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For The People & The Press

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Life in 2050: Amazing Science, Familiar Threats
PUBLIC SEES A FUTURE FULL OF PROMISE AND PERIL

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Life in 2050: Amazing Science, Familiar Threats PUBLIC SEES A FUTURE FULL OF PROMISE AND PERIL

Imagine a future in which cancer becomes a memory, ordinary people travel in space, and computers carry on conversations like humans. Now imagine a darker future – a world beset by war, rising temperatures and energy shortages, one where the United States faces a terrorist attack with nuclear weapons.

Most Americans think that these developments and many others are likely to unfold over the next 40 years. In the public's view, this promises to be an era of technological progress. Large majorities expect that computers will be able to carry on conversations (81% say this definitely or probably will happen) and that there will be a cure for cancer (71%). About two-thirds (66%) say that artificial arms and legs will outperform real limbs while 53% envision ordinary people traveling in space.

At the same time, most say that war, terrorism and environmental catastrophes are at least probable by the year 2050. Nearly six-in-ten (58%) see another world war as definite or probable; 53% say the same about the prospect for a major terrorist attack on the United States involving nuclear weapons. An even higher percentage (72%) anticipates that the world will face a major energy crisis in the next 40 years.

The public is evenly divided over whether the quality of the earth's environment will improve over the next 40 years; as many say the environment is not likely to improve (50%) as say it is (47%). There continues to be a widespread belief that the earth will get warmer in the future, though the percentage expressing this view has declined by 10 points, from 76% to 66%, since 1999.

Moreover, 60% say the world's oceans will be less healthy 40 years from now than they are today; just 32% say the oceans will be more healthy. The survey was conducted just after the

Imagining Life in 2050			
In next 40 years...	Probably/Definitely		
	Will happen %	Will not happen %	DK %
Science/technology			
Computers will be able to converse like humans	81	18	1=100
Cancer will be cured	71	27	2=100
Artificial limbs will perform better than natural ones	66	31	3=100
Ordinary people will travel in space	53	45	2=100
Energy/environment			
Most of our energy will <u>not</u> come from coal/oil/gas	74	24	6=100
World will face major energy crisis	72	25	3=100
Earth will get warmer	66	30	4=100
War/terrorism			
Another world war	58	37	4=100
Major terrorist attack on U.S. involving nuclear weapons	53	43	4=100
Pew Research Center/ <i>Smithsonian</i> magazine April 21-26, 2010. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.			

April 20 explosion and fire on the Deepwater Horizon well in the Gulf of Mexico but before the full extent of the massive environmental damage caused by the oil leak became evident.

These are among the findings of a new survey of attitudes and expectations about the future, conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and *Smithsonian* magazine in conjunction with the magazine's 40th anniversary (see ["40 Things You Need to Know about the Next 40 Years"](#)). The survey, conducted by landline and cell phones April 21-26 among 1,546 adults, was informed by a 1999 survey on the future that explored many of the same topics (see ["Optimism Reigns, Technology Plays Key Role,"](#) October 24, 1999).

Despite the current economic slump and the widespread anticipation of crises to come, most Americans remain upbeat about the future, both for themselves and the nation. Today, 64% say they are very or somewhat optimistic about life for themselves and their family over the next 40 years, while 61% are optimistic about the future of the United States. Moreover, 56% say the U.S. economy will be stronger than it is today.

Most Americans Still Optimistic about the Long-Term Future		
<i>Over next 40 years, view of...</i>	May 1999	April 2010
<i>Life for you/your family</i>	%	%
Optimistic	81	64
Pessimistic	15	31
Don't know	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>
	100	100
<i>Future of U.S.</i>		
Optimistic	70	61
Pessimistic	27	36
Don't know	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>
	100	100
<i>U.S. economy will be...</i>		
Stronger	64	56
Weaker	31	39
Neither/DK	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>
	100	100

Pew Research Center/*Smithsonian* magazine
 April 21-26, 2010. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Today's recession-weary public is less sanguine about the long-term future than it was in May 1999, a time of very strong economic growth. Still, majorities across most demographic and political groups see things getting better – both for themselves and the nation – over the next four decades.

Race Relations and Health Care Expected to Improve

Thinking ahead 40 years, 68% say race relations in the United States will better, which is unchanged from the 1999 survey. And in the wake of the election of the nation's first African American president, large majorities say that the election of a woman (89%) and Hispanic (69%) will definitely or probably occur.

Notably, far more Americans think that health care will be more affordable in the future than did so in May 1999. Currently, 50% say health care will be more affordable in 2050, while 46% say it will be less affordable. In 1999, just 36% said health care would be more affordable compared with 60% who said it would be less affordable.

While a clear majority (58%) expects the gap between rich and poor in the United States to grow by 2050, fewer people say this than did so in 1999 (69%). About a third (34%) now says the rich-poor gap will get smaller, up from 27% 11 years ago.

However, Americans are less optimistic about long-term prospects for public education than they were 11 years ago. About half (49%) say the public education system will improve by 2050, down from 66% who expressed that view in 1999.

The public expresses mixed views about America's role in the world in 2050. On the one hand, people are divided over whether China will overtake the U.S. as the world's main superpower – 46% say this will definitely or probably happen, while 49% say it will not.

However, most Americans (53%) say that the United States will be less important in the world 40 years from now than it is today; 40% say it will be more important.

The U.S. in 2050		
<i>More likely to happen in the U.S...</i>	May 1999	April 2010
	%	%
Race relations...		
Will improve	68	68
Will get worse	28	23
Rich/poor gap...		
Will grow	69	58
Will get smaller	27	34
Health care...		
Will be more affordable	36	50
Will be less affordable	60	46
Public education...		
Will improve	66	49
Will get worse	30	46
Role in the world...		
Will be more important	--	40
Will be less important	--	53
Pew Research Center/Smithsonian magazine April 21-26, 2010.		

