FRAMEWORKS
Culture Change Project

# The State of American Culture

2023–2024

# Overview

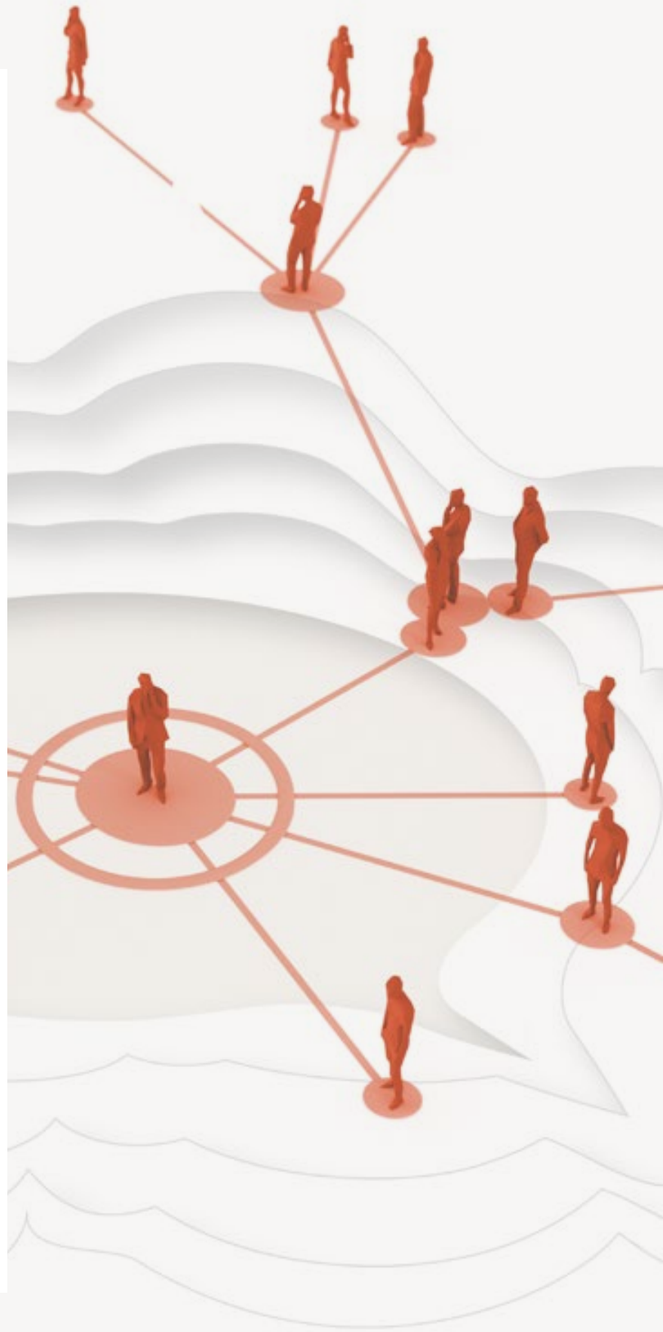
For the past four years, the FrameWorks Institute has been tracking how American thinking is changing in light of the social, economic, and political turmoil of 2020 and beyond. This year, the United States has seen a rising cost of living, denial or restriction of reproductive health care in 22 states, and a fraught political landscape, all of which shape our cultural consciousness.

In the first few years of the Culture Change Project, we observed that the long-standing cultural mindset of individualism, while still dominant in the American consciousness, was becoming slightly more balanced with systemic understandings of the world when it came to thinking about some issues. People had started to more readily see how the environments and systems around us shape our lived experiences, especially when it comes to how we understand financial success. These gains in structural thinking were not even across every issue, however, and over the last year we have seen that individualism is gaining traction among younger people across a range of issues. Individualistic thinking about topics like racism and health have returned to pre-pandemic highs.

At the same time, we're also seeing a strong desire for fundamental, transformative change in the United States. Notably, Americans *across the political spectrum* are dissatisfied with the status quo, worried about rigged systems, and looking for ways to overcome divisions. This acknowledgment that something isn't working, coupled with a strong desire for transformation, presents an important opportunity for communicators working to build systems and policy that advance a more just world.

The Culture Change Project is ongoing, and we still have much to learn about how these mindsets work together and signal openings for meaningful cultural change. But the shifts and patterns we've seen over the past year offer important clues as to what is going on in American culture—and how we might tap into it through effective framing and strategy.

