

AP

NORC⁷⁵
at the UNIVERSITY of CHICAGO

The Associated Press-NORC
Center for Public Affairs Research

THE FRUSTRATED PUBLIC: VIEWS OF THE 2016 CAMPAIGN, THE PARTIES, AND THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

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 recent national poll conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. More than half feel helpless and a similar percent are angry.

Nine in 10 Americans lack confidence in the country's political system, and 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.

Americans do not see either the Republicans or the Democrats as particularly receptive to new ideas or the views of the rank-and-file membership. However, the candidacy of Bernie Sanders for the Democratic nomination is more likely to be viewed as good for his party than Donald Trump's bid for the Republican Party.

The nationwide poll of 1,060 adults used the AmeriSpeak® Omnibus, a monthly multi-client survey using NORC at the University of Chicago's probability based panel. Interviews were conducted between May 12 and 15, 2016, online and using landlines and cellphones.

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.



© 2016 AP Photo/Matt Rourke

Three Things You Should Know about The AP-NORC Poll on the health of the electoral system:

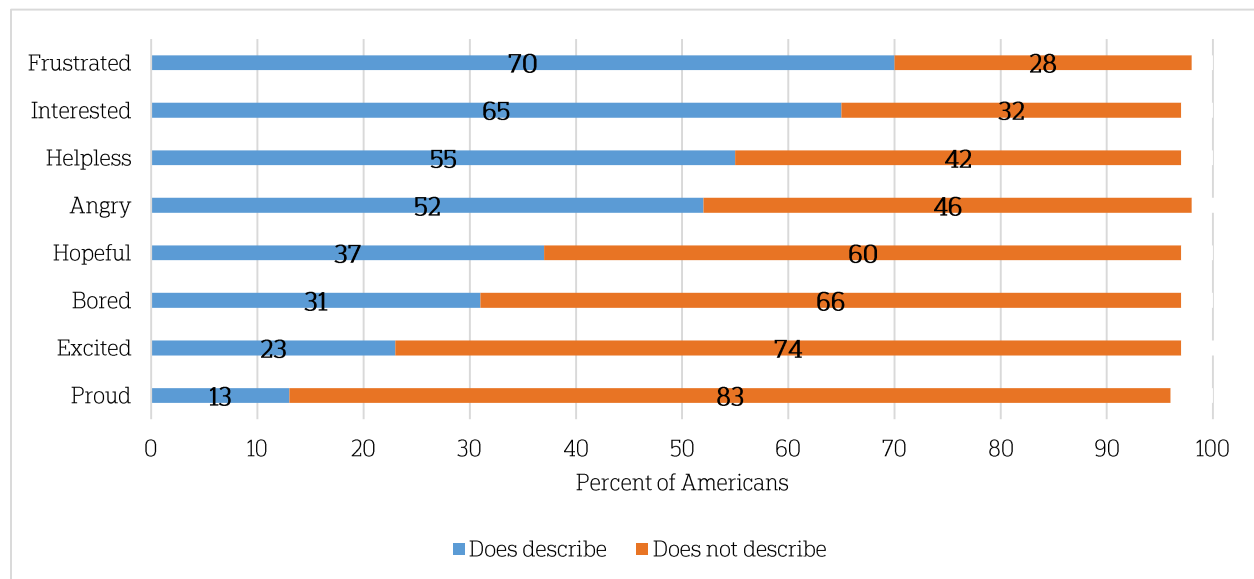
- 1) Nine in 10 Americans lack confidence in the country's political system, and 4 in 10 say the two-party system is seriously broken.
- 2) While 65 percent of the public is interested in the 2016 presidential campaign, 70 percent of Americans are frustrated by this year's election.
- 3) Few Americans say either party is particularly receptive to new ideas or responsive to the views of ordinary voters.

- 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 election for president. 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. However, only 37 percent are feeling hopeful about the campaign, 23 percent are excited, and just 13 percent say the presidential election make them feel proud.
- 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 party. 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 report that about the Republican Party.
- Donald Trump, the presumptive Republican nominee, has never held elected office or worked for the government, but most Americans do not regard the Republican Party as especially receptive to candidates from outside the usual influence of Washington and party politics. Only 9 percent consider the Republican Party open to outsiders.
- 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.
- The Democratic Party is not viewed as friendly to outsiders either. Only 10 percent say the Democratic Party is open to candidates that are independent of the established order.
- However, in contrast to Trump, the entry of Bernie Sanders into the race for the Democratic nomination is not seen as a negative for the party. 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). Although Sanders has served in Congress as a House member and Senator for more than 25 years, he was an independent and did not register as a Democrat until recently.

