

2025 AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENT FREEDOM, PROGRESS, AND FLOURISHING SURVEY

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Introduction

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. This survey, conducted in collaboration with College Pulse, aims to enhance our understanding of how students' experiences in higher education influence their thoughts about the current and future state of the world and their place in it.

This survey, our fifth annual survey since 2021, is divided into five 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 the college experience has shaped these views. A fourth section, added last year, looks at student views related to the Israel-Hamas war and the appropriate ways to voice opinions. Finally, with increasing societal concerns about potential harms from social media use, we examine student perceptions of its use and effects.

Methodology

The 2025 survey was conducted in collaboration with College Pulse between June 23rd and July 7th, 2025, with a sample size of 2,067 students currently enrolled in 472 four-year U.S. colleges and universities. ⁱ The sample is 65 percent female, 30 percent male, and 5 percent other/non-identified. It is 41 percent white, 25.5 percent Asian, 13.5 percent Hispanic/Latino, 8 percent black, 6 percent two or more races, 2 percent Middle Eastern, and 4 percent reporting other/prefer not to say. Seventy percent of participants are attending public colleges, and 30 percent are attending private colleges. Concerning political ideology, 52 percent report being slightly, somewhat, or very liberal; 25 percent report being slightly, somewhat, or very conservative; and 23 percent report being neither liberal nor conservative (independent) or not having thought much about politics (apolitical). ⁱⁱ

In addition to reporting results for all students, we report results by political ideology and gender. Moreover, we examine changes in results over the five years of the survey. The following section highlights survey findings regarding students' comfort level in discussing controversial topics on campus, their attitudes about free speech, and their willingness to take actions that shield them from opinions and points of view that they disagree with or are uncomfortable with.

Section 1: Campus Free Speech and Viewpoint Diversity

Given growing concerns about free speech and the lack of viewpoint diversity in higher education, we ask students a range of questions regarding their attitudes and experiences navigating diverse viewpoints and potentially controversial or sensitive topics. These questions assess students' comfort level in sharing opinions on controversial or sensitive issues in class and their attitudes toward preventing or reporting others for speech that could be viewed as controversial or offensive.

We report these attitudes overall, as well as by political ideology and gender. Moreover, we examine changes in these attitudes over the five years during which we have conducted the survey.

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

Like last year, we find that a large majority (71 percent) of all students feel at least somewhat comfortable sharing their opinions on controversial or sensitive topics in class. However, among students who say they are comfortable sharing their views, nearly half say the reason they feel comfortable sharing their opinion is that they believe their views align with most other students and professors. While comfort in sharing opinions on controversial or sensitive topics might be an indicator of a climate open to diverse views, it isn't for those students who cite alignment with others as the reason for their comfort. Among students who say they are not comfortable sharing their opinions, 51 percent say it is because they believe their opinion wouldn't be acceptable to other students, and 25 percent say they are worried about their reputation.

When surveying students on their attitudes toward withdrawing invitations to speakers who have controversial views, dropping class readings that make students feel uncomfortable, and dropping course discussion topics that make students feel uneasy, there is agreement among roughly one-quarter of students that these actions should be taken. However, there are some significant differences among students by political ideology and gender. Liberal students are more in favor of disinviting controversial speakers (35 percent) than independent (28 percent) and conservative (16 percent) students, while independent students (29 percent) and conservative students (26 percent) are more in favor of dropping discussion topics that make students feel uncomfortable than liberal students (19 percent). Forty percent of students with an unknown/other gender and 31 percent of female students are in favor of disinviting controversial speakers, compared to 22 percent of male students. Students with unknown /other gender (34 percent) and female students (30 percent) are also more in favor of dropping class readings that make students uncomfortable, in comparison to 24 percent of male students.

Interestingly, there has been a significant increase in student tolerance in all three of these areas since 2023. The percent of students in favor of disinviting controversial speakers dropped from 35 percent to 28 percent, the percent of students in favor of dropping class readings that make students uncomfortable dropped from 42 percent to 28 percent, and the percent of students in favor of dropping course discussion topics that make students uncomfortable dropped from 31 percent to 23 percent between 2023 and 2025.

In contrast to the apparent tolerance of most students when it comes to disinviting speakers or dropping readings or discussion topics, 72 percent of students say they are in favor of reporting professors to the

university if they say something that students deem offensive. As in previous years of the survey, there are significant differences among students by political ideology and gender in their responses to this question. Seventy-nine percent of liberal students and 74 percent of independent students are in favor of reporting professors, compared to 56 percent of conservative students (Figure 1). By gender, unknown/other (84 percent) and female students (81 percent) are more in favor of reporting professors than male students (57 percent). Over time, the percentage of students in favor of reporting professors has remained between 68 percent and 74 percent since 2021.

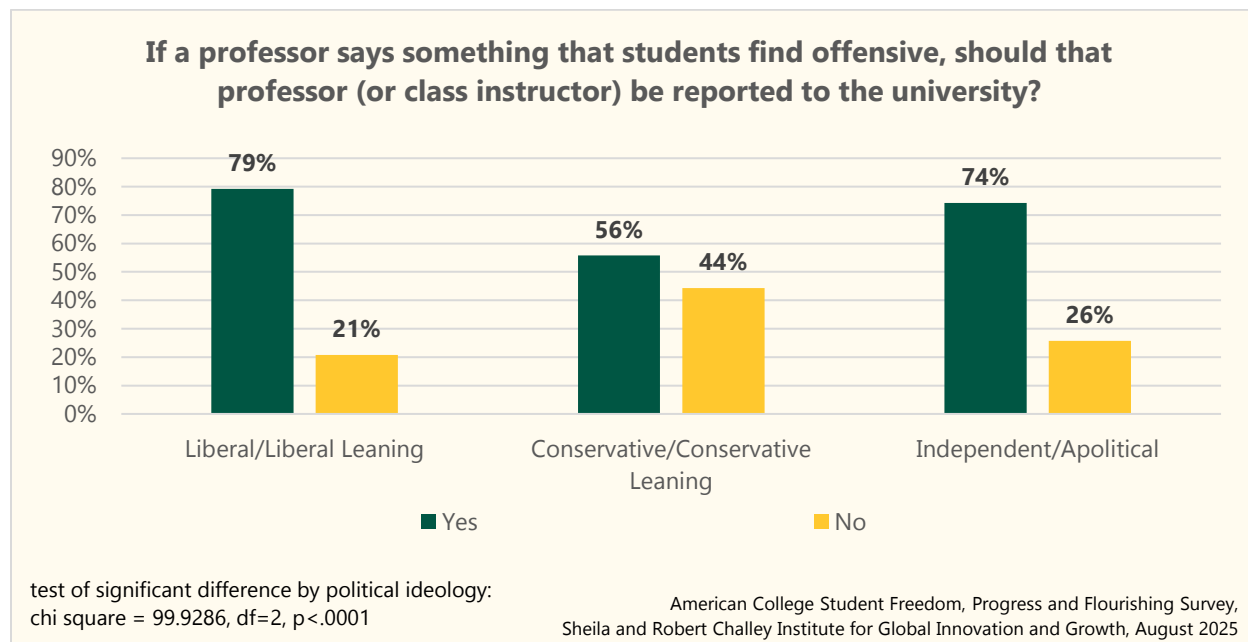


Figure 1: Percent of students in favor of reporting professors for making comments deemed offensive

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 ask 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.”

