

**Understanding Civic Health:
How to Measure It, Why it Matters,
and How it Can Transform
Democracy**

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Mentimeter Poll Results

Why Does Civic Health Matter?



One Thing Republicans and Democrats Disagree on...

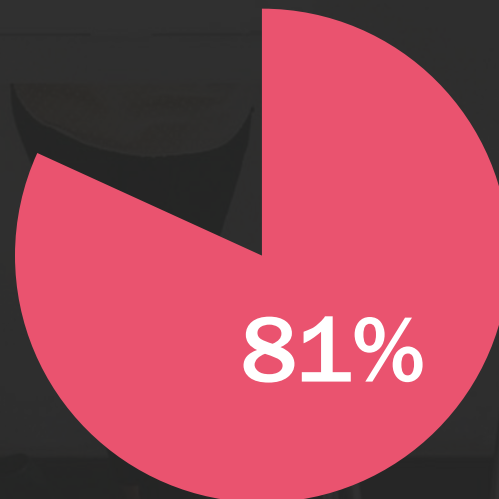
Disagree on...

They **can't agree** on any basic facts.

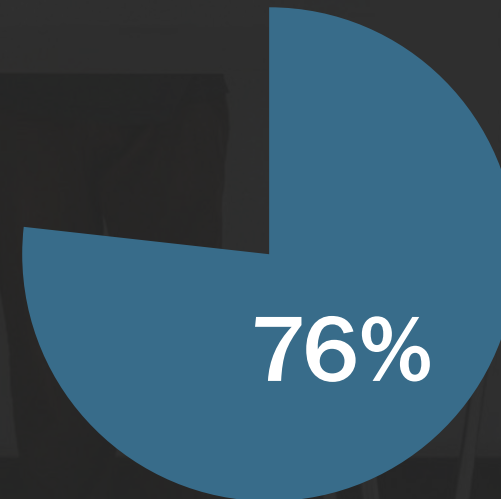
% who say when it comes to important issues facing the country, most republican and democrat voters can't agree on basic facts

Source: Pew Research

Republicans



Democrats




74% of Americans feel they **don't belong** in their local community

68%

don't feel they
belong in the
nation

64%

don't feel they
belong in their
workplace

A person is walking away from the camera down the center of a long, straight asphalt road. The road is flanked by bare, leafless trees, and the atmosphere is thick with fog or mist, creating a sense of isolation and solitude. The person is wearing a light-colored jacket and jeans. The overall mood is somber and reflective.

More than half of adults report being lonely...

And this is more acute for **underrepresented groups.**

Volunteerism is declining

A group of volunteers, including an elderly woman in the foreground, are planting young trees in a field. They are wearing white t-shirts with 'VOLUNTEER' printed on them. The scene is outdoors with a clear sky and some trees in the background.

Formal **volunteer participation dropped to 23%**, a 7% decrease from 2019 to 2021 and the largest drop since 2002.

There are real concerns and threats to democracy.

% who say they are _____ with the way democracy is working in their country



Source: Pew Research

*Here is just how poorly Florida
Republicans and Democrats
regard each other | Column*

