

## Attitudes and Behavior

- The attitudes of the American public have been remarkably stable over the past three decades. The percentage of Americans who think life is exciting, for example, has grown only slightly—to 51 percent—despite dramatic change in lifestyles and technology.
- When asked how their family’s income ranks relative to the incomes of other families, fewer Americans place themselves in the middle. The percentage of those who say their incomes are in the middle fell from 57 to 47 percent between 1972 and 2004.
- Times have changed. In 1977, two out of three Americans believed traditional sex roles—where the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman stays home and cares for the family—were best. By 2004, only 38 percent felt that way.
- The percentage of Americans who think premarital sex is not wrong at all has grown from only 27 percent in 1972 to nearly half—46 percent—in 2004. Homosexuality is still disapproved by most Americans, but the majority is shrinking.
- Two out of three Americans aged 18 or older believe in God and have no doubt about it, a percentage that has been fairly stable over the years. Only 3 percent do not believe in God.
- Political views have been surprisingly stable over the decades. In 2004, the 66 percent majority of the public described its political views as moderate, only slightly liberal, or only slightly conservative—not much different from the percentage who described themselves that way more than thirty years earlier.

# Americans Find Life More Exciting

## But happiness has not increased.

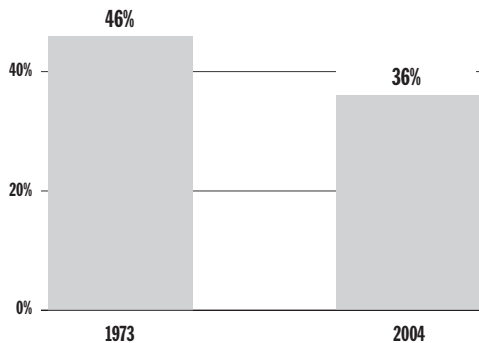
The attitudes of the American public toward many issues have been remarkably stable over the past three decades. The percentage of Americans who think life is exciting, for example, has grown only slightly, despite dramatic change in lifestyles and technology. In 2004, 50.6 percent of the public said life was exciting, up from the 45.5 percent of 1973. There has been almost no increase in the percentage of people who say they are very happy, which stood at 31 percent in 2004. When asked whether they think people try to be helpful, a slightly larger percentage of Americans say yes (50 percent in 2004, up from 47 percent in 1972).

But some attitudes have changed. The percentage of people who say most people can be trusted has dropped by a substantial 10 percentage points over the past thirty years, from 46 to 36 percent. The percentage of Americans who agree that people will try to take advantage if they get a chance has grown from 34 to 40 percent.

- Growing urbanization in the United States has contributed to greater distrust.

### Trust in others has declined

*(percent of people aged 18 or older who agree that most people can be trusted, 1973 and 2004)*



**Table 1.1 General Happiness, 1972 to 2004**

“Taken all together, how would you say things are these days—would you say that you are very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?”

(percent distribution of people aged 18 or older by response, 1972 to 2004)

	total people	very happy	pretty happy	not too happy
2004	100.0%	31.3%	55.2%	13.5%
2002	100.0	30.3	57.3	12.4
2000	100.0	31.7	57.7	10.6
1998	100.0	31.8	56.1	12.1
1996	100.0	30.4	57.5	12.1
1994	100.0	28.8	59.0	12.2
1993	100.0	31.6	57.3	11.1
1991	100.0	31.1	58.0	11.0
1990	100.0	33.4	57.6	9.0
1989	100.0	32.6	57.7	9.7
1988	100.0	34.0	56.8	9.3
1987	100.0	29.1	57.5	13.4
1986	100.0	32.3	56.3	11.4
1985	100.0	28.6	60.0	11.4
1984	100.0	34.7	52.3	12.9
1983	100.0	31.2	56.1	12.8
1982	100.0	30.6	54.9	14.5
1980	100.0	33.9	52.7	13.3
1978	100.0	34.3	56.1	9.6
1977	100.0	34.8	53.2	11.9
1976	100.0	34.1	53.4	12.5
1975	100.0	32.9	54.1	13.1
1974	100.0	37.9	49.0	13.1
1973	100.0	35.9	51.1	13.1
1972	100.0	30.3	53.2	16.5

Source: Survey Documentation and Analysis, Computer-assisted Survey Methods Program, University of California, Berkeley, General Social Surveys, 1972–2004 Cumulative Data Files, Internet site <http://sda.berkeley.edu/D3/GSS04/Docyr/g04.htm>

