



2023 AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENT FREEDOM, PROGRESS AND FLOURISHING SURVEY

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The Sheila and Robert Challey Institute for Inn Global Innovation and Growth aims to advance understanding in the areas of innovation, trade, institutions, and human potential to identify policies and solutions for the betterment of society.

Introduction

The American College Student Freedom, Progress, and Flourishing Survey is an annual survey conducted by the Sheila and Robert Challey Institute for Global Innovation and Growth. The survey assesses student perceptions about viewpoint diversity and campus freedom; human progress and beliefs about the future; student attitudes toward capitalism and socialism; and how college is influencing their views. This report presents the results of the 2023 survey.

American colleges and universities play a vital role in shaping future political, cultural, and business leaders. However, there are growing concerns among the American public regarding the current state and direction of higher education and its influence on society. Recent surveys have begun to identify important challenges on college campuses related to free speech and tolerance of diverse viewpoints. To build on this understanding, we initiated an annual survey in 2021 to explore how students' experiences in higher education influence their thoughts about the current and future state of the world and their place in it. The results from previous surveys can be found [here](#).

Survey results are divided into three sections. The first section examines student perceptions of viewpoint diversity in the classroom, as well as student attitudes toward regulating speech in the classroom and on campus. The second section examines student perceptions of how their college education is shaping their views on the world, the United States, their futures, and their ability to contribute to society. The third section examines students' views on capitalism and socialism and the ways that these views have been shaped by the college experience.

Summaries and results for each section can be found by clicking the links below.

[Section 1: Campus Free Speech and Viewpoint Diversity](#)

[Section 2: Human Progress, Attitudes about the Future, and National Pride](#)

[Section 3: Capitalism and Socialism](#)

Methodology

The Sheila and Robert Challey Institute for Global Innovation and Growth, in collaboration with College Pulse, conducted a nationally representative survey of undergraduate students currently attending four-year colleges or universities in the United States. The survey was conducted May 11 – June 2, 2023. The sample was drawn from College Pulse’s Undergraduate Student Panel, which includes more than 700,000 verified students representing more than 1,500 different colleges and universities in all 50 states. Panel members are recruited by a number of methods to help ensure diversity in the panel population, including web advertising, permission-based email campaigns, and partnerships with university organizations. To reduce the effects of non-response bias, College Pulse applied a post-stratification adjustment based on demographic distributions from the 2017 Current Population Survey, the 2016 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, and the 2019-20 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. Averages use the weights developed by College Pulse. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 2.4%.

The sample consists of 2,250 undergraduate students currently enrolled in four-year U.S. colleges and universities. Participants represent 131 colleges/universities across the U.S. The sample is 63 percent female, 27 percent male, and 10 percent other/non-identified. It is 40 percent white, 24 percent Asian, 13 percent Hispanic/Latino, 8 percent black, 5.5 percent two or more races, 2 percent Middle Eastern, 1 percent Native American, less than 1 percent Native Hawaiian, and 4 percent reporting other/prefer not to say. Roughly 64 percent of participants are attending public colleges, and 36 percent are attending private colleges. Concerning political ideology, 58 percent report being slightly, somewhat, or very liberal; 20 percent report being slightly, somewhat, or very conservative; and 22 percent report being neither liberal nor conservative (independent) or not having thought much about politics (apolitical).

Our survey focuses on a range of issues that are potentially influenced by political ideology. Therefore, in addition to reporting results for all students, we report them categorized into three groups: liberal/liberal leaning (students who identify as slightly, somewhat, or very liberal), conservative/conservative leaning (students who identify as slightly, somewhat, or very conservative), and independent/apolitical (students who identify as not liberal or conservative or not having thought much about politics.)

Section 1: Campus Free Speech and Viewpoint Diversity

Given growing concerns about free speech and the lack of viewpoint diversity in higher education, we asked students a range of questions regarding their attitudes and experiences navigating diverse viewpoints and potentially controversial or sensitive topics. These questions assessed student perceptions of the climate surrounding viewpoint diversity, as well as their own attitudes toward preventing or reporting others for speech that could be viewed as controversial or offensive.

As universities aim to enhance students' critical thinking skills and advance scientific knowledge, academic freedom and an ability to engage in a competition of ideas are essential to their missions. Student views of the classroom and university climate regarding viewpoint diversity suggest higher education may not be as open to unpopular and controversial views as one might expect.

Although a majority of students feel at least somewhat comfortable sharing their opinions on controversial or sensitive topics in class, half of them say the reason they are comfortable sharing their opinion is because they think their views align with most other students and professors. For those students, their comfort level in sharing their opinions is not necessarily an indicator of a climate open to diverse views.

A series of questions that ask directly about classroom climate suggest that a majority of students perceive a climate that is generally open to sharing of controversial or unpopular ideas in the classroom. However, there are disparities in this perception among students with different political ideologies. In general, students with a conservative political ideology are less likely to perceive a classroom climate that is open to diverse points of view. Moreover, although a majority of students perceive a climate of open inquiry, there remain large numbers of students who do not.

Students seem open to a wide range of ideas based on their attitudes related to whether controversial readings and discussions in class should be dropped or speakers should be disinvited. A majority of students are not in favor of dropping controversial topics or uninviting speakers, but a sizable minority of students do favor censorship regarding controversial topics or speakers that many students disagree with.

On the other hand, two questions asking students whether professors and other students should be reported to the university for saying something that students deem to be offensive suggest a campus climate that is not open to diverse points of view. In answering a question that lists a series of opinions or facts related to affirmative action, police shootings, guns, gender/sex, and vaccines, 65 percent of students say a professor should be reported to the university for stating one of these opinions or facts.

Individual questions and responses are presented below.

A Majority of Students are Comfortable Sharing Opinions on Controversial Topics in Class

Most of the students surveyed (71 percent) say they feel at least somewhat comfortable sharing their opinions on controversial or sensitive topics in class. The remaining 29 percent are not comfortable sharing such opinions.



Figure 1: 71 percent of students are "somewhat comfortable" or "very comfortable" sharing their opinions on controversial or sensitive topics in class

Although the majority of students feel at least somewhat comfortable sharing their opinions on controversial or sensitive topics in class, there are significant differences among students with different political ideologies. 79 percent of liberal students are at least somewhat comfortable sharing their opinions, while 59 percent and 64 percent of conservative and independent students feel comfortable sharing their opinions, respectively.

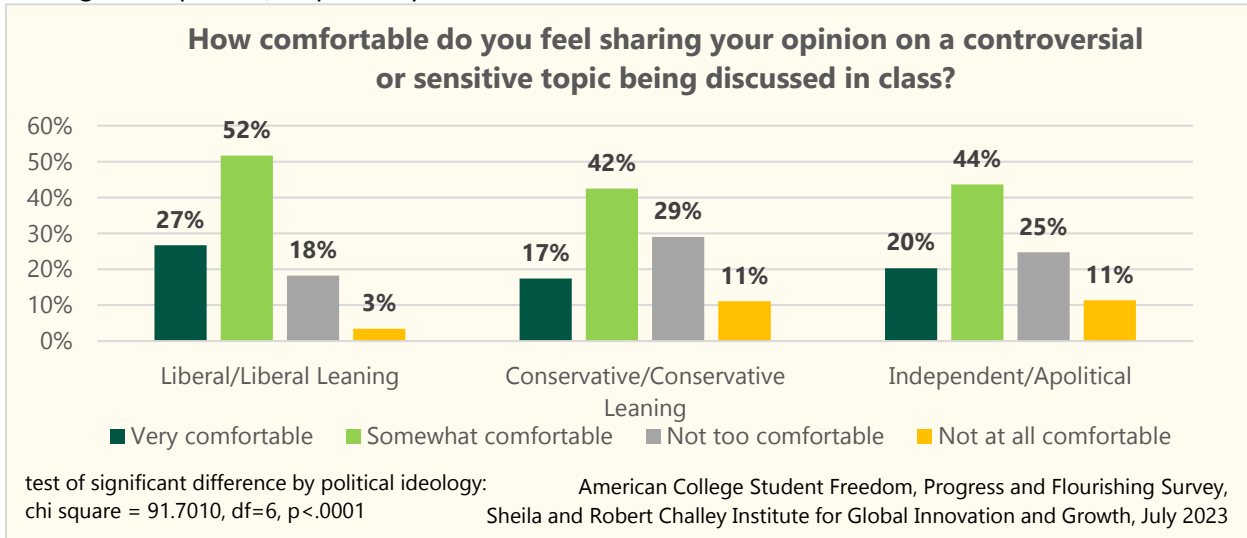


Figure 2: There are significant differences between liberal, conservative, and independent students in their comfort level in sharing opinions on controversial or sensitive topics

Nearly Half of Students Who Are Comfortable Sharing Opinions on Controversial or Sensitive Topics in Class Are Comfortable Because Their Views Align with Others.

Among the students who are comfortable sharing their opinions on controversial or sensitive topics in class (1,594), 47 percent of them are comfortable because they believe their views align with most other students and professors. Most of the remaining students who are comfortable sharing their opinions on such topics (49 percent) feel comfortable, even if other students and their professor strongly disagree with them.



Figure 3: Students who are comfortable sharing opinions on controversial or sensitive topics are nearly evenly split on being comfortable because others agree and being comfortable regardless of what others think

There are significant differences between students with different political ideologies in the reasons that they feel comfortable sharing their opinions on such topics. 55 percent of liberal students who are comfortable sharing their opinions on controversial or sensitive topics are comfortable because they believe professors and other students agree with them. In contrast, only 30 percent of conservative students who feel comfortable sharing opinions on such topics are comfortable because they believe others agree with them. For independent students, the percent who are comfortable because they think others agree with them is 40 percent.

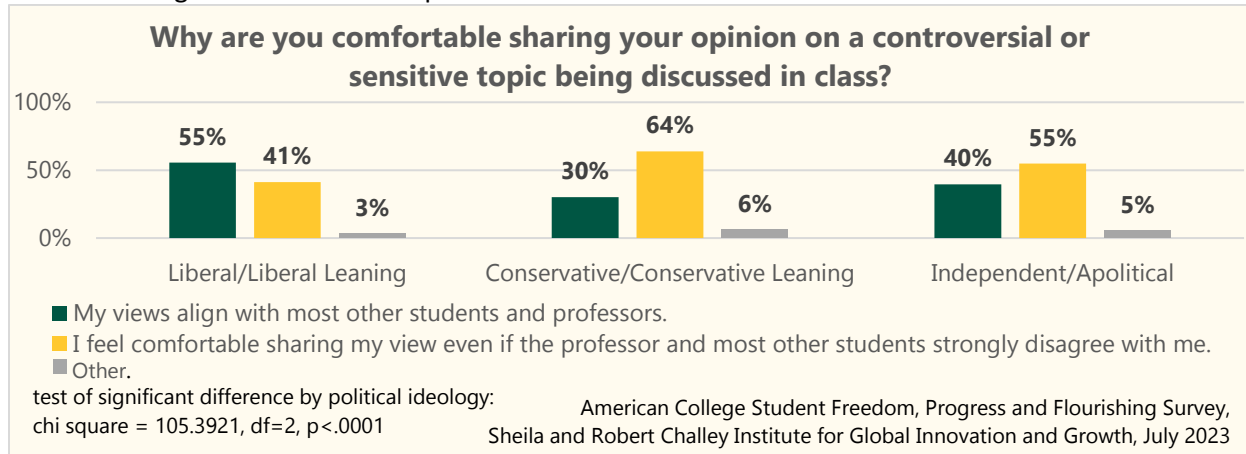


Figure 4: For students who are comfortable sharing opinions on controversial or sensitive topics, those with liberal views are more likely to be comfortable because their views align with others.

Students Who Are Not Comfortable Sharing their Opinion on Controversial or Sensitive Topics in Class Are Most Concerned About the Opinions of Other Students

When students are not comfortable sharing their opinion on controversial or sensitive topics in class (656) were asked to check all the reasons they weren't comfortable, 72 percent said they were worried their opinion would be considered unacceptable by other students. Another 47 percent and 45 percent, respectively, were worried about their reputation and that their opinion would be considered unacceptable by their professor. 10 percent listed other reasons ranging from general anxiety in speaking up to concern that speaking up would affect their grade.

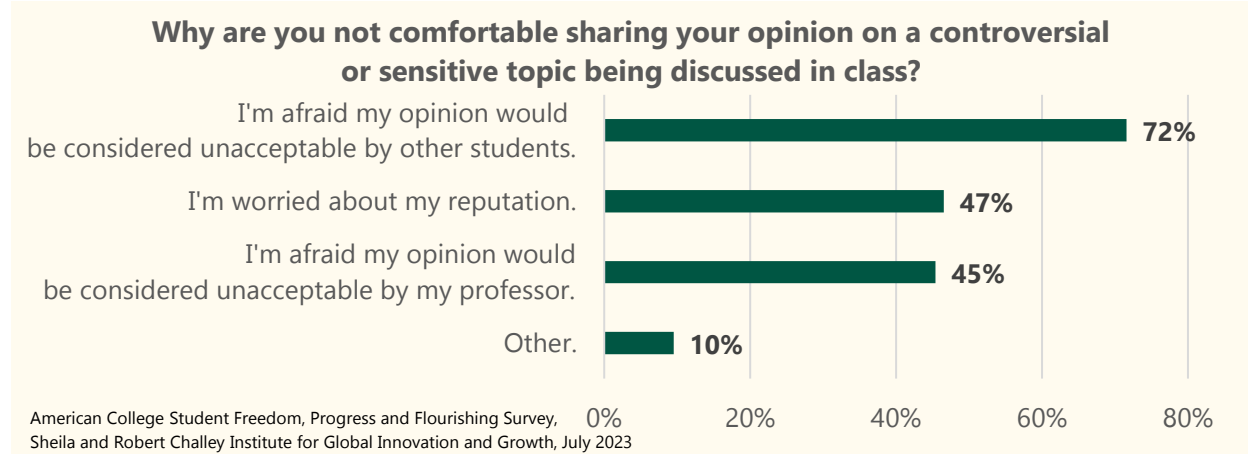


Figure 5: Reasons students are not comfortable sharing their opinion on controversial or sensitive topics in class

Conservative students who are not comfortable sharing their opinions on controversial or sensitive topics in class are more likely to be concerned for multiple reasons in comparison to liberal and independent students.

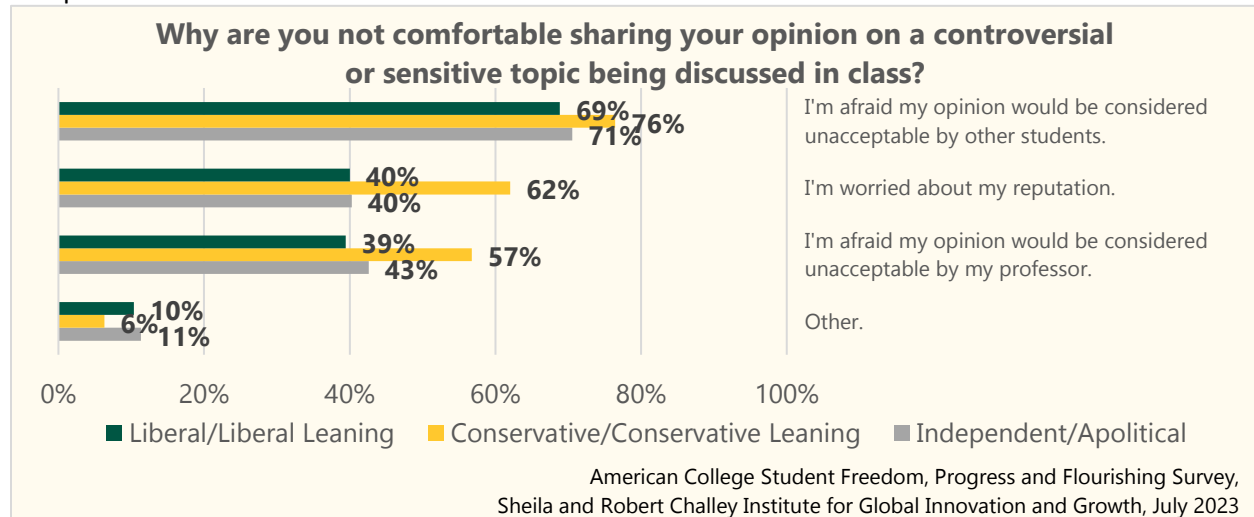


Figure 6: Conservative students are more likely to list multiple reasons for not being comfortable sharing their opinion on controversial or sensitive topics being discussed in class

A Majority of Students Say Professors Create a Classroom Climate That Allows Diverse Views

Most students (84 percent) say that professors create a classroom climate where people with diverse views would feel comfortable sharing their opinions.



Figure 7: 84 percent of students believe professors create a classroom climate that allows diverse views

Significant differences in perceptions of whether professors create a classroom climate where people with diverse views would feel comfortable sharing their opinions exist among students with different political ideologies. In comparison to conservative students, liberal and independent students are more likely to perceive a climate where diverse views are welcome.

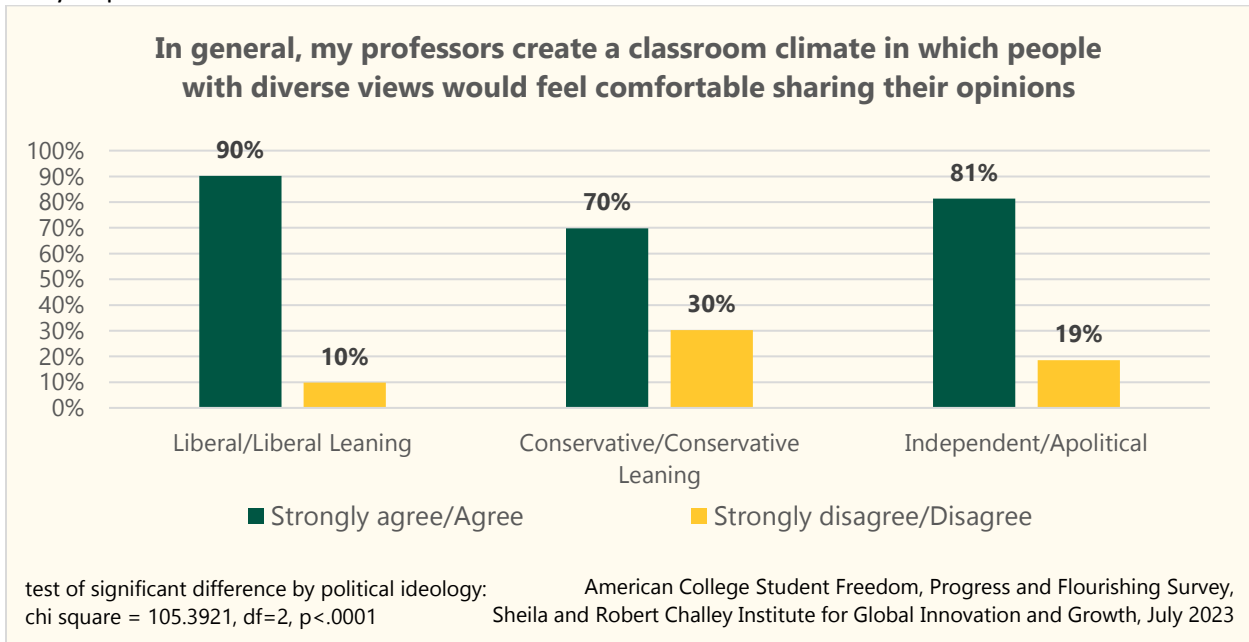


Figure 8: Students with different political ideologies have significantly different perceptions of classroom climate

A Majority of Students Say Professors Encourage Diverse Viewpoints and Perspectives

Most students (83 percent) believe that professors encourage students to explore a wide variety of viewpoints and perspectives.



Figure 9: 83 percent of students believe professors encourage diverse viewpoints

89 percent of liberal students and 81 percent of independent students believe professors encourage exploration of a wide variety of viewpoints and perspectives, while 73 percent of conservative students think so.

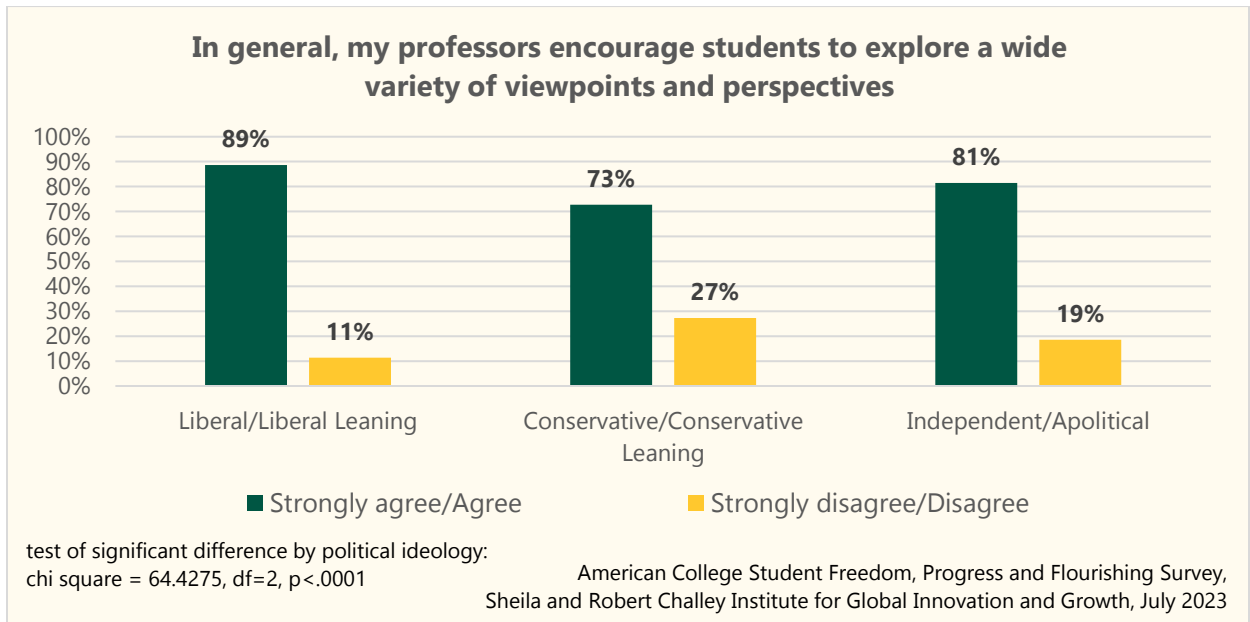


Figure 10: There are significant differences among students with different political ideologies in perceptions of whether professors encourage exploring a wide variety of viewpoints

A Majority of Students Say Unpopular Views Are Welcome in the Classroom

Nearly three quarters of students believe that their professors create a classroom climate where people with unpopular views would feel comfortable sharing their opinions.



Figure 11: 73 percent of students believe professors create a climate where students with unpopular views would feel comfortable sharing their opinions

There are significant differences in the perception of the classroom climate being open to unpopular views among students with different political ideologies. 78 percent of liberal students believe the classroom climate is open to people with unpopular views compared to 61 percent of conservative students who believe so.

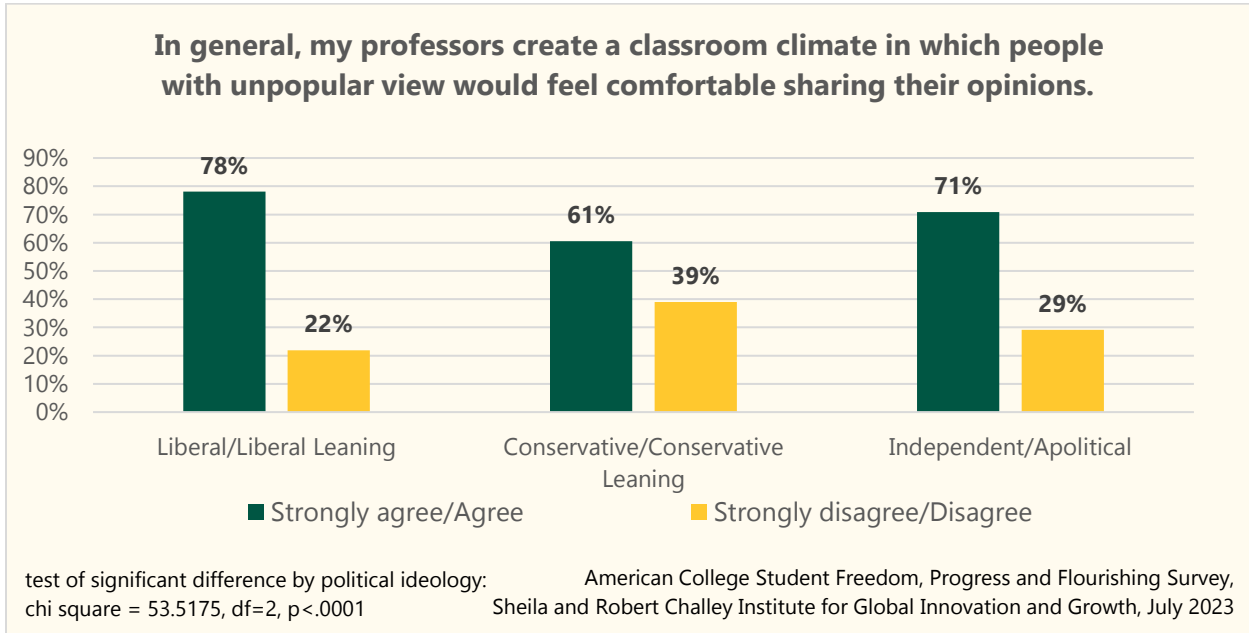


Figure 12: Significant differences in perceptions of classroom openness to unpopular views exist among students with different political ideologies

About Half of Students Report That Professors Promote Their Own Political Views in the Classroom at Least Occasionally

15 percent of students report that professors promote their own political views in the classroom very frequently or frequently, and another 35 percent report that they promote their own political views occasionally. Only 7 percent report that their professors never promote their own political opinion in the classroom.

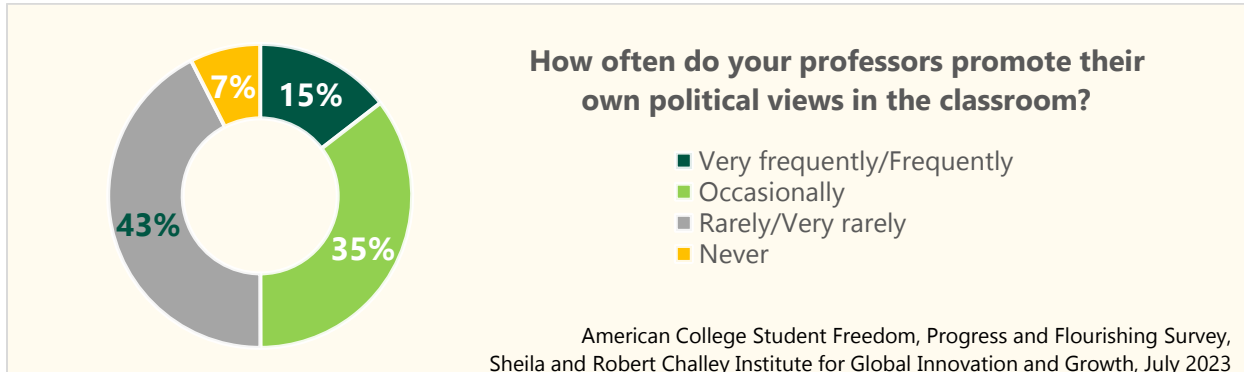


Figure 13: 50 percent of students report that professors promote their own political views in the classroom at least occasionally

Although there is a statistically significant difference in reporting how often professors promote their own political views among students with different political ideologies, there is broad general agreement among liberal and conservative students. 51 percent of liberal students and 56 percent of conservative students, respectively, report that professors promote their own political views in the classroom at least occasionally.

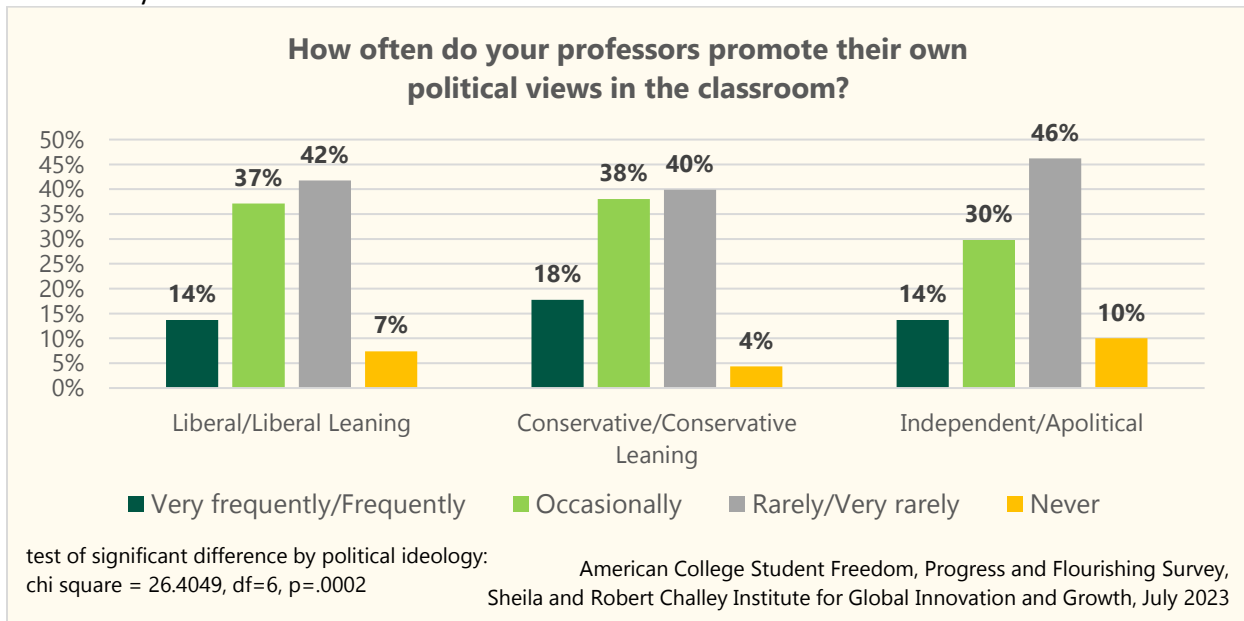


Figure 14: Around half of students from each political ideology report that professors promote their own political views in the classroom at least occasionally

More Than One-Third of Students Say Controversial Speakers Invitations Should be Withdrawn

Although 65 percent of students believe universities should not withdraw the invitations of speakers when many students disagree with their views, 35 percent think universities should withdraw the invitation.



