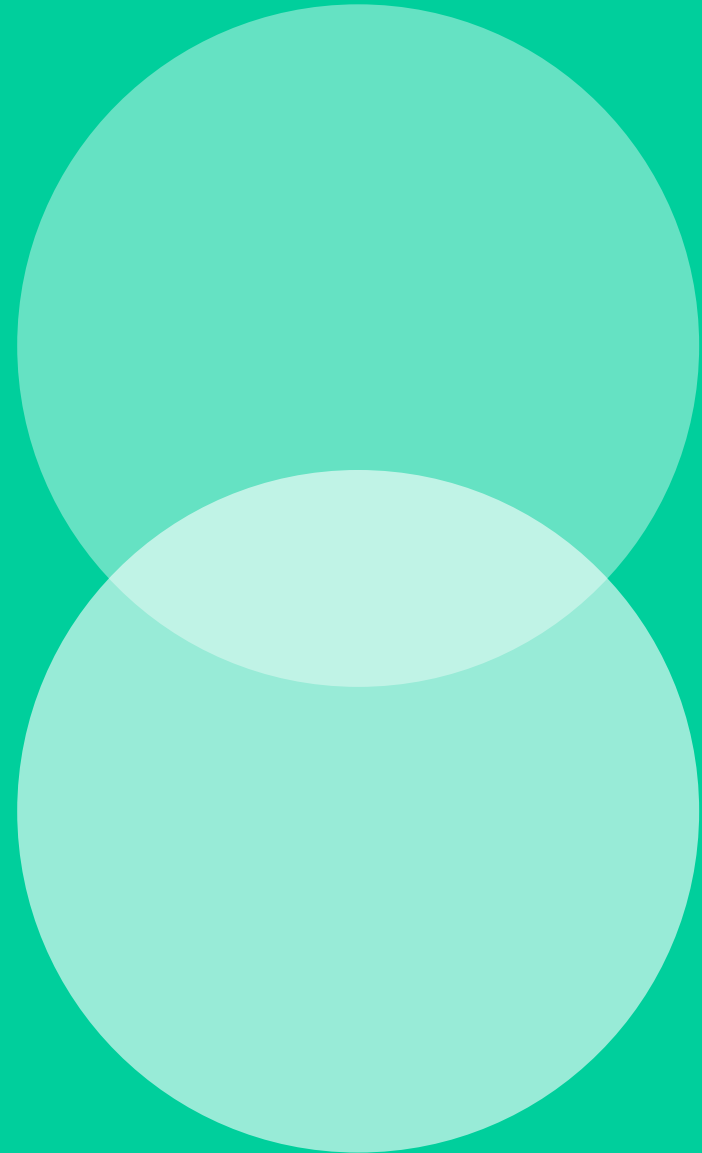


# Navigating the Modern Social Landscape: Understanding Community Dynamics, Barriers, and Well-being in the United States

May 17, 2024



# Meet the team



Andrea Date  
Vice President



Erica Parker  
Managing Director



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Vice President



Michele Salomon  
Vice President

# Research Objectives

1. Explore the relationship between community engagement and quality of life
2. Quantify the number of communities individuals are actively a part of
2. Define the types of communities individuals are a part of
3. Understand the depth of engagement within those communities
4. Unravel the processes of joining these communities
5. Investigate the barriers individuals encounter when attempting to join communities
6. Dig into demographic nuances, considering factors such as age, gender, religious affiliation, and employment status
7. Segment the U.S. population into types of community members to paint a comprehensive picture of the intricate interplay between individual characteristics and community engagement

# Methods



**Online survey**



**English language only**



**19 questions**



**2,090 U.S. adults, 18+**



**April 5-9, 2024**

This survey was conducted online from April 5-9, 2024 within the United States by The Harris Poll among 2,090 adults ages 18 and older. Data are weighted where necessary by age, gender, region, race/ethnicity, household income, education, marital status, size of household, and political party affiliation to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population.

Respondents are selected among those who have agreed to participate in our surveys. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. The sample data is accurate to within  $\pm 2.5$  percentage points using a 95% confidence level. This credible interval will be wider among subsets of the surveyed population of interest.

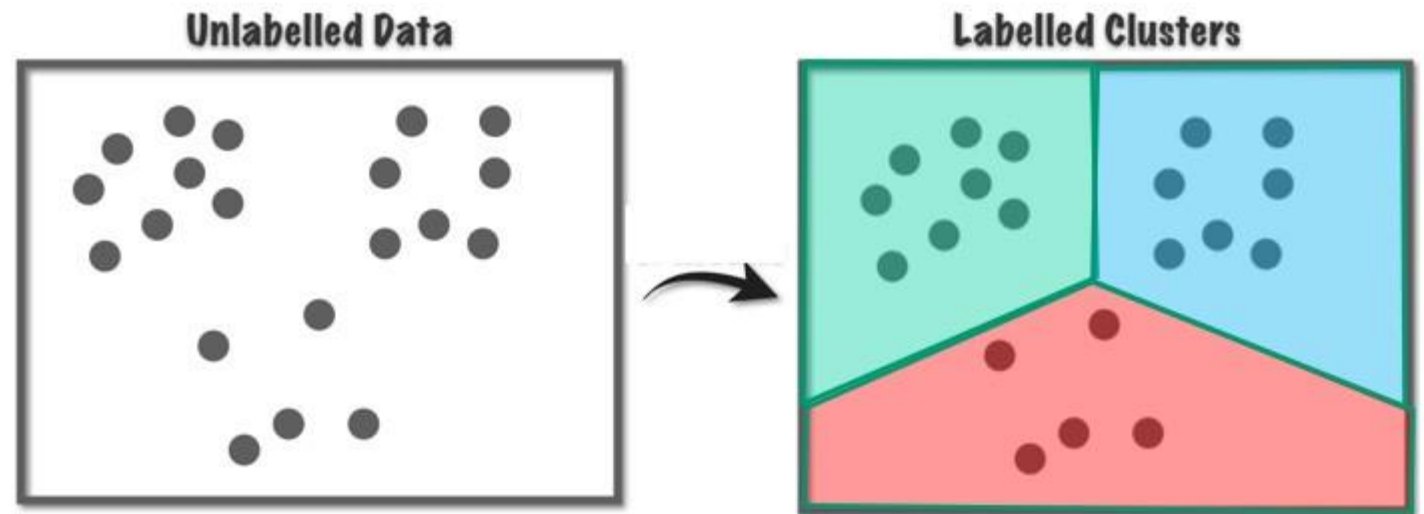
All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to other multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including, but not limited to coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments.

# Segmentation Method: Twostep cluster analysis

To conduct the segmentation analysis, we used a **TwoStep cluster analysis** approach.

TwoStep cluster analysis can be used to cluster the dataset into distinct groups when you don't know what those groups are at the beginning. As with Kohonen nodes and K-Means nodes, TwoStep Cluster models do *not* use a target field. Instead of trying to predict an outcome, TwoStep Cluster tries to uncover patterns in the set of input fields. Records are grouped so that records within a group or cluster tend to be similar to each other, but records in different groups are dissimilar.

We arrived at **six segments**.



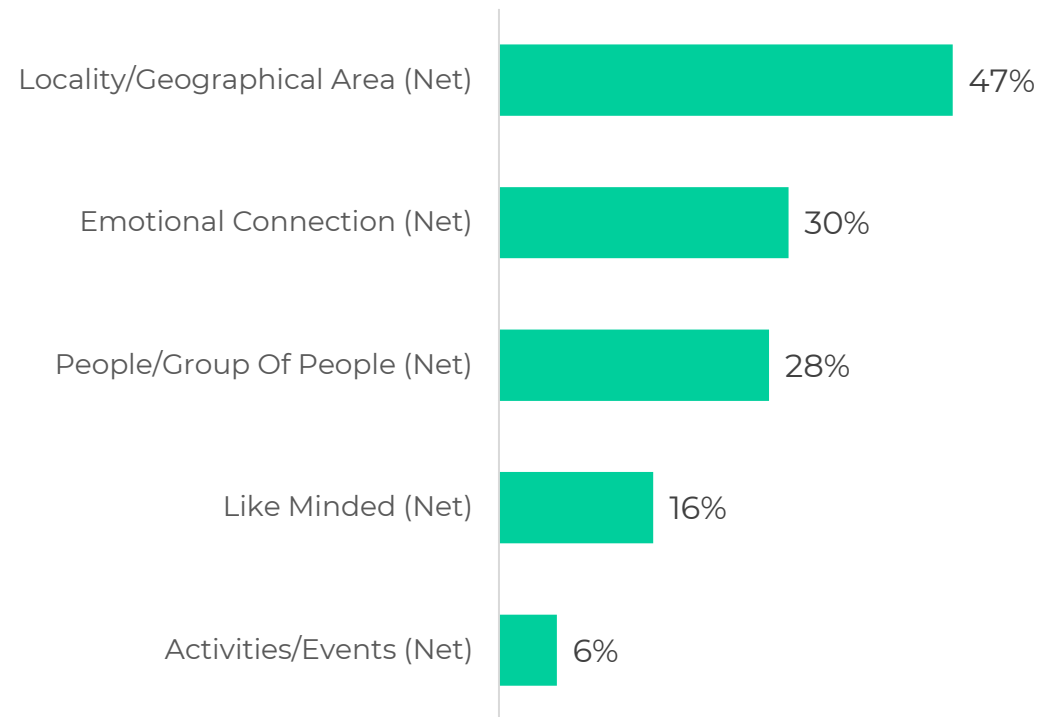
# COMMUNITIES AT A GLANCE



# Community defined by geography, people, and emotional connections

What does community mean?

