

A LIVE CONVERGE SESSION • 23 APRIL 2026

The American Dream, at 250.

Is it still attainable? How has it changed? What's in the way? 28 leaders, operators and retirees from across the country came together for one live hour to say what they really think — simultaneously, anonymously, in real time.

PARTICIPANTS

28 across 4 regions

FORMAT

Live, voice-moderated

SESSION RATING

9.48 / 10

DURATION

60 minutes

A single hour. Every voice. Real-time consensus.

The Converge Leadership Forum Series is a quarterly, live, voice-moderated session on a topic that matters now. For our debut, in honor of America's 250th birthday, we asked a simple but charged question: **Is the American Dream still attainable?** Here's what 28 people said — at the same time, without cameras, watching themes emerge together in real time.

• HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

Every chart in here is direct participant data — not a summary of opinion, but a count of hands.

Participants submitted open text, ranked options, and rated statements live. Themes were synthesized in-session by AI and validated back to the group before the next activity. That means consensus wasn't guessed — it was watched forming.

Think of this document as a mirror held up to a room of 28 Americans on one afternoon in April 2026. The sample isn't random, and it isn't meant to be. It's a cross-section of leaders, operators, retirees and rising professionals who said yes to a thoughtful conversation — and got one.

28

Live participants responding simultaneously

29

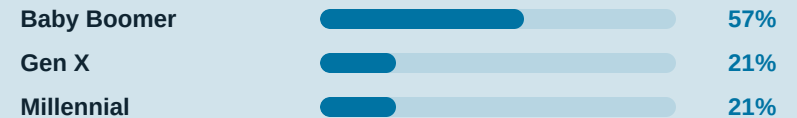
Activities across the hour — surveys, ideation, ranking, rating

9.48/10

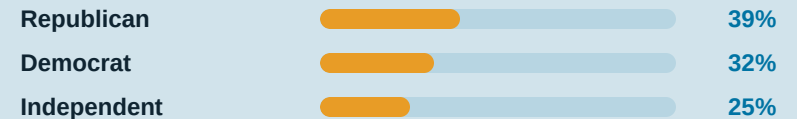
Participant rating of the Converge platform itself

WHO WAS IN THE ROOM

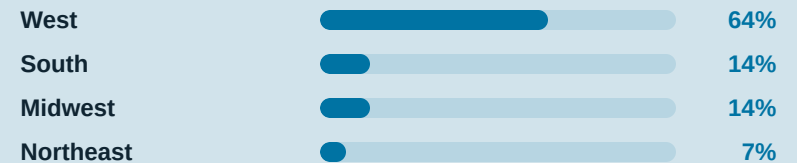
GENERATION



POLITICAL AFFILIATION



REGION



WORK STATUS & LIFE



Almost everyone says the Dream still matters. Most are **more pessimistic** than they've ever been about it.

That tension is the story of this session. Belief in the idea held firm across political affiliation, generation and region. Belief in the *path* did not.

93%

Yes — the American Dream still matters for the future of this country.

25 of 27 participants • Cuts cleanly across party lines

WHAT PEOPLE SAID WHEN ASKED WHY

"It should be our North Star." • "We won't have a country without it."
• "No one is an island. We survive and succeed together." • "It's perhaps the best thing the US has going for it."

WHY THIS MATTERS

The Dream isn't a partisan artifact. It's a shared frame — one that 25 of 27 respondents, Republican and Democrat and Independent alike, agreed belongs at the center of the national story. That consensus is the scaffolding for everything else in this report.

70%

...are more pessimistic about whether the Dream will become more attainable by 2030.

19 of 27 • Just 8 said they were more optimistic

"

The dream was always a myth — it's just been more fully exposed.

