

# KAISER PUBLIC OPINION SPOTLIGHT

*Kaiser Public Opinion Spotlights provide in-depth analysis of public opinion on a variety of health care and health policy topics. Each Spotlight uses public opinion data from Kaiser surveys and other sources to examine current views and trends. Spotlights are prepared by Dr. Mollyann Brodie, Vice President and Director, Public Opinion and Media Research, Elizabeth Hamel, and Erin Weltzien.*

*Updated: November 2005*

## **World AIDS Day 2005: The HIV/AIDS Epidemic in the United States and U.S. Government Spending**

With a theme of "Keep the Promise", this year's World AIDS Day on December 1, 2005 seeks to focus public attention on fulfilling commitments in the fight against HIV/AIDS, including government commitments. The Kaiser Family Foundation has tracked public concern about HIV/AIDS, as well as views on government spending and progress on HIV/AIDS, for over a decade. As part of this effort, this Kaiser Public Opinion Spotlight presents new 2005 data on key trend questions in this area.

In general, the public recognizes HIV as a problem facing the country and is supportive of federal spending to fight the epidemic. However, a few recent trends indicate that their sense of urgency may be somewhat muted compared with what it has been at certain points in the past. This is perhaps not surprising given the ongoing war, recent natural disasters, and other problems facing the country, and we will continue to track these questions over time to determine whether these recent trends will continue, level off, or change direction.

In 2005, 16% of the public name HIV/AIDS as the most urgent health problem facing the nation, a share that declined dramatically between 1995 and 2002, but that has remained relatively stable since then. The public is more likely to say that the United States is making progress on the problem of HIV/AIDS in the country (41%) than losing ground (24%) or staying about the same (26%), although the share saying the U.S. is making progress declined somewhat between 2004 and 2005, while the share saying the problem is about the same reached its highest level since 1995.

The public is generally supportive of federal spending on HIV/AIDS, with the largest share (42%) saying the federal government spends too little money on HIV/AIDS, and one-third (33%) saying spending is about right; fewer than one in ten (9%) say the government spends too much on HIV/AIDS. Similarly, when asked about federal spending on AIDS compared with other health problems such as heart disease and cancer, the public is most likely to say spending on HIV/AIDS is about right (43%) comparatively, followed by 29% who say spending on HIV/AIDS is too low; only a small share (13%) say such spending is too high. On both of these questions, the share saying spending on HIV/AIDS is too low declined somewhat between 2004 and 2005.

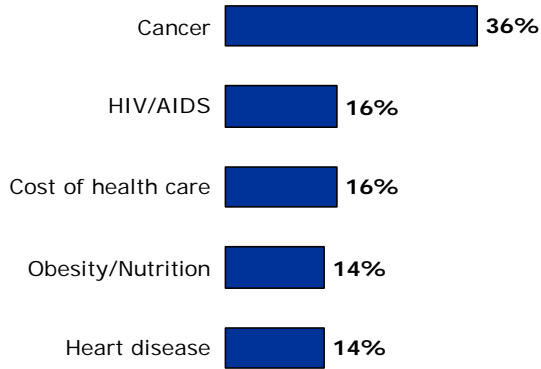
In 2005, the public was fairly split about whether spending more money on HIV/AIDS prevention in the United States would lead to meaningful progress in slowing the epidemic (44%) or wouldn't make much difference (48%). This is somewhat of a change from 2004, when a majority (57%) believed more spending on HIV/AIDS prevention would lead to meaningful progress, and about one-third (34%) believed it would not make much difference.

