

Katy Hussey-Sloniker:

Welcome to What is Civic Engagement, Exploring New Paradigms. Today's webinar, we'll examine the history of civic engagement in the United States, present novel findings from the most robust longitudinal survey about civic engagement trends in the United States, and explore local level views of the myriad of ways people are engaging in civic lives outside of formal institutional context. There'll be plenty of time at the conclusion of the presentations to ask our panelists your questions. Please be sure to place advanced questions in the chat. We'll be collecting your questions for the Q&A time block towards the end of the webinar.

Now, here to welcome us and set the stage for the discussion is Dr. Andrea Robles, research and evaluation manager with the AmeriCorps Offensive Research and Evaluation.

Andrea Robles:

Hey, thank you Katy. Well, hello everyone and welcome. I first want to thank all of you for joining us today. As always, we are just thrilled that there's so much interest in this topic. I see the chat of all of you joining from all over the country and in other countries. Fantastic. We believe civic life is essential to a thriving democracy. Our speakers will be presenting very interesting findings and studies on where we find ourselves as a nation in terms of civic life and some reasons for that. As Katy said, we hope that during the Q&A we have a vibrant conversation that include your ideas as well of how we can reignite civic life. This is of particular interest to us as an agency since we are very well aware that as a nation we are still recovering from the impacts of the Covid epidemic.

As an Office of Research and Evaluation, we have several ways we support our mission of increasing civic engagement and volunteering to strengthen communities. Next slide please.

As you will see on your screen, we categorize the work into four main buckets. We identify national service and volunteering trends at different geographic levels and with different populations. We conduct research and build scholarship on civic engagement. We measure national service impacts and provide technical assistance for AmeriCorps grantees conducting evaluations, and we promote evidence-based models that have been evaluated to be effective in meeting program goals. As an office and agency, we work really hard at translating this knowledge and evidence so that information can be utilized to strengthen organizations and communities, improve our program and enhance our members and volunteer service experience.

Our webinar series is just one way that we make our evidence available. Today, our speakers will be addressing these first two buckets that are shaded in blue. But before I turn this over to our distinguished speakers, I want to very briefly describe the development of this work at AmeriCorps. Next slide please.

In 2002, we partnered with the US Census to field a supplement on volunteering in the current population survey, otherwise known as the CPS, which I'm sure many of you are familiar with. Dr. Laura Hanson Schlachter will describe the work in more detail in a few minutes, but just in terms of background, after about a decade of fielding the supplement, we started to wonder whether there were more ways to measure the concept of civic engagement or civic life more broadly. For example, after a decade of fielding the supplement, regardless of the year and context, the formal volunteering rate was always around 26.2, nationally, or something close to that. We started asking ourselves, were we using the correct measures? Were we missing questions that better tap into volunteering in civic engagement, behavior and attitudes? With these questions in mind, we turned to the National Academies of Sciences to conduct a scan of the literature, review our questions of measures, and make recommendations on how we can improve our understanding of civic engagement, social cohesion, and social capital. Next slide please.

There were many wonderful recommendations. You can download a free copy of this report and there should be a link in the chat. But one major recommendation was to compliment the national level survey with other studies that could allow us to tap into more complex relationships among these related topics. More specifically, NAS recommended that we conduct research at the sub national and local levels, and second, use other research designs such as in-depth longitudinal or experimental studies.

To address these recommendations, our office developed a research grant competition for scholars and graduate students at universities so they could conduct more innovative research on these topics. To make sure we incorporated local level research as well, we also created a research grant program called the Community Conversations that focused solely on scholars and communities conducting participatory research or action research and communities. To learn more about these awardees and their studies, again, there should be a link in the chat. We can find it on our website. More importantly, it's that all three speakers that you will hear from today are research grant recipients. Next slide please.

Our first speaker is Dr. Laura Hanson Schlachter, who is currently a research analyst at the Office of Research and Evaluation at AmeriCorps, and is the technical lead of the CPS Volunteering and Civic Engagement supplement. She's also a 2017 awardee.

Our second speaker is Dr. Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg, who is the new house director at the Center for Information of Research on civic learning and engagement, also known as CIRCLE, at Tisch College of Civic Life at Tufts University. She is a 2015 awardee.

Our third speaker is Penn Loh, associate chair, senior lecturer and director of the Master of Public Policy Program and Community Practice at Tufts University, University's Department of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning. He is a 2018 and 2022 grantee.

Again, please, if you have any comments, questions, great ideas, please engage and just put those ideas in the chat. Laura, I am handing this over to you. Thank you everyone.

Laura Hanson Schlachter:

Okay, wonderful. Thank you so much, Andrea, for that wonderful framing. Welcome everyone. We're really glad to have you with us today. Next slide please.

I'd like to begin just with a question for you all. Civic engagement is a term we throw around a lot, but there's no universally accepted definition. I'd like to ask you to do a quick exercise. If you'll humor me, close your eyes and picture engaging in civic life. Who do you see? What are they doing? What's the first thing that pops into your head? I'll invite you if you feel so inclined to just share that in the chat. What's the first thing that comes to mind when you think about civic engagement?

Okay, I see voting, voters, collective action, volunteering, voting, public meeting, everyone participates, nope. Neighbors helping neighbors. Okay, thank you so much everyone. Yeah, and keep them coming. Yeah. As I suspected, voting is one of the top things that come through in this... That I'm seeing coming through in this crowd. I see some volunteering. I also see a wide range of other things that people can do to participate in civic life. Historically, at AmeriCorps, as Andrea said, we have really focused on formal volunteering through organizations. Voting has been of less central focus for our agency, but certainly top of mind for scholars. A recent report by the Institute for Citizen Scholars found that researchers repeatedly turn to voting as the key indicator of civic readiness. But if you take one thing away from this webinar, I hope it is the idea that civic life takes many forms.

Yes, absolutely. It encompasses voting and volunteering and national service, but civic life also involves behaviors like reading the news, buying socially responsible products, and even pursuing careers in public service. Next slide please.

What these behaviors all share in common is that they're all activities individuals engage in to make a difference in their communities. Now, notice that we in the AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation define civic engagement in very behavioral terms. In part, this reflects our agency's focus on getting things done for America, and in part it reflects the fact that a lot of our research around civic engagement trends across the country leverage behavioral indicators which are much more reliable and easier to measure through national surveys than say, for example, we focused on values or ideals. But obviously, those also play a role. Part of what we want to do today is invite you to a dialogue about what civic engagement means in the context of your work and your community.

I'd like to kick off that conversation by sharing with you a bit about how we operationalize our definition of civic engagement through the most robust national survey we have about the multitude of ways that people engage in civic life across the United States and over time. Next slide please.

