

Civic Language Survey: Project Report

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Prepared for PACE
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Acknowledgements

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Disclaimer

The content of this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of PACE.

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Data and survey resoures will be made publically available.

Survey Description and Demographics

In early January of 2019, PACE and Dr. Parissa Ballard surveyed 1,000 participants about their perceptions of civic language. We used Qualtrics as a survey platform and employed their capacity to survey nationally representative panels of participants. Our sample is nationally representative based on race/ethnicity, education level, gender, and age (nationally representative above age 18; we recruited an additional 100 participants between the ages of 15-18). In addition, our sample very closely reflects the nation in terms of self-reported political affiliation by major political party (democrats and republicans) according to Gallup poll reports during the time period the survey was conducted (<https://news.gallup.com/poll/15370/party-affiliation.aspx>). After extensive internal piloting and revisions, we conducted a “soft launch” where Qualtrics sent the survey to 100 participants to make sure the survey was functioning properly and we were getting high quality data. The full survey is included in Appendix A.

The civic language survey took people an average of 16 minutes and 30 seconds, which is as we anticipated based on our internal piloting and “soft launch” of the survey to 100 participants. Survey participants received \$5 for completing the survey. The total sample for the final survey was 1,006 participants.

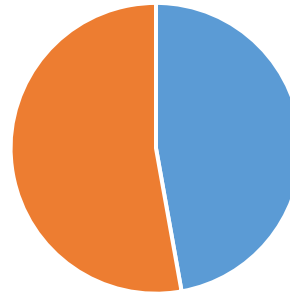
Detailed demographic information about the full sample is summarized in pie charts below. As expected, the sample is diverse with regards to race/ethnicity, education level, gender, and age. Our sample is also diverse with regards to income level, geographic diversity, diversity of political affiliation, and community type (urban, rural, suburban). Achieving diversity across these demographic characteristics was a goal of our survey recruitment. It is important to note that it was not possible in this report to conduct group difference testing for the number of groups that would be ideal for many of the demographic characteristics. For example, it is possible that meaningful differences in perceptions of language by political affiliation, age, race/ethnicity, etc. might be masked by categorizing each of these demographic factors into only 2 or 3 groups.

Age



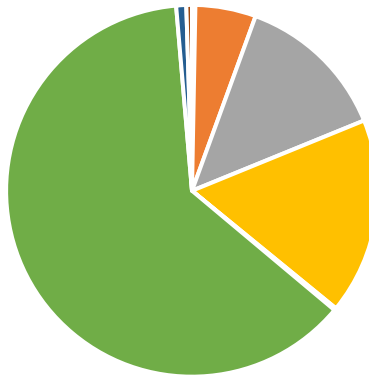
- 15-18 (10%)
- 19-24 (10%)
- 25-34 (16%)
- 35-44 (16%)
- 45-54 (17%)
- 55-64 (15%)
- 65 or older (17%)

Gender



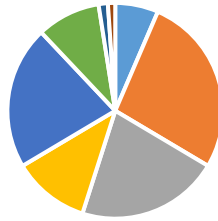
- Male (47%)
- Female (52%)

Race/Ethnicity



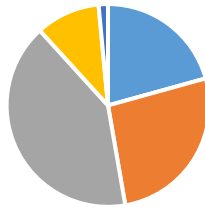
- American Indian or Alaska Native (.2%)
- Asian (5%)
- Black or African American (13%)
- Hispanic/Latino(a) (17%)
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (.1%)
- White (63%)
- Bi-racial or multi-racial (.8%)
- Other (.5%)

Education



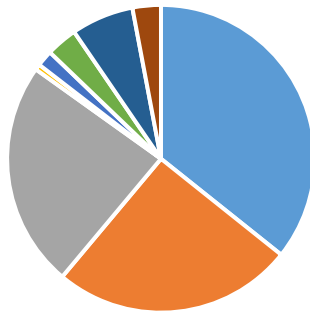
- Less than high school degree (7%)
- High school graduate (high school diploma or equivalent including GED) (27%)
- Some college but no degree (21%)
- Associate degree in college (2-year) (12%)
- Bachelor's degree in college (4-year) (22%)
- Master's degree (10%)
- Doctoral degree (1%)
- Professional degree (JD, MD) (1%)

Income



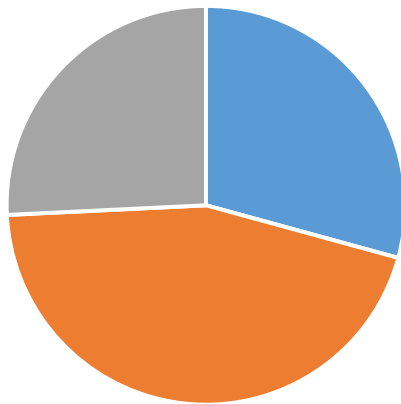
- Low income (21%)
- Low-middle income (27%)
- Middle income (41%)
- Upper-middle income (10%)
- High income (1.5%)

Political affiliation



- Democrat (36%)
- Republican (25%)
- Independent (24%)
- Green party (.6%)
- Libertarian (1.7%)
- Other (3.3%)
- Don't know (6.6%)
- Prefer not to answer (3%)

Community



- Urban (29%)
- Suburban (45%)
- Rural (26%)

Part 2) Open-ended short answer questions.

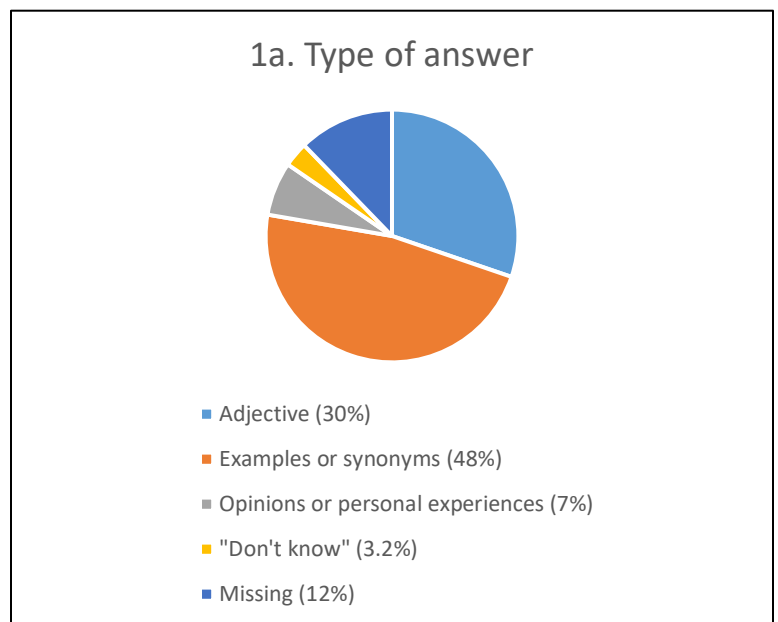
After answering some demographic questions, the survey began with five open-ended questions. The purpose of this set of questions was to explore the civic words and phrases that participants themselves might use, before reading the civic language used in the rest of the survey. Each question is provided below along with a narrative summary of the types of answers that were provided (and further summary for Question 1).

Survey instruction: “To get started, we will ask some open-ended questions. Please write whatever word or short phrase comes to mind (using 50 characters or less)”

1) If you were to say one word or very short phrase to describe the act of participating in your community, what would it be?

