THE AMERICAN FAMILY SURVEY

2022 REPORT

Conflict and Consensus in Changing Times

DeseretNews.

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRACY

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2022 American Family Survey documents shifting challenges for families in the United States. While no single survey can cover all areas of importance, three findings from this year's survey stand out: rising economic tension against a backdrop of receding COVID; the nuance and complexity of (newly important) abortion attitudes; and the difficulty of deciding school policy and parental roles.

As Americans shift attention away from COVID restrictions, the importance of the economy is rising and likely to be a topic of concern for families in the future. The pandemic affected American families unevenly, with Black and Hispanic families being far more likely to report that a member of their immediate or extended family had died from COVID-19. But even while the country is still coming to grips with this reality, pandemic-era worries are receding to the background, overtaken by new economic stresses, especially inflation. While American families expressed concern about rising prices last year, those concerns have increased this year, with nearly 9 in 10 Americans saying they are at least somewhat worried about inflation. Majorities say they have seen large price increases for food and transportation, and more than half expect that their incomes will not be able to keep up with prices in the coming years. While there are occasionally partisan dimensions to these concerns, it is a sweeping trend that worries most of our respondents.

Such concerns would, alone, be significant, but perhaps the more ominous finding is that a rising number of Americans at all income levels reported experiencing a significant economic crisis in the last twelve months. Rates of crises are not back to pre-pandemic levels, but they are substantially more prevalent than they were in 2020 and 2021, and it is impossible not to worry about the trend. One reasonable hypothesis about the lack of crises during the pandemic was that high levels of government spending helped families stave off the worst potential situations. But the looming inflation not only worries families, it also makes such levels of government spending in the future increasingly unlikely as interest rates on borrowing rise and politicians face daunting budget choices.

As in past years, there is much optimism in our survey. Americans are confident about the strength of their personal families, though they remain pessimistic about the health of the American family generally. And we see evidence of long-term concern about the economic prospects of families: optimism about the American Dream and prospects for economic mobility have fallen substantially from previous decades. Only 4 in 10 say they are better off financially than their parents were at their age, and only one-third believe that the next generation is likely to be better off. These are record lows compared to earlier eras, and while these trends likely have many causes and should not be seen as a simple consequence of inflation or post-pandemic malaise, it is a concerning result.

This year's midterm elections promise to be heavily influenced by the economy, but a wide variety of other issues may be on the minds of Americans as they head to the polls — student loan forgiveness, immigration, gun control, and abortion, just to name a few. As part of our analysis this year, we also explored how self-identified ideology and partisanship interact to shape public opinion about contemporary issues. That is, we analyzed both the ideological wings of the parties — liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans — as well as moderates in both parties, occasionally comparing these partisan categories to pure independents as well. Analyzing the data this way highlights two issues. First, focusing on the ideological wings illustrates how Democrats and Republicans are often quite different from one another across a host of different issue areas. Second, exploring the differences between moderates and others highlights the key differences that exist within the parties. On this latter point, the survey often shows possibilities for compromise among the moderates across partisan lines. The ideological wings are the larger group in both parties (75% of Republicans and 63% of Democrats), but the moderates should not be ignored. They comprise one-quarter of Republicans and more than one-third of Democrats, and they are crucial for understanding public conversations about the nation's problems and especially for finding potential policy solutions.

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We thank Spencer Rudy, Natalie Bria, Kathryn Fontano, and Rylie Hinds for excellent research assistance.

We are deeply grateful for the efforts and advice of our advisory committee, Karlyn Bowman (American Enterprise Institute), Camille Bussette (The Brookings Institution), Paul Edwards (Brigham Young University), Richard Reeves (The Brookings Institution), and Brad Wilcox (AEI and The University of Virginia). Their advice dramatically improved the survey questionnaire and informed the report. Errors, of course, are our own.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. ECONOMIC ISSUES

Faith in the American Dream
Inflation
Economic crises
Student loan debt

2. POLICY OPINIONS

Congressional priorities
Immigration and families
Supporting families through tax policy
Abortion policy
Unexpected pregnancies

3. PUBLIC SCHOOL ISSUES

Students and gender identity
Public school libraries
Teaching in public schools
Teaching about race
Teaching about race, sex and gender
Sex education
School safety

4. FAMILY LIFE

Most important issues facing families
Technology and family relationships
Physical and mental health
Family conversations about race
Relationships across differences
Grandparents
Religion and family life

5. CORE FAMILY INDICATORS

Relationship status
Relationship strength
Family strength
Work-life balance

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On a hopeful note, public opinion often suggests compromise solutions to difficult policy problems. One issue area where public opinion is less polarized and more nuanced than the public discourse sometimes recognizes is abortion policy. Our survey's results in the wake of the Dobbs v. Jackson decision illustrate some prospects for compromise, even on an issue with deep moral implications. The standard view may be that the parties have intransigent positions, but events are showing this to be an overstatement even as states begin to set abortion policies. Kansas, a relatively conservative state, is perhaps the best illustration of how partisan expectations are not always fulfilled. But while politicians (at least so far) often fixate on more extreme policy proposals, our survey finds clear evidence of the complexity of public opinion about the details of abortion policy. For example, in addition to a traditional question about whether abortion should be legal or illegal in all more most cases, we asked AFS respondents to indicate the number of weeks of a pregnancy (between 0 and 40) that a woman should be legally allowed to obtain an abortion. This new question focuses on the timing of abortion availability, while the traditional question asks about the "cases" or situations when abortion should be an option. When we combine the two questions, we find very few Americans at the extremes on the issues. Only 7% favor no access to abortion at all (0 weeks and always illegal), and the same percentage favor abortion access through the end of pregnancy (40 weeks and always legal). Put differently, 86% of Americans are somewhere between those extremes — favoring some access to abortion for at least some cases. Partisan differences matter greatly: a plurality of Republicans favor abortion access ending sometime in the first trimester, while a plurality of Democrats favor extending access through the second trimester. Still, as legislators in the states and in Congress consider abortion policy in a post-Roe world, they may do well to remember that clinging to the extremes of the policy spectrum on this issue leaves behind an overwhelming percentage of Americans.

Given recent controversies in states and local school districts, the 2022 American Family Survey also included a host of questions about attitudes toward school-related issues of concern to many families — how to accommodate transgender students, what to teach about race relations, how parents evaluate their schools' approach to sex education, who should teach about sex and gender identity, how much to emphasize merit and achievement in school curricula, how school libraries should approach books about controversial issues, and how to keep school children safe. This area also showed considerable nuance: by and large, respondents do not prefer policy extremes on either the right or the left. For example, banning books from school libraries remains unpopular among most Americans, despite the activism of conservative groups who worry about the content of some library holdings. At the same time, many American parents also express concern about what schools are teaching about issues like gender identity, and many would prefer to handle teaching those issues at home, a solution that is likely to be at odds with the preferences of liberal activists who want schools to send stronger messages about gender equality. Perhaps the overriding sentiment is that parents of all political commitments want to retain primary decision-making control over their local school policies and curriculum. Because liberal parents will have different priorities than conservative parents, one consequence is that parental control may lead to very different outcomes in Massachusetts than in Mississippi. Nonetheless, parents of all stripes and types expect to be the guardians of what is taught at school, not outsource it to other institutions or decision-makers.

As the nation emerges from the pandemic, we also see hints of rebounds from pandemic lows in concern about relationship trouble and in struggles to balance work and home life. Concern about the physical, social, and mental health of children is not evenly distributed, with lower-income Americans expressing more concern. The pandemic did not bring with it a wave of increased loneliness, though both before, during, and after the pandemic, levels of loneliness are primarily tied to relationship status: those not in a relationship are much more likely to report feelings of loneliness. And this is, in turn, tied to the changing rates of marriage. Over the eight years of its existence, the American Family Survey has documented a 5-point decline in the percentage of Americans who say they are married, with a corresponding 5-point increase in those who are not currently in any relationship at all. One reason to follow these long-term trends is that they are correlated with people feeling isolated, left out, or lonely.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While the challenges facing individuals and families are real, the 2022 American Family Survey also documents potential bright spots. Many Americans feel that technology benefits their relationships with their partners and with their children, though an even larger group is not sure that these tools make much difference, and the vast majority of parents feel that it is important to set boundaries on the media consumption of their children. When it comesto the day-to-day lives of families, like eating dinner together, attending activities, doing chores, going out, socializing, or having family conversations about political and social issues, partisan differences tend to be small. Whatever else may divide Americans, everyday family routines look very similar no matter what their ideological commitments.

The midterm elections are likely to highlight tension and political debate. This is natural and even useful in politics, and our survey points out some of those tensions. But while Americans should not ignore their differences, they should also not magnify them beyond reason or data. Compromise is possible because Americans are often more unified than accounts let on. One of our goals for the American Family Survey is to carefully document both points of enduring division and prospects for discovering unity.

FAITH IN THE AMERICAN DREAM

Fewer Americans today believe they are better off than their parents were at their age. Only 4o% of Americans say this today, compared to **70%-80%** in the 1980s and 1990s.

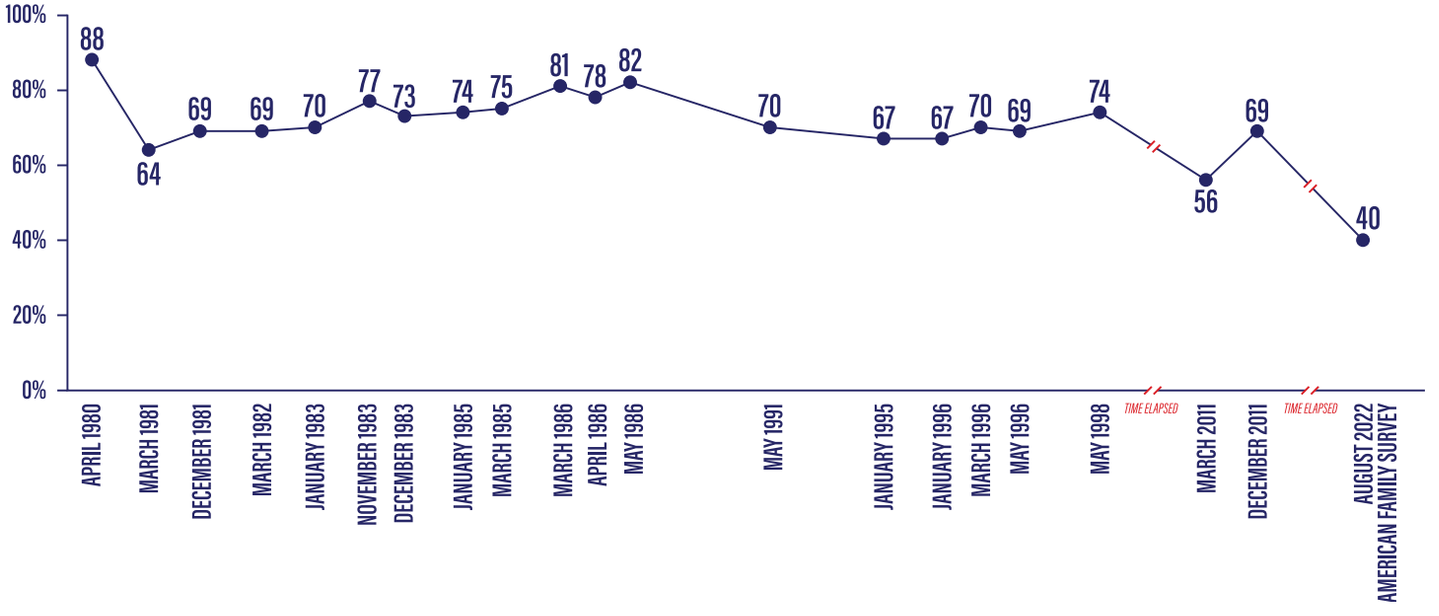
Black Americans are more likely than others to say life will be better for their children than for them. A full

70%

express some level of confidence in this.

AMERICANS DON'T THINK THEY ARE BETTER OFF THAN THEIR PARENTS

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



SOURCE: ABC News, The Washington Post, Gallup, Pew/Mellman/Public Opinion Strategies and American Family Survey.
(Asked of all Americans.)

One aspect of the American dream is the idea that each new generation can exceed the accomplishments of the previous generation. In the 2022 American Family Survey, we asked Americans to tell us, first, whether or not they believe they are better off financially than their parents and second, whether their children (or for those who are not parents, "children today") will be better off when they reach the respondents' age.

Only 4 in 10 Americans say they are better off than their parents were at a similar age. This represents a dramatic drop from responses to the same question when it was asked in the 1980s and 1990s. During that time period, between 70% and 80% of Americans judged themselves to be better off than their parents. Other than two surveys from 2011, we do not have comparable questions for the early 2000s, but the clear result is that contemporary Americans are far less likely to say that they have exceeded their parents' financial achievements. This contemporary finding is remarkably stable across lines of gender, race, education, partisanship and ideology. The only group for which a majority believes that they have exceeded their parents' standard is those making more than $80,000 per year, and even then it is only a bare majority (51%). Among those making less than $40,000 per year, the number drops to only one-third.

MOST AMERICANS DO NOT BELIEVE THEY ARE BETTER OFF THAN THEIR PARENTS, AND EVEN FEWER BELIEVE THAT THE NEXT GENERATION WILL BE BETTER OFF

	BETTER OFF	ABOUT THE SAME	WORSE OFF
THINK OF YOUR PARENTS WHEN THEY WERE YOUR AGE. WOULD YOU SAY THAT YOU ARE BETTER OFF FINANCIALLY THAN THEY WERE OR NOT?	40	31	28
NOW THINK ABOUT YOUR EXPECTATIONS FOR YOUR CHILDREN.* DO YOU THINK THEY WILL BE BETTER OFF FINANCIALLY WHEN THEY REACH YOUR AGE OR NOT?	33	35	33

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. (Asked of all Americans.)

*For respondents who do not have children, the question wording was: "Now think about your expectations for children today."

NOTE: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Americans are even more pessimistic about the likely prospects of children. Just one-third believe today's children will be better off financially than their parents. This, too, represents a substantial decline from results of similar questions asked in the 1980s and 1990s. During that period, percentages of those believing that children would do better ranged between 43% and 71% of respondents. Thus, the patterns in the 2022 American Family Survey represent a 10 percentage point decline from even the most pessimistic result from an earlier era.

This contemporary loss of faith in the American dream can be found in a variety of different demographic groups: It is present among men and women and across income, education and political identities. The primary differences occur between parents and nonparents, with parents being about twice as likely as nonparents to say that their children will exceed their level of financial success. But some of this difference could be related to question wording: Parents were asked to think about their own children, while nonparents were asked more generally about "children today." Nonetheless, nonparents express very low levels of confidence that children will do better than the previous generation. The other perhaps surprising source of optimism is among Black respondents, who are about 10 percentage points more optimistic about the future financial prospects of today's children. This result is consistent with the work of others, including the social scientist Jennifer Hochschild, who reports notably resilient faith in the American dream among many Black Americans ("Facing Up to the American Dream").

Similar patterns are present in responses to a final question about respondents' confidence that "life for your children (or children today) will be better than it has been for us." This question allows respondents to think beyond financial success to life more generally. Again, however, we find extremely low levels of confidence — only about 15% of Americans say they are very confident, compared to 50% who say they are not at all confident. This, too, represents a decline, though a modest one, from responses to the same question asked by survey researchers in a previous era. And as the table below shows, both parents and Black respondents again tend to be more confident than other groups.

A MAJORITY OF AMERICANS DOUBT LIFE FOR CHILDREN WILL BE BETTER

Thinking about life in general, how confident are you that life for your children will be better than it has been for us? (For respondents without children: Thinking about life in general, how confident are you that life for children today will be better than it has been for us?)

	VERY CONFIDENT	FAIRLY CONFIDENT	NOT AT ALL CONFIDENT
ALL	15%	35%	50%
PARENTS	19%	39%	42%
NONPARENTS	10%	30%	60%
WHITE	12%	33%	55%
BLACK	28%	42%	30%
HISPANIC	21%	39%	40%

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. (Asked of all Americans.)

When it comes to the notion that children can exceed the accomplishments of their parents, many Americans appear to be in the grips of a profound loss of faith in at least one aspect of the American dream. Whether the question is focused on financial success or life more generally, few Americans believe that children today are likely to exceed the accomplishments of their parents.

– Chris Karpowitz and Jeremy Pope
Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy at BYU

AMERICANS LESS CONFIDENT IN BEING BETTER OFF FINANCIALLY THAN THEIR PARENTS

And what about your children? Do you think they will be better off than you are financially when they reach your age, or not? (For those who do not have children: Suppose you did have children, do you think those children would be better off financially or not when they reach your age?) American Family Survey question wording: Now think about your expectations for your children. (For those who do not have children: Now think about your expectations for children today.) Do you think they will be better off financially when they reach your age or not?

	BETTER OFF
MARCH 1981	47%
MARCH 1982	43%
JANUARY 1983	44%
NOVEMBER 1983	62%
DECEMBER 1983	65%
JANUARY 1985	62%
MARCH 1986	75%
APRIL 1986	69%
MAY 1986	71%
MAY 1991	66%
JANUARY 1995	54%
JANUARY 1996	52%
MARCH 1996	52%
MAY 1996	60%
AUGUST 2022 AMERICAN FAMILY SURVEY	33%

SOURCE: ABC News, The Washington Post and 2022 American Family Survey. (Asked of all Americans.)

LOW CONFIDENCE IN BETTER LIFE FOR CHILDREN

Do you feel very confident, only fairly confident or not at all confident that life for your children will be better than it has been for us? American Family Survey question wording: Thinking about life in general, how confident are you that life for children today will be better than it has been for us?

	VERY CONFIDENT LIFE WILL BE BETTER FOR CHILDREN
1973	26%
1974	25%
1975	23%
1976	31%
1979	25%
1982	20%
1983	24%
1988	20%
1992	17%
1995	17%
2010 BLOOMBERG*	22%
AUGUST 2022 AMERICAN FAMILY SURVEY	15%

SOURCE: Roper Starch Worldwide and 2022 American Family Survey.

* Question wording: Thinking about your future, how confident are you that ... The children in your life will have a better life than you have? Very confident, fairly confident, just somewhat confident, not confident.

PARENTS AND BLACK AMERICANS MORE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR CHILDREN

Now think about your expectations for your children. (For respondents who do not have children, the question stem was as follows: Now think about your expectations for children today.) Do you think they will be better off financially when they reach your age or not?

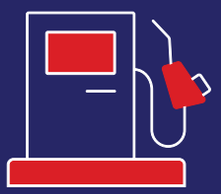
	BETTER OFF	ABOUT THE SAME	WORSE OFF
PARENTS	41%	34%	25%
NONPARENTS	20%	36%	44%
WHITE	31%	33%	36%
BLACK	42%	38%	20%
HISPANIC	32%	40%	27%

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. (Asked of all Americans.)

NOTE: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

SOURCE: The American Family Survey 2022 was conducted online to a matched sample on gender, race, age and education Aug. 8-15, 2022. The sample size is 3,000 and the overall margin of error is +/- 1.9 percentage points.

INFLATION



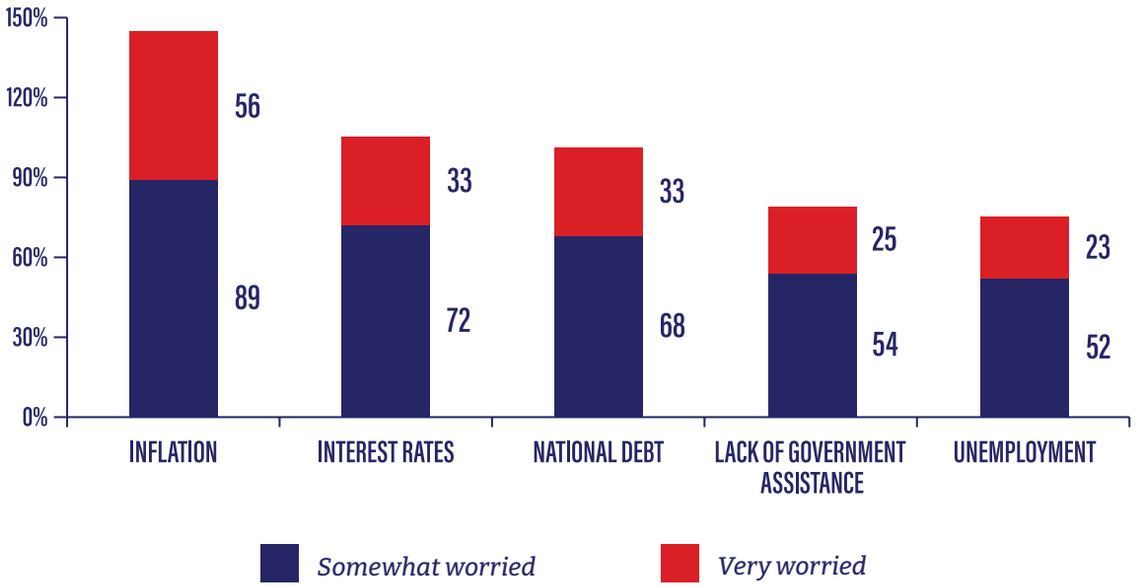
Americans are increasingly worried about inflation over other economic concerns. **Fifty-six percent** are very worried.

Americans are not optimistic about their incomes keeping up with inflation.

55% say they will fall behind.

ECONOMIC CONCERNS OF AMERICAN FAMILIES

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



SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.)

Americans are more worried about inflation than other economic concerns. The 2022 American Family Survey asked respondents which financial topics currently concern them the most, and inflation was clearly the top response: Eighty-nine percent of Americans are at least somewhat worried about inflation, and 56% are very worried. Among the alternatives, no more than a third of the public is very worried — they all pale in comparison. Despite all the worry over inflation, it has not coincided with widespread fear of job loss: The hot job market leaves worry over unemployment ranked last among the topics covered by the survey, with only 23% of Americans identifying themselves as very worried at the time the survey was fielded in August 2022. The concern about inflation also represents a marked increase from the 2021. In last year's American Family Survey, 80% of Americans said they were at least somewhat worried about inflation, and 39% said they were very worried.

Respondents also indicated whether they have seen rising, falling or steady prices in four categories that might affect family budgets: food, transportation, housing and entertainment. Two categories lead the way for where Americans have noticed rising costs in their daily

lives. While at least half of Americans saw increases in all four categories, more than 80% of Americans noticed increases in the cost of food and transportation (including gasoline). The higher prices in these categories were not inconsequential for most Americans; 3 out of 5 respondents indicated that they had seen large price increases in the cost of food and transportation.

The majority of Americans also do not have high hopes for their levels of income to keep up with inflation in the near future. Overall, more than half of respondents indicated that they expect their income to fall behind prices over the next couple of years, while less than a quarter expect their income to keep up with prices. The takeaway is that expectations about inflation are very negative, and this is true across the board — no major differences exist across demographics because the pessimism is widespread.

The public's perception of who stands to blame for the high levels of inflation points to several different people and events. About a third of Americans blame the Biden administration and its policies for inflation, the highest percentage for any of the options. Just over a quarter blame disruptions to the global supply chain related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and respondents selected the remaining options 10% or less of the time. But it should be kept in mind that these are very partisan evaluations: Forty-four percent of Democrats selected disruptions to supply chain as the main cause of rising inflation, whereas Republicans blamed supply chain disruptions only 8% of the time. In stark contrast, 70% of Republicans most blame the policies of the Biden administration. Independents most blamed Biden only 32% of the time (while only 1 out of every 20 Democrats did so). Other demographics, such as gender and education, did not show significant differences from the overall responses.

Inflation, and the attendant concerns, is likely to be a key political issue for the next few years, and Americans are expecting that. They blame two major causes above all others: the policies of the Biden administration and disruptions to the supply chain caused by the recent pandemic. Notably, the institution formally tasked with managing inflation (the Federal Reserve) gets off lightly in this data. And Americans connect these problems to purchasing things like food and transportation in their own lives.

— Chris Karpowitz, Jeremy C. Pope and Spencer Rudy
Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy at BYU

SUPPORTING TABLES

PERCEPTION OF BLAME FOR INFLATION

In your opinion, which of the following is most responsible for current inflation in the United States today? You may feel that more than one contributed to inflation in some way, but we are interested in which is most responsible.

	ALL AMERICANS	DEMOCRATS	INDEPENDENTS	REPUBLICANS
BIDEN ADMINISTRATION POLICIES	34%	5%	32%	70%
SUPPLY CHAIN DISRUPTIONS	26%	44%	19%	8%
WAR IN UKRAINE	10%	16%	8%	4%
TRUMP ADMINISTRATION POLICIES	9%	16%	4%	2%
SPENDING BILLS PASSED BY CONGRESS	8%	5%	9%	10%
FEDERAL RESERVE POLICIES	4%	3%	7%	2%
NONE OF THE ABOVE	10%	11%	21%	4%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.)

NOTE: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

EXPECTATIONS FOR INCOME AND INFLATION

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

	ALL AMERICANS
INCOME WILL KEEP UP WITH PRICES	20%
INCOME WILL FALL BEHIND PRICES	55%
DON'T KNOW	25%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.)

RISING COSTS OVER THE PAST YEAR

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

	HAVE SEEN PRICES INCREASE	HAVE SEEN LARGE PRICE INCREASES	HAVE SEEN NO CHANGE IN PRICES
FOOD	86%	61%	11%
TRANSPORTATION	82%	60%	15%
HOUSING	53%	30%	44%
ENTERTAINMENT	50%	24%	44%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.)

ECONOMIC CONCERNS IN 2021 AND 2022

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

	2021		2022	
	AT LEAST SOMEWHAT WORRIED	VERY WORRIED	AT LEAST SOMEWHAT WORRIED	VERY WORRIED
INFLATION	80%	39%	89%	56%
INTEREST RATES	NOT ASKED	NOT ASKED	72%	33%
NATIONAL DEBT	67%	30%	68%	33%
LACK OF GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE	50%	18%	54%	25%
UNEMPLOYMENT	47%	19%	52%	23%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.)

The American Family Survey 2022 was conducted online to a matched sample on gender, race, age and education Aug. 8-15, 2022. The sample size is 3,000 and the overall margin of error is +/- 1.9 percentage points.

ECONOMIC CRISES

One-third of Americans do not have enough savings to survive one month if they were to lose their job.

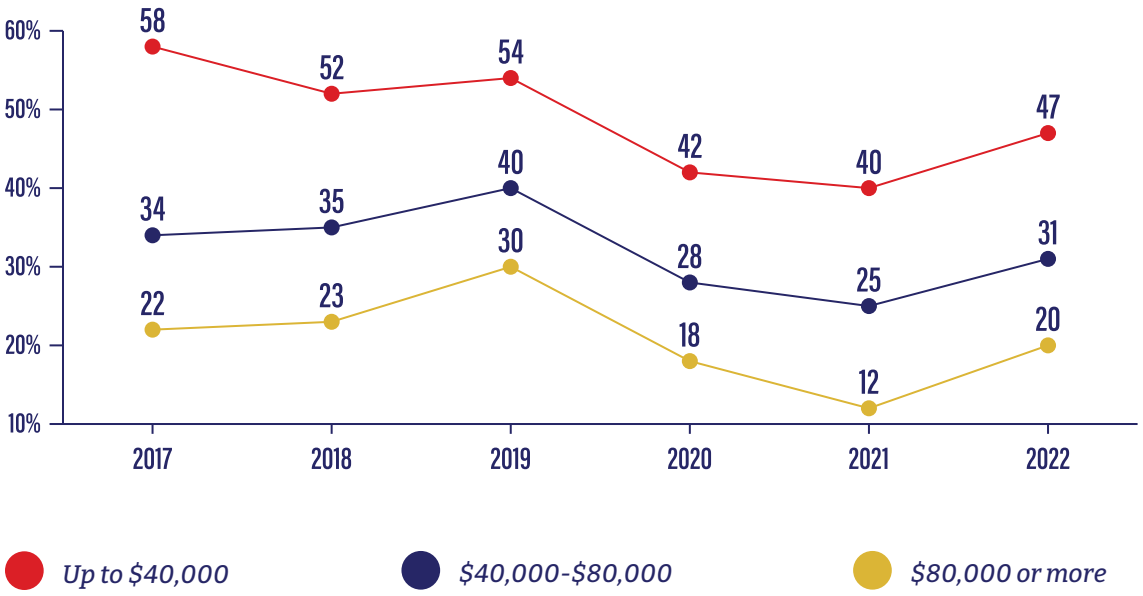
People at all income levels are experiencing more economic crises in 2022 than the previous two years. For example,

47%

of those who make less than $40,000 reported a crisis this year.

