

# *AEI PUBLIC OPINION STUDY*

## **ATTITUDES TOWARD** **THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT** **(June 2008)**

Over the past seventy years, pollsters have asked hundreds of questions about the federal government. The first section of this AEI Public Opinion Study looks at public opinion about federal government activity historically. The next section looks at the contemporary critique of government. The final section is an in-depth look at views of federal government power. Like the other AEI Public Opinion Studies, this document will be updated as new polls become available.

From the late 1940s to the mid-1960s, Americans were more concerned about the power of big labor than about the reach of the federal government. For the first time in 1965, however, more people said that big government posed a greater threat to the future than big labor. That sentiment has not changed in the past 40 years. Even after the business scandals of late 2001 and 2002, Americans still pronounced big government the greatest threat.

Contemporary polls show that Americans believe the federal government *can* have a positive impact on people's lives. Only small proportions believe the government *is* playing that role today. Perhaps more damaging, significant numbers believe the government creates more problems than it solves. Large majorities do not trust the government to do what is right. People believe Washington is too big, inefficient, and wasteful. They do not have a high regard for politicians.

The final section of this report looks at concerns about federal government power, an area that has been less fully studied. Many people believe that federal government power threatens their personal freedom.

Attitudes toward Washington have improved only a few times since pollsters began documenting erosion in views about government in the mid-1960s. In the mid-1980s, as the economy improved, people said they trusted the government in Washington more than they had in the past. We also saw a brief uptick in attitudes toward government after the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995. The strong economy of the late 1990s produced more positive feelings, too. After the terrorist attacks on 9/11, attitudes toward Washington improved once again. Those improvements were short-lived.

Today, Americans still want the federal government to do many things. But they are critical of government performance. There is no evidence of a legitimacy crisis. Americans think their system of government is the best in the world, despite its faults.

## I. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

In 1939, the Roper Organization, in a poll for *Fortune* magazine, conducted what is probably the first in-depth exploration of public attitudes toward the federal government. Both Gallup and Roper had asked questions about federal government policies from the earliest days of polling in the mid-1930s, but nothing like the *Fortune* survey had been attempted before. For the survey, Roper began by exploring attitudes toward sixteen possible government activities.

In describing the results, the editors wrote: “It is safe to say that in 1929 a minimum of government in business was the popular rule. Today, in spite of the trend toward the enlargement of government, this reliance on laissez-faire still seems to prevail among the majority of the people. In 1929, beneficence would probably not have been accepted as a proper function for the federal government. But today it is emphatically held desirable. So during the period of the New Deal, the public has cleaved to tradition on the economic front and thrown tradition overboard on the social front.”

Large majorities thought three of the sixteen items on Roper’s list—providing for an army and navy, providing for all people who have no other means of subsistence, and being responsible for seeing to it that everyone who wants to work has a job—were things government should do. A near majority, 49 percent, said government should regulate all public utility rates with 39 percent opposed. Thirty-five percent wanted government to make all decisions in disputes between capital and labor, but 45 percent were opposed.

Majorities opposed establishing a bureau to supervise what should be produced in moving pictures (51 percent) and redistributing wealth by heavy taxes on the rich (54 percent). Even larger majorities opposed establishing a bureau to supervise what should be produced on the radio (60 percent), controlling the prices of farm products by controlling production (62 percent), taking over and operating all private, public and parochial schools for children (72 percent), making every adult male spend at least two years in the army (76 percent), confiscating wealth over what people need to live on decently and use it for the public good (76 percent), and establishing a bureau to supervise what should be printed in newspapers and magazines (76 percent). Almost everyone opposed government taking over all the present family duties toward children (92 percent) and supervising all religious observances by establishing a national church (92 percent).

In another question in the poll, 88 percent wanted the government to operate all the postal and parcel post services, 5 percent some, and 4 percent none. Twenty-one percent wanted government to own and operate all the country’s natural resources “like mines, forests, and waterpower” (34 percent some and 33 percent none). The responses for electric power were 20 percent all, 24 percent some, and 42 percent none. Fourteen percent wanted government to own and operate all the nation’s hospitals and medical services, 59 percent some of them, and 19 percent none.

Beginning in 1993, RoperASW revisited these subjects by asking Americans whether various activities were definite responsibilities of the federal government, highly desirable, though not a definite responsibility and finally, something that is beyond what the federal government is expected to do. The list shows that people expect a lot from government. As later sections of this report show, however, they also find a lot to criticize.

- People feel differently about how far a government should go. Here is a list of things which some people believe in and some don't. Let's take them one at a time. Do you think the government should or should not...?

Mar. 1939	Roper	Should	Should Not
	Provide an army and navy	96	2
	Provide for all people who have no other means of subsistence	69	23
	Be responsible for seeing to it that everyone who wants to work has a job	61	32
	Regulate all public utility rates like electricity, gas, etc.	49	39
	Make all decisions in disputes between capital and labor	35	45
	Redistribute wealth by heavy taxes on the rich	35	54
	Establish a bureau to supervise what should be produced in moving pictures	32	51
	Establish a bureau to supervise what should be produced over the radio	27	60
	Control the price of farm products by controlling production	23	62
	Take over and operate all private, public, and parochial schools for children	20	72
	Make every adult male spend at least two years in the army	18	76
	Confiscate wealth over what people need to live on decently; use it for the public good	16	76
	Establish a bureau to supervise what should be printed in newspapers and magazines	15	76
	Take over and operate all private colleges and institutions of higher learning	14	75
	Take over all the present family duties toward children	5	92
	Supervise all religious observances by establishing a national church	4	92

NOTE: Interviewers were told to tell respondents that this question was about the federal government, not government in general.

- Now here is a list of things people have said are or should be the responsibility of the Federal Government. Would you go down that list and for each one tell me whether you consider it to be a definite responsibility of government, or highly desirable although not a definite responsibility, or something that would be nice, but not necessarily expected, or something that is beyond what the Federal Government should do?
- Now here is a list of things people have said are or should be the responsibility of the Federal Government. Would you go down that list and for each one tell me whether you think the government is fulfilling its responsibility fully, fairly well, not too well, or not at all well?

		-----Fed. Govt. Responsibility?-----			Fed. Govt. -----Fulfilling Responsibility?-----		
		Definite Respon- sibility	Desirable/ Not Expected*	Beyond What Should Do	Fully	Fairly Well	Not Too/ Not At All Well+
Providing an adequate national defense							
Dec. 1993	RoperASW	60	34	3	32	47	19
Dec. 1995	RoperASW	65	32	2	34	48	15
Dec. 1999	RoperASW	74	23	1	35	43	19
Protecting individual rights							
Dec. 1993	RoperASW	54	39	5	18	52	27
Dec. 1995	RoperASW	54	39	4	13	51	33
Dec. 1999	RoperASW	63	35	2	16	55	26

Educating young people

Dec. 1993	RoperASW	48	46	5	11	40	46
Dec. 1995	RoperASW	53	38	7	6	42	50
Dec. 1999	RoperASW	61	34	5	16	41	40

Protecting the environment

Dec. 1993	RoperASW	46	49	3	13	44	39
Dec. 1995	RoperASW	48	47	4	11	48	38
Dec. 1999	RoperASW	60	38	1	16	49	32

Building and maintaining roads and highways

Dec. 1993	RoperASW	38	54	7	16	49	32
Dec. 1995	RoperASW	53	40	5	17	56	25
Dec. 1999	RoperASW	57	39	3	17	53	29

Providing health care for all citizens

Dec. 1993	RoperASW	41	49	7	11	27	59
Dec. 1995	RoperASW	44	47	7	8	29	60
Dec. 1999	RoperASW	49	45	6	11	31	54

Providing retirement benefits for all citizens

Dec. 1993	RoperASW	36	53	8	10	39	46
Dec. 1995	RoperASW	32	55	11	7	33	55
Dec. 1999	RoperASW	44	49	6	11	36	48

Helping U.S. companies compete with foreign industry

Dec. 1993	RoperASW	33	53	9	13	38	37
Dec. 1995	RoperASW	29	54	13	11	41	37
Dec. 1999	RoperASW	37	51	9	13	41	35

Housing the homeless

Dec. 1993	RoperASW	30	58	8	6	32	57
Dec. 1995	RoperASW	28	62	8	6	32	58
Dec. 1999	RoperASW	37	55	6	9	28	58

Providing financial assistance to the poor

Dec. 1993	RoperASW	30	50	7	12	41	42
Dec. 1995	RoperASW	30	60	7	10	42	44
Dec. 1999	RoperASW	36	58	4	11	40	35

Providing support and subsidies to farmers

Dec. 1993	RoperASW	27	58	10	16	39	32
Dec. 1995	RoperASW	24	56	16	17	43	27
Dec. 1999	RoperASW	36	53	8	11	40	35

Funding research for new technologies

Dec. 1993	RoperASW	28	61	7	14	48	25
Dec. 1995	RoperASW	29	59	8	17	46	23
Dec. 1999	RoperASW	32	57	7	21	52	17

Retraining people who lose their jobs

Dec. 1993	RoperASW	27	64	7	9	33	47
Dec. 1995	RoperASW	27	62	9	6	34	49
Dec. 1999	RoperASW	30	63	7	9	38	43

NOTE: \*Responses for “highly desirable although not a definite responsibility” and “something that would be nice, but not necessarily expected” are combined. +Responses for “not too well” and “not at all well” are combined.

- On the following things we have found that people differ as to the degree to which government should function. Do you think that the government should...?

Mar. 1939	Roper	All	Some	None
	Operate all, some, or none of the of the postal and parcel-post services	87	5	4
	Own and operate all, some, or none of the country’s natural resources, like mines, forests, waterpower, etc.	21	34	33
	Produce and sell all, some, or none of the nation’s electric power	20	24	42
	Own and operate all, some, or none of the nation’s hospitals and medical service	14	59	19

NOTE: Interviewers were told to tell respondents that this question was about the federal government, not government in general.

- All levels of government are frequently criticized for being both too big and too inefficient. One possible solution to this is to have a much smaller government that contracts with private companies to provide personnel and services just as the government now contracts with private companies to manufacture the products and machines it uses – cars, tanks, ships, business machines, etc. I’m going to name some different services, and for each one would you tell me if you think it would be a good idea or a bad idea to have the government subcontract it to private companies?

		Subcontract To ----Private Companies----	
		Good Idea	Bad Idea
Garbage disposal			
Mar. 1982	RoperASW	55	36
Mar. 1985	RoperASW	54	37
Mar. 1988	RoperASW	59	33
Mar. 1995	RoperASW	55	32
The running of the U.S. Postal Service			
Mar. 1988	RoperASW	46	45
Mar. 1995	RoperASW	45	43
The managing of the welfare system			
Mar. 1995	RoperASW	42	44
The running of our prison system			
Mar. 1982	RoperASW	27	64
Mar. 1985	RoperASW	39	50
Mar. 1988	RoperASW	38	51
Mar. 1995	RoperASW	41	45

The hiring for and running of public schools

Mar. 1982	RoperASW	28	63
Mar. 1985	RoperASW	30	59
Mar. 1988	RoperASW	32	58
Mar. 1995	RoperASW	36	49

Air traffic control

Mar. 1995	RoperASW	36	46
-----------	----------	----	----

The collection of income taxes

Mar. 1995	RoperASW	34	52
-----------	----------	----	----

The hiring for and running of fire departments

Mar. 1982	RoperASW	27	67
Mar. 1985	RoperASW	25	65
Mar. 1988	RoperASW	27	65
Mar. 1995	RoperASW	26	62

The hiring for and running of police departments

Mar. 1982	RoperASW	23	70
Mar. 1985	RoperASW	22	68
Mar. 1988	RoperASW	24	67
Mar. 1995	RoperASW	25	64

The hiring for and running of the armed forces

Mar. 1982	RoperASW	14	79
Mar. 1985	RoperASW	19	72
Mar. 1988	RoperASW	18	73
Mar. 1995	RoperASW	18	71

- For each of the following business sectors in the United States, please say whether your overall view of it is very positive, somewhat positive, neutral, somewhat negative or very negative. How about the federal government?

