Overview

This section pulls out interesting trends about civic health in the state of New Hampshire, taken from the *2020 Civic Health Index*. We encourage you to use this information to explore if these trends hold true for you at the local level, or if you are experiencing trends that differ from the overall state. We hope exploring these trends will help you to think about root causes behind issues as well as assets that you have at the local level.

You can use the information below to have conversations with your working group, to frame conversations at a community dialogue, or to share in a variety of other venues.

## HOW DOES YOUR COMMUNITY COMPARE TO STATE CIVIC HEALTH TRENDS?

Introduction

In the *2020 NH Civic Health Index* that we did at the state level, we identified some interesting trends. Do these statewide trends hold up at the local level? We expect for some communities they will, and for others, they won't. Below are some of the statewide trends with some talking points and questions for you to consider. You could use this information in a working group meeting, at a community presentation, or in a dialogue (see Section 5 in the above guide for more information about how to host a civic health dialogue).

Trust

In the *2020 NH Civic Health Index*, one red flag we saw is that trust is declining all around in the state. This included trust in neighbors, trust in government, and trust in media.

The largest drop in trust was in both local and national government. As you can see in Figure 1, NH residents' trust in national government has fallen by over half in the past 19 years, and trust in local government has also fallen. How do you think you are doing at the local level in terms of trust in local government? What information could you draw on or collect to learn more about local trust? Do you think trust in local government has gotten better or worse since the pandemic?
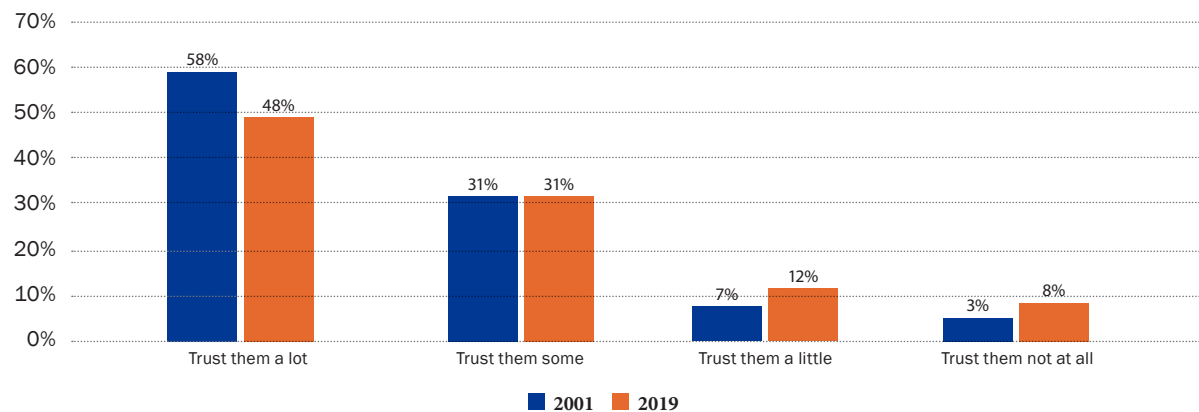
Figure 1. New Hampshire Residents' Trust in Government All or Most of the Time, 2001–2019
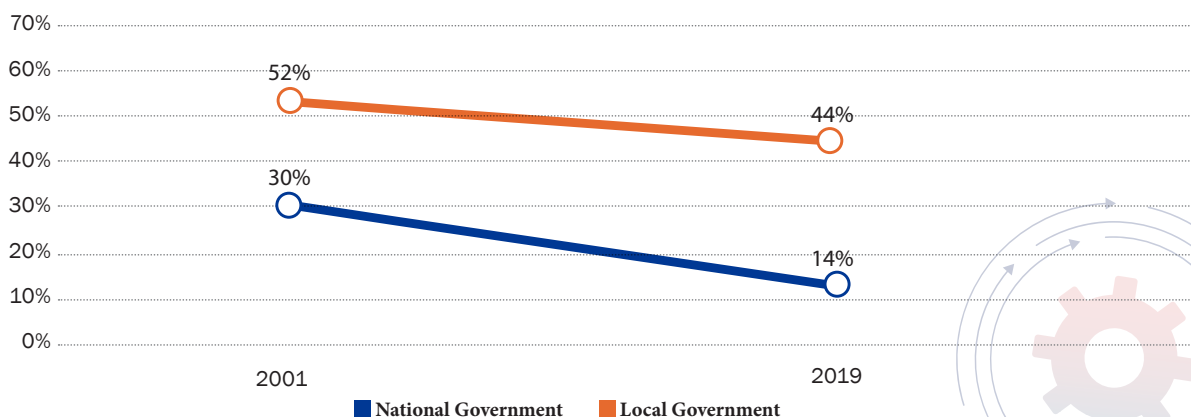
Source: October 2019 Granite State Poll

Trust in neighbors has also declined in New Hampshire over the past 19 years (Figure 2). Certain regions of the state are demonstrating more trust than others. How strong is trust among neighbors and others who live in your local community? Has it gotten better or worse in recent years? What are signs of trust or distrust that you are seeing?

Figure 2. Trust in Neighbors 2001–2019 in New Hampshire
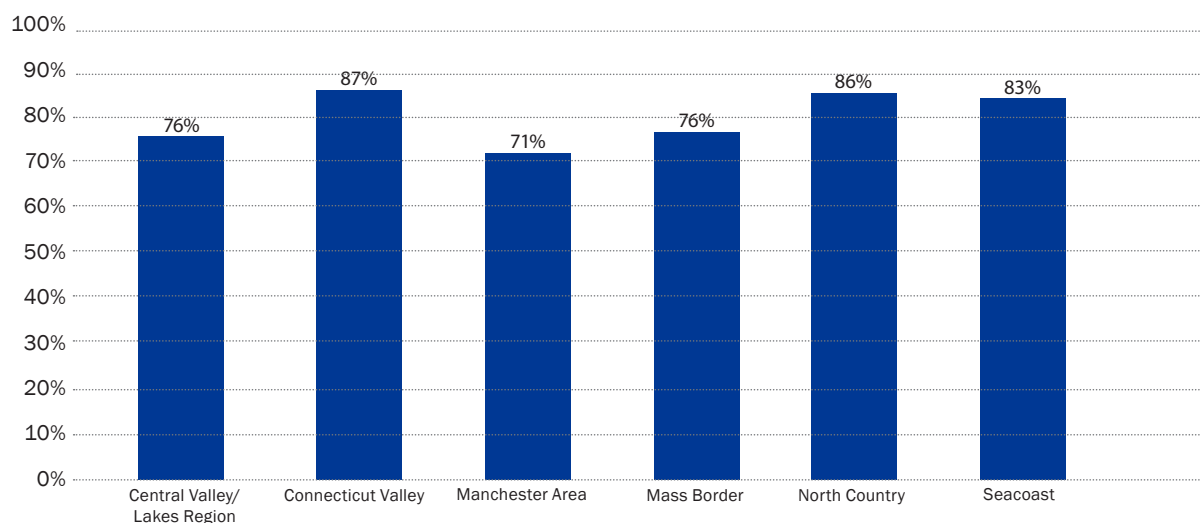
Category	2001	2019
Trust them a lot	58%	48%
Trust them some	31%	31%
Trust them a little	7%	12%
Trust them not at all	3%	8%

