

Press contacts: William Morgan, wrmorgan@uchicago.edu, (773) 834-9123 or (708) 256-5743 (cell) and Eric Young, young-eric@norc.org, (301) 634-9536 or (703) 217-6814 (cell)

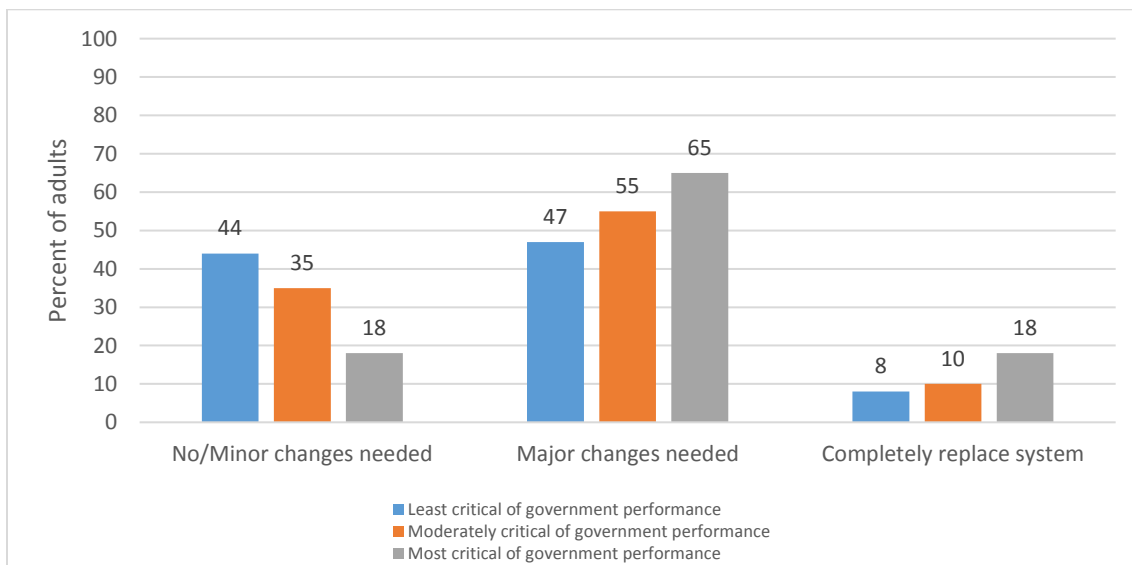
UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll shows 66 percent think major structural changes are needed to U.S. system of government

Most Democrats and Republicans believe the federal government should address a range of problems, but few believe it is handling such issues well.

CHICAGO, May 2, 2019 – Many Americans want significant reforms to the U.S. system of government, and support for such change is tied to people’s discontent with the government’s handling of problems rather than to how well it represents people like them, according to a new UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll.

The poll, which is a collaboration between the [University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy](#) and [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#), finds more than 70 percent of Americans say the government should have a lot of responsibility for issues such as terrorism, economic growth, and crime, but few believe it handles such issues very well.

Those most critical of how government performs are the most likely to lack trust in government and say major changes are needed to the government system.



Question: Thinking about the structure of the U.S. system of government, which of the following comes closest to your view?

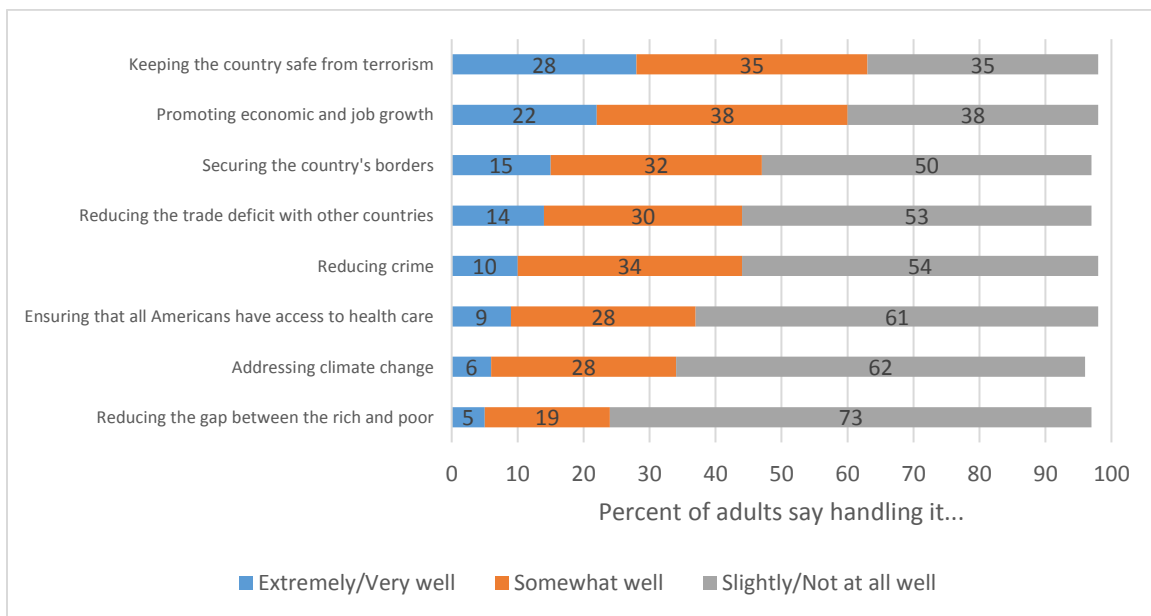
Source: UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll conducted March 14-18, 2019, with 1,003 adults age 18 and older nationwide

This connection between views of performance and the desire for change is consistent across ages, races and ethnicities, education levels, and partisan affiliations. For example, Democrats most critical of the performance of government are more likely than those least critical of performance to believe the government needs major changes or should be completely replaced (85 percent vs. 57 percent), and the same is true among Republicans (71 percent vs. 54 percent).