Figure 15: 65 percent of students say universities should not withdraw invitations to controversial speakers

Student attitudes about disinviting controversial speakers vary widely among students with different political views. 44 percent of liberal students believe that speakers who hold views that many students disagree with should be disinvited, compared to 18 percent of conservative students and 32 percent of independent students who think so.

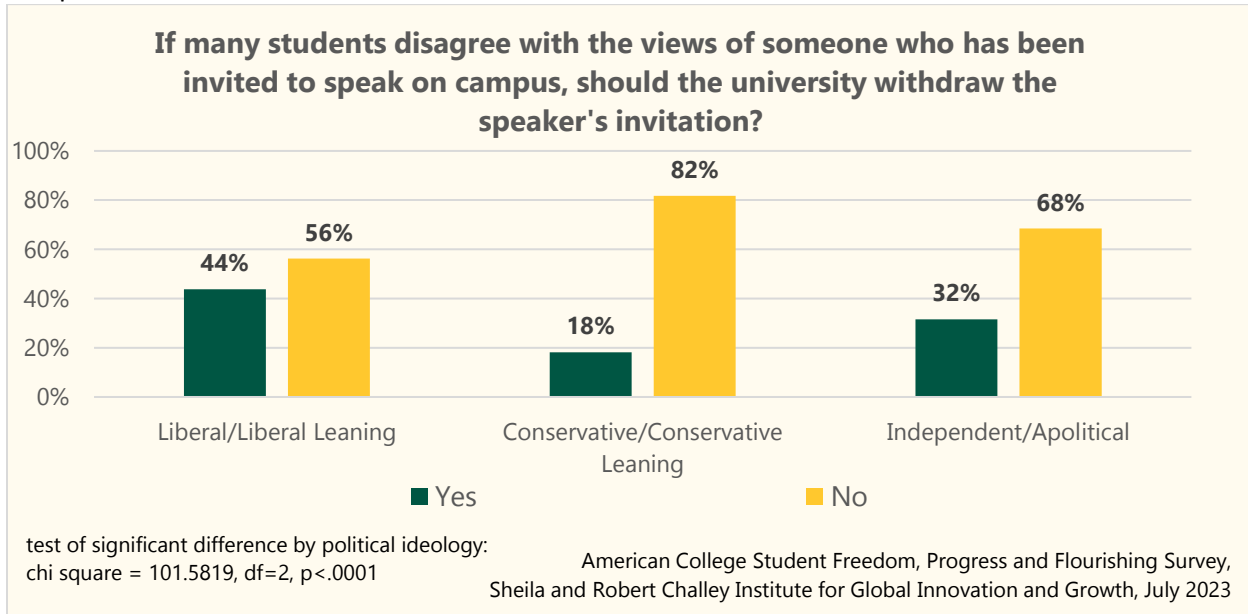


Figure 16: There are significant differences among students with different political ideologies about whether controversial speakers should be disinvited

A Majority of Students Say Professors Should Not Drop Readings That Students Strongly Disagree With

69 percent of students believe a required reading for a college course should not be dropped when it includes views that many students strongly disagree with.

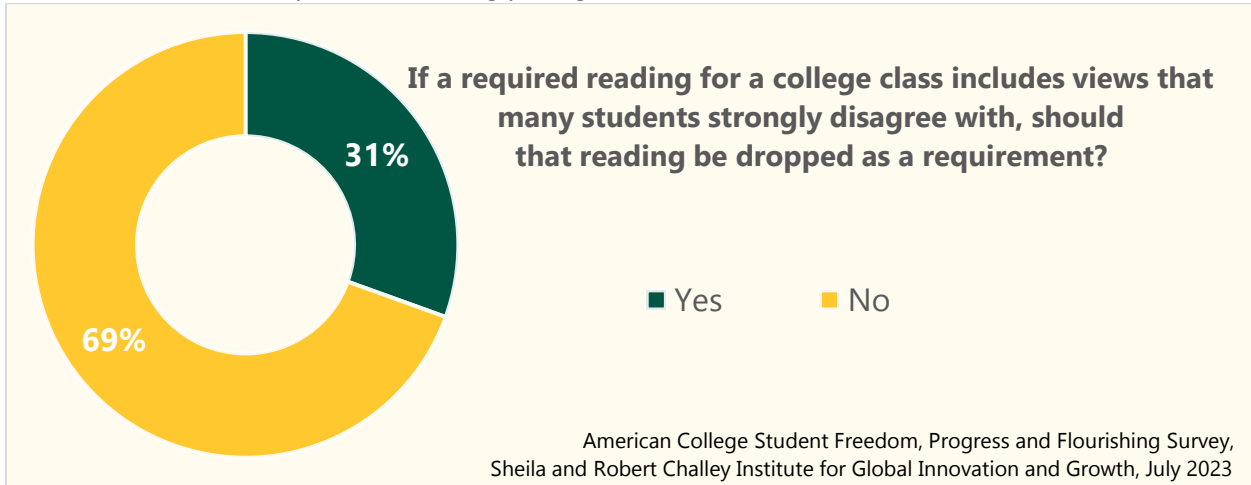


Figure 4: 69 percent of students are not in favor of dropping class readings due to strong student disagreement

Although some statistically significant differences exist among students with different political ideologies, there is widespread agreement that readings should not be dropped because of many students disagreeing with the readings.

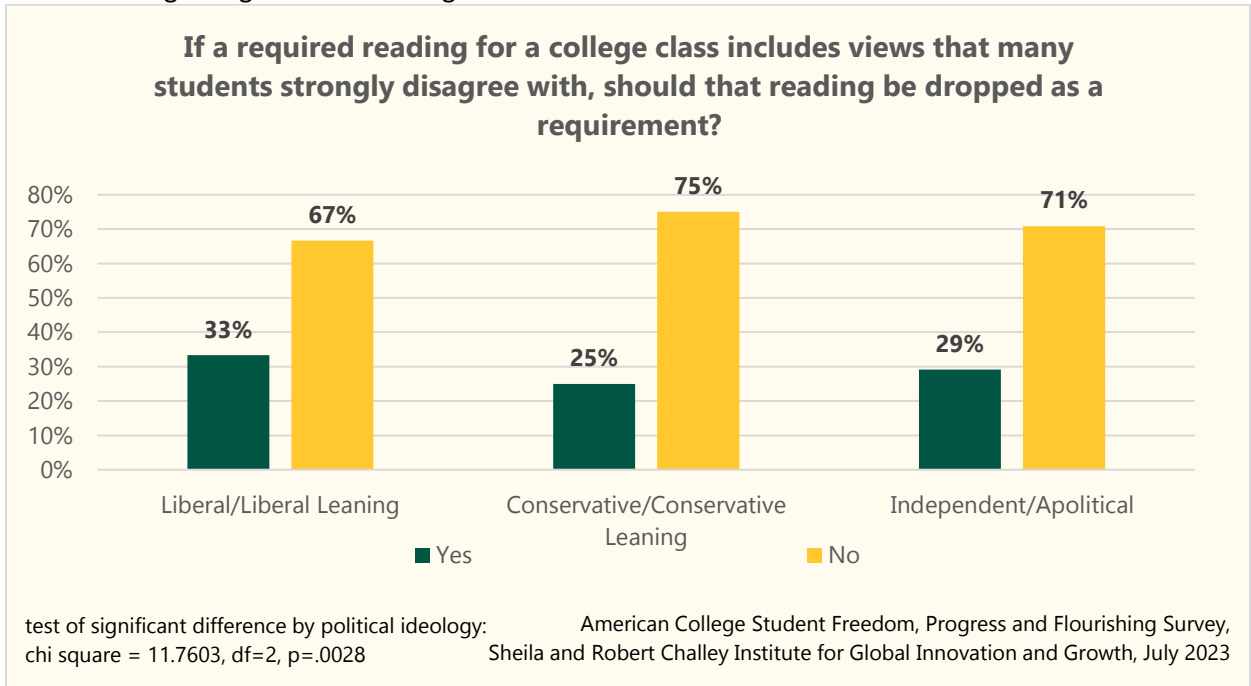


Figure 5: Most students are not in favor of dropping readings that many students disagree with

A Majority of Students Say Professors Should Not Drop Readings That Make Students Uncomfortable

Just as a majority of students (69 percent) believe that professors should not drop readings that students disagree with, a majority (58 percent) also believe that professors should not drop readings that make students feel uncomfortable. Although a majority of students are not in favor of dropping readings in either case, students are more in favor of dropping readings that make students uncomfortable than those that they disagree with.

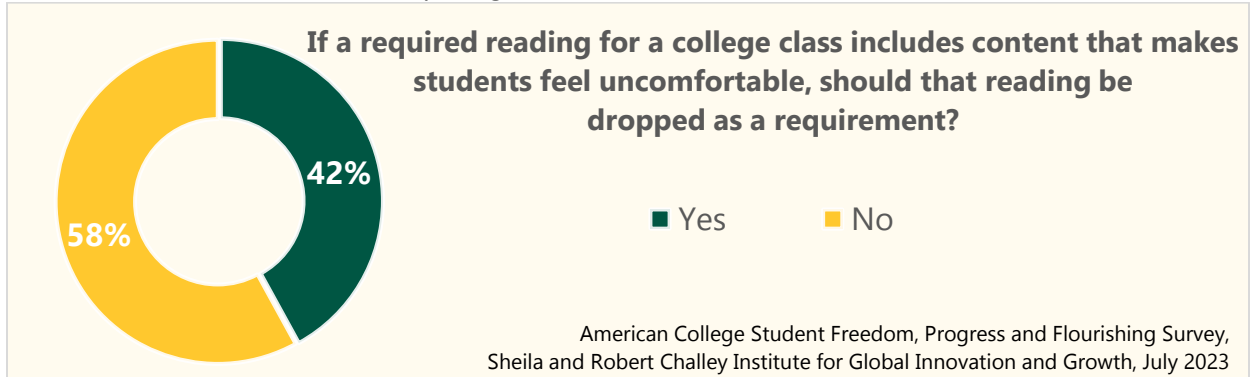


Figure 6: 58 percent of students are not in favor of dropping class readings that make students feel uncomfortable

As with views on dropping readings that many students disagree with, there are significant differences among students with different political ideologies in their opinions on whether readings should be dropped because they make students uncomfortable. 46 percent of liberal students think a reading should be dropped if it makes students feel uncomfortable, compared to 33 percent of conservative students who do.

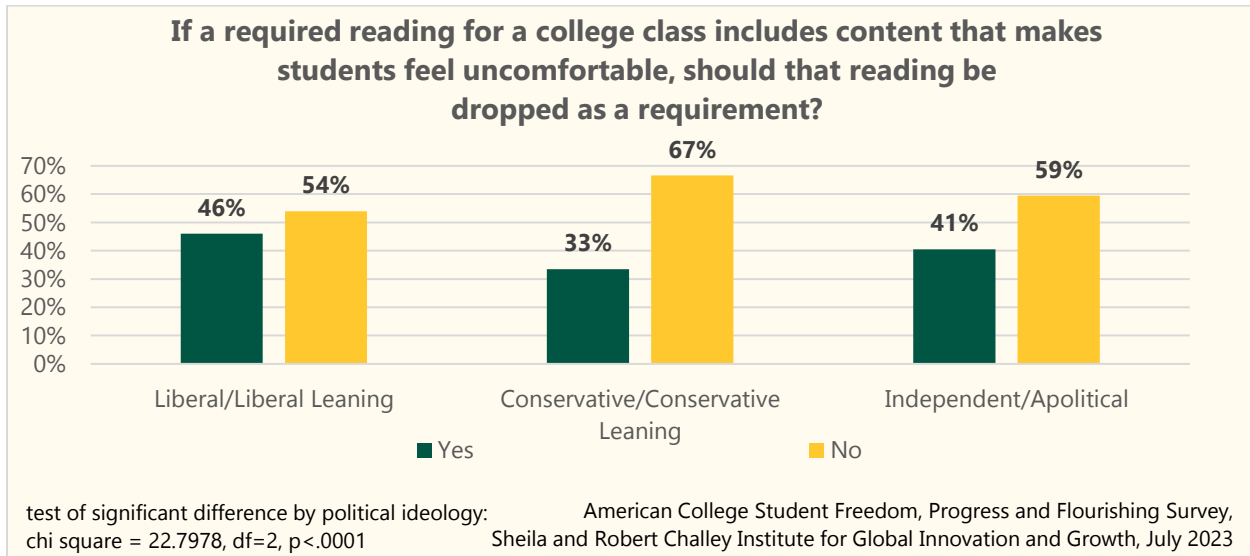


Figure 7: 46 percent of liberal students think a reading that makes students feel uncomfortable should be dropped, while 33 percent of conservative students do

A Majority of Students Are Not in Favor of Dropping a Class Discussion Topic if it Makes Students Feel Uncomfortable

69 percent of students believe that a class discussion topic should not be dropped due to it making students feel uncomfortable.



Figure 21: A majority of students do not think a course topic should be dropped due to it making students feel uncomfortable

While statistically significant differences among students with different political ideologies exist, there are similar percentages among liberal, conservative, and independent students who believe course topics should not be dropped due to making students uncomfortable.

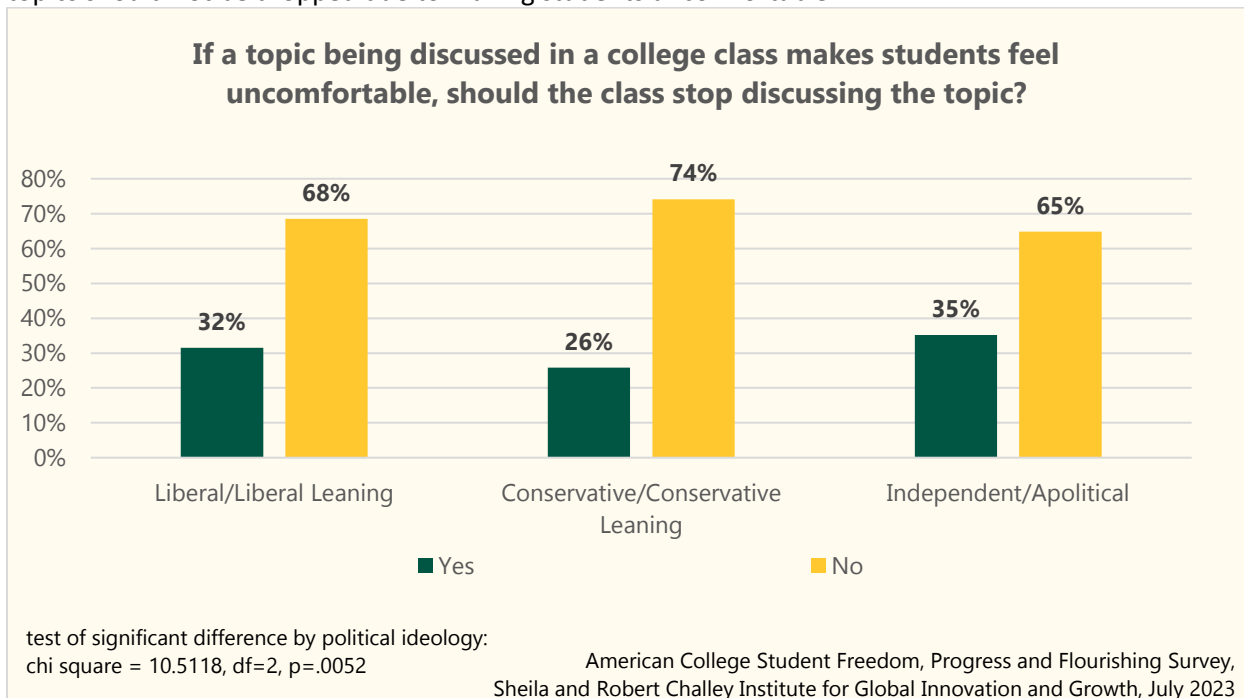


Figure 22: About two-thirds to three-quarters of students in each political group believe that class topics should not be dropped due to them making students uncomfortable

Nearly Three Quarters of Students Say Professors Should be Reported for Making Comments That Students Find Offensive

74 percent of the students surveyed are in favor of reporting professors (or instructors) to the university if they say something that students find offensive.

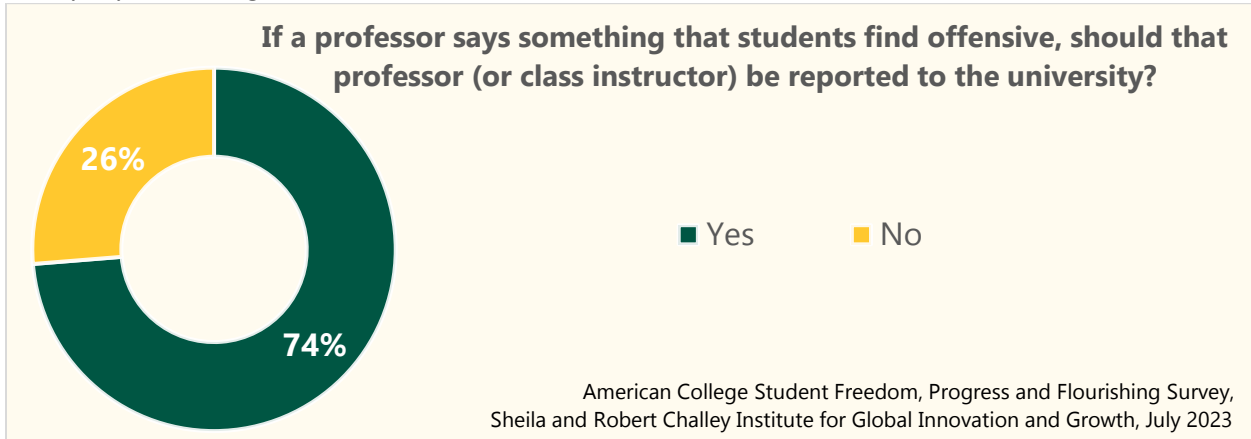


Figure 23: 74 percent of students believe a professor should be reported to the university for saying something students deem offensive

There are large and statistically significant differences among students with different political ideologies on whether professors who say something that students deem offensive should be reported to the university. 81 percent of liberal students think professors should be reported to the university for saying something deemed offensive compared to 53 percent of conservative students who think so.

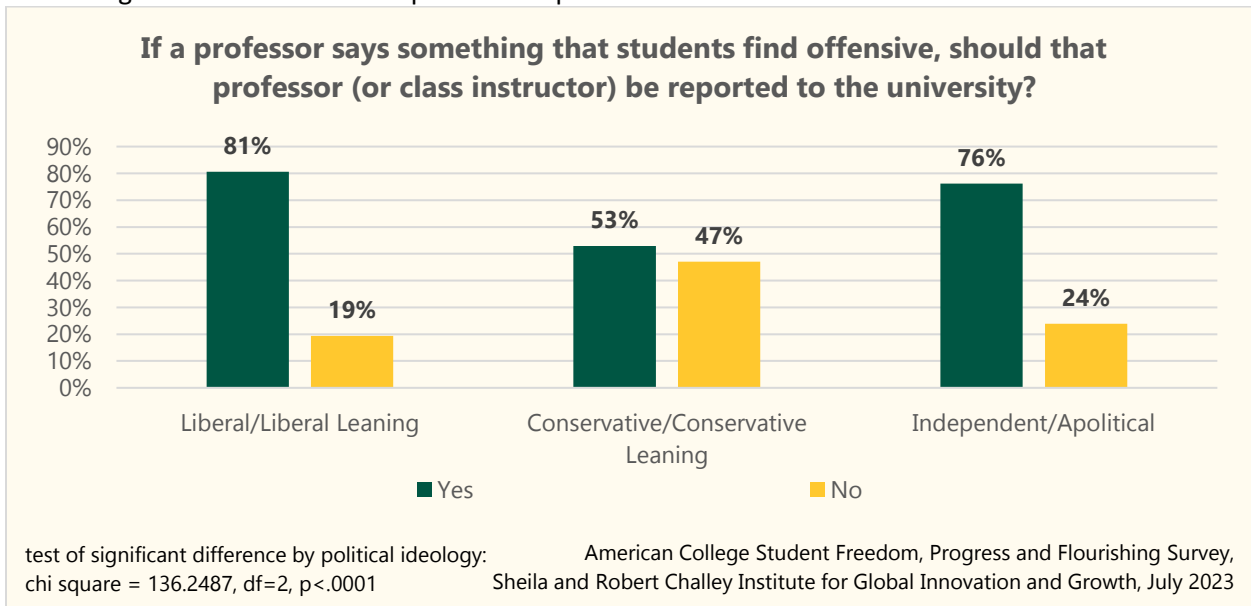


Figure 24: Significant differences exist among students with different political ideologies on whether professors should be reported for saying something students find offensive

Many Students Believe Professors Should be Reported for Opinions they Find to be Offensive

In an attempt to identify whether students are in favor of reporting professors for stating opinions and/or facts that students may disagree with, or whether they are only in favor of reporting professors for things like racial slurs, sexual harassment, and personal attacks, we asked students who answered “yes” to the previous question, which of the following statements professors should be reported for:

- Statement 1: “It is clear that Affirmative Action is doing more harm than good, and should be eliminated.”
- Statement 2: “If you look at the data, there is no evidence of anti-black bias in police shootings.”
- Statement 3: “Owning a gun is the right of every U.S. citizen.”
- Statement 4: “Biological sex is a scientific fact. There are two sexes, male and female.”
- Statement 5: “Requiring vaccination for COVID is an assault on individual freedom.”
- Statement 6: “Those who want to eliminate Affirmative Action are perpetuating white privilege.”
- Statement 7: “It is clear that we have a problem with racist police in the U.S. shooting unarmed black men.”
- Statement 8: “A civilized society doesn’t need guns.”
- Statement 9: “There are a wide variety of sexes. Sex is not binary.”
- Statement 10: “Not getting vaccinated for COVID is irresponsible and inconsiderate to others.”
- “Other, please specify.”

40 percent of all students (54 percent of those who think professors should be reported for saying something offensive) believe that professors should be reported for Statement 2. 34 percent of all students (46 percent of those who think professors should be reported for saying something offensive) believe professors should be reported for Statement 5. 30 percent and 27 percent of all students think that professors should be reported for Statement 1 and Statement 4, respectively. Smaller percentages believe that professors should be reported for the other statements. Only 13.7 percent of students responding to this question (10 percent of all students) chose “other” for this question. In specifying reasons for “other” responses included racial slurs, sexual harassment, and personal attacks.

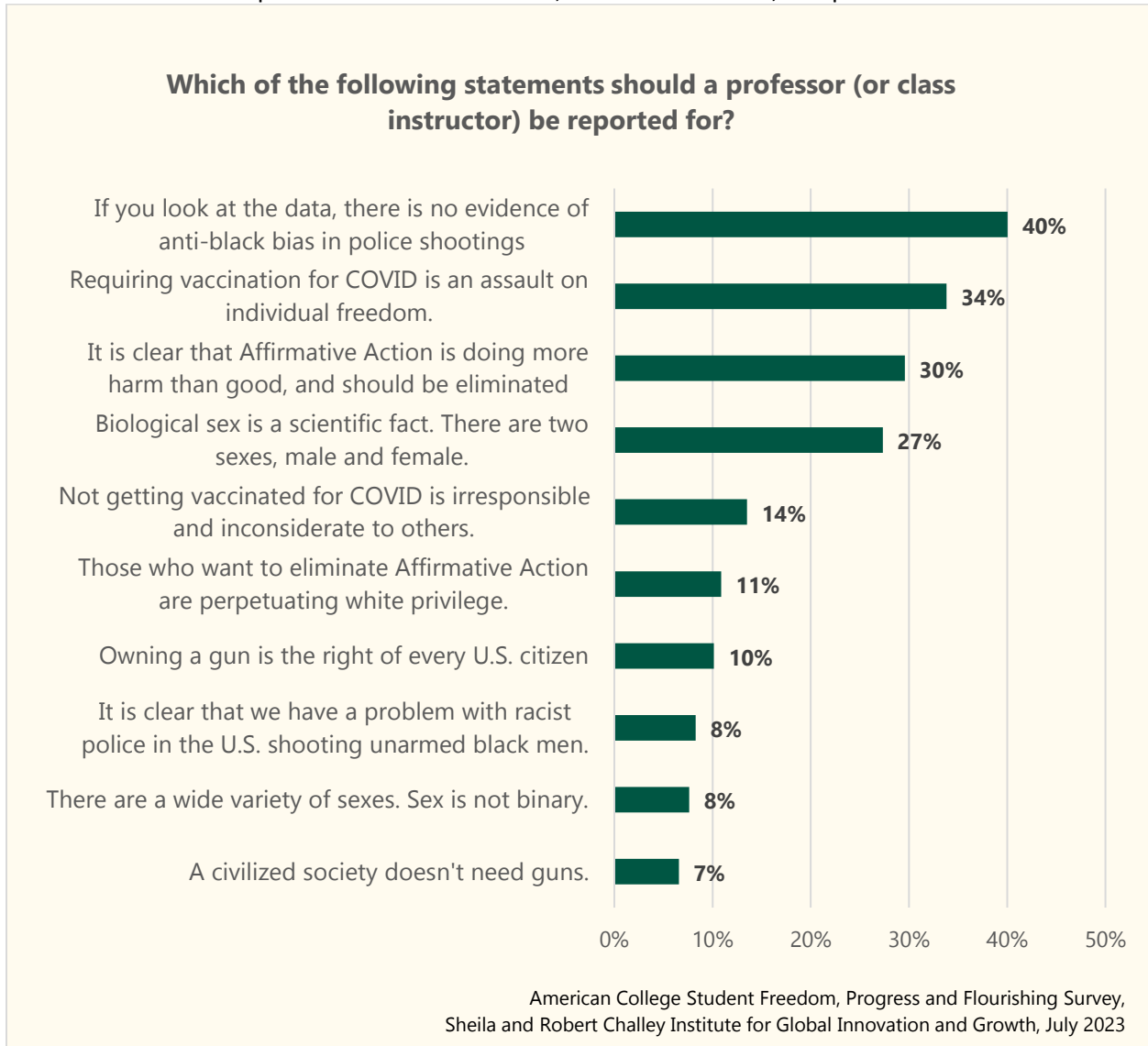


Figure 25: Percent of all students who believe professors should be reported for these statements (total answering divided by the full sample of 2,250)

Not surprisingly, liberal students are more likely to be in favor of reporting professors for more conservative leaning statements in comparison to reporting them for more liberal leaning statements. Although conservative students are less likely to be in favor of reporting professors on most issues, their likelihood of being in favor of reporting relative to liberal students is higher for more liberal leaning statements.

