

SINE INSTITUTE  
*of* POLICY & POLITICS

# Young Americans Describe Their American Experience

# Key Findings

In describing their American experience and the routines and feelings that govern their everyday lives, young Americans:

- Overwhelmingly describe feeling stress, pressure and the consequences of mental health challenges. While this is true among all groups of young Americans, these findings (consistent with other studies) show that this is an especially common experience for young women.
- Are governed by contradicting values and emotions that pull them in different directions, such as feeling simultaneously lonely and connected as well as resilient and discouraged.
- Remain steadfastly optimistic about their own lives, surpassing both their positive feelings about the overall direction of the country and their own judgements about the experience of their parents' generation.
- See the American Dream as a flexible vision that can and should adapt for each individual and across generations.
- Say the pandemic, while officially over, has permanently changed their vision for their own future while openly admitting they're not fully recovered from its impacts.

# For young Americans, the pace and pressure of everyday life can be overwhelming (young women feel this especially).

■ Very much applies to my life ■ Somewhat applies to my life

People feel **pressure to live up to a certain standard** or expectation instead of being able to be true to themselves.



Daily life moves at such a **fast pace** that I often feel like it's exhausting to keep up.



Too often **people distance themselves from those who seem different** than they are and instead surround themselves mostly by others who are like-minded.



There is too much **emphasis on knowing a lot of people at a superficial level** than on knowing a smaller number of people on a deep level.



I don't feel like I've recovered from the **negative effects that Covid** and the pandemic had on my life.



# Young Americans see themselves as creative and innovative, but most of all, they are stressed (along with other contradictions like feeling simultaneously connected but lonely).

*Which two of these adjectives best describe people in your generation?*



24%	<b>Creative &amp; entrepreneurial/innovate</b>	44%	<b>Stressed &amp; overwhelmed</b>
17%	Connected & informed	16%	Discouraged & hopeless
15%	Hard working	15%	Lonely & isolated
15%	Accepting & tolerant	7%	Fearful
13%	Ambitious	6%	Angry
11%	Resilient		
9%	Confident		
7%	Happy		

# The American Dream is in transition: there is no one uniform vision, instead, it varies by individual and by generation, and the effects of the pandemic are enduring.

**There is no one American Dream**; instead the American Dream can and should look different for each individual.

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The American Dream **means something very different to me than it did to my parents** and older generations.

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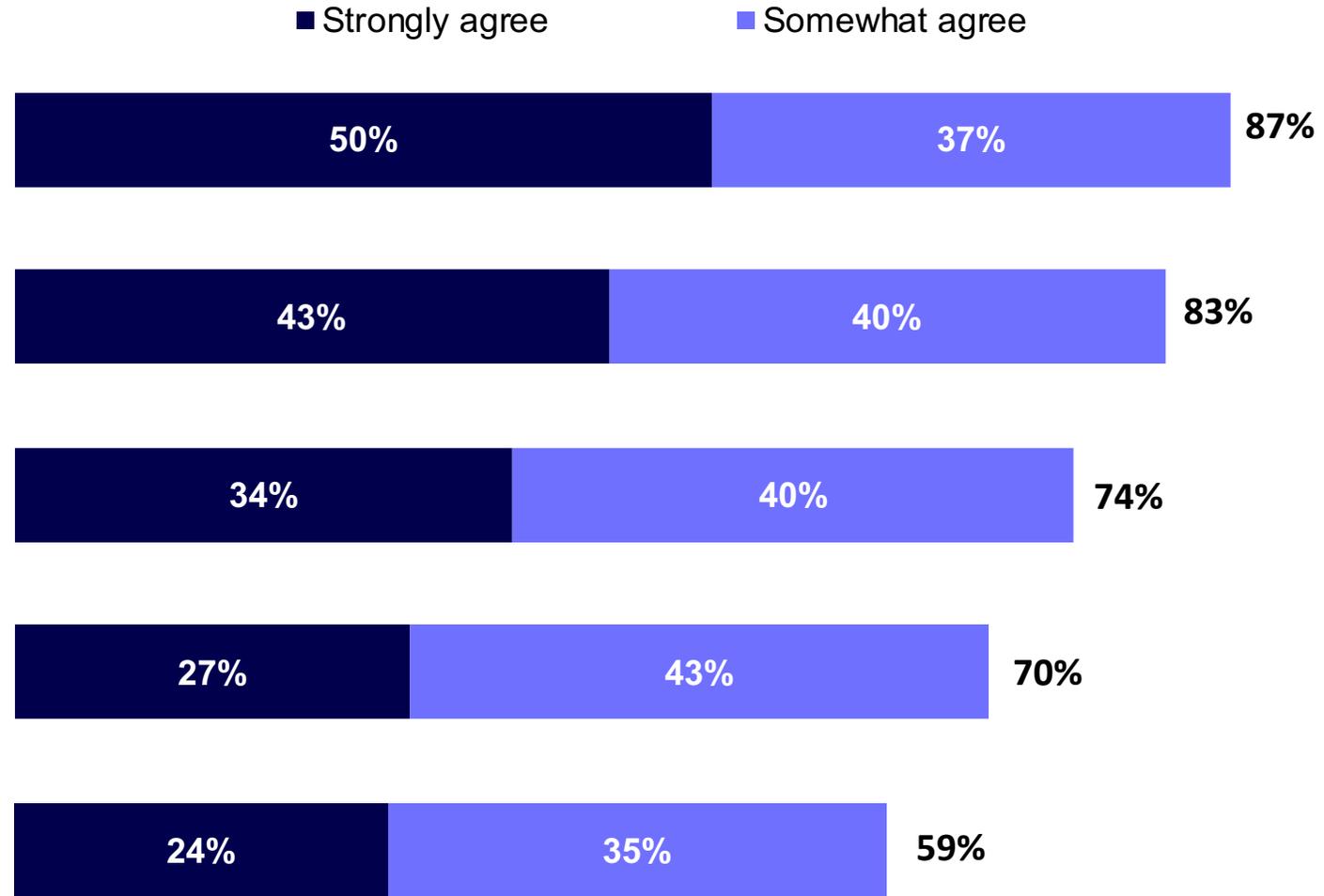
I have a **good chance of achieving** what I consider the American Dream for myself.