SECTION 1: SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Many Americans see dramatic scientific and technological advancements on the horizon, with big developments in medicine, engineering, space travel and computers. However, despite the widely anticipated scientific breakthroughs – including the elimination of fossil fuels and gas-powered cars – the public foresees a grim environmental future. Rising world temperatures, more polluted oceans and severe water shortages in the U.S. are seen as definite or probable over the next 40 years.

Fully 81% think computer science will have progressed to the point where a computer will probably or definitely be able to carry on a conversation indistinguishable from that of a human being – passing the so-called “Turing test” – by mid-century. And two-thirds of the public (66%) say that technological advancements will likely result in the development of “bionic” limbs – artificial arms and legs that perform better than natural ones.

There also is considerable optimism about the future of cancer research; about seven-in-ten people (71%) say that a cure for cancer will probably or definitely have been found by 2050. Nevertheless, optimism about this has declined since 1999, when 81% of the public thought a cure would be found by this date.

In the wake of recent shifts in NASA’s plans for manned missions to the moon and the imminent end of the space shuttle program, Americans by and large remain optimistic that astronauts will land on Mars in the next 40 years.

However, fewer now say this is likely than did so 11 years ago (63% today, 76% in 1999). While there are few demographic differences in predictions about space exploration, college graduates are more doubtful than others; 57% of college graduates say astronauts will definitely or probably land on the red planet within 40 years, while 67% of those without college degrees expect this to happen.

	Most Expect Manned Missions to Mars by 2050		
	<i>Probably/Definitely Will happen</i> %	<i>Will not happen</i> %	<i>DK</i> %
<i>In next 40 years...</i>			
Computers will be able to converse like human beings	81	18	1=100
There will be a cure for cancer	71	27	2=100
There will be artificial limbs that perform better than natural ones	66	31	3=100
Astronauts will land on Mars	63	34	2=100
Ordinary people will travel in space	53	45	2=100
An extinct animal will be brought back through cloning	51	47	2=100
We will find evidence of life elsewhere in the universe	50	45	4=100
Human beings will be cloned	48	49	3=100
Computer chips will be embedded in Americans for identification	48	50	2=100
Scientists will be able to tell thoughts from brain scans	42	55	4=100

Pew Research Center/Smithsonian magazine April 21-26, 2010.
Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

The public is more divided when it comes to other space-related scientific advancements. Half (50%) say that by 2050 there definitely or probably will be evidence that humans are not alone in the universe, while 45% say that this evidence probably or definitely won't exist by then. And about as many people anticipate that within 40 years ordinary people will be able to travel in space (53%) as think it unlikely this will happen (45%).

Americans are also split in their expectations about the future of cloning. Roughly half of Americans foresee scientists bringing an animal species back from extinction through cloning (51%), while nearly as many (47%) say this will definitely or probably not take place by 2050. Views about whether human cloning is a probable part of the next 40 years are also mixed (48% say it is and 49% say it is not), little changed since 1999.

The embedding of computer chips in order to identify Americans – familiar to many through science fiction – also gets mixed predictions. While half (50%) say this probably or definitely will not occur by 2050, almost as many (48%) say that it probably or definitely will.

About four-in-ten (42%) say it is likely that scientists will be able to tell what people are thinking by scanning their brains, another prediction that may seem like something straight out of science fiction; yet researchers are currently exploring this through the use of functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI). However, a majority (55%) says this will definitely or probably not happen.

Only about three-in-ten college graduates (31%) and 37% of those with some college experience say brain scans will allow scientists to read minds, while 50% of those who did not attend college anticipate that this will definitely or probably happen within 40 years.

Paper Will Be Passé?

If the public's predictions are to be believed, those working and living 40 years from now should be prepared for a paperless future. Nearly two-thirds (64%) say paper editions of newspapers will no longer exist, while 34% think they will still be around. Majorities of most demographic groups expect the demise of print newspapers, and those with at least some college experience are especially likely to do so.

	Paperless Future Predicted		
	<i>Probably/Definitely Will happen</i>	<i>Will not happen</i>	<i>DK</i>
<i>In next 40 years...</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
Paper newspapers will no longer exist	64	34	1=100
Paper money won't exist, all electronic transactions	63	35	2=100
Almost no one will send personal letters in mail	61	37	2=100

Pew Research Center/*Smithsonian* magazine April 21-26, 2010.
Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

A similar number (63%) thinks that paper money will definitely or probably cease to exist, with all financial transactions being electronic; some 35% do not think this will happen in the next 40 years. And with no newspaper clippings or cash-filled birthday cards to send, most predict that almost no one will send personal letters in the mail: 61% say this will definitely or probably happen; 37% of the public disagrees.

Energy and the Environment

Public opinion about the condition of the planet and the energy situation over the next 40 years includes several dire predictions as well as some optimistic ones. Across many of these measures, those who hold more pessimistic views about the future of the environment are also more likely to be pessimistic about the future of the country.

Nearly three-quarters (74%) say that it is likely that “most of our energy will come from sources other than coal, oil, and gas” while just 24% say that this is unlikely. A smaller majority (54%) thinks that production of automobiles powered by gasoline will have stopped by 2050; 41% say this is unlikely to happen. At the same time, 72% of Americans say that the world is likely to experience a major worldwide energy crisis by the end of the next four decades.

	More Alternative Energy, But Global Energy Crisis Nonetheless		
	<i>Probably/Definitely Will happen</i> %	<i>Will not happen</i> %	<i>DK</i> %
<i>In next 40 years....</i>			
Most energy from alternative sources	74	24	2=100
Major world energy crisis	72	25	3=100
The earth will get warmer	66	30	4=100
No more gas-powered cars	54	41	4=100
Severe fresh water shortages in most of U.S.	53	43	3=100
Improved environmental quality	47	50	3=100

Pew Research Center/*Smithsonian* magazine April 21-26, 2010.
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In terms of the overall quality of the environment, about as many expect it will not improve over the next 40 years (50%) as say it will get better (47%). Moreover, two-thirds (66%) say the earth will definitely or probably get warmer over this period; just 30% say this definitely or probably won't happen. Six-in-ten (60%) say the world's oceans will be less healthy in 40 years than they are today. And more Americans say the country is likely to experience severe fresh water shortages (53%) than say this is unlikely to happen (43%).

