

In March 2011, the Economic Mobility Project updated its 2009 national poll to reassess public perceptions of economic mobility and the American Dream in the wake of the Great Recession.

Large majorities of Americans felt that the recession had hurt their economic status and rated their current financial situation as only fair or poor. However, even in the face of personal economic hardship, Americans maintained a strong belief in their ability to achieve the American Dream and control their own economic situations.

New analyses on the 2011 poll data examine demographic differences by age cohort, education, income, employment, and race/ethnicity.



Economic Mobility and the American Dream: Examining Racial and Ethnic Differences

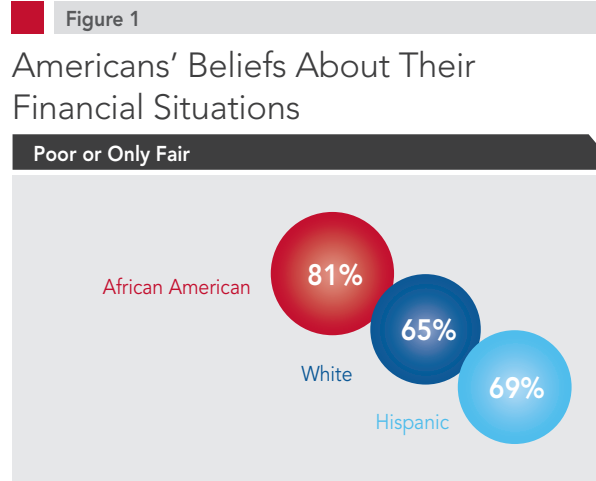
African Americans were quite optimistic that their economic situation would improve over time, followed closely by Hispanics. Still, African Americans responded more negatively than other groups about their current financial situation and their ability to make enough money to lead the kind of lives they want in the future.

Racial/Ethnic Groups

- African Americans
- Whites (Non-Hispanic)
- Hispanic Whites and Hispanic Other

African Americans were the most negative about their current financial situation.

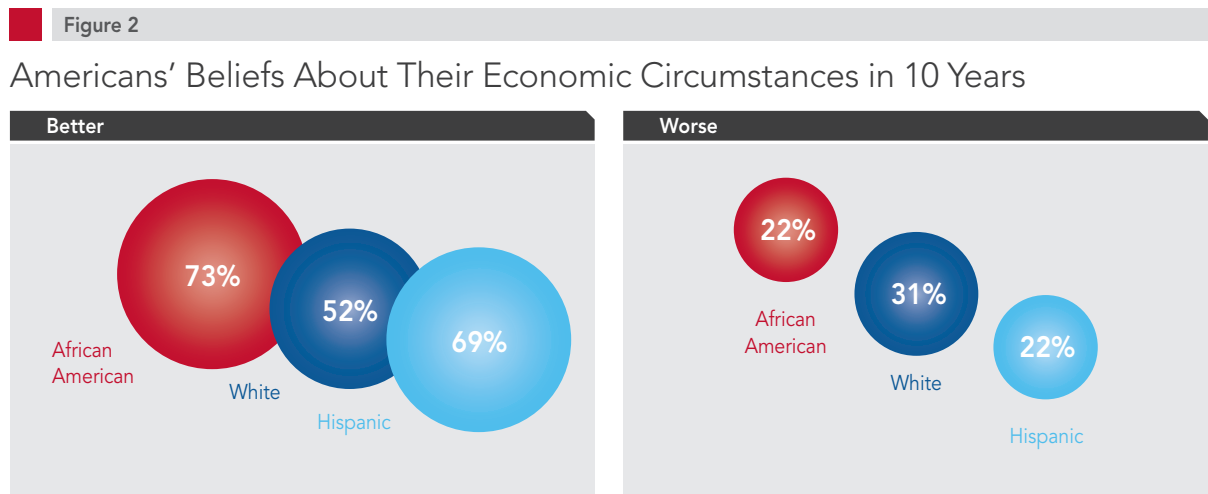
More than 8 in 10 (81 percent) African Americans reported feeling negatively about their current financial situation. This compares with 7 in 10 Hispanics and two-thirds (65 percent) of whites who felt negatively (see Figure 1).



However, African Americans and Hispanics were the most likely to think they would be better off in the future.