We find that most students who are in favor of reporting professors are in favor of reporting them for stating opinions and/or facts that they disagree with. Sixty-two percent of all students say they are in favor of reporting professors to the university for making one or more of the 10 statements above (see Figure 2 below for percentages of students in favor of reporting professors for various statements).

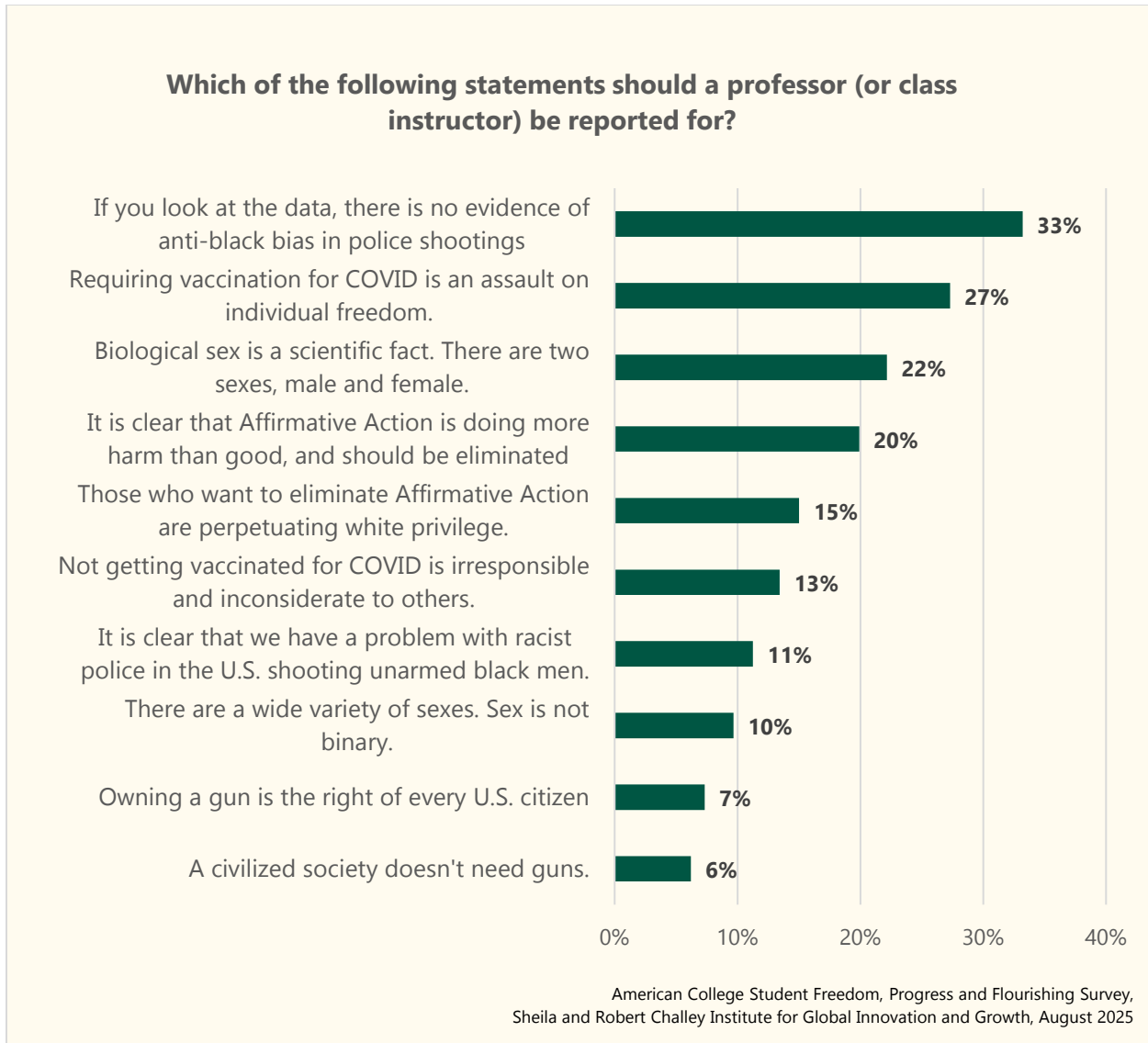


Figure 2: Percent of all students who are in favor of reporting professors for one or more of the above statements

These also vary significantly by political ideology and gender. Seventy percent of liberal students and 62 percent of independent students are in favor of reporting professors for one or more of these statements, compared to 48 percent of conservative students. Seventy-two percent of female students and 69 percent of unknown/other students are in favor of reporting professors for one or more of these statements,

compared to 47 percent of male students. The percentage of students in favor of reporting professors who make these statements is the same as last year.

A majority of students (57 percent) are also in favor of reporting other students who make statements that other students deem offensive. While this is a smaller percentage than in 2022 (62 percent), it is similar to 2023 (58 percent) and 2024 (56 percent). The percent of students who are in favor of reporting other students also varies significantly by political ideology (liberal 65 percent, independent 65 percent, conservative 37 percent) and gender (unknown/other 73 percent, female 63 percent, male 46 percent).

Last, in answering whether protecting free speech or ensuring everyone is comfortable is more important, students express strong support for free speech. Seventy-four percent of students (and more than 69 percent of students from any political ideology) say protecting free speech is more important than ensuring nobody feels uncomfortable. While this may sound like students are very tolerant of different points of view, their answers to many of the previous questions contradict this.

As this section of our survey shows, a significant number of students are intolerant of points of view that they disagree with. While the slight decline in the number of students who are in favor of disinviting campus speakers, dropping class readings, and dropping class discussion topics is encouraging, the persistence of student willingness to report professors for disfavored opinions and report students along with the large number of students who report comfort in sharing opinions because most people agree with them suggest a campus environment that is not open to free speech and diverse points of view. The next section of the report examines student beliefs about human progress and its foundations, student optimism, and student patriotism.

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

Despite considerable improvements in a wide range of indicators such as life expectancy, literacy, poverty, access to food, and access to education, many people believe things have gotten worse. As shown in our previous surveys, this may be especially true among students. To gain a better understanding of students' views in this area and how they are being shaped by college, we ask students about their perceptions on how the world and the U.S. have changed and why; their optimism about the future of the world, the U.S., and their future; and their pride in being American. We also report their answers by political ideology and gender, and over time.

We find that a minority of students believe the world and U.S. have improved. Only 43 percent of students think the world has improved over the last 50 years in terms of extreme poverty, life expectancy, hunger, and literacy, while 46 percent believe the world has gotten worse, and 11 percent think it hasn't changed. Forty percent of students feel the U.S. has improved in terms of life expectancy, per capita income, and education level over the last 50 years, compared to 51 percent and 9 percent who think it has gotten worse or not changed.

