

**BENCHMARK ADOPTION SURVEY**  
**REPORT ON THE FINDINGS**

*Conducted for:*  
**The Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Virtually all Americans agree that adoption serves a useful purpose in our society, and most have a favorable opinion of the institution. But many Americans, even those with very favorable opinions about adoption overall, do harbor doubts about the institution. Half feel adopting a child, while preferable to remaining childless, is not quite as good as having one's own. And a quarter think it is sometimes harder to love an adopted child because the child is not your own flesh and blood.

On the surface these data seem puzzling; Americans have an overwhelmingly favorable opinion of adoption, yet only half say adopting is as good as being a birth parent. A more comprehensive view of adoption attitudes takes these possibly contradictory viewpoints into account. On this basis Americans divide into three groups according to their attitudes toward adoption: 1) *Full Supporters* who express unqualified support for adoption; 2) *Qualified Supporters*, who have a mostly positive opinion about the institution but some hesitancy to fully embrace it and; 3) *Marginal Supporters*, who while generally more supportive than not, are less convinced than others of adoption's merits.

Americans' opinions about the members of the adoption triad follow a similar pattern to their assessment of the institution. Most say *adoptive parents* are generous and lucky, but some believe they would have been luckier still to have had their own child. *Adopted children*, a majority says, are well adjusted and secure, but some think adopted children are insecure, poorly adjusted and more prone to behavioral and academic problems than other children. Lastly, many Americans support *birth parents'* decisions to place children for adoption, but a notable minority disapproves of decisions to do so, and some even see it as irresponsible or hardhearted.

Attitudes toward adoption divide starkly by social group. Less educated Americans are more skeptical about adoption than others. There are also gender differences; men are more uncertain of adoption's merits than women. Blacks are more skeptical than whites.

These are among the findings of the Benchmark Adoption Survey conducted July 7 through August 8, 1997 for the Adoption Institute by Princeton Survey Research Associates. This probability survey of 1,554 adults is the first in-depth look at American public attitudes toward the institution of adoption and the members of the adoption triad. The survey also examined opinion about open adoption, adoptees' search for their birth parents and adoption in the context of welfare reform and teenage pregnancy.

Among other key findings:

- Six in 10 Americans have had personal experience with adoption, meaning they themselves, a family member, or a close friend was adopted, adopted a child, or put a child up for adoption. A third have considered adopting a child at least somewhat seriously. Those with personal experience are more likely than those without to have favorable opinions of adoption.
- Americans are divided over whether it is better for pregnant teenagers to place their babies for adoption or raise them themselves. Americans also are divided over which is better for the child in this situation, although slightly more believe the baby is better off adopted than raised by the birth mother.
- Americans are divided over whether the government should promote adoption as an alternative to welfare. Asked about a California plan in which welfare mothers would be encouraged to place their children for adoption, a slim majority oppose this plan, and substantial minority support it. Americans are somewhat more supportive of the plan for pregnant teenagers.

- The public is ambivalent about open adoption, that is, adoption in which birth parents maintain some contact with the child they have placed for adoption. Most Americans think it is a good idea, but only in a limited number of cases. One in five feel it is always a bad idea for birth mothers to maintain contact with the children they have placed for adoption.
- Americans also have mixed views about the consequences of adoptees searching for and finding their birth parents. In the public's eyes, adoptees are the most likely of the triad to benefit from contacting their birth parents. There is more skepticism about whether adoptive and birth parents benefit.
- Perhaps in reaction to an increase in media stories about international adoptions gone awry, many are skeptical about the prospects for children adopted overseas. Many Americans feel these children are more prone to physical illness and emotional problems than children adopted in the United States. In contrast, Americans are more hopeful than not about the academic promise of children adopted internationally.

### **Methodological Statement**

This survey is based on telephone interviews with a representative sample of 1,554 adults 18 and older, living in telephone households in the continental United States, including an oversample of 50 African-Americans. The sample data were weighted, using parameters from the most recently available Census data (the Current Population Survey, March 1996), to bring the sample characteristics into alignment with the demographics of the 18 and older population of adults in the continental United States. The interviewing took place from July 7, through August 8, 1997.

For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is plus or minus 3 percentage points. In

addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting telephone surveys can introduce error or bias into the finding of opinion polls.

## **FINDINGS IN DETAIL**

## Section I: Adoption as an Institution

### Adoption Positive and Useful...

Most Americans say they have a favorable opinion of adoption and think it serves a useful purpose in society. A slim majority (56%) voices a *very* favorable opinion and a third (34%) express a *somewhat* favorable opinion of adoption. A small minority (8%) sees adoption in a less positive light, offering an unfavorable opinion. The American public is even more convinced of the utility of adoption. Virtually all Americans *strongly* (78%) or *somewhat* (17%) agree that adoption serves a useful purpose in society.

### ...But Less Desirable than “Own” Child

At the same time, however, many Americans express reservations about adoption when asked to compare adopting a child to having one’s “own” child. Half (50%) believe adoption is better than being childless, but is not quite as good as having one’s own child. Half (49%) disagree.

#### Overall Opinion of Adoption

In general, do you have a very favorable opinion of adoption, a somewhat favorable opinion, a somewhat unfavorable opinion, or a very unfavorable opinion of adoption?

Very favorable	56%
Somewhat favorable	34
Somewhat unfavorable	4
Very unfavorable	4
Don’t know	2

Now I’m going to read you a set of statements. For each please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each statement: *Adoption serves a useful purpose in our society.*

Strongly agree	78%
Somewhat agree	17
Somewhat disagree	2
Strongly disagree	2
Don’t know	1

#### Adoption Compared to Biological Child

Now I’m going to read you a set of statements. For each please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each statement: *Adoption is better than being childless, but it is not quite as good as having one’s own child.*

Strongly agree	21%
Somewhat agree	29
Somewhat disagree	17
Strongly disagree	32
Don’t know	1

### ***Full Supporters, Qualified Supporters and Marginal Supporters of Adoption***

How do we reconcile these data? How can nine in 10 Americans say they have a favorable opinion of adoption, but only half say they think adopting is as good as being a birth parent? Americans support adoption, but many do not necessarily think it is the preferred way to form, or add to, a family. Americans think adoption serves a societal need, but perhaps some Americans wish this need did not exist.

In other words, none of these three questions alone tells the whole story. To say most Americans have a favorable opinion of adoption or that most think it serves a useful purpose neglects the reservations that half the country harbors. Yet to say that half think adoption is not quite as good as having one's own child understates public support for the institution. The more complete explanation combines these questions to yield three groups of attitude toward adoption -- *Full Supporters, Qualified Supporters* and *Marginal Supporters*. All are supporters, but not to the same degree:

- One in three (32%) Americans is a *Full Supporter*. This group expresses unqualified support for adoption. *Full Supporters* voice a very favorable opinion of adoption, strongly agree adoption serves a useful purpose in society and think adoption is as good as having one's own child.
- Four in ten (37%) are *Qualified Supporters*. Overall, this group's opinion of adoption is positive but it is distinguished by some hesitancy to fully embrace the institution. Some in this group express a *very* favorable opinion of adoption but think adoption is not as desirable as having one's own child; others in this group voice a *somewhat* favorable or even unfavorable opinion of adoption but do think adoption is as good as having one's own child.

