

Is the **American Dream Alive?**

Examining Americans' Attitudes



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A M E R I C A N E N T E R P R I S E I N S T I T U T E

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Introduction

Nearly 30 years ago, in 1986, the *Wall Street Journal* commissioned the Roper Organization to conduct a poll on the American Dream. At the time, it was the most comprehensive poll on the idea. Questions had been asked in the past about upward mobility, expectations about the future, and attitudes toward homeownership, but there had been no systematic exploration of various components of the dream. It is worth quoting a portion of the introduction:

Changing economic realities in the 1970s and 1980s, combined with shifting social and cultural values, have caused many observers to wonder whether the underpinnings of The American Dream are eroding. Economists report that, in constant dollars, median household income peaked in 1973 and has actually declined since. Average weekly earnings were higher in 1962 than in 1985. And the cost of buying a home, a car, and sending one's child to college have all increased faster than wages. From these and other statistics, many experts have concluded that The American Dream is becoming unattainable for an increasing number of middle class Americans. . . . Indeed, it has become the common wisdom in many circles that The American Dream is either dead or dying.¹

It is not surprising given the mood described in this introduction that commentators would question the health of the American Dream. When you care deeply about the idea of being able to get ahead, of your children being able to do better than you have done, you worry about its passing. The *Wall Street Journal's* exploration was designed to see how that pessimism was affecting views of the American Dream. They found the connection weak: "Most Americans, in fact, feel the American Dream is alive and well. Further, they

are confident they'll ultimately attain, or come close to attaining, their own American Dream."²

Today, overall pessimism in America is especially deep, influenced by a weak economy. In a September 2014 CBS poll, just 27 percent felt the country was generally headed in the right direction. (In 1986, 43 percent said the country was on the right track, and 48 percent said the country was on the wrong track.) Responses to this popular polling question have been very negative since the 2008 crash. Wages are stagnant for many, and opportunity seems more limited than in the past. Has the current negative mood infected views about the American Dream? That is what we set out to study in this American Enterprise Institute Public Opinion Study.

At the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, DC, we study public opinion on a variety of topics. We track current public opinion polls in the monthly AEI *Political Report*, but we also produce more detailed AEI Public Opinion Studies on individual topics and historical polling trends.

We take no polls of our own. Instead, we rely on polls in the public domain from pollsters such as Gallup, the Pew Research Center, and ABC News and the *Washington Post*, to name a few. Many pollsters archive their data with the Roper Center at the University of Connecticut, and we draw on those polls for our studies. By examining different polls on a topic, we try to put media reports on new polls in broader historical context and compare pollsters' results to get a true picture of public opinion.

For many years, we have wanted to publish an AEI Public Opinion Study on attitudes toward the American Dream. We have been eager to understand how Americans viewed it in the past and how they view it today. But there are significant challenges to getting a clear picture of public opinion on this idea. Many

pollsters today are obsessed with following the news cycle and only occasionally update questions on topics such as the American Dream. The dearth of historical trend questions on the dream hinders a fuller understanding of how views of it have changed over the years.

Another obstacle to a comprehensive look at attitudes about the American Dream is shifting conceptions of the idea. Today, being able to finish college is part of the American Dream for most Americans. Not too many decades ago, people aspired to be able to finish high school. Another challenge is understanding how economic ups and downs affect views of the dream. At the time of the *Wall Street Journal* survey, pessimism did not seem to affect views of the dream significantly. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the strong economy lifted Americans' spirits across the board. People felt better about the environment, for example, although there was no special evidence that environmental conditions had improved significantly. Americans were optimistic about their own prospects and their children's.

Six years after the 2008 crash, with optimism about the country's economy still weak, Americans are not as confident. A late July/early August 2014 Rutgers/Heldrich Work Trends poll found that 71 percent believed that the Great Recession had left us with a permanent change in normal economic conditions in the country. Twenty-nine percent said it had produced a temporary change from which the economy would recover. Today's deep pessimism seems to have affected views of the dream. It is too early to know whether this is permanent.

This AEI Public Opinion Study is the most comprehensive collection of survey data from major pollsters on the topic, organized in sections that deal with various aspects of the dream. Each section includes commentary on the data.

Because many questions have not been asked regularly, we do not want to draw too many sweeping conclusions about the health of the American Dream. It is

impossible to know if the deep pessimism in the nation today will affect views about the American Dream in the future. Some conclusions, however, seem clear to us.

- Americans, by and large, believe that they can achieve their own version of the American Dream, and it is a personal vision. This view has changed little over the past 30 years. While a small group of skeptics exists, the average American believes that this is still a country of opportunity where personal success—material or otherwise—can be achieved with hard work and a little bit of ingenuity.
- People think the challenges to achieving the dream are greater than in the past.
- The key elements of the dream—an education for oneself and one's children and freedom to live life on one's own terms—still rank much higher in terms of priority than becoming wealthy.
- Americans continue to be more confident about their own children's prospects for achieving the American Dream than they are about the prospects of children overall.
- In 1986, whites were more optimistic than non-whites about the American Dream. Today, whites in some polls are less confident than blacks and Hispanics about being able to achieve selected aspects of the American Dream.

Notes

1. The Roper Organization and the *Wall Street Journal*, *The American Dream: A National Survey* (Princeton, NJ: Dow Jones & Company, 1987), 3–4.
2. *Ibid.*, 8.

Defining the American Dream

Pollsters have long sought to discover how people perceive and understand the American Dream. The concept is amorphous and evolves over time, and how pollsters approach the subject affects results. Some recent surveys, for example, have included questions about achieving fame or being free of debt, topics that did not appear in any of the early surveys we located.

In 1975, the Roper Organization asked Americans about achieving the good life and presented people with a list of what might constitute such a life. The results are the first item in this section. The organization then followed up with a question about whether the individual had achieved it. Virtually identical numbers chose “a home you own” and “a happy marriage”—85 and 84 percent, respectively—as part of the good life. That year, 34 percent said “a college education for myself” was part of the good life. Two in ten (22 percent) said they had a college degree. Although Roper did not use the words “American Dream” in the questions, the organization wrote about the responses using the term. A decade later in 1986, the Roper Organization, in its comprehensive poll for the *Wall Street Journal*, asked specifically about the American Dream and found that 84 percent said that being able to get a high school education was very much a part of it. Having “freedom

of choice in how to live one’s life” ranked second (80 percent).

In the limited number of surveys from the 1970s and 1980s, homeownership, freedom, and education rank very high on people’s lists. Becoming wealthy usually comes near the bottom. A September 2013 *Washington Post*–Miller Center poll found a similar pattern. For three-fourths of Americans, “to have freedom of choice in how to live one’s life” was “very much” what the American Dream meant. The second-highest response was “to be rewarded for hard work” (68 percent), followed by owning a home (61 percent). At the bottom of the 2013 list was becoming wealthy. Twenty-nine percent said that was very much what the American Dream meant.

In two questions asked 27 years apart, 68 percent in 1986 and 61 percent in 2013 said that the term “the American Dream” had real meaning for them. Nineteen percent in 2013 (13 percent in 1986) said the term has no real meaning for anyone. In their 1987 commentary on the 1986 poll, the *Wall Street Journal* writers noted that the dream is “intensely personal.” Even if there is no universal definition of the American Dream, it is a concept that clearly has meaning for most Americans.

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

We often hear people talk about what they want out of life. Here are a number of different things. When you think of the good life—the life you'd like to have, which of the things on this list, if any, are part of the good life as far as you personally are concerned?

Now would you go down that list and call off all the things you now have?

The Roper Organization

	Part of the good life				Things you now have			
	1975 Dec.	1978 Dec.	1981 Dec.	1984 Dec.	1975 Dec.	1978 Dec.	1981 Dec.	1984 Dec.
A home you own	85%	84%	83%	87%	60%	58%	61%	60%
A happy marriage	84	82	79	80	62	59	57	54
One or more children	74	72	69	69	66	64	65	63
Two children	34	34	34	32	25	24	24	22
Three children	18	15	15	16	13	13	13	14
Four or more children	16	16	14	13	15	13	15	13
One child	6	7	6	8	13	14	13	14
A car	71	73	64	69	78	79	77	78
A job that is interesting	69	67	61	61	40	39	33	36
A college education for my children	59	56	54	52	14	14	12	12
A yard and lawn	62	58	55	52	58	55	56	54
A job that pays much more than average	45	50	45	52	19	19	17	19
A lot of money	38	44	43	48	4	2	3	3
A color TV set	46	49	40	47	54	63	65	69
Travel abroad	30	33	36	36	13	11	13	11
A college education for myself	34	36	36	35	22	21	24	23
A second car	30	29	28	34	34	33	32	35
Really nice clothes	36	40	33	34	27	25	24	23
A job that contributes to the welfare of society	38	32	29	31	21	17	16	17
A vacation home	19	24	25	26	5	4	4	4
A five day work week	37	30	23	25	33	34	29	30
A four day work week	18	21	18	21	2	3	3	4
A swimming pool	14	19	18	20	3	4	3	4
A second color TV set	10	13	12	17	9	12	15	20
No children	3	2	2	2	8	9	9	7

Thinking of your concept of the good life, how good do you think your chances are of achieving it—very good, fairly good, not very good, or not good at all?

The Roper Organization

	Very good	Fairly good	Not very good	Not good at all	Already achieved it (vol.*)
Dec. 1975	35%	41%	10%	4%	9%
Dec. 1978	35	40	10	4	9
Dec. 1981	32	42	8	5	9
Dec. 1984	35	41	9	4	9

Note: *Volunteered response.

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

I'd like to understand what living the good life means to you. I'm going to read a list of items, and I'd like you to tell me how much each one contributes to living a good life, in your opinion, on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means the item does not contribute at all, and 10 means the item contributes a lot.

May 2014—AARP/USA Today/Woelfel Research

	Responses of 40–59-year-olds		
	10—Contributes a lot Leans toward “contributes a lot” to living the good life (10–8)	(7–4)	1—Does not contribute at all Leans toward “does not contribute at all” (3–1)
Being healthy and physically fit	89%	9%	1%
Having a good relationship with a spouse or partner	89	6	3
Being happy	88	10	2
Having close ties with friends and family	87	10	2
Being independent, not depending on others	82	15	2
Having financial security	79	19	2
Continuing to learn new things	78	21	1
Having a good balance between work and personal life	78	19	3
Having a job I love	76	20	3
Having spiritual well-being	75	20	5
Raising children	75	12	10
Giving back to my community	70	29	1
Having time to pursue my passions	66	30	4
Traveling	36	50	13

Note: Asked of 40–59-year-olds.

What does the phrase “the American Dream” mean to you?

	Mar. 2005 NYT	Apr. 2009 CBS News/NYT
Freedom/opportunity	20%	27%
Happiness/contentment/peace of mind	19	6
Financial security/steady job	19	13
Have a house/home	13	9
Family	7	3
Successful	7	18
Doesn't exist/illusion/nothing	2	3
Other	2	9
Health	2	2
Comfortable retirement	2	1
Life in America	1	1
Good job	1	-
To pay little/no taxes	-	-

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

I'm going to read you some possible definitions or descriptions of the American Dream and for each one I'd like you to tell me if that's very much what you understand the American Dream to mean, or sort of what it means, or not what it means?

Oct. 1986—Roper/WSJ

	Very much what the American Dream means	Sort of what it means	Not what it means
To be able to get a high school education	84%	11%	4%
To have freedom of choice in how to live one's life	80	16	3
To own a home	78	18	3
To be able to send one's children to college	77	19	4
To be able to get a college education	68	26	5
To be financially secure enough to have ample time for leisure pursuits	64	29	7
To do better than one's parents did	61	29	9
To be able to start a business of one's own	58	33	8
To be able to rise from clerk or worker to president of a company	52	33	14
To be able to become wealthy	39	42	18

When you think about the American Dream, is it something which has real meaning to you personally, something which has meaning to others but not to you, or is it just a phrase which doesn't really have meaning to anyone?

		Has meaning to me	Has meaning to others	Has no real meaning to anyone
Oct. 1986	Roper/WSJ	68%	16%	13%
Sep. 2013	Wash Post–Miller Center	61	18	19

What does the American Dream mean to you today? You can select up to three responses.

MetLife/Strategy First Partners/Penn, Schoen, & Berland

	Nov. 2006	Jan. 2008	Jan. 2009	Apr. 2010
Financial security	59%	62%	66%	65%
Family/children	42	47	56	58
Free from want, basic needs met	43	42	45	43
Home ownership	31	35	38	36
Comfortable retirement	35	35	35	35
Successful career	28	27	29	31
Marriage	21	17	27	29
Others	4	5	3	3

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

I'm going to read you some possible definitions or descriptions of the American Dream, and for each one I'd like you to tell me if that's very much what you understand the American Dream to mean or sort of what it means, or not what it means.

Dec. 1995—Roper

	Very much what the American Dream means	Sort of what it means	Not what it means
To own a house	77%	18%	3%
To be able to get a high school education	76	17	5
To live in an open society in which everyone has an equal chance	75	20	4
To have freedom of choice in how to live one's life	71	23	3
To be able to have a financially secure retirement	69	23	6
To be able to have both a rewarding career and family life	67	26	6
To be able to send one's children to college	66	27	6
To be able to get a college education	65	27	6
To be financially secure enough to have ample time for leisure	63	30	6
To have a job you enjoy	63	30	6
To do better than one's parents did	53	35	9
To be able to rise from clerk or worker to the president of a company	52	34	11
To be able to start a business of one's own	51	34	13
To live in a natural environment free from pollution	48	37	13
To be able to become wealthy	43	40	14
To be able to buy all the things one wants	37	39	22

Which of the following comes closest to how you would describe "the American Dream" today?

Feb. 2011—CBS News/*Vanity Fair*

Giving your kids a better life	52%
Having a successful business/career	20
Becoming wealthy overnight	8
Owning a home	7
Doing better than your parents	7
Becoming famous	3

Which of the following is closer to your view?

Oct. 2011—MetLife/Strategy First Partners/Penn, Schoen, & Berland

	General population	Silent	Baby Boom	Gen X	Gen Y
American Dream is about my personal achievements	41%	28%	33%	47%	52%
American Dream is about the the opportunity for all members of society	59	72	67	53	48

Note: The Silent Generation, the Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y refer to individuals born between 1933 and 1945, 1946 and 1964, 1965 and 1977, and 1978 and 1994, respectively.

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How well does each word or statement describe the concept of the American Dream?

Jul. 2004—New American Dream/Widmeyer

	Percent that responded 8–10 on 10-point scale
Freedom	86%
Happiness	76
Family	75
Personal fulfillment	74
Equality of opportunity for all	73
Security or having all my basic needs met	73
Peace	71
Enough free time outside of work to enjoy life	69
Optimism	68
Strong communities	66
Compassion for others	66
Fair wages and taxes	65
Financial success	63
Free market society	61
U.S. is recognized as the world leader	60
Social responsibility	59
U.S. is the most militarily powerful country	56
Absence of poverty	56
To consume or buy whatever we want	55
Living in harmony with the environment	54
Achieving an affluent or wealthy lifestyle	49

Please tell me how important each should be, as part of your ideal American Dream.

