

MANY ADULTS ARE PESSIMISTIC ABOUT IMPROVING THEIR STANDARD OF LIVING

While most Americans say it is important to them to have a good standard of living, almost half say this goal has gotten harder to achieve. That's according to a new poll from the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research that finds significant differences in outlook based on race, ethnicity, and age.

Similarly, large majorities of the public consider raising a family and owning a home important to them, but about half believe these goals are harder to achieve compared to their parents' generation.

The poll finds 49% of adults say it is hard for them to improve their standard of living these days, and 54% believe it is unlikely that young people today will have a better standard of living than their parents.

Black adults and older adults have a more positive outlook on upward mobility compared to the rest of the public. Black adults are more likely than white adults to report that having a good standard of living (43% vs. 28%), raising a family (33% vs. 16%), and owning a home (37% vs. 22%) have become easier for them to achieve compared to their parents. Only a quarter of Black adults report that it is more difficult now than it was for their parents to improve their standard of living, compared to half of white and Hispanic adults.



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Three Things You Should Know About the UChicago Harris/AP-NORC Poll Among American Adults:

- 1) 49% believe it is hard for them and their family to improve their standard of living, but Black Americans are less pessimistic than white and Hispanic Americans.
- 2) 54% think it is unlikely that younger people today will have a better standard of living than their parents, and that pessimism is concentrated among younger adults.
- 3) 50% of Democrats and 46% of Republicans agree that it is difficult to improve their standard of living, but Democrats are more likely to perceive added difficulties for certain groups like immigrants and people of color.

Americans aged 60 and older are more likely than younger people to believe it has gotten easier for them to achieve a good standard of living than it was for their parents (44% vs. 27%). Older Americans are also more likely than those under 60 to believe young people today will have a better standard of living.

Democrats and Republicans tend to have similar perceptions of how hard it is to get ahead in life. Comparable percentages of respondents in each party believe that owning a home, raising a family, and having a good standard of living are harder to achieve for them than it was for their parents. About half of each group also believes that it is hard for them to improve their standard of living these days, and that today's youth are unlikely to achieve a higher standard of living than their parents.

However, there are significant partisan differences in views about the challenges of getting ahead in life for various groups of people. About 60% of the public says it is hard for Black adults and immigrants to improve their standard of living, and around half believe the same for women, LGBTQ people, and Hispanic adults. Democrats are more likely than Republicans to believe that each of these groups has a hard time improving their standard of living.

More than 9 in 10 adults believe that hard work and a stable family environment are at least somewhat important to improving their standard of living. Democrats and Republicans have very different views, however—Democrats are more likely than Republicans to say a college education, the community one lives in, parents' wealth, race and ethnicity, and gender affect one's ability to improve their standard of living, while Republicans are more likely to cite hard work as important. Black adults are more likely than white adults to say a college education, the talents a person is born with, and their gender are important to improving their standard of living. Black and Hispanic adults are also more likely than white adults to cite race and ethnicity as important.

The nationwide poll was conducted by the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research from August 25 to August 29, 2022, using AmeriSpeak®, the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago. Online and telephone interviews using landlines and cell phones were conducted with 1,014 adults. The margin of sampling error is +/-4.4 percentage points.

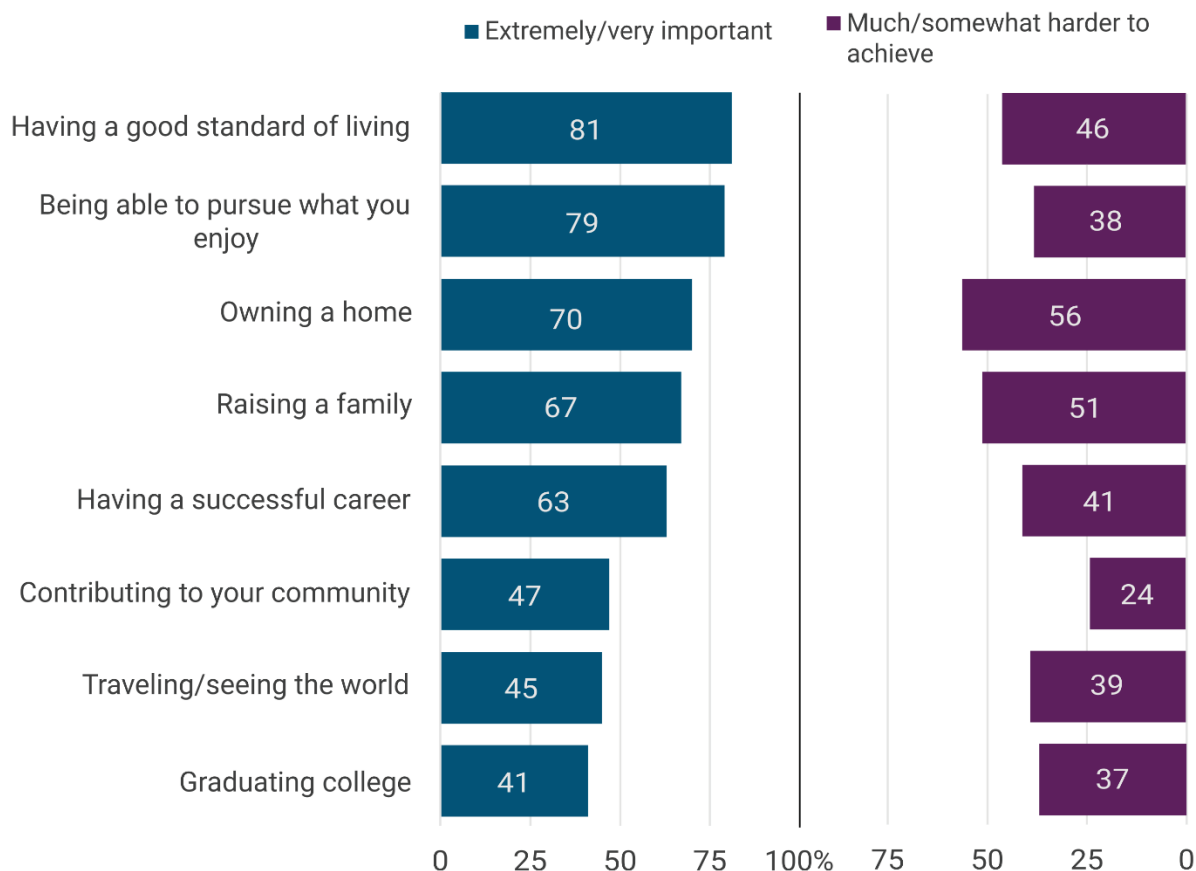
MOST PRIORITIZE A GOOD STANDARD OF LIVING IN LIFE, BUT MANY ALSO FEEL IT'S BECOMING HARDER TO ACHIEVE

