



2024 New Hampshire Civic Health Report

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FUNDERS

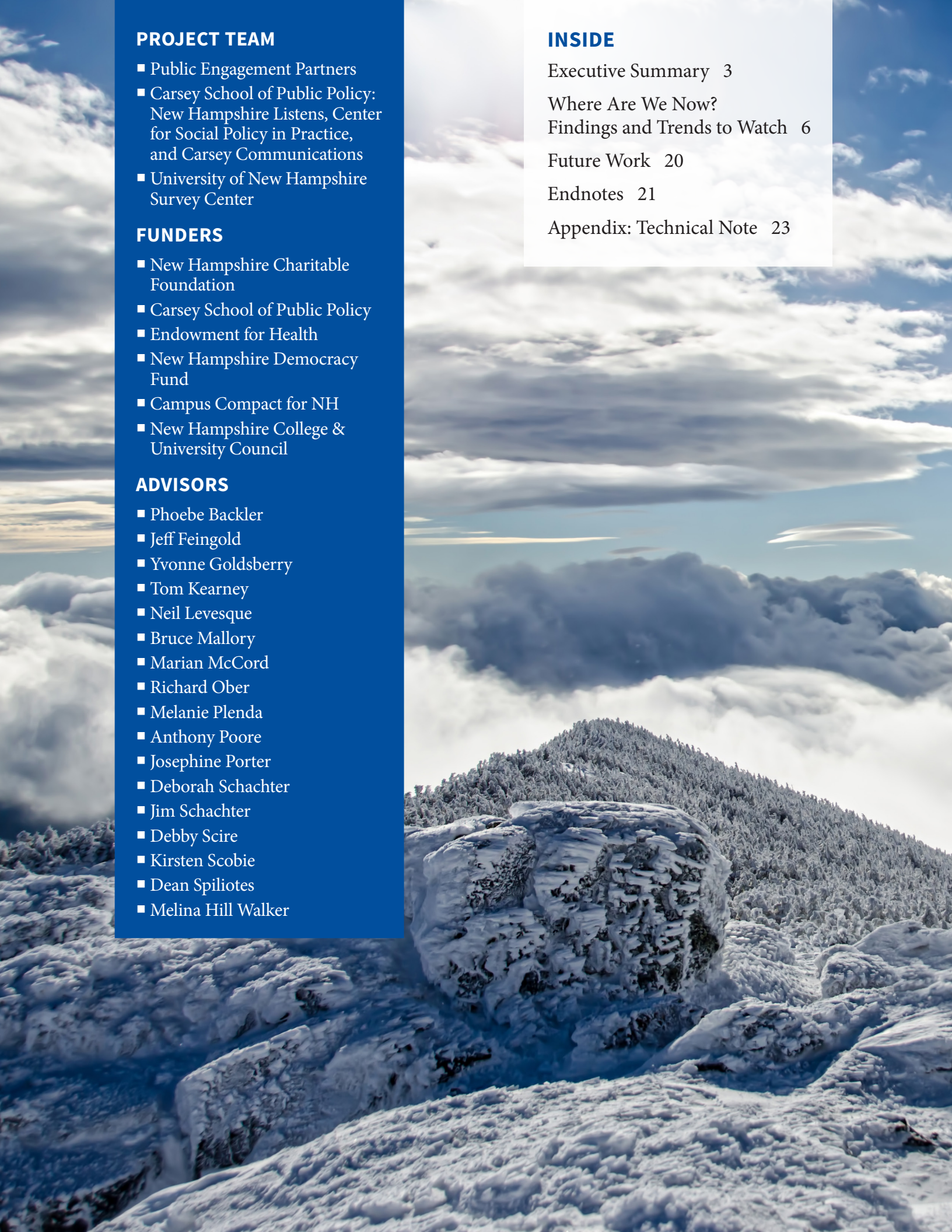
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Executive Summary



Why This 2024 Special Edition?

Since the [2020 New Hampshire Civic Health Index](#) was published, there have been significant changes to the country that may have impacted civic health in New Hampshire. We have experienced the Covid-19 pandemic, a rise in social justice efforts, the 2020 presidential election, and the January 6th attack on the United States Capitol. This report focuses on the civic health of New Hampshire from 2019 through 2024 using a specific set of indicators. The intent behind this report is that the data at the state level can be used to help both the state overall and local communities strengthen civic health.

What Is Civic Health?

There are many ways we can study civic health. Civic health can be behaviors, beliefs, or actions that are related to civic engagement. Civic health can occur at multiple levels, including national, statewide, town or city, or within the workplace or at school. Measuring civic health informs communities as they take proactive steps toward greater engagement and belonging.

