



Democracy
Innovation

Democracy Innovations Workshop

Phoenix, AZ

October 22nd, 2024





wifi network: asu guest (have to register for account)





How long have you been doing civic work?



The National Civic League: A large, diverse network of local leaders



A long history of innovation...



Founded in 1894 by Teddy Roosevelt, Louis Brandeis, Frederick Law Olmsted, and Mary Munford, NCL established the Model City Charter, city manager form of government, and other reforms to fight corruption, end patronage, and advance public health.

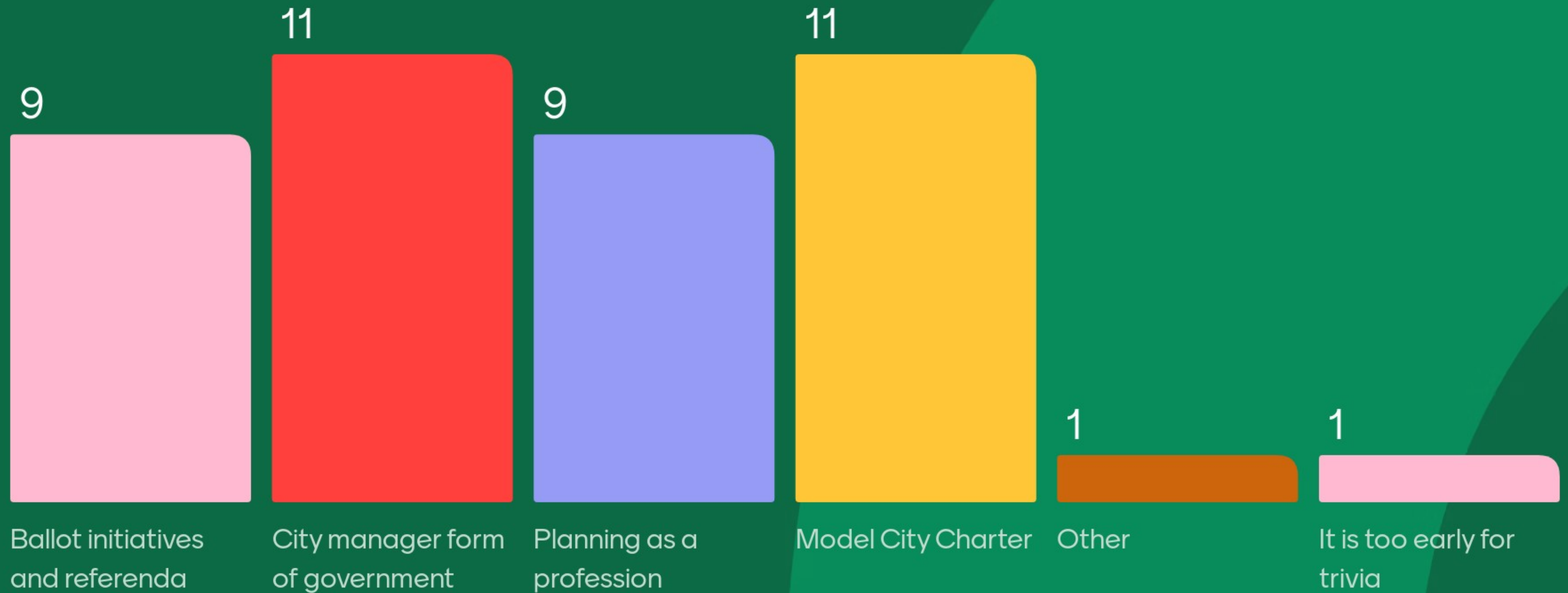


The mission of the National Civic League is to advance civic engagement to create equitable, thriving communities through key programs: community assistance, awards and events, research and publications.



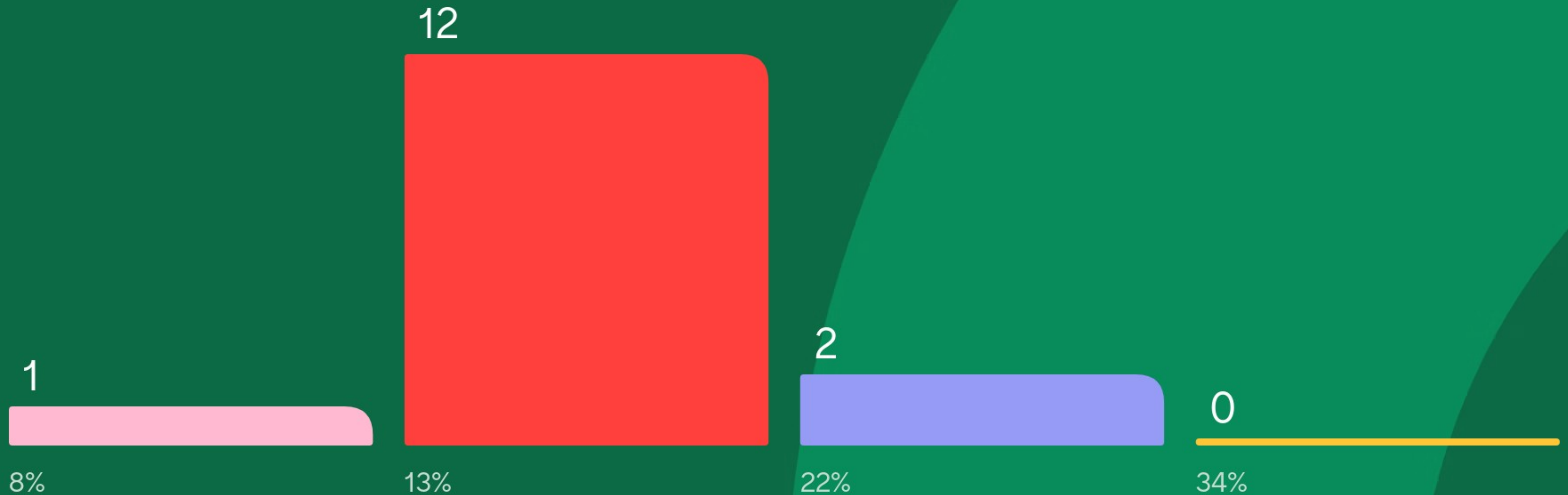


What were the democracy innovations of the early 20th Century?

