

Appendix 2 Charts: Human Progress, Attitudes About Future, and National Pride

38 Percent of Students Say the World Has Gotten Better Over the Last 50 Years

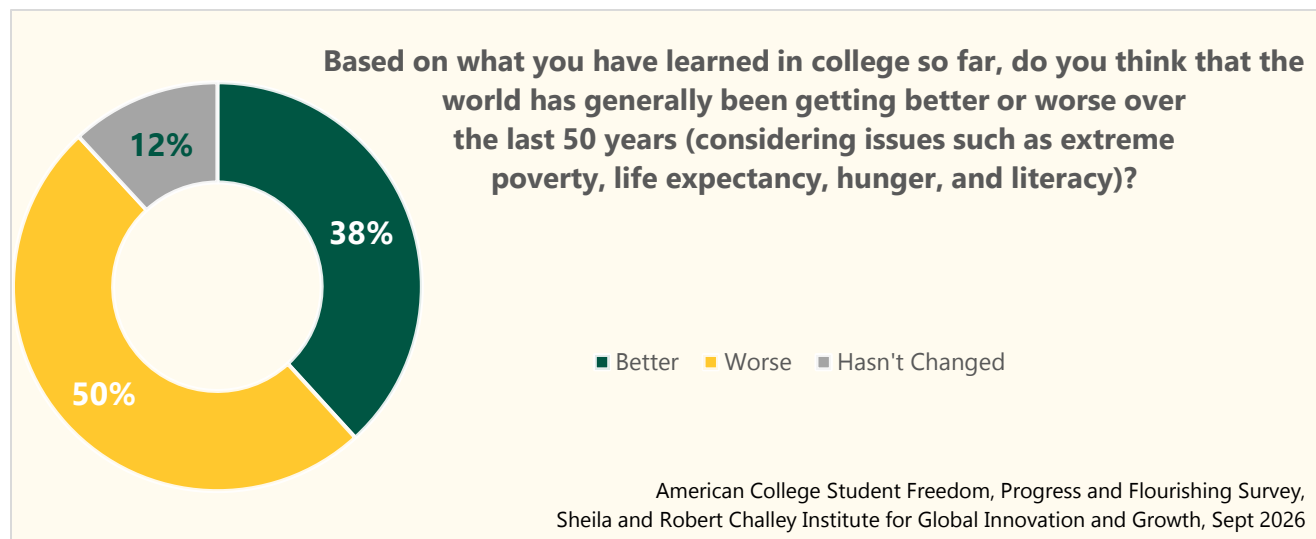


Figure 67: 38 percent of students believe the world has improved over the last 50 years in terms of extreme poverty, life expectancy, hunger, and literacy.

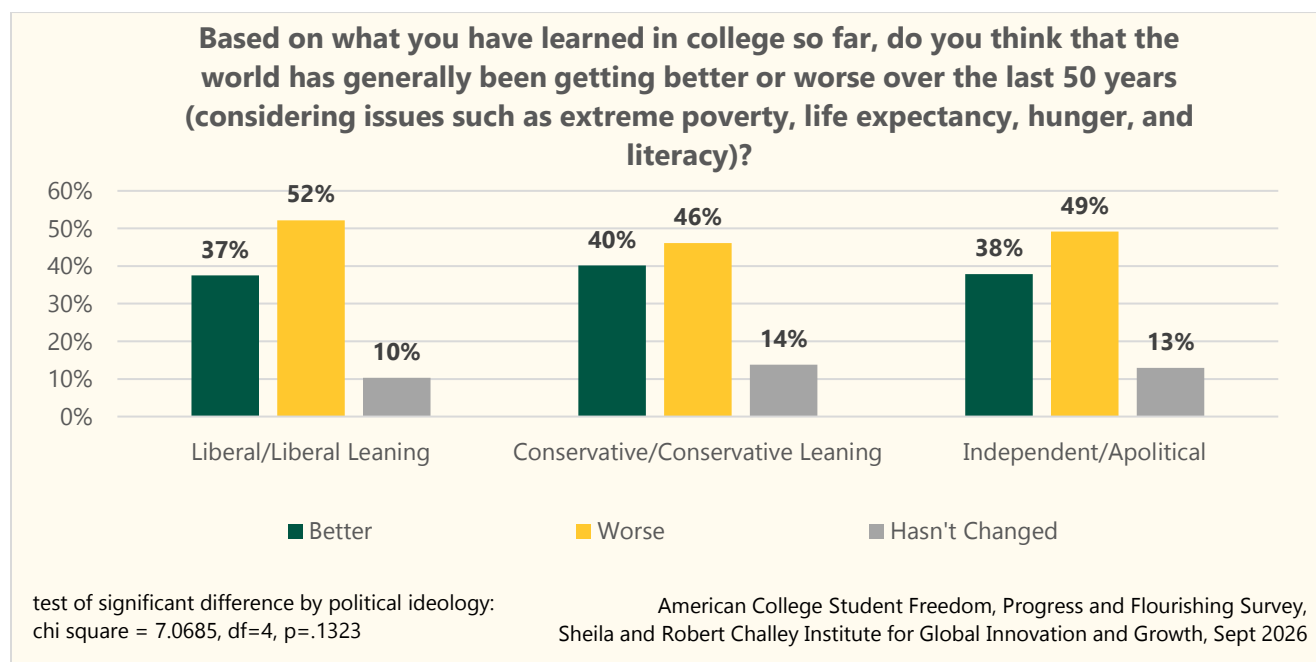


Figure 68: Student views on how the world has changed over the last 50 years do not vary significantly by political ideology.

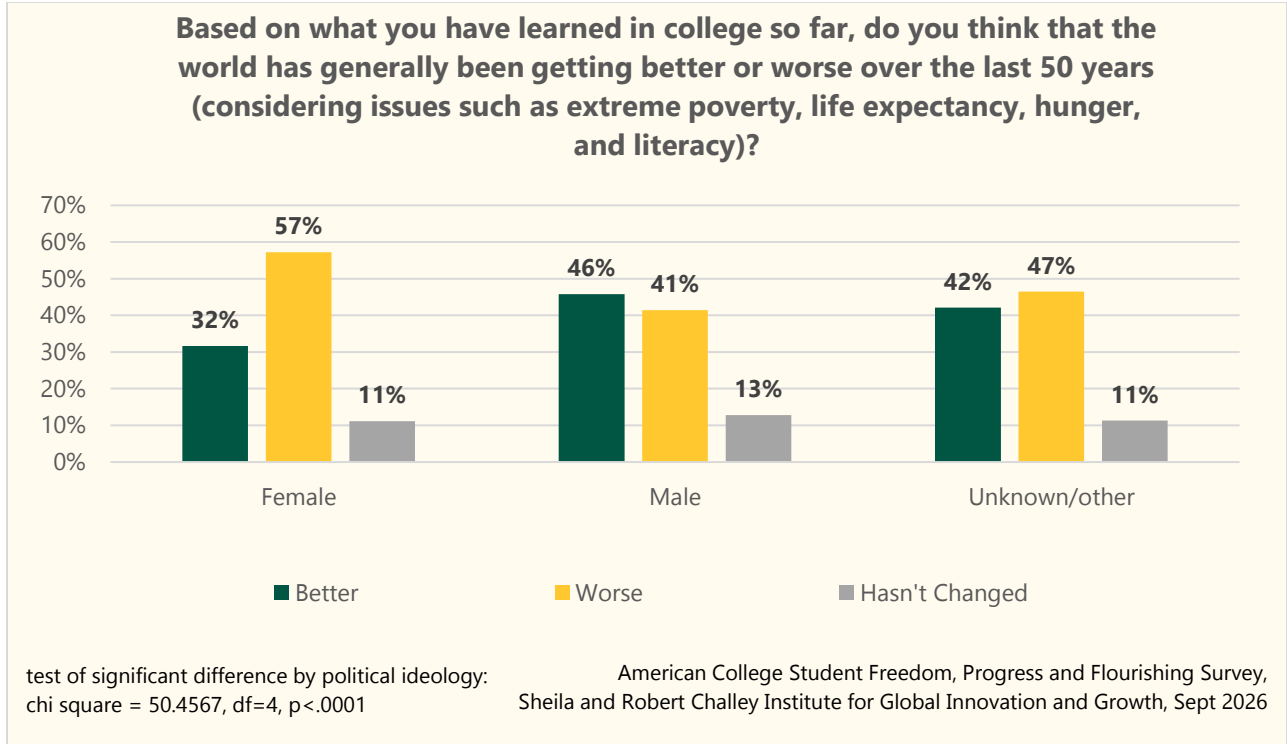


Figure 69: A smaller percentage of female think the world has improved over the last 50 years in comparison to unknown/other and male students.

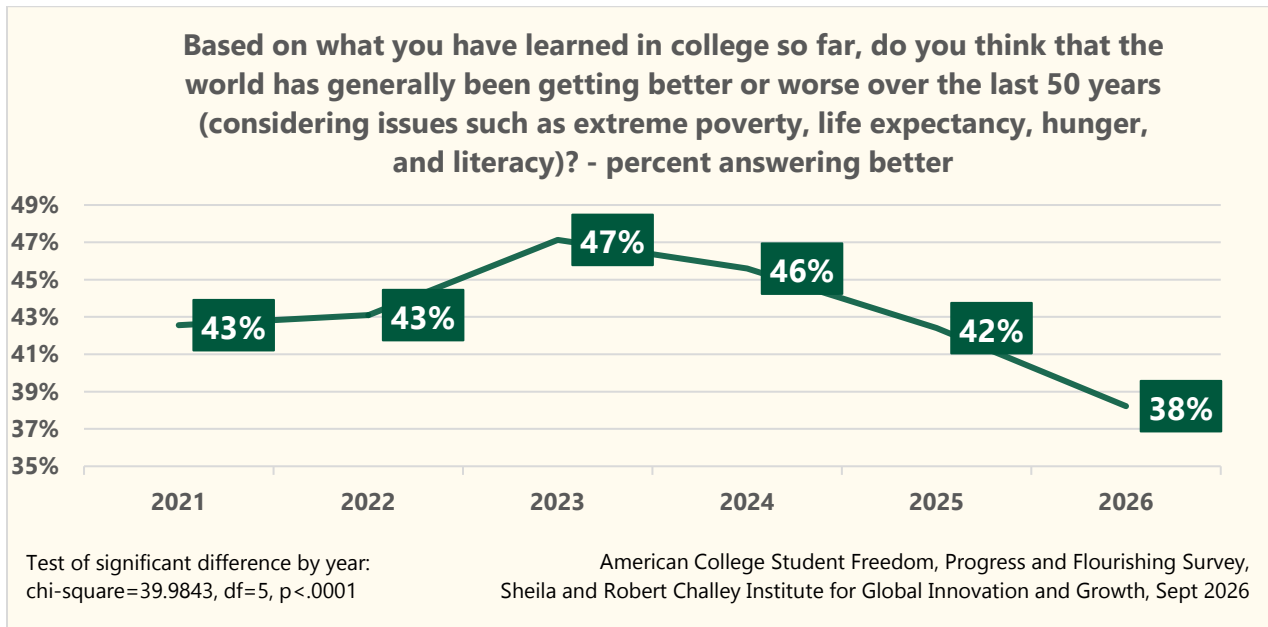


Figure 70: Student beliefs on whether the world has improved over the last 50 years dropped from 42 percent in 2025 to 38 percent in 2026.

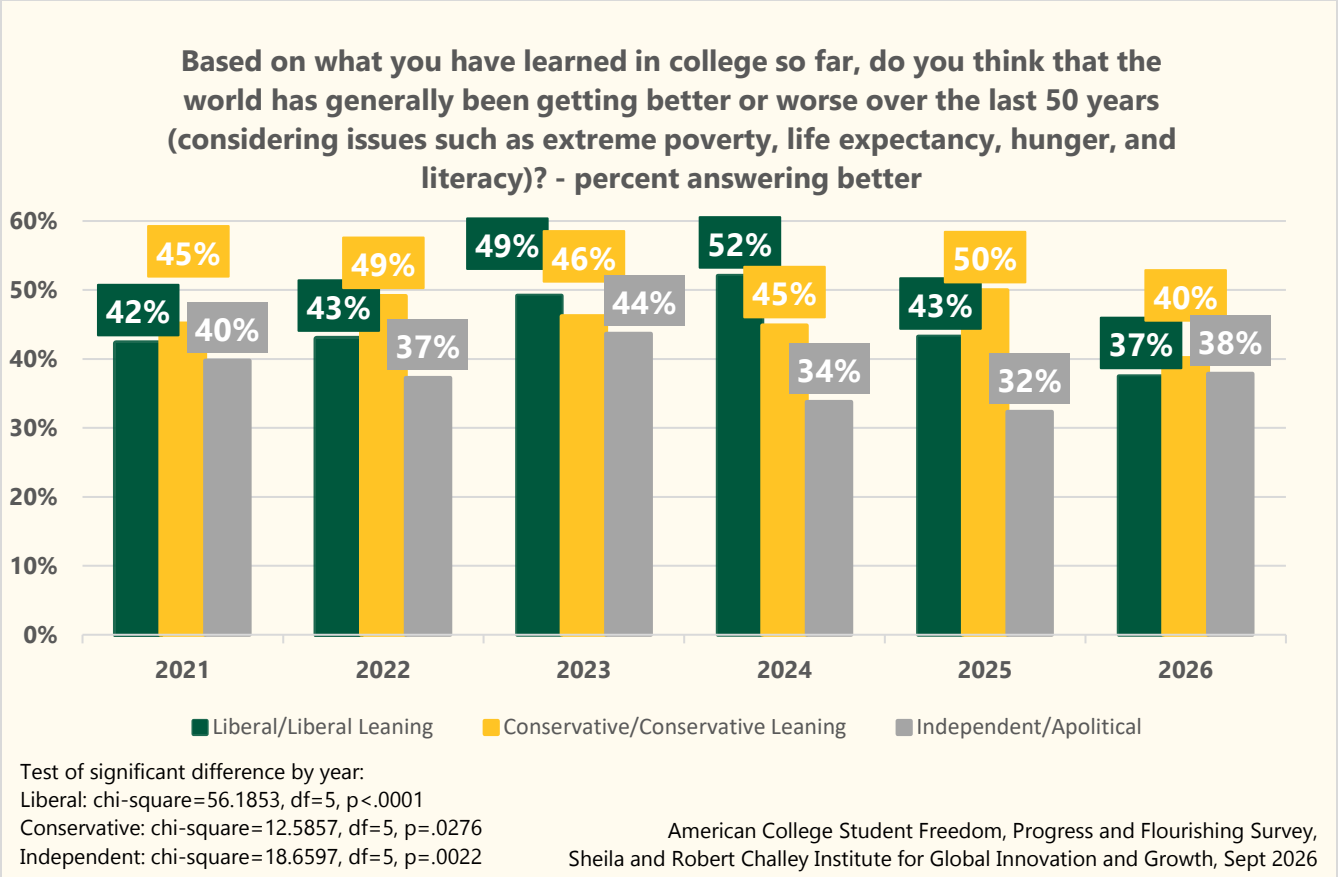


Figure 71: There have been significant changes over time in beliefs about whether the world has improved among students with different political ideologies. The percent of conservative students who believe the world has improved dropped from 50 to 40 percent between 2025 and 2026.

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

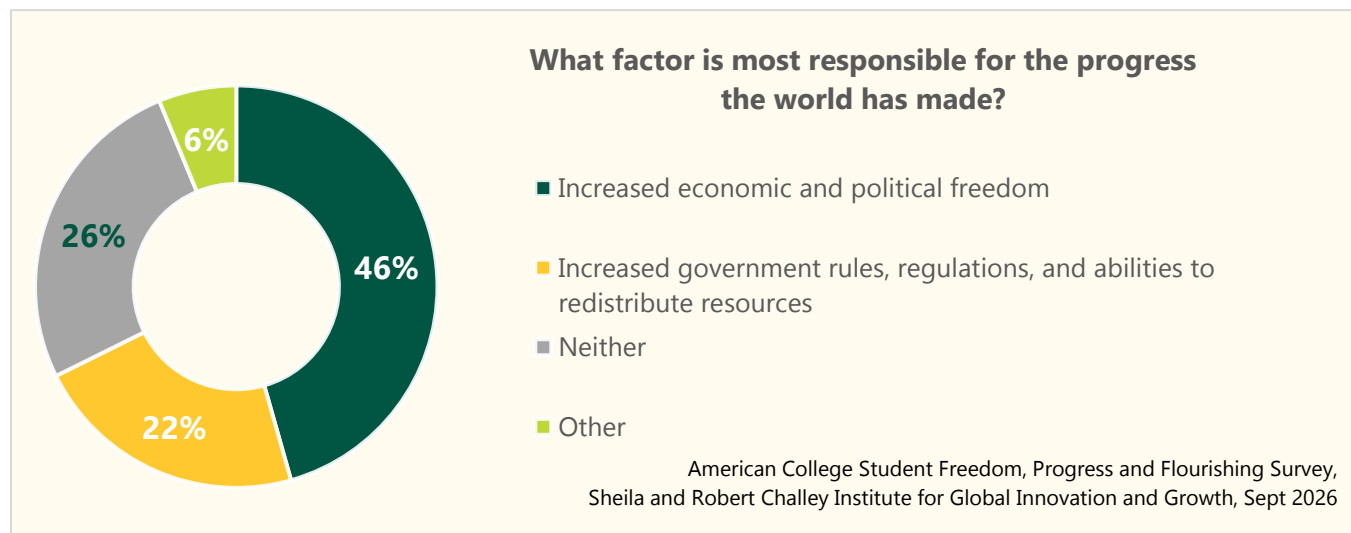


Figure 72: 46 percent of students who believe the world has improved think it is because of increased freedom.

