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Better, Not Smaller

What Americans Want From Their Federal Government

Guy Molyneux and Ruy Teixeira, with John Whaley July 2010

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Based on a nationwide survey conducted by Hart Research Associates for the Center for American Progress and its Doing What Works project

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This publication is a product of CAP's Doing What Works project, which promotes government reform to efficiently allocate scarce resources and achieve greater results for the American people. Doing What Works specifically has three key objectives: (1) eliminating or redesigning misguided spending programs and tax expenditures focused on priority areas such as health care, energy, and education; (2) improving government's ability to execute by streamlining management and strengthening operations in the areas of human resources, information technology, and procurement; and (3) building a foundation for smarter decision making by enhancing transparency, performance measurement, and evaluation. Doing What Works publications and products can be viewed at http://www.americanprogress.org/projects/doing_what_works. This project is undertaken in partnership with the Rockefeller Foundation's Campaign for American Workers.

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Executive summary

Public confidence in government is at an all-time low, according to a major new survey commissioned by the Center for American Progress. And yet clear majorities of Americans of all ages want and expect more federal involvement in priority areas such as energy, poverty, and education, the poll found.

The key lesson embedded in these seemingly paradoxical results: Americans want a federal government that is better, not smaller. CAP's new research shows people would rather improve government performance than reduce its size. And they are extremely receptive to reform efforts that would eliminate inefficient government programs, implement performance-based policy decisions, and adopt modern management methods and information technologies.

The May survey of 2,523 adults conducted by Hart Research Associates found that public lack of confidence in government's ability to solve problems is more closely related to perceptions of government performance than it is a function of partisan affiliation or political ideology. A majority of respondents indicated they would be more likely to support political candidates who embrace a reform agenda of improving government performance, effectiveness, and efficiency.

While recession-fueled record low levels of confidence are sobering, the broader lesson for policymakers is that a better-run government will increase public confidence in public institutions. That, in turn, should expand public support for smart government solutions to pressing social problems. Specifically, the survey found substantial support, especially among the younger generation and minorities but also among independents, moderates, and unlikely constituencies like Republicans and Tea Party supporters, for a government reform plan organized around three core elements:

- Eliminating inefficient programs and redirecting support to the most cost-efficient programs
- Carefully evaluating the performance of individual programs and agencies, and making that information available to the public
- Using more modern management methods and information technologies

Despite the opportunity this new research presents, it also underscores the challenge of overcoming public skepticism of government competence today. Negative feelings toward the government are ascendant in the public mind, and significantly outweigh positive attitudes. Measures of trust in government have declined in recent years, while unfavorable feelings have risen. At a time when so many pressing national problems appear to demand redress from the public sector, the general public appears reluctant to allow stronger government actions.

The conventional interpretation of the recent negative shift in public sentiment toward the federal government is that it reflects an ideological rejection of “big government.” This survey, however, reveals that Americans have not significantly changed their opinion of government’s role. Indeed, clear majorities want *more* federal government involvement in priority areas, and they expect government’s role in improving people’s lives to grow rather than shrink in importance in the years ahead.

Rather than a rejection of big government, the survey reveals a rejection of incompetent government. The government receives mediocre to poor performance ratings from the public both in terms of how effective it is and how well it is managed. There is a widespread belief that government spends their tax dollars inefficiently, and the

Doing What Works a winner with Americans

What distinguishes this study from other inquiries into public attitudes toward government is a focus on understanding how Americans want government to change. The survey finds a surprisingly high level of confidence that government effectiveness can be improved—poor performance in the public sector is not inevitable, Americans say—and a powerful commitment to realizing that potential for better government. More specifically, the survey gauges public reaction to CAP’s “Doing What Works” plan for improving federal government performance. The public responds positively to all three of our core reform elements:

- Eliminating wasteful programs
- Measuring performance more precisely
- Modernizing government management

See page 5 for a summary of these findings, and the complete analysis beginning on page 10.

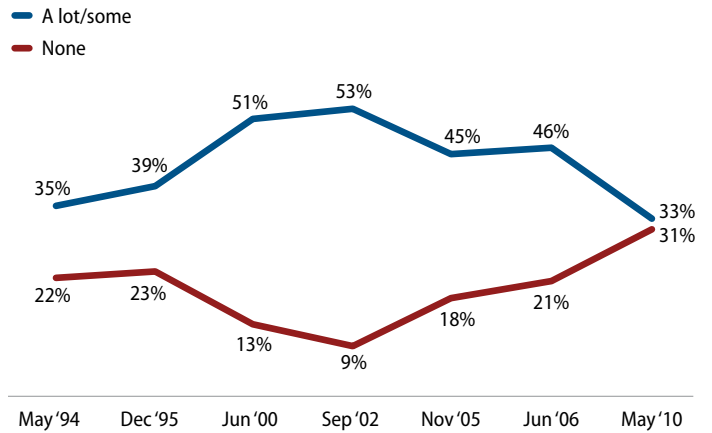
survey explores these perceptions of “wasteful spending” in significant depth. Improving these perceptions, we find, is a central challenge for reform efforts.

The message to politicians and policymakers is clear. Government will not regain the public trust unless it earns it. And earning it means spending taxpayer money more carefully—and doing what works.

Respondents to this survey included an oversample of so-called Millennials, or adults ages 18 to 32. A companion report exploring today’s remarkable generation gap in attitudes toward government is also available at http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2010/07/dww_millennials.com.

Lowest rating on record for confidence in federal government

Confidence in federal government to solve problems



Introduction and key findings

Americans have long had a love-hate relationship with their federal government. They express an aversion to “big” government in principle while at the same time embracing a wide range of actual federal government programs and initiatives.

To gain a deeper understanding of the current state of Americans’ conflicted relationship with their government—and to explore ways to improve it—the Center for American Progress commissioned a new survey on public attitudes toward the federal government and government reform. This report reviews the key findings from the survey, conducted May 10-22, 2010 by Hart Research Associates, one of the leading survey research firms in the United States. The survey consisted of extensive interviews with a total of 2,523 American adults, including 911 members of the Millennial generation (adults ages 18 to 32).

The full report—and this introductory summary of key findings—is organized along the three main questions that undergird the survey’s design:

- How do Americans view the federal government?
- Why do Americans lack confidence in the federal government?
- How do Americans react to CAP’s government-improvement plan?

Following this summary of key findings are detailed expositions of each of the above themes. A full description of the survey sample and methodology is provided in appendix D beginning on page 59. A separate report on the findings among Millennials, exploring today’s remarkable generation gap in attitudes toward government, is also available from CAP at http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2010/07/dww_millennials.com.

How do Americans view their federal government?

Public confidence in government is at an all-time low

The survey asks Americans “when the government in Washington decides to solve a problem, how much confidence do you have that the problem actually will be solved?” This question has been asked periodically by various news organizations over two decades, and the current results represent the lowest level of public confidence ever recorded. Just one-third (33 percent) of adults voice a lot or some confidence, 35 percent have “just a little confidence,” and another one-third (31 percent) have no confidence at all. The proportion saying “no confidence” in the past has never before exceeded 23 percent.

Confidence among blacks is up, down among Latinos and whites, especially the white working class

African Americans stand out as the only group whose confidence has risen over the decade (+10), most likely because of the combined effect of their Democratic partisanship and strong support for President Obama (91 percent favorable rating). Confidence declined among both Latinos (-16) and whites (-22). White working class (noncollege educated) adults have registered an especially sharp fall in confidence of 25 points.

Americans want more government involvement in key policy areas

A majority of Americans respondents favor *more* government involvement in all five areas tested by the survey:

- Developing new energy sources
- Improving public schools
- Making college education affordable
- Reducing poverty
- Ensuring access to affordable health care

Apart from health care, over three-fourths of liberals/progressives—and over 60 percent of moderates—favor a stronger government role in every area.¹ Remarkably, at least 40 percent of conservatives/libertarians support a larger federal government role in pursuing each of these four goals. Even on health care, we see a 56 percent majority of moderates supporting more federal engagement.

Improving the government is more important than shrinking it, people say
We asked Americans what they think should be the higher priority for improving the federal government: reducing the cost and size of federal government, or improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the federal government? By a decisive margin of 62 percent to 36 percent, people say their priority is making government more efficient and more effective, not reducing its size. In the political center, independents and moderates both cite a clear preference for more effective government (62 percent and 69 percent respectively). Even among the 57 percent of adults who say government is doing too many things today, there is as much sentiment for improving government's effectiveness (48 percent) as for shrinking government (50 percent).

More than a quarter of the public criticizes big government but still wants better, not smaller government

Twenty-seven percent of the public says both that government is doing too many things today *and* that government should be improved rather than downsized. These citizens also want to see an expanded role for government in many areas, even including reducing poverty. This is a critical target group for efforts at government reform. Disproportionately white working class (54 percent of the group), this segment offers potential in-roads among a generally hostile constituency. Members of this group could then be added to those who already think government should do more to solve problems—a group heavily dominated by growing progressive constituencies such as minorities, unmarried women, Millennials, and professionals, to form a potentially formidable coalition.

Why do Americans lack confidence in the federal government?

Americans perceive government operations as poorly run, unhelpful, and wasteful

Americans have serious concerns about how federal programs and agencies currently operate across a diverse range of performance metrics. Few Americans give excellent or good marks to government services or the ability of federal programs and agencies to help people, accomplish goals, be well run, or spend money efficiently.

Americans think the government wastes “a lot” of money, especially by running unproven programs

Sixty-six percent of Americans believe that federal government programs and agencies waste a lot of taxpayer money, and another 28 percent say that they

waste “some” money. That leaves only 4 percent who believe that not very much money is wasted. The best example of wastefulness to respondents is government programs continuing for years though they have not been proven effective.

This perception of wastefulness is what drives mistrust, more than politics or ideology

Performance assessments have more than twice the power of party identification or political ideology in predicting a person’s confidence in government, the survey shows. These results strongly suggest that efforts to improve government performance would increase confidence in the government. In particular, these findings support the potential efficacy of the Doing What Works program at the Center for American Progress (see box).

CAP’s Doing What Works government-improvement plan

The Doing What Works project at the Center for American Progress recommends a governmentwide initiative to improve government efficiency, performance, and management. The plan would, among other things:

- Require federal agencies to set clear goals measured by real-world results
- Reform the federal budget process to make spending decisions based on objective evidence about what works
- Measure and compare state actions to determine which approaches work
- Consolidate federal programs where there is overlap
- Reform the federal procurement system to make it faster and easier to identify best vendors
- Reform federal hiring and firing practices to improve performance of the workforce
- Evaluate tax subsidies for effectiveness and eliminate wasteful ones
- Subject new policies to “try before you buy” pilot programs
- Establish rigorous measurement and evaluation systems to determine government effectiveness and guide future policy
- Modernize federal information technology systems for better service
- Apply the best private-sector management practices for improved government performance
- Create Internet tools that allow the public to monitor government performance
- Establish an online report card informing the public about national progress toward goals
- Institute a speedy up-or-down confirmation vote in U.S. Senate for presidential appointments
- Allow taxpayers to opt-in to a free, pre-filled IRS tax return

How do Americans react to CAP's Doing What Works government-improvement plan?

The public strongly supports the principle of improving government performance. Three in four respondents say it is very important for the president and Congress to take steps to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the federal government's programs and agencies. Support for improving the government's performance is shared across partisan lines, with large majorities of Democrats (79 percent), independents (73 percent), and Republicans (68 percent) endorsing this position.

Americans believe better management can improve government effectiveness. More than seven in 10 (74 percent) Americans believe the government *could* be more effective with better management, while only 23 percent say the federal government is bound to be ineffective no matter what. There is broad agreement on this issue across party lines, with 71 percent of both independents and Republicans seeing the potential for government to improve.

The three core components of CAP's reform plan will improve government, people say

A strong majority of respondents said the three components would be “very effective” or “fairly effective” at making the federal government work better. The three elements are: eliminating inefficient programs and redirecting support to the most cost-effective programs, with 71 percent saying very or fairly effective; evaluating government program performance and making it transparent (70 percent very or fairly effective); and improving the management methods and information technologies of the government (60 percent very or fairly effective).

Tea Party followers and conservatives think the CAP plan would help

Three in five respondents (61 percent) say that the overall plan would be very or fairly effective, including strong majorities from each party and from independents (Democrats, 67 percent; independents, 57 percent; and Republicans, 58 percent). Both African Americans (71 percent) and Hispanics (68 percent) give the plan very high ratings. Sixty percent of Tea Party followers, 55 percent of those who voted for Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) for president in 2008, and 56 percent of conservatives/libertarians see the plan as being effective.

The CAP plan could raise trust among those who today have little or no confidence in government

More than a quarter of the public says that they have little or no confidence in the government and that the Doing What Works platform would give them a lot or some more confidence in Washington's ability to solve problems. This finding suggests that CAP's plan, if implemented, has potential to widen support for a problem-solving government far beyond the "usual suspects" among progressive constituencies.

Voters would reward politicians who pledged to implement the Doing What Works plan

People not only like the Doing What Works government-reform agenda, but say they would reward candidates for public office who supported the plan and advocated for its implementation. A majority (51 percent) of the public reports being more likely to vote for a candidate who put implementing this plan at the top of their agenda. This includes 50 percent of Republicans, independents, and conservatives/libertarians who all say they are more likely to vote for a candidate who supported and prioritized the core elements of our government reform plan.

Americans' diminished confidence in their federal government

Americans are clearly unhappy with their federal government today. By a decisive margin of 62 percent to 35 percent, the public reports an unfavorable rather than favorable view of the federal government (unless indicated otherwise, all poll results in this report are from the Hart Research Associates Doing What Works survey). In addition, 26 percent have a *very* unfavorable opinion, while just 4 percent are very favorable, so the intensity of sentiment is even more strongly on the negative side. Such a negative outlook is by no means inevitable, as past polling has often revealed favorable sentiment equaling or exceeding the unfavorable view. A decade ago, for example, in October 2000, 54 percent of Americans viewed the federal government favorably, according to Pew Research Center polling.²

The timing of this change strongly suggests an important role for economic conditions in understanding the public's outlook. What changed in 2007, of course, was the onset of the Great Recession. In late 2006, 43 percent of adults expressed satisfaction with economic conditions. By April 2008, when approval of the government initially declined, just 14 percent felt satisfied with the state of the economy. Today, economic satisfaction remains very low at 23 percent.

The current data confirms the strong link between economic satisfaction and one's opinion of the federal government. Americans satisfied with the economy give the government a strong positive rating (65 percent favorable, 31 percent unfavorable), but the economically dissatisfied express the opposite view (26 percent favorable, 71 percent unfavorable). While opinion of the economy is itself strongly influenced by partisanship, we find a strong link between economic outlook and opinion of the government even after controlling for party.

A perusal of ratings for other institutions quickly reveals that it is not only the federal government that has fallen into disfavor with the American people during these challenging economic times. Ratings for other levels of government have also declined sharply. Favorable opinion toward one's state government, for example, has declined just as sharply as for the federal government. Between December 2005 and today (dates for which we have comparable ratings), favorable opinion of the federal

government declined 11 points while state government ratings fell by 13 points (57 percent to 44 percent). Local government, which people generally rate higher, also declined by 8 points over the same period (66 percent to 58 percent).

Nor is the public sector alone viewed more critically by the public. In fact, public opinion toward business corporations has turned downward even more sharply than we see for various levels of government. From January 2007 to today, favorable opinion toward corporations has declined by 18 percentage points (from 57 percent to 39 percent), almost twice the decline experience by the federal government over the same period (10 points). Americans feel only slightly more positive about corporations than the federal government today, and view corporations more negatively than state governments (see chart).

Clearly, the recent negative turn in feelings about the federal government is part of a larger pattern of dissatisfaction with public and private institutions alike, especially those related to the performance of the economy. (For additional analysis of how the broad political and economic environment shapes views of the federal government, see Appendix A on page 47). At the same time, it is undeniable that the federal government faces discrete challenges in terms of gaining the confidence of the American people. We can see that in the consistently lower positive ratings for federal government as compared to state and local government.

Moreover, this survey reveals that Americans' confidence that the federal government can solve problems has collapsed. It is to this crucial dimension of confidence in the government's fundamental ability to address problems that we now turn.