- Three in ten (31%) are *Marginal Supporters*. They are less convinced than others about the merits of adoption. *Marginal Supporters* believe adoption is less desirable than having one's own child, hold less than a very favorable opinion of adoption and agree only somewhat or disagree that adoption serves a useful purpose in society.

### **Support for Adoption Differs by Social Demographic Characteristics**

Adoption attitudes differ substantially by social demographic characteristics, with education, gender and race being the most important distinguishing elements.

- Those with a college degree (48%) are notably more likely than those with only a high school education (23%) to be *Full Supporters* of adoption. By contrast, the less well educated (39%) are more likely than the well educated (18%) to be *Marginal Supporters*.
- A larger percentage of women (36%) than men (27%) are *Full Supporters*. Men (35%) are more likely than women (27%) to be *Marginal Supporters*.
- Race is another important factor. Whites (35%) are three times as likely as blacks (11%) to be *Full Supporters* of adoption. Conversely, half again as many blacks (44%) as whites (29%) are *Marginal Supporters*.
- Married Americans (36%) are more likely than those who are unmarried (27%) to be *Full Supporters*.

- Four in ten (43%) Americans living in the western part of the country are *Full Supporters*, while just a quarter of those in the South (25%) and Northeast (28%) are *Full Supporters*.

Adoption attitudes do not vary by age, family size or urbanity. Young Americans are as likely as older ones to be *Full Supporters* of adoption, childless Americans are as likely as those with five or more children to be *Full Supporters* and urban residents are as likely as rural dwellers to be *Full Supporters*. Political orientation also does not differentiate support for adoption. As many self-defined liberals as self-defined conservatives are *Full Supporters*.

### **Americans Are Conflicted about Issues Surrounding Adoption**

Although generally supportive of adoption, the American public appears conflicted about specific aspects of adoption, such as: 1) the costs and benefits of adoption to the adoption triad; 2) whether unmarried teen mothers should place their babies for adoption or raise the babies themselves; 3) the wisdom of open adoption and searching for one's birth parents and; 4) adoption as a welfare alternative. We begin examining these conflicted sentiments by describing attitudes toward the adoption triad.

## Section II: The Adoption Triad

The American public views each of the parties to any adoption -- the adoptive parents, the adopted child and the birth parents -- distinctly and differently. Many of these attitudes differ by the three groups of supporters, *Full Supporters*, *Qualified Supporters* and *Marginal Supporters*. These data show that while Americans generally support the parties to an adoption, some Americans have serious reservations about what these parties do or concerns about how they are affected by adoption.

For the most part, Americans perceive adoptive parents as generous and lucky. Yet at least some think these parents would have been luckier if they had their own children. Adoptees themselves are also viewed in a positive light, although here too there is a less positive side -- some feel adopted children are more prone to problems than other children. Most Americans view birth parents favorably and approve of their decision to place their children for adoption. Yet some feel this decision is irresponsible and even callous.

### Adoptive Parents -- Lucky and Advantaged...

Adoptive parents are the most positively viewed of the triad, or at least they are seen as the member of the triad who benefit most in an adoption. Almost all Americans see adoptive families as lucky (95%) and advantaged (86%). Very few people view their actions as selfish (4%). Furthermore, people believe adoptive parents get the same amount of satisfaction (46%) or even more satisfaction (33%) out of raising an adopted child than a child born to them. Substantially fewer (17%) say adoptive parents get less satisfaction.

Views of Adoptive Parents	
In your opinion, when parents adopt a child are they . . .	
Lucky	95%
Unlucky	2
Don't know	3
Selfish	4%
Unselfish	91
Don't know	5
Advantaged	86%
Disadvantaged	7
Don't know	7

### **...But Will Love Be As Strong in Adoptive Families?**

As many as one in four Americans question whether the love between parent and child can be as strong and true in adoptive families as in more traditional families. A quarter (23%) agree it is sometimes harder to love an adopted child, because that child is not your own flesh and blood, although the majority (76%) disagree. Likewise, although a majority (67%) say it is *very* likely adopted children love their adoptive parents as much as they would have loved their birth parents, a third are less optimistic -- 25% say it is only somewhat likely the love will be as strong, and 5% say it is unlikely.

### ***Marginal Supporters* Less Positive than *Full Supporters* about Adoptive Parents**

People who are less enthusiastic about adoption in general have less positive attitudes toward those who adopt.

- Three in ten (30%) *Marginal Supporters* think parents get less satisfaction from raising adopted children compared with two in ten (18%) *Qualified Supporters* and only four percent of *Full Supporters*.
- Likewise, *Marginal Supporters* are more likely than others to see adoptive parents as disadvantaged (15% vs. 6% of *Qualified* and 2% of *Full Supporters*).
- The biggest differences between *Marginal Supporters* and those who are more positively disposed toward adoption, have to do with the quality of the love between parents and children in adoptive families. Most *Full Supporters* (86%) and nearly as many *Qualified Supporters* (72%) believe it is *very* likely adopted children will love those who adopt them as much as they would have loved those who gave birth to them. Less than half (45%) of *Marginal Supporters* concur. Moreover, four in ten (40%) *Marginal Supporters* agree it is sometimes harder to love an adopted child because it is not your flesh and

blood, compared with only two in ten (23%) *Qualified Supporters* and less than one in ten (6%) *Full Supporters*.

### Social Demographics Differentiate Opinion about Adoptive Parents

As is the case with adoption in general, people's opinions about adoptive parents vary by education, gender and race. The less well educated, men and blacks are more likely than the better educated, women and whites to voice negative feelings toward adoptive families themselves and to feel adoptive parents are getting shortchanged in the adoption process. Likewise, the less well educated, men and blacks are more likely than others to say it is sometimes harder to love an adopted child than a child born to you. Similarly, these groups are *less* convinced adopted children will have as strong a love for their adoptive parents as they would have had for their birth parents. These differences persist even when other demographic variables are taken into account.

	Total	Education		Gender		Race	
		No College	Some College	Male	Female	Black	White
Adoptive parents get less satisfaction out of raising an adopted child	17%	21	13	20	14	31	14
Sometimes it is harder to love an adopted child	23%	27	17	28	17	32	20
It is <i>very likely</i> adopted children will love their adoptive parents as much as they would have loved the parents who gave birth to them	67%	61	75	60	73	51	70

### Adopted Individuals -- Well-Adjusted, Secure and First-Rate...

Most Americans have a positive view of adopted children. Solid majorities say adopted kids are well-adjusted (76%) secure (68%) and first rate (70%). Yet minorities up to a quarter see them as not well-adjusted (14%), insecure (23%) and second best (20%).

### ...But One in Three Americans Predicts School and Behavioral Problems

People are divided as to whether adopted children are more likely than other children to have problems at school (35%), less likely (36%) or equally likely (21%).

And there is disagreement as to whether adopted kids are more likely (39%), less likely (34%) or equally likely (19%) to have behavioral problems. By contrast, people do not foresee adopted children developing drug and alcohol problems at higher rates than other children. In fact, more people say adopted kids are *less* likely than other kids to have such problems (39%) than say they are *more* likely to (28%).