Categories of Civic Health

This report includes six categories of civic health:



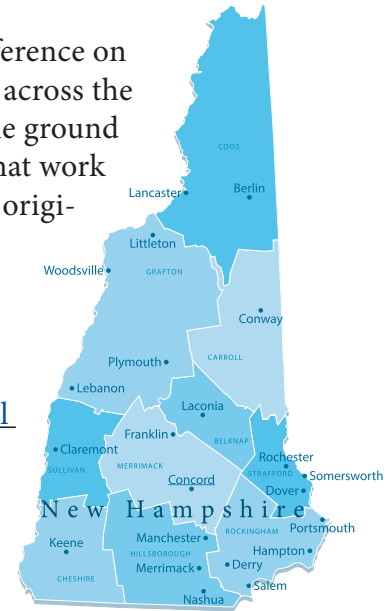
- Connecting in Community—How much people engage with and help out others
- Trust—How much people trust government (national and local), local news, and their neighbors
- Civic Awareness and Engagement—How much people pay attention to news and engage in local decision-making such as public meeting
- Belonging and Mattering—How much people feel they belong and matter to their local community
- Voting—Percentage of people voting in national and local elections
- Volunteering and Giving—How much people participate in volunteerism, group participation, and charitable giving

About the Research

The concept of a “civic health index” was created by the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC), a congressionally chartered nonprofit that works across the country to help states measure civic health. We thank the NCoC for the ground they have broken on measuring civic health and are pleased to carry that work forward by building upon their analysis of Census data and adding an original statewide survey.

The first New Hampshire Civic Health Index was published in 2006 by the New Hampshire Institute of Politics at Saint Anselm College. The Carsey School of Public Policy has conducted three civic health indices (2009, 2012, 2020). In 2023, the Carsey School also developed the [“Local Civic Health: A Guide to Building Community and Bridging Divides.”](#)

Data was analyzed by the Carsey School and stems from two main sources—the U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey (the Volunteering and Civic Engagement Supplement and the Voting and Registration Supplement) and the University of New Hampshire’s Granite State Poll. The U.S. Census Bureau data included measures from 2019–2022. The Granite State Poll was conducted in 2023 and 2024 (see Technical Note).



Demographic data in our findings include age, gender, income, educational levels, partisan identity, and regions of the state. New Hampshire is 87 percent white;¹ the sample size for racial and ethnic subgroups was too small for reliable statistical analysis. Better understanding of how people of different racial and ethnic identities experience civic health is important, and we recommend further follow-up research in this area.

A Snapshot of New Hampshire

New Hampshire’s population has increased by 1.3 percent since 2020, totaling nearly 1.4 million Granite Staters.² This growth can bring both benefit and strain to the state. A growing state is essential to creating a robust workforce, a steady economy, and thriving communities.³ As the state has expanded, there has been growing concern about income inequality in the state. Especially in the wake of the pandemic, many households and individuals are grappling with negative outcomes including housing insecurity, child care hurdles, and healthcare concerns.⁴ Those disproportionately affected from high-burden costs may have difficulty prioritizing other needs⁵ and may be less inclined to participate in public life. As our population in New Hampshire continues to grow, so can our ability to connect and feel like we belong. When residents feel they belong, they’re more likely to feel included in their community, express their thoughts and opinions, and feel able to influence decisions.⁶

Key Findings

Long-term data about civic health in the state suggest that there have been declines that need attention.

- **New Hampshire residents feel that they matter less to their communities and are engaging less with others.** Mattering fell by more than 30 percentage points since 2019, from 76 percent to 43 percent. The share of residents across New Hampshire who do favors for neighbors fell by half, to a low of 5 percent.

-
- **Over half of New Hampshire residents engage across race, ethnicity, and culture.** Individuals ages 65 and older interact with someone with a different race, ethnicity, or culture at a significantly lower rate than all other age groups.
 - **Our findings suggest that urban residents vote less than suburban or rural residents in national elections.** For instance, 76 percent of rural people voted in the 2020 presidential election, compared with 57 percent of urban residents.
 - **Trust in both national and local government remains low since 2019.** Only 1 percent of residents trust the national government all the time, and 49 percent almost never trust the national government. Trust in national and local government has declined significantly since 2001.
 - **Granite Staters shared mixed feelings about how much they feel they belong.** Slightly less than half of New Hampshire residents feel they belong in their local community (49 percent), and only slight majorities feel comfortable expressing their opinions (59 percent) or are satisfied with their relationships with others (55 percent) in their community. The majority of Granite Staters (62 percent) reported they feel connected to their local community.



Where Are We Now? Findings and Trends to Watch



Connecting in Community

This category of indicators helps us describe how often people connect with family, friends, and neighbors. Between 2019 and 2021, New Hampshire has experienced declines in connecting with others. For instance, fewer people indicate they are helping others in their community. Compared to national rates, New Hampshire still measures above or on par on the following:

- Spending time with neighbors
- Discussing important issues with family and friends
- Doing positive things for the community

New Hampshire is below national rates on discussing important issues with neighbors as well as doing favors for neighbors. See Table 1.

Impacts Since the Pandemic

More than 80 percent of Granite Staters frequently engage with family and friends, talking or visiting at least a few times a week, which is about the same as the national average. However, between 2019 and 2021, the share of New Hampshire residents who frequently spent time with family and friends dropped from 85 to 81 percent.

NH residents who did favors for their neighbors fell by half, from 11 percent in 2019 to 5 percent in 2021. Even though one-fifth (21 percent) reported working with neighbors to do something good for the community, this also dropped from 27 percent in 2019.

Demographic Patterns in Connecting in Community

- **Age and Generation**—Baby Boomers were more likely to frequently talk about political, societal, and local issues with neighbors than Millennials. Boomers were also more likely to work with neighbors to do positive things for the community than Millennials (see Library of Congress definitions).⁷
- **Income**—Those with higher incomes (\$75,000+) are more likely to work with neighbors to do something positive for the community than those with incomes of less than \$35,000.