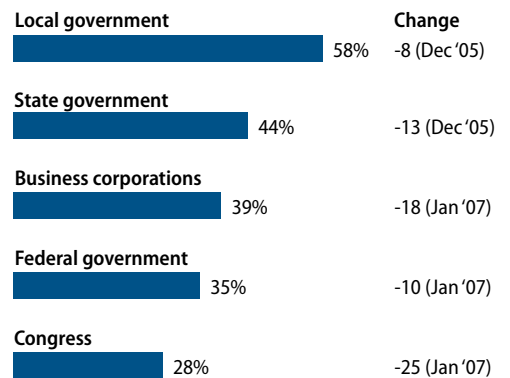
Collapse in confidence in government's ability to solve problems

The most distinctive aspect of the public's view of the federal government today is the low level of confidence that government can solve problems. Our survey asks Americans "when the government in Washington decides to solve a problem, how much confidence do you have that the problem actually will be solved?" This question has been asked periodically by various news organizations over two decades, and the current results represent the lowest level of public confidence ever recorded. Just one-third (33 percent) of adults voice a lot or some confidence, 35 percent have "just a little confidence," and another one-third (31 percent) have no confidence at

Falling from favor

Favorable view of institutions has declined

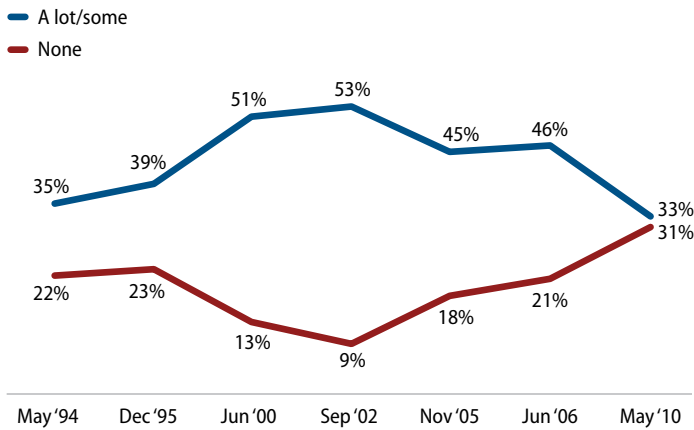
Favorable feelings, all adults



Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey.

Lowest rating on record for confidence in federal government

Confidence in federal government to solve problems, May 1994 to May 2010



Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey and earlier surveys as noted in Appendix E, question 6.

all. The proportion saying “no confidence” has never before exceeded 23 percent. Simply put, Americans do not feel confident that their federal government can get the job done when it takes on a challenge (see chart).

This extent of the collapse in confidence can be seen when we compare the current results to those obtained a decade earlier in a survey conducted for National Public Radio, Harvard University, and the Kaiser Foundation in June 2000.³ At that time, 51 percent expressed a lot or some confidence in the federal government, 18 points higher than today, while the proportion saying no confidence was just 13 percent (18 points lower than today). Over the course of the decade, the net change means that almost one-fifth of the public has moved from having confidence in the federal government to having no confidence at all (see Table 1).

TABLE 1
Collapsing confidence

Change in confidence in government, 2000 to 2010

	2000			2010		
	A lot/some confidence	A lot/some confidence	Change	No confidence	No confidence	Change
All adults	51%	33%	-18%	13%	31%	+18%
Democrats	63%	55%	-8%	8%	12%	+4%
Independents	48%	26%	-22%	13%	34%	+21%
Republicans	41%	16%	-25%	16%	49%	+33%
Whites	50%	28%	-22%	13%	36%	+23%
African Americans	53%	63%	+10%	11%	8%	-3%
Hispanics	59%	43%	-16%	11%	21%	+10%
Whites: Noncollege graduates	51%	26%	-25%	14%	39%	+25%
Whites: College graduates	51%	32%	-19%	11%	30%	+19%
18 to 29	54%	46%	-8%	10%	17%	+7%
30 to 49	53%	31%	-22%	11%	29%	+18%
50 and older	47%	29%	-18%	16%	39%	+23%

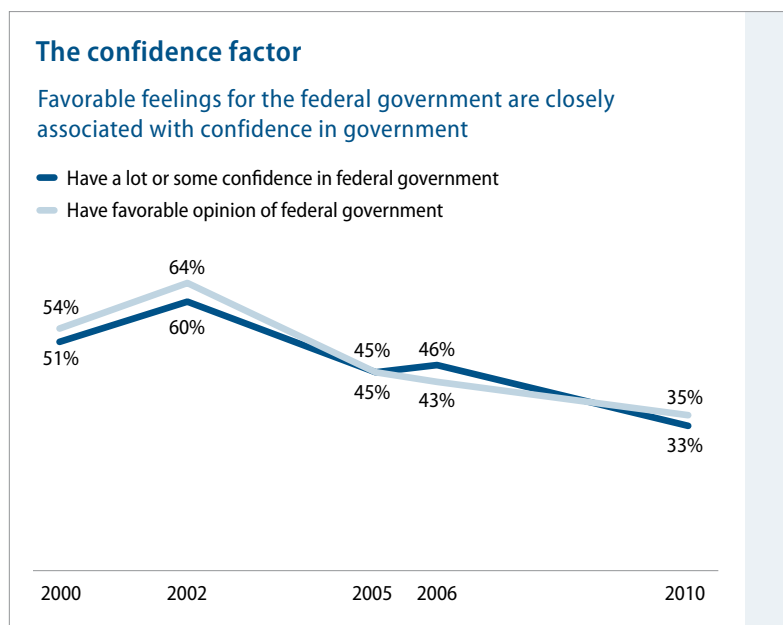
Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey and June, 2000 NPR/Harvard/Kaiser survey.

In demographic terms, confidence has fallen broadly across most groups and is now below 50 percent among all but a few groups. (See Appendix B for more detail on the current demographics of confidence in government.) But there are distinct patterns to the change. Among Democrats, the drop in confidence is modest (-8 points), likely reflecting the fact that their party controls both elected branches. Confidence among Republicans (-25) has dropped much more sharply (and no confidence increased 33 points). Examining the perspective of independents allows us to remove the influence of partisanship, and there we see a very substantial 22-point drop in confidence.

African Americans stand out as the only group whose confidence has risen over the decade (+10), most likely because of the combined effect of their Democratic partisanship and strong support for President Obama (91 percent favorable rating). Confidence declined among both Latinos (-16) and whites (-22). White working class (noncollege educated) adults have registered an especially sharp fall in confidence of 25 points. Young people have proven somewhat resistant to the downward trend, as people under 30 are much more confident today (46 percent) than those over age 30, and nearly as confident as people of that age were a decade ago (54 percent). (Note: a separate report on Millennials’ view of their federal government provides an extensive look at the distinctive perspective of this generation on these issues.)

There is a clear and very strong connection between someone’s confidence in the government’s ability to solve problems and their overall opinion of the federal government. Those with confidence have a favorable opinion (68 percent favorable, 28 percent unfavorable), those with no confidence feel strongly negative (5 percent favorable, 93 percent unfavorable), and those with just “a little confidence” have a view similar to the public overall (29 percent favorable, 66 percent unfavorable). Historically, the two attitudes also track extremely closely, rising and falling together (see chart).

While we cannot assume a one-way causal relationship—general feelings about the government may impact confidence in its problem-



Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey and earlier surveys as shown in Appendix E, questions 4 and 6.

solving ability, as well as the reverse—it seems clear that the public’s confidence in government’s capacity to address problems plays an important role in shaping their overall view of government.

Do Americans want a smaller government?

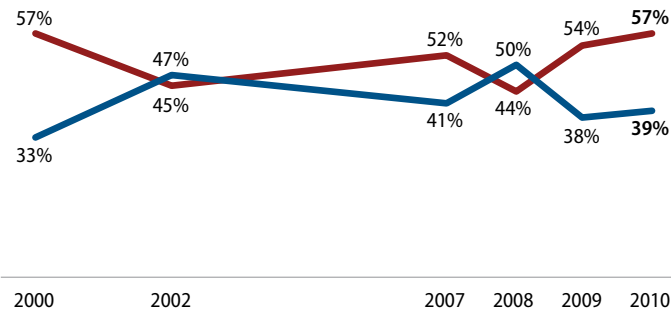
A different and commonly heard interpretation of the public’s current negative feelings toward the federal government is that it reflects an ideological shift to the right. Americans are signaling, in this interpretation, a desire for smaller and more limited government. As we have already discussed, similar declines in favorable attitudes toward business corporations suggest there must be much more to the story.

The measured decline in confidence in government’s capacity to address problems successfully, as well as strong evidence of the impact that economic attitudes have on American’s opinion of government, also demonstrate that negative feelings toward the government cannot be solely—or even mainly—about a shift in ideology. At the same time, these other factors cannot rule out the possibility that a heightened desire for small government explains part of the overall change in attitudes.

Government is doing too much

Americans are increasingly concerned about the public sector taking on too many responsibilities

- Government should do more to solve problems
- Government is doing too many things better left to businesses and individuals



Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey and earlier surveys as indicated in Appendix E, question 5a.

In addition, there is some survey evidence—including data in this survey—that appears to support claims of an ideological shift that could at least be partially responsible for the observed increase in negative feelings toward the federal government. So it is worth examining all the data carefully to determine whether Americans’ preferred role for government has changed in a substantial way—not least because of the clear shift among Americans who believe the government is doing too much (see chart).

Should government do more?

Today, 39 percent of adults say that “government should do more to solve problems,” while

a 57 percent majority feels “government is doing too many things better left to businesses and individuals.” This type of result is often cited as evidence for the claim that Americans want smaller government.

Moreover, a look at partisan and demographic breakdowns on this question confirms that the belief that “government is doing too many things” has a strong correlation with a conservative perspective. Case in point: 82 percent of Republicans say “doing too many things” while 32 percent of Democrats concur. And there is considerable variation outside of partisanship: 60 percent of blacks and 50 percent of Hispanics want government to do more, compared to 31 percent of the white working class (see Table 2).

Nonetheless, it is far from clear that these results demonstrate any kind of major shift in Americans’ fundamental view of the proper role for government. Historically, the results for this question fluctuate a fair amount over short periods of time, suggesting it is not measuring a core philosophical orientation with much

TABLE 2
Should government do more?

It depends on your partisan and demographic background

	Should do more	Doing too much
All adults	39%	57%
Men	34%	61%
Women	43%	53%
Democrats	63%	32%
Independents	34%	61%
Republicans	16%	82%
Progressives/liberals	59%	35%
Moderates	43%	51%
Conservatives/libertarians	21%	76%
Whites	34%	62%
Hispanics	50%	44%
African Americans	60%	33%
Whites: Noncollege graduates	31%	65%
Whites: Four-year college graduates	37%	61%
Whites: Postgraduates	45%	50%

Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey.

precision. Just five months before this survey was conducted, for example, the public was divided quite evenly on this same question (45 percent do more, 47 percent doing too much). Yet seven months before *that*, the results were quite similar to those in the current survey (34 percent more, 56 percent too many things).

It is instructive to see where the public stood on this question at the start of decade, when, as we’ve seen, both favorable opinion toward and confidence in the federal government were much higher. While confidence has declined by 18 points in this timeframe, and favorable view by 19 points, the proportion feeling that government is doing too many things better left to business and individuals is unchanged at 57 percent (see Table 3). It is therefore hard to see how an ideological shift to the right, at least as measured by this question, can possibly explain the erosion we observe in confidence and positive feelings about the government.

To the extent there is a discernible pattern in the historical data, it appears that party control of the White House does provoke a kind of “counter-cyclical” public response. When a Democrat is president people are less inclined to say the government should “do more” because they perceive the president to be pursuing a more activist agenda. But when the Republicans control the White House Americans shift in the opposite direction.

This question about government “doing more” was asked three times during George W. Bush’s presidency,⁴ and in every case the public registered more support than today for government doing more to solve problems (ranging from 41

TABLE 3
A decade’s change in views on government

But views are constant on whether the government is doing too many things

	2000	2010	Change
A lot/some confidence in government	51%	33%	-18%
A little confidence in government	35%	35%	0%
No confidence in government	13%	31%	+18%
Favorable view of federal government	54%	35%	-19%
Unfavorable view of federal government	40%	62%	+22%
Government is doing too many things	57%	57%	0%
Government should do more	33%	39%	+6%

Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey and earlier surveys as indicated in Appendix E, questions 4, 5a and 6.

percent to 50 percent). Yet over the four times the question was asked during the Clinton presidency, support for more government action was *lower* than today in every case (never exceeding 34 percent). In October 1994, for example, just 30 percent of Americans wanted government to do more, while 63 percent thought it was doing too much—a much stronger aversion to active government than we see today.

Government's mission

Other questions can provide us a more direct and clear sense of what responsibilities the American people do and do not want to assign the federal government. In this survey we ask people whether they would like to see the federal government become more or less involved (or not change its involvement) in five different domestic arenas. As the accompanying graph illustrates, a majority of Americans favor *more* government involvement in all five of these areas:

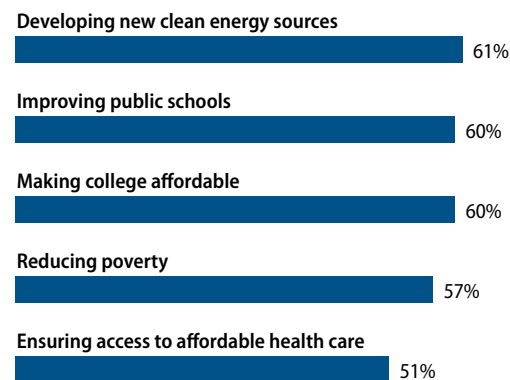
- Developing new energy sources
- Improving public schools
- Making college education affordable
- Reducing poverty
- Ensuring access to affordable health care.

The limited mandate for smaller government is demonstrated by the fact that in four of these five areas only one-quarter or less of the public felt there should be less or no government involvement. Even in the fifth area, affordable health care, the 38 percent that wants to see less government involvement is exceeded by the 51 percent that wants more (see chart).

The breadth of support for greater government involvement is impressive. Outside of health care, over three-fourths of liberals/progressive—and over 60 percent of moderates—favor a stronger government role in every area. Surprisingly, at least 40 percent of conservatives/libertarians support a larger federal government role in pursuing each of these four goals. Even on health care, we see a 56 percent majority of moderates supporting more federal engagement.

The government should do more

A majority of Americans want more federal government involvement in various areas



Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey.

The public clearly voices greater caution on health care than the other issues examined. The 51 percent saying more involvement on health care represents a very large decrease from a decade earlier, when 73 percent favored a larger government role⁵. The recent passage of national health care reform certainly explains these findings. Many Americans, reasonably enough, want to wait to see the impact of the new legislation before deciding whether further government involvement is a good idea.

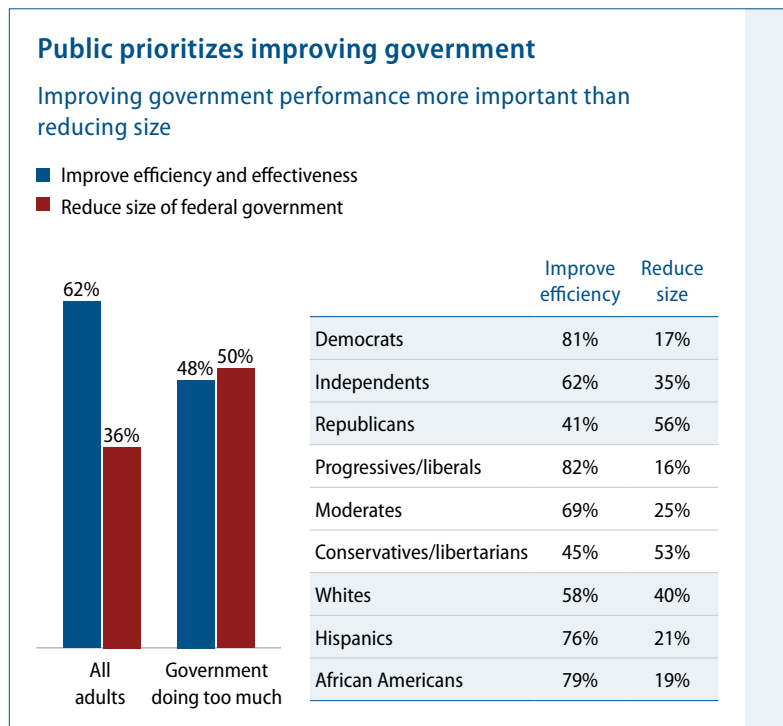
More generally, Americans clearly see a future for their nation in which government plays a role at least as substantial as it does today, if not more robust. When people look ahead 10 to 20 years, they say by 42 percent to 18 percent that the federal government will become more rather than less important in terms of improving the lives of the American people (36 percent expect no change).

Better government, not less

Probably the best way to distinguish whether people want to see the government become smaller, or whether negative government ratings actually reflect concerns about its performance, is simply to ask them. So that's what we did. We asked Americans what they think should be the higher priority for improving the federal government: reducing the cost and size of federal government, or improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the federal government? By a decisive margin of 62 percent to 36 percent, people said their priority is making government more efficient and more effective, not reducing its size. In the political center, independents (62 percent) and moderates (69 percent) both cite a clear preference for more effective government (see chart).

Remarkably, even among the 57 percent of adults who say government is doing too many things today, there is as much sentiment for improving government's effectiveness (48 percent) as for shrinking government (50 percent). Taking the two questions together, we can analyze the attitudes of people who say both that government does too much now *and* that it should get smaller in the future. This is indeed a group with a deeply conservative outlook on government: 81 percent of the group describes their outlook as conservative or libertarian, 60 percent are Republicans, and 90 percent have an unfavorable opinion of the federal government. But this group represents just 28 percent of the American people, according to our survey.