“The poll reveals that voters do not trust government to follow through, and it’s not meeting their expectations. This lack of trust and lack of performance relates to larger concerns about the state of American democracy,” said William Howell, Professor of American Politics at the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy. “While Americans broadly think that government should play an active role in attending to our nation’s challenges—including terrorism, promoting economic and job growth, addressing climate change, and improving access to health care—few voters are satisfied with its performance. There’s a real opening here for political candidates to address people’s desire for systemic change.”

The nationally representative survey of 1,003 adults shows a majority of Americans say the government has a lot of responsibility to handle policy issues such as keeping the country safe from terrorism, promoting economic and job growth, and reducing crime. Even with more polarizing issues such as ensuring access to health care and addressing climate change, most Americans feel the government should have at least some responsibility.

However, few Americans believe the government is handling these policies well.



Question: How well is the government handling each of the following?

Source: UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll conducted March 14-18, 2019, with 1,003 adults age 18 and older nationwide

The poll also finds that most Americans believe people like them don't have enough influence in Washington. Seventy percent of Americans report people like them have too little power, and those least satisfied with their representation trust the federal government to do what is right less often than those who feel well represented.

"Many Americans don't feel well represented in Washington," said Trevor Tompson, director of The AP-NORC Center. "And when they don't, this study shows that they're more skeptical of the government's ability to do what's right."

Among the key findings from the report:

- Fifty-four percent of the public thinks that major changes are needed to the U.S. government system, 12 percent say that the whole system needs to be replaced, and 32 percent say that either no or minor changes are needed.
- Political independents are more than twice as likely as Democrats and Republicans to say the whole U.S. system of government needs to be replaced (22 percent vs. 11 percent and 8 percent, respectively).
- A majority of Americans say the government is not doing well with issues like reducing income inequality (73 percent), addressing climate change (62 percent), ensuring access to health care (61 percent), and reducing crime (54 percent).
- Those most critical of the government's policy performance are more likely than those who are least critical to support major changes to the U.S. government system (65 percent vs. 48 percent).
- Seventy percent say people like them have too little power and influence in Washington.
- When it comes to representation, 60 percent of Democrats say whites have too much power and influence compared with only 12 percent of Republicans.
- Americans who don't feel well represented in government are most distrustful of it (47 percent rarely or never trust government vs. 24 percent who feel well represented). However, those who don't feel well represented are no more likely than those who do to think the government needs major structural changes.

About the Study

This survey was conducted by the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research with funding from NORC at the University of Chicago. Staff from Harris Public Policy and The AP-NORC Center collaborated on all aspects of the study.

Data were collected using the AmeriSpeak Omnibus®, a monthly multi-client survey using NORC's probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. Interviews for this survey were conducted between March 14 and 18, 2019, with

adults age 18 and over representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak, and 1,003 completed the survey—888 via the web and 115 via telephone. Interviews were conducted in English. The final stage completion rate is 22.5 percent, the weighted household panel response rate is 34.2 percent, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 85.1 percent, for a cumulative response rate of 6.5 percent. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 4.18 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

A full description of the study methodology for the survey can be found at the end of the report.

The proper description of the survey's authorship is as follows: This study was conducted jointly by the [University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy](#) and [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#).

About the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy

One of the largest graduate professional schools at the University of Chicago, Harris Public Policy has been driven by the belief that evidence-based research, not ideology or intuition, is the best guide for public policy. For more than three decades, our exceptional community of scholars, students, and alumni have applied this exacting perspective to the world's most pressing problems using the latest tools of social science. Through our undergraduate and graduate programs, we empower a new generation of data-driven leaders to create a positive social impact throughout our global society.

<https://harris.uchicago.edu/>

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.

www.apnorc.org

The Associated Press (AP) is the essential global news network, delivering fast, unbiased news from every corner of the world to all media platforms and formats. Founded in 1846, AP today is the most trusted source of independent news and information. On any given day, more than half the world's population sees news from AP.

www.ap.org

NORC at the University of Chicago is an objective and non-partisan research institution that delivers reliable data and rigorous analysis to guide critical programmatic, business, and policy

decisions. Since 1941, NORC has conducted groundbreaking studies, created and applied innovative methods and tools, and advanced principles of scientific integrity and collaboration. Today, government, corporate, and nonprofit clients around the world partner with NORC to transform increasingly complex information into useful knowledge.

www.norc.org

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.

###

Contacts: For more information, contact either William Morgan for Harris at wrmorgan@uchicago.edu, (773) 834-9123 or (708) 256-5743 (cell); or Eric Young for NORC at young-eric@norc.org, (301) 634-9536 or (703) 217-6814 (cell); or Lauren Easton for AP at leastonap.org.