

Responsible Planning for the Future:

An Analysis of Survey Research
Regarding Communicating
the Issues of Low-Wage Work

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for the Ford Foundation Project
Making Work Pay for Families Today

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Public Knowledge



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Introduction

The Ford Foundation's *Making Work Pay for Families Today* project set out to research the dynamics of public opinion regarding the issue of low-wage work, and to identify a cohesive message strategy to build support for a series of policies that will assist low-wage workers. This paper, the fourth in the series, reports on a quantitative test of several hypotheses from the earlier research. While this paper summarizes the recommendations at this stage of the project, it does not repeat detailed findings from the earlier reports. All four papers should be read for a full understanding of the recommendations included in this final report.

The first report in the series found that much of the existing news coverage about low-wage work consists of stories about individuals who are working poor. In *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, Douglas Gould & Co.'s report on their analysis of news coverage of low-wage work, they found that many of the stories position the working poor as sympathetic individuals stuck in a bad situation—between a rock and a hard place (32%). News stories position the working poor as unable to climb the economic ladder (17%), falling behind

(17%), or characterize them as freeloaders, prisoners and undeserving (15%). Fully one-third (33%) of stories position the government as incompetent. Due to the prevalence of the individual sympathy story in the news, understanding the impact of these stories on public opinion became a central question for research.

The second report, *Achieving the American Dream*, suggested that past efforts to address poverty have been hampered by a series of core American beliefs:

- Each individual is responsible for his or her own success or failure.
- With hard work comes reward.
- The goal is equal opportunity, not equal outcome.
- Anyone can achieve the American Dream.

The public sees the poor as deficient in each of these beliefs. While sympathetic to the plight of a struggling individual, they can only see causes and solutions that are inherent to the individual. The dominant news framing of the working poor as stories of individual problems and solutions

underscores existing beliefs instead of helping the public get beyond a mental picture of individual success and failure to see systemic problems and solutions.

In addition to shifting the dialogue from the individual to the systemic, the third report, *Responsibility and Opportunity*, found that the issue of low-wage work needs to live within a broader category of the economy, capitalism and prosperity rather than the category of poverty and the poor. Americans have internalized a corporate America mindset, and frequently speak from the perspective of a businessperson's interests rather than their own interests or workers' interests. Their mental model of the economy is a "free market," meaning it should be unconstrained and free of government intervention. Unless an alternative model of the economy is put forward, the report found, policies to assist low-wage workers will always be positioned as government intervening inappropriately in business.

This report, based on a national survey of registered voters, quantifies many of the earlier findings and recommenda-

tions. The survey finds that while the public is supportive of policies to assist low-wage workers, support drops dramatically once a dialogue on both sides begins. Community stakeholders cannot assume that broad public support will stay firm in the heat of a policy debate. Thoughtful, planned communication that links the policies to broader values is central to continuing public support.

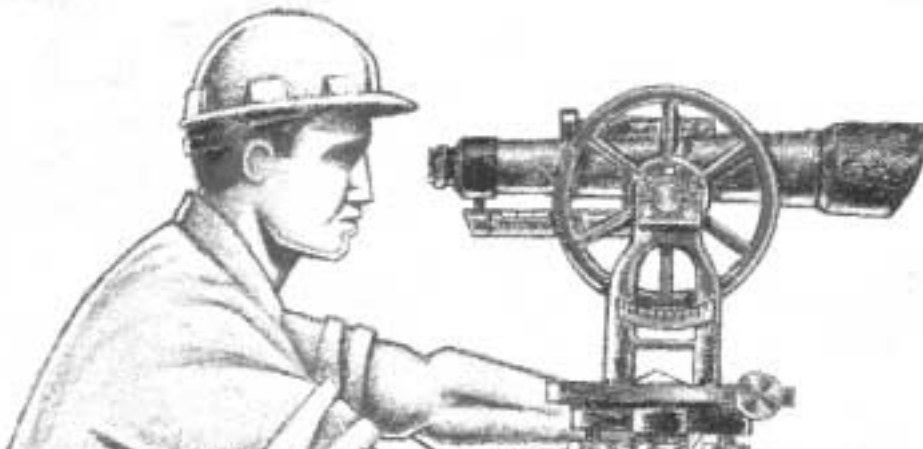
The analysis and recommendations in this report suggest ways to develop effective communications that will link specific policies to broader values and connections. Throughout, the report will refer to the concept of “framing.” The FrameWorks Institute defines framing as referring to “the way a story is told—its selective use of particular symbols, metaphors, and messengers, for example—and to the way these cues, in turn, trigger the shared and durable cultural models that people use to make sense of their world” (Bales and Gilliam, 2002). Research on how people think demonstrates that people use mental shortcuts to make sense of the world, and that new information provides cues to help people designate how to connect the new information to what they already know. So the cues, or frames, in communications define how people think about issues. For example, depending on the frame used in a news story, people can either think about water pollution as a hazard to

human health or as damage to nature. This lens on the issue then quickly defines issue understanding, priority, consequences, solutions and responsibility for fixing the problem. This is framing. (Note: For more information on frames and framing, see the FrameWorks Institute website at frameworksinstitute.org.)

The strongest framing for low-wage work is as an economic issue linked to the values of responsibility and planning for the future. It needs to be positioned as a concern that affects us all, not just the poor. Furthermore, communications need to begin to describe the economy as something that can be influenced. Currently, people think of the market as “free,” as a force of nature that should not be constrained. Instead, we need to begin to help people see the economy as a product of humanity that can be influenced by people. The high-profile corporate fraud in the news would tempt communicators to attack corporate greed. Indeed, a subtle critique of business practices helps people understand what is broken in the system. But advocates will be ill served by a harsh attack on business, or an anti-business position. It should be a message about how we need to work together to create and invest in the kind of economy that supports families and strengthens communities.

The best way to frame this issue among every demographic and psychographic group is as responsible planning—creating a better tomorrow requires responsible planning today for building jobs and the economy for the long-term. Furthermore, it is the strongest message no matter which of seven tested messengers delivers it, indicating that a broad spectrum of voices can communicate this framing credibly. Secondary messages based on the values of teamwork and fairness also tested well and can also be used effectively to position the issues of low-wage work.

The following report, in conjunction with the other three reports in the series, make a strong case for replacing the dominant communications framing of low-wage work. Stories about sympathetic, poor individuals who need a hand-up from government reinforce the dominant mindset that individuals create their own problems and have to find their own solutions. This issue cannot be positioned as being about the poor. Instead, advocates need to frame policies for low-wage work within the category of the economy and jobs, and need to link this issue to tomorrow’s prosperity. Advocates need to ask the question: how are we going to plan responsibly today, and make investments in society today, for an economy that works for all?



Methodology

This survey was designed to test a series of hypotheses about how to communicate effectively on behalf of policies to assist low-wage workers. Primarily, this survey sought to discover which frames, or lenses on the issue, are most effective in building support across a range of policies to address the needs of low-wage workers. Two separate approaches in the survey determined the effectiveness of various frames.

First, in one segment of the survey, the 1,204 survey respondents were divided into three separate samples—each main split or division consisted of a national sample of registered voters drawn geographically proportionate to population. Demographic characteristics (gender, age, education, political party identification) were weighted when necessary to be consistent across splits. One of the three groups, the control group, was asked for their level of support or opposition for a variety of policies. The other two groups, the test groups or debate groups, were exposed to a message in support of the policy as well as an opposition message. The supporting message was alternated in each of the two test groups, to determine which communications approach was more effective in advancing the policy. For example, the job training policy was tested across the splits as follows:

Split One—Control Group

Would you favor or oppose government creating more job training and skill development programs?

Split Two—Test/Debate Group

Some people say:

There are many people who are not working or who are working in low

wage jobs because they do not have the skills to get a better job. So we should create more job training and skill development programs.

While other people say:

There are already plenty of programs and opportunities for a person who really wants to work hard to get ahead so we do not need to create more job training and skill development programs.

What do you think? Would you favor or oppose government creating more job training and skill development programs?

Split Three—Test/Debate Group

Some people say:

To have a strong economy in the future, we need to invest in the workforce now. That means planning for the kinds of jobs we will want and need in 10, 20 or 30 years, and starting to train workers now.

While other people say:

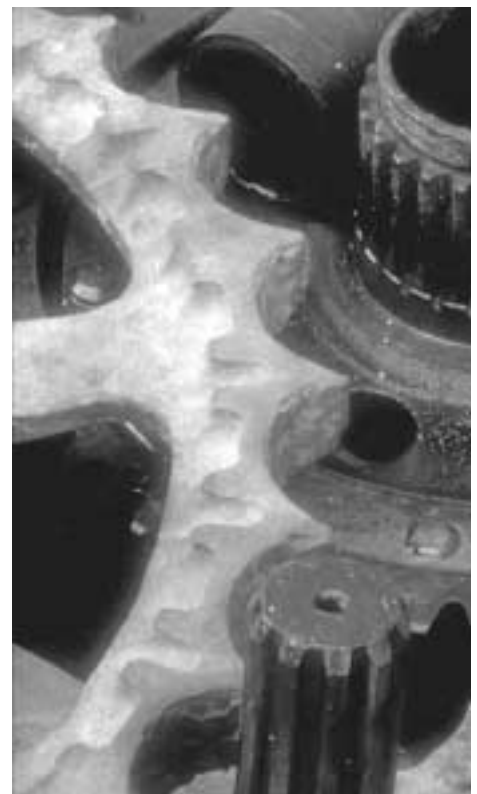
There are already plenty of programs and opportunities for a person who really wants to work hard to get ahead so we do not need to create more job training and skill development programs.