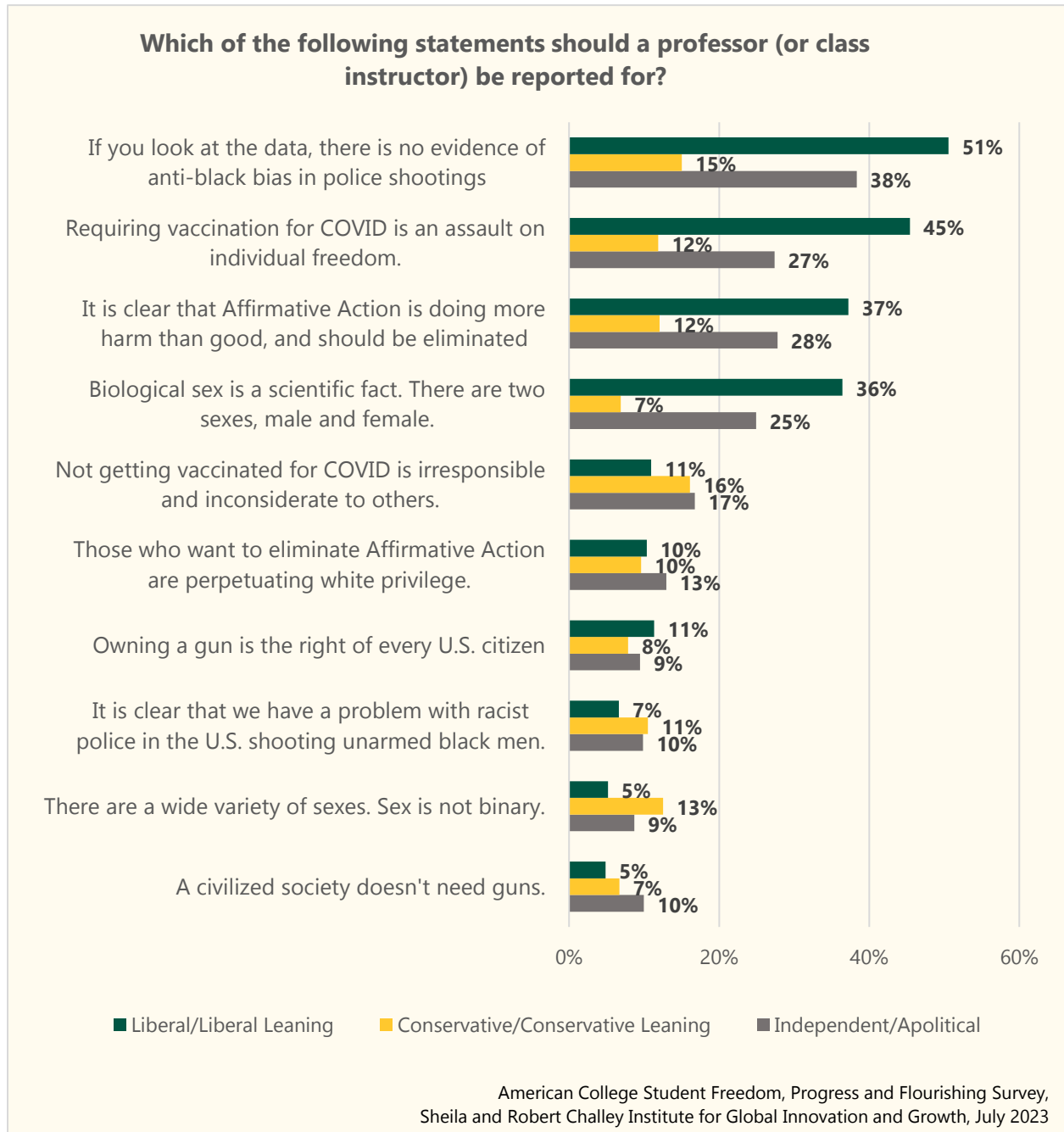


Figure 8: Percent of all liberal, conservative, and independent students who are in favor of reporting professors for various statements

Nearly Two-Thirds of Students Are in Favor of Reporting Professors for Disfavored Opinions or Facts

65 percent of all students are in favor of reporting professors for stating one of the 10 opinions or facts above (excluding the other category.) These opinions or facts deal with affirmative action, police shootings, guns, sex/gender, or vaccines.

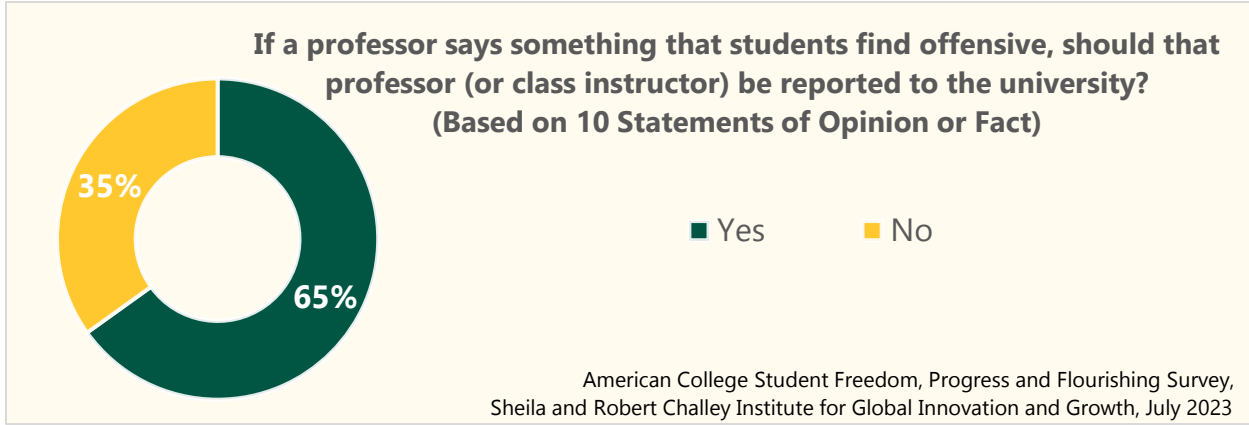


Figure 9: 65 percent of students believe a professor should be reported to the university for making a statement on affirmative action, police shootings, guns, sex/gender, or vaccines

Student opinions on whether professors should be reported for these statements vary widely across political ideologies. 75 percent of liberal students believe professors should be reported for one or more of these statements, compared to 65 percent of independent students, and 41 percent of conservative students.

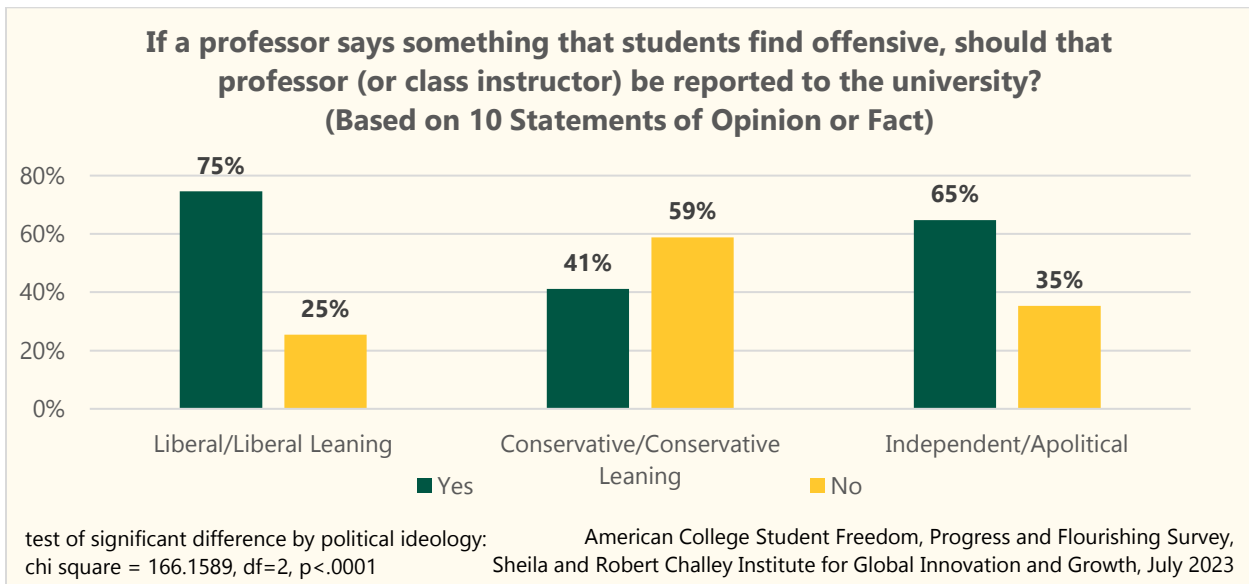


Figure 10: Significant differences exist among students with different political ideologies in whether they believe professors should be reported for statements related to affirmative action, police shootings, guns, sex/gender, and vaccines

A Majority of Students Say a Student Should be Reported for Saying Something Other Students Find Offensive

A majority of students (58 percent) are in favor of reporting students who say something that other students find offensive.

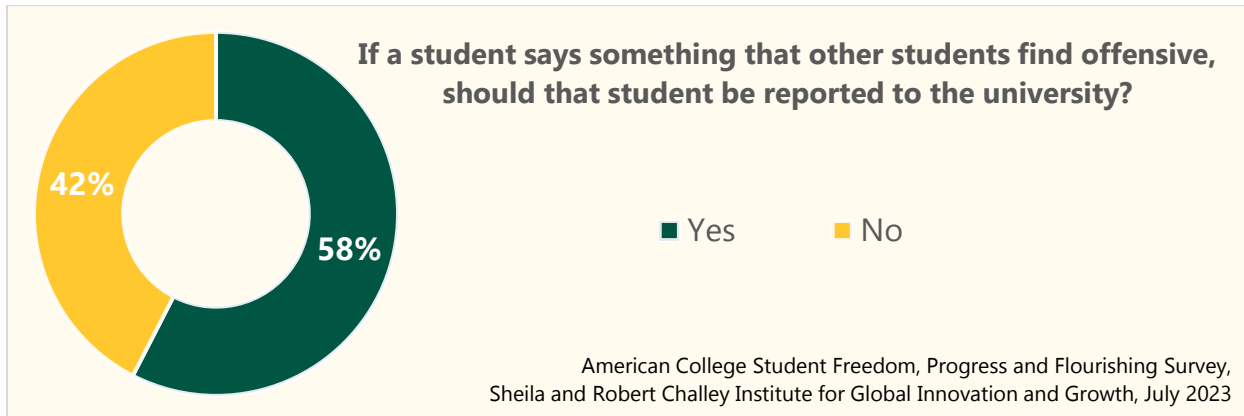


Figure 11: 58 percent of students believe another student should be reported for saying something that is deemed offensive

As with attitudes toward reporting professors for saying something deemed offensive, there are large and statistically significant differences in how students with different political ideologies feel about reporting other students who say something deemed offensive. 66 percent of liberal students are in favor of reporting other students in comparison to 37 percent of conservative students.

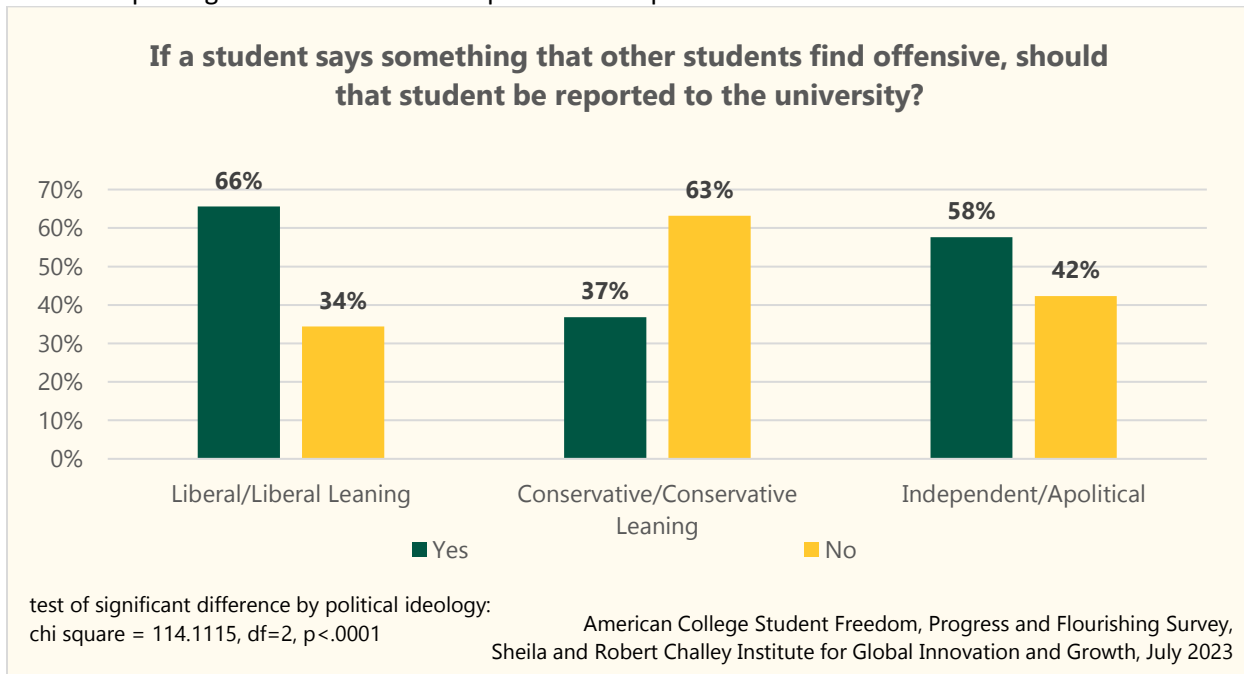


Figure 30: Students with different political ideologies have different views about reporting students who say something deemed offensive

About One-Fifth of Students Have Participated in a Civil Discourse Program in the Past Year

A number of programs at universities across the country aim to teach and facilitate civil discourse among students. 21 percent of the students surveyed report participating in such a program during the last year.

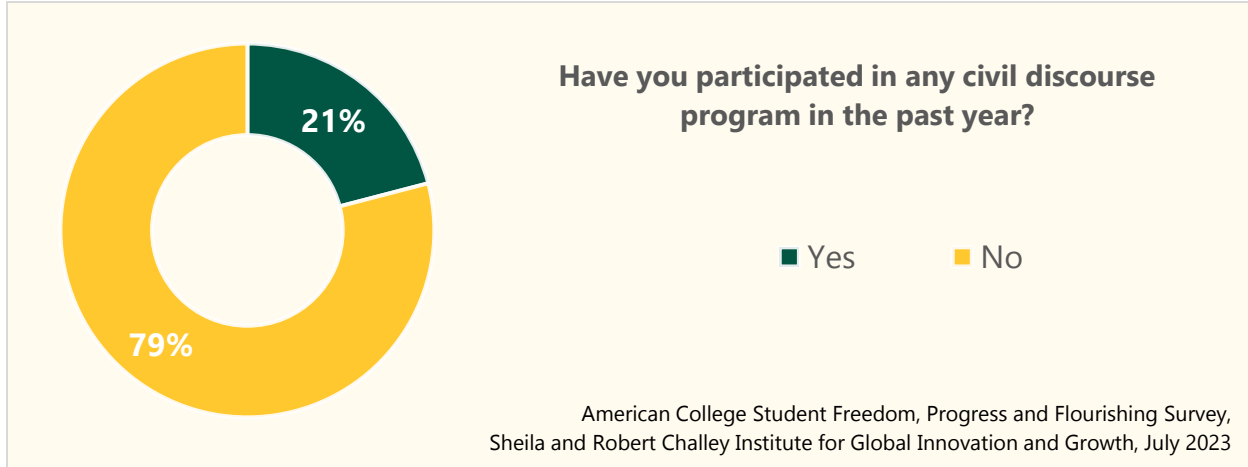


Figure 12: 21 percent of students have participated in a civil discourse program over the last year

Participation in the programs is similar across the political ideologies of students.

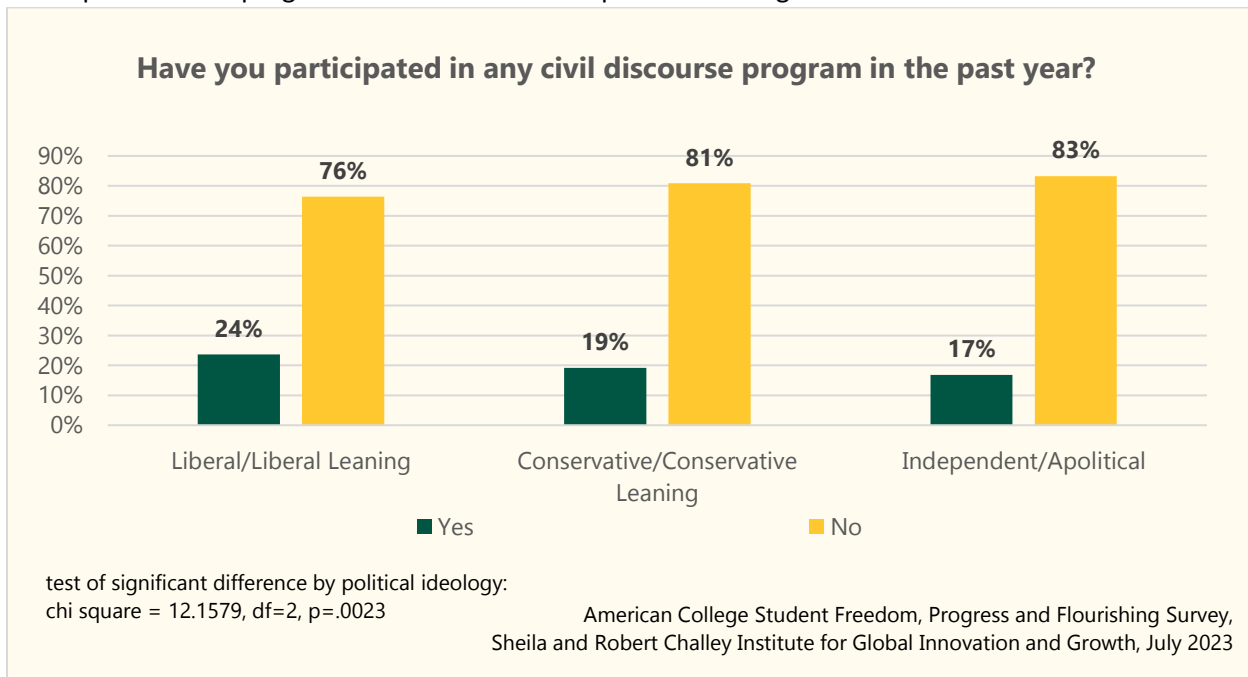


Figure 13: Similar percentages of students of different political ideologies have participated in a civil discourse program over the last year

Nearly Three-Quarters of Students Participating in a Civil Discourse Program Say It Has Made Them More Comfortable Sharing Their Opinion

Of the students that have participated in a civil discourse program over the last year, 74 percent say it has made them more comfortable sharing their opinion and discussing controversial/sensitive topics with others. 31 percent of these students say it has made them “much more comfortable,” and another 43 percent say it has made them “somewhat more comfortable.” Only 6 percent say it has made them less comfortable.



Figure 33: 74 percent of students say participating in a civil discourse program has made them more comfortable sharing their opinion and discussing sensitive topics

While program participation has made most students more comfortable in sharing their opinion and discussing controversial/sensitive topics, the impacts are most pronounced for liberal students. 80 percent of liberal students say program participation has made them more comfortable sharing their opinion and discussing sensitive topics, compared to 63 percent of conservative students participating in such a program.

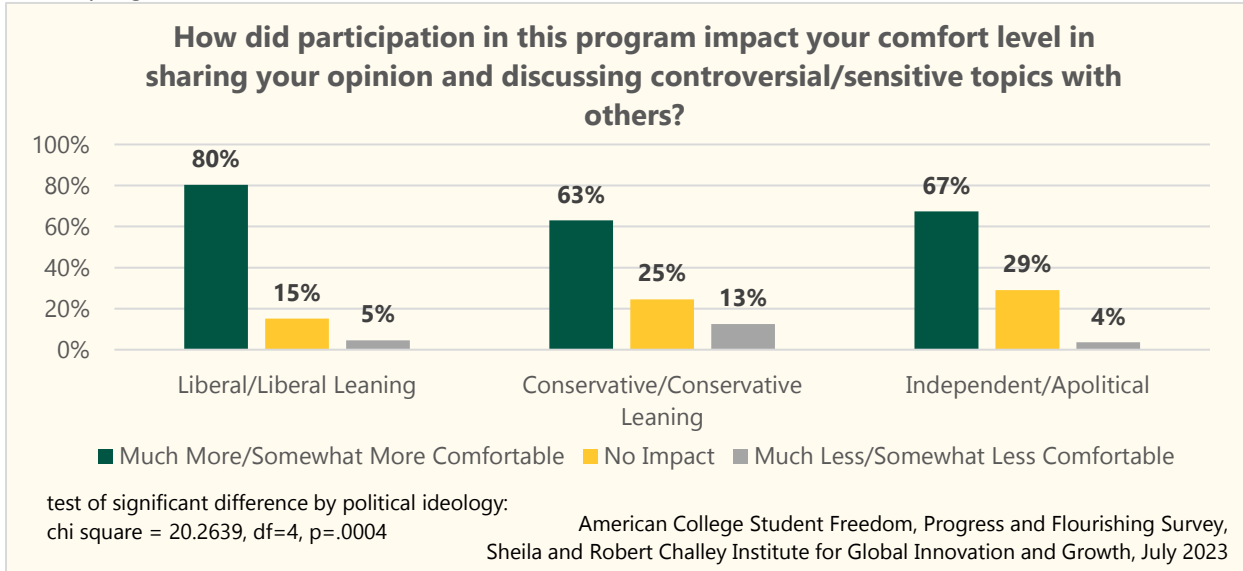


Figure 14: Civil discourse programs have been effective in making students more comfortable in sharing their opinion and discussing controversial/sensitive topics, especially for liberal students

Summary

As shown in the figures above, there are some positive signs regarding openness to a variety of views on campus and some negative signs. On the positive side, a majority of students are at least somewhat comfortable sharing their opinions on controversial topics in class, they believe that professors create a classroom climate open to diverse views and where unpopular views are welcome, they are not in favor of dropping readings or discussions that students disagree with, and they are not in favor of disinviting controversial speakers.

However, there are a number of things related to viewpoint diversity that are concerning. Although a majority of students are at least somewhat comfortable sharing their opinions on controversial topics in class, half of these students feel comfortable because they believe that others agree with them. Moreover, sizeable minorities of students are in favor of dropping readings that make students feel uncomfortable (42 percent) and disinviting speakers whom many students disagree (35 percent). One of the most concerning things relates to students' willingness to report professors or other students for saying something they deem to be offensive. A majority of students are in favor of both, and 65 percent of students are in favor of reporting professors for making specific statements of opinion or fact about affirmative action, police shootings, guns, gender/sex, or vaccines. Finally, students with conservative political ideologies are much less likely to view the campus climate as open to different points of view.

Section 2: Human Progress, Attitudes About the Future, and National Pride

According to a wide range of indicators (e.g., life expectancy, income, access to food, and access to education), life is getting better for people all over the world. Yet, surveys suggest there is growing pessimism in the U.S. about the present and future of our society, and perhaps especially among younger generations. Thus, we asked students a range of questions about how they think their college education is influencing their understanding of the state of the world and the U.S., shaping their attitudes about the future, and preparing them to make a difference in the world. We also asked them whether or not they are proud to be American.

A majority of students believe their college education is helping them develop more accurate views of the world and the U.S., but there are disparities in this perception among students with different political ideologies. In general, students with a more conservative political ideology are less likely to perceive their college education as helping them develop more accurate views.

Less than half of students believe that the world and the U.S. have improved over the last 50 years, and the majority believe that the U.S. and world have gotten worse or stayed the same. This is shared among students with different political beliefs. The reasons for progress or the lack thereof are split among those who think the world/U.S. have gotten better and those who think they have gotten worse. Students who think the world and U.S. have gotten worse are more likely to believe the decline is because of a lack of government rules/programs than due to a lack of economic freedom. On the other hand, students who think the world and the U.S. have improved are more likely to attribute the improvement to increased economic freedom rather than increased government rules/programs.

Few students are optimistic about the future of the world (30 percent) and the future of the U.S. (25 percent). The lack of optimism about the future of the world and the U.S. is shared among students with different political views.

On the other hand, a slight majority of students are optimistic about their own future and their ability to make a difference in the world. Similar percentages of students with different political views share this optimism.

On national pride, about half of students are proud to be American. However, we see large differences between political groups, with a large majority of conservatives and a minority of liberal students being proud to be American.

Individual questions and responses are presented below.

A Majority of Students Believe That College Is Helping Them Develop a More Accurate Picture of the World

Most students (77 percent) believe their college education is helping them develop a more accurate picture of the state of the world.

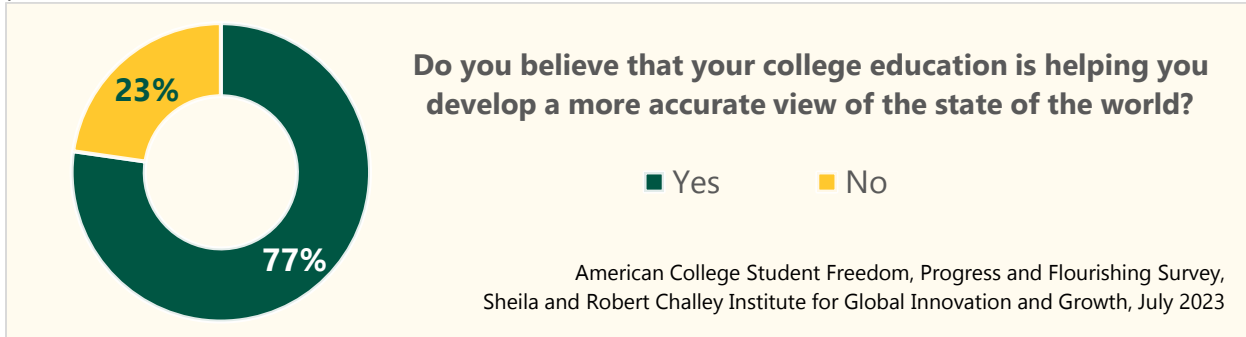


Figure 15: More than three-quarters of students believe college is giving them a more accurate view of the world

The proportion of students that believe their college education is giving them a more accurate picture of the world varies widely among students with different political ideologies. Conservative students are less likely to believe their college education is giving them a more accurate view of the world in comparison to independent and liberal students.

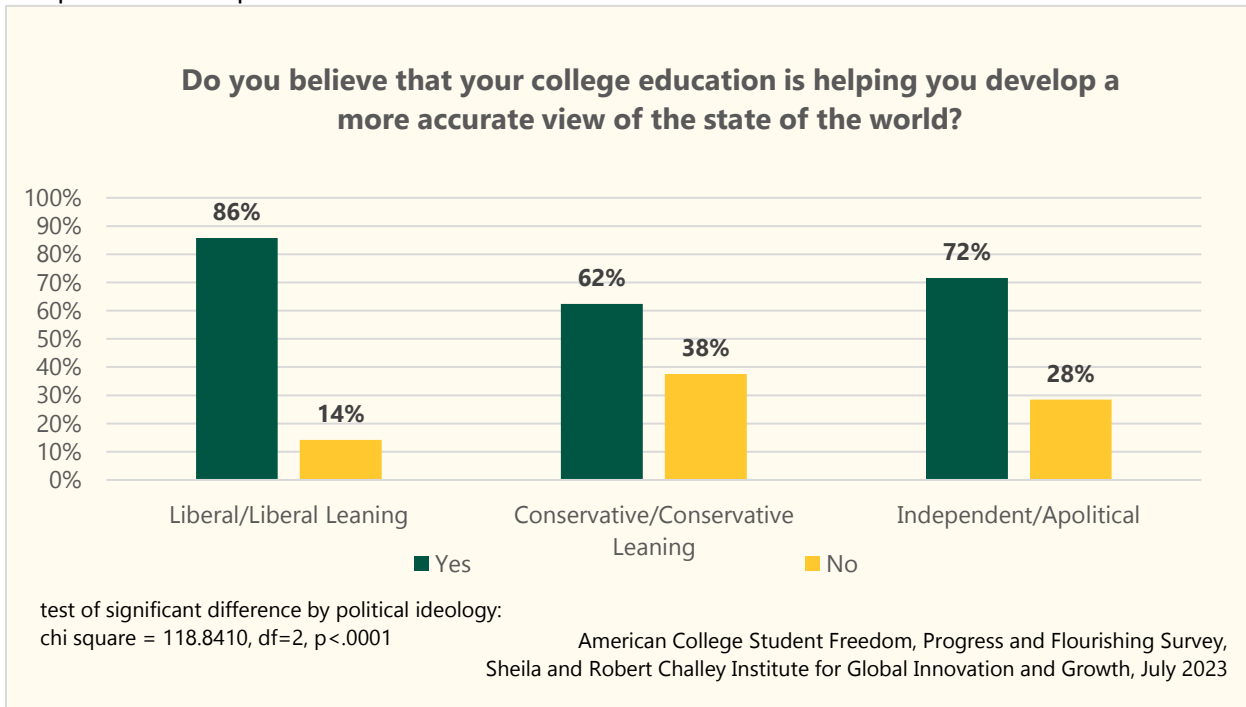


Figure 36: Liberal students are more likely to believe college is giving them a more accurate view of the world than conservative students

Less Than Half of Students Say the World Has Gotten Better Over the Last 50 Years

Only 47 percent of students believe that based on what they have learned in college the world has gotten better in terms of extreme poverty, life expectancy, hunger, and literacy over the last 50 years.

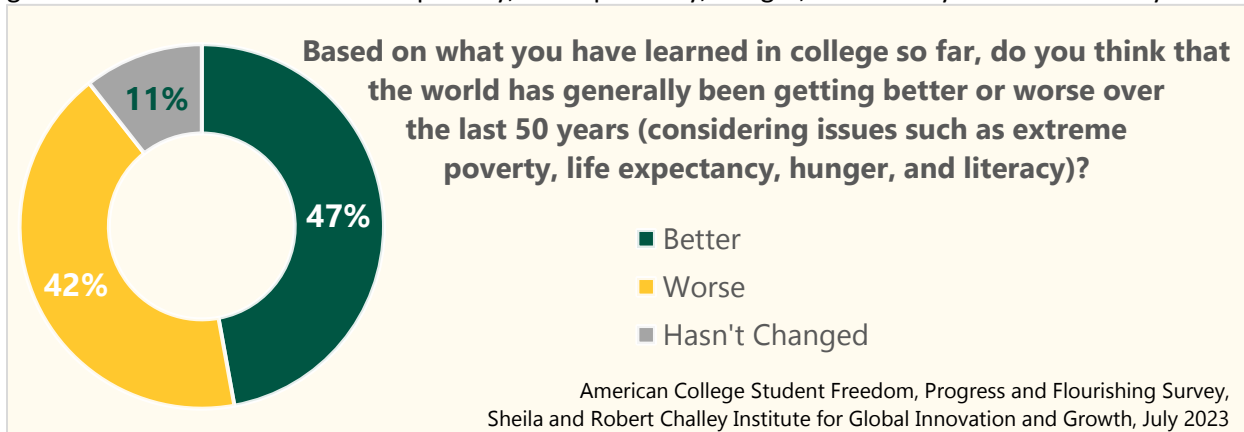


Figure 16: Less than half of students believe the world has improved over the last 50 years in terms of extreme poverty, life expectancy, hunger, and literacy

The belief that the world has gotten worse or hasn't changed over the last 50 years is shared by a majority of liberal, conservative, and independent students.

