

National Perception of Expenditures on the Environment and Nation's health

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For more than a decade the General Social Survey (GSS) conducted by the National Opinion Research Center has included items on two important policy issues in the surveys. The issues are the Nation's health and the environment. Both issues are strongly related and are of great importance to individuals and the nation as a whole. In fact the nation's health and the environment constitute an important component of the nation's wellbeing. GSS has included two questionnaire items to determine national perception of expenditures on 1) the nation's health (NATHEAL) and 2) the environment (NATENVIR). Information on these two substantive topics is important for national conversation and policy considerations. The specific questionnaire items on GSS were:

1. We are faced with many problems in this country, none of which can be solved easily or inexpensively. I am going to name some of these problems, and for each one I'd like you to tell me whether you think we're spending too much money on it, too little money, or about the right amount. First are we spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on improving and protecting the nation's health? (NATHEAL)
2. We are faced with many problems in this country, none of which can be solved easily or inexpensively. I am going to name some of these problems, and for each one I'd like you to tell me whether you think we're spending too much money on it, too little money, or about the right amount. First are we spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on improving and protecting the environment? (NATENVIR).

National responses to the two questions for the past 16 years were downloaded from the Association of Religious Data Archives (ARDA), www.TheARDA.com for analysis.

The purpose of the study was to explore public perceptions of national expenditures for improving and protecting the nation's health and the environment.

Frequency distributions of the responses to the two GSS items for each survey year were computed to investigate change in public perceptions of the issues.

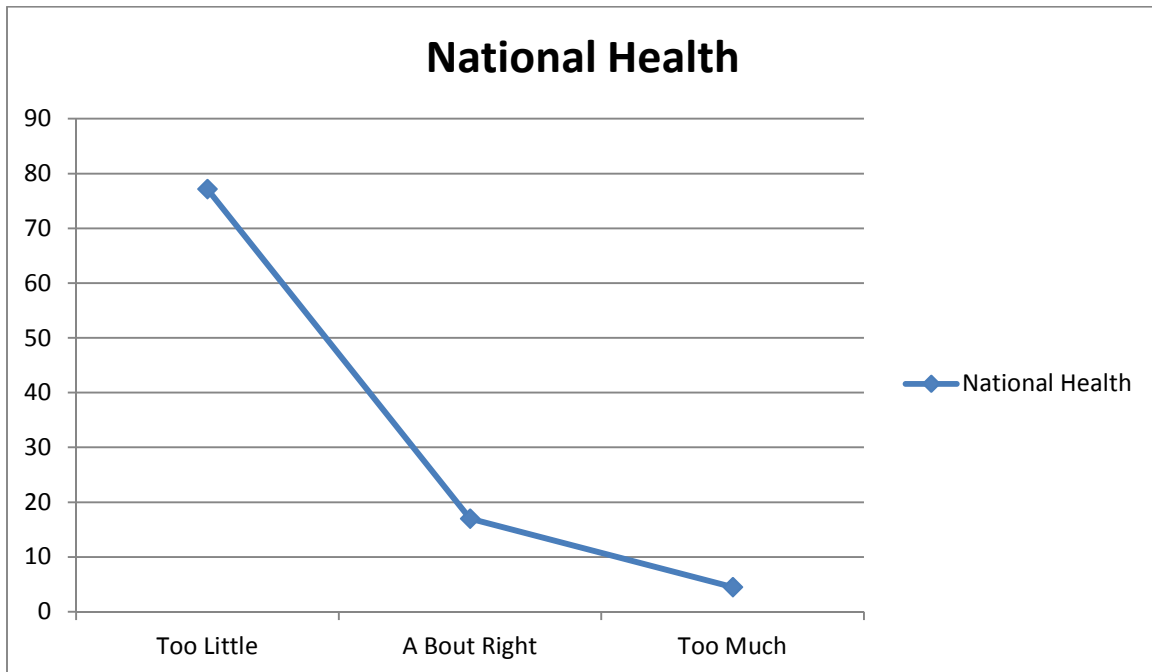
Results.

For the past 16 years beginning from 1976, majority of Americans have felt that the nation was spending too little on improving and protecting the nation's health. In 2002, 2004, and 2006 more than 70 percent of the people indicated on the surveys that the nation was spending too little on improving and protecting the nation's health. The responses to the national health question are heavily skewed towards "Too little" national expenditure to improve and protect the

nation's health. For example, in 2004 the responses were 77.2% for "Too Little", 17.0% for "About Right" and only 4.5% for "Too Much" expenditure for improving and protecting the nation's health. (See Figure 1)

GSS 2004 Responses to Expenditure on the Nation's Health.