#### Views of Adopted Children

Next, I am going to read pairs of words or phrases. For each pair please tell me which one best describes your opinion of adopted children . . .

Well adjusted	76%
Not well adjusted	14
Don't know	10
Insecure	23%
Secure	68
Don't know	9
First rate	70%
Second best	20
Don't know	10

### *Marginal Supporters* More Concerned about Adjustment Problems than *Full Supporters*

Those whose support for adoption is most conditional, *Marginal Supporters*, are more likely than others to see adopted children as insecure (36%) and poorly adjusted (22%). Majorities of *Marginal Supporters* believe adopted children are more likely than other kids to have problems at school (54%) and behavioral problems (57%). Those who express more support for adoption, on the other hand, tend to see adopted children as equally prone or even less likely than others to have academic and behavioral problems.

## Demographics Differentiate Opinions about Adopted Children

People's opinions about adoptees differ by education, sex and race. The less educated are more likely than better-educated Americans to view adopted kids as insecure and second best and to think adoptees are more prone to substance abuse, academic and behavioral problems. Likewise, men are more likely than women to question how well adjusted and secure adopted children are. A larger share of men than women foresee behavioral problems, problems in the classroom, and problems with drugs and alcohol. Similarly, blacks are more likely than whites to hold these less positive views of adoptive children.

## International Adoptions More Troublesome

Americans are decidedly less optimistic about the prospects of children adopted from other countries. These views may result, in part, from recent media stories about troubled international adoptions. Half of those surveyed believe children adopted abroad are more likely than those adopted in this country to have emotional problems and the same proportion say they are *less* likely to be physically healthy. But Americans do not believe children adopted internationally are likely to have trouble in school. In fact, more say these children are *less* likely to do poorly in school than say they are *more* likely to have academic problems.

### Views about International Adoptions

These days many Americans are adopting children from other countries such as Columbia and China. Do you think children adopted from foreign countries are MORE likely or LESS likely than children adopted in this country to . . .

	More Likely	Just as Likely (VOL.)	Less Likely	Don't know
Have emotional problems	52%	11	29	8
Be physically healthy	29%	13	51	7
Do poorly in school	31%	14	48	7

### Most Americans Support Birth Parents' Decision...

Most Americans have positive opinions about birth parents, and are supportive of the decision to place their child up for adoption. Seven in ten (69%) say they generally approve of a birth mother's decision and most view this choice as responsible (76%), caring (78%) and unselfish (77%).

### ...But Some See it as Irresponsible, Uncaring and Selfish

One in four Americans (23%) generally disapproves of a birth mother's decision to place a child for adoption. Moreover, a small but significant minority sees this decision as irresponsible (16%), uncaring (13%) and selfish (14%). One in five (20%) agrees a mother who gives a child up does *not* love the child as much as one who raises the child herself.

People's opinions of fathers who place their children for adoption are more negative. They are more likely than their female counterparts to have their actions seen as irresponsible (26%), uncaring (24%) and selfish (23%) and people are more likely to disapprove (29%) of their decision.

### Full Supporters Most Positive about Birth Parents

People who are most supportive of adoption in general -- *Full Supporters* -- are more approving of a parent's decision to place a child for adoption and are more likely than others to see their decision as loving,

responsible, caring and unselfish. Conversely, those who question the institution more are less

#### Views about Birth Parents

In general, when a MOTHER puts her child up for adoption is she being . . .

Irresponsible	16%
Responsible	76
Don't know	8

Caring	78%
Uncaring	13
Don't know	9

Unselfish	77%
Selfish	14
Don't know	9

And how about fathers, when a FATHER puts his child up for adoption is he being . . .

Irresponsible	26%
Responsible	66
Don't know	8

Caring	68%
Uncaring	24
Don't know	8

Unselfish	68%
Selfish	23
Don't know	9

unanimous in this view, though they are still more likely than not to view birth parents and their decision in a positive light.

### **The Less Well Educated, Men and African-Americans Most Negative about Birth Parents**

Again in-depth analysis shows cleavages within American society. Less well-educated Americans, men and African Americans are more likely to hold negative views of those who place their children for adoption than their counterparts. Here, in fact, the differences are even more pronounced, especially where race is concerned. As the table shows, half or more of African Americans generally disapprove of the decision to place a child for adoption, compared with only about a quarter of whites. Furthermore, blacks are much more likely to view the decision to give up one's child in a negative light.

<b>Racial Differences in Views of Birth Parents</b>			
	<u>Total</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>White</u>
<i>Birth Mothers</i>			
Generally <u>disapprove</u> of birth mothers' decision	23%	52	20
By putting child up for adoption mothers are being . . .			
Irresponsible	16%	38	12
Uncaring	13%	35	10
Selfish	14%	31	11
<i>Birth Fathers</i>			
Generally <u>disapprove</u> of birth fathers' decision	29%	56	25
By putting child up for adoption fathers are being . . .			
Irresponsible	26%	54	21
Uncaring	24%	50	20
Selfish	23%	45	20

### **Birth Fathers Entitled to Say in Adoption Decision**

A majority (79%) of Americans think the father of a baby born to an unmarried couple should have at least some say in whether the child is put up for adoption, including almost half who (45%) believe he should have *a lot* of say. Younger Americans see a larger role for fathers in this decision than their older counterparts.



## Americans Express Mixed Views about Placing Own Child for Adoption in Dire Circumstances

A majority of Americans generally approve of birth parents' decisions, but they are less certain they would put a child of their own up for adoption were they unable to provide for the child. As the table shows, half the Americans surveyed say they would be likely to place a child for adoption, and half would be unlikely to do so, including more than a third who say they would be *very* unlikely to place their child for adoption.

Americans feelings about whether they would put their own child up for adoption follow similar patterns to their approval of birth parents' decisions in general. Whites are

divided between those who say they would be likely to put their child up for adoption and those who would be unlikely to do so. Conversely, only about a third of blacks say they would be likely to put their child up for adoption, whereas almost two-thirds would be unlikely to do so, including almost half who say it is *very* unlikely. Similarly, better educated people are marginally more likely to say they would consider adoption, whereas those with less education would be more likely to keep their child. These data suggest some sectors of American society are more accepting of birth parents raising their own children even in the face of difficult circumstances.

	Total	Education		Race	
		No College	Some College	Black	White
Very likely	22%	20%	25%	15%	24%
Somewhat likely	25	24	26	22	25
Somewhat unlikely	14	13	14	17	13
Very unlikely	36	41	31	46	35
Don't know	3	3	3	1	3

### Section III: Experience and Sources of Information about Adoption

A majority of Americans (58%) have had personal experience with adoption -- meaning they themselves, a family member or a close friend was adopted, adopted a child, or put a child up for adoption. And over a third (36%) say they have given very or somewhat serious consideration to adopting a child. But a sizable minority (42%) lack personal experience with adoption and two in three (64%) have not given serious consideration to adopting a child.

Personal experience with adoption or having considered adoption plays a major role in shaping adoption attitudes. Almost three in four (72%) *Full Supporters* of adoption have had intimate experiences with adoption compared with less than half (44%) of the *Marginal Supporters*. Having given serious consideration to adopting a child apparently fosters positive sentiments as well. Respondents who have never considered adopting a child are substantially less likely to voice positive views about adoption than those who have.