## 1. HIV/AIDS As Most Urgent Health Problem Facing The Nation

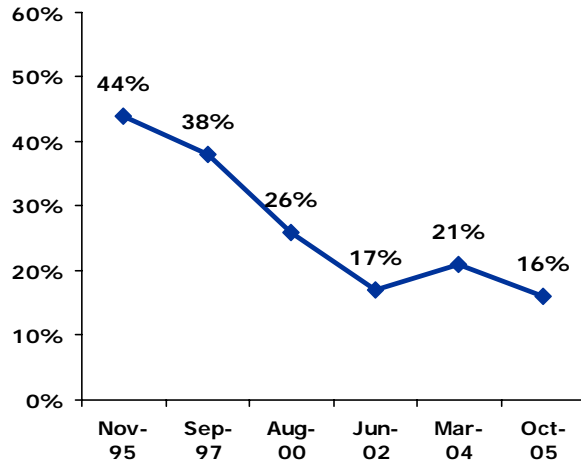
In 2005, in an open-ended question, 16% of the public names HIV/AIDS as the most urgent health problem facing the nation, ranking second behind cancer (36%), and tied with health care costs (16%). The share of the public naming HIV/AIDS as the most urgent health problem facing the nation declined dramatically between 1995 and 2002, and has remained relatively stable since then.

### HIV/AIDS As Most Urgent Health Problem Facing The Nation

What do you think is the most urgent health problem facing this nation today? (Oct 2005)  
(Open-ended – top 5 responses shown)\*



Percent naming HIV/AIDS as the most urgent health problem facing the nation...



\*Note: Adds to more than 100% because of multiple responses

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Surveys

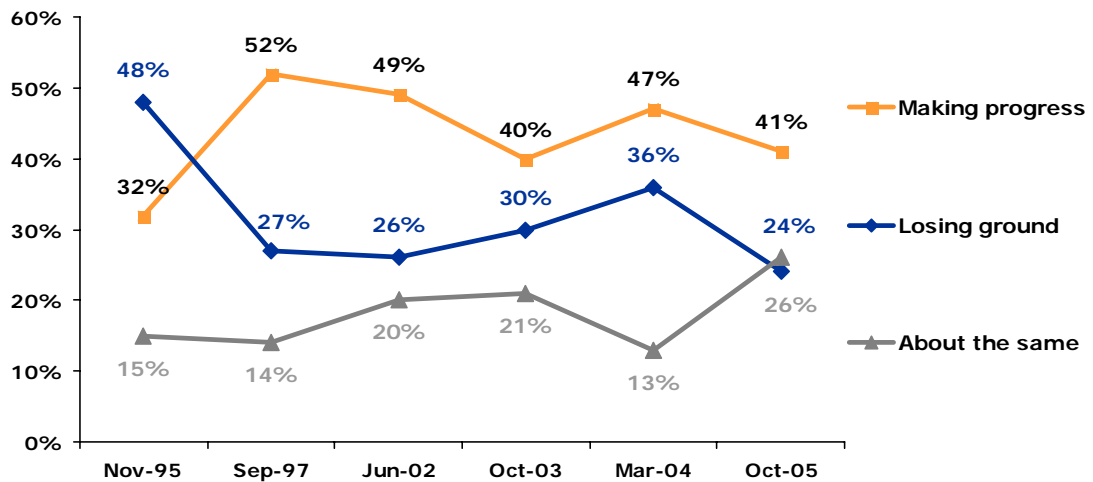
## 2. Perceived Progress on HIV/AIDS Epidemic

Since 1997, the public has been more likely to say that the United States is making progress than losing ground on the problem of HIV/AIDS. In 2005, about four in ten people (41%) say the United States is making progress on the problem of HIV/AIDS, while about one-quarter say it is losing ground (24%) or the problem is about the same (26%).

The share of the public saying the U.S. is making progress of HIV/AIDS declined somewhat between 2004 and 2005, and is now back around the level that was seen in 2003. At the same time, the share of the public saying the problem is about the same reached its highest level since 1995.

### Perceived Progress on HIV/AIDS Epidemic

Thinking about the way the problem of HIV/AIDS affects the United States today, do you think the problem is about the same as it has been, that the U.S. today is making progress in this area, or that the U.S. today is losing ground?