Source: October 2019 Granite State Poll

We also found that trust varied in the state by region. Connecticut Valley and North Country residents trust their neighbors most. See Figure 3.

Figure 3. Trust Neighbors by Region in New Hampshire

Source: October 2019 Granite State Poll

Voting

In the *NH Civic Health Index*, we looked at voter data from the late 1970s and early 1980s through to 2016–2018 and found that voter turnout has been strong in the state over the past few elections (Figures 4 and 5). The 2018 midterm election in particular was strong. At the time we wrote the index, there was not yet information on the 2020 election, but we now know that there was record voter turnout in that election as well. How do you think voter turnout in your local community has compared with the state trends? Do you see the same turnout for local elections that you do for national ones? What are your concerns and priorities for future elections? Do you have ideas of how to encourage more people in your community to vote?
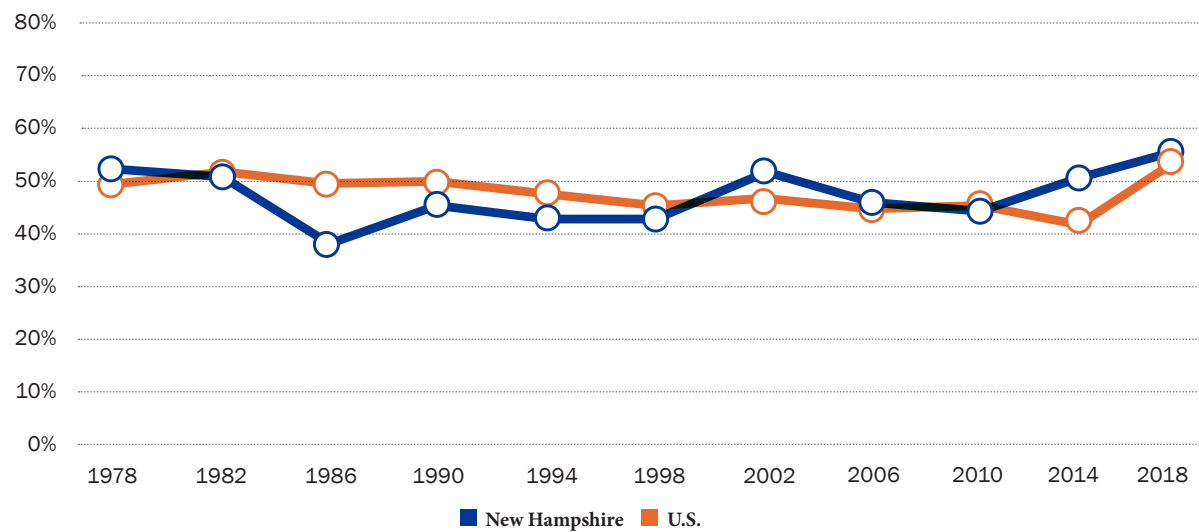
Figure 4. Presidential Election Voter Turnout in New Hampshire, 1980–2016
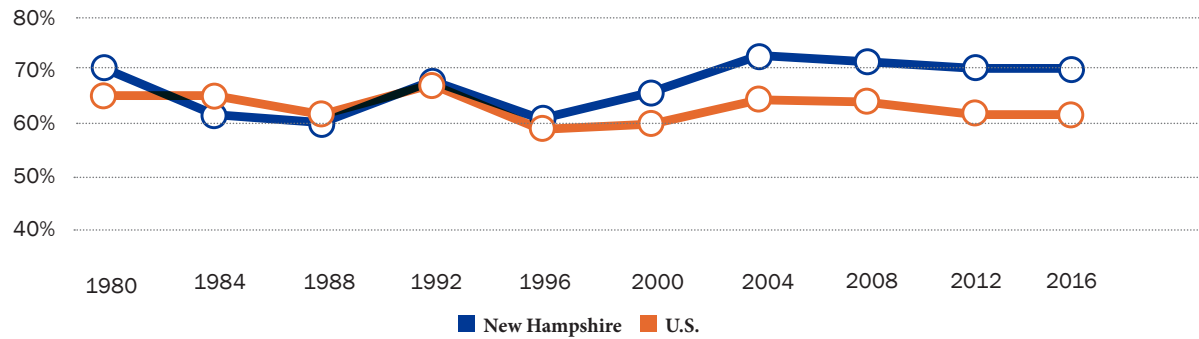
Source: *Voting and Registration in New Hampshire, U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey*

Figure 5. Midterm Voter Turnout in New Hampshire, 1978–2018

Source: *Voting and Registration in New Hampshire, U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey*

Barriers and Obstacles to Community Involvement

In the *2020 NH Civic Health Index*, we asked people to identify any barriers they experienced to getting involved in local civic life (Figure 6). When you look at these trends, how do you think your community compares? How might you address barriers that people are experiencing to encourage more community involvement?

