

E PLURIBUS UNUM

PERSONA VALIDATION AND EXPLORATION

SEPTEMBER 2024

METHODOLOGY

On behalf of E Pluribus Unum, Embold Research conducted a poll of registered voters built of modelled personas, in order to validate the accuracy and profile of these personas. Additionally, this research sought to dive more deeply into the attitudes of these particular voters toward racial justice and community engagement.



Survey n=568 likely “Overwhelmed Olivias,” “Lost Lucilles,” and “Nervous Nessas” in 13 southern states, from August 28 - September 1, 2024



Respondents were recruited via dynamic online sampling targeting a list of identified voters provided by E Pluribus Unum



Filtering based on age, gender, and race/ethnicity.



The modeled margin of error is 4.1%

SAMPLE OVERVIEW



100% Women
0% Men
0% Other



100% White
0% Black
0% Hispanic
0% AAPI
0% Other



65% Base Democrat
8% Base Republican
27% Independents + Leaners



0% 18-34
94% 35-49
6% 50-64
0% 65+



20% Protestant, Non-Evangelical
5% Evangelical
3% Observant Catholic
8% Non-observant Catholic
18% Other
46% Non-religious



19% Florida	6% Georgia
18% North Carolina	4% South Carolina
14% Texas	4% Virginia
10% Tennessee	1% Louisiana
8% Arkansas	1% Mississippi
7% Alabama	1% West Virginia
7% Kentucky	

KEY FINDINGS

.....

This cohort of voters show clear desire and enthusiasm for making change in their communities. At the same time, practical constraints and fears around community acceptance stifle action.

01

Most respondents align somewhat, if not completely, to at least one of the three tested personas.

02

A majority of respondents (55%) feel welcomed by their community, however, six in 10 feel that they would be treated poorly for expressing different views.

03

Respondents overwhelmingly believe that they can make a difference when it comes to racial justice (75%) and a majority (58%) are currently involved in their communities in some way

04

Messages about creating change resonate deeply with respondents, but do not significantly change the level interest in taking action to advance racial justice in their communities

PERSONA

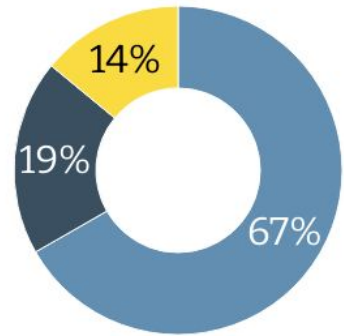
ALIGNMENT



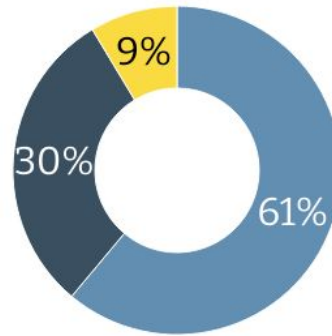
Overall, respondents show partial, if not near-complete, alignment with at least one of the three tested personas

Persona Alignment

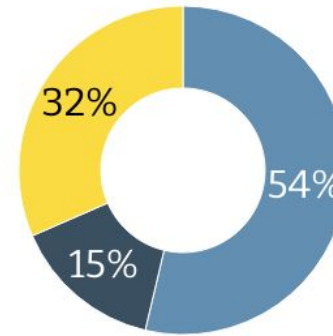
- Semi
- Mostly
- Not



Overwhelmed Olivia



Lost Lucille



Nervous Nessa

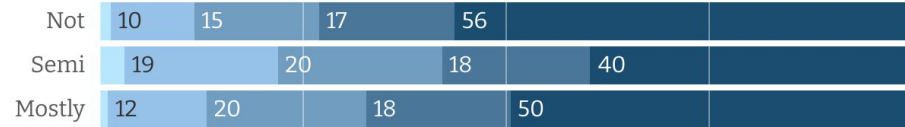


Length of Time in Community

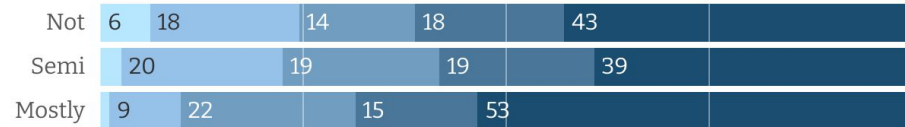
● Less than 2 years ● 2-5 years ● 6-10 years ● 11-15 years ● More than 15 years



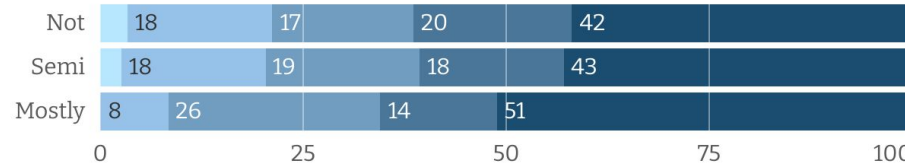
Overwhelmed Olivia



Lost Lucille



Nervous Nessa



0 25 50 75 100

Q: Roughly how many years have you lived in your current community?

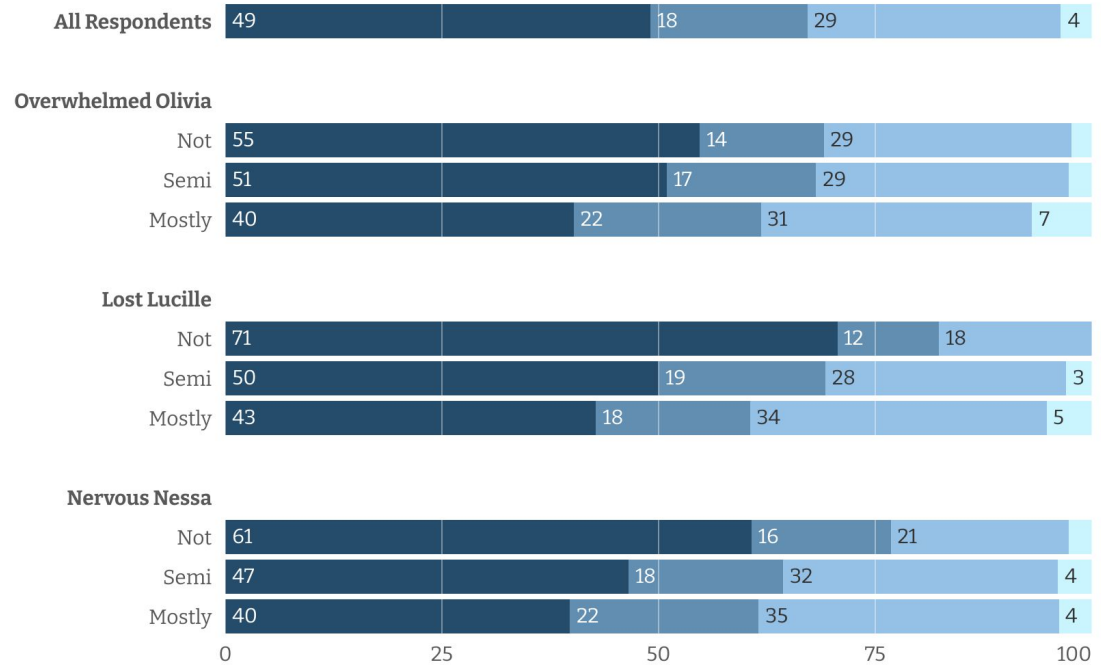
Most respondents have lived in their community for at least 10 years...



...However, only three in 10 are “true” transplants, and just under half are life-long Southerners

Length of Time in South

- Lived in the South my whole life
- Grew up in the South, but spent some time living in other areas before returning
- Grew up somewhere else, then moved to the South
- Other (please specify)