		Positive	Neutral	Negative
Aug. 7-10, 2006	Gallup/USA Today	25	23	50

Note: Responses are combined.

- Some people say they are basically content with the federal government, others say they are frustrated, and others say they are angry. Which of these best describes how you feel?

		Basically Content	Frustrated	Angry
Oct. 1997	PSRA/Pew	29	56	12
Feb. 2000	PSRA/Pew	33	54	10
Jun. 2000	PSRA/Pew	28	53	13
Nov. 2001	PSRA/Pew	53	34	8
Mar. 2004	PSRA/Pew	32	52	13
Oct. 2006	PSRA/Pew	21	54	20
Dec. 2006- Jan. 2007	PSRA/Pew	21	58	16

- Please say whether you feel generally optimistic about our system of government and how it works as far as the future is concerned, generally pessimistic about it, or uncertain about it?

		Optimistic	Pessimistic	Uncertain
Aug. 1974	Roper	55	15	27
Aug. 1975	Roper	45	24	29
Feb. 1977	Roper	57	14	26
Aug. 1977	Roper	47	21	29
Feb. 1979	Roper	49	22	26
Feb. 1981	Roper	51	21	26
Feb. 1983	Roper	51	21	27
Mar. 1996	Gallup	43	28	28
Feb. 1999	Gallup	53	19	27
Jan. 2008	Gallup	44	23	33

**CONCERNS ABOUT GOVERNMENT'S GROWTH:** In polls conducted in the 1940s and 1950s, people didn't seem overly concerned about federal government activity. In a 1941 Gallup question, for example, just a third thought there was too much power in the hands of the government in Washington. Fifty-nine percent that year felt that way about rich people and corporations and 75 percent about labor unions. A question Gallup asked for the first time in 1959 shows much more concern about big labor than big government or big business. As the federal government's role and size grew, so, too, did worries about federal government power. Since 1965 people have been more worried about big government than big labor or big business. The business scandals reduced concerns about big government and raised them about big business, but big government was still perceived to be the biggest threat to the country in the future.

- Do you think there is too much power in the hands of the government in Washington?
- Do you think there is too much power in the hands of a few rich men and large corporations in the United States?
- Do you think there is too much power in the hands of the leaders of labor unions in this country?

		Govt. in Washington		Too Much Power In Hands of of Rich People & Corps.		Labor Unions	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Apr. 1941	Gallup	32	56	59	27	75	13
Aug. 1997*	Fox/OpDyn	64	27	--	--	--	--
Oct. 1997+	PSRA/Pew	62	37	--	--	--	--

NOTE: \*Asked of registered voters. Question wording was, "Do you think the government in Washington has too much power or not?" +Question wording was, "Now I'm going to read you a few statements some people have made about government...Do you completely agree, mostly agree, mostly disagree or completely disagree that the federal government is too powerful?"

- In your opinion, which of the following do you think will be the biggest threat to the country in the future – big business, big labor, or big government?

			-----Biggest Threat To Future-----		
			Big Business	Big Labor	Big Government
1959	Gallup		15	41	14
1960	Look		15	41	14
1965	Look		16	28	37
1965	Gallup		17	29	35
1965	ORC		14	15	35
1966	Gallup		14	21	48
1967	Gallup		14	21	49
1968	Gallup		12	26	46
1969	ORC		12	17	44
1969	Gallup		19	28	33
1974	ORC		18	12	49

1976	Harris	11	15	33
1977	Gallup	23	26	39
1978	Gallup	19	19	47
1979	Gallup	28	17	43
1981	Harris	21	16	53
1981	Gallup	22	22	46
1981	Harris	22	15	52
1983	Gallup	19	18	51
1985	Gallup	22	19	50
1994	Roper/U. Conn	14	5	67
1995	Gallup	24	9	64
1998	WP/Kaiser/Harvard	25	11	59
1998	Gallup	24	7	64
1999	Gallup	24	8	65
2000	Gallup	22	7	65
2002	Gallup	38	10	47
2004	Gallup	27	11	57
2005	Gallup	27	8	61
2006	Gallup	25	9	61

NOTE: Question wording varied slightly.

- Just your best guess – do you think the size of the federal government has increased or decreased during the past four years?

		Increased	Decreased
Oct. 2006	CNN/ORC	72	20

## II. THE CONTEMPORARY CRITIQUE OF GOVERNMENT

In this section, we begin to look at the contemporary critique of government. Since 2001, Gallup has asked people annually how satisfied they are with our system of government and how well it works. Today around two in ten are either *very* satisfied or *very* dissatisfied. Of the remainder, more are satisfied than dissatisfied. In 1997, Pew started asking people whether they had a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the government in Washington. Responses to this question have varied a lot. In the December 2006-January 2007 poll, 45 percent were positive and 46 percent were favorable. Since CBS News first asked the question in 1995, large majorities of around 80 percent have consistently told the pollsters that government *can* have a positive impact on people's lives. In a follow-up question, however, around a third usually say that government *is* having a positive impact on people's lives. In 1981, when CBS News and the *New York Times* asked whether the federal government creates more problems than it solves, 63 percent responded that it did, while around two in ten said it solved more problems than it created. In a handful of repetitions of the question between 1986 and 2006, majorities have labeled the government a problem causer.

Between 10 and 15 percent say they feel angry about the way the federal government works, and fewer than 5 percent are enthusiastic. The remainder are somewhere in between. In a 1997 poll, around 40 percent said they were more angry with the federal government than they used to be. Two-thirds said that people they knew were more angry with government than they used to be. Only small numbers of people say they are anti-government.

- Next, I'm going to read some aspects of life in America today. For each one, please say whether you are – very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied. How about our system of government and how well it works?

		Very Satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Jan. 2001	Gallup	16	52	21	9
Jan. 2002	Gallup	25	51	16	7

Jan. 2003	Gallup	19	45	25	10
Jan. 2004	Gallup	17	44	26	13
Jan. 2005	Gallup	18	42	24	15
Jan. 2006	Gallup	18	41	25	16
Jan. 2007	Gallup	17	39	25	18
Jan. 2008	Gallup	14	39	27	20

- Now thinking about some groups and organizations...is your overall opinion of the federal government in Washington very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly unfavorable, or very unfavorable?

		-----Opinion of Federal Government in Washington-----			
		Very Favorable	Mostly Favorable	Mostly Unfavorable	Very Unfavorable
Oct. 1997	PSRA/Pew Research Center	4	34	41	18
Oct. 2000+	PSRA/Pew Research Center	7	47	30	10
Nov. 2001	PSRA/Pew Research Center	17	65	12	3
Dec. 2002	PSRA/Pew Research Center	11	53	20	7
Apr. 2003	PSRA/Pew Research Center	14	59	17	5
Feb. 2004	PSRA/Pew Research Center	10	49	25	11
Oct. 2005	PSRA/Pew Research Center	6	39	32	16
Feb. 2006	PSRA/Pew Research Center	6	37	34	16
Dec. 2006-					
Jan. 2007	PSRA/Pew Research Center	7	38	31	15

NOTE: + Registered voters.

- Do you think the government can have a positive impact on people's lives, or not?

		Can Govt. Have Positive ---Impact On People's Lives?---	
		Can	Cannot
Feb. 1995	CBS	89	10
Feb. 1996	CBS/NYT	87	10
Aug. 1996	CBS	89	8
Oct. 1996	CBS	88	9
Feb. 1997	CBS	88	9
Jan. 1998	CBS	87	11
Sep. 1999*	CBS	75	22
May 2000*	CBS/NYT	83	15

NOTE: \*Question wording was, "on your own life?"

- These days, what kind of impact do you think government has on most people's lives – a positive impact, a negative impact, or doesn't the government have much impact on most people's lives?

		-----Govt.'s Impact On Most People's Lives-----		
		Positive Impact	Doesn't Have Much Impact	Negative Impact
Aug. 1996*	CBS	33	13	45
Sep. 1996*	CBS/NYT	32	16	42
Feb. 1997	CBS	28	22	41
Jan. 1998	CBS/NYT	31	22	40
Sep. 1999	CBS	30	24	38
May 2000	CBS/NYT	37	24	30
Nov. 2001	CBS	55	17	15
Jul. 2006	CBS/NYT	30	20	43

NOTE: \*Asked of registered voters.

- Do you think that, in general, the federal government creates more problems than it solves, or do you think it solves more problems than it creates?

		-----Federal Government-----	
		Creates More Problems	Solves More Problems
Jan. 1981	CBS/NYT	63	19
Jan. 1986	CBS/NYT	51	31
Jan. 1993	CBS/NYT	69	22
Dec. 1993	CBS	73	17
Mar. 1995	Hart/CEG	72	21
Jan. 1999	CBS	64	25
Dec. 2001	CBS/NYT	44	42
Jul. 2006	CBS/NYT	67	22

- When the government in Washington decides to solve a problem, how much confidence do you have that the problem will actually be solved: a lot, some, just a little, or none at all?

		-----Confidence In Washington To Solve Problems-----			
		A Lot	Some	A Little	None
Oct. 1991	ABC/WP	7	31	38	23
Apr. 1992	ABC	4	46	38	12
Feb. 1993	ABC/WP	5	46	37	12
Jan. 1994	ABC/WP	4	39	40	16
May 1994	ABC/WP	4	31	42	22
Aug. 1994	Luntz	6	36	41	18
Dec. 1995	WP/Kasier/Harvard	4	35	38	23
Jan.-Apr. 1996	Gallup/UVA	4	35	39	21
Nov. 1996	Luntz*	6	35	42	15
Jun. 2000	Kaiser/NPR/Harvard	8	43	35	13
Jan. 2002	ABC/WP	14	52	27	7
Sep. 2002	WP	8	45	38	9
Nov. 2005	WP	7	38	36	18
Jun. 2006	ABC/WP	8	38	33	21

NOTE: \*Question wording varied slightly.

- I am going to mention four phrases and ask you which one best describes how you feel about the way the federal government works. Do you feel enthusiastic, satisfied but not enthusiastic, dissatisfied but not angry, or angry?

		-----Feel About Federal Government-----			
		Enthusiastic	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Angry
Mar. 1992	ABC	1	17	60	20
Mar. 1992	ABC	1	21	54	23
Apr. 1992	ABC	1	20	55	24
Jun. 1992	ABC/WP	1	20	58	21
Jul. 1992	ABC/WP	1	22	53	23
Oct. 1992	ABC/WP	1	16	56	25
Feb. 1993	ABC/WP	4	29	50	16
Mar. 1994	ABC/WP	1	29	48	20
Sep. 1994	ABC	2	25	53	20
Oct. 1994	ABC	2	24	53	19
Oct. 1994	ABC/WP	1	26	52	20
Oct. 1994	ABC/WP	1	25	55	18
Nov. 1994*	ABC	2	26	49	21
Nov. 1994+	VNS	4	25	51	20
Jan. 1995	ABC	2	27	53	16
May 1995	ABC/WP	3	45	41	9
Mar. 1996	ABC/WP	2	27	54	16
Oct. 1996	CBS	2	35	49	12
Aug. 1997	ABC	2	33	52	11
Jan. 1998	ABC/WP	2	43	45	8

Sep. 1998	ABC/WP	4	46	36	12
Aug. 1998	WP/Kaiser/ Harvard	2	39	46	11
Dec. 1998	WP	3	41	40	14
Feb. 1999	WP	3	48	35	12
Dec. 2000	ABC/WP	4	55	34	6
Feb. 2002	WP	7	49	36	7
Oct. 2002	ABC	4	47	42	7
Nov. 2002^	ABC	5	45	40	9
Oct. 2003	ABC/WP	2	41	42	15

NOTE: \*Registered voters. +Exit poll. ^Likely voters.