What do you think? Would you favor or oppose government creating more job training and skill development programs?

By including a variety of communications approaches and analyzing the patterns of response across the splits, it is possible to determine the impact of different frames on policy support. The range of frames included in the survey were determined based on the findings

of the prior research in the *Making Work Pay for Families Today* project: *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, the media content analysis; *Achieving the American Dream*, the review of existing public opinion data, and *Responsibility and Opportunity*, a report of focus groups and one-on-one interviews. Some of the messages were included to reflect the current public debate while others were developed to test promising approaches uncovered in the earlier research.

In addition, a later section of the survey tested seven message frames matched with seven imaginary messengers. The messengers were rotated against the messages, allowing a determination of the effectiveness of message, messenger, and the combination of message and messenger. The imaginary names for the messengers were deliberately chosen to limit gender and ethnic bias. The frames and messages tested were: (see page 8).





Randomized Combinations of Frame and Messenger

Responsible Planning/Economic Vision (FRAME)

Morgan Richards, a CEO of a large corporation (MESSENGER)

Teamwork/Respect

Chris Buckner, an economist

Fairness

Dale Burns, mayor of a mid-size city

Balance/Jobs for 21st Century

Tyler Wilson, head of an advocacy group that helps the working poor

Opportunity

Pat Sorenson, head of a national labor union

Dead-end Jobs

Cathy Peters, a waitress and single mom

Sympathy/poverty/stewardship

Reverend Lee Adams, a religious leader

Finally, one additional experiment was included in the survey to begin to test one hypothesis from *Responsibility and Opportunity*. That analysis of qualitative research suggested that the public's fundamental understanding of the economy, that it is a force of nature outside human control, is a barrier to advancing change for a variety of economic problems. Three additional divisions, or splits, of respondents were exposed to one of three models of the economy and government: a free market or natural force best left uncontrolled, a long-term plan for prosperity, and government intervention and protection for workers. It was hoped that by analyzing views concerning government and business responsibility as well as support for policies, the impact of these various models could be better understood.

Responses to each of the experiments are frequently subtle shifts. Dominant models of understanding are developed through the course of our lives, and changing those models may take time and significant exposure. A short survey of this type can provide direction, but will not fully represent the shifts in understanding that might occur over a long period of exposure to new framing. For the most part, only statistically significant shifts in opinion are included in this report, though a few directional changes are included in the analysis to help outline important nuances in response. Also, for greater accuracy, all net margins and summary scores are based on computer rounding, which may differ slightly from the totals in the frequency questionnaire.

The survey analysis is based on telephone interviews with 1,204 registered voters nationwide, conducted June 6–17, 2002. Responses based on the total 1,204 interviews would result in a sampling error of no more than +/- 3%. (Error decreases as opinion on a question becomes more polarized.) For those instances with a base sample of 400, the sampling error is no more than +/- 5%.

Support for Policies

Strong majorities of the public support a variety of policies to assist low-wage workers. Even so, advocates need to prepare for difficult political battles on any of these issues, as public support drops dramatically with further debate. Advocates should not view public opinion as an absolute categorization of those for or against a specific policy, since a person's stance may change once a policy is linked to broader values or ways of thinking about an issue.

As described in *Achieving the American Dream*, the review of existing public opinion data written for the Ford Foundation *Making Work Pay for Families Today* project, the public supports a variety of policies to address the issues facing low-wage workers. By strong margins, the public supports: (see the chart in the next column).

However, as indicated in *Responsibility and Opportunity*, the analysis of qualitative research also conducted for this project, public support is eroded when the public begins to debate the issues. To quantify the erosion in support seen in the focus groups, survey respondents were divided into three separate groups. One group, the control group, was asked for their level of support or opposition to a series of policies—with no message for or against any of the policies. The second and third groups were exposed to reasons for and against each policy. On average, support for policies between the control group and the debate groups dropped by 25 percentage points.

This finding should caution advocates to take each legislative battle very seriously and not assume the public will stand solidly in support of a

Support for Policies to Assist Low-Wage Workers (rank ordered by % Favor minus % Oppose)

Requiring companies to provide full-time employees with at least five days off with pay annually for illness or a family emergency

% Favor	% Strongly Favor	Net Favor minus Oppose
85%	71%	71

Government creating more job training and skill development programs

% Favor	% Strongly Favor	Net Favor minus Oppose
83%	60%	68

Expanding day care subsidies to parents of young children who are working, but poor

% Favor	% Strongly Favor	Net Favor minus Oppose
80%	54%	62

Adjusting poverty level guidelines to take into account an individual family's situation and the area's cost of living to determine the government assistance that family needs

% Favor	% Strongly Favor	Net Favor minus Oppose
76%	49%	53

Government providing health insurance to low-wage workers whose employers do not provide it

% Favor	% Strongly Favor	Net Favor minus Oppose
71%	52%	45

Requiring companies to provide employees that work at least 25 hours per week with the same range of benefits as full-time employees, meaning they would have all the same health, pension, and paid leave benefits, but adjusted proportionately to their work hours

% Favor	% Strongly Favor	Net Favor minus Oppose
69%	45%	40

Increasing the minimum wage from \$5.15 per hour to \$8 per hour

% Favor	% Strongly Favor	Net Favor minus Oppose
65%	51%	30

specific proposal once the debate begins. In this survey, a majority of respondents continue to support the policies tested. However, if one brief statement in a survey can cause support to drop so dramatically, imagine how an extended public debate could shift public opinion.



Support for Policies - Isolated and Under Debate (Net Rating: % Favor minus % Oppose)

Average net rating



5 days paid leave



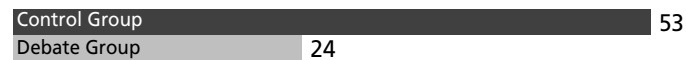
Job training



Day care subsidies



Adjust poverty guidelines



Health insurance



Benefits for part-time



Minimum wage



Categorizing the Issue

The issue of low wage work needs to be communicated within the category of jobs and the economy. It should not be characterized as being about the poor or working poor. There are three reasons for this recommendation. First, the economy and jobs are higher public priorities than addressing the needs of the poor. Additionally, the economy and jobs are priorities that extend beyond government responsibility to include business responsibility. Finally, characterizing these issues as economic issues builds higher levels of support for policies than when they are characterized as policies to help the poor. As will be seen in a later section, when policies are framed in an economic context they are supported by net margins 4–11 points higher than when framed as being about the poor. In fact, all of the economy and jobs frames tested significantly higher than a frame about sympathy for the poor.

Connecting low wage work to the economy and jobs rather than poverty attaches the issue to a higher priority for most Americans. Overall, “strengthening the economy,” “creating good jobs,” and “ensuring economic opportunity for all Americans” are higher priorities for federal government action than “helping families who are working, but poor” or “improving conditions for the poor.”

Furthermore, nesting low-wage work within the economy and jobs allows a role for both government and business, while framing the issue as being about the poor places responsibility solely upon government. “Strengthening the economy” is one area in which the public sees responsibility for both government (59% “a lot of responsibility”) and business (66%). Majorities also place significant responsibility with business for creating good jobs (73%) and ensuring

Issue Priority for the President and Congress on a 1–10 Scale (rank ordered by average rating)	
Strengthening the economy	
Average	% Rating 10
8.4	43
Making health care affordable and accessible to everyone	
Average	% Rating 10
8.4	53
Improving education and the schools	
Average	% Rating 10
8.4	51
Ensuring economic opportunity for all Americans	
Average	% Rating 10
7.8	37
Creating good jobs	
Average	% Rating 10
7.7	36
Improving conditions for the poor	
Average	% Rating 10
7.5	32
Helping families who are working, but poor	
Average	% Rating 10
7.6	30
Lowering taxes	
Average	% Rating 10
7.1	30

economic opportunity (54%). The other areas in which a majority sees a large government role are education (66%) and health care (69%). No other area is rated highly by a majority. If anyone is responsible for the poor, it is government, not business.

Highlighting the role for society at large, including business, is central to advancing support for these issues. When provided with three views of how the economy should work, the public is most enthusiastic about a societal approach to creating the economy we want, rather than abandoning people to the natural forces of the market or relying upon a strong interventionist government.

