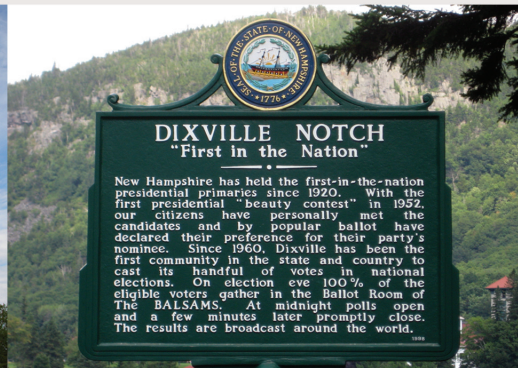


NEW HAMPSHIRE



CIVIC HEALTH INDEX

2009



2009 NEW HAMPSHIRE CIVIC HEALTH INDEX

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

New Hampshire's political history and structure of government, along with its demographic and economic profile, make it a state conducive to insuring high levels of civic engagement. New Hampshire's government is highly decentralized and it has the largest state house of representatives (400) in the country. Citizens live in close proximity to politics and civic life in New Hampshire. The state is also characterized by the in-migration of young families and relatively affluent retirees, the presence of substantial numbers of college graduates, and although the current economic recession is taking a toll, relatively low unemployment and comparatively high household income. These are all characteristics that tend to be positively associated with citizen involvement in community life and public affairs. This is not to say that everything in New Hampshire is rosy. As is true nationwide, economic inequality is growing and is driven largely by the growing gap in wages between college and non-college educated workers. Similarly, there is a geographic divide: many rural communities in New Hampshire are experiencing economic and demographic losses and struggle to maintain the institutions that contribute to a strong community fabric.

Results from the 2009 Civic Health Index (CHI) survey conducted for the National Conference on Citizenship show that, compared to the nation as a whole, New Hampshire residents are more likely to:

Engage in their communities

- Belong or donate money to a local or national group (NH 56% / US 52%)
- Volunteer during the past year (43% / 35%)
- Attend a club or community meeting (36% / 27%)
- Work on a community project (26% / 19%)
- Work with others in their neighborhood to solve a problem (19% / 15%)
- Trust their neighbors – e.g., see other people as honest (77% / 67%) and helpful (66% / 58%)

Experience the negative effects of recession and respond in a positive way

- Personally experience job loss (14% / 9%) within the past year
- Personally experience difficulty affording food or medication (23% / 17%) in the past year
- Personally experience difficulty paying a mortgage (6% / 3%) in the past year

- Help out relatives by giving them a place to stay (22% / 17%)
- Help out non-relatives by giving them a place to stay (17% / 11%)
- Live in communities where people help others during times of economic difficulty (25% / 19%)

Engage in politics and civic life

- See their state's civic tradition as strong (31% / 13%)
- Try to persuade someone to change their mind about a political candidate or an issue (43% / 32%)
- Wear a campaign button or place a campaign sign in their yard (23% / 18%)
- Pay attention to current affairs most of the time (37% / 30%)
- Try to change local policies (16% / 8%)
- Regularly use the Internet to gather information about political, social, and community issues (29% / 18%)

Have less involvement or confidence in organized religion

- Never attend church (48% / 35%)
- Have hardly any confidence in organized religion (37% / 25%)

Value socializing

- Spend a lot of time visiting friends (51% / 40%)
- Regularly use the Internet and electronic devices to communicate with friends (74% / 59%)

Similar to other Americans, New Hampshire residents have:

- Positive views of the impact of citizens in the democratic process
- Substantial gaps in knowledge of how the US political and legal system works
- Low levels of confidence in government decision-making
- Low levels of confidence in economic and social institutions
- Positive views of the effectiveness of economic rewards as incentives for motivating increased community involvement

In New Hampshire, as in the US as a whole:

- College graduates and respondents with even some college education are significantly more likely than those who have a high school education (or less) to be involved in their communities and to have a positive view of the political process
- Weekly churchgoers are more likely than others to have high levels of civic engagement

CIVIC HEALTH INDEX SURVEY DATA & SAMPLE

The Civic Health Index data discussed in this report are from a nationally representative survey of Americans that was conducted in April 2009 for the National Conference on Citizenship, based in Washington D.C. The sample is comprised of 1,518 nationally representative respondents and additional samples from 6 states - California, Florida, Illinois, Minnesota, New Hampshire, and Ohio - providing a total national sample of 3,889 respondents. 413 New Hampshire respondents completed the survey. The original New Hampshire sample had an over-representation of women and of college-educated respondents and, therefore, following standard practices in survey methodology, the sample was weighted statistically to redress these imbalances. The New Hampshire survey does not have data on the income or urban/rural status of the respondents. The sample selection and the survey administration was conducted by Knowledge Networks, a survey research organization that has recruited the first online research panel that is representative of the entire US population. Panel members are randomly recruited by probability-based sampling, and households are provided with access to the Internet and hardware if needed (20 percent of the total national sample needed this assistance).

CONTEXT OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

New Hampshire is a state rich in natural, economic, and human resources and has strong civic, political, and cultural traditions. It is currently a state in transition. Many of the changes New Hampshire is experiencing augur well for the civic health of the state, while other emergent changes may threaten continued vibrant civic participation.

Population Growth and Composition

New Hampshire is home to 1,315,000 people. Its population has increased by 6.4 percent since 2000; this rate is similar to that of the United States as a whole but higher than that of other New England states. Most of this growth is due to in-migration rather than natural increase and is largely driven by young families moving from the sprawling Boston metropolitan area into the southern part of New Hampshire. Out-of-state retirees migrating to the recreation and amenity-rich rural communities in central and northern New Hampshire are also contributing to population change.¹ Both of these groups are well poised to contribute to community life. Parents with school-age children tend to care about the communities in which they live and the institutions, especially schools, that are central to their children's well-being. Similarly, because relatively well-off retirees migrate to places that they find attractive, they have an added incentive to become engaged in community issues that will help conserve the quality of life in their new community. Additionally, migrating retirees typically have resources—human skills and experience as well as money and time—that can be used to contribute to community projects; they are thus regarded as the “grey gold” that can be mined to enhance their new community's stock of social capital.²

New Hampshire, with 93.7 percent of its residents non-Hispanic white, is one of the least racially diverse states in the nation.³ Indeed, it has fewer foreign-born residents today than it had at the turn of the twentieth century, when individuals and families from Canada and Europe settled in the state.⁴ Its immigrant population doubled this decade, however, from 3 percent to 6 percent, with most immigrants settling in the state's largest cities. Many of the new immigrants come from countries that have not had a history of migration to the Granite State—after Canada (17 percent), immigrants are most likely to have been born in India (6 percent), Vietnam (5 percent), Germany (4 percent), China (4 percent), and Mexico (2 percent).⁵ Many of the immigrants are well-educated professionals who can immediately contribute to enriching the state's civic health.

Education

The educational profile of New Hampshire in general is a major factor boosting its civic health. Residents of the Granite State (including migrants and immigrants), are highly educated. Over one-third (34 percent) of the state's workforce has a 4-year college degree or higher. This rate compares favorably with New Hampshire's well-educated neighbors in Massachusetts (40 percent) and Connecticut (36 percent), and is higher than the proportion of college graduates nationwide (29 percent).⁶ The strong positive relationship that many studies find between education and community involvement⁷ thus leads us to expect a high level of civic engagement in the state.

Labor Force Participation and Income

Another factor boosting New Hampshire's civic health is the strength of the state's economy. Since 2000, the major growth sectors are construction (18.5 percent), education and health (16.6 percent), finance (15.0 percent), and leisure and hospitality (9.6 percent). Overall, job growth in these and other sectors (e.g. information, transportation) compensated for the large decline that has occurred during this same period in manufacturing (-22.4 percent) and other jobs.⁸ New Hampshire has high levels of labor force participation for both men (78 percent) and women (65 percent),⁹ and unemployment tends to be low. Even at the height of the recession (June 2009), New Hampshire's unemployment rate was only 6.8 percent. Although this represents an 11-year high for the Granite State, it is nonetheless considerably lower than the unemployment rates in many other states during this time of national and global economic downturn.¹⁰ Personal, family, and household incomes are higher, on average, in New Hampshire than nationally, and the state has the lowest percentage of people living in poverty as well as one of the lowest child poverty rates in the country.¹¹ The relative economic health of New Hampshire, therefore, bodes well for its civic health. As several studies have documented, there tends to be a positive relationship between income and community engagement.¹² Moreover, communities that are economically stable and have low unemployment tend to be more cohesive; crime tends to be lower, for example, and there is less likelihood that the community will become strained over strategic initiatives that seek to reorient the community's economic base, as may occur in communities that are economically depressed and/or in economic transition.

Political Shifts

Population and economic change invariably impact the political landscape. In New Hampshire, migration trends and the coming of age of new cohorts of young voters has resulted in a steady shift toward the Democratic Party.¹³ President Obama received 55 percent of the state's votes in the 2008 election, an election which also saw former Democratic Governor Jeanne Shaheen win incumbent Republican John Sununu's senate seat, the return of two Democrats to the House, the re-election of Democratic governor John Lynch, and the Democratic Party's retention of control in both houses of the state legislature, and of the state's executive council, a body that performs an important oversight function in state government. It is unlikely, however, that the current dominance of the Democratic Party will lead to political indifference among Granite Staters. One can expect, rather, that

the Democratic excitement of recent gains and the Republican disappointment of loss will continue to fuel citizen engagement with political issues and their vigilant oversight of the political process. Moreover, in this time of recession and budget cuts, we can expect local communities to actively monitor the responsiveness of their political representatives to local needs.

Factors complicating civic health in New Hampshire

Despite the positive context New Hampshire provides for civic engagement, there are some emerging trends that may contribute to a dampening of citizen involvement.

Economic Inequality. Notwithstanding New Hampshire's overall high ranking in income distribution, economic inequality is becoming more pronounced and its effects may become divisive in local communities and in the state as a whole. One in seven families in 2004 was classified as low income, with a family income below \$37,700, and there has been a significant increase over the last fifteen years in the number of single mother families in New Hampshire, a group that typically is low income.¹⁴ Similarly, there is a growing gap in the pace of wage increases between college-educated and other workers.¹⁵ The economic inequality in the state has a marked geographical pattern. Median household income is notably low in some rural counties (e.g., Coos County) as a result of the precipitous decline in the timber and paper mill industries and the continuing paucity of alternative economic opportunities in these communities. These trends toward increased economic inequality will likely accelerate as a result of the current recession. While economic need can produce new opportunities for individuals to get involved in community issues and problems, it can also add strain to dwindling community resources and push individuals to withdraw from rather than engage in community activism.