The 27 percent of Americans who say the government should not do more to solve problems, but go on to say they want to see government



Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey.

TABLE 4
Prioritizing improved government is strongly related to wanting more government involvement

Federal government should be more involved in...

(Among those who say government is doing too many things)

	Priority: Reduce government	Priority: Improve government
Developing new, clean energy sources	33%	63%
Making college education affordable	31%	64%
Improving public schools	31%	61%
Reducing poverty	26%	60%
Ensuring access to affordable health care	17%	47%

Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey.

improved rather than downsized, have a very different outlook. As illustrated in Table 4, this group actually wants to see an expanded role for government in many areas, even reducing poverty.

This group of Americans is a critical target group for efforts in support of government reform. Disproportionately white working class (54 percent), the group is a potential avenue for expanding support for activist government among a generally hostile constituency. Members of this group could then be added to the 39 percent of Americans who already think government should do more to solve problems (see Table 2)—a group heavily dominated by growing progressive constituencies such as minorities, unmarried women, Millennials and professionals, to form a potentially formidable coalition.

Confidence as the foundation

Finally, we return to the central role of public confidence in the government’s capacity to solve the problems that it seeks to address. People’s level of confidence in government’s problem-solving ability powerfully shapes their view on the proper role of government. In all five of the issue areas we examined, more than 70 percent of people with confidence in government favored more government involvement, while this figure is below 50 percent for every issue among those who have no confidence. Significantly, the middle group—those with only “a little” confidence—embraces a fairly robust role for government: a majority favors an expanded federal government role on energy (62 percent),

TABLE 5

Confidence in government plays a key role

Relationship between confidence and other views of government

	Confidence in government to solve problems		
	A lot/some	A little	None
View of federal government			
Favorable	68%	29%	5%
Unfavorable	28%	66%	93%
Government should do more	62%	36%	17%
Government doing too much	34%	58%	80%
Priority for government			
Improve efficiency/effectiveness	82%	66%	37%
Reduce size	16%	32%	60%

Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey.

college affordability (63 percent), public education (61 percent), and poverty reduction (56 percent). Even on health care there is a 50 percent plurality that supports a larger role.

Confidence also strongly influences peoples' view on whether the best path forward is shrinking government or improving its performance. Those with confidence in government overwhelmingly favor a focus on improving government efficiency and effectiveness (82 percent to 16 percent), while those completely lacking confidence want to reduce the size of government (60 percent to 37 percent). Significantly, those with just a little confidence come down on the side of trying to make government work better by 66 percent to 32 percent (see Table 5).

The upshot: It appears that only the minority of Americans with no confidence whatsoever in their federal government really want to see the government reduced in size. The majority still has a lot they want government to do, but many of them have serious doubts about government's ability to make a difference. In the next section, we turn to a deeper exploration of the causes of this limited public confidence.

Why Americans lack confidence in the federal government

As noted in the previous section, most Americans lack confidence in the federal government’s ability to solve problems—even though a majority of us still want the government to be more involved in key areas. This section builds on that finding and analyzes the demographic and attitudinal factors associated with low confidence levels.

The key result of this analysis is that concerns about government inefficiencies and waste clearly affect confidence, above and beyond the effects of party identification, political ideology, and other variables. This finding suggests that major improvements in how government operates could go a long way toward instilling greater confidence in the federal government’s ability to tackle significant challenges.

How government performance affects confidence

First, we consider how Americans perceive the performance of the federal government’s programs and agencies and relate these perceptions to one’s confidence in the government’s ability to solve problems. As illustrated in Table 6, Americans have serious concerns about how federal programs and agencies currently operate across a diverse range of performance metrics.

TABLE 6
How well does the government perform?

Americans’ views on how well the government works in different areas

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Not so good	Poor
Being customer-friendly and providing quality services	3%	18%	37%	18%	19%
Helping you and your family	3%	16%	34%	20%	21%
Accomplishing their goals	2%	14%	37%	23%	21%
Being well run and effectively managed	2%	12%	32%	24%	29%
Spending money efficiently	1%	6%	21%	25%	45%

Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey.

TABLE 7

Government performance and confidence

Americans' views on government performance are strongly related to confidence

	Confidence in government correlation
Being customer-friendly and providing quality services	0.44
Helping you and your family	0.44
Accomplishing their goals	0.48
Spending money efficiently	0.52
Being well run and effectively managed	0.52

*Note: the higher the correlation coefficient, the more closely the two variables are related; a correlation coefficient in an identical relationship = 1.0.

Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey.

Clearly, few Americans give excellent or good marks to government services or the ability of federal programs and agencies to help people, accomplish goals, run effectively, or spend money efficiently. Efficiency in spending tax dollars garners especially low marks, with nearly half (45 percent) of Americans saying federal programs and agencies are poor performers when it comes to spending money efficiently.

Americans' assessment of current government performance, however, is strongly related to their confidence in the government's ability to solve problems. This relationship is demonstrated in Table 7, which shows the degree to which performance in each area is correlated to confidence

Interestingly, some performance metrics are more related to confidence than others. Being well run and spending money efficiently are not only the lowest-rated functions, they also are the performance ratings most correlated to confidence. (For more analysis of the individual performance metrics, see Appendix C).

Waste in government and what people mean by it

Americans' concerns about inefficient spending are vividly on display when they are asked to assess how much federal government programs and agencies waste money. Two-thirds (66 percent) of Americans believe that federal government programs and agencies waste a lot of taxpayer money, with another 28 percent who say that they waste some money, leaving only 4 percent who believe that not very much money is wasted. And while this proportion varies by political party, this sentiment is shared by nearly half (48 percent) of Democrats as well. Working

class whites seem especially attentive to the issue of waste, with fully 75 percent saying the federal government wastes “a lot” of tax money (compared to 64 percent of college-educated whites).

Americans define wasteful spending in many ways. Table 8 shows the average rating by respondents of a series of examples of wasteful government spending using a zero to 10 scale, on which a 10 means the item is a perfect example and zero means it is not an example. Based on the average scores, the best example of waste is government programs continuing for years even though they have not proven effective, with an average score of 8.1. This is clearly a powerful example of inefficient government in the public mind, receiving the highest rating among those who perceive a lot of waste in government and among those who rate government spending efficiency as poor.

The next four items as ranked by average scores share a common theme of someone getting a portion of tax money that they don’t deserve, whether it be government contractors, beneficiaries of programs, politically connected corporations, or inefficient government workers. All of these receive average ratings of over 8.0 from people who believe government wastes a lot of money. Working class whites appear particularly concerned about people receiving undeserved benefits (8.3) and high salaries for ineffective employees (8.2), the forms of waste they rate highest relative to the public overall (and relative to college-educated whites).

TABLE 8
Americans’ views on examples of waste in government

The average score of all adults and adults by partisanship on examples of government waste

	All adults	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
	Average	Average	Average	Average
Government programs continuing for years even though they have not proven effective	8.1	7.6	8.3	8.5
Government contractors receiving no-bid contracts and overcharging for services	8.1	7.9	8.2	8.3
People receiving government benefits who do not deserve them	8.0	7.4	8.1	8.5
Tax breaks for corporations that have political influence	7.9	7.9	7.9	7.8
Inefficient government employees receiving generous benefits or high salaries	7.8	7.3	7.9	8.2
Government agencies duplicating the efforts of other agencies	7.4	6.8	7.6	8.0
Government agencies failing to use new technologies and modern management methods to improve efficiency	6.7	6.5	6.7	6.8
Excessive and unnecessary military spending	5.8	6.5	5.9	5.1

Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey.

The general partisan pattern is that Republicans are more likely to see each item as a prime example of waste and Democrats see the reverse. The corporate tax breaks item is an exception in that it receives nearly identical mean scores across the political spectrum. The unnecessary military spending item, which garners the lowest mean score of any item listed, is interesting in that it creates a dilemma for both Republicans and Democrats who on the one hand are more or less convinced that the government wastes a lot of money, but who also tend to support or oppose military spending. Therefore, the pattern is flipped for this item, with Republicans scoring it as a 5.1 and Democrats as a 6.5.

In a regression model, a standard statistical tool used by social scientists to determine the independent, separate effects of predictor variables, each item (with the exception of corporate tax breaks) is a significant predictor of how people rate federal programs and agencies on spending money efficiently. Yet the inefficient government employee item is especially powerful. Not only is this item the most significant predictor of low ratings on how well the government spends money, it also is the only item that out-predicts party identification or political ideology in the model.

How perceptions of performance and waste affect confidence

As noted previously, confidence clearly correlates with the various performance measures included in the survey (and many of the performance measures highly correlate with each other). In spite of these high correlations, the question remains as to whether, when it comes to predicting confidence in the government, partisan and ideological identity would trump perceptions of performance and waste.

Table 9 shows results from a regression model in which confidence in the government is the dependent variable or variable to be predicted. The independent or predictor variables are demographic, partisan, and ideological characteristics, along with a variable combining people's assessments of government performance and how much it wastes.

The results clearly indicate that while both performance measures and party identification are strong predictors, performance measures have more than twice the predictive power of party identification (and with them political ideology drops out as a statistically significant predictor).⁶ These results are tremendously important because they give us reason to believe that efforts to improve government performance would have an enormous effect on confidence in the government.

TABLE 9

Better government performance and less waste leads to more confidence in government

Better government performance/less waste is a stronger predictor of confidence than partisanship

Dependent variable: Q6 confidence

Adjusted R square = 0.44

Coefficients	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t-score	Sig.
	B	Std. error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.256	0.322		3.907	0.000
Better performance/less waste (Index)	0.855	0.057	0.502	14.875	0.000
More Republican	-0.119	0.021	-0.196	-5.595	0.000
Registered voter	-0.284	0.128	-0.066	-2.215	0.027
Divorced	-0.247	0.133	-0.057	-1.860	0.063
More conservative/libertarian	-0.085	0.052	-0.057	-1.643	0.101

Note: The significant predictors (value of less than .05 in the far right column) are highlighted. Significant means we can be confident that the relationship with the dependent variable is real and is very unlikely to have occurred by chance. A positive t-score indicates the variable predicts *greater* confidence in government. The larger the t-score in absolute terms, the more sure we can be that the predictive relationship to the dependent variable is real. The standardized or beta coefficient tells us the relative predictive power of the variables in the model. If the beta of one variable is twice the magnitude of another, then that variable has twice the predictive power of the other variable. The overall explanatory power of the model (Adjusted R Square = 0.44) means that the model as currently constructed can explain 44 percent of the variation in responses to the question of how much confidence people have in the federal government's ability to solve problems.

Source: Authors' analysis of Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey data.

Views of specific government agencies

Our survey findings reveal considerable differentiation in Americans' views of how individual programs and agencies perform. Table 10 shows that Americans give the FBI—the top-rated agency in terms of performance—a mean score of 6.4 on a zero to 10 scale (10 equals run extremely well; zero equals not run well at all), compared with the last-rated agency (the Securities and Exchange Commission, with a mean score of 4.3). But this differentiation nevertheless underscores the fact that none of the agencies fares especially well, with half of those garnering negative ratings, or mean scores of less than five.

While most programs or agencies earn mediocre performance ratings, Americans often ascribe a considerable amount of *importance* to the same programs or agencies in terms of their serving an important public interest. This is consistent with our earlier finding that the public continues to value the mission of most government programs and agencies, while often being disappointed in the execution of government's responsibilities.

TABLE 10
How Americans rate specific government agencies

Average performance and importance ratings for select government agencies

	Performance	Importance	Difference
	Average	Average	Average
The Federal Bureau of Investigation, the FBI	6.5	8.0	1.5
Department of Defense	6.2	8.3	2.1
Department of Homeland Security	5.2	7.5	2.3
National Institutes of Health, the NIH	5.1	6.9	1.8
Environmental Protection Agency or EPA	5.0	6.8	1.8
Internal Revenue Service, the IRS	5.0	6.2	1.2
Medicare	4.8	7.6	2.7
Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA	4.8	6.7	1.9
Social Security Administration	4.7	7.7	2.9
Medicaid	4.6	7.3	2.7
Department of Education	4.6	7.1	2.5
Securities and Exchange Commission, the SEC	4.3	6.3	2.0

Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey.

The gap between an individual agency or program’s performance score and its perceived importance can be instructive. Case in point: Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and the Department of Education are perceived to be much more important than they are effective. It is probably not a coincidence that each of these programs primarily serves a targeted population (seniors, the poor, or students), which leaves many Americans who do not directly benefit feeling skeptical about its efficiency. The Department of Defense and the FBI, both of which provide broadly for public safety and national defense, score high on both measures. Interestingly, the Internal Revenue Service is considered relatively unimportant, but ranks fairly well in terms of performance.

Performance ratings for Social Security and Medicare vary substantially by age, with seniors far more likely to rate the two agencies as better performing than their younger counterparts (see Table 11).

TABLE 11
How Americans of different ages view Medicare and Social Security performance

Average performance ratings by age

	18 to 32	33 to 49	50 to 64	65 and over
	Average	Average	Average	Average
Social Security Administration	4.5	4.1	4.8	5.9
Medicare	5.0	4.4	4.7	5.5

Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey.

Satisfaction with personal interactions with government

Although Americans clearly are concerned about what they perceive to be ineffective performance in government, fully 61 percent say they are satisfied with their own personal interactions with federal government programs and agencies over the past year. As with the performance ratings above, satisfaction ranges dramatically depending on the program or agency being rated. Two-thirds (67 percent) of those associating their ranking with Social Security express satisfaction, while 62 percent and 60 percent say the same about Medicare and the IRS, respectively. Some Americans report basing their satisfaction level on their interactions with “Congress,” which in most cases presumably means their general perception of members of Congress. In this group 70 percent express dissatisfaction—another sign that negative views of government often reflect the public’s opinion of elected officials.

People’s personal interactions with government and their general perceptions about its performance do not exist in separate dimensions—they are highly correlated with one another. Unfortunately, it is hard to know from correlations alone which one is driving the other—whether Americans’ general perceptions of government performance color the way they approach and experience their personal government interactions or if firsthand experience in turn shapes how they perceive government performance more generally.

An examination of satisfaction levels by party suggests that at least some of one’s pre-existing attitudes about the government likely influence one’s interaction with it. For example, 72 percent of Democrats say they are satisfied with the personal interactions in the past year (21 percent very satisfied), while far fewer Republicans say the same about theirs (49 percent satisfied; 11 percent very satisfied).

TABLE 12

Good interactions with government build confidence

Relationship between satisfaction with interactions with government and confidence

Dependent variable: Q6 confidence

Adjusted R square = 0.34

Coefficients	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t-score	Sig.
	B	Std. error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.795	0.242		11.530	0.000
More satisfied with personal interactions	0.282	0.024	0.293	11.720	0.000
More Republican	-0.154	0.018	-0.248	-8.419	0.000
More conservative/libertarian	-0.261	0.043	-0.171	-6.030	0.000
African Americans	0.353	0.120	0.081	2.947	0.003
Registered voters	-0.303	0.106	-0.070	-2.849	0.004
Single	0.183	0.090	0.061	2.026	0.043

Note: Other variables lacking statistical significance are not shown. The significant predictors (value of less than .05 in the far right column) are highlighted. Significant means we can be confident that the relationship with the dependent variable is real and is very unlikely to have occurred by chance. A positive t-score indicates the variable predicts greater confidence in government. The larger the t-score in absolute terms, the more sure we can be that the predictive relationship to the dependent variable is real. The standardized or beta coefficient tells us the relative predictive power of the variables in the model. If the beta coefficient of one variable is larger in magnitude than another, then that variable has more predictive power than the other variable. The overall explanatory power of the model (Adjusted R Square = 0.34) means that the model as currently constructed can explain 34 percent of the variation in responses to the question of how much confidence people have in the federal government's ability to solve problems.

Source: Author's analysis of Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey data.

Nonetheless, when we look at how satisfaction with one's personal interactions affects one's confidence in the government, perceptions about one's personal interactions trumps partisanship and political ideology, and is a stronger predictor of confidence (see Table 12 for results of regression model).

Does government represent your values and interests?

While performance measures are an important predictor of people's confidence in the federal government's ability to solve problems, so too are perceptions about how the federal government impacts people and the degree to which it represents their values.

In Table 13 the statements on the left generally reflect a belief that the government is on the side of ordinary citizens, respects their rights, and is constantly evolving to fit changing circumstances. As the results indicate, many Americans have serious concerns about how consistently the federal government is upholding

TABLE 13

How Americans feel about government's values

Our survey asked which statement better applies to the government

Statement A	Agree much/ somewhat more	Statement B	Agree much/ somewhat more
Is innovative and changes with the times	49%	Is old fashioned and does not keep up with changing times	41%
Protects our personal freedoms	48%	Threatens our personal freedoms	47%
Has policies that generally reflect my values	39%	Has policies that generally do not reflect my values	56%
Operates openly and makes most information available to the public	37%	Operates secretly and makes little information available to the public	60%
Helps people get ahead in life	34%	Makes it harder for people to get ahead in life	59%
Serves the public interests	31%	Serves the special interests	66%

Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey.

these basic principles, and in no case does an outright majority agree with any of the positive statements. For instance, two-thirds of Americans believe the federal government serves special interests rather than the public interests.

