

## **The Political Alienation Barometer**

Public Agenda

Representative surveys of U.S. adults

Two surveys fielded August 25 to August 29, 2022 and September 9 to September 12, 2022

Data collected by NORC

Released October 2022

<https://www.publicagenda.org/reports/the-political-alienation-barometer/>

### **Methodology and Topline**

The survey results below appear in the Public Agenda report "The Political Alienation Barometer" which summarizes findings from two national surveys of adult Americans ages 18 and older from the continental U.S., Alaska, and Hawaii. Both surveys were administered in English and fielded online and by telephone. The first survey of 1,003 adult Americans was conducted from August 25 to August 29, 2022 (946 completed online and 57 completed by phone). The second survey of 1,014 adult Americans was conducted from September 9 to September 12, 2022 (934 completed online and 80 completed by phone). Both surveys were fielded by NORC. This research was solely supported by Public Agenda. When referencing this report, please cite Public Agenda.

Surveys were conducted by the AmeriSpeak Panel department of NORC at the University of Chicago. Data were collected using the probability-based, nationally representative AmeriSpeak® Panel. Technical information about the AmeriSpeak Panel is available [here](#). During the initial recruitment phase of the AmeriSpeak Panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame, supplemented with households selected from the USPS Delivery Sequence File. Selected U.S. households were then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face-to-face interviewing in the homes of respondents). AmeriSpeak provides sample coverage of approximately 97 percent of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the sample include people in group-living quarters and those with P.O. Box only addresses and some newly constructed dwellings. AmeriSpeak Panel members selected for this study were scientifically selected to represent persons aged 18 and over in the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

For August Wave 1, the final stage survey completion rate is 16.9 percent, and the overall margin of sampling error is +/- 4.35 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level for a 50% survey statistic, including the design effect. For September Wave 2, the final stage survey completion rate is 17.1 percent, and the overall margin of sampling error is +/- 3.97 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level for a 50% survey statistic, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups. Once the AmeriSpeak study sample has been selected and fielded, and all the study data have been collected and made final, a statistical weighting process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any noncoverage or under and oversampling resulting from the study specific sample design. Poststratification variables included age, gender, census division, race/ethnicity, and education. Weighting variables were obtained from the 2022 Current Population Survey. The weighted data reflect the U.S. population of adults age 18 and over.

Some questions in this survey are trended with a survey conducted from September 14 to October 15, 2018, for Public Agenda by Wiese Research Associates, Inc. and released in August 2019. That

survey was based on a nationally representative probability sample of adults aged 18 or older (n=1,000) and conducted by phone and online. Further information about the 2018 survey can be found at <https://www.publicagenda.org/reports/strengthening-democracy-what-do-americans-think/>.

Some questions in this survey are trended with a survey conducted from November 6 to December 28, 2019, for Public Agenda by Wiese Research Associates, Inc. and released in July 2020. That survey was based on a nationally representative probability sample of adults aged 18 or older (n=1,000) and conducted by phone and online. Further information about the 2019 survey can be found at <https://www.publicagenda.org/reports/greater-voice-greater-impact/>.

Some questions in this survey are trended with a survey conducted from May 24 to May 27, 2021, for Public Agenda by Ipsos and released in July 2021. That survey was based on a nationally representative probability sample of adults aged 18 or older (n=1,260) and conducted online. Further information about the 2021 survey can be found at <https://www.publicagenda.org/reports/renewing-democracy/>.

The 2018 and 2019 surveys were fielded via telephone interviews. In 2021, the survey was fielded online. While significant changes in data points from the telephone surveys to the online survey can largely be attributed to the changing environment, switching from a phone to online approach may have also generated a mode effect. Questions that allowed telephone respondents to volunteer “Don’t know” as a response in the telephone surveys also included “Don’t know” as an explicit response category in the online survey. The topline includes this “Don’t know” option for all questions that included it as an explicit response category in the online survey. The topline denotes questions that included “Don’t know” as an explicit response category in the telephone surveys but did not include “Don’t know” in the online survey with a dash (-), indicating null or missing values. Insignificant values of less than 0.5% are indicated with an asterisk (\*).

**FULL QUESTIONNAIRE**

**PA1. To what extent do you [agree or disagree / disagree or agree] with the following statements? [GRID ITEMS RANDOMIZED. HALF SAMPLE SHOWN RESPONSE OPTIONS IN REVERSE ORDER]**

**A. Politicians don't care what people like me think**

	Total N=2017
Strongly agree	30%
Agree	34%
Neither agree nor disagree	23%
Disagree	10%
Strongly disagree	3%
Don't know/Skipped on Web/Refused	1%

**B. Politicians in Washington cannot be trusted to put the interests of the country ahead of the interests of their party**

	Total N=2017
Strongly agree	36%
Agree	37%
Neither agree nor disagree	19%
Disagree	5%
Strongly disagree	2%
Don't know/Skipped on Web/Refused	1%

