



LIFTING BARRIERS. LIFTING LIVES.

AMERICAN DREAM 2021 SNAPSHOT:

*HOW AMERICANS VIEW
THE AMERICAN DREAM
AND ECONOMIC MOBILITY*

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INTRODUCTION

In 2020, we conducted our first American Dream snapshot analyzing attitudes towards the American Dream and equal opportunity. At the time there were many circumstances that could have influenced people's perceptions, including the COVID-19 pandemic, which was in its heyday; the recent police shootings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor that reignited Black Lives Matter protests; and the presidential election, which politicized almost every aspect of our lives.

Polarization is still with us, and even though the Biden administration has struck a more conciliatory tone on a public level, there are many more challenges in the political and policy sphere that continue to divide Americans, including determining the best policies to bounce back from the pandemic, rising inflation, critical race theory, voting rights legislation, and many other topics. Rediscovering the unifying ethos of the American Dream is one way in which Americans might be able to find common ground and address these important questions and challenges successfully.

But is the American Dream just a feel-good motto? Or can it have relevance beyond platitudes? At the Archbridge Institute we continue to believe that the ethos of the American Dream can be the common ground that binds us together as a country and serves as the vision statement for our nation.

The American Dream presupposes the value of many things: meaning, freedom, aim, aspiration, agency, persistence. It is the difference between having a society that is dynamic and thinks of itself as capable of solving any problem . . . and one where people look mostly for security, leaving aside the innovative spirit that made it great; a nation in which we are dynamic, ever-improving, self-conscious . . . or a nation that is static, decadent, and doomed to fail.

Embracing the American Dream as a possibility for everyone, and reality for most, could mean the difference in our cultural conversations between thinking we can build and achieve big things, grow, innovate, and solve problems as opposed to being mired in the moment, fearing we have achieved all that we ever will, that we are doomed to fail and simply unable to fully tackle pressing issues and challenges. This latter mindset only brings fewer opportunities for all and hampers the pursuit of better, richer, and fuller lives for our children and grandchildren in the future.

Being optimistic, hopeful, and understanding that we're in control of solving huge problems is why rekindling a positive, aspirational, and agency-centric vision for the American dream is a key driver of innovation and human flourishing.

The charge that the American Dream is simply a static, unfulfilled promise fails to convince when we have so many examples of people achieving their dream every day. From the immigrant able to give a better life to their kids, to the entrepreneur coming up with the next unicorn company, to the athletes pursuing success at the highest level, to artists having actual markets for their products, to community organizers striving for a better future for others—there are countless stories of the American Dream achieved.

As a reminder, one of the best and most used definitions of the American Dream is that of James Truslow Adams, in his 1931 book, *The Epic of America*. Adams defines the American Dream as

that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man, with opportunity for each according to his ability or achievement. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of a social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest

stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position.

Besides looking into the more technical academic definitions of the American Dream, which quantifies it only by the level of income mobility a person has (i.e., if they have surpassed the level of income their parents had at the same age, usually 32–40 years of age), we should also pay attention to whether people's lives are becoming better and fuller per the Adams definition. Even though these issues might be more subjective, they are no less valid.

So the question remains if the dream is still alive, if it is fading, or if it's now simply out of reach for most Americans. After a year, we decided to go back and ask the questions again to see how perceptions in our country have changed, if at all, given the different political background and the COVID-19 pandemic turning a corner.

For this survey we partnered again with NORC at the University of Chicago and its AmeriSpeak® panel. AmeriSpeak® is a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the US household population. Randomly selected US households are sampled using area probability and address-based sampling, with a known, nonzero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame. The nationally representative sample consisted of 2,005 respondents. The survey was conducted June 24–28, 2021.

THE SURVEY RESULTS INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING SEVEN KEY FINDINGS:

- 1) Most Americans, regardless of race, income, or education, believe that they have either achieved the American Dream or are on their way to achieving it.
- 2) Most Americans regard living better and fuller lives—rather than simply becoming richer—as essential in achieving the American Dream.
- 3) Most Americans, and especially blacks, believe they have more opportunities than their parents. And most Americans think their children will have the same or more opportunities than they did and not fewer.
- 4) For most Americans, ensuring a fair chance to succeed and reducing poverty is more important than reducing income inequality.
- 5) For an overwhelming number of Americans, 66%, equality means equality before the law and people having a fair chance to pursue opportunities, regardless of where they started. Only 4% of people said that equality represented equality of outcomes, where everyone ends up in the same place. This finding remains true across age, education, race, and income level.
- 6) For most Americans a job is the best vehicle to climb the income ladder. Five in ten Americans identified that as the most important step up the income ladder, more than a college degree (16%), a high degree of family and social support (15%), or a government assistance program (8%).
- 7) For a plurality of Americans the most important precondition to ensure more people can climb the income ladder is strong labor market and high level of economic growth (34%). Access to education came in a close second (24%), and very few people agreed that a low level of income inequality or a strong government social safety net are the most important pre-conditions, coming in at 6% and 5% respectively.