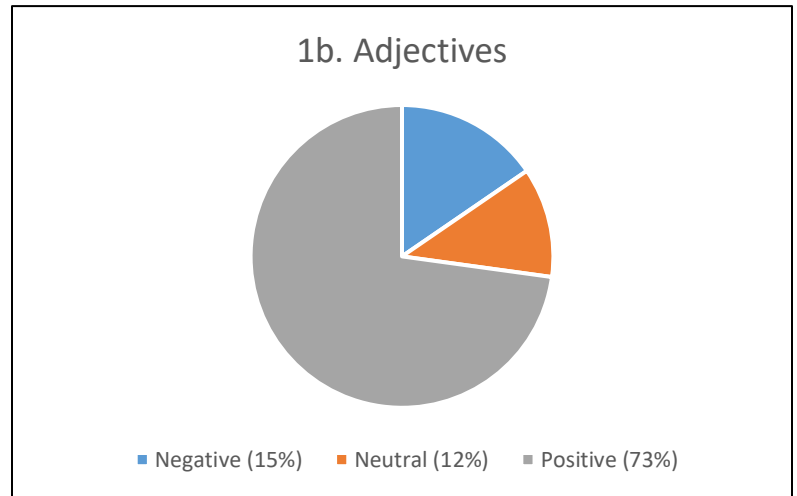
For the first question, participants answered in three main ways. The first way is that some participants gave *adjectives* to describe the act of participating in their communities and responses were both positive and negative. Examples of this type of response include: helpful, proactive, civic-minded, fruitless, unselfish, rewarding, tedious, beneficial, non-existent. The second way is that people gave synonyms or general examples. The most frequently given synonym was: volunteer and other examples included service, paying taxes, and activism. The third way is that participants gave specific examples such as: leadership and development, educating yourself in community issues and voting, church, volunteering for political party, getting to know neighbors, helping when you can.

In addition to the narrative summary, a coding system was developed to further characterize responses to this question. See Appendix B for full description of the coding system. The 4 descriptions and pie charts below summarize the open-ended answers for Short Answer Question 1 along 4 dimensions that seem meaningful: type of answer, valence of adjectives, recipients of community participation examples, and whether examples of community participation can be thought of as direct service or aimed at root causes/systems (see descriptions below). These codes are the perceptions of only one coder and there are many additional ways to understand these answers.

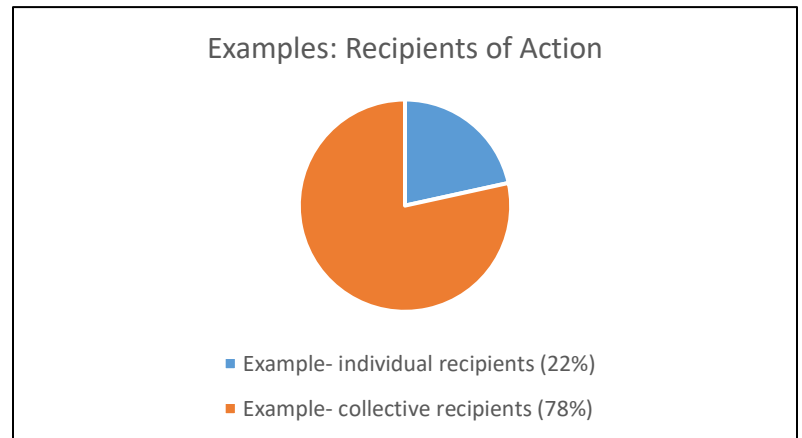


1a Type of answer: This variable codes the type of answer people gave to this question: an adjective or descriptive phrase (sample codes include: fulfilling, generous, difficult), a synonym or an example (sample codes include: volunteering, church, outreach, civic) or an opinion or personal experience (sample codes include: I need to do more, I am very involved).

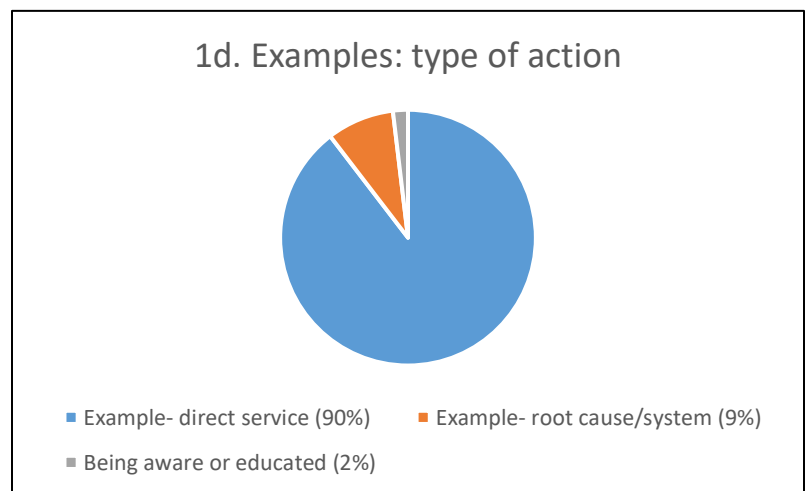
1b. Adjectives: For the answers coded as adjectives or descriptive short phrases – this code will describe the valence of the adjective used to describe “participating in community). *Negative* (sample codes include: bad, useless, non-existent, difficult); *neutral* (sample codes include: moderate, fast-paced) and *positive* (sample codes include: helpful, fulfilling, important).



1c. Recipient: For the answers coded as examples of “participating in your community”, this variable codes whether the examples describe activities aimed at *individual recipients* (sample codes include: helping a neighbor or family member) versus *collective recipients* (sample codes include: recycling, helping community, voting).



1d. “Direct service” or root cause example: For the answers coded as examples of “participating in your community”, this code captures whether the examples provided describe more direct service types of activities or activities aimed at root causes/systems. “Direct service” types of activities are things that focus on helping or serving or alleviating social issues (sample codes include: recycle, do good deeds, be neighborly, serve others). *Root cause/system* are examples that focus on joining with others to affect change or focus on systemic causes of social issues (sample codes include: voting, policy, volunteering for a political party).



2) What word or very short phrase would you use to describe a person who is active in their community?

For the second question, participants answered in two main ways. The first way is that some participants gave *adjectives* to describe a person who is active in their community and responses were both positive and negative. Examples of this type of response were overwhelmingly positive but also included some negative adjectives. Examples include: selfless, friendly, admirable, caring, a typical resident, sneaky, proactive, community-minded, engaged, a sucker, committed. The second way is that people gave synonyms or general examples. Examples of this type of response were mostly positive but included some negative synonyms. Examples include: volunteer, community activist, a Christian, a good person, a busy-body, a Samaritan, contributor, a narcissist, a good citizen.

3) How would you describe someone who loves their country?

For this question, participants overwhelmingly answered with “patriotic” or “patriotism.” Another popular response was “American.” There were other responses as well, both positive and negative such as: nationalist, a fool, uninformed, a person who votes, a person who follows the law, a person who works, someone over 50, they probably live in Canada, loyal, proud.

4) How would you describe someone who respectfully engages with different political viewpoints?

For this question, participants answered in a few ways. The first was in partisan terms, for example: liberal, conservative, Trump, progressive, democrat, republican. The second way was in political terms although not necessarily partisan. For example: moderate, bipartisan, a politician. The third and most common way is that people listed adjectives, mostly positive but with a number of negative adjectives as well, for example: open-minded, convictionless, tolerant, flexible, weird, pointless, respectful, mature, politically correct, engaged, rare, neutral, educated, human, thoughtful, fair.

