



Written by [James Murphy](#) on February 19, 2019

## Record Number Say Government Is the Most Important Problem in the U.S.

Since 1939, the Gallup polling group has been asking Americans what the greatest problem currently facing the nation is. In the [poll](#) just released on February 18, Americans listed the government/leadership as the most important problem facing the United States. Thirty-five percent of those polled — a record — saw government as the key problem in the United States today.

The previous high number showing government as the biggest problem was in October of 2013. Ironically, both the 2013 poll and this year's were taken during or adjacent to times of federal government shutdown.

The current percentage that see government as the biggest problem is almost twice as high as when the same question was asked last November.

A more in-depth analysis of verbatim responses shows that 11 percent of respondents specifically listed President Donald Trump as the most important problem in America. Five percent named "Democrats" or "liberals" as the top problem, and only one percent named "Congress." Eighteen percent of respondents named both parties and a combination of "gridlock" and "lack of cooperation" as the main issue.

Individual Americans are likely to see different things as the main problem in the country. Only occasionally do 35 percent or more of those polled agree on any one problem facing the United States. The October 2001 poll, taken in the wake of the 9/11 terror attacks, showed that 46 percent of Americans believed that terrorism was the most important problem. As the economic meltdown of 2008 was occurring, 58 percent of respondents cited the economy as the biggest problem. In 2011, as President Obama was laying out an ambitious job creation plan, 39 percent saw unemployment as the major problem.

So, the news of the day seems to have a large effect on how everyday Americans see problems. The current survey was taken from February 1-10, directly after the federal government shutdown over funding for President Trump's border wall.

Of other problems addressed, only immigration at 19 percent even breeched double digits. Last November when the same poll was taken, 21 percent of respondents named immigration as the top problem in America, tops in that particular poll. So, apparently, President Trump's message and plans for a border wall are having some effect.

Only three percent of Americans see the economy as a problem currently. Despite the vast amount of coverage of the Covington kids and actor Jussie Smollett, which occurred during the polling, only five





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percent see racism/race relations as the main problem in America.

Three percent of respondents see the environment/pollution (which would include so-called climate change) as the main problem facing the United States.

Considering the questions being asked, the sample size seems rather low. Only 1,016 adults (age 18 and over) in all states and the District of Columbia were polled. The margin of error is plus or minus four percent.

Perhaps, in an uncomprehending way, the citizens who answered this poll got things right — sort of. The problem is that far too many of them see government as a dysfunctional overlord rather than a group of out-of-control employees of the people who need to be reined in.

In this poll, people seem to have reacted to the government shutdown, which put a quarter of the federal government's employees — some 800,000 people — out of work for a month. What many miss about that is the fact that the federal government employs more than three million people. The fact that the federal government is the nation's largest employer is a disgrace. Government was never intended to be a jobs program.

Government, with all its intrusion via regulation, burdensome taxation, cronyism, and privacy-invading laws, is a huge problem. And the fact that people still look to government to solve the problems of the nation is curious, especially when government is the cause of so many of them.

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