- Does it seem to you that the people you know personally are more angry with the federal government these days than they used to be?

		People You Know More Angry With Govt. -----Than In Past?-----	
		Yes	No
Jun. 1995	Scripps Howard/Ohio U.	68	22
Jun. 1997	Scripps Howard/Ohio U.	66	26

- Are you personally more angry with the federal government than you used to be?

		You Personally More Angry With Govt. -----Than In Past?-----	
		Yes	No
Jun. 1995*	Scripps Howard/Ohio U.	48	41
Jun. 1997	Scripps Howard/Ohio U.	42	51

NOTE: \*Question wording was, "Are you now more angry with the federal government these days than you used to be?"

- It is human, even if not always admirable, to be "anti-something." Would you go down this list and call off all the things where you are inclined to feel anti? Just call off the letters. Anti-government?

		Anti-Government
Feb. 1974	RoperASW	11
Feb. 1979	RoperASW	11
Jan. 1991*	RoperASW	6

NOTE: \*Three percent said they were "anti-labor" and 2 percent "anti-business."

- What is your opinion of most Federal Government departments and agencies? There may be exceptions, of course, but would you say your opinion of most Federal Government departments and agencies is highly favorable, or moderately favorable, or not too favorable, or rather unfavorable?

		-----Opinion of Most Federal Government Agencies-----			
		Highly Favorable	Moderately Favorable	Not Too Favorable	Rather Unfavorable
Apr. 1983	RoperASW	2	48	29	14
Aug. 1983	RoperASW	6	50	28	10
Apr. 1984	RoperASW	5	46	31	11
Aug. 1984	RoperASW	6	54	26	9
Apr.-May 1985	RoperASW	4	53	27	9
Aug. 1985	RoperASW	7	52	24	9
Apr.-May 1986	RoperASW	5	57	25	8
Aug. 1986	RoperASW	6	55	26	8
Apr.-May 1987	RoperASW	4	51	30	9
Aug. 1987	RoperASW	6	56	26	8

Apr. 1988	RoperASW	4	54	25	10
Aug. 1988	RoperASW	6	55	22	9
Apr. 1989	RoperASW	6	55	24	9
Aug. 1989	RoperASW	6	56	25	7
Apr. 1990	RoperASW	6	50	24	12
Aug. 1990	RoperASW	5	51	29	9
Apr. 1991	RoperASW	4	54	29	8
Aug. 1991	RoperASW	3	48	29	13
Apr. 1992	RoperASW	3	44	33	13
Aug. 1992	RoperASW	3	48	27	13
Apr. 1993	RoperASW	3	43	32	14
Sep. 1993	RoperASW	3	43	31	16
Apr. 1994	RoperASW	5	49	26	12
Aug. 1994	RoperASW	3	45	27	16
Aug. 1995	RoperASW	4	47	28	13
Mar.-Apr. 1996	RoperASW	5	50	27	10
Jul. 1996	RoperASW	5	52	23	11
Apr. 1997	RoperASW	5	52	27	9
Jul. 1997	RoperASW	4	52	25	12
Apr. 1998	RoperASW	7	52	22	10
Jul. 1998	RoperASW	7	57	20	10
Apr. 1999	RoperASW	8	50	24	11
Jul. 1999	RoperASW	10	51	22	11
Apr. 2000	RoperASW	10	54	20	11
Jul. 2000	RoperASW	6	55	23	10
Apr. 2001	RoperASW	7	58	20	7
Jul. 2001	RoperASW	7	59	20	7

**HURRICANE KATRINA:** Hurricane Katrina hit Louisiana on August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2005 and ravaged the Gulf Coast. Americans' initial overall ratings of the federal government's response to Hurricane Katrina were negative and grew worse over time. In Pew's September 2005 poll, 38 percent of Americans said the government was doing a good or excellent job. By December 2006 that number had dropped to 20 percent with over 76 percent rated the job only fair or poor. Time did not heal all wounds. Two years later, in August 2007, CNN/Opinion Research pollsters found that a majority, 52 percent, said that the federal government's efforts to rebuild were not enough. In a bit of good news for the government though, 66 percent of those surveyed by Gallup in October 2007 said the response to the wildfires in California was better than its response to Katrina.

- How would you rate the job of the federal government has done in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina?

		Excellent	Good	Only fair	Poor
Early Sep. 2005	PSRA/Pew Research Center	8	30	29	29
Mid Sep. 2005	PSRA/Pew Research Center	8	29	30	31
Dec. 2006	PSRA/Pew Research Center	3	17	36	40

- In New Orleans, after the Hurricane, hundreds of thousands of people were unable to evacuate the flooded city and they lacked food, water, and shelter. Who would you say was most to blame for those conditions?

CBS News

	Aug. 2006	Feb. 2006	Sep. 2005
Federal government	20	13	10
City of New Orleans	16	9	12
State government	16	5	7
Residents of New Orleans	12	11	12
FEMA	10	14	11

- I'd like to ask you some questions about what happened in the days just after the hurricane hit the Gulf area last year. Do you think the federal government responded adequately to Hurricane Katrina or could it have done much better?

		Responded adequately	Could have done much better
Sep. 2005	CBS News	20	77
Aug. 2006	CBS News	17	80

- Right now, do you think that federal agencies like FEMA are doing all they can reasonably be expected to do to help the people affected by Hurricane Katrina, or could they be doing more?

		Doing all the could be expected	Could be doing more
Feb. 2006	CBS News	27	66
Aug. 2006	CBS News	32	59

- How much confidence do you have in the ability of the U.S. government to respond to natural disasters – a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all?

		A great deal	A fair amount	Not very much	None at all
Feb. 2006	CBS News	10	39	37	14
Aug. 2006	CBS News	13	43	32	12

- Looking ahead, how confident are you in the federal government's ability to respond effectively to another major disaster like the one cause by Hurricane Katrina – very confident, somewhat confident, not so confident, or not confident at all?

		Very confident	Somewhat confident	Not so confident	Not confident at all
Aug. 2006	ABC News				
	National	12	36	28	22
	Gulf Coast	12	40	26	21
	New Orleans	6	23	33	37

- Thinking about the efforts the federal government is making to rebuild areas damaged by Hurricane Katrina, do you think the federal government is doing too much, is doing the right amount, or has not done enough?

		Too much	Right amount	Not enough
Aug. 2007	CNN/ORC	10	33	52

- Which concerns you more? That the federal government is spending too much money on hurricane relief in the Gulf or that the government is spending too little money on hurricane relief in the Gulf?

		Concerned that govt. is spending too much money	Too little
Dec. 2006	PSRA/Pew Research Center	21	55

- Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast, including New Orleans, about a year ago. In terms of rebuilding and recovery efforts that have gone on over the past year, how would you rate the job done by the federal government – excellent good, not so good, or poor?

		Excellent	Good	Not so good	Poor
Aug. 2006	ABC News				
	National	4	25	28	38
	Gulf Coast	6	32	30	30
	New Orleans	1	14	35	48

- Do you think the money the federal government has spent on hurricane recovery efforts has been mostly well spent or mostly wasted?

		Well spent	Wasted
Aug. 2006	ABC News		
	National	27	60

Gulf coast	34	57
New Orleans	20	66

- How would you rate the federal government's overall response to the situation caused by the hurricane and flooding?

Sep. 2005	ABC News/WP	Excellent 11	Good 37	Not so good 23	Poor 28
-----------	-------------	-----------------	------------	-------------------	------------

- Do you think the federal government should have been better prepared to deal with a storm of this size, or do you think it was as prepared as it reasonably could have been?

Sep. 2005	ABC News/WP	Should have been better prepared 67	Was as prepared as it reasonably could have been 31
-----------	-------------	---	---

- Please tell me if each of the following does or does not describe your own personal feelings about the federal government's response to the hurricane situation.

Sep. 2005	ABC News/WP	Does	Does not
	Angry	45	54
	Proud	27	71
	Ashamed	44	54
	Hopeful	64	34
	Shocked	55	45

#### Katrina Evacuees

- Has your experience made you feel like the government cares about people like you, or has it made you feel like the government doesn't care?

Sep. 2005	Washington Post/KFF/Harvard	Government cares 28	Does not 61
-----------	-----------------------------	------------------------	----------------

Note: Sample is of Katrina evacuees.

- Do you think the federal government would have responded more quickly to rescue trapped by floodwaters if more of them had been wealthier and white rather than poorer and black, or do you think race and poverty did not effect the speed of the rescue effort?

Sep. 2005	Washington Post/KFF/Harvard	Yes, would have responded quicker 68	No, race and poverty had no effect 23
-----------	-----------------------------	--	---

Note: Sample is of Katrina evacuees.

- Considering everything, who do you blame most for the problems that occurred due to the hurricane and flooding: the federal government, the state of Louisiana, the city of New Orleans, or someone else?

Sep. 2005	Washington Post/KFF/Harvard	
	Federal government	28
	All equally (vol.)	22
	City of New Orleans	19
	The state of Louisiana	12
	Nobody (vol.)	8
	Someone else	2

Note: Sample is of Katrina evacuees.

**October 2007 Wildfires**

- Based on what you have heard or read, do you think the federal government’s response to the October 2007 wildfires in California has been better, about the same, or worse than the federal government’s response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005?

		Better	The same	Worse
Oct. 2007	Gallup	66	22	4

**TRUST IN GOVERNMENT:** Trust in the federal government to do the right thing has dropped dramatically since the question was first asked in 1958, in the University of Michigan’s National Election Study. How consequential this is is a matter of debate. In an article in the January/February 2002 *Public Perspective* David Moore of the Gallup Organization argued that no one has shown that a decline in trust is a threat to American democracy. He was not confident that the uptick in trust that we saw after 9/11 would mean much for our democracy either. Gallup questions asked in the 1970s and again in the late 1990s show erosion in trust and confidence in the federal government’s handling of domestic problems and separately international ones. In both areas, however, majorities say they have a great deal or some trust and confidence in federal government handling of these problems.

- How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right—just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?

		Always	Most of the time	Only some	Never
1958	U Mich/NES	16	57	23	*
1964	U Mich/NES	14	62	22	*
1966	U Mich/NES	17	48	28	2
1968	U Mich/NES	7	54	36	*
1970	U Mich/NES	6	47	44	*
1972	U Mich/NES	5	48	44	1
1974	U Mich/NES	2	34	61	1
1976	U Mich/NES	3	30	62	1
1978	U Mich/NES	2	27	64	4
1980	U Mich/NES	2	23	69	4
1982	U Mich/NES	2	31	62	3
1984	U Mich/NES	4	40	53	1
1986	U Mich/NES	3	35	57	2
1988	U Mich/NES	4	36	56	2
1990	U Mich/NES	3	25	69	2
1992	U Mich/NES	3	26	68	2
1994	U Mich/NES	2	19	74	2
1996	U Mich/NES	3	30	66	1
1998	U Mich/NES	4	36	58	1
2000	U Mich/NES	4	40	55	1
2002	U Mich/NES	4	40	55	*
2004	U Mich/NES	3	37	46	1

- How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right – just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?

