

AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation

# Putting Civic Engagement into Context: Exploring Data Trends, Uses, and Actionable Insights

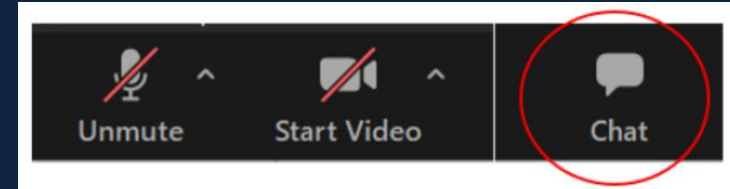
April 4, 2024





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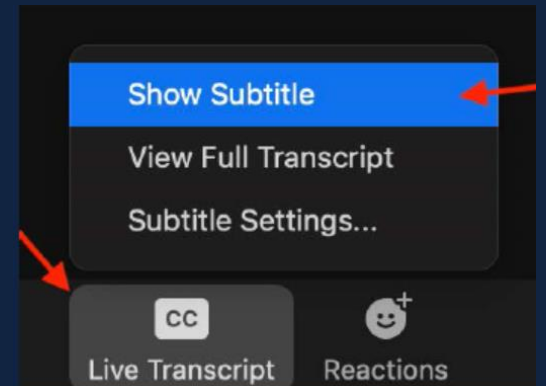
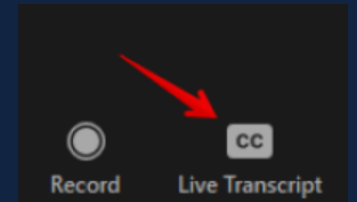
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# Welcome

**Katy Hussey-Sloniker, MBA, MSW**  
Learning Officer, Office of Research and Evaluation  
AmeriCorps



# Today's Presenters



- **Mary Hyde**, PhD, Director, AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation
- **Laura Hanson Schlachter**, PhD, Survey Statistician, AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation
- **Shane Dermanjian**, MPP, Research Analyst, AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation
- **Barry Goodstadt**, PhD, Research Analyst, AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation
- **Analise Gammel**, MSW, Statewide Engagement Officer, Serve Virginia
- **REFLECTION: Kathy Spangler**, Director, Serve Virginia

# Webinar Learning Objectives



- How AmeriCorps leverages data for policy and practice insight, and
- Highlight AmeriCorps data application and use by partners in the field.

# Evidence to Advance the AmeriCorps Mission

The Office of Research and Evaluation

Mary Hyde, PhD

Director, Office of Research and Evaluation,  
AmeriCorps



# The AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation

## ORE Vision:

AmeriCorps strives to make a lasting and sustainable impact across the FOUR domains of our Impact Framework and foster the powerful synergies between these interconnected domains.

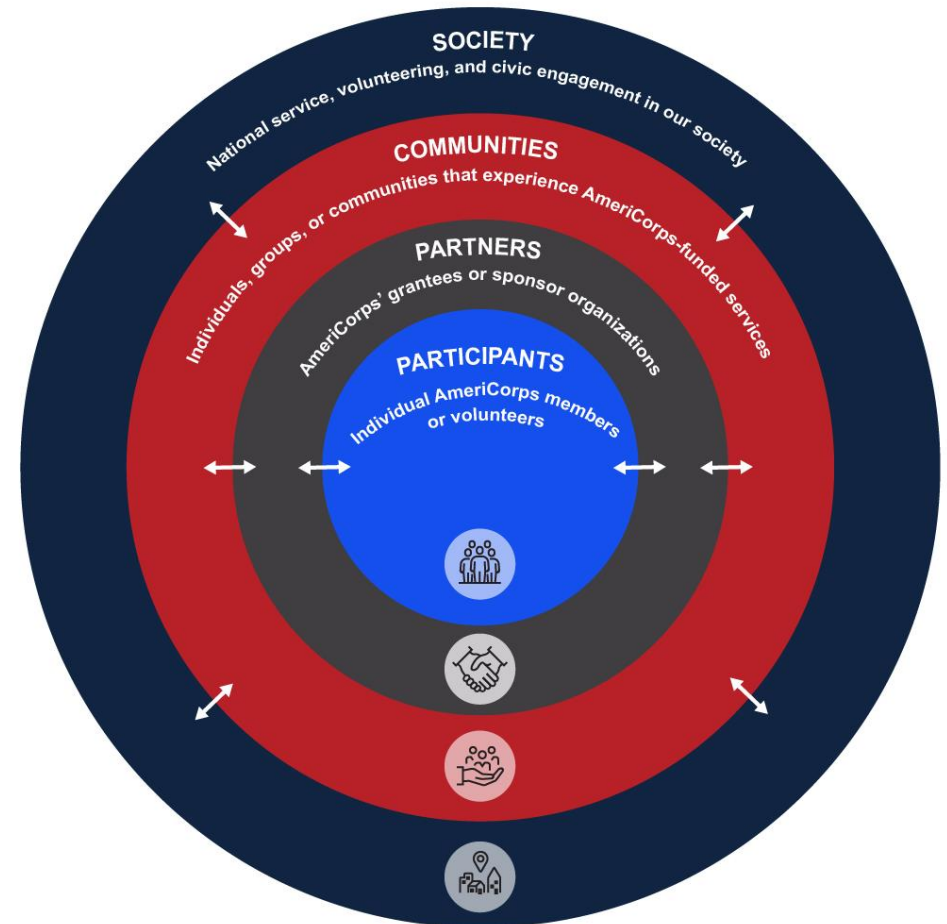
## ORE Mission

- Identify national service and volunteering trends
- Conduct research and build scholarship on civic engagement
- Measure national service impact
- Promote evidence-based models and program expansion

## Culture of Learning:

Knowledge and evidence built across the FOUR domains of impact can be used to improve the participant service experience, strengthen organizations, support communities and inform the civic health of society.

## AmeriCorps Impact Framework



# Setting the Stage

The Various Ways AmeriCorps Builds Evidence Related to Civic Engagement

Laura Hanson Schlachter, PhD

Survey Statistician, Office of Research and Evaluation,  
AmeriCorps





# AmeriCorps' mission

To improve lives,  
strengthen communities,  
and foster **civic engagement**  
through service and  
volunteering.



# How does AmeriCorps understand civic engagement?

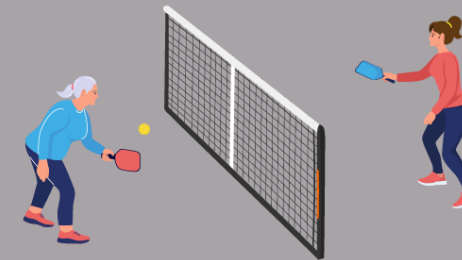
The constellation of activities individuals engage in to make a difference in their communities and promote the common good.

## Civic engagement activities can include...

Participating in a national service program



Joining a pickleball team



Picking up groceries for a neighbor



Giving blood



Discussing the news with your family



# How is AmeriCorps building our understanding of civic engagement?



Tracking civic engagement trends

Examining civic engagement of national service participants & partners

Funding scholarship on national service and civic engagement

Conducting evaluation research

# The AmeriCorps Member Exit Survey (MES)

Shane Dermanjian, MPP

Research Analyst, Office of Research and Evaluation,  
AmeriCorps





# Background Info on the AmeriCorps Member Exit Survey (MES)

Webinar: Produced and published at US taxpayer expense





## Background on the MES

*“the purpose of the member exit survey is to collect information about AmeriCorps members’ experiences for the purpose of monitoring progress towards the agency’s strategic goals around member development”*

-OMB Justification Part A



# MES Basics



## HISTORY & SURVEY SIZE

- Survey began in 2015, given to *all* AmeriCorps members
- 31 numbered questions (108 total questions including sub-questions)
- Question types include Likert Scales, multiple choice, multiple answer, Yes/No, open-ended responses

## DATA REFRESH SCHEDULE

- MES offered on rolling basis; data compiled by fiscal year (sorted by Service End Date)
- Data is refreshed quarterly, published to AmeriCorps Open Data Platform annually

## WHERE/WHEN MEMBERS TAKE SURVEY:

- AmeriCorps members can take the MES for as many service terms they serve
- Survey appears in MyAmeriCorps portal up to 60 days before member's Service End Date, and up to 180 days after their last day
- Early-exiting members also take the MES (survey appears in MyAmeriCorps as soon as they depart service)
- ORE data analysis inclusive of those aged 18+ upon starting service
- ACS Volunteers do not take MES

# MES Completion Rates (2018 – 2022)



	2018		2019		2020		2021		2022		Total 2018 - 2022	
	Completed Surveys	Total Surveys	Completed Surveys	Total Surveys	Completed Surveys	Total Surveys	Completed Surveys	Total Surveys	Completed Surveys	Total Surveys	Completed Surveys	Total Surveys
All Members	49567	62974	49165	62675	46059	58305	46214	57363	40509	51693	<b>231514</b>	<b>293010</b>
<b>By Service Completion</b>												
Completed Service	42824	48898	42527	48552	26901	31671	32162	37008	29849	34898	<b>174263</b>	<b>201027</b>
Exited Early	6743	14076	6638	14123	19158	26634	14052	20355	10660	16795	<b>57251</b>	<b>91983</b>
<b>By AmeriCorps Program (Both Completed Service &amp; Exited Early)</b>												
ACSN	40191	53010	41192	53013	39090	49057	38997	47888	34518	43542	<b>193988</b>	<b>246510</b>
NCCC	1292	1496	1175	1424	953	1423	896	1256	970	1268	<b>5286</b>	<b>6867</b>
VISTA	7415	8468	6798	8238	6016	7825	6321	8219	5021	6883	<b>31571</b>	<b>39633</b>
	2018		2019		2020		2021		2022		Total 2018 - 2022	
	Completion Rate	Completion Rate	Completion Rate	Completion Rate	Completion Rate	Completion Rate	Completion Rate	Completion Rate	Completion Rate	Completion Rate	Completion Rate	
All Members	78.7%		78.4%		79.0%		80.6%		78.4%		<b>79.0%</b>	
<b>By Service Completion</b>												
Completed Service	87.6%		87.6%		84.9%		86.9%		85.5%		<b>86.7%</b>	
Exited Early	47.9%		47.0%		71.9%		69.0%		63.5%		<b>62.2%</b>	
<b>By AmeriCorps Program (Both Completed Service &amp; Exited Early)</b>												
ACSN	75.8%		77.7%		79.7%		81.4%		79.3%		<b>78.7%</b>	
NCCC	86.4%		82.5%		67.0%		71.3%		76.5%		<b>77.0%</b>	
VISTA	87.6%		82.5%		76.9%		76.9%		72.9%		<b>79.7%</b>	



# MES on the Open Data Platform (ODP)



- MES Data uploaded to the ODP annually
  - Data from 2016-2022 currently available
- Top-line summary statistics disaggregated by program (All programs / ASN / NCCC / VISTA) at national level
- Exportable files
- Support material available for download (background info & data dictionary)

<p><b>2020 AmeriCorps MES: AmeriCorps Member Exit Survey</b> <span>National Service</span> <span>Dataset</span></p> <p>Upon exiting service, AmeriCorps members are invited to complete the AmeriCorps Member Exit Survey (AmeriCorps MES) to provide information on their service experiences. By collecting data on member experiences, AmeriCorps and its <a href="#">More</a></p> <p><b>Tags</b> americorps, member, mes, survey, volunteer, and 1 more <span>API Docs</span></p>	<p><b>Updated</b> November 27, 2023</p> <p><b>Views</b> 133</p>
<p><b>2016 AmeriCorps MES: AmeriCorps Member Exit Survey</b> <span>National Service</span> <span>Dataset</span></p> <p>Upon exiting service, AmeriCorps members are invited to complete the AmeriCorps Member Exit Survey (AmeriCorps MES) to provide information on their service experiences. By collecting data on member experiences, AmeriCorps and its <a href="#">More</a></p> <p><b>Tags</b> americorps, member, members, mes, volunteer, and 2 more <span>API Docs</span></p>	<p><b>Updated</b> November 27, 2023</p> <p><b>Views</b> 58</p>
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# Theoretical Background of the MES

Webinar: Produced and published at US taxpayer expense





# AmeriCorps Member Theory of Change

## Vision:

- Creation of empowered and prepared citizens
  - More civically engaged
  - Will work to strengthen their communities
  - Dedicated to improving the lives of those in their community