Partisanship clearly plays a role here. Sixty-five percent of Democrats say that the government protects our freedom, while less than half that proportion of Republicans (31 percent) thinks the same. In addition to partisanship, satisfaction with the economy is significantly related to whether Americans view these government principles in positive terms. Fully 67 percent of those who are dissatisfied with the economy say that the government makes it harder for people to get ahead in life.

Just as measures of performance—being well run, spending money efficiently, and accomplishing goals—affect Americans' views of government, so too do positions on these values and interests measures play a critical role in influencing confidence in the federal government's ability to solve problems. In a regression model, each individual statement is a significant predictor in its own right. The three most significant predictors (see Table 14) are whether the government:

- Has policies that generally reflect people's values
- Helps or hurts people get ahead in life
- Operates openly or secretly

TABLE 14

Positive views of government values lead to more confidence in government

Relationship between different measures of government values and confidence

	t-score
Is innovative and changes with the times	4.461
Protects our personal freedoms	6.651
Has policies that generally reflect my values	9.695
Operates openly and makes most information available to the public	8.048
Helps people get ahead in life	8.613
Serves the public interests	5.271

Note: A positive t-score indicates the variable predicts *greater* confidence in government. The larger the t-score in absolute terms, the more sure we can be that the predictive relationship to confidence is real.

Source: Author's analysis of Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey data

Note also that the top four items in Table 14 are all more significant predictors of confidence than party identification or ideology.

The results in this section demonstrate that concerns about government performance and efficiency—especially concerns related to wasteful spending of tax dollars—significantly affect people's confidence in the government. Reform efforts focusing solely on the overall outcomes of government programs and policies may be limited in their impact on public confidence because confidence also is strongly affected by perceptions of efficiency as well as whether programs are considered to be in people's best interest and consistent with their values. Put simply, it is not just what the government does, it is how the government does it.

With this in mind, the next section explores Americans' commitment to improving government's performance, and the degree to which elements of the Doing What Works program at the Center for American Progress might boost Americans' lagging confidence in their federal government.

Making government work

This report documents the critical role of diminished public confidence in government's ability to solve problems, and reviews some of the underlying sources of low confidence. But we also find that despite these concerns there is much that people still want their government to do, and that they want the government improved rather than downsized. This final section explores Americans' priorities for improving government performance. It looks at how much importance the public places on reform, and how the public responds to a specific plan—the Doing What Works agenda that the Center for American Progress champions to improve the federal government.

Our survey finds that the American public is deeply committed to the principle of improving government performance. Three in four (74 percent) believe that it is very important for the president and Congress to take steps to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the federal government's programs and agencies. Support for improving the government's performance is shared across partisan lines, as large majorities of Democrats (79 percent), independents (73 percent), and Republicans (68 percent) share this feeling.

Similarly, more than seven in 10 (74 percent) Americans believe the government could be more effective with better management, while only 23 percent say the federal government is bound to be ineffective no matter what. There is broad agreement on this issue across party lines, with 79 percent of Democrats and 71 percent of both independents and Republicans seeing the potential for government to improve.

But to turn the tide of antigovernment sentiment, it will not be enough to improve outcomes—the public also wants improvements in accountability and wasteful spending. When asked to rank the priorities for improving the government, the top two responses are making the government more accountable for how it spends its money (45 percent) and reducing wasteful spending (38

TABLE 15
Priorities for improving the federal government

How all Americans and Americans by partisanship rank priorities for making government work better

	All adults	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
Accountable for how it spends its money	45%	39%	50%	48%
Reduce wasteful spending	38%	39%	37%	37%
Programs more effective at solving problems	29%	41%	29%	15%
Reduce size of government	19%	5%	18%	36%
End programs that are no longer needed	17%	16%	13%	21%
Provide information on what government is doing	16%	21%	13%	15%

Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey.

percent), significantly outranking making programs more effective at solving problems (29 percent).

Table 15 shows that Democrats rate making programs more effective at solving problems slightly higher than both accountability and reducing wasteful spending. In contrast, independents and Republicans say accountability and wasteful spending are far more important than effectiveness at solving problems.

Another interesting result evident in Table 15 is among those who believe government is doing too much today but want it to improve its efficiency and effectiveness instead of reducing its size. A majority of this group (51 percent) prioritizes accountable spending, with an additional 42 percent saying that reducing wasteful spending is a top priority, while solving problems is only seen as a priority among 26 percent of this group. Clearly, improving the way that the government spends money is a concern among the public, and something that must be addressed in any plan to improve the government's performance.

The Doing What Works agenda

Our survey tested public response to the Doing What Works reform agenda for improving government effectiveness whose core components are:

- Eliminating inefficient programs and redirecting support to the most cost-effective programs

CAP's Doing What Works agenda garners strong majority support

Americans overwhelmingly support the three core components of CAP's Doing What Works program for government reform

- Would be very effective in making federal government better
- Would be fairly effective

Eliminate inefficient government programs and redirect support to the most cost-effective programs



Carefully evaluate the performance of government programs and agencies and make this information available to the public



Have the government use the most modern management methods and information technologies



Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey.

- Evaluating government program performance and making information available to the public
- Improving the management methods and information technologies of the government

The response to our survey demonstrates this agenda is very much in step with Americans' beliefs about how to improve the overall effectiveness of government. Eliminating inefficient programs and redirecting support to the most cost-effective programs garnered 71 percent support as very or fairly effective. Evaluating government program performance and making information available to the public won 70 percent support as very or fairly effective. And improving the management methods and information technologies of the government gathered 60 percent support as very or fairly effective (see chart).

After hearing the Doing What Works plan's three core components, three in five (61 percent) say that the overall plan would be very or fairly effective in making the federal government work better, including strong majorities from each party and independents (67 percent Democrats, 57 percent independents, 58 percent Republicans). Both African Americans (71 percent) and Hispanics (68 percent) see the plan as very effective.

Even among unlikely groups there is a strong belief that CAP's plan would improve the government. Sixty percent of Tea Party followers, 55 percent of McCain voters, and 56 percent of conservatives/libertarians see the plan as being effective. Both those with strong confidence in the government to solve problems (69 percent), and those with just a little confidence (63 percent) agree. Even a majority of Americans with no confidence in their government see CAP's Doing What Works plan as effective (51 percent) (see Table 16).

TABLE 16

Americans of all political persuasions want to make government work better

From the left to the right of our political spectrum, our survey found support for CAP's Doing What Works agenda

	Effective	Not effective
All adults	61%	36%
Democrats	67%	31%
Independents	57%	39%
Republicans	58%	41%
Tea Party	60%	38%
Progressives/liberals	70%	29%
Conservatives/libertarians	56%	42%
Obama voters	66%	32%
McCain voters	55%	43%
Whites	59%	39%
Hispanics	68%	31%
African Americans	71%	28%
A lot/some confidence in government	69%	29%
Just a little confidence in government	63%	36%
No confidence in government	51%	46%
Could be more effective	66%	33%
Improve not reduce	66%	32%

Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey

Specific elements Of CAP's Doing What Works agenda

Like the broad outlines, the specific elements of CAP's government reform plan enjoy strong support among the general public, as shown in the Table 17. Of the 16 reforms tested, 14 are seen as effective (rated 6 to 10 on a 10-point scale) by more than 60 percent of the public, and 11 are embraced by more than 70 percent of the public. These elements can be divided into four broad categories: improving efficiency and reducing waste; measuring performance; modernizing management and technology; and increasing transparency. By and large, the items with the strongest effectiveness ratings are directly tied to efficiency and performance, while process reforms linked to management and transparency are seen as somewhat less effective.

TABLE 17

Americans strongly support the specific elements of the Doing What Works plan

Responses to our survey asking about 16 key reform items in CAP's plan

Ranked by percent total effective

	Highly effective	Total effective	Neutral	Total ineffective	Highly ineffective	Cannot rate	Average rating
	8-10	6-10	5	0-4	0-2		
Require every federal agency to set clear goals that are measured by real-world results	68	83	10	5	3	2	8.1
Reform the federal budget process, so that spending decisions are based on objective evidence about what works and what does not	65	82	10	7	3	1	7.8
Measure and compare the performance of state actions in areas such as health care, education, and energy to identify which approaches work and which do not	58	80	10	9	5	1	7.6
Consolidate federal programs where there is significant overlap	62	79	12	7	4	2	7.7
Change the way government contracts are awarded, so government officials can quickly and accurately determine the best contractor for the job	60	79	11	7	4	3	7.7
Reform government hiring, firing, and other personnel practices to improve the quality and performance of the federal workforce	55	76	13	9	4	2	7.4
Evaluate the effectiveness of tax breaks and tax credits to determine which ones are cost-effective	58	75	14	8	4	3	7.6
Conduct "try before you buy" pilot experiments to test different policy approaches before investing a lot of money in them	56	74	14	10	6	2	7.4
Measure and evaluate the effectiveness of government programs to guide future policy decisions	51	74	16	8	4	2	7.3
Modernize federal government information technology to improve the quality of government services	51	74	15	10	5	1	7.2
Apply the best practices in private-sector management to improve the performance of government programs	51	74	16	8	5	2	7.2
Provide the public with Internet-based tools to monitor government performance	49	66	16	16	9	2	6.9
Provide the public with an online report card detailing the federal government's progress toward meeting national goals	48	65	17	17	9	1	6.8
Provide the public with Internet-based tools to give feedback and advice to government officials	44	64	15	20	9	1	6.6
Ensure that people nominated by the president to lead government agencies receive a quick up-or-down confirmation vote in the U.S. Senate	42	59	20	18	12	3	6.5
Give people the option of allowing the IRS to prepare their tax return, at no charge, which they can then review and change before submitting to the IRS	36	50	15	32	23	3	5.6

Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey.

Improving efficiency and reducing waste

Proposals related to spending efficiency and costs all receive strong ratings on their effectiveness to make government programs and agencies work better. The best efficiency message focuses on reforming the budget process so spending decisions are based on objective evidence. This was rated effective by 82 percent of Americans and highly effective (8 to 10 rating) by 65 percent (see Table 18).

These responses speak directly to the concern for smarter decision making and the need for real measurements to both evaluate current programs and make future decisions. In fact, many of the items related to improving efficiency and reducing waste connect to specific concerns about waste asked earlier in the survey. The proposal for consolidating programs where there is significant overlap, for example, is rated effective by 79 percent and highly effective by 62 percent—driven by the public view that government agencies duplicating efforts is a prime example of government waste.

Similarly, changing the process for government contracts is another very popular element of CAP’s plan (79 percent effective, 60 percent highly effective), reflecting the public’s emphatic view that government contractors receiving no-bid contracts and overcharging for services is an egregious example of waste in government (rated 8 to 10 as an example by 70 percent of the public). Finally, evaluating

TABLE 18
Reforms that boost the efficiency of government are the most popular

Basing budget decisions on objective evidence about “what works” is the most popular of all

Element would be highly effective (score of 8 to 10)

Efficiency and Cost	Total	Persuadable skeptics
Reform federal budget process, spending decisions based on objective evidence about what works and what does not	65%	78%
Consolidate federal programs where significant overlap	62%	72%
Change way government contracts awarded, government officials can quickly and accurately determine best contractor	60%	70%
Evaluate the effectiveness of tax breaks and tax credits to determine which ones are cost-effective	58%	69%

Note: Persuadable skeptics are those who have little or no confidence in the federal government but who, after hearing the details of the Doing What Works plan, say it would give them a lot or some more confidence in government’s ability to solve problems.

Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey.

the effectiveness of tax breaks and tax credits to determine which ones are cost-effective gets only slightly lower ratings. It is viewed as effective by 75 percent and as highly effective by 58 percent.

Measuring performance

Like the policies related to efficiency, many performance policy proposals receive very high effectiveness ratings. The highest rated of these proposals requires every agency to set clear goals that are measured by real-world results (83 percent effective, 68 percent highly effective). The key to this item is its support for the idea of evaluating outcomes based on concrete measurements. Real-world results are objective and finite, and the public has a strong desire to create this type of system for judging performance (see Table 19).

In addition, proposals that evaluate the effectiveness of programs before the government fully invests in them are seen as potential improvements to government performance. Looking to state government actions in areas such as health care and education, and then identifying what approaches work is seen as very effective (80 percent effective, 58 percent highly effective).

TABLE 19
Measuring performance is very important to Americans

The public wants performance details to gauge the effectiveness of government programs
Element would be highly effective (score of 8 to 10)

Performance	Total	Persuadable skeptics
Require every federal agency to set clear goals that are measured by real-world results	68%	82%
Measure and compare performance of state actions in health care, education, and energy to identify which approaches work	58%	68%
Conduct “try before you buy” pilot experiments to test different policy approaches before investing a lot of money	56%	66%
Measure and evaluate the effectiveness of government programs to guide future policy decisions	51%	65%

Note: Persuadable skeptics are those who have little or no confidence in the federal government but who, after hearing the details of the Doing What Works plan, say it would give them a lot or some more confidence in government’s ability to solve problems.

Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey.

A similar idea that proposed conducting “try before you buy” pilot experiments on policy approaches also receives high ratings on effectiveness (74 percent effective, 56 percent highly effective). These two specific elements of the Doing What Works agenda address the concern that the government wastes money on programs and policies it does not know will work, and that it does not have clear ways to measure and evaluate performance.

Modernizing management and technology

Several management and technology items are seen very positively by the public, though they mostly run behind the items on improving efficiency and measuring performance. The most popular management or technology item is reforming government’s hiring, firing, and other personnel practices, which is rated by 76 percent as effective and by 55 percent as highly effective. This reflects the public’s belief that another major source of waste is inefficient government employees receiving generous benefits or high salaries (rated 8 to 10 as an example of government waste by 67 percent of the public).

TABLE 20
Support for modernizing management

Improving the performance of government employees is a highly rated reform for a majority of Americans

Element would be highly effective (score of 8 to 10)

Management/technology	Total	Persuadable skeptics
Reform government hiring, firing, and personnel practices to improve quality and performance of federal workforce	55%	66%
Modernize federal government information technology to improve the quality of government services	51%	60%
Apply the best practices in private-sector management to improve the performance of government programs	51%	62%

Note: Persuadable skeptics are those who have little or no confidence in the federal government but who, after hearing the details of the Doing What Works plan, say it would give them a lot or some more confidence in government’s ability to solve problems.

Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey.

Similarly, 41 percent sees the government’s failing to adopt new technologies and modern management methods as a prime example of waste today. Two items from CAP’s government reform plan address that need and are seen as fairly effective ways to improve government performance. The first is modernizing the government’s information technology to improve the quality of services, and the second is applying the best practices from private-sector management to improve performance of government programs. Both were rated by 74 percent of Americans as effective, and by 51 percent as highly effective.

Increasing transparency

Proposals to increase transparency in government are viewed as effective, but receive somewhat lower ratings than the policy items discussed above. Providing Internet-based tools to monitor government performance was considered 66 percent effective and 49 percent highly effective. An online report card detailing progress toward goals was rated 66 percent effective and 48 percent highly effective. And Internet-based tools to give feedback and advice to government officials were found to be 64 percent effective and 44 percent highly effective. In short, all are seen as reasonably effective (see Table 21).

TABLE 21
What would make government more open and accessible?

Internet-based tools get favorable reaction

Element would be highly effective (score of 8 to 10)

Transparency	Total	Persuadable skeptics
Provide the public with Internet-based tools to monitor government performance	49%	56%
Provide public with an online report card detailing federal government’s progress toward meeting national goals	48%	59%
Provide the public with Internet-based tools to give feedback and advice to government officials	44%	53%

Note: Persuadable skeptics are those who have little or no confidence in the federal government but who, after hearing the details of the Doing What Works plan, say it would give them a lot or some more confidence in government’s ability to solve problems.
Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey.

Doing What Works reform plan would improve confidence in government

After hearing both the core elements and specific proposals of our government reform agenda, an impressively strong two-thirds (67 percent) of the public say that, if carried out, it would give them more confidence in the government's ability to solve problems, including 20 percent who say that it would give them a lot more confidence. More than 65 percent of men, women, young, old, whites, blacks, and Hispanics say that their confidence in the government would increase with the DWW plan in place. Even Republicans (60 percent), conservatives (61 percent), and libertarians (63 percent) report they would feel more confidence in the federal government. Across partisan and ideological lines, Americans say that CAP's government performance plan would raise their confidence in government's ability to solve problems.

A key target group for reform efforts is the 27 percent of the public who have little or no confidence in government but who after hearing the details of the plan say it would give them a lot or some more confidence in government's ability to solve problems. We call this group "persuadable skeptics" since they are currently skeptical of government but could adopt a significantly more positive attitude as a result of reform efforts. Persuadable skeptics are a challenging audience—they have a 9-point Republican partisan advantage, with half (53 percent) considering themselves conservatives or libertarian, one-fifth (21 percent) identifying with the Tea Party movement, and 55 percent who are from the white working class. This profile suggests that our Doing What Works plan, if implemented, has a great deal of potential for widening support for an activist, problem-solving government far beyond the "usual suspects" among progressive constituencies (see Table 22).