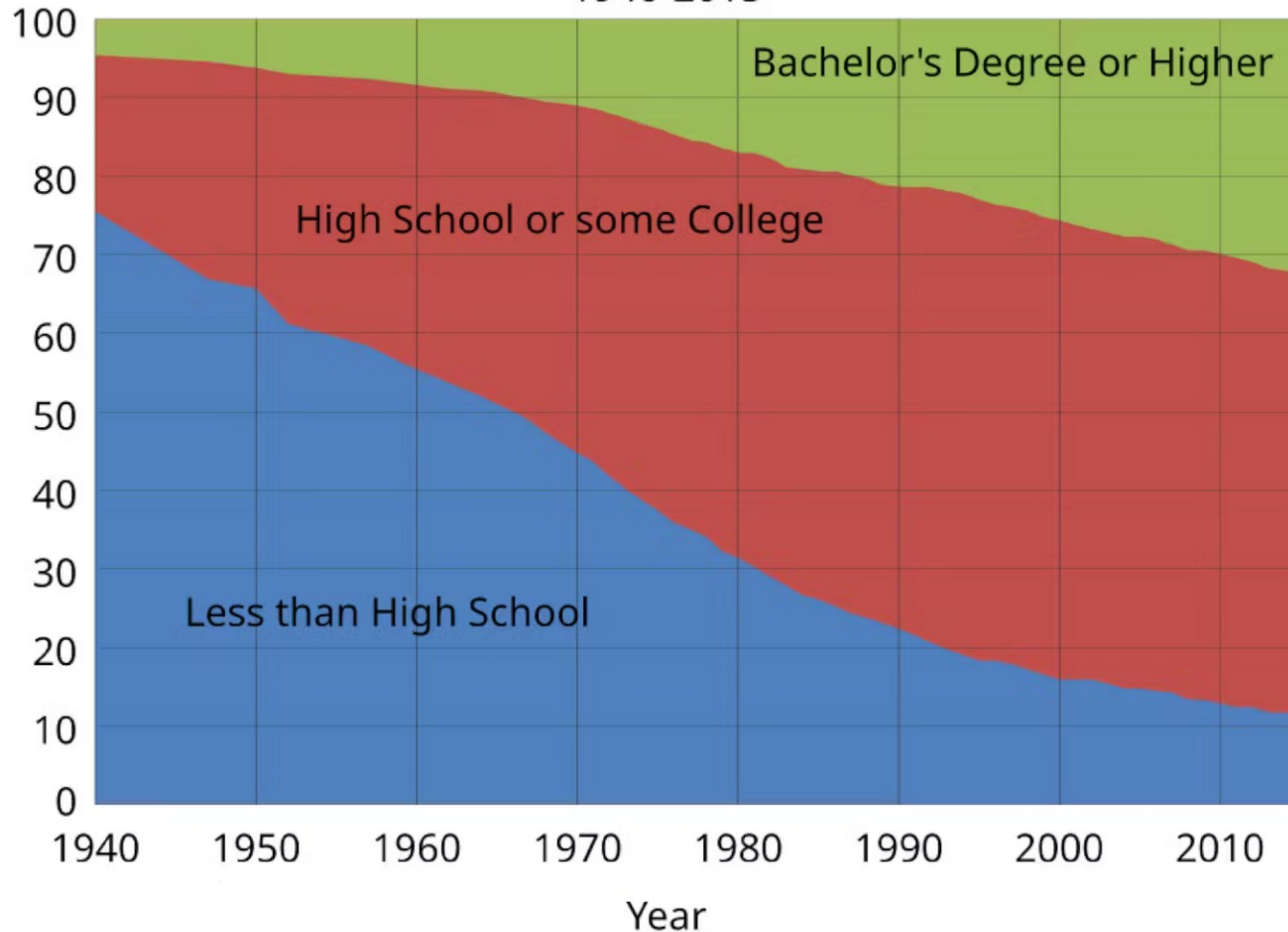




Changes since the Civic League was founded: What percentage of Americans were high school graduates in 1910?



Percent of Population Age 25 and over by Educational Attainment 1940-2015

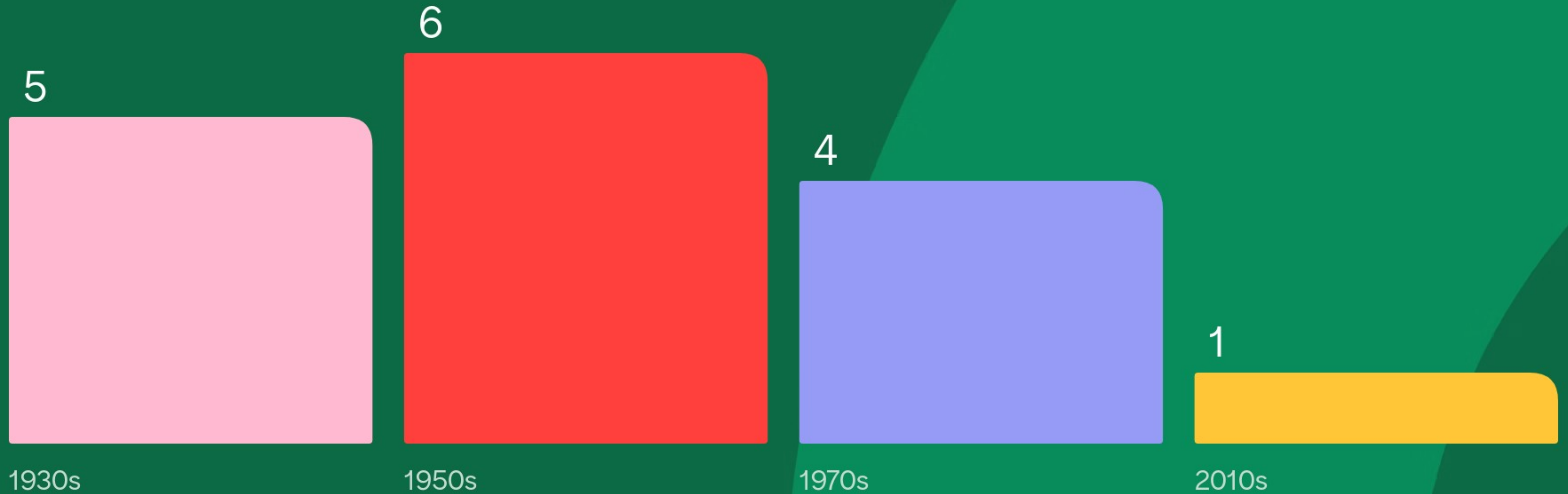


Percent educational attainment in the United States by year from 1940 to 2015. Data from [US Census CPS](#)





Changes since the Civic League was founded: In what decade was deference to authority at its peak?



