



PHILANTHROPY FOR
ACTIVE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Talk Bridgey: How to Reach More Students

2026 MN Statewide Student Voter Summit

June 8, 2026



Which email or text message are you most likely to keep reading?

Option 1:

As members of a community, it's so important that we exercise our right to vote and make our voices heard through participating in elections. Whether it's local, state, or national, the general election in November or the primary elections in August, each election presents an opportunity for us to shape the future of our society...

Option 2:

Every community is stronger when more people have a voice. Voting is one of the ways we protect our freedom, strengthen our sense of belonging, and help shape the future we share. Whether an election is local, state, or national, showing up and participating helps ensure that our diverse communities are represented and that we continue building a country where everyone has a place and a stake in what comes next...

Option 3:

The choices made by elected leaders shape things that show up in our daily lives—where we live, what opportunities we have, and how our communities grow. Registering to vote is a simple way to make sure your perspective is counted. You don't have to know everything about politics to have a voice in the future we're building together...

Option 4:

Every community is stronger when more people have a voice. Voting is one way we can stand up for our freedom, strengthen our sense of belonging, and help shape the future we all share. Whether an election is local, state, or national, showing up and making your voice heard helps make sure our communities are represented and that everyone has a place in what comes next...

PACE

is a community of funders working together to strengthen American democracy through active civic participation.





PACE's Civic Language National Survey – 2025

TERMS

*American**

Authoritarian

*Belonging***

Checks and Balances

*Citizen***

*Civic Engagement***

*Civility***

*Community**

*Constitution**

*Democracy***

*Diversity***

*Freedom**

Law and Order

*Liberty***

*Patriotism***

Pluralism

Prosperity

*Racial Equity***

*Service**

*Social Justice***

*Unity***

DEMOGRAPHICS

Age

Political party

Community type

Race/ethnicity

Education level

Religion

Employment sector

State

Gender

Registered to vote

Political ideology

2024 Presidential Vote

Hidden Tribes

Nationally representative sample of
5393 registered US voters surveyed in
November 2025 in partnership with
More in Common

** indicates tested in 2021 and 2023

* indicates tested in 2023

MCKNIGHT FOUNDATION

THE 2025 SURVEY WAS DESIGNED TO LEARN...