It's called the current population survey, Civic Engagement and Volunteering supplement, or CEV. Really, reflecting this idea that civic engagement takes many forms. In total, the CEV includes measures of 17 different civic behaviors that I group into six key constructs; organizational engagement, informal helping and conversation, local collective action, engaging with issues, economic engagement, and political engagement. In January, we rolled out top line findings related to organizational engagement and informal helping and conversation through our volunteering and civic life in America research. Today I want to share with you some insights related to these other areas of civic life. But first, just a bit about the history of the CEV and how you can access and explore this data yourself. Next slide please.

Following 9/11, there was a renewed interest in more systematically studying civic engagement in America. As Andrea mentioned, AmeriCorps entered an agreement with the US Census Bureau to conduct a nationally representative survey about volunteerism attached to the current population survey or CPS, which has been our source of federal labor force statistics since the 1940s. As she explained, the first volunteering supplement was fielded in 2002, but over time, this idea of tracking a broader conception of civic health really gained traction. In 2008, AmeriCorps also began to sponsor a CPS supplement encompassing what scholars like Ben Berger have described as the political, social, moral, and civil dimensions of civic engagement that have a lot of important implications for social cohesion and social capital. Taken together, these two CPS supplements included many different indicators of civic engagement, but also some redundancies.

In 2014, the National Academy of Sciences published a report that AmeriCorps had commissioned from experts in the field. As Andrea said, some of their recommendations focused on collecting different types of data, different methodologies. They also recommended merging these supplements, a process that resulted in the launch of the CEV in 2017.

In other words, for the past two decades, in one form or another, AmeriCorps and the US Census Bureau have conducted the most robust national surveys on civic engagement and volunteering friends in the general population. We're really proud to be part of a collaboration that produces this rich data source. You can access the full CEV data set from 2017, '19 and '21, along with complete documentation at data.americorps.gov.

That said, of course, the CEV is not the end all be all, but it does give us a bird's eye view of some key indicators of civic engagement trends. Next slide, please.

I want to share some of the most interesting things I've learned as I've explored the 2021 CEV data. My goal today is to convey, again, civic engagement takes many forms, including and beyond voting or volunteering through organizations. Also, that the CEV is a valuable resource that we as researchers and practitioners have to examine the state of civic engagement in America. In order to understand where we want to go, we need to understand where we are. I'll slice some top line findings in three different ways. First, in terms of prevalence. Second, in terms of change from 2019 to 2021 at the height of the

Covid 19 pandemic. Third, in terms of variation based on where people live and who they are. This is only going to scratch the surface, but I hope it peaks your interest and encourages you to explore the data yourself.

What types of civic engagement were most prevalent in 2021? Next slide, please.

The graph here shows the national rate of each measure we have in the CEV. The rate indicates the estimated share of the general population that engaged in each behavior at least once in the previous year. As you can see here, between September, 2020 and September, 2021, over two thirds of Americans talked to or spent time with friends or family, read, watched or listened to news or information about political, societal, or local issues, discussed political, societal, or local issues with friends or family, and had a conversation or spent time with their neighbors.

Now, these are not necessarily the first things that come to mind when we think about civic engagement, as we saw in the chat, but they all build social cohesion, trust and knowledge about the public sphere, and thus we can see them as building blocks of participation in civil society. Next slide, please.

What's interesting is that these ways of engaging with issues or people close to us are common both in terms of whether people do them at all or not, and also in terms of frequency. It just so happens that these top four measures also... We also ask in the CEV how often people engage in those behaviors. You can see in the graph here that in many cases, a substantial percentage of Americans do these things at least a few times a week. For example, 83% of Americans learned about issues through the news in 2021, but almost half did so almost every day. These are common behaviors both in terms of prevalence, nationally and in terms of frequency. All right, next slide please.

Just going back to our frequency graph, what types of civic engagement were least common in 2021? As you can see here, less than 10% of Americans contacted or visited a public official to express their opinion, donated more than \$25 to a political organization, party or campaign, or attended a public meeting such as a zoning or school board meeting to discuss a local issue. I saw that's something that came up in the chat. These are all what I would consider to be higher effort forms of civic engagement, but also ones that are really crucial to the functioning of our democracy. All right, next slide please.

All right, next, how did civic engagement change during the pandemic? Now, in this context, I consider a substantial change to be within two percentage points, plus or minus. Obviously, you can operationalize that in different ways, but some small fluctuation is expected year to year. I think this threshold captures changes that should really make us sit up and take notice.

The story here, next slide please, is actually that the overarching pattern is one of stability. As you can see here, the change in rates of all CEV measures of informal helping and conversation, engaging with issues, and two of our three measures of political engagement actually stayed within two percentage points between 2019 and 2021. Next slide please.

Now, if you participated in our rollout event in January, you know that we did see a historic decline in the formal volunteering rate. That's the rate of volunteering through organizations. This seven percentage point decrease is the largest drop we've seen on record since we began collecting this data in 2002. It's the largest change we see of any CEV measure in terms of absolute value. We also see substantial decreases in other measures of organizational engagement and local collective action. In contrast, buying or boycotting products or services based on the political values or business practices of a company substantially increased, as well as voting in the last local elections. I suspect this is tied to unprecedented turnout in the 2020 election that trickled down the ballot. Next slide please.

Here's a visual comparing rates of organizational engagement and local collective action in 2019 and '21. As you can see here, the baselines for these more in-person higher effort forms of local collective action

are much lower. I'm guessing it's no surprise to many of you on this call that we saw declines in forms of civic engagement that have traditionally taken place in person. The question here is whether this will be a temporary dip or represents broader shifts in this sector and how we can respond. Next slide please.

But again, to me, the most striking takeaway here is the stability of informal helping and conversation, engaging with issues, political engagement and economic engagement. Even in the midst of a pandemic that upended just about every aspect of social life, Americans continued to help and engage with each other informally about issues and participate in the democratic process, at least at the national level. Next slide please.

Now, the story is a little bit more complicated when we look at variation in state level rates. In some cases, stability at the national level mirrors what we see at the state level. For example, next slide please, the rate of contacting public officials went down only 0.4 percentage points nationally from 2019 to '21, not what I would consider a substantial change, but we saw relative stability within two percentage points in the rate of contacting public officials in 41 states and a substantial increase or decrease in the state level rate in only 10.

In other cases, next slide please, stability in national rates masks substantial variation in the extent of change at the state level. For example, the rate of posting views about issues online went up only 1.8 percentage points nationally, a real change, but not necessarily a substantial one. But at the state level, it did go up substantially in 22 states, down substantially in 12, and then was relatively stable in 17. We see a lot more variation at the state level that isn't necessarily captured in those national statistics.

