

IELTS Academic Reading Practice Test 27

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 1–16, which are based on Reading Passage 1 below.

Why are Americans so angry?

Americans are generally known for having a positive outlook on life, but with the countdown for November's presidential election now well under way, polls show voters are angry. This may explain the success of non-mainstream candidates such as Republican Donald Trump and Democrat Bernie Sanders. But what is fuelling the frustration?

A CNN/ORC poll carried out in December 2015 suggests 69% of Americans are either "very angry" or "somewhat angry" about "the way things are going" in the US. And the same proportion - 69% - are angry because the political system "seems to only be working for the insiders with money and power, like those on Wall Street or in Washington," according to a NBC/Wall Street Journal poll from November. Many people are not only angry, they are angrier than they were a year ago, according to an NBC/Esquire survey last month - particularly Republicans (61%), somewhat white people (54%), but also 42% of Democrats, 43% of Latinos and 33% of African Americans.

Candidates have sensed the mood and are adopting the rhetoric. Donald Trump, who has arguably tapped into voters' frustration better than any other candidate, says he is "very, very angry" and will "gladly accept the mantle of anger" while rival Republican Ben Carson says he has encountered "many Americans who are discouraged and angry as they watch the American dream slipping away". Democratic presidential hopeful Bernie Sanders says: "I am angry and millions of Americans are angry," while Hillary Clinton says she "understands why people get angry". Here are five reasons why some voters feel the American dream is in tatters.

1. Economy

"The failure of the economy to deliver real progress to middle-class and working-class Americans over the past 15 years is the most fundamental source of public anger and disaffection in the US," says William Galston, an expert in governance studies at the Brookings Institution think tank. Although the country may have recovered from the recession - economic output has rebounded and unemployment rates have fallen from 10% in 2009 to 5% in 2015 - Americans are still feeling the pinch in their wallets. Household incomes have, generally speaking, been stagnant for 15 years. In 2014, the median household income was \$53,657,

according to the US Census Bureau - compared with \$57,357 in 2007 and \$57,843 in 1999 (adjusted for inflation). There is also a sense that many jobs are of lower quality and opportunity is dwindling, says Galston. "The search for explanations can very quickly degenerate into the identification of villains in American politics. On the left it is the billionaires, the banks, and Wall Street. On the right it is immigrants, other countries taking advantage of us and the international economy - they are two sides of the same political coin."

2. Immigration

America's demographics are changing - nearly 59 million immigrants have arrived in the US since 1965, not all of whom entered the country legally. Forty years ago, 84% of the American population was made up of non-Hispanic white people - by last year the figure was 62%, according to Pew Research. It projects this trend will continue, and by 2055 non-Hispanic white people will make up less than half the population. Pew expects them to account for only 46% of the population by 2065. By 2055, more Asians than any other ethnic group are expected to move to US.

"It's been an era of huge demographic, racial, cultural, religious and generational change," says Paul Taylor, author of *The Next America*. "While some celebrate these changes, others deplore them. Some older, whiter voters do not recognise the country they grew up in. There is a sense of alien tribes," he says.

The US currently has 11.3 million illegal immigrants. Migrants often become a target of anger, says Roberto Suro, an immigration expert at the University of Southern California. "There is a displacement of anxiety and they become the face of larger sources of tensions, such as terrorism, jobs and dissatisfaction. We saw that very clearly when Donald Trump switched from [complaining about] Mexicans to Muslims without skipping a beat after San Bernardino," he says, referring to the shooting in California in December that left 14 people dead.

3. Washington

"When asked if they trust the government, 89% of Republicans and 72% of Democrats say "only sometimes" or "never", according to Pew Research. Six out of 10 Americans think the government has too much power, a survey by Gallup suggests, while the government has been named as the top problem in the US for two years in a row - above issues such as the economy, jobs and immigration, according to the organisation.

The gridlock on Capitol Hill and the perceived impotence of elected officials has led to resentment among 20 to 30% of voters, says polling expert Karlyn Bowman, from the American Enterprise Institute. "People see politicians fighting and things not getting done - plus the responsibilities of Congress have grown significantly since the 1970s and there is simply more to criticise. People feel more distant from their government and sour on it," she says.

William Galston thinks part of the appeal of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders is down to frustration with what some see as a failing system. "So on the right you have someone who is running as a 'strong man', a Berlusconi and Putin, who will get things done, and on the left you have someone who is rejecting incrementalism and calling for a political revolution," he says.

Ted Cruz, who won the Republican caucuses in Iowa, is also running as an anti-establishment candidate. "Tonight is a victory for every American who's watched in dismay as career politicians in Washington in both parties refuse to listen and too often fail to keep their commitments to the people," he said on Monday night.

