

Appendix Table 7-21 Public assessment of government spending, by policy area: 1983–2014

(Percent)

Policy area	1983 (n = 1,615)	1985 (n = 1,986)	1988 (n = 2,041) a	1990 (n = 2,005)	1992 (n = 1,995)	1997 (n = 2,000)	1999 (n = 1,882)	2001 (n = 1,574)	2002 (n = 1,358) b	2004 (n = 1,401) c	2006 (n = 2,992) d	2008 (n = 3,559) e	2010 (n = 4,901) f	2012 (n = 4,820) g	2014 (n = 2,130) h
Education															
Too little	71	73	76	77	81	76	75	76	75	75	73	74	74	75	74
About right	23	22	19	17	14	16	18	17	19	19	20	21	20	18	19
Too much	5	3	4	4	4	6	6	5	5	5	5	5	5	7	6
Don't know	2	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Assistance for the poor															
Too little	NA	54	55	57	56	43	49	53	66	69	68	68	61	61	63
About right	NA	29	30	25	26	30	30	29	24	23	22	23	27	26	23
Too much	NA	13	12	15	17	23	19	15	8	6	8	7	10	10	12
Don't know	NA	3	3	3	2	4	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	3	2
Environment															
Too little	54	69	76	76	72	65	65	63	60	63	67	66	57	58	60
About right	31	21	18	17	20	23	25	28	29	27	23	23	30	30	27
Too much	11	6	4	5	7	8	7	6	8	7	7	8	10	10	10
Don't know	4	3	2	2	2	4	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	3	3
Health															
Too little	NA	68	67	75	79	68	71	70	73	77	72	75	58	61	57
About right	NA	26	28	20	15	23	22	24	21	17	19	17	22	23	24



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Too much	NA	3	2	3	4	7	6	4	4	4	7	7	17	14	16
Don't know	NA	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	3
Developing alternative energy sources															
Too little	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	61	60	56
About right	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	28	27	31
Too much	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	7	9	9
Don't know	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	4	4	4
Drug rehabilitation															
Too little	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	56	53	55	51	49	48	54
About right	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	31	34	31	34	36	34	30
Too much	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	10	9	9	10	10	13	11
Don't know	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3	4	5	5	5	6	5
Social Security															
Too little	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	59	63	61	58	53	54	52
About right	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	33	27	30	32	35	34	37
Too much	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	4	5	5	5	8	7	6
Don't know	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	4	4	4	4	4	4	6
Law enforcement															
Too little	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	56	56	57	54	53	52	49
About right	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	35	36	33	35	36	36	37



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Too much	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	7	5	8	8	9	9	11
Don't know	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3	3	2	2	2	3	2
Assistance for child care															
Too little	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	56	54	51	49	46	45	47
About right	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	31	34	35	39	41	39	38
Too much	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	7	6	7	6	7	8	8
Don't know	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	6	6	7	6	6	7	7
Highways and bridges															
Too little	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	35	29	35	43	43	43	45
About right	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	50	55	52	45	45	43	42
Too much	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	12	13	11	9	10	12	11
Don't know	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3	3	3	3	2	2	2
Supporting scientific research															
Too little	NA	29	34	30	34	34	37	36	34	38	41	36	36	38	39
About right	NA	46	48	47	43	46	43	44	46	45	41	46	47	45	45
Too much	NA	18	15	16	19	14	14	14	13	12	11	11	12	12	10
Don't know	NA	7	4	6	4	7	6	7	6	5	7	7	5	6	6
Mass transportation															
Too little	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	34	35	39	45	40	38	37
About right	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	50	50	47	42	46	46	48



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Too much	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	10	10	8	8	9	10	9
Don't know	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	6	6	6	5	4	6	6
Parks and recreation															
Too little	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	34	31	33	30	32	31	32
About right	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	58	60	59	63	60	61	62
Too much	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	5	7	6	5	6	6	5
Don't know	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3	2	2	2	2	2	2
National defense															
Too little	19	11	11	15	15	23	31	29	33	33	26	23	25	24	31
About right	31	36	35	42	42	42	40	41	44	38	33	34	39	40	36
Too much	47	50	52	40	40	32	25	25	20	26	39	40	33	32	30
Don't know	3	3	3	3	2	4	4	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Assistance to blacks															
Too little	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	30	32	29	29	26	27	27
About right	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	45	46	42	44	46	45	43
Too much	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	17	13	18	15	16	16	18
Don't know	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	8	9	11	11	11	13	12
Assistance to big cities															
Too little	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	41	40	32	31	28	27	26
About right	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	37	38	36	38	38	38	39
Too much	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	13	12	22	20	24	24	25