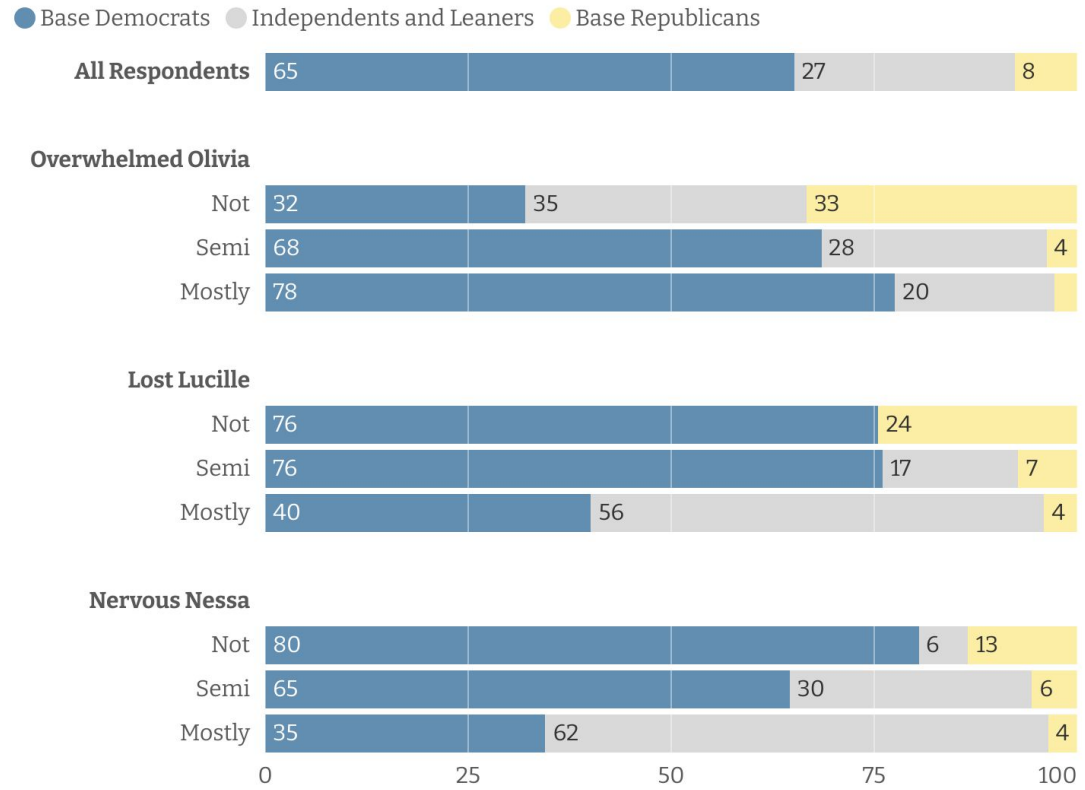


Q: Which of the following best describes the areas you've lived in?



Personas roughly fall into their expected political alignments

Persona Political Alignment



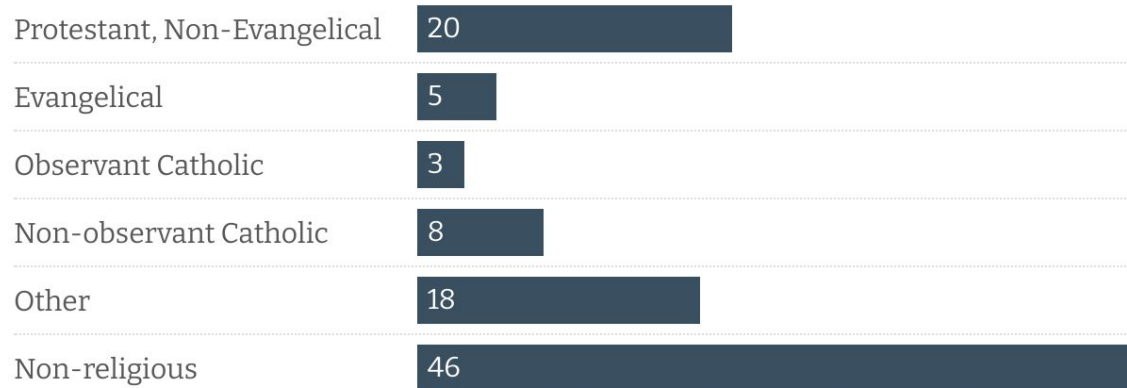
Q: Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a:



Notably, only a quarter of respondents identify as Evangelical or Non-evangelical protestant.

Additionally, significant portion of respondents describe themselves as “non-religious.”

Religious Affiliation



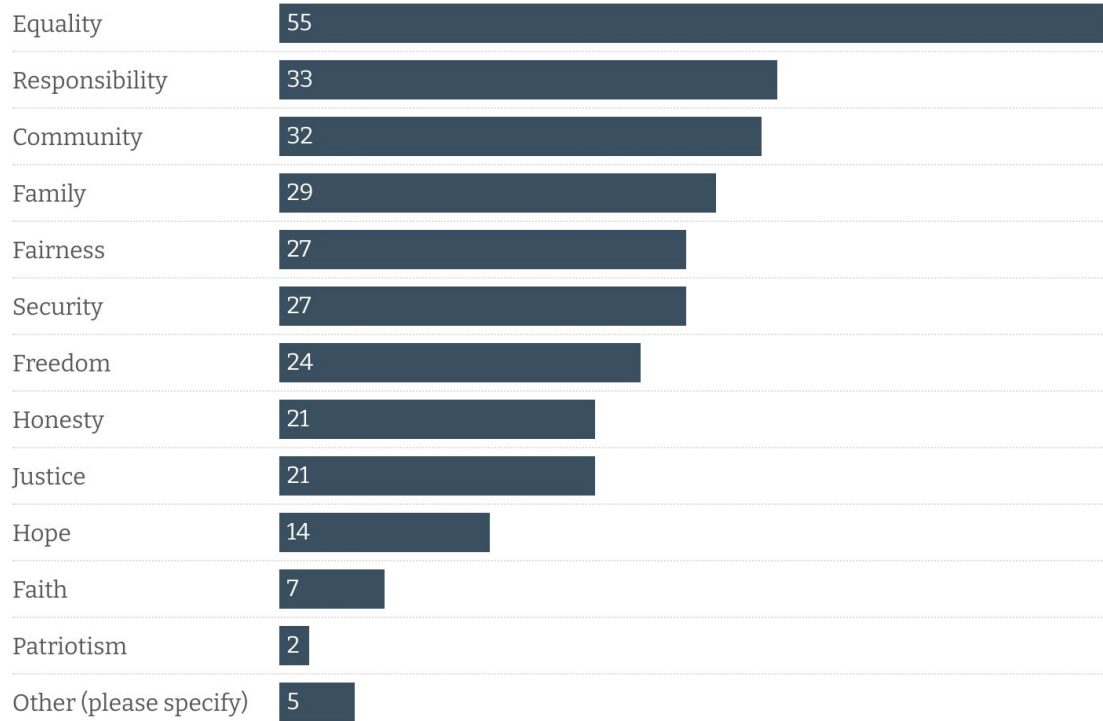
Q: Which of the following best matches your religious affiliation?



Equality is one of the most important values for respondents when it comes to maintaining strong communities, followed by responsibility and community

Only one in 5 respondents select “Honesty” as a top value for maintaining strong communities

Top Community Values



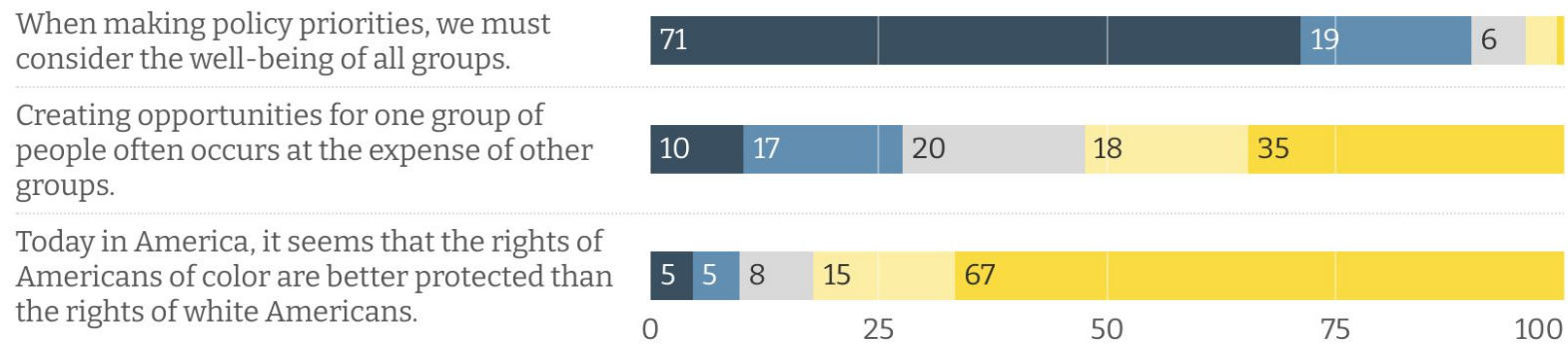
Q: Focus now on yourself. In your opinion, which THREE of the following values are most important for maintaining strong local communities?



Respondents overwhelmingly believe that policy priorities must take into account the well-being of all groups and reject the notion that Americans of color are better protected than their white peers.