Possible Trends to Watch

- **Shifts in social connectivity are noticeable.** There have been declines in the share of New Hampshire residents who connect frequently with friends and family. This pattern may be temporary and connected to the realities of the pandemic and lends to further research and community engagement to understand people’s experiences.
- **Age and community involvement may be linked.** Our data suggests that age and community involvement may be linked. Organizations in New Hampshire are focused on engaging different age groups. One area of interest that has remained is keeping young people in the state (e.g., Stay Work Play).

Table 1. Select Community and Civic Engagement Indicators Among New Hampshire and U.S. Population, Age 16 and Older, 2019 and 2021

Indicator	NH 2019	NH 2021	Change Since 2019	U.S. 2021	U.S. vs. NH (2021)
Frequently hear from or spend time with family or friends	85%	81%	↓	79%	=
Frequently have a conversation with or spend time with neighbors	28%	23%	=	27%	=
Frequently discuss important political, societal, or local issues with family or friends	39%	37%	=	35%	≠
Frequently discuss important political, societal, or local issues with neighbors	7%	5%	=	8%	≠
Frequently do favors for neighbors	11%	5%	↓	10%	≠
Worked with neighbors to do something positive for neighborhood or community	27%	21%	↓	18%	≠

Source: Carsey School of Public Policy analysis of Current Population Survey, 2019 & 2021 September Volunteering and Civic Engagement Supplement. **Note:** Estimates calculated among those 16 years or older. All estimates are weighted. An up (↑) or down (↓) arrow in the “change” column indicates the direction of a statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) change between New Hampshire’s 2019 and 2021 estimates; an equals sign (=) indicates no change between years. A does-not-equal sign (≠) in the “U.S. vs. NH (2021)” column indicates that the difference between New Hampshire and U.S. 2021 estimates is statistically significant; an equals sign (=) indicates no difference between places.



Trust

Trust indicates how people feel about the competency, value, and ethics of their political leadership and sources of information. Trust in national government and local government declined from 2001 to 2019, but remained similar from 2019 to 2024. Trust in local news dipped slightly between 2001 and 2019 but has remained steady in recent years, with most New Hampshire residents trusting local news sources. Trust in neighbors has declined from 2001 to 2019, but remained similar from 2019 to 2024. See Table 2.

Table 2. Indicators of Trust Among New Hampshire Adults 2001, 2019, 2023, and 2024

How much can you trust ...	2001	2019	2023 / 2024	Change 2001 to 2019	Change 2001 to 2023/2024	Change 2019 to 2023/2024
People in your neighborhood— (“a lot” or “some”)	88%	78%	84%	↓	=	=
Local news— (“a lot” or “some”)	58%	54%	60%	=	=	=
National government— (“Just about always” or “most of the time”)	31%	14%	17%	↓	↓	=
Local government — (“Just about always” or “most of the time”)	53%	44%	36%	=	↓	=

Source: Carsey School of Public Policy analysis of the Social Capital Community Benchmarks Survey, 2001 and UNH Survey Center’s Granite State Poll, 2019, 2023, 2024. **Note:** The reason the table reads 2023/2024 is that some of the data were collected in a 2023 survey and some in a 2024 survey. All estimates are weighted. An up (↑) or down (↓) arrow in the “change” column indicates the direction of a statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) change between New Hampshire’s 2019 and 2023 or 2024 estimates; an equals sign (=) indicates no change between years. N/A signifies that the data were not collected in 2019, so no change data are available. The Granite State Poll is part of the States of Opinion Project (<https://cola.unh.edu/unh-survey-center/projects/states-opinion-project>).

Impacts Since the Pandemic

Trust in national government in New Hampshire is sizably low; only 1 percent of residents trust their national government to do what is right just about all the time. Only 15 percent trust their national government most of the time. In contrast, 49 percent of Granite Staters hardly ever trust their national government.

Trust in local government has decreased since 2001 and is low overall, but it remained stable from 2019 to 2024. Trust in neighbors and local news has also stabilized over time.

Possible Trends to Watch

- **Understanding trust in local government remains an area for continued work.** New Hampshire has a history of focusing on local and regional efforts. People who focus on civic engagement and community efforts in their work could find time together to better understand why trust in local government has fallen since 2001 and remains low.
- **Maintaining a healthy local news landscape supports engagement across differences.** New Hampshire residents have access to a variety of local news outlets across politics. With concerns about misinformation, local news outlets could help people grapple with the divides that have been linked to the pandemic and recent politics.





Civic Awareness and Engagement

Indicators of civic awareness and engagement serve as a means to reflect how people feel, learn, and take actions related to issues that impact their lives.¹ Granite Staters engaged in activities such as contacting public officials, buying or boycotting products, paying attention to news, and posting online at about similar levels to 2019.

New Hampshire is higher than national averages in attending public meetings and contacting public officials. New Hampshire is similar to the United States in paying attention to news and posting political and social issues online.

Still, only 12 percent of Granite Staters attended a public meeting in the past 12 months, 12 percent contacted a public official, and 6 percent frequently posted about political or community issues online, which means most NH residents are not engaging in such behaviors, echoing national trends of low political engagement. More New Hampshire residents pay attention to news (69 percent) and reflect their values by buying or boycotting products (21 percent). The likelihood of boycotting a product in New Hampshire is higher when compared to the United States. See Table 3.