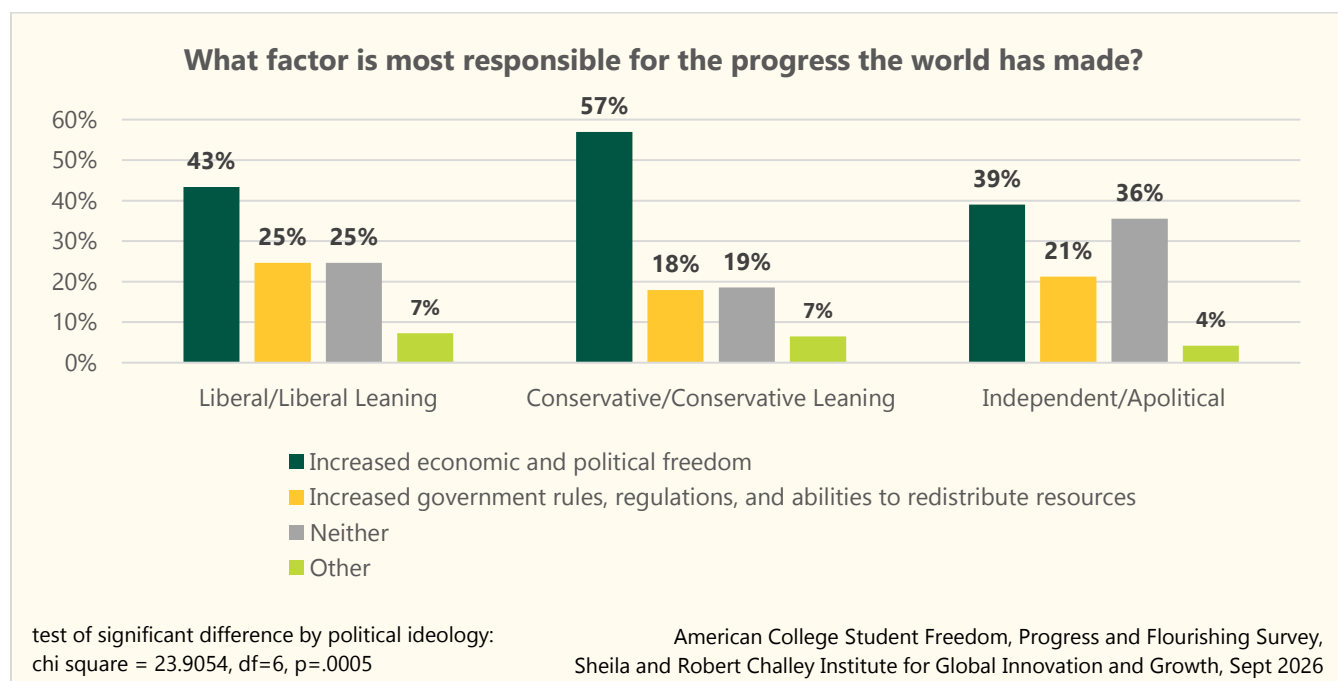


Figure 73: Among students who think the world has improved, conservative students are more likely to attribute the improvement to increased freedom in comparison to liberal and independent students.

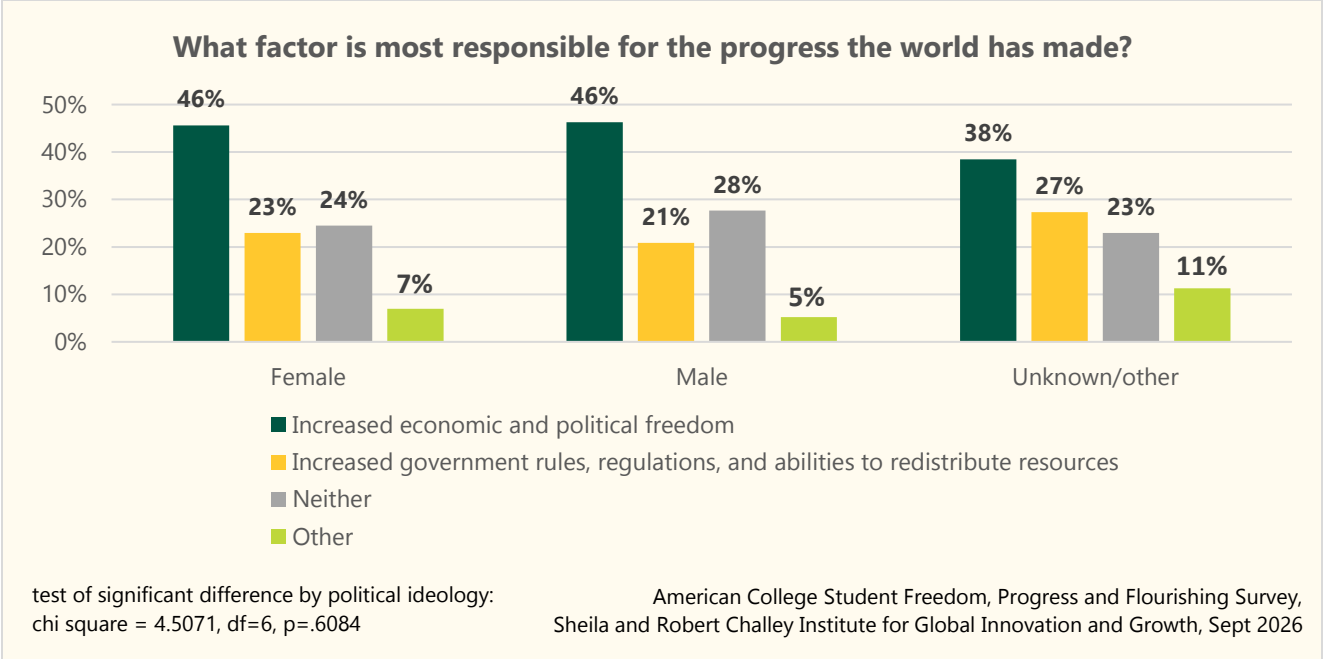


Figure 74: Among students who think the world has improved over the last 50 years, there are no significant differences in attribution for why by gender.

For Students Who Think the World Has Declined Over the Last 50 Years, 33 Percent Believe It Is Because There are Not Enough Government Rules, Regulations, and Redistribution.



Figure 75: 33 percent of students who believe the world has gotten worse attribute it to a lack of government rules and 28 percent attribute it to a lack of freedom.

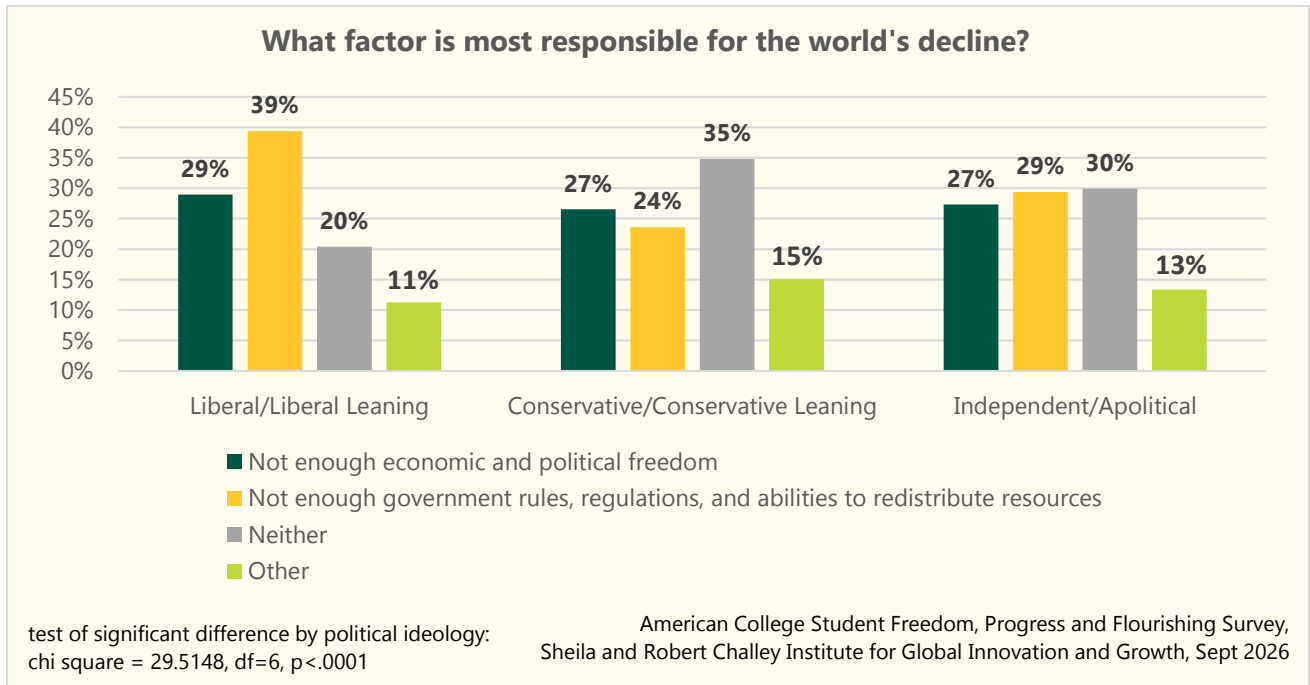


Figure 76: There are significant differences in attribution for the perceived decline among students with different political ideologies.

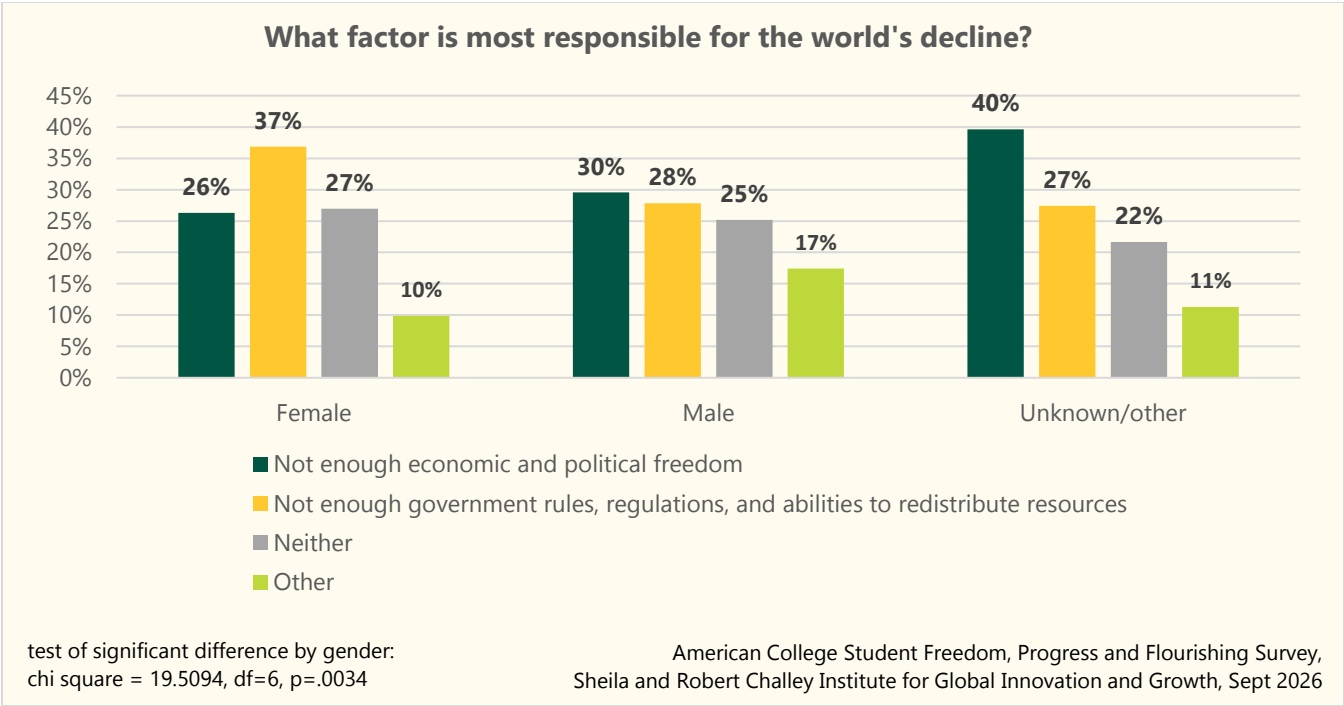


Figure 77: There are significant differences in attribution for the perceived decline in the world by gender

Only a Quarter of Students Are Optimistic About the Future of the World

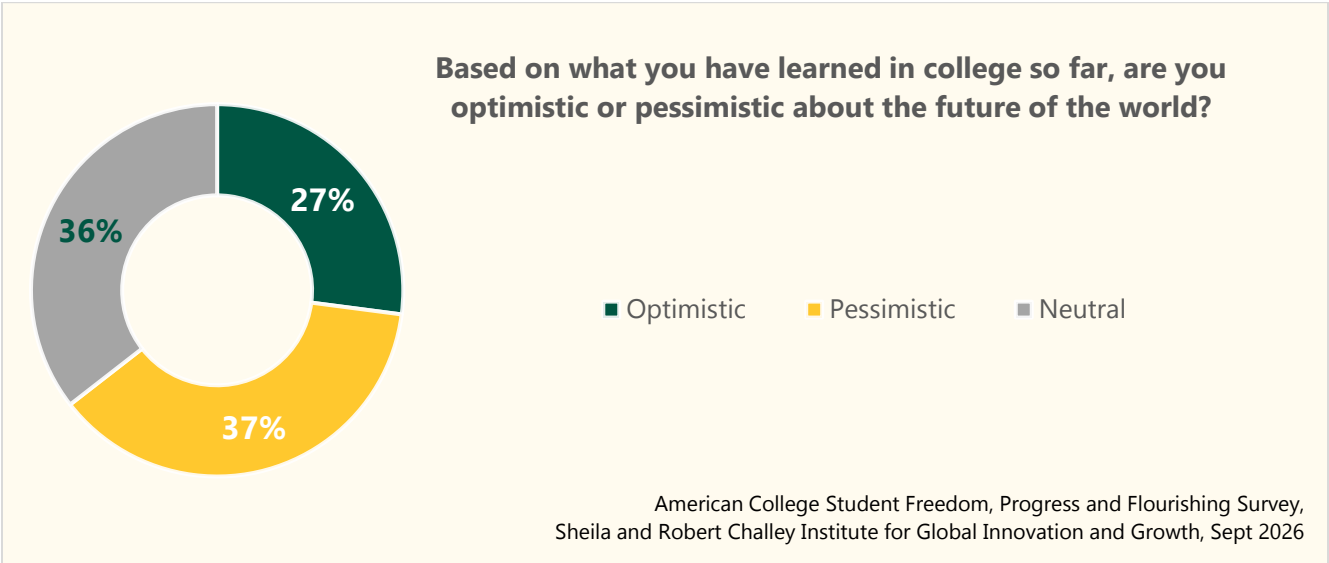


Figure 78: 27 percent of students are optimistic about the future of the world, while 37 percent are pessimistic

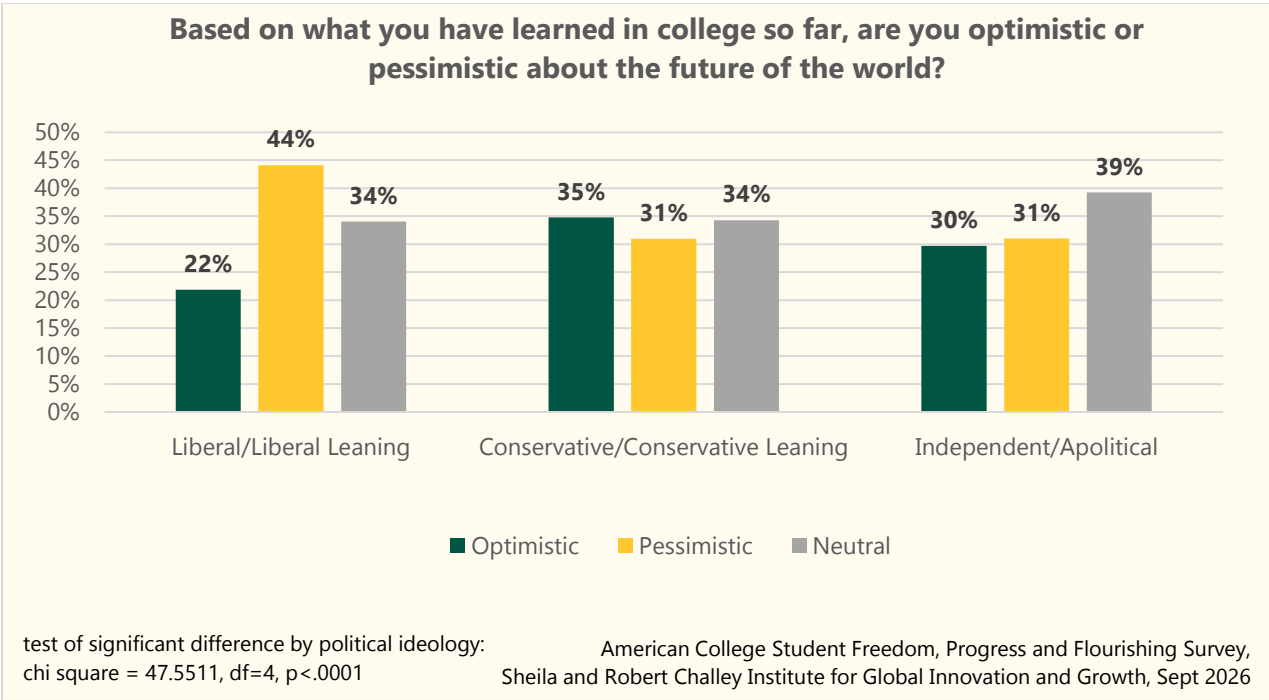


Figure 79: Liberal students are more pessimistic about the future of the world in comparison to independent and conservative students.

