THE AMERICAN FAMILY SURVEY

2026



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CONTENTS

Executive Summary 2
Dating Experiences Among Young People 15
Barriers to Dating 21
Commitment, Marriage, and Working on Relationships 27
Attitude Toward Marriage 34
Marriage, Family, and the Opportunity Costs of Family Formation 40
Family Roles and Personal Identity 47
Prerequisites for Having Children 54
Decisions about Having Children 60
Child Care 65
Concerns about the Impact of Technology 70
Gambling 77
Technology Use and Regulation 81
Passing Political Values to Children 88
Parental Rights 92
Policies to Support Families 97
Economic Hardship and Family Finances 102
Housing Affordability and Homeownership 109
Methodology 116
Toplines 117

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We thank our extraordinary team of research assistants, including Kaden Benzley, Madeline Christianson, Katelyn Gale and Emma Thomas. We could not have completed the study without their diligent efforts.

We are deeply grateful for the efforts and advice of our advisory committee, Dan Cox (American Enterprise Institute), E.J. Dionne (Brookings Institution), Catherine Rampell (The Bulwark), Galena Rhoades (University of Denver), and Brad Wilcox (American Enterprise Institute and University of Virginia). As it does every year, their advice dramatically improved the survey questionnaire and informed the report. Errors, of course, are our own.

THE AMERICAN FAMILY SURVEY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Americans are living through an unsettled time. Housing feels out of reach for many, with more than 7 in 10 saying affordable homes are hard to find where they live. New technologies are reshaping work and relationships faster than many people can absorb. More than four in ten Americans report experiencing at least one serious financial hardship in the past year — the highest share since we first started tracking this measure in 2016. Among adults under 40, financial stability is also the most commonly named prerequisite for having a child. The survey's findings thus point to security as a recurring concern in family life. In this economic and social environment, decisions about family life — whether to commit to a partner, marry or have a child — can come down to whether young people feel secure enough to take the next step.

Since 2015, the American Family Survey has explored Americans' views about relationships, children, and public policies that affect families. In a typical year, we interview a sample of 3,000 respondents designed to represent the population of the United States. This year, we added to that an oversample of adults ages 18-40, allowing us to focus on the priorities and concerns of Americans who are currently at the stage of building relationships and forming families.

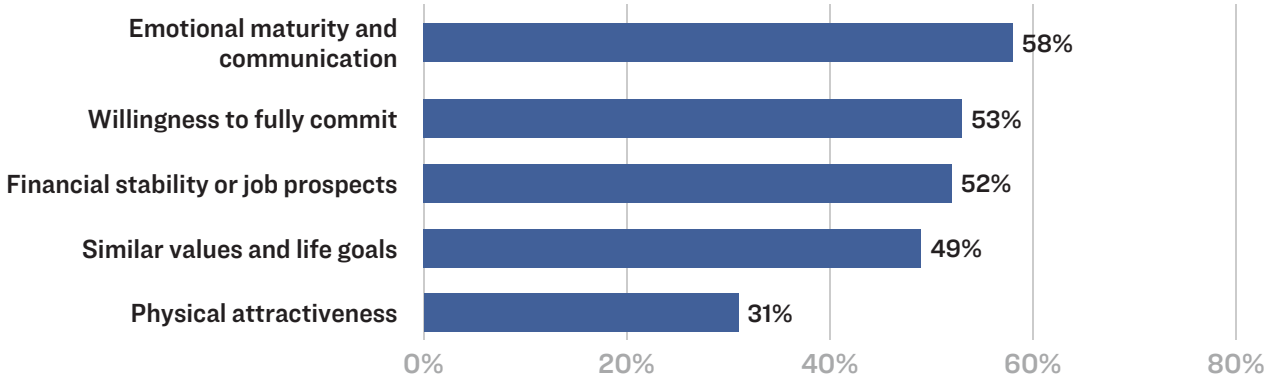
Family Formation

Young adults see family life and the prospect of family formation with a combination of aspiration and caution as they weigh whether or not to begin or deepen romantic relationships. People may value committed relationships, but they want to feel secure before pushing any deeper into commitment. Many (especially women) also find dating to be difficult and express greater sensitivity than older Americans to the financial and career tradeoffs associated with family life. They find it hard to locate emotionally mature, commitment-oriented, and financially stable people in the pool. And the most common prerequisite that they name for having a child is financial stability. At the same time, about one-third of childless adults under 40 who want children say they don't know if they will ever be financially ready to have a child. Young people may be taking steps to strengthen their relationships and parenting, but they worry about the future and whether they will ever have sufficient resources to support children.

Among young people who are not currently in a relationship, we find three distinct orientations toward dating and the possibility of forming a relationship: 17% are actively looking for a committed relationship, 50% are open to one but not actively looking, and 33% are not interested right now, with 54% of that group saying that they prefer being single to having a partner. Women are slightly more likely than men (38% vs. 30%) to say they are not interested at this point in their lives. Among those who are not actively looking, many say that building a career (37%) and seeking financial security (33%) are their priorities at this stage in life.

Difficulty Finding Qualities in Dating Partners

Percentage among adults ages 18-40 who say each is difficult to find



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on adults ages 18-40.
QUESTION WORDING: When it comes to finding a good partner, how easy or difficult [has it been/was it] for you to find someone with the following traits? Emotional maturity and communication skills; Financial stability or good job prospects; Willingness to fully commit; Physical attractiveness; Similar values and life goals. (Difficult combines very and somewhat difficult.)

Establishing relationships is complicated in a variety of ways. Getting the ball rolling is not easy. A majority of single Americans ages 18-40 (58%) say they never go on dates. And among all adults in that age group, most say it is difficult to find a partner who is emotionally mature (58%), willing to fully commit (53%), or financially stable with good job prospects (52%). Lower-income Americans are the most likely to report these sorts of challenges.

Of those who are actively looking, many are somewhat pessimistic about the dating experience, both online and in person, with one-third saying that dating apps make the experience more difficult and 3 in 10 reporting that it is hard to meet people where they live. In our oversample of young people between 18-40 who have dated in the past two years, no group reports more negative dating experiences than women ages 30-40, more than half of whom (52%) say the experience has been negative, compared to only 14% who describe the experience as positive. Among those who are unattached, liberals are more likely than conservatives to say that dating is difficult or discouraging or that they prefer being single, while conservatives are more likely than liberals to say they feel social pressure from family and friends to marry.

Marriage, Parenting, and Meaning

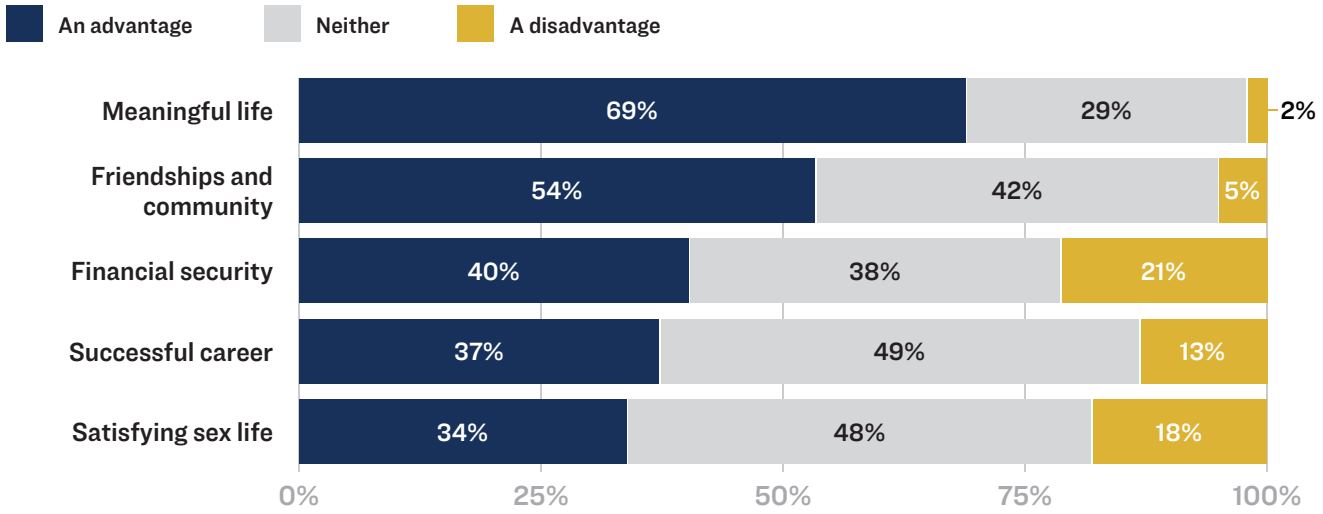
These challenges shape the context in which young adults consider marriage and parenthood. We asked Americans whether they see these family roles as advantages or disadvantages across several areas of life. The majority see marriage as an advantage for living a meaningful life, achieving financial security, having a satisfying sex life, and forming strong friendships and a sense of community. Very few Americans identify outright disadvantages in any of these dimensions, though women are less likely than men to see marriage as an advantage for a successful career (39% vs. 49%).

More broadly, Americans see practical value in marriage, and very few reject the institution outright. On the other hand, they have differing perspectives about what kind of good marriage is. Some regard marriage primarily as a private good for individuals — a better route to happiness than remaining single. A second view conceives of marriage as a public good — needed for strong families and a healthy society. Liberals and conservatives divide sharply over this public role, with 79% of conservatives believing that marriage is needed to create strong families, compared with 33% of liberals. By contrast, more than two-thirds of liberals (69%) believe that a personal sense of commitment matters more than being legally married, a perspective only one-third of conservatives (32%) share. Conservatives in the youngest age cohort (18-29) are more likely to endorse the public value of marriage alone (41% vs. 23% endorsing marriage as both a personal and public good), while older conservatives tend to see both personal and public value in marriage (44% vs. 22% as a public good only).

About 7 in 10 Americans believe that having children contributes to a meaningful life (69%), and most expect that children will contribute positively to forming friendships and community (54%). But they are far more ambivalent about how children affect practical domains like financial security (40% see children as an advantage), building a successful career (37%), and enjoying a satisfying sex life (34%). Similar to their evaluations of marriage, women, both over 40 and under 40, are less likely than men to see children as an advantage for a career. Among men and women ages 18-40, Republicans are much more likely than Democrats to say that getting married or having children will be a career advantage. Republicans are also more convinced than Democrats of the financial and social advantages of having children. Notably, however, Republican women are less convinced than Republican men that marriage (50% vs. 63%) or children (42% vs. 56%) will benefit their careers.

Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of Having Children

Percentage selecting each response



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: In each of the following domains, does having children provide an advantage or a disadvantage? Domains: having a successful career; being financially secure; having strong friendships and community; having a satisfying sex life; living a meaningful life. Response options: An advantage; Neither an advantage nor disadvantage; A disadvantage.

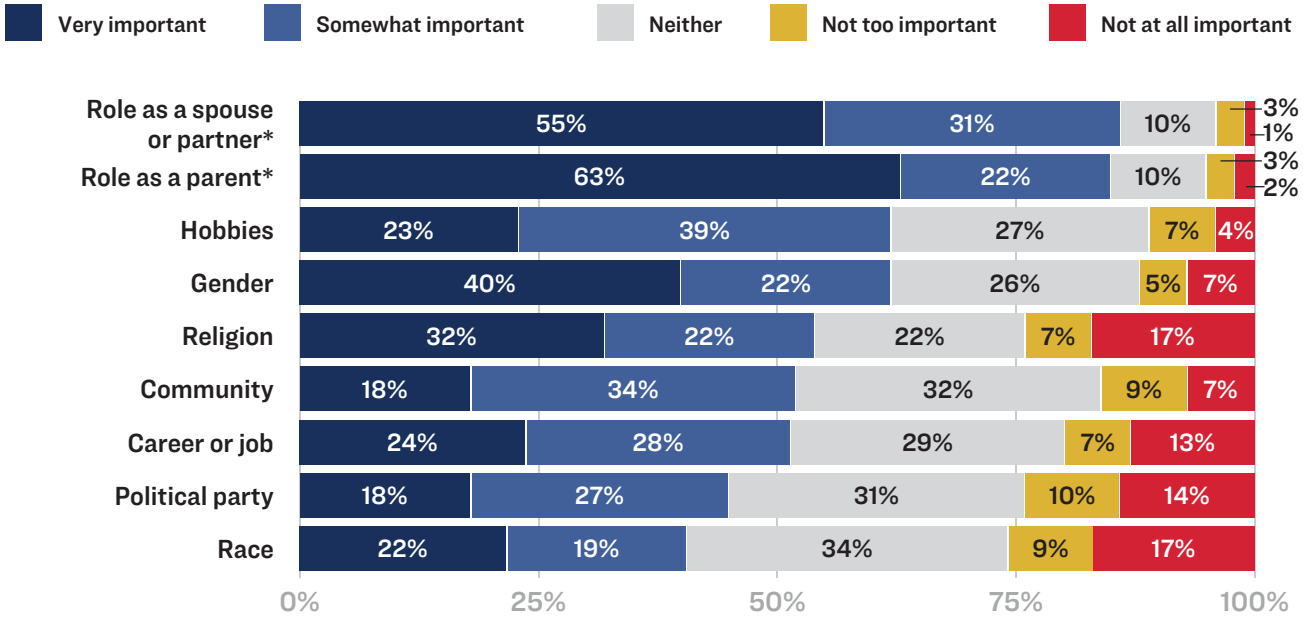
Among Democrats, we also see meaningful gender gaps. For example, Democratic women are somewhat less likely than Democratic men (61% vs. 69%) to see marriage as an advantage for living a meaningful life, though strong majorities of both genders believe it. Racial and ethnic identities also matter. Across all the dimensions about which we surveyed this year, Hispanics between 18-40 are more likely than whites to believe that having children will be an advantage, with Black Americans landing somewhere between the other two groups.

Despite the practical concerns they raise about parenthood, family roles and responsibilities remain deeply connected to how many Americans see themselves. Among those who occupy these roles, being a spouse, partner, or parent strongly anchors personal identity. Eighty-six percent of those who are in a committed relationship (whether married, cohabiting, or living apart) say that their role as a spouse or partner is important to their identities, with 55% saying it is very important. This sense of relationship identity varies little across other demographic characteristics, including age, gender, and partisanship. Married respondents are more likely than unmarried but partnered respondents (90% vs. 78%) to say that their relationship is important for their identity, but relationship identity is still key for more than three-quarters of those who are not married but currently with a partner.

For respondents with children, 85% say their role as parent is important to who they are, with 63% saying it is very important. We find few meaningful differences in this strong sense of identity by other demographic characteristics; across the board, being a parent is a central element of the self-identity of Americans with children. Politics may dominate the news, but few Americans build their true identity on a partisan affiliation: less than half of all Americans say their political party is important to their identity, and only 18% say it is very important — a far cry from the nearly two-thirds of parents who say the same about their parental roles. Religion, by contrast, is quite polarized — 32% of Americans call it very important to their identities, but 25% say it is not too important or not important at all.

Importance of Nine Factors to Americans' Sense of Identity

Percentage selecting each level of importance



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans. Spouse/partner and parent items were asked only of respondents for whom each role applied. QUESTION WORDING: People value different roles in their lives. How important are the following things to your personal identity? Items: my role as a spouse or partner; my role as a parent; my religion; my race; my political party; my career or job; my community; my gender; my hobbies. Response options: Very important; Somewhat important; Neither important nor unimportant; Not too important; Not at all important.

The centrality of relationships to identity does not mean every relationship feels equally secure. Younger adults are less likely than the older adults to call themselves "very committed" (67% vs. 78%). Among people in relationships lasting at least two years, 36% of adults under 40 say their relationship has been in trouble in the past two years, compared with 27% of adults over 40. Still, younger Americans report working harder at relationships. More than half of the younger adults who are currently in a relationship did at least one thing in the past two years to improve their relationships or parenting — including reading or listening to relationship material, working with a therapist, seeking religious guidance, attending a workshop, or using artificial intelligence for advice. This is more than double the rate among the older group. The distinct combination of somewhat lower commitment and somewhat higher levels of relationship work may also reflect the uncertainty and insecurity of their experiences and their current life stage, when relationships and family roles may still be new and developing.

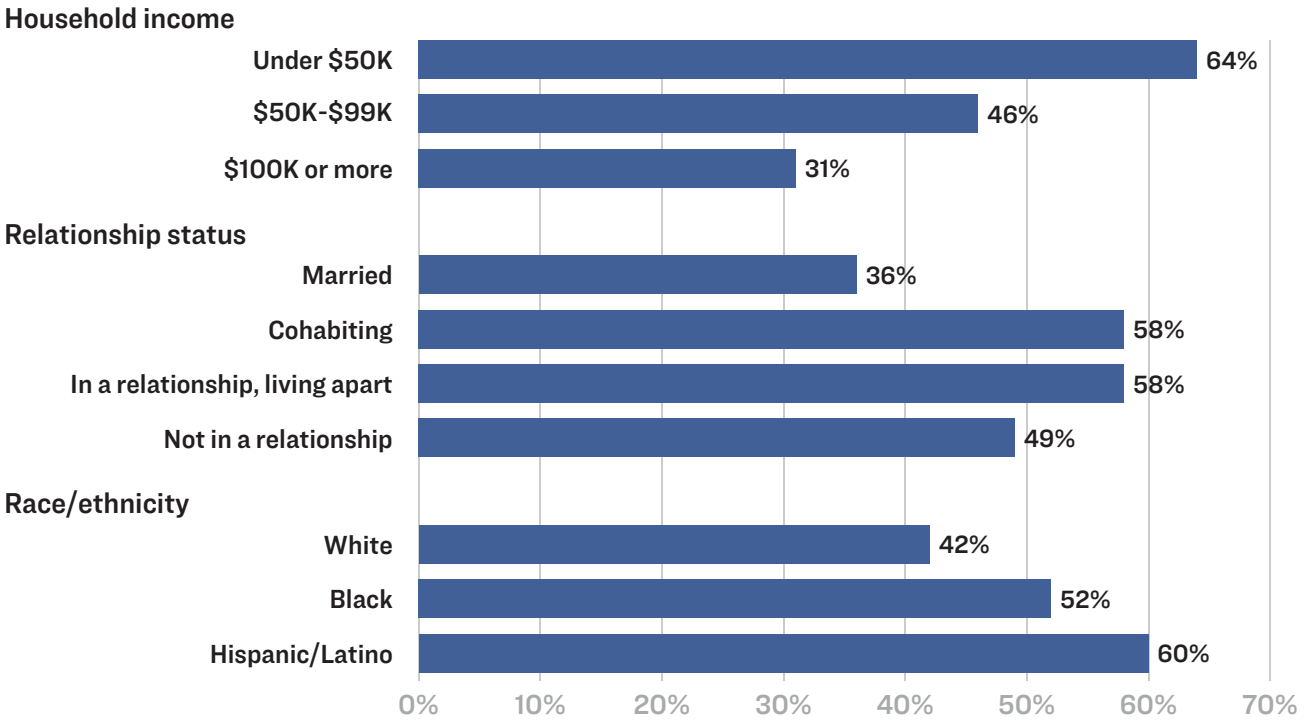
Economic Security and Housing

The challenge of security is nowhere more evident than in the economic realm. Since 2016, the American Family Survey has tracked a broad measure of economic crisis by identifying respondents who experienced at least one of six hardship events because there was not enough money: hunger, inability to pay an important bill in full, borrowing from family or friends to pay bills, moving in with others because of financial problems, staying somewhere not intended for housing, or forgoing needed medical care because of cost. In 2026, 42% of all respondents report at least one hardship event. This result is the highest level ever measured in this survey, and it represents a 7-point increase over last year and a 15-percentage-point increase over 2021, when many families benefited from pandemic-era government assistance. Borrowing from family or friends and failing to pay an important bill in full are the most common types of hardship reported.

Young people are more vulnerable to these hardships than older Americans (48% of those between 18-29 and 47% of those between 30-40 reported a hardship, compared to 39% of those over 40). And among young people between 18-40 with household incomes under $50,000 per year, 64% experienced a hardship (compared to 31% who make over $100,000 per year). When asked whether their family finances have improved, stayed the same, or worsened over the past year, the most common response from Americans between the ages of 18 and 40 is that they stayed about the same. But the current economic environment has been especially challenging for young people with low incomes: 33% of those with incomes under $50,000 said their family finances have gotten worse, while only 17% said their financial situation has improved in the last year. As last year, the greatest single worry about the future from Americans of all ages is inflation, with 89% saying that they are at least somewhat worried about it, and over half (51%) indicating that they are very worried.

Economic Hardship Among Young Adults

Percent of adults ages 18-40 who experienced at least one of six hardships during the past year



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on adults ages 18-40.
QUESTION WORDING: In the past 12 months, did you do any of the following because there wasn't enough money? Were you ever hungry, but didn't eat because you couldn't afford enough food? Did you not pay the full amount of an important bill (like rent, mortgage, or a utility bill)? Did you borrow or receive money from friends or family to help pay the bills? Did you move in with other people even for a little while because of financial problems? Did you stay at a shelter, in an abandoned building, an automobile or any other place not meant for regular housing, even for one night? Was there anyone in your household who needed to see a doctor or go to the hospital but couldn't go because of the cost?

Concerns about inflation are compounded by worries about housing. Though homeownership is a common experience for those in our sample — a little less than 7 in 10 currently own a home and 75% have owned a home at some point in their lives — more than 7 in 10 Americans say that finding affordable housing in their local communities is somewhat or very difficult. This same dismal view of housing affordability is found across demographic groups and community types. Among adults between 18-40, a little less than 6 in 10 currently own a home, though income matters a great deal — more than three-quarters of those with incomes over $100,000 currently own a home, compared to 4 in 10 respondents with incomes under $50,000. Among non-homeowners between 18-40, more than one-third say homeownership will always be too expensive for them, though this number is less than the 55% of current non-homeowners over age 40 who say that owning a home will always be out of reach.

Overall, financial insecurity is a significant concern for Americans under 40 who are making decisions about relationships and family. They are more likely than older Americans to report economic hardship, and they are living in a political environment in which all Americans, whether old or young, believe that housing affordability is a significant challenge in their local communities and that inflation will threaten their family finances.

The Role of New Technologies and the Demand for Regulation

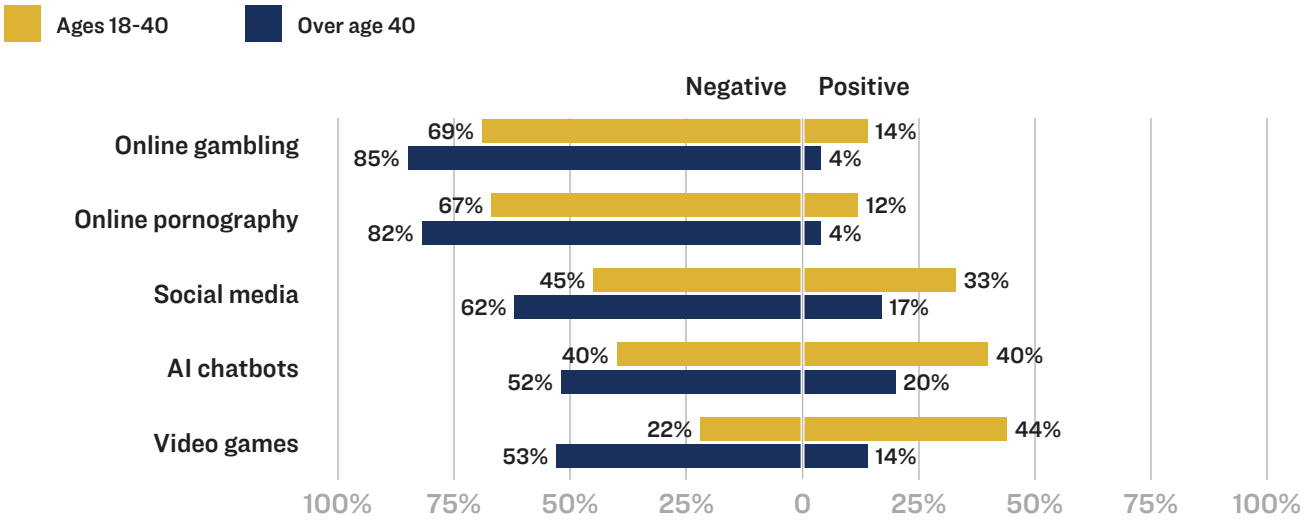
For many Americans today, security extends beyond finances to uncertainties about technology, including the rapid growth of AI and the role of social media, both of which increasingly shape many aspects of life. We asked AFS respondents to indicate how they are using AI, focusing on uses in school, work, and issues that affect American families, including health questions, emotional support, and advice about relationships and parenting. Across all adults, AI use for health questions (28%) is almost as common as use for work, school, or writing (29%). Emotional-support use is 13%, and relationship or parenting advice is 11%.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, adults between 18-40 are far more likely than older Americans to use AI, at least given the options we provided — 64% of respondents between 18-40 indicated that they had used AI for at least one of the options on our list, compared to 39% of those over 40. Those between 18-40 are more than twice as likely as those over 40 to use AI for school and work tasks (44% vs. 20%), more than three times as likely to use it for emotional support (22% vs. 7%), and more than four times as likely to use it for relationship and parenting advice (21% vs. 4%). Among those between 18-40, parents with minor children in the home were more likely than non-parents to use AI.

When it comes to social media, younger Americans report more difficulty self-imposing limits. Nearly half (49%) of adults between 18-29 say they “often” or “very often” spend more time on social media than they intended, compared to 36% of those between 30-40 and 24% of those over 40. In an experiment in which we randomly assigned respondents to consider AI, social media, and gambling app use in their family, those under 40 were more likely than older Americans to express concern about the use of AI or social media by family members. About one quarter (26%) of adults between 18-40 assigned to consider social media say they somewhat or strongly agree that someone in the family uses the technology in ways that concern them, with a similar number (24%) expressing concern about AI use and a smaller percentage (14%) worrying about gambling apps. Young people are also more likely than older Americans to connect technology concerns and relationship problems: among adults ages 18-40, social media is more often identified as a relationship problem than drug or alcohol use, a problem much more likely to be highlighted by those over 40.

Views of Technology by Age

Percentage assessing each technology negatively (left) and positively (right)



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: How positive or negative are the effects of the following on young people today? Items: social media; online pornography; artificial-intelligence chatbots; video games; online gambling. Response options: Very positive; Somewhat positive; Neither positive nor negative; Somewhat negative; Very negative.

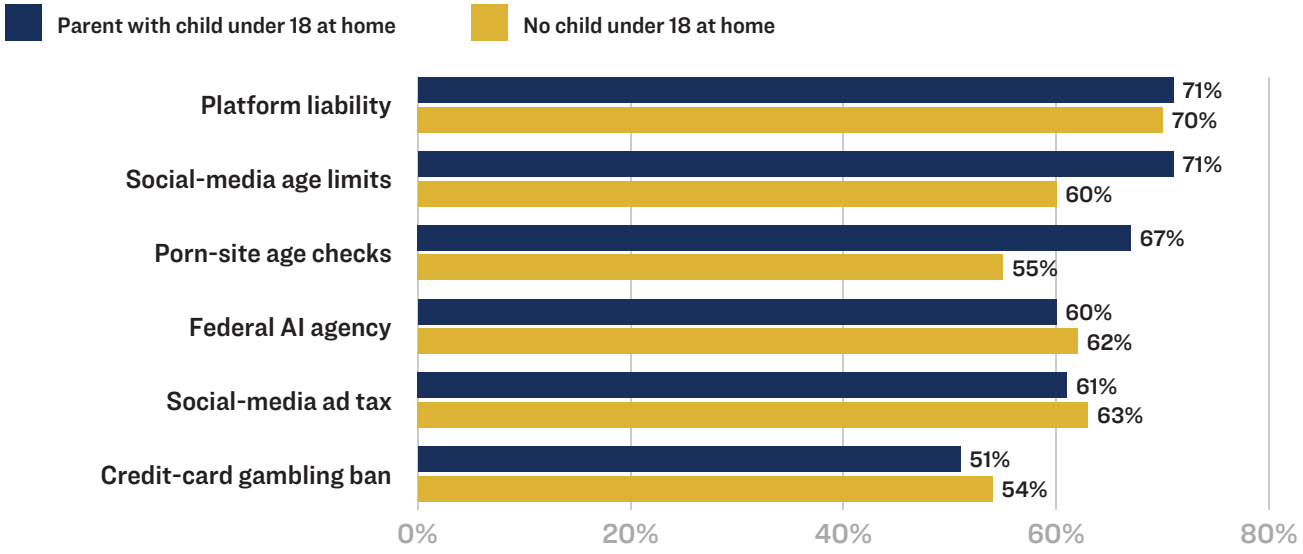
When asked to make broader judgments about the effects of technology on young people, Americans of all ages see a great deal of cause for concern. Close to 8 in 10 Americans believe access to online vices like gambling or pornography has a somewhat or very negative effect on young people. Online betting is a game for the young, and significant percentages report regular use of gambling apps: in our sample, 1 in 4 adults under age 45 use a betting app at least monthly. Though they tend to be similar on many dimensions of life satisfaction, it is also the case that online bettors are more likely than those who rarely or never bet to report financial hardship (55% vs. 40%), and bettors in a relationship are more than twice as likely as others in a relationship to say they hide finances or purchases from their spouse or partner (46% vs. 22%). Monthly betting app users were also more likely to report a serious argument with a spouse or partner at least monthly (46%, versus 28% among other users), and more likely to report three or more financial hardships (26%, versus 13%).

While both older and younger Americans highlight concerns about gambling or pornography, on other forms of technology, views are more mixed, especially among Americans between 18-40, who are substantially more positive and less negative than those over 40 about the role of video games, AI chatbots, and social media. Even as they recognize the challenge of self-imposing limits and the potentially negative role it can play in the lives of family members, younger Americans also recognize potential positive elements of those forms of technology.

Still, both older and younger Americans alike express strong support for regulating new forms of technology. We asked about six different potential regulations, and we find majority or supermajority support for all of them. The most popular would hold platforms responsible for harm caused by content they recommend to minors and require social-media companies to enforce age restrictions; each receives support from three-quarters of adults. Even the least popular proposal — banning credit cards on gambling apps — wins clear majority support. Such majority support spans age categories, though younger Americans are somewhat less enthusiastic about age restrictions for social media or requirements that pornography websites verify users' ages. Parents with children under 18 at home, by contrast, are especially enthusiastic about those forms of regulation. In a survey experiment, three-quarters of Americans assigned to consider gambling or AI companies believe they should be regulated in much the same way that tobacco, alcohol, or other unsafe products are regulated, and about two-thirds of Americans assigned to think about social media companies say the same. Clearly, supermajorities of Americans believe that these forms of technology require additional government intervention and guardrails.

Support for Technology Regulation by Parental Status

Percentage of adults age 18-40 who support each proposed regulation



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026.* Based on Americans ages 18-40.

QUESTION WORDING: To what extent would you support or oppose government regulations that... Items: Require social media companies to enforce age restrictions? Require pornographic websites to verify a user's age before granting access? Hold social media companies responsible for harm caused by the content they recommend to minors? Require social media companies to pay a tax on advertising revenue, similar to taxes on tobacco or alcohol? Create a federal agency specifically to oversee AI development and use? Ban the use of credit cards on gambling apps? Response options: Strongly support; somewhat support; neither support nor oppose; somewhat oppose; strongly oppose.

Family Policy in a Time of Economic Insecurity

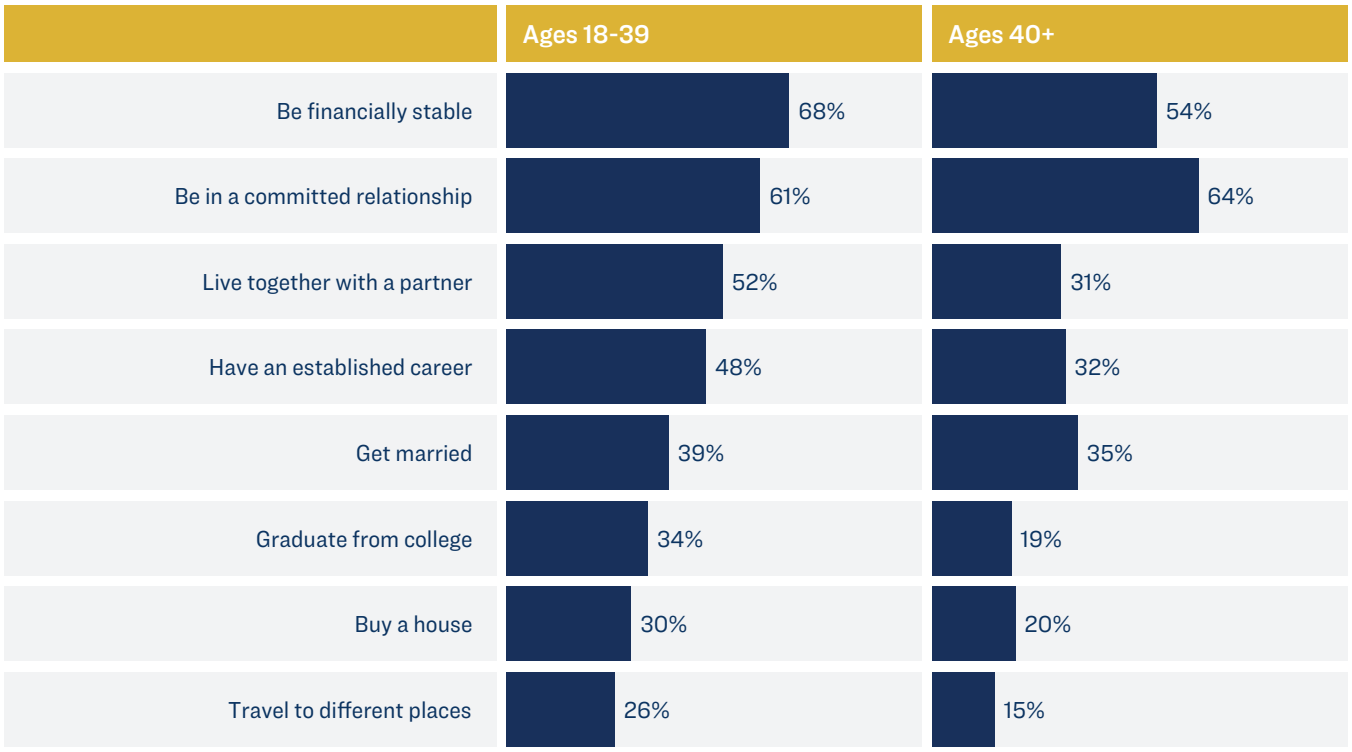
Beyond technology, the family policy findings from this year's AFS also highlight the theme of security. Age shapes some differences, but Americans' views on having children and preparing for family life also reflect whether they feel financially secure. For younger adults, financial stability is the most commonly named prerequisite for having a child.

Among childless adults under 50 who definitely want children, 77% of liberals call the cost of raising a child an extremely important consideration, compared with just 33% of conservatives. Paid family leave is one of the most broadly supported family policies, with about eight in ten Americans saying it would help families. We also found that child care is an element of raising children where people are looking for specific policy remedies that will help them defray costs. Among childless adults under 50 who want children, 46% say help paying for child care would be very helpful.

Moreover, as we look at what predicts wanting children now, it is not the level of income but recent changes in financial circumstances that matter most for whether childless adults want children: 44% of people in the improved category definitely want children compared with just 24% of those whose finances got worse. This is an area where both the states and the federal government are getting creative with support. New Mexico, for instance, has made child care free for all families. The 2025 federal tax law raised the cap on tax-advantaged dependent-care accounts to $7,500. In the same tax law, Congress raised the child tax credit to $2,200 and created $1,000 savings accounts for babies born between 2025 and 2028. Our results show that people rate tax credits as helpful, but they don't single them out the way they single out child care, which is truly a top-of-mind issue for many Americans.

Preparing for Children

Percent saying each item is extremely important to do before having a child



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: How important do you think it is for a person to do each of these things before having their first child?

When asked about what prerequisites individuals need to have accomplished before having children, younger Americans between 18-40 identify an average of 3.6 prerequisites, compared with 2.7 among older adults. The most popular prerequisite (68%) is financial stability, an indicator that could be interpreted as a desire for increased economic security. Focusing on the younger group, about a third of them who want children are unable to say when or even if they will feel financially ready. And money does not shorten the list of prerequisites because younger adults who have higher incomes have even longer lists of prerequisites than do those with less income.

It would be easy to read much of the above as being about money, and money does matter. But it is far from the whole story. Income level barely moves attitudes about having kids for childless adults. Higher-income young adults list more prerequisites for parenthood, not fewer. And a behavior that has the potential to erode household security — frequent online betting — is associated with greater financial and relationship strain among those adults still in their family-building years. Our interpretation is that what people want is a sense that the ground beneath them will hold, and income, by itself, will not accomplish that. Readiness for family life depends in part on whether people feel secure enough to take on its responsibilities.

Beyond the themes we have outlined here, this year's American Family Survey yields a number of other striking results:

- Married young adults without children and those in an unmarried committed relationship are the most likely to go on dates with their partner at least monthly (72% and 68%, respectively). For the younger generations, going on dates — or labeling activities as dates — appears generally reserved for relationships, rather than a way to get to know a potential romantic partner.
- Among parents, 41% of Republicans say it is important to pass political beliefs to their children, compared with 23% of Democrats.
- When it comes to making decisions for children, about 3 in 10 Americans say parents should have the final say across all the areas the survey asked about: gender-related medical care, sex education, and assigned books that conflict with a family's values. Liberals are more likely to support parental choice on medical care; conservatives are more likely to support it on school curriculum.
- Pressure to marry is often self-generated: 41% of eligible adults ages 18–40 report pressure from their own sense of where they should be in life, more than report pressure from family (26%) or friends (21%).
- Building wealth or financial security is a top priority for 56% of adults ages 18–40. Finding or developing a relationship is a top priority for 19% of unpartnered young adults, compared with 44% of those already in a relationship.
- Desire for children declines with age among childless adults: 65% of those ages 18–29 want children, compared with about 45% of those in their 30s and 21% of those ages 40-49.
- Young liberals and conservatives name the same average number of prerequisites for having a child (3.6), but emphasize different ones: 77% of liberals say financial stability is extremely important, compared with 61% of conservatives; 53% of conservatives say marriage is extremely important, compared with 28% of liberals.
- Views on the permanence of marriage are mixed: 53% say marriage is for life, while 53% also say divorce is acceptable when a spouse's needs are no longer met; 23% agree with both.
- Inflation concern varies with the political context. In 2026, 64% of Democrats say they are very worried about inflation affecting family finances, compared with 36% of Republicans.
- Among adults ages 18–40, higher-income respondents are more likely to see marriage as an advantage across all five areas measured (having a successful career, being financially secure, having strong friendships and community, having a satisfying sex life, and living a meaningful life); the gap between the highest- and lowest-income groups reaches 20 points for a satisfying sex life.
- Nearly half of Americans select rent control as a policy that would help make housing more affordable, while only 22% select reducing zoning regulations. About one-quarter select none of the options offered.
- Among adults ages 18–40 in relationships, the married–unmarried commitment gap is largest among independents. Republicans are most likely to report taking at least one step to work on their relationship or parenting (61%, versus 53% of Democrats and 40% of Independents).

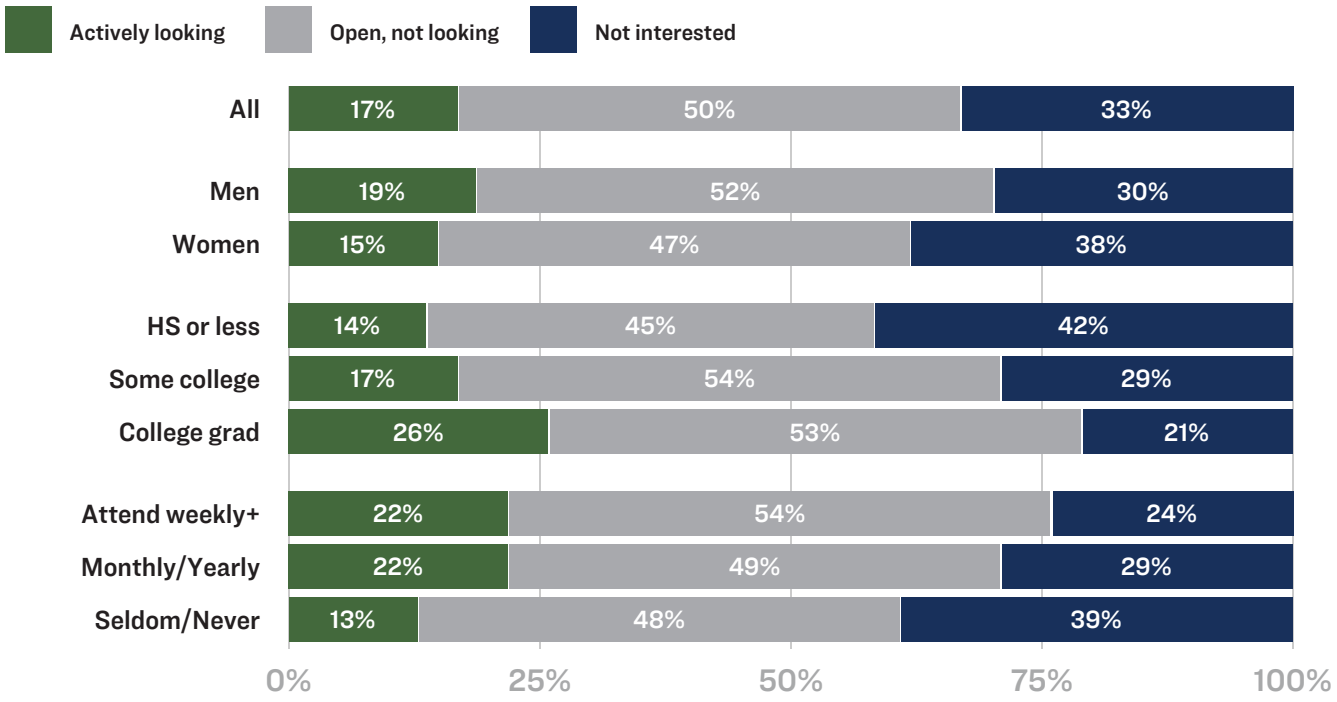
DATING EXPERIENCES AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

Most single young adults are open to a relationship, but few are actively looking, and most rarely go on dates.

17%
of single adults ages 18-40 are actively looking for a committed relationship.

Dating Interest

Percentage among adults ages 18-40 who are not in a relationship



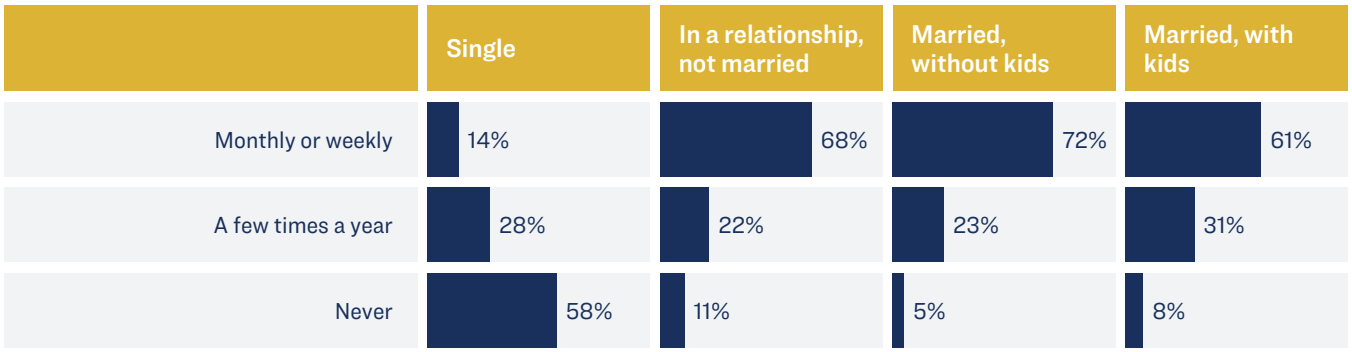
SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on Americans ages 18-40 who are not in a relationship.
QUESTION WORDING: Which of the following comes closest to your current approach to dating?

Among young adults ages 18-40, roughly four-in-ten (43%) are not currently in a committed relationship, compared with one-third (33%) who are married and one-quarter (23%) who are in an unmarried committed relationship. Among this group of unattached young adults, we find low levels of active interest in dating — a pattern that varies somewhat by demographic group, but nonetheless remains low.

Only 17% of unattached young adults are actively looking for a committed relationship, while double that proportion (33%) say they are not interested in dating right now. Half indicate openness to a relationship, though they are not currently seeking one. Young people with more education express more interest in finding a relationship (26% among college graduates), which may also reflect age differences. Religious attendance is also correlated with more openness and less disinterest in dating. The data show fewer differences by political ideology or party.

Frequency of Going On Dates

Percentage among adults ages 18-40



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on Americans age 18-40.
QUESTION WORDING: On average, how often do you go on a date with [a potential romantic partner / your current spouse or partner]?

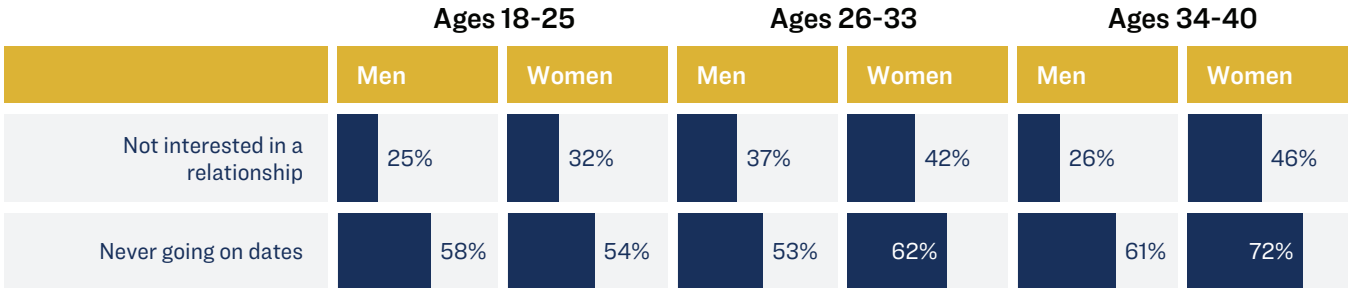
Consistent with low levels of active seeking for a relationship, the vast majority of single adults age 40 and younger (86%) say they rarely go on dates, including 58% who say they never do this. However, there is a group of young adults that goes on dates frequently: those in committed relationships. In fact, married young adults without children and those in an unmarried committed relationship are the most likely to go on dates with their partner at least monthly (72% and 68%, respectively). For the younger generations, going on dates — or labeling activities as dates — appears generally reserved for relationships, rather than a way to get to know a potential romantic partner.

Among single young adults, those who attend religious services weekly are more likely to go on dates at least monthly (21% vs. 12% of others).

When it comes to both interest and frequency of dates, significant age and gender gaps appear for single young adults as they approach 40.

Dating Interest and Activity by Age

Percentage among adults ages 18-40 who are not in a relationship



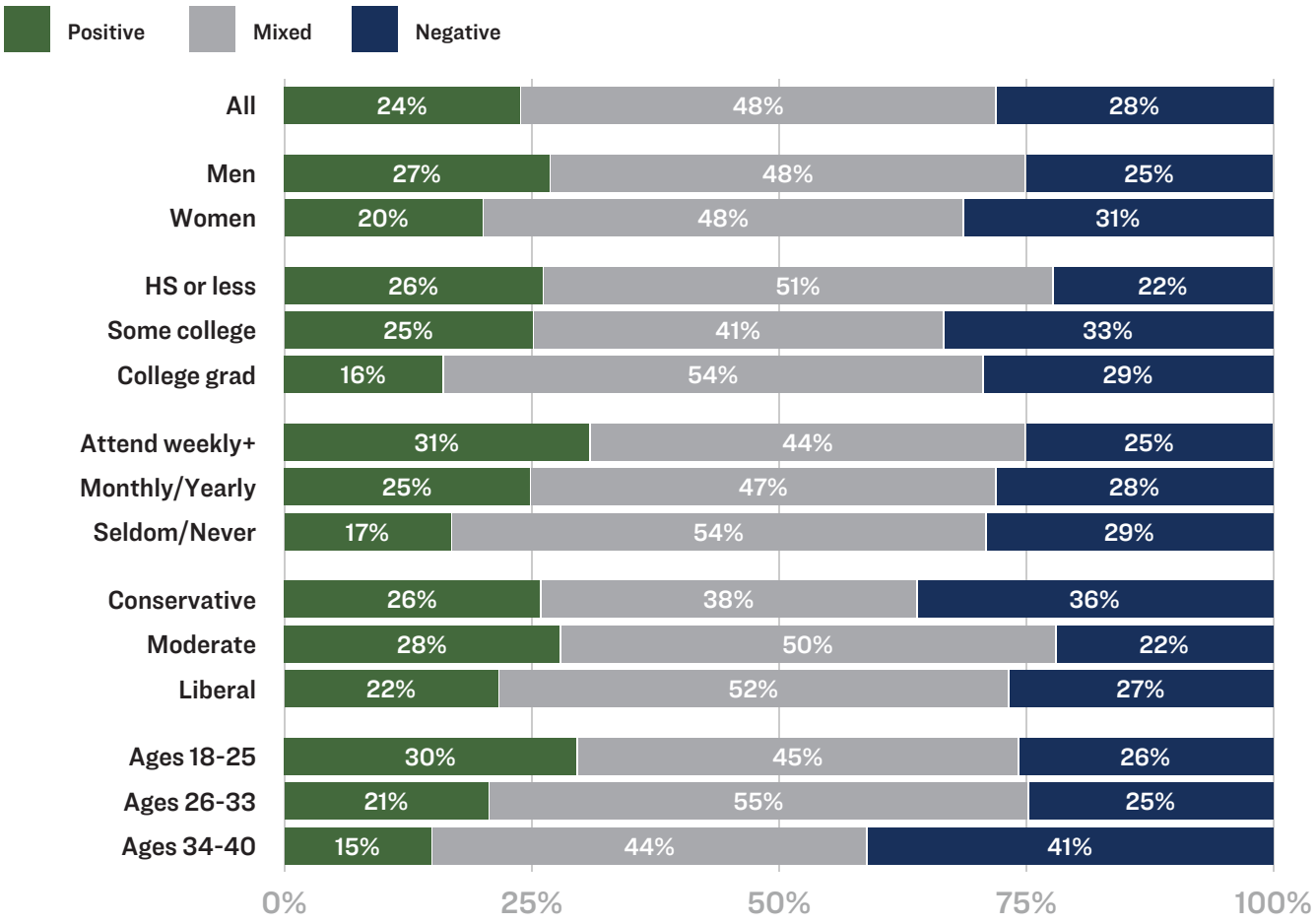
SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on adults age 18-40 who are not in a relationship.

At ages 18-25, the difference between women and men who say they are not interested in a relationship is small and not statistically significant (32% vs. 25%). However, by ages 34-40, women are 20 points more likely than men to say they are not interested (46% vs. 26%). This change comes from women, whose disinterest rises from 32% to 46%, while men's stays flat (25% to 26%). The gap in behavior is smaller than the gap in intentions. Single men and women ages 18-25 go on dates — or rather, do not go on dates — at similar rates (58% and 54% respectively never go on dates). By ages 34-40, women are somewhat more likely to never go on dates (72% vs. 61%), though this difference is within the margin of error. Fewer women than men this age are single (22% vs. 34%), so these single women may differ from single men in ways the survey doesn't measure.

Similar patterns exist when it comes to the kinds of experiences young people have when they date.

Dating Experiences

Percentage among young adults ages 18-40 who are not in a relationship and have dated in the past two years



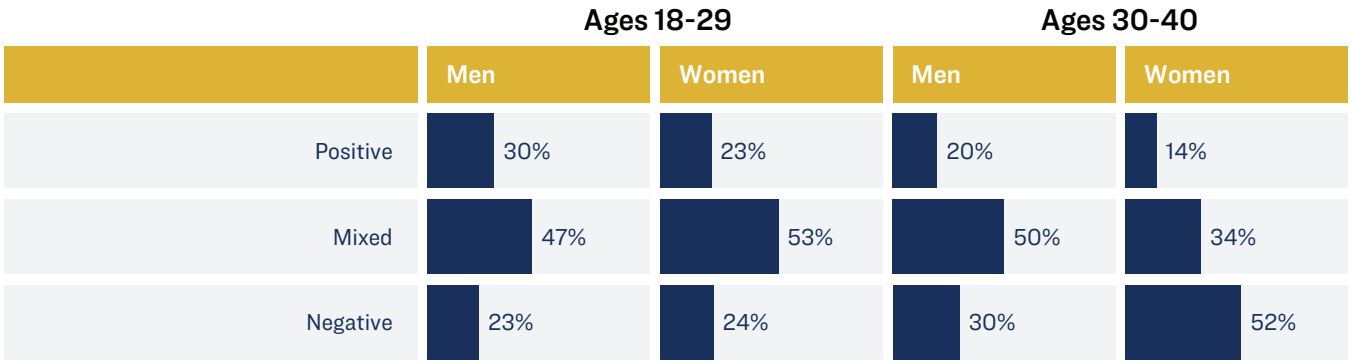
SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on adults ages 18-40 who are not in a relationship.
QUESTION WORDING: Overall, how would you describe your experience with dating in the past two years?

Among those who have been on a date in the past two years, single young adults are about equally likely to say their experience was negative or positive (28% vs. 24%). Weekly attenders at religious services are among the most likely to say they have positive experiences (31%). College graduates, who are more likely to actively look for a relationship than those with less education, are somewhat less likely to enjoy it (16% vs. 26%).

But no group of young singles reports more negative dating experiences than women in their 30s.

Dating Experiences by Age

Percentage among young adults ages 18-40 who are not in a relationship and have dated in the past two years



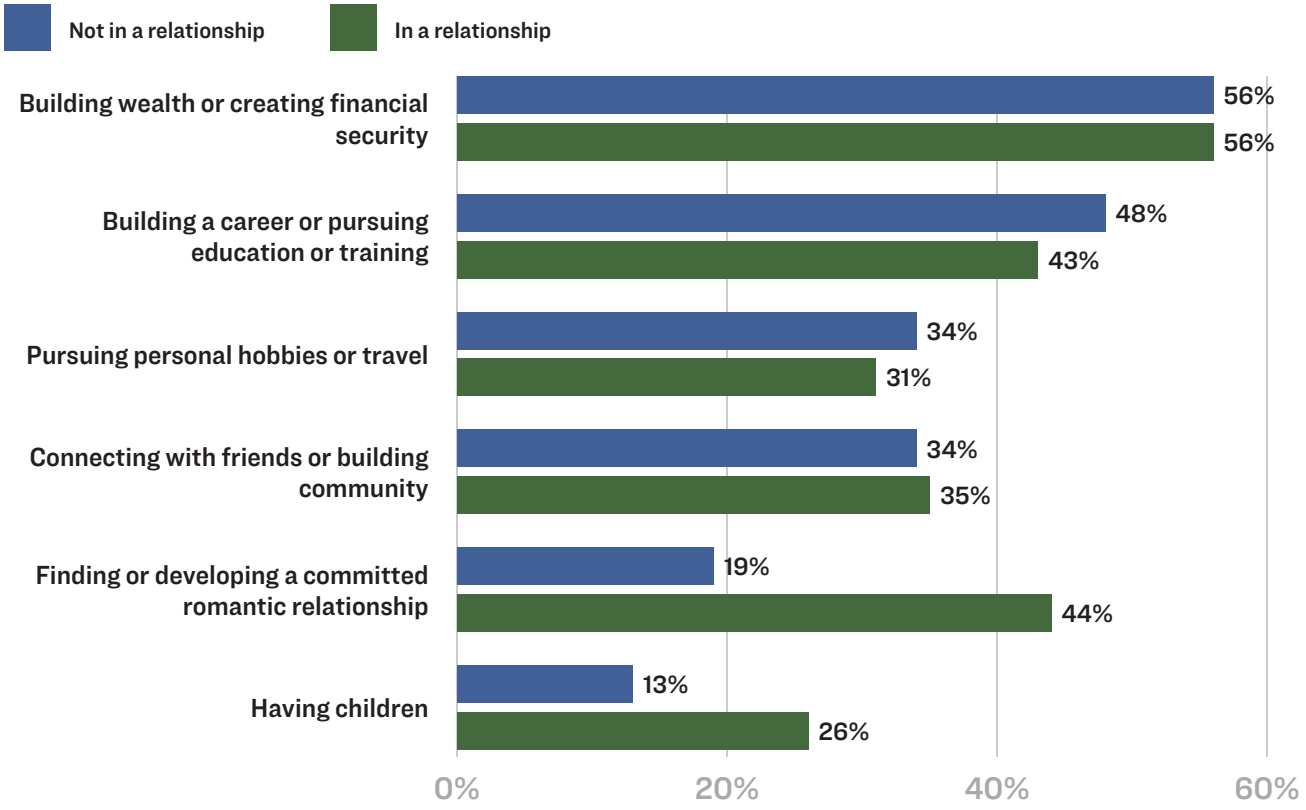
SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on adults age 18-40 who are not in a relationship.
QUESTION WORDING: Overall, how would you describe your experience with dating in the past two years?

At ages 18-29, women and men are equally likely to report negative dating experiences. But by ages 30-40, there is a 22-point divide between men and women, with 52% of women saying their recent dating experience was negative. Among men, the shift from 23% to 30% negative is not statistically significant. These data suggest that not only are women in their 30s dating less, but when they do, it goes worse.

Consistent with findings about low levels of dating, we also find that single young adults are significantly less likely to prioritize finding or developing a relationship than other life goals.

Relationships Among Other Life Priorities

Percentage choosing each item as a "top priority" among adults age 18-40.



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on adults 18–40.
QUESTION WORDING: How important are each of the following personal goals to you right now?

