It is hardly surprising that in 1942, one subject absorbed the attention of the American people like no other: World War II. The polling record for that year attests to its dominance in the public mind. Of 636 polling questions asked by the Gallup Organization, not including those on elections or taxes, nearly half referred directly to the war or national defense; many more alluded to them.

War permeated every aspect of life on the home front. Families gave their loved ones to the military and their own efforts to civil defense. Scrap metal drives and the rationing of sugar, clothing, tires, and even movie film transformed what used to be ordinary activities into opportunities—or expectations—for patriotic participation.

In those early months following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, nobody knew how long the war would last; but many already suspected it would be a part of everyday life and thought for a considerable time. Sometimes demanding people’s full attention, sometimes hovering at the periphery of their days, it never quite went away.

—Lisa Ferraro Parmelee

**In It for the Long Haul**

**Question:** How much longer do you think the war will last from now?

- Up to 6 months to 1 year: 18%
- Up to 2 years: 28%
- Up to 3 years: 17%
- Up to 4 years to over 5 years: 20%
- Don’t know: 16%

**Source:** Survey by the National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago, July 1942.

**Sense of Mission**

**Question:** Do you feel that you have a clear idea of what the war is all about—that is, what we are fighting for?

- Yes: 68%
- No: 32%

**Source:** Survey by the Gallup Organization, December 4-9, 1942.

**Small Sacrifices**

**Question:** Would you be willing to take the bumpers off your car and give them to the scrap metal drive?

- Yes: 57%
- No: 38%
- Don’t know: 6%

**Note:** Asked of car owners.

**Source:** Survey by the Gallup Organization, October 1-6, 1942.

**Question:** It has been suggested that the government issue an order forbidding double feature movies for the duration of the war, in order to save film. Would you favor or oppose such an order?

- Favor: 72%
- Oppose: 12%
- No opinion: 17%

**Source:** Survey by the Gallup Organization, August 15-20, 1942.
**Hard Choices, Sleepless Nights**

**Question:** If the government had to choose between drafting 18 and 19 year old men, or married men without children, which should it choose?

- **Married men without children:** 47%
- **18-19 year olds:** 43%
- **Undecided:** 10%

**Source:** Survey by the Gallup Organization, July 16-21, 1942.

**Patriotic Duty**

**Question:** Should all men and women over 18 who are not already in military services be required to register with the government for some kind of civilian defense or war work?

- **Yes:** 83%
- **No:** 11%
- **No opinion:** 6%

**Source:** Survey by the Gallup Organization, February 25-March 2, 1942.

**The Enemy Among Us**

**Question:** Should spies caught in this country be punished by death?

- **Yes:** 87%
- **No:** 8%
- **Undecided:** 6%

**Source:** Survey by the Gallup Organization, July 16-21, 1942.

**No Turning Back**

**Question:** If Hitler offered peace now to all countries on the basis of not going farther, but of leaving matters as they are now, would you favor or oppose such a peace?

- **Favor:** 8%
- **Oppose:** 88%

**Source:** Survey by the Gallup Organization, February 5-11, 1942.

**World War II**

**Question:** Here are a few names that have been suggested to call the present war. Which do you like best?

- **War of World Freedom:** 26%
- **War of Freedom:** 14%
- **War of Liberty:** 13%
- **Anti-Dictator War:** 11%
- **War for Humanity:** 9%

**Source:** Survey by the Gallup Organization, April 17-22, 1942.