## Four Pathways to Achieving Vision:

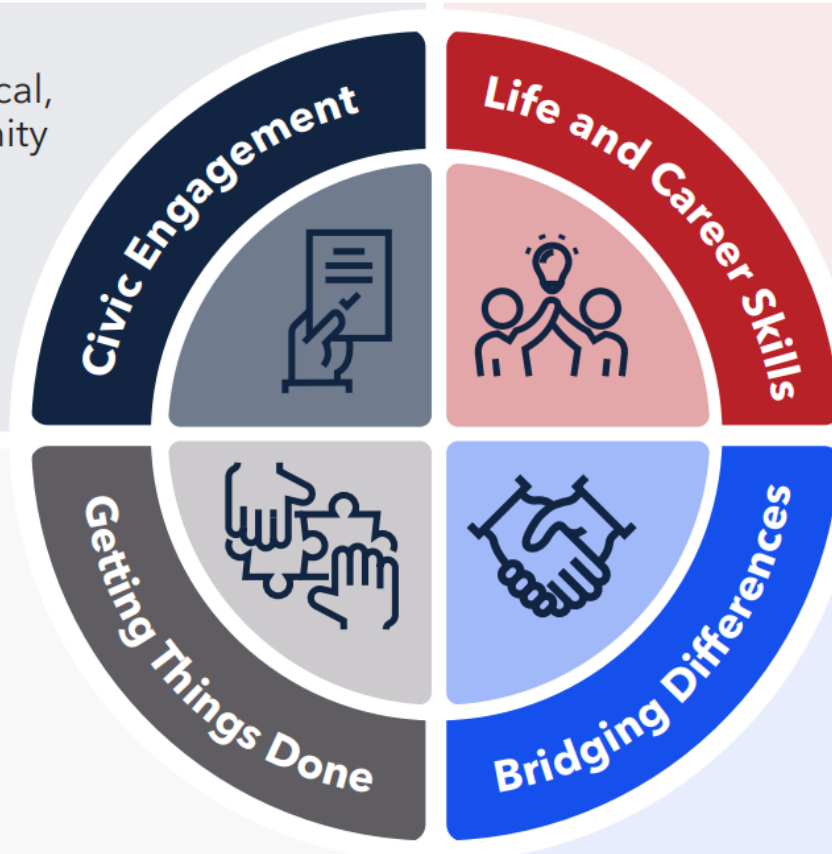
- Participants develop along four pathways essential in developing empowerment and preparation necessary to be a change-oriented, active community member

# MES Pathways and Domains



## Pathways

- Participation in civic activities
- Discussion of how political, social, local, or national issues affect the community
- Trust in people and institutions
- Voter registration and voting in last presidential election
- Competence for civic action
- Community attachment



- Leadership, problem-solving, communication, and collaboration skills
- Perceptions on how one's service impacted the community and personal growth
- AmeriCorps service as a worthwhile and defining personal and/or professional experience

- Belief in one's ability to respond to challenges and adversity
- Belief in one's capacity to identify solutions to arising issues
- Personal initiative and self-efficacy

- Respect of values and differences of people from different cultures and backgrounds
- Enjoyment from interacting with people from different cultures and backgrounds
- Confidence when interacting with people from different cultures and backgrounds

# MES Pathways and Domains



## Domains

### Describing Member Experience



- Focus areas of an individual's service
- Connectedness to one's AmeriCorps service

### Satisfaction with Experience



- Satisfaction with AmeriCorps service
- Recommendation of AmeriCorps service to family or friends

### Motivation to Join



- Reason for joining AmeriCorps

### Post-Service Plans



- Plans for using AmeriCorps education award
- Education, workforce, and service plans after AmeriCorps
- Plans for listing AmeriCorps experience on resume

### Training



- Adequacy of training, resources, supervision, and supports
- Training on how to describe AmeriCorps experience



# Generational Analysis Of AmeriCorps Members and Analysis of Motivation to Join AmeriCorps Using the Member Exit Survey

Barry Goodstadt, PhD

Research Analyst, Office of Research and Evaluation,  
AmeriCorps



# Definition of Generations for Analysis



**Within the Member Exit Survey, a series of specific questions were posed to members:**

*“People join AmeriCorps for a variety of reasons. How much do you agree that each of the following reasons motivated you to join?”*

*To gain general skills or competencies that would be useful in school or work.*

*To have a chance to work with people who share your ideals.*

*To fulfill your duty as a citizen.*

*To receive an education award*

*To make friends and meet people*

*To gain direct experience in a specific career and future profession*

*To help in solving a community need or challenge*

*To do something while also enrolled in school*

*To do something during a break in school or work*

**Respondents filled out 5-point Likert scale to indicate their agreement or disagreement with each item ranging from “Very Much Agree, Agree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Disagree or Very Much Disagree”**



# Understanding Motivation to Join National Service

- Question 1 of the MES

For the purpose of this analysis, we used a definition that was developed by Pew Research in 2019<sup>1</sup>

The birth cutoffs in this definition are as follows:

Generation	Range of Birth Years
Silent Generation	1945 or Earlier
Baby Boomers	1946 to 1964
Gen X	1965-1980
Gen Y (Millennials)	1981-1996
Gen Z	1997 or Later

<sup>1</sup>Dimock, Michael. "Defining generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z begins." *Pew Research Center* 17.1 (2019): 1-7.





# Data Set for Carrying Out a Generational Analysis

Two data sets were assembled:

- 1) All AmeriCorps members from ASN, NCCC, and VISTA for 5 years including those who exited service between CY2018 and CY2022.
  - a. Contains approximately 294,000 members who served (including those who exited early)

## AmeriCorps Members Who Exited Service in CY 2018 Through CY2022

Program	Parameter	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total
AmeriCorps State & National	Number of Members	53,296	53,135	49,173	47,970	43,692	247,266
	% in the Program Per Year	84.20%	84.60%	84.20%	83.50%	84.30%	
NCCC	Number of Members	1,497	1,425	1,428	1,256	1,268	6,874
	% in the Program Per Year	21.80%	20.70%	20.80%	19.70%	18.30%	
VISTA	Number of Members	8,477	8,241	7,826	8,219	6,888	39,651
	% in the Program Per Year	13.40%	13.10%	13.40%	14.30%	13.30%	
							293,791

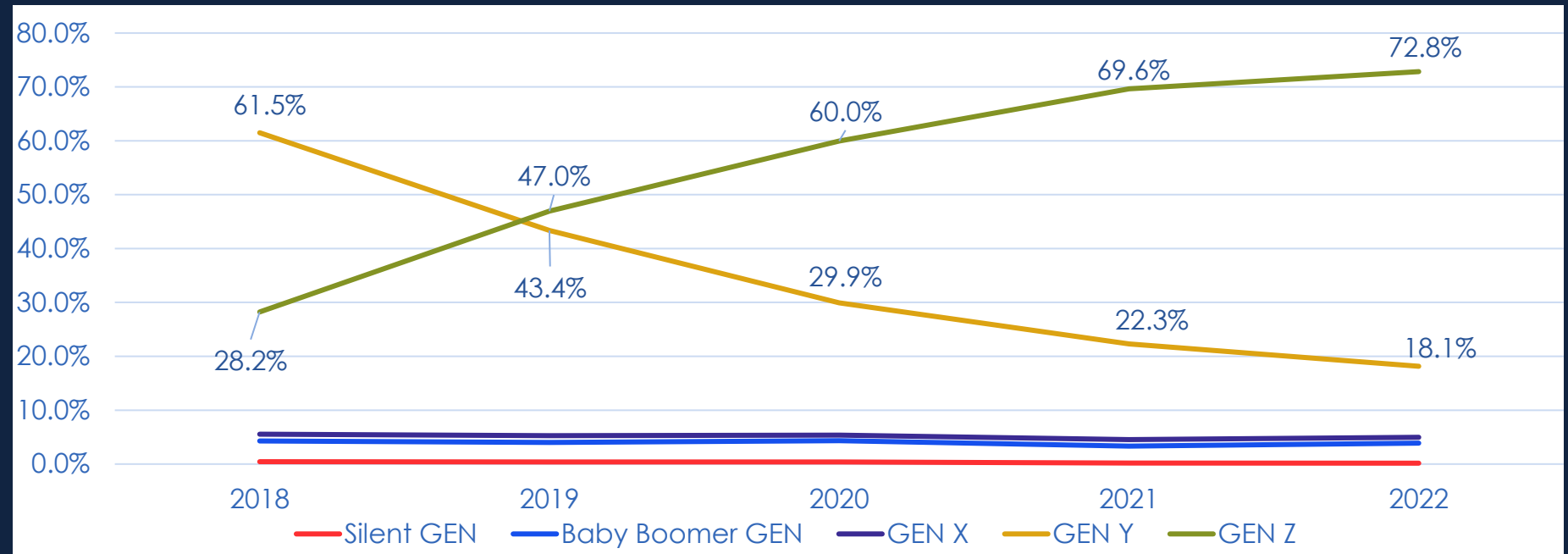
- 2) A subset of the first file of those who took the Member Exit Survey
  - a. Those who did not complete the MES were excluded from this file because they did not answer the questions regarding their motivation to join AmeriCorps.
  - b. There is no way to assess their motives for joining
  - c. Contains 236,009 members who ended service between CY2018 and CY2022 and took the MES. This group reflects an 80.3% response rate for the MES.

# Changing Mix of Generations Serving in AmeriCorps

(2018-2022)



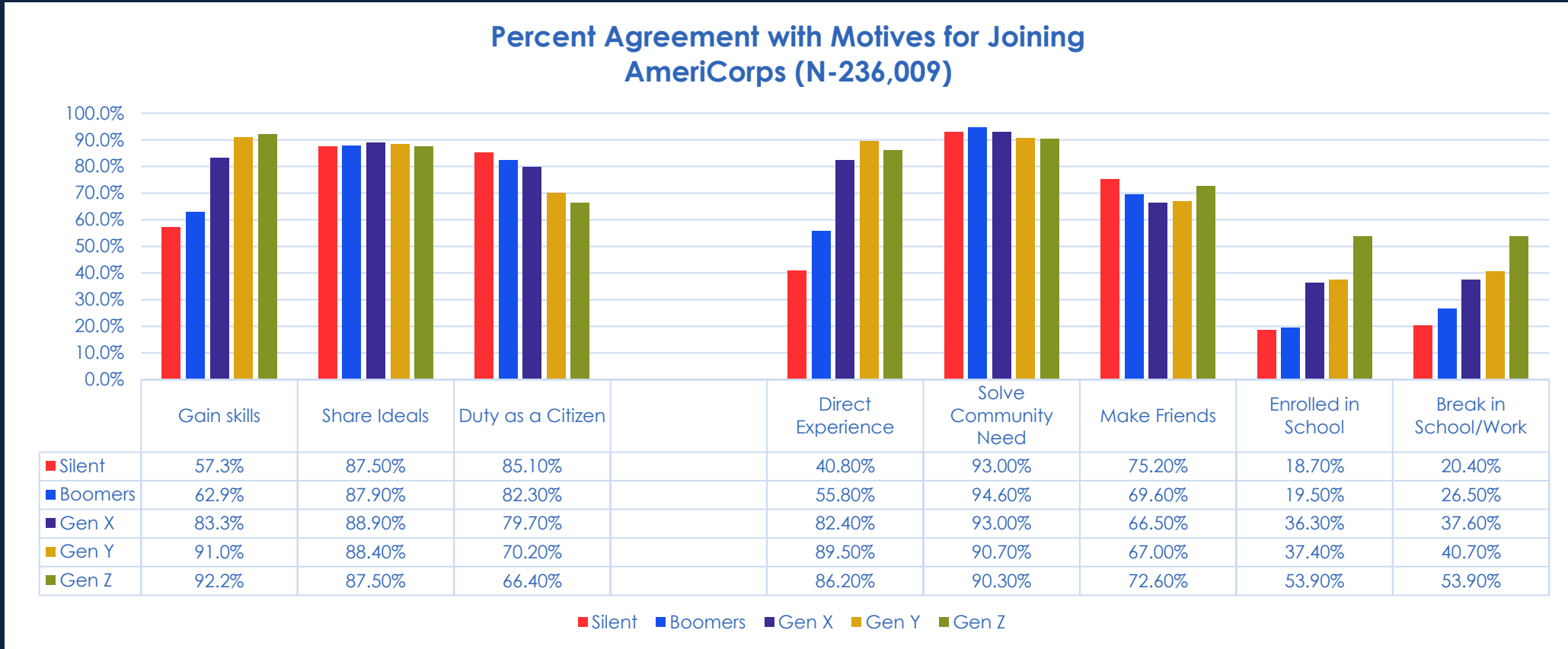
Generation	Total Sample Size (2018-22)
Silent	946
Baby Boomer	11,702
Gen X	15,147
Gen Y	160,146
Gen Z	105,850



Altogether, the Silent Generation, Baby Boomers and Gen Xers represent less than 10% of AmeriCorps membership outside of Senior Corps. Millennials (Gen Y) are now a decreasing portion of membership. Beginning in 2019 Gen Z members reflect the dominant share of AmeriCorps members.

