

APPENDIX B: CREATING AGGREGATE PROBLEM MEASURES

Throughout this report, we refer to several aggregate measures of problems facing the population. This Appendix explains how and why individual measures were aggregated into categories in both the current survey and our 2006 baseline survey.

We grouped these questions by broad areas that are often used to measure the status of people's personal situations and well-being. Questions were grouped into categories that made intuitive sense and that corresponded closely with the exact answers from the respondent.

To confirm the validity of the categories, we ran factor analysis and scale reliability analysis with each of the individual items that make up the aggregate measures. This analysis confirmed that the categories we created were generally cohesive (i.e., items that were placed in the same aggregate measure loaded on the same factor; Cronbach's Alpha values were reasonably high; and removing individual items did not increase Alpha values).

The broad categories of problems, specific problems measured, and specific questions included are shown below.

Area	Problems measured	Questions included
Employment	No job or inadequate wages	Self-reported employment status and whether current job pays enough to cover basic expenses
Physical health	Physical health challenges	Self-reported health status and whether respondent has ever been diagnosed with a chronic condition or disability
Mental health	Mental health challenges	Self-reported mental health status, whether respondent has been diagnosed with a serious mental illness or is taking medication for mental health
Health care access	Health care coverage and access problems	How well health needs are being met, ease of travel to medical care, usual source of care, uninsured status, whether respondent has skipped or postponed care and/or had problems paying medical bills in past 6 months
Children in household	Child in home troubled, ill, or not getting needed care	How well children's health needs are being met, whether any child in home is uninsured, has a chronic condition or disability, or didn't get needed care in past 6 months

Note that a few questions that were included in the scales in the 2006 survey report were not repeated in the 2008 survey. All trends to 2006 reported in this document are based on aggregate scales that include *only* the questions that were asked in both 2006 and 2008 (so the aggregate mental health and children in household scales reported for 2006 in this document will not match up exactly to the 2006 report).