

2025

The Connection Opportunity

Insights for Bringing Americans
Together Across Difference

Spotlight on Houston





**More in
Common**

About More in Common

More in Common seeks to understand the forces driving us apart, find common ground, and help bring Americans together to tackle shared challenges. We work with over 200 groups across civil society, business, education, and philanthropy to conduct actionable research that informs policymakers, community leaders, and the public.

Website: www.moreincommonus.com

Email: us@moreincommon.com

Authors

Daniel Yudkin, Ph.D. — Senior Advisor

Calista Small — Research Manager

Jordan Wylie, Ph.D. — Research Fellow

Ashley Fabrizio, Ph.D. — Head of Research

Kate Carney — Deputy Director

We would like to thank Linda R. Tropp, Professor of Social Psychology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, for her insights, contributions, and feedback on this project.

This research is made possible through funding by the Walmart Foundation. The findings, conclusions and recommendations presented in this publication are those of More in Common alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Walmart Foundation.

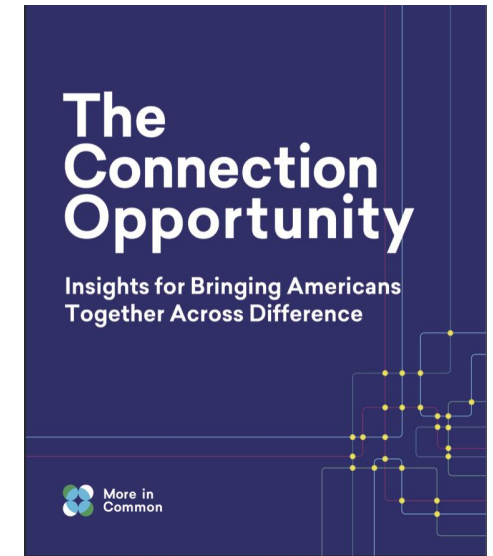
Foreword

Research shows that social connection isn't just important for individual well-being—it's also essential to societal and democratic health as well. Yet, these days, Americans are increasingly disconnected and divided, reporting record high levels of loneliness and also distrust in both institutions and each other.

One solution to this problem is clear: Americans need to reconnect, especially across lines of difference. But: do they want to? Do they value connecting with those who have different backgrounds and beliefs? And if so, what's preventing them from forging those ties?

To answer these questions, More in Common conducted a wide-ranging investigation of Americans' attitudes toward connection across difference, involving more than 6,000 survey respondents across the United States, with a regional spotlight on three metro areas: Kansas City, Houston, and Pittsburgh.

This publication focuses specifically on findings from the Houston metro area and provides broad recommendations for how to foster more connections across lines of difference in the region. We hope these insights help stakeholders working to build a stronger culture of connection in Houston engage new audiences in their work.



This deck serves as a companion piece to our main report. To explore all the insights from this project, visit our [website](#).

Table of Contents

Sections

1. Our Approach
2. Executive Summary
3. Connecting Across Difference
4. Predictors of Interest in Connecting Across Difference
5. Barriers to Connecting
6. Places of Connection
7. Trusted Messengers
8. Levers of Change

Appendix

Section One

Our Approach

OUR APPROACH

Defining Terms

— What is “connection across difference”?

Connection across differences refers to meaningful engagement or communication between individuals from different social, cultural, political, or demographic groups. These interactions help bridge divides and promote understanding and trust across lines of difference.

— A focus on four lines of difference

This deck examines connection across four lines of difference: race/ethnicity, political viewpoint, socioeconomic status, and religion.

— Why Houston?

This deck highlights insights from the Houston metro area and makes comparisons to the US national average. Houston was selected as one of three regions of focus for this study because it is one of the largest and most diverse metro areas in the country. It has also undergone significant change over the past several decades, with large shifts in its demographics and economy.

As a case study, this research attempts to identify broad trends and is not seeking to capture the full complexity of connection across difference in the Houston area. Future work should continue to investigate topics studied in this report at a more granular level.

WHAT IS THE HOUSTON METRO AREA?

Houston MSA

The Houston metropolitan statistical area (MSA) is the fifth most populous MSA in the US and is made up of nine counties, with the city of Houston at its center.

Houston MSA has historically been one of the fastest growing metro areas in the US, and Houston is often recognized as one of the [first](#) major US cities to have a "majority-minority" population—meaning that more than half of its residents are from racial or ethnic minority backgrounds.

Learn more about the population of Houston MSA via data from the US Census Bureau [here](#).



Map of Houston MSA

METHODS

Quantitative Research

More in Common partnered with the international polling firm YouGov to conduct quantitative survey research.

For the **national survey**

- $N = 4,522$ U.S. adults
- The data collection period was from December 21, 2023 to January 18, 2024
- The margin of error for the US average is $\pm 1.46\%$

For the **Houston MSA Survey**

- $N = 1,000$ adults from Houston MSA
- The data collection period was from April 30 to May 16, 2024
- The margin of error for the Houston average is $\pm 3.09\%$

Qualitative Research

More in Common partnered with the qualitative research firm ROI Rocket to convene five focus groups of Houston residents.

Residents were grouped by:

1. Party ID (Democrat, Republican, Independent)
2. Feelings of belonging in Houston (high vs. low)

Focus groups consisted of 8 to 10 residents each. Discussions were held online from July to August 2024.

Section Two

Executive Summary

Interest in Connection

- The majority of Houston residents (71 percent) believe they have a "shared responsibility" to connect across lines of difference.
- Houston residents are interested in forming connections across all lines of difference, on average—more so than US adults nationally (67 percent vs. 56 percent nationally).
 - This interest is especially pronounced for connecting across differences of race/ethnicity (78 percent vs. 68 percent nationally) and of political viewpoint (68 percent vs. 50 percent nationally).
- Houston residents, on average, are most interested in activities involving working across lines of difference to "achieve a mutual goal in their community" (nearly 8 in 10 express interest) and are least interested in "talking about group tensions" (about 6 in 10 express interest).

What predicts interest in connection?

In our main [report](#), we identified three strong predictors of interest in connection. These are highlighted in below, along with data from the Houston metro area.

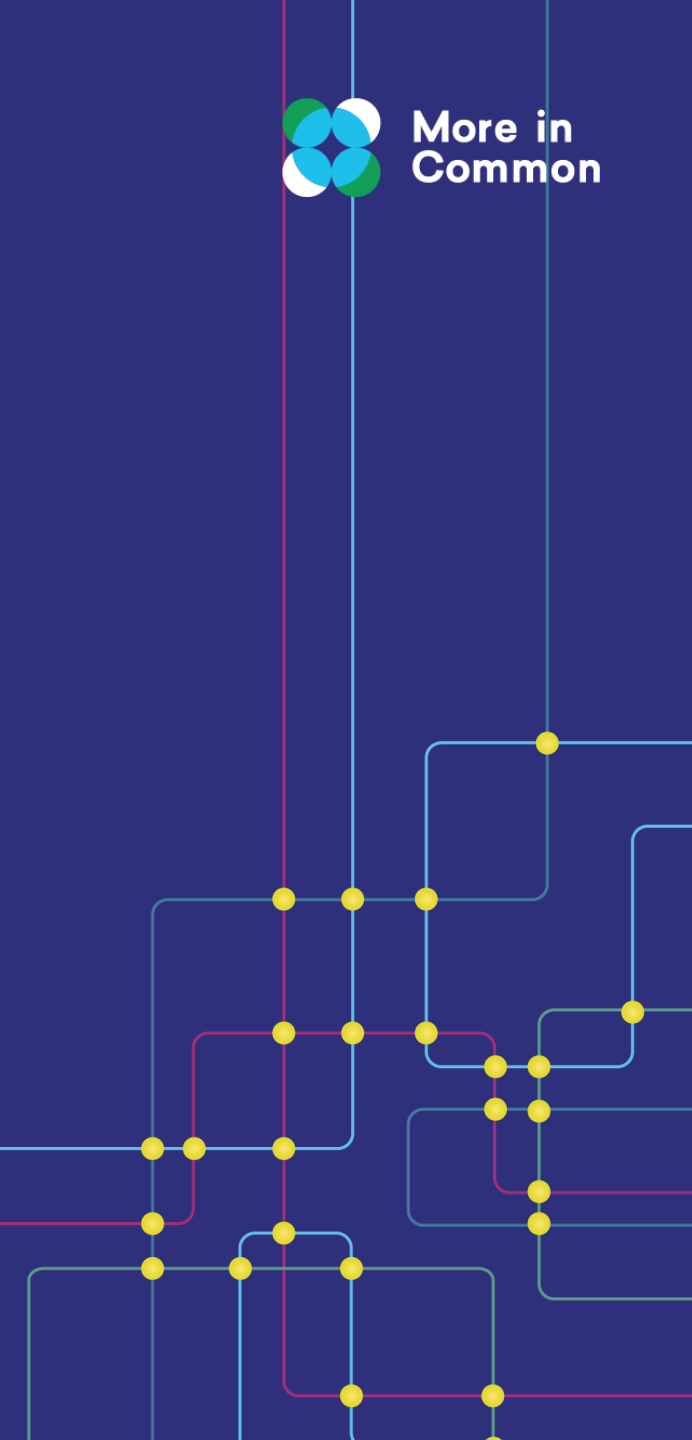
- 1. Perceived Community Norms of Connection:** The more people think others in their community are connecting across lines of difference (the more they feel this is a “social norm”), the more interested they are in connecting as well. While a majority (66 percent) of Houston residents agree or are “neutral” that people in their community support connecting across lines of difference, much fewer (55 percent) think these connections are common in the region.
- 2. Frequency of Cross-Group Interaction:** How much someone currently interacts across lines of difference is positively correlated to interest in future connection. Only 41 percent of Houston residents report “frequently” engaging across lines of socioeconomic difference, compared to 65 percent who report “frequently” interacting with people from different races/ethnicities.
- 3. Local Community Belonging:** Feeling a sense of local community belonging is related to interest in connection with others from different backgrounds. 57 percent of Houston residents report a strong sense of community belonging (similar to national trends).

Barriers to Connection & Trusted Messengers

- Houston residents most commonly report a “lack of opportunity” as a barrier to connection for all lines of difference— except for politics.
 - For politics, a number of barriers emerge: residents commonly cite that such interactions are “not important” (21 percent), that they “lack the energy” to interact (18 percent), and that they think those with different political views won’t want to interact with *them* (20 percent).
- Houston residents place the most trust in close connections, doctors, and veterans— while social media influencers, local sports figures, and government officials are trusted the least.
- Respondents seek out local TV news the most to know what is happening locally.

Section Three

Connecting Across Difference



Section Three Topics

01 **Connective
responsibility**

02 **Interest in connection
across difference**

03 **Attitudes towards
integrated communities**

DEFINING TERMS

What is connective responsibility?

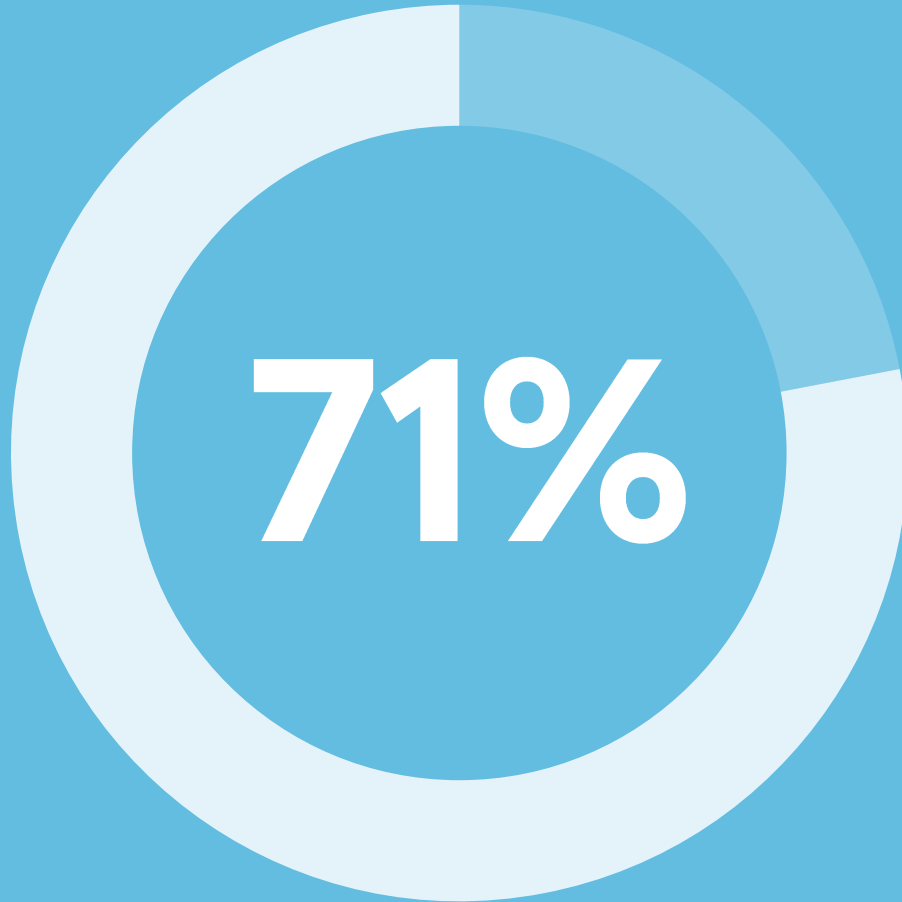
UNDERSTANDING CONNECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

Connective responsibility refers to the belief that individuals have a moral obligation to engage with people from different backgrounds.

MEASURING CONNECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements: [1- Strongly disagree to 7 - Strongly agree]

1. In a complex society, we all have a shared responsibility to engage with people whose backgrounds and viewpoints are different from our own.

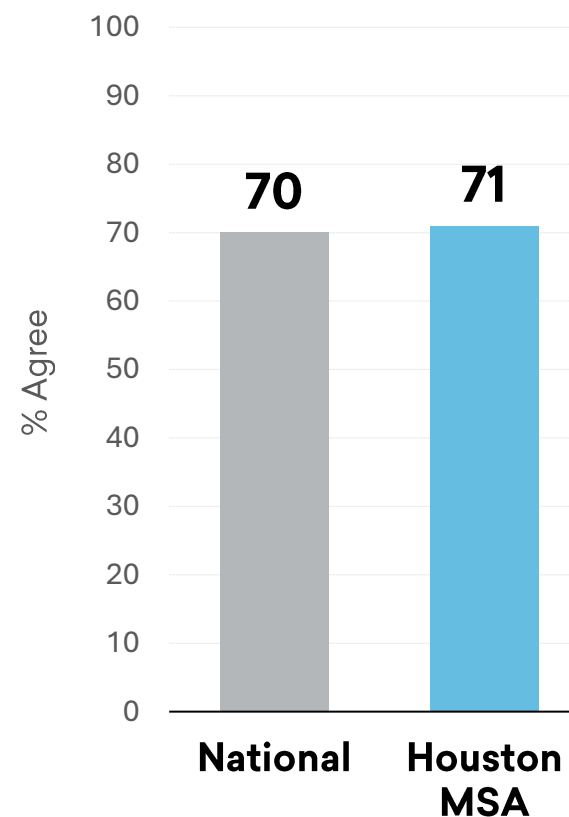


of Houston MSA residents
agree that we have a shared
responsibility to connect
across difference.