## What motivates different generations of members to serve with AmeriCorps?

# Motivation to Join AmeriCorps by Generation

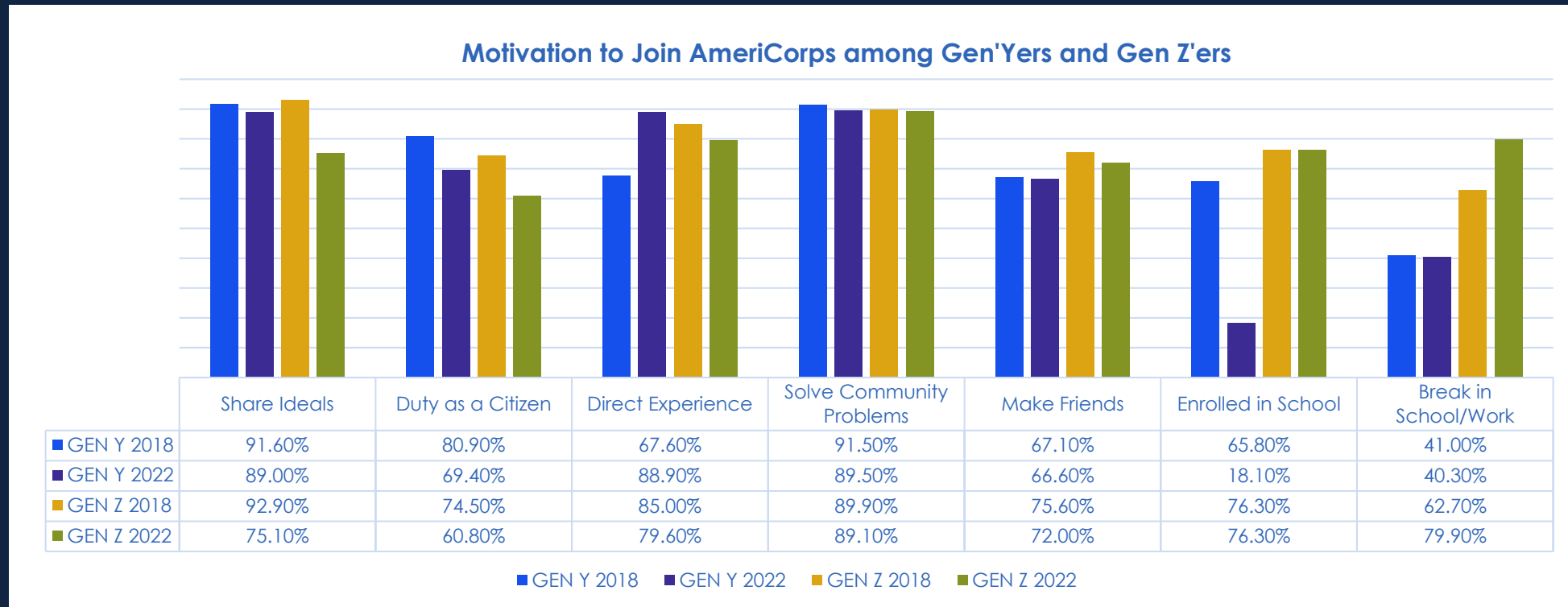


Motivation to join appears to vary significantly by generation. Older members (Silent Gen, Boomers, Gen X) are less likely to be drawn to join AmeriCorps due to school enrollment, breaks in school or work, obtaining direct experience or gaining skills. Since these members are older they are generally beyond school age and may no longer need direct work experience or skill development.



# Motivation to Join AmeriCorps Among GEN Y'ers and GEN Z'ers

GEN Y (Millennials) and GEN Z constitute the bulk of members (more than 90%) joining AmeriCorps programs over the last few years. A deeper look at their reasons for joining between 2018 and 2022 is needed.



The data reveal that Millennials and GEN Z'ers are most concerned with solving community problems and obtaining direct experience in the workplace and being able to share ideals with those with whom they work.

# Findings Summary from the Generational Analysis



- Generational analysis revealed that within non-Senior AmeriCorps programs (ASN, NCCC, and VISTA) only 10% of the members belong to the Silent, Baby Boomer, or X Generations
- Prior to 2019, the majority of AmeriCorps members were Millennials (GEN Y). Since then, the majority of members now come from Generation Z.
- Examination of motivation for joining AmeriCorps across generations revealed that some questions posed in the Member Exit Survey were less relevant for members from Silent, Baby Boomer, or X Generations
- Among Millennials and GEN Z'ers there is declining interest in making friends, enrolling in school or serving in AmeriCorps during a break in school or work.



# Implications of the Generational Analysis



1. There is a need to update motives queried in the MES for members of the Silent, Baby Boomer, and X Generations. Since the MES will soon be expanded to cover volunteers who sign up for service with AmeriCorps Seniors (in the Enterprise-Wide Pre-Post Participant Survey), additional work on measuring relevant motives is needed; AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers come from the Silent, Baby Boomer, and Gen X Generations
2. Several items in the MES—such as joining AmeriCorps to fill a break in school or work or as a source of new friends appear to be less relevant for GEN Z'ers than was the case for members joining in the past.
3. Given that the motives for joining AmeriCorps is changing among recent members who are GEN Z'ers, a broad review of recruiting messages being used in advertising and promotional materials may well be in order.
4. To the extent that AmeriCorps motivation to serve messages are being assessed in the ongoing agency survey efforts, such efforts should be coordinated with the ongoing and updated work on MES



Shane Dermanjian, MPP

# Completed MES Pathways Analyses

(as of April 2024)



# Civic Engagement – Pathway

2017 – 2021



## How do AmeriCorps members demonstrate civic engagement?

From 2017-2021, the majority of departing members demonstrated civic engagement by

### Prioritizing community needs.

Members feel ready to address community concerns and have a sense of duty toward their communities. For example:

**86%** feel prepared to create a plan to address a problem in their community.

**86%** feel a personal obligation to contribute in some way to the community.



### Taking political and social engagement seriously.

Members engage with sociopolitical issues that impact their local area by voting and staying informed. For example:

**73%** voted in the last presidential election.

**72%** often discuss and think about how political, social, local, or national issues affect the community.



### Helping to create stronger, more vibrant communities.

Members believe that giving time can transform communities and want to continue staying involved in their communities. For example:

**82%** are or plan to become involved in issues that positively affect their community.

**82%** feel their AmeriCorps service made them more likely to volunteer for a cause or issue they care about.



<https://www.americorps.gov/evidence-exchange/ameri-corps-fosters-civic-engagement-ameri-corps-member-exit-survey-analysis-2017>



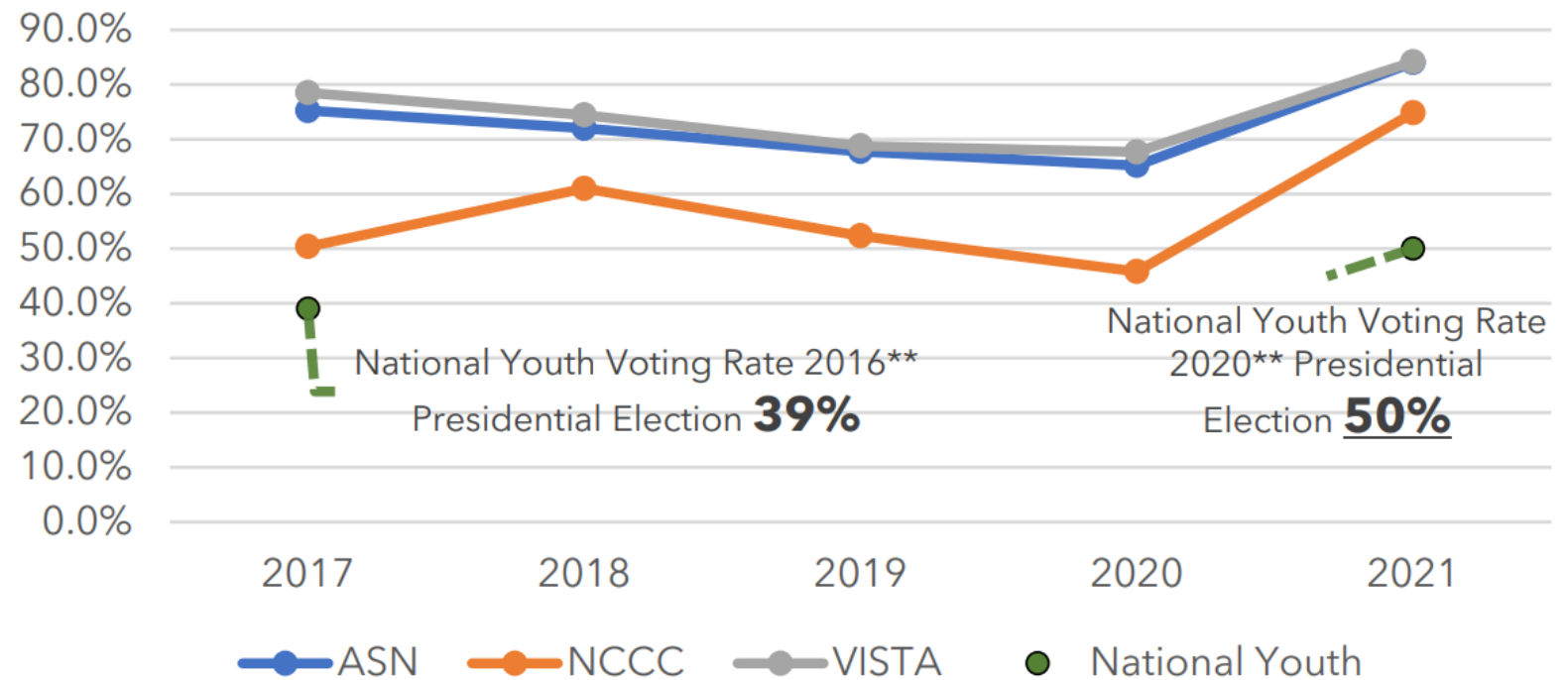
# Civic Engagement – Pathway

2017 – 2021: Voting in Presidential Elections



**AmeriCorps members aged 18-29 vote in presidential elections more than the general population of the same age**

### Comparison of Youth Voter (aged 18 - 29) Turnout in "Last" Presidential Election for Exiting AmeriCorps Members vs. National Population



<https://www.americorps.gov/evidence-exchange/ameri-corps-fosters-civic-engagement-ameri-corps-member-exit-survey-analysis-2017>

# Bridging Differences - Pathway

2016 – 2020



## How do AmeriCorps members **bridge differences**?

On surveys taken between 2016 – 2020, the vast majority of departing AmeriCorps members agreed that they:

Enjoy exploring differences between co-workers and/or friends from different cultures and backgrounds



93%

96%



Enjoy interacting with people from different cultures and backgrounds

Respect the values of people from different cultures and backgrounds



97%

93%



Feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures and backgrounds

Members that reported regularly serving on teams as during their service term were more likely to agree with these four questions than members who worked on teams less often during service

<https://www.americorps.gov/evidence-exchange/bridging-differences-through-ameri-corps-service>

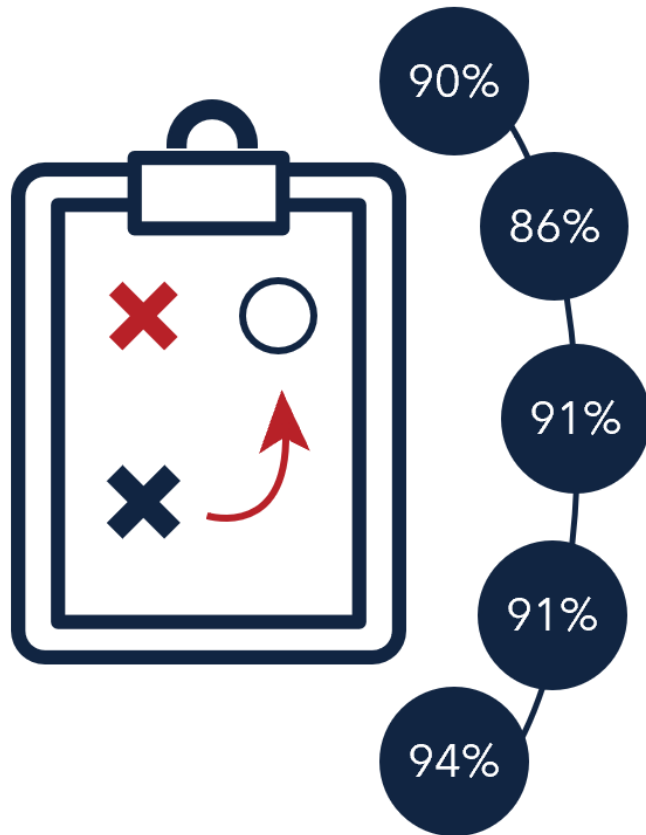
# “Getting Things Done” – Pathway

2017 – 2022



## How do AmeriCorps members **get things done**?

From 2017-2022, the majority of departing members agreed they can:



**Handle whatever comes their way.** More than 90 percent of members agreed that they have ability to handle whatever comes their way.