Term Impression

Positive, Negative,
Neutral, Unfamiliar

Unifying Potential

Bring Together or
Drive Apart

Term Ownership

Meant for Me or
Someone Else

Ways to
talk about

Threats to Democracy

Ways to
broaden the

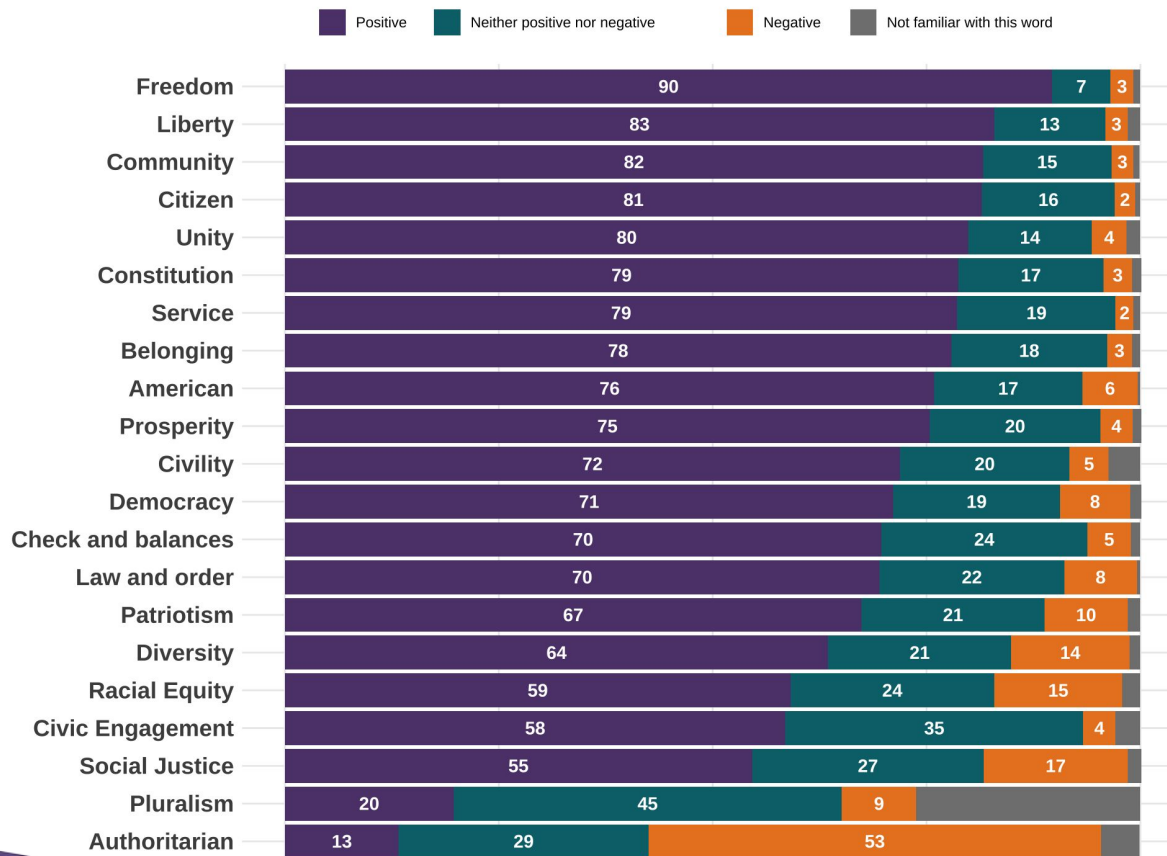
Appeal of Democracy

Civic terms that
resonate with the

Exhausted Majority

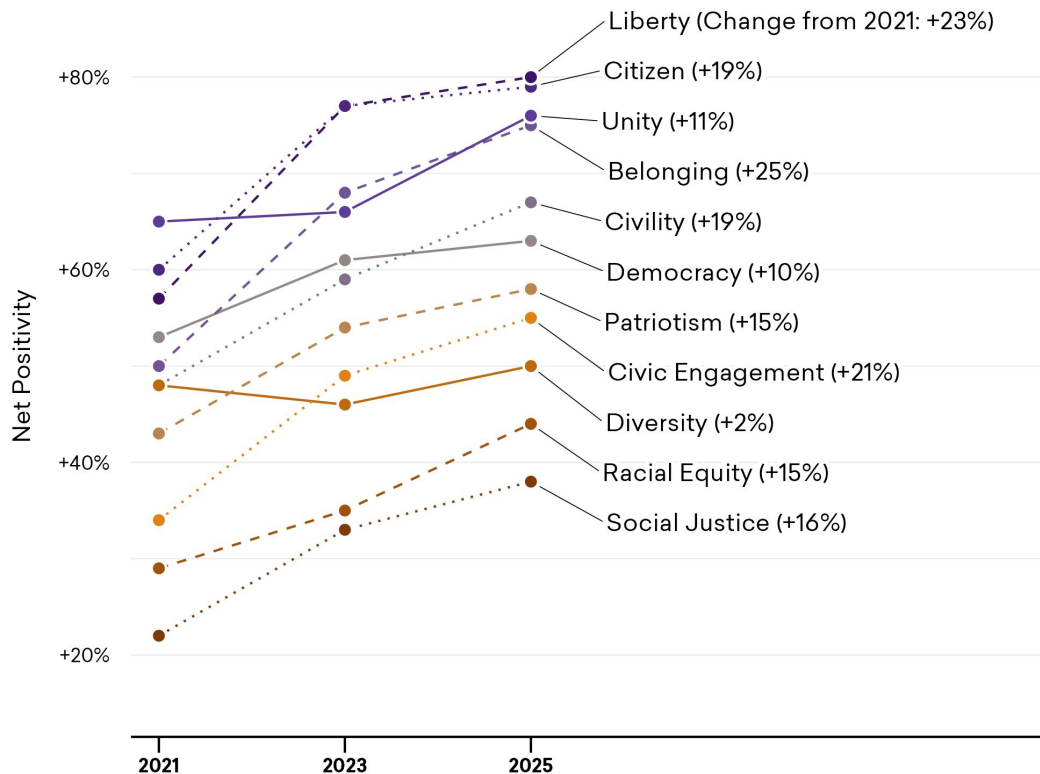
“Freedom” is the most positive civic term, while “Authoritarian” sits at the bottom.

Question: “For each of the following terms, please indicate whether you have a positive or negative impression of that word.” (%)



All perceptions of civic terms that were re-tested across four years got more positive.