In this update, you will find an overview of seven key findings about the state of American culture in 2024, as well as a preview of the important questions we'll be investigating over the course of our next year of research.



PART ONE

# Update on Key Cultural Trends

# 01

## KEY FINDING

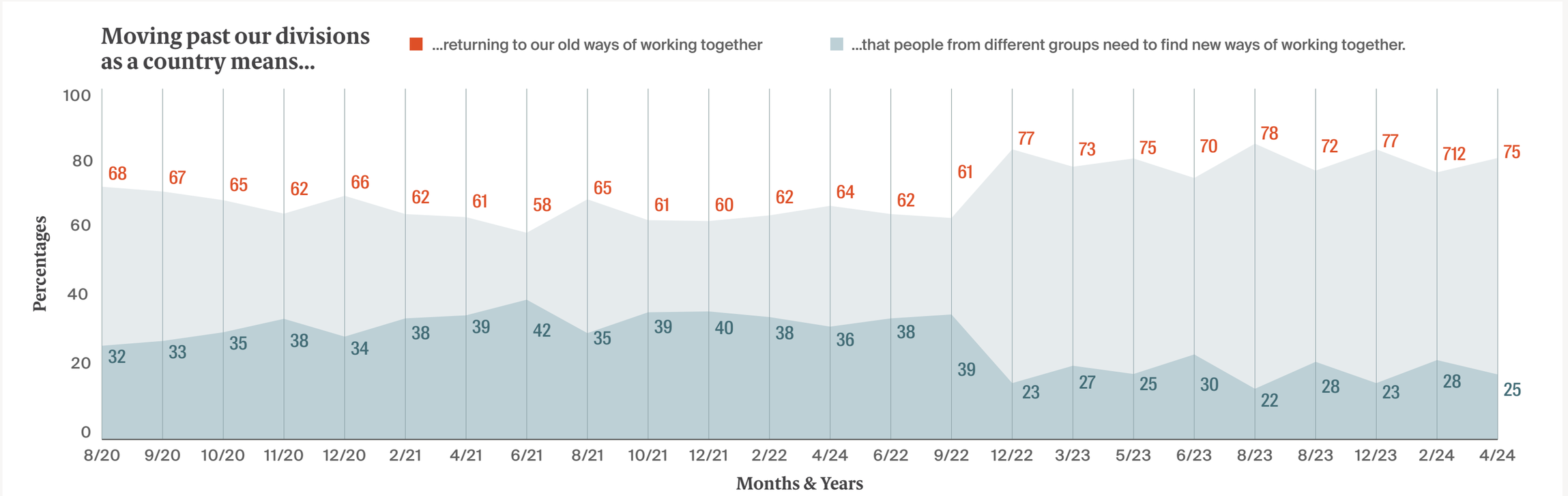
## Americans are deeply dissatisfied with the state of our country and think things should change—but aren't sure what that change should look like.

We increasingly find that members of the US public are seeking fundamental changes to our society. In surveys, focus groups, and interviews, we see people deeply unhappy with the status quo—often because they see our society as rigged by the powerful few against the many. Yet they struggle to envision a different future.

# In surveys and focus groups, we find that Americans are growing more receptive to the idea that our country needs radical change.

In a May 2024 survey, 61 percent of participants indicated that they believe our society needs to be fundamentally changed, agreeing with statements like "our society needs to be radically restructured" and "we need to remake our society in major ways."

People increasingly are looking for something new and different—not the restoration of a supposedly better past. More people than ever believe that moving past our divisions as a country means finding *new* ways of working together:



One surprising place we see the depth of dissatisfaction with our current systems is in thinking about the Constitution. Unlike in recent decades, when veneration of the Constitution was largely unquestioned, we see the Constitution being called into question as an outdated product of its time. Our research into mindsets around democracy suggests that Americans' faith in the Constitution is cracking:

"I understand where people come from that are like, '[the Constitution] is a sacred document and no one should question it,' but it was written so long ago in a different time, with different situations, different technology, different world, different problems. [...] There could be situations where things could be rewritten or added, deleted, etc. from the original document, I feel, because of how times are so much different now."

**Research Participant**

Despite this increasingly strong yearning for fundamental and even radical change, people struggle to envision a better future. Even when asked to imagine what a better future might look like, solutions are hard to come by, hoping that perhaps technology or charismatic leaders could help us overcome our divisions as a society and make life better.

