How citizens assess their society is a pretty complicated question in any democracy. Some recent surveys help us toward an answer as to Americans’ thinking today. (1) The areas where the highest proportions of us see the country losing ground involve “the moral dimension” (below, this page). (2) While we worry about future prospects, we see much of the promise of American life realized in our personal experience today (Top of Pg. 57). And, (3) we don’t see government as the key to extending national promise (Bottom of Pg. 57).

Losing Ground: A Large Moral Dimension

Question: Next, as I read you some problem areas, please tell me how you think each is affecting this country today. Do you think the problem of... is about the same today, is the country making progress in this area or is the country losing ground?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Losing Ground</th>
<th>Making Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families not staying together</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low moral and ethical standards</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare system</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal immigration</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of living</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for religion</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal budget deficit</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public education</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty, hunger and homelessness</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of good-paying jobs</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care system</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal tax system</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political corruption</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International terrorism</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict among racial, religious or ethnic groups</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental pollution</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination against minorities</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How Fares the American Dream?

Pretty Good, for Me

Question: Looking at your life as a whole these days, do you think you have a better life than your parents did, or is it not as good as your parents' life or is it about the same?


Doubts, for the Future

Question: Do you think the future of the next generation of Americans will be better, or worse, or about the same as life today?

Source: Survey by The Tarrance Group & Mellman, Lazarus & Lake, April 2-4, 1995.

Government's Role is Severely Challenged

Question: In today's society, do you think the American Dream is achievable for all Americans who are willing to work for it; for most Americans, but not all; only for some Americans; or for very few Americans, even if they are willing to work for it?


Question: Some people have proposed a budget that would reduce the amount of money the federal government spends by about 30% by the end of the year 2002. Do you think this goes too far, doesn't go far enough, or is about right?


Question: Do you think the American Dream will be easier to achieve or harder to achieve for future generations?

Source: Survey by The Tarrance Group & Mellman, Lazarus & Lake, April 2-4, 1995.

Question: Overall, do you think that government programs and policies do more to help or more to hinder your family in trying to achieve the American Dream?


Question: In general, which of these two approaches do you favor:

A budget plan which would balance the federal budget within seven years, in part by cutting spending on popular programs such as Medicare and farm subsidies.

Any Lift to President Clinton's Ratings from His Handling of the Oklahoma Tragedy was Temporary Nationally...

**Question:** Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bill Clinton is handling his job as president?

**California**

**Question:** What kind of job do you think Bill Clinton is doing as president?

**Colorado**

**Question:** Do you approve or disapprove of the job Bill Clinton is doing as president?

**Georgia**

**Question:** Do you approve or disapprove of the way Bill Clinton is handling his job as president?

**Wisconsin**

**Question:** How would you rate the job Bill Clinton is doing as president?


Source: Surveys by the Field Poll, latest that of May 16-22, 1995.

Source: Surveys by Talmey-Drake Research and Strategy for the Denver Post.

Source: Surveys by the Applied Research Center, Georgia State University.

Source: Surveys by the Wisconsin Survey Research Laboratory, University of Wisconsin.

58 THE PUBLIC PERSPECTIVE, JUNE/JULY 1995
Congress

When two polls taken in April asked for an overall assessment of the new Congress, clear majorities give it good marks. But when one of these surveys asked whether legislation being considered on balance helped or hurt a wide array of groups, it recorded bad marks.

The Republican Congress: A Good Rating

**Question:** Overall, how would you describe the Republican Congress’ effect on the country so far?

**Question:** In general, are you happy or unhappy that the Republican Party won control of the US Congress?


Yet, Its Policies Are Seen As Hurting

**Question:** Please tell me if you think, on balance, each of the following groups would be helped, hurt, or not much affected by legislation considered by the new Congress so far. Do you think _______ would be helped, hurt or not much affected?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Net) Percent Helped*</th>
<th>(Net) Percent Hurt*</th>
<th>Not much affected*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The wealthy 38%</td>
<td></td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big corporations 36%</td>
<td></td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4% Middle class</td>
<td></td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16% Small businesses</td>
<td></td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18% People like you</td>
<td></td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20% Women</td>
<td></td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21% Families with young children</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21% Minorities</td>
<td></td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28% Supporters of abortion rights</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29% Environmentalists</td>
<td></td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34% The poor</td>
<td></td>
<td>19%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39% Retired people</td>
<td></td>
<td>27%*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Displayed is the difference in percent between those saying the group is “helped” and those saying the group is “hurt.” For example, 38% more respondents said the wealthy are “helped” than “hurt,” while 4% more respondents said the middle class is “hurt” than “helped.”