4. America's place in the world

America is used to being seen as a superpower but the number of Americans that think the US "stands above all other countries in the world" went from 38% in 2012 to 28% in 2014, Pew Research suggests. Seventy percent of Americans also think the US is losing respect internationally, according to a 2013 poll by the centre.

"For a country that is used to being on top of the world, the last 15 years haven't been great in terms of foreign policy. There's a feeling of having been at war since 9/11 that's never really gone away, a sense America doesn't know what it wants and that things aren't going our way," says Roberto Suro. The rise of China, the failure to defeat the Taliban and the slow progress in the fight against the so-called Islamic State group has contributed to the anxiety.

Americans are also more afraid of the prospect of terrorist attacks than at any time since 9/11, according to a New York Times/CBS poll. The American reaction to the San Bernardino shooting was different to the French reaction to the Paris attacks, says Galston. "Whereas the French rallied around the government, Americans rallied against it. There is an impression that the US government is failing in its most basic obligation to keep country and people safe."

5. Divided nation

Democrats and Republicans have become more ideologically polarised than ever. The typical (median), Republican is now more conservative in his or her core social, economic and political views than 94% of Democrats, compared with 70% in 1994, according to Pew Research. The median Democrat, meanwhile, is more liberal than 92% of Republicans, up from 64%.

The study also found that the share of Americans with a highly negative view of the opposing party has doubled, and that the animosity is so deep, many would be unhappy if a close relative married someone of a different political persuasion.

This polarisation makes reaching common ground on big issues such as immigration, healthcare and gun control more complicated. The deadlock is, in turn, angering another part of the electorate. "Despite this rise in polarisation in America, a large mass in the middle are pragmatic. They aren't totally disengaged, they don't want to see Washington gridlocked, but they roll their eyes at the nature of this discourse," says Paul Taylor. This group includes a lot of young people and tends to eschew party labels. "If they voted," he says, "they could play an important part of the election."

Questions 1-8

Complete the sentences below using **ONLY ONE WORD** for each answer.

1. Conducted poll in December says that most Americans are with the way that hing are going.
2. Many people are angrier than a year ago, particulary .
- 3.The economical rates are decreasing, even though the country has recovered from the .
4. Billionaires and immigrants are the two sides of one political .
5. It is expected that the will be the biggest ethnic group to move in the USA by the year 2055.
6. It has been an era of demographic, racial, cultural, religious and change.
7. Roberto Suro says that migrants might become a of anger.
8. Six to ten Americans believe that government has too much .

Questions 9-16

Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Passage 1?

In boxes 9-16 on your answer sheet, write

TRUE if the statement agrees with the information

FALSE if the statement contradicts the information

NOT GIVEN if there is no information on this

9. The Congress has more responsibilities now than in 1970s.

10. William Galston believes that the appeal of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders is growing bigger each day.

11. Ted Cruz is running as an anti-establishment candidate.

12. The number of Americans who think that the US "stands above all other countries in the world" increased by 10% in 2014 compared to 2012.

13. Since 9/11 there's been a feeling of war in America and it's still here.

14. The Americans had the same reaction to the San Bernardino shooting as French to the Paris attacks.

15. The ideological diversity between the Democrats and the Republicans is stronger than ever now.

16. The pragmatic mass consists of a lot of young people.

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 17–28, which are based on Reading Passage 2 below.

Do e-cigarettes make it harder to stop smoking?

(A) People trying to give up smoking often use e-cigarettes to help wean themselves off tobacco. Most experts think they are safer than cigarettes but a surprising paper was published recently - it suggests that people who use e-cigarettes are less successful at giving up smoking than those who don't. "E-cigarettes WON'T help you quit," reported the Daily Mail. "Smokers using vapers are '28% less likely to ditch traditional cigarettes,'" read the paper's headline. The story was reported on many other websites around the world, including CBS: "Study: E-cigarettes don't help smokers quit," it said.

(B) The study causing the fuss was written by researchers at the Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education at the University of California, and published in one of the Lancet's sister journals, Lancet Respiratory Medicine. It is a meta-analysis, which means the authors reviewed the academic literature already available on the topic. They sifted out the weaker papers - ones that didn't have control groups, for example - and were left with 20.

(C) The conclusion? Smokers who use e-cigarettes have a 28% lower chance of quitting than smokers who don't use them, according to Prof Stanton Glantz, one of the authors. But while the conclusion is surprising, so is the number of academics who have criticised the paper. One was Ann McNeill, professor of tobacco addiction at Kings College London, whose own research is included in Glantz's analysis. "This review is not scientific," she wrote on the Science Media Centre website. "The information... about two studies that I co-authored is either inaccurate or misleading... I believe the findings should therefore be dismissed.

