



## **My Drift**

**Title: America's Biggest Problems in 2024**

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**Date: 24 Sep 2024**

**Article Number: (472-2024-31)**



### **America's Biggest Problems or Issues in 2024**

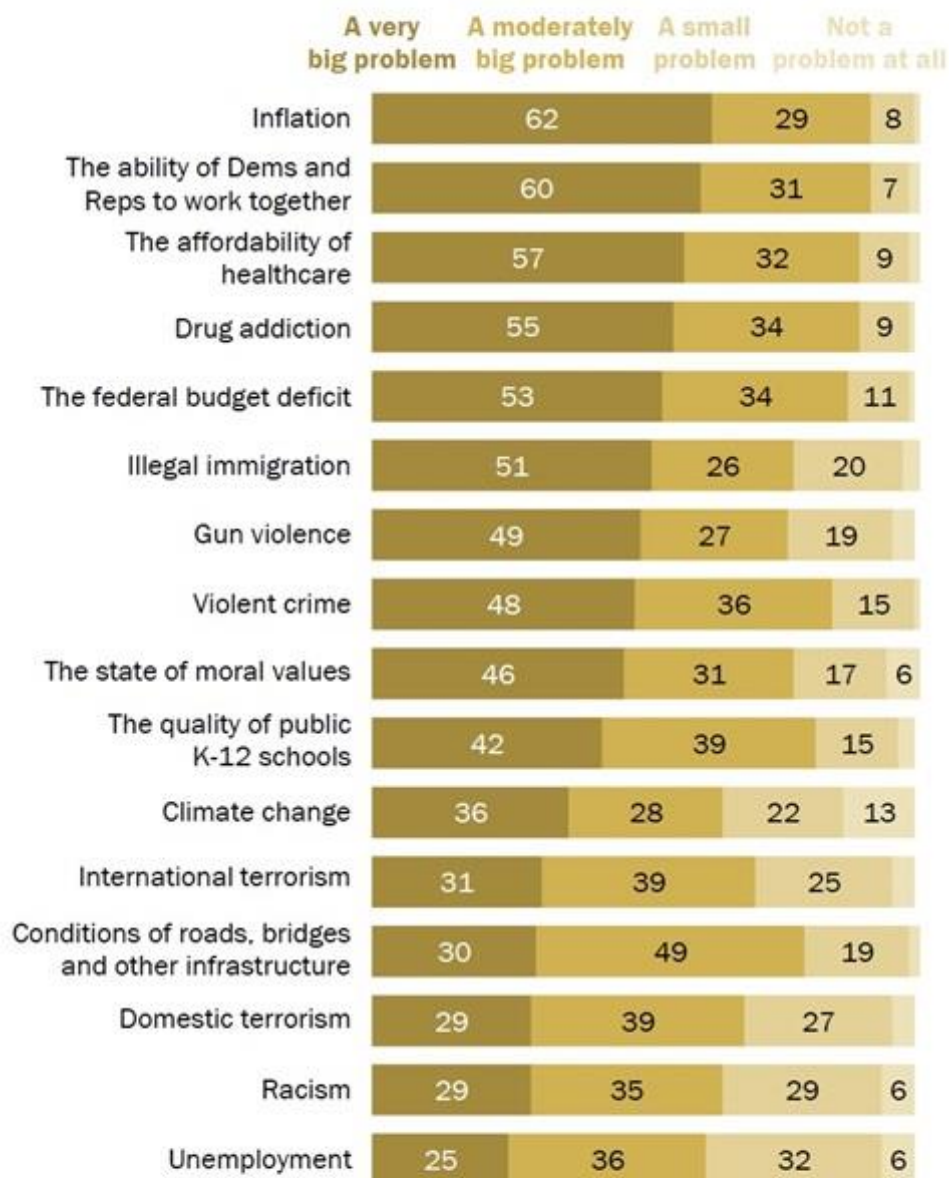
Well, here we are in September 2024 – Another election year. If you have not been living under a rock, or in a dark cave, or been high on drugs for past few years, you should know that we have a lot of problems here in the good ole US of America. You also might have noticed that I have not been writing about politics or my views on our problems – mainly because I'm getting old and it's not good for me if my blood pressure goes sky high. But this time I can't resist! I have researched several national surveys and polls to see what Americans think are our biggest problems or issues today. I don't agree with all of the results but I'm going to pick what I think are the top 15 to discuss.

Let's face it, the democrat and republican politicians in Washington DC don't agree on what our biggest problems are, and they definitely don't agree on how to fix them. In fact, they don't agree on anything unless it is a bill to increase their pay and benefits!! However, most US citizens (regardless of their politics) agree that America has many problems that need to be resolved. So, let's look at some of the bigger ones.

Below are the results of a recent 2024 Pew Research Center Survey, a New York Post Survey and a Gallop Poll of Americans across the country:

## Inflation, bipartisan cooperation top Americans' list of top problems facing the country

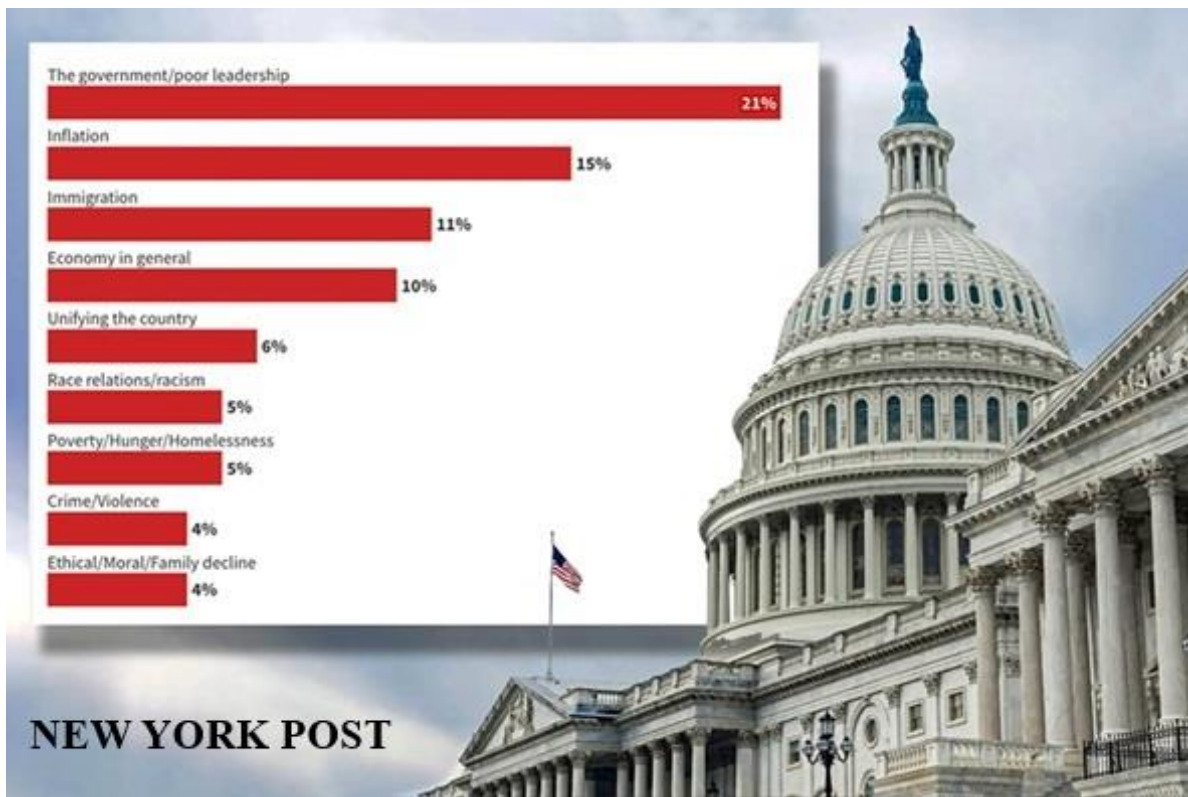
% who say each of the following is \_\_\_\_ in the country today



Note: No answer responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted May 13-19, 2024.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER



### Most Important U.S. Problem, by Partisanship

GALLOP POLL

What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today?

	Republicans/Republican-leaning independents	Democrats/Democratic-leaning independents
	%	%
Government	24	18
Inflation	18	11
Immigration	18	5
Economy in general	11	9
Moral/Ethical/Family Decline	6	2
Federal budget deficit/Debt	5	3
Poverty/Hunger/Homelessness	4	4
Crime/Violence	4	5
Unifying the country	3	8
Race relations	2	9
Healthcare/Health insurance	2	4
Environment	0	6
Gap between rich and poor	0	4

## MY LIST OF THE BIGGEST 15 PROBLEMS FACING AMERICA TODAY

Number	Problem or Issue
1	Inflation or the Economy in General
2	Government – The Dem and Rep can't work together
3	Illegal Immigration
4	Crime / Violence
5	Domestic and International Terrorism
6	Poverty / Hunger / Homelessness
7	Cost and Availability of Healthcare
8	Illegal Drugs
9	The State of Moral Values
10	Condition of Roads, Bridges, and Other Infrastructure
11	The Federal Debt
12	Judicial System / Courts / Laws
13	The Quality of our Public Schools
14	Environment and Climate Change
15	Race Relations

### #1 Inflation or the Economy in General

For an average family to live comfortably, they need a house, car, food, clothing, the ability to pay the bills, and have a little money left over for entertainment.

Take a look at the following pictures: (These are for Hawaii where I live but reflect the high prices across America)







Food prices for all foods are out of sight! Well, maybe I can live on beer, but my favorite bar just raised the price of a bottle of Coors Light from \$3.50 to \$6.25. Owning a house is out of reach for most first-time buyers. Rents have gone up accordingly. No wonder there are so many homeless people.







