

# Americans Offer Anemic State of the Nation Report

Under Biden, public satisfaction has fallen in more areas than it has improved

BY **LYDIA SAAD**



WASHINGTON, D.C. -- As President Joe Biden prepares to deliver his State of the Union address to Congress, Americans are feeling less content with numerous aspects of the country than they were when he took office three years ago.

Of 29 aspects of the country Gallup has tracked during Biden's presidency, public satisfaction has declined in 12, while it has been steady in 12 and improved in five. As a result, in a reversal of the pattern seen before 2021, anemic (sub-33%) public satisfaction ratings of national conditions now outnumber strong (50%+) ones, and by a substantial margin.

## **Military and Immigration Among Largest Declines**

Since January 2021, public satisfaction has fallen most sharply with the nation's military strength and preparedness, the immigration level, the nation's energy policies, and its laws or policies on guns. All four readings are at or near their record lows, with only satisfaction with the military (62% very or somewhat satisfied) holding at the majority level.

The public is also less content today than three years ago with federal taxes, the quality of medical care, abortion policies, the distribution of wealth, the economy, public education, government regulation of business, and the position of women.

Since 2021, Americans' satisfaction with another set of issues hasn't worsened, but it also hasn't improved. This includes a variety of domestic issue areas, ranging from environmental quality to Social Security to healthcare coverage. And while the public is less satisfied with the military, its satisfaction with the role the U.S. plays in world affairs and the nation's security from terrorism have been steady.

In some cases, such as with the overall quality of life, and acceptance of gay and lesbian people, satisfaction is holding at the majority level, while in others, such as with the size and influence of major corporations as well as efforts to deal with poverty and homelessness, it is steady but scarce.

Biden may be comforted to know that Americans have become slightly more satisfied with the position of Black adults and other racial minority people in the country (up eight points to 43%) as well as with race relations, perceptions of the size and power of the federal government, how well the federal government is working, and the state of moral values.

Still, satisfaction with most of these registers well below 50%.

The latest results are from Gallup's annual Mood of the Nation survey, conducted Jan. 2-22. Gallup has tracked Americans' satisfaction with various aspects of the country annually since 2001, except for 2009 and 2010, and with a reduced list in 2011.

Americans' average level of satisfaction this year with the 24 issues asked in every full measurement of the question since 2002 (when security from terrorism was added to the list) is 37%. This is identical to the average in each of the past two years but down from 40% in January 2021 and 48% in 2020. The highest average was 53% in 2002, shortly after the 9/11 attacks.

### **While Improved, Ratings of Racial Matters and Government Still Subdued**

The increased satisfaction ratings for race-related matters since 2021 represent partial recoveries from their all-time lows in Gallup's trends. The 43% of Americans satisfied with "the position of Blacks and other racial minority people in the nation" is up from 35% in 2021, while the 30% satisfied with the state of race relations is up from 23%. Neither rating has returned to the higher readings recorded as recently as January 2020, however, or approaches the peak levels found in the early 2000s.

Americans' satisfaction with their system of government and how it's working was also at a trend low (of 27%) in January 2021. That poll was taken during the politically tense period before and after Jan. 6, when supporters of President Donald Trump stormed the U.S. Capitol, trying to stop Congress from certifying the 2020 election for Joe Biden. Although improved from three years ago, today's 33% satisfaction with the nation's system of government remains one of the lowest readings in the trend.

### **Satisfaction Below 33% for Nearly Half the List**

Of the 31 issues and aspects of the country measured this year, six -- a relatively low number in the history of the trend -- engender majority-level public satisfaction. These are the overall quality of life, the nation's military strength and preparedness, the position of women, the opportunity for people to get ahead, the acceptance of gays and lesbians, and the nation's security from terrorism.

More than twice as many issues, 13, receive satisfaction ratings below 33%. Of these, Americans are least content with efforts to address poverty and homelessness (16%), the moral and ethical climate (23%), and the size and influence of major corporations (24%), with fewer than one in four satisfied with each.

The full list includes two items not previously asked -- the effect technology is having on society (44%) and the acceptance of transgender people (36%). While Democrats are more satisfied than Republicans with technology, there is no partisan difference on the acceptance of transgender people -- although Democrats and Republicans may come to that position for different reasons.

Majorities of Democrats (including independents who lean Democratic) and Republicans (including Republican leaners) are satisfied with the overall quality of life, the opportunity to get ahead, and the acceptance of gay and lesbian people. Majority satisfaction is found only among Democrats on seven other issues, including military strength, security from terrorism and the economy. Majorities of Republicans but not Democrats are satisfied with the position of women, the position of people who are racial minorities, the quality of the environment, and the influence of religion.

### **Several Issues Receive Record-Low Satisfaction**

The 57% of Americans satisfied with the position of women in the nation, the 45% satisfied with the influence of organized religion, the 44% with the quality of medical care, the 31% with laws or policies on guns, and the 24% with the size and influence of major corporations are all new lows.

At 25%, satisfaction with abortion is just above the record low of [24% measured in January 2022](#) after the Supreme Court failed to block a restrictive abortion law from taking effect in Texas, signaling the court might go further and overturn *Roe v. Wade*, which it ultimately did. Before 2021, Americans' satisfaction with abortion laws had been a bit higher, ranging from 32% to 48%.

Satisfaction with the quality of public education (29%), the amount Americans pay in federal taxes (27%), and the nation's efforts to deal with poverty and homelessness (16%) are also just one point above their trend lows.

Although [immigration is the issue](#) that Americans who disapprove of Biden's job performance cite most as the reason for their view, and it saw among the sharpest declines in satisfaction over the past year, the current 28% satisfied with the level of immigration into the country today is not the lowest for this issue -- that was 23% in 2008.

### **Bottom Line**

In his upcoming State of the Union address, Biden can rightfully tout that satisfaction with the nation's system of government has come back from the brink since he took office. And the

overwhelmingly negative sentiment about race relations that set in after George Floyd's killing in 2020 has eased.

Beyond that, during his presidency, Americans have grown less content with more issues than they feel better about, underscoring the [adverse political environment](#) surrounding Biden's bid for a second term.

To see all the tables and statistics;

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