Jul. 2004—New American Dream/Widmeyer

	Percent that responded 8–10 on 10-point scale
Freedom	93%
Happiness	90
Family	89
Equality of opportunity for all	88
Peace	88
Compassion for others	87
Security or having all my basic needs met	87
Fair wages and taxes	86
Enough free time outside of work to enjoy life	83
Personal fulfillment	82
Strong communities	81
Optimism	81
Absence of poverty	79
Social responsibility	78
Living in harmony with the environment	75
Free market society	66
Financial success	65
U.S. is recognized as the world leader	57
U.S. is the most militarily powerful country	54
To consume or buy whatever we want	49
Achieving an affluent or wealthy lifestyle	44

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

The term American Dream means different things to different people. Here are some ways some people have described what the American Dream means to them. On a scale of 1 to 10, please tell me how accurately each statement describes what you consider the American Dream to be. One would mean this statement does not describe the American Dream at all. A 10 would mean this statement describes the American Dream almost perfectly.

Jan. 2009—Pew Charitable Trusts/GQR*/Public Opinion Strategies

	Percent that responded 8–10 on 10-point scale
Being free to accomplish anything	74%
Free to say or do what you want	68
Children being better off financially than you	64
Being financially secure	61
Succeed regardless of the economic circumstances in which you were born	60
Getting a college degree or advanced education	55
Enough income to afford a few luxuries	48
Getting married, having kids	48
Owning your own business	40
Owning a house	60
Becoming rich	33
Being middle class	31

Note: *Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research.

Now, I'd like to read you some different goals and aspirations that are often discussed as part of the American Dream. Using a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means it is definitely not part of the American Dream and 10 means it is definitely part of the American Dream, please tell me how each of the following fit into your idea of the American Dream.

Mar. 2011—Allstate/National Journal

	Mean
Owning your own home	8.3
Retiring comfortably in the way and at the time you expect	7.7
Raising a family and making sure they have more opportunity than you did	8.5
Graduating from college	7.8
Being able to pursue a rewarding career wherever it takes you	8.2
Becoming wealthy	5.0

Do you agree or disagree that home ownership represents the American Dream?

	Agree	Disagree
Apr. 2007 Zogby International	84%	11%

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How important a part of the American Dream is owning a home—is it a very important part of the American Dream, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?

		Very important	Somewhat important	Not too important	Not at all important
Jun. 2011	CBS News	55%	34%	7%	3%
<i>(Demographic breakdowns)</i>					
	Northeast	56%	34%	7%	3%
	Midwest	55	32	10	3
	South	60	29	6	4
	West	45	45	6	3
	High school grad or less	61%	28%	7%	2%
	Some college	55	36	5	3
	College plus	42	43	9	5
	Male	55%	34%	6%	3%
	Female	54	34	8	3
	Income <\$30K	67%	23%	6%	2%
	\$30–\$49K	53	39	4	2
	\$50–\$74K	53	34	9	4
	>\$75K	46	41	9	3

Is this very much what you understand the American Dream to mean, or sort of what it means, or not what it means?

Sep. 2013—*Wash Post*–Miller Center

	Very much what it means	Sort of what it means	Not what it means
To have freedom of choice in how to live one's life	75%	18%	6%
To be rewarded for hard work	68	22	10
To own a home	61	28	10
The ability to balance work and family life	56	32	11
To do better than one's parents did	54	32	13
To be able to get a college education	52	33	14
To be able to become wealthy	29	40	30

Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement: "A belief in God is an important part of the American Dream."

		Agree	Disagree
1994	Luntz	84%	15%

Note: Combined "Strongly agree" and "Somewhat agree" responses. Combined "Somewhat disagree" and "Strongly disagree" responses.

Belief in the American Dream

People still believe the American Dream is alive, but it may be a little bruised. In the 1986 Roper/*Wall Street Journal* survey, 32 percent said it was very much alive, 54 percent somewhat alive, and 11 percent not really alive. A March 2011 Pew Charitable Trusts poll showed that 17 percent thought it was very much alive, while a majority, 53 percent, believed the dream was somewhat alive and 27 percent not really alive. In questions asked by other pollsters, 15 to 20 percent said it was dead.

In the 1986 Roper/*Wall Street Journal* poll, 23 percent said the dream was easier to attain than in the past, while 45 percent said it was harder and 32 percent about the same. Ten percent said it would be easier to attain a generation from now, 55 percent harder, and one-third about the same. In three questions asked in 2004 and 2011, people said it was harder to achieve the

American Dream than in the past. A question asked for the first time in 1995 by Yankelovich found that 57 percent agreed with the negative statement, “The American Dream has become impossible for most people to achieve.” When CNN and the Opinion Research Corporation repeated the question in May 2014, 59 percent gave that response.

This significant level of pessimism probably reflects growing belief that it has become harder for Americans to do many of the things they associate with the American Dream, or it may simply be a question wording effect. The September 2013 *Washington Post*–Miller Center poll found that 77 percent of Americans believe it has become harder for people like them to pay for college, while 66 percent say it has become harder to get ahead financially.

I'd like to talk with you now about a term with which you are probably familiar—the American Dream. Do you personally feel that the American Dream is very much alive today, somewhat alive, or not really alive?

		Very much alive	Somewhat alive	Not really alive
1986	Roper/WSJ	32%	55%	11%
1990	Roper	23	50	20
1992	Roper	16	52	26
1993	Roper	20	50	22
1995	Roper	22	52	21
2003	Roper	33	47	15
2011	Pew Charitable Trusts	17	53	27

Do you think that the American Dream is very much alive today, somewhat alive today, or is it dead?

		Very much alive	Somewhat alive	Dead
1994	Luntz	23%	64%	12%
1996	Luntz	20	66	11

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Is the American Dream of middle class prosperity still a realistic goal for new immigrants or not?

		Still realistic	Not realistic
Dec. 1994	Harris	60%	37%

I'd like to talk to you now about a term with which you probably are familiar—the American Dream. Do you believe in the American Dream, or not?

		Yes, believe	No, don't believe	No opinion
Sep. 1995	Wash Post/Harvard/Kaiser	76%	19%	5%

(Demographic breakdowns)

White	79%	17%	4%
African American	67	30	3
Asian	75	22	3
Latino	68	21	11

The idea and promise of reaching the American Dream and being able to "make it" in America is . . .

		Largely true and possible	Largely a myth and not possible
Oct. 2010	StrategyOne	74%	26%

Now I'm going to read you some pairs of statements. As I read each pair, please tell me whether the first statement or the second statement comes closer to your own views, even if neither is exactly right. 1) Most people today face increasing uncertainty about employment, with stagnant incomes, pay more for health care, taxes, and retirement, while those at the top have booming incomes and lower taxes. 2) Our economy faces ups and downs, but most people can expect to better themselves, see rising incomes, find good jobs and provide economic security for their families. The American Dream is very much alive.

		Most people face uncertainty	The American Dream is very much alive
Mar. 2006	EPI*/GQR	64%	32%

Note: *Economic Policy Institute.

Do you think the American Dream—that if you work hard you'll get ahead—still holds true, never held true, or once held true but does not anymore?

		Responses of 18–24-year-olds		
		Still holds true	Once held true	Never held true
Mar. 2012	PRRI	40%	45%	10%

Note: Asked of 18–24-year-olds.

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Do you think the American Dream—that if you work hard you'll get ahead—still holds true, never held true, or once held true but does not anymore?

		Still true	Once true	Never true	No opinion
Sep. 2010	ABC News/Yahoo	50%	43%	4%	2%
Nov. 2011	PRRI/RNS	44	48	6	1
Aug. 2012	PRRI	53	42	4	1
Jul.–Aug. 2014	PRRI	42	48	7	3

(Demographic breakdowns, Jul.–Aug. 2014, race)

White	45%	47%	5%	3%
Black	31	50	14	5
Hispanic	42	48	9	1

(Demographic breakdowns, Jul.–Aug. 2014, age)

18–29-year-olds	40%	49%	8%	3%
30–49	42	49	7	2
50–64	41	51	6	2
65+	46	44	4	6

Thinking about the young adults you know today, do you think they face more economic challenges, fewer economic challenges or about the same number of economic challenges as you faced when you were first starting out?

		34-year-olds and older		
		More economic challenges	Fewer economic challenges	About the same
Feb. 2014	Pew	70%	7%	21%
<i>(Demographic breakdowns)</i>				
	Generation X	66%	7%	25%
	Boomer	74	5	20
	Silent	68	12	16

Note: Asked of adults ages 34 and older. The survey defined young adults as “adults in their twenties or early thirties.”

Thinking about people you know who are about your age, do you think they face more economic challenges, fewer economic challenges, or about the same number of economic challenges as your parents' generation faced when they were first starting out?

		18–33-year-olds and older		
		More economic challenges	Fewer economic challenges	About the same
Feb. 2014	Pew	71%	12%	15%

Note: Asked of 18–33-year-olds.

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Compared with the past—say, a generation ago—do you feel the American Dream is easier to attain today, harder to attain, or is it about the same?

Looking to the future—say, a generation from now—do you feel the American Dream will be easier to attain than today, harder to attain, or will it be about the same?

		Easier to attain	Harder to attain	About the same
Compared with past				
Oct. 1986#	Roper	23%	45%	32%
Dec. 1990	Roper	17	61	18
May 1992	Roper	8	72	18
Dec. 1993	Roper	13	64	19
Dec. 1995	Roper	12	63	22

Looking to future

Oct. 1986#	Roper	10%	55%	33%
Dec. 1990	Roper	13	62	19
Jul. 1993	PSRA/Family Circle	6	67	24
Dec. 1993	Roper	8	64	21
Aug. 1994*	Luntz	14	78	4
Dec. 1995	Roper	8	66	20
Aug. 1996	CBS News/NYT	4	68	24
Nov. 1996*	Luntz	16	77	4
Jan. 1998	CBS News/NYT	9	55	34

Note: #In 1986, questions were asked of the 87 percent of respondents who believed the American Dream still had meaning. A special analysis found that the difference in the bases had a negligible impact on the results, which are now based on the total. *Question wording varied and did not include the option of "about the same." Four percent volunteered it nonetheless.

Compared to your parents' generation, do you think it is harder or easier for Americans today to achieve the American Dream?

		Harder	Easier	The same
Jul. 2004	New American Dream/Widmeyer	62%	24%	12%

Compared to 10 years ago, do you think it is harder or easier for Americans today to achieve the American Dream?

		Harder	Easier	The same
Jul. 2004	New American Dream/Widmeyer	64%	17%	15%

Compared to your parents, do you think it is easier or harder for you to achieve the American Dream?

Jan. 2009—Pew Charitable Trusts/GQR/Public Opinion Strategies

Compared to your parents it is	
easier to achieve the American Dream	50%
Harder to achieve the American Dream	42

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Would you say that it is easier or harder for Americans to achieve the American Dream today than it was 10 years ago, or haven't things changed much?

		Easier than 10 years ago	Harder	Hasn't changed much
Sep. 2011	<i>Time/Abt SRBI</i>	5%	81%	14%

Thinking about the past few years, would you say it has become easier or harder for people like you to _____ or hasn't that changed much?

Sep. 2013—*Wash Post*–Miller Center

	Easier	Harder	Hasn't changed
Get ahead financially	7%	66%	26%
Afford health care*	8	64	26
Pay for college*	6	77	11
Find good jobs*	5	74	16
Find decent, affordable housing*	15	54	26
Provide for your children^	10	58	31
Save for retirement#	6	71	20

Note: *Asked of a half sample. ^Asked of parents. #Asked of not retired.

Do you agree or disagree: The American Dream has become impossible for most people to achieve?

		Agree	Disagree
Jan. 1995	Yankelovich	57%	40%
Jan. 1996	Yankelovich	63	34
Jan. 1997	Yankelovich	55	41
Jan. 1998	Yankelovich	51	45
Jan. 2003	CNN/ <i>Time</i> /Harris Interactive	50	47
Oct. 2006*	CNN	54	45
May 2014	CNN/ORC	59	40

Note: *Asked of a half sample.

Satisfaction with Your Opportunity

One of the key aspects of the American Dream is opportunity—but how do Americans define opportunity? A September 2012 Allstate/*National Journal* survey found that one-third of Americans thought that living in the land of opportunity means “living in a society where you can make the most of your talents and potential.” Seventeen percent said opportunity is “providing your children with a better life than you had,” while another 12 percent said it means “maintaining a balance between work and other things in life you enjoy.”

Americans’ assessments of whether there is more

or less opportunity for them now than in the past are closely tied to the state of the economy. In the early 1980s, when America was coming out of a deep recession, 40 percent told Roper that there were more opportunities for Americans than in the past. By January 1985, when the economy was doing better, 52 percent gave that response. In September 2000, when the economy was similarly strong, 54 percent told Gallup there were more opportunities for them than there used to be. By the fall of 2013, however, only 12 percent gave that response.

Some people say there’s not much opportunity in America today—that the average person doesn’t have much chance to really get ahead. Others say there’s plenty of opportunity, and anyone who works hard can go as far as he wants. How do you feel about this?

		Yes, there’s plenty of opportunity	There’s not much opportunity
1952	University of Michigan Election Survey	87%	8%
Apr.–May 1998	Gallup	81	17
Nov.–Dec. 2011	Gallup	57	41
Sep.–Oct. 2013	Gallup	52	43

Since the time this country was settled, the United States has been called the land of opportunity. Do you think there are more opportunities for Americans today than in the past, or less opportunities today, or about the same today as in the past?

		More	Less	About the same
Jan. 1983	Roper	40%	34%	25%
Jan. 1985	Roper	52	20	25
Jun. 1986	Roper	54	21	22
Oct. 1986	Roper/WSJ	49	24	26
Jan. 1990	Roper	47	20	28
Mar. 1996*	CBS News	41	27	30

Note: *Question wording varied slightly.

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Is there more opportunity in America today for the average person to really get ahead than there used to be, less opportunity for the average person to really get ahead, or is the amount of opportunity about the same?

		More opportunity	Less opportunity	About the same
Apr.–May 1998	Gallup	43%	20%	36%
Sep. 2000	Gallup	54	15	30
Sep.–Oct. 2013	Gallup	12	58	28

Which of the following statements is closer to your own opinion? America is still the land of opportunity and anyone who works hard can achieve financial independence. In today's economy, many people simply cannot become financially independent, no matter how hard they work.

		Still the land of opportunity	Many people can't become financially independent
Jan. 1992	Cambridge Reports	52%	42%
Apr. 1992	Cambridge Reports	53	42
Jan. 1994	Cambridge Reports	52	43

Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement. . .

1994—Luntz

	Agree	Disagree
I am optimistic about my personal future	81%	17%
I am optimistic about America's future	64	32

Note: Combined "Strongly agree" and "Somewhat agree" responses. Combined "Somewhat disagree" and "Strongly disagree" responses.

And regardless of whether you agree or disagree, what does the phrase "America is the land of opportunity," mean to you, personally. Does it mean . . . ?

Sep. 2012—Allstate/*National Journal*

Living in a society where you can make the most of your talents and potential	33%
Providing your children with a better life than you had	17
Maintaining a balance between work and other things in life you enjoy	12
Achieving an education and learning as much as you can	11
Having a better life than your parents had	10
Achieving financial stability and security	8
Being able to afford and own the finer things in life	3

Your Opportunity Compared to Your Parents'

Questions stretching back to the 1940s have shown similar results—most Americans believe they are better off than their parents were at the same age. This is especially true when they are asked about their standard of living, though a December 2013 AP/National Opinion Research Center update of a long trend shows that, for the first time, less than half (49 percent) believed their standard of living was much or somewhat better than their parents' at the same age.