Figure 6. Obstacles and Barriers to Community Involvement in New Hampshire

Legend: ■ Very Important Obstacle ■ Somewhat Important Obstacle ■ Not at All an Important Obstacle
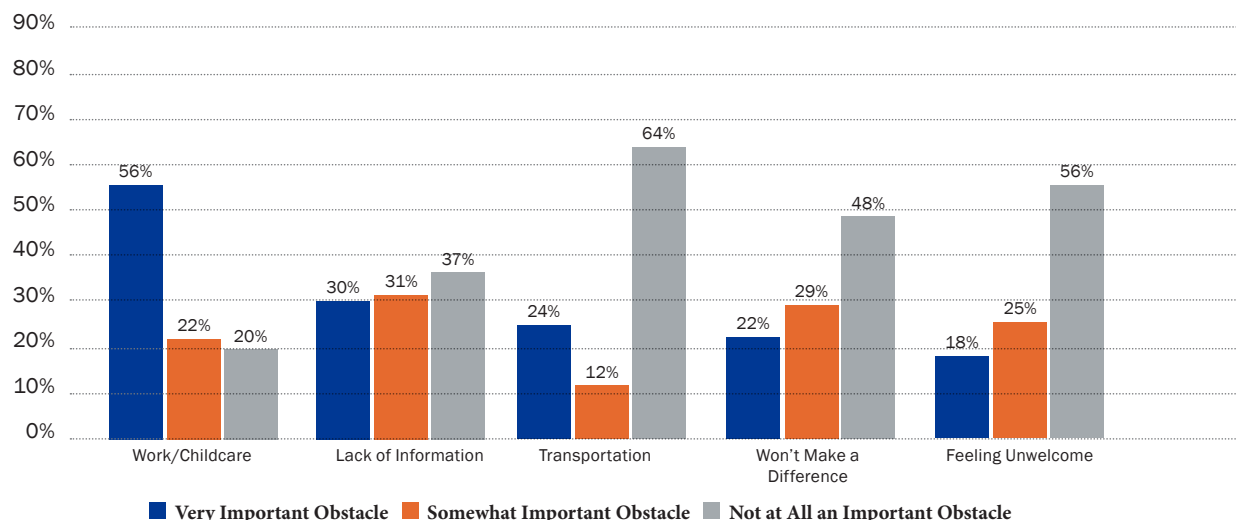
Source: October 2019 Granite State Poll

Millennials and Youth

Millennials (people born between 1982 and 1996) in New Hampshire are struggling to achieve strong civic health. The Millennial generation are now mostly in t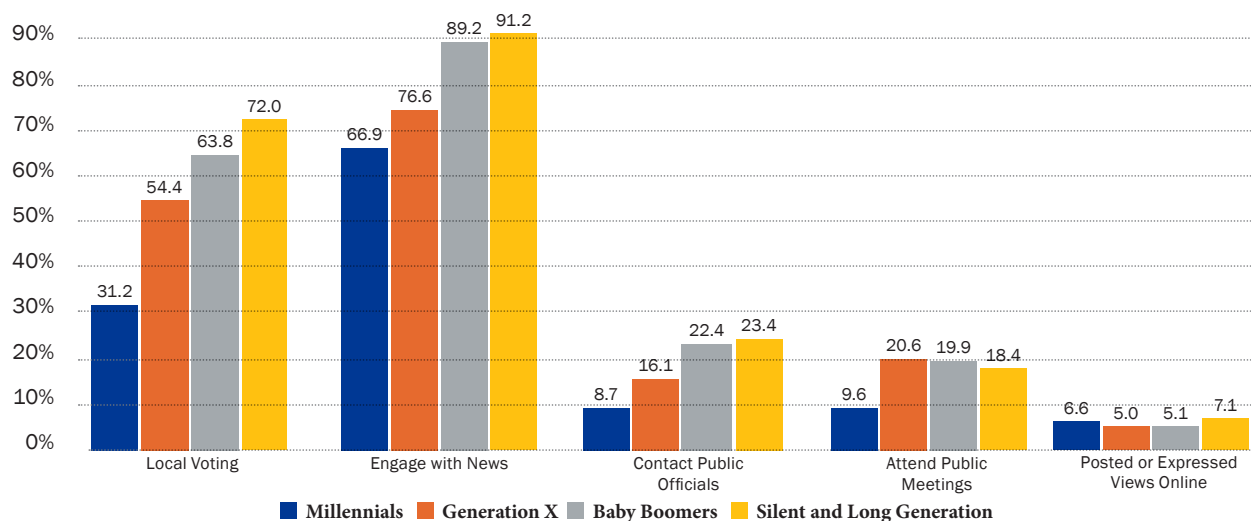heir 30s and 40s. Small sample sizes prevented us from collecting as much information about Gen Z (people born 1997–2012) as we would like, but in the information we had, it looks like Gen Z is also not demonstrating strong civic health in New Hampshire. As you can see in the figures below, though Millennials exhibit some civic strengths, overall they lag behind other generations in their civic health. Gen Z and Millennials tend to trust their neighbors less than other generations. Do the youth and Millennials in your community engage at high or low levels? In what ways have you found success in engaging younger people? If younger people are not engaging as much as others, do you know the reasons why? If not, how could you find out? What could you do differently at the community level to engage younger people?

Figure 7. Civic Awareness and Engagement by Age in New Hampshire

	Local Voting	Engage with News	Contact Public Officials	Attend Public Meetings	Posted or Expressed Views Online
Millennials	31.2	66.9	8.7	9.6	6.6
Generation X	54.4	76.6	16.1	20.6	5.0
Baby Boomers	63.8	89.2	22.4	19.9	5.1
Silent and Long Generation	72.0	91.2	23.4	18.4	7.1

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

Figure 8. Connecting in Community by Age in New Hampshire
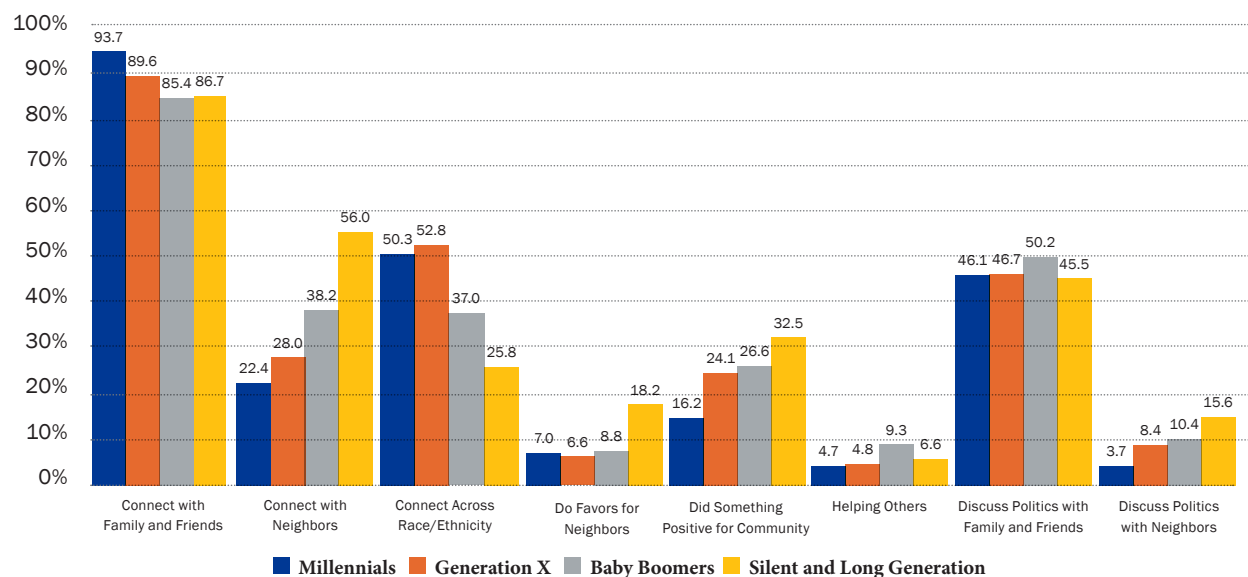
	Connect with Family and Friends	Connect with Neighbors	Connect Across Race/Ethnicity	Do Favors for Neighbors	Did Something Positive for Community	Helping Others	Discuss Politics with Family and Friends	Discuss Politics with Neighbors
Millennials	93.7	22.4	50.3	7.0	16.2	4.7	46.1	3.7
Generation X	89.6	28.0	52.8	6.6	24.1	4.8	46.7	8.4
Baby Boomers	85.4	38.2	37.0	8.8	26.6	9.3	50.2	10.4
Silent and Long Generation	86.7	56.0	25.8	18.2	32.5	6.6	45.5	15.6

