

Debt Facts

- For the first time since the Great Depression and amid historically low unemployment, Americans spent more than they earned in 2005 and 2006.
- Debt payments eat up about 15 percent of the average U.S. family's income. More than 20 percent of lower-income families spend at least 40 percent of their income in debt payments.
- A typical graduating college senior has about \$20,000 in student debt, up from \$9,000 a decade ago.
- One in seven families is dealing with a debt collector.
- Nearly half of all credit card holders have missed payments in the last year. Forty-four percent of college students carry a balance on their credit cards, with an average outstanding balance of more than \$2,000. Almost a quarter of undergraduates carry balances in excess of \$3,000.
- More than 40 percent of college graduates who don't pursue graduate school blame student loan debt.
- One in seven Americans reports that at some point in their lives they experienced debt problems serious enough that they filed for bankruptcy or used a credit consolidator.
- More than one-third (36 percent) of Americans say they have felt at some point that their financial situation was out of control. People ages 30-49 are more likely than others to have felt this way (45 percent); so are parents of children under age 18 (41 percent), and African Americans (46 percent).
- Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of Americans say that they do not save enough.
- The United States saves less than nearly every other advanced industrial nation and much less than France, Belgium, and the Czech Republic, among others.



For A New Thrift: An Appeal to Prospective Colleagues
(Institute for American Values; January 2008), page 4.
Available at www.NewThrift.org.