**Election '96: Nation's Mood**

**1979-80: Striking Pessimism**

**National Optimism/Pessimism**
- Dissatisfied with the way things are going in the U.S. at this time (Gallup, July 1979): 84%
- Things in this country have pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track (MOR, Oct.-Nov. 1979): 77%
- Things in the country these days are going badly (YSW, Aug. 1979): 70%
- The country is really in deep and serious trouble today (YSW, Aug. 1979): 70%

**National Economy**
- Economy is getting worse, same (24%), better (5%) (CBS/NYT, Oct.-Nov. 1979): 70%

**Presidential Disapproval**
- Presidential disapproval ratings (Gallup, July 1979): 58%
- (Gallup, September 1979): 56%
- (Gallup, February, 1980): 36%
- (Gallup, April 1980): 50%
- (Gallup, August 1980): 55%
- (Gallup, September 1980): 55%

**Consumer Confidence**
- Conference Board Consumer Confidence Index, May 1980 (1965 = 100): 50.1

**的政治 cynical**
- Most public officials are not really interested in the problems of the average man (NORC, Feb.-Apr. 1980): 71%

**Personal Economic Position**
- Not satisfied at all with your present financial situation (more or less 44%, pretty well 28%) (NORC, 1980): 27%
- Dissatisfied with the work you do (NORC, 1980): 18%

**Personal Optimism/Pessimism**
- Dissatisfied with the way things are going in your own personal life (Gallup, Nov. 1979): 24%

**Nation's Future**
- Have no real confidence that our country will be strong and prosperous a few years from now (some 45%, a lot 36%) (YSW, Aug. 1979): 22%
- Generally pessimistic about our country's future (uncertain 37%, generally optimistic 44%) (Roper Starch, Aug. 1979): 18%

**Note:** MOR = Market Opinion Research for the Republican National Committee; YSW = Yankelovich Skelly White.

*Asked of those currently working, temporarily not at work, or keeping house (85%).

**Question:** Some people say there is a crisis of confidence in the country, that is, the people lack confidence in themselves and their future. Others say there is a crisis, but that it is a crisis of confidence in the elected officials. And others say there is no crisis at all. How about you...?


**Question:** [Do you]... agree or disagree with each of these statements...The American way of life is being seriously threatened by the energy and economic situation.

**Source:** Survey by ABC News/Louis Harris and Associates, September 18-28, 1979.

**Question:** Do you have more confidence or less confidence than you had a year ago in the government's ability to solve the inflation problem?

**Source:** Survey by Cambridge Reports for the American Retail Federation, April 17-May 5, 1980.
1985-86: Morning in America

National Optimism/Pessimism
- Dissatisfied with the way things are going in the US at this time (Gallup, June 1986) — 26%, 43%
- Things in this country have pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track (ABC/WP, July 1985) — 31%
- Things in the country these days are going badly (YSW, July 1985) — 39%
- The country is really in deep and serious trouble today (YSW, July 1985)

National Economy
- Economy is getting worse, same (33%), better (42%) (ABC/WP, March 1986) — 24%

Personal Economic Position
- Not satisfied at all with your present financial situation (more or less 43%, pretty well 30%) (NORC, 1986)
- Dissatisfied with the work you do* (NORC, 1986) — 12%

Presidential Disapproval
- Presidential disapproval ratings (Gallup, Jan. 1985) — 29%
- (Gallup, March 1985) — 37%
- (Gallup, August 1985) — 26%
- (Gallup, November 1985) — 24%
- (Gallup, March 1986) — 26%
- (Gallup, May 1986) — 23%

Consumer Confidence
- Conference Board Consumer Confidence Index, July 1985 (1985 = 100) — 103.2

*Asked of those currently working, temporarily not at work, or keeping house (83%).

Question: Overall, would you say this country is in better shape, worse shape, or about the same shape as when President Reagan took office in January 1981?

Question: Do you approve or disapprove of the way Ronald Reagan is handling the nation’s economy?

Question: Do you approve or disapprove of the way Ronald Reagan is handling foreign policy?