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

Figure 9. Trust Neighbors by Age in New Hampshire

Age Group	Percentage
18-34	64%
35-49	80%
50-64	89%
65+	82%

Source: October 2019 Granite State Poll

Figure 10. Volunteering and Giving by Age in New Hampshire

	Volunteering	Charitable Giving	Political Giving	Group Membership
Millennials	37.1	55.2	6.5	25.3
Generation X	36.9	70.2	8.5	31.5
Baby Boomers	39.0	76.2	13.2	36.6
Silent and Long Generation	32.6	82.4	19.1	37.9

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Volunteering and Civic Life in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2017)
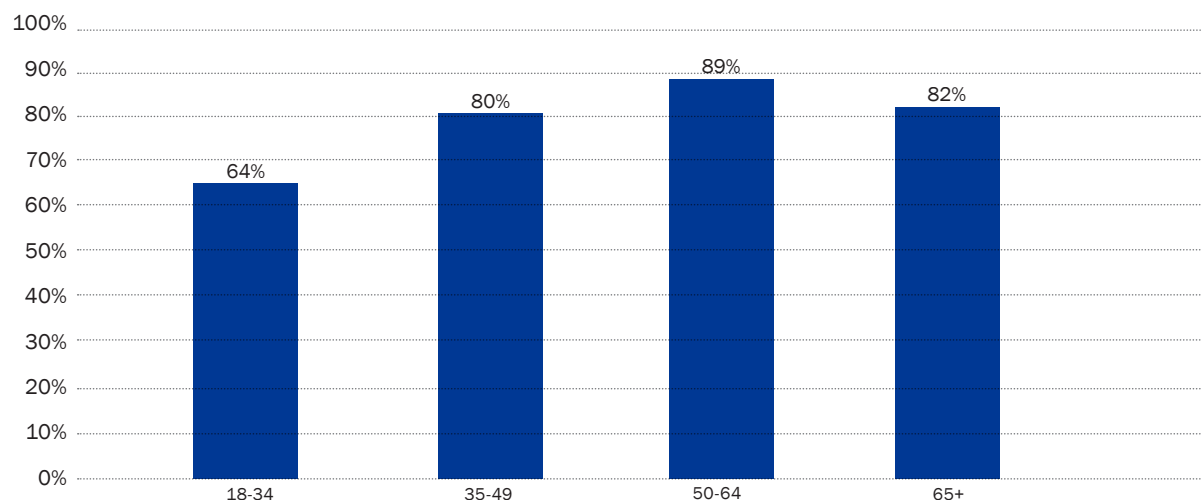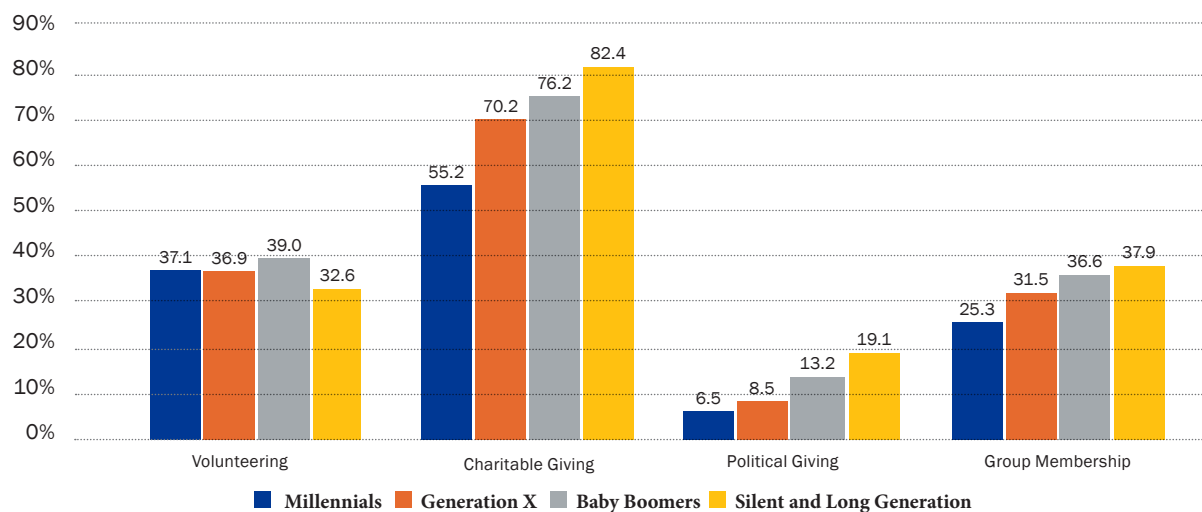
Figure 11. Voting by Age in New Hampshire