#### Experience with Adoption

Has anyone in your family or among your close friends ever been adopted or adopted a child or put a child up for adoption?

Yes	58%
No	42
Don't know	--

#### Percent Having Considered Adoption

How seriously, if at all, have you ever considered adopting a child-- would you say very seriously, somewhat seriously, not too seriously or not at all seriously?

Very seriously	15%
Somewhat seriously	21
Not too seriously	17
Not at all seriously	47
Don't know	--

#### Experience with Adoption Differs by Group

Adoption experience varies widely by social characteristics. Just one in three blacks but nearly two in three whites say they have had personal experience with adoption. Similar, but less striking patterns prevail for gender, age, education and income. Women, younger people, the college educated and higher income households are more likely than others to say a family

member or close friend has been adopted or has placed a child for adoption. Since these data suggest personal experience and positive views about adoption are linked, those social groups with less personal exposure may have fewer opportunities to develop positive sentiments toward adoption.

### Family and Friends Main Source of Information

A plurality of Americans says their family and friends (45%) are their main source of information about adoption, followed by the news (30%), books and magazines (16%), and movies and entertainment programs (6%).

Each of the three categories of supporters turn to somewhat different sources for information about adoption.

Among *Full Supporters* a majority (55%) rely on family and friends, while news (21%) and books and magazines (18%) place a distant second. By contrast, *Marginal Supporters* are as

likely to say their main source of adoption information is the news (38%) as family and friends (39%). Among all three groups only a handful turn to movies and entertainment programs as their main source of information about adoption.

<b>Main Source of Information about Adoption</b>			
What is your main source of information about adoption?			
	<u>Adoption Supporters</u>		
	Full	Qualified	Marginal
Family and Friends	55%	42%	39%
News	21	32	38
Books and Magazines	18	16	13
Movies and Entertainment prgs.	3	7	7
Don't know	2	3	3

## Section IV: Alternatives to Adoption

### Adoption or Raising Baby -- What's Best for the Teenage Mom?

Americans divide over whether it is best for an unmarried pregnant teenager to raise the baby herself or place the baby for adoption. Just as many think it is best for the teenage mother to place the baby for adoption (37%) as believe she is better off raising the baby herself (39%). One in five (20%) says it depends on the individual situation. Among those who have a more definite opinion, two in three *Full Supporters* of adoption (67%) favor the teenager placing the baby for adoption, while a third (33%) think she should raise the baby herself. Just the opposite pattern prevails among *Marginal Supporters* -- 64 percent believe the teenager should raise the baby herself while 36 percent favor placing the baby for adoption.

#### Unmarried Pregnant Teen Mothers: Raise Baby or Place for Adoption?

Today many teenage girls get pregnant and don't have the option of marrying the father. Let's suppose a pregnant teenager decides to have the baby, do you think it best for her if she raises the baby herself or puts the baby up for adoption?

Raise baby herself	39%
Put baby up for adoption	37
Depends (VOL.)	20
Don't know	4

Here again, these data suggest the social milieu of some sectors of American society are more open than others to unmarried teen mothers raising their biological children regardless of economic circumstances. African Americans (69%) are twice as likely as whites (34%) to favor teen mothers raising their babies themselves. Similar age, education and income differences exist. Half or more of the young (18-29 year olds -- 50%), the non-high school educated (57%), and those from low income households (under \$20,000 -- 49%) favor unmarried teen mothers raising their babies themselves. Only a third or less of the older (30 years of age and older) (33%), the college educated (24%), and those from wealthier households (\$50,000 and over) (30%) concur. Men (42%) are slightly more likely than women (36%) to think it is better for teen mothers to raise their babies themselves. And never married respondents (48%) are

somewhat more favorable toward teen mothers raising their babies themselves than those who are or have been married (36%). Finally Southerners and those with a pro-life stance on abortion are slightly more inclined to favor a mother raising the child herself than placing the baby for adoption.

### **Public Divided about What's Best for Baby**

What about the baby of the unmarried teenage mother -- is it best for the baby to be adopted or be raised by the mother? Again, opinion is divided, although slightly more think the baby is better off being placed for adoption (42%) than being raised by the birth mother (36%). Similar social demographic patterns to those noted above prevail.

#### **What's Best for the Baby?**

And what about for the baby? Do you think it is best for the baby to be raised by the teenage mother or be put up for adoption?

Best to be raised by the teenager	36%
Best to be put up for adoption	42
Depends	18
Don't know	4

## Section V: Adoption as an Alternative to Welfare

The current wave of welfare reform has prompted politicians to rethink America's social safety net, and has lead some to wonder if encouraging adoption would ease welfare rolls. In particular, California Governor Pete Wilson has proposed a plan to encourage welfare mothers to place their children for adoption. A slim majority of Americans (54%) oppose promoting adoption as an alternative to welfare, but a sizable minority (43%) support it. Support for such a plan is stronger when the mother in question is a pregnant teenager. Two in three (67%) would support a plan to encourage pregnant teens who are unable to provide for their newborn to place the baby for adoption.

*Full Supporters* are as likely as *Marginal Supporters* of adoption to oppose promoting adoption

as a alternative to welfare. But, when the referent is teenage mothers, *Full Supporters* (76%) are slightly more likely than *Marginal Supporters* (65%) to approve of encouraging teenage mothers to place their babies for adoption. People who describe themselves as politically conservative,

### Adoption as an Alternative . . .

#### For Welfare Mothers . . .

A state governor has recently announced a plan to encourage *welfare recipients* to consider putting their children up for adoption. Some people say the plan is good because if these children are adopted the state would be relieved of any responsibility for the children and the children would grow up in more financially and emotionally secure households. Others say the plan is bad because the state should try to keep families together. How do you feel about this plan? Do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose it?

Strongly support	12%
Somewhat support	31
Somewhat oppose	22
Strongly oppose	32
Don't know	3

#### . . . And Pregnant Teens

The same proposal suggests that *pregnant teenagers* who aren't able to provide for their babies be encouraged to put their babies up for adoption. How do you feel about such a plan -- do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose it?

Strongly support	32%
Somewhat support	35
Somewhat oppose	15
Strongly oppose	16
Don't know	2

who have higher incomes and the better educated are more likely than others to favor adoption as an alternative to welfare. Those who favor adoption in this situation are also more likely than others to agree with the statement “*Poor people today have it easy because they can get government benefits without doing much of anything in return.*” This suggests these sentiments may be as much a reaction to the perpetuation of a culture of dependency as a reflection of their adoption attitudes.

## Section VI: Open Adoption and Searching for Birth Parents

### Relatively Few Favor Open Adoption in Most Cases

Open adoption -- when the birth and adoptive families maintain contact with each other -- has become more commonplace in the United States. Despite this move toward open adoptions, the public offers only modest support for the practice. Less than two in ten (16%) say it is a good idea in *most* cases while the plurality (40%) think it is a good idea in *some* cases, suggesting they feel decisions

about openness should be made on a case-by-case basis. The remaining 42% say contact is *seldom* (23%) or *never* (19%) a good idea. This split prevails regardless of whether one is a *Full* or *Marginal Supporter* of adoption. It would seem that open adoption has won only limited acceptance even by those members of the public who unconditionally support adoption.