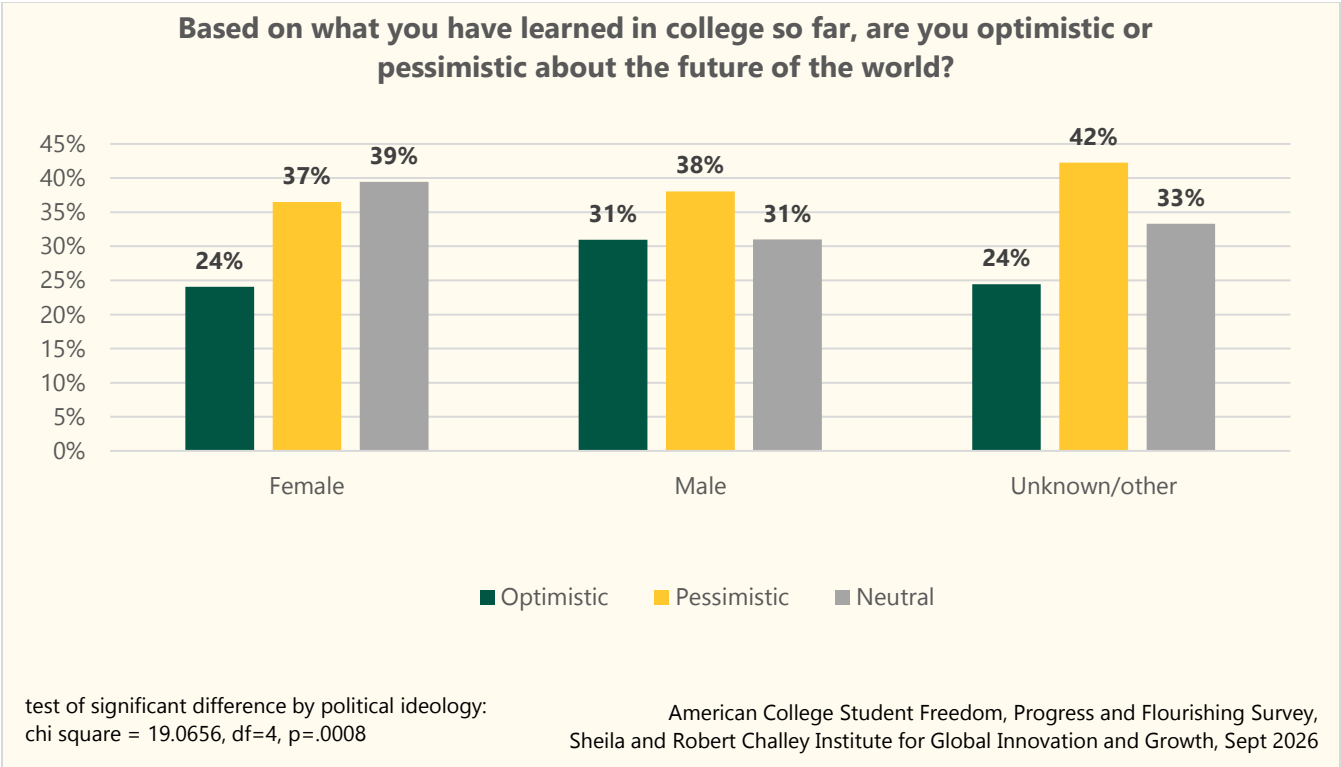


Figure 80: Male students are more optimistic about the future of the world than other students.

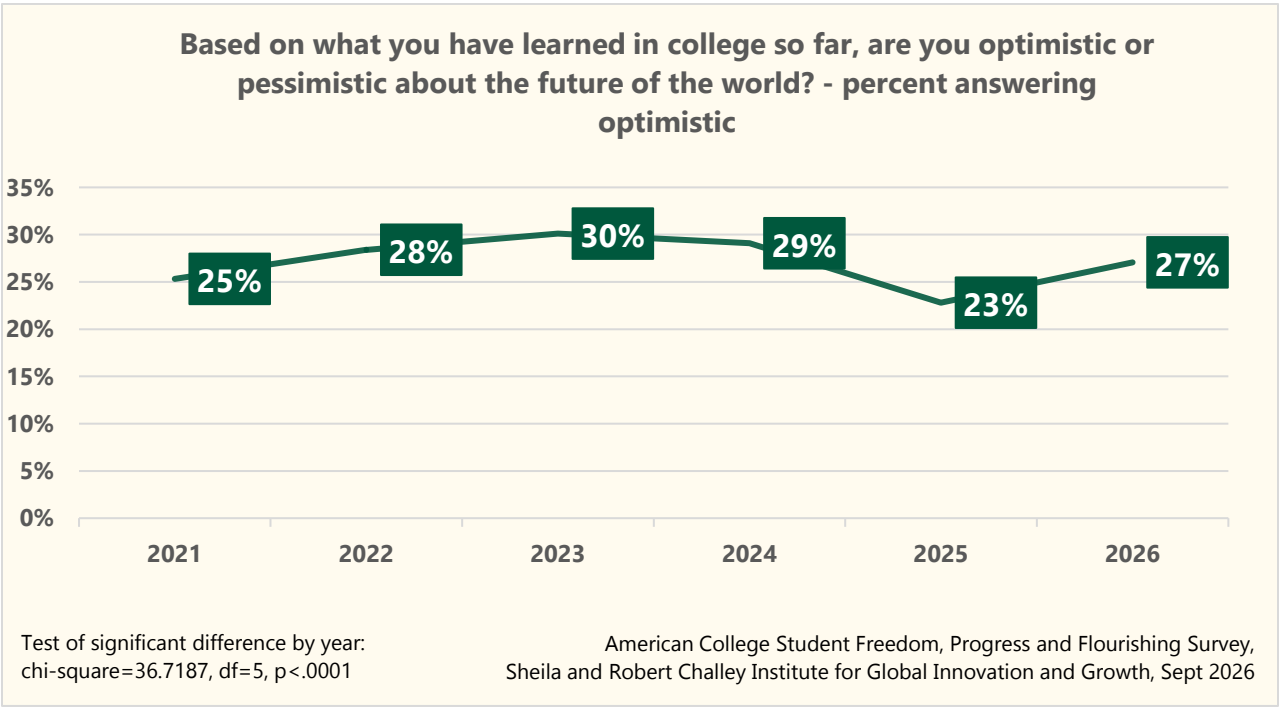


Figure 81: Few students have been optimistic about the future of the world since 2021.

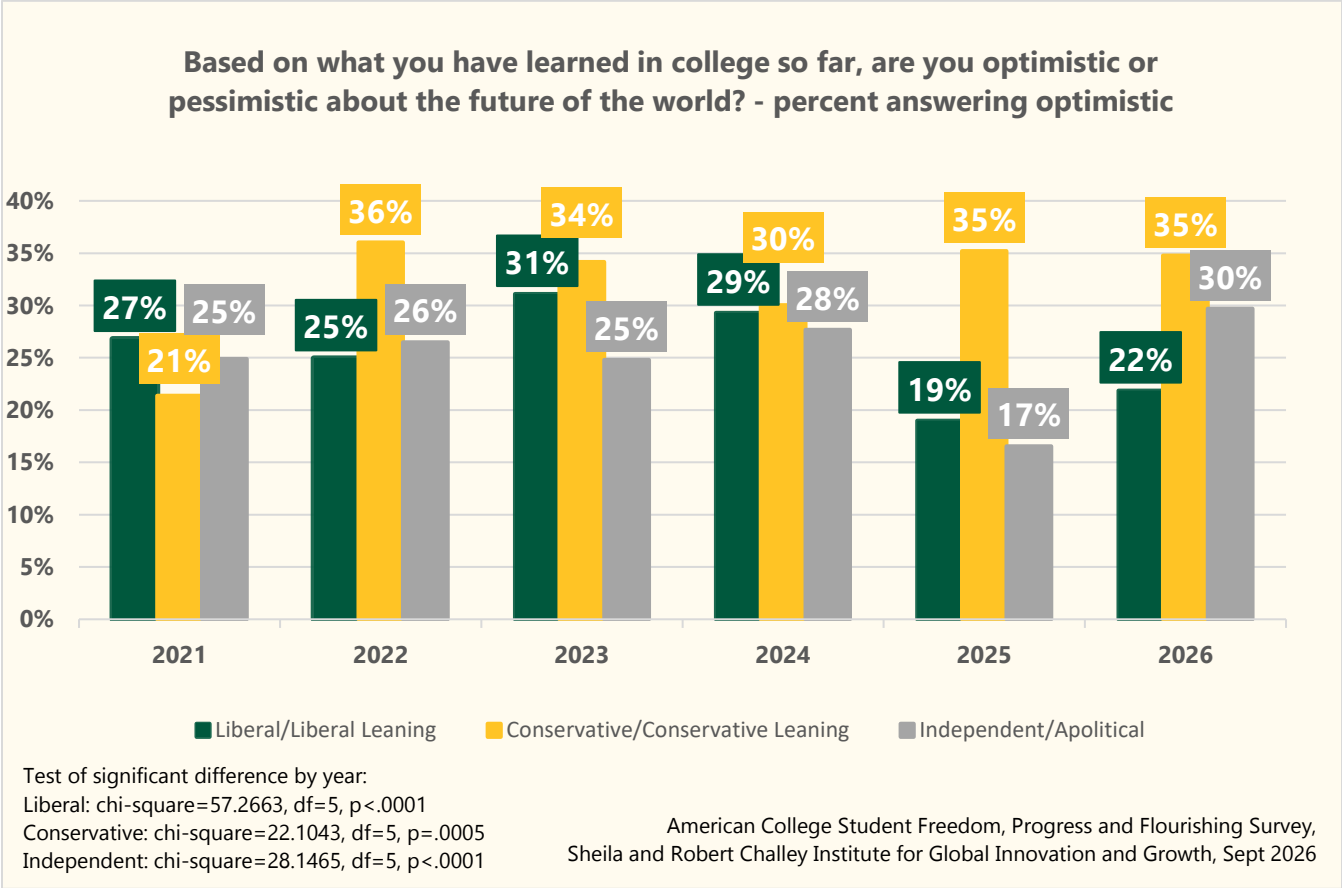


Figure 82: Student optimism about the future of the world for students with different ideologies varies significantly over time.

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

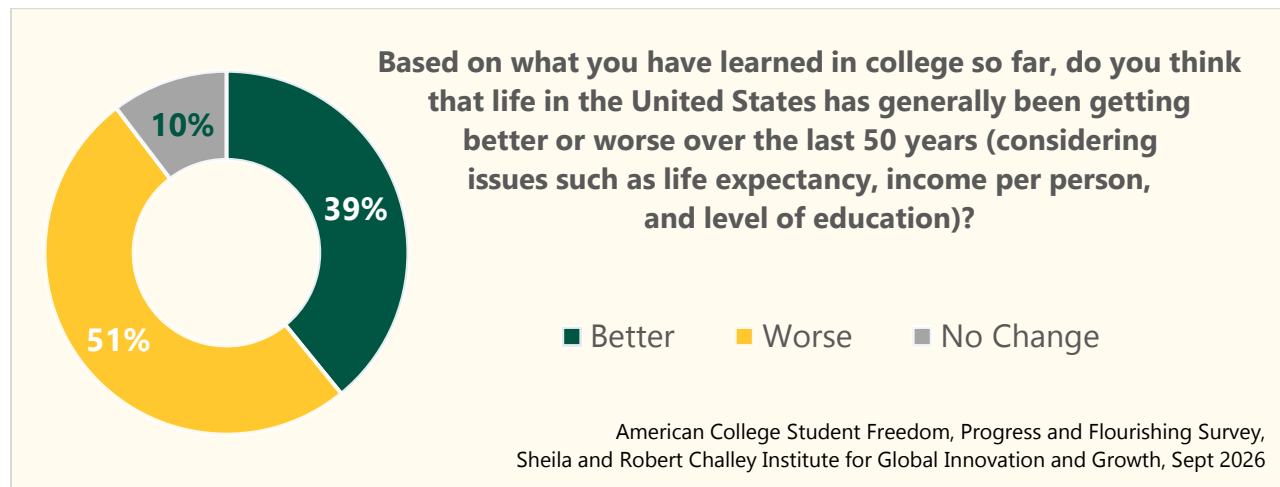


Figure 83: 39 percent of students think life has gotten better in the U.S. over the last 50 years, while 51 percent say it has gotten worse.

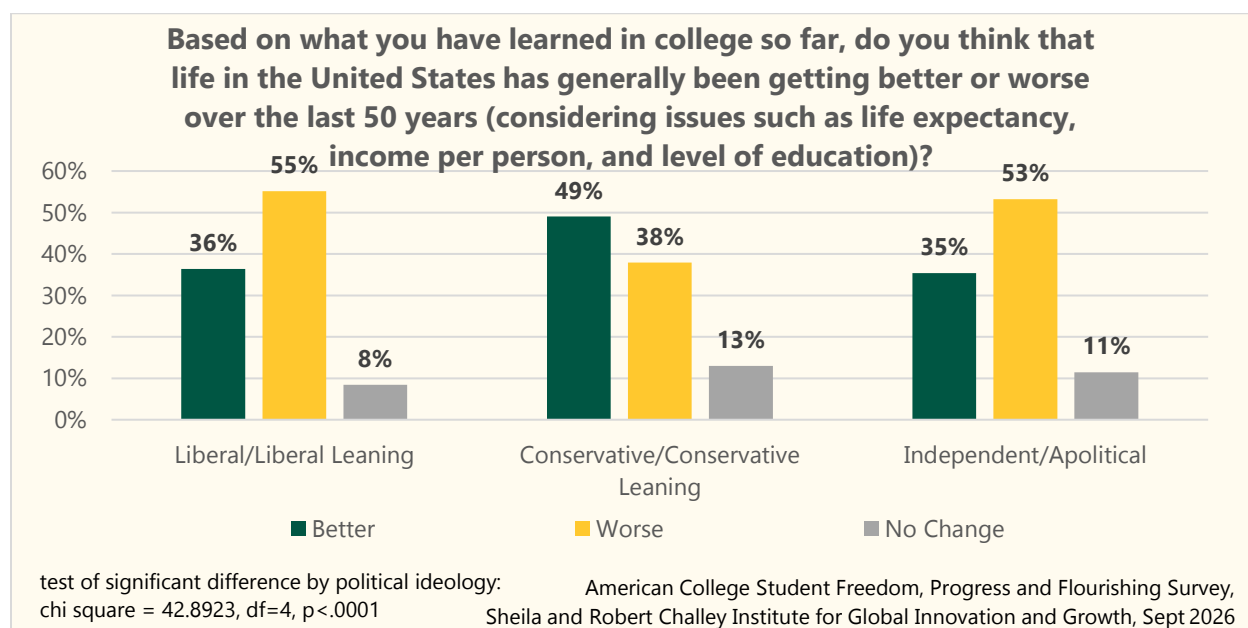


Figure 84: There are significant differences among students with different political ideologies on perceptions about whether the U.S. has improved over the last 50 years.

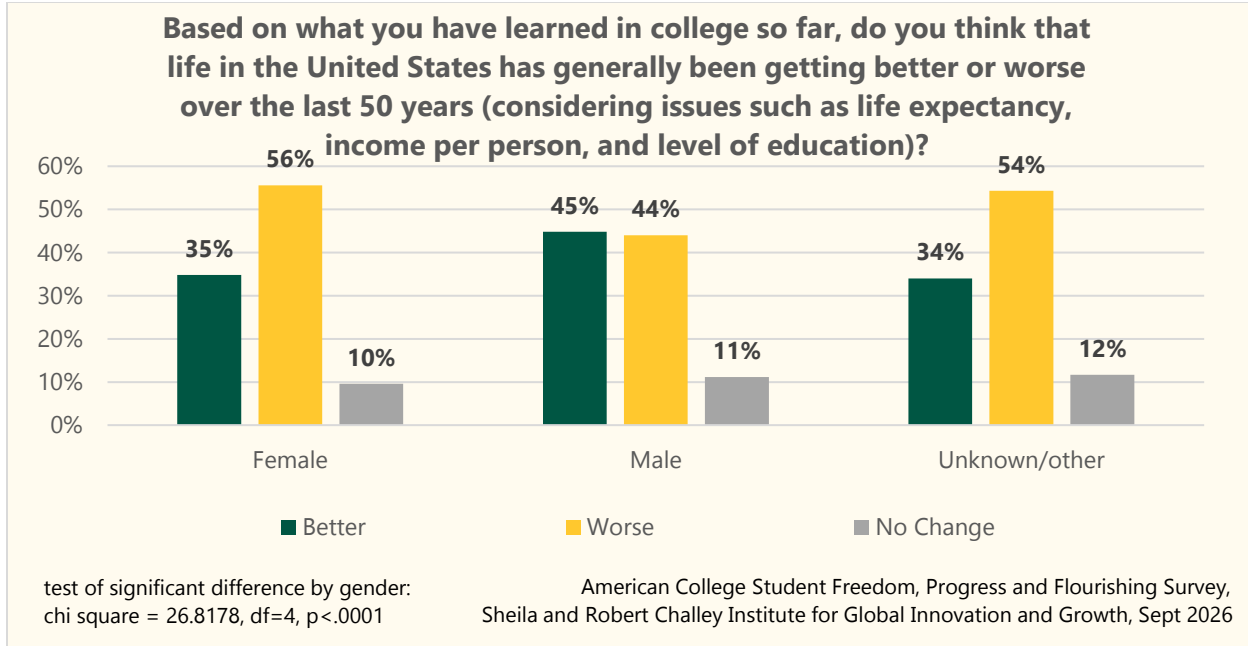


Figure 85: A larger percentage of male students think the world has improved over the last 50 years in comparison to unknown/other and female students.

