

What Concerns Them on Campus

By George Gallup

Princeton, N.J.

Distrust in the nation's leadership is the No. 1 problem facing the nation today, according to more than half of the college students in America.

Four students in ten (42 per cent) cite distrust in government (including Watergate) as the nation's chief problem. Another 16 per cent point directly to President Nixon's leadership. By way of comparison, in the most recent Gallup survey

of the general public, only 22 per cent said problems with America's leadership was the top concern.

The energy crisis, the economy and a breakdown of moral and religious values round out the top five problems named by students.

While a need for change is reflected in student response concerning the nation's problems, six in ten reject violence as a means of achieving change.

Although a significant proportion — 37 per cent — say violence is sometimes justified in bringing about change, this figure does not differ markedly from a 1970 survey taken at the height of student activism. At that time, 44 per cent said violence is a legitimate means to change in society.

Following is the question asked to determine problems of greatest concern to the college students:

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

Here are the national findings for the college population:

MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM FACING COUNTRY?	
Distrust in government/	
Watergate	42%
Energy crisis	33
Nixon leadership	16
The economy	13
Breakdown of moral, religious values	9
The environment	4
Apathy of Americans (in general)	4
Civil unrest	3
Foreign affairs	3
Unemployment	2
Overpopulation	2
Race relations	2
Others	3
No opinion	136%

* Less than 1 per cent.
** More than 100% due to multiple responses.

This question was asked in the survey:

"Do you think violence is sometimes justified to bring about change in American society, or not?"

VIOLENCE JUSTIFIED TO BRING ABOUT CHANGE? (Views of College Students)		
	1970	1974
Yes	44%	37%
No	54	60
No opinion	2	3

Students attending colleges in each of the four regions place highest priority on problems related to trust and confidence in the government, but students in the East are most likely to put these problems high on their list of top problems facing the nation.

In terms of year in school, problems named by freshmen differ little from those cited by seniors.

Two other key findings indicative of the mood on campus today, as reported previously, are (1) a lack of commitment among many students to either major party and (2) the continued interest in helping to bring about change in society.

Many college students today appear to be disenchanted with both major parties, as reflected in the finding that nearly half (49 per cent) describe themselves as independents. This proportion exceeds the number who say they are Democrats (37 per cent) or Republicans (14 per cent). In fact, GOP allegiance among the nation's college students is currently at the lowest point since these college measurements were initiated almost a decade ago.