Impacts Since the Pandemic

Attendance at public meetings dropped since 2019, down 7 percentage points. Public meeting attendance dropped nationally as well; the drop in attendance was larger in New Hampshire than nationwide. Although Granite Staters attend public meetings at a higher rate than Americans in general, it is worth noting that most Granite Staters—88 percent—are not attending public meetings at all. Other than the decline in public meeting attendance, New Hampshire has held steady on other civic awareness and engagement indicators from 2019 to 2021 (Table 3). See Figure 1.

Demographic Patterns in Civic Awareness and Engagement

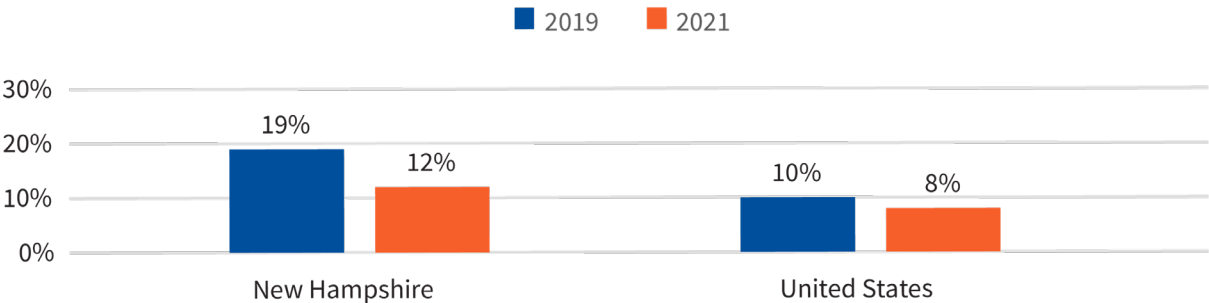
- **Age and Generation**—Eighty-six percent of Boomers paid frequent attention to news compared with 59 percent of Millennials.
- **Educational Levels**—Educational levels were also linked to civic awareness and engagement. Just 5 percent of people with a high school diploma had contacted a public official in the past 12 months, compared with 20 percent of those with a bachelor's degree or higher. People with a bachelor's degree or higher also frequently engaged with the news at higher rates than those with a high school diploma.

Table 3. Select Civic Awareness and Engagement Indicators Among New Hampshire and U.S. Population, Age 16 and Older, 2019 and 2021

Indicator	NH 2019	NH 2021	Change 2019 to 2021	U.S. 2021	U.S. vs. NH (2021)
Attended a public meeting	19%	12%	↓	8%	≠
Contacted a public official	12%	12%	=	10%	≠
Bought or boycotted products based on values	18%	21%	=	17%	≠
Frequently read, watched, or listened to news or information about political, societal, or local issues	73%	69%	=	68%	=
Frequently posted online about political, societal, or local issues	5%	6%	=	6%	=

Source: Carsey School of Public Policy analysis of Current Population Survey, 2019 & 2021 September Volunteering and Civic Engagement Supplement. **Note:** Estimates calculated among those 16 years or older. All estimates are weighted. An up (↑) or down (↓) arrow in the “change” column indicates the direction of a statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) change between New Hampshire’s 2019 and 2021 estimates; an equals sign (=) indicates no change between years. A does-not-equal sign (≠) in the “U.S. vs. NH (2021)” column indicates that the difference between New Hampshire and U.S. 2021 estimates is statistically significant; an equals sign (=) indicates no difference between places.

Figure 1. Percent of New Hampshire Adults Who Attended a Public Meeting in the Past 12 Months



Source: Carsey School of Public Policy analysis of Current Population Survey, 2019 & 2021 September Volunteering and Civic Engagement Supplement

- **Income Levels**—Lower income people (earning less than \$35,000) and higher income people (earning more than \$75,000) frequently engage with news at about the same rates.

Possible Trends to Watch

- **Factors affecting public meeting attendance deserve further inquiry.** The dip in public meeting attendance may be due to health concerns with Covid-19. Time will tell if other factors are affecting public meeting attendance, such as dissatisfaction with politics or feelings of apathy. The rise of online and hybrid public meetings may facilitate greater engagement over time. Public meeting attendance is especially meaningful in a state where important decisions are made in local public meetings.

- **Schools face new civic education provisions.** Recent legislation⁸ in New Hampshire places an emphasis on civic education and includes a required civic test for graduation.⁹ Schools will need resources and professional development to support these new civic education requirements. As these programs develop, Granite State youth may have different civic awareness and engagement patterns compared to previous generations.
- **Youth civic engagement remains an important, missing indicator.** We don't have any data on public meetings being attended by children under 18, and the opportunities to compare data are limited. A future question for research at the local level could be how are younger people engaging in local government and politics?
- **Exploring solutions to increase civic engagement.** Although New Hampshire is above U.S. averages on many indicators, engagement on these indicators is still low—88 percent of NH residents did not contact a public official in the past 12 months and 88 percent did not attend a public meeting in the past 12 months. New Hampshire should experiment with innovations to increase community participation to see what works.





Belonging and Mattering

Belonging and mattering are compelling concepts especially in light of the social disruptions that occurred during the pandemic and how people are navigating feelings of disconnection that continue to persist.¹⁰ In this study we measured feelings of belonging for the first time in our New Hampshire civic health research and found mixed results. Less than half of Granite Staters feel they belong in their local communities, and only slight majorities of residents feel comfortable expressing their opinions in public or are satisfied with their relationships with other local people. A slight majority of residents are connecting frequently across race, ethnicity, or cultures different from their own.