		----- Trust Government In Washington-----			
		Just About Always	Most Of The Time	Some Of The Time	Never (Vol.)
Apr. 1977	CBS/NYT	6	29	62	NA
Oct. 1977	CBS/NYT	4	28	62	2
Oct. 1979	CBS/NYT	3	26	64	3
Mar. 1980	CBS/NYT	3	22	69	2
Jun. 1983	NYT	7	43	46	1
Nov. 1983	NYT	6	38	51	1

Nov. 1984*	CBS/NYT	5	42	51	NA
Feb. 1985	CBS/NYT	5	41	49	1
Dec. 1985	NYT	6	40	50	2
Jan. 1986	CBS/NYT	5	37	54	1
Nov. 1986	CBS/NYT	7	42	46	3
Jan. 1987	CBS/NYT	7	37	52	2
Feb.-Mar. 1987	CBS/NYT	6	35	54	2
Oct. 1987	CBS/NYT	5	35	55	2
Nov. 1988	CBS/NYT	4	40	52	2
Jan. 1989	CBS/NYT	6	38	53	1
Jun. 1989	CBS	4	31	57	NA
Apr. 1990	NYT	6	32	53	4
Oct. 1990	CBS/NYT	3	22	70	2
Mar. 1991	CBS/NYT	7	40	50	2
Oct. 1992	CBS/NYT	2	20	72	4
Dec. 1992+	CBS/NYT	2	24	64	8
Jan. 1993	CBS/NYT	2	22	73	3
Dec. 1993+	CBS	1	15	70	13
Oct.-Nov. 1994	CBS/NYT	2	20	76	2
Feb. 1995	CBS/NYT	2	16	77	4
Aug. 1995	CBS/NYT	3	17	75	4
Oct.-Nov. 1996	CBS/NYT	2	23	70	3
Jan. 1997	CBS/NYT	1	22	72	4
Jan. 1998	CBS/NYT	3	23	71	3
Oct. 1998	CBS/NYT	2	24	70	3
Oct.-Nov. 1998	CBS	3	21	70	3
Jan. 1999	CBS	4	30	64	2
Jan. 1999	CBS	4	33	59	3
Sep. 1999	CBS/NYT	4	34	59	2
Oct. 1999	CBS/NYT	3	27	66	4
Oct. 2000	CBS/NYT	5	35	57	2
Jan. 2001	CBS/NYT	3	28	64	3
Oct. 2001	CBS/NYT	10	45	42	2
Dec. 2001	CBS/NYT	5	42	49	2
Jan. 2002	CBS/NYT	5	41	51	2
Jul. 2002	CBS/NYT	5	33	57	4
Sep. 2002	CBS/NYT	5	33	57	4
Jul. 2003	CBS/NYT	4	32	60	3
Jul. 2004	CBS/NYT	4	36	56	3
Sept. 2005	CBS/NYT	3	26	63	6
Dec. 2005	CBS/NYT	2	30	65	2
Sep. 2006	CBS/NYT	1	26	65	6
Oct. 2006	CBS/NYT	2	26	66	4
Jul. 2007	CBS/NYT	2	22	71	5

NOTE: \*Asked of those who said they had voted in that year's election. +Question wording was, "only some of the time, or never?" ~Exit poll. ^Question wording was, "trust the government to do what is right."

- How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right – just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?

		----- Trust Government in Washington -----			
		Just About Always	Most Of The Time	Some Of The Time	Never (Vol.)
Nov. 1997	Pew	2	36	60	2
Feb. 1998	Pew	5	29	61	4
Nov. 1998	Pew	4	22	61	11
Feb. 1999	Pew	4	27	64	4
May 1999	Pew	3	28	62	5
Feb. 2000	Pew	5	35	56	3
Mar. 2004	Pew	4	32	59	4
Sept. 2005	Pew	3	28	63	4

Feb. 2006	Pew	4	30	59	6
Dec. 2006-					
Jan. 2007	Pew	3	28	63	5

- How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right – just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?

		----- Trust Government In Washington -----			
		Just About Always	Most Of The Time	Some Of The Time	Never (Vol.)
Sep. 1978	WP	6	31	60	NA
Jul. 1979	WP	3	26	66	NA
Feb. 1985	ABC/WP	5	38	55	1
Mar. 1985	ABC/WP	5	32	60	2
Jul. 1985	ABC/WP	6	32	58	3
Sep. 1986	ABC/WP	6	34	58	2
Jan. 1987	ABC/WP	7	37	55	NA
May-Jun. 1987	ABC/WP	9	39	51	1
Jan. 1988	ABC/WP	6	34	59	2
Jun. 1988	WP	5	26	65	4
Jan. 1990	ABC/WP	8	31	58	3
Sep. 1990	ABC/WP	7	35	55	2
Nov. 1990*	ABC	6	31	62	NA
Mar. 1991	ABC/WP	7	38	52	3
Oct. 1991	ABC/WP	8	28	58	5
Nov. 1991	ABC	4	24	70	NA
Oct. 1992	WP	2	21	71	6
Jan. 1993	ABC/WP	5	24	70	NA
Feb. 1993	ABC/WP	4	17	74	4
Nov. 1993	ABC/WP	1	18	75	5
Jan. 1994	ABC/WP	3	21	68	8
Mar. 1994	ABC/WP	3	27	67	4
Oct. 1994	ABC/WP	2	19	72	6
Oct. 1994	ABC/WP	2	18	75	5
Mar. 1995	ABC/WP	3	19	69	8
Nov. 1995	ABC/WP	3	22	67	6
Apr.-May 1996	ABC	5	29	62	4
Aug. 1997	ABC	2	20	76	NA
Jan. 1998	ABC/WP	4	27	66	3
Dec. 1998	WP	7	26	58	7
Feb. 1999	WP	3	29	63	4
Mar.-Apr. 2000	ABC/WP	4	26	64	5
Sep. 2001	WP	13	51	35	1
Sep. 2002	WP	6	34	59	2

- How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right – just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?

		----- Trust Government In Washington -----			
		Just About Always	Most Of The Time	Some Of The Time	Never (Vol.)
Feb.-Mar. 1976	Gallup	4	29	64	NA
Jun. 1992	Gallup	2	21	71	2
Mar. 1993	Gallup	3	20	75	2
Jan. 1994	Gallup	2	17	80	NA
Jan. 1994	Gallup	1	19	74	5
Jun. 1994	Gallup	3	14	74	9
Aug. 1995	Gallup	2	21	73	4
Apr. 1995	Gallup	2	18	78	NA
Aug. 1995	Gallup	2	20	71	5
May 1996	Gallup	2	25	69	4
May-Jun. 1997	Gallup	4	29	66	2

Jan.-Feb. 1998	Gallup	6	33	59	2
Feb. 1999	Gallup	5	29	64	2
Jul. 2000	Gallup	4	38	56	2
Oct. 2001	Gallup	13	47	38	1
Jun. 2002	Gallup	6	39	51	3
Sep. 2002	Gallup	8	38	52	2
Oct. 2003	Gallup	4	33	58	3
Jun. 2005	Gallup	4	26	65	5

- I am going to read a list of institutions in American society. Please tell me how much confidence you, yourself, have in each one – a great deal, quite a lot, some, or very little. The federal government?

		Great deal/Quite a lot	Some	Very little/none
May 1990	NBC/WSJ	36	45	18
May 1994	NBC/WSJ	20	44	35
Feb. 1997	NBC/WSJ	22	45	32
Dec. 2000	NBC/WSJ	28	52	19
Jul. 2002	NBC/WSJ	34	47	18
Jul. 2007	NBC/WSJ	16	41	42

- Would you say you basically trust the federal government, or don't trust it?

		-----Federal Government-----	
		Trust	Don't Trust
May 1995	ABC/WP	66	32
Sep.-Oct. 1997*	Pew	39	57
Feb. 9-14 2000	Pew	41	55

NOTE: \*Question wording was "federal government in Washington."

- How much trust and confidence do you have in our federal government in Washington when it comes to handling...domestic problems...a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all?

		-----Trust & Confidence in Fed. Govt., Handling Domestic Problems-----			
		Great Deal	Fair Amount	Not Very Much	None At All
May 1972	Gallup	11	59	26	3
Apr. 1974	Gallup	9	42	36	8
Jun. 1976	Gallup	5	44	42	7
May 1997	Gallup	6	45	36	11
Dec. 1998	Gallup	9	52	30	7
May 2000	Gallup	8	45	34	12
Jul. 2000	Gallup	10	48	30	10
Feb. 2001	Gallup	7	56	28	8
Feb. 2002	Gallup	12	59	23	5
Jun. 2002	Gallup	13	54	23	8
Sep. 2002	Gallup	11	52	28	7
Feb. 2003	Gallup	11	52	28	7
Jul. 2003	Gallup	14	50	29	7
Sep. 2003	Gallup	9	49	32	9
Sep. 2004	Gallup	13	48	31	7
Sep. 2005	Gallup	10	43	35	11
Feb. 2006	Gallup	8	45	36	10
Sep. 2006	Gallup	8	44	34	13
Feb. 2007	Gallup	8	44	38	10
Sep. 2007	Gallup	6	41	38	14

- How much trust and confidence do you have in our federal government in Washington when it comes to handling...international problems...a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all?

-----Trust & Confidence in Fed. Govt., Handling International Problems-----

		Great Deal	Fair Amount	Not Very Much	None At All
May 1972	Gallup	20	55	20	2
Apr. 1974	Gallup	24	49	18	4
Jun. 1976	Gallup	8	48	33	7
May 1997	Gallup	10	58	23	7
Dec. 1998	Gallup	22	54	18	5
May 2000	Gallup	11	54	26	7
Jul. 2000	Gallup	17	55	21	6
Feb. 2001	Gallup	12	63	19	4
Feb. 2002	Gallup	21	60	14	4
Jun. 2002	Gallup	20	54	18	6
Sep. 2002	Gallup	18	53	22	6
Feb. 2003	Gallup	17	56	20	6
Jul. 2003	Gallup	17	52	25	5
Sep. 2003	Gallup	16	47	27	9
Sep. 2004	Gallup	18	45	28	8
Sept. 2005	Gallup	14	42	33	11
Feb. 2006	Gallup	10	49	31	8
Sept. 2006	Gallup	13	39	33	14
Feb. 2007	Gallup	7	46	36	10
Sep. 2007	Gallup	8	43	34	13

- Let me ask you how much trust and confidence you have at this time in...the Executive branch, headed by the President...a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all?

-----Trust & Confidence in Executive Branch-----

		Great Deal	Fair Amount	Not Very Much	None At All
May 1972	Gallup	24	49	20	4
Apr. 1974	Gallup	12	28	36	20
Jun. 1976	Gallup	13	45	30	9
May 1997	Gallup	13	49	27	9
Dec. 1998	Gallup	24	39	23	12
Feb. 1999	Gallup	21	43	24	11
Jul. 2000	Gallup	18	47	23	11
Sep. 2001	Gallup	21	42	28	8
Sep. 2002	Gallup	28	44	20	7
Sep. 2003	Gallup	25	35	26	14
Sep. 2004	Gallup	31	27	25	16
Sept. 2005	Gallup	19	33	30	18
Sep. 2006	Gallup	15	31	28	24
Sep. 2007	Gallup	15	28	32	24

- Let me ask you how much trust and confidence you have at this time in...the Judicial branch, headed by the U.S. Supreme Court...a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all?

-----Trust & Confidence in Judicial Branch-----

		Great Deal	Fair Amount	Not Very Much	None At All
May 1972	Gallup	17	49	24	7
Apr. 1974	Gallup	17	54	20	5
Jun. 1976	Gallup	16	47	26	6
May 1997	Gallup	19	52	22	5
Dec. 1998	Gallup	27	51	16	4
Feb. 1999	Gallup	29	51	13	5
Jul. 2000	Gallup	23	52	18	6
Sep. 2001	Gallup	17	57	20	4

Sep. 2002	Gallup	17	58	18	5
Sep. 2003	Gallup	13	54	27	5
Sep. 2004	Gallup	14	51	27	6
Sept. 2005	Gallup	13	55	25	6
Sep. 2006	Gallup	15	54	21	7
Sep. 2007	Gallup	15	54	23	6

- Let me ask you how much trust and confidence you have at this time in...the Legislative branch, consisting of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives...a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, or none at all?

