

TABLE S7-13

Public assessment of spending, by policy area: 1981–2018

(Percent)

| Policy area | 1981 (n = 1,611) | 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 = 3,558) ^e | 2010 (n = 4,901) ^f | 2012 (n = 4,820) ^g | 2014 (n = 2,130) ^h | 2016 (n = 2,867) ⁱ | 2018 (n = 1,175) ^j |
|-------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Education | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Too little | 62 | 71 | 73 | 76 | 77 | 81 | 76 | 75 | 76 | 73 | 73 | 73 | 74 | 74 | 75 | 74 | 72 | 77 |
| About right | 30 | 23 | 22 | 19 | 17 | 14 | 16 | 18 | 17 | 20 | 21 | 20 | 21 | 20 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 17 |
| Too much | 6 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 5 |
| Don't know | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Health | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Too little | 61 | na | 68 | 67 | 75 | 79 | 68 | 71 | 70 | 73 | 77 | 72 | 75 | 58 | 61 | 57 | 62 | 70 |
| About right | 31 | na | 26 | 28 | 20 | 15 | 23 | 22 | 24 | 21 | 17 | 19 | 17 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 23 | 21 |
| Too much | 6 | na | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 7 | 17 | 14 | 16 | 12 | 7 |
| Don't know | 2 | na | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Assistance for the poor | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Too little | 45 | na | 54 | 55 | 57 | 56 | 43 | 49 | 53 | 66 | 69 | 68 | 68 | 61 | 61 | 63 | 71 | 72 |
| About right | 29 | na | 29 | 30 | 25 | 26 | 30 | 30 | 29 | 24 | 23 | 22 | 23 | 27 | 26 | 23 | 21 | 19 |
| Too much | 24 | na | 13 | 12 | 15 | 17 | 23 | 19 | 15 | 8 | 6 | 8 | 7 | 10 | 10 | 12 | 7 | 7 |
| Don't know | 2 | na | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Environment | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Too little | 52 | 54 | 69 | 76 | 76 | 72 | 65 | 65 | 63 | 58 | 63 | 67 | 66 | 57 | 58 | 60 | 63 | 66 |
| About right | 32 | 31 | 21 | 18 | 17 | 20 | 23 | 25 | 28 | 32 | 29 | 23 | 23 | 30 | 30 | 27 | 27 | 24 |
| Too much | 13 | 11 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 8 | 7 |
| Don't know | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Drug rehabilitation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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|---------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|----|
| Too little | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 56 | 53 | 55 | 51 | 49 | 48 | 54 | 61 | 66 | |
| About right | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 31 | 34 | 31 | 34 | 36 | 34 | 30 | 26 | 22 | |
| Too much | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 10 | 9 | 9 | 10 | 10 | 13 | 11 | 9 | 8 | |
| Don't know | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 3 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 4 | |
| Law enforcement | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Too little | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 56 | 56 | 57 | 54 | 53 | 52 | 49 | 59 | 59 | |
| About right | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 35 | 36 | 33 | 35 | 36 | 36 | 37 | 30 | 29 | |
| Too much | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 7 | 5 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 11 | 9 | 8 | |
| Don't know | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 4 | |
| Social Security | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Too little | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 59 | 63 | 61 | 58 | 53 | 54 | 52 | 58 | 57 | |
| About right | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 33 | 27 | 30 | 32 | 35 | 34 | 37 | 33 | 33 | |
| Too much | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 5 | |
| Don't know | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 5 | |
| Assistance for childcare | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Too little | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 56 | 54 | 51 | 49 | 46 | 45 | 47 | 54 | 56 | |
| About right | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 31 | 34 | 35 | 39 | 41 | 39 | 38 | 35 | 33 | |
| Too much | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 7 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 5 | 5 | |
| Don't know | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 6 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 5 | |
| Developing alternative energy sources | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Too little | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 61 | 60 | 56 | 54 | 55 |

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|--------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| About right | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 28 | 27 | 31 | 34 | 34 |
| Too much | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 7 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 6 |
| Don't know | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 |
| Highways and bridges | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Too little | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 35 | 29 | 35 | 43 | 43 | 43 | 45 | 48 | 53 |
| About right | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 50 | 55 | 52 | 45 | 45 | 43 | 42 | 40 | 37 |
| Too much | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 12 | 13 | 11 | 9 | 10 | 12 | 11 | 11 | 9 |
| Don't know | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Assistance to blacks | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Too little | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 30 | 32 | 29 | 29 | 26 | 27 | 27 | 41 | 48 |
| About right | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 45 | 46 | 42 | 44 | 46 | 45 | 43 | 36 | 33 |
| Too much | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 17 | 13 | 18 | 15 | 16 | 16 | 18 | 12 | 9 |
| Don't know | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 8 | 9 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 13 | 12 | 10 | 10 |
| Supporting scientific research | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Too little | 31 | na | 29 | 34 | 30 | 34 | 34 | 37 | 36 | 34 | 38 | 41 | 36 | 36 | 38 | 39 | 38 | 43 |
| About right | 47 | na | 46 | 48 | 47 | 43 | 46 | 43 | 44 | 46 | 45 | 41 | 46 | 47 | 45 | 45 | 45 | 44 |
| Too much | 18 | na | 18 | 15 | 16 | 19 | 14 | 14 | 14 | 13 | 12 | 11 | 11 | 12 | 12 | 10 | 11 | 7 |
| Don't know | 4 | na | 7 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Assistance to big cities | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Too little | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 41 | 40 | 32 | 31 | 28 | 27 | 26 | 35 | 35 |
| About right | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 37 | 38 | 36 | 38 | 38 | 38 | 39 | 35 | 35 |