(D) "I am concerned at the huge damage this publication may have - many more smokers may continue smoking and die if they take from this piece of work that all evidence suggests e-cigarettes do not help you quit smoking; that is not the case." Prof Peter Hajek, director of the Tobacco Dependence Research Unit at the Wolfson Institute also called the findings "grossly misleading".

(E) The critics are making three main points. First, the definition of e-cigarettes is a bit loose. There are many different types - some look like cigarettes, others have tanks for the vaping liquid, some are disposable and other are multi-use. They all deliver different doses of nicotine. Many of the papers included in the analysis don't specify which type people are using, according to Linda Bauld, professor of health policy at the University of Stirling. Another point is that the studies vary in the way they measure how often people use e-cigarettes. "Some only assessed whether a person had ever tried an e-cigarette or if they had tried one recently, not whether they were using it regularly or frequently," Bauld says.

(F) Even the paper's author admits it's possible that in some of the studies e-cigarettes may only have been used once, which he says would not be a good predictor of whether they had affected people's ability to stop smoking. And there is another problem. You might expect, if you were going to draw conclusions about how useful e-cigarettes are in helping people quit, to focus on studies looking at people who are trying to give up. Prof Robert West, who heads a team at University College London researching ways to help people stop smoking, says this analysis mashed together some very different studies - only some of which include people using e-cigarettes to help them quit.

(G) "To mix them in with studies where you've got people using an e-cigarette and are not particularly trying to stop smoking is mixing apples and oranges," he says. Some of the studies track smokers who use e-cigarettes for other reasons - perhaps because smoking a cigarette in a bar or an office is illegal and they want a nicotine hit. "With the studies where people are using electronic cigarettes specifically in a quit attempt the evidence is consistent," says West, referring to two randomised control trials.

(H) Both are quite small and one was funded by the e-cigarette industry. They took two groups of smokers, and gave one real e-cigarettes, and the other a placebo. The studies reach a broadly similar conclusion to a large, real-world study called the Smoking Toolkit run by West. West's investigation follows people in their daily lives and assesses how successful various methods of giving up smoking are - this includes nicotine patches, medicines and going cold turkey. These studies suggest that people using e-cigarettes to help them quit are 50% to 100% more successful than those who use no aids at all.

(I) In his paper, Glantz acknowledges there are limitations to the research that he analysed. He agrees there are problems with the way the use of e-cigarettes is measured and accepts it's not clear which devices people are using. But he is sticking by his analysis because he believes

he has taken these factors into account. The editor of Lancet Respiratory Medicine, Emma Grainger, defends the article too. She says she does not see a problem with the paper and that it has been through the normal peer-review process.

Reading Passage 2 has nine paragraphs, **A–I**.

Which paragraph contains the following information?

Write the correct letter, **A–I**, in boxes 17–25 on your answer sheet.

17. Possible damage

18. Shocking news

19. Mix of different studies

20. Misleading information

21. Types of e-cigarettes

22. A place where the controversial research was written

23. The defence of the article

24. A research by an e-cigarette industry

25. The consistent evidence

Questions 26–28

Choose the correct letter, **A, B, C** or **D**.

Write the correct letter in boxes 26–27 on your answer sheet.

26. New controversial research suggests that e-cigarettes:

1. make it easier to quit smoking
2. make it harder to quit smoking
3. don't play a major role in quitting smoking
4. the research doesn't answer this question

27. Ann McNeill criticized the research because:

1. the majority of other researches disagree with this review
2. the definition of e-cigarettes is a bit loose
3. some information is either inaccurate or misleading
4. the analysis mashed together some very different studies

28. This article aims at:

1. finding the truth about e-cigarettes, providing facts
2. showing that the e-cigarettes are worthless
3. promoting the use of e-cigarettes
4. analyzing different scientific researches

You should spend about 20 minutes on Questions 29–40, which are based on Reading Passage 3 below.

The battle over the gender price gap

Boots has reduced the price of "feminine" razors to bring them in line with men's. The chemist chain says it's just an isolated incident, but campaigners say it's part of a "pink tax" that discriminates against women. Who's right and what's the bigger story, ask Jessica McCallin and Claire Bates.

Campaigners against what's been dubbed the "pink tax" - where retailers charge women more than men for similar products - are celebrating after Boots said it would change the price of some of its goods. A Change.org petition has already gathered more than 43,000 signatures.

The issue has been raised in Parliament. Paula Sherriff, Labour MP for Dewsbury, called a debate on the issue on Tuesday. She wants the government to commission independent research to quantify the extent of the problem, arguing that it amounts to women paying thousands of pounds more over the course of their lives.