#### Open Adoption

Sometimes mothers who put their child up for adoption maintain contact by occasionally sending cards and letters. Do you think this is a good idea in most cases, in some cases, very few cases, or no cases at all?

Most cases	16%
Some cases	40
Very few cases	23
No cases at all	19
Don't know	2

## Public Lukewarm on Searching for Birth Parents

Perhaps one reason many Americans are reluctant to fully support open adoption is the mixed views they hold about the consequences of adoptees searching for and finding their birth parents. From the public's perspective, adoptees benefit more from contacting their birth parents than either the birth parents or adoptive parents. Two in three (68%) say it is usually good for adoptees to find their birth parents. Somewhat fewer (56%) believe it is usually good for the birth parents to be contacted by their birth child, and even fewer (44%) think it is a positive event for the adoptive parents. In all three cases, *Full Supporters* of adoption are more likely than *Marginal Supporters* to judge these actions as beneficial, indicating the greater confidence and trust *Full Supporters* place in the resilience of the adoption triad.

### Benefits and Costs of Finding Birth Parents

Sometimes people who were adopted as children look for and find one or both of the parents who put them up for adoption. When this happens, is this usually a good thing or a bad thing for the ADOPTED PERSON?

Usually good	68%
Usually bad	21
Don't know	11

When people who were adopted as children look for and find one or both of the parents who put them up for adoption, is it usually a good thing or a bad thing for the PARENTS WHO PUT THEM UP FOR ADOPTION?

Usually good	56%
Usually bad	31
Don't know	13

How about the parents who adopted the person. . . When people who were adopted as children look for and find one or both of the parents who put them up for adoption. Is this usually a good thing or a bad thing for the PARENTS WHO ADOPTED THEM?

Usually good	44%
Usually bad	45
Don't know	11

## VII: Gay and Interracial Adoption

Gay and interracial adoption were not explored in this survey because data on these topics are available elsewhere. The data presented below show most Americans are opposed to gay couples adopting children. Conversely, most have a positive opinion about interracial adoption.

### Americans Hesitant About Gay Couples Adopting . . .

A May 1996 Princeton Survey Research Associates survey for Newsweek magazine asked whether it should be as easy for gay couples to adopt as it is for heterosexual couples. A minority (30%) said it should be as easy. Most either thought it should be more difficult (20%) or should not be allowed at all (44%). Younger Americans, and those under 30 in particular, are more accepting of gay adoption than older people. Women are more open to gay adoption than men.

#### Opinion of Gay Adoptions

If gay couples are allowed to marry, should it be as easy for them to adopt children as it is for heterosexual married couples, should it be more difficult, or should they not be allowed to adopt at all?

As easy	30%
More difficult	20
Not be allowed at all	44
Don't know	6

### . . . But Interracial Adoption has Public Support

Interracial adoption, or at least adoption between whites and African-Americans, has broader public acceptance. The majority of the public supports white couples adopting black children (80%) and black couples adopting white children (77%),

#### Interracial Adoption between Whites and African-Americans

Do you approve or disapprove of a married couple who is white adopting a baby who is African-American?

Approve	80%
Disapprove	14
Don't know	6

Do you approve or disapprove of a married couple who is African-American adoption a baby who is white?

Approve	77%
Disapprove	16
Don't know	7

according to a June 1995 survey by Yankelovich for Time magazine and CNN.

**Methodological Statement**

This survey is based on telephone interviews with a representative sample of 1,554 adults 18 and older, living in telephone households in the continental United States, including an oversample of 50 African-Americans. The sample data were weighted, using parameters from the most recently available Census data (the Current Population Survey, March 1996), to bring the sample characteristics into alignment with the demographics of the 18 and older population of adults in the continental United States. The interviewing took place from July 7, through August 8, 1997.

For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is plus or minus 3 percentage points. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting telephone surveys can introduce error or bias into the finding of opinion polls.

**APPENDIX A:  
TOPLINE RESULTS**

## BENCHMARK ADOPTION ATTITUDE SURVEY

### PRINCETON SURVEY RESEARCH ASSOCIATES FOR THE ADOPTION INSTITUTE

#### TOPLINE RESULTS

N= 1,554 Adults, 18 or older (including an oversample of 50 blacks)  
Margin of error: Plus or minus 3 percentage points  
Dates of Interviewing: July 7 - August 8, 1997

**INTRODUCTION:** Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm calling for Princeton Survey Research of Princeton, New Jersey. We are conducting a national opinion survey about some important social issues.

1. **RESPONDENT'S SEX:**

46 Male  
54 Female  
100

2. Today many teenage girls get pregnant and don't have the option of marrying the father. Let's suppose a pregnant teenager decides to have the baby, do you think it best for HER if she raises the baby herself or puts the baby up for adoption?

39 Raise baby herself  
37 Put baby up for adoption  
20 Depends (VOL.)  
4 Don't know  
100

3. And what about for the BABY? Do you think it is best for the BABY to be raised by the teenage mother or be put up for adoption?

36 Best to be raised by the teenager  
42 Best to be put up for adoption  
18 Depends (VOL.)  
4 Don't know  
100

4. Next, I'm going to read pairs of words or phrases. For each pair please tell me which one best describes your opinion of ADOPTED CHILDREN. (First/Next). . .

a.       76   Well adjusted, or  
           14   Not well adjusted  
         10   Don't know  
         100

b.       23   Insecure, or  
           68   Secure  
          9   Don't know  
         100

c.       70   First rate, or  
           20   Second best  
         10   Don't know  
         100

5. In general, how do you feel about it when MOTHERS put their children up for adoption? Do you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove or strongly disapprove of the mother's decision?

32   Strongly approve  
 37   Somewhat approve  
 13   Somewhat disapprove  
 10   Strongly disapprove  
 8   Don't know  
 100

6. And how about FATHERS who put their children up for adoption? Do you strongly approve, somewhat approve, somewhat disapprove, or strongly disapprove of the father's decision?

30   Strongly approve  
 33   Somewhat approve  
 13   Somewhat disapprove  
 16   Strongly disapprove  
 8   Don't know  
 100

7. In general, do you think adopted children are more likely or less likely than other children to have. . .

		More <u>Likely</u>	Less <u>Likely</u>	Equally Likely <b>(VOL.)</b>	<u>DK</u>	
a.	Problems at school	35	36	21	8	=100
b.	Behavior problems	39	34	19	8	=100
c.	Problems with drugs and alcohol	28	39	23	10	=100

8. Do you think parents get the same amount of satisfaction out of raising an adopted child as raising a child born to them, MORE satisfaction, or LESS satisfaction?

46	Same amount of satisfaction
33	More satisfaction
17	Less satisfaction
<u>4</u>	Don't know
100	

9. In your opinion, when parents adopt a child are they . . .

a.	95	Lucky or
	2	Unlucky
	<u>3</u>	Don't know
	100	
b.	4	Selfish or
	91	Unselfish
	<u>5</u>	Don't know
	100	
c.	86	Advantaged or
	7	Disadvantaged
	<u>7</u>	Don't know
	100	

10. How likely is it that adopted children will love the parents who adopted them as much as they would have loved the parents who gave birth to them -- is it . . .