The share of Granite Staters who felt they matter fell by more than 30 percentage points in just four years. Still, most NH residents reported feeling connected to where they live, providing hope that feelings of mattering and belonging can grow. See Table 4.

Table 4. Select Belonging and Mattering Indicators Among New Hampshire Population

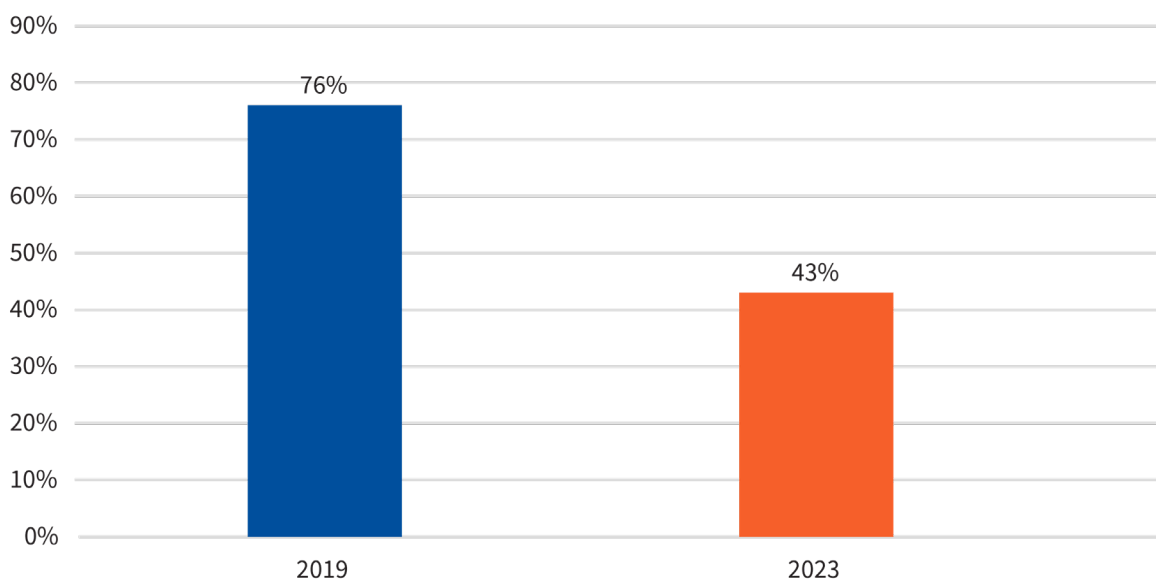
Indicator	2023 Result	2019 Result	Change
Feeling You Matter	43%	76%	↓
Feeling You Belong	49%	x	N/A
Feeling You Can Make an Impact	89%	93%	=
Satisfaction with Local Relationships	55%	x	N/A
Comfort Expressing Your Opinions	59%	x	N/A
Feeling Connected to Your Local Community	62%	x	N/A
Connecting frequently across a racial, ethnic, or cultural group different from one's own	53%	x	N/A

Source: 2023 Granite State Poll. **Note:** All estimates are weighted. An up (↑) or down (↓) arrow in the “change” column indicates the direction of a statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) change between New Hampshire’s 2019 and 2023 estimates; an equals sign (=) indicates no change between years. N/A signifies that the data were not collected in 2019, so no change data are available. The Granite State Poll is part of the States of Opinion Project (<https://cola.unh.edu/unh-survey-center/projects/states-opinion-project>).

Impacts Since the Pandemic

With new data collected on belonging in recent years, we can measure different forms of community connection (as summarized in Table 4). We learned that slightly less than half—49 percent—of Granite Staters feel they truly belong in their local community. Although 62 percent of NH residents report feeling emotionally connected to where they live, one-in-five explicitly state that they do not. When looking at patterns in mattering, people feel they matter to their communities much less in 2023 than in 2019, dropping from 76 percent to 43 percent. These findings could suggest that Granite Staters are feeling disconnected from their local communities and could point to future research around connectivity in the state. See Figure 2.

Figure 2. Percent of New Hampshire Adults Who Felt They Mattered in Their Community, 2019 and 2023 Comparison



Source: Carsey School of Public Policy analysis of Granite State Poll, 2019 & 2023

Demographic Patterns in Belonging and Mattering

- **Region**—In the state’s North Country, mattering had an especially large decline, to a low of 34 percent compared with 85 percent in 2019.¹¹
- **Age**—Age is linked to social connectivity, for instance, 63 percent of those ages 35–49 frequently connect with people who are a different race, culture, or ethnicity compared with 30 percent of those 65 and over. People ages 50–64 felt they mattered at 81 percent in 2019 and that dropped to 38 percent in 2023, indicating over half of people in this age group don’t feel they matter to their local communities. Individuals ages 65 and older interact with someone with a different race, ethnicity, or culture at a significantly lower rate than all other age groups.
- **Income**—People with higher household incomes (\$150,000 and higher) are more likely to feel comfortable expressing their opinions in town than those with the lowest household incomes (below \$45,000). This is also true for these two groups regarding satisfaction in relationships with others in town.