**Election '96: Nation's Mood**

**1992: Again, Widespread Dissatisfaction**

**National Optimism/Pessimism**
- Dissatisfied with the way things are going in the US at this time (Gallup, June 1992): 84%
- Things in this country have pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track (ABC, April 1992): 81%
- Things in the country these days are going badly (YCS, Jan. 1992): 72%
- The country is really in deep and serious trouble today: NA

**National Economy**
- Economy is getting worse, same (34%), better (9%) (ABC/Money, Jan-Feb. 1992): 57%

**Personal Economic Position**
- Dissatisfied with your family or household income (Gallup, Dec. 1991): 33%
- Dissatisfied with the work you do (Gallup, Dec. 1991): 16%

**Presidential Disapproval**
- Presidential disapproval ratings (Gallup, July 1992): 59%
- (Gallup, Aug 1992): 58%
- (Gallup, Aug.-Sept. 1992): 54%
- (Gallup, Oct. 1992): 58%
- (Gallup, Oct. 1992): 56%

**Consumer Confidence**
- Conference Board Consumer Confidence Index, Feb (1965=100): 47.3

**Personal Optimism/Pessimism**
- Dissatisfied with the way things are going in your own personal life (Gallup, Jan. 1992): 22%

**Nation's Future**
- NA
- Have no real confidence that our country will be strong and prosperous a few years from now (some, a lot)
- Generally pessimistic about our country's future (uncertain, generally optimistic)

**Political Cynicism**
- Most public officials are not really interested in the problems of the average man (ABC, April 1992): 65%

**Question:** Some people say the Bush administration is drifting without clear policies, while other people say it is moving carefully to develop its plans. Which do you think is more accurate?

**Question:** In general, do you approve or disapprove of the job Congress is doing?

**Question:** How satisfied are you with the candidates in this year's presidential election—very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?


**Source:** Survey by NBC News/Wall Street Journal, April 11-14, 1992.

**Source:** Survey by Louis Harris and Associates, April 22-27, 1992.
1994: Economic Brightening and Political Dissatisfaction

National Optimism/Pessimism
- Dissatisfied with the way things are going in the U.S. at this time (Gallup, July 1994) 65%
- Things in this country have pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track (ABC News, July 1994) 70%
- Things in the country these days are going badly (YP, Aug. 1994) 52%
- The country is really in deep and serious trouble today NA

National Economy
- Economy is getting worse [same (56%), better (22%)] (CBS News/NYT, Jul. 1994) 21%

Personal Economic Position
- Not satisfied at all with your present financial situation (more or less 46%, pretty well 28%) (NORC 1994) 26%
- Dissatisfied with the work you do* (NORC 1994) 15%

Presidential Disapproval
- Presidential disapproval ratings (Gallup, July 1994) 49%
- (Gallup, Aug. 1994) 52%
- (Gallup, Sept. 1994) 54%
- (Gallup, Oct. 1994) 52%
- (Gallup, Oct. 1994) 46%

Personal Optimism/Pessimism
- Dissatisfied with the way things are going in your own personal life (Roper Center, Aug. 1994) 15%

Nation’s Future
- Have no real confidence that our country will be strong and prosperous a few years from now (some, a lot) NA
- Generally pessimistic about our country’s future (uncertain, generally optimistic) NA

Consumer Confidence
- Conference Board Consumer Confidence Index 89.5

Political Cynicism
- Most public officials are not really interested in the problems of the average man (NORC 1994) 74%

*Asked of those who are currently working, temporarily not at work or keeping house (82%).

**Question:** Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?...

**Government is the problem, not the solution to our problems.**

- Don't know 7%
- Disagree 27%
- Agree 66%

**Question:** How do you feel about the problem of low moral and ethical standards in this country today? Do you think this problem is about the same as it has been, that the country is making progress in this area, or that the country is losing ground in this area?