All right, next slide please. That's just a little teaser about geography. What do we see in terms of demographic patterns? Now, the relationship between education and civic engagement has been well documented in terms of formal volunteering and voting. As Wilson and Music write in their 2008 book *Volunteers, a Social Profile*, "Education is the most consistent and often the strongest predictor of volunteering," but there's been much less research on the relationship between education and other forms of civic engagement. Next slide please.

But one of the most consistent patterns I see across every CEV measure in terms of demographics is a nearly linear relationship between civic engagement rates and educational attainment. For example, this graph shows national rates of talking with neighbors, learning about issues and values based buying or boycotting by education. As you can see, there's a pretty stark difference between those at the top levels of educational attainment and those at the bottom.

Now, the typical approach among researchers is simply to control for education and statistical models and not think much more about it, but I think this actually raises a lot of important questions about why we see these trends. Many scholars have conceptualized education as a resource that enables individuals to more easily afford the costs of giving time to participate in society. They've also theorized that education builds self-confidence and more expansive and heterogeneous social networks, which increases the chances that people will be asked to participate. The question is, do these mechanisms extend to other forms of civic engagement? Are there opportunities for us to ask and to reach out to people who historically have not been quite as invited at such high rates to participate in these other forms of civic life? I think there's really a lot more to dig into here in terms of mechanisms and implications for inequality. All right, next slide please.

Now, let's just take little look at gender. In terms of prevalence, we see comparable rates of women and men engaging in civic life. Along most measures in the CEV, there is a slight gender gap in terms of formal volunteering, charitable giving, talking with friends and family weekly and volunteering or giving through an employer with women typically having slightly higher rates than men. Next slide.

We see a similar pattern in terms of changes in civic engagement rates between men and women during the pandemic. They're largely similar. The one exception to this is rates of volunteering through organizations which decline much more substantially for women than men. While this makes sense in the broader context of evidence about the burden Covid placed on women, for me, it raises also interesting questions about why we see disproportionate impacts by gender for formal volunteering, but not for these other types of civic engagement behaviors. All right, next slide please.

Now, the third demographic pattern that really struck me is related to age. Overall, measures in the CEV either increased more or less linearly with age, or resembled more of a bell curve with rates gradually increasing with each age group and then declining among those 80 years or older. Next slide please.

For example, you can see here that rates of charitable giving and talking with neighbors increases pretty steadily with age and then drops off slightly between ages 80 and 85. Contacting public officials here in red looks more like a bell curve with less than 8% of those under 24 and over 80 engaging in this type of civic behavior. Next slide, please.

We see a similar pattern with other measures, for example, with engaging with issues. Next slide please.

You can see here learning about issues, discussing them with friends and family, discussing them with neighbors, they all follow the same pattern as most measures in the CEV. Rates more or less steadily increase with each generational cohort, and then there's a slight drop off among members of the silent generation or older. But notice we see the opposite pattern with the rate of posting views about social issues on the internet or social media. About a quarter of members of Gen Z and Millennials engaged in this type of civic behavior at least once in the past year compared to only 17% of Baby Boomers and 11% of the silent generation or older. I know that Kei is going to dig into civic engagement trends by generation a lot more, but again, I think this raises some really important questions related to measurement and also thinking about policies that can support or erode civic infrastructure for the next generation. I'll just end with a couple thoughts about implications of these findings. Next slide, please.

As I said at the outset, if you take one thing away from this presentation, I hope it's the idea that civic engagement takes many forms. Although volunteering, voting might be some of the first things that come to mind, there are a variety of ways that people make a difference in their communities. The CEV is of course not exhaustive. There are many measures of civic engagement it leaves out, as Kei and Penn will discuss, but it is a really rich data source that allows us to examine some of these key indicators over time. We'll be publishing a comprehensive report about all of these measures in the coming months. I encourage you to check it out and let us know what you think.

Thinking about these trends is really important for our agency. Part of AmeriCorps mission is to foster civic engagement through volunteering and service. How can we leverage our platform and resources to reignite civic life? As people who are interested in national service and community wellbeing, how can these findings inform our efforts to engage different groups in making a difference in their communities? How can we meet people where they are?

Taking a closer look at America's civic health over time and the multiplicity of ways people contribute to society is also important to us as a country. In the original Latin, the construction means together build. How can we collectively and constructively rise to the challenges of this moment? With that, I'll hand it over to Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg. Thank you very much.

Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg:

Thank you, Laura. It was wonderful presentation. Hi, good afternoon everyone. I'm Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg. I'm so glad to be here as someone who cares deeply about young people, civic engagement,

and democratic engagement, as well as a member of AmeriCorps family as a 2015 grantee. Thank you for having me. Let's go to next slide.

I'm here to talk about from a place that Laura left us with, which was the engagement that young people demonstrate with regards to discussion of issues with family, friends, neighbors, online. This is an interesting measure in the... For young people, this is the measure that they excel at, in many ways. They're writing in other metrics too, as I'll indicate later, but this is one measure where they surpass other generations in terms of the rates on their own. When we ask young people more questions about why, how, and what they do with this online discussion, we get a much bigger and richer understanding of how they're engaging in civic life and how they view their place in democracy. I'm looking forward to sharing some of that. Let's go to the next slide.

The first piece of data I want to share with you is teenager data that we collected for age 14 and 17 year old Americans back in 2020. We asked about the civic and political engagement among this age cohort because we were starting to see that instead of just looking at 18 to 29 as youth, we were starting to see 12, 13 and 14 year old and a little bit older youth getting really involved in civic and political life and expressing their voice, particularly online, because that's where they could actually access as opposed to having to drive somewhere, for example, to be part of a protest, or going to the State House if they lived in somewhere that's far away from a location where they could do those things.

We saw a large number, about 45% of young people sharing news using a variety of medias. Some of these things, the young people expressing themselves with regards to political views are probably not the kind of ways people have typically expressed themselves. They're making memes, they're making gifs, they are sharing their experiences with their own civic engagement instead of telling them to do something. But therefore, example, if there are 18 year old, they're filling out their voter registration form on a TikTok and showing everybody that's how that's do it so that their peers are learning along with them how they can be a first time voters and filling out these government forms correctly. There are many states where student ID laws are really confusing to many young people. Many young people stepped up to make videos or online pictures or infographic in many cases to show how it's done. That's how they're starting to use online medium as not just a way to discuss issues, but educate each other, encourage each other, and share diverse types of experience they have. Let's go to the next slide here too.

There's also staying informed as part of civic engagement. It's a really important part of civic readiness as all of us probably agree with that. But when we take a look at how young people, particularly even within young people, Gen Zs and Millennials access information from variety of sources, you see some differences between older adults and youth. Here we are showing both kind of people that can translate, filter and mediate information, and share political affairs and public affair information with young people. That's family, teachers, classmates in school, as well as some forms of media that could be print media, podcast and mail. You see by and large young people relying on the people that are close and that they know well, and social media, to get information about public affairs.