HOUSTON MSA VS. USA

A similar proportion of Houston MSA residents endorse this belief, compared to the national average.

“In a complex society, we all have a shared responsibility to engage with people whose backgrounds and viewpoints are different from our own.”



Question: "Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements." (1 - Strongly Disagree to 7 - Strongly Agree)

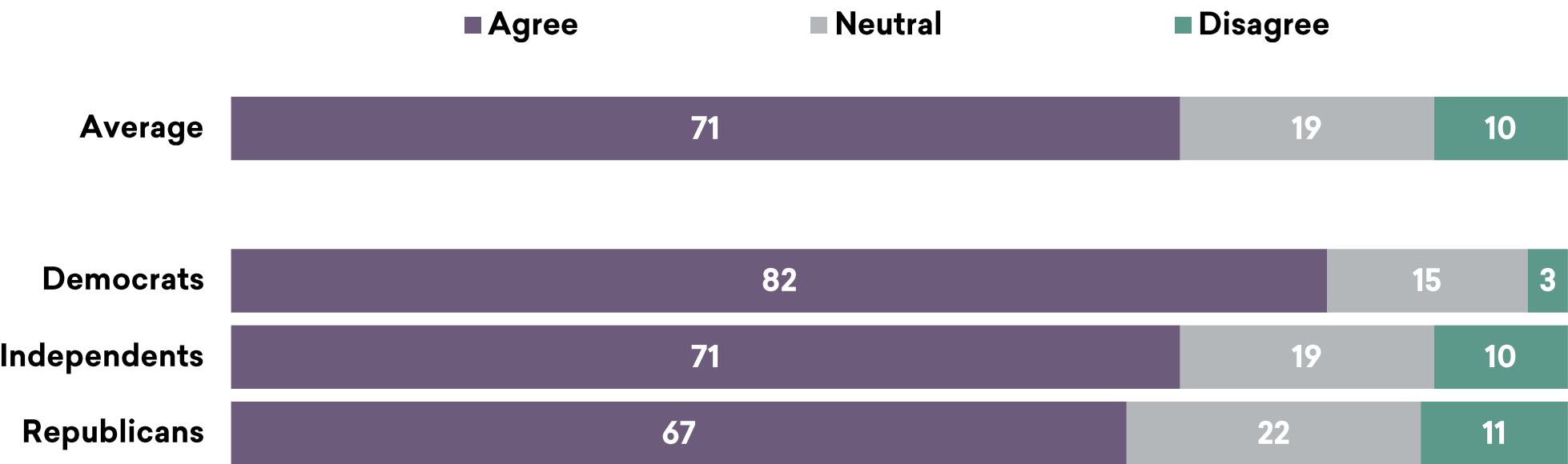
Note: Responses of 5-7 are categorized as agreement.

Source: More in Common (2025). Surveys of 4,522 U.S. adults and 1,000 adults in the Houston MSA, conducted in 2024.

There is broad bipartisan agreement among Houston MSA residents that "we all have a shared responsibility" to engage with others who have different backgrounds and beliefs.

Numbers indicate percentages of Houston MSA residents.

“In a complex society, we all have a shared responsibility to engage with people whose backgrounds and viewpoints are different from our own.”



Question: "Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements." (1 - Strongly Disagree to 7 - Strongly Agree)
Note: Responses of 1-3 are categorized as disagreement; 4 as neutral; 5-7 as agreement.
Source: More in Common (2025). Survey of 1,000 adults in the Houston MSA conducted in 2024.

Section Three Topics

01 **Connective
responsibility**

02 **Interest in connection
across difference**

03 **Attitudes towards
integrated communities**

DEFINING TERMS

We asked respondents to report how interested they would be in participating in a range of activities. We then averaged their responses together.

MEASURING INTEREST

Thinking about the near future, please indicate how interested you are in doing each of the following with someone from a different [group] than you:* [1 - Not at all interested, 2 - Slightly interested, 3 - Moderately interested, 4 - Very interested, 5 - Extremely interested]

1. Engaging in an extended conversation
2. Talking about [group] tensions
3. Forming a close friendship
4. Inviting into your home as a guest
5. Working in the same work group
6. Going to a function or social event
7. Working to achieve a mutual goal that improves your community

*This question was repeated for each line of difference. Items have been edited for clarity.



of Houston MSA residents
are at least moderately
interested in activities
involving connecting across
differences.

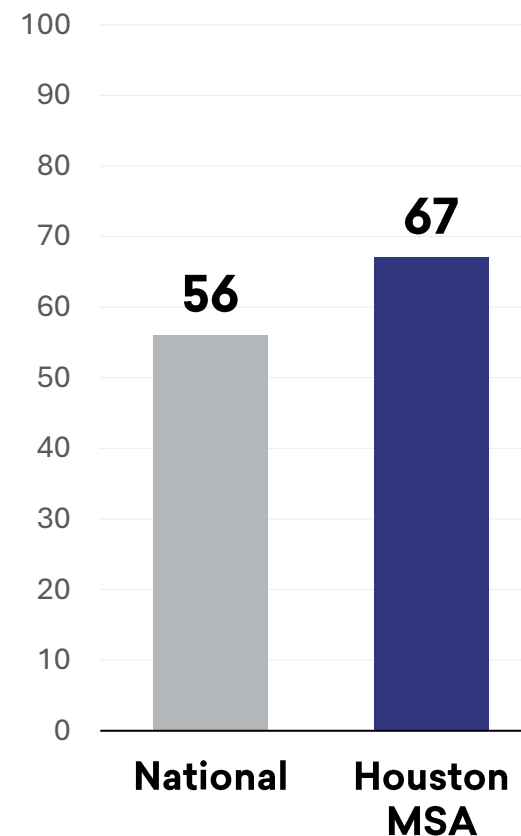
Note: "Moderately interested" was defined as 3 or higher on a composite measure of interest in future contact, which is where we averaged of all seven items across all lines of difference and then binarized scores at or above a 3 to create an overall proportion of interest in connection across difference.

Source: More in Common (2025). Survey of 1000 adults in the Houston MSA, conducted in 2024.

HOUSTON MSA VS. USA

A greater proportion of Houston MSA residents are interested in activities involving connecting across differences, compared to the national average.

% of people at least moderately interested in activities involving cross-group connection (on average)*

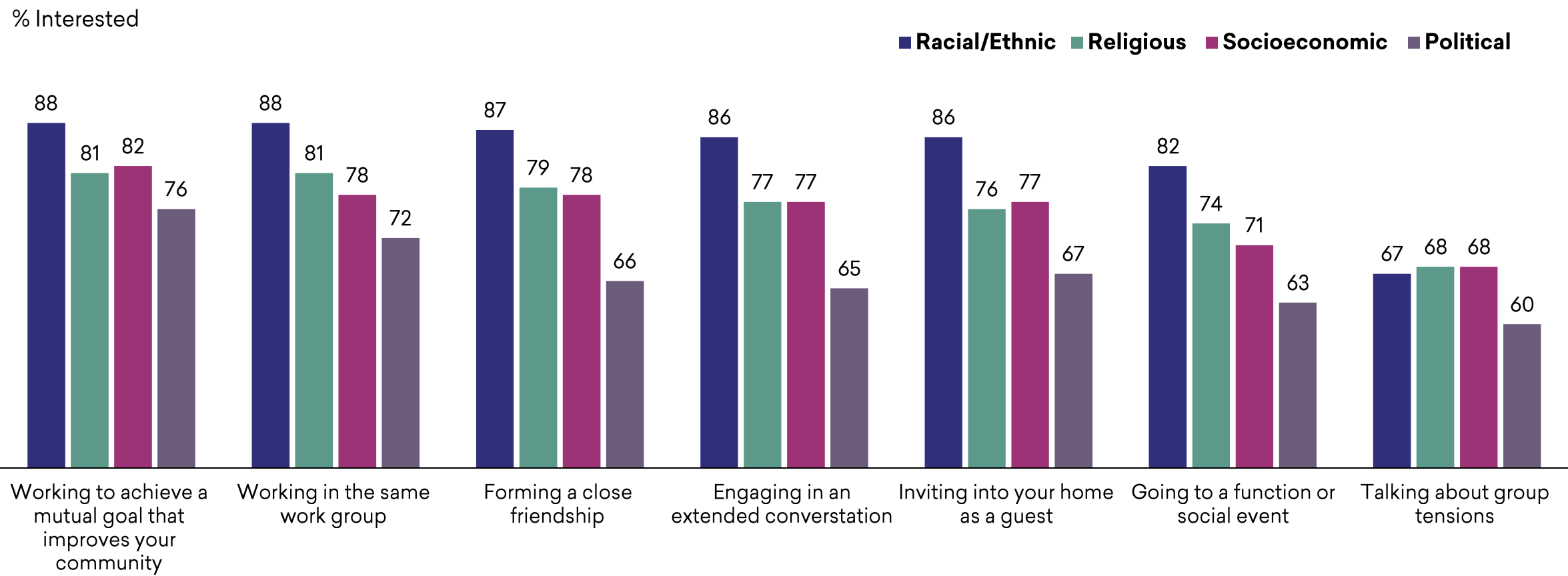


*Note: This uses a composite measure of the interest in future contact items with scores 3 ("Moderately interested") and above included. The difference between the national and Houston MSA average is statistically significant.

Source: More in Common (2025). Surveys of 4,522 U.S. adults and 1,000 adults in the Houston MSA conducted in 2024.

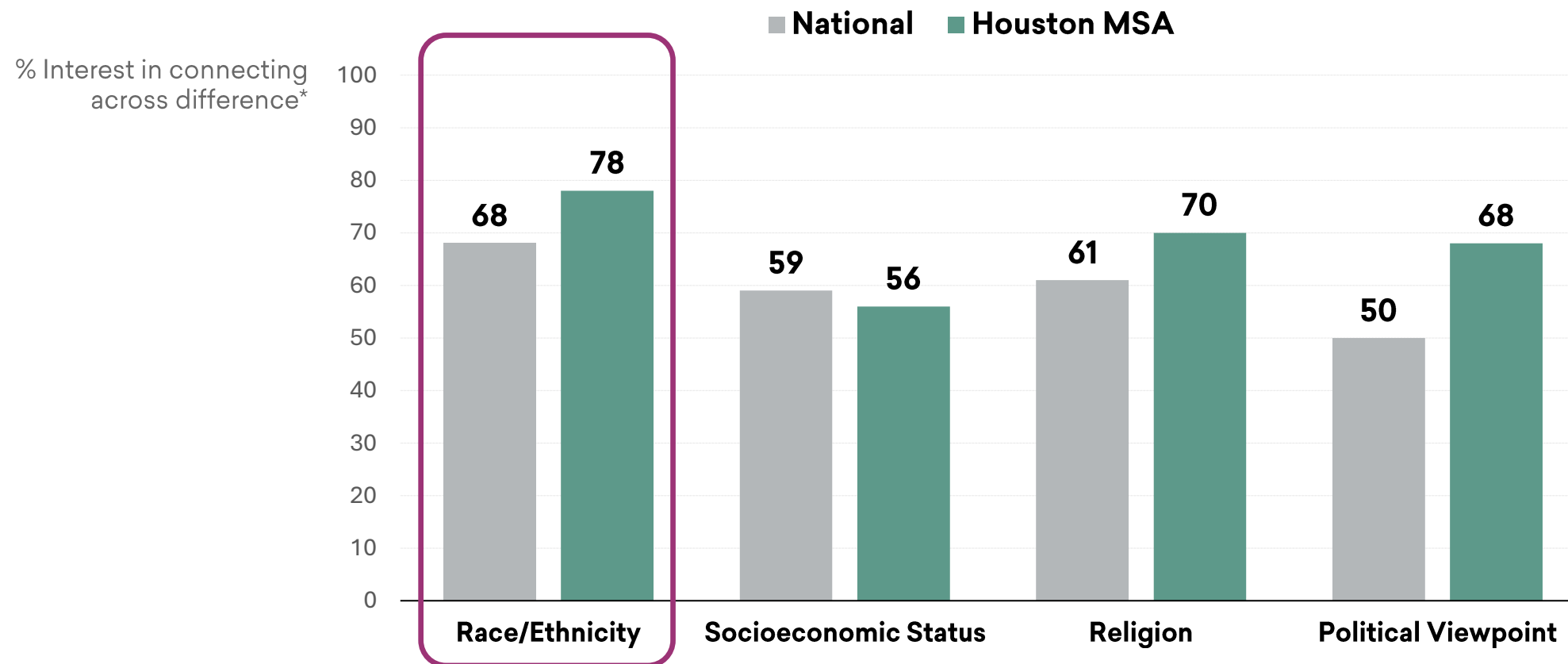
Houston MSA residents are most interested in connecting across lines of difference by engaging in activities that involve working together.

“Thinking about the near future, please indicate how interested you are in doing the following with people from a different [group] background than you.”



Note: % Interested = “Moderately Interested” + “Very Interested” + “Extremely Interested” Item wording has been edited lightly for clarity.
Source: More in Common (2025). Survey of 1,000 adults in the Houston MSA conducted in 2024.

Houston MSA residents are most interested in connecting across racial and ethnic lines of difference, compared to the others.



*Note: This uses a composite measure of the interest in future contact items with scores 3 ("Moderately interested") and above included.
Source: More in Common (2025). Surveys of 4,522 U.S. adults and 1,000 adults in the Houston MSA conducted in 2024.

Residents discussed the value of understanding others' viewpoints and the need to connect across difference to benefit the whole of society.



"I definitely think that it's good to get to know people with different outlooks because if everybody's outlooks is the same when does change happen? So, if you can tell me: *oh, well, if you look at it this way...*and I could see it from a different view, maybe a view I had never thought about. So, I definitely think it's great to connect with people that don't necessarily share your mindset. There's nothing wrong with that."

Bree, Gen X Black woman with from Houston



"That's what this whole world is about. Everybody's got to connect with each other and get by every other issue that can possibly be out there, especially the stupid ones that cause a lot of problems between people. And I guess they might be stupid to me but they're important to other people. I realize that."