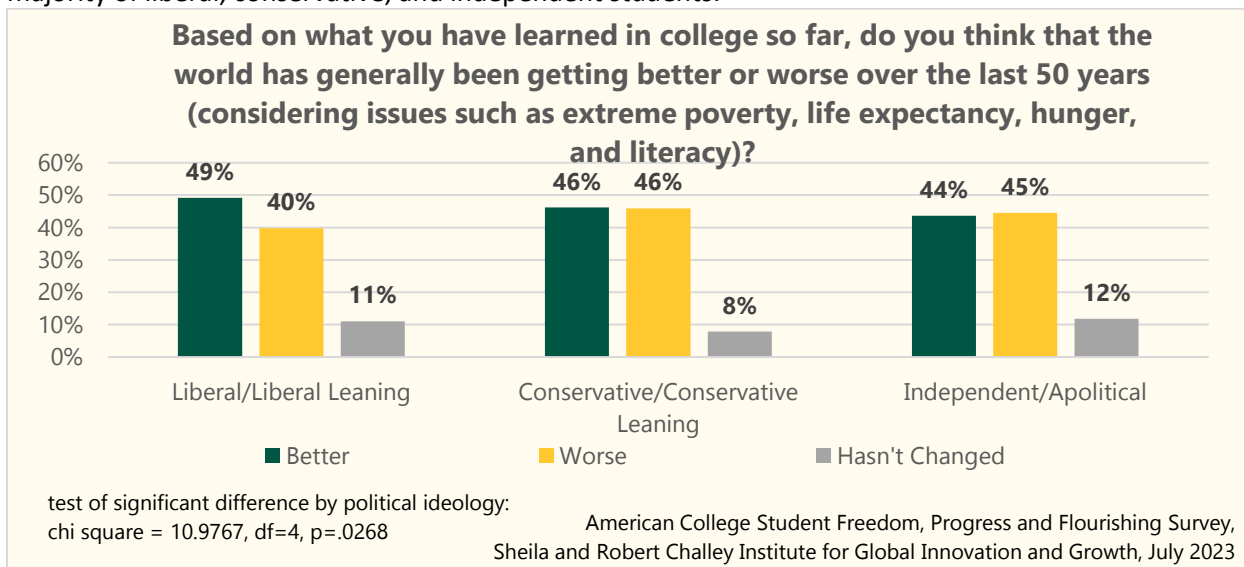


Figure 17: Based on what they have learned in college, a minority of students believe the world has improved over the last 50 years

For Students Who Believe the World Has Improved Over the Last 50 Years, 46 Percent Believe It Is Due to Increased Economic and Political Freedom

When students who believe the world has improved were asked whether it was because of increased economic and political freedom or because of increased rules and regulations, 46 percent said it was due to increased freedom. 30 percent attributed it to increased government rules, regulation, and abilities to redistribute resources.



Figure 39: 46 percent of students who believe the world has improved attribute it to increased freedom, while 30 percent attribute it to increased government rules

For students who believe the world has improved over the last 50 years there are significant differences in attributing the improvement to various reasons among students with different political ideologies. 45 percent of liberal students attribute the improvement to increased economic and political freedom, while 32 percent attribute it to increased government rules. By comparison, 51 percent of conservative students attribute it to increased economic and political freedom and 28 percent to increased government rules.

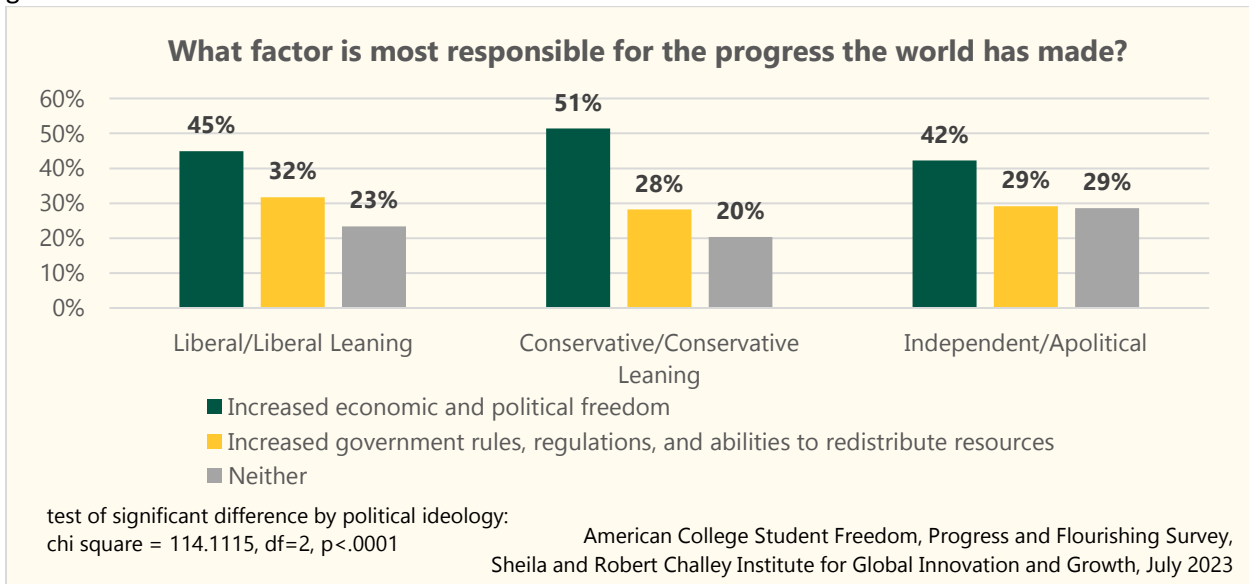


Figure 40: Significant differences in attribution of progress exist among students with different political ideologies

For Students Who Think the World Has Declined Over the Last 50 Years, 36 Percent Believe It Is Because There Are Not Enough Government Rules.

Among students who believe the world has gotten worse over the last 50 years, 36 percent attribute the decline to not enough government rules and 27 percent attribute it to not enough economic and political freedom.



Figure 41: 36 percent of students who believe the world has gotten worse attribute it to a lack of government rules and 27 percent attribute it to a lack of economic and political freedom

There are significant differences in attribution for a perceived decline in the world among students with different political ideologies. 45 percent of liberal students attribute the perceived decline to not enough government rules compared to 26 percent of conservative students. 37 percent of conservative students attribute the perceived decline to not enough economic and political freedom compared to 24 percent of liberal students.

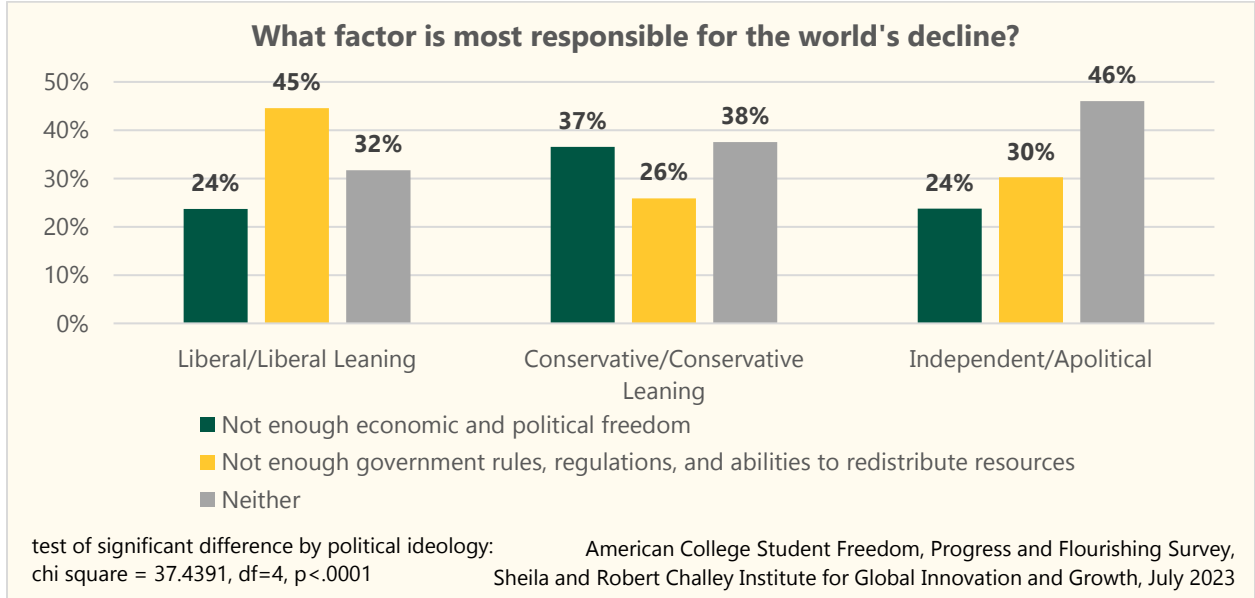


Figure 42: There are significant differences in attribution for the perceived decline among students with different political ideologies

A Minority of Students Are Optimistic About the Future of the World

Based on what they have learned in college, 30 percent of students are optimistic about the future of the world, 36 percent are pessimistic, and 34 percent have a neutral view.

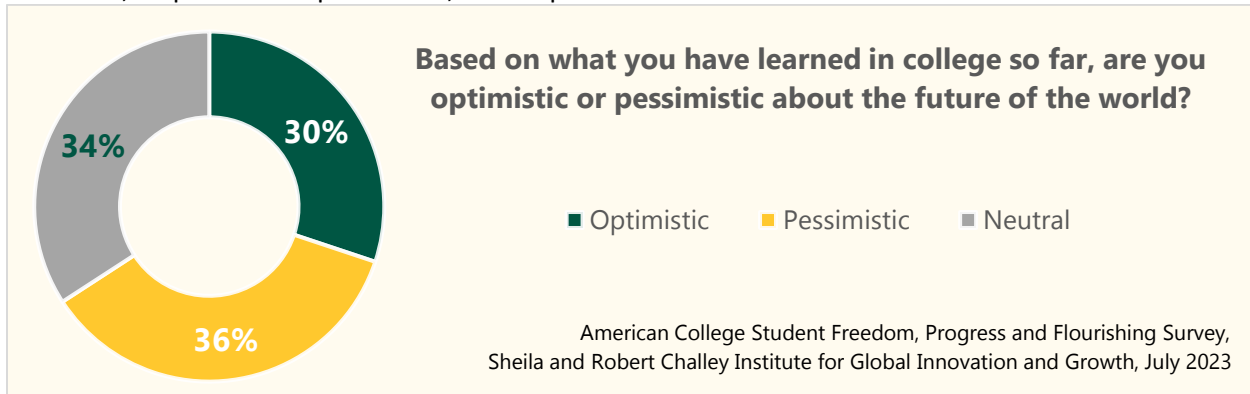


Figure 43: 30 percent of students are optimistic about the future of the world, while 36 percent are pessimistic

Similar percentages of students with different political ideologies are optimistic and pessimistic about the future of the world, though independent students are more neutral about the future of the world in comparison to the other two.

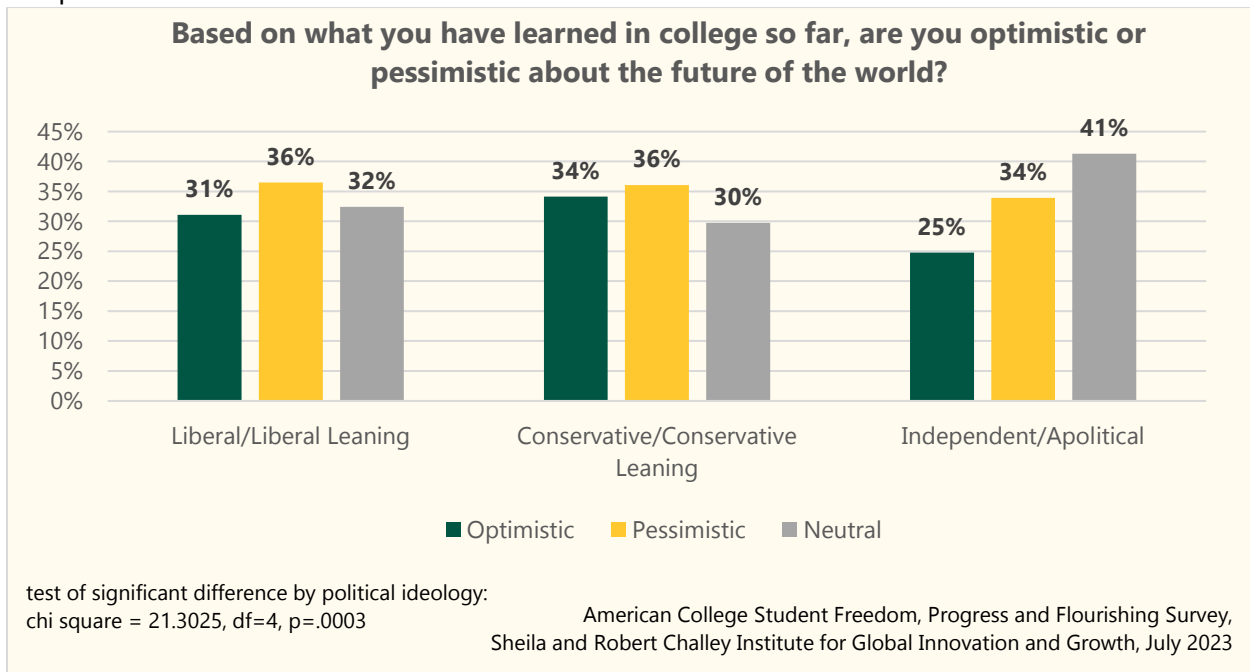


Figure 18: A majority of students are pessimistic or neutral about the future of the world, regardless of their political ideology

Three-Quarters of Students Say Their Professors Inspire Them to Feel Optimistic About the Future of the World at Least Occasionally

30 percent of students say their professors frequently or very frequently inspire them to feel optimistic about the future of the world. Another 45 percent say their professors occasionally inspire them to feel optimistic about the future of the world, while only 4 percent say professors never inspire them to feel optimistic about the future of the world.



Figure 45: 75 percent of students say professors inspire them to feel optimistic about the future of the world at least occasionally

There are significant differences in students with different political views reporting that their professors inspire them to feel optimistic about the future of the world. Liberal students (81 percent) are more likely to report professors inspire them to feel optimistic about the world’s future than conservative (71 percent) and independent (66 percent) students.

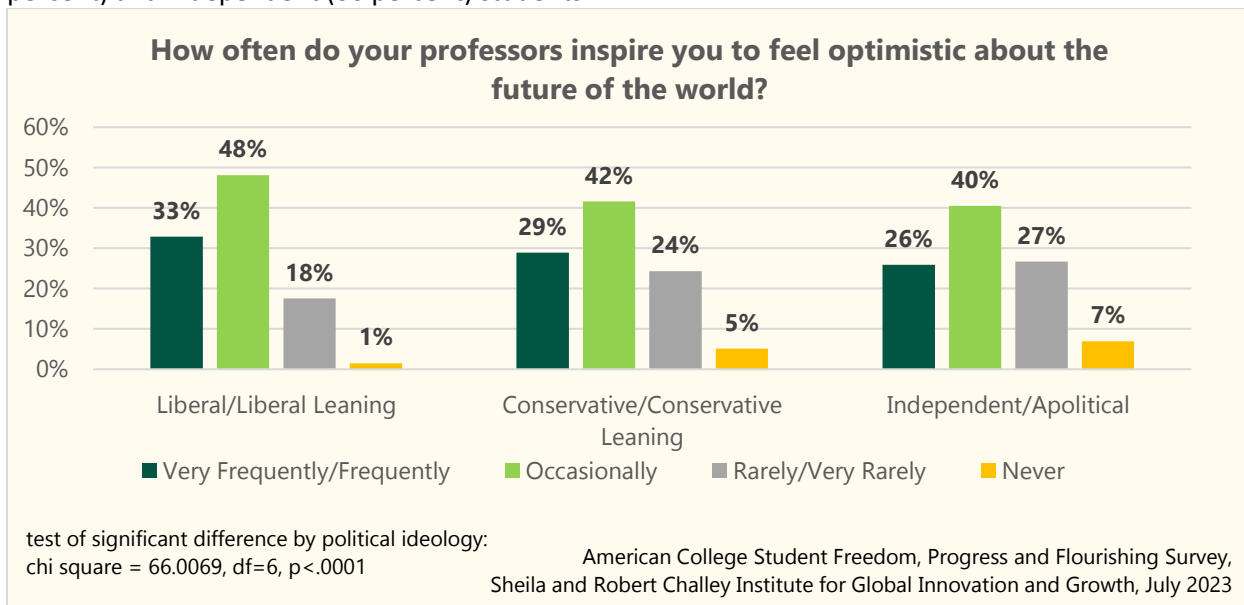


Figure 46: Liberal students are more likely to report being inspired by professors to feel optimistic about the future of the world in comparison to conservative or independent students

A Majority of Students Say College Is Helping Them Develop a More Accurate View of the U.S.

An identical percentage (77 percent) of students believes that their college education is helping them develop a more accurate picture of the U.S. and believes it is helping them develop a more accurate picture of the world.

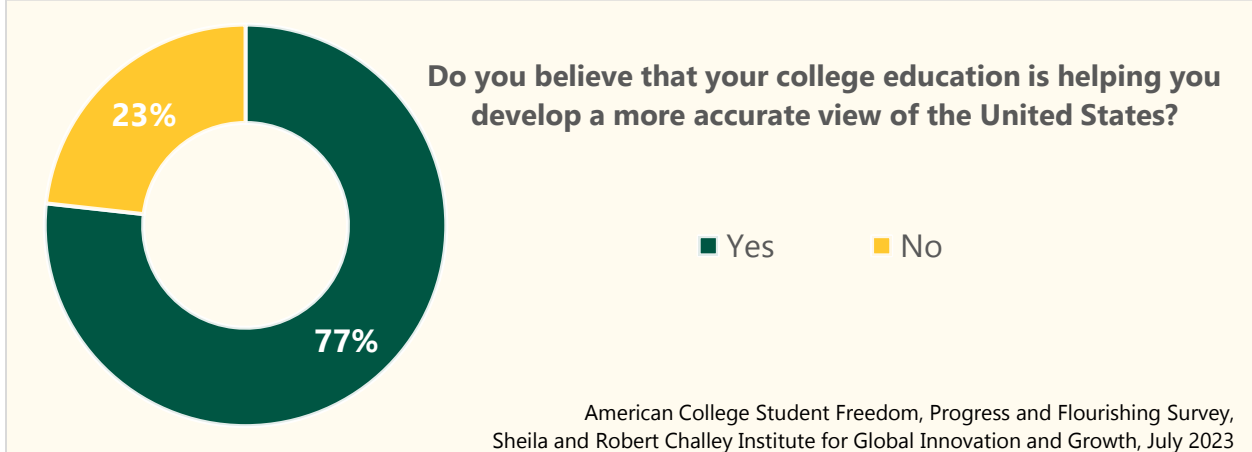


Figure 19: 77 percent of students believe college is helping them develop a more accurate picture of the U.S.

Liberal students (83 percent) are more likely to believe that college is helping them to develop a more accurate picture of the U.S. in comparison to independent (71 percent) or conservative (68 percent) students.

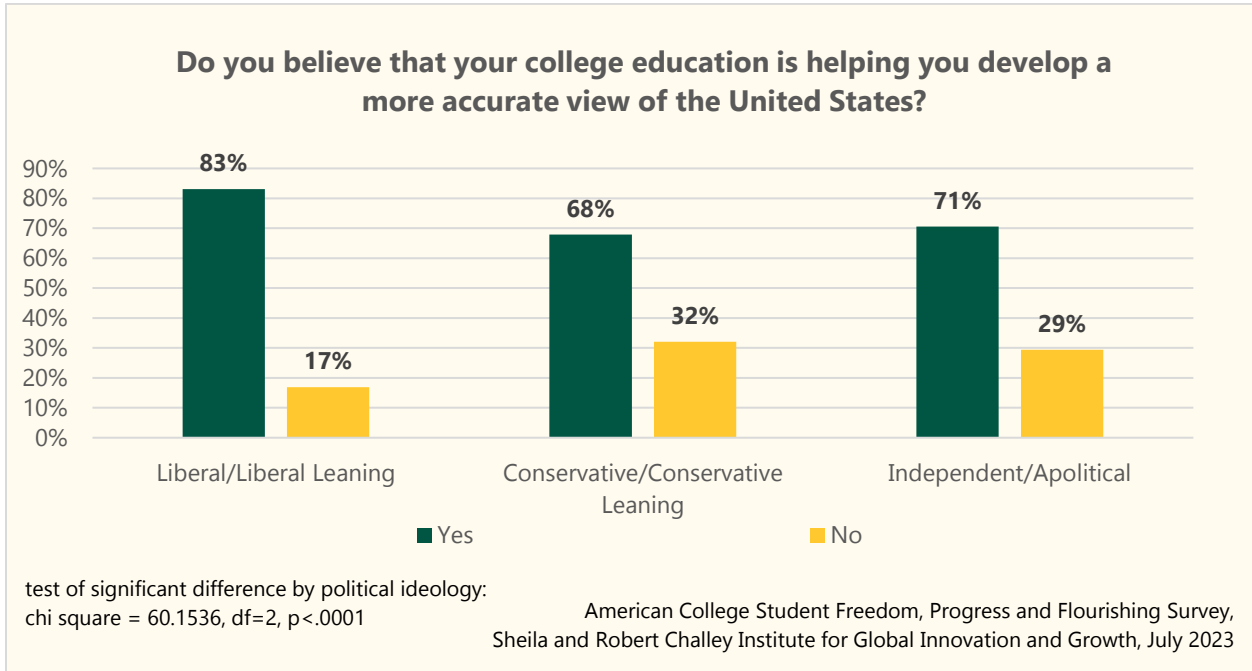


Figure 20: 83 percent of liberal students believe college is helping them develop a more accurate view of the U.S., while 71 percent of independent students and 68 percent of conservative students believe so

Few Students Believe That College Has Given Them a More Positive View of the U.S.

16 percent of students say their classes and other activities during college gave them a more positive view of the U.S., while 37 percent say they have given them a more negative view of the U.S.

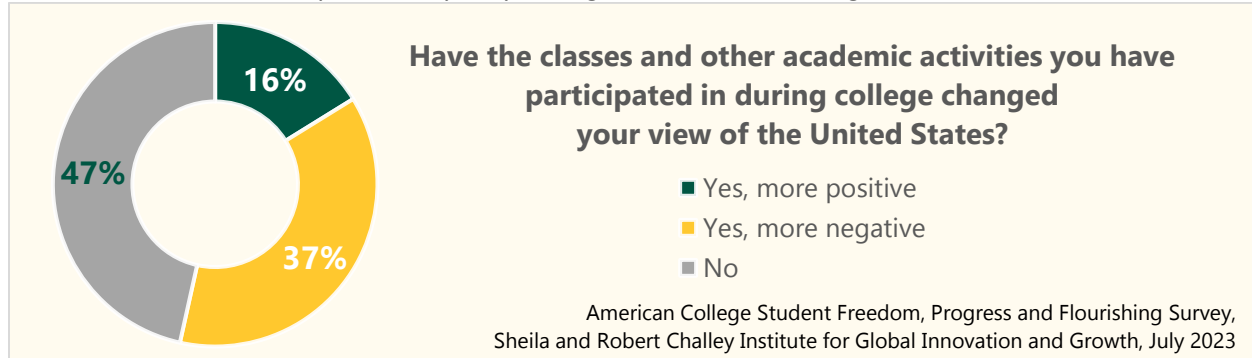


Figure 49: 16 percent of students say college has given them a more positive view of the U.S.

Significant differences among students with different political ideologies exist in their perception of how college has changed their view of the U.S. Conservative students (24 percent) are more likely to say college has given them a more positive view of the U.S. in comparison to liberal (15 percent) and independent (12 percent) students, while liberal students (43 percent) are more likely to say it has given them a more negative view of the U.S. in comparison to independent (34 percent) and conservative (27 percent) students.

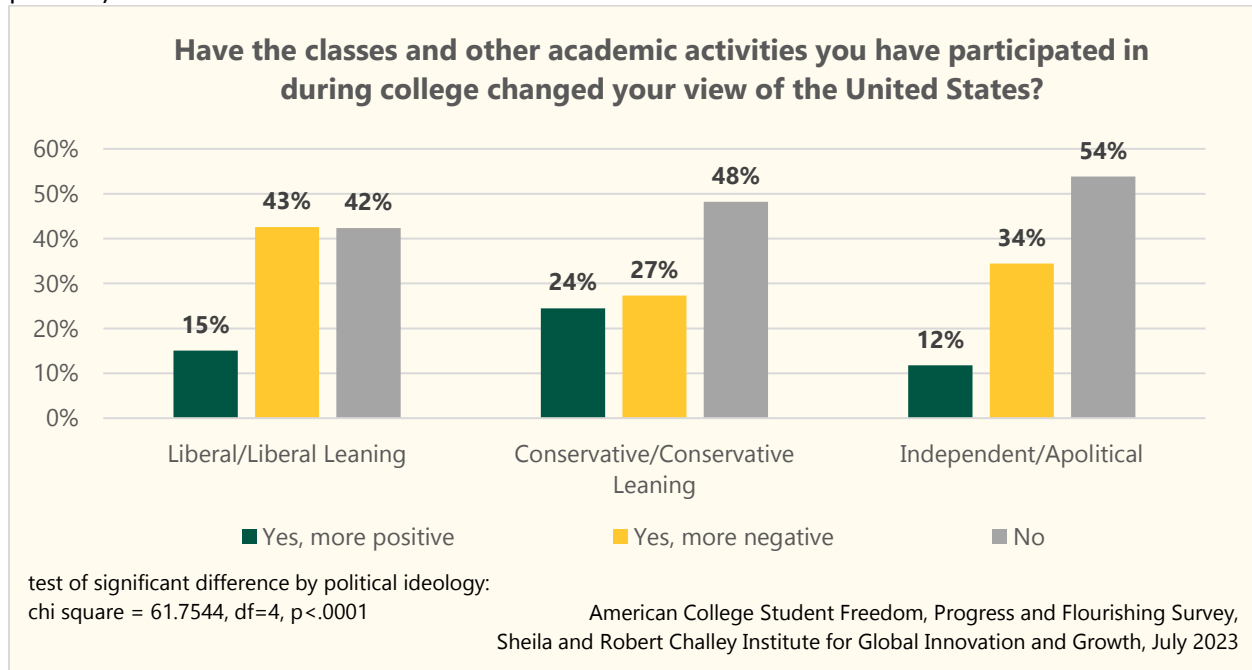


Figure 50: Significant differences among students with different political ideologies exist in their perception of how college has changed their view of the U.S.

Nearly 60 Percent of Students Believe that Life in the U.S. Has Gotten Worse or Stayed the Same Over the Last 50 Years

Based on what they have learned in college, 41 percent of students believe that life has gotten better in the U.S. over the last 50 years, considering life expectancy, income per person, and education level. 46 percent of students think it has gotten worse, and another 13 percent say it has not changed.

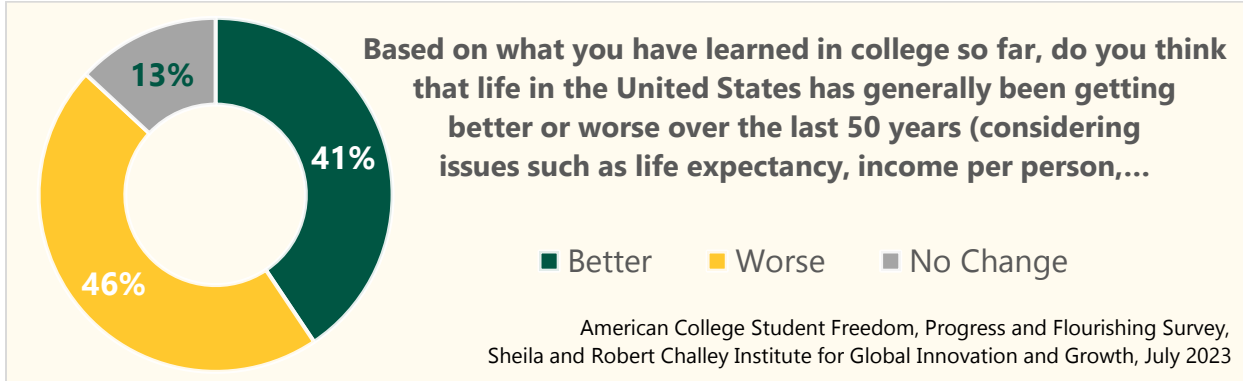


Figure 51: 41 percent of students think life has gotten better in the U.S. over the last 50 years, while 46 percent say it has gotten worse

Liberal students (44 percent) are more likely to believe the U.S. has gotten better over the last 50 years in comparison to conservative (38 percent) and independent (35 percent) students. Interestingly, this is in reverse to our 2022 findings, where 51 percent of conservative students thought the U.S. had gotten better and 38 percent of liberal and 40 percent of independent students thought the U.S. had gotten better.