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The experience of **Covid and living through the pandemic changed my goals** for the future and what I consider important in my vision of the American Dream.

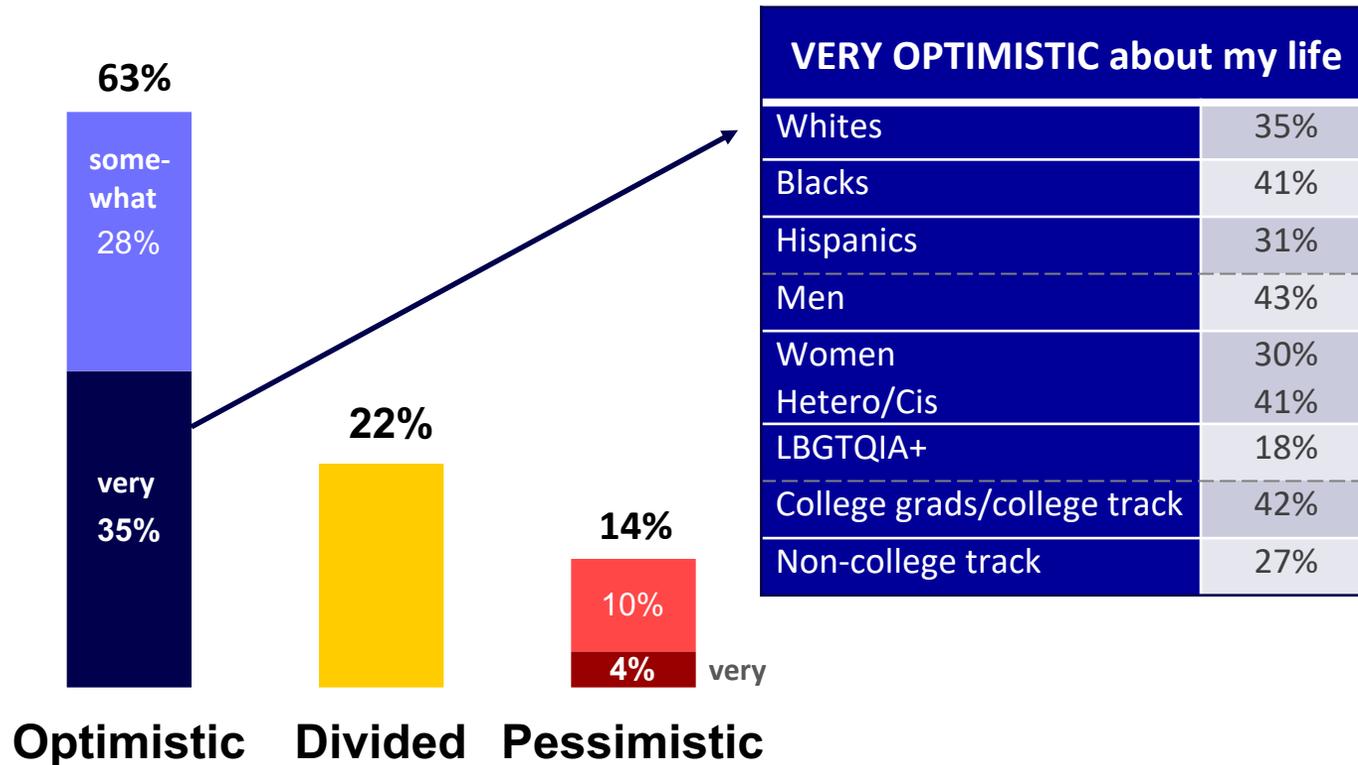
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**All people my age have a good chance** of achieving their own vision of the American Dream.