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Daedalus. 2022;151(4):43-66. doi:10.1162/daed_a_01943

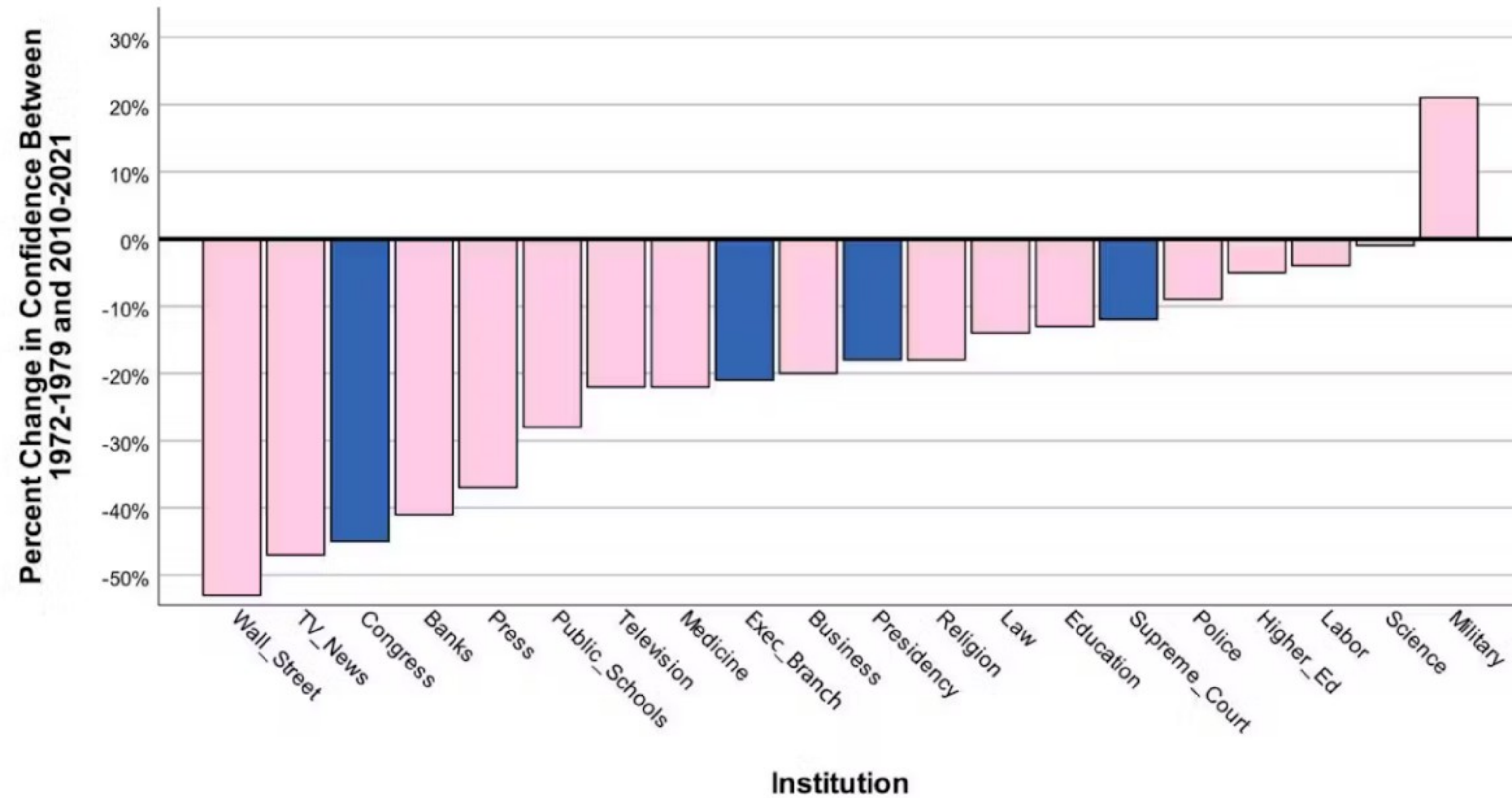
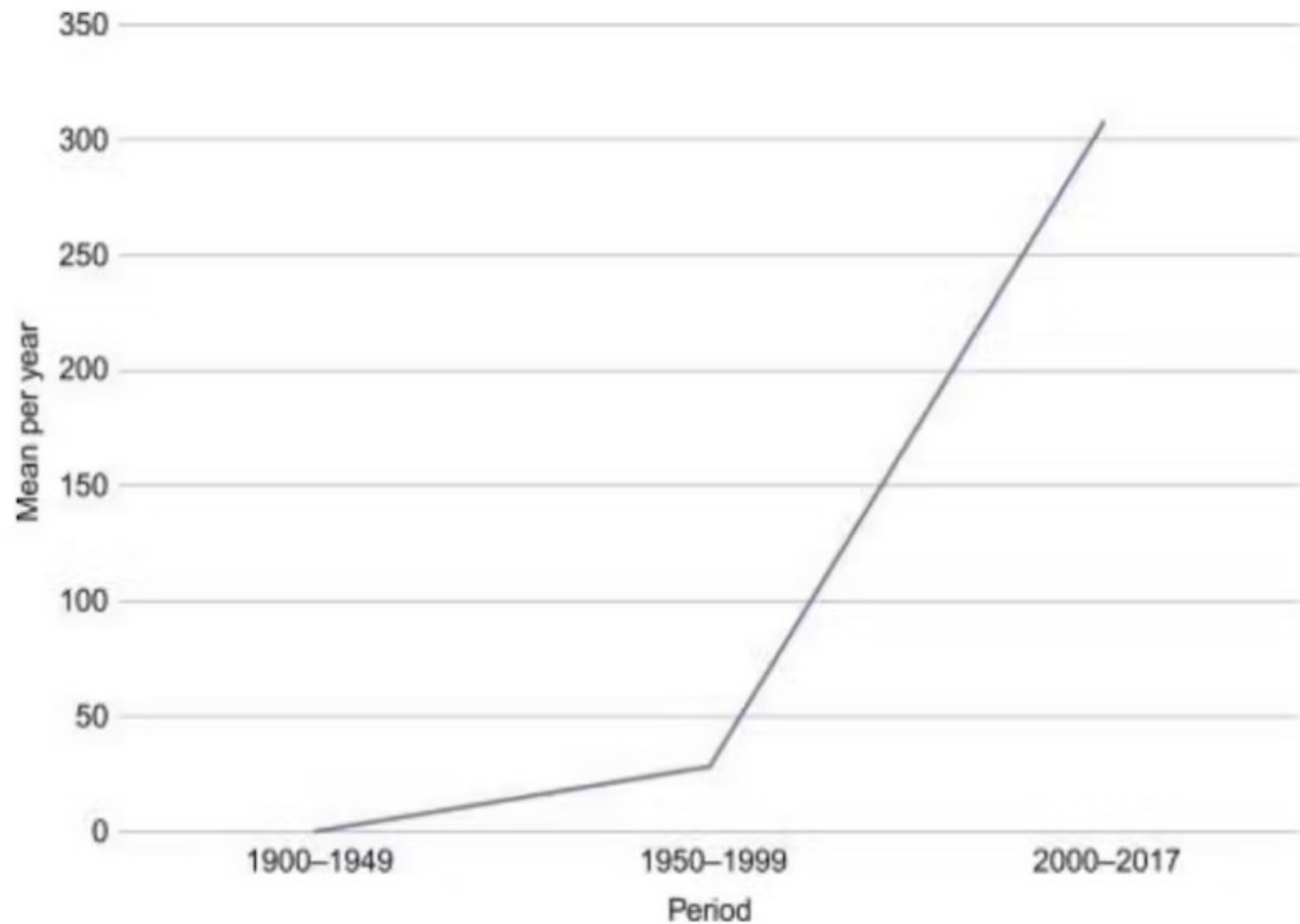