Americans' feelings about their opportunity to succeed have been affected by the 2008 crash and the economy's slow recovery. In February 2000, 72 percent told CBS News that their opportunities to succeed were better than in their parents' generation. In the summer of 2014, 42 percent gave that response, while one-third (32 percent) said their opportunities were worse.

Today's young people are also not as confident about their prospects as they were in the recent past. In 2001, 82 percent of 17–29-year-olds told MTV and CBS News that the phrase “my life will be better than my parents” described their situation very or somewhat well. More recent polls show today's generation divided over whether they are better or worse off than their parents' generation. A July 2013 poll by the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) found that 47 percent of Americans believed their generation to be worse off financially than their parents' generation.

These responses may reflect the economy's anemic recovery. However, they may represent a deeper change. It is too early to know given the pollsters' sporadic data collection.

Do you think your opportunities to succeed are better than, or not as good as, those your parents had? Do you think your son's/children's opportunities to succeed will be better than, or not as good as, those you have? (If no children) Assume that you did have children.

Your opportunity to succeed compared with your parents

		Better	Not as good	Same (vol.)
Dec. 1939	Roper	61%	20%	12%
Feb. 1940	Roper	59	22	13
Jan. 1947	Roper	70	13	13
Dec. 1990	Roper	70	15	12
Aug. 1993	Roper	63	22	11

Your son's/children's opportunity to succeed compared with yours

Dec. 1939	Roper	61%	15%	10%
Feb. 1940	Roper	60	15	10
Jan. 1947	Roper	62	13	12
Dec. 1990	Roper	61	21	12
Aug. 1993	Roper	49	32	10

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Do you think you are better or less prepared to get ahead than your parents were?

		Better	Less	Same (vol.)
1939	Roper	72%	9%	13%
1990	Roper	76	10	10

Think of your parents when they were your age. Would you say you are better off financially than they are or not?

		Are better off than parents at your age	Not better off than parents at your age
Apr. 1980	ABC News/Wash Post	88%	10%
Mar. 1981	ABC News/Wash Post	64	35
Dec. 1981	ABC News/Wash Post	69	28
Mar. 1982	ABC News/Wash Post	69	30
Jan. 1983	ABC News/Wash Post	70	29
Nov. 1983	ABC News/Wash Post	77	21
Dec. 1983	ABC News/Wash Post	73	25
Jan. 1985	ABC News/Wash Post	74	23
Mar. 1985	ABC News/Wash Post	75	23
Mar. 1986	ABC News/Wash Post	81	18
Apr. 1986	ABC News/Wash Post	78	21
May 1986	ABC News/Wash Post	82	17
May 1991	ABC News/Wash Post	70	26
Jan. 1995	ABC News/Wash Post	67	31
Jan. 1996	ABC News/Wash Post	67	30
Mar. 1996	ABC News/Wash Post	70	29
May 1996	ABC News/Wash Post	69	29
Apr. 1998	Gallup	74	23
Mar. 2011	Pew Charitable Trusts	56	39
Nov. 2011	Gallup	69	29

Overall, do you think of yourself as being financially better off, financially worse off, or financially the same as your parents when at your age?

Dec. 2009–Jan. 2010—Marist

	Generation		
	Gen X	Baby Boom	Greatest
Better off	40%	42%	66%
Worse off	41	38	15
The same	19	20	19

Note: Asked of members of each generation. In the poll, Greatest Generation is defined as the generation ages 65+ as of the time when the poll was conducted. Baby Boomers and Generation X are not specifically defined. However, the Baby Boomer generation is defined as those born in the aftermath of World War II between 1946 and 1964, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Generation X is generally defined between the end of the Baby Boom and the early 1980s.

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Think of your parents when they were your age. Would you say you are better off financially than they were, worse off financially than they were, or about the same?

		Better off	Worse off	About the same
Jul. 2013	Harvard School of Public Health/ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/ National Public Radio	69%	9%	19%

Do you think you are better off financially or worse off financially than your parents were when they were your age?

		Better off	Worse off	About the same
May 2014	CNN/ORC	54%	41%	4%

Do you think in your lifetime, you will be better off, about the same, or less well-off financially than your parents?

		Responses of 18–24-year-olds		
		Better off	Less well-off	About the same
Mar. 2012	PRRI	42%	18%	38%

Note: Asked of 18–24-year-olds.

Thinking about your family, do you think that your generation is better off, about the same, or worse off financially than your parents' generation?

		Better off	Worse off	About the same
Jul. 2013	PRRI	36%	47%	16%
<i>(Demographic breakdowns, race)</i>				
	White	34%	1%	14%
	Black	38	47	15
	Hispanic	43	31	25
<i>(Demographic breakdowns, age)</i>				
	18–29-year-olds	25%	60%	14%
	30–49	28	51	19
	50–64	39	46	13
	65+	56	26	16

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

And do you think that your generation is better off, about the same, or worse off financially than your children's generation will be?

		Better off	Worse off	About the same
Jul. 2013	PRRI	52%	26%	18%
Jul.–Aug. 2014	PRRI	49	29	18

(Demographic breakdowns, Jul.–Aug. 2014, race)

White	54%	24%	17%
Black	38	36	20
Hispanic	37	40	20

(Demographic breakdowns, Jul.–Aug. 2014, age)

18–29-year-olds	40%	34%	21%
30–49	47	29	19
50–64	53	28	15
65+	52	26	17

In general, when I am my parent's [sic] age, I believe that I will be . . .

Responses of 18–29-year-olds

		Better off financially than they are now	About the same as they are now	Worse off financially than they are now	Not sure
Mar. 2013	Harvard IOP	39%	31%	17%	13%
Mar. 2014	Harvard IOP	41	28	15	15

Note: Sample is 18–29-year-olds.

Compared to your parents' generation, do you think in general your opportunities to succeed in life are better than theirs, about the same as theirs, or worse than theirs?

		Better	Same	Worse
Feb. 2000	CBS News	72%	22%	5%
Jun. 2000	NYT	73	16	10
Dec. 2006	CBS News	55	21	23
Jun. 2007	CBS News	62	18	18
Dec. 2009	CBS News	47	24	27
Feb. 2011	CBS News/NYT	52	23	23
Jan. 2014	CBS News	44	20	35
Jul.–Aug. 2014	CBS News	42	24	32

(Demographic breakdowns, Jul.–Aug. 2014)

Hispanics	55%	24%	19%
Non-Hispanics	40	24	35

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Compared to your parents when they were the age you are now, do you think your own standard of living now is much better, somewhat better, about the same, somewhat worse, or much worse than theirs was?

		Much/Somewhat better	About the same	Somewhat/Much worse
May 1994	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	63%	21%	14%
May 1996	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	61	21	16
Dec. 1997*	NBC/ <i>WSJ</i>	72	15	12
Jun. 1998	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	64	21	13
Jun. 2000	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	65	21	12
Jun. 2002	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	66	19	14
Mar. 2005	<i>NYT</i>	66	20	13
Jul. 2006	CBS News	63	21	16
Jan.–Feb. 2008	Pew	65	19	14
Mar. 2008	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	62	19	17
May–Jun. 2008	Gallup	63	18	18
Jan. 2009	Pew	59	24	17
Apr. 2009	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	58	20	21
May 2010	Pew	57	23	17
Mar. 2011	Pew	61	23	13
Dec. 2011	Pew	60	23	15
Jan. 2012	CBS/ <i>NYT</i>	56	21	23
Mar. 2012	Pew	60	20	18
Jul. 2012	Pew	57	22	17
Dec. 2013	AP/NORC	49	25	24
1994*	NORC/GSS	63	21	14
1996^	NORC/GSS	61	21	16
1998^	NORC/GSS	64	21	13
2000^	NORC/GSS	65	21	12
2002**	NORC/GSS	66	19	14
2004**	NORC/GSS	70	18	11
2006*	NORC/GSS	66	21	12
2008^	NORC/GSS	62	21	16
2010^	NORC/GSS	59	25	16
2012^	NORC/GSS	61	21	17

(NORC/GSS demographic breakdowns)

	Much/Somewhat better		About the same		Somewhat/Much worse	
	White	Black	White	Black	White	Black
1994	65%	69%	22%	14%	13%	17%
1996	62	72	23	15	15	13
1998	66	66	22	19	13	15
2000	67	64	21	24	12	12
2002	68	74	20	13	12	13
2004	69	78	20	14	12	9
2006	65	68	23	15	12	17
2008	61	68	23	13	16	19
2010	57	58	26	26	16	16
2012	58	69	23	19	19	12

Note: *Asked of a half sample. ^Asked of a two-thirds sample. **Asked of a one-third sample.

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Compared to your parents when they were the age you are now, do you think your own standard of living now is better, about the same, or worse than theirs was?

		Better	About the same	Worse
Jan. 2011	<i>Wash Post/Kaiser/Harvard</i>	52%	27%	19%
Sep. 2013	<i>Wash Post-Miller Center</i>	54	27	18

(Demographic breakdowns, Sep. 2013)

White	51%	29%	19%
African American	58	27	13
Hispanic	62	20	18

And, compared to your parents when they were your age, would you say you have more opportunity to get ahead, less opportunity to get ahead, or about the same amount of opportunity?

		More opportunity	Less opportunity	About the same
Jul. 2009	<i>Allstate/National Journal</i>	54%	18%	26%
May 2011	<i>Allstate/National Journal</i>	44	29	24
Sep. 2012	<i>Allstate/National Journal</i>	48	23	28

Times today are, of course, different than when your parents were your age. But taking into account those differences, would you say that compared to your parents, you have more success financially, about the same amount, or less?

		More	Same	Less
Sep. 1978	<i>Roper Report</i>	59%	24%	14%

How would you compare the economic situation of your generation with that of your parents' generation? Would you say your generation is better off or worse off?

		Better off	Worse off	About the same (vol.)
Apr. 1986	<i>Time/Yankelovich</i>	67%	25%	5%

Note: Sample is national adults with an oversample of 30–40-year-olds at the time of the survey.

Compared to when your parents were your age, are you and your family better off or worse off than your parents in terms of the quality of life you lead?

		Better off	Worse off	Same
Aug. 1993	<i>Yankelovich</i>	62%	24%	11%

Compared to when your parents were your age, are you and your family better off or worse off than your parents financially?

		Better off	Worse off	Same/no difference
Aug. 1993	<i>Yankelovich</i>	73%	17%	8%

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Compared with your parents, would you say you are better off or worse off with respect to: The freedom to do what you want with your life?

		Better off	Worse off	The same
Apr. 1986	Time/Yankelovich	74%	12%	11%

Note: Sample is national adults with an oversample of 30–40-year-olds at the time of the survey.

Do you think your standard of living is higher, lower, or about the same as your parents' standard of living? Now, looking into the future, do you think your children's standard of living will be higher, lower, or about the same as your standard of living?

Cambridge Reports/Research International

		Higher	Lower	About the same
Your standard of living is . . .				
	1989	59%	19%	20%
	1992	59	19	21
	1993	57	18	23
	1994	55	20	24
	1995	58	20	21
Your children's standard of living will be . . .				
	1989	52	12	19
	1992	47	15	28
	1993	49	17	27
	1994	43	22	28
	1995	46	17	29

Note: Category "don't have children" not shown above.

Is your current standard of living higher, lower, or about the same as your parents' standard of living when you were a child?

		Higher	Lower	About the same
Mar. 2014	Bloomberg	54%	21%	23%

Do you think that your generation is enjoying a higher standard of living than your parents' generation?

		Yes	No
Dec. 1994	NBC/WSJ	73%	25%

Compared to your parents, would you say you're working harder to maintain your standard of living, working less hard, or about the same?

		Working harder	Working less hard	About the same
Jan. 1995	ABC News	40%	20%	39%
Mar. 1996	ABC/Wash Post	37	19	43

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

How does your generation's quality of life compare with your parent's generation/children's generation? Is it much better, somewhat better, somewhat worse, much worse or about the same?

How does your generation's standard of living compare with your parent's generation/children's generation? Is it much better, somewhat better, somewhat worse, much worse or about the same?

Luntz

		Better	Worse	Same
Your generation's compared with your parents' generation				
1994	Quality of life	64%	22%	13%
	Standard of living	68	19	13
1996	Quality of life	74	21	3 (vol.)
	Standard of living	74	22	3 (vol.)
Your generation's compared with your children's generation				
1994	Quality of life	44	16	31
	Standard of living	49	20	26
1996^	Quality of life	48	44	4 (vol.)
	Standard of living	48	45	4 (vol.)

Note: Categories combined. ^Compares *next generation's* quality of life/standard of living to your own rather than *your children's* quality of life/standard of living.

Is your financial standard of living—which includes your houses and lifestyles as well as your income—higher than your parents achieved during their peak financial years, lower, or about the same?

		Higher than your parents'	Lower	About the same
Jul. 1996	Roper Center/ U. of CT for <i>Reader's Digest</i>	56%	22%	21%

Note: Sample is adults 30 years and older.

Considering income, as well as homes and lifestyles, do you think that your generation is enjoying a higher economic standard of living than your parents' generation, a lower economic standard of living, or about the same as your parents' generation?

		Higher than your parents'	Lower	About the same
Jul. 1996	Roper Center/ U. of CT for <i>Reader's Digest</i>	64%	16%	19%

Note: Sample is adults 30 years and older.

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Some people say although there are many economic hardships faced by every generation in America, eventually most will do better financially than their parents. Thinking about your own generation, do you think it is true that eventually most people in your generation will do better financially than their parents or not?

		Will do better	No, most will not do better
Jul. 1996	Roper Center/ U. of CT for <i>Reader's Digest</i>	70%	23%

Note: Sample is adults 30 years and older.

Do you feel that you, personally, will eventually do better financially than your parents, or not?

		Yes	No
Jul. 1996	Roper Center/ U. of CT for <i>Reader's Digest</i>	70%	19%

Note: Sample is adults 30 years and older.

Do you think the average American family is better off now economically than the average American family 40 years ago, meaning the 1950s, or not?

		Better off now	Better off in the 1950s
Jul. 1996	Roper Center/ U. of CT for <i>Reader's Digest</i>	59%	31%

Note: Sample is adults 30 years and older.

How about compared to 20 years ago, meaning the 1970s?

		Better off now	Better off in the 1970s
Jul. 1996	Roper Center/ U. of CT for <i>Reader's Digest</i>	46%	38%

Note: Sample is adults 30 years and older.

All in all, are you and your spouse better off financially than your parents were when they were your age, about the same, or worse off financially than your parents were when they were your age?

		Better off than your parents when they were your age	Worse	About the same
Jul. 1996	Roper Center/ U. of CT for <i>Reader's Digest</i>	59%	17%	21%

Note: Sample is adults 30 years and older.

Compared to when your parents were your age, do you think that you have more freedom of choice in how to live your life, about the same freedom of choice, or less freedom of choice in how to live your life?

		More	About the same	Less
Feb. 1998	NBC/WSJ	66%	16%	17%

Note: Asked of a half sample.

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Now, thinking about life in the US . . . Since the 1960s, would you say life in the U.S. has gotten better, gotten worse or stayed about the same?

		Since the 1960s, life in the US has		
		Gotten better	Gotten worse	Stayed the same
May 1999	Pew	44%	30%	20%
Jan. 2011	Pew	37	38	19

Compared to 30 years ago, do you think the likelihood of moving up from one social class to another is greater today, less today or is it about the same?

		Greater	Less	Same
Mar. 2005	NYT	40%	23%	35%

Which of the following is closer to your view?