Stevie Wise, who launched the petition, was driven by a Times investigation which claimed that women and girls are charged, on average, 37% more for clothes, beauty products and toys. The investigation was inspired by research in the US which found that women's products are routinely more expensive than men's. The New York Department of Consumer Affairs had compared the prices of 800 products with male and female versions and concluded that, after controlling for quality, women's versions were, on average, 7% more expensive than men's.

Boots says the two examples highlighted in the Change.org petition are exceptional cases, but campaigners are not so sure. "This is a very exciting response," says Wise. "We are delighted with Boots' decision, but we now need to get them to look at all of their products, not just the ones highlighted in the petition. We hope this decision is just the first of many and we may broaden our campaign to focus on other retailers as well." Wise says that women have been getting in touch with examples of other price discrepancies from lots of companies and says there seems to be a particular problem with toys and clothes. Argos has been criticised for identical scooters that cost £5 more if they were pink rather than blue. Argos said it was an error that had already been rectified and that it would never indulge in differential pricing.

Among the examples sent to Wise was Boots selling identical child car seats that cost more in pink. Another retailer was selling children's balance bikes which cost more for a flowery print aimed at girls than a pirate print aimed at boys. But the latter example already appears to have been tweaked on the retailer's website, albeit by applying a £10 discount to the flowery version. With many retailers indulging in complicated algorithms to calculate price, or frequently changing prices around promotions, it's easy for them to argue that what appears to be a gender price gap is in fact an innocent mistake.

One of the main things that retailers consider when deciding what to charge is what the customer is willing to pay, argues Mark Billige, UK managing partner at Simon-Kucher, a management consultancy that advises companies on things like pricing. "They have to consider what it costs to make the product and what their competitors are charging, but in a world where consumers have lots of choices, willingness to pay becomes very important as people will vote with their wallets if they don't like the price of a product. There is something in the fact that

women are willing to pay more. Why, I don't know, but it will probably have something to do with psychology."

When challenged over sexist pricing, both Levi's and Tesco argued that different versions of things could have different production costs even if appearing fairly similar. Prof Nancy Puccinelli, a consumer psychologist at Oxford University says that her research suggests that women are actually much more careful shoppers than men, better able to scrutinise adverts and pricing gimmicks. She wonders if women are perceiving more value in the more expensive products. "For men, razors are functional, whereas women may perceive hair removal as more hedonistic, more about self-care, and be more willing to pay more. But there could also be environmental factors hindering their choices, like product placement in the store. If products are separated into male and female sections far away from each other it's harder to scrutinise prices." Such a situation could either be deliberate or accidental but the campaigners are not convinced.

"It's just the tip of the iceberg," says the Fawcett Society's head of policy, Jemima Olchawski. "It's been happening in plain sight and, to me, it shows that bias against women is ingrained across our society. The worst thing about it is that women are getting ripped off twice. They are paid less than men and are also charged more for similar products." The campaign may lead to further changes, but the perennial advice to shop around remains the same. "There are quite a few comparison websites you can use to see if there's a price difference," says Sally Francis, senior writer at moneysavingexpert.com. If, as Tesco claim, there are "additional design and performance features" testing the male and female versions at home should settle whether they are worth it.

There is an opportunity for some companies, argues Olchawski. "The finding shows the power of marketing in our lives, how it shapes our perception of what it means to be a man or a women. Some companies could choose not to play into this, not to play into the stereotypes and rip women off, but launch products more in tune with moves toward gender equality."

Questions 29–35

Who's responsible for what? Choose A, B, C or D and write your answers in boxes 29–35 on your answer sheet.

A Stevie Wise

B Mark Billige

C Jemima Olchawski

D Nobody from the above

29. Called a debate on the issue

30. Launched the petition

31. States that women are willing to pay more

32. Says that women are more careful shoppers than men

33. Says that companies should keep in mind gender equality while making products

34. Was told that there are many problems with prices, especially with toys and clothes

35. States that women are getting ripped off twice

Questions 36-40

Do the following statements agree with the information in the IELTS reading text?

In boxes 36-40 on your answer sheet, write

TRUE if the statement agrees with the information

FALSE if the statement contradicts the information

NOT GIVEN if there is no information on this

36. "Pink tax" means that women are being charged more than men for the same products.

37. Due to the fact that the petition gathered more than 43,000 signatures the issue has been raised in Parliament.

38. After comparing the prices of 800 products., it was concluded that women's versions were 7% more expensive than men's.

39. It is hard for the retailers to pretend that the gender price gap is an innocent mistake.

40. If male and female products are situated in different sections, it makes it harder to examine the prices.