Policy Priorities

● Strongly agree ● Somewhat agree ● Neither agree nor disagree ● Somewhat disagree ● Strongly disagree



Q: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

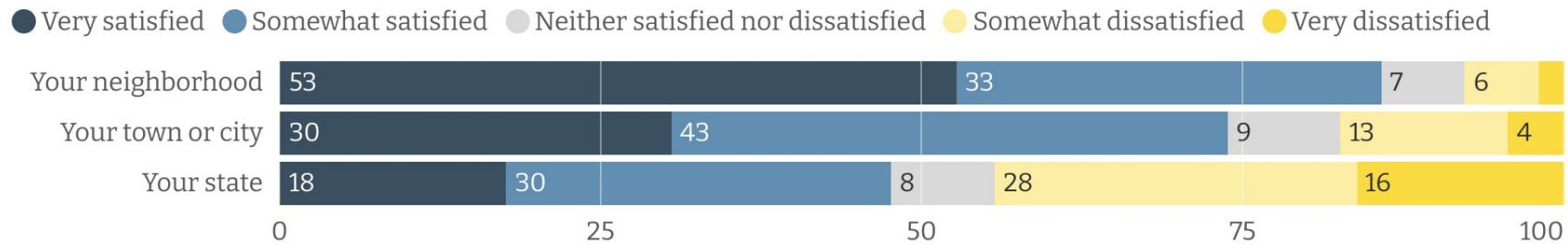


SOUTHERN COMMUNITIES IN
CONTEXT



Majorities of respondents are satisfied with how things are going in their local areas, but divided when it comes to how they feel about their state.

Satisfaction With Local Areas



Q: Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a:

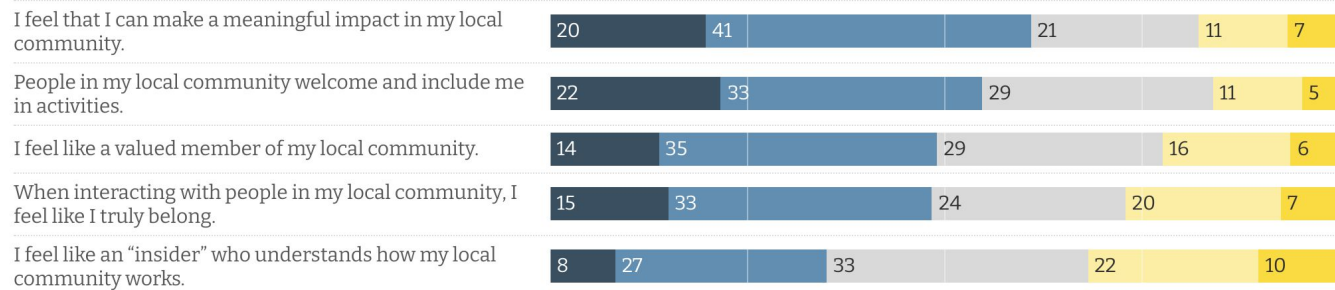


Just over half of voters say their community welcomes and includes them, but six in 10 believe they would be treated poorly if they expressed beliefs different from others

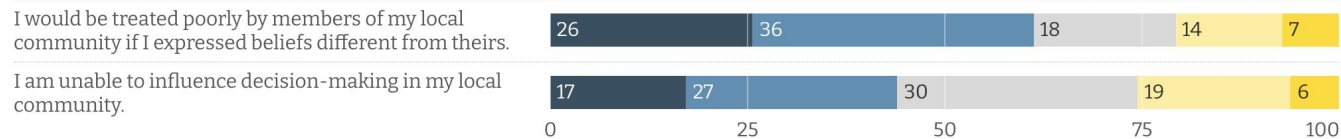
Belonging Within Community

● Strongly agree ● Somewhat agree ● Neither agree nor disagree ● Somewhat disagree ● Strongly disagree

Positive Messages



Negative Messages



Q: Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?



Respondents most often cite local schools, churches, and volunteer organizations as places where they feel a sense of belonging in their community

“Ocala down town farmer's market. Everyone is incredibly friendly and always willing to chat.” - 40yo, 15+ years in community, FL, Strong Democrat

“Church I always feel welcome and I feel like I belong.” - 49yo, 15+ years in community, AR, Independent lean Democrat

“My neighborhood. There's a strong sense of community among most of us. We'd all drop something to help another out.” - 41yo, 15+ years in community, SC, Strong Democrat



Most respondents believe that individuals with marginalized identities are often excluded from their communities – both through individual hostilities and systemic barriers

“LGBT community. They were asked not to participate in the Christmas parade.” - *43yo, 15+ years in community, TN, Strong Republican*

“I feel like the area I live in is very racist. I feel people are stereotyped by what they look like; Hispanics are automatically illegal immigrants, African Americans are automatically criminals.” - *45yo, 15+ years in community, NC, Weak Democrat*

“Sure. Those with less money, resources, POC, elderly, anyone partially on the margins.” - *48yo, 15+ years in community, GA, Strong Democrat*

“Spanish-speakers, lack of community resources for assimilation.” - *46yo, 15+ years in community, GA, Weak Democrat*



When identifying shared values, most respondents gravitate toward family, community, and helping one another

“Making sure to take care of each other.” - 42yo, 15+ years in community, TX, Strong Democrat

“I think everyone genuinely wants to do right by their neighbors and be a good citizen.” - 50yo, <15 years in community, GA, strong Democrat

“Ability to have the freedom to provide a safe, comfortable life for our families” -, 46yo, 15+ years in community, NC, Independent lean Democrat

However, there is also a significant group of respondents who feel that conservative and religious values – which they don’t hold – dominate

“I understand that most of my community is Christian and Republican however, I don't think they value anything but themselves” - 44yo, <15 years in community, TN, Weak Democrat

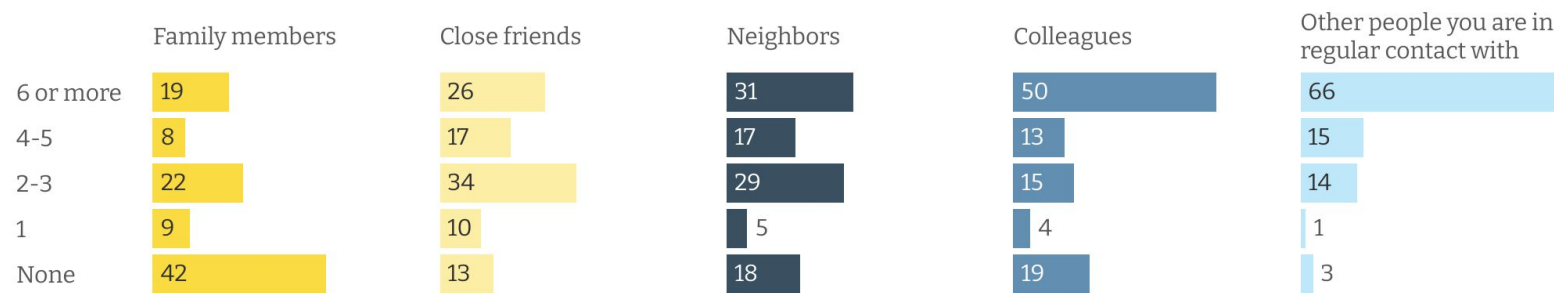
“Christian’ values of treating everyone as a brother - as long as people look at and believe like you” - 45yo, <15 years in community, NC, Independent lean Democrat



Most voters have at least one person in their lives that is another race or ethnicity from them

However, the more intimate the connection, the smaller the number of those who are different races/ethnicities

Diversity of Everyday Life

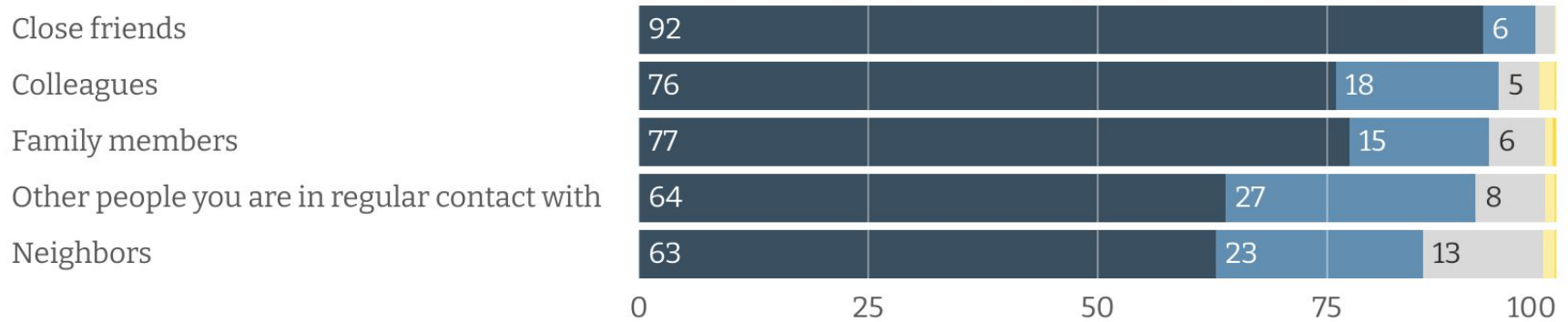


Q: How many of your family, close friends, neighbors, coworkers, and acquaintances are from another race or ethnicity than you?