Nov. 2006—MetLife/Strategy First Partners/Penn, Schoen, & Berland

	Generation				
	All	Silent	Boomer	Gen X	Gen Y
I am carrying more financial burdens for my family than my parents' generation had to	56%	41%	61%	64%	52%
I have it good compared to my parents' generation: I am not carrying more of the financial burden for my family than they had to	44	59	39	36	48

Jan. 2008

	Generation				
	All	Silent	Boomer	Gen X	Gen Y
I am carrying more financial burdens for my family than my parents' generation had to	52%	41%	52%	62%	46%
I have it good compared to my parents' generation: I am not carrying more of the financial burden for my family than they had to	48	59	48	38	54

Would you say you and your immediate family are better off or worse off than your parents' immediate family when they were your age?

		Better off	Worse off	The same
Mar. 2008	Economist/YouGov	47%	27%	21%

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Compared to your parents when they were the age you are now, do you think your standard of living now is better, worse, or about the same as theirs was?

		Much better	Somewhat better	About the same	Somewhat worse	Much worse
Mar. 2006	EPI/GQR	32%	26%	25%	9%	7%
Jan. 2009	EPI/GQR	31	28	24	11	6

Thinking again about your parents when they were the age you are now, do you think your quality of life is better, worse, or about the same as theirs was?

		Much better	Somewhat better	About the same	Somewhat worse	Much worse
Mar. 2006	EPI/GQR	29%	23%	32%	11%	4%

And, compared to your parents when they were your age, do you believe that today's economy presents you with more risks that endanger your standard of living, fewer risks that endanger your standard of living, or the same amount of risks?

		More risks	Fewer risks	The same amount of risks
Apr. 2009	Allstate/National Journal	64%	11%	22%

Note: Asked of a half sample.

And, compared to your parents when they were your age, do you believe that today's economy presents you with more opportunities to improve your standard of living, fewer opportunities to improve your standard of living, or the same amount of opportunities?

		More opportunities	Fewer opportunities	The same amount of opportunities
Apr. 2009	Allstate/National Journal	42%	29%	25%

Note: Asked of a half sample.

We'd like you to compare your life today with that of your parents when they were your age. Do you feel you have more opportunity to get ahead economically than your parents did, less opportunity to get ahead, or about the same amount?

		More opportunity	Less opportunity	About the same
Apr. 2012	University of Phoenix/ National Journal	46%	29%	22%

For most people today, is getting ahead harder, easier, or about the same as it has been in previous generations?

		Harder	About the same	Easier
Sep. 2012	Allstate/National Journal	75%	15%	8%

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

For each one I mention, please tell me whether it describes you very well, somewhat well, not too well or not at all.

Nov. 2001—MTV/CBS News

	17–29-year-olds			
	Describes very well	Describes somewhat well	Describes not too well	Not at all
My life will be better than my parents'	40%	42%	9%	8%
I am optimistic about the future of the country	40	42	11	6
I am optimistic about my life	56	34	6	3

Note: Sample is 17–29-year-olds.

Do you think your generation will be better off, worse off, or about the same as your parents' generation?

	17–29-year-olds		
	Better off	Worse of	About the same
Jun. 2007 CBS News/MTV/NYT	25%	48%	25%

Note: Sample is 17–29-year-olds.

Do you think your generation will be better off, worse off, or about the same as your parents' generation?

	18–29-year-olds		
	Better off	About the same	Worse off
Feb.–Mar. 2014 Reason/Rupe	16%	36%	46%

Note: Sample is 18–29-year-olds.

The Next Generation's Opportunities

Americans are not optimistic about the opportunities future generations will have. Many do not expect young people to be better off than the current generation, to be as financially successful, or to have as many chances to get ahead.

In the early 2000s—when the economy was strong—people were more optimistic. In the NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* poll, 49 percent in 2001 felt confident that life for their children's generation would be better than it has been for them. Their August 2014 poll showed that 21 percent felt confident that life for their children's generation would be better than it had

been for them. Seventy-six percent said it would not be. In a CBS News/*New York Times* Summer 2014 question that gave people the option of choosing “about the same,” 23 percent said the future generation of Americans would be better off, 50 percent worse off, and 23 percent about the same. A broader question last asked by Gallup in Fall 2013 found that 16 percent said it was very likely that today's youth would have a better life than their parents, 35 percent said somewhat likely, 26 percent said somewhat unlikely, and 22 percent said very unlikely.

In general, do you think that future generations of Americans will be much better off, somewhat better off, somewhat worse off, or much worse off, or the same as Americans today?

		Better off	Worse off	Same
1994	Luntz	32%	46%	18%

Note: Combined “Much better” and “Somewhat better” responses. Combined “Somewhat worse” and “Much worse” responses.

Do you feel confident that life for our children's generation will be better than it has been for us?

		Yes	No
Oct. 1990*	NBC/WSJ	50%	45%
Dec. 1991*	NBC/WSJ	44	51
Feb. 1992	NBC/WSJ	26	66
Dec. 1992	NBC/WSJ	41	52
Sep. 1993	NBC/WSJ	25	68
Dec. 2001	NBC/WSJ	49	42
Jul. 2006	NBC/WSJ	27	65
Jan. 2007	NBC/WSJ	33	60
Sep. 2008*	NBC/WSJ	34	56
Jun. 2009	NBC/WSJ	31	57
Dec. 2009	NBC/WSJ	27	66
Aug. 2010	NBC/WSJ	27	66
May 2012^	NBC/WSJ	30	63
Aug. 2014^	NBC/WSJ	21	76

Note: *Asked of registered voters. ^Asked of a half sample.

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Do you expect the next generation of Americans will have a better standard of living than the one we have now, a worse standard of living than the one we have now or about the same standard of living as we have now?

		Better	Worse	Same
Nov. 1991	LAT	20%	51%	23%
Oct. 1992	LAT	24	36	36
Jan. 1993	LAT	23	38	35
Jun. 1993	LAT	14	51	32
Dec. 1993	LAT	15	47	35
Oct. 1995	LAT	13	51	33
Aug. 1996	LAT	18	46	33

Do you think the future generation of Americans will be better off, worse off, or about the same as people today?

		Better off	Worse	Same
Jun. 1989	CBS News/NT	25%	52%	18%
Jun. 1990	CBS News/NT	28	36	31
Mar. 1991	CBS News/NT	36	26	35
Oct. 1991	CBS News/NT	20	52	25
Nov. 1991	CBS News/NT	26	43	28
Sep. 1992	CBS News/NT	22	46	21
Oct. 1992	CBS News/NT	26	44	20
Nov. 1992*	Voter Research and Surveys	30	35	30
Dec. 1992	CBS News/NT	25	40	31
Feb. 1993	CBS News/NT	22	49	22
Aug. 1994	Luntz	32	46	18
Nov. 1994	CBS News/NT	18	57	21
Dec. 1994	CBS News/NT	21	47	30
Mar. 1995	CBS News/NT	16	58	20
Aug. 1996	ABC News	16	48	31
Sep. 1996	CBS News/NT	24	38	32
Oct. 1996	CBS News/NT	31	34	33
Nov. 1996*	Voter News Service	30	34	36
Feb. 1997	CBS News	14	51	31
Jan. 1998	CBS News/NT	28	38	31

Note: Question wording varies slightly. *Indicates Election Day exit poll of national adult voters leaving the polls.

Do you think the future of the next generation of Americans will be better, or worse, or about the same as your life today?

		Better	Worse	Same
Jun. 1989	CBS News/NT	25%	52%	18%
Mar. 1991	CBS News/NT	36	26	35
Oct. 1991	CBS News/NT	20	52	25
Jan. 1992	CBS News/NT	26	48	22
Oct.-Nov. 1992	CBS News/NT	18	57	21
Jan. 1994	CBS News	22	53	21
Mar. 1995	CBS News/NT	16	58	20
Mar. 1998	CBS News	29	41	23
Feb. 2000	CBS News/NT	44	27	27
Jun. 2000	CBS News/NT	40	31	26

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Oct. 2002	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	29	39	27
Sep. 2006	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	30	38	28
Jun. 2007	CBS News	25	48	24
Mar.–Apr. 2008	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	33	34	29
Mar. 2009	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	35	32	26
May 2009	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	25	42	28
Feb. 2010	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	25	46	26
May 2010	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	20	50	25
Oct. 2010	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	22	51	23
Oct. 2011	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	21	46	29
Apr. 2012	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	24	47	23
Sep. 2012	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	32	42	18
Jan. 2014	CBS News	20	53	25
Jul.–Aug. 2014	CBS News	23	50	23
<i>(Demographic breakdowns, Jul.–Aug. 2014)</i>				
	Hispanics	40%	30%	26%
	Non-Hispanics	20	53	22

Note: Original question wording asked “for Americans,” not “of Americans,” and was used 1989–Feb. 2000.

Now here are some questions about whether you are satisfied with various things about America today. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the opportunity for the next generation of Americans to live better than their parents?

		Satisfied	Dissatisfied
Jan. 1992	Gallup/ <i>USA Today</i>	36%	61%
Jun. 1992	Gallup/ <i>USA Today</i>	22	74
Aug. 1992	Gallup/CNN/Knight Ridder [^]	28	68
Aug.–Sep. 1992	Gallup/ <i>USA Today</i>	28	68
Jan. 1993	Gallup/CNN/ <i>USA Today</i> #	38	60
Oct. 1994	Gallup/ <i>USA Today</i>	24	73
Jan. 1997	Gallup/CNN/ <i>USA Today</i> #	45	53
Dec. 1997	Gallup/CNN/ <i>USA Today</i> #	47	51
Jan. 2000	Gallup/CNN/ <i>USA Today</i> *	69	29
Sep. 2000	Gallup/CNN/ <i>USA Today</i> *	69	29
Oct. 2006	CNN/ORC**	44	55
Jul. 2007	Gallup/ <i>USA Today</i> *	43	55
Oct. 2007	Gallup/ <i>USA Today</i> *	46	52
May 2012	Gallup/ <i>USA Today</i>	40	58

Note: [^]Question wording: “Please tell me whether you are satisfied or dissatisfied with each of the following aspects of life in this country today. . . . The opportunity for the next generation of Americans to live better than their parents.”

#Question wording: “I’d like you to rate your satisfaction with the state of the nation in some different areas. How satisfied are you with the opportunity for the next generation of Americans to live better than their parents? Would you say very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, not too satisfied, or not at all satisfied?”

*Question wording: “I’d like you to rate your satisfaction with the state of the nation in some different areas. For each of the following areas, please say whether you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, not too satisfied, or not at all satisfied. How about the opportunity for the next generation of Americans to live better than their parents?”

**Asked of a half sample. Question wording: “Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the opportunity for the next generation of Americans to live better than their parents?”

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Overall, do you think life for the next generation of Americans will be better or worse than life today?

		Better than life today	Worse than life today
Aug. 2002	Fox News	41%	39%
Apr. 2010	Fox News	32	57
Oct. 2010 [^]	Fox News	29	58
Oct. 2010	Fox News	27	61
Jan. 2012	Fox News	34	53
Aug. 2012	Fox News	42	49

Note: [^]Asked of likely voters. All other questions asked of registered voters.

Looking to the future, do you think most children in this country will grow up to be better off or worse off than their parents?

		Better	Worse	Same (vol.)
May 2014	CNN/ORC	34%	63%	2%

And, thinking ahead to when today's children are your age, do you think they will have more opportunity to get ahead, less opportunity to get ahead, or about the same opportunity?

		More opportunity to get ahead	Less opportunity	About the same
Jul. 2009	Allstate/National Journal	31%	36%	29%
Dec. 2010	Allstate/National Journal	25	39	30
May 2011	Allstate/National Journal	33	35	26
Sep. 2012	Allstate/National Journal	32	32	31
Sep. 2013	Allstate/National Journal	20	45	30

Do you believe that the next generation will be better off economically than the current generation?

		Yes	No
May 2011	GWU/Battleground	22%	73%
Nov. 2011	Politico/GWU	22	66
Feb. 2012	Politico/GWU	30	59
Aug. 2012	Politico/GWU	29	64

When children today in the United States grow up, do you think they will be better off or worse off financially than their parents?

		Better off	Worse off
Mar. 2013	Pew	33%	62%

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

If things continue the way they are going now, do you think the future of the next generation of Americans will be a good one, or will it be bogged down by too many problems left behind for them?

		Good future	Too many problems
Early Oct. 1984 [^]	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	41%	51%
Late Oct. 1984 [^]	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	42	47
Sep.–Oct. 1986	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	32	62
Nov. 1987 [^]	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	30	61
Jul. 1988	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	29	59
Sep. 1988*	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	34	56
Early Oct. 1988*	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	41	48
Late Oct. 1988*	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	35	56
Nov. 1988	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	37	55

Note: [^]Registered voters. *Probable electorate.

In America, each generation has tried to have a better life than their parents, with a better living standard, better homes, a better education, and so on. How likely do you think it is that today's youth will have a better life than their parents—very likely, somewhat likely, somewhat unlikely, or very unlikely?

		Very likely	Somewhat likely	Somewhat unlikely	Very unlikely
Jan. 1983	Roper	19%	35%	27%	17%
Jan. 1985	Roper	28	40	19	10
Jan. 1990	Roper	21	41	20	13
Oct. 1990	Roper	28	46	13	4
Dec. 1995	<i>NYT</i>	11	38	32	17
Sep. 1996	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	16	42	27	13
Oct. 1996	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	11	40	32	14
Oct.–Nov. 1996	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	15	41	27	15
Dec. 1996	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	14	37	30	17
Jan. 1998	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	18	47	26	8
Jul. 1999	<i>NYT</i>	29	42	18	8
Dec. 2001	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	26	45	19	8
Jan. 2003	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	24	42	21	10
Jan. 2008	Gallup/ <i>USA Today</i>	25	41	21	12
Dec. 2008	Gallup/ <i>USA Today</i>	19	37	27	15
Mar. 2009	Gallup/ <i>USA Today</i>	19	40	25	15
Jan. 2010	Gallup/ <i>USA Today</i>	17	45	26	12
Oct. 2010	Gallup	14	37	26	22
Apr. 2011	Gallup	13	31	28	27
Aug. 2012	AP/Gfk/Roper	17	33	28	21
Dec. 2012	Gallup/ <i>USA Today</i>	13	36	25	25
Sep.–Oct. 2013	Gallup	16	35	26	22

Looking a little further ahead, do you think the next generation will live better than people live today, worse than people live today, or about the same?

		Better	Worse	About the same
Jan. 1989	<i>Time/CNN/Yankelovich</i>	27%	32%	38%
May 1989	<i>Wash Post</i> *	22	38	36

Note: *Question wording: "Looking ahead . . ."

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

What about the future for the next generation of Americans? Will it be better or worse?

		Better	Worse	About the same
Jan. 1992	CBS News/NTT	26%	48%	22%

(Asked of those who thought the future of the next generation of Americans will be worse = 48%) In what way do you think the future of the next generation of Americans will be worse?

Jan. 1992—CBS News/NTT		
	Economy	12%
	Jobs	7

(Asked of those who thought the future of the next generation of Americans will be better = 26%) In what way do you think the future of the next generation of Americans will be better?

Jan. 1992—CBS News/NTT		
	Education	4%
	Jobs	3
	Economy	3

Do you think the next generation will be better off financially or worse off financially than the current generation?