Regardless of their relationship status, most young adults say building wealth or creating financial security is a top priority (56%). Career/education, hobbies/travel, and friends are also prioritized at comparable rates. However, when it comes to a committed relationship or having children, those young adults who are not currently in a relationship simply don't consider these top priorities. Only 19% say finding or developing a relationship is a top priority compared with 44% of those currently in a relationship.

It's possible some of these young people would prioritize a relationship if they were to enter into one, and that the difference here is due in part to the difference between "finding" and "developing" a relationship. But the low levels of dating interest and activity among young single people raises another possibility: a divergence in life paths between those choosing relationships and those opting to stay single in the rising generations. These single young adults don't seem to be trading relationships or children for other priorities — they are just dropping them from the list.

Even among young singles who say a relationship is a top priority, only 45% are actively looking for one. And there is an association between negative dating experiences and not prioritizing a relationship: Among those who report recent negative dating experiences, 45% say a relationship is a low priority, compared to just 13% among those with recent positive experiences. We can't say which came first — the negative experiences or the lack of prioritization — or whether it is a self-reinforcing cycle. Either way, it appears that pursuing a relationship no longer registers as a major life goal for at least some single young adults who've tried dating and had it go badly.

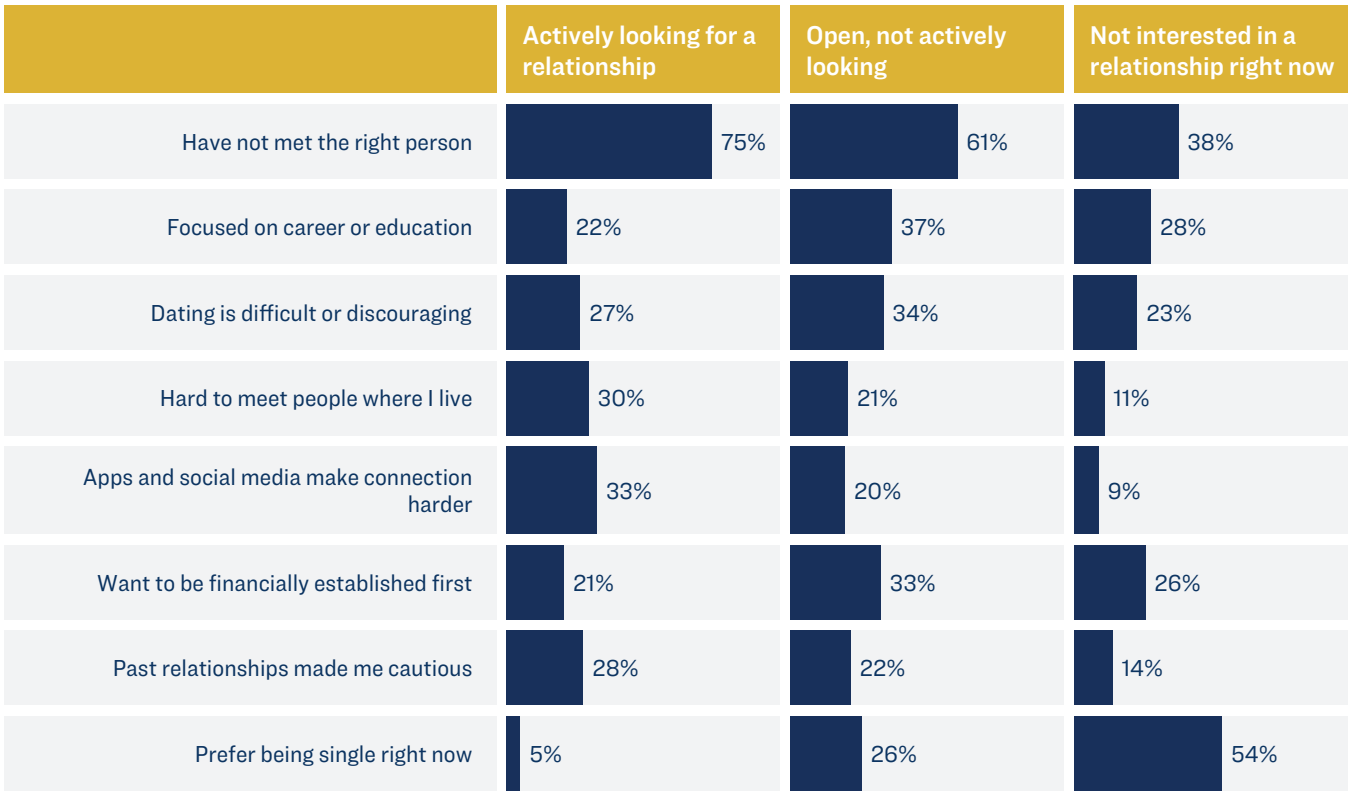
BARRIERS TO DATING

Some single young adults are actively looking for a relationship, while others prioritize preparation for the future, and a distinct segment favors singlehood.

54%
of unattached young adults who are not currently looking for a relationship say they prefer being single.

Reasons for Lack of Attachment Among Young Adults

Percentage among adults ages 18-40 who are not in a relationship



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on adults ages 18-40 who are not in a relationship.
QUESTION WORDING: If you are not currently in a committed relationship, why not? (Select all that apply) Options: I haven't met the right person; I'm focused on my career or education right now; I find dating too difficult or discouraging; It's hard to meet people where I live; Dating apps and social media make genuine connection harder; I want to be more financially established first; Past relationships have made me cautious; I prefer being single right now.

Young adults are reaching traditional milestones later. In 1975, nearly half of U.S. adults ages 25 to 34 had moved out of their parents' home, worked, married and had children, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. By 2024, fewer than a quarter had done all four. Yet most young adults still say they hope to marry someday, which suggests later family formation reflects timing and practical obstacles more than a rejection of marriage.

The 2026 American Family Survey explores three approaches to dating among unattached young adults: actively looking for a committed relationship (17%), open to one but not actively looking (50%), and not interested right now (33%). Across these three groups, respondents give different reasons for remaining single.

Among those actively looking, 75% say they have not met the right person. This is the most common explanation for their current status: they are searching for a relationship but have not found the one they want.

Active daters are also the group most likely to say dating apps and social media make genuine connection more difficult. One-third (33%) select this reason, and about 30% say it is hard to meet people where they live. Dating platforms may expand the number of potential partners while making genuine connection harder to recognize or sustain.

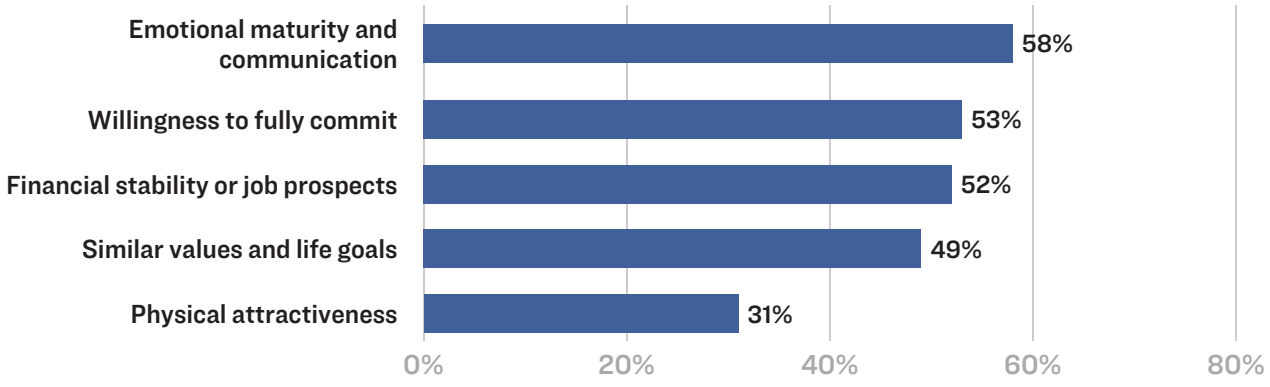
Those who are open to a committed relationship but not actively looking describe other priorities. Thirty-seven percent say they are focused on career or education, and 33% want to become more financially established first. Their responses suggest that they are occupied with other goals, rather than opposed to relationships.

Among respondents not interested in a committed relationship, 54% say they prefer being single right now, while 38% say they have not met the right person. Dating apps and social media are a less common concern for this group: 9% select it, compared with 33% of active daters.

These data suggest that singlehood is not one condition: some respondents are looking for a relationship, some are focused on other priorities, and some currently prefer being single. A single explanation cannot capture these different experiences.

Difficulty Finding Qualities in Dating Partners

Percentage among adults ages 18-40 who say each is difficult to find



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on adults ages 18-40.
QUESTION WORDING: When it comes to finding a good partner, how easy or difficult [has it been/was it] for you to find someone with the following traits? Emotional maturity and communication skills; Financial stability or good job prospects; Willingness to fully commit; Physical attractiveness; Similar values and life goals.

When it comes to how difficult it is to find qualities young adults are seeking in a partner, emotional maturity and communication skills rank first. Fifty-eight percent of adults ages 18-40 say these qualities are very or somewhat difficult to find. Willingness to fully commit follows at 53%, and 52% say financial stability or good job prospects are difficult to find. Nearly half (49%) say the same about similar values and life goals.

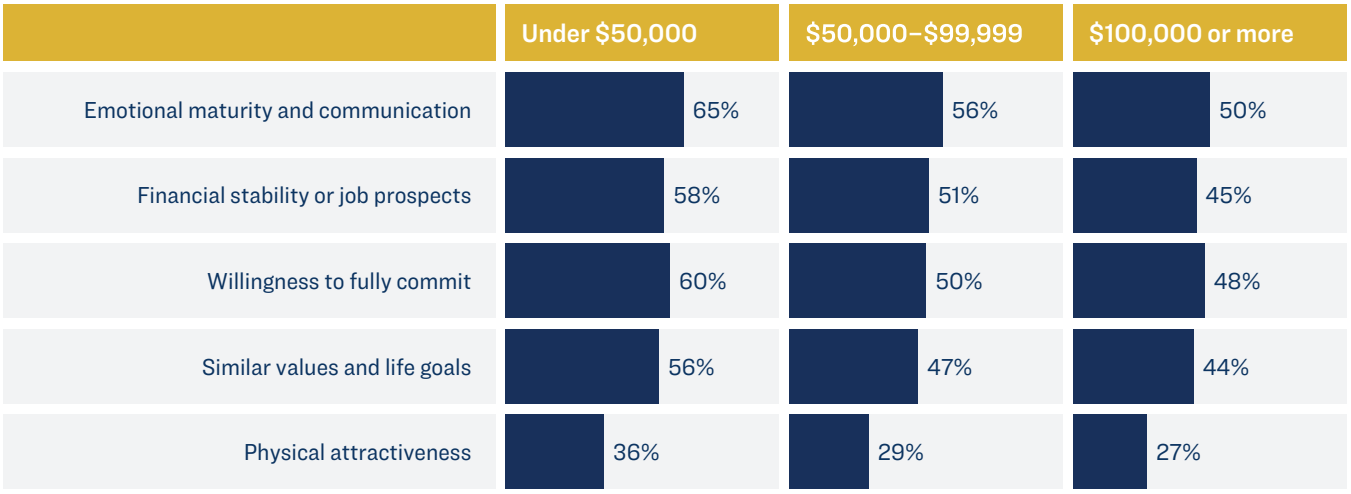
Physical attractiveness ranks last: 31% say it is difficult to find. Although not shown in the figure, women are somewhat more likely than men to say emotional maturity and communication are difficult to find (61% vs. 54%). The difference is modest.

This pattern complicates the idea that dating is primarily a search for physical appearance or chemistry. Respondents more often identify emotional readiness, communication, commitment, and economic stability as challenges. Physical attraction matters, but it is not the quality they most often describe as difficult to find.

The survey asks about perceived difficulty, not how important each quality is to respondents. Even so, the pattern shows what many young adults encounter while looking for a partner: difficulty finding someone who communicates, commits, and is prepared to manage adult responsibilities.

Difficulty Finding Partner Qualities by Income

Percentage among adults ages 18-40 who say each is difficult to find



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on adults ages 18-40.
QUESTION WORDING: When it comes to finding a good partner, how easy or difficult [has it been/was it] for you to find someone with the following traits? Emotional maturity and communication skills; Financial stability or good job prospects; Willingness to fully commit; Physical attractiveness; Similar values and life goals.

Income is associated with how difficult young adults say it is to find a partner. Among adults ages 18-40 earning under $50,000, 65% report difficulty finding emotional maturity and communication skills, compared with 56% of those earning $50,000 to $99,999 and 50% of those earning $100,000 or more. The same pattern appears for each of the other four qualities.

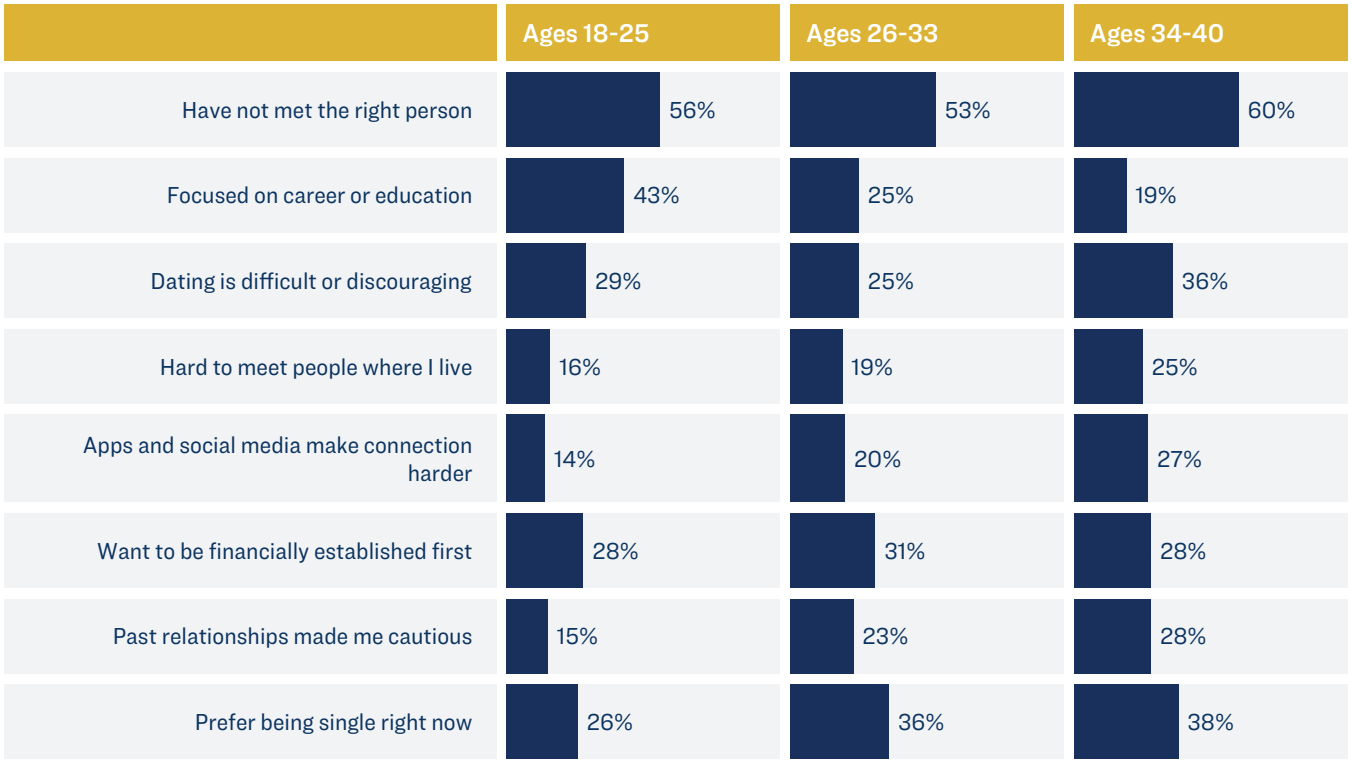
The largest gaps concern emotional maturity and communication (15 percentage points), financial stability (13 points), similar values and life goals (13 points), and willingness to commit (12 points). Thus, income differences extend beyond financial stability: lower-income respondents report more difficulty finding partners across a range of qualities.

Income is also associated with other circumstances surrounding singlehood. Among unattached adults ages 18-40, 25% of those earning under $50,000 say it is difficult to meet people where they live, compared with 17% of those earning $50,000 to $99,999 and 11% of those earning $100,000 or more. Lower-income respondents are also more likely to say they prefer being single right now: 36% of those earning under $50,000 give this reason, compared with 30% in the middle-income group and 17% in the highest-income group.

Together, these findings suggest that economic inequality reaches into the social landscape of dating. Income may shape where people live, their time and social networks, and their ability to participate in activities where relationships develop. These patterns may reflect choice, constraint, or both. Either way, income may affect whom young adults meet and whether relationships seem attainable before marriage or cohabitation.

Reasons for Lack of Attachment by Age

Percentage among adults ages 18-40 who are not in a relationship



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on adults ages 18-40 who are not in a relationship.
QUESTION WORDING: If you are not currently in a committed relationship, why not? (Select all that apply) Options: I haven't met the right person; I'm focused on my career or education right now; I find dating too difficult or discouraging; It's hard to meet people where I live; Dating apps and social media make genuine connection harder; I want to be more financially established first; Past relationships have made me cautious; I prefer being single right now.

Reasons for being unattached also shift across the young-adult years. Among respondents ages 18 to 25, 43% say they are focused on career or education. That share falls to 25% among those ages 26 to 33 and 19% among those ages 34 to 40.

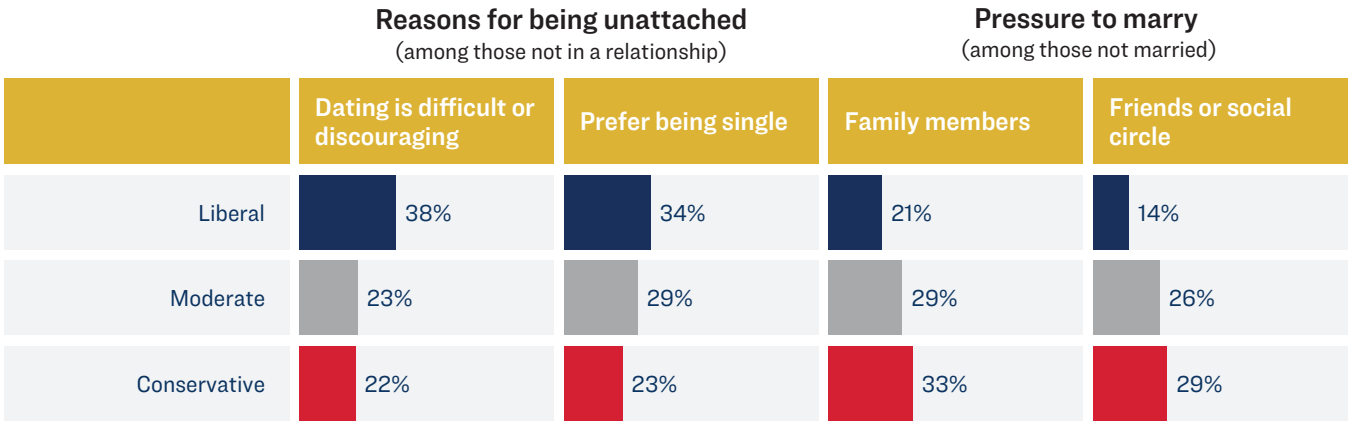
At the same time, older respondents are more likely to describe singlehood as a preference or as the result of accumulated experience. The share who say they prefer being single rises from 26% among 18- to 25-year-olds to 36% among those ages 26 to 33 and 38% among those ages 34 to 40. Reports that past relationships have made respondents cautious rise from 15% to 23% to 28% across the same age groups.

Older unattached adults are also more likely to say that dating apps and social media make genuine connection harder. The share rises from 14% among 18- to 25-year-olds to 27% among those ages 34 to 40.

These results do not show a simple decline in interest in relationships as people age. Instead, reasons for remaining single become more varied. Younger adults more often describe singlehood as part of a period focused on education and career. Older adults more often describe it in terms of preference, discouragement, and previous relationship experience.

Dating Difficulty and Marriage Pressure

Percentage among adults ages 18-40



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on adults ages 18-40.
QUESTION WORDING: If you are not currently in a committed relationship, why not? (Select all that apply) Options: I haven't met the right person; I'm focused on my career or education right now; I find dating too difficult or discouraging; It's hard to meet people where I live; Dating apps and social media make genuine connection harder; I want to be more financially established first; Past relationships have made me cautious; I prefer being single right now. / How much pressure, if any, do you feel from the following to get married? Family members; Friends or social circle; Society or culture generally; My own sense of where I should be in life.

The survey also shows a distinct ideological pattern. Liberal respondents are more likely than conservative respondents to say that dating is difficult or discouraging. Among unattached adults ages 18 to 40, 38% of liberals select this reason, compared with 22% of conservatives. Liberals are also more likely to say that they prefer being single right now: 34%, compared with 23% of conservatives.

Conservatives, however, report more pressure to marry. Among adults ages 18 to 40 who received the marriage-pressure question, 33% of conservatives say they feel pressure from family members, compared with 21% of liberals. Twenty-nine percent of conservatives report pressure from friends or their social circle, compared with 14% of liberals.

Liberals are more likely to describe dating as difficult and to prefer remaining single, while conservatives are more likely to report pressure from family and friends to marry. These patterns may reflect different expectations about relationships, different experiences with dating, or different standards for deciding when a relationship is ready for marriage.

Taken together, these results do not point to one explanation for remaining single. Some young adults are actively searching and have not met the right person. Others are open to a relationship while concentrating on education, careers, or financial stability. Still others prefer being single or have become more cautious after previous relationships.

Marriage pressure also tends to come from within. Among eligible adults ages 18 to 40, 41% report pressure from their own sense of where they should be in life. Thirty percent report pressure from society or culture, 26% from family members, and 21% from friends or their social circle.

Young adults are single for many different reasons. In addition to the factors explored here, dating is also shaped by emotional readiness, economic circumstances, technology, past experiences, and social expectations. A single explanation cannot capture the range of situations young adults describe.

COMMITMENT, MARRIAGE, AND WORKING ON RELATIONSHIPS

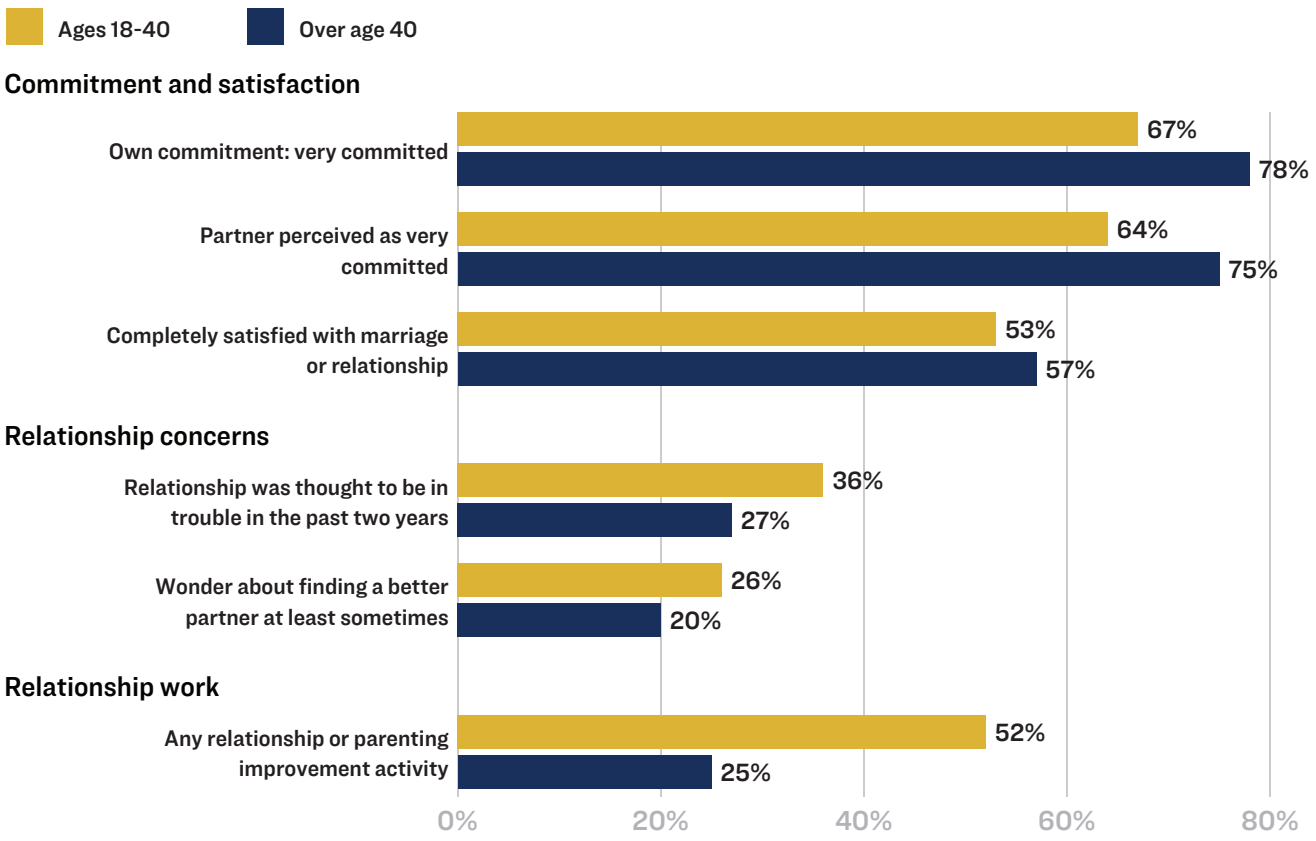
Younger adults report lower commitment, but this does not mean they are disengaged: they are much more likely than older adults to report actively working on relationships or parenting.

55% of married adults under 40 report doing something to improve their relationship or parenting in the last two years, compared with 23% of married adults over 40.

Commitment might be thought of as a private quality of a couple: two people are either devoted to one another or they are not. But the 2026 American Family Survey suggests that commitment is shaped by social context, including relationship status, age, and party identification.

Relationship Commitment, Concerns, and Work

Percentage among adults in a current relationship



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on those currently in a relationship. The relationship trouble question is based on relationships lasting at least two years.

QUESTION WORDING: How committed are you to your current relationship? How committed do you think your partner is to the relationship? How satisfied are you with your marriage or relationship? In the past two years, have you done any of the following to intentionally work on your marriage, relationship, or parenting? How often do you wonder if you could find a better partner than you currently have? At any point in the last two years, have you thought that your marriage or relationship was in trouble?

We asked respondents in current relationships to rate their own commitment and their perceptions of how committed they believed their partner to be on a seven-point scale. Nearly eight in ten married respondents describe themselves as "very committed" (the highest category), and a similar share assigns that rating to their partner. Commitment is still common among cohabiters (67% say they are very committed, and 62% say their partners are) and couples who live apart (59% say they are very committed, and 54% report their partners being very committed), but percentages are lower than for those who are married. Some of these differences may be a function of relationship longevity. In our sample, the median relationship length among married respondents is 22 years, compared to 6 years among cohabiters and 2 years among couples living apart.

These differences should not be read as proof that marriage itself produces commitment. People who feel more certain about a partnership are more likely to marry, and we did not measure commitment in previous marriages that ended in divorce. Still, marital status offers important context for how respondents describe their own commitment and their partners'.

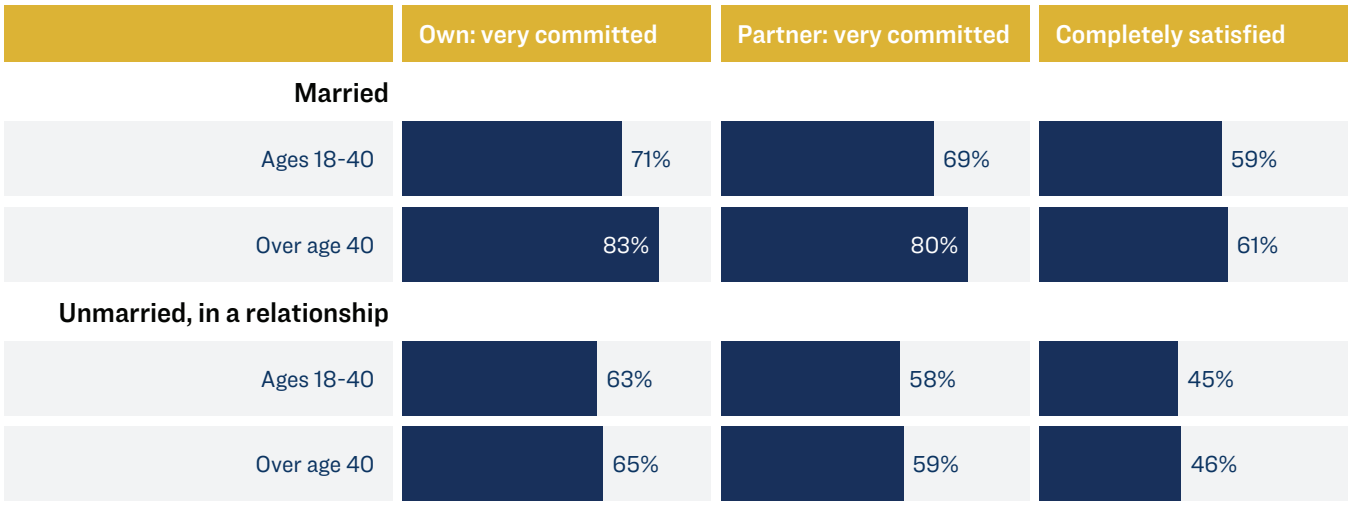
Age also matters. Young people report lower levels of commitment and partner commitment and slightly lower levels of satisfaction with their relationships. But the survey results do not paint a portrait of simple disengagement among younger adults. While respondents under 40 are somewhat more likely to report relationship concerns, they are more than twice as likely as older Americans to say they actively work on their relationship or parenting. Active relationship doubts are not the norm, but young people are slightly more likely to have wondered about finding a better partner, and almost 10 percentage points more likely to have worried that their relationship is in trouble.

The most dramatic age-related difference, though, runs in the opposite direction. More than half of younger adults report at least one action during the preceding two years to improve a relationship or parenting, more than double the percentage among older adults. These actions include reading or listening to relationship material, working with a therapist, seeking religious guidance, attending a workshop, or using artificial intelligence for advice.

Younger adults are less likely to be married, so relationship composition could produce the apparent age gap in relationship commitment. Dividing by marital status, we find, perhaps surprisingly, that the age differences in relationship commitment occur primarily among married respondents. Younger married respondents are 12 percentage points less likely than older married respondents to give themselves the highest commitment rating and 11 points less likely to give their partner that rating. Among unmarried partnered adults, by contrast, younger and older respondents report nearly identical commitment.

Marriage, Commitment, and Relationship Satisfaction

Percentage among adults in married and unmarried relationships



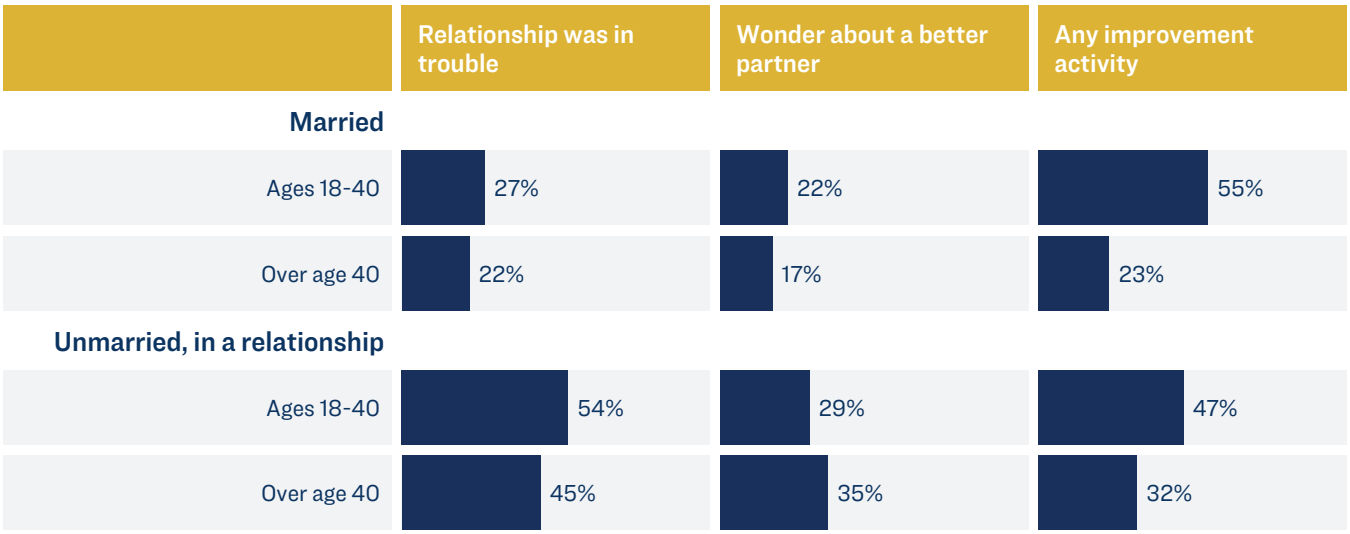
SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on those currently in a relationship.
QUESTION WORDING: How committed are you to your current relationship? How committed do you think your partner is to the relationship? How satisfied are you with your marriage or relationship? Response options: Commitment uses a 1–7 scale, from Not at all committed to Very committed; satisfaction ranges from Completely dissatisfied to Completely satisfied.

It is not the case, then, that all younger couples are less committed than otherwise similar older couples. The commitment difference appears principally among married respondents. This could reflect generational differences in how marriage is understood, differences in relationship duration, or selection into and out of marriage. Among married respondents under 40, for example, the average marriage duration is a little less than 8 years, compared to nearly 28 years among married respondents who are over 40. Thus, the greater levels of commitment are found among people who have been married for roughly two decades longer. Consistent with the notion that relationship duration is an important factor in these differing commitment levels, among married adults age 40 and younger, 66% of those in relationships lasting less than six years describe themselves as very committed, compared with 76% of those in relationships lasting at least 11 years.

Notably, differences in commitment are not the result of religiosity. Among respondents under 40, 70% of those who attend church weekly say they are very committed, but this number is essentially identical to the 69% of those who say they attend seldom or never. A similar pattern emerges when we divide by respondents' self-reports of how important religion is in their lives: 77% of those who say religion is very important in their lives describe themselves as very committed to their partners, but so, too, do more than 7 in 10 young people who say that religion is not at all important.

Working on Relationships

Percentage among adults in married and unmarried relationships



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on those currently in a relationship. The relationship trouble question is based on relationships lasting at least two years.
QUESTION WORDING: In the past two years, have you done any of the following to intentionally work on your marriage, relationship, or parenting? At any point in the last two years, have you thought that your marriage or relationship was in trouble? How often do you wonder if you could find a better partner than you currently have?

Compared with older respondents, younger adults, whether married or not, are also somewhat more likely to feel that their relationship has been in trouble over the past two years. Younger married respondents are also slightly more likely to say that they sometimes wonder about finding a better partner, though among the unmarried, older respondents are more likely to reflect on the possibility of a better partner.

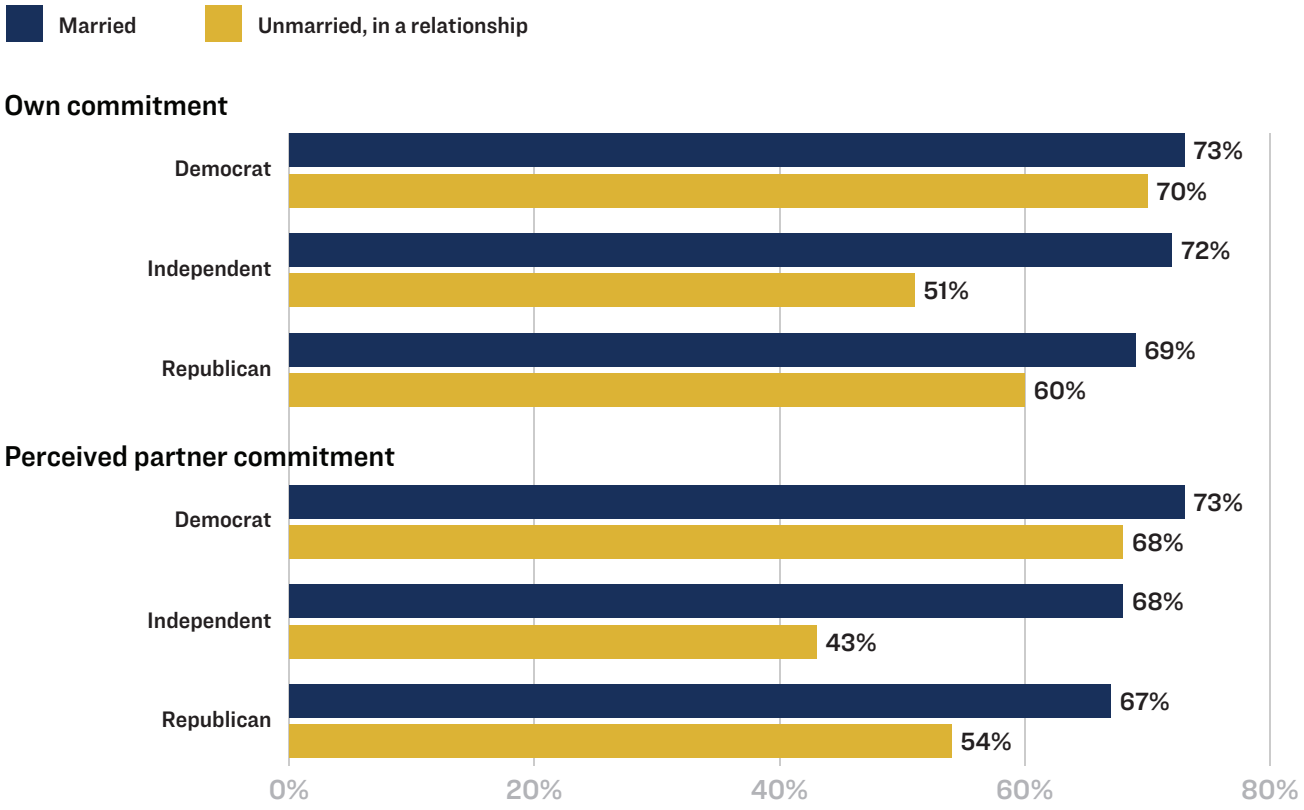
At the same time, the most profound difference between younger and older respondents — whether married or not — is that young people are more likely to report making efforts to work on their family relationships or parenting. Younger adults report more deliberate relationship or parenting work whether married (55% versus 23%) or unmarried (47% versus 32%).

Effort is not necessarily evidence of relationship trouble. Younger adults are more likely to be forming relationships, raising young children, and encountering new family demands, all of which may be catalysts for overt efforts to further strengthen family relationships. To this point, those under 40 who are in a relationship and have children at home are about 13 percentage points more likely than young people without children in the home to say that they actively worked on their relationship or parenting (58% versus 45%). Older couples may also have developed routines that require less deliberate intervention or, alternatively, may be less inclined to describe what they do using the survey's categories. The important point is that lower relationship commitment and greater effort coexist.

Among adults ages 18-40, party identification is associated with commitment — but not because Republicans and Democrats are polarized on this issue. Instead, the most distinctive group is independents, particularly those in unmarried relationships.

Marriage, Commitment, and Political Party

Percentage choosing scale point 7 of 7, very committed, among adults age 18-40



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on those age 18-40 currently in a relationship.
QUESTION WORDING: How committed are you to your current relationship? How committed do you think your partner is to the relationship? Response options for both: 1–7 scale, from Not at all committed to Very committed, with Somewhat committed at 4.

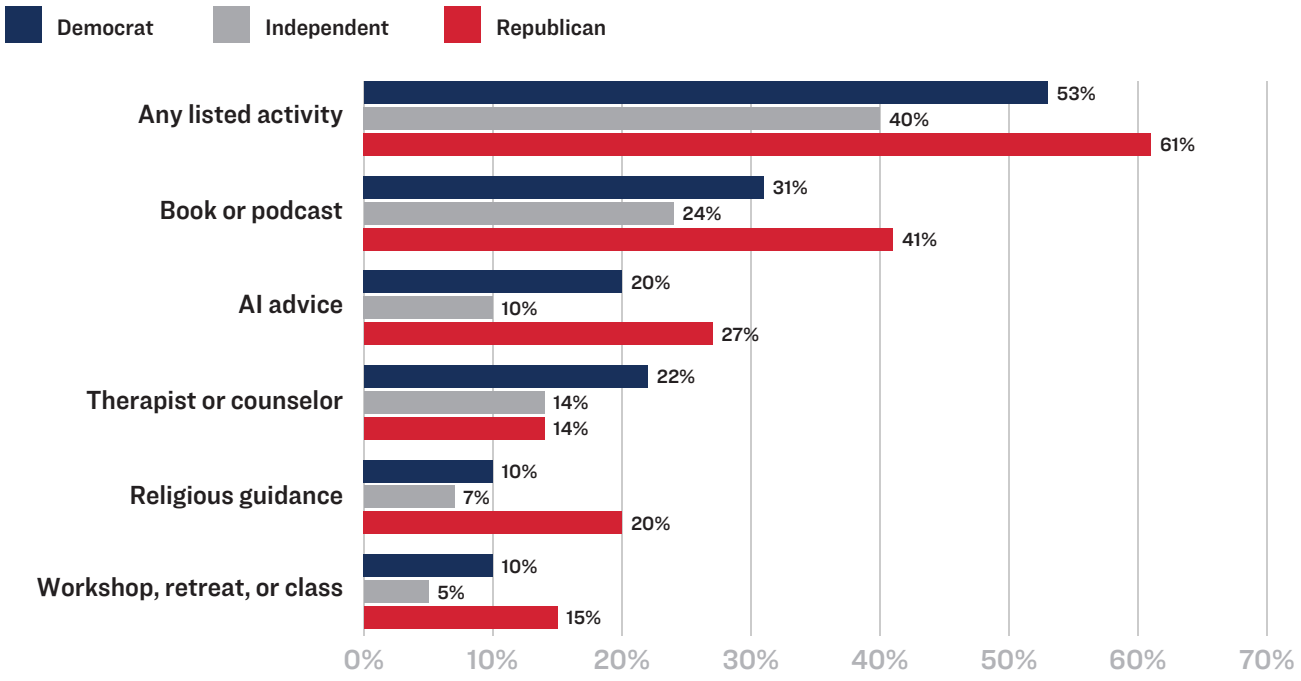
Young Democrats report little difference by marital status. Nearly three-quarters of married Democrats and 7 in 10 unmarried partnered Democrats describe themselves as very committed. Their perceptions of their partners are similarly close. Among independents, the picture is dramatically different: own very high commitment falls from 72% among the married to 51% among the unmarried, while perceived partner commitment falls from 68% to 43%.

Republicans occupy an intermediate position, with married-unmarried gaps of 9 points for own commitment and 13 points for perceived partner commitment. (The sample includes only 108 unmarried but partnered young Republicans, so these differences are only suggestive.) Though none of these correlations should be interpreted as causal, young independents, who are by definition less committed to partisan identities, also seem to be less attached to their partners and, in turn, see their partners as less devoted to them. More broadly, for both Republicans and Independents, marriage is a key marker of increased commitment; Democrats, by contrast, express high levels of relationship commitment whether married or not.

Differences across categories of partisan identification extend beyond commitment. We also asked respondents whether they had used any of five approaches during the preceding two years to work intentionally on their marriage, relationship, or parenting. They could select every option that applied.

How Young Adults Work on Relationships

Percentage selecting each relationship- or parenting-improvement activity



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on those age 18-40 currently in a relationship.
QUESTION WORDING: In the past two years, have you done any of the following to intentionally work on your marriage, relationship, or parenting? (Select all that apply) Response options: Read a book or listened to a podcast about relationships or parenting; attended a workshop, retreat, or class focused on marriage or parenting; worked with a therapist or counselor, individually or as a couple; sought guidance from a religious leader or faith community; used AI tools to get advice about your relationship or parenting; none of the above.

Sixty-one percent of young Republicans report at least one activity, compared with 53% of Democrats and 40% of independents. These differences are not simply a matter of doing more of the same thing. Republicans are especially likely to report books or podcasts, religious guidance, workshops, and AI advice. Partisan differences in reliance on religious guidance make sense, given the higher rates of religious attendance among Republicans. Democrats are more likely than Republicans to report working with a therapist or counselor, although Republicans' greater use of other approaches gives them the highest overall activity rate. Independents report the lowest rate for each listed approach except therapy, where they resemble Republicans. There are few gender differences within the parties, except on religious guidance, where Democratic women are about 7 percentage points less likely than Democratic men to seek it.

Taken together, these results resist a simple contrast between “committed” and “uncommitted” generations. Younger adults express less top-category commitment, especially when married, but they also report much more relationship and parenting work. That combination may reflect the uncertainty of early and middle adulthood, when partnerships and family roles are changing and developing.

Party differences add another layer: among young adults, the married-unmarried commitment gap is largest among Independents, while Republicans report the most relationship work. Partisanship is associated both with how young adults assess relationships and with the ways they seek support.

ATTITUDES TOWARD MARRIAGE

Americans broadly agree marriage has practical benefits. They disagree, mostly along ideological lines, about whether strong families and society depend on it.

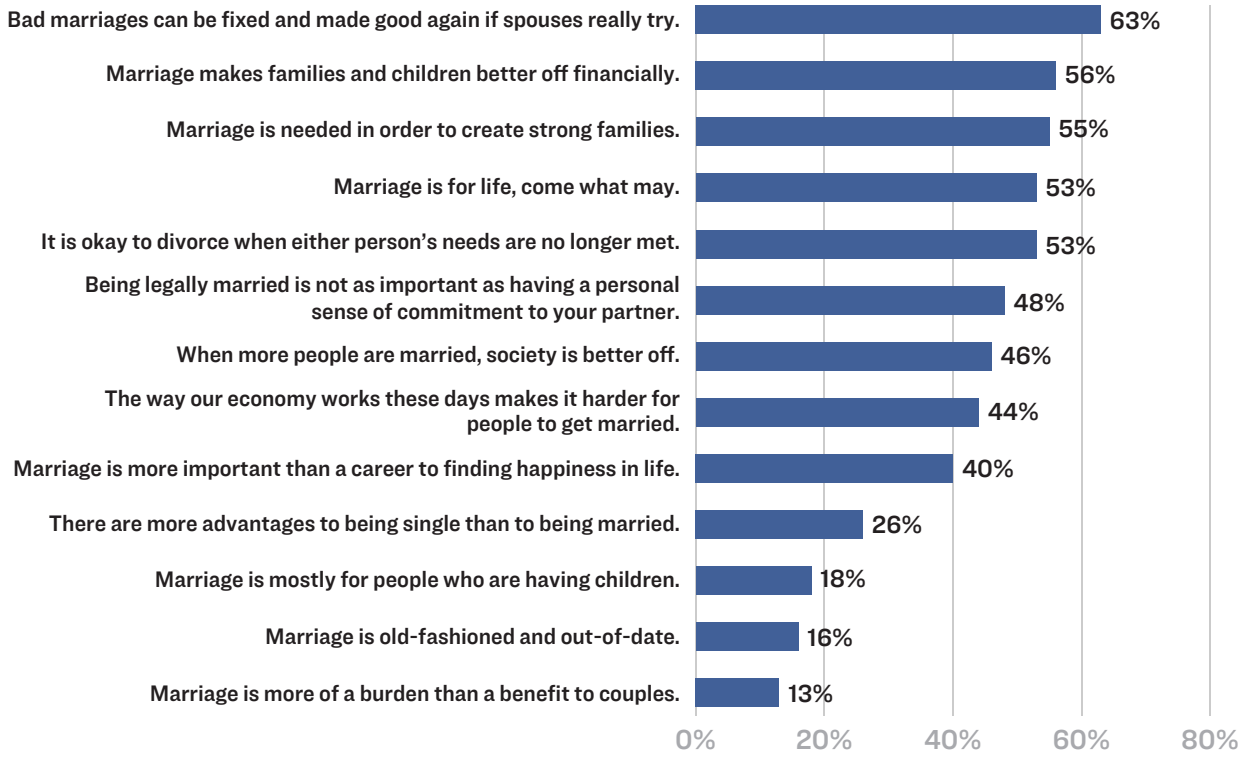
46 points

The gap between conservatives (79%) and liberals (33%) on whether marriage is needed for strong families.

Most Americans see practical value in marriage, and few reject it outright. Where they disagree is over what kind of a good marriage is in our society. One view holds that marriage is good for individuals. Under this view, marriage is a route to happiness and a better life than remaining single. A second view holds that it is also good for everyone else—something necessary for strong families and a healthy society. Liberals and conservatives divide over that second view and sharply. But there is also an internal division among conservatives along age lines.

Most See Practical Benefits to Marriage

Percent agreeing with each statement



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.

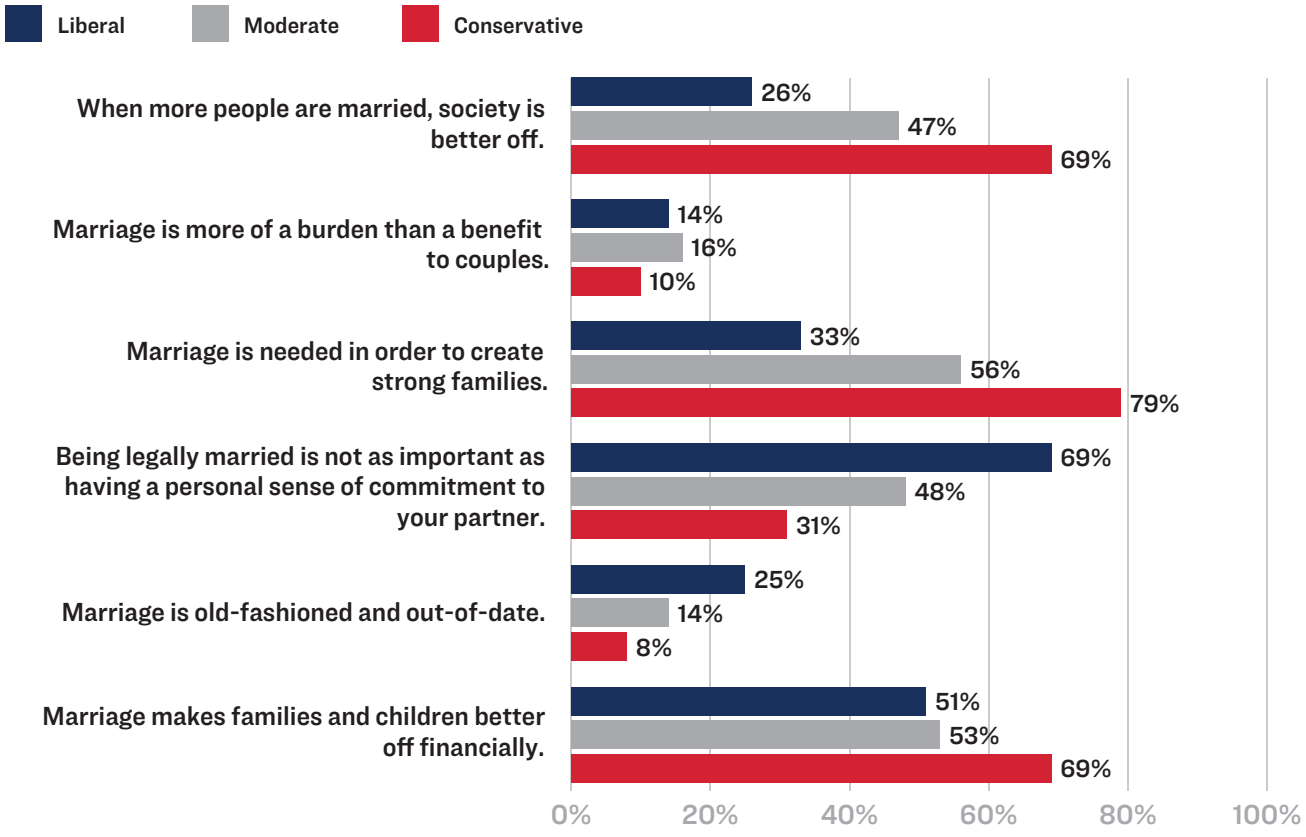
QUESTION WORDING: How much do you agree or disagree with the following? (Agreement includes somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree)

Relatively few Americans reject marriage outright. Only 16% call it old-fashioned and out-of-date, and 13% say it is more of a burden than a benefit. And people's views of marriage are not narrow: just 18% say marriage is mostly for people who are having children. So most Americans see practical benefits. And they like the idea of saving marriages for the people around them: 63% say bad marriages can be fixed if spouses really try, and 56% say marriage makes families and children better off financially. Despite this broad agreement, there is a sticking point when marriage is compared with other life paths. Just 46% say society is better off when more people are married, and 40% say marriage matters more than a career for finding happiness. Just under half (48%) say a personal sense of commitment matters more than being legally married.

The sharpest disagreements are about marriage's public role. Seventy-nine percent of conservatives say marriage is needed to create strong families, compared with 33% of liberals, a 46-point gap. The gap on whether society is better off when more people marry is nearly as large (69% vs. 26%). Practical benefits divide people less: 69% of conservatives and 51% of liberals say marriage helps family finances. Liberal skepticism is about marriage as an institution, not about commitment. Sixty-nine percent of liberals say a personal sense of commitment matters more than being legally married, compared with 31% of conservatives.

Marriage Attitudes by Political Ideology

Percent agreeing with each statement

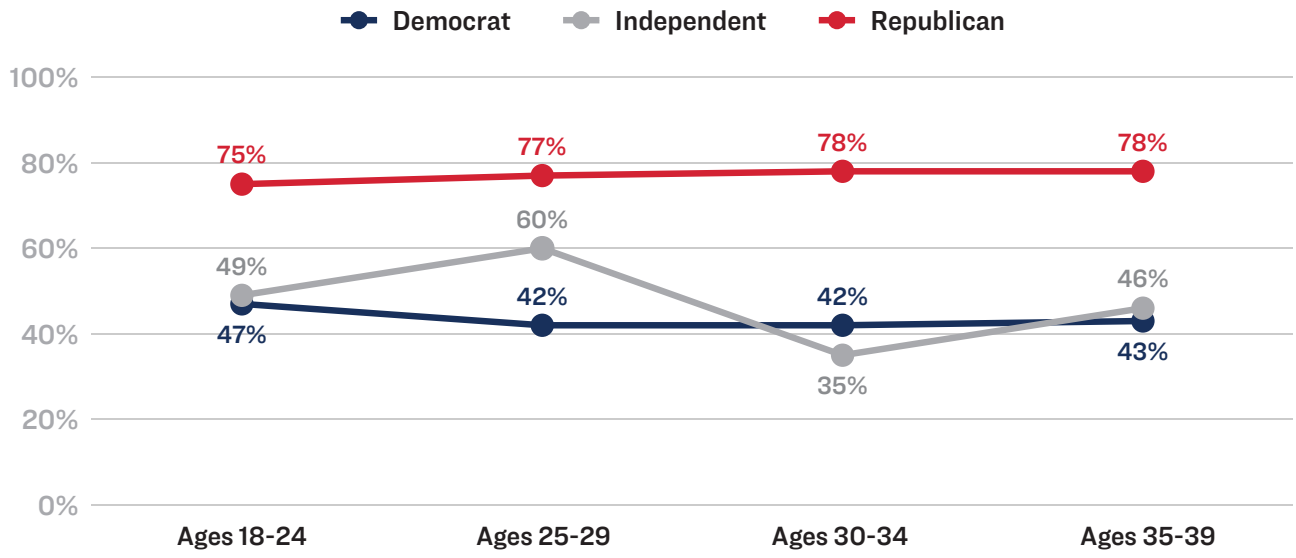


SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026.* Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: How much do you agree or disagree with the following? (Agreement includes somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree)

Our oversample of younger adults (ages 18-39) lets us look more closely at people in early adult life, using one question as an indicator: whether marriage is needed to create strong families, which follows the pattern of most items. Among younger adults, views on this question differ far more by party than by age.

Marriage Attitudes Among Young Adults

Percent ages 18-39 agreeing that marriage is needed to create strong families



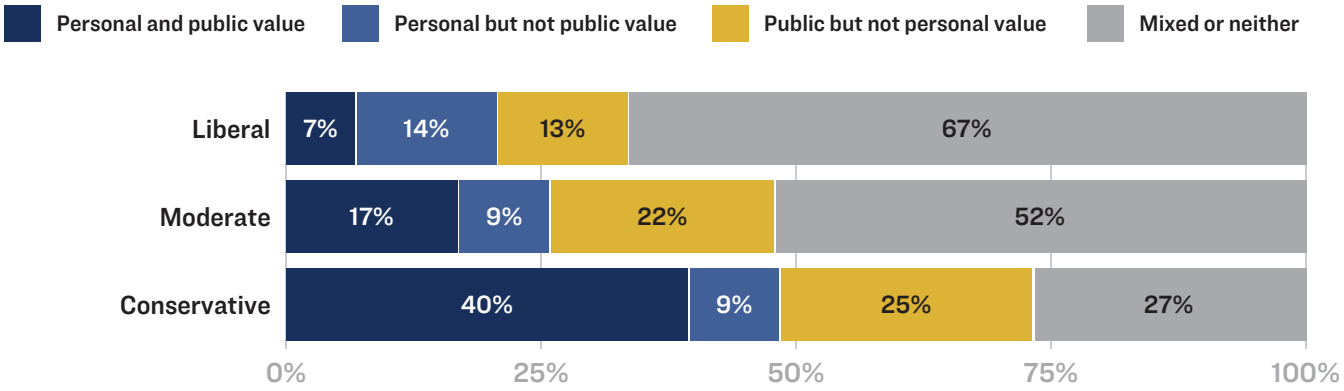
SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: How much do you agree or disagree with the following? Marriage is needed in order to create strong families. (Agreement includes somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree)

In every single age group, about three-quarters of Republicans agree, compared with 42% to 47% of Democrats. Independents move around more from one age group to the next, with no consistent pattern as fits their unpredictability.