**Table 2.3 High School Graduates by Age and Sex, 1950 to 2006**

(percent of people aged 25 or older who completed high school, by age and sex, 1950 to 2006; percentage point change for selected years)

	25 to 34		35 to 54		55 or older	
	men	women	men	women	men	women
2006	85.4%	88.5%	87.3%	89.4%	81.6%	80.2%
2005	85.6	87.9	87.9	89.6	80.2	79.1
2004	85.7	88.4	87.8	89.7	79.8	78.4
2003	85.6	88.5	87.4	89.5	78.1	77.1
2002	85.1	88.7	88.1	89.4	76.3	75.4
2001	86.2	88.5	88.2	89.2	76.0	75.0
2000	87.1	89.2	88.5	89.0	75.1	74.2
1999	89.8	88.7	87.6	88.7	74.2	72.9
1998	86.8	89.0	86.8	88.6	73.2	71.3
1997	85.9	88.6	86.8	88.2	71.0	69.9
1996	85.9	87.9	86.9	87.7	70.7	69.3
1995	86.1	88.2	87.0	87.9	69.5	68.9
1994	85.2	87.5	87.0	87.4	68.0	67.5
1993	86.1	87.7	86.8	87.2	66.3	65.7
1992	85.9	87.0	85.9	86.0	65.0	65.3
1991	85.7	86.5	84.8	85.4	63.1	64.1
1990	85.1	87.4	84.5	84.8	61.5	61.8
1989	85.7	87.4	83.5	83.1	60.7	61.1
1988	85.4	87.5	83.0	82.5	59.3	60.2
1987	86.0	87.0	82.5	82.5	58.0	58.8
1986	86.5	87.1	81.1	81.6	56.7	57.3
1985	86.5	87.1	80.3	80.5	55.7	56.3
1984	86.5	86.6	79.0	79.7	55.1	56.3
1983	86.6	86.1	77.8	77.8	53.8	54.7
1982	86.9	85.7	75.9	76.1	52.7	53.3
1981	86.1	85.2	74.2	75.1	51.3	51.7
1980	86.0	84.8	73.1	73.8	49.6	50.6
1979	85.8	83.6	72.4	72.6	48.7	50.0
1978	85.3	82.8	70.2	70.3	46.7	47.6
1977	84.7	82.1	68.4	69.5	45.9	46.7
1976	84.1	81.4	67.8	68.8	44.5	45.8
1975	82.4	79.7	67.0	68.0	42.2	43.9
1974	81.1	79.1	66.2	67.0	40.0	42.3
1973	78.5	77.6	65.2	65.7	38.8	41.4
1972	77.9	76.4	62.4	64.0	37.6	40.3
1971	75.9	74.6	61.5	63.2	35.2	38.4
1970	74.3	73.3	60.3	62.1	34.1	37.2
1969	73.1	72.2	58.7	61.1	33.2	36.2
1968	71.3	71.0	57.5	59.7	31.4	34.9
1967	70.6	70.2	55.7	58.2	30.2	33.2
1966	69.7	68.6	53.7	56.9	28.7	32.7
1965	68.5	67.5	52.9	56.7	27.4	30.9
1959	58.8	62.1	45.0	48.9	22.1	25.6
1950	47.2	51.0	30.8	35.0	17.8	20.5
<b>Percentage point change</b>						
2000 to 2006	-1.7	-0.6	-1.2	0.3	6.4	6.1
1950 to 2006	38.3	37.5	56.5	54.4	63.8	59.7

Source: Bureau of the Census, Current Population Surveys, Internet site <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/educ-attn.html>; calculations by New Strategist

# Hypertension and High Cholesterol Are Less of a Problem

**Diabetes is increasingly prevalent, however.**

There has been considerable progress in alleviating many health conditions in the past few decades. Hypertension declined substantially between 1960–62 and 1999–2000. Overall, the percentage of adults with hypertension fell from 38 to 29 percent during those years.

The prevalence of high cholesterol has also been falling as Americans have become aware of the problem and changed their lifestyles accordingly. In 1960–62, one-third of adults had high cholesterol. By 2001–04 the rate had been cut in half, to just 16.5 percent.