		Better off	Worse off	About the same (vol.)
1996	Roper Center/ U. of CT for Reader's Digest	29%	52%	8%

Note: Sample is adults 30 years and older.

Overall, do you expect the life of the next generation of Americans will be better than life today, or worse than life today, or about the same as life today?

		Better than life today	About the same as life today	Worse than life today
Oct. 1996	ABC News	31%	33%	34%
Nov. 2010*	AP/CNBC	21	33	45

When they grow up, do you expect children today will enjoy a higher or lower standard of living than your generation, or do you think it will be about the same?

		Higher	Lower	Same
Oct. 2000	Wash Post/Kaiser/Harvard	47%	15%	36%

Note: Sample is registered voters.

When children today in the US grow up, do you think they will be better off or worse off than people are now?

		Better off	Worse off
Sep. 2002	Pew	41%	50%
Feb.–Mar. 2006	Pew	34	50
May 2007	Pew	31	60
Jul. 2008	Pew	25	62
Oct. 2008	Pew	37	45
May 2009	Pew	36	55

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Thinking about the economy and standard of living. Do you think the next generation will be better off, worse off, about the same as your personal economic situation is right now?

		Better off	Worse off	About the same
Oct. 2005	GWU/Battleground	19%	18%	63%

Note: Asked of likely voters.

When kids today are the age you are now, do you think their standard of living will be better, worse, or about the same as yours now?

		Much better	Somewhat better	About the same	Somewhat worse	Much worse
Mar. 2006	EPI/GQR	14%	19%	23%	22%	16%
Jan. 2009*	Pew/GQR	15	25	29	16	7
Mar. 2011	Pew/GQR	8	18	23	27	19

Note: Asked of those who do not have any children under 18 years of age living at home (67 percent in 2006, 68 percent in 2009, 69 percent in 2011). *Sample includes oversamples of blacks, Hispanics, and youth under age 40 with results weighted to be representative of the national adult population.

Which of the following is closer to your view?

MetLife/Strategy First Partners/Penn, Schoen, & Berland

	Nov. 2006	Jan. 2008
Future generations, such as my children's, have plenty of time to adapt to the financial burden shift and their lives will not be negatively impacted.	28%	28%
I am worried that the financial burden shift will lessen future generations (such as my children's) to lead a comfortable life.	72%	72%

Note: For both surveys, MetLife defined the "financial burden shift" as "a weakening of traditional social and corporate safety nets (such as Social Security and corporate pensions) that increasingly shifted financial responsibilities towards individuals."

Please listen carefully as I read each statement and tell me if you would agree or disagree with that particular statement. I think the next generation will be better off economically than I am now.

		Agree	Disagree
May 2008	GWU/Battleground	30%	66%
Mar. 2014	GWU/Battleground	20	76

Note: National likely voters, defined as registered voters who said they are somewhat/very/extremely likely to vote in 2008.

In the future, when children reach your age, do you think they'll have more opportunities to get ahead, the same opportunities to get ahead, or fewer opportunities to get ahead?

		More opportunities	The same opportunities	Fewer opportunities
Sep. 2012	Reason/Rupe	27%	29%	37%

Note: Asked of likely voters.

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Thinking about the next generation of Americans who are children today, the way things are going, do you think economically they will be better off, worse off, or about the same as the generation of adults who are working today?

		Better off economically	About the same economically	Worse off
Jul. 2008*	Chicago Council on Global Affairs	9%	30%	60%
Sep. 2008	Chicago Council on Global Affairs	10	27	62
Jun. 2010	Chicago Council on Global Affairs	8	32	59
May 2012	Chicago Council on Global Affairs	8	34	58

Note: *Asked of a two-thirds sample.

Thinking about young people, under the age of 18, do you think it will be easier or harder for them to achieve the American Dream?

		Responses of nonparents			
		Much easier	Somewhat easier	Somewhat harder	Much harder
Jan.–Feb. 2009	Pew/GQR	10%	19%	32%	32%

Note: Asked of nonparents.

I would now like to read you a list of some ways the US economy might change as a result of this recession. Please indicate for each of the statements, how likely you think it is that each of these changes will take place over the next 5–10 years? Young people starting out in their careers won't achieve as high a standard of living as my generation did.

		Not at all likely	Not too likely	Somewhat likely	Very likely
Sep. 2009	Allstate/National Journal	10%	21%	36%	33%

Do you expect American children will have a higher, lower, or about the same standard of living than their parents do today?

		Higher	Lower	Same
Jun. 2011	Bloomberg	23%	55%	19%
Jun. 2012	Bloomberg	28	45	22

Do you think future generations will be better off, worse off, or about the same financially as people are now?

		Better off	Worse off	About the same
Aug. 2011	McClatchy/Marist	16%	61%	23%

Your Children's Opportunities

People are generally more confident about the future of their own children than they are about the next generation as a whole. The early 2000s, when the economy was doing very well, was a period of especially high expectations. Sadly, we have no questions from 2014 to include in this section. There are only a handful from 2012 and 2013.

In a CBS News/*New York Times* question last asked in January 2012, 41 percent of parents said their children's

standard of living would be better than their own, 20 said percent about the same, and 34 percent said worse. A question asked in 2013 by the *Washington Post* and the Miller Center found that 39 percent believed their children's standard of living would be better, 24 percent believed about the same, and 28 percent believed worse. Only 30 percent of whites believed their children's standard of living would be better, compared to 65 percent of African Americans and 63 percent of Hispanics.

Do you think your opportunities to succeed are better than, or not as good as, those your parents had? Do you think your son's/children's opportunities to succeed will be better than, or not as good as, those you have? (If no children) Assume that you did have children.

Your opportunity to succeed compared with your parents

		Better	Not as good	Same (vol.)
Dec. 1939	Roper	61%	20%	12%
Feb. 1940	Roper	59	22	13
Jan. 1947	Roper	70	13	13
Dec. 1990	Roper	70	15	12
Aug. 1993	Roper	63	22	11

Your son's/children's opportunity to succeed compared with yours

Dec. 1939	Roper	61%	15%	10%
Feb. 1940	Roper	60	5	10
Jan. 1947	Roper	62	13	12
Dec. 1990	Roper	61	21	12
Aug. 1993	Roper	49	32	10

Do you expect that your children will have a better life than you have had, a worse life, or a life about as good as yours?

		Better life	Worse life	Life about as good
1989	Louis Harris and Associates	59%	10%	25%
1992	Louis Harris and Associates	31	28	37
Feb. 1996	Louis Harris and Associates	50	16	26
Jul. 2000	<i>Business Week</i> /Harris	50	15	26
Jul. 2002	Harris Interactive	41	23	29

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

(Asked of mothers) Will your daughter's opportunities to succeed be better than or not as good as those you've had?

(Asked to fathers) Will your son's opportunities to succeed be better than or not as good as those you've had?

Mothers' opinions of daughters' opportunities to succeed

		Better	Not as good	Same
1946	Gallup	61%	20%	12%
Feb. 1997	Gallup	85	7	6
Mar. 2011	Pew	74	17	8

Fathers' opinions of sons' opportunities to succeed

		Better	Not as good	Same
1946	Gallup	64%	13%	13%
Feb. 1997	Gallup	62	21	11
Mar. 2011	Pew	59	32	9

Now, taking some specific aspects of our life, we'd like to know how confident you feel about them. First, do you feel very confident, only fairly confident, or not at all confident that life for your children will be better than it has been for us?

		Very confident	Only fairly confident	Not at all confident
1973	Roper	26%	36%	30%
1974	Roper	25	41	28
1975	Roper	23	39	32
1976	Roper	31	39	25
1979	Roper	25	41	29
1982	Roper	20	44	32
1983	Roper	24	38	33
1988	Roper	20	45	28
1992	Roper	17	46	31
1995	Roper	17	44	34

Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement . . .

1994—Luntz

	Agree	Disagree
My children will inherit a better world than I have	41%	56%
My children have a right to expect more than I had	63	34

Note: Combined "Strongly agree" and "Somewhat agree" responses. Combined "Somewhat disagree" and "Strongly disagree" responses.

In the future, what do you think the economic situation will be for your children or other people's children? Do you think they will be better off than you and your generation or worse off?

		Better off	Worse off
1986	Yankelovich Partners	48%	39%
1997	Yankelovich Partners	27	67

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

And what about your children? Do you think they will be better off than you financially when they reach your age, or not?

(For people who say they have no children) Suppose you did have children; do you think those children would be better off financially or not when they reach your age?

		Better off financially	Not better off
Mar. 1981	ABC News/Wash Post	47%	43%
Mar. 1982	ABC News/Wash Post	43	41
Jan. 1983	ABC News/Wash Post	44	45
Nov. 1983	ABC News/Wash Post	62	27
Dec. 1983	ABC News/Wash Post	65	29
Jan. 1985	ABC News/Wash Post	62	29
Mar. 1986	ABC News/Wash Post	74	19
Apr. 1986	ABC News/Wash Post	69	26
May 1986	ABC News/Wash Post	71	23
May 1991	ABC News/Wash Post	66	25
Jan. 1995	ABC News/Wash Post	54	39
Mar. 1996	ABC News/Wash Post	52	42
May 1996	ABC News/Wash Post	60	33

Do you think it's possible your child could grow up to be president or not?

		Possible	Not possible	No children (vol.)
May 1988	AP	59%	34%	NA
Oct. 1992	ABC News/Wash Post	50	46	3%
Aug. 2008	ABC News/Wash Post	49	40	10
<i>(Demographic breakdowns, August 2008)</i>				
	Whites	46%	44%	9%
	Blacks	64	23	11

Do you expect that your children will have a better life than you have had, a worse life, or a life about as good as yours?

		Better life	Worse life	Life about as good
1989	Louis Harris and Associates	59%	10%	25%
1992	Louis Harris and Associates	31	28	37
Feb. 1996	Louis Harris and Associates	50	16	26
Jul. 2000	<i>Business Week</i> /Harris	50	15	26
Jul. 2002	Harris Interactive	41	23	29

Do you think your son's or daughter's opportunities to get ahead will be better than, or not as good as, those you have?

		Parents		
		Better than	Not as good	Same (vol.)
Feb. 1990	Clark, Martire, and Bartolomeo/ <i>Fortune</i>	70%	19%	7%

Note: Asked of parents.

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

If you had children, do you think your son's or daughter's opportunities to get ahead would be better than, or not as good as, those you have?

		Nonparents		
		Better than	Not as good	Same (vol.)
Feb. 1990	<i>Fortune</i>	57%	26%	6%

Note: Asked of nonparents.

Do you expect your children's generation to enjoy a higher standard of living than your generation?

		Yes	No
May 1990#	NBC/WSJ	60%	37%
Jul. 1994	NBC/WSJ	45	50
Sep. 1994	NBC/WSJ	49	45
Dec. 1994	NBC/WSJ	48	46
Mar. 1995*	Hart/Teeter/Council for Excellence in Government	49	45
Jan. 1996*	NBC/WSJ	41	52
Mar. 1996*	NBC/WSJ	41	51
Jun. 1996*	NBC/WSJ	43	47
Sep. 1996*	NBC/WSJ	43	47
Apr. 1997*	NBC/WSJ	52	44
Jun. 1997*	NBC/WSJ	53	42
Feb. 1998*	NBC/WSJ	64	32
Sep. 1998*	NBC/WSJ	63	32
Dec. 1998	NBC/WSJ	63	31
Oct. 2000*	NBC/WSJ	69	22
Oct. 2001	NBC/WSJ	69	22
Jan. 2003*	NBC/WSJ	59	34
Jan. 2004	NBC/WSJ	64	29

Note: #Asked of national registered voters. *Asked of a half sample.

*All things considered, do you think your children will be better off or worse off than you? (If no children)
What about the generation younger than your own? Do you think they will be better off or worse off than
your generation?*

		Better off	Worse off	The same
Mar. 1992	CNN/Angus Reid	41%	43%	10%
Sep. 2011	Ipsos-Reid	72	19	5

Did your parents reach "the American Dream"? Your children, or the next generation, do you feel they will reach "the American Dream"?

		Parents reached the Am. Dream	Parents did not reach the Am. Dream	Your children, the next generation, will reach	Your children, the next generation, will not reach
Aug. 1992	Wirthlin Worldwide	54%	43%	62%	29%
Dec. 1995	Wirthlin Worldwide	55	39	59	26

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Looking to the future, when your children grow up do you think they will be better off or worse off than you are now? Looking to the future, do you think MOST children in this country will grow up to be better off or worse off than their parents?

		Better	Worse	Same (vol.)
Your children*				
1994	Pew	47%	39%	5%
1996	Pew	51	41	4
Most children				
1994#	Pew	33%	50%	6%
1996	Pew	38	55	3

Note: *Based on sample of parents with children under 18. #Based on sample of nonparents only.

How does your generation's quality of life compare with your [parent's generation/children's generation]? Is it much better, somewhat better, somewhat worse, much worse, or about the same?

How does your generation's standard of living compare with your [parent's generation/children's generation]? Is it much better, somewhat better, somewhat worse, much worse, or about the same?

Luntz

		Better	Worse	Same
Your generation's . . . compared with your parent's generation				
1994	Quality of life	64%	22%	13%
	Standard of living	68	19	13
1996	Quality of life	74	21	3 (vol.)
	Standard of living	74	22	3 (vol.)
Your generation's . . . compared with your children's generation				
1994	Quality of life	44%	16%	31%
	Standard of living	49	20	26
1996^	Quality of life	48	44	4 (vol.)
	Standard of living	48	45	4 (vol.)

Note: Categories combined. ^Compares *next generation's* quality of life/standard of living to your own rather than *your children's* quality of life/standard of living.

Do you think that by the time they are your age, your children will have a higher financial standard of living than you have now, a lower one, or about the same?

		Adults 30 and older		
		Higher	Lower	About the same
1996	Roper Center/U. of CT for <i>Reader's Digest</i>	53%	12%	29%

Note: Sample is adults 30 years and older.

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

(If parent) When your children are the age you are now, do you think their standard of living will be much better, somewhat better, about the same, somewhat worse, or much worse than yours is now?

		Much better	Somewhat better	About the same	Somewhat worse	Much worse
May 1994	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	18%	32%	23%	17%	5%
May 1996	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	22	30	21	18	5
Jun. 1998	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	24	36	22	10	4
Jun. 2000	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	32	34	18	8	3
Jun. 2002	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	29	38	20	9	2
Mar. 2005	<i>NYT</i>	25	31	18	15	7
Jul. 2006	CBS News	18	30	23	21	6
Mar. 2008	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	19	27	24	19	9
Apr. 2009	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	19	24	18	25	9
Jan. 2012*	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	18	23	20	22	12

Note: *Asked of parents of children under age 18 (66 percent).

When your children are at the age you are now, do you think their standard of living will be much better, somewhat better, about the same, somewhat worse, or much worse than yours is now?

		Much better	Somewhat better	About the same	Somewhat worse	Much worse
Jan.–Feb. 2008	Pew	26%	23%	20%	14%	7%
Jan.–Feb. 2009*	Pew	32	30	25	6	4
May 2010	Pew	24	21	19	16	10
Mar. 2011	Pew	26	22	19	12	9
Dec. 2011	Pew	28	20	19	13	10
Jul. 2012	Pew	24	18	19	15	13

Note: *Question wording slightly different: “When your children are the age you are now, do you think their standard of living will be better, worse, or about the same as yours or people your age?”