AMERICANS EXPRESS FRUSTRATION REGARDING THE 2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AND FIND BOTH PARTIES INFLEXIBLE TO NEW IDEAS.

In general, the election is provoking more negative feelings than positive ones. Although two-thirds of Americans say they are interested in the 2016 presidential election, about 7 in 10 say they feel frustrated and more than half feel helpless or angry. Far fewer report they feel either hopeful, excited, or proud.

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



Question: For each of the following, please say if each of the following words describes or does not describe how you feel about the 2016 presidential election.

Currently the public is lukewarm about the inclusion of Democratic officeholders and party officials as superdelegates in the nominating process. The implementation of superdelegates in 1984 by the Democratic Party was an effort to merge the knowledge and experience of party insiders with the wishes of rank-and-file Democrats, and therefore, prevent the nomination of candidates with little chance of success.

Hillary Clinton has 1,768 pledged delegates, won through the primary and caucus process, 274 more than Sanders. But because she is supported by 525 superdelegates, Clinton needs 90 more delegates to clinch the nomination, while Sanders, who is only backed by 39 superdelegates, needs 847. Superdelegates are free to change their support at any time before the convention.¹

More than 30 years after superdelegates were introduced to the Democratic Party’s nominating process, few voters see them as a positive. Less than 2 in 10 consider superdelegates a good idea for the Democratic Party, while about half say their inclusion is a bad idea and nearly 3 in 10 say it is

1. <https://interactives.ap.org/2016/delegate-tracker/>

neither good nor bad. Republicans (67 percent) are more likely than Democrats (46 percent) or independents (37 percent) to consider superdelegates a bad idea.

DESPITE THE SUCCESS OF DONALD TRUMP AND BERNIE SANDERS, BOTH PARTIES ARE SEEN AS RESISTENT TO NEW IDEAS AND CANDIDATES FROM OUTSIDE THE PARTY ORGANIZATIONS.

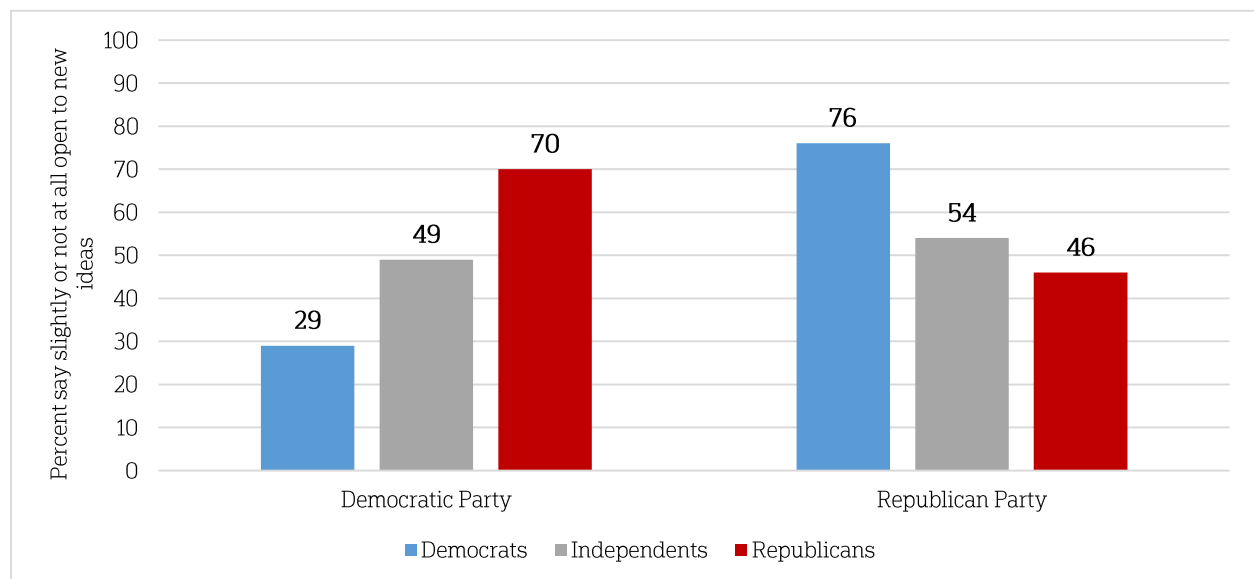
Few Americans see either party as receptive to fresh ideas. Just 17 percent of the public say the Democratic Party is open to new ideas about dealing with the country’s problems; 10 percent report that about the Republican Party.