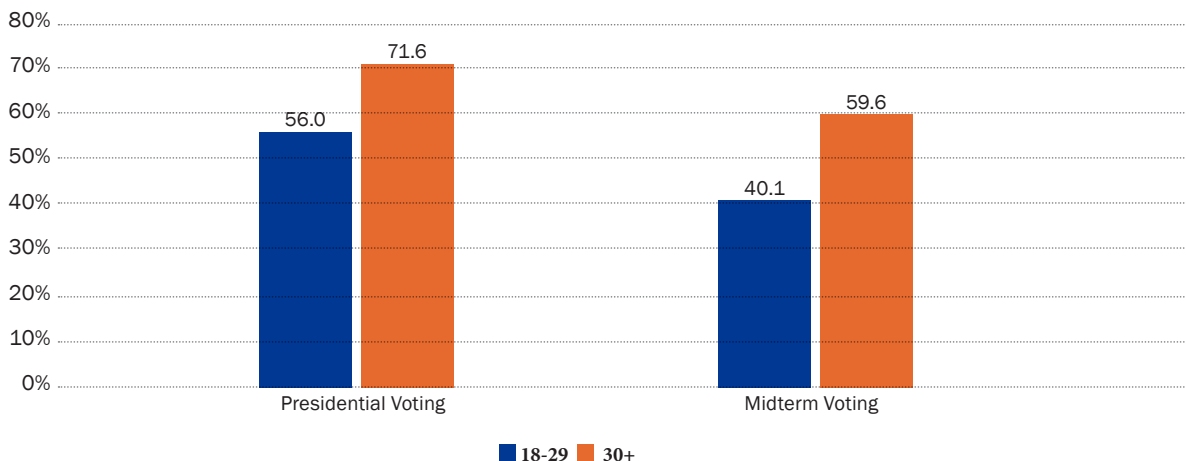*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Volunteering and Civic Life in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2017) and Voting in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2018 and 2016)*

Engaging Across Race, Ethnicity, and Culture

New Hampshire exhibited some strengths in civic health, like being in the top 5 states in the nation when it comes to voting, connecting with friends and family, and charitable giving. However, we ranked in the bottom 5 in the country—46th—in connecting with people of different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds (Table 1). This question was asked not only of in-person connection but also how often people interact with others online or on the phone, and we still scored quite low. The state is also rapidly diversifying, especially in the southern part of the state, and in particular communities like Manchester and Nashua. This trend raises important questions about how much people are engaging—or not—with people different than themselves. In your own community, do you see people engaging with others across race, ethnicity, and culture? If you do not have much racial and ethnic diversity, do you see people engaging across other differences like disability, age, income, and politics? If new residents are moving into your community, what ways do you think you could welcome them? How do you balance honoring people who have lived in communities for a long time and people who are new? Are you seeing incidents of racism and discrimination? What could your community do to encourage more interactions across differences?

Table 1. Connecting in Community: New Hampshire Versus U.S.

Census Indicators of Civic Health	National rank, out of 51 (including DC)	Percent who engage in activity in NH	Percent who engage in activity in U.S.
Connecting with a person of a different racial, ethnic, or cultural background	46th	44.2%	56.0%