*Open end*



“A city or a neighborhood where everyone knows one another and willing to help each other.” – Man, age 50

““Community” to me means a place of belonging, mutual support, where all members feel included, welcome, and safe.” – Woman, age 24

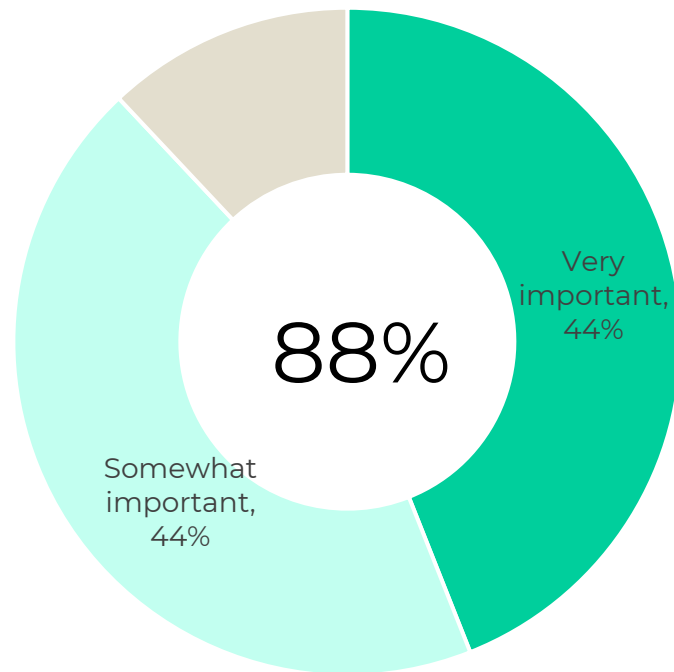
“A community is a collection of individuals who share a common set of beliefs, interests, obligations, or geographical proximity.” - Man, age 80



# Community of critical importance to Americans

9 in 10 Americans consider community important because it provides a sense of belonging and connection

## Importance of Community



## Why are they important?

Of those who say it is somewhat or very important

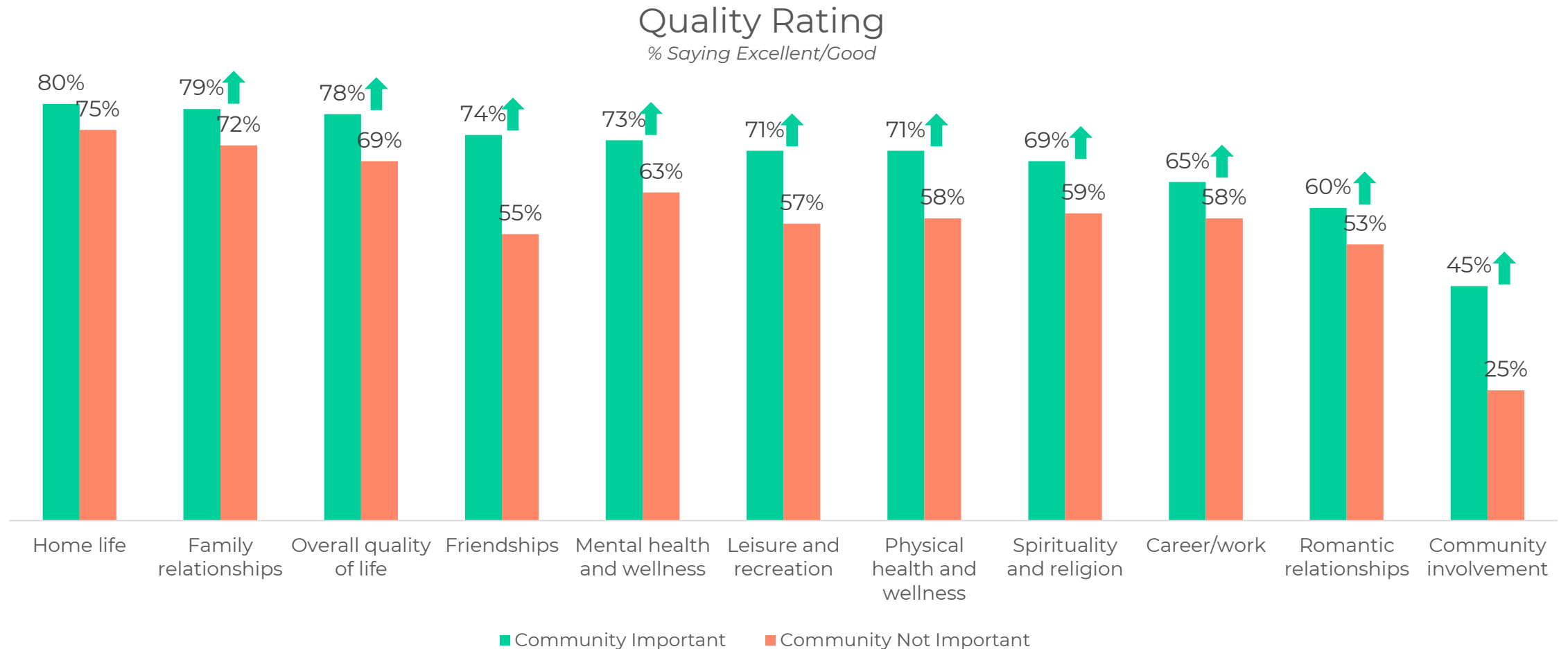






# Importance of community linked to quality of life

Americans who consider community important are more likely to state a higher quality across many aspects of their life.



↑ Indicates statistically significant at 95% confidence level



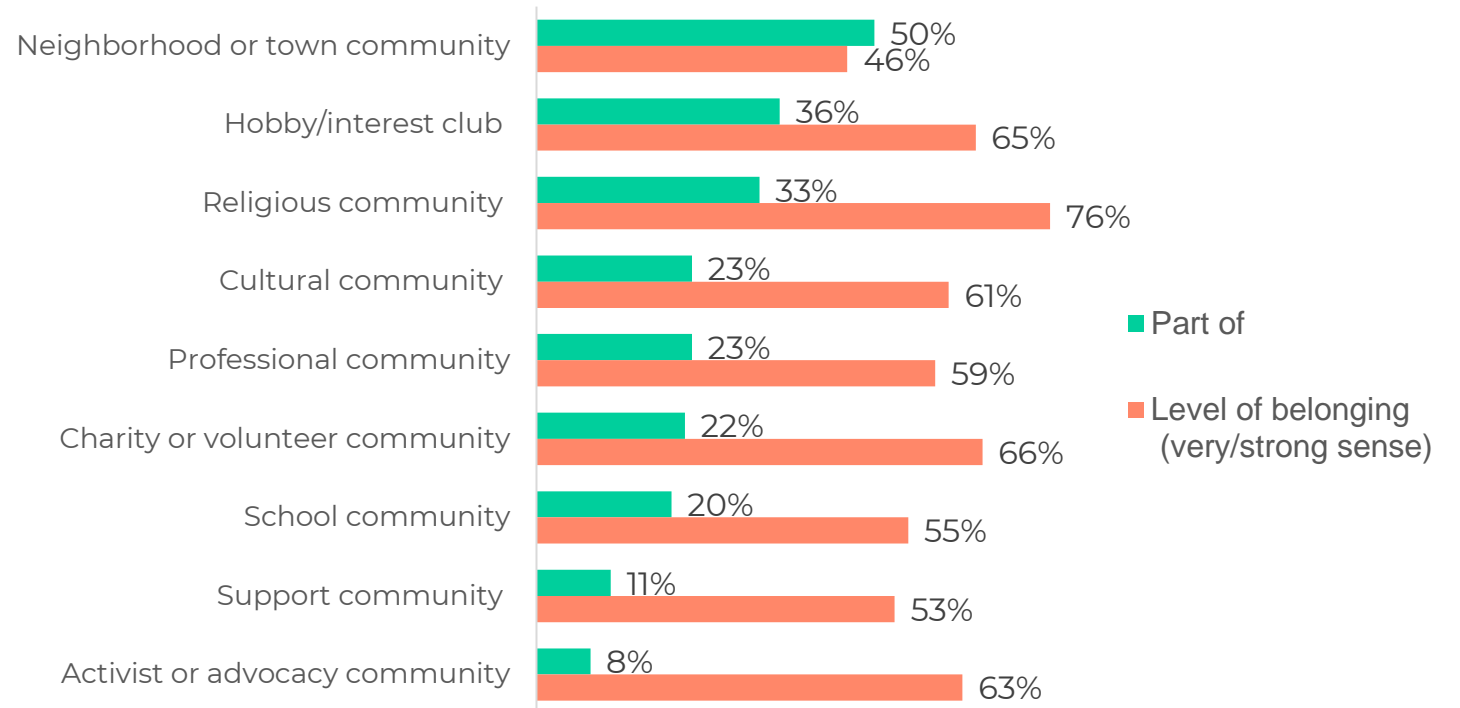
# Typical American involved in 2 communities

*Most common involvement is neighborhood or town community thought lowest level of belonging.*

# 2

Median number  
of communities

## Communities Part of and Depth of Belonging





# Pathway to community is varied

Seeking a connection with others is a strong motivation for community seekers while event attendance or simply being raised in it are how non-seekers found themselves in community.