Libertarian Culture. New Hampshire's state motto is "Live free or die." This libertarian ethos pervades the political culture independent of party affiliation. It is strongly evident in residents' skepticism of government, and most notably, opposition to taxes. New Hampshire does not impose sales or personal income taxes, and businesses enjoy very low insurance premium taxes (1.5 percent), and low corporate income tax rates (8.5 percent). Although this produces a successful business entrepreneurial environment and many well-paying jobs, it can also dampen residents' readiness to consider government initiatives that might strengthen core community institutions such as schools

and enrich individual and community well-being, say through establishing a higher state minimum wage. At the same time, however, a libertarian ethos can also enhance community engagement, motivating individuals to get involved in local issues where they perceive an overreach of local, state, or national government.

Church Decline. The religious profile of New Hampshire has undergone remarkable change. Catholicism continues as the largest single denomination in the state but, more notably, there has been a substantial increase in the proportion of Granite Staters who express no religious affiliation. In 1990, 9 percent of New Hampshire residents, largely similar to the nation as a

whole, had no religious preference. While this rate has doubled for Americans overall, it tripled in New Hampshire—to 29 percent in 2009.¹⁶ Additionally, fewer than half of the state's residents (46 percent) say that religion is an important part of their daily life, thus making New Hampshire the second least religious state in the country (after neighboring Vermont).¹⁷ Religious involvement has long been one of the strongest correlates of community engagement;¹⁸ it remains to be seen whether the decline in New Hampshire's religiosity will lead to a concomitant decline in civic engagement or whether this decline will be offset by the strength of the many other factors in the state that boost civic health.

NEW HAMPSHIRE CIVIC LIFE: DETAILED FINDINGS

Volunteer Activity

New Hampshire residents show a strong commitment to voluntary activity. A majority (56 percent) either belong to or have donated money to a local or national group or organization, and a substantial 43 percent have volunteered over the past year; these figures place New Hampshire residents ahead of the national trend (52 percent and 35 percent, respectively; see [Figure 1](#)). Within New Hampshire, churchgoers (55 percent) are more likely than non-churchgoers (31 percent) to have volunteered in the past year, and this is also true of college graduates (59 percent) compared to those with some college experience (49 percent) and those with only a high school education (27 percent). These findings are in line with the well-documented trends of other studies showing a positive relation between church attendance, education, and community engagement.¹⁹

New Hampshire volunteering encompasses a broad range of outlets. Volunteering in children's educational, sports, and recreational activities (19 percent), at a religious organization (19 percent), and in social and community service activities (17 percent) are the most frequently mentioned. A substantial 12 percent report volunteering at animal care/animal rights organizations. Fewer than one in ten volunteer in sports or hobby groups (7 percent), at health clinics (8 percent) or health education organizations (6 percent), or are involved in environmental activity (8 percent), political advocacy (7 percent), or in arts (5 percent) or civic organizations (4 percent).

Not surprisingly, given the very small—though growing—percentage of immigrants in the state, very few residents volunteer in immigrant and refugee assistance work (2 percent) (see [Figure 2](#)).

FIGURE 1
COMPARISON OF NH AND NATIONAL PATTERNS FOR ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIP AND VOLUNTEERING IN THE LAST YEAR

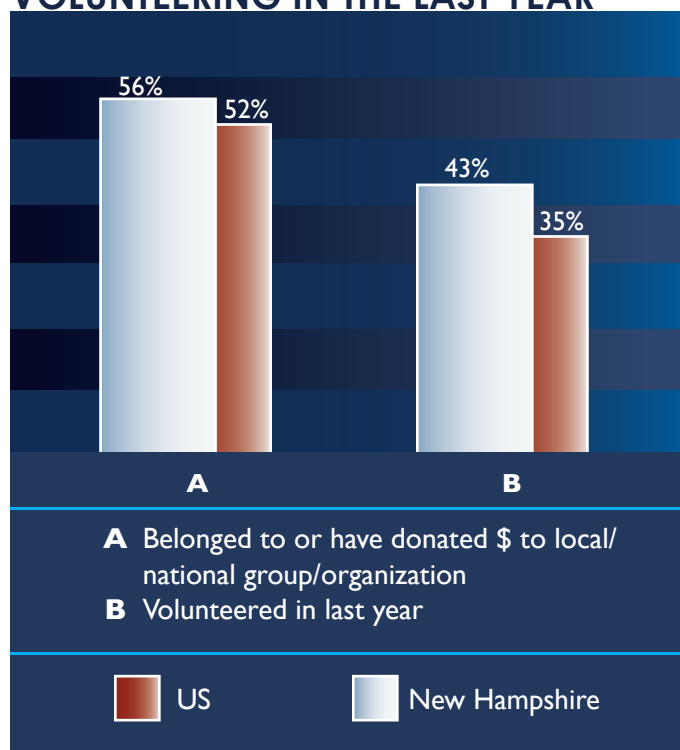
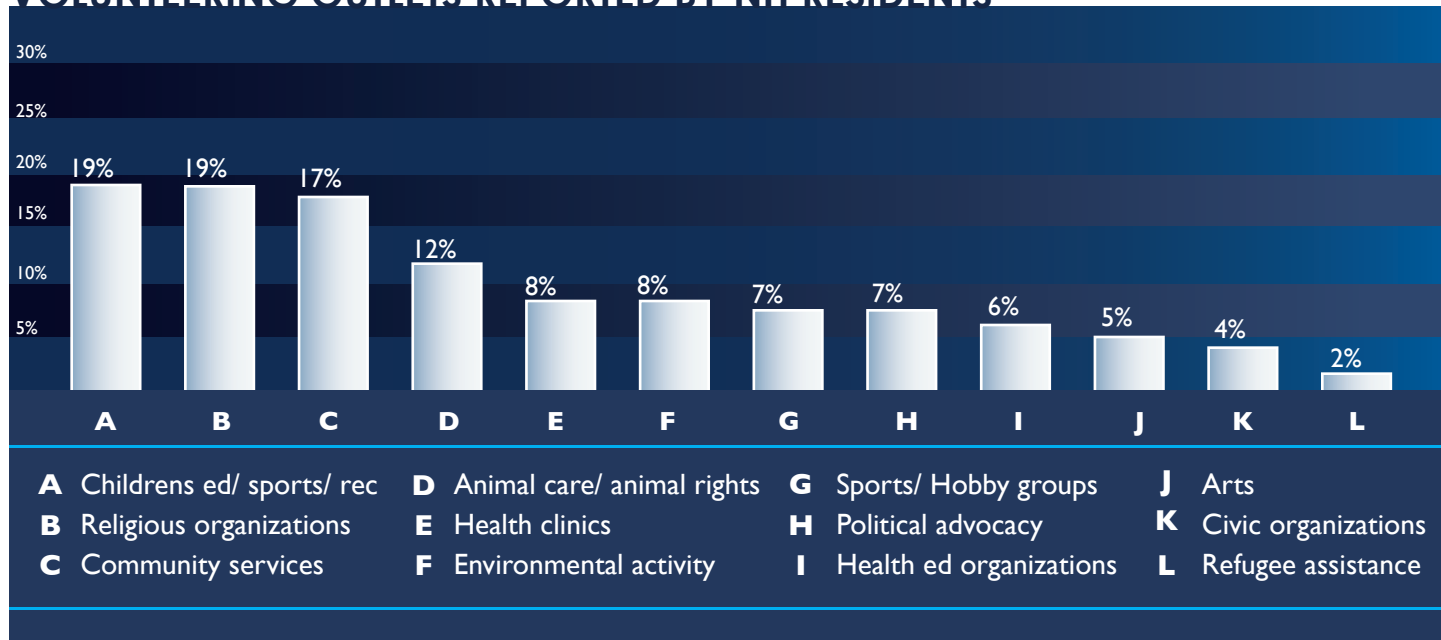


FIGURE 2
VOLUNTEERING OUTLETS REPORTED BY NH RESIDENTS



Community Spirit and Trust in Others

Many New Hampshire communities pride themselves on their community spirit, and this ethos is reflected in the CHI survey data. New Hampshire residents show high levels of trust in others. Three-quarters of the respondents agreed that most people are honest (77 percent) and two-thirds agreed that most of the time people try to be helpful (66 percent) as opposed to just looking out for themselves (34 percent). Trust in others helps to foster individuals' willingness to get engaged in community action,²⁰ and we see this in New Hampshire. Over one-third (36 percent) reported having attended a club or community meeting in the past year; while close to a quarter worked on a community project (26 percent) or attended a public meeting to discuss community affairs (23 percent). Additionally, 19 percent of residents said that they had worked with other people in their neighborhood to solve a community problem (see [Figure 3](#)). Once again, education and church attendance matter in influencing community involvement. Respondents with even some college education are significantly more likely than those without college experience to attend community and other public meetings, to work on a community project, and to work with other people in their neighborhood to solve a community problem (see [Figure 4](#)). Similarly, churchgoers are more likely than those who never attend church to get involved in some of these aspects of community life.