- About the same 10%
- Making progress 9%
- Losing ground 81%

**Question:** How much of a problem is crime in the US?

- Somewhat serious 15%
- Very serious 84%

**Source:** Survey by the Wirthlin Group, September 6-9, 1994.
1996: Economic Gains Lift Clinton's Ratings

National Optimism/Pessimism
- Dissatisfied with the way things are going in the U.S. at this time (Gallup, Aug. 1996): 57%
- Things in this country have pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track (NBC/WSJ, Aug. 1996): 43%
- Things in the country these days are going badly (YP, July 1996): 37%
- The country is really in deep and serious trouble today (YP, July 1996): 51%

Presidential Disapproval
- Presidential disapproval ratings (Gallup, June 1996): 37%
- (Gallup, June 1996): 42%
- (Gallup, Aug. 1996): 36%
- (Gallup, Aug. 1996): 39%
- (Gallup, Sept. 1996): 31%

Consumer Confidence
- Conference Board Consumer Confidence Index, August 1996 (1965 = 100): 109.4

National Economy
- Economy is getting worse [same (57%), better (17%)] (CBS/NYT, Aug. 1996): 23%

Personal Economic Position
- Not satisfied at all with your present financial situation (NORC, 1996): 26%
- Dissatisfied with the work you do* (NORC, 1996): 15%

Personal Optimism/Pessimism
- Dissatisfied with the way things are going in your own personal life (Gallup, March 1996): 12%

Nation's Future
- Generally pessimistic about our country's future (ABC News, Apr.-May 1996): 27%

Political Cynicism
- Most public officials are not really interested in the problems of the average man: NA

*Asked of those currently working, temporarily not at work, or keeping house (83%).

Question: Do you personally agree or disagree with those who feel that there is something wrong with the country at this time?

Question: Thinking about everything going on in this country, how would you rate the state of the nation today...

Question: Would you say that you and your family are better off or worse off than you were four years ago?

Source: Survey by Yankelovich Partners, Inc. for Time/CNN, July 10-11, 1996.
Source: Survey by NBC News/Wall Street Journal, August 2-6, 1996.
In the Deepest Sense, Americans in ’96 Remain Confident in their Nation’s Ideals and Promise and their Place in It

Questions: Would you say that you are optimistic or pessimistic about (the future of this country/your own personal future)?

Question: Think of your parents when they were your age. Would you say you are better off financially than they were, or not?

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<th>Not Better Off</th>
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<tr>
<td>3/29/81</td>
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</table>

Question: And what about your children? Do you think they will be better off than you are financially when they reach your age, or not? [For people who say they have no children] Suppose you did have children...

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Question: Do you think it’s still possible for most people in this country to achieve the American Dream, or do you think that’s not possible any more?

<table>
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Question: ...[Do you agree or disagree]...It is true in this country that if you work hard, eventually you will get ahead?

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<thead>
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<th>Agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>66%</td>
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Source for page: Survey by Chilton Research for ABC World News Tonight “Listening to America,” April 30-May 6, 1996.
In the Deepest Sense, Americans in '96 Remain Confident in their Nation's Ideals and Promise and their Place in It

Questions: Would you say that you are optimistic or pessimistic about (the future of this country/your own personal future)?

**Question**: Think of your parents when they were your age. Would you say you are better off financially than they were, or not?

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**Question**: Do you think it's still possible for most people in this country to achieve the American Dream, or do you think that's not possible any more?

- Not possible anymore: 26%
- Still possible: 71%

**Question**: ...[Do you agree or disagree]...It is true in this country that if you work hard, eventually you will get ahead?

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</table>

Source for page: Survey by Chilton Research for ABC World News Tonight "Listening to America," April 30-May 6, 1996.
Republicans and Democrats Agree on Economy’s Strength

**Question:** How would you rate the economic conditions in this country today...

**By Party ID**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Everyone</th>
<th>2% Excellent</th>
<th>3% Good</th>
<th>3% Only Fair</th>
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<tr>
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<td>46%</td>
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<td>Poor</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>18%</td>
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**By Presidential Vote**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Everyone</th>
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<tr>
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But Differ Sharply When It Comes to Partisan Credit

**Question:** Right now, do you think that economic conditions in the country as a whole are getting better or getting worse?