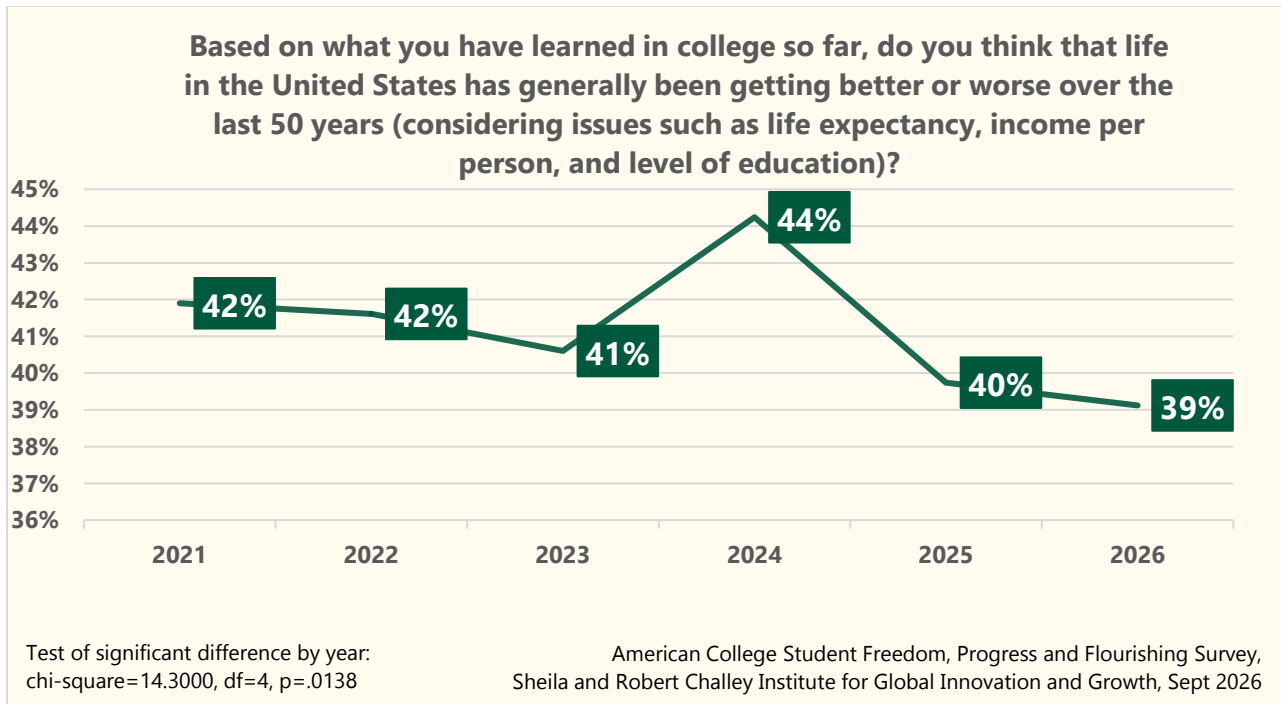


Figure 86: The percent of students who believe the U.S. has improved over the last 50 years from 2021 to 2026.

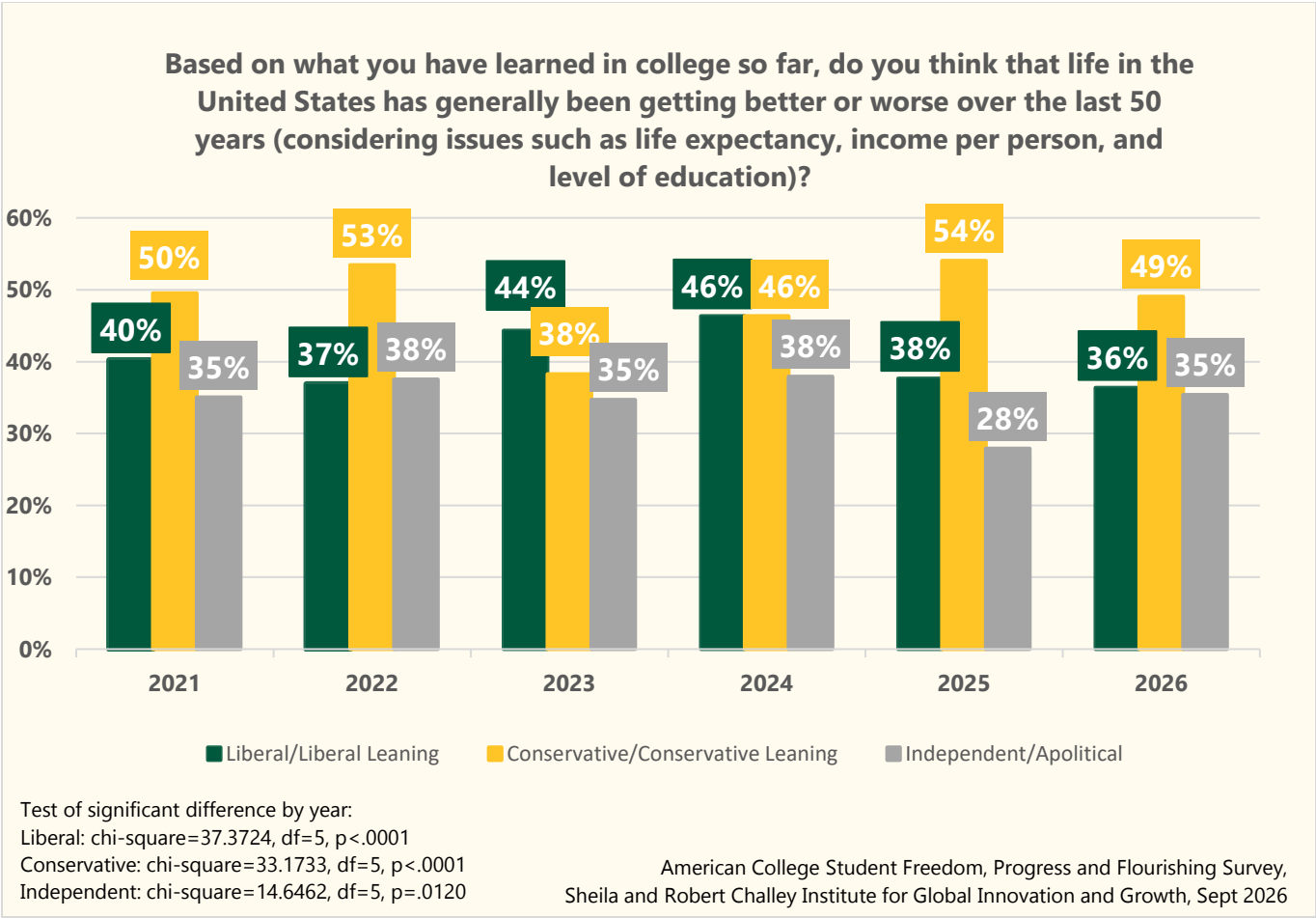


Figure 87: The percent of students believing the U.S. has improved over the last 50 years has significantly changed over time for all political ideologies.

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

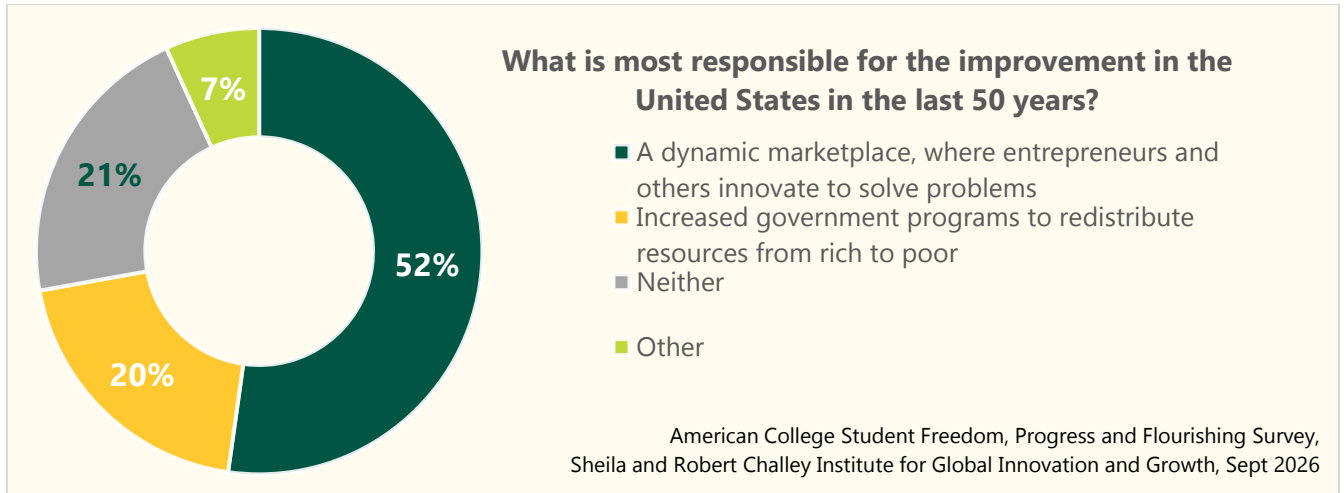


Figure 88: 52 percent of students who think the U.S. has improved attribute it to a dynamic marketplace.

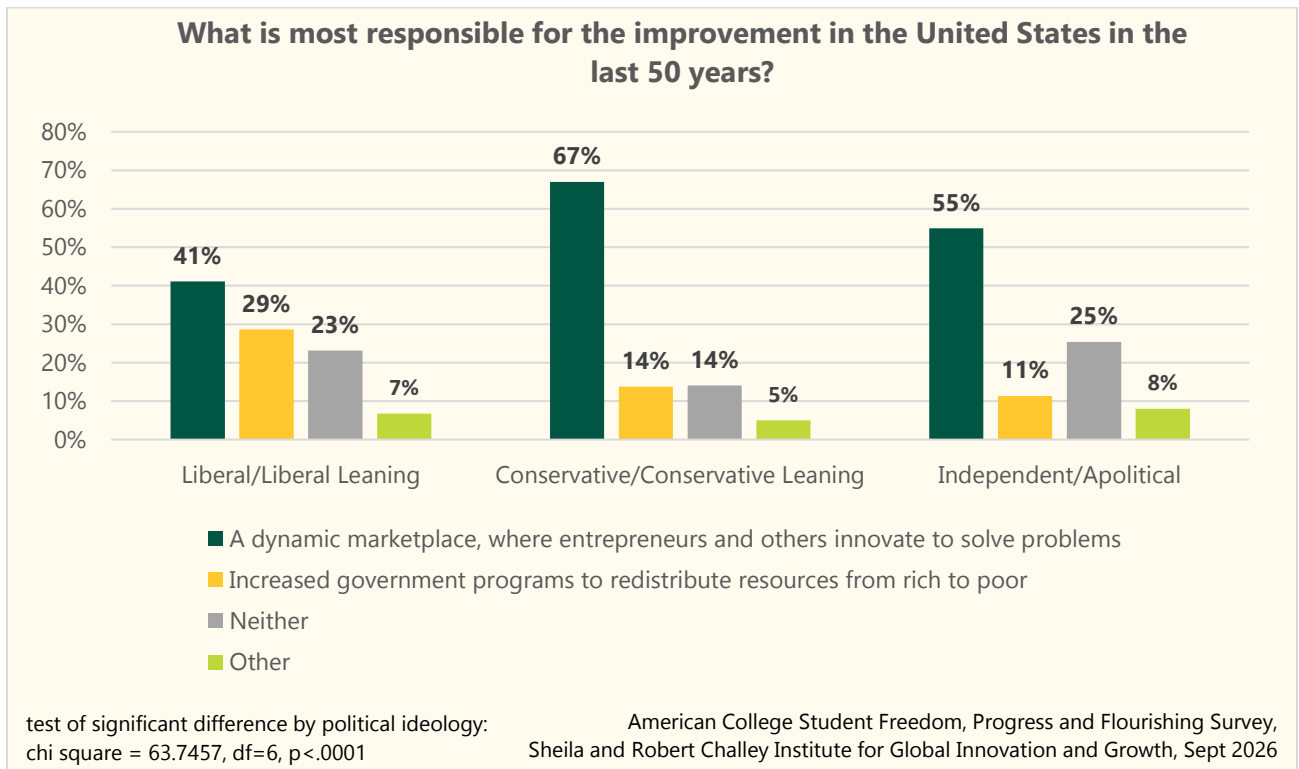


Figure 89: There are large differences among students with different political ideologies in attributing U.S. improvement.

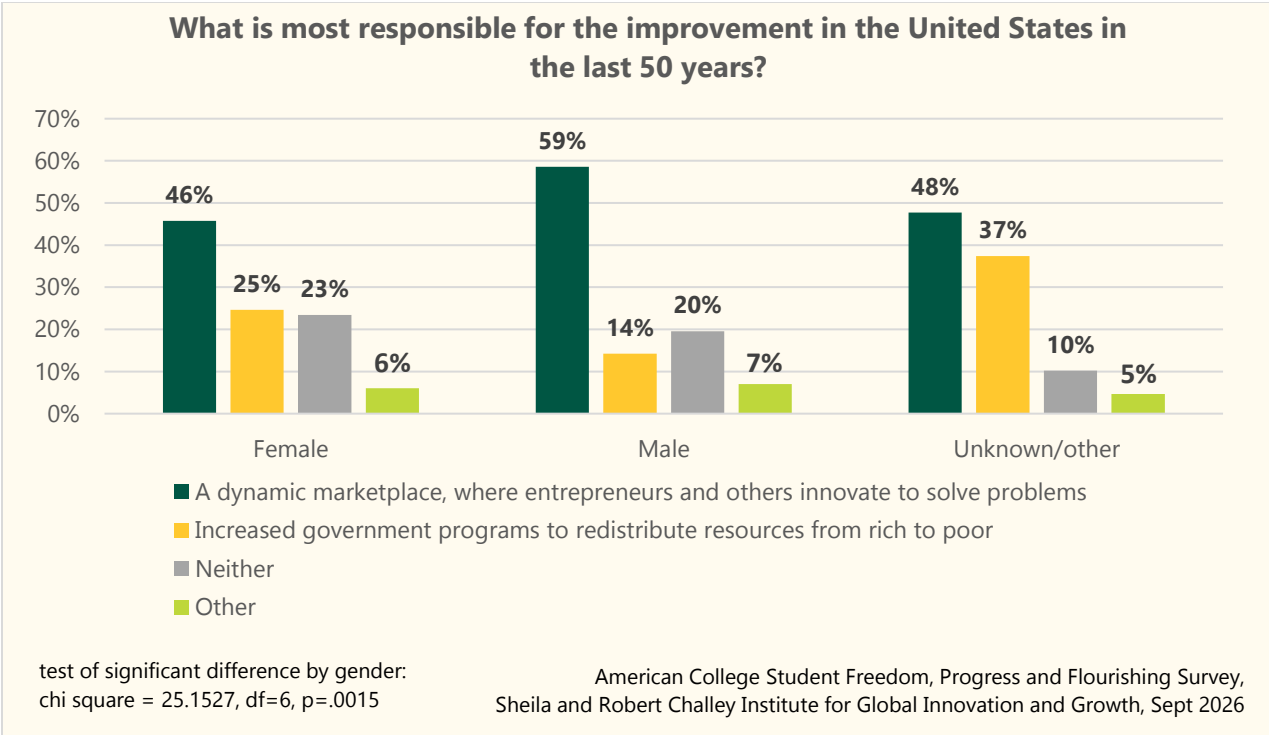


Figure 90: Male students are more likely to attribute improvement in the U.S. to a dynamic marketplace in comparison to female and unknown/other students.