### **All Outback Restaurants in Hawaii closed a year and half ago**

**Retail stores and restaurants all around the United States are closing and the ones still open can't find enough good workers.**

**Yes, our economy is in the tank and our government is too busy fighting among themselves to do anything about it.**

**Which Party Is Better for the Economy?**

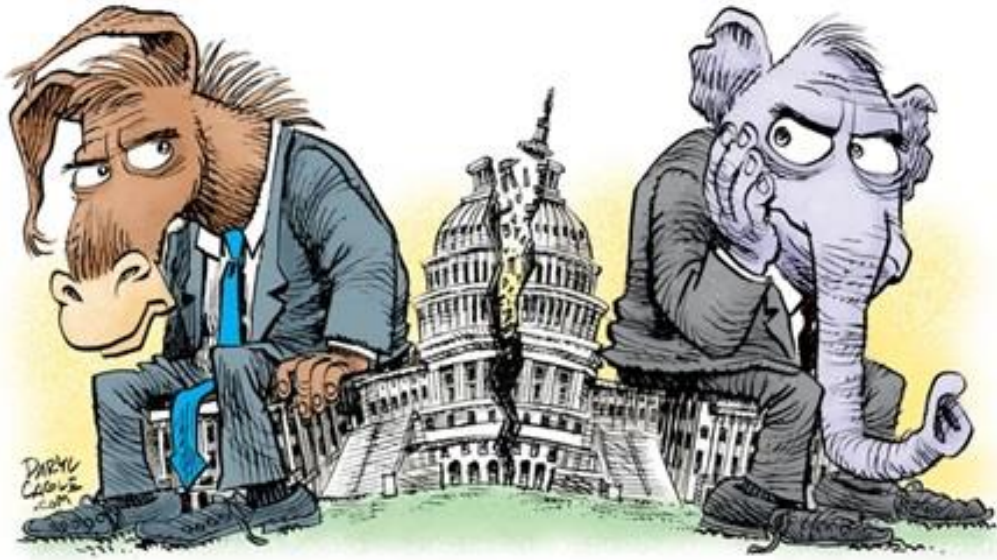
 <b>Democrats</b>	 <b>Republicans</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Economic policies benefit low-income and middle-income families</li> <li>– Argue that reducing income inequality spurs economic growth: people are more likely to spend than save and invest</li> <li>– Support Keynesian economic theory that government should spend its way out of a recession</li> <li>– Some research shows that economic growth is better under Democrats</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Advocate for supply-side economics that primarily benefits businesses and investors</li> <li>– Argue that tax cuts on businesses allow them to hire more workers, increasing demand and growth</li> <li>– Support the pursuit of prosperity without government interference</li> <li>– Business-friendly approach makes many believe that Republicans are better for the economy</li> </ul>

**You decide!!**



## **#2 Government – The Democrats and Republicans can't work together**

Many people think this is our number one problem.



### **Some Possible Solutions**

#### **Create a streamlined and expert Cabinet**

There are many problems with the way the Cabinet is structured: it's too big, members aren't necessarily experts at what they do, and they work in silos rather than together. In other countries, such as Switzerland, the executive branch is called a "collective presidency," a committee of seven elected leaders representing multiple parties and reaching consensus on major issues. They even rotate chairmanship each year. Seven heads are better than one.

And since there is no mention of the Cabinet in the constitution, the president can construct it any way he chooses. Instead of just appointing friends or trying to construct a "team of rivals," the cabinet should have doers and influencers from across government, including even sitting Congressmen. That way they have real skin in the game: they either work with Congress or take the blame together. Lastly, the cabinet should be trimmed down, merging bloated agencies to force cooperation on related issues: the Department of Transportation and Department of Housing and Urban Development could be combined into an Infrastructure Department; the departments of Energy, Agriculture and Interior, as well as the Environmental Protection Agency, should be fused into a Department of Energy and Environment; the Department of Commerce with the U.S. Trade Representative; Defense with Homeland Security; Education with Labor; and so on.

### **Replace the Senate with an Assembly of Governors**

In recent decades, the Senate has become nothing more than a smaller version of the House, a bastion of populism focused on filibusters and other arcane procedures—and of course fundraising for reelection. Indeed, in the past the Senate was largely composed of former Governors; now it is mostly former Congressmen.

It's time to go back to a Senate that knows how to actually do something, and the best way to do that is to abolish it completely and replace it with an Assembly of Governors. America's governors actually run their states, oversee large bureaucracies, manage complex budgets and understand local realities. Unlike squabbling senators, governors get along extremely well with each other and overwhelmingly favor cross-border projects that enhance their connectivity to each other. Rather than each state having two senators, it should have two governors—either running on a joint ticket or with the two most popular candidates being chosen. After the election, one will work in the state capital and the other in Washington coordinating priorities and agendas and sharing successful policies with their peers from other states. Especially since Senate rules have barely evolved in 200 years, this would at least ensure fewer filibusters and more actual policy.

### **Term Limits: The Only Way to Clean Up Congress**

It is difficult to overstate the extent to which term limits would change Congress. They are supported by large majorities of most American demographic groups; they are opposed primarily by incumbent politicians and the special interest groups which depend on them. Term limits would eliminate many of America's most serious political problems by counterbalancing incumbent advantages, ensuring congressional turnover, securing independent congressional judgment, and reducing election-related incentives for wasteful government spending. Perhaps most important, Congress would acquire a sense of its own fragility and temporariness, possibly even coming to learn that it would acquire more legitimacy as an institution by doing better work on fewer tasks.

### **WHY TERM LIMITS**

Did you know that 240 members of congress have served more than 30 years?

82% of Americans support term limits – This includes 76% of Democrats, 89% of Republicans, and 83% of Independents. It is the most popular and most bipartisan issue in America.



**Restores a citizen legislature – With term limits, there would be no more squatting in an office for 30, 40 or 50 years. The framers of congress did not intend career politicians. They wanted people from all walks of life who could serve for a short time and come home to live under the laws they made. They wanted rotation in office. Term limits would accomplish it. It would deliver fresh faces and ideas.**

**Demolishes the seniority system – Washington is run in a top-down structure where seniority equals influence. Even if we vote in better members, they are still buried under the power of Pelosi and Schumer. Term limits would replace seniority with a merit system.**

**Address the incumbent advantage – Term limits make elections more winnable and competitive by tackling the advantage of the incumbent. Open seat races give voters more options.**

**Fixes Congress – Right now members are only thinking about how to get re-elected, by pandering to special interests. They spend more time fundraising than doing their jobs. Term limits would change this culture and make members focused on solving problems.**

**Frustrate Lobbyists – There are 12,000 lobbyists in Washington DC and they all hate the idea of term limits. They never want to lose access to their favored members. Term limits would sever these ties with special interests.**

**Increases Voter Turnout – Term limits increase voter turnout. More candidates knocking on doors and campaigning bring more voters to the polls.**

### **Recommended Term Limit (By Me)**

**Currently, members of the House of Representatives serve two-year terms and are considered for reelection every even year. Members of the Senate serve six-year terms.**

**I recommend that members of congress can serve a maximum of 12 years in the House of Representatives and/or the Senate. Period. For example, if a person served 8 years in the House, he could not run for the Senate.**

### **#3 Illegal Immigration**



**Illegal Immigrants trying to get into Texas**

The estimated population of unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. stands at around 11 million people. The United States has seen a spike in migrant encounters in the last few years, with over two million cases registered by the U.S. Border Patrol in 2023. As of June 2024, the last month of available CBP data, there were 1.44 million (240,000 every month) reported border encounters in 2024.

Right now, there are thousands of non-U.S. citizens (including undocumented immigrants) on national voting registers, and they are able to vote. Former President Donald Trump wants to pair a temporary spending bill to keep the government running along with a bill that would require proof of citizenship for every American in order to register to vote. Democrats don't seem to have a similar interest in not letting non-U.S. citizens vote.

The security of our homeland is under constant threat by the crisis at the southern border, heightened by our broken immigration system, and exacerbated by the flow of illicit narcotics into our communities. First and foremost, we must regain operational control of our border.

**How Much Do Illegal Immigrants Cost the U.S. taxpayers?** \$150.7 billion shared between federal and state governments, and that's just last year.

In my humble opinion, we should welcome legal immigrants who went through the proper process. However, illegal immigrants should not be allowed into the United States. And if they do get in, they should be sent home.

## #4 Crime / Violence

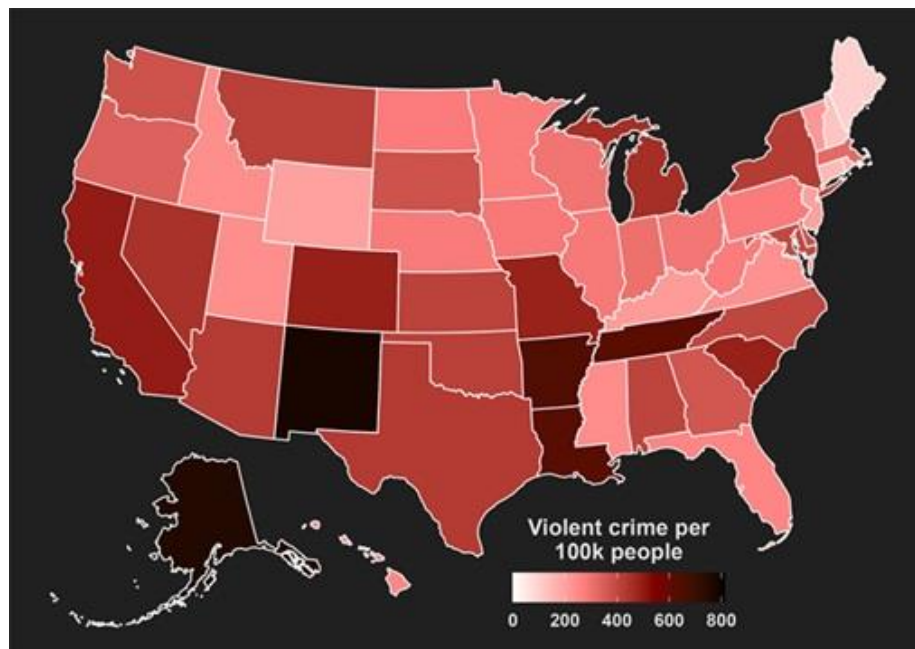


**Philadelphia reaches 562 Homicides in a year – Highest ever!**

### Some Statistics

The five US states with the most violent crime per capita are:

1. New Mexico
2. Louisiana
3. Tennessee
4. Arkansas
5. Alaska





**There was a total of 21,156 reported homicide cases in the U.S. in 2022. When looking at murder victims by gender and ethnicity, the vast majority were male, while just over half of victims were African American.**

**The five large US cities with the most murders per capita are:**

- 1. New Orleans, Louisiana**
- 2. St. Louis, Missouri**
- 3. Baltimore, Maryland**
- 4. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**
- 5. Memphis, Tennessee**

**US cities with the most murders are:**

- 1. There were 617 homicides and 2,450 shootings across Chicago throughout 2023.**
- 2. Murders peaked at 562 in 2021 before falling to 514 in 2022. In 2023, the number dropped again, as 410 people were killed on Philly streets.**



**The Smash-and-Grab Epidemic has Crippled many Democratic Cities across the United States throughout 2023 and so far in 2024. Hardest hit cities include Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland, Chicago, and New York City.**

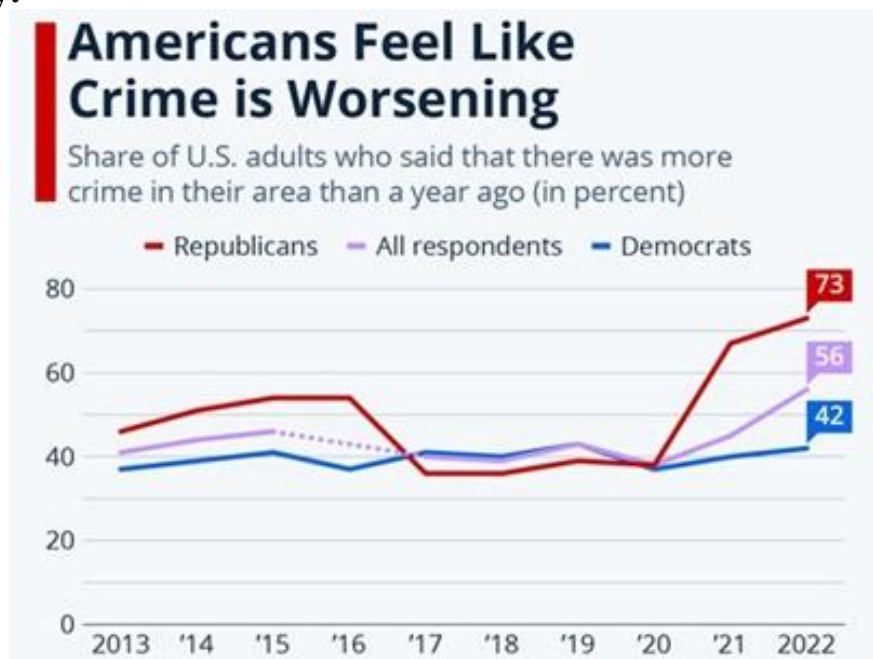
**Also known as “flash mob” robberies, smash-and-grabs are defined as criminal actions conducted after “breaking a window of a car, store, etc., and stealing whatever can be taken quickly.”**

**This type of criminal activity has been utilized by robbers in the past few years, but 2023 saw their popularity appear to rise as videos, police reports, and stories of businesses closing flooded social media.**

**In January 2024, a gang of masked thieves stole up to \$2 million worth of high-end jewelry from Facets Fine Jewelry in the Park Slope area of New York City. “The whole thing lasted 38 seconds,” the store owner said. “They took two and a half full cases of diamond engagement rings, newer pieces we’ve designed in-house, and pieces we’ve collected — art deco and Edwardian rings. ... I want to say 100 rings.”**

**Another New York City business, a family-owned gallery, saw a precious \$5,000 painting stolen in September after a thief smashed the gallery’s front door at Carlton Fine Arts in Midtown Manhattan. Police said the painting that was taken had been placed on an easel close to the front window, and that the alarm was activated during the incident. However, the criminal managed to escape the scene and flee in a silver sedan that was driven by an accomplice.**

**On the other side of the country, San Francisco saw both its small businesses and major retailers suffer as a result of smash-and-grab crime in 2023. In May, Nordstrom announced the closure of two locations in San Francisco, citing the “dynamics” of the city’s downtown area, where retail theft has ravaged storefronts. “We’ve spent more than 35 years serving customers in downtown San Francisco, building relationships with them and investing in the local community,” a memo from Chief Stores Officer Jamie Nordstrom sent at the time read. “But as many of you know, the dynamics of the downtown San Francisco market have changed dramatically over the past several years, impacting customer foot traffic to our stores and our ability to operate successfully.**



## **#5 Domestic and International Terrorism**



**Religious Extremism is the Main Cause of Terrorism**



**America will never ever forget what happened on 9-11-2001.**

**God Bless America!!**



## **#6 Poverty / Hunger / Homelessness**



**Sidewalks and Streets full of Tents in Los Angeles  
(A few of the 45,252 Unhoused People in the City)**

Poverty's simple definition is the state of not having enough possessions or assets to fulfill a person's basic needs. Poverty has several causes, including a lack of access to basic needs such as food, water, and housing, as well as access to education and healthcare. It is also caused by systemic inequities such as gender, racial, and ethnic discrimination. Interpretations of progress against poverty and how social policies affect poverty depend on how poverty is measured.

**How does poverty vary by select demographic characteristics of older Americans?**

**In 2020, 55.7 million people in the U.S. were over the age of 65 and represented 17% of the population. Five million people aged 65 and older lived below the poverty level. At least 2.6 million were classified as "near poor," meaning their incomes were between the poverty level and 125 percent over the poverty level. The 2020 median income of older people was \$26,668.**

**To illustrate, here's a demographic breakdown of older adults living below the poverty level in 2020:**

**Gender: Men had higher median incomes (\$35,808) when compared to women's median income of \$21,245. Gender disparities are also present in who**

**experiences poverty: the poverty rate for women was 10.1 percent, while the poverty rate for men was 7.6 percent.**

**Race: Clear racial disparities exist among older adults experiencing poverty. The rate of White (non-Hispanic) older adult population living in poverty was 6.8 percent, compared to 17.2 percent of Blacks or African Americans, 11.5 percent of Asian Americans, and 16.6 percent of the Hispanic population (any race).**

**Marital Status: More men were married (69 percent) when compared to women (47 percent). Three times more women (9.1 million in total) were widowed when compared to men (2.7 million).**

**Living Arrangement: 15.2 million older adults lived alone, which equated to about 10.1 million women and 5.2 million men. It's important to note the proportion living alone increases with advanced age: for example, 43 percent of women aged 75 and older lived alone. It is evident that women, especially women of color and those living alone, are more likely to age into poverty than men.**

**Why does this matter?**

**The older adult population is growing: the population of people aged 65 and older is expected to grow from 55.7 million in 2020 to 80.8 million by 2040. Poverty affects older adults differently than other groups because they are more vulnerable to economic instability when their physical health, cognitive abilities, and social networks decline.**

**Further, older Americans are finding that their pensions are inadequate to meet their basic needs, which include housing. According to the Harvard Joint Center on Housing, more than 2.2 million older adult renters with very low incomes had "worst case housing needs," which is defined as having severe cost burdens, living in severely inadequate housing, or both. This means low-income older adults may be more likely to struggle to afford basic medical care and their housing costs.**

**Since the majority of older adults live with chronic conditions, this often leads to increased out-of-pocket medical expenses. One serious health crisis could impact their ability to pay their usual bills, as many older adults live on fixed incomes. For example, social security is a primary source of income for most older Americans, and in 2020, the average monthly benefit was approximately**

**\$1,500. As medical needs increase, costs can be hard to keep up with, leading to a reduced ability to pay for other vital needs.**

**Homelessness and poverty are inextricably linked: when economic instability increases, so does the risk of homelessness. Thus, older Americans living in poverty are at increased risk of becoming homeless or experiencing housing instability. Preventing homelessness through the eradication of poverty cannot be done through isolated interventions: addressing homelessness of older adults (which includes eliminating the racial gap in poverty in this population) requires lifelong approaches to systemic and structural discrimination.**

## **10 Root Causes of Homelessness**

### **Stagnant wages**

**While the cost of living increases, wages haven't. In the United States, wages have gone up around 350% since 1970. The Consumer Price Index has increased by over 480%. This makes it challenging to cover everyday living expenses, let alone save money for homeownership down the line or emergencies. Without the ability to save money, an unexpected expense can devour a person's income. Around the world, low wages keep people trapped in poverty and more vulnerable to homelessness.**

### **Unemployment**

**While low wages contribute to homelessness, unemployment is also a significant factor. Reasons for unemployment vary and some countries have higher rates than others. Once a person is unemployed for a time, they can easily slip into homelessness. Research shows that most unhoused people want to work but face obstacles, such as not having a permanent address.**

### **Lack of affordable housing**

**High housing costs are a global issue. A global survey showed that out of 200 polled cities, 90% were considered unaffordable. This was based on average house prices being more than three times the median income. Without affordable housing, people find themselves with fewer options. It becomes harder to find housing near a place of work or in a safe area.**

### **Lack of affordable healthcare**

**Healthcare is very expensive, but many people are uninsured or underinsured. This means spending large amounts of money on healthcare while struggling to pay for rent, food, and utilities. It can also mean neglecting routine checkups and procedures, leading to higher medical costs down the road. One serious injury or accident could push an individual or family into homelessness.**



## **Poverty**

Poverty is one of the most significant root causes of homelessness. Stagnant wages, unemployment, and high housing and healthcare costs all play into poverty. Being unable to afford essentials like housing, food, education, and more greatly increases a person's or family's risk. To address homelessness effectively, governments and organizations need to address poverty.