FIGURE 3
COMMUNITY ACTION

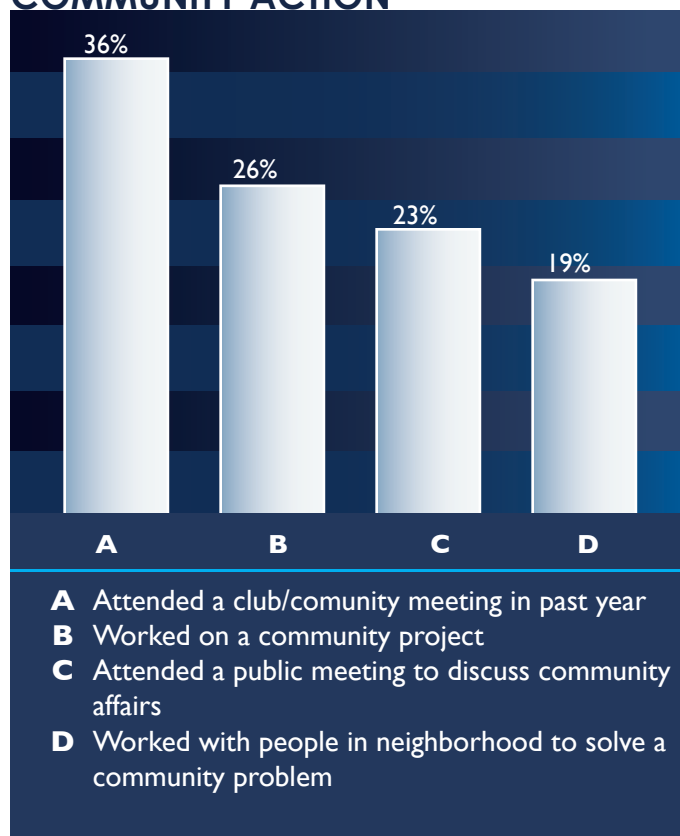
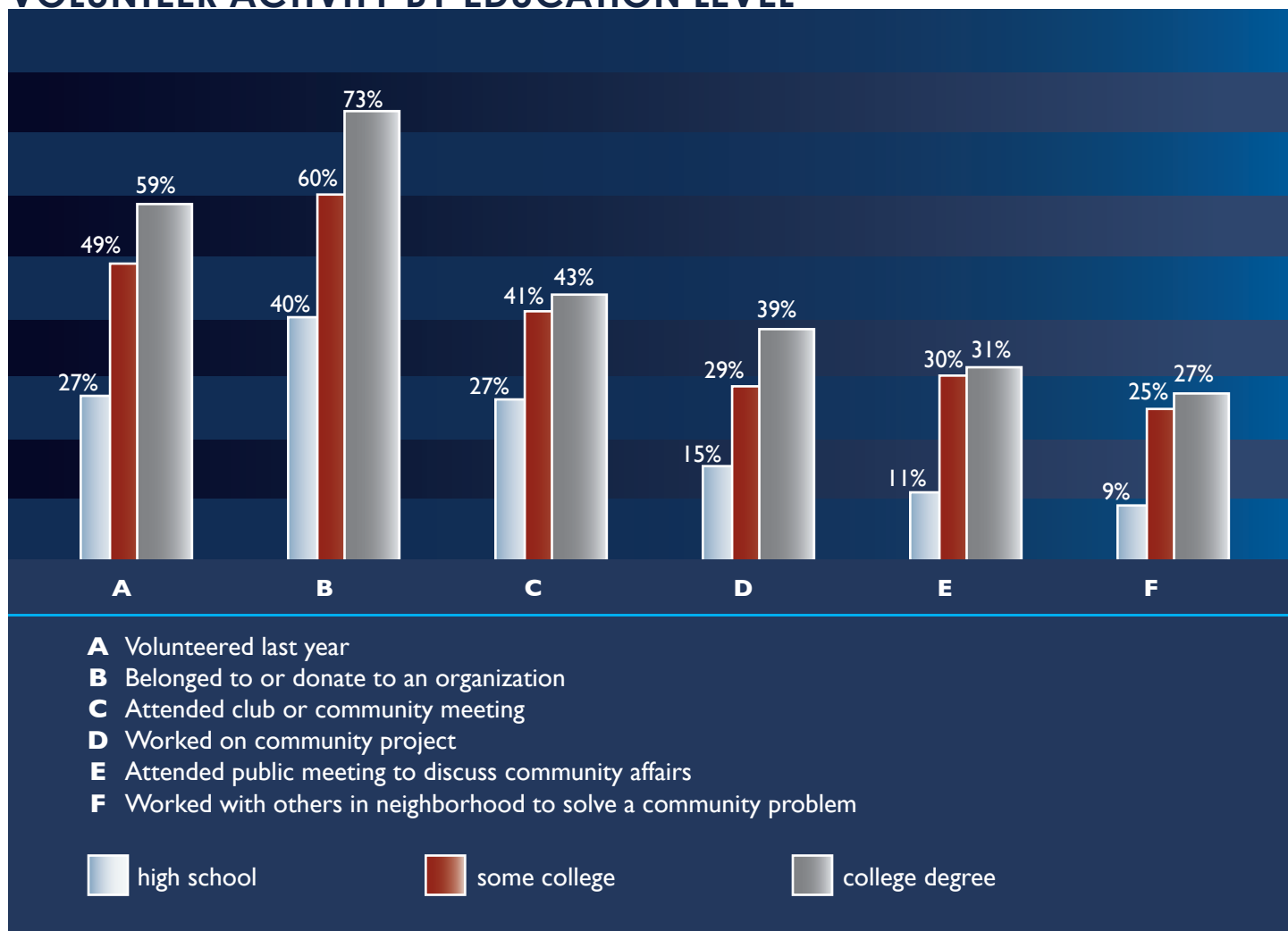


FIGURE 4

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY BY EDUCATION LEVEL



Economic Recession and its Impact on Volunteer Activity

The CHI interviews, conducted in May 2009, occurred at the height of the recession. This context is interesting from the point of view of civic involvement since it creates additional financial constraints on individuals' giving behavior while simultaneously providing new opportunities to help relatives, neighbors, and needy individuals and groups in general. Despite the relative economic health of New Hampshire compared to many other states across the nation, New Hampshire respondents were more likely than other Americans surveyed to report firsthand experience of economic difficulty. Fourteen percent of New Hampshire respondents reported losing their job in the twelve months prior to the interview, and 15 percent reported that this

was true of someone else in their household; 2 percent of the respondents reported job loss for both themselves and another household member. Many more—a substantial 23 percent—had difficulty affording food or medication, and 6 percent had trouble paying their mortgage. By contrast, only 9 percent of respondents nationwide reported losing their job, 17 percent had difficulty affording food or medication, and just 3 percent had mortgage troubles.

Whether prompted by the recession or not, many New Hampshire residents reported that in the past year they had helped relatives (42 percent) or non-relatives (52 percent) by giving them food or money, and several had a relative (22 percent) or non-relative (17 percent) live in their home (see

FIGURE 5
IMPACT OF THE RECESSION

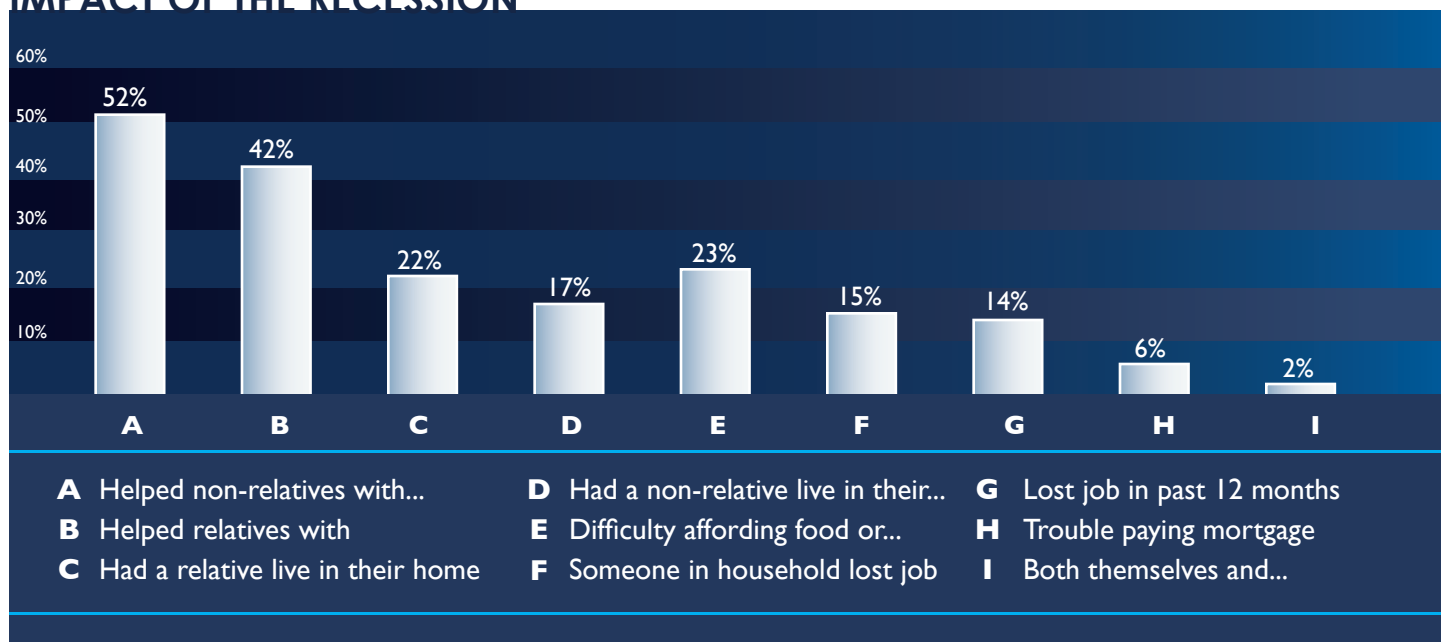


Figure 5). Churchgoing respondents stood out as the most likely to help others, both relatives and non-relatives, with food or money, and women (51 percent) were significantly more likely than men (34 percent) to report helping out a relative with food or money.

Over two-thirds of the respondents (72 percent) said that they had cut back on the time they spent volunteering. On the other hand, over one in four (28 percent) reported increasing, though mostly to a small extent, the time spent volunteering. Weekly churchgoers and those with some college education were less likely than others to cut back on their volunteering. Although nationwide, Granite Staters were as likely as other Americans (72 percent) to cut back on volunteer time, they were more likely than Americans in general to help relatives (22 percent/17 percent) and non-relatives (17 percent/11 percent) by giving them a place to stay.

Community Response to Economic Strain

The New Hampshire community spirit also came to the fore in respondents' assessments of how their community has responded to the economic situation. Over a quarter said that people are helping one another and serving the community more (25 percent compared to 19 percent nationwide); one in

ten reported a revival of earlier service traditions (11 percent compared to 7 percent nationwide); and over a third said that there is greater discussion of how economic issues affect schools and other community institutions (33 percent compared to 29 percent nationwide).

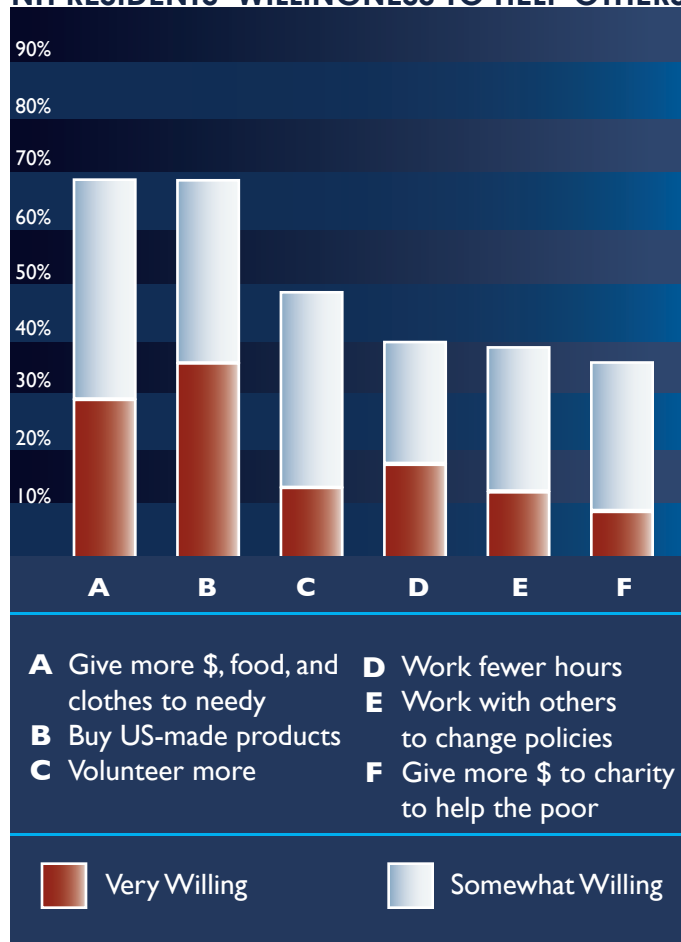
No doubt, community discussion is fueled in part by the economic urgency of reduced school budgets: over one-third (35 percent) of New Hampshire residents said that there had been staff and budget cuts in their local schools, 25 percent reported no change and others (38 percent) were unsure whether or not their local schools faced budget pressures.

