

Perceptions of Poverty...National Salvation Army Week

Written by Holly Nomura
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REPORT: 38% OF AMERICANS HAVE RECEIVED HELP FROM CHARITY

Report Highlights Importance of Giving Back During 59th Annual National Salvation Army Week

(Alexandria, VA) May 16, 2012 – The American public is largely sympathetic to people in need, but drastically misunderstands the causes of poverty, according to a new report, “Perceptions of Poverty: The Salvation Army’s Report to America,” released today by The Salvation Army. Among other eye-opening statistics, the report showed that while 38 percent of Americans have received assistance from a charitable group in their lifetime, another 27 percent of Americans believe that laziness is a root cause of poverty. Still, an overwhelming majority continues to donate to charities to help others in need.

The report was based on a survey of more than 1,000 Americans, conducted in February 2012 by a third-party research firm in advance of the 59th annual National Salvation Army Week, celebrated this year from May 14-20.

“This report highlights the critical issue of poverty at a time when many Americans are struggling to get by,” said Major George Hood, National Community Relations and Development Secretary for The Salvation Army. “It is more important than ever to raise awareness of not only the public’s perception of poverty, but also the programs available to those in need. With the public’s support, The Salvation Army will continue to provide assistance.”

According to the survey commissioned by The Salvation Army and conducted on Vision Critical's Springboard America panel, nearly 40 percent of Americans have requested help, including housing, food, financial and other assistance, from charitable organizations at some point in their lives. In particular, Americans with lower household incomes are much more likely to have experienced a lack of shelter, or a need to request assistance from a charitable group.

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Thirty-eight percent of Americans have received assistance from a charitable group, including food from food banks or financial assistance/housing support.

Thirteen percent of Americans reported having spent a night in a shelter or on the street due to a loss of housing.

Additionally, a majority of Americans believe people living in poverty deserve a helping hand, and sympathize with the challenges that people living in poverty face on a daily basis.

- Eighty-eight percent of Americans believe people living in poverty deserve a helping hand.
- Eighty-four percent of Americans believe it is almost impossible to survive on your own on minimum wage.
- Seventy-five percent of Americans believe helping poor families sets up children from those families for success.
- Sixty percent of Americans believe it is difficult to escape poverty once becoming poor.
- However, there are a significant minority of Americans who are skeptical of the realities and reasons for poverty.
- Notably, the further a person is from poverty, the less common he or she believes poverty is in society.
- Forty-nine percent of Americans believe a good work ethic is all a person needs to escape poverty.
- Forty-three percent of Americans believe people living in poverty can always find a job if they really want to work, with twenty-seven percent of Americans reporting that people are poor because they are lazy.
- Twenty-nine percent of Americans believe poor people usually have lower moral values.

In total, Americans believe approximately thirty-four percent of the general population is living in poverty. However, Americans who earn less than \$25,000 a year believe forty percent of the population lives in poverty, while Americans who earn at least \$50,000 a year believe twenty-seven percent live in poverty.

The Perceptions of Poverty report, which can be viewed on The Salvation Army's website at www.SalvationArmyUSA.org, comes as The Salvation Army celebrates the 59th annual National Salvation Army Week with a variety of events and activities to honor donors, supporters and beneficiaries of Salvation Army programs. President Dwight D. Eisenhower declared the first National Salvation Army Week in 1954, proclaiming, "Among Americans, The Salvation Army has long been a symbol of wholehearted dedication to the cause of brotherhood. In time of war, the men and women of this organization have brought to those serving their country far from home, friendliness and warm concern. In the quieter days of

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peace, their work has been a constant reminder to us all that each of us is neighbor and kin to all Americans, giving freely of themselves, the men and women of The Salvation Army have won the respect of all.”

“We are proud to celebrate our donors, volunteers and supporters, not only during National Salvation Army Week but every day throughout the year,” said Major Hood. “As President Eisenhower recognized nearly sixty years ago, The Salvation Army is dedicated to serving our neighbors, families and friends in communities throughout America, and we want to take this time to give thanks to each person who makes this possible.”

Since The Salvation Army began its social service work in the United States in 1880, the organization has grown into one of the largest social service providers in the country. Each year, The Salvation Army directly supports 30 million Americans through a variety of programs including transitional and family shelters, feeding programs, senior centers, adult rehabilitation, education, athletic programs for kids and more.

Though the dates have changed since the first National Salvation Army Week, the work of The Salvation Army has not. The Salvation Army is calling upon all Americans to consider donating money or volunteering time to charities and organizations fighting poverty in local communities. Donors and volunteers can learn more about The Salvation Army, including further information regarding the Perceptions of Poverty report and National Salvation Army Week, by visiting www.SalvationArmyUSA.org.

About The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army, an evangelical part of the universal Christian church established in London in 1865, has been supporting those in need in His name without discrimination for 130 years in the United States. Nearly 30 million Americans receive assistance from The Salvation Army each year through the broadest array of social services that range from providing food for the hungry, relief for disaster victims, assistance for the disabled, outreach to the elderly and ill, clothing and shelter to the homeless and opportunities for underprivileged children. 82 cents of every dollar spent is used Wednesday, May 16, 2012 to support those services in 5,000 communities nationwide. For more information, go to www.salvationarmyusa.org.

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