This difficulty imagining a positive future is rooted in two deeply held mindsets—*system-is-rigged* thinking and *personalistic* thinking about government. The idea that *systems are rigged* by the powerful few makes it hard to envision how change is possible—any fundamental changes seem out of reach, as they'll be prevented by those with power.

And the tendency to equate government entirely with individual leaders in charge—or *personalistic* thinking—makes it hard to envision what change would look like that *isn't* just swapping out the leaders in power. This way of thinking can, in fact, fuel authoritarianism, as it leads people to think we need leaders who are *fundamentally* different and not tied to standard political norms. If the only way to envision fundamental change is bringing in a leader who is *really* different—a savior who can come in and fix our problems for us—this opens the door for a charismatic authoritarian leader.

## IMPLICATIONS

Americans are surprisingly open to transformative change, but generally can't envision what this change could look like, or how we'd get there. The disconnect between knowing the scope of our problems and not knowing what can fix them creates a dangerous willingness to hand power over to an outside actor who can come in and change everything.

Progressives need ways of responding to this opening and talking about major change in ways that address dissatisfaction with the status quo and enable people to think about a better future and how we'd get there. This year, we'll be conducting research into the best ways to respond to this dissatisfaction and address the desire for fundamental change given the dangers of fatalism and authoritarianism.

02

KEY FINDING

# The idea that our "system is rigged" can be leveraged to build support for change.

As we have discussed in previous Culture Change Project reports, the "system-is-rigged" mindset has become increasingly dominant over the past several years. The assumption that the powerful few are rigging "the system" to benefit themselves at the expense of the rest of us is widespread across groups and is drawn on to make sense of almost every aspect of American society. In our February 2024 Culture Change Tracking Survey, nearly 71 percent of Americans agreed that "the system is rigged." This mindset is contested cultural terrain—it can lead to demands for changing systems to be more just, it can prompt xenophobic and racist scapegoating (elites are rigging the system for "them" and against "you"), or it can lead to fatalism.

Given the dominance of this mindset in our cultural discourse and its malleability, over the past year, we embarked on research to figure out how progressive communicators can *most effectively* talk about rigged systems. How can we talk about rigged systems in ways that leverage this mindset's centering of power to build support for progressive change, while inoculating against reactionary thinking and fatalism?

Our research indicates that there are ways of talking about rigged systems that meet these goals:

1. **When we pair system-is-rigged framing with the right values, we flip fatalism on its head.** In our research, we found that beginning a message about rigged systems with the right values enables people to envision change. Specifically, we identified three values—Solidarity, Popular Self-Government, and Freedom from Domination—that help people think about the possibility of unrigging systems and making society fairer.
2. **Explanation can illuminate the black box of the rigged system and prevent reactionary thinking.** People generally don't understand how systems are rigged. This opens the door for scapegoating and authoritarianism, which often go hand in hand. When people don't realize the true sources of social problems, it creates space to point the finger at marginalized groups and to think that the only way to change things is by giving power to charismatic leaders. We've found that simple explanations of how systems are rigged and how they can be unrigged decrease xenophobia and authoritarian attitudes. By filling in the blanks of the mindset with progressive explanations, we can steer it away from reaction and exclusion.
3. **Matching the scale of problem and solution is critical.** One of the major challenges of using "system-is-rigged" framing to build support for change is that we need to put forward solutions that are at the same scale as the problems we're trying to fix—and when we talk about "the system" generally, many of the solutions we want to build support for can come across as too small to fix it. Our research shows that this can cue fatalism and make it harder to advocate for our solutions. Communicators can address this by getting specific or going big. They can spotlight a specific aspect of the system, explain how it works, and offer a tangible solution that would fix it. Or they can go big and offer a vision of transformative change at scale that would genuinely unrig whole systems (though there are limitations to this approach, as people struggle to see how these changes would happen).

This fall, we'll be releasing our full research findings on how to use *system-is-rigged* framing, including additional insights around framing solutions, how to use tested values to build efficacy around progressive change, and how to leverage *system-is-rigged* thinking to counter white supremacy.

## IMPLICATIONS

The *system-is-rigged* mindset is a mixed bag. While it can be and is often used to critique corporate power and mobilize support for structural progressive change, it can be—and often is--used to promote a right populist agenda. And by making our problems seem too big to fix—*if the whole system is rigged, how do we possibly change it?*—it can lead people to disengage.

Yet we can't just avoid this mindset. It is *incredibly* pervasive in thinking across issues and across groups. If we cede this contested cultural terrain to the right, this will undermine progressive causes across issues for years to come. Figuring out how to win the contest over what our "rigged systems" involve is essential, and that requires talking about rigged systems in the right ways.