Figure Legend:

Changes in Confidence in Political and Nonpolitical Institutions between 1972–1979 and 2010–2021

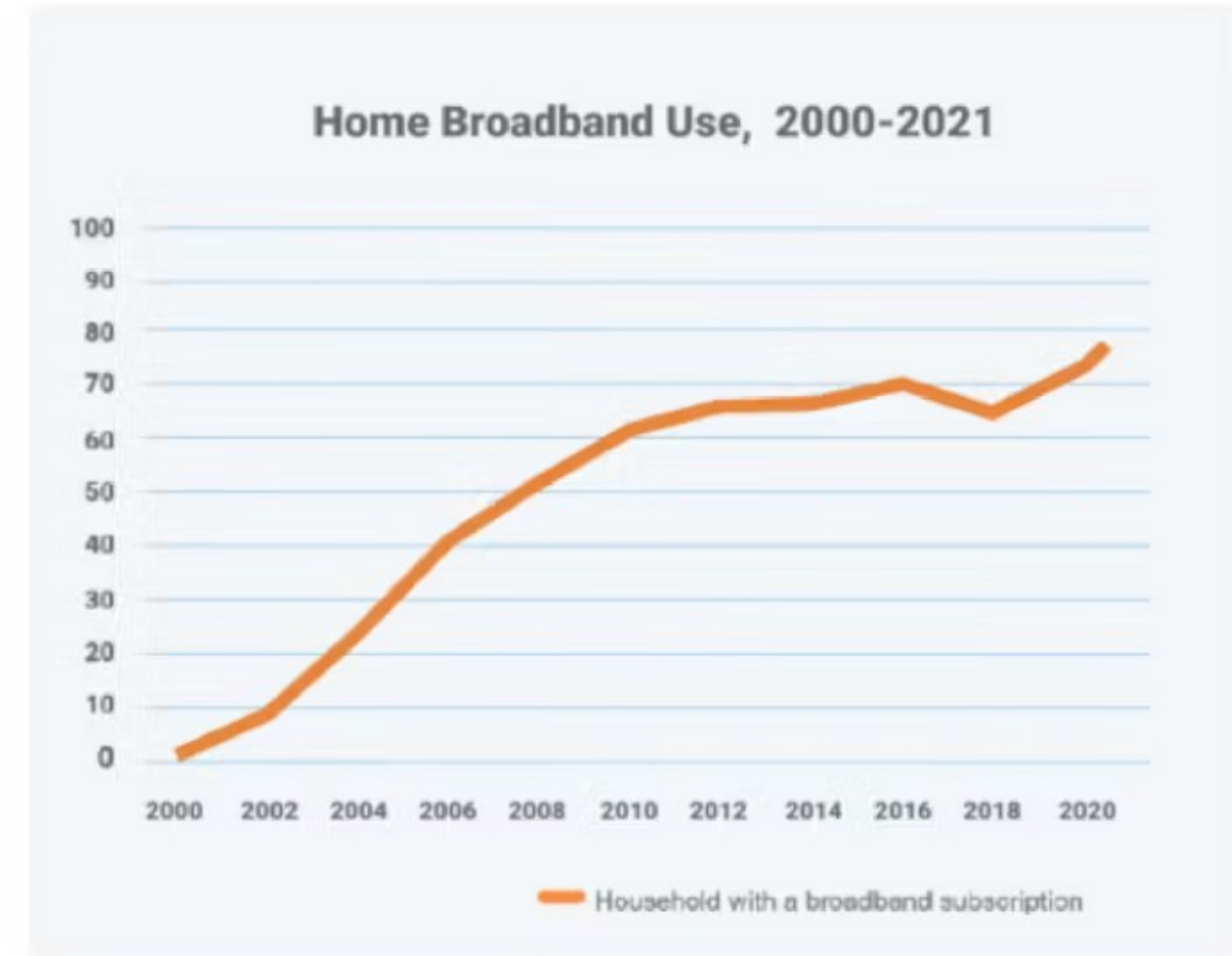


Loneliness



<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0065260118300145>

Internet use



<https://www.learning.com/blog/digital-divide-statistics/>





What is civic health?



Democracy as a way of
life

Agency

The ability for people to
come together and solve
public problems to create a
vibrant community

Community
Connectedness

self-rule together with
social cohesion

Strengthen the actual
participation by
community.

Relationships

Representative
involvement in
government spaces and
processes



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What is civic health?



viability of democracy

Interest and ability to productively engage with government structures to make an impact and positive change

Informed, activated, and intentional engagement

People have capacity to engage, and engage often, meaningful, and experiences direct impact of their voice

Broad mix of relationships in a community

engaged community members, stability and ability to respond to emergent needs, universal access to basic needs, collective trust

Physical space for convening; meaningful channels and methods for participating in public processes



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How can we measure civic health?



Mutual aid, voter engagement and turnout, willingness to help neighbors, communication with public officials, shared decision-making power

Thinking outside the box

Note who has a voice or a seat at the table in civic processes

Differential between public opinion and policy outcomes

Find new ways to truly get representative sample of our people

Community capitals (social, cultural, governance...)

participation

That's difficult! It needs to be objective in a the context of the community. Polls, surveys and focus groups aren't enough. Have community developed indicators for engagement .



How can we measure civic health?



Longitudinal surveys,
census data, qualitative
interviews/q method

case studies that show
evidence of civic
input/guidance creating
structural response/impact

demographics of
participation match the
demographic of the district

Directly from people who
participate in robust
community building and
development

Talking with and listening to
people to see how they
engage in their
community/involved in their
community.