Robert, Silent Gen white man from Houston

Section Three Topics

01 **Connective
responsibility**

02 **Interest in connection
across difference**

03 **Attitudes towards
integrated communities**

DEFINING TERMS

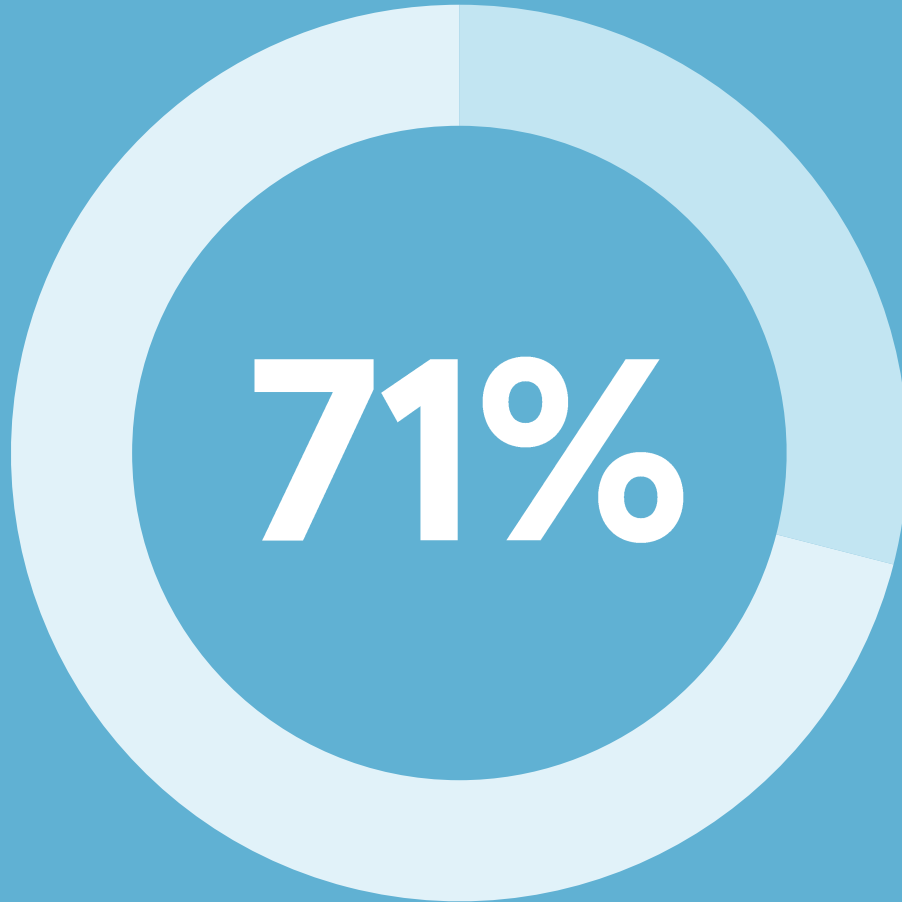
We asked respondents how much they would support greater mixing and integration of people with different backgrounds in their community.

MEASURING ATTITUDES TOWARDS INTEGRATED COMMUNITIES

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:* [1 - Strongly disagree to 7 - Strongly agree]

1. Greater integration of people with different [group] viewpoints/backgrounds would make Greater Houston a better place to live.
2. I would like to live in a community where there is greater mixing and interaction among people with different [group] viewpoints/backgrounds than what exists where I live today.

*This question was repeated for each line of difference.

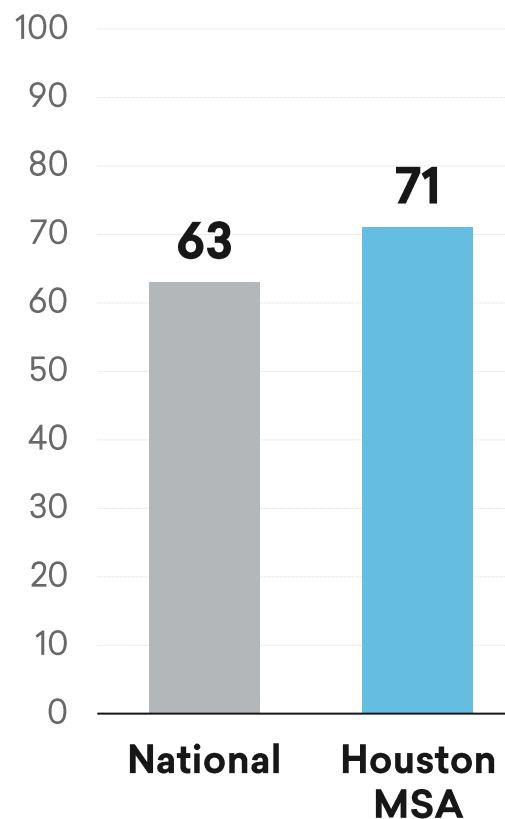


of Houston MSA residents
support greater integration
in their communities.

HOUSTON MSA VS. USA

A greater percentage of Houston MSA residents support greater integration, on average, compared to US adults nationally.

Percentage of people that support integrated communities *

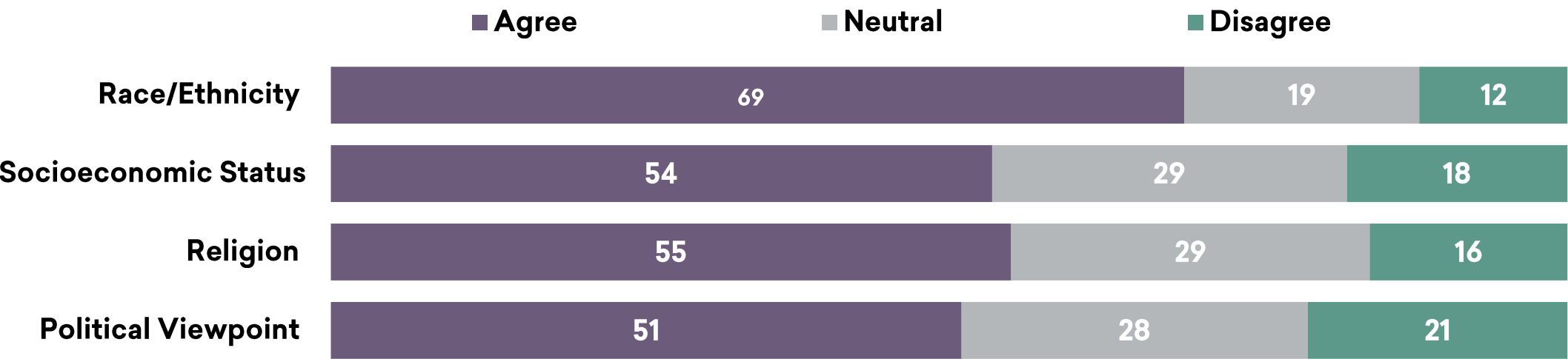


*Note: This is based on an average score higher than "4" on a composite measure of attitudes toward integration. The difference is statistically significant.
Source: More in Common (2025). Surveys of 4,522 US adults and 1,000 adults in the Houston MSA conducted in 2024.

Looking at line of difference, many Houston MSA residents (69%) think that greater racial integration would make their communities a better place to live. About 1 in 2 support greater socioeconomic, religious, and political integration.

Numbers indicate percentages of Houston MSA residents.

“Greater integration of people from a different [group] would make my community a better place to live.”



Question: “Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.” (1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree)
Source: More in Common (2025). Surveys of 4,522 US adults and 1,000 adults in the Houston MSA conducted in 2024.

Many discussed their appreciation of living next to and interacting with people from different backgrounds.



"Absolutely. This neighbor over here is from Mexico. This one over here is from Guatemala. This one over here is from Florida. We all get along. We learn from each other. That's the best part about it is you can learn so much from those other people. They know stuff, [like] cooking. When I cook and I want something different, I'd be like, 'Hey, give me an idea.' They're the same with me. You share, you just share your ideas and [it's] great."

Alice, Gen X white woman with from Houston

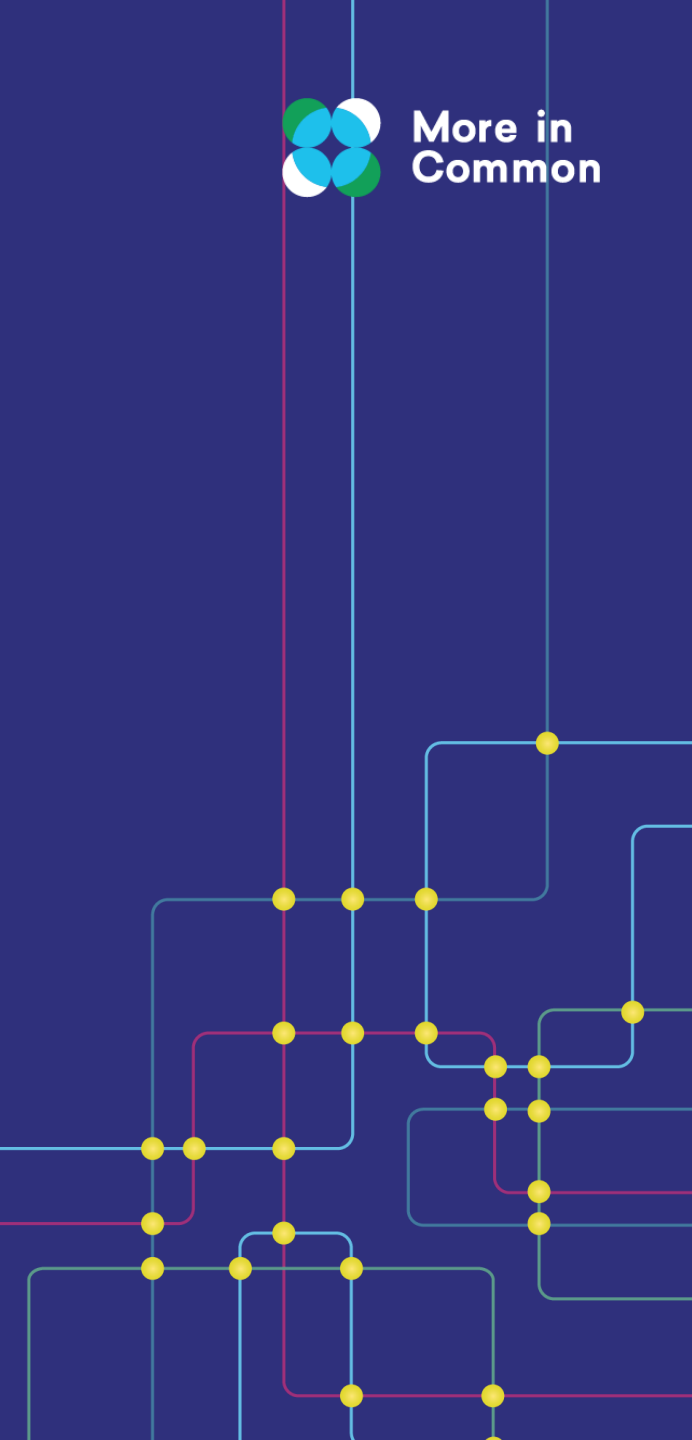


"One of the things that I appreciate about Houston, having grown up in San Francisco, is the diversity. And I mean that really in every sense: artistic diversity, cultural diversity, racial diversity... I think a lot of people in northern states think of—if they think of Texas at all, which they don't—they think of it as the "deep south"... people sitting on the plantation with a big hat.. they have no clue that this is a very, very international city. And that's what I like about it."

Aaron, Baby Boomer white man from Houston

Section Four

Predictors of Interest in Connecting Across Difference



Predictors of Interest

01 Perceived Community
Norms of Connection

02 Frequency of
Cross-Group Interaction

03 Belonging In Houston
MSA

DEFINING TERMS

What are perceived community norms of connection?

UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY NORMS OF CONNECTION

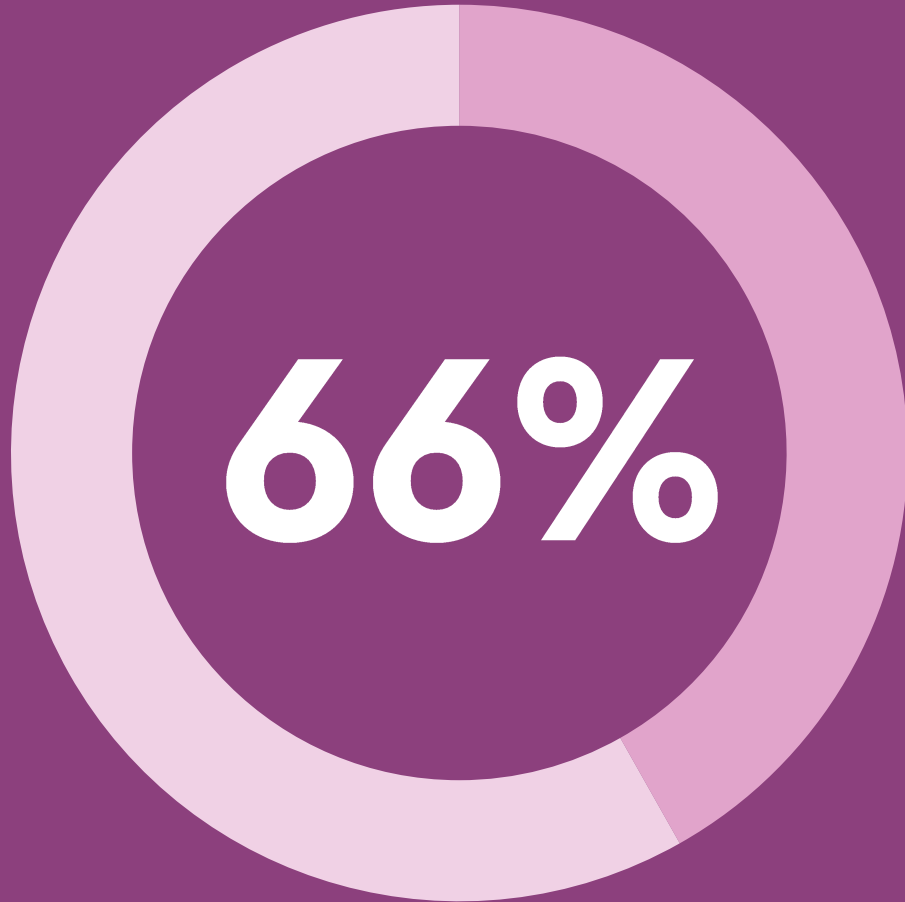
Norms are informal standards that describe typical or desirable behavior—and have a powerful influence over how people behave in a society. In this report, we focus specifically on perceived community norms of cross-group interaction, meaning beliefs about how common and acceptable it is to connect across differences in one's community.

MEASURING PERCEIVED COMMUNITY NORMS OF CONNECTION

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:* [1- Strongly disagree to 7 - Strongly agree]

1. If given the choice, people should spend time with people from different [group] backgrounds than them because it is the right thing to do.
2. People in my local community often spend time with people whose [group] is different than them.

*This question was repeated for each line of difference.



of Houston MSA residents
agree that connecting
across lines of difference is
the "right thing to do."

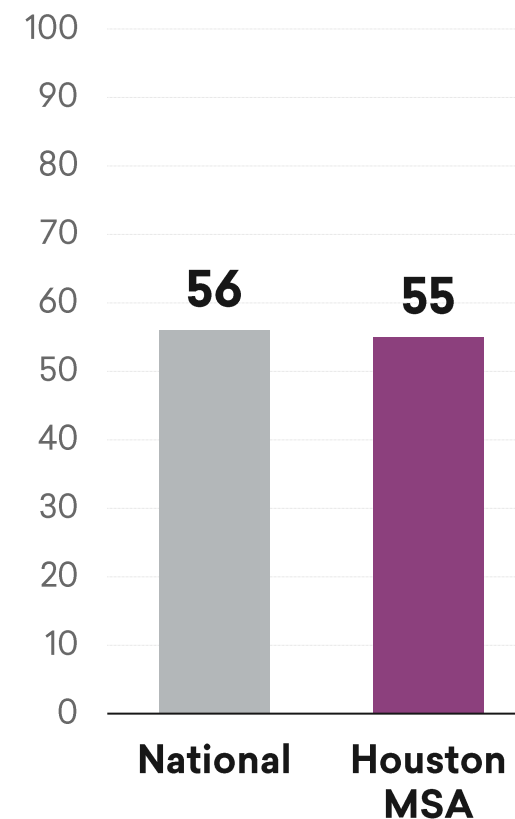
Note: This is approximately the same as the national percentage. Percentage is based on people having a score of "4" or higher on a composite score on the first norm item, after averaging across all four lines of difference.