03

KEY FINDING

# Individualistic thinking about racism and health has returned to pre-pandemic levels.

In the first few years of the Culture Change Project, we saw a promising sign: a rise in structural thinking about social issues. The idea that social systems and structures shape people's outcomes in life has long existed in the background, as an alternative to the dominant individualistic idea that it's our individual choices and willpower that determine how we do. Yet for a couple of years, this structural mindset moved closer to the foreground of people's thinking, and individualism slightly weakened its grip on American culture.

Unfortunately, this trend has not only stalled but reversed. In our survey, the gains in structural thinking we initially saw (reaching their peak in 2021) have now been lost. Individualistic thinking about certain issues is now endorsed at *higher* rates than we saw in August 2020 when we began tracking it.

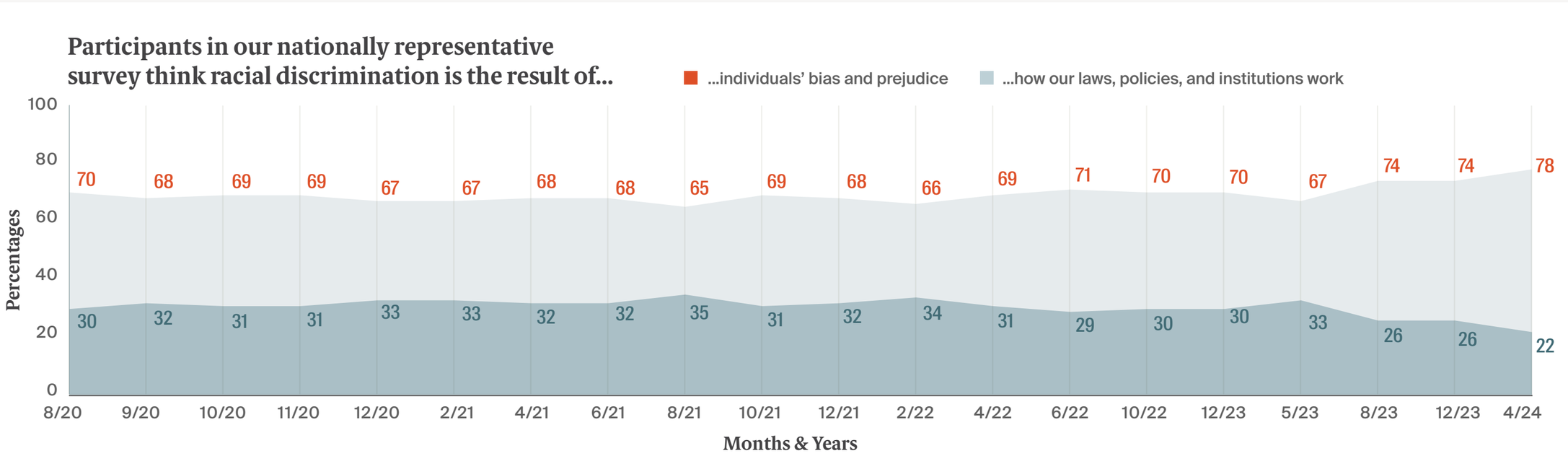
The return of individualism and decline of structural thinking has been particularly notable in people's thinking about two issues: racism and health.

# The decline of structural thinking about racism

Structural understandings of racism are less strongly endorsed than when we started measuring them in August 2020. When asked which they agree with more, only 22 percent of participants in our nationally representative survey now choose an understanding of racial discrimination as the result of how our laws, policies, and institutions work, over an understanding of it as the result of individuals' bias and prejudice. This is 13 percentage points lower than in August 2021, when 35 percent of survey participants endorsed the structural view.

The decrease in structural understandings of racism this year is even more pronounced among specific groups: **Latino participants**' endorsement of the structural view of racism is down nearly 20 percentage points since last spring; and **younger people** (aged 18–29), who had been much more likely to choose the structural view of racism than older groups, are now endorsing the interpersonal view at the same rates as older people.

The turn toward individualism among younger people is not limited to thinking about racism, as we discuss below. While shifts in thinking among Latino participants are tricky to interpret, since this group is diverse and includes people with different identities and social situations, this finding is important, as it makes clear that the decline in structural thinking about racism is not simply among white, non-Hispanic Americans.