Among students who think the world and the U.S. have improved, the top reason given for the improvement is freedom and the private sector. In contrast, among those who believe things have declined, the top reason given is not enough government and regulations. For students who think the world and the U.S. have improved, 49 percent attribute world improvement to increased economic and political freedom, and 55 percent attribute U.S. improvement to a dynamic marketplace where

entrepreneurs and others innovate to solve problems (see Figure 3). These compare to 26 percent and 25 percent who think the improvement in the world and the U.S. is due to increased government rules, regulations, and redistribution.

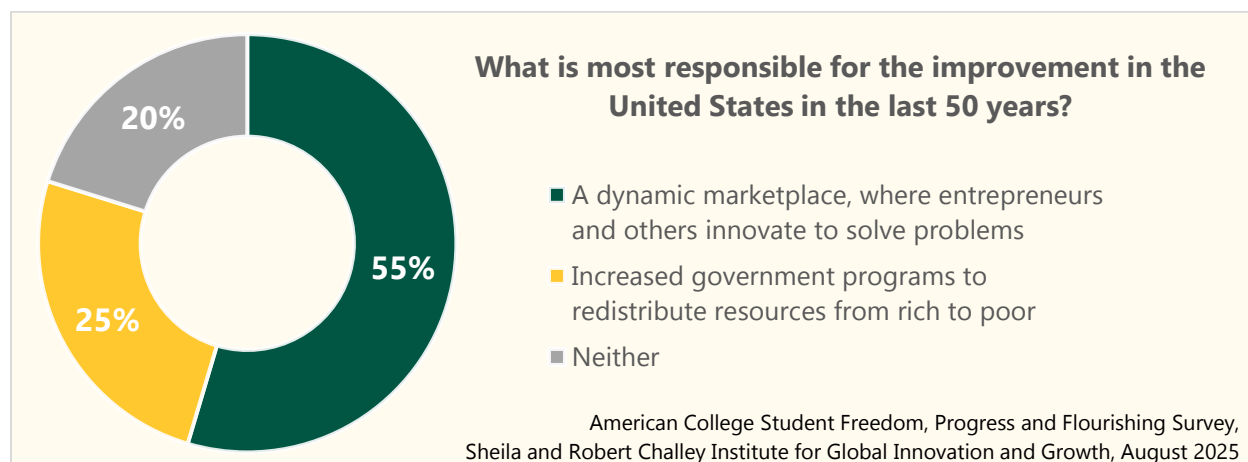


Figure 3: Perceptions for why the U.S. has improved among students who think it has improved

Students who think the world and the U.S. have declined largely blame the decline on a lack of government. Thirty-eight percent attribute a perceived decline in the world to not enough government rules, regulations, and abilities to distribute resources, and 54 percent attribute a perceived decline in the U.S. to not enough government programs to make sure resources are used wisely (see Figure 4).

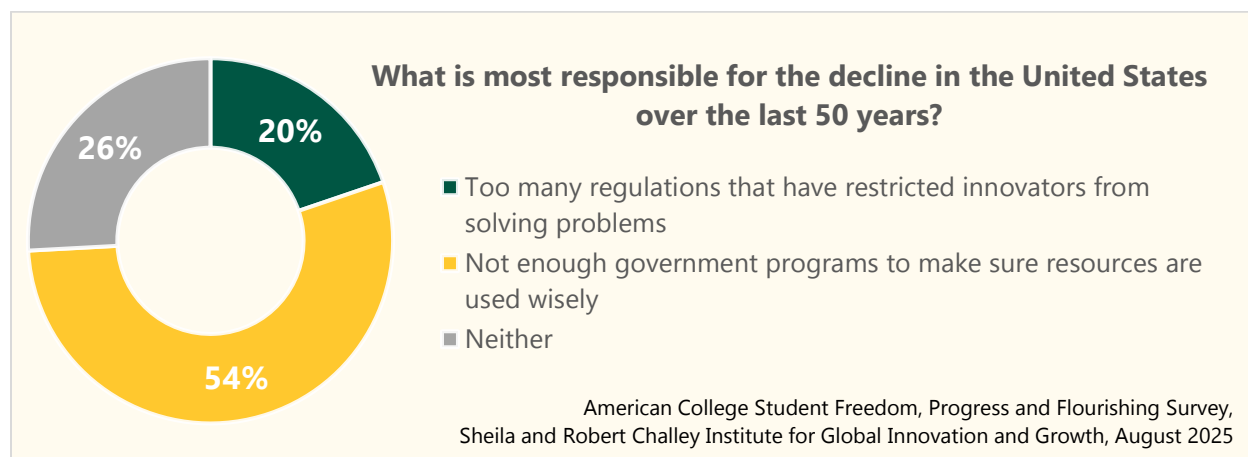


Figure 4: Attribution for a perceived decline in the U.S. for students who think it has gotten worse

Not surprisingly, with the lack of perceived progress, there is a corresponding lack of optimism among students. Only 23 percent of students are optimistic about the future of the world and the U.S., and roughly half of students are optimistic about their future (51 percent) and about their ability to make a difference in the world (49 percent).

In examining student views of progress and their optimism, there are notable differences by political ideology and gender. Conservative students are more likely to believe the world and the U.S. have improved over the last 50 years, be optimistic about the future of the world and the U.S., and about their

futures and ability to make a difference in the world in comparison to liberal and independent students. Similarly, male students are more likely to believe the world and the U.S. have improved over the last 50 years, and be optimistic about the future of the world and the U.S. in comparison to female and unknown/other students.

Although there have been some changes in percentages of students who perceive progress and are optimistic over time, the percentages are similar to those of previous years. For example, the rate of students who believed the world had gotten better was 43 percent in 2021. It increased to 47 percent in 2023 and has subsequently declined to 42 percent in 2025. As with these changes, changes in other progress/optimism variables make it difficult to decipher any pattern in changes in perceptions of progress and optimism over time.

Last, we ask students how proud they are to be American. Fifty-nine percent of American students express that they are very proud (23 percent) or somewhat proud (36 percent) to be American. As Figure 5 shows, 86 percent of conservative students are very proud (53 percent) or somewhat proud (33 percent) compared to 55 percent of independent students (17 percent very proud, 38 percent somewhat proud) and 45 percent of liberal students (9 percent very proud, 36 percent somewhat proud). A higher percentage of male students (68 percent) also report being very proud or somewhat proud to be American in comparison to female (57 percent) and unknown/other (31 percent) students. Pride in being American has ranged between 54 percent of students and 64 percent of students since 2021.