When your children are the age you are now, do you think their standard of living will be better, about the same, or worse than yours is now?

		Better	About the same	Worse
Feb. 2011	<i>Wash Post</i> /Kaiser/Harvard	52%	23%	28%
Sep. 2013	<i>Wash Post</i> –Miller Center	39	24	28

(Demographic breakdowns, Sep. 2013)

White	30%	27%	33%
African American	65	16	11
Hispanic	63	17	14

When they grow up, do you expect your children or children from families like yours to enjoy a higher or lower standard of living than your generation, or do you think it will be about the same?

		Higher	Lower	About the same
Jul. 1996	<i>Wash Post</i> /Kaiser/Harvard	38%	27%	35%
Mar. 2011*	<i>Wash Post</i> /Kaiser/Harvard	50	10	37

Note: *Sample: National adult with an oversample of minority groups. Results are weighted to be representative of a national adult population.

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

All things considered, do you think your children will be better off or worse off than you? (If no children) What about the generation younger than your own? Do you think they will be better off or worse off than your generation?

		Better off	Worse off	The same
Jul. 2004	New American Dream/Widmeyer	64%	17%	15%

(Asked of parents): When your children are your age, do you think their standard of living will be better, about the same or worse than yours today?

		Better	Same	Worse
Feb.–Mar. 2006	Pew	56%	18%	22%

(If have children) When your children are the age you are now, do you think their standard of living will be better, worse, or about the same that yours is now?

		Much better	Somewhat better	About the same	Somewhat worse	Much worse
Mar. 2006	EPI/GQR	28%	26%	18%	14%	10%

Do you believe that in the future your children will be better off, about the same, or worse off?

		Better	Same	Worse
Jan. 2007	GWU/Battleground	39%	19%	37%
Jul. 2007	GWU/Battleground	32	24	38
Dec. 2007	GWU/Battleground	39	26	30
May 2008	GWU/Battleground	36	28	33
Mar. 2014*	GWU/Battleground	26	33	37

Note: Asked of likely voters. *Question wording ended with the additional phrase “than you are right now?”

How confident are you that your children will have a better life than you?

		Very confident	Fairly confident	Not very confident	Not at all confident
Aug. 2007	Zogby	26%	38%	23%	7%
Sep. 2007	Zogby	28	36	20	6
Dec. 2007	Zogby	31	36	21	7

Thinking about your future, how confident are you in each of the following—very confident, just somewhat confident, or not confident? If this does not apply to you, just say so. The children in your life will have a better life than you have.

		Very confident	Fairly confident	Just somewhat confident	Not confident	Does not apply
Oct. 2010	Bloomberg	22%	15%	18%	33%	11%

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Do you expect your children will be better off or worse off than you when they reach your current stage of life?

		Better off	Worse off
Mar.–Apr. 2008	CNN/ORC	71%	21%
May 2009	CNN/ORC	66	28

Thinking about your own kids, do you think it will be easier or harder for them to achieve the American Dream?

		——Parents with children under age 18 in household——			
		Much easier	Somewhat easier	Somewhat harder	Much harder
Jan.–Feb. 2009	Pew/GQR	19%	25%	27%	25%

While everyone may interpret this data differently, we refer to the American Dream as the ability of all citizens and residents of America to achieve their goals in life through hard work. Is it likely your children will achieve the American Dream?

		Yes	No
Sep. 2011	Time/Abt SRBI	65%	29%

Note: Asked of those who have children.

How to Get Ahead

Almost all Americans agree that hard work is an important factor in getting ahead, though Americans' belief in the importance of hard work fluctuates. In identical questions asked since 1984, between 52 and 69 percent disagreed that "hard work offers little guarantee of success." In a Pew question from 2014, 65 percent answered that most people can make it if they are willing to work hard.

The belief that hard work can bring success remains intact, but there are signs of concern. In 2001, when spirits were high, Gallup reported that 76 percent were satisfied with the opportunity in this country to get ahead by working hard, while 20 percent were dissatisfied. Gallup's latest question from January 2014 shows that 54 percent were satisfied and 45 percent were dissatisfied. Dissatisfaction with the belief in the ability to

get ahead through hard work had more than doubled.

Overall, even though Americans' belief in the dividends from hard work as a path to success has diminished in recent years, it is still stronger than most if not all other potential factors. In 2005, the *New York Times* asked people to rank in importance experiences and qualities essential to "getting ahead in life." Coming from a wealthy family, natural ability, and knowing the right people ranked low on the list of essential attributes. Hard work ranked at the top, with a good education following closely behind. The September 2013 *Washington Post*-Miller Center poll got similar responses to the question of what is most important for getting ahead financially. Thirty-four percent said hard work, followed by 30 percent saying education.

I am going to read a few statements now, and I'd like you to tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with each one. For me, good luck is more important than hard work for success.

		Agree	Disagree	Uncertain
Dec. 1973	Equitable Life Assurance/ Society/NORC	17%	77%	7%

Now, as I read some statements on a few different topics, please tell me if you completely agree, mostly agree, mostly disagree or completely disagree with each one. Hard work and determination are no guarantee of success for most people.

		Completely agree	Mostly agree	Mostly disagree	Completely disagree
Mar. 2014	PRRI	19%	35%	31%	14%

Note: Asked of national likely voters.

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Now I am going to read to you a series of statements that will help us understand how you feel about a number of things. For each statement, please tell me if you completely agree with it, mostly agree with it, mostly disagree with it or completely disagree with it. Hard work offers little guarantee of success.

		Completely/Mostly agree that hard work offers little guarantee of success	Mostly/Completely disagree that hard work offers little guarantee of success
Sep. 1984	University of Michigan	36%	55%
May 1987	Gallup	29	68
May 1988	Gallup	32	66
Feb. 1989	Gallup	41	57
May 1990	Pew	36	63
Nov. 1991	Pew	44	54
Jan. 1992	Pew	41	56
Feb. 1992	Pew	42	56
Mar. 1992	Pew	45	52
Apr.–May 1992	Pew	42	57
May 1992	Pew	32	66
Jun 1992	Pew	32	66
Sep. 1992	Pew	45	52
Jul. 1994	Pew	39	60
Nov. 1997	Pew	33	66
Jul. 1998	Wash Post/Kaiser/Harvard	40	59
Jun. 1999	Wash Post/Kaiser/Harvard	43	56
Sep.–Oct. 1999	Pew	29	69
Jul. 2002	Pew	30	67
Jul. 2003	Pew	30	68
Aug. 2003	Pew	30	68
Dec. 2006	Pew	34	64
Jan. 2007	Pew	34	64
Mar. 2009	Pew	33	65
Apr. 2009	Pew	33	65
Apr. 2012	Pew	35	63

Now here are some questions about whether you are satisfied or dissatisfied with various things about America today. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with Americans' willingness to work hard to better themselves?

		Satisfied	Dissatisfied
Jan. 1992	Gallup/USA Today	52%	45%
Aug.–Sep. 1992	Gallup/USA Today	55	41
May 2012	Gallup/USA Today	52	45

Now here are some questions about whether you are satisfied or dissatisfied with various things about America today. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the opportunity for a poor person in this nation to get ahead by working hard?

		Satisfied	Dissatisfied
Jan. 1992	Gallup/USA Today	40%	58%
Oct. 1994	Gallup/USA Today	38	59
May 2012	Gallup/USA Today	50	48

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

I'm going to read you some pairs of statements that will help us understand how you feel about a number of things. As I read each pair, please tell me whether the first statement or the second statement comes closer to your views—even if neither is exactly right. The first pair is most people who want to get ahead can make it if they're willing to work hard. Or, hard work and determination are no guarantee of success for most people.

		Most people can make it if willing to work hard	Hard work and determination no guarantee of success
Jul. 1994	Pew	68%	30%
Jul. 1999	Pew	74	23
Aug. 1999	Pew	74	23
Aug. 2000	Pew	73	24
Sep. 2000	Pew	73	24
Dec. 2004	Pew	68	28
Dec. 2005	Pew	64	32
Feb. 2006	Pew	64	33
Mar. 2006	Pew	64	33
Apr. 2006	Pew	64	33
May 2007	Pew	67	29
Aug.–Sep. 2010	Pew	64	33
Sep. 2010	Kaiser/Wash Post/Harvard	66	32
Oct. 2010	Kaiser/Harvard/Wash Post	66	32
Feb. 2011	Kaiser/Harvard/Wash Post	59	39
Feb.–Mar. 2011	Pew	62	34
Apr.–Jul. 2011*	Pew	74	26
Dec. 2011	Pew	58	40
Jul. 2012**	Pew	63	34
Sep. 2013	Reason/Rupe	63	34
Sep. 2013	Wash Post–Miller Center	65	34
Jan. 2014	Pew/USA Today	60	38
Feb.–Mar. 2014***^	Reason/Rupe	58	35
Mar. 2014**	Pew	65	32

Note: *The two options read, "First statement: Most people who want to get ahead can make it if they're willing to work hard. Second statement: Hard work and determination are no guarantee of success for most people." **The question reads, "Which statement comes closer to your own views—even if neither is exactly right? . . . Most people who want to get ahead can make it if they're willing to work hard. Hard work and determination are no guarantee of success for most people." ***The two options read, "Most people who want to get ahead can make it if they're willing to work hard; TWO: hard work and determination do not lead to success for most people."
^Asked of adults ages 18–29 years old.

If you had to choose, which thing on this list would you pick as the most important for a child to learn to prepare him or her for life? . . . Which comes next in importance? Which comes third? Which comes fourth?

Mar. 2012 NORC/GSS

—Ranking of importance for a child to learn to prepare him or her for life—

	First in importance	Second in importance	Third in importance	Fourth in importance	Fifth in importance
To think for oneself	44%	19%	17%	15%	4%
To work hard	25	35	29	10	1
To help others	16	33	33	16	2
To obey	14	11	18	41	16
To be well-liked or popular	*	*	*	19	76

Note: Asked of a two-thirds sample. *Response was too small to report.

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Some people say that people get ahead by their own hard work; others say that lucky breaks or help from other people are more important. Which do you think is most important?

		Hard work most important	Hard work, luck equally important (vol.)	Luck most important
Feb. 1982	NORC/GSS	60%	25%	13%
Feb. 1984	NORC/GSS	67	18	15
Feb. 1985	NORC/GSS	66	19	14
Feb. 1987	NORC/GSS	66	19	15
Feb. 1988*	NORC/GSS	67	21	12
Feb. 1989*	NORC/GSS	66	20	14
Feb. 1990*	NORC/GSS	65	21	13
Feb. 1991*	NORC/GSS	66	21	13
Feb. 1993*	NORC/GSS	66	22	13
Jan. 1994*	NORC/GSS	69	19	11
Feb. 1996*	NORC/GSS	70	18	11
Feb. 1998*	NORC/GSS	67	22	10
Feb. 2000*	NORC/GSS	65	24	10
Feb. 2002^	NORC/GSS	63	27	10
Aug. 2004^	NORC/GSS	66	24	9
Mar. 2006*	NORC/GSS	68	20	11
Apr. 2008*	NORC/GSS	67	21	12
Mar. 2010*	NORC/GSS	69	20	10
Mar. 2012*	NORC/GSS	70	20	10

Note: *Asked of a two-thirds sample. ^Asked of one-third sample.

How good a chance do you think a person has to become rich today, if the person is willing to work hard?

		Very good/ Good chance	Some/ Little chance	No chance at all
May 1990	Gallup	51%	46%	2%

Next, I'm going to read some aspects of life in America today. For each one, please say whether you are very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied. How about the opportunity for a person in this nation to get ahead by working hard?

		Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Jan. 2001	Gallup	36%	40%	14%	8%
Jan. 2002	Gallup	40	37	14	8
Jan. 2003	Gallup	33	36	19	11
Jan. 2004	Gallup	31	38	18	12
Jan. 2005	Gallup	33	33	19	14
Jan. 2006	Gallup	34	32	19	14
Jan. 2007	Gallup	40	30	16	13
Jan. 2008	Gallup	35	33	17	14
May 2009	Gallup	24	33	24	17
Jan. 2011	Gallup	21	34	24	20
Jan. 2012	Gallup	20	33	26	20

Note: In January 2014, Gallup released the "satisfied" and "dissatisfied" responses to this question but did not provide the full breaks. Fifty-four percent were satisfied, and 45 percent were dissatisfied. When Gallup asked the question in 2013, 57 percent were satisfied, and 42 percent were dissatisfied.

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

For each statement, please tell me if you completely agree with it, mostly agree with it, mostly disagree with it, or completely disagree with it. Success in life is pretty much determined by forces outside our control.

		Agree	Disagree
May 1987	Pew	38%	57%
May 1988	Pew	41	56
May 1990	Pew	40	57
Jun. 1992	Pew	38	59
May 1993	Pew	41	57
Jul. 1994	Pew	39	59
Nov. 1997	Pew	33	65
Sep. 1999	Pew	32	67
Aug. 2002	Pew	30	66
Aug. 2003	Pew	30	67
Dec. 2006–Jan. 2007	Pew	34	62
Apr.–May 2007	Pew	33	64
Jan.–Feb. 2008	Pew	36	61
Apr. 2009	Pew	32	64
Apr. 2012	Pew	35	63

I'm going to read you some pairs of statements that will help us understand how you feel about a number of things. As I read each pair, tell me whether the first statement or the second statement comes closer to your own views—even if neither is exactly right.

		Success in life is pretty much determined by forces outside of our control	Everyone has it in their own power to succeed
Jul. 1994	Pew	18%	79%
Aug. 1999	Pew	15	80
Dec. 2004	Pew	16	78
Oct.–Nov. 2009	Pew	12	82
Feb.–Mar. 2011	Pew	19	75
Dec. 2013	Pew	18	76
Jan.–Mar. 2014	Pew	16	80

What do you think matters most for getting ahead in life today?

Oct. 2010—Gallup

A good education	36%
Hard work	28
Saving and smart spending decisions	14
Knowing the right people	8
Coming from a wealthy family	5
Natural ability	3
Luck	2
Other (vol.)	2

Note: Asked of a two-thirds sample.

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

How important do you think _____ is for getting ahead in life—essential, very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not important at all?

Coming from a wealthy family . . .

		Essential	Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not at all important
1987	NORC	4%	19%	28%	30%	17%
1992	NORC	3	15	31	31	48
2000	NORC	3	16	27	33	14
Mar. 2005	NYT	11	33	40	10	6

A good education . . .

		Essential	Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not at all important
1987	NORC	35%	49%	13%	1%	1%
1992	NORC	35	52	12	1	-
Mar. 2005	NYT	39	46	12	2	-

Natural ability . . .

		Essential	Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not at all important
1987	NORC	13%	47%	33%	3%	-
1992	NORC	10	42	41	5	-
Mar. 2005	NYT	22	49	26	1	-

Hard work . . .

		Essential	Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not at all important
1987	NORC	36%	52%	9%	1%	-
1992	NORC	37	51	11	1	-
Mar. 2005	NYT	46	41	11	2	-

Knowing the right people . . .

		Essential	Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not at all important
1987	NORC	9%	35%	42%	11%	2%
1992	NORC	9	34	41	12	2
2000	NORC	13	34	38	10	4
Mar. 2005	NYT	16	33	42	6	2

Note: NORC wording was slightly different: "Please show for each of these how important you think it is for getting ahead in life. . . . First, how important is coming from a wealthy family? Essential, very important, fairly important, not very important, not important at all.

How good a chance do you think a person has to get ahead today, if the person works hard?