Figure 1



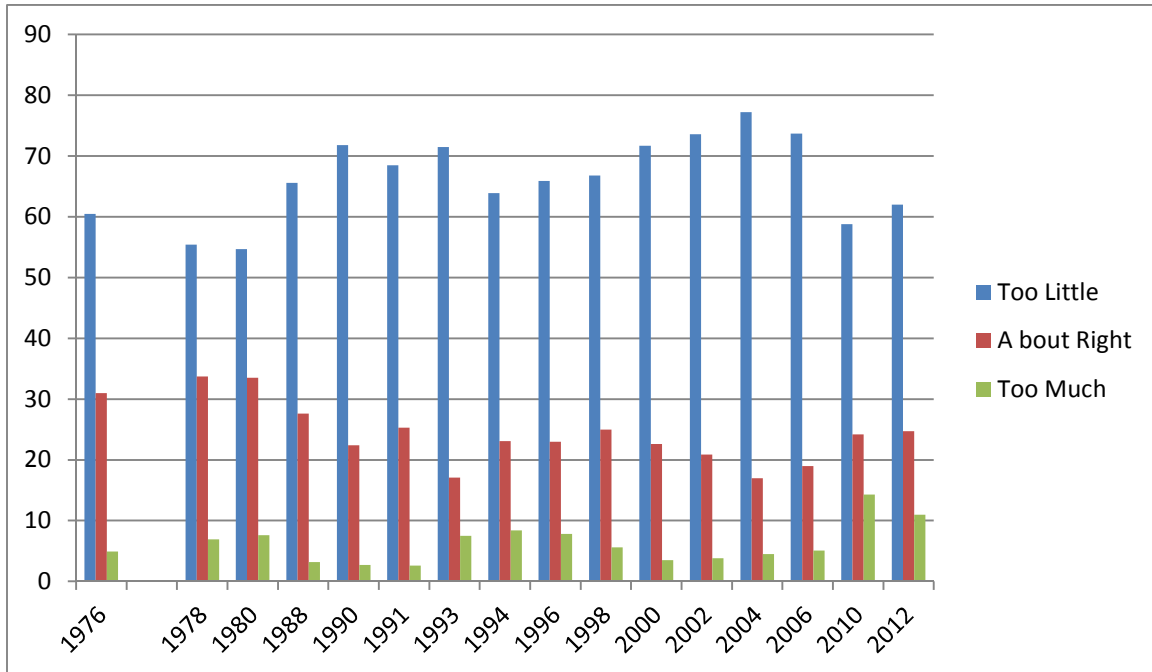
The average of the response distributions for the 16 years was: Too little, 66.3%, about right, 24.4%, and too much, 6.2%.

Figure 2 below shows the response distributions of the national health GSS question for 16 years. The data show an increasing trend in the response, 'Too little' expenditure on national health from 1994 to 2004. The most noticeable feature in the figure is the relatively small percentages of Americans who perceived the expenditure on the nation's health as too much.