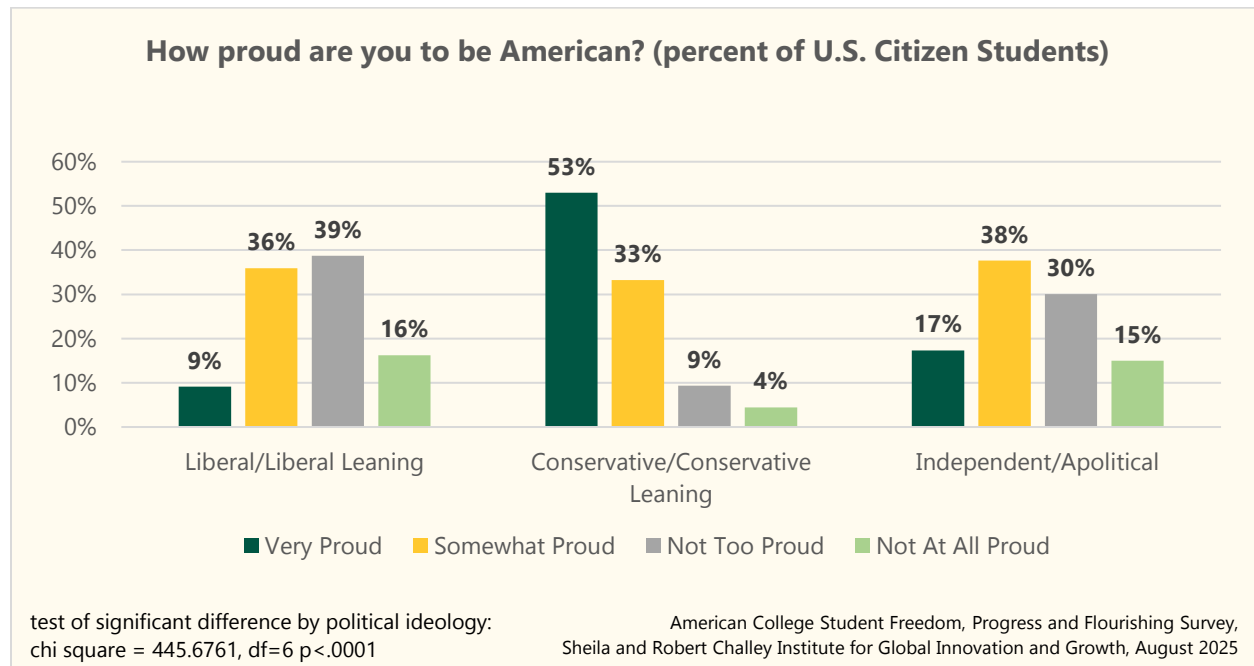


Figure 5: Pride in being American by political ideology

This section of the survey shows the widespread misunderstanding of progress by college students. A majority of students believe the world and the U.S. have declined in measures such as extreme poverty, life expectancy, and literacy over the last 50 years. Yet, these measures have all improved markedly. In

1981, 47 percent of the world lived in extreme poverty compared to 10 percent today, global life expectancy was 60.9 years compared to 73.2 years today, 68 percent of the world's population was literate compared to 87 percent today, and larger percentages of people were undernourished than today.ⁱⁱⁱ Significant improvements have also been seen in the U.S.

As previous research has shown, this lack of awareness of progress likely leads to the lack of optimism displayed by students.^{iv} There is also some evidence that this lack of optimism may be related to a lack of national pride, with only 59 percent of American college students being very proud or somewhat proud to be American.^v The following section aims to understand students' economic beliefs and understanding.

Section 3: Capitalism and Socialism

Because of the importance of economic systems in influencing economic opportunity and societal flourishing, we ask students several questions related to their understanding of economic systems, their favorability toward them, and the ways they have been influenced by college. Unlike studies that just ask about whether people view capitalism or socialism favorably, our survey asks students about definitions – finding that definitions matter a lot in whether students view the economic system favorably or unfavorably. As in previous sections, we report findings by political ideology, gender, and over time.

When presented with two different definitions of capitalism—one reflecting free market capitalism and one describing cronyism—59 percent of the students select the free market definition, 26 percent choose cronyism, 12 percent are unsure, and 3 percent say other. Most students do not view capitalism positively (with only 27 percent having a positive view of capitalism), but student views on capitalism vary widely depending on how they define it. For students who define capitalism as free market capitalism, twice as many have a favorable view as a negative view (40 percent versus 20 percent), while six times as many students who define capitalism as cronyism have a negative view as a positive view (64 percent versus 10 percent).

Student views on capitalism vary widely by political ideology and gender. Conservative students (72 percent) are more likely to define capitalism using the free market definition in comparison to liberal (57 percent) and independent students (46 percent), and more likely to have a favorable view of capitalism (57 percent) compared to liberal (16 percent) and independent (16 percent) students (see Figure 6). Similarly, male students (68 percent) are more likely than unknown/other students (53 percent) or female students (52 percent) to define capitalism with a free market definition. They are more likely (43 percent) to have a positive view of capitalism in comparison to female (18 percent) and other/unknown (10 percent) students.

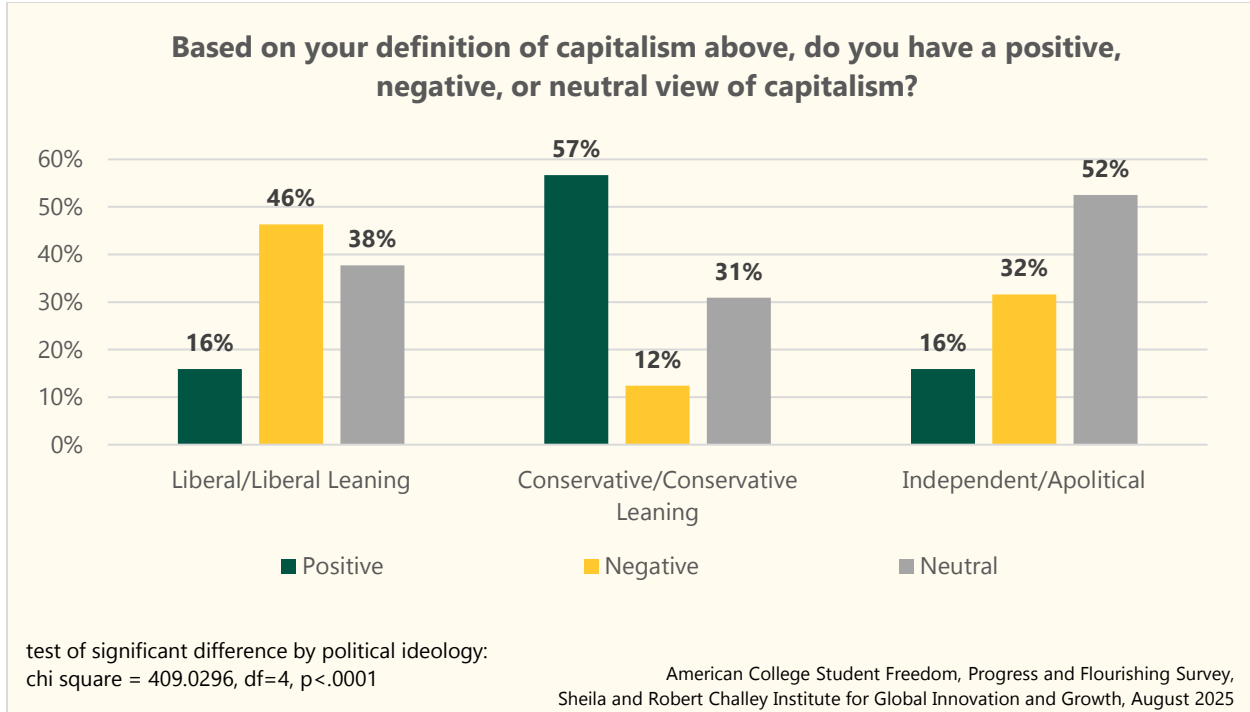


Figure 6: Student attitudes toward capitalism by political ideology

While the percentage of students who view capitalism positively is small, it has been viewed more positively in recent years than previously. In 2024 and 2025, 27 percent of students viewed capitalism positively compared to 24 percent, 25 percent, and 23 percent in 2021, 2022, and 2023.