On the other hand, things like print media and podcast are way down on the list. I think radio and TV are sometimes sources, but they didn't blip as a way that they primarily get information for us. Again, we see some differences in the kinds of media they use, even within social media. Older young people tend to use Facebook a lot more than younger Gen Zs. Gen Zs tend to use more of the visual media, like TikTok and YouTube and Instagram and so on. That's the trend there. Let's go to the next slide here.

I think if you could share the information about all the studies that are listing all this data, that'd be great. I think I share that in advance. One of the things that's important to know about young people and news and information consumption is that the young people can be the important mediator between the complex and sometimes confusing information and civic and political action. Research

consistently show that the young people need that space to be able to process information with somebody, try to understand it and decide what they think and do about it.

That mediation role is taken up by a lot of young leaders who are taking that role to share that information and experiences through the media that is accessible and relevant for young people. In addition to that, we see more young people of color using these visual medias to be able to share the political views with others. What it may be doing is really filling out this important gap in abyss in some of the legacy media in the voice views and experiences and assets of young people of color that are not represented in the media, and those young people stepping up again to represent themselves so that other people like themselves see each other in the media. They feel that their stories, diverse stories that come from communities of color and the other communities that are historically marginalized can be represented in an accurate way. It's playing that equalizing role as well, as well as mobilization.

Moving away for a minute from just online engagement and how widely they use this particular word, online engagement, to do sharing information, mobilizing action, learn about issues and convince others, I'm going to now switch gears to talk about how else young people are engaging in today's civic political life. If you can move two slides. Thank you.

I'm showing how young people's involvement in social movements has been on the rise. It really peaked. This is all from our semi-annual surveys in 2020, but it has been much higher than we had seen in previous several decades. The rate of young people who are age 18 to 24 who said they had participated in demonstration or marches in support of social issues have risen from a baseline rate in 2016 survey to 16%, peaking at 27%, and then back down to 14. It ranges a bit. As you'll see, this may have a lot to do with how many opportunities are available for young people to participate in these protests, but large percent. Well more than half of the young people today continue to say they're part of a movement. They consider themselves as part of their identity. They support in something about the movement that they support, whether it's a gun violence prevention or it could be climate action or racism in their community and police violence, but they see themselves as part of these social change that are happening.

I often get questions about, well, when young people engaged in so-called activism, do they stop voting? Do they stop keeping up with public affairs? Do they stop doing anything else? That turns out to be not true at all. Movement involvement is connected to virtually all forms of civic engagement. I'm highlighting some of the voting and registration related metrics here. We see that the young people who say they are part of the social movement is 21 points more likely to say that they're voted, and 22 percentage points more likely to try to convince friends and family to vote. They're really getting at these really active and engaged young people who are now taking on sizable role in our civic life to do a lot of things to move the community, and especially informing and encouraging peers. Let's go to next slide here.

We have some interesting data from during the pandemic that I want to share with you. It's particularly related to how CEV asked questions about helping neighbors, family and friends. What may be happening with the young people that's interesting is that the young people were in fact doing a lot of things to help, but oftentimes they were locating strangers on the internet that they didn't know about, but they heard there was a need, whether it was a food aid, or the money they could donate through GoFundMe, or some other little informal ways, or deliver food or make masks and send it to the distribution center. These are the things that young people are doing relatively in large numbers during the Covid 19 pandemic, a [inaudible 00:34:06] of it. Even more young people were saying they would do those things if they had opportunities.

There's an interesting potential gap in thinking about how young people find and locate community needs without being totally grounded within their local community, knowing neighbors per se, but still

being able to mobilize themselves to support the people they don't even know but know that they need something. That was really evident during the pandemic when we're collecting data.

Now, a little bit of challenging news in the next slide coming directly from the most recent AmeriCorps data is a decline in volunteering rate and still relatively low rate of informal helping in the 18 to 24 year old age bracket. As you all know, the data collection starts for 16 and 17 year old and then all the way to an older age group. What you see is a notable dip in the formal volunteering rate with 18 to 24 year old. There's a lot of different reasons for that. Namely, and probably most important one is a lack of institution supported formal opportunities to become engaged in organizations. If you think about the age group before this, they're often living with family members in the family origin neighborhood and going to school. They're sometimes offered opportunities for service learning for credit or coursework. Sometimes they have family members who might strongly encourage their teenage kids to go do service in their community with them, and often can drive them or have them a way to get to a place where they want to do service work.

On the other hand, 18 to 24 year old represents really a transitional time period in a lot of young people's life where they're moving very often, if not every year. They're sometimes living in a new community, oftentimes detached from their family of origin for the first time. These opportunities are now missing in their lives. That explains part of their dip in volunteering rate.

The other side of potential motivation side that we're starting to see is that the young people are really looking critically at the society and how to find themselves in civic life. Sometimes they may be choosing to become engaged in political activities instead of engaging with organizations and thinking of doing service as not so much a social change activities supporting community. More and more young people are really looking to become mobilized for social action. That's what we are seeing in the uprising, or uptick trends in the protest and movement involvement. But potential downside of that for the young adults is that they're having to choose because of the time commitment. But I think the lack of institution supported formal opportunities is really the largest factor in driving this step. But what's clear is that this age group in particular needs a lot more support if we were to engage them fully in service, particularly through formal organizations.

Okay, continuing with that data, let's look at the next slide, which is coming from our most recent survey in 2022 post-election. We're seeing similar trends in the political action too, not just in service. We see pretty high rate of young people joining petition and boycott, and then following Canada on social media. Those are kind of a low time commitment activities. Much less frequently, young people are able to, for example, warranty for a political campaign, attend protest or run for office, but much bigger bars, especially for run for office, which had 2% of young people saying they've done this, is the people that are interested in doing so, if they had opportunities or planning to do so. With Run for Office there are 13% of young people who said they would run for office if they had opportunities.

We had a separate study about running for office in particular because of this increase in interest that we were seeing among young people and found that especially for young people who come from mid to low income background and communities of color, lack of network with wealthy people was one of the biggest barriers for running for office. Not the lack of capacity, not a lack of experience or intent for the governance, but it was really structural barriers, economic in nature.

But there's a lot of hope in seeing young people wanting to do more, contribute more to the community through their action and power. If we can go to the next slide.

Here's one of the things that I want to communicate in addition to showing there are some challenges, is that the vast majority of this generation of young people believe that their generation is the generation that can change things for the better for the country with systemic change through collective action. Their generation, Gen Z in particular is a generation, unlike other generations we've watched like

Millennials and Gen Xers are much more willing to engage directly with political institution, whether it's voting, running for office, registering for voters, and shifting policies through organizing and protesting, whereas other generation have maybe shifted more towards starting a nonprofit organizations, or mentoring young people, or coaching sports leagues in their communities to support their community and seeing politics that's totally ineffective and not worth engaging. That's at least what surveys used to show. This generation really doesn't say that. This is generation that says that they have some questions about how things are going in our democracy, but they're willing to stick around and try to fix it with us.