Young Are More Pessimistic about Environment

People younger than 30 are considerably more pessimistic than older Americans about the environment over the next four decades. About three-quarters (74%) of those under 30 say the oceans will be less healthy in 2050 than they are today, a view shared by 60% of 30 to 49 year olds, but smaller majorities of older Americans.

Similarly, a 62% majority of those under 30 expect that the quality of the earth's environment will not improve by 2050, the highest percentage in any age group. There is also an age gap in predictions of a rise in earth's temperature: 77% of younger Americans say the earth will definitely or probably get warmer, compared with 64% of those older than 30.

	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+	Young-old diff
<i>In next 40 years...</i>	%	%	%	%	
World's oceans will be <u>less</u> healthy than today	74	60	55	51	+23
Environmental quality will <u>not</u> improve*	62	51	43	42	+20
Earth will get warmer*	77	63	65	61	+16

* Definitely/probably.
Pew Research Center/*Smithsonian* magazine April 21-26, 2010.

In general, Republicans are substantially less negative than Democrats and independents in their long-term environmental outlook. Fewer than half of Republicans (48%) say the earth will definitely or probably get warmer over the next 40 years, while large majorities of Democrats (83%) and independents (68%) expect the earth to get warmer over this period.

Moreover, just 37% of Republicans say the United States is likely to face severe water shortages in coming decades; 63% of independents and 56% of Democrats say severe water shortages in the U.S. are either definite or probable. And Republicans (52%) are less likely than Democrats (65%) to say that the world's oceans will be less healthy over the next 40 years.

	Total	Rep	Dem	Ind	R-D diff
<i>In next 40 years...</i>	%	%	%	%	
Earth will get warmer*	66	48	83	68	-35
U.S. will face water shortages*	53	37	56	63	-19
World's oceans will be <u>less</u> healthy than today	60	52	65	61	-13

* Definitely/probably.
Pew Research Center/*Smithsonian* magazine April 21-26, 2010.

Since 1999, there has been a sharp decline in the percentage of Republicans and older Americans who say the earth is likely to get warmer by 2050. Eleven years ago, 68% of Republicans said it was at least probable that the earth would get warmer. That figure has fallen to 48% currently. Independents also are somewhat less likely to expect the earth to get warmer than in 1999 (76% then, 68% today). By contrast, there has been virtually no change among Democrats (81% in 1999, 83% today).

<i>Probable/definite that earth will get warmer...</i>	May <u>1999</u> %	April <u>2010</u> %	<u>Change</u>
Total	76	66	-10
18-29	78	77	-1
30-49	76	63	-13
50-64	71	65	-6
65+	78	61	-17
Republican	68	48	-20
Democrat	81	83	+2
Independent	76	68	-8

Pew Research Center/Smithsonian magazine April 21-26, 2010.

In addition, fewer people 65 and older anticipate the earth will get warmer than did so 11 years ago (78% then, 61% today); the percentage of those ages 30 to 49 who predict that the earth will get warmer also has declined (76% then, 63% today).

The sizable partisan and age differences in opinions about future global warming correspond to views about whether earth's temperatures have been rising in recent decades. Pew Research Center surveys over the past few years have found a substantial decline in the proportion of Republicans saying there is solid evidence the earth's temperatures have been rising (see [Fewer Americans See Solid Evidence of Global Warming](#), October 22, 2009).

SECTION 2: THE NATION, THE ECONOMY AND SOCIAL TRENDS

Most Americans are optimistic about their own lives and the future of the United States over the next 40 years. But there are clouds on the horizon. Most expect the average family's standard of living will not improve by 2050 and there is a widespread belief that economic inequality will increase.

More than six-in-ten (64%) say they are either very (26%) or somewhat (38%) optimistic about life for them and their families over the next 40 years. Personal optimism has slipped somewhat from the 1999 survey when fully 81% said they were either very (40%) or somewhat (41%) optimistic about life in the future.

Most Americans (61%) also are optimistic about the future of the U.S. over the next 40 years. However, fewer today are optimistic than in 1999, when 70% expressed optimism.

Democrats (72%) stand out as being more optimistic about the nation's future than Republicans and independents (55% each). Optimism about the future of the country also is associated with expectations for the U.S. economy. Fully 78% of those who say the U.S. economy will be stronger by 2050 are optimistic about the nation's future, compared with just 34% among those who say the economy will be weaker 40 years from today.

	Optimistic %	Pessimistic %	DK %
Total	61	36	3=100
18-29	59	40	2=100
30-49	61	36	3=100
50-64	61	36	4=100
65+	62	32	6=100
Republican	55	43	2=100
Democrat	72	26	2=100
Independent	55	41	3=100
<i>U.S. economy will be...</i>			
Stronger	78	20	2=100
Weaker	34	61	5=100

Pew Research Center/Smithsonian magazine April 21-26, 2010. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Mixed Economic Expectations

As might be expected, fewer Americans (56%) expect the U.S. economy will be stronger in 2050 than said that during economic boom of the late 1990s (64%). Somewhat more also say the gap between rich and poor will get smaller than did so 11 years ago (34% today, 27% in 1999). Still, a majority (58%) continues to say that it is likely that the rich-poor gap will grow.

Despite the public's fairly upbeat assessment of the nation's economic future, only about a third (34%) says that the average American family will see its standard of living get better over the next 40 years. More than six-in-ten (63%) see the average family' standard of living getting worse (36%) or staying the same (27%) over the next four decades.