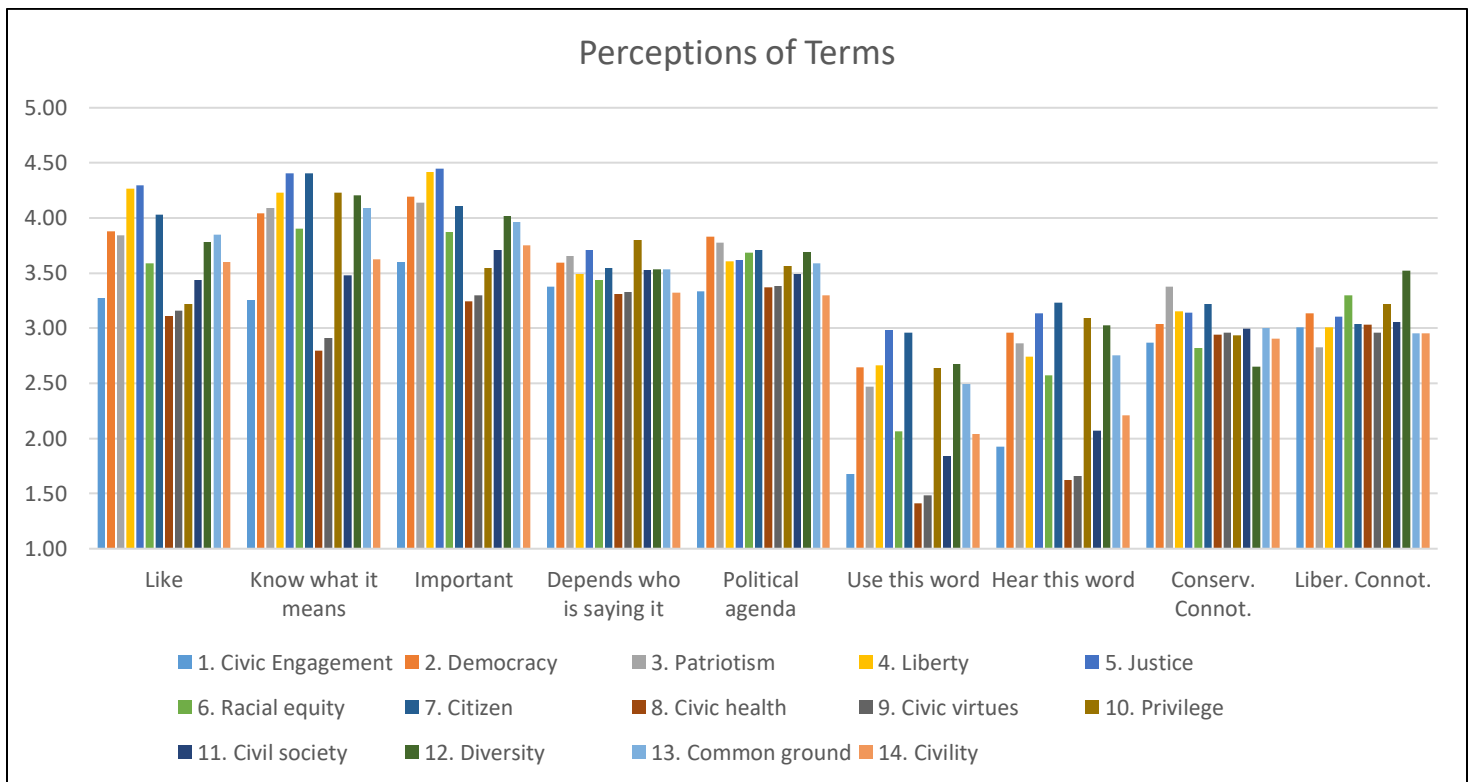
5) How do you describe your political identity?

For this question, the majority of participants answered with one-word partisan labels such as: democrat, republican, liberal, conservative, independent, progressive. Others answered with more specific information such as: Tea Party, very conservative, very liberal, slightly liberal democrat, conservative republican, in line with the founding fathers, I am a fiscally moderate and socially lean liberal. Others answered with things such as: don’t care, don’t know, confused, rather not say, not interested, I don’t identify with one party, unsure.

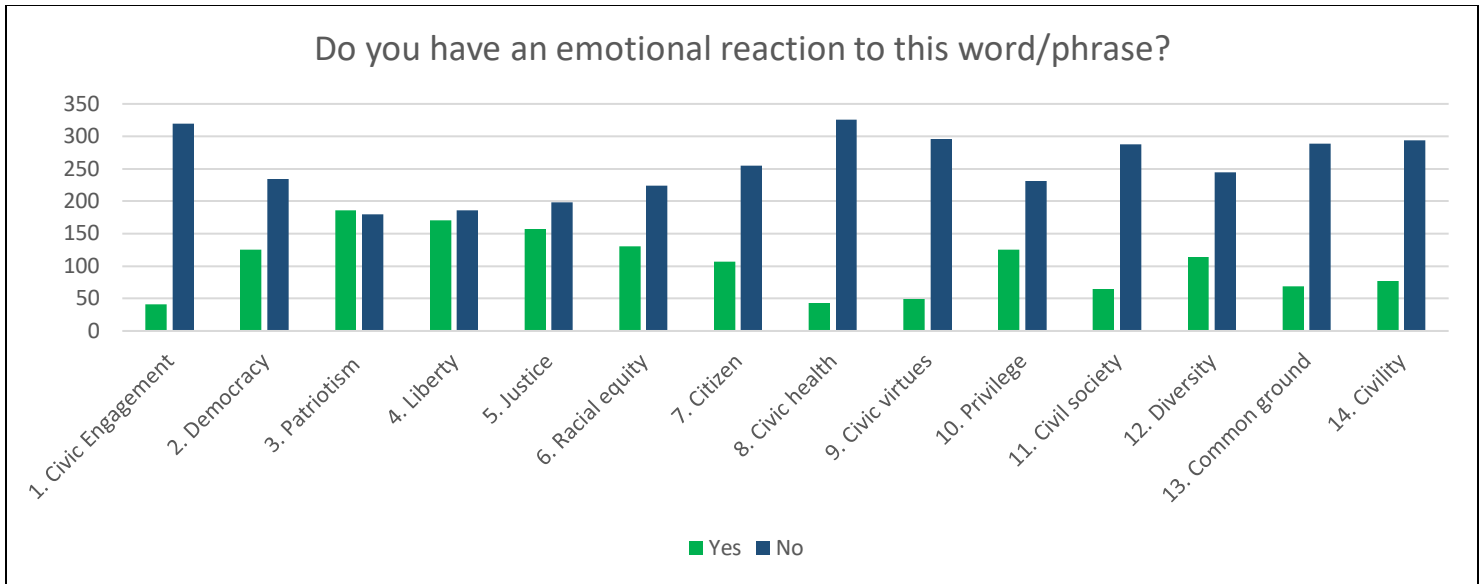
Part 2) Perceptions of civic terms

One question we wanted to explore with this survey is how people perceive 14 key civic words and phrases (also referred to as “civic terms” in this report). Each survey participant answered 10 questions (9 of the questions are along the horizontal axis on the graph below, one question is in the graph on the next page) about 5 of the civic terms (represented by the colored bars on the graph below). For each term, between 360 and 380 people answered the questions. This graph shows the average rating for each question asked for each of the 14 terms for the full sample.

Each survey question in this section was answered on a scale from 1-5 with 5 being the highest (typically 5 = “strongly agree” and 1 = “strongly disagree”; see Appendix A for details). For many of the questions, participants were provided with an open-ended follow up question to give more detail; responses to the open-ended follow-ups were not required and summaries of that information are not included here. See Appendix A for the full survey, which provides further detail about the exact questions and answer options.



In addition, we asked one question that was answered with a “yes” or “no.” “Do you have an emotional reaction to this word/phrase?” This table shows the number of responses for each word or phrase.



Takeaways:

- The most liked terms are: liberty, justice, citizen, common ground, and democracy
- The least liked terms are: civic health, civic virtues, and privilege
- The terms perceived to be most important are: justice and citizen
- In general, people report low emotional reactions to the terms
- Participants had the highest emotional reaction to the words patriotism, liberty and justice
- The averages for using and hearing the terms are lower than for the first few questions, but there is a lot of variability by term
 - Terms more commonly used are: justice; citizen
 - Terms less commonly used are: civic health, civic virtues, civic engagement, civil society
- The term that people said their opinion on is most “dependent on who is saying it” are: privilege and justice
- The terms most perceived to be used for political agenda are: democracy and patriotism
- The terms with the highest perceived conservative connotation are: patriotism and citizen
- The terms with the highest perceived liberal connotation are: racial equity and diversity

Part 3) Perceptions of civic terms by demographic characteristics of survey participants

One question we wanted to answer with this survey is whether perceptions of the 14 civic terms were different depending on the demographic characteristics of survey participants. For example, do men and women differ on their perceptions of civic language? The tables in this section present differences in perceptions of each term by different demographic characteristics of the survey participants such as: political affiliation, gender, age, race/ethnicity, level of education, and community type. It is important to note that each set of analyses presents group differences by one demographic characteristic but does not explain why such differences exist and does not simultaneously account for other demographic characteristics. For example, age differences on how participants perceive various terms might reflect the fact that civic language resonates differently for older and younger participants. Or, such differences

by age might be driven by different political affiliations among participants from older and younger backgrounds in this sample.