Four questions together illustrate how views of marriage's personal and public value fit together. Two ask whether marriage is good for individuals: whether it is more important than a career for finding happiness, and whether being single has more advantages than being married. Two ask whether it is good for society: whether society is better off when more people are married, and whether marriage is needed to create strong families.

Views of Public and Private Value of Marriage

Percent with each combination of views about the value of marriage



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026.* Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: How much do you agree or disagree with the following? (Agreement includes somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree. Personal value includes agreement marriage matters more than a career for happiness and disagreement being single has more advantages. Public value includes agreement that society is better off when more people marry and marriage is needed for strong families.)

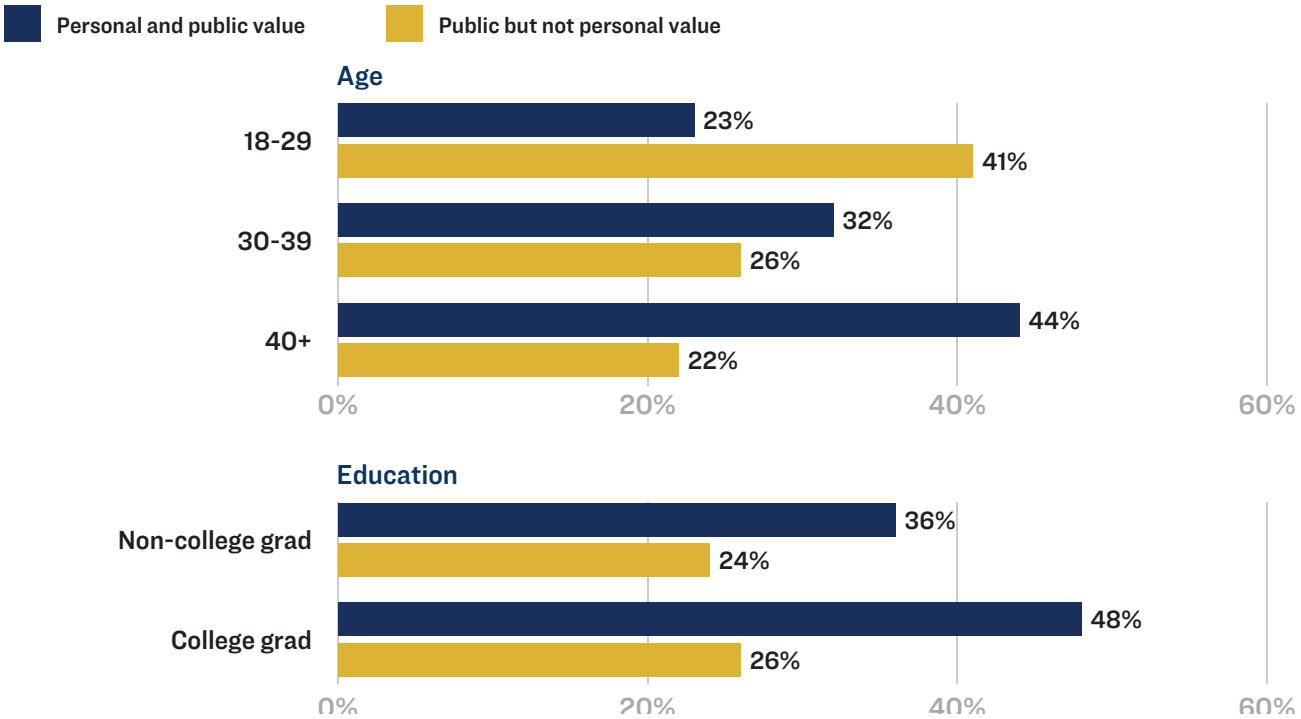
So here, respondents are labeled as seeing personal value in marriage if they agree that marriage matters more than a career for happiness and disagree that single life has more advantages (the first two questions). They are labeled as seeing public value in marriage if they agree with both of the second two questions — that society is better off with more marriages and marriages make strong families. That sorts everyone into four groups: those who see marriage as having both personal and public value; personal value only; public value only; and mixed or neither. The last group includes people who agree with one statement in a pair but not the other.

Note where conservatives are: 40% see both personal and public value, and another 25% see public value only. Liberals and moderates look quite different. Most liberals (67%) and about half of moderates (52%) fall in the mixed-or-neither group, and only 7% of liberals see both kinds of value.

Among conservatives, the clearest difference is by age.

Views Among Conservatives of the Value of Marriage

Percent of conservatives with each combination of views about marriage



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.

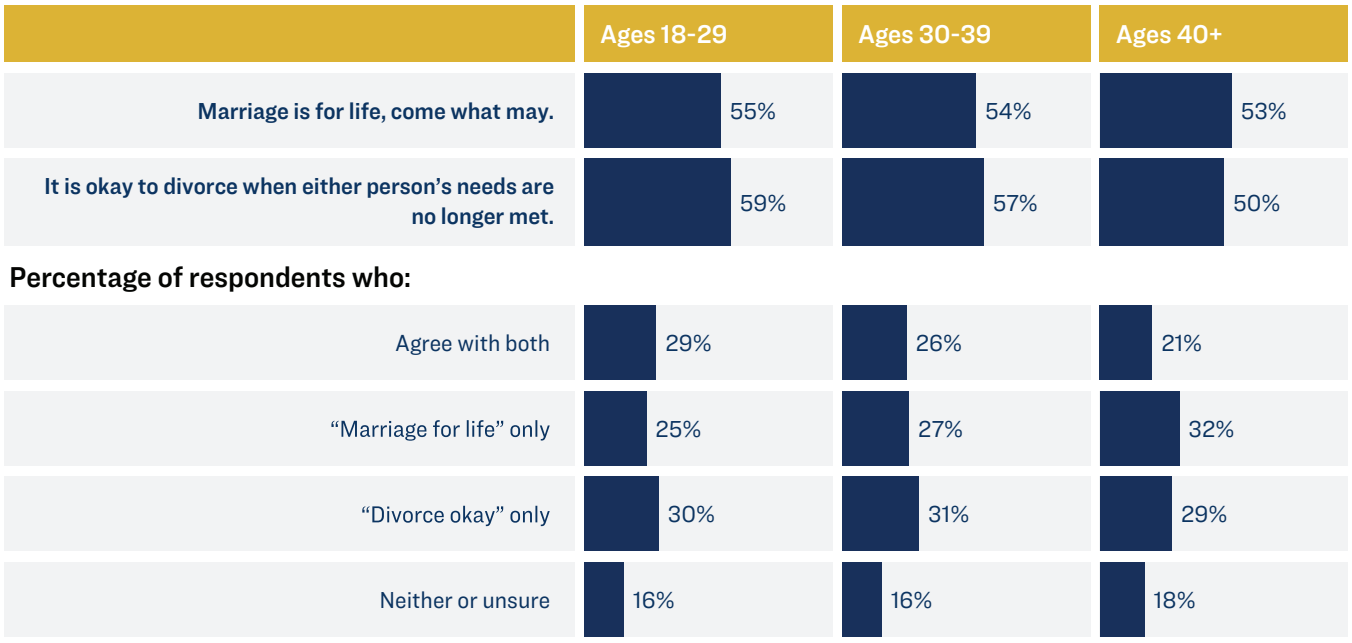
QUESTION WORDING: How much do you agree or disagree with the following? (Agreement includes somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree. Personal value includes agreement marriage matters more than a career for happiness and disagreement being single has more advantages. Public value includes agreement that society is better off when more people marry and marriage is needed for strong families.)

Between 58% and 66% of conservatives in each age group see public value in marriage. What cuts conservatives is whether they also see personal value. Among conservatives 18 to 29, the most common view is public value only (41%), and 23% see both. Among those 40 and older, the pattern reverses: 44% see both and 22% see public value only. College graduates are also more likely than non-graduates to see both (48% vs. 36%).

Americans also seem to hold two ideas about marital permanence at once. Fifty-three percent agree that marriage is for life, "come what may," and 53% agree that divorce is okay when either spouse's needs are no longer met. Yet these are not two separate camps — about 23% of adults agree with both statements.

Views of Marital Permanence

Percent agreeing with each statement



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: How much do you agree or disagree with the following? (Agreement includes somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree)

It appears that many people want marriages to last but also want an acceptable way out if one fails. Younger adults are the most likely to hold both views (29% of those 18 to 29, compared with 21% of those 40 and older). Older adults more often hold to the ideal of permanence without accepting divorce (32% vs. 25%). Only 2% to 3% in each age group reject both statements outright; most of the "neither or unsure" group is unsure about at least one.

These results do not describe a public that has given up on marriage. Few Americans call it outdated or a burden, and majorities see practical benefits. Many hold to ideals of permanence while still leaving room for divorce. The real disagreement is over whether marriage is a public good, something strong families and a healthy society depend on. That is mostly a divide between liberals and conservatives, but among conservatives it takes a second form: younger conservatives see public value in marriage about as often as their elders do, yet fewer of them also see personal value in it.

What do we make of this pattern among conservatives? They are not joining the political left, and since a survey taken at one point in time cannot tell us whether they will come to share their elders' views as they age, we cannot be sure that this pattern of seeing public but not private value in marriage will hold in the future. Still, these findings are troubling for those with an interest in the institution of marriage. The surest future for marriage is one where majorities see both public and private value for the institution, and that is not true for most people in this survey. So, the glass is decidedly half full. People value marriage, but not consistently and not for the same reasons.

MARRIAGE, CHILDREN, & THE OPPORTUNITY COSTS OF FAMILY FORMATION

Americans regard marriage as broadly beneficial, but they see practical tradeoffs to having children.

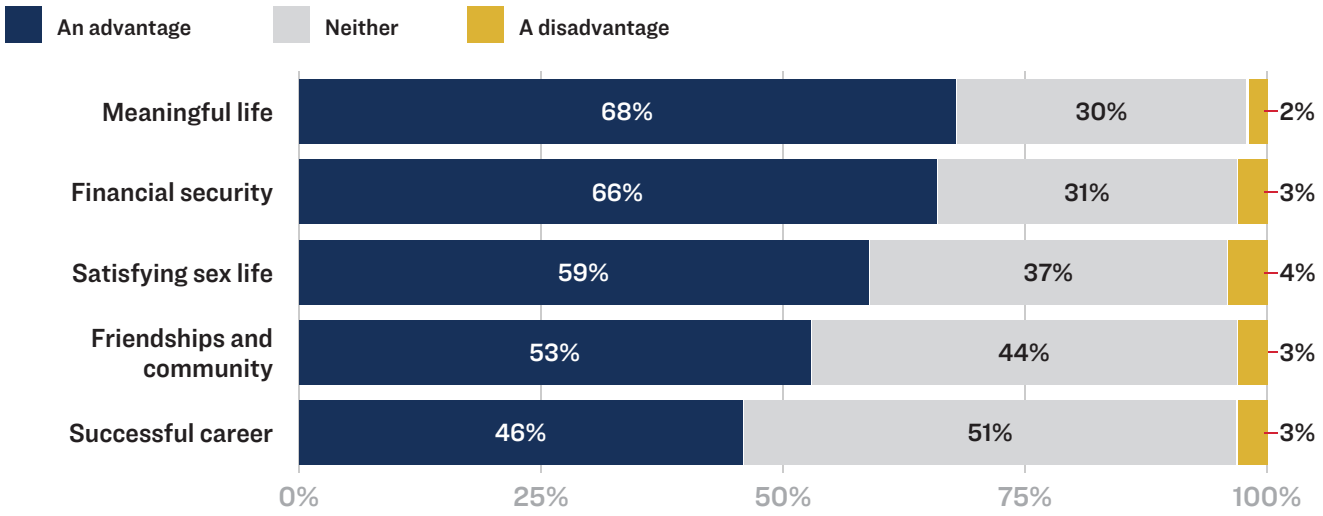
49% vs. 39%

Among American adults ages 18-40, men are more likely than women to see marriage as an advantage for a successful career.

Marriage and parenthood can create meaning, intimacy, and durable social ties. They can also demand money, time, and changes in work and personal life. These competing possibilities prompted us to ask how people, especially young people who are considering marriage and children, view the advantages and costs of these life milestones. Questions about the value of marriage and children are not merely about individual-level costs and benefits, of course, but are deeply connected to Americans' values, views of family, and visions of the good life.

Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of Marriage

Percentage selecting each response



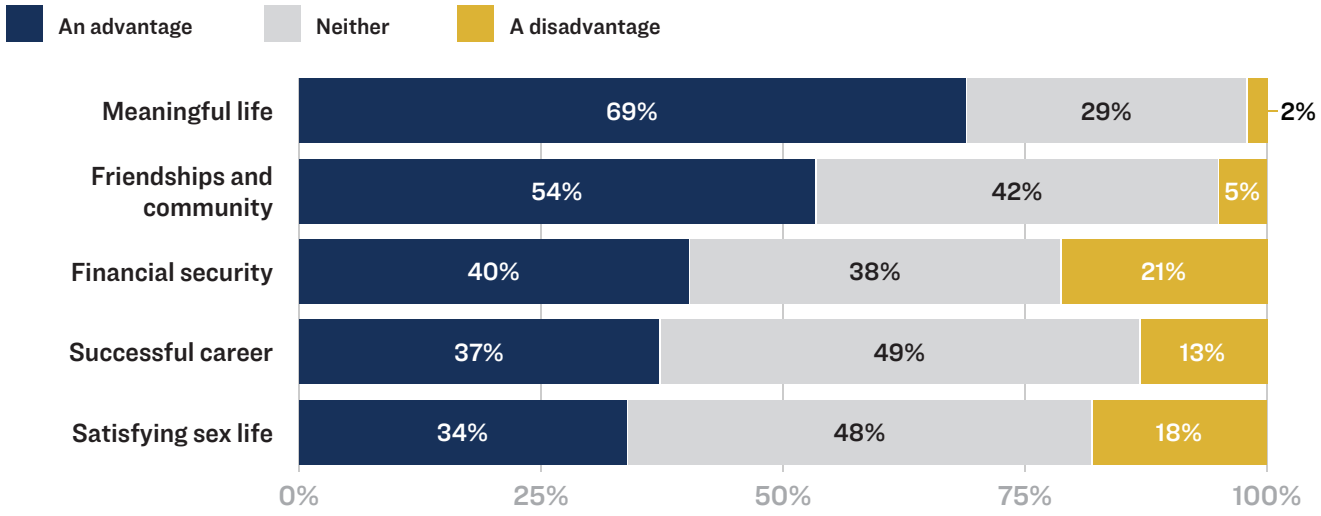
SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: In each of the following domains, does getting married provide an advantage or a disadvantage? Domains: having a successful career; being financially secure; having strong friendships and community; having a satisfying sex life; living a meaningful life.

Americans regard marriage as a broadly advantageous institution, with very few respondents identifying outright disadvantages. About two-thirds say marriage is an advantage for living a meaningful life and for creating financial security, and nearly six in ten see an advantage for a satisfying sex life. Majorities also see marriage as advantageous for friendships and community. Career receives the least positive assessment, but even there, nearly half see an advantage and only a small minority see a disadvantage. Marriage may not be viewed as necessary for success in every domain, but it is rarely understood as actively harmful.

Children are also strongly associated with meaning and social connection, but respondents are more divided about their practical effects. Sixty-nine percent describe having children as an advantage for a meaningful life, and 54% say children are advantageous for friendships and community. On these social and existential dimensions, children look much like marriage: they are widely viewed as adding something valuable, with very few regarding them as a disadvantage.

Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages of Having Children

Percentage selecting each response



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: In each of the following domains, does having children provide an advantage or a disadvantage? Domains: having a successful career; being financially secure; having strong friendships and community; having a satisfying sex life; living a meaningful life.

The practical domains produce more ambivalence. Forty percent see children as an advantage for financial security, but 21% regard parenthood as a disadvantage. Only 37% describe children as an advantage for career success, and 13% identify them as a disadvantage. Views of the effects of children on the sex lives of adults are similarly mixed.

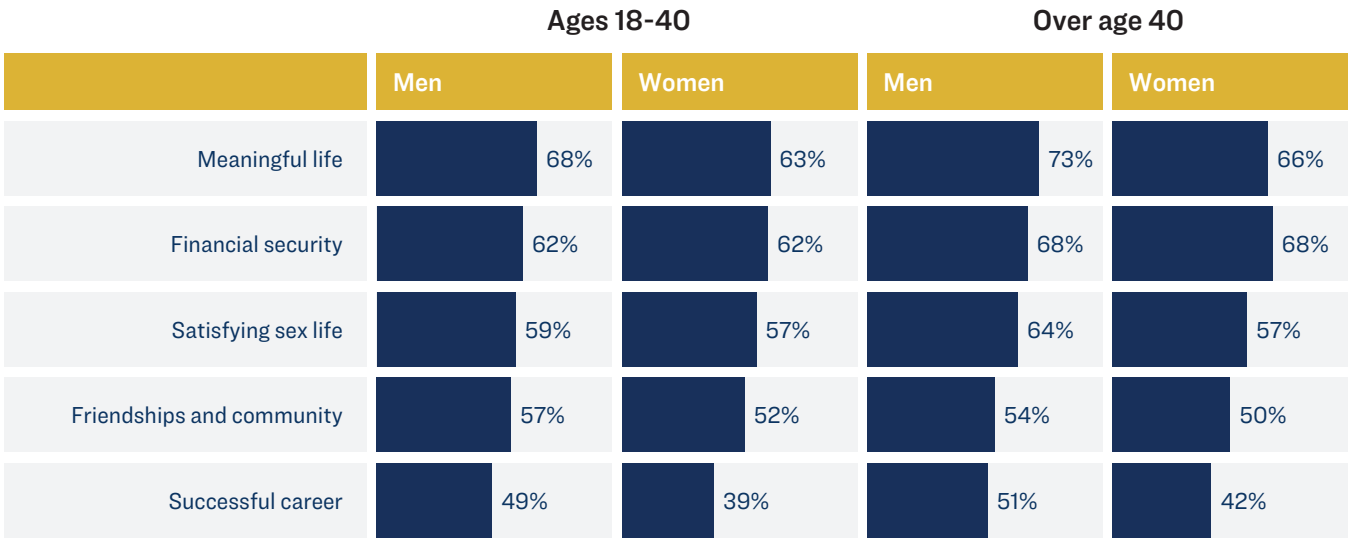
Career concerns about children are especially pronounced among women. Approximately one third of women see having children as a career advantage, compared to 42% of men. This gender difference is similar in size among adults under 40. In addition, 22% of women under 40 see having children as a disadvantage to their careers, compared to 15% of men under 40.

Most Americans connect children to meaning, and outright disadvantage is never the modal response. But the results do show why decisions about parenthood can feel consequential. The perceived rewards are concentrated in meaning and relationships, while financial, occupational, and intimate-life assessments are less uniformly positive.

Adults over 40 are generally more likely than younger adults to see advantages to marriage, although the size of the difference is never substantial, and on several dimensions, views are quite similar. The clearest age gaps concern financial security: 68% of adults over 40 say marriage benefits financial security, compared with 62% of those age 40 and younger. But among both older and younger Americans, women tend to be less convinced than men of marriage's advantages. Women in both age groups are about 10 percentage points less likely than men to see marriage as an advantage for a successful career, and they are also less convinced than men that it contributes to a meaningful life.

Perceived Advantages of Marriage by Gender and Age

Percentage describing marriage as an advantage

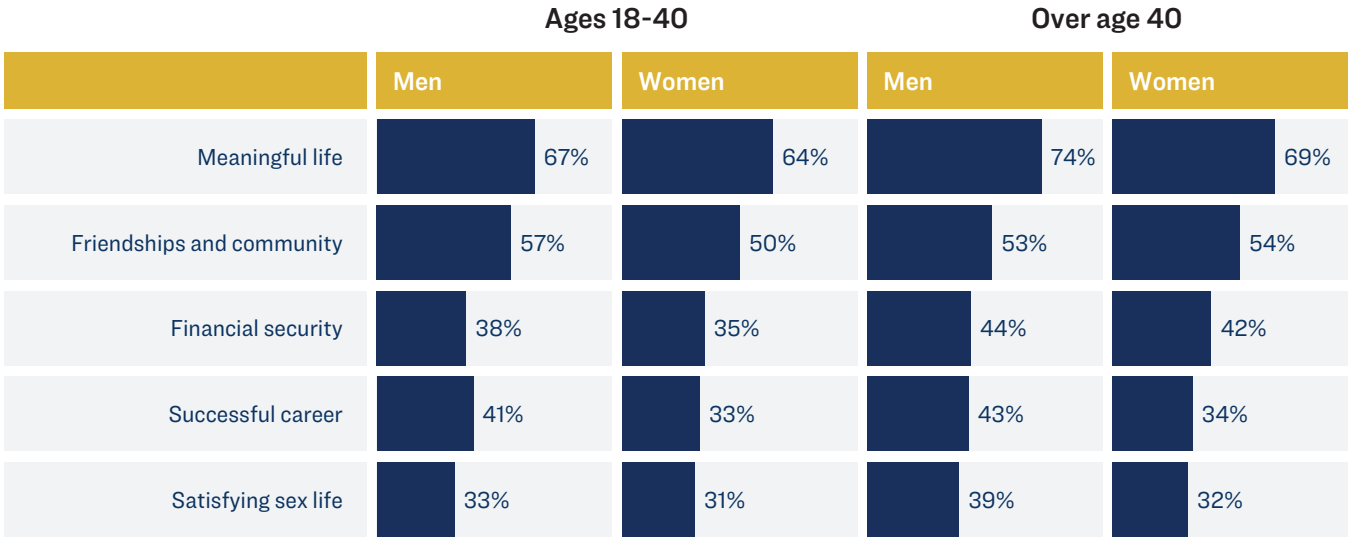


SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: In each of the following domains, does getting married provide an advantage or a disadvantage? Domains: having a successful career; being financially secure; having strong friendships and community; having a satisfying sex life; living a meaningful life.

When considering the effects of children, the largest age differences concern finances and meaning. On average, about 43% of adults over 40 see children as an advantage for financial security, compared with 37% of younger adults. Seventy-one percent of older adults see children as an advantage for a meaningful life, compared with 66% of younger adults. But again, gender differences among both older and younger tend to be larger. For example, women in both age groups are less likely to say that children are an advantage for a successful career, and women aged 18-40 are also slightly less likely than men of that age to believe that children enable friendships and community.

Perceived Advantages of Having Children by Gender and Age

Percentage describing having children as an advantage



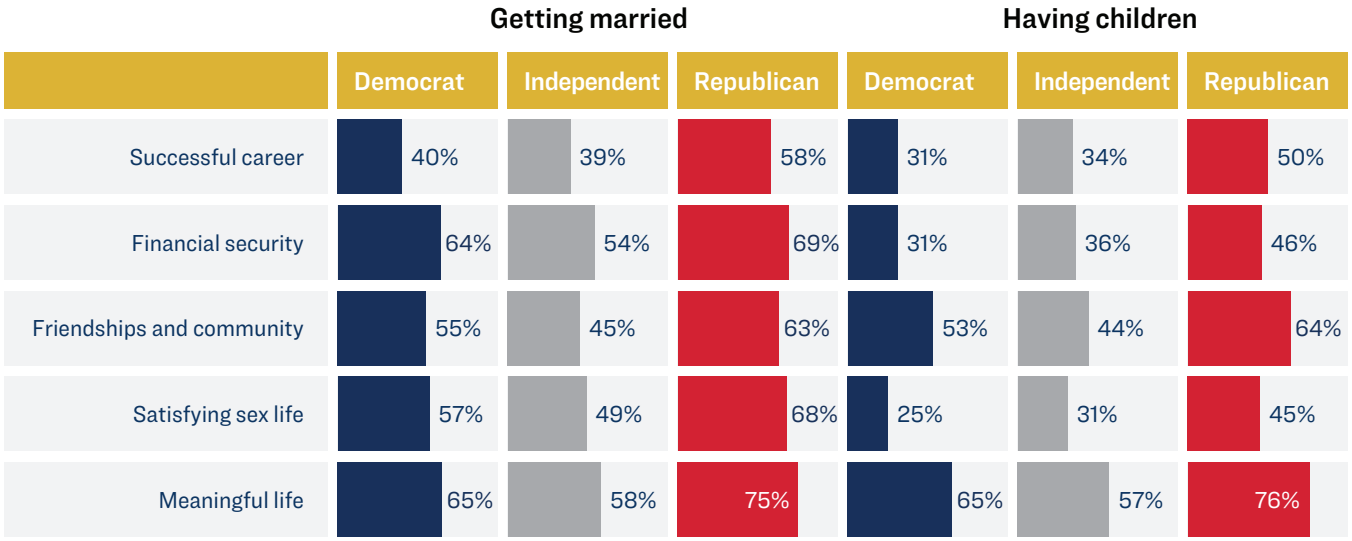
SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: In each of the following domains, does having children provide an advantage or a disadvantage? Domains: having a successful career; being financially secure; having strong friendships and community; having a satisfying sex life; living a meaningful life.

Age therefore matters, but it does not divide Americans into two fundamentally different camps. On average, younger adults retain the same broad ranking as older adults. But women, both older and younger, are much more likely than men to see marriage and children as coming with career and other costs.

Party identification produces one of the most consistent patterns in the young-adult sample. Republicans are more likely than Democrats to describe both marriage and children as advantages in every domain. Three quarters of young Republicans say marriage is an advantage for a meaningful life, compared with 65% of Democrats and 58% of independents. Thus, majorities of all groups see marriage as contributing to the goods and meaning of life, but Republicans are especially convinced of it.

Perceived Advantages of Marriage and Children Among Young Adults

Percentage of adults ages 18-40 describing each institution as an advantage



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on Americans ages 18-40.
QUESTION WORDING: In each of the following domains, does [getting married/having children] provide an advantage or a disadvantage? Domains: having a successful career; being financially secure; having strong friendships and community; having a satisfying sex life; living a meaningful life.

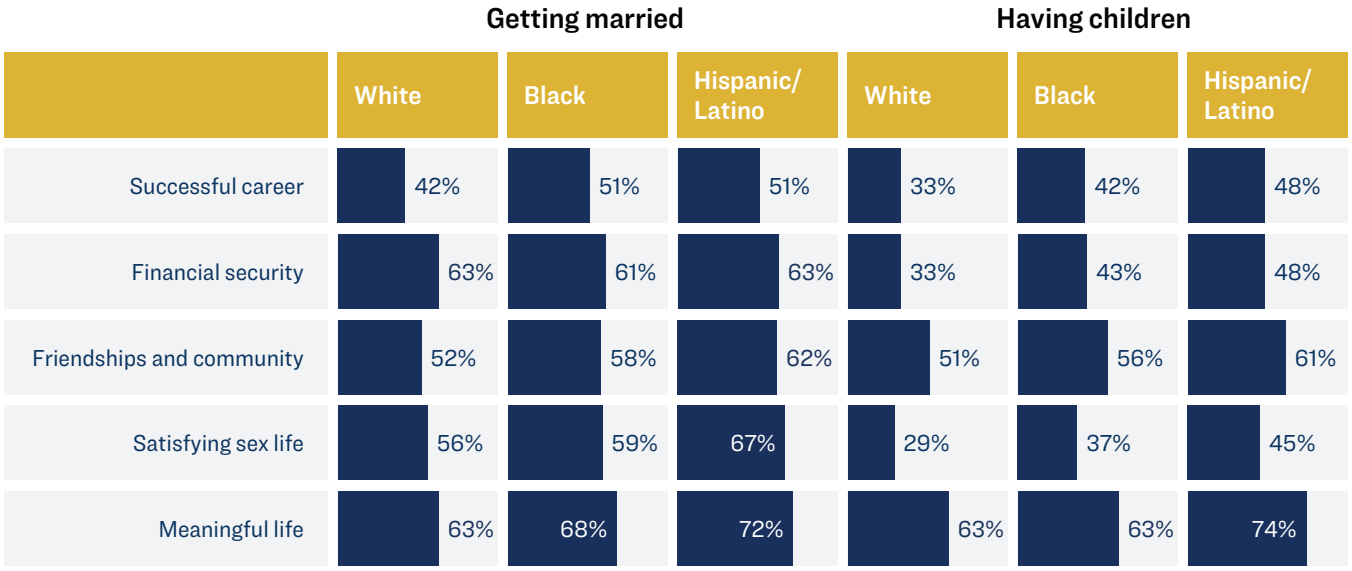
Young Republicans are also more likely to see children as an advantage. The Republican-Democratic difference is 19 percentage points for career, 15 points for finances, 21 points for sex, and 11 points for both community and meaning. Independents do not consistently occupy the middle; on several domains they are less positive than either party group. Other social cleavages, such as religiosity, family norms and experiences, and income, are correlated with partisanship, so these differences should not be interpreted as a causal effect of partisanship. Still, the consistency of the relationship shows that beliefs about family formation are now connected to broader political and social perspectives.

Within the parties, gender differences tend to be smaller but still notable in two cases. In both the full sample and the oversample of young adults, the data suggest that Democratic women (61%) are less convinced than Democratic men (69%) that marriage is correlated with living a meaningful life. Republican women are less likely than Republican men to say that marriage is linked to having a successful career (63% of men vs. 50% of women age 40 or younger). Republican women under 40 are also less likely than Republican men to say that having children is an advantage for a successful career (42% vs. 56%).

Differences by race and ethnicity also exist, with Hispanic/Latino respondents expressing the most optimism about the advantages of marriage and children. Among adults age 40 and younger, Hispanic/Latino respondents are especially likely to see advantages to marriage and children across all five domains, and white respondents frequently emerge as the least likely to see advantages.

Perceived Advantages of Marriage and Children by Race

Percentage of adults ages 18-40 describing each institution as an advantage



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on Americans ages 18-40.

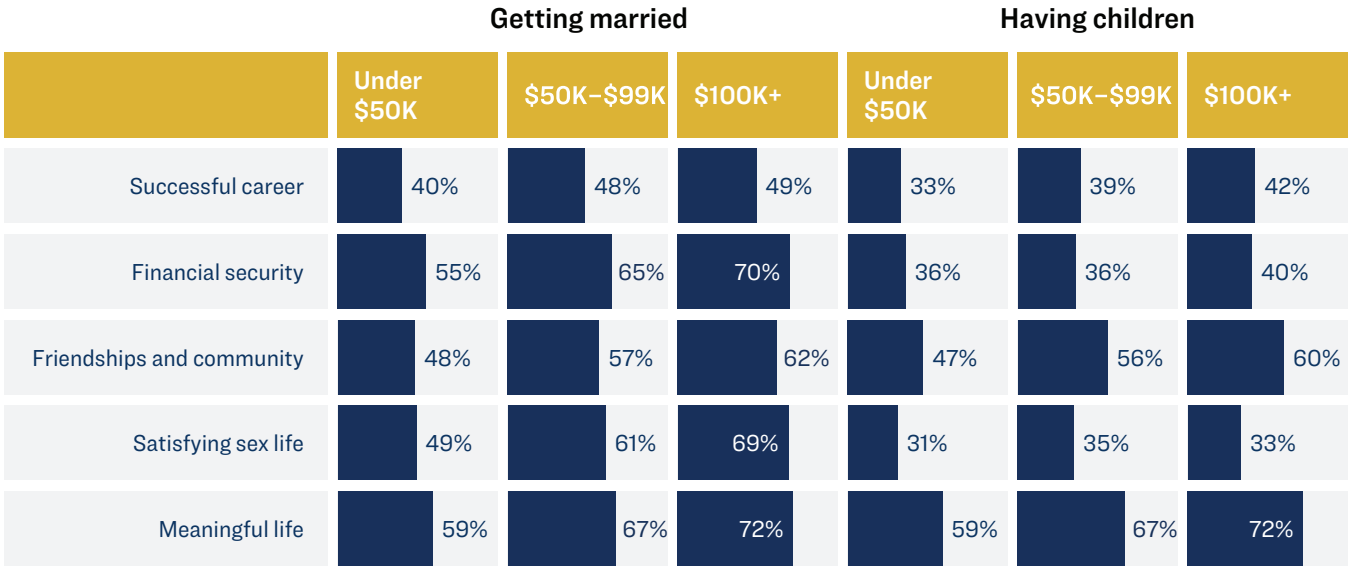
QUESTION WORDING: In each of the following domains, does [getting married/having children] provide an advantage or a disadvantage? Domains: having a successful career; being financially secure; having strong friendships and community; having a satisfying sex life; living a meaningful life.

The largest differences concern the perceived practical and intimate effects of children. Across all five areas, Hispanic/Latino respondents under 40 are more likely to see children as an advantage than the other two groups. By contrast, White respondents tend to be the least convinced of the advantages of children in every domain, and Black respondents typically fall between the two groups.

Income also matters for young people's views of the advantages and costs of marriage. For example, across all five domains, young adults with family incomes of at least $100,000 are substantially more likely than those with incomes under $50,000 to see marriage as an advantage. The differences between the highest and lowest income groups are as much as 15 percentage points on the effect of marriage on finances and 20 percentage points on marriage's effect on a satisfying sex life. Even when it comes to marriage's role in creating meaning in life, high-income young people are 13 percentage points more positive than those with lower income levels.

Perceived Advantages of Marriage and Children by Income

Percentage of adults ages 18-40 describing each institution as an advantage



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on Americans ages 18-40.
QUESTION WORDING: In each of the following domains, does [getting married/having children] provide an advantage or a disadvantage? Domains: having a successful career; being financially secure; having strong friendships and community; having a satisfying sex life; living a meaningful life.

Income differences in views of children are less uniform, though still present at least for some aspects of life, with higher-income young adults expressing more positive views of children's contribution to career, community, and meaning.

Other dimensions of life experience beyond income also matter. For example, in our oversample, young people who are currently married are more likely than unmarried young adults to see marriage as an advantage for a meaningful life (74% vs. 61%). The difference between young parents and non-parents in views of whether children are connected to a meaningful life is nearly identical. Lived experience shapes views of the advantages and disadvantages of marriage and children.

Overall, these data show that marriage is widely perceived as offering advantages across practical, relational, and existential domains. Children are strongly connected to meaning and community, even as their effects on money, careers, and intimate life generate more mixed judgments. In this sense, the survey captures both the attraction of family life and the tradeoffs that can delay or complicate decisions about it. The results also show that these judgments are socially situated. Age differences exist, but gender, partisanship, and other features of lived experience among young adults are often more revealing than age differences.

FAMILY ROLES AND PERSONAL IDENTITY

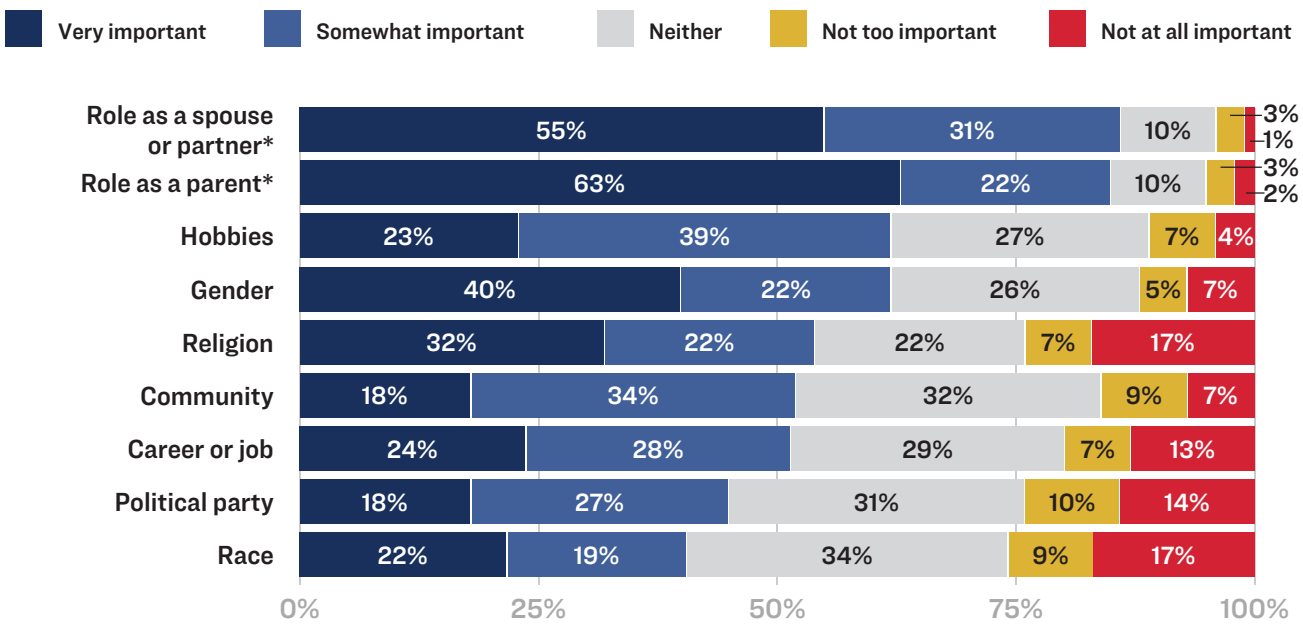
For people who occupy them, family roles are among the strongest anchors of identity.

85%
of parents say being a parent is important to their identity.

The roles people occupy in families are not merely descriptions of their living arrangements. They can become important answers to a more fundamental question: Who am I? The 2026 American Family Survey asked Americans to assess the importance of nine roles and social categories to their personal identity, including family roles along with religion, race, partisanship, work, community, gender, and hobbies.

Importance of Nine Factors to Americans' Sense of Identity

Percentage selecting each level of importance



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: People value different roles in their lives. How important are the following things to your personal identity? Items: my role as a spouse or partner; my role as a parent; my religion; my race; my political party; my career or job; my community; my gender; my hobbies. (Spouse/partner and parent items were asked only of respondents for whom each role applied.)

Interpreting these results requires special care because we only asked about relationship and parental identities among respondents for whom those roles applied, meaning that only respondents in a current committed relationship were asked about being a spouse or partner, and only those who are currently parents were asked about being a parent. In other words, for those family-related roles, we learn what people value only when a role is part of their lives.

For those who inhabit them, family roles occupy a distinctive position. Eighty-six percent of respondents asked about their role as a spouse or partner call it important, as do 85% of parents evaluating their parental role. The gap between family and nonfamily identities is substantial: hobbies and gender, the two highest-rated identities asked of everyone, reach 63% and 62%, respectively. Political party and race rank lowest on the combined measure, at 45% and 41%, with only about two-in-10 calling either one very important to their identity.

The strength of family identity is even clearer in the most intense response. Nearly two-thirds of parents say being a parent is very important to who they are. A strong majority (55%) of respondents asked about their spouse or partner role select the same category. No other potential identity reaches a majority in the very-important category. At the opposite end of the distribution, very few people actively downplay family identities. Only about 3% of respondents asked about a spouse or partner role and 4% of parents describe the applicable family role as either not too important or not at all important; about 10% choose the neutral category for each.

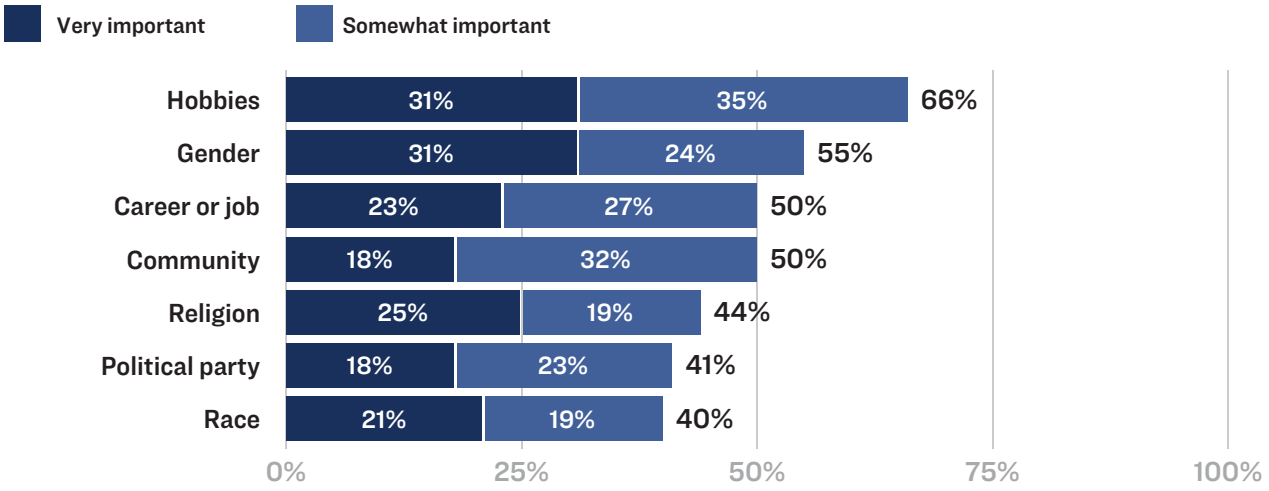
Other identities produce more ambivalence or rejection. Religion, for example, is polarized: 32% call it very important, but approximately 25% call it not too important or not at all important. And despite the considerable attention given to political polarization, fewer than half of Americans say their party identity is important or very important, and nearly one quarter say it is not important.

Because the survey did not ask respondents to evaluate roles they do not currently hold, these comparisons do not mean that adults without a partner or children reject family identities. The striking result is that, once present, spouse, partner, and parent roles are more widely and intensely incorporated into identity than the other social identities included in the survey.

What anchors identity when neither family role currently applies? Those who are single and report no children — a little less than one quarter of the population in the survey — were asked only the seven identity items asked of everyone. The median age of respondents in this group is 31. This population thus includes many young adults who may later enter family roles, but also some older adults whose family histories differ as well as people with varied religious, occupational, and political attachments.

Personal Identity Among Single Adults Without Children

Percentage of those who are not in a relationship and do not have children



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on those who are not in a relationship and do not have children.
QUESTION WORDING: People value different roles in their lives. How important are the following things to your personal identity? Items: my role as a spouse or partner; my role as a parent; my religion; my race; my political party; my career or job; my community; my gender; my hobbies.

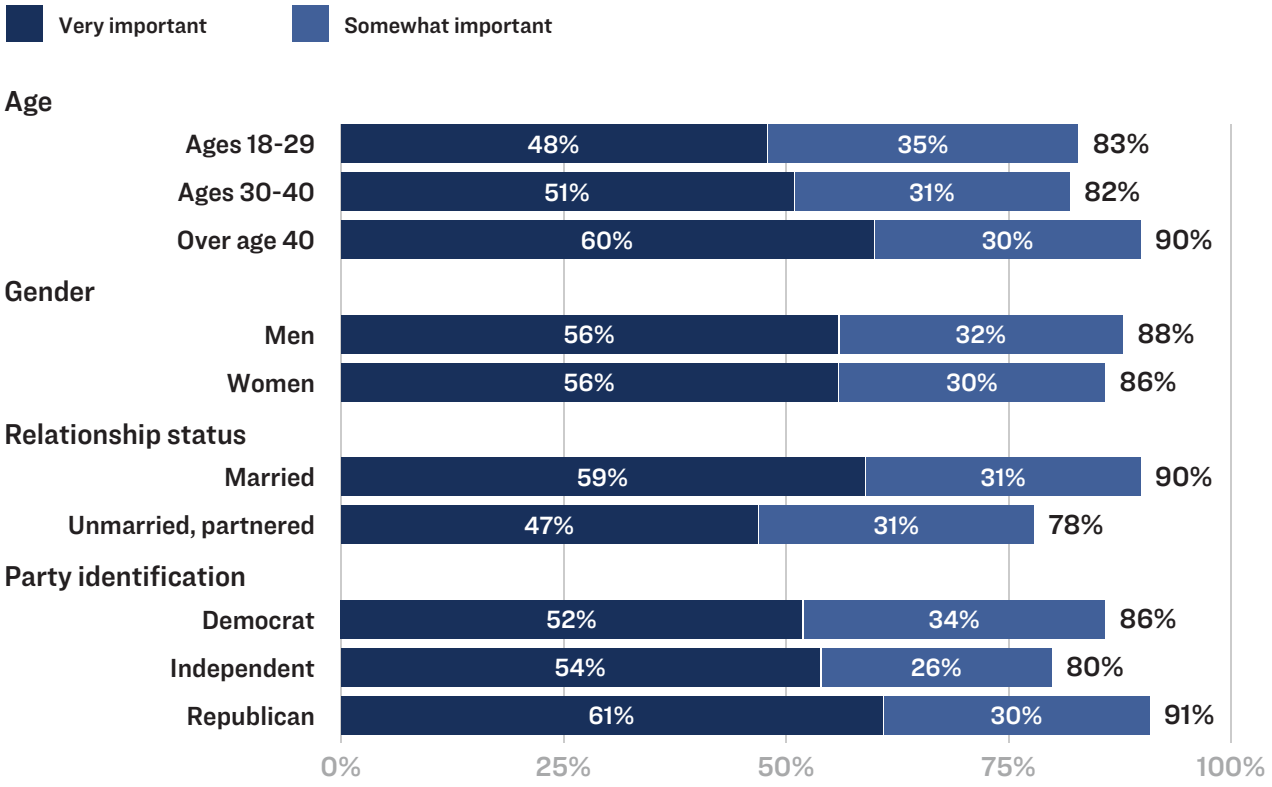
Hobbies are the most common source of identity in this group: 66% of single adults without children describe their hobbies as very or somewhat important. Gender follows at 55%. Career or job and community form the next tier at about 50% each, followed by religion at 44%, political party at 41%, and race at 40%. One quarter of single adults without children say religion is very important, but a similar number (21%) say that religion is not important to their identity at all.

When the spouse and parent items do not apply, then, identity is more diverse and diffuse, organized around leisure, gender, work, community, faith, and social categories. The results also caution against describing single adults without children as a single cultural type. Even the leading identity is important to about two-thirds, not everyone, and none of the remaining identities reaches 60%.

Among respondents in a current committed relationship or marriage, the spouse or partner role is important across every demographic and political group we examined.

Personal Identity and Relationship Status

Percentage of those in a relationship who say the role is important to their personal identity



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on those who are in a committed relationship or marriage.
QUESTION WORDING: People value different roles in their lives. How important are the following things to your personal identity? Items: my role as a spouse or partner.

Marriage marks the clearest divide. Ninety percent of married respondents call their spouse role very or somewhat important, compared with 78% of unmarried respondents who are cohabiting or in committed relationships while living apart. The entire difference is concentrated in intensity: 59% of married respondents choose very important, compared with 47% of unmarried partnered respondents.

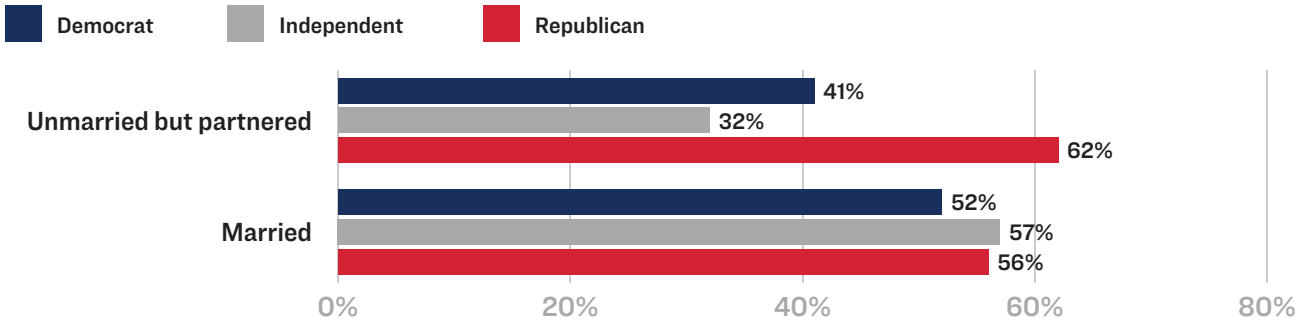
Age produces a similar, though smaller, pattern. Adults ages 18-29 and 30-40 are almost identical on the combined measure, at 83% and 82%, with the percentage among adults over 40 rising to 90%. The distinction is intensity rather than moderate attachment: 60% of older adults call the relationship role very important, compared with 48% of those ages 18-29 and 51% of those ages 30-40.

Partisanship also differentiates relationship identity to some extent, though supermajorities of every partisan group value their relationship identities. The role is important to 91% of Republicans, 86% of Democrats, and 80% of Independents. Republicans are also most likely to select very important — 61%, compared with 52% of Democrats and 54% of Independents.

The young-adult oversample makes it possible to examine party and relationship status together. Focusing on respondents ages 18-40 and on the most intense identity response, Republicans stand out. Among Republicans, those who are not married still find their identity as a partner to be especially important, while unmarried Democrats and Independents are less likely to say their relationships are key to their identities. These partisan differences evaporate among married young adults: the three estimates cluster between 52% and 57% and are not statistically distinguishable from each other.

Relationships and Identity Among Young Adults

Percentage of those ages 18-40 in a relationship who say the role is "very important" to their identity

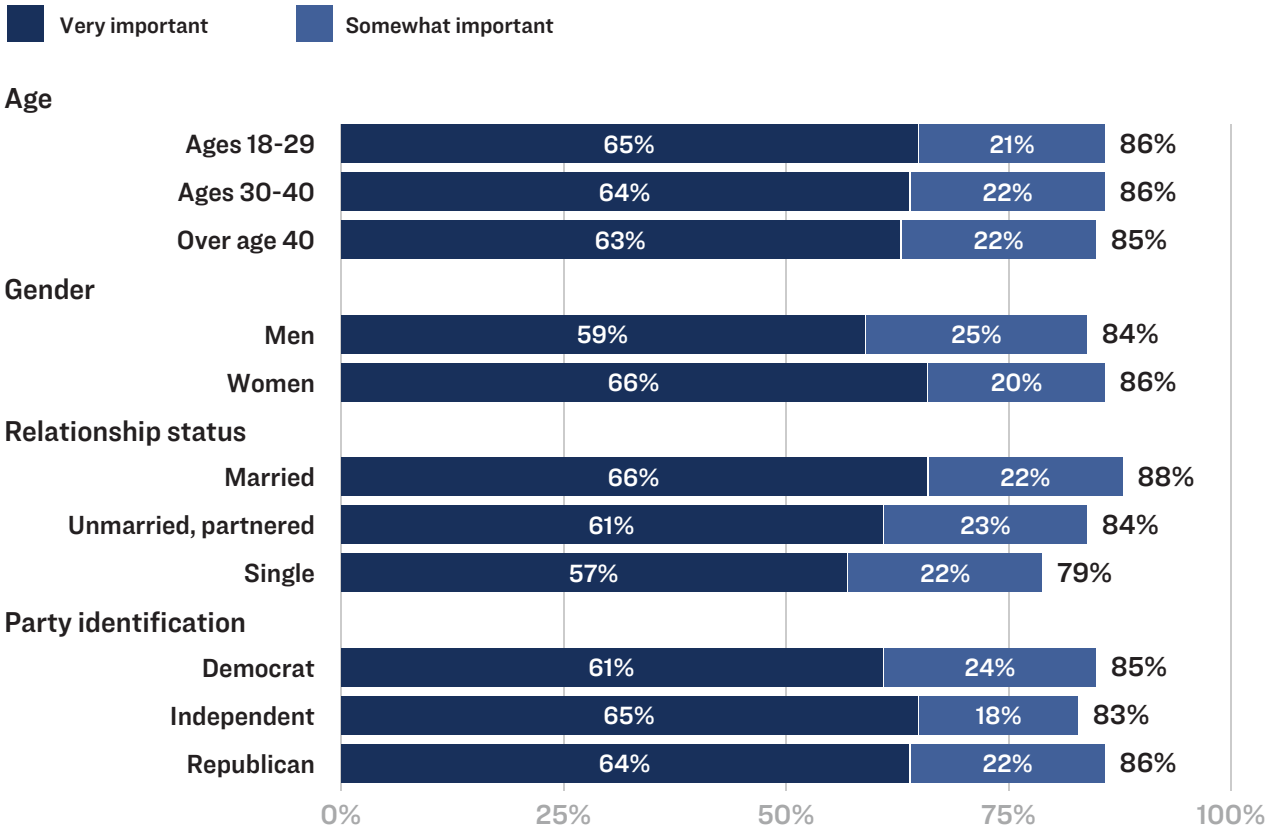


SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on those who are in a committed relationship or marriage.
QUESTION WORDING: People value different roles in their lives. How important are the following things to your personal identity? My role as a spouse or partner.

Parental identity is even more likely than relationship identity to be regarded as very important to respondents across the board. What differences exist are primarily along the lines of gender and relationship status.

Personal Identity and Parenthood

Percentage of those with children who say the role is important to their personal identity

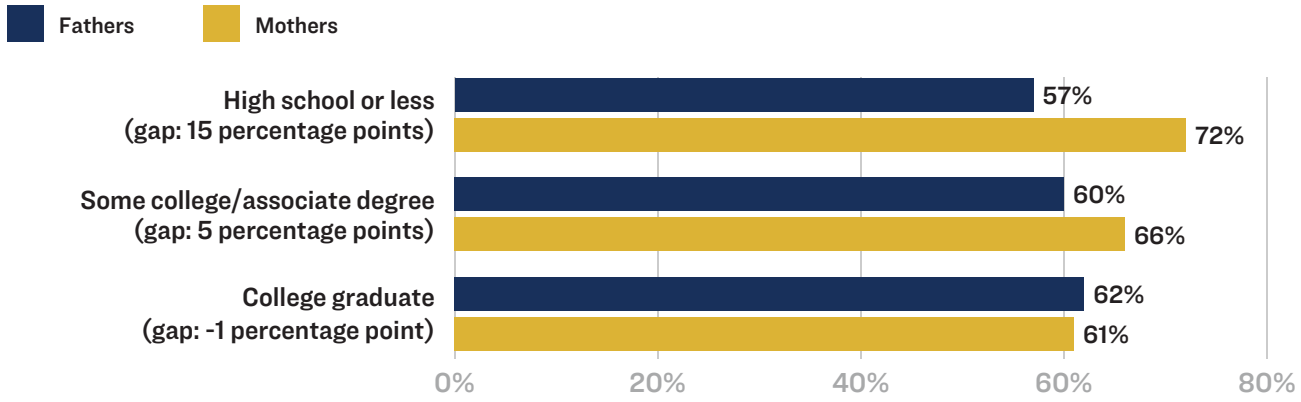


SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on those who have at least one child.
QUESTION WORDING: People value different roles in their lives. How important are the following things to your personal identity?My role as a parent.

Age differences are minimal. Parental identity appears to be central to Americans with children at various life stages. The combined gender difference is also small, though a modest distinction appears in intensity. Two-thirds of mothers call the role very important, compared with 59% of fathers. In general, this gap does not vary by other demographic characteristics, including partisanship, ideology, age, and income. We do, however, see a gap between mothers and fathers among those who have never been to college. Among this group, the gap in feeling that parental identity is "very important" is 15 percentage points, while there is essentially no gap among those with a college degree.

Importance of Parental Roles by Education

Percentage of those with children who say the role is "very important" to their personal identity



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on those who have at least one child.
QUESTION WORDING: People value different roles in their lives. How important are the following things to your personal identity? My role as a parent.

Relationship status differentiates parental identity to some extent as well. The parent role is important to 88% of married parents, 84% of unmarried partnered parents, and 79% of single parents. The very-important share also declines across the same categories. These gaps should not be read as evidence that single parents care less about their children. Identity questions measure how a role figures in a person's sense of self, and single parents may face different economic pressures, relationship histories, and competing responsibilities. The finding is nevertheless notable because parental identity remains the leading identity even among groups reporting less intensity.

Party differences in parental identity are limited. Combined importance ranges from 83% among Independents to 85% among Democrats and 86% among Republicans. Americans of all political stripes value their role as parents; indeed, supermajorities of all three categories say their identity as a parent is important to them.

Family roles are unusual identities because they are simultaneously personal, relational, and institutional. Being a parent or partner describes a tie to another person, but it also becomes part of how individuals understand themselves. This incorporation is broad: once family roles apply, they outrank work, religion, community, party, race, gender, and hobbies as sources of identity.

The differences between relationship and parental identity are also important. Relationship identity varies with the institutional form and social context of the relationship. Parental identity, by contrast, is remarkably stable across demographic characteristics. For most Americans, parenthood appears to provide a durable identity across much of adult life.

These findings cannot determine whether marriage causes people to identify more strongly as a partner, whether people with stronger relationship identities are more likely to marry, or whether a third factor influences both. Still, the results illuminate a basic feature of American family life: family roles are not merely circumstances people inhabit. Among people who hold them, these roles are central parts of who people believe themselves to be.