**C. Politics and government can seem so complicated, I find it hard to understand what is going on**

	Total N=2017
Strongly agree	13%
Agree	28%
Neither agree nor disagree	25%
Disagree	23%
Strongly disagree	11%
Don't know/Skipped on Web/Refused	1%

**PA2. Are you planning to vote in the upcoming 2022 midterm election or not, or are you not sure?  
[HALF SAMPLE SHOWN FIRST FOUR RESPONSE OPTIONS IN REVERSE ORDER]**

	Total N=1014
Yes, definitely	60%
Yes, probably	16%
No, probably not	7%
No, definitely not	5%
Not sure whether I will vote	10%
I am not eligible to vote	2%
Don't know/Skipped on Web/Refused	*

**PA3. The United States is meant to be a democracy, where citizens have a voice, rights are protected, and laws are fairly enforced. These days, would you say that our country's democracy is:  
[HALF SAMPLE SHOWN RESPONSE OPTIONS IN REVERSE ORDER]**

	Total N=1014
In crisis	50%
Facing serious challenges but not in crisis	44%
Doing well	6%
Don't know/Skipped on Web/Refused	*

<i>Trending</i>	9/14-15, 2018	11/6-12/28, 2019	5/24-27, 2021	2022
In crisis	39%	39%	36%	50%
Facing serious challenges but not in crisis	42%	41%	50%	44%
Doing well	15%	16%	14%	6%
Don't know	3%	4%	-	*
Refused	1%	1%	-	-

**PA4. Do you think the design and structure of our nation’s government [is fine as long as we elect the right people to represent us or needs significant change no matter who we elect to represent us / needs significant change no matter who we elect to represent us or is fine as long as we elect the right people to represent us]?**

**[HALF SAMPLE SHOWN BOTH QUESTION TEXT AND RESPONSE OPTIONS IN REVERSE ORDER]**

	Total N=1014
Is fine as long as we elect the right people to represent us	43%
Needs significant change no matter who we elect to represent us	56%
Don’t know/Skipped on Web/Refused	1%

<i>Trending</i>	11/6-12/28, 2019	5/24-27, 2021	2022
Needs significant change no matter who we elect to represent us	52%	47%	43%
Is fine as long as we elect the right people to represent us	40%	53%	56%
Don’t know	4%	-	-
Depends	3%	-	-
Refused	1%	-	1%

**PA5. How much of a problem, if at all, is each of the following?**

**[GRID ITEMS RANDOMIZED. HALF SAMPLE SHOWN RESPONSE OPTIONS IN REVERSE ORDER]**

**A. Politicians are more interested in blocking the other party than getting anything done**

	Total N=2017
A serious problem	66%
Somewhat of a problem	26%
Not much of a problem	4%
Not a problem at all	1%
Don’t know/Skipped on Web/Refused	2%

**B. Negativity, bias, and misinformation in the news media**

	Total N=2017
A serious problem	58%
Somewhat of a problem	33%
Not much of a problem	6%
Not a problem at all	1%
Don't know/Skipped on Web/Refused	2%

**C. Negativity, bias, and misinformation on social media**

	Total N=2017
A serious problem	62%
Somewhat of a problem	28%
Not much of a problem	5%
Not a problem at all	2%
Don't know/Skipped on Web/Refused	3%

**D. Government not being able to fulfill basic services**

	Total N=2017
A serious problem	44%
Somewhat of a problem	40%
Not much of a problem	12%
Not a problem at all	3%
Don't know/Skipped on Web/Refused	1%

**E. Elections being stolen**

	Total N=2017
A serious problem	29%
Somewhat of a problem	21%
Not much of a problem	21%
Not a problem at all	26%
Don't know/Skipped on Web/Refused	3%

**F. Corruption in government and among politicians**

	Total N=2017
A serious problem	62%
Somewhat of a problem	28%
Not much of a problem	7%
Not a problem at all	1%
Don't know/Skipped on Web/Refused	2%

**G. Government being controlled by corporations and the wealthy**

	Total N=2017
A serious problem	60%
Somewhat of a problem	28%
Not much of a problem	8%
Not a problem at all	2%
Don't know/Skipped on Web/Refused	2%

**H. Politics being boring**

	Total N=2017
A serious problem	14%
Somewhat of a problem	26%
Not much of a problem	35%
Not a problem at all	22%
Don't know/Skipped on Web/Refused	3%

**I. Too few Americans participating in the political process**

	Total N=2017
A serious problem	37%
Somewhat of a problem	44%
Not much of a problem	13%
Not a problem at all	4%
Don't know/Skipped on Web/Refused	2%

**J. Extremism in the Republican Party**

	Total N=2017
A serious problem	50%
Somewhat of a problem	27%
Not much of a problem	15%
Not a problem at all	6%
Don't know/Skipped on Web/Refused	2%