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Surveys

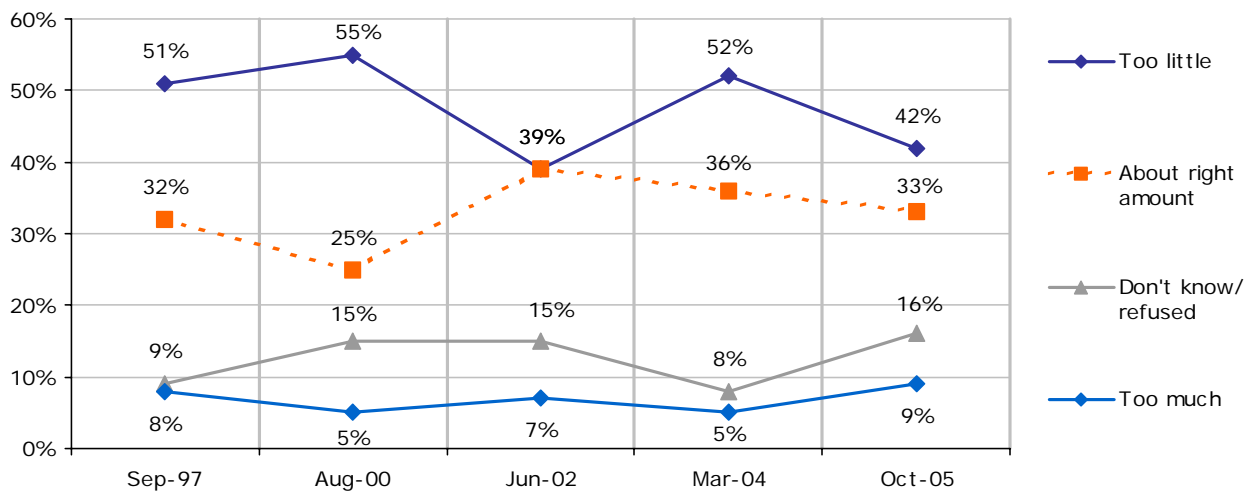
### **3. Amount of Federal Government Spending on HIV/AIDS**

The public is generally supportive of federal spending on HIV/AIDS, with the largest share (42%) saying the federal government spends too little money on HIV/AIDS, and one-third (33%) saying spending is about right; fewer than one in ten (9%) say the government spends too much on HIV/AIDS.

The four in ten who say the government spends too little on HIV/AIDS represents a decline from most previous years, though it is about the same share who said this in 2002 (39%).

#### **Amount of Federal Government Spending on HIV/AIDS**

In general, do you think the federal government spends too much money on HIV/AIDS, too little money, or about the right amount?



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Surveys

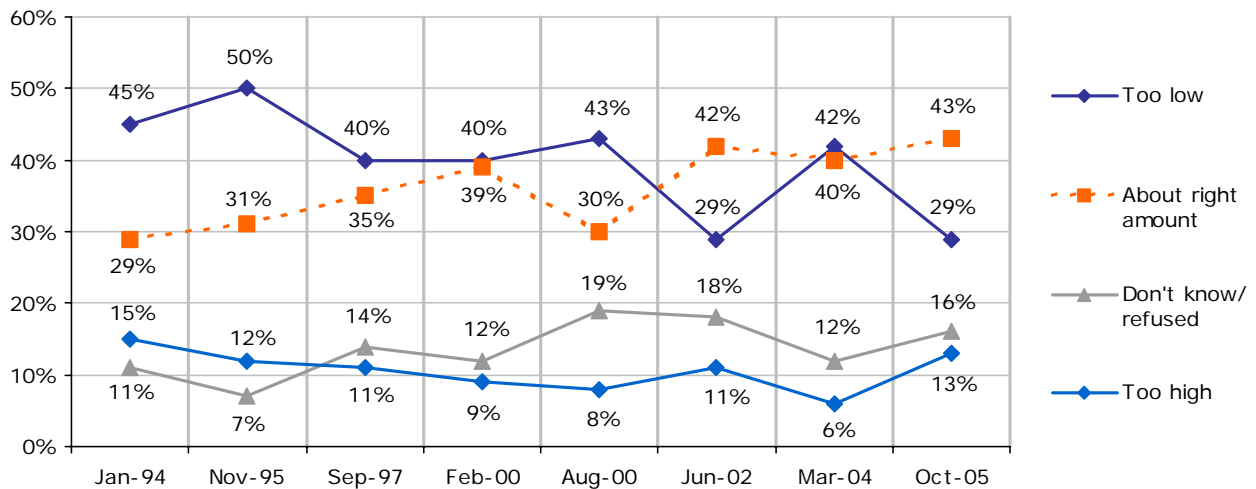
#### **4. Amount of Federal Government Spending on HIV/AIDS Compared with Other Health Problems**