## IMPLICATIONS

The racial justice uprisings of 2020 and the enduring effects of the Black Lives Matter movement made structural understandings of racism more available to a wider group of people, but as memory of the uprisings fades, it seems that these views are typically not the default for most people when they think about racism. Advocates and communicators can pull those structural understandings back into the foreground with the right framing.

One strategy our research has consistently shown to be helpful in strengthening structural understandings of racism is to illustrate the link between harmful policies—both past and present—and negative modern-day outcomes. Providing specific examples helps move structural racism from the realm of the abstract and elusive to a concrete reality that can be addressed. For example, explaining how "urban renewal" policies passed in the 1960s have led to concentrated poverty in communities of color today can help people see how structural racism shapes the world around us:

> "Urban renewal" involved highway construction projects that bulldozed hundreds of homes, sometimes clearing out more than 50 percent of local businesses and leaving behind dozens of vacant storefronts. Neighborhoods chosen for such projects were often well-established Black communities. Residents were left with half as many job opportunities. Without the means to work and thrive, community wellbeing declined.

**For more resources on how to strengthen structural thinking about racism, check out:**

- Where We Thrive: Communicating about Resident-Centered Neighborhood Revitalization, A Communications Toolkit produced in partnership with Purpose Built Communities
- Navigating Cultural Mindsets of Race and Place in the United States
- Talking About Racism in Child and Family Advocacy
- Framing Community Safety: Guidance for Effective Communication

# The increasing strength of health individualism

Individualistic understandings of health outcomes are more dominant than they have been in the history of the Culture Change Project. *Health individualism*—the belief that individuals' lifestyle choices determine how healthy they are—has been overwhelmingly dominant throughout our research. In 2023 we reported that systemic thinking about health—the idea that social contexts and systems shape our health—peaked in the winter of 2021–22, though even then the vast majority of people chose an individualistic view. Since then, systemic thinking has continued to weaken. As of April 2024, only 17 percent of respondents endorsed a systemic view of health over a more individualistic one.

This rise in health individualism over the last year seems particularly driven by **younger age groups** (ages 18–29 and 30–44), who—unlike what we have seen in previous years—are now endorsing an individualistic understanding of health outcomes at the same rate as older people.

## IMPLICATIONS

If we want to build support for the programs and policies needed for health equity, we must work to combat the idea that our health is simply a product of personal choices and behaviors. Our research on framing health has shown that it's crucial for communicators to foreground the effects of social conditions and policy contexts when talking about health to show that health is a public issue that requires us to engage collectively as a society. That might look something like the following:

- Most of our health is shaped by our environments: the places we work, the options we have for food, our commutes, our communities, and more. As a society, we create these health environments through policies and other collective decisions about housing, transportation, education, community planning, and more.
- Society's decisions, both past and present, have set up barriers to essential resources like affordable, healthy food; stable, safe places to live; opportunities to socialize and connect with others; and the ability to get a good education, good jobs, and good health care. When we see different patterns in the health and wellbeing of different communities or social groups, we can trace most disparities to health environments and the decisions that created them.

**For more resources on how to frame health as a systemic issue, check out:**

- Reframing Health Disparities in Rural America: A Communications Toolkit
- Explain the Frame: Expand on health
- Explaining the Social Determinants of Health
- Changing the Narrative Together: Three Effective Strategies for Talking about Youth Mental Health
- Excessive Alcohol Use and Health Equity
- Framing the Foundation of Community Health

04

KEY FINDING

# More than ever before, we are seeing Americans think at a systemic level about our economy and financial success.

While systemic thinking about health and racism has recently declined, the idea that the economy is a designed system continues to gain strength.

In the past year, we've picked up further evidence that the American public is moving beyond the neoliberal assumptions of the Reagan era, which used to be conventional wisdom. As we've reported previously, members of the public widely recognize that government choices shape how the economy works and whom it benefits. We're now seeing increasing rejection of the idea that the US is a meritocracy and stronger recognition that inequality is the result of collective choices.

In our survey, we ask participants to choose between two mindsets that are available to think about financial success: a *meritocracy* mindset (the idea that financial success is due to talent and hard work) and an *opportunity structures* mindset (the idea that our opportunities shape our economic outcomes). Until 2023, endorsement of these mindsets was relatively balanced and stable over the course of our research.

That balance shifted in March of last year, when research participants began endorsing the *opportunity structures* mindset at higher levels than we'd seen since the start of the project in 2020, and this trend has held throughout the last year. As of March 2024, 60 percent of respondents endorsed the *opportunity structures* mindset and only 40 percent endorsed the *meritocracy*.