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Guide to Civic Measurement: Using Mapping Civic Measurement in your Community

MAPPING CIVIC MEASUREMENT

Released in 2023, the report features a collection of measurement tools, rubrics, and more than 200 resources in use by practitioners across education, business, philanthropy, community institutions, media, government, and civil society.

But how do you use this in your community?

The *Guide to Civic Measurement* is designed to help you:

- deepen your understanding of the various aspects of readiness and opportunities that can be measured.
- reflect on why sections of the map are important to you and your work and what you are already doing in those areas.
- prioritize what you want to measure and what resources you might need to do so.

Explore the Report & Guide
ctzn-schlr.org/guide-mcm



Democracy
Innovation



New guide for local civic
measurement, produced with
Institute for Citizens and Scholars

To be released October 30





What does civic infrastructure mean to you?

The structure in which people engage

Institutions for engagement
Supporting policy
frameworks/legislation

the systems and practices in place that contribute to civic health

NPOs, civic organizations, grassroots organizations, a community forums like the Arizona Town Hall.

Processes for collaboration, dialogue/deliberation, restorative practices, community organizing

Opportunities and infrastructure that allows meaningful participation in democracy and decision making

An enabling environment for people to actively engage

3rd places, community organizations, and processes for regular people to engage in governance



What does civic infrastructure mean to you?



the processes and inputs/throughputs where civic action can occur and have impact

What is in place to allow for or encourage civic health

Inclusive voting methods

"roads and bridges" for in-person convening, digital connectivity, and facilitated participation

Processes, programs, institutions, social capital, laws

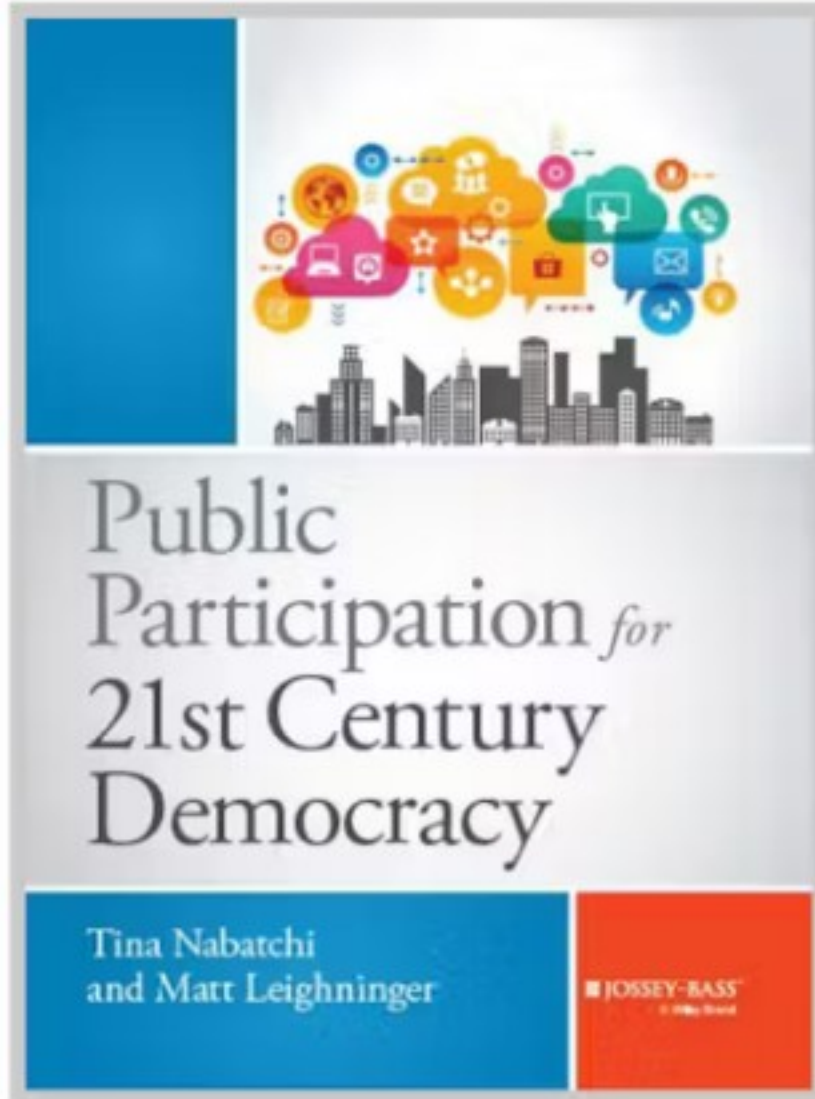
Accessibility



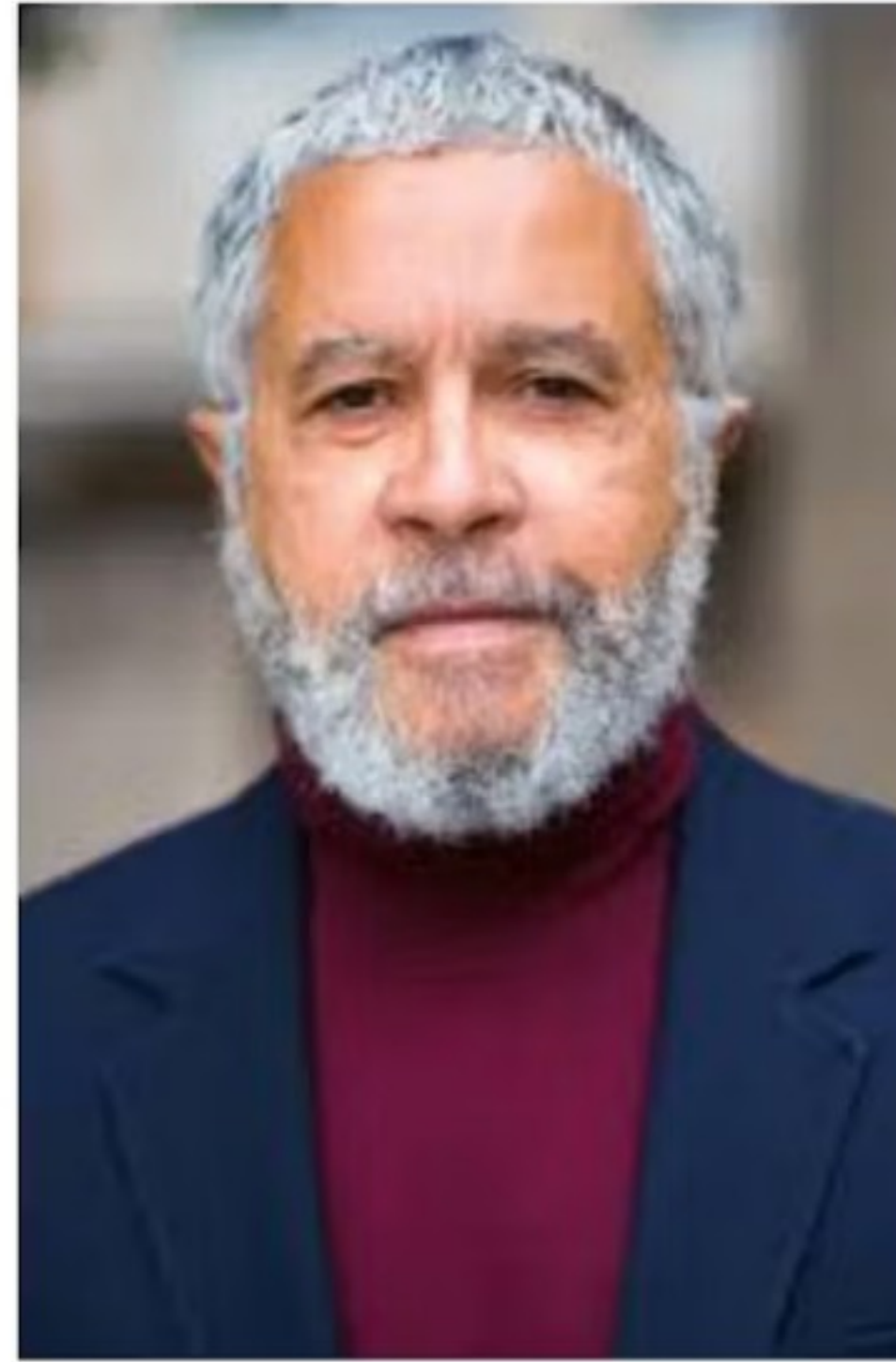
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What is civic infrastructure?