**Florida Becomes Epicenter Of Nation's
Polarizing Politics**

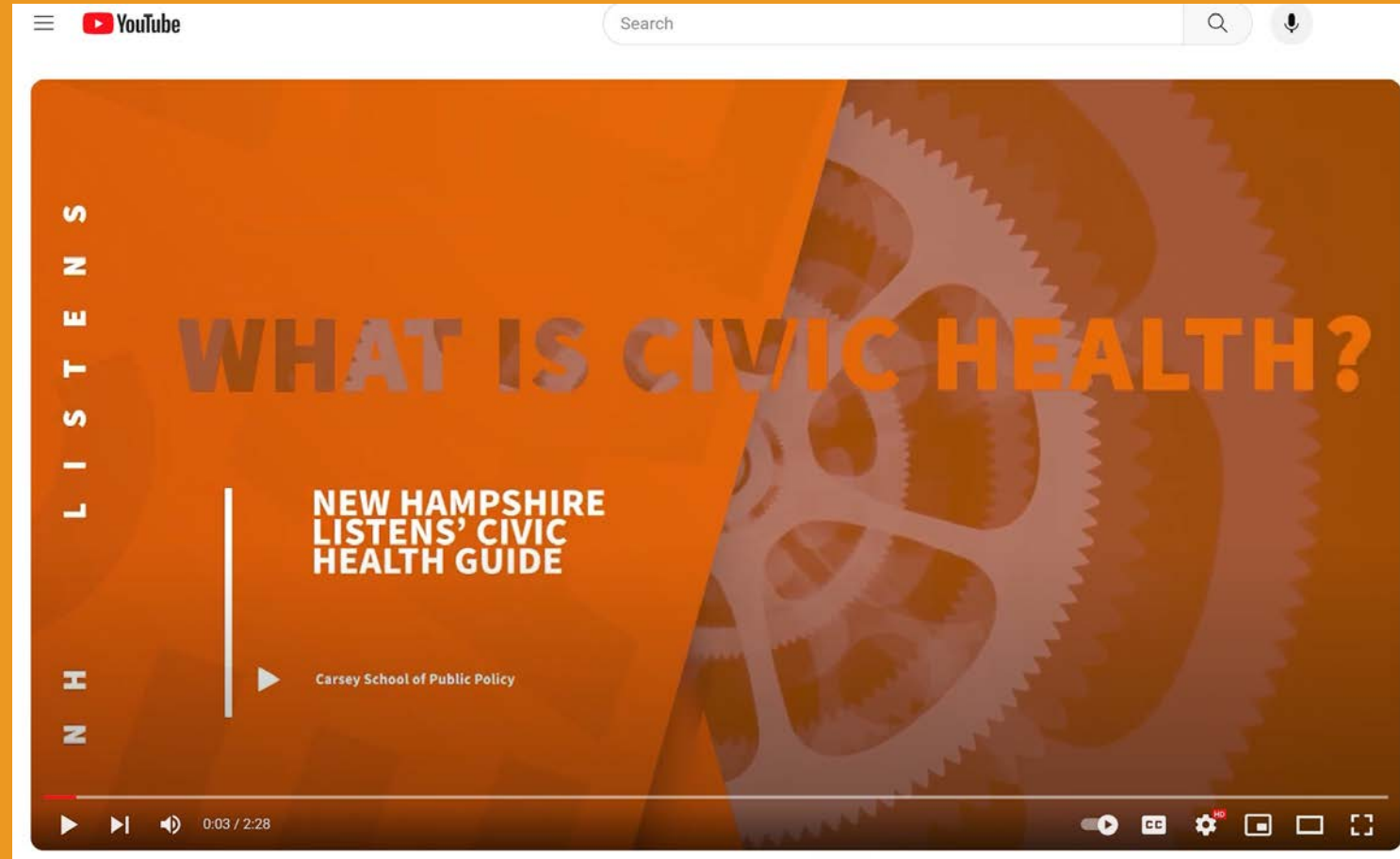
POLITICS

The divided states of America: Florida,
California and the future of political polarization

**Some Conferences Steer Away From
Florida, Citing State's Divisive Laws**

**Pride and prejudice: Florida is the most politically
divided state, study shows**

Civic Health Affects All of These Issues



What is Civic Health?



What is Civic Health?



Behaviors



Beliefs



Actions

...that are related to civic engagement

Civic Health Can Include

- Voting
- Volunteering and community service
- Helping out neighbors
- Attending public meetings
- Staying informed and talking about issues
- People believing they matter and can make an impact
- Feeling trust in institutions and community
- Belonging



Civic Health can occur at multiple levels including

- National
- State
- Local counties, cities, and towns
- Within micro communities, such as a university, school, or apartment building



What is civic infrastructure?

- Roads or bridges in our physical infrastructure allow our communities to function as they should.
- When our physical infrastructure is not well-maintained, our communities suffer.
- Similarly, the quality of our civic infrastructure affects the strength of our civic health and local democracy.

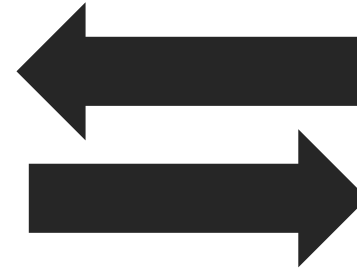
What is civic infrastructure?

