

Child Survival

New Survey Shows that Americans Cannot Identify Top Killers of Children Under Five



Child Survival

October 10, 2007 – A new poll, sponsored by the US Coalition for Child Survival, was conducted by Lake Research Partners August 16-20, 2007 among 1,025 U.S. adults nationwide. The survey explored Americans' attitudes toward child survival issues. According to the poll results, a majority of Americans say Congress should be doing more to prevent unnecessary deaths among children in the world's poorest countries, citing child survival as an important international aid priority.

The US Coalition for Child Survival (USCCS) is a collaboration of more than 30 organizations and individuals working together to strengthen the United States' commitment to improving the survival and health of children under age five in developing countries.

Executive summary, key findings, a chart pack, and survey methodology can be found on the following pages.

Situation

Nearly 10 million children are dying each year from preventable, treatable causes like neonatal complications, diarrhea, pneumonia, and measles. Close to 4 million of these children are babies in their first month of life. Malnutrition and preventable, treatable diseases like pneumonia and diarrhea actually cause the most deaths among children under five years of age – almost 27,000 children die each day.

The tools and the knowledge we have for child survival are not being implemented at a rate that will keep mortality rates on the decline. In fact, the rate of decline for child mortality is not speeding up, but rather slowing down. In addition, U.S. government support for cost-effective, life-saving interventions has also been stagnant over the past decade.

However, if child survival receives proper funding, close to 6 million young lives could be saved with existing, affordable measures.

Purpose of Survey

The purpose of this poll was to find out:

1. the awareness level among Americans as to the top threats to child survival;
2. whether Americans felt child survival is an important issue for the U.S. government to address;
3. Americans' attitudes toward increased foreign aid funding to support child survival.

Toplines

- 60 percent of Americans are under the misperception that HIV/AIDS and malaria are the top threats to child survival.
- Almost all Americans (95 percent) believe the issue of child survival¹ is an important problem facing the world today.
- 93 percent of Americans feel child survival should be a priority.
- 73 percent say knowing how to prevent the most common causes of deaths is a major reason the U.S. should be doing more to save lives.
- A large majority of Americans (84 percent) support increasing funding to reduce the top preventable causes of death among children.
- Eight in ten Americans (81 percent) support the "U.S. Commitment to Global Child Survival Act," even when told it would cost 7 dollars per American per year.

¹ A definition of "child survival" was read to respondents prior to the questions: "Now I want to turn to a different topic. Every year, more than 10 million children in the world's poorest countries die before they reach age five. Efforts to fight this are often called "child survival" efforts and I want to ask you some questions about it."

Key Findings

- **While HIV/AIDS and malaria are serious threats to child survival in developing countries, there is a misperception that they are the leading killers of children under five.** In reality, neonatal complications, pneumonia, malnutrition and diarrhea are the top determinants of death among children under five². When given a list of options (diarrhea, complications from birth, malaria, pneumonia, HIV/AIDS, and measles), a plurality of respondents (42 percent) believe HIV/AIDS causes the most deaths among children. Another 18 percent say malaria causes the most deaths. (See Figure 1.) This belief is consistent across demographic groups, including gender, age, income, and region. Those with a college degree are less likely than others to say HIV/AIDS and malaria, although still 53 percent say these diseases are most threatening.

- **Almost all Americans (95 percent) believe the issue of child survival³ is an important problem facing the world today.** In a 2001 survey conducted by Lake Research Partners, this proportion was identical (95 percent). (See Figure 2.) A majority of all respondents consider child survival important including Americans across regional divides, income and education levels, and whether there is a child in the household. Democrats and Republicans find common ground on the issue with 97 percent of Democrats and 94 percent of Republicans citing child survival as important. Women, Democrats and 18 to 24 year olds are most likely to find this issue *very* important (84 percent, 87 percent and 88 percent, respectively).

- **Additionally, 93 percent of Americans feel child survival should be a priority in terms of U.S. international aid priorities; 64 percent say it should be a *very* important priority.** The proportion of those saying it is *very* important is up six points (58 percent) from 2001. (See Figure 3.) Support for child survival as an international aid priority crosses party lines, with 97 percent of Democrats and 88 percent of Republicans saying it should be important. Women are more likely than men to say it is *very* important (70 percent vs. 57 percent).