Question: "For each of the following terms, please indicate whether you have a positive or negative impression of that word."



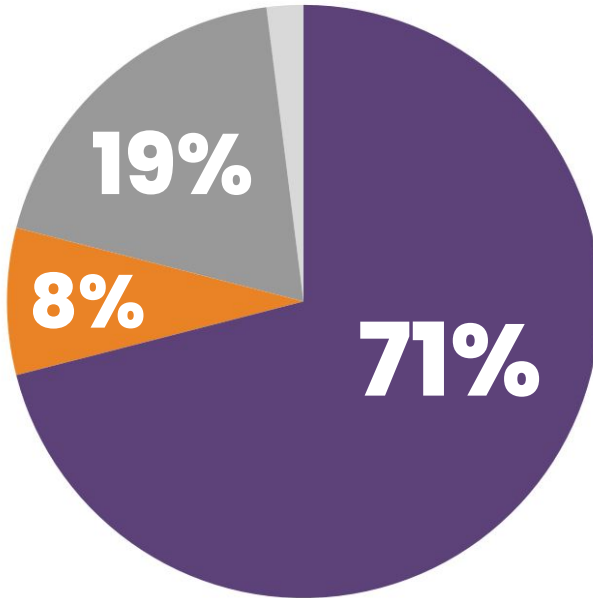
**Biggest Increases
2023-2025**

**Unity - 10%
Racial Equity - 9%
Civility - 8%**

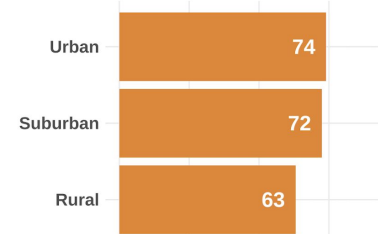
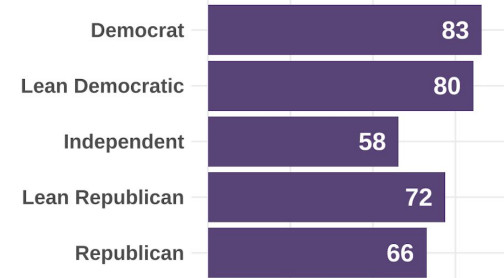


Keep saying democracy!