“The laws, processes, institutions, and associations that support regular opportunities for people to connect with each other, solve problems, make decisions, and celebrate community.”



Harold McDougall wrote about civic infrastructure in *Black Baltimore* (1993)

Black Baltimore

A New Theory of Community

HAROLD A. McDOUGALL





A pyramid of democracy innovations



mini-publics

- citizen assemblies
- citizen juries
- deliberative polls

participatory structures

- deliberative forums
- participatory budgeting
- commissions that engage
- neighborhood councils
- youth councils

good governance opportunities

- survey panels
- reporting systems
- co-creation of public services
- volunteer mobilization
- mini-grant programs
- scenario mapping

civic tech opportunities

- ideation
- crowdfunding
- e-petitions
- serious games
- texting-based engagement

social and community networks

- hyperlocal online networks
- neighborhood groups
- On the Table/Meet and Eat

Which democracy innovation has been mandated for local governments in the Dominican Republic, Bolivia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Peru?



PB

Citizen Assembly

participatory budgeting

participatory budgeting

Decentralization

PB

Participatory budgeting

Pb



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Which democracy innovation has been mandated for local governments in the Dominican Republic, Bolivia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Peru?



PB

On the Table



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Which democracy innovation has been mandated for local governments in the Dominican Republic, Bolivia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Peru?

→ Participatory budgeting



Which kind of deliberation has been most prevalent in the United States, and on what issue?



town hall (health care)

Public health

Ballot initiatives on...
abortion??

town halls

On the Dias, and behind
closed doors

Don't know

Focus groups

"consultations" on land
use.



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Which kind of deliberation has been most prevalent in the United States, and on what issue?



the lower rungs on Sherry Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation

social media

social media



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Which form of digital engagement is now used by over 80% of American households?



E petitions?

NextDoor

Social media

social media

Social media

social media

Social media

book of face



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Which form of digital engagement is now used by over 80% of American households?



Facebook

Texting

Return the 'scales' of the pros, cons, and outcomes of policy decisions to public voice and experience.





Which kind of deliberation has been most prevalent in the United States, and on what issue?

→ Local small-group deliberations, in large numbers, on issues of race and difference





Which form of digital engagement is now
used by over 80% of American
households?

→ Hyperlocal online networks



Which democracy innovation engaged over 150,000 Americans in 2013-2014?



America speaks

more voices at the table



2





Which democracy innovation engaged over 150,000 Americans in 2013-2014?

- "Text Talk Act" - texting-enabled small-group deliberation as part of the National Dialogue for Mental Health



What are you trying to achieve through democracy innovations?



America Speaks

Texting

Desperation

Meaningful citizen
engagement

More representative
voices heard to inform
policy decisions

Affect change in an
inclusive and meaningful
way

Power redistribution and
attenuate inequality

stronger, higher-capacity local
government that can...
1. Solve community problems
2. Work with other localities to solve the
planetary problems that nation-
states won't address



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What are you trying to achieve through democracy innovations?



A better world for future generations

To welcome new and underrepresented groups in public decision making

Healthier communities

Fairness, equity, meaning, connection, better decision making, addressing critical societal issues

Increase public trust

Depolarization

Cultivating Common good

Engage the community in policy discussion on the energy transition in bakersfield CA without blame or judgment at the local level



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What are you trying to achieve through democracy innovations?



To work toward The Arizona We Want (achieving progress on shared public values); aka identifying priorities of community members and working together to solve them

To share more authority with communities that are often underrepresented and harmed by decisions made by other communities that don't share their experiences and values

Where can we tap National service members as participants in being an individual actor but also a resource for communities and community leaders who are wanting to connect with their neighbors



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Why innovate? (part 1)

When people have meaningful roles in public decision-making, they produce policies that:

- Represent what people want
- Are more informed by local experiences and conditions
- Enjoy broader public support
- In some cases, are accompanied by other changes made by citizens



Why innovate? (part 2)

When people have meaningful roles in public problem-solving, they produce solutions that:

- Rely on volunteerism and citizen capacity
- Rely on volunteerism in collaboration with government
- Are creative
- Get people involved who don't want to participate in decision-making



Why innovate? (part 3)

Stronger connections among residents, and between citizens and institutions, makes people:

- Physically healthier
- More successful economically
- Kids do better in school
- More prepared for natural disasters







What are your main take-aways so far?

(talk with your neighbor for a few minutes)



**We've thrown a lot at you! Let's discuss:
What are the strengths and weaknesses of
your local democracy?**

(talk with your neighbor for a few minutes)





What are the strengths of your local democracy?

Intentionality

Mayor & Council support the work wholeheartedly

Strong community partners

Good city planning

We have a PB process
City council is easy to engage

Non profit organizations working with school districts at the parent-school- and district level.

Proximity driving feedback

Volunteer networks



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What are the strengths of your local democracy?