MORE AMERICANS EXPERIENCE ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

In the past 12 months, did you do any of the following because there wasn't enough money? (See list of six economic challenges below.*) Percent experiencing at least one economic crisis.



SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.)

Since 2017, the American Family Survey has asked about American families' experiences with economic crises in the past year. The specific list of crisis indicators includes the following: not eating, not paying a bill, borrowing money (or receiving a large gift), moving in with others, staying at a shelter or avoiding a doctor. While not an exhaustive look at the economic troubles someone could face, it is a list that captures distress in the public. People often weather these problems, but the challenges create trouble and dislocation. We use these responses as a measure of how people are faring under recent economic conditions.

The percentage who experienced at least one of these crises had been trending down during the first two years of the pandemic, but the numbers uniformly rebounded in 2022. Almost half of those making less than $40,000 per year faced at least one of those problems, as did almost a third in the middle-income category and 1 in 5 of the top group. The fact that there is roughly uniform uptick in reporting of such crises suggests this is not a small or local phenomenon, but rather a general change. There are some pockets where the change is more or less pronounced. For example, white respondents report trouble about 10% less often than nonwhite respondents. And married Americans and those with children are

less likely to have experienced these crises (meaning they happen more often to those not in a relationship or without children). But the trend is broadly the same for all groups.

What could be causing it? Because the past few years are so packed with economic events — government spending due to the pandemic, historic inflation and massive dislocation in the workplace — it is difficult to know with certainty what the root cause is. Frankly, it seems likely that at least three stories are all contributing. First, we have written about inflation, and it is very likely this is causing some distress. As bills come in at unexpected levels, it must be the case that economic crises will follow at a higher rate. Second, in both 2020 and 2021 (to a lesser degree) citizens received payments from the government that undoubtedly cushioned any economic blows. But those payments are unlikely to recur, in part because inflation will make it more difficult for the government to provide them. Finally, as people have changed jobs, shifted their work hours or moved to a more online set of work habits, they are also a bit more likely to have encountered trouble. Suggesting the exact mixture of blame is beyond our scope, but the trend is now moving in a more worrisome direction.

Given the economic situation, can people rely on their savings? If so, which people? Those at the bottom of the income scale are most likely to be able to go less than a month (55% of those making less than $30,000 responded this way). And half of those at the top of the income scale could go for more than six months. But outside of these patterns, there is not much clarity. People have trouble saving at all income levels some of the time.

It is important to look beyond the obvious income differences, and education level offers additional insight. Americans with a high school diploma or less can go the shortest amount of time (but still 3 in 10 can go for six months or more). Those with college diplomas (or more) are most likely to say that they can go for a long period (though 1 in 5 can go less than a month). The lesson is that education is not a guarantee of anything. Some jobs lead to great security, others less so. Life choices after one's start in the world are very important for savings patterns.

RAINY DAY SAVINGS

If you were to lose your job, about how long would you be able to live off your savings without going into debt?

	LESS THAN A MONTH	1-3 MONTHS	3-6 MONTHS	6 MONTHS OR MORE
ALL	33%	20%	14%	33%
HIGH SCHOOL OR LESS	41%	19%	12%	29%
SOME COLLEGE	39%	21%	14%	26%
COLLEGE OR MORE	18%	21%	17%	44%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.)

NOTE: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

The public is facing rising levels of economic distress, and a very high fraction of the public is not particularly ready for those challenges. All of this comes at a moment when government debt is rising dramatically, making it less likely that help will come from that direction. This is, in our view, one of the more important findings from this year's American Family Survey.

— Chris Karpowitz and Jeremy C. Pope
Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy at BYU

SAVINGS IN CASE OF JOB LOSS

If you were to lose your job, about how long would you be able to live off your savings without going into debt?

INCOME	LESS THAN A MONTH	1-3 MONTHS	3-6 MONTHS	6 MONTHS OR MORE
$0-$30,000	55%	17%	9%	20%
$30,000-$50,000	35%	19%	16%	29%
$50,000-$80,000	27%	23%	15%	34%
$80,000-$100,000	17%	26%	20%	37%
>$100,000	12%	21%	17%	50%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.)

NOTE: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

In the past 12 months, did you do any of the following because there wasn't enough money? (See list of six economic challenges below.*)

	EXPERIENCED AN ECONOMIC CRISIS IN 2022
ALL	34%
WHITE	31%
BLACK	40%
HISPANIC	40%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.)

*ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

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?

The American Family Survey 2022 was conducted online to a matched sample on gender, race, age and education Aug. 8-15, 2022. The sample size is 3,000 and the overall margin of error is +/- 1.9 percentage points.

STUDENT LOAN FORGIVENESS

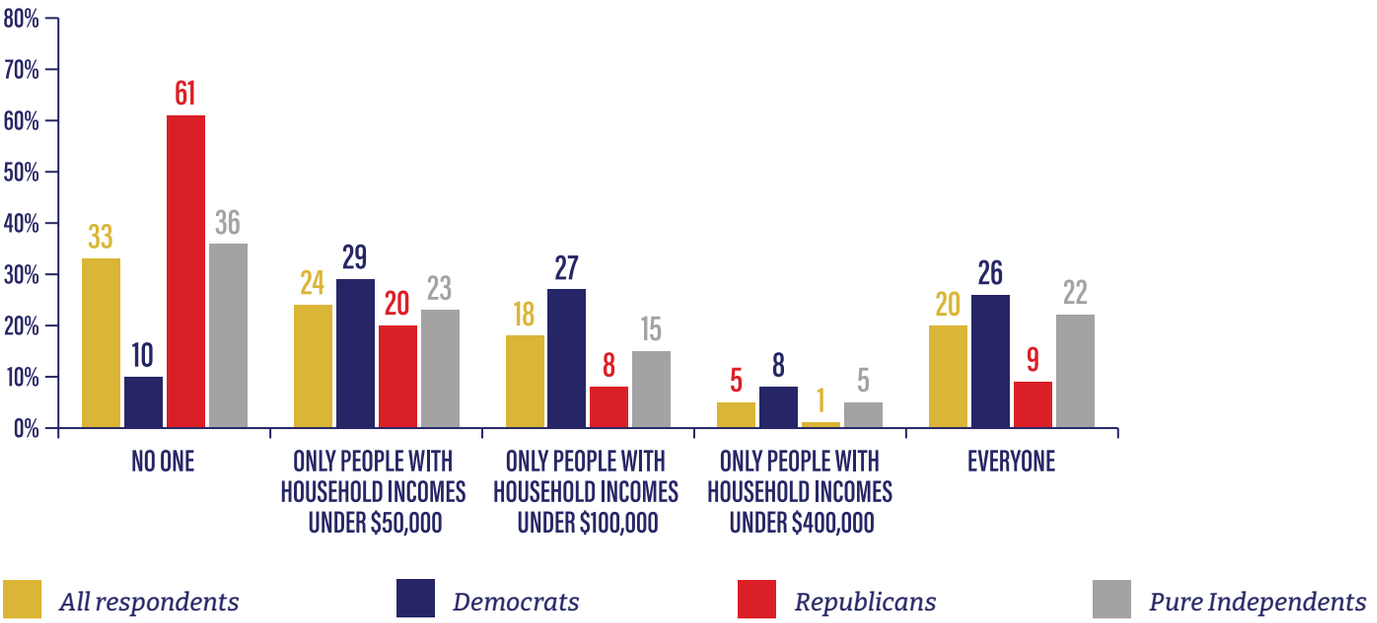
Some Americans favor student loan forgiveness, but only for those who really need it. **24%** favor it for people with incomes below **$50k**, while only **5%** favor it for people with incomes below **$400k.**

Young people especially say debt relief would help them.

25% say it would affect their family finances a lot.

WHO SHOULD GET LOAN FORGIVENESS?

What types of individuals, if any, should receive $10,000 in student loan debt forgiveness?



SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. Asked of all Americans.

Student loan debt forgiveness, like many public policy issues, is complicated. Popular in some ways, it can lose popularity quickly once the details are fully understood. When the American Family Survey asked all respondents whether or not forgiveness of debt up to $10,000 would affect their family's finances, 18% responded "a lot" and another 17% responded "a little" (the rest suggested it would not make a difference). As might be expected, support differs by age; young people are significantly more likely to say that student loan forgiveness would affect them. For those under 45, for example, one quarter of all respondents say that it would make a large difference for their family finances, and for those under 30, a majority say it would make at least a little difference.

A loan forgiveness policy can be popular under the right circumstances and even among a wider group than just the young. In fact, many Americans expressed a willingness to add to their own tax burden to pay for the policy. The average amount that most respondents would be willing to pay in extra taxes for each year is over $600, though they think that the wealthy should pay more—about three times more.

But it is important to note that about one-third of Americans oppose forgiveness of any sort, and support is highly sensitive to income thresholds for recipients. Only 20% of survey respondents favored loan forgiveness for everyone, regardless of recipient income, and a paltry 5% favored loan forgiveness if the income threshold was raised to $400,000. By contrast, about a quarter of respondents preferred that the income threshold for aid be set at $50,000.

Differing preferences are driven in large measure by the difference between Democrats and Republicans. Six in ten Republicans would not offer the aid at all, while nine in ten Democrats favored at least some form of loan forgiveness. Even among Democrats, though, support is notably lower at the highest income threshold.

Whatever the merits of the policy, there is a fairly clear public preference for the aid to be concentrated lower on the economic ladder. President Biden's proposal is for significantly more generous relief than this, and it should be noted that his proposal is much closer to his own party's preference, where a clear majority favors debt forgiveness up to a threshold of at least $100,000.

— Chris Karpowitz & Jeremy C. Pope
Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy at BYU

SUPPORTING TABLES

LOAN FORGIVENESS AND FAMILY FINANCES

How would $10,000 in student loan forgiveness would affect your family finances?

	18-29	30-44	45-54	55-64	65+
WOULD AFFECT A LOT	25%	25%	15%	15%	8%
WOULD AFFECT A LITTLE	27%	21%	15%	13%	9%
WOULD NOT AFFECT	48%	55%	70%	72%	83%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. Asked of all Americans.

HOW TO PAY FOR LOAN FORGIVENESS

Suppose Congress were to finance a student loan forgiveness policy with additional taxes. How much would you personally be willing to pay in extra taxes per year to finance a student loan forgiveness policy? How much do you think wealthy people making more than $400,000 should pay in extra taxes to finance a student loan forgiveness policy?

Response options for both questions: Any number between $0 and $5000. Figures are averages.

	PERSONALLY WILLING TO PAY	WEALTHY SHOULD PAY
ALL	$646	$1960
LIBERAL DEMOCRATS	$751	$2867
MODERATE DEMOCRATS	$914	$2345
INDEPENDENTS	$685	$1916
MODERATE REPUBLICANS	$615	$1656
CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICANS	$277	$723

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. Asked of all Americans.

The American Family Survey 2022 was conducted online to a matched sample on gender, race, age and education Aug. 8-15, 2022. The sample size is 3,000 and the overall margin of error is +/- 1.9 percentage points.

POLICY PRIORITIES

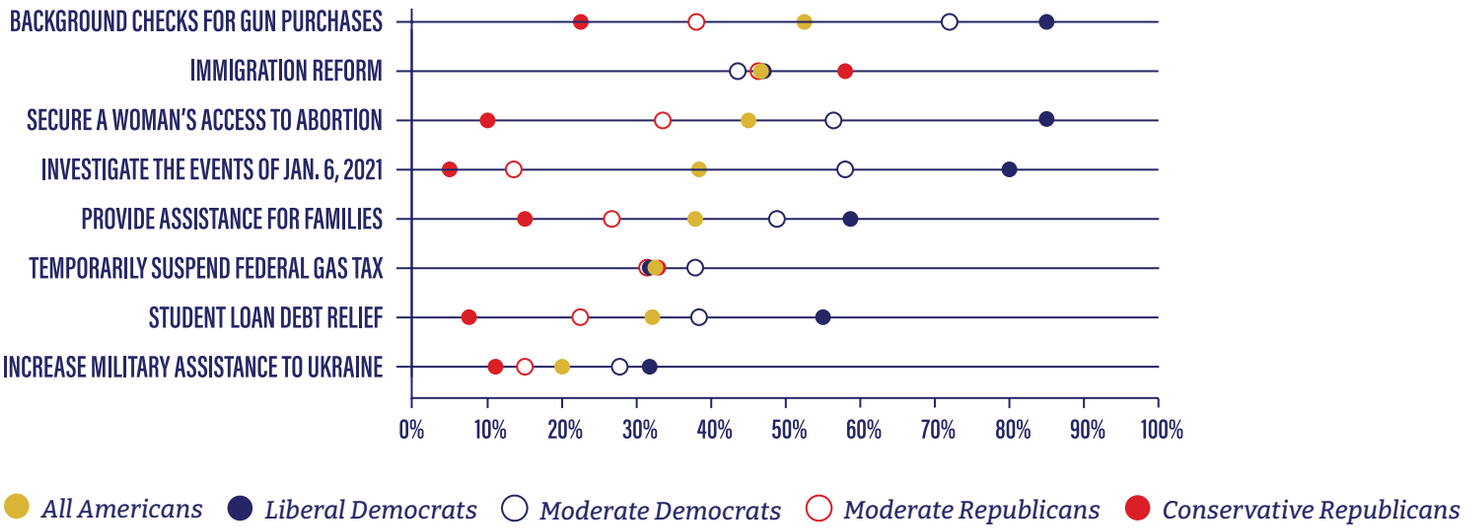
Moderate Americans are less divided than other members of their parties on priorities for the current Congress.

Background checks for gun purchases is the most popular of eight issues included in the survey.

53% of Americans say this should be very important for Congress.

PRIORITIES FOR CONGRESSIONAL ACTION

How important should the following issues be for Congress? Percent who say each policy is "very important." Response options: Very important, somewhat important, not important at all, don't know



SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022.(Asked of all Americans.)

Of a list of eight current policy issues, the only policy that a majority of Americans think should be "very" important to Congress' current agenda is the imposition of more background checks for gun purchases. Every other item receives less than majority support from the public as a whole. However, there is a major partisan difference that is revealing about how the parties approach policy matters.

Among Democrats, a majority of those who label themselves as liberal see multiple policy areas as "very important": not just guns, but also abortion, investigating the events of Jan. 6, 2021, providing assistance to families and student loan debt relief. Moderate Democrats are not quite as eager for congressional action, but their priorities are similar. A majority of moderate Democrats also see background checks, abortion and investigating Jan. 6 as very important. In contrast to liberals, there is no majority support among moderate Democrats for regarding additional assistance to families and student loan debt relief as "very important," though family assistance comes quite close. Broadly, Democrats see a very significant policy agenda for the future and much of it is related to families, either explicitly in the case of assistance labeled as "for families" or implicitly as in the case of abortion.

Republicans of both the moderate or conservative stripe are a study in disagreement. The only area where conservative Republicans want to see reform is immigration. Many Democrats want that too, of course,

but they are not likely to agree on the form and content of any proposed change. Republicans would broadly favor heavy restrictions (including walls and other barriers) and wish to see national action. The other areas of potential congressional activity simply do not rise to the level of national action for most Republicans.

A reasonable observer could draw the conclusion that the country is polarized and stop there, but that conclusion should be tempered by the fact that the middle of the partisan ideological spectrum offers opportunities for each of the parties to appeal to the other side — perhaps more so for Democrats who are interested in action, but the principle is the same for both parties.

Consider a few facts:

- Three out of ten moderate Republicans (who make up a little more than 8% of the public as a whole and more than 10% of those who claim a party label) want to see a bill to protect abortion access.
- Four out of ten moderate Republicans and slightly less than one-quarter of conservative Republicans want to see additional gun background checks.
- A quarter of moderate Republicans want to see additional support for families.

In other words, in a closely divided Congress, Democrats could solidify support for their policy priorities by reaching out to some Republicans. Not all Republicans will be receptive, but a substantial number might be, especially with respect to the issue of background checks. Democrats would have to make the sacrifice of clearly and unambiguously reaching out to the middle of the political spectrum — something that many Democrats are clearly reluctant to do — but the chance to make new policy is there in public opinion. A moderate bill on abortion could win over a large chunk of the public, including nearly one-third of moderate Republicans. But it would have to truly be a moderate bill, a fact that may sap support among the most liberal Democrats, who generally favor fewer limits on abortion.

Republicans have similar incentives. Just under half of all moderate Democrats want to see immigration reform. A proposal that would win their support would not necessarily be an incredibly restrictive regime, but Democrats want to see some change on this front.

The bottom line of this comparison of policy priorities shows both that the public wants some changes in specific areas and that there are members of each party who are willing to go along with reform. Whether the party leaders will work toward that is a different question entirely.

— Chris Karpowitz and Jeremy C. Pope
Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy at BYU

SUPPORTING TABLES

PRIORITIZING CONGRESSIONAL ACTION

Asked of all Americans.

	VIEW THE POLICY AS AT LEAST SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT FOR CONGRESS	VIEW THE POLICY AS VERY IMPORTANT FOR CONGRESS
IMMIGRATION REFORM	77%	46%
BACKGROUND CHECKS FOR PURCHASING GUNS	74%	53%
PROVIDE ASSISTANCE FOR FAMILIES	72%	38%
TEMPORARILY SUSPEND FEDERAL GAS TAX	64%	33%
STUDENT LOAN DEBT RELIEF	57%	32%
INVESTIGATING EVENTS OF JAN. 6, 2021	55%	39%
INCREASE MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO UKRAINE	52%	20%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022.

The American Family Survey 2022 was conducted online to a matched sample on gender, race, age and education Aug. 8-15, 2022. The sample size is 3,000 and the overall margin of error is +/- 1.9 percentage points.

IMMIGRATION & FAMILIES

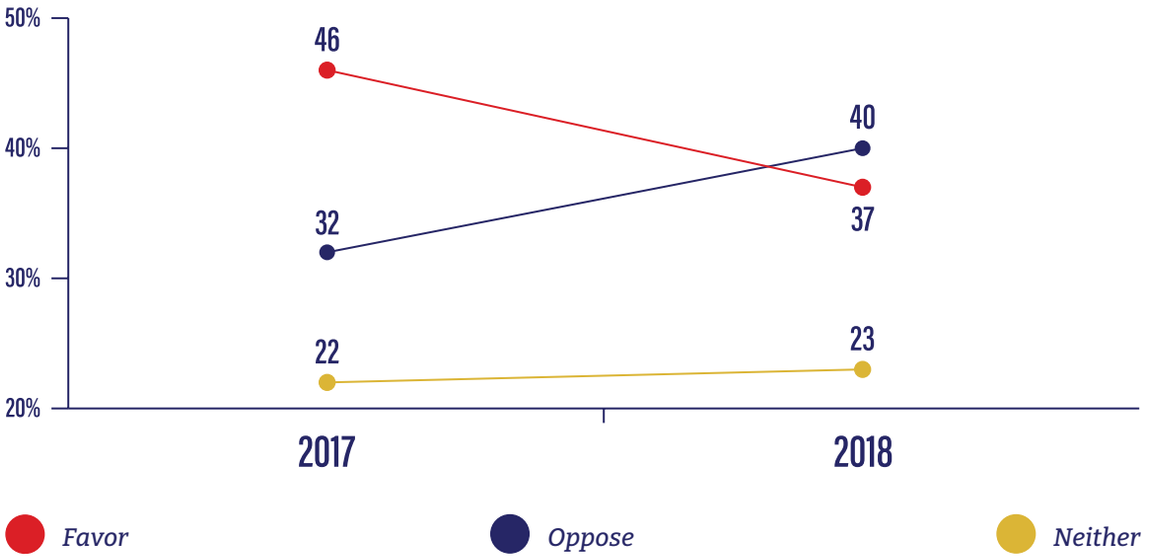
Support for separating families through deportation is down.

Only **37%** of Americans favor this, compared with 46% in 2017.

Support for automatic citizenship for children of unauthorized immigrants born in the U.S. is up **5 percentage points** from 2017.

SUPPORT SHRINKS FOR DEPORTATION THAT SEPARATES FAMILIES

Do you favor or oppose the following policy? Deporting unauthorized immigrants even when it separates family members. (Asked of all Americans.)



SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022.

Over the last five years, Americans have shifted in small but noticeable ways in how they view immigration policy, including deportations. In 2017, the last time the American Family Survey asked the above question, a 46% plurality of respondents favored deporting unauthorized immigrants even if it resulted in separating family members. By 2022, support for a deportation policy that involved separating families declined, while opposition increased. Though the difference is not large, now 40% of Americans oppose this policy, while 37% favor it. The proportion of undecideds did not change.

Unsurprisingly, political ideology is the most important factor shaping Americans' views about immigration policy. The vast majority of liberal Democrats oppose the policy, and the vast majority of conservative Republicans support it. And although moderates are less polarized than liberals and conservatives, there is still a very clear difference between moderate Democrats (23% of whom favor the policy) and moderate Republicans (59% of whom favor the policy). Though there may be room for compromise among these groups, deportation is still a tool most Republicans countenance and most Democrats dislike.

The survey also asked respondents about a policy to grant automatic citizenship to children of unauthorized immigrants if those children were born in the U.S. Support for this policy has grown some since 2017, with 49% of all Americans supporting the policy in 2022, up from 44% in 2017. Again, political ideology provides the clearest divide. But here the divide is smaller. Fully 39% of moderate Republicans favor this citizenship policy, while 63% of moderate Democrats favor it. Though it remains deeply unpopular among conservative Republicans, these results show where the fissures and cracks are inside the party coalitions.

Immigration remains a controversial policy area, but public opinion overall seems to have shifted slightly in favor of allowing unauthorized immigrants to stay in the U.S. to avoid separating family members. And support for granting automatic citizenship to those born within the United States, even if the parents are not citizens, has also grown slightly in the last five years.

— Rudy Spencer, Chris Karpowitz and Jeremy C. Pope
Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy at BYU

SUPPORTING TABLES

DEPORTING UNAUTHORIZED IMMIGRANTS EVEN WHEN IT SEPARATES FAMILY MEMBERS

Asked of all Americans.

	LIBERAL DEMOCRATS	MODERATE DEMOCRATS	MODERATE REPUBLICANS	CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICANS
FAVOR	10%	23%	59%	75%
OPPOSE	76%	46%	19%	11%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022.

CITIZENSHIP FOR CHILDREN OF UNAUTHORIZED IMMIGRANTS BORN IN THE U.S.

Asked of all Americans.

	2017	2022
FAVOR	44%	49%
OPPOSE	37%	31%
NEITHER FAVOR NOR OPPOSE	19%	20%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022.

AUTOMATIC CITIZENSHIP FOR CHILDREN OF UNAUTHORIZED IMMIGRANTS BORN IN THE U.S.

Asked of all Americans.

	LIBERAL DEMOCRATS	MODERATE DEMOCRATS	MODERATE REPUBLICANS	CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICANS
FAVOR	81%	63%	39%	19%
OPPOSE	6%	13%	44%	67%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022.

DEPORTING UNAUTHORIZED IMMIGRANTS

Asked of all Americans.

	2017	2022
STRONGLY FAVOR	26%	24%
SOMEWHAT FAVOR	20%	13%
NEITHER FAVOR OR OPPOSE	22%	23%
SOMEWHAT OPPOSE	17%	15%
STRONGLY OPPOSE	15%	25%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022.

SOURCE: The American Family Survey 2022 was conducted online to a matched sample on gender, race age and education Aug. 8-15, 2022. the sample size is 3,000 and the overall margin of error is +/- 1.9 percentage points.

SUPPORTING FAMILIES THROUGH POLICY

Support for spending money on programs and institutions is up from 29% in 2021 to 40% in 2022, while support for giving money directly to families is down from 47% to 43%.

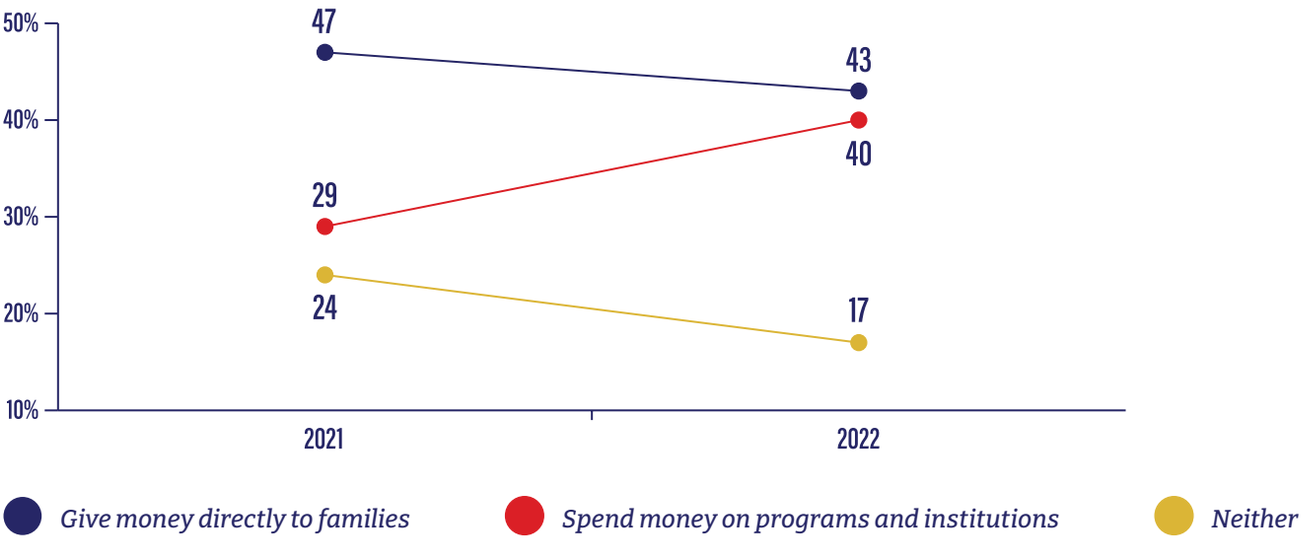
Most people who received direct payments for families with children in 2021 said the payments helped, but only

34%

of Americans say the government should resume payments.

WHAT SHOULD GOVERNMENT DO TO SUPPORT FAMILIES?

Choose one of the following: Would you rather the government ... help families by giving money directly to the parents (e.g. tax breaks, child allowances, etc.); or ... help families by spending money on programs and institutions (e.g. child care, schools, etc.)?



SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.)

NOTE: If respondents answered "both," they were asked to indicate which option they would prefer if they had to choose. Percentages combine those who initially chose each option and those who chose it after being prompted.

While most Americans still agree that the government should help families, their attitudes about how the government should do so — whether giving money directly to families or paying for programs and institutions — have shifted substantially within the last year.

In 2021, nearly half of Americans favored direct payments to families, while about 3 in 10 preferred spending money on institutions and a quarter didn't approve of either option. Though giving money directly to families remained the most popular option in 2022, the difference in support for direct payments and spending on programs shrank from 18% to 3%, and fewer respondents selected the "neither" option in 2022.

The policy context over the past year may have influenced opinions on this topic. In late 2021, after last year's survey was fielded, the federal government sent direct monthly payments to families with children. Previous child tax credit payments were only available as a lump yearly sum — and the 2021 benefits were also more generous.