● Positive ● Negative ● Neutral ● Unfamiliar



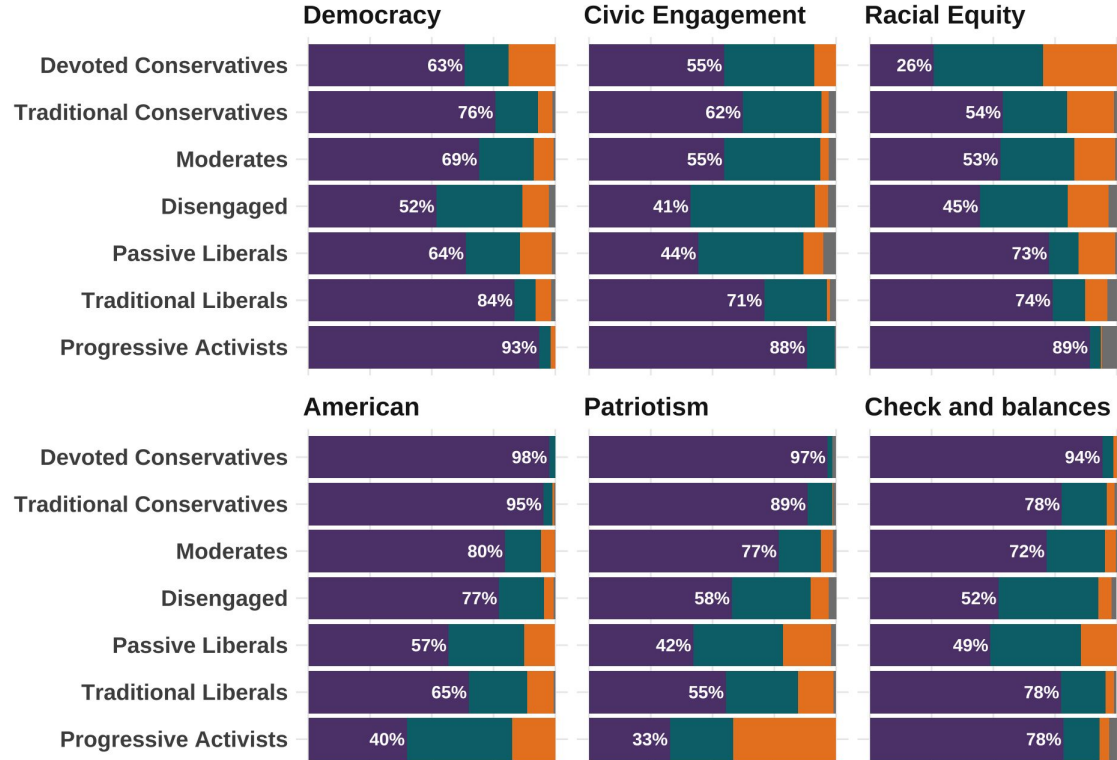
Positivity By Group





Term Perceptions by Hidden Tribes

Positive Neither positive nor negative Negative Not familiar with this word

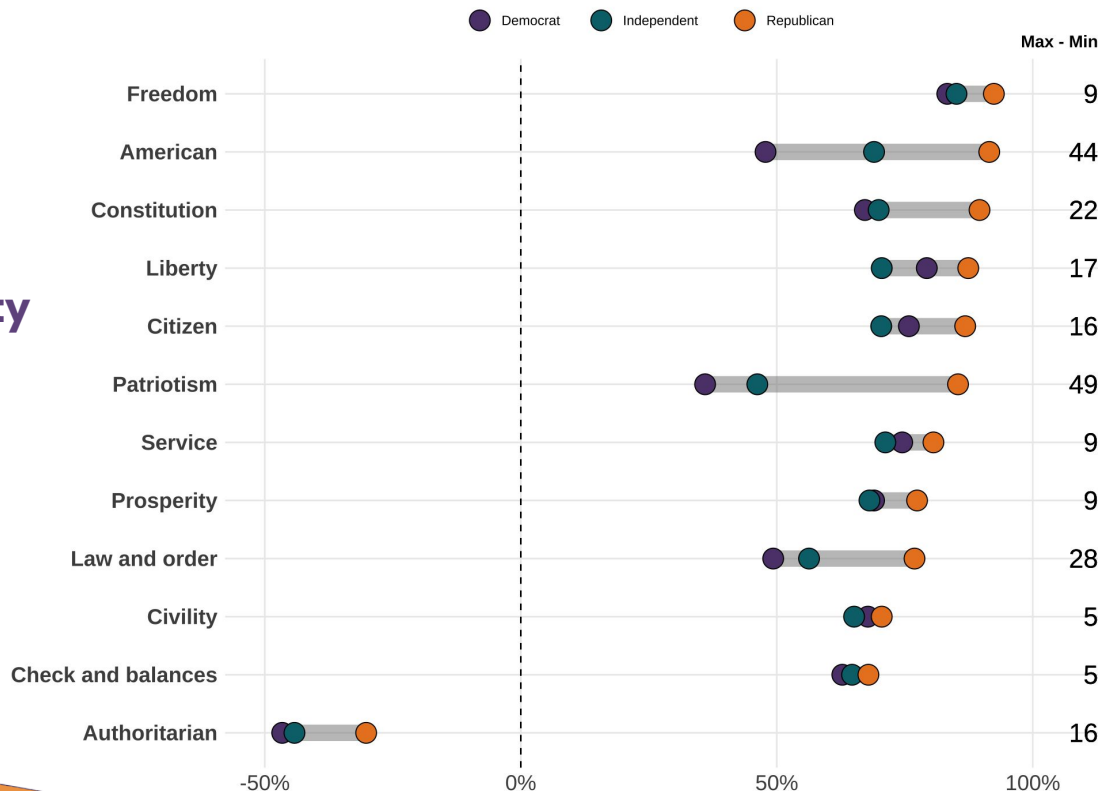


More in
Common

Political party is still a key driver of perception differences.