Despite the increase in needs due to the impact of the recession, a substantial 17 percent of Granite Staters said that while they wished they could do something to help the community, they were unable to find ways to do so; this was by and large true of a similar proportion of Americans nationwide (14 percent). At the same time, and not necessarily at odds with the strong tradition of community care in New Hampshire, close to two-thirds of residents (65 percent) said that people in the community were responding to the economic situation by looking out for themselves and their families. A similar view was echoed by Americans (66 percent) across the nation.

New Hampshire residents express confidence in their state's civic tradition, with almost one-third (31 percent) believing that the state's civic tradition is stronger than elsewhere. American in others states (13 percent) are less likely on average to express this view of their home states. Granite Staters' positive assessment of their civic commitment is borne out in their relatively greater willingness compared to other Americans to make efforts to help everyone get through these tough economic times. Over a third said they were very willing to buy American products (35 percent), and over a quarter (27 percent) were very willing to give more money, food, and clothes to the needy. Fewer—though still more than was the case nationally—were very willing to work fewer hours to save jobs (17 percent), to work with others to change government policies (13 percent), to volunteer more (12 percent), and to give more money to charity to help the poor (8 percent) (see [Figure 6](#)).

People's willingness to help others is likely to be impacted by the everyday economic and other practical constraints and opportunities they face. Given the positive association between education and income, it is not surprising that respondents who had some college education or who had graduated from college were significantly more likely than those with a high school credential (or less) to say they were very willing to give more money, food, and other goods to charities, to increase the amount of time they themselves volunteer, and to work with others to change government policies. Women were more likely than men to express a strong willingness to give more money (42 percent versus 32 percent) and food (81 percent versus 58 percent) to charities and, important to note given women's traditional role as the primary buyers for the family household, to say that they were very willing to make an effort to buy American-made products (76 percent versus 64 percent). A willingness to give and to help and work with others—but not to work fewer hours to avoid others' being unemployed—was also significantly more characteristic of churchgoing than of non-churchgoing respondents. Although there were few generational differences in our data, one was striking: Members of the millennial generation—those born after 1980 and who are currently 15 to 29 years old—were less likely than older cohorts to express a strong willingness to give more food and money to charities helping the needy. This finding needs to be interpreted with caution. It may be that young people have relatively less

FIGURE 6
NH RESIDENTS' WILLINGNESS TO HELP OTHERS



disposable time and money than older Americans rather than simply indicating a greater personal selfishness. Indeed, almost half (49 percent) of all the millennials in our study report being engaged in volunteering, a proportion that is slightly higher than for other age groups: generation Xers (born between 1965 and 1979) – 43%; baby boomers (born between 1945 and 1964) 40%; or seniors (born before 1945) 42%. (These differences are not statistically significant.)

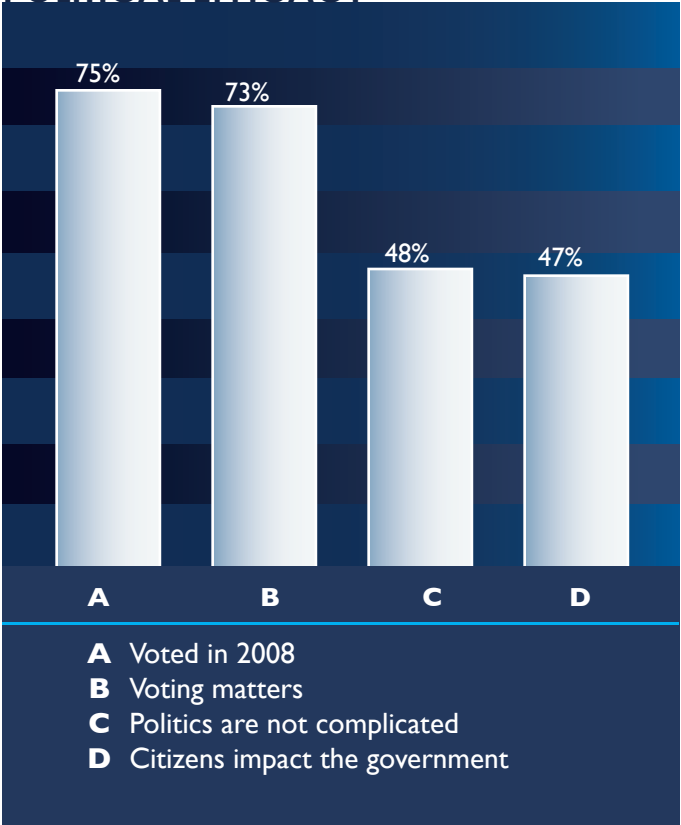
Political Involvement

New Hampshire residents take pride in their state's highly influential place in presidential primaries and their unique first-in-the-nation voting status—at famed Dixville Notch in the northern tip of the state. Politics, therefore, is very much part of New Hampshire life, and we see this reflected in residents' attitudes toward the political process. Seventy-five percent of the survey respondents reported voting in the 2008 presidential

election; this figure is slightly higher than that reported in the Census Bureau's survey-based Volunteering and Voting Supplementary Data (71 percent). Nonetheless, given the social desirability attached to voting, the New Hampshire figure (75 percent) from the CHI survey is remarkably consistent with the official voter turnout records from the New Hampshire secretary of state's office (74 percent). Voter turnout in New Hampshire is among the highest in the nation—after Minnesota (75 percent), and D.C. (74 percent)—and similar to Maine and Wisconsin (based on Census self-report figures).

Not surprisingly, given that all of the presidential election candidates ritualistically visit the state several times during the long election season, Granite Staters are more likely than Americans as a whole to get personally involved in campaigning. Forty-three percent of New Hampshire respondents said that had they tried to convince someone to vote for or against a political party or candidate, whereas this was true of fewer than one-third (32 percent) of Americans overall. New Hampshire residents are also more likely to wear a campaign button or to place a campaign placard outside their home (23 percent versus 18 percent for the nation). Granite Staters' use of the Internet

FIGURE 7
POLITICAL EFFICACY



as a campaign tool more closely matches other Americans: over one in ten (13 percent) displayed their support for a candidate on Facebook, and 6 percent made a donation on a political website (the figures for Americans as a whole are 8 percent and 6 percent respectively).

Respect for the Democratic Process

New Hampshire residents express a great deal of respect for the democratic process and their role within that process. Close to three-quarters (73 percent) of the respondents disagree with the statement: "So many other people vote in the national elections that it doesn't matter much to me whether I vote or not." Close to half express disagreement with the statement: "Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on" (48 percent), and similarly with the statement: "People like me don't

FIGURE 8
POLITICAL EFFICACY BY EDUCATION

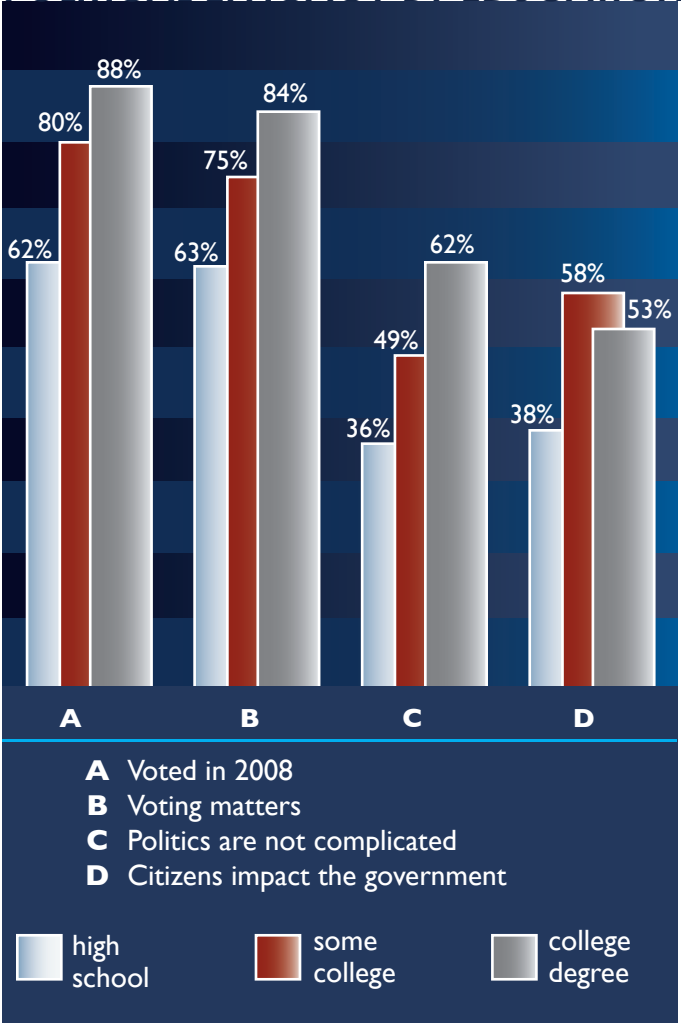
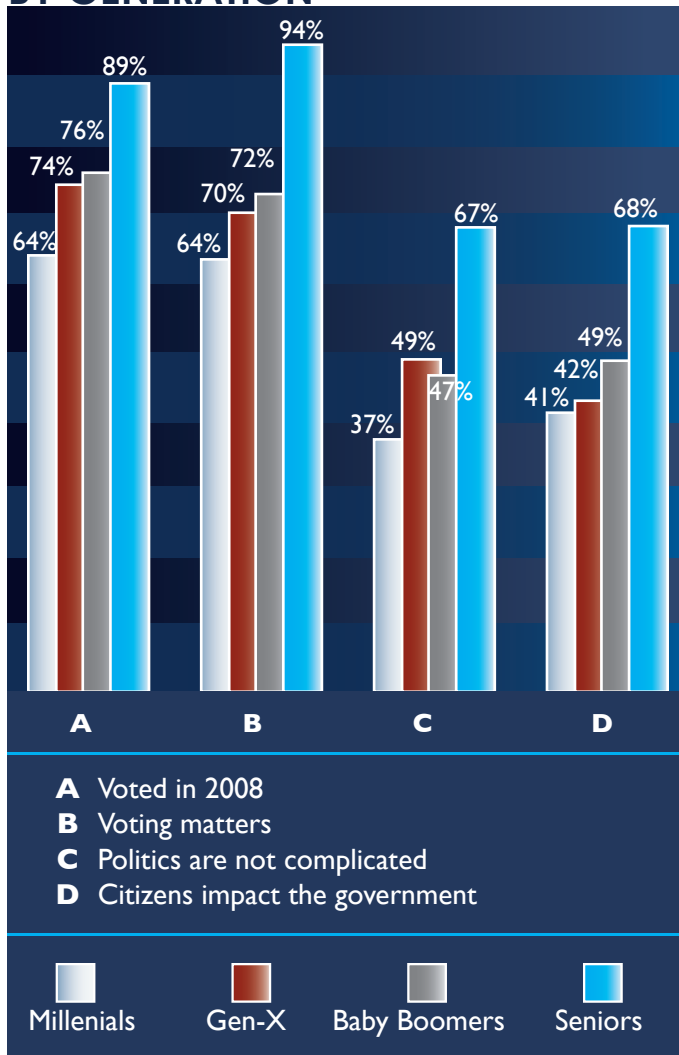


