



# Cornell National Social Survey 2008

## Report 2: CNSS Results

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### Introduction

This report summarizes the findings of the 2008 Cornell National Social Survey (CNSS), conducted by the Survey Research Institute (SRI) at Cornell University. The 2008 CNSS queried continental United States residents regarding a wide range of topics through questions developed by Cornell University faculty and researchers. Questions were presented as modules that included topics on:

- Social capital
- Health and well-being
- Political identity
- Consumer identity
- Treatment of prisoners during war
- Social integration/environmental sustainability
- Attitudes towards immigrants
- National civil justice
- Virtual worlds

### Methodology<sup>1</sup>

- A total of 1,000 telephone interviews were conducted between November 1, 2008 and December 22, 2008, one-third of which were offered a \$10 incentive to complete the survey. All participants were asked core demographic questions as well as all questions from the omnibus modules.
- The CNSS utilizes a random digit dial (RDD) sample of all telephone exchanges within the continental United States. Eligible respondents must be at least 18 years old.
- The cooperation rate was 60.0% using American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) standards.
- The margin of error (MOE) for questions with two response options is 3.1% among the 1,000 respondents, 5.2% among the respondents offered an incentive, and

3.9% among the respondents that were not offered an incentive. The MOE may be smaller for some questions depending on the number of response options.

Some highlights of results from the CNSS are described below.

### Social Capital

#### Social Capital and the Labor Market

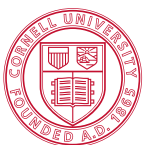
*Only a quarter of the respondents applied for their current job based on a personal referral from an employee of their current company. Less than half of the respondents have referred an acquaintance to a job opportunity at their company that resulted in an application. The vast majority of respondents reported that their companies do not offer “referral bonuses”.*

- Only about 26% of respondents decided to apply for a job at their current company because an acquaintance personally referred them to the job opportunity.
- About 40% of respondents have had acquaintances apply for a job opportunity that they have personally referred them to. About 46% of respondents have referred acquaintances to a job opportunity that did not result in an application. 15% of respondents have never made referrals.
- 85% of the respondents report that their company does not pay a “referral bonus”. Of those respondents that reported their company does pay a “referral bonus”, the average bonus is \$802 with a range from \$1-\$5000.

#### Social Capital and the Community

*The vast majority of respondents are involved in at least one community organization, with close to half of the respondents being involved in two or more. About half of the respondents involved in a community organization devote one to five hours a week to the organization. Most respondents participate in their respective organizations as members, volunteers and donors, with less than 25% participating as officers. Church is the most common primary community organization.*

<sup>1</sup> See Report 1: Introduction & Methodology for a full description at [www.sri.cornell.edu](http://www.sri.cornell.edu). A copy of the questionnaire and data file is available at: <http://ciser.cornell.edu/CNSS>.



- About 27% of respondents have not been involved with any community organization in the twelve months prior to the survey. About 26% of the respondents had been involved with only one community organization, while about 47% had been involved with more than one community organization.
- Including all community organizations each respondent is involved with, about 21% devote less than one hour per week to the organization, about 51% devote one to five hours, about 17% devote five to ten hours, and about 11% devote over ten hours.
- With respect to the primary community organization of the respondent, 77% are involved as members of the organization, 66% are involved as volunteers, 21% are involved as officers and 72% are involved donors.
- With respect to the secondary community organization compared to the first community organization of the respondent, fewer are involved as members (65% vs. 77%), about the same percent are involved as volunteers, fewer are involved as officers (16% vs. 21%) and fewer are involved donors (64% vs. 72%).

## Health and Well-Being

*Over half of the respondents described themselves as overweight, but only 45% of respondents were actively trying to lose weight. Less than 2% of respondents were trying to lose weight via doctor prescribed weight loss pills and about 7% were trying to lost weight via non-prescription medication such as weight loss pills, herbs, or supplements.*

- Over half of the respondents (53.0%) described themselves as overweight, while 3.8% of the respondents described themselves as underweight, and 43.2% described themselves as “about right”.
- The majority of the respondents (52.7%) were currently not trying to either gain or lose weight, but almost 45% were actively trying to lose weight.
- Less than 2% of the respondents reported that they took doctor prescribed weight lose pills in the twelve months prior to the survey, while 7% reported taking non-prescription medication (includes weight loss pills, herbs and supplements) in the twelve months prior to the survey.

## Political Identity

*About half of the respondents self-reported as Democrats to some degree and one-third self-reported as Republicans to some degree. Age is the most common isolated personal characteristic that is viewed to determine thoughts on political issues.*

- About 50% of respondents are Democrats to some degree, while about 34% are Republicans to some degree. The remaining are Independents with no leaning towards Democrat or Republican.
- Age, combination of identities or none of the listed identities are the most frequent cited personal characteristics that determine political issues, accounting for about 70% of the responses.