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

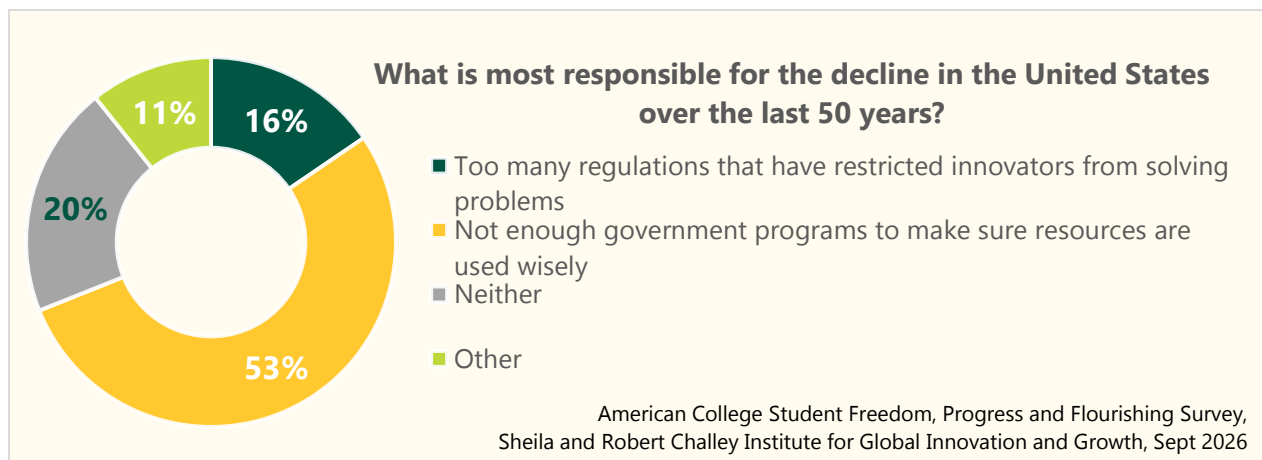


Figure 91: 53 percent of students attribute a perceived decline in the U.S. to not enough government programs

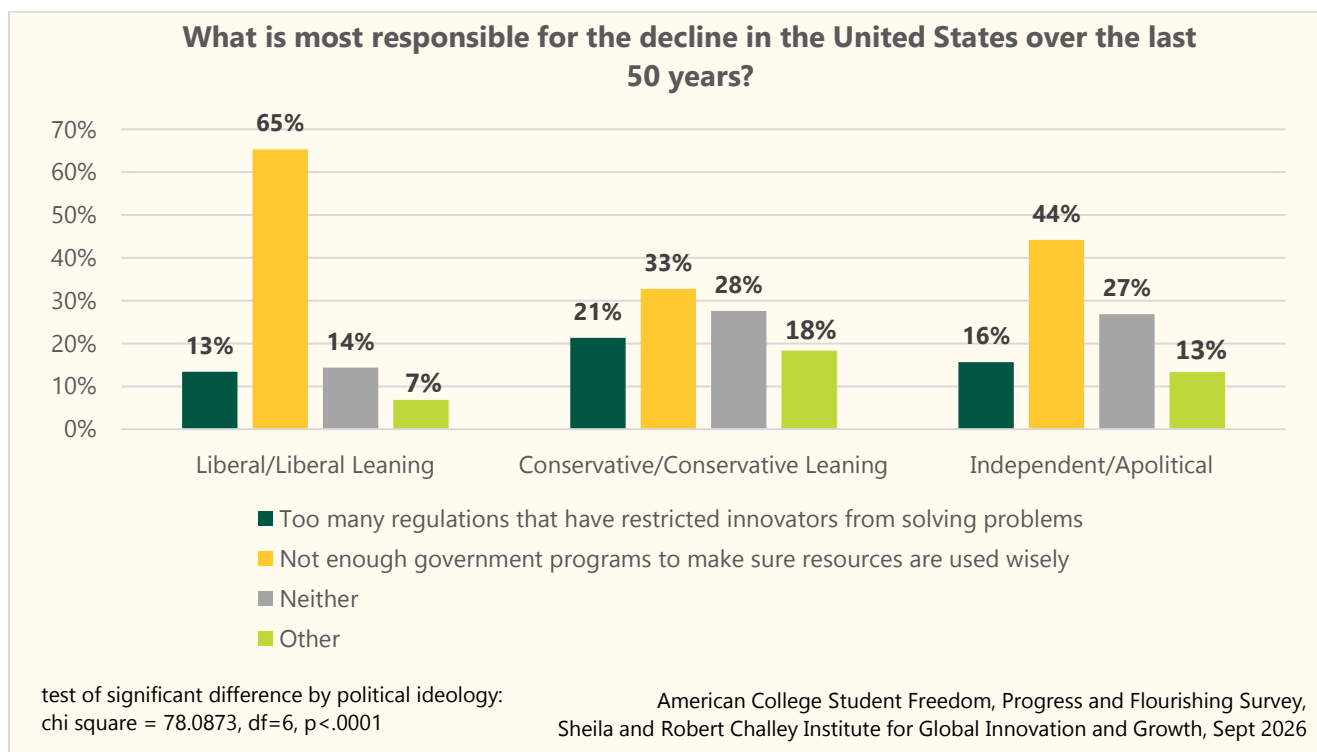


Figure 92: Large differences among students with different political views exist in attributing a perceived decline in the U.S.

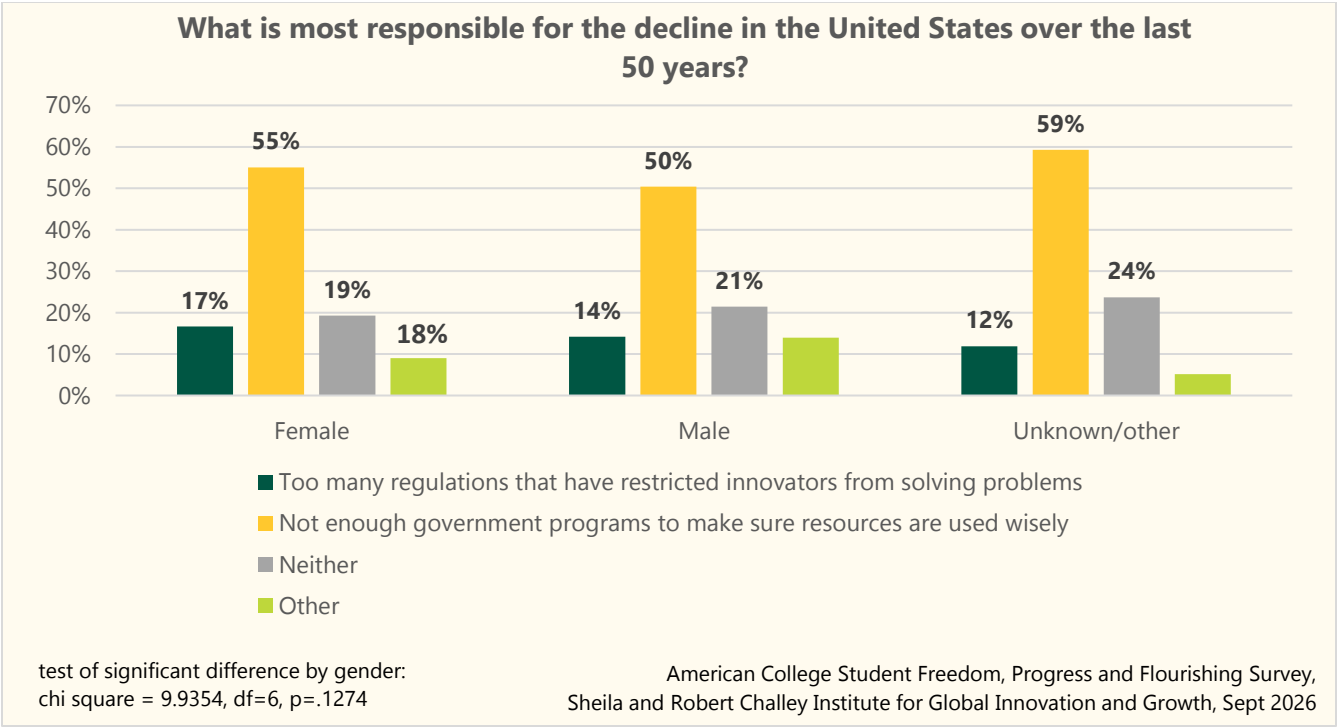


Figure 93: There are not significant differences in attribution of the perceived U.S. decline by gender.

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

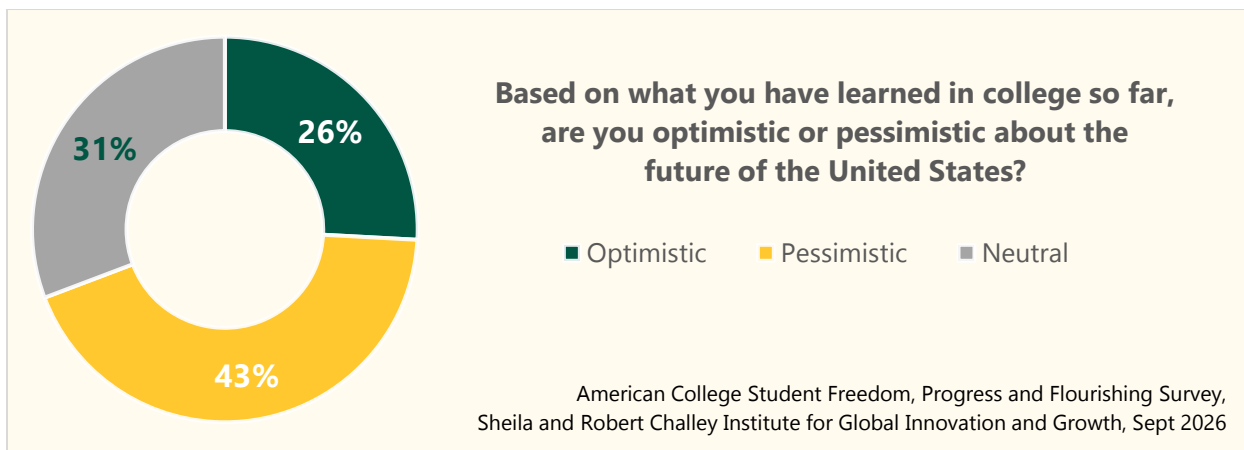


Figure 94: 26 percent of students are optimistic about the future of the U.S., while 43 percent are pessimistic.

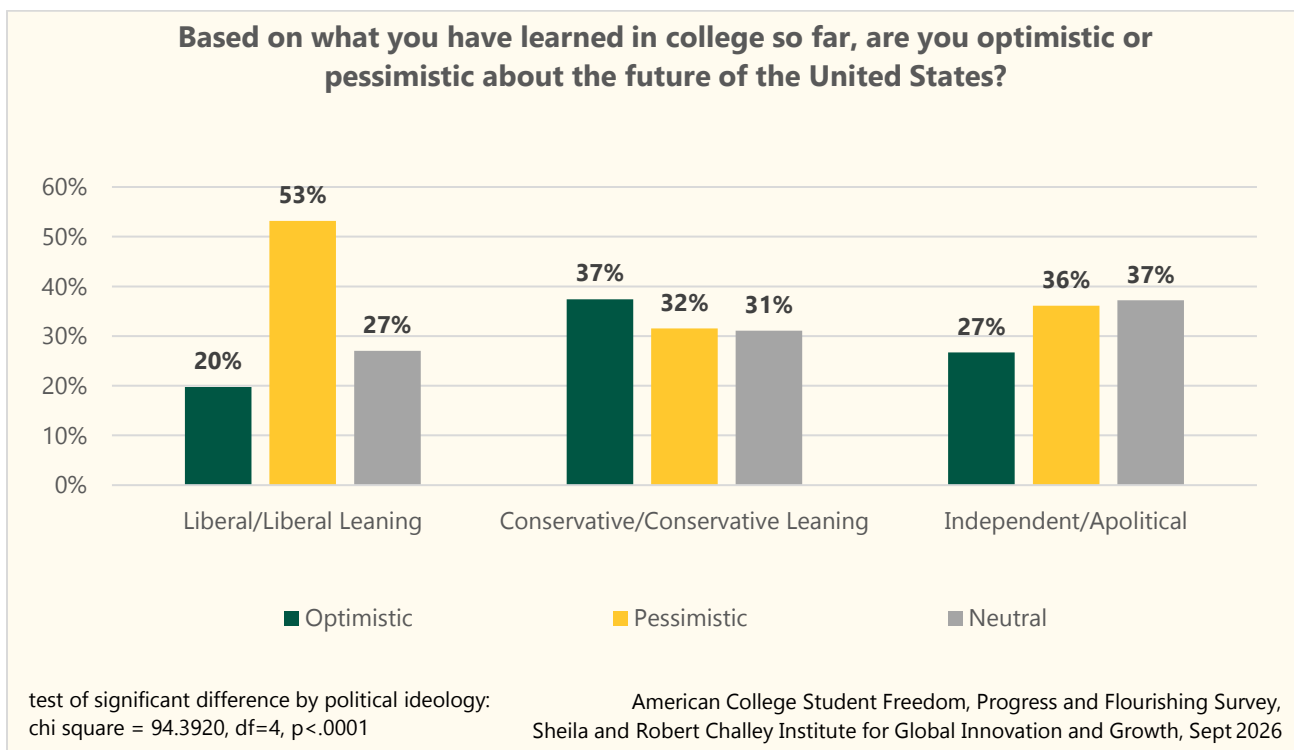


Figure 95: There are significant differences by political ideology in optimism about the future of the U.S.

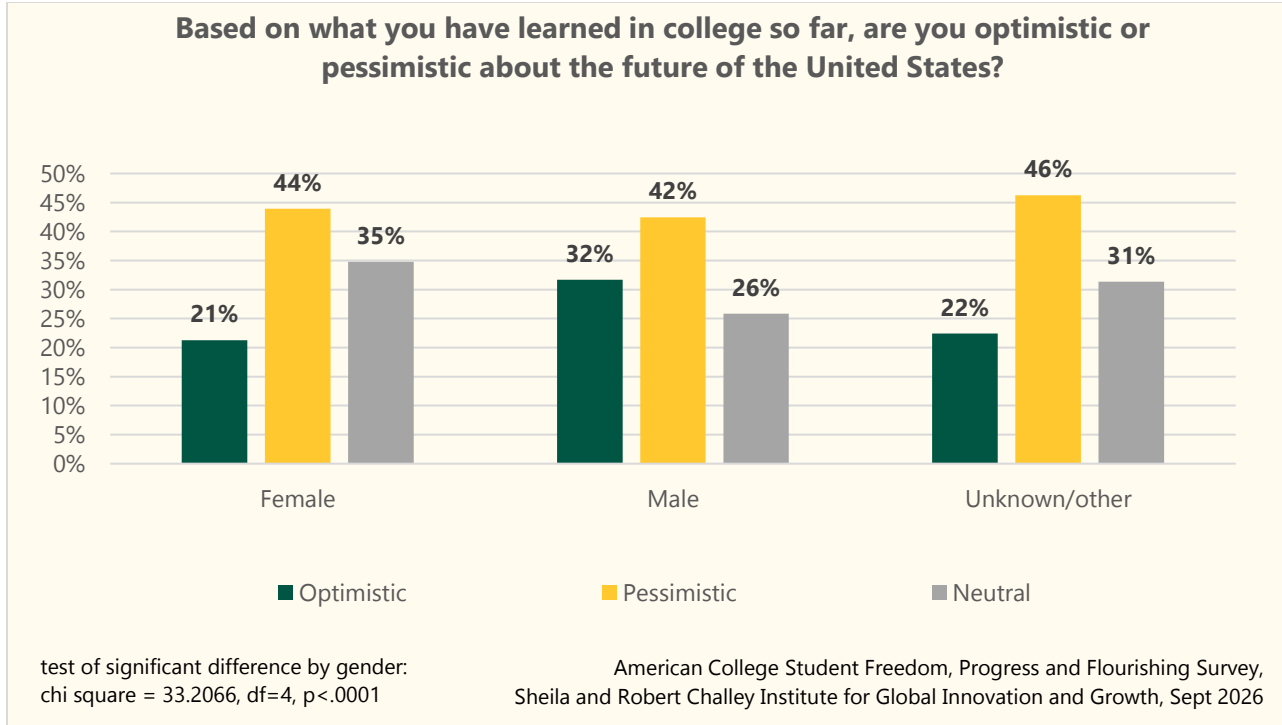


Figure 96: Differences in optimism about the future of the U.S. by gender are significant.