- 67% strongly agree: To keep America prosperous, we need a long-term approach for the kind of economy that works for everyone, rather than short-term thinking only concerned about a corporation’s quarterly profits. Future prosperity requires that we start thinking today about the industries we want to develop, the infrastructure we will need, and the investments society makes in today’s workforce.
- 47% strongly agree: It is up to government to set the standards that protect workers and intervene when workers need assistance. There are many ways that workers rely upon government—wage and hour laws, health care and day care assistance to workers who are poor, and unemployment insurance, to name a few. We need government to continue to watch out for workers’ best interests.
- 40% strongly agree: A free market economy is strongest when there are few restrictions or regulations to stunt its growth. Left on its own, businesses will

prosper through supplying the products and services that people want and through creating profitable innovations. The jobs that are in the greatest demand will pay the highest wages. The natural forces in the market keep the economy growing.

More importantly, when people are exposed to these different ways of

thinking about the economy, their assessment of government’s role changes. The “free market economy” language was intended to reflect the dominant mental model for the U.S. economy, and the “long-term planning” language was developed to reflect the recommended description of how the economy works as outlined in *Responsibility and Opportunity*. The

Responsibility Government and Business Should Have In Several Areas (% a Lot of responsibility)

Making health care affordable and accessible to everyone



Improving education and the schools



Strengthening the economy



Ensuring economic opportunity for all Americans



Improving conditions for the poor



Helping families who are working, but poor



Creating good jobs



“government intervention” language was included to determine the impact of a direct call for government action.

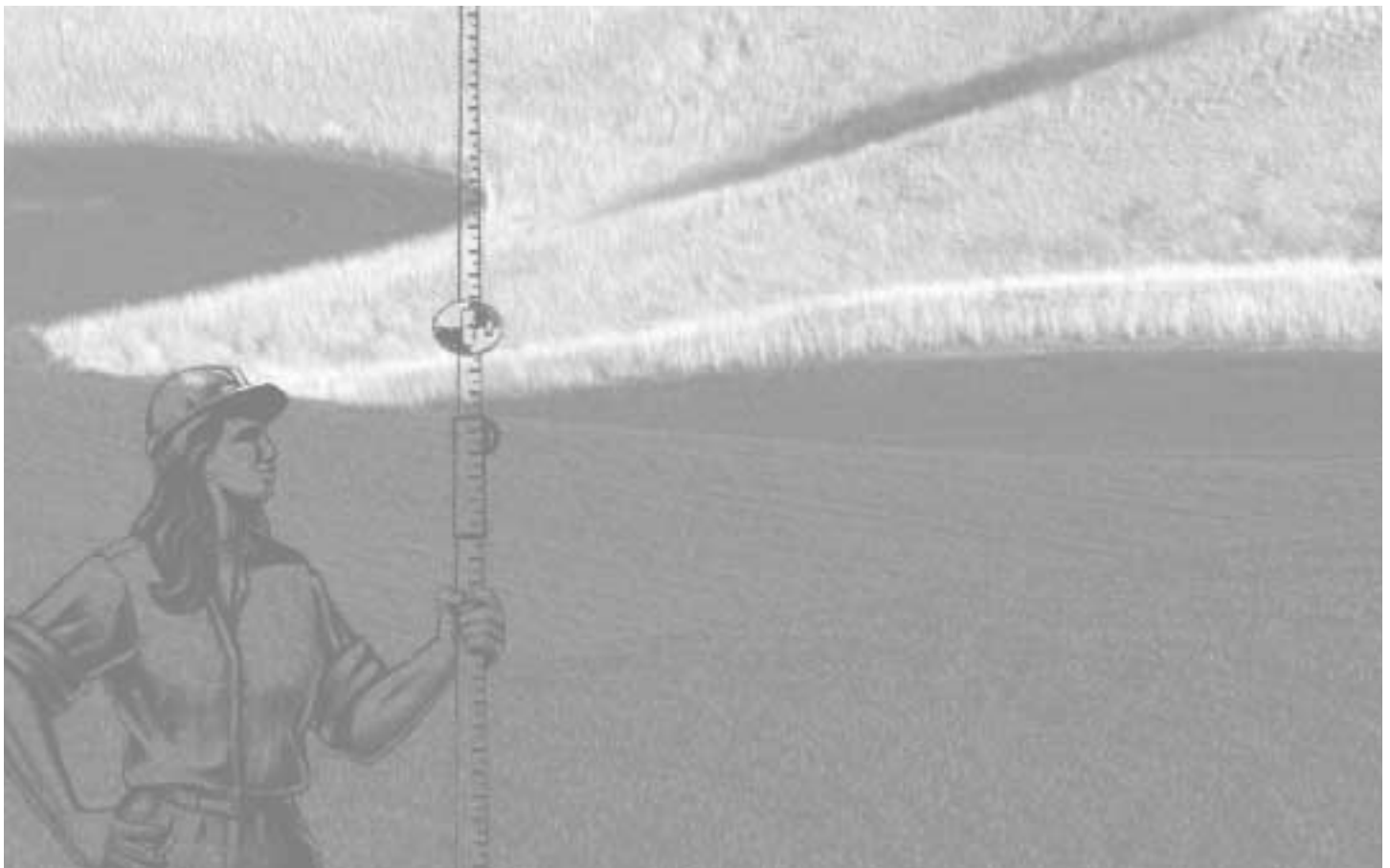
These three frames influence the public’s perspective on the role they see for government in dealing with the economy. Those exposed to the language about government intervention for workers or long-term planning for the economy, see a greater role for government in strengthening the economy than those exposed to the free market model. Among those exposed to the government intervention language, 63% say the government has “a lot of responsibility” for strengthening the economy, and among those exposed to the long-term planning language, 59% say “a lot of responsibility.” This compares with 55% of those exposed to the free market model.

Interestingly, the government intervention frame actually decreases people’s view of government’s responsibility for improving conditions for the poor, with 45% of those exposed to the government intervention frame seeing “a lot of responsibility” for government, compared to 50% of those exposed to the free market statement.

The long-term planning frame also increases the public’s view of business responsibility in creating good jobs and helping poor families. People exposed to the long-term planning frame are more likely to say business has “a lot of responsibility” for creating good jobs (76%) than those exposed to the free market (72%) or the government intervention frame (71%). The long-term planning frame also slightly increases the public’s perception of business responsibility for helping poor families

(40% say “a lot of responsibility,” compared to 36% in the free market or government intervention splits).

These few survey questions on this topic indicate that communicating a new model of the economy can change people’s assessment of government and business responsibility in dealing with the country’s problems. Helping people understand that the economy can be influenced by society will break down barriers to collective action on these issues. An alternative to the “free market” model needs to be created, however, more research needs to be conducted to refine this recommendation and develop effective language.



Connecting to Values—the Broad Message

Advocates have an opportunity to shift the dialogue about low-wage work away from an ineffective plea for sympathy for the poor, and toward a call to responsible planning and investment in the kind of economy that works for everyone. This issue is positioned most strongly with messages about responsible planning for the future, fairness, and teamwork. Sympathy for the poor is the weakest approach to advancing these issues.

Responsibility and Opportunity, the focus group analysis, hypothesized that three approaches would most effectively advance policies on behalf of low-wage workers. First, the analysis suggested that messages addressing corporate responsibility to society would be effective if through the lens of long-term planning for the economy of the future, or through the lens of teamwork and respect for workers. Second, the analysis suggested that fairness is a powerful value to be tapped on this issue. Finally, opportunity, particularly a positive message about ensuring opportunity, seemed to have an ability to motivate people on this issue. In addition to suggesting effective messages, the analysis also warned that advocates' traditional approach to this issue, creating sympathy for the working poor, would be ineffective in building support for policies.

This survey confirms those recommendations, but finds that responsible planning for the future is far more persuasive than the other messages. It is rated as most convincing among every demographic and psychographic group. Most importantly, it is a message that can be delivered by a variety of messengers, since it was rated highest

Convincing Reason to Support Policymakers in Taking Major Steps on a scale from 1–10, rank ordered by average rating

Responsible Planning/Economic Vision

Creating a better tomorrow requires responsible planning today. Instead of a short-term profit orientation, we need to think about building jobs and the economy for the long-term. Too many companies and decision makers focus on short-term profits and short-term thinking to the detriment of the greater good. We need to change that thinking and create a future with a strong economy and good jobs for all workers. That means investing in education and job training, and encouraging investment in industries with the kinds of good jobs that support families and strengthen communities.

8.0

Teamwork/Respect

Good companies know that their future relies on their employees, so they treat employees as respected members of the team and provide good pay, benefits, and working conditions. But there are also “grab and go” companies that profit at others' expense, that take advantage of employees, focus on short-term profits instead of long-term stability, and jump with their profits at the first sign of trouble. Government needs to encourage responsible companies, and protect workers from irresponsible companies by enforcing workplace safety regulations, wage and hour laws, and requiring living wage standards and a minimum set of benefits.

7.5

Fairness

People who work hard shouldn't be poor, but many are. Today, millions of the hardest working Americans are living in poverty. At \$5.15 an hour, the purchasing power of the minimum wage is 25% lower than it was in the 1970s. What today costs what it did in the 1970s? A parent with two children can work full-time year-round at the current minimum and still make only \$10,700—much less than the poverty level. And that is with no benefits like health insurance or daycare subsidies. It is only fair to require decent wages and basic benefits that allow workers to provide for their families and live in dignity.