When it comes to Americans' priorities in life, there is relative consensus. Most—8 in 10—believe that having a good standard of living and being able to pursue what they enjoy are important. About 7 in 10 place a high importance on raising a family and owning a home, and 6 in 10 value a successful career.

But many Americans think that these goals are becoming less accessible. Around half believe it is harder for them to own a home, raise a family, and have a good standard of living than it was during their parents' generation. Forty-one percent say that it is harder for them to have a successful career than it was for their parents. And although half of adults think that contributing to their community, traveling the world, and graduating from college are important, a quarter to a third believe these goals have become more difficult to achieve.

Americans believe certain life goals are becoming less accessible

Percent of adults



Questions: [Left] How important to you are each of the following?

[Right] Compared to your parents, do you think each of the following has become easier to achieve, harder to achieve, or neither easier nor harder to achieve for you?

Source: UChicago Harris/AP-NORC poll conducted August 25-29, 2022, with 1,014 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



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There are some partisan differences in Americans' priorities. Democrats are more likely than Republicans to think obtaining a college education is important (50% vs. 32%), while Republicans are more likely than Democrats to place a high value on raising a family (77% vs. 58%). Despite these partisan differences, Democrats and Republicans have similar outlooks on whether these goals have become harder or easier to achieve.

Both Hispanic adults and Black adults are more likely than white adults to believe that going to college is important (54% and 48% vs. 33%). White adults are more likely than Hispanic adults to believe that it has become easier to travel (42% vs 26%), but there are no other significant racial or ethnic differences in which goals are cited as important.

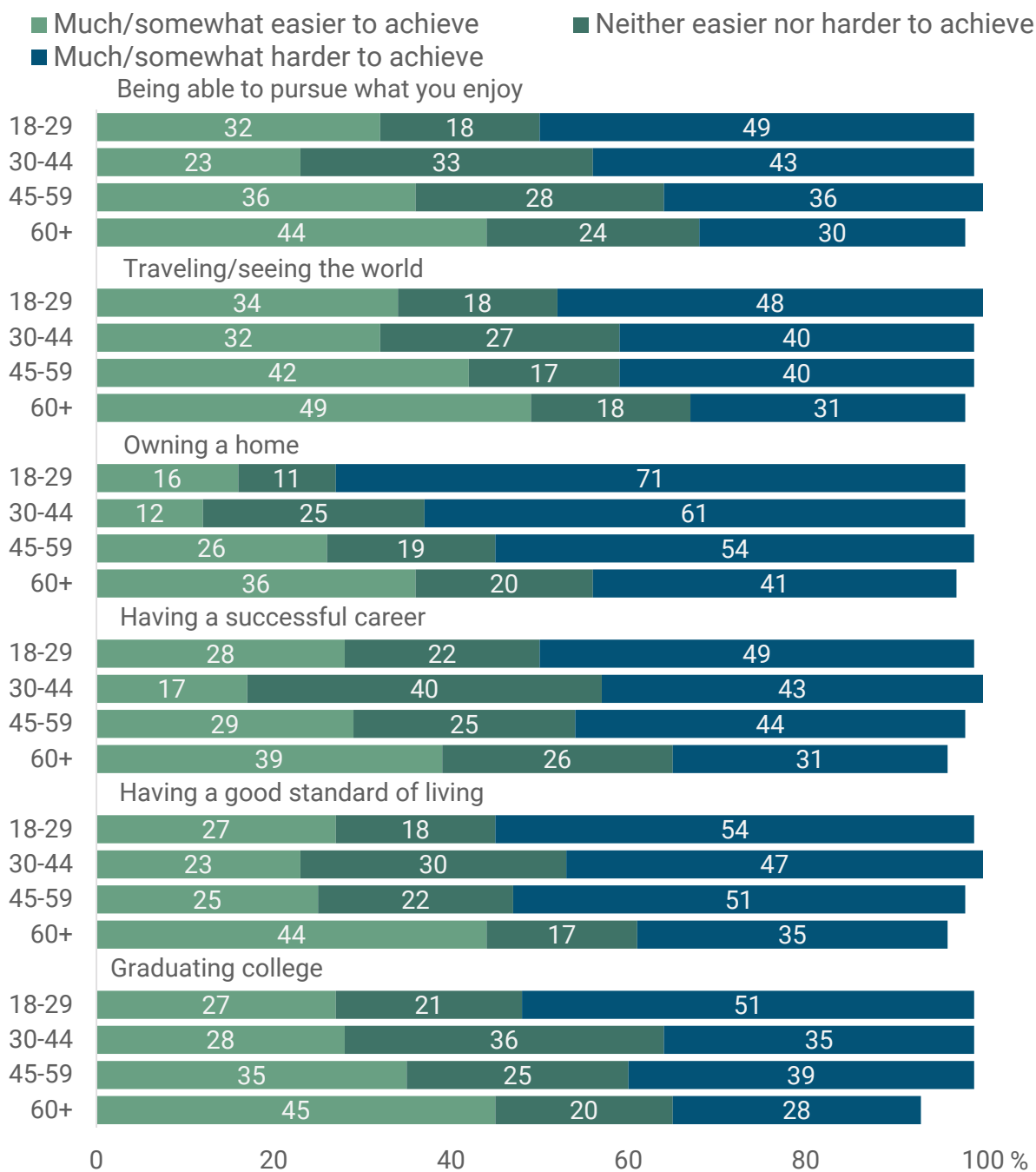
Black adults are more likely than white adults to say some of these goals are easier to achieve now compared to their parents' generation. Black adults are more likely than white adults to believe that having a good standard of living (43% vs. 28%), having a successful career (42% vs. 29%), owning a home (37% vs. 22%), and raising a family (33% vs. 16%) have become easier to achieve than it was for their parents. Black Americans are also more likely than Hispanic Americans to say that having a successful career has become easier (42% vs. 24%).

