

SINE INSTITUTE
of POLICY & POLITICS

Pursuing the American Dream: the Supports and Barriers Young Americans Encounter

Key Findings

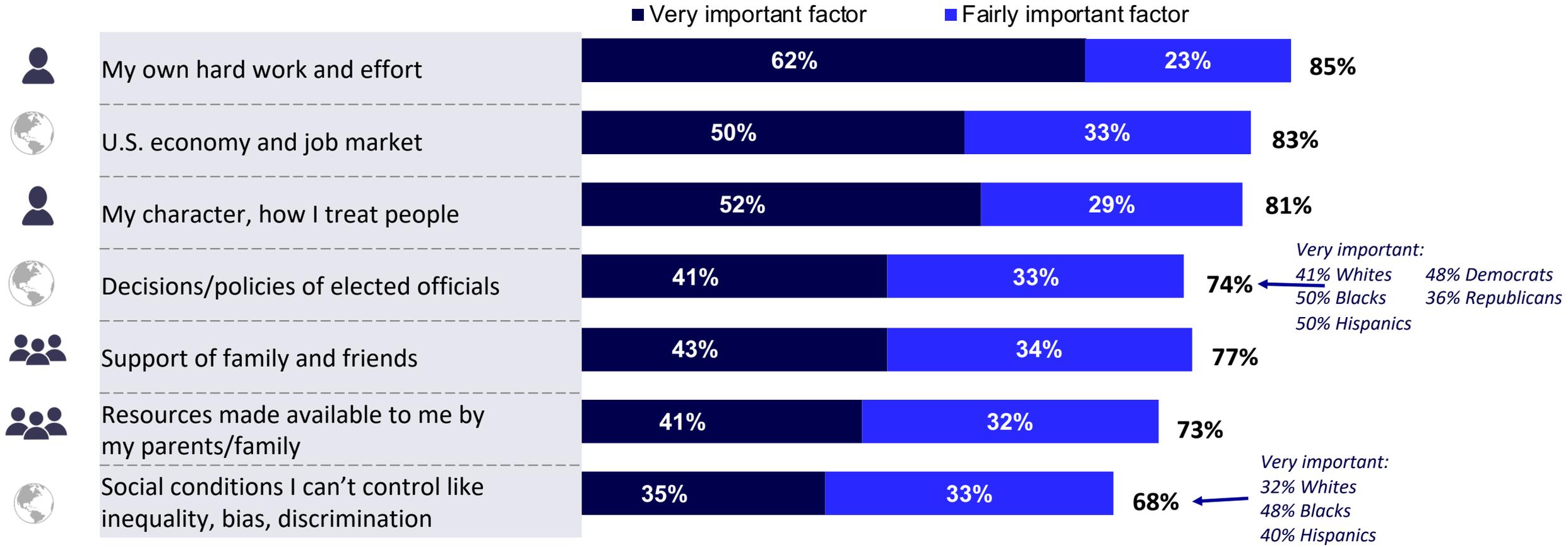
Young Americans are acutely aware of the obstacles and opportunities for support they experience as they pursue their American Dream. The influential factors they identify are a mix of individual traits, life circumstances, and macro-level, social-political-economic forces beyond their control.

- Of more than a half-dozen distinct factors that young Americans were asked to evaluate, they say that their own hard work and effort is the most consequential in their ability to achieve their vision of the American Dream.
- Unlike the core composition of the American Dream which young Americans across gender, race, class and political lines describe in largely similar ways, the barriers they report vary considerably: conditions like racism and discrimination and even the impact of elected leaders' policy decisions have very different effects.
- Educational opportunities and the support of family and friends lead the list of factors that young Americans hail as helping them in their efforts to achieve their American Dream; our political system and the way our leaders are chosen to represent stands out as a distinct hindrance; in fact, by double digit margins, members of this generation say this dynamic has done more to hurt them than to help them.

Young Americans say that individual attributes are key in determining their ability to achieve the American Dream, but they also identify forces out of their control.

Individual level  Family/friends level  Macro/social level 

Selected factors' importance in my ability to achieve my goals and my vision of the American Dream



There are new barriers to the American Dream for this generation; the magnitude of these obstacles vary by identify.

*People identify different things that hold them back from being able to achieve their goals and their vision of the American Dream. Please select **THREE FACTORS** that represent the biggest challenges for you personally when you think about your goals and your vision of the American Dream.*

62%	Lack of money and financial resources	(College grads/college track, 56%, Non college track 67%)
48%	Mental health challenges, including emotions such as hopelessness and anxiety	(Women 53%, Men 40%)
42%	Lack of trust and feeling hopeless about government and social institutions	(Hetero/Cis 38%, LBTQIA+ 47%)
24%	Fear of violence and not feeling safe	(Urban 27%, Suburban 23%, Small town/rural 23%)
23%	Not having mentors or people close to me who will support me	
19%	Racial inequality	(Whites 9%, Blacks 46%, Hispanics 21%)
18%	Pressure from peers and friends, including on social media	
14%	Gender inequality	(Women 19%, Men 9%; Hetero/Cis 13%/LGBTQIA+ 21%)
	Other forms of discrimination (not race or	

In pursuing the American Dream, education and friends & family are important sources of support, but young Americans see our current political circumstances as an obstacle.

Selected factors' role in my ability to achieve my vision of the American Dream :

■ This has done more to hold me back ■ This has done more to help me achieve the American Dream