7.4

Balance/Jobs for 21st Century

The world has changed—about two-thirds of women are now in the workforce, but the workplace has not changed to adapt to families' needs. The workplace still assumes the ideal worker has no other responsibilities except work. You can be asked to work overtime or change your schedule with no thought about whether there is any impact on your home life. Seventy years ago we created a basic set of work-related benefits like unemployment insurance, social security, and the 40-hour workweek. We need to update these laws and make today's workplace work for all workers by providing living wages, affordable childcare, and flexibility in hours.

7.3

Continues on page 15

no matter which messenger delivered the message.

To test both message and messenger, survey respondents were asked to rate seven different messages on a scale from one to ten in how convincing a reason the statement is “for you personally to support policymakers taking major steps.” Each message was paired with one of seven possible messengers, randomly assigned. No matter which messenger delivered the message, the responsible planning message was consistently rated the highest. This message offers a critique of shortsighted and short-term profit orientation, and calls for investment in our collective future. It suggests a role for society overall, not just government or business, which allows for a very broad range of policy solutions from educational improvements to community and industry investment.

The responsible planning message is far more convincing to voters than the other tested messages. Still, there are several secondary messages that are compelling, particularly among specific subgroups. The teamwork message is the second most convincing message overall (rated 7.5 on a 10-point scale) and is second within most subgroups. The fairness message is rated 7.4 on a 10-point scale overall, but is a particularly convincing secondary message among Republican women and union households. A message about work/family balance (7.3 average rating) is particularly convincing to those most struggling with that balance—dual income families with children under 18 years old. The opportunity message, rated 5th highest at 7.2 overall, is ranked higher among men, particularly older men, men without a college education, Republican men, and conservative Independents. A message about dead-end jobs (7.2) is a particularly strong secondary message for younger men, conservative Democrats,

Convincing Reason to Support Policymakers in Taking Major Steps on a scale from 1–10, rank ordered by average rating

Opportunity

Our economy will be strongest when every person at every level of society has opportunity to advance. We all seek to improve our situations and seek jobs that offer better opportunities for us and our families to live the kind of lives we want to lead. But too many jobs have no opportunity to grow and no recognition of the employee’s value to the company. We need to provide more opportunity for workers to advance through training, benefit packages that are portable from one job to the next, and stimulating good paying jobs.

7.2

Dead-end Jobs

Good jobs are defined by the opportunity they offer to grow and advance without sacrificing your entire life to work. But too many jobs are dead-end jobs, with no opportunity to grow, no flexibility for family life, and no recognition of the employee’s value to the company. How can there be opportunity in America, if people cannot get ahead in their work? We need to support responsible employers offering good jobs with real opportunities for advancement through tax incentives for job training and skill development, requiring living wages and a minimum set of benefits.

7.2

Sympathy/poverty/stewardship

America is increasingly being separated into the haves and the have nots. One of every three Americans is poor, and two-thirds of those are single mothers with children. Poverty destabilizes families, and destabilizes society. Try to imagine the plight of a single mother working a low wage job. Even at \$10 an hour, twice the minimum wage, she earns only about \$20,000. Who could support a family on \$20,000 a year? It is up to each of us to help those in need. That means supporting government subsidies for health care, day care and transportation to those who are working but still can’t make ends meet, and requiring companies to provide living wages and a minimum set of benefits.

6.8

and Republican women. Finally, the sympathy message, at 6.8 was rated far lower than the other messages, and was only rated highly among liberal Democrats, who respond at higher levels to every message tested.

There was less variation in rating for the messengers, though the businessperson and economist rated marginally higher than other messengers. This suggests that a variety of people in society can speak with credibility on these issues.

Tone is critical to the effectiveness of the responsible planning message. While the message needs to be

about the economy, the way the message characterizes business’ role is important to its success or failure. An overtly anti-business message is less effective.

As noted earlier in this report, respondents were divided into three separate groups: one group, the control group, rated their support for policies with no message for or against. The second and third groups were exposed to statements both for and against a policy and then asked for their level of support. By analyzing the patterns of response to the different messages

tested in the two debate groups, it is possible to determine the strength of various approaches in framing the issue and defending against opposition.

In a parallel test of the planning and investment message against a message about sympathy for the poor, the planning and investment message draws more support for job training programs. Both groups heard the same opposition attack, but two different reasons to support job training. Responsibility and planning is a more effective approach than sympathy.



Messengers Paired with Messages on a scale from 1–10

Morgan Richards, a CEO of a large corporation	7.5
Chris Buckner, an economist	7.4
Dale Burns, mayor of a mid-size city	7.4
Tyler Wilson, head of an advocacy group that helps the working poor	7.3
Pat Sorenson, head of a national labor union	7.3
Cathy Peters, a waitress and single mom	7.3
Reverend Lee Adams, a religious leader	7.2

Job Training: Isolated Support and Support Under Debate net margin = % Favor minus % Oppose

Control

Would you favor or oppose government creating more job training and skill development programs? 68 points

Debate One

Planning and Investment:

To have a strong economy in the future, we need to invest in the workforce now. That means planning for the kinds of jobs we will want and need in 10, 20 or 30 years, and starting to train workers now.

Attack:

There are already plenty of programs and opportunities for a person who really wants to work hard to get ahead so we do not need to create more job training and skill development programs. 49 points

Debate Two

Sympathy:

There are many people who are not working or who are working in low-wage jobs because they do not have the skills to get a better job. So we should create more job training and skill development programs.

Attack:

There are already plenty of programs and opportunities for a person who really wants to work hard to get ahead so we do not need to create more job training and skill development programs. 38 points

However, in the delivery of the responsibility and planning message, advocates need to be careful in their characterization of corporate responsibility. If the tone is too overtly anti-business, it is less effective. For example, on the issue of benefits, a soft critique of business hiring more part-time and contingent workers is more effective than a slightly harsher critique of companies cutting back full-time positions to avoid paying benefits.



Benefits: Isolated Support and Support Under Debate
net margin = % Favor minus % Oppose

Control

Would you favor or oppose requiring companies to provide employees that work at least 25 hours per week with the same range of benefits as full-time employees, meaning they would have all the same health, pension, and paid leave benefits, but adjusted proportionately to their work hours?

40 points

Debate One

Soft Critique:

To avoid paying benefits, some companies are hiring more part-time or contingent workers, which forces employees to work two and three part-time jobs to make ends meet. Government needs to protect those workers by requiring companies to offer benefits to more employees.

Attack:

Increasing numbers of people want flexible work arrangements, such as young parents who want to spend more time with family. If companies are forced to give part-time workers the same benefits full-time workers get, it will be too expensive and part-time arrangements will disappear.

28 points

Debate Two

Harsher Critique:

Successful companies treat their employees as members of a team, and provide flexible arrangements that benefit both the company and the worker. But some companies cut back full-time positions to avoid paying benefits, so workers need government to protect them by requiring companies to offer benefits to more employees.

Attack:

Increasing numbers of people want flexible work arrangements, such as young parents who want to spend more time with family. If companies are forced to give part-time workers the same benefits full-time workers get, it will be too expensive and part-time arrangements will disappear.

21 points

Furthermore, an anti-business message about companies trying to give employees as little as they can was less effective than a sympathetic statement (which has already been shown to be an ineffective approach) about the serious financial difficulties a person faces if they need time off.



Paid Leave: Isolated Support and Support Under Debate	
net margin = % Favor minus % Oppose	
Control	
Would you favor or oppose requiring companies to provide full-time employees with at least five days off with pay annually for illness or a family emergency?	71 points
Debate One	
<p>Sympathetic Situation: The working poor, who rarely get paid leave, can be put into serious financial difficulty or even lose a job, if they get sick or need time off to care for a sick family member. So government needs to require companies to provide some basics like paid leave.</p> <p>Attack: Government should not intrude into corporate practices. It is up to employers and their employees to decide on their benefits so the government should not regulate paid leave.</p>	
55 points	
Debate Two	
<p>Anti Business: Good companies respect and value their employees, but many companies try to give employees as little as they can get away with. So government needs to require companies to provide some basics like paid leave.</p> <p>Attack: Government should not intrude into corporate practices. It is up to employers and their employees to decide on their benefits so the government should not regulate paid leave.</p>	
51 points	

However, a soft critique is better than no critique. On the issue of health insurance, a message about good companies providing insurance while others claim they cannot afford it receives more support than a message that simply says employers don't provide insurance.



Health Insurance: Isolated Support and Support Under Debate

net margin = % Favor minus % Oppose

Control

Would you favor or oppose government providing health insurance to low-wage workers whose employers do not provide it?

45 points

Debate One

Soft Business Critique:

Good companies provide health insurance to attract the best employees and to keep them healthy. But some companies claim they can't afford health insurance. Government needs to step in to protect workers.

Attack:

Nearly every company already offers a health care plan, but some employees just don't want to pay for it. Taxpayers shouldn't have to subsidize those people who choose not to pay for their own insurance.