PARTICIPANT • GEN X

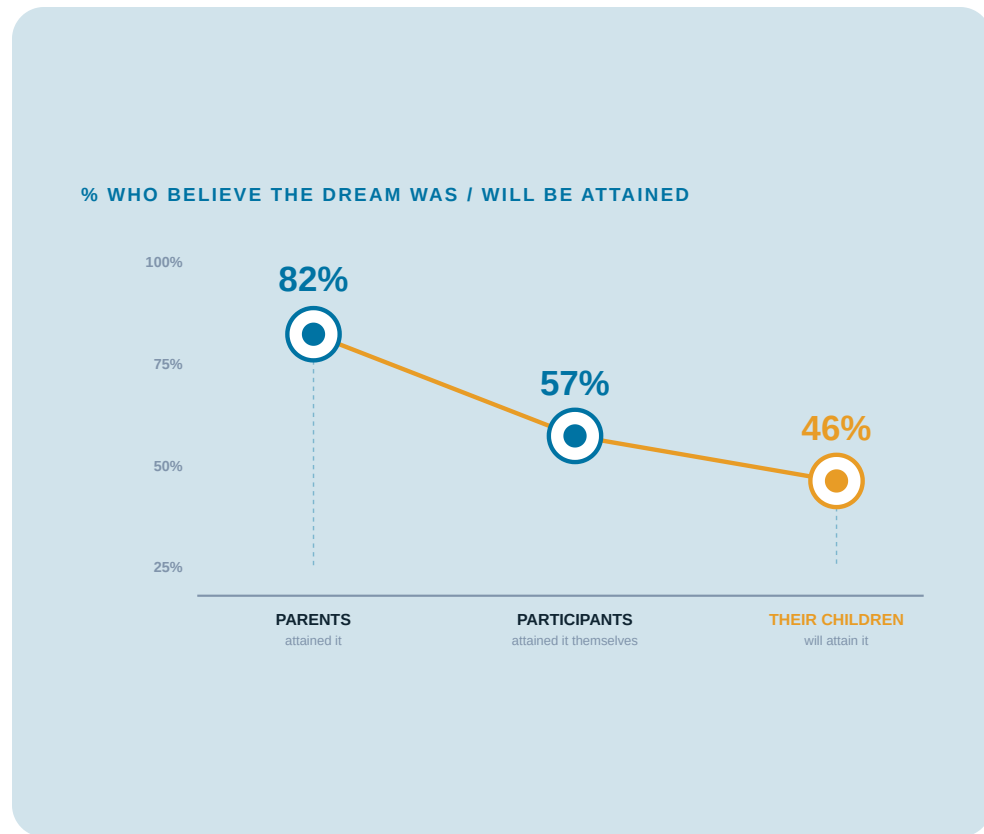
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I hadn't thought about the American Dream in a while. Maybe that is telling. We are facing a lot of challenges, but Americans and Humans have survived and thrived in much worse situations. This too shall pass.

PARTICIPANT • BOOMER

My parents made it. I made it. My kids? I'm not so sure.

This is the data point that stopped the room. 82% of participants believe their parents attained the American Dream. 57% say they've attained it themselves. But when asked whether their children will — belief collapsed by nearly half.



THE 36-POINT DROP
 From "my parents made it" to "my kids will" — the slide is 36 points. That's not a shift in optimism, it's a shift in **expectation**.

42% SAID "NOT SURE"
 On the children question, only 3 of 28 said "No" outright. The real answer was **uncertainty** — 12 participants chose "not sure." That's the middle ground where anxiety lives.

" Avg age of a first-time home buyer is now closer to 40. Avg house is about 500k or more. Plus childcare is 1000+/month. Most people simply cannot afford the house and kids.
 MILLENNIAL • HEALTHCARE

The picket fence is out. Flexibility is in. And nobody's sure it's an upgrade.

We asked participants to describe the *traditional* Dream and the *new* Dream in their own words. Then we asked them to rate the shift. The words they used tell the story better than any chart.

TRADITIONAL DREAM

**Own it. Keep it.
Pass it down.**

- Homeownership, suburbs, white picket fence
- Financial security & early retirement
- A good pension from a career employer
- Ability to start & own a business
- Rising standard of living each generation
- Freedom of religion & personal liberty
- Passing wealth on to children

NEW DREAM

**Stay flexible.
Find meaning.
Survive the costs.**

- Flexibility, agility, remote work
- Work-life balance over career climbing
- Purposeful, impactful work
- Experiences, travel, mobility over stuff
- Health, wellness, mental space
- Individuality & the freedom to define "family"
- Getting out from under education debt

4.62_{/5}

"Home ownership is increasingly out of reach" — most-agreed-with statement in the session

50%

Said it's "too early to tell" if the new Dream is a good or bad change. Only 12% called it good.

38%

Outright called the new Dream a bad change — nearly 4x the share who called it good

People still believe in people. They don't believe in the **systems** around them.

The pattern is stark. When asked what *enables* the Dream today, participants picked **personal traits**: drive, passion, innovation, hope. When asked what *constrains* it, they picked **institutions**: government, healthcare, debt, housing markets.