Question: "For each of the following terms, please indicate whether you have a positive or negative impression of that word." (% Net Positivity)

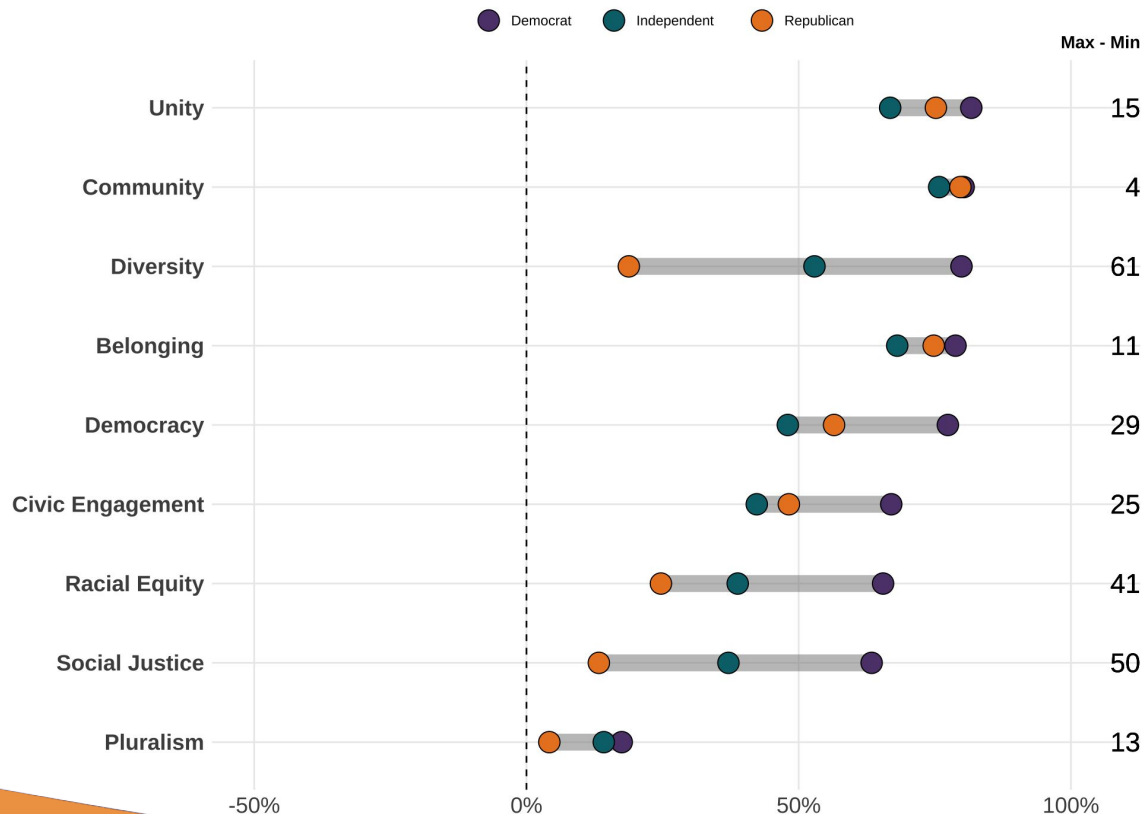
**12 Terms with
Higher Net Positivity
for Republicans**



Political party is still a key driver of perception differences.

Question: "For each of the following terms, please indicate whether you have a positive or negative impression of that word." (% Net Positivity)

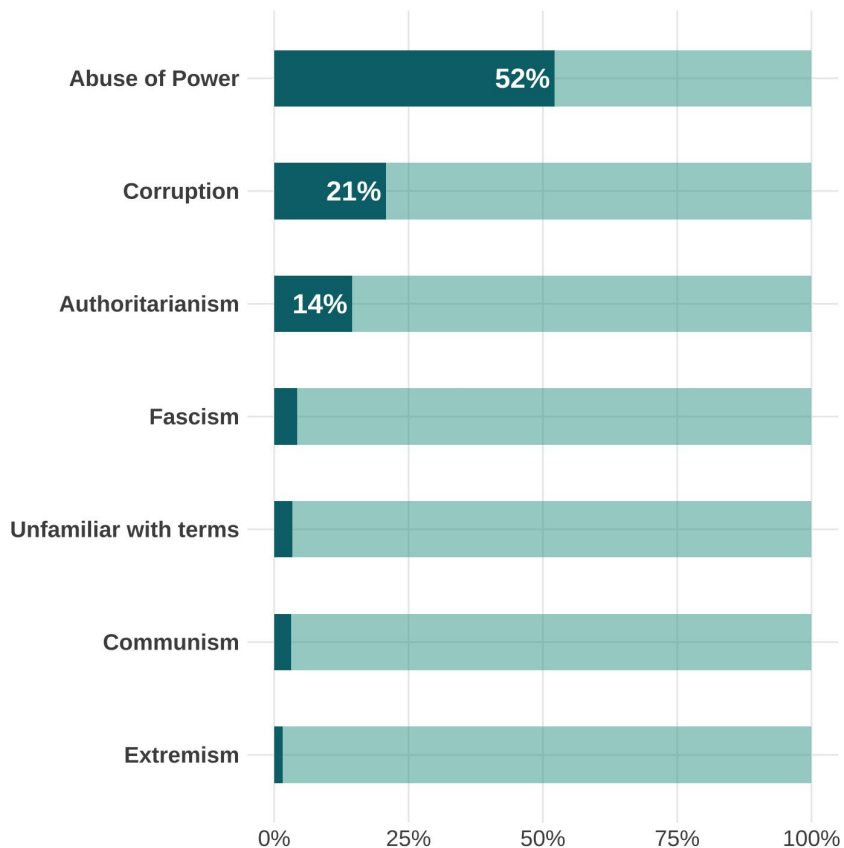
9 Terms with Higher Net Positivity for Democrats