Some of this increased positivity toward capitalism may be the result of improved understanding. The percent of students who define capitalism using the free market definition (as opposed to the cronyism definition) has increased from 56 percent in 2021 to 69 percent in 2025.

As with capitalism, there is disagreement among students on how socialism is defined. When presented with two definitions of socialism, students were more likely to select the definition focused on redistribution and active government (48 percent) than the definition of central planning and the collective ownership of property (34 percent). Only 25 percent of students have a positive view of socialism, though their opinion of socialism varies depending on how they define it. For those who define socialism as heavy redistribution and active government, 37 percent have a favorable view and 17 percent have a negative view of socialism. In contrast, for those who define socialism as central planning and the collective ownership of property, 17 percent have a positive view and 45 percent have a negative view of socialism.

Just like with capitalism, student views on socialism vary widely by political ideology and gender. Liberal students (58 percent) are more likely to define socialism as redistribution and active government in comparison to independent (42 percent) or conservative (36 percent) students, and liberal students (36 percent) are more likely to have a positive view of socialism in comparison to independent (21 percent) or conservative (9 percent) students. Unknown/other (60 percent) students are more likely to define socialism as redistribution and active government in comparison to female (47 percent) and male (46 percent) students, and unknown/other (51 percent) students are more likely to have a favorable view of socialism than female (23 percent) or male (22 percent) students.

Despite a decline in the percentage of students defining socialism using the central planning definition since a peak in 2022, the rate in favor of socialism has not increased. In 2025, 41 percent of students chose the central planning definition of socialism (as opposed to the redistribution definition). This was a decline from 46 percent in 2022. Twenty-five percent of students (the same as last year) have a positive view of socialism. This has declined from 31 percent in 2021.

Most students say that college hasn't influenced their opinion of capitalism or socialism. For those who say it has, 12 percent say college has given them a more positive view, and 22 percent say college has given them a more negative view of capitalism. In comparison, 16 percent say it has given them a more positive view and 13 percent a more negative view of socialism.

Similarly, most students say their professors have not expressed their views on capitalism and socialism. When they have, 20 percent say professor attitudes toward capitalism have been positive and 25 percent say negative, while 20 percent say professor views toward socialism have been positive and 15 percent negative. While there is no discernible pattern in expressed views of professors toward socialism, student reports suggest professor views have become more favorable toward capitalism (increasing from 33 percent of opinions expressed on capitalism in 2021 to 45 percent in 2025).

As highlighted in the question above, according to students' definitions of socialism, many define socialism as a large welfare state. Moreover, student favorability toward socialism greatly increases when they define it this way.

Because of this, we add questions in this year's survey to see if students would be in favor of universal healthcare and free higher education when funded in different ways. When asked whether they would be in favor of these things if funded by a wealth tax on the top one percent, 78 percent say yes. Similarly, 71 percent say they would be in favor of these things if funded by increasing income taxes to the top 10 percent. In particular, liberal and independent students are in favor of these things being financed in this way (See Figure 7).

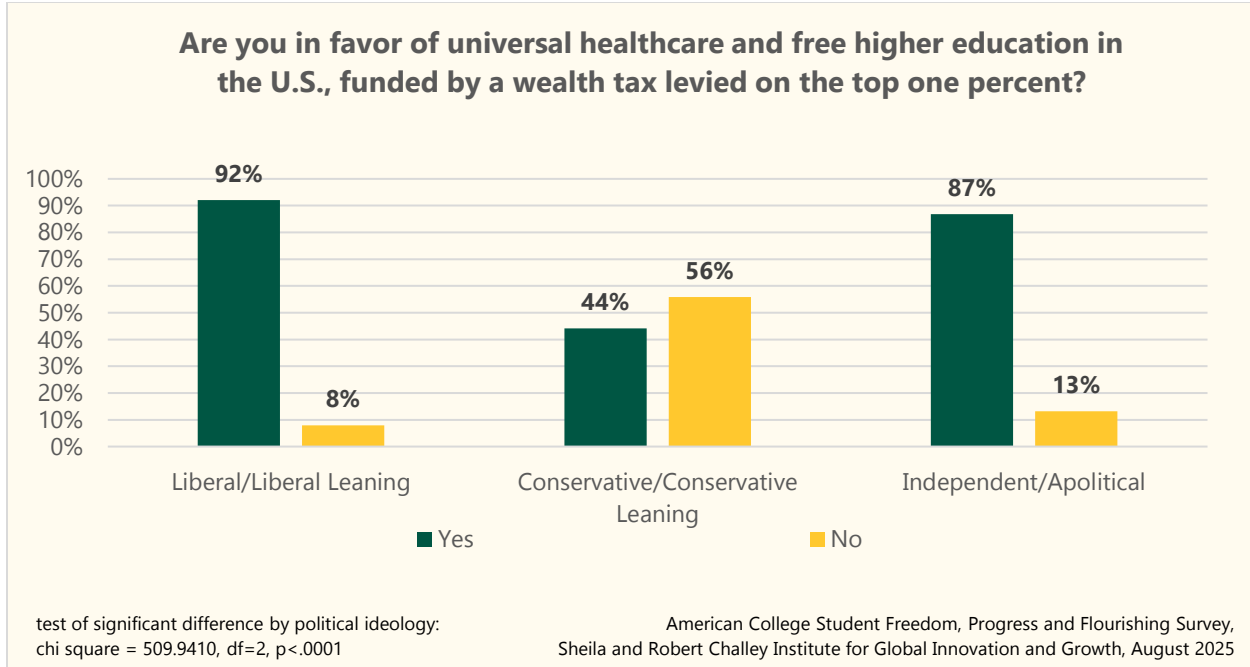


Figure 7: Percent of students with different political ideologies who are in favor of universal healthcare and free higher education funded by a wealth tax on the top one percent

In contrast, when students are asked whether they would be in favor of universal healthcare and free higher education if funded by higher income taxes on most workers, only 38 percent say yes. If funded by a universal consumption tax, 50 percent of students would support it. Figure 8 shows percentages in favor of universal healthcare and free higher education financed by higher income taxes on most workers across different political ideologies.