Opinions about the future of the economy and standard of living for average families are divided along partisan lines. Fully 71% of Democrats say the U.S. economy will be stronger 40 years from now than it is today. That compares with 50% of independents and 47% of Republicans.

Democrats also are more likely than independents or Republicans to see the average family's standard of living improve by 2050. Still, fewer than half of Democrats (44%) expect that the average family will be better off economically. Only about three-in-ten independents (29%) and Republicans (27%) see average families doing better in the future.

There is little optimism across most demographic and income groups that the standard of living for average families will improve. However, 61% of African Americans say that the standard of living for families will improve; just 27% of whites agree.

Among those who see the U.S. economy getting stronger over the next 40 years, 53% see average families doing better economically. Among those who say the economy will be weaker in the future, 67% say the standard of living will get worse by 2050.

A Stronger U.S. Economy, But Average Families Are Not Expected to Benefit

<i>In 40 years, more likely that... U.S. economy will be...</i>	May 1999 %	April 2010 %	<i>Change</i>
Stronger	64	56	-8
Weaker	31	39	+8
<i>Rich-poor gap will...</i>			
Grow	69	58	-11
Get smaller	27	34	+7
<i>Over next 40 years, standard of living for average families will...</i>			
Get better	--	34	
Stay the same	--	27	
Get worse	--	36	

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Average Family's Standard of Living Is More Likely to...

	Get better %	Stay about the same %	Get worse %	DK %
Total	34	27	36	3=100
Republican	27	30	41	2=100
Democrat	44	27	25	3=100
Independent	29	25	43	3=100
<i>Family income</i>				
\$75,000 or more	31	29	38	2=100
\$30k-74,999	33	29	36	2=100
Less than \$30,000	38	22	35	5=100
<i>Economy will be...</i>				
Stronger	53	28	17	2=100
Weaker	7	23	67	3=100

Pew Research Center/Smithsonian magazine April 21-26, 2010. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Health Care and Education

Public expectations are divided about progress on two major domestic issues – health care and education. Compared with 1999, many more people expect health care to be more affordable 40 years from now than it is today. By contrast, far fewer people say the public education system will improve than did so 11 years ago.

The changing expectations on both issues are strongly linked to partisanship. In the wake of passage of major health care legislation, twice as many Democrats say health care will be more affordable in the future than did so in 1999 (70% today, 35% then). Independents also are more likely to say that health care will be more affordable (47% today, 35% in 1999). But fewer Republicans say health care is likely to become more affordable than did so in 1999 (30% today, 41% in 1999).

Republicans take a much more negative view of the future of the public education system than they did 11 years ago. Currently, a majority of Republicans (55%) say the public education system is more likely to get worse over the next 40 years. In 1999, most Republicans (63%) thought that public education would improve by 2050.

Independents also have turned more negative about the future of public education. Fewer than half (44%) see public education improving by 2050, down from 63% in 1999. Democrats remain much more positive about the education system: Currently, 66% say it is more likely to improve by 2050, little changed from 11 years ago (72%).

Democrats Optimistic Health Care in the U.S. Will Be More Affordable

April 2010

<i>In 40 years, health care more likely to be...</i>	Total %	Rep %	Dem %	Ind %
More affordable	50	30	70	47
Less affordable	46	65	25	51
Other/DK	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>2</u>
	100	100	100	100

May 1999

<i>In 50 years, health care more likely to be...</i>	Total %	Rep %	Dem %	Ind %
More affordable	36	41	35	35
Less affordable	60	57	61	63
Other/DK	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>
	100	100	100	100

99-10 change in "more affordable" +14 -11 +35 +12

Pew Research Center/Smithsonian magazine April 21-26, 2010.
 Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Republicans See U.S. Public Education System Getting Worse

April 2010

<i>In 40 years, public education more likely to...</i>	Total %	Rep %	Dem %	Ind %
Improve	49	38	66	44
Get worse	46	55	30	53
Other/DK	<u>5</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>
	100	100	100	100

May 1999

<i>In 50 years, public education more likely to...</i>	Total %	Rep %	Dem %	Ind %
Improve	66	63	72	63
Get worse	30	33	26	33
Other/DK	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
	100	100	100	100

99-10 change in "improve" -17 -25 -6 -19

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Most Expect Female, Hispanic Presidents

There is much greater agreement among the public that political gender and ethnic barriers will fall in the next 40 years. Fully 89% say that a woman will definitely (28%) or probably (61%) be elected, up from 80% in 1999. Men (90%) are as likely as women (88%) to say they think a woman will become president; large majorities of all political and demographic groups expect this to happen.

Somewhat fewer (69%) – but still a clear majority – expect a Hispanic to be elected U.S. president in the next 40 years. Just 26% say this will definitely or probably not happen.

The public also anticipates that race relations in the United States will improve, rather than get worse, over the next 40 years. Nearly seven-in-ten (68%) now say that race relations are likely to improve, which is unchanged from 1999. Those under the age of 50 are somewhat more optimistic about the future of race relations in this country than are older Americans: 75% of those under 50 think race relations will improve, compared with 61% of those 50 and older.

	May <u>1999</u> %	April <u>2010</u> %
<i>In 40 years, probable/ definite that...</i>		
Woman will be elected U.S. president	80	89
Hispanic will be elected U.S. president	--	69
<i>More likely that U.S. race relations will...</i>		
Improve	68	68
Get worse	28	23
Other/DK	<u>4</u>	<u>9</u>
	100	100

Pew Research Center/*Smithsonian* magazine April 21-26, 2010.
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Aging Workforce Envisioned

An overwhelming majority (86%) says that it is at least probable that in the next 40 years most Americans will have to work into their 70s before retiring. Just 11% say this is definitely or probably not going to happen.