The **foundations** needed for civic life to function, including

- Places and spaces to connect
- In Person Networks
- Online Networks
- Local Leadership
- Laws, Policies, and Practices
- User Friendly Supports (childcare, scheduling, Wifi)



THE CIVIC CONTINUUM



Civic Infrastructure

Systems, spaces, and networks that support civic life

Civic Health

Behaviours, beliefs, and actions that contribute to strong or weak civic life

Civic Action

Interventions that strengthen civic health

How can we measure civic health?

Civic Health Index

BELA (Belonging and Engagement Landscape Analysis)

Taking it Local

Civic Health Index

Report that shares civic health of a geographic location, drawing on Census and supplemental data



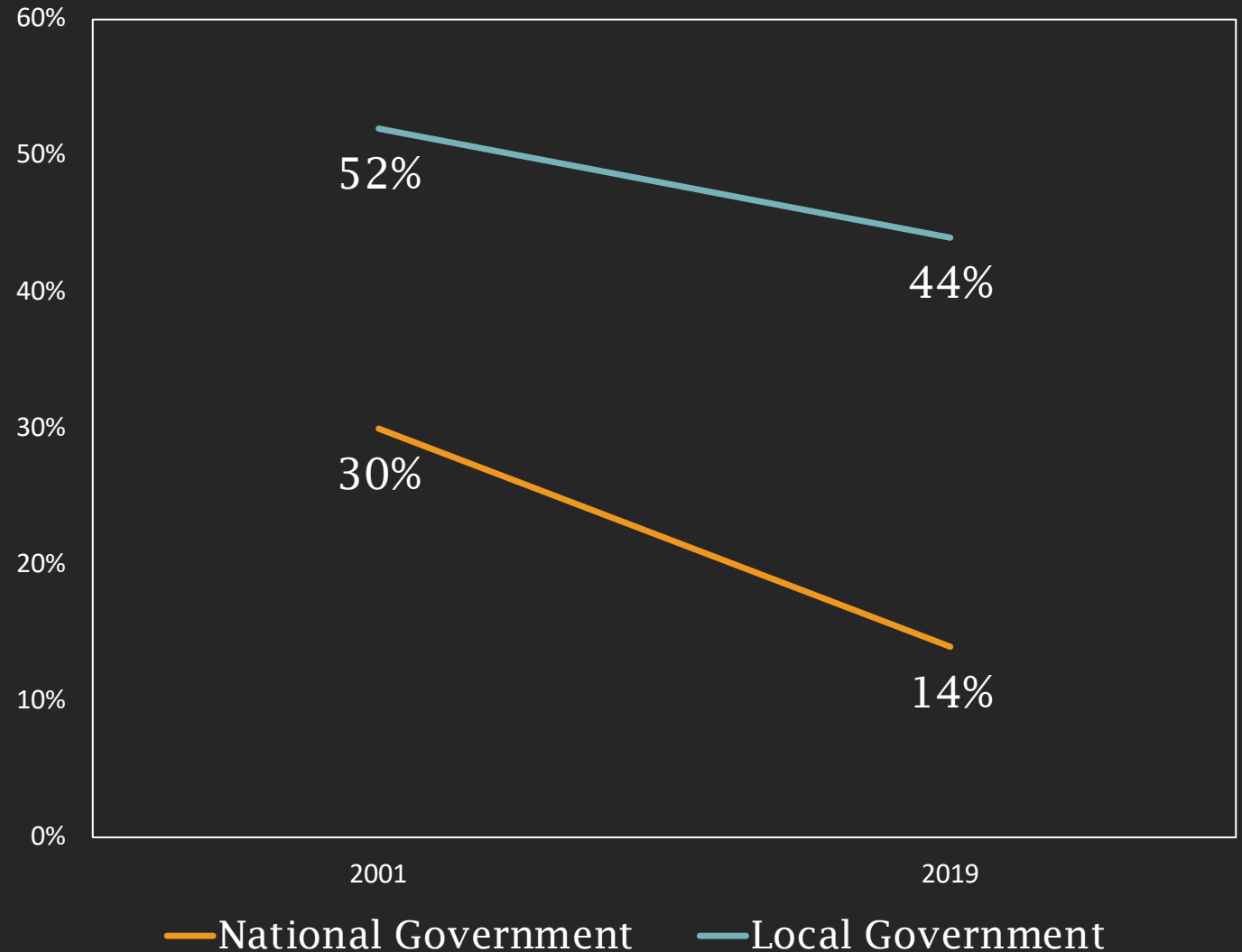
NCoC created Civic Health Index in 2006

46th in **connecting** with people of
different racial, ethnic, or cultural
backgrounds