That is the next slide that I wanted to share with you, which is that the young people are not confident about how democracy is going right now. Only a quarter of young people agree with that statement. But when you ask them, is democracy capable of creating those changes, half of young people agree, and only 13% of young people disagree with this estimator. To me, that's just a lot about how young people are critical, cynical about how things are going today in our America democracy, but why they're sticking around to keep pushing the public officials, keep voting, keep organizing, and keep sharing information, because they have this hope that they can do this. They can change for the better.

If you can go to next slide, I want to use the last few minutes to share about the building blocks for civic readiness. At CIRCLE, we care a lot about how young people grow up to be citizens mostly in the community. We see educational community institutions, as well as family neighborhood as really important system to build that readiness by doing all sorts of help.

The first one I highlight is in the next slide, which is information literacy. Media literacy education can be done in school or community, but especially in school. It's really one place where young people at scale can learn about sourcing, evaluating, synthesizing, and creating media and news. Young people are showing really desperate access, depending on where they live. Rural young people, black young people, young people whose parents do not have college experience are particularly at risk, but even overall, all young people, about half of them, report having sufficient media literacy education while they're in school. It's not nearly enough, but especially problematic in some communities.

Next slide I show is what we call civic desert, which is really a physical condition where young people say that they don't really have access to multiple institutions. Whether it's a preschool for their own kids or civic institution, arts and humanity organizations, or religious institution, they don't see themselves being able to access those institution where civic life can happen in diverse way. What we found is that when young people say that they don't have access to those places, or just one or none of these places, they also show both low civic engagement and political engagement, but even more so, they lack belief in the power of the collective.

When young people band together and try to solve problems, these people that are living in low access to institution places are far less likely to believe that we can change public policies together. That, again, leaves a lot of thought for me about how do we make sure that the environments and the communities can offer a variety of opportunities where young people have voice and practice civic life well before they turn 18.

The next slide shows the lack of knowledge that are happening in many, many communities within the K-12 community. Foundational civic knowledge empowers young people to know where to go, who to go to, how to communicate, and what they can do in a particular situation when the community sees a problem that they need to solve. That's really important base knowledge that you need to have. By the time kids reach eighth grade, we see a significant disparities in the rate of proficiency.

This isn't just a test app called NAEP that is about memorizing facts, but it also has questions about leveraging foundational knowledge to solve a particular applied problems. When you look at it this way, we see children who are coming from low income household with less educated parents reaching proficiency level at less than 10%, while at the upper strata of the society, higher income and more

educated parents, almost 40% reach that proficiency. Already, by eighth grade, we're seeing huge disparities in where kids are starting out and continue to see disparities moving into the older age.

I want to go to the last slide here to show you some of the trends that are happening in the K-12 education. There are some really great opportunities, like a big increase in federal funding to support civic education and social studies education including American history, lots of great activities in extracurricular student associations, as well as after school program. I think many of you represent those organizations where great innovations are happening where young people are doing hands-on civics in their community. Some of the fields stakeholders are starting to really come together to talk about how comprehensively and holistically we need to think about that education.

At the same time, there's lots of threats and challenges in that the public really lacks understanding still about why it's so important to start building civic muscles and let kids use it from early on, especially from schooling. Many, many state legislative actions are taken or proposed to limit the amount of experiential learning, like service learning that can be happening within the community. Many limits on the kinds of books the kids can read in the library, the kinds of history content the students and teachers can talk about in an open and pluralistic way within their classroom. That's giving teachers a lot of fear and having chilling effect on what they think they can do in their own classroom, whether it's a social studies teachers or not.

I'll leave you here with this opportunity and challenge picture. Next slide, it will just have my contact information if you have any further question. With that, I'm going to pass on to my wonderful colleague, Penn Loh. Thanks.

Penn Loh:

All right, thank you, Kei. I've learned so much about what's going on at the broader national scale from you and from Laura. My role here today is to help us zoom in. I have been teaching at Tufts in this department of urban and environmental policy and planning for about 13 years, but for the 13 years before that, I was with a community-based environmental justice organization, including having a youth program there doing some of the things that Kei was mentioning. But my focus has been on community university partnerships and action research to advance more sustainable just and democratic communities. I have the privilege of being an AmeriCorps first community action research grantee group in 2018 and continuing on with the 2022 cohort. If I can go to the next slide. The one after that.

Great. I'm going to be talking a bit about some of these changes that involve the challenges and opportunities for civic engagement in a very specific place during the pandemic. The AmeriCorps grant from 2018 supported the work that I did with eight community-based organizations in the Boston area where we focused on learning about and sharing reflections on how the pandemic affected civic engagement. You can see the report that came out of that, the front page here, grounded and interconnected in the pandemic. All of these groups that we worked with who were part of the research, doing the research, not just being studied, they all served working class communities in greater Boston area that had high concentrations of immigrants and people of color. While these communities may have high needs, they have also been hotbeds of diverse forms of civic engagement, the multiple forms that Laura was talking about.

For our work, we see civic engagement as being inclusive of a number of categories that have already been mentioned, but we break it down into advocacy and organizing, community building and mutual aid, which we saw take off in a very particular way during the pandemic. For today, I'm going to be sharing some of the findings that we had from this study. I'll finish with some of the questions that we're continuing to pursue about how some of these opportunities and innovations that happened during the

pandemic might be sustained into the future. All right, I'm just going to go right into our first case. If I can get the next slide.

Great. I noticed some of you are from New England or Massachusetts, but if you aren't, Chelsea is a small city in Massachusetts that has about 40,000 people. It is mostly immigrants, majority Latinx. As you can imagine, lots of frontline low wage workers. Housing is at a crisis level actually in the whole region, but overcrowding, also overburdened by pollution. All of these set up conditions that made it so that Chelsea was one of the hardest... Actually, they were just off the scales at the beginning of the Covid pandemic, highest rates in Massachusetts. But if you check back a year plus later, they had achieved some of the highest rates of vaccination amongst working class American communities in the US. We will learn a little bit about how that happened, if I can get to the next slide.

Several of the community-based organizations really catalyzed civic action and collaboration far beyond what they had done before. The week before the Covid shutdown, which was almost three years to the day from today, a group called GreenRoots, which was an environmental... They are an environmental justice organization, were the ones that convened a call with 15 stakeholders to begin coordinating emergency response across community, service providers and government partners and hospitals. That call continued every single day, including weekends for the next over two months, and became the Chelsea Pandemic Response team that involved 75 people and 10 working groups. This was the way that collaboration across all the sectors happened in order for Chelsea to really respond to how hard they were hit and to start getting proactive about how they would respond.