	Very good chance to get ahead	Some/Little chance	No chance at all
Kluegel and Smith, <i>Beliefs about Inequality: Americans' Views of What Is and What Ought to Be</i> (1980 survey for 1986 book)	63%	35%	2%

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

(Agree/disagree) America is the land of opportunity where everyone who works hard can get ahead.

	Strongly agree/ Agree	Disagree/ Strongly disagree
Cluegel and Smith, <i>Beliefs about Inequality</i>	70%	31%

A basic American belief has been that if you work hard you can get ahead—reach the goals you set and more. Does that still hold true?

	Yes, still true	Not true
Aug. 1994 Roper Center/U. of CT for <i>Reader's Digest</i>	74%	24%

Please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement: In America, if you work hard, you can be anything you want to be.

	Strongly/ Somewhat agree	Somewhat/ Strongly disagree
Aug. 1994 Luntz	74%	25%
Nov. 1996 Luntz	80	20

I'd like you to tell me your views on various issues. How would you place your views on this scale? 1 means you agree completely with the statement on the left; 10 means you agree completely with the statement on the right; and if your views fall somewhere in between, you can choose any number in between. In the long run, hard work usually brings a better life. Hard work doesn't generally bring success—it's more a matter of luck and connections.

		<div> <div>In the long run, hard work usually brings a better life Agree completely</div> <div>Hard work doesn't generally bring success—it's more a matter of luck and connections Agree completely</div> </div>									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sep. 1995	Gallup	28%	16%	14%	10%	13%	6%	5%	5%	2%	2%

Thinking about the way your own life has turned out so far: would you say it has been primarily a matter of luck or fate, or has it been more a matter of factors which are within your control?

		Luck or fate	Control	Combination (vol.)
Mar. 1996	CBS News	18%	72%	6%

True or false: People who work hard in this nation are likely to succeed?

		True	False
May 1997	Opinion Research Corporation	79%	18%

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Using a one-to-five scale, where "1" means not at all important, and "5" means extremely important, please tell me how important it is as a reason for a person's success. You can choose any number from 1 to 5.

Apr. 1998—Gallup

	Important (4 and 5)
Hard work and initiative	92%
Getting right education or training	92
Parents and family	87
Willingness to take risks	69
Connections/Knowing right people	68
Ability or talent one is born with	60
Physical appearance/good looks	50
Good luck/in right place at right time	43
Money inherited from family	41
Gender (i.e., whether male or female)	33
Member of particular race/ethnic group	30
Dishonesty and willingness to take whatever one can get	24

Do you think what you achieve in life depends largely on your family background, or on your abilities and hard work?

		Family background	Both	Abilities and hard work
Oct. 2004	Maxwell/Syracuse	8%	27%	63%
Oct. 2005	Maxwell/Syracuse	12	28	60
Sep.–Oct. 2006	Maxwell/Syracuse	13	39	45
Sep. 2007	Maxwell/Syracuse	12	33	54

Would you agree or disagree with the following: While people may begin with different opportunities, hard work and perseverance can usually overcome those disadvantages.

		Agree	Disagree
Oct. 2004	Maxwell/Syracuse	83%	14%
Oct. 2005	Maxwell/Syracuse	84	13
Sep.–Oct. 2006	Maxwell/Syracuse	83	14
Sep. 2007	Maxwell/Syracuse	85	11

What do you think matters most for getting ahead in life today?

Mar. 2006—EPI/GQR

A good education	37%
Hard work	25
Saving and smart spending decisions	16
Knowing the right people	8
Coming from a wealthy family	6
Natural ability	3
Luck	2

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

As I read from a list, please tell me how important each factor is in people's economic success—Is hard work a very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important factor in people's economic success?

		Hard work and people's economic success			
		Very important	Somewhat important	Not too important	Not at all important
Jul. 2006	Pew	84%	12%	2%	1%

Now I am going to read you a series of statements on some different topics. For each statement, please tell me if you completely agree with it, mostly agree with it, mostly disagree with it, or completely disagree with it.

Jan.–Feb. 2008 Pew

	Agree	Disagree
Success in life is pretty much determined by forces outside our control	36%	61%
Today it's really true that the rich just get richer while the poor get poorer	69	28

Which of the following young people is more likely to get ahead economically? Young person A comes from a one-parent family. Young person A has the drive and ambition to get ahead. Young person B comes from a two-parent family. Young person B lacks drive and ambition.

	Person A	Person B
Mar. 2011 Pew Charitable Trusts	79%	14%

Which of the following young people is more likely to get ahead economically? Young person A grew up in a poor neighborhood. Young person A has the drive and ambition to get ahead. Young person B grew up in a wealthy neighborhood. Young person B lacks drive and ambition.

	Person A	Person B
Mar. 2011 Pew Charitable Trusts	78%	15%

Which of the following young people is more likely to get ahead economically? Young person C is talented and creative. Young person C grew up in a poor neighborhood. Young person D is an average student and lacks imagination. Young person D grew up in a wealthy neighborhood.

	Person C	Person D
Mar. 2011 Pew Charitable Trusts	72%	20%

Which of the following young people is more likely to get ahead economically? Young person C is talented and creative. Young person C comes from a one-parent family. Young person D is an average student and lacks imagination. Young person D comes from a two-parent family.

	Person C	Person D
Mar. 2011 Pew Charitable Trusts	70%	20%

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Now I want to read you some things some people have told us they have felt from time to time. Do you feel or not feel the rich get richer and the poor get poorer?

Yes, feel this way		
1972	Harris Interactive	67%
1977	Harris Interactive	77
1985	Harris Interactive	79
1990	Harris Interactive	82
1991	Harris Interactive	83
1992	Harris Interactive	83
1993	Harris Interactive	81
1994	Harris Interactive	78
1995	Harris Interactive	79
1996	Harris Interactive	76
1997	Harris Interactive	78
1998	Harris Interactive	72
1999	Harris Interactive	74
2000	Harris Interactive	69
2001	Harris Interactive	69
2002	Harris Interactive	72
2003	Harris Interactive	69
2004	Harris Interactive	68
2005	Harris Interactive	75
2006	Harris Interactive	72
2007	Harris Interactive	73
2008	Harris Interactive	71
2009	Harris Interactive	66
2010	Harris Interactive	68
2011	Harris Interactive	73
2013	Harris Interactive	80

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Because of the widening gap between the incomes of the wealthy and everyone else, America is no longer a country where everyone, regardless of their background, has an opportunity to get ahead and move up to a better standard of living.

		Agree	Disagree
Apr. 2014	NBC/WSJ	54%	43%

Which of the following statements about America comes closer to your view? Statement A: The United States is a country where anyone, regardless of their background, can work hard, succeed and be comfortable financially. Statement B: The widening gap between the incomes of the wealthy and everyone else is undermining the idea that every American has the opportunity to move up to a better standard of living.

		Anyone, regardless of their background, can succeed	Widening gap between incomes is undermining opportunity
Aug. 2014	NBC/WSJ	44%	54%

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Please listen carefully as I read each statement, and tell me if you would agree or disagree with that particular statement. In America, anyone can get ahead if they work hard enough.

		Agree	Disagree
Dec. 2007	GWU/Battleground	64%	36%
May 2008	GWU/Battleground	65	33
Mar. 2014	GWU/Battleground	64	34

In general, to what extent do you think that your personal financial situation is affected by factors outside your control—a great deal, a fair amount, not much, or not at all?

		Great deal	Fair amount	Not much	Not at all
Dec. 2008	Gallup/USA Today	33%	36%	24%	7%

Do you believe your own financial well-being depends more on your own actions, like working hard, doing a good job, leading a healthy life and saving and investing carefully, or events mostly out of your control, like what happens in the economy, decisions by your employer, an unexpected illness, and what happens in the stock market?

		Your own actions	Events mostly out of your control	Don't know/Refused
Apr. 2009	Allstate/National Journal	57%	37%	7%
Apr. 2010	Allstate/National Journal	60	32	8

In general, would you say the best way to increase opportunity for you comes from . . . ?

Apr. 2009—Allstate/National Journal

Your own efforts, like doing a good job, increasing skills, and obtaining more education	40%
Government policies that try to create economic growth by reducing taxes, reducing regulations on businesses and making it easier for people to start and operate small businesses	22
Private sector companies that are well-managed, innovative, and good at identifying and investing in talented workers	17
Government policies that try to create economic growth by investing in new technologies and industries and funding programs to train people to work in these new industries	16

Do you think the American Dream—that if you work hard you'll get ahead—still holds true, never held true, or once held true but does not anymore?

		Adults ages 18–24 years old		
		Still holds true	Once held true	Never held true
Mar. 2012	PRRI	40%	45%	10%

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Do you think the American Dream—that if you work hard you'll get ahead—still holds true, never held true, or once held true but does not anymore?

		Still true	Once true	Never true	No opinion
Sep. 2010	ABC News/Yahoo	50%	43%	4%	2%
Nov. 2011	PRRI/RNS	44	48	6	1
Aug. 2012	PRRI	53	42	4	1

(Demographic breakdowns, Aug. 2012, race)

White	54%	41%	4%	1%
Black	46	45	6	2
Hispanic	55	40	3	1

(Demographic breakdowns, Aug. 2012, age)

18–29-year-olds	56%	39%	3%	1%
30–49	53	42	4	1
50–64	51	43	3	1
65+	53	40	4	2

Which of the following comes closest to your own point of view?

Mar. 2011—Pew Charitable Trusts

Whether or not a person gets ahead economically in this country is mostly up to them—if someone has the drive, works hard and gets the right skills, they can get ahead economically in America	55%
Circumstances beyond any person's control have a lot to do with whether or not they can get ahead economically in this country—the state of the economy or competition for jobs can severely limit a person's ability to get ahead economically in this country.	41

Which of the following comes closest to your own point of view?

Mar. 2011—Pew Charitable Trusts

Whether or not a person gets ahead economically in this country is mostly up to them—if someone has the drive, works hard and gets the right skills, they can get ahead economically in America	58%
Circumstances beyond any person's control have a lot to do with whether or not they can get ahead economically in this country—a person's race, gender, and parents as well as the quality of education available where they happen to live can severely limit a person's ability to get ahead economically in this country	39

Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following: if you work hard and play by the rules, you can achieve a middle-class life in America today.

		Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Oct. 2010	StrategyOne	28%	53%	16%	4%

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Achieving success in America today is more about . . . ?

		Working hard	Having lots of luck
Oct. 2010	StrategyOne	74%	26%

How important is each of the following factors in determining whether people in the U.S. get ahead or fall behind economically? After each please tell me if it is one of the most important factors determining whether or not Americans get ahead or fall behind economically, very important, somewhat important, not too important or not important at all?

Mar. 2011—Pew Charitable Trusts

	One of the most important	Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not at all important
Hard work	43%	49%	6%	1%	1%
A person's drive and personal ambition	41	49	9	1	0
Access to quality K–12 education	34	55	8	1	1
The attitudes and values a person's parents taught them	33	52	11	2	1
The quality of a person's education	31	51	15	2	1
The state of the economy	29	49	18	2	1
Growing up in a stable family environment	25	53	18	2	2
The economic situation in the country at the time a person is in their prime working years	22	47	25	3	1
Whether the person is healthy or not	22	50	22	3	2
Growing up in a two-parent household	19	40	25	9	5
Whether the person has adequate health care or not	19	44	26	7	3
Knowing the right people	16	36	34	9	4
Having well-educated	15	38	30	10	7
Coming from a financially successful family	12	29	37	13	8
Growing up in a good neighborhood	10	39	36	9	5
Access to loans	9	32	37	12	8
Luck	6	17	32	21	23
A person's race	4	13	24	27	30
A person's gender	4	13	24	28	29

And, which of the following do you believe has the most impact on the ability to achieve the American Dream?

	Your own skills and hard work	The state of the economy
Mar. 2011 Allstate/National Journal	58%	36%

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Generally speaking, do you think people get ahead in their job or career based on their hard work and ability, or do you think that hard work and ability are no guarantee of success in a job or career? Which comes closer to the way you feel?

		People get ahead based on hard work and ability	Hard work and ability are no guarantee
Sep. 2011	Pew	48%	48%

Which of the following is closer to your view?

May–June 2012—*Atlantic/Aspen*

That with hard work I can accomplish anything	70%
No matter how hard I work success is more dependent on luck and/or knowing the right people	28

And, in general, which of the following do you think plays a bigger role in determining whether or not you have more opportunity to get ahead?

Sep. 2012—*Allstate/National Journal*

Your own skills and hard work	41%
Your educational background	23
The state of the economy	18
Your income level	6
Current government policies	5
Your racial and ethnic background	4

Note: Asked of a partial sample (80 percent).

Ten years ago, do you think that people who worked hard and played by the rules were more or less likely to get ahead?

		More likely	Less likely
May 2014	<i>Atlantic/Aspen</i>	61%	23%

In 10 years, do you think that people who work hard and play by the rules will be more or less likely to get ahead?

		More likely	Less likely
May 2014	<i>Atlantic/Aspen</i>	30%	49%

Which of these statements do you agree with more?

Sep. 2013—*Wash Post*–Miller Center

Most people who want to get ahead can make it if they're willing to work hard	65%
Hard work and determination are no guarantee of success for most people	34

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Which of the following do you think is most important for getting ahead financially?

Sep. 2013—*Wash Post*–Miller Center

Hard work	34%
Education	30
Friends and connections	13
Growing up wealthy	11
Natural ability	5
All/combination of things (vol.)	3
Something else	3

In general, who do you think has a better chance of getting ahead in today's society—white people, black people, or do white people and black people have about an equal chance of getting ahead?

		White	Black	Equal
Aug. 2013	CBS	32%	6%	56%
Mar. 2014	CBS	34	5	59

Generally speaking, do you think that everyone in the US does or does not have an equal shot at getting ahead?

		Does have an equal shot	Does not have an equal shot
Dec. 2013	Bloomberg	33%	64%

Overall, how important of a factor is education in achieving the American Dream?

		Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not at all important
Mar. 2014	Harvard IOP	60%	30%	6%	3%

Note: Sample of national youth age 18–29.

What level of education do you feel is necessary to achieve the American Dream?

		High school	Some college/ Community College	Bachelor's	Master's	Doctoral or professional
Mar. 2014	Harvard IOP	15%	20%	35%	17%	9%

Note: Sample of national youth age 18–29.

Being Rich, Getting Ahead

Most Americans think it is possible to start out poor and become rich in America. Sixty percent gave that response in 1983 and 59 percent in 1988. But it seems out of reach for them. In Gallup's May 2012 poll, only 7 percent think it is very likely they ever will be rich. In Gallup's data, young people are more likely than older ones to say they could become rich. At the same time, 73 percent think they will one day be financially comfortable and secure, according to a September 2012 Allstate/*National Journal* poll.

The modest expectations are not due to lack of imagination. If they had the opportunity, 63 percent

told Gallup they would want to be rich. Older respondents were most divided on the question. Fifty percent of those 65 and older said they wanted to be rich. Forty-eight percent did not want to. Americans' desires to be wealthy may be pie in the sky, but their expectations about working hard and doing better are not. Most Americans do not believe the rich are happier than they are. The last time Gallup asked this question in 2012, 57 percent of those who did not consider themselves rich thought that rich people in America today were about as happy as they were.

Looking ahead, how likely is it that you will ever be rich?