There are only modest demographic differences on this issue. But young people today – who would actually experience extended time in the workforce – are less likely than older people to see this as probable. While 78% of those under 30 say most Americans will have to work into their 70s before retiring, fully 89% of those 30 and older expect this to happen.

	April <u>2010</u> %
<i>In 40 years, probable/ definite that...</i>	
Most Americans will have to work into 70s before retiring	86
<i>More likely that...</i>	
Many more will live to 100	42
About as many will live to 100	50
Other/DK	<u>8</u>
	100

Pew Research Center/*Smithsonian* magazine April 21-26, 2010.
Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

A sizable minority (42%) say it is likely that the nation's population of those 100 and older – already the largest in its history – will grow substantially by 2050. Half (50%) say that about as many people will live to 100 as do so today. College graduates (55%) are much more

likely than those with no college experience (34%) to predict many more people living to age 100 in the future.

Demographic Trends

Most experts agree that the U.S. population will continue to grow in the decades to come. Asked about estimates that the nation's population will grow by 100 million by 2050, far Americans more say the burgeoning population will harm the country (42%) than benefit the country (16%); 37% say it will neither benefit nor harm the country.

On a related subject, the public is divided over whether legal immigration will need to be increased, kept at current levels, or reduced in order to maintain the strength of the U.S. economy over the next 40 years. Slightly more than a third (36%) say legal immigration will need to be maintained at current levels, 34% say it will need to be decreased, while 26% say it will need to be increased.

Notably, far more of those who do not have a college degree (39%) than college graduates (21%) say legal immigration will need to be decreased keep the U.S. economy strong. There also are partisan differences; 43% of Republicans say immigration will need to be decreased compared with 31% of independents and 28% of Democrats.

Public Wary of Population Growth, Increased Immigration	
<i>U.S. population growth of about 100 million will ...</i>	April 2010 %
Benefit the country	16
Harm the country	42
Neither benefit nor harm	37
Don't know	5
	100
<i>To keep U.S. economy strong, legal immigration will need to be...</i>	
Increased	26
Kept at current levels	36
Decreased	34
Don't know	5
	100
Pew Research Center/ <i>Smithsonian</i> magazine April 21-26, 2010. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.	

SECTION 3: WAR, TERRORISM AND GLOBAL TRENDS

The public sees the next 40 years as a time of violent conflict, both globally and in the United States. Fully 58% see another world war as definite or probable over the next 40 years. Nearly as many (53%) expect the United States to face a terrorist attack with nuclear weapons.

Opinions about America's future role in the world are mixed: 53% say the United States will be less important in the world than it is today while 40% say it will be more important. At the same time, 49% say China will definitely or probably *not* overtake the United States as the world's main superpower, while 46% say it will.

	<i>Probably/definitely</i> <u>Will</u> <u>happen</u> %	<i>Probably/definitely</i> <u>Will not</u> <u>happen</u> %	<u>DK</u> %
Another world war	58	37	4=100
A major terrorist attack on U.S. with a nuclear weapon	53	43	4=100
China will overtake U.S. as world's main superpower	46	49	5=100
Jesus Christ will return	41	46	13=100
Single global currency	41	55	4=100
An asteroid will hit earth	31	62	7=100

Pew Research Center/*Smithsonian* magazine April 21-26, 2010. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Notably, opinions about the U.S. role in the world – and whether China will overtake the United States as the main superpower – are associated with optimism about the nation's future. An overwhelming majority (81%) among those who predict the U.S. will be more important in the future are optimistic about the future of the United States. But among those who say the nation will be less important in the future, just 46% express optimism.

On a very different subject, the public is divided over whether Jesus Christ will return to earth by 2050. About four-in-ten (41%) expect Jesus Christ to return while slightly more (46%) say this will definitely or probably not happen. Opinions about the return of Jesus Christ are little changed from 1999 when 44% said it would definitely or probably happen.

Most Americans do not expect the adoption of a single global currency in the next 40 years. And while the survey finds that the public sees many potential dangers looming in the decades ahead, there is not widespread concern about the possibility that an asteroid will collide with earth. Fewer than one-third (31%) say an asteroid will definitely or probably hit earth, which is unchanged from 1999.

Apocalypse Soon?

The expectation that there will be another world war by 2050 is more common among younger and less educated Americans than among those in other groups. Fully 68% of those younger than 30 predict another world war; that compares with 56% of those ages 30 and older.

And while 69% of those with no more than a high school education say another world war is at least probable, that view is shared by just 48% of those with a college education.

At the same time, young people are a bit less likely than older Americans to predict that the United States will face a terrorist attack with nuclear weapons. Those under 30 are the only age group in which fewer than half (46%) say such an attack is at least probable. As with expectations about another world war, those with a high school education or less are more likely than college graduates to predict a nuclear terrorist attack on the United States (57% vs. 46%).

<i>Definite/probable in next 40 years...</i>	World War %	Nuclear terrorism against U.S. %
Total	58	53
18-29	68	46
30-49	54	54
50-64	59	56
65+	55	57
College grad +	48	46
Some college	54	54
HS or less	69	57
Republican	61	57
Democrat	53	46
Independent	62	58

Pew Research Center/Smithsonian magazine April 21-26, 2010.

Jesus Christ's Return

As expected, predictions about whether Jesus Christ will return to earth in the next 40 years divide along religious lines. Fully 58% of white evangelical Christians say Jesus Christ will definitely or probably return to earth in this period, by far the highest percentage in any religious group. Only about a third of Catholics (32%), and even fewer white mainline Protestants (27%) and the religiously unaffiliated (20%) predict Jesus Christ's return to earth.

In addition, those with no college experience (59%) are much more likely than those with some college experience (35%) and college graduates (19%) to expect Jesus Christ's return. By region, those in the South (52%) are the most likely to predict a Second Coming by 2050.