FIGURE 9
POLITICAL EFFICACY
BY GENERATION



have any say about what the government does” (47 percent) (see [Figure 7](#)). New Hampshire residents’ views of the political process closely parallel Americans in general (for whom the respective “disagree” figures for the statements above are 70 percent, 45 percent, and 47 percent). But New Hampshire residents are more likely than those living outside the state to say that they pay attention to what’s going on in government and public affairs *most* of the time (37 percent, compared to 30 percent nationally).

Granite Staters’ perceptions of citizens’ political efficacy are highly differentiated by education. Those with a high school education or less are significantly more likely than those who have been to college (even if not graduated) to have a pessimistic view of the

role of citizens in shaping government and political outcomes (see [Figure 8](#)). There are also some signs of political disaffection among members of the millennial generation, notwithstanding the high profile role of young people in the 2008 election campaign. New Hampshire millennials are less likely than older respondents to agree that citizens can impact elections and the political process, and they are also less likely to pay attention to public affairs (see [Figure 9](#)).

Political Activism

It is further noteworthy that many Granite Staters continue to maintain an activist interest in political issues after the glow of the election spotlight has faded. For example, 24 percent reported that they had contacted an elected official about an issue that was discussed during the campaign, and close to one in ten (7 percent) said that they contacted the media about a campaign issue. Many worked to change things locally—with regard to school, workplace, or neighborhood policies (14 percent)—and more commonly, through personal relationships, by trying to

FIGURE 10
POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT
BY EDUCATION LEVEL

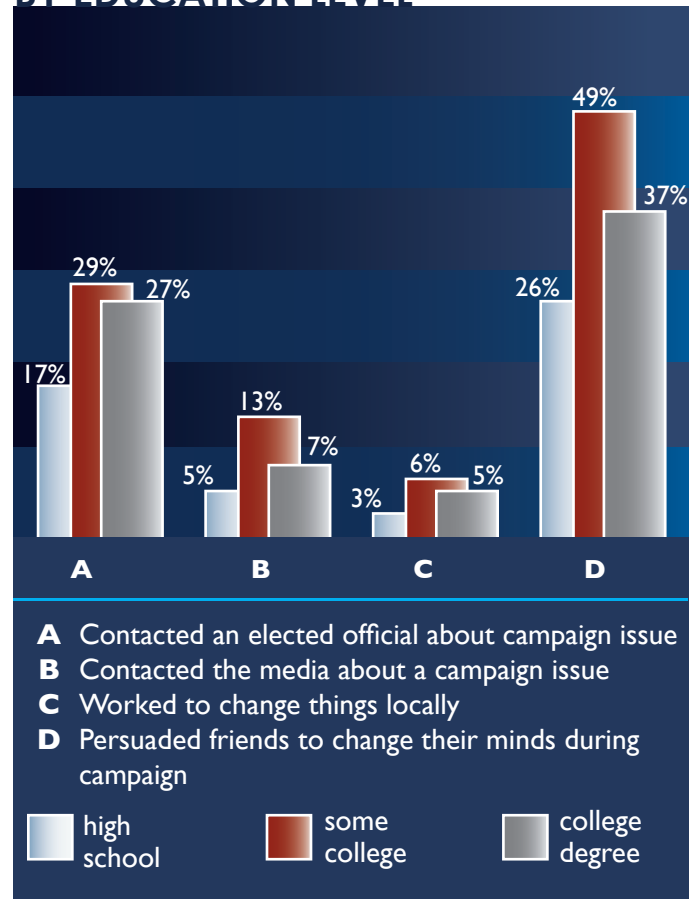
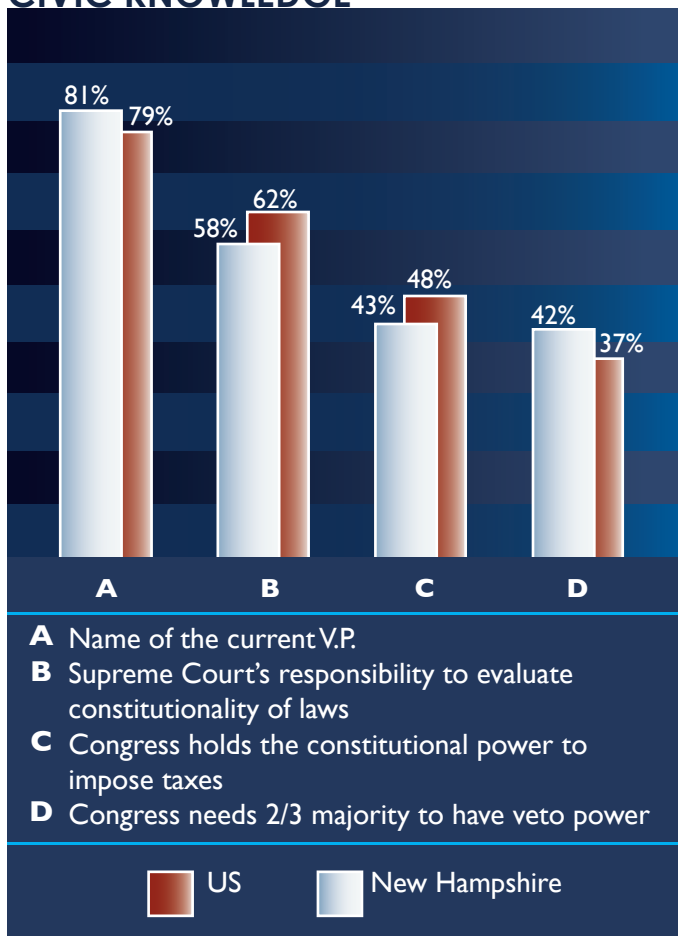


FIGURE 11
CIVIC KNOWLEDGE



persuade friends to change their minds about issues discussed during the campaign (35 percent). Once again, education impacts civic engagement—respondents with some college experience are significantly more likely than the non-college educated to report trying to change a local policy (see [Figure 10](#)). Gender is also a source of variation here, with men (19 percent) more likely than women (10 percent) to work toward changing local policies.

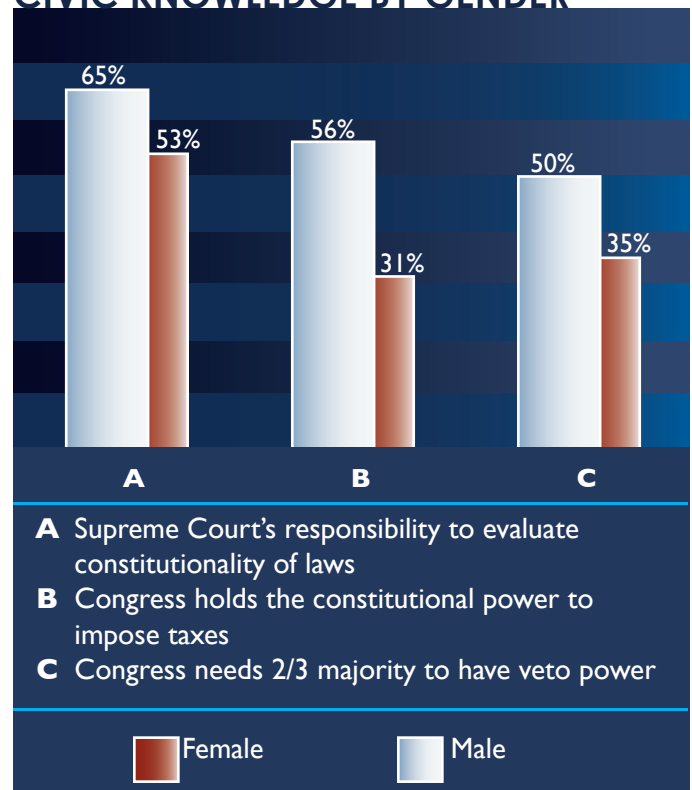
Civic Knowledge

New Hampshire residents' comparatively greater level of political interest and involvement gives them a slight edge in civic knowledge. For example, they are more likely than other Americans to know the name of the current vice president (81 percent versus 79 percent), and to know that Congress needs a two-thirds majority to have veto power (42 percent versus 37 percent). They are less likely, however, to know that it is the Supreme Court's responsibility to evaluate the constitutionality of laws (58 percent versus 62 percent). Nevertheless, as is true of substantial numbers of people across the nation, fewer than

half (43 percent) of New Hampshire residents (and 48 percent in the United States as a whole) know for sure that Congress holds the constitutional power to impose taxes (see [Figure 11](#)). The latter gap in civic knowledge is all the more remarkable in New Hampshire given that tax policy is such a persistently salient public issue in the state.

Levels of civic knowledge vary by social context. College graduates are significantly more likely than all others to give the correct responses on civic knowledge questions—even though, it should be noted, a substantial minority of college graduates is unsure regarding Congress's veto override (38 percent) and taxation (38 percent) powers. It is also evident from the survey that women tend to be less knowledgeable than men about the Supreme Court's power to evaluate the constitutionality of laws (53 percent/65 percent), Congress's taxation power (31 percent/56 percent), and Congress's veto majority (34 percent/50 percent) (see [Figure 12](#)). Adding to the literature indicating that church is a source not only of civic engagement but also of civic knowledge,²¹ New Hampshire churchgoers are significantly more likely than non-churchgoers to know about Congress's taxation and veto powers, and the Supreme Court's

FIGURE 12
CIVIC KNOWLEDGE BY GENDER



role in evaluating the constitutionality of laws. Although an earlier study of civic life in New Hampshire found that youth were less knowledgeable than older respondents about politics and government,²² in this survey, generation did not emerge as a significant source of variation in respondents' civic knowledge.