Overall, respondents report having “very positive” experiences with people close to them of different races or ethnicities

● Very positive ● Somewhat positive ● Neither positive nor negative ● Somewhat negative ● Very negative



Q: How would you describe the interactions with the people you identified above (e.g., family, close friends, neighbors, coworkers, and acquaintances who are from another race or ethnicity than you)? (Respondents were shown only the options in which they indicated they had relationships with people from other races).

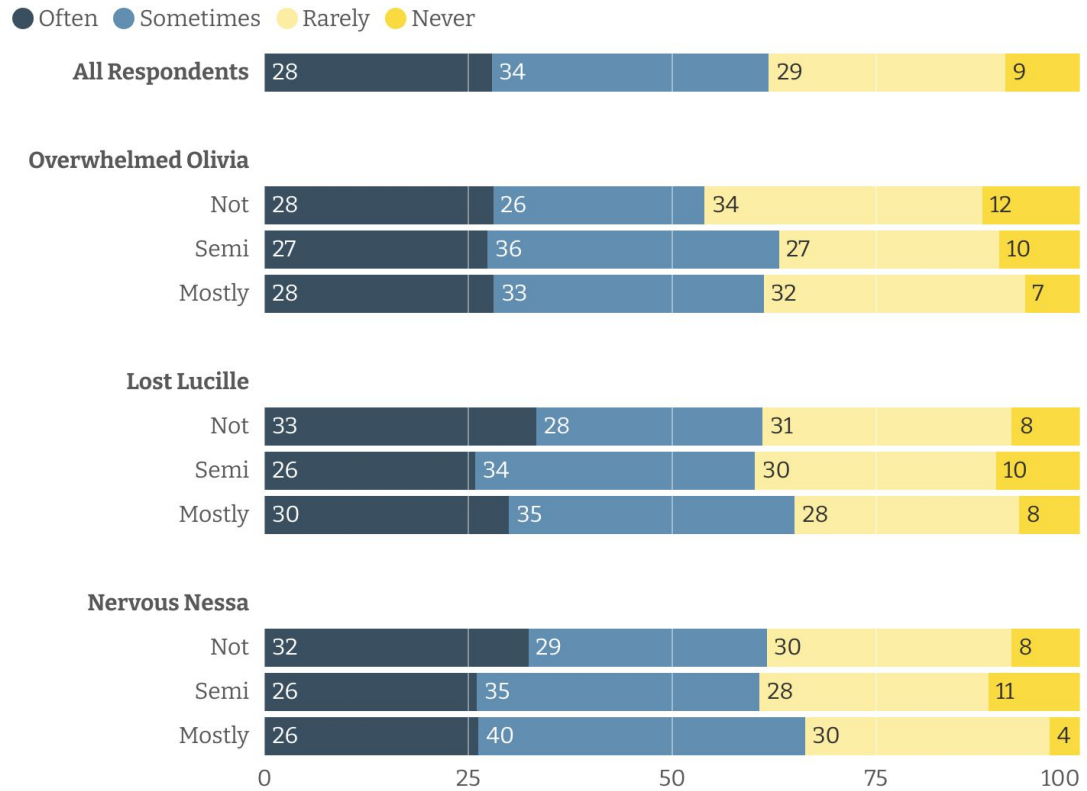


A majority of respondents hear about conversations about racial justice in their communities semi-frequently

Those who are more aligned with the personas modelled are more likely to be attuned to these conversations.



Conversations about Racial Justice

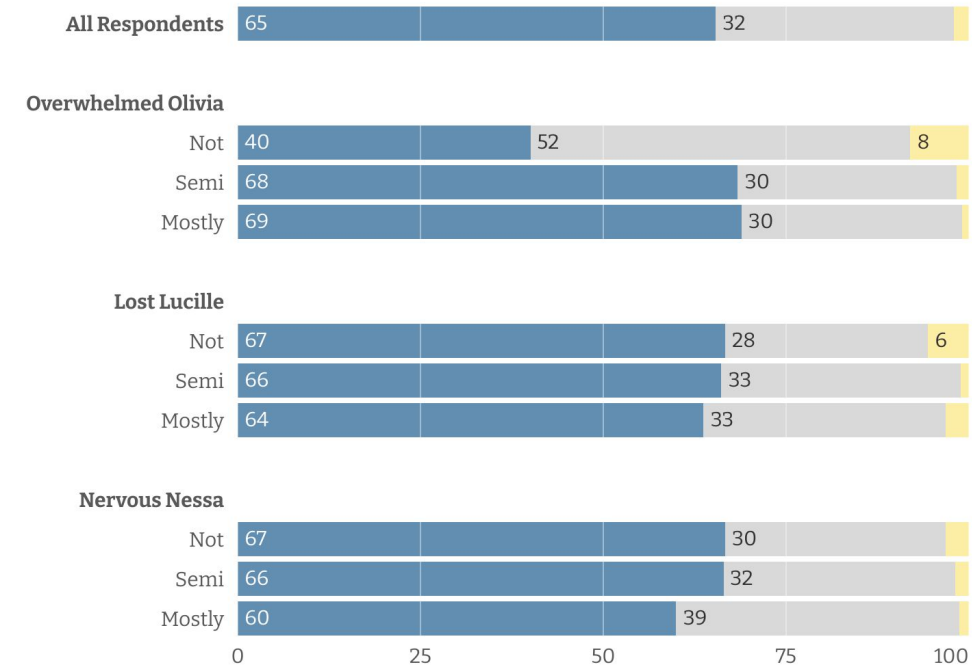


Q: There are a lot of conversations in America today about racial justice and making our communities more fair for people of all races. How often do you hear about such conversations happening in your local community?

Most respondents feel that the larger issue when it comes to discrimination against Black people is systemic, not individual

Views on Discrimination

- When it comes to discrimination against Black people in our country today, the bigger problem is racism in our laws and systems.
- When it comes to discrimination against Black people in our country today, the bigger problem is racism by individual people.
- There is no discrimination against Black people in our country today.



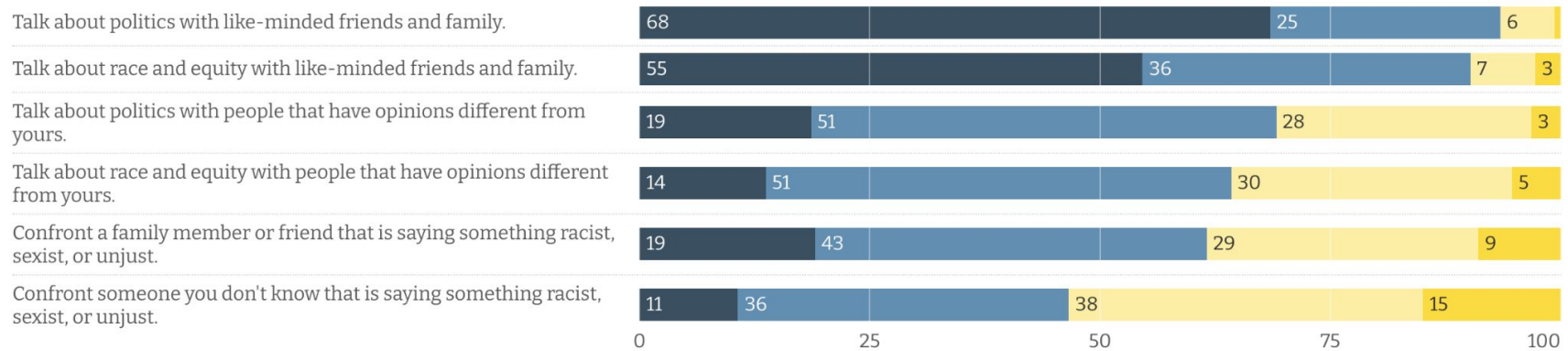
Q: Which of the following comes closest to your view?



Majorities of respondents frequently talk to like-minded people about politics, race, and equity but are less likely to do so with people that have different views, or confront someone on their opinions

Conversations About Race

● Often ● Sometimes ● Rarely ● Never



Q: How often do you find yourself having the following conversations or discussions?