When asked directly about the possibility, only about a third of Americans favor returning to making direct monthly payments, but it is clear that the payments were effective for helping low- and middle-income Americans last year. Almost half of low-income respondents who received the payments said the direct monthly payments helped their family finances a lot, while over three-quarters said the payments helped at least a little bit.

Though middle-income households did not receive as much benefit from the payments, nearly three-quarters still indicated that the direct payments helped them to some degree. For those making more than $80K a year, the payments were less effective; only 20% said that the payments helped them a lot, and less than half indicated that the payments helped at all.

IMPACT OF ADVANCE CHILD TAX CREDIT PAYMENTS ON FAMILIES

Last year, the government sent direct payments of $300 each month to families with children in an effort to support families. How did these payments affect your family finances? Percent saying payments helped their family finances.

	ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME		
	LESS THAN $40K	$40K-80K	MORE THAN $80K
"HELPED A LOT"	45%	37%	20%
"HELPED A LOT" OR "HELPED AT LEAST A LITTLE"	77%	72%	44%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of people who received payments.)

Though spending on institutions and programs is growing in popularity, poorer Americans prefer direct payments, while programs and institutions are more popular among the wealthy — a pattern constant across both years. White Americans are the least supportive of direct payments, with Black and Hispanic Americans being more likely to favor them, though the differences are not overwhelming. Finally, Democrats, particularly liberal ones, are most in favor of spending on programs and institutions — 57% favor that, the only clear majority across partisan ideological groups. By contrast, only 26% of conservative Republicans favor spending on programs and institutions, while 38% prefer direct payments to families.

It is impossible to be sure why attitudes are shifting on this question. Political scientists often note that policy opinions sometimes change against the party in power, perhaps as the public focuses on the shortcomings of the attitudes of the party more likely to set policy. But these results go against that — Democrats control both the presidency and Congress and these policy preferences seem to be drifting in their direction. That makes this result particularly interesting and something that bears watching in future years. Perhaps the direct monthly payment of the child tax credit served its purpose; it helped those who needed it during a challenging economic time. Now that the payments have ended, Americans seem to have gained a bit of confidence in letting government spend money on programs and institutions.

— Chris Karpowitz, Jeremy C. Pope and Spencer Rudy
Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy at BYU

SUPPORT FOR DIRECT PAYMENTS

Last year, the government sent direct payments of $300 each month to families with children in an effort to support families. Should the government go back to making monthly child tax payments or not?

YES	34%
NO	41%
DON'T KNOW	25%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.)

HOW SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT HELP FAMILIES?

Choose one of the following: Would you rather the government ... help families by giving money directly to the parents (e.g. tax breaks, child allowances, etc.); or ... help families by spending money on programs and institutions (e.g. child care, schools, etc.)?

	ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME					
	LESS THAN $40K		$40K-80K		MORE THAN $80K	
	2021	2022	2021	2022	2021	2022
GIVE MONEY DIRECTLY TO FAMILIES	57%	48%	45%	43%	40%	38%
SPEND MONEY ON PROGRAMS AND INSTITUTIONS	23%	39%	30%	39%	34%	43%
NEITHER	20%	13%	25%	18%	26%	19%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.)

HOW SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT HELP FAMILIES?

Choose one of the following: Would you rather the government ... help families by giving money directly to the parents (e.g. tax breaks, child allowances, etc.); or ... help families by spending money on programs and institutions (e.g. child care, schools, etc.)?

	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC
GIVE MONEY DIRECTLY TO FAMILIES	40%	50%	46%
SPEND MONEY ON PROGRAMS AND INSTITUTIONS	40%	39%	42%
NEITHER	20%	11%	12%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.)

IMPACT OF PAYMENTS ON FAMILIES

Last year, the government sent direct payments of $300 each month to families with children in an effort to support families. How did these payments affect your family finances?

	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC
HELPED A LOT	31%	35%	44%
HELPED A LITTLE	37%	35%	32%
DIDN'T MAKE MUCH DIFFERENCE	32%	30%	24%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.)

HOW SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT HELP FAMILIES?

Choose one of the following: Would you rather the government ... help families by giving money directly to the parents (e.g. tax breaks, child allowances, etc.); or ... help families by spending money on programs and institutions (e.g. child care, schools, etc.)?

	LIBERAL DEMOCRATS	MODERATE DEMOCRATS	MODERATE REPUBLICANS	CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICANS
GIVE MONEY DIRECTLY TO FAMILIES	41%	47%	40%	38%
SPEND MONEY ON PROGRAMS AND INSTITUTIONS	57%	46%	43%	26%
NEITHER	2%	7%	17%	35%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.)

NOTE: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

SOURCE: The American Family Survey 2022 was conducted online to a matched sample on gender, race, age and education Aug. 8-15, 2022. The sample size is 3,000 and the overall margin of error is +/- 1.9 percentage points.

ABORTION POLICY

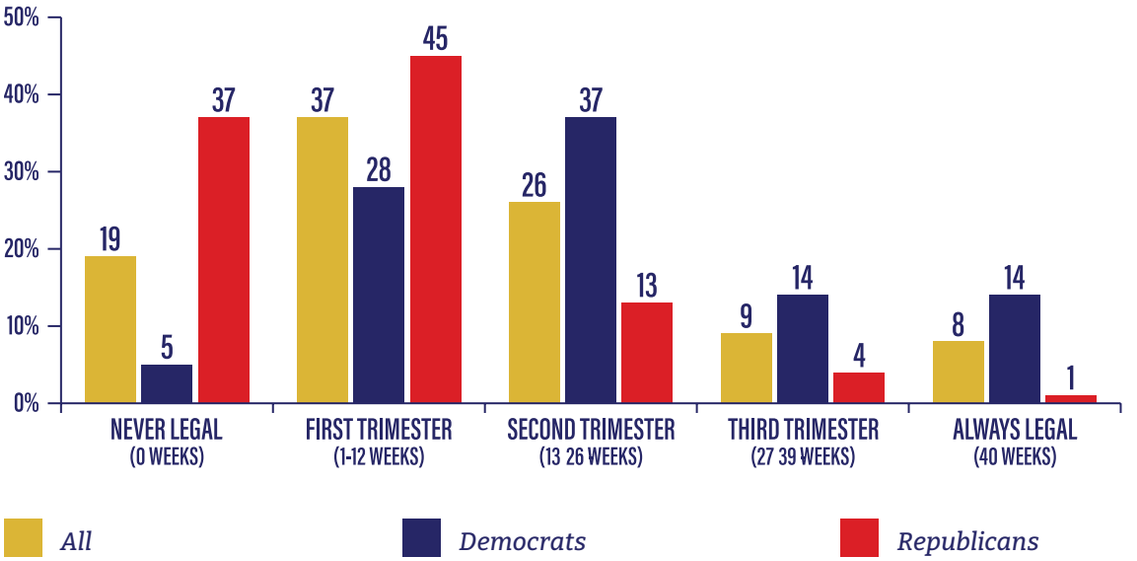
Americans' views on abortion are nuanced. Only about **7%** consistently favor no access to abortion, and another **7%** consistently favor complete access.

Americans are divided on whether they prefer abortion policy be decided at the national or state level.

56% say there should be a single national policy on abortions that is consistent across the states.

FEW FAVOR COMPLETE BANS OR COMPLETE ACCESS TO ABORTION

Until what point in a pregnancy do you think a woman should be legally allowed to obtain an abortion? (Respondents moved a slider from 0 to 40 weeks.)



SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.)

NOTE: Numbers might not add up to 100% due to rounding.

The 2022 American Family Survey asked respondents their opinions about abortion in a novel way — by indicating the number of weeks between zero and 40 that a woman should be legally allowed to obtain an abortion. Responses to this question open new insights into the complexity of abortion attitudes in the United States. Comparatively fewer Americans prefer a complete ban on abortion (about 1 in 5 said zero weeks, meaning it should never be legal) or complete access to abortion at every stage of pregnancy (about 1 in 10 indicated 40 weeks, meaning that it should always be legal). The most common answer was somewhere in the first trimester, an option that was supported by just over one-third of Americans. This approach to abortion policy produces slightly different results than a question about whether abortion should be legal or illegal in all or most cases. We find that about 60% of Americans favor abortion being legal in all (31%) or most (29%) cases, compared to 40% who favor it remaining illegal in all (10%) or most (29%) cases. These results are nearly identical to findings from a Pew Research Center survey fielded in the summer of 2022, and they reflect a higher percentage of Americans who favor abortion being legal in "all cases" (31%), compared to abortion being legal through through the entire 40 weeks

of a pregnancy (8%).

What should we make of this difference? One possible interpretation of the discrepancy between responses to the two questions is that Americans distinguish between the *timing* of abortion as an option, which is the focus of the first question, and the different "cases" or *situations* when abortion might be legal, which is the focus of the second question. This distinction becomes clearer when responses to the two questions are analyzed together. For example, among those who believe abortion should be legal in all cases, the average respondent favors abortion being legal up to about 24 weeks — or in other words, toward the end of the second trimester. By contrast, even among those who think abortion should be illegal in all "cases" the average number of weeks is nearly five, with about one-third of respondents giving a weekly limit other than zero. Similarly, among those who favor a limit of zero weeks, more than half (56%) say they want abortion to be illegal in most cases, and about 7% say it should be legal in all or most cases.

AMERICANS' NUANCED VIEWS ON ABORTION

Until what point in a pregnancy do you think a woman should be legally allowed to obtain an abortion? (Respondents moved a slider from zero to 40 weeks.)

	AVERAGE NUMBER OF WEEKS UNTIL WHICH ABORTION SHOULD BE ALLOWED
ALL	14
AMONG THOSE WHO SAY ABORTION SHOULD BE ...	
LEGAL IN ALL CASES	24
LEGAL IN MOST CASES	16
ILLEGAL IN MOST CASES	6
ILLEGAL IN ALL CASES	5
AMONG THOSE WHO PREFER ...	
A SINGLE NATIONAL POLICY	18
ALLOWING STATES TO DEVELOP POLICIES	10

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.)

It is not hard to find commentators who will note that Americans' opinions on abortion are nuanced, though it is rarely demonstrated so clearly. Even those who want abortion to be available across many different contexts do not necessarily believe that it should be allowed in the third trimester, and those who favor restrictions on timing also make exceptions for different contexts or situations when they believe abortion should be a possibility. For this reason, maximalist activists and politicians — who cling to either end of the policy spectrum — are likely to find many Americans who disagree with them. Very few Americans (a little less than 7%) consistently favor no access to abortion whatsoever. A similar number (about 7%) consistently favor abortions in all situations up to 40 weeks. The remaining 86% of Americans are somewhere in between those extremes.

The partisan camps better reflect extremes, though not as perfectly as some might imagine. When Democrats are asked about the number of weeks until which abortion should be legal, a plurality (37%) choose a point during the second trimester (between 13-26 weeks), though many Democrats favor limits in the first trimester (28%) or the third trimester, including the last week of pregnancy (28%). Among Republicans, by contrast, a plurality choose a limit in the first trimester (45%), with 37% of Republicans believing that abortion should be illegal at zero weeks of a woman's pregnancy. At the same time, about 13% of Republicans favor a second trimester limit, and only 5% favor a limit beyond the second trimester.

We also asked respondents to tell us their opinions about what level of government should make abortion policy, regardless of their feelings on the substance of the issue.

A slight majority of Americans (about 56%) prefer a single national policy. While closely divided, the public tends to disagree with the Supreme Court's recent decision to return this issue to the states, but partisan and ideological commitments matter for these opinions. About 8 in 10 liberal Democrats prefer a single national policy, while 7 in 10 conservative Republicans want policy to be made at the state level. Opinion among moderates is less starkly polarized, with two-thirds of moderate Democrats preferring a single national policy. Moderate Republicans are more evenly divided, with 55% preferring state-level policymaking and 45% preferring a single national policy.

ABORTION AND FEDERALISM

Regardless of whether you favor or oppose abortion, which of the following do you prefer?

	A SINGLE NATIONAL POLICY ON ABORTIONS THAT IS CONSISTENT ACROSS THE STATES	ALLOW VARIATION IN ABORTION POLICY, WITH EACH STATE DEVELOPING ITS OWN POLICY
ALL	56%	43%
LIBERAL DEMOCRATS	83%	17%
MODERATE DEMOCRATS	66%	34%
MODERATE REPUBLICANS	45%	55%
CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICANS	31%	69%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.)

When we examine these findings in light of opinions on the legality of abortion, we find that Americans who favor legal abortion in most or all cases tend to prefer a single national policy, while those who prefer that abortion remain illegal in most circumstances favor state-based policymaking. Among those who want abortion to be illegal in all cases, for example, more than 4 in 10 prefer a single national policy. Presumably, this group would like to see a national abortion ban. This is, however, a very small group — only about 4% of Americans fit this category, and if we further limit it to those who also want to limit abortions to zero weeks, only about 2% of Americans remain.

Similarly, we also asked whether states that adopt more strict abortion policies should be able to prohibit residents from purchasing abortion pills from out of state. Predictably, very few Americans who want abortion to be legal in all or most cases favor banning abortion pills (10% and 14%, respectively). Among those Americans who prefer abortion to be illegal in most cases, though, only 37% express affirmative support for banning abortion pills, with the rest roughly evenly split between responding no or don't know. And even if we focus on those who say abortion should be illegal in all cases, only about half also favor banning abortion pills. Again, this turns out to be a very small percentage of all Americans — only about 6%.

Understanding the nuance in Americans' abortion beliefs, including the variety of possibilities for facilitating or denying access to abortion, is likely to be ever more important both in the upcoming congressional elections and as more states introduce and debate abortion-related regulations. Often, media reports focus on the extremes of this debate — either total prohibition or access through the final days of pregnancy. But both of those positions are unpopular, as the new questions we have introduced make clear. Those who generally favor abortion access also see a role for regulatory limitations, and those who want to reduce abortion access also embrace a variety of possible exceptions. Even those who appear extreme in some survey questions turn out to be less so when we ask about different elements of abortion policy. Greater effort to both understand and communicate the complexity of Americans' abortion beliefs could bear fruit for politicians seeking a new equilibrium on these issues. Candidates and elected officials who move solely to the extremes will miss opportunities to find a new policy that reflects the nuance and complexity the vast majority of Americans clearly embrace.

— Chris Karpowitz and Jeremy C. Pope
Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy at BYU

LEGALITY OF ABORTION

Do you think abortion should be ...

	LEGAL IN ALL CASES	LEGAL IN MOST CASES	ILLEGAL IN MOST CASES	ILLEGAL IN ALL CASES
ALL	31%	29%	29%	10%
LIBERAL DEMOCRATS	62%	32%	4%	2%
MODERATE DEMOCRATS	33%	41%	20%	6%
MODERATE REPUBLICANS	19%	32%	44%	5%
CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICANS	5%	16%	57%	21%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.)

NOTE: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

PREFERENCE FOR NATIONAL OR STATE DECISION-MAKING

Regardless of whether you favor or oppose abortion, which of the following do you prefer?

	A SINGLE NATIONAL POLICY ON ABORTIONS THAT IS CONSISTENT ACROSS THE STATES	ALLOW VARIATION IN ABORTION POLICY, WITH EACH STATE DEVELOPING ITS OWN POLICY
AMONG THOSE WHO SAY ABORTION SHOULD BE ...		
LEGAL IN ALL CASES	83%	17%
LEGAL IN MOST CASES	59%	41%
ILLEGAL IN MOST CASES	31%	69%
ILLEGAL IN ALL CASES	43%	57%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.)

ABORTION PILLS FROM OUT OF STATE

One method of abortion in the first 11 weeks of pregnancy is medication abortion, or the abortion pill. This pill can be ordered online and taken at home without an in-person visit to the doctor. Should states that limit or ban abortions in the first 11 weeks also be able to prohibit residents from purchasing abortion pills from out of state?

	YES, STATES SHOULD BE ABLE TO PROHIBIT OUT-OF-STATE ABORTION PILLS
ALL	24%
AMONG THOSE WHO SAY ABORTION SHOULD BE ...	
LEGAL IN ALL CASES	10%
LEGAL IN MOST CASES	14%
ILLEGAL IN MOST CASES	37%
ILLEGAL IN ALL CASES	57%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.)

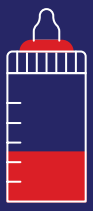
SOURCE: The American Family Survey 2022 was conducted online to a matched sample on gender, race age and education Aug. 8-15, 2022. the sample size is 3,000 and the overall margin of error is +/- 1.9 percentage points.

UNEXPECTED PREGNANCIES

Most women under 50 say if they had an unexpected pregnancy and kept the child, it would benefit their relationship. But,

61%

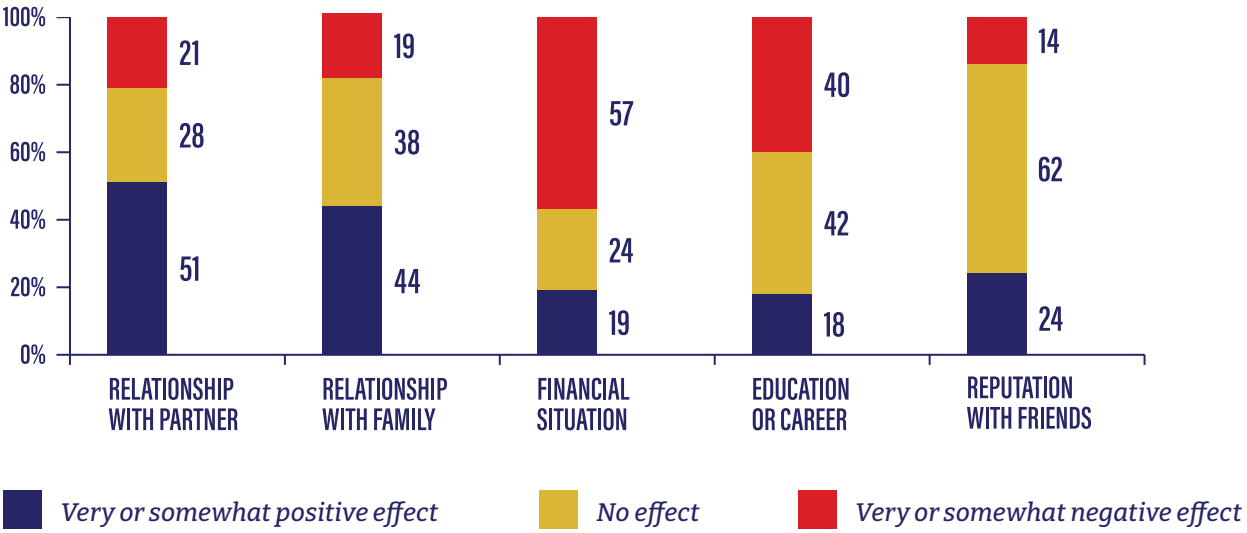
say it would hurt their financial situation.



These women are more likely to say their family would support them having a child unexpectedly than having an abortion. **Thirty-one** percent say they would have no emotional support for an abortion, compared to **18%** for having a child.

IMPACT OF AN UNEXPECTED PREGNANCY

If (you/your partner) were to have an unexpected pregnancy and keep the child, how do you think this pregnancy would affect your ...



SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. Asked of all women under 50. Asked of all men under 50 in a relationship.

NOTE: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

In light of the Supreme Court's recent abortion decision, the question of how Americans react to unexpected pregnancies takes on increasing importance. We asked all women under 50 years old and all men under 50 in a relationship to report their expectations for how an unexpected pregnancy in which they keep the child would affect their relationships, financial situations, and education or career plans. A majority of respondents say that an unexpected pregnancy would have a very or somewhat positive effect on their relationships with their partners, and a plurality say it would improve relationships with their family members more generally, though women express more concern than men about a potentially negative effect on their relationships with their partners and families. By contrast, over 6 in 10 respondents judge that an unexpected pregnancy would have no effect on friendships, and this is true for both women and men.

Expectations about the effects of unexpected pregnancy are dramatically less rosy for judgments about finances, education and career. A majority of respondents (56%) believe that an unexpected pregnancy would somewhat or very negatively affect their financial situation. Women

report substantially more negative financial expectations than men: Over 60% of women believe an unexpected pregnancy would harm their financial situation, compared to just under half (45%) of men. Similarly, about 45% of women believe an unexpected pregnancy would harm their career or educational prospects, compared with only 27% of men. Men are also somewhat more likely than women to say that having an unexpected pregnancy and keeping the baby would positively affect their financial situation, educational or career plans, and their reputation with their friends. Clearly, the economic burdens and the potential benefits of unexpected pregnancy do not fall equally on fathers and mothers.

We also asked women to tell us about the level of family support they might expect in case of an unexpected pregnancy. At random, half of women under 50 in the sample were asked about a situation in which they had an unexpected pregnancy and chose to have an abortion, while the other half were asked about an unexpected pregnancy in which they chose to have the baby.

Randomization is important because on average, we can expect the women in both groups to be roughly similar. In other words, any differences we find can be traced to the difference in expectations about the two situations, not to other features of the two groups.

Just under half of women believe they would have "a lot of help" with either an abortion or a new baby. The biggest differences across the scenarios involve whether women believe they would receive "a little help" or "no help at all," with more women expecting no help at all in the case of choosing abortion than choosing to keep the child. Nearly half of women who received the abortion question say they would receive no financial help from family to pay for an abortion. In contrast, just over one-quarter of women who were asked about having the child said they would receive no financial help. This may be, of course, because the financial obligations of having a child are likely much greater and tend to last longer. Nonetheless, many women expect that the decision to have an abortion means taking on that cost by themselves.

WOMEN'S EXPECTATIONS FOR HELP

If you were to have an unexpected pregnancy and chose to have an abortion, how much help do you think your family would provide in terms of help with arrangements, like a ride or child care; help paying for the abortion; emotional support? If you were to have an unexpected pregnancy and chose to have the child, how much help do you think your family would provide in terms of help with arrangements, such as child care; financial help; emotional support?*

	A LOT OF HELP	A LITTLE HELP	NO HELP
HELP WITH ARRANGEMENTS			
HAVE ABORTION	45%	21%	34%
HAVE CHILD	44%	32%	24%
FINANCIAL HELP			
HAVE ABORTION	33%	19%	48%
HAVE CHILD	36%	36%	27%
EMOTIONAL SUPPORT			
HAVE ABORTION	50%	19%	31%
HAVE CHILD	54%	28%	18%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all women under 50.)

*NOTE: Respondents were assigned to answer one of the two questions. Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

But the difference in expected support is not merely about money. Though at least half of women expect a great deal of emotional support from family members in both scenarios, close to one-third of women who received the abortion question say they would receive no emotional support at all, compared to less than one-fifth of women

who received the question about having a child. These patterns do not vary by race, but less-educated women, lower-income women, more conservative women and more religious women are more likely to expect no emotional support from their family members in the case of abortion.

We also found differences by income and education among women asked about a scenario in which they have the baby. Again, respondents with less education and lower incomes expect less emotional support, though not as little as in the abortion scenario. In addition, conservative Republican women and women for whom religion is very important expect a great deal of emotional support when choosing to keep the baby. For example, 46% of conservative Republicans expect no emotional support for a decision to abort; only 5% of conservative Republicans expect no support for having the baby. Similarly, 37% of women for whom religion is very important expect no emotional support from family in case of abortion, compared to 14% in the case of having the child. These differences are consistent with the moral commitments of those groups, many of which have taken strong stands about the meaning and implications of abortion. Nonetheless, disparities in levels of expected emotional support can also reinforce those moral positions. For this reason, it is striking, too, that within the "keep the baby" scenario, the women who expect the lowest levels of emotional support are liberal Democrats and women for whom religion is not important at all.

Overall, these results highlight the complex set of considerations women may face when dealing with an unexpected pregnancy. Though both men and women see such pregnancies as potentially positive influences on their relationships, women also expect significant financial challenges. In making choices about whether to seek an abortion or keep the baby, many women expect support from family members, but some women believe they will be left to face these choices on their own with very little family support at all.

– Chris Karpowitz, Jeremy Pope and Natalie Bria
Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy at BYU

SUPPORTING TABLES

IMPACT OF AN UNEXPECTED PREGNANCY

If (you/your partner) were to have an unexpected pregnancy and keep the child, how do you think this pregnancy would affect your ... (Asked of all women under 50. Asked of all men under 50 in a relationship.)

	RELATIONSHIP WITH PARTNER		RELATIONSHIP WITH FAMILY		FINANCIAL SITUATION		EDUCATION OR CAREER		REPUTATION WITH FRIENDS	
	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN
POSITIVE EFFECT	51%	51%	43%	47%	17%	24%	15%	25%	22%	31%
NO EFFECT	25%	32%	36%	40%	22%	30%	40%	48%	64%	58%
NEGATIVE EFFECT	24%	18%	21%	13%	61%	46%	45%	27%	14%	11%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022.

*NOTE: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

EXPECTATIONS FOR FAMILY EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

If you were to have an unexpected pregnancy and chose to have an abortion, how much help do you think your family would provide in terms of help with arrangements, like a ride or child care; help paying for the abortion; emotional support? If you were to have an unexpected pregnancy and chose to have the child, how much help do you think your family would provide in terms of help with arrangements, such as child care; financial help; emotional support?*

	NO EMOTIONAL SUPPORT FOR HAVING THE CHILD	NO EMOTIONAL SUPPORT FOR HAVING AN ABORTION
WHITE	13%	31%
BLACK	21%	27%
HISPANIC	27%	28%
HIGH SCHOOL OR LESS	26%	36%
SOME COLLEGE	18%	32%
COLLEGE GRADUATE +	12%	24%
LOW INCOME (<$40K)	24%	35%
MID INCOME ($40-80K)	17%	27%
HIGH INCOME ($80K+)	6%	24%
LIBERAL DEMOCRATS	20%	17%
MODERATE DEMOCRATS	6%	24%
MODERATE REPUBLICANS	5%	33%
CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICANS	5%	46%
RELIGION VERY IMPORTANT	14%	37%
RELIGION SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	15%	24%
RELIGION NOT TOO IMPORTANT	14%	31%
RELIGION NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL	27%	28%

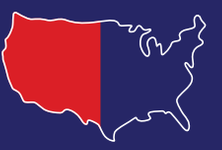
SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all women under 50.)

*NOTE: Respondents were assigned to answer one of the two questions.

SOURCE: The American Family Survey 2022 was conducted online to a matched sample on gender, race, age and education Aug. 8-15, 2022. The sample size is 3,000 and the overall margin of error is +/- 1.9 percentage points.

SCHOOLS & GENDER IDENTITY

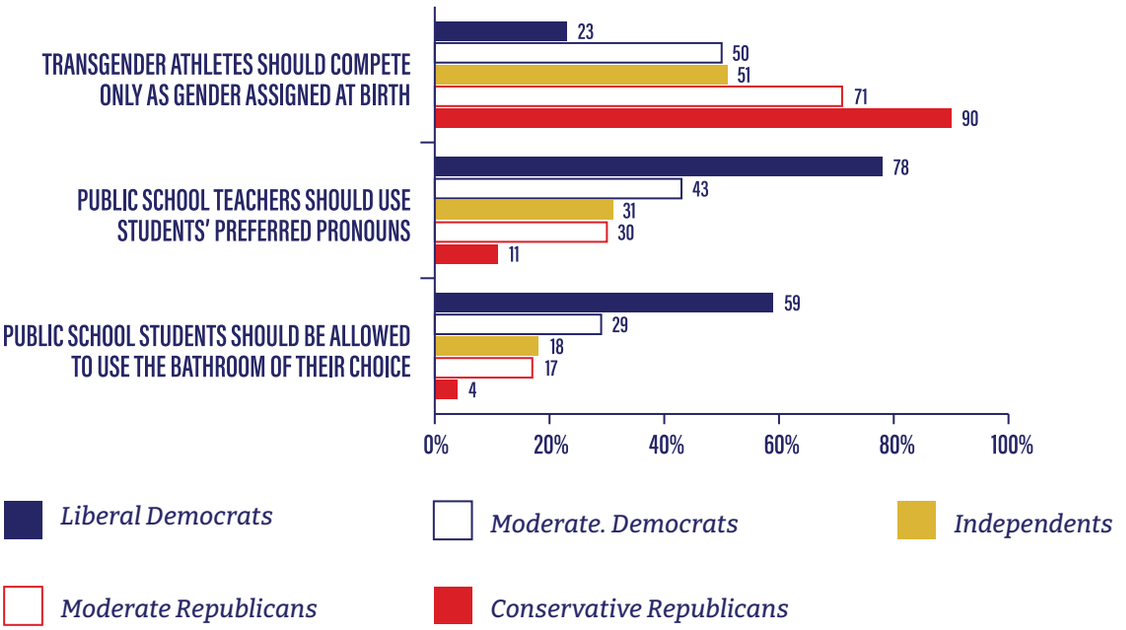
26% of Americans say students should be able to use the bathroom of their choice.