For the most part, there is consensus across age groups when it comes to life priorities, with a few notable exceptions. Older Americans, aged 60 and up, are less likely than other adults to value traveling (32% vs. 55% for 18-29 year-olds, 53% for 30-44 year-olds, and 46% for 45-59 year-olds).

But older people are significantly more optimistic than younger people about the ease of obtaining these goals.

Older people are more likely than younger adults to believe achieving a good standard of living is easier for them than it was for their parents

Percent of adults



Questions: Compared to your parents, do you think each of the following has become easier to achieve, harder to achieve, or neither easier nor harder to achieve for you?

Source: UChicago Harris/AP-NORC poll conducted August 25-29, 2022, with 1,014 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



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Education levels are also related to what they view as important. College-educated Americans are more likely than those without a degree to place high importance on going to college (66% vs. 28%), contributing to their communities (60% vs. 40%), having a successful career (77% vs. 55%), and traveling the world (58% vs. 39%). They are also more likely than those without a college degree to believe it is easier to graduate from college (45% vs. 29%) and travel the world (54% vs. 32%) than it was for their parents.

While men and women have similar priorities in life, men are less likely than women to believe it is easier to have a successful career compared to their parents (24% vs. 33%).

AMERICANS LACK OPTIMISM IN IMPROVING THEIR STANDARD OF LIVING FOR THEMSELVES, FUTURE GENERATIONS

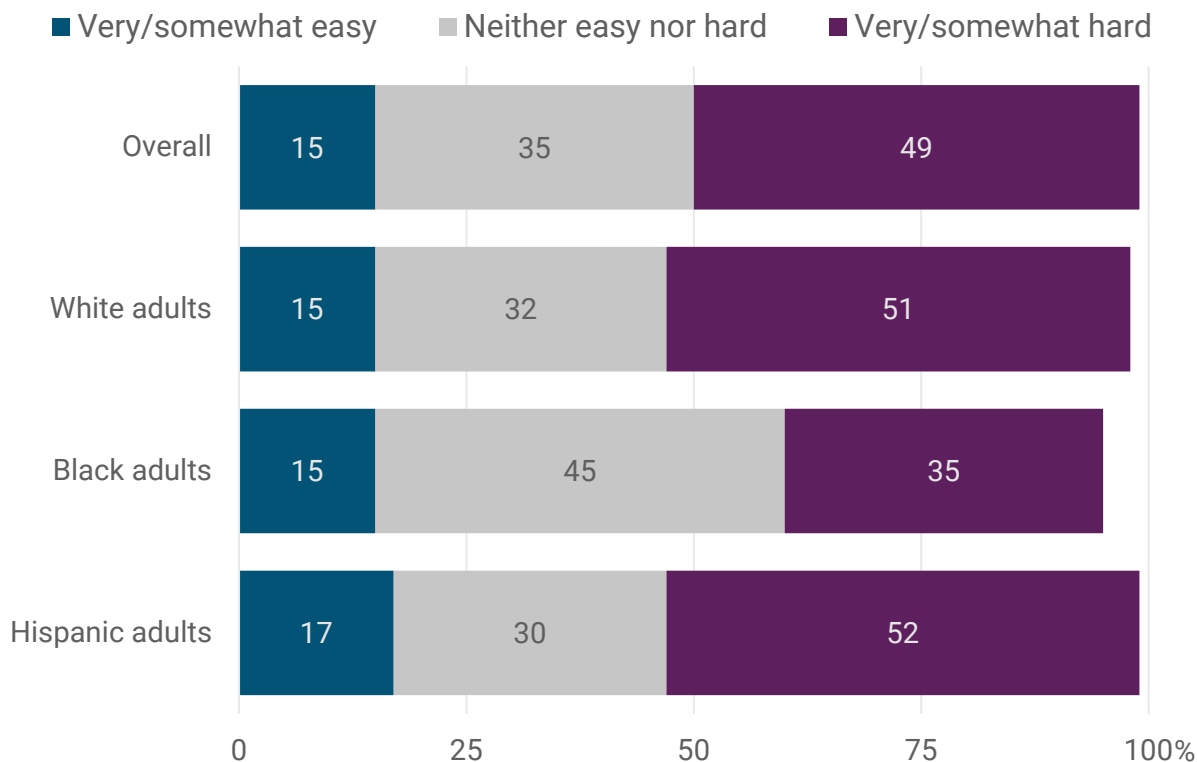
Few Americans are optimistic about their ability to improve their standard of living these days. This idea of being able to improve one's standard of living feels out of reach for many. Forty-nine percent think it is hard for them and their families to improve their standard of living, 35% are neutral, and 15% think it is easy.