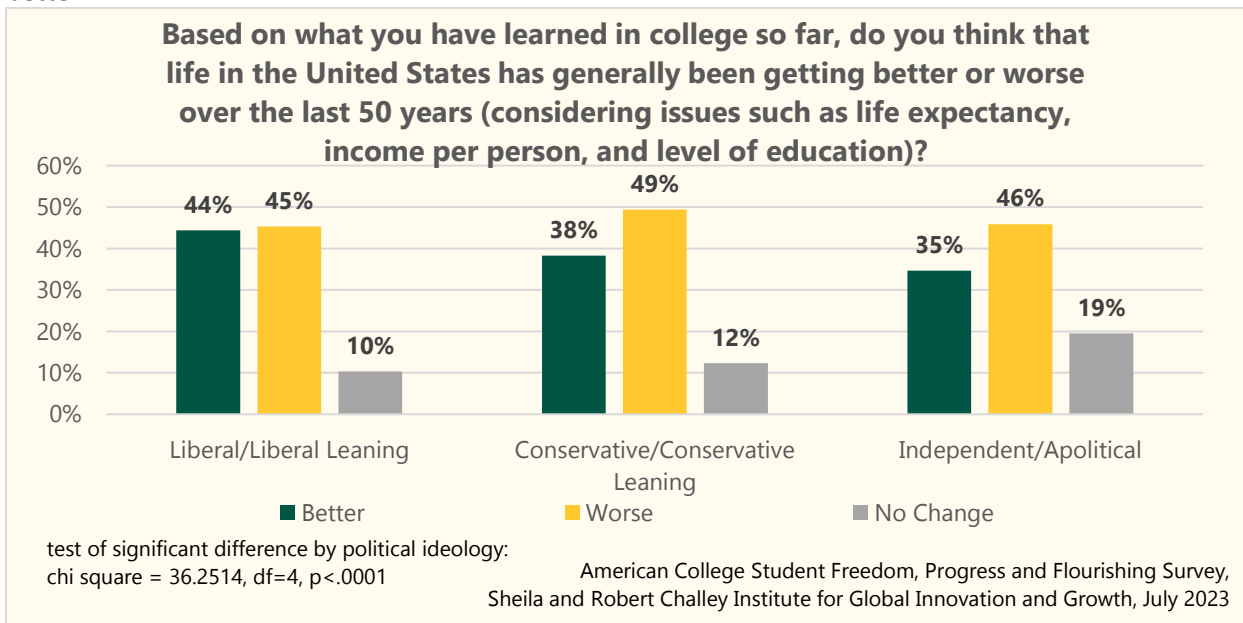


Figure 52: There are differences among students with different political ideologies on perceptions about whether the U.S. has improved over the last 50 years

For Students Who Think the U.S. Has Improved Over the Last 50 Years, Nearly Half Believe It Is Because of a Dynamic Marketplace

49 percent of students who think the U.S. has improved over the last 50 years believe the reason is because of a dynamic marketplace where entrepreneurs and others innovate to solve problems. 29 percent think it is because of increased government programs to redistribute resources.



Figure 53: 49 percent of students who think the U.S. has improved attribute it to a dynamic marketplace

There are large differences among students with different political ideologies in attributing the improvement in the U.S. over the last 50 years for those students who think it has improved. Conservative students (66 percent) are more likely to believe it is because of a dynamic marketplace in comparison to independent (50 percent) and liberal (43 percent) students, while liberal students (36 percent) are more likely to believe it is because of increased government redistribution programs in comparison to independent (22 percent) and conservative (15 percent) students.

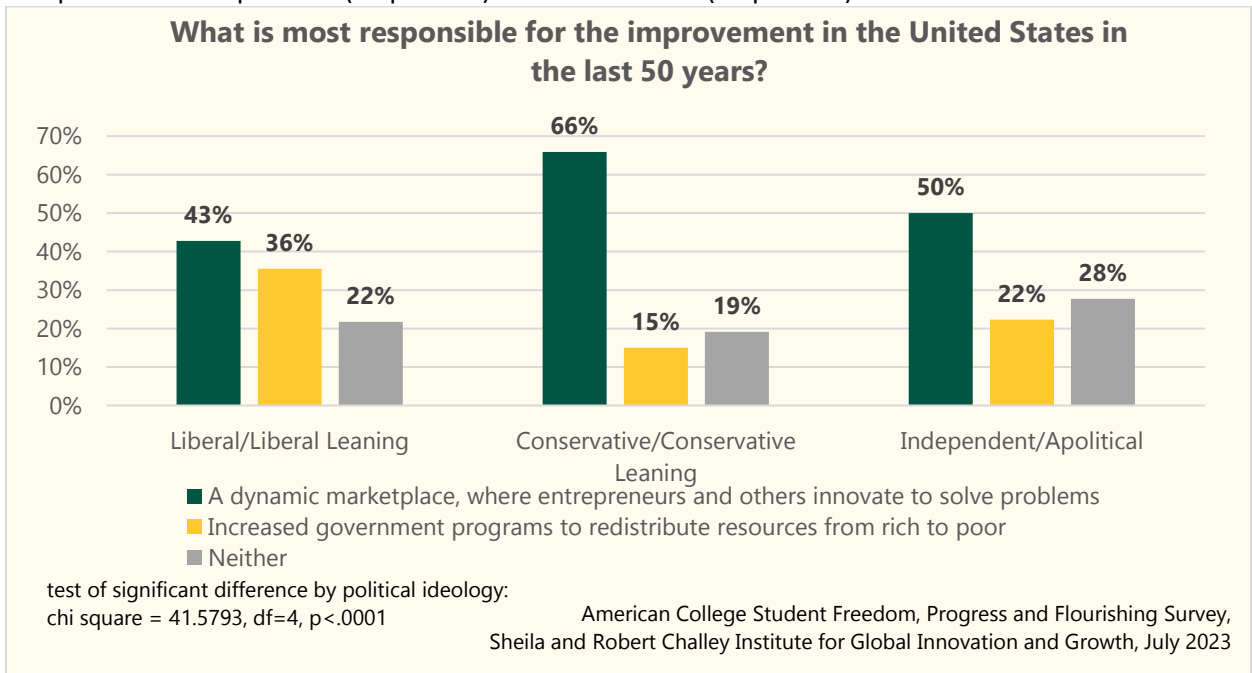


Figure 54: There are large differences among students with different political ideologies in attributing U.S. improvement

For Students Who Think the U.S. Has Declined Over the Last 50 Years, Over Half Believe It Is Because There Are Not Enough Government Programs

For students who believe the U.S. has declined over the last 50 years, 53 percent believe it is because there are not enough government programs to make sure resources are used wisely. Only 20 percent think it is because there are too many regulations that have restricted innovators from solving problems.

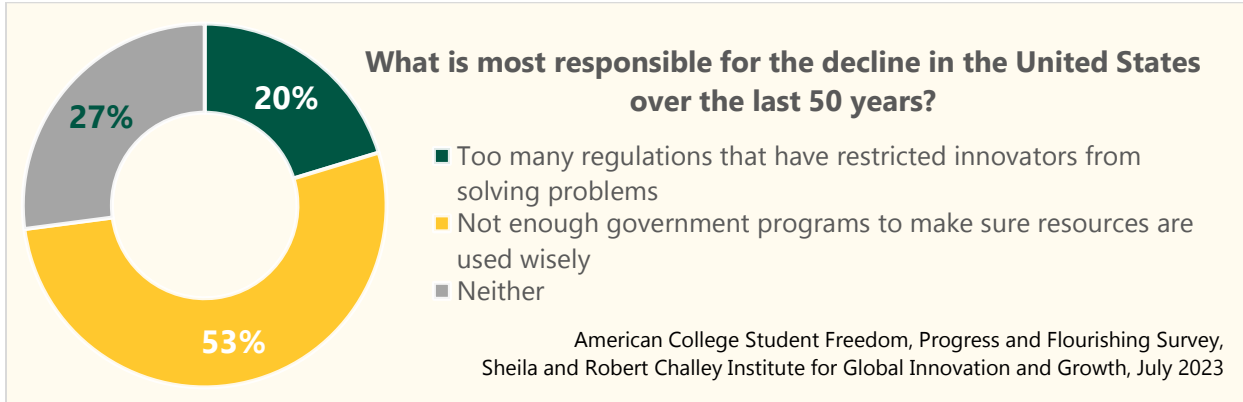


Figure 55: 53 percent of students attribute a perceived decline in the U.S. to not enough government programs

There are large differences among students with different political views in attributing a perceived decline in the U.S. 65 percent of liberal students who think the U.S. has declined attribute it to not enough government programs, while 46 percent of independent students and 31 percent of conservative students attribute the perceived decline to a lack of government programs. On the other hand, 36 percent of conservative students attribute the perceived decline to too many regulations in comparison to 18 percent of independent students and 15 percent of liberal students.

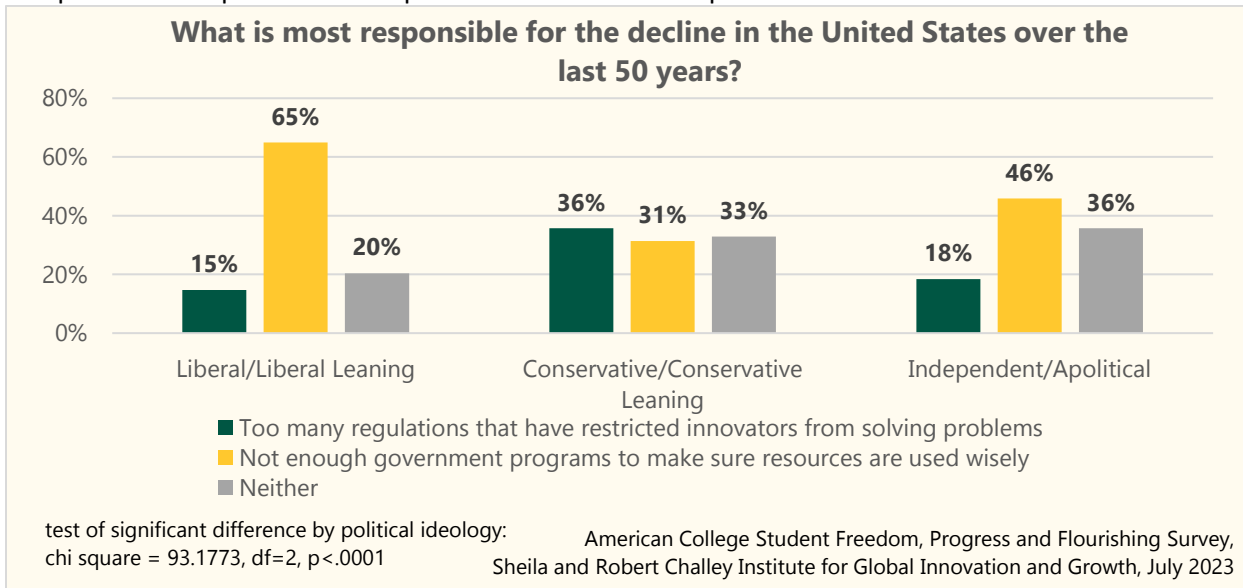


Figure 56: Large differences among students with different political views exist in attributing a perceived decline in the U.S.

A Quarter of Students Are Optimistic About the Future of the U.S.

Based on what they have learned in college, 25 percent of students say they are optimistic about the future of the U.S. 43 percent are pessimistic about the future of the U.S.

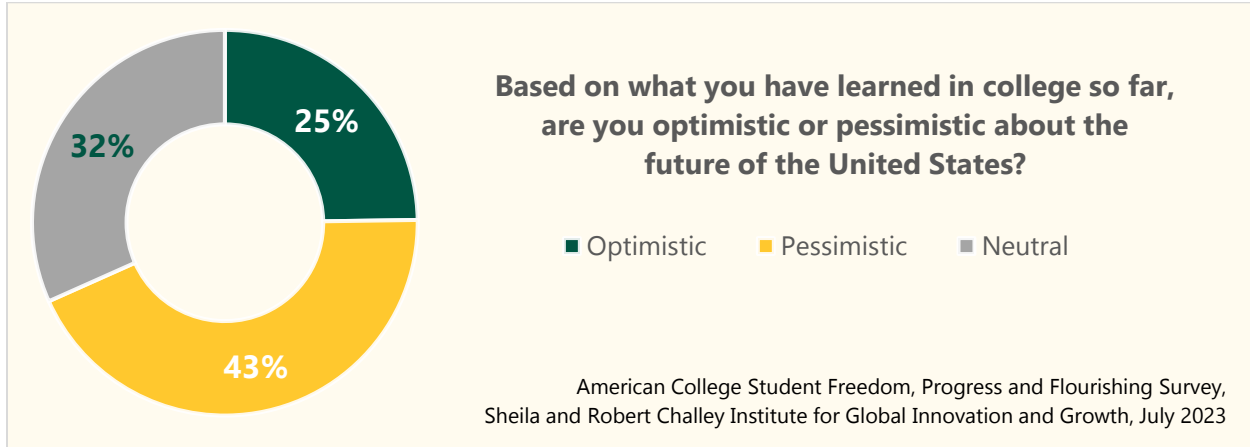


Figure 57: 25 percent of students are optimistic about the future of the U.S., while 43 percent are pessimistic

Whether students have political views that are liberal, conservative, or independent, more than 40 percent are pessimistic about the future of the U.S. Less than 30 percent are optimistic about the future of the U.S. in each political group.

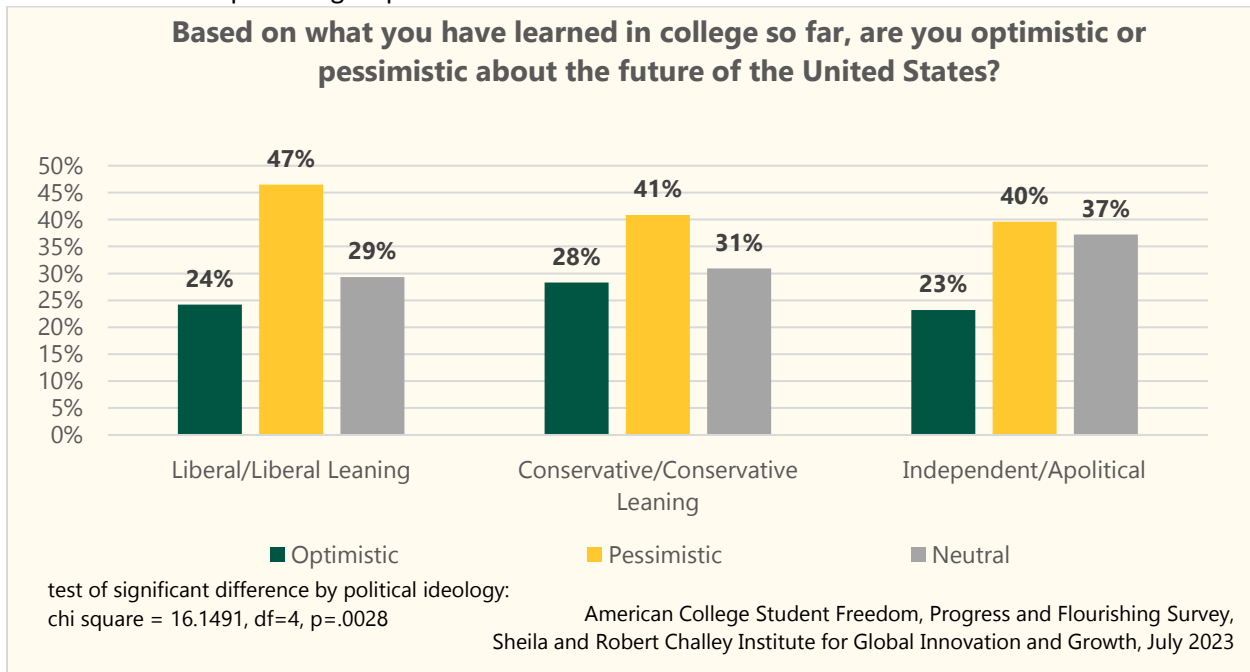


Figure 58: A majority of students are pessimistic or neutral about the future of the U.S.

Nearly Two-Thirds of Students Say Professors Inspire Them to Feel Optimistic About the Future of the U.S. at Least Occasionally

22 percent of students say that professors inspire them to feel optimistic about the future of the U.S. very frequently or frequently, and another 42 percent say that professors inspire them to feel optimistic about the future of the U.S. occasionally.

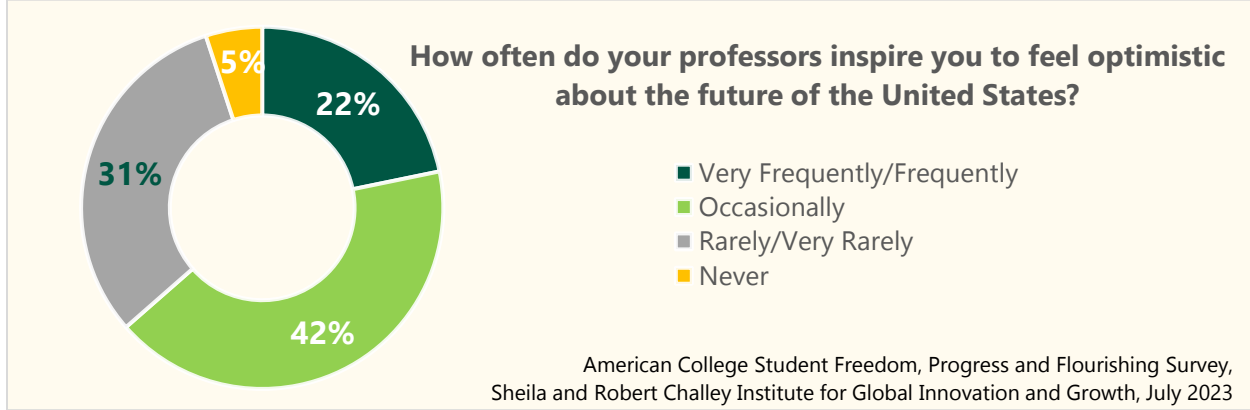


Figure 59: 64 percent of students say their professors inspire them to feel optimistic about the future of the U.S. at least occasionally

Although there is a statistically significant difference among students with different political views in the reporting of professors inspiring them to feel optimistic about the future of the U.S., the percentages reporting various frequencies are similar.

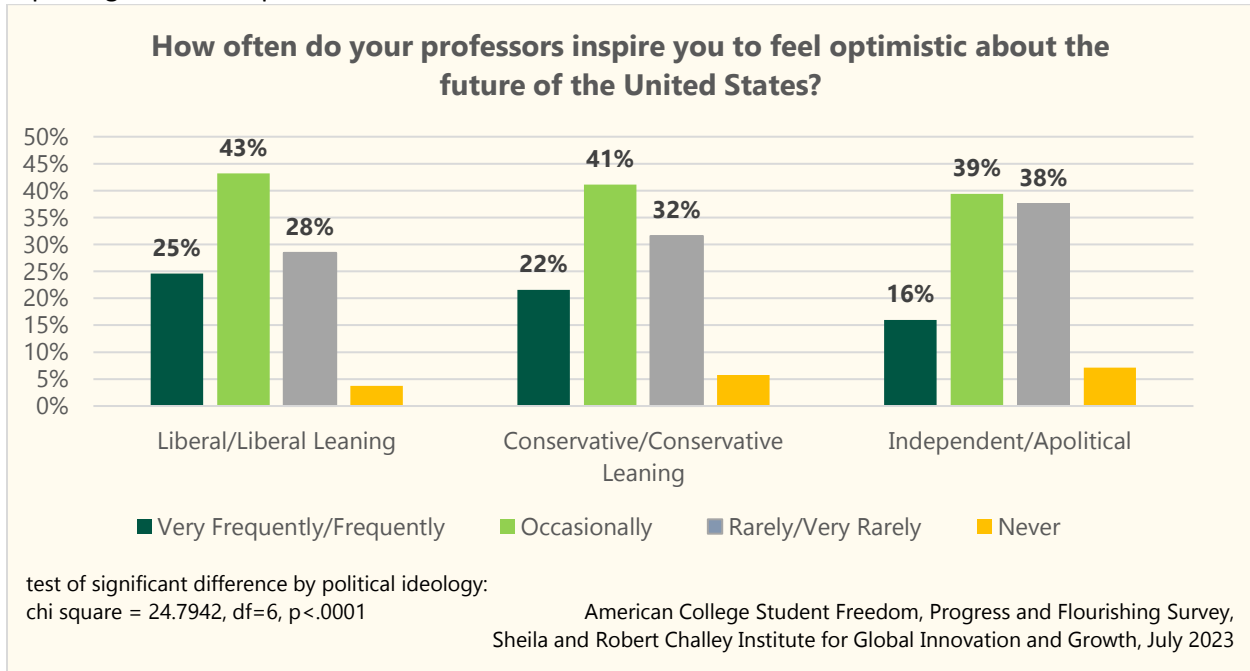


Figure 60: Student reporting on being inspired by professors to feel optimistic about the future of the U.S. is similar for students with different political views

Slightly More than Half of Students Are Optimistic About Their Own Future

Based on what students have learned in college, 52 percent say they are optimistic about their own future, while 20 percent are pessimistic about their own future.

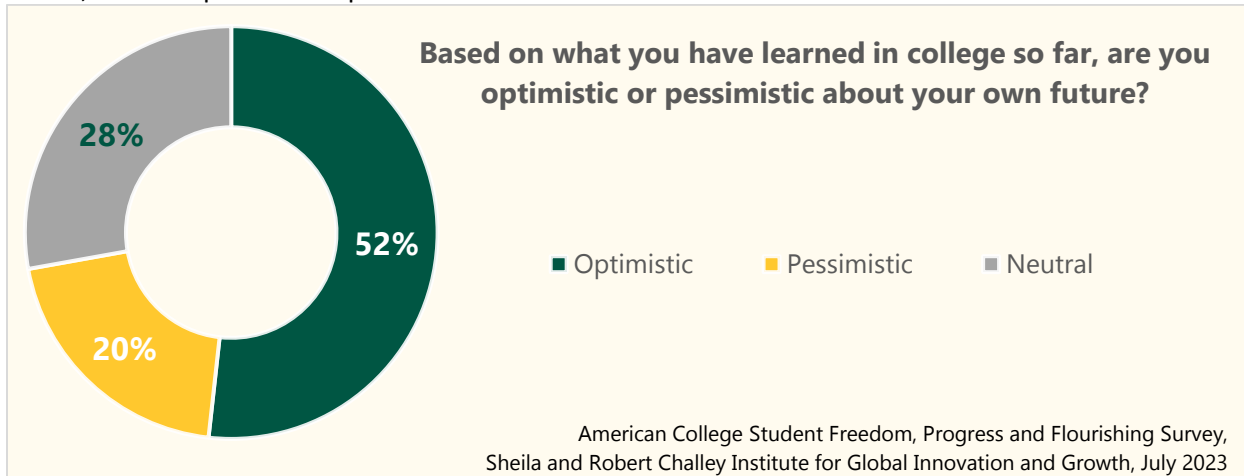


Figure 61: 52 percent of students are optimistic about their own future

About half of liberal, conservative, and independent students are optimistic about their own future.

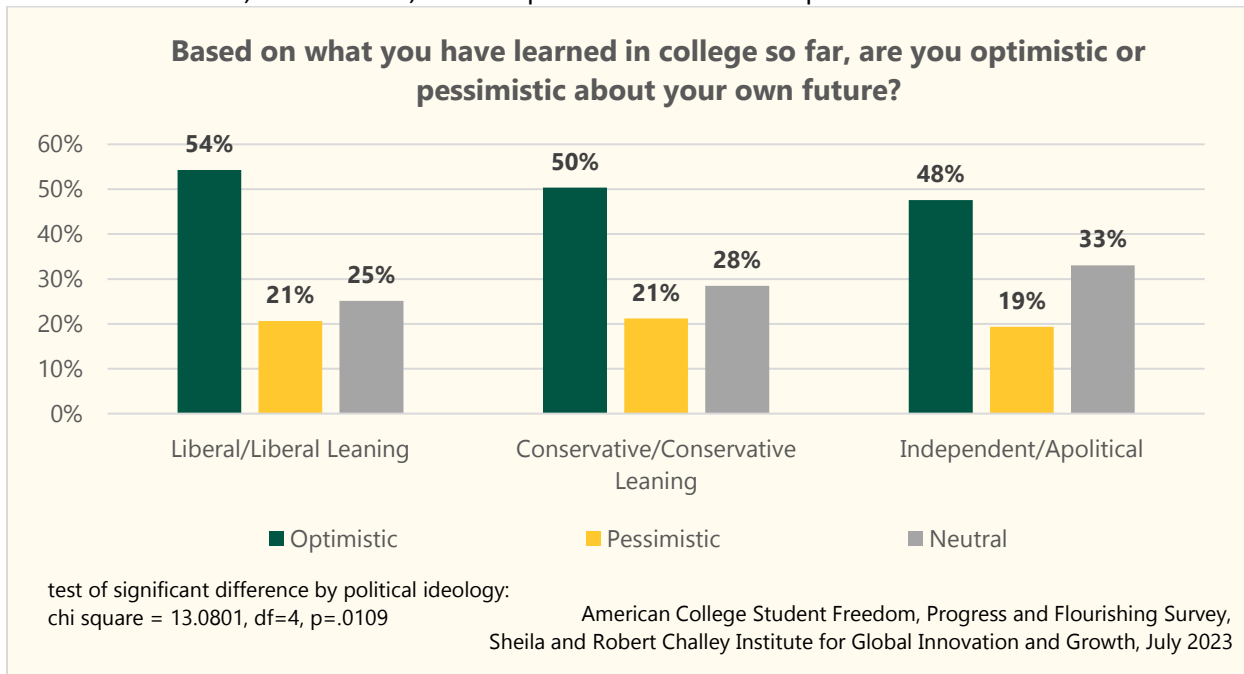


Figure 62: About half of all students are optimistic about their own future

About Half of Students Are Optimistic About Their Ability to Make a Difference in the World

Based on what students have learned in college so far, the percent who are optimistic about their ability to make a difference in the world (51 percent) is nearly identical to the percent who are optimistic about their own future (52 percent).

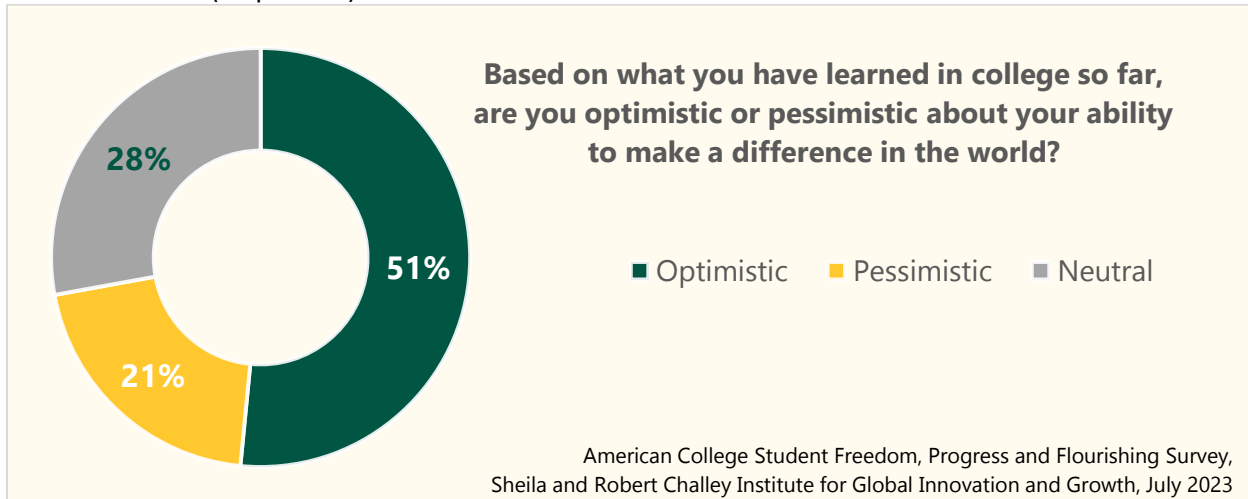


Figure 63: About half of students are optimistic about their ability to make a difference in the world

Just as with student optimism in their own future, approximately half of conservative, liberal, and independent students are optimistic in their own ability to make a difference in the world.