Trust in Government

Civic knowledge, interest in politics, and respect for the democratic process do not necessarily translate into trust in government. Although a large majority of New Hampshire residents say that the government in Washington, D.C., can be trusted to do what is right (81 percent), most qualify their sense of trust to indicate that this is true “only some of the time” (60 percent). By contrast, only one in five (21 percent) said that the

federal government can be trusted “most of the time.” Trust in state and in local government is higher, though still highly qualified, with approximately one-third of New Hampshire residents saying that state (37 percent) and local government (33 percent) can be trusted to do what is right most of the time (see [Figure 13](#)). The patterns of trust in government observed for New Hampshire residents parallel those for Americans nationwide.

The general skepticism toward government decision making extended to respondents' attitudes toward the recent economic stimulus package. A large minority, 40 percent, said that they had *hardly any* confidence that the federal government would spend the stimulus money responsibly, though again, respondents were more likely to express confidence in the ability of state and local government to act responsibly in regard to stimulus spending. Nonetheless, those saying that they had a *great deal* of confidence in either local (14 percent), state (14 percent), or federal (10 percent) government stimulus spending was relatively low. It is interesting to note that churchgoers expressed more trust in local government than did non-churchgoers, a finding that may reflect churchgoers' volunteer experiences of occasionally working with local government officials in social service activities.

Confidence in Institutions

The notable lack of trust in government extends to several other major social institutions. Congress earns the least confidence among New Hampshire residents, with 41 percent of respondents expressing *hardly any* confidence in this core institution. Perhaps not surprising given the economic difficulties of the last two years, close to 4 in 10 respondents express *hardly any* confidence in major companies (38 percent) and banks and financial institutions (36 percent). Similarly, large minorities express *hardly any* confidence in federal agencies (35 percent), organized labor (32 percent), and in the print (32 percent) and electronic (25 percent) news media. The institutions that inspire the greatest amount of confidence are local or small businesses, the scientific community, and public schools (see [Figure 14](#)).

FIGURE 13
LEVELS OF TRUST IN GOVERNMENT

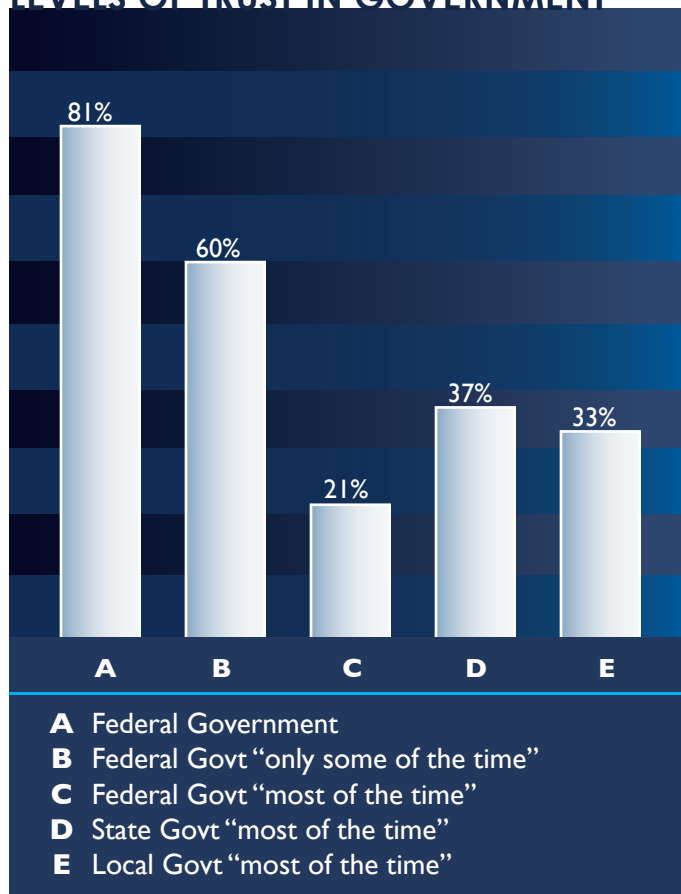
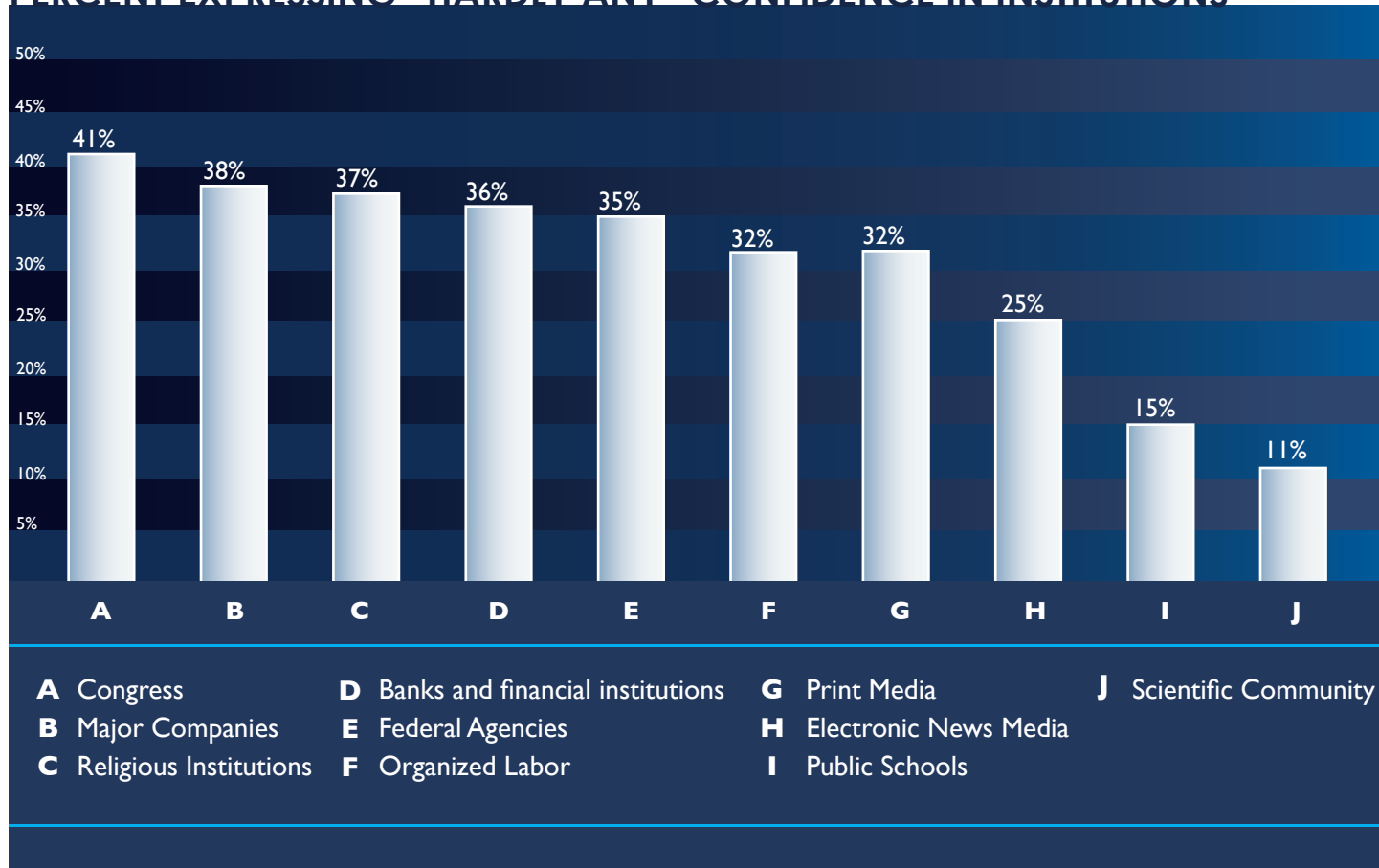


FIGURE 14
PERCENT EXPRESSING “HARDLY ANY” CONFIDENCE IN INSTITUTIONS



In regard to all of these institutions, New Hampshire attitudes basically mirror those of the nation as a whole. There is, however, one notable exception. New Hampshire residents (37 percent) are far more likely than Americans across the nation (25 percent) to say that they have *hardly any* confidence in religious institutions. This finding is likely a reflection of a couple of factors. First, Granite Staters demonstrate a general religious indifference—close to half of New Hampshire residents (48 percent) never attend religious services. Second, among those who do attend church in this largely Catholic state, a sharp distrust of religious organizations is part of the continuing institutional fallout from the Church’s sex abuse crisis in which New Hampshire church officials were embroiled. It is particularly noteworthy that over half (55 percent) of the young millennial generation – those born after 1980 – express hardly any confidence in organized religion. By contrast, this is true of approximately one-third of older respondents.