GreenRoots and another group called La Colaborativa were groups that were really connected on the ground with people. They sent health ambassadors out into the streets to meet people where they're at, and to talk with folks in their own languages. Of course, Spanish being one of the major other languages besides English, but they were also out there with four other major languages spoken in the city. They were able to counter false information, particularly around vaccines when those first came out through person to person communication, but they also started to employ social media. They made their own TikTok videos to counter some of what was being perpetrated through other social media channels. All of that really led to a response that is now being held up as a model for how a community and a city can respond. All right, that's the first case. I'm going to go to the next one if I can get the next slide.

All right. We found with all of our groups, all of the groups that I worked with were primarily groups that did community organizing and advocacy and community building. During the pandemic, or actually basically overnight, they all pivoted to do direct aid, which was something that some of them did a little bit of, but that was not their primary purpose. Of course, during the pandemic, reaching out to people, trying to figure out what they needed and trying to connect them with resources became one of the primary ways that these community-based organizations were doing their work.

I just wanted to share two stories about some of the innovations that happened during the pandemic. A group called New England United for Justice that operates out of the Dorchester neighborhood in the city of Boston, they developed something that they called their wellness to organizing model. Now, they're an organization that in non-pandemic times basically does door-to-door campaigns, and they do a lot of outreach in neighborhoods. Pandemic prevented them from doing that. What they did instead was start to conduct wellness checks through phone calls. In that first year, they made calls with 85,000 people, holding more than 5,000 conversations. One of their leaders said, it's not just about getting the service. If they sign up for rental assistance, they hear about housing justice. If they're filing for unemployment, they hear about worker's rights and the struggles. This is a vehicle to continue our organizing. For them, the wellness checks and connecting the people to services really fit with their model of trying to build even more civic engagement by getting people involved in the various organizing and advocacy campaigns that they had ordinarily run.

If I can go on to the next slide. Yeah. The other case I'm going to talk about is in East Boston, which is actually right next to the city of Chelsea. Here, I'll start with the story of a group called Neighbors United for a Better East Boston. This was a group that also did a lot of civic engagement, get out the vote campaigns and a lot of grassroots outreach. When the pandemic started, they set up a system of block leaders so that people could check on their neighbors. How they brought people together was through the WhatsApp chat application. With over 300 people active, they found that they could actually use this network for mutual aid. Neighbors United for a Better East Boston, working with several other organizations, formed Mutual Aid Eastie. This became a major clearing house, Mutual Aid Eastie, for connecting people with abundance to share with people in need.

One of the major things that they did was food delivery. During the height of the pandemic, they were delivering more than 5,000 meals per week. What's really interesting here is they were really concerned about the mutual in mutual aid. They tried to ensure reciprocity to overcome what they call a culture of service-ism, or some other people might call it a culture of one way charity. All the participants who were part of this network were required to do an orientation to learn about ways that they could contribute and receive. They signed up with WhatsApp because that's where... That chat was where people matched offers and needs.

As one of the leaders in this effort said, "We had to redefine it as reciprocity and being in relationship with each other. It's saying, I have enough. Our folks say, I don't have anything to give, yet, our people were saying, I made tamales and I can sell them or give them."

All right. Let me advance one more slide. Great. Some of my research partners and I were also involved in another related project for a climate justice funder in our area. I just wanted to show this slide because of the wonderful graphic that was produced from a webinar we did there, but we were looking at how Mutual Aid, during the pandemic, was building a foundation for climate resilience. I should mention, we conceive that as a broad social resilience that could respond to all kinds of impacts, not just for climate, but for pandemics and other things that may yet to become. Yeah. I just wanted to show this and say that a lot of the work that we're doing shows how important civic engagement and civic infrastructure really is, to really to life and death when we have crises like the pandemic.

All right, now I'm going to go to my last slide, which is a few of the takeaways and some of the questions that we're now pursuing. One of the takeaways for us is that Mutual Aid is not new. There are new forms of trying to promote it and to do it that came up during the pandemic, but certainly Mutual Aid, if you define it as people taking responsibility to care for one another and provide for material needs, then that's basically something that's been happening as long as human beings have been around.

What we were seeing was not entirely novel, but building on really ancient practices. Second, the grassroots community based organizations, the kinds that we were working with in our project, showed that they are a critical part of the civic infrastructure. Really during the pandemic, they started to be recognized by both government agencies, by other stakeholders, as being that critical bridge that was able to connect the resources that were being made available to the most vulnerable in our communities. That was a big revelation because a lot of times these are smaller community organizations, a lot of times they have to really fight for recognition for the work that they actually do. During the pandemic, folks were going to them saying, "Hey, how do we get to the folks and provide needed aid to people who are the most vulnerable?"

The stories I told really were about how they were finding new ways to exercise civic engagement, and Mutual Aid being among the newer ways that they became involved in, and that there were some real ways that the relationships that they have with government, with other nonprofit service providers and private sector partners were really rewiring themselves to become more effective.

That is now the promise and potential that we are starting to explore in the next phase of our project. In this next phase, we are going to go deeper into learning about the experiences of the Mutual Aid networks and how those networks can sustain themselves and be strengthened going into the future as we are coming into a different phase of the pandemic.

One of the biggest questions we have is how can government and public resources support this type of reciprocal Mutual Aid that a lot of our community-based organizations have done? Another question, of course that I've already mentioned, is that these groups are trying to figure out how do we sustain this stuff? We did all this stuff on an emergency basis. How can we build this into the day-to-day and regular activities that we do?

All right, I'm going to stop there. Now it's my job to turn it over to our next speaker, to Adrienne Andrews, who's the Deputy Chief of Staff of AmeriCorps. Thanks.

Adrienne Andrews:

Thanks Penn. I have so many notes right now. I am sure many of you maybe have as many, maybe more than I do. I just am incredibly grateful for this body of work. I know many of you know a lot of these things intuitively and also are engaged in some of this research. I told our research and evaluation team that sometimes I feel like we're sitting on a mountain of treasure. How do we share these stories and these pieces and these tools with our network? I'm so grateful that we have this space. I'm also wishing we were together in person because I think the room would be buzzing with ideas. I hope we can continue to generate those ideas in this meeting time and beyond.

I'll introduce myself. Adrienne Andrews, Deputy Chief of Staff, with a focus on strategic engagement. I am new to the agency, but not new to the national service world. I recognize several of the names in the chat and admire a lot of you for the continued work you're doing in communities around our country.

I actually wanted to anchor us a little bit in our personal stories, and thinking about our journeys into the service space. All of you are somehow engaged in service and civic engagement and what that looks like. I appreciated, Laura, your activity of viewing what that fabric of our community looks like.