## Intentionally Joined Community



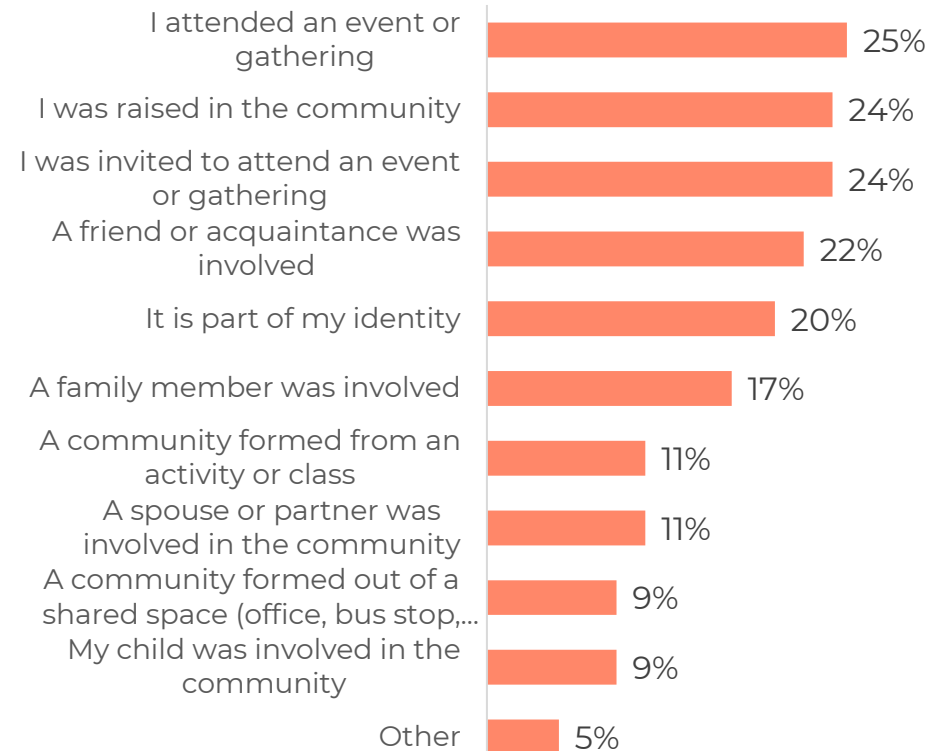
### Motivation to Intentionally Join

Excluding Don't Know



### How Joined

Among members who did not intentionally join  
Excluding Don't Know

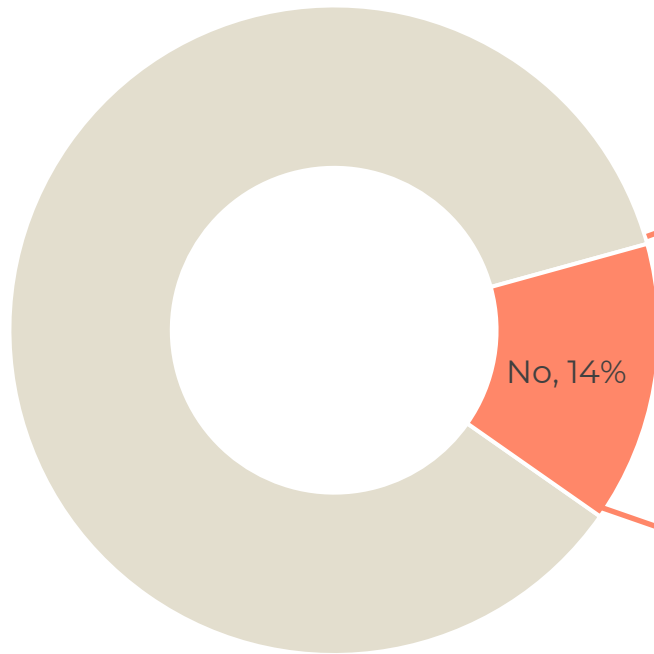




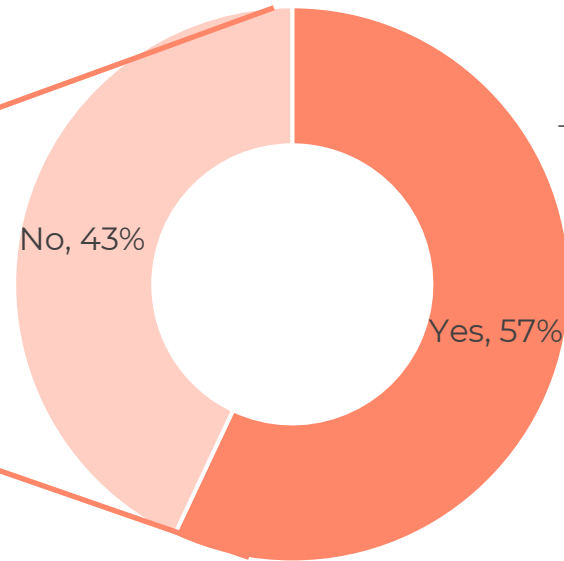
# Barriers to community include lack of desire and time

*Additionally, people don't know where to begin or face geographic challenges to joining.*

### Part of Community

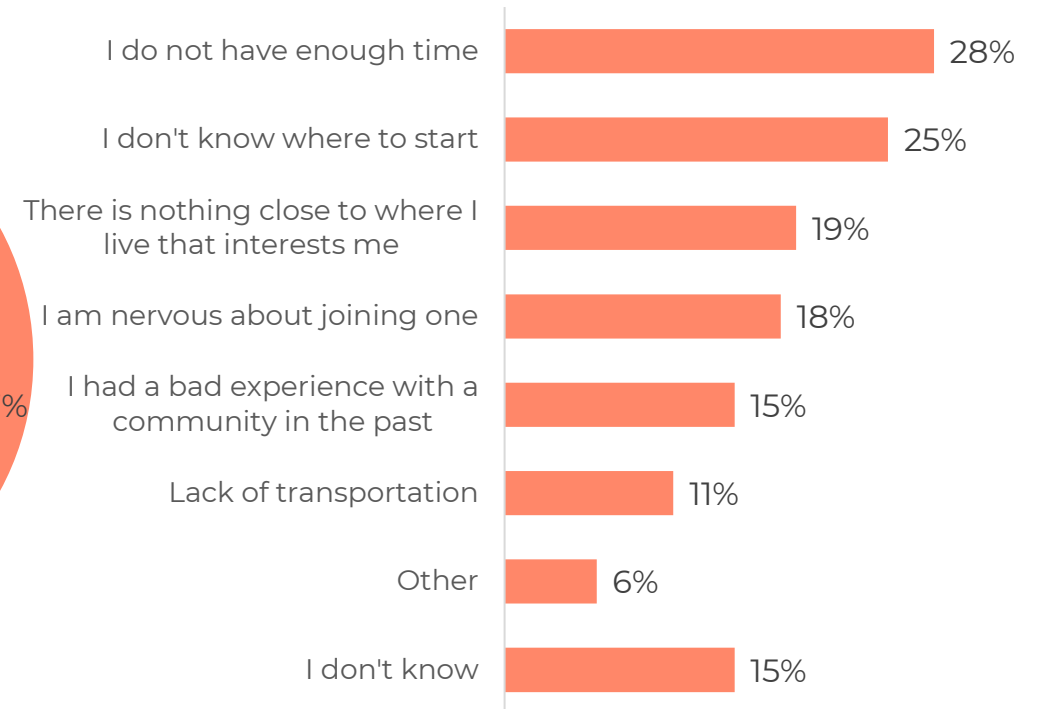


### Barriers



### Barriers to Joining

Among those who cited a barrier



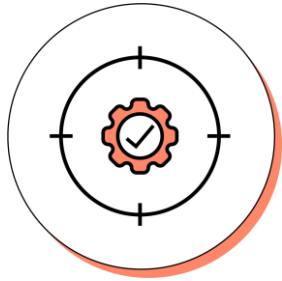
# SEGMENT DEEP DIVE

# Meet the Segments

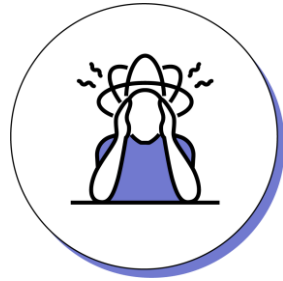
Parent Socialites



Specific Engagers



Anxious Followers



Lone Wolf



Community Organizers



Community Skeptics



Importance Of Communities (very/somewhat)



Average # Of Communities





# Parent Socialites

**Community Experience:** Community is universally important to Parent Socialites. They tend to be leaders, and actively join communities particularly their neighborhood or town, hobby/interest group, or advocacy group. .

