



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on April 19, 2010

Poll Shows 4 out of 5 Americans Distrust Government

A poll from the Pew Research Center reports that approximately 80 percent of Americans (four out of five) distrust the government. The poll reflects the lack of faith that Americans have in the government's ability to alleviate the nation's woes.

Based on four surveys conducted over a period of one month, from March 11 to April 11, the poll surveyed approximately 5,500 adults and has a percentage point margin of error ranging from 2.5 to 4.

The poll comes at a time when congressional Democrats are struggling to maintain their majority in the upcoming elections. According to the Associated Press, "Midterm prospects are typically tough for the party in power. Add a toxic environment like this and lots of incumbent Democrats could be out of work."



The poll's results seem to reflect the sentiments that have prompted Americans to rally around the Tea Party movement. To the disbelief of the congressional Democrats, these sentiments are not solely reflective of conservatives, but of disenchanting Democrats as well. Registered Democrat Cindy Wanto, 57, explains, "The government's been lying to people for years. Politicians make promises to get elected, and when they get elected, they don't follow through. There's too much government in my business. It was a problem before Obama, but he's certainly not helping fix it."

Of the 80 percent, approximately half believe that the government should be scaled back in size and that personal responsibility should be increased. Similar requests for small federal government, as specified by the Constitution, have been the rallying cries of the Tea Partiers. The other half believes the government should do more to rescue the struggling economy.

According to the survey by the Pew Research Center, President Obama is a major factor in the shocking 80 percent figure. Americans resented the government's rescue of Detroit automakers, the ineffective \$787 billion stimulus package, and, of course, the surreptitious takeover of the American healthcare system.

Former Republican President George W. Bush is not exempt from the causes of the prevalent anti-government sentiment, in particular the recession that he passed along to President Obama.

It doesn't stop there, however. Derek Thompson of the *Atlantic Monthly* adds that the poll reflects "structural disapproval," not "seasonal," citing a steady decline in government distrust which can be traced back to the late 1960s. "The only time since 1975 that government trust broke 50 percent was in the months following 9/11. After the tumultuous assassinations of the 1960s, the Vietnam War, the resignation of President Nixon, and the stagflation of the late 1970s, public trust fell from 80 percent in



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1966 to about 25 percent in 1981.” Regular recessions and “hyperpartisanship” are also contributing factors, according to Thompson.

Former strategist for President Bush’s reelection campaign Matt Dowd accuses both parties of “missing the mark.” While both parties have accepted some responsibility for some of these sentiments, each party blames the other for the overall lack of American confidence.

However, political analysts suspect that the bitterness felt by these Americans will result in positive outcomes for the GOP in November.

Republican Senator Scott Brown of Massachusetts argues, “It’s clear Washington is broken. There’s too much partisan bickering to be able to solve the problems people want us to solve. It’s going to be reflected in the elections this fall.”



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