Optimism is related to race. About half of white and Hispanic adults think it is difficult to improve their standard of living, compared to 35% of Black adults. Though Black adults aren't likely to say it's easy either. Rather, Black adults are more likely than white Americans to have a neutral opinion on how easy or difficult it is to improve their standard of living.

There are no significant differences in outlook toward improving one's standard of living by age, education, gender, or party affiliation.

Black adults are less likely to think it is hard to improve their standard of living

Percent of adults



Questions: How easy or hard is it for you and your family to improve your standard of living these days?

Source: UChicago Harris/AP-NORC poll conducted August 25-29, 2022, with 1,014 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

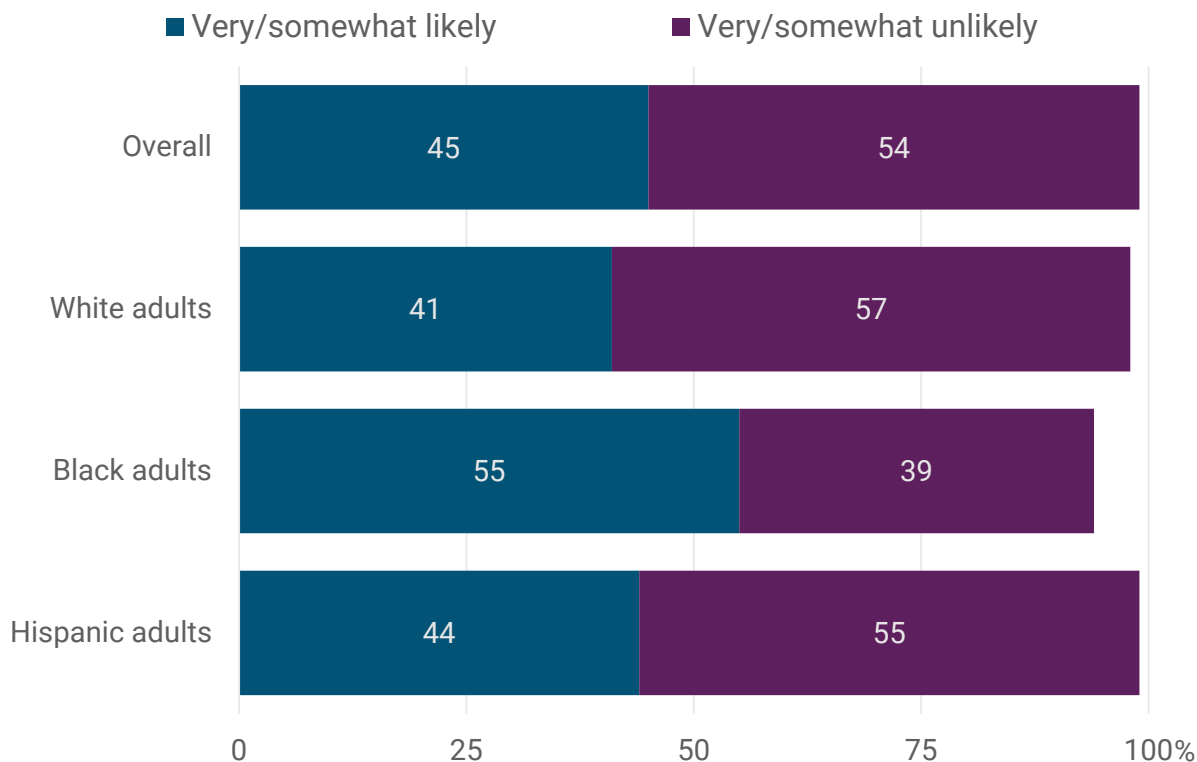


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The public is also relatively pessimistic regarding the ability of future generations to have a better standard of living than their parents, with 54% expressing skepticism that young people today will have a better standard of living than their parents. Though there are no significant differences by education, income, gender, or party affiliation, Black adults are more likely to believe that today's youth will be able to attain a higher standard of living than their parents, compared to white adults.

Black adults are more likely to think today's youth will have a better standard of living than their parents

Percent of adults



Questions: How likely do you think it is that young people today will have a better standard of living than their parents?

Source: UChicago Harris/AP-NORC poll conducted August 25-29, 2022, with 1,014 adults age 18 and older nationwide.