Source: More in Common (2025). Survey of 1,000 adults in the Houston MSA, conducted in 2024.

Houston MSA VS. USA

The proportion of people in Houston MSA who think that connection is common is similar to the national average.

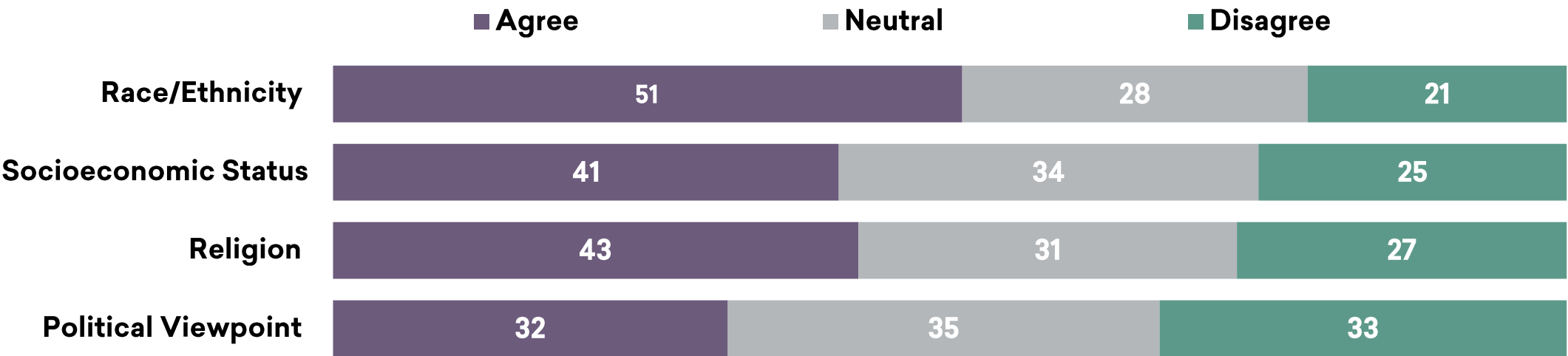
% of people who say connecting across difference is common in their community



Norms for connecting across lines of difference in Houston MSA are more prevalent for race/ethnicity, compared to the other social categories.

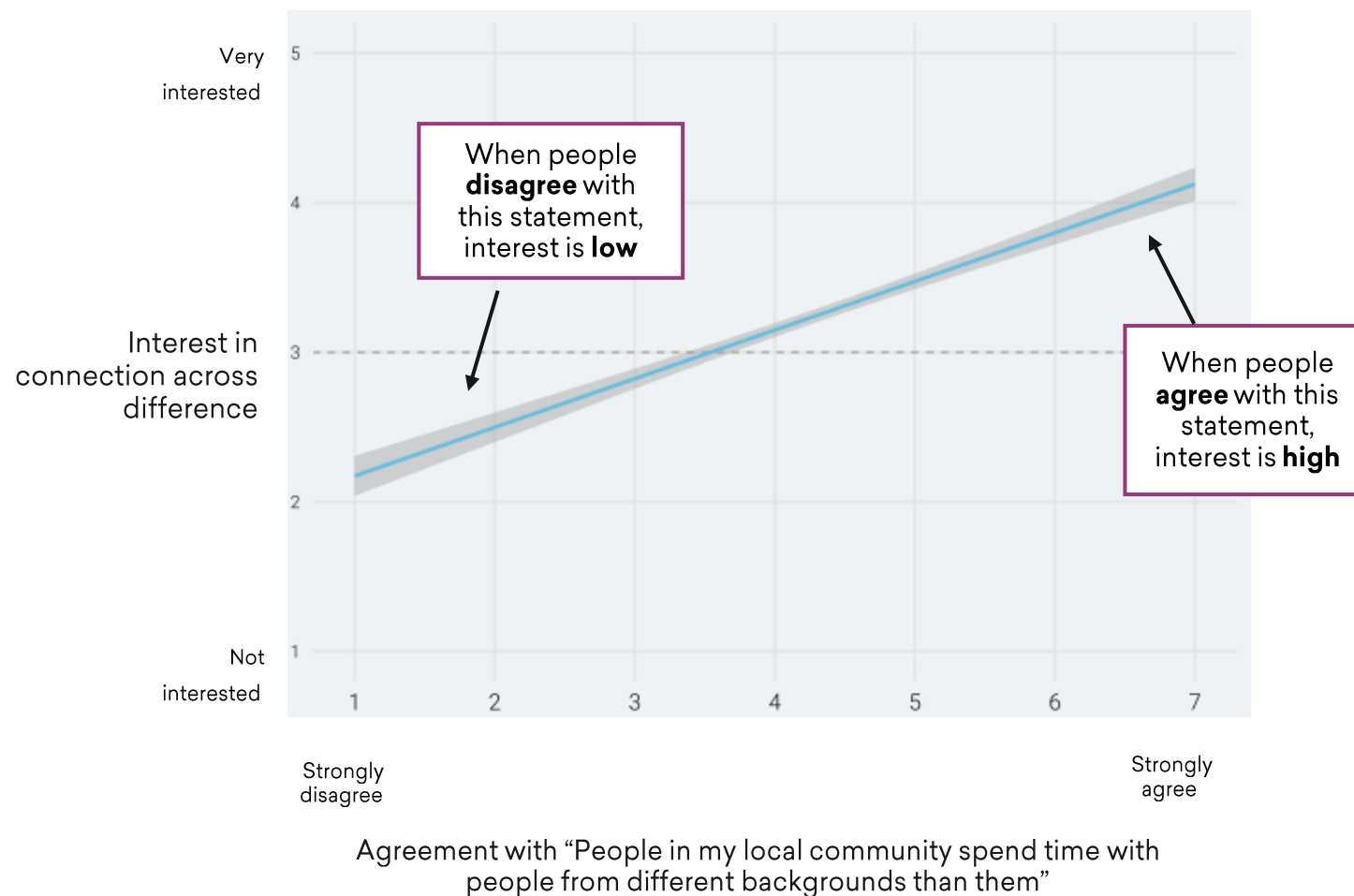
Numbers indicate percentages of Houston MSA residents.

“People in my local community often spend time with people whose _____ is different than them.”



Question: “Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.” (1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree)
Note: Responses of 1–3 are categorized as disagreement; 4 as neutral; 5–7 as agreement.
Source: More in Common (2025). Surveys of 4,522 U.S. adults and 1,000 adults in the Houston MSA conducted in 2024.

The more people think *others* in their community are crossing lines of difference, the more interested they are to do so as well.



Note: The measure on the y-axis is a composite of all seven interest items averaged across all four lines of difference.
Source: More in Common (2025). Survey of 1,000 adults in the Houston MSA conducted in 2024.

FURTHER INSIGHTS FROM FOCUS GROUPS

Residents see people connecting in many places across the city, making this behavior seem common and accepted.



"I see a lot of diversity at work and the gym and different social settings, and I think that since we're in a melting pot city, it's just something that we're used to. It's not different. It's not something that we think is, *Oh, well, these people are from this country. We don't know anything about them.* It's something that you see every day at the store, and it's just something that it's part of our culture. Work is extremely diverse. It's very international...so, we see it every day."

Lyla, Gen X biracial (Hispanic and white) woman from Houston

FURTHER INSIGHTS FROM FOCUS GROUPS

Others describe how community events, like sports, bring people together—reinforcing norms of connection.



"With sports, anybody who lives in Texas—small town, big town—during football Friday night lights, everybody comes together. Everybody's Friday nights, they support a team—children, family members, friends, everybody."

Maureen, Gen X Hispanic woman from Houston

Predictors of Interest

01 Perceived Community
Norms of Connection

02 Frequency of
Cross-Group Interaction

03 Belonging In Houston
MSA

DEFINING TERMS

How do we measure frequency of cross-group interaction?

DEFINITION

Frequency of cross-group interaction is a measure of how often individuals themselves report contact with people from different racial and ethnic, political, socioeconomic, and religious backgrounds than them.

MEASUREMENT

In your day-to-day life, how often do you find yourself interacting with people from a different [group] than you?*

- 1 - Never
- 2 - Rarely
- 3 - Sometimes
- 4 - Often
- 5 - All the time
- 6- I don't know

*This question was repeated for each line of difference. People who reported "I don't know" were removed.



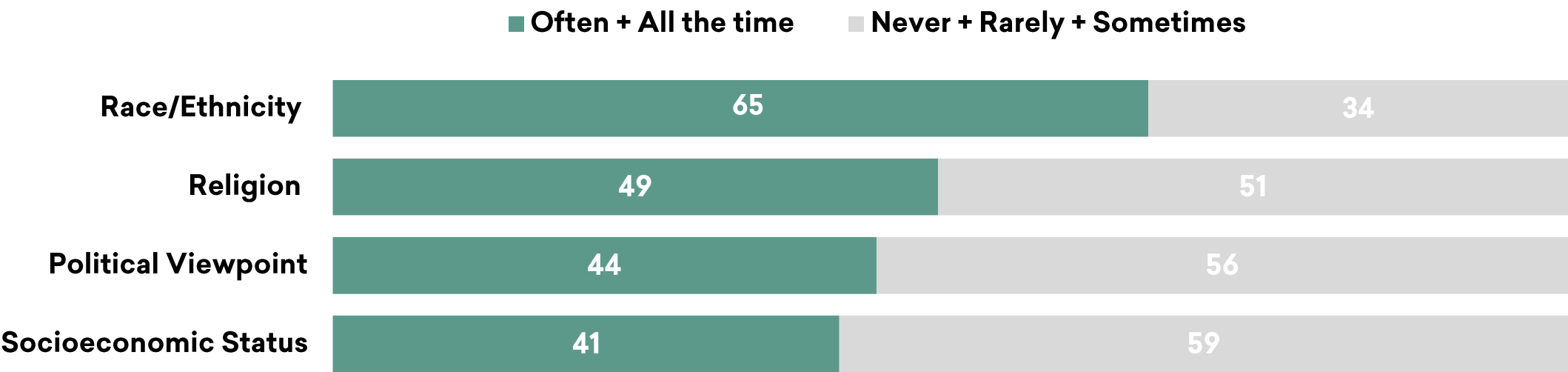
50%

of Houston MSA residents
self-report that they connect
frequently across lines of
difference.

Houston MSA residents report interacting more frequently across racial and ethnic lines than any other line of difference.

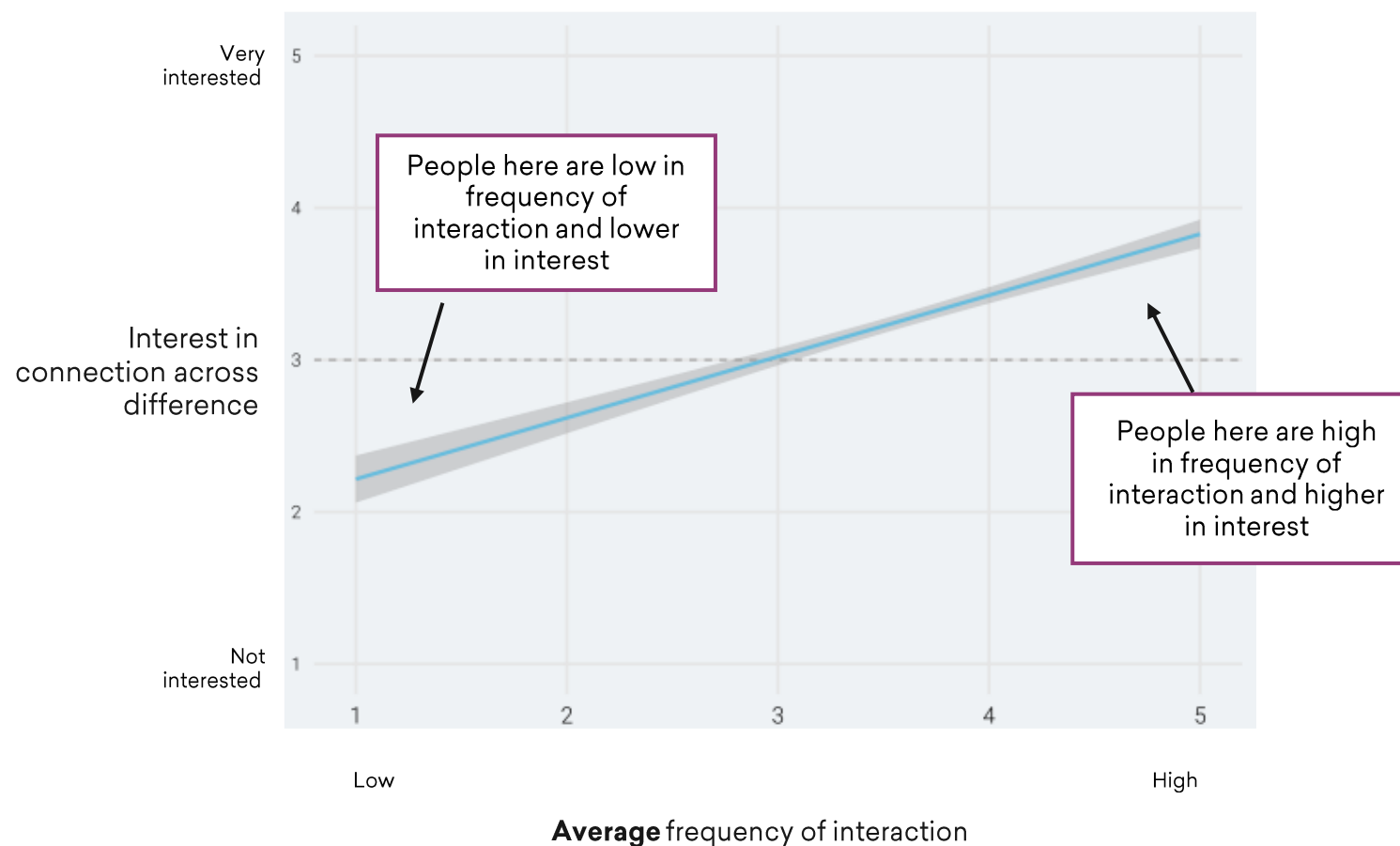
Numbers indicate percentages of Houston MSA residents .

“In your day-to-day life, how often do you find yourself interacting with people from different ____ backgrounds than you?”



Note: “I don’t know” responses were excluded.
Source: More in Common (2025). Surveys of 4,522 U.S. adults and 1,000 adults in the Houston MSA conducted in 2024.

The more frequently people interact across lines of difference in their community, the more interested they are in connection in the future.



Note: The measure on the y-axis is a composite of all seven interest items averaged across all four lines of difference. The x-axis is the average across all four lines of difference.
Source: More in Common (2025). Surveys of 4,522 U.S. adults and 1,000 adults in the Houston MSA conducted in 2024.

Predictors of Interest

01 Perceived Community
Norms of Connection

02 Frequency of
Cross-Group Interaction

03 Belonging In Houston
MSA

DEFINING TERMS

What does it mean to feel local community belonging?