PREREQUISITES FOR HAVING CHILDREN

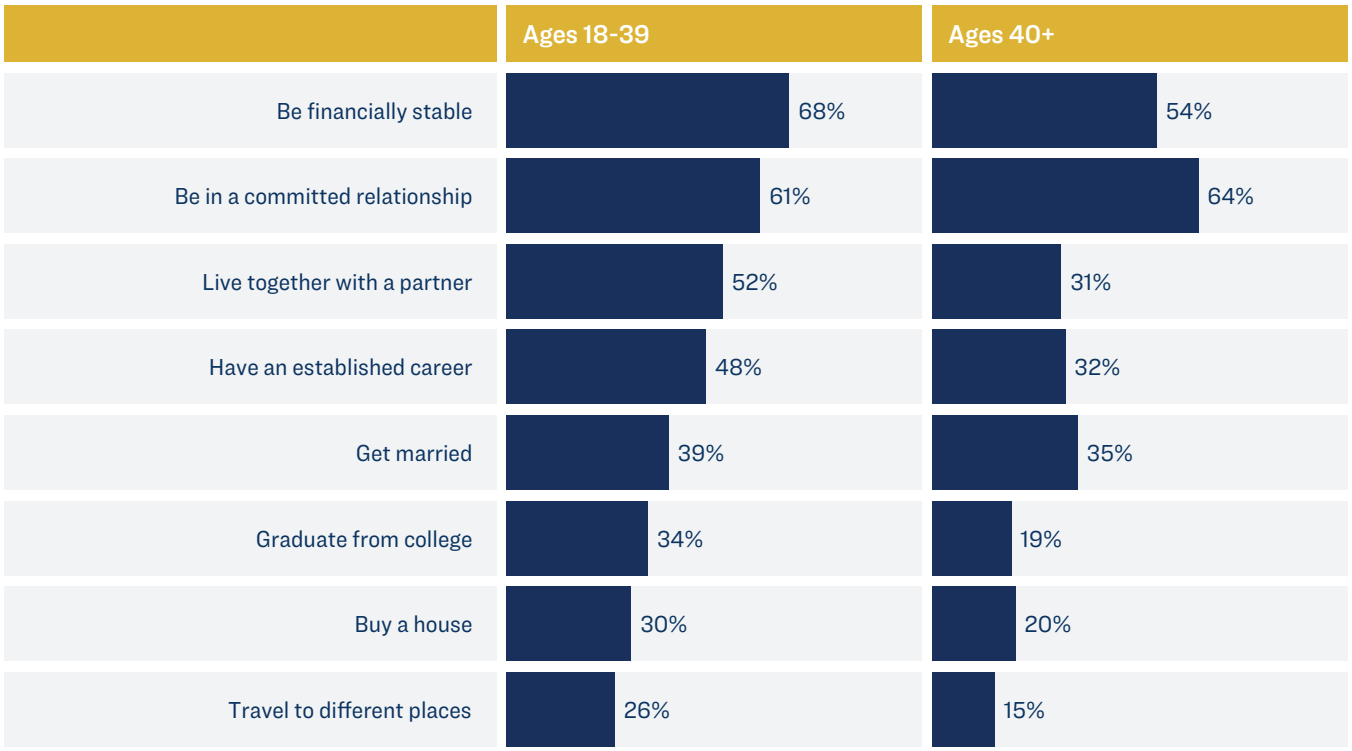
Adults under 40 set more conditions on having a child than older adults do, but majorities of all ages agree that financial stability is important.



68%
of adults under 40 say financial stability is extremely important before having a child.

Preparing for Children

Percent saying each item is extremely important to do before having a child



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: How important do you think it is for a person to do each of these things before having their first child?

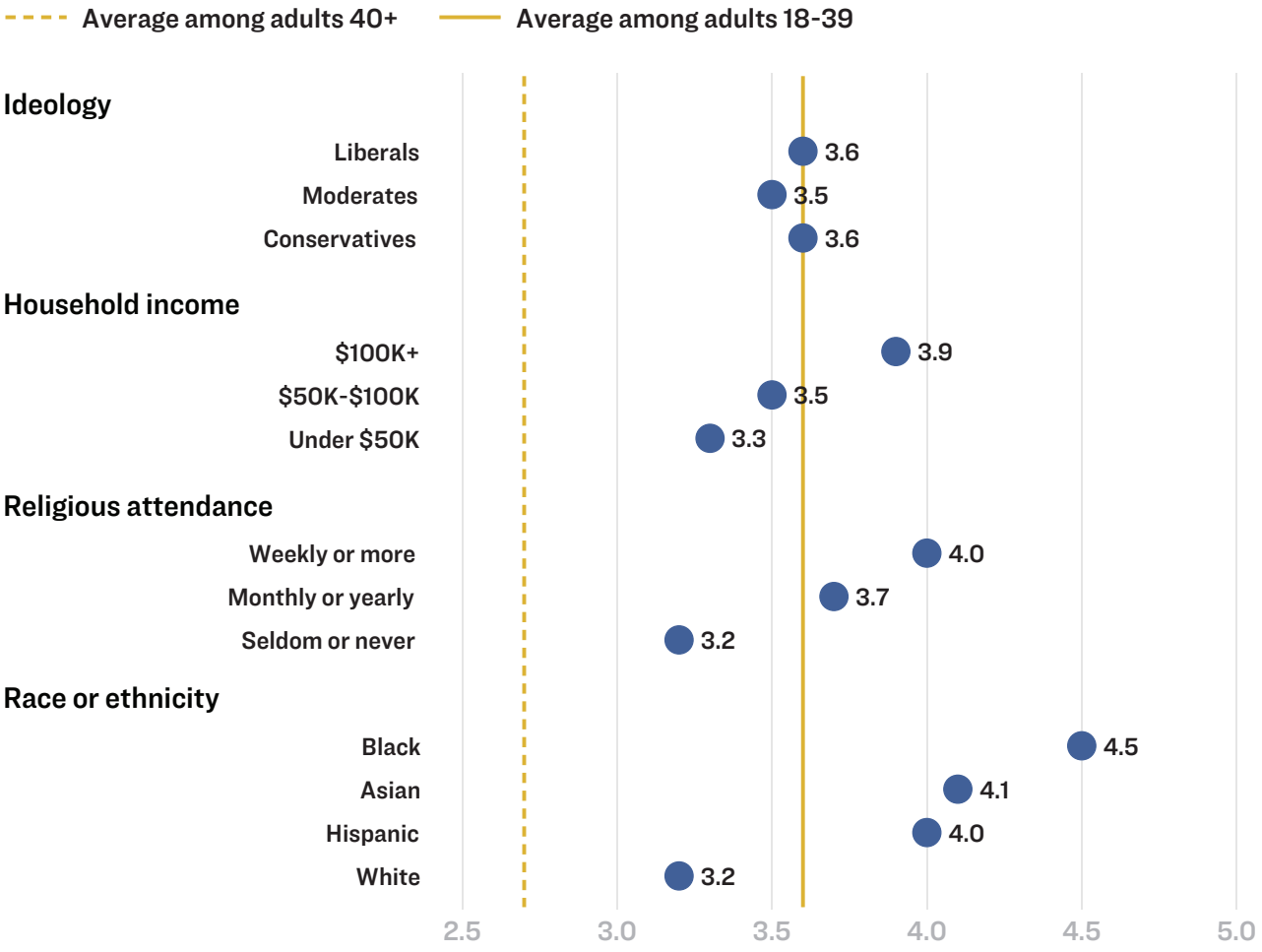
What do Americans believe should happen before a child is born? The young — adults under 40 — have higher standards: on average, they rate 3.6 of eight possible prerequisites as extremely important, compared with just 2.7 among those over 40. Financial stability tops the list for the younger (though a committed relationship matters most for the older). This year's oversample of adults under 40 lets us look closely at which young adults set which conditions.

The largest age differences involve living with a partner (52% of younger Americans vs. 31% of older Americans), having an established career (48% vs. 32%), graduating from college (34% vs. 19%), and being financially stable (68% vs. 54%). Marriage is the very clear exception: it is about as common a prerequisite among older adults as among younger ones (35% vs. 39% — just a four point difference). This age gap appears to be about finances and life milestones, not marriage per se.

Turning to the younger group, other differences emerge that can be as large as the gap between our two main age groups. Among adults under 40, the number of conditions varies by race, religious attendance, and household income, and these differences remain when we compare people similar in education, income, marital status, parenthood, and religious attendance.

Prerequisites for Having Children Among Adults Age 18-39

Average number of prerequisites rated extremely important from a list of eight



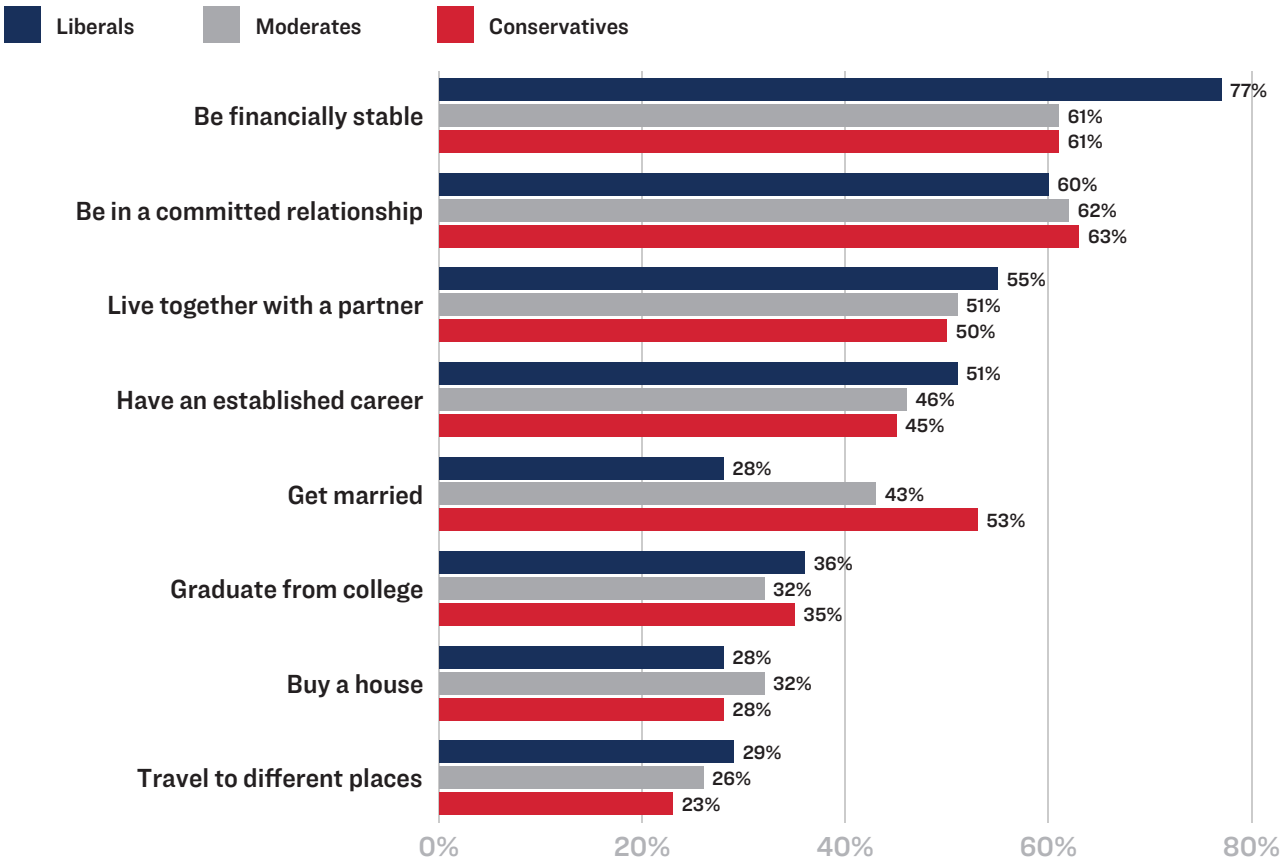
SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on Americans age 18-39.
QUESTION WORDING: How important do you think it is for a person to do each of these things before having their first child?

Black adults under 40 rate about 1.3 more prerequisites as extremely important than white adults under 40 (4.5 items against 3.2). And religion matters as well: younger adults who attend religious services weekly name 0.8 more than those who seldom or never attend. Younger adults in richer households (earning $100,000 or more) name 0.6 more than those earning under $50,000. The bottom line is that there is no uniform standard for what people believe must happen before having children. Different groups set variable bars, and this can pose a challenge for policymakers.

There are few gender effects: women under 40 name 3.7 prerequisites and men 3.4, a gap that largely disappears when we compare otherwise similar men and women. But it is worth noting that gender matters far more for whether people want children at all. Among adults under 40, 37% of men say they definitely want children, compared with just 27% of women — and 25% of women say they definitely do not, compared with just 13% of men. (See Decisions About Having Children for a detailed look at who wants children.)

Prerequisites for Children by Political Ideology

Percent of young adults ages 18-39 rating each prerequisite as extremely important



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on Americans age 18-39.
QUESTION WORDING: How important do you think it is for a person to do each of these things before having their first child?

Whatever disagreements exist about having kids, they are only somewhat ideological. Both liberal and conservative Americans under 40 hold almost exactly the same number of prerequisites — 3.6 each.

What separates these younger Americans is which prerequisites.

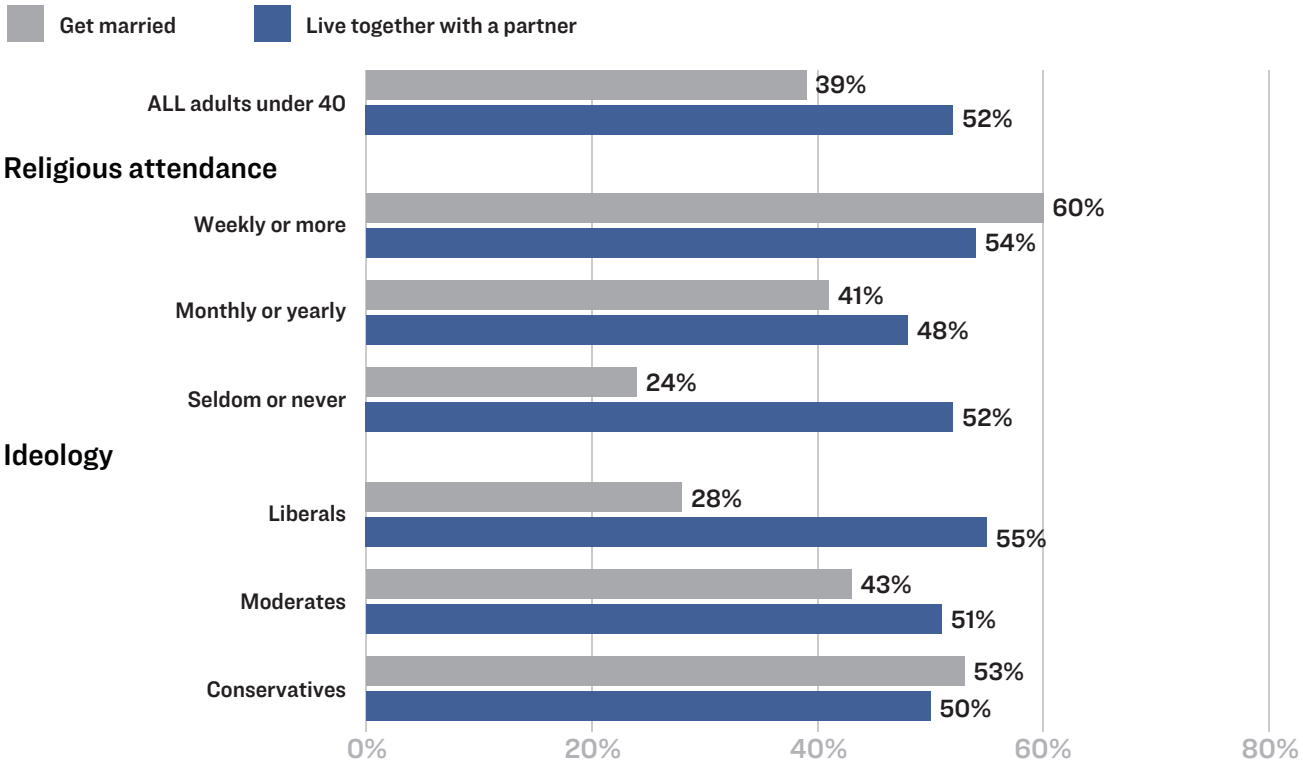
- Over half of young conservatives (53%) say it is extremely important to get married before having a child; just over a quarter of young liberals (28%) do.
- Financial stability goes the opposite way, though the gap is smaller: 77% of young liberals say financial stability is extremely important, compared with 61% of young conservatives.

Neither group is obviously more demanding, but they weight different considerations differently. Conservatives rank marriage third of the eight conditions, while liberals rank it near the bottom. Financial stability is first for liberals and second for conservatives, but liberals clearly stress it more.

Living conditions are not particularly controversial: about half of every ideological and religious group (48% to 55%) say living together is extremely important before having a child. But younger adults do rate living together (52%) higher than marriage (39%). Marriage varies as a value: 24% of young adults who seldom or never attend religious services call it extremely important, compared with 60% of weekly attenders, 28% of liberals, and 53% of conservatives. The only groups that consistently rank marriage above living together are weekly church attenders and conservatives.

Relative Importance of Living Together vs. Marriage Before Having Children

Percent of young adults ages 18-39 rating each prerequisite as extremely important



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on Americans age 18-39.
QUESTION WORDING: How important do you think it is for a person to do each of these things before having their first child?

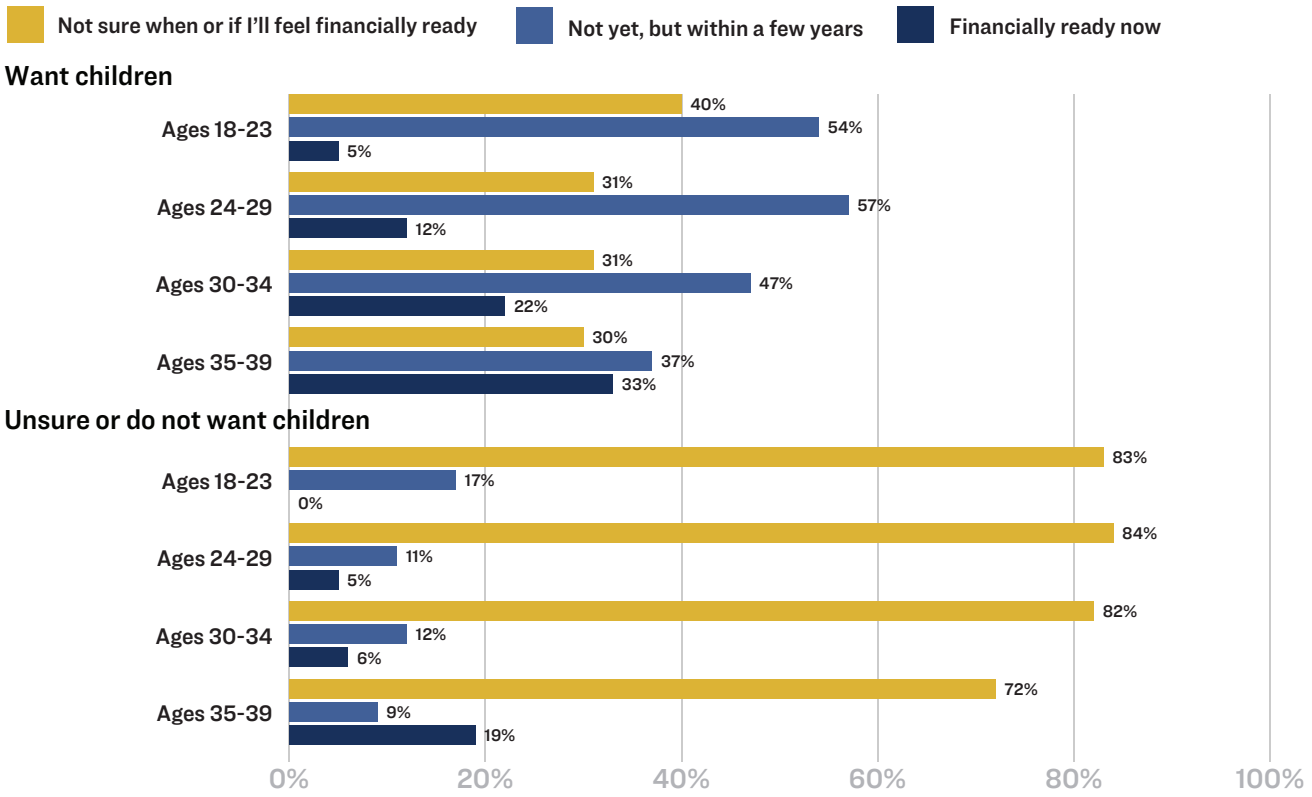
Race also matters for this question of living together vs. marriage. Fifty-four percent of Black adults under 40 say it is extremely important to marry before having a child, compared with just one third of white adults under 40. Younger Blacks are also more likely than younger whites to name financial stability (81% vs. 60%), an established career (64% vs. 40%), and living together (62% vs. 50%). And this gap changes very little when we compare people similar in education, income, marital status, parenthood, religious attendance, and ideology; in fact, it actually grows very slightly.

But what about actually being married? This looks quite different. Just 24% of Black adults under 40 are currently married, compared with 39% of white adults under 40, though rates of parenthood in this age group are similar. This illustrates the point that a standard is an aspiration, while an outcome is a reality. People may hold certain standards and achieve almost opposite outcomes. The pattern fits research finding that many lower-income Americans hold marriage in high regard and simultaneously set a very high economic bar for it.

By far the most widely held prerequisite for having children is financial stability: 68% of Americans under 40 call it extremely important before having a child, and it is at or near the top of the list for every subgroup we examined. Most young adults who want children expect to have them, though age makes a difference. Among childless adults under 40 who want children, a majority at every age either feel financially ready now or expect to be ready within a few years, and the share who currently feel ready climbs from 5% among the youngest to 33% among those 35 to 39. But about a third say they are not sure when or if they will ever feel financially ready, and that share stops falling after the early twenties: 31% in the late twenties, 31% in the early thirties, and 30% in the late thirties.

Financial Readiness for Having Children

Percent of young adults ages 18-39



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on Americans age 18-39 who have no children.
QUESTION WORDING: Do you feel financially ready to have children?

Perhaps the single most important variable influencing readiness to have children is the question of wanting children in the first place. Those who are unsure or do not want children tend to look quite similar, and members of this group cannot name a time when they will be financially ready to have children.

Is this group amenable to a policy intervention? Perhaps not, or at least not easily. For one thing, many of them are indifferent to the idea of children. But there is the question of cost. Since finances are the most consistent prerequisite, policies that lower the cost of a first child (see Policies to Support Families) would speak to the question of standards of living and cost. We cannot say with any degree of certainty that this policy response would change the overall picture, but we can say that the data leave it open as a possibility.

However, two facts complicate this picture. First, young adults with higher incomes actually have longer lists of prerequisites. For those earning $100,000 or more, the number is 3.9 prerequisites, compared with just 3.3 for those earning under $50,000. Perhaps if incomes were boosted or circumstances changed, the numbers might change, but that comparison sits uneasily with the idea that a higher incomes will lead to more children.

But we also found that a longer list of prerequisites is not correlated with less interest in children. In fact, young adults who name more prerequisites are somewhat more likely to want children. The problem is that the checklist may be measuring two things at the same time: reasons to put off children as well as how seriously people take the decision. About a third of young adults who want children cannot say when they will be financially ready. And it is possible that no amount of help would be enough. Some prerequisites can be addressed, as things like a degree, a career, or a house are purchasable. Marriage, however, as a prerequisite tracks most closely with religious attendance and ideology, and there is little reason to believe that policymakers could affect those factors.

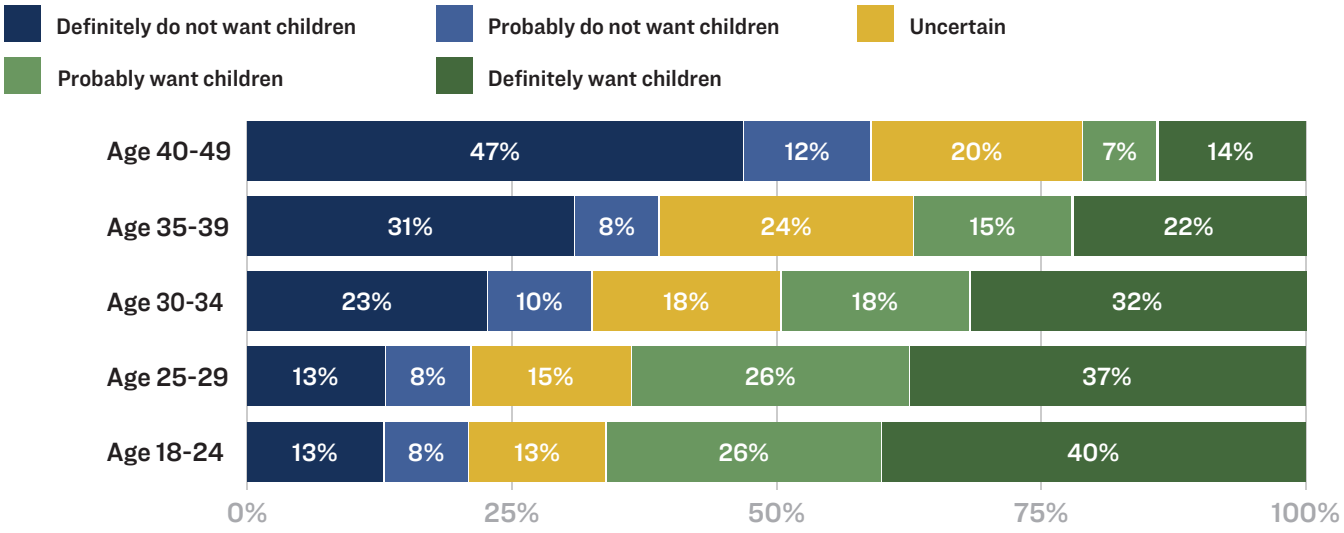
DECISIONS ABOUT HAVING CHILDREN

Most childless young adults want children and agree on the personal reasons to have them, but liberals and conservatives are divided over questions of cost and social support.

1 in 5
childless adults ages 40-49 say they still want children.

Desire for Children

Percent among childless adults in each age group



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on Americans under age 50 who do not have children.
QUESTION WORDING: Do you personally hope or desire to have [a child/another child] someday?

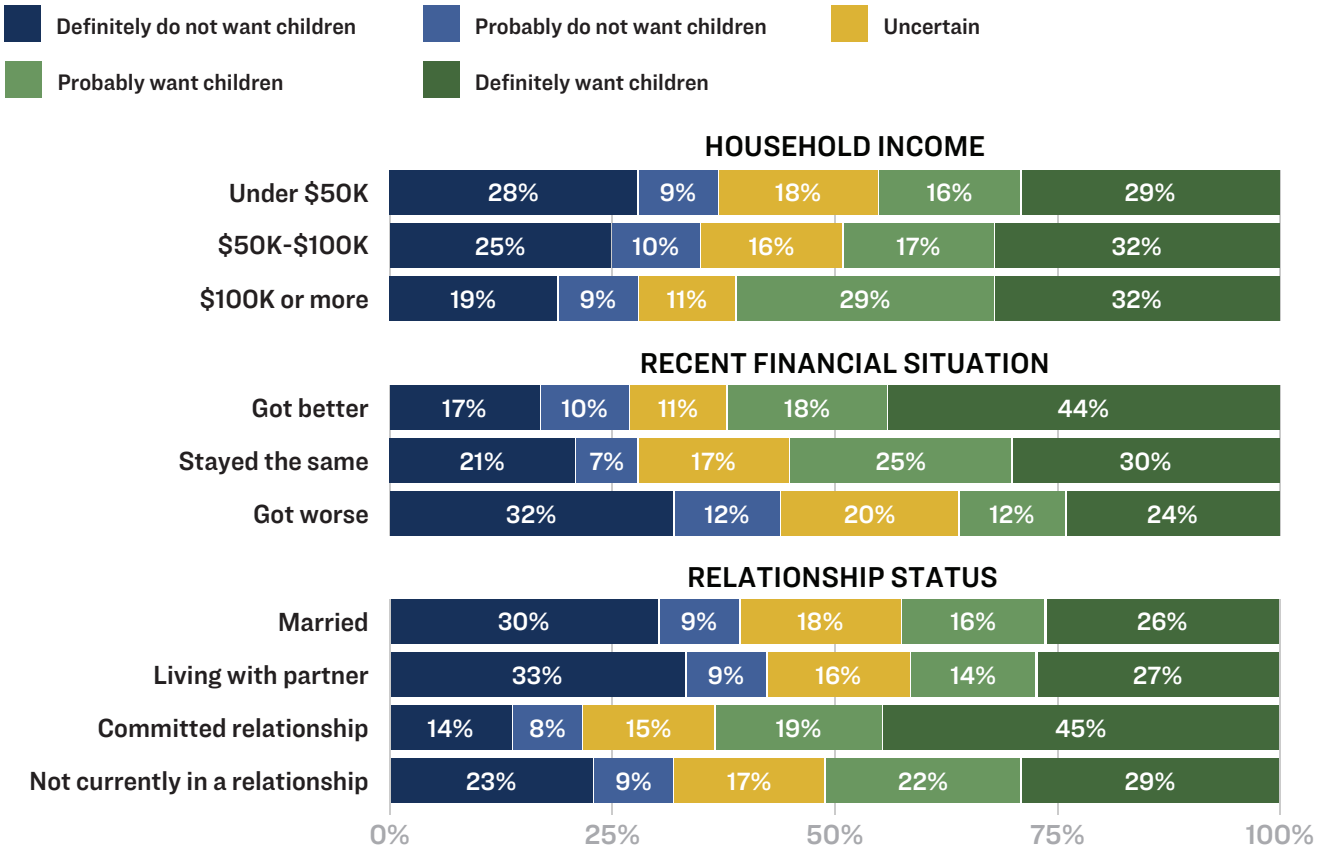
Among adults without children, more people want children than do not. However, this is a plurality and not a majority, as plenty of people do not desire children, and those that do are typically young. Moreover, among those without children, the desire for them falls precipitously with age. For instance, among childless adults 18 to 29, 65% want children (definitely or probably) and 21% do not. Among those in their 30s, the split narrows to about 45% and 35%. After 40 it reverses: 21% want children and 59% do not.

People may cool on the idea of kids as they age, but much of the difference reflects that fact that those who remain in the childless group as they age probably wanted children less to begin with. Still, it is worth noting that one in five childless adults ages 40-49 say they want children (14% definitely, 7% probably). That group deserves attention in the fertility policy conversation.

Relationship status and recent financial changes both line up with how strongly people want these kids. Childless adults in a committed relationship are the most likely to say they definitely want children (45%). This compares with just 26% of those who are married and 27% of those living with a partner. And the gap when broken out by changes in finances is roughly the same: 44% of those whose finances got better say they definitely want children, compared with 24% of those whose finances got worse. Strikingly, income level makes little difference to who definitely wants children: 29%, 32%, and 32% across the three income groups. However, it is true that more income does correlate with people saying that they "probably" want children (29% among those earning $100,000 or more, compared with 16% to 17% in the lower groups).

Desire for Children by Income and Relationship Status

Percent among childless adults in each group



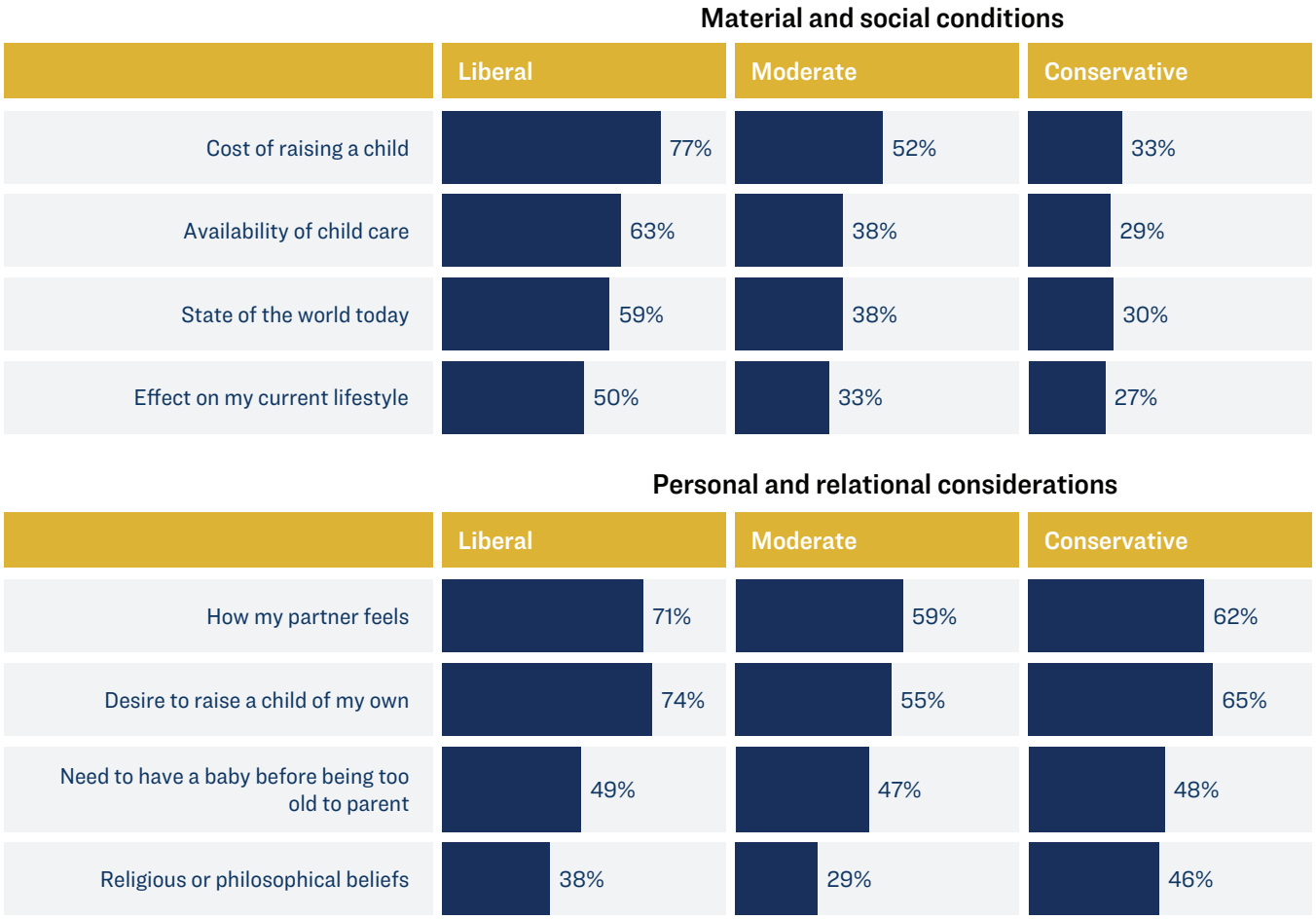
SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on Americans under age 50 who do not have children.
QUESTION WORDING: Do you personally hope or desire to have [a child/another child] someday?

People clearly think prospectively about this, with desire for children following more along the lines of "What direction are my finances headed?" than "What have I experienced lately?" The clearest economic difference in desire has to do with whether finances have changed — not their income level.

Moreover, we also asked childless adults who definitely want children how important each of twelve considerations is in deciding whether to have children. And the largest distinctions were ideological.

Factors Influencing the Decision to Have Children

Percent saying each consideration is extremely important among those under age 50 who definitely want children



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026.* Based on Americans under age 50 who do not have children and definitely want children.
QUESTION WORDING: Apart from physical ability to conceive a child, how important are each of these factors for your decisions about having children in the future?

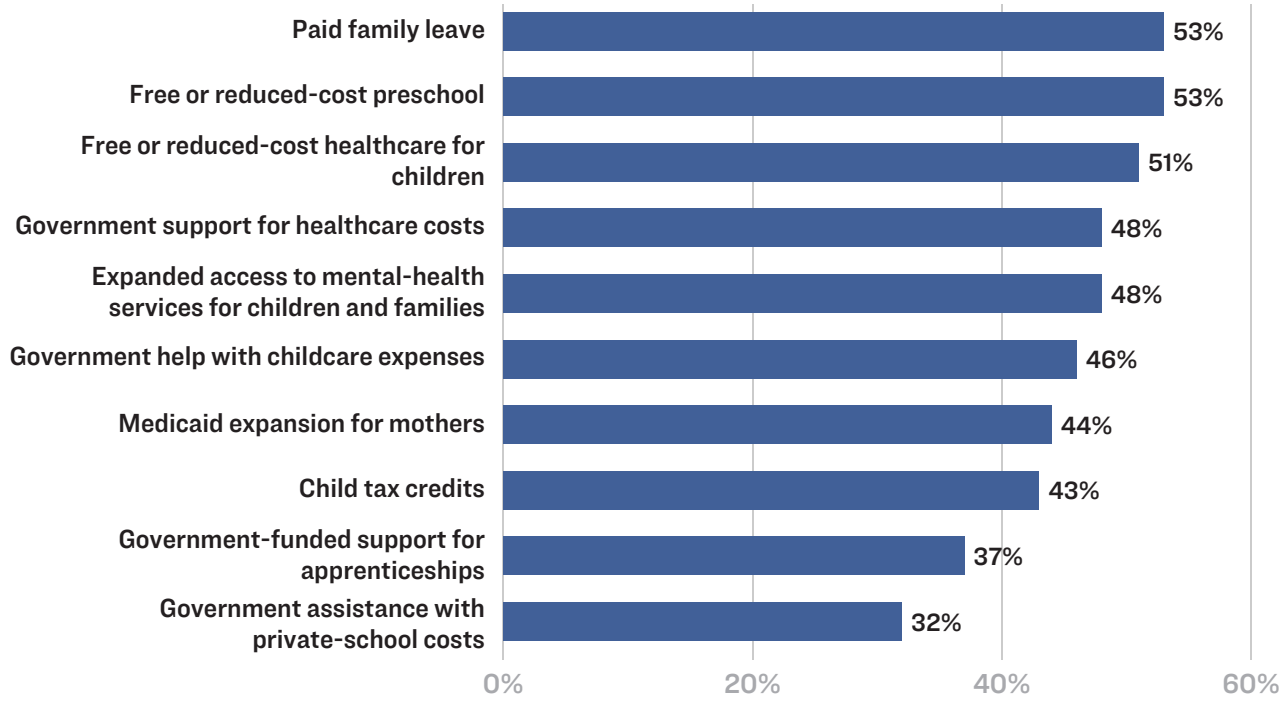
People of all political stripes — liberals, moderates, and conservatives — who are interested in children largely agree on the personal side of the decision. They disagree about conditions in the wider world.

For instance, they agree on the importance of a partner's feelings, one's own desires and the biological clock. None of those considerations show a gap of even ten points between liberals and conservatives. But when we shift to the cost of raising a child, liberals and conservatives are 44 points apart, with moderates roughly in between. On child care, the state of the world, and the effect on one's current lifestyle, moderates sit much closer to conservatives, and liberals are the outlying group. Liberals and conservatives are not separated by the seriousness with which they take the decision (indeed the overall impression is that people take this quite seriously). What separates people ideologically is how they see conditions outside their own household: What does the world look like, and what is society willing to provide?

The difference is crucial for family policy because these debates reflect the same question: How much does the decision to have a baby turn on economic status and prospects?

Policies to Help Families

Percent who say each would be very helpful, among childless adults under 50 who want children



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on Americans under age 50 who do not have children and definitely or probably want children.
QUESTION WORDING: Consider the policies below. In your opinion, how helpful would each policy be for family well-being in the United States if it were passed? Response options: Very helpful, helpful, neither, unhelpful, very unhelpful.

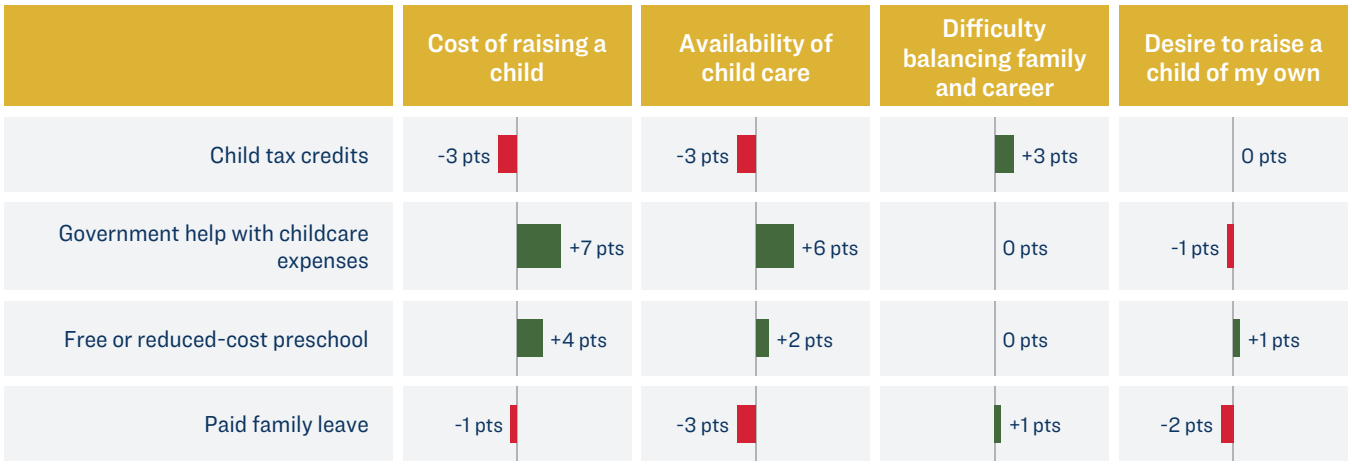
Childless adults who want children rate many potential family policies as "very helpful." Paid family leave and free or reduced-cost preschool sit atop the list (53% each), and those policies are followed closely by free or reduced-cost health care for children (51%). Help with child-care expenses (46%) and child tax credits (43%) rank in the middle, and apprenticeships (37%) and help with private-school costs (32%) rank lowest. Our interpretation is that support is broad, but clearly not equal across the board. And while it is true that people want cash and support, child tax credits are not at the top of the policy list. People are quite open to institutional assistance.

Because so many people call so many policies "very helpful," we went further with a narrower question: Do people who care about a particular concern rate the most clearly related policy higher than they rate policies in general? In other words, do policies stand out for people based on their expressed needs?

In the next figure, a value above zero means a group singles out that policy out over and above their baseline for saying policies are helpful; zero means it does not. Negative values mean a policy comes in lower than the average baseline. The figure explores policy ratings among groups who said certain factors are extremely important to their decision to have children.

Fertility Concerns and Policy Priorities

Percentage-point difference in policy ratings relative to average scores across 10 policies, according to factors influencing decision to have children



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on Americans under age 50 who do not have children and definitely or probably want children.
QUESTION WORDING: Consider the policies below. In your opinion, how helpful would each policy be for family well-being in the United States if it were passed? / Apart from physical ability to conceive a child, how important are each of these factors for your decisions about having children in the future?

Frankly, putting conditions like this on the data shows that most people are, in most cases, simply answering based on their baseline desire for help. But there is an exception. People who say that the cost of raising a child is extremely important rate help with child-care expenses about seven points above their baseline. And those who say child-care availability is an important factor rate the policy about six points above baseline. The implication is that these policies are special. People are answering not only based on their general instinct for help, but by placing a special emphasis on these ways of helping with costs. The rest — tax credits, paid family leave, and so forth — do not stand out in the same way. Policymakers would do well to pay attention to these results.

When it comes to family policy, child care is the one concern people connect to specific remedies. Paid family leave may be the most popular policy, but people don't seem to single it out above their baseline approval of family policies generally. Child tax credits — a key focus in the debate — are similar in lacking any particular constituency. Perhaps those policies would help. But this analysis shows that child-care costs are not just top of mind for many who want children, they are also linked in many people's minds to a particular set of policy responses.

THE AMERICAN FAMILY SURVEY

CHILD CARE

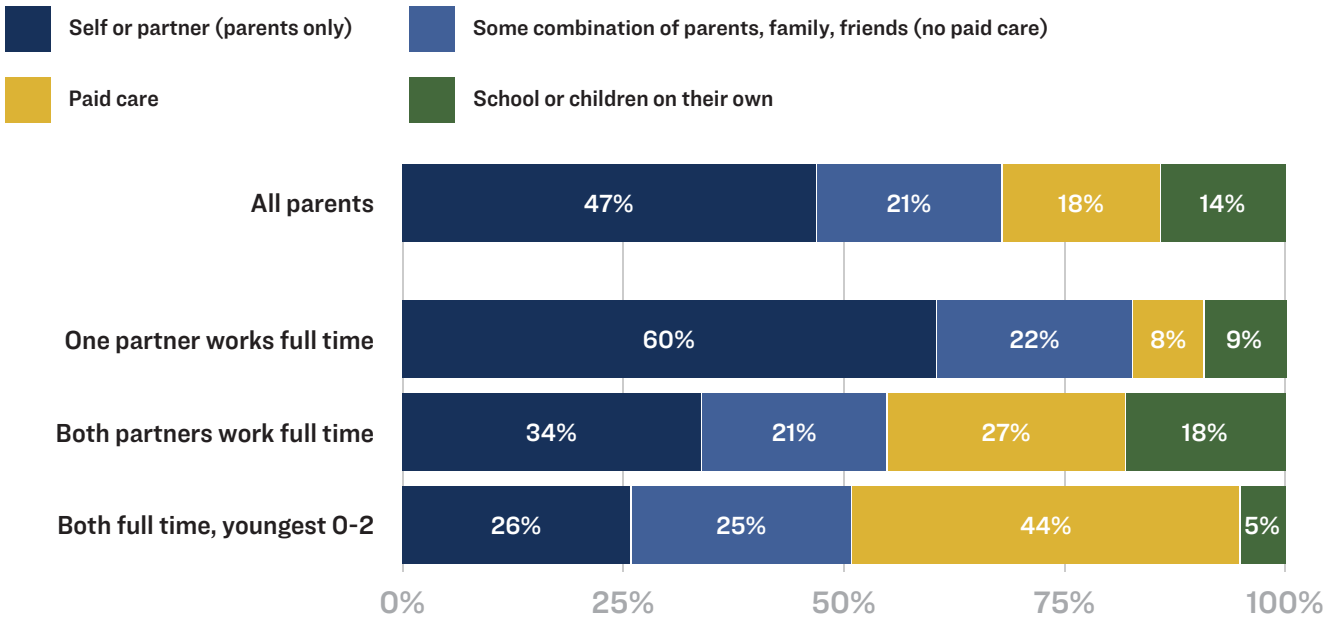
Many working parents handle child care themselves, and flexible jobs appear to facilitate this — though often at a cost to their work and family plans.

1 in 3 parents

in families where both partners work full time use no outside child care during the work day.

Who Provides Child Care?

Percentage among parents with a child under 12 at home



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on parents with a child under 12 at home.
QUESTION WORDING: Who provides the primary care for your children during the work day? Select all that apply. (Note: Chart categories are mutually exclusive: families using any paid care are counted as "paid care.")

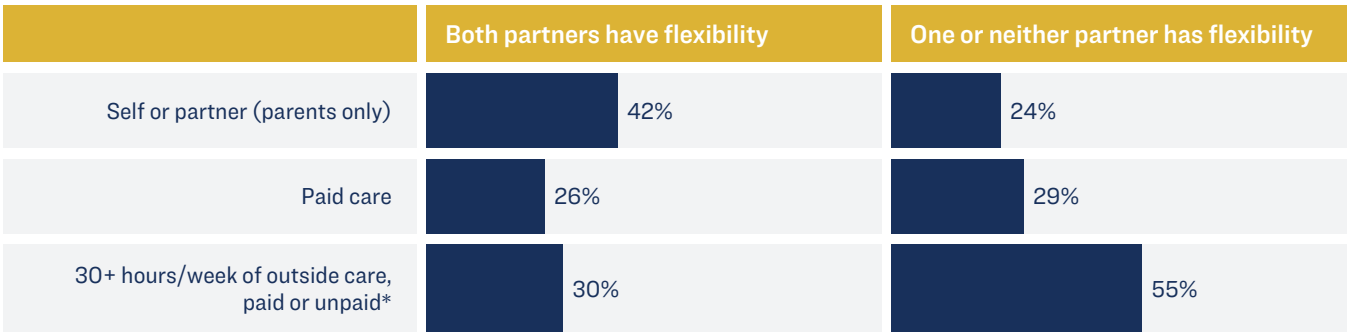
For most families, there is no single answer to the question of who watches the kids. Half of parents with a child under 12 (51%) name more than one source of care during the work day, and one in five (21%) rely on three or more: some mix of themselves, a partner, grandparents, school, a sitter, or daycare. This year's survey offers a look at how families fit those pieces together. (Because the survey was fielded between July 20 and August 6, when most schools are out, these responses may reflect summertime arrangements for some families with school-age children.)

Nearly half of parents say they rely only on themselves or their partner or coparent for care during the workday, without enlisting assistance from other sources. Even among couples where both partners work full time, fully a third (34%) use no outside care. This varies by income, with 56% of parents earning under $50,000 handling care themselves, compared with 36% among those earning $100,000 or more, and daycare use rises from 6% to 18% in the highest income group.

Yet paid care is still used by only a minority of parents with children under 12. Even among families with a child age 0-2 where both partners work full time, only 44% use paid care, while more than half manage without it. Fully a quarter (26%) of these dual full-time couples with a baby or toddler have no outside help at all. One way they make this work is through workplace flexibility.

Dual Full-Time Couples: How They Cover Child Care, by Workplace Flexibility

Percentage among couples where both partners work full time, with a child under 12 at home



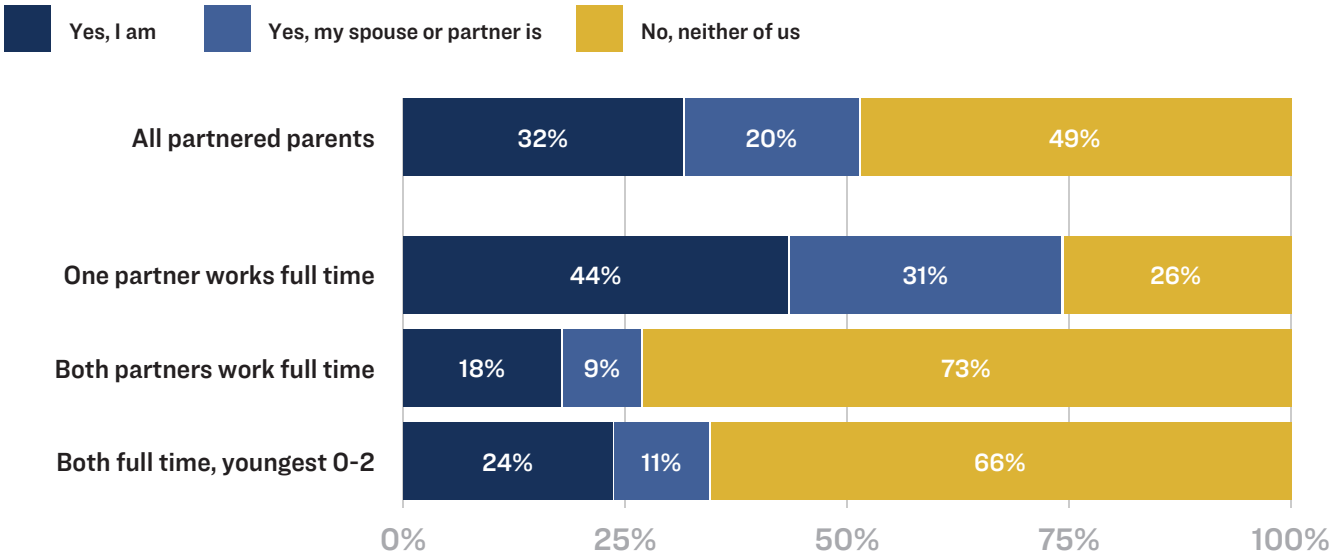
SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on parents with a child under 12 at home.
QUESTION WORDING: Who provides the primary care for your children during the work day? Select all that apply. / Approximately how many hours per week does your child receive care from someone other than a parent? Note: "Flexibility" includes those who say they or their partner have "a great deal" or "some" flexibility in when and where they work. "Paid care" includes those who use a sitter, nanny, daycare, or nursery school, alone or with other arrangements.

When both partners in a dual full-time family have jobs that allow flexibility in where and when they work, 42% use no outside care. But among couples with less workplace flexibility, the figure is only 24%. Levels of paid care barely differ between these two groups (26% vs. 29%), which suggests that flexibility doesn't replace daycare for many families. Instead, flexibility appears to replace other arrangements, such as school or children minding themselves. This pattern holds regardless of the youngest child's age. Even among couples who use some outside care, those with two flexible jobs are far less likely to rely on it full time (30% vs. 55% receive 30 or more hours a week). Still, the survey can't say whether flexible jobs make this possible or whether parents who want to provide their own care seek out flexible jobs.

For some families, workplace flexibility appears to blur the line between being a working parent and a stay-at-home parent.

Identification as a "Stay-at-Home" Parent

Percentage among married or cohabiting parents with a child under 12 at home



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on married or cohabiting parents with a child under 12 at home.
QUESTION WORDING: Do you or your spouse or partner consider yourselves to be a stay-at-home parent?

Notably, about a quarter (27%) of parents in a couple where both partners work full time say one of them is a stay-at-home parent. And among those in dual full-time couples with a baby or toddler, a third (34%) say this.

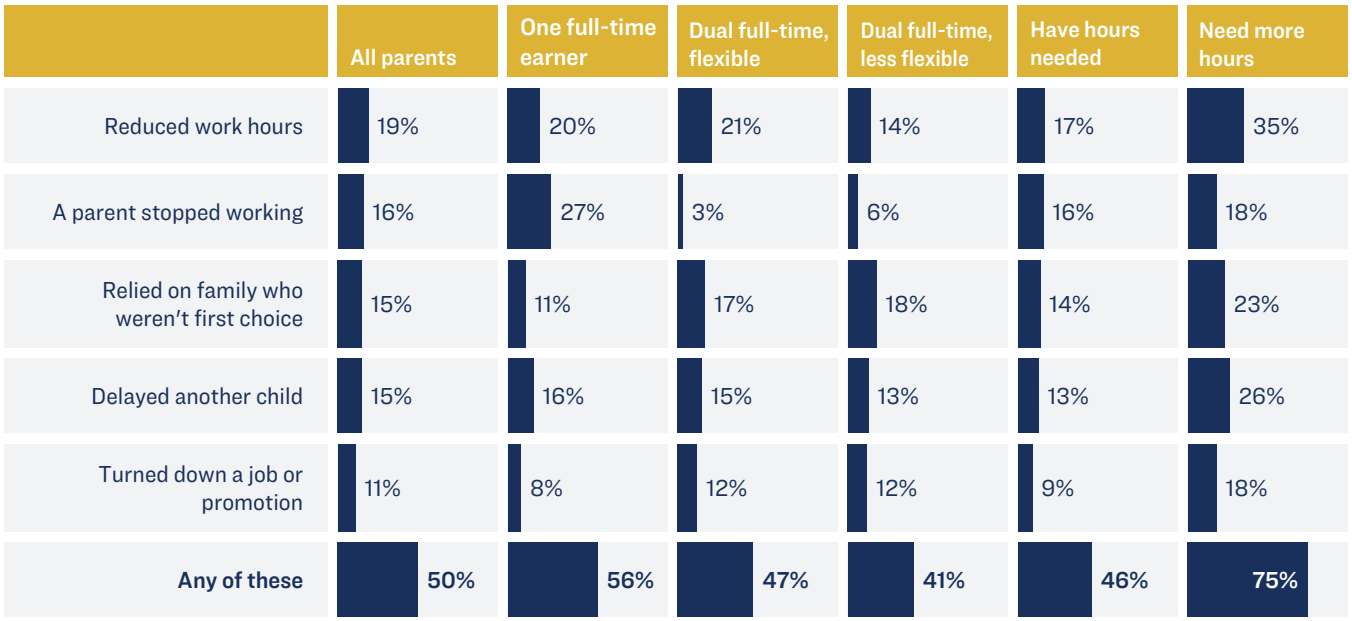
More than half of these self-described stay-at-home parents also work 35 or more hours a week for pay, suggesting that for some families, "staying home" now means being the parent who's there, even while holding a full-time job — perhaps by working split shifts or caring for children while working simultaneously. Indeed, 95% of these families have at least one partner with some amount of workplace flexibility, and 60% use no outside care during the work day.

This year's American Family Survey also asked parents how many hours per week their child is cared for by someone other than a parent, along with a question about how many hours per week would best meet their family's needs. Most parents say they have about the amount of care they need (82%). That is, either their current hours already meet their needs (34%), or the number of hours they would prefer falls in the same range as the hours they already have (48%). Only 12% say they need more care than they have, and 7% say they need fewer hours.

But having enough care often comes at a cost.

Tradeoffs Because of the Cost of Child Care

Percentage among parents with a child under 12 at home



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on parents with a child under 12 at home.
QUESTION WORDING: Have you or your partner ever done any of the following because of the cost of childcare? Select all that apply.

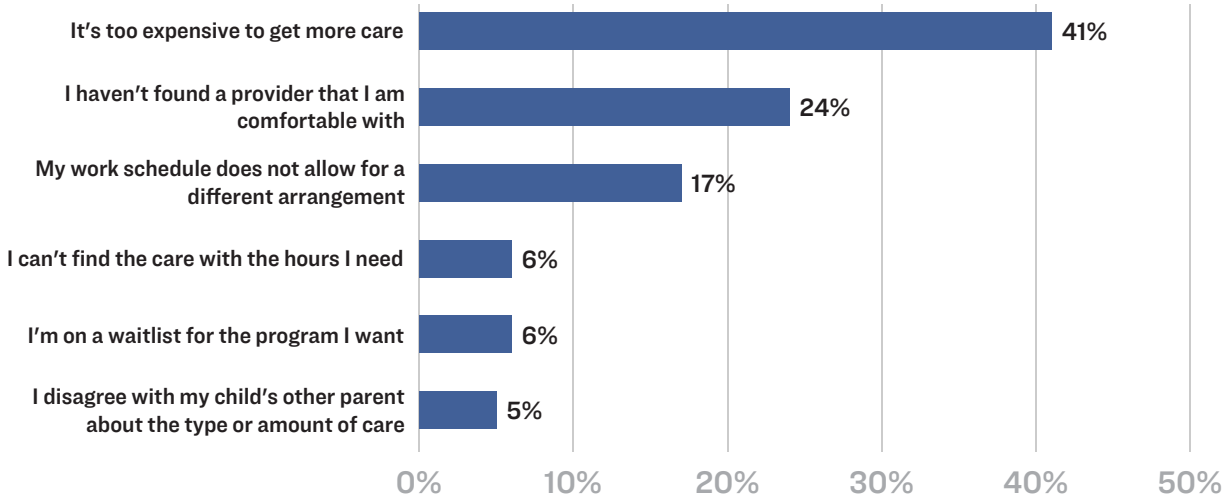
Half of parents with a child under age 12 at home say they have made at least one sacrifice due to the cost of child care, such as reducing work hours, delaying having another child, or turning down a job. Even among parents who say they have the number of hours of child care they need, 46% appear to have made a cost-driven tradeoff to achieve it.