Additionally, most Americans say neither political party takes much notice of the views of ordinary voters. Fourteen percent say the Democratic Party is responsive to the opinions of the average voter; 8 percent say the same about the Republicans.

Americans view both parties as resistant to outside candidates that are independent from the Washington establishment and party politics. Seventeen percent consider the Democratic Party amenable to outsider candidates. Even fewer, only 9 percent, regard the Republican Party as willing to consider an independent candidate.

There are clear partisan divisions when it comes to views about the parties being open to new ideas. Democrats are most likely to see the Republican Party as resistant to new ideas while Republicans are most likely to see the Democratic Party as resistant to new ideas.

There are partisan divisions when it comes to beliefs about the parties resisting new ideas.



Questions: How open do you think the Democratic Party is to new ideas about dealing with the country’s problems?

How open do you think the Republican Party is to new ideas about dealing with the country’s problems?

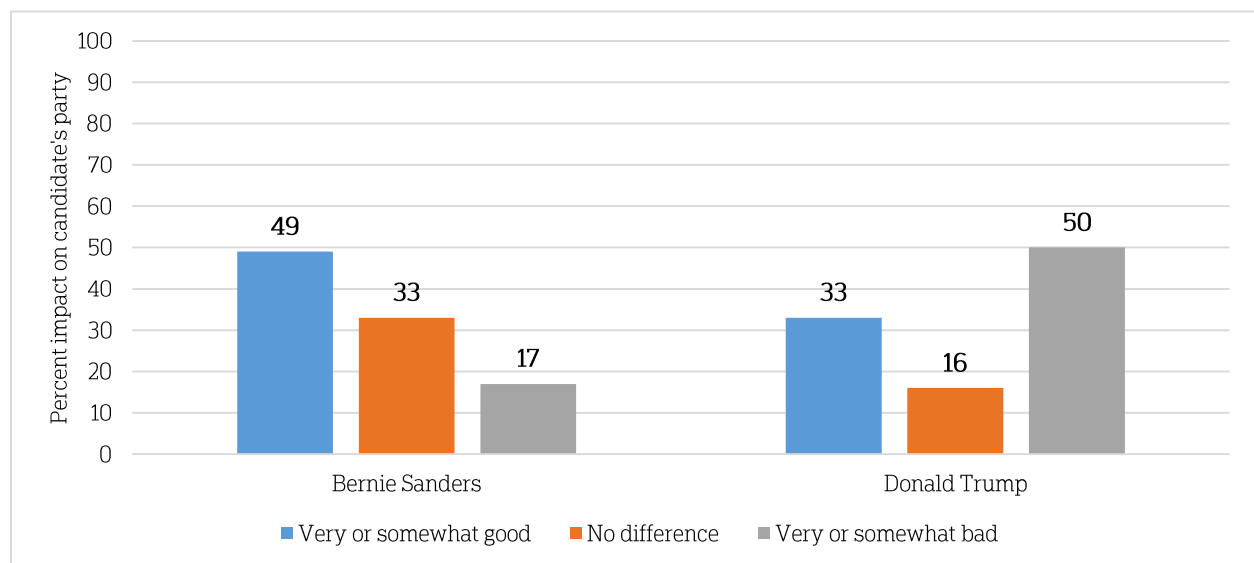
Although the public does not see the parties as being particularly receptive to candidates from outside the usual sphere of party influence, the nominating process on both sides of the aisle have major candidates that could be considered outsiders.

The presumptive Republican nominee has never held elected office, and Trump will be the first major party candidate for President to have never been elected to public office since Dwight D. Eisenhower was the Republican nominee in 1952 after serving as the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe during World War II. And while Sanders was a member of the United States House of Representative for 16 years, and has represented Vermont in the United States Senate since 2006, he has served in Congress most years as an independent, albeit one that caucuses with the Democrats.

Are the campaigns of these candidates a positive force for their parties? The public is divided. Perhaps an indication of his low overall favorability rating,² half of Americans say Trump's campaign has been bad for the Republican Party while 1 in 3 say it has been good. Republicans are more likely than either Democrats or independents to say Trump has been good for the Republican Party (57 percent vs. 15 percent and 24 percent, respectively). Democrats overwhelmingly say Trump has been bad for the Republican Party (71 percent).