For me, growing up, I grew up in Youngstown, Ohio, a rust belt city that got left behind in the industrial revolution there. We were still trying to figure out what you do with a working class town that doesn't have work to sustain families. I grew up in that moment where we were losing jobs and people. I think the unemployment rate was 13% when I was in high school. Really challenged in watching the resources and the institutions that we had known shift and be reshaped because of our lack of resources.

I was watching that as I was growing up and keenly aware, for some reason, of all the social structures that were being shifted in front of me and trying to figure out where I belonged in all of that. I went to a high school where 80% of our folks in my high school were under the poverty line. College was not expected. I was lucky to go to college. I had a privilege that some of my peers didn't have and worked hard, but also felt very lucky to have access to education. I remember thinking as a kid and my best friend growing up reminded me that we defined success as getting out, as leaving town, as finding better horizons in other places.

That was the framework I used when going to college and thinking about, "Wow, I'm going to go move on, get my degree and do all these things." As soon as I was able to have access to that education, I recognized that I needed to share it. I had this resource education, this gift that so many of us know, how can I share it with the broader world?

That was my look at what I saw of service. I don't know that I would've named it civic engagement at that point in the volunteering I did in my community. It was just you showed up for each other. I keep wrestling with these conversations we have around service and civic engagement and figuring out where

the conversations are happening and how we make sure that we are a part of them as an agency and as a network with all of you.

I spent many years working in a nonprofit focused on education, and again, landed the agency. I find that my role now is to translate some of these things that are happening up here in DC land, in research land, to the actionable pieces that actually will move communities forward, the solutions to move communities forward.

For folks who don't know, AmeriCorps is the federal agency on volunteering and service. Our mission statement is simple, yet very deep and complex. Our mission is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. 30 years ago, they were very ambitious when they gave us this call and this task. We do this through several streams of funding, grant making, obviously, through these research grants. We have Native Nations grants, Vista grants, and then we also have volunteer Generation Fund grants and days of service, 9/11 and MLK day, ways to put federal money quickly into local communities so that you all can build programs and engage folks and use those resources to engage your community because we know, it takes resources.

A couple of things I want to know in terms of what I heard today and what I've experienced in my work and in my lifetime of service so far, I have many years to go, is this generational shift that's happening. When I'm thinking about the fabric of our communities and this Patrick that makes up of our communities, I heard some folks talk about what institutions look like locally and how some of our young people are disengaged from those institutions because of distrust, mistrust, or different ways of communicating. I think there is something noteworthy there that we have to collectively think about how are we reshaping institutions that were built for another period of time, for another generation of people? And then who are we preparing to be the leaders of those institutions?

I'll add this here because I think it's something that Penn made me realize right now is that there's an interesting moment here with the pandemic being hyper-local. Folks were so ingrained in their community because they were kind of stuck there. Something occurred to me when Penn was talking about how we build on that moment of helping people feel anchored in their community and not think that the definition of success is getting out of that community, that the definition of that success is recreating those institutions and building them for the next generation. That would be an excellent question for the group, for the Q&A, to just really think about what that looks like for you all and for us as an agency.

In terms of AmeriCorps, we are also thinking about ways we can modernize service and reduce barriers to service. I'll be fully transparent. When I chose to serve in AmeriCorps many years ago, I thought I was making bank at \$10,000 a year. I can put my loans on hold. That not sufficient anymore. We need to do better. We need to make... The way I like to say it is give people the permission to choose service. We need to think about modernizing the way we do that, and we are making those requests. This administration has been very supportive in helping us figure out how to do that.

Let's see. One more thing. The other thing I'll just say too, for folks new to the AmeriCorps network, this week we are also celebrating AmeriCorps week. Check out all the social channels because there are so many... We're doing our best to capture the individual snapshots of impact, that impact that happens when people are engaged in their local community for local change and themselves learning how they can create a lifetime of service.

Another notable grant, I mentioned the Volunteer Generation fund, there are several new grants we're putting out there. A colleague sent me one of these from Serve Utah. It's around community engagement pathways modeled after Stanford's pathways of public service and civic engagement. Those kinds of snapshot grants and those opportunities to look at this on a micro level and see how we can make sure that we are giving resources to local folks who have local solutions to local challenges.

I'll leave it there. I have a lot more to share with you all, but I know you all have things to share, ideas to share, and excited to engage with you in conversation. Again, thank you all for being here, for being a part of this network and for our research evaluation team for bringing all these people to the table. I'll turn it over to you, Melissa.

Melissa Gouge:

All right, thank you so very much Adrienne. I have the honor and responsibility today of moderating the Q&A. My name's Melissa Gouge. I am an analyst in the Office of Research and Evaluation. I am very fortunate to work with and have worked with these grantees for a while. I'll get right into the Q&A. I have been collecting your questions from the chat, those that have not been answered. I'll do a round robin. Again, if I don't get to your question, many, many apologies, but let's hit the ground running. This first question, I am going to direct to Penn Loh, if you could hop back on please.

Something that resonated with me as you were discussing this work and mutual aid and the act of reciprocity I think is really important. It resonated because we hear our beloved CEO, Michael Smith, in nearly every presentation or every time we have an opportunity to interact with him that AmeriCorps should be an organization, an agency, where everybody should be able to serve and everybody should be able to be served. That part of reciprocity is really in the ether in our organization these days. But I want to ask you a question. One of our questions to you is the work that you were discussing, Penn, is in some ways feels like it's emerging from survival mode and moving into community, if you will, on your climate resilience slide in particular. What has that looked like in the context of the case studies that you have shared? How are folks adapting to a post-crisis moment, if you will?

Penn Loh:

Yeah, no, thanks for that Melissa. Lots to say on this. I would say first that I wouldn't necessarily draw such a sharp contrast between survival and community. I think that it really goes together. The pandemic was a real good example where people step up when there is need. As Adrienne said, people are just there for each other. I do think that the pandemic created more opportunity for that, even if we didn't like that that was happening and hope that it doesn't. I would say that's the first response on that. The second, and this was very clear with our group of eight partners, was that they particularly were feeling burned out. You can only sustain some of this type of action for so long. If you're not resourced to do it... They were just talking about being on 24/7. They could never step away from the roles that they were put in. The need was so great. What they want to see as we move into a post-pandemic, but not returned to normal, is that they want to see some of our systems, whether that's through the social service providers, through our public resources, really retool themselves so that we can do a better job should other crises like this come in the future. More civic engagement required to do that as well.

Melissa Gouge:

Yeah, thank you. Thank you very much. Next question I will direct to Laura, Laura Schlachter, if you could hop back on. We have a couple questions for you here. Did you see... This comes from Leslie L in the chat. Were there any correlations between CEV changes in states and state Covid policies? Have you done this analysis?