In families where only one partner works full-time, more than a quarter (27%) of respondents say a parent stopped working because of child care costs, indicating that for some families, having one parent at home isn't purely a preference. And even among those with two incomes and flexible jobs, nearly half (47%) have made at least one trade-off due to cost. For most families, those trade-offs have produced an arrangement that works.

But a smaller group of parents is still falling short. About one in eight (12%) say they need more hours of care than they have, and many have struggled to find it. Among this group of parents, three-quarters (75%) have made a trade-off, including 35% who reduced work hours. Nearly half of these parents (45%) say they had trouble finding child care in the past two years, compared with 18% of parents overall. Difficulty finding care is also more common among lower-income parents (24% of those earning under $50,000) and parents of young children (22% of those whose youngest child is under 5).

Why Parents Don't Have the Child Care They Need

Percentage among parents who need more hours of child care than they have



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on parents with a child under 12 at home who say they need more hours of care than they currently have.
QUESTION WORDING: What is the main reason you don't currently have the amount of childcare that would work best for you?

Asked why they don't have the care they need, these parents most often point to cost (41%), followed by not finding a provider they're comfortable with (24%). Notably, 17% say their own work schedule stands in the way, while few (6%) say they can't find care with the hours they need.

Taken together, these findings illustrate the complexity of the child care challenge. Most parents have about the amount of care they need, often by providing it themselves. But half of parents have paid for their arrangements with reduced work, a lost paycheck, or a delayed child, and those without flexibility or the means to pay for care are the most likely to struggle to find it.

For many families, the most important child care arrangement may be a flexible job that fills the gaps daycare doesn't cover. In that sense, workplace flexibility is becoming a part of the nation's child care infrastructure, deserving a place in conversations about the supply and cost of child care.

CONCERNS ABOUT THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY

Americans believe some technologies offer genuine benefits, while others prompt broad concern about their effects on young people and families.

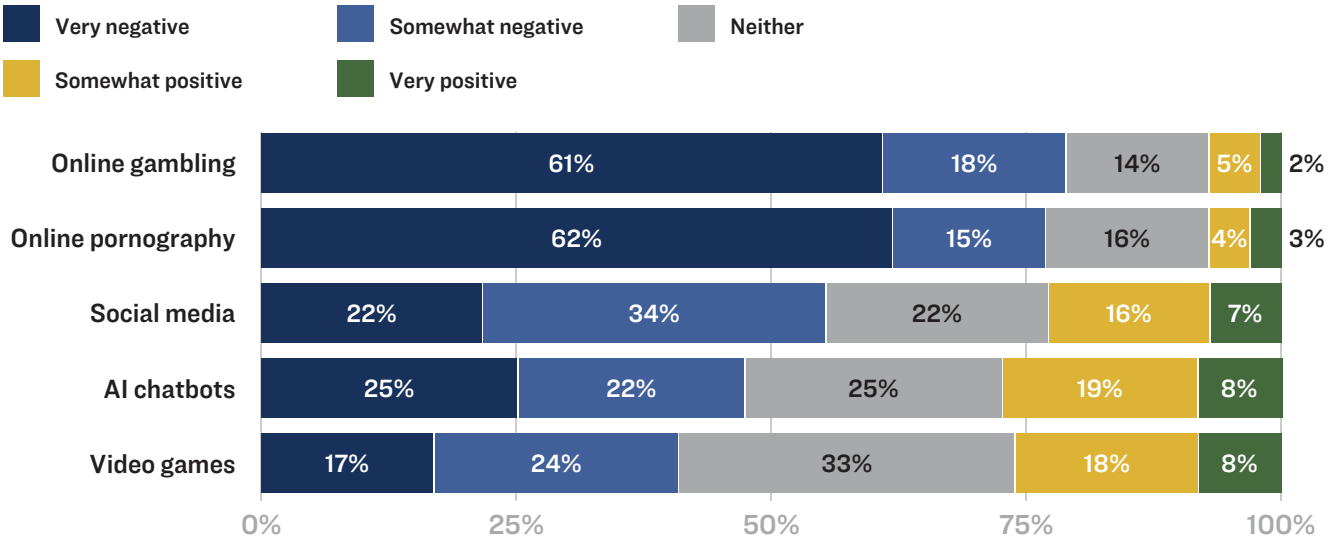
44%

of Americans ages 18-40 believe video games have a positive effect on young people today.

Americans are overwhelmingly pessimistic about the effects of online gambling and pornography on young people. Nearly 8 in 10 Americans give these online behaviors a negative rating, and over 6 in 10 rate them as "very negative." Fewer than 1 in 10 Americans give either a positive evaluation. These are not narrowly partisan or demographic judgments. Negative assessments of both technologies are widespread throughout the sample, despite the fact that these are very different sorts of vices.

Evaluations of Technology's Effect on Young People

Percentage selecting each response option



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026.* Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: How positive or negative are the effects of the following on young people today? Items: social media; online pornography; artificial-intelligence chatbots; video games; online gambling. Response options: Very positive; Somewhat positive; Neither positive nor negative; Somewhat negative; Very negative.

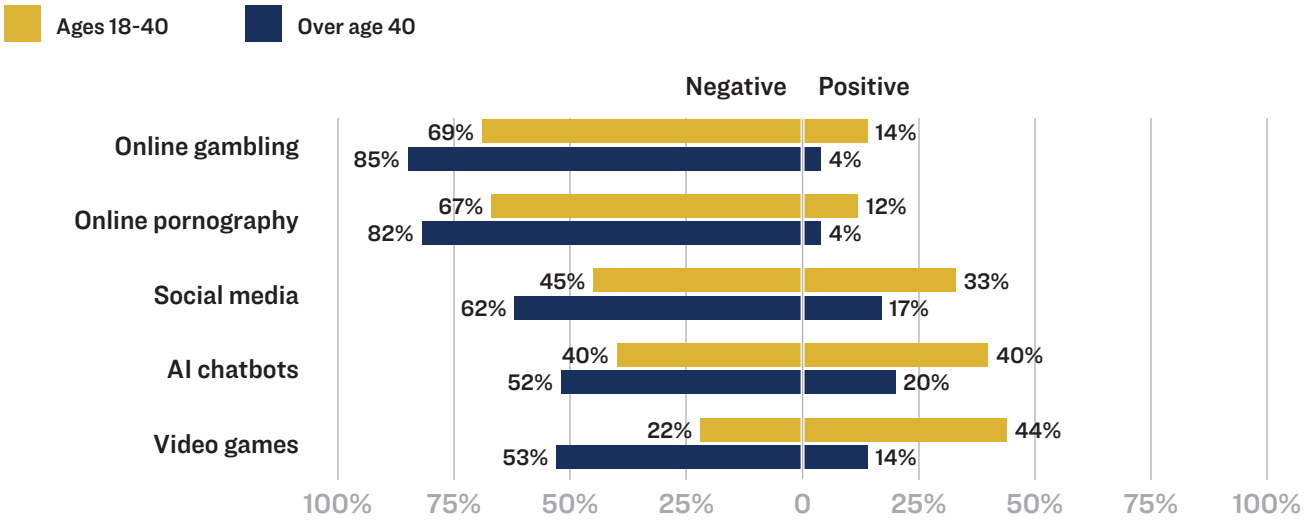
Views of other technologies are decidedly more mixed. For example, while a majority evaluate social media negatively, nearly one quarter of respondents say it is either somewhat or very positive. AI chatbots divide the public in similar ways. Video games receive the least negative assessment. About 4 in 10 view the effects of video gaming negatively, a little more than one quarter see them positively, and one-third choose the middle category, saying they are neither positive nor negative. In contrast to the overwhelming negativity about gambling and pornography, evaluations of social media, AI chatbots, and video games inspire concern, but they also leave considerably more room for ambivalence and even favorable judgments.

Parents with children under age 18 at home generally rank the technologies in the same order, but perhaps surprisingly, they are somewhat more positive than the public overall. They are especially more favorable toward AI chatbots and video games, with around 4 in 10 saying they are at least somewhat positive influences and between one quarter and one third of parents evaluating them negatively. This comparative optimism is striking, given that they may be seeing the influence of these technologies firsthand in their homes.

More generally, young people tend to be substantially less negative and more positive than older Americans about all these forms of technology. Forty-four percent of adults ages 18-40 evaluate video games positively and 22% negatively. Among adults over 40, only 14% are positive, and 53% are negative. And when it comes to AI bots, Americans under 40 are equally divided between negative and positive assessments, while a majority of those over 40 lean in the negative direction. Social media elicits negative assessments from both groups, but the balance is less negative among younger adults. And while the vast majority of younger Americans still think that online gambling and pornography are bad for young people, Americans over 40 are even more convinced of the negative effects of these online behaviors.

Views of Technology by Age

Percentage assessing each technology negatively (left) and positively (right)

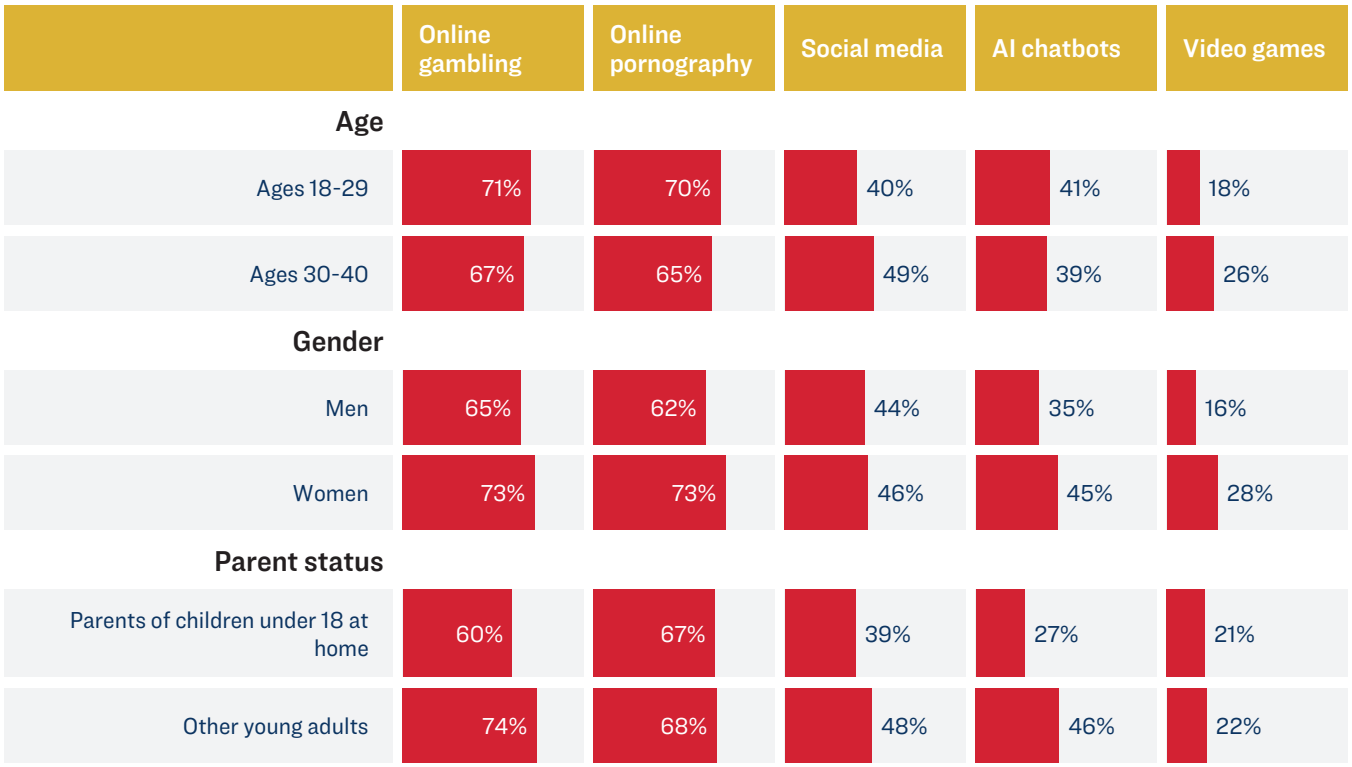


SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: How positive or negative are the effects of the following on young people today? Items: social media; online pornography; artificial-intelligence chatbots; video games; online gambling. Response options: Very positive; Somewhat positive; Neither positive nor negative; Somewhat negative; Very negative.

The following figure focuses on negative judgments among adults age 18-40 across age, gender, and parental status. The red shading emphasizes that each cell reports the percentage offering a somewhat or very negative assessment.

Negative Views of Technology

Percentage of adults ages 18-40 evaluating each technology as somewhat or very negative



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on Americans ages 18-40.
QUESTION WORDING: How positive or negative are the effects of the following on young people today?

The two age categories — 18-29 and 30-40 — are generally more alike than different. Those ages 30-40 are somewhat more negative about social media and video games. These are the only two age differences that reach standard levels of statistical significance, so the small differences for the other categories should not be taken as evidence of meaningful age-based divides.

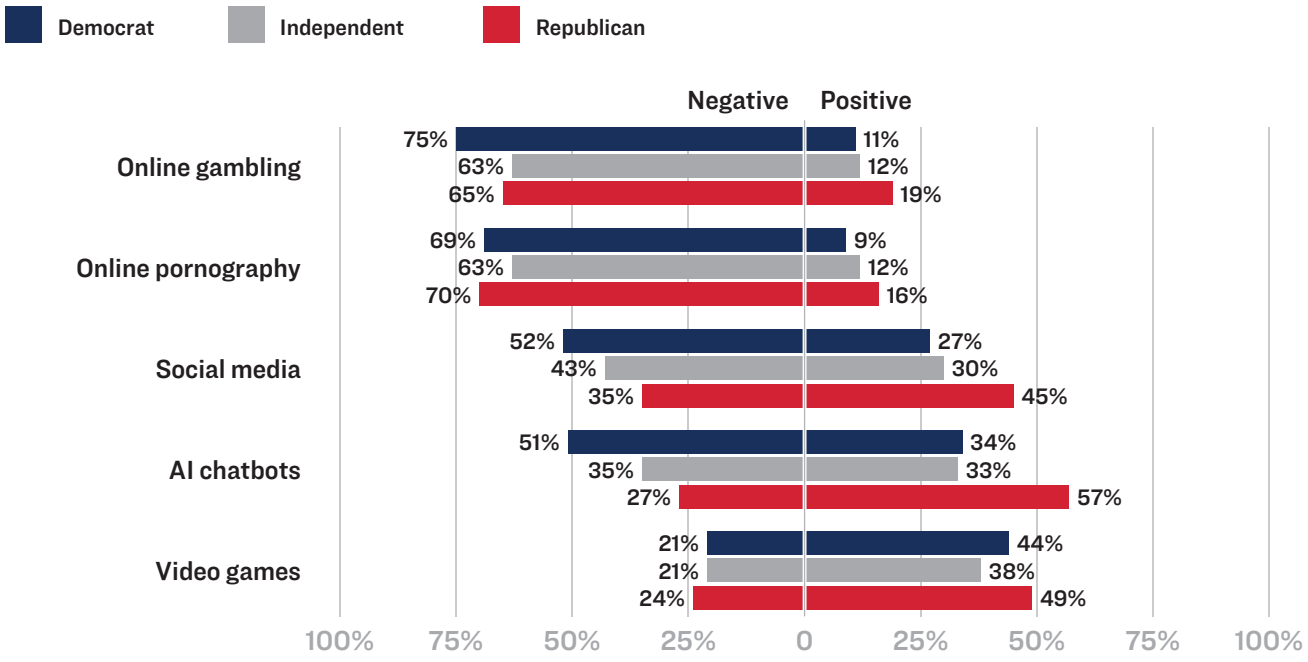
Gender differences, by contrast, are larger for all technologies except social media. Young women are more negative than young men about online gambling (73% versus 65%), online pornography (73% versus 62%), AI chatbots (45% versus 35%), and video games (28% versus 16%).

In keeping with the findings among the full sample, parents with a child under 18 at home evaluate several of these forms of technology less negatively than other young adults. The clearest differences concern AI chatbots — 27% negative among parents compared with 46% among other young adults — and online gambling, where the corresponding estimates are 60% and 74%. Parents with children under 18 in the home are also around 10 percentage points less negative in their assessments of social media. While this pattern should not be read as a causal effect of parenthood, given the variety of differences between parents and nonparents, it is notable that parents are less roundly critical of at least some of these uses of technology.

Differing assessments of technology also separate partisans in the sample. Young Democrats are substantially more negative than young Republicans about social media (52% versus 35%) and AI chatbots (51% versus 27%) and somewhat more negative about online gambling (75% versus 65%). The positive assessments reinforce the divide: Republicans are the most positive partisan group toward all five technologies, with especially large differences for AI chatbots and social media. Given the importance of social conservatism among Republicans, it is perhaps surprising that they are comparatively more positive about both online gambling and pornography, though those differences are relatively small and perhaps tempered by the fact that supermajorities of all Americans evaluate those uses of technology negatively.

Partisan Differences in Evaluations of Technology Among Young Adults

Percentage of adults ages 18-40 assessing each technology negatively (left) and positively (right)

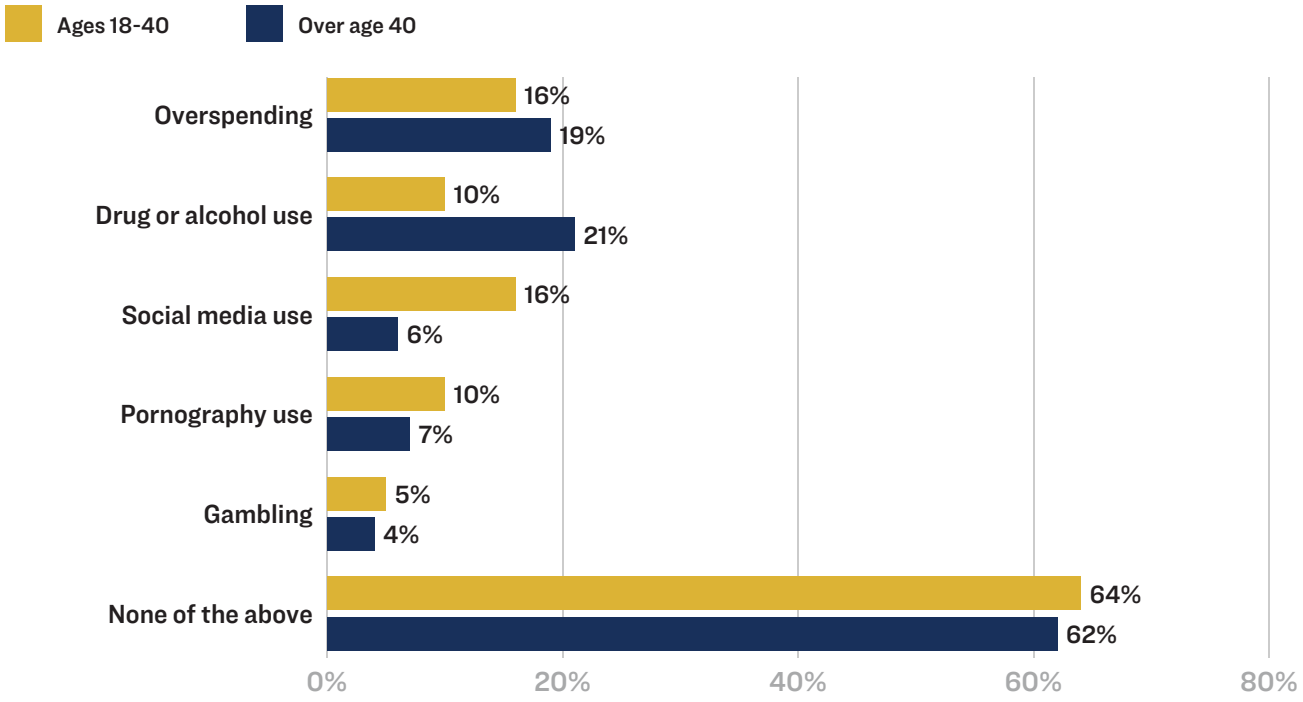


SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on Americans ages 18-40.
QUESTION WORDING: How positive or negative are the effects of the following on young people today? Items: social media; online pornography; artificial-intelligence chatbots; video games; online gambling. Response options: Very positive; Somewhat positive; Neither positive nor negative; Somewhat negative; Very negative.

Beyond the general evaluations of different forms and uses of technology, one closer-to-home question is whether technology has caused problems in romantic relationships and, if so, how that compares with other sources of relationship friction. We asked respondents who had been in a marriage or relationship at any point in the past whether any of five distinct issues — overspending, drug or alcohol use, social media, pornography, or gambling — has ever been a problem in a past or current relationship. While 6 in 10 respondents say none of these issues has ever arisen in their relationships, where such problems have occurred, younger and older adults report different kinds of difficulties.

Types of Relationship Problems by Age

Percentage saying each has ever been a problem in their marriage or relationship



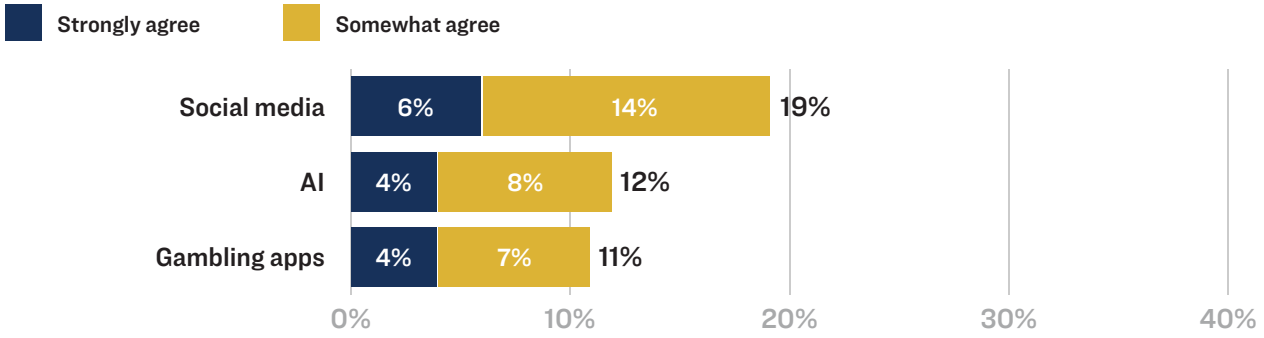
SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on Americans who have been in a marriage or relationship.
QUESTION WORDING: Have any of the following ever been a problem in your marriage or relationship, past or present? Check all that apply. Response options: Gambling; pornography use; social media use; drug or alcohol use; overspending; none of the above.

For example, among older Americans, the most commonly selected issues include financial concerns and drug and alcohol use. About 1 in 5 respondents identified these as having been a problem, past or present, in their relationship. Among ages 18-40, the two most common responses were financial concerns and social media use. Moreover, young Americans were significantly more likely to mention social media use than drug or alcohol issues. Thus, technology concerns are a more common source of relationship challenges for younger than for older Americans. There are no meaningful differences between those 18-29 and 30-40, but this pattern bears watching as more young people form and experience relationships in the social media era.

Finally, we further explored worries about social media with a survey experiment in which we asked respondents whether anyone in their immediate family uses technology in a way that worries them. Each respondent was randomly assigned one of three technologies — AI, social media, or gambling apps — to consider.

Concern About Family Members' Use of Technology

Percentage among all Americans agreeing that someone in their immediate family uses the technology in a worrisome way

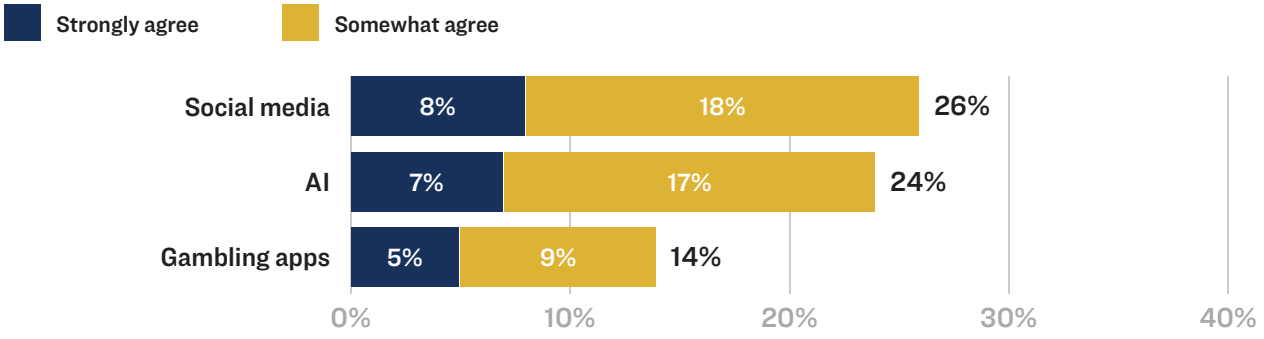


SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement, "Someone in my immediate family uses [AI/social media/gambling apps] in a way that worries me." Respondents were randomly assigned one target. Response options: Strongly agree; somewhat agree; neither agree nor disagree; somewhat disagree; strongly disagree.

Among all Americans, concern is greatest about social media, with about one in five indicating that someone in their immediate family uses it in a concerning way. Agreement falls to 12% for AI and 11% for gambling apps — a difference that is statistically robust.

Concern About Family Members' Use of Technology Among Young Adults

Percentage among adults ages 18-40 agreeing that someone in their immediate family uses the technology in a worrisome way



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on Americans ages 18-40. Each respondent considered one technology.
QUESTION WORDING: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement, "Someone in my immediate family uses [AI/social media/gambling apps] in a way that worries me." Respondents were randomly assigned one target. Response options: Strongly agree; somewhat agree; neither agree nor disagree; somewhat disagree; strongly disagree.

The pattern changes when the analysis focuses on young Americans. Among respondents ages 18-40, concern about social media remains high, but concern about AI nearly matches it. The two estimates are statistically indistinguishable. Concern about gambling apps is significantly lower than both, at 14%.

One additional notable age difference emerges when we focus on the youngest respondents in the sample. Among those ages 18-29 assigned to the AI condition, 31% express concern about a family member's AI use, compared with 17% among those ages 30-40. This 14-point difference is statistically significant. By contrast, the two age groups report nearly identical levels of concern about social media (26% and 25%) and gambling apps (15% and 13%). Thus, the youngest Americans in the sample are the most likely to express concern about a family member's use when assigned to think about AI, and they are the only group for whom concern about AI rivals the level of concern among those assigned to consider social media. Among those ages 30-40, concern about an immediate family member's use of social media remains much greater than concern about AI.

This comparatively greater level of concern about AI use among young adults under 30 did not emerge from the general evaluations of AI chatbots, but responses to the question about use by an immediate family member suggest the need for additional investigation of these concerns in the future. While we cannot isolate the exact reasons for their concern with this experiment, we can say that the youngest Americans are the most likely to report worries about the way AI is used in their immediate family.

Overall, Americans do not hold a single generalized attitude toward technology. Online pornography and gambling prompt broad negative judgments, while opinions about AI, social media, and video games are more contingent. Social media occupies a distinctive place in Americans' evaluations: it receives net-negative public evaluations, is more often identified as a relationship problem by younger adults, and generates the most concern in the randomized family-use experiment. That convergence identifies the technology around which Americans most readily connect broad concern with problems close to home. And the sharply greater level of concern about AI that emerges among the youngest Americans could portend worries about the ways this emerging technology might affect both individuals and families.

GAMBLING

Online betting is a young adult's game: under age 45, about one in four adults bets monthly, while above that age it is one in ten.

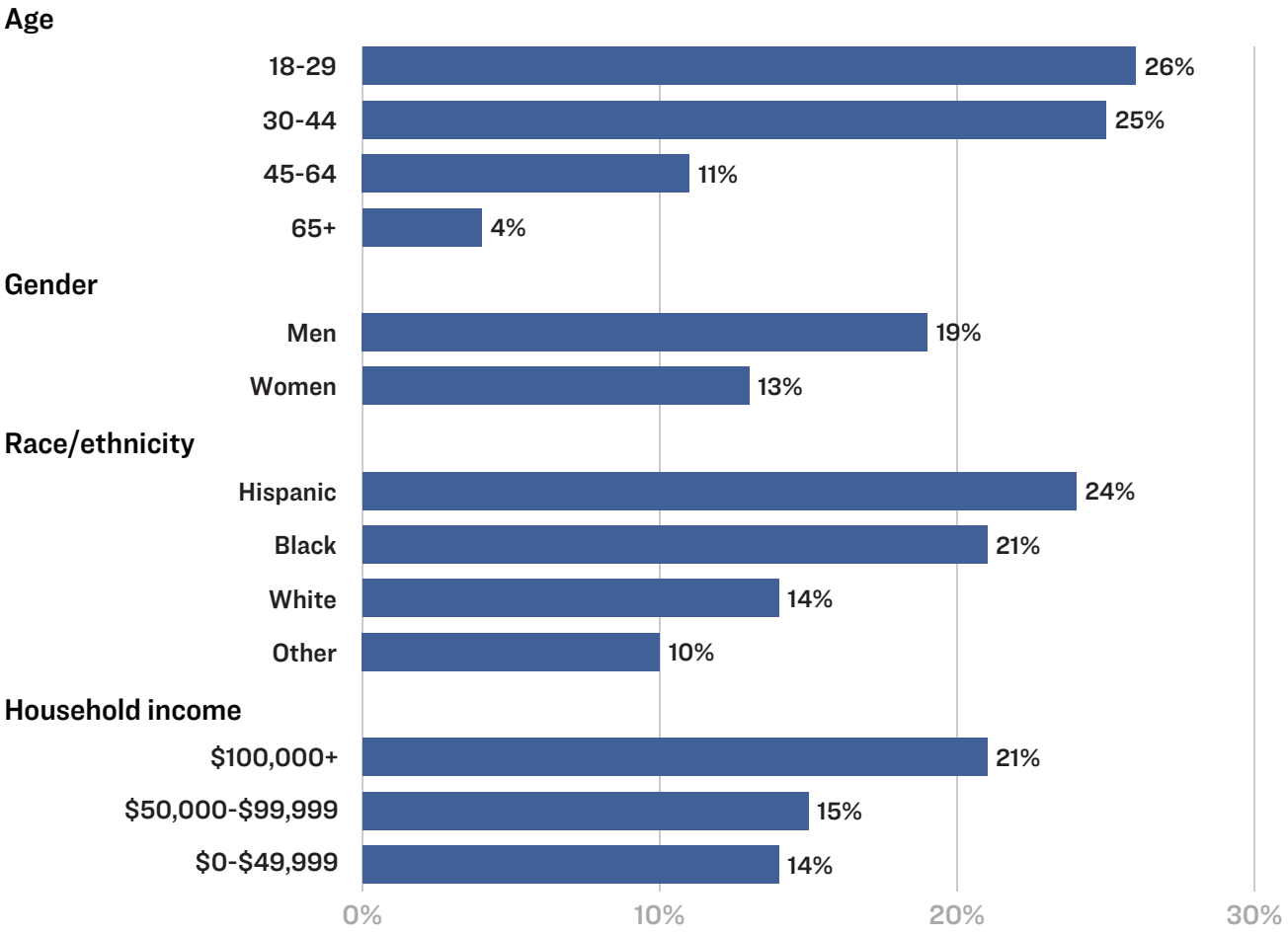
46%

of monthly bettors in a relationship say they hide finances or purchases from their spouse, compared with just 22% of others in a relationship.

Since a 2018 Supreme Court decision let states legalize sports gambling of all kinds, betting has moved onto American phones. About one in six adults now uses a gambling app of some kind at least once a month, and one in ten people do so every week. So while most people (three-quarters of the public) claim they never use gambling apps, those that do bet often.

Age Patterns in Online Betting

Percent who use gambling or betting apps at least monthly



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: How often do you use sites or apps for gambling or placing bets?

The age pattern is not a gradient but a cliff, and it falls off at about age 45. Among adults 18 to 29 and those 30 to 44, about 1 in 4 use betting apps at least monthly. Young men bet more than young women: 29% of men 18 to 29 and 30% of men 30 to 44 use betting apps at least monthly, compared with 23% and 21% of women in those age groups. Monthly-or-more use is 14% among white respondents, 21% among Black respondents, and 24% among Hispanic respondents. And it rises from 14-15% among households earning less than $100,000 to 21% among households earning $100,000 or more. While none of these statistics prove a causal relationship, they do suggest contours of the behavior.

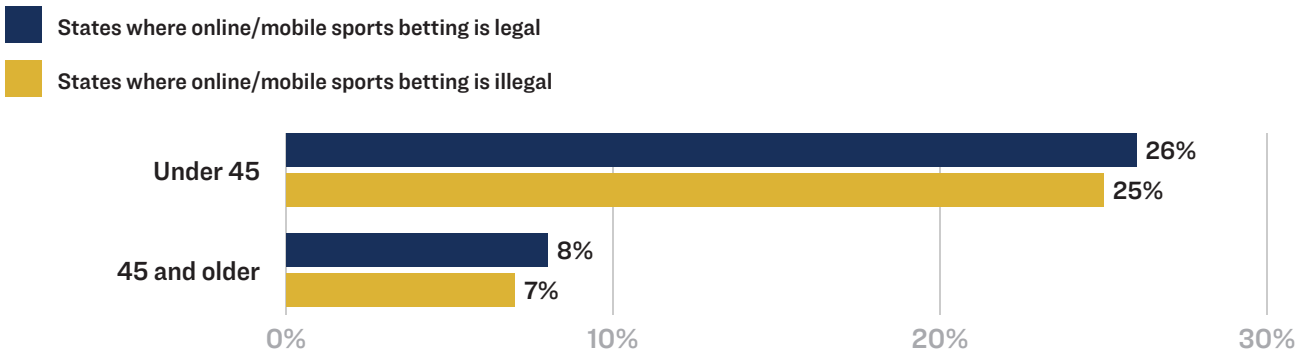
Income buys access to lots of things. But as we will show below, it does not necessarily protect one from harm. This is important because online bettors are young and early in their careers with their real earning years ahead of them. There is no way for us now to tell whether a gambling habit will grow or simply age with these youth, but we would be foolish to assume it will die off as they age.

We should note that using apps is not the broadest form of gambling, as it leaves out in-person sports betting, casinos, lotteries, and the like. And our findings differ from a recent American Gaming Association estimate that 21% of registered voters ages 21 and older placed a sports bet during the previous year. The AGA estimate covers a broader twelve-month period but a narrower activity—sports betting—while our measure covers a wider range of online gambling but requires at least monthly use. What we clearly see is that betting is a routine activity for this quarter of adults.

Moreover, we find that whether a state has legalized online sports betting or not makes little difference in frequency of app use. Among adults under 45, 26% of those in states with legal online sports betting use betting apps at least monthly, compared with 25% in states without it. Among those 45 and older, the figures are 8% and 7%, respectively. This doesn't mean legalization has no effect. States that legalized may differ from those that did not in many ways. And people in states without legal betting can still use offshore sites or prediction-market apps, or cross into a neighboring state to bet; and the survey asks about all online gambling, not just sports betting. However, with those caveats in mind, our results show that, right now, rates of online betting are similar regardless of the legal regime.

Online Sport Betting and State Legalization

Percent who use gambling or betting apps at least monthly



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026.* Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: How often do you use sites or apps for gambling or placing bets?

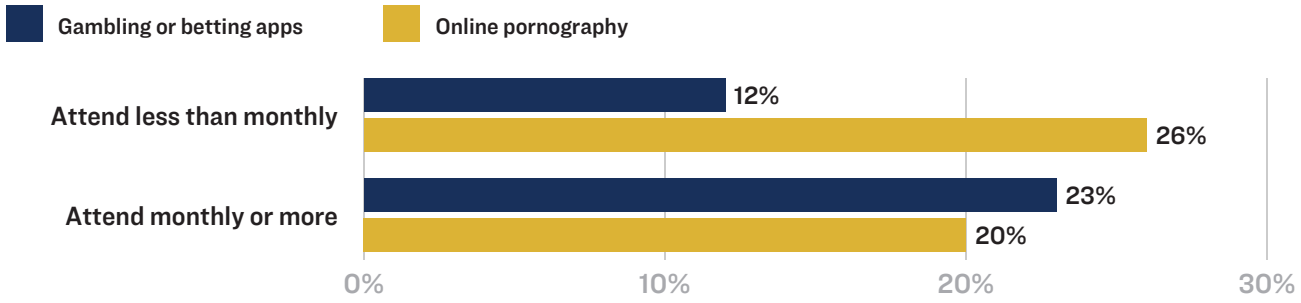
It is possible that the legal ground will shift. Prediction-market apps such as Kalshi argue that their futures bets are federally regulated commodities, not gambling subject to state laws. In 2026, the Third and Ninth Circuit Courts split on this question, so the very reach of state licensing itself is likely to be unsettled for some time.

Church attendance is associated with more reported gambling, but the size of the relationship varies substantially by religious tradition. Among Catholics, monthly-or-more gambling rises from 12% among those who attend less than monthly to 35% among those who attend monthly or more. Among Protestants, the corresponding figures are 9% and 17%. Across the full sample, the difference is 11 percentage points: 12% among less-than-monthly attenders and 23% among monthly-or-more attenders. The Catholic gap remains when we compare Catholics of similar age, ethnicity, and income. Religious traditions and beliefs about the morality of wagering vary. The Catechism of the Catholic Church, for instance, treats games of chance as acceptable under some circumstances—unless they deprive people of what they need. Protestant denominations, in contrast, have long opposed gambling with far more clarity.

In contrast, those who attend church at least monthly report less pornography use, meaning that gambling goes up with attendance while pornography usage goes down. This means we should not assume that churchgoers are merely reluctant to report disapproved behavior (though some of that may be going on). It may also be that churchgoing does not suppress all forms of vice. Context matters and behavior varies with what specific traditions teach or emphasize.

Online Gambling and Pornography Use by Religious Attendance

Percent who use each type of site or app at least monthly

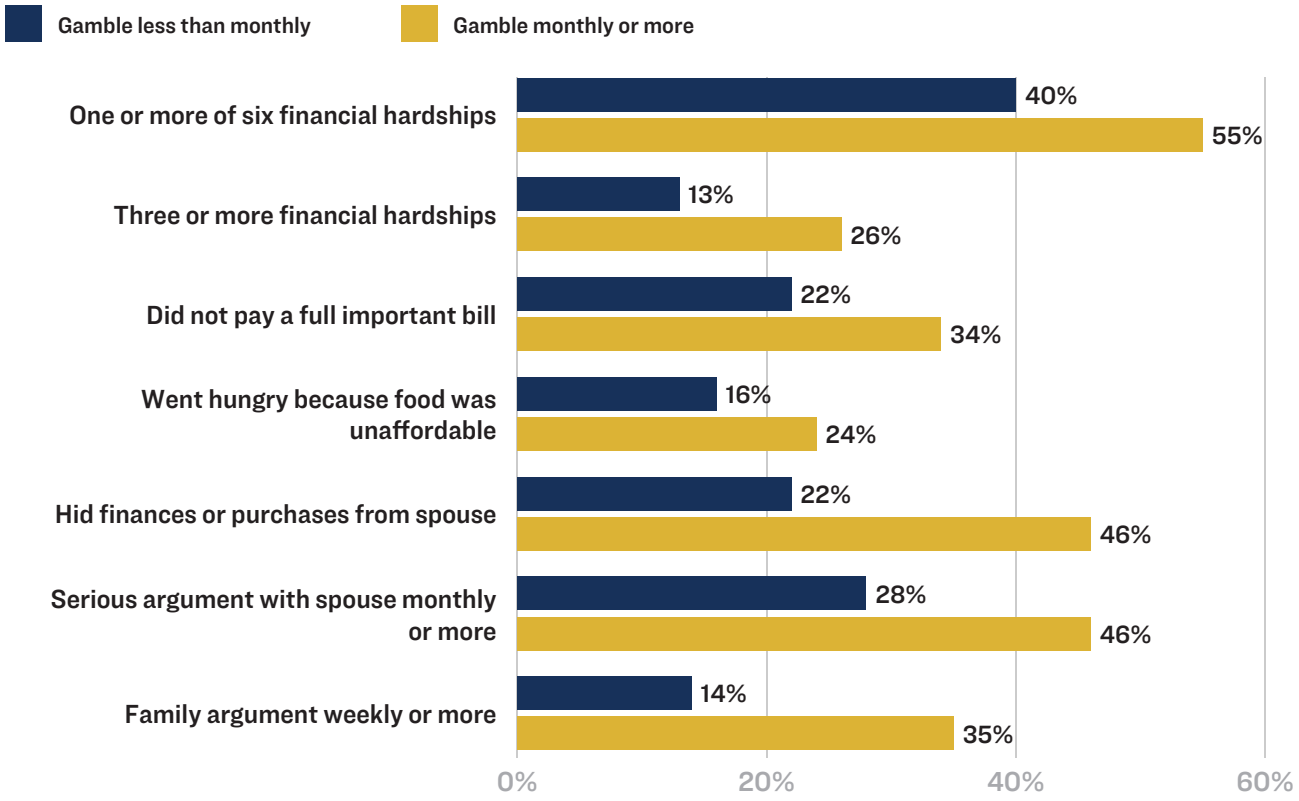


SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: How often, if ever, do you use sites or apps for gambling or placing bets? / sites or apps that provide online pornography?

Whatever the religious patterns may be, frequent betting is associated with familial strain. When we compare with adults who use betting apps a few times a year or never, monthly bettors are more likely to report financial hardship in the past year: 55% faced at least one of six hardships, compared with 40%, and 26% of monthly bettors faced three or more hardships, about twice the rate among everyone else (13%). They are also about twice as likely to say they hid finances or purchases from a spouse or partner (46% vs. 22%) and more likely to report a serious argument with a spouse at least monthly (46% vs. 28%). Perhaps the betting did not lead to the strain, or perhaps something else drove both reported behaviors. But the reported strain is greater among bettors.

Online Gambling, Financial Hardship, and Family Experiences

Percent who report each type of experience, by gambling frequency



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.

QUESTION WORDING: How often, if ever, do you use sites or apps for gambling or placing bets? Financial hardships include not paying a bill, going hungry, borrowing money, moving in with others, staying in a shelter, or forgoing medical care. See topline results for exact question wording.

This may seem at odds with the earlier finding that higher-income households bet more often. But the two findings reflect different problems. Income indicates who can afford to bet; hardship tells us what bettors report facing. A household can earn a good income and still come up short on a bill. It is important to note that monthly bettors report life satisfaction similar to other adults, and they do not report much difference in the quality or stability of their marriages. What we see is a pattern of secrecy and conflict, not a massive difference in overall well-being or satisfaction.

The most useful signal in these data is the rate of betting and the household strain that goes with frequent betting, things that could get worse as federal tax law changes. Beginning with the 2026 tax year, gamblers can deduct only 90% of their losses. After that, someone who breaks even will owe tax on a portion of their take. It is possible this will lead to even more strain.

This survey does not tell us whether the current trend will spread, level off, or even recede over the next few years. However, it does indicate that betting today is concentrated among adults in their 20s and 30s, tailing off around age 45, regardless of where respondents live. And adults who bet often also report secrecy and conflict, suggesting that some cost is being paid at home and out of sight.

TECHNOLOGY USE AND REGULATION

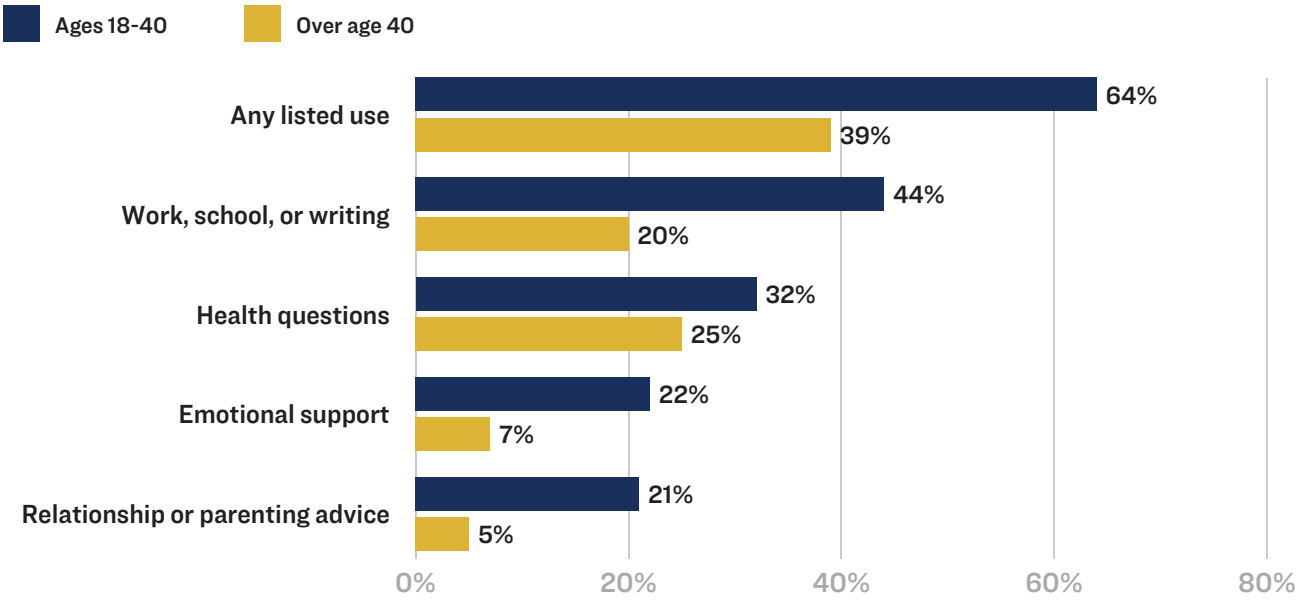
Younger adults are more likely than older adults to use AI and to say they spend more time on social media than intended — yet support for technology regulation is broad.

75%
of Americans want to hold social media companies liable for harm caused to minors.

Technologies like artificial intelligence and social media increasingly shape Americans' work, health decisions, relationships, and family lives. The 2026 American Family Survey explored three elements of these emerging technologies: how people use AI, whether they struggle to limit their time on social media, and which technology regulations they support.

Use of AI Tools

Percentage who used AI for each purpose during the past year



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: In the past year, have you used AI tools like ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini, or Claude for any of the following? (Select all that apply) Response options: Help with writing, schoolwork, or work tasks; emotional support or conversation; getting advice on a relationship or parenting issue; medical or health questions; I have not used AI for any of these.

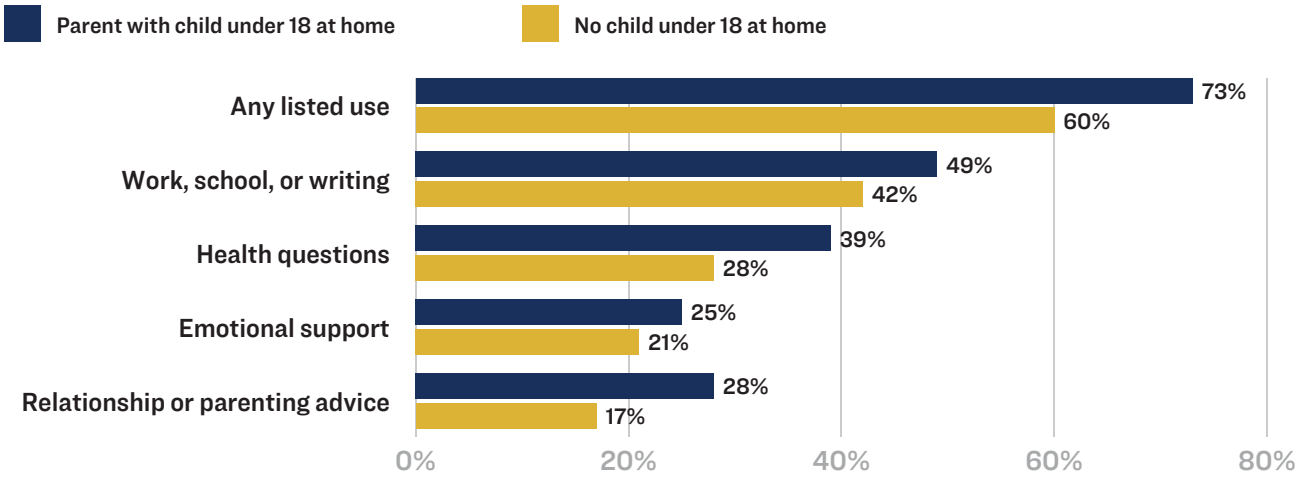
We asked respondents to indicate how they are using AI, focusing on uses in school and work, but also for issues that affect American families, including health questions, emotional support, and advice about relationships and parenting. This list is not meant to be a full menu of options for using AI, but the items include uses that might matter for relationship and family life. Nearly half of American adults used AI for at least one of the purposes listed in the survey during the past year. The most common uses were help with work, school, or writing (29%) and medical or health questions (28%). Smaller — but still notable — shares used AI for emotional support (13%) or relationship and parenting advice (11%).

The overall results mask a large age divide. Almost two-thirds of adults age 40 and younger report at least one listed use, compared with 39% of those over 40. The gap is especially large for work, school, or writing, where younger adults' usage is more than twice that of older adults. And while about one in five Americans ages 18-40 use AI for emotional support or relationship or parenting advice, those percentages are more than three times the corresponding percentages among Americans over 40. For a meaningful percentage — though not yet close to a majority — of younger Americans, then, AI is serving roles traditionally associated with family, close friends, or mental health professionals.

AI use is especially common among younger Americans in the midst of raising families. Among adults ages 18-40, those with a child under age 18 living at home are more likely to report every listed use of AI. Close to three-quarters of young parents report at least one listed use, compared with 60% of other young adults. The differences are largest for health questions and relationship or parenting advice. Young parents and other young adults differ in many ways, including daily responsibilities and the kinds of information they need, so these correlations do not imply that becoming a parent causes AI use. Still, the pattern is consistent across all four uses and is substantively strongest where family demands are most relevant.

AI Use Among Young Adults, by Parental Status

Percentage among adults ages 18-40 who used AI for each purpose during the past year

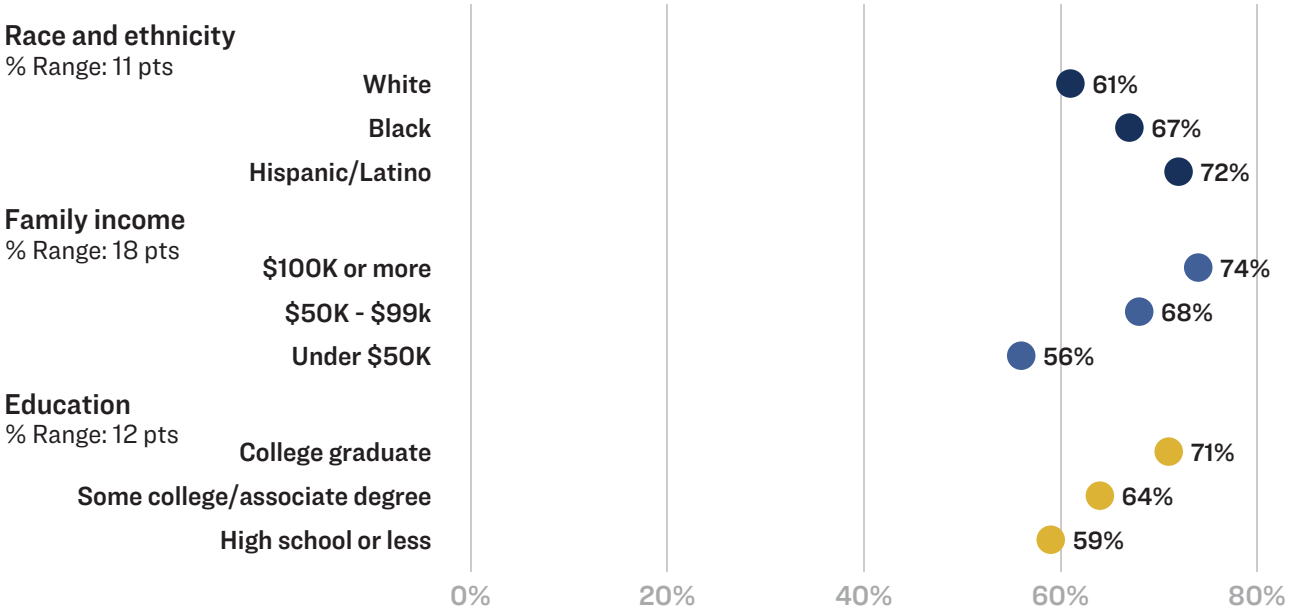


SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on Americans ages 18-40.
QUESTION WORDING: In the past year, have you used AI tools like ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini, or Claude for any of the following? (Select all that apply)
Response options: Help with writing, schoolwork, or work tasks; emotional support or conversation; getting advice on a relationship or parenting issue; medical or health questions; I have not used AI for any of these.

Other demographic characteristics are also correlated with the four types of AI use we investigated. For example, white young adults are less likely than Black and Hispanic/Latino young adults to report any of the listed uses. They are also less likely to report using AI for work (40% vs. 49% for Blacks and 51% for Hispanic/Latinos), emotional support (18% vs. 28% and 31%), or relationship and parenting advice (18% vs. 27% and 28%). The key exception is health questions, where all three groups report similar patterns of use.

AI Use Among Young Adults, by Race and Ethnicity

Percentage among adults ages 18-40 who used AI for any of four purposes during the past year



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on Americans ages 18-40. Labels indicate percentage-point range.
QUESTION WORDING: In the past year, have you used AI tools like ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini, or Claude for any of the following? (Select all that apply)
Response options: Help with writing, schoolwork, or work tasks; emotional support or conversation; getting advice on a relationship or parenting issue; medical or health questions; I have not used AI for any of these.

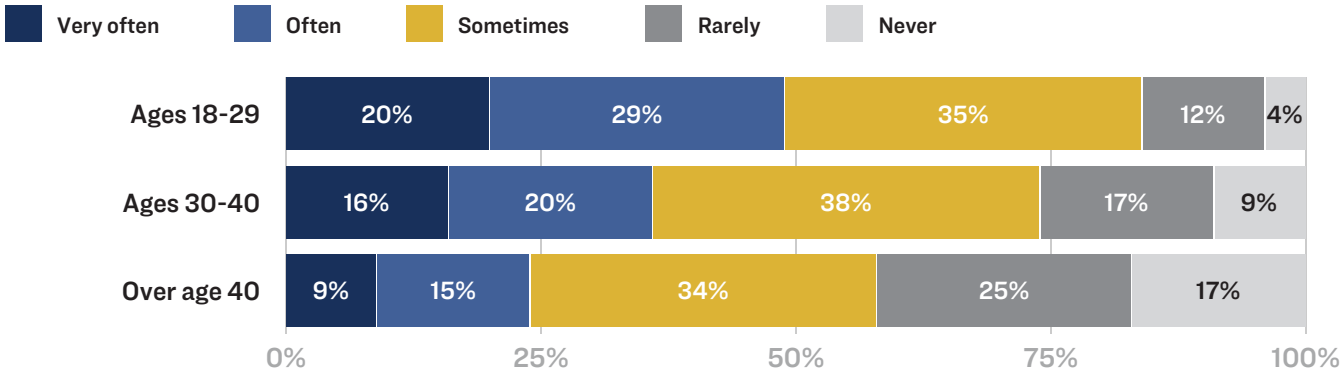
We also see evidence of socioeconomic inequalities in patterns of use. While a majority of those with lower levels of income or education report using AI in at least one of the ways we listed, young adults with higher family incomes or a college degree are more likely to report AI use overall and for work, school, or writing. Differences are less uniform for the more personal uses, but lower-income respondents reported substantially lower levels of use for health questions (23% among lower-income vs. 37% for middle- and higher-income respondents). While AI tools may be widely available, when it comes to the four family-related use cases that were our focus, patterns of use are not distributed evenly.

Social media presents a different kind of technology challenge. In contrast to AI use, where the current pressing question is about who is using it and how, the key question with social media may revolve around habitual scrolling and the ability of individuals to constrain use. For that reason, we asked all respondents how often they use social media "more than they intended to." Thus, respondents are telling us not how often they used the technology in absolute terms, but whether their use exceeds their internal sense of intention.

Nationally, 31% of adults say that they often or very often spend much more time on social media than they intended, but age matters. Just less than one-quarter of Americans over 40 say they often or very often use social media more than planned, compared with more than one-third of those between 30 and 40 and almost one-half of adults under 30. Thus, the youngest cohort is more than twice as likely as the oldest age group to say that they are frequently unable to regulate their social-media use relative to their intentions.

Social Media Use Relative to Intent

Percentage of Americans in each age group



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: How often do you spend much more time on social media than you intended to? Response options: Very often; often; sometimes; rarely; never.

Given the challenges posed by new technology, one pressing policy question is whether and how new technologies should be regulated. We asked about six different potential regulations, and we find majority or supermajority support for all of them. The most popular would hold platforms responsible for harm caused by content they recommend to minors and require social-media companies to enforce age restrictions; each receives support from three-quarters of adults. Even the least popular proposal — banning credit cards on gambling apps — wins clear majority support.

Such majority support spans age categories, though younger Americans are somewhat less enthusiastic about age restrictions for social media or requirements that pornography websites verify users' ages.

