

Table 2.1.2012

Attitudes toward the most important problem facing the country

United States, 1984-2012

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
High cost of living; inflation; taxes; fuel prices; lack of money ^a	10%	11%	4%	5%	2%	3%	2%	2%	8%	4%	4%	7%	11%	6%	7%	3%
Unemployment; jobs	29	20	23	13	9	6	3	8	25	22	18	15	13	NA	5	4
International problems; foreign affairs	11	NA	NA	NA	4	4	NA	1	3	8	3	2	4	3	4	3
Crime; violence	4	4	3	3	2	6	1	2	5	9	37	27	25	23	20	17
Judicial system/courts/laws	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Guns/gun control	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	(b)	NA	NA	1	10
Fear of war/nuclear war; Middle East/international tensions	11	27	22	23	5	2	1	2	NA	NA	NA	(b)	NA	NA	NA	2
Ethics, moral, family decline	7	2	3	5	1	5	2	2	5	7	8	6	14	9	16	18
Terrorism	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Excessive government spending; Federal budget deficit	12	18	13	11	12	7	21	8	8	13	5	14	15	8	5	1
Dissatisfaction with government; poor leadership; corruption	2	NA	NA	5	NA	2	1	NA	8	5	6	5	12	7	8	5
Economy (general)	5	6	7	10	12	8	7	24	42	35	14	10	12	21	6	3
Poverty; hunger; homelessness	NA	6	6	5	7	10	7	10	15	15	11	10	7	10	10	7
Drugs; drug abuse	NA	2	8	11	11	27	18	11	8	6	9	6	10	17	12	5
National security	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Trade deficit; trade relations	NA	NA	NA	NA	3	3	1	1	4	3	2	1	2	1	1	1
Education; quality of education	NA	NA	NA	NA	2	3	2	2	8	8	7	5	13	10	13	11
Immigration; illegal aliens	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Environment; pollution	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	4	5	2	3	3	1	1	3	1	2	2
AIDS	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1	2	(b)	3	2	2	1	(b)	1	1	(b)
Abortion	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	(b)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1	0	1	1	(b)
Health care; cost of health care	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	12	18	20	12	10	7	6	5

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 2012 are based on telephone interviews with a randomly selected national sample of 1,024 adults, 18 years of age and older, conducted Mar. 8-11, 2012. For a discussion of public opinion survey sampling procedures, see [Appendix 5](#).

^aBeginning in 2000, response data for "fuel prices" are included in this category. Beginning in 2009, response data for "lack of money" are included.

^bLess 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]; <http://poll.gallup.com/> [Mar. 27, 2006]; <http://www.galluppoll.com/> [June 13, 2007]; <http://www.gallup.com/poll/107233/US-Satisfaction-Down-14-Just-Shy-AllTime-Low.aspx> [July 21, 2008]; <http://www.gallup.com/poll/1675/Most-Important-Problem.aspx> [Jan. 19, 2011]; <http://www.gallup.com/poll/1675/Most-Important-Problem.aspx> [Jan. 4, 2012]; <http://www.gallup.com/poll/1675/Most-Important-Problem.aspx> [Apr. 16, 2012]; and data provided by The Gallup Organization, Inc. Table constructed by SOURCEBOOK staff. Reprinted by permission.

Table 2.1.2012

Attitudes toward the most important problem facing the country

United States, 1984-2012--Continued

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

	Mar. 10-12, 2000	Jan. 10-14, 2001	Mar. 4-7, 2002	Feb. 3-6, 2003	June 3-6, 2004	Mar. 7-10, 2005	Mar. 13-16, 2006	May 10-13, 2007	May 8-11, 2008	Aug. 31- Sept. 2, 2009	Nov. 4-7, 2010	Nov. 3-6, 2011	Mar. 8-11, 2012
High cost of living; inflation; taxes; fuel prices; lack of money ^a	15%	8%	2%	2%	10%	5%	8%	8%	22%	8%	6%	12%	15%
Unemployment; jobs	2	4	8	10	13	8	8	4	5	15	33	36	26
International problems; foreign affairs	4	4	2	8	4	5	4	3	2	1	2	1	5
Crime; violence	13	9	1	2	2	2	2	3	(b)	NA	(b)	1	2
Judicial system/courts/laws	1	1	1	(b)	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1
Guns/gun control	7	1	NA	NA	NA	(b)	(b)	1	NA	NA	1	NA	NA
Fear of war/nuclear war; Middle East/international tensions	NA	(b)	12	35	27	25	20	33	15	9	5	4	4
Ethics, moral, family decline	15	13	7	4	6	4	6	6	3	5	2	3	4
Terrorism	NA	NA	22	10	13	9	9	7	2	1	1	1	(b)
Excessive government spending; Federal budget deficit	4	1	1	3	3	3	4	2	2	9	9	6	9
Dissatisfaction with government; poor leadership; corruption	11	9	4	2	5	6	8	7	5	10	14	13	13
Economy (general)	6	7	18	34	19	10	10	6	35	29	31	30	31
Poverty; hunger; homelessness	5	4	4	3	3	3	4	6	2	1	2	2	2
Drugs; drug abuse	5	7	3	2	1	1	1	1	NA	NA	1	NA	1
National security	NA	NA	6	3	3	5	5	1	1	3	1	1	1
Trade deficit; trade relations	1	(b)	NA	NA	(b)	(b)	1	1	(b)	1	1	(b)	1
Education; quality of education	16	12	7	4	4	6	6	3	3	3	5	3	5
Immigration; illegal aliens	NA	NA	NA	1	2	3	6	11	4	2	4	3	3
Environment; pollution	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	(b)	1
AIDS	(b)	(b)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Abortion	2	1	(b)	1	1	(b)	(b)	(b)	NA	1	1	(b)	(b)
Health care; cost of health care	8	7	6	5	6	9	8	8	7	26	15	4	5