² Bryce J., Black R., Walker N. et al. 2005a. "Can the world afford to save the lives of 6 million children each year?" *Lancet* 365: 2193-2199.

³ A definition of "child survival" was read to respondents prior to the questions: "Now I want to turn to a different topic... Every year, more than 10 million children in the world's poorest countries die before they reach age five. Efforts to fight this are often called "child survival" efforts and I want to ask you some questions about it."

- **Seventy-three percent say knowing how to prevent the most common causes of deaths is a major reason the U.S. should be doing more to save lives.** Seventeen percent say it is a minor reason, and 7 percent say it is *not* a reason for the U.S. to do more. (See Figure 4.) Democrats are more likely than Republicans to say it is a major reason to do more (81 percent vs. 64 percent).
- **A large majority of Americans (84 percent) support increasing funding to reduce the top preventable causes of death among children.** Sixty percent say they *strongly* support more funds allotted to child survival. (See Figure 5.) Support is strong across all demographic groups, particularly among women (89 percent), African Americans and Latinos (93 percent of each), and parents of children under 18 (91 percent).
- **Eight in ten Americans (81 percent) support the “U.S. Commitment to Global Child Survival Act,” even when told it would cost 7 dollars per American per year.** (See Figure 6.) Again, support crosses demographic segments of the population including gender, age, race, income, education, and regions. Majorities of Republicans and Democrats also say they support this act (74 percent and 88 percent, respectively).

Conclusion

This new survey shows the American public continues to support U.S. investments in saving the lives of children in developing countries. They lack knowledge that most children’s deaths are from treatable, preventable causes that require basic solutions we already have. Already having the know-how to save children’s lives is a compelling reason among the public for the U.S. to do more for developing countries. Finally, Americans support Congressional action to increase funding, even when informed of the cost.

Figure 1: HIV/AIDS and Malaria Are Thought to Cause the Most Deaths Among Children in the Poorest Countries

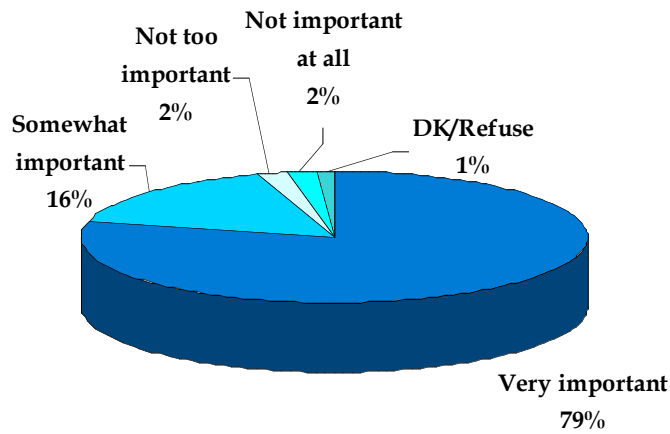
Q. Which of the following diseases or health conditions do you think causes the MOST deaths among children in the world's poorest countries?

	Total	Less than HS	HS Grad	Some College	College Grad
HIV/AIDS	42%	47%	51%	44%	33%
Malaria	18%	17%	19%	18%	20%
Diarrhea	17%	5%	7%	19%	26%
Complications during birth	9%	14%	12%	5%	6%
Pneumonia	4%	3%	5%	5%	4%
Measles	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%

Figure 2: Importance of Child Survival Issue

Q. How important is the issue of child survival as a problem facing the world today? Would you say it is a very important problem, a somewhat important problem, not too important or not important at all?