41 points

Debate Two

No Business Critique:

Millions of Americans are without health insurance today because their employer does not provide it and they cannot afford to buy it on their own, so government needs to fill the gap.

Attack:

Nearly every company already offers a health care plan, but some employees just don't want to pay for it. Taxpayers shouldn't have to subsidize those people who choose not to pay for their own insurance.

35 points

In addition to the responsibility and planning message, the fairness frame also performs well. A fairness message about minimum wage jobs increases support more than a message about a person earning less than the poverty level even though he is working full-time, and it increases support over the control by 10 points.



Minimum Wage: Isolated Support and Support Under Debate
net margin = % Favor minus % Oppose

Control

Would you favor or oppose increasing the minimum wage from \$5.15 per hour to \$8 per hour?

30 points

Debate One

Fair Jobs:

Jobs that used to support a family, like janitors or health care workers, now only pay the minimum wage. It is only fair that people who work full-time should be able support their family with dignity, so the minimum wage should be increased.

Attack:

Minimum wage jobs are held by teenagers or older people looking to make a few extra dollars, so the current minimum wage level is fine.

40 points

Debate Two

Sympathetic Individual:

A person working full-time at a minimum wage job still earns less than the poverty level for a family of three, so the minimum wage should be increased.

Attack:

Minimum wage jobs are held by teenagers or older people looking to make a few extra dollars, so the current minimum wage level is fine.

36 points

Two issue areas in the message test showed no significant difference in response between the debate splits. On the issue of day care, one message tested safety and affordability, while the other tested educational opportunity. Both are equally effective in positioning the need for day care subsidies.

Other research has demonstrated that day care is viewed as a negative consequence of women in the workforce and is closely associated with the public's views on good parenting and morality. Attaching early childhood education to work further invigorates public worries over dual income families and sacrificing children to work. As advocates position day care policies, they should consider whether they are helping to advance early childhood education as a stimulating educational opportunity or whether they are continuing to position it as simply a necessity for work. While both may successfully advance subsidies, the educational opportunity framing helps people to see early childhood education as a positive, while a necessity framing allows day care to continue to be positioned as a sacrifice.

Day Care: Isolated Support and Support Under Debate
net margin = % Favor minus % Oppose

Control

Would you favor or oppose expanding day care subsidies to parents of young children who are working, but poor?

62 points

Debate One

Safety/Necessity:

In today's world, women have to work. But quality day care is not affordable for the working poor. We should provide subsidies for day care to make sure children are safe while their parents work.

Attack:

It is not government's responsibility to spend billions paying for day care. If a parent chooses to work, then they are also responsible for using some of those wages to pay for taking care of their child while they work.

40 points

Debate Two

Educational Opportunity:

All children should start out with the best opportunities to succeed, but some parents can afford the best quality early education while other parents don't have that opportunity. We should provide subsidies for quality child care to give all children a good start in life.

Attack:

It is not government's responsibility to spend billions paying for day care. If a parent chooses to work, then they are also responsible for using some of those wages to pay for taking care of their child while they work.

41 points

Similarly, on the issue of self-sufficiency, neither message held up well to the opposition. One message was based on studies indicating the poverty level is insufficient. The other message was based on the ability of a few companies to keep wages in a city unfairly low. Neither tested well. Since this question is about poverty level guidelines, it may be that self-sufficiency is so closely tied to the poverty frame, that the economic positioning is not strong enough to break people's associations with poverty and the poor. A more effective approach may be the approach taken with the minimum wage test—focusing on fairness and dignity in work, rather than allowing self-sufficiency to be categorized as being about assistance to the poor.



Self-Sufficiency: Isolated Support and Support Under Debate

net margin = % Favor minus % Oppose

Control

Would you favor or oppose adjusting poverty level guidelines to take into account an individual family's situation and the area's cost of living to determine the government assistance that family needs?

53 points

Debate One

Research Studies:

The federal poverty level guidelines need to be replaced with a self-sufficiency standard, which is a flexible system that provides incremental government subsidies of different kinds, such as health insurance, day care, or cash so that people can make it on their own. Studies demonstrate that the poverty level just isn't enough in most cities. A no-frills existence is frequently double the poverty level.

Attack:

The market naturally adjusts wages in a region. If an area has a higher cost of living, employers are likely to offer higher wages to attract employees, so this kind of adjustment isn't needed. Besides, it would cost billions to create this new government bureaucracy.

25 points

Debate Two

Unfair Companies:

Wages in a city are frequently kept low because a few companies that value short-term profits over long-term growth, pay workers unfair wages. Meanwhile rent, food, transportation and other basic needs can become out-of-reach. We need standards for wages and for government assistance that take cost of living for an area into account and allow workers to earn a fair living.

Attack:

The market naturally adjusts wages in a region. If an area has a higher cost of living, employers are likely to offer higher wages to attract employees, so this kind of adjustment isn't needed. Besides, it would cost billions to create this new government bureaucracy.

23 points

Constituencies

Fortunately, the recommended message strategy is effective across the American electorate. It is effective with men and women, young and old, Republicans and Democrats, etc. No matter which audience the communications target, the responsible planning message is the most convincing approach. As noted, there are also several secondary messages that are effective, particularly with specific audiences.

While the message can be consistent across audiences, there are certain subgroups of the electorate that are reliable, core supporters for issues affecting low-wage workers, while others need reinforcement. Core supporters, those who support these measures at high levels and retain their support even under debate, include the traditional audiences for this issue. These voters are the solid foundation of support upon which the larger movement can build.

- **Democrats**
(40% of the electorate)
- **Labor union households**
(16% of the electorate)
- **Non-white voters**
(19% of the electorate)
- **Those earning less than \$25,000 per year**
(22% of the electorate)
- **Younger women**
(25% of the electorate)

The next tier of support consists of those voters who initially support policies at high levels, but weaken in their support when a debate ensues. These swing voters include: voters in the Northeast (followed by the Midwest), older women, voters without a college education, and Independents.

Northeast Voters (19% of the electorate)

On average, voters in the Northeast support the tested policies by a net 62 percentage points. However, a policy debate causes support to erode by 40 percent. Strengthening the economy is their top priority (8.5 on a 10 point scale) and they are more likely than voters overall to prioritize “ensuring economic opportunity for all Americans” (8.0). More than voters overall, they see government as having a lot of responsibility for strengthening the economy (63%) and for ensuring economic opportunity (53%). They rate the working poor spokesperson and the local politician as particularly effective messengers. One-fifth (20%) of voters in the Northeast live in union households.

Older Women (26% of the electorate)

On average, older women support the tested policies by a net 62 percentage points. However, a policy debate causes support to erode by 38 percent. They rate all issues as higher priorities than voters overall, but are particularly concerned about “making health care affordable and accessible to everyone” (9.0 on a 10 point scale). They rate all of the messages at higher levels than voters overall. They are heavy churchgoers, with 41% saying they attend religious services at least once per week.

Voters without a College Education (33% of the electorate)

On average, women without a college education support the tested policies by a net 75 percentage points and men without a college education support by 57 percentage points. However, a policy debate causes support to erode by 30

percent and 35 percent respectively. They rate every issue as a higher priority than the electorate overall. Men in this category see improving education as the highest priority (8.7 on a 10 point scale) followed by the economy (8.6), while women prioritize health care (9.3) followed by the economy and education (8.8 each). They see much higher levels of responsibility for both government and business in addressing problems, particularly among women in this category. Voters without a college education (particularly women) rate all the messages higher. While men are most attracted to the responsible planning message, they also rate the opportunity message particularly highly. Women without a college education are heavy churchgoers—43% attend services at least once per week. Problematically, few have experience in political action. Most have never spoken in public about an issue they care about (75% of men, 79% of women) and most have never expressed their opinion in a letter to a member of Congress or a newspaper (54% of men, 58% of women).

Independents (20% of the electorate)

On average, Independents support the tested policies by a net 53 percentage points, but a policy debate causes support to erode by 38 percent. They rate “making health care accessible and affordable to everyone” as their top priority (8.6 on a 10 point scale). Independents tend to see less responsibility for government in addressing problems, but in “ensuring economic opportunity” they are at the same level as voters overall. They find a businessperson to be a particularly compelling spokesperson.

One other category of swing voters provides substantiation for the need for grassroots mobilization on this issue.

Some of the strongest initial support for policies, followed by drops in support under debate, is among those voters who have never publicly expressed their opinion on an issue. They rate all issues as higher priorities, and tend to put more responsibility with government to fix problems, so they should be strong supporters of our issues if they can be mobilized to voice their opinion. Target supporters who have never written a letter with their opinion about an issue include: younger women (55%), men and women without a college education (54% and 58% respectively), and African American and Hispanic voters (59% each). Those who have never spoken out for an issue they care about include men and women without a college education (75% and 79% respectively), and lower income voters (69%). A broad communications strategy should help these voters become engaged in the process and feel comfortable expressing their opinion to policymakers.