67 Very likely  
 25 Somewhat likely  
 3 Somewhat unlikely  
 2 Very unlikely  
3 Don't know  
 100

11. Now I'm going to read you some statements that describe how people feel about some different topics. For each, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each statement.

	Strongly <u>Agree</u>	Somewhat <u>Agree</u>	Somewhat <u>Disagree</u>	Strongly <u>Disagree</u>	<u>DK</u>	
a. When jobs are scarce, men have more right to a job than women.	14	20	9	46	1	=100
b. Religious values should play a larger role in our society.	57	26	9	7	1	=100
c. Sometimes it is harder to love an adopted child than a child born to you because the adopted child isn't your own flesh and blood.	6	17	19	57	1	=100
d. Young people these days don't have enough respect for their parents.	55	30	9	5	1	=100
e. Adoption serves a useful purpose in our society.	78	17	2	2	1	=100

12. In general, when a mother puts her child up for adoption is she being . . .

a.      16    Irresponsible, or  
           76    Responsible  
             8    Don't know  
           100

b.      78    Caring, or  
           13    Uncaring  
             9    Don't know  
           100

c.      77    Unselfish, or  
           14    Selfish  
             9    Don't know  
           100

13. And how about fathers, when a father puts his child up for adoption is he being . . .

a.      26    Irresponsible, or  
           66    Responsible  
             8    Don't know  
           100

b.      68    Caring, or  
           24    Uncaring  
             8    Don't know  
           100

c.      68    Unselfish, or  
           23    Selfish  
             9    Don't know  
           100

14. Suppose a couple is unmarried and they don't intend to get married. How much say do you think the father of a baby born to this couple should have in whether the baby is put up for adoption -- a lot of say, some, not very much, or no say at all?

45	A lot of say
34	Some say
9	Not very much say
10	No say at all
<u>2</u>	Don't know
100	

15. These days many Americans are adopting children from other countries such as Columbia and China. Do you think children adopted from foreign countries are MORE likely or LESS likely than children adopted in this country to . . .

		More <u>Likely</u>	Less <u>Likely</u>	Just as Likely <b>(VOL.)</b>	<u>DK</u>	
a.	Have emotional problems	52	29	11	8	=100
b.	Be physically healthy	29	51	13	7	=100
c.	Do poorly in school	31	48	14	7	=100

16. A state governor has recently announced a plan to encourage welfare recipients to consider putting their children up for adoption. Some people say the plan is good because if these children are adopted the state would be relieved of any responsibility for the children and the children would grow up in more financially and emotionally secure households. Others say the plan is bad because the state should try to keep families together. How do you feel about this plan? Do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose it?

12 Strongly support  
 31 Somewhat support  
 22 Somewhat oppose  
 32 Strongly oppose  
3 Don't know  
 100

17. The same proposal suggests that pregnant teenagers who aren't able to provide for their babies be encouraged to put their babies up for adoption. How do you feel about such a plan -- do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose it?

32 Strongly support  
 35 Somewhat support  
 15 Somewhat oppose  
 16 Strongly oppose  
2 Don't know  
 100

18. Sometimes mothers who put their child up for adoption maintain contact by occasionally sending cards and letters. Do you think this is a good idea in most cases, in some cases, very few cases, or no cases at all?

16 Most cases  
 40 Some cases  
 23 Very few cases  
 19 No cases at all  
2 Don't know  
 100

19. Sometimes people who were adopted as children look for and find one or both of the parents who put them up for adoption. When this happens, is this usually a good thing or a bad thing for the ADOPTED PERSON?

68 Usually good  
21 Usually bad  
11 Don't know  
100

20. When people who were adopted as children look for and find one or both of the parents who put them up for adoption, is it usually a good thing or a bad thing for the PARENTS WHO PUT THEM UP FOR ADOPTION?

56 Usually good  
31 Usually bad  
13 Don't know  
100

21. How about the parents who adopted the person. . . When people who were adopted as children look for and find one or both of the parents who put them up for adoption. Is this usually a good thing or a bad thing for the PARENTS WHO ADOPTED THEM?

44 Usually good  
45 Usually bad  
11 Don't know  
100

22. In general, do you have a very favorable opinion of adoption, a somewhat favorable opinion, a somewhat UNfavorable opinion, or a very UNfavorable opinion of adoption?

56 Very favorable  
 34 Somewhat favorable  
 4 Somewhat unfavorable  
 4 Very unfavorable  
2 Don't know  
 100

23. Has anyone in your family or among your close friends ever been adopted OR adopted a child OR put a child up for adoption?

58 Yes  
 42 No  
\*1 Don't know  
 100

24. What's your MAIN source of information about adoption? Do you get most of your information about adoption from the news, movies and entertainment programs, books and magazines, or family and friends?

30 News  
 6 Movies and entertainment programs  
 16 Books and magazines  
 45 Family and friends, or  
3 Don't know  
 100

---

<sup>1</sup> \* = <0.5%

25. Imagine for a moment you had a child you couldn't provide for and there was a loving couple who wanted to adopt the child. How likely would you be to put your child up for adoption? Would you be very likely, somewhat likely, somewhat unlikely or very unlikely to put your child up for adoption?

22 Very likely  
25 Somewhat likely  
14 Somewhat unlikely  
36 Very unlikely  
3 Don't know  
100

26. How seriously, if at all, have you ever considered ADOPTING a child-- would you say very seriously, somewhat seriously, not too seriously or not at all seriously?

15 Very seriously  
21 Somewhat seriously  
17 Not too seriously  
47 Not at all seriously  
\* Don't know/Refused  
100

27. Now I'm going to read you one last set of statements. For each please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each statement. . . .

	Strongly <u>Agree</u>	Somewhat <u>Agree</u>	Somewhat <u>Disagree</u>	Strongly <u>Disagree</u>	<u>DK</u>	
a. Adoption is better than being childless, but it is not quite as good as having one's own child.	21	29	17	32	1	=100
b. Poor people today have it easy because they can get government benefits without doing much of anything in return.	31	26	18	23	2	=100
c. A woman should be allowed to have an abortion in the early months of pregnancy if she wants one.	36	18	10	34	2	=100
d. A mother who gives up her child for adoption doesn't love the child as much as a mother who raises the child herself.	7	13	25	52	3	=100

Finally, I'd like to ask you a few questions for statistical purposes only...

28. How many children, if any, do you have?

27	None
14	One
28	Two
25	Three or Four
6	Five or more
*	Don't know/Refused
100	

29. Are you a parent or guardian for any children under 18?

37 Yes  
63 No  
  \* Don't know/Refused  
100

30. How often, if at all, do you go to church, synagogue or some other place of worship -- every week, almost every week, once or twice a month, a few times a year, or never?

33 Every week  
11 Almost every week  
17 Once or twice a month  
25 A few times a year  
13 Never  
  1 Don't know/Refused  
100

31. In general, would you describe your political views as very conservative, conservative, moderate, liberal or very liberal?