These persuadable skeptics rate each of our core reform elements strongly, actually as highly or higher than the ratings of those with initial confidence. While those already confident in government see our overall plan as effective (69 percent effective, including 43 percent very effective), the persuadable skeptics show even more support (74 percent effective, 49 percent very effective).

Similarly, the persuadable skeptics see the specific elements of the Doing What Works plan as more effective than both the public overall (see Tables 18 through

TABLE 22
How persuadable skeptics differ from those who already have confidence in government

Persuadable skeptics have a markedly conservative profile

	Initially confident	Persuadable skeptics
Democrats	61%	29%
Independents	24%	33%
Republicans	15%	38%
Tea Party supporters	8%	21%
Progressives/liberals	58%	35%
Conservatives/libertarians	31%	53%
Obama voters	58%	33%
McCain voters	12%	35%
Whites	64%	82%
Hispanics	14%	10%
African Americans	20%	7%
Government should do more	62%	34%
Government doing too much	34%	63%

Note: Persuadable skeptics are those who have little or no confidence in the federal government but who, after hearing the details of the Doing What Works plan, say it would give them a lot or some more confidence in government's ability to solve problems.
 Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey.

21 on pages 37-40, respectively) and the initially confident. In particular, the top two rated elements of CAP's plan—setting clear goals measured by real-world results (82 percent highly effective rating among persuadable skeptics) and reforming the budget process to be based on objective evidence (78 percent highly effective rating among persuadable skeptics)—are both rated much stronger by persuadable skeptics than by those with initial confidence.

Consolidating federal programs where there is significant overlap (72 percent highly effective rating among persuadable skeptics) is another program very highly rated by the persuadable skeptics group, possibly due to their higher concern about agencies duplicating efforts as a source of wasteful government spending (62 percent, versus 54 percent among the public).

Perceived effects of the Doing What Works plan

The public also expects that CAP’s plan would improve the quality of services and the efficiency of government spending. One key measuring stick for any improvement to government’s performance is how it spends its money. This report documents the importance of spending issues when it comes to the public’s attitudes toward the government and their priorities for improving its performance. CAP’s plan addresses those concerns, with 64 percent saying that the plan will make things better when it comes to the federal government spending tax dollars efficiently.

Independents and Republicans, who are particularly worried about this issue and rank it at the top of their priorities, give the Doing What Works plan excellent ratings on improving spending, with 60 percent of both groups saying it will make the government a more efficient spender of tax dollars. Even among those who initially say that the government spends money inefficiently, 61 percent of them think the plan will reduce waste.

Similarly, nearly two in three believe that this plan will improve the government’s ability to provide quality services (65 percent). Three-quarters (74 percent) of Democrats think that services will improve, and three in five Republicans and independents agree (59 percent and 62 percent respectively). Sixty percent of those who initially say that the government generally fails at providing quality services think CAP’s plan would make those services better.

TABLE 23

Public believes the Doing What Works plan would work

Across the board, Americans think CAP’s reform program would improve our government

	All adults	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
Quality of services provided by federal government	65%	74%	62%	59%
How efficiently government spends tax dollars	64%	71%	60%	60%
Federal budget deficit	57%	65%	54%	51%

Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey.

People also believe that the plan will improve the federal budget deficit, although they are less confident on this point than they are on its improvements to spending and service quality. When asked whether it would make things better, worse, or have no effect on the deficit, a majority (57 percent) believes the Doing What Works plan will make the federal budget deficit situation better, including majorities of Democrats, Republicans, and independents. Even majorities of conservatives/libertarians (54 percent), as well as more than three in five progressives and liberals, believe that the budget deficit will get better (see Table 23).

Finally, people not only like the Doing What Works plan, but they would reward candidates for public office who supported the plan and advocated for its implementation. A majority (51 percent) of the public reports being more likely to vote for a candidate who put implementing this plan at the top of their agenda. A majority of Republicans (50 percent), independents (50 percent), and conservatives/libertarians (50 percent) all are more likely to vote for a candidate who supported and prioritized the plan. There is almost no negative response to supporting CAP's plan, with just 5 percent saying that it would reduce their support for a candidate.

Conclusion

Public confidence in government is at an all-time low, according to our survey. A common interpretation of this and other recent negative shifts in public sentiment toward the federal government is that it reflects an ideological rejection of “big government.” The results of our survey, however, reveal that Americans have not significantly changed their opinion of what government should do or its proper role. Indeed, clear majorities want *more* federal government involvement in areas like developing new energy sources, reducing poverty, and improving public education. Moreover, they expect government’s role in improving people’s lives to grow rather than shrink in importance in the years ahead.

How, then, can today’s undeniably negative sentiment toward federal government be explained? Americans’ critical view of government, the survey data reveals, has much more to do with perceptions of government’s competence than concern over “mission creep.” People’s concern is not that government is addressing too many problems, but rather that it will not succeed in carrying out its critically important tasks. And looking forward, people say quite clearly that their priority is improving government’s performance more than reducing its size. Americans want a federal government that is better, not smaller.

It is very welcome news, therefore, that the American public strongly supports CAP’s Doing What Works government reform plan, seeing it as an effective way to make government work more efficiently, deliver quality services and reduce the federal budget deficit. This support is strong across party lines, including Republicans and independents, so this is not an agenda popular only among those already disposed to like government.

Indeed, those whose confidence in government would be boosted the most by CAP’s plan tend to be currently skeptical of government and drawn from conservative demographics such as the white working class. This indicates that implementing the Doing What Works plan could help solve a long-standing dilemma around the politics of government—there is plenty of demand for government

action across a wide range of economic and social problems but a lack of belief among the public that the government, if it acts, can effectively address these problems. This undercuts support for the very government actions the public professes to support.

CAP's government reform plan is potentially a way out. Reforming government so that it works more efficiently and effectively than it has in the past may well increase confidence in government, that, in turn, should build stronger and more stable support for government action to solve problems, potentially creating a "virtuous cycle" of rising confidence and competence. The data in this report suggest that elected officials who believe in an active role for government should take this approach very seriously. Otherwise, they are likely to face continuing and severe difficulties maintaining public support for active government.

Appendix A

Politicians, the economy, and views of the federal government

The phrase “federal government” incorporates many different officials, programs, and institutions. While it is useful to measure aggregate public feelings toward, and confidence in, the federal government as a whole, there is necessarily some ambiguity in what specific attitudes these questions measure for different respondents.

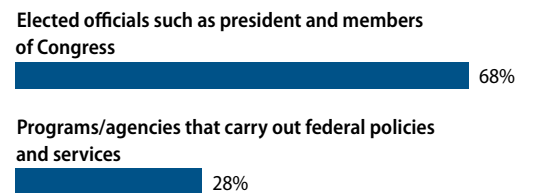
In this survey, we asked Americans what came to mind for them when they think about “the government in Washington” (a phrase used in many survey questions). Interestingly, two-thirds (68 percent) say that they think mainly of elected officials such as the president and members of Congress, rather than the programs and agencies that carry out federal policies (28 percent). So public opinion questions about the “federal government” will be heavily influenced by people’s current attitudes toward the president and the 535 members of Congress (see chart).

We can also see this by examining relationships within the survey data. A person’s view of the federal government, for example, is extremely highly correlated with his or her view of President Obama, and also with one’s opinion of Congress. But when we have people evaluate the performance and importance of various agencies of government, these correlations tend to be considerably weaker.

As a result, we should recognize that these broad measures of sentiment about government, at least today, reflect people’s opinion of politicians at the federal level as much or more than the permanent programs and agencies of government. Indeed, Americans’ current dissatisfaction with the performance of Congress likely contributes to the unfavorable ratings for the federal government as a whole. Just 28 percent have a favorable view of Congress, considerably lower than the federal government, and a contemporaneous survey found a very weak Congressional job approval of just 21 percent.

View of elected officials drives image of government

When you think about “the government in Washington,” what first comes to mind?



Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey.

The economic context also plays an important part in framing views of the federal government. The biggest problem in the country today, in the public's eye, is the weak state of the economy, especially high unemployment. While opinion of specific policy responses, such as the 2009 economic stimulus act, is mixed, clearly government has not "solved" the larger problem. Among those satisfied with the state of the economy, 58 percent voice confidence in the federal government and just 10 percent have no confidence. But among the much larger pool of the economically dissatisfied, less than half as many express confidence (26 percent) and almost four times as many have none (38 percent).

Stepping back from the current economic crisis, it is important to recognize that even a decade ago—when 81 percent of Americans were satisfied with the state of the economy—only a bare majority of 51 percent expressed confidence in the government's ability to solve problems. Although recent declines are clearly related to economic difficulties, the federal government's confidence deficit is in fact a long-standing problem, just as serious as its fiscal deficit.

Appendix B

Demographic factors and confidence in government

This appendix examines demographic factors that predict high or low confidence in the federal government's ability to solve problems. The results below highlight demographic characteristics whose predictive power remains statistically significant even when controlling for other demographic variables in a regression model.

Partisanship and political ideology

Party identification and political ideology are the strongest demographic predictors of whether someone has high or low confidence in the federal government's ability to solve problems. Republicans and conservatives/libertarians have significantly less confidence in the federal government than Democrats and liberals/progressives. Note that these two variables, while related, are nevertheless independent of each other.⁷

The effect of party identification on confidence is clearly evident in the following table, showing nearly half of Americans who identify themselves as conservative or libertarian lack any confidence whatsoever in the federal government's ability to solve problems, compared with 15 percent among self-identified progressives or liberals who say the same.

It is interesting to note that confidence levels among independents do not occupy the midpoint between Democrats and Republicans, but rather hew more closely to Republicans. A third (34 percent) of independents say they have no confidence in the federal government's problem-solving capabilities, a proportion closer to the 49 percent figure for Republicans than to the 12 percent figure for Democrats.

TABLE B-1

Confidence in the federal government to solve a problem

A demographic and political breakdown of confidence in the government

	A lot/some confidence	Just a little confidence	No confidence
All adults	33%	35%	31%
Democrats	55%	32%	12%
Independents	26%	39%	34%
Republicans	15%	35%	49%
Progressives/liberals	49%	35%	15%
Moderates	32%	39%	28%
Conservatives/libertarians	21%	34%	45%
Whites	28%	36%	36%
African Americans	63%	29%	8%
Hispanics	43%	35%	21%
Registered voters	32%	34%	33%
Nonregistered voters	39%	38%	23%
18 to 32	44%	36%	20%
33 to 49	30%	40%	30%
50 to 64	29%	33%	37%
65 and over	30%	27%	43%
Men	30%	35%	34%
Women	36%	36%	28%
Married	28%	34%	37%
Single	43%	36%	21%
Widowers	38%	32%	30%
Students	51%	37%	11%

Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey.

Race

African Americans display significantly higher levels of confidence in the federal government, even when controlling for partisanship, political ideology, and other demographic characteristics. As the table shows, 63 percent of African Americans say that they have a lot or some confidence in the federal government's ability

to solve problems, compared with 28 percent among whites who say the same. Confidence among African Americans has increased since 2000, when 53 percent of African Americans said they had a lot or some confidence in the federal government. Note that Hispanics also express more confidence in government than their white counterparts, but this effect largely disappears once we control for party identification and other demographic characteristics.

Registered voters

Somewhat surprisingly, our analysis shows that being a registered voter results in less confidence, and turns on its head the notion that many Americans fail to vote because they lack confidence in government. This pattern is shown in Table B-1, with 33 percent of registered voters saying that they have no confidence at all in the federal government's ability to solve problems, compared with 23 percent among nonregistered voters who say the same. And while one might posit that this effect is largely a factor of nonvoting African Americans expressing confidence in President Obama, recall again that our regression analysis controls for race.

Age

Age is a key predictor of confidence as well, with older voters being significantly more likely to lack confidence in government. Differences in confidence levels are clear across the age spectrum, with Millennials displaying starkly more confident views of government than their senior citizen counterparts. Note in Table B-1 that 43 percent of seniors have no confidence in government, compared with 20 percent among Millennials who say the same.

Gender

At first glance, gender appears to be an important demographic characteristic, with more women (36 percent) saying they have some or a lot of confidence in government than men (30 percent). But this effect ceases to be statistically significant once we control for party identification and other demographic characteristics.

Marital status, students and church attendance

As Table B-1 shows, single and widowed Americans are far more likely to have confidence in the federal government than are their married counterparts (43 percent and 38 percent respectively, compared with 28 percent for married respondents). Being a student also appears to be a positive predictor of confidence in government, independent of age, with more than half of students saying they have at least some confidence in the federal government's ability to solve problems.

Although church attendance lacks the statistical significance of the demographic characteristics reported above, an examination of its predictive direction in a regression analysis reveals that frequent church attendance is associated with greater levels of confidence. One might posit that respect for institutions and formal authority is higher among churchgoers, which might account for their increased confidence in government once partisanship and ideology are taken out of the equation.

Appendix C

Detailed analysis of performance metrics

The survey data show that few Americans give excellent or good marks to government services or the ability of federal programs and agencies to help people, accomplish goals, run effectively, or spend money efficiently. This appendix provides detailed demographic analysis of each of these performance metrics.

Being well run and effectively managed

The majority of Americans rate the government as not so good (24 percent) or poor (29 percent) when it comes to being well run and effectively managed. Ratings on this measure vary significantly by party identification. Less than a quarter of Democrats say federal programs and agencies are excellent or good when it comes to being well run and effectively managed, but only 6 percent of Republicans say the same, with 71 percent of Republicans saying they are not so good or poor (see Table C-1).

Other significant factors are gender and age (men and older adults give significantly lower marks than do women and younger adults respectively). Note that nearly twice as many Millennials (20 percent) say federal programs and agencies are excellent or good as do adults age 33 and over (11 percent).

Race also is significantly associated with ratings, and in this case African Americans and Hispanics are far more positive than are whites. African Americans are especially positive, with a proportion of excellent or good marks (28 percent) that is nearly three times larger as that given by whites (10 percent).

TABLE C-1

Americans have a poor view of government's performance

A majority of most groups of Americans do not believe government is well run and effectively managed

	Excellent/good	Fair	Not so good/poor
All adults	14%	32%	53%
Democrats	23%	42%	34%
Independents	11%	31%	55%
Republicans	6%	22%	71%
Liberals/progressives	22%	39%	38%
Moderates	13%	33%	49%
Conservatives/libertarians	8%	26%	65%
Men	13%	29%	57%
Women	15%	35%	49%
18 to 32	20%	40%	38%
33 to 64	11%	29%	58%
65 and over	11%	28%	59%
Whites	10%	30%	59%
African Americans	28%	43%	29%
Hispanics	24%	37%	37%

Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey.

Spending money efficiently

As noted above, the vast majority of Americans harshly assess the ability of federal programs and agencies to spend money efficiently, with seven in 10 adults giving the government a grade of not so good or poor. Fully 45 percent assign a rating of “poor,” by far the highest proportion among the five factors evaluated in the survey.

On this measure, party identification and political ideology are especially strong predictors—twice as powerful as the next most significant demographic characteristics (gender and age). Eighty-four percent of Republicans and 82 percent of conservatives/libertarians rate government as not so good or poor on this measure, compared with 53 percent among Democrats who answer the same (see Table C-2).

TABLE C-2
Money down the drain?

Most Americans do not believe the government spends money efficiently

	Excellent/good	Fair	Not so good/poor
All adults	7%	21%	70%
Democrats	13%	32%	53%
Independents	5%	17%	76%
Republicans	2%	12%	84%
Liberals/progressives	12%	30%	58%
Moderates	8%	23%	66%
Conservatives/libertarians	3%	14%	82%
Men	6%	18%	75%
Women	8%	24%	66%
18 to 32	11%	28%	60%
33 to 64	5%	19%	74%
65 and over	7%	15%	75%
Small town	6%	20%	73%
Midwest	6%	18%	74%
African Americans	12%	36%	49%
Less than \$30k	11%	23%	65%
\$30k to \$50k	7%	19%	74%
\$50k to \$75k	3%	20%	75%
\$75k to \$100k	6%	19%	74%
\$100k and up	6%	22%	72%

Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey.

Being male or older is associated with significantly more negative ratings, as is being from a small town or the Midwest. By contrast, Americans are more likely to give more positive ratings if they are African American or come from lower-income households. That said, neither African Americans nor lower-income people are especially positive in their assessment of how the government spends money. Note that even in the case of African Americans, the second most positive demographic characteristic shown, only 12 percent give the government a grade of excellent or good.

Accomplishing their goals

When it comes to federal programs and agencies accomplishing their goals, nearly half (44 percent) of Americans rate their performance as not so good or poor. Differences by party identification are significant, however. Case in point: Whereas only 25 percent of Democrats say that federal programs and agencies are doing an excellent or good job accomplishing their goals, this review is relatively positive compared with the 8 percent of Republicans who give the same rating (see Table C-3).