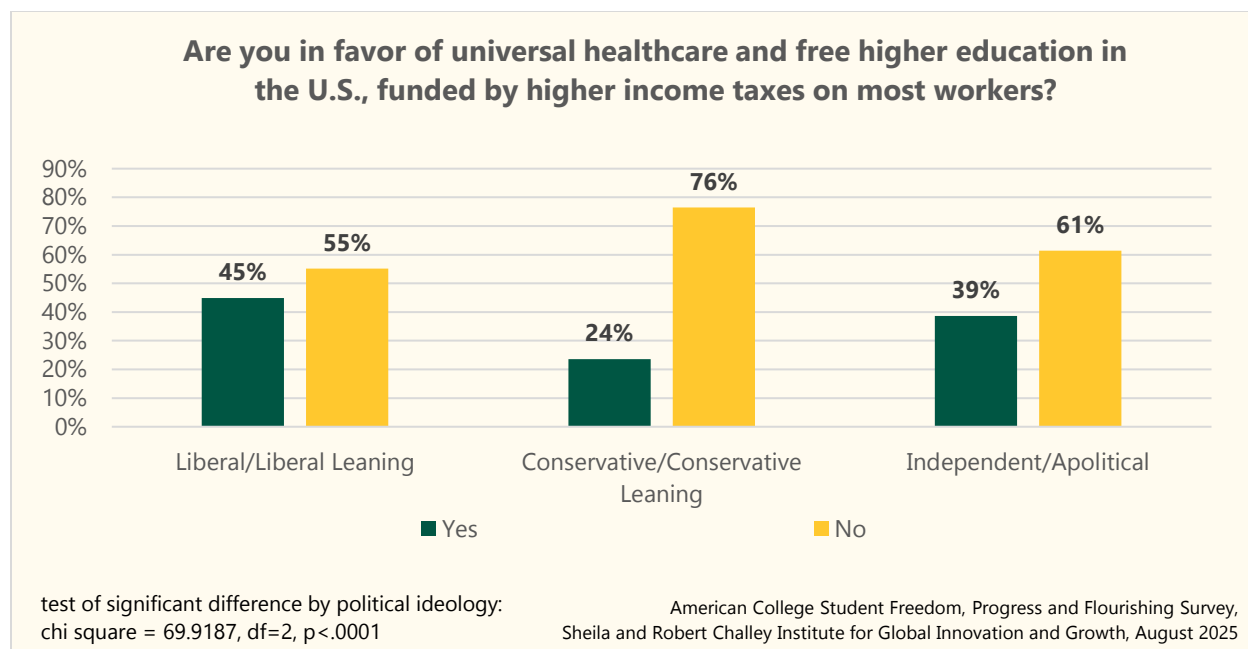


Figure 8: Percent of students with different political ideologies who are in favor of universal healthcare and free higher education funded by higher income taxes on most workers

This section shows divergent views on the meanings of capitalism and socialism among students, as well as on whether they are positive or negative systems. Significant percentages of students confuse capitalism with cronyism, and large percentages associate socialism with active redistribution by government. Many students are in favor of universal healthcare and free higher education, but only want the wealthiest Americans to pay for it. The next section examines student attitudes toward protest and expressing opinions related to the Israel-Hamas war and other global conflicts.

Section 4: The Israel-Hamas War – Appropriate Ways to Express Opinions

Since the attack by Hamas on October 7th, 2023, and the subsequent response by Israel, there have been campus protests across the U.S. and in other parts of the world. While some of the protests have been peaceful protests, others have included illiberal actions that are not part of free speech.

In a continuation from last year, we survey students about their attitudes toward peaceful protests and illiberal protests around the war, their perceived knowledge of issues surrounding the war, and their comfort level in talking about it. We also added two new questions to gauge students' desire to have their university take official stances on global conflicts and to see if students are concerned about government legislation interfering with academic freedom.

Eighty-eight percent of students say that they have a right to engage in peaceful protests related to the Israel-Hamas war. Although this varies somewhat by political ideology (79 percent of conservative students, 87 percent of independent students, and 94 percent of liberal students), there is broad agreement that students have this right. The percent who say students have this right is nearly identical to last year (89 percent).

In answering whether students have a right to engage in various illiberal actions to raise awareness of issues surrounding the Israel-Hamas war, the majority of students say no. However, sizeable minorities are in favor of some illiberal actions; 37 percent of students say students have a right to occupy buildings or stage die-ins, 23 percent say students have a right to disrupt class, and 18 percent say students have a right to shout down a speaker. Smaller percentages say it is acceptable to block a speaker and others from entering an auditorium (10 percent), and it is okay to pull a fire alarm to evacuate an auditorium (6 percent).

Student attitudes toward taking illiberal actions in reaction to the Israel-Hamas war vary by political ideology and gender. Liberal students are more likely to believe students have a right to occupy buildings (52 percent) in comparison to independent (33 percent) and conservative (13 percent) students (see Figure 9), more likely to believe it is okay to disrupt class (33 percent) in comparison to independent (19 percent) and conservative (9 percent) students, and more likely to believe it is okay to shout down a speaker (24 percent) in comparison to independent (14 percent) or conservative (10 percent) students. Similarly, unknown/other students are more likely to believe students have a right to do these things in comparison to female and male students.