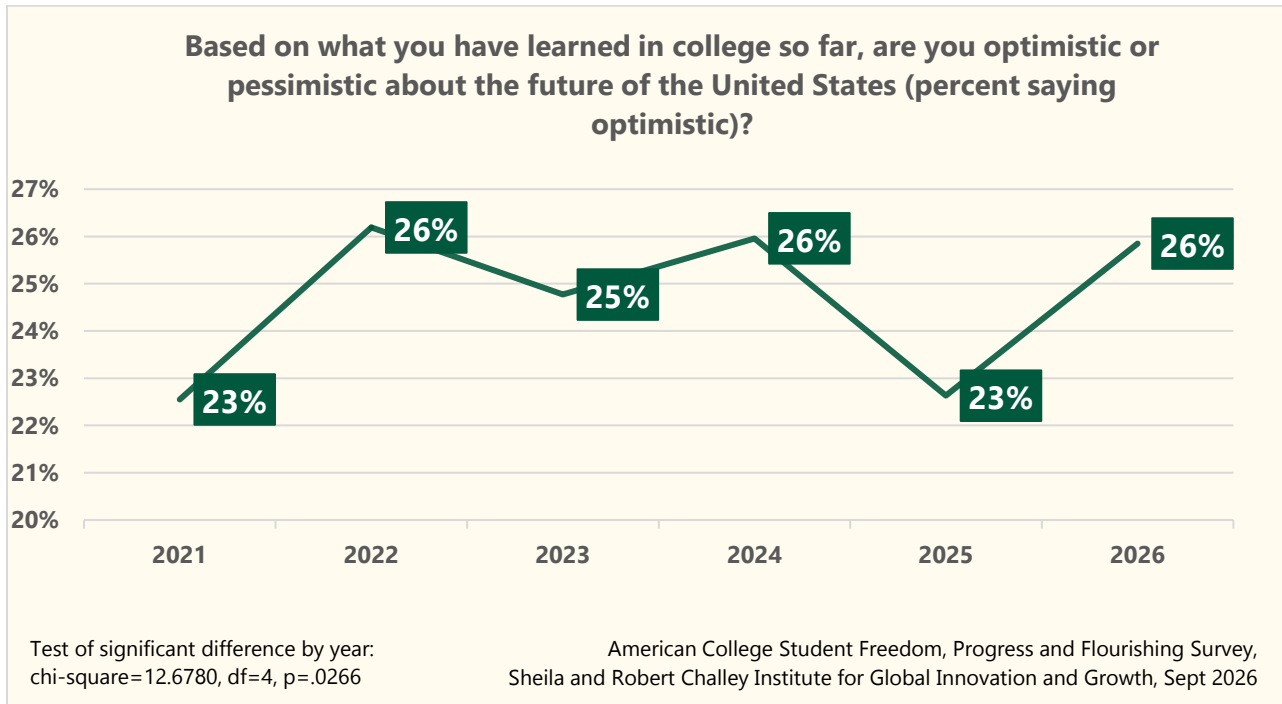


Figure 97: Optimism about the future of the U.S. has hovered around 25 percent for the last six years.

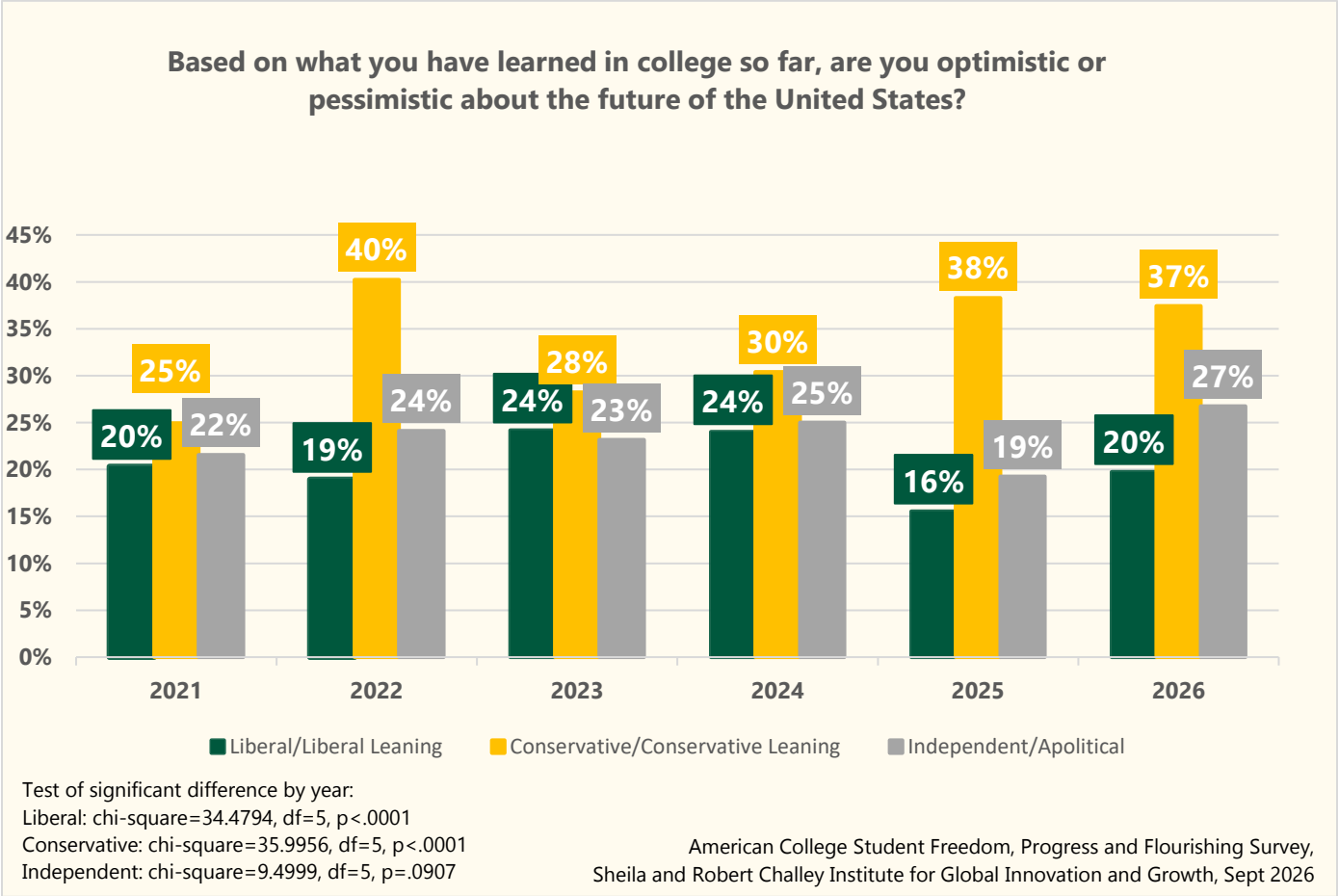


Figure 98: Optimism about the future of the U.S. has varied significantly among liberal and conservative students over time.

Over Half of Students Are Optimistic About Their Own Future

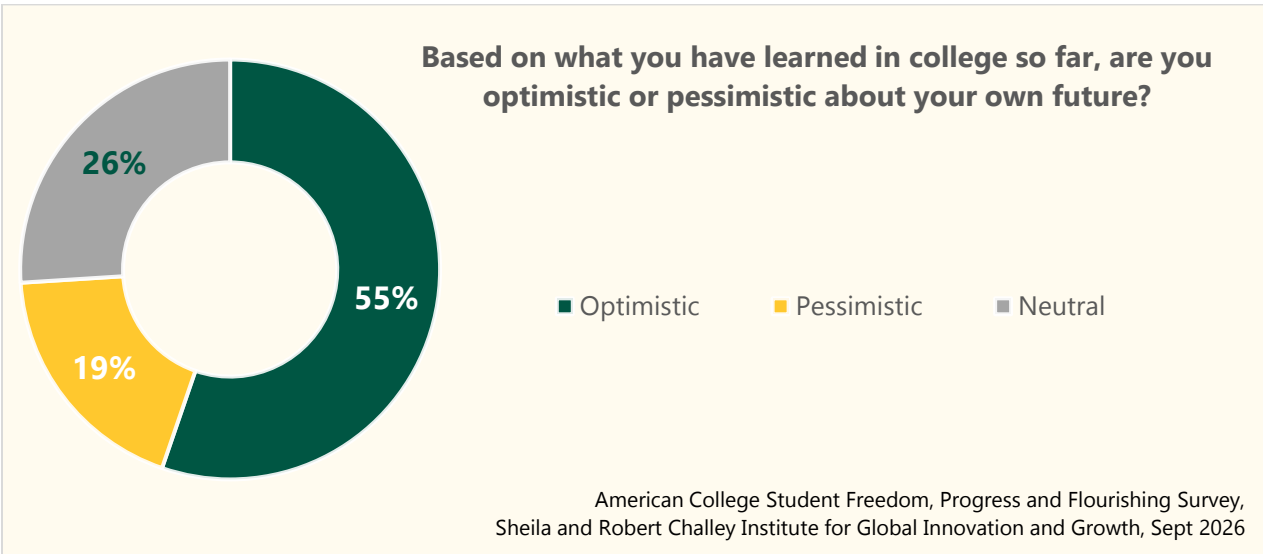


Figure 99: 55 percent of students are optimistic about their own future.

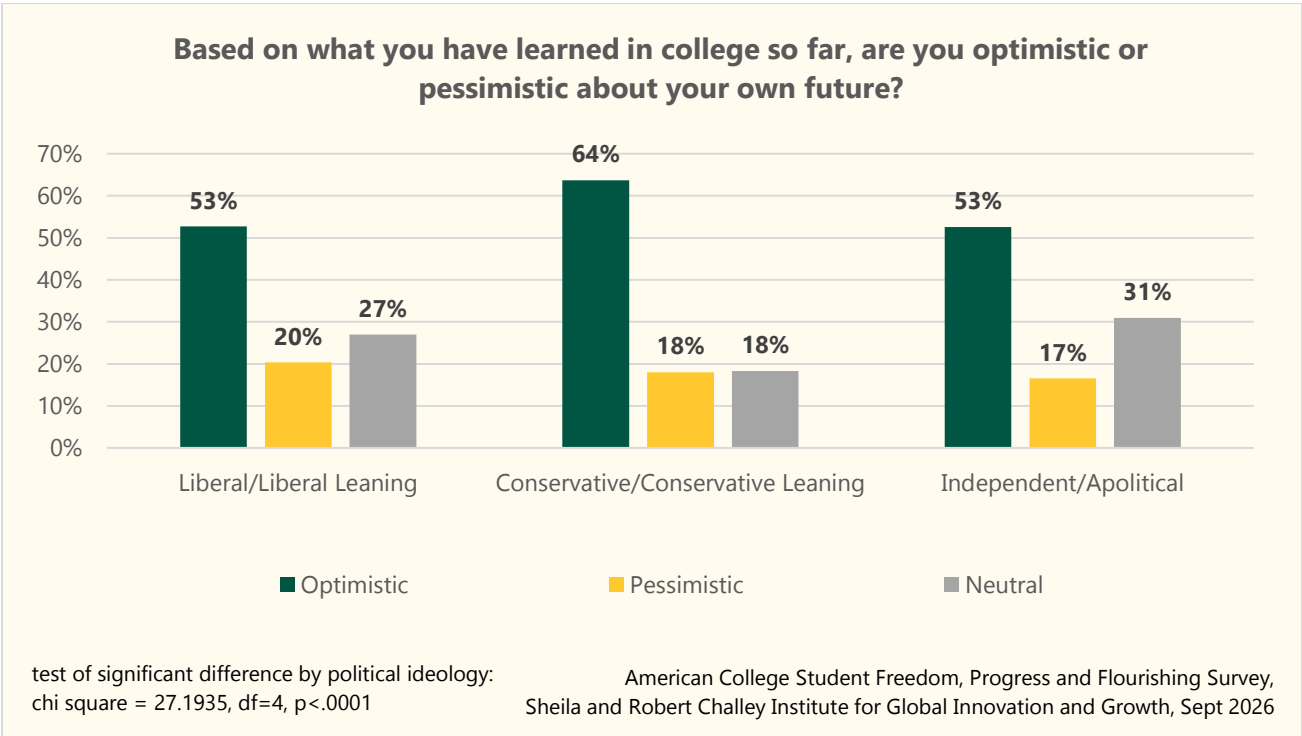


Figure 100: There are significant differences in optimism about their own futures for students with different political ideologies.

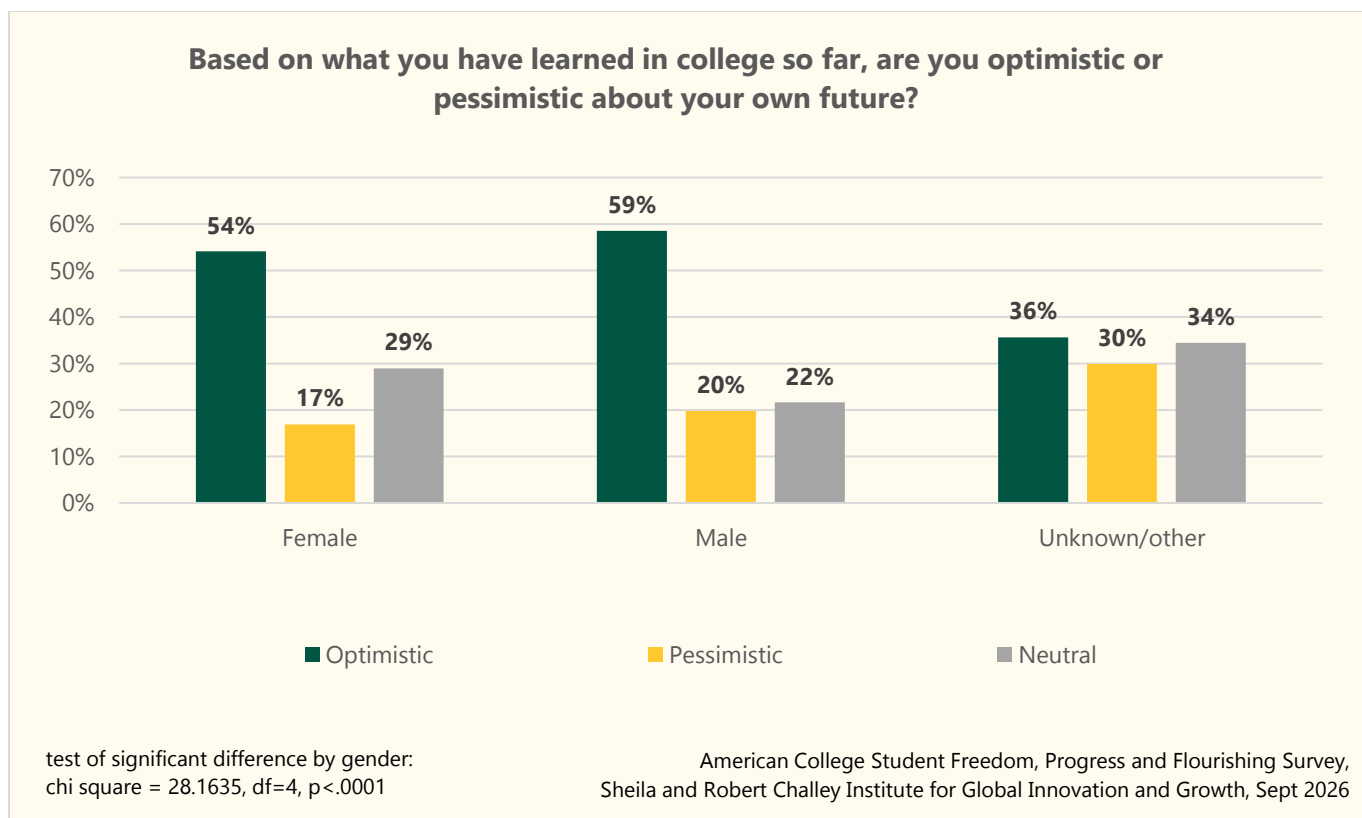


Figure 101: There are significant differences in student optimism about their own future by gender.

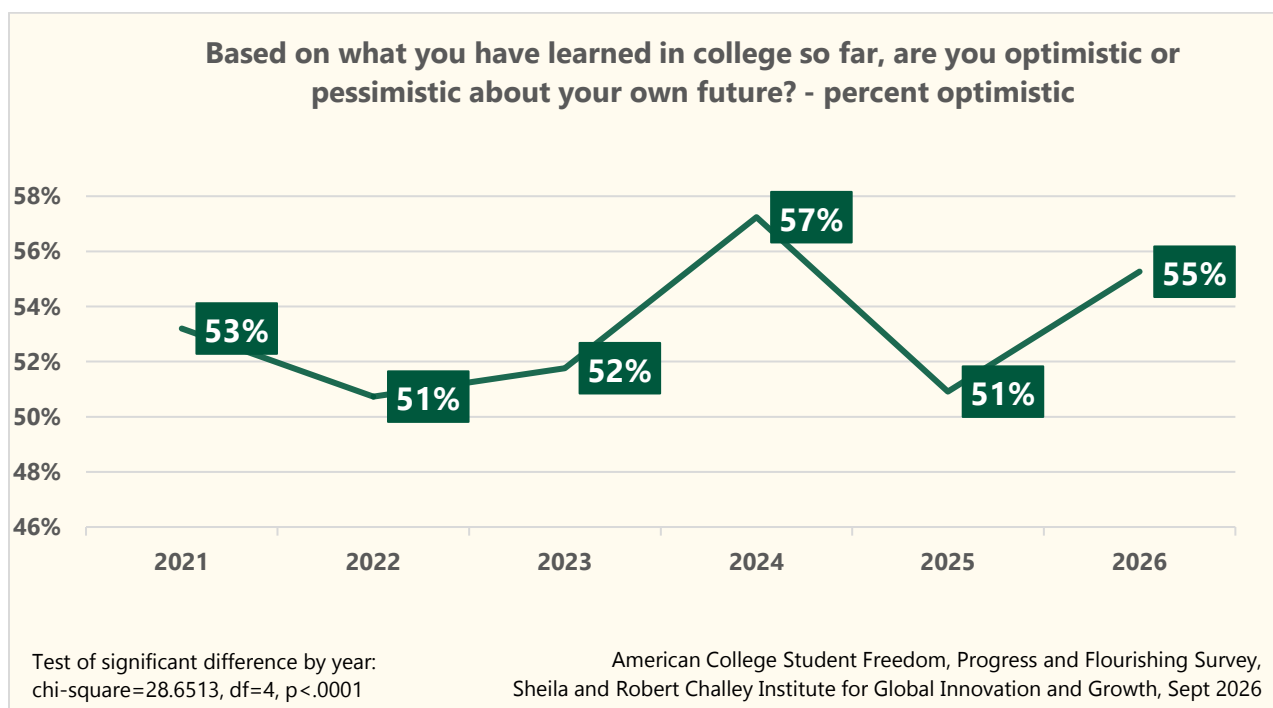


Figure 102: Student optimism about their own futures over time.