17 Very conservative  
32 Conservative  
38 Moderate  
14 Liberal  
  5 Very liberal  
  4 Don't know/Refused  
100

32. Are you now married, LIVING as married, widowed, divorced, separated, or have you never been married?

52	Married
3	Living as Married
8	Widowed
13	Divorced
4	Separated
20	Never Married
<u>  </u> *	Don't know/Refused
100	

33. What is the LAST grade or class that you COMPLETED in school?

3	None, or grade 1-8
11	High school incomplete (grades 9-11)
35	High school graduate (grade 12 or GED certificate)
3	Business, technical, or vocational school AFTER high school
24	Some college, no 4-year degree
15	College graduate (B.S., B.A. or other 4-year degree)
8	Post-graduate training or professional schooling after college (e.g., toward A master's degree or Ph.D.; law or medical school)
<u>  </u> 1	Don't Know/Refused
100	

34. What is your age?

21	18-29
24	30-39
18	40-49
20	50-64
16	65+
<u>  </u> 1	Don't know/Refused
100	

35. Are you of Hispanic or Latino background, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or some other Spanish background?

5 Yes  
 94 No  
1 Don't know/Refused  
 100

36. What is your race? Are you white, black, Asian or some other race?

85 White  
 10 Black or African-American  
 1 Asian  
 3 Other or mixed race  
1 Don't know/Refused  
 100

37. Last year, that is in 1996, what was your total family income from all sources, before taxes? Just stop me when I get to the right category. . .

9 Less than \$10,000  
 12 \$10,000 to under \$20,000  
 16 \$20,000 to under \$30,000  
 24 \$30,000 to under \$50,000  
 17 \$50,000 to under \$75,000  
 7 \$75,000 to under \$100,000  
 5 \$100,000 or more  
10 Don't know/Refused  
 100

Thank you for taking the time to answer my questions. Have a nice day/evening.

**APPENDIX B:**  
**SURVEY METHODOLOGY**

These survey results are based on 1,554 interviews conducted from July 7, 1997 to August 8, 1997. The completed interviews for the survey were obtained from two different sample sources; a sample from the general population and a special black oversample. The 1554 interviews contain 154 completed interviews with black respondents from the general population sample of the survey, and 52 completed interviews with black respondents from a special high density black sample described below.

The sample for the general population portion of the survey was a proportionate stratified random digit dial (RDD) sample of telephone numbers selected proportionately from telephone exchanges in the continental United States. This sample and the high density black sample were drawn by Survey Sampling, Inc. of Westport, Connecticut following PSRA's specifications.

The high density black sample was designed to be representative of all telephone households in the continental United States, yet efficient in locating black adults. These competing goals are met by selecting random telephone numbers from exchanges such that a disproportionately large sample of telephone numbers is selected from high density black telephone exchanges and a disproportionately small sample is selected from other (lower density black) telephone exchanges. The sample becomes representative after weights are applied to eliminate the disproportionality in selection probabilities related to the density of black households in the telephone exchange.

The random digit aspect of the sample is used to avoid "listing" bias. According to the most recent estimates from the Bureau of the Census, there are 96.4 million households in the continental United States, and approximately 95% of them contain one or more telephones. Telephone directories only list about 73% of such "telephone households" and numerous studies have shown that households with unlisted telephone numbers are different in several important ways from listed households. Moreover, nearly 15% of listed telephone numbers are "discontinued" due to household mobility and directory publishing lag, and it is reasonable to assume that a roughly equal number are working residential numbers too new to be found in published directories.

In order to avoid these various sources of bias, a random digit procedure designed to provide representation of both listed and unlisted (including not-yet-listed) numbers is used. The

design of the sample ensures this representation by random generation of the last two digits of telephone numbers selected on the basis of their area code, telephone exchange (the first three digits of a seven digit telephone number), and bank number (the fourth and fifth digits).

The selection procedure produces a sample that is superior to random selection from a frame of listed telephone households, and the superiority is greater to the degree that the assignment of telephone numbers to households is made independently of their publication status in the directory. That is, if unlisted numbers tend to be found in the same telephone banks as listed numbers and if, in general, banks containing relatively few listed numbers also contain relatively few unlisted numbers, then the sample that results from the procedure described below will represent unlisted telephone households fully as well as it represents listed households. Random number selection within banks ensures that all numbers within a particular bank (whether listed or unlisted) have the same likelihood of inclusion in the sample, and that the sample so generated will represent listed and unlisted telephone households in the appropriate proportions.

The telephone exchanges were selected with probabilities proportional to their size. The first eight digits of the sampled telephone numbers (area code, telephone exchange, bank number) were selected proportionally by county and by telephone exchange within county. That is, the number of telephone numbers randomly sampled from within a given county is proportional to that county's share of telephone numbers in the U.S.

Only working banks of telephone numbers are selected. A working bank is defined as 100 contiguous telephone numbers containing three or more residential listings. By eliminating non-working banks of numbers from the sample, the likelihood that any sampled telephone number will be associated with a residence increases from only 20% (where all banks of numbers are sampled) to between 60% and 70%.

The sample was released for interviewing in replicates, which are random subsamples of the larger sample. Using replicates to control the release of sample to the field ensures that the complete call procedures are followed for the entire sample. The use of replicates also ensures that the regional distribution of numbers called is appropriate. Again, this works to increase the representativeness of the final sample.

At least 15 attempts were made to complete an interview at every sampled telephone number. The calls were staggered over times of day and days of the week to maximize the chances of contacting a qualified respondent. All interview breakoffs and refusals were re-contacted at least once in order to attempt to convert them to completed interviews. In each contacted household, interviewers first obtained information on the number of adults (18 or older) living in the household. If there were no adults in the household, the interview was terminated. A random respondent selection technique was used to identify the appropriate adult in the household to interview.

### Response Rate

Following is the full disposition of all sampled telephone numbers:

Non-sample numbers:	
Telephone number not in service	867
Business, telephone booth, fax, or modem number	<u>902</u>
	1,769
Potential non-sample numbers:	
Telephone rings, but never answered on any call	580
Households never contacted (results of final call):	
No answer	136
Answering machine	253
Busy	48
Call back another time	<u>91</u>
	528
Households that refused to cooperate:	936
Households with no eligible member:	
No one speaks English	173
Illness or hearing problem	133
No one 18 or older/DK/Ref.	163
Respondent away for duration	70
Not black (for black oversample)	428
Over quota sex	<u>2</u>
	969
Households with an eligible member:	
Incomplete interview	72
Complete interview	1,554

**TOTAL TELEPHONE NUMBERS****6,408**

Interviewers were able to conduct the respondent selection interview with a potential respondent at 62% of the sampled residential telephone numbers. Excluded from the base of “residential telephone numbers” are all non-sample numbers listed above, plus three quarters of the “potential” non-sample numbers. According to informal estimates from AT&T, only a quarter of telephone numbers that consistently ring with no answer are actually assigned to a residence.

Ninety-six percent of the respondents who were determined to be eligible as a result of the respondent selection interview went on to complete the entire interview. Thus, the overall response rate for this study is 60% (the product of the 62% completion rate for respondent selection and the 96% completion rate for the full interview among eligible respondents).

Weighting

The weighting of these survey data was accomplished through a two-stage weighting procedure. The first stage of the weighting process involved the calculation of stratum weights in the black oversample necessary to compensate for the disproportionate sample selection of telephone numbers by the black density of their telephone exchange.