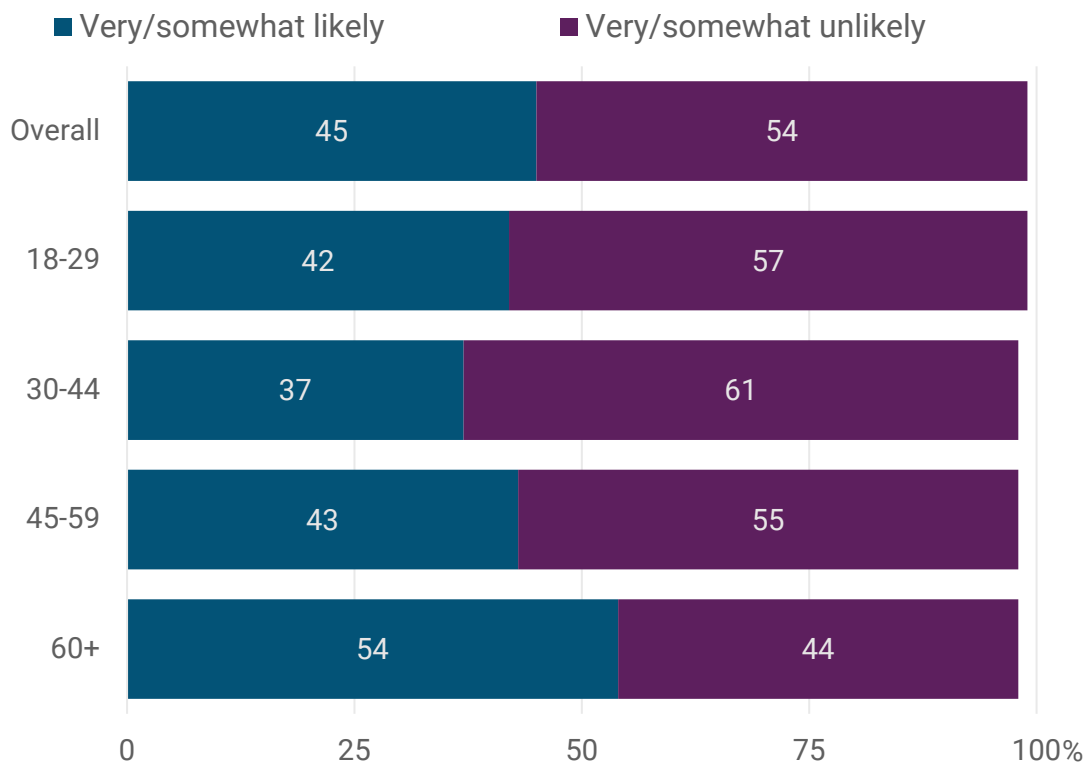


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Perspectives on future generations' standard of living also vary by age, as younger adults tend to be less optimistic.

Younger people are less optimistic that they will have a better standard of living than their parents

Percent of adults



Questions: How likely do you think it is that young people today will have a better standard of living than their parents?

Source: UChicago Harris/AP-NORC poll conducted August 25-29, 2022, with 1,014 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



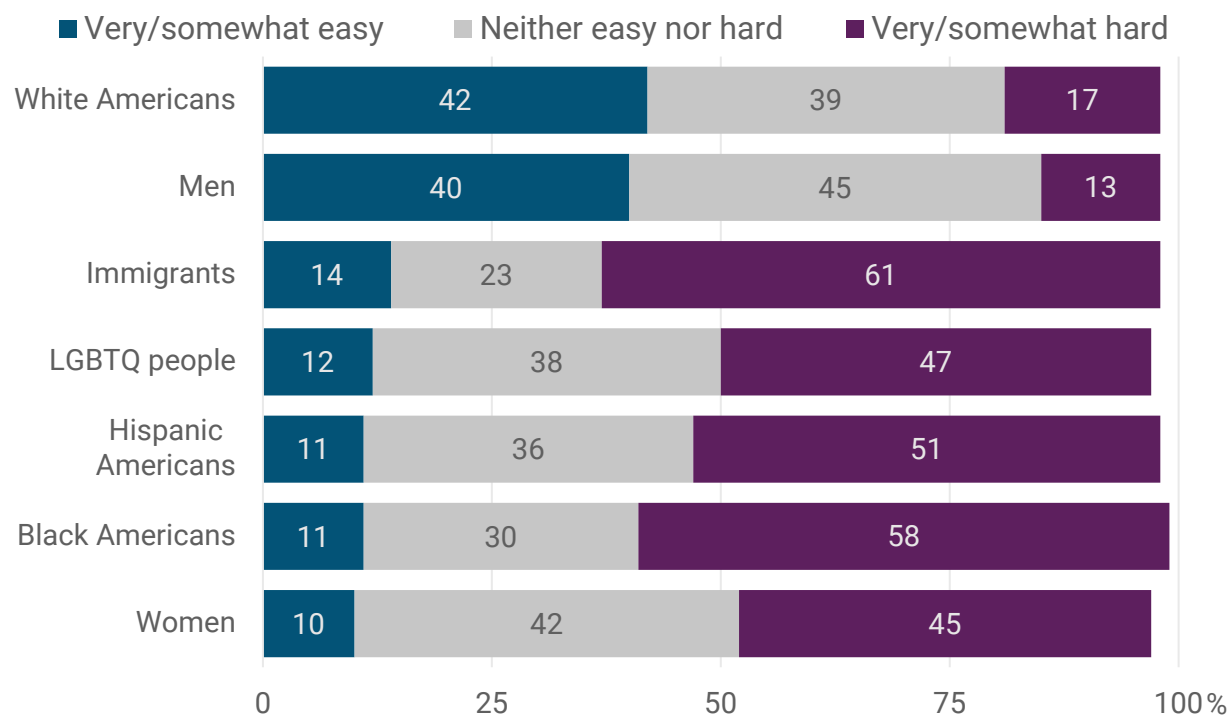
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MANY ARE AWARE OF DISPARITIES IN PEOPLE'S OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE THEIR STANDARD OF LIVING

About 60% of adults think it is hard for Black Americans and immigrants to improve their standard of living, while about half believe the same regarding LGBTQ people, Hispanic Americans, and women. Few perceive difficulties for men or white Americans.

Most adults believe people of color and immigrants have a harder time improving their standard of living

Percent of adults



Questions: Do people from the following groups have an easy or hard time improving their standard of living in the United States?