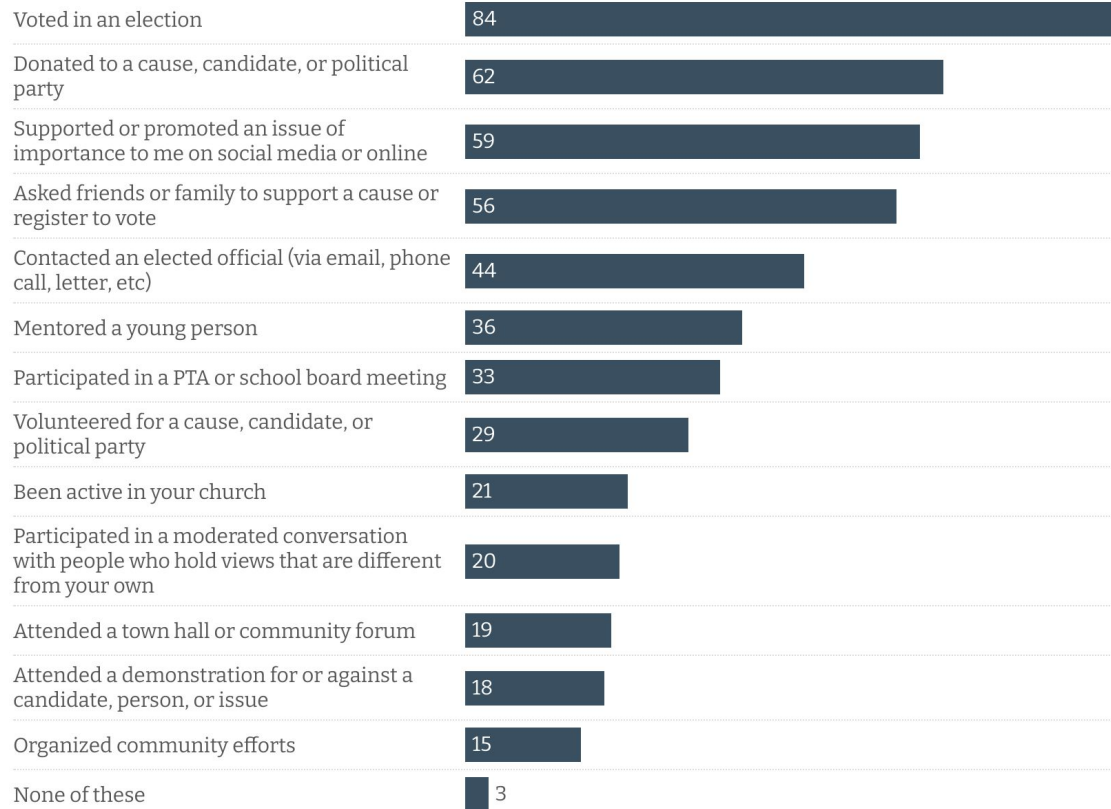
MOTIVATORS AND BARRIERS
TO ACTION



Virtually all respondents have gotten involved in some way, with the most popular forms of civic engagement being voting and donating to a cause, candidate or political party



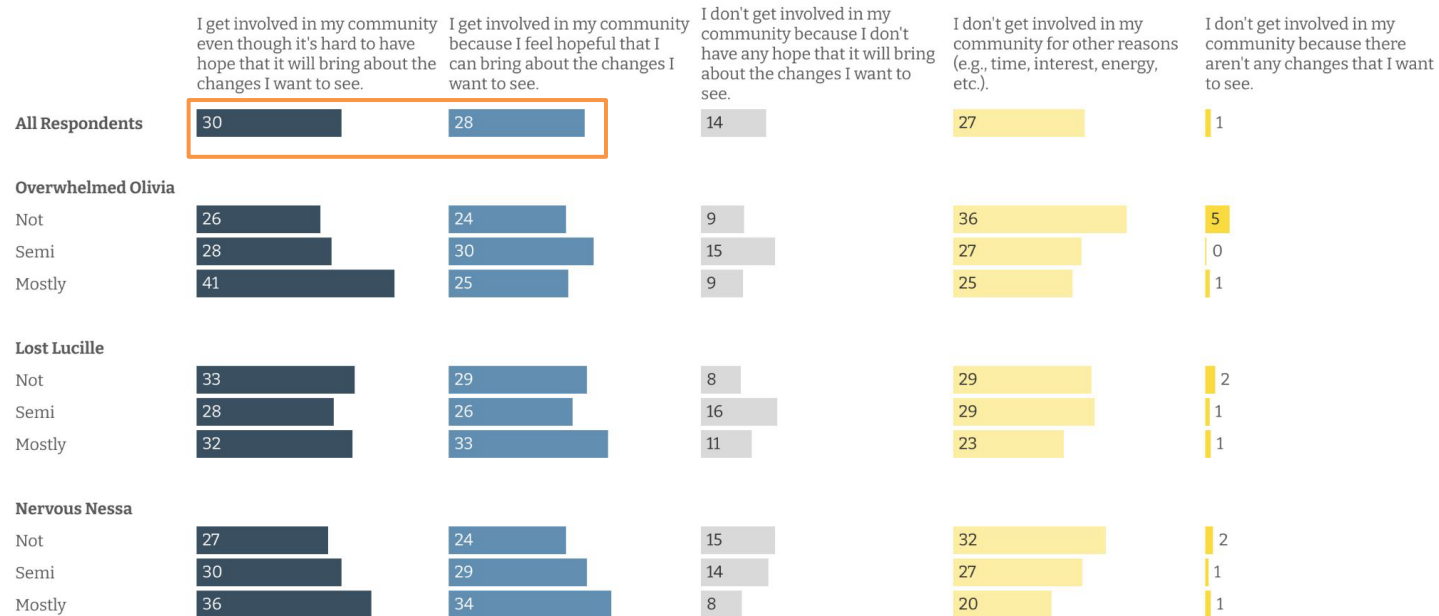
Civic Engagement



Q: Below are some ways that people get involved in their community. Which of the following have you done in the last year? Select all that apply.

Nearly six in 10 voters say that they are involved in their community, even if significant portions feel that it's hard to bring about the changes they want to see

Getting Involved in Community



Q: Thinking about your involvement in your community, which of the following comes closest to your view?



Respondents' motivation to be involved comes from three main sources:

Personal Values

"My privileged upbringing and education makes me feel like I have a responsibility to be engaged and contribute positively to my community, plus my faith and hope for the future." - 40yo, <15 years in community, Weak Democrat, FL

Desire for Change

"My daughter. We need to make the world a better place for her. She needs bodily autonomy. She needs a safe. School environment without fear of being shot. She'll need affordable housing and insurance eventually. And affordable groceries. We always need to strive for better. They deserve it." - 44yo, <15 years in community, FL, Strong Democrat

Ability to impact

"A sense that that effort makes someone else feel safer, more comfortable, more themselves .. an ability to demonstrate inclusion and make actual changes that impact actual humans" - 40yo, 15+ years in community, Strong Democrat, FL



Respondents overwhelmingly say that time is the biggest obstacle when it comes to getting involved...

“It's hard to find time. Do I spend my off hours with my family? Or do I spend my off hours canvassing? It's a difficult balance to achieve.” - 44yo, <15 years in community, FL, Strong Democrat

“I have to work. So the answer there is time.” - 44yo, 15+ years in community, NC, Independent lean Democrat

...but fears around safety, and lack of knowledge or feeling overwhelmed about where to start are also prominent

“Violence against me or my family if I show what "side" I'm on in any way.” - 45yo, 15+ years in community, VA, Strong Democrat

“Feeling dispirited and fatigued. Not knowing who to trust or where to start.” - 44yo, 15+ years in community, AR, Strong Democrat



Respondents are divided when it comes to identifying the obstacles that keeps individuals or organizations from being effective

While some respondents feel that the most significant barrier is a lack of resources or knowledge...

“Exposure, funding, more volunteers” - 42yo, <15 years in community, NC, Pure Independent

“People don't know where to start, it's intimidating and overwhelming.” - 41yo, 15+ years in community, WV, Strong Democrat