## Importance of Community

**2%▼**  
Not At All/Not Very Important

### Top Reasons Why Not:

- 35%** I don't want others in my personal business
- 29%** I prefer to be independent
- 20%** I don't want to conform



**98%▲**  
Very/somewhat important

### Top Reasons Why:

- 21%** It gives me a sense of belonging
- 15%** It keeps me connected to others
- 15%** It has a positive impact on my mental health and well-being

**73%▲**

Have Intentionally Joined

**0%**

Ever part of a community

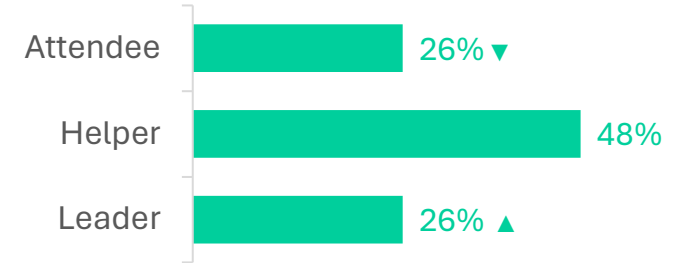
**Most Common Type of Community**

**55%▲**

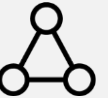
Neighborhood/  
Town Community



## Type of Involvement



## Most Common Reasons To Become Part of A Community



- 54%▲** I wanted to connect with people with similar interests to me
- 49%▲** I wanted to meet new people
- 47%▲** I wanted to connect with people with similar experiences as me

**53%▲**

Hobby/Interest club or group community



**47%▲**

Activist or advocacy community

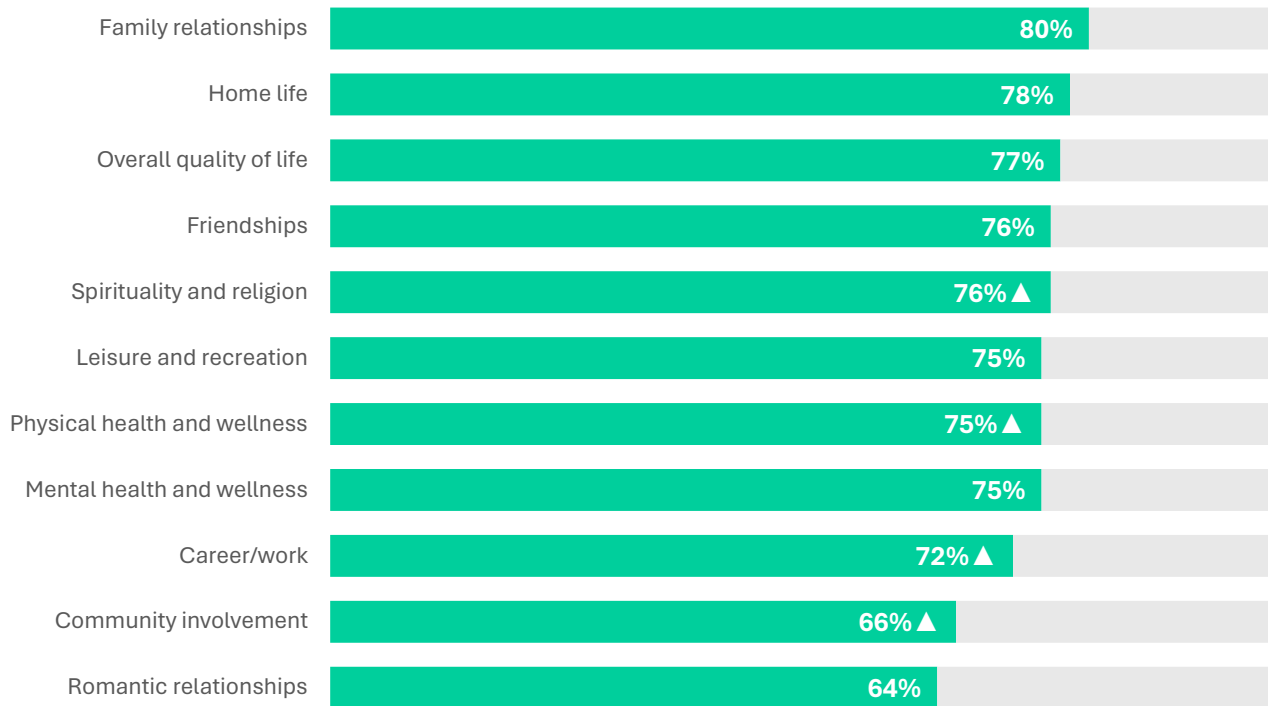




# Parent Socialites

**Attitudes & Behaviors:** Parent Socialites have higher than average quality of life ratings for spirituality & religion, physical health & wellness, work and community involvement. They are more likely than average to report a high sense of belonging for most communities they are part of, except for their religious or spiritual community.

## Quality of Life (Good/excellent)



## Belonging (Very strong/strong)

82%



Religious Community (e.g., church, synagogue, mosque)

81% ▲



Hobby/Interest club or group

80% ▲



Charity or volunteer community

79% ▲



Professional Community

77% ▲



Cultural community (i.e. group of people with shared traditions, values)

75% ▲



Support Community

73% ▲



Activist or advocacy community

68% ▲



School Community

65% ▲



Neighborhood or town community





# Parent Socialites

**Demographic Profile:** Parent Socialites have the highest rates of employment and having children in the household and are most likely to be college graduates. Additionally, they are more likely to live in the suburbs and identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community.

43 ▾

Average Age

Gender

51% Woman

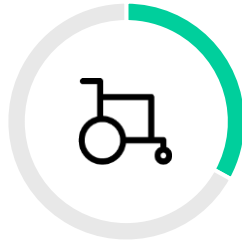
48% Man

0% Other

46% ▲

Children in HH

## Have Disability



33% ▲

## Education

28% High school or less

29% Some college

42% College grad+ ▲

## LGBTQ+ Community



14% ▲

## Urbanicity

18% Rural

44% Suburban ▲

38% Urban ▾

## Work Environment

54% In-person

37% Hybrid ▲

9% Remote ▾

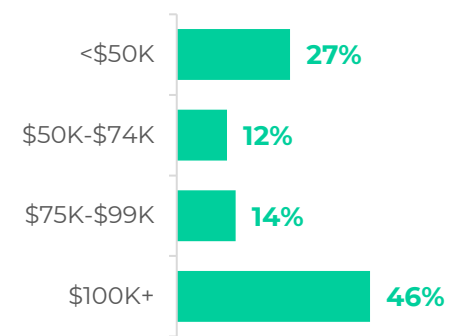
## Employment



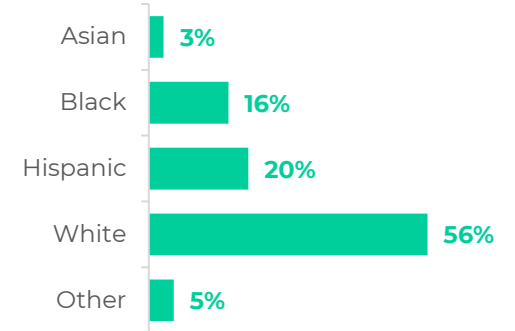
23% ▾ Not employed

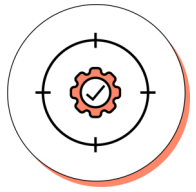
77% ▲ Employed

## Income



## Race





# Specific Engagers

**Community Experience:** This group of Specific Engagers values community, are more likely to be helpers and actively seek out community to connect with and meet new people.

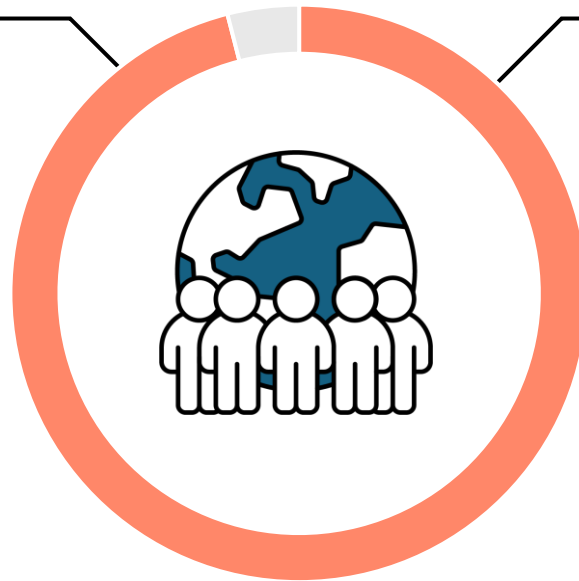
## Importance of Community

4% ▼

Not At All/Not Very Important

## Top Reasons Why Not:

- 25% I already have a support system
- 19% I don't have the time
- 18% There is too much conflict



96% ▲

Very/somewhat important

## Top Reasons Why:

- 24% It gives me a sense of belonging
- 22% It keeps me connected to others
- 14% It has a positive impact on my mental health and well-being

100% ▲

Have Intentionally Joined

100%

Ever part of a community

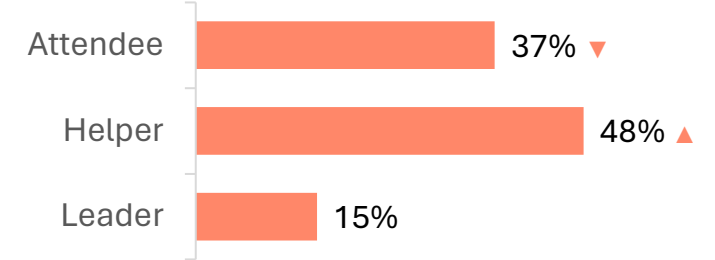
**Most Common Type of Community**

50% ▲

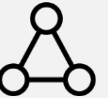
Neighborhood/  
Town Community



## Type of Involvement



## Most Common Reasons To Become Part of A Community



- 45% I wanted to connect with people with similar interests to me
- 39% I wanted to meet new people
- 33% I wanted to connect with people with similar experiences as me

40% ▲

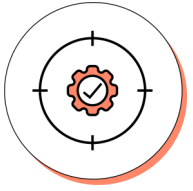
Hobby/Interest club  
or group community



38% ▲

Religious community  
(e.g., church, synagogue,  
mosque, etc.)

