# Study Finds Optimism Prevails in America, But Promise and Attainability of "The American Dream" Diminishing

MILWAUKEE, May 21, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- Eight out of ten (79%) Americans believe "the American Dream" is alive, and three quarters (73%) are optimistic, saying they generally see the world as "Glass Half Full" vs. 27% who see it as "Glass Half Empty." These are the latest findings from Northwestern Mutual's 2013 Planning & Progress Study.

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However, digging into these findings reveals some deep-seated skepticism.

The study showed:

Only 9% say the American Dream is as good as – if not better than – it was a generation ago;
36% say it is alive but people's priorities and ambitions are different, and that it is defined more by happiness, health and balance in life;
34% say it is alive, but opportunities are not as good as they were a generation ago; and
21% say it no longer exists.

Looking ahead, attainability of the American Dream is seen, for the most part, as diminishing, with only 7 in 10 believing that the American Dream will be alive for their children and grandchildren.

Among Americans 25 and older:

36% say it will be alive, but the opportunities won't be as good;
13% say it will be the same this generation to the next;
22% say it will be alive, and the opportunities will be just as good – if not better – than they are now.

"I think we're seeing two distinctly American attributes in these numbers – optimism in the face of a challenge, and pragmatism about the facts on the ground," said Greg Oberland, Northwestern Mutual executive vice president. "The reality for most of us is that opportunity exists, but it is not by any means automatic. It takes more than just optimism or pragmatism to achieve financial security. It takes planning."

**Does Optimism Come With Age?**
You might assume that it is the young who are our most idealistic, and that pessimism sets in with age. Not so, according to the study. The most optimistic (seeing the glass half full) Americans are those aged 67 and older (Matures), among which 79% are optimists. Meanwhile, [among] the least optimistic Americans are those aged 25-32 (Gen Y), where one in three (33%) is a pessimist.

While those age 67 and older (Matures) are more optimistic they are also more likely to be skeptical about the American Dream. One-third of Matures believe the American Dream no longer exists (31%), and four in ten believe the American Dream will no longer exist for their children or grandchildren (37%).

In earlier findings from the study, Gen Y stood out for its financial planning, with 24% considering themselves highly disciplined, compared to 16% for Gen X, 14% for Baby Boomers, and 15% for Matures.

**About the Research**
This is the latest set of findings released from Northwestern Mutual's 2013 Planning & Progress Study, which explores the state of financial planning in America today, and provides unique insights into people's current attitudes and behaviors toward money, goal-setting and priorities.

More results from this study can be found atNorthwestern Mutual.com.

The study was conducted by independent research firm Harris Interactive, and included 1,546 Americans aged 25 or older who participated in an online survey between January 9, 2013 and January 23, 2013. Results were weighted as needed for age by gender, education, race/ethnicity, region and household income. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online. No estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated; a full methodology is available.

**About Northwestern Mutual**

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