A) Perceptions of terms by political affiliation

This summary table shows whether there were significant differences on perceptions of each term by political affiliation between people who identify as a democrat (N = 359), republican (N = 255) and independent (N = 239). Note that sample sizes for other political affiliations (e.g., libertarian and green party) were too low to include in group difference testing.

- Differences that were statistically significant ($p < .05$) are summarized
- Colored squares indicate that there was a difference in the question for the given term by political affiliation of participants
- The colors indicate which political affiliation drives the overall group difference

Democrat	
Independent	
Republican	

- If a square is red on top and blue on the bottom, it means that participants who identify as *republican* rated the given question more highly for the given term compared to participants who identify as *democrat*
 - For example, using the table below, participants who identify as republican indicate that they use the phrase “patriotism” more compared to participants who identify as democrats
 - Participants who identify as democrats report using the term “civic health” more compared to participants who identify as independent
- White squares indicate there were not differences between groups on the question about the term

	Like	Know what it means	Important	Depends who is saying it	Political agenda	Emotional reaction	Use this word	Hear this word	Conserv. Connot.	Liber. Connot.
1. Civic Engagement										
2. Democracy										
3. Patriotism										
4. Liberty										
5. Justice										
6. Racial equity										
7. Citizen										
8. Civic health										
9. Civic virtues										
10. Privilege										
11. Civil society										
12. Diversity										
13. Common ground										
14. Civility										

B) Perceptions of terms by gender

This summary table shows whether there were significant differences on perceptions of each term by gender between people who identify as male (N = 469) or female (N = 525)

- Differences that were statistically significant ($p < .05$) are summarized
- The pink squares indicate that *women* endorsed the question for the term more highly
- The blue squares indicate that *men* endorsed the question for the term more highly
- White squares indicate there were not differences by gender on the question about the term

	Like	Know what it means	Important	Depends who is saying it	Political agenda	Emotional reaction	Use this word	Hear this word	Conserv. Connot.	Liber. Connot.
1. Civic Engagement										
2. Democracy										
3. Patriotism										
4. Liberty										
5. Justice										
6. Racial equity										
7. Citizen										
8. Civic health										
9. Civic virtues										
10. Privilege										
11. Civil society										
12. Diversity										
13. Common ground										
14. Civility										

C) Perceptions of terms by age

This summary table shows whether there were significant differences on perceptions of each term by age.

- Differences that were statistically significant ($p < .05$) are summarized
- The green squares indicate that *participants under the age of 24* (N = 197) endorsed the question for the term more highly
- The grey squares indicate that *participants over the age of 25* (N = 808) endorsed the question for the term more highly
- White squares indicate there were not differences between age groups on the question about the term

	Like	Know what it means	Important	Depends who is saying it	Political agenda	Emotional reaction	Use this word	Hear this word	Conserv. Connot.	Liber. Connot.
1. Civic Engagement										
2. Democracy										
3. Patriotism										
4. Liberty										
5. Justice										
6. Racial equity										
7. Citizen										
8. Civic health										
9. Civic virtues										
10. Privilege										
11. Civil society										
12. Diversity										
13. Common ground										
14. Civility										

D) Perceptions of terms by race/ethnicity

This summary table shows whether there were significant differences on perceptions of each term by race given the categories *white* (N = 631) and *all other race/ethnicities* (N = 373). Note that sample sizes for other racial/ethnic were low and sample sizes are not large enough to conduct group testing by more groups.

- Differences that were statistically significant ($p < .05$) are summarized
- The gold squares indicate that *participants who identified as white* endorsed the question for the term more highly
- The blue squares indicate that *participants who identified as any race/ethnicity other than white* (see demographics above for all categories included) endorsed the question for the term more highly
- White squares indicate there were not differences between groups on the question about the term

	Like	Know what it means	Important	Depends who is saying it	Political agenda	Emotional reaction	Use this word	Hear this word	Conserv. Connot.	Liber. Connot.
1. Civic Engagement	Blue	Blue	Blue	White	Blue	White	Blue	Blue	Blue	White
2. Democracy	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	Blue	White	Blue
3. Patriotism	Gold	White	Gold	White	White	White	Gold	White	White	White
4. Liberty	Gold	White	Gold	White	White	Gold	White	White	White	Blue
5. Justice	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	Blue
6. Racial equity	Blue	White	White	White	White	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
7. Citizen	White	Gold	White	Blue	White	White	White	White	White	Blue
8. Civic health	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	White	White	White	White	White	White
9. Civic virtues	Blue	White	Blue	White	White	White	Blue	Blue	Blue	White
10. Privilege	White	White	Blue	Blue	White	White	White	Blue	White	White
11. Civil society	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	Blue	White	Blue
12. Diversity	Blue	White	White	Blue	White	Blue	Blue	White	Blue	White
13. Common ground	White	White	White	Blue	White	White	White	White	White	Blue
14. Civility	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	Blue

E) Perceptions of terms by education level

This summary table shows whether there were significant differences on perceptions of each term by education. Categories were some high school or below (N = 552) and college degree or above (N = 453).

- Differences that were statistically significant ($p < .05$) are summarized
- The grey squares indicate that *participants with some high school, a high school degree, or some college (but no degree)* endorsed the question for the term more highly
- The maroon squares indicate that *participants with an associates degree or higher* (see demographics above for all categories included) endorsed the question for the term more highly
- White squares indicate there were not differences between groups on the question about the term

	Like	Know what it means	Important	Depends who is saying it	Political agenda	Emotional reaction	Use this word	Hear this word	Conserv. Connot.	Liber. Connot.
1. Civic Engagement	Maroon	Maroon	Maroon	Maroon	Maroon	White	White	Maroon	White	White
2. Democracy	Maroon	Maroon	Maroon	White	White	Maroon	Maroon	White	White	White
3. Patriotism	White	Maroon	White	Maroon	Maroon	Maroon	White	Maroon	Maroon	White
4. Liberty	White	Maroon	Maroon	Maroon	White	Maroon	White	White	White	White
5. Justice	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	Grey	White
6. Racial equity	White	White	White	White	Maroon	White	White	Maroon	White	White
7. Citizen	Maroon	Maroon	White	White	White	Maroon	White	Maroon	White	White
8. Civic health	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White
9. Civic virtues	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White
10. Privilege	White	White	White	Maroon	Maroon	Maroon	White	White	White	White
11. Civil society	White	Maroon	White	Maroon	White	White	White	White	White	White
12. Diversity	White	Maroon	White	Maroon	White	White	White	White	White	White
13. Common ground	White	Maroon	Maroon	Maroon	Maroon	White	White	Maroon	White	White
14. Civility	Maroon	Maroon	Maroon	White	White	White	Maroon	Maroon	White	White

F) Perceptions of terms by community type (urban, rural, and suburban)

This summary table shows whether there were significant differences on perceptions of each term by the type of community that participants live in: urban (N = 294) suburban (N = 452) or rural (N = 259).