TABLE C-3
Does government accomplish its goals?

Most Americans don't think so

	Excellent/good	Fair	Not so good/poor
All adults	15%	37%	44%
Democrats	25%	45%	27%
Independents	12%	35%	49%
Republicans	8%	29%	60%
Liberals/progressives	23%	45%	30%
Moderates	15%	34%	40%
Conservatives/libertarians	10%	31%	57%
Single	20%	43%	35%
Widowers	18%	38%	40%
White: High school or less	13%	31%	52%
White: Some college	10%	40%	46%
White: Four-year college graduates	13%	34%	49%
White: Postgraduates	18%	41%	38%
Men	15%	32%	49%
Women	16%	41%	40%
Less than \$30k	20%	38%	38%
\$30k to \$50k	13%	37%	48%
\$50k to \$75k	12%	44%	41%
\$75k to \$100k	14%	34%	48%
\$100k and up	18%	30%	50%

Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey.

Controlling for race and other factors, higher levels of education is a significant and positive predictor of believing government is accomplishing its goals, with postgrads being far more likely to give the government higher ratings in this area. Women are significantly more likely to give government higher marks on accomplishing its goals, although their ratings are not especially high overall. Income also is significant: 38 percent of respondents from lower -income households (less than \$30,000) say that federal programs and agencies are doing a poor or not so good job of accomplishing their goals, compared with half of those earning \$100,000 or more who answer the same.

Helping you and your family

Less than one in five (19 percent) of Americans gives federal programs and agencies a good or excellent grade for having directly helped them and their family. Republicans and conservatives/libertarians are especially critical when it comes to whether or not federal programs and agencies help them and their families. Approximately three times as many Democrats (30 percent) as Republicans (11 percent) rate federal programs and agencies as excellent or good in this area (see Table C-4).

TABLE C-4
Personal help is not a government strength

Most Americans say helping you and your family is not what government does well

	Excellent/good	Fair	Not so good/poor
All adults	19%	34%	41%
Democrats	30%	39%	28%
Independents	16%	33%	45%
Republicans	11%	30%	52%
Liberals/progressives	29%	37%	30%
Moderates	21%	30%	38%
Conservatives/libertarians	9%	33%	50%
White: High school or less	16%	31%	47%
White: Some college	14%	33%	47%
White: Four-year college graduates	21%	34%	38%
White: Postgraduates	23%	36%	32%

Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey.

Education (controlling for race) also is a key driver on this element, with 23 percent of postgrads providing excellent or good ratings, higher than adults with a high school education or some college (16 percent and 14 percent respectively). Surprisingly, there is no connection between respondents' income and their responses here.

Being customer friendly and providing quality services

Americans give federal programs and agencies somewhat higher marks (though still a weak endorsement) when it comes to the government being customer friendly and providing quality services. Republicans and conservatives/libertarians overwhelmingly see the government as underperforming in this area. Nearly half (49 percent) of Republicans rate federal programs and agencies as not so good or poor, but just a quarter of Democrats say the same (see Table C-5).

TABLE C-5
Government rates low as a service provider

Being customer-friendly and providing quality services is not something government does well

	Excellent/good	Fair	Not so good/poor
All adults	21%	37%	37%
Democrats	31%	40%	25%
Independents	16%	39%	40%
Republicans	14%	32%	49%
Liberals/progressives	29%	39%	28%
Moderates	19%	35%	37%
Conservatives/libertarians	15%	36%	45%

Source: Hart Research Associates/Center for American Progress Doing What Works survey.

Student, divorced, single, and other significant predictors of performance ratings

While typically less powerful than some of the primary characteristics discussed above, the regression models frequently show that being a student, single, divorced, widowed, or unemployed is positively and significantly associated with higher performance ratings, suggesting that people who are more “on their own” see the government in a better light.

Appendix D

Survey methodology

Our survey results are based on telephone interviews conducted from May 10 to 22, 2010, by Hart Research Associates, among 2,523 American adults age 18 and over, including 911 “Millennials” age 18 to 32. The resulting sample size for the sample among all adults (in which Millennials are weighted down to their proper proportion of the population) is 2,180 respondents. The margin of error is ± 2.1 percentage points for the all adults sample, ± 3.3 percentage points for the Millennials sample, and is higher among subgroups, for example ± 5.5 percentage points for African Americans.

Demographic profiles of the two samples

	Main sample	Millennial sample
18 to 32	27%	100%
33 to 49	27%	—
50 to 64	29%	—
65 and over	17%	—
Men	49%	51%
Women	51%	49%
Whites	74%	60%
African Americans	10%	13%
Hispanics	11%	19%
Democrats	37%	44%
Independents	30%	25%
Republicans	33%	31%
Noncollege graduates	69%	71%
College graduates	29%	27%

Three sampling approaches were used: random-digit dialing of landlines; random-digit dialing of cell phones; and targeted dialing of sample lists composed of ethnic minorities and young people to ensure the proper representation of those subgroups. The sample includes 503 cell phone interviews—254 Millennials and 249 adults age 33 and over—with people for whom a cell phone is their only telephone. Nominal weights were then applied to both the all adults sample and the Millennials sample to ensure each was demographically representative according to U.S. Census data.

The total sample is representative of the total population in this country. A little over a quarter are Millennials (27 percent), 33- to 49-year-olds make up 27 percent of the sample, 50- to 64-year-olds are 29 percent of the sample, and the final 17 percent of the sample are age 65 or over. There are slightly more women (51 percent) than men (49 percent), and African Americans (10 percent) and Hispanics (11 percent) both make up about a tenth of the sample.

Democrats hold a 4-point partisan advantage (37 percent versus 33 percent), whereas independents make up the remaining 30 percent of the sample. Nearly seven in 10 adults are not college graduates (69 percent), whereas 18 percent of the sample have a four-year college degree and another 11 percent have a post-graduate education.

The Millennial sample is based only among 18- to 32-year-old respondents. This group is split 52 percent among 25- to 32-year-olds and 48 percent among 18- to 24-year-olds, and is slightly more male (51 percent) than female (49 percent). Racially, it is much less white (60 percent), whereas African Americans (13 percent) and Hispanics (19 percent) make up a larger part of this sample than the national sample. Democrats here hold a 13-point partisan advantage (44 percent versus 31 percent), while the remaining quarter identify as independents. Only 26 percent do not have a college degree, although that number is low due to the fact many in this age group currently are in school (19 percent students).

Appendix E

The Doing What Works survey of attitudes toward government and government reform

1724 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20009

(202) 234-5570

Interviews: 2,523 adults, including 911 millennials

Dates: May 10-22, 2010

[109]	All adults	Millennials
Male	49%	51%
Female	51%	49%

FINAL

Study #9823

CAP DWW Survey

May 2010

Please note: all results are shown as percentages unless otherwise stated.

I'm calling from Hart Research, a national public opinion polling firm in Washington, D.C. We are conducting a national survey, and I'd really appreciate the chance to get your opinions on a few questions. This survey is being conducted for research purposes only, and we promise that your name and individual opinions will be kept confidential.

Millennials are defined as 18-32 year olds.

1a. Generally speaking, do you feel that things in the nation are going in the right direction these days, or do you feel that things are pretty seriously off on the wrong track? [140]

	All adults	Millennials
Right direction	30	36
Wrong track	62	55
Not sure	8	9

2. How satisfied are you with the state of the U.S. economy today—are you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with the state of the economy? [145]

	All adults	Millennials
Very satisfied	3	4
Somewhat satisfied	20	26
Somewhat dissatisfied	32	39
Very dissatisfied	44	30
Not sure	1	1

3. How closely do you follow news from Washington, D.C., about what the president and Congress are doing—very closely, fairly closely, just somewhat closely, or not too closely? [146]

	All adults	Millennials
Follow very closely	35	19
Follow fairly closely	30	30
Follow just somewhat closely	24	36
Do not follow too closely	11	15
Not sure	—	—

4. I would like your opinion of some organizations, people, and institutions. What is your overall opinion of (READ ITEM)—very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly unfavorable or very unfavorable?

	Total favorable	Total unfavorable	Favorable		Unfavorable		Not sure
			Very	Mostly	Mostly	Very	
Federal government in Washington [147]							
All adults							
May 2010	35	62	4	31	36	26	3
July 2009*	42	50	4	38	18	31	8
April 2008*	37	58	6	31	21	37	5
January 2007*	45	46	7	38	15	31	9
February 2006*	43	50	6	37	16	34	7
December 2005*	46	49	7	39	18	31	5
Late October 2005*	45	48	6	39	16	32	7
February 2004*	59	36	10	49	11	25	5
April 2003*	73	22	14	59	5	17	5
December 2002*	64	27	11	53	7	20	9
Mid-November 2001*	82	15	17	65	3	12	3
Late October 2000* (RVs)	54	40	7	47	30	10	6
October 1997*	38	59	4	34	18	41	3
Millennials							
May 2010	47	48	6	41	32	16	5
Your state government [148]							
All adults							
May 2010	44	52	6	38	30	22	4
July 2009*	50	44	6	44	16	28	6
April 2008*	59	37	9	50	16	21	4
December 2005*	57	37	8	49	11	26	6
December 2002*	62	31	15	47	10	21	8
Mid-November 2001*	77	18	15	62	4	14	5
October 1997*	66	29	10	56	7	22	5
Millennials							
May 2010	51	43	9	42	27	16	6
Your local government [149]							
All adults							
May 2010	58	38	10	48	23	15	4
July 2009*	60	32	8	52	9	23	8
April 2008*	63	33	11	52	12	21	4
December 2005*	66	28	12	54	10	18	6
December 2002*	67	25	16	51	9	16	7
Mid-November 2001*	78	17	15	63	4	13	5
October 1997*	68	25	12	56	7	18	7

* Comparative data conducted by Pew Research Center.

4. I would like your opinion of some organizations, people, and institutions. What is your overall opinion of (READ ITEM)—very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly unfavorable or very unfavorable?

	Total favorable	Total unfavorable	Favorable		Unfavorable		Not sure
			Very	Mostly	Mostly	Very	
Millennials							
May 2010	62	32	12	50	21	11	6
Congress [150]							
All adults							
May 2010	28	67	3	25	35	32	5
August 2009*	37	52	4	33	20	32	11
Early April 2009*	50	43	10	40	15	28	7
January 2009*	40	52	5	35	20	32	8
Late May 2008*	41	51	6	35	17	34	8
July 2007*	41	51	6	35	16	35	8
Early January 2007*	53	38	11	42	9	29	8
Late October 2006*	41	46	5	36	15	31	13
February 2006*	44	47	6	38	14	33	9
Late October 2005*	45	45	7	38	13	32	10
July 2005*	49	40	6	43	11	29	11
June 2005*	49	40	6	43	10	30	11
June 2004*	56	33	7	49	7	26	11
July 2001*	57	32	7	50	8	24	11
March 2001*	56	36	6	50	10	26	8
January 2001*	64	23	10	54	5	18	13
September 2000* (RVs)	61	32	8	53	5	27	7
August 1999*	63	34	8	55	7	27	3
June 1999*	56	39	9	47	9	30	5
February 1999*	52	44	4	48	8	36	4
January 1999*	48	45	7	41	15	30	7
Millennials							
May 2010	40	52	4	36	34	18	8
President Obama [151]							
All adults							
May 2010	49	47	20	29	19	28	4
November 2009*	65	30	33	32	16	14	5
June 2009*	72	25	37	35	11	14	3
Mid April 2009*	73	24	38	35	10	14	3
January 2009*	79	15	40	39	4	11	6
Millennials							
May 2010	60	37	22	38	19	18	3

* Comparative data conducted by Pew Research Center.

4. I would like your opinion of some organizations, people, and institutions. What is your overall opinion of (READ ITEM)—very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly unfavorable or very unfavorable?

	Total favorable	Total unfavorable	Favorable		Unfavorable		Not sure
			Very	Mostly	Mostly	Very	
Business corporations [152]							
All adults							
May 2010	39	52	5	34	32	20	9
July 2009*	47	45	10	37	15	30	8
January 2007*	57	30	9	48	8	22	13
December 2005*	57	35	9	48	10	25	8
Late October 2005*	45	45	8	37	16	29	10
July 2005*	49	40	9	40	11	29	11
March 2002*	62	29	10	52	6	23	9
July 2001*	59	27	9	50	6	21	14
March 2001*	65	25	9	56	6	19	10
August 1999*	73	22	8	65	3	19	5
Early September 1998*	64	26	9	55	5	21	10
October 1997*	66	28	11	55	5	23	6
June 1997*	68	25	8	60	7	18	7
May 1997*	59	28	9	50	7	21	13
June 1996*	62	31	10	52	6	25	7
February 1996*	59	34	9	50	10	24	7
October 1995*	60	36	6	54	7	29	4
July 1994*	70	24	8	62	5	19	6
November 1991*	65	28	8	57	6	22	7
January 1988*	59	32	6	53	5	27	9
June 1985*	58	31	8	50	7	24	11
Millennials							
May 2010	45	46	6	39	32	14	9

* Comparative data conducted by Pew Research Center.

5a. 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. [153/156]

(STATEMENT A) Government should do more to solve problems, OR

(STATEMENT B) Government is doing too many things better left to businesses and individuals.

	All adults						Millennials		
	5/10	1/10 ¹	6/09 ²	3/09 ³	11/08 ⁴	3/07 ²	5/10	1/10 ¹	11/08 ⁴
Statement A/Should do more	39	45	34	41	50	41	49	53	69
Statement B/Doing too many things	57	47	56	51	44	52	46	42	27
Both equally (VOL)	2	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	—
Neither (VOL)	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Not sure	1	}8	}10	}8	}6	}7	1	}6	}4
		4/02 ¹	7/00 ²	1/97 ²	10/95 ²	10/94 ²			
		47	33	34	27	30			
		45	57	58	64	63			
		—	—	—	—	—			
		—	—	—	—	—			
		}8	}10	}7	}9	}7			

1 Comparative data conducted by Pew Research Center. Pew millennials defined as 18 to 29 year olds.

2 Comparative data conducted by CBS/New York Times. Statement A was phrased, "Government should do more to solve national problems."

3 Comparative data conducted by CBS.

4 Comparative data conducted by Pew Research Center only among 2008 voters.

5b. 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. [154/157]

(STATEMENT A) I pay too much in taxes for what I get from the government, OR

(STATEMENT B) I don't mind paying taxes when I consider all that the government does.

	All adults	Millennials
Statement A/I pay too much	56	49
Statement B/I don't mind paying	41	47
Both equally (VOL)	1	1
Neither (VOL)	1	1
Not sure	1	2

5c. 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.* [155]

(STATEMENT A) Government regulation of business is necessary to protect the public interest, OR

(STATEMENT B) Government regulation of business usually does more harm than good.

	All adults			Millennials
	5/10	10/08 ¹	12/04 ¹	5/10
Statement A/Regulation is necessary	46	50	49	53
Statement B/Regulation does more harm than good	49	38	41	43
Both equally (VOL)	2	NA	NA	2
Neither (VOL)	1	}12	}10	—
Not sure	2	—	—	2
	7/02¹	8/99¹	10/94¹	
	54	48	38	
	36	44	55	
	NA	NA	NA	
	}10	}8	}7	

* Asked of one-half the respondents (FORMS A/C).
¹ Comparative data conducted by Pew Research Center.

5d. 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.** [158]

(STATEMENT A) We need a strong government to handle today's complex economic problems, OR

(STATEMENT B) The free market can handle these problems without government being involved.

	All adults			Millennials
	5/10	2008 ¹	2004 ¹	5/10
Statement A/Need a strong government	50	72	64	62
Statement B/Free market can handle these problems	44	26	33	33
Both equally (VOL)	3	NA	NA	2
Neither (VOL)	1	—	—	1
Not sure	2	}2	}2	2
	2000¹	1992¹	1990¹	
	60	68	71	
	37	25	23	
	NA	NA	NA	
	}3	}7	}7	

** Asked of one-half the respondents (FORMS B/D).
¹ Comparative data conducted by National Election Studies.

6. When the government in Washington decides to solve a problem, how much confidence do you have that the problem actually will be solved—a lot, some, just a little, or none at all? [159]

	All adults					Millennials
	5/10	6/06 ¹	11/05 ⁶	9/02 ⁶	1/02 ¹	5/10
A lot of confidence	4	8	7	8	14	6
Some confidence	29	38	38	45	52	38
Just a little confidence	35	33	36	38	27	36
No confidence at all	31	21	18	9	7	20
Not sure	1	—	1	—	—	—
		6/00 ⁵	1-4/96 ⁴	12/95 ³	5/94 ¹	
		8	4	4	4	
		43	35	35	31	
		35	39	38	42	
		13	21	23	22	
		1	1	—	1	
		1/94 ¹	2/93 ¹	4/92 ²	10/91 ¹	
		4	5	4	7	
		39	46	46	31	
		40	37	38	38	
		16	12	12	23	
		1	—	—	1	

1 Comparative data conducted by ABC/Washington Post.

2 Comparative data conducted by ABC.

3 Comparative data conducted by Washington Post/Kasier/Harvard.

4 Comparative data conducted by Gallup/UVA.

5 Comparative data conducted by Kaiser/NPR/Harvard.

6 Comparative data conducted by the Washington Post.

7. When you think about “the government in Washington,” what first comes to mind for you—federal elected officials such as the president and members of Congress, or the programs and agencies that carry out federal policies and services? [160]

	All adults	Millennials
Elected officials	68	67
Programs and agencies	28	29
Other (VOL)	1	1
Not sure	3	3

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about the federal government, specifically meaning the programs and agencies of the federal government, not elected officials.