	<i>Probably/Definitely</i>		
	Will Happen %	Will not Happen %	DK %
Total	41	46	13=100
Protestant	54	32	15=100
White evangelical	58	25	16=100
White mainline	27	58	15=100
Catholic	32	57	12=100
Unaffiliated	20	72	8=100
College grad+	19	64	17=100
Some college	35	51	14=100
HS or less	59	31	10=100
East	29	64	7=100
Midwest	39	47	14=100
South	52	33	15=100
West	35	51	14=100

Pew Research Center/Smithsonian magazine April 21-26, 2010. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

On a related subject, 65% of Americans say that religion in the United States will be about as important as it is now in 40 years; 30% say religion will become less important. Majorities across all religious groups, including the unaffiliated, see religion continuing to be about as important as it is now in the coming decades.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

Results for this survey are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International among a national sample of 1,546 adults living in the continental United States, 18 years of age or older, from April 21-26, 2010 (1,006 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 540 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 203 who had no landline telephone). Both the landline and cell phone samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see <http://people-press.org/methodology/>.

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race/ethnicity, region, and population density to parameters from the March 2009 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample is also weighted to match current patterns of telephone status and relative usage of landline and cell phones (for those with both), based on extrapolations from the 2009 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size within the landline sample. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting.

The following table shows the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

<u>Group</u>	<u>Sample Size</u>	<u>Plus or minus...</u>
Total sample	1,546	3.0 percentage points
Form 1	779	4.5 percentage points
Form 2	767	4.5 percentage points

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

ABOUT THE CENTER

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. We are sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts and are one of seven projects that make up the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

The Center's purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations. All of our current survey results are made available free of charge.

All of the Center's research and reports are collaborative products based on the input and analysis of the entire Center staff consisting of:

Andrew Kohut, Director
Scott Keeter, Director of Survey Research
Carroll Doherty and Michael Dimock, Associate Directors
Michael Remez, Senior Writer
Robert Suls, Shawn Neidorf, Leah Christian, Jocelyn Kiley and Alec Tyson, Research Associates
Jacob Poushter, Research Analyst

PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS
APRIL 2010 POLITICAL AND FUTURE SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
 April 21-26, 2010
 N=1546

QUESTIONS 1-39 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

NO QUESTIONS 40-44

ASK ALL:

Now, I'd like you to think about what things will be like in 2050 [**PRONOUNCED: "twenty-fifty"**], that is, 40 years from now...

Q.45 First, thinking about you and your family... Would you say you are very optimistic, somewhat optimistic, somewhat pessimistic, or very pessimistic about life for you and your family over the next 40 years?

Apr 21-26 <u>2010</u>		May <u>1999¹</u>
26	Very optimistic	40
38	Somewhat optimistic	41
19	Somewhat pessimistic	10
12	Very pessimistic	5
4	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	4

ASK ALL:

Q.46 And, thinking about the United States... Would you say you are very optimistic, somewhat optimistic, somewhat pessimistic, or very pessimistic about the future of the U.S., over the next 40 years?

Apr 21-26 <u>2010</u>		May <u>1999²</u>
23	Very optimistic	23
38	Somewhat optimistic	47
23	Somewhat pessimistic	20
13	Very pessimistic	7
3	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	3

NO QUESTIONS 47-49

ASK ALL:

Q.50 Over the next 40 years, do you think that the average American family will see its standard of living...
[READ AND RANDOMIZE RESPONSE OPTIONS 1 & 3, WITH OPTION 2 ALWAYS IN THE MIDDLE]

Apr 21-26 <u>2010</u>	
34	Get better
27	Stay about the same [OR]
36	Get worse
3	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

NO QUESTIONS 51-52

¹ In May, 1999 the question asked about: "life for you and your family over the next 50 years."
² In May, 1999 the question asked about: "the future of the U.S., over the next 50 years."

ASK ALL:

Q.53 Still thinking ahead 40 years, as I read the following pairs, please tell me which is more likely to happen here in the U.S... First, do you think . . .**[INSERT ITEM PAIRS; RANDOMIZE; OBSERVE FORM SPLITS]** Next, do you think **[NEXT ITEM]** **[IF NECESSARY: 40 years from now, which is more likely to happen here in the U.S. (REPEAT ITEM)] [DO NOT READ NUMBERS “1” OR “2”]**³

	Apr 21-26 <u>2010</u>		May <u>1999</u> ⁴	Dec <u>1996</u>
a.	56	The U.S. economy will be stronger than today	64	53
		OR		
	39	The U.S. economy will be weaker than today	31	42
	1	Neither/No change (VOL.)	2	2
	4	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	3	3

ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=767]:

	Apr 21-26 <u>2010</u>		May <u>1999</u> ⁵	Dec <u>1996</u>
b.F2	50	Health care will be MORE affordable than today	36	36
		OR		
	46	Health care will be LESS affordable than today	60	61
	1	Neither/No change (VOL.)	1	1
	4	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	3	2

	Apr 21-26 <u>2010</u>		May <u>1999</u>	Dec <u>1996</u>
c.F2	68	Race relations will improve	68	54
		OR		
	23	Race relations will get worse	28	40
	4	Neither/No change (VOL.)	3	3
	5	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	1	3

	Apr 21-26 <u>2010</u>			
d.F2	40	The United States will be more important in the world than it is now		
		OR		
	53	The United States will be less important in the world than it is now		
	5	Neither/No change (VOL.)		
	3	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)		

NO ITEM e.F2

ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=779]:

	Apr 21-26 <u>2010</u>		May <u>1999</u>
f.F1	58	The gap between rich and poor will grow	69
		OR	
	34	The gap between rich and poor will get smaller	27
	3	Neither/No change (VOL.)	2
	5	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	2

³ In May, 1999 the question began: “Thinking ahead over the next 50 years...”

⁴ In May, 1999 and before the statements read: “The U.S. economy will be stronger [OR] the U.S. economy will be weaker.”