Place based problem solvers

Lots of activity at the ward level, inclusive of diverse communities and transplants

there is lot of planning, plans for all kinds. (if only more were followed, bore fruit)





What are the weaknesses of your local democracy?

Disconnection between decision maker and decision impacted

But do the REALLY want to share power and authority?

Communication from government on their successes and what they are actually doing

Not enough community connections across geography and interactions from the ground up at scale

Leaders not wanting to listen to the community- Deciding for them.

Strong Mayor (or City manager) system means no one can do anything without his/her approval

Unsupportive administration, little (or no) funding for innovation, resistance to change, few voices allowed in the conversation

Lack of interest in communities. LG even has become too hard to access.



What are the weaknesses of your local democracy?



Performative, lack of authenticity, hiring skilled and experienced staff to do the work

lack of agency and power by both people and government....
failure of democracy and technocracy.lack of enough skilled technocrats for the 21st century
Lack of citizens with skills in self-governmen

Oligarchy





civic measurement using a digital scorecard



THICK ENGAGEMENT: Informed, deliberative, emotional, full of choices for groups to make

THIN ENGAGEMENT: Fast, easy, full of choices for individuals to make



Ways to engage: Surveys and survey panels (thin)

One-off surveys:

- Take temperature of community
- People may not be informed
- Sample may not be representative
- Can't go back to respondents

Survey panels:

- Sample grows, diversifies over time
- Can report back to respondents





Ways to engage: Small-group deliberation (thick)

- Groups of 4-8, randomly sorted
- Facilitators
- Group agrees to ground rules
- No more than one elected official per group
- Process for summarizing/sharing ideas (do it digitally – like an online polling or texting-based platform)



Ways to engage: Digital tools (mostly thin)

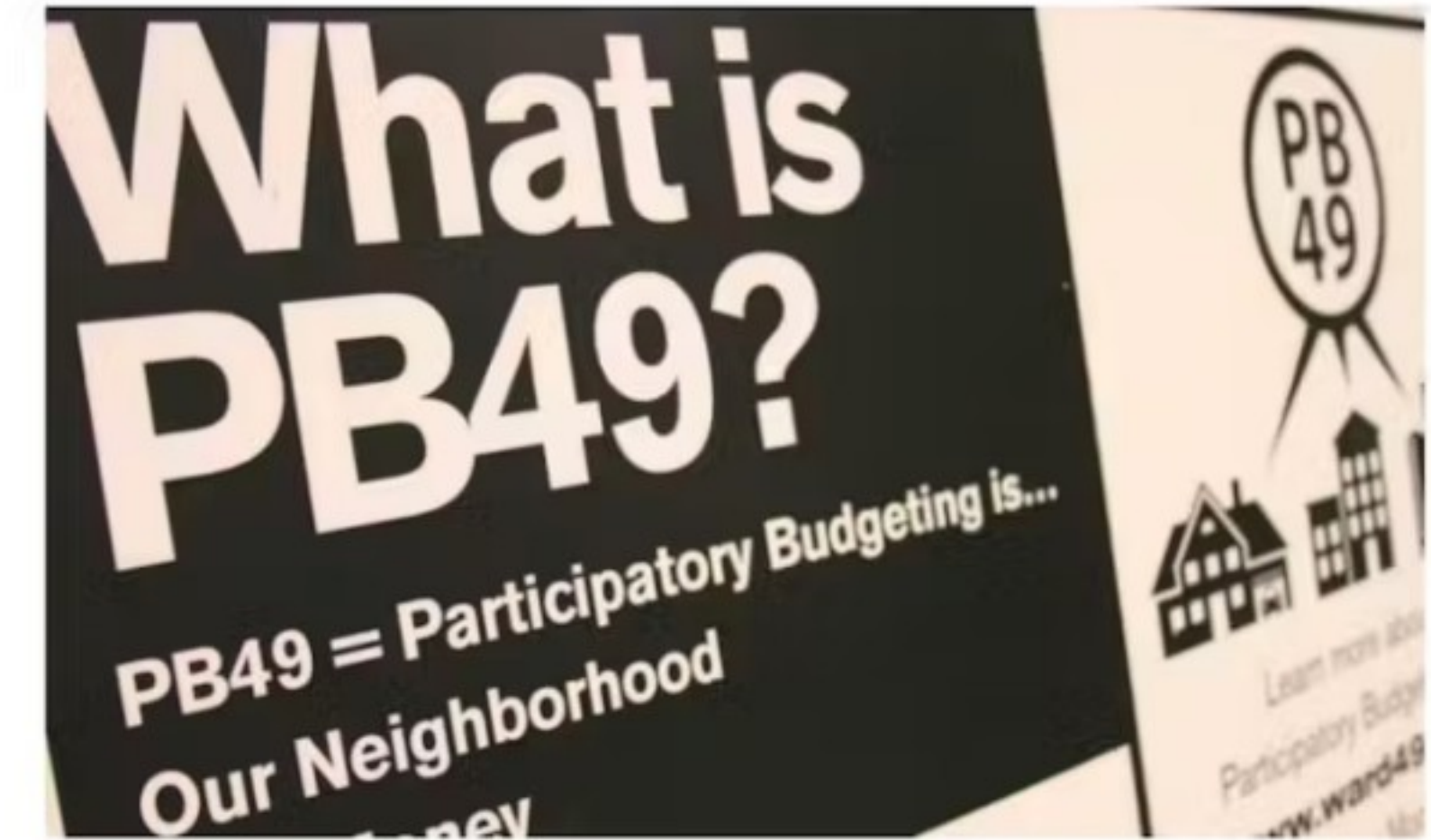
General purpose	Some representative examples
Crowdsourcing and ideation	AllOurIdeas; MindMixer; IdeaScale
Gathering feedback on problems and services	SeeClickFix; FixMyStreet; PublicStuff
Crowdfunding	Kickstarter; ioby
Petitions	Change.org
Games	@stake; Community PlanIt; Civic IDEA
Mapping and wikis	LocalWiki; OpenStreetMap
Illustrating options and voting on them	Metroquest; Ethelo
Hyperlocal community-building	Nextdoor; Front Porch Forum
Finding common ground in large groups	Pol.is
Polling	Mentimeter





Ways to engage: Participatory Budgeting (thick and thin)