- Differences that were statistically significant ($p < .05$) are summarized
- Colored squares indicated that there was a difference in the question for the given term by community type
- The colors indicate which community type drives the overall group difference

urban	
suburban	
rural	

- If a square is green on top and yellow on the bottom, it means that participants from *suburban* communities rated the given question more highly for the given term compared to participants from *rural* communities
 - So, participants in suburban communities indicate that they use the phrase “civic engagement” more compared to participants from rural communities
 - Participants in urban communities rate the term “liberty” higher on conservative connotation compared to participants from suburban communities
- White squares indicate there were not differences between groups on the question about the term

	Like	Know what it means	Important	Depends who is saying it	Political agenda	Emotional reaction	Use this word	Hear this word	Conserv. Connot.	Liber. Connot.
1. Civic Engagement										
2. Democracy										
3. Patriotism										
4. Liberty										
5. Justice										
6. Racial equity										
7. Citizen										
8. Civic health										
9. Civic virtues										
10. Privilege										
11. Civil society										
12. Diversity										
13. Common ground										
14. Civility										

Part 4) Defining Key terms

For 3 Key terms (civic engagement, democracy, citizen), we got additional information regarding how survey participants define these terms. We followed up the question “I know exactly what this word means” with three definitions, provided by PACE, to explore which definition most aligned with how participants understand the key terms. The follow-up question was only asked of the subset of participants who answered “agree” or “strongly agree” to knowing exactly what the term means. The definitions are not exhaustive and there is not a correct answer; rather, they were meant to provide three possible definitions based on PACE’s understanding of the three terms.

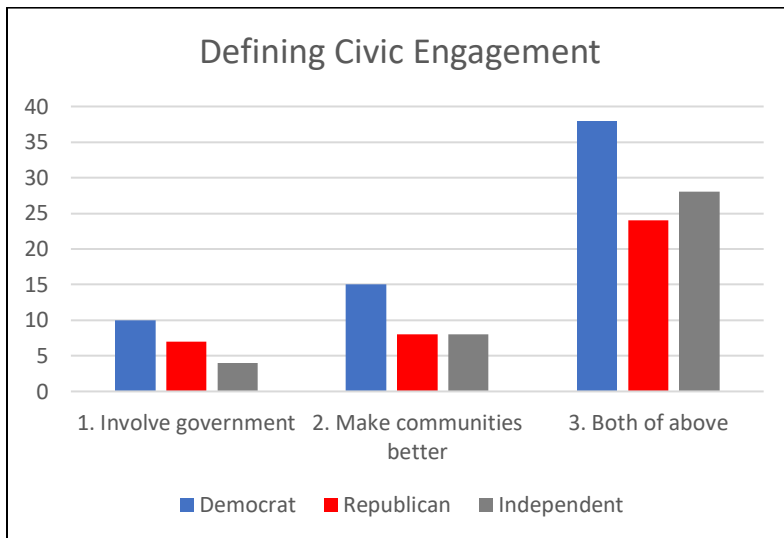
Civic engagement:

For participants who answered “agree” or “strongly agree” to knowing exactly what civic engagement means, they were asked a follow-up:

This term can be defined in several different ways. Here are a few ways we hear people describe this term. There are no right or wrong answers. Which most closely aligns with how you understand it?

1. *Participating in actions that **involve government** and intend to influence the way it functions (such as voting, attending public meetings, contacting representatives, attending marches or rallies, political involvement)*
2. *Participating in actions that allow people to **make their communities better**, but may not directly involve government or politics (such as volunteerism and service, helping neighbors, giving to charity, joining community groups)*
3. **Both of the above** (that is, civic engagement can be government/political oriented AND also include voluntary/charitable associations)

Overall, participants across the three major political affiliations endorsed the third definition “both of the above” most highly (90 people out of 142 total, or 63%). The graphs below shows how many people endorsed each question for the sample and broken down by political affiliation. The Y-axis indicates the number of people who endorsed each definition.



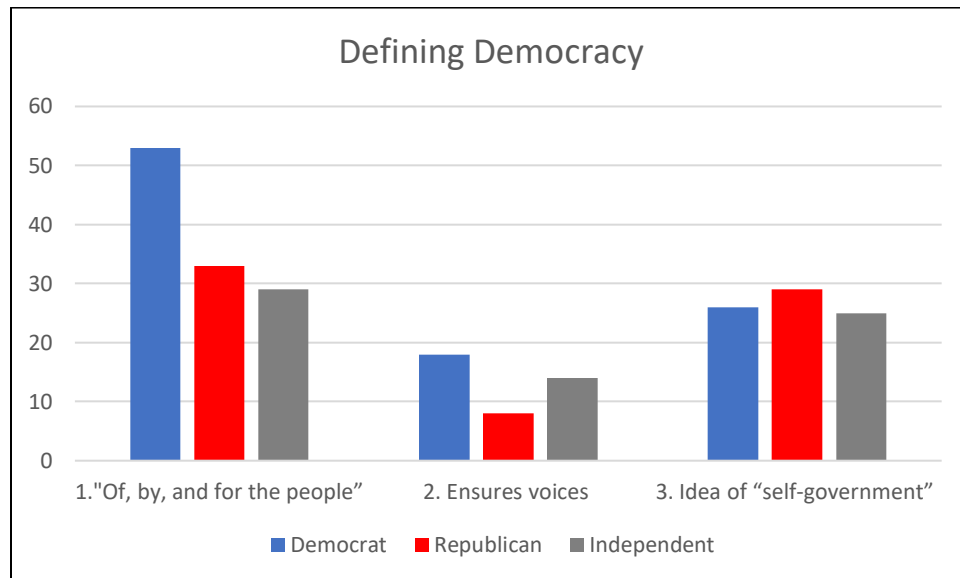
Democracy

For participants who answered “agree” or “strongly agree” to knowing exactly what democracy means, they were asked a follow-up:

This term can be defined in several different ways. Here are a few ways we hear people describe this term. There are no right or wrong answers. Which most closely aligns with how you understand it?

1. A system or structure of institutional government that is **“of, by, and for the people”**
2. A way of government representation that **ensures the voices** of those least likely to have access to political power or decision-making are prioritized
3. The **idea of “self-government”** which means people have the right and responsibility to have voice in government decisions as well as other political and non-political activities across society

Overall, participants across the three major political affiliations endorsed the first definition “Of, by, and for the people” most highly (115 people out of 235 total, or 49%). The graphs below shows how many people endorsed each question for the sample and broken down by political affiliation. The Y-axis indicates the number of people who endorsed each definition.



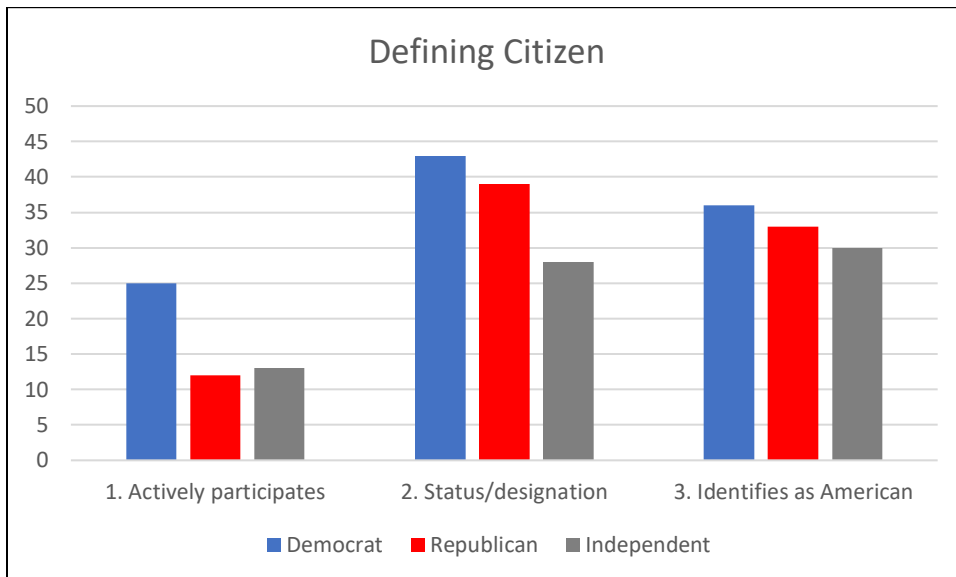
Citizen

For participants who answered “agree” or “strongly agree” to knowing exactly what citizen means, they were asked:

This term can be defined in several different ways. Here are a few ways we hear people describe this term. There are no right or wrong answers. Which most closely aligns with how you understand it?