The public is more positive about Sanders' campaign. About half of the public regards Sanders' bid for the nomination as beneficial to the Democratic Party, while about 2 in 10 say it has had a negative effect. Democrats are more likely than Republicans or independents to say Sanders has been good for the Democratic Party (64 percent vs. 43 percent and 22 percent).

Nearly half of Americans say Sanders' campaign for the Democratic nomination has been good for the party; fewer say the same about Trump's campaign to be the Republican nominee.



Questions: Regardless of whether or not you support him, overall do you think Donald Trump running for the Republican nomination for President has been good for the Republican Party, bad for the Republican Party, or doesn't make much difference either way?

Regardless of whether or not you support him, overall do you think Bernie Sanders running for the Democratic nomination for President has been good for the Democratic Party, bad for the Democratic Party, or doesn't make much difference either way?

²In a national AP-GfK poll taken March 31 to April 4, 26 percent of the public had a favorable opinion of Trump and 69 percent were unfavorable. Sanders was viewed favorably by 48 percent and unfavorably by 39 percent.

http://ap-gfcpoll.com/main/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/March2016-AP-GfK-Poll-FINAL_Sanders.pdf

AMERICANS SHOW LITTLE CONFIDENCE IN THE BRANCHES OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, THE POLITICAL SYSTEM, AND THE COUNTRY'S MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES.

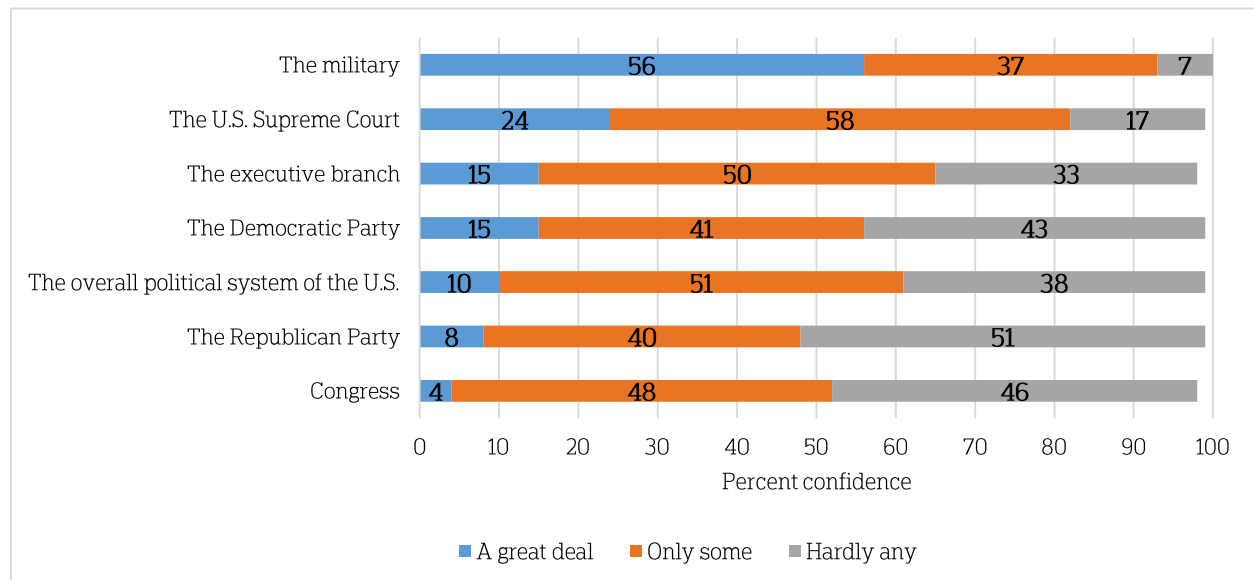
Few Americans have a lot of confidence in the three branches of the federal government, although over the last few years, more people express at least some confidence in the Supreme Court, Congress and the White House than in the recent past.³ In contrast, more than half of the public continues to have a great deal of confidence in the military.

Americans express middling levels of confidence in political institutions and procedures. Only 1 in 10 have a great deal of confidence in the political system of the United States while about half have some confidence and nearly 4 in 10 have hardly any confidence. About half of Americans have hardly any confidence in the Republican Party, and 43 percent report the same about the Democratic Party.

