

April 17, 2006

## Americans Divided Over Whether Their Income Taxes Are Too High

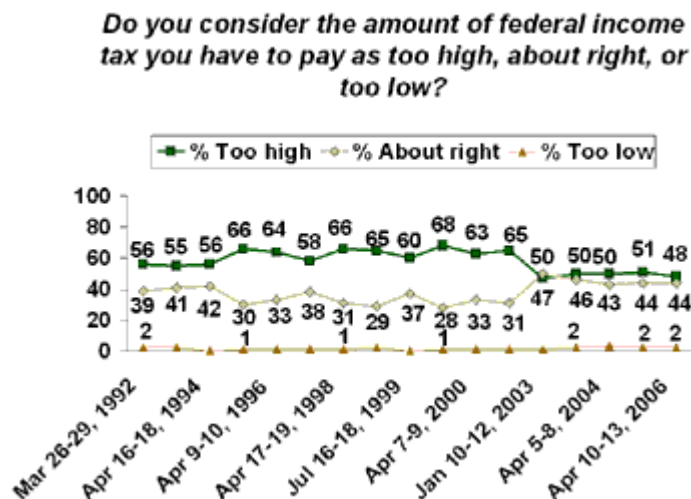
Majority says the federal taxes they pay are fair

by Jeffrey M. Jones

PRINCETON, NJ -- The percentage of Americans that believe the amounts of federal income taxes they pay are too high is at one of the lowest points Gallup has measured on this question in the past 60 years. At this point, the American public is divided over whether their federal income taxes are too high or about right. In prior years, majorities of Americans said their taxes were too high, though this view has declined since 2002. The majority of Americans also believe that the income taxes they pay are fair, continuing a pattern first evident five years ago. Generally speaking, Americans say upper-income people and corporations pay too little in taxes, while they are not as united in their views about the amount of taxes paid by middle- and lower-income people.

A recent Gallup Poll, conducted April 10-13, 2006, finds 48% of Americans describing the federal income tax they pay as "too high," while 44% say it is "about right." Only a small proportion, 2%, believes their taxes are "too low."

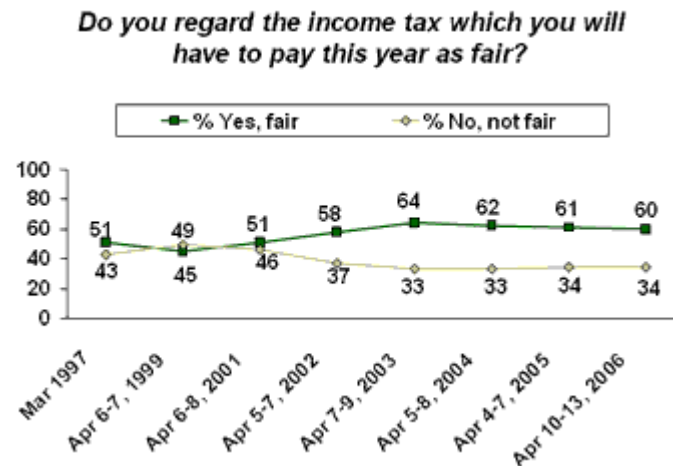
This represents a slight change from recent years. In each of the past three years, half of Americans have considered their income taxes as too high. In prior years, though, the public's clear position was that income taxes were too high -- from 1967 to 2001 at least 55% of Americans said so, with an average of 62% holding that view during this time period.



Gallup first asked this question about income taxes in 1947, and has polled the public about this issue on a fairly regular basis since then. There have only been a few occasions when the percentage saying their taxes were too high was lower than the 48% reported in the recent poll. These include 1949, when only 43% said the amount of taxes they paid was too high (the lowest ever measured), and readings of 46% in 1961 and 47% in 2003.

There is surprisingly little variation in Americans' attitudes toward the amount of taxes they pay based on their party affiliation, political ideology, or household income level.

Even though close to half of Americans believe their taxes are too high, significantly fewer regard them as unfair. In the current poll, 60% say the income tax they will pay this year is fair, while 34% disagree. Views on this matter have also become more positive in recent years -- the percentage regarding their taxes as fair has ranged from 58% to 64% since 2002, after ranging from 45% to 51% from 1997 to 2001.