+ TOP ENABLERS — % who selected into top 5



- TOP CONSTRAINERS — % who selected into top 5



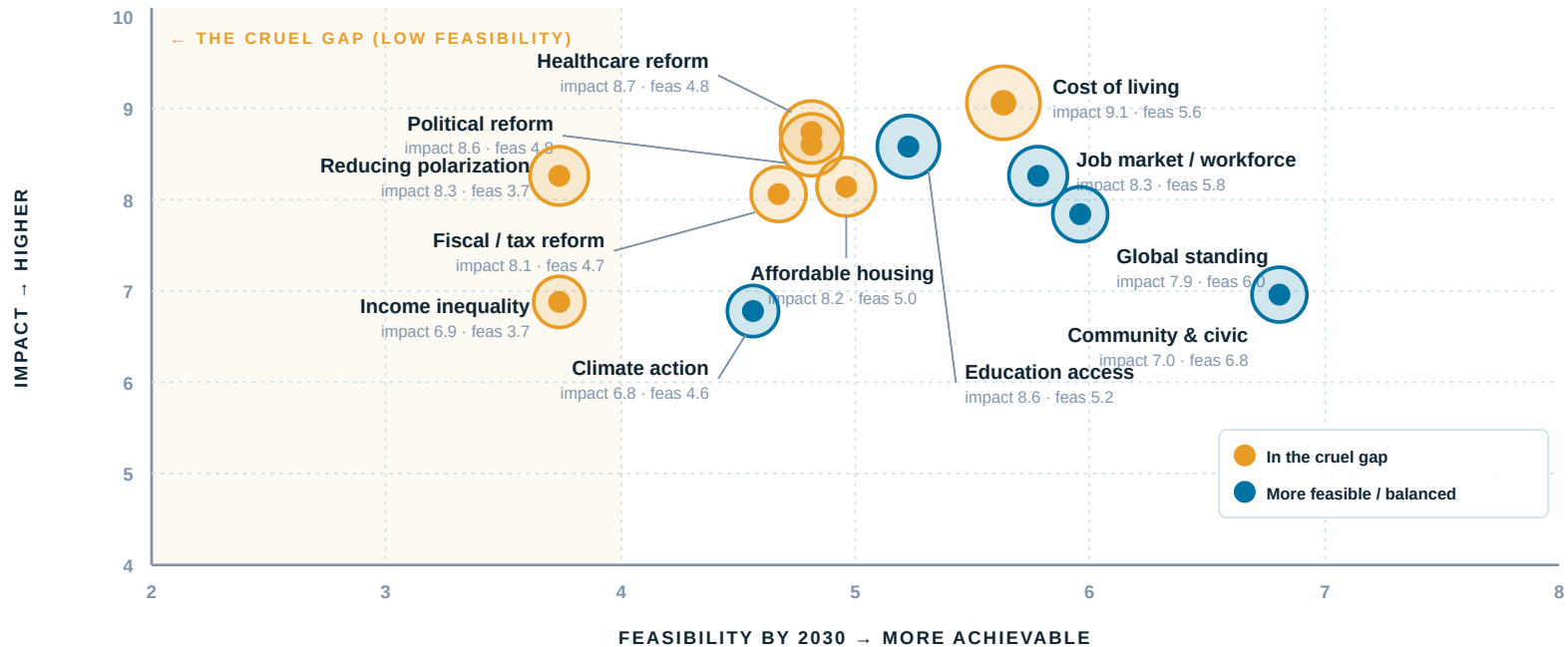
THE TAKEAWAY — THE LOCUS OF CONTROL HAS SPLIT

Every top enabler is something an individual owns: drive, values, creativity, hope. Every top constrainer is something an individual *cannot* own: policy, markets, institutions, healthcare systems. Americans in this room still believe they can do their part — they just don't believe the country is holding up its end. **52% said constrainters outweigh enablers**; only 33% said the reverse.

The things that would help most are the things we believe least likely to change.

We asked participants to rate 12 proposed changes on two axes: **impact** if achieved, and **feasibility** of achieving it by 2030. Every single item scored higher on impact than on feasibility. The gap, not the score, is the story.

IMPACT IF IMPLEMENTED vs. FEASIBILITY BY 2030 (1-10 scale)