-----Trust & Confidence in Legislative Branch-----

		Great Deal	Fair Amount	Not Very Much	None At All
May 1972	Gallup	13	58	22	3
Apr. 1974	Gallup	13	55	24	4
Jun. 1976	Gallup	9	52	31	6
May 1997	Gallup	6	48	36	8
Dec. 1998	Gallup	13	48	30	7
Feb. 1999	Gallup	9	49	34	7
Jul. 2000	Gallup	11	57	24	7
Sep. 2001	Gallup	7	58	28	6
Sep. 2002	Gallup	9	58	26	6
Sep. 2003	Gallup	8	55	31	5
Sep. 2004	Gallup	7	53	33	6
Sept. 2005	Gallup	8	54	31	6
Sep. 2006	Gallup	6	50	31	10
Sep. 2007	Gallup	5	45	36	12

- In general do you have more or less trust in your government now than you did 5 years ago?

		More	Less	The Same
Apr. 18-24, 2006	Zogby	8	75	16

**UNDERSTANDING MISTRUST:** An October 1995 survey by Lake-Snell Perry for Pew found that 51 percent thought it was a bad thing that Americans distrusted their government as much as they do, while 34 percent thought it is a good thing. Another question, however, that provides a rationale for skepticism—"we need to guard against government getting too big and powerful"—finds 53 percent saying that skepticism is a good thing. People think there is a utility in skepticism. It keeps government officials on their toes.

- Do you think that, in the end, it is good or bad that Americans distrust their government as much as they do?

		-----Distrust of Govt.-----	
		Good	Bad
Oct. 1995	Pew/Lake-Snell-Perry	34	51

- Please tell me which one of the following statements about the federal government comes closer to your own point of view: "It's a good thing for America that many people are skeptical about the federal government, and we need to guard against government getting too big and powerful," or "It's a bad thing for America that many people are skeptical about the federal government, and we need to appreciate what government does and try to improve it."

		-----Skepticism of Federal Govt.-----	
		Good Thing	Bad Thing
Feb. 1997	Hart/CEG	53	37

- Earlier in this interview, you said you could trust the government in Washington just about always/most of the time/only some of the time/none of the time. People give different reasons for not trusting the government. I'm going to read you a list of some of those reasons. Please tell me if each one is a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason at all why you often/sometimes don't trust the federal government. How about...?

May-Jun. 2000 Kaiser/NPR/Harvard

	-----Distrust of Government-----		
	Major Reason	Minor Reason	Not A Reason
Government leaders tell us what they think will get them elected, not what they really believe	80	14	4
The federal government is inefficient and wastes time	73	18	6
There is too much bickering between political parties	68	20	10
Special interests have too much influence on the federal government	65	24	8
Elected officials lack honesty and integrity	64	25	8
Federal taxes are too high	57	26	15
The federal government doesn't do enough to help people who really need it	56	27	15
People in government don't have high moral values	49	33	15
Federal government policies don't reflect your own beliefs and values	42	40	16
The federal government interferes too much in people's lives	42	37	19
The problems it focuses on cannot be solved by the federal government	39	39	18

- Here are some reasons why people mistrust the government in Washington. For each one, please tell me if you agree, disagree, or are neutral about it. (If agree/disagree) Would that be strongly agree/disagree or just somewhat agree/disagree?

Jun. 1995 Greenberg Research/Market Strategies

	-----Mistrust of Government-----			
	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The government wastes too much of our money	80	14	2	1
Government tax policies help large corporations and the wealthy more than average people	63	18	7	5
Government leaders tell us what they think will get them elected, not what they are really thinking	61	26	5	2
Government leaders say and do anything to get elected, then do whatever they want	55	25	11	3
Government laws to help immigrants and foreign countries go too far and hurt American citizens	52	23	10	6
Politicians work for themselves and their careers, not the people they represent	41	32	12	4
The government has too much influence in our lives and has taken away many of our rights and freedoms	41	20	18	14
The government is run for the benefit of special interests, not to benefit most Americans	37	33	12	7

Government efforts to help the poor, minorities and women often are unfair to people in general	33	26	15	12
Government leaders are out of touch. They don't know or care about what's going on in the rest of America	30	30	20	10
The government promotes policies that undermine basic American values of individual responsibility, self reliance and respect for the law	30	28	18	11
Government laws on public health, safety and the environment go too far and hurt jobs and competitiveness	23	7	20	16
The government interferes with women's civil rights to choose	20	19	21	17
People are distrustful of almost all institutions today. There is no special reason to distrust the U. S. government more than other institutions	19	33	18	15
The government promotes policies that make it more difficult for people to practice their religious faiths	16	14	23	31
These are hard times in the country and the government unfairly gets the blame	12	26	25	23

- Do you completely agree, mostly agree, mostly disagree, or completely disagree that the government often does a better job than people give it credit for?

			Govt. Does Better Job Than -----People Give It Credit For-----	
			Completely/ Mostly Agree	Completely/ Mostly Disagree
Apr. 1996	Gallup		60	40

- Some people think criticism of the way the federal government does its job is justified, while others think the government often does a better job than it is given credit for. Which comes closer to your views?

			----- Federal Govt.'s Job-----	
			Criticism Justified	Better Than Given Credit For
Sep.-Oct. 1997	PSRA/Pew		60	33
May-Jun. 2000	Kaiser/WP/Harvard		56	39

- Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the statement...A lot of people complain about the government without thinking about the government programs that benefit them?

			People Complain Without -----Thinking of Benefits-----	
			Agree	Disagree
May 1996	ABC		77	21

- I'm going to read a few statements; for each, please tell me if you agree or disagree with it... Whatever its faults, the United States still has the best system of government in the world?

			-----U.S. Has Best Govt.-----	
			Agree	Disagree
Apr. 1992	ABC		85	14
Sep. 1994	ABC		84	13
May 1996	ABC		83	15
Dec. 2000	ABC/WP		89	11

***IS GOVERNMENT DOING TOO MUCH?*** As the RoperASW tables at the beginning of this study show, Americans want a lot from government. At the same time, they are persistent critics. When people are reminded by pollsters of the idea of individual or business responsibility, they frequently say that government is doing too much. In the abstract, they generally prefer a smaller government with fewer services than a larger government with more services.

- Some people think the government is trying to do too many things that should be left to individuals and businesses. Others think that government should do more to solve our country's problems. Which comes closer to your own view?

		Govt. Doing Too Much That Should Be Left to Individuals And Business	Govt. Should Do More To Solve Country's Problems
Jan. 1985	ABC/WP	57	38
Feb. 1986	ABC/WP	55	42
Jan. 1987	ABC/WP	49	47
Jun. 1988	WP	48	49
Sep. 1990	ABC/WP	52	45
Jun. 1992	Gallup	39	52
Jun. 1992	ABC/WP	47	49
Aug. 1992	Gallup	50	43
Sep. 1992	Gallup	51	43
Oct. 1992	Gallup	48	44
Mar. 1993	Gallup	45	49
Apr. 1993	Gallup	49	45
Jun. 1993	Yankelovich	52	42
Dec. 1993	Gallup	55	38
Jan. 1994	Gallup	54	39
Oct. 1994	Gallup	57	37
Nov. 1994	Gallup	55	37
Nov. 1995*	Yankelovich	50	42
Dec. 1995	Gallup	60	32
Jan. 1996	Gallup	58	35
Feb. 1996	Yankelovich	70	26
Sep. 1996*	NBC/WSJ	58	34
Feb. 1997	Gallup	58	33
Apr. 1998	Gallup	59	33
Oct. 1998	Gallup	50	38
Sep. 1999	Gallup	55	39
Aug. 2000	Gallup	54	38
Sep. 2000	Gallup	50	37
Sep. 2001	Gallup	55	36
Oct. 2001	Gallup	41	50
Sep. 2002	Gallup	50	43
Oct. 2002	Gallup	44	48
Sep. 2003	Gallup	51	43
Nov. 2004	Gallup	55	36
Sept. 2005	Gallup	50	44
Oct. 2006	Gallup	46	44
May-Jun. 2007	WP/Kaiser/Harvard	48	45

NOTE: Question wording varied slightly. \*Registered voters.

- I'm going to read you two statements about the role of government, and I'd like to know which one comes closer to your point of view. Government should do more to solve problems and help meet the needs of people, OR Government is doing too many things better left to businesses and individuals.

		Govt. should do more to solve problems and help people	Govt. is doing too many things better left to businesses and individuals
Dec. 1995	NBC/WSJ	62	32
Jul. 1995	NBC/WSJ	68	25
Dec. 1997	NBC/WSJ	51	41
Jan. 2002	NBC/WSJ	43	45
Mar. 2007	NBC/WSJ	40	52
Sep. 2007	NBC/WSJ	38	65

- Which comes closer to your view: "Government should do more to solve national problems" or "Government is doing too many things better left to businesses and individuals?"

		Govt. Doing Too Many Things Better Left to Business & Individuals	Govt. Should Do More To Solve National Problems
Nov. 1994	CBS/NYT	63	30
Nov. 1994	CBS	59	31
Jan. 1995	CBS	63	31
Jan. 1995	CBS	62	32
Aug. 1995	CBS/NYT	66	24
Oct. 1995	CBS/NYT	64	27
Feb. 1996	CBS/NYT	60	32
Apr. 1996	CBS/NYT	59	34
Jun. 1996	CBS/NYT	57	36
Aug. 1996	CBS/NYT	58	36
Aug. 1996	CBS	60	32
Sep. 1996	CBS/NYT	62	28
Oct. 1996	CBS/NYT	62	29
Oct. 1996	CBS	57	34
Feb. 1997	CBS	58	34
Oct. 1998	CBS	54	38
Jul. 2000	CBS/NYT	54	36
Aug. 2001	Hart/CEG	43	51
Nov. 2002+	CBS	55	36
Mar. 2007	CBS News/NYT	52	41

NOTE: +Likely voters.

- Would you say you favor smaller government with fewer services, or larger government with many services?