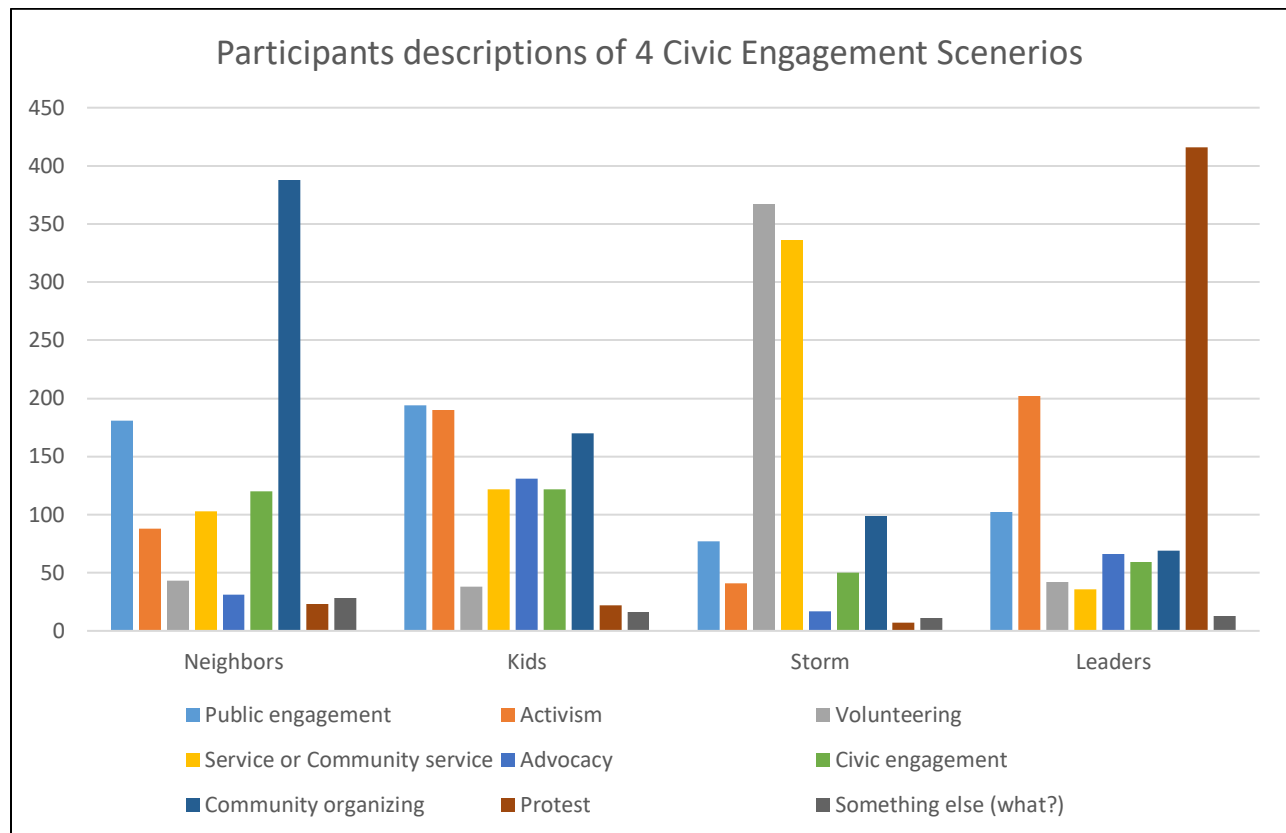
1. A person who **actively participates** in and contributes to the “civic life” of their community
2. A person who possesses a specific government **status/designation** as a resident of the United States
3. A resident of a community who defines themselves or their identity as **being American**

Overall, participants across the three major political affiliations endorsed the second definition “Status/designation” most highly (110 people out of 259 total, or 42%). The graphs below shows how many people endorsed each question for the sample broken down by political affiliation. The Y-axis indicates the number of people who endorsed each definition.



Part 5) Scenarios

In this section of the survey, we wrote 4 scenarios to describe different types of civic action. We gave participants 9 options and asked them to choose how they would describe each activity. This graph shows how many people endorsed each option for each of 4 scenarios (copied below for reference).



Scenario 1 (Neighbors). *Two neighbors bump into each other and commiserate about the pothole on their street that has been there for years. They don't know how to get the attention of decision-makers in their community. They decide to try to gather their neighbors together for informal meetings to make a plan for getting the pothole fixed.*

➔ **Participants most frequently referred to this activity as community organizing.**

Scenario 2 (Kids). *Kids have been injured crossing a street to get to their local public school. Parents put together information and present it to the school, local school board, and community decision-makers to educate them about the problem and encourage the community to build a bridge or overpass for the kids to walk across.*

➔ **Participants most frequently referred to this activity as public engagement, activism, or community organizing. Some described this activity as service/community service, advocacy, and civic engagement.**

Scenario 3 (Storm). *After a major storm ravages a community, people help each other out by doing things like collecting money and donations or choosing to pick up trash and debris to help life get back to normal.*

→ Participants most frequently referred to this activity as volunteering or service/community service.

Scenario 4 (Leaders). *Leaders are considering implementing a policy that people are concerned will have negative consequences on their community or go against their values. They decide to speak out and organize a campaign, rally, demonstration, or a march to make their concerns public and push back against the idea.*

→ Participants most frequently referred to this activity as protest.

Takeaways:

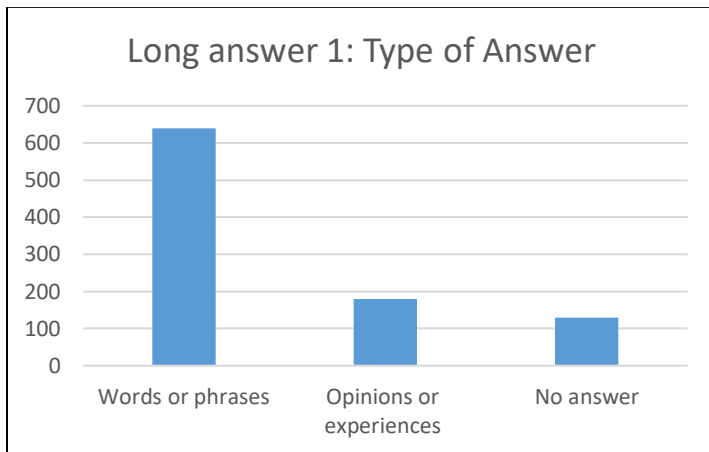
- Two of the scenarios showed lots of agreement among participants in how they would describe the activity (Scenario 1 and 4)
- There were many terms used to describe Scenario 2
- There were two clear words used to describe Scenario 3 (equal split between volunteering and service/community service)

Part 6) Open-ended long answer questions

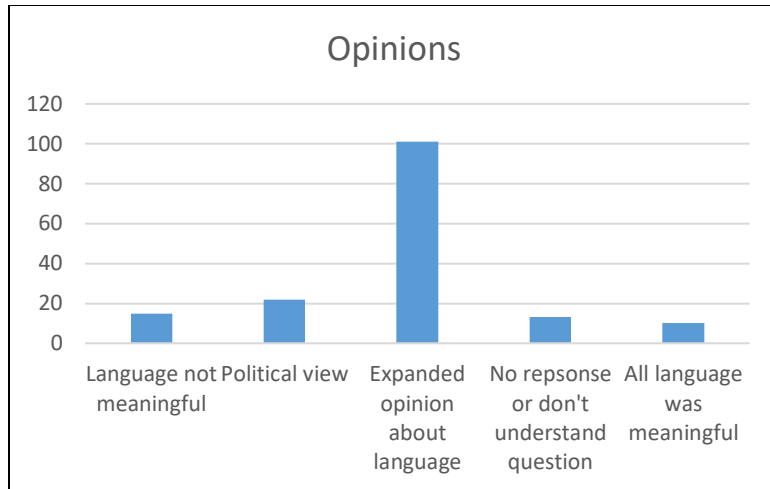
The survey concluded with two open-ended questions that allowed participants to give longer responses. Participants were not required to respond. Each question is provided below along with a narrative summary of the types of answers that were provided and some examples of responses.

