

# Who is Voting for Trump and Why? Pew Research Council Explains

By [Mike Whitney](#)

Global Research, April 11, 2016

[CounterPunch](#) 8 April 2016

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Global Economy](#), [Poverty & Social Inequality](#)

In-depth Report: [U.S. Elections](#)

*“In a new survey by the Pew Research Council, half of the registered voters surveyed (51%) said they think the future for the next generation will be worse, while just 24% said life will be better for the next generation. The survey indicated this pessimistic sentiment is spread across racial and economic lines.”*

– [Optimism Is a Casualty in Campaign 2016](#), Wall Street Journal

30 years of wage stagnation followed by one wealth-eviscerating asset bubble after another has drained the optimism from the collective American psyche. Most people now think things are going to get worse for themselves and their children. This pervasive pessimism shows up in other surveys as well, like this recent Gallup poll in which the sample-group was asked, “In general, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in the United States at this time?”

You’d think that would be a slam-dunk for President Obama who never misses a chance to boast about his great economic recovery. But the fact is, 71 percent of the people said they were dissatisfied with the way things are going. Only 27 percent said they’re satisfied. That’s not just a knock on Obama, it’s also a powerful statement about the abysmal condition economy. The vast majority of people are clearly frustrated that they can’t get ahead because the economy isn’t improving. At the same time, they can’t help but notice that more and more of the nation’s wealth is being shifted to the people who least need it, the 1 percent elites at the top.

The point we’re trying to make is that Donald Trump’s meteoric rise in the GOP can be traced back to the failed economic policies of prior administrations. He’s the political beneficiary of 3 decades of stagnant wages, falling incomes, declining living standards, and a cataclysmic financial crisis that wiped out trillions of dollars in home equity leaving behind a battered middle class and sluggish economy that doesn’t grow, doesn’t generate opportunities for upward mobility, and only produces low-paying, deadend, service-sector jobs that barely pay the rent. In other words, if the economy wasn’t in such dire straits, Trump probably would not be the GOP frontrunner. Here’s a summary of what’s really going on by Mechele Dickerson:

“The American Dream that has existed in this country for over 50 years is on life support. For some Americans, it may already be dead....One-fifth of all employed Americans must find ways to supplement their income just to pay bills and buy groceries. Fourteen percent are spending more on their credit

cards to pay for their monthly living expenses, and 17 percent of workers have been forced to sacrifice their retirement security....

Federal Reserve data show that 31 percent of people who have not yet retired and 19 percent of 55-64-year-old adults who are nearing retirement age have no postwork savings or private pension..

Americans who have worked hard and played by the rules now fear that they will never be financially successful. They have lost faith in the American Dream. They are disillusioned, and they are showing signs of despair..." ([Is the American Dream Dead](#), PBS)

This is the environment in which Trump has emerged as the unlikely frontrunner of the Republican Party. Trump has been able to capitalize on anti-establishment sentiment just by being himself. His supporters, many of who are blue collar conservatives from small cities and towns across the country, love the fact that Trump is not self censoring and that he says what he thinks whether others find it offensive or not. They see his patrician condescension, his outspoken xenophobia and his blustery showmanship as a refreshing antidote to the other GOP candidates who are invariably scripted, wooden, and fake.

It's unlikely that Trump would have been as successful as he has been if the economy was in better shape. But, as the surveys indicate, people are desperately unhappy and want change now which is why they've turned to a glitzy billionaire casino magnate whose one redeeming grace appears to be that he is an outsider who promises to shake things up once he gets to Washington. We'll see.

But let's cut to the chase: Who are these Trump supporters and why are they backing him?

The PEW Research Center's latest survey titled: "Campaign Exposes Fissures Over Issues, Values and How Life Has Changed in the U.S" sheds some light on these and other questions. Here are a few excerpts from the piece:

"Among GOP voters, fully 75% of those who support Donald Trump for the Republican presidential nomination say life for people like them has gotten worse..."(a much higher percentage than for any other candidate).....

"GOP voters who support Trump also stand out for their pessimism about the nation's economy and their own financial situations: 48% rate current economic conditions in the U.S. as "poor" - no more than about a third of any other candidate's supporters say the same. And 50% of Trump supporters are not satisfied with their financial situations, the highest among any candidate's supported."

"Within the GOP, anger at government is heavily concentrated among Trump supporters - 50% say they are angry at government, compared with 30% of Cruz backers and just 18% of those who support Kasich...."

"Among Republicans, a majority of those who back Trump (61%) view the system as unfair...among Trump supporters, just 27% say trade agreements are beneficial for the U.S, while 67% say they are bad thing..."

"Half of Trump supporters (50%) say they are angry at the federal government, compared with 30% of Cruz supporters and 18% of Kasich supporters. Even smaller shares of Sanders (13%) and Clinton supporters (6%) express anger at government. Anger at government - and politics - is much more pronounced

among Trump backers than among supporters of any other presidential candidate, Republican or Democrat..." ([Campaign Exposes Fissures Over Issues, Values and How Life Has Changed in the U.S.](#), PEW Research Center)

Let's summarize: A higher percentage of Trump supporters think they are getting screwed-over by an unfair system. They think "free trade" only benefits the rich, they think the government is unresponsive to their needs, they think the system is rigged, they think the economy stinks and they're really, really mad.

So, is it fair to say that the Trump campaign is mainly fueled by middle-and-lower income, raging white males who feel like the system threw them overboard years ago and left them with no way to improve conditions for themselves and their families?

It certainly looks that way from the results of the survey, but I could be wrong.

*Mike Whitney lives in Washington state. He is a contributor to [Hopeless: Barack Obama and the Politics of Illusion](#) (AK Press). *Hopeless* is also available in a [Kindle edition](#). He can be reached at [fergiwhitney@msn.com](mailto:fergiwhitney@msn.com).*

The original source of this article is [CounterPunch](#)  
Copyright © [Mike Whitney](#), [CounterPunch](#), 2016

---

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Mike Whitney](#)

**Disclaimer:** The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)  
[www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca) contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)