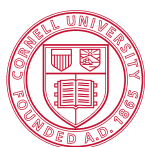
**Table 1** Most Important Personal Characteristic Determining Thoughts about Political Issues

Top Issues	Count	Percent
Gender	44	4.7
Race	25	2.7
Religion	157	16.8
Ethnicity	50	5.4
Age	225	24.1
Some Combination of Identities Above	244	26.2
None of These	187	20.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>932</b>	

## Consumer Identity

*About half of the respondents spend \$100 or less per week on groceries, about two-thirds spend \$50 or less per week eating out, about half spend \$50 or less per week on gasoline, and about half spend \$150 or less per month on utility gas and electricity.*

- About half (48.4%) of the respondents report spending \$100 or less per week on groceries, with about 3% spending less than \$25 and about 20% spending \$76-\$100. About 10% of respondents spend over \$250/week on groceries and 42.3% spend between \$101 and \$250.
- 66.7% of the respondents report spending \$50 or less per week on meals and snacks eaten outside of the home, with about 18% spending less than \$10. About 8% of the respondents report spending over \$150 per week eating out.
- 49.1% of the respondents report spending \$50 or less per week on gasoline, with about 8% spending less than \$10. About 7% of the respondents report spending over \$200 per week on gasoline.



- 45% of the respondents report spending \$150 or less per month on utility gas and electricity, with 4.5% spending less than \$50. About 4% of the respondents report spending more than \$600 per month and 6.3% report spending between \$400 and \$600 per month on utility gas and electricity.

**Table 2** Purchase Amount for Food, and Gasoline

Amount	Groceries (per Week)		Eating Out (per Week)		Gasoline (per Week)	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
< \$50	138	14.1	662	66.7	484	49.1
\$51-100	336	34.3	185	18.7	298	30.2
\$101-150	226	23.0	71	7.2	87	8.8
\$151-200	134	13.7	40	4.0	47	4.8
> \$200	146	14.9	35	3.5	68	6.9
<i>Total</i>	980		993		984	

## Treatment of Prisoners of War

The majority of respondents disagree that it is justified for the United States to use torture, unless it would lead to the prevention of a major attack and save American's lives. Slightly more respondents agree with torture if it would cause retaliation.

- About 60% of respondents disagree to some degree that it is justified for the United States to use torture to get information, while 29.7% of the respondents agree that torture is justified. The remaining have no opinion.
- If the information obtained from torture could lead to prevention of a major attack on the U.S. or save Americans lives, then about 53% of respondents agree with the use of torture, while 37% disagree.
- Even if the use of torture makes it more likely that Americans will be tortured by enemies, about 51% of respondents disagree with the use of torture, while 37.7% agree.

## Environment Sustainability

While the majority of respondents agree that they do what is right for the environment at the expense of time and money and that it is important to maintain the environment for future generations, less than 15% are members of environmental organizations and less than 20% have devoted time to volunteer at an environmental organization.

- Almost 80% of respondents agree that they do what is right for the environment even if they have to sacrifice

time and money, while about 13% disagree and the remaining are feel neutral about the statement.

- The vast majority (about 97%) of respondents agree that it is important to maintain the environment for future generations.
- Only about 13% of respondents are members of environmental groups whose main aim is to preserve or protect the environment.
- Only about 17% of respondents have devoted time to a volunteer activity whose main aim is to preserve or protect the environment.

## Attitude Towards Immigrants

The majority of respondents, 90.7% of whom were born in the United States, personally know an immigrant in their community. While the majority of the respondents view the immigrants in their community as an asset, the majority of the respondents view new/undocumented/illegal immigrants as a burden.

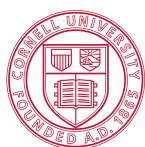
- Almost 70% of respondents personally know an immigrant, whom is of no relation to them, who lives in their community.
- About 35% of respondents view the immigrants in their community as an asset, only 7% view them as a burden, and 42% view them as both an asset and a burden.
- However, only about 7% view new/undocumented/illegal immigrants as an asset, the plurality 49.7% view them as a burden, and 32.3% view them as both an asset and a burden.

**Table 3** Attitude Towards Immigrants in Your Community

Top Issues	Immigrants Personally Known		New, Undocumented, Illegal Immigrants	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Asset	340	34.9	66	6.8
Burden	71	7.3	485	49.7
Neither Asset nor Burden	154	15.8	110	11.3
Both Asset and Burden	409	42.0	315	32.3
<i>Total</i>	974		976	

## National Civil Justice

Only about a quarter of respondents reported difficulty with consumer disputes and less than 10% reported difficulty with



employment disputes. About 30% of respondents have experienced property damage through the fault of someone else and about 15% have experienced injury through the fault of someone else, by accident or on purpose.

- 22.2% of respondents have recently had problems or disputes that were difficult to resolve related to consumer issues such as faulty goods, issues with refunds, disputes with utility companies, insurance companies, etc.
- 8.4% of respondents have recently had problems or disputes that were difficult to resolve related to employment issues such as discrimination, harassment, unfair dismissal or disciplinary procedures, personal grievances, etc.
- Through the fault of someone else, 29.5% of respondents have experienced property damages and 14.7% of respondents have experienced injury.

#### **For More Information:**

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#### **Citing Results from the CNSS:**

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## Virtual Worlds

Virtual worlds are familiar to the majority of the respondents. While the majority of respondents have a neutral to negative view of virtual worlds, almost half of the respondents would encourage use of virtual worlds in education and business.

- 35.4% of respondents have never heard of virtual worlds before, while 5.3% of respondents spend time in a virtual world.
- Only 11.2% of respondents have a positive view of virtual worlds, while 65.2% have a neutral view/no opinion and 13.6% have a negative view.
- 48.5% of respondents would encourage use of virtual worlds in education and business, while 13.2% would discourage use of virtual worlds. The remaining 38.2% have neutral/no opinions.

