

Table 2.1

Attitudes toward the most important problem facing the country

United States, 1982-97

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

	Oct. 15-18, 1982	Apr. 15-18, 1983	Oct. 7-10, 1983	Feb. 10-13, 1984	Jan. 25-28, 1985	July 11-14, 1986	Apr. 10-13, 1987	Sept. 9-11, 1988	May 4-7, 1989	Nov. 9-12, 1989	Apr. 5-8, 1990	July 19-22, 1990	Mar. 7-10, 1991	Mar. 26-29, 1992	Jan. 8-11, 1993	Jan. 15-17, 1994	Aug. 15-16, 1994	Jan. 16-18, 1995	May 9-12, 1996	Jan. 10-13, 1997
High cost of living; inflation; taxes	18%	18%	12%	10%	11%	4%	5%	2%	3%	2%	1%	1%	2%	6%	3%	4%	3%	7%	11%	6%
Unemployment	61	54	41	29	20	23	13	9	6	3	3	3	8	25	22	18	6	15	13	NA
International problems; foreign affairs	2	2	7	11	NA	NA	NA	4	4	3	NA	NA	1	3	8	3	4	2	4	3
Crime; violence	3	2	5	4	4	3	3	2	6	3	2	1	2	5	9	37	52	27	25	23
Fear of war/nuclear war; international tensions	3	11	14	11	27	22	23	5	2	1	1	1	2	NA	NA	NA	(a)	(a)	NA	NA
Moral decline in society; ethics	3	4	5	7	2	3	5	1	5	3	1	2	2	5	7	8	7	6	14	9
Excessive government spending; Federal budget deficit	4	5	4	12	18	13	11	12	7	7	6	21	8	8	13	5	3	14	15	8
Dissatisfaction with government	3	NA	2	2	NA	NA	5	NA	2	1	1	1	NA	8	5	6	5	5	12	7
Economy (general)	11	8	4	5	6	7	10	12	8	7	7	7	24	42	35	14	17	10	12	21
Poverty; hunger; homeless	NA	NA	NA	NA	6	6	5	7	10	10	11	7	10	15	15	11	5	10	7	10
Drugs; drug abuse	NA	NA	NA	NA	2	8	11	11	27	38	30	18	11	8	6	9	9	6	10	17
Trade deficit; trade relations	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3	3	2	2	1	1	4	3	2	1	1	2	1
Education; quality of education	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	2	3	2	1	2	2	8	8	7	5	5	13	10
Environment; pollution	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	4	3	8	5	2	3	3	1	1	1	3	1
AIDS	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1	NA	1	2	(a)	3	2	2	2	1	(a)	1
Abortion	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	(a)	3	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1	1	0	1
Recession; depression	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	(a)	(a)	NA	NA	4	3	NA	(a)	1	0	(a)	NA
Health care	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	12	18	20	29	12	10	7
No opinion; don't know	2	2	4	4	3	3	4	12	7	6	9	5	6	2	2	2	2	2	7	6

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. For a discussion of public opinion survey sampling procedures, see Appendix 6.

^aLess than 0.5%.

Source: George H. Gallup, *The Gallup Report*, Report No. 198, p. 27; 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 (Princeton, NJ: The Gallup Poll); and data provided by The Gallup Organization, Inc. Table constructed by SOURCEBOOK staff. Reprinted by permission.