Previous chapters have demonstrated that low and declining citizen respect for government institutions and political leaders is characteristic of contemporary industrialized societies. Evidence since the early 1970s reveals a trend toward growing distrust of government institutions in a number of countries. While this trend is evident, the interpretation of this phenomenon has proved far more controversial. One explanation focuses upon public dissatisfaction with government performance. This chapter explores this question. First, it examines the direct link between government performance, as measured by objective indicators of inflation, unemployment, or government deficits, and institutional confidence in support for government. It then considers the dynamics of political trust and government performance, before moving on to examine the role that expectations play in translating evaluations of government performance into political distrust in three countries where long-term time-series data are available—the US, Norway, and Sweden. The study explores how ethical expectations about government standards influence trust in politicians and the conclusion draws some general lessons from the results. The survey data employed in the analysis include the 1990–1 World Values Survey, the Norwegian, Swedish, and US Election Studies, surveys in the US, Russia, Ukraine, and Lithuania; data from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and OECD are used to measure inflation, unemployment, and government deficits.