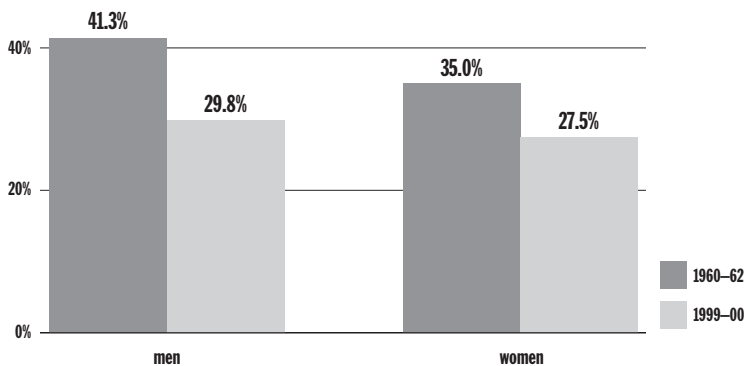
The trend is different with diabetes. Ten percent of adults had diabetes in 2001–04, up from 8 percent in 1988–94, making it one of the nation’s more important health problems.

The use of prescription drugs to treat a variety of illnesses, particularly chronic conditions, increased greatly between 1988–94 and 1999–2002. The percentage of people aged 18 or older who took at least one prescription drug in the past month rose from 38 to 45 percent during those years. The percentage of Americans who take three or more drugs climbed from 11 to 18 percent.

■ With more Americans controlling their high blood pressure, the rate of heart disease could decline in the future.

## Hypertension is lower in both men and women

*(percent of people aged 20 to 74 with hypertension, by sex, 1960–62 and 1999–2000)*



**Table 4.18 Vacation Homes, 1950 to 2005**

*(total number of housing units, and number and percent that are seasonal, recreational, or for occasional use, 1950 to 2005; numbers in thousands)*

	total	vacation housing units	
		number	percent
2005	124,522	3,916	3.1%
2000	115,905	3,604	3.1
1990	102,264	3,117	3.0
1980	88,411	2,794	3.2
1970	68,679	2,020	2.9
1960	58,326	2,024	3.5
1950	45,983	1,050	2.3

*Source: Bureau of the Census, Historical Census of Housing Tables—Vacation Homes, Internet site <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/housing/census/historic/vacation.html> and 2005 American Community Survey, Internet site <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>; calculations by New Strategist*

**Table 5.43 Percent Distribution of Female-Headed Families in Poverty by Race and Hispanic Origin, 1973 to 2005**

(percent distribution of female-headed families below poverty level by race and Hispanic origin of householder, 1973 to 2005; percentage point change for selected years)

	total female-headed families in poverty	black	Hispanic	white	
				total	non-Hispanic
2005	100.0%	33.0%	21.7%	57.2%	38.0%
2004	100.0	33.8	22.0	57.4	37.6
2003	100.0	34.8	20.5	56.3	37.7
2002	100.0	35.6	19.8	55.5	38.0
2001	100.0	38.9	20.5	55.9	37.6
2000	100.0	39.7	20.3	55.5	37.4
1999	100.0	41.8	20.1	53.4	35.1
1998	100.0	40.6	19.7	55.4	37.3
1997	100.0	39.1	19.2	57.7	40.0
1996	100.0	41.4	19.8	54.6	36.9
1995	100.0	41.9	19.5	54.2	36.1
1994	100.0	40.5	18.3	55.0	39.7
1993	100.0	43.1	17.5	53.7	38.4
1992	100.0	43.9	15.5	52.5	38.3
1991	100.0	44.1	15.1	52.7	38.7
1990	100.0	43.7	15.2	53.3	39.3
1989	100.0	43.5	15.1	53.0	38.7
1988	100.0	43.4	15.0	53.4	39.2
1987	100.0	43.2	15.5	53.7	39.5
1986	100.0	41.2	14.6	56.5	42.7
1985	100.0	41.8	15.0	56.1	42.0
1984	100.0	43.8	13.8	53.7	40.7
1983	100.0	43.2	12.7	54.0	42.1
1982	100.0	44.7	12.4	52.8	41.1
1981	100.0	42.3	12.3	55.8	44.2
1980	100.0	43.8	12.2	54.1	42.5
1979	100.0	46.7	11.3	51.0	40.2
1978	100.0	45.5	10.9	52.4	39.4
1977	100.0	44.5	11.5	53.6	39.8
1976	100.0	44.1	10.8	54.2	41.6
1975	100.0	41.3	11.5	57.4	44.4
1974	100.0	43.5	9.9	55.5	43.2
1973	100.0	44.4	9.6	54.3	—
<b>Percentage point change</b>					
2000 to 2005	—	−6.6	1.4	1.6	0.6
1973 to 2005	—	−11.4	12.0	2.9	—

Note: “—” means not applicable or data are not available.