**Stick to aims and accomplish goals.** More than 86 percent of members agreed they showed consistent effort to accomplish their goals.

**Deal with unexpected events, confidently.** More than 91 percent of members felt confident in their ability to handle unexpected events.

**Think of solutions when in trouble.** More than 91 percent of members agreed they can develop solutions to arising challenges.

**Invest effort to solve problems.** More than 94 percent of members believed in their ability to solve problems if they invest the necessary effort.

# Life and Career Skills – Pathway

2017 – 2022



## How does AmeriCorps service enhance **life and career skills**?

From 2017-2022, the majority of departing members reported that they:



### Developed useful work skills

For example, AmeriCorps members:

- Met **deadlines** effectively (89%)
- Worked **on a team** (85%)
- Gathered and **analyzed information** (77%)



### Made a lasting impact

For example, AmeriCorps members:

- Contributed to the **community** (91%)
- **Made a difference** in the life of at least one person (92%)



### Had a meaningful service experience

For example, AmeriCorps members:

Viewed AmeriCorps as a worthwhile experience that furthered their **personal** (88%), **professional** (87%), and **educational** (83%) endeavors



### Gained a broader life perspective

For example, AmeriCorps members:

- Gained exposure to **new ideas** and ways of seeing the world (88%)
- Figured out their **professional next steps** (70%)

# Conclusions & Future Work





# AmeriCorps MES provides a wealth of information about AmeriCorps members

## Large number of survey responses

- 350k+ responses since 2015
- Can disaggregate data by demographics, program, timeframe, and more
- Can view trends over time

## MES gets to bottom of impact on members

- Is integral to agency's strategic goal of member development
- Fully addresses AmeriCorps member **Theory of Change**
- Examines how members feel about their service

## The MES can be used to improve the service experience

- Useful for variety of stakeholders
- Can use MES findings to inform future policies and programming
- Members get opportunities to be heard and influence positive changes for members after them



# Looking to the Future: the Pre-Post Participant Survey



## Current: Member Exit Survey

- Only offered to AmeriCorps members, not AmeriCorps Seniors Volunteers
- Administered only as a Post- survey after service completion

## Replacement: Pre-Post Participant Survey

- Offered to all AmeriCorps participants (including AmeriCorps Seniors Volunteers)
- Administered:
  - 1) before service starts (pre-)
  - 2) after serve ends (post-)
- Can measure impact of AmeriCorps on the participant over the course of their service term



## For more information

- Please contact the AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation's email dedicated to the AmeriCorps Member Exit Survey:

[AmeriCorpsMES@americorps.gov](mailto:AmeriCorpsMES@americorps.gov)







# The Virginia Community Engagement Index

Analise Gammel, MSW  
Statewide Engagement Officer,  
Serve Virginia





# Serve Virginia

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We exist to inspire & celebrate  
volunteering and service in Virginia.

**Our impact is  
greater together.**

## Our Challenge:

Develop a study that could assess how residents were engaging and what they prioritized in their communities, while also gaining insights that could lead to a fuller understanding of the service landscape, strategies for promoting greater awareness on the part of residents, and tactics for boosting volunteer recruitment and program development.

84%

Said it was very important to gain a greater understanding of community-level needs

60%

Said community organizations lack the volunteer cultivation, training and recruitment resources to boost volunteerism rates effectively

63%

Said limited awareness and understanding on the part of resident for how they can serve was an important barrier to address

55%

Said they felt there was limited inclusivity of “community-level” service in how, we as a sector, think about and measure engagement



# Volunteering and Civic Life in America

Every two years, AmeriCorps produces comprehensive research about civic engagement trends in the United States.



## WHAT THIS STUDY NEEDED TO BE

- More unique to Virginia
- More encompassing of all avenues of community engagement (formal service and volunteering, informal neighborly acts of aid, civic and democratic action, etc.)
- More illustrative of community priorities — where should we be channeling resources and volunteers
- More indicative of messaging and strategies to drive recruitment and retention



### COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

A community health assessment is a careful, systematic examination of the health status of the community that is used to identify key health problems and assets in the community. Data from the assessment will inform decision-making, prioritization of health problems and development of plans to improve the health of the community. The success of the CHA is owned and led by members of each community, so that the results accurately reflect the opinions of people who live, work, play, and pray in each community in the Commonwealth.





Our Process

# Building Our Survey



LEVERAGING INSIGHTS FROM OUR CORE TEAM TO  
PINPOINT MOST ACTIONABLE AREAS OF INQUIRY

LEVERAGING NATIONAL PARTNERS FOR THOUGHT  
LEADERSHIP & TO DETERMINE QUESTIONS THAT MIGHT  
SERVE AS NATIONAL COMPARISONS\*



POINTS  
OF LIGHT



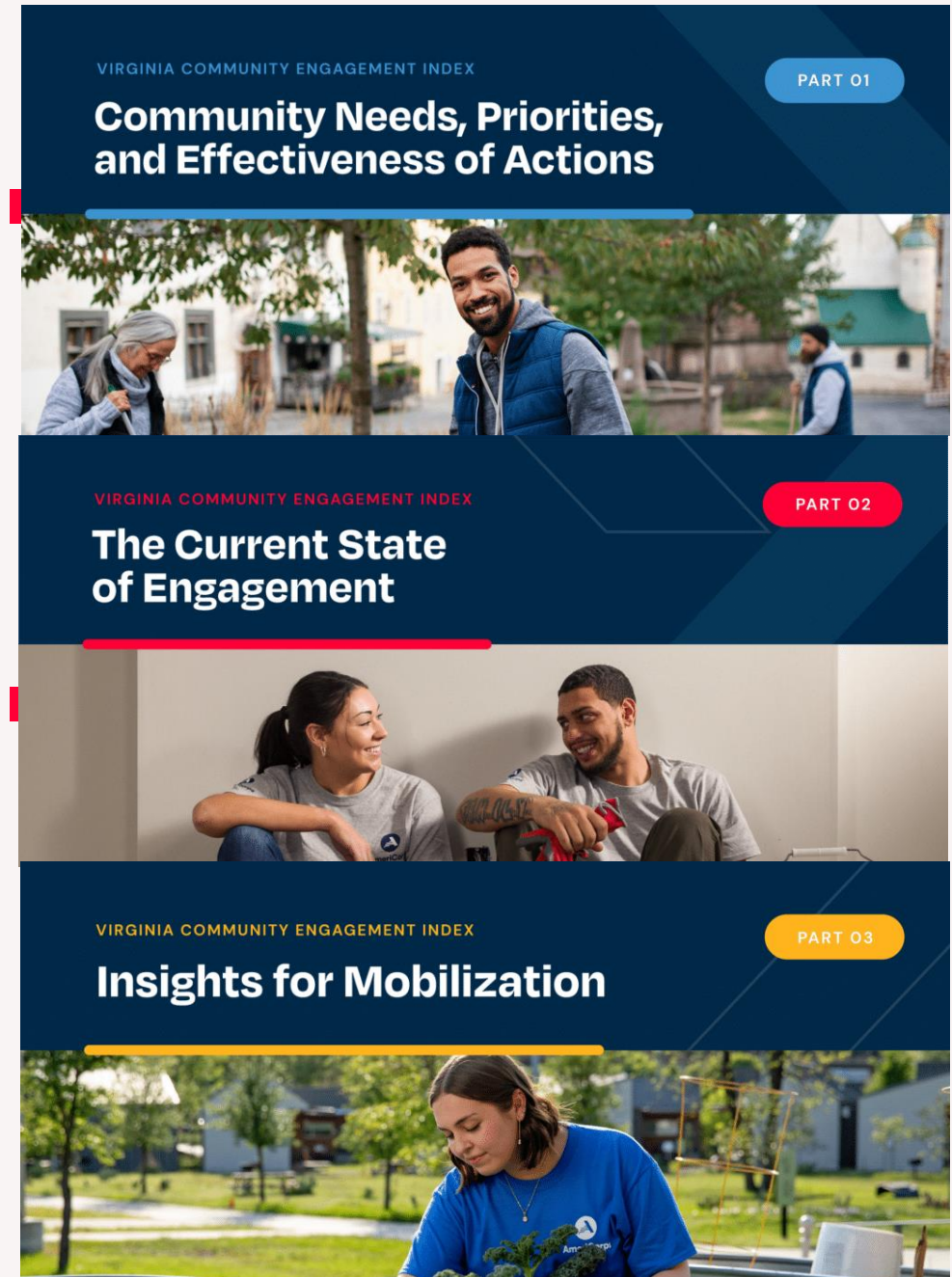
AmeriCorps



## Our Results

# What We Learned

- What Virginians care about, and how they rank community priorities
- How Virginians invest their time, talent, and treasure against the needs they see in their communities
- Why Virginians start volunteering, and what keeps them engaged