**K. Extremism in the Democratic Party**

	Total N=2017
A serious problem	37%
Somewhat of a problem	33%
Not much of a problem	20%
Not a problem at all	8%
Don't know/Skipped on Web/Refused	2%

**PA6. How much more involved would you get in the political process if...**

[GRID ITEMS RANDOMIZED. HALF SAMPLE SHOWN RESPONSE OPTIONS IN REVERSE ORDER]

**A. More politicians refused to compromise with their opposition**

	Total N=2017
A great deal more involved	14%
Somewhat more involved	23%
A little more involved	20%
Not more involved at all	39%
Don't know/Skipped on Web/Refused	4%

**B. More politicians worked together to get things done despite their political differences**

	Total N=2017
A great deal more involved	36%
Somewhat more involved	32%
A little more involved	19%
Not more involved at all	11%
Don't know/Skipped on Web/Refused	3%



**C. Ordinary people had more of an influence on government decisions**

	Total N=2017
A great deal more involved	36%
Somewhat more involved	32%
A little more involved	20%
Not more involved at all	10%
Don't know/Skipped on Web/Refused	2%

**D. More politicians listened to and acted on voters' opinions**

	Total N=2017
A great deal more involved	36%
Somewhat more involved	31%
A little more involved	20%
Not more involved at all	10%
Don't know/Skipped on Web/Refused	2%

**E. It were easier for third-party and independent candidates to run for office so voters have more than just two choices**

	Total N=2017
A great deal more involved	28%
Somewhat more involved	29%
A little more involved	20%
Not more involved at all	21%
Don't know/Skipped on Web/Refused	3%

**F. There were term limits for members of Congress**

	Total N=2017
A great deal more involved	38%
Somewhat more involved	26%
A little more involved	17%
Not more involved at all	16%
Don't know/Skipped on Web/Refused	3%

**G. All Americans were automatically registered to vote when they turn 18 years old**

	Total N=2017
A great deal more involved	25%
Somewhat more involved	24%
A little more involved	15%
Not more involved at all	34%
Don't know/Skipped on Web/Refused	2%

**H. The voting process was easier, such as through early voting, voting by mail, weekend elections, and opening more polling places**

	Total N=2017
A great deal more involved	27%
Somewhat more involved	22%
A little more involved	18%
Not more involved at all	30%
Don't know/Skipped on Web/Refused	2%

**I. Election security were improved, such as by requiring picture identification at polling places, regularly purging voter rolls, and banning voting by mail**

	Total N=2017
A great deal more involved	26%
Somewhat more involved	19%
A little more involved	18%
Not more involved at all	35%
Don't know/Skipped on Web/Refused	2%

**J. There was a standard, non-partisan process for drawing election district maps**

	Total N=2017
A great deal more involved	28%
Somewhat more involved	27%
A little more involved	20%
Not more involved at all	22%
Don't know/Skipped on Web/Refused	3%

**K. The President was elected based on the popular vote and not the electoral college**

	Total N=2017
A great deal more involved	33%
Somewhat more involved	21%
A little more involved	16%
Not more involved at all	26%
Don't know/Skipped on Web/Refused	2%

**PartyID5. Computed 5-level Party ID**

	Total N=2017
Unknown	*
Democrat NET	45%
Democrat	36%
Lean Democrat	10%
Don't lean/Independent/ None	20%
Republican NET	35%
Lean Republican	10%
Republican	25%

**PartyID7. Computed 7-level Party ID**

	Total N=2017
Unknown	*
Democrat NET	45%
Strong Democrat	22%
Not so strong Democrat	14%
Lean Democrat	10%
Don't lean/Independent/ None	20%
Republican NET	35%
Lean Republican	10%
Not so strong Republican	11%
Strong Republican	14%

**IDEO. Computed 5-level political ideology**

	Total N=2017
Unknown	1%
Liberal NET	24%
Very liberal	12%
Moderate	46%
Conservative NET	29%
Somewhat conservative	18%
Very conservative	11%

**VOTENEW. Are you currently registered to vote at your current address, registered at a different address, or not currently registered?**

	Total N=2017
Registered at current address	81%
Registered at a different address	5%
Not currently registered	9%
I am not eligible to vote	2%
Not sure	2%
Skipped on Web/Refused	-

**VOTE20. In talking to people about elections, we often find that a lot of people were not able to vote because they weren't registered, they were sick, or they just didn't have time. Which one of the following best describes you?**

	Total N=2017
I did not vote in the 2020 election.	18%
I thought about voting in the 2020 election, but didn't.	3%
I usually vote, but I didn't in the 2020 election.	3%
I'm sure I voted	76%
Don't know/Skipped on Web/Refused	*

*If voted in 2020 election*

**CANDI20. Did you vote in the 2020 presidential election for Donald Trump, Joe Biden, or someone else?**

	Total N=1599
Donald Trump	44%
Joe Biden	47%
Someone else	7%
Did not vote in this race	2%
Don't know/Skipped on Web/Refused	*