Seventy-nine percent of liberal Democrats say teachers should use students' preferred pronouns, compared to **11%** of conservative Republicans.

SUPPORT FOR TRANSGENDER STUDENTS VARIES BY POLITICAL IDENTITY

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.)

When asked about how schools should handle various issues related to gender identity, public support for accommodating transgender students in public schools tends to be low. For example, a majority of Americans express support for the idea that transgender athletes should be restricted to participating only as the gender they were assigned at birth. Similarly, half of Americans actively disagree with allowing public school students to use the bathroom of their choice, though this question did not specifically reference transgender young people. Only 20 percent oppose restricting transgender students' participation in sports, and about one-quarter of respondents embrace student choice about bathroom use.

Comparatively more Americans seem open to accommodating student preferences about pronouns: about 4 in 10 survey respondents embrace the idea that teachers should address students by their preferred pronouns, with just over one-third opposing. Across all three questions, about one-quarter of respondents said they neither agree nor disagree with accommodating transgender preferences, suggesting that many Americans may be uncertain, ambivalent, or otherwise unwilling to take a side. The large number of respondents

choosing the midpoint may also indicate opinions that are in flux, which is a reason to continue to track public beliefs about these issues over time.

Opinions about transgender issues vary by age and partisanship. Differences by race, gender, and education tend to be somewhat smaller, though women, people of color, and college graduates express less opposition to transgender athletes taking part in high school sports. At the same time, young people differ sharply from the oldest Americans, but even among the youngest cohort, support for transgender students reaches a majority only for the idea of teachers using students' preferred pronouns.

Partisan and ideological differences remain wide. As the table below highlights, liberal Democrats sometimes differ from conservative Republicans by more than 60 percentage points. Only liberal Democrats express majority support for preferred pronouns and bathroom choice. Less than a quarter of liberal Democrats support the notion that transgender athletes should be restricted to competing as the gender assigned at birth, though about one-third choose the midpoint of the scale. Thus, even among this group, less than a majority oppose sex-based restrictions. In addition, support for transgender students falls off dramatically among moderate Democrats, who are much closer to independents than to liberal Democrats.

Even when we removed the school context and asked only about parents' ability to promote gender-affirming medical care for their children, we found relatively low levels of support for transgender issues. We asked the question in two ways: at random, half of respondents received a question about parents being barred from obtaining gender-affirming care for their children and half were asked about parents being permitted by law to obtain such care. Regardless of which way we ask the question, support for gender-affirming care never receives majority support among Americans generally. Liberal Democrats support it, but they are offset by intense opposition among conservative Republicans. This is an area where the cultural divide is a chasm.

Even when we removed the school context and asked only about parents' ability to promote gender-affirming medical care for their children, we found relatively low levels of support for transgender issues. We asked the question in two ways: at random, half of respondents received a question about parents being barred from obtaining gender-affirming care for their children and half were asked about parents being permitted by law to obtain such care. Regardless of which way we ask the question, support for gender-affirming care never receives majority support among Americans generally. Liberal Democrats support it, but they are offset by intense opposition among conservative Republicans. This is an area where the cultural divide is a chasm.

ONE QUARTER OF AMERICANS PREFER NOT TO TAKE SIDES ON TRANSGENDER ISSUES

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements (asked of all Americans)?

	STRONGLY AGREE/ AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE/ DISAGREE
TRANSGENDER ATHLETES SHOULD ONLY BE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS AS THE GENDER THEY WERE ASSIGNED AT BIRTH.	56%	24%	20%
PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS SHOULD USE STUDENTS' PREFERRED PRONOUNS, EVEN IF THEY ARE DIFFERENT FROM THE STUDENT'S SEX AT BIRTH.	39%	26%	35%
PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO USE THE BATHROOM OF THEIR CHOICE, REGARDLESS OF THE GENDER THEY WERE ASSIGNED AT BIRTH.	26%	24%	50%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022.

PARENTAL RIGHTS FOR GENDER-AFFIRMING CARE FALL SHORT OF MAJORITY SUPPORT

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Parents should be (***barred from obtaining***/***permitted by law to obtain***) gender-affirming care for their children, such as hormone blockers or gender-reassignment surgery.

	STRONGLY AGREE/ AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE/ DISAGREE
ALL	44% 35%	28% 30%	28% 36%
LIBERAL DEMOCRATS	15% 65%	24% 26%	62% 9%
MODERATE DEMOCRATS	37% 46%	39% 37%	24% 17%
MODERATE REPUBLICANS	56% 27%	35% 29%	9% 44%
CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICANS	75% 9%	15% 17%	11% 75%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.) NOTE: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

– Chris Karpowitz and Jeremy Pope
Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy at BYU

SUPPORTING TABLES

TRANSGENDER ATHLETES

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Transgender athletes should only be able to participate in high school sports as the gender they were assigned at birth.

	STRONGLY AGREE/ AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE/ DISAGREE
MEN	61%	22%	17%
WOMEN	51%	27%	22%
WHITE	59%	20%	21%
BLACK	47%	37%	16%
HISPANIC	50%	31%	18%
18-29	43%	31%	26%
30-44	51%	25%	25%
45-54	60%	22%	18%
55-64	63%	21%	16%
65+	64%	22%	14%

TRANSGENDER ATHLETES (CONTINUED).

	STRONGLY AGREE/ AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE/ DISAGREE
HIGH SCHOOL OR LESS	59%	26%	15%
SOME COLLEGE	55%	24%	21%
COLLEGE GRAD +	52%	23%	25%
LIBERAL DEMOCRAT	23%	33%	44%
MODERATE DEMOCRAT	50%	34%	16%
MODERATE REPUBLICAN	71%	19%	10%
CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICAN	90%	5%	5%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.) NOTE: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

PREFERRED PRONOUNS

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Public school teachers should use students' preferred pronouns, even if they are different from the student's sex at birth.

	STRONGLY AGREE/ AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE/ DISAGREE
MEN	36%	25%	40%
WOMEN	41%	28%	31%
WHITE	38%	21%	41%
BLACK	41%	40%	19%
HISPANIC	42%	35%	23%
18-29	53%	31%	17%
30-44	50%	26%	24%
45-54	34%	25%	41%
55-64	29%	25%	46%
65+	25%	23%	52%
HIGH SCHOOL OR LESS	31%	33%	35%
SOME COLLEGE	40%	23%	36%
COLLEGE GRADUATE +	48%	19%	33%
LIBERAL DEMOCRAT	78%	18%	4%
MODERATE DEMOCRAT	43%	38%	19%
MODERATE REPUBLICAN	30%	32%	38%
CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICAN	11%	12%	77%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.) NOTE: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

SCHOOL BATHROOMS

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Public school students should be allowed to use the bathroom of their choice, regardless of the gender they were assigned at birth.

	STRONGLY AGREE/ AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE/ DISAGREE
MEN	24%	22%	54%
WOMEN	27%	26%	48%
WHITE	27%	19%	54%
BLACK	21%	38%	41%
HISPANIC	23%	34%	42%
18-29	37%	32%	32%
30-44	35%	28%	37%
45-54	23%	18%	59%
55-64	17%	21%	62%
65+	17%	18%	65%
HIGH SCHOOL OR LESS	20%	26%	53%
SOME COLLEGE	25%	24%	51%
COLLEGE GRADUATE +	35%	51%	45%
LIBERAL DEMOCRAT	59%	27%	15%
MODERATE DEMOCRAT	29%	33%	38%
MODERAT REPUBLICAN	17%	21%	61%
CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICAN	4%	6%	90%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.) NOTE: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

SOURCE: The American Family Survey 2022 was conducted online to a matched sample on gender, race age and education Aug. 8-15, 2022. the sample size is 3,000 and the overall margin of error is +/- 1.9 percentage points.

PUBLIC SCHOOL LIBRARIES

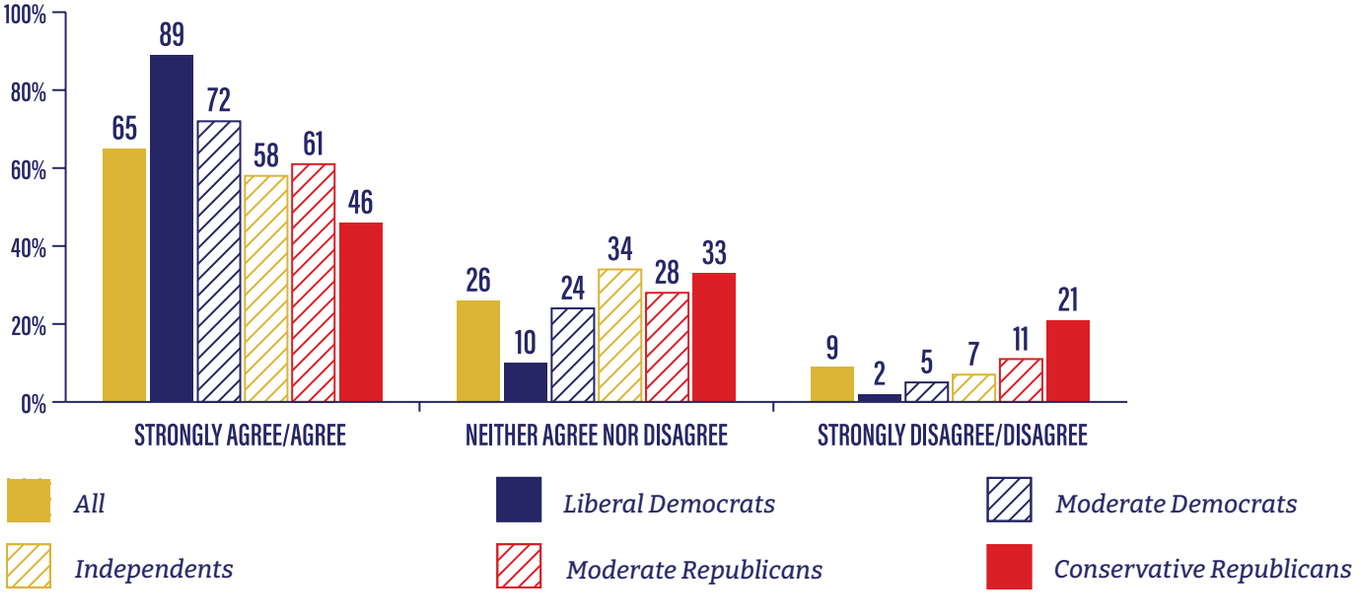
Few Americans support banning books from public school libraries. Only **12%** agree a book should be removed if any parent objects to it, compared to 56% who disagree.

Most Americans think school libraries should have books that represent a variety of perspectives.

Only **37%** believe their local public school library includes inappropriate books.

AMERICANS SUPPORT DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES IN SCHOOL LIBRARIES

It is important for public school libraries to have books that represent a variety of perspectives about controversial issues, even if it makes some people uncomfortable.



SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. (Asked of all Americans.)

NOTE: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

The 2022 American Family Survey asked respondents three questions designed to explore opinions about how public school libraries should handle books about controversial or sensitive topics.

Despite the attention the issue has received in media reports, fewer than 2 in 10 Americans believe their public school libraries include inappropriate books on their shelves, and just over 1 in 10 Americans agree that books should be removed if any parent objects. These questions did not highlight specific book titles, but at least as a general principle, Americans support their public schools' library collections and do not favor banning books, even in the face of some parental objections. Moreover, nearly two-thirds of survey respondents affirm the idea that public school libraries should include books that represent a variety of different perspectives, even if those books make some readers uncomfortable. Fewer than 1 in 10 Americans disagree with that idea. In other words, strong majorities of Americans endorse a pluralistic approach to book acquisitions — they believe that the public school library should include multiple perspectives and should not be limited to only those books about which everyone can agree.

FEW AMERICANS SUPPORT BANNING BOOKS FROM PUBLIC SCHOOL LIBRARIES

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Percent who agree or strongly agree.)

	THE PUBLIC SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN MY AREA INCLUDE BOOKS THAT SHOULD BE REMOVED BECAUSE THEY ARE INAPPROPRIATE	IF ANY PARENT OBJECTS TO A BOOK IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL LIBRARY, THAT BOOK SHOULD BE REMOVED, EVEN IF OTHER PARENTS LIKE THE BOOK	IT IS IMPORTANT FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL LIBRARIES TO HAVE BOOKS THAT REPRESENT A VARIETY OF PERSPECTIVES ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES, EVEN IF IT MAKES SOME PEOPLE UNCOMFORTABLE
ALL	16%	12%	65%
HIGH SCHOOL OR LESS	18%	16%	58%
SOME COLLEGE	14%	10%	66%
COLLEGE GRADUATE +	15%	9%	74%
LIBERAL DEMOCRATS	9%	8%	89%
MODERATE DEMOCRATS	20%	20%	72%
MODERATE REPUBLICANS	21%	20%	61%
CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICANS	24%	13%	46%

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. (Asked of all Americans.)

These patterns generally hold across gender, age and income categories, but education, party and ideology make a difference in how strongly Americans are committed to libraries acquiring books with a variety of different perspectives. Liberal Democrats are about 10 percentage points less willing to remove books from public libraries than all other partisan or ideological groups. Similarly, willingness to remove books in response to even one parental objection is about 7 percentage points lower among college graduates than among those who have only a high school education or less. But these differences should not obscure the fact that very few Americans of any educational attainment or partisan perspective express support for removing books from public school libraries, even when some parents object. Book banning is a decidedly minority approach to library holdings.

Somewhat starker educational and partisan differences emerge in active support for pluralism in public school library collections, but even so, most Americans, regardless of education or partisanship, want library collections to include a variety of perspectives about controversial issues. For example, three-quarters of college graduates support the idea that library holdings should represent multiple points of view. Support falls to 58% among Americans with a high school education or less, but that number still represents strong majority support. Nearly 9 in 10 liberal Democrats embrace the need for multiple perspectives in library collections, compared to just over 7 in 10 moderate Democrats and 6 in 10 moderate Republicans. The only group that does not express majority support for including a range of perspectives about controversial issues is conservative Republicans, though even within that group, only 1 in 5 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the idea, with the remaining one-third of respondents neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

Classic political science research on tolerance and commitment to civil liberties has shown that Americans support the general principle of protecting differing perspectives and issue attitudes, but they are less consistently tolerant when it comes to specific applications of that principle. For this reason, it is possible that these results would have been different if we had asked about a specific book or controversy of the sort that has roiled school board meetings in various locations across the country. Despite such controversies, though, very few Americans are generally suspicious that inappropriate books line the shelves of their public school libraries, and even fewer want to actively ban books, even when some parents raise objections. By contrast, most Americans endorse the principle that the

public school library should be a place where students can access and explore a range of different viewpoints about controversial issues of the day.

– Chris Karpowitz and Jeremy Pope
Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy at BYU

SUPPORTING TABLES

FEW AMERICANS ACTIVELY SUPPORT BANNING BOOKS

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	STRONGLY AGREE/ AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE/ DISAGREE
THE PUBLIC SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN MY AREA INCLUDE BOOKS THAT SHOULD BE REMOVED BECAUSE THEY ARE INAPPROPRIATE	16%	42%	42%
IF ANY PARENT OBJECTS TO A BOOK IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL LIBRARY, THAT BOOK SHOULD BE REMOVED, EVEN IF OTHER PARENTS LIKE THE BOOK	12%	32%	56%
IT IS IMPORTANT FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL LIBRARIES TO HAVE BOOKS THAT REPRESENT A VARIETY OF PERSPECTIVES ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES, EVEN IF IT MAKES SOME PEOPLE UNCOMFORTABLE	65%	26%	9%

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. (Asked of all Americans.)

SOURCE: The American Family Survey 2022 was conducted online to a matched sample on gender, race, age and education Aug. 8-15, 2022. The sample size is 3,000 and the overall margin of error is +/- 1.9 percentage points.

TEACHING IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Americans are more likely to say parents should have the final say over teaching about controversial issues than teachers or administrators, as

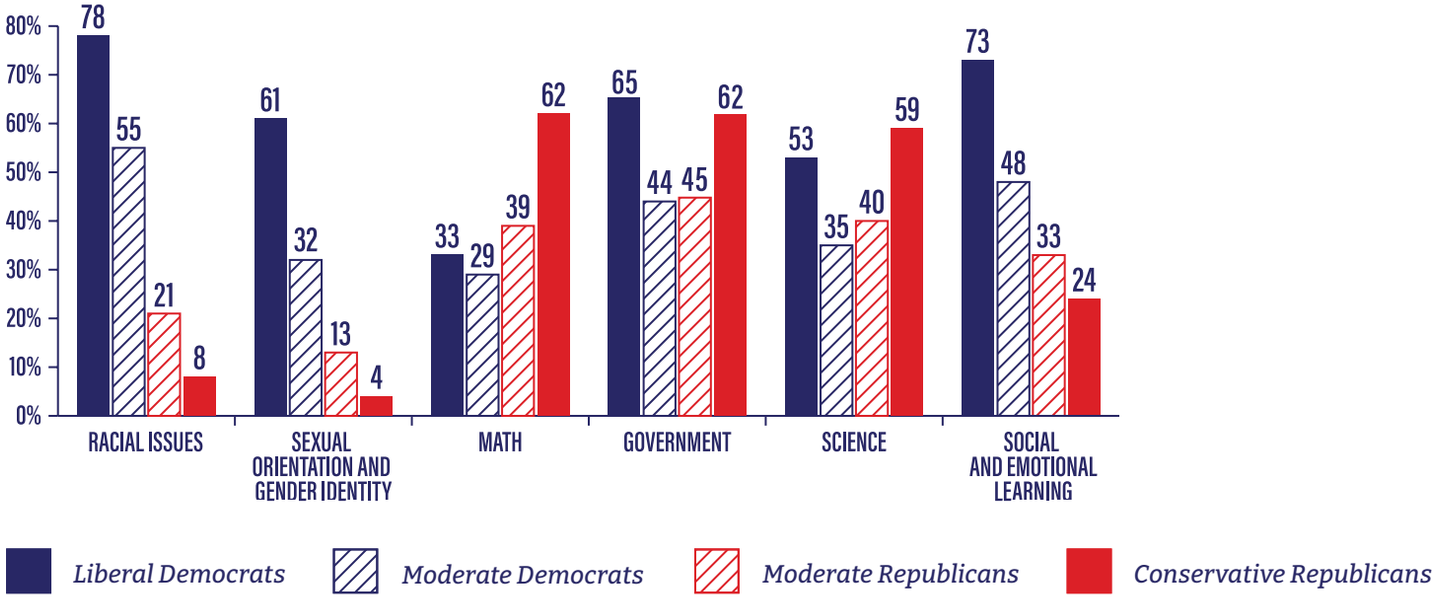
51%

say parents should decide what is taught about sexual orientation and gender identity.

Seventy-eight percent of liberal Democrats say schools spend too little time teaching about race, and **71%** of conservative Republicans say the same about teaching government.

DISAGREEMENT OVER TEACHING IN SCHOOLS

Do you think schools today spend too much, the right amount or too little time teaching about the following topics? Percent saying schools emphasize the topic too little



SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. (Asked of all Americans.)

Communities across the nation are confronting meaningful questions about the content of public school curriculum. What should be taught? How should it be presented? The American Family Survey reveals some deep divides on this subject, but in other areas there is far more agreement than political debate may suggest.

Commentators on the right often claim that schools, especially public ones, are emphasizing merit less in favor of other matters like equity or justice. In our data, we find a whiff of support for the idea that the left opposes emphasizing merit: Thirty-one percent of liberal Democrats believe it is emphasized too much in this country — more than any other ideological group, although another 30% of liberal Democrats believe merit is emphasized *too little*. While other ideological groups feel even more strongly about the importance of merit, a majority of all groups say schools emphasize it either enough or too little. Conservative Republicans are the most likely to say they prefer increased attention to merit — more than 6 in 10 say merit is emphasized "too little."

SCHOOLS AND ACHIEVEMENT

Do schools in this country emphasize merit and achievement too much, too little or about the right amount?

	TOO MUCH	TOO LITTLE	ABOUT THE RIGHT AMOUNT
ALL	19%	37%	44%
LIBERAL DEMOCRATS	31%	29%	40%
MODERATE DEMOCRATS	15%	39%	46%
MODERATE REPUBLICANS	16%	47%	37%
CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICANS	13%	63%	24%

SOURCE: 2022 American Familv Survey. (Asked of all Americans.)

The ideological right may be correct that certain strains of the left oppose emphasis on merit, but a more complete picture shows that most Americans are either happy with the way schools emphasize merit or want a bit more emphasis, and this is true across the political spectrum. This finding is consistent across income and education levels. Differences by race, in particular, are noteworthy as 48% of Blacks and 44% of Hispanics think merit receives the right amount of emphasis in schools. Only 33% of whites feel that way.

This year's survey also asked who should have the final say over what is taught in schools, and the answer is a resounding endorsement of parents. This pattern is common across most demographic groups with the partial exception of liberal Democrats, who are relatively more likely to trust teachers or school administrators — but in most areas they, too, would favor parents.

While there is unity across the political spectrum about some aspects of public school curriculum, there are also some clear divisions. Liberal Democrats want to see much more emphasis placed on teaching racial issues, sexual orientation, and gender identity, as well as social and emotional learning. Elsewhere, we take up some of these issues in greater detail. Conservative Republicans want to see more emphasis placed on math and government.

These divisions can be as stark as any we uncover. Just 8% of conservative Republicans, for instance, want more emphasis placed on race, compared with 78% of liberal Democrats. The divide is only slightly less stark for matters of sexual orientation and gender identity, though 61% of liberal Democrats still want more emphasis on that. Moderate Democrats and moderate Republicans are generally more content with the status quo, but even there, noticeable differences emerge: For example, 55% of moderate Democrats want more emphasis on race, compared with just 21% of moderate Republicans.

Schooling is a complicated area to assess. There is probably more unity on policy than is realized, especially in the sense that most respondents want parents to be in control of school policy. However, that unity should not mask a local diversity. Even if parents get their wish of being the final say about their local school curriculum, partisan and ideological divides mean that what is taught in Mississippi under the guidance of those local parents is very unlikely to be the same as what parents in Massachusetts prefer.

— Chris Karpowitz, Jeremy C. Pope and Rudy Spencer
Center for the Study of Electons and Democracy at BYU

SUPPORTING TABLES

EMPHASIS ON MERIT AND ACHIEVEMENT

Do schools in this country emphasize merit and achievement too much, too little or about the right amount?

	TOO MUCH	TOO LITTLE	ABOUT THE RIGHT AMOUNT
OVERALL	19%	37%	44%
WHITE	22%	45%	33%
BLACK	13%	39%	48%
HISPANIC	14%	43%	44%
ASIAN	12%	44%	43%

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. (Asked of all Americans.)

NOTE: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

SCHOOLS, CURRICULUM AND PARENTS

In your opinion, when controversies arise, who should have the final say about what is taught in public schools about the following issues?

	BOOKS ASSIGNED IN ENGLISH	SEX EDUCATION	RELIGION	SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY	HISTORY OF RACE IN AMERICA
STUDENTS	8%	5%	6%	8%	5%
PARENTS	32%	48%	50%	51%	30%
CLASSROOM TEACHERS	24%	12%	7%	9%	21%
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS	13%	12%	9%	10%	14%
SCHOOL BOARD	14%	11%	10%	11%	12%
STATE GOVERNMENT	4%	4%	5%	5%	6%
NATIONAL GOVERNMENT	4%	6%	13%	7%	13%

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. (Asked of all Americans.)

NOTE: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

SCHOOLS, CURRICULUM AND PARENTS (CONTINUED)

Do you think schools today spend too much, the right amount or too little time teaching about the following topics?

	TOO MUCH	THE RIGHT AMOUNT	TOO LITTLE
RACIAL ISSUES	32%	26%	42%
SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY	42%	28%	29%
MATH	10%	49%	41%
HISTORY	6%	37%	57%
GOVERNMENT	9%	36	55
WRITING	5%	41	54
SCIENCE	6%	46	48
SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING	22%	32%	46%
ART AND MUSIC	8%	46%	47%

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. (Asked of all Americans.)

NOTE: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

SOURCE: The American Family Survey 2022 was conducted online to a matched sample on gender, race, age and education Aug. 8-15, 2022. The sample size is 3,000 and the overall margin of error is +/- 1.9 percentage points.

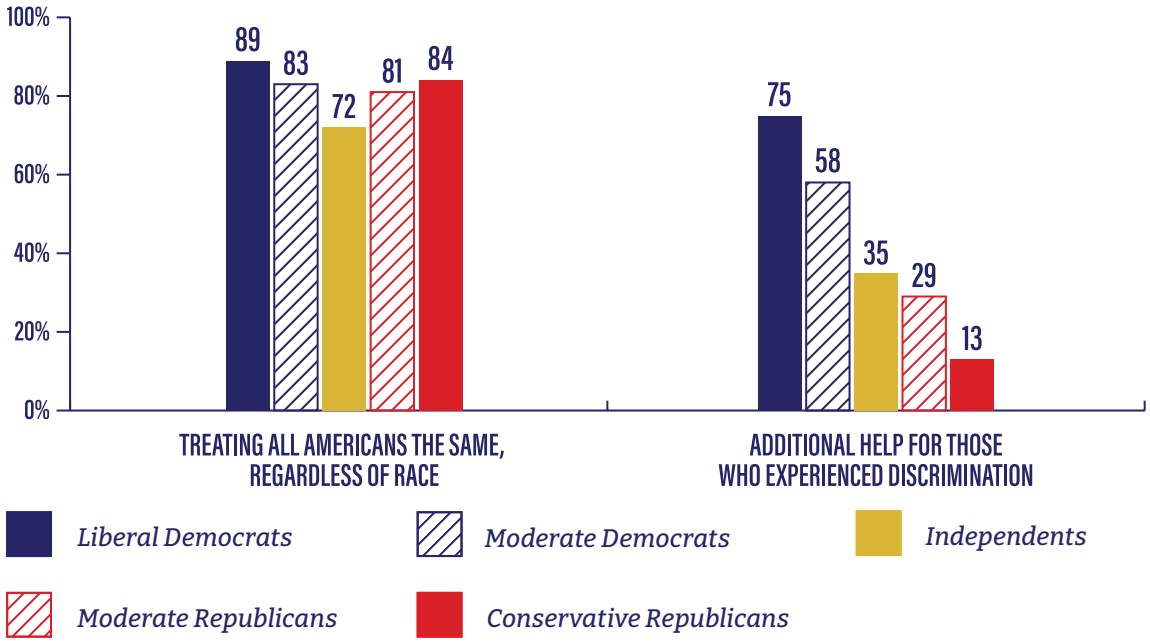
TEACHING ABOUT RACE

Americans disagree about how to teach about the history and impact of racism. Only **38%** **of conservative Republicans** say schools should teach about the history of racism, compared with **93% of liberal Democrats.**

Most Americans agree schools should teach the importance of treating all Americans the same, regardless of race. More than **8** in **10** agree with this.