## **Lack of mental health and addiction treatment services**

The two-way connection between mental health, addiction, and homelessness is clear. In the US, around 30% of "chronically homeless" people have mental health conditions. In 2017, the National Coalition for the Homeless found that 38% of homeless people depend on alcohol. 26% depend on other substances. Having a mental illness or addiction makes a person more vulnerable to homelessness and makes it more difficult to find permanent housing. A lack of stable housing also exacerbates mental health and addiction issues. Without treatment services, it's very difficult for someone to break the cycle.

## **Racial inequality**

In the United States, racial minorities experience homelessness at a higher rate than the white population. According to research from the National Alliance to End Homelessness and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, black Americans are 3 times more likely to lose housing. Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans are also minorities disproportionately affected. The reasons why are based in racial inequalities such as racial discrimination in housing and incarceration.

## **Domestic violence**

Women and children are especially vulnerable to violence-triggered homelessness. To escape domestic violence, people will flee their homes without a plan. If they don't have a place to stay, they can end up living in cars, shelters, or the street. Even for those who stay, the toll that domestic violence takes makes them more vulnerable to homelessness in the future. This is because trauma often leads to mental health issues and substance abuse.

## **Family conflict**

Closely related to domestic violence, family conflict can also lead to homelessness. This is especially true for the LGBTQ+ community. Coming out is risky. Families can kick out the individual or make the home environment dangerous. According to the True Colors Fund, 1.6 million young LGBTQ+ people end up homeless each year. This population is also at an increased risk for homelessness at a younger age.

## **Systemic failures**

While homelessness can occur because of an individual's or family's circumstances, we cannot ignore the systemic failures. Homelessness occurs when society fails to identify and support people at risk of becoming unhoused. Failures in areas like correctional services, healthcare services, and child welfare are very common. A society's failure to address racial inequalities, increase wages, and provide affordable housing contribute to homelessness.

## **How to fix or greatly reduce the Homeless Problem**

Every big city in America has attempted to fix the homeless problem and all have failed. Homelessness just keeps getting worse. It is obvious that we need a new approach. One country that has greatly reduced homelessness is Japan. Let's look at how they did it.

## **Japan's Innovative Approach to Addressing Homelessness**

### **Introduction:**

Homelessness is a complex social issue faced by countries around the world. While there is no one-size-fits-all solution, Japan has emerged as a notable example of a country that has made significant strides in addressing homelessness. With a combination of innovative policies, community involvement, and a holistic approach, Japan has managed to reduce homelessness rates and provide support to those in need. In this post, we will explore some of the strategies that Japan has employed to tackle homelessness.

### **Housing First Approach:**

One of the fundamental principles guiding Japan's approach to homelessness is the "Housing First" strategy. This approach prioritizes providing stable and permanent housing to individuals experiencing homelessness, rather than requiring them to meet certain conditions or complete programs before accessing housing. By focusing on securing housing as a primary step, Japan ensures that individuals have a safe and stable environment from which they can address other challenges contributing to their homelessness.

### **Collaboration between Government, Nonprofits, and Corporations:**

Japan's success in addressing homelessness can be attributed, in part, to the collaboration between multiple stakeholders. The government, nonprofit organizations, and corporations work together to pool resources, expertise, and funding. The government provides financial support and establishes policies, while nonprofits and corporations contribute through donations, volunteering,

and initiatives aimed at creating employment opportunities for homeless individuals.

#### **Supportive Services and Rehabilitation:**

Japan recognizes that addressing homelessness requires more than just providing housing. The government and nonprofit organizations offer a range of supportive services to help individuals reintegrate into society. This includes access to healthcare, mental health services, addiction treatment, vocational training, and employment support. By addressing the underlying factors contributing to homelessness, Japan empowers individuals to rebuild their lives and achieve sustainable independence.

#### **Social Integration and Community Support:**

Community involvement plays a crucial role in Japan's approach to homelessness. Efforts are made to foster social integration and eliminate stigma surrounding homelessness. Public awareness campaigns educate the public about homelessness, encouraging empathy and understanding. Additionally, community centers and support groups provide spaces for homeless individuals to connect with others, build social networks, and access necessary resources.

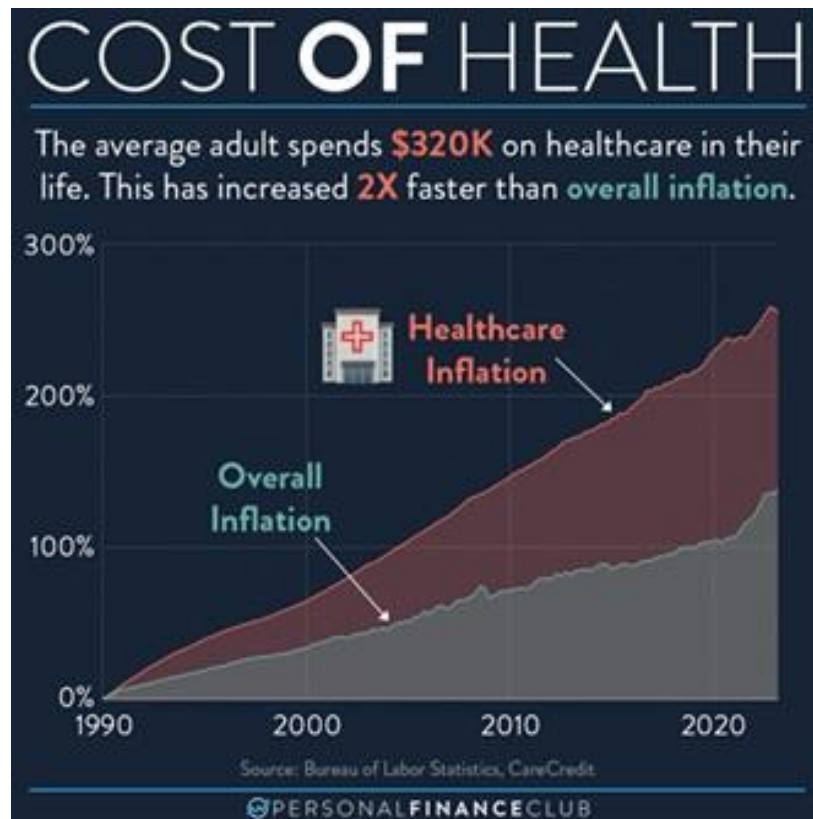
#### **Prevention and Early Intervention:**

Japan recognizes the importance of preventing homelessness before it occurs. The government focuses on identifying individuals and families at risk of homelessness and intervening early to provide the necessary support. This includes financial assistance, mediation services to prevent eviction, and counseling to address underlying issues such as unemployment or family disputes. By taking a proactive approach, Japan aims to prevent homelessness from becoming a long-term problem.

#### **Conclusion:**

While homelessness remains a global challenge, Japan's approach offers valuable insights into effective strategies for addressing this complex issue. By prioritizing stable housing, fostering collaboration among stakeholders, providing comprehensive support services, promoting social integration, and focusing on prevention, Japan has made significant progress in reducing homelessness rates. However, it is important to recognize that homelessness is a multifaceted problem, and solutions must be tailored to the unique circumstances of each country. By learning from successful initiatives like those implemented in Japan, societies around the world can take steps towards alleviating homelessness and creating a more inclusive and compassionate society.

## #7 Cost and Availability of Healthcare



Health spending in the United States is projected to grow by 5% between 2023 and 2024, to a total of \$4.9 trillion or about \$14,200 for every person in the US. According to the report, those between 65 and 74 spend about \$15,000 a year on health care. That jumps to \$24,000 between 75 and 84 and then rises to \$39,000 for those over the age of 84.

### How We Can Reduce US Health Care Costs

The primary reason that the US needs health care reform is that we pay more for health care than any other country in the world; yet our health outcomes are below that of other western nations. Our health outcomes are suboptimal because millions of Americans have limited access to ongoing primary and preventive care because they can't afford our health insurance.

#### Reducing Administrative Costs

We spend more than a third of our health care dollars on overhead and administration: billing, advertising, profits, and bonuses for health care executives. Administrative costs in countries such as Canada that have a single payer (non-profit national health insurance) are half as much as in the US. If



**we had a single payer instead of hundreds of insurers with thousands of different plans, we would save 15% of our health care costs. Fifteen per cent of trillions adds up!**

**A Price Waterhouse Coopers study reported that our complex, fragmented health care delivery system wastes \$210 billion per year on unnecessary billing and administrative costs. The ultimate solution to our excessive health care costs is national health insurance: Medicare for all but that won't happen—at least not in the very near future. What can we do to decrease health care costs now?**

### **Focus on Preventive Care**

**We need to change our focus from disease management to prevention and health promotion. To change our focus to prevention we need more primary care physicians, family physicians, and general internists. Multiple studies have shown that generalists practice more cost-effective medicine than specialists and that their patients have better health outcomes.**

**Due to poor planning, currently we have an overall shortage of physicians in the US. The number of medical students recently has increased, but we have an even greater problem. The number of US MD graduates choosing primary care careers keeps decreasing. In the 2009 National Residency Match, only 7% of graduates chose family practice, and 19% chose internal medicine. Only a minority of those choosing internal medicine will become general internists; the majority will become subspecialists or hospitalists. Hauer et al reported that only 2% of US senior MD medical students planned to have a career in general internal medicine.**