Support for Technology Regulation

Percentage who strongly or somewhat support each proposed regulation

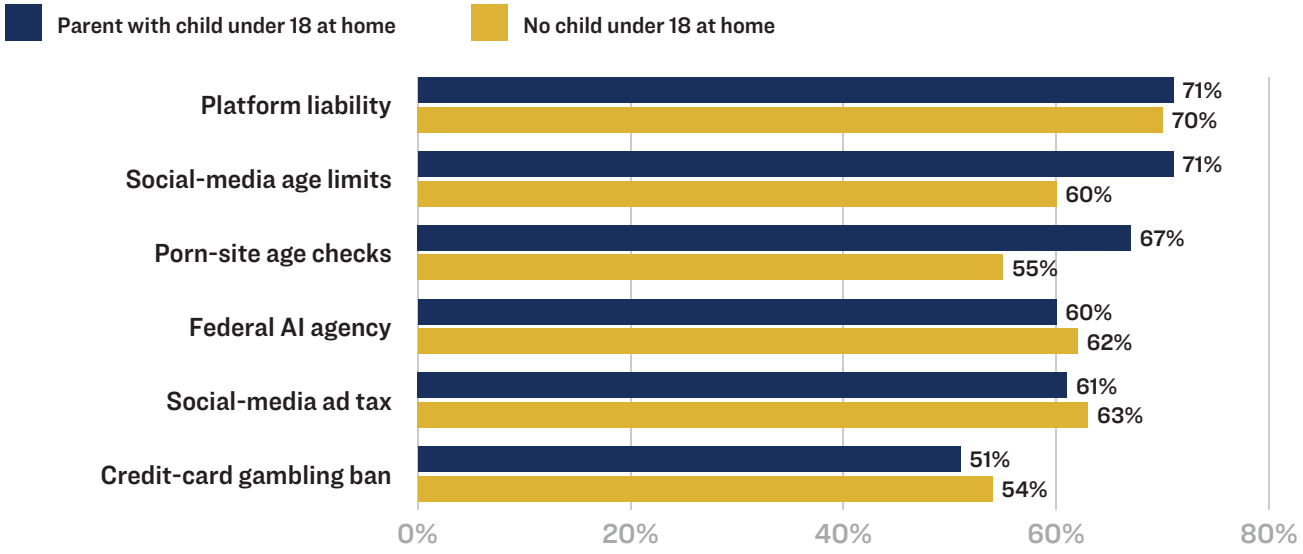
	Platform liability	Social-media age limits	Porn-site age checks	Federal AI agency	Social-media ad tax	Credit-card gambling ban
All adults	**75%**	**75%**	**71%**	**65%**	**65%**	**57%**
Ages 18-40	71%	64%	59%	61%	63%	53%
Over age 40	78%	82%	78%	68%	66%	59%

SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: To what extent would you support or oppose government regulations that... Items: Require social media companies to enforce age restrictions? Require pornographic websites to verify a user's age before granting access? Hold social media companies responsible for harm caused by the content they recommend to minors? Require social media companies to pay a tax on advertising revenue, similar to taxes on tobacco or alcohol? Create a federal agency specifically to oversee AI development and use? Ban the use of credit cards on gambling apps? Response options: Strongly support; somewhat support; neither support nor oppose; somewhat oppose; strongly oppose.

Although support for social-media age limits and pornography-site age verification tends to be lower among young people than older Americans, majorities of adults age 40 or younger support both, though the experiences of young people also matter for their level of support. For example, parenthood is associated with significantly greater support for these two types of regulations, both of which are most directly aimed at restricting minors' access. Parents are 11 percentage points more supportive of social-media age limits and 12 percentage points more supportive of pornography-site age checks. Parenthood produces little difference on the other four proposals, all of which receive majority or supermajority support.

Support for Technology Regulation by Parental Status

Percentage of adults age 18-40 who support each proposed regulation

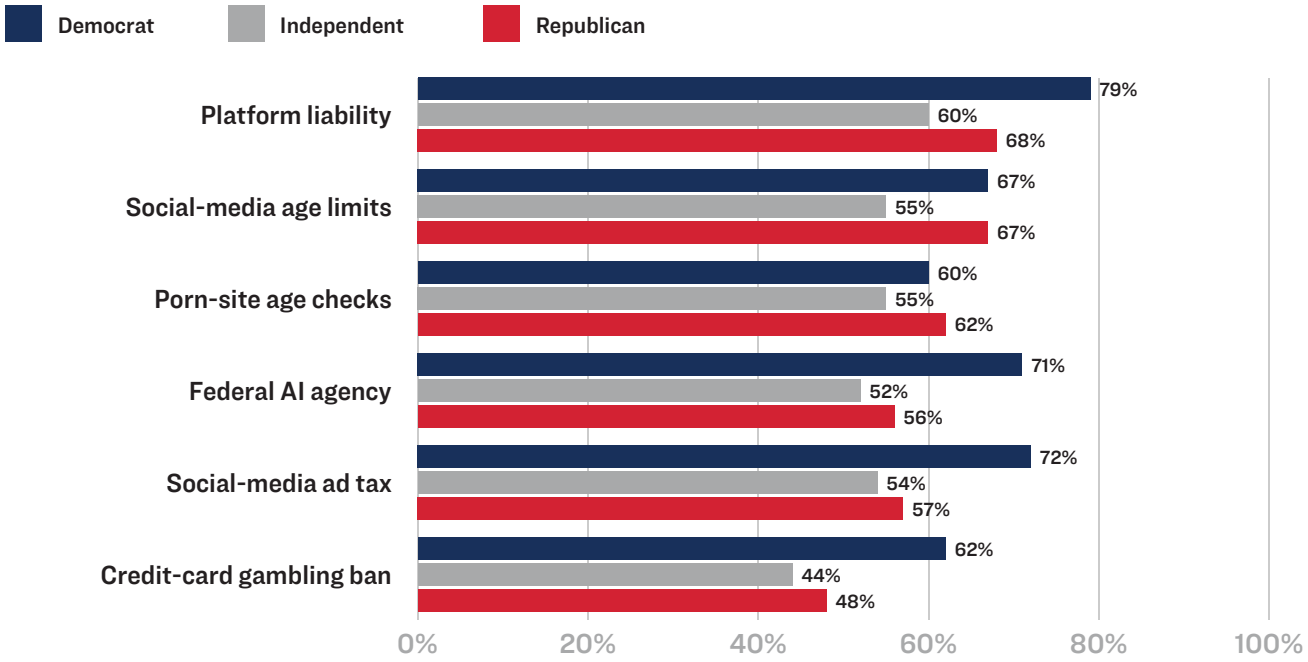


SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026.* Based on Americans ages 18-40.
QUESTION WORDING: To what extent would you support or oppose government regulations that... Items: Require social media companies to enforce age restrictions? Require pornographic websites to verify a user's age before granting access? Hold social media companies responsible for harm caused by the content they recommend to minors? Require social media companies to pay a tax on advertising revenue, similar to taxes on tobacco or alcohol? Create a federal agency specifically to oversee AI development and use? Ban the use of credit cards on gambling apps? Response options: Strongly support; somewhat support; neither support nor oppose; somewhat oppose; strongly oppose.

Majorities of Democrats, Republicans, and independents support nearly every proposal. Partisan differences among younger adults emerge, but they are policy-specific. With the exception of pornography-site age verification and social-media age limits, young Democrats are more supportive of regulation than young Republicans. On the two age protections, however, Republicans and Democrats are about equally supportive, while independents are somewhat less so.

Support for Technology Regulation by Party

Percentage of adults age 18-40 who support each proposed regulation



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on Americans ages 18-40.
QUESTION WORDING: To what extent would you support or oppose government regulations that... Items: Require social media companies to enforce age restrictions? Require pornographic websites to verify a user's age before granting access? Hold social media companies responsible for harm caused by the content they recommend to minors? Require social media companies to pay a tax on advertising revenue, similar to taxes on tobacco or alcohol? Create a federal agency specifically to oversee AI development and use? Ban the use of credit cards on gambling apps? Response options: Strongly support; somewhat support; neither support nor oppose; somewhat oppose; strongly oppose.

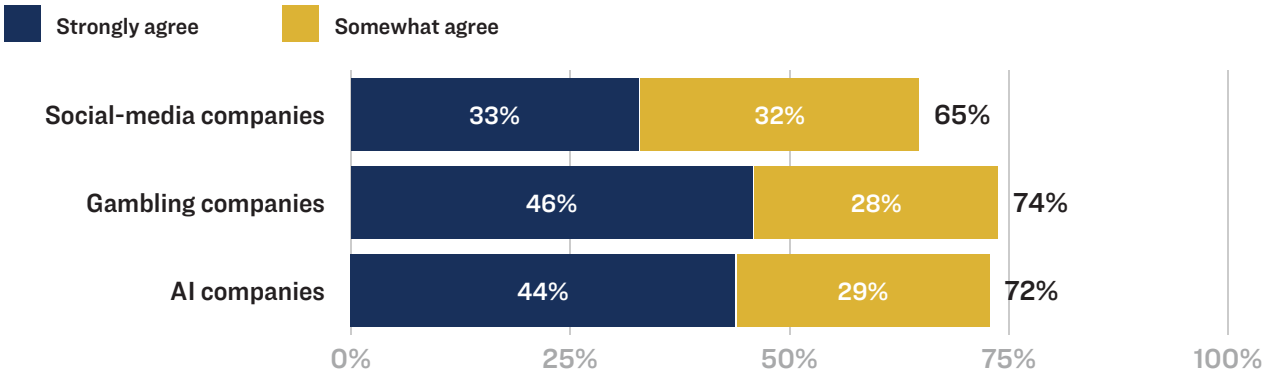
On the other regulations, the partisan divides are substantial. Seventy-nine percent of young Democrats support holding platforms responsible for harm to minors, compared with 68% of Republicans and 60% of independents — an 11-point Democratic–Republican gap and a 19-point Democratic–independent gap. Similar differences appear on proposals to create a federal AI oversight agency, tax social-media advertising revenue, and ban the use of credit cards on gambling apps.

The exception is the credit-card gambling ban, where support falls to less than a majority among Republicans and independents. The broader pattern therefore reflects greater Democratic enthusiasm more than widespread Republican or independent opposition. This difference is especially apparent in the intensity of support: Democrats are substantially more likely to express "strong support" for platform liability, federal AI oversight, a social-media advertising tax, and the credit-card gambling ban. The two age-protection policies are again the exception, with Republicans at least as likely as Democrats to express strong support.

Finally, we explored support for regulation with a randomized experiment in which we asked each respondent whether the government should set limits on one of three industries — social media, gambling, or artificial intelligence — in the same way that it regulates other unsafe products. Close to three-quarters of Americans support regulation when assigned to consider gambling or AI companies, compared with two-thirds of those assigned to consider social-media companies. The results do not show opposition to social-media regulation — a clear majority still agrees — but they suggest that Americans more readily accept an analogy to tobacco or alcohol when thinking about gambling and AI. Notably, the basic patterns are very similar across age groups: the idea of regulating these industries is popular among young and old alike.

Support for Regulating Gambling, Social Media, and AI Companies

Percentage who agree government should regulate companies the way it regulates tobacco, alcohol, or unsafe products



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans. Each respondent considered one industry.
QUESTION WORDING: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Government needs to set limits on [gambling companies/social media companies/AI companies] the same way it regulates tobacco, alcohol, and other unsafe products. Response options: Strongly agree; somewhat agree; neither agree nor disagree; somewhat disagree; strongly disagree.

These data suggest that Americans are neither uniformly enthusiastic nor uniformly alarmed about new technology. The pattern of results suggests that the public seeks both the benefits of digital tools and stronger guardrails around them. For policymakers, efforts to rein in technologies like the ones we asked our respondents to consider are likely to receive strong backing from the vast majority of Americans. Regulations connected directly to protecting minors receive especially broad support.

PASSING POLITICAL VALUES TO CHILDREN

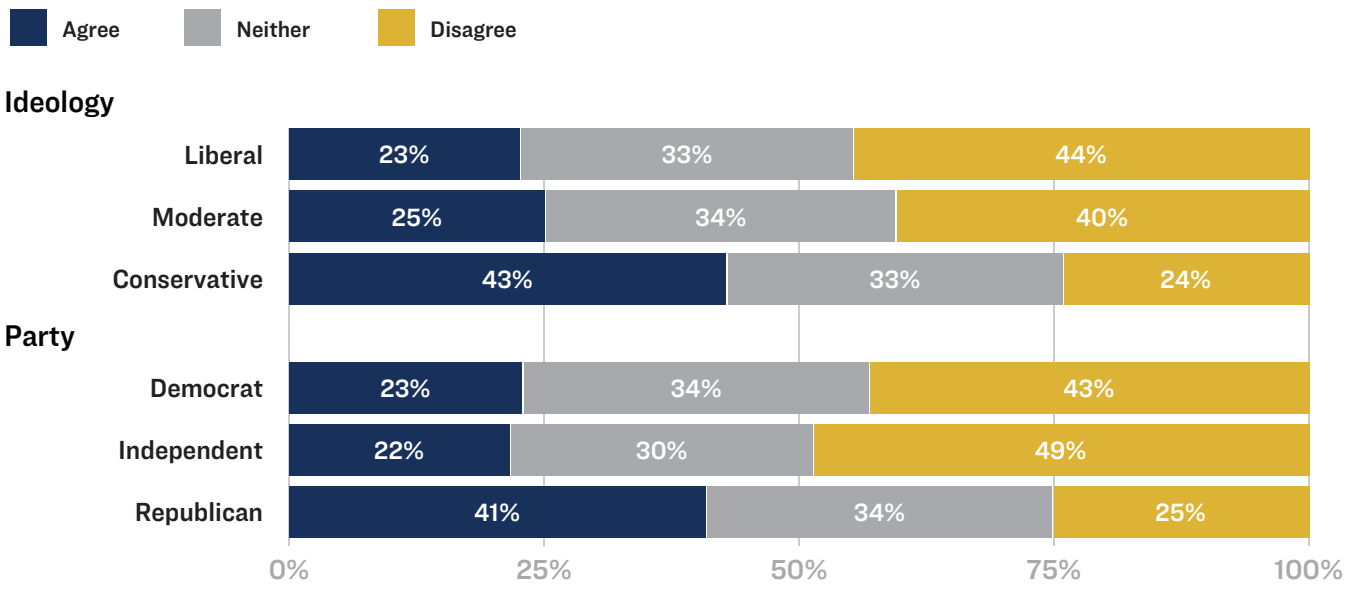
Most Americans don't see passing on political beliefs as important, though Republicans are more likely to support it.

2x

Republicans are twice as likely as Democrats to say it is important for parents to pass on their political beliefs.

Importance of Passing Political Beliefs to the Next Generation

Percent among parents



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on parents of at least one child.
QUESTION WORDING: How much do you agree or disagree with the following: It is important for parents to pass on their political beliefs to their children.

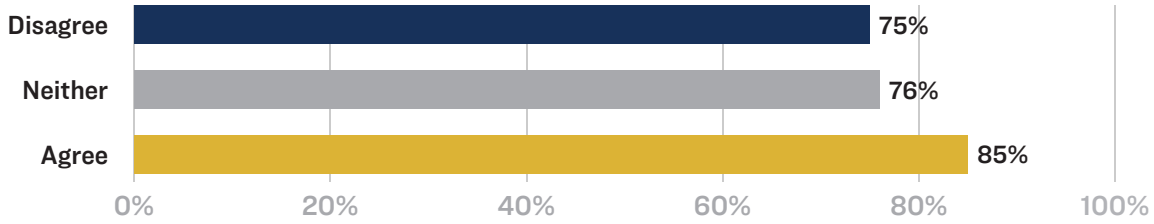
Whether or not to pass on political beliefs to the next generation turns out, itself, to be a contested and partisan political issue. Republicans and conservatives support such transmission much more than Democrats and liberals, with 41% of Republicans agreeing it is important, compared with just 23% of Democrats. In fact, among Democrats (43%) and independents (49%), disagreement is the most common answer.

Republican attitudes are not overwhelmingly positive: passing on values is still only a plurality position among Republicans, many of whom choose the neutral option, along with about a third of every group. Among liberal parents, disagreement is the most common response (44%). Of course, these parents may still transmit political values. Disagreeing doesn't mean these parents avoid politics with their children; the question asks what matters, not what parents actually do in their time and relationships. Still, there is a clear political difference across the political spectrum.

Do people who want to pass on their political beliefs have different family lives? Somewhat. In both 2025 and 2026, they were more likely to say they are satisfied with their families. In 2026, 85% of those who agree transmitting political values is important are satisfied, compared with 75% of those who disagree. And those who favor passing on beliefs differ in other ways, such as marriage rates, religious attendance and age. Statistical adjustments for those traits cuts the gap roughly in half to about five or six points, though the gap remains.

Family Satisfaction and Passing Political Beliefs to Children

Percent of respondents who are satisfied with family life, by agreement with importance of passing on political beliefs



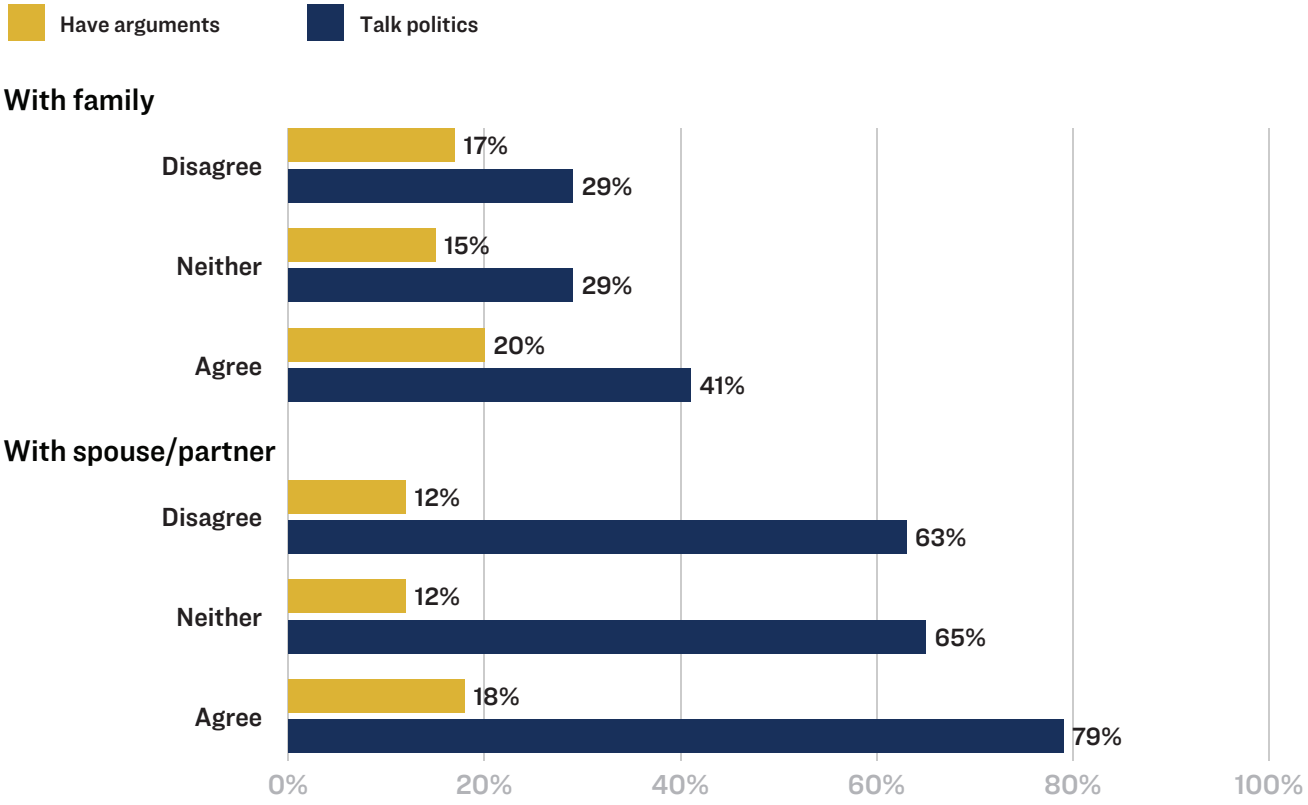
SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all respondents.
QUESTION WORDING: How much do you agree or disagree with the following: It is important for parents to pass on their political beliefs to their children. / How satisfied are you with your family?

Overall, differences are modest. About three in four of those who do not want to pass on political beliefs are satisfied with their family life as well. And we make no strong claims here about causality. Perhaps happy families find it easier to share politics, or perhaps shared politics makes it easier to discuss things, or some other factor may drive both.

The survey also asks how often families argue or talk about political or social issues, as well as how often couples do these things. The questions about arguments are general and not about political arguments specifically.

Family Conversations and Passing Political Beliefs to Children

Percent of respondents who report each activity at least weekly, by agreement with importance of passing on political beliefs

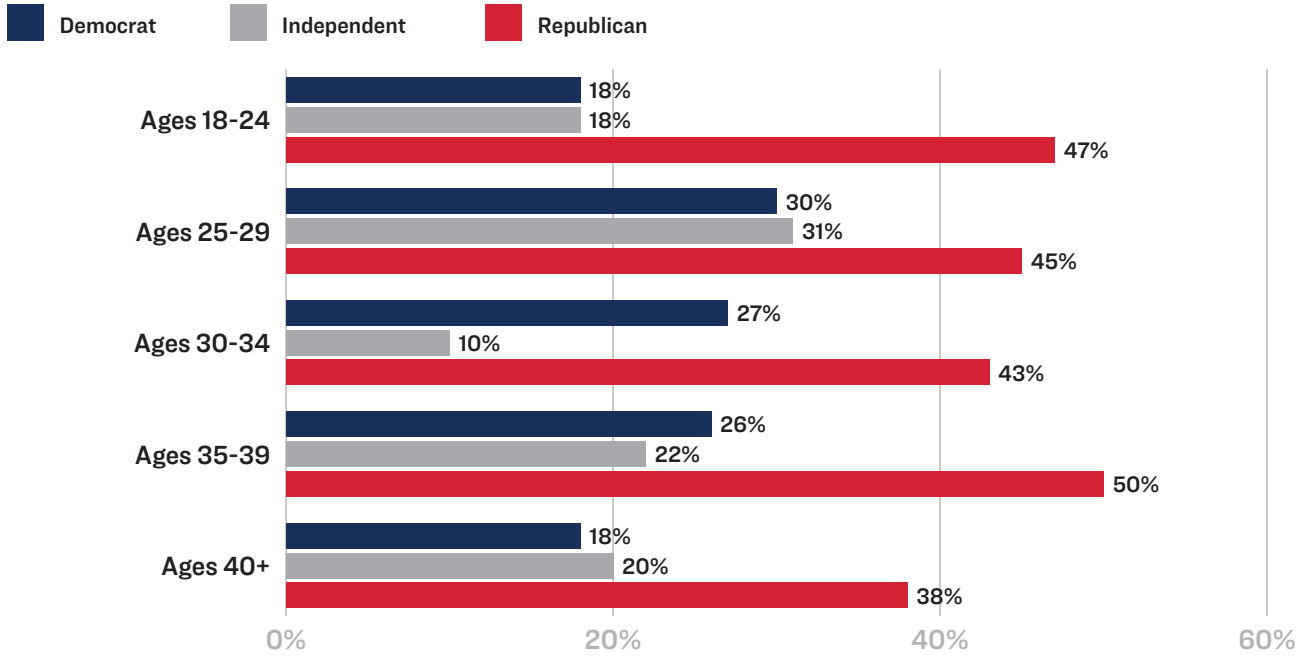


SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all respondents.
QUESTION WORDING: How much do you agree or disagree with the following: It is important for parents to pass on their political beliefs to their children. / How often does your family: Have an argument; Discuss political and social issues as a family / How often do you do the following with your spouse or partner? Have a serious argument; Talk about political or social issues with each other.

People who favor passing on political beliefs do talk politics more often at home. Among those who agree, 41% say their family discusses political or social issues at least weekly, compared with 29% of those who disagree. With a spouse or partner, the figures are 79% and 63%. Those who agree also report somewhat more arguments (20% vs. 17% in families; 18% vs. 12% with a spouse or partner). But these gaps are consistently small, and standards for what counts as an argument or how comfortable families are with arguments vary across families. The division is likely not between peaceful, blessedly apolitical homes and dysfunctional political ones. It is between homes where politics is a live and relatively common subject and homes where politics simply isn't.

Generational Attitudes on Passing Political Values to Children

Percent who agree passing political beliefs is important



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: How much do you agree or disagree with the following: It is important for parents to pass on their political beliefs to their children.

Our oversample of the younger population lets us check whether this partisan gap holds among adults under 40. Even among the oldest group, the pattern is still there, just slightly attenuated. In every age group from 18 to 39, Republicans are more likely than Democrats to say passing on political beliefs is important, by 16 to 29 points. Among Republicans under 40, agreement ranges from 43% to 50%, compared with 40% among Republicans overall. If we look only at parents, the effect does attenuate, but the finding remains for those over age 30. These views may persist into later life, as we see in the figure, and perhaps even at a higher level — though the future is uncertain and we can make no firm predictions.

It is important to emphasize that neither of these kinds of families is obviously healthier. People who favor passing on such beliefs do seem a bit more satisfied with their families, but people who do not agree with passing on political beliefs are happy too. And it is important to note that actually not passing on values is not the same thing as answering a question on a survey. Parents can teach a lot without teaching devotion to a political party.

The partisan differences are surprising. Twice as many Republicans wanting to pass on values as Democrats (41% vs. 23%) is a striking number that perhaps should give the political left some pause. The idea that politics should not be the focus of parenting is reasonable and in some ways laudable. Still, political scientists have found that values are transmitted more successfully when politics is a frequent topic. It is not impossible that a gap in these attitudes could become a gap in behavior and how likely views are to reach the next generation. There are benefits to expressing politics to children and grandchildren. Indeed, the country would be better off if good political conversation was more clearly modeled.

PARENTAL RIGHTS

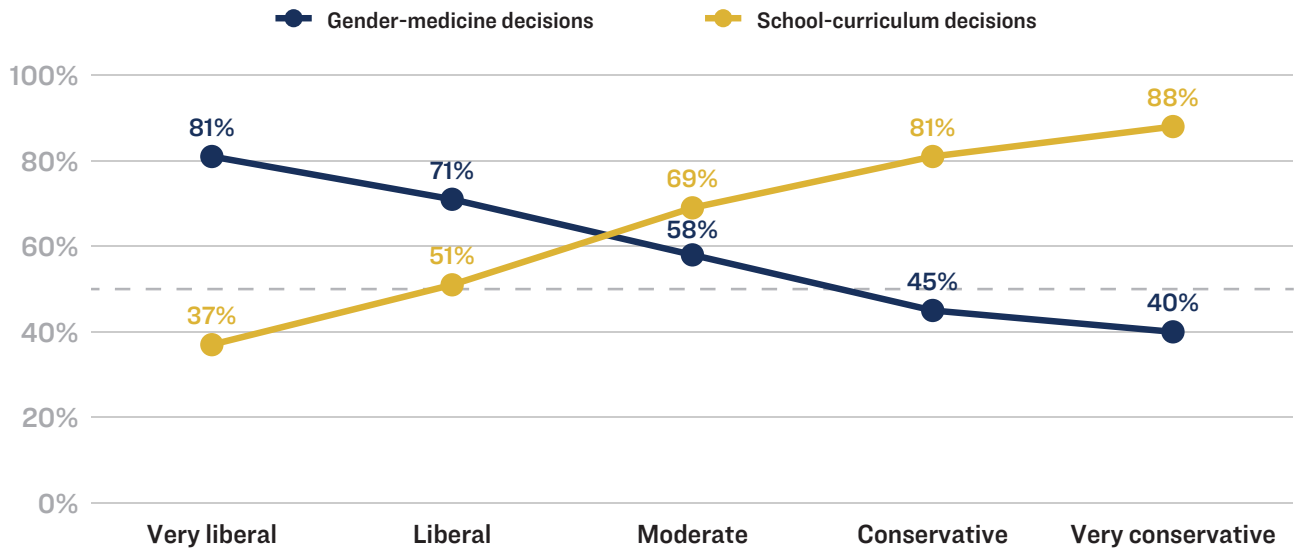
Liberals and conservatives both sometimes support parental rights, but they do so on opposite issues: liberals on gender medicine, conservatives on school curriculum.

About 30%

of Americans consistently support parents' rights to make decisions for their children, regardless of the issue.

Views on Parental Decision-Making

Percent who say parents should have the right to make each type of decision for their child



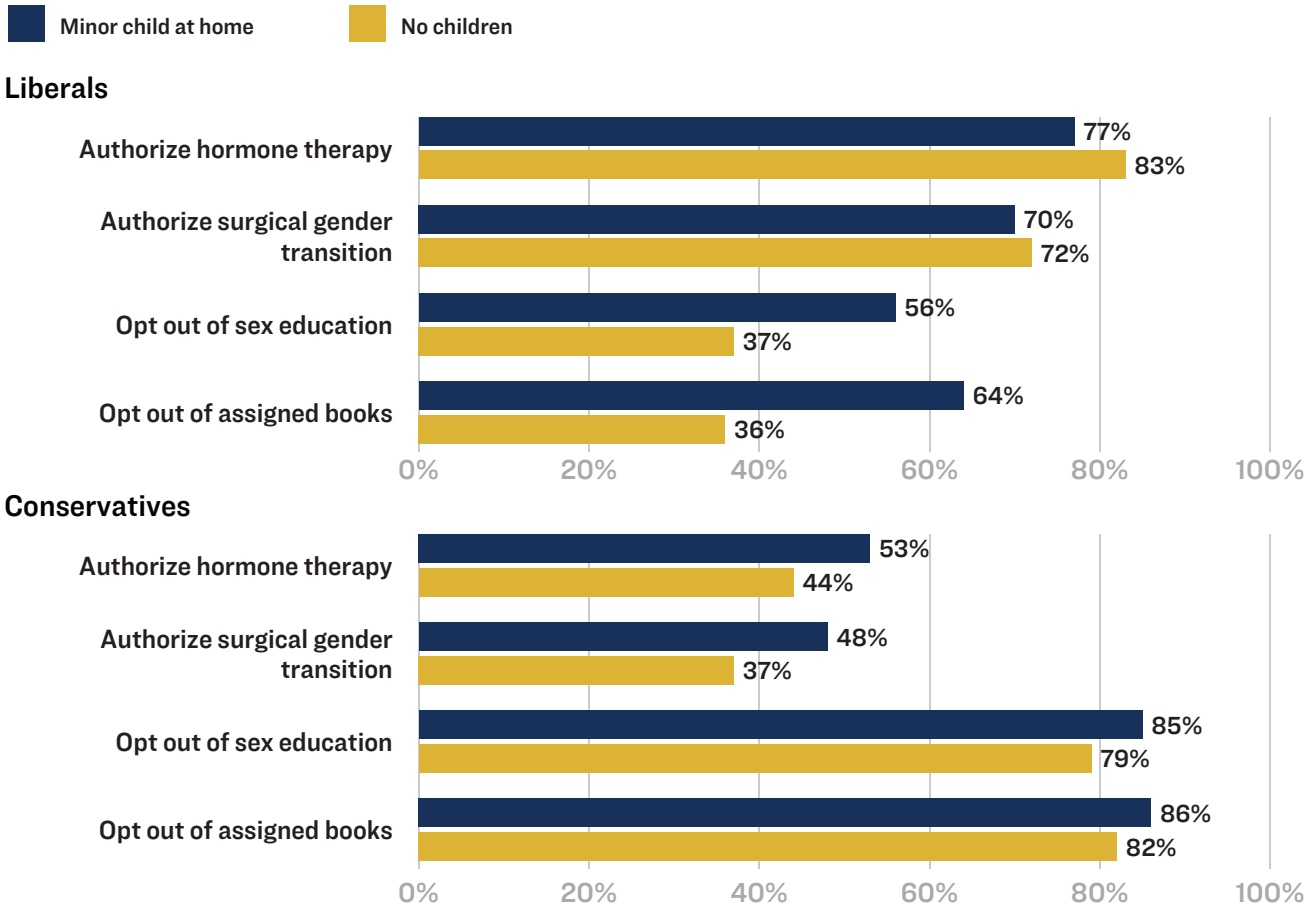
SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: For each of the following, please tell us whether you think parents should have the right to make this decision for their child, even if you personally disagree with the choice. Should parents generally have the right to: Authorize hormone therapy for a transgender child; Authorize surgical gender transition procedures for a child under 18; Opt their child out of sex education classes; Opt their child out of reading assigned books that conflict with their family's values.

Should parents have the right to make decisions for their children when other adults, or even society, disagree? We asked about four decisions: two relating to gender-medicine (authorizing hormone therapy and surgical gender transition) and two to school-curriculum (opting out of sex education classes and opting out of reading assignments that conflict with the parents' values). The question emphasized respondents' views of the parent's authority to decide — not agreement with the decision.

Intriguingly, there is not much consistency in support for parental rights. Ideology predicts opposite answers in the two areas. Among very liberal Americans, 81% would let parents decide on gender medicine, but only 37% would let them opt children out of school curriculum. Among very conservative Americans, the pattern flips: 88% on curriculum and 40% on gender medicine. Moderates are the most evenly supportive across the two. Thus, for the average respondent, the nature of parental authority depends on the issue, not a consistent philosophy.

Views on Parental Authority

Percent who say parents should have the right to make each decision for their child



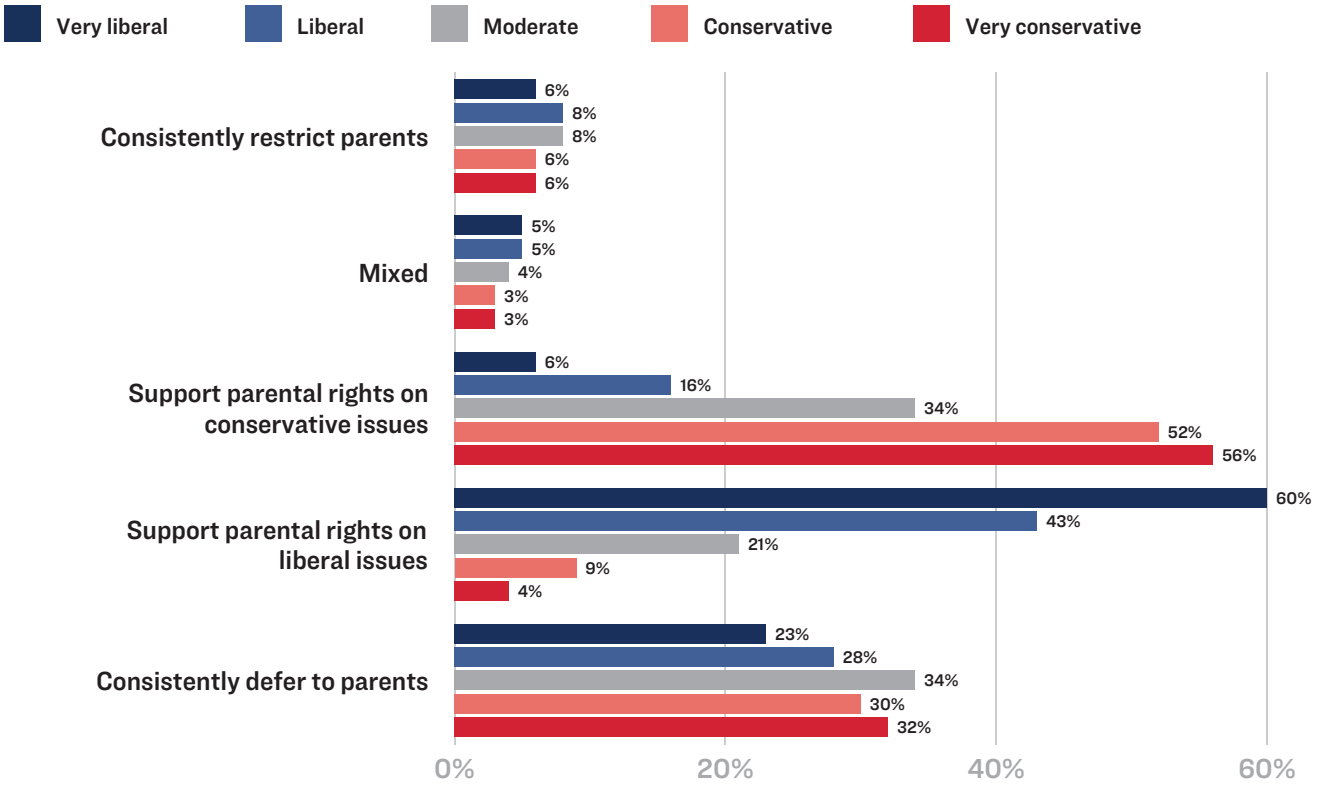
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Parenthood is a relevant factor, with parents of children under 18 more likely to defer on the issues their own side resists. Liberal parents are far more likely than childless liberals to let parents opt children out of sex education (56% vs. 37%) and assigned books (64% vs. 36%). Conservative parents are somewhat more likely than childless conservatives to let parents authorize hormone therapy (53% vs. 44%) and surgery (48% vs. 37%). The differences are smaller for conservatives, who may be less moved by parenthood. And, of course, a single survey cannot tell us how being a parent changes one's views (if at all). Still, parents clearly answer differently than non-parents and the difference is not easily dismissed.

We also explored patterns in how respondents answered all four of the questions. Respondents could fully defer to parents by supporting their right to all four decisions; fully restrict parents by opposing their right to any of the decisions; support parental rights only in a certain direction, either conservative or liberal; or display an ideologically mixed set of responses.

Consistency of Views on Parental Authority

Percent who demonstrate each pattern of responses



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.

QUESTION WORDING: For each of the following, please tell us whether you think parents should have the right to make this decision for their child, even if you personally disagree with the choice. Should parents generally have the right to: Authorize hormone therapy for a transgender child; Authorize surgical gender transition procedures for a child under 18; Opt their child out of sex education classes; Opt their child out of reading assigned books that conflict with their family's values.

The most important findings is that fewer than 1 in 10 in any group would deny parents all four rights. The larger pattern is ideological, with liberals limiting parental authority against school curriculum choices and conservatives limiting parental authority on transgender-related medical issues. Moderates are the most likely to consistently defer.

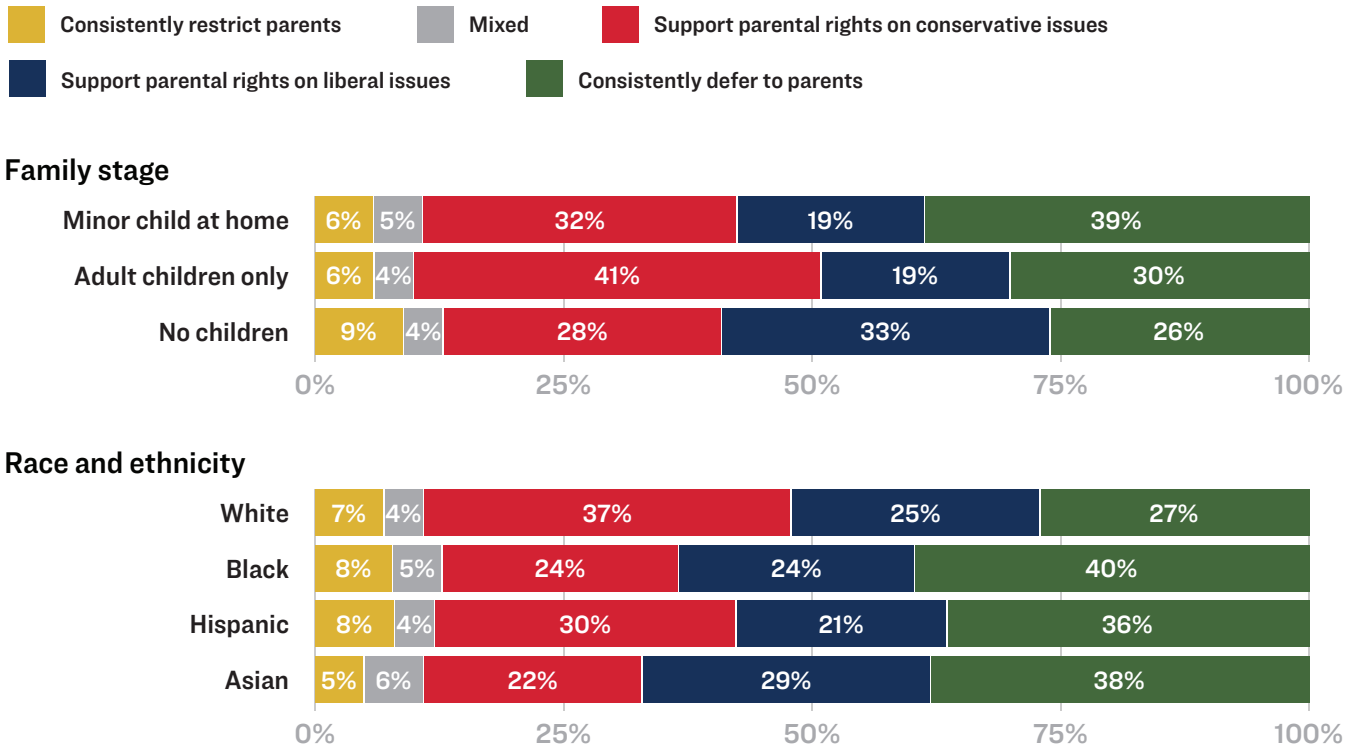
Notably, a consistent "let parents decide" group exists in every ideological camp: roughly a quarter to a third of each, strongest among moderates (34%). Party affiliation shows the same pattern: 32% of strong Democrats, 27% of independents, and 34% of strong Republicans would defer on all four, though only 20% of those who lean Democratic would defer.

Age is not a major dividing line in these patterns. Clearer differences are associated with parenthood, race, religious attendance, and ideology.

Consistent deference to parents is more common among people with a minor child at home (39%, compared with 26% of those without children), among weekly churchgoers, and among moderates. It is also more common among Black (40%), Asian (38%), and Hispanic (36%) respondents than among white respondents (27%).

Views on Parental Authority by Demographic Group

Percent who demonstrate each pattern of responses



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.

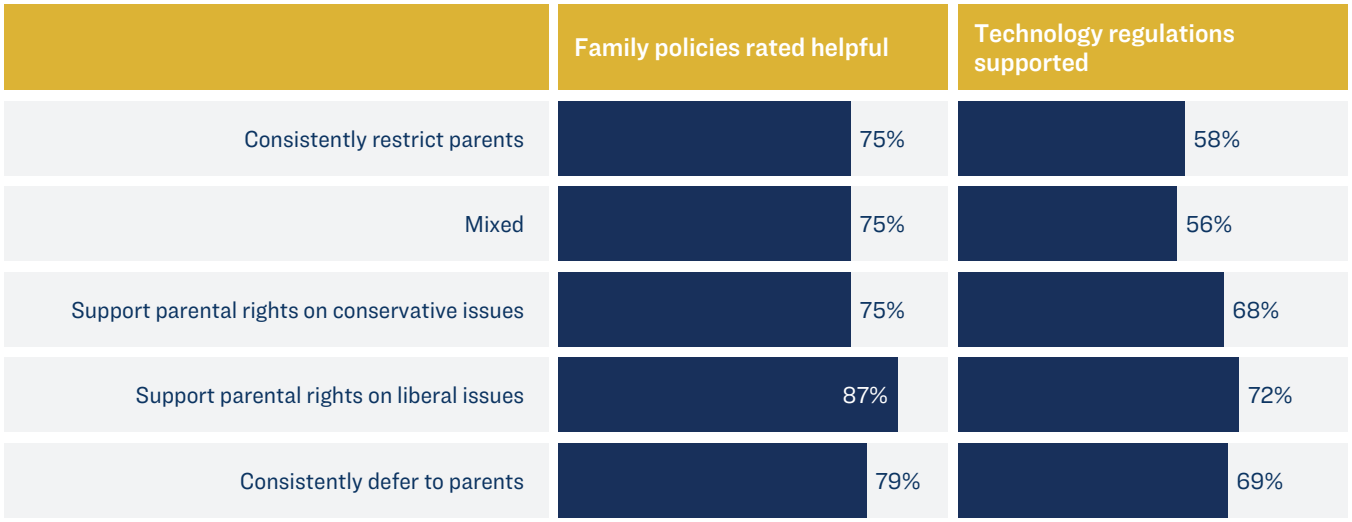
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Education exacerbates ideological differences. Among liberals, the gap between support for parental authority on gender medicine and on school curriculum widens from 23 points among those with a high school education or less to 39 points among those with graduate degrees. Consistent with smaller shifts among conservatives, a bachelor's degree goes with a smaller gap between the two areas.

Is deference to parents just libertarianism? Perhaps the "let parents decide" caucus is a small-government position held by people who want government out of anyone's life. But the data do not support this view. People who defer to parents on all four decisions rate family-support programs (paid leave, child tax credits, etc.) as helpful at about the same rate as other groups, and they support technology regulations (age verification, platform liability, etc.) for children at similar rates.

Support for Family Policies and Tech Regulations, by Views on Parental Rights

Percent of family policies rated as helpful and technology regulations supported, by response patterns on parental rights questions



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: Family policy questions include paid leave, child tax credits, child care, preschool, and children's health care. Technology regulations include social media age rules, age verification for pornographic websites, platform liability, platform taxes, federal oversight, and credit-card bans on gambling apps. See topline results for exact question wording.

On average, those who consistently defer to parents rate 79% of the family programs we asked about as helpful, compared with 75% to 87% in the other groups defined by our typology. And they support 69% of the technology policies, compared with 56% to 72% in the other groups. The small group that would deny parents all four rights is among the least supportive of technology regulation (58%), which firmly goes against a libertarian hypothesis. The pattern holds when we compare otherwise similar people. So the implication is that this is about the issues or about deference (it varies by the respondent).

What does this mean for policy? We can be sure that the parental-rights coalition in these data is not a deregulatory coalition, as they are quite open to regulations such as age-verification laws and platform-liability rules. Such policies draw support from the roughly 30% who defer to parents on all four decisions at approximately the same rate as from everyone else. This is about the policy areas and when parents should decide. And people seem to fit into three large groups (with some room for error): conservatives, liberals, and deferrers who tend to be moderate.

Obviously, these findings speak most directly to the four decisions the survey asked about, especially the contrast between gender-medicine and school-curriculum questions. They do not measure attitudes toward transgender children in general and clearly do not establish a universal theory of parental rights. They do show, however, that "parents decide" and "government stays out" are not the same position for most people. Any proposed policy that combines parental authority with a broad anti-government agenda is likely to attract a narrow coalition. The public thinks about many issues on a case-by-case basis. Yet the most surprising thing these data suggest is that there does appear to be a genuine parental rights coalition.

POLICIES TO SUPPORT FAMILIES

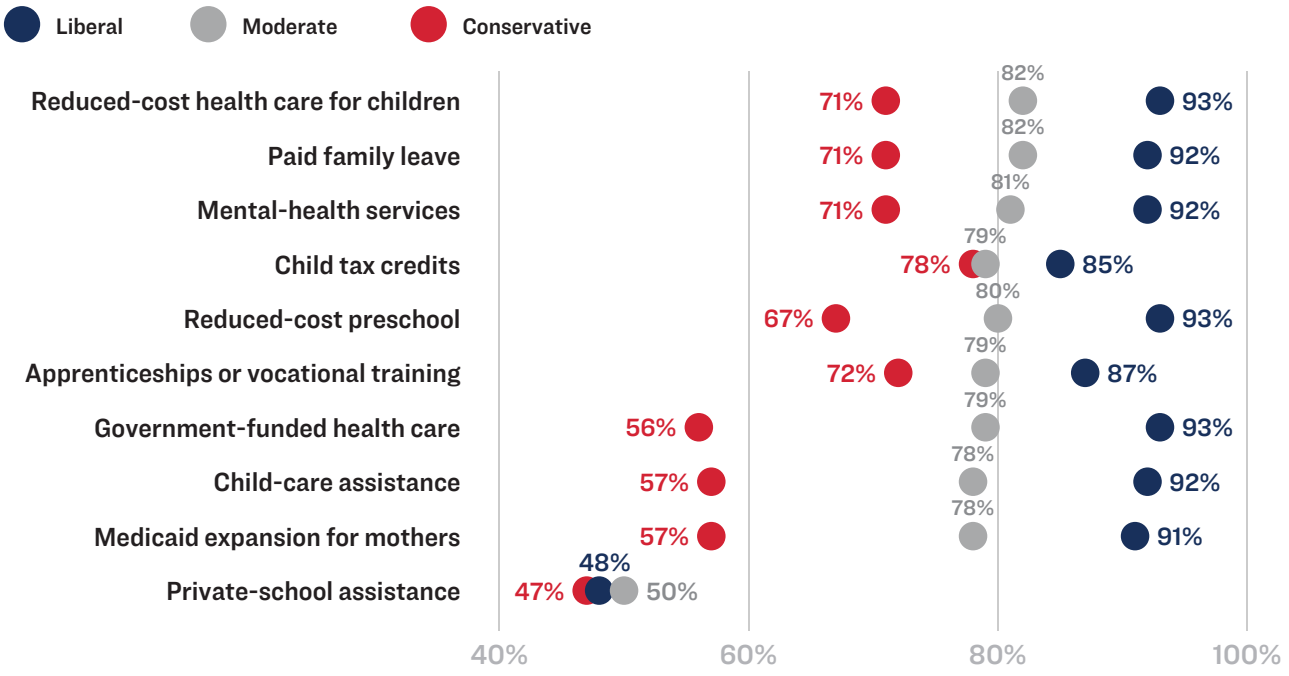
Americans broadly support practical help for families, but differ in how they define family problems and which public responses they favor.

8 in 10

Americans say paid family leave would help families, one of the most broadly supported of 10 policies tested.

Perceived Helpfulness of Family Policies

Percent who say each policy would be helpful or very helpful if passed



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: Consider the policies below. In your opinion, how helpful would each policy be for family well-being in the United States if it were passed? Paid family leave; Child tax credits; Expanded access to mental health services for children and families; Free or reduced-cost healthcare for children; More government-funded support for healthcare; Government-funded support for apprenticeships for a vocation or trade; Free or reduced cost preschool access for young children; Government-funded assistance to help families pay for private school; Expanded government help for childcare expenses; Medicaid expansion for mothers.

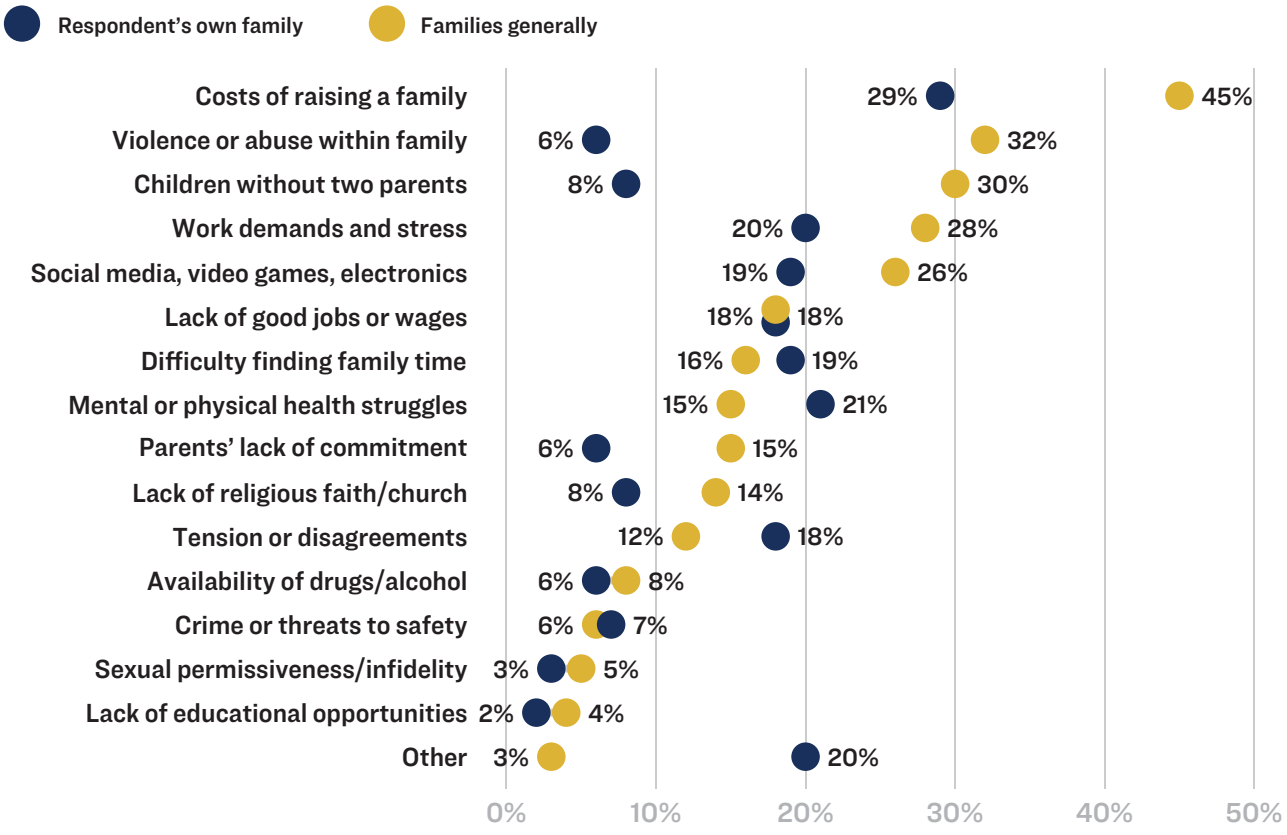
The 2026 American Family Survey asked about ten specific policies to support families. Most Americans believe most of the policies would be helpful if they were passed, but the level of support differs. Among liberals, support ranges from 85% to 93% for nine of the ten policies; among moderates, it ranges from 78% to 82%. Conservatives also show majority support for those nine policies, though that support is somewhat lower and ranges more widely, from 56% to 78%. Private-school assistance stands apart: only 47% to 50% in each group say it would be helpful.

The largest ideological differences concern government-funded healthcare, childcare assistance, and Medicaid expansion for mothers. Liberal support for these policies is 34 to 37 percentage points higher than conservative support. By contrast, support for child tax credits is relatively similar across groups, ranging from 78% to 85%. The results show broad agreement on many forms of family support alongside sharper ideological differences over publicly funded healthcare and childcare.

When asked about the most important problems facing families today, respondents identify different challenges based on whether they are asked about their own family or families generally. The cost of raising a family ranks first in both versions of the question, although the percentage is considerably higher when respondents evaluate families generally. Forty-five percent identify family costs as a top-three problem facing families generally, compared with 29% who identify them as a problem for their own family.

Top Challenges Facing Families Today

Percent selecting each item as one of the top three challenges for their family or families generally



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.

QUESTION WORDING: What are the most important challenges facing [families/YOUR family] today? Pick up to three items. Children growing up without two parents in the home; Violence and abuse within the family; Tension or disagreements between family members; Parents lack of commitment to each other; Difficulty finding quality family time; High work demands and stress on parents; The costs associated with raising a family; The lack of good jobs or wages; Lack of educational opportunities; Crime and other threats to personal safety; Lack of religious faith or church attendance; The widespread availability of drugs and alcohol; Social media, video games, or other electronic resources; Mental or physical health struggles; Sexual permissiveness, including infidelity; Other.

Several other problems show an even larger gap. Thirty-two percent say violence or abuse is one of the three most important problems facing families generally, compared with only 6% who say the same of their own family. Thirty percent identify children without two parents as a top problem facing families generally, compared with just 8% who identify it in their own family. Work demands and stress are selected in the top three by 28% when respondents consider families generally and by 20% when they consider their own family.

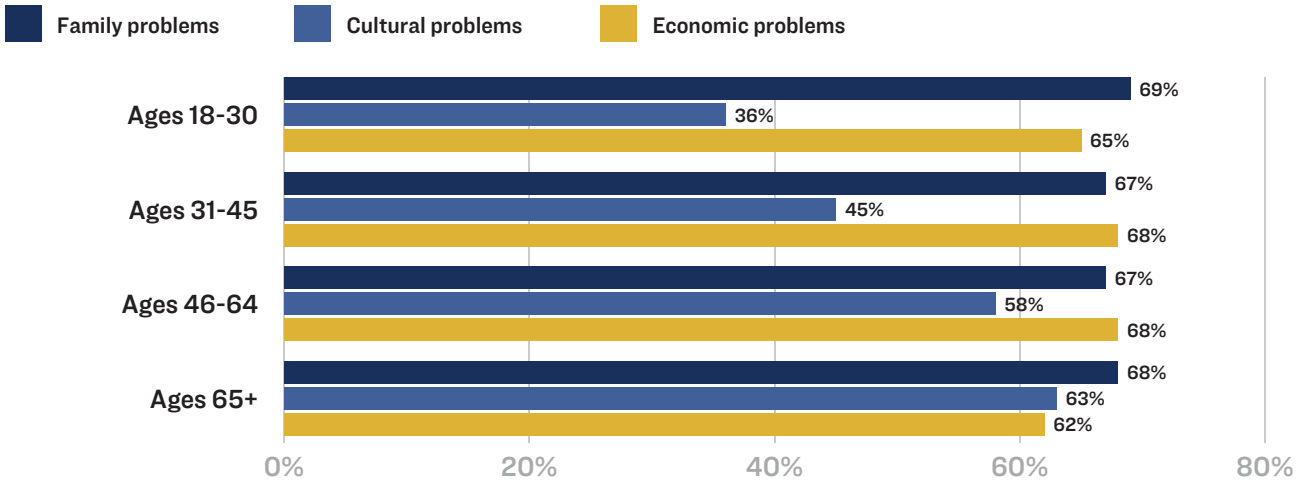
The pattern changes for more immediate household concerns. Mental or physical health struggles are reported as a top-three problem by 21% of respondents regarding their own family, compared with 15% regarding families generally. Tension or disagreements are reported by 18% regarding respondents' own families and 12% regarding families generally. Difficulty finding family time follows a similar pattern, at 19% and 16%, respectively.

These results reveal a gap between how Americans assess their own families and how they assess families as a social institution. Respondents are more likely to associate families generally with violence, absent parents, parental irresponsibility, and the broader costs of family life. They are more likely to identify their own families with health struggles, tension, and the practical difficulty of finding enough time together.

To examine these results in more detail, we combined these survey items into three overarching categories: cultural problems (lack of faith, sexual permissiveness, substances, technology, and health struggles), economic problems (costs of raising family, stress on parents, lack of jobs, lack of education, crime), and family problems (lack of two parents, violence, lack of commitment, tension, quality time).

Top Challenges Facing Families, by Age

Percent selecting at least one problem in each category as one of the top three challenges facing families today



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.