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

Education and Income

In the *NH 2020* and *2012 Civic Health Indexes*, we found that education, not income, was the bigger influence on if people are civically engaged (Figure 12–18). Do you think this is true for your local community? What intersections are there between education and civic health at the local level? Are there ways that your schools or other educational institutions like universities or colleges encourage local civic health? What is civic education like in your community, and are there ways it could be improved?
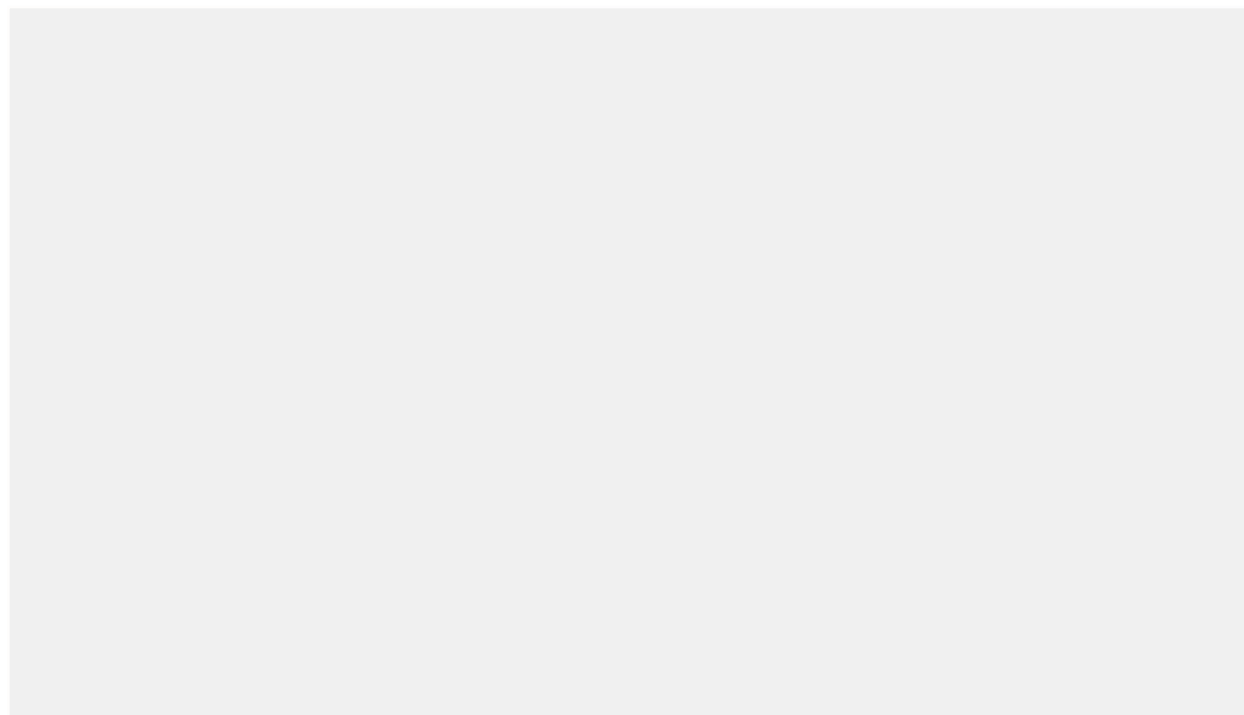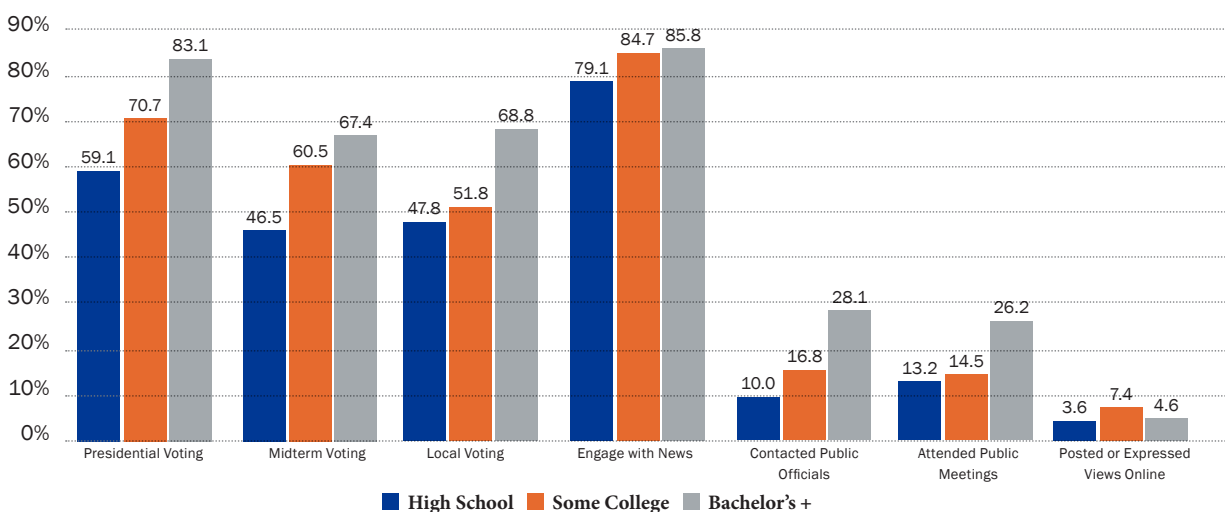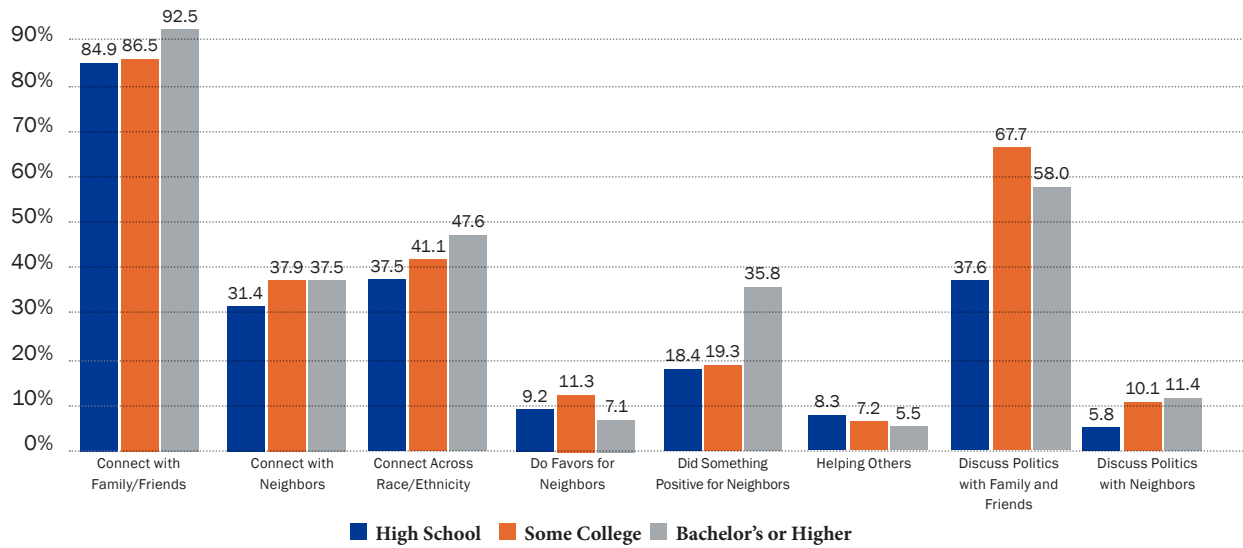
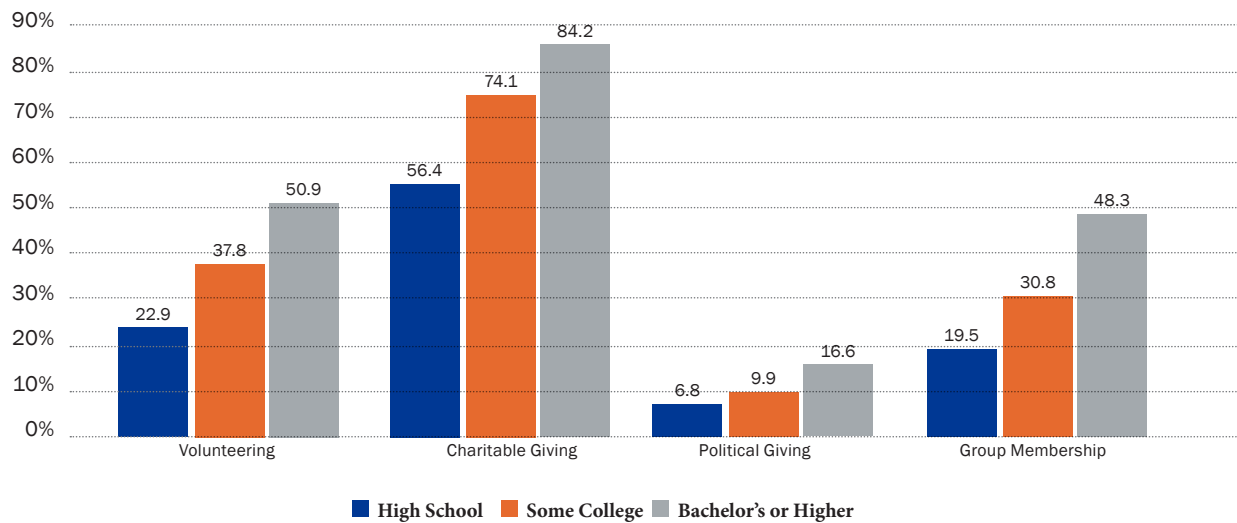**Figure 12. Civic Awareness and Engagement by Education in New Hampshire**