Source: UChicago Harris/AP-NORC poll conducted August 25-29, 2022, with 1,014 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



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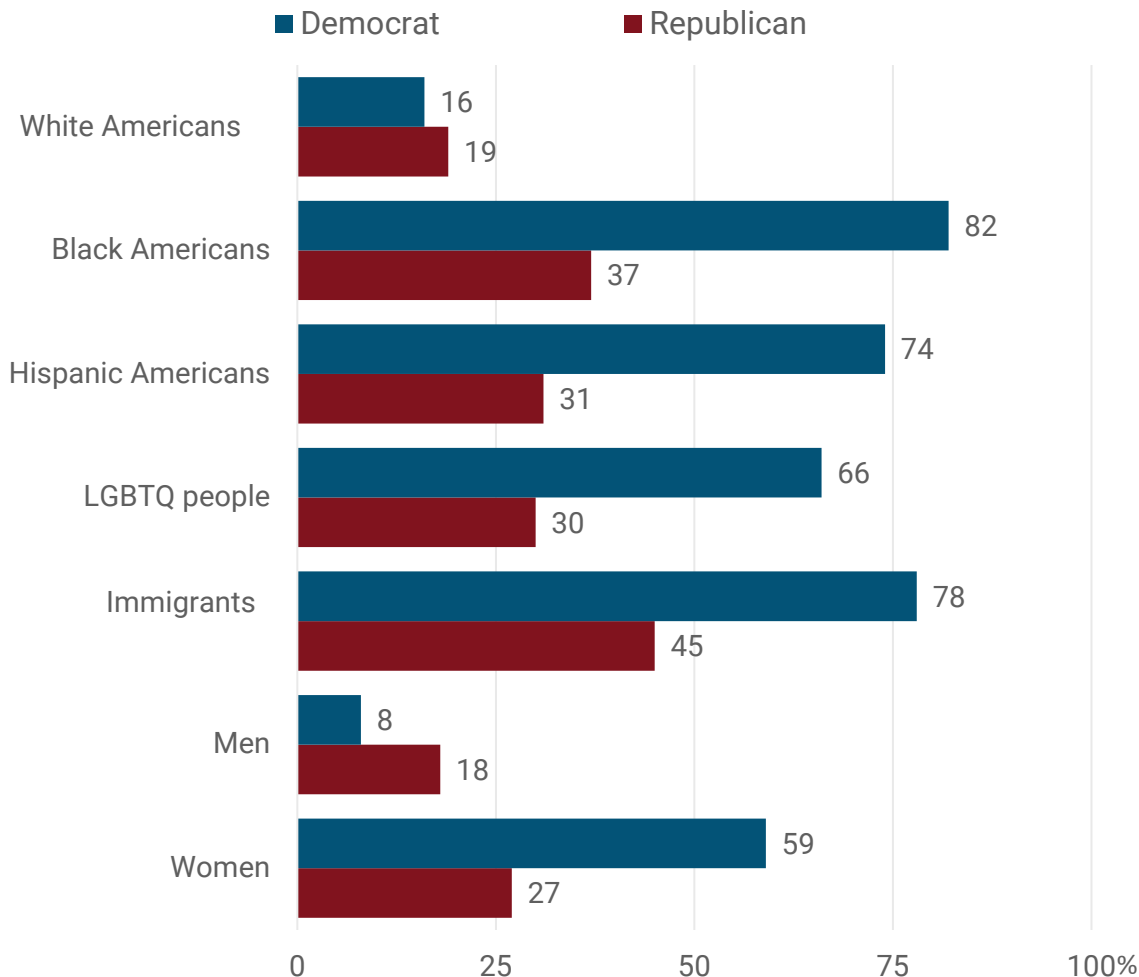
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However, there are stark partisan divides. Republicans are much less likely than Democrats to perceive this disparity. Republicans, however, are more likely than Democrats to believe that men have a hard time getting ahead. Democrats (58%) are more likely than Republicans (27%) to believe that white Americans have an easy time getting ahead.

Democrats are more likely to perceive difficulties for immigrants, LGBTQ people, and Black and Hispanic Americans to get ahead

Percent of adults who think it is very/somewhat hard



Question: Do people from the following groups have an easy or hard time improving their standard of living in the United States?

Source: UChicago Harris/AP-NORC poll conducted August 25-29, 2022, with 1,014 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



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Even controlling for partisanship, opinions also differ according to race and ethnicity when it comes to the perceived lack of difficulties faced by white Americans. Black Americans (64%) and Hispanic Americans (48%) are more likely than white Americans (34%) to believe white Americans have an easy time improving their standard of living.

College graduates (71%) are more likely than those without a college degree (56%) to believe that immigrants have a harder time improving their standard of living.

Men (31%) are less likely than women (49%) to believe that men have an easy time improving their standard of living and that women have a hard time doing so (33% vs. 56%). Men are also less likely than women to say that Black Americans (52% vs. 63%) and LGBTQ people (40% vs. 53%) have a hard time getting ahead.