GSS Responses to Expenditures on National Health

1976 to 2012

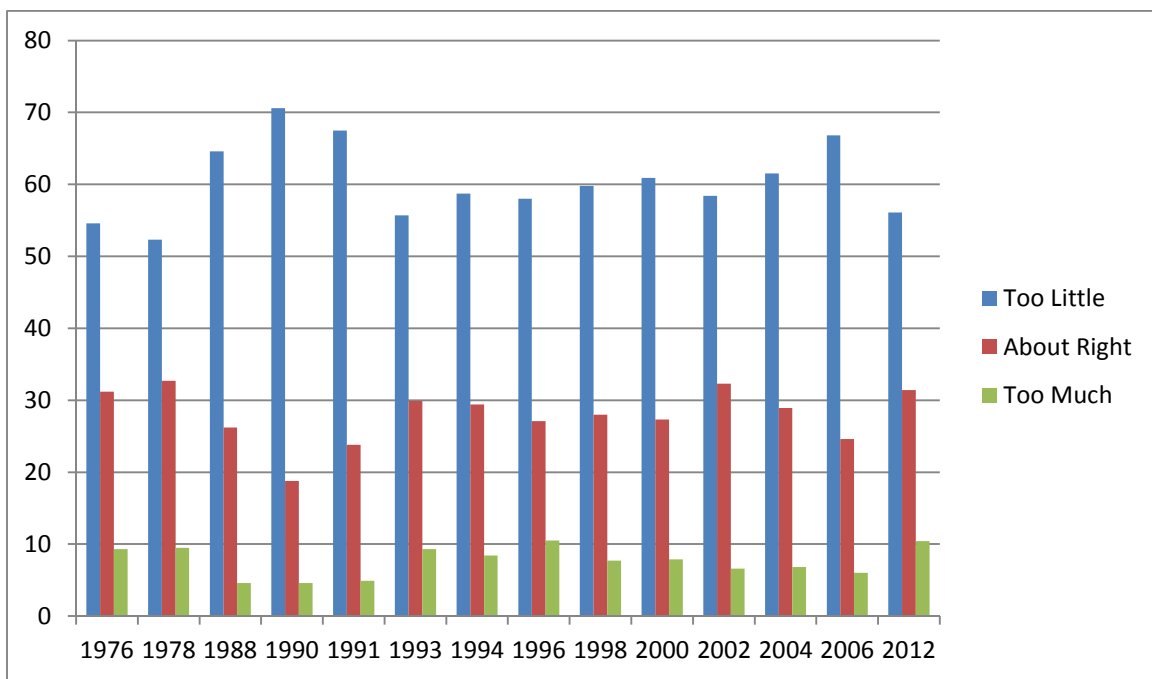
Figure 2



How do Americans perceive the national expenditures for improving and protecting the environment? The perception is very similar to how they perceive the national expenditures on national health. Majority of Americans believe that the expenditures to improve and protect the environment are too little. The data showed (See Figure 3) for example that in 1990, 1991 and 2006 the percentages of respondents that indicated ‘too little’ expenditure on the environment were 70.6%, 67.6% and 66.8% respectively. The average of the response distributions for available 14 years of GSS data was: Too little, 60.4%, about right, 28.0%, and too much, 7.6%. As shown in Figure 3, there was an increasing trend in the response, ‘Too little’ expenditure on the environment from 1993 to 2006.

GSS Responses to Expenditures on the environment
1976 to 2012

Figure 3



Correlate of national Perceptions (GSS 2012)

Cross tabulation of the responses to national health and the environment items with political ideology showed that:

- Political ideology is strongly related to perceptions of national expenditure to improve and protect the nation’s health and the environment. Those who described themselves as extremely liberal or liberal tend to endorse that the expenditures on the nation’s health and the environment were too little. For example, 72.9% of the extremely liberal or liberal indicated the expenditure for the nation’s health was too little compared to 39% of the

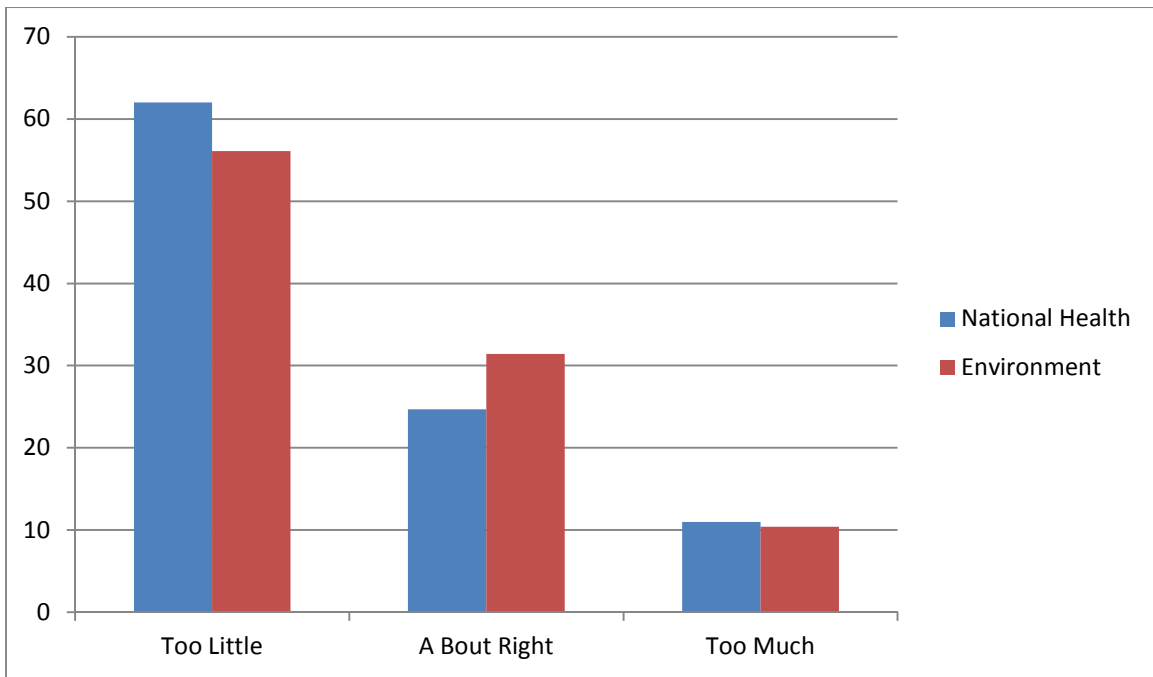
extremely conservative or conservative that gave a similar response. For the expenditure on the environment, 77.1% of the extremely liberal or liberal perceived national expenditures on the environment to be too little. Only 30.9% of the extremely conservative or conservative felt the expenditure on the environment was too little

Summary.

A brief summary of how Americans perceive the national expenditures for improving and protecting the nation’s health and the environment is presented graphically in Figure 4 below.

National Perception of Expenditures on the Nation’s Health and the Environment
GSS Data for 2012

Figure 4



- In 1990 and 1991, the largest majority of Americans, 70.6% and 67.6% respectively perceived the national expenditure on the environment as inadequate or too little.

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- 2004 registered the highest percentage of Americans (77.2%) who felt the expenditure on national health was too little.
- The perceptions of the public may reflect how serious they consider national health and the environment