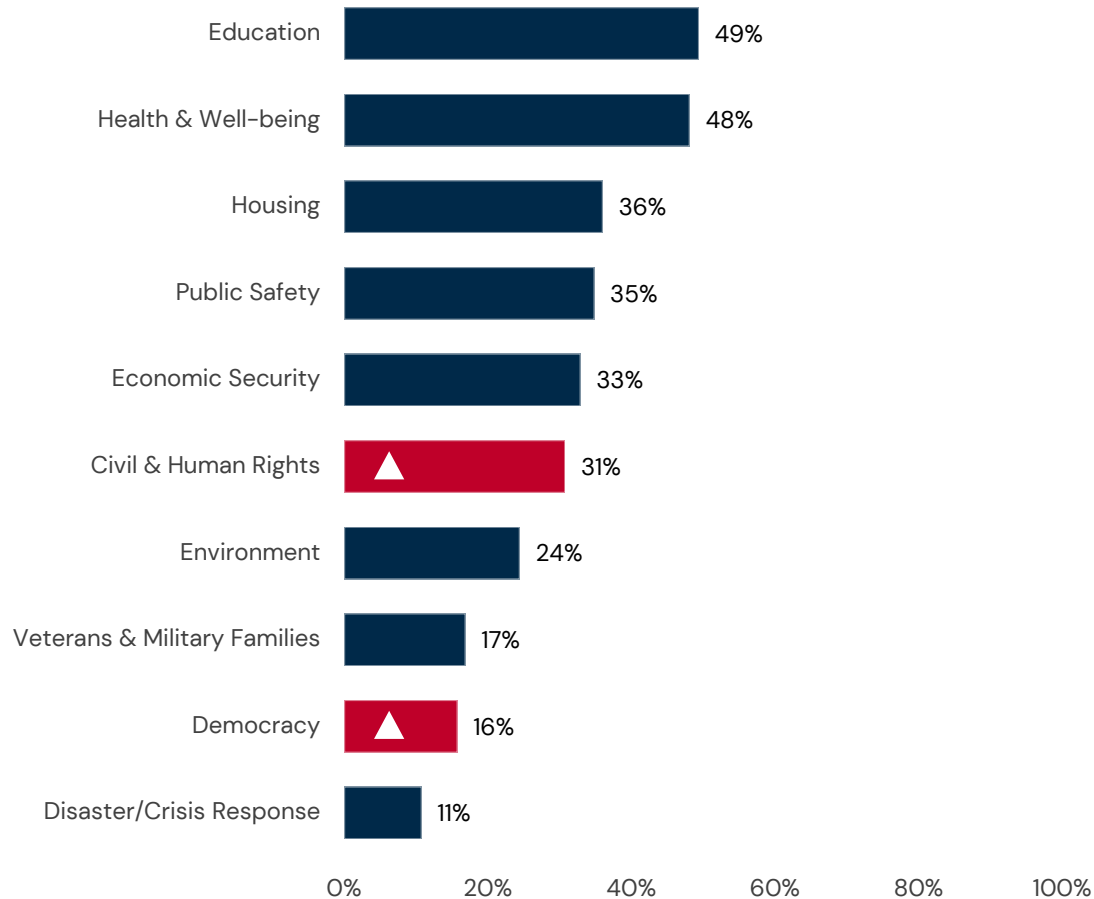




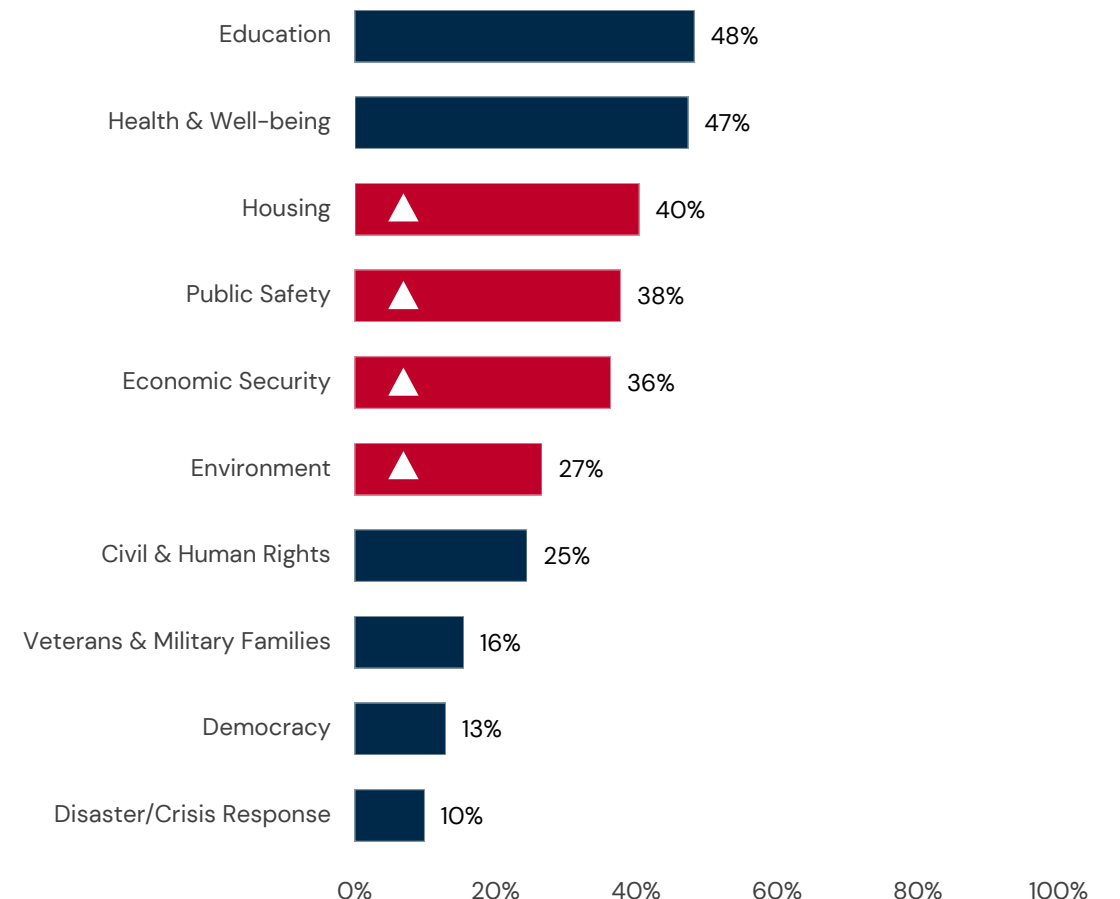
# State vs. Local Priorities

When comparing state and local priorities, respondents place higher emphasis on housing, public safety, economic security and the environment on the local level, while placing higher emphasis on civil and human rights and democracy on the state level.

## STATEWIDE PRIORITIES



## LOCAL PRIORITIES



Q12. Of the following options, what should be the Top 3 priorities for Virginia?

n = 6,379

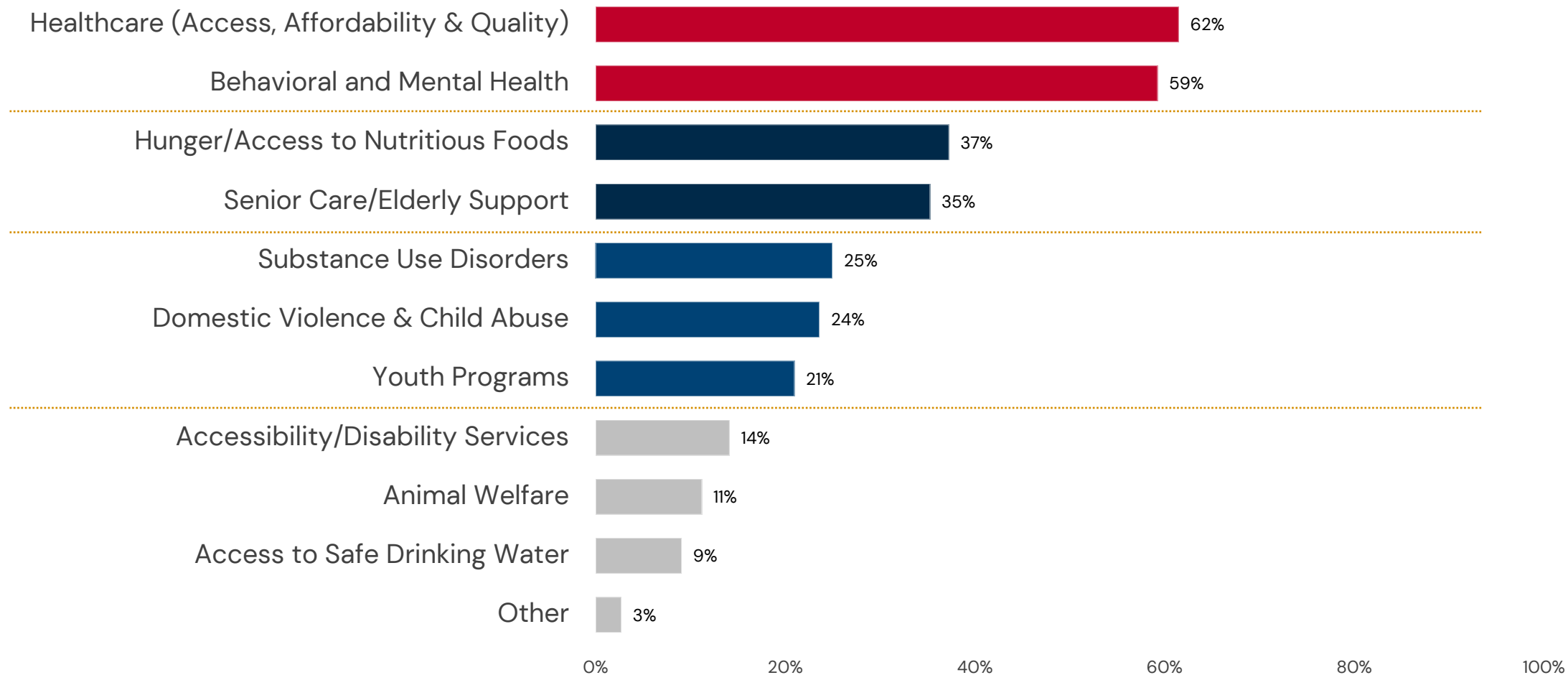
Q13. Of the following options, what should be the Top 3 priorities for where you live?

n = 6,374



## HEALTH & WELL-BEING: What needs to be addressed

The vast majority of respondents point to access, affordability and quality of healthcare services and behavioral and mental health as the top priorities to address.

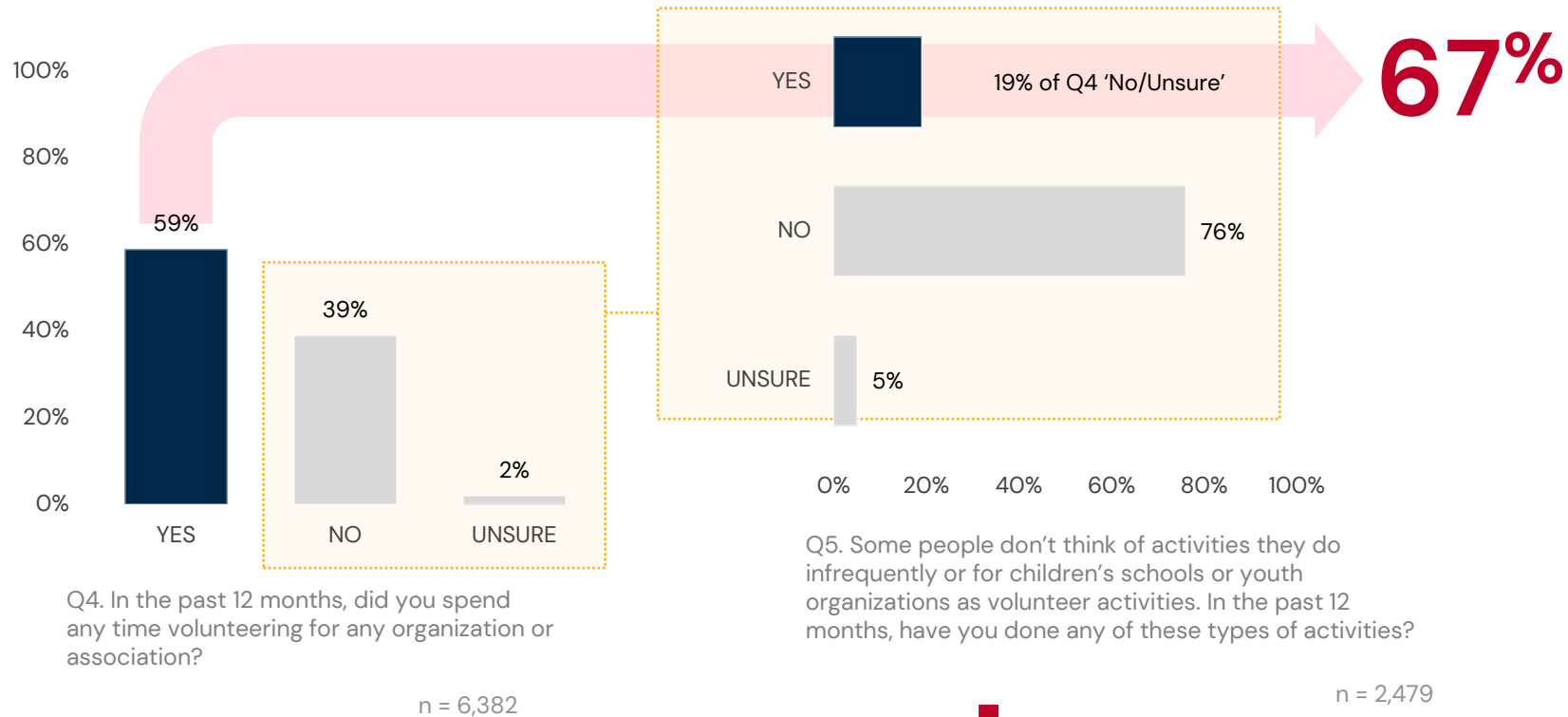


Q14.1. You chose Health & Well-being as a top priority for where you live. Thinking of that priority, which of the following "areas to address" are most important? *Please select three options.*

n = 3,100



# Percentage of Virginians Who Have Volunteered in the Past 12 Months:



Unaided, nearly 3 out of 5 Virginians say they've volunteered with an organization in the past 12 months.

However, when prompted to consider activities that may fly under the radar of traditionally held notions of "volunteering," an additional 19% self-identify as a volunteer.