THE AMERICAN DREAM IS ALIVE AND WELL

The first question on our survey specifically addressed whether people believed that they have achieved the American Dream. In 2020, we asked the same question and found out that most people had either already achieved their American Dream or were on their way to achieving it, with only 24% saying the American Dream was out of reach. That number was higher than what others like the Pew Research Trust¹ and the American Enterprise Institute² have found in the past where only 17–18% of people said that the American Dream is out of reach for them.

At the time we believed the results could have been affected because we were in the middle of a pandemic, a presidential election, and in the midst of protests around racial inequality and police brutality. The 2021 survey confirmed that suspicion. As Table 1 shows, the number of people who said the American Dream is out of reach came down from 24% in 2020 to 20% in 2021. Most people continue to believe that they have either achieved their American Dream (a figure that grew from 29% in 2020 to 34% in 2021), or that they are on their way to achieve it (a figure that remained steady from year to year at 45%).

Table 1 | TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU BELIEVE YOUR FAMILY HAS ACHIEVED THE AMERICAN DREAM? WOULD YOU SAY...

	Has Already Achieved It	On Way to Achieving It	It is Out of Reach
Total	34%	45%	20%
18-29	23%	54%	21%
30-44	24%	49%	26%
45-59	34%	45%	20%
60+	47%	36%	15%
No HS Diploma	11%	47%	38%
HS Grad or Equivalent	27%	45%	26%
Some College/AA	33%	43%	23%
BA+	45%	46%	8%
White, NH	40%	40%	18%
Black, NH	19%	60%	21%
Hispanic	25%	50%	23%
Other/2+, NH	20%	51%	27%
<\$30k	17%	46%	35%
\$30k-<\$60k	28%	48%	23%
\$60k-<\$100k	37%	44%	16%
\$100k+	53%	41%	5%

Note: Results for “Did not respond” or skipped questions are not included

Eight in ten Americans believe that they have either achieved or are on their way to achieving the American Dream. While the figures certainly vary according to age, race, education, and income level, in all cases, the majority of these groups say that they have achieved or are on their way to achieving the American Dream. That is definitely a cause for celebration and for realizing that contrary to all of the bad publicity the American Dream gets in our public discourse, it is still alive and well, and we should strive to make it even more so. The American Dream is an invitation to pursue big life projects and ideals even though it is not an assurance.

THE AMERICAN DREAM IS ABOUT MORE THAN JUST ECONOMIC WEALTH

A key component of the traditional definition of the American Dream is that people seek to live better and fuller lives and not just richer ones. This is certainly subjective, and the dream can mean different things to different people. This is why our second question in this survey asked again what do people think about different statements that can be associated with the American Dream? Are the statements considered essential, important but not essential, or not important as they relate to the American Dream? In Table 2 we summarize the results:

Table 2 | HOW ESSENTIAL DO YOU THINK EACH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS IS TO YOUR OWN VIEW OF THE AMERICAN DREAM?

	Essential	Important But Not Essential	Not important
Freedom of Choice in How to Live	85%	13%	1%
Have a Good Family Life	80%	18%	2%
Retire Comfortably	65%	31%	3%
Own a Home	46%	47%	7%
Have a Successful Career	44%	51%	4%
Make Valuable Contributions to Community	35%	56%	8%
Become Wealthy	10%	57%	32%

Note: Results for “Did not respond” or skipped questions are not included

Of those who considered various components essential, it is interesting to analyze some of the subgroups and key characteristics in more detail. In Table 3 we provide more detail.

Table 3 | HOW ESSENTIAL DO YOU THINK EACH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS IS TO YOUR OWN VIEW OF THE AMERICAN DREAM?