2007 Survey Results



2001 Survey Results

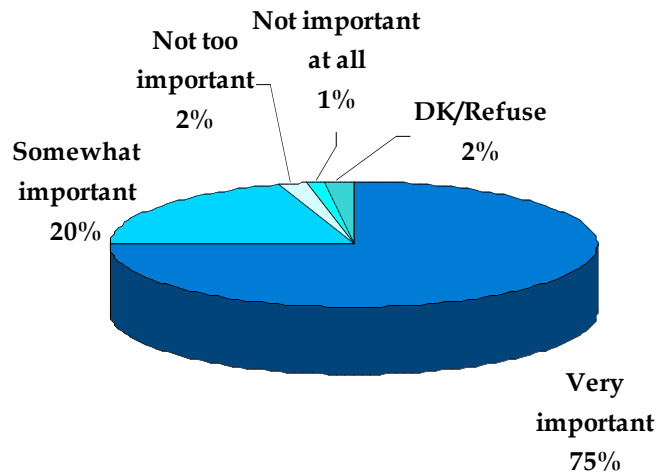
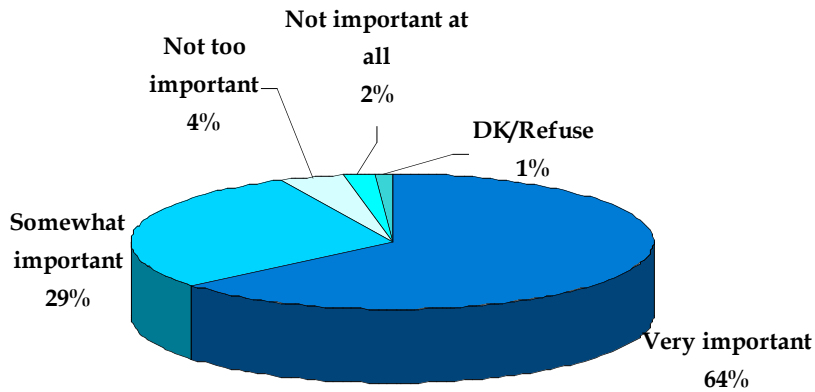


Figure 3: Importance of Child Survival as International Aid Priority

Q. In your opinion, how important should child survival be in terms of the United States' international aid priorities? Should it be a VERY important international aid priority, somewhat important, not too important, or not important at all (or are you unsure/don't know)?

2007 Survey Results



2001 Survey Results

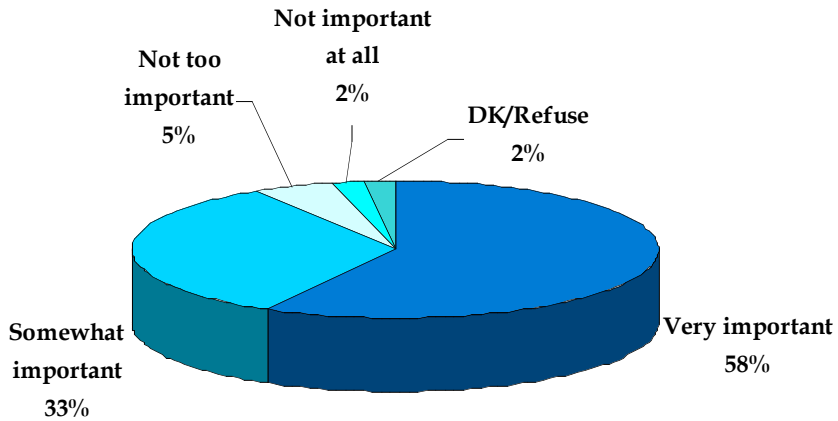


Figure 4: Knowing How to Prevent the Most Common Deaths Is a Major Reason to Do More

Q. Malnutrition and preventable, treatable diseases like diarrhea and pneumonia actually cause the most deaths among these children – about 30,000 child deaths every day. Some say that because we already know how to prevent these unnecessary deaths, we should be doing more to save lives. In your opinion, is this a major reason that the U.S. should do more, a minor reason to do more, or not a reason at all to do more?