		Very likely	Somewhat likely	Not very likely	Not all all likely
May 1990	Gallup	9%	23%	32%	35%
Sep. 1990	ABC News/ <i>Wash Post</i>	9	19	27	45
Apr. 1996	Gallup	10	24	37	27
Jan. 2003*	Gallup	10	21	37	31
May 2012	Gallup	7	21	40	32

Among 18–29-year-olds

		Very/somewhat likely	Not very/not at all likely
May 2012	Gallup	47%	52%

Note: Asked of those who do not consider themselves rich. *Question asked of all respondents; data for respondents who said they were "already rich" were excluded.

Considering your entire adult life, do you think you've gotten ahead financially, fallen behind financially, or stayed about the same?

		Adults 30 years and older		
		Gotten ahead	Fallen behind	Stayed same
1996	Roper Center/U. of CT for <i>Reader's Digest</i>	54%	18%	29%

Note: Sample is adults 30 years and older.

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Do you think it's possible to start out poor in this country, work hard, and become rich?

		Yes, it's possible to start out poor, work hard and become rich	No, it's not possible to start out poor and work hard and become rich
Apr. 1981	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	67%	28%
Jan. 1983	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	57	38
Feb. 1996	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	70	27
Mar. 1996	CBS News	78	18
Feb. 2000	CBS News	84	13
Jul. 2003	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	70	27
Jul. 2003	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	60	36
Mar. 2005	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	80	19
Jun. 2007	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	81	18
Apr. 2009	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	72	24
Feb. 2011	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	82	15
Oct. 2011#	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	75	24
Jul. 2012	CBS/ <i>NYT</i>	71	27

Note: #Question wording read, "Do you think it is still possible..."

All in all, if you had a choice, would you want to be rich, or not?

		Yes	No
May 1990	Gallup	59%	38%
Sep. 1990	ABC News/ <i>Wash Post</i>	58	42
Apr. 1996	Gallup	60	37
May 2012	Gallup	63	35

(Demographic breakdowns, May 2012)

18–29-year-olds	63%	35%
30–49	72	27
50–64	62	36
65+	50	48
East	73%	24%
Midwest	64	35
South	57	43
West	63	36

Looking ahead, how likely is it that you will ever be financially wealthy? Would you say it is very likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, or not at all likely?

		Very likely	Somewhat likely	Not very likely	Not at all likely	Already rich
Mar. 2005	<i>NYT</i>	11%	34%	30%	22%	1%
Mar. 2006	EPI	13	32	32	20	1

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is extremely poor and 10 is extremely rich, where would you put your family's financial situation now compared with all other American families?

		1–4	5	6–7	8–10	Mean
Mar. 2006	EPI/GQR	29%	31%	27%	11%	5.3

(Follow up) Using the same 1 to 10 scale, again 1 is extremely poor and 10 is extremely rich, where do you expect your family's financial situation to be in 10 years?

		1–4	5	6–7	8–10	Mean
Mar. 2006	EPI/GQR	17%	19%	34%	25%	6.2

Looking ahead, how likely is it that you will ever be financially wealthy? Would you say it is very likely, somewhat likely, not very likely, or not at all likely?

		Very likely	Somewhat likely	Not very likely	Not at all likely
Mar. 2006	EPI/GQR	13%	32%	32%	20%

(If very/somewhat likely in preceding question) How do you think you might become financially wealthy?

Hard work and saving money	29%
Good investments	23
Starting a business	15
Getting a better education or the right kind of training	14
Getting a better job	10
Getting lucky, like winning the lottery	6

Do you expect to receive an inheritance of money or valuable possessions from any living relatives after they die?

		Yes	No
Aug. 2007	Gallup	28%	69%
(Demographic breakdowns, age)			
	18–34-year-olds	44%	53%
	35–54	33	63
	55+	10	88

Thinking about the country today, how common is it for someone to start poor, work hard and become rich? Would you say it is very common, somewhat common, somewhat uncommon, or very uncommon?

		Very common	Somewhat common	Somewhat uncommon	Very uncommon
Jan. 2009	Pew	7%	32%	32%	27%

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Of the following, which comes closest to what you think of when you hear the term "getting ahead"?

Sep. 2012—Allstate/*National Journal*

Doing better than you did in previous years	57%
Doing better than your parents did	24
Doing better than most Americans today	9
Doing better than your friends, neighbors and coworkers	4

Note: Asked of a half sample.

And, do you think in your lifetime, you will reach that level where you will consider yourself to be financially comfortable and secure?

		Yes	No
Sep. 2012	Allstate/ <i>National Journal</i>	73%	22%

Do you think it's as possible now as it was when you finished school to start out poor in this country, work hard, and become rich?

		Yes	No
Jun. 1983	<i>NYT</i>	60%	34%
Apr. 1986	<i>NYT</i>	51	41
Jul. 1988	CBS News/ <i>NYT</i>	59	35

Now, please tell me which of the two following statements better reflects your view: today's economy mostly rewards rich people and it's difficult for average people to get ahead, or anyone who works hard still has a fair chance to succeed and live a comfortable life in today's America?

		Economy rewards rich	Anyone can get ahead
Jul. 2009	Allstate/ <i>National Journal</i>	43%	53%
Sep. 2012	Allstate/ <i>National Journal</i>	43	53

Achieving the American Dream

We introduced this study with a discussion of a 1986 *Wall Street Journal* poll on the American Dream. The authors of the report on the poll noted, “Above all, the American Dream is intensely personal.” Because Americans define it in individual and, in many cases, non-materialistic terms, many people say they have already reached it. In recent polls, around 3 in 10 say they have already achieved the dream. When asked about their idea of success, they mention things such as being a good parent, having a happy marriage or relationship, and having friends. Being wealthy or prominent or famous comes at the bottom of the list. There is considerable evidence that Americans define the dream this way today.

In four MetLife and Strategy First polls from 2006 through 2010, around one-third of Americans said they had achieved the American Dream. In three polls from 2011 to 2012, around 60 percent told Allstate/*National Journal* pollsters that they were living the

American Dream, described as “the opportunity to go as far as your talents and hard work will take you and to live better than your parents.” Perhaps the disparity taps into a critical component of the American Dream; it is often defined as the opportunity to be able to strive for one’s goal, not necessarily the guarantee of success.

In a 2012 poll conducted by CNN and ORC International, 44 percent of registered voters said they feel they have achieved the American Dream, while 42 percent said they feel they will do so eventually. A question from MetLife seems to hint at that idea of opportunity. Of those who said they had not achieved the American Dream, two-thirds thought it was possible to do so in a lifetime. Given the pessimism we have seen in other polls included in this report, the fact that many people say they are already living a version of the dream they have outlined for themselves may suggest that in many Americans’ eyes, the American Dream is as much a journey as a destination.

In today’s society, do you think the American Dream is achievable for all Americans who are willing to work for it; for most Americans, but not all; only for some Americans; or for very few Americans, even if they are willing to work for it?

		All	Most	Only some	Very few
Mar. 1995	Hart/Teeter/Council for Excellence in Government	33%	29%	22%	15%
Feb. 1997	Hart/Teeter/Council for Excellence in Government	30	29	24	16

Do you think it’s still possible for most people in this country to achieve the American Dream, or do you think that’s not possible anymore?

		Still possible	Not possible
Apr. 1996	ABC News	71%	26%

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Do you think that if an individual works hard, they can still achieve the American Dream of making a decent living, owning a home, and sending their children to college?

		Yes	No
Feb. 1997	Fox News	72%	24%
Sep. 2010	Fox News	64	28
Feb. 2013	Fox News	65	29
Dec. 2013	Fox News	62	34

Note: Sample is registered voters.

Compared to 10 years ago, do you think people like you are closer or farther away from attaining the American Dream?

		Closer	Farther away	About the same
Dec. 1995	Wash Post/Harvard/Kaiser	30%	59%	7%

(Asked of those who say farther away from attaining the American Dream in preceding question) Is each of the following a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason at all why people like you are farther away from attaining the American Dream?

	Percentage who say lack of the following is a major reason why people like you are farther away from the American Dream				
	Total	White	African Americans	Asians	Latino
I face too much discrimination and lack of opportunities	23%	17%	54%	22%	38%
There aren't enough good jobs available	57	54	72	53	67
There's so much crime, violence, and family tension that it's hard for people like me to have a good life	45	42	57	55	58
Preferences given to other racial and ethnic groups threaten my job opportunities	21	19	38	17	25
My taxes are too high	56	56	62	43	56
My income and benefits haven't kept up with the cost of living	74	74	78	56	78
Government interferes too much in my life	41	43	36	21	31
The growing number of other racial and ethnic groups is eroding my way of life	18	18	24	7	18

How many Americans living today do you think will be able to achieve their idea of the American Dream?

		All	Most	Some	Only a few	None
Jul. 2004	New American Dream/ Widmeyer	1%	14%	51%	32%	—

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

People sometimes talk about the American Dream—that is, the ability of all Americans to achieve their goals in life through hard work. Would you say that it's going to be easier or harder for Americans to achieve the American Dream in 10 years than it is today, or that things won't change much?

		Going to be easier in 10 years	Harder	Won't change much
Apr. 2009	Time/Abt SRBI	13%	57%	24%

And how close are you to achieving your own version of the American Dream? Have you achieved it already, are you close to achieving it, are you very far away, or do you never expect to achieve your version of the American Dream?

		Achieved it	Close	Very far away	Never expect
1994	Luntz	22%	49%	19%	6%
1996	Luntz	20	46	21	9

Do you think you will reach, as you define it, "the American Dream," in your lifetime, or have you already reached it?

		Already reached it	Will reach	Will not reach
Aug. 1992	CBS News/NYT	37%	43%	17%
Dec. 1995	CBS News/NYT	45	35	16
Mar. 2005	NYT	32	38	27
Mar. 2006	GQR	34	35	25
Apr. 2009	CBS News/NYT	44	31	20
Mar. 2011	Pew	31	37	27

Do you feel that you have lived the American Dream or have been unable to live the American Dream?

		Have	Have not
1997	Hart/Teeter/Council for Excellence in Government	65%	28%

Do you think you will be able to achieve your idea of the American Dream in your lifetime?

		Yes	No
Jul. 2004	New American Dream/ Widmeyer	42%	36%

Do you believe that the American Dream is still possible and achievable for other people like you or no longer possible and achievable for other people like you?

		Possible and achievable	Not possible and achievable
Mar. 2011	Allstate/National Journal	75%	21%

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

Do you think you have achieved the American Dream?

		Yes	No
Nov. 2006	MetLife*	34%	—
Jan. 2008	MetLife*	37	—
Jan. 2009	MetLife*	34	66%
Apr. 2010	MetLife*	34	66

(Demographic breakdowns)

	Jan. 2009	
White	38%	62%
African American	19	81
	Apr. 2010	
White	37%	63%
African American	27	73
Chinese American	31	69
South Asian Indian	35	65

Note: *Poll conducted by MetLife/Strategy First Partners/Penn, Schoen, and Berland.

(If haven't achieved) Do you think it is possible for you to achieve the American Dream in your lifetime?

		Yes	No
Nov. 2006	MetLife*	67%	—
Jan. 2008	MetLife*	74	—
Jan. 2009	MetLife*	72	28%
Apr. 2010	MetLife*	67	33
		<hr/> July 2009	
	White	66%	34%
	African American	82	18
		<hr/> Apr. 2010	
	White	67%	33%
	African American	86	14

Note: * Poll conducted by MetLife/Strategy First Partners/Penn, Schoen, and Berland.

Which of the following statements comes closest to your view: You feel as if you have achieved the American Dream; you have not achieved the American Dream but you feel that you will do so eventually; or you feel that you will never achieve the American Dream?

		Have achieved	Will do so eventually	Will never achieve
May 2009	CNN/ORC	44%	38%	15%
Jul. 2010	CNN/ORC	40	39	20
Sep. 2012*	CNN/ORC	44	42	12

(Demographic breakdowns, Hispanics only)

	Hispanics	
Sep.–Oct. 2012 CNN/ORC	38%	45% 17%

Note: *Sample is registered voters.

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

People sometimes talk about the American Dream—having a nice home and financial security for you and your family. Which of the following comes closest to your view?

Jan. 2013—Harvard School of Public Health/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/National Public Radio

	—Hispanics—
You feel as if you have achieved the American Dream	30%
You have not achieved the American Dream but you feel that you will do so eventually	56
You feel that you will never achieve the American Dream	11

Jan. 2013—Harvard School of Public Health/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/National Public Radio

	—African Americans—
You feel as if you have achieved the American Dream	21%
You have not achieved the American Dream but you feel that you will do so eventually	60
You feel that you will never achieve the American Dream	16

I'd like to talk to you now about a term with which you probably are familiar—the American Dream. How close are you to achieving the American Dream—are you . . . ?

		Very/somewhat close	Somewhat/very far	Already achieved it
Jul. 2008	Wash Post/Kaiser/Harvard*	43%	49%	4%

Note: *Sample: Low-wage workers nationwide. Low-wage workers were defined as adults ages 18–64 working at least 30 hours per week, not self-employed, and earning \$27,000 or less in 2007.

(Asked of those who said they are somewhat/very far from achieving the American Dream = 49%) Do you think you will achieve the American Dream in your lifetime or not?

		Yes	No
Jul. 2008	Wash Post/Harvard/Kaiser	56%	39%

Are you living the American Dream?

		Yes	No
Oct. 2010	StrategyOne	52%	48%

Do you believe you will ever live the American Dream?

		Yes	No
Oct. 2010	StrategyOne	44%	56%

Note: Asked of those who said they are not living the American Dream.

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

The American Dream has been described as the opportunity to go as far as your talents and hard work will take you and to live better than your parents. Generally speaking, do you believe you are living the American Dream?

		Yes	No
Mar. 2011	Allstate/National Journal	59%	39%
Dec. 2011	Allstate/National Journal	60	36
Sep. 2012	Allstate/National Journal	61	37

While everyone may interpret this idea differently, we refer to the American Dream as the ability of all citizens and residents of America to achieve their goals in life through hard work. Do you think you have achieved the American Dream?

		Yes	No
Sep. 2011	Time/Abt SRBI	64%	36%

How important is it to you to achieve the American Dream in your lifetime?

		Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not at all important
Oct. 2011	MetLife*	41%	41%	15%	3%
<i>(Demographic breakdowns, generation)</i>					
	Silent generation	14%	36%	35%	15%
	Baby Boom	33	47	17	3
	Gen X	42	44	12	2
	Gen Y	55	34	10	1

Note: Poll conducted by MetLife/Strategy First Partners/Penn, Schoen, and Berland.

Is it possible to achieve the American Dream without . . . ?

Oct. 2011—MetLife/Strategy First Partners/Penn, Schoen, and Berland

	Yes
A postgraduate degree	76%
Being married	71
Having children	70
Being wealthy	70
A college education	65
Owning your own home	59
Having great friends	51

Which is most important to you in judging whether you have achieved the American Dream?

Oct. 2011—MetLife/Strategy First Partners/Penn, Schoen, and Berland

Feeling a sense of personal fulfillment in my life	29%
Having enough money to live the way I want	27
Providing security for your children	18
Income and financial success	12

IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE? EXAMINING AMERICANS' ATTITUDES

(Thinking about the future of our country, please tell me whether you feel generally optimistic or generally pessimistic about each of the following.) How about . . . the opportunity for most people to achieve the American Dream?

		Generally optimistic	Generally pessimistic
Dec. 2013	AP/NORC	43%	54%

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