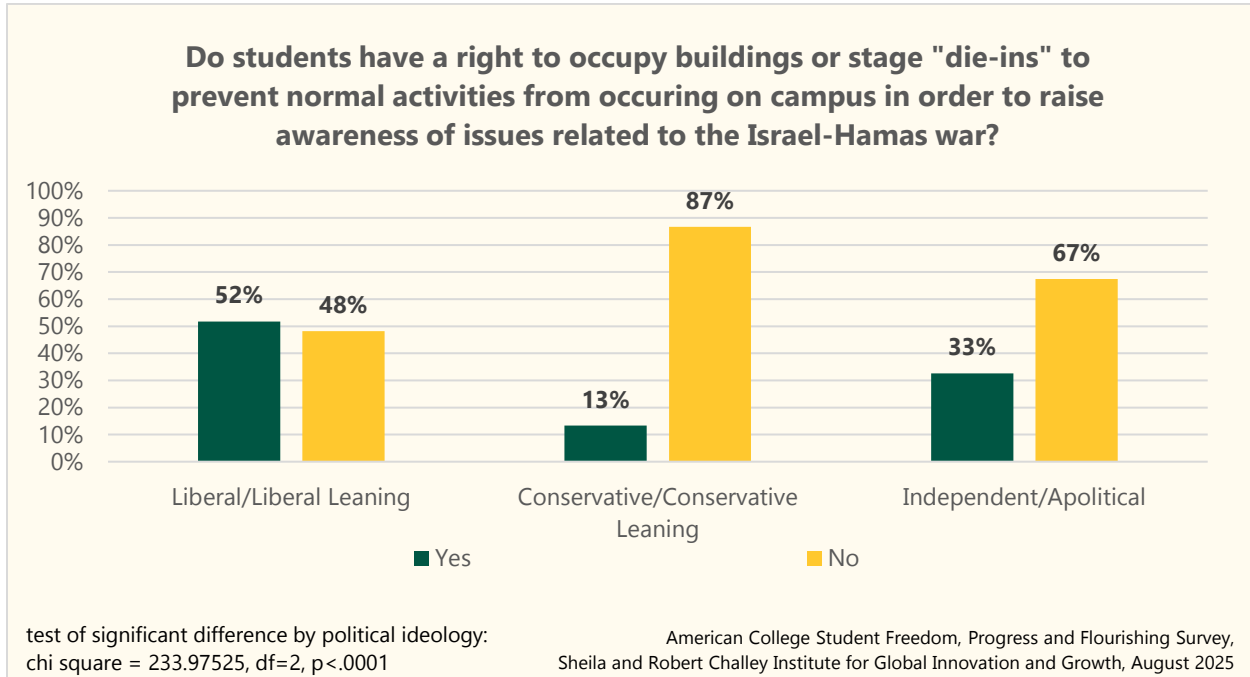


Figure 9: Student beliefs on their right to occupy buildings to raise awareness of issues related to the Israel-Hamas war

Notably, the percentage of students who believe it is acceptable to take these illiberal actions has declined since last year. Since last year, the percent who thought occupying buildings was acceptable declined from 41 percent to 37 percent, the percent who thought it was acceptable to disrupt class fell from 27 percent to 23 percent, the percent who thought it was acceptable to shout down a speaker declined from 20 percent to 18 percent, the percent who thought it was okay to block an auditorium declined from 14 percent to 10 percent, and the percent who thought it was acceptable to pull the fire alarm dropped from 8 percent to 6 percent.

Other questions related to the Israel-Hamas war suggest less engagement with the issue in comparison to last year. Only 8 percent of students say they have participated in a protest related to the war, compared to 13 percent last year. Moreover, 60 percent say they are very informed or somewhat informed about the conflict, compared to 64 percent last year. Similarly, 31 percent say they are at least somewhat comfortable discussing the conflict on campus, compared to 34 percent last year. Lastly, 73 percent say neither side is right, compared to 66 percent last year.

In reaction to campus controversies surrounding protests in recent years, several universities have adopted institutional neutrality, pledging not to take positions on social and political issues. To gain insight into student views on this trend, we ask whether students support their university administration taking an official stance on international conflicts. Only 21 percent say yes.

Also, in reaction to the campus controversies, state and local governments have taken actions against universities and legislated changes in curriculum. To gain insights into whether this concerns students, we ask students about concerns with legislative action and academic freedom. Sixty-eight percent of students express that they are at least somewhat concerned about government legislation interfering with academic freedom at their university; again, this varies by political ideology (see Figure 10).

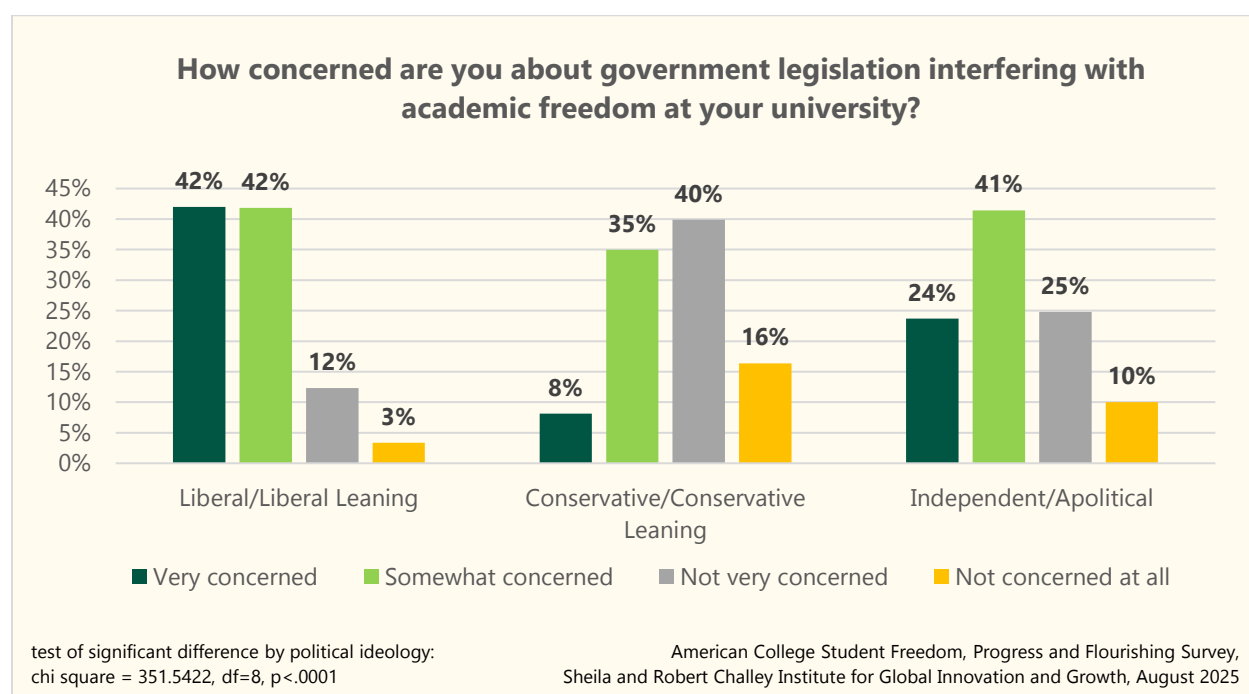


Figure 10: Student concern about legislation interfering with academic freedom by political ideology

This section shows the widespread support among students for the right to peaceful protest. However, it also indicates that significant minorities of students are confusing illiberal actions, such as occupying buildings to disrupt campus operations and disrupting classes with free speech. The final section of the report examines student social media use and their perception of its impact.

Section 5: Student Use of Social Media

There are growing concerns in the U.S. about the heavy use of social media and its potentially negative impacts on mental health and well-being – especially among young people. To gain insights into student social media use and its perceived effects, we ask students about their experiences.

The average student reports using social media 3.39 hours per day. Seventy-nine percent of students report using social media between 1 and 5 hours per day, 15 percent report using social media 5 to 10 hours per day, and 2 percent report using it more than 10 hours per day.

When asked how social media has impacted student mental health and well-being during college, more students report negative impacts than positive ones. 46 percent report that social media has had a somewhat negative or very negative impact on their mental health and well-being, compared to 23 percent reporting a positive impact (see Figure 11).