Prior to 2023, participants had routinely endorsed the idea that economic inequality is "natural" over the view that economic inequality is due to choices our society has made—but by July of 2023 that balance shifted. As of March 2024, 57 percent of respondents endorsed the idea that inequality is due to choices about how our economy will work.

These changes suggest that a paradigm shift is underway in how Americans think about the economy, which mirrors a sea change in economic policymaking. This shift in mindsets likely both reflects and has enabled the rise of economic populism (on the right and left) and the new conventional wisdom that government does and should shape the economy. The debate is now about *how* the government should try to shape the economy and *for whom*, rather than whether it should be involved in the first place.

Despite this shift in thinking about the economy, it's important to highlight that people still generally hold individualistic and naturalistic mindsets when it comes to thinking about work and labor. In addition, even though people increasingly recognize that government choices shape how the economy works, people's understanding of how this works is typically quite limited. There is, thus, much more work ahead to build support for more just and equitable labor systems and for the structural changes needed to create a truly just and inclusive economy.

## IMPLICATIONS

This is a moment when progressive communicators have an opportunity to show *how* economic policies can benefit (or harm) people. It's crucial for us to connect the dots and explain how these policies affect people's lives, and to make a proactive case about *whom* government should benefit to actively counter racist and xenophobic narratives.

It is also important to broaden and extend this structural, designed thinking about the economy to thinking about work. To develop frames that help with this, FrameWorks has recently launched the WorkShift Project, a multi-year initiative designed to change narratives around work and labor. You can find the latest research on public thinking and effective framing strategies from WorkShift by visiting https://www.frameworksinstitute.org/work-shift/

# 05

KEY FINDING

## Mindsets around gender are in flux—and lie at the center of a volatile site of contestation in American culture.

Over the course of the Culture Change Project, we've identified three core mindsets that structure Americans' thinking about gender:

- **Gender is a fixed binary:** the assumption that everyone's gender is either "man" or "woman," and that gender is assigned at birth and remains unchanged throughout a person's life
- **Gender essentialism:** the idea that biological sex determines character and behavior
- **Gender is constructed:** the idea that differences between genders are the result of what society expects

New data from our tracking survey has revealed that **while younger people are less likely than older people to believe that gender is a fixed binary, they are more likely to endorse *gender essentialism*.** This means that younger people are more likely to think that our biological sex determines our personal behavior—believing, for example, that women are "naturally more caring" and men "naturally more aggressive." We aren't sure yet why this is happening. One factor may be the rise of the tradwife phenomenon

on social media—content aimed at promoting (and romanticizing) traditional gender roles among younger people. Lived experience might also play a role—younger people are more likely than older people to have grown up with both parents working, but might still have experienced women doing a majority of the care work, perhaps reinforcing the idea that women are "naturally" more caring than men.

**Meanwhile, participants in our focus groups—across political party lines—are using transphobic language as shorthand to explain what they see as wrong with the "modern" world today.** We consistently see talk like this in our research:

"Now, you can even identify yourself as an Apache helicopter because the world is going crazy. If I say I'm a cow, I wanna be a cow, I can identify as a cow. What is that? I don't find that normal."
**Research participant, Democrat**

That "now…" at the beginning of the participant's statement gets at the belief that in an older, "better" time, everyone understood that there were only two fixed genders. We frequently hear talk that reflects the *gender is a fixed binary* mindset in this way, where participants either implicitly or explicitly compare a present they are dissatisfied with to a past where things were more "normal." That kind of talk comes not only from the *gender is a fixed binary* mindset, but also from a mindset we call the *threat of modernity* mindset—the idea that life in this country used to be better and is getting worse. The *threat of modernity* mindset is often used in reactionary defense of the status quo.

It's becoming increasingly clear that **the idea that *gender is a fixed* binary is a hugely important, volatile site of contestation in American culture right now. This mindset lies at the center of political and social reaction—the push to restore and reinforce hierarchies across domains in American society. As a result, every progressive advocate has a stake in this contestation over gender.**

Our research shows that the more strongly someone assumes that *gender is a fixed binary*, the more likely they are to:

- Oppose immigration policies such as support for asylum seekers and expanding legal pathways to citizenship
- Oppose criminal legal reform such as the abolition of private prisons
- Oppose government-provided child care for all families
- Oppose affirmative action, reparations made to Black Americans who are the descendants of enslaved people, and including clear discussions of slavery and racism in the teaching of US history in schools
- Oppose making it easier for workers to join a union
- Oppose a single-payer national health plan
- Oppose a universal basic income.