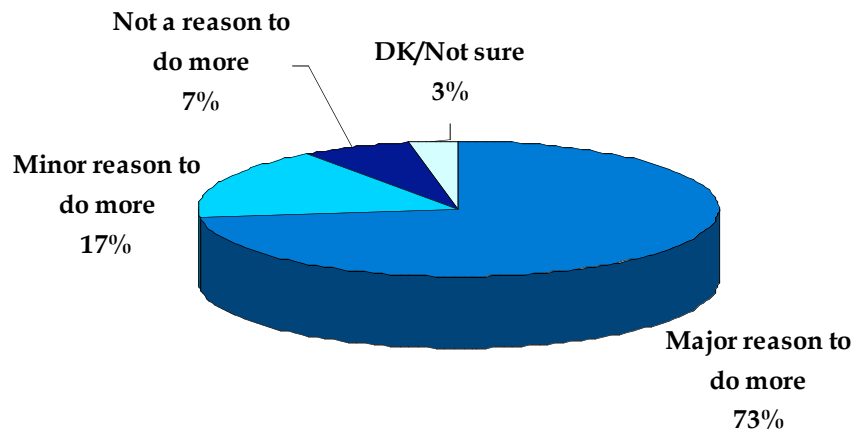


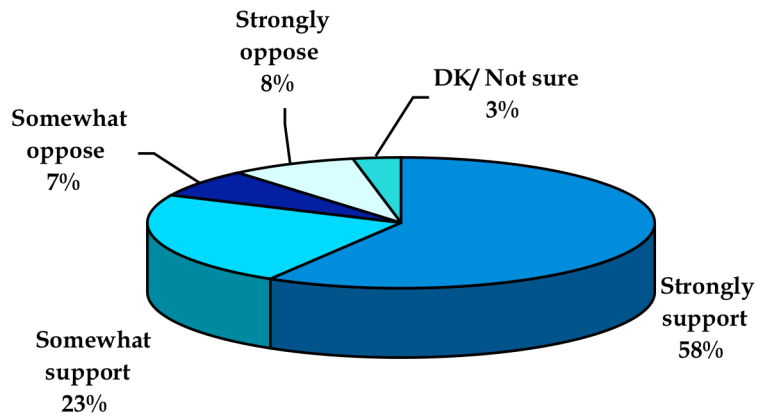
Figure 5: Americans Support Congress Providing More Funding to Reduce Top Preventable Causes of Death Among Children

Q. Would you support or oppose the U.S. Congress providing more funding to reduce the top preventable causes of death among children? Is that strongly or somewhat support or oppose?

	Support (Total)	Strongly Support	Somewhat Support
<i>Total</i>	84%	60%	24%
Sex			
Male	80%	55%	25%
Female	89%	65%	24%
Race			
White	82%	55%	27%
African American	93%	81%	12%
Latino	93%	71%	22%
Parental status			
Parent of child <18	91%	64%	27%
No children <18	81%	58%	23%

Figure 6: Support for the “U.S. Commitment to Global Child Survival Act” When Told Cost

Q. This fall the U.S. Congress will vote on the *U.S. Commitment to Global Child Survival Act*. This bill would raise spending on child survival programs in the world’s poorest countries to \$1.6 billion by the year 2012. This is about \$7 per American per year, or about the cost to see a movie. The bill would also push for more coordination among child survival efforts and more accountability from those receiving U.S. assistance. Would you want your member of Congress to support or oppose this bill? Is that strongly or somewhat support or oppose?



The data in this report are from a telephone omnibus survey, which was conducted among a national RDD probability sample of 1,025 adults nationwide from August 17 through 20, 2007. The data were weighted slightly by gender, age, race, and geographic region to reflect their proper proportions according to the U.S. Census. The survey includes 24 percent Republicans, 38 percent Independents and 33 percent Democrats.

In interpreting survey results, all probability sample surveys are subject to possible sampling error; that is, the results of a survey may differ from those which would be obtained if the entire population were interviewed. The size of the sampling error depends upon the total number of respondents in the survey and the percentage distribution of responses to a particular question. The margin of sampling error for the total survey results is ± 3.1 percentage points. When looking at smaller subgroups within the sample, such as the state oversamples and cross-tabulations, the margin of error will be greater. The table below represents the estimated sampling error for different percentage distributions of responses based on sample size.

**Margin of Sampling Error
for Different Percentage Distributions and Different Sample Sizes
(95% confidence)**

	PERCENTAGES NEAR								
SAMPLE SIZE NEAR	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%
1,000	1.9	2.5	2.8	3.0	3.1	3.0	2.8	2.5	1.9
800	2.1	2.8	3.2	3.4	3.5	3.4	3.2	2.8	2.1
600	2.4	3.2	3.7	3.9	4.0	3.9	3.7	3.2	2.4
400	2.9	3.9	4.5	4.8	4.9	4.8	4.5	3.9	2.9
200	4.2	5.5	6.4	6.8	6.9	6.8	6.4	5.5	4.2
100	5.9	7.8	9.0	9.6	9.7	9.6	9.0	7.8	5.9

Photo credits for cover: Save the Children