

NEW YORK — Economic problems and crime top the list of Americans' concerns in this election year, but an Associated Press poll found that more than half the people are confused about where the contenders stand on major issues.

However, this inability to match candidates and issues may not be crucial to the campaign results: The overwhelming majority of those interviewed said the personal qualities of the candidate, not his stands on the issues, are more important in deciding whom to support.

The poll, taken for the AP by the Roper Organization of New York in the second week of May, demonstrates that even after three and a half months of primary campaigning and intensive media coverage of the candidates the people still don't know where the candidates stand.

On each of five major issues — abortion, government guaranteed jobs, welfare, military spending and breaking up the oil companies — an average of half the people said they didn't know what their chosen candidate advocates.

And of those who claimed to know their candidate's position, the supporters of Rep. Morris Udall and Ronald Reagan — and to a lesser extent, Sen. Henry Jackson — were right more often than wrong in picking the candidate's stand.

Jimmy Carter's supporters were the most likely to name the wrong stand for their candidate on four issues. Most did say correctly

that he supports government guaranteed jobs. But supporters of all the Democratic contenders listed in the survey said correctly that their candidate supports such a program.

Pres. Ford's supporters correctly named his stand on three issues — for increased military spending, against an amendment banning abortion and against breaking up the big oil companies. Most mistakenly said he favors transferring welfare back to the states. And as many of his supporters were wrong as were right in naming his position on government guaranteed jobs. He opposes such a bill.

Those who named non-candidate Sen. Hubert Humphrey as their choice for president correctly picked his stand on two of the five issues, were wrong on one and split on the others.

The interviews for the AP Poll were made between May 8 and

May 15, the same week California Gov. Edmund Brown Jr. and Sen. Frank Church scored their initial primary victories. Because the national perceptions of Brown and Church had not then taken shape, the poll did not test their supporters' perceptions.

Alabama Gov. George Wallace had stopped campaigning and was running fourth in delegates during the second week in May. Thus, his supporters' perceptions were also not tested.

The poll results come four months after the first primary and five months before election day.

The poll is based on face-to-face interviews with 2,001 Americans over 18 across the continental United States. In a survey of this size, one can say with 95 per cent certainty that the results will vary no more than 2.2 percentage points either way solely because of chance.

The economy in general was named as the most important election year issue by 59 per cent of the people, making it the overwhelming first choice among the 2,001 respondents in the survey. Those economic worries included high prices, named by 35 per cent; unemployment and the recession, 25 per cent; and holding down government spending, 13 per cent. The figures add to more than 59 per cent because each person was allowed to name more than one issue.

Crime was Americans' next major concern.

Crime and lawlessness in general was ranked second behind the economy as the people's major concern with 31 per cent. Drug abuse was next, named by 17 per cent, and then criminal acts by public officials, picked by 14 per cent.

Concern about energy problems and about air and water pollution were named by 13 per cent each.

Approval of a constitutional amendment to end school busing for desegregation was a concern of 12 per cent.

Detente — including U.S.-U.S.S.R. relations and increased military spending — was named by 11 per cent, the same percentage as are concerned about equal rights for Americans of all races.

Support of women's rights was named by five per cent and passing a constitutional amendment to ban abortions by four per cent.

The major finding of the poll on people's perceptions of candidates was that the people don't know where the candidates stand.

The survey asked each person with a favorite candidate if their candidate agrees or disagrees with position statements on five issues, or if they don't know their candidate's stand.

Those who did not know their candidates' positions ranged from 57 per cent unaware on whether the big oil companies should be broken up to 41 per cent on whether the government should guarantee everyone a job and whether military spending should be increased.

On abortion, 56 per cent didn't know where their candidate stands, while 52 per cent were uncertain about the candidate's position on giving welfare programs

back to the states.

Udall supporters were the most consistently accurate in identifying his stands, naming them correctly on all five issues.

For example, slightly less than 46 per cent of the Arizona Democrat's supporters said he supports breaking up the big oil companies. Only 10 per cent incorrectly said he opposes such a move. Just over 44 per cent didn't know where he stands.

Reagan's supporters are the next most likely to have identified their candidate's positions correctly, hitting the mark on four out of five issues.

Just under 51 per cent of the former California governor's supporters correctly said he supports returning welfare to state control, while only eight per cent said he opposes it. But 44 per cent said they didn't now where he stood.

Jimmy Carter's supporters were the most likely to name the wrong stand for their candidate on the issues, averaging an incorrect answer one-third of the time.

For example, 33 per cent of those who identified themselves as supporters of the former Georgia governor said he supports breaking up the big oil companies. He does not. Only eight per cent said he disagrees with that. A total of 59 per cent said they didn't know.

Jackson's supporters were apparently well aware of their candidate's stands on the five issues, naming four out of five correctly. But because of the small number of the supporters of the Democratic senator from Washington found in the survey, it would be misleading to draw definite conclusions about them. Jackson has given up active campaigning.

The candidates:

AP poll shows people confused on campaign stands

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