

Table 2.1

Attitudes toward the most important problem facing the country

United States, 1984-2004

Question: "What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today?"

	Feb. 10-13, 1984	Jan. 25-28, 1985	July 11-14, 1986	Apr. 10-13, 1987	Sept. 9-11, 1988	May 4-7, 1989	July 19-22, 1990	Mar. 7-10, 1991	Mar. 26-29, 1992	Jan. 8-11, 1993	Jan. 15-17, 1994	Jan. 16-18, 1995	May 9-12, 1996	Jan. 10-13, 1997	Apr. 17-19, 1998	May 23-24, 1999	Mar. 10-12, 2000	Jan. 10-14, 2001	Mar. 4-7, 2002	Feb. 3-6, 2003	June 3-6, 2004
High cost of living; inflation; taxes	10%	11%	4%	5%	2%	3%	2%	2%	8%	4%	4%	7%	11%	6%	7%	3%	13%	6%	2%	2%	3%
Unemployment; jobs	29	20	23	13	9	6	3	8	25	22	18	15	13	NA	5	4	2	4	8	10	13
International problems; foreign affairs	11	NA	NA	NA	4	4	NA	1	3	8	3	2	4	3	4	3	4	4	2	8	4
Crime; violence	4	4	3	3	2	6	1	2	5	9	37	27	25	23	20	17	13	9	1	2	2
Guns/gun control	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	(a)	NA	NA	1	10	7	1	NA	NA	NA
Fear of war/nuclear war; international tensions	11	27	22	23	5	2	1	2	NA	NA	NA	(a)	NA	NA	NA	2	NA	(a)	12	35	27
Ethics, moral, family decline	7	2	3	5	1	5	2	2	5	7	8	6	14	9	16	18	15	13	7	4	6
Terrorism	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	22	10	13
Excessive government spending; Federal budget deficit	12	18	13	11	12	7	21	8	8	13	5	14	15	8	5	1	4	1	1	3	3
Dissatisfaction with government; poor leadership; corruption	2	NA	NA	5	NA	2	1	NA	8	5	6	5	12	7	8	5	11	9	4	2	5
Economy (general)	5	6	7	10	12	8	7	24	42	35	14	10	12	21	6	3	6	7	18	34	19
Poverty; hunger; homelessness	NA	6	6	5	7	10	7	10	15	15	11	10	7	10	10	7	5	4	4	3	3
Drugs; drug abuse	NA	2	8	11	11	27	18	11	8	6	9	6	10	17	12	5	5	7	3	2	1
National security	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	6	3	3
Trade deficit; trade relations	NA	NA	NA	NA	3	3	1	1	4	3	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	(a)	NA	NA	(a)
Education; quality of education	NA	NA	NA	NA	2	3	2	2	8	8	7	5	13	10	13	11	16	12	7	4	4
Immigration; illegal aliens	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1	2
Environment; pollution	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	4	5	2	3	3	1	1	3	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	1
AIDS	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1	2	(a)	3	2	2	1	(a)	1	1	(a)	(a)	(a)	NA	NA	NA
Abortion	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	(a)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1	0	1	1	(a)	2	1	(a)	1	1
Health care; cost of health care	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	12	18	20	12	10	7	6	5	8	7	6	5	6
No opinion; don't know	4	3	3	4	12	7	5	6	2	2	2	2	7	6	4	2	6	8	4	5	3

Note: Exact wording of response categories varies across surveys. Multiple responses are possible; the Source records up to three problems per respondent. Some problems mentioned by a small percentage of respondents are not included in the table. Sample sizes vary from year to year; the data for 2004 are based on telephone interviews with a randomly selected national sample of 1,000 adults, 18 years of age and older, conducted June 3-6, 2004. For a discussion of public opinion survey sampling procedures, see [Appendix 5](#).

^aLess than 0.5%.

Source: George H. Gallup, *The Gallup Report*, Report No. 226, p. 17; Report No. 235, pp. 20, 21; Report No. 252, pp. 28, 29; Report No. 260, pp. 6, 7; Report No. 277, pp. 6, 7; Report No. 285, pp. 4, 5; Report No. 290, p. 6 (Princeton, NJ: The Gallup Poll); George Gallup, Jr., *The Gallup Poll*, Mar. 14, 1991, pp. 2, 3; Apr. 3, 1992, pp. 1, 2; Jan. 30, 1997, p. 2 (Princeton, NJ: The Gallup Poll); George Gallup, Jr., *The Gallup Poll Monthly*, No. 298, p. 14; No. 340, p. 43; No. 352, p. 7; No. 396, p. 34 (Princeton, NJ: The Gallup Poll); The Gallup Organization, Inc., *The Gallup Poll* [Online]. Available: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/releases/pr990528.asp> [July 20, 1999]; <http://www.gallup.com/poll/releases/pr000331.asp> [Mar. 31, 2000]; <http://www.gallup.com/poll/releases/pr010205.asp> [Feb. 5, 2001]; <http://www.gallup.com/poll/releases/pr020320.asp> [Mar. 27, 2002]; <http://www.gallup.com/poll/releases/pr030213.asp> [Feb. 19, 2003]; <http://www.gallup.com/poll/> [June 28, 2004]; and data provided by The Gallup Organization, Inc. Table constructed by SOURCEBOOK staff. Reprinted by permission.