DEFINITION

The feeling of being socially connected, accepted, and valued within one's local group or community

MEASUREMENT

Think about your relationship with your **local community**. Please indicate your agreement/disagreement with the following statements: [1 - Strongly disagree to 7 - Strongly agree]

1. People in my community welcome and include me in activities.
2. People in my community value me and my contributions.
3. My relationships with others in my community are as satisfying as I want them to be.
4. I feel like an "insider" who understands how my community works.
5. I am comfortable expressing my opinions in my community.
6. When interacting with people in my community, I feel like I truly belong.



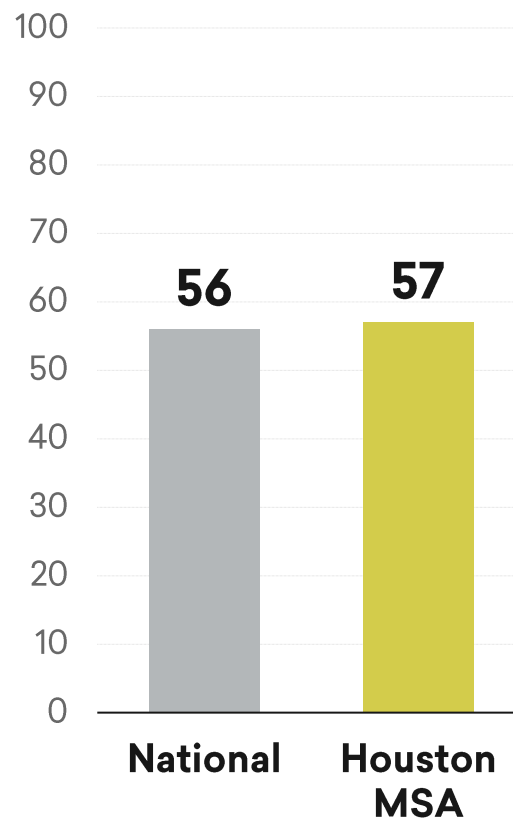
57%

of Houston MSA residents
report a strong sense of local
community belonging.

HOUSTON MSA VS. USA

Houston MSA Residents report similar levels of local community belonging, compared to the national average.

% reporting a strong sense of local community belonging*

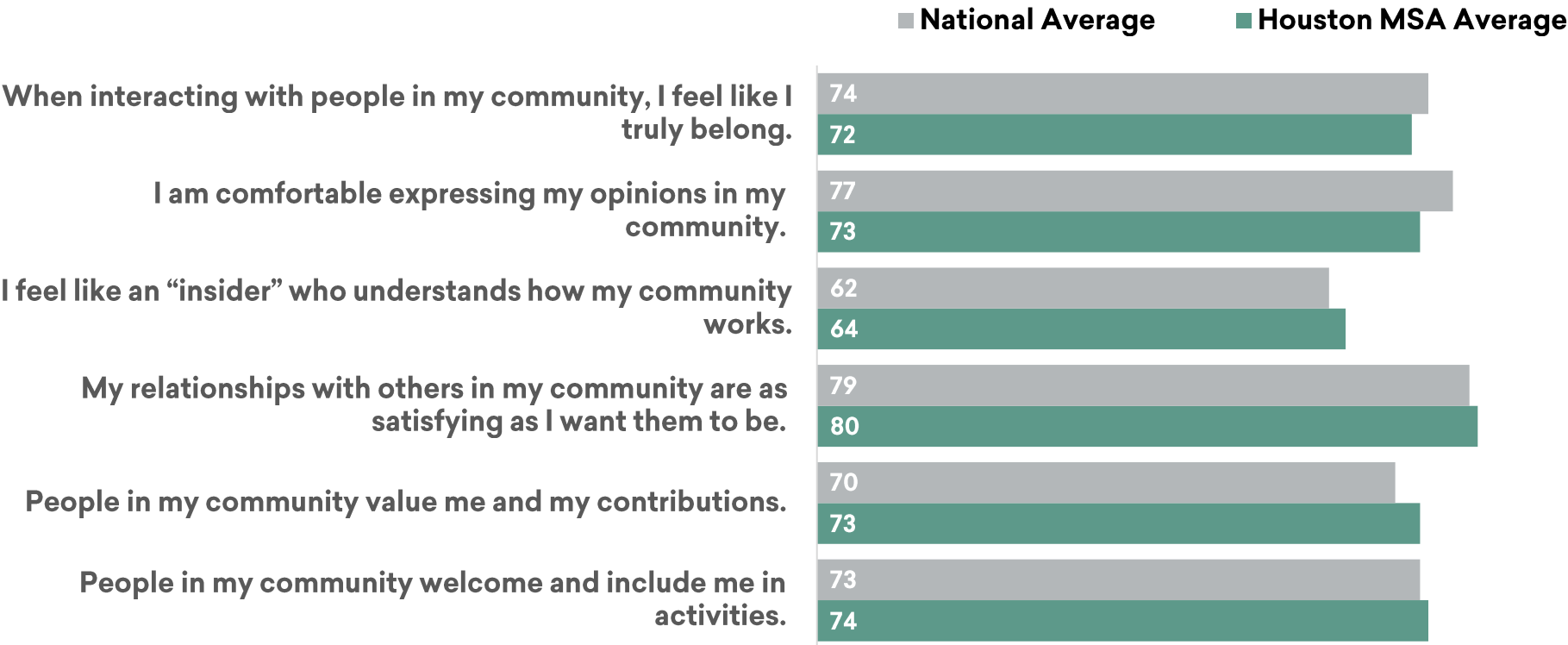


*Note: This is based on an average score higher than "4" on a composite measure of local community belonging.
Source: More in Common (2025). Surveys of 4,522 U.S. adults and 1,000 adults in the Houston MSA conducted in 2024.

Agreement with local community belonging statements varies slightly across the six items.

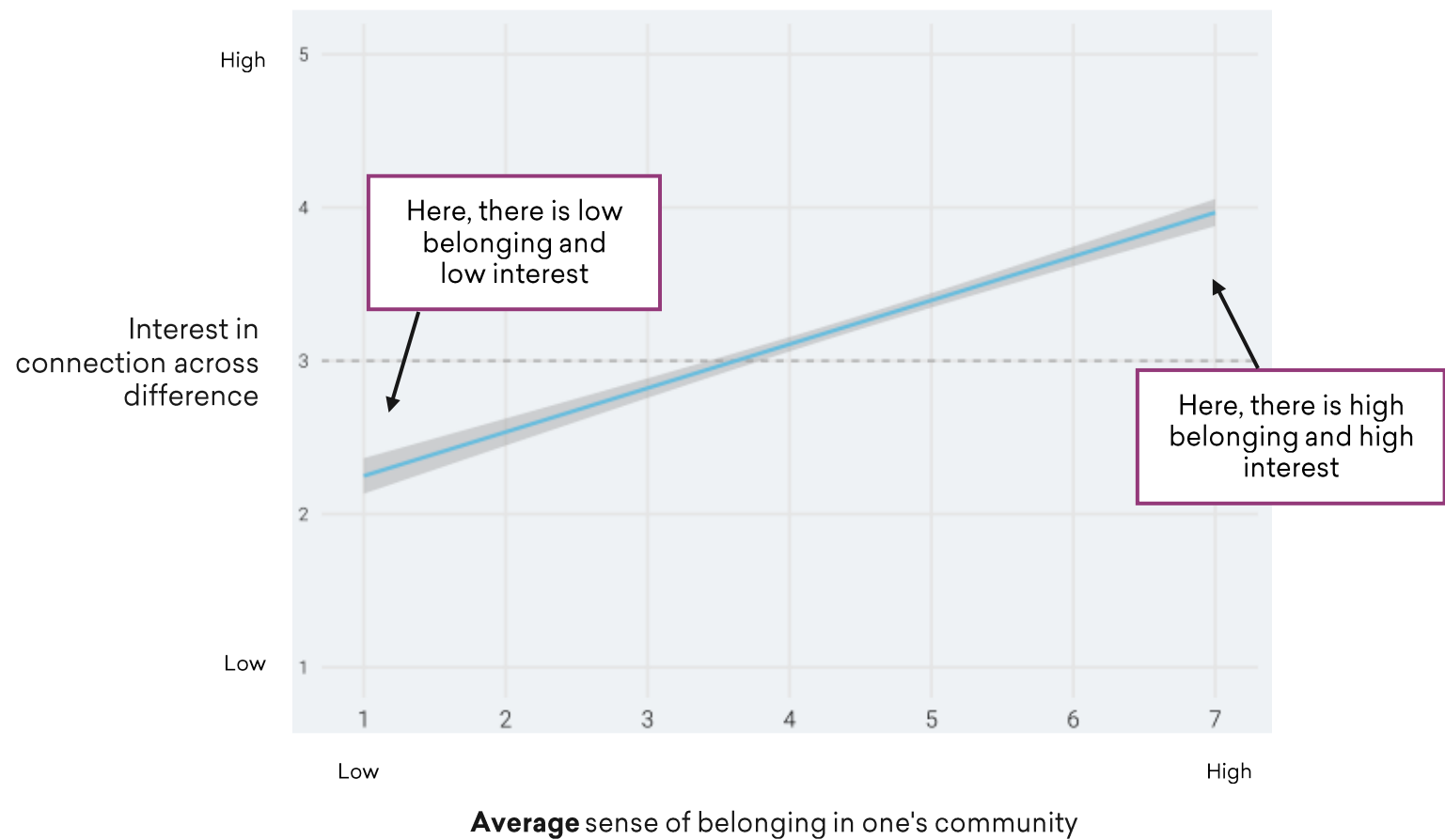
Numbers indicate percentages.

"Think about your relationship with your local community. Please indicate your agreement/disagreement with the following statements:"



Question: "Think about your relationship with your local community. Please indicate your agreement/disagreement with the following statements." [1- Strongly disagree to 7 - Strongly agree]
Note: These numbers reflect the percentage of respondents who scored 4 or higher on each statements.
Source: More in Common (2025). Surveys of 4,522 U.S. adults and 1,000 adults in the Houston MSA conducted in 2024.

The more belonging people feel at the local community level, the more interested they are to engage across lines of difference.



Note: The measure on the y-axis is a composite of all seven interest items averaged across all four lines of difference. Belonging (x-axis) was averaged across all six items into a single measure of belonging.
Source: More in Common (2025). Surveys of 4,522 U.S. adults and 1,000 adults in the Houston MSA conducted in 2024.

FURTHER INSIGHTS FROM FOCUS GROUPS

Some discussed how economic opportunities in Houston increased their sense of community belonging.



"For me, I feel like Houston's somewhere that I belong. It's got a great growth potential. Especially in the areas that I live. The school systems are fantastic. I have a young daughter. She's just two years old, so that's something that I'm looking forward to. Putting her through a good school system and the opportunity to buy a new house and grow career-wise for both me and my wife and everything. So, I feel like Houston has lots of opportunity and the diversity helps, the great sense of community—of our community and other communities that are around us."

Adil, Gen X Asian man from Houston

FURTHER INSIGHTS FROM FOCUS GROUPS

Lack of community belonging can come from feeling marginalized in many settings.

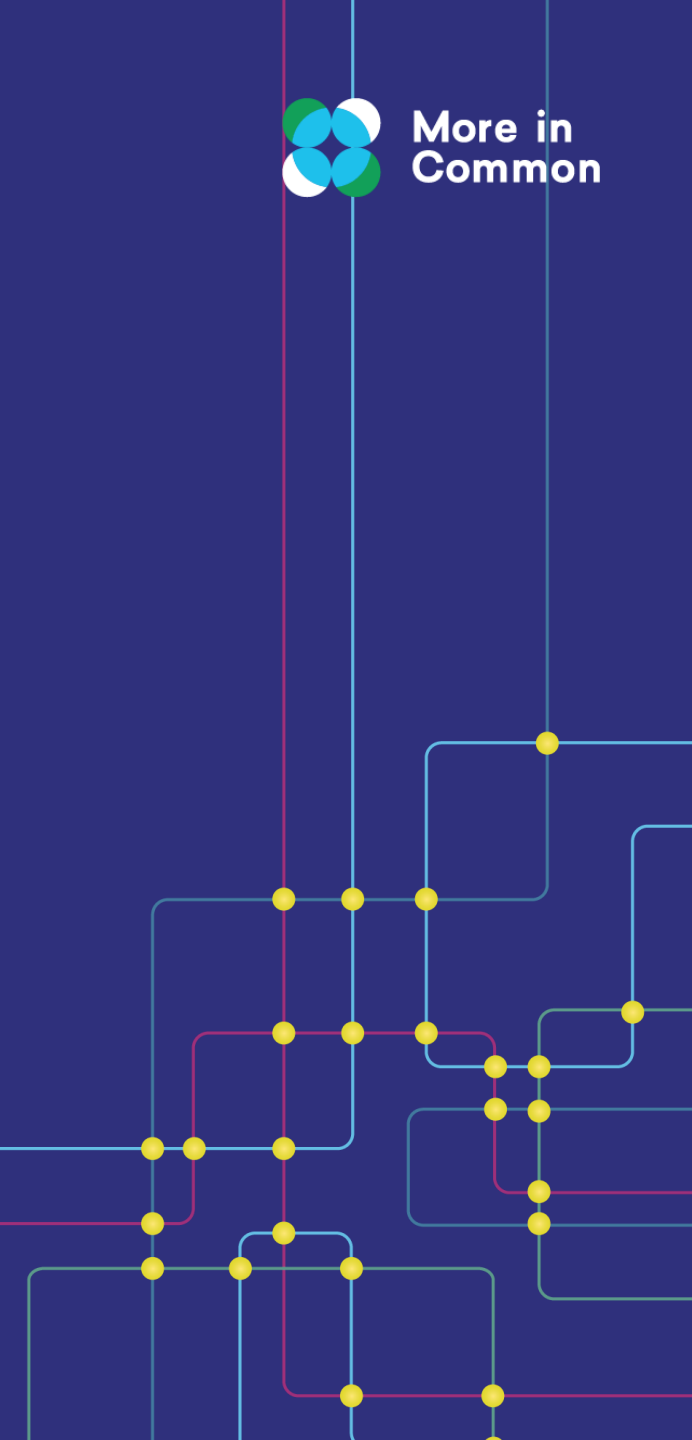


"I'm going to say no for myself... I'm prior military. I'm a combat vet. I'm also transgender, and so it's a very, very fine line. It's all mental issues with me. So, do I feel like I belong here? No, not really. But at the same time, there's nowhere else that I feel like I belong any more than I do here. So, we're trying to work on that. But I can see where I could have a home. I mean, we just bought this house, so... I'm trying to make the best of the situation even if I don't feel like I belong somewhere."

Conor, Gen X white man from Houston

Section Five

Barriers to Connecting Across Difference



DEFINING TERMS

What are barriers to connection across difference?

UNDERSTANDING BARRIERS TO CONNECTION

Factors that hinder meaningful interactions across people from different social groups. These can be psychological (e.g. prejudice, anxiety about the interaction), social (e.g. threats to safety), environmental (e.g. lacking opportunity, time constraints), or a combination of one or more of the above.