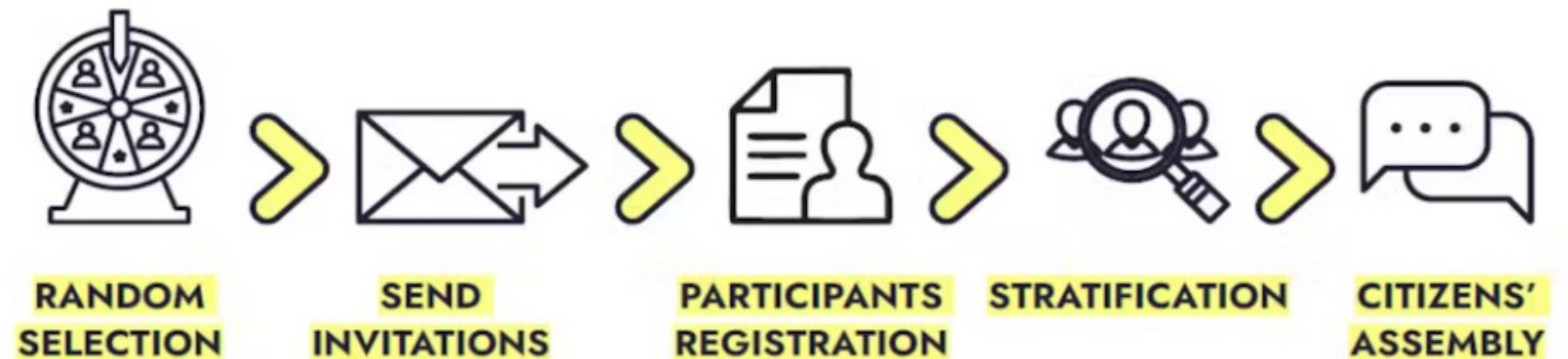
- Money that citizens decide how to spend
- A structured process – citizens brainstorm, research, and develop proposals, working with gov't officials, staff (the thick part)
- Citizens vote on proposals (the thin part)
- Can have multiple levels – city, region, state



Ways to engage: Citizen assemblies (thick)

An intensive process:

- 20-50 randomly selected people
- Meet 3-10 days over several months
- Hear testimony, learn together
- Issue recommendations
- Officials pledge to consider recommendations





Getting more people in the room

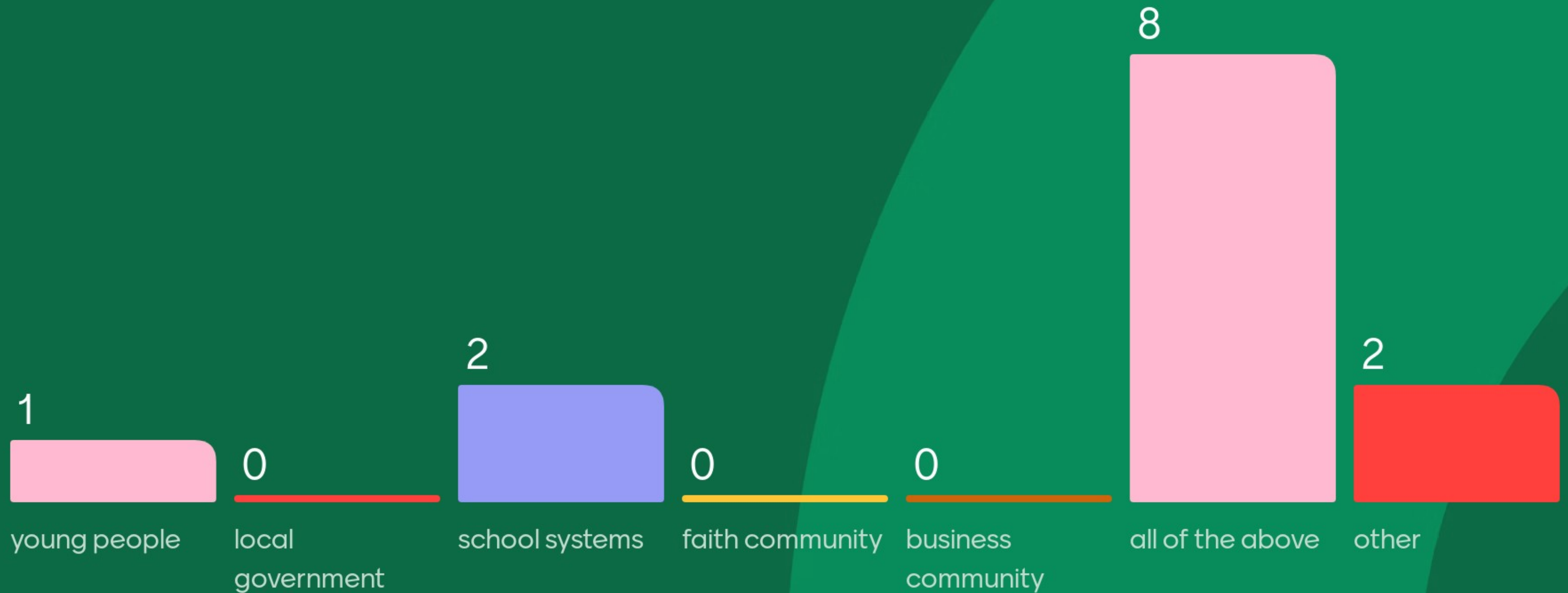
- People engage because someone they know and trust asks them!
- Help other groups engage: boards and commissions, neighborhood associations and parent councils, and many more
- Two-way communication through those connections – information, options, ideas
- Use digital tools both to engage and recruit







Who has a stake in improving civic health, civic infrastructure, and democracy?



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What is your plan?

Some suggestions:

- State your focus
- Pick one thick and one thin engagement option
- Pick two other civic assets
- Explain how they fit together

Building blocks for better civic infrastructure

Enabling Small-Scale Decision Making
(individuals, families, groups, neighborhoods)

Enabling Large-Scale Decision Making
(communities, cities, regions)

Encouraging Public Work

Gathering Input and Data

Discussing and Connecting

Disseminating Information

What's your plan? What do you want to try next, and how do you want to do it?



Getting PB started in MPS
:)

What does a citizens
assembly “light” look like?

Starting small—something
meaningful but that will result
in a win and increased trust
with the community

Start with pilot homelessness
community working group as
a stepping stone to having
our first ever Citizen’s
Assembly next year.

Large-scale engagement that
includes both thick and thin
engagement. Engagement plan
that details all the strategies.
This will not be quick and takes a
lot of planning and resources.



5





In what ways are you going to evaluate/measure your work?





Which of these engagement strategies seem promising to you?

0

Surveys and survey panels

0

In-person deliberative discussion

0

Digital tools for supporting, informing, connecting

0

Ongoing civic opportunities centered on food

0

Citizen assemblies

0

Participatory budgeting

0

Other





What is your local democracy like?

ad hoc engagement efforts good, official meetings bad



some civic infrastructure - but no democracy innovations



grassroots and neighborhood groups are suffering



not much collaboration across sectors to engage residents



Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