Source: Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey Annual Demographic Supplements, Internet site <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/histpov/perindex.html>; calculations by New Strategist

# Most Married Couples Are Dual Earners

**Among couples with children under age 18, nearly two out of three are dual earners.**

Dual earners have accounted for the majority of the nation’s married couples for nearly two decades. In 2006, 55 percent of couples were dual earners, while only the husband worked in a much smaller 22 percent. Among couples with children under age 18, an even larger 65 percent are dual-earner, and in 30 percent only the husband works.

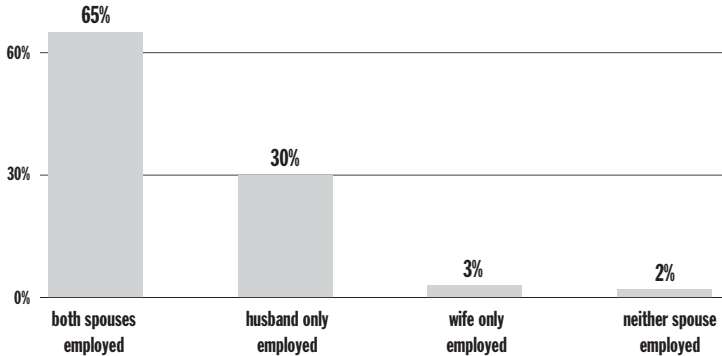
No matter how young the child, the majority of married women with children under age 18 are in the labor force. Among wives with children under age 3, the 57 percent majority was in the labor force in 2005—up from just 33 percent in 1975. Among wives with children aged 6 to 17, fully 75 percent are in the labor force.

Sixty-one percent of preschoolers are in some type of regular day care. This proportion has been stable for the past decade, but the type of day care is changing. Fewer children are being cared for in a home (the child’s or another home) by a nonrelative, with the proportion falling from 18 to 14 percent between 1995 and 2005. A larger percentage of children are being cared for in a day care center, the figure rising from 31 to 36 percent between 1995 and 2005. Twenty-two percent of children are cared for by a relative.

■ Children whose mother works full-time are most likely to be in a center-based child care program. Forty-eight percent were in day care centers in 2005, up from 39 percent 1995.

### Nearly two out of three couples with children are dual-earners

*(percent distribution of married couples by labor force status of husband and wife, 2005)*



**Table 7.25 Marital Status of Women, 1950 to 2006**

(total number of women aged 15 or older and percent distribution by marital status, 1950 to 2006; numbers in thousands)

	total women		never married	married	divorced	widowed
	number	percent				
2006	119,966	100.0%	26.2%	53.4%	10.9%	9.4%
2005	118,681	100.0	25.8	53.8	11.0	9.4
2004	117,295	100.0	25.6	54.0	10.9	9.5
2003	116,361	100.0	25.4	54.0	10.9	9.7
2002	114,639	100.0	25.2	54.2	10.7	10.0
2001	113,451	100.0	24.7	54.6	10.6	10.2
2000	110,660	100.0	25.1	54.7	10.2	10.0
1999	109,628	100.0	25.1	54.7	10.2	10.0
1998	108,168	100.0	24.7	54.9	10.3	10.2
1997	107,076	100.0	24.3	54.9	10.4	10.3
1996	106,031	100.0	24.1	55.6	9.9	10.4
1995	105,028	100.0	23.5	56.2	9.8	10.6
1994	104,032	100.0	23.7	55.9	9.7	10.6
1993	102,400	100.0	23.0	56.4	9.7	11.0
1992	101,483	100.0	23.0	56.4	9.4	11.2
1991	100,680	100.0	23.2	56.5	9.1	11.2
1990	99,838	100.0	22.8	56.9	8.9	11.5
1980	89,914	100.0	22.5	58.9	6.6	12.0
1970	77,766	100.0	22.1	61.9	3.5	12.5
1960	64,607	100.0	19.0	65.9	2.6	12.5
1950	57,102	100.0	20.0	65.8	2.4	11.8

Note: Figures for 1950 and 1960 are for women aged 14 or older.

Source: Bureau of the Census, *Families and Living Arrangements—Historical Tables*, Internet site <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam.html>; and *Statistical Abstract of the United States for 1992 and 1993*; calculations by New Strategist