Conclusions

At a mid-way point in the research, Susan Bales of the Frameworks Institute suggested that much of the existing communications on this topic revolved around positioning low-wage workers as sympathetic individuals deserving of support. Framing stories as individual problems forces the public to see the causes and solutions as inherent to the individual as well. She suggested that issues of low-wage work should be positioned as being about the work, not the worker, and listed the choices in communications under each alternative. This was a useful approach for quickly identifying and summarizing what needs to be communicated, and what needs to be avoided. As a conclusion to this research process, I offer an updated and expanded version of Bales' insights that incorporates the recommendations across all the research to date.

Frames We Need: Recommendations & Frames We've Got: Avoid	
Needed	Avoid
Jobs/Economy	The Poor/Working Poor
All of Us/Unity	Them/Otherness
Work	Worker
Paying Well Enough	Working Hard Enough
System Failures	Individual Failures
Public Problem/Solution	Private Problem/Solution
Fix the Condition	Fix the Person
Can Affect Economy/Plan and Invest	Free Market/Can't Affect System
Responsible Management/Planning	Harsh Anti-business
Fairness	Sympathy Story
Societal Concern/Use Diverse Voices	Concern of Just Advocates and Politicians
Teamwork	Government/Business/Individual as Isolated Actors

Work Survey

General Public Survey

1,204 Registered Voters Nationwide
June 6–17, 2002

(Responses in Percent)

Hello. My name is (caller name). I'm calling for National Opinion Surveys. I would like to ask you a few questions about some issues facing the United States. The survey will take about 20 minutes. This is for research purposes only. Could I please speak with the person 18 or older in your household who celebrated a birthday most recently? (Repeat intro if necessary.)

Record Respondents Gender (Do Not Ask).

Male 48
Female 52

1. First of all, are you registered to vote at this address?

Yes 100
No registered voter **(Terminate)**

Please tell me what kind of priority you want to see the President and Congress give to each of the following issues. Rate each issue on a scale from one to ten, with ten meaning the issue should be among the highest priorities and one meaning the issue should be among the lowest priorities. Or you can rate anywhere between one and ten.

_____ (Neither/Don't know = 11)

(Randomize)

	Average %	Rating 10
2. Strengthening the economy	8.4	43
3. Improving education and the schools	8.4	51
4. Creating good jobs	7.7	36
5. Improving conditions for the poor	7.5	32
6. Ensuring economic opportunity for all Americans	7.8	37
7. Making health care affordable and accessible to everyone	8.4	53
8. Lowering taxes	7.1	30
9. Helping families who are working, but poor	7.6	30

(Split Sample A—1/3 Sample)

10. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement. A free market economy is strongest when there are few restrictions or regulations to stunt its growth. Left on its own, businesses will prosper through supplying the products and services that people want and through creating profitable innovations. The jobs that are in the greatest demand will pay the highest wages. The natural forces in the market keep the economy growing. (FOLLOW UP) And do you agree/disagree strongly or not so strongly?

Agree, strongly	40
Agree, not strongly	29
Disagree, not strongly	13
Disagree, strongly	12
Don't know	6

(Split Sample B—1/3 Sample)

11. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement. To keep America prosperous, we need a long-term approach for the kind of economy that works for everyone, rather than short-term thinking only concerned about a corporation's quarterly profits. Future prosperity requires that we start thinking today about the industries we want to develop, the infrastructure we will need, and the investments society makes in today's workforce. (FOLLOW UP) And do you agree/disagree strongly or not so strongly?

Agree, strongly	67
Agree, not strongly	21
Disagree, not strongly	4
Disagree, strongly	5
Don't know	3

(Split Sample C—1/3 Sample)

12. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statement. It is up to government to set the standards that protect workers and intervene when workers need assistance. There are many ways that workers rely upon government—wage and hour laws, health care and day care assistance to workers who are poor, and unemployment insurance, to name a few. We need government to continue to watch out for workers’ best interests. (FOLLOW UP) And do you agree/disagree strongly or not so strongly?

Agree, strongly	47
Agree, not strongly	27
Disagree, not strongly	11
Disagree, strongly	12
Don’t know	3

Resume Asking Everyone

There are many segments of society that have influence—government, business, individual citizens to name a few. Thinking about the role of government, tell me how much responsibility you believe government should have for each of the following—a lot, some, a little or not much? (Neither/Don’t know vol. Response)

(Randomize)

	A Lot	Some	A Little	Not Much	Don’t Know
13. Strengthening the economy	59	31	6	4	0
14. Improving education and the schools	66	23	5	5	0
15. Creating good jobs	43	38	11	7	0
16. Improving conditions for the poor	48	38	9	5	1
17. Ensuring economic opportunity for all Americans	48	36	8	6	1
18. Making health care affordable and accessible to everyone	69	21	6	4	0
19. Helping families who are working, but poor	46	41	9	5	0

Now thinking about the role of business, tell me how much responsibility you believe business should have for each of the following—a lot, some, a little or not much?

(Randomize)

	A Lot	Some	A Little	Not Much	Don't Know
20 Strengthening the economy	66	28	3	3	0
21. Improving education and the schools	36	36	15	13	0
22. Creating good jobs	73	20	4	2	1
23. Improving conditions for the poor	32	41	16	10	1
24. Ensuring economic opportunity for all Americans	54	32	8	6	0
25. Making health care affordable and accessible to everyone	49	32	10	8	0
26. Helping families who are working, but poor	37	43	13	7	0

(Split Sample A—1/3 Sample)

Now I'd like to ask some more questions about free markets and the natural forces in the market that keep the economy growing. I'm going to read you descriptions of some policies that are being discussed by legislators. For each, please tell me if you favor or oppose that policy.

(Split Sample B—1/3 Sample)

Now I'd like to ask some more questions about a long-term approach for the kind of economy that works for everyone. I'm going to read you descriptions of some policies that are being discussed by legislators. For each, please tell me if you favor or oppose that policy.

(Split Sample C—1/3 Sample)

Now I'd like to ask some more questions about government's role in protecting and assisting workers. I'm going to read you descriptions of some policies that are being discussed by legislators. For each, please tell me if you favor or oppose that policy.

Split Sample 1 (one third of respondents)

(Randomize order of descriptions)

27. Would you favor or oppose increasing the minimum wage from \$5.15 per hour to \$8 per hour.

(Follow Up Choice) And do you favor/oppose strongly or not so strongly?

Favor,STRONG	51
Favor,not strong	14
Oppose,not strong	12
Oppose,Strong	22
Neither/Don't know	1

28. Would you favor or oppose requiring companies to provide full-time employees with at least five days off with pay annually for illness or a family emergency?

(Follow Up Choice) And do you favor/oppose strongly or not so strongly?

Favor,STRONG	71
Favor,not strong	14
Oppose,not strong	5
Oppose,STRONG	8
Neither/Don't know	1

29. Would you favor or oppose adjusting poverty level guidelines to take into account an individual family's situation and the area's cost of living to determine the government assistance that family needs?

(Follow Up Choice) And do you favor/oppose strongly or not so strongly?

Favor,STRONG	49
Favor,not strong	27
Oppose,not strong	11
Oppose,STRONG	11
Neither/Don't know	2

30. Would you favor or oppose requiring companies to provide employees that work at least 25 hours per week with the same range of benefits as full-time employees, meaning they would have all the same health, pension, and paid leave benefits, but adjusted proportionately to their work hours?

(Follow Up Choice) And do you favor/oppose strongly or not so strongly?

Favor,STRONG	45
Favor,not strong	24
Oppose,not strong	11
Oppose,STRONG	18
Neither/Don't know	1

31. Would you favor or oppose expanding day care subsidies to parents of young children who are working, but poor?

(Follow Up Choice) And do you favor/oppose strongly or not so strongly?

Favor,STRONG	54
Favor,not strong	26
Oppose,not strong	9
Oppose,STRONG	10
Neither/Don't know	1

32. Would you favor or oppose government providing health insurance to low-wage workers whose employers do not provide it?

(Follow Up Choice) And do you favor/oppose strongly or not so strongly?

Favor,STRONG	52
Favor,not strong	19
Oppose,not strong	10
Oppose,STRONG	16
Neither/Don't know	3

33. Would you favor or oppose government creating more job training and skill development programs?

(Follow Up Choice) And do you favor/oppose strongly or not so strongly?

Favor,STRONG	60
Favor,not strong	23
Oppose,not strong	7
Oppose,STRONG	9
Neither/Don't know	1

End of Split Sample 1

Split Sample 2 (One-third of Respondents)

(Randomize order of descriptions and rotate some/other statements)

34. Some people say (statement) while other people say (statement)

- A person working full-time at a minimum wage job still earns less than the poverty level for a family of three,so the minimum wage should be increased.
- Minimum wage jobs are held by teenagers or older people looking to make a few extra dollars,so the current minimum wage level is fine.

What do you think? Would you favor or oppose increasing the minimum wage from \$5.15 per hour to \$8 per hour?

(Follow Up Choice) And do you favor/oppose strongly or not so strongly?