WHAT SCHOOLS SHOULD TEACH ABOUT RACE

To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Public schools should teach the importance of treating all Americans the same, regardless of race. Public schools should teach the importance of giving additional help to members of groups that have experienced racial discrimination in the past.



SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.)

What should schools teach about race and racism in the United States? The 2022 American Family Survey finds that Americans overwhelmingly agree schools should emphasize the importance of equal treatment, regardless of race. More than 8 in 10 Americans believe schools should teach the importance of racial equality, and this high level of agreement spans all racial groups and political identities. Though percentages are somewhat lower, majorities of all groups also support the idea of teaching about progress toward racial equality. Americans are thus unified in their support for teaching about racial equality and the idea that the nation has made progress toward that goal.

Divisions in public opinion begin to emerge with the question of how to approach teaching the nation's history of racism. Close to two-thirds of all Americans and majorities of all racial/ethnic groups agree this history should be taught, though Black and Hispanic respondents are more supportive of teaching it than whites. In addition, nearly all liberal Democrats and more than three-quarters of moderate Democrats support teaching

about the nation's history of racism, as do majorities of independents and moderate Republicans. Conservative Republicans are more likely to dissent, though; among that group, a little less than 4 in 10 support schools exploring the nation's history of racism. These numbers are very similar to what we found in 2021. And similar to the results from last year, the group most enthusiastic about the importance of teaching about racism in American history is white liberal Democrats (94%), while the group least enthusiastic is white conservative Republicans (37%). Among self-identified moderates, whether Democrats or Republicans, respondents of color are more likely than whites to want to emphasize a legacy of racism.

The issue that creates the most division, however, is whether to teach the idea of giving "additional help" to groups that have experienced racial discrimination in the past. Majorities of Black and Hispanic respondents agree public schools should teach this, compared to barely over one-third of whites. And support for teaching about the idea of assisting groups that have experienced past racial disadvantage is popular among Democrats, but independents and Republicans decidedly disagree. Only 13% of conservative Republicans (and only 9% of white conservative Republicans) believe that schools ought to teach about an obligation to assist groups based on the experiences of the past. Thus, conservative Republicans are less enthusiastic about schools telling the story of past racism and overwhelmingly opposed to teaching about what to do for groups that experienced such racism. Liberal Democrats (and white liberal Democrats most of all) prefer a very different curriculum. They want to see schools confront directly the issue of historical racism (even more than they want to tell a story of racial progress) and to emphasize a present obligation to assist groups that have experienced past discrimination.

The first "self-evident truth" of the Declaration of Independence is equality. But when it comes to race and race relations, exactly how we understand past deviations from that principle and what that history implies about how to achieve equality in the present continue to be sources of deep political disagreement. These profound differences are likely to be felt as school districts across the country consider their curricula. While large percentages of Americans agree that schools ought to emphasize racial equality and the ways the nation has experienced progress toward that goal, how to tell the history of race in America and whether that history should influence contemporary policymaking remains a fraught subject.

— Chris Karpowitz and Jeremy C. Pope
Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy at BYU

WHAT SCHOOLS SHOULD TEACH ABOUT RACE

(Public) Schools should teach ...

	ABOUT THE HISTORY OF RACISM IN THE UNITED STATES	THAT THERE HAS BEEN SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS TOWARD RACIAL EQUALITY IN THE UNITED STATES	THE IMPORTANCE OF TREATING ALL AMERICANS THE SAME, REGARDLESS OF RACE	THE IMPORTANCE OF GIVING ADDITIONAL HELP TO MEMBERS OF GROUPS THAT HAVE EXPERIENCED RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN THE PAST
ALL	64%	57%	81%	42%
WHITE	60%	56%	84%	36%
BLACK	75%	52%	76%	60%
HISPANIC	69%	62%	77%	52%
LIBERAL DEMOCRATS	93%	59%	89%	75%
MODERATE DEMOCRATS	77%	64%	83%	58%
INDEPENDENTS	56%	50%	72%	35%
MODERATE REPUBLICANS	54%	59%	81%	29%
CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICANS	38%	56%	84%	13%

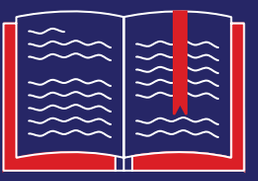
NOTE: In columns 1 and 2, the question referred to "schools." In columns 3 and 4, it referred to "public schools."

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.)

SOURCE: The American Family Survey 2022 was conducted online to a matched sample on gender, race, age and education Aug. 8-15, 2022. The sample size is 3,000 and the overall margin of error is +/- 1.9 percentage points.

TEACHING ABOUT RACE, SEX AND GENDER

Support is higher for teaching racial equality than sex or gender equality in public schools. **Sixty-three%** of Americans say schools should teach students to reject racism, while only **45%** say the same of sexism or homophobia.

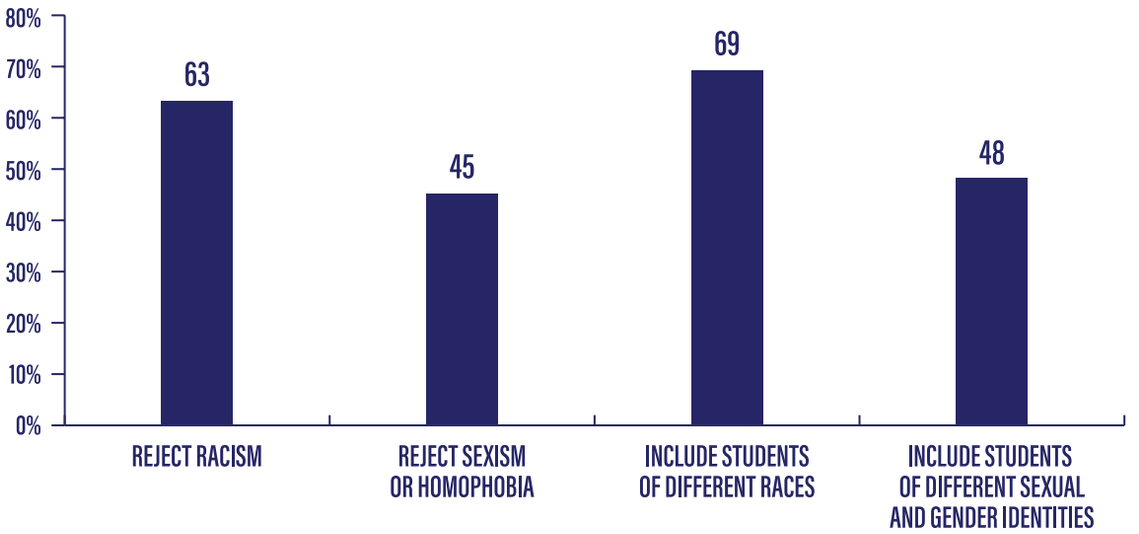


The parties are deeply split over whether issues of race and gender are best taught at home. More than **8 in 10** conservative Republicans prefer this, compared to fewer than **1 in 5** liberal Democrats.

TEACHING ABOUT RACE, SEX AND GENDER IN SCHOOLS

Percent who agree or strongly agree

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?
Public schools should actively teach students (to reject racism/to reject sexism or homophobia/to include students of different races/to include students of different sexual and gender identities). (asked of all Americans)



SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022.

In previous analyses of this survey, we showed that support for transgender students in public schools tends to be low, with less than a majority of American supporting a variety of accommodations. One additional way to understand attitudes about gender identity is to compare them to attitudes about race and racial identity. We asked each respondent to indicate their agreement with one of four statements about what public schools should teach, randomizing whether we asked about race or sexual and gender identity. We also randomized whether the question was framed negatively — rejecting racism/sexism or homophobia — or positively — emphasizing the need to include those groups.

Overall, Americans express much more support for schools advocating for racial equality than for sex or gender equality. In addition, they are slightly more likely to endure the idea of schools emphasizing "inclusion" over "rejecting" racism, sexism, or homophobia. For example, just over 6 in 10 Americans agree with the idea that public schools should actively teach students to reject racism, and just under 7 in 10 endorse "including students of

different races." But when asked about rejecting sexism or including students of different sexual and gender identities, support plummets by as much as 20 percentage points and falls below a majority, regardless of whether we asked about rejection or inclusion. In other words, relative to racial equality, support for equality of gender and sexual identity is far lower. Differences by gender, race and education tend to be small, though more educated respondents are significantly more likely to endorse sexual and gender equality.

TEACHING ABOUT RACE, SEX AND GENDER IN SCHOOLS

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Public schools should actively teach students (to reject racism/to reject sexism or homophobia/to include students of different races/to include students of different sexual and gender identities). (asked of all Americans)

Percent who agree or strongly agree

	REJECT RACISM	REJECT SEXISM OR HOMOPHOBIA	INCLUDE STUDENTS OF DIFFERENT RACES	INCLUDE STUDENTS OF DIFFERENT SEXUAL AND GENDER IDENTITIES
LIBERAL DEM.	88%	78%	88%	84%
MOD. DEM.	68%	55%	79%	53%
INDEPENDENTS	48%	34%	57%	40%
MOD. REPUB.	48%	37%	63%	44%
CONS. REPUB.	54%	21%	58%	22%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022.

Liberal Democrats consistently emphasize their opposition to racism, sexism and homophobia, with at least three-quarters or more preferring equality no matter what their assigned question wording. The largest differences occur among conservative Republicans, who are more than 30 percentage points more supportive of schools teaching students to reject racism than to reject sexism and homophobia. In other words, liberal Democrats make few distinctions between issues of race and issues of sex or gender, while conservative Republicans regard them as very different. (When we disaggregate by party and ideology across the four conditions, percentages for moderate Republicans sometimes are based on fewer than 100 respondents, so those results should be treated as meaningful but less statistically precise.)

The fact that support for racial equality did not exceed 70% among Americans as a whole, with only half or fewer Republicans expressing support for the idea that schools should educate children on this topic, may be surprising. However, the question asked about the responsibility of schools to "actively teach" about these issues. It is possible that conservative concerns about schools taking sides in the culture wars have sapped the confidence of Republicans in teachers taking on the role of championing racial equality.

We show in other analyses of this survey that Republicans are especially concerned about how schools teach about the nation's fraught past on issues of race. Additional support for the interpretation that Republicans have lost confidence in public schools comes from a second randomized experiment. We asked half of respondents how much they agreed or disagreed with the idea that "questions of race and racial identity should be left to parents, not taught at school," while the other half was asked about agreement or disagreement with the notion that "questions of sexual orientation and gender identity should be left to parents, not taught at school." Overall, respondents asked about "sexual orientation and gender identity" are about 10 percentage points more likely than those asked about "race and racial identity" to prefer that the issue be left to parents and not taught at school. This represents a majority of respondents.

REPUBLICANS SAY PARENTS, NOT SCHOOLS, SHOULD TEACH RACIAL AND SEX OR GENDER IDENTITY

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Questions of (race and racial identity/sexual orientation or gender identity) should be left to parents, not taught at school. (asked of all Americans)

Percent who agree or strongly agree

	RACE AND RACIAL IDENTITY	SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY
ALL	43%	53%
LIBERAL DEMOCRATS	13%	17%
MODERATE DEMOCRATS	34%	49%
INDEPENDENTS	36%	50%
MODERATE REPUBLICANS	60%	68%
CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICANS	80%	88%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022.

Again, however, there are deep disagreements grounded in partisanship and ideology. Very few liberal Democrats agree with leaving either issue to parents, though moderate Democrats are much more open to the idea – especially for issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. About one-third of moderate Democrats want to leave questions of race and racial identity to parents, while nearly half of moderate Democrats prefer that solution for teaching about questions of sexual orientation and gender identity. Independents closely mirror the patterns among moderate Democrats.

Large percentages of Republicans, however, prefer that both issues be handled by parents, not at school. Fully 6 in 10 moderate Republicans want parents to teach about racial identity, and nearly 7 in 10 prefer parents to teach about sexual orientation and gender identity. Among conservative Republicans, those numbers rise to 8 in 10 (for race) and almost 9 in 10 (for gender). Conservative Republicans strongly prefer that parents, not schools, take primary responsibility for teaching about identity equality of either type. Other demographic categories also matter: older, white and less educated respondents are also more likely to prefer parents to schools in teaching about these issues. But none of those demographic differences are as sizeable as the partisan divide.

– Chris Karpowitz and Jeremy Pope
Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy at BYU

WHAT SCHOOLS SHOULD TEACH ABOUT RACE, SEX AND GENDER IN SCHOOLS

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?
Public schools should actively teach students (to reject racism/to reject sexism or homophobia/to include students of different races/to include students of different sexual and gender identities).

Percent who agree or strongly agree

	REJECT RACISM	REJECT SEXISM OR HOMOPHOBIA	INCLUDE STUDENTS OF DIFFERENT RACES	INCLUDE STUDENTS OF DIFFERENT SEXUAL AND GENDER IDENTITIES
MEN	62%	43%	65%	44%
WOMEN	63%	46%	71%	52%
WHITE	64%	46%	68%	47%
BLACK	62%	41%	71%	45%
HISPANIC	59%	47%	68%	51%
HIGH SCHOOL OR LESS	57%	38%	68%	42%
SOME COLLEGE	69%	41%	65%	47%
COLLEGE GRAD +	63%	57%	74%	57%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.)

SHOULD TEACHING RACE, SEX AND GENDER IDENTITY BE LEFT TO PARENTS?

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Questions of (race and racial identity/sexual orientation or gender identity) should be left to parents, not taught at school. (asked of all Americans)

Percent who agree or strongly agree

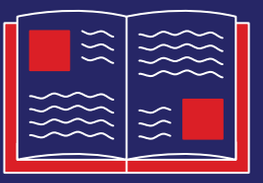
	RACE AND RACIAL IDENTITY	SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY
MEN	45%	57%
WOMEN	41%	51%
WHITE	46%	58%
BLACK	36%	41%
HISPANIC	34%	46%
18-29	30%	39%
30-44	38%	42%
45-54	45%	59%
55-64	51%	62%
65+	51%	68%
HIGH SCHOOL OR LESS	49%	57%
SOME COLLEGE	42%	53%
COLLEGE GRAD +	36%	47%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022.

The American Family Survey was conducted online to a matched sample on gender, race, age, and education between August 8-15, 2022. The sample size is 3,000 and the overall margin of error for the survey is 1.9 percent.

SEX EDUCATION

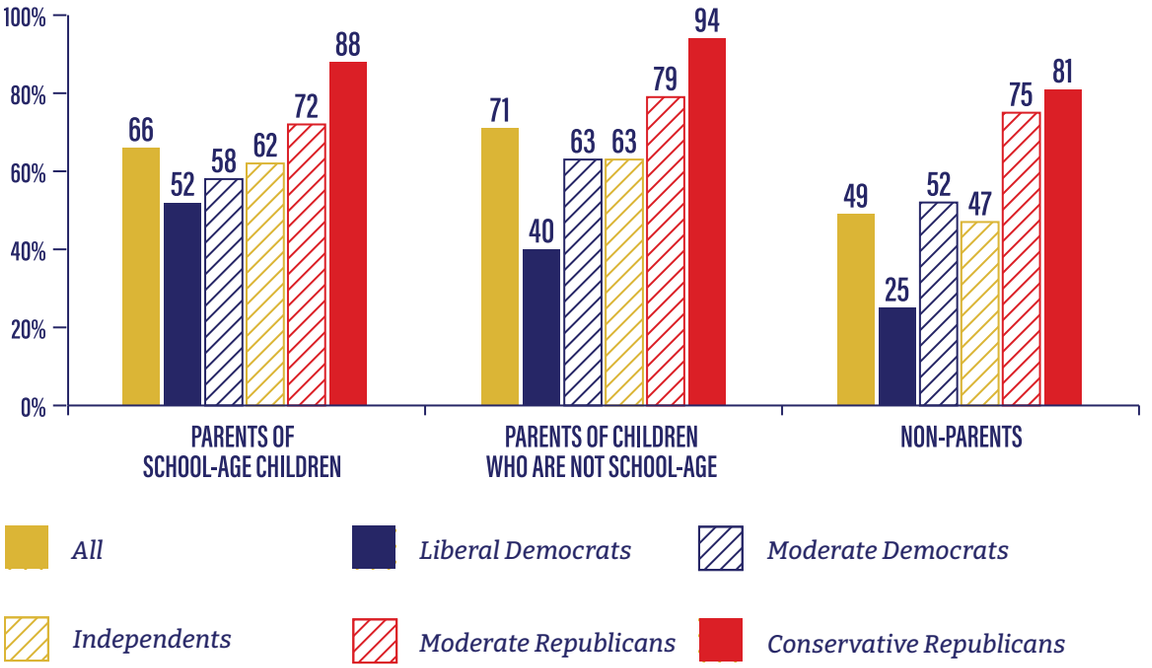
Most parents say sex education is an important school responsibility, but only **35%** are satisfied with their school's efforts.



Among liberals, **52%** of parents of school-age children favor teaching about gender identity at home, compared with **25%** of non-parents.

WHERE SHOULD CHILDREN LEARN ABOUT GENDER IDENTITY?

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? The best place for children to learn about gender identity is at home. Percent who agree or strongly agree. Asked of all Americans.



SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. (Asked of all Americans.)

The 2022 American Family Survey reveals majority support across a wide variety of groups for the importance of sex education in schools. But parents are generally far less satisfied with the sex education actually offered in their local schools, and we see evidence of disagreement about the proper site for teaching issues related to gender identity. Most parents believe that discussion of gender identity is best handled at home, though support for that notion varies by ideology and parental status. In other analyses, we have shown substantial disagreement along lines of partisanship and ideology in whether questions of sexual orientation and gender identity should be taught at school. This year's questions did not address the issue directly, but additional research in future years could explore parents' views about what, exactly, should be included in a successful sex education curriculum. Based on this year's results, we expect that whether and how schools should take up the issue of gender identity will be highly controversial and that parents with differing political commitments will answer that question in very different ways.

PARENTS' VIEWS ON SEX EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	STRONGLY AGREE/ AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE/ DISAGREE
I AM SATISFIED WITH THE LEVEL OF SEX EDUCATION OFFERED BY MY CHILD'S SCHOOL	35%	46%	20%
SEX EDUCATION IS AN IMPORTANT TOPIC FOR SCHOOLS TO TEACH, EVEN IF IT MAKES SOME PEOPLE UNCOMFORTABLE	59%	24%	16%

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. (Asked of parents of school-age children.)

NOTE: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Barely more than one-third of parents of school-age children say they are satisfied with the level of sex education offered in their local schools, though 6 in 10 parents believe schools have a responsibility to teach the subject. Many parents hesitate to express a firm opinion about how their schools are doing, with nearly one-half saying they neither agree or disagree that they are satisfied. About 1 in 5 parents express overt dissatisfaction with local school efforts.

Low levels of satisfaction are more likely among mothers than fathers, among parents of color than whites, and among young parents than older parents. Differences based on income and education tend to be small. When it comes to political identities, the least satisfied group is liberal Democrats (35% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they are satisfied), followed by conservative Republicans (40% satisfied), with moderates and independents expressing comparatively higher levels of satisfaction (42% among independents, 44% among moderate Democrats and 45% among moderate Republicans). Demographic differences in beliefs about the importance of sex education tend to be much smaller, and the only two groups in which a majority fails to agree that sex education is important are older parents (ages 55-64) at 47% and conservative Republicans at 44%. Pockets of satisfaction can be found in the public, but there are many groups — women, the young and nonwhite respondents, especially — who are clearly unsatisfied.

At the same time, liberal Democrats and independents are most likely to believe that sex education should be an important part of the school curriculum. While liberal Democratic parents expressed the least satisfaction with sex education offerings in schools, 8 in 10 believe that it is an important topic for schools to teach, and nearly 9 in 10 independents agree. About two-thirds of moderate Democrats and Republicans believe that sex education is an important topic, and the only group where support fails to reach a majority is conservative Republicans (44%).

SATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL SEX ED

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Percent who agree or strongly agree.

	SATISFIED WITH THE LEVEL OF SEX EDUCATION OFFERED BY CHILD'S SCHOOL	SEX EDUCATION IS AN IMPORTANT TOPIC FOR SCHOOLS TO TEACH
FATHERS	40%	58%
MOTHERS	30%	60%
LIBERAL DEMOCRATS	35%	80%
MODERATE DEMOCRATS	44%	68%
INDEPENDENTS	42%	89%
MODERATE REPUBLICANS	45%	66%
CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICANS	40%	44%
WHITE	40%	62%
BLACK	23%	57%
HISPANIC	30%	56%
AGES 18-29	21%	68%
AGES 30-44	37%	63%
AGES 45-54	30%	52%
AGES 55-64*	42%	47%

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. (Asked of parents of school-age children.)

*NOTE: Few parents of school-age children were over 65, so they are not included.

At the same time, most parents also emphasize the home as an important site for teaching about sexuality and gender identity. More than 7 in 10 parents say they feel comfortable discussing sexuality with their children, and this sentiment is shared across many different demographic categories. Regardless of gender, age, income, education or partisanship, more than 6 in 10 parents report feeling comfortable discussing matters of sexuality and reproduction with their children. These are self-reports, so "feeling comfortable" discussing matters of sexuality does not necessarily mean that parents do so frequently or effectively.

The question of where to teach gender identity, specifically, is important because some schools include it as a component of sex education, while others do not. Two-thirds of parents say home is the "best place" for children to learn about gender identity. The biggest differences in patterns of support for home-based teaching about gender identity occur across partisan lines: Fifty-two percent of liberal Democrats and 58% of moderate Democrats agree or strongly agree that home is the best place for children to learn about these issues, compared to 72% of moderate Republicans and 88% of conservative Republicans. These findings are consistent with the notion that conservatives prefer to handle discussions of gender identity themselves, where many will presumably emphasize more traditional understandings instead of outsourcing it to schools. It is not that Democratic parents are opposed to discussions at home (a majority of them endorse the idea), but they are less focused on exclusively home-centered approaches than are Republicans. In other analyses, we show that liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans disagree strongly about whether schools should teach about issues of gender identity.

Expanding the analysis to respondents who have no children, slightly less than a majority (49%) endorsed home as the best place for teaching gender identity. Among liberals without children, supports falls to only 25%. Liberal parents whose children are not in school fall

in the middle, at 40% support. Relative to conservative Republicans, liberal Democrats are substantially less supportive of the idea that home is the best place to discuss gender identity, but liberal parents are far more enthusiastic about the idea than liberals who do not have children. Put differently, among liberals, parenthood strongly influences attitudes about where gender identity should be taught. For conservative Republicans, on the other hand, parental status matters far less: Conservatives overwhelmingly favor a home-focused approach whether they have children or not.

— Chris Karpowitz and Jeremy C. Pope
Center for the Study of Electons and Democracy at BYU

SUPPORTING TABLES

PARENTS, CHILDREN AND DISCUSSIONS OF SEXUALITY

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	STRONGLY AGREE/ AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE/ DISAGREE
I FEEL COMFORTABLE DISCUSSING MATTERS OF SEXUALITY AND REPRODUCTION WITH MY CHILDREN	71%	20%	8%
THE BEST PLACE FOR CHILDREN TO LEARN ABOUT GENDER IDENTITY IS AT HOME	66%	26%	9%

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. (Asked of parents of school-age children.)

NOTE: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

SOURCE: The American Family Survey 2022 was conducted online to a matched sample on gender, race age and education Aug. 8-15, 2022. the sample size is 3,000 and the overall margin of error is +/- 1.9 percentage points.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Almost **half** of parents say their children have expressed concern about school shootings in the U.S., and nearly a **third** say their children are concerned about the potential for a shooting at their own school.

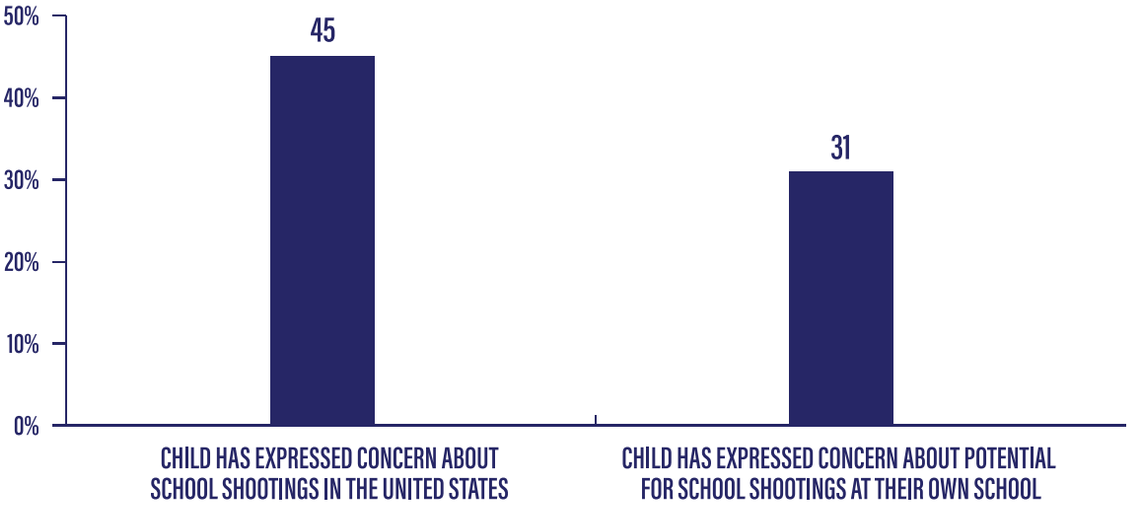
Majorities of Americans favor strong safety measures in schools.

81% favor locking all doors during the school day.

67% favor metal detectors.

WORRY ABOUT SCHOOL SHOOTINGS AMONG CHILDREN

Have any of your children ever expressed a concern over school shootings in the United States? Have any of your children ever expressed a concern over the potential for school shootings at their own school?



SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of parents of school-age children.)

School shootings represent a source of concern for a large percentage of American children, according to their parents. Close to half of parents of school-age children report that their children have expressed concern about school shootings in the United States, and almost one-third say that their children worry about the potential for a shooting at their local school.

These concerns are common across gender, race and class, though mothers and parents of color are slightly more likely than fathers or white parents to register concern. Democratic parents are more likely than Republicans to say that their children have mentioned a concern, but even among conservative Republicans, 1 in 5 parents say that their children are worried about the prospect of a shooting at their school and almost 4 in 10 have raised concerns about school shootings generally. Among liberal Democrats, 4 in 10 report a child's anxiety about a shooting at their school, and 6 in 10 say that their children worry about school shootings across the nation. We do not have an estimate of how intense or disruptive the child's distress might have been, but these parental reports suggest that some level of worry is widespread.

Parents themselves also have anxiety about school shootings. About half of American parents express unease about the possibility of shootings in their area — a similar number to the percentage of parents who say

their children have expressed concern about shootings nationwide. At the same time, though, half of all parents trust the school or the police to keep their children safe. If we focus on the half of parents who feel concerned about school shootings occurring in their area, about half say they trust the school to keep their children safe, and half do not. Put differently, about one-quarter of all parents both worry about school shootings in their locality and do not believe the school will keep their children safe.

HALF OF PARENTS WORRY ABOUT SCHOOL SHOOTINGS IN THEIR AREA

Select your level of agreement with the following statement: I feel concerned that a school shooting may occur in my area. Percent who agree or strongly agree.

	AMONG PARENTS
I FEEL CONCERNED THAT A SCHOOL SHOOTING MAY OCCUR IN MY AREA	49%
I TRUST MY CHILD'S SCHOOL TO KEEP MY CHILD SAFE	50%
I TRUST THE POLICE AND SCHOOL SECURITY TO KEEP MY CHILD SAFE	49%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of parents of school-age children.)