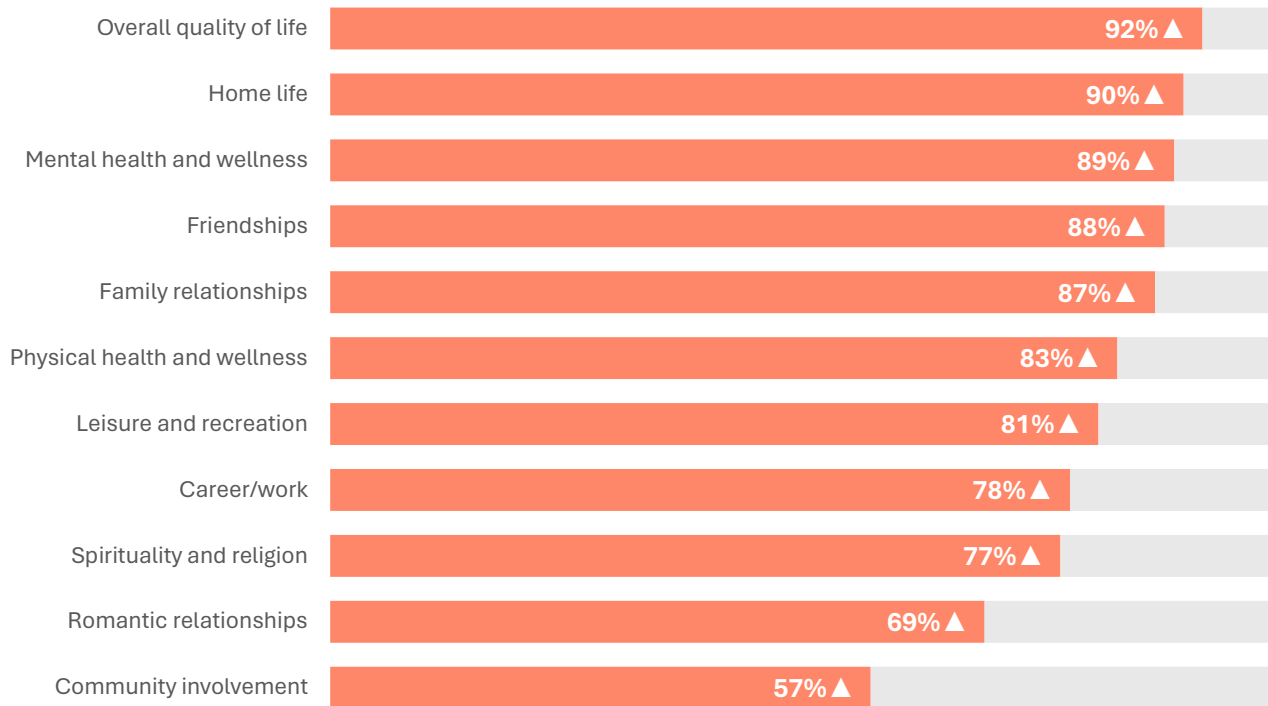




# Specific Engagers

**Attitudes & Behaviors:** Specific Engagers report higher than average quality of life on all measures as compared to the general public. Additionally, their sense of belonging is strong, and stronger than average for their religious community, school community and neighborhood community.

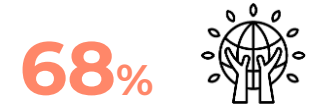
## Quality of Life (Good/excellent)



## Belonging (Very strong/strong)



Religious Community (e.g., church, synagogue, mosque)



Cultural community (i.e. group of people with shared traditions, values)



Charity or volunteer community



Professional Community



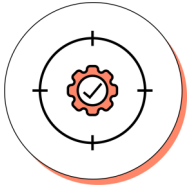
School Community



Neighborhood or town community



Hobby/Interest club or group



# Specific Engagers

**Demographic Profile:** Specific Engagers tend to be older with a high level of education. This group has the higher proportion of higher income adults than other groups.

**50** ▲  
Average Age

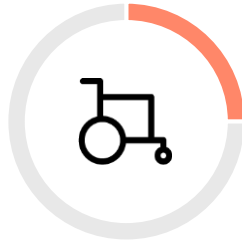
Gender  
**47%** Woman

**53%** Man

**0%** Other

**24%**  
Children in HH

## Have Disability



**25%**

## Education

**22%** ▼  
High school or less

**33%**  
Some college

**36%** ▲  
College grad+

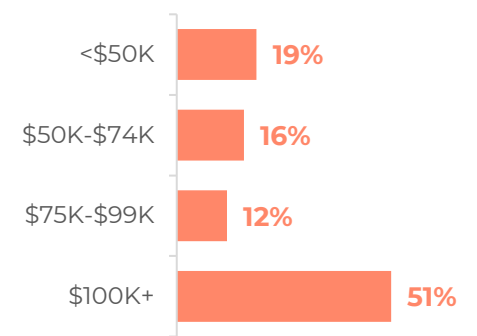
## Work Environment

**58%**  
In-person

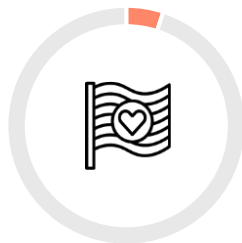
**28%**  
Hybrid

**14%**  
Remote

## Income



## LGBTQ+ Community



**5%**

## Urbanicity

**16%** ▼  
Rural

**59%** ▲  
Suburban

**25%**  
Urban

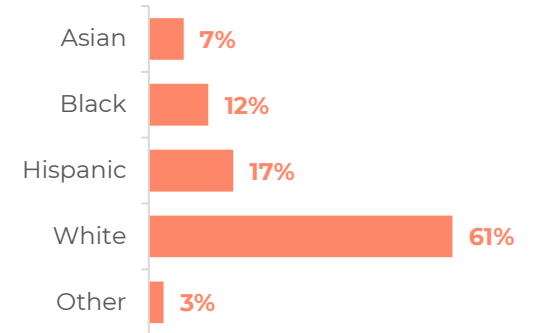
## Employment



**40%**  
Not employed

**60%**  
Employed

## Race





# Anxious Followers

**Community Experience:** Community is important to nearly all Anxious Followers. They are notably helpers and less likely to be leaders. They seek connection with people who share their interests.

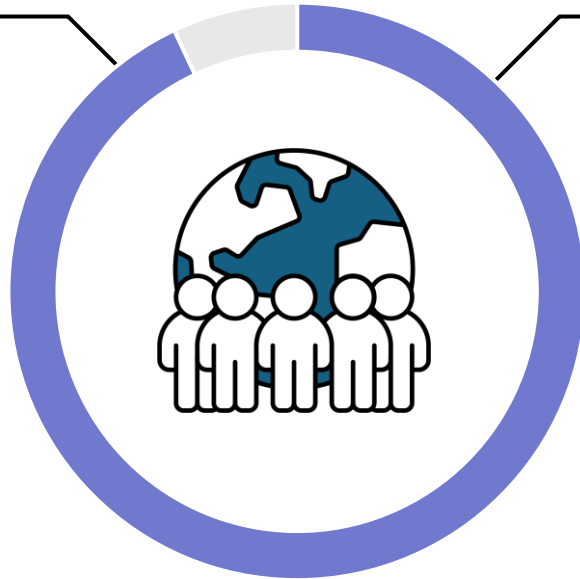
## Importance of Community

7% ▼

Not At All/Not Very Important

93% ▲

Very/somewhat important



## Top Reasons Why Not:

- 18% I don't want others in my personal business
- 18% I already have a support system
- 17% I don't want more obligations / There is too much conflict

## Top Reasons Why:

- 22% It keeps me connected to others
- 21% It gives me a sense of belonging
- 16% It has a positive impact on my mental health and well-being

50%

Have Intentionally Joined

53%

Ever part of a community

**Most Common Type of Community**

42%



Neighborhood/  
Town Community

26%



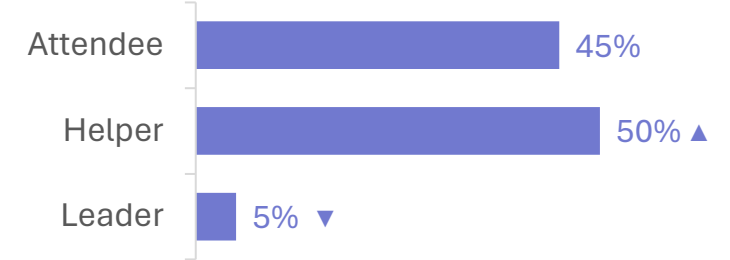
Hobby/Interest club  
or group community

24%

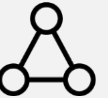


Religious community  
(e.g., church, synagogue,  
mosque, etc.)

