

Confidence Lost

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Just when the stakes couldn't be higher, America's trust in public health is faltering, a new [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health poll](#) of 1,305 American adults confirms.

- Just 52% of Americans polled have a great deal of trust in CDC advice; 1 respondent [told NPR](#) she lost trust because of the agency's inconsistent, "all over the board" guidance during the pandemic
- Just 41% express strong trust in state and local health departments. That falls to 37% for the NIH and FDA
- Only 34% gave high marks to US's public health surveillance system—down from 43% in 2009
- 27% of Republicans greatly trust CDC, compared to 76% of Democrats

Key reason: "Our nation's public health system entered the pandemic underfunded and understaffed—problems that have persisted for generations—and the consequences of this underinvestment over the past year have been devastating," notes Richard Besser, RWJF chief, in a [news release](#).

Problem: "We're in a period of distrust of government in general," notes Robert Blendon, a Harvard emeritus professor who led the survey. And without trust, he says, "people won't agree "to change their lives, take preventive [measures], take vaccines."

Silver linings:

- 71% of those polled favor substantially boosting federal spending on public health
- 72% agree that public health agencies are extremely or very important to Americans' health