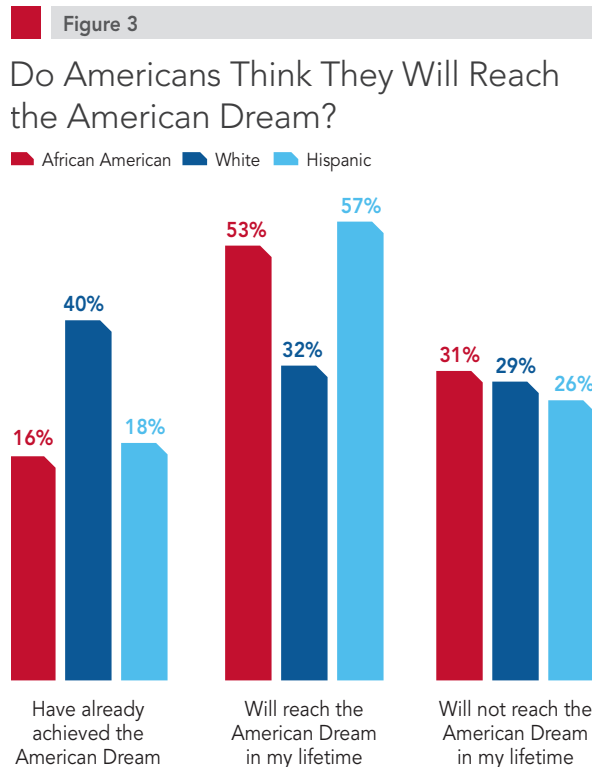
Almost three-quarters (73 percent) of African Americans and 7 in 10 (69 percent) Hispanics felt their economic circumstances would be better in 10

years. In contrast, slightly more than half of whites (52 percent) felt their economic circumstances would be better. Thirty-one percent of white respondents felt they would be worse off in 10 years, compared to only 22 percent of both African Americans and Hispanics (see Figure 2).



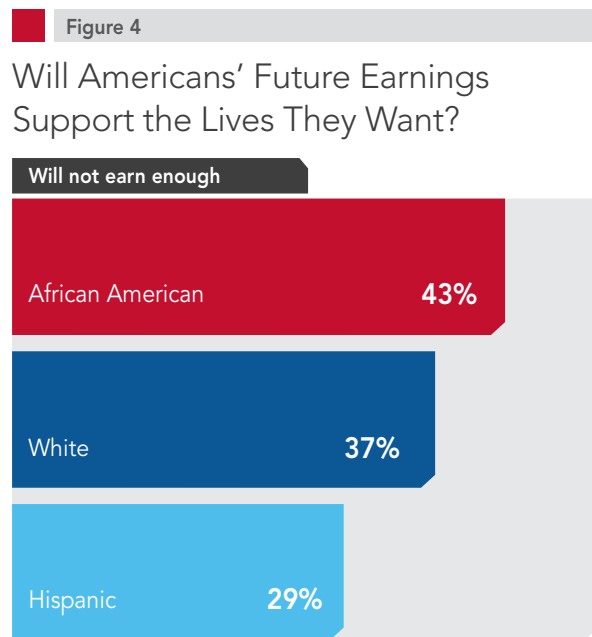
African Americans, Hispanics, and whites shared similar beliefs about the existence of the American Dream; however, they differed in their assessment of whether they had already achieved it.

Four in 10 whites believed they had already achieved the American Dream compared with only 16 percent of African Americans and 18 percent of Hispanics. However, more than half of African Americans (53 percent) and Hispanics (57 percent) believed they would achieve the American Dream in the future (see Figure 3).



African Americans were the least optimistic about their ability to make enough money in the future to lead the lives they want.

Overall, 43 percent of African Americans thought they would not make enough money in the future to live the life they want to lead, followed by 37 percent of whites and 29 percent of Hispanics. In contrast, 42 percent of whites, 34 percent of Hispanics, and 22 percent of African Americans reported that they already made enough money to live the life they want to lead (see Figure 4).



FULL POLL RESULTS ARE AVAILABLE AT: WWW.ECONOMICMOBILITY.ORG/POLL2011

METHODOLOGY

On behalf of The Pew Charitable Trusts' Economic Mobility Project, a national survey, focus groups, and individual interviews were conducted by the Mellman Group and Public Opinion Strategies. For the survey, 2,000 adults nationwide were interviewed by telephone March 24-29, 2011. The margin of error is +/-2.2% at the 95% level of confidence for the sample as a whole, but larger for subgroups. Very few respondents reported "Don't Know" or refused to answer select questions. Such missing cases were excluded from final analyses on a question-by-question basis.