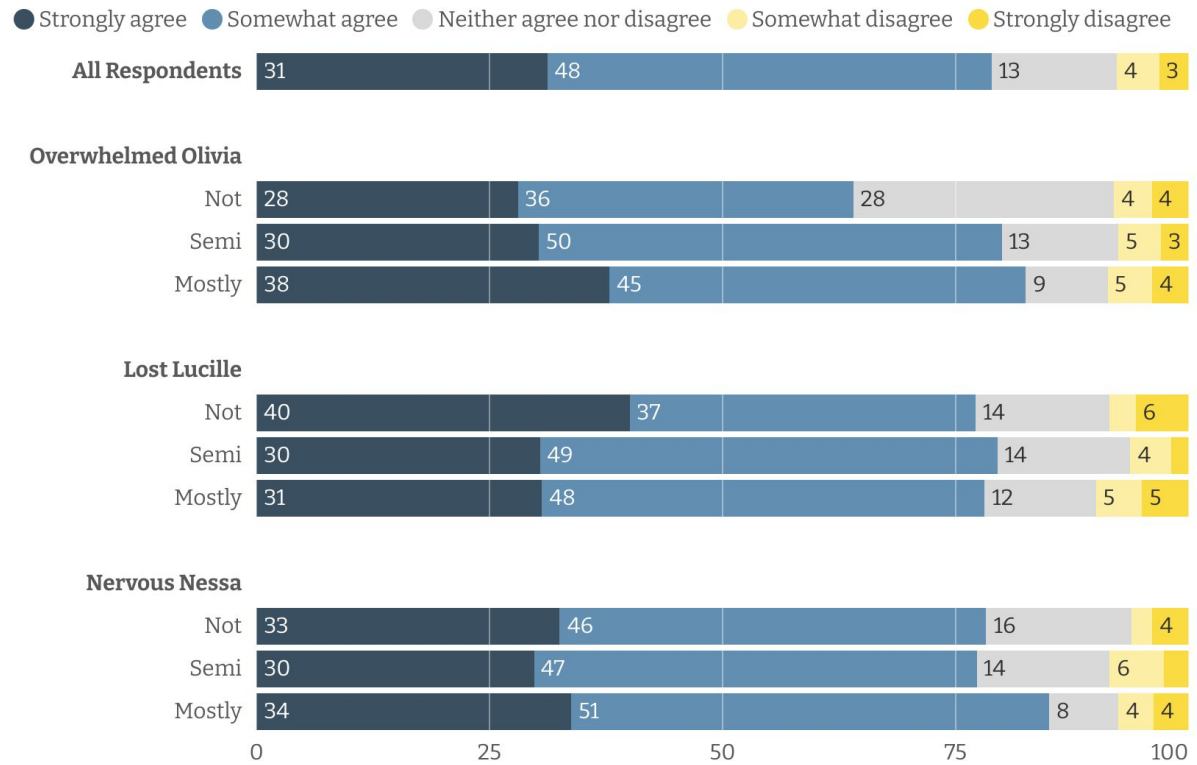
...Others feel that a fear of change, or close-mindedness and apathy in their communities is what stands in the way

“I believe their biggest obstacle is not knowing how to work with others that may see things differently than them. Compromise is possible. I think many people are too busy with themselves and their lives to really take a moment to find the needs in their community.” - 48yo, <15 years in community, VA, Strong Democrat



Respondents overwhelmingly believe that they can make a difference in advancing racial justice

Belief in Ability to Make a Difference

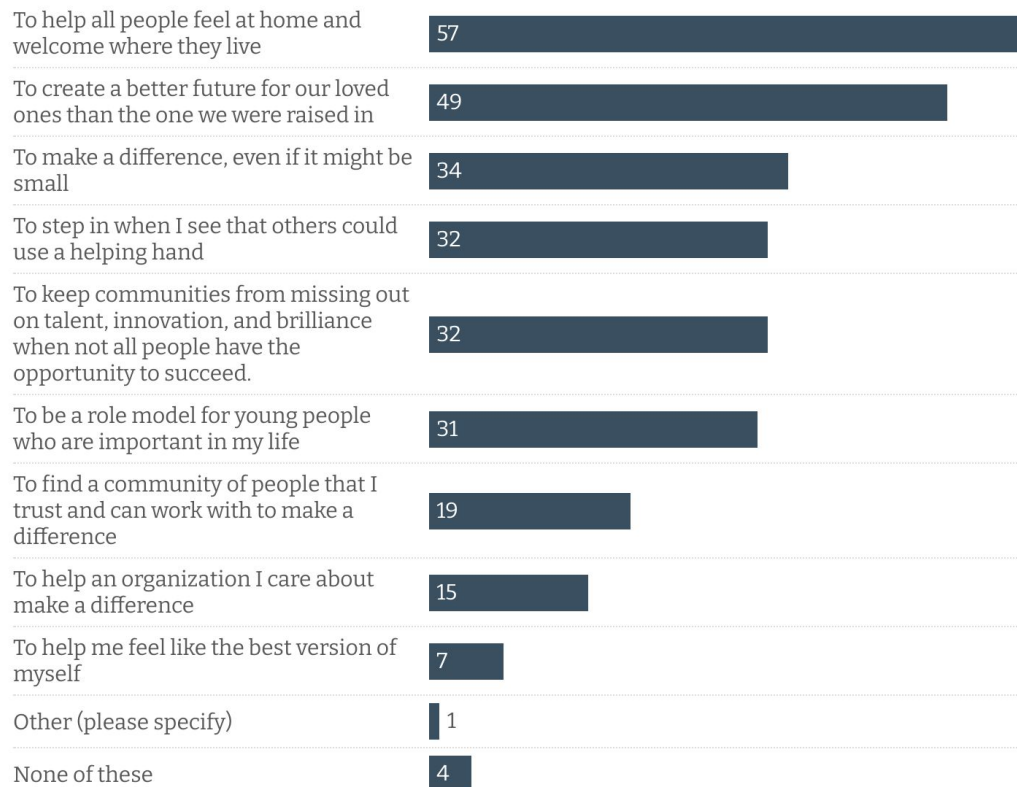


Q: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "People like me can make a difference in advancing racial justice."



Respondents are most motivated by the possibility of helping all people feel at home and of creating a better future for their loved ones

Motivations For Taking Action

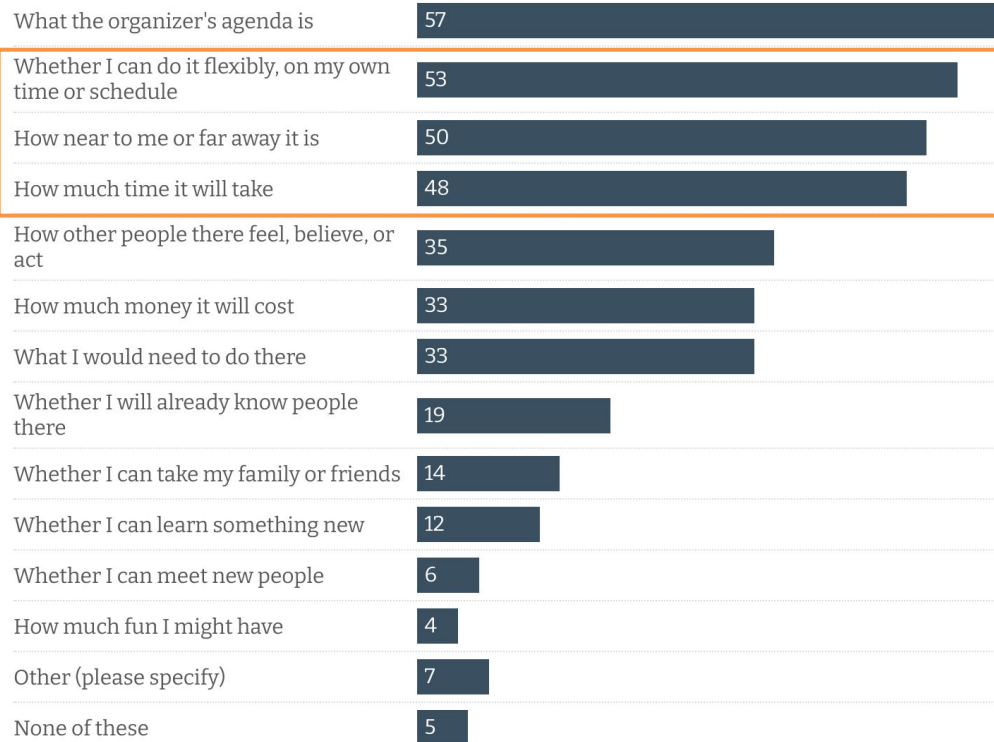


Q: Which of the following reasons would most motivate you to take action to advance racial equity? Please select UP TO THREE.



When deciding to participate in advancing racial equity, the most important factors for respondents are the agenda or the organizer and the time commitment