Trust in public institutions is declining, particularly national government

New Hampshire Residents' Trust in the Government
All or Most of the Time, 2001-2019

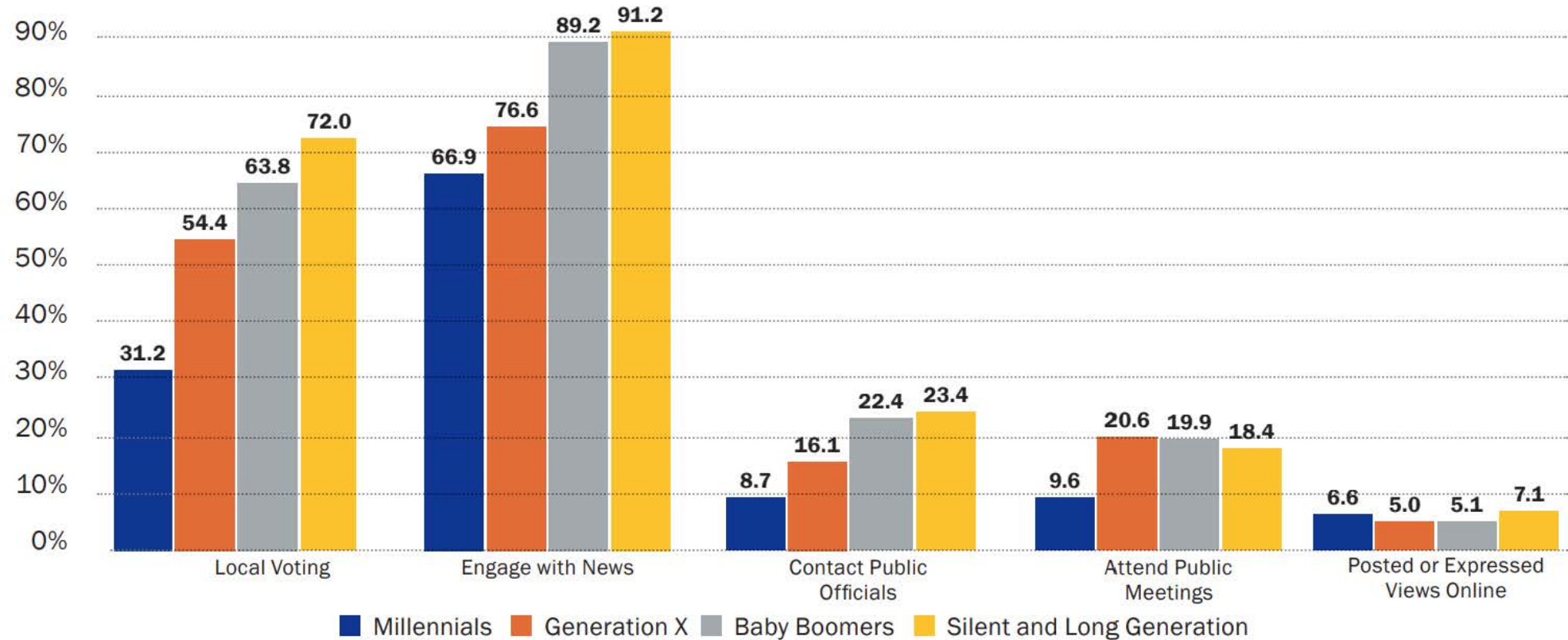


Source: October 2019 Granite State Poll

Age and Generation³⁸

Different generations demonstrate varying levels of civic awareness and engagement, as seen in Figure 8:

Figure 8. Civic Awareness and Engagement by Age in New Hampshire



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Volunteering and Civic Life in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2017) and Voting in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2018 and 2016)

Challenge with Civic Health Index

- Need for geographic nuance
- One data point in time
- More depth of understanding about the issues
 - Particularly for underrepresented and vulnerable people



BELA

Belonging and Engagement Landscape Analysis

- Surfaces the following
 - Key trends
 - Stories of people with lived experience
 - Stories from people with professional expertise
 - Civic engagement dynamics
 - Assets and challenges
 - Examples of positive and negative civic engagement
 - Identifies key organizations and initiatives