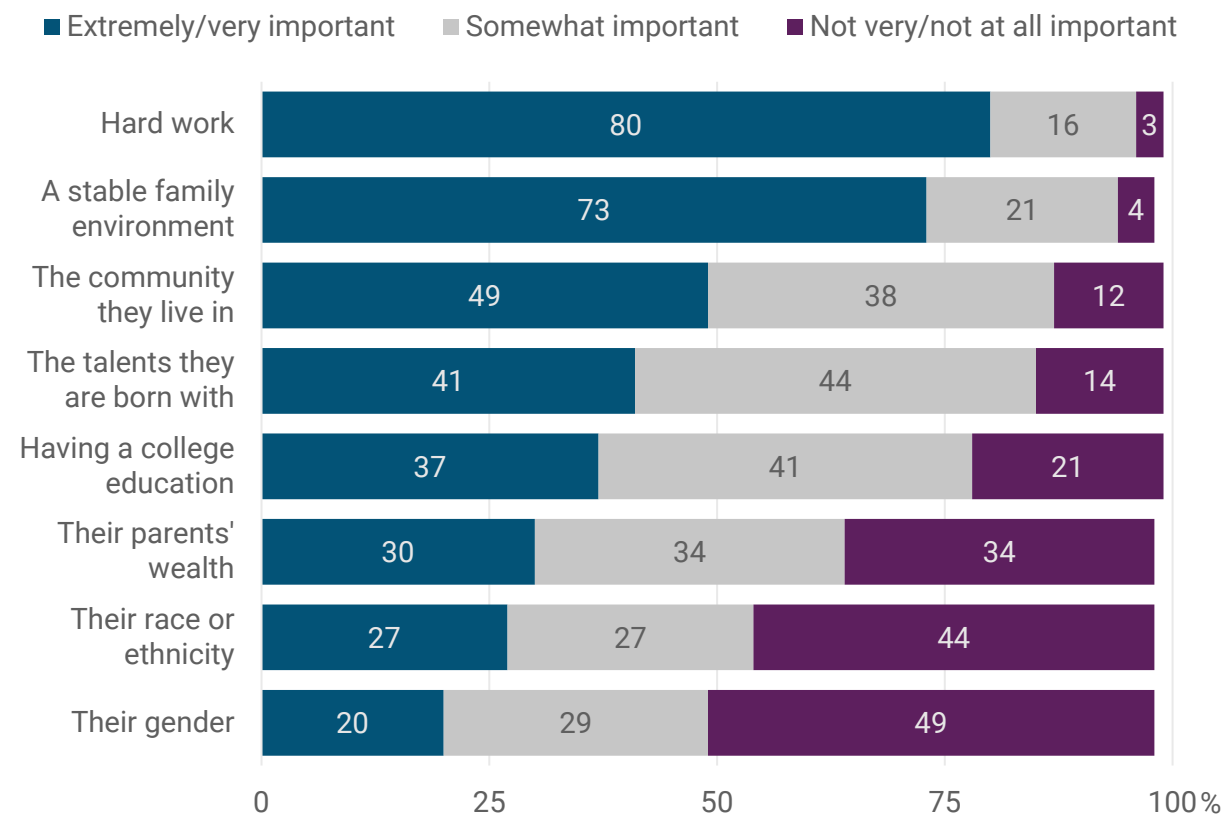
VAST MAJORITY OF PUBLIC CITES HARD WORK, STABLE FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AS IMPORTANT TO IMPROVING STANDARD OF LIVING

There is relative consensus among the public regarding the importance of several factors for improving one's standard of living. Overall, 80% cite hard work as being extremely or very important, and 73% say the same regarding a stable family environment.

Fewer adults consider the community they live in, inherent talent, or a college education as important to improving one's standard of living. Less than a third cite parental wealth, race or ethnicity, or gender as important.

Most adults believe hard work is important for improving standard of living

Percent of adults



Questions: How important are each of the following for a person to improve their standard of living?

Source: UChicago Harris/AP-NORC poll conducted August 25-29, 2022, with 1,014 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



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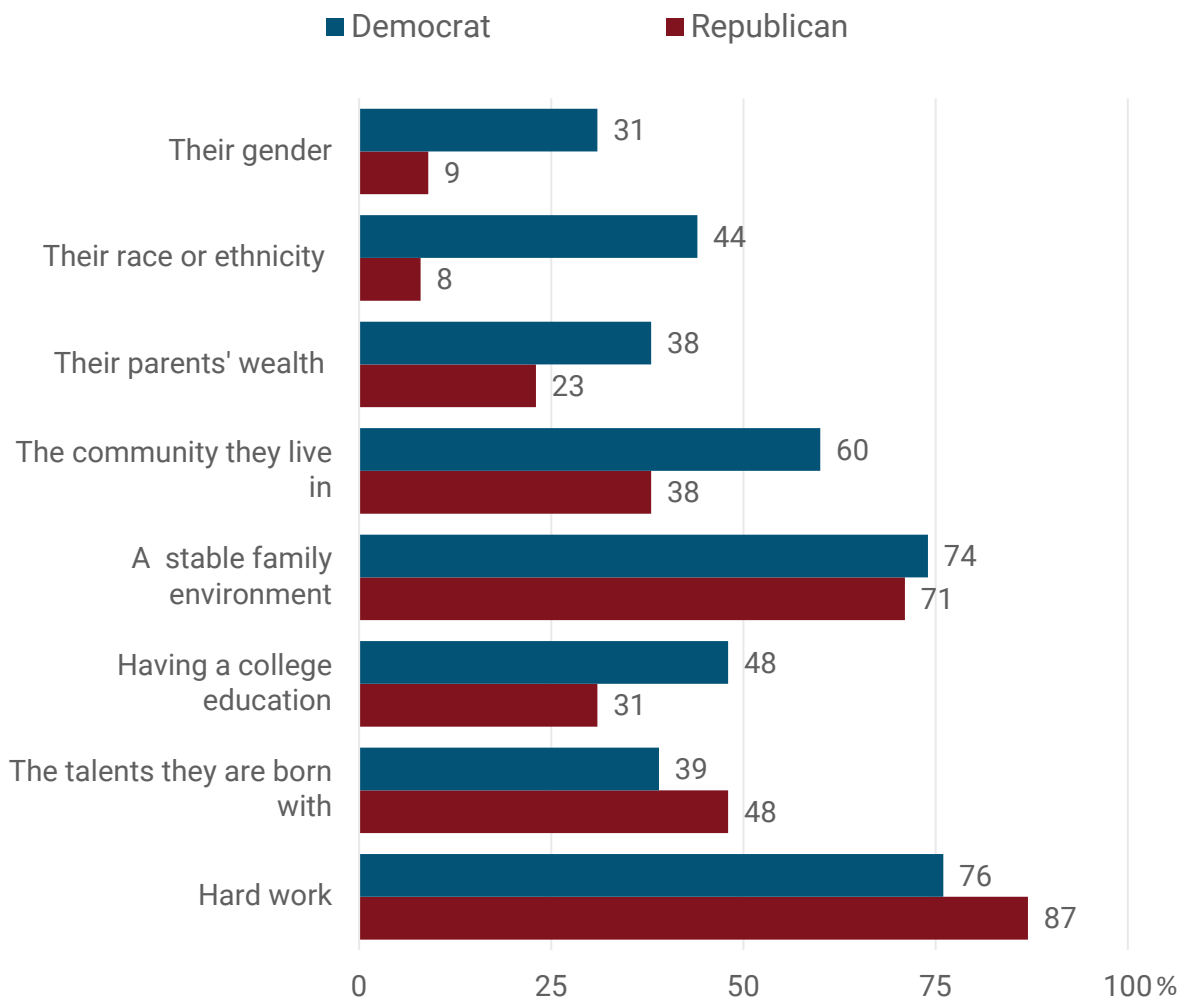
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There are stark differences by party affiliation in views toward what factors are important for improving standard of living. Democrats are more likely than Republicans to believe having a college education, the community one lives in, parents' wealth, race or ethnicity, and gender are important to one's ability to improve their standard of living. Republicans are more likely to cite hard work (87% vs. 76%). There are no significant differences between how many Democrats and Republicans cite the talents one is born with and a stable family environment as important factors.