MEASUREMENT

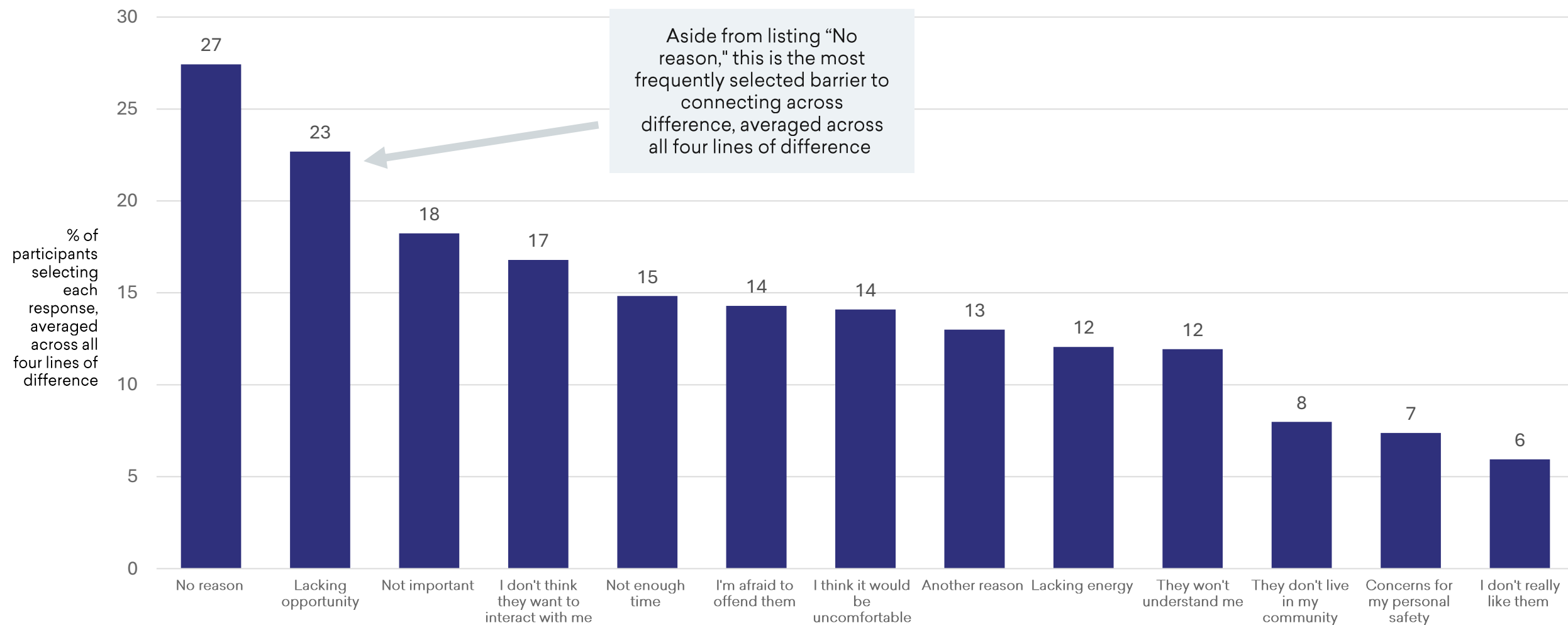
Which of the following factors best reflects what might make it challenging for you to interact with people of a different___than you? (Please select all that apply) *

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Lacking opportunity | 9. I'm afraid to offend them |
| 2. Not important | 10. Not enough time |
| 3. Lacking energy | 11. They don't live in my community |
| 4. I think it would be uncomfortable | 12. Concerns for my personal safety |
| 5. They won't understand me | 13. I don't really like them |
| 6. Other people won't approve | 14. No reason |
| 7. Lacking social support | 15. Another reason |
| 8. I don't think they want to interact with me | |

*This question was repeated for each four lines of difference. Item wording has been shortened here for brevity.

Houston MSA residents most frequently cite a "lack the opportunity" to connect across lines of difference.

"Which of the following factors best reflects what might make it challenging for you to interact with people of a different [group] than you? (Please select all that apply)"

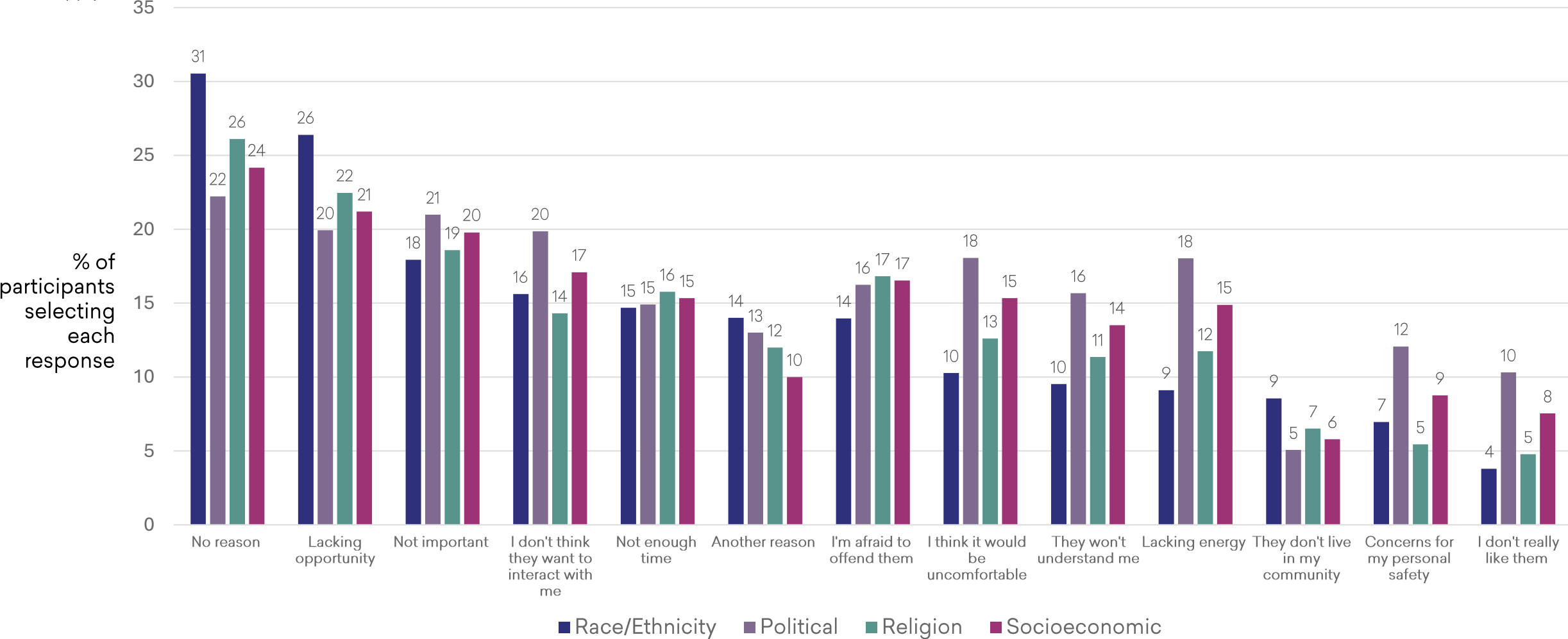


Note: Percents do not add to 100 due to multiple response. The items "I don't think other people in my life would approve" and "I don't have the social support to do this" were included in the "Another reason" group due to low % response.

Source: More in Common (2025). Survey of 1,000 adults in the Houston MSA conducted in 2024.

The barriers to connection that Houston MSA residents cite vary slightly by line of difference.

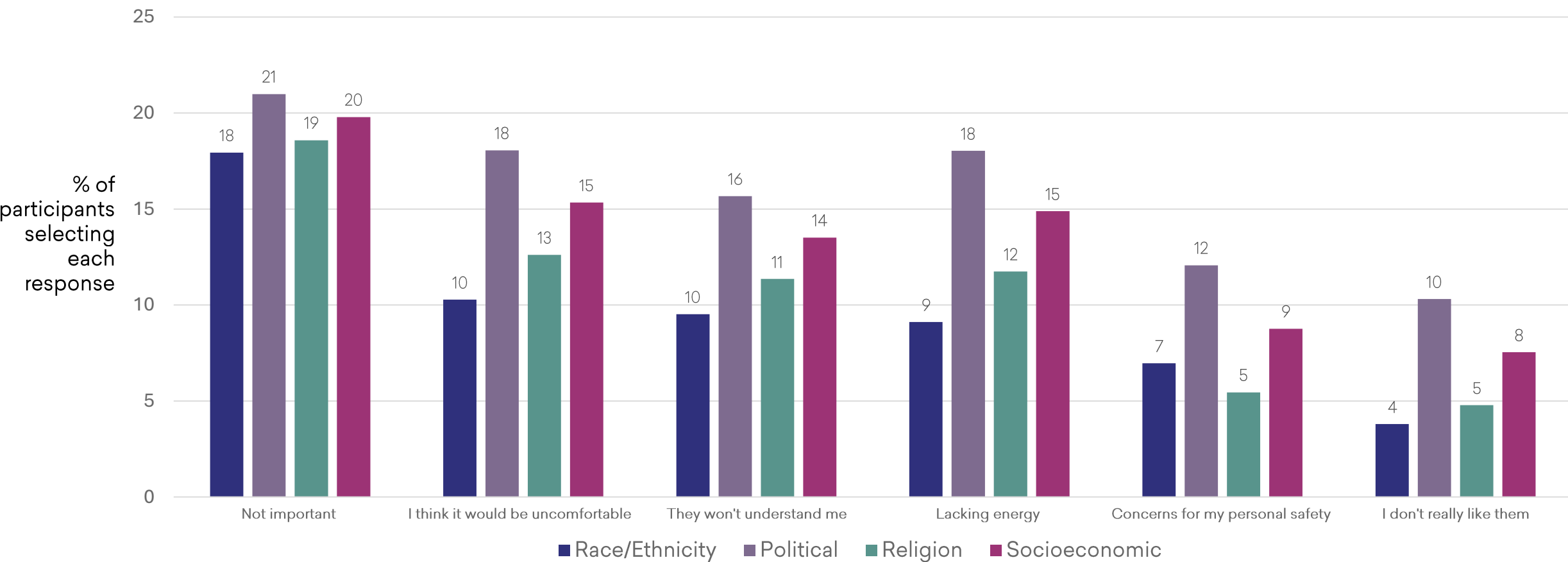
“Which of the following factors best reflects what might make it challenging for you to interact with people of a different [group] than you? (Please select all that apply)”



Note: Percents do not add to 100 due to multiple response. The items “I don't think other people in my life would approve” and “I don't have the social support to do this” were omitted due to low percentages across all lines of difference.
Source: More in Common (2025). Survey of 1,000 adults in the Houston MSA conducted in 2024.

Houston MSA residents are hesitant to connect across political differences due to perceived discomfort, lack of energy, safety concerns, a general dislike, and a sense that interaction is unimportant.

“Which of the following factors best reflects what might make it challenging for you to interact with people of a different than you? (Please select all that apply)”



Note: Percents do not add to 100 due to multiple response.
Source: More in Common (2025). Survey of 1,000 adults in the Houston MSA conducted in 2024.

FURTHER INSIGHTS FROM FOCUS GROUPS

Houston residents mention political tensions as a barrier to authentically connecting with others in the community.



"Coming from a very blue state, moving to a very red state with politics, my in-laws and I had a lot of disagreements, as well as with others. And I think that's why my sense of community has lacked as well because I'm afraid to be myself sometimes and show my views... I haven't had any physical violence or anything like that, but definitely a lot of heated disagreements... which kind of does make it hard to want to build a community because even though I am all for people of other views, I think that maybe some were taking it a little bit too far."

Ally, Millennial white woman from Houston

FURTHER INSIGHTS FROM FOCUS GROUPS

Some mention how the increasing cost of living increases stress and makes them less interested in engaging across lines of difference.

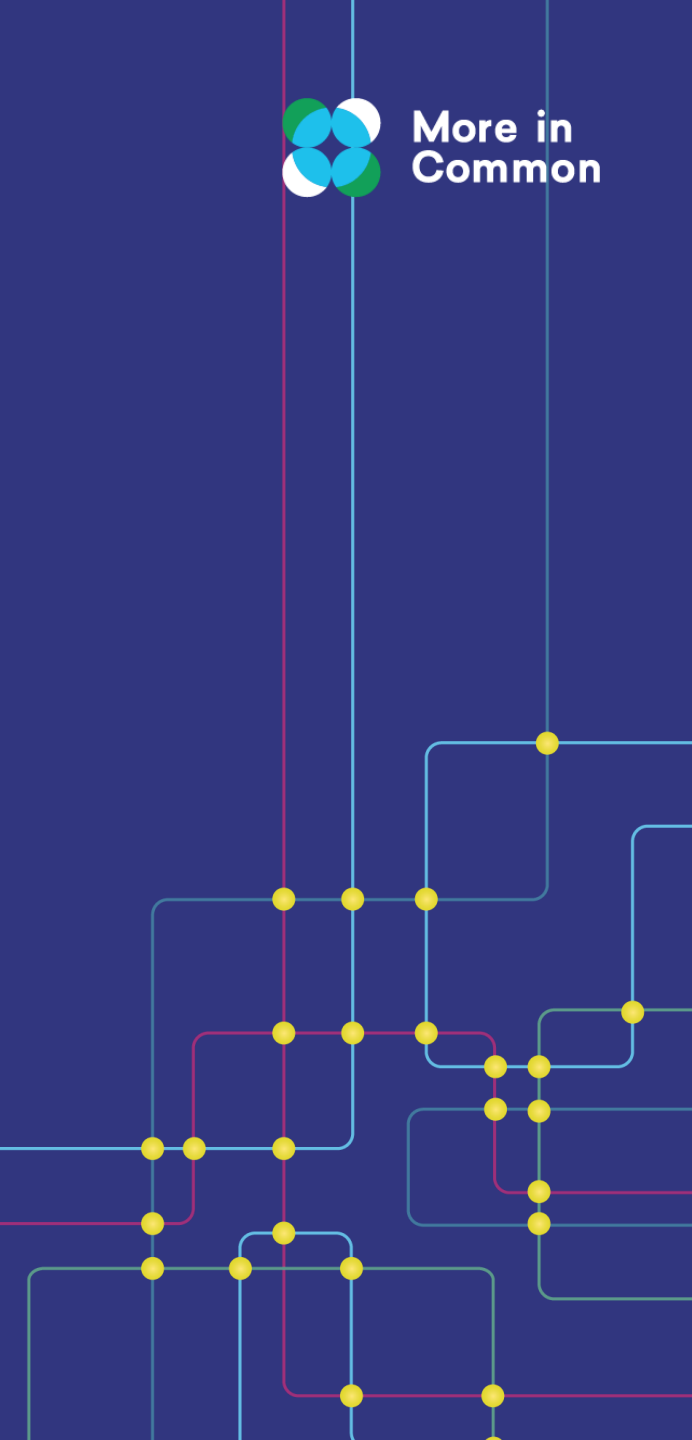


"Cost of life has increased a lot even in the last seven years I've been here. And I think a lot of people feel, due to all of those reasons, just are very on edge, prickly about things. Where maybe in the past, they would've been able to come together, now it feels like an affront on your existence or maybe on your beliefs, on your rights to certain things. And I think that a lot of the issues that we're seeing with people being more divided, can be partially explained by just that situation of maybe *I feel like I'm in survival mode*. I'm not sure how to go beyond that. So, to me, that's also part of it."

