

Trust in State and Federal Government

Nearly half of Californians (47%) and likely voters (48%) think that they can trust the state government to do what is right only some of the time, while 9 percent of Californians and 13 percent of likely voters volunteer that they can never trust the state government to do what is right. In periodic surveys since August 2002, a majority of adults and likely voters have expressed distrust in state government; however, distrust is currently at its lowest level since 2002. Today, partisans are divided: Republicans (82%) and independents (68%) are much more likely than Democrats (40%) to trust the state government only some or none of the time. Among racial/ethnic groups, whites (62%) and African Americans (61%) are the most likely to express distrust, followed by Latinos (50%) and Asians (48%). Majorities across regions express distrust (62% Orange/San Diego, 59% Inland Empire, 58% Los Angeles, 55% Central Valley)—with the exception of the San Francisco Bay Area (46%).

“How much of the time do you think you can trust the state government in Sacramento to do what is right?”

	All adults	Party			Likely voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Just about always	9%	7%	4%	3%	6%
Most of the time	32	51	13	28	32
Only some of the time	47	37	62	55	48
None of the time (volunteered)	9	3	20	13	13
Don't know	3	2	1	1	1

Californians continue to be distrustful of the federal government. A solid majority (62%) think the federal government can be trusted to do what is right only some of the time, while 11 percent of adults volunteer that it can never be trusted. Only 24 percent say the federal government can be trusted just about always (6%) or most of the time (18%). Likely voters are slightly more distrustful (68% only some of the time, 13% none of the time). Similar proportions of Californians held this view in our March 2017 survey (62% only some of the time, 7% none of the time). Today, Democrats (81%) and independents (80%) are somewhat more likely than Republicans (73%) to express distrust. Majorities of Californians across all regions and demographic groups express distrust toward the federal government.

“How much of the time do you think you can trust the federal government in Washington today to do what is right?”

	All adults	Party			Likely voters
		Dem	Rep	Ind	
Just about always	6%	2%	5%	3%	3%
Most of the time	18	15	20	16	15
Only some of the time	62	68	66	66	68
None of the time (volunteered)	11	13	7	14	13
Don't know	3	2	2	1	1