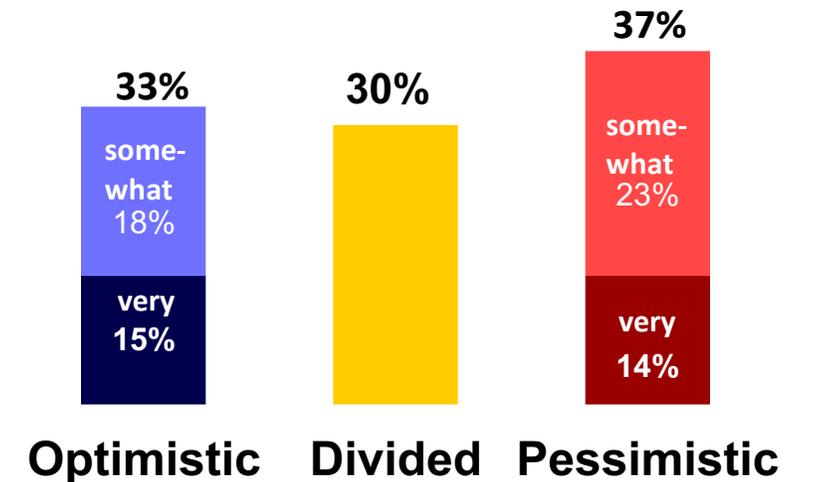


# Young Americans are more optimistic for themselves than they are for the country.

*Thinking about the next five to ten years, when it comes to MY OWN PERSONAL LIFE, I feel:*

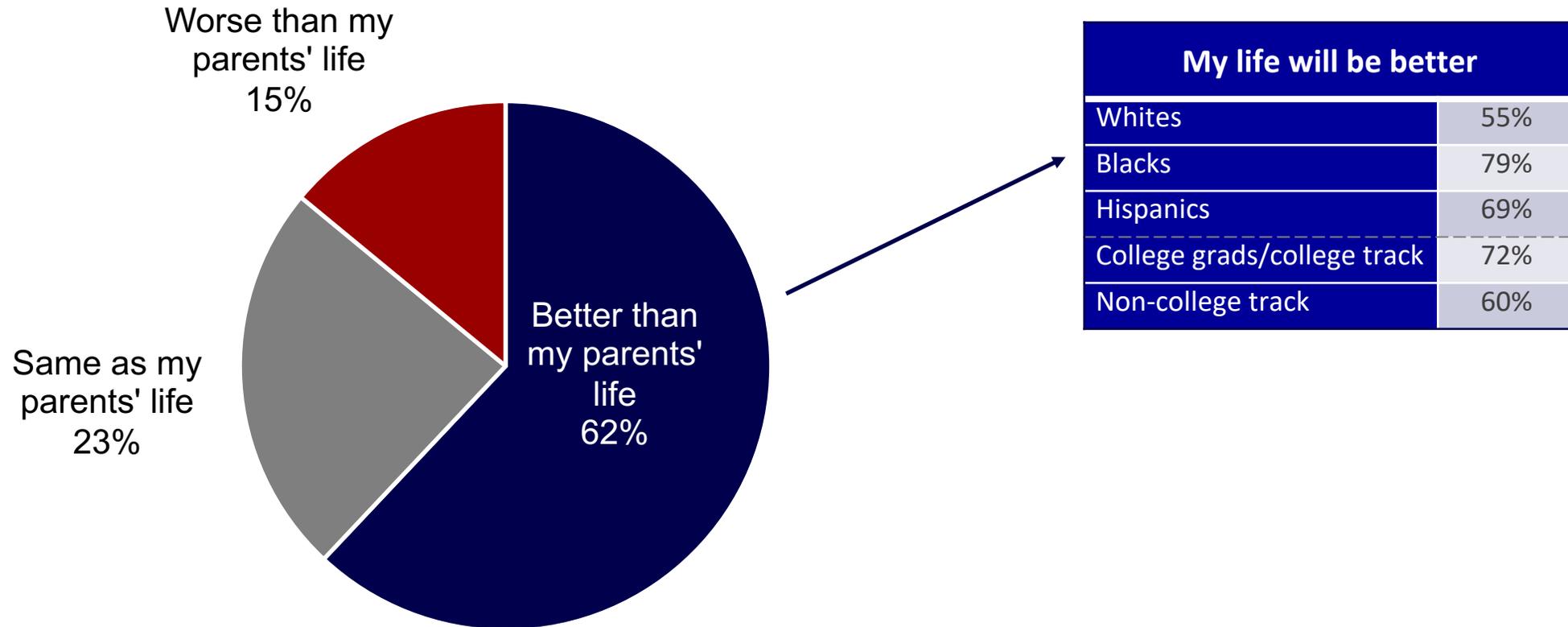


*Thinking about the next five to ten years, when it comes to HOW THINGS WILL BE HERE IN AMERICA, I feel:*



# Contrary to some negative media narratives, most young Americans don't expect their lives to be worse than their parents.

*Thinking about the life my parents have had, I expect that I my life will be:*



# On many measures, young Americans say they will be better off than their parents; but having a functional & effective government is a notable exception.

*On this aspect of quality of life, I expect that I my life will be:*

■ Worse than my parents' life ■ Better than my parents' life