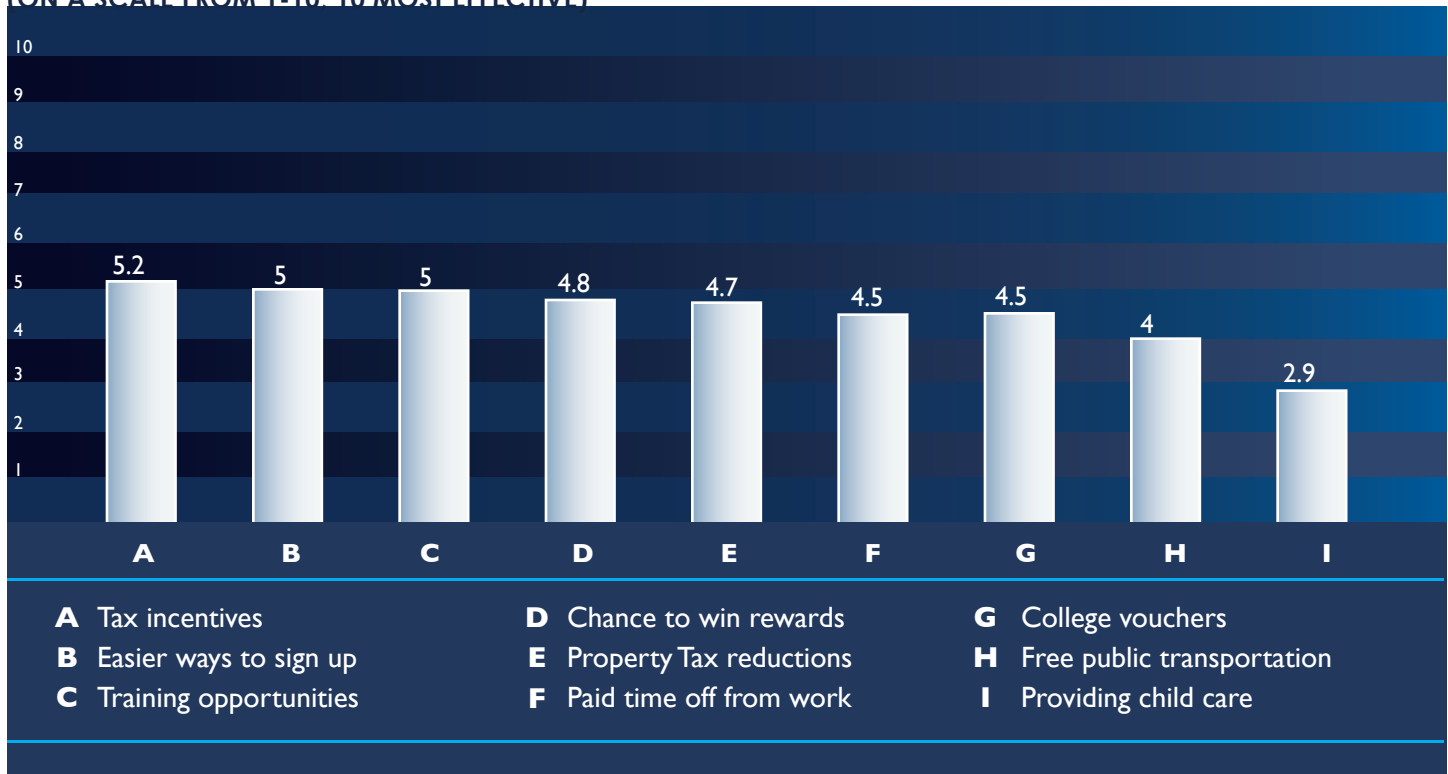
The low regard that respondents have for social institutions across the gamut is so sweepingly pervasive that, with the exception of variation in regard to organized religion, no one subgroup of the population stands out as deviating from others. Whether college educated or not, male or female, a boomer or a generation-Xer, or churchgoing or non-attending, all are united by a lack of confidence in the array of institutions that are crucial to the everyday and long-term functioning and cohesion of American society.

Nurturing Civic Involvement *Personal Incentives*

Although it is frequently assumed that people might volunteer more if volunteering was made more convenient and if there were more incentives to do so, the CHI survey suggests that this is not true. In response to questions assessing the effectiveness of various wide-ranging incentives, the most common response

FIGURE 15

AVERAGE LEVEL OF EFFECTIVENESS FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT INCENTIVES (ON A SCALE FROM 1-10; 10 MOST EFFECTIVE)

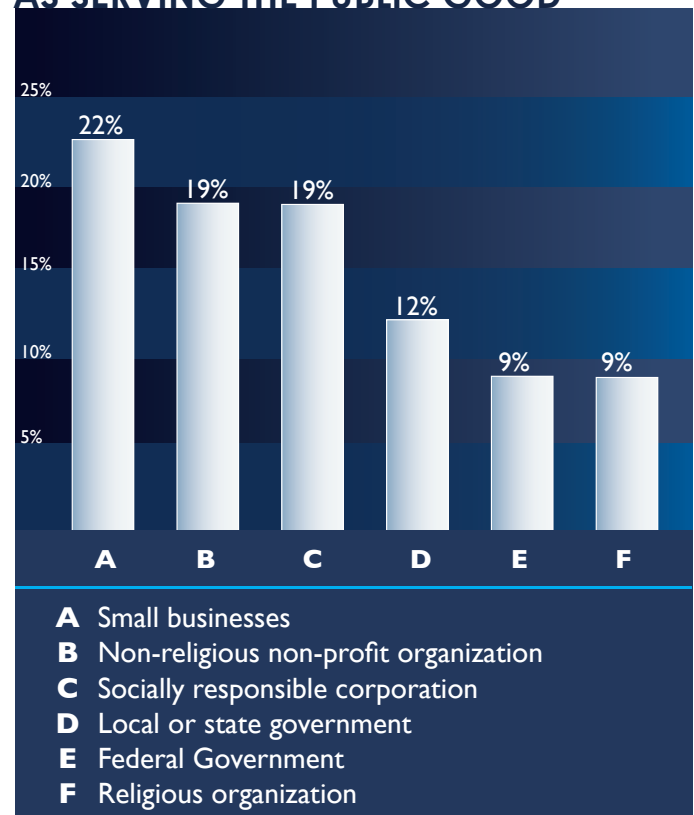


to each incentive, across a continuum of response options (from 1 through 10), indicated that the particular incentive *wouldn't make any difference* in getting the respondent to become more active in his or her community. Thus, such incentives as providing child care for respondents' children while parents attended meetings or did volunteer work; easier ways to sign up for public service activities; training opportunities so that respondents could learn new skills as part of their volunteer activity; the chance to win rewards (e.g., gift certificates) for volunteering; and free public transportation to the volunteer activity were seen by New Hampshire residents—and by Americans more generally—as relatively ineffective ways to increase their community engagement. The incentives that were more welcomed by respondents were getting paid time off from work, college vouchers, and income and property tax reductions (see Figure 15).

Clearly, then, for Americans to increase their personal involvement in community activity it would seem that such activity needs to present an economic benefit to the volunteer. In general, although many Americans are quite engaged in

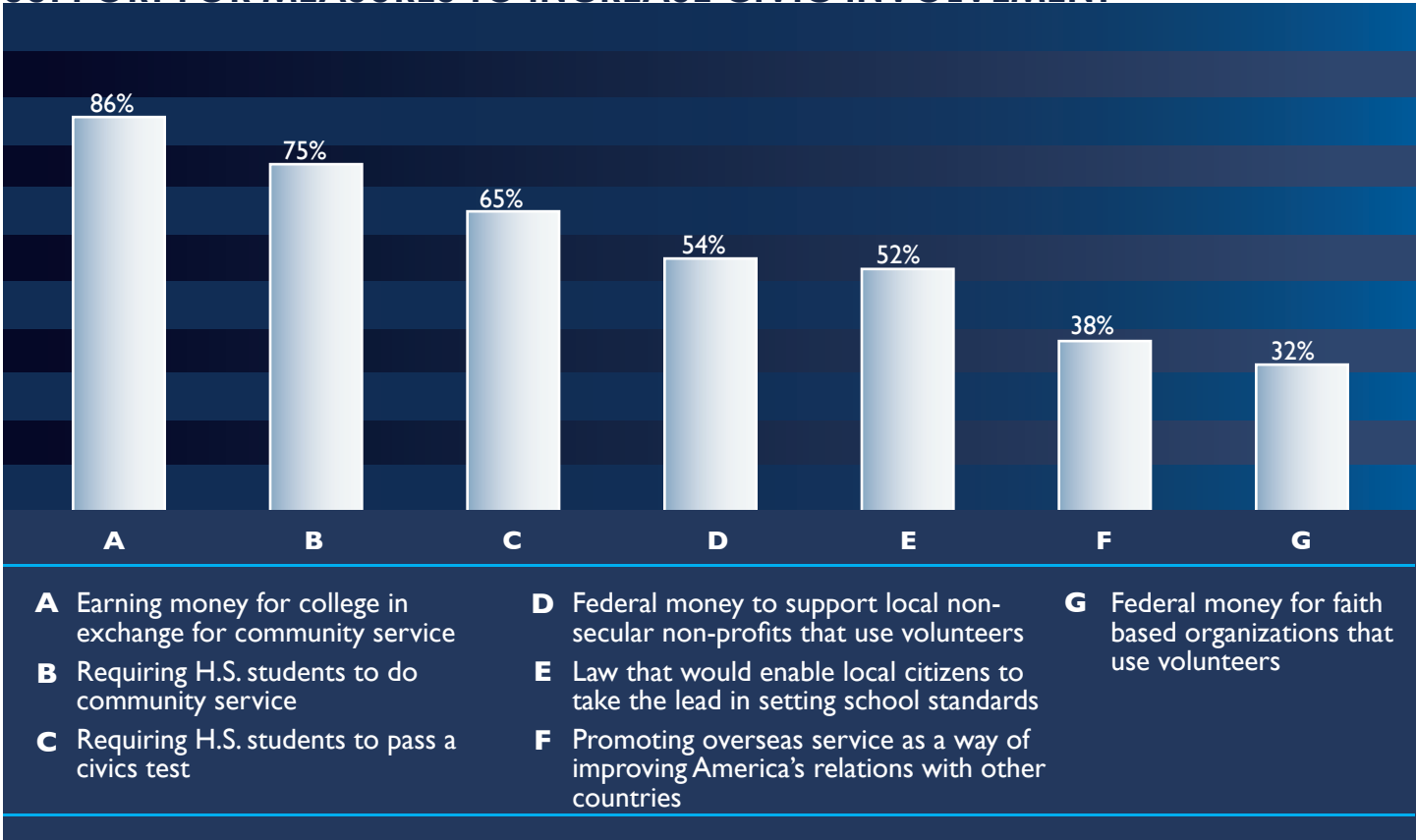
FIGURE 16

CAREER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AS SERVING THE PUBLIC GOOD



community activity, a community service ethos is not necessarily dominant in their lives. Some New Hampshire residents, like Americans outside the state, see career choices, for example, in terms of the public benefit of the work (7 percent and 6 percent, respectively). Nonetheless, they are far more likely to rank salary and benefits (42 percent and 41 percent) and job security (23 percent and 28 percent) as the most important considerations influencing their career choice.

FIGURE 17
SUPPORT FOR MEASURES TO INCREASE CIVIC INVOLVEMENT



Serving the Community Good

It is evident that New Hampshire residents share with their fellow Americans the view that serving the community good is not confined to doing community service. It is noteworthy that close to equal numbers of respondents said that working either for a local small business (22 percent), for a non-religious nonprofit organization (19 percent), or for a socially responsible corporation (19 percent) would allow them to do the most good for the community or the country. Far fewer endorsed the community benefit of working for local or state (12 percent) or federal (9 percent) government. Once again, highlighting the general unreligious tenor of New Hampshire, fewer Granite

Staters (9 percent) than other Americans (15 percent) saw working for a religious organization as good for the community (see [Figure 16](#)).

