

NEW SURVEY EXAMINES AMERICANS' PRIORITIES HEADING INTO 2018

The public would like to see Washington expend considerable effort dealing with their top concerns, but there is little confidence that much progress will be made.

CHICAGO, Dec. 20, 2017 — Health care, taxes, immigration, the environment, and education top a long and diverse list of the American public's policy priorities for the coming year, according to a new survey from [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#). But while Americans see a great many high-priority issues, they lack confidence in their government's ability to solve them.

"News coverage tends to focus only on a few issues, but the public has a much broader set of issue priorities," said Trevor Tompson, director of The AP-NORC Center. "Large numbers of Americans see issues like education and the environment as top priorities even though they may not get as much attention from the media or from politicians."

In order to explore the public's agenda for the next year, the poll accepted up to five volunteered issues from each respondent. There turned out to be substantial partisan differences on several high-profile issues, including the importance of the environment, immigration, education, and terrorism.

Key findings from the poll include:

- Republicans and Democrats agree on the importance of some of the country's leading priorities, but disagree on others. Health care is the top issue for Democrats, named by 54 percent. For Republicans, health care (41 percent) is a close second after immigration (42 percent). Only 20 percent of Democrats listed immigration as one of their top five concerns.
- Most Americans think the government should put substantial effort into addressing the public's priorities. However, the poll did not investigate what specifically people want to see accomplished. While tax reform is a top issue for many Americans, it is likely that Democrats and Republicans would favor different outcomes.
- There is not much confidence that progress will be made in dealing with the major issues facing the country in the next year. Doubt about the government's ability to address these problems has increased since President Trump was elected. For example, last year 51 percent were pessimistic about Washington's capacity to make progress on health care. Now, 72 percent have little or no confidence in the federal government's ability to make any headway on that issue.
- While many measures indicate an improved economy over the past 10 months, most people do not regard their personal situation or the country as a whole as having improved. Twenty percent say that they and their family are better off under Trump's administration, but 46 percent feel there has been no change and 33 percent say their circumstances have deteriorated. About half the public says the country has become worse off since Trump was inaugurated in January. Only 25 percent consider the country better off, and 21 percent do not see any difference.



- Only 9 percent of Americans think Trump has been successful in bringing the country together, while 67 percent say the United States has become more divided. Another 23 percent say there has been no change.

About the Survey

The nationwide poll was conducted between November 30 and December 4, 2017, using AmeriSpeak Omnibus®, a monthly multi-client survey using NORC at the University of Chicago's probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. The survey was part of a larger study that included questions about other topics not included in this report. During the initial recruitment phase of the panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face-to-face). The panel provides sample coverage of approximately 97 percent of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the sample include people with P.O. Box only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings.

Interviews for this survey were conducted with adults age 18 and over representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. All interviews were conducted in English by professional interviewers who were carefully trained on the specific survey for this study. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak, and 1,444 completed the survey—1,286 via the web and 158 via telephone. The final stage completion rate is 24.5 percent, the weighted household panel response rate is 33.7 percent, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 88.8 percent, for a cumulative response rate of 7.3 percent. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 3.7 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

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