**One reason that medical students enter specialties is that the average educational debt of the class of 2008 MD graduates was \$150,000. This influences many graduates to enter specialties that pay, on average, twice as much as primary care so that they can pay off their educational debt. To influence more physicians to choose primary care we need to pay off their educational debt if they choose and remain in primary care. In addition, they should receive an annual stipend for each Medicare patient for whom they coordinate care and provide a medical home. These stipends added to their fee for service income should provide an income comparable to the average specialist. This would be an excellent investment for Medicare. If each primary care physician can avoid 1 unnecessary hospitalization or even 1 expensive but unnecessary test for each patient, Medicare will come out far ahead!**

**To be effective in prevention, primary care physicians must have certain skills that our current medical school curriculum does not provide adequately. We offer minimal training in nutrition, prescribed exercise, stress reduction techniques, and other effective therapies for certain conditions, for example, acupuncture for specific chronic pain syndromes.**

#### **Eliminate Unnecessary Tests and Procedures**

**In addition to training a new cadre of adult generalists with expertise in prevention, we must ensure that all physicians (specialists and generalists) practice cost-effective medicine. At the present time, physicians vary tremendously in their use of expensive diagnostic tests and treatments. The average cost of treating a Medicare patient in some parts of the country is twice as expensive as in other areas. The most expensive cities have more hospitalizations, and physician visits and their physicians order more expensive diagnostic tests and procedures. There is no evidence that the more expensive treatment benefits patients. Much of the excessive treatment and unnecessary testing occurs at the end of life. We must encourage all citizens to have living wills to avoid unwanted procedures at the end of life.**

**Many unnecessary tests are performed to prevent malpractice suits. Kessler and McClellan, in 1996, estimated the annual cost of defensive medicine to be as much as \$50 billion per year. It must be much higher at present. We need malpractice reform including limits on awards for pain and suffering. Our current system of paying millions of dollars to patients and their attorneys when malpractice is documented does not prevent malpractice. We need to require retraining of physicians who are shown to practice substandard medicine. We need to suspend or deny participation in Medicare for repeat offenders.**

**In addition, we need to increase research funding for projects that will help to determine which diagnostic tests and procedures actually benefit specific patients. This research will increase the number of evidence-based practice guidelines. Medicare should not pay for procedures that do not benefit patients. This is not rationing—it is common sense.**

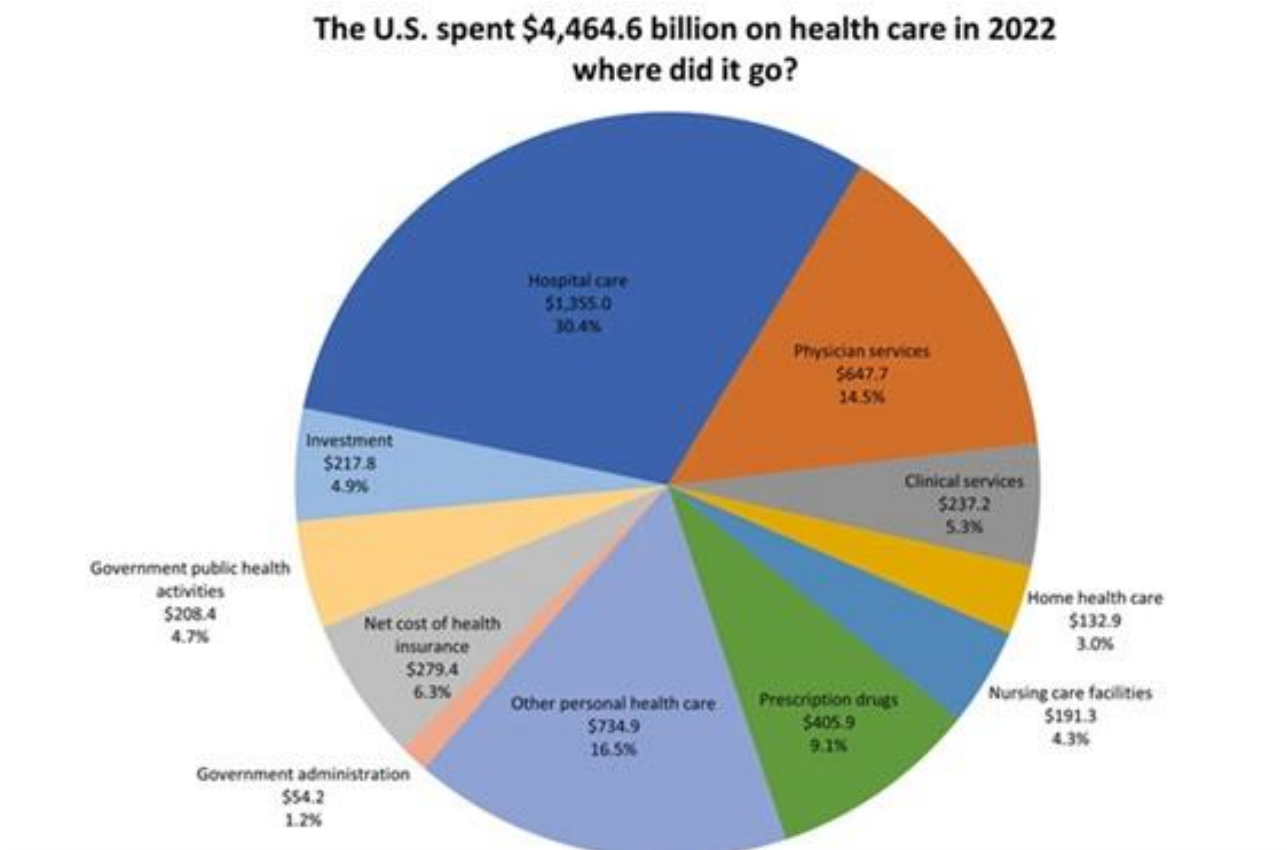
#### **Controlling the Costs of Prescription Drugs**

**Our government must control the prices of prescription drugs as is done in nearly every other nation. Drug companies can charge whatever they wish in the US. Citizens of other nations pay 20% to 40% less for prescription drugs compared with what Americans pay.**

Millions of Americans have chronic conditions that require life-long medications. If their insurance doesn't pay for them, or if they fall into Medicare's donut hole and cannot afford prescribed medicines, many patients stop taking their medications. The result is increased emergency room visits and hospitalizations and a further increase in our health care costs.

Some authorities have suggested that if we decrease the profits of drug companies, they will stop developing new drugs. Given that drug companies spend more than twice as much for marketing and advertising as they do for research this is a very unlikely outcome.

In summary, we must reduce the cost of health care in the US. We can do this by developing a health care system that emphasizes prevention rather than disease management. To do this we must encourage more physicians to be adult generalists, and we must provide them with new skills. Furthermore, we must insure that all physicians have cost-effective practice patterns that avoid unnecessary tests and procedures and that all citizens adopt living wills. As a nation, we need to have better control over the cost of prescription drugs.



## #8 Illegal Drugs



### What Are Illegal Drugs?

Illegal drugs refer to substances that are prohibited by law and are not legally available for use, possession, or distribution. These drugs can have a range of harmful effects on the human body, including physical, mental, and emotional damage. The use of illegal drugs can also lead to addiction and other negative consequences such as legal problems, financial difficulties, and strained relationships. Here is a list of illegal drugs that are commonly used:

**Crack cocaine:** Cocaine is considered a stimulant drug that comes from the coca plant leaves in South America. People usually use it to give them energy and keep them alert. Some of the effects of cocaine are severe stress on the heart, the lungs and the brain. Produces blood vessels rupture, hardening of the arteries and leads to stroke and heart failure. As for the overdose symptoms, they are seizures, hallucinations, delirium, violent behavior, hyperthermia, arrhythmia, chest pain, breathing difficulty, and coughing up blood.

**Heroin:** Heroin is an opioid and related to the opium poppy plant. When overdosing on heroin, it can give you the symptoms of extreme drowsiness, small pupils, passing out, hypothermia, slow breathing with blueish gray lips and fingertips, cold, clammy skin, low blood pressure, and irregular heartbeat. Some effects of heroin are collapsed veins, infection of the heart valves, liver and kidney damage, bone pain, higher risk of contracting Hepatitis and HIV.

**Methamphetamine:** Methamphetamine is primarily used to treat ADHD or attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder. If you take this prescription drug with it not being properly prescribed to you and you overuse, causing overdose symptoms. Some of the overdose symptoms are being aggressive, agitation,



angry, blurred vision, dark urine, blurred vision, fainting, and fast breathing. Some of the side effects are severe anxiety, confusion, weight loss, tooth decay, paranoia, hallucinations, violent and erratic behavior.

**Bath Salts:** Bath salts are under the synthetic stimulant drugs. The symptoms of overdosing on bath salts are rapid heart rate, paranoia, seizures, coma, stroke, delusions, psychosis, and stroke. Some of the side effects of bath salts are agitation, hallucinations, violent behavior, breakdown of skeletal muscle tissue, kidney and liver damage.

**Cocaine:** Cocaine has the same overdose symptoms as crack cocaine, it's just made differently. Some of the effects of using cocaine are nasal damage, loss of sense of smell, infection and death of bowel tissue, paranoia, psychosis, heart attack, stroke, seizure, coma.

**Amphetamines:** Amphetamines are usually prescribed by doctors to treat the conditions attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and narcolepsy. The overdose symptoms for amphetamines are racing heartbeat, stroke, heart attack and death, not being able to urinate, and getting chills or fever. Some of the effects of amphetamines are experiencing panic attack, psychosis, convulsions, anxiety, changes in weight, headaches.

**Methadone:** Methadone is used primarily for treating severe, chronic pain. Some of the symptoms of overdosing on Methadone are swelling in your legs and ankles, cold, clammy skin, increased sweating, pale or blue lips, and irregular or slow heartbeat. Some of the effects of methadone are slow or stop breathing, nausea and vomiting, itchiness, severe sweating, stroke, coma.