Lillian, Millennial biracial (Native American and white) woman from Houston

Section Six

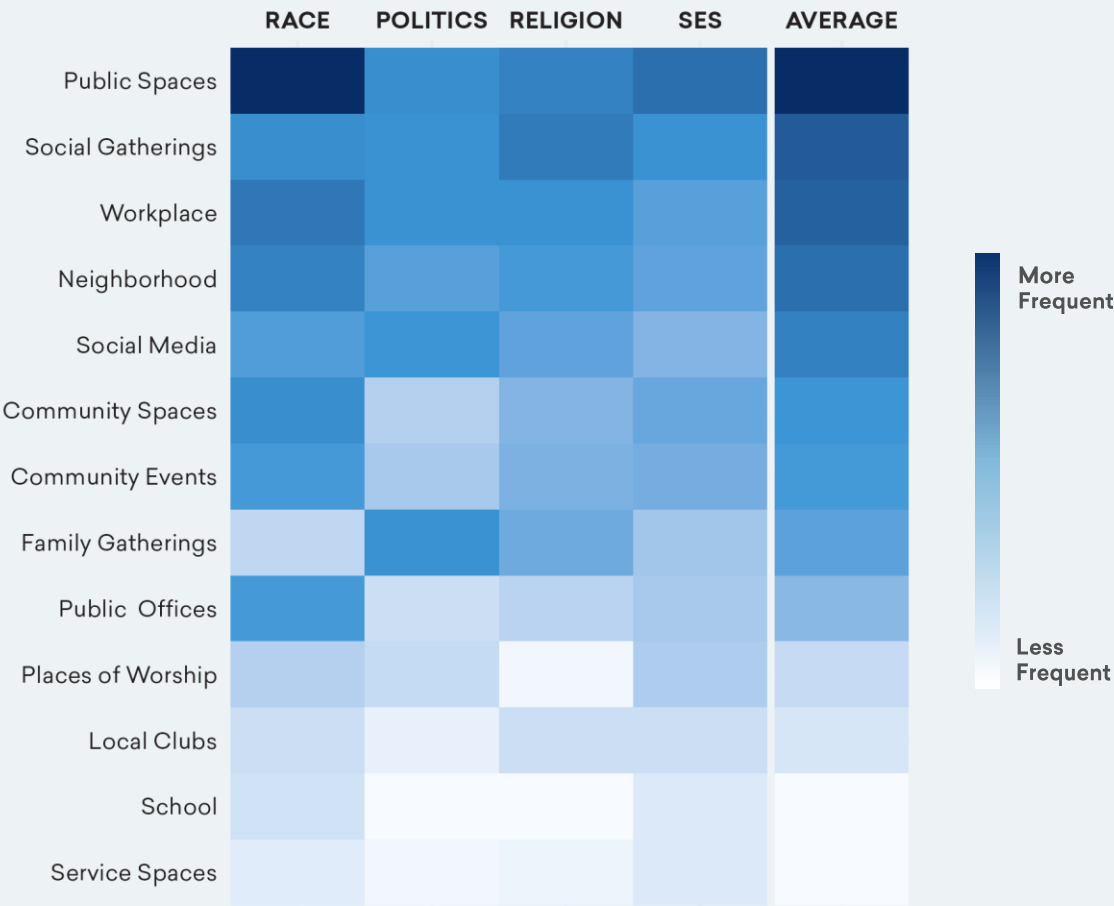
Places of Connection



WHERE PEOPLE SELF-REPORT THEY CONNECT

People report the most connections happening in public spaces and at social gatherings.

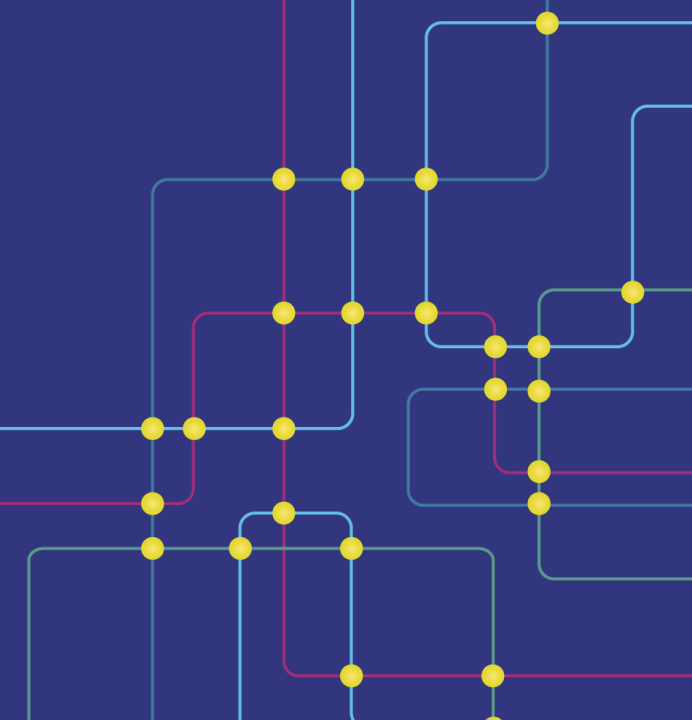
Social media and family gatherings stand out as frequent places to connect across political differences.



Question: We would like you to think about your day-to-day interactions—if any—with people from different [group] than you. Where do these interactions usually take place? [Select as many that apply]
Source: More in Common (2025). Source: More in Common (2025). Surveys of 4,522 U.S. adults and 1,000 adults in the Houston MSA conducted in 2024.

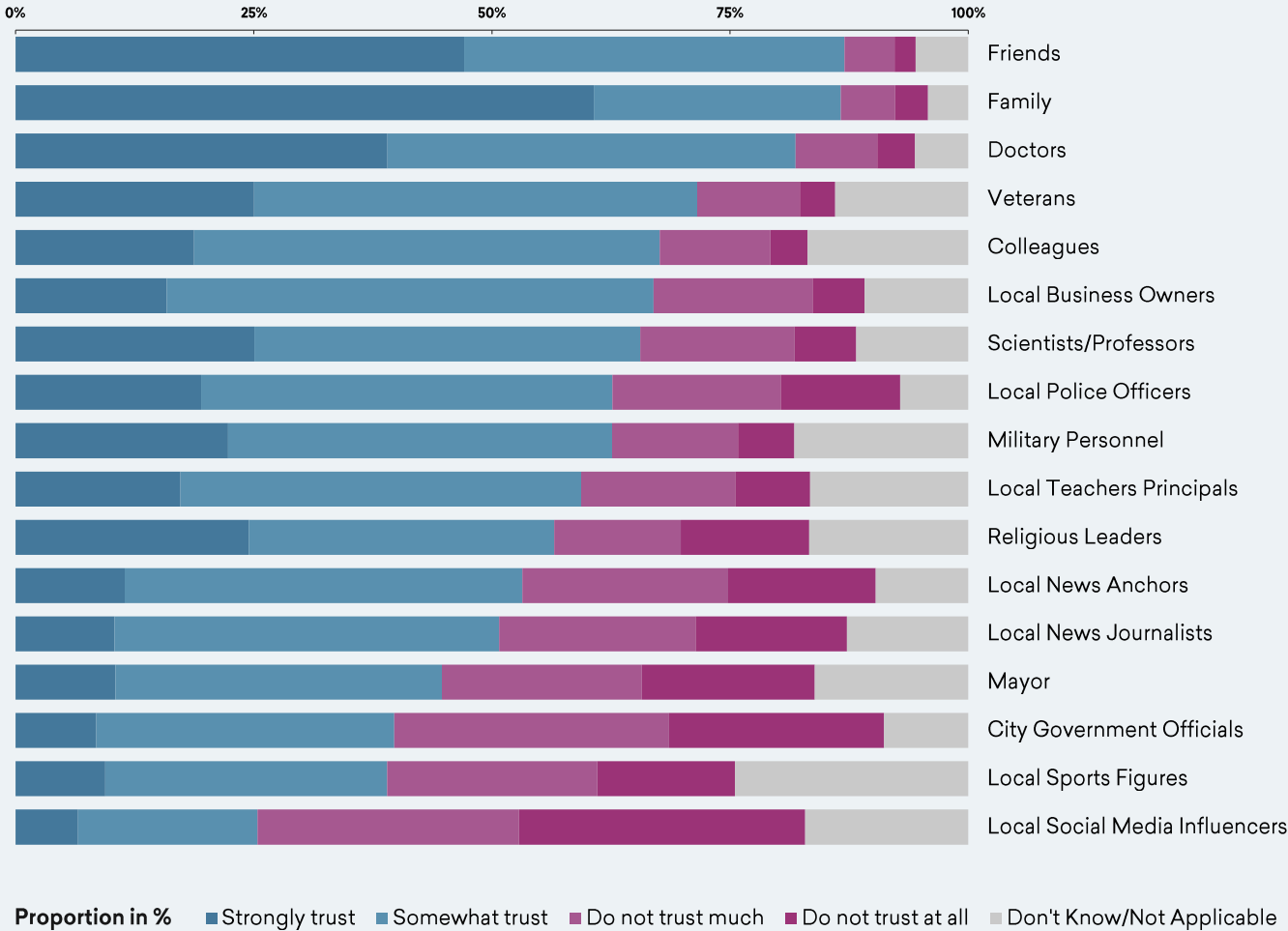
Section Seven

Trusted Messengers



TRUSTED MESSENGERS

In Houston MSA, people place the most trust in close connections, doctors, veterans, and colleagues—while local social media influencers are trusted the least.

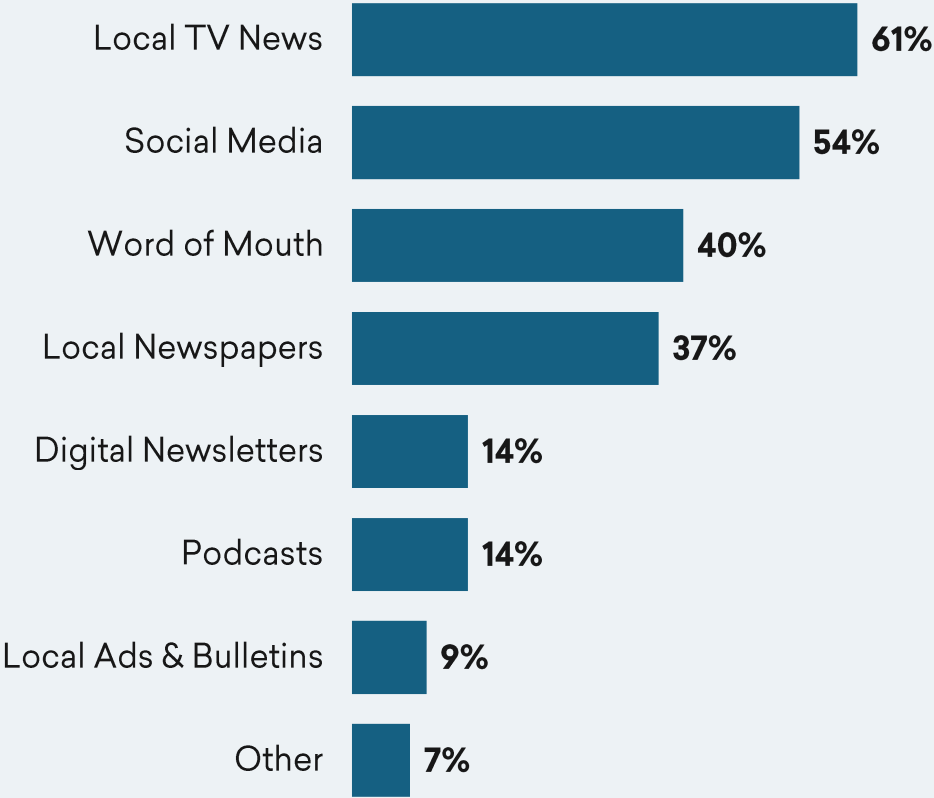


Question: Please indicate to what extent, if at all, you trust the following people in Greater Houston?
Source: More in Common (2025). Survey of 1,000 adults in the Houston MSA conducted in 2024.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

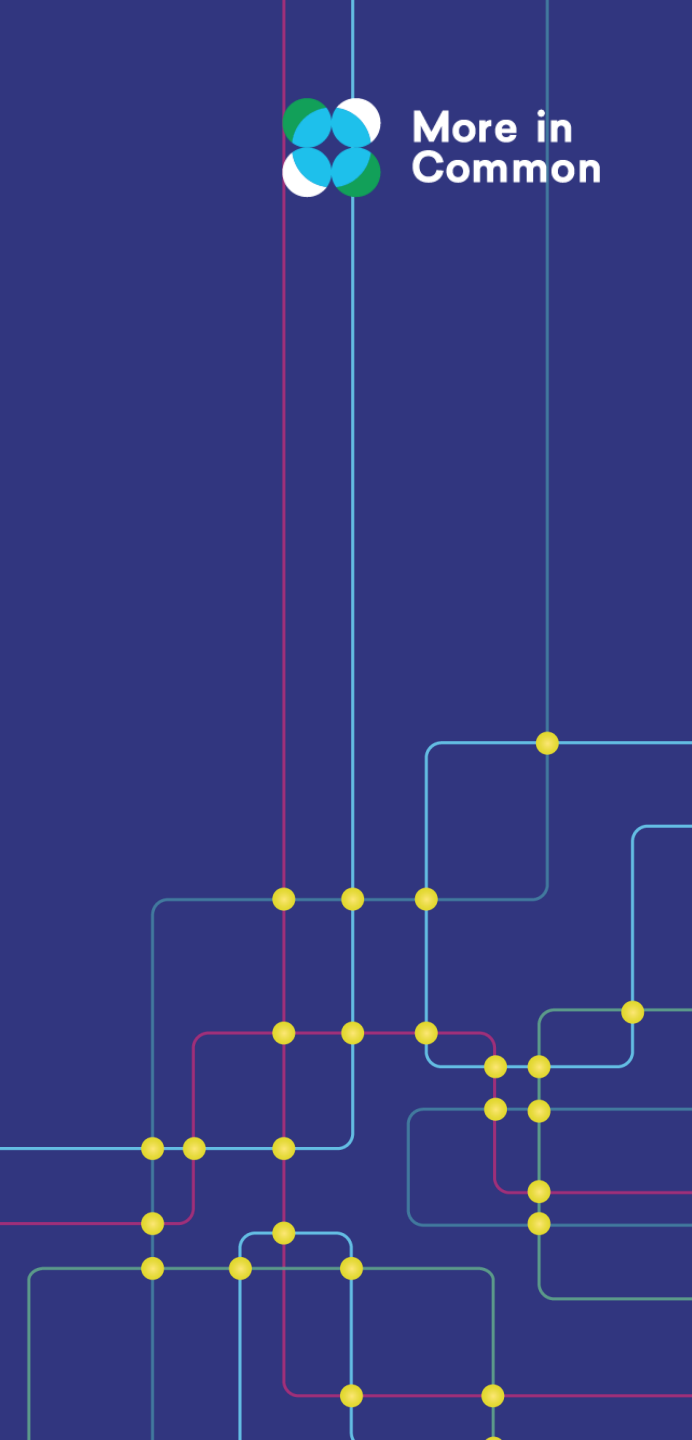
Respondents seek out local TV news the most to know what is happening locally.