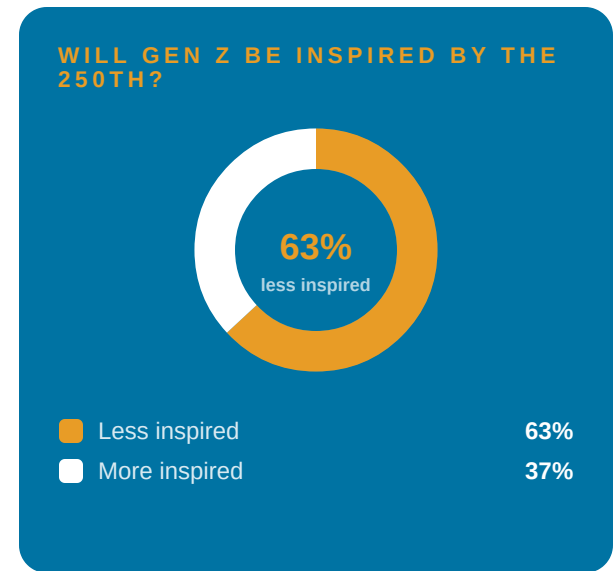
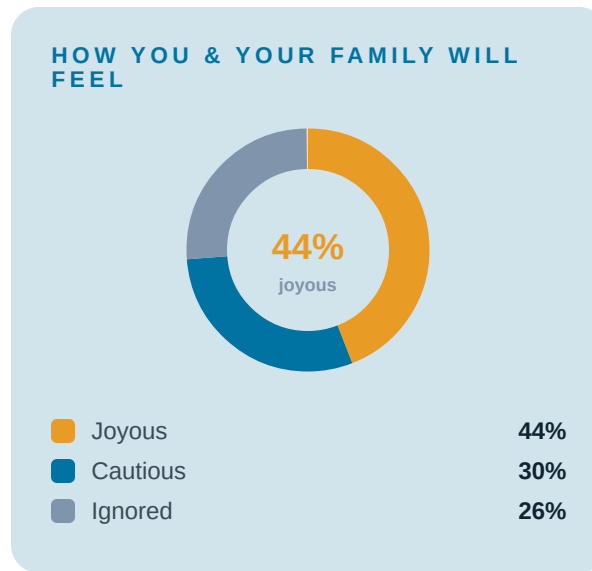
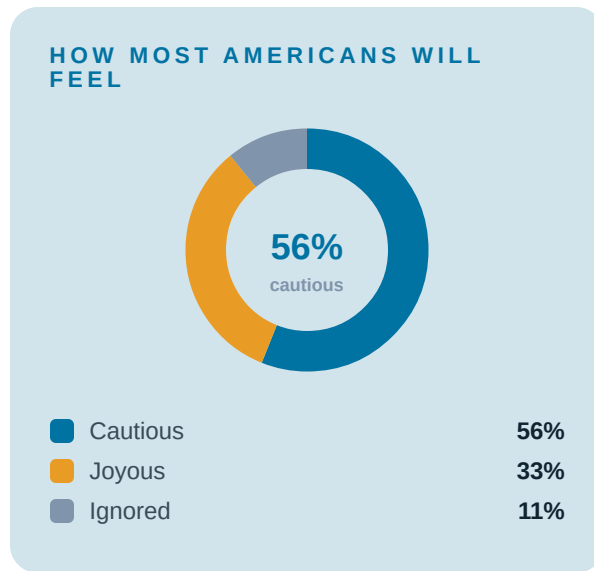


FIVE OF THE SIX HIGHEST-IMPACT LEVERS SIT ON THE PESSIMISTIC SIDE

Cost of living, healthcare, political reform, polarization, and fiscal reform — all rated 8.0+ on impact — averaged 4.7 or lower on feasibility. Participants know what would move the needle. They don't believe the country is wired to deliver it before 2030. That's the mechanism behind the 70% pessimism on page 03.

Cautious for the country. Joyous at home. Worried for the young.

July 4, 2026 marks America's 250th birthday. We asked participants three questions: how will most Americans feel about the milestone, how will *you and your family* feel, and will Gen Z be more inspired or less?



THE PRIVATE VS. PUBLIC SPLIT

Participants were almost twice as joyous about the milestone personally (44%) as they expected their fellow Americans to be (33%). It's an old pattern — people trust their own household more than they trust the country — but the gap matters for anyone planning 250th programming. Lead with the individual and the family; don't lean on national unity until the unity is earned.

Anonymity is what makes this honest. These are voices from **the room.**

Participants responded anonymously throughout the session — no names, no cameras, no social pressure. What follows is a small slice of the thousand-plus open-text responses we collected.

“ *The American Dream is what makes us different from every other nation or country — and gives us our strength.*

ON WHY THE DREAM MATTERS

“ *While we want to believe we are still the best country, research is clearly demonstrating the story we want to tell ourselves and the real story being told, shows we are losing sight of the dream.*

ON THE GAP BETWEEN STORY AND REALITY

“ *It seems harder for people to tap into unless they have the benefits of education and access to money to get started. There are exceptions but these seem to be rarer. We seem to have a shrinking middle class.*

ON THE MIDDLE-CLASS SQUEEZE

“ *Feedback was much better than in mainstream news or social media. It has been encouraging to have discourse with real people of diverse backgrounds and to see what we have in common. We all want good lives.*

ON THE SESSION ITSELF

“ *This is the worst timeline most have lived through, with the younger generations horrified at how we got into this spot in the first place.*

ON THE OUTLOOK

“ *The post-Trump era could be used to course correct, strengthen our institutions, and safeguard our political system. It should be a time to refocus on what the American Dream is.*

ON WHAT COMES NEXT

One hour. Every voice. Real consensus.

This entire report came from a single 60-minute live session on Converge. 28 participants answered at the same time, anonymously. AI synthesized themes as the session ran. Nobody waited a turn. Nobody stayed quiet. That's what Converge does — every day, for agencies, research firms, consultancies and enterprise teams who need the depth of focus groups and the scale of surveys in the same room.

THE FORUM SERIES

Next up, Q3 2026

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WANT TO RUN THIS KIND OF SESSION YOURSELF?

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