Concern about the potential for a school shooting is shared equally by mothers and fathers, though mothers are slightly less confident than fathers in the ability of schools or police to safeguard their children. Concern spans income and racial categories, though Hispanic parents are the most likely to report feeling concerned and are simultaneously more likely to express confidence in schools and police. About two-thirds of liberal Democratic parents report worrying about a school shooting in their area, compared to about one-third of conservative Republicans. Partisan disparities in trust in schools and police are also present, but less pronounced.

What do parents want in terms of school safety measures that might be instituted in school buildings? A little bit of everything. Overwhelming majorities favored every item we asked about, including signs for check-in, locking outside doors, and a single entrance for use by all students and visitors. About 8 in 10 parents or more supported all of these measures. Support was slightly lower for armed security guards and metal detectors, but even these garnered the support of two-thirds to three-fourths of parents. These numbers are not really much different from the rest of the general population. In most cases, they are statistically indistinguishable. Parents and nonparents alike favor these measures at roughly equal rates.

SUPPORT FOR A VARIETY OF SCHOOL SAFETY MEASURES IS WIDESPREAD

How strongly do you support each of the following safety measures for schools in your area? Percent who agree or strongly agree.

	PARENTS OF SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN	ALL OTHERS
A SIGN TELLING VISITORS THEY MUST CHECK IN AT THE OFFICE	89%	90%
ALL OUTSIDE DOORS ARE LOCKED DURING THE SCHOOL DAY	84%	81%
ONE ENTRANCE OR EXIT THAT ALL STUDENTS AND VISITORS MUST USE	77%	70%
AN ARMED SECURITY GUARD	73%	68%
METAL DETECTORS	66%	67%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of all Americans.)

To the extent that support for armed security guards and metal detectors is a bit lower, liberal Democrats are the least supportive of those measures, though even among liberal Democratic parents, support exceeds 50% in both cases. When it comes to keeping schools safe at the level of the school building, large percentages of Americans endorse an "all-of-the-above" strategy.

– Chris Karpowitz, Jeremy Pope and Rylie Hinds
Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy at BYU

SUPPORTING TABLES

WORRY ABOUT SCHOOL SHOOTINGS AMONG CHILDREN

Have any of your children ever expressed a concern over school shootings in the United States? Have any of your children ever expressed a concern over the potential for school shootings at their own school?

	CHILD HAS EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT SCHOOL SHOOTINGS IN THE UNITED STATES	CHILD HAS EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT SCHOOL SHOOTINGS AT THEIR OWN SCHOOL
FATHERS	40%	26%
MOTHERS	49%	35%
WHITE	42%	28%
BLACK	47%	39%
HISPANIC	49%	32%
LOW INCOME	44%	29%
MIDDLE INCOME	44%	33%
HIGH INCOME	44%	30%
LIBERAL DEMOCRATS	60%	44%
MODERATE DEMOCRATS	53%	34%
INDEPENDENTS	38%	28%
MODERATE REPUBLICANS	33%	27%
LIBERAL REPUBLICANS	37%	20%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of parents of school-age children.)

WORRY ABOUT SCHOOL SHOOTINGS AMONG PARENTS

Select your level of agreement with the following statements. Percent who agree or strongly agree.

	I FEEL CONCERNED THAT A SCHOOL SHOOTING MAY OCCUR IN MY AREA	I TRUST MY CHILD'S SCHOOL TO KEEP MY CHILD SAFE	I TRUST THE POLICE AND SCHOOL SECURITY TO KEEP MY CHILD SAFE
FATHERS	47%	54%	53%
MOTHERS	50%	46%	45%
WHITE	47%	50%	49%
BLACK	44%	45%	46%
HISPANIC	51%	54%	55%
LOW INCOME	46%	50%	47%
MIDDLE INCOME	52%	49%	51%
HIGH INCOME	51%	52%	48%
LIBERAL DEMOCRATS	67%	46%	41%
MODERATE DEMOCRATS	63%	56%	54%
INDEPENDENTS	38%	42%	37%
MODERATE REPUBLICANS	43%	62%	74%
LIBERAL REPUBLICANS	36%	56%	61%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of parents of school-age children.)

HOW CONCERN ABOUT SCHOOL SHOOTINGS AND CONFIDENCE IN SCHOOLS TO KEEP CHILDREN SAFE INTERACT

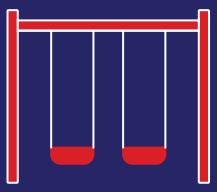
Cell entries are the percentage of parents in each category. Respondents are classified as "concerned about school shootings" if they agree or strongly agree that they are concerned "that a school shooting might occur in my area." Respondents are classified as trusting their schools if they agree or strongly agree that they "trust my child's school to keep my child safe."

	CONCERNED ABOUT SCHOOL SHOOTINGS IN THE AREA	NOT CONCERNED ABOUT SCHOOL SHOOTINGS
TRUST SCHOOL TO KEEP CHILD SAFE	24%	25%
DO NOT TRUST SCHOOL TO KEEP CHILD SAFE	26%	25%

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of parents of school-age children.)

SOURCE: The American Family Survey 2022 was conducted online to a matched sample on gender, race, age and education Aug. 8-15, 2022. The sample size is 3,000 and the overall margin of error is +/- 1.9 percentage points.

ISSUES FACING FAMILIES



Americans increasingly choose economic issues among the top issues facing families today. **63 percent** identified at least one economic issue in their top three, up from **51 percent** in 2015.

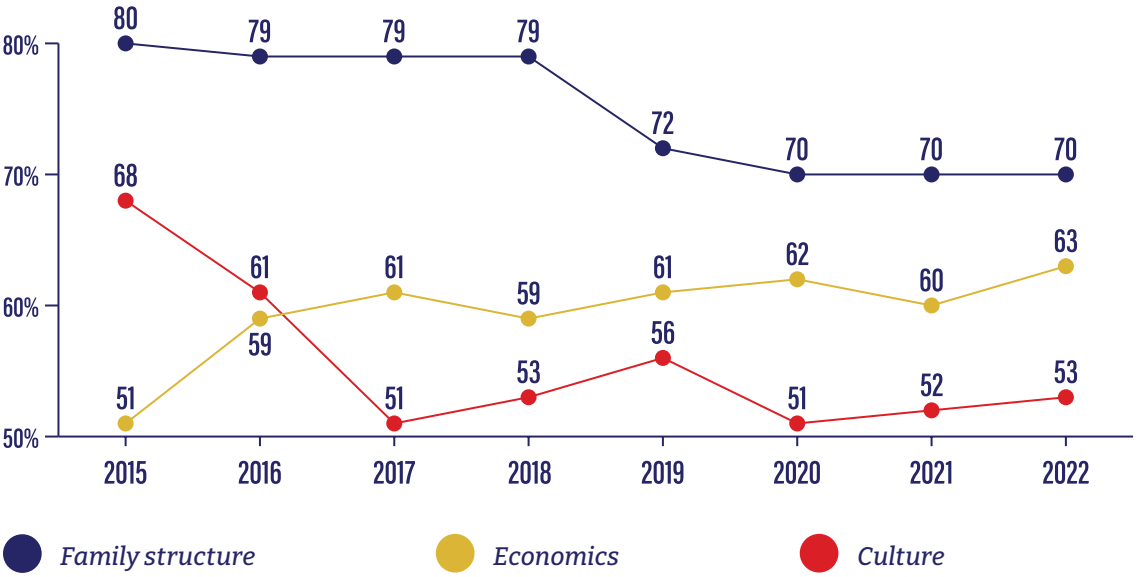
Since 2020, fewer people are choosing the COVID-19 pandemic or racial inequality as top issues facing families. In 2022,

12%

chose racial inequality, a decline of 8 points since 2020.

MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING FAMILIES

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



SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of all Americans.

Note: Respondents selected three items from a list of 12. The list of 12 included four items about family structure, four about economics, and four about culture. Percentages include Americans who chose at least one item in the category.

Each year since 2015, we have asked Americans about the most important issues or problems facing families. We do this by presenting respondents with a curated list of twelve items and asking them to choose up to three. We then categorize responses into sets of structural, economic, and cultural issues. Respondents saw only the items, not our categorizations. Structural items included things like parents not teaching or disciplining their children sufficiently or the challenge of finding quality time with family in the digital age. Cultural issues included items like the widespread availability of drugs and alcohol or the decline in religious faith and church attendance. Economic issues involved the costs associated with raising a family, the lack of good jobs, or high work demands and stress on parents. Because respondents could choose up to three items, these categories are not mutually exclusive.

Patterns of response have remained largely stable over the past several years, with structure being the most common category chosen, largely because of overwhelming agreement that parents do not teach or discipline their children sufficiently. The percentage of respondents choosing structure has declined 10 points since 2015 but has remained very stable over the most recent years. The next most commonly chosen category is

economics. The percentage of respondents choosing this category has increased by more than 12 points since 2015, and 2022 saw the highest percentage yet (63%) choosing this category. The increase from 2021 is not large enough to be confident that the trend is robust, but it bears watching, especially as the nation continues to confront inflation and other economic concerns. Finally, concern about cultural issues has declined 15 points since 2015 but, as with the structural category, has remained roughly stable for the past several years.

When we look closer at the 2022 survey, Americans at the extremes of the partisan and ideological scale disagree sharply about the challenges confronting families. About 9 in 10 liberal Democrats choose some element of economics as among their top three most important problems, compared to only one-third of conservative Republicans. With respect to the other two categories, 85% of conservative Republicans choose some aspect of family structure and three-quarters choose culture, while half of liberal Democrats choose structure, and only 3 in 10 choose culture. These are substantial differences of 30, 40, or — in the case of economics — more than 50 percentage points.

But the extremes do not tell the entire story. If we look at moderate Democrats and Republicans, the differences are much smaller — typically around 10 percentage points or less. This is consistent with a series of findings in this year's survey that show while the ideological members of each party are prone to take stridently incompatible positions, each of the parties has a more moderate wing that is crucial for both public conversations about America's problems as well as the policymaking that could address those problems.

MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING FAMILIES TODAY

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

	STRUCTURE	ECONOMICS	CULTURE
ALL	70%	63%	53%
LIBERAL DEMOCRATS	51%	89%	30%
MODERATE DEMOCRATS	69%	69%	52%
INDEPENDENTS	69%	64%	50%
MODERATE REPUBLICANS	80%	58%	59%
CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICANS	85%	34%	76%

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of all Americans.

NOTE: Respondents selected three items from a list of 12. The list of 12 included four items about family structure, four about economics, and four about culture. Percentages include Americans who chose at least one item in the category.

Beginning in 2020, we also assigned half our respondents to receive curated lists of potential most important family problems that included two additional items: the COVID-19 pandemic and racial inequality. (The analysis above is based only on the half of respondents who received the same list every year.) In 2020, the first year of the pandemic and the year of widespread racial protest in response to the murder of George Floyd, about one-third of Americans chose the pandemic as one of their three most important problems, and 1 in 5 chose racial inequality. These numbers have steadily declined every year, indicating that such issues have fallen off the social and political agenda for many families. In 2022, 13% chose COVID-19 and 12% chose racial inequality — declines of 20 and 8 percentage points, respectively.

At the same time, partisan differences in attention to these issues endure, with Democrats being substantially more likely to highlight them, regardless of whether they are liberal or moderate. Republicans, by contrast, simply do not see these items as challenges for families. For example, only 2% of moderate Republicans and about 1% of conservative Republicans believe that racial inequality is one of the most serious issues confronting American families.

Not surprisingly, differences along lines of race are also present. Consistent with our finding that COVID-19-

related deaths are much more likely to touch Black and Hispanic families, more than 1 in 5 Black and Hispanic respondents selected COVID as a most important problem, compared to less than 1 in 10 whites. And in terms of racial inequality, Black Americans were more than twice as likely as whites to select racial inequality (23% compared to 10%), with Hispanics falling between the two groups, though closer to whites (13%).

When they evaluate the challenges facing American families, the ideological wings of the each party focus on very different issues and concerns. But each side may be overlooking important insights: as we have shown in other analysis, both income and family structure shape the time families have to spend together and participate in family activities, so to the extent that liberal Democrats focus on economic challenges while conservative Republicans express concern about structure and culture as the key problems facing American families, both sides are missing an important element of the story.

–Chris Karpowitz and Jeremy C. Pope
Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy at BYU

SUPPORTING TABLES

MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING FAMILIES TODAY

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

	PERCENT SELECTING
ECONOMICS	63%
THE COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH RAISING A FAMILY	41%
HIGH WORK DEMANDS AND STRESS ON PARENTS	30%
THE LACK OF GOOD JOBS	14%
LACK OF GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT FAMILY	16%
CULTURE	53%
DECLINE IN RELIGIOUS FAITH AND CHURCH ATTENDANCE	20%
WIDESPREAD AVAILABILITY AND USE OF DRUGS AND ALCOHOL	16%
CRIME AND OTHER THREATS TO PERSONAL SAFETY	21%
SEXUAL PERMISSIVENESS IN OUR SOCIETY	13%
FAMILY STRUCTURE AND STABILITY	70%
PARENTS NOT DISCIPLINING THEIR CHILDREN SUFFICIENTLY	41%
MORE CHILDREN GROWING UP IN SINGLE-PARENT HOMES	26%
DIFFICULT FINDING QUALITY TIME WITH FAMILY IN THE DIGITAL AGE	20%
CHANGE IN THE DEFINITION OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY	13%

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of all Americans.

Note: Respondents selected three items from a list of 12. The list of 12 included four items about family structure, four about economics, and four about culture. Percentages include Americans who chose at least one item in the category.

CONCERN ABOUT COVID AND RACIAL INEQUALITY

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

	2020	2021	2022
COVID-19	33%	17%	13%
RACIAL INEQUALITY	20%	16%	12%

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of all Americans.

NOTE: Respondents selected three items from a list of 14.

CONCERN ABOUT COVID AND RACIAL INEQUALITY BY PARTISANSHIP AND IDEOLOGY

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

	COVID-19	RACIAL INEQUALITY
LIBERAL DEMOCRATS	18%	23%
MODERATE DEMOCRATS	19%	16%
INDEPENDENTS	13%	12%
MODERATE REPUBLICANS	9%	2%
CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICANS	4%	1%
WHITE	9%	10%
BLACK	22%	23%
HISPANIC	20%	13%

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of all Americans.

NOTE: Respondents selected three items from a list of 14.

The American Family Survey 2022 was conducted online to a matched sample on gender, race, age and education Aug. 8-15, 2022. The sample size is 3,000 and the overall margin of error is +/- 1.9 percentage points.

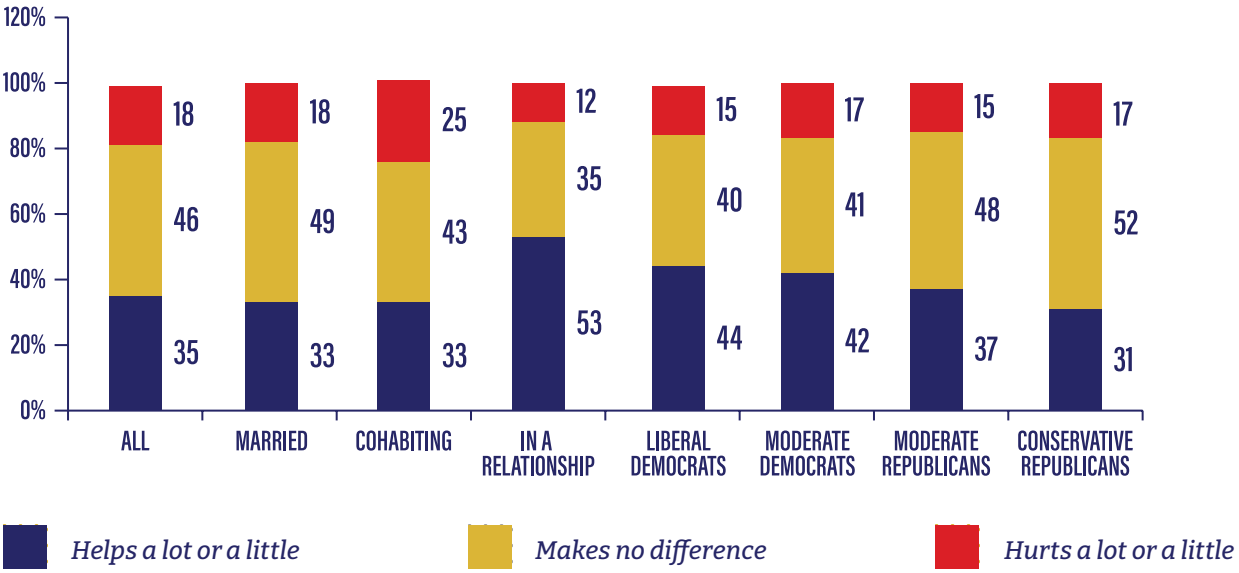
TECHNOLOGY AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

The vast majority of parents — **88%** — agree parents should set boundaries on media use by kids.

Americans are more likely to say technology helps than hurts their relationships. **Thirty-five percent** say it helps their relationship with their partner, and **42%** say it helps their relationship with their children.

RELATIVELY FEW SAY TECHNOLOGY HARMS RELATIONSHIPS

On balance, how does technology (cellphones, computers, tablets and other screens) affect your relationship with your spouse or partner?



SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. (Asked of those in a relationship, cohabiting or married.)

NOTE: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

When asked to render a summary judgment about how things like cellphones, computers, tablets and other screens affect their current relationships with their partners, very few Americans — less than 1 in 5 — report that technology is a negative influence. Almost double that number — more than 1 in 3 — judge modern technology as a positive force in their relationships, all things considered. And the largest group — a little less than half — says technological resources make no difference one way or the other.

Notably, the group that is most enthusiastic about the positive effects of technology are those who are in a relationship but not cohabiting or married. One-third of cohabiting and married respondents say technology helps, compared with more than half of those who are in a relationship but not married or cohabiting. One possible explanation for this difference is that technology facilitates communication and connection at the earlier stages of relationships. By contrast, about one-quarter of cohabiters judge technology to be a hindrance to their relationship — a somewhat higher percentage than among married respondents.

Across other demographic categories, men are more enthusiastic about the positive effects of technology than women, as are Americans with higher incomes and more education, perhaps because those latter two groups are more likely to have access to more or higher quality technological resources. Differences across race and ethnicity are comparatively smaller. When it comes to political identities, liberal Democrats are more likely than conservative Republicans to conclude that technology is a positive force, though the two groups were about equally likely to judge it as actively harmful.

When prompted to make similar judgments about how technology affects their relationship with their children, parents express even more positive views. More than 4 in 10 — the most common response — say technology helps, on balance. About one-quarter of parents say that it hurts, and just over one-third judge that it makes no difference either way. Fathers and mothers come to similar conclusions. As with the findings about technology's effects on partner relationships, wealthier and better-educated respondents are more likely to say technology helps, as are Democrats. Hispanic parents are the least enthusiastic about technology's effects and the most likely to say that it hurts.

MOST PARENTS SAY TECHNOLOGY HELPS MORE THAN HURTS

On balance, how does technology (cellphones, computers, tablets and other screens) affect your relationship with your children?

	HELPS A LOT OR A LITTLE	MAKES NO DIFFERENCE	HURTS A LOT OR A LITTLE
ALL	42%	35%	23%
FATHERS	41%	35%	24%
MOTHERS	43%	35%	22%
LIBERAL DEMOCRATS	52%	28%	20%
MODERATE DEMOCRATS	50%	33%	17%
MODERATE REPUBLICANS	42%	34%	24%
CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICANS	38%	37%	25%

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. (Asked of all parents.)

These positive judgments should not be interpreted to mean that parents do not think it is necessary to monitor and limit their children's media consumption. Nearly 9 in 10 parents agree at least somewhat with the notion that "parents should set boundaries on media consumption for their children," and almost 4 in 10 parents "strongly agree" with that sentiment. A tiny percentage — fewer than 4% — disagrees with the idea of setting boundaries. Regardless of whether they think technology helps or hurts their relationships, the overwhelming majority of all parents conclude that they should regulate their children's relationship to technology.

Parents who are concerned about technology's effects are more likely to talk to their children about media use. Overall, a little less than half of parents say they have had such conversations with their children, though that number rises to almost 6 in 10 among parents who believe technology has a negative effect. On the other hand, just over one-third of parents who don't believe technology makes a difference raise the issue in conversation with their children. What we do not know from these results is how the nature of conversations might differ, depending on parental views of technology's effects. Nor do we know the causal order of these relationships: Do parents have conversations because they believe technology is harming the relationship or do the conversations open parents' eyes to potential harms? These issues could be the subject of further inquiry. For now, however, we can conclude that a little less than half of parents report having conversations about media use and that the likelihood of having such conversations varies with judgments about technology's effects on parent-child relationships.

CONVERSATIONS WITH KIDS ABOUT MEDIA USE

Have you ever spoken with your children about media use?

	PERCENT WHO TALK TO KIDS ABOUT MEDIA USE
ALL	45%
AMONG THOSE WHO SAY TECHNOLOGY ...	
HELPS RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILDREN	47%
MAKES NO DIFFERENCE IN RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILDREN	35%
HURTS RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILDREN	58%

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. (Asked of all parents.)

One way to interpret this set of results is that a large number of parents see both positive and negative aspects to technology. In any given family situation there are likely to be elements of both. Some see mostly problems; some see mostly benefits; and a third (often large) group regards technology as a tool that is, on balance, neither benefiting or harming their relationships. Parents act according to their judgments by speaking with their children, setting limits or simply letting these problems work themselves out. When it comes to effects on family relationships, technology is not easily described with broad normative generalizations such as "technology is bad" or "good." It is, for most people, a set of tools with various considerations.

— Chris Karpowitz and Jeremy C. Pope
Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy at BYU

TECHNOLOGY AND PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS

On balance, how does technology (cellphones, computers, tablets and other screens) affect your relationship with your spouse or partner?

	HELPS A LOT OR A LITTLE	MAKES NO DIFFERENCE	HURTS A LOT OR A LITTLE
MEN	38%	47%	16%
WOMEN	32%	46%	21%
LOW INCOME	33%	45%	22%
MIDDLE INCOME	31%	51%	18%
HIGH INCOME	42%	41%	17%
HIGH SCHOOL OR LESS	30%	53%	17%
SOME COLLEGE	34%	47%	19%
COLLEGE GRADUATES +	41%	39%	20%
WHITE	36%	46%	19%
BLACK	37%	46%	16%
HISPANIC	31%	49%	20%

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. (Asked of all parents.)

NOTE: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

BOUNDARIES ON MEDIA FOR KIDS

How much do you agree or disagree with the following: Parents should set boundaries on media consumption for their children.

	PERCENT WHO AGREE WITH BOUNDARIES ON MEDIA
ALL	88%
AMONG THOSE WHO SAY TECHNOLOGY ...	
HELPS RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILDREN	88%
MAKES NO DIFFERENCE IN RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILDREN	86%
HURTS RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILDREN	94%

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. (Asked of all parents.)

SOURCE: The American Family Survey 2022 was conducted online to a matched sample on gender, race, age and education Aug. 8-15, 2022. The sample size is 3,000 and the overall margin of error is +/- 1.9 percentage points.

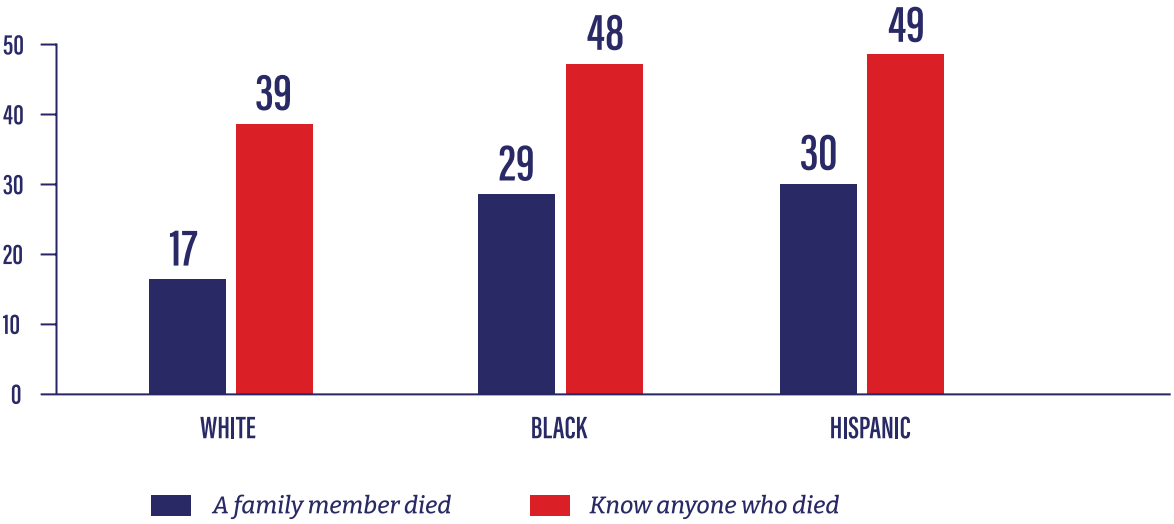
PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

Black and Hispanic Americans are more likely to have a family member who died of COVID. **3** in **10** experienced this, compared to **17%** of whites.

25% of parents say they are extremely concerned about their child's mental health.

FAMILY MEMBERS WHO DIED OF COVID

Have any of the following people you know died because of infection or complications from coronavirus (COVID-19)?



SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of all Americans.
Note: Family members include "someone in my household" and "a family member I don't live with."

Midway through the pandemic's third year, we continue to find substantial racial and ethnic disparities in the way COVID-19 has touched American families. Those disparities were evident in 2021 as well, and the primary difference in 2022 is that more families of all races have experienced a death from COVID in their immediate or extended family. Approximately 3 in 10 Black and Hispanic Americans now report that someone in their household or a family member they don't live with has died from COVID, compared to 17% of whites. And if we expand the analysis to include knowing anyone who has died, about half of Black and Hispanic respondents are aware of a COVID death in their circle of acquaintances, compared to 4 in 10 whites. Clearly, the pandemic has taken a toll on all Americans, but the costs of that pandemic are not distributed evenly through the population; some groups have experienced a higher toll.

We also asked about access to medical care. These questions do not refer to COVID, specifically, but to whether respondents feel they have been able to access all needed health care, both mental and physical, in the past year. Respondents could also indicate that they did not need such care. Compared to 2021, a higher percentage of respondents said they needed physical care this year, while rates of needing mental health care remained largely unchanged, with the possible exception of slightly higher percentages of low-income and Hispanic respondents saying they needed mental health care services in 2022. Perhaps the increased need for physical

health care that we see across all groups reflects the large Omicron wave of COVID cases or the pent-up need for health care as the pandemic persists, though we did not inquire about specific medical challenges or diagnoses. Intriguingly, in both 2021 and 2022, white and high-income respondents were more likely than others to say they needed physical health care.

Among those who said they needed care, high-income and white respondents are more likely to say they received it. These patterns hold for both 2021 and 2022. For mental health care services, Hispanic respondents are the group least likely to say they received needed care, while differences between white and Black Americans are substantially smaller. When it comes to physical health care, the differences in receiving care between high- and low-income respondents is large: in 2022, for example, it is a 16-point gap, with a little less than 70% of low-income respondents saying they received needed physical care, compared to 85% of those with comparatively higher incomes. As with mental health services, Hispanic respondents are the group least likely to say they received the care they needed.

WHO RECEIVED THE CARE THEY NEEDED?

Do you feel like you and your family have received the mental health care you needed in the past year? Do you feel like you and your family have received the physical health care you needed in the past year?

Percent who received needed care

	2021	2022
MENTAL HEALTH		
LOW INCOME (<$40K)	47	46
MIDDLE INCOME ($40-80K)	54	53
HIGH INCOME (>$80K)	62	59
WHITE	57	52
BLACK	53	51
HISPANIC	42	44
PHYSICAL HEALTH		
LOW INCOME (<$40K)	67	69
MIDDLE INCOME ($40-80K)	78	79
HIGH INCOME (>$80K)	80	85
WHITE	77	79
BLACK	72	76
HISPANIC	63	71

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of all Americans. Analysis based only on those who said they needed care.

