

## NEW SURVEY ON AMERICANS' POLICY PRIORITIES FINDS HEALTH CARE, UNEMPLOYMENT, IMMIGRATION, AND EDUCATION TOP LIST FOR 2017

Survey finds that the public has little confidence the federal government will be able to make much headway on the problems facing the country.

**CHICAGO, Jan. 18, 2017** — Health care, unemployment, immigration, and education top a lengthy and varied list of the American public's policy priorities for 2017, according to a new national survey conducted by [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#). While the public is eager for Washington to deal with these issues, they are not confident that much progress will be made. In order to explore the public's agenda for the next year, the poll accepted up to five volunteered issues from each respondent.

"Our unique, open-ended format shows that the average American is concerned about a number of policy issues and wants the new government in Washington to work hard to address them," said Trevor Tompson, director of The AP-NORC Center. "However, Americans are not very optimistic that much will be accomplished, especially for long-standing issues like poverty, racism, and the environment."

### Key findings from the survey include:

- The top issue for Republicans (47 percent), Democrats (40 percent), and independents (43 percent) is health care.
- Unemployment is mentioned by 37 percent of Republicans, 25 percent of Democrats, and 26 percent of independents. The economy, in general, was mentioned by roughly a fifth, regardless of party.
- While there is partisan agreement on some of the country's leading priorities, Republicans and Democrats disagree on the importance of other issues. For example, the second most common response from Republicans is immigration, named by 40 percent. In contrast, only 15 percent of Democrats listed immigration as one of their top five concerns.
- Coming up with a solution to the public's priorities should be given a substantial amount of effort by the government, according to most Americans. However, the poll did not investigate what people specifically want to see accomplished for any of these problems. It is likely that, while health care is the top issue for both Democrats and Republicans, each group would prefer different resolutions.
- Few expect much will be accomplished to solve these problems in the next year. The public views some problems as more difficult to deal with than others. Americans have little



confidence in the government's ability to address poverty, racism, and the environment. There is more optimism for progress to be made on unemployment, immigration, and terrorism.

- Fewer Americans regard the country as heading in the wrong direction than a year ago, although it remains a majority. In 2015, 69 percent said the country was on the wrong course and 30 percent said it was headed in the right direction. Now, 56 percent consider the country heading in the wrong direction and 42 percent say it is on the right track.
- Republicans and Democrats have both had an about-face regarding the direction of the country. In the wake of Donald Trump's election as president, 66 percent of Republicans say the country is headed in the right direction, up from 18 percent last year. Only 22 percent of Democrats now regard the country as being on the right course, down from 42 percent last year.

### **About the Survey**

The nationwide poll was conducted December 14-19, 2016, using the AmeriSpeak Panel, the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago. Online and telephone interviews using landlines and cell phones were conducted with 1,017 adults. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 3.7 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

### **About The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research**

The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research taps into the power of social science research and the highest-quality journalism to bring key information to people across the nation and throughout the world.

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The two organizations have established The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research to conduct, analyze, and distribute social science research in the public interest on newsworthy topics, and to use the power of journalism to tell the stories that research reveals.

### **About AmeriSpeak Omnibus**



The Associated Press-NORC  
Center for Public Affairs Research

AmeriSpeak Omnibus is a once-a-month, multi-client survey using a probability sample of at least 1,000 nationally representative adults age 18 and older. Respondents are interviewed online and by phone from NORC's AmeriSpeak Panel—the most scientifically rigorous multi-client household panel in the United States. AmeriSpeak households are selected randomly from NORC's National Sample Frame, the industry leader in sample coverage. The National Frame is representative of over 99 percent of U.S. households and includes additional coverage of hard-to-survey population segments, such as rural and low-income households, that are underrepresented in other sample frames. More information about AmeriSpeak is available at [AmeriSpeak.NORC.org](http://AmeriSpeak.NORC.org).

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