Support for Civic Involvement

Although Granite Staters are more likely to emphasize the practical economic considerations involved in career choices and in evaluating incentives for greater involvement in community service, they largely support a range of measures to increase civic involvement. Substantial majorities favor students earning money for college in exchange for completing a full year of national or community service (84 percent), and requiring high

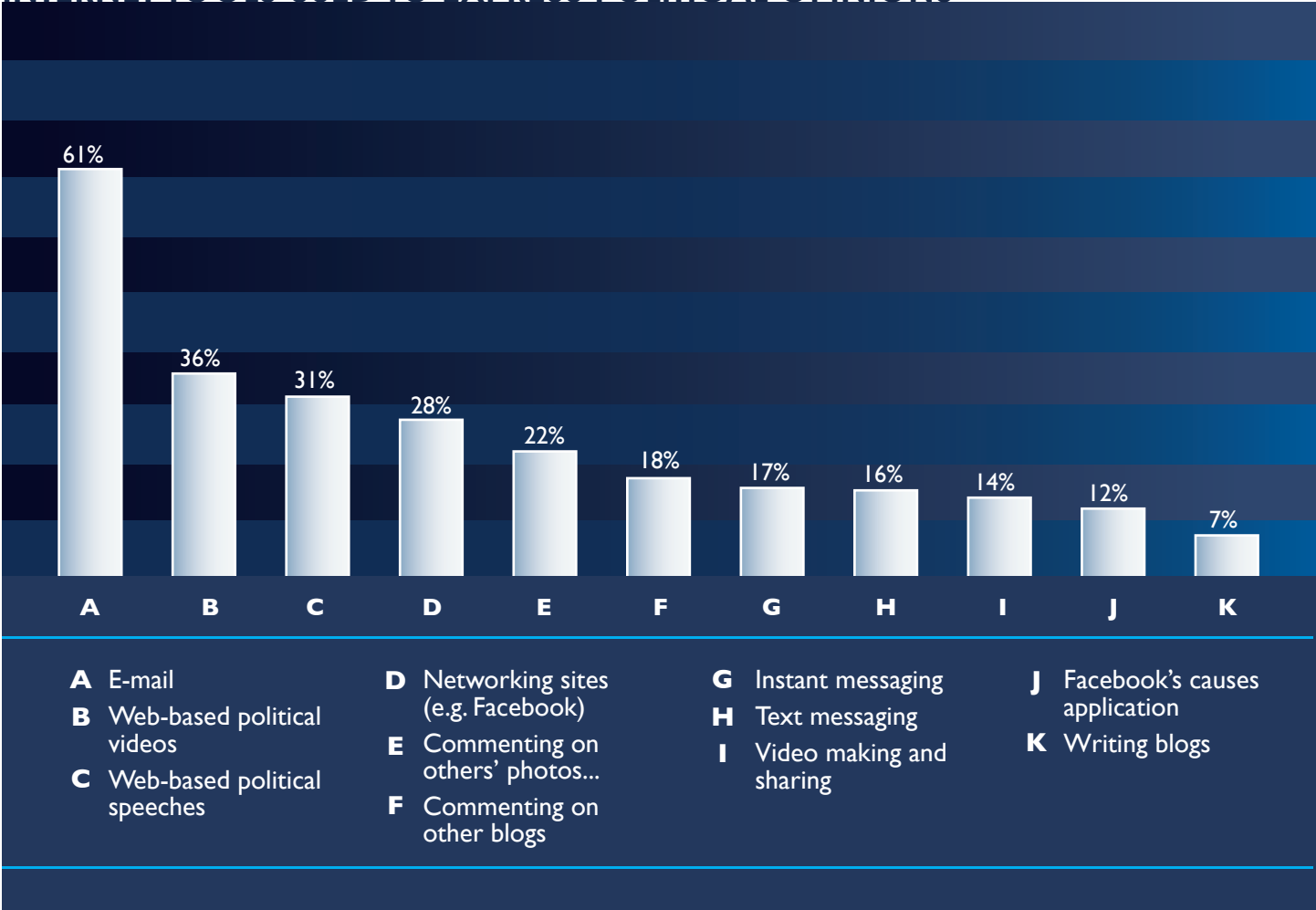
school students to do community service (74 percent) and to pass a civics test (64 percent). It is of further note that over two-thirds (69 percent) welcome the relatively innovative idea of a national public discussion involving more than one million Americans deliberating on an important policy issue that would require a response from Congress.

There is also substantial support for other measures to increase civic involvement (see [Figure 17](#)). Just over half of New Hampshire residents favor using federal money to support non-secular nonprofit organizations that use volunteers (54 percent), and support changes in the law that would enable local citizens to take the lead in setting standards in their local schools (52 percent). In line with New Hampshire residents' relative distrust of organized religion, approximately one-third (32 percent) favor federal money for faith-based organizations that use volunteers.

Indeed, this option is less preferred than the other least popular proposal—funding and promoting overseas service as a way of improving America's relations with other countries (38 percent). Not surprisingly, weekly churchgoers (50 percent) are significantly more likely than occasional attendees (33 percent) and non-churchgoers (25 percent) to support government funding of faith-based organizations.

New Hampshire respondents' support for various measures that would increase civic engagement also varies by gender and generation. Women are more likely than men to support government funding of secular volunteer organizations (62 percent/46 percent), requiring high school students to fulfill service obligations (84 percent/66 percent), and giving college tuition in exchange for service (91 percent/77 percent). The younger generation, perhaps because their experience of high

FIGURE 18
INTERNET TOOLS USED TO EXPRESS POLITICAL OPINIONS



school is the most recent, is the least favorably disposed toward policies requiring high school community service and civics tests. While a majority in all age groups favors requiring high school students to do community service, millennials – those born after 1980 – comprise the smallest majority supporting this measure – 56 percent, compared to 78% of Xers and baby boomers, and 85 percent of seniors. Similarly, whereas 53 percent of millennials oppose a high school civics test requirement, this is favored by 61 percent of generation X, 71 percent of baby boomers, and 82 percent of seniors.

Sociability, Internet Use and Civic Engagement

New Hampshire residents are fairly sociable. Close to two-thirds (62 percent) of respondents, similar to Americans nationwide (60 percent), report that their whole family usually eats dinner together. But Granite Staters (51 percent) are more likely than Americans as a whole (40 percent) to say that they spend a lot of time visiting friends. Among New Hampshire respondents, visiting with friends is a far more common activity for those with only a high school diploma (61 percent) than for those with some college experience (47 percent) or who graduated from college (41 percent). Additionally, three out of four New Hampshire residents (74 percent), compared to fewer than two-thirds (59 percent) of other Americans, report spending a lot of time communicating electronically with friends using a computer, cell phone or some other device.

New Hampshire residents are also active users of Internet technology for purposes of political and community engagement. Eight in ten (81 percent) Granite Staters, compared to 60 percent of Americans nationwide, use the Internet at least occasionally to gather information about political, social, or community issues, and this is something that over a quarter (29 percent) of New Hampshire residents do weekly or more often (compared to 18 percent of Americans in general). New Hampshire men (39 percent) are more likely than women (24 percent), and college graduates (40 percent) are more likely than respondents with some college experience (35 percent) and respondents who are high school graduates only (23 percent) to frequently use the Internet for gathering political information.

Additionally, substantial numbers of New Hampshire residents report having used the Internet to express their own opinions about political, social, or community issues over the past year. The

range of Internet tools engaged to express political opinions is impressive. It includes email (61 percent), social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace (28 percent), instant messaging (17 percent), text messaging (16 percent), using Facebook's causes application (12 percent), writing blogs (7 percent), posting comments on other blogs (18 percent), photo and video making and sharing (14 percent), commenting on others' photos and videos (22 percent), and watching online political videos (36 percent) and speeches (31 percent) (see [Figure 18](#)). Again, these rates of Internet use in New Hampshire are higher than the national average. And when New Hampshire residents use the Internet to gather information with regard to taking action on a social or community issue, almost all do so from home (97 percent, compared to 81 percent nationwide) rather than from work (10 percent versus 20 percent), a library or community center (4 percent versus 7 percent), or from a mobile phone (3 percent versus 5 percent).

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The findings from the Civic Health Index (CHI) indicate a high level of civic engagement in New Hampshire. Granite Staters are more likely than Americans as a whole to volunteer, to belong to civic groups, to attend community meetings, and to work with others in their neighborhood to solve community problems. They have a positive view of the state's civic tradition, they pay attention to public affairs, they get involved in political, social and community issues, they take voting seriously, and have high regard for the active role of citizens in the political and governing process. Many New Hampshire residents have first-hand experience of economic difficulty. Yet, it is indicative of the strong community spirit in New Hampshire that during this economic downturn many respondents have helped relatives or non-relatives with food or money or by giving them a place to stay. Many too indicate a strong willingness to make personal sacrifices in order to help others out.

Despite the vibrant condition of New Hampshire's civic health there are some findings that give cause for concern. Like Americans across the nation, New Hampshire residents are skeptical of government decision-making, especially of the federal government, and during this time of economic crisis have very little confidence in banks and financial institutions, major companies, organized labor, the mass media, and Congress. The long term consequences of citizens' lack of trust in the social institutions – especially those that are core to the nation's everyday economic and political functioning – may undermine the ability of these institutions to effectively perform the functions that are required of them, and in the process lead to a deterioration in the well-being of local and national community.

A second cause of concern is the gap in citizens' civic knowledge. Again, this is not unique to New Hampshire, and in fact Granite Staters are more knowledgeable about the political and legal process than the average American. Nonetheless, many residents are unsure about how the legislative process works and this uncertainty or misinformation can hinder both the quality of political debate as well as citizens' ability to shape and impact policy outcomes.

It is also evident that despite the many opportunities available to New Hampshire residents to volunteer in the community, a sizable number say that they have not been able to find an outlet through which to help others. This suggests perhaps that community leaders need to be more attentive to publicizing the volunteer opportunities available and reaching out to those who may not already be part of a volunteer network.

The NCI survey shows that New Hampshire residents are using the Internet as a tool for civic engagement, and it is likely that its use will continue to grow over the next few years. The Internet opens up a whole slew of new and exciting ways for individuals to get involved in community and political activism. It can also become a source of civic inequality, however, if gaps in access to broadband or high-speed Internet are not redressed so as to ensure that all citizens – whether they live in rural northern New Hampshire or in immigrant neighborhoods in Manchester – have the technological, economic, and social capability to use the Internet effectively.

Finally, one of the most persistent patterns in the survey is the positive relationship between education and civic engagement. There is a big divide between college educated and high school educated individuals in their levels of community involvement and attitudes toward civic engagement and the political process. This gap parallels the growing economic divide between college and non-college educated workers, and both trends in tandem do not bode well for efforts to build a more inclusive and participatory civic society that needs the input of all of its citizens in order to better serve the good of the whole community.

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