Finally, we also asked parents with school-age children to report their levels of concern about different dimensions of their children's well-being, including physical health, social health, mental health, and academic achievement. These evaluations are general assessments of how parents are feeling right now, and we do not know the pre-COVID baseline. For respondents with more than one school-age child, we randomly chose one child for the respondent to tell us about. Overall, about one-quarter of parents expressed "extreme" concern about their children in each of these areas. But again, concern is not equally distributed. White parents are substantially less likely to describe themselves as extremely concerned about their children compared to Black and Hispanic parents.

Regardless of the specific category, about 1 in 5 white parents says they are extremely concerned, compared to roughly one-third of Black parents and roughly 3 in 10 Hispanic parents. On several dimensions, disparities of income and education are also glaring. For example, fully twice as many low-income parents say they are extremely concerned about their child (30%) as high-income parents (15%). Similarly, parental levels of extreme concern about their child's academic achievement are more than twice as high among parents with a high school education or less than among parents with a college degree. Notably, income gaps are somewhat less pronounced for social health and academic achievement.

PARENT CONCERNS ABOUT CHILDREN

How concerned are you about the following issues when it comes to your [x]-year-old [son/daughter]?

Percent "extremely concerned"

	PHYSICAL HEALTH	SOCIAL HEALTH	MENTAL HEALTH	ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT
ALL	22	25	25	24
WHITE	17	20	22	18
BLACK	34	32	31	35
HISPANIC	28	34	28	29
LOW INCOME	30	28	31	27
MIDDLE INCOME	20	25	23	23
HIGH INCOME	15	20	20	21
HIGH SCHOOL	31	30	31	34
SOME COLLEGE	18	26	26	21
COLLEGE GRAD +	15	17	18	15

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of parents with school-age children.

None of these findings should be confused with formal medical diagnoses or other indicators of health, well-being, or achievement. They are respondent self-reports of how well they believe they and their families are doing. All the same, health challenges are not affecting all American families equally. The American Family Survey reveals meaningful racial and economic disparities in Americans' level of concern about health challenges as well as persistent inequalities in perceptions of access to needed medical services. When asked to reflect on both their own and their family's physical and mental sense of well-being, some Americans feel much greater levels of concern than others. These inequalities are reflected in their evaluations not just of themselves but of how well their children are doing across multiple dimensions.

— Chris Karpowitz and Jeremy C. Pope
Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy at BYU

DEATH OF A FAMILY MEMBER FROM COVID

Have any of the following people you know died because of infection or complications from coronavirus (COVID-19)?

	2021	2022
WHITE	9	17
BLACK	16	29
HISPANIC	21	30

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of all Americans.
Note: Family members include "someone in my household" and "a family member I don't live with."

WHO NEEDED HEALTH CARE?

Do you feel like you and your family have received the mental health care you needed in the past year? Do you feel like you and your family have received the physical health care you needed in the past year?

Percent who reported needing care (whether or not they received it)

	2021	2022
MENTAL HEALTH CARE		
ALL	49	50
LOW INCOME (<$40K)	51	57
MIDDLE INCOME ($40-80K)	49	46
HIGH INCOME (>$80K)	50	49
WHITE	48	48
BLACK	54	53
HISPANIC	48	54
PHYSICAL HEALTH CARE		
ALL	74	83
LOW INCOME (<$40K)	72	82
MIDDLE INCOME ($40-80K)	76	82
HIGH INCOME (>$80K)	78	87
WHITE	77	85
BLACK	70	82
HISPANIC	66	76

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of all Americans.

The American Family Survey 2022 was conducted online to a matched sample on gender, race, age and education Aug. 8-15, 2022. The sample size is 3,000 and the overall margin of error is +/- 1.9 percentage points.

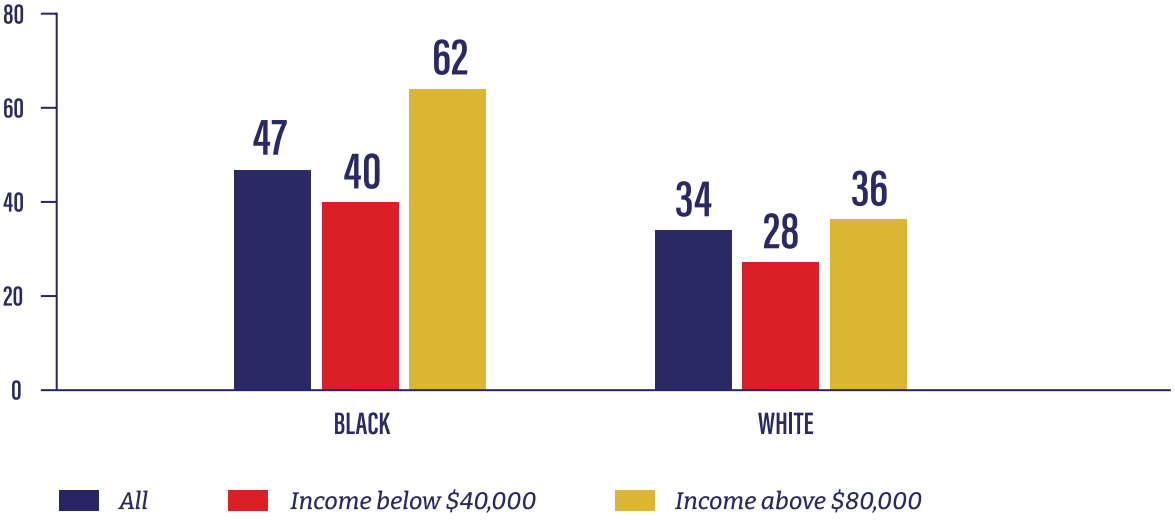
FAMILY CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE

About half of all Americans have ever spoken to their children about racial justice.

62% of high-income Black Americans have talked with their kids about how to stay safe when interacting with police.

PARENTS DISCUSS POLICE INTERACTIONS WITH KIDS

Have you ever spoken with your children about the following topics? How to stay personally safe when interacting with the police.



SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. Asked of parents.

The 2022 American Family Survey asked respondents about the types of conversations they're having with their children, including race-related issues like police interactions and the concepts of racial justice or injustice. White and Black families differ substantially in their likelihood of talking with their kids about how to stay safe when interacting with police: about 47% of Black parents report that they have had these types of conversations, compared to 34% of white and 31% of Hispanic parents.

Talking with children about safety with the police is also related to income, and in the case of Black respondents, the income effect is more than 20 percentage points, with conversations about being safe with the police more likely among higher income respondents. More than 60% of Black parents with incomes above $80,000 (putting them in the upper third of the personal income distribution) report such conversations compared with 40% for the lower third of the income distribution. Whites are less likely than Black respondents to report such conversations, though higher-income whites are again more likely than those with lower incomes to report such conversations. Among whites, consistently about a third or fewer reported such conversations. Though we do not know the specific reasons behind this, these numbers suggest that parents with higher incomes are more likely to think that conversation is necessary and important.

We also asked about conversations around racial "justice" or "injustice." This was a simple experiment where half of

the sample was asked whether they talk to their children about "racial justice" and half were asked about "racial injustice." Differences between the two" framings tend to be small, except among Hispanic respondents where racial "justice" drew a higher response (48% to 34%). Among other groups the differences were negligible.

Parents clearly have conversations about racial issues some of the time and it does seem to be one of the more likely topics for people to discuss (as opposed to other matters like family finances, media, or gender issues), but the experience is far from universal, regardless of the race of the family.

— Chris Karpowitz, Jeremy C. Pope, and Spencer Rudy
Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy at BYU

SUPPORTING TABLES

DISCUSSING RACIAL JUSTICE WITH CHILDREN

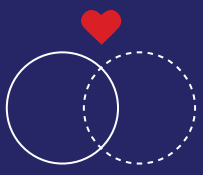
Have you ever spoken with your children about the following topics? (Half of respondents were asked about racial justice and half were asked about racial injustice)

	ALL	BLACK	WHITE	HISPANIC
RACIAL JUSTICE	48	55	48	48
RACIAL INJUSTICE	49	54	50	34

SOURCE: American Family Survey 2022. Asked of parents.

The American Family Survey 2022 was conducted online to a matched sample on gender, race, age and education Aug. 8-15, 2022. The sample size is 3,000 and the overall margin of error is +/- 1.9 percentage points.

RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS DIFFERENCES



4 in **10** Amerians say someone in their family is in a relationship with someone of a different race.

Mixed relationships are more prevalent among those with high incomes.

40% of high-income Americans report a mixed-partisan marriage in their family, compared to 23% among low-income Americans.

MIXED-RACE RELATIONSHIPS MORE COMMON THAN MIXED-PARTY OR MIXED-RELIGION

Are you or is anyone in your family married to or in a committed relationship with someone of [another race/religion/political party]?

	MIXED RACE	MIXED RELIGION	MIXED POLITICAL PARTY
RESPONDENT	10	10	7
IMMEDIATE FAMILY	17	13	13
EXTENDED FAMILY	25	14	16
ANY FAMILY MEMBER	43	30	31

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of all Americans.

In a diverse and often divided society, one important question is how often Americans develop committed relationships across lines of race, religion and partisanship. Racial and religious divisions have a long history in the United States, and scholars have also documented recent increases in affective polarization in which partisans are dividing into separate camps, including in their willingness to marry someone of the opposite party.

In the 2022 American Family Survey, respondents reported on their experience with "mixed" relationships of several different types. We randomly assigned them to tell us whether they or family members are married to or in a committed relationship with someone of another race, another religion, or another political party. Each respondent thus reported only one type of mixed relationship.

The striking result of these self-reports is that mixed-race relationships are more common than mixed-religion or mixed-partisan relationships. These differences are more muted among the respondents themselves, but are pronounced in reports of broader family relationships. When we consider self, immediate family, and extended family together, more than 4 in 10 Americans say their family includes at least one mixed-race relationship or marriage. By contrast, about 3 in 10 say mixed-religion or mixed-partisan relationships can be found in their families.

About 15% of Black and 17% of Hispanic Americans report that they themselves are in a mixed-race marriage, compared to about 6% of whites. These racial differences are not found for religious or partisan divides: mixed-religion marriages are least common among Hispanics (6%, compared to 10% among whites and 12% for Black respondents), and mixed-partisan marriages are least common for Blacks (2%, compared to 7% among whites and 5% among Hispanics).

Mixed relationships also vary by income and are more prevalent among those with the highest incomes. These differences are present to some degree in respondent

reports about their own marriages but are again much larger when we consider other family members, too. Nearly half of Americans with high incomes report a mixed-race relationship in their family, compared to 4 in 10 Americans with low incomes. For mixed-religion and mixed-partisan relationships, the differences between low-and high-income respondents is around 20 percentage points.

MIXED RELATIONSHIPS BY INCOME

Are you or is anyone in your family married to or in a committed relationship with someone of [another race/religion/political party]?

	LOW INCOME (< $40K)	MIDDLE INCOME ($40-$80K)	HIGH INCOME (> $80K)
RESPONDENT ONLY			
MIXED RACE	7	9	11
MIXED RELIGION	8	11	15
MIXED PARTISANSHIP	3	9	10
ANY FAMILY MEMBERS OF RESPONDENT			
MIXED RACE	39	45	47
MIXED RELIGION	23	29	43
MIXED PARTISANSHIP	23	33	40

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of all Americans.

Parsing results by respondents' partisan and ideological commitments, we again find some patterns. Considering only the respondent's own marriage or relationship, mixed-race marriages are slightly more common among moderate partisans, though the differences are small. Liberal Democrats are less likely than others to report a mixed-partisan marriage, though that difference evaporates when widening the circle to include reports about other family members. Mixed-race and mixed-religion marriages appear to be somewhat less prevalent in the families of conservative Republicans, though moderate Republicans are the most likely to report mixed-religion marriages. Across the political spectrum, mixed-partisan relationships are less prevalent than mixed-race marriages. For example, nearly half of liberal Democrats report a mixed-race marriage in their family, but only one-third report partisan diversity.

These results are correlations and should not be interpreted to suggest the causes of these familial experiences. Given the nation's history of racial tension and segregation, however, it is notable that racially integrated American families are now more common than religiously or politically diverse marriages. The implications of both the presence of racial integration and the comparative absence of religious and political diversity bear additional examination in the future. The fact that political and religious homophily—the tendency to associate with those who are similar to ourselves—outstrip racial homophily in marriage relationships has the potential to shape not only family discussions and experiences but also public discourse in a host of important ways.

—Chris Karpowitz and Jeremy C. Pope
Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy at BYU

MIXED RELATIONSHIPS BY PARTISANSHIP AND IDEOLOGY

Are you or is anyone in your family married to or in a committed relationship with someone of [another race/religion/political party]?

	LIBERAL DEMOCRATS	MODERATE DEMOCRATS	MODERATE REPUBLICANS	CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICANS
RESPONDENT ONLY				
MIXED RACE	8	10	11	6
MIXED RELIGION	10	10	12	9
MIXED PARTISANSHIP	3	9	8	7
ANY FAMILY RELATIONSHIP				
MIXED RACE	49	41	44	35
MIXED RELIGION	33	31	37	23
MIXED PARTISANSHIP	33	35	32	29

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of all Americans.

The American Family Survey 2022 was conducted online to a matched sample on gender, race, age and education Aug. 8-15, 2022. The sample size is 3,000 and the overall margin of error is +/- 1.9 percentage points.

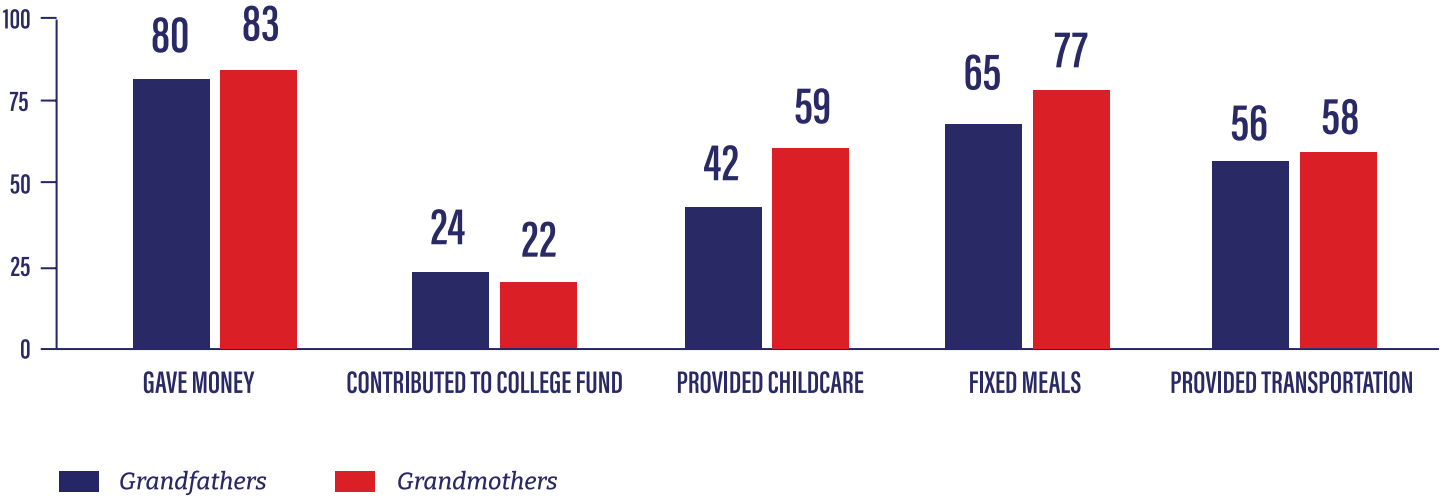
GRANDPARENTS

The most common way grandparents support their grandchildren is financial. More than 80% across all income groups say they have given money to their grandchildren.

40% of grandmothers send text messages to their grandparents at least once a week.

GRANDPARENT INVOLVEMENT

Have you ever done any of the following for any of your grandchildren?



SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of grandparents.

For the first time in the survey's history, this year's American Family Survey explored grandparents' involvement in the lives of their grandchildren. Nearly one-third of the 3,000 respondents reported having one or more grandchildren, and just over 6% of these grandparents told us they serve as the primary caregiver or guardian for a grandchild. Though few in our sample say they are raising their grandchildren, large percentages of grandfathers and grandmothers report being involved in their grandchildren's lives in some way.

One of the most common things grandparents do is provide financial gifts, support, or other forms of economic assistance. About 8 in 10 grandparents say they have given money to their grandchildren, and in a follow-up question, the most common amount given is somewhere between $1,000 and $10,000. Not surprisingly, such gifts are partially a function of grandparents' income, and more than one-third of high-income grandparents (those making over $80,000 per year) report giving more than $10,000. But even among the lowest income group (those making less than $40,000 per year), 8 in 10 grandparents say they have given at least some money; more than one-third report giving between $101 and $1,000; and about 45% told us they have given at least $1,000. Close to one-quarter of all grandparents say they have contributed to a grandchild's college fund, though this sort of giving is more than three times more likely among high-income grandparents (37%) than among those with lower incomes (12%).

Beyond financial support, large percentages of grandparents say they have taken other steps to support their grandchildren, such as providing childcare, fixing meals, or supplying transportation. Grandmothers tend to offer these sorts of services more often than grandfathers—consistent with gender differences in other areas we have seen in the AFS. Still, healthy percentages of grandfathers pitch in. And this finding does not mask significant racial differences: grandparents of all races support their grandchildren at roughly equal rates.
We also asked about patterns of communication between grandparents and grandchildren. More than 4 in 10 grandparents say they see their grandchildren in person at least weekly, and substantial numbers connect with their grandchildren by video, voice, or text messages, though it appears that grandmothers communicate slightly more often than grandfathers. And these patterns seem to have little to do with grandparents' income: low, middle, and high income grandparents communicate with their grandchildren at roughly equal rates. Very few grandparents (about 3% of our sample) have no contact or communication of any kind with their grandchildren.

COMMUNICATING WITH GRANDCHILDREN

How often do you ...
Percent reporting doing each activity at least weekly.

	GRANDFATHERS	GRANDMOTHERS
SEE GRANDCHILD IN PERSON	41	44
VIDEO OR VOICE CALLS WITH GRANDCHILDREN	31	41
SEND TEXT MESSAGES TO GRANDCHILDREN	26	40
RECEIVE TEXT MESSAGES FROM GRANDCHILDREN	24	38

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of grandparents.

Finally, we also asked about the types of in-person activities grandparents do with their grandchildren. These sorts of activities tend to be infrequent—most grandparents report participating in them monthly or less, and 20-30% of grandparents say they never do them at all The most common activities include talking together about life and participating in other home-centered activities, like playing games or watching tv. Going out to grandchildren's activities or to other events is far less common. Regardless of the activity, though, grandmothers tend to be somewhat more actively involved than grandfathers.

ACTIVITIES WITH GRANDCHILDREN

How often do you do the following things with your grandchildren?
Percent reporting doing each activity at least weekly.

	GRANDFATHERS	GRANDMOTHERS
ATTEND GRANDCHILD'S ACTIVITIES (RECITALS, SPORTING EVENTS, ETC.)	7	8
TALK ABOUT LIFE	17	27
GO OUT TO MOVIES, MUSEUMS, SPORTING EVENTS	5	9
PARTICIPATE IN ACTIVITIES AT HOME (PLAY GAMES, WATCH TV, ETC.)	22	29

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of grandparents.

Overall, this first-ever AFS exploration of grandparent involvement in the lives of their grandchildren reveals widespread support for grandchildren, especially financial support. And a willingness to give money spans across income categories—even grandparents with the lowest incomes say they have given substantial amounts to their grandchildren. Though we did not ask about specific responses to economic challenges, these results suggest that grandparents and other extended family members may serve as an important source of support in times of economic stress. And beyond money, grandparents support their grandchildren in other ways—talking or texting, attending events, and otherwise cheering them on. Such widespread patterns of communication and assistance mean that it would be unwise to discount the important role grandparents can play in the life of the family.

—Chris Karpowitz and Jeremy C. Pope
Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy at BYU

SUPPORTING TABLES

GRANDPARENT INVOLVEMENT

Have you ever done any of the following for any of your grandchildren?

INCOME	LOW INCOME	MIDDLE INCOME	HIGH INCOME
GAVE MONEY	81	85	81
CONTRIBUTED TO COLLEGE FUND	12	25	37
PROVIDED CHILDCARE	49	52	54
FIXED MEALS	69	71	75
PROVIDED TRANSPORTATION	52	58	61

SOURCE:2022 American Family Survey. Asked of grandparents.

GRANDPARENT FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

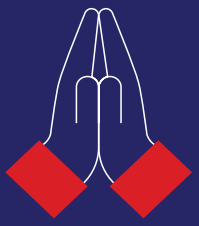
Currently, how much money do you estimate that you have contributed to your grandchildren/ children in total?

	LOW INCOME	MIDDLE INCOME	HIGH INCOME
LESS THAN $100	19	8	5
$101-$1,000	36	27	23
$1,001-$10,000	35	46	36
$10,001-$50,000	7	13	25
$50,001+	3	7	12

SOURCE:2022 American Family Survey. Asked of grandparents.

The American Family Survey 2022 was conducted online to a matched sample on gender, race, age and education Aug. 8-15, 2022. The sample size is 3,000 and the overall margin of error is +/- 1.9 percentage points.

RELIGION AND FAMILY LIFE

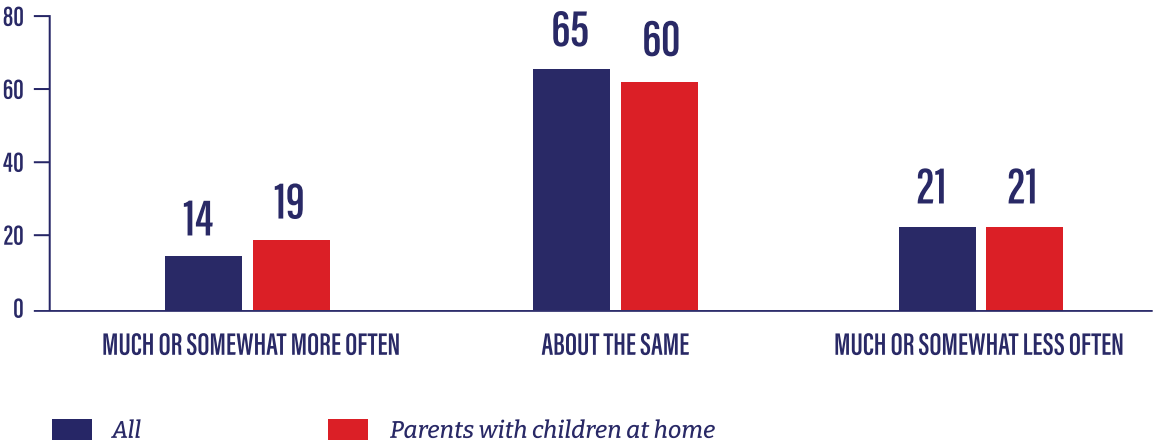


Most Americans did not change their religious activities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. About 2/3 say their frequency of participation is the same as before the pandemic.

Many families are religiously diverse. Among parents who belong to a religion, **56%** say all their children share that religion.

SELF-REPORTED CHANGE IN RELIGIOUS PRACTICE POST-COVID

Thinking back to the time before the COVID-19 pandemic, how often would you say your family now participates in religious activities, including worship attendance, compared to before the pandemic?



SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of all Americans.

Researchers have documented a significant decline over the past several decades in the number of Americans who claim a religious affiliation, with many now numbering among the religious "nones"—those who describe themselves as "atheist," "agnostic," or "nothing in particular." In 2022, 36% of respondents to the American Family Survey fall into this category, a result similar to recent surveys from the Pew Research Center.

The nation has a long tradition of some form of belief in the divine even among those who are "unchurched," so in addition to religious affiliation, we asked whether people consider themselves "religious" and whether they consider themselves "spiritual." More than 6 in 10 Americans classify themselves as "spiritual," compared to a little over 4 in 10 who say they are "religious." Just over one-third say they are "religious" and "spiritual," which is roughly similar to the percentage who say they are neither. About one-quarter of respondents say they are "spiritual" but not "religious", a finding that emphasizes the persistence of some form of belief even among those who are not formally affiliated with a religion.

RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

Do you agree with the following statements? I consider myself a religious person; I consider myself a spiritual person
Percent agree or strongly agree

	CONSIDER SELF SPIRITUAL	DO NOT CONSIDER SELF SPIRITUAL
CONSIDER SELF RELIGIOUS	37	5
DO NOT CONSIDER SELF RELIGIOUS	24	34

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of all Americans.

The American Family Survey is uniquely positioned to explore not only individual religious commitment, but also the varieties of religious traditions and experiences within families. While most Americans (51%) say that religion is an "individual" matter, just over 40% say that is either a family matter or both an individual and family issue.

To explore how religious commitments vary within families, we asked parents to tell us whether their children share their parents' religious affiliation, whatever that might be. These are parental reports, so we do not know whether the children might have responded differently. Overall, we find a great deal of religious diversity within families: among parents who are themselves affiliated with a religion, 56% say all their children share that same affiliation, while 44% say that some or all of them do not. But even among parents who are religious "nones," 44% say their children share their (lack of) religious commitments, while 56% say that some or all of their children do not. This result likely means that some children of religious "nones" are affiliated with a religion. Among parents affiliated with a religion, white evangelical Protestants and Black Protestants are the most likely to report that all their children share their same affiliation—64% and 63%, respectively. Among white mainline Protestants, Catholics, and other religions, about half of respondents report that all their children belong to the same religion.

SHARED RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION AMONG PARENTS AND CHILDREN

Does your child share your present religious affiliation?

	ALL CHILDREN SHARE PARENT'S AFFILIATION	SOME OR ALL CHILDREN DO NOT SHARE PARENT'S AFFILIATION
AMONG...		
PARENTS WHO ARE AFFILIATED WITH A RELIGION	56	44
PARENTS WHO ARE NOT AFFILIATED WITH A RELIGION	44	56
PARENTS WHO HAVE SAME RELIGION AS PARTNER	57	43
PARENTS WHO DO NOT HAVE SAME RELIGION AS PARTNER*	43	57

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. Analysis of all parents with a current partner and children.
*NOTE: About 75% of parents share the same religious affiliation with their partner; 25% do not.

We also asked respondents to tell us whether their spouse or romantic partner shares their religious commitments: about three-quarters of couples share a religious affiliation, while one-quarter do not. Religious unity among parents matters: 57% of parents who share their partner's religious affiliation report that all their children also share their religious affiliation, compared with 43% among mixed-religion relationships. At the same time, large percentages of both groups have one or more children who do not share their religious commitments. All in all, we find substantial evidence of a variety of religious beliefs and commitments within families.

Fewer than 4 in 10 parents told us it is somewhat or very important that their children practice the same religion they do. But this sentiment also varies with the family's lived experience. For example, 56% of parents in families where all the children share the responding parent's religious affiliation say it is somewhat or very important to them, compared to 26% of parents who have at least one child that does not share their religious affilation. Among parents who are affiliated with a religion, these numbers increase to 66% and 34%, respectively, and among parents in mixed-religion marriages, they decrease to 43% and 16%. These are correlations, so we do not know whether parental views about the importance of sharing religious affiliation with their children are a cause or effect of their children's (or partner's) choices. Nonetheless, for some parents, sharing religious commitments with their children is extremely important, but for others (especially those in mixed-religion households), such a shared religious life appears to be a lower priority.