8. How would you rate the performance of federal government programs and agencies, in terms of (READ ITEM)? Would you say excellent, good, fair, not so good, or poor?

Ranked by the percentage of all adults who say excellent, good, or fair

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Not so good	Poor	Not sure
Being customer-friendly and providing quality services [164]						
All adults	3	18	37	18	19	5
Millennials	4	23	41	15	12	5
Helping you and your family [165]						
All adults	3	16	34	20	21	6
Millennials	4	19	39	17	17	4
Accomplishing their goals [162]						
All adults	2	14	37	23	21	3
Millennials	3	20	43	20	12	2
Being well run and effectively managed [161]						
All adults	2	12	32	24	29	1
Millennials	4	17	40	22	16	1
Spending money efficiently [163]						
All adults	1	6	21	25	45	2
Millennials	1	9	28	28	32	2

9. Generally speaking, would you say the performance of federal government programs and agencies is getting better, getting worse, or staying about the same? [166]

	All adults	Millennials
Getting better	15	22
Getting worse	38	25
Staying about the same	45	52
Not sure	2	1

10. When you think about the performance of the federal government, is your opinion based mainly on your own personal experience with government, what you hear from family and friends, or what you read and hear about government in newspapers, television, or online? [167]

	All adults	Millennials
Own personal experience	34	36
Family and friends	9	16
Stories in newspapers, TV, online	52	43
None/other (VOL)	3	4
Not sure	2	1

11ab. I'm going to read you the names of some federal government programs and agencies, and I'd like to know how well run you feel that program or agency is in terms of being effective and spending tax dollars efficiently. For each one, please use a scale from zero to ten, on which a ten means you think it is run extremely well, and zero means it is not run well at all. You may use any number from zero to ten.

Ranked by the highest mean score of all adults

	Mean	Run extremely well				Not run well at all		Cannot rate
		9-10	7-8	4-6	2-3	0-1		
The Federal Bureau of Investigation, FBI* [170-171]								
All adults	6.5	14	39	31	5	4	7	
Millennials	6.9	16	48	24	3	3	6	
Department of Defense** [208-209]								
All adults	6.2	17	32	35	8	5	3	
Millennials	6.1	16	33	37	7	6	1	
Department of Homeland Security** [214-215]								
All adults	5.2	10	28	32	14	13	3	
Millennials	5.8	14	31	32	10	10	3	
National Institutes of Health, NIH* [168-169]								
All adults	5.1	5	20	42	9	9	15	
Millennials	5.4	7	23	42	6	8	14	
Internal Revenue Service, IRS** [210-211]								
All adults	5.0	7	25	39	13	13	3	
Millennials	5.6	9	33	37	11	8	2	
Environmental Protection Agency, EPA** [212-213]								
All adults	5.0	6	26	39	17	10	2	
Millennials	5.6	6	35	37	14	5	3	
Medicare* [172-173]								
All adults	4.8	8	20	39	16	13	4	
Millennials	5.0	7	20	42	13	13	5	
Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA* [174-175]								
All adults	4.8	5	21	42	14	14	4	
Millennials	5.6	7	28	45	9	6	5	
Social Security Administration** [218-219]								
All adults	4.7	9	19	37	18	15	2	
Millennials	4.5	5	16	42	23	12	2	
Medicaid** [216-217]								
All adults	4.6	7	18	37	18	13	7	
Millennials	4.9	8	16	44	17	9	6	
Department of Education* [176-177]								
All adults	4.6	5	18	45	18	13	1	
Millennials	5.0	5	21	50	15	9	—	
Securities and Exchange Commission, SEC* [178-179]								
All adults	4.3	4	12	40	17	15	12	
Millennials	5.4	6	25	36	11	6	16	

* Asked of one-fourth the respondents (FORM A).

** Asked of one-fourth the respondents (FORM B).

11cd. I'm going to read you the names of some federal government programs and agencies, and I'd like to know how important you feel that program or agency is in terms of serving an important public interest. For each one, please use a scale from zero to ten, on which a ten means you think that program or agency is extremely important and a zero means you think that program or agency is not important at all. You may use any number from zero to ten.

Ranked by the highest mean score of all adults

	Mean	Extremely important				Not important at all		Cannot rate
		9-10	7-8	4-6	2-3	0-1		
Department of Defense** [232-233]								
All adults	8.3	59	25	11	2	2	1	
Millennials	8.3	51	32	13	1	1	2	
The Federal Bureau of Investigation, FBI* [222-223]								
All adults	8.0	48	29	18	1	3	1	
Millennials	8.0	45	33	18	3	—	1	
Social Security Administration** [242-243]								
All adults	7.7	46	27	19	4	3	1	
Millennials	7.2	39	27	20	7	5	2	
Medicare* [224-225]								
All adults	7.6	48	23	18	6	4	1	
Millennials	7.3	44	23	21	6	5	1	
Department of Homeland Security** [238-239]								
All adults	7.5	43	27	18	7	4	1	
Millennials	7.8	46	32	15	3	4	—	
Medicaid** [240-241]								
All adults	7.3	41	25	22	6	4	2	
Millennials	7.2	39	26	23	6	4	2	
Department of Education* [228-229]								
All adults	7.1	45	19	20	7	8	1	
Millennials	8.1	60	17	13	5	4	1	
National Institutes of Health, NIH* [220-221]								
All adults	6.9	27	28	25	6	4	10	
Millennials	7.4	31	35	23	2	2	7	
Environmental Protection Agency, EPA** [236-237]								
All adults	6.8	30	31	25	7	6	1	
Millennials	7.2	35	29	24	7	3	2	
Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA* [226-227]								
All adults	6.7	29	26	29	7	6	3	
Millennials	6.9	29	33	24	5	6	3	
Securities and Exchange Commission, SEC* [230-231]								
All adults	6.3	21	26	30	7	7	9	
Millennials	6.8	24	26	32	4	4	10	
Internal Revenue Service, IRS** [234-235]								
All adults	6.2	20	30	33	9	8	—	
Millennials	6.7	25	33	28	8	6	—	

* Asked of one-fourth the respondents (FORM C).

** Asked of one-fourth the respondents (FORM D).

12a. On the whole, are you mostly satisfied or mostly dissatisfied with your personal interactions with federal government programs and agencies over the past year or so? (IF "SATISFIED/DISSATISFIED," ASK:) Is that very or somewhat (satisfied/dissatisfied)? [244]

	All adults	Millennials	
Very satisfied	13	14	CONTINUE
Somewhat satisfied	37	43	
Somewhat dissatisfied	18	20	
Very dissatisfied	13	11	
Have not had any interactions (VOL)	18	10	Skip to Q.13
Not sure	1	2	

Ask only of respondents who make a choice in Q. 12a

12b. When you say you were (satisfied/dissatisfied), which federal government programs, agencies, or departments were you thinking of? [245-246] Ranked by the highest percentage of all adults

			Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	All adults	Millennials	All adults	Millennials	All adults	Millennials
Medicare	22	18	22	15	21	24
Social Security	22	11	24	8	19	14
IRS/paying taxes	17	16	16	17	17	14
Department of Defense, military	7	9	8	9	6	8
Congress	6	8	3	6	12	11
Student loans	5	9	4	9	5	10
Department of Education	5	7	5	8	5	6
Department of Motor Vehicles	4	6	4	6	4	5
President Obama	4	5	3	4	7	7
Veterans Administration	4	2	4	1	4	4
Postal Service	3	4	4	5	2	2
Medicaid	2	2	1	2	3	2
FEMA	2	2	1	3	2	2
Department of Homeland Security	2	1	2	1	2	1
Health care	2	1	1	1	2	1
Welfare, food stamps	1	2	1	1	2	2
Housing, housing assistance, HUD, FHA	1	1	1	—	2	1
EPA, other environmental programs	1	1	1	1	2	-
Department of Health and Human Services	1	1	1	1	2	2
Unemployment, job services, other job programs	1	1	1	1	2	2
Immigration borders, ICE	1	—	—	—	1	1
Social Services	1	—	—	—	1	—
Other (specify)	10	10	8	9	12	12
Not sure	15	19	18	22	11	13

13. I am going to list activities that the federal government is involved with or might be involved with. Please tell me whether you'd like to see more federal government involvement in that area, less involvement, about the same amount of involvement, or no federal government involvement at all.*

Ranked by the percentage of all adults who say more involvement

	Involvement			No government involvement	Not sure
	More	Less	About the same amount		
Developing new, clean energy sources [255]					
All adults					
May 2010	61	10	18	10	1
Millennials					
May 2010	66	8	21	5	—
Improving public schools [256]					
All adults					
May 2010	60	14	14	11	1
Millennials					
May 2010	75	8	12	4	1
Making college education affordable [258]					
All adults					
May 2010	60	11	17	11	1
Millennials					
May 2010	73	7	14	5	1
Reducing poverty [257]					
All adults					
May 2010	57	15	17	9	2
June 2000 ¹	69	11	14	5	1
Millennials					
May 2010	64	12	18	5	1
Ensuring access to affordable health care [254]					
All adults					
May 2010	51	19	10	19	1
June 2000 ¹	73	7	13	6	1
Millennials					
May 2010	56	17	14	12	1

* Asked of one-half the respondents (FORMS A/C).

¹ Comparative data conducted by NPR/Kaiser.

14. Looking ahead to the next ten or twenty years, how important do you think the federal government will be in terms of improving the lives of the American people—more important than in the past, less important than in the past, or equally as important as it was in the past? ** [259]

	All adults	Millennials
More important	42	47
Less important	18	12
Equally important	36	39
Not sure	4	2

15. I am going to read you pairs of phrases that could be used to describe the federal government, and for each pair, please tell me which statement you feel better applies to federal government. (IF RESPONDENT MAKES A CHOICE, ASK:) Is that much more or only somewhat more? **

Statement A	Much more	Somewhat more	Statement B	Somewhat more	Much more	Not sure
[260] Has policies that generally reflect my values			Has policies that generally do not reflect my values			
All adults	13	27	All adults	27	29	4
Millennials	14	34	Millennials	26	21	5
[261] Serves the special interests			Serves the public interest			
All adults	43	23	All adults	20	10	4
Millennials	33	29	Millennials	23	11	4
[262] Helps people get ahead in life			Makes it harder for people to get ahead in life			
All adults	12	22	All adults	27	32	7
Millennials	17	32	Millennials	24	21	6
[263] Is innovative and changes with the times			Is old fashioned and does not keep up with changing times			
All adults	16	33	All adults	23	18	10
Millennials	20	38	Millennials	23	14	5
[264] Threatens our personal freedoms			Protects our personal freedoms			
All adults	29	18	All adults	31	18	4
Millennials	20	20	Millennials	35	22	3
[265] Operates openly and makes most information available to the public			Operates secretly and makes little information available to the public			
All adults	13	24	All adults	24	36	3
Millennials	17	27	Millennials	27	26	3

** Asked of one-half the respondents (FORMS C/D).

16. Do you think that federal government programs and agencies waste a lot of money we pay in taxes, waste some of it, or don't waste very much of it?*[266]

	All adults						Millennials
	5/10	2008 ¹	2004 ¹	2000 ¹	1998 ¹	1996 ¹	5/10
A lot	66	73	61	59	61	60	49
Some	28	NA	NA	38	34	38	42
Not very much	4	NA	NA	3	4	1	7
Not sure	2	NA	NA	—	1	1	2
		1994 ¹	1992 ¹	1990 ¹	1988 ¹	1984 ¹	
		70	67	67	63	65	
		27	30	30	33	29	
		2	2	2	2	4	
		1	1	1	2	2	
		1982 ¹	1980 ¹	1978 ¹	1976 ¹	1974 ¹	
		66	78	77	74	74	
		29	18	19	20	22	
		2	2	2	3	1	
		3	2	2	3	3	

* Asked of one-half the respondents (FORMS A/B).

¹ Comparative data conducted by University of Michigan/National Election Studies.

17. People sometimes say that spending by federal government programs and agencies is “wasteful.” For each of the following items I read, please indicate whether you feel that this is a good example of what you personally mean by wasteful government spending. Use a scale from zero to ten, on which a ten means it is a perfect example of wasteful spending, zero means it is not an example of wasteful spending, and five is in the middle.*

Ranked by the highest mean score of all adults

	Mean	Perfect example				Not an example		Cannot rate
		9-10	7-8	4-6	2-3	0-1		
Government programs continuing for years even though they have not proven effective [275-276]								
All adults	8.1	60	16	13	4	5	2	
Millennials	7.4	45	25	18	6	6	—	
Government contractors receiving no-bid contracts and overcharging for services [269-270]								
All adults	8.1	59	18	13	4	4	2	
Millennials	7.5	44	26	19	5	5	1	
People receiving government benefits who do not deserve them [267-268]								
All adults	8.0	60	13	15	5	5	2	
Millennials	7.5	52	15	19	6	7	1	
Tax breaks for corporations that have political influence [279-280]								
All adults	7.9	56	17	17	4	5	1	
Millennials	7.1	40	22	25	6	6	1	
Inefficient government employees receiving generous benefits or high salaries [277-278]								
All adults	7.8	55	18	16	5	5	1	
Millennials	7.4	48	23	15	7	7	—	
Government agencies duplicating the efforts of other agencies [273-274]								
All adults	7.4	44	19	25	4	4	4	
Millennials	6.6	28	21	36	7	5	3	
Government agencies failing to use new technologies and modern management methods to improve efficiency [308-309]								
All adults	6.7	29	23	34	6	5	3	
Millennials	6.3	24	23	37	7	7	2	
Excessive and unnecessary military spending [271-272]								
All adults	5.8	27	17	30	11	13	2	
Millennials	6.2	30	19	28	10	11	2	

* Asked of one-half the respondents (FORMS A/B).

Now I have some questions on the issue of improving the performance of federal government programs and agencies.

18. Overall, how important do you think it is for the president and Congress to take steps to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of federal government programs and agencies—very important, fairly important, not too important, or not at all important? [310]

	All adults	Millennials
Very important	74	66
Fairly important	19	28
Not too important	3	3
Not at all important	3	3
Not sure	1	—

19. Do you think the federal government could be more effective if it were better managed, or do you think the federal government is bound to be ineffective no matter what? [311]

	All adults	Millennials
Could be more effective	74	77
Bound to be ineffective	23	19
Not sure	3	4

20. Please tell me which you think should be the higher priority for improving the federal government—A) Reducing the cost and size of federal government, or B) improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the federal government? [312]

	All adults	Millennials
A/Reducing the size of federal government	36	26
B/Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of federal government	62	71
Not sure	2	3

21. Now I'm going to list some goals related to improving federal government programs and agencies. Please tell me which one or two of the following goals you think should be the highest priorities for improving federal government programs and agencies at this time. (IF "MORE THAN TWO," ASK:) Well, if you had to choose just one or two, which would you choose? ** [313]

Ranked by the highest percentage of all adults

	All adults	Millennials
Make government more accountable for how it spends money	45	40
Reduce wasteful spending	38	40
Make programs more effective at solving problems and helping people	29	33
Reduce the size of government	19	14
End programs once they are no longer needed	17	13
Provide more information to the public about what government is doing	16	22
Other (VOL)	1	—
None (VOL)	—	—
Not sure	—	—

** Asked of one-half the respondents (FORMS B/D).

22a. Now I'm going to talk to you about a plan for improving the performance of federal government programs and agencies. This government performance plan has three main components. After I read each one, please tell me whether you think that it would be very effective, fairly effective, just somewhat effective, or not very effective in making the federal government work better.

	Effective				Not sure
	Very	Fairly	Just somewhat	Not very	
Eliminate inefficient government programs and redirect support to the most cost-effective programs [314]					
All adults	54	17	20	7	2
Millennials	48	24	21	6	1
Carefully evaluate the performance of government programs and agencies and make this information available to the public [315]					
All adults	53	17	22	7	1
Millennials	50	20	23	6	1
Have the government use the most modern management methods and information technologies [316]					
All adults	39	21	29	9	2
Millennials	37	25	31	6	1

22b. And overall, do you think this plan would be very effective, fairly effective, just somewhat effective, or not very effective in terms of making the federal government work better. [317]

	All adults	Millennials
Very effective	36	35
Fairly effective	25	30
Just somewhat effective	29	28
Not very effective	8	5
Not sure	2	2

23. Here are some more specific elements in this plan to improve the performance of federal government programs and agencies. For each one, please tell me on a scale from zero to ten how effective you think it would be in making federal government programs and agencies work better. Ten means the idea would be extremely effective in making federal government programs and agencies work better, zero means the idea would not be effective at all in making federal government programs and agencies work better, and five is in the middle.

