

Public Favors Increased Government Role in Promoting American Dream, According to Poll by Pew's Economic Mobility Project

Families' Financial Situations Tumble, Yet Optimism About the Future Prevails

WASHINGTON—A new national poll released today by Pew's Economic Mobility Project finds that 83 percent of Americans support a government role in promoting upward economic mobility, a sentiment that cuts across party lines. In fact, 58 percent think it could do even more.

Moreover, 80 percent believe the government does an ineffective job helping poor and middle-class Americans, but there is disagreement over whether government is pursuing the “wrong” policies (37 percent) or is pursuing the “right” ones ineffectively (43 percent). According to the Project's poll, which was conducted by The Mellman Group and Public Opinion Strategies as an update of a 2009 national survey, 54 percent of respondents said that when the government does intervene, it assists the “wrong people.”

“Americans are looking to policy makers to support their efforts to get ahead,” said Erin Currier, project manager for Pew's Economic Mobility Project. “Even in the wake of the Great Recession, there is a strong belief that people can work hard and be successful, no matter their starting point, and their optimism remains strong.”

Of those surveyed, 68 percent feel they have achieved or will achieve the American Dream and that their children will grow up to be at least as well off as they are now. An overwhelming majority of respondents, 85 percent, made clear that financial stability is more important to them than moving higher up the income ladder. Americans also feel better about the national economy; slightly more than half consider it poor versus 73 percent who did in the 2009 poll.

Still, Americans have grown increasingly negative about their personal finances, with only 32 percent considering them excellent or good, down nine points since last year and down 23 points since the recession started in 2007.

The results demonstrate support for policies that facilitate people's ability to climb the income ladder: ensuring all children get a quality education (88 percent); promoting job creation (83 percent); ensuring equal opportunity (79 percent); letting people keep more of their money (78 percent); and providing basic needs to the very poor (75 percent).

For the complete poll from Pew's Economic Mobility Project, the fact sheet *Economic Mobility and the American Dream – Where Do We Stand in the Wake of the Great Recession* and more information, visit www.economicmobility.org.

By forging a broad and nonpartisan agreement on the facts, figures and trends related to mobility, the Economic Mobility Project is generating an active policy debate about how best to improve economic opportunity in the United States and to ensure that the American Dream is kept alive for generations that follow.

The Pew Charitable Trusts' economic policy work aims to encourage an informed debate and promote practices that strengthen the U.S. economy. Pew is a nonprofit organization that applies a rigorous, analytical approach to improve public policy, inform the public and stimulate civic life.

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