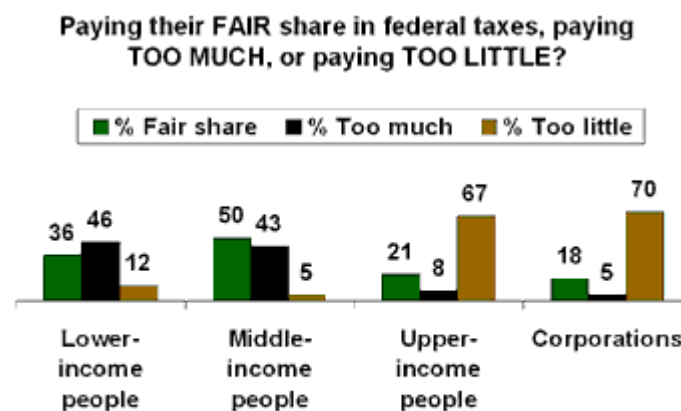


The more positive views of taxes since 2002 likely stem from two sources. First, Congress passed tax cuts favored by President George W. Bush in 2001 and again in 2002, which means Americans are paying less in federal income taxes than they did before Bush took office. Secondly, the public typically is less critical of federal taxes during wartime, presumably because Americans want to support the war effort. The United States has been involved in ongoing military action in Afghanistan and Iraq since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Again, there are little differences in perceptions of the fairness of one's taxes by subgroup.

Americans do not necessarily regard the taxes that other people pay as fair, though. Sixty-seven percent of Americans say that upper-income people pay too little tax, while just 21% of Americans say upper-income people pay their fair share. Fifty percent say middle-income people pay their fair share of taxes, while 43% say they pay too much. The plurality of Americans, 46%, say lower-income people pay too much tax, while 36% say they pay their fair share and 12% say too little.

Most Americans say corporations also pay too little in taxes -- 70% hold this view.



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One's perceptions of whether groups are paying the appropriate amount of tax are strongly related to political ideology. More than 6 in 10 liberals believe lower-income people are paying too much in

taxes, while just 45% of moderates and 36% of conservatives share this view. All three groups are fairly divided in their view of whether middle-income people pay too much or the right amount of taxes, though conservatives are slightly less inclined to say they pay too much and more inclined to say they pay the right amount. While all three groups say that upper-income people are paying too little in taxes, this view is more widely held by liberals and moderates than conservatives.

**Views of Groups' Tax Contributions  
by Ideology**

	Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
	%	%	%
<i>Lower-income people</i>			
Fair share	27	38	42
Too much	62	45	36
Too little	9	11	16
<i>Middle-income people</i>			
Fair share	48	49	52
Too much	44	46	40
Too little	6	3	5
<i>Upper-income people</i>			
Fair share	14	20	28
Too much	8	7	9
Too little	75	70	58
<i>Corporations</i>			
Fair share	12	19	21
Too much	5	4	4
Too little	75	72	67

32. Do you consider the amount of federal income tax you have to pay as too high, about right, or too low?

	Too high	About right	Too low	No opinion
	%	%	%	%
2006 Apr 10-13	48	44	2	5
2005 Apr 4-7	51	44	2	3
2004 Apr 5-8	50	43	3	4
2003 Apr 7-9	50	46	2	2
2003 Jan 10-12 ^	47	50	1	2
2001 Apr 6-8	65	31	1	3
2000 Apr 7-9	63	33	1	3
1999 Sep 10-14	68	28	1	3
1999 Jul 16-18	60	37	*	3
1999 Apr 6-7	65	29	2	4
1998 Apr 17-19	66	31	1	2
1997 Mar 24-26	58	38	1	3
1996 Apr 9-10	64	33	1	2
1994 Dec 16-18	66	30	1	3
1994 Apr 16-18	56	42	*	2
1993 Mar 29-31	55	41	2	2
1992 Mar 26-29	56	39	2	3
1991 Mar 28-30	55	37	2	6
1990 Mar 8-11	63	31	2	4
1985 Jun 7-10	63	32	1	4
1982 May 14-17	60	32	*	8
1973 Feb 16-19	65	28	1	6
1969 Mar 12-17	69	25	*	6
1967 Mar 9-14	58	38	1	3
1966 Feb 10-15	52	39	0	8