"Abuse of power threatens our free and fair democracy."

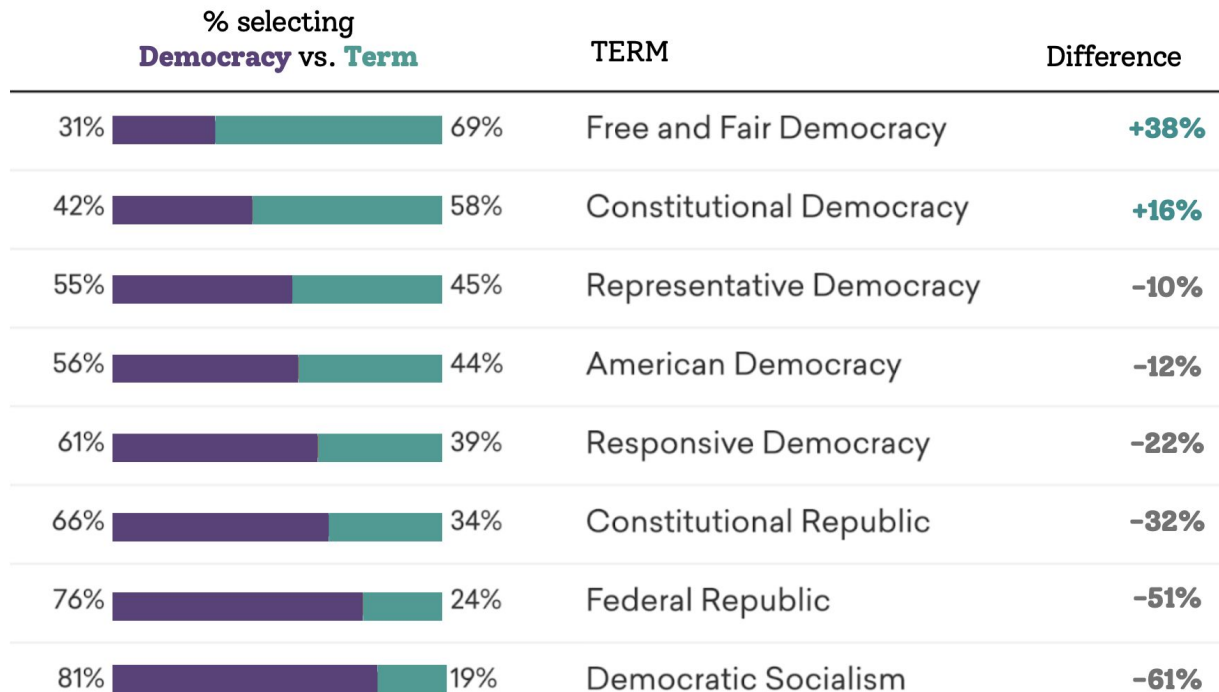
"Sometimes, people in power use their position and authority to help themselves or their group, instead of following or enforcing laws for everyone *equally* or using the law to protect *everyone's* rights."

"What is the term that best fits this description?"



"Abuse of power threatens our free and fair democracy."

Question: "Which term best describes the kind of government you want America to have?" ["Democracy" is paired with an alternate term] (% selected)



HOW TO TALK BRIDGEY 2.0

Lessons and Takeaways from PACE's 2025-2026
Civic Language Perceptions Project



A REPORT BY:





What makes a word bridgey?