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|----------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Too much | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 13 | 12 | 22 | 20 | 24 | 24 | 25 | 22 | 19 |
| Don't know | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 9 | 10 | 10 | 11 | 10 | 11 | 10 | 9 | 11 |
| Mass transportation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Too little | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 34 | 35 | 39 | 45 | 40 | 38 | 37 | 35 | 37 |
| About right | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 50 | 50 | 47 | 42 | 46 | 46 | 48 | 52 | 48 |
| Too much | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 10 | 10 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 9 | 8 | 8 |
| Don't know | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 7 |
| Parks and recreation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Too little | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 34 | 31 | 33 | 30 | 32 | 31 | 32 | 34 | 34 |
| About right | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 58 | 60 | 59 | 63 | 60 | 61 | 62 | 59 | 59 |
| Too much | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 5 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 4 |
| Don't know | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| National defense | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Too little | 34 | 19 | 11 | 11 | 15 | 15 | 23 | 31 | 29 | 33 | 33 | 26 | 23 | 25 | 24 | 31 | 36 | 29 |
| About right | 38 | 31 | 36 | 35 | 42 | 42 | 42 | 40 | 41 | 44 | 38 | 33 | 34 | 39 | 40 | 36 | 34 | 39 |
| Too much | 26 | 47 | 50 | 52 | 40 | 40 | 32 | 25 | 25 | 20 | 26 | 39 | 40 | 33 | 32 | 30 | 26 | 27 |
| Don't know | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| Welfare | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Too little | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 20 | 23 | 24 | 23 | 22 | 20 | 18 | 22 | 23 |
| About right | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 37 | 34 | 36 | 37 | 35 | 33 | 34 | 33 | 36 |
| Too much | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 40 | 40 | 37 | 36 | 41 | 43 | 45 | 42 | 36 |

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|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Don't know | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 |
| Space exploration | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Too little | 18 | 17 | 9 | 17 | 9 | 12 | 14 | 15 | 11 | 12 | 14 | 14 | 14 | 16 | 22 | 24 | 21 | 21 |
| About right | 37 | 42 | 43 | 38 | 37 | 36 | 38 | 36 | 38 | 47 | 43 | 45 | 45 | 44 | 41 | 41 | 45 | 45 |
| Too much | 42 | 39 | 45 | 43 | 52 | 50 | 45 | 46 | 48 | 35 | 37 | 35 | 36 | 35 | 29 | 28 | 25 | 23 |
| Don't know | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 9 | 11 |
| Assistance to other countries | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Too little | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 7 | 10 | 11 | 11 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 9 | 15 |
| About right | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 27 | 26 | 24 | 26 | 28 | 23 | 23 | 28 | 31 |
| Too much | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 63 | 61 | 62 | 59 | 60 | 65 | 68 | 58 | 48 |
| Don't know | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | na | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 6 |

na = not applicable; question was 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.

ⁱ In 2016, "assistance for the poor" was asked of 1,430 survey respondents; "welfare" was asked of 1,437 respondents.

^j In 2018, "assistance for the poor" was asked of 381 survey respondents; "welfare" was asked of 794 respondents.

Note(s)

Responses are to the following: *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. This table combines data for policy areas with similar wording or meaning (explained as follows). 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 2002–18 are as follows:

- *Education*: "improving education" in 1983–2001; alternate wording "improving the nation's education system" in 2002–18.
- *Assistance for the poor*: "helping low-income persons" in 1983–2001; no alternate wording in 2002–18.
- *Environment*: "reducing pollution" in 1983–2001; alternate wording "improving and protecting the environment" in 2002–18.
- *Health*: "improving health care" in 1983–2001; alternate wording "improving and protecting the nation's health" in 2002–18.
- *Law enforcement*: alternate wording "halting the rising crime rate" in 2002–18.
- *Drug rehabilitation*: alternate wording "dealing with drug addiction" in 2002–18.
- *Assistance to big cities*: alternate wording "solving the problems of the big cities" in 2002–18.
- *Assistance to blacks*: alternate wording "improving the conditions of blacks" in 2002–18.
- *National defense*: "improving national defense" in 1981–2001; alternate wording "military, armaments, and defense" in 2002–18.
- *Space exploration*: alternate wording "space exploration program" in 2002–18.
- *Assistance to other countries*: alternate wording "foreign aid" in 2002–18.

Source(s)

National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, National Science Foundation, Survey of Public Attitudes Toward and Understanding of Science and Technology (1981–2001); University of Michigan, Survey of Consumer Attitudes (2004); NORC at the University of Chicago, General Social Survey (2002–18).