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Don't know	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	9	10	10	11	10	11	10
Space exploration															
Too little	17	9	17	9	12	14	15	11	12	14	14	14	16	22	24
About right	42	43	38	37	36	38	36	38	47	43	45	45	44	41	41
Too much	39	45	43	52	50	45	46	48	35	37	35	36	35	29	28
Don't know	2	2	2	2	1	3	3	3	6	6	6	6	5	7	7
Welfare															
Too little	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	20	23	24	23	22	20	18
About right	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	37	34	36	37	35	33	34
Too much	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	40	40	37	36	41	43	45
Don't know	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3	2	3	4	3	3	3
Assistance to other countries															
Too little	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	7	10	11	11	8	7	6
About right	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	27	26	24	26	28	23	23
Too much	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	63	61	62	59	60	65	68
Don't know	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3	4	4	4	3	4	3

NA = not available; question not asked.

^a In 1988, "national defense" was asked of 1,021 survey respondents.

^b In 2002, "assistance for the poor" was asked of 1,407 survey respondents; "education," "environment," "Social Security," "child care," "highways and bridges," "mass transportation," "parks and recreation," and "national defense" were asked of 2,765 respondents.

^c In 2004, "assistance for the poor" was asked of 1,411 survey respondents; "education," "environment," "Social Security," "child care," "highways and bridges," "mass transportation," "parks and recreation," and "national defense" were asked of 2,812 respondents.

^d In 2006, "assistance for the poor" was asked of 1,508 survey respondents; "welfare" was asked of 1,484 respondents.



^e In 2008, "assistance for the poor" was asked of 1,781 survey respondents; "welfare" was asked of 1,778 respondents; "environment," "health," "law enforcement," "drug rehabilitation," "assistance to big cities," and "space exploration" were asked of 3,558 respondents.

^f In 2010, "assistance for the poor" was asked of 2,480 survey respondents; "welfare" was asked of 2,421 respondents; "developing alternative energy sources" was asked of 2,044 respondents; "environment," "health," "law enforcement," and "national defense" were asked of 4,900 respondents; "assistance to big cities" was asked of 4,899 respondents; "assistance to blacks" was asked of 4,892 respondents.

^g In 2012, "assistance for the poor" was asked of 2,435 survey respondents; "welfare" was asked of 2,385 respondents; "developing alternative energy sources" was asked of 1,974 respondents.

^h In 2014, "assistance for the poor" was asked of 1,297 survey respondents; "welfare" was asked of 833 respondents; "developing alternative energy sources" was asked of 1,239 respondents.

NOTES: Responses to *We are faced with many problems in this country, none of which can be solved easily or inexpensively. I'm going to name some of these problems, and for each one, I'd like you to tell me if you think we're spending too little money on it, about the right amount, or too much.* Beginning in 2002, two versions of the question were administered with different wording for some policy areas. Wording also varied for some policy areas in 1983–2001. Table combines data for policy areas with similar wording or meaning (see below). Percentages may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Policy areas with different wording in 1983–2001 or alternate wording in the second version of the question in 2002–14:

- *Education*: "improving education" in 1983–2001; alternate wording "improving the nation's education system" in 2002–14.
- *Assistance for the poor*: "helping low-income persons" in 1983–2001; no alternate wording in 2002–14.
- *Environment*: "reducing pollution" in 1983–2001; alternate wording "improving and protecting the environment" in 2002–14.
- *Health*: "improving health care" in 1983–2001; alternate wording "improving and protecting the nation's health" in 2002–14.
- *Law enforcement*: alternate wording "halting the rising crime rate" in 2002–14.
- *Drug rehabilitation*: alternate wording "dealing with drug addiction" in 2002–14.
- *Assistance to big cities*: alternate wording "solving the problems of the big cities" in 2002–14.
- *Assistance to blacks*: alternate wording "improving the conditions of blacks" in 2002–14.
- *National defense*: "improving national defense" in 1981–2001; alternate wording "military, armaments, and defense" in 2002–14.
- *Space exploration*: alternate wording "space exploration program" in 2002–14.
- *Assistance to other countries*: alternate wording "foreign aid" in 2002–14.

For 1981 data, see *Science and Engineering Indicators 2014*, Appendix Table 7-24.

SOURCES: National Science Foundation, National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, Survey of Public Attitudes Toward and Understanding of Science and Technology (1983–2001); University of Chicago, National Opinion Research Center, General Social Survey (2002–14).

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