In addition to the disproportionality imposed by the sample design for the black oversample, non-response in telephone interview surveys produces some known biases in survey-derived estimates because participation tends to vary for different subgroups of the population, and these subgroups are likely to vary also on questions of substantive interest. For example, men are more difficult than women to reach at home by telephone, and people with relatively low educational attainment are less likely than others to agree to participate in telephone surveys. In order to compensate for these known biases, demographic weighting was used in the second stage of the weighting process to bring the characteristics of the sample into alignment with the demographic characteristics of the population.

The demographic weighting parameters are derived from a special analysis of the most recently available Census Bureau Annual Demographic File (from the March 1996 Current Population Survey). This analysis produced population parameters for the demographic characteristics of households with adults 18 or older, which are then compared with the sample characteristics to construct sample weights. The analysis only included households in the continental United States where there is a telephone in the household. The data were weighted on the demographic distributions of age, sex, education, race, and region.

The final weights are derived using an iterative technique that simultaneously balances the distributions of all weighting parameters and takes into account the first stage weight for respondents from the black oversample. After an optimum sample balancing solution is reached, the weights were constrained to fall within the range of .36 to 1.81. This constraint is useful to ensure that individual respondents do not exert an inordinate effect on the survey's overall results.

### Statistical Tests

PSRA calculated the effects of the sample weights on the statistical efficiency of the sample design, so that an adjustment can be incorporated into tests of statistical significance when using these data. This so-called "design effect" or "deff" represents the loss in statistical efficiency that results from systematically undersampling (through sample design and non-response) parts of the population of interest.

The square root of the design effect should be multiplied by the standard error of a statistic in computing tests of statistical significance. Thus the formula for computing the 95% confidence interval around a percentage is:

$$1.96 * (\text{sqrt of the design effect}) * \text{sqrt of } [(p)(1-p)/\text{unweighted n}]$$

The square root of the design effect for this sample is 1.06. Using this formula, we calculate the 95% confidence interval for results expressed as percentages in this study as plus or minus 3 percentage points for results near 50% based on the total sample. Results based on

smaller subgroups are subject to larger margins of sampling error. The square root of the design effect for the subsample of blacks is 1.17; for the subsample of whites is 1.04. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 8 percentage points for results based on the subsample of 206 blacks; plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on the subsample of 1221 whites. The square root of the design effect for the subsample of men is 1.05; for the subsample of women is 1.06. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 4 percentage points for results based on the subsample of 621 men; plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on the subsample of 933 women.

The formula for computing the 95% confidence interval around a difference between percentages is:

$$1.96 * \text{sqrt of } [(deff \text{ for group 1} * (p1)(1-p1)/\text{unweighted n1}) + (deff \text{ for group 2} * (p2)(1-p2)/\text{unweighted n2})]$$

The above formulas may be used to calculate the confidence interval around any percentage or any difference between percentages for the results reported.

### Sampling Tolerance

In interpreting survey results, one must keep in mind that all sample surveys are subject to sampling error, that is, the extent to which the results may differ from what would be obtained if the whole population had been interviewed. The size of such sampling error depends largely on the number of completed interviews in the sample under consideration.

The following tables may be used in estimating the sampling error of any percentage in this report. The tables may be interpreted as indicating the range (plus or minus the figure shown) within which the results of repeated sampling in the same time period could be expected to vary, 95% of the time, assuming the same sampling procedures, the same interviewers, and the same questionnaire.

Table 1 shows how much allowance should be made for the sampling error of a percentage. The table would be used in the following manner. If a reported percentage is 33 for a group that includes 600 respondents, the appropriate row in the table would be the row that says "percentages near 30" and the appropriate column would be the one labeled "600". The number that appears at the intersection of that row and that column (4) indicates that the 33% is subject to a sampling error of plus or minus 4 percentage points. In other words, 95 out of 100 times, the true value of this percentage in the population is between 29 and 37 percentage points.

In comparing the survey results in two samples, for example, men and women, the question arises as to how large the difference between them must be in order to be reasonably sure that it reflects a real difference in the population under study. Tables 2 and 3 give the size of the difference necessary to be confident that a real difference exists. Table 2 is for percentages near 20 or 80 and Table 3 is for percentages near 50. For percentages in between, the sampling error is between those shown in the two tables.

Here is an example of how the tables would be used. Say that 50% of men respond a certain way to a question and 40% of women respond in the same way, resulting in a difference of 10%. The question for the analyst becomes "Can one say with confidence that the 10-point difference reflects a real difference between men and women in the population under study?" The sample contains 621 men and 933 women and the percentages in question are around 50 so we would use Table 3. Looking at the column headed 900 and the row headed 600 we see that the number there is 6 which means that we would need to see at least a six percentage point difference in order to say with 95 percentage confidence that the difference is real. Because we have a 10 point difference we can be confident that a difference truly exists between men and women on this question.

Table 1  
Recommended Allowances for Sampling Error of a **Percentage**

In Percentage Points (at 95 in 100 confidence level)

<u>Sample size</u>	<u>Percentages near</u>				
	50	60	70	80	90
		40	30	20	10
1200	3	3	3	2	2
1000	3	3	3	3	2
900	3	3	3	3	2
750	4	4	3	3	2
700	4	4	4	3	2
600	4	4	4	3	3
500	5	5	4	4	3
400	5	5	5	4	3
300	6	6	6	5	4
250	7	6	6	5	4
200	7	7	7	6	4
150	9	8	8	7	5
100	10	10	10	8	6
50	15	14	14	12	9

Table 2  
Recommended Allowances for Sampling Error of a **Difference**

Comparing Two Groups For Percentages Near **80 or 20**  
In Percentage Points (at 95 in 100 confidence level)

	<u>Sample size</u>												
	1200	1000	900	600	500	400	300	250	200	150	100	50	
<u>Sample size</u>													
1200	3												
1000	4	4											
900	4	4	4										
600	4	4	4	5									
500	4	5	5	5	5								
400	5	5	5	5	6	6							
300	5	5	6	6	6	6	7						
250	6	6	6	6	6	7	7	7					
200	6	6	7	7	7	7	8	8	8				
150	7	7	7	8	8	8	8	9	9	10			
100	9	9	9	9	9	9	10	10	10	11	12		
50	12	12	12	12	12	13	13	13	13	14	14	17	

Table 3  
Recommended Allowances for Sampling Error of a **Difference**

Comparing Two Groups For Percentages Near **50**  
In Percentage Points (at 95 in 100 confidence level)

<u>Sample size</u>	<u>Sample size</u>											
	1200	1000	900	600	500	400	300	250	200	150	100	50
1200	4											
1000	4	5										
900	5	5	5									
600	5	5	5	6								
500	6	6	6	6	7							
400	6	6	6	7	7	7						
300	7	7	7	7	8	8	9					
250	7	7	7	8	8	8	9	9				
200	8	8	8	9	9	9	10	10	10			
150	9	9	9	10	10	10	10	11	11	12		
100	11	11	11	11	11	12	12	12	13	13	15	
50	15	15	15	15	15	16	16	16	16	17	18	21