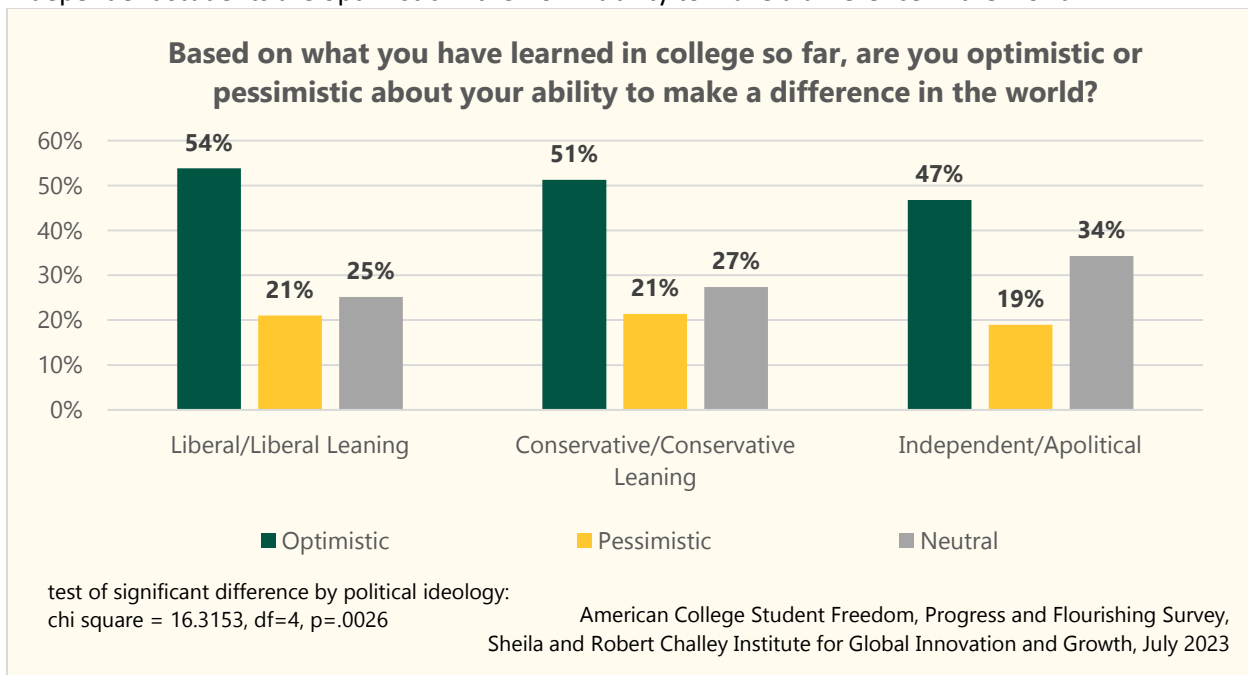


Figure 64: About half of all students are optimistic about their ability to make a difference in the world

Over Half of Students Are Proud to Be American

Among students who are U.S. citizens, 17 percent of students are very proud to be American and another 37 percent are somewhat proud to be American. In contrast, 31 percent say they are not too proud and 14 percent not at all proud to be American.

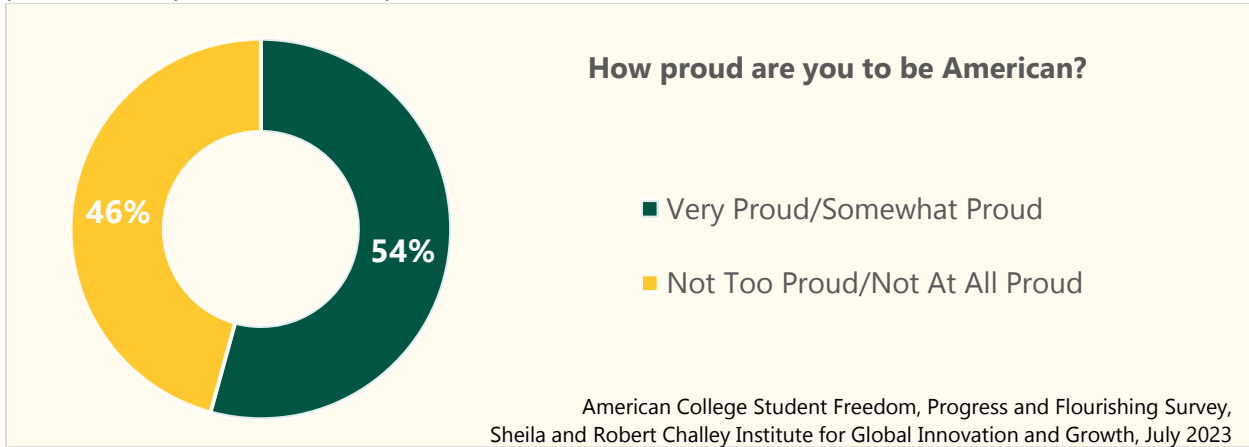


Figure 65: 54 percent of students say they are proud to be American

These percentages vary widely by students with different political views. Only 9 percent and 33 percent of liberal students say they are very proud and somewhat proud to be American, respectively. By comparison, 37 percent and 40 percent of conservative students say they are very proud and somewhat proud to be American, respectively. 19 percent and 41 percent of independent students say they are very proud and somewhat proud to be American, respectively.

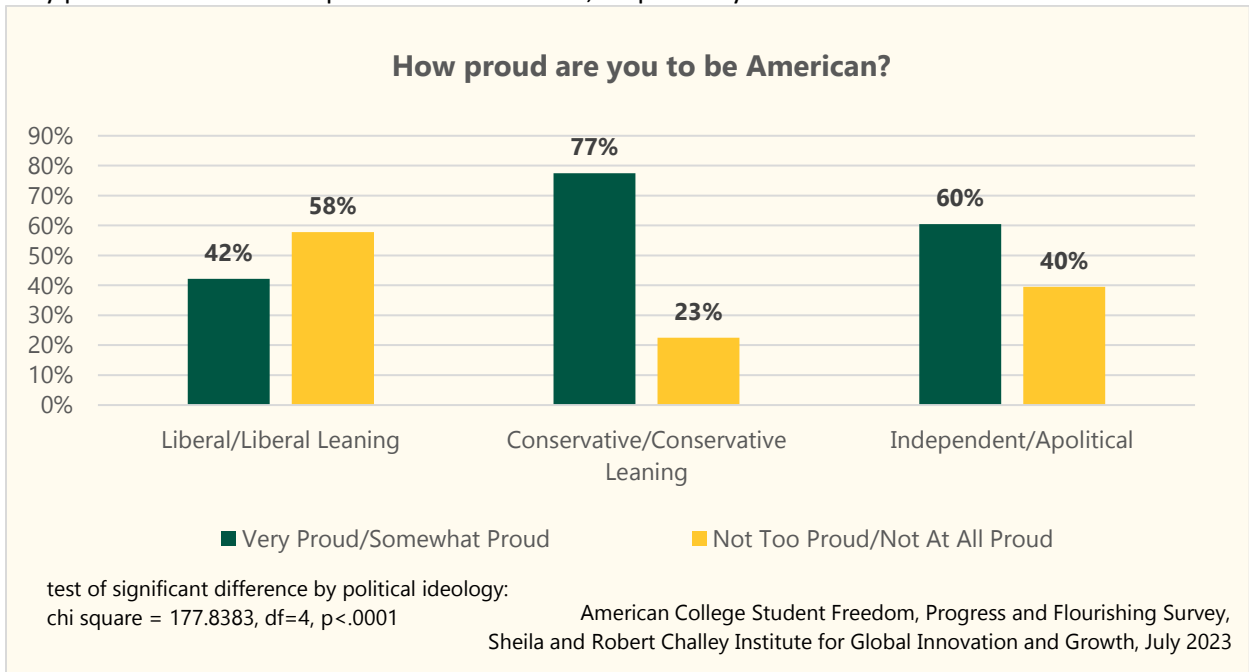


Figure 66: Students with different political views vary widely on their pride in being American

Summary

As shown in the figures above, college students do not have a very good understanding of human progress. There has been tremendous progress worldwide and in the U.S. over the last 50 years. Global extreme poverty has declined dramatically, with 43.6 percent of the world's population living in extreme poverty in 1981 and less than 9 percent today (<https://data.worldbank.org/topic/poverty>). Global life expectancy has increased from 60 years in 1973 to more than 72 years today (<https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/life-expectancy-at-birth-total-years?tab=chart>). World literacy rate was 67 percent in 1976 and 86 percent today (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/997360/global-adult-and-youth-literacy/>). Despite this progress, only 47 percent of students think the world has improved over the last 50 years. Students have a similar misunderstanding of progress in the U.S.

Students who recognize that the world and the U.S. have improved are more likely to attribute the improvement to an increase in economic freedom and a dynamic marketplace, while those who believe the world and the U.S. have declined are more likely to attribute the decline to a lack of regulation and government programs. Given the strong evidence that economic freedom leads to progress (<https://fee.org/articles/data-show-a-clear-correlation-between-economic-freedom-and-prosperity/>), these findings suggest that students who are not aware of the progress that has been made are also more likely to misunderstand the mechanisms that lead to progress.

The section also shows that students tend to be pessimistic about the future of the world and the U.S., but optimistic about their own future and their ability to make a difference in the world. It is likely that their lack of knowledge of human progress contributes to their pessimism about the future of the world and the U.S.

Finally, only a little over half of American students are proud to be American. However, given that more than twice as many students report that college has given them a more negative view of the U.S. than those who report that it has given them a more positive view of the U.S., the lower percentage of students who are proud to be American may not be surprising.

Section 3: Capitalism and Socialism

Since economic systems play a central role in influencing economic opportunity and overall societal prosperity, we asked students a variety of questions related to their views on capitalism and socialism, including: (1) how they define each system; (2) their attitudes toward capitalism and socialism; (3) how their attitudes have changed; (4) whether each system can solve important societal problems; and (5) the influence of professors on their views.

When presented with two different definitions of capitalism—one reflecting free market capitalism and one describing cronyism—over half of the students selected the free market definition. Moreover, a majority of liberal, conservative, and independent students all selected this definition, though there were significant differences among different political groups. Most students do not view capitalism positively, but there are large differences between political groups. Nearly half of conservative students report having a positive view of capitalism, while this number drops to 15 percent for liberal students. Moreover, these numbers vary based on a student’s definition of capitalism. Among conservative students who selected the free market definition, 66 percent have a positive view of capitalism. For liberal students, the number remains much lower but does increase to 24 percent for those who use a free market definition. Very few students in any political group view capitalism positively if they selected the cronyism definition. Most students do not believe capitalism can help solve big challenges – the highest percent believing so are conservative students who use a free market definition of capitalism (46 percent).

A majority of students say their college classes and activities have not changed their view of capitalism. However, among those who reported that college has changed their view, three times as many reported a negative change than those reporting a positive change.

When presented with two definitions of socialism, students were more likely to select the definition focused on redistribution and active government than the definition of central planning and the collective ownership of goods. Once again, however, responses varied between political groups. Liberal students are more likely to define socialism as heavy redistribution and active government, while conservative students are more likely to define socialism as central planning and the collective ownership of property. A minority of students in every political group have a positive view of socialism, but liberal students are more likely to have a positive view of socialism than conservative students. Moreover, like capitalism, these numbers vary as a function of how students define socialism. For those who define socialism as heavy redistribution and active government, 50 percent of liberal students and 18 percent of conservative students view it positively. Among those who define socialism as central planning and the collective ownership of property, the number of students with positive views drops to 33 percent among liberal students and 9 percent among conservative students. While more students agree that socialism can help solve big challenges than those who do not agree that it can help solve them, this also varies depending on how students define socialism and on their political views. Half of students who define socialism as redistribution and active government think it can solve major challenges, though only 26 percent of conservative students who define socialism this way think it can help solve big challenges.

A majority of students report their college classes and activities have not changed their view of socialism. However, among those who reported that college has changed their view, the change was more likely to be an increased positive view among liberal students and increased negative view among conservative students.

A majority of students across political groups agree that at least a few of their professors have expressed their views on capitalism and socialism. These students indicate that a majority of the time these views are unfavorable toward capitalism and favorable toward socialism.

Individual questions and responses are presented below.

Slightly More Than Half of Students Define Capitalism as Free Market Capitalism

When presented with two different definitions of capitalism, 56 percent of students define capitalism as a system where property is privately owned, exchange is voluntary, and production and pricing of goods/services are determined by market forces (free market). 30 percent of students define capitalism as an economic system in which corporations utilize grants, special tax breaks, political connections, and special rules that favor them over competitors to earn profits (cronyism). 14 percent are unsure of the definition of capitalism.

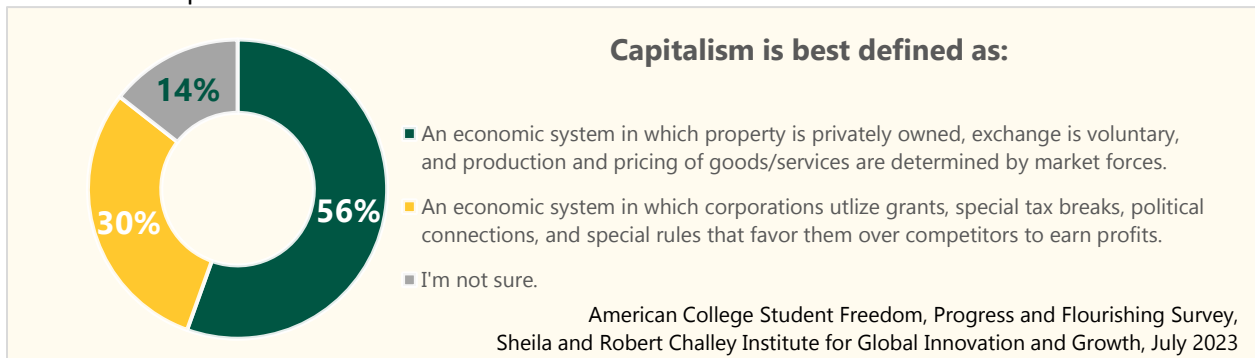


Figure 67: 56 percent of students define capitalism as free market capitalism

There are significant differences in the way students with different political views define capitalism. Conservative students (69 percent) are more likely to define capitalism as free market capitalism in comparison to liberal (55 percent) or independent (45 percent) students. Liberal students (35 percent) are more likely to define capitalism as cronyism in comparison to independent (30 percent) or conservative (18 percent) students.

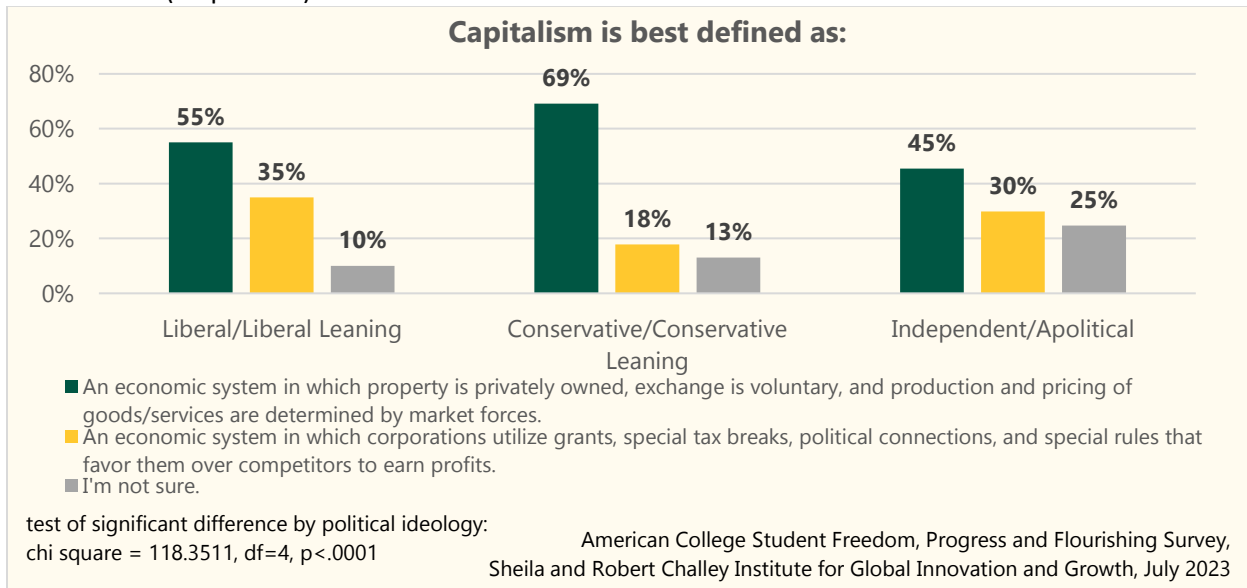


Figure 68: Significant differences in defining capitalism exist among students with different political views

Less Than a Quarter of Students Have a Positive View of Capitalism

Based on the definition of capitalism chosen by students, 23 percent have a positive view, 38 percent have a negative view, and 39 percent have a neutral view of capitalism.

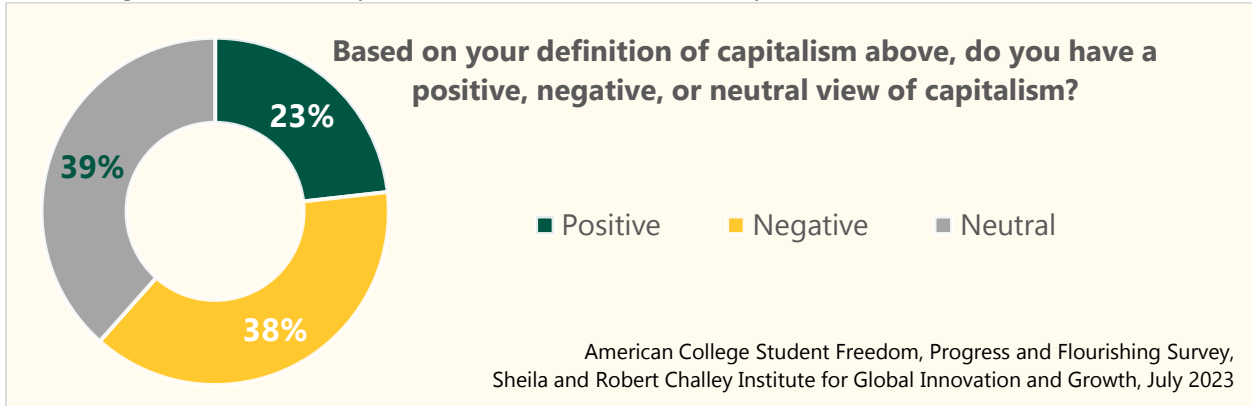


Figure 69: Based on their definition of capitalism, 23 percent of students have a positive view

Almost half of conservative students have a positive view of capitalism, compared to 19 percent of independent students and 15 percent of liberal students.

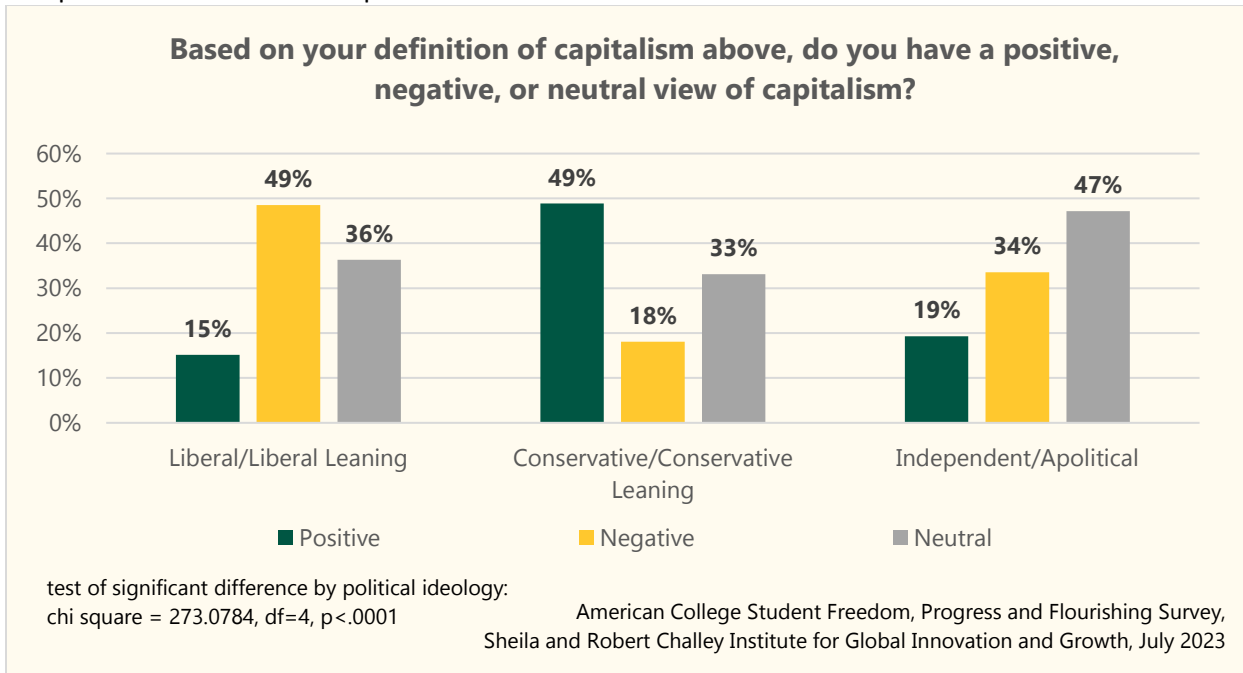


Figure 70: There are significant differences among students with different political ideologies on their attitudes toward capitalism

For Students Who Define Capitalism as Free Market Capitalism, 37 percent Have a Positive View of Capitalism

Among students who define capitalism as free market capitalism, 37 percent have a positive view, 25 percent have a negative view, and 38 percent have a neutral view of capitalism.

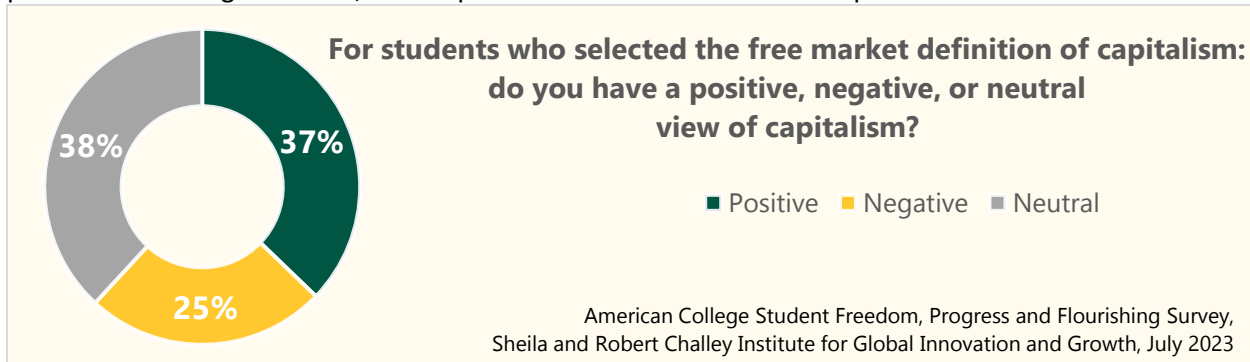


Figure 71: 37 percent of students defining capitalism as free market capitalism have a positive view of capitalism

There are large and significant differences among students with different political views in their attitudes toward capitalism for those that define capitalism as free market capitalism. For students that define capitalism as free market capitalism, 66 percent of conservative students have a positive view of capitalism compared to 36 percent of independent students and 24 percent of liberal students.

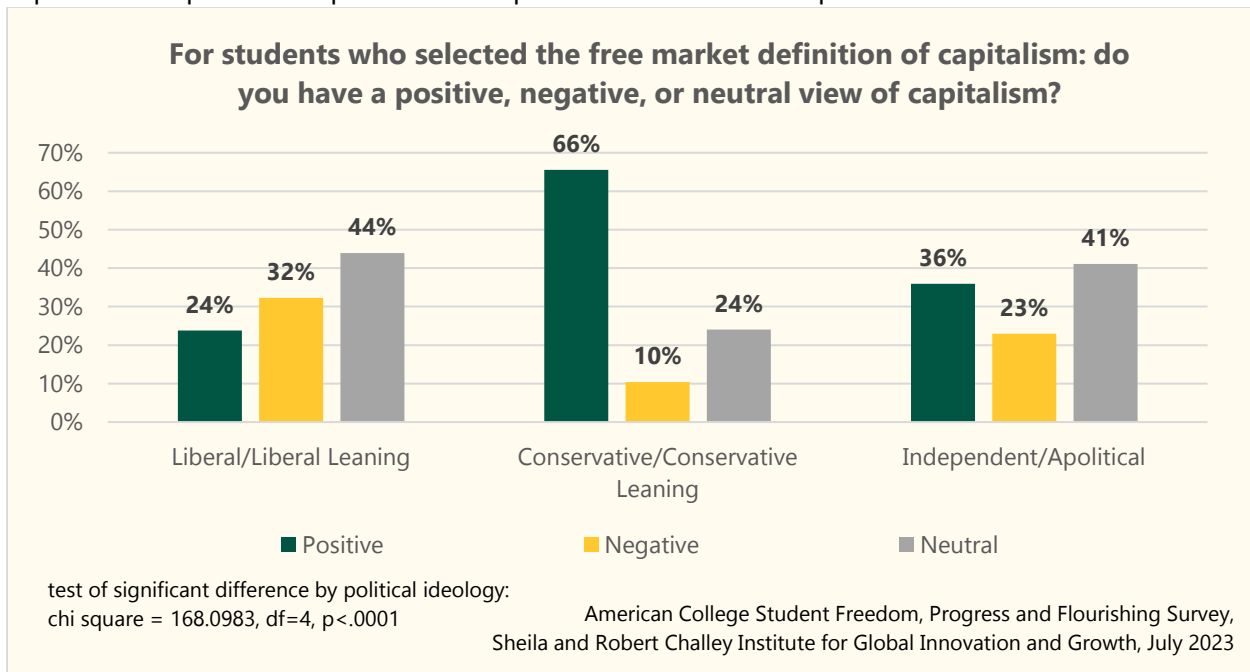


Figure 72: Significant differences between students with different political views exist on their attitudes toward capitalism for those that define capitalism as free market capitalism

For Students Who Define Capitalism as Cronyism, 71 percent Have a Negative View

Among students who define capitalism as cronyism, only 6 percent have a positive view. 71 percent of students view capitalism defined as cronyism negatively, while 23 percent have a neutral view.

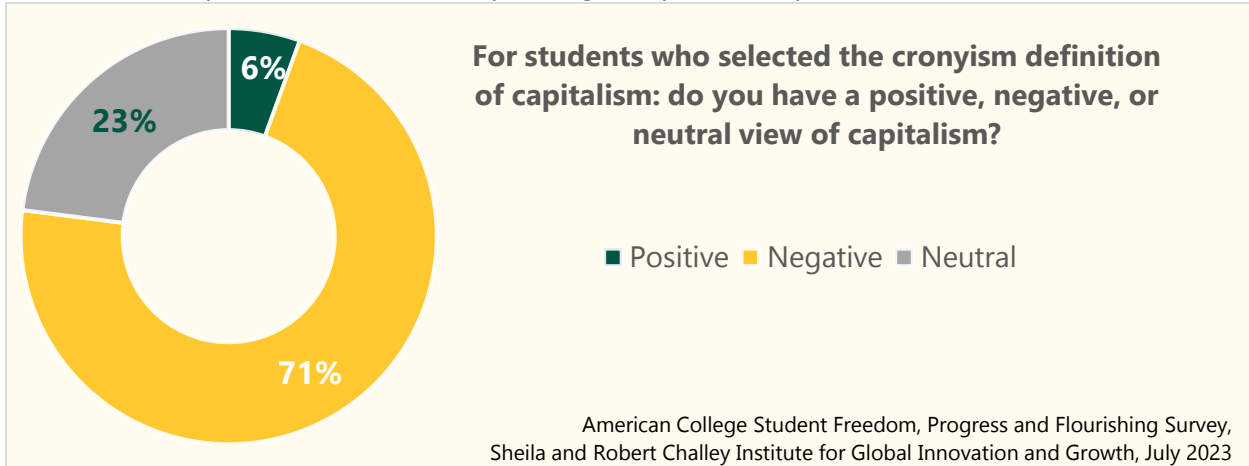


Figure 73: Most students who define capitalism as cronyism have a negative or neutral view of it

Although there are significant differences among students with different political ideologies in whether they view capitalism defined as cronyism negatively or neutrally, less than 8 percent of students in any political group view cronyism positively.

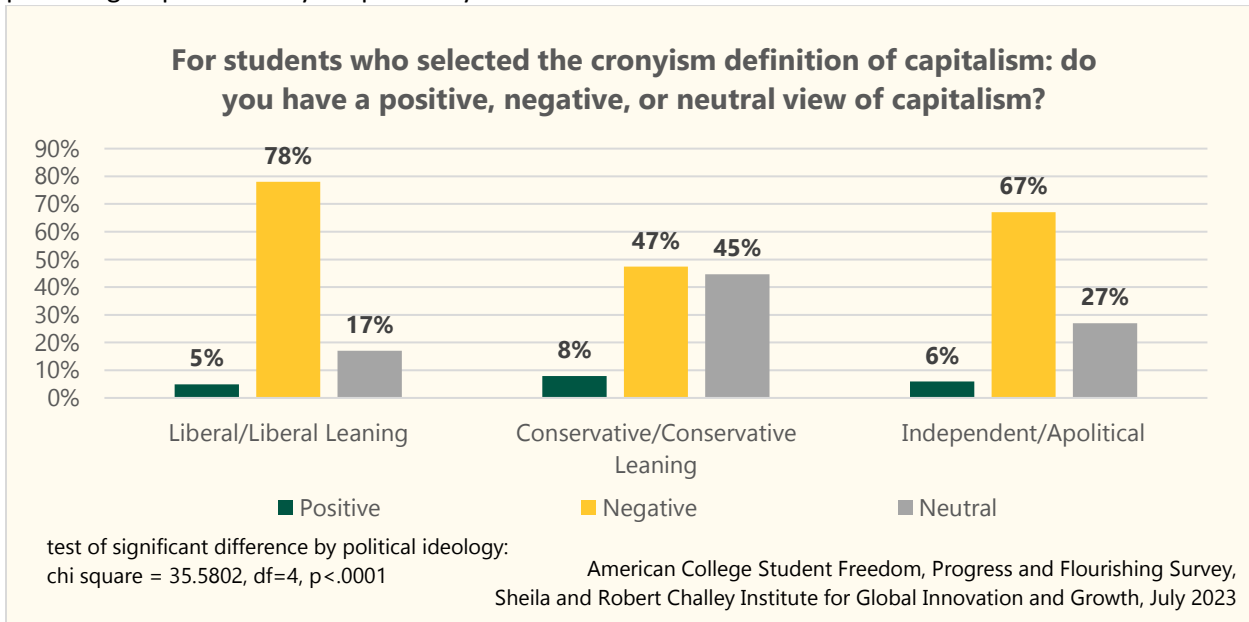


Figure 74: Across the political spectrum, most students have a negative or neutral view of cronyism

Less Than a Quarter of Students Believe that Capitalism Can Help Solve Major Challenges

45 percent of students disagree with the idea that capitalism can help solve major challenges such as climate change and poverty, while only 22 percent agree that it can help solve such problems.