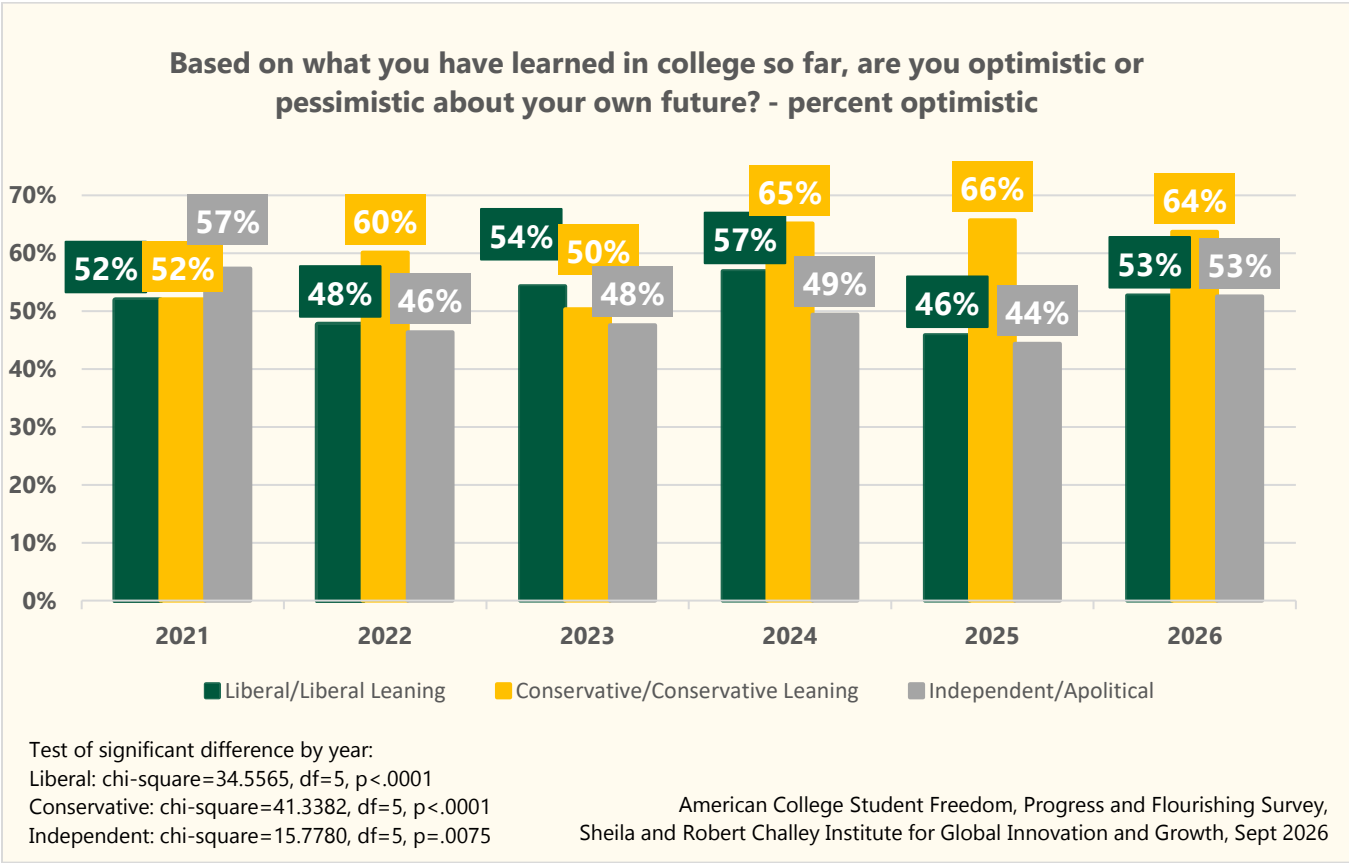


Figure 103: Optimism about own future by political ideology over time.

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

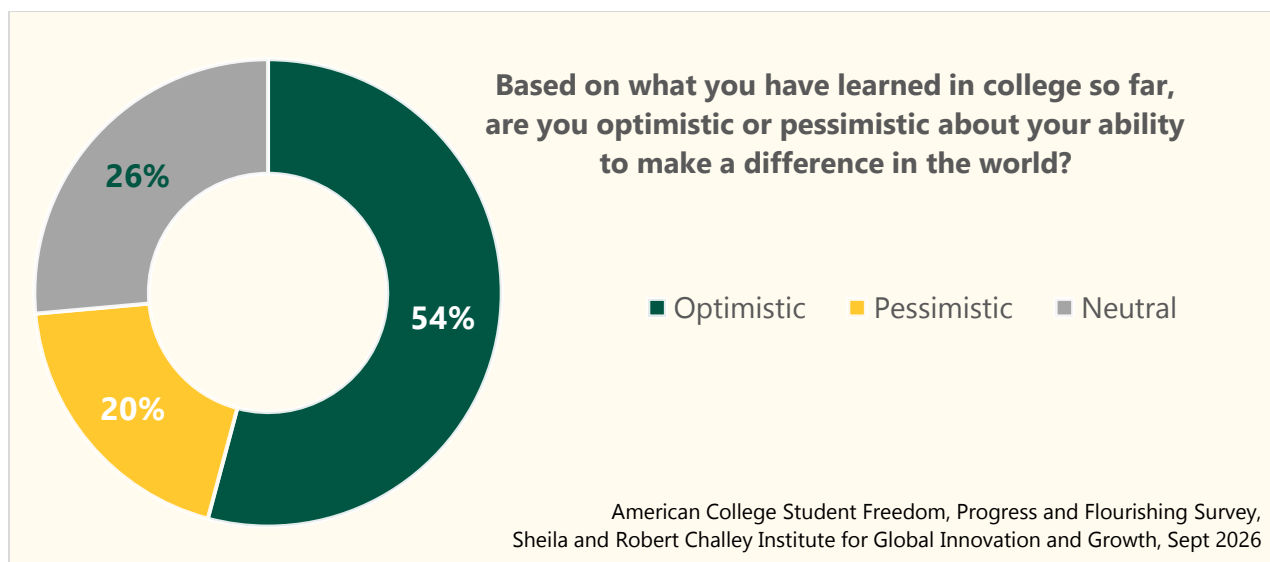


Figure 104: 54 percent of students are optimistic about their ability to make a difference in the world.

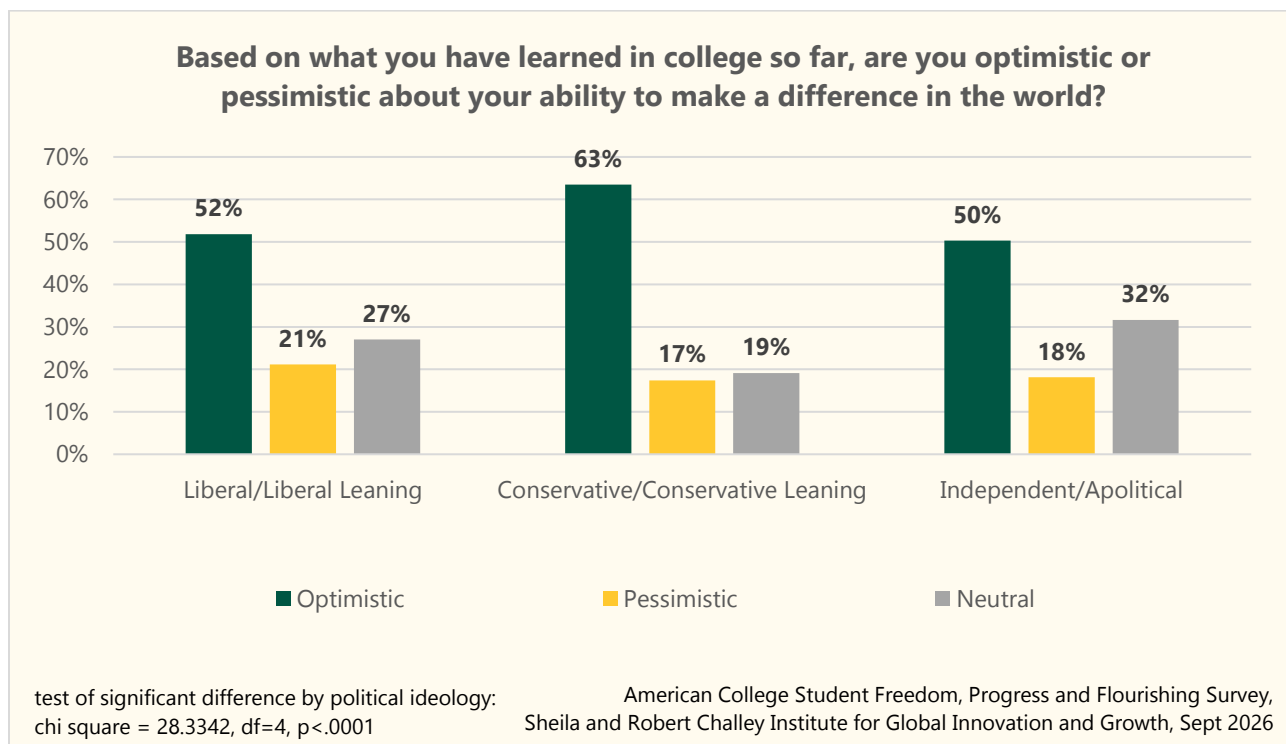


Figure 105: Conservative students are more optimistic about their ability to make a difference in the world in comparison to liberal and independent students.

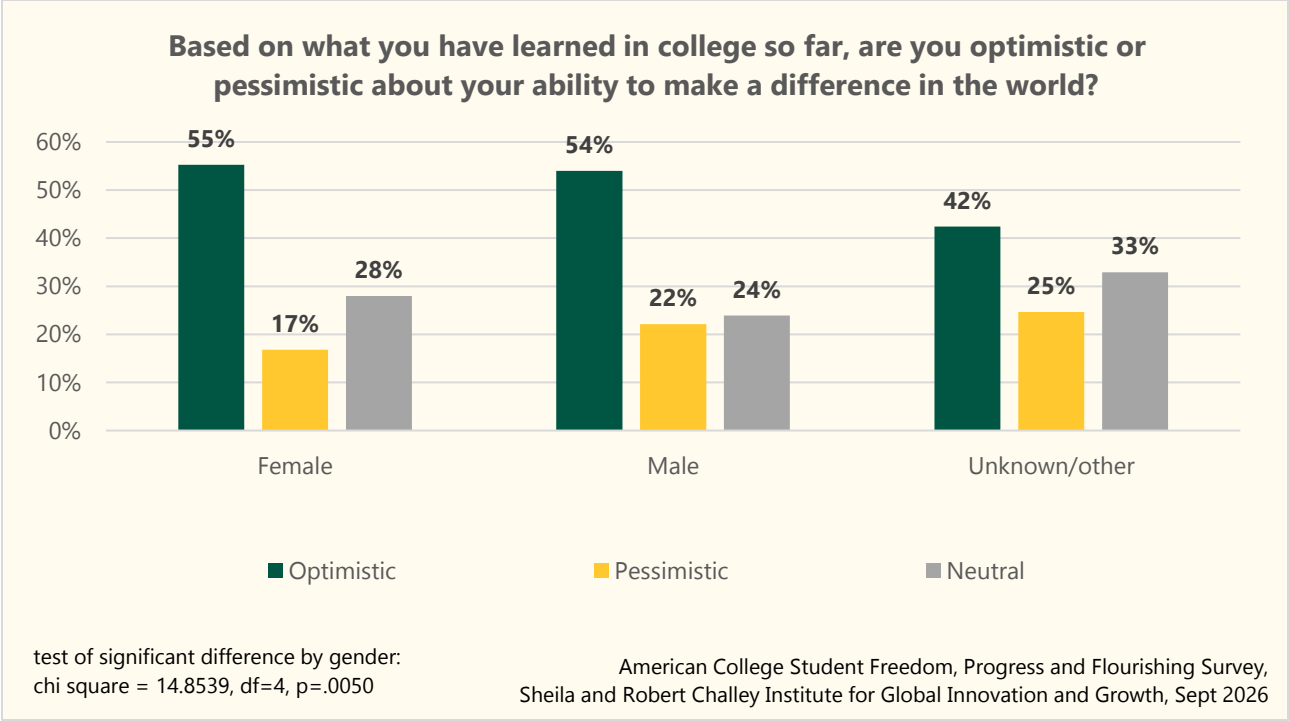


Figure 106: Male and female students are more optimistic about their ability to make a difference in the world than unknown/other students.

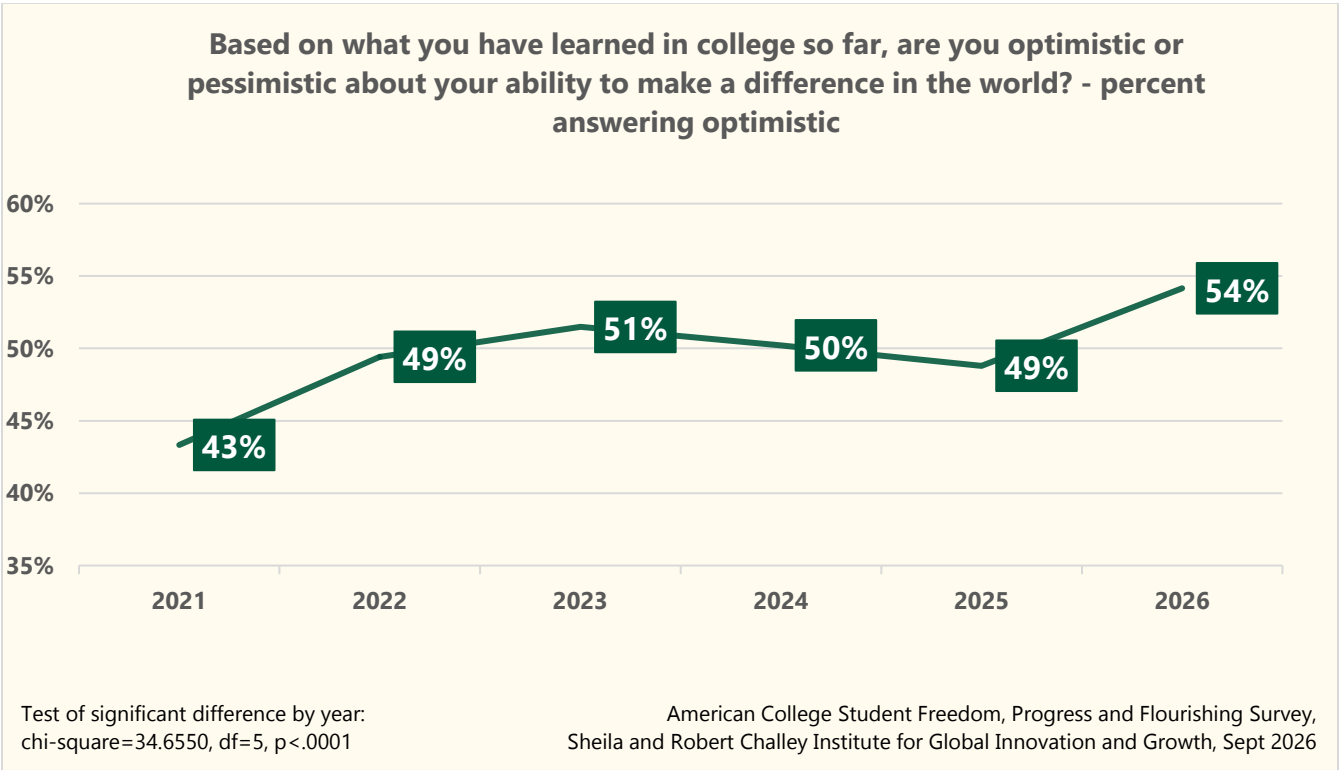


Figure 107: Students are more optimistic about their ability to make a difference in the world in comparison to 2021

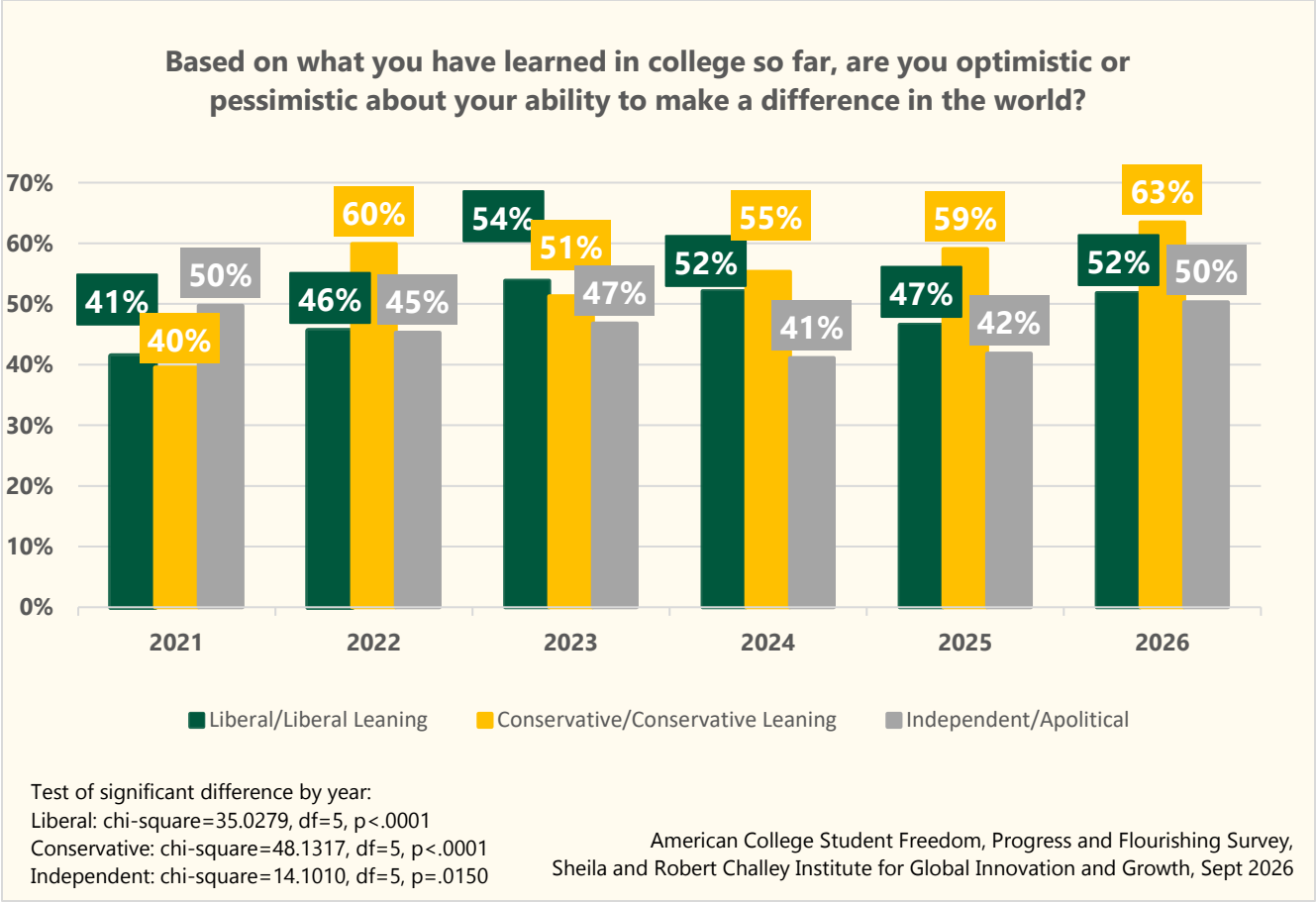


Figure 108: Change in optimism about an ability to make a difference by political ideology over time.