**Benzodiazepines:** Benzodiazepines are used primarily to make your nervous system less active. There is a decrease in the nervous system activity. Some of the overdose symptoms of benzodiazepines are slurred speech, extreme drowsiness, uncoordinated movements, and loss of consciousness. The symptoms of consuming benzodiazepines are impaired cognition, impaired motor function, tremors, nausea, lethargy, depression, sleeplessness, memory problems.

**Ecstasy:** Ecstasy is stimulant drug with hallucinogenic substance in it. Some of the overdose symptoms of ecstasy are sleep disturbances and confusion and memory loss, confusion, depression, memory loss, anxiety, agitation, severe rise in body temperature, heart failure, heat stroke.

**Marijuana:** Marijuana comes from the Cannabis plant and causes mind-altering effects that make you feel high. The overdose symptoms of marijuana are increased heart rate, hallucinations, memory problems, chronic cough, panic attacks, and psychosis



In recent weeks, a spate of media attention has once again alerted Americans to our epidemic of narcotic drug abuse – and its destructive and fatal consequences. The political promise for a response in this country because an epidemic is indifferent to whether a person is Republican, Democrat or independent. We are all besieged by this problem; an epidemic makes no distinctions between white, black, Hispanic or Asian, rich or poor, urban or rural, or young or old.

For the doers among us, we need to decide and act on what can be done to contain this epidemic. Unnecessary deaths can be averted, and we can do far better to protect against the personal, community and economic devastation that addiction wreaks on a society. At the risk of missing a few things, I offer below 10 actions individuals, families and communities (including our policymakers and insurers) can do. These are not meant to be taken in rank order; rather, the more taken, the greater our chances of success.

**1. Reduce overdose deaths by providing easy access to naloxone. Naloxone, now available as a nasal spray, immediately blocks the deadly respiratory suppression caused by heroin, methadone and narcotic pain pills (like OxyContin, Percodan and Vicodin), and it should be made easily available to first responders, families and those dependent on narcotics and their friends. In 2021, overdose deaths from prescription pain pills reached nearly 19,000, a more than threefold increase from 2001. Over 47,000 people total overdosed that same year.**

**2. Identify and crack down on prescribers who are providing large quantities of narcotics in so-called pill mills. Use state prescription databases to identify these prescribers and distinguish them from doctors legitimately practicing with populations of pain and cancer patients.**

**3. Employ TV, radio and social media to educate families about drug-abuse prevention. This has been repeatedly shown to reduce the non-medical use of narcotic pain pills.**

**4. Establish and implement medical guidelines for the treatment of chronic pain. This can be done through quality improvement techniques and performance improvement strategies.**

**5. Make problem drug and alcohol use screening a standard of care. Screening for this abuse should be a universal practice, used with adult patients seen in primary care settings to identify and intervene early before addiction sets in and overtakes an individual. Screening, brief intervention and referral for treatment, or SBIRT, is a proven intervention that is generally covered by insurers, including Medicaid and Medicare. This intervention has also been adapted for teenage detection and intervention of drug and alcohol problems.**

**6. Increase the availability, affordability and access to drug treatment programs. An estimated 80 to 90 percent of individuals who could benefit from treatment are not getting it. Celebrities who can pay vast sums for private treatment programs should not be the only ones able to enter them. The Affordable Care Act requires as an essential service element coverage and parity for mental health and substance use disorders, meaning that insurance benefits for addiction must be equivalent to any other covered general medical condition. The opportunity for proper reimbursement for substance disorder treatment has never been better.**

**7. Educate doctors, patients and families about what good addiction treatment must include. Medical providers, not just addiction specialists, need to appreciate the underlying neuroscience of addiction and fashion their treatment accordingly. Patients and families need to be far more informed consumers in order to advocate for effective treatments.**

**8. Expose treatment centers not providing comprehensive treatment for substance abuse as falling below standards of quality of care. 12-Step recovery programs (like Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous) are important as a part of a comprehensive treatment program but have low rates of effectiveness alone. Treatment options must include motivational enhancement, cognitive-behavioral treatments, relapse prevention, family education and support, wellness efforts and medication to help prevent relapse and maintain sobriety.**

**9. Promote and pay for the use of medication-assisted treatment. This means that recovery efforts can include medication. The use of medication should not be exhorted as a violation of sobriety. A number of medications now exist for drug and alcohol addiction (tobacco too) that improve rates of abstinence – or reduce use, called harm reduction. These include buprenorphine (Suboxone), methadone, naltrexone (including the 28-day injectable Vivitrol) and naloxone. Let's give people in recovery as good a chance as possible not be drawn into puritanical and outdated notions of recovery.**

**10. Keep hope alive. People with substance use disorders can recover. That takes good treatment, hard work, ongoing support and keeping hope alive. People with addictions do get on the path to recovery – but it is hard to predict when that will happen. For some it is early, even after one or two rehabilitation programs. For others it may take five, 10 or 20 rehab programs, and the pain and suffering of too many relapses. Persons affected, their families and clinical providers need to sustain hope that recovery can happen during what can be a protracted and very dark time. The darkest moments, the most deadly, are when hope evaporates, which is when exile from family, friends and communities and suicide are more likely.**

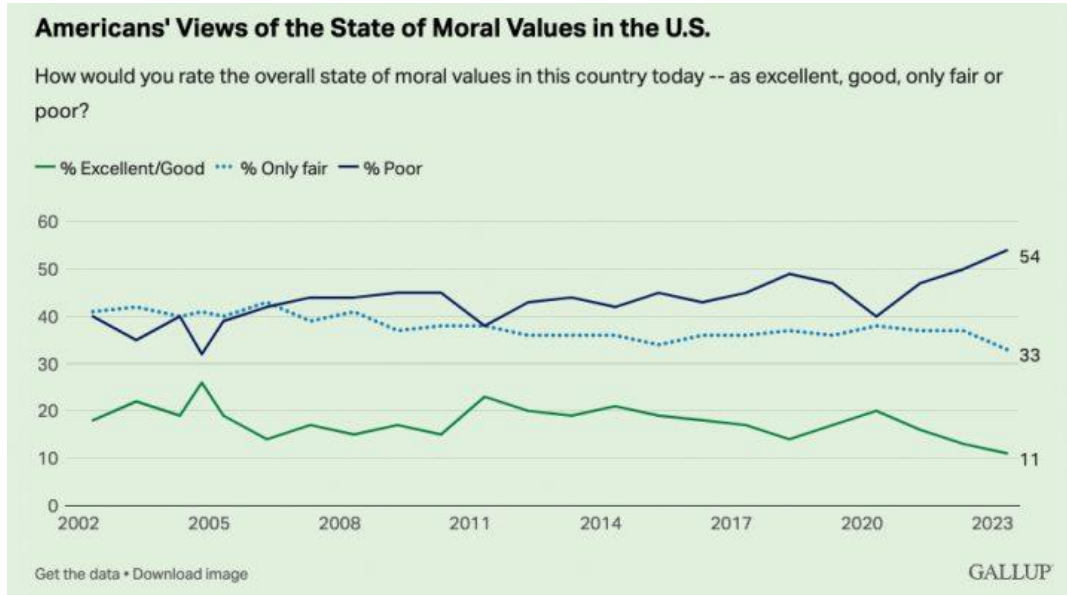
## **Summary**

**We surely have an epidemic of drug use and abuse. This country, and others, have successfully faced and overcome many other epidemics. The sooner we act, the more lives and families will be spared.**



## #9 The State of Moral Values

### State of Moral Values in U.S. is at New Low



A record-high 54% of Americans rate the overall state of moral values in the U.S. as "poor," and another 33% say it is "only fair." Just 1% think the state of moral values is "excellent" and 10% is "good." Although negative views of the nation's moral values have been the norm throughout Gallup's 20-year trend, the current poor rating is the highest on record.



Here's why moral values are of paramount importance: **Social Cohesion:** They create a sense of unity, fostering cooperation and understanding among individuals. **Ethical Decision-Making:** They guide individuals in making ethical choices, contributing to a morally upright society.

## **#10 Condition of Roads, Bridges, and Other Infrastructure**



**The World Economic Forum now ranks the United States 13th when it comes to the overall quality of infrastructure. Examples of our nation's fragile and aging infrastructure abound. More than 45,000 U.S. bridges and 1 in 5 miles of roads are in poor condition. The American Society of Civil Engineers reports that the US would have to invest \$3.6 trillion just to bring our existing Infrastructure into a state of good repair by 2030.**

**How many dams does America have?**

**The US has 91,804 dams across all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and Guam. The average age of a dam in the United States is 61 years, leaving them susceptible to structural failure risks.**

**Approximately 65% of all dams are privately owned, while federal, state, and local government agencies own 31%. The remaining 4% belong to public utility companies and tribal governments or remain unlisted.**

**Restore a strong federal service that knows how to run a country.**

**Part of the deep rot that undermines the effectiveness of both the executive and legislative branches is the gutting of America's federal service. A century ago, the U.S. had legions of civil servants professionally managing the expansion of America's railways and highways and creating "New Deal" bureaucracies such as the Social Security Administration. Today, it is an emasculated and fragmented workforce overseen by self-interested cronies and contractors.**

**And yet it is precisely in times of political gridlock that a professional civil service is needed most to get things done even if elected politicians do nothing. As in Singapore and China, America once again needs a permanently staffed federal service that brings all departments up to speed with the latest in data management and analytics. Crucial advisory bodies such as the National Security Council and Council of Economic Advisors in the White House, and Congressional Research Service, Government Accountability Office and Congressional Budget Office, should be beefed up as preparatory bodies to shape policy and legislation that serve the entire population while keeping it within the realm of the affordable and rational.**

**After this years election, Americans should focus on building and institutionalizing competence beyond the president as a way of graduating from personality politics towards a better system of government. Democracy has gotten us to where we are now—a bit more technocracy could ensure America's best days aren't behind it.**

**I think our government should stop spending billions of dollars of our tax dollars on helping illegal immigrants and foreign aid to countries that hate the United States. Government needs to start fixing things here in America to help U.S. citizens and our country.**

## #11 The Federal Debt



The US Federal Debt is over \$35 Trillion Dollars and goes up every second as our government keeps spending billions of dollars they don't have. The United States boasts both the world's biggest national debt in terms of dollar amount.