	Freedom of Choice In How to Live	Have a Good Family Life	Retire Comfortably	Own a Home	Have a Successful Career	Make Valuable Contributions to Community	Become Wealthy
Total	85%	80%	65%	46%	44%	35%	10%
18–29	87%	76%	68%	58%	51%	32%	19%
30–44	84%	82%	65%	50%	46%	37%	15%
45–59	85%	84%	64%	40%	38%	32%	7%
60+	84%	78%	64%	40%	42%	38%	4%
No HS diploma	77%	57%	42%	36%	31%	18%	9%
HS grad or equivalent	83%	85%	67%	52%	49%	31%	14%
Some college/AA	85%	82%	67%	48%	42%	34%	10%
BA+	88%	80%	68%	42%	44%	44%	9%
White, NH	85%	80%	62%	41%	40%	35%	6%
Black, NH	82%	80%	69%	58%	51%	38%	24%
Hispanic	82%	81%	72%	53%	48%	34%	14%
Other/2+, NH	91%	81%	72%	51%	48%	36%	15%
<\$30k	77%	74%	56%	45%	41%	31%	14%
\$30k–<\$60k	88%	81%	69%	49%	45%	33%	9%
\$60k–<\$100k	86%	81%	69%	47%	45%	40%	9%
\$100k+	89%	84%	66%	43%	43%	37%	10%

Note: Results for “Did not respond” or skipped questions are not included

The majority of respondents regardless of age, race, education, and income considered freedom to choose what they want to do with their life as essential for the American Dream. That freedom of choice in how to live remains the bedrock of the pursuit of happiness that can be traced back to the founding of the country. This can be related to the “fuller lives” component of the American Dream, where it’s not a pursuit of material success but more an aspiration to choose one’s own path, a meaningful path.

The second idea that was mostly ranked as essential is another nonmaterial goal of having a good family life.

Despite being consistently linked to home ownership and wealth in pop culture, both are regarded mostly as important but not essential. Measuring the richer part of the American Dream as income mobility and how much people climb the income ladder is important, but the pursuit of more intangible and more purpose-driven goals for Americans continue to be at the forefront of people’s minds when pursuing the American Dream.

There were few changes from our 2020 American Dream Snapshot with freedom of choice ranked as essential rising slightly overall and mostly with the 18–29 age group. Becoming wealthy also changed slightly, being ranked as essential only by 10% of respondents down from 13% in 2020.

DO WE HAVE MORE OPPORTUNITIES?

Absolute upward economic mobility continues to be one of the main scholarly measurements of the American Dream, since many people associate it with opportunity. Whether referring to opportunities in the labor market or opportunities to live meaningful lives, this factor has been a staple of the American Dream for generations. The pursuit of more and better opportunities is why English and other European settlers came to America, why the frontier continued to be pushed westward when the United States was founded, and why countless immigrants come to the United States even now looking for more opportunities.

Whether opportunities have been equal is something that continues to be vigorously debated in recent months and throughout US history, and barriers need to be continuously identified and removed so more people can have access to opportunity. In our survey we asked people directly how they think their own opportunities compared to that of their parents.

Table 4 | RELATIVE TO THE OPPORTUNITIES YOUR PARENTS HAD, HOW DO YOU VIEW YOUR OWN OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUCCESS? DO YOU FEEL YOU HAVE...

	More Opportunities	About the same Opportunities	Fewer Opportunities
Total	50%	33%	16%
18–29	38%	45%	16%
30–44	42%	37%	20%
45–59	52%	29%	18%
60+	62%	27%	11%
No HS diploma	23%	41%	33%
HS grad or equivalent	51%	36%	11%
Some college/AA	45%	34%	20%
BA+	59%	29%	12%
White, NH	46%	36%	18%

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Black, NH	65%	29%	6%
Hispanic	56%	29%	14%
Other/2+, NH	52%	30%	17%
<\$30k	41%	36%	23%
\$30k–<\$60k	46%	35%	19%
\$60k–<\$100k	53%	35%	12%
\$100k+	63%	28%	9%

Note: Results for “Did not respond” or skipped questions are not included

The results from 2020 remain practically unchanged. A majority of respondents think they have either more opportunities or about the same amount of opportunities as their parents had, and only a small minority—16%, up slightly from 15% in 2020—believe they have fewer opportunities than their parents.

This is true across age, education, race, and income with the exception of those without a high school diploma. Even though the majority of people think they have more or the same amount of opportunities, people in this group that feel they have less opportunities climbed from 17% in 2020 to 33% in 2021.

It is interesting to highlight that blacks are the group that mostly reports to have either more opportunities than or the same opportunities as their parents, with the lowest percentage of people in that group, 6%, saying that they have fewer opportunities. And Hispanics are also more optimistic with only 14% saying that they have fewer opportunities.