		Smaller Govt./ Fewer Services	Larger Govt./ Many Services
Apr. 1976*	CBS/NYT	40	44
May 1976*	CBS/NYT	41	43
Jun. 1976*	CBS/NYT	43	42
Sep. 1976*	CBS/NYT	48	38
Oct. 1976*	CBS/NYT	49	37
Nov. 1976*	CBS/NYT	44	44
Jun. 1978*	CBS/NYT	53	36
Mar. 1980*	CBS/NYT	54	32
May 1988*	CBS/NYT	43	44
Oct. 1988*	CBS/NYT	45	38
Jan. 1989*	CBS/NYT	41	48
Oct. 1991+	CBS/NYT	42	43
Feb. 1996+	CBS/NYT	61	30

Sep. 1999	CBS	46	43
Oct. 2000	CBS	57	32
Nov. 2000+	CBS/NYT	55	32
Nov. 2000	CBS	54	31
Jan. 2001	CBS	51	36
Oct. 2001	CBS/NYT	48	39
Jan. 2002+	CBS/NYT	46	40
Jul. 2003+	CBS/NYT	48	40
Nov. 2003	CBS/NYT	45	42
Mar-Apr. 2008	CBS/NYT	43	43
Jan. 1978	WP	40	39
Jul. 1984	ABC/WP	49	43
Jul. 1988	ABC/WP	49	45
Jul. 1992	ABC/WP	55	38
Feb. 1993	ABC/WP	67	30
Aug. 1996	ABC/WP	63	32
Aug. 1998	WP/Kaiser/Harvard	59	35
Apr. 2000	ABC/WP	56	38
Jul. 2000	ABC/WP	59	34
Oct. 2000^	ABC/WP	58	32
Oct. 2000	ABC/WP	58	33
Oct. 2000^	WP/Kaiser/Harvard	60	32
Jan. 2002	ABC/WP	54	41
Jul. 2002	ABC/WP	53	42
Sep. 2002	WP	54	39
Oct. 2002~	ABC	60	35
June 2004	ABC/WP	50	46
Nov. 2007	ABC/WP	50	44
Jun. 1993	LAT	60	29
Jan. 1995	LAT	63	27
Sep. 1995	LAT	62	27
Oct. 1995	LAT	68	23
Apr. 1996	LAT	62	28
Mar. 2001	LAT	59	29
Nov. 2001	LAT	48	41
Jan. 2005	LAT	52	36
Jan. 2006	LAT/Bloomberg	49	38
Dec. 2006-			
Jan. 2007+	Pew	45	43
Aug. 2007	Zogby	57	31
Exit Polls:			
Nov. 1992	VNS	41	49
Nov. 1994	VNS	59	42
Nov. 1996	VNS	56	44
Nov. 2000	VNS	52	43

NOTE: \*Question wording was, “In general, government grows bigger as it provides more services. If you had to choose, would you rather have a smaller government providing less services or a bigger government providing more services?” +Question wording was, “If you had to choose, would you rather have a smaller government providing fewer services, or a bigger government providing more services?”  
^Registered voters. ~Likely voters.

- Which of the following statements do you agree with more...I'd rather pay higher taxes to support a larger government that provides more services, or I'd rather pay lower taxes and have a smaller government that provides fewer services?

		I'd Rather Pay	
		Higher Taxes/ Larger Govt.	Lower Taxes/ Smaller Govt.
Jun. 1997	Fox News/Opinion Dynamics	31	58
Apr. 1998	Fox News/Opinion Dynamics	30	58
Oct. 2000	Fox News/Opinion Dynamics	32	52
May 2003	Fox News/Opinion Dynamics	34	50
Jan. 2004	Fox News/Opinion Dynamics	38	45
Jan. 2006	Fox News/Opinion Dynamics	34	52

- Would you rather have more government services if it meant more taxes, less government services in order to reduce taxes, or services and taxes about as we have them now?

		More Services/ More Taxes	Same As Now	Less Services/ Less Taxes
Dec. 1978*	LAT	5	21	67
Apr. 1991	LAT	12	45	40
Mar. 1993	Gallup	20	35	40

NOTE : \*Asked of registered voters.

- Do you agree or disagree that Senators and Representatives in Congress promise more social programs than taxpayers can afford?

		Agree	Disagree
Jan. 24-25, 2006	Fox News/Opinion Dynamics	67	25

- No I am going to mention various areas that receive money from the federal government. For each one, please tell me if you would be willing to pay more in taxes to keep the program going at its current level, or if you would rather see funding for that area cut. Would you rather pay more in taxes or cut funding for...

		Pay more	Cut funding
Feb. 28-Mar. 1, 2006	Fox News/Opinion Dynamics		
	Education	74	19
	Health care	69	21
	Public safety, such as police forces	67	22
	Social Security	67	19
	The military	63	25
	Repairs on roads and bridges	58	30
	Homeland security	56	32
	Hurricane relief programs	53	32
	Iraq reconstruction	19	70

**WASTE:** The belief that government wastes a lot of money is widespread. So, too, is the belief that government officials don't care much about average citizens.

- Out of every dollar the federal government collects in taxes, how many cents do you think are wasted?

		Of Every Dollar, How ----Many Cents Are Wasted?----	
		Mean	Median
Nov. 1979	Gallup	--	40
Jan. 1981	Gallup	--	48
Mar. 1981	Gallup	--	40
May 1984	Gallup	--	45
Feb. 1989	Gallup	--	50
Jul. 1985	ABC/WP	43	45
May 1990	ABC/WP	46	50
Sep. 1990	ABC	44	50
Sep. 1990	WP	48	50
Oct. 1991	ABC/WP	49	41
Feb. 1993	ABC/WP	46	39
Aug. 1993	ABC/WP	47	40
Jan. 1995	ABC/WP	51	50
Jan. 1998	ABC	56	--
Apr. 2000	ABC	46	--
Apr. 2002	ABC	47	--
Apr. 2006	ABC/WP	51	--
Nov. 1996	Tarrance(R)/Lake(D)	49	--

- Do you think that people in government waste a lot of money we pay in taxes, waste some of it, or don't waste very much of it?

		-----Govt. Wastes Tax Money-----		
		A Lot	Some	Not Very Much
Jun. 1978	CBS/NYT	78	17	2
Sep. 1978	WP	73	23	2
Jun. 1983	NYT	69	26	3
Nov. 1983	NYT	74	21	2
Nov. 1984	CBS/NYT	67	27	3
Feb. 1985	CBS/NYT	69	25	3
Dec. 1985	NYT	75	21	3
Nov. 1988	CBS/NYT	71	24	3
Oct. 1991	ABC/WP	75	23	2
Oct. 1992	CBS/NYT	76	20	1
Jun. 1993	CBS/NYT	86	12	1
Sep. 1993	Gallup	86	12	1
Oct. 2001	CBS/NYT	52	43	4

- Do you think that people in government waste a lot of money we pay in taxes, waste some of it, or don't waste very much of it?

		-----Govt. Wastes Tax Money-----		
		A Lot	Some	Not Very Much
1958	U Mich/NES	43	42	10
1964	U Mich/NES	47	44	7
1968	U Mich/NES	59	34	4
1970	U Mich/NES	69	26	4
1972	U Mich/NES	66	30	2

1974	U Mich/NES	74	22	1
1976	U Mich/NES	74	20	3
1978	U Mich/NES	77	19	2
1980	U Mich/NES	78	18	2
1982	U Mich/NES	66	29	2
1984	U Mich/NES	65	29	4
1988	U Mich/NES	63	33	2
1990	U Mich/NES	67	30	2
1992	U Mich/NES	67	30	2
1994	U Mich/NES	70	27	2
1996	U Mich/NES	60	38	1
1998	U Mich/NES	61	34	4
2000	U Mich/NES	59	38	3
2004	U Mich/NES	55	31	2

- I'm going to read you some pairs of statements that will help us understand how you feel about a number of things. As I read each pair, tell me whether the first statement or the second statement comes closer to your own views – even if neither is exactly right. The first pair is government is almost always wasteful and inefficient or government often does a better job than people give it credit for...?

		Govt. Almost Always Wasteful & Inefficient	Govt. Does Does Better Job
Jul. 1994	PSRA/Pew Research Center	66	31
Oct. 1994	PSRA/Pew Research Center	64	32
Apr. 1995	PSRA/Pew Research Center	63	34
Oct. 1995	PSRA/Pew Research Center	63	34
Oct. 1996	PSRA/Pew Research Center	56	39
Jun. 1997	PSRA/Pew Research Center	59	36
Aug. 1999	PSRA/Pew Research Center	51	43
Sept. 2000	PSRA/Pew Research Center	52	40
Jun. 2003	PSRA/Pew Research Center	48	46
Dec. 2004	PSRA/Pew Research Center	47	45
Sept. 2005	PSRA/Pew Research Center	56	39

- For each statement, please tell me if you completely agree with it, mostly agree with it, mostly disagree with it, or completely disagree with it. When something is run by the government it is usually inefficient and wasteful.

		Agree	Disagree
May 1987	PSRA/Pew	63	31
May 1988	PSRA/Pew	66	29
Feb. 1989	PSRA/Pew	65	31
May 1990	PSRA/Pew	67	29
Nov. 1991	PSRA/Pew	68	30
Jun. 1992	PSRA/Pew	70	28
May 1993	PSRA/Pew	69	29
Jul. 1994	PSRA/Pew	69	30
Nov. 1997	PSRA/Pew	64	34
Sep. 1999	PSRA/Pew	59	38
Nov. 2001	PSRA/Pew	53	43
Aug. 2002	PSRA/Pew	53	43
Aug. 2003	PSRA/Pew	57	39
Dec. 2006- Jan. 2007	PSRA/Pew	62	34

- Do you think that quite a few of the people running the government are a little crooked, not very many are, or do you think hardly any of them are crooked at all?

		-----People Running Govt. Are Crooked-----			
		Quite A Few	Not Many	Hardly Any	All Are (Vol.)
1958	U Mich/NES	24	44	26	NA
1964	U Mich/NES	29	49	18	NA
1968	U Mich/NES	25	52	19	NA
1970	U Mich/NES	32	49	16	NA
1972	U Mich/NES	36	45	14	NA
1974	U Mich/NES	45	42	10	NA
1976	U Mich/NES	42	40	13	NA
1978	U Mich/NES	39	42	13	NA
1980	U Mich/NES	47	41	9	NA
1984	U Mich/NES	32	50	14	NA
1988	U Mich/NES	40	45	11	NA
1990	U Mich/NES	48	40	9	NA
1992	U Mich/NES	46	44	9	NA
1994	U Mich/NES	51	39	8	NA
1996	U Mich/NES	43	47	9	NA
1998	U Mich/NES	41	46	12	NA
2000	U Mich/NES	36	49	13	NA
2004	U Mich/NES	31	47	9	NA

NOTE: Question has been asked by other organizations.

- Do you think that quite a few of the people running the government are a little crooked, not very many are, or do you think hardly any of them are crooked at all?

		-----People Running Govt. Are Crooked-----			
		Quite A Few	Not Many	Hardly Any	All Are (Vol.)
Apr. 1992	Gallup	61	25	7	4
Jun. 1994	Gallup	58	29	6	5
May 1996	Gallup	52	32	9	5
May 1997	Gallup	50	37	8	3
Jul. 2000	Gallup	49	38	8	3
Aug. 2002	WP/KFF/Harvard	48	39	9	4

- Now I'd like your opinions on a number of different things. As I read each one, tell me whether you more or less agree with it, or more or less disagree...Most public officials (people in public office) are not really interested in the problems of the average man?

		Most Public Officials Not Interested In Problems -----Of Average Man-----	
		Agree	Disagree
1963*	NORC	31	69
1964	NORC	44	48
1974	NORC	64	33
1976	NORC	65	33
1977	NORC	63	34
1980	NORC	71	26
1982	NORC	66	31
1984	NORC	68	30
1985	NORC	63	34
1987	NORC	68	30
1988	NORC	66	31
1989	NORC	64	33
1990	NORC	67	30
1991	NORC	67	29

1993	NORC	74	24
1994	NORC	74	24
2006	NORC	64	34

NOTE: In 1963, “Disagree” and “Don’t Know” response are combined.

- Do you agree or disagree with the following statements...I don’t think public officials care much what people like me think?

		Public Officials Don’t Care What People -----Like Me Think -----	
		Agree	Disagree
1952	U Mich/NES	35	63
1956	U Mich/NES	26	71
1960	U Mich/NES	25	73
1964	U Mich/NES	36	62
1966	U Mich/NES	34	57
1968	U Mich/NES	43	55
1970	U Mich/NES	47	50
1972	U Mich/NES	49	49
1974	U Mich/NES	50	46
1976	U Mich/NES	51	44
1978	U Mich/NES	51	45
1980	U Mich/NES	52	43
1982	U Mich/NES	47	50
1984	U Mich/NES	42	57
1986	U Mich/NES	52	43
1988	U Mich/NES	51	37
1990	U Mich/NES	63	23
1992	U Mich/NES	52	37
1994	U Mich/NES	66	23
1996	U Mich/NES	60	24
1998	U Mich/NES	62	25
2000	U Mich/NES	56	33
2004	U Mich/NES	44	39

- Do you agree or disagree with the following statements...I don’t think public officials care much what people like me think?