## DEMOGRAPHIC FINDING

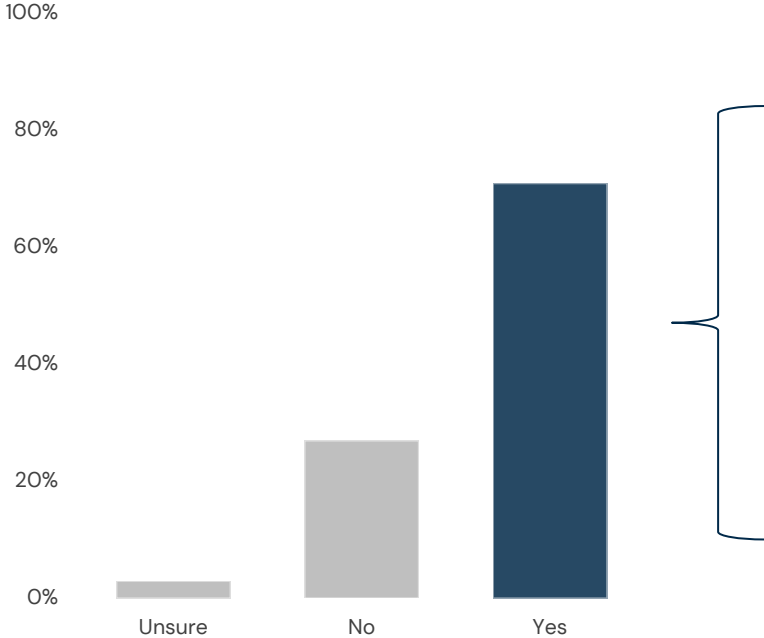
Black (25%) and Hispanic/Latino (23%) respondents were more likely than White respondents (16%) to change their answer to "yes" when prompted to broaden their definition of volunteerism.

# Neighbors Helping Neighbors...

Roughly 7 in 10 Virginians embrace “informal” forms of helping their neighbors...

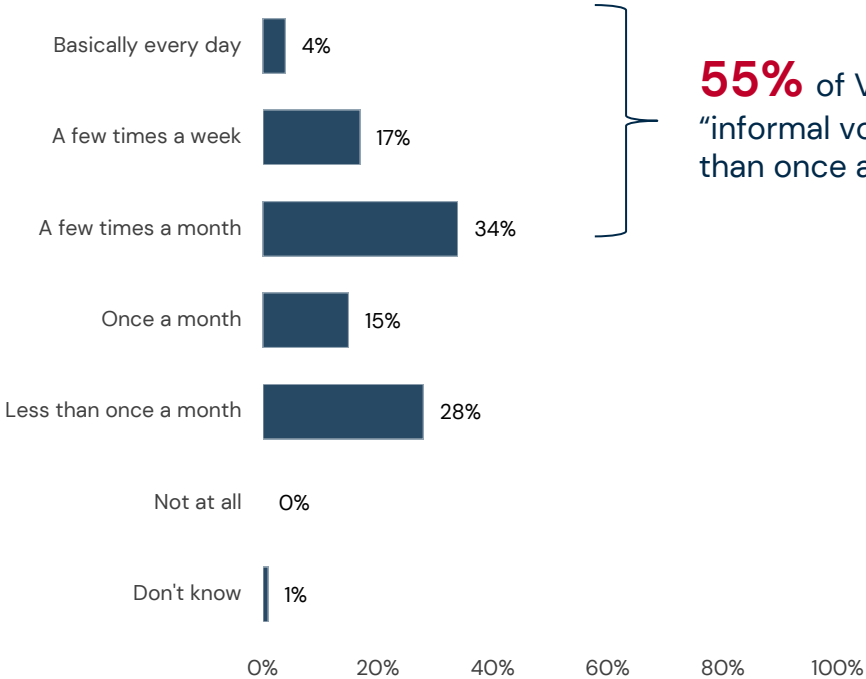


...and more than half of those who engage in “informal” service say they do so more than once a month.



Q2. In the past 12 months, did you and your neighbors do favors for each other such as house-sitting, watching each other’s children, lending tools, and other things to help each other?

n = 6,381



**55%** of Virginians engage in “informal volunteerism” more than once a month.

Q3. In the past 12 months, how often did you and your neighbors do favors for each other such as house-sitting, watching each other’s children, lending tools, and other things to help each other?

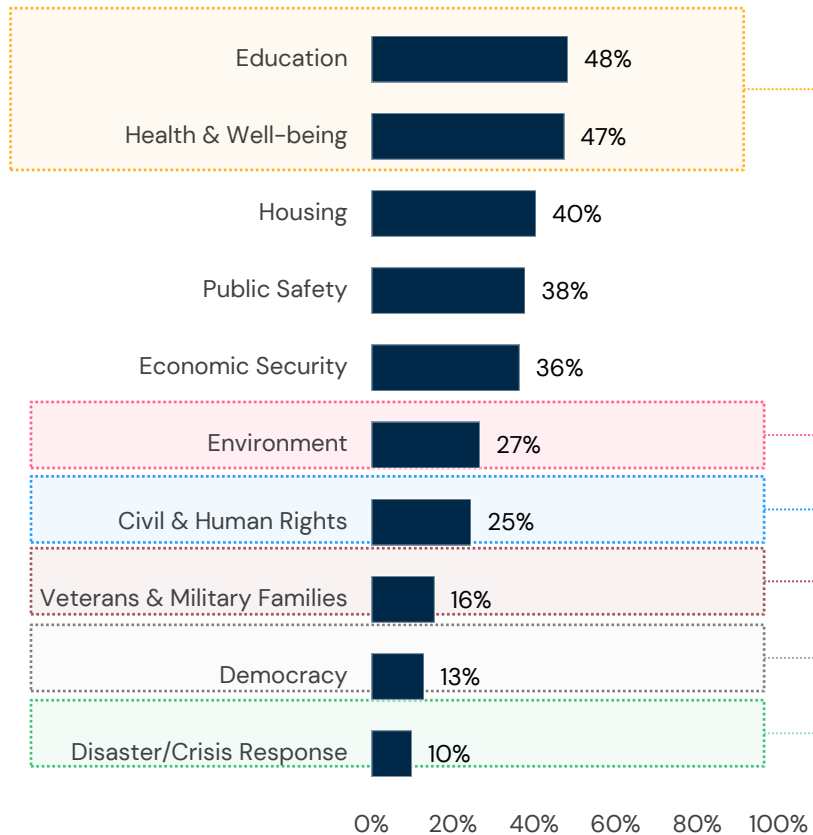
n = 4,602



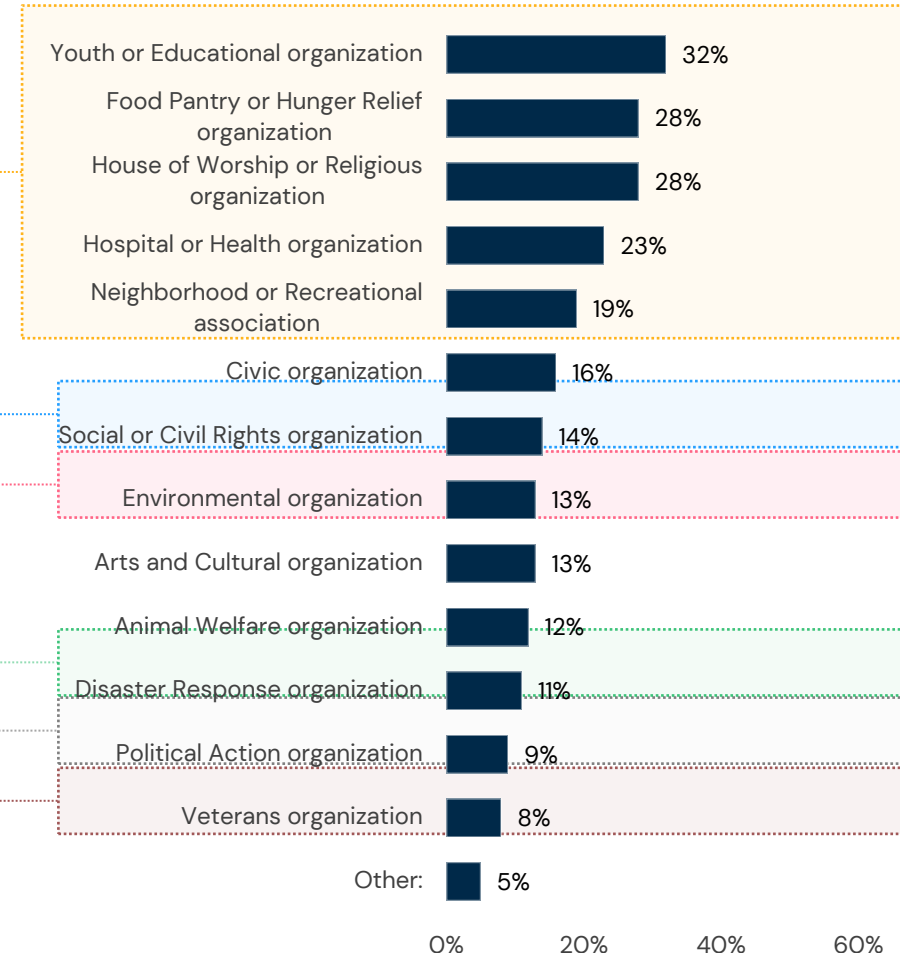
# Moving the Needle Against Priorities

**Volunteering to Meet Needs:** Respondents tend to volunteer with organizations most often that align with their top two identified local priorities. That said, gaps exist when considering the number of people who prioritize issues like the environment, civil and human rights and veterans and the degree to which volunteers engage with organizations in those fields.

## LOCAL PRIORITIES



## WHERE THEY VOLUNTEER



Q13. Of the following options, what should be the Top 3 priorities for where you live

n = 6,374

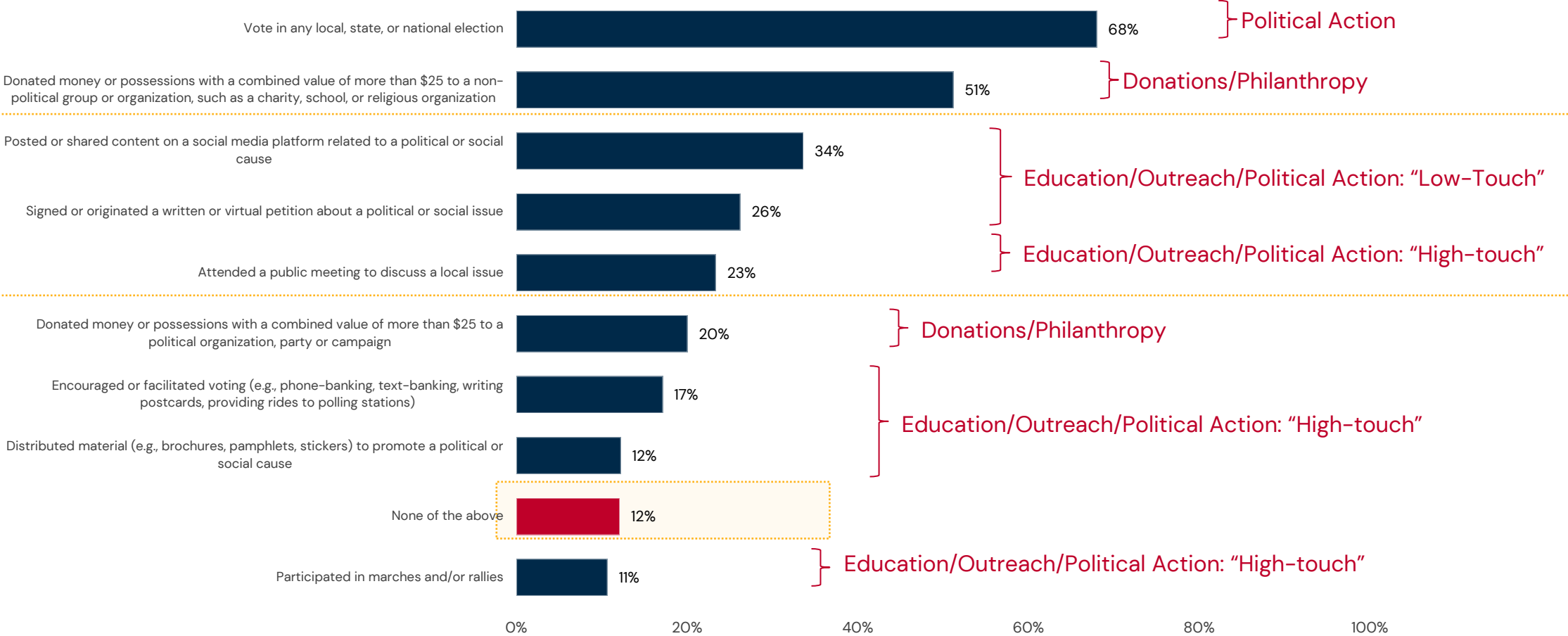
Q6. Which types of organizations have you volunteered for in the past 12 months? Select all that apply

n = 4,353



# Civic Action

The most direct actions respondents are most likely to take involve voting and making non-political donations. Beyond that, respondents are most apt to use virtual or public forums to spread awareness.