## Type of Involvement



## Most Common Reasons To Become Part of A Community



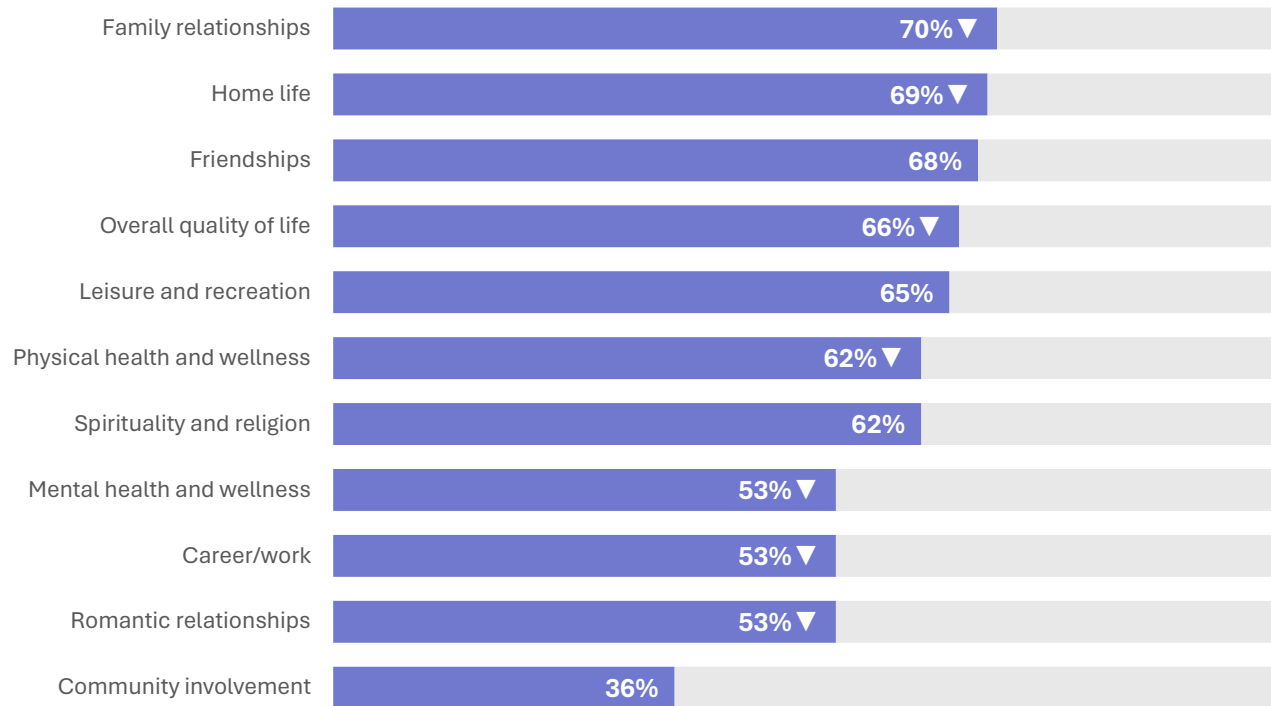
- 39% I wanted to connect with people with similar interests to me
- 36% I wanted to connect with people with similar experiences as me
- 35% I wanted to meet new people



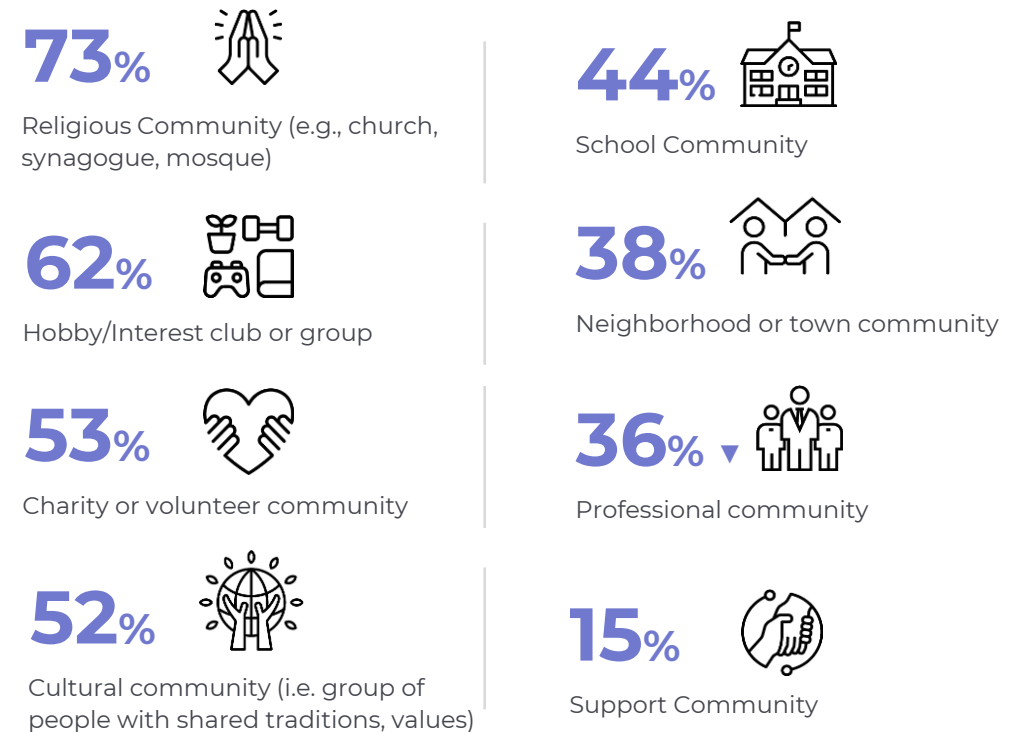
# Anxious Followers

**Attitudes & Behaviors:** This group is noted for rating their quality of life, in most areas, lower than average. Their sense of belonging for the communities they are involved in is, on par with the general public.

## Quality of Life (Good/excellent)



## Belonging (Very strong/strong)





# Anxious Followers

**Demographic Profile:** Anxious Followers resemble the profile of the general population in terms of key demographics.

**47**

Average Age

Gender

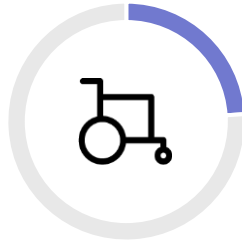
**55%** Woman

**45%** Man

**1%** Other

**37%**  
Children in HH

## Have Disability



**24%**

## Education

**30%** High school or less

**39%** Some college

**30%** College grad+

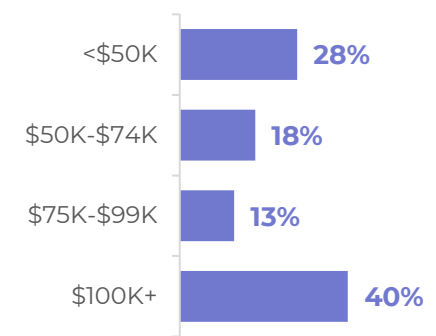
## Work Environment

**55%** In-person

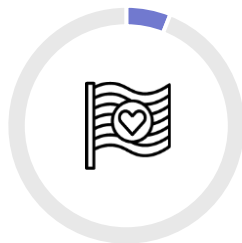
**33%** Hybrid

**12%** Remote

## Income



## LGBTQ+ Community



**6%**

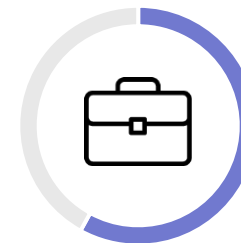
## Urbanicity

**17%** Rural

**60%** Suburban

**24%** Urban

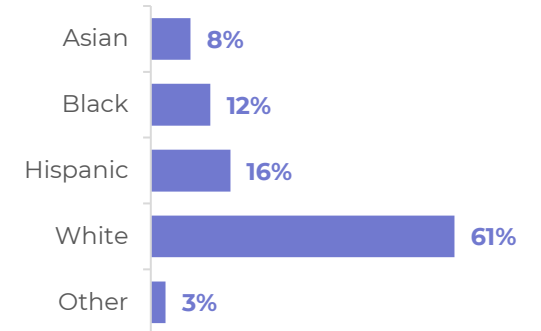
## Employment



**42%** Not employed

**58%** Employed

## Race





# Lone Wolf

**Community Experience:** Members of the Lone Wolf group actively seek community and want connection with others who share their interests. They are most likely to be attendees and be involved in their neighborhood or town community.