Question: If you want to find out what is happening locally in Greater Houston, including news on sports, traffic, weather, politics, events, lifestyle, etc., what source are you most likely to turn to? [Select one]



Section Eight

Levers of Change



LEVERS OF CHANGE

Six recommendations for fostering more connection across difference

1

Provide more opportunities for Houston residents to connect across lines of difference.

Our research identifies a “lack of opportunity” as the most frequently cited barrier to building these connections, especially for differences of race/ethnicity, region, and socioeconomic status. One clear strategy for resolving this is also the most straightforward: create more opportunities for people to make connections in their daily lives. This can be done in two main ways: 1) provide more opportunities for meaningful connection in spaces where people are already coming together, and 2) design environments where new connections can happen naturally.

2

Increase the perception that connecting across difference is the “community norm.”

Perceived community norms that support connection across difference are the strongest predictor of interest in connecting across all four lines of difference we explored. This suggests that strengthening these norms of connection can be a powerful lever for change. See our main report for practical guidance on how to achieve this.

LEVERS OF CHANGE

Six recommendations for fostering more connection across difference

3

Foster community belonging in Houston.

Our data show that the more people feel like they belong in their local community, the more they express interest in connecting across lines of difference. Therefore, fostering a sense of community belonging is likely an important aspect of supporting people's willingness to bridge differences.

4

Focus on commonalities, like shared goals, to broaden the appeal of bridging activities.

Houston residents report that they would be more interested in connecting across lines of difference if the interactions focused on working to achieve a mutual goal in the community. As such, creating opportunities that emphasize shared community goals and activities may draw in more community members. In contrast, programs that invite people to come together to talk about potential sources of tension or conflict—which is frequently the focus of some traditional bridge-building efforts—may inadvertently “preach to the choir” and only entice those who already feel comfortable addressing group differences.

LEVERS OF CHANGE

Six recommendations for fostering more connection across difference

5

Emphasize the importance of “connective responsibility.”

A majority of Houston residents agree that they have a responsibility to connect across lines of difference. Community leaders can highlight this in public messages and also discuss ways in which collaboration across differences has been essential to advancements in the area.

6

Create longstanding programming to reinforce connections, as opposed to one-off events.

Our research finds that the more people engage across lines of difference (their “frequency of cross-group connection”), the more interested they are to do so again in the future. This suggests that experiences of and interest in connection may build on themselves in a self-reinforcing cycle. To take advantage of such cascading interest, organizations need to create sustained opportunities for engagement and bridging.



See our full [report](#) for more guidance on how to turn these insights into action.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact us at us@moreincommon.com



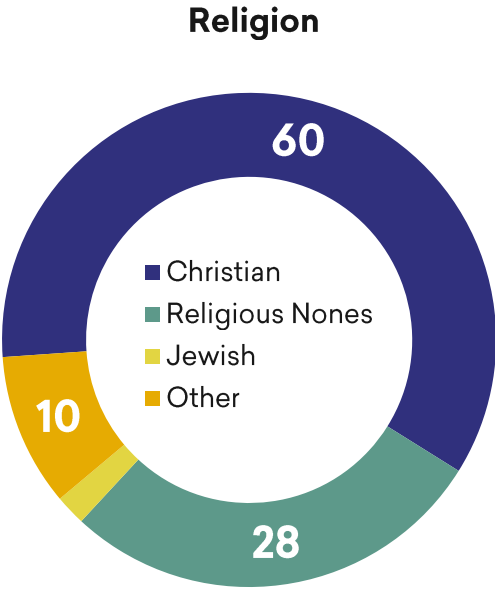
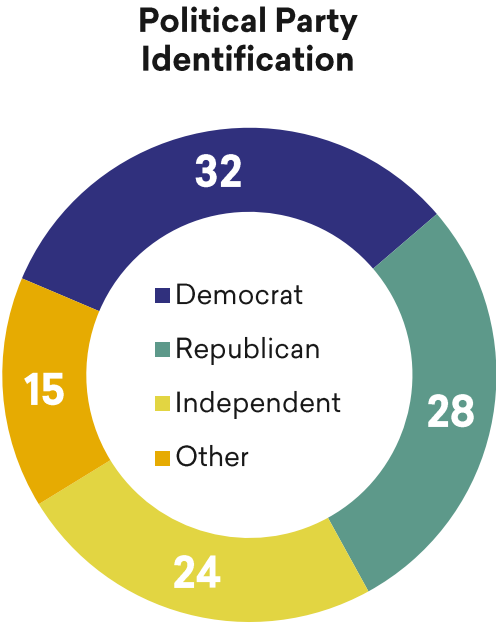
**More in
Common**

Section Nine

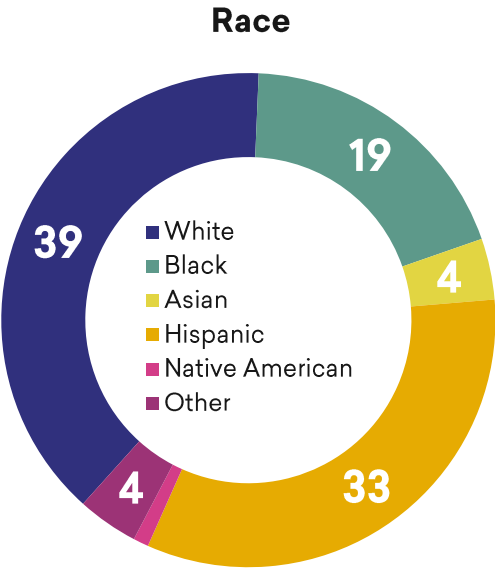
Appendix

The Houston MSA sample consists of 1000 adults. 85% have lived in the area for over 10 years.

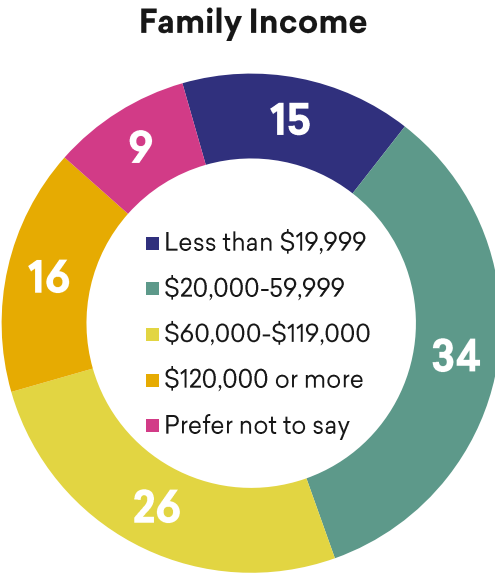
Numbers indicate percentages.



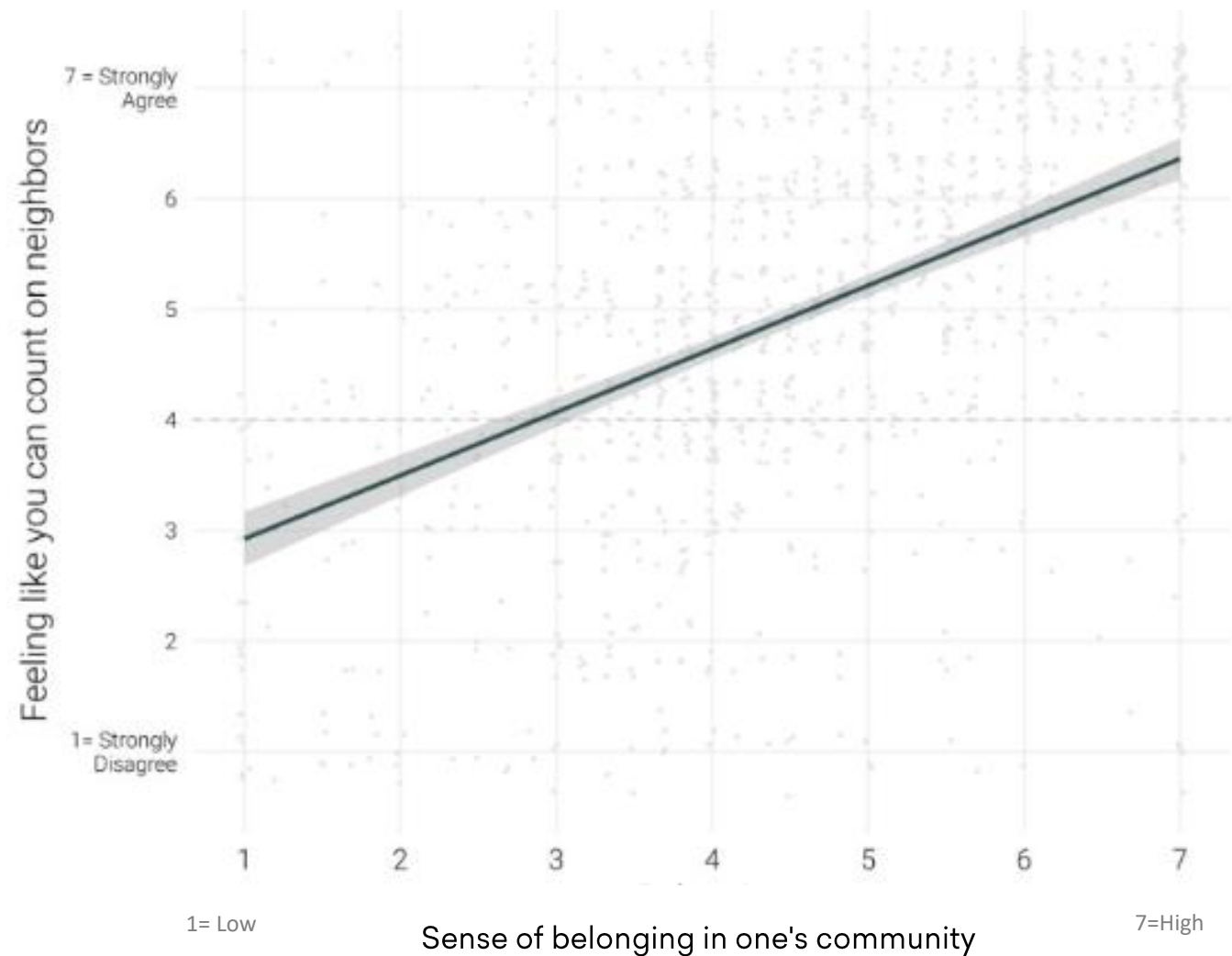
Christian = Protestant, Catholic, LDS.
Religious Nones = Atheist, Agnostic, “Nothing in Particular”. Other = Buddhist, Hindu, “Something Else”. There were no Muslim participants in the sample.



Other = Two or more races and “Other”.
There were no Middle Eastern participants in the sample.

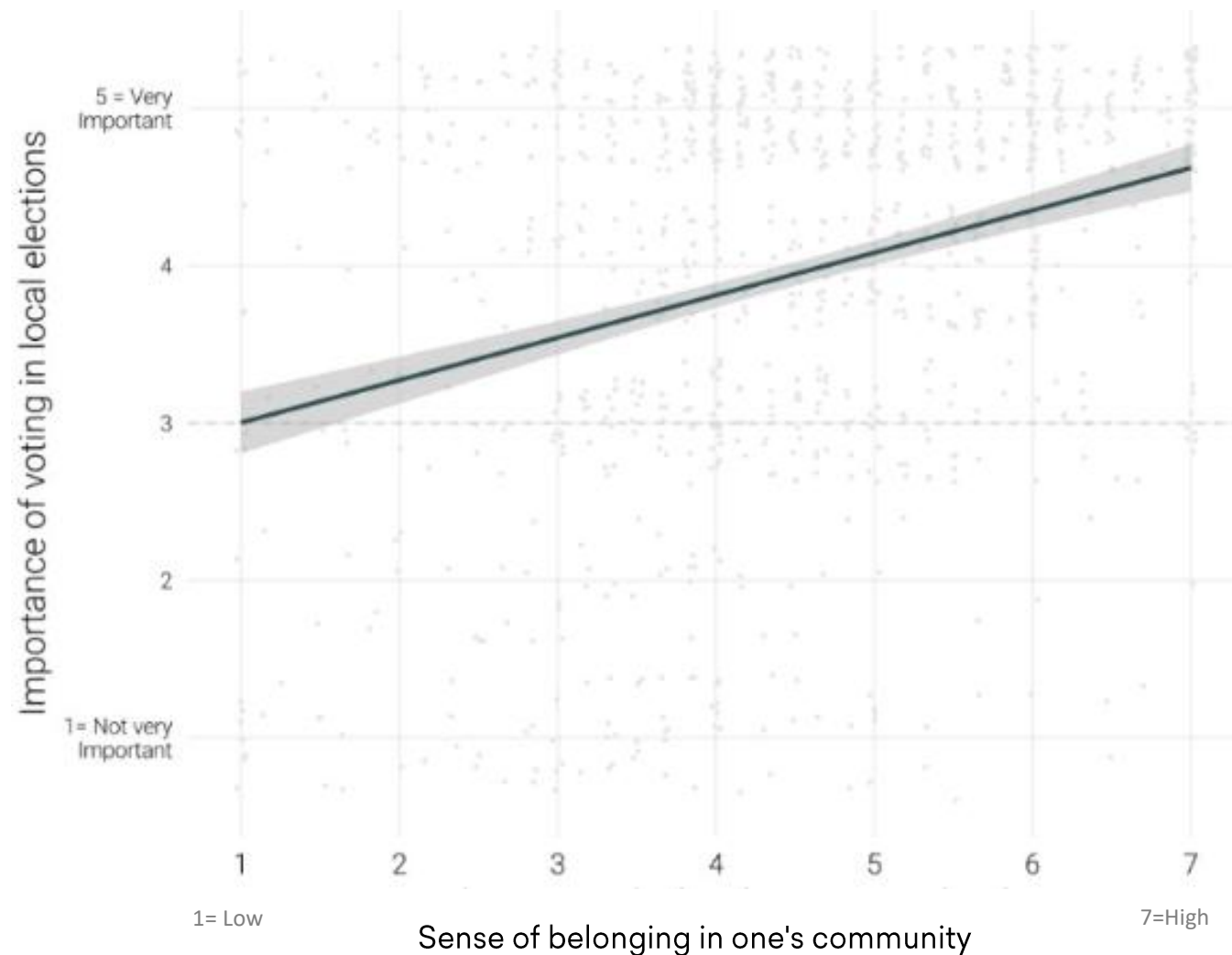


Houston MSA residents who are high in belonging feel like they can count on their neighbors if needed.



Question for y-axis: "I feel like I can ask a neighbor for assistance if needed. (1- Strongly Disagree to 7- Strongly Agree)". X-axis is the composite measure for local community belonging.
Source: More in Common (2025). Survey of 1,000 adults in the Houston MSA conducted in 2024.

Houston MSA residents who are high in belonging tend to feel that voting in local elections is important.



Question for y-axis: "How important to you are the following behaviors?: Voting in local elections (e.g. voting for city officials)" X-axis is the composite measure for local community belonging.
Source: More in Common (2025). Survey of 1,000 adults in the Houston MSA conducted in 2024.



**More in
Common**