1) This survey has asked you to think about language used to describe participation in democracy. Of all the words and phrases you have read (or thinking about any others), what words and phrases are most meaningful to you?

Responses to this question varied considerably. Many people chose civic terms from the survey that were most meaningful. Others wrote out expanded opinions on meaningful civic language or political opinions or responses asserting that language doesn't feel meaningful to them or that they did not have any further thoughts on the questions. This graph shows the types of answers to this question. The majority of people who answered provided words or phrases that were most meaningful. 180 participants provided an expanded opinion of meaningful words or phrases or expressed a political opinion. The rest did not provide an answer.



Of the participants who provided the most meaningful words or phrases, the top 10 most common were: liberty, justice, civic engagement, democracy, patriotism, diversity, racial equality, activism, citizen, and common ground.



Among the participants who expressed an opinion in response to this question, some themes emerged. One was a theme of *coming together*. Several respondents brought up the idea that people need to work together with others in their communities and work together toward common goals. For many of these responses, there was an explicit or implicit theme of coming together for *action* or *to get things done*. Another theme that came up was that *action speaks louder than words*. Many respondents suggested that language is not meaningful out of context or that language isn't as important as action. Examples of opinions and political views include:

- a) I think the words community organizing and civic engagement are the most resonant for me, personally.
- b) Communities coming together to talk sensible, without agendas, to get things done.
- c) I don't think any of them are meaningful to me, a word is simply just a word, just because I don't like the word doesn't mean it is going to change my whole life
- d) In this current landscape, the idea of "citizen" is extremely meaningful, as I believe there are people in this country that were brought here as children, but identify as American just as much as any American citizen.
- e) coming together for the good of the people is what is most important to me
- f) MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN
- g) I really have nothing to say about any of this
- h) Democracy. Conservatives and liberals alike have lost sight of the art of compromise. There is an Old World saying: whoever wants All Will lose All. We should hear what everyone has to say and value people's opinions but in the end we HAVE TO BE WILLING TO WORK TOGETHER FOR THE COMMON GOOD.

2) We hear that language used to describe civic life and democracy often feels academic, meaning it doesn't resonate with many people. We also hear that sometimes language used to describe civic life and democracy feels political or politicized in a divisive way. Do you have thoughts or reactions to this?

Approximately 1/3 of participants provided an answer to this question. Responses varied considerably. Many participants agreed with the idea that civic language feels either political or academic, some elaborated on why they agree or disagree. Some expressed disappointment that civic language has become divisive. Others wrote that they do not think about civic language at all and others did not have any further thoughts to share. Examples include:

- a) I think we have become so use to hearing all the words in negative ways from both sides of the fence, that they don't have the same meaning anymore.
- b) Politicians have turned every idea into an attack we need to focus on the real issues not on the politicians or political agendas
- c) Democracy and justice are what truly matters in this world. Civics follows with good democracy and justice
- d) we must understand the true meaning of words and respect them
- e) Politicians have made these words sound dull in our ears because it's usually used to further their agenda
- f) Both statements are true, it just depends on what is happening.
- g) People see it as a thing they don't have to learn about because it's "too hard to understand" but it's very important to know and be active in our democracy
- h) I really do not have any thoughts
- i) Politicians have to use words to communicate like the rest of us so it's only natural some words will become politicized.
- j) I am college educated, so I don't personally experience the feeling of words being too academic (most of the time), though I can understand how others would feel that at first. But unless a more effective replacement is suggested, I say it's good to give learning the language a shot. As for political language, I would say that definitely does exist, depending on the political "dialect" people are speaking in together. I would say that the majority of words used are apolitical, with a very roughly equal percentage of a minority fitting into either liberal or conservative vocabularies.
- k) I would agree, people want to be able to feel the integrity of someone's agenda, not their ability to use big words.
- l) Haven't really thought about it

Appendix A) PACE Civic Language Survey

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey. The survey should take no more than 20 minutes. We are interested in learning your opinions about language used to describe how people participate in civic life in our country. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions

To get started, we have a few questions about you.

What is your age?

- 15-18
- 19-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65 or older

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Do not identify as male or female
- Prefer not to answer

What is the highest level of education you have received?

- Less than high school degree
- High school graduate (high school diploma or equivalent including GED)
- Some college but not degree
- Associate degree in college (2 year)
- Bachelor's degree in college (4 year)
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree
- Professional degree (JD, MD)

Please specify your race.

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic/Latino(a)
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White

- Bi-racial or multi-racial
- Other _____

Now we will ask some open-ended questions. Please write whatever word or short phrase comes to mind (using 50 characters or less).

If you were to say one word or very short phrase to describe the act of participating in your community, what would it be? _____

What word or very short phrase would you use to describe a person who is active in their community?

How would you describe someone who loves their country?

How would you describe someone who respectfully engages with different political viewpoints?

How do you describe your political identity? (limit 100 characters)

Next, you will see a word or phrase followed by a set of questions about your reactions to the word or phrase. You will see 5 words or phrases total, and answer a set of questions about each of them.

We know that for many of the words and phrases, your answer might depend on who is saying it and in what context. However, we are interested in your gut reaction to the words and phrases in general even if your answer depends on the context where it is used. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions.

1. Civic Engagement
2. Democracy
3. Patriotism
4. Liberty
5. Justice
6. Racial equity

7. Citizen
8. Civic health
9. Civic virtues
10. Privilege
11. Civil society
12. Diversity
13. Common ground
14. Civility

Please answer the following questions about the word/phrase [INSERT PHRASE FROM LIST]:

Do you like this word?

1 = strongly dislike

2 = dislike

3 = neither like nor dislike

4 = like

5 = strongly like

→ Follow up with: Why or why not? _____

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statement:

I know exactly what this word means:

1 = strongly disagree

2 = disagree

3 = neither agree nor disagree

4 = agree

5 = strongly agree

→ *(For 3 key words, follow up with multiple choice question for people who answer “agree” or “strongly agree” with no wrong answers)*

This term can be defined in several different ways. Here are a few ways we hear people describe this term. There are no right or wrong answers. Which most closely aligns with how you understand it?

Civic engagement:

- a) Participating in actions that involve government and intend to influence the way it functions (such as voting, attending public meetings, contacting representatives, attending marches or rallies, political involvement)
- b) Participating in actions that allow people to make their communities better, but may not directly involve government or politics (such as volunteerism and service, helping neighbors, giving to charity, joining community groups)
- c) Both of the above (that is, civic engagement can be government/political oriented AND also include voluntary/charitable associations)
- d) Other _____

Democracy:

- a) A system or structure of institutional government that is “of, by, and for the people”
- b) A way of government representation that ensures the voices of those least likely to have access to political power or decision-making are prioritized
- c) The idea of “self-government” which means people have the right and responsibility to have voice in government decisions as well as other political and non-political activities across society
- d) Other _____

Citizen:

- a) A person who actively participates in and contributes to the “civic life” of their community
- b) A person who possesses a specific government status/designation as a resident of the United States
- c) A resident of a community who defines themselves or their identity as being American
- d) Other _____

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statement:

This word represents an important idea.

1 = strongly disagree

2 = disagree

3 = neither agree nor disagree

4 = agree

5 = strongly agree

This word or phrase tends to be used by people with a political agenda.