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

Figure 13. Connecting in Community by Education in New Hampshire

Connect with Family/Friends — High School: 84.9, Some College: 86.5, Bachelor's or Higher: 92.5
Connect with Neighbors — High School: 31.4, Some College: 37.9, Bachelor's or Higher: 37.5
Connect Across Race/Ethnicity — High School: 37.5, Some College: 41.1, Bachelor's or Higher: 47.6
Do Favors for Neighbors — High School: 9.2, Some College: 11.3, Bachelor's or Higher: 7.1
Did Something Positive for Neighbors — High School: 18.4, Some College: 19.3, Bachelor's or Higher: 35.8
Helping Others — High School: 8.3, Some College: 7.2, Bachelor's or Higher: 5.5
Discuss Politics with Family and Friends — High School: 37.6, Some College: 67.7, Bachelor's or Higher: 58.0
Discuss Politics with Neighbors — High School: 5.8, Some College: 10.1, Bachelor's or Higher: 11.4

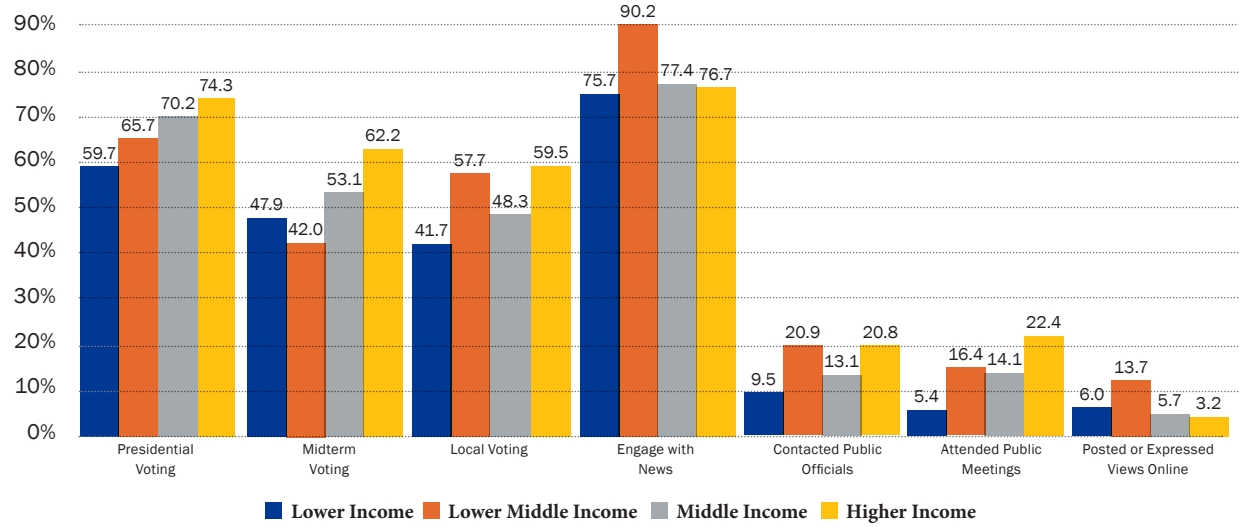Legend: High School, Some College, Bachelor's or Higher

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

Figure 14. Volunteering and Giving by Education in New Hampshire

Volunteering — High School: 22.9, Some College: 37.8, Bachelor's or Higher: 50.9
Charitable Giving — High School: 56.4, Some College: 74.1, Bachelor's or Higher: 84.2
Political Giving — High School: 6.8, Some College: 9.9, Bachelor's or Higher: 16.6
Group Membership — High School: 19.5, Some College: 30.8, Bachelor's or Higher: 48.3

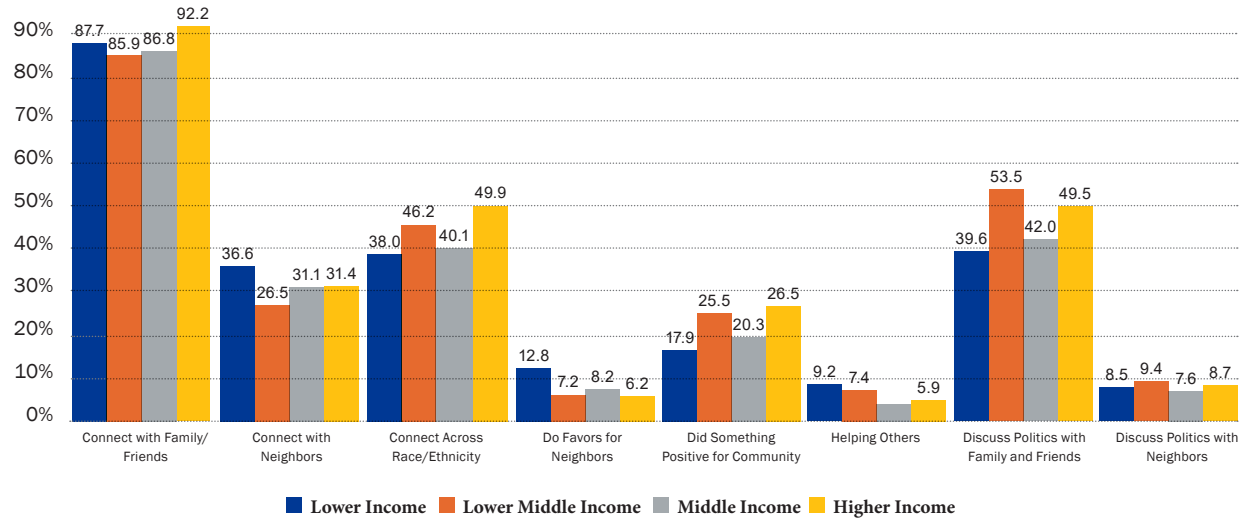Legend: High School, Some College, Bachelor's or Higher

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

Figure 15. Civic Awareness and Engagement by Income in New Hampshire

|	Presidential Voting	Midterm Voting	Local Voting	Engage with News	Contacted Public Officials	Attended Public Meetings	Posted or Expressed Views Online
Lower Income	59.7	47.9	41.7	75.7	9.5	5.4	6.0
Lower Middle Income	65.7	42.0	57.7	90.2	20.9	16.4	13.7
Middle Income	70.2	53.1	48.3	77.4	13.1	14.1	5.7
Higher Income	74.3	62.2	59.5	76.7	20.8	22.4	3.2

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

Figure 16. Connecting in Community by Income in New Hampshire

|	Connect with Family/ Friends	Connect with Neighbors	Connect Across Race/Ethnicity	Do Favors for Neighbors	Did Something Positive for Community	Helping Others	Discuss Politics with Family and Friends	Discuss Politics with Neighbors
Lower Income	87.7	36.6	38.0	12.8	17.9	9.2	39.6	8.5
Lower Middle Income	85.9	26.5	46.2	7.2	25.5	7.4	53.5	9.4
Middle Income	86.8	31.1	40.1	8.2	20.3	—	42.0	7.6
Higher Income	92.2	31.4	49.9	6.2	26.5	5.9	49.5	8.7