1964 Feb 28-Mar 5	56	35	1	9
1963 Jan 11-16	52	38	1	8
1962 Jun 28-Jul 3	63	32	1	4
1962 Feb 8-13	48	45	0	7
1961 Feb 10-15	46	45	1	8
1959 Mar 4-9	51	40	2	7
1957 Apr 6-11	61	31	*	8
1956 Feb 16-21	55	35	1	9
1953 Feb 1-5	59	37	*	4
1952 Feb 9-14	71	26	*	3
1951 Feb 4-9	52	43	1	4
1950 Feb	57	40	0	3
1949 Mar	43	53	1	4
1948 Mar	57	38	1	4
1947 Nov	63	32	0	5
1947 Mar	54	40	0	6

^ Asked of a half sample

\* Less than 0.5%

33. Do you regard the income tax which you will have to pay this year as fair?

	Yes, fair %	No, not fair %	No opinion %
2006 Apr 10-13	60	34	5
2005 Apr 4-7	61	34	5
2004 Apr 5-8	62	33	5
2003 Apr 7-9	64	33	3
2002 Apr 5-7	58	37	5
2001 Apr 6-8	51	46	3
1999 Apr 6-7	45	49	6
1997 Mar	51	43	6
1946 Nov	60	34	6
1946 Feb	62	38	--
1945 Mar	85	15	--
1944 Mar	87	13	--
1944 Feb	90	10	--
1943 Feb	85	15	--

34. As I read off some different groups, please tell me if you think they are paying their FAIR share in federal taxes, paying too MUCH or paying too LITTLE? First, how about -- [ITEMS A-C ROTATED, ITEM D READ LAST]?

#### A. Lower-income people

	Fair share %	Too much %	Too little %	No opinion %
2006 Apr 10-13	36	46	12	6
2005 Apr 4-7	36	51	10	3
2004 Apr 5-8	35	49	12	4
2003 Apr 7-9	36	49	12	3
1999 Apr 6-7	34	51	11	4
1996 Apr 9-10	40	48	9	3
1994 Apr 16-18	43	42	12	3
1993 Mar 29-31	37	51	9	3
1992 Mar 26-29	32	57	8	3

## B. Middle-income people

	Fair share	Too much	Too little	No opinion
	%	%	%	%
2006 Apr 10-13	50	43	5	3
2005 Apr 4-7	52	41	4	3
2004 Apr 5-8	47	46	4	3
2003 Apr 7-9	51	40	7	2
1999 Apr 6-7	35	59	4	2
1996 Apr 9-10	34	58	5	3
1994 Apr 16-18	39	57	3	1
1993 Mar 29-31	39	54	5	2
1992 Mar 26-29	36	57	5	2

## C. Upper-income people

	Fair share	Too much	Too little	No opinion
	%	%	%	%
2006 Apr 10-13	21	8	67	4
2005 Apr 4-7	22	7	68	3
2004 Apr 5-8	24	9	63	4
2003 Apr 7-9	24	10	63	3
1999 Apr 6-7	19	10	66	5
1996 Apr 9-10	19	9	68	4
1994 Apr 16-18	20	10	68	2
1993 Mar 29-31	16	5	77	2
1992 Mar 26-29	16	4	77	3

## D. Corporations

	Fair share	Too much	Too little	No opinion
	%	%	%	%
2006 Apr 10-13	18	5	70	7
2005 Apr 4-7	21	4	69	6
2004 Apr 5-8	19	5	69	7

## Survey Methods

These results are based on telephone interviews with a randomly selected national sample of 1,005 adults, aged 18 and older, conducted April 10-13, 2006. For results based on this sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum error attributable to sampling and other random effects is  $\pm 3$  percentage points. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.