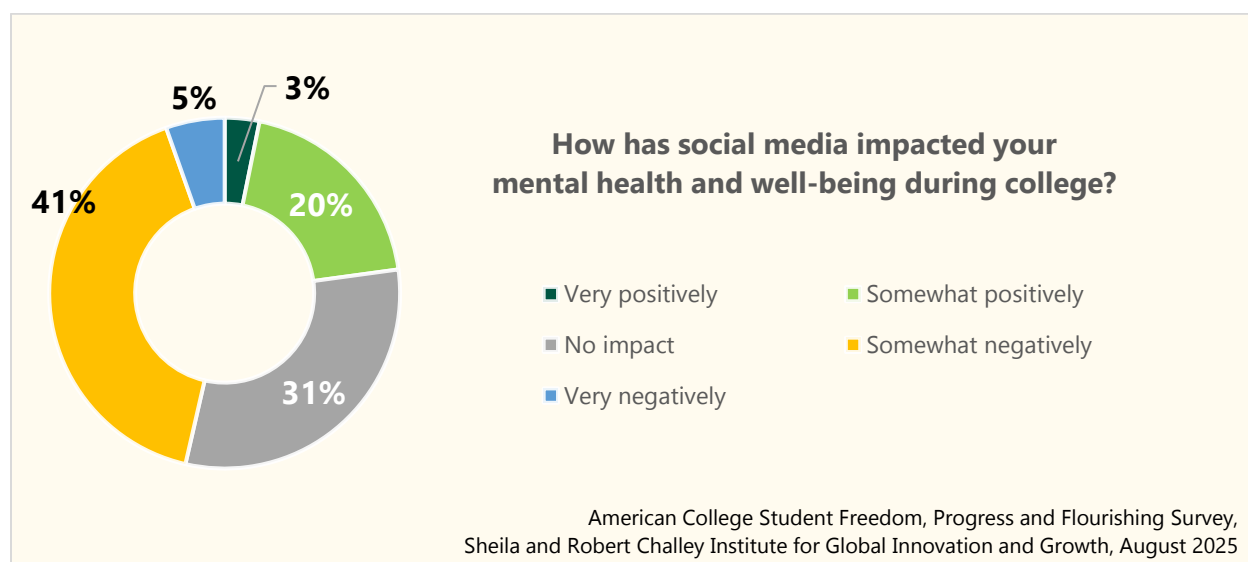


Figure 11: Student perception of social media on their mental health and well-being

When asked how important it is for them that others like their social media posts, a third of students think it is somewhat or very important. Four percent say it is very important that others like their posts, 29 percent say it is somewhat important, 34 percent say it is not very important, and 33 percent say it is not at all important.

Most students say they have not been bullied on social media and wouldn't be perceived by others as bullying them on social media. Eighty-nine percent say they have never or rarely been bullied on social media, and 89 percent somewhat disagree or strongly disagree that others would attribute social media bullying to them.

Summary

The 2025 version of the American College Student Freedom, Progress, and Flourishing Survey contains many important and interesting results. As in previous years of the survey, we find that students are not very tolerant of points of view that they disagree with. Although fewer students are in favor of

withdrawing controversial speaker invitations and readings/discussion topics that make students feel uncomfortable, more than 60 percent are in favor of reporting professors for statements of opinion or fact that they disagree with. Despite students' stated preference for free speech over student comfort, these findings do not suggest a campus environment open to the free inquiry and debate needed to advance knowledge and teach critical thinking.

We also find that students are unaware of progress, with a minority of students believing the world and the U.S. have improved over the last 50 years in terms of objective measures of poverty, education, and life expectancy. Moreover, the unawareness of this progress seems to be related to a misunderstanding of how progress occurs. Students who believe the world and the U.S. have not improved attribute the lack of improvement to insufficient government regulations and redistribution, while those who think they have improved attribute the improvement to an increase in freedom.

The lack of awareness of progress is also related to a lack of optimism for the future and a lack of national pride. Less than a quarter of students are optimistic about the future of the world and the U.S., and only half are optimistic about their future and their ability to make a difference in the world. Only 59 percent of American students are at least somewhat proud to be American.

Students have divergent views on capitalism and socialism, with many confusing capitalism with cronyism and many defining socialism as heavy redistribution and active government. However, there has been a significant improvement in the understanding of capitalism since 2021.

Few students view capitalism (27 percent) or socialism (25 percent) favorably, but their opinions of both depend heavily on how they define them. Students who define capitalism as free market capitalism have a much more favorable view of capitalism than those who define it as cronyism. Similarly, students who define socialism as redistribution have a much more favorable view of socialism than those who define it as central planning.

Because of favorable student views toward active government redistribution, we add questions this year about student attitudes toward universal healthcare and free higher education funded by various means. We find that students are mainly in favor of these if they are financed by taxing the wealthy, but not if they are funded by taxing everyone.

In examining student attitudes related to protests around the Israel-Hamas war, we find students continuing to be in favor of the ability to engage in peaceful demonstrations, and fewer students believe that taking illiberal protest actions are appropriate. Eighty-eight percent of students think they have a right to engage in peaceful protests related to the Israel-Hamas war. A significant minority of students believe illiberal actions such as occupying buildings, disrupting class, and shouting down speakers are acceptable. Still, fewer believe these are acceptable in comparison to last year.

We also find that few students are in favor of their university taking an official position on international conflicts, and many are concerned with government legislation interfering with academic freedom. Twenty-one percent of students are in favor of their administration taking official positions on global disputes, and 68 percent are at least somewhat concerned about government legislation interfering with academic freedom at their university.

Finally, we ask students about their social media use and its effects. Most students (79 percent) report spending 1 to 5 hours per day on social media, many (46 percent) believe social media has had an adverse effect on their mental health and well-being, and few students report being bullied or bullying others on social media.

Charts showing all survey results follow. They show overall results, results by political ideology, and results over time.

ⁱ The sample was drawn from College Pulse's American College Student Panel™ that includes over 850,000 verified students representing more than 1500 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 any non-response bias, a post-stratification adjustment was applied based on demographic distributions of the four-year undergraduate population, derived from the 2017 Current Population Survey (CPS), the 2016 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), and the 2019-20 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The post-stratification weight rebalanced the sample based on the following benchmarks: gender, race and ethnicity, class year, voter registration and financial aid status. The sample weighting was accomplished using an iterative proportional fitting (IPF) process that simultaneously balances the distributions of all variables. Weights were trimmed to prevent individual interviews from having too much influence on the final results.

ⁱⁱ The margin of error for this survey is +/- 2 percentage points for the full sample. When breaking it down by political ideology and gender, or in questions where the number of respondents is limited based on their response to a previous question (for example, students are only asked whether they will continue protesting about the Israel Hamas war if they have already protested), the margin of error is larger. Margins of error are typically calculated on probability-based samples and are not technically correct for non-probability online samples. We supply them here to provide a general assessment of error ranges that may be associated with the data.

ⁱⁱⁱ Extreme poverty statistics are from the World Bank (<https://pip.worldbank.org/poverty-calculator>), and other statistics are from our world in data (<https://ourworldindata.org>).

^{iv} <https://www.ndsu.edu/challeyinstitute/research/briefs/202102>.

^v https://www.ndsu.edu/challeyinstitute/research/publications/patriotic_progress.