When the question is asked about federal spending on HIV/AIDS compared with other health problems such as heart disease and cancer, the public is again supportive, with most either saying spending on HIV/AIDS is about right (43%) or too low (29%); only a small shares (13%) say such spending is too high when compared to other health problems.

However, the public has been somewhat divided on whether AIDS spending is too little or about right. Historically, about four in ten people have said HIV/AIDS spending is too low compared with spending on other health problems, though in 2002 and 2005, fewer (29%) said too little is spent on HIV/AIDS. Over time, the percent saying AIDS spending is about right in relation to other health problems has increased somewhat from 29% in 1994 to about four in ten (43%) in 2005.

#### **Amount of Federal Government Spending on HIV/AIDS Compared with Other Health Problems**

Compared with the amount of money the federal government spends on other health problems, such as heart disease and cancer, do you think federal spending on HIV/AIDS is too high, too low, or about right?



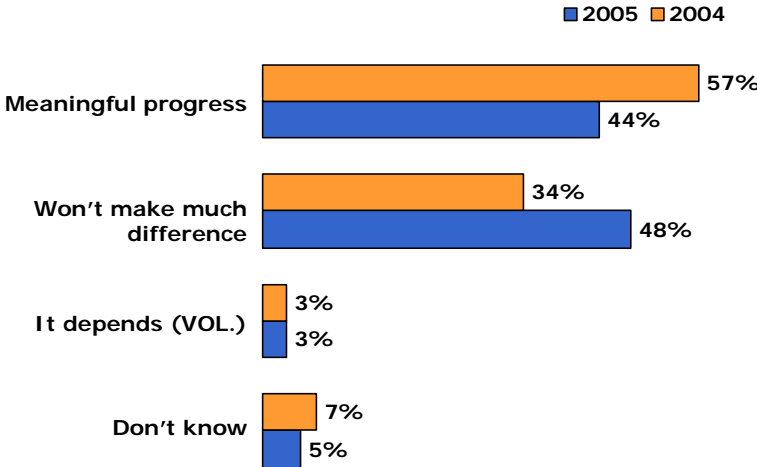
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Surveys; January 1994 data from NBC News/Wall Street Journal

**5. Will Spending on HIV/AIDS Prevention in The United States Lead to Progress?**

In 2005, the public was fairly split about whether spending more money on HIV/AIDS prevention in the United States would lead to meaningful progress in slowing the epidemic (44%) or wouldn't make much difference (48%). This is somewhat of a change from 2004, when a majority (57%) believed more spending on HIV/AIDS prevention would lead to meaningful progress, and about one-third (34%) believed it would not make much difference.

**Will Spending on HIV/AIDS Prevention in The United States Lead to Progress?**

In general, do you think that spending more money on HIV/AIDS prevention in the United States will lead to meaningful progress in slowing the epidemic, or that spending more money won't make much difference?



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Health Poll Report* (Oct 2005); Kaiser Family Foundation *Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS* (Conducted March 15 – May 11, 2004)