	Mean	Highly effective 8-10	Total effective 6-10	Neutral 5	Total ineffective 0-4	Highly ineffective 0-2	Cannot rate
Require every federal agency to set clear goals that are measured by real-world results*							
All adults	8.1	68	83	10	5	3	2
Millennials	8.0	64	86	8	5	3	1
Reform the federal budget process, so that spending decisions are based on objective evidence about what works and what does not**							
All adults	7.8	65	82	10	7	3	1
Millennials	7.7	60	82	10	8	2	—
Measure and compare the performance of state actions in areas such as health care, education, and energy to identify which approaches work and which do not**							
All adults	7.6	58	80	10	9	5	1
Millennials	7.7	59	81	9	9	4	1
Consolidate federal programs where there is significant overlap*							
All adults	7.7	62	79	12	7	4	2
Millennials	7.4	51	79	12	7	4	2
Change the way government contracts are awarded, so government officials can quickly and accurately determine the best contractor for the job*							
All adults	7.7	60	79	11	7	4	3
Millennials	7.5	51	80	11	7	3	2
Reform government hiring, firing, and other personnel practices to improve the quality and performance of the federal workforce**							
All adults	7.4	55	76	13	9	4	2
Millennials	7.3	50	79	11	9	3	1
Evaluate the effectiveness of tax breaks and tax credits to determine which ones are cost-effective*							
All adults	7.6	58	75	14	8	4	3
Millennials	7.5	53	79	11	8	4	2
Conduct “try before you buy” pilot experiments to test different policy approaches before investing a lot of money in them*							
All adults	7.4	56	74	14	10	6	2
Millennials	7.2	50	75	13	11	5	1
Measure and evaluate the effectiveness of government programs to guide future policy decisions*							
All adults	7.3	51	74	16	8	4	2
Millennials	7.2	46	77	14	8	3	1
Modernize federal government information technology to improve the quality of government services**							
All adults	7.2	51	74	15	10	5	1
Millennials	7.1	47	75	14	11	5	—

* Asked of one-half the respondents (FORM A/C).

** Asked of one-half the respondents (FORM B/D).

23. Here are some more specific elements in this plan to improve the performance of federal government programs and agencies. For each one, please tell me on a scale from zero to ten how effective you think it would be in making federal government programs and agencies work better. Ten means the idea would be extremely effective in making federal government programs and agencies work better, zero means the idea would not be effective at all in making federal government programs and agencies work better, and five is in the middle.

	Mean	Highly effective 8-10	Total effective 6-10	Neutral 5	Total ineffective 0-4	Highly ineffective 0-2	Cannot rate
Apply the best practices in private-sector management to improve the performance of government programs**							
All adults	7.2	51	74	16	8	5	2
Millennials	7.0	43	74	15	9	4	2
Provide the public with Internet-based tools to monitor government performance*							
All adults	6.9	49	66	16	16	9	2
Millennials	7.1	53	74	11	14	8	1
Provide the public with an online report card detailing the federal government's progress toward meeting national goals**							
All adults	6.8	48	65	17	17	9	1
Millennials	6.9	48	69	13	18	7	—
Provide the public with Internet-based tools to give feedback and advice to government officials**							
All adults	6.6	44	64	15	20	9	1
Millennials	6.7	42	68	12	20	8	—
Ensure that people nominated by the president to lead government agencies receive a quick up-or-down confirmation vote in the U.S. Senate*							
All adults	6.5	42	59	20	18	12	3
Millennials	6.4	36	60	22	16	8	2
Give people the option of allowing the IRS to prepare their tax return, at no charge, which they can then review and change before submitting to the IRS**							
All adults	5.6	36	50	15	32	23	3
Millennials	6.5	44	63	14	22	13	1

* Asked of one-half the respondents (FORM A/C).

** Asked of one-half the respondents (FORM B/D).

24. If Congress and the president adopted this government performance plan, do you think that would make things better, make things worse, or have no effect when it comes to (READ ITEM)?

	Make things better	Make things worse	Have no effect	Not sure
The federal budget deficit [350]				
All adults	57	7	30	6
Millennials	62	7	26	5
How efficiently the government spends tax dollars [351]				
All adults	64	8	24	4
Millennials	69	7	21	3
The quality of services provided by the federal government [352]				
All adults	65	5	26	4
Millennials	70	4	23	3

25a/b. And if Congress and the president do adopt this government performance plan, would that give you more confidence in the federal government's ability to solve problems? (IF "YES," ASK:) Would that be a lot, some, or just a little more confidence? [353/354]

	All adults	Millennials
Yes, would give more confidence	67	73
A lot more confidence	20	20
Some more confidence	29	31
Just a little more confidence	18	22
Not sure	—	—
No, would not give more confidence	27	22
Not sure	6	5

26. If a candidate running for Congress supported this government performance plan and said that working to pass the plan would be one of their top priorities if elected, would that make you more likely to vote for that candidate, less likely to vote for that candidate, or would it not affect your vote either way? [355]

	All adults	Millennials
More likely to vote	51	54
Less likely to vote	5	4
Not affect vote either way	41	39
Not sure	3	3

FACTUALS: Now I am going to ask you a few questions for statistical purposes only.

F1. Are you currently employed? (IF “NOT CURRENTLY EMPLOYED,” ASK:) Are you a student, a homemaker, retired, or unemployed and looking for work? [356]

	All adults	Millennials
Currently employed	54	61
Not currently employed		
Student	6	19
Homemaker	5	5
Retired	21	—
Unemployed, looking for work	8	10
Other (VOL)	4	3
Not sure/refused	2	2

F2. What is the last grade that you completed in school? [357-358]

	All adults	Millennials
Grade school	1	—
Some high school	7	8
High school graduate	30	27
Some college, no degree	20	27
Vocational training/two-year college	11	9
Four-year college/Bachelor’s degree	18	20
Some postgraduate work, no degree	2	2
Two or three years’ postgraduate work/Master’s degree	8	4
Doctoral/law degree	1	1
Not sure/refused	2	2

F3. Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an independent, or something else? (IF “DEMOCRAT” OR “REPUBLICAN,” ASK:) Would you call yourself a strong (Democrat/Republican) or not a very strong (Democrat/Republican)? (IF “INDEPENDENT” OR OTHER ASK:) Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or Democratic Party? [359]

	All adults	Millennials
Strong Democrat	19	19
Not very strong Democrat	9	14
Independent/lean Democrat	9	11
Strictly independent	19	15
Independent/lean Republican	12	10
Not very strong Republican	6	8
Strong Republican	15	13
Other (VOL)	8	7
Not sure	3	3
Total Democrat	37	44
Total Republican	33	31

F4. Which of the following do you feel best describes your political perspective: progressive, liberal, moderate, conservative, libertarian?

Ask only of respondents who say moderate, none/other, or not sure in Q. F4

F5. If you had to pick one of the following, which do you feel best describes your political perspective—progressive, liberal, conservative, libertarian? [360/361]

	Without leaners		With leaners	
	All adults	Millennials	All adults	Millennials
Progressive	13	16	20	23
Liberal	15	21	20	27
Moderate	24	23	4	3
Conservative	34	25	42	33
Libertarian	5	7	7	8
Other (VOL)	1	1	—	—
None (VOL)	1	1	1	1
Not sure	7	6	6	5

F6. Do you consider yourself to be part of the Tea Party movement? [362]

	All adults	Millennials
Yes, part of Tea Party movement	18	13
No, not part of Tea Party movement	72	76
Not sure	10	11

F7a. Are you currently registered to vote at this address? [363]

	All adults	Millennials
Registered	85	79
Not registered	12	17
Not sure	3	4

F7b/c. Did you happen to vote in the 2008 election for president? (IF "YES," ASK:) For whom did you vote—Barack Obama, John McCain, or someone else? [364/365]

	All adults	Millennials
Yes, Voted	79	68
Voted for Barack Obama	37	39
Voted for John McCain	32	22
Voted for someone else	4	4
Not sure	6	3
No, Did Not Vote	19	30
Not sure	2	2

F8a. What is your religion? [366]

	All adults	Millennials
Protestant (includes Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Episcopal, Presbyterian, and other Christians)	53	48
Catholic	20	20
Jewish	1	1
Muslim	—	—
Mormon/LDS/Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints	1	2
Other	6	8
None	13	17
Not sure/refused	6	4

F8b. How often do you attend services at a church, synagogue, mosque, or other place of worship? [367]

	All adults	Millennials
Never	19	20
Once a year	6	7
A few times a year	16	15
Once a month	6	8
About twice a month	8	9
Once a week or more often	39	36
Not sure	6	5

F9. Are you currently single and never married, unmarried and living with a partner, married, separated, widowed, or divorced? [368]

	All adults	Millennials
Single	25	59
Unmarried, living with a partner	4	6
Married	50	29
Separated	2	2
Widowed	6	—
Divorced	10	2
Other (VOL)	—	—
Not sure/refused	3	2

F10. Are you currently or have you ever been employed by the federal, state, or local government? For the purposes of this survey, federal does not include the military or any military service. [369]

	All adults	Millennials
Federal	9	6
State	12	8
Local	7	4
No, never employed by any government	69	80
Not sure	3	2

F11a. Are you a labor union member? [370/371]

Ask only of respondents who say no or not sure in Q. F11a

F11b. Is anyone else in your household a labor union member?

	All adults	Millennials
Labor union member	11	7
Labor union household	6	9
Nonunion household	79	79
Not sure	4	5

F12. Which of the following are your primary sources for news about national politics and the federal government? [372]

	All adults	Millennials
Local broadcast TV news	37	31
National broadcast TV news on ABC, CBS or NBC	43	38
Fox News Channel	36	27
CNN	31	27
A printed newspaper	33	25
Radio	27	21
The Internet	42	55
Other (VOL)	2	3
Not sure	3	2

F13. How would you describe the area in which you live? [373]

	All adults	Millennials
Urban	19	25
Suburban	29	33
Small town	29	24
Rural	19	14
Not sure	4	4

F14. If you added together the yearly income of all the members of your family who were living at home last year, would the total be less than ten thousand dollars, between ten thousand dollars and twenty thousand dollars, between twenty thousand dollars and thirty thousand dollars, between thirty thousand dollars and forty thousand dollars, between forty thousand dollars and fifty thousand dollars, between fifty thousand dollars and seventy-five thousand dollars, between seventy-five thousand dollars and one hundred thousand dollars, or would the total be more than that? [374]

	All adults	Millennials
Less than \$10,000	7	7
Between \$10,000 and \$20,000	9	8
Between \$20,000 and \$30,000	10	11
Between \$30,000 and \$40,000	10	11
Between \$40,000 and \$50,000	9	9
Between \$50,000 and \$75,000	16	17
Between \$75,000 and \$100,000	10	11
More than \$100,000	13	12
Not sure/refused	16	14

F15. For statistical purposes only, would you please tell me how old you are? (IF “REFUSED,” ASK:) Well, would you tell me which age group you belong to? [141-142]

	All adults	Millennials
18-24	13	48
25-29	8	31
30-32	6	21
33-34	3	—
35-39	7	—
40-44	9	—
45-49	8	—
50-54	9	—
55-59	9	—
60-64	11	—
65-69	6	—
70-74	7	—
75 and over	4	—
Refused/not sure	—	—

F16. And again, for statistical purposes only, would you please tell me whether you are from a Hispanic or Spanish-speaking background? [143]

	All adults	Millennials
Yes, Hispanic	11	19
No, not Hispanic	89	80
Not sure	—	1

F17. And to ensure that we have a representative sample, what is your race—white, black, Asian, or something else? [144]

	All adults	Millennials
White	76	63
Black	10	14
Asian	1	2
Other	4	7
Hispanic (VOL)	8	13
Not sure/refused	1	1

Endnotes

- 1 For years, traditional public opinion polling has broken down ideology into three distinct groupings: liberal, moderate, and conservative. Based on this categorization, there has been remarkable stability in ideological orientation for the last 20 years with roughly one-fifth of Americans identifying themselves as “liberal” and about four in 10 classifying themselves as “moderate” or “conservative,” respectively, according to Gallup and other public polling. In this study, the electorate is broken down using a more expansive five-point scale of political ideology that reflects the primary approaches people ascribe to today. Under this schematic, 34 percent of the country identifies as “conservative,” 24 percent as “moderate,” 15 percent as “liberal,” 13 percent as “progressive,” and 5 percent as “libertarian.” After moderates are asked which approach they lean toward, the overall ideological breakdown of the country divides into 40 percent of Americans identifying as progressive or liberal and 49 percent as conservative or libertarian and the rest unsure or scattered among moderate and other approaches.
- 2 See Appendix E, question 4.
- 3 Confidence levels rose in 2002, at one point to 66 percent. However, this was almost certainly a national “rallying effect” caused by the September 2001 terrorist attacks. We therefore feel that the 2000 results provide a more meaningful and typical measure of public confidence.
- 4 For historical data on this question, see Appendix E, question 5a.
- 5 See Appendix E, question 13.
- 6 The same general pattern is seen when each performance metric is entered into the model independently. When the item about waste in government is entered, it too has more predictive power than partisanship, although its t-score (7.988) is only slightly higher than that for party identification (-6.353).
- 7 The correlation for party identification and ideology = 0.486. We use correlation analysis to measure the degree to which variables are related to each other. If two variables produced the exact same responses for every respondent, their correlation coefficient would equal 1.0.

About the authors

Ruy Teixeira is a Senior Fellow at both The Century Foundation and American Progress. He is also a guest scholar at the Brookings Institution, where he recently co-directed a joint Brookings-American Enterprise Institute project on political demography and geography, “The Future of Red, Blue and, Purple America,” and wrote a series of reports with William Frey on the political geography of battleground states in the 2008 election.

He is the author or co-author of six books, including *Red, Blue and Purple America: The Future of Election Demographics*; *The Emerging Democratic Majority*; *America’s Forgotten Majority: Why the White Working Class Still Matters*; and *The Disappearing American Voter*, as well as hundreds of articles, both scholarly and popular. He also writes “Public Opinion Snapshot,” a weekly feature featured on the CAP and TCF websites.

Teixeira’s book *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, written with John Judis (Scribner, 2002), was the most widely discussed political book of that year and generated praise across the political spectrum, from George Will on the right to E.J. Dionne on the left. It was selected as one of the best books of the year by *The Economist* magazine. Teixeira’s recent writings include “Demographic Change and the Future of the Parties,” “The European Paradox” (with Matt Browne and John Halpin), “New Progressive America,” “New Progressive America: The Millennial Generation” (with David Madland), and “The Decline of the White Working Class and the Rise of a Mass Upper Middle Class” (with Alan Abramowitz).

Guy Molyneux is a partner with Hart Research. He has carried out survey and focus group research projects for a wide variety of nonprofit organizations, government agencies, political candidates, labor unions, and media organizations. His clients have included NBC News, the Council for Excellence in Government, The Wall Street Journal, the U.S. Department of Labor, the Nasdaq Stock Market, U.S. Sen. Richard Durbin, the AFL-CIO, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), and the Children’s Defense Fund.

Mr. Molyneux previously served as director of polling for Cable News Network (CNN) and as executive director of the Commonwealth Institute. He has written about politics and public opinion for *The Atlantic*, *Rolling Stone*, *Dissent*, *The American Prospect*, and the *Los Angeles Times*'s Sunday "Opinion" section, and is a contributing editor to *The Public Perspective*. He has commented on politics for National Public Radio, NBC News, C-SPAN, the Fox News Channel, CNBC, and CNN.

Mr. Molyneux is a graduate of Harvard College and has undertaken graduate study in public opinion research and electoral politics at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

John D. Whaley, Ph.D., is a senior analyst at Hart Research. His diverse set of corporate, government, labor, political, and non-profit clients includes the DSCC, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Coca-Cola Company, and the University of California system. Prior to rejoining Hart Research in 2010, John spent three years as a senior VP at American Environics (AE), a California-based firm combining traditional polling methods with in-depth techniques in cognitive linguistics and political psychology. While at AE, John served as overall project director and played the lead analytical role on numerous quantitative and qualitative research efforts. His AE clients included AARP, the Open Society Institute, the Robert Wood Johnson and Ford Foundations, and Earthjustice. John first joined Hart Research in 2003 after receiving his doctorate in political science from American University in Washington, where he specialized in issues pertaining to corruption and democratization and taught a course on research methods. A native Californian, John received his B.A. in political science from UC Berkeley in 1989.

About Hart Research Associates

Peter D. Hart Research Associates is one of the nation's leading survey research firms. Founded in 1971, Hart Research has conducted over 5,000 public opinion surveys and interviewed more than three million individuals. The firm has also undertaken more than 5,000 focus group sessions.

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