**By Party ID**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Everyone</th>
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<th>52% Worse</th>
<th>36% Same</th>
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<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Getting Worse</td>
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<td>53%</td>
<td>29%</td>
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**By Presidential Vote**

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>57% Worse</th>
<th>60% Same (vol.)</th>
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<td>29%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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Still, Democrats Say Economic Problems Worst, Republicans Say Moral Problems Worst

**Question:** Which concerns you more—the nation’s economic problems or the nation’s moral problems?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Concern</th>
<th>Everyone</th>
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</table>

**By Party ID**

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<th>Concern</th>
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<th>60% Morals</th>
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<tr>
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**By Presidential Vote Intent**

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<th>63% Morals</th>
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<tr>
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<td>44%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morals</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Source:** The group responses (by party identification and presidential preference) shown on this page are from the combined surveys of the Gallup Organization, January-August, 1996. The “everyone” responses are for the latest Gallup asking of the questions, July 18-21, 1996.
Real National Unease—Especially on “the Moral Dimension”

**Question:** Do you personally agree or disagree with those who feel that there is something wrong with the country at this time?

- **Agree:** 80%
- **Disagree:** 18%
- **Not sure:** 2%

**Source:** Survey by Yankelovich Partners, Inc. for Time/CNN, July 10-11, 1996.

**Question:** Thinking about everything going on in this country, how would you rate the state of the nation today—excellent, pretty good, only fair or poor?

- **Excellent:** 18%
- **Pretty good:** 44%
- **Only fair:** 38%
- **Poor:** 2%

**Source:** Survey by Louis Harris and Associates, July 9-13, 1996.

**Question:** Do you think the U.S. is in a long-term moral decline, or do you think the country’s moral standing is basically pretty solid?

- **Long-term decline:** 67%
- **Pretty solid:** 31%

**Source:** Survey by Chilton Research Services for ABC World News Tonight “Listening to America” poll, April 30-May 6, 1996.

**Question:** Would you say this country’s main problems are caused more by a lack of economic opportunity, or more by a lack of morality?

- **Economic opportunity:** 27%
- **Morality:** 59%

**Source:** Survey by NBC News/Wall Street Journal, June 20-25, 1996.

**Question:** Which concerns you more—the nation’s economic problems or the nation’s moral problems?

- **Economic:** 37%
- **Moral:** 43%

**Note:** Asked of registered voters.

**Source:** Survey by NBC News/Wall Street Journal, June 20-25, 1996.

**Question:** Which concerns you more—the nation’s economic problems or the nation’s moral problems?

- **Economic:** 38%
- **Moral:** 53%

**Source:** Survey by the Gallup Organization for CNN/USA Today, July 18-21, 1996.

**Question:** If this country’s economic problems were solved, do you believe that most of the country’s moral problems would also be solved, many of them would be solved, only a few would be solved, or none at all?

- **None/DK/Refused:** 13%
- **Most:** 34%
- **Many:** 46%
- **Only a few:** 7%

**Source:** Survey by the Gallup Organization for CNN/USA Today, May 9-12, 1996.
Views on Role of Government: No Change, 1994 to 1996

**Question:** ...How do you feel about the way the federal government works...enthusiastic, satisfied but not enthusiastic, dissatisfied but not angry, or angry?

![Pie chart showing responses to the question about the role of government.](chart)

**Source:** Surveys by ABC News/Washington Post, October 1994 and March 1996

**Question:** ...Tell me whether the first statement or the second statement comes closer to your own views...Elected officials in Washington lose touch with the people pretty quickly (or) elected officials in Washington try hard to stay in touch with voters back home.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>1994</th>
<th>1996</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly, lose touch with the people pretty quickly</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not strongly, lose touch with the people pretty quickly</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not strongly, try hard to stay in touch with voters</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>back home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly, try hard to stay in touch with voters back</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Surveys by Princeton Survey Research Associates, for Times Mirror, July 1994 and for Pew Research Center, April 1996

**Question:** Would you say you favor smaller government with fewer services, or larger government with many services?

![Bar chart showing preferences for smaller or larger government.](chart)

**Source:** Survey by the Los Angeles Times, January 1995.

**Question:** How much of the time do you think you can trust government in Washington to do what is right: Just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?

![Bar chart showing responses to the question about trust in government.](chart)

**Source:** Surveys by the Gallup Organization, June 1994 and May 1996.

**Question:** Which comes closer to your view: Government should do more to solve national problems, or government is doing too many things better left to businesses and individuals?

![Pie chart showing responses to the question about government role.](chart)

**Source:** Surveys by CBS News/New York Times, October 1994 and September 1996.