Possible Trends to Watch

- **North Country mattering should be monitored.** Initial data suggest a downturn in mattering from 2019 to 2023, and it is important to see if this trend continues.
- **Connecting across race and ethnicity remains an important indicator of civic health.** In the *2020 Civic Health Index*, the authors reported that less than half of New Hampshire residents were connecting with people who are different from them racially, culturally, or ethnically, based on 2017 data. This question was removed from the Census Bureau's survey recently. When we asked this question on the Granite State Poll in late 2023/early 2024, 53 percent of Granite Staters responding to the poll noted they connected across race, culture, and/or ethnicity. While the two rates aren't directly comparable, it is important to continue using this indicator and include this type of demographic-related question in state-based studies.
- **People's perceptions of mattering are worth further study.** The pandemic and other events of 2020 may have affected how Granite Staters view themselves in relation to their community, particularly how much they feel others care about them. The question remains: Is the drop from 2019 to 2023 in mattering just a temporary dip or is it indicative of a more consistent trend of decreasing social connection?
- **Education level is a variable to study further when linked to mattering in community.** Although we had a small sample of respondents, we found that one-quarter of those with a high school diploma or less felt they mattered to those in their community; this rose to more than half among those with a college degree or higher.¹²
- **Local and regionally based studies of civic health are needed.** For instance, our findings showed that feelings of mattering seemed to have shifted downward from 2019 to 2023 in the North Country. This decline in mattering in the North Country is a notable concern worth exploring further.
- **About half of New Hampshire residents connect frequently with someone from a different race, ethnicity, or culture.** This finding is important as the state's racial and ethnic diversity is increasing, especially among children.¹³ The likelihood that two people will be from different racial or ethnic groups has increased from 15 percent in 2010 to 24 percent in 2020.¹⁴ As demographics shift, further study about how race, ethnicity, and culture are connected to civic health is needed.
- **Men and women had similar rates of mattering and belonging.** However, those reporting a gender identity outside the binary represent a small sample size that we were not able to interpret for this report. In future studies, we should find ways to explore civic health beyond the current gender binary represented here.



Voting

In 2020 and 2022, Granite Staters turned out both for presidential and mid-term elections at higher rates than the nation overall. It’s important to note that New Hampshire had a Senate race in the 2022 elections, which could have caused an increase in voting compared to the country, since not all states had Senate elections. Just over half of Granite staters reported voting in local elections in both 2020 and 2022, with no significant differences between the two years, unlike the United States overall which showed a significant 3 percent increase in local voting. See Table 5.

Table 5. Select Voting Indicators Among New Hampshire and U.S. Population, Age 16 and older, 2020 and 2022

Indicator	NH 2020*	NH 2022	Change	U.S. 2020*	U.S. 2022	U.S. vs. NH (2022)
Percent who voted in last national elections	74%	59%	↓	67%	52%	↓

*Presidential year elections

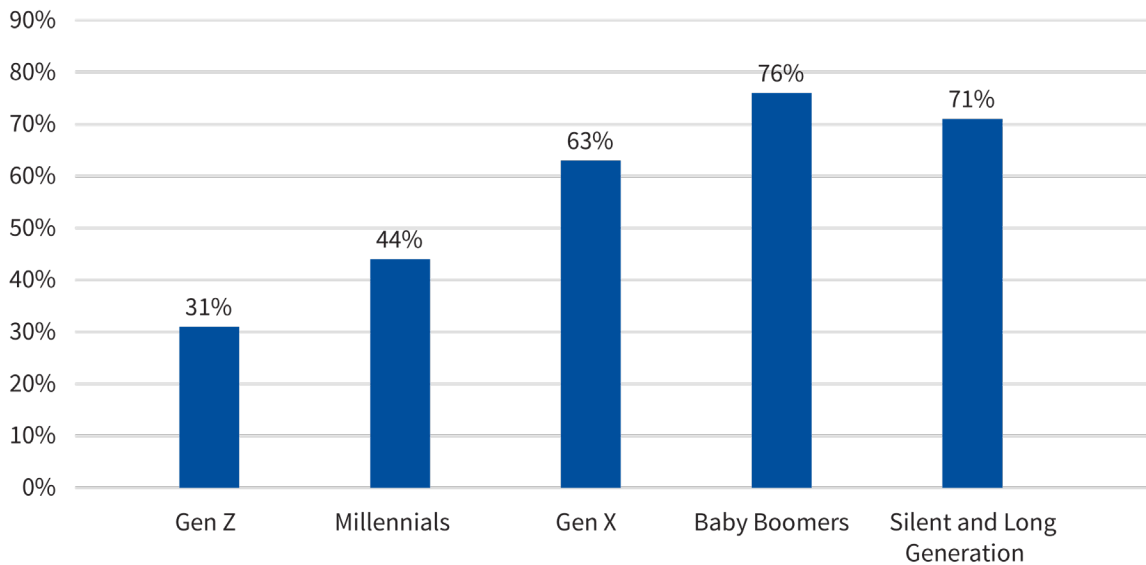
Source: Carsey School of Public Policy analysis of Current Population Survey, 2020 & 2022 Voting Supplement.