**People
generally
agree they
like the word**



**People
perceive the
word to be
unifying**



Variance
penalty



**BRIDGEY
WORDS**

**Bridgeyness
is increasing,
but there's
more to the
story**

**Biggest Increases
2023-2025**

American - 11%
Citizen - 10%
Civility - 10%
Social Justice - 10%
Racial Equity - 10%

	Bridgeyness Strength	Net Positivity	Net Brings People Together	Variation Penalty	Change from 2023 to 2025
Community	76%	79%	75%	1.1	-1%
Freedom	76%	76%	67%	1.1	+8%
Unity	71%	76%	68%	1.3	+9%
Service	70%	76%	67%	1.2	0%
Belonging	68%	75%	65%	1.4	+3%
Liberty	67%	80%	58%	1.6	+5%
Citizen	65%	79%	53%	1.5	+10%
Civility	58%	67%	53%	1.8	+10%
Constitution	58%	75%	45%	2.2	not tested in 2023
American	57%	69%	51%	2.9	+11%
Prosperity	53%	72%	37%	1.3	not tested in 2023
Civic Engagement	49%	55%	47%	1.7	+8%
Democracy	47%	63%	38%	3.5	+8%
Checks and Balances	46%	65%	32%	2.2	not tested in 2023
Patriotism	43%	58%	36%	4.0	+3%
Law and Order	39%	61%	22%	2.6	not tested in 2023
Diversity	26%	50%	9%	3.4	+1%
Social Justice	21%	38%	11%	3.3	+10%
Racial Equity	20%	44%	2%	2.5	+10%
Pluralism	6%	11%	4%	1.8	not tested in 2023
Authoritarian	-47%	-40%	-47%	4.0	not tested in 2023

Demographic groups driving variance penalty increases:

Religion
Urbanicity
Education
Age
Employment
Party

Understand what signals civic terms send



	Bridgyness Strength	Ideology	Age	Urbanicity
Community	76%	Bridgey	Bridgey	Bridgey
Freedom	76%	Weak Conservative	Weak Older	Bridgey
Unity	71%	Weak Liberal	Bridgey	Bridgey
Service	70%	Weak Conservative	Weak Older	Bridgey
Belonging	68%	Bridgey	Bridgey	Bridgey
Liberty	67%	Weak Conservative	Strong Older	Bridgey
Citizen	65%	Weak Conservative	Weak Older	Bridgey
Civility	58%	Bridgey	Strong Older	Bridgey
Constitution	58%	Strong Conservative	Strong Older	Bridgey
American	57%	Strong Conservative	Strong Older	Bridgey
Prosperity	53%	Strong Conservative	Strong Older	Weak Rural
Civic Engagement	49%	Strong Liberal	Bridgey	Weak Urban
Democracy	47%	Strong Liberal	Strong Older	Weak Urban
Checks and Balances	46%	Bridgey	Strong Older	Weak Urban
Patriotism	43%	Strong Conservative	Strong Older	Weak Rural
Law and Order	39%	Strong Conservative	Strong Older	Bridgey
Diversity	26%	Strong Liberal	Strong Younger	Weak Urban
Social Justice	21%	Strong Liberal	Bridgey	Strong Urban
Racial Equity	20%	Strong Liberal	Bridgey	Weak Urban
Pluralism	6%	Strong Liberal	Weak Younger	Weak Urban
Authoritarianism	-47%	Strong Conservative	Strong Younger	Weak Urban



Americans report that their civic engagement is driven primarily by personal relationships and direct participation, not by formal institutions or coursework.

Influence	%	
Conversations with family or friends about news, politics, or community issues	43%	
Voting or helping with an election (e.g., poll worker, campaign volunteer)	30%	
Community service or volunteering (not religious activities)	20%	
Religious or faith-based activities that encouraged action or reflection on social issues	17%	
Following or taking part in news or social media discussions about current events	17%	
A film, TV show, news article, podcast, or other media that influenced your views on civic issues	15%	
None of the above	15%	
Teachers who encouraged discussion or debate about public issues	13%	
Local community meetings, advocacy groups, or public hearings	10%	
A civics or government class in school	9%	
College or adult education courses on social issues or leadership	9%	
A workplace, military, or union experience that connected to civic responsibilities	7%	
Direct interaction with an elected official	6%	
Participation in student government, mock trial, Model UN, or debate team	4%	

Question: “Think about your roles and responsibilities as an American citizen (your “civic” roles and responsibilities). Consider experiences you’ve had in school, your community, or everyday life. Which of the following experiences have had the greatest impact on how you engage in your civic roles and responsibilities? Select up to three.” (% selected)

Age matters a lot...