And how do people believe that future generations will fare? In our next question we asked if people believed their children, if they had any, were likely to have more opportunities, the same amount of opportunities, or fewer opportunities. Again, most people who had children reported that they will likely have more opportunities or the same amount of opportunities as they had. Again, it is interesting to highlight that Hispanics and blacks are the groups that are most optimistic, and least pessimistic, about their children’s futures.

Table 5 | RELATIVE TO YOUR OWN OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUCCESS, HOW DO YOU VIEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUR CHILDREN? DO YOU FEEL YOUR CHILDREN ARE...

	Likely to Have More Opportunities	Likely to Have About the Same Amount of Opportunities	Likely to Have Fewer Opportunities	No Children
Total	35%	27%	19%	18%
18–29	27%	29%	10%	31%
30–44	35%	29%	17%	19%
45–59	39%	24%	23%	13%
60+	36%	27%	21%	15%
No HS diploma	33%	32%	14%	21%
HS grad or equivalent	40%	27%	17%	15%
Some college/AA	37%	25%	21%	17%
BA+	30%	28%	19%	22%
White, NH	28%	30%	21%	20%
Black, NH	46%	26%	12%	16%
Hispanic	49%	19%	16%	14%
Other/2+, NH	41%	25%	12%	21%
<\$30k	40%	26%	15%	19%

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\$30k-<\$60k	35%	23%	18%	24%
\$60k-<\$100k	33%	28%	20%	17%
\$100k+	32%	33%	21%	14%

Note: Results for “Did not respond” or skipped questions are not included

DO WE NEED TO EQUALIZE OUTCOMES OR OPPORTUNITIES?

As we discussed in previous questions, opportunity—and *equality* of opportunity, to be more specific—is a big pillar of the American Dream. When it comes to rekindling the American Dream and ensuring more opportunities for everyone, which policy solutions are most conducive to doing so continues to be one of the most hotly debated topics. As recently as the last presidential campaign, then vice-presidential candidate Kamala Harris asserted that the search for equality should entail equality of outcomes.

Other researchers continue to conflate both income mobility and income inequality with the American Dream.³ However, when it comes to policy alternatives, there is a big difference between which policies we should pursue if we seek to reduce income or wealth inequality and those we should pursue if we seek to improve upward economic mobility. Even though there might be some structural problems that affect both issues at the same time,⁴ the policy alternatives are very different. In order to ensure that more people achieve their American Dream, should policymakers worry more about reducing income inequality, ensuring a fair chance for all to pursue their dream (more opportunities), or just ensuring that fewer people are suffering in poverty?

In our survey, we asked this question again and there weren’t any changes from 2020. Despite a constant flow of media and public intellectuals telling us that income inequality is the defining issue of our times, most people in our survey reported that it is much more important to ensure people have a fair chance to succeed or that we reduce poverty rather than focus on reducing the income gap.

Table 6 | WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE THE MOST IMPORTANT GOAL OF PUBLIC POLICY?

	Closing the Gap Between Rich and Poor	Ensuring Everyone Has a Fair Chance of Achieving Success	Ensuring Americans Do Not Live in Poverty	None of The Above are Important Public Policy Goals
Total	24%	41%	26%	9%
18–29	28%	31%	36%	3%
30–44	31%	33%	29%	7%
45–59	20%	43%	25%	12%
60+	20%	52%	17%	10%
No HS diploma	20%	42%	33%	2%
HS grad or equivalent	16%	43%	27%	11%
Some college/AA	27%	39%	24%	10%
BA+	30%	39%	24%	7%
White, NH	23%	42%	23%	10%
Black, NH	27%	36%	29%	7%
Hispanic	24%	43%	26%	6%
Other/2+, NH	31%	28%	36%	5%
<\$30k	22%	39%	29%	8%

Note: Results for “Did not respond” or skipped questions are not included

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\$30k–<\$60k	24%	41%	25%	9%
\$60k–<\$100k	26%	42%	23%	8%
\$100k+	26%	40%	25%	9%

Note: Results for “Did not respond” or skipped questions are not included

Now, it is open for debate whether the best way to ensure less poverty and more mobility is actually accomplished by reducing income inequality, but such a strategy would recognize that the reduction in income inequality is, at best, an intermediate achievement.

THE PROMISE OF EQUALITY

In 2021, we wanted to delve deeper than our 2020 snapshot and focus a bit more on the question of equality, since the promise of the American Dream has always entailed a component of equality. But what type of equality are we talking about? That continues to be a contentious issue and one that is the subject of many policy conversations as each type of equality—whether it be of opportunity, of outcomes, or of starting point—has different policy implications. In a follow-up question to the previous one on what the most important policy goal is, we asked people what equality meant to them.