Factors For Participation

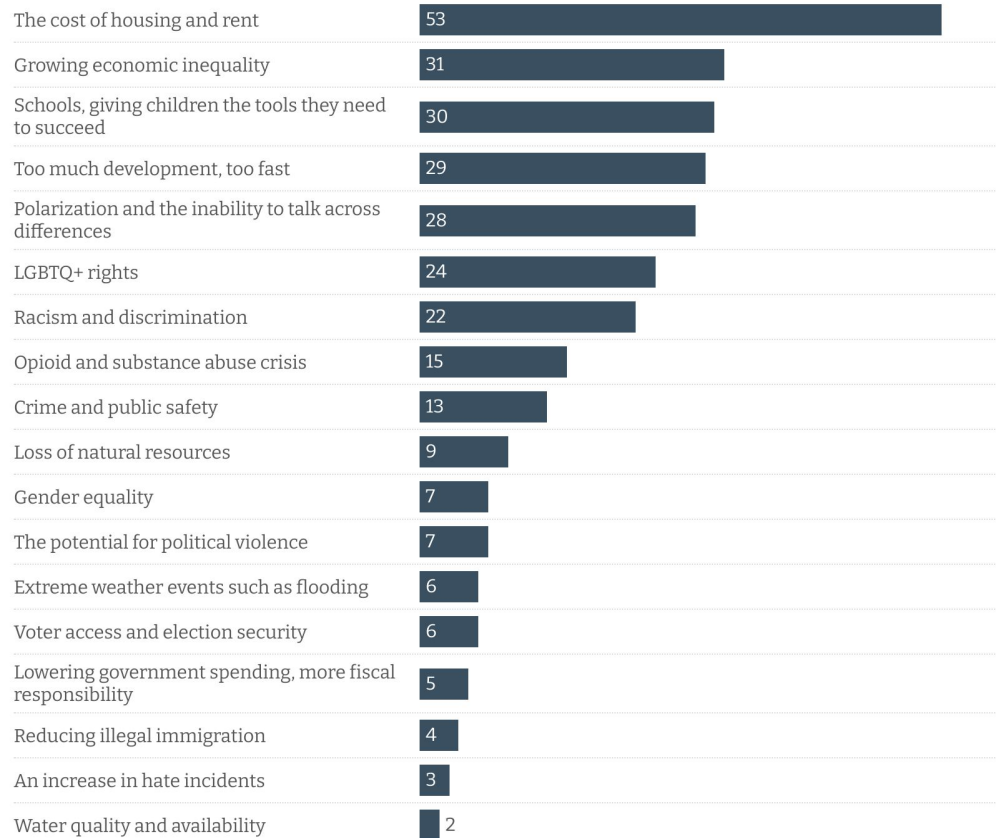


Q: Which of the following factors are most important to you when deciding whether to take action or participate in an event to advance racial equity? Please select UP TO FIVE factors that are most important to you.



Economic issues rise to the top, with over half of respondents selecting “the cost of housing and rent” as one of the top three biggest community challenges

Biggest Challenges



Q: Below is a list of issues that people sometimes consider to be challenges in their communities. In your opinion, what are the THREE biggest challenges in your community? Please select UP TO THREE.



MESSAGE
TESTING



Message Test for Persona Groups:

Statement A [50% see]: We all want to feel safe and welcome where we live, work, and play. But given our country's history of prejudice, some people don't feel like they belong here. Thankfully, we can each do something about it right now.

We each have more power than we think. But sometimes we need guidance, and connection to others who feel like we do. That support can help us overcome discomfort, find time to contribute, and realize the difference we can make.

People like us can start with the things we do every day, like talking to our friends and family, or putting our talents to use to create caring communities. It only takes a few minutes to learn how you can make a difference.

Statement B [50% see]: We all want to create a better world than the one we were raised in. A big part of making that happen is creating communities where everyone—no matter where you come from, what you look like, or what you believe in—feels welcomed, supported, and that they belong.

We've come a long way, but there's more work to be done. While we did not create today's inequalities, we can be part of the solution. We can create kinder communities for ourselves, our families, neighbors, and generations to come.



Respondents resonate strongly with both messages, but prefer a statement that focuses just on community

[50% saw version A]

We all want to feel safe and welcome where we live, work, and play. But given our country's history of prejudice, some people don't feel like they belong here. Thankfully, we can each do something about it right now.

We each have more power than we think. But sometimes we need guidance, and connection to others who feel like we do. That support can help us overcome discomfort, find time to contribute, and realize the difference we can make. People like us can start with the things we do every day, like talking to our friends and family, or putting our talents to use to create caring communities. It only takes a few minutes to learn how you can make a difference.

How favorable or unfavorable do you feel toward this statement?

● Very favorable ● Somewhat favorable ● Neutral ● Somewhat unfavorable ● Very unfavorable



[50% saw version B]

We all want to create a better world than the one we were raised in. A big part of making that happen is creating communities where everyone—no matter where you come from, what you look like, or what you believe in—feels welcomed, supported, and that they belong.

We've come a long way, but there's more work to be done. While we did not create today's inequalities, we can be part of the solution. We can create kinder communities for ourselves, our families, neighbors, and generations to come.

How favorable or unfavorable do you feel toward this statement?

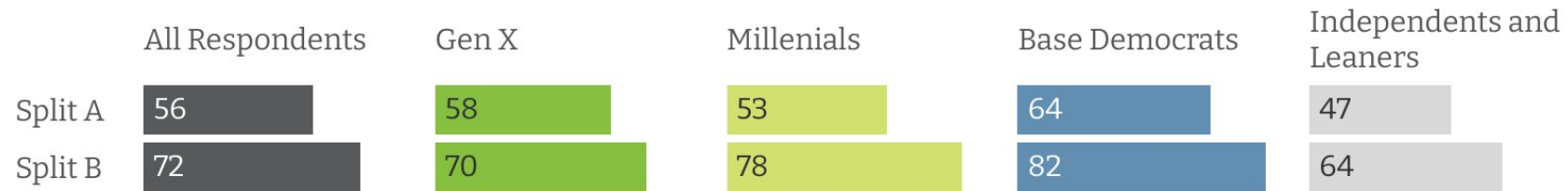
● Very favorable ● Somewhat favorable ● Neutral ● Somewhat unfavorable ● Very unfavorable



There is a key generational and partisan difference when it comes to the reception of each message

Inclusive Community Statements

Total "Very favorable"

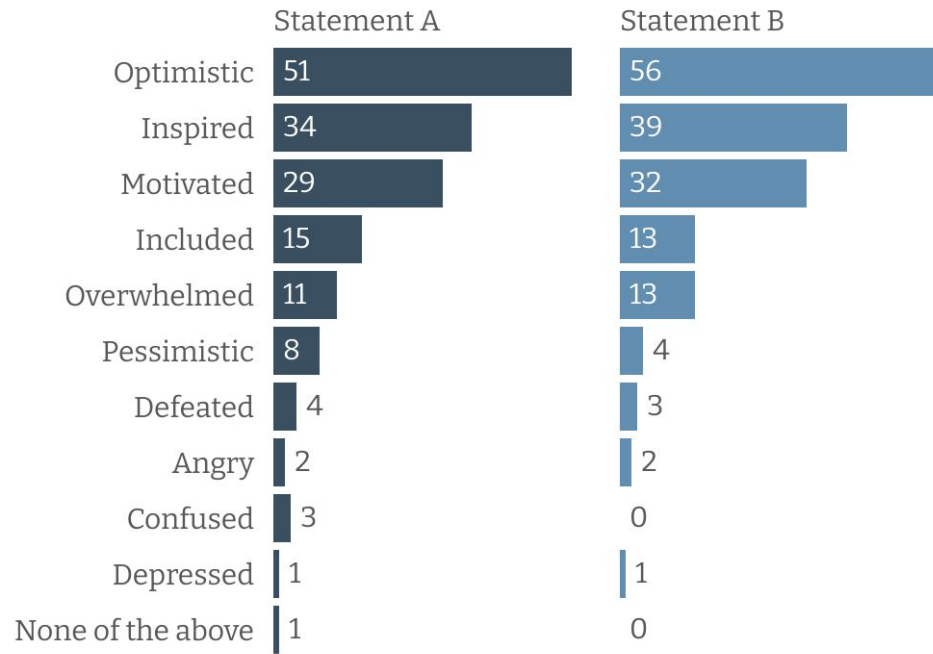


Q: How favorable or unfavorable do you feel toward this statement?



Reaction to Statements

While both messages elicit positive emotions, respondents are slightly more likely to say they feel “optimistic” and “inspired” after reading Statement B

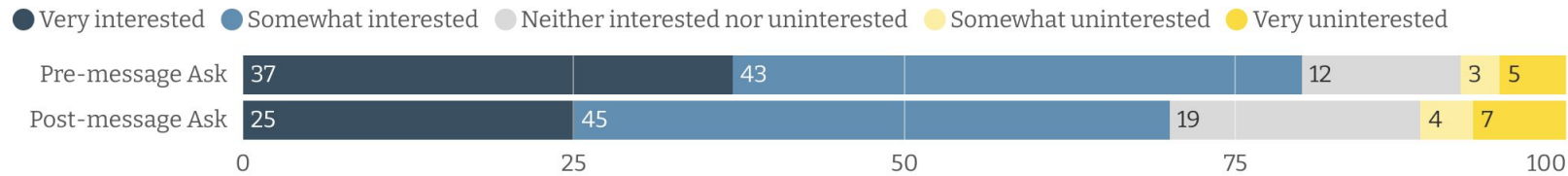


Q: How does this statement make you feel? Select all that apply.

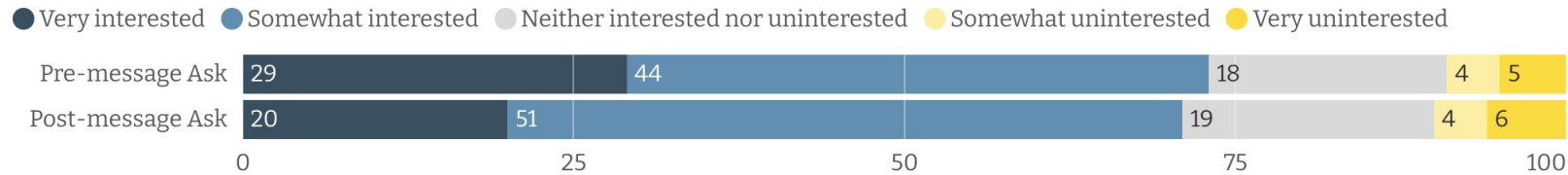


After messaging, interest in taking action to advance racial justice remains roughly the same

Statement A Movers



Statement B Movers



Q Initial: How interested or uninterested are you in taking actions to advance racial justice in your community?