**Why is U.S. debt so high?** When the federal government spends more than its budget, it creates a deficit. In the fiscal year of 2023, it spent about \$381 billion more than it collected in revenues. To pay that deficit, the government borrows money from “you” the public by issuing securities—bills, notes, and bonds—through the Treasury.

**How serious is the US debt crisis?** The United States is facing a critical economic issue: its national debt is growing faster than its income, with no clear plan for repayment— and this could have serious repercussions for the global economy. In fact, the U.S. deficit looks like it will be more than 7% of GDP this year.

### 10 Countries without Public Debt

- Switzerland
- Sweden
- Norway
- Denmark
- Czech Republic
- Estonia
- Singapore
- Taiwan
- South Korea
- Russia

**How to Fix the US Debt Crisis.** The federal government has to Stop Spending more than it collects in revenues.



## **#12 Judicial System / Courts / Laws**



**An outdated and unfair criminal justice system continues to result in devastating consequences for crime prevention, rehabilitation, and fair justice in the U.S.**

**The United States has almost 7 million people under correctional control, making it the world leader in incarceration. Out of those, about 2.2 million are serving sentences, and the rest are on probation, parole, or under community surveillance.**

**It is estimated that 100 million have a criminal record. Criminal justice reform has become necessary since most incarcerations are not caused by increasing crime rates but by the persistence of adhering to extremely punitive policies and sentencing laws.**

**One of the most significant consequences of the current criminal justice system is its impact on minority communities – with whole generations condemned to a vicious cycle of incarceration. It also aggravates social, economic, and racial inequalities. These lead to relapses, unemployment, and other social handicaps – without objective evidence that it prevents crime. COVID-19 has also highlighted the inefficiencies of a system that relies on incarcerations.**

A study conducted by Time magazine found that 39% of people in prison did not threaten public safety, and their release could save the country \$20 billion annually. Of these, 25% are lower-level, non-violent offenders who could benefit from alternative reforms, and 14% have already served long sentences for serious crimes and could safely be released.

**These are the fifteen biggest problems the outdated U.S. criminal system faces today:**

### **1. Law enforcement and policing**

Sending armed officers in uniforms to respond to 911 calls often leads to situations like the one that led to the death of Rayshard Brooks in Atlanta in mid-2020. It is estimated that 80% of nationwide calls to 911 are not made because of violent or property-related offenses. That indicated it should not be the police responding to them.

Additionally, many people, mainly from minority groups, do not call emergency services because they fear that the responders will be police officers. The system needs reforming to ensure the proper responders are sent out to deal with each specific situation, especially drug-related and psychological distress.

### **2. The 1994 Crime Bill**

The 1994 Crime Bill increased the number and length of incarcerations, and more funding went into building jails and prisons. Also, the possibility of early release was reduced. These measures increased the amount of taxpayers' money invested in enforcement and led to disproportionate incarcerations among African-American men. Its effect on public safety was minimal.

### **3. Mandatory minimum sentencing**

Mandatory minimum sentencing is a court's minimum sentence for a specific crime, even in unique circumstances. Unfortunately, even though more than half of federal inmates are incarcerated under these mandatory provisions, there is no correlated increase in public safety. Prosecutors often have incentives to send people to prison, and they can pick the charges they want to send someone to jail for.

Rachel Barkow, author of "Prisoners of Politics: Breaking the Cycle of Mass Incarceration," is quoted from an interview with CBS News: "Instead of having a judge decide what the sentence should be, prosecutors can make that decision. That is problematic because the judge is at least an objective third party with no stake in the outcome. The prosecutor, however, can threaten people with mandatory minimums to get them to plead guilty."

#### **4. Poverty continues inhibiting prevention and recidivism**

Some issues contributing to the high number of incarcerations include drug use and mental health. The money for policing and detentions could be better spent on community prevention and treatment programs. Recidivism can also be reduced if the federal Pell Grants were restored to inmates.

These grants allowed federal education support and financial aid to help rehabilitate those incarcerated and give them a second chance. Additionally, the system requiring people to pay cash bail adds to the problem. It is estimated that 3 out of 5 people in jail have not been convicted of a crime but are too poor to meet the bail set by the court.

#### **5. Handling of juveniles**

Juveniles are often tried as adults in the criminal justice system and are not given parole eligibility. Also, policing neighborhoods and schools often criminalizes minor offenses and contributes to unnecessary violence. This leads to a stigma or psychological trauma that can lead to increased criminal activities.

#### **6. Prosecutorial Discretion**

Prosecutorial discretion is the ability of prosecutors to determine which charges and what sentences are pursued in criminal cases without any form of accountability or oversight. This has resulted in excessive punishments and racial disparities in sentencing.

#### **7. Over-Policing**

Over-policing occurs when police focus too much on certain communities instead of relying on proactive policing strategies that prioritize crime prevention and public safety. This has led to increased arrests for minor crimes, the criminalization of poverty, and increased mass incarceration rates.

#### **8. Incarceration Conditions**

Incarceration conditions in US prisons are often overcrowded, unsafe, and unhealthy, with inadequate access to medical care or rehabilitative services; a growing body of research suggests that incarceration conditions can contribute to physical and mental health issues in inmates and the likelihood they will recidivate.

#### **9. Lack of Access to Rehabilitative Services**

Incarcerated individuals often lack access to rehabilitative programming or services to help them better re-enter society after being released from prison. This increases recidivism rates, making it more difficult for formerly incarcerated people to find employment or housing opportunities outside prison.

#### **10. Unfair Sentencing Practices**

Unfair sentencing practices are based on racial disparities, socioeconomic status, and gender inequity in the criminal justice system. These sentencing guidelines result in harsher penalties for certain offenses.

Comprehensive criminal justice reform is needed to ensure fair and equal sentencing for all individuals. This would include abolishing the death penalty, life without parole sentences, mandatory minimums, and other inhumane punishments.

Additionally, it should focus on providing rehabilitative services for those incarcerated so that they can successfully re-enter society after their release with support from the community.

#### **11. Unjust Drug Laws**

The US has some of the harshest drug laws in the world despite growing evidence that decriminalization or legalization is more effective at reducing addiction and associated crimes than long-term incarceration. These laws have resulted in a disproportionate number of Black and Latino people being arrested, charged with felonies, and incarcerated—leading to increased mass incarceration.

Reforming these laws can help reduce recidivism and provide much-needed treatment for those suffering from addiction rather than simply throwing them in jail.

#### **12. Inadequate Legal Representation**

People of color, especially African Americans, can often not access adequate legal representation due to social or economic status and lack of resources. This results in people facing criminal charges without legal defense and exacerbates racial disparities within the justice system. Access to equitable and quality legal representation is essential for a fair and just criminal justice system.

#### **13. Police Militarization**



**Police militarization refers to the increasing use of military equipment, tactics, and training by law enforcement agencies. This has resulted in a culture of excessive force and violence and increased risk to police officers and civilians. The militarization of the police can lead to racial profiling, discrimination, and disproportionate use of force against people of color—contributing to mass incarceration rates. Reform is needed to ensure that policing practices do not harm or discriminate against certain groups while protecting public safety.**

#### **14. Unjust Immigration Laws**

**The US immigration system is overly punitive and has criminalized undocumented individuals by labeling them as criminals and subjecting them to harsh detention conditions, deportation proceedings, or long-term jail sentences for minor offenses. This has led to an increase in the number of immigrants being detained and incarcerated— comprehensive immigration reform is needed to ensure that immigrants are treated with dignity and respect. This should include a pathway to citizenship, abolishing detention centers, and restoring due process rights for all individuals facing deportation proceedings.**

#### **15. Lack of Mental Health Services**

**Mental health issues often go untreated in the criminal justice system due to inadequate resources and access to care. Incarcerated individuals often struggle with mental illness or substance abuse without support from counselors or other healthcare professionals—leading to increased self-harm or even death in prison.**

**Reforming this system requires increased funding for mental health services and improved access to counseling and rehabilitation programs inside and outside prisons. This could help reduce the criminal justice system that is fair and just not only for those accused of a crime but also for the victims. This includes ensuring all individuals have access to adequate legal representation, reducing racial disparities in sentencing and prosecution, providing more access to rehabilitative services, and ensuring that those with mental health issues receive the care they need.**

**With comprehensive reform, we can ensure a criminal justice system that truly upholds fairness and justice for all. Addressing these challenges needs concerted efforts across the criminal justice system if the number of incarcerations is reduced and crime numbers are kept low.**

## #13 The Quality of our Public Schools



### **K-12 education reform: Top issues and solutions**

Public education hasn't changed much in 3 decades. We desperately need to innovate.

If you walked into a typical public K-12 classroom today, it would not look significantly different from your own classroom 15, 20, or even 30 years ago.

Perhaps the chalkboards would be replaced by whiteboards, and teachers may now have microphones hanging around their necks. However, the classroom setup and teaching methods would be very similar: students passively learning from desks in rows facing the front of the room, where the teacher lectures from a state-mandated, standards-based curriculum, focusing on subjects and information likely to be on end-of-year exams.

The most troubling similarity across the decades: large gaps in student learning proficiency that persist and continue to widen. After decades of trying to make standardized education work, communities, parents, and educators are pushing for solutions and policy reforms that support variety and innovation. This guide explores the primary challenges in K-12 education and offers solutions that could lead to transformative outcomes.

