

Obama, McCain Supporters Agree Government Responsible For Ensuring Basic Healthcare, Food, and Education Needs

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But on Healthcare, Both See Government Falling Short

[Questionnaire/Methodology \(PDF\)](#)



A new WorldPublicOpinion.org poll shows broad consensus among Americans that the government is responsible for ensuring that its citizens can meet their basic healthcare, food, and education needs. These views are held by clear majorities of those who support both John McCain and Barack Obama.

(Photo: [Mark Coggins](#))

However, nearly seven in 10 Americans (69%) say the government is doing a poor job ensuring that its citizens can meet their healthcare needs. These poor ratings on healthcare are given by large majorities of Obama supporters (79%), those who are undecided about the race (74%), and McCain supporters, although by a slimmer margin (55%).

McCain and Obama supporters divide on how well the government is doing in terms of ensuring that people can meet their basic need for food, with 65 percent of McCain supporters saying that it is doing a good job, as compared to 44 percent of Obama supporters. Undecided voters are even more negative, with just 38 percent giving the government a positive evaluation.

The government gets good ratings on meeting its citizens' need for education from a large majority of McCain supporters (70%) and from more modest majorities of Obama supporters (56%) and undecided respondents (52%).

Steven Kull, director of WorldPublicOpinion.org, observes: "There seems to be a consensus that the government has the responsibility to ensure that Americans can meet their basic needs and that the government is underperforming on health care."

The findings are part of a larger international poll conducted in over 20 countries by WorldPublicOpinion.org, an international research project managed by the Program on International Policy Attitudes at the University of Maryland. Knowledge Networks surveyed a representative sample of 885 Americans between August 9 - 20, 2008. The margin of error for the total sample is +/- 3.3 percentage points.

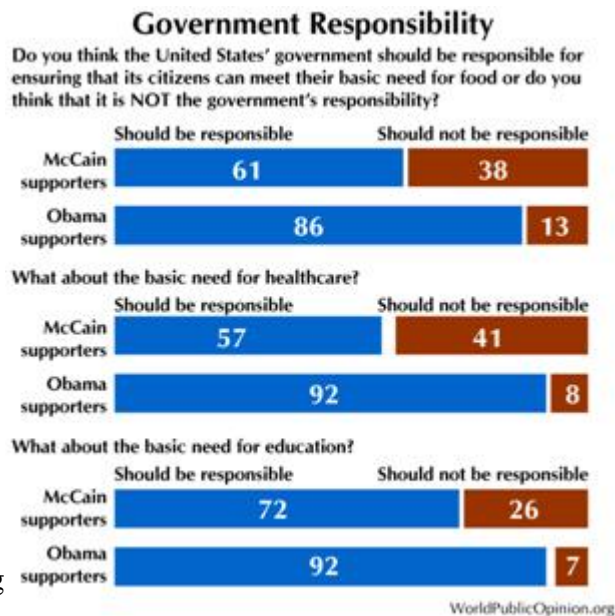
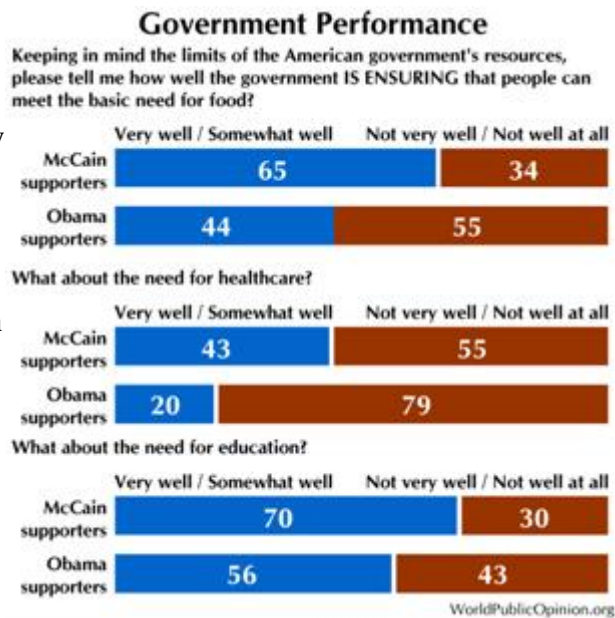
These findings show that the American public largely concurs with the principles presented in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was ratified by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 10, 1948. It states that "everyone has the right to...food, medical care... [and] education." Signatories to the declaration commit "by progressive measures, national and international, to secure" these rights. The Universal Declaration celebrates its 60th anniversary this year.

At least three-quarters of Americans say the "US government should be responsible for ensuring that its citizens can meet their basic needs" for education (83%), healthcare (77%), and food (74%).

A government responsibility for healthcare is recognized by 92 percent of Obama supporters, by 88 percent of the undecided public, and by a smaller majority of McCain supporters, 57 percent.

In terms of ensuring the basic need for food, majorities of each partisan grouping also see this to be a government responsibility: 86 percent of Obama supporters, 77 percent of undecided voters, and 61 percent of McCain supporters.

On the responsibility for meeting education needs, majorities agree among Obama supporters (92%), undecided voters (87%), and McCain supporters (72%).



Americans were also asked: "Keeping in mind the limits of the US government's resources, please tell me how well the government is ensuring that people can meet this need" for each healthcare, education, and food.

Overall, the government gets a mixed assessment on how well it is fulfilling these obligations, with considerable variation across the three basic needs. Sixty-nine percent give the government a poor rating for ensuring that basic healthcare needs are met, and barely positive grades on ensuring basic food needs (52% well, 47% poor). On ensuring education needs, a 61-percent majority says the government is doing a good job.