BELA methodology example

- A **design team** directed this landscape analysis composed of
 - Seattle Chamber of Commerce
 - Seattle City Club
 - Asian Counseling and Referral Service
 - Civic Commons
 - Department of Neighborhoods
- Interviewed 10 people working in equity advocating organizations
- Interviewed 5 civic sector leaders
- Reviewed over 175 documents including
 - 43 local media articles
 - 132 organizational website and reports from the region



BELA findings example

**THEME 7: UNDERREPRESENTED
GROUPS HAVE LOW LEVELS OF
TRUST IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS**





THEME 7: UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS HAVE LOW LEVELS OF TRUST IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

KEY IDEAS



- Low levels of trust in local government, police, schools, and healthcare.
- Trust issues were different for different populations
 - People with disabilities – low trust in schools
 - LGBTQIA+ - low trust in healthcare institutions and police
 - BIPOC community – low trust in police
 - Native Neighborhoods survey – large numbers feel they don't belong
- Desire for more compassion and recognition of trauma (historic, cultural, and from pandemic).



**THEME 7: UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS HAVE LOW LEVELS
OF TRUST IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS**

CIVIC QUESTIONS



- What are strategies for building trust that acknowledge and heal the past and move us towards a positive future?
- How do we balance pressures public institutions feel to produce and stick to timelines with community needs to move slowly and intentionally?
- What is the best way to help public institution leaders understand and respond to fears of different populations in the region?
- What trainings or actions have been meaningful in building trust among underrepresented groups?

Taking it Local

- Existing municipal/county data
- Community dialogues
- Local surveys
- Civic tours
- Listening tours with equity organizations



LOCAL CIVIC HEALTH

A Guide to Building Community and Bridging Divides



University of New Hampshire
Carsey School of Public Policy

How Can Civic Health Impact Local Communities?



How Can Civic Health Impact Statewide Action?



How Can Civic Health Impact Statewide Action?

Connecticut

A scenic view of a white church with a steeple, surrounded by lush green trees and a stone bridge over a river with a waterfall. The church is the central focus, with a tall, white steeple and a clock tower. The building is surrounded by dense green foliage. In the foreground, a stone bridge with a decorative railing spans across a river. The river flows over a series of rocks, creating a waterfall effect. The overall scene is peaceful and picturesque.

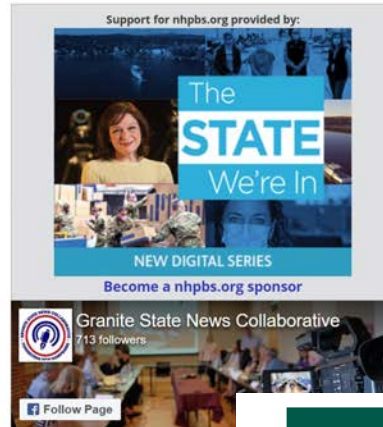
How Can Civic Health Impact Statewide Action?

New Hampshire

Millennials struggle in achieving strong civic health

Stay, Work, Engage: Civic Engagement Among Young People

From: Granite State News Collaborative



NH BUSINESS REVIEW

NEWSLETTER SIGNUP | SPECIAL EDITIONS

NEWS PEOPLE ADVICE OP-ED EVENTS/AWARDS

A CUSTOMIZED APPROACH TO POWER YOUR WAY TO WEALTH.



Stay, work, engage

New Hampshire's young people are not as civically engaged as older Granite Staters, but not because they don't want to be

May 17, 2021 by Evan Edmonds-Granite State News Collaborative

Civics

101

How Can Civic Health Impact Statewide Action?

Wisconsin

Civic health impacts well-being

In Communities Where Civic Health Is Poor, Lives Are Shorter

In a new report, the University of Wisconsin's Population Health Institute shows that civic infrastructure affects how long and how well we live.

April 4, 2023 • Carl Smith



Most Read



Other Ways to Build Civic Health

- City Wide Initiatives – Cities of Belonging, Child Friendly Cities
- Dialogue and Storytelling Campaigns



Questions for You to Consider at the Summit

- What value could measuring civic health bring to your work, and to your local community?
- How could you support measurement of civic health in Florida?
- How could you collect civic health data to civic action?

Keep in touch!



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