

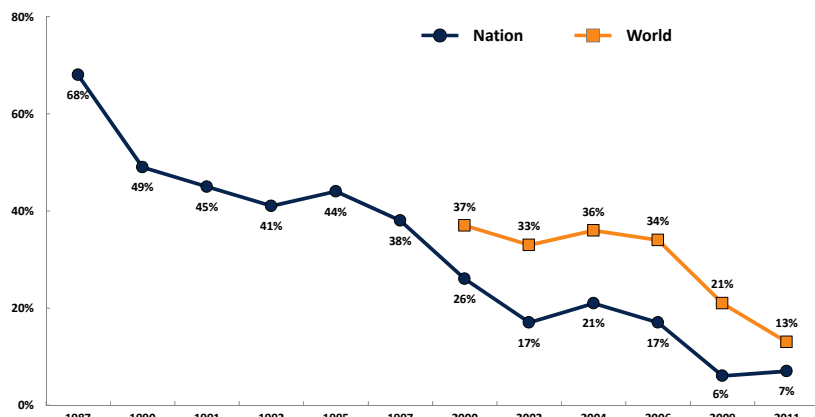
A BRIEF LOOK AT AMERICANS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE GLOBAL HIV/AIDS EPIDEMIC

In this 30th year of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the Kaiser Family Foundation recently released a national survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS which focused mainly on the epidemic within the United States¹. This Data Note, using data from the same survey and trends from previous Kaiser surveys, takes a different focus and examines a few trends in the public's perception of HIV/AIDS as a *global* problem. Today, about 34 million people are living with HIV/AIDS around the world². Given the United States' role as a leader in combating HIV/AIDS around the world, tracking Americans' awareness and understanding of the global HIV/AIDS epidemic provides important feedback for policymakers, the media, non-governmental organizations, and other major players in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Overall, survey trends show that Americans view HIV/AIDS as a more pressing health problem for the world than for the U.S., although the perceived sense of urgency has been on the decline for both the global and domestic epidemics. The sense of urgency about the global HIV/AIDS epidemic has declined steeply in the past five years; about one third of Americans ranked it as the world's most urgent health issue from 2000 through 2006, a share that fell to 21 percent in 2009 and 13 percent today. Still, HIV/AIDS is ranked by Americans as the second most urgent health problem facing the world, second only to the share who named cancer (30 percent), which has ranked consistently at the top of the list since 2002. By contrast, Americans rank HIV/AIDS seventh on the list of the nation's most urgent health problems (mentioned by 7 percent in the most recent survey).

Share Naming HIV/AIDS as Most Urgent Health Problem Declines Over Time

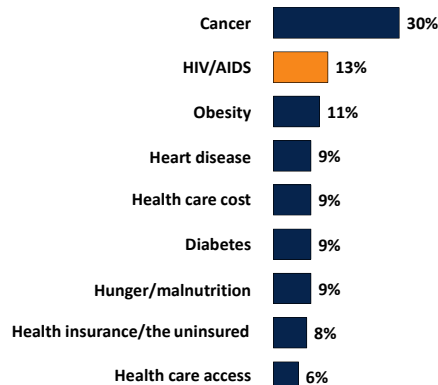
Percent who name HIV/AIDS as the most urgent health problem facing the nation/world today: (open-ended, multiple responses allowed)



Note: Asked of separate half-samples.
Source: Gallup surveys (1987-1992); Kaiser Family Foundation surveys (1995-2011)

Perception of Most Urgent Health Problem Facing the World

What do you think is the most urgent health problem facing the world today? (open-ended, multiple responses allowed)



Note: Responses less than 4 percent not shown. Total exceeds 100% due to multiple responses. Asked of half-samples.
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation 2011 Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS (conducted April 4 – May 1, 2011)

¹ Survey report and topline can be found at <http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/8186.cfm>.

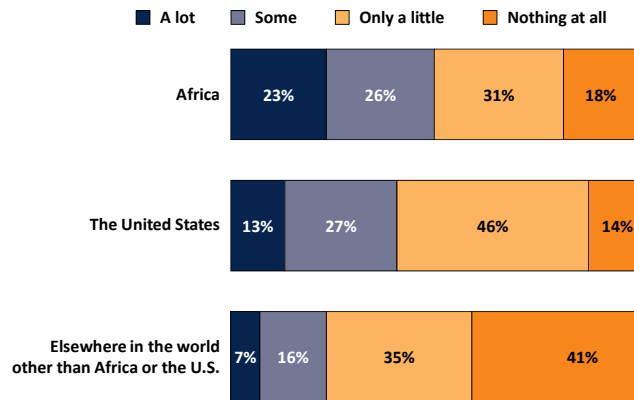
² UNAIDS, AIDS at 30: Nations at the crossroads, June 2011. http://www.unaids.org/en/resources/unaidspublications/2011/#c_60139

The visibility of the problem of AIDS in Africa, as reported by the American public, is higher than the visibility of the domestic U.S. epidemic or the epidemic in other parts of the world. Nearly half of Americans (49 percent) report having read, seen, or heard “a lot” or “some” about HIV/AIDS in Africa in the past year, compared to four in ten who report having read, seen, or heard the same amount about HIV/AIDS in the U.S., and less than a quarter (23 percent) who say the same about HIV/AIDS elsewhere in the world. Forty-one percent say they have heard nothing at all about HIV/AIDS outside of Africa and the U.S. in the past year. Similar to a trend observed with the domestic epidemic, visibility of the problem of HIV/AIDS in Africa has declined in recent years, from 71 percent reporting hearing “a lot” or “some” in 2004 to 49 percent today.