Republicans are more likely to say hard work is important for getting ahead



Question: How important are each of the following for a person to improve their standard of living?

Source: UChicago Harris/AP-NORC poll conducted August 25-29, 2022, with 1,014 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



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White adults and men are less likely than other groups to think that demographics, including race and ethnicity and gender, impact a person's ability to improve their standard of living.

Black adults are more likely than white adults to think that the talents a person is born with (54% vs. 39%), having a college education (51% vs. 33%), or gender (33% vs. 16%) are important. Black and Hispanic adults are also more likely than white adults to cite race and ethnicity (49% and 37% vs. 21%) as important.

Men are less likely than women to say that a person's race and ethnicity (21% vs. 32%) or their gender (16% vs. 24%) are important for improving their standard of living. They are also less likely than women to say the same about a college education (31% vs. 43%).

Adults 18 to 44 years of age (18-29: 69%, 30-44: 75%) are less likely than adults 45 years and older (45-59: 86%, 60 and older: 87%) to believe that hard work is important for a person to improve their standard of living. Younger adults are twice as likely as older adults to say that parents' wealth is important for improving their standard of living. About 2 in 10 Americans aged 45 and above say so, compared to 4 in 10 adults under the age of 45. College-educated Americans are more likely than those without a degree to cite a college education (46% vs. 32%) or parents' wealth (39% vs. 25%) as important for improving their standard of living.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

This survey was conducted by the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research with funding from NORC at the University of Chicago. Staff from Harris Public Policy and The AP-NORC Center collaborated on all aspects of the study.

Data were collected using the AmeriSpeak Omnibus®, a monthly, multi-client survey using NORC's probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. The survey was part of a larger study that included questions about other topics not included in this report. During the initial recruitment phase of the panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame or a secondary national address frame, both with over 97% coverage of all U.S. addresses, and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, or field interviewers (face-to-face). The panel provides sample coverage of approximately 97% of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the sample include people with P.O. Box only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings population.

Interviews for this survey were conducted between August 25 and August 29, 2022, with adults age 18 and older representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak, and 1,014 completed the survey—932 via the web and 82 via telephone. Panel members were invited by email or by phone from an NORC telephone interviewer. Interviews were conducted in English. Respondents were offered a small monetary incentive for completing the survey.

The final stage completion rate is 16.9%, the weighted household panel recruitment rate is 20.8%, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 78.7%, for a cumulative response rate of 2.8%. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 4.4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

Sampling error is only one of many potential sources of error, and there may be other unmeasured error in this or any other survey.

Quality assurance checks were conducted to ensure data quality. In total, 25 interviews were removed for nonresponse to at least 50% of the questions asked of them, for completing the survey in less than one-third the median interview time for the full sample, or for straight-lining all grid questions asked of them. These interviews were excluded from the data file prior to weighting.

Once the sample has been selected and fielded, and all the study data have been collected and made final, a poststratification process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any non-coverage or under- and oversampling resulting from the study-specific sample design. Poststratification variables included age, gender, census division, race/ethnicity, and education.

Weighting variables were obtained from the 2022 Current Population Survey. The weighted data reflect the U.S. population of adults age 18 and over.

For more information, visit www.apnorc.org or email info@apnorc.org.

CONTRIBUTING RESEARCHERS

From NORC at the University of Chicago

David Sterrett
Claire Krummenacher
Alice Tracey
Lindsey Witt-Swanson
Jennifer Benz

From The Associated Press

Emily Swanson
Hannah Fingerhut

From The University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy

Steven Durlauf

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