Q30. In the past 12 months, did you do any of the following? *Select all that apply.* n = 6,259

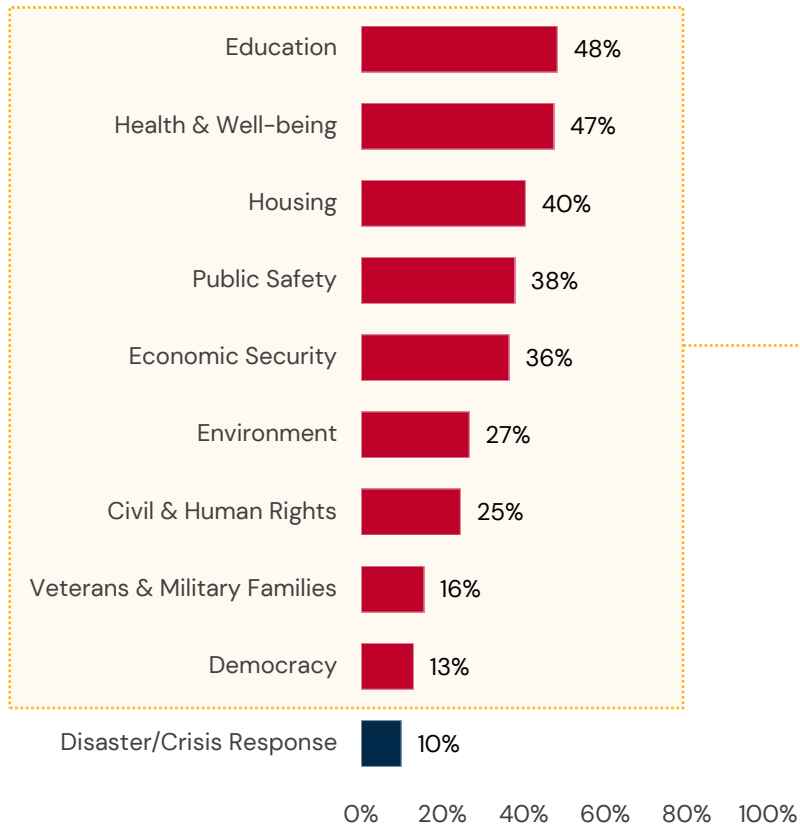


# Moving the Needle Against Priorities

Respondents choose political action as one of the two most effective actions to meet community needs for all but one priority area, yet they don't always trust government to act accordingly...

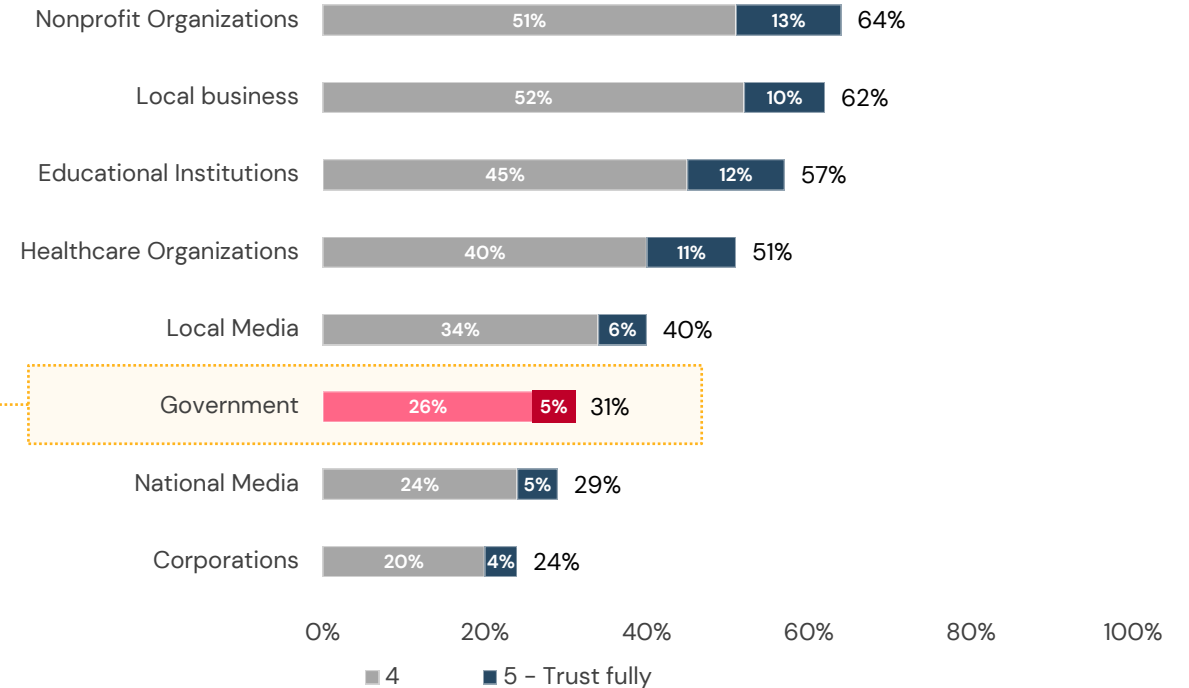


## LOCAL PRIORITIES



n = 6,374

## How much do you trust the following institutions to do what is right?



Q29. How much do you trust the following institutions to do what is right?

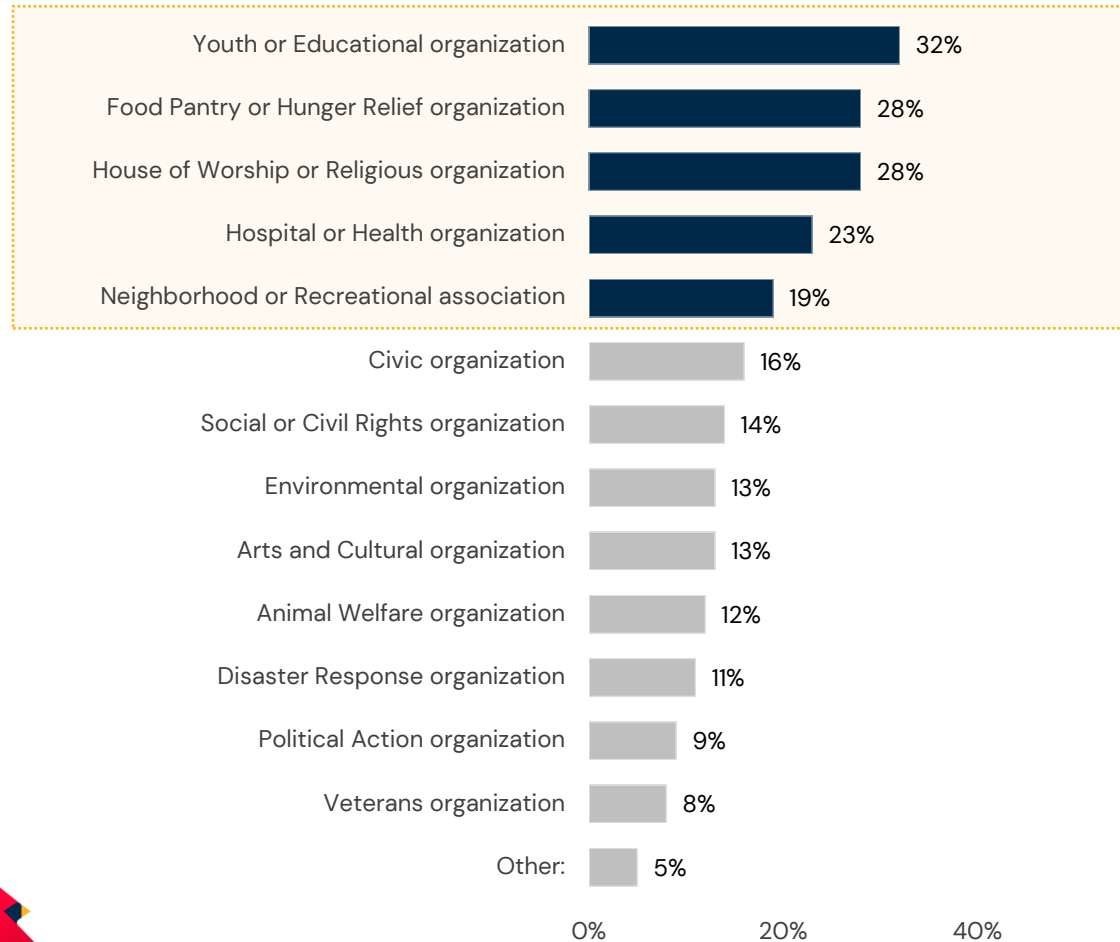
Avg n = 6,257



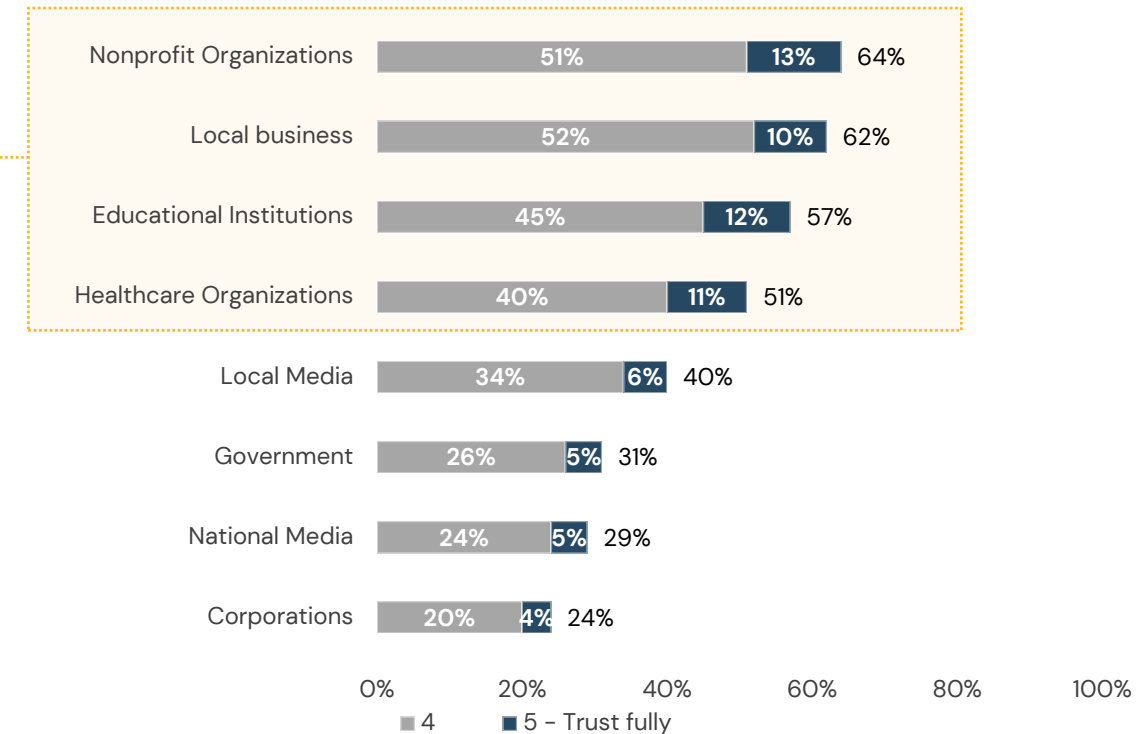
Q13. Of the following options, what should be the Top 3 priorities for where you live

# How Trust Manifests Locally

The high prevalence of “neighborly acts” Virginians report signifies a high degree of trust people have in each other. Beyond that, a closer examination of where Virginians most often volunteer also suggests a desire to support organizations that tend to have a unique local presence, reflect local character or even function as community spaces.



**Where they volunteer most often is also aligned with those organizations they trust to do the right thing.**



Q6. Which types of organizations have you volunteered for in the past 12 months? Select all that apply  
 Q29. How much do you trust the following institutions to do what is right?

n = 4,353  
 Avg n = 6,257

Virginia Community Engagement Index

# How do we invite people?

Insights to tailor recruitment and program development



## Focus on appealing to motivations – not alleviating barriers

**WHY?** Because motivations have a more statistically reliable relationship to whether someone volunteers, whereas barriers are not as strongly related to whether someone doesn't volunteer. Therefore, if we're trying to influence behavior, our energies will likely be better spent on those actions more likely to spur desired outcomes.

