

The people's agenda—America's priorities and outlook for 2014

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The Associated Press—NORC Center for Public Affairs Research has released the results of a major new survey that reveals the American people's list of issues they believe should be the focus of government attention in 2014. The same survey also explores the complex blend of personal, political, and ideological factors that lie behind such a list.

The data reveal broad doubts that the [government](#) will make progress in addressing the public's policy priorities, and feelings about the role of institutions other than government to solve major problems.

"While it is very easy to ask people to choose a single 'most important problem' and to build a list for the answers, the reality is that government has to address many issues at the same time," said Trevor Tompson, director of the AP-NORC Center. "This survey, with data about the public's priorities on a range of policy issues, provides policy makers with rigorous data as they seek to understand the public's outlook on where the country is now and what the action agenda should be for the year ahead."

Key findings of the Survey Include:

- The public's preferred agenda for the government in 2014 includes a diverse set of policy issues that range from economic problems to social policies to foreign affairs.
- Health care reform tops the public's list of priorities, mentioned

by 52 percent of respondents as one of the top ten problems, followed by unemployment (42 percent), the economy in general (39 percent), and the federal deficit (31 percent).

- Few have faith in the current political system, with the government receiving low marks on its performance in upholding the nation's fundamental principles. For example, 55 percent believe the government is doing a poor job of representing the views of most Americans while only 9 percent say it is doing a good job.
- Americans are more pessimistic than optimistic on matters such as the nation's ability to produce strong leaders, America's role as a global leader, and the opportunity to achieve the American dream.
- Compared with the early 1970s, 20 percent of Americans feel technology is the biggest change in American life, with specific changes including the Internet, computers, and communications. By contrast, fewer than ten percent cite politics as the biggest change and five percent moral, religious, or social change.
- A majority of Americans believe that American institutions such as churches, small and medium-sized businesses, and charitable organizations are doing "the right amount," when it comes to fixing problems the government cannot while similar numbers believe big business, labor unions, and wealthy individuals are not.

This nationally representative survey was conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research between December 12 and 16, 2013, with 1,141 adults 18 and over from the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The overall margin of error is +/- 3.7 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

Provided by University of Chicago

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