First, let's look at the biggest challenges that should be addressed.

### **Issue 1: One-size-fits-all approach**

In 1989, 49 governors and President George H.W. Bush convened with the predetermined goal of improving the quality of American education. Their primary means for achieving this goal was the standardization of learning expectations to be monitored via yearly testing.

In the 35 years since the summit, federal and state legislatures have relied on a one-size-fits-all education model. Governments have focused more on what schools are teaching rather than who they are teaching. However, the idea that every school can and should be teaching the same things, in the same way, has failed miserably. For example, two-thirds of high school students report being disengaged, and some inner-city schools have zero students testing at grade level in math and reading.

One-size-fits-all teaching methods don't factor in individual students and their unique needs and learning styles. This can lead to disengagement, frustration, and poor outcomes.

### **Issue 2: Lack of individualized education**

Research suggests students are more likely to thrive in environments that offer personalized learning experiences tailored to their interests and abilities. In one study, students in schools using personalized learning methods outperformed their peers in math and reading over two school years, and students who lagged when they first entered personalized learning environments reached or surpassed national averages by the end of those two years.

Increased engagement is a key benefit of personalized learning. When students feel like their needs matter and are given the reins to their own learning, they're more likely to stay engaged and master difficult concepts.

With standardized instruction and testing, personalized learning takes a back burner because schools and teachers worry about losing funding and programs if their students don't perform well on end-of-year tests. Parents also get caught up in grades and test scores because in traditional education systems scores can determine a child's future.

Unfortunately, the obsession with tests and grades takes a toll. When students leave high school, often the most prominent skills they've acquired are how to take tests and how to meet academic requirements — neither of which prepares them for life in the real world. They have no understanding of their own

aptitudes, strengths, or talents, and they feel they lack the social and emotional skills to navigate adult life.

When learning is individualized, it empowers children to explore their natural gifts and talents, hone them, and discover ways to use them to benefit themselves and others.

### **Issue 3: Inadequate preparation for the real world**

The current public education system is heavily focused on test scores and college preparation. To that end, high schools emphasize academic subjects like math, reading, and science. Students leave high school knowing how to memorize information, take tests, and do the kind of math and chemistry most of them will never use again.

In the meantime, most students feel unprepared socially and emotionally for life after school. Their traditional K-12 education hasn't equipped them with essential life skills such as financial literacy, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, problem-solving, resilience, and effective communication.

As New York high school biology teacher Selim Tlili put it: "Education policy has increasingly centered on expanding access to college and helping students become 'college ready.' Rather than helping students become competent and self-sufficient adults, as school used to do, high school now focuses on the development of abstract skills that will purportedly serve them in college."

Many students leave their K-12 education feeling unprepared for the workforce and adult responsibilities. They've been taught to pursue college for so long that they lack awareness and information about alternative postsecondary career paths that don't require degrees. According to a 2023 study by ECMC, only 13% of high school graduates felt they were prepared to choose a path after high school. Of students who chose to pursue a degree, 64% of them cited a lack of information about other pathways as a barrier to choosing anything else.

### **Issue 4: Teacher shortages**

American schools have high student-to-teacher ratios driven by a massive K-12 teacher shortage. Faced with disciplinary problems and low school funding, schools have focused on staffing classrooms at all costs. That means larger class sizes — and teaching quality problems.

Other major problems include student poverty and chronic absenteeism.



## #14 Environment and Climate Change



### What Is Climate Change?

Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. Such shifts can be natural, due to changes in the sun's activity or large volcanic eruptions. But since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change, primarily due to the burning of fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas. Burning fossil fuels generates greenhouse gas emissions that act like a blanket wrapped around the Earth, trapping the sun's heat and raising temperatures.

The main greenhouse gases that are causing climate change include carbon dioxide and methane. These come from using gasoline for driving a car or coal for heating a building, for example. Clearing land and cutting down forests can also release carbon dioxide. Agriculture, oil and gas operations are major sources of methane emissions. Energy, industry, transport, buildings, agriculture and land use are among the main sectors causing greenhouse gases

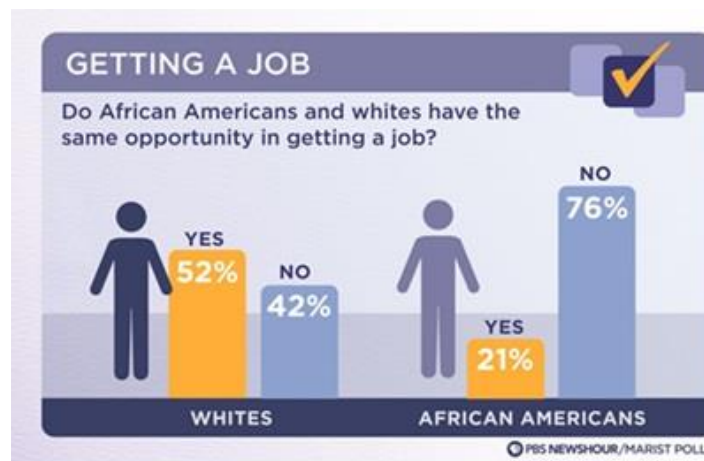
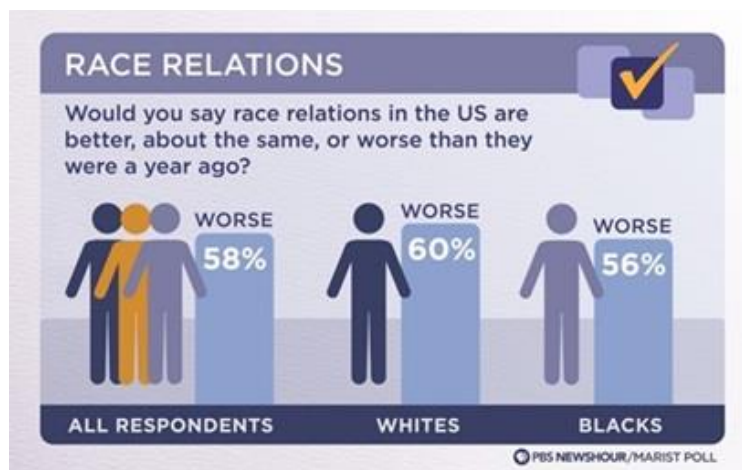
### How does environment relate to climate change?

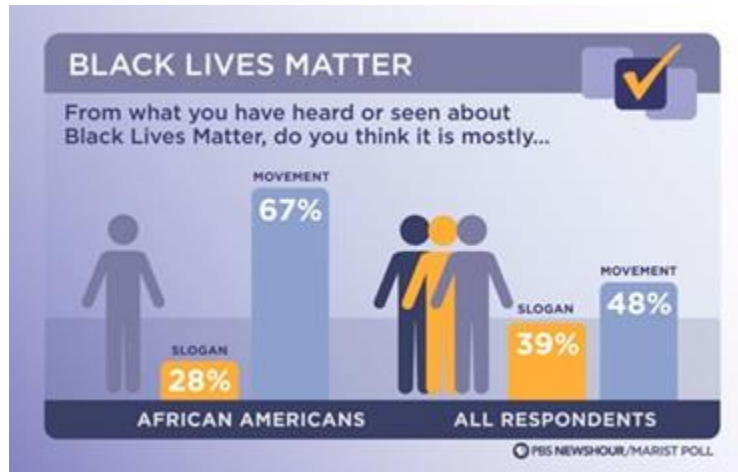
The consequences of climate change now include, among others, intense droughts, water scarcity, severe fires, rising sea levels, flooding, melting polar ice, catastrophic storms and declining biodiversity. From polar bears in the Arctic to marine turtles off the coast of Africa, our planet's diversity of life is at risk from the changing

## #15 Race Relations



## Black – White Relations: Recent Polls





As the above polls show, most Americans (white and black) think race relations are not getting better.

**However, the following numbers tell a different story.**

**Black Progress: How far we've come**

Let's start with a few contrasting numbers.

**60 and 2.2.**

In 1940, 60 percent of employed black women worked as domestic servants; today the number is down to 2.2 percent, while 60 percent hold white-collar jobs.

**44 and 1.**

In 1958, 44 percent of whites said they would move if a black family became their next door neighbor; today the figure is 1 percent.

**18 and 86.**

In 1964, the year the great Civil Rights Act was passed, only 18 percent of whites claimed to have a friend who was black; today 86 percent say they do, while 87 percent of blacks assert they have white friends.

Progress is the largely suppressed story of race and race relations over the past half-century. And thus, it's news that more than 40 percent of African Americans now consider themselves members of the middle class. Forty-two percent own their own homes, a figure that rises to 75 percent if we look just at black married couples. Black two-parent families earn only 13 percent less than those who are white. Almost a third of the black population lives in suburbia.

**Because these are facts the media seldom report, the black underclass continues to define black America in the view of much of the public. Many assume blacks live in ghettos, often in high-rise public housing projects. Crime and the welfare check are seen as their main source of income. The stereotype crosses racial lines. Blacks are even more prone than whites to exaggerate the extent to which African Americans are trapped in inner-city poverty. In a 1991 Gallup poll, about one-fifth of all whites, but almost half of black respondents, said that at least three out of four African Americans were impoverished urban residents. And yet, in reality, blacks who consider themselves to be middle class outnumber those with incomes below the poverty line by a wide margin.**

### **Conclusion**

**So, on Tuesday, 5 November 2024, Americans go to the polls and vote for our next President between Democrat Kamala Harris or Republican Donald Trump. We need to think for ourselves, do research, and vote for the person who will do the best job. Don't listen to these popular singers, movie stars, or sports stars who think their opinion and endorsement is more important than yours. It is not!! Remember all the problems that need to be fixed and vote for the candidate who you think can to do the best job fixing them and keeping America safe.**



**Kamala Harris**



**Donald Trump**

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