Favor,STRONG	54
Favor,not strong	13
Oppose,not strong	10
Oppose,STRONG	21
Neither/Don't know	2

35. Some people say (Statement) while other people say (Statement)

- The working poor, who rarely get paid leave, can be put into serious financial difficulty or even lose a job, if they get sick or need time off to care for a sick family member. So government needs to require companies to provide some basics like paid leave.
- Government should not intrude into corporate practices. It is up to employers and their employees to decide on their benefits so the government should not regulate paid leave.

What do you think? Would you favor or oppose requiring companies to provide full-time employees with at least five days off with pay annually for illness or a family emergency?

(Follow Up Choice) And do you favor/oppose strongly or not so strongly?

Favor,STRONG	63
Favor,not strong	14
Oppose,not strong	8
Oppose,STRONG	14
Neither/Don't know	2

36. Some people say (Statement) while other people say (Statement)

- The federal poverty level guidelines need to be replaced with a self-sufficiency standard, which is a flexible system that provides incremental government subsidies of different kinds, such as health insurance, day care, or cash so that people can make it on their own. Studies demonstrate that the poverty level just isn't enough in most cities. A no-frills existence is frequently double the poverty level.
- The market naturally adjusts wages in a region. If an area has a higher cost of living, employers are likely to offer higher wages to attract employees, so this kind of adjustment isn't needed. Besides, it would cost billions to create this new government bureaucracy.

What do you think? Would you favor or oppose adjusting poverty level guidelines to take into account an individual family's situation and the area's cost of living to determine the government assistance that family needs?

(Follow Up Choice) And do you favor/oppose strongly or not so strongly?

Favor,STRONG	37
Favor,not strong	22
Oppose,not strong	14
Oppose,STRONG	20
Neither/Don't know	7

37. Some people say (Statement) while other people say (Statement)

- To avoid paying benefits, some companies are hiring more part-time or contingent workers, which forces employees to work two and three part-time jobs to make ends meet. Government needs to protect those workers by requiring companies to offer benefits to more employees.
- Increasing numbers of people want flexible work arrangements, such as young parents who want to spend more time with family. If companies are forced to give part-time workers the same benefits full-time workers get, it will be too expensive and part-time arrangements will disappear.

What do you think? Would you favor or oppose requiring companies to provide employees that work at least 25 hours per week with the same range of benefits as full-time employees, meaning they would have all the same health, pension, and paid leave benefits, but adjusted proportionately to their work hours?

(Follow Up Choice) And do you favor/oppose strongly or not so strongly?

Favor, STRONG	46
Favor, not strong	17
Oppose, not strong	13
Oppose, STRONG	22
Neither/Don't know	3

38. Some people say (Statement) while other people say (Statement)

- In today's world, women have to work. But quality day care is not affordable for the working poor. We should provide subsidies for day care to make sure children are safe while their parents work.
- It is not government's responsibility to spend billions paying for day care. If a parent chooses to work, then they are also responsible for using some of those wages to pay for taking care of their child while they work.

What do you think? Would you favor or oppose expanding day care subsidies to parents of young children who are working, but poor?

(Follow Up Choice) And do you favor/oppose strongly or not so strongly?

Favor, STRONG	51
Favor, not strong	19
Oppose, not strong	12
Oppose, STRONG	17
Neither/Don't know	1

39. Some people say (Statement) while other people say (Statement)

- Millions of Americans are without health insurance today because their employer does not provide it and they cannot afford to buy it on their own, so government needs to fill the gap.
- Nearly every company already offers a health care plan, but some employees just don't want to pay for it. Taxpayers shouldn't have to subsidize those people who choose not to pay for their own insurance.

What do you think? Would you favor or oppose government providing health insurance to low-wage workers whose employers do not provide it?

(Follow Up Choice) And do you favor/oppose strongly or not so strongly?

Favor, STRONG	52
Favor, not strong	14
Oppose, not strong	12
Oppose, STRONG	19
Neither/Don't know	3

40. Some people say (Statement) while other people say (Statement)

- There are many people who are not working or who are working in low wage jobs because they do not have the skills to get a better job. So we should create more job training and skill development programs.
- There are already plenty of programs and opportunities for a person who really wants to work hard to get ahead so we do not need to create more job training and skill development programs.

What do you think? Would you favor or oppose government creating more job training and skill development programs?

(Follow Up Choice) And do you favor/oppose strongly or not so strongly?

Favor, STRONG	51
Favor, not strong	17
Oppose, not strong	12
Oppose, STRONG	18
Neither/Don't know	2

Split Sample 3 (One-third of Sample)

(Randomize order of descriptions and rotate some/other statements)

41. Some people say (Statement) while other people say (Statement)

- Jobs that used to support a family, like janitors or health care workers, now only pay the minimum wage. It is only fair that people who work full-time should be able support their family with dignity, so the minimum wage should be increased.
- Minimum wage jobs are held by teenagers or older people looking to make a few extra dollars, so the current minimum wage level is fine.

What do you think? Would you favor or oppose increasing the minimum wage from \$5.15 per hour to \$8 per hour?

(Follow Up Choice) And do you favor/oppose strongly or not so strongly?

Favor, STRONG	55
Favor, not strong	15
Oppose, not strong	10
Oppose, STRONG	20
Neither/Don't know	1

42. Some people say (Statement) while other people say (Statement)

- Good companies respect and value their employees, but many companies try to give employees as little as they can get away with. So government needs to require companies to provide some basics like paid leave.
- Government should not intrude into corporate practices. It is up to employers and their employees to decide on their benefits so the government should not regulate paid leave.

What do you think? Would you favor or oppose requiring companies to provide full-time employees with at least five days off with pay annually for illness or a family emergency?

(Follow Up Choice) And do you favor/oppose strongly or not so strongly?

Favor, STRONG	60
Favor, not strong	15
Oppose, not strong	9
Oppose, STRONG	15
Neither/Don't know	0

43. Some people say (Statement) while other people say (Statement)

- Wages in a city are frequently kept low because a few companies that value short-term profits over long-term growth, pay workers unfair wages. Meanwhile rent, food, transportation and other basic needs can become out-of-reach. We need standards for wages and for government assistance that take cost of living for an area into account and allow workers to earn a fair living.
- The market naturally adjusts wages in a region. If an area has a higher cost of living, employers are likely to offer higher wages to attract employees, so this kind of adjustment isn't needed. Besides, it would cost billions to create this new government bureaucracy.

What do you think? Would you favor or oppose adjusting poverty level guidelines to take into account an individual family's situation and the area's cost of living to determine the government assistance that family needs?

(Follow Up Choice) And do you favor/oppose strongly or not so strongly?

Favor,STRONG	37
Favor,not strong	23
Oppose,not strong	13
Oppose,STRONG	23
Neither/Don't know	4

44. Some people say (Statement) while other people say (Statement)

- Successful companies treat their employees as members of a team, and provide flexible arrangements that benefit both the company and the worker. But some companies cut back full-time positions to avoid paying benefits, so workers need government to protect them by requiring companies to offer benefits to more employees.
- Increasing numbers of people want flexible work arrangements, such as young parents who want to spend more time with family. If companies are forced to give part-time workers the same benefits full-time workers get, it will be too expensive and part-time arrangements will disappear.

What do you think? Would you favor or oppose requiring companies to provide employees that work at least 25 hours per week with the same range of benefits as full-time employees, meaning they would have all the same health, pension, and paid leave benefits, but adjusted proportionately to their work hours?

(Follow Up Choice) And do you favor/oppose strongly or not so strongly?

Favor,STRONG	42
Favor,not strong	18
Oppose,not strong	17
Oppose,STRONG	21
Neither/Don't know	3

45. Some people say (Statement) while other people say (Statement)

- All children should start out with the best opportunities to succeed, but some parents can afford the best quality early education while other parents don't have that opportunity. We should provide subsidies for quality child care to give all children a good start in life.
- It is not government's responsibility to spend billions paying for day care. If a parent chooses to work, then they are also responsible for using some of those wages to pay for taking care of their child while they work.

What do you think? Would you favor or oppose expanding day care subsidies to parents of young children who are working, but poor?

(Follow Up Choice) And do you favor/oppose strongly or not so strongly?

Favor,STRONG	47
Favor,not strong	22
Oppose,not strong	10
Oppose,STRONG	19
Neither/Don't know	1

46. Some people say (Statement) while other people say (Statement)

- Good companies provide health insurance to attract the best employees and to keep them healthy. But some companies claim they can't afford health insurance. Government needs to step in to protect workers.
- Nearly every company already offers a health care plan, but some employees just don't want to pay for it. Taxpayers shouldn't have to subsidize those people who choose not to pay for their own insurance.

What do you think? Would you favor or oppose government providing health insurance to low-wage workers whose employers do not provide it?

(Follow Up Choice) And do you favor/oppose strongly or not so strongly?

Favor,STRONG	49
Favor,not strong	20
Oppose,not strong	13
Oppose,STRONG	15
Neither/Don't know	2

47. Some people say (Statement) while other people say (Statement)

- To have a strong economy in the future, we need to invest in the workforce now. That means planning for the kinds of jobs we will want and need in 10, 20 or 30 years, and starting to train workers now.
- There are already plenty of programs and opportunities for a person who really wants to work hard to get ahead so we do not need to create more job training and skill development programs.