Laura Hanson Schlachter:

I love that question because you are anticipating one of our next steps in our analytic plan. I actually was in a conversation with Andrea just this morning about this topic. When I look at the variation in state level rates, that's the first thing that comes to mind. Tackling that research question raises some thorny

issues around how do you actually... What's the right indicator of Covid impact? That's where we are now is looking at some possibilities, but that is analysis that's very much at the forefront of our minds. We will be sharing that out as we conduct it and learn more.

Melissa Gouge:

Great. Thank you Laura. The next question I'll direct to Kei, if you could answer this question please. We have perhaps a couple for you here. When you were discussing how different generations of young people hear about information, did that the mail slide include email as well? Is this another avenue that you are considering?

Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg:

Great question. We actually meant physical mail in this case. There's an interesting dichotomy in how young people really appreciate mail. They love it on one hand, but what I often hear is that they need to be told if it's an official mail. My city in Massachusetts need to census people every time we need to update our voter registration form. I had a younger coworker in the same state who missed a mailing because [inaudible 01:16:07]. What I'm hearing is that you may need to also text those young people as a city, or email them to have a dual or triple way of communicating with them and not rely on one method and then assume that they would get it. Our question did not include email.

Melissa Gouge:

Okay, while we have you, would you mind placing some of the findings you shared about Gen Z in historical perspective? Have we seen similar trends, such as disengagement from traditional institutions, distrust of government, and during other periods, thinking maybe around the 1960s as a comparison?

Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg:

The closest parallel that we can track is how the voting rate increases as people age. It's always linear and upward trend as people age. That's expected. What we are seeing in this generation of Gen Z is couple things. A, their voting rate is very similar to that of the Boomers generation, when they were the youngest cohort. They had also shifted constitutional amendment though, so they're very much on the high of being able to vote on the 18 year old. Another thing though that may be notable with this generation is that they don't wait to be older twenties to start voting. There's relatively small difference between 18 and 19 year olds voting rate and then slightly older, 25 to 29 year olds, let's say. That gap has been shrinking, as is midterm voting rate. They're, I think, higher on the trend, though this cohort just started voting as a generation in midterms.

Melissa Gouge:

Okay. Thinking about... You were sharing information about formal volunteering as well, was that data... Did that include virtual or online volunteering, or is that just in person volunteering?

Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg:

We didn't actually survey young people about volunteering. The CEV data is what I'm citing in the slide, so I'm going to ask Laura to speak to that.

Laura Hanson Schlachter:

Yeah, I can speak to that. Thank you. Yeah, our question about volunteering just asks if in the past 12 months, have you volunteered with or through an organization? That might very well include virtual volunteering. We don't have a way in the CEV responses to assess what people are thinking when they answer that question, but my assumption and I think the general assumption is that that definitely includes volunteering virtually.

Melissa Gouge:

Thank you Laura. I'll also offer... Carissa A. asked a couple of questions around virtual volunteering. I will offer a little sneak peek that we have a new FY '22 grantee at University of Maine, Dr. Jennifer Crittendon, who is doing a study on virtual volunteering in our AmeriCorps seniors program. There will be information coming out around that in a couple of years. Please stay tuned. We'll know more about virtual volunteering, in particular, when that comes out as well. Laura, don't go anywhere.

We've got another question from Jessica F. in the chat. Finding it really interesting that the data does show that Generation Z as being ranked below in civic engagement, but Points of Lights research shows Generation Zs engagement is highest above all generations in volunteering and working in ethical organizations. The only two civic actions that they came in last for them was donating, which makes sense if you have limited discretionary income, and voting. Do you have any thoughts on this?

Laura Hanson Schlachter:

There are a couple possibilities there. I'd be interested to see exactly which piece of their data in their report. We actually have had the opportunity to collaborate with Points of Light and the Virginia Service Commission to better understand each other's measures of civic health. The Virginia Service Commission has been conducting some interesting research to customize their definition and measurement of civic health to their state.

My understanding is that Points of Lights... A couple of things. First, our samples are different. The CPS really is the most robust. We have the highest response rate. This is the source of our federal labor force statistics. In terms of generating reliable estimates, the CPS is my go-to. That said, I think that part of the discrepancy might be just differences in measurement.

We have one very... When we cite the formal volunteering rate, that volunteering through organizations, our question really asks about that specifically. The way that the Points of Light questions are written could include volunteering formally through an organization, or informally, just helping your neighbor. In the CEV, we separate those out as two separate forms of volunteering. I don't know if that is exactly the statistic that you're referring to, but we've been having a lot of really good conversations with Points of Light. This just comes down to the idea that, again, civic life takes many forms. There's ongoing conversation among scholars and researchers and practitioners about how we best capture that. It goes back to what Andrea was saying about our research grants. A survey can be a very robust tool, but it is not the end all be all. The way that people interpret questions can look very different, even based on a one word change. That's why we really need to use different methodologies and be really looking at local level variation in order to understand not only the what, but also the why and how people are processing those questions and what the implications are for the overall findings. There's a lot of opportunity for all of us in this space to continue to learn from each other.

Melissa Gouge:

Yes, absolutely, Laura. I'll pose this question to the panel. If you have any suggestions or questions directed to the whole panel, but in particular, Kei and Penn, if you have suggestions on how formal organizations can entice young people to get involved?

Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg:

I'll go quickly. Adrienne, I was actually really glad to hear about the potential for institution to shift. I think there's a lot of promise in, including young people in particular in decision making about what the program is doing, how they're reaching out to young people, in what ways young people are actually participate in the cool governance of the particular institution. A lot of organizations are trying intergenerational work. I think that can actually change the face of volunteering. I'll stop there.

Penn Loh:

I'll just ditto that. In the organization I was with, we had a youth program. When they took the reins and developed their own approaches and we provided resources, then amazing things happened.

Melissa Gouge:

All right, thank you so much, Penn. Well, it looks like we are at time today. I'll thank you all so much for attending. This was fantastic. As the slide says, in the next two weeks, you should get a recording. You'll also have all of the materials in case you want to take another listen. Thank you.

Katy Hussey-Sloniker:

We're now at the close of our webinar. We'd like to thank our research panelists for their presentations, Adrienne Andrews for the AmeriCorps reflection, and Dr. Melissa Gouge for facilitating the discussion. To our audience today, our webinar objective was to provide insights into national trends about civic engagement, research into engagement with youth about civic engagement, and how new understandings of civic life are emerging through local mutual aid efforts. We hope we hit our mark and you join us for our next webinar in the Reigniting Civic Life series on April 26th, 2023 from 3:30 to 4:45 Eastern Standard time.

I'd like to extend a thank you to our AmeriCorps staff, Mathematica and the Guardians of Honor colleagues for their technical support and coordination. Thank you all and have a wonderful rest of your day.