61 Percent of American Students Are Proud to Be American

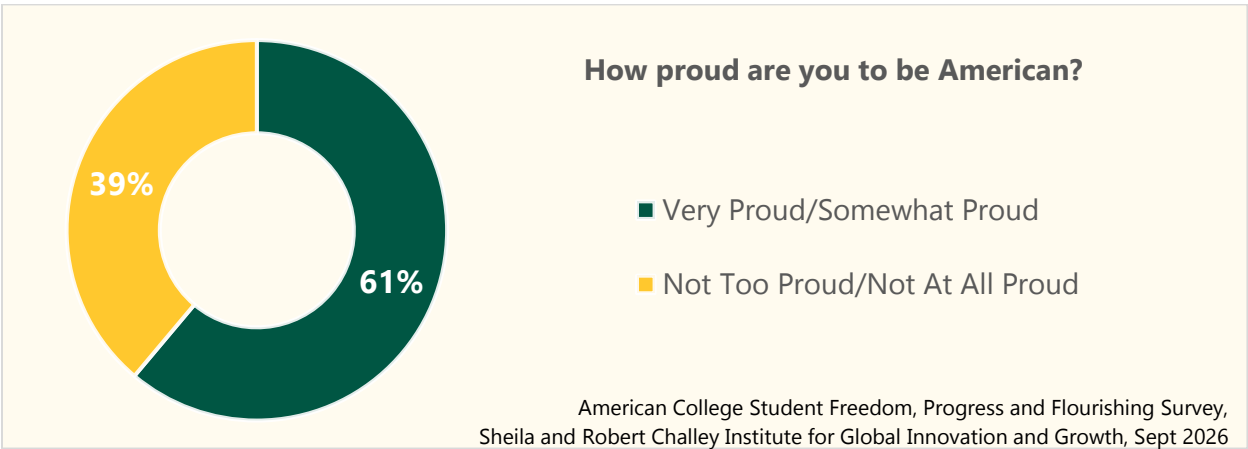


Figure 109: 61 percent of students who are citizens say they are proud to be American.

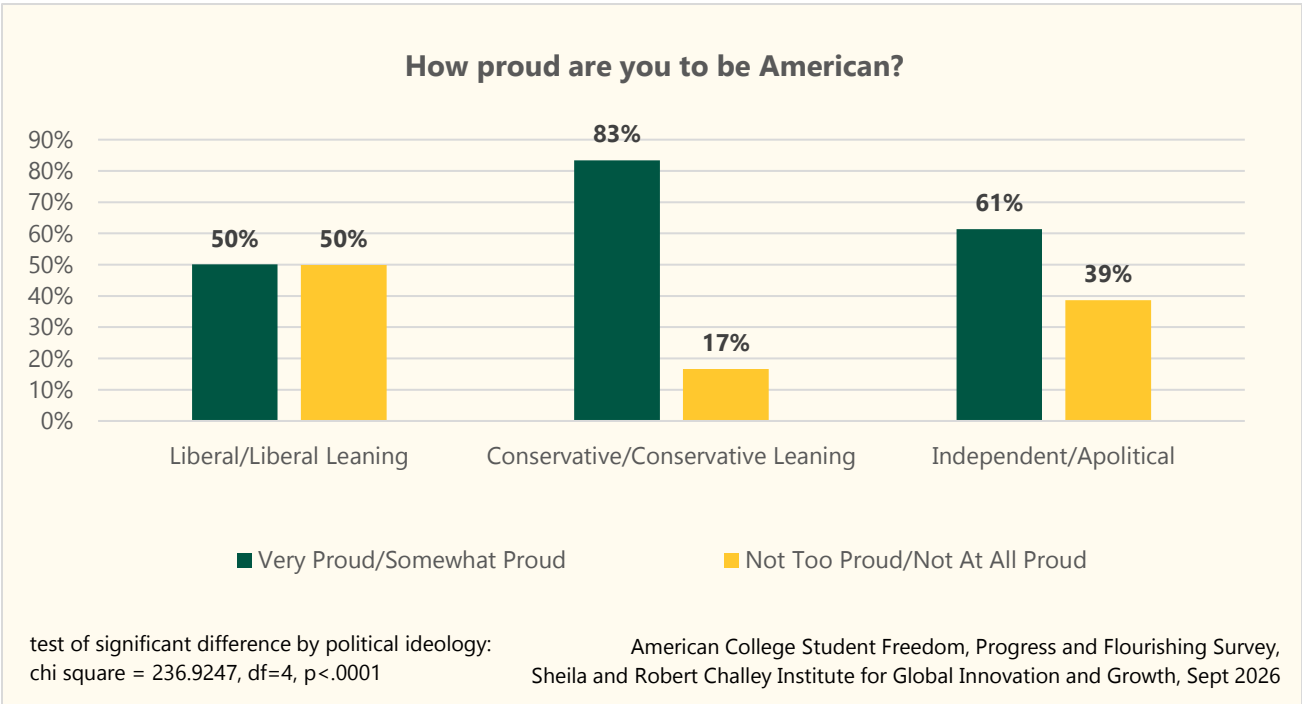


Figure 110: Students with different political views vary widely on their pride in being American, with conservative students being significantly more likely to be proud.

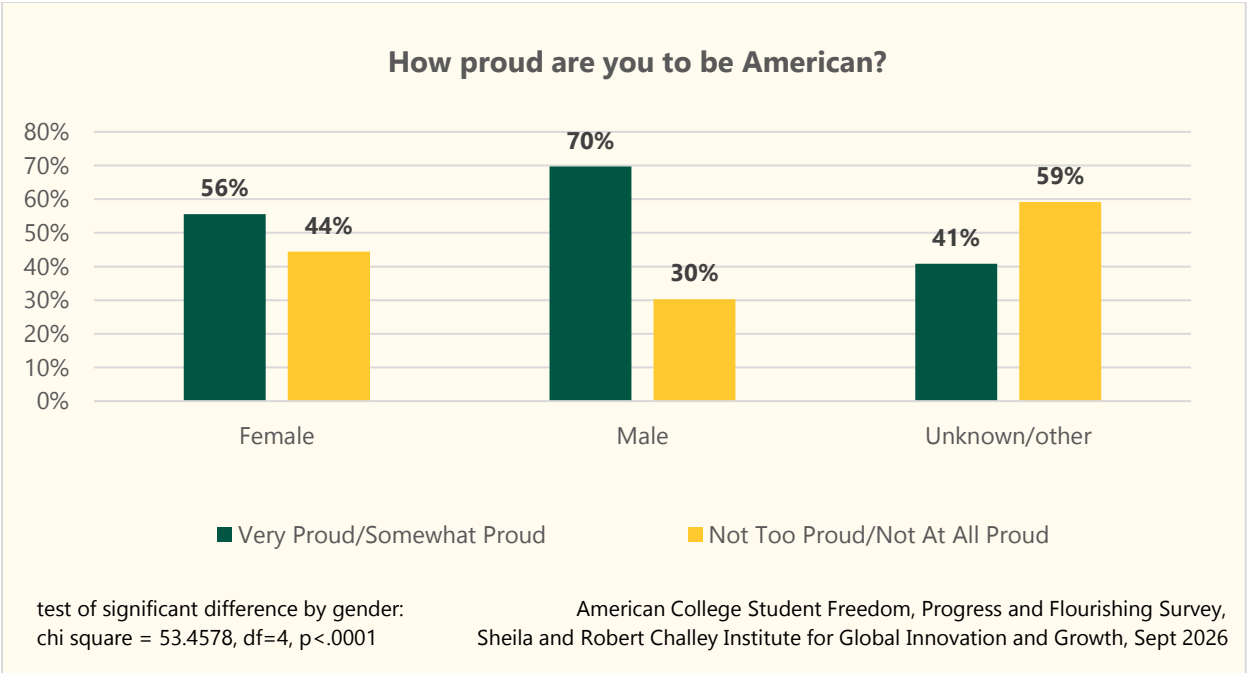


Figure 111: Percent of students who are proud to be American varies significantly by gender.

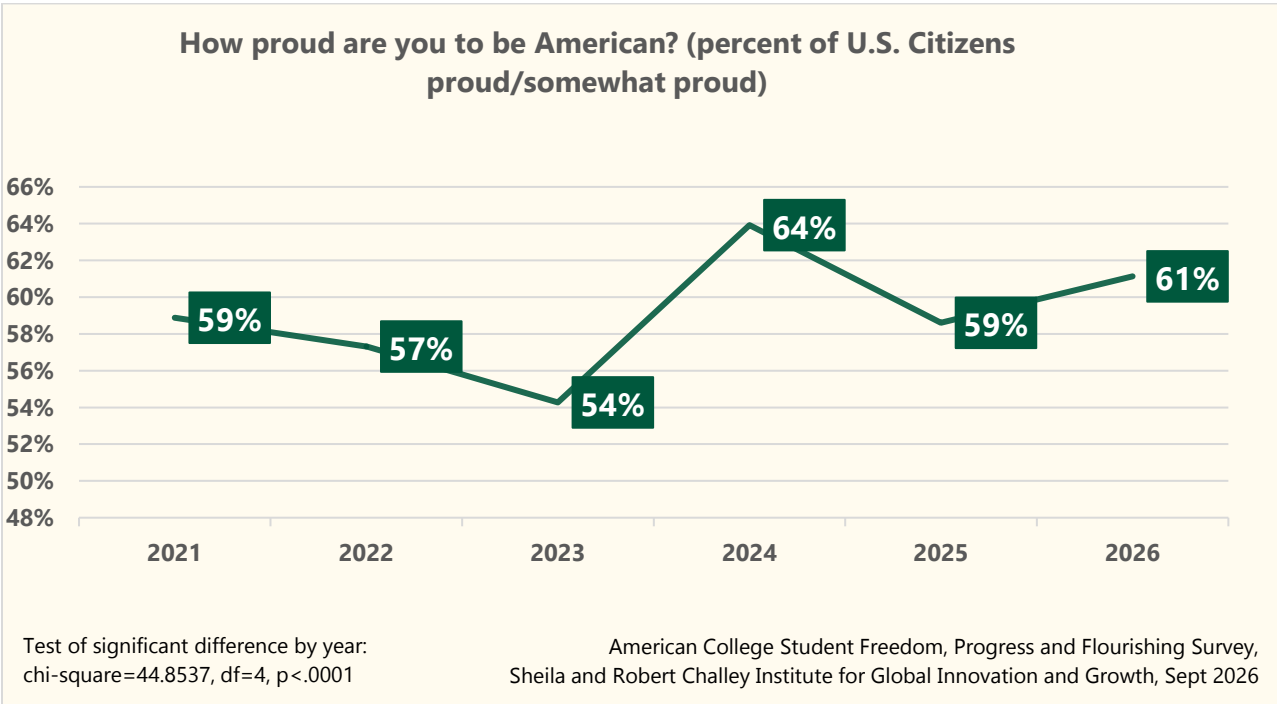


Figure 112: The percent of students who say they are proud to be American over time.

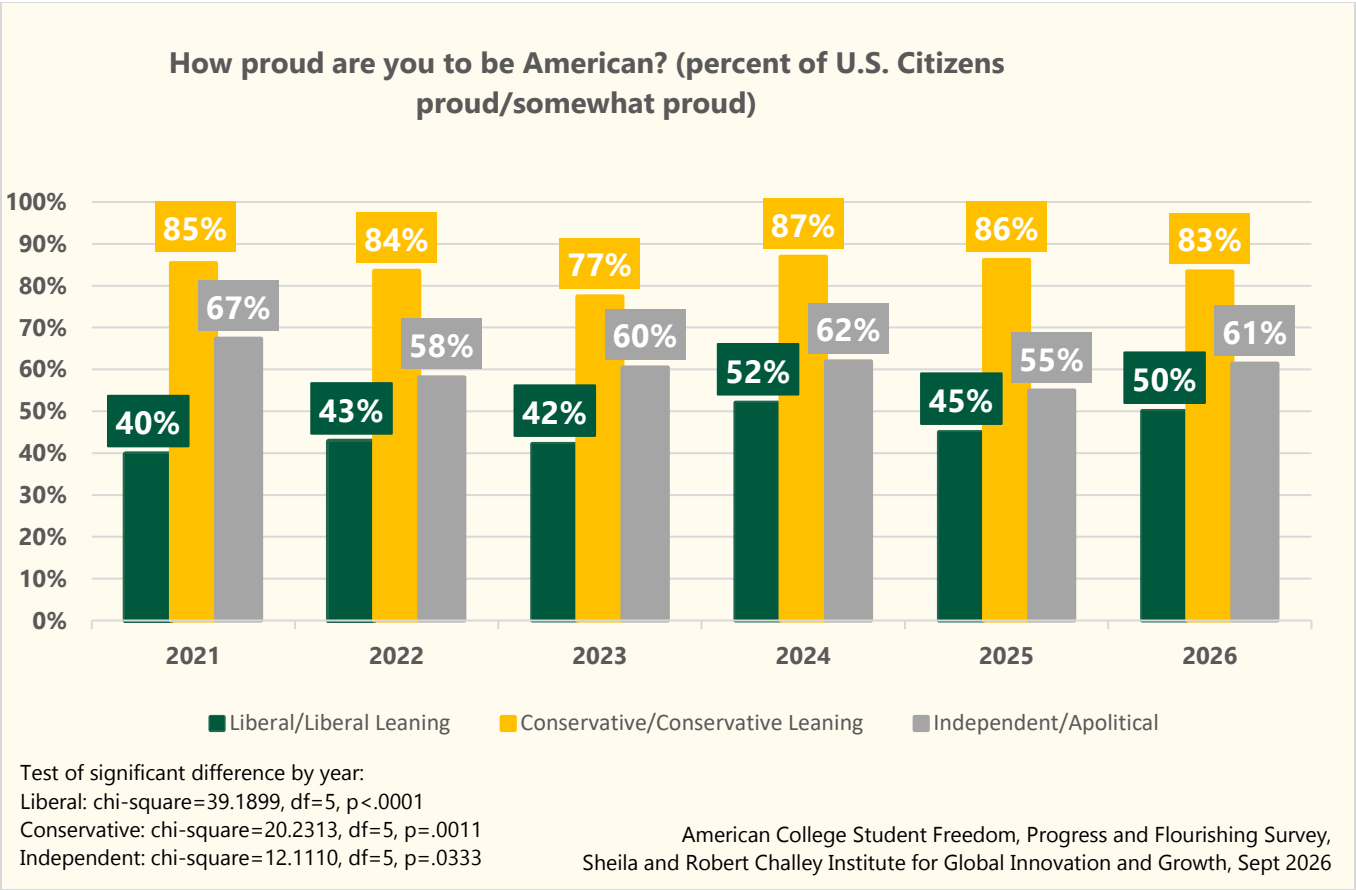


Figure 113: Percent of students who are proud to be American by political ideology over time