



Written by [James Heiser](#) on March 16, 2011

Poll: Europeans Don't Trust Their Political Leaders

In the words of [Julian Glover's article for the Guardian](#): "The main message from all five is that European citizens do not trust their governments or the honesty of their politicians and think that their countries are more likely to become poorer than richer over the next decade. But they also see themselves as socially liberal and, on balance, are likely to support the single currency in those countries that use it."

The poll of opinion in Britain, France, Germany, Spain and Poland was conducted by major news agencies in these nations, including the *Guardian*, *Le Monde*, *Der Spiegel*, *El Pais*, and *Gazeta Wyborcza*. (A full report of the poll findings can be downloaded [here](#).)



Public expectations regarding the general state of the European economy was one of the major points explored by the poll, and the result was grim: On average, 47 percent of respondents expected the state of the economy to get worse, and only 20 percent anticipated any improvement, while the rest believed the situation would remain virtually the same. Opinion concerning the state of the economy appears to be most dire in Great Britain and France, where 55 and 59 percent, respectively, expect the economy to be worse shape over the next 12 months.

But public opinion became even more hostile when it came to trusting the government. When asked the question, "To what extent do you trust the government to deal with the problems facing your country?," the British had the most favorable opinion of their elected representatives, and still 66 percent responded "not very much" or "not at all." The numbers for Germany (80 percent), France (82 percent), Spain (78 percent) and Poland (82 percent) would seem to indicate a fundamental failure of trust. And there is reason to believe that Europeans have found their political leaders to be fundamentally untrustworthy, because when they were asked, "To what extent do you trust all national politicians, whether in government or opposition, to act with honest and integrity?," the average of the nations polled was 89 percent responded "not very much" or "not at all."

Many of the questions in the poll focused on an economic issues that are under contention in the United States, as well. Asked whether they agree with the statement, "The government has been spending too much money," the EU average response of 78 percent agreement with this statement, while a mere *eight percent* disagreed. Asked whether they agreed with the statement, "The government needs to focus on reducing the national debt by cutting public spending," the numbers were not as dramatic (56 percent in agreement, with 22 percent disagreeing), but were decisively in favor of cutting such public spending. Even Europeans are clearly recognizing that their nations cannot spend their way out of a financial crisis.

The issue of "social liberalism" highlighted by Glover's article for the *Guardian* appears to be focused



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primarily on one social question: “If you had to define your attitude toward social issues, for example your attitude towards marriage, women’s rights or gay rights, on the whole, would you say it is...?” The total considering themselves “Liberal” on this issue made up an average of 62 percent of respondents, while 16 percent considered themselves “Traditional,” and 20 percent were “neither liberal nor traditional.”

Given the widespread discontent among the electorate that is manifested in this poll, it would appear that saying the Europeans have “little confidence” in their leadership would be a profound understatement. However, what seems uncertain is what the people are prepared to do in response. Further study needs to be done to determine more precisely the views of the people regarding the specific parties; however, what seems certain is that there is virtually no sympathy for continuing the Progressive path of redistributionist economics. Europeans don’t trust their leaders, and they want those leaders to stop spending their money — a sentiment they clearly share with a majority of Americans.



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