Q Final: Based off the statement you just read, how interested or uninterested are you in taking actions to advance racial justice in your community?



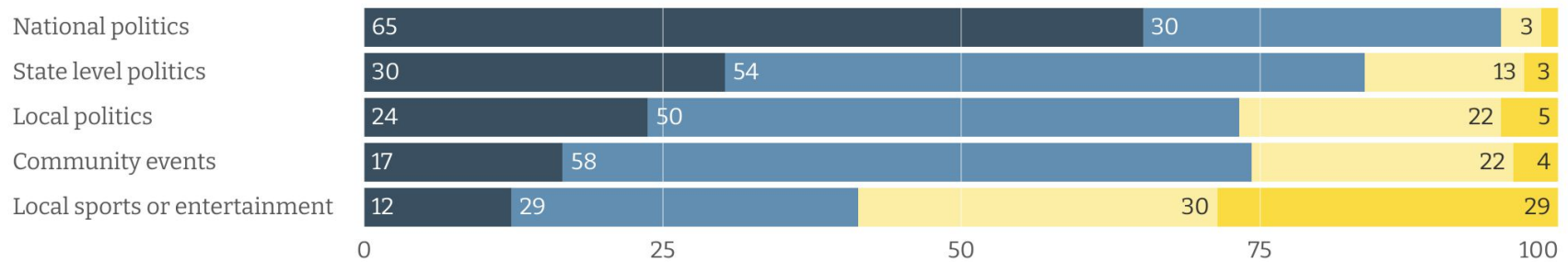
INFORMATION AND
MESSENGERS



Respondents regularly keep up with politics at all levels, but the level of engagement decreases when getting to a more local level

Engagement in Community and Politics

● Very closely ● Somewhat closely ● Not too closely ● Not closely at all

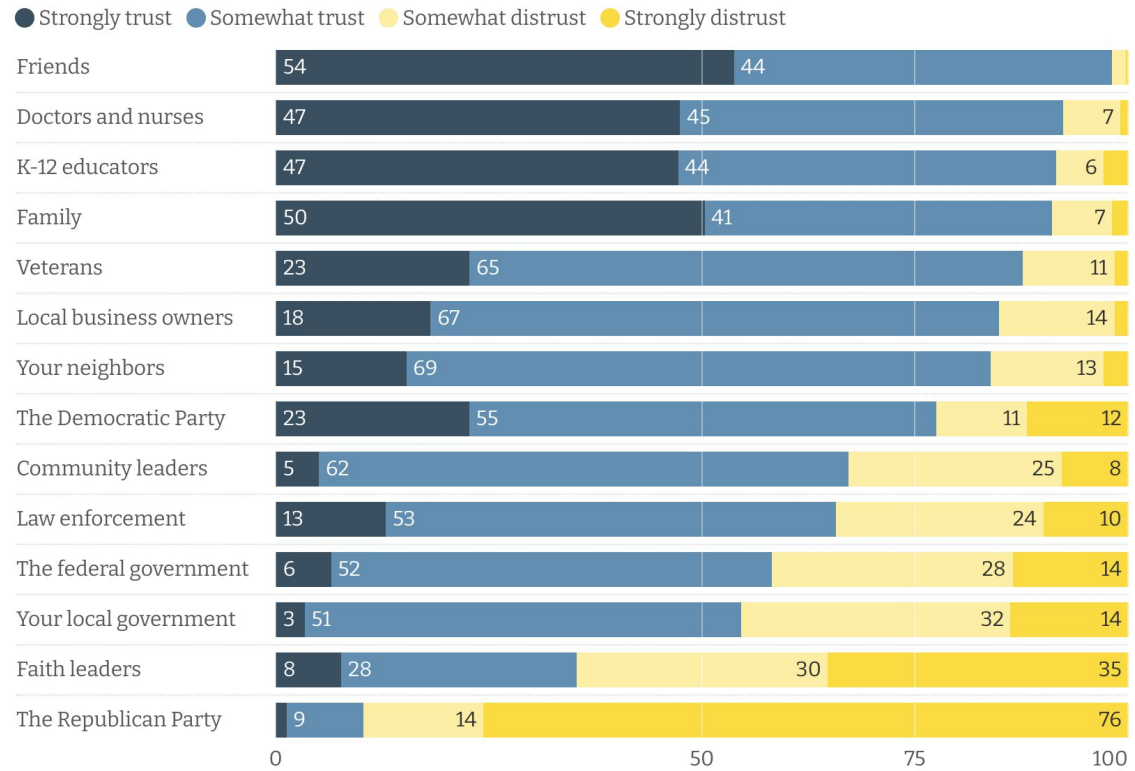


Q: How closely do you follow the following topics?



When receiving information, respondents universally trust friends, doctors/nurses, and K-12 educators, and are wary of faith leaders and the Republican party

Levels of Trust

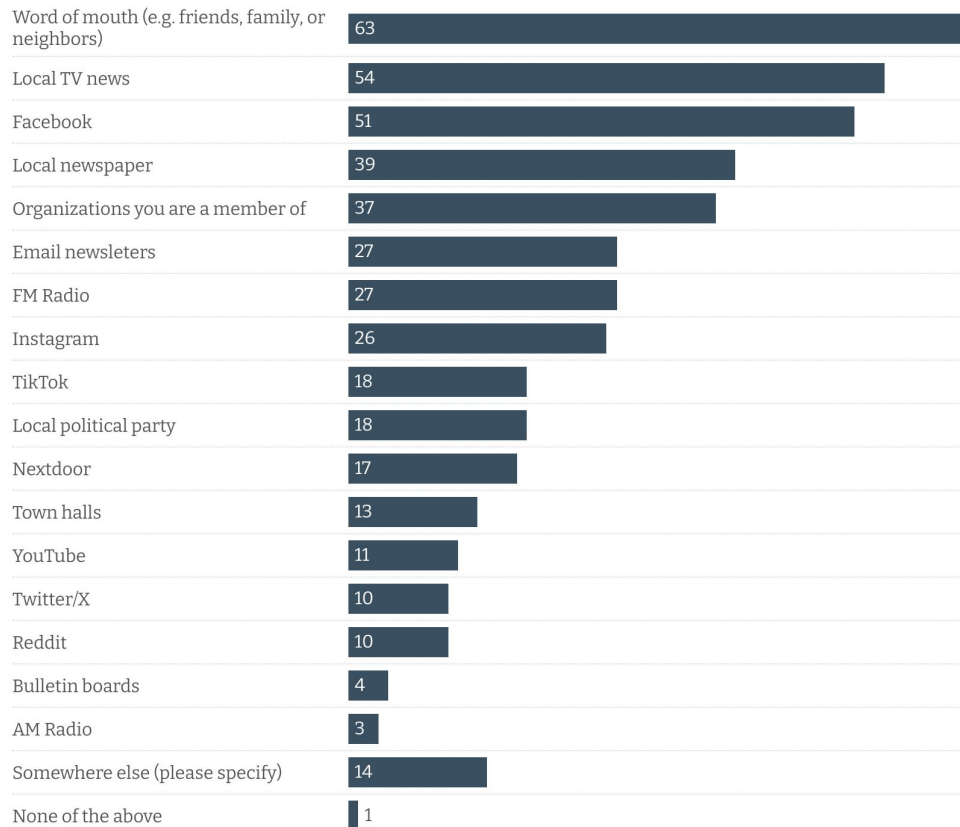


Q: For each of the following public figures or groups, please indicate how much you trust the information they provide.



When seeking information about local issues, respondents are most likely to turn to word-of-mouth sources, local TV news, and Facebook

Information About Local Issues



Q: Where do you get information about local issues? Select all that apply.



CONCLUSION

Nuanced relationship to community: Just over half of respondents feel welcomed by their communities (54%), and when asked to identify shared values in their communities, respondents tend to point to helping and supporting each other. At the same time, many respondents (61%) feel that they would be ostracized for expressing different views, and that fear reveals itself as a central obstacle for getting involved in efforts for change.

Gap between values and involvement: Respondents demonstrate keen interest in getting involved in their communities, and substantial portions report being civically engaged or active in their communities. Moreover, nearly eight in 10 respondents feel that they have the power to make a change in advancing racial justice. At the same time, respondents express feelings of overwhelm at the magnitude of the issues, or fear about backlash or ostracization from other community members.