PACE's CLPP Terms	Top 7 for 18-24	Top 7 for 55-64	Bridgeyness Strength	Age Signal
Freedom	1	1	76%	Weak Older
Belonging	2	-	68%	Bridgey
Unity	3	-	71%	Bridgey
Diversity	4	-	26%	Strong Younger
Citizen	5	5	65%	Weak Older
Community	6	2	76%	Bridgey
American	-	3	57%	Strong Older
Constitution	-	4	58%	Strong Older
Law and Order	-	6	39%	Strong Older
Service	7	-	70%	Weak Older
Liberty	-	7	67%	Strong Older



Applying Language Intelligence to *Recruiting Gen Z*

The future is shaped by people who show up.

- Every **community**⁶ faces challenges, and every generation has the power to help solve them.
- **Service**⁷ is how we turn compassion into action, build connections across backgrounds and experiences⁴, and help create a country where everyone **belongs**² and has the opportunity to thrive.

You have what it takes to make an impact.

- AmeriCorps gives you the chance to make a real impact while building skills, relationships, and experience that can shape the future.
- Whether you care about education, climate resilience, public health, housing, food security, or supporting families and neighborhoods, your contribution matters.
- You can lead in nearly 40,000 locations across the country alongside people who believe that **freedom**¹ and **unity**³ grow stronger when we show up for one another.

The future is something you help build.

- This is more than volunteering. It's being part of a generation willing to step forward, solve problems, and help build stronger **communities**⁶ together.
- Join more than 1.25 million AmeriCorps alumni who chose action over cynicism and **unity**³ over division.
- Education awards, health insurance, childcare support, job pathways, loan deferment, and other benefits may be available depending on the program.

Shape the future. Find a place to belong². Join AmeriCorps.



Applying Language Intelligence to *Recruiting Older Americans*

Strong communities are built by people who continue to show up for one another.

- Throughout our country's history, **Americans**³ have strengthened their **communities**² through **service**¹⁰, responsibility, and a willingness to help neighbors in times of need.
- That spirit of **patriotism**⁹ remains one of the foundations of **freedom**¹ and **prosperity**⁸ in **America**³ today.

AmeriCorps Seniors provide meaningful ways to use your experience, skills, and time to make a lasting difference.

- Whether you are beginning a new chapter after retirement, looking to give back locally, or hoping to support the next generation, your **service**¹⁰ can help strengthen **communities**² across the country.
- With opportunities in nearly 40,000 locations nationwide, you can **serve**¹⁰ in ways that fit your interests, schedule, and goals by helping students succeed, supporting families, strengthening neighborhoods, and addressing local challenges.

When Americans³ **help one another, we reinforce the values that hold our nation together.**

- Join a nationwide **community**² of **service**¹⁰ and become part of a legacy that includes more than 1.25 million AmeriCorps alumni and volunteers committed to building a stronger future for the next generation.
- Stipends, health insurance, and other benefits may be available depending on the program.
- Your experience matters. Your contribution matters. **America**³ needs people willing to **serve**¹⁰.

Make your community² **stronger. Choose AmeriCorps.**

New Interactive Dashboard



**National Conference
on Citizenship**

Civic Language Terms

How Americans perceive 21 civic concepts n=1,821

Click on any of the 21 terms below to see more in-depth analysis for that term.

Positivity

Ownership

Togetherness

Compare Measures

Question: "For each of the following terms, please indicate whether you have a positive or negative impression of this term."

Positive Neither positive nor negative Negative

1 Freedom



90%

2 Liberty



90%

3 Community



82%

4 Citizen



82%

5 Unity



80%

6 Constitution



79%

7 Service



79%

8 Belonging



78%



Civic Language Terms

How Americans perceive 21 civic concepts



Democracy Terms

Phrases that describe American government



Civic Influences

Experiences that shaped civic understanding



Civic Activities

Participation in civic and political activities



Barriers to Participation

Why people don't engage more civically



Authoritarian Concepts

What comes to mind when hearing "authoritarian"



Compare Measures

Visualize terms across three measures



What's next?

Civic
Language
Perceptions
Project



National Conference
on Citizenship



More in
Common



Metropolitan Group
the power of voice



Questions & Responses

Thank You.



Dr. Siri Erickson, Senior Director for Strategy and Learning
siri@pacefunders.org