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

Figure 17. Civic Awareness and Engagement by Age in New Hampshire
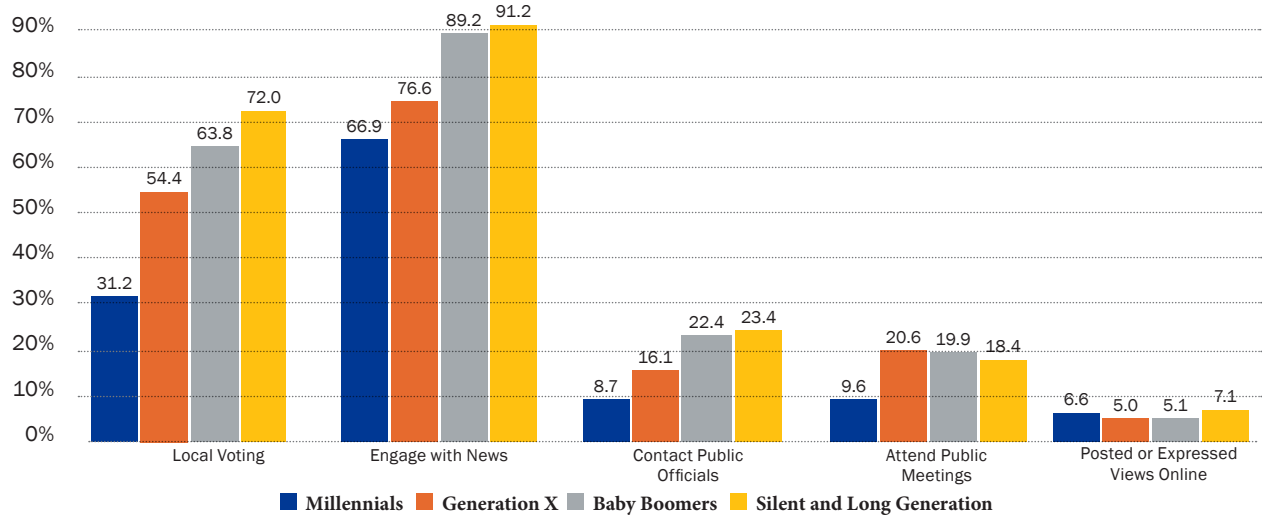
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Volunteering and Civic Life in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2017) and Voting in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2018 and 2016)

Figure 18. Volunteering and Giving by Income in New Hampshire
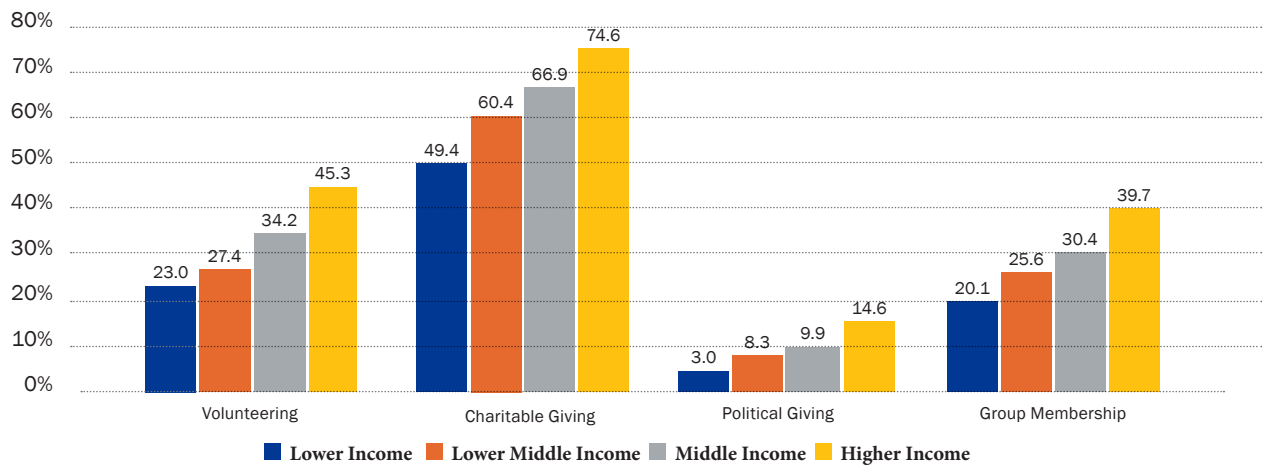
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Volunteering and Civic Life in New Hampshire, Current Population Survey (2017)

Taking Action

The information in this section is intended to support you in conversations at the local level.

▶ If you are finding that trends in your local community differ from the state trends, what do you think these differences mean for your local community? Does it make you feel good about the directions you have been going or motivate you to make changes?

▶ If you are seeing similar trends to the state, do you feel like you want to approach people at the state level to take action? Do you want to talk with other communities about this issue and create partnerships to address civic health?

Conclusion

There is a lot of information in the statewide civic health index from 2020 that may be interesting for you to explore at the local level. How does your local community differ from the state, and where do you see similar trends? What have you learned about civic health at the local level?
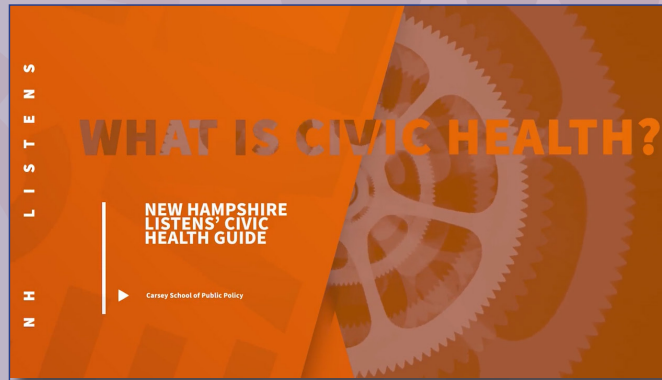
Resources

Click on the images below to access the videos that accompany this guide and for the *2020 New Hampshire Civic Health Index* report (PDF and online versions).

Video About Civic Health

Video About Local Civic Health Guide

2020 New Hampshire Civic Health Index

PDF   *Online*