What do you think? Would you favor or oppose government creating more job training and skill development programs?

(Follow Up Choice) And do you favor/oppose strongly or not so strongly?

Favor, STRONG	55
Favor, not strong	19
Oppose, not strong	12
Oppose, STRONG	13
Neither/Don't know	1

Resume Asking Everyone

What kind of priority do you want the President and Congress to give to each of the following issues—on a scale from one to ten, with ten meaning the issue should be among the highest priorities and one meaning the issue should be among the lowest priorities, or anywhere between one and ten?

_____ (Neither/Don't know = 11)

Randomize

	Average	% Rating10
48. Strengthening the economy	8.3	43
49. Improving education and the schools	8.4	53
50. Creating good jobs	7.4	33
51. Improving conditions for the poor	7.4	31
52. Ensuring economic opportunity for all Americans	7.7	38
53. Making health care affordable and accessible to everyone	8.2	49
54. Helping families who are working, but poor	7.5	32
55. Lowering taxes	7.2	33

Now let me read you some things that different people have said about these issues. Please tell me how convincing you would rate each statement on a scale of one to ten, with one being a totally UNCONVINCING reason and 10 being an extremely CONVINCING reason for you personally to support policymakers taking major steps to address jobs and the economy. Or, you can rate anywhere in between 1 and 10. (Neither/Don't know vol. response—11)

**Average Messenger Rating,
Across All Messages**

SEVEN SPLITS—Rotating messenger across messages

Messenger 1—Economist: Chris Buckner, an economist, says that	7.4
Messenger 2—Business: Morgan Richards, a CEO of a large corporation, says that	7.5
Messenger 3—Advocate: Tyler Wilson, head of an advocacy group that helps the working poor, says that	7.3
Messenger 4—Labor leader: Pat Sorenson, head of a national labor union, says that	7.3
Messenger 5—Religious: Reverend Lee Adams, a religious leader, says that	7.2
Messenger 6—Politician: Dale Burns, mayor of a mid-size city, says that	7.4
Messenger 7—Working poor: Cathy Peters, a waitress and single mom, says that	7.3

Randomize Message Order

Message 1—Opportunity

Our economy will be strongest when every person at every level of society has opportunity to advance. We all seek to improve our situations and seek jobs that offer better opportunities for us and our families to live the kind of lives we want to lead. But too many jobs have no opportunity to grow and no recognition of the employee's value to the company. We need to provide more opportunity for workers to advance through training, benefit packages that are portable from one job to the next, and stimulating good paying jobs.

Average Messenger Rating Across All Messages	7.2
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Message 2—Fairness

People who work hard shouldn't be poor, but many are. Today, millions of the hardest working Americans are living in poverty. At \$5.15 an hour, the purchasing power of the minimum wage is 25% lower than it was in the 1970s. What today costs what it did in the 1970s? A parent with two children can work full-time year-round at the current minimum and still make only \$10,700—much less than the poverty level. And that is with no benefits like health insurance or daycare subsidies. It is only fair to require decent wages and basic benefits that allow workers to provide for their families and live in dignity.

Average Messenger Rating Across All Messages	7.5
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Message 3—Planning/Economic Vision

Creating a better tomorrow requires responsible planning today. Instead of a short-term profit orientation, we need to think about building jobs and the economy for the long-term. Too many companies and decision makers focus on short-term profits and short-term thinking to the detriment of the greater good. We need to change that thinking and create a future with a strong economy and good jobs for all workers. That means investing in education and job training, and encouraging investment in industries with the kinds of good jobs that support families and strengthen communities.

Average Messenger Rating Across All Messages 8.0

Message 4—Teamwork/Respect

Good companies know that their future relies on their employees, so they treat employees as respected members of the team and provide good pay, benefits, and working conditions. But there are also “grab and go” companies that profit at others’ expense, that take advantage of employees, focus on short-term profits instead of long-term stability, and jump with their profits at the first sign of trouble. Government needs to encourage responsible companies, and protect workers from irresponsible companies by enforcing workplace safety regulations, wage and hour laws, and requiring living wage standards and a minimum set of benefits.

Average Messenger Rating Across All Messages 7.5

Message 5—Sympathy/poverty/stewardship

America is increasingly being separated into the haves and the have nots. One of every three Americans is poor, and two-thirds of those are single mothers with children. Poverty destabilizes families, and destabilizes society. Try to imagine the plight of a single mother working a low wage job. Even at \$10 an hour, twice the minimum wage, she earns only about \$20,000. Who could support a family on \$20,000 a year? It is up to each of us to help those in need. That means supporting government subsidies for health care, day care and transportation to those who are working but still can’t make ends meet, and requiring companies to provide living wages and a minimum set of benefits.

Average Messenger Rating Across All Messages 6.8

Message 6—Balance/Jobs for 21st Century

The world has changed—about two-thirds of women are now in the workforce, but the workplace has not changed to adapt to families’ needs. The workplace still assumes the ideal worker has no other responsibilities except work. You can be asked to work overtime or change your schedule with no thought about whether there is any impact on your home life. Seventy years ago we created a basic set of work-related benefits like unemployment insurance, social security, and the 40-hour workweek. We need to update these laws and make today’s workplace work for all workers by providing living wages, affordable childcare, and flexibility in hours.

Average Messenger Rating Across All Messages 7.3

Message 7—Dead-end Jobs

Good jobs are defined by the opportunity they offer to grow and advance without sacrificing your entire life to work. But too many jobs are dead-end jobs, with no opportunity to grow, no flexibility for family life, and no recognition of the employee's value to the company. How can there be opportunity in America, if people cannot get ahead in their work? We need to support responsible employers offering good jobs with real opportunities for advancement through tax incentives for job training and skill development, requiring living wages and a minimum set of benefits.

Average Messenger Rating Across All Messages

7.2

And now, just a few more quick questions for statistical purposes. This information will only be used for analysis of this study, and will be kept completely confidential.

56. Generally speaking, do you consider yourself a Democrat, Republican or Independent? (If Independent, Don't Know) Would you say you are closer to the Democrats or Republicans?

Democrat	34
Lean Democrat	7
Independent, no lean	20
Lean Republican	6
Republican	29
Don't know / Refused	4

57. Thinking in political terms, would you say that you are Conservative, Moderate, or Liberal?

Liberal	17
Moderate	39
Conservative	39
(Don't know/refused)	5

I am going to read you a list of activities that some people have done and others have not. Please tell me which of the following you can recall ever having done. (IF YES) Did you happen to have done that in the last 12 months or so?

	Ever Done	Past 12 months	Never	Don't know
58. Expressed your opinion by writing a letter to a newspaper or contacting an elected official	33	22	43	1

	Ever Done	Past 12 months	Never	Don't know
59. Spoken in public for an organization or cause you cared about	21	18	60	1
60. In what year were you born?				
18-29	13			
30-39	17			
40-54	30			
55-64	18			
65+	20			
Refused	3			
61. What is your employment status?				
Employed full time	45			
Employed part time	8			
Self employed	8			
Not employed but looking	4			
Homemaker	6			
Student	2			
Retired	22			
Other, not working	3			
Refused	1			
62. Are you married, single, separated, widowed, or divorced?				
Married	56			
Single, never married	20			
Separated/divorced	14			
Widowed	8			
Refused	1			

63. (If Married) Does your spouse work, part-time or more, outside the home or would you say that your spouse's work is mainly at home?

Employed	66
At home	32
Refused	2

64. Do you have any children?

Yes	73
No	25
Refused	1

65. (If Yes) In which of the following age groups do they belong? (Check All That Apply)

Under 2 years old	6
2–5 years old	12
6–11 years old	18
12–18 years old	22
Over 18 years old	67
Refused	1

66. What is the last year of schooling that you have completed?

1–11th grade	6
High school graduate	26
Non-college post H.S. (e.g. tech)	2
Some college (jr. college)	26
College graduate	25
Post-graduate school/PHD	14
Don't know	2

67. About how often do you attend church or synagogue—at least once a week, almost every week, about once a month, seldom, or never?

At least once a week	35
Almost every week	11
About once a month	12
Seldom	26
Never	14
Don't know	2

68. Are you a member of a labor union? (If No) Is any member of your household a union member?

Yes: Respondent belongs	12
Household member	4
No member belongs	82
(Don't know/refused)	2

69. What is your race? (Can Mark More Than One)

White	78
Black	9
Hispanic (Puerto Rican, Mexican-American, etc.)	6
Asian/pacific islander	1
Other	4
Don't know/refused	3

70. And are you of Spanish or Hispanic descent? (Results Combined With Above)

71. And lastly, which of the following categories reflects your total household income before taxes?

Less than \$15,000	9
\$15–25,000	13
\$26–35,000	13
\$36–50,000	17
\$51–75,000	16
\$76–100,000	10
\$101–150,000	6
Over \$150,000	5
Refused	12

Thank You **[Terminate]**