SURVEY QUESTIONS	ATTRIBUTE	KEY MEASURES	Strength of Relationship*
Q9. How or why did you start volunteering or “giving back”?	How Someone Started Volunteering ( <b>STARTING</b> )	Q4/5. Volunteer in the past 12 months	Moderate
Q10. Why do you continue to volunteer or give back?	Why someone continues volunteering ( <b>MOTIVATIONS</b> )	Q4/5. Volunteer in the past 12 months	Strong
Q11. Below are some potential reasons why someone may be unable to volunteer or may choose not to serve or contribute to causes. Select up to 3 that best match your experience.	What gets in the way of volunteering ( <b>BARRIERS</b> )	Q4/5. Volunteer in the past 12 months	Weak

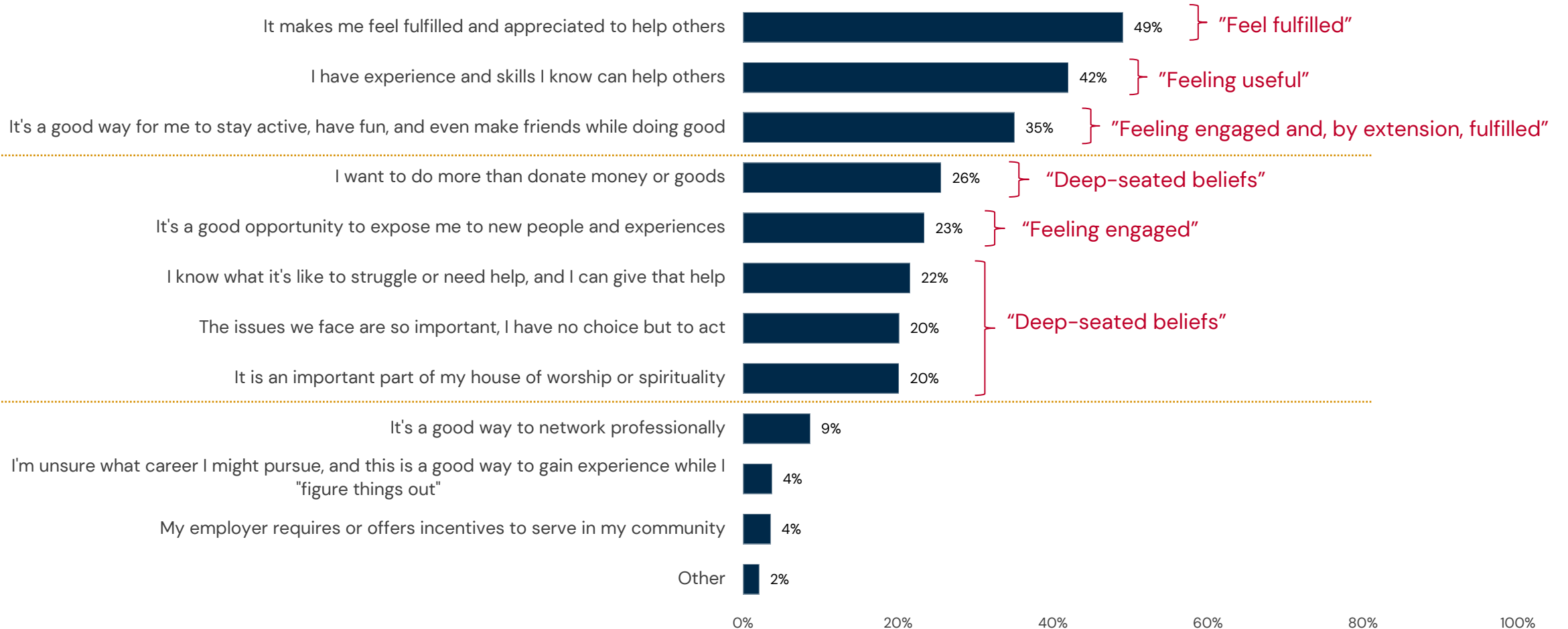
\*r<sup>2</sup>= % of variability within the driver explained:

- Strong > .70
- Moderate .3 to .69
- Weak < .3



# Why They Keep Volunteering

Respondents most often cite personal fulfillment as the reason they continue volunteering — whether that fulfillment comes from knowing they’ve helped or having shared the experience with others. Beyond that, a desire to do more in the face of current challenges, or because of personal beliefs, also rates highly as a motivating factor.



Q10. Why do you continue to volunteer or give back? Select up to three descriptions that best match your experiences.

n = 4,355





# How do we mobilize?

By looking closer at who is volunteering and how, you can target your message to segments of your volunteers to leverage their investment of time and treasure.

## Active & Frequent Engagers

Defined as those who report volunteering more than a few times a week and/or have engaged in 5 or more civic actions in the past 12 months.

**28% of the survey population\***



### GOAL

Broaden their influence and build up as ambassadors — those who can spread awareness of opportunities and extend the invitation to serve.

## Active but Sporadic Engagers

Defined as those who have volunteered within the past year but report having decreased their frequency of volunteering.

**14% of the survey population\***



### GOAL

Reignite their passions through specific invitations to serve that align with their community priorities and the impacts they hope to make — both for their communities and themselves.

## Potential Engagers

Defined as those who did not report volunteering with an organization within the past 12 months.

**30% of the survey population\***



### GOAL

Spark an interest to explore more “formal” avenues of service using what we know about the drivers of volunteerism while capturing and celebrating the ways in which they’re already making a difference.

\*Note: These groups are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Therefore, their percentages are not intended to add up to 100% of the total survey population.

## Using the VCEI

# What now?

- Using data to inform volunteer recruitment and retention based off perception of community needs and understanding priorities of volunteers
- Leveraging how Virginians invest their time, talent, and treasure to create larger impact
- Inspiring more Virginians to get involved to create a culture of service and volunteerism throughout the Commonwealth



VIRGINIA COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INDEX

PART 01

## Community Needs, Priorities, and Effectiveness of Actions



VIRGINIA COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INDEX

PART 02

## The Current State of Engagement



VIRGINIA COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INDEX

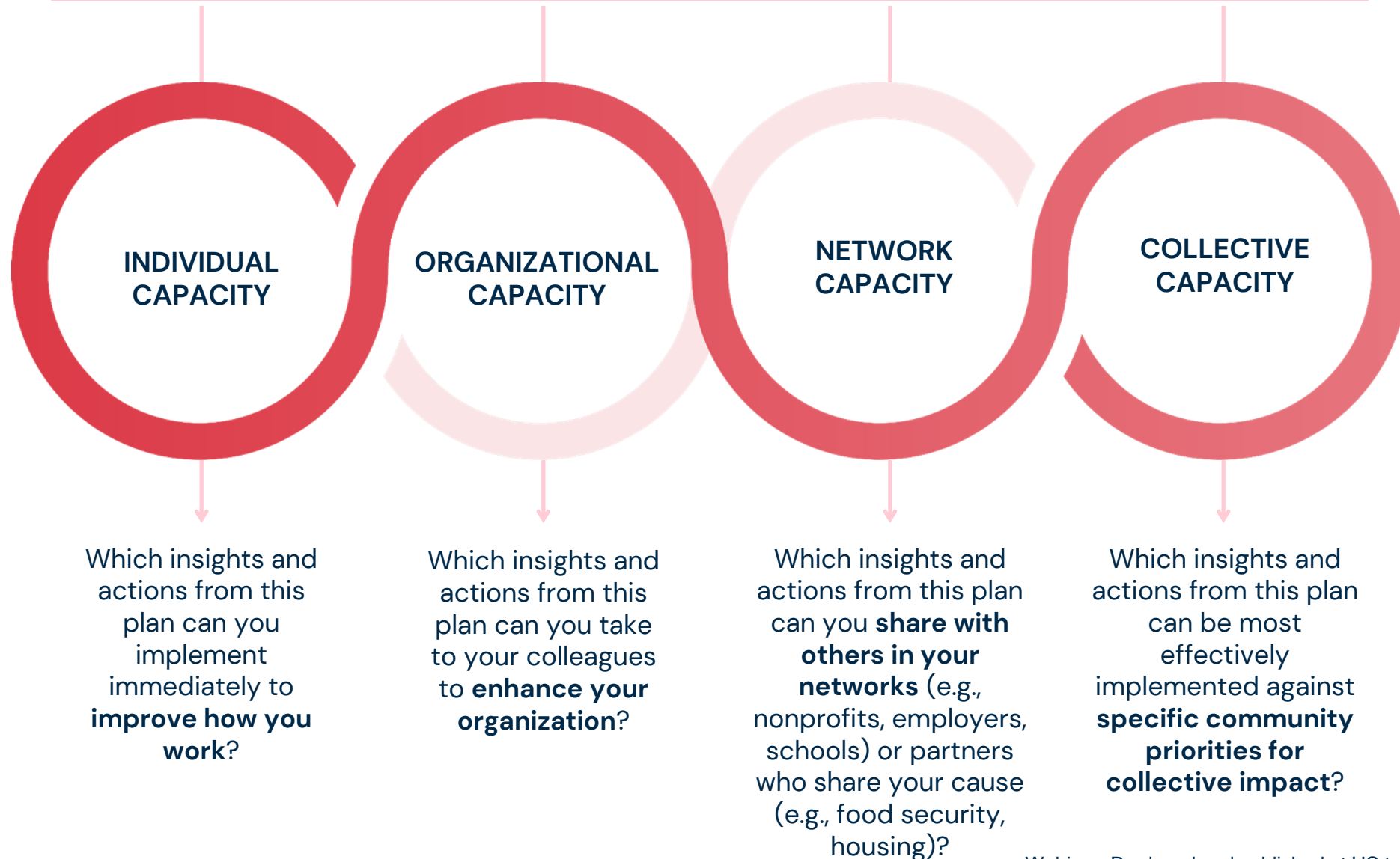
PART 03

## Insights for Mobilization



Webinar: Produced and published at US taxpayer expense

# Applying the Plan



# Examples from the Field

- Using the VCEI to inform our work at the statewide level
  - Check out recordings from the 2023 Virginia Volunteerism Summit
  - Offering technical assistance rooted in evidence
- Sharing insights with employers, funders, and other stakeholders
  - Promoting opportunities for employers to get engaged, and engage their employees
  - Inspiring funders to consider how to build the capacity of their grantees through VCEI findings
- Piloting projects with networks to build resources and capacity for a common goal
  - Utilizing the VCEI to ground strategic conversations



# Reflection

Kathy Spangler  
Director, Serve Virginia





# Continuing the Conversation

## Question & Answer

### Facilitator:

- **Laura H. Schlachter**, PhD, Survey Statistician, Office of Research and Evaluation, AmeriCorps

### Panel:

- **Mary Hyde**, PhD, Director, Office of Research and Evaluation, AmeriCorps
- **Shane Dermanjian**, MPP, Research Analyst, Office of Research and Evaluation, AmeriCorps
- **Barry Goodstadt**, PhD, Research Analyst, Office of Research and Evaluation, AmeriCorps
- **Analise Gammel**, MSW, Statewide Engagement Officer, Serve Virginia
- **Kathy Spangler**, Director, Serve Virginia

# Thank you for attending today's webinar

Join us in June 2024 for our final webinar in the year long Celebration of Service and Its Evidence Story.

The recording and support materials for this webinar will be provided in the next two weeks on the [AmeriCorps Our Impact Webinar page](#) and [AmeriCorps R&E YouTube Playlist](#)



The screenshot shows a slide from a webinar series. At the top left is the AmeriCorps 30th Anniversary logo, featuring a large red '30' with a stylized 'A' inside the zero, and the text 'YEARS of AmeriCorps' below it. To the right of the logo, the text reads 'Evidence & Impact Webinar Series 2023-2024'. The main title of the slide is 'Celebrating Service and Its Evidence Story' in a bold, red, sans-serif font. Below the title, there is a section header 'About the 2023-2024 Webinar Series' in a smaller, red font. The body text describes a six-webinar series hosted by the AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation, focusing on evidence and impact with partners in the field, within the agency, and leaders in communities and the nation. It mentions celebrating AmeriCorps' 30th Anniversary and highlights the transformative value of evidence use to strengthen community-based organization practices, members and volunteers, local impact, and public trust. The text also notes that the series will highlight AmeriCorps' evidence journey and the evidence use movement sparked through the Evidence Act, and that webinars will share how AmeriCorps not only supports research, evidence and evaluation capacity building that strengthens the local nonprofit missions to problem solve and tackle community inspired change, but also shows return in taxpayer dollars saved to local, state, and national budgets and sparks our nation's civic engagement.