Figure 75: 22 percent of students believe capitalism can help solve major challenges

Like students' overall attitudes toward capitalism, there are significant difference between students with different political views on whether they believe capitalism can help solve major challenges. Conservative students (43 percent) are more likely to believe capitalism can help solve major challenges than independent (20 percent) or liberal (14 percent) students

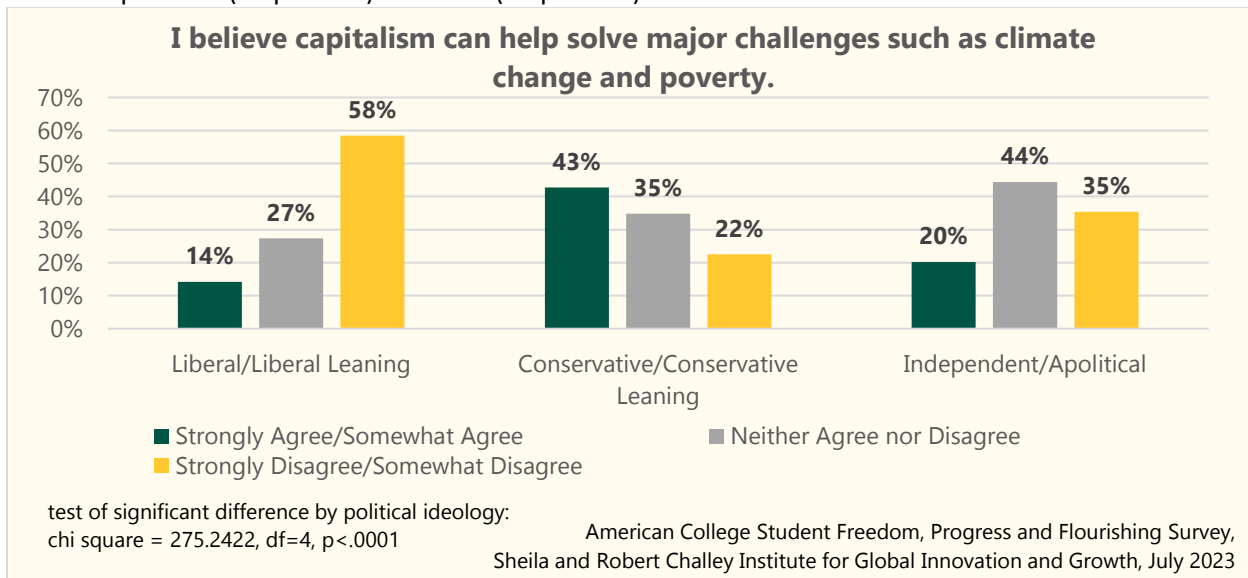


Figure 76: Conservative students are more likely to believe that capitalism can help to solve major challenges than independent or liberal students

For Students Who Define Capitalism as Free Market Capitalism, 27 Percent Believe That Capitalism Can Help Solve Major Challenges

While more students who define capitalism as free market capitalism believe it can help solve major challenges in comparison to all students, only 27 percent of students who define capitalism this way think it can help solve major challenges such as climate change and poverty.



Figure 77: 27 percent of students who define capitalism as free market capitalism believe it can help solve major challenges

Significant differences among students with different political views exist on whether those who define capitalism as free market capitalism think it can help solve major challenges. 46 percent of conservative students think it can help solve major challenges compared to 28 percent of independent students and 18 percent of liberal students.

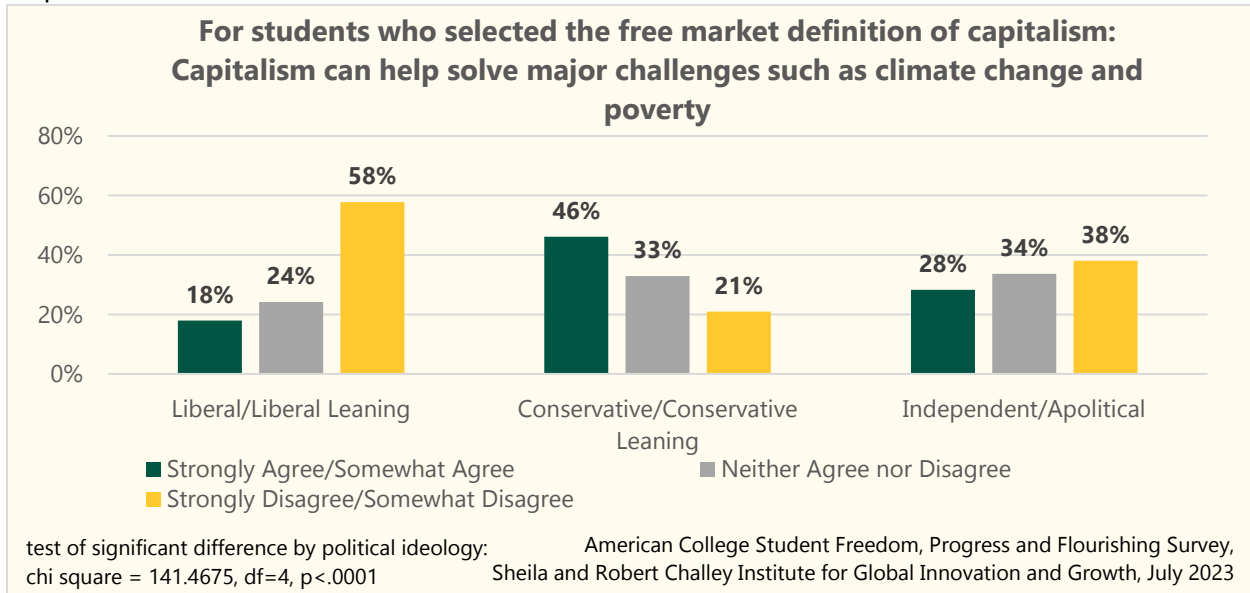


Figure 78: Students with different political views who define capitalism as free market capitalism have different beliefs about whether it can help solve major challenges

For Students Who Define Capitalism as Cronyism, Only 13 Percent Believe that Capitalism Can Help Solve Major Challenges

For students who define capitalism as cronyism, 87 percent disagree with or do not have an opinion on the idea that capitalism can help solve major challenges such as climate change or poverty.



Figure 79: 13 percent of students who define capitalism as cronyism think it can help solve major challenges

There are large differences among students with different political beliefs who define capitalism as cronyism as to whether it can help solve major challenges. Of the students defining capitalism as cronyism, 35 percent of conservative students, 14 percent of independent students, and 9 percent of liberal students think it can help solve major challenges.

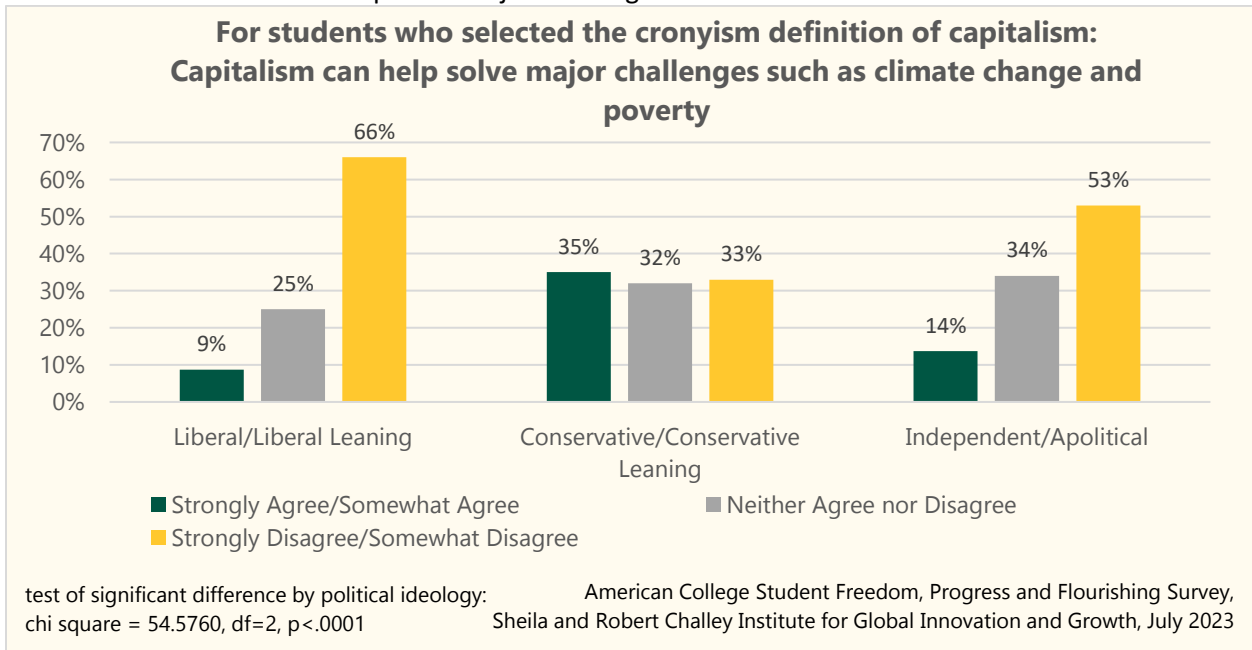


Figure 80: There are significant differences in beliefs among students with different political views on whether capitalism can help solve major challenges for students defining capitalism as cronyism

Only 1 in 10 Students Say College Has Given Them a More Positive View of Capitalism

Three times as many students report that college has given them a more negative view of capitalism than report that it has given them a more positive view of capitalism. For 60 percent of students, their view has not changed.

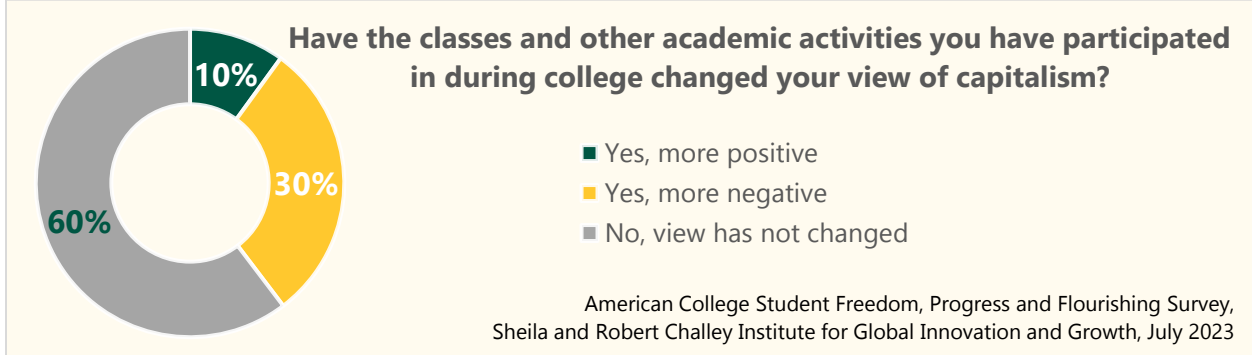


Figure 81: 10 percent of students say college has given them a more positive view of capitalism

Students with liberal views (38 percent) are more likely to report that college has given them a more negative view of capitalism in comparison to independent (23 percent) and conservative (18 percent) students.

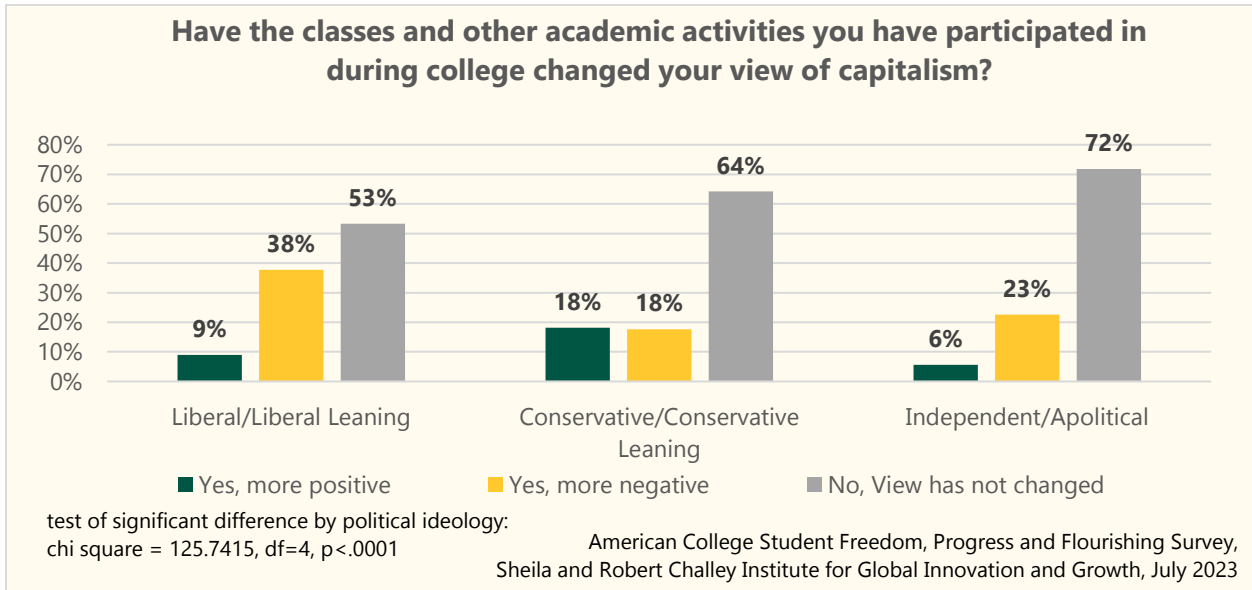


Figure 82: Significant differences among students with different political ideologies exist in how they perceive college has influenced their views on capitalism

Just Over One-Third of Students Define Socialism as Central Planning

When presented with two different definitions of socialism, 44 percent of students define socialism as an economic system with active government involvement and policies that ensure an equitable distribution of resources (redistribution), while 35 percent define it as an economic system involving central planning and collective ownership of goods and property (central planning). 21 percent of students say they are not sure how to define socialism.

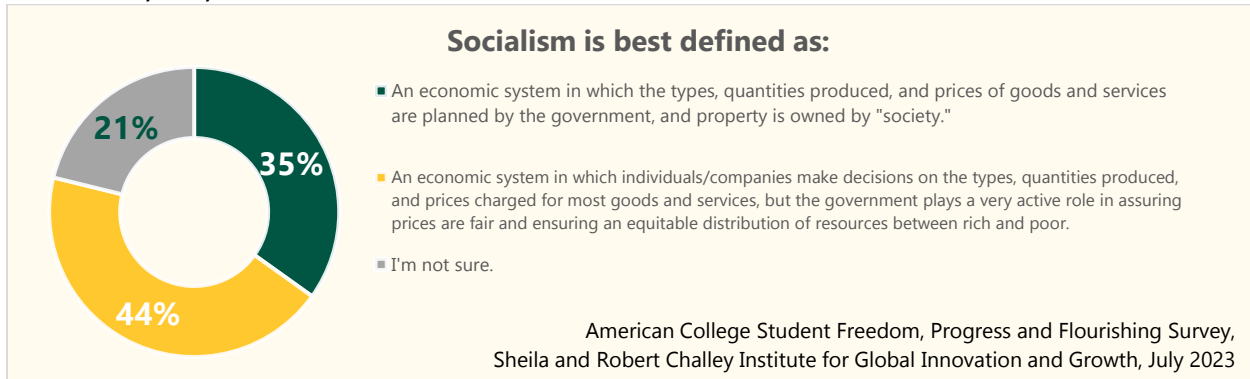


Figure 83: Students have differing definitions of socialism

Students who have conservative political views (47 percent) are more likely to define socialism as central planning in comparison to independent (32 percent) and liberal (32 percent) students. Liberal students (52 percent) are more likely to define socialism as redistribution in comparison to independent (36 percent) and conservative (34 percent) students.

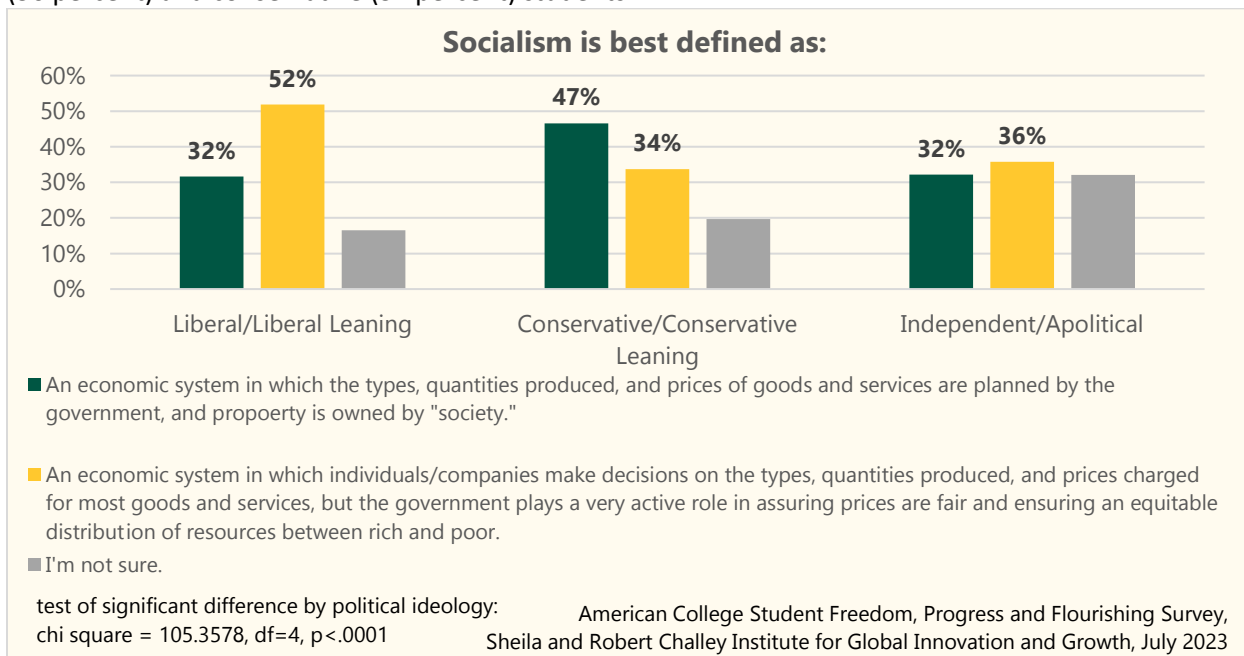


Figure 84: Students with different political views define socialism differently

Slightly More Students Have a Positive View of Socialism Than Have a Negative View

Based on the definition of socialism chosen by students, 28 percent have a positive view of socialism and 23 percent a negative view of socialism. Student views are more favorable to socialism than capitalism, as 23 percent and 38 percent of students have positive and negative views of capitalism, respectively.

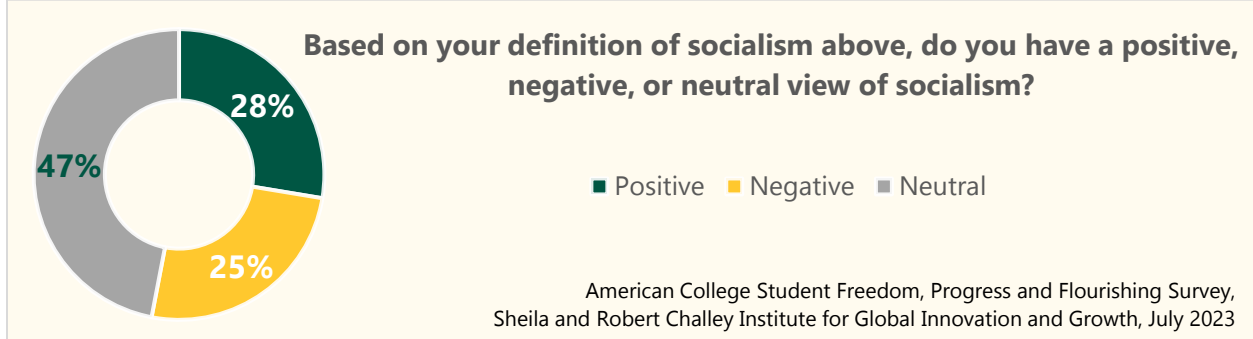


Figure 85: 28 percent of students have a positive view of socialism

Liberal students (38 percent) are more likely to view socialism favorably in comparison to independent (19 percent) and conservative (11 percent) students, while conservative students (56 percent) are more likely to view it negatively compared to independent (23 percent) and liberal (15 percent) students.

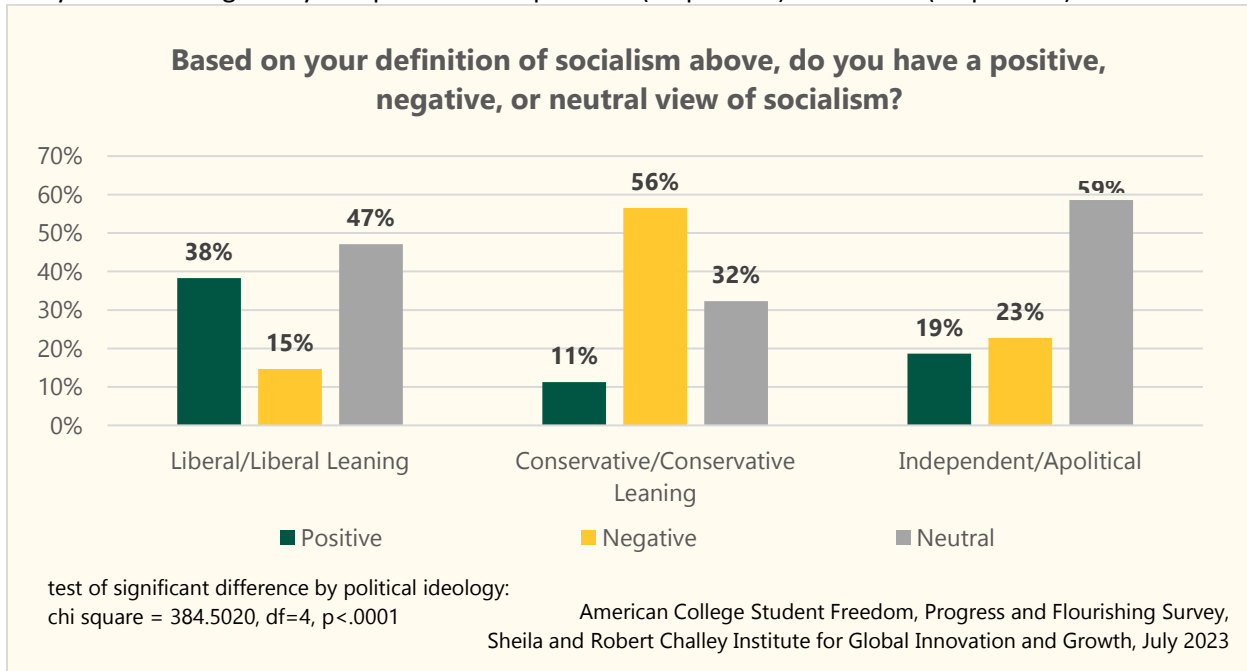


Figure 86: Liberal students view socialism more favorably than others

For Students Who Define Socialism as Central Planning, 23 Percent Have a Positive View

Among students who define socialism as central planning, 23 percent have a positive view of socialism, 43 percent have a negative view, and 34 percent have a neutral view.

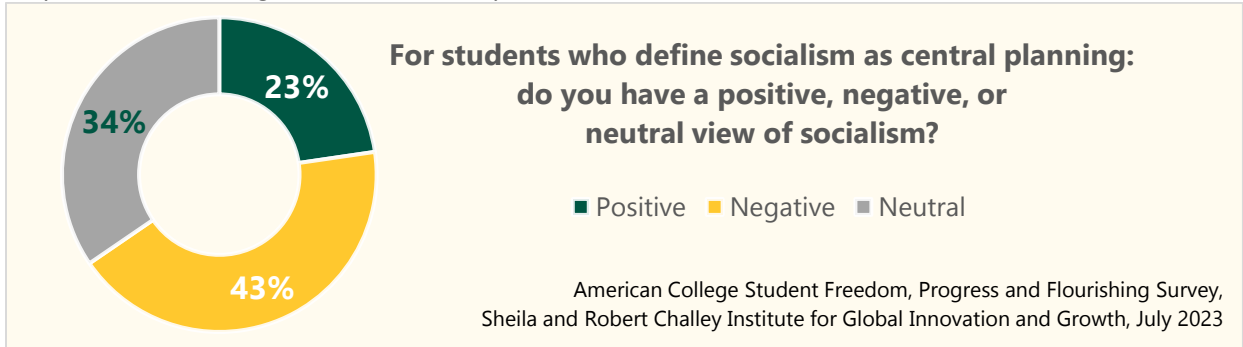


Figure 87: 23 percent of students who define socialism as central planning view it positively

For students who define socialism as central planning, liberal students (33 percent) are more likely to view it favorably than independent (17 percent) and conservative (9 percent) students. Conservative students (73 percent) are more likely to view it negatively compared to independent (49 percent) and liberal (23 percent) students.

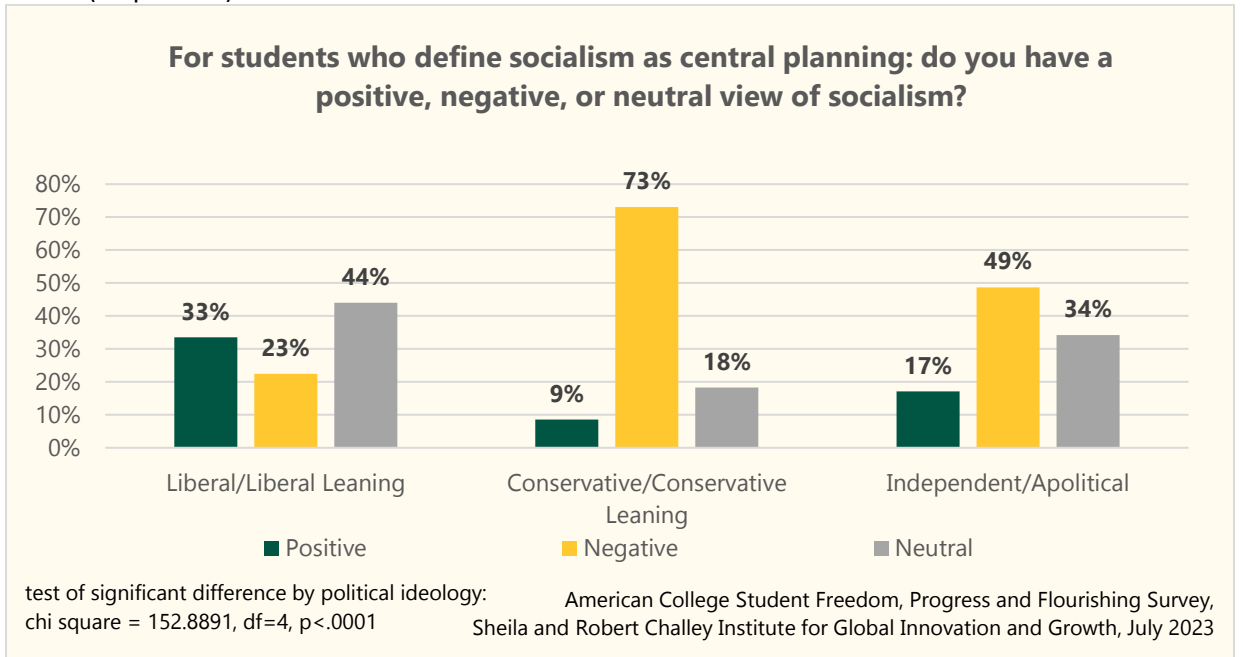


Figure 88: Among students who define socialism as central planning, students with different political views view it more or less favorably

For Students Who Define Socialism as Redistribution and Active Government, 42 Percent Have a Positive View

Among students who define socialism as redistribution and active government, 42 percent have a positive view of socialism, while 18 percent have a negative view of socialism, and 40 percent have a neutral view of socialism.



Figure 89: 42 percent of students who define socialism as redistribution and active government view it positively

For students who define socialism as redistribution and active government, there are significant differences among students with different political views in how they view socialism. Liberal students (50 percent) are more likely to view it favorably in comparison to independent (36 percent) and conservative (18 percent) students.