		Public Officials Don’t Care What People -----Like Me Think -----	
		Agree	Disagree
Jul. 1984	Gallup	53	41
Sep. 1992	Gallup	59	38
Apr. 1996	Gallup	69	31
Nov. 1996	Gallup	56	41
Oct. 2001	Gallup	41	57

**FEDERAL, STATE, & LOCAL:** Three-quarters in 1987, and roughly that number again in 2007, agreed that the federal government should run only those things that cannot be run at the local level. Most polls show that people have a higher level of confidence and trust in institutions that are closer to them and therefore more accountable. Thus, state and local governments rank higher than the federal government does on these attributes.

- I am going to read you a series of statements that will help us understand how you feel about a number of things. For each statement, please tell me if you completely agree with it, mostly agree with it, mostly disagree with it, or completely disagree with it...the federal government should run only those things that cannot be run at the local level?

		-----Fed. Govt. Should Run Only Those Things Local Govt. Can't-----			
		Completely Agree	Mostly Agree	Mostly Disagree	Completely Disagree
Apr. 1987	PSRA/Pew	22	53	16	3
May 1988	PSRA/Pew	30	48	15	3
May 1990	PSRA/Pew	26	51	16	2
Jul. 1994	PSRA/Pew	38	40	14	5
Nov. 1997	PSRA/Pew	33	41	17	7
Sep.-Oct. 1999	PSRA/Pew	32	42	17	5
Jul.-Aug. 2003	PSRA/Pew	29	42	17	7
Dec. 2006-					
Jan. 2007	PSRA/Pew	27	47	16	4
Mar. 2007	PSRA/Pew	27	47	16	4

### III. FEDERAL GOVERNMENT POWER

In 1941, a third agreed that there was too much power in the hands of the government in Washington. Nearly two-thirds gave that response in 1997. Another perspective on government's power comes from a question Gallup asked for the first time in 1964. That year, and in 1997, the last time the question was asked, people were evenly divided about whether the federal government had too much power or whether it should be using its powers more vigorously "to promote the well-being of all segments of the people." That last phrase may prejudice people's responses, but it provides some sense of the numbers of people at both ends of the spectrum in terms of views about government.

In 1940, 27 percent said that the federal government interfered too much with their personal freedoms. In 2007, 28 percent completely agreed and another 36 percent mostly agreed that the federal government controls too much of their daily lives (Pew). When asked in 2005 whether the federal government's size and power posed an immediate threat to ordinary citizens, 37 percent responded that it did. In a similar question which did not ask about an *immediate* threat, more people gave that response. In Gallup questions asked in the late 1990s, around 30 percent said the federal government in Washington was an immediate threat to ordinary citizens like themselves.

In a question asked immediately after the Oklahoma City bombing, 12 percent said they were afraid of the federal government. In a half dozen questions asked between 1995 and 2002, between 11 and 20 percent have said the federal government threatens their own personal rights and freedoms.

- Do you feel that the federal government is now interfering too much with your individual freedom?

		Govt. Interfering Too ---Much With Freedom?---	
		Yes	No
Oct. 1940	Roper	27	63

- Do you think there is too much power in the hands of the government in Washington?

		Too Much Power In Hands -----Of Govt. in Washington-----	
		Yes	No
Apr. 1941*	Gallup	32	56
Aug. 1997+	Fox/OpDyn	64	27
Oct. 1997^	PSRA/Pew	62	37

NOTE: \*When asked, "Do you think there is too much power in the hands of a few rich men and large corporations in the United States?" 59 percent said "yes" and 27 percent said "no." When asked, "Do you think there is too much power in the hands of the leaders of labor unions in this country?" 75 percent said "yes" and 13 percent said "no." + Asked of registered voters. Question wording was, "Do you think the government in Washington has too much power or not?" ^Responses combined. Question wording was, "Now I'm going to read you a few statements some people have made about government...Do you completely agree, mostly agree, mostly disagree or completely disagree that the federal government is too powerful?"

- Next, I'm going to read some aspects of life in America today. For each one, please say whether you are – very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied. How about the size and power of the federal government?

		Very Satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Jan. 2001	Gallup	8	42	29	18
Jan. 2002	Gallup	12	48	26	13
Jan. 2003	Gallup	10	41	29	18
Jan. 2004	Gallup	10	38	31	20
Jan. 2005	Gallup	8	40	31	19
Jan. 2006	Gallup	8	38	29	23
Jan. 2007	Gallup	10	34	32	22
Jan. 2008	Gallup	7	34	33	24

- And what about the federal government, does it have far too much power, too much power, about the right amount of power, too little power, or far too little power?

		-----Power Of Federal Government-----				
		Far Too Much Power	Too Much Power	About Right	Too Little Power	Far Too Little Power
1985	NORC	16	41	38	4	*
1990	NORC	13	35	47	4	*
1996	NORC	24	40	29	3	1

- Which of these statements comes closest to your view about government power today: the federal government today has too much power, the federal government is now using just about the right amount of power for meeting today's needs, or the federal government should use its powers even more vigorously to promote the well-being of all segments of the people?

		-----Federal Government Today -----		
		Has Too Much Power	Now Using Right Amount Of Power	Should Use Its Power More Vigorously
Sep. 1964	Gallup	26	38	29
Oct. 1964	Gallup	28	35	31
May 1978	ORC	38	18	36
Jun. 1982	ORC	38	18	30
May 1984	Gallup	35	25	34
May 1985	Gallup	31	27	36
May 1986	Gallup	28	24	41
Jun. 1992	Gallup	39	12	41
Mar. 1993	Gallup	39	27	31
Nov. 1997	PSRA/Pew	33	32	33

Nov. 2001	Penn-Schoen	30	41	26
-----------	-------------	----	----	----

- Do you think the federal government today has too much power, has about the right amount of power, or has too little power?

		-----Federal Government Today -----		
		Has Too Much Power	Right Amount Of Power	Has Too Little Power
Sep. 2002	Gallup	39	52	7
Sept. 2003	Gallup	43	49	7
Sept. 2004	Gallup	42	49	7
Sept. 2005*	Gallup	50	43	6

Note: Fifty-six percent of Republicans say that government has the right amount of power, while 55 percent of Democrats feel that the government has too much power.

- Now I am going to read you a series of statements that will help us understand how you feel about a number of things. For each statement, please tell me if you completely agree with it, mostly agree with it, mostly disagree with it, or completely disagree with it. The first one is...the federal government controls too much of our daily lives?

		-----Fed. Government Controls Too Much Of Our Lives-----			
		Completely Agree	Mostly Agree	Mostly Disagree	Completely Disagree
May 1987	PSRA/Pew	18	40	32	5
May 1988	PSRA/Pew	25	36	31	5
Feb. 1989	PSRA/Pew	22	35	34	9
May 1990	PSRA/Pew	22	40	29	5
Nov. 1991	PSRA/Pew	32	31	28	7
Jun. 1992	PSRA/Pew	28	36	29	5
May 1993	PSRA/Pew	26	39	30	4
Jul. 1994	PSRA/Pew	37	32	25	5
Jan.-Apr. 1996	Gallup/UVA	23	40	31	7
Apr. 1997	PSRA/Pew	27	42	23	5
Nov. 1997	PSRA/Pew	29	35	29	6
Jul.-Aug. 1998*	WP/Kaiser/ Harvard	35	26	28	10
Sep.-Oct. 1999	PSRA/Pew	30	30	32	6
Nov. 2001	PSRA/Pew	20	33	35	10
Aug. 2002	PSRA/Pew	25	29	35	8
Aug. 2003	PSRA/Pew	24	32	34	8
Dec. 2006-					
Jan. 2007	PSRA/Pew	28	36	27	6
Mar. 2007	PSRA/Pew	28	36	27	6

NOTE: \*Question wording was, "Do you personally agree or disagree with the following statement? Government controls too much of our daily lives? Do you agree/disagree strongly or somewhat?"

- Do you think the federal government has become so large and powerful that it poses an immediate threat to the rights and freedoms of ordinary citizens or don't you think so?

		Fed. Govt. So Large & Powerful Immediately Threatens -----Rights & Freedoms of Ordinary Citizens-----	
		Yes	No
Apr. 1995	Gallup	39	59
Feb. 1996	Gallup	52	43
Mar. 1996*	Gallup	50	44
Apr. 2000	Gallup	45	51
May 2001	Gallup	52	46
Sep. 2003*	Gallup	30	68
Sep. 2004*	Gallup	35	63
Sept. 2005*	Gallup	37	62

NOTE: \*Asked of half sample.

- Thinking now about the federal government...do you think the federal government has become so large and powerful that it poses a threat to the rights and freedoms of ordinary citizens, or don't you think so?

		Fed. Govt. So Large & Powerful Poses Threat To Rights & ---- Freedoms Of Ordinary Citizens----	
		Yes	No
Apr. 1995	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	52	44
Oct. 1995	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	55	39
Feb. 1996	Yankelovich/CNN/Time	62	33

- In your opinion, is the federal government in Washington an immediate threat to the rights and freedoms of ordinary citizens like yourself, or not?

		Fed. Govt. Immediate Threat To Rights & Freedoms Of ----Citizens Like Yourself----	
		Yes	No
Aug. 1995	Gallup	33	65
Mar. 1996*	Gallup	31	63
Oct.-Nov. 1998	Gallup	26	69

NOTE: \*Asked of half sample.

- Do you think the federal government threatens your own personal rights and freedoms, or not? Is this a major threat or a minor threat?

		-----Fed. Govt. Threat To Your Rights & Freedoms?-----		
		Yes, Major Threat	Yes, Minor Threat	Not A Threat
May 1995*	ABC/WP	12	24	62
Nov.-Dec. 1995	WP/Kaiser/Harvard	20	21	54
May-Jun. 2000+	NPR/Kaiser/Harvard	23	23	54
Oct.-Nov. 2001	NPR/Kaiser/Harvard	14	14	67
Aug. 2002	NPR/Kaiser/Harvard	16	19	61
Aug. 2002	NPR/Kaiser/Harvard	11	16	66
Oct. 2003*	ABC/WP	18	27	54

NOTE: \*When asked, "Do you think the state government in your state threatens your own personal rights and freedoms, or not? Is this a major threat or a minor threat?" 8 percent of respondents said it was a "major threat," 11 percent said it was a "minor threat," and 80 percent said it was "not a threat." +The "Not a Threat" category includes those who said "don't know."

- Do you think the federal government threatens your own personal well-being, or not? Is this a major threat or a minor threat?

		-----Fed. Govt. Threatens Own Personal Well-Being-----		
		Yes, Major Threat	Yes, Minor Threat	Not A Threat
Nov.-Dec. 1995	WP/Kaiser/Harvard	31	21	44

- In your opinion, how often does the federal government in Washington violate your constitutional rights: very often, quite often, only occasionally, or never?

		-----Federal Government Violates Your Constitutional Rights-----			
		Very Often	Quite Often	Occasionally	Never
Aug. 1995	Gallup	11	23	53	11

NOTE: When asked, "How often does the state government violate your constitutional rights," the responses were 7 percent "very often," 15 percent "quite often," 61 percent "occasionally," and 16 percent "never." When asked, "How often does the local government in your city or town where you live violate your constitutional rights," the responses were 6 percent "very often," 13 percent "quite often," 56 percent "occasionally," and 24 percent "never."

- Do you think the federal government in Washington is violating any of your constitutional rights these days, or not? (If Yes) In your opinion, is the federal government in Washington violating your constitutional rights today more than in the past, less than in the past, or about the same amount?