## Importance of Community

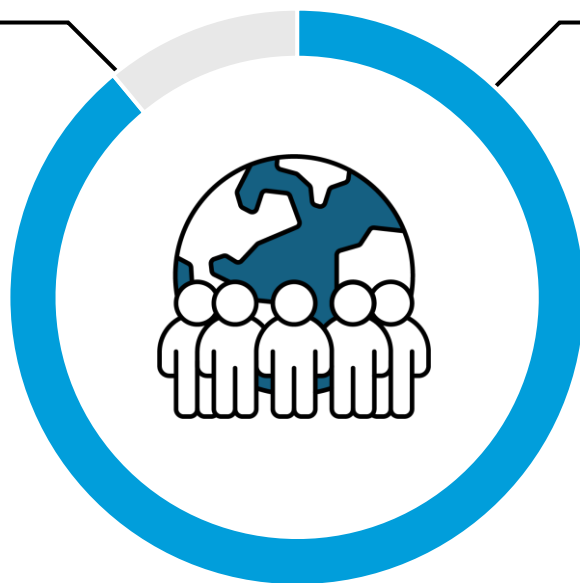
**11%**  
Not At All/Not Very Important

**89%**

Very/somewhat important

## Top Reasons Why Not:

- 22% I prefer to be independent
- 22% I already have a support system
- 18% There is too much conflict



## Top Reasons Why:

- 21% It gives me a sense of belonging
- 17% It keeps me connected to others
- 15% It has a positive impact on my mental health and well-being

**100%▲**

Have Intentionally Joined

**83%**

Ever part of a community

**Most Common Type of Community**

**43%**   
Neighborhood or town community

**37%▲**

Hobby/Interest club or group community

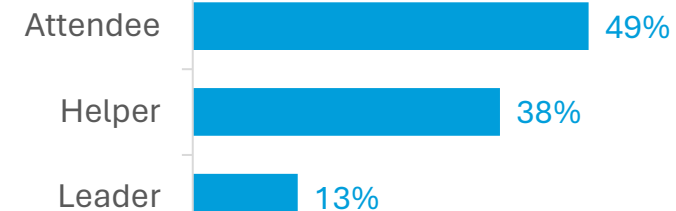


**26%**

Religious community (e.g., church, synagogue, mosque, etc.)



## Type of Involvement



## Most Common Reasons To Become Part of A Community



- 45% I wanted to connect with people with similar interests to me
- 37% I wanted to meet new people
- 36% I wanted to connect with people with similar experiences as me

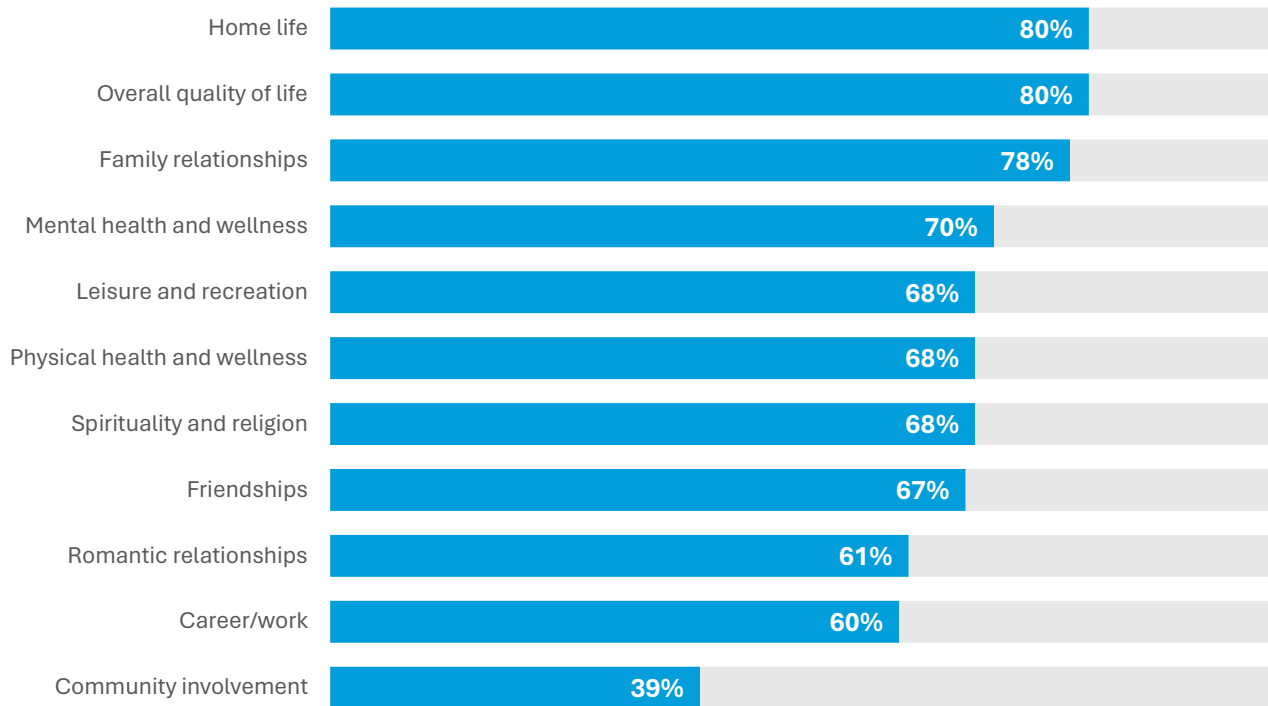




# Lone Wolf

**Attitudes & Behaviors:** Quality of life measure for members of the Lone Wolf group resemble the general population. And while they are members of community and seek connection, their sense of belonging is significantly lower than average..

## Quality of Life (Good/excellent)



## Belonging (Very strong/strong)



Religious Community (e.g., church, synagogue, mosque)



Professional community



Hobby/Interest club or group



Cultural community (i.e. group of people with shared traditions, values)



Charity or volunteer community



Neighborhood or town community



School Community



Support Community



# Lone Wolf

**Demographic Profile:** This group is younger than average and more likely to have children in the household, have at least a college education and be employed.

**43** ▾

Average Age

Gender

**50%** Woman

**48%** Man

**2%** Other

**40%** ▲

Children in HH

## Have Disability



**29%**

## Education

**26%** High school or less

**33%** Some college

**41%** ▲ College grad+

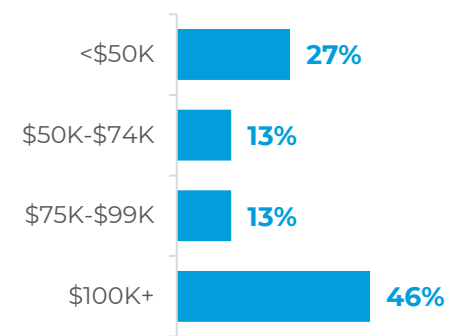
## Work Environment

**55%** In-person

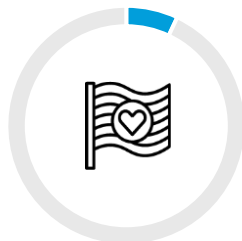
**28%** Hybrid

**17%** Remote

## Income



## LGBTQ+ Community



**7%**

## Urbanicity

**19%** Rural

**56%** Suburban

**25%** Urban

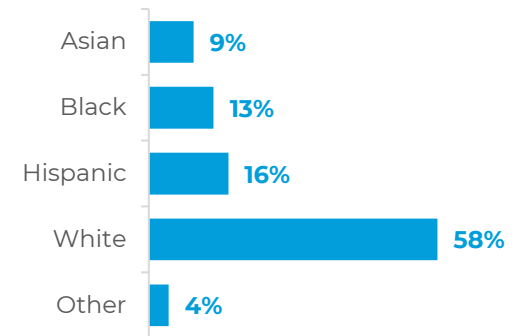
## Employment



**32%** ▲ Not employed

**68%** ▲ Employed

## Race





# Community Organizers

**Community Experience:** Community organizers join community organically, having attended, been invited or being raised in the community. They are most commonly attendees in their neighborhood or town community, religious community or hobby/interest club.

## Importance of Community

12%

Not At All/Not Very Important

88%

Very/somewhat important

## Top Reasons Why Not:

31%▲ I already have a support system

17% I prefer to be independent

14% I don't have the time



## Top Reasons Why:

24% It keeps me connected to others

21% It gives me a sense of belonging

12% It gives me an opportunity to meet different types of people

0%▼

Have Intentionally Joined

40%

Ever part of a community

**Most Common Type of Community**

46%

Neighborhood/  
Town Community



26%

Religious community  
(e.g., church, synagogue,  
mosque, etc.)

