



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on September 20, 2012

Poll: 64 Percent Believe Americans Too Dependent on Government Aid

A Rasmussen Reports [poll](#) released Thursday says 64 percent of American adults believe too many Americans are dependent on the government for financial aid. The survey was conducted by Pulse Opinion Research on Wednesday and Thursday, September 18 and 19, two days when the big political story in the news was about Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney telling supporters at a private fundraiser that 47 percent of Americans would likely vote this fall for President Barack Obama because they don't pay taxes and receive government assistance of one kind or another. The survey was conducted by phone with 1,000 adults, the report said.



Participants were asked: "Are there too many Americans dependent on the government for financial aid or not enough? Or is the level of dependency about right?" Ten percent said not enough Americans are dependent on the government, while 16 percent said the number is about right.

In a secret video [recording](#) made during a Romney fundraiser in May, Romney said he had no chance of winning over the nearly half the population he described as in a state of dependency on the federal government. The comments did not become public until posted Monday on the website of the left-wing *Mother Jones* magazine. Romney is heard on the video making the following comments:

There are 47 percent who will vote for the President, no matter what. All right, there are 47 percent who are with him, who are dependent on the government, who believe that they are victims, who believe the government has a responsibility to care for them, who believe that they are entitled to health care, to food, to housing, to you name it.... Forty-seven percent of Americans pay no income tax. So our message of low taxes doesn't connect. And so my job is not to worry about those people — I'll never convince them that they should take personal responsibility and care for their lives.

Romney said he would have to concentrate his efforts on trying to win over "the 5 to 10 percent in the center that are independents, that are thoughtful," to find a margin of victory. Democrats seized on the comments as evidence that Romney is out of touch with the lives of poor and middle-class Americans and is willing to write off nearly half the electorate in his campaign for President.

"My expectation is that if you want to be President, you have to work for everyone, not just for some," President Obama said during an [appearance](#) Tuesday night on *The Late Show* with David Letterman. Based on his observations while traveling the country, Obama said, "I promise you, there are not a lot of people out there who think they're victims. There are not a lot of people who think that they're entitled to something. What I think the majority of people, Democrats and Republicans, believe is that we've got



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some obligations to each other, and there's nothing wrong with us giving each other a helping hand."

But Romney's comments drew plenty of criticism from his Republican allies as well. Neo-conservative commentator and *Weekly Standard* editor William Kristol bluntly described the remarks as "stupid and arrogant."

"It's worth recalling," Kristol wrote "that a good chunk of the 47 percent who don't pay income taxes are Romney supporters — especially of course seniors (who might well 'believe they are entitled to health care,' a position Romney agrees with), as well as many lower-income Americans (including men and women serving in the military) who think conservative policies are better for the country even if they're not getting a tax cut under the Romney plan."

David Brooks in his *New York Times* column took Romney to task for giving voice to "a country-club fantasy."

"It's what self-satisfied millionaires say to each other. It reinforces every negative view people have about Romney," Brooks wrote. Romney, meanwhile, stood by the substance of his remarks, while conceding he had expressed it "inelegantly." In that he was backed up by running mate Paul Ryan, who called the comments of his senior partner on the ticket "obviously inarticulate."

"He was obviously inarticulate in making this point, and the point we're trying to make here is under the Obama economy, government dependency is up and economic stagnation is up, and what we're trying to achieve is getting people off of government dependency and back to a job that pays well and gets them onto a path of prosperity," Ryan said in the interview with KRNV in Reno, Nevada.

But a number of the candidate's conservative supporters, from billionaire Donald Trump to syndicated talk-show host Laura Ingraham and former rival GOP candidate Herman Cain said they found nothing wrong with what Romney said or the way he said it.

"My advice to Gov. Romney: don't back down," Cain said in an interview with Newsmax.TV. "You don't need to say it any differently. You just basically stated a fact and they don't like the facts," the Georgia businessman said. Former Superior Court of New Jersey judge and Fox News commentator Andrew Napolitano agreed, [writing](#) on Thursday's LewRockwell.com that the cult of dependency did not begin with Obama.

The reason hell broke loose among most of the media is that Romney spoke a painful truth, and often a painful truth is difficult to accept. I have argued that FDR deliberately set out to create dependence upon the federal government — and hence upon virtually all Democrats in Congress and Republicans afraid to resist them — by establishing entitlement programs and inducing reliance upon them.

While Romney had not intended for his comments to be made public, he said this week that all the publicity now surrounding them may help clarify the different views of governance he and President Obama offer.

"The president's view is one of a larger government; I disagree," Romney said in an [interview](#) on Fox News. "I think a society based on a government-centered nation where government plays a larger and larger role, redistributes money, that's the wrong course for America."

The comments on the video may be reassuring to hard-line conservatives who have often expressed a distrust for the man who was a champion of "gay rights" as a U.S. Senate candidate in the 1990s and fathered the "RomneyCare" state healthcare program as governor of Massachusetts. But *New York*



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Times columnist Russ Douthat cautioned both Romney's critics and defenders against assuming that what the former governor said at the private affair reflects his true beliefs. What the candidate really believes. What a candidate says at a fundraiser is what he thinks potential donors want to hear, Douthat [wrote](#).

This is a man who tried to get to the left of Ted Kennedy in their 1994 Senate race and to the right of Rick Perry in 2012. The idea that he would reveal his true political beliefs to a group of people he's trying to flatter, cajole and spook into giving him more money may be appealing to his critics, but it isn't necessarily convincing.

To columnist Brooks, it is because Romney has tried so hard to portray himself as a (in Romney's words) "severe conservative" that he has become more caricature than candidate.

"Personally, I think he's a kind, decent man who says stupid things because he is pretending to be something he is not — some sort of cartoonish government-hater," Brooks wrote. "But it scarcely matters. He's running a depressingly inept presidential campaign. Mr. Romney, your entitlement reform ideas are essential, but when will the incompetence stop?"



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