As Table 7 shows, for an overwhelming number of Americans, 66%, equality means equality before the law and people having a fair chance to pursue opportunities regardless of where they started. Only 4% of people said that equality represented equality of outcomes where everyone ends up in the same place. The finding remains true across age, education, race, and income levels.

Table 7 | WHAT DOES EQUALITY MEAN TO YOU?

	When Everyone Ends Up in the Same Place	When There is Equality Before the Law and People have a Fair Chance to Pursue Opportunities Regardless of Where They Started	When Everyone Starts in the Same Position	Where People Who Start with More Disadvantages are Given Tools that Could Help Them Catch Up With Others	None of the Above
Total	4%	66%	10%	11%	8%
18–29	6%	60%	13%	13%	6%
30–44	2%	62%	11%	14%	11%
45–59	5%	68%	7%	9%	10%
60+	2%	72%	9%	9%	5%
No HS diploma	6%	64%	7%	3%	9%
HS grad or equivalent	5%	56%	17%	10%	11%
Some college/AA	4%	68%	9%	11%	9%
BA+	2%	73%	6%	14%	5%
White, NH	3%	70%	9%	9%	8%
Black, NH	6%	58%	11%	15%	10%
Hispanic	3%	58%	15%	12%	8%
Other/2+, NH	7%	65%	5%	16%	6%
<\$30k	4%	58%	13%	11%	9%
\$30k–<\$60k	4%	63%	12%	11%	10%
\$60k–<\$100k	3%	71%	7%	10%	7%
\$100k+	3%	71%	7%	12%	7

Note: Results for “Did not respond” or skipped questions are not included

CLIMBING THE LADDER

Last but not least in our 2021 survey, we asked two important questions regarding what people think is the best vehicle to climb the income ladder and achieve upward social mobility and also what are the most important preconditions to being able to do so. This might seem like a trivial matter, but when there is no academic or policy consensus defining the main barriers to and indicators of more social mobility, research data becomes particularly important. Currently, many conversations revolve around tweaking safety net programs like the Earned Income Tax Credit or the Child Tax Credit, and it seems like our society and most researchers are forgetting to address or even consider the root causes or determinants of upward income mobility.

In this 2021 American Dream survey we tried to shed some light on this issue, and Table 8 includes the main results:

Table 8 | WHAT IS THE BEST WAY FOR AN INDIVIDUAL TO CLIMB THE INCOME LADDER?

	Employment or a Job	Well-Designed Government Assistance Programs	A College Degree	High Degree of Family and Social Support	None of the Above
Total	50%	8%	16%	15%	10%
18–29	49%	11%	14%	20%	5%
30–44	46%	8%	13%	16%	16%
45–59	55%	6%	17%	11%	9%
60+	50%	8%	19%	15%	8%
No HS diploma	50%	14%	17%	7%	10%
HS grad or equivalent	57%	6%	13%	13%	9%
Some college/AA	48%	9%	16%	15%	11%
BA+	46%	7%	19%	20%	8%
White, NH	53%	6%	15%	15%	9%
Black, NH	42%	10%	16%	15%	16%
Hispanic	46%	10%	23%	12%	8%
Other/2+, NH	47%	15%	10%	23%	5%
<\$30k	45%	12%	16%	16%	9%
\$30k–<\$60k	54%	7%	17%	10%	11%
\$60k–<\$100k	52%	6%	15%	16%	10%
\$100k+	50%	7%	16%	19%	8%

Note: Results for “Did not respond” or skipped questions are not included

The resounding answer is that employment or a job is the main vehicle to climb the income ladder with half of the 2,005 respondents selecting that option. Eight percent said it was a matter of having well designed government assistance programs like the aforementioned EITC and Child Tax credits, 16% said it was a matter of having a college degree, and 15% answered that what was more important was to have a high degree of family and social support.

Ten percent of people answered that none of the previous options were in and of themselves the most important. One drawback of our survey could be that if given the opportunity, people might have selected a combination of several factors we mentioned or come up with their own. So for example, people might still think that employment is the best way to climb the income ladder but if combined with a college degree

there is an even better chance. Or the same can be said of a supportive family and friend network. However, when it comes to isolating what people think is the most important vehicle for upward mobility, in and of itself, a job is most clearly the preferred option.

