



New Survey Finds 9 in 10 Americans Lack Confidence in the Country's Political System

Americans most frequently describe their feelings about the 2016 presidential election as frustrated, interested, helpless, and angry.

May 26, 2016, Chicago, IL.— Seventy percent of Americans say they feel frustrated about this year's presidential election, including roughly equal proportions of Democrats and Republicans, according to a new survey conducted by [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#). The report, *The Frustrated Public: Views of the 2016 Campaign, the Parties and the Electoral Process*, found that among a normally polarized electorate, there are few partisan differences in the public's lack of faith in the political parties, the nominating process, and the branches of government.

"There is no doubt that the American public are frustrated about their political system, even angry," said [Trevor Tompson](#), director of The AP-NORC Center. "They don't see either political party as receptive to new ideas about dealing with the country's problems, and that's even though the nominating processes for both parties have been heavily influenced by outsiders."

Some of the poll's key findings are:

- Just 10 percent of Americans have a great deal of confidence in the country's overall political system while 51 percent have only some confidence and 38 percent have hardly any confidence.
- Similarly, only 13 percent say the two-party system for presidential elections works, while 38 percent consider it seriously broken. About half (49 percent) say that although the two-party system has real problems, it could still work well with some improvements.
- Most Americans report feeling discouraged about this year's presidential election. Seventy percent say they experience frustration and 55 percent report they feel helpless.
- Few Americans are feeling pride or excitement about the 2016 presidential campaign, but it is grabbing the public's attention. Two-thirds (65 percent) of the public say they are interested in the election for president this year; only 31 percent say they are bored.
- The public has little confidence in the three branches of government. A quarter (24 percent) say they have a great deal of confidence in the Supreme Court and only 15 percent of Americans say the same of the executive branch. Merely 4 percent of Americans have much faith in Congress. However, more than half (56 percent) of Americans have a great deal of confidence in the military.

- Only 29 percent of Democrats and just 16 percent of Republicans have a great deal of confidence in their respective parties. Similarly, 31 percent of Democrats and 17 percent of Republicans have a lot of faith in the fairness of their party's nominating process.
- Neither party is seen as particularly receptive to fresh ideas. Only 17 percent of the public say the Democratic Party is open to new ideas about dealing with the country's problems; 10 percent say that about the Republican Party.
- The views of ordinary voters are not considered by either party, according to most Americans. Fourteen percent say the Democratic Party is responsive to the views of the rank-and-file; 8 percent say that about the Republican Party.
- Most Republicans (57 percent) say Trump's candidacy has been good for the Republican Party, although only 15 percent of Democrats and 24 percent of independents agree.
- Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of Democrats say Sanders' bid for the nomination has been good for the Democratic Party, along with 43 percent of Republicans and 22 percent of independents (54 percent of independents report it is neither good nor bad).

Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted by The Associated Press NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and with funding from NORC at the University of Chicago. Data were collected using [AmeriSpeak® Omnibus](#), a monthly multi-client survey using NORC at the University of Chicago's probability based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. The survey was part of a larger study that included questions about other topics not included in this report. During the initial recruitment phase of the panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face to face).

Interviews for this survey were conducted between May 12 and 15, 2016, with adults age 18 and over representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak, and 1,060 completed the survey—761 via the web and 299 via telephone. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 4.1 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

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About AmeriSpeak Omnibus

AmeriSpeak Omnibus is a once-a-month, multi-client survey using a probability sample of at least 1,000 nationally representative adults age 18 and older. Respondents are interviewed online and by phone from NORC's AmeriSpeak Panel—the most scientifically rigorous multi-client household panel in the United States. AmeriSpeak households are selected randomly from NORC's National Sample Frame, the industry leader in sample coverage. The National Frame is representative of over 99 percent of U.S. households and includes additional coverage of hard-to-survey population segments, such as rural and low-income households, that are underrepresented in other sample frames. More information about AmeriSpeak is available at AmeriSpeak.norc.org.

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