QUESTION WORDING: What are the most important challenges facing families today? Pick up to three items. Children growing up without two parents in the home; Violence and abuse within the family; Tension or disagreements between family members; Parents lack of commitment to each other; Difficulty finding quality family time; High work demands and stress on parents; The costs associated with raising a family; The lack of good jobs or wages; Lack of educational opportunities; Crime and other threats to personal safety; Lack of religious faith or church attendance; The widespread availability of drugs and alcohol; Social media, video games, or other electronic resources; Mental or physical health struggles; Sexual permissiveness, including infidelity; Other.

Family and economic problems are common across age groups. Roughly seven in 10 respondents in every age group select at least one family problem (70% to 73%), and about the same share select at least one economic problem (67% to 71%).

Cultural problems show the clearest age pattern, with concern rising with age: 38% of adults ages 18-30 select at least one, compared with 48% of adults ages 31-45, 58% of adults ages 46-64, and 66% of adults ages 65 and older.

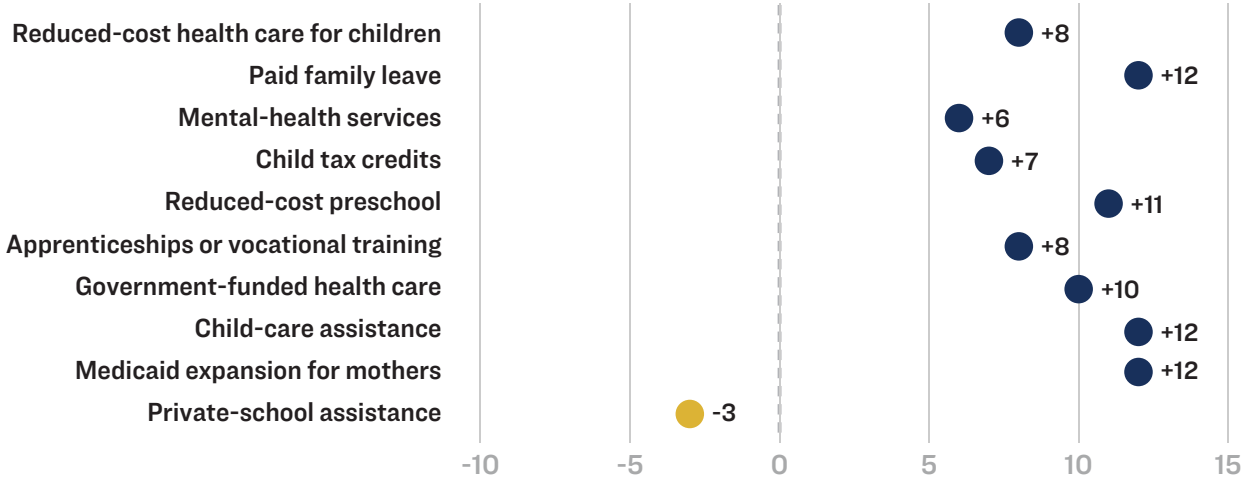
The age differences suggest that Americans share a broad concern about family well-being while emphasizing different explanations for family difficulties. Younger adults are much less likely to identify cultural problems. Older adults are much more likely to identify cultural problems. Family problems remain consistently important across the age range.

This pattern helps explain why family policy debates often involve competing diagnoses. Americans may agree that families need assistance while disagreeing about whether the central challenge involves economic pressure, family relationships, cultural change, or some combination of these concerns.

Do the problems people see in their own families shape the policies they support? To find out, we compared respondents who named at least one economic problem among the top challenges facing their own family with those who did not.

Facing Economic Problems and Policy Support

Difference in predicted support (percentage points) among those selecting an economic challenge as one of the top three facing their family



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: What are the most important challenges facing your family today? Pick up to three items. Children growing up without two parents in the home; Violence and abuse within the family; Tension or disagreements between family members; Parents lack of commitment to each other; Difficulty finding quality family time; High work demands and stress on parents; The costs associated with raising a family; The lack of good jobs or wages; Lack of educational opportunities; Crime and other threats to personal safety; Lack of religious faith or church attendance; The widespread availability of drugs and alcohol; Social media, video games, or other electronic resources; Mental or physical health struggles; Sexual permissiveness, including infidelity; Other. Support includes those who answered "helpful" or "very helpful."

Because people who report economic problems may differ in other ways — they may be younger, have lower incomes, or lean more liberal — we used a statistical model to compare people who are otherwise alike in age, ideology, gender, race, education, family income, and whether they have children at home. Even after accounting for these factors, respondents who named an economic problem for their own family were more likely than similar respondents who did not to say that nine of the 10 policies would be helpful. The differences are largest for paid family leave, child-care assistance, and Medicaid expansion for mothers (12 percentage points each), followed by reduced-cost preschool (11 points) and government-funded health care (10 points). Private-school assistance is the only policy where economic problems made little difference.

In other words, two people with the same income and the same politics can still see family policy differently, depending on whether their own family is feeling economic strain. That connection extends beyond policies framed in economic terms to health care, preschool, and family leave, suggesting that families under financial pressure are more open to many kinds of public support.

Taken together, these results suggest a family-policy environment with substantial agreement and meaningful disagreement. Americans broadly support assistance involving health care, paid leave, childcare, preschool, mental-health services, and financial support. Their views diverge more sharply when they identify the problems families face and the kinds of policies that should respond to those problems. Respondents also distinguish between their own families and families generally, and age is associated with different understandings of the family crisis. Economic experience is also linked to stronger support for nearly every major public family policy.

The central finding is that Americans share a strong desire to support families while holding different views about the source of family difficulties. Family policy therefore involves two related questions: what families need and how Americans understand the problems that assistance should address.

ECONOMIC HARDSHIP AND FAMILY FINANCES

Signs of economic challenge are increasing in the United States, but the hardships are unequally borne, including among young people.

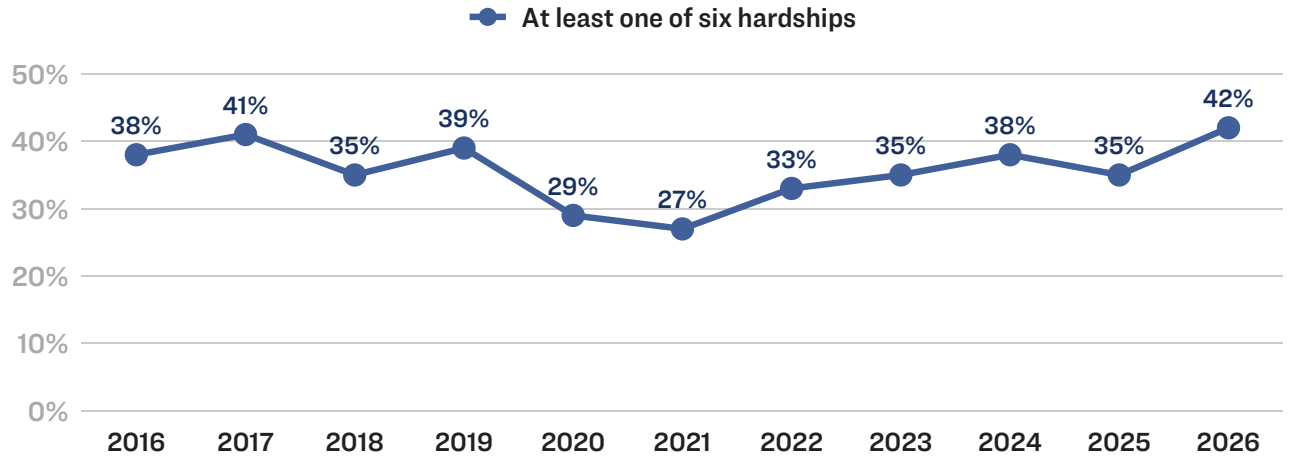
42%

of adults reported at least one of six serious financial hardships in the past year — up 7 percentage points from 2025.

Since 2016, the American Family Survey has tracked a broad measure of economic crisis by identifying respondents who experienced at least one of six hardship events because there was not enough money: hunger, inability to pay an important bill in full, borrowing from family or friends to pay bills, moving in with others because of financial problems, staying somewhere not intended for housing, or forgoing needed medical care because of cost.

Economic Hardship Over Time

Percent who experienced at least one of six hardships during the past year



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: In the past 12 months, did you do any of the following because there wasn't enough money? Were you ever hungry, but didn't eat because you couldn't afford enough food? Did you not pay the full amount of an important bill (like rent, mortgage, or a utility bill)? Did you borrow or receive money from friends or family to help pay the bills? Did you move in with other people even for a little while because of financial problems? Did you stay at a shelter, in an abandoned building, an automobile or any other place not meant for regular housing, even for one night? Was there anyone in your household who needed to see a doctor or go to the hospital but couldn't go because of the cost?

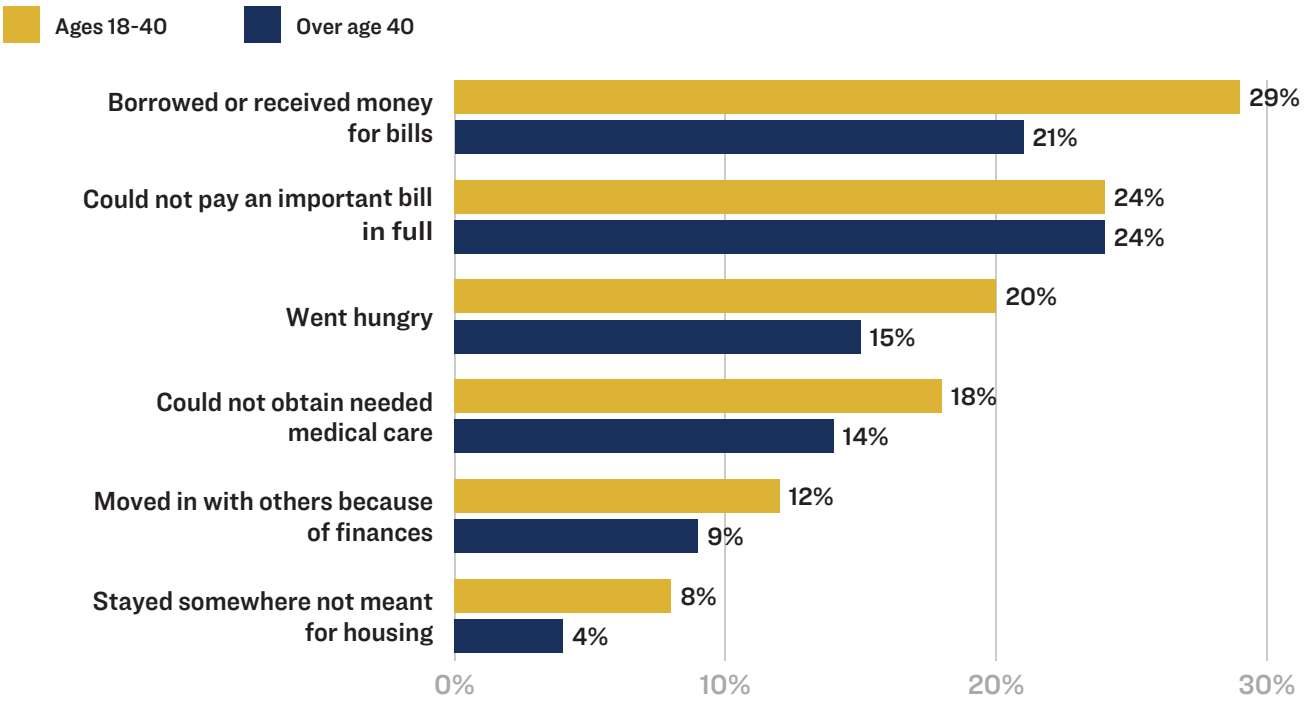
In 2026, 42% of all respondents report at least one hardship event. This result is the highest level ever measured in this survey, and it represents a 7-point increase over last year and a 15-percentage-point increase over 2021, when many families benefited from pandemic-era government assistance. Borrowing from family or friends and failing to pay an important bill in full are the most common events, each affecting approximately 24%. Seventeen percent went hungry in the last year, and 16% report that someone in the household could not obtain needed medical care because of cost.

Propensity to experience an economic crisis differs by age. Nearly half of adults ages 18-29 (48%) and 30-40 (47%) experienced at least one economic crisis in the last year, compared with 39% of adults over 40. Thus, hardship is more common among young adults, but it is not limited to those at the beginning of adult life.

Age differences are not uniform across the six experiences. Younger adults are more likely to borrow money for bills, go hungry, move in with others, experience unstable housing, or forgo medical care. All five of these differences are statistically significant. The largest difference appears in borrowing money: 29% among adults 18-40 compared with 21% among those over 40.

Prevalence of Economic Hardship by Age

Percent who experienced each hardship during the past year

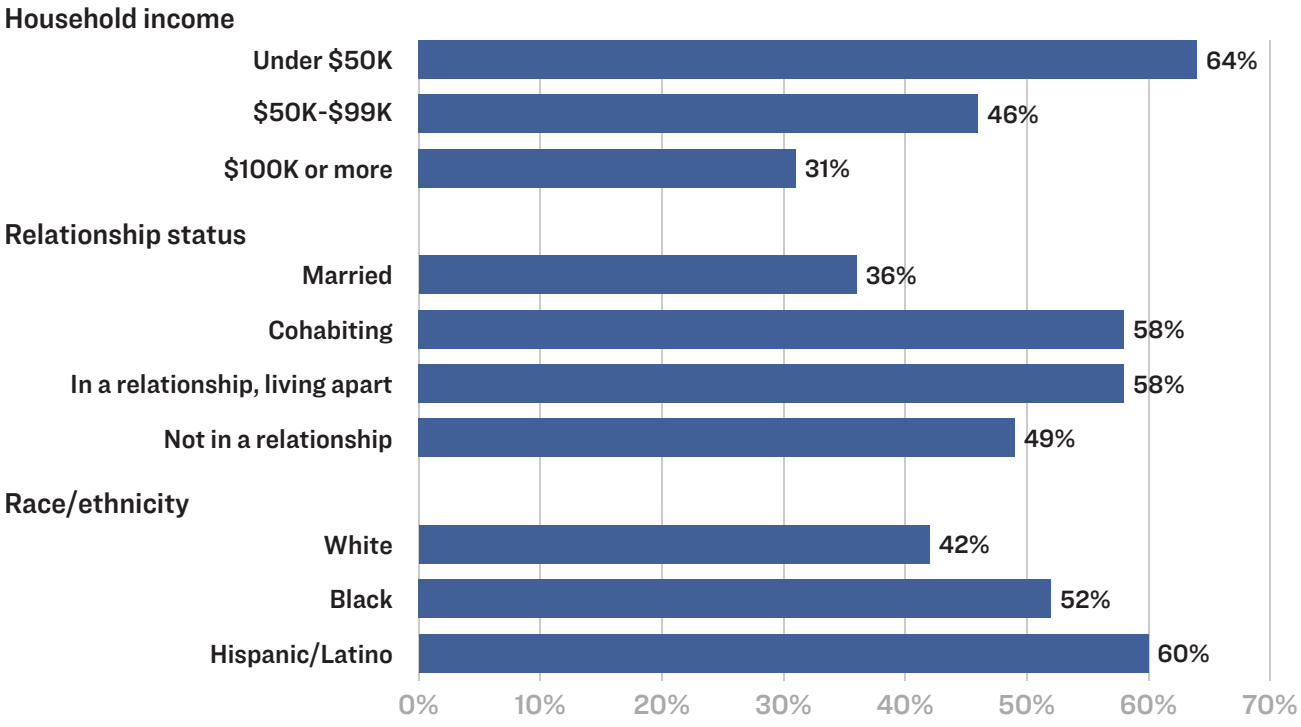


SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: In the past 12 months, did you do any of the following because there wasn't enough money? Were you ever hungry, but didn't eat because you couldn't afford enough food? Did you not pay the full amount of an important bill (like rent, mortgage, or a utility bill)? Did you borrow or receive money from friends or family to help pay the bills? Did you move in with other people even for a little while because of financial problems? Did you stay at a shelter, in an abandoned building, an automobile or any other place not meant for regular housing, even for one night? Was there anyone in your household who needed to see a doctor or go to the hospital but couldn't go because of the cost?

Our oversample of respondents age 18-40 allows us to explore the relationship between the demographic characteristics of young adults and their likelihood of experiencing an economic crisis. These data reveal that young adults do not share a single economic experience, and income level is the clearest dividing line. Nearly two-thirds of young adults with household incomes under $50,000 experienced an economic crisis, compared with just under half of those earning $50,000–$99,999 and less than one-third of those earning at least $100,000. Though not shown in the figure, education follows a similar pattern. College graduates were far less likely to experience a crisis (35%) than young adults with some college or an associate degree (51%) or those with a high school education or less (55%).

Economic Hardship Among Young Adults

Percent of adults ages 18-40 who experienced at least one of six hardships during the past year



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on adults ages 18-40.
QUESTION WORDING: In the past 12 months, did you do any of the following because there wasn't enough money? Were you ever hungry, but didn't eat because you couldn't afford enough food? Did you not pay the full amount of an important bill (like rent, mortgage, or a utility bill)? Did you borrow or receive money from friends or family to help pay the bills? Did you move in with other people even for a little while because of financial problems? Did you stay at a shelter, in an abandoned building, an automobile or any other place not meant for regular housing, even for one night? Was there anyone in your household who needed to see a doctor or go to the hospital but couldn't go because of the cost?

Family and relationship circumstances are also associated with economic security. Among young adults, a little more than one third of married respondents experienced at least one event, compared with 58% of cohabiting respondents and respondents in a relationship but living apart. The estimate for young adults not in a relationship falls between those extremes at 49%. Marriage does not eliminate the effects of low income, however. Among those with incomes below $50,000, there is no statistical difference between married and unmarried respondents; both are highly likely to have experienced an economic crisis.

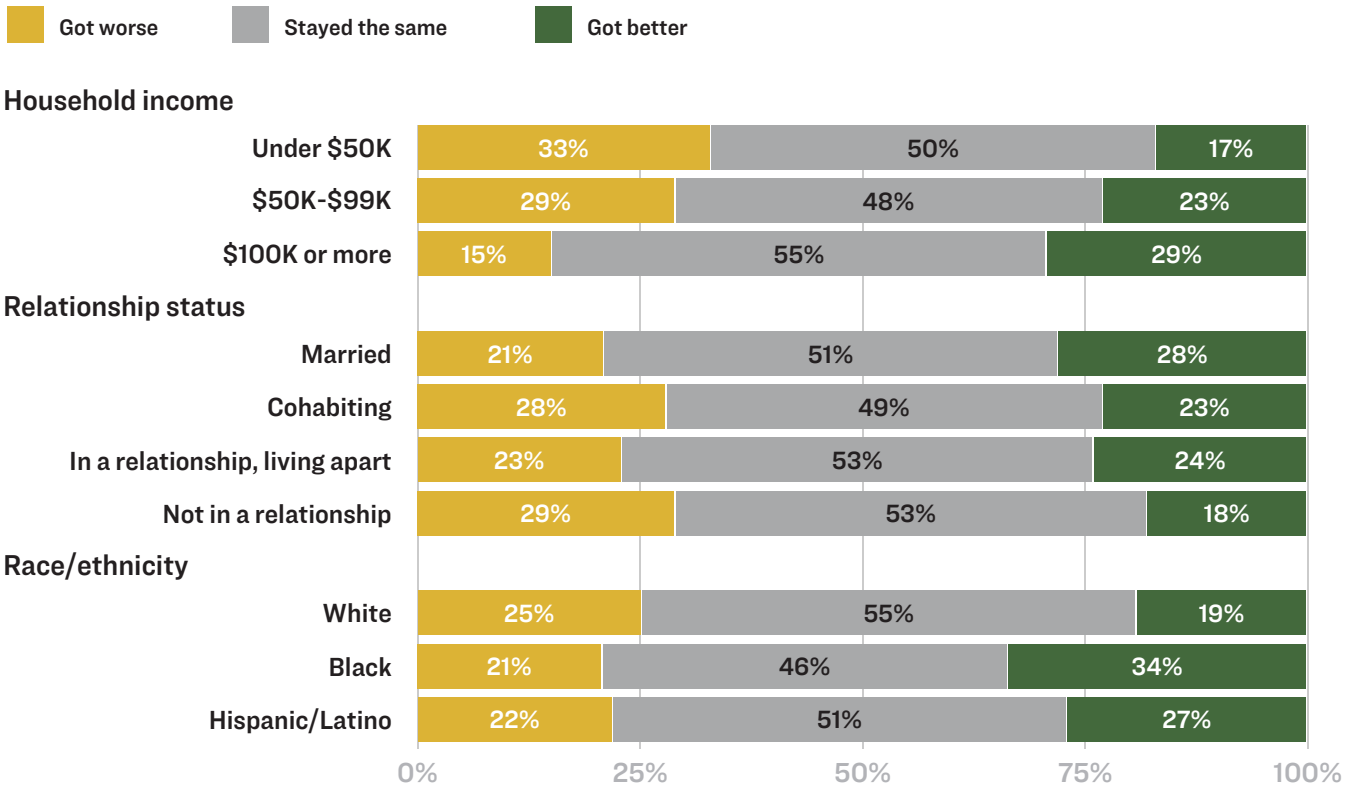
The same is true at the upper end of the income scale. Among those with incomes above $100,000, we find no difference between married and unmarried respondents. Both groups are about half as likely as low-income Americans to have experienced one of our six economic crises. Where marriage seems to matter most is among middle-income Americans (those making between $50,000 and $99,999). In this income band, about 36% of married respondents experienced a crisis, compared with 53% of unmarried respondents.

Race and ethnicity are also associated with experiencing an economic crisis, with white young adults (42%) reporting a substantially lower level than Black (52%) or Hispanic/Latino (60%) young adults. When we consider race and marital status together, we find a large and statistically robust difference among white respondents: 31% of married respondents have experienced a crisis, compared with 48% of all other respondents. A similarly large difference exists among Black respondents (41% among married versus 56% among all others), though our statistical power to distinguish married (n=73) from unmarried (n=240) young Black respondents is lower, creating greater uncertainty about the exact size of the difference. However, we find essentially no difference based on marital status among Hispanic/Latino respondents. Whether married or not, about six in ten Hispanic/Latino respondents have experienced a crisis in the past year.

Respondents' broader assessments of their finances are less stark than the crisis measure. When asked whether their finances got worse, stayed the same, or got better over the past year, the most common response among young adults of every subgroup is that their financial situation stayed the same. Still, income again marks an important divide. One-third of young adults with incomes under $50,000 say their situation got worse, compared with 15% of those with incomes of $100,000 or more. At the same time, 29% in the highest-income group say their finances improved.

How Young Adults' Finances Have Changed in the Past Year

Percent of adults ages 18-40



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on adults ages 18-40.
QUESTION WORDING: Has your financial situation gotten worse, better, or stayed the same in the last year?

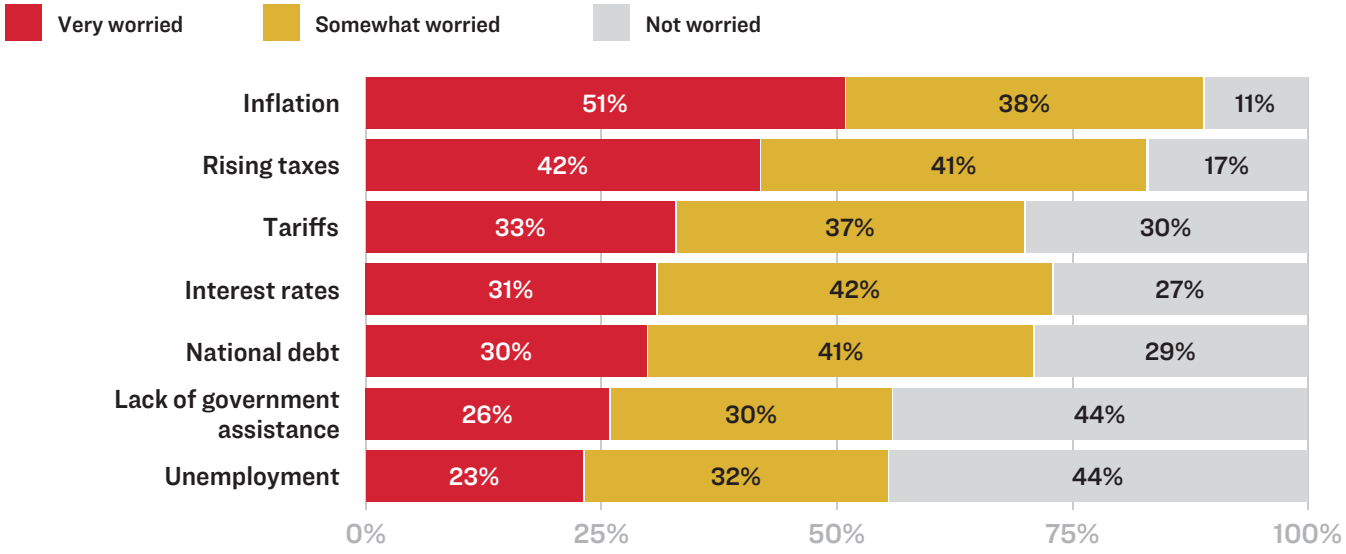
Some patterns differ from the crisis measure. Racial and ethnic differences in the percentage saying their finances got worse are modest, and Black young adults are the most likely group shown to say their finances improved. Married young adults are less likely than cohabiting or unpartnered young adults to say their finances worsened and more likely than single respondents to say their finances improved.

Reading the crisis and evaluation measures together helps clarify the nature of economic security today. Young adults with low incomes fare poorly on both measures, suggesting that their higher incidence of crisis is accompanied by a broader sense of declining financial security.

We also asked respondents to report their expectations about how seven economic factors would affect their family finances during the coming year. Inflation stands apart: 51% are very worried and another 38% are somewhat worried. Only 11% say they are not worried. Rising taxes rank second in intense concern, with 42% very worried. Tariffs, interest rates, and the national debt form a middle tier, while unemployment and lack of government assistance produce less intense — but still substantial — concern, especially if we include those who say they are "somewhat worried." Majorities thus express at least some concern about every economic factor listed, but inflation provokes the most intense concern.

Threats to Family Finances

Percent concerned about each economic factor

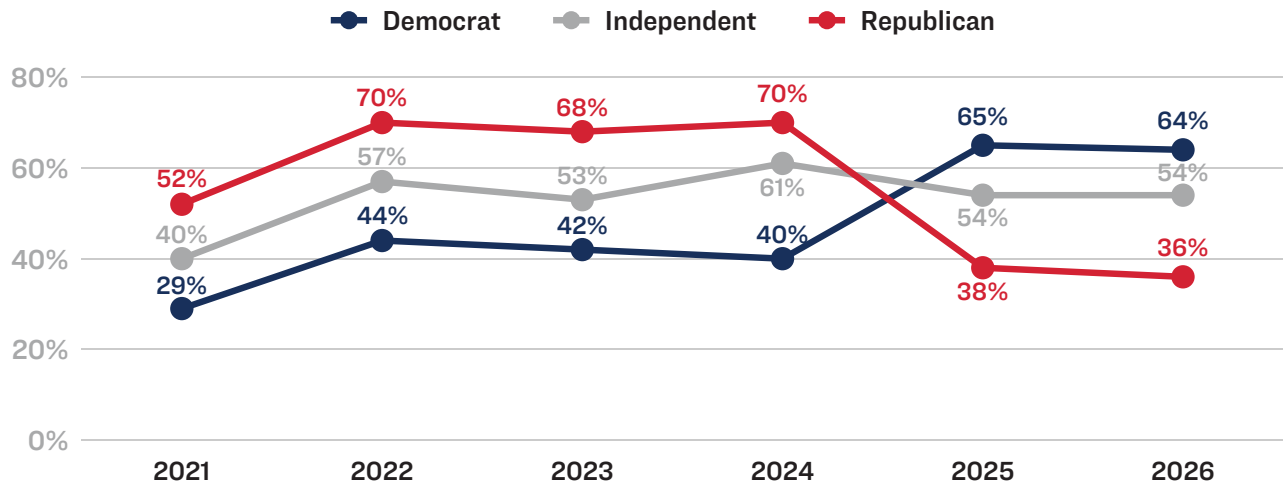


SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: How worried are you that each of the following will affect your family finances in the coming year?

Partisanship strongly structures inflation worry, but the political context matters for who indicates the most worry. From 2021 through 2024, when Democrats held the White House, Republicans were much more likely than Democrats to say they were very worried about inflation. The pattern reversed when Republicans came to power in 2025 and persisted in 2026. In the current survey, 64% of Democrats are very worried, compared with 54% of independents and 36% of Republicans. This reversal is a reminder that expressed economic concern can reflect more than exposure to prices or household resources. Evaluations of economic conditions are also connected to the political context and which party controls the presidency.

Partisan Differences in Concern About Inflation

Percent "very worried" about inflation affecting their family finances

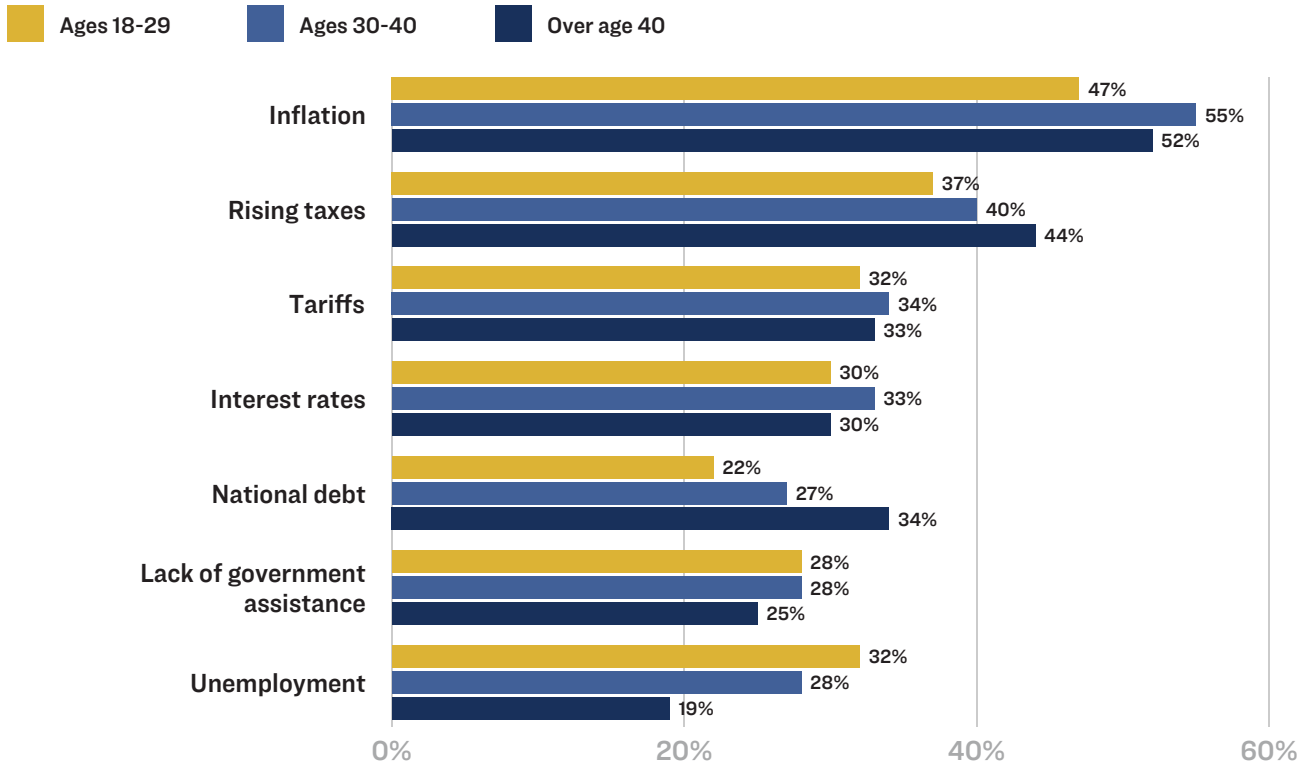


SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: How worried are you that each of the following will affect your family finances in the coming year? Items: inflation; national debt; unemployment; lack of government assistance; interest rates; rising taxes; tariffs. Response options: Very worried; Somewhat worried; Not worried.

Concern about the economic future also depends upon age, with meaningful variation by particular economic threat. Adults ages 30-40 express comparatively more intense worry about inflation (55%) than those ages 18-29 (47%), with older Americans falling between those two estimates. Younger adults are more worried about unemployment (32% of those ages 18-29 and 28% of those ages 30-40 are very worried, compared with 19% of adults over 40). Older adults, by contrast, are more intensely worried about the national debt and rising taxes. Concern about tariffs and interest rates varies little across these age groups. Economic concerns thus appear to shift as adults move through different stages of work, housing, and family life.

Economic Worries by Age

Percent "very worried" about each item affecting their family finances



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: How worried are you that each of the following will affect your family finances in the coming year?

The economic picture that emerges from these analyses is one of measurable hardship combined with variation in present concerns and expectations about the future. In this year's survey, more Americans report at least one serious economic crisis than in any prior year of this series. Younger adults are more exposed than older adults, but the largest divides within the young-adult population are associated with income, education, and relationship circumstances. As in previous years, inflation is the most widely shared concern, but even that issue is filtered through age and partisanship. At the same time, unemployment weighs more heavily on younger adults, while the national debt and rising taxes generate more intense concern among older adults. Taken together, these various indicators of economic health reflect widespread economic strain, but also reveal where that strain is unequally distributed.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY AND HOMEOWNERSHIP

Homeownership remains common, but access is still unequal. Concern about housing affordability spans communities across the country.

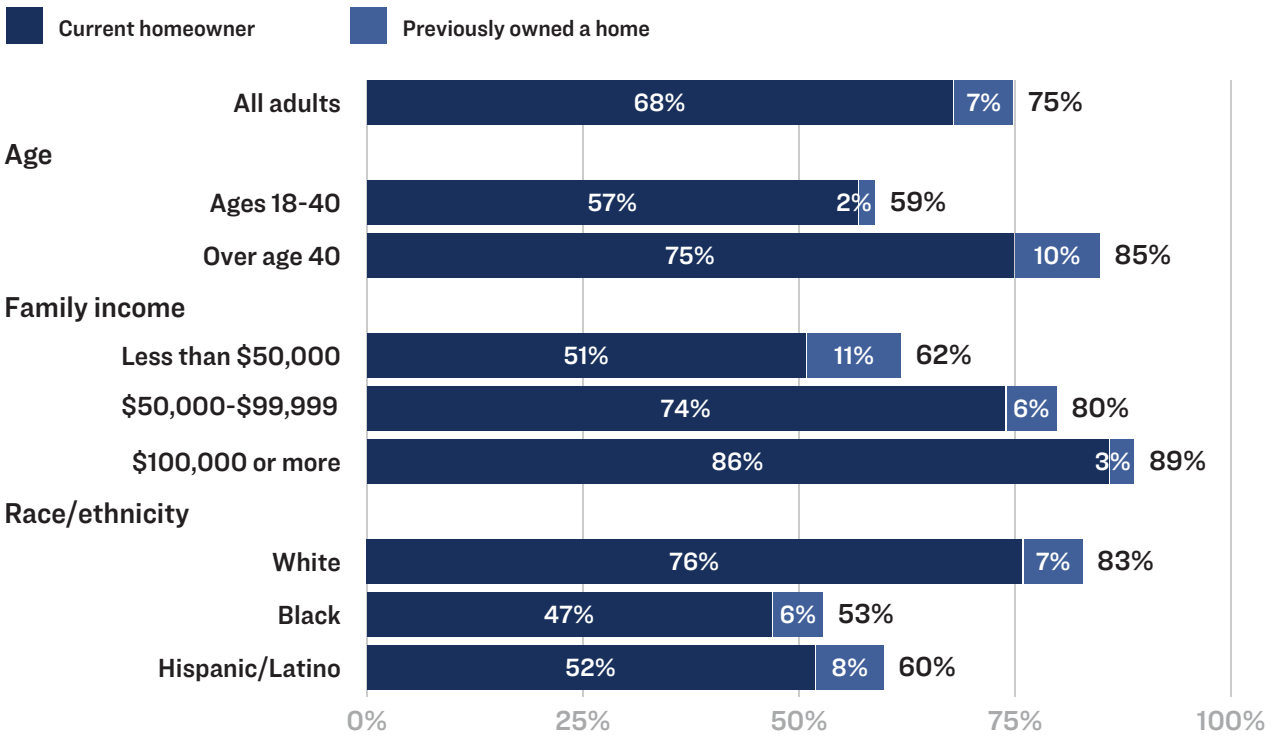
56% of nonhomeowners with family incomes below $50,000 say owning a home will always be too expensive, compared with 20% of those with incomes of at least $100,000.

Homeownership remains closely tied to Americans' ideas about financial security and opportunity. It is, for many, a key milestone in the American Dream. Yet rising prices and uneven access have made ownership difficult to attain for many households.

Even so, homeownership is a common experience for adults. A little over two-thirds of respondents to the 2026 American Family Survey report that they currently own their home, and approximately three-quarters have owned a home at some point in their lives. At the same time, these national figures conceal substantial differences by age, income, and race.

Current and Lifetime Homeownership

Dark bars show percent of current homeowners; lighter extensions show previous owners



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: Have you ever owned a home?

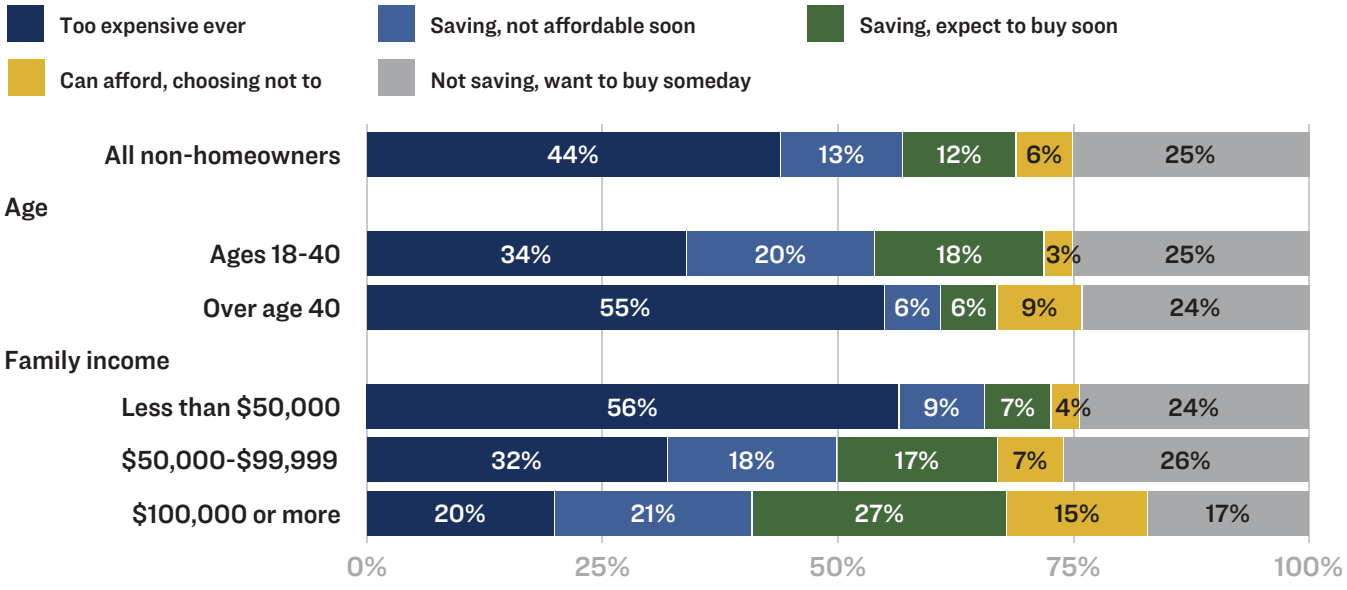
The difference between current and lifetime ownership also provides useful context. Nationally, the two measures differ by 7 percentage points, showing that a meaningful minority previously owned but no longer does. Among younger adults, however, the difference is only 2 points. In other words, most young adults who do not currently own have never entered homeownership at all. By contrast, the 10-point gap among adults over 40 reflects a larger population with previous experience owning a home. The challenge of homeownership can therefore mean different things at different stages of life.

We also asked those who do not currently own a home about their expectations for the future. A plurality (44%) are pessimistic about their prospects, saying that a home will always be too expensive for them to buy, and an additional 13% report that they are saving but do not believe a home will be affordable for them soon. Thus, close to 6 in 10 doubt that they will be able to afford a home in the near future. Another 25% are not saving currently but harbor the hope of buying someday. About 12% are saving and expect to buy soon, and only 6% say they can afford a home but are choosing not to buy.

Perhaps surprisingly, pessimism is more common among older non-homeowners: 55% of those over 40 say a home will always be too expensive, compared with 34% of those ages 18-40. This may reflect the different meaning of delay across the life course. Younger adults have more time to anticipate rising incomes or changing conditions, whereas older non-homeowners may see fewer remaining opportunities to enter the market.

Expectations Among Current Non-homeowners

Percentage among those who do not own their home



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on those who do not currently own a home.
QUESTION WORDING: Which of the following statements reflect your expectations about home ownership? Response options: It is too expensive for me to ever own a home; I am saving up for it, but will not be able to afford one in the near future; I am saving up for it, and am expecting to buy one soon; I have the financial ability to buy a home, but am choosing not to; I am not currently saving up but still want to buy a home someday.

Income is the strongest dividing line in attitudes about future ownership. More than half (56%) of non-homeowners with family incomes below $50,000 say ownership will always be too expensive, compared with 20% among those with incomes of at least $100,000. Higher-income nonowners are instead more likely to be saving for a near-term purchase or to say that they could afford a home but are choosing not to buy. The same status of "non-homeowner" therefore encompasses very different economic positions, depending on income.

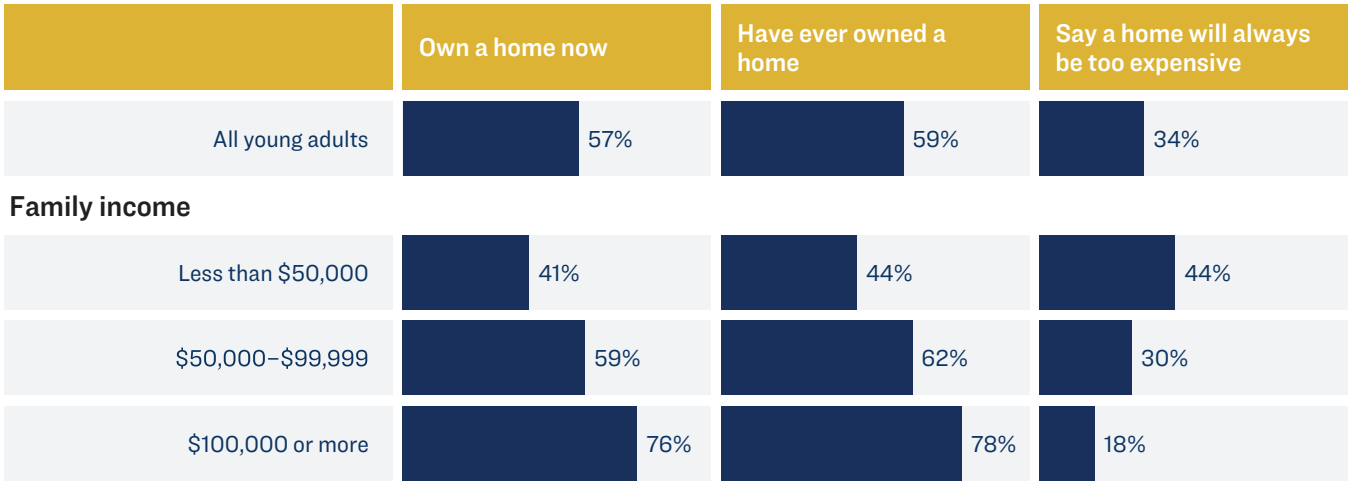
Age and income can reinforce one another. About two-thirds of current non-homeowners over age 40 with incomes below $50,000 say ownership will always be too expensive. This group has neither the financial resources associated with entry into homeownership nor the longer time horizon that may sustain optimism among younger adults.

Race and income are also jointly associated with expectations about homeownership, though it is lower-income white respondents who are the most pessimistic. About two-thirds (64%) believe that they will never be able to afford a home, compared with 48% of Hispanic/Latino respondents and 44% of Black respondents. Our sample size is not large enough to reliably disaggregate by age, race, and income together. Still, the lesson is clear that optimism about future prospects for homeownership varies widely across demographic characteristics. Treating all non-homeowners as a single group would conceal these fundamentally different circumstances.

These national age and income patterns come into sharper focus when we use the survey's young-adult oversample to examine how income structures housing experiences within the same broad stage of life. Among adults ages 18-40, 57% currently own a home and 59% have ever owned one. Over one-third of young non-homeowners believe that a home will always be too expensive for them to buy. But as with Americans as a whole, the experience of young adults varies sharply by income.

Housing Experiences Among Young Adults, by Income

Percentage of adults ages 18-40



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026.* Based on adults ages 18-40. Percentages in the "Too expensive ever" column are based on those who do not currently own a home.

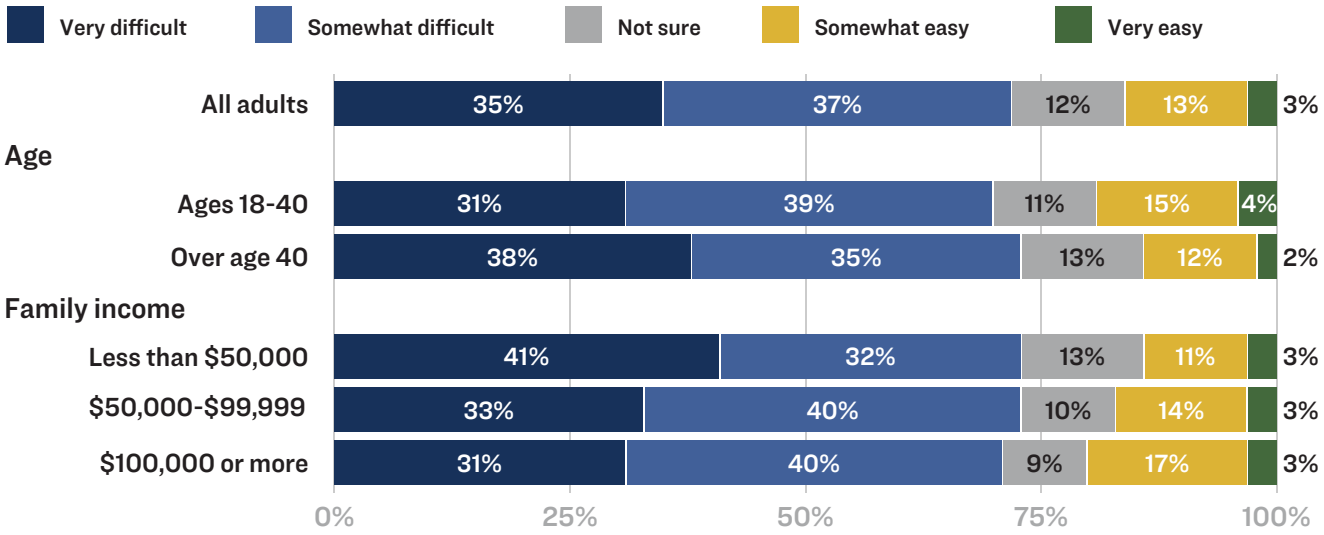
QUESTION WORDING: Which of the following statements reflect your expectations about home ownership? It is too expensive for me to ever own a home; I am saving up for it, but will not be able to afford one in the near future; I am saving up for it, and am expecting to buy one soon; I have the financial ability to buy a home, but am choosing not to; I am not currently saving up but still want to buy a home someday.

Current ownership rises from 41% among young adults with family incomes below $50,000 to 76% among those with incomes of at least $100,000. The experience of ever owning a home follows a nearly identical pattern. By contrast, perceptions of permanent exclusion move in the opposite direction: 44% of lower-income young non-homeowners say a home will always be too expensive, compared with 18% of those in the highest income category. The survey cannot predict individual trajectories, but it shows how unequal those starting positions already are before age 40.

We also asked respondents to step back and consider housing affordability in their area. Though each respondent is asked to judge their own local conditions, which may vary in a variety of ways, their responses reflect significant concern across the board.

Finding Affordable Housing in Local Communities

Percentage of Americans



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: In your local community, how easy or difficult is it for people to find affordable housing?

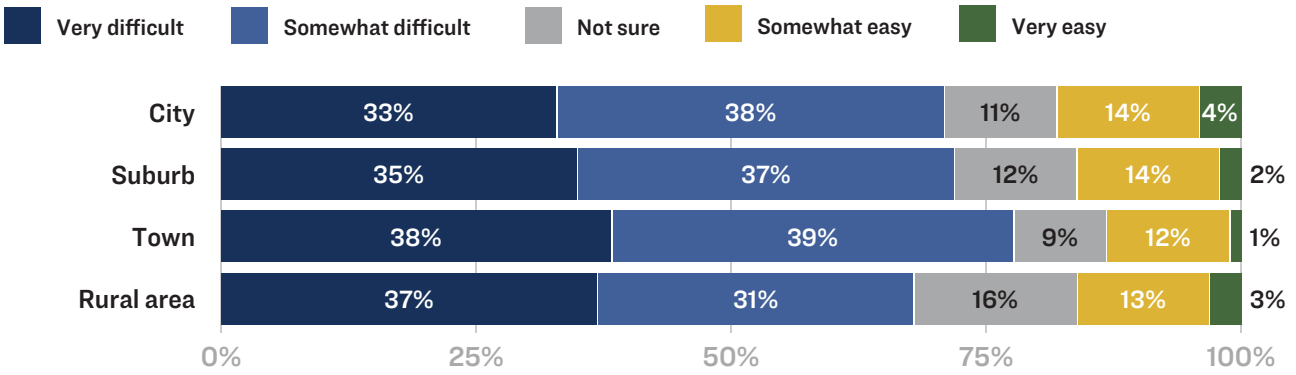
More than seven-in-10 adults say finding affordable housing in their local community is somewhat or very difficult, with more than one-third indicating that it is “very difficult.” By contrast, only 16% describe affordable housing as somewhat or very easy to find.

Unlike reports of homeownership, perceptions of local affordability vary only modestly by age and income. Differences by gender, education, and race are similarly small. Housing affordability is thus perceived as a broad community problem, including by households with the resources to own a home. Concern about affordability thus reaches beyond those currently excluded from ownership.

This concern also spans community types, from cities and suburbs to towns and rural areas. No community type escapes the problem: in each one, roughly seven-in-10 or more describe affordable housing as difficult to find.

Perceived Availability of Affordable Housing by Community Type

Percentage of Americans

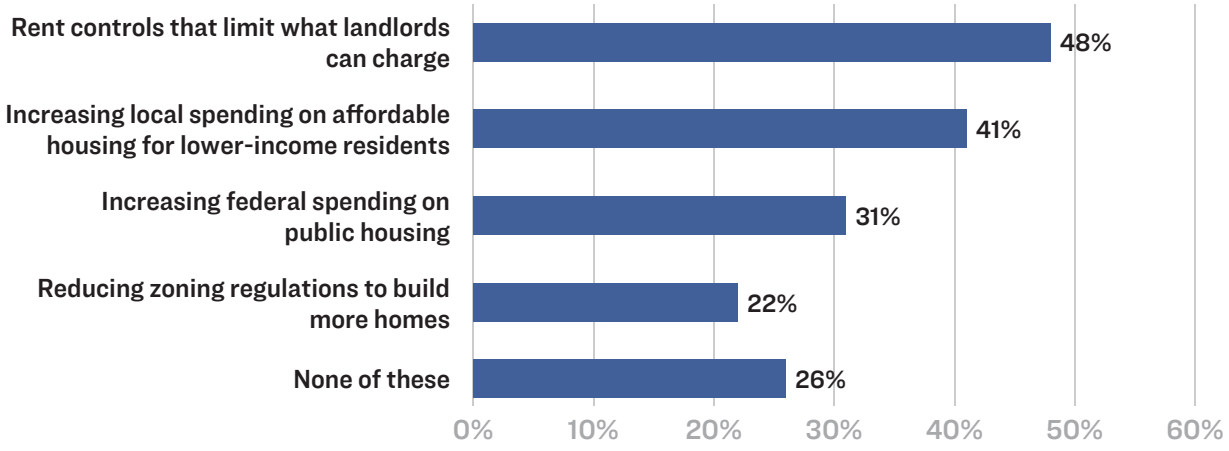


SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: In your local community, how easy or difficult is it for people to find affordable housing?

What policies do Americans support to deal with housing affordability? We asked respondents about four options, including rent controls, increased local spending on affordable housing for lower-income residents, increased federal spending on public housing, and reduced zoning regulations meant to facilitate more home building. The most popular response, selected by nearly half of the sample, is rent control. A little more than four-in-10 choose local spending on affordable housing, substantially more than the three-in-10 who want more federal spending. Just over one-in-five select the option of reducing zoning regulations. Because respondents could choose more than one policy, these results measure whether a proposal is seen as helpful rather than a zero-sum choice between the policies.

Policies to Create Affordable Housing

Percentage who say each policy would help create more affordable housing in their area



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: Which of the following would help create more affordable housing in your area? (Select all that apply) Response options: Reducing zoning regulations to build more homes; rent controls that limit what landlords can charge for rent; increasing federal spending on public housing; increasing local spending on affordable housing for lower-income residents; none of these.

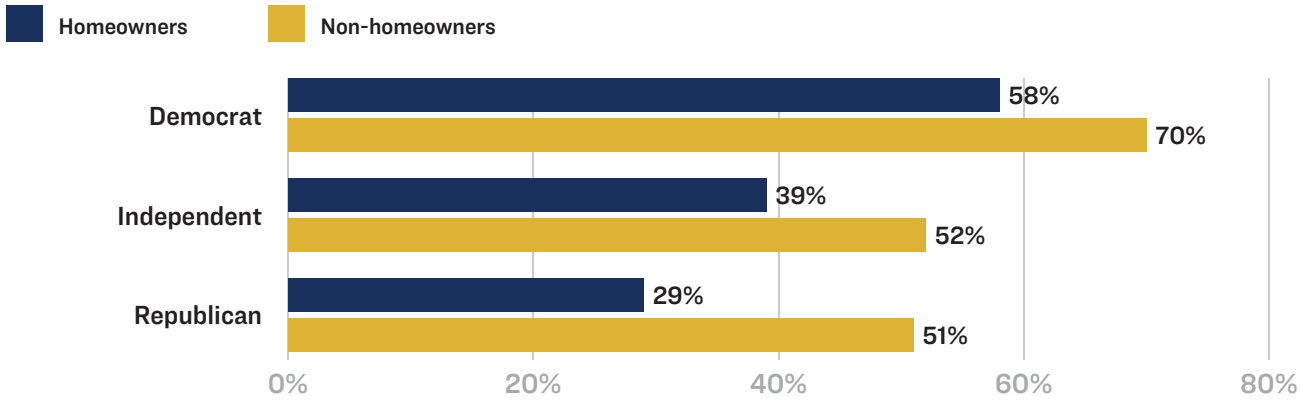
Still, the ordering is notable because the survey offered policies that work through different mechanisms. Zoning reform seeks to expand private housing supply; public spending directly subsidizes or builds affordable units; and rent controls limit prices within the existing rental market.

Most respondents do not reject government action, though about one quarter do not believe that any of the options we included would be a good solution. The comparatively low 22% for reduced zoning regulations suggests that supply-oriented reforms are less intuitively compelling to the public than policies promising more immediate assistance or limits on housing costs. At the same time, the comparative popularity of rent controls suggests that many respondents find policies that promise immediate price relief to be enticing. Whether they have fully considered the longer-term consequences associated with price ceilings is less certain.

Party identification and ownership status both divide views of rent control. Among both Democrats and Independents, rent control was the most popular option (chosen by 62% and 44%, respectively). Among Republicans, "none of the above" was the plurality preference (38%), with rent control coming in second (34%).

Support for Rent Controls by Party and Homeownership

Percentage who say rent controls would help create affordable housing



SOURCE: *American Family Survey 2026*. Based on all Americans.
QUESTION WORDING: Which of the following would help create more affordable housing in your area? (Select all that apply) Response options: Reducing zoning regulations to build more homes; rent controls that limit what landlords can charge for rent; increasing federal spending on public housing; increasing local spending on affordable housing for lower-income residents; none of these.

Still, current home ownership also matters. Among current homeowners, 58% of Democrats select rent controls, compared with 39% of independents and 29% of Republicans. Among current non-homeowners, support is higher and reaches majority support in every party: 70% among Democrats, 52% among independents, and 51% among Republicans.

The comparison is especially revealing among Republicans. Republican non-homeowners are 22 percentage points more likely than Republican homeowners to select rent controls, and their estimate is nearly identical to that of independent non-homeowners. Party remains important, but immediate position in the housing market also means that substantial intraparty differences can be found across the political spectrum.

Taken together, these results suggest that homeownership remains a common American experience and a touchstone of the American Dream. But access to it remains unequal in the United States, as is optimism about the prospect of becoming a homeowner. Americans living in very different places agree that housing affordability is a problem in their area, yet differ over how to address it — a divide that reflects not only competing policy preferences, but also unequal prospects for achieving the security homeownership can offer.

Methodology Note

YouGov interviewed 4,545 nationally-representative respondents in the United States (3,044 in the main survey of 18+ year-olds and 1,501 in the over sample of 18-40 year-olds) who were then matched down separately to respective samples of 3,000 main, 1,500 oversample to produce the two datasets. The respondents were matched to a corresponding sampling frame on gender, age, race, and education. The sampling frame was constructed by stratified sampling from the full (main) or 18-40 year-old subset (oversample) 2023 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year sample with selection within strata by weighted sampling with replacements (using the person weights on the public use file). The 2024 presidential vote distributions were collected from CNN exit polls.