Note: Estimates calculated among those 16 years or older. All estimates are weighted. An up (↑) or down (↓) arrow in the “change” column indicates the direction of a statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) change between New Hampshire’s 2020 and 2022 estimates; an equals sign (=) indicates no change between years. A does-not-equal sign (≠) in the “U.S. vs. NH (2022)” column indicates that the difference between New Hampshire and U.S. 2022 estimates is statistically significant; an equals sign (=) indicates no difference between places.

Demographic Patterns in Voting

- **Age & Generation**—Older voters, particularly Baby Boomers, are voting at much higher rates in both national and local elections than younger voters. During the mid-term elections Boomers voted over twice as much as Generation Zers, 76 percent compared with only 31 percent. More Boomers, 84 percent, voted in the presidential election compared with 62 percent of Gen. Z. Older generations voted at higher rates than Millennials in local elections as well.
- **Type of Community**—Our findings suggested that urban residents vote less than suburban or rural residents in national elections. For instance, 76 percent of rural people voted in the 2020 presidential election, compared with 57 percent of urban residents. See Figure 3.

Figure 3. 2022 Percent of People Voting in Mid-Term Election by Generation



Source: Carsey School of Public Policy analysis of Current Population Survey, 2022 November Voting and Registration Supplement.

Possible Trends to Watch

- **Assessing voter enthusiasm could lead to further understanding of patterns.** The upcoming 2024 presidential election can show us whether the spike in the recent turnout of voters in New Hampshire was a rare phenomenon spurred on the events surrounding the 2020 election, or if we are seeing an upwards trend of Granite Staters showing up at the polls.
- **Gaps in voting based on education levels remain.** Formal education has consistently been associated with voting. People who are more highly educated vote more. It may be worth asking what deters people with less formal education from voting? Or what factors compel people with higher educational levels to vote more?
- **Gaps also remain among generations.** Voting and age have a statistically significant relationship, with people who are older voting more than younger people. It is worth exploring why this gap exists and what might encourage younger people to vote.
- **Further study and engagement around voting districts and accessibility is needed.** What are the reasons why access differs? What barriers may be an issue (e.g., transportation)?



Volunteering and Giving

New Hampshire habits around volunteering and giving remain similar in 2021 to what they were in 2019, with no significant changes. Table 5 shows that New Hampshire residents volunteered as much as the United States overall in 2021. And the Census reported that their research has revealed that, despite the pandemic, people continue to serve their communities.¹⁵ See Table 6.

Table 6. Select Volunteering, Giving, and Civic Engagement Indicators among New Hampshire and U.S. Population, Age 16 and older, 2019 and 2021

Indicator	NH 2019	NH 2021	Change	U.S. 2021	U.S. vs. NH (2021)
Volunteer frequently	19.1%	19.5%	=	20.6%	=
Percent made a donation to charitable or religious organization (\$25 or more)	59.6%	59.4%	=	48.1%	≠
Percent made a donation to a political organization (\$25 or more)	8.1%	8.8%	=	9.4%	=
Percent participated in any kind of group	33.2%	29.4%	=	23.8%	≠

Source: Carsey School of Public Policy analysis of Current Population Survey, 2019 & 2021 September Volunteering and Civic Engagement Supplement. **Note:** Estimates calculated among those 16 years or older. All estimates are weighted. An up (↑) or down (↓) arrow in the “change” column indicates the direction of a statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) change between New Hampshire’s 2019 and 2021 estimates; an equals sign (=) indicates no change between years. A does-not-equal sign (≠) in the “U.S. vs. NH (2021)” column indicates that the difference between New Hampshire and U.S. 2021 estimates is statistically significant; an equals sign (=) indicates no difference between places.

Impacts Since the Pandemic

There were no major changes in volunteering and giving from 2019 to 2021, suggesting that the pandemic and events of 2020 have not impacted these indicators in New Hampshire. An alternative explanation for this “flat” rate of change could be that while in some ways factors like volunteerism increased during the pandemic (with people getting groceries for elderly neighbors), volunteerism also decreased in other areas (such as people avoiding public activities due to public health concerns).

Demographic Patterns in Volunteering and Giving

- **Educational Levels**—Education is associated with charitable giving and participation in social groups. Levels of giving to charitable groups were higher among people with a bachelor’s degree (75.9 percent) than those with a high school education (42.9 percent).
- **Age and Generation**—Millennials lagged behind other generations on charitable and religious giving, with less than half reporting such giving, compared to over 72.1 percent of Gen Xers and 69.8 percent of Baby Boomers.
- **Income**—Families with high levels of income (\$75,000 or greater) are more likely to donate to a charitable or religious organization than families with incomes less than \$35,000. The same is true for donating to political organizations.

Possible Trends to Watch

- **Stable, yet declining, volunteer rates lend to further study.** Volunteering and giving patterns have been stable in New Hampshire from 2019 to 2021, but longer-view analysis suggests that rates of giving and volunteering have been declining over time. Though some of these declines mirror national trends, others do not. It will be interesting to see if in the future declines continue or reverse direction.
- **Risks of social isolation and volunteer shortages remain.** Although New Hampshire fares well compared to the nation, some engagement measures remain low overall. Only one-in-five NH residents volunteer frequently, and only about 30 percent are part of social groups. Further declines may suggest threats to civic health including heightened risks of social isolation and less people available for local volunteerism.





When we looked at different demographic breakouts among the data we collected for this report, some of which are described above, the subtle shifts we observed are worth diving back into even though they did not always show significance in the data for this specific report. We could not determine some longitudinal effects of civic health in New Hampshire based on our questions; further work is needed. Below are a few areas of potential interest.