More than almost any other mindset we study, the *gender is a fixed* binary mindset is linked to staunch support for upholding the status quo. In other words, the idea that *gender is a fixed binary* lies at the heart of regressive thinking—it's one of the linchpins of reactionary thinking in the United States.

## IMPLICATIONS

There is already a highly coordinated effort to create a moral panic around trans issues, and the language of that panic has made its way into mainstream discourse, in part because it taps into fears about the "modern" world and discomfort with the disruption of social hierarchies. If we are to push back against this reactionary movement, we must make a highly coordinated effort as well, intentionally and strategically combating regressive understandings of gender across issues.

Progressives widely recognize that racism is bound up with all social issues, and that combating it is necessary for transformative change across issues. This research indicates that, in a similar vein, gender should not be treated as a narrow issue. These reactionary understandings of gender *must* be recognized and combated across social issues.

06

KEY FINDING

# Individualistic and reactionary thinking is gaining traction among younger people.

As discussed above, we're seeing the strengthening of individualistic and reactionary thinking among younger participants in our research across a range of issues: the rise in endorsement of gender essentialism (see Finding 5), health individualism (see Finding 3), and an interpersonal view of racism (see Finding 3).

Taken together, these results suggest that younger people are retrenching in mindsets that justify the status quo and existing power relations and that blame individuals for problems they face. More research is needed to deepen our understanding of these troubling trends, but the trends themselves seem relatively clear.

## IMPLICATIONS

We often assume that because younger people have held more progressive views on some issues, they must think in more progressive ways across the board—but that's *not* always the case. It's vital for communicators not to take their younger audiences for granted, even on issues (like race and health) where they have held more structural understandings in the past. We'll be digging into this finding more in the future, looking into whether this trend is being driven by particular subgroups of young people.

07

KEY FINDING

# Some mindsets cluster together. This could have major implications for social change work.

We all have multiple mindsets that we can use to think about a given issue—for example, we can all think both individualistically *and* contextually about what shapes our health. New research into the cultural mindsets we all share is showing that many of the mindsets we use to make sense of the world are connected to each other.

Several sets of mindsets seem to cluster together. For each cluster, the more strongly people endorse one mindset in the cluster, the more strongly they tend to endorse others in that cluster. The mindsets in each cluster hang together because they're grounded in assumptions that are, in some way, mutually reinforcing.

The first cluster includes mindsets that are naturalistic, individualistic, or reactionary. These characteristics are mutually reinforcing. When people think of society as arising from natural processes and forces, they often see this "natural order" as something that shouldn't be challenged. Attempts to change it seem foolish at best and dangerous at worst. It also seems natural that it's up to individuals to navigate this natural order to the best of their abilities. This cluster includes many mindsets:

- **Individualism**, the idea that what happens to an individual in their life is primarily the result of the choices they make
- **Pathologizing Black Culture**, a set of harmful and racist beliefs about Black communities
- **Limited Government**, the idea that government should play a limited role in our lives
- **Meritocracy**, the idea that financial success is due to talent and hard work
- **Colorblind Racism**, the idea that talking about race is the reason for our country's divisions
- **Market Naturalism**, the idea that who benefits in our economy is determined naturally by the free market
- **Health Individualism**, the idea that individuals' lifestyle choices determine how healthy they are
- **Gender Essentialism**, the idea that biological sex determines character and behavior
- **Gender is a Fixed Binary,** the assumption that everyone's gender is either "man" or "woman" and that gender is assigned at birth and remains unchanged throughout a person's life

The second cluster includes mindsets that are oriented toward collective, rather than individual, decisions, as well as mindsets that center designed systems. These mindsets are also mutually reinforcing. When people think of social reality as a product of collective choices, they tend to see how social systems and structures shape people's outcomes in life. These assumptions tend to go together, and lead people to see a broader role for collective action to address social problems. Whereas the first cluster is linked with reactionary thinking, these mindsets tend to make it easier to see why and how we should *contest* the status quo. This cluster, like the first, includes mindsets on a range of different issues:

- **Systemic Thinking**, the idea that what happens to an individual in their life is the result of how our society is organized
- **Systemic Model of Racism**, the understanding that racial discrimination is the result of how our laws, policies, and institutions work
- **Expansive Government**, the idea that government should do what it takes to make sure people have what they need
- **Designed Economy**, the idea that policy choices determine how the economy works and whom it benefits
- **Opportunity Structures**, the idea that access opportunities shape our economic outcomes
- **Systemic Thinking about Health**, the understanding that environments and context determine how healthy we are
- **Gender Is Constructed**, the idea that differences between genders are the result of what society expects

It's critical to highlight that these clusters are loosely linked networks, not tightly organized ideologies or worldviews. They tend to hang together, but they're sets of discrete mindsets. And both sets are available to be drawn on across groups. In one moment, someone might draw on mindsets from the first cluster, and in the next, draw on mindsets from the second cluster.

Moreover, some mindsets don't fit neatly into one of these clusters. These mindsets can be applied in ways that link up with the different types of thinking that characterize each cluster. For example, fatalism can accompany naturalistic thinking (we can't fix problems because that's just the way of things), but it can also accompany designed systems thinking (we can't fix problems because those with power are intentionally shaping systems to their benefit). Similarly, the *system-is-rigged* mindset can be linked with reactionary thinking or with thinking about the possibility of transformative social redesign.

## IMPLICATIONS

In the coming year, we'll continue to explore these clusters to better understand how they are connected to each other. We suspect that strengthening one mindset in a cluster is likely to strengthen others in the same cluster. If that's true, then there may be multiple avenues to weakening reactionary, individualistic, and naturalistic thinking. For example, it may be that if we can counter and weaken the *gender is a fixed binary* mindset, this might simultaneously undercut the *pathologizing Black culture* mindset, and vice versa. It could be that there are particular mindsets in each cluster that serve a linchpin role—they cue and buttress other mindsets—and are thus especially important to tackle.

PART TWO

# This coming year, the Culture Change Project is digging into...

01

## The strategic implications of how mindsets cluster together.

As described above, we believe that further understanding how mindsets are related to each other can help us identify pathways to weaken harmful ways of thinking and strengthen more productive ones. This year, we'll explore these hypotheses and expand our understanding of how these mindsets are connected. Understanding these connections can strengthen our understanding of how culture and narrative change efforts on different issues can reinforce and amplify each other's effects and where it's most critical for movements to come together to tackle mindsets that obstruct or enable change across issues.

02

## How to frame with values to build systemic thinking across issues.

As we've discussed in this report, systemic thinking is on the rise around some issues (e.g., the economy)—but not all. We're currently conducting research into how values can be used to strengthen systemic thinking across issues like the economy, race and racism, democracy, and other issues. We're exploring the effects of values that are already associated with progressive causes (like justice and solidarity), as well as how to steer contested values (like freedom and fairness) in progressive directions and whether it's possible to use traditionally conservative values (like family and security) for progressive ends. This research will result in insights about which values are best suited to shift underlying cultural mindsets in the right direction and whether values framing that works on one issue is likely to help or harm efforts on other issues.

03

## How to navigate the deep dissatisfaction with the status quo and desire for fundamental change, given people's difficulty envisioning a better future.

Over the last year, our research has pointed again and again to Americans' dissatisfaction with the current state of our country and openness to fundamental or even radical changes to how our society operates. Yet we've also seen how that desire for change can lead people to yearn for a strong leader to come in and fix all of the problems in our country (see finding 1 above). Communicators need ways of navigating this terrain in ways that counter authoritarian attitudes, cultivate collective efficacy, and build support for progressive change. In the coming year, we will conduct research to understand how different ways of responding to this deep dissatisfaction and desire for change affect these outcomes.

04

## How to build a more inclusive "we the people."

In the coming year, we will begin investigating how framing can help build a more inclusive understanding of "we the people"—one that encompasses all groups within American society and that people in different groups can see themselves and others in.

We plan to identify ways of talking about a collective "we the people" that:

1. Marginalized groups see themselves in and want to be called into
2. Dominant groups see themselves in while also seeing marginalized groups in
3. Strengthen reciprocity, mutuality, and collective responsibility
4. Counter dehumanizing and reactionary mindsets
5. Avoid cuing jingoism, American exceptionalism, and other "us vs. them" mindsets
6. Are motivating and help to catalyze progressive movement coalitions.

To stay up-to-date on findings from the FrameWorks Institute's *Culture Change Project*, please follow us on Instagram (@frameworksinstitute), LinkedIn, and subscribe to our monthly *On Culture* newsletter here.

FRAME WORKS

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