⁵ In May, 1999 and before the statements read: “Health care will be MORE affordable [OR] health care will be LESS affordable.”

Q.53 CONTINUED...

		TREND FOR COMPARISON		
Apr 21-26 <u>2010</u>			May <u>1999⁶</u>	
g.F1		Many more people than now will live to be 100 years of age OR	58	
	42			
	50	About as many people will live to 100 as do now	40	
	5	Neither/No change (VOL.)	2	
	3	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	*	
Apr 21-26 <u>2010</u>			May <u>1999</u>	Dec <u>1996</u>
h.F1	49	The public education system will improve OR	66	59
	46	The public education system will get worse	30	37
	1	Neither/No change (VOL.)	2	2
	4	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	2	2
Apr 21-26 <u>2010</u>				
i.F1	30	Religion will become less important in the U.S. OR		
	65	Religion will be about as important in the U.S. as it is now		
	3	Neither/No change (VOL.)		
	3	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)		

ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=767]:

Q.54F2 And 40 years from now, do you think [**READ AND RANDOMIZE**]?

Apr 21-26 <u>2010</u>		
	32	The world's oceans will be MORE healthy than they are now [OR]
	60	The world's oceans will be LESS healthy than they are now
	3	Neither/No change (VOL.)
	5	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK FORM 1 ONLY [N=779]:

Q.55AF1 It's estimated that by 2050 the population of the United States will grow by about 100 million. Do you think this population growth will [**READ, RANDOMIZE ITEMS 1 & 2, KEEP ITEM 3 LAST**]?

Apr 21-26 <u>2010</u>		
	16	Benefit the country
	42	Harm the country [OR]
	37	Neither benefit nor harm the country
	5	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

⁶ In May, 1999 the statements read: "People will live much longer [OR] people will live about as long as they do now."

ASK FORM 2 ONLY [N=767]:

Q.55BF2 In order to maintain the strength of the U.S. economy over the next 40 years, do you think, that LEGAL immigration will...**[READ AND RANDOMIZE RESPONSE OPTIONS 1 & 3, WITH OPTION 2 ALWAYS IN THE MIDDLE]**

Apr 21-26
2010

- 26 Need to be increased
- 36 Need to be maintained at current levels [OR]
- 34 Need to be decreased
- 5 Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

ASK ALL:

Q.56 Now I'm going to read you a list of things that may or may not happen in the next 40 years. Please tell me how likely you think it is that each will happen. First, How likely do you think it is that **[INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE; OBSERVE FORM SPLITS]**... do you think this will definitely happen, will probably happen, will probably NOT happen, or will definitely not happen? How about **[NEXT ITEM] [IF NECESSARY: do you think this will definitely happen, will probably happen, will probably NOT happen, or will definitely not happen, in the next 40 years?]**...⁷

FORM 1 ITEMS BASED ON N=779

FORM 2 ITEMS BASED ON N=767

		Will definitely <u>happen</u>	Will probably <u>happen</u>	Will probably <u>not happen</u>	Will definitely <u>not happen</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
a.F1	Jesus Christ will return to earth					
	Apr 21-26, 2010	23	18	29	17	13
	May, 1999	22	22	27	17	12
b.F1	There will be another world war					
	Apr 21-26, 2010	16	42	31	6	4
	TREND FOR COMPARISON:					
	There will be a nuclear war					
	May, 1999	9	32	46	11	2
c.F2	There will be a major terrorist attack on the U.S. involving a nuclear weapon					
	Apr 21-26, 2010	10	43	36	7	4
	TREND FOR COMPARISON:					
	There will be a major terrorist attack on the U.S. involving biological or chemical weapons					
	May, 1999	13	51	28	4	4
d.F2	The world will face a major energy crisis					
	Apr 21-26, 2010	21	51	21	4	3
	May, 1999	15	48	30	4	3
e.F1	The earth will get warmer					
	Apr 21-26, 2010	27	39	21	9	4
	May, 1999	28	48	16	3	5

⁷ In May, 1999 the question began: "Now I'm going to read you a list of things that may or may not happen in the next 50 years. "

Q.56 CONTINUED...

		Will definitely <u>happen</u>	Will probably <u>happen</u>	Will probably <u>not happen</u>	Will definitely <u>not happen</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
f.F2	The quality of the earth's environment will improve Apr 21-26, 2010	9	38	41	9	3
	TREND FOR COMPARISON: We will make progress in improving our environment May, 1999	19	59	18	2	2
g.F1	An asteroid will hit the earth Apr 21-26, 2010	5	26	46	16	7
	May, 1999	6	25	48	14	7
h.F2	We will find evidence of life elsewhere in the universe Apr 21-26, 2010	12	38	33	12	4
	TREND FOR COMPARISON: We will make contact with alien life May, 1999	4	23	42	27	4
i.F1	Ordinary people will travel in space Apr 21-26, 2010	14	39	35	10	2
	May, 1999	12	45	32	9	2
j.F2	Astronauts will land on Mars Apr 21-26, 2010	14	49	27	7	2
	May, 1999 ⁸	18	58	17	5	2
k.F2	There will be a cure for cancer Apr 21-26, 2010	18	53	23	4	2
	May, 1999	23	58	16	2	1
	TREND FOR COMPARISON: There will be a cure for AIDS May, 1999	19	60	16	4	1
l.F2	Most Americans will have computer chips embedded in their bodies for identification Apr 21-26, 2010	9	39	36	14	2
m.F1	China will overtake the U.S. as the world's main superpower Apr 21-26, 2010	12	34	33	16	5
	TRENDS FOR COMPARISON: China will become a rival superpower to the U.S. May, 1999	18	49	24	5	4
	The U.S. will remain the world's only superpower May, 1999	13	31	43	10	3

⁸ In May, 1999 the item read: "A manned spacecraft will land on Mars."

Q.56 CONTINUED...