Table 9 shows the results to a second related question where we asked people what they think are the most important preconditions that would enable more people to climb the income ladder. As we mentioned in the analyses of previous responses, there is an incessant narrative that maintains that if only we had lower levels of income inequality we would be able to have more opportunities or people would have a better chance to climb the income ladder. However, what Table 9 shows is that people don't think that a low level of inequality is as important as the public discourse will have us believe. A strong labor market and a high level of economic growth that would enable more job creation and more direct opportunities for employment was the first option people selected. In second place, increased access to higher education was also selected as an important precondition.

Only 6% of people said that they think a low level of income inequality is a key precondition for more upward economic mobility and only 5% said that it required a strong safety net. Even though that strong safety net might be important, we believe this represents what is the more logical view: people view that safety net as something temporary, as it should be. As happened in the previous question, 7% of people selected none of the above, and 6% selected "other," which could mean that people might prefer an answer that would be a combination of these different factors.

Table 9 | WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PRECONDITION IN ENABLING PEOPLE TO CLIMB THE INCOME LADDER?

	Strong labor market and high level of economic growth	Low level income inequality	Stable family structure	Strong government social safety net	Increased access to higher education	Other	None of the above
Total	34%	6%	17%	5%	24%	6%	7%
18–29	27%	9%	15%	8%	25%	8%	5%
30–44	29%	8%	19%	5%	22%	9%	7%
45–59	39%	6%	16%	4%	21%	5%	8%
60+	40%	3%	16%	4%	26%	4%	5%
No HS diploma	29%	4%	12%	4%	30%	5%	12%
HS grad or equivalent	33%	6%	18%	3%	23%	5%	10%
Some college/AA	34%	7%	16%	5%	25%	8%	5%
BA+	37%	6%	18%	7%	22%	7%	3%
White, NH	37%	4%	18%	5%	22%	6%	6%
Black, NH	29%	12%	9%	6%	28%	6%	9%
Hispanic	29%	7%	18%	5%	26%	6%	9%
Other/2+, NH	35%	11%	14%	6%	23%	10%	2%
<\$30k	31%	8%	14%	6%	25%	4%	11%
\$30k–<\$60k	32%	7%	18%	5%	25%	6%	6%
\$60k–<\$100k	39%	6%	15%	4%	22%	7%	6%
\$100k+	36%	4%	20%	6%	23%	8%	4%

Note: Results for "Did not respond" or skipped questions are not included

CONCLUSIONS

Despite many challenges, or maybe precisely because of them, people remain positive and upbeat about the American Dream. More people continue to think that they have either achieved the American Dream or are on their way to achieving it than think the dream is out of reach. More people think they have had more opportunities than their parents and that their kids will have more opportunities than they have.

Partisan and divisive times have not been the exception but the norm throughout the history of this young nation since its founding. However, despite sensationalist and negative narratives, the country is perpetually moving forward, addressing problems as it has from the beginning. Are we leading better, richer, and fuller lives? Is the American Dream still alive and well? Our answer, based on our survey, is an emphatic yes.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Samantha Smith, “Most think the ‘American dream’ is within reach for them,” Pew Research Center (October 31, 2017), <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/10/31/most-think-the-american-dream-is-within-reach-for-them>.
- ² Samuel J. Abrams et al., “AEI Survey on Community and Society: Social capital, civic health, and quality of life in the United States,” American Enterprise Institute (February 2019).
- ³ Raj Chetty et al., “The Fading American Dream”; Miles Corak, “Income Inequality, Equality of Opportunity, and Intergenerational Mobility,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Volume 27, Number 3 (Summer 2013), 79–102.
- ⁴ Gonzalo Schwarz, “The Importance of Structural Factors in Understanding Economic Mobility,” Archbridge Institute (October 9, 2018), <https://www.archbridgeinstitute.org/2018/10/09/the-importance-of-structural-factors-in-understanding-economic-mobility/>.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



GONZALO SCHWARZ Growing up around the world in Uruguay, Israel, Ecuador, and Bolivia, Gonzalo saw poverty firsthand and wondered how to get individuals on the path to prosperity. After earning his bachelor's degree in economics at the Catholic University of Bolivia and his master's in economics from George Mason University, he began his life's work of reducing poverty. This led Gonzalo to found the Archbridge Institute, an organization dedicated to lifting barriers to human flourishing.

While forming the idea to start the Archbridge Institute, Gonzalo Schwarz was working as the Director of Strategic Initiatives at Atlas Network. In his free time, Gonzalo loves to spend time with his family, read, and watch his favorite sport fútbol, the appropriate name for soccer.



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