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## **Majority of U.S. Adults Think Domestic Violence Is a Serious Problem in the United States Today**

### ***Majorities Feel That Services Should Be Provided to Victims***

#### **Part 1**

ROCHESTER, N.Y., June 15 /PRNewswire/ – A majority of U.S. adults think domestic violence is a serious problem facing this country, according to a new Harris Poll. Furthermore, majorities of U.S. adults broadly recognize some of the major identifying characteristics of domestic violence. Finally, many U.S. adults feel that certain services should be provided to domestic violence victims and their children.

These are some of the results of a Harris Poll of 2,377 U.S. adults ages 18 and older surveyed online by Harris Interactive® between April 11 and 17, 2006. This survey was conceived and developed by Harris Interactive and was not commissioned by any organization; however, we sought and received valuable input from the National Domestic Violence Hotline.

#### **Familiarity and Perceived Seriousness of Domestic Violence**

- \* Large percentages of adults say they have some familiarity with domestic violence. Approximately eight in 10 (79%) recall “seeing or hearing something” about domestic violence in the past year. Furthermore, 53% say that they have heard of the National Domestic Violence Hotline. This percentage increases substantially among those people who admit that they have been victims of domestic violence (71%).
- \* Among those who recall seeing or hearing about domestic violence in the past year, by far the single most prominent source of information is television. Over eight in 10 (84%) cite television followed by radio (33%), Internet (26%), billboards or signs on buses or trains (23%) and friends and family (22%).
- \* Concerning the perceived seriousness of domestic violence as a problem in the U.S. today, over six in 10 (63%) say that it is either a very serious (34%) or extremely serious (29%) problem. Another 21% say it is a fairly serious problem, and 12% say it is either somewhat (11%) or not serious at all (1%).

There are substantial differences between women’s and men’s responses. Women, by 72%, think this is at least a very serious problem, while just over half (54%) of men agree. Not surprisingly, among victims of domestic violence, the number jumps to 84%.

#### **Attitudes Toward Domestic Violence**

The Harris Poll measured a number of attitudes of all adults toward domestic violence. The survey found:

- \* A large majority (85%) agrees that “when a person forces his/her partner to have sex, it is an act of domestic violence.” Two-thirds (66%) of adults strongly and 20% somewhat agree with this sentiment.
- \* An 85% majority also agrees that “a man or woman who abuses his/her partner is more likely to also abuse children.” About half (53%) strongly agree and 32% somewhat agree.
- \* Approximately half (48%) of adults feel that “victims who don’t leave an abusive relationship share some of the blame for their abuse.” A third (34%) of adults disagree with this, and 16% neither agree nor disagree.

About two-thirds (68%) of all adults disagree that “abusive behavior is generally caused by circumstances beyond the abusers control.” Only 14% agree and 15% neither agree nor disagree.

- \* Furthermore, a slim majority (53%) disagrees that “leaving an abusive relationship can be more dangerous than staying in the relationship.” Under three in 10 (28%) agree with this and 17% neither agree nor disagree.

Adults are divided on whether “domestic violence happens more frequently in poor households.” Thirty-eight percent disagree, while 32% agree and a quarter (26%) neither agree nor disagree.

### **Services Available for Domestic Violence Victims**

The U.S. adult public feels that it is important that domestic violence victims and their children are provided with certain services. The most important of these services include:

- \* Emergency shelter (68% say extremely important)
- \* Counseling (63% say extremely important)
- \* Legal service (60% say extremely important)
- \* An anonymous hotline (58% say extremely important)

Other services that also are thought to be extremely important but in lower numbers are childcare (56%), affordable housing (51%), transportation (48%), faith organizations (42%) and community of neighborhood associations (37%).

Sheryl Cates, Executive Director of the National Domestic Violence Hotline states, “These statistics are an important snapshot of attitudes, prevalence and resources necessary to change and prevent domestic violence in this country. While this snapshot of American attitudes shows an increase in awareness about the issue and the availability of local resources, the reality is there is still a long way to go toward changing public perception.”

“As the National Domestic Violence Hotline commemorates its tenth anniversary, it continues to provide a vital link to safety for victims and we are hopeful that the next decade will bring us, as a nation, closer to becoming a society free of domestic violence.”

*This is Part 1 of a two-part Harris Poll column about Domestic Violence.*

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