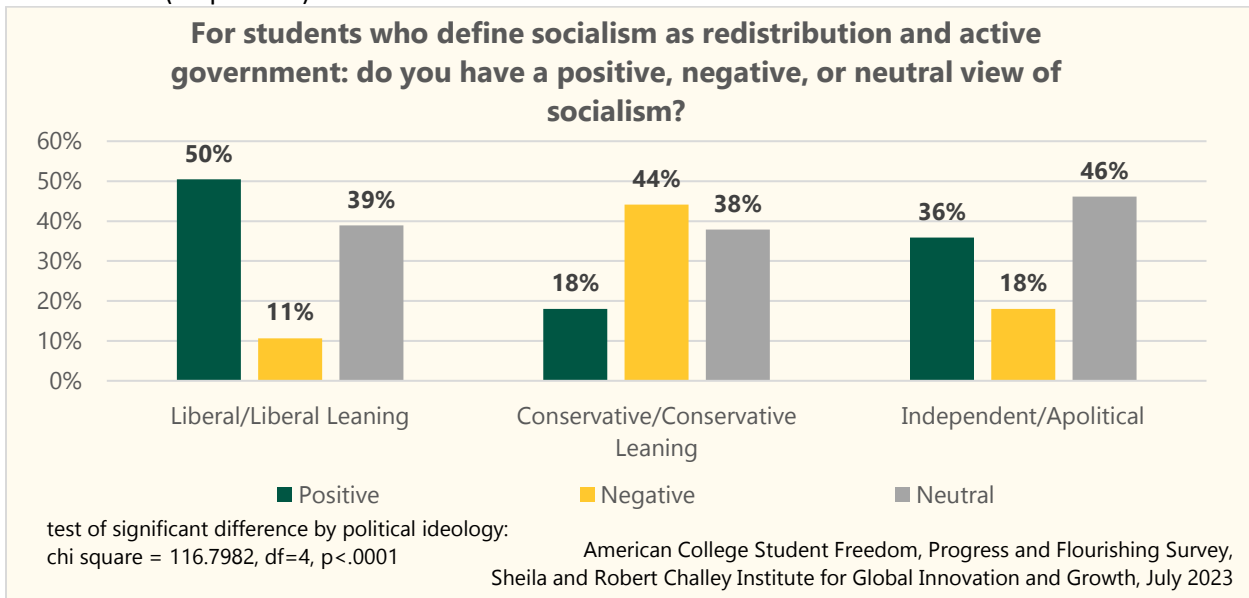


Figure 90: Significant differences among students with different political beliefs exist in their attitudes toward socialism for those that define it as redistribution and active government

Over One-Third of Students Believe that Socialism Can Help Solve Major Challenges

36 percent of students agree that socialism can help solve major challenges such as climate change and poverty, while 24 percent disagree, and 40 percent are neutral.

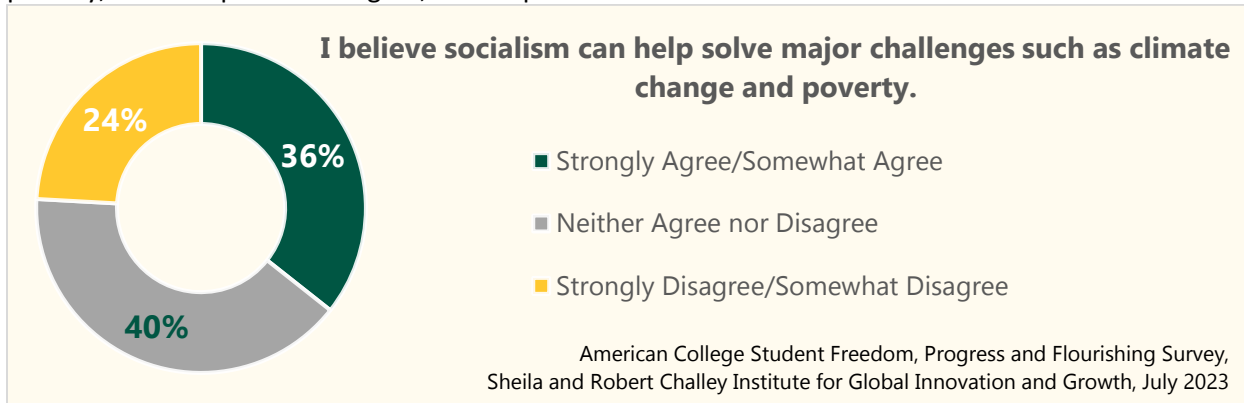


Figure 91: 36 percent of students believe that socialism can help solve major challenges

There are large differences among students with different political views about whether socialism can help solve major challenges. 46 percent of liberal students believe it can, compared to 25 percent of independent students and 21 percent of conservative students.

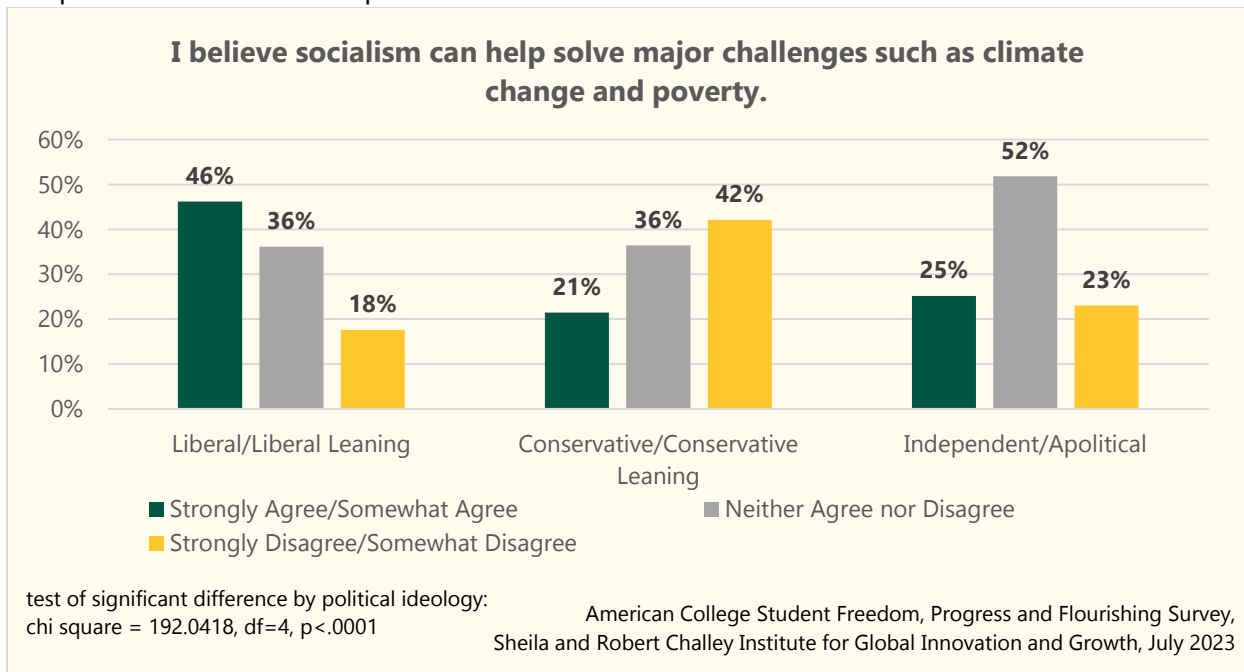


Figure 92: The ability of socialism to help solve major challenges is viewed differently by students with different political views

For Students Who Define Socialism as Central Planning, 30 Percent Believe It Can Help Solve Major Challenges

30 percent of students who define socialism as central planning agree that it can help solve major challenges, while 39 percent disagree, and 31 percent do not have an opinion.



Figure 93: 30 percent of students who define socialism as central planning think it can help solve major challenges

Among students who define socialism as central planning there are large differences among students from different political groups in their perceptions of whether it can help solve major challenges. 55 percent of conservative students disagree with the idea that it can help solve major challenges compared to 42 percent of independent students and 29 percent of liberal students.

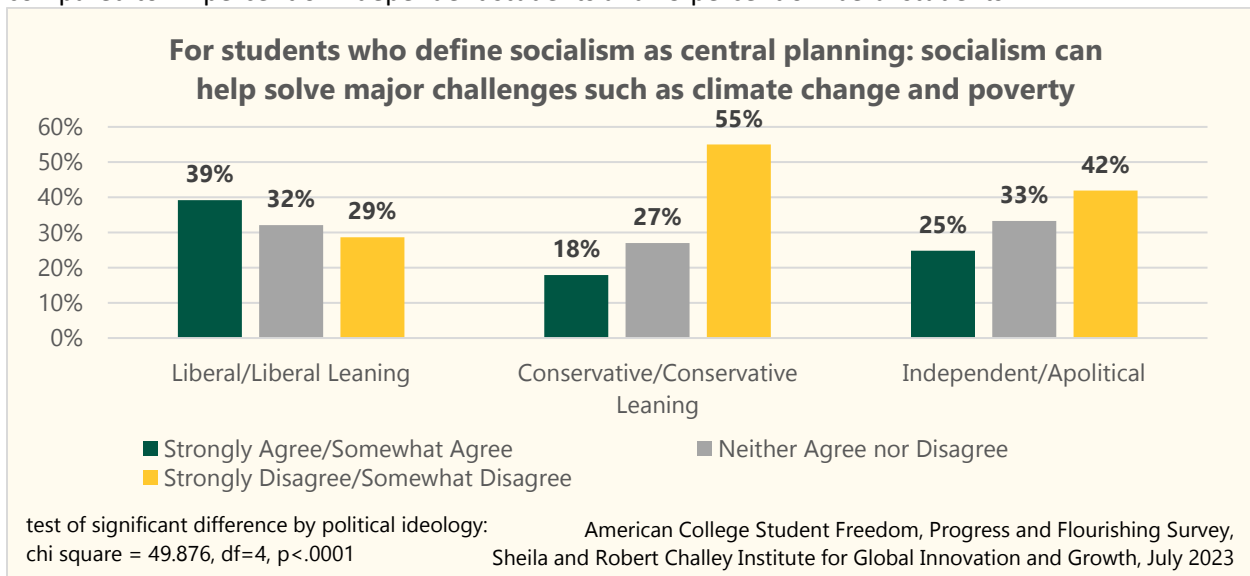


Figure 94: For students who define socialism as central planning, there are significant differences among those with different political views in their opinions on whether socialism can help solve major challenges

Half of Students Who Define Socialism as Redistribution and Active Government Believe It Can Help Solve Major Challenges

For students who define socialism as redistribution and active government, 50 percent believe it can help solve major challenges, while 16 percent do not think it can help solve major challenges, and 34 percent are neutral.



Figure 95: 50 percent of students who define socialism as redistribution and active government think it can help solve major challenges

Among students who define socialism as redistribution and active government, significant differences in their views on whether it can solve major challenges exist depending on their political views. 60 percent of liberal students think it can help solve major challenges, compared to 40 percent of independent students, and 26 percent of conservative students.

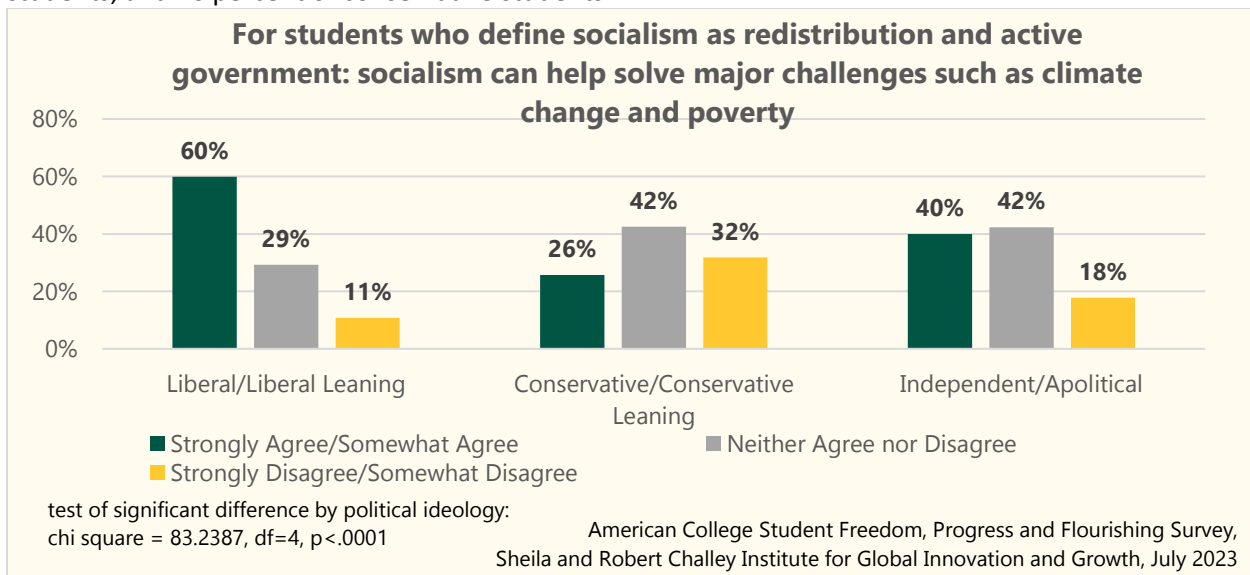


Figure 96: Significant differences among students with different political views exist in their assessment of whether socialism defined as redistribution and active government can help solve major challenges

One-Fifth of Students Say College Has Given Them a More Positive View of Socialism

20 percent of students say the classes and other activities they participated in during college gave them a more positive view of socialism, compared to 16 percent who said they gave them a more negative view of socialism and 64 percent who said they did not change their view of socialism.

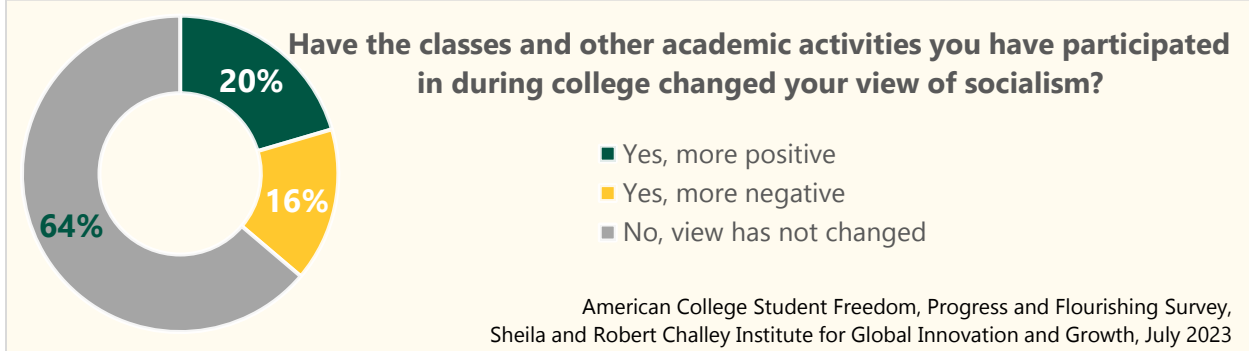


Figure 97: 20 percent of students say college has given them a more positive view of socialism

Significant differences among students with different political views exist in their reporting of how college has changed their view of socialism. 29 percent of liberal students say college has given them a more favorable view of socialism, compared to 13 percent of independent students and 9 percent of conservative students.

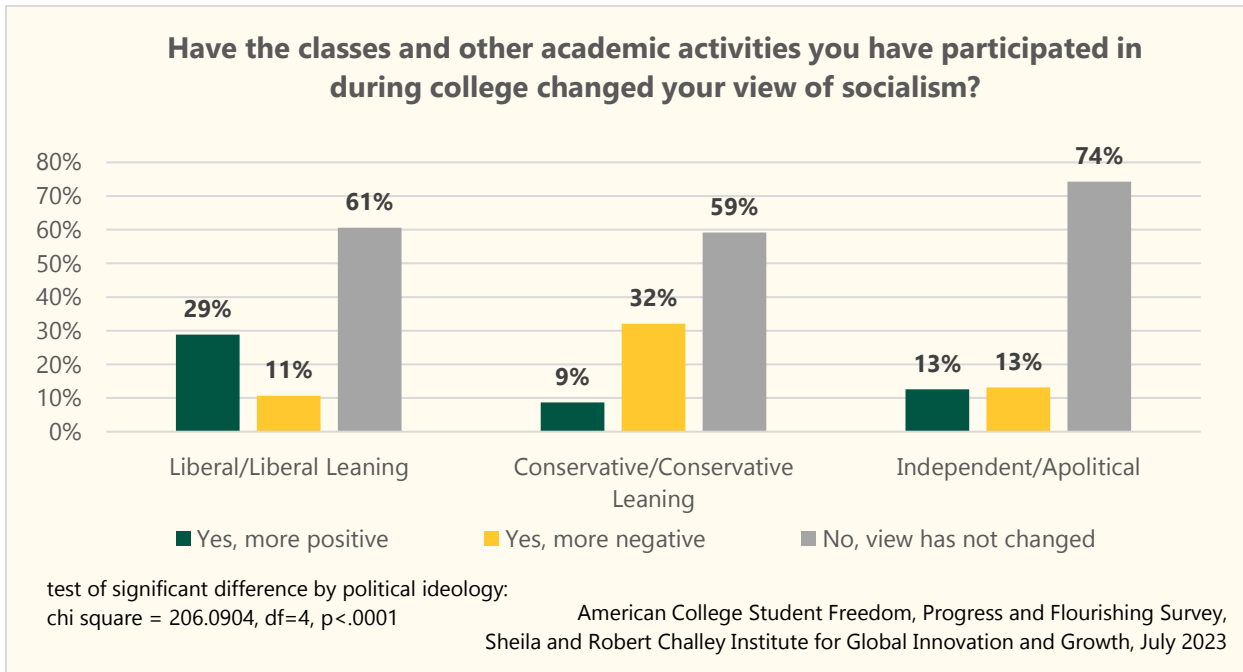


Figure 98: Students with different political beliefs report differences in the way college has influenced their view of socialism

A Majority of Students Say that at Least a Few Professors Have Expressed Their Views on Capitalism and Socialism

Although only 17 percent of students say that most or many of their professors have expressed their views on capitalism and socialism, 46 percent report that few professors have.



Figure 99: 63 percent of students say that at least a few professors have expressed their views on capitalism and socialism

Independent students (45 percent) are more likely to report that none of their professors have expressed their views on capitalism and socialism in comparison to liberal (35 percent) and conservative (31 percent) students.

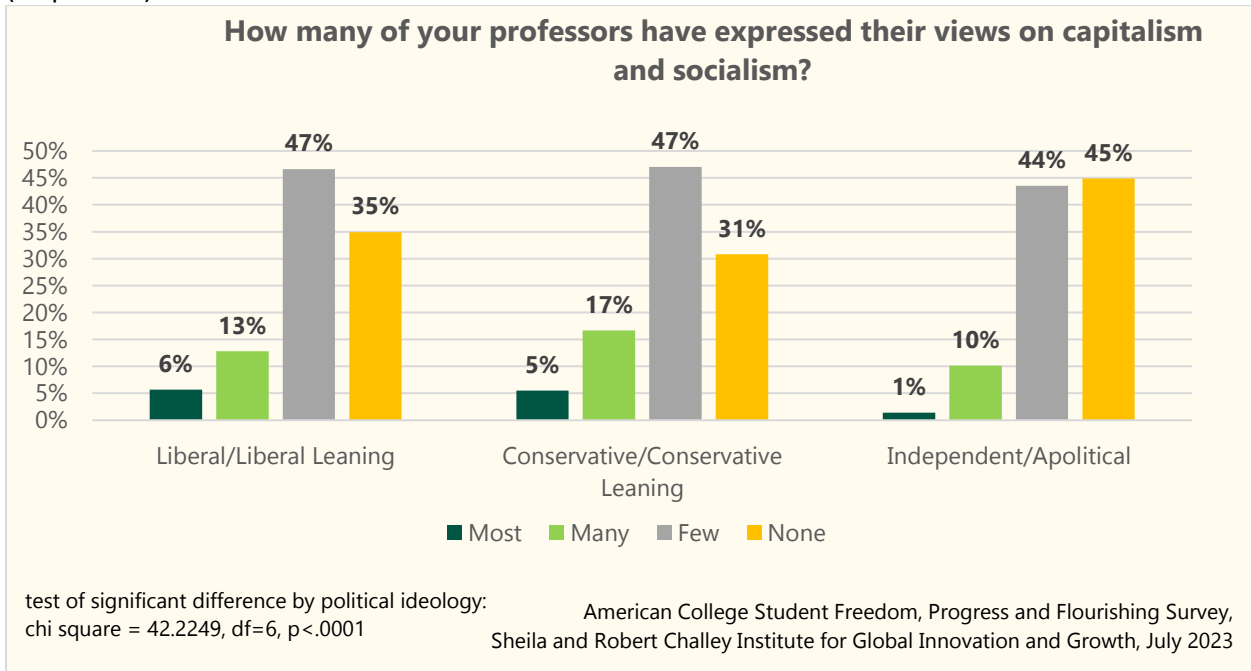


Figure 100: Students with independent political views are more likely to say that none of their professors have expressed their views on capitalism and socialism in comparison to other students

Among Students Who Say Professors Have Expressed Their Views on Capitalism, Over 60 Percent Say It Has Been Negative

For students who say their professors have expressed their views on capitalism, 38 percent say the views have been favorable toward capitalism, while 62 percent say the views were unfavorable toward capitalism.

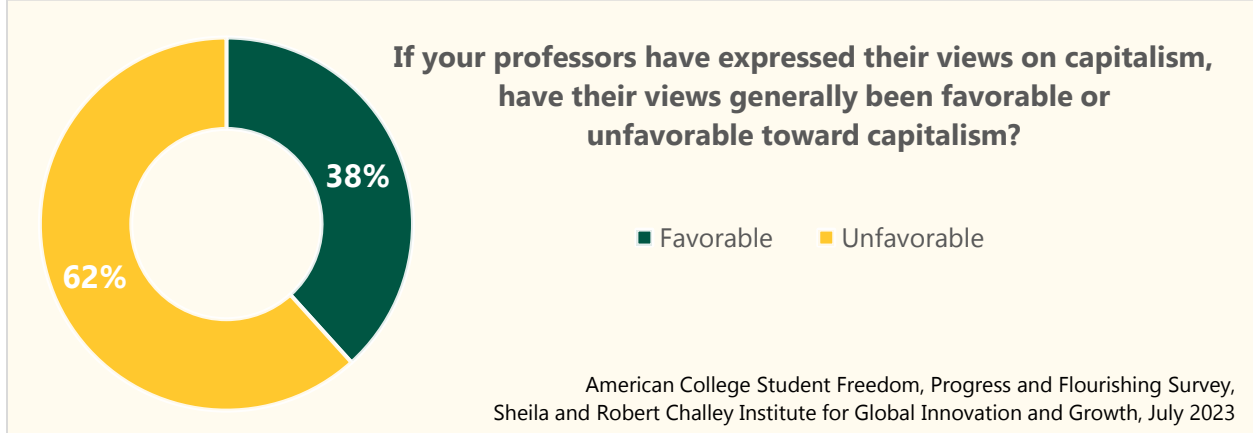


Figure 101: 62 percent of students who say their professors have expressed their views on capitalism say the views have been negative

Although there are some significant differences among students with different political views in their assessment of whether professors expressed favorable or unfavorable views toward capitalism, there is broad agreement that when views were expressed, they were more likely to be unfavorable toward capitalism.

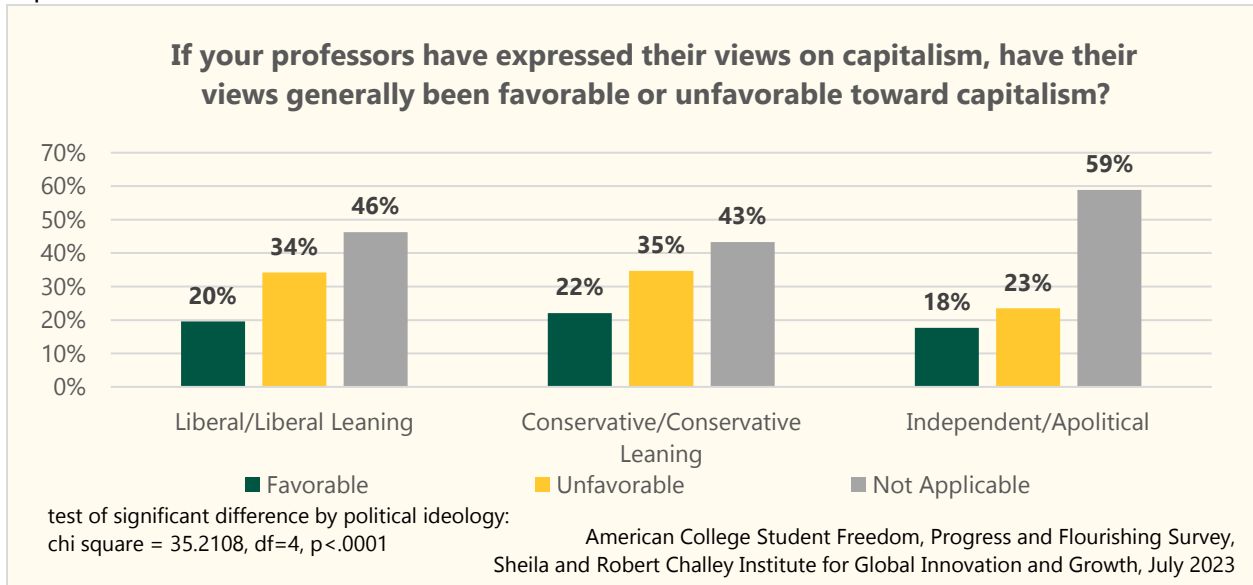


Figure 21: Across all political ideologies, more students report that their professors have expressed unfavorable views toward capitalism than favorable views toward capitalism

For Students Who Report That Their Professors Have Expressed Their Views on Socialism, 61 percent Say It Has Been Positive

Among students who say their professors have expressed their views on socialism, 61 percent say the views have been favorable and 39 percent say they have been unfavorable. This is the reverse of what students reported for professor views on capitalism (38 percent favorable).



Figure 22: 61 percent of students who say their professors have expressed their views on socialism say the views have been positive

Among students with different political views there are some statistical differences in reporting of whether professor views were favorable or unfavorable toward socialism. However, with the exception of independent students, there is agreement that more professors have expressed a favorable opinion of socialism than an unfavorable opinion.

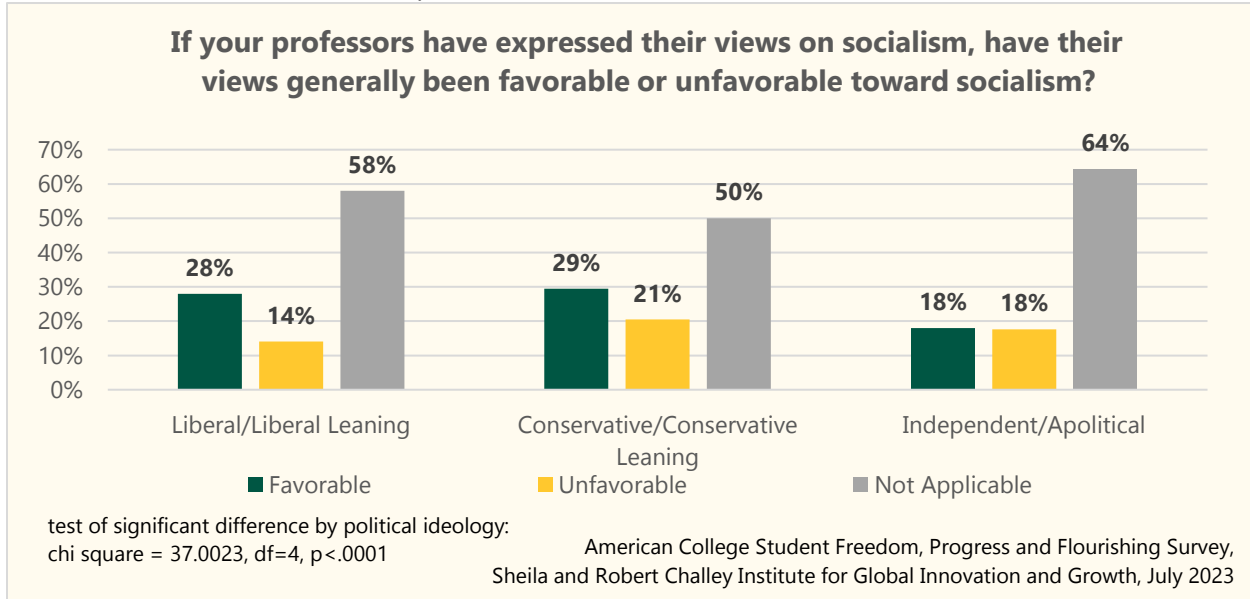


Figure 23: Students report that professor views toward socialism have been more favorable than unfavorable

Summary

As shown in the figures above, college students do not have a very good understanding of capitalism and socialism. While over half of students associate capitalism with private property and voluntary exchange, nearly a third confuse capitalism with cronyism and another 14 percent are not sure what capitalism is. In defining socialism, only one-third of students associate it with central planning and government ownership of property, while 44 percent associate socialism with hyper-redistribution, and another 21 percent are not sure what socialism is.

Moreover, the way students define capitalism and socialism has a big influence on how they view the merits of each system and its ability to contribute to solving important problems. Less than a quarter of students have a favorable view of capitalism or believe it can help to solve important problems. However, the percentage of students who view capitalism favorably increases to 37 percent and the percent who believe it can help to solve major challenges increases to 27 percent (from 22 percent) when students define capitalism as free market capitalism. A higher percentage of students have a favorable view of socialism (28 percent) and think it can help to solve major problems (36 percent) in comparison to capitalism, and these percentages increase to 42 percent (viewing favorably) and 50 percent (believing it can help solve problems) for students who define socialism as hyper-redistribution.

The survey also suggests that college is giving students a more negative view of capitalism and a more positive view of socialism. Three times as many students report that college has given them a more negative view of capitalism than those that report it has given them a more positive view of capitalism. In addition, a majority of students who report that professors express their views on capitalism say those views are negative. On the other hand, more students report that college has given them a more positive view of socialism than those that report it has given them a more negative view of socialism. Moreover, 61 percent of students who report that professors express their views on socialism say those views are positive.