

Psychologists explain why British are so apathetic about the general election

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If you are not feeling enthused by the general election, you are not alone. An article in the May issue of *The Psychologist* magazine quotes research finding that, in the UK, 31 per cent of people trust the government and only 20 per cent trust political parties.

The article, by Ella Rhodes, interviews several [psychologists](#) and other academics about possible reasons for this disillusion with politics.

Professor Steve Reicher (University of St Andrews) says: "The end of the Soviet Union, the narrowing of ideological alternatives, and the feeling that all [politicians](#) are the same (and generally not in a good way) has increased the perception 'that they are all as bad as each other', and that electoral choice is therefore illusory."

Dr Nicole Gillespie (University of Queensland) says: "Over-promising and under-delivering is a guaranteed way to erode the trust and confidence of the public. Politicians need to better manage expectations about what they can deliver."

Professor James Martin (Goldsmiths, University of London) says: "Political behaviour is often not very rational at all – what grips us instinctively may be any number of things that speak to an unacknowledged sense of hurt or anger, loss or potential fulfilment."

The May issue of *The Psychologist*, the monthly magazine of the British Psychological Society, contains other articles with a political theme.

Helena Cooper-Thomas considers the transitions involved in becoming an MP; Jo Silvester and Madeleine Wyatt look at the idea of training for politicians; and Sharon Coen is interviewed about our age of celebrity politics.

Provided by British Psychological Society

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