Tracking civic health indicators longitudinally can help us better understand patterns in New Hampshire. Local, community-engaged research can also help us more robustly understand more about our state’s civic health. Focus groups, local surveys, using existing data, or holding community dialogues with people could help increase understanding about civic health challenges. For tools to help collect local information see the “Local Civic Health” guide.

As trust has fallen in local government and public meeting attendance has decreased, municipalities may want to consider strategies to build trust. These strategies could include more civic education about how systems work and increased transparency. One tool that has been of interest in New Hampshire is the Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement (PACE)’s Civic Language Perceptions Project 2024, which refers to the words people use when talking about being involved in their community, state, and country. The focus of this work is to better understand: What can we know about how aligned we are on our language choices related to our civic lives?¹⁶

New Hampshire ranks 50th in the United States in terms of time and effort required to cast a ballot, according to the 2022 Cost of Voting Index. Groups like the NH Campaign for Voting Rights are concerned about this ranking.¹⁷ Some researchers have recently made the case that voting should be considered a social determinant of health.¹⁸ Understanding more about New Hampshire voting patterns could help us develop studies that explore linkages between mattering and political identity.

Ties between Granite Staters and their local community are still strong. Building on those ties can help strengthen civic health within and across NH communities. The Community Builders Hub, funded by the Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund, hired three full-time stewards to be “well-connected community organizers and change agents” building trusting relationships with North Country community members.¹⁹ This effort links to mattering—feeling significant to others or community or being valued and important in our relationships.²⁰

As diversity in New Hampshire increases, so can our ability to connect. Embracing diversity allows us to recognize each other’s differences and how valuable we can be when accomplishing work together.²¹ For instance, communities can build equitable opportunities for community engagement (see page 23 of our “Local Civic Health” guide).²² When we feel like we belong, we’re more likely to feel included in our communities, express our thoughts and opinions, and feel that we’re able to influence decisions.

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APPENDIX: TECHNICAL NOTE

Findings in this report are from two data sources—U.S. Census Current Population Survey (CPS) and the UNH Survey Center’s Granite State Poll. A list of indicators is available upon request.

Current Population Survey—The U.S. Census Bureau data set drew on the Current Population Survey (CPS), the 2019 and 2021 Volunteering and Civic Engagement Supplement to the CPS and the November 2020 and 2022 Voting and Registration Supplement. Using a probability selected sample of about 150,000 occupied households, the CPS collects monthly data on employment and demographic characteristics of the nation. Depending on the CPS supplement, the single-year New Hampshire CPS sample size used for this report ranges from 344–952 (volunteering/civic engagement supplement) and to 1,247 (voting supplement) residents across New Hampshire. This sample is then weighted to representative population demographics for the district. Estimates for the volunteering and civic engagement indicators (e.g. volunteering, working with neighbors, making donations) are based on U.S. residents 16 and older. Voting and registration statistics are based on U.S. citizens who are 18 and older (eligible voters). When we examined the relationships between educational attainment and engagement, estimates are based on adults 25 and older with the assumption younger people may be completing their education.

Because multiple sources of data with varying samples sizes are used, the report is not able to compute one margin of error for all New Hampshire indicators. Any analysis breaking down the sample into smaller groups (e.g., gender, education) will have smaller samples and the margin of error will increase. It is also important that our margin of error estimates are approximate, as CPS sampling is highly complex and accurate estimation of error rates involves many parameters that are not publicly available.

The U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey and the Carsey School provided subgroup data about the following: gender, generation, age, educational levels, and income. Generations were measured as Millennials, born 1982–1995; Generation X, born 1981–1965; Baby Boomers, born 1946–1964; and Silent and Long Generation, born before 1930–1945. Income subgroups included less than \$35,000; \$35,000–\$49,999; \$50,000–\$74,999; and \$75,000 and higher. Educational levels included high school, some college, and a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Granite State Poll—The [Granite State Poll](#) is part of the [States of Opinion Project](#) and administered by the UNH Survey Center. Questions for this report were included in the Granite State Poll in December 2023 and January 2024. This web-based survey of Granite State panel members are recruited from randomly selected landline and cell phone numbers across New Hampshire. Respondents under the age of 18, non-NH residents, and seasonal residents who are not registered to vote in New Hampshire were excluded from this survey and did not receive an invitation to join the panel. One thousand, one hundred eighty (1,180) Granite State Panel members completed the December 2023 survey (a 30 percent response rate). One thousand, eight hundred sixty-four (1,864) Granite State Panel members completed the January 2024 survey (a 34 percent response rate).

The Granite State Poll, like all surveys, is subject to sampling error due to the fact that all residents in the area were not interviewed. The margin of sampling error is +/- 2.9 percent for the December 2023 survey and +/-2.3 percent for the January 2024 survey. The Granite State Poll provided subgroup data about the following that were used in this report: gender, political identity, age groups, educational level, income, region of the state, and if a respondent voted for Biden or Trump in the last election. Age groups included 18–34; 35–49; 50–64; and 65+. Educational levels included high school; tech school or some college; college graduate; or postgraduate. Income levels included less than \$45,000; \$45–74,999; \$75,000–\$99,999; \$100,000–\$149,999; \$150,000+.



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