1 = strongly disagree

2 = disagree

3 = neither agree nor disagree

4 = agree

5 = strongly agree

My feeling about this word depends on who is saying it.

1 = strongly disagree

2 = disagree

3 = neither agree nor disagree

4 = agree

5 = strongly agree

Do you have an emotional reaction to this [word/phrase]?

No

Yes

→ (if yes) Feel free to say more, if you'd like: _____

Do you use this word?

1 = never

2 = rarely

3 = sometimes

4 = often

5 = very often

→ If “never”, is there another word you use to describe this? _____

Do you hear other people use this word/phrase?

1 = never

2 = rarely

3 = sometimes

4 = often

5 = very often

→ If “sometimes/often/very often”, Where do you hear it and from whom? _____

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statement:

This word has a conservative connotation:

1 = strongly disagree

2 = disagree

3 = neither agree nor disagree

4 = agree

5 = strongly agree

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statement:

This word has a liberal connotation:

1 = strongly disagree

2 = disagree

3 = neither agree nor disagree

4 = agree

5 = strongly agree

Now we will describe several situations where people take action in their communities. After you read the scenarios, please choose the word or phrase you would use to describe the activity in the scenario. There is not a “right answer.” Please choose whichever description of the scenario you think is best.

Scenario 1. Two neighbors bump into each other and commiserate about the pothole on their street that has been there for years. They don't know how to get the attention of decision makers in their community. They decide to try to gather their neighbors together for informal meetings to make a plan for getting the pothole fixed.

Scenario 2. Kids have been injured crossing a street to get to their local public school. Parents put together information and present it to the school, local school board, and community decision makers to educate them about the problem and encourage the community to build a bridge or overpass for the kids to walk across.

Scenario 3. After a major storm ravages a community, people help each other out by doing things like collecting money and donations or choosing to pick up trash and debris to help life get back to normal.

Scenario 4. Leaders are considering implementing a policy that people are concerned will have negative consequences on their community or go against their values. They decide to speak out and organize a campaign, rally, demonstration, or a march to make their concerns public and push back against the idea.

What would you call this activity?

- a. Public engagement
- b. Activism
- c. Volunteering
- d. Service or Community service
- e. Advocacy
- f. Civic engagement
- g. Community organizing
- h. Protest
- i. Something else (What? _____)

We want to ask about what language you think works best to describe how people participate in our civic society.

This survey has asked you to think about language used to describe participation in democracy. Of all the words and phrases you have read (or thinking about any others), what words and phrases are most meaningful to you?

We hear that language used to describe civic life and democracy often feels academic, meaning it doesn't resonate with many people. We also hear that sometimes language used to describe civic life and democracy feels political or politicized in a divisive way. Do you have thoughts or reactions to this?

Finally, we have some questions about your background.

Which best describes your political affiliation?

- Democrat
- Republican
- Independent
- Green party
- Libertarian
- Other _____
- Don't know
- Prefer not to answer

How would you describe your socio-economic status?

- Low income
- Low-middle income
- Middle income
- Upper-middle income
- High income

What state do you live in?

[drop down menu of all states]

What best describes the community you live in:

- Urban
- Rural
- Suburban

Thank you for taking this survey!

Appendix B) PACE Civic Language Codebook for Short Answer Question 1 and Long Answer Question 1

NOTE that this represents the coding of the report author only. There are many alternative ways these questions could be coded.

Short Answer question 1 (participants required to provide a response, 50 characters or less). *If you were to say one word or very short phrase to describe the act of participating in your community, what would it be?*

1. Variable 1: type of answer

- a. Variable name in dataset: SA_parttype**
- b. Description:** This variable will code the types of answer people gave to this question (for example answering with an adjective or descriptive phrase, or with a synonym or an example)
- c. Codes and examples**
 - i. 1 = adjective or descriptive short phrases (fulfilling, generous, “you need to”)
 - ii. 2 = examples or synonyms (volunteering, church, outreach, active)
 - iii. 3 = opinion or personal experience (“I need to do more”)
 - iv. 4 = answer makes sense but doesn’t fit into these codes (“United people to be good and share with other”)
 - v. 5 = don’t know (no clue, don’t know)
 - vi. Missing = didn’t provide answer or provided nonsense answer

2. Variable 2: valence of adjectives

- a. Variable name in dataset: SA_partadj**
- b. Description:** For the answers coded as adjectives or descriptive short phrases – this code will describe the valence (negative, neutral, positive) of the adjective used in this answer.
- c. Codes and examples**
 - i. 1 = negative (bad, useless, non-existent, difficult)
 - ii. 2 = neutral (moderate, face-paced)
 - iii. 3 = positive (helpful, fulfilling, important)
 - iv. 4 = answer makes sense but doesn’t fit into these codes (“United people to be good and share with other”)
 - v. Missing = didn’t provide answer or provided nonsense answer

3. Variable 3: Recipient

- a. Variable name in dataset: SA_partrec**
- b. Description:** For the answers coded as examples or synonyms for “participating in your community”, this variable will code whether the examples describe activities aimed at *individual recipients* versus *collective recipients*
- c. Codes**
 - i. 1 = individual recipients (help where I can, be neighborly, good deed)

- ii. 2 = collective recipients (recycling, neighborhood watch, Being a member of the HOA and attending meetings, volunteer, service, paying taxes, volunteer at church)
- iii. 3 = can't tell from information provided
4 = answer makes sense but doesn't fit into these codes ("United people to be good and share with other", Religion, Church, Keeping to myself, Work, Gangs)
- iv. 5 = synonym (religion, cooperation)
- v. Missing = didn't provide answer or provided nonsense answer
- d. Notes: Some words (service, volunteer) could be either examples or synonyms. They were coded as examples here.

4. Variable 4: Examples of "direct service" or root cause/system

a. Variable name in dataset: SA_partcause

- o **Description:** For the answers coded as examples of "participating in your community", this code captures whether the examples provided describe more direct service types of activities or activities aimed at root causes/systems. "Direct service" types of activities are things that focus on helping or serving or alleviating social issues (sample codes include: recycle, do good deeds, be neighborly, serve others). *Root cause/system* are examples that focus on joining with others to affect change or focus on systemic causes of social issues (sample codes include: voting, policy, volunteering for a political party).

b. Codes

- i. 1 = direct service (help where I can, be neighborly, recycle, good deed)
- ii. 2 = root cause (vote, work with political party, change policy)
- iii. 3 = can't tell from information provided
- iv. 4 = answer makes sense but doesn't fit into these codes ("United people to be good and share with other")
- v. 5 = being informed, aware of issues
- vi. Missing = didn't provide answer or provided nonsense answer

Long Answer question 1

This survey has asked you to think about language used to describe participation in democracy. Of all the words and phrases you have read (or thinking about any others), what words and phrases are most meaningful to you?

1. Variable 1: type of answer

a. Variable name in dataset: Open1_type

- b. Description:** This variable will code the type of answer people gave to this question (either answering with civic vocabulary words or phrases, or with a longer response expressing an opinion)

c. Codes and examples

- i. 1 = word or phrases (justice, civic engagement)
- ii. 2 = opinion or personal experience
- iii. Missing = didn't provide answer or provided nonsense answer

2. Variable 3: types of opinions

a. Variable name in dataset: Open1_opin

- b. Description:** For the answers coded as opinions, this will capture the main types of opinions expressed.
- c. Codes and examples**
 - i.** 1 = language is not meaningful (“none because when used out of context words mean nothing”)
 - ii.** 2 = expressed political view (“government being honest NEVER GOING TO HAPPEN!!”)
 - iii.** 3 = offered a new or expanded word or phrase (“They get together for causes for what they believe in to perform their civil duty.”)
 - iv.** 4 = don’t understand the question (“I do not understand this question the way in which it is worded. This question should be revised so that one can ascertain what is being asked.”)
 - v.** 5 = all of the language is meaningful
 - vi.** Missing = didn’t provide answer or provided nonsense answer