Partisans have more confidence in their own party than those of who do not identify with the party, but confidence is low across the board. Twenty-nine percent of Democrats have confidence in the Democratic Party compared to just 5 percent of independents and 2 percent of Republicans.

And only 16 percent of Republicans have a great deal of confidence in the Republican Party compared to just 3 percent of Democrats or independents.

Americans express high levels of confidence in the military but little confidence in other governmental and political institutions.



Question: Here are some institutions in this country. As far as the people running these institutions are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?

How much confidence do you have [ITEM]?

³ http://www.apnorc.org/PDFs/Balancing%20Act/AP-NORC%202013_Civil%20Liberties%20Poll_Topline_Trend.pdf

Also asked in trust media poll: <http://mediainsight.org/PDFs/Trust/TrustToplineFinal.pdf>

THERE IS PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE ACCURACY OF VOTE COUNTS BUT STRONG RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM AND THE FAIRNESS OF THE NOMINATING PROCESS.

While Americans have doubts about the overall political system and its fairness, nearly 3 in 4 say they have at least some confidence that their vote will be counted accurately. Just 1 in 4 report they have hardly any confidence that their vote will be counted.

Still, many Americans express qualms about how well the two-party system works for presidential elections. Nearly 4 in 10 regard the two-party system as seriously broken. About half say this system for electing a president has major problems, but could still work with some improvement. Just 13 percent of the public says the two-party system works fairly well.

Americans also question the fairness of the political parties' presidential nominating processes. About 4 in 10 have little confidence in the equity of the parties' nominating process for president. Four in 10 have some faith that the Republican Party's means of selecting its standard bearer is fair, but only about 1 in 10 have a great deal of confidence in the process. Similarly, 38 percent have some confidence in the Democratic Party's procedures, but only 17 percent have a great deal of confidence.

Again, while partisans are more confident in their own party, the levels are low. Thirty-one percent of Democrats express confidence in the Democratic Party's nominating process, compared with 9 percent of Republicans and 6 percent of independents. Republicans have even less faith in their party's system: 17 percent have confidence in the Republican Party's nominating process. Only 11 percent of Democrats and 5 percent of independents agree.

Many Americans want changes to the process. Seven in 10 would prefer to see primaries and caucuses be open to all voters, regardless of the party registration. Only 3 in 10 favor a system of closed nominating contests, where only voters registered in a party can participate in that party's primary or caucus. A majority of each party say they favor open primaries and caucuses, though Democrats are more likely than Republicans to support them (73 percent vs. 62 percent).

Most states hold primaries rather than caucuses, and most voters prefer primaries. Eight in 10 Americans say primaries are a more fair method of nominating a candidate. Less than 1 in 5 view caucuses as a more fair method.

ABOUT THE STUDY

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 final stage completion rate is 29.6 percent, the weighted household panel response rate is 23.8 percent, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 90.5 percent, for a cumulative response rate of 6.4 percent. 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.

Once the sample has been selected and fielded, and all the study data have been collected and made final, a poststratification process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any non-coverage or under and oversampling resulting from the study specific sample design. Poststratification variables included age, gender, census division, race/ethnicity, and household phone status. The weighted data, which reflect the U.S. population of adults age 18 and over, were used for all analyses.

All differences reported between subgroups of the U.S. population are at the 95 percent level of statistical significance, meaning that there is only a 5 percent (or lower) probability that the observed differences could be attributed to chance variation in sampling.

A comprehensive listing of the questions, complete with tabulations of top level results for each question, is available on The AP NORC Center website: www.apnorc.org.

CONTRIBUTING RESEARCHERS

From NORC at the University of Chicago

Marjorie Connelly
Dan Malato
Jennifer Benz
Trevor Tompson
David Sterrett
Ivana Cvarkovic
Nada Ganesh

From The Associated Press

Emily Swanson

ABOUT THE ASSOCIATED PRESS–NORC CENTER FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS RESEARCH

The AP NORC Center for Public Affairs Research taps into the power of social science research and the highest quality journalism to bring key information to people across the nation and throughout the world.

The Associated Press (AP) is the world's essential news organization, bringing fast, unbiased news to all media platforms and formats.

NORC at the University of Chicago is one of the oldest and most respected, independent research institutions in the world.

The two organizations have established The AP NORC Center for Public Affairs Research to conduct, analyze, and distribute social science research in the public interest on newsworthy topics, and to use the power of journalism to tell the stories that research reveals.