		Will definitely <u>happen</u>	Will probably <u>happen</u>	Will probably <u>not happen</u>	Will definitely <u>not happen</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
n.F1	There will be a single global currency in use throughout the world Apr 21-26, 2010	10	31	40	15	4
o.F1	A woman will be elected U.S. president Apr 21-26, 2010	28	61	7	2	1
	May, 1999	27	53	16	3	1
p.F2	A Hispanic will be elected U.S. president Apr 21-26, 2010	8	61	20	6	4
	TREND FOR COMPARISON: An African American will be elected U.S. president May, 1999	17	59	17	5	2
q.F1	We will clone human beings Apr 21-26, 2010	12	36	33	16	3
	May, 1999	12	39	32	13	4
r.F1	There will be artificial arms and legs that perform better than natural ones Apr 21-26, 2010	20	46	22	9	3
s.F2	Almost no one will send personal letters in the mail Apr 21-26, 2010	18	43	30	7	2
t.F2	Gasoline powered cars will no longer be made Apr 21-26, 2010	12	42	35	6	4
u.F1	Most of our energy will come from sources other than coal, oil, and gas Apr 21-26, 2010	21	53	20	4	2
v.F1	There will be computers that can carry on a conversation just like a human being Apr 21-26, 2010	28	53	13	5	1
w.F2	Most Americans will have to work into their 70s before retiring Apr 21-26, 2010	32	54	10	1	2
x.F2	Scientists will be able to tell what people are thinking by scanning their brains Apr 21-26, 2010	7	35	38	17	4
y.F1	Most of the U.S. will experience severe shortages of fresh water Apr 21-26, 2010	14	39	36	7	3

Q.56 CONTINUED...

		Will definitely <u>happen</u>	Will probably <u>happen</u>	Will probably <u>not happen</u>	Will definitely <u>not happen</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
z.F1	Paper editions of newspapers will no longer exist Apr 21-26, 2010	19	45	27	7	1
aa.F2	Paper money will no longer exist, all financial transactions will be electronic Apr 21-26, 2010	15	48	27	8	2
bb.F2	Scientists will bring back an extinct animal species by cloning it Apr 21-26, 2010	9	42	36	11	2

ASK ALL:

PARTY In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or Independent?

ASK IF ANSWERED 3, 4, 5 OR 9 IN PARTY:

PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	(VOL.) No <u>preference</u>	(VOL.) Other <u>party</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>	<i>Lean Rep</i>	<i>Lean Dem</i>
Apr 21-26, 2010	26	33	36	3	1	3	16	13
Apr 8-11, 2010	23	32	38	5	*	2	17	13
Apr 1-5, 2010	24	29	40	3	1	3	17	15
Mar 18-21, 2010	24	30	40	2	1	3	17	13
Mar 11-21, 2010	28	34	32	3	*	3	13	12
Mar 10-14, 2010	22	33	37	6	*	3	14	13
Feb 3-9, 2010	26	31	37	3	*	3	14	17
Jan 6-10, 2010	22	33	42	2	1	2	17	16
Dec 9-13, 2009	25	32	38	2	*	2	14	15
Oct 28-Nov 8, 2009	27	35	32	3	*	2	13	13
Sep 30-Oct 4, 2009	23	34	37	3	1	3	16	14
Sep 10-15, 2009	23	34	34	4	*	5	13	17
Aug 20-27, 2009	26	32	36	3	*	3	14	16
Aug 11-17, 2009	23	33	38	3	*	3	16	15
Jul 22-26, 2009	22	34	37	5	*	2	15	14
Jun 10-14, 2009	25	34	34	3	*	3	11	16
Apr 28-May 12, 2009	23	39	29	4	*	4	9	14
Yearly Totals								
2009	23.9	34.4	35.1	3.4	.4	2.8	13.1	15.7
2008	25.3	35.8	31.7	3.8	.3	3.1	10.5	15.4
2007	25.4	32.9	33.7	4.6	.4	3.1	10.7	16.7
2006	27.6	32.8	30.3	5.0	.4	3.9	10.2	14.5
2005	29.2	32.8	30.3	4.5	.3	2.8	10.2	14.9
2004	29.7	33.4	29.8	3.9	.4	2.9	11.7	13.4
2003	29.8	31.4	31.2	4.7	.5	2.5	12.1	13.0
2002	30.3	31.2	30.1	5.1	.7	2.7	12.6	11.6
2001	29.2	33.6	28.9	5.1	.5	2.7	11.7	11.4
2001 Post-Sept 11	30.9	31.8	27.9	5.2	.6	3.6	11.7	9.4
2001 Pre-Sept 11	28.2	34.6	29.5	5.0	.5	2.1	11.7	12.5
2000	27.5	32.5	29.5	5.9	.5	4.0	11.6	11.6
1999	26.6	33.5	33.7	3.9	.5	1.9	13.0	14.5
1998	27.5	33.2	31.9	4.6	.4	2.4	11.8	13.5

PARTY/PARTYLN CONTINUED...

				(VOL.)	(VOL.)	(VOL.)	<i>Lean</i>	<i>Lean</i>
	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	No	Other	DK/Ref	<i>Rep</i>	<i>Dem</i>
				preference	party			
1997	28.2	33.3	31.9	4.0	.4	2.3	12.3	13.8
1996	29.2	32.7	33.0	5.2	--	--	12.7	15.6
1995	31.4	29.7	33.4	5.4	--	--	14.4	12.9
1994	29.8	31.8	33.8	4.6	--	--	14.3	12.6
1993	27.4	33.8	34.0	4.8	--	--	11.8	14.7
1992	27.7	32.7	35.7	3.9	--	--	13.8	15.8
1991	30.9	31.4	33.2	4.5	--	--	14.6	10.8
1990	31.0	33.1	29.1	6.8	--	--	12.4	11.3
1989	33	33	34	--	--	--	--	--
1987	26	35	39	--	--	--	--	--