When it comes to engaging in different religious activities with their children, majorities of parents with children at home say they pray, talk about God, and discuss how to live a moral or ethical life at least once a month. These percentages are even higher among parents who are affiliated with a religion (approximately 70% or more), especially white evangelical and Black Protestants, and they are substantially lower among parents who are not affiliated with a religion. White mainline Protestants are the group least likely to participate in these at-home religious activities, at times only barely exceeding the percentages found among the "nones." At the same time, majorities or near majorities of those who consider themselves spiritual but are not affiliated with a religion also report engaging in these activities at least monthly. Thus, both institutional affiliation and personal commitment to spirituality matter for some aspects of the practice of religion in the home. Other aspects of religious life, such as reading religious texts, participating in religious rituals, and attending religious services are, perhaps unsurprisingly, much more likely to occur in families where the responding parent is affiliated with a religion.

RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL ACTIVITIES

How often do you engage in these activities with any of your children?
Percent saying at least once a month

	ALL PARENTS	AFFILIATED WITH RELIGION	NOT AFFILIATED WITH RELIGION	NOT AFFILIATED AND IDENTIFY AS "SPIRITUAL"
DISCUSS LIVING A MORAL OR ETHICAL LIFE	61	68	46	59
PRAY	59	74	32	48
TALK ABOUT GOD	56	70	30	50
READ RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL TEXTS	40	51	19	27
ATTEND RELIGIOUS SERVICES	37	51	10	15
PARTICIPATE IN RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL RITUALS	35	47	12	19
MEDITATE	35	41	23	33

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. Analysis of parents with children at home.

Most Americans say the pandemic did not change their participation in religious life. A small percentage (14%) report that their religious activity increased during the pandemic, but a slightly larger group (21%) says they now engage in religious activities less often. Among parents with children at home, the percentage reporting an increase (19%) is more evenly balanced with those reporting a decrease (21%). Overall, self-assessed frequency of religious devotion does not seem to be greatly affected by the pandemic; if anything, it decreased slightly.

While many have documented Americans' declining levels of commitment to formal religious institutions, the 2022 AFS reveals a patchwork quilt of religious practices within families, differing levels of commitment to religious institutions, and the potential for considerable religious "churn." Many parents who are affiliated with a denomination have one or more children who are not affiliated; and some parents who are not affiliated have children who are. Americans' spiritual lives are rich and diverse, not only across but within families.

—Chris Karpowitz and Jeremy C. Pope
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SUPPORTING TABLES

RESPONSIBILITY FOR RELIGION

In your view, are religion and spirituality primarily an individual matter or family matter?

	INDIVIDUAL	FAMILY	BOTH	NEITHER
ALL	51	8	34	7
18-29	45	9	33	13
30-44	47	10	34	8
45-54	50	6	37	6
55-64	54	7	35	3
65+	60	8	30	2
WHITE	56	8	32	5
BLACK	40	10	41	10
HISPANIC	45	9	36	10

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of all Americans.

IMPORTANCE OF SHARED RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION IN FAMILIES

How important is it for you that your child/children practice the same religion that you practice?
Percent saying somewhat or very important

	ALL CHILDREN SHARE PARENT'S AFFILIATION	SOME OR ALL CHILDREN DO NOT SHARE PARENT'S AFFILIATION
AMONG...		
ALL PARETNS	56	26
PARENTS WITH CHILDREN AT HOME	65	31
PARENTS WHO ARE AFFILIATED WITH A RELIGION	66	34
PARENTS WHO DO NOT SHARE A RELIGION WITH THIER PARTNER	43	16

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of all parents.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR RELIGION

In your view, are religion and spirituality primarily an individual matter or family matter?

	WHITE EVANGELICAL PROTESTANT	WHITE MAINLINE PROTESTANT	BLACK PROTESTANT	CATHOLIC	OTHER	NONE
DISCUSS LIVING A MORAL OR ETHICAL LIFE	83	57	78	59	67	47
PRAY	88	51	70	70	69	32
TALK ABOUT GOD	88	47	79	61	68	30
READ RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL TEXTS	68	25	53	45	47	19
ATTEND RELIGIOUS SERVICES	63	27	56	51	44	10
PARTICIPATE IN RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL RITUALS	59	21	40	46	46	13
MEDITATE	39	31	46	43	47	24

SOURCE: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of parents with children at home.

The American Family Survey 2022 was conducted online to a matched sample on gender, race, age and education Aug. 8-15, 2022. The sample size is 3,000 and the overall margin of error is +/- 1.9 percentage points.

RELATIONSHIP STATUS

SLOW SHIFTS IN MARITAL STATUS

Which best describes your current relationship status?

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Married	50	50	47	47	48	47	45	45
Cohabiting	11	9	11	11	11	10	9	11
In a relationship	8	7	6	6	7	6	6	7
Not in a relationship	32	34	35	35	34	37	39	37

Source: American Family Survey, 2015-2022. Asked of all Americans.
Note: The very small percentage of respondents who report being separated are included in the "married" category.

Over its eight years, the American Family Survey has documented a small but meaningful decline in the percentage of Americans who report being married and a corresponding increase in those saying they are not in any relationship at all. In 2015, fully half of Americans described themselves as married, and a little less than one-third classified themselves as not currently in a romantic relationship. By 2022, the percentage of married Americans declined by 5 points, while the percentage not in a relationship increased by the same amount. These changes appear to be enduring, not merely a blip in a single year.

What difference do these patterns make in the lives of Americans? For one, changing patterns of relationships matter for how often people feel isolated and lonely. We asked three questions developed by psychologists at UCLA to gauge loneliness, and we find that the likelihood of reporting "often" feeling a lack of companionship, left out, or isolated is strongly associated with relationship status. Married respondents are the least likely to report high levels of loneliness, with 1 in 10 or fewer saying they "often" feel that way. Cohabiting respondents and those in a relationship look roughly similar to each other and experience slightly higher levels of loneliness. Americans not in a relationship of any kind are dramatically more likely to report feeling that they are isolated, left out, or lack companionship. Depending on the exact question asked, somewhere between 2 in 10 and 3 in 10 Americans not in a relationship say they feel this way "often."

MARRIED AMERICANS ARE LEAST LONELY

The next questions are about how you feel about different aspects of your life. For each one, indicate how often you feel that way.
Percent answering "often"

	I Lack Companionship	I Feel Left Out	I Feel Isolated
Married	8	9	10
Cohabiting	9	14	17
In a relationship	9	16	20
Not in a relationship	31	22	24

Source: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of all Americans.

This correlation between loneliness and relationship status holds for both men and women, though a slightly higher percentage of women than men reports feeling lonely "often." Gender disparities are largest among those who are not married or cohabiting. Specifically, women not married or cohabiting are especially likely to feel isolated compared to men in those categories.

We asked the same loneliness questions in 2019 (prior to the pandemic) and in 2020 (in the first few months of the pandemic). Strikingly, levels of loneliness decline slightly between 2019 and 2022 among married and cohabiting individuals, but they hold steady among those who are not married or living with a partner. Among married respondents, loneliness — defined as saying "often" to *any* of the three questions — declines by about 4 percentage points, and among those who are cohabiting, it declines by 6. These are small changes, to be sure, but we see little to no evidence of change among the other two groups. In this analysis, we again find that rates of loneliness are consistently lowest among those who are married, and the effect is quite large.

During the pandemic, many commentators worried about a potential explosion of loneliness among Americans asked to shelter at home, practice social distancing, or otherwise reduce face-to-face, in-person interactions. The American Family Survey finds no evidence of a pandemic spike in loneliness when we compare the 2019 findings to 2020 and 2022. Nonetheless, the consistent finding is that committed relationships — and marriage especially — provides an important buffer against feeling isolated, left out, and alone. In this sense, the meaningful decline we see in respondents reporting their relationship status as "married" and the corresponding increase in those who are not involved in any romantic relationship is likely to matter for the psychological health of Americans. Among its other benefits, marriage insulates partners from feeling detached, left out — alone.

—Chris Karpowitz and Jeremy C. Pope
Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy at BYU

SUPPORTING TABLES

RELATIONSHIP STATUS AND LONELINESS

The next questions are about how you feel about different aspects of your life. For each one, indicate how often you feel that way.

Percent answering "often"

	I Lack Companionship		I Feel Left Out		I Feel Isolated	
	Women	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**
Married	9	7	10	8	12	8
Cohabiting	11	7	16	12	19	14
In a relationship	8	11	15	15	12	28
Not in a relationship	30	33	20	24	21	27

Source: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of all Americans.

SLIGHT DECLINE IN LONELINESS FOR MARRIED, COHABITING AMERICANS

Percent reporting they feel *any* of the three loneliness items "often."

	2019	2020	2022
All	28	27	26
Married	19	17	15
Cohabiting	28	24	22
In a relationship	28	26	28
Not in a relationship	40	39	41

Source: 2019, 2020, 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of all Americans.

The American Family Survey was conducted online to a matched sample on gender, race, age, and education between August 8-15, 2022. The sample size is 3,000 and the overall margin of error for the survey is 1.9 percent.

RELATIONSHIP STRENGTH

PERCEPTIONS OF RELATIONSHIP TROUBLE

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

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
All	34	34	33	32	33	26	28	30
Married	28	31	29	27	30	22	24	25
Cohabiting	52	42	47	48	42	38	46	42
In Relationship	50	41	39	41	42	35	33	50

Source: 2015-2022 American Family Survey. Asked of those in a committed relationship of at least two years or more.

Each year, the American Family Survey includes an opportunity for Americans who report being in a committed relationship for at least two years to tell us whether they worry that their relationship has been "in trouble" in the previous two years. Prior to the pandemic, one-third of respondents consistently answered in the affirmative. In 2020, at the height of the pandemic, the percentage dropped dramatically. But this pandemic-related period improvement may be reversing. The last couple of years have seen more couples report the view that their marriage has recently been in trouble, with the figure now rising again to 30%. Is this a blip? Measurement error? It is too soon to be sure, but it is striking that as we exit the pandemic's most difficult periods, the percent of the public seeing trouble in their marriages is rising.

The level of concern about relationship trouble varies significantly by relationship status. Married couples are the least likely to report concern, and depending on the year, concern among those who are cohabiting or in a long-term (but not cohabiting) relationship is often 10-20 percentage points higher. Nonetheless, all three groups have seen a rebound from pandemic lows. In the case of people in a committed relationship, concern is now 15 points higher than it was in 2020, and among cohabiters, concern has increased by seven points, compared to an increase of three points among married respondents. In other words, the lower the level of legal commitment to each other, the greater the increase in post-pandemic relationship concern.

Other demographic characteristics also matter. As in the past, the group most likely to report thinking their relationship is in trouble is younger respondents; almost half of those in a committed relationship between 18-29 years old and over 40% of those between 30-44 report trouble, and these numbers are even higher among non-married respondents. Among older respondents, 30% or fewer express concern. In a similar vein, poorer Americans are also more likely to report relationship trouble. Those who make less than $40k a year are more concerned than the average, while those making more than $40k a year are less concerned than average. Analyzing the question by race also reveals differences; about 1 in 4 white respondents think their marriage has been in trouble within the last two years, while more than 1 in 3 Black and Hispanic respondents feel that way. And again, reported concern is highest among Americans who are not married.

Though this picture of relationship health is important, it may overemphasize the negative trend. Repeatedly, we see evidence that married respondents are less concerned than those who are in a committed relationship but are not married. And despite this year's increase in reported relationship trouble, a little more than 4 in 10 married Americans say their marriage got *stronger* within the last year — a fairly consistent number over the last few years. Though, as we have noted in previous reports, Americans are worried about marriage generally, they tend to have a pretty positive view of their own marriages.

And the pattern of people being concerned about marriages generally while being content in their own marriages is consistent with what people report they do in their marriages and relationships. More than 8 in 10 Americans in relationships report doing nice things for each other weekly or more often, and this is true regardless of marital status. Large percentages also report having sex regularly, going out, discussing finances, and talking politics. The frequency with which American couples report activities like discussing their relationship, going out, or having arguments is largely unchanged over the last several years. The only major change from 2020 to 2022 is that fewer couples have political discussions than before. In 2020, almost 3 in 4 couples reported discussing political or social topics weekly or more; in 2022, that number decreased a bit to less than 2 in 3 Americans. This decline is evident among the married, cohabiting, and all others. Perhaps this change is the result of the difference between a presidential election year and congressional elections.

Even so, the differences among demographics are nonetheless significant. Married people talk politics more often than the non-married, and Americans with lower incomes discuss politics much less frequently than those who earn more. Younger people discuss it less than older people, White Americans discuss politics more than Black and Hispanic Americans, and the ideological wings of the parties discuss politics more than moderates.

The pandemic created a period of stasis that America is decisively exiting in 2022, and in that change, we see some evidence of increasing relationship trouble, especially among the non-married, those with lower incomes, and the young. At the same time, the percentage of

married Americans who see their relationships growing stronger is holding steady, and whether married or not, American couples do many things to strengthen their relationships. Across the board, one thing they are doing less often than in the past is talking politics.

–Chris Karpowitz, Jeremy C. Pope, and Spencer Rudy
Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy at BYU

SUPPORTING TABLES

RELATIONSHIP TROUBLES

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

	All	Married	Cohabiting	In Relationship
Less than $40,000	39	31	47	53
$40,000-$80,000	27	25	39	39
More than $80,000	25	24	29	–
White	27	23	43	44
Black	40	35	45	–
Hispanic	37	30	45	–
18-29	47	36	55	59
30-44	41	39	46	55
45-54	31	28	41	–
55-64	21	19	28	–
65+	14	14	12	–

Source: American Family Survey 2022. Asked of those in a committed relationship of at least two years or more.
Note: Percentages not reported for groups with fewer than 25 respondents.

PERCEIVED STRENGTH OF RELATIONSHIPS

Would you say that your marriage or relationship is stronger, weaker or about the same as two years ago? Turning to marriage generally, do you feel that marriages in the United States are stronger, weaker, or about the same as two years ago?

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Your marriage								
Stronger	43	50	46	52	49	43	43	43
Weaker	6	5	7	5	6	6	7	8
Marriages generally								
Stronger	5	8	8	8	13	12	8	8
Weaker	43	43	36	36	31	29	33	36

Source: American Family Survey 2022. Analysis restricted to married respondents only.

MARRIAGE AND RELATIONSHIP ACTIVITIES

How often do you do each of the following with your spouse or partner?
Percent weekly or more

	All	Married	Cohabiting	In relationship
Go out together as a couple	45	45	44	49
Have a serious argument	13	13	15	12
Discuss your relationship	31	28	35	41
Discuss finances with each other	47	48	55	32
Sleep in different rooms	7	8	6	4
Talk about political/social issues	63	68	56	47
Pray together outside of meals	29	33	18	20
Have sex with each other	51	49	60	55
Do nice things for each other	81	83	82	68
Hide finances from each other	9	9	11	9

Source: American Family Survey 2022. Asked of all respondents in a relationship, regardless of the length of the relationship.

POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS WITH SPOUSE OR PARTNER

How often do you do each of the following with your spouse or partner? Talk about political or social issues with each other.

Percent weekly or more

	2019	*2020*	*2022*
All	66	73	63
Married	70	76	68
Cohabiting	60	68	56
In relationship	54	63	47

Source: American Family Survey, 2019-2022. Asked of respondents in a relationship, regardless of length of relationship.

POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS WITH SPOUSE OR PARTNER

How often do you do each of the following with your spouse or partner? Talk about political or social issues with each other.

	Weekly or more	Monthly to a few times a year	Yearly or less
Less than $40,000	51	20	29
$40,000-$80,000	62	26	12
More than $80,000	75	17	8
White	70	19	11
Black	39	30	31
Hispanic	48	26	26
Liberal Democrats	75	15	10
Moderate Democrats	52	30	18
Moderate Republicans	52	29	19
Conservative Republicans	75	17	8

Source: American Family Survey 2022. Asked of respondents in a relationship, regardless of length of relationship.

The American Family Survey was conducted online to a matched sample on gender, race, age, and education between August 8-15, 2022. The sample size is 3,000 and the overall margin of error for the survey is 1.9 percent.

FAMILY STRENGTH

FAMILY LIFE IN AMERICA

Percent doing activity weekly or more

	Eat Dinner	Attend Activities	Worship Together	Socialize with Friends
Liberal Democrats	72	19	15	35
Moderate Democrats	79	32	39	53
Independents	70	18	25	36
Moderate Republicans	80	18	24	38
Conservative Republicans	80	25	44	47

Source: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of all respondents in a relationship.

The 2022 American Family Survey included opportunities to explore the daily life of American families. We asked everyone in a committed relationship to tell us about the frequency with which they take part in a variety of different family activities from eating dinner together to playing games to going out to worshipping together. In the table below, we show the percentage of Americans who report doing each item at least weekly. Roughly three-quarters of Americans eat dinner and take part in activities at home like watching television or playing games on a weekly basis. About 6 in 10 say they do chores together weekly, and more than 4 in 10 say they socialize with friends or discuss political issues. Fewer Americans say they attend family activities, worship together, or have arguments on a weekly basis.

Income matters for the frequency of some of these activities. Americans with higher incomes are more likely to eat dinner together, attend activities outside the home, do chores together, go out together, participate in activities at home, and discuss political and social issues. In addition, low-income respondents are about twice as likely as those with high incomes to say that they attend family members' activities *yearly or less* (42% vs. 20%, with middle income at 25%). High- and low-income Americans are equally likely to worship together and socialize with friends, indicating that some family dynamics span across the income divide. We also find evidence of some racial and ethnic differences, with Blacks by far the most likely to say they worship together weekly and whites reporting higher levels of political discussion.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Percent doing activity weekly or more

	Eat Dinner	Attend Activities	Do Chores	Go Out to Movies, Museums, etc.	Worship Together	Have Argument	Activities at Home (Watch TV, Play Games, etc.)	Socialize with Friends	Discuss Political and Social Issues
All	76	23	59	22	30	19	73	42	49
Liberal Democrats	72	19	53	22	15	19	71	35	52
Moderate Democrats	79	32	66	32	39	26	73	53	48
Independents	70	18	55	20	25	22	71	36	39
Moderate Republicans	80	18	63	23	24	14	73	38	41
Conservative Republicans	80	25	63	19	44	14	78	47	59

Source: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of all respondents in a relationship.

These are not the only demographic characteristics that matter. Family structure is important, too. For example, single mothers are much less likely to report eating dinner together as a family (61% of single mothers, compared to 84% of others). Respondents with children are more likely than those without to say they do chores together (61% vs. 55%), worship together (34% vs. 20%), or have arguments (26% among families with children at home vs. 14% among respondents without a child living at home) on a weekly basis. And factors like geographic location can also play a role. For example, respondents who told us they live in a city are about twice as likely as those who live in rural areas (29% vs. 14%, with those living in suburbs or towns at about 20%) to say they go out to movies, museums, and other activities, presumably because of the increased availability of those activities in more populated areas.

When it comes to the weekly participation in the ordinary activities of family life, partisan and ideological differences tend to be relatively small. Liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans differ from each other by more than 10 percentage points on only two activities: worshipping together and socializing with friends. Only 15% of liberal Democrats say they worship as a family weekly or more, compared to more than 4 in 10 conservative Republicans. A little less than half of conservative Republicans socialize with friends on a weekly basis, compared to a little more than one-third of liberal Democrats. These two findings are linked, as people who go to church weekly are much more likely to socialize with friends compared to people who do not attend church (53% of weekly churchgoers, compared to 36% of others). Beyond worship and socializing, though, the day-to-day family life of liberals and conservatives

is remarkably similar. In terms of family routines, the ideological wings of the two parties share a great many commonalities.

When we focus on moderates, it is moderate *Democrats* who appear to be more social and to worship together more often than moderate Republicans. These findings are likely linked, at least in part, to the behavior of African Americans, who are substantially more likely than white Democrats to identify as moderates and who are, as we have shown, among the most likely to participate in worship. Moderate Democrats are also more likely than moderate Republicans to attend family activities, go out to movies and museums, discuss political and social issues, and (perhaps related to the previous item) have arguments. Moderates in the two parties are about equally likely to eat dinner together and do chores together.

What does all of this mean for summary judgments about the health of American families? Every year since its inception, the American Family Survey has included opportunities for respondents to assess the strength of their own families and of families in the United States generally, and the consistent finding is that Americans judge their own families more positively than families generally. A majority says their own families are about the same, and 3 in 10 say their families are getting stronger. In 2022, 14% of respondents say their family has grown weaker, which is the highest level we have recorded so far, but too small an increase to say that it is anything more than measurement error. When considering families generally, a plurality (39%) say things are about the same, a pattern that has remained essentially constant over every year of the survey.

When we disaggregate the 2022 survey by partisan and ideological commitments, we find a great deal of similarity between Republicans and Democrats in evaluations of the strength of their own families. However, when it comes to judgments about families generally, conservative Republicans are substantially more pessimistic than liberal Democrats — almost half of conservative Republicans believe that American families are growing weaker, compared to just over 1 in 5 liberal Democrats. But these differences in pessimism are not mirrored in partisan optimism about American families growing stronger. Instead, liberal Democrats are more likely than conservative Republicans to say that they don't know how families generally are doing.

When we step back and consider this set of findings as a whole, we find large swaths of agreement in Americans' assessments of the strength of their families and in the day-to-day activities in which families take part. Such agreement often spans across lines of political and economic difference. In general, we can say that Americans' attachments to their families in terms of time spent together and assessments of their family strength is bipartisan, even if assessments of the health of families general is not.

— Chris Karpowitz and Jeremy C. Pope
Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy at BYU

SUPPORTING TABLES

INCOME, RACE, AND FAMILY LIFE

Percent doing activity weekly or more

	Eat Dinner	Attend Activities	Do Chores	Go Out to Movies, Museums, etc.	Worship Together	Have Argument	Activities at Home (Watch TV, Play Games, etc.)	Socialize with Friends	Discuss Political and Social Issues
Low Income	67	18	56	20	31	23	67	43	38
Middle Income	77	21	61	19	30	18	74	37	50
High Income	82	27	63	27	31	18	80	45	59
White	78	21	61	21	28	17	76	42	53
Black	67	26	53	24	42	22	64	39	41
Hispanic	72	26	57	26	31	26	69	42	38

Source: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of all respondents in a relationship.

YOUR FAMILY

Would you say that your family relationships are stronger, weaker, or about the same as two years ago?

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Stronger	33	32	30	32	32	30	28	29
About the Same	53	55	54	52	51	53	53	52
Weaker	11	10	11	11	12	11	12	14
Don't Know	3	2	4	5	5	6	7	5

Source: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of all Americans.

FAMILIES GENERALLY

Turning to families generally, do you feel that family relationships in the United States are stronger, weaker, or about the same as two years ago?

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Stronger	9	7	8	7	9	12	10	9
About the Same	43	45	46	46	45	42	39	39
Weaker	35	34	32	33	30	28	30	34
Don't Know	12	13	14	15	16	19	21	18

Source: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of all Americans.

STRENGTH OF FAMILIES

Would you say that your family relationships are stronger, weaker, or about the same as two years ago? Turning to families generally, do you feel that family relationships in the United States are stronger, weaker, or about the same as two years ago?

	Stronger	About the Same	Weaker	Don't Know
Your Family				
Liberal Democrats	27	55	13	5
Moderate Democrats	34	49	14	4
Independents	25	48	19	8
Moderate Republicans	31	57	8	4
Conservative Republicans	33	53	11	3
Families Generally				
Liberal Democrats	10	45	22	23
Moderate Democrats	13	44	30	13
Independents	5	35	34	25
Moderate Republicans	14	41	33	13
Conservative Republicans	8	33	49	11

Source: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of all Americans.

The American Family Survey was conducted online to a matched sample on gender, race, age, and education between August 8-15, 2022. The sample size is 3,000 and the overall margin of error for the survey is 1.9 percent.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements: I am struggling to balance home and work life.

	2020	2021	2022
Agree	27	25	34
Disagree	38	42	36

Source: American Family Survey, 2020-2022. Asked of parents.

For the last three years, the American Family Survey has asked respondents to indicate how they feel they are balancing their home and work life. This year's results show that about 1 in 3 Americans agree they are struggling to balance the two. This is a substantial increase from 2021, when only 1 in 4 Americans struggled with balancing home and work life. While more men felt that they were struggling to balance home and work life in 2020, men and women reported similar levels of struggle in 2021 and 2022. This year was the first time that slightly more women reported struggling to balance home and work life than men.

We further asked respondents to evaluate how their parenting efforts are going by indicating whether they feel they are failing as a parent. Responses to this question have remained fairly constant over the last three years, with about a quarter of Americans indicating they do feel as if they are failing and half saying that they do not feel that way. In 2020, at the height of the pandemic, men were more likely to indicate feeling like they were failing as a parent, but in 2021 and 2022 women have agreed with the statement more than men. Over the past three years, men have been more likely to disagree with the statement, and that gap has grown each year.

Another trend happening in parallel is a shift in how parents manage child care responsibilities in the third year of the pandemic. In 2022, fewer Americans provided for their own childcare than in 2021. While it remains true that most Americans provide childcare themselves or ask their extended family for help, an increased number of Americans asked friends for such assistance or sent their children to daycare in 2022. Similarly, for the 16% of Americans who are primarily responsible for the care of elderly family members, most rely on themselves or extended family members for that care.

HOW AMERICANS WOULD LIKE TO SPEND THEIR TIME

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they would prefer more, less, or the same amount of time they currently spend at work, with family, and on personal leisure.

	Would like more time	Would like less time
Work	22	28
Family	49	7
Leisure	47	7

Source: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of all Americans.

In a related vein, the 2022 survey also featured a new question asking respondents to indicate how they would like to spend their time. Most respondents want more family and leisure time (close to half indicated that in both categories). This was a fairly constant desire that varied little across demographics. White respondents were slightly less likely to want less family time, as were Republican respondents, but these differences were minor.

The bottom line is that as they return to work and other more normal patterns of living after the pandemic, many Americans are struggling to balance personal and work life more than before. Fewer Americans are providing their own childcare compared to last year, and about a quarter feel as though they are failing as a parent to some degree. Most Americans would like to spend more time with their family and less time at work. Few policies on offer in Congress directly address any of these concerns (though perhaps there are exceptions like family leave), but the clear interest in additional options to have a more satisfying life is out there in the public.

—Chris Karpowitz, Jeremy C. Pope, and Spencer Rudy
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SUPPORTING TABLES

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements: I am struggling to balance home and work life.

	2020		2021		2022	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Agree	24	32	24	25	35	33
Disagree	37	39	39	44	36	36

Source: American Family Survey, 2020-2022. Asked of parents.

HOW AMERICANS CARE FOR CHILDREN

How do you provide care for your children during the work day? Check all that apply.

	2021	2022
Self/Spouse	70	60
Extended Family	27	29
Friends	7	15
Sitter/Nanny	7	8
Daycare/Nursery	13	19
Older Siblings	9	9
Children care for themselves	n/a	8

Source: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of those with a child under age 12 at home.

HOW AMERICANS CARE FOR ELDERS

How do you provide care for those for whom you are responsible? Check all that apply.

Self/Spouse	64
Extended family	31
Care facility	10
In-home nurse	7
Informal help (i.e., neighbors/friends)	9

Source: 2022 American Family Survey. Asked of those who are primarily responsible for the care of any elderly members of their family.

FAILING AS A PARENT

Indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements: I feel as if I am failing as a parent.

	2020	2021	2022
Agree	25	24	24
Disagree	47	50	51

Source: American Family Survey, 2020-2022. Based on parents with children age 5-18.

FAILING AS A PARENT

Indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements: I feel as if I am failing as a parent.

	2020		2021		2022	
	Women	*Men*	*Women*	*Men*	*Women*	*Men*
Agree	22	27	26	20	25	22
Disagree	43	47	46	55	46	56

Source: American Family Survey, 2020-2022. Based on parents with children age 5-18.

The American Family Survey was conducted online to a matched sample on gender, race, age, and education between August 8-15, 2022. The sample size is 3,000 and the overall margin of error for the survey is 1.9 percent.