The respective matched cases were weighted to the corresponding sampling frame using propensity scores. The matched cases and the frame were combined and a logistic regression was estimated for inclusion in the frame. The propensity score function included age, gender, race/ethnicity, years of education, region, and home ownership. The propensity scores were grouped into deciles of the estimated propensity score in the frame and post-stratified according to these deciles. The two interim datasets weights were then post-stratified on home ownership (oversample only), 2024 presidential vote choice as well as a four-way stratification of gender, age , race (4-categories), and education (4-categories), to produce the final weights.

The two datasets were then combined and post-stratified on age (5-categories) to produce the final combined dataset. The survey was fielded July 20–August 6, 2026. The margin of error for the full sample of 4,500 is ±1.8 percentage points; margins of error for subgroups are larger.

BYUC0044 Toplines

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Sample	4500 United States - General Population
Conducted	July 20 - August 06, 2026
Margin of Error	±1.8%

List of Tables

1. Do you personally hope or desire to marry in the future? . . . 2
2. How likely is it that you will [still be married two years from now/get married in the next two years]? . . . 2
3. How often do you do each of the following with your spouse or partner? . . . 2
4. At any point in the last two years, have you thought that your marriage or relationship was in trouble? 3
5. Would you say that your marriage or relationship is stronger, weaker, or about the same as two years ago? . . . 3
6. Turning to marriage generally, do you feel that marriages in the United States are stronger, weaker, or about the same as two years ago? . . . 4
7. How much do you agree or disagree with the following: . . . 4
8. How satisfied are you with your ... ? . . . 5
9. Do you personally hope or desire to have [a child/another child] someday? . . . 5
10. How much do you agree or disagree with the following: . . . 5
11. Children are better off with two married caregivers than with a single caregiver. . . . 6
12. Children are better off with two unmarried caregivers than with a single caregiver. . . . 7
13. Children are better off with two married caregivers of the same sex than with a single caregiver. . . . 7
14. How much do you agree or disagree with the following: . . . 7
15. Children are better off with two married caregivers than with a single caregiver. . . . 8
16. Children are better off with two unmarried caregivers than with a single caregiver. . . . 8
17. Children are better off with two married caregivers of the same sex than with a single caregiver. . . . 8
18. How old were you when you first became a parent? . . . 8
19. How often does your family ...? . . . 9
20. What are the most important challenges facing YOUR family today? Pick up to three items. . . . 10
21. What are the most important challenges facing families today? Pick up to three items. . . . 11
22. In the past 12 months, did you do any of the following because there wasn't enough money? . . . 11
23. Has your financial situation gotten worse, better, or stayed the same in the last year? . . . 12
24. How worried are you that each of the following will affect your family finances in the coming year? . . . 12
25. Which of the following comes closest to your current approach to dating? . . . 12
26. On average, how often do you go on a date with [a potential romantic partner/your current spouse or partner]? . . . 13
27. If you are not currently in a committed relationship, why not? (Select all that apply) . . . 13
28. Overall, how would you describe your experience with dating in the past two years? . . . 13
29. Thinking of [your last serious relationship/your current partner], what is the highest level of education they completed? . . . 13
30. When it comes to finding a good partner, how easy or difficult [has it been/was it] for you to find someone with the following traits? . . . 14
31. How much pressure, if any, do you feel from the following to get married? . . . 14
32. How important are each of the following personal goals to you right now? . . . 15
33. Before getting married, how important is it for someone to 15
34. How important do you think the following are when creating a successful marriage? . . . 16
35. How committed are you to your current relationship? . . . 16
36. How committed do you think your partner is to the relationship? . . . 17
37. In the past two years, have you done any of the following to intentionally work on your marriage, relationship, or parenting? (Select all that apply) . . . 17
38. How often do you wonder if you could find a better partner than you currently have? . . . 17
39. People value different roles in their lives. How important are the following things to your personal identity? . . . 18

40. Apart from physical ability to conceive a child, how important are each of these factors for your decisions about having children in the future? . . . 18
41. Do you feel financially ready to have children? . . . 19
42. How important do you think it is for a person to do each of these things before having their first child? 19
43. How much pressure, if any, do you feel from the following to have children? . . . 19
44. In each of the following domains, does getting married provide an advantage or disadvantage? . . . 20
45. In each of the following domains, does having children provide an advantage or disadvantage? . . . 20
46. Who provides the primary care for your children during the work day? (Select all that apply) . . . 20
47. Approximately how many hours per week does your child receive care from someone other than a parent? . . . 21
48. How many hours per week of childcare from someone other than a parent would best meet your family's needs? . . . 21
49. What is the main reason you don't currently have the amount of childcare that would work best for you? . . . 21
50. In the past two years, have you had difficulty finding childcare? . . . 21
51. Have you or your partner ever done any of the following because of the cost of childcare? (Select all that apply) . . . 22
52. Consider the policies below. In your opinion, how helpful would each policy be for family well-being in the United States if it were passed? . . . 22
53. How often, if ever, do you use each of the following? . . . 23
54. How positive or negative are the effects of the following on young people today? . . . 23
55. Have any of the following ever been a problem in your marriage or relationship, past or present? (Select all that apply) . . . 23
56. In the past year, have you used AI tools like ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini, or Claude for any of the following? (Select all that apply) . . . 24
57. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Someone in my immediate family uses gambling apps in ways that concern me. . . . 24
58. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Someone in my immediate family uses social media in ways that concern me. . . . 24
59. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Someone in my immediate family uses AI in ways that concern me. . . . 24
60. How often do you spend much more time on social media than you intended to? . . . 25
61. To what extent would you support or oppose government regulations that 25
62. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Government needs to set limits on gambling companies the same way it regulates tobacco, alcohol, and other unsafe products. 25
63. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Government needs to set limits on social media companies the same way it regulates tobacco, alcohol, and other unsafe products. . . . 26
64. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Government needs to set limits on AI companies the same way it regulates tobacco, alcohol, and other unsafe products. . . . 26
65. How have the following prices changed for your household over the last year? . . . 26
66. During the next year or two, do you expect that your household income will keep up with prices or fall behind prices? . . . 27
67. Do you personally know anyone who identifies as gay or lesbian? . . . 27
68. Do you personally know anyone who identifies as transgender? . . . 27
69. For each of the following, please tell us whether you think parents should have the right to make this decision for their child, even if you personally disagree with the choice. Should parents generally have the right to 27
70. Generally speaking, do you think now is a good time or a bad time for each of the following? . . . 28
71. Generally speaking, do you think now is a bad time or a good time for each of the following? . . . 28
72. Which, if any, of the following types of home best describes where you currently live? . . . 28
73. Have you ever owned a home? . . . 28
74. Which of the following statements reflect your expectations about home ownership? . . . 29

75. In your local community, how easy or difficult is it for people to find affordable housing? 29
76. Which of the following would help create more affordable housing in your area? (Select all that apply) 29
77. Which of the following best describes your current employment status? 29
78. Which of the following best describes your spouse or partner's current employment status? 30
79. How many hours a week do you typically work for income? 30
80. How many hours a week does your spouse or partner typically work for income? 32
81. Thinking back over the last year, what was your annual income? 33
82. Thinking back over the last year, what was your spouse or partner's annual income? 34
83. Thinking of your last serious relationship, what was their annual income? If you're not sure, please give your best guess. 34
84. How much flexibility does your workplace provide in terms of when and where you work? 35
85. How much flexibility does your partner's workplace provide in terms of when and where he or she works? 35
86. How much total time in minutes do you spend commuting to and from work in a typical day? 35
87. What would be the ideal situation for you – working full-time, working part-time, or not working at all for income? 35
88. Do you or your spouse or partner consider yourselves to be a stay-at-home parent? 36
89. Age (banner) 36
90. Gender (banner) 36
91. Which of the following best describes your sexuality? 36
92. What racial or ethnic group best describes you? 37
93. Are you of Spanish, Latino, or Hispanic origin or descent? 37
94. What is the highest level of education you have completed? 37
95. What is your marital status? 37
96. Are you the parent or guardian of any children under the age of 18? 38
97. In which state do you live? 38
98. Do you own your home or pay rent? 40
99. Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a ...? 40
100. $pid7text 40
101. Who did you vote for in the election for President in 2020? 40
102. Who did you vote for in the election for President in 2024? 41
103. Are you registered to vote? 41
104. In general, how would you describe your own political viewpoint? 41
105. Ideology - 3 categories 41
106. Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election going on or not. Others aren't that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs 42
107. What is your present religion, if any? 42
108. To which Protestant church or group do you belong? 42
109. To which Baptist church do you belong, if any? 43
110. To which Methodist church do you belong, if any? 43
111. To which kind of nondenominational or independent church do you belong, if any? 43
112. To which Lutheran church do you belong? 44
113. To which Presbyterian church do you belong? 44
114. To which Pentecostal church do you belong? 44
115. To which Episcopalian church do you belong? 45
116. To which Christian church do you belong? 45
117. To which congregational church do you belong? 45
118. To which Holiness church do you belong? 45
119. To which Reformed church do you belong? 46
120. To which Adventist church do you belong? 46
121. To which Catholic church do you belong? 46
122. To which Mormon church do you belong? 46

123. To which Orthodox church do you belong? 46
124. To which Jewish group do you belong? 47
125. To which Muslim group do you belong? 47
126. To which Buddhist group do you belong? 47
127. With which of the following Hindu groups, if any, do you identify with most closely? 48
128. Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services? 48
129. Would you describe yourself as a "born-again" or evangelical Christian, or not? 48
130. How important is religion in your life? 48
131. People practice their religion in different ways. Outside of attending religious services, how often do you pray? 49

BYUC0044 Toplines

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1. Do you personally hope or desire to marry in the future?

Asked if not currently married

Yes, definitely	26%
Yes, probably	21%
No, probably not	16%
No, definitely not	23%
Not sure	14%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	2,570

2. How likely is it that you will [still be married two years from now/get married in the next two years]?

Very likely	42%
Likely	6%
Somewhat likely	5%
Neither likely nor unlikely	5%
Somewhat unlikely	4%
Unlikely	5%
Very unlikely	27%
Don't know	5%
Totals	99%
Unweighted N	4,500

3. How often do you do each of the following with your spouse or partner?

Asked only of those in a relationship & in marriage_or_family_battery treatment 1

	Never	Yearly	A few times a year	About once a month	Weekly	A few times a week	Daily
Marriage activities – Go out together, just the two of you	7%	3%	16%	20%	29%	18%	6%
Marriage activities – Have a serious argument	20%	15%	33%	18%	8%	4%	2%
Marriage activities – Discuss your relationship with each other	12%	4%	17%	20%	16%	19%	12%
Marriage activities – Discuss finances with each other	6%	1%	11%	20%	26%	22%	13%
Marriage activities – Sleep in different rooms because you were upset with one another	73%	6%	10%	4%	2%	1%	4%

Marriage activities – Talk about political or social issues with each other	9%	1%	9%	12%	21%	24%	24%
Marriage activities – Pray together as a couple, outside of meals	48%	3%	11%	6%	11%	8%	13%
Marriage activities – Have sex with each other	16%	4%	10%	16%	23%	26%	5%
Marriage activities – Do nice things for each other, such as making coffee, putting gas in the car, etc.	3%	1%	4%	7%	18%	24%	43%
Marriage activities – Hide finances or purchases from each other	73%	5%	10%	4%	3%	2%	3%
Marriage activities – Express physical affection (hugs or kisses, etc.)	5%	1%	4%	4%	9%	16%	61%

4. At any point in the last two years, have you thought that your marriage or relationship was in trouble?

Asked only of those in a relationship more than 2 years

Yes	30%
No	70%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	2,488

5. Would you say that your marriage or relationship is stronger, weaker, or about the same as two years ago?

Asked only of those in a relationship more than 2 years

Stronger	49%
About the same	41%
Weaker	7%
Don't know	2%
Totals	99%
Unweighted N	2,488

6. Turning to marriage generally, do you feel that marriages in the United States are stronger, weaker, or about the same as two years ago?

Stronger	6%
About the same	41%
Weaker	36%
Don't know	17%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	4,500

7. How much do you agree or disagree with the following:

	Total Agree	Total Disagree	Total Neither
Marriage battery – When more people are married, society is better off.	46%	17%	37%
Marriage battery – Marriage is more of a burden than a benefit to couples.	13%	60%	27%
Marriage battery – Marriage is needed in order to create strong families.	55%	27%	18%
Marriage battery – Being legally married is not as important as having a personal sense of commitment to your partner.	48%	27%	24%
Marriage battery – Marriage is old-fashioned and out-of-date.	15%	66%	19%
Marriage battery – Marriage makes families and children better off financially.	56%	13%	31%
Marriage battery – Marriage is for life, come what may.	53%	24%	23%
Marriage battery – Marriage is mostly for people who are having children.	18%	60%	22%
Marriage battery – Marriage is more important than a career to finding happiness in life.	39%	29%	32%
Marriage battery – There are more advantages to being single than to being married.	26%	36%	38%
Marriage battery – The way our economy works these days makes it harder for people to get married.	44%	28%	28%
Marriage battery – Bad marriages can be fixed and made good again if spouses really try.	63%	15%	22%
Marriage battery – It is okay to divorce when either person's needs are no longer met.	53%	23%	24%

8. How satisfied are you with your ... ?

	Completely dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Neutral/Don't know	Somewhat satisfied	Completely satisfied	Not applicable
Satisfaction Battery – Current job?	4%	7%	12%	26%	17%	34%
Satisfaction Battery – Family?	3%	6%	12%	30%	46%	3%
Satisfaction Battery – Marriage or relationship?	2%	5%	7%	29%	55%	2%
Satisfaction Battery – Life as a whole these days?	5%	14%	14%	43%	23%	1%
Satisfaction Battery – Sex life?	9%	11%	16%	22%	25%	17%

9. Do you personally hope or desire to have [a child/another child] someday?

Asked of those under 50 years old

Yes, definitely	25%
Yes, probably	18%
No, probably not	12%
No, definitely not	30%
It depends	10%
Don't know	5%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	3,042

10. How much do you agree or disagree with the following:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Raising Children Battery – The cost of raising a child/children is affordable for most people.	22%	20%	17%	19%	12%	7%	3%
Raising Children Battery – Children are better off if they have two married parents.	4%	7%	5%	23%	16%	19%	26%

Raising Children Battery – It is sometimes necessary to discipline a child with a good, hard spanking.	15%	11%	8%	21%	18%	16%	10%
Raising Children Battery – It is important for parents to pass on their political values to their children.	12%	15%	12%	33%	13%	9%	6%
Raising Children Battery – Parents should set boundaries on media consumption for their children.	0%	0%	1%	10%	19%	32%	37%
Raising Children Battery – Children need both a male and female role model in the home.	8%	7%	5%	17%	15%	20%	28%
Raising Children Battery – Raising children is one of life's greatest joys.	3%	2%	3%	20%	17%	27%	27%
Raising Children Battery – It's morally wrong to have a child outside of marriage.	21%	16%	9%	22%	12%	11%	9%

11. Children are better off with two married caregivers than with a single caregiver.

Asked of a random third of respondents

Strongly disagree	4%
Disagree	7%
Somewhat disagree	7%
Neither agree nor disagree	25%
Somewhat agree	16%
Agree	19%
Strongly agree	22%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	1,487

12. Children are better off with two unmarried caregivers than with a single caregiver.

Asked of a random third of respondents

Strongly disagree	9%
Disagree	11%
Somewhat disagree	10%
Neither agree nor disagree	41%
Somewhat agree	14%
Agree	11%
Strongly agree	4%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	1,511

13. Children are better off with two married caregivers of the same sex than with a single caregiver.

Asked of a random third of respondents

Strongly disagree	22%
Disagree	11%
Somewhat disagree	8%
Neither agree nor disagree	36%
Somewhat agree	9%
Agree	9%
Strongly agree	5%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	1,502

14. How much do you agree or disagree with the following:

	Total Agree	Total Disagree	Total Neither
Raising Children Battery – The cost of raising a child/children is affordable for most people.	22%	59%	19%
Raising Children Battery – Children are better off if they have two married parents.	62%	16%	22%
Raising Children Battery – It is sometimes necessary to discipline a child with a good, hard spanking.	45%	34%	21%
Raising Children Battery – It is important for parents to pass on their political values to their children.	28%	39%	33%
Raising Children Battery – Parents should set boundaries on media consumption for their children.	89%	1%	10%
Raising Children Battery – Children need both a male and female role model in the home.	63%	20%	17%
Raising Children Battery – Raising children is one of life's greatest joys.	71%	8%	20%

Raising Children Battery – It's morally wrong to have a child outside of marriage.	32%	46%	22%

15. Children are better off with two married caregivers than with a single caregiver.

Asked of a random third of respondents

Total Agree	57%
Total Disagree	18%
Total Neither	25%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	1,487

16. Children are better off with two unmarried caregivers than with a single caregiver.

Asked of a random third of respondents

Total Agree	29%
Total Disagree	30%
Total Neither	41%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	1,511

17. Children are better off with two married caregivers of the same sex than with a single caregiver.

Asked of a random third of respondents

Total Agree	23%
Total Disagree	41%
Total Neither	36%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	1,502

18. How old were you when you first became a parent?

Asked of those with at least 1 child

12	0%
13	0%
14	0%
15	0%
16	2%
17	3%
18	6%

19	5%
20	7%
21	7%
22	6%
23	6%
24	5%
25	6%
26	5%
27	5%
28	5%
29	5%
30	6%
31	3%
32	3%
33	2%
34	2%
35	2%
36	1%
37	1%
38	1%
39	1%
40	1%
41	0%
42	1%
43	0%
44 or older	1%
Totals	98%
Unweighted N	2,340

19. How often does your family ...?

Asked only of those in a relationship & in marriage_or_family_battery treatment 2

	Never	Yearly or less	A few times a year	About once a month	A few times a month	Weekly	A few times a week	Daily
Family activities – Eat dinner together	3%	2%	9%	6%	10%	12%	15%	42%
Family activities – Attend the activities of a family member (recitals, sporting, events, etc.)	14%	17%	29%	11%	15%	7%	5%	2%
Family activities – Do household chores together	11%	3%	9%	8%	16%	21%	19%	13%

Family activities – Go out to movies, museums, sporting events, or parks together	9%	15%	30%	13%	20%	8%	3%	1%
Family activities – Worship together	35%	9%	11%	5%	8%	18%	6%	8%
Family activities – Have an argument	11%	15%	26%	13%	18%	7%	7%	3%
Family activities – Participate in activities together at home (watch TV, watch a movie, play games, etc.)	4%	5%	10%	5%	12%	16%	20%	28%
Family activities – Socialize with friends	6%	7%	15%	13%	24%	19%	12%	4%
Family activities – Discuss political and social issues as a family	19%	8%	13%	9%	18%	12%	13%	8%
Family activities – Have family meetings or discussions about family plans	20%	11%	17%	12%	17%	12%	8%	3%
Family activities – Ignore or avoid one another	52%	12%	14%	5%	6%	4%	4%	3%
Family activities – Socialize with extended family	8%	12%	32%	12%	18%	11%	4%	3%
Family activities – Try new activities or experiences together that your family has never done before	12%	24%	32%	9%	11%	6%	4%	1%
Family activities – Engage in community service together	40%	17%	17%	6%	9%	6%	3%	2%

20. What are the most important challenges facing YOUR family today? Pick up to three items.

Asked of a random half of respondents

PAR006_a_1 Children growing up without two parents in the home 8%
PAR006_a_2 Violence and abuse within the family 6%
PAR006_a_3 Tension or disagreements between family members 18%
PAR006_a_4 Parents lack of commitment to each other 6%
PAR006_a_5 Difficulty finding quality family time 19%
PAR006_a_6 High work demands and stress on parents 20%

PAR006_a_7 The costs associated with raising a family	29%
PAR006_a_8 The lack of good jobs or wages	18%
PAR006_a_9 Lack of educational opportunities	2%
PAR006_a_10 Crime and other threats to personal safety	7%
PAR006_a_11 Lack of religious faith or church attendance	8%
PAR006_a_12 The widespread availability of drugs and alcohol	6%
PAR006_a_13 Social media, video games, or other electronic resources	19%
PAR006_a_14 Mental or physical health struggles	21%
PAR006_a_15 Sexual permissiveness, including infidelity	3%
PAR006_a_16 Other	20%
Unweighted N	2,235

21. What are the most important challenges facing families today? Pick up to three items.

Asked of a random half of respondents

PAR006_b_1 Children growing up without two parents in the home	30%
PAR006_b_2 Violence and abuse within the family	32%
PAR006_b_3 Tension or disagreements between family members	12%
PAR006_b_4 Parents lack of commitment to each other	15%
PAR006_b_5 Difficulty finding quality family time	16%
PAR006_b_6 High work demands and stress on parents	28%
PAR006_b_7 The costs associated with raising a family	45%
PAR006_b_8 The lack of good jobs or wages	18%
PAR006_b_9 Lack of educational opportunities	4%
PAR006_b_10 Crime and other threats to personal safety	6%
PAR006_b_11 Lack of religious faith or church attendance	14%
PAR006_b_12 The widespread availability of drugs and alcohol	8%
PAR006_b_13 Social media, video games, or other electronic resources	26%
PAR006_b_14 Mental or physical health struggles	15%
PAR006_b_15 Sexual permissiveness, including infidelity	5%
PAR006_b_16 Other	3%
Unweighted N	2,265

22. In the past 12 months, did you do any of the following because there wasn't enough money?

	Yes	No
Economic crisis – Were you ever hungry, but didn't eat because you couldn't afford enough food?	17%	83%
Economic crisis – Did you not pay the full amount of an important bill (like rent, mortgage, or a utility bill)?	24%	76%
Economic crisis – Did you borrow or receive money from friends or family to help pay the bills?	24%	76%

Economic crisis – Did you move in with other people even for a little while because of financial problems?	10%	90%
Economic crisis – Did you stay at a shelter, in an abandoned building, an automobile or any other place not meant for regular housing, even for one night?	6%	94%
Economic crisis – Was there anyone in your household who needed to see a doctor or go to the hospital but couldn't go because of the cost?	16%	84%

23. Has your financial situation gotten worse, better, or stayed the same in the last year?

It got worse	30%
It stayed the same	51%
It got better	19%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	4,500

24. How worried are you that each of the following will affect your family finances in the coming year?

	Very worried	Somewhat worried	Not worried
Household employment – Inflation	51%	38%	11%
Household employment – National Debt	30%	41%	29%
Household employment – Unemployment	23%	32%	44%
Household employment – Lack of government assistance	26%	30%	44%
Household employment – Interest rates	31%	42%	27%
Household employment – Rising taxes	42%	41%	17%
Household employment – Tariffs	33%	37%	30%

25. Which of the following comes closest to your current approach to dating?

Asked of those not currently in a relationship

I am actively looking for a committed relationship	11%
I am not currently looking for a committed relationship but I am open to it	44%
I am not interested in a committed relationship at this time	45%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	1,773

26. On average, how often do you go on a date with [a potential romantic partner/your current spouse or partner]?

Never	35%
A few times a year	25%
About once a month	17%
A few times a month	14%
Almost every week or every week	9%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	4,500

27. If you are not currently in a committed relationship, why not? (Select all that apply)

Asked of those not currently in a relationship

Dating and Relationship Constraints - I haven't met the right person	49%
Dating and Relationship Constraints - I'm focused on my career or education right now	16%
Dating and Relationship Constraints - I find dating too difficult or discouraging	25%
Dating and Relationship Constraints - It's hard to meet people where I live	18%
Dating and Relationship Constraints - Dating apps and social media make genuine connection harder	15%
Dating and Relationship Constraints - I want to be more financially established first	20%
Dating and Relationship Constraints - Past relationships have made me cautious	28%
Dating and Relationship Constraints - I prefer being single right now	45%
Unweighted N	1,773

28. Overall, how would you describe your experience with dating in the past two years?

Asked of those not currently in a relationship

Very positive	2%
Somewhat positive	7%
Mixed	17%
Somewhat negative	7%
Very negative	6%
I have not dated in the past two years	61%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	1,773

29. Thinking of [your last serious relationship/your current partner], what is the highest level of education they completed?

Less than high school	5%
High school diploma or GED	31%
Some college (no degree)	16%
Associate degree	8%

Bachelor's degree	20%
Master's degree	9%
Professional degree	2%
Doctoral degree	2%
I have not had a serious relationship before	6%
Totals	99%
Unweighted N	4,500

30. When it comes to finding a good partner, how easy or difficult [has it been/was it] for you to find someone with the following traits?

	Total Difficult	Total Easy
Relationships and dating – Emotional maturity and communication skills	55%	45%
Relationships and dating – Financial stability or good job prospects	51%	49%
Relationships and dating – Willingness to fully commit	50%	50%
Relationships and dating – Physical attractiveness	30%	70%
Relationships and dating – Similar values and life goals	48%	52%

31. How much pressure, if any, do you feel from the following to get married?

Asked if not currently married

	A great deal	Some	A little	None
Dating and Relationships - Marriage Social Pressure – Family members	5%	13%	17%	65%
Dating and Relationships - Marriage Social Pressure – Friends or social circle	3%	11%	16%	70%
Dating and Relationships - Marriage Social Pressure – Society or culture generally	7%	13%	19%	61%
Dating and Relationships - Marriage Social Pressure – My own sense of where I should be in life	14%	18%	20%	48%

32. How important are each of the following personal goals to you right now?

	A top priority	A medium priority	A low priority
Dating and Relationship - Personal Goals – Building a career or pursuing education or training	26%	33%	41%
Dating and Relationship - Personal Goals – Building wealth or creating financial security	44%	41%	15%
Dating and Relationship - Personal Goals – Finding or developing a committed romantic relationship	25%	31%	43%
Dating and Relationship - Personal Goals – Connecting with friends or building community	24%	50%	25%
Dating and Relationship - Personal Goals – Pursuing personal hobbies or travel	26%	48%	26%
Dating and Relationship - Personal Goals – Having children	14%	19%	67%

33. Before getting married, how important is it for someone to ...

	Very important	Somewhat important	Neither unimportant nor important	Somewhat unimportant	Not at all important
Before marriage statements – Own a home	22%	21%	33%	10%	13%
Before marriage statements – Finish college	22%	23%	30%	8%	17%
Before marriage statements – Have a stable job	53%	30%	11%	2%	4%
Before marriage statements – Live together with his or her future spouse	22%	26%	29%	7%	16%
Before marriage statements – Have had several serious relationships	8%	22%	39%	13%	18%
Before marriage statements – Have some savings or be paying off debt	42%	38%	14%	3%	3%

34. How important do you think the following are when creating a successful marriage?

	Not at all important	Somewhat unimportant	Neither unimportant nor important	Somewhat important	Very important
Successful marriage battery – Having shared interests	2%	4%	12%	42%	39%
Successful marriage battery – Satisfying sexual relationship	3%	3%	14%	34%	46%
Successful marriage battery – Sharing household chores	2%	4%	14%	36%	44%
Successful marriage battery – Financial security	1%	4%	12%	37%	46%
Successful marriage battery – Shared religious beliefs	7%	7%	25%	30%	31%
Successful marriage battery – Having children	18%	8%	34%	21%	19%
Successful marriage battery – Shared political beliefs	6%	7%	26%	35%	26%
Successful marriage battery – Being good friends	1%	3%	9%	24%	63%
Successful marriage battery – Spending quality time together	1%	3%	7%	23%	66%
Successful marriage battery – Agreeing on how to raise children	3%	3%	12%	27%	54%

35. How committed are you to your current relationship?

Asked if currently in a relationship

1 - Not at all committed	1%
2	1%
3	1%
4	3%
5	7%
6	13%
7 - Very committed	74%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	2,727

36. How committed do you think your partner is to the relationship?

Asked if currently in a relationship

1 - Not at all committed	1%
2	1%
3	1%
4	5%
5	7%
6	13%
7 - Very committed	71%
Totals	99%
Unweighted N	2,727

37. In the past two years, have you done any of the following to intentionally work on your marriage, relationship, or parenting? (Select all that apply)

Asked if currently in a relationship

Relationship Improvements - Read a book or listened to a podcast	21%
Relationship Improvements - Attended a workshop, retreat, or class	6%
Relationship Improvements - Worked with a therapist or counselor	12%
Relationship Improvements - Sought guidance from a religious leader	7%
Relationship Improvements - Used AI tools	11%
Relationship Improvements - None of the above	66%
Unweighted N	2,727

38. How often do you wonder if you could find a better partner than you currently have?

Asked if currently in a relationship

Every day	3%
Often	5%
Sometimes	14%
Rarely	24%
Never	54%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	2,727

39. People value different roles in their lives. How important are the following things to your personal identity?

	Very important	Somewhat important	Neither unimportant nor important	Somewhat unimportant	Not at all important
Personal Identity – My role as a spouse or partner	55%	31%	10%	2%	1%
Personal Identity – My role as a parent	63%	22%	10%	3%	2%
Personal Identity – My religion	32%	22%	22%	7%	17%
Personal Identity – My race	22%	19%	33%	9%	17%
Personal Identity – My political party	18%	27%	31%	10%	14%
Personal Identity – My career or job	24%	28%	29%	6%	13%
Personal Identity – My community	18%	34%	32%	9%	7%
Personal Identity – My gender	40%	22%	26%	5%	7%
Personal Identity – My hobbies	23%	39%	27%	7%	4%

40. Apart from physical ability to conceive a child, how important are each of these factors for your decisions about having children in the future?

Asked of those under 50

	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Extremely important
Desire children – The difficulty of balancing family and career	17%	44%	39%
Desire children – The cost of raising a child	12%	33%	55%
Desire children – The desire to raise a child of my own	22%	35%	43%
Desire children – My current relationship status	20%	33%	47%
Desire children – The need to have a baby before I'm too old to parent	34%	39%	27%
Desire children – The expectations of my family	36%	38%	26%
Desire children – My religious or philosophical beliefs	36%	37%	27%
Desire children – The state of the world today	15%	39%	46%
Desire children – The availability of child care	21%	39%	40%
Desire children – Worries about the physical challenges of being pregnant or giving birth	27%	39%	34%
Desire children – How my partner feels about children	12%	31%	57%
Desire children – The effect it will have on my current lifestyle	19%	42%	39%

41. Do you feel financially ready to have children?

Asked of those who have no children

Yes, I feel financially ready now	14%
Not yet, but I expect to be within the next few years	26%
I'm not sure when or if I'll feel financially ready	60%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	2,160

42. How important do you think it is for a person to do each of these things before having their first child?

	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Extremely important
Before having a child statements – Have an established career	12%	50%	38%
Before having a child statements – Get married	25%	38%	37%
Before having a child statements – Be financially stable	4%	37%	59%
Before having a child statements – Buy a house	32%	45%	23%
Before having a child statements – Graduate from college	38%	38%	24%
Before having a child statements – Travel to different places	42%	39%	19%
Before having a child statements – Be in a committed relationship	7%	30%	63%
Before having a child statements – Live together with their partner	21%	40%	39%

43. How much pressure, if any, do you feel from the following to have children?

Asked of those under 50 years old

	A great deal	Some	A little	None
Fertility Social Pressure – Family members	11%	19%	18%	52%
Fertility Social Pressure – Friends or social circle	6%	16%	17%	61%
Fertility Social Pressure – Society or culture generally	10%	20%	21%	49%
Fertility Social Pressure – My own sense of where I should be in life	17%	24%	18%	41%

44. In each of the following domains, does getting married provide an advantage or disadvantage?

	An advantage	Neither an advantage nor disadvantage	A disadvantage
Marriage Opportunity Cost – Having a successful career	45%	51%	4%
Marriage Opportunity Cost – Achieving financial security	66%	31%	3%
Marriage Opportunity Cost – Building friendships and community	53%	44%	3%
Marriage Opportunity Cost – Having a satisfying sex life	59%	37%	4%
Marriage Opportunity Cost – Building a meaningful life	68%	30%	2%

45. In each of the following domains, does having children provide an advantage or disadvantage?

	An advantage	Neither an advantage nor disadvantage	A disadvantage
Children Opportunity Cost – Having a successful career	37%	49%	13%
Children Opportunity Cost – Achieving financial security	40%	38%	21%
Children Opportunity Cost – Building friendships and community	53%	42%	5%
Children Opportunity Cost – Having a satisfying sex life	34%	48%	18%
Children Opportunity Cost – Building a meaningful life	69%	29%	2%

46. Who provides the primary care for your children during the work day? (Select all that apply)

Asked of those with a child under 12 years old at home

Child care - Myself	59%
Child care - My partner or co-parent	50%
Child care - Extended family	20%
Child care - Friends	4%
Child care - Sitter/nanny	7%
Child care - Daycare or nursery school	13%
Child care - Older siblings tending younger siblings	5%
Child care - Children care for themselves	6%
Child care - School	19%
Child care - Other	1%
Unweighted N	948

47. Approximately how many hours per week does your child receive care from someone other than a parent?

Asked of those with a child under 12 years old at home

Less than 10 hours per week	57%
10–19 hours per week	13%
20–29 hours per week	9%
30–39 hours per week	10%
40 or more hours per week	11%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	948

48. How many hours per week of childcare from someone other than a parent would best meet your family's needs?

Asked of those with a child under 12 years old at home

Less than 10 hours per week	33%
10–19 hours per week	12%
20–29 hours per week	10%
30–39 hours per week	6%
40 or more hours per week	5%
My current hours already meet my needs	34%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	948

49. What is the main reason you don't currently have the amount of childcare that would work best for you?

Asked of those with a child under 12 in the home & CHD014 < CHD013

It's too expensive to get more care	41%
I can't find the care with the hours I need	6%
I haven't found a provider that I am comfortable with	24%
My work schedule does not allow for a different arrangements	17%
I'm on a waitlist for the program I want	6%
I disagree with my child's other parent about the type or amount of care	5%
Totals	99%
Unweighted N	139

50. In the past two years, have you had difficulty finding childcare?

Asked of those with a child under 12 years old at home

Yes	18%
No	82%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	948

51. Have you or your partner ever done any of the following because of the cost of childcare? (Select all that apply)

Asked of those with a child under 12 years old at home

Childcare cost - Reduced work hours	19%
Childcare cost - Turned down a job or promotion	11%
Childcare cost - Relied on a family member who wasn't your first choice	15%
Childcare cost - Delayed having another child	15%
Childcare cost - Had one parent stop working entirely	16%
Childcare cost - None of the above	50%
Unweighted N	948

52. Consider the policies below. In your opinion, how helpful would each policy be for family well-being in the United States if it were passed?

	Very helpful	Helpful	Neither helpful nor unhelpful	Unhelpful	Very unhelpful
Most important family policies – Paid family leave	50%	31%	15%	2%	1%
Most important family policies – Child tax credits	46%	34%	17%	2%	1%
Most important family policies – Expanded access to mental health services for children and families	48%	33%	16%	2%	1%
Most important family policies – Free or reduced-cost healthcare for children	51%	30%	15%	3%	1%
Most important family policies – More government-funded support for healthcare	48%	27%	16%	4%	4%
Most important family policies – Government-funded support for apprenticeships for a vocation or trade	41%	37%	18%	2%	1%
Most important family policies – Free or reduced cost preschool access for young children	49%	30%	15%	3%	2%
Most important family policies – Government-funded assistance to help families pay for private school	24%	25%	30%	10%	11%
Most important family policies – Expanded government help for childcare expenses	44%	31%	17%	5%	3%
Most important family policies – Medicaid expansion for mothers	44%	31%	19%	3%	3%

53. How often, if ever, do you use each of the following?

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	A few times per year	Never
Gambling and Social Media Use – AI tools such as ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini, or Claude	18%	25%	10%	11%	35%
Gambling and Social Media Use – Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, or X	53%	18%	5%	5%	19%
Gambling and Social Media Use – Sites or apps that provide online pornography	6%	11%	7%	11%	65%
Gambling and Social Media Use – Sites or apps for gambling or placing bets	3%	7%	5%	8%	76%
Gambling and Social Media Use – Video games	23%	20%	8%	9%	40%

54. How positive or negative are the effects of the following on young people today?

	Total Positive	Total Negative	Total Neither
Views on children and technology – Social media	23%	55%	22%
Views on children and technology – Online pornography	7%	77%	16%
Views on children and technology – AI Chatbots (Chat GPT, Google Gemini, etc.)	28%	47%	25%
Views on children and technology – Video games	26%	41%	33%
Views on children and technology – Online gambling	7%	79%	14%

55. Have any of the following ever been a problem in your marriage or relationship, past or present? (Select all that apply)

Asked of those who have ever been in a serious relationship

Relationship problem - Gambling	4%
Relationship problem - Pornography use	8%
Relationship problem - Social media use	10%
Relationship problem - Drug or alcohol use	17%
Relationship problem - Overspending	18%
Relationship problem - None of the above	63%
Unweighted N	4,107

56. In the past year, have you used AI tools like ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini, or Claude for any of the following? (Select all that apply)

AI use - Help with writing, schoolwork, or work tasks	29%
AI use - Emotional support or conversation	13%
AI use - Getting advice on a relationship or parenting issue	11%
AI use - Medical or health questions	28%
AI use - I have not used AI for any of these	51%
Unweighted N	4,500

57. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Someone in my immediate family uses gambling apps in ways that concern me.

Asked of a random third of respondents

Strongly agree	3%
Somewhat agree	7%
Neither agree nor disagree	16%
Somewhat disagree	7%
Strongly disagree	67%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	1,513

58. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Someone in my immediate family uses social media in ways that concern me.

Asked of a random third of respondents

Strongly agree	6%
Somewhat agree	13%
Neither agree nor disagree	27%
Somewhat disagree	15%
Strongly disagree	39%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	1,489

59. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Someone in my immediate family uses AI in ways that concern me.

Asked of a random third of respondents

Strongly agree	4%
Somewhat agree	8%
Neither agree nor disagree	28%
Somewhat disagree	12%
Strongly disagree	47%
Totals	99%

Unweighted N	1,498

60. How often do you spend much more time on social media than you intended to?

Very often	12%
Often	19%
Sometimes	35%
Rarely	21%
Never	13%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	4,500

61. To what extent would you support or oppose government regulations that ...

	Total Support	Total Oppose	Total Neither
Views on children and technology – Require social media companies to enforce age restrictions?	75%	8%	17%
Views on children and technology – Require pornographic websites to verify a user's age before granting access?	71%	12%	17%
Views on children and technology – Hold social media companies responsible for harm caused by the content they recommend to minors?	75%	5%	20%
Views on children and technology – Require social media companies to pay a tax on advertising revenue, similar to taxes on tobacco or alcohol?	65%	7%	28%
Views on children and technology – Create a federal agency specifically to oversee AI development and use?	65%	9%	26%
Views on children and technology – Ban the use of credit cards on gambling apps?	57%	11%	32%

62. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Government needs to set limits on gambling companies the same way it regulates tobacco, alcohol, and other unsafe products.

Asked of a random third of respondents

Strongly agree	46%
Somewhat agree	28%
Neither agree nor disagree	19%
Somewhat disagree	3%
Strongly disagree	4%

Totals	100%
Unweighted N	1,496

63. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Government needs to set limits on social media companies the same way it regulates tobacco, alcohol, and other unsafe products.

Asked of a random third of respondents

Strongly agree	33%
Somewhat agree	31%
Neither agree nor disagree	23%
Somewhat disagree	8%
Strongly disagree	5%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	1,511

64. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Government needs to set limits on AI companies the same way it regulates tobacco, alcohol, and other unsafe products.

Asked of a random third of respondents

Strongly agree	44%
Somewhat agree	29%
Neither agree nor disagree	20%
Somewhat disagree	4%
Strongly disagree	3%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	1,493

65. How have the following prices changed for your household over the last year?

	Up a lot	Up a little	No change	Down a little	Down a lot
Inflation – Food	54%	31%	12%	2%	0%
Inflation – Housing	32%	29%	36%	2%	1%
Inflation – Transportation (including gasoline)	53%	30%	14%	3%	0%
Inflation – Entertainment	30%	33%	33%	2%	2%

66. During the next year or two, do you expect that your household income will keep up with prices or fall behind prices?

Income will keep up with prices	23%
Income will fall behind prices	50%
Don't know	27%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	4,500

67. Do you personally know anyone who identifies as gay or lesbian?

Yes	64%
No	36%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	4,500

68. Do you personally know anyone who identifies as transgender?

Yes	28%
No	72%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	4,500

69. For each of the following, please tell us whether you think parents should have the right to make this decision for their child, even if you personally disagree with the choice. Should parents generally have the right to ...

	Parents should definitely have this right	Parents should probably have this right	Parents should probably NOT have this right	Parents should definitely NOT have this right
Parental Rights – Authorize hormone therapy for a transgender child	35%	27%	14%	24%
Parental Rights – Authorize surgical gender transition procedures for a child under 18	32%	22%	16%	30%
Parental Rights – Opt their child out of sex education classes	35%	31%	20%	14%
Parental Rights – Opt their child out of reading assigned books that conflict with their family's values	36%	33%	20%	11%

70. Generally speaking, do you think now is a good time or a bad time for each of the following?
Asked of a random half of respondents

	Good time	Bad time	Don't know
Raising children – Children to be growing up in your community?	44%	27%	29%
Raising children – Young people to form long-term relationships and get married?	42%	23%	35%

71. Generally speaking, do you think now is a bad time or a good time for each of the following?
Asked of a random half of respondents

	Bad time	Good time	Don't know
Raising children – Children to be growing up in your community?	25%	46%	29%
Raising children – Young people to form long-term relationships and get married?	22%	43%	35%

72. Which, if any, of the following types of home best describes where you currently live?

Mobile home	5%
Single-family detached house	62%
Single-family attached house (townhouse, duplex, etc.)	10%
An apartment or condominium/co-op building	21%
Other	2%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	4,500

73. Have you ever owned a home?
Asked if not a homeowner

Yes	22%
No	78%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	1,966

74. Which of the following statements reflect your expectations about home ownership?

Asked if not a homeowner

It is too expensive for me to ever own a home	44%
I am saving up for it, but will not be able to afford one in the near future	13%
I am saving up for it, and am expecting to buy one soon	12%
I have the financial ability to buy a home, but am choosing not to	6%
I am not currently saving up but still want to buy a home someday	25%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	1,966

75. In your local community, how easy or difficult is it for people to find affordable housing?

Very easy	3%
Somewhat easy	13%
Somewhat difficult	37%
Very difficult	35%
Not sure	12%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	4,500

76. Which of the following would help create more affordable housing in your area? (Select all that apply)

Housing Cost Policies - Reducing zoning regulations	22%
Housing Cost Policies - Rent controls	48%
Housing Cost Policies - Increasing federal spending	31%
Housing Cost Policies - Increasing local spending	41%
Housing Cost Policies - None of these	26%
Unweighted N	4,500

77. Which of the following best describes your current employment status?

Working full time	37%
Working part time	14%
Temporarily laid off	1%
Unemployed	8%
Retired	23%
On leave (maternity, paternity, etc.)	0%
Permanently disabled	7%
Taking care of home or family	5%
Student, not currently working	4%
Totals	99%

Unweighted N	4,500

78. Which of the following best describes your spouse or partner's current employment status?

Asked if currently in a relationship

Working full time	50%
Working part time	12%
Temporarily laid off	1%
Unemployed	4%
Retired	24%
On leave (maternity, paternity, etc.)	0%
Permanently disabled	4%
Taking care of home or family	4%
Student, not currently working	1%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	2,727

79. How many hours a week do you typically work for income?

0	41%
1	1%
2	1%
3	1%
4	1%
5	1%
6	1%
7	1%
8	1%
9	0%
10	2%
11	0%
12	1%
13	0%
14	0%
15	1%
16	0%
17	0%
18	0%
19	0%
20	3%
21	0%
22	0%

23	0%
24	1%
25	1%
26	0%
27	0%
28	0%
29	0%
30	4%
31	0%
32	1%
33	0%
34	0%
35	3%
36	1%
37	1%
38	1%
39	0%
40	19%
41	0%
42	1%
43	0%
44	1%
45	3%
46	0%
47	0%
48	0%
49	0%
50	2%
51	0%
52	0%
53	0%
54	0%
55	0%
56	0%
57	0%
58	0%
59	0%
60	1%
More than 60	1%
Totals	97%
Unweighted N	4,500

80. How many hours a week does your spouse or partner typically work for income?

Asked if currently in a relationship

0	33%
1	0%
2	1%
3	0%
4	0%
5	1%
6	1%
7	0%
8	1%
9	0%
10	1%
11	0%
12	0%
13	0%
14	0%
15	1%
16	0%
17	0%
18	0%
19	0%
20	3%
21	0%
22	0%
23	0%
24	1%
25	1%
26	0%
27	0%
28	0%
29	0%
30	4%
31	0%
32	1%
33	0%
34	0%
35	3%
36	1%
37	0%
38	1%
39	0%
40	25%
41	0%

42	1%
43	0%
44	1%
45	4%
46	0%
47	0%
48	1%
49	0%
50	4%
51	0%
52	0%
53	0%
54	0%
55	0%
56	0%
57	0%
58	0%
59	0%
60	2%
More than 60	2%
Totals	94%
Unweighted N	2,727

81. Thinking back over the last year, what was your annual income?

Less than $10,000	15%
$10,000 - $19,999	10%
$20,000 - $29,999	10%
$30,000 - $39,999	9%
$40,000 - $49,999	9%
$50,000 - $59,999	8%
$60,000 - $69,999	7%
$70,000 - $79,999	8%
$80,000 - $99,999	8%
$100,000 - $119,999	5%
$120,000 - $149,999	5%
$150,000 - $199,999	4%
$200,000 - $249,999	1%
$250,000 - $349,999	1%
$350,000 - $499,999	0%
$500,000 or more	0%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	4,498

82. Thinking back over the last year, what was your spouse or partner's annual income?

Asked if currently in a relationship

Less than $10,000	14%
$10,000 - $19,999	8%
$20,000 - $29,999	10%
$30,000 - $39,999	9%
$40,000 - $49,999	10%
$50,000 - $59,999	9%
$60,000 - $69,999	8%
$70,000 - $79,999	7%
$80,000 - $99,999	8%
$100,000 - $119,999	6%
$120,000 - $149,999	4%
$150,000 - $199,999	3%
$200,000 - $249,999	1%
$250,000 - $349,999	1%
$350,000 - $499,999	1%
$500,000 or more	1%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	2,725

83. Thinking of your last serious relationship, what was their annual income? If you're not sure, please give your best guess.

Asked if not currently in a relationship, but has been in a serious relationship

Less than $10,000	11%
$10,000 - $19,999	8%
$20,000 - $29,999	9%
$30,000 - $39,999	7%
$40,000 - $49,999	7%
$50,000 - $59,999	8%
$60,000 - $69,999	4%
$70,000 - $79,999	4%
$80,000 - $99,999	4%
$100,000 - $119,999	4%
$120,000 - $149,999	1%
$150,000 - $199,999	1%
$200,000 - $249,999	1%
$250,000 - $349,999	0%
$350,000 - $499,999	0%
$500,000 or more	0%
Don't know	30%

Totals	99%
Unweighted N	1,380

84. How much flexibility does your workplace provide in terms of when and where you work?

Asked of those who are employed full or part time

A great deal	32%
Some	34%
A little	15%
None	19%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	2,510

85. How much flexibility does your partner's workplace provide in terms of when and where he or she works?

Asked if currenlty in a relationship and partner is employed

A great deal	26%
Some	34%
A little	20%
None	20%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	1,854

86. How much total time in minutes do you spend commuting to and from work in a typical day?

Asked of those who are employed full or part time

Less than 30 minutes	51%
30 minutes to less than one hour	34%
One hour to less than 90 minutes	10%
90 minutes to less than 2 hours	3%
2 hours or more	2%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	2,510

87. What would be the ideal situation for you – working full-time, working part-time, or not working at all for income?

Full-time	39%
Part-time	28%
Not at all	33%
Totals	100%

Unweighted N	4,500

88. Do you or your spouse or partner consider yourselves to be a stay-at-home parent?

Asked if currenty in a relationship and has a child

Yes, I do	18%
Yes, my spouse or partner does	11%
No, neither of us do	71%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	1,845

89. Age (banner)

18-29	19%
30-39	18%
40-49	16%
50-64	23%
65+	24%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	4,500

90. Gender (banner)

Male	49%
Female	51%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	4,500

91. Which of the following best describes your sexuality?

Heterosexual / straight	87%
Lesbian / gay woman	1%
Gay man	2%
Bisexual	4%
Other	2%
Prefer not to say	3%
Totals	99%
Unweighted N	4,500

92. What racial or ethnic group best describes you?

White	63%
Black	12%
Hispanic	13%
Asian	5%
Native American	1%
Middle Eastern	0%
Two or more races	3%
Other	2%
Totals	99%
Unweighted N	4,500

93. Are you of Spanish, Latino, or Hispanic origin or descent?

Yes	18%
No	82%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	4,500

94. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

No HS	6%
High school graduate	31%
Some college	19%
2-year	10%
4-year	21%
Post-grad	13%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	4,500

95. What is your marital status?

Married	46%
Separated	2%
Divorced	10%
Widowed	5%
Never married	32%
Domestic / civil partnership	5%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	4,500

96. Are you the parent or guardian of any children under the age of 18?

Yes	24%
No	76%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	4,500

97. In which state do you live?

Alabama	2%
Alaska	0%
Arizona	3%
Arkansas	1%
California	11%
Colorado	2%
Connecticut	1%
Delaware	0%
District of Columbia	0%
Florida	8%
Georgia	4%
Hawaii	1%
Idaho	1%
Illinois	4%
Indiana	2%
Iowa	1%
Kansas	1%
Kentucky	1%
Louisiana	1%
Maine	0%
Maryland	1%
Massachusetts	1%
Michigan	3%
Minnesota	2%
Mississippi	1%
Missouri	2%
Montana	0%
Nebraska	0%
Nevada	1%
New Hampshire	0%
New Jersey	2%
New Mexico	1%
New York	7%
North Carolina	3%
North Dakota	0%

Ohio	3%
Oklahoma	1%
Oregon	1%
Pennsylvania	5%
Rhode Island	0%
South Carolina	1%
South Dakota	0%
Tennessee	2%
Texas	10%
Utah	1%
Vermont	0%
Virginia	3%
Washington	2%
West Virginia	1%
Wisconsin	2%
Wyoming	0%
American Samoa	0%
Federated States of Micronesia	0%
Guam	0%
Marshall Islands	0%
Northern Mariana Islands	0%
Palau	0%
Puerto Rico	0%
U.S. Minor Outlying Islands	0%
Virgin Islands	0%
Alberta	0%
British Columbia	0%
Manitoba	0%
New Brunswick	0%
Newfoundland	0%
Northwest Territories	0%
Nova Scotia	0%
Nunavut	0%
Ontario	0%
Prince Edward Island	0%
Quebec	0%
Saskatchewan	0%
Yukon Territory	0%
Not in the U.S. or Canada	0%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	4,500

98. Do you own your home or pay rent?

Own	68%
Rent	31%
Other	1%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	4,500

99. Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a ...?

Democrat	32%
Republican	30%
Independent	28%
Other	4%
Not sure	6%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	4,500

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Strong Democrat	21%
Not very strong Democrat	10%
Strong Republican	21%
Not very strong Republican	9%
Lean Democrat	10%
Lean Republican	7%
Independent	19%
Not sure	2%
Don’t know	0%
Totals	99%
Unweighted N	4,500

101. Who did you vote for in the election for President in 2020?

Joe Biden	33%
Donald Trump	32%
Jo Jorgensen	1%
Howie Hawkins	0%
Other	1%
Did not vote for President	33%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	4,500

102. Who did you vote for in the election for President in 2024?

Kamala Harris	36%
Donald Trump	36%
Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.	0%
Jill Stein	0%
Cornel West	0%
Chase Oliver	0%
Other	0%
Did not vote for President	26%
Totals	98%
Unweighted N	4,500

103. Are you registered to vote?

Yes	88%
No	11%
Don't know	1%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	4,500

104. In general, how would you describe your own political viewpoint?

Very liberal	12%
Liberal	16%
Moderate	31%
Conservative	20%
Very conservative	12%
Not sure	8%
Totals	99%
Unweighted N	4,500

105. Ideology - 3 categories

Liberal	30%
Conservative	35%
Moderate	35%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	4,500

106. Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election going on or not. Others aren't that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs ...

Most of the time	45%
Some of the time	30%
Only now and then	14%
Hardly at all	9%
Don't know	2%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	4,500

107. What is your present religion, if any?

Protestant	36%
Roman Catholic	23%
Mormon	1%
Eastern or Greek Orthodox	1%
Jewish	1%
Muslim	1%
Buddhist	1%
Hindu	0%
Atheist	6%
Agnostic	5%
Nothing in particular	19%
Something else	6%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	4,500

108. To which Protestant church or group do you belong?

Baptist	27%
Methodist	9%
Nondenominational or Independent Church	21%
Lutheran	7%
Presbyterian	4%
Pentecostal	8%
Episcopalian	3%
Church of Christ or Disciples of Christ	3%
Congregational or United Church of Christ	2%
Holiness	0%

Reformed	1%
Adventist	1%
Jehovah's Witness	2%
Something else	11%
Totals	99%
Unweighted N	1,888

109. To which Baptist church do you belong, if any?

Southern Baptist Convention	33%
American Baptist Churches in USA	9%
National Baptist Convention	2%
Progressive Baptist Convention	1%
Independent Baptist	15%
Baptist General Conference	2%
Baptist Missionary Association	6%
Conservative Baptist Assoc. of America	1%
Free Will Baptist	6%
General Association of Regular Baptists	5%
Other Baptist	20%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	530

110. To which Methodist church do you belong, if any?

United Methodist Church	75%
Free Methodist Church	2%
African Methodist Episcopal	4%
African Methodist Episcopal Zion	1%
Christian Methodist Episcopal Church	3%
Other Methodist Church	14%
Totals	99%
Unweighted N	194

111. To which kind of nondenominational or independent church do you belong, if any?

Nondenominational evangelical	37%
Nondenominational fundamentalist	4%
Nondenominational charismatic	6%
Interdenominational	4%

Community church	34%
Other	15%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	487

112. To which Lutheran church do you belong?

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)	39%
Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod	28%
Lutheran Church, Wisconsin Synod	8%
Other Lutheran Church	25%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	137

113. To which Presbyterian church do you belong?

Presbyterian Church USA	34%
Presbyterian Church in America	19%
Associate Reformed Presbyterian	7%
Cumberland Presbyterian Church	4%
Orthodox Presbyterian	6%
Evangelical Presbyterian Church	9%
Other Presbyterian Church	21%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	98

114. To which Pentecostal church do you belong?

Assemblies of God	23%
Church of God Cleveland TN	3%
Four Square Gospel	5%
Pentecostal Church of God	13%
Pentecostal Holiness Church	3%
Church of God in Christ	9%
Church of God of the Apostolic Faith	1%
Assembly of Christian Churches	0%
Apostolic Christian	10%
Other Pentecostal Church	32%
Totals	99%
Unweighted N	186

115. To which Episcopalian church do you belong?

Episcopal Church in the USA	76%
Anglican Church (Church of England)	10%
Anglican Orthodox Church	0%
Reformed Episcopal Church	1%
Other Episcopalian or Anglican Church	13%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	54

116. To which Christian church do you belong?

Church of Christ	58%
Disciples of Christ	11%
Christian Churches and Churches of Christ	21%
Other Christian church	10%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	93

117. To which congregational church do you belong?

United Church of Christ	78%
Conservative Congregational Christian	12%
National Association of Congregational Christians	6%
Other Congregational	4%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	48

118. To which Holiness church do you belong?

Church of the Nazarene	2%
Wesleyan Church	4%
Free Methodist Church	0%
Christian and Missionary Alliance	7%
Church of God (Anderson, Indiana)	35%
Salvation Army, American Rescue workers	0%
Other Holiness	52%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	16

119. To which Reformed church do you belong?

Reformed Church in America	10%
Christian Reformed Church	61%
Other Reformed	29%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	23

120. To which Adventist church do you belong?

Seventh Day Adventist	70%
Church of God, General Conference	21%
Advent Christian	2%
Other Adventist	7%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	24

121. To which Catholic church do you belong?

Roman Catholic Church	91%
National Polish Catholic Church	1%
Greek-rite Catholic	0%
Armenian Catholic	1%
Old Catholic	3%
Other Catholic	4%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	1,099

122. To which Mormon church do you belong?

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	86%
Community of Christ	9%
Other Mormon	5%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	56

123. To which Orthodox church do you belong?

Greek Orthodox	23%
Russian Orthodox	17%

Orthodox Church in America	22%
Armenian Orthodox	7%
Eastern Orthodox	20%
Serbian Orthodox	4%
Other Orthodox	7%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	47

124. To which Jewish group do you belong?

Reform	48%
Conservative	22%
Orthodox	10%
Reconstructionist	6%
Other	14%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	111

125. To which Muslim group do you belong?

Sunni	65%
Shia	7%
Nation of Islam (Black Muslim)	7%
Other Muslim	21%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	56

126. To which Buddhist group do you belong?

Theravada (Vipassana) Buddhism	8%
Mahayana (Zen) Buddhism	35%
Vajrayana (Tibetan) Buddhism	20%
Other Buddhist	37%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	47

127. With which of the following Hindu groups, if any, do you identify with most closely?

Vaishnava Hinduism	23%
Shaivite Hinduism	22%
Shaktism Hinduism	25%
Other Hindu	30%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	25

128. Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?

More than once a week	8%
Once a week	19%
Once or twice a month	7%
A few times a year	12%
Seldom	22%
Never	30%
Don't know	2%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	4,499

129. Would you describe yourself as a "born-again" or evangelical Christian, or not?

Yes	34%
No	66%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	4,500

130. How important is religion in your life?

Very important	39%
Somewhat important	26%
Not too important	14%
Not at all important	21%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	4,500

131. People practice their religion in different ways. Outside of attending religious services, how often do you pray?

Several times a day	28%
Once a day	13%
A few times a week	12%
Once a week	4%
A few times a month	6%
Seldom	13%
Never	20%
Don't know	4%
Totals	100%
Unweighted N	4,500