At the same time, despite this declining sense of urgency and visibility, there has also been an increasing sense among Americans that the world is making strides in the fight against HIV/AIDS. In surveys conducted from 2002 through 2006, pluralities said the world was losing ground when it came to HIV/AIDS. Since then, the share of Americans who say the world is making progress on the disease has risen, and in 2011 about half the public feels that progress is being made, while only about a quarter (26 percent) say the world is losing ground. This increased sense of progress may be linked in part to the declining sense of urgency mentioned above—as more people see the world as making progress in fighting the disease, they are less likely to view it as an urgent health problem.

More Visibility of the Problem of AIDS in Africa

During the last year, how much, if anything, have you personally seen, heard, or read about the problem of AIDS in each area?



Note: Don't know/Refused responses not shown.
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation 2011 Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS (conducted April 4 – May 1, 2011)

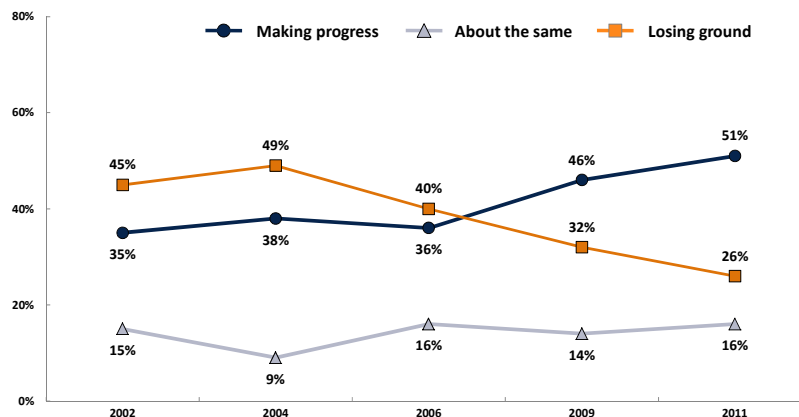
Table 1: Visibility of AIDS in Africa Over Time

Percent who say they have seen, heard, or read “a lot” or “some” about AIDS in Africa in the last year

	A lot	Some	A lot/Some (NET)
2011	23%	26%	49%
2009	26	29	55
2004	51	20	71

Trend in Perceptions of World Progress on HIV/AIDS

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



Note: Asked of half sample. Don't know/Refused responses not shown.
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation surveys

In general, there are little differences in knowledge and perceptions of the global HIV epidemic based on individual demographic characteristics. A few differences are noteworthy, however. People under the age of 30 are more likely than those 30 or over to name HIV/AIDS as the world's most urgent health issue (18 percent versus 11 percent), and blacks are more likely than whites to say the same (19 percent versus 11 percent). Blacks are also more likely than other groups to report hearing "a lot" or "some" about HIV/AIDS in Africa (59 percent versus 48 percent of whites and 44 percent of Latinos). People with some college education and those who have graduated from college are more likely to report hearing about AIDS in Africa than those with no college education (56 percent, 58 percent, and 40 percent respectively), and college graduates are more likely than those with no college degree to feel the world is making progress in fighting HIV (61 percent versus 48 percent).

Table 2: Perceptions Of Global HIV Among Specific Demographic Groups								
	By Race/Ethnicity			By Education			By Age	
	Black	Latino	White	No College	Some College	College Grad	18-29	30+
Percent who name HIV/AIDS as the world's most urgent health problem	19% ^a	14%	11%	13%	14%	12%	18% ^f	11%
Percent who say the world is...								
...making progress on HIV/AIDS	47	50	52	48	48	61 ^{c,d}	46	53
...staying about the same	15	11	18	16	19 ^e	12	20	14
...losing ground on HIV/AIDS	28	33 ^a	23	30	25	20	30	25
Percent who say they have heard "a lot" or "some" in the past year about AIDS in...								
Africa	59 ^{a,b}	44	48	40	56 ^c	58 ^c	48	49
U.S.	54 ^{a,b}	43	37	39	41	41	43	39
Elsewhere	25 ^a	30 ^a	20	23	20	24	20	23
^a = statistically significant from whites (p<.05); ^b = statistically significant from Latinos (p<.05); ^c = statistically significant from no college (p<.05); ^d = statistically significant from some college (p<.05); ^e = statistically significant from college graduate (p<.05); ^f = statistically significant from over 30 (p<.05)								

This publication (#8211) is available on the Kaiser Family Foundation's website at www.kff.org.