		-----Fed. Govt Violates Your Constitutional Rights-----			Is Not Violating
		Yes, More Than In Past	Yes, Same As In Past	Yes, Less Than In Past	
Aug. 1995	Gallup	34	4	19	38

- In the future, do you think the federal government in Washington will violate your constitutional rights, or not? (If Yes) In your opinion, in the future will the federal government in Washington violate your constitutional rights more often than is the case now, less often, or about the same amount as now?

		-----Fed. Govt Violates Your Constitutional Rights-----			Will Not Violate
		Yes, More In Future	Yes, About Same	Yes, Less In Future	
Aug. 1995	Gallup	33	5	32	24

- How do you personally view the federal government in Washington: as an enemy, as a friend, or as neither?

		-----Personal View of Federal Government-----		
		Friend	Neither	Enemy
May 1995*	ABC/WP	26	67	6
Aug. 1995	Gallup	29	61	8

NOTE: \*Question wording was, "On another subject, if you had to say, would you say you think of the federal government as your friend or as your enemy, or don't you think about it in those terms?"

- Would you say you're afraid of the federal government, or not afraid of it?

		-----Federal Government-----	
		Afraid	Not Afraid
May 1995	ABC/WP	12	88

- Here are some increased powers of investigation that law enforcement agencies might use when dealing with people suspected of terrorist activity, which would also affect our civil liberties. For each, please say if you would favor or oppose it...Adoption of a national I.D. system for all U.S. citizens?

		Favor	Oppose
Sep. 2001	Harris	68	28
Mar. 2002	Harris	59	37
Feb.2003	Harris	64	31
Feb.2004	Harris	56	37
Sep. 2004	Harris	60	33
June 2005	Harris	61	34
Feb. 2006	Harris	64	34

**THE LIBERTARIAN IMPULSE:** The questions in this section follow naturally from the questions above on federal government power. They give us a sense of how large the libertarian or “leave us alone” contingent is in American politics today. Since 1993, Gallup has used responses to two questions to divide the population into four groups, pure liberals, populists, libertarians, and pure conservatives. Using this definition, libertarians make up 21 percent of the population according to the November 2006 survey.

- (1) Some people think the government is trying to do too many things that should be left to individuals and business.  
 (2) Others think that government should do more to solve our country’s problems.  
 Which comes closer to your own view?  
 (3) Some people think the government should promote traditional values in our society.  
 (4) Others think the government should not favor any particular set of values.  
 Which comes closer to your own view?

Gallup’s Typology

		-----Political Ideology-----			
		Pure Liberal (2 and 4)	Populist (2 and 3)	Libertarian (1 and 4)	Pure Conservative (1 and 3)
Mar. 1993	Gallup	20	27	19	24
Apr. 1993	Gallup	17	25	20	27
Dec. 1993	Gallup	13	23	22	31
Jan. 1994	Gallup	16	20	22	30
Oct. 1994	Gallup	16	19	21	33
Nov. 1994	Gallup	15	20	20	32
Jan. 1996	Gallup	13	20	20	35
Jan. 1997	Gallup	13	17	24	31
Apr. 1998	Gallup	13	17	21	34
Oct. 1998	Gallup	14	23	19	29
Sep. 1999	Gallup	15	23	23	31
Sep. 2000	Gallup	16	18	18	30
Sep. 2001	Gallup	16	18	22	30
Oct. 2001	Gallup	18	30	17	23
Sep. 2002	Gallup	18	23	19	29
Oct. 2002	Gallup	18	28	15	27
Sep. 2003	Gallup	19	22	19	31
Sep. 2006	Gallup	21	20	21	25

- Does the term \_\_\_\_\_ apply to you personally or does it not?

		Very/somewhat familiar with the term		
		Applies to me	Does not	
Nov. 2006	Gallup			
	<b>Libertarian</b>	56	12	88
	Conservative	92	56	44
	Moderate	83	57	43
	Liberal	90	35	65
	Progressive	59	34	66
	Populist	39	11	9

Note: Each subgroup was only asked about if respondents were familiar with the term.

- Now let me read you some statements some people have made about the way different levels of government should operate in this country. For each, tell me if you tend to agree or disagree...The best government is the government that governs the least?

		Best Government Is ---One That Governs Least---	
		Agree	Disagree
1973	Harris	32	56
1976	Harris	38	48
1981	Harris	58	36
1996*	Gallup/UVA	61	39
1998	Penn-Schoen	56	36

NOTE: \*Responses combined.

- Here is a list of some statements. For each one, please tell me how much you agree with it – do you completely agree, mostly agree, mostly disagree, agree more than disagree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree more than agree, mostly disagree, or do you completely disagree with the statement...Government should stay out of people’s personal lives, that is their choices about relationships, sex, family life, etc.?

		-----Govt. Should Stay Out Of Personal Lives-----						
		Completely Agree	Mostly Agree	Agree More	Neither	Disagree More	Mostly Disagree	Completely Disagree
Oct. 1995	RoperASW	39	27	16	10	5	2	1
Oct. 1997	RoperASW	38	30	16	9	3	2	1
Oct. 2000	RoperASW	36	33	17	7	3	3	1

- Here is a list of some statements. For each one, please tell me how much you agree with it – do you completely agree, mostly agree, mostly disagree, agree more than disagree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree more than agree, mostly disagree, or do you completely disagree with the statement...I should be able to do whatever I want so long as it doesn’t harm anyone else?

		I Should Be Able To Do Whatever I Want -----As Long As It Doesn’t Harm Anyone Else-----						
		Completely Agree	Mostly Agree	Agree More	Neither	Disagree More	Mostly Disagree	Completely Disagree
Oct. 1995	RoperASW	31	28	19	7	6	5	4
Oct. 1997	RoperASW	27	34	17	7	7	4	4
Oct. 2000	RoperASW	27	33	19	6	7	4	3

- Here is a list of some statements. For each one, please tell me how much you agree with it – do you completely agree, mostly agree, mostly disagree, agree more than disagree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree more than agree, mostly disagree, or do you completely disagree with the statement...There shouldn’t be any restrictions on what a person can do with his or her own private property?

		-----No Restrictions On What People Do With Private Property-----						
		Completely Agree	Mostly Agree	Agree More	Neither	Disagree More	Mostly Disagree	Completely Disagree
Oct. 1995	RoperASW	19	19	17	12	16	11	5
Oct. 1997	RoperASW	19	26	17	12	13	8	6
Oct. 2000	RoperASW	16	26	19	10	14	9	5

- Now I'm going to read you some pairs of statements. As I read each pair, please tell me whether the first statement or the second statement comes closer to your own views, even if neither is exactly right... Government regulation often improves safety and protects consumers and the environment or the government should stop trying to tell people what to do – whether they own a gun, use an off-road vehicle, or drive an SUV? Do you feel strongly about that or not so strongly?

		-----Govt. Regulation Often Improves Safety (1 <sup>st</sup> Statement) Or---- Govt. Should Stop Telling People What To Do (2 <sup>nd</sup> Statement)?----			
		1 <sup>st</sup> Statement	1 <sup>st</sup> Statement	2 <sup>nd</sup> Statement	2 <sup>nd</sup> Statement
		Strongly	Not Strongly	Not Strongly	Strongly
Apr. 2002	Democracy Corps	32	17	12	30
Jul. 2002	Democracy Corps	34	17	11	31
Sep.-Oct. 2002	Democracy Corps	35	16	12	31
Oct. 2002	Democracy Corps	34	16	11	32
May 2003	Democracy Corps	33	14	9	38
Jun. 2003	Greenberg/PIP	29	22	15	27
Jun. 2003	Democracy Corps	31	16	10	36
Jul. 2003	Democracy Corps	31	17	9	38
Sep. 2003	Democracy Corps	32	18	10	36
Oct. 2003	Democracy Corps	34	13	7	39
Jan. 2004	Democracy Corps	32	16	8	37

- Now I'm going to read you some pairs of statements. As I read each pair, please tell me whether the first statement or the second statement comes closer to your own views, even if neither is exactly right. Government must create basic rules to ensure food safety, protect water and air from pollutants, and keep corporations honest with their employees and consumers. OR The government should stop trying to tell people what to do – whether they can own a gun, use an off-road vehicle, or drive an SUV.

		-----Govt. Must Create Basic Rules (1 <sup>st</sup> Statement) Or---- Govt. Should Stop Telling People What To Do (2 <sup>nd</sup> Statement)?----			
		1 <sup>st</sup> Statement	1 <sup>st</sup> Statement	2 <sup>nd</sup> Statement	2 <sup>nd</sup> Statement
		Strongly	Not Strongly	Not Strongly	Strongly
May 2005	Democracy Corps	52	12	19	6

- I will read you some activities that some people feel are matters of private choice or consent that ought to be left to the individual, that other people feel should be regulated by law, and others feel should be forbidden by law altogether. Please tell me, for each one, how you feel that activity should be treated – should it be left to the individual, should it be allowed, but regulated by law, or should it be totally forbidden by law?

		Left To Individual      Allowed But Regulated      Totally Forbidden		
Smoking marijuana in a private residence				
Nov.-Dec. 1978	Harris/Sentry	55	14	29
Jan.-Feb. 1990	Harris/Equifax	33	19	48
Homosexual relations in private between consenting adults				
Nov.-Dec. 1978	Harris/Sentry	70	5	20
Jan.-Feb. 1990	Harris/Equifax	63	8	27
Having an abortion				
Nov.-Dec. 1978	Harris/Sentry	59	17	21
Jan.-Feb. 1990	Harris/Equifax	62	16	21
Engaging in prostitution				
Nov.-Dec. 1978	Harris/Sentry	35	24	37
Jan.-Feb. 1990	Harris/Equifax	22	31	46

Heterosexual relations between unmarried adults					
	Nov.-Dec. 1978	Harris/Sentry	79	3	13
Riding a motorcycle without a helmet					
	Nov.-Dec. 1978	Harris/Sentry	34	23	41
Selling pornographic magazines and films in bookstores					
	Nov.-Dec. 1978	Harris/Sentry	24	30	44

**SUGGESTED READINGS:**

Melnick, R. Shep. "An American Dilemma." *Wilson Quarterly* 23, no. 4, 1999 (Autumn 1999):70-78

Murray, Charles. "Americans Remain Wary of Washington." *Wall Street Journal*, 23 December, 1997

Nye, Joseph S., Philip D. Zelikow, David C. King, eds. *Why Americans Mistrust Government*: Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Steeper, Fred. "The Discontent and Cynicism of the American Public: Analysis of Trust in Government Attitudes." Market Strategies, Inc., 1995.

Wills, Gary. *A Necessary Evil: A History of American Distrust of Government*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999.

Council for Excellence in Government.

Internet on-line. <http://www.excelgov.org/displayContent.asp?Keyword=pppHomePage>.

[1 August 2003].

Kaiser Family Foundation. *Why Don't Americans Trust the Government*. 1996

Internet on-line. <http://www.kff.org/content/archive/1110/>

[1 August 2003]

The Washington Post began a six-part series on the survey on January 28, 1996.

The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, *Deconstructing Distrust*. 1998

Internet on-line. <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=95>

[1 August 2003]

The data in this report come from the archive of public opinion polls at AEI and from The Roper Center's archive at the University of Connecticut in Storrs, Connecticut. The Roper Center is the oldest and largest archive of public opinion data in the world. To learn more about the Roper Center, visit <http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/>.

For comments or questions  
contact Karlyn Bowman at [kbowman@aei.org](mailto:kbowman@aei.org)

Compiled by Karlyn Bowman, Resident Fellow,  
Adam Foster, Staff/Research Assistant,  
Fowler Brown, David Smith, Kathryn Alpage, Bryan Blom and Krista Schmitt, Interns

This document first appeared on  
the AEI website in August 2003