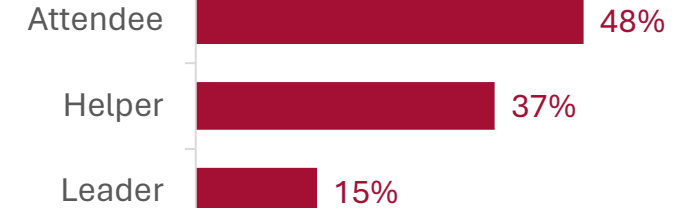


21%

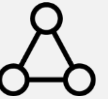
Hobby/Interest club  
or group community



## Type of Involvement



## Most Common Reasons To Become Part of A Community



29% I attended an event or gathering

23% I was invited to attend an event or gathering

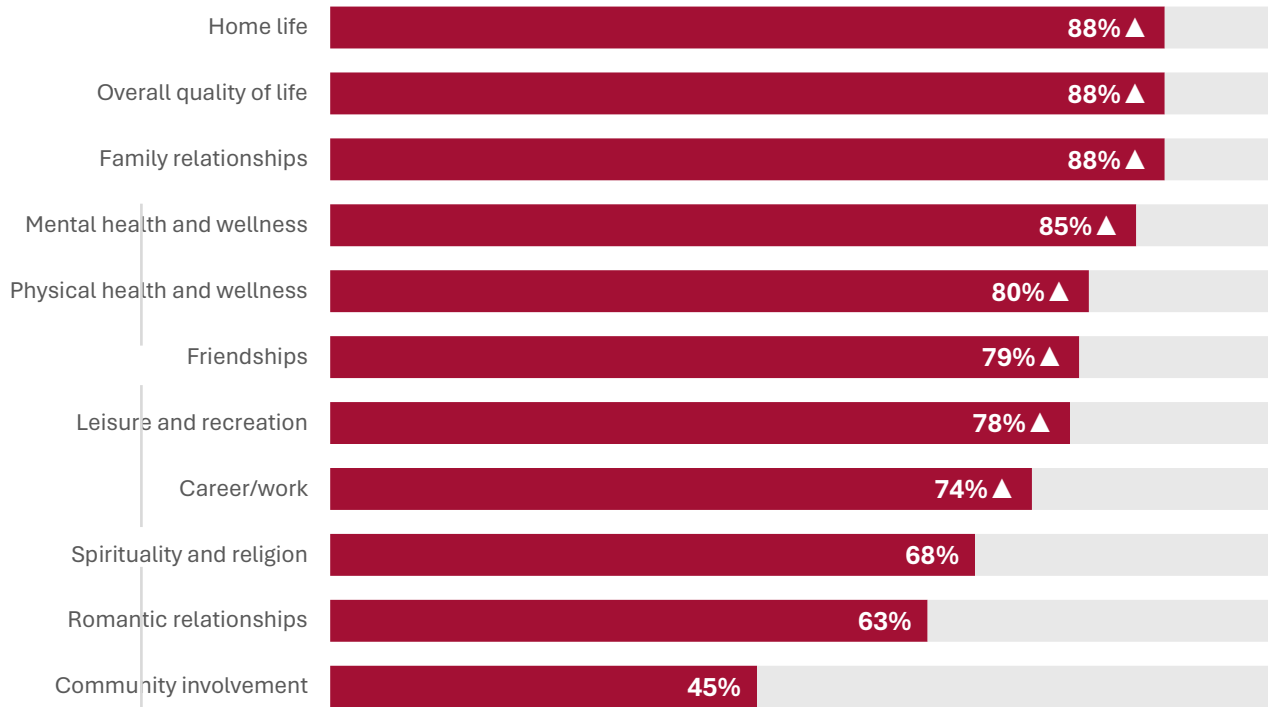
22% I was raised in the community



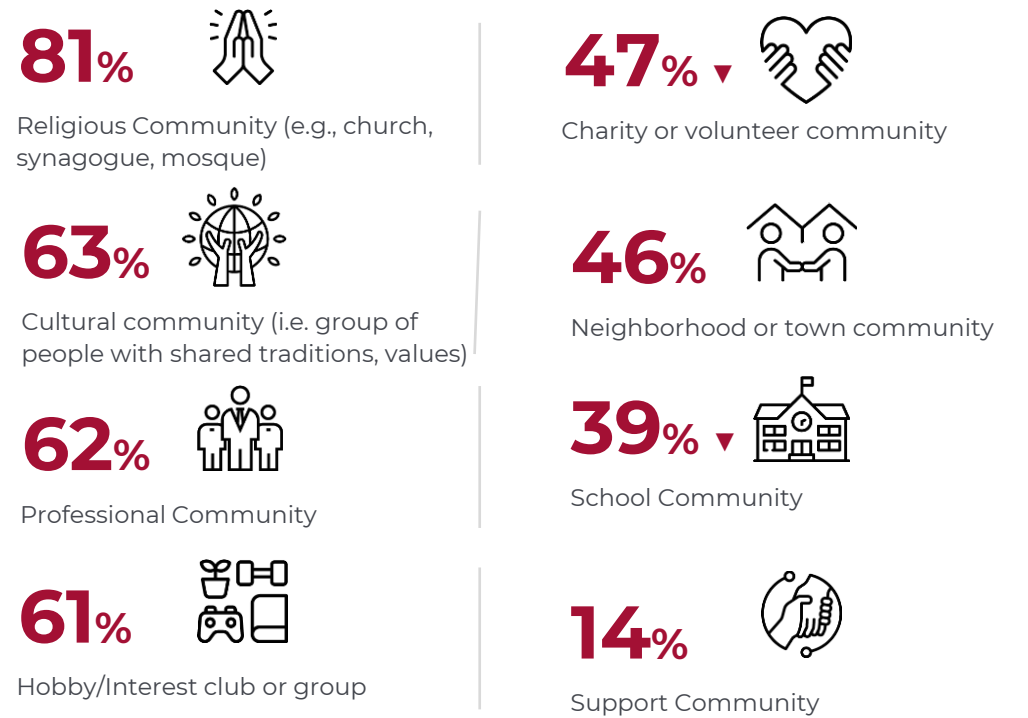
# Community Organizers

**Attitudes & Behaviors:** This group rates most aspects of quality of life as good or excellent, and more so than the public as a whole. While they may report a strong sense of belonging in some communities they are part of, their sense of belonging is lower than average for their charity or school community.

## Quality of Life (Good/excellent)



## Belonging (Very strong/strong)





# Community Organizers

**Demographic Profile:** On average, Community Organizers are the oldest group and have the highest proportion of white adults. They are less likely to be employed or have children in the household.

**53** ▲

Average Age

Gender

**47%** Woman

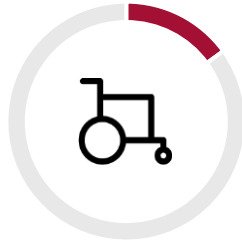
**52%** Man

**0%** Other

**27%** ▼

Children in HH

## Have Disability



**15%** ▼

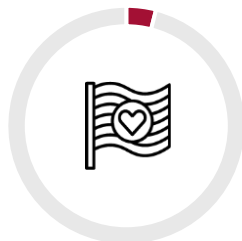
## Education

**32%** High school or less

**36%** Some college

**31%** College grad+

## LGBTQ+ Community



**4%** ▼

## Urbanicity

**22%** Rural

**53%** Suburban

**25%** Urban

## Work Environment

**61%** In-person

**25%** Hybrid

**13%** Remote

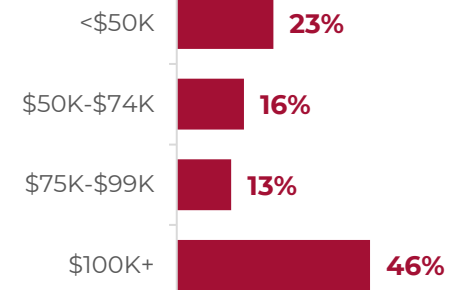
## Employment



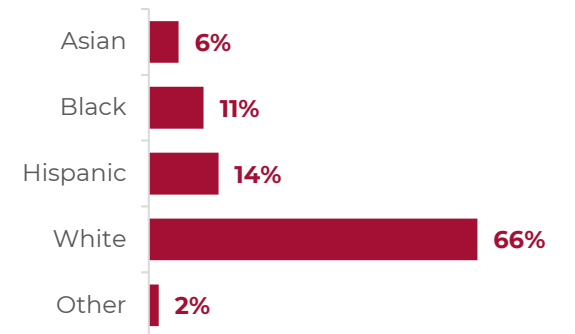
**45%** ▲  
Not employed

**55%** ▼  
Employed

## Income



## Race





# Community Skeptics

**Community Experience:** Community Skeptics find community least important, have never intentionally joined one, and are more likely to simply be attendees.

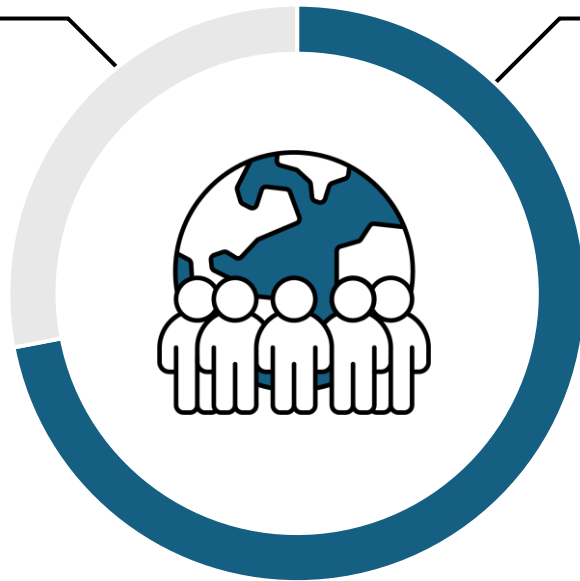
## Importance of Community

28% ▲

Not At All/Not Very Important

72% ▼

Very/somewhat important



## Top Reasons Why Not:

- 27%▲ I don't want others in my personal business
- 24% I prefer to be independent
- 9% I already have a support system

## Top Reasons Why:

- 26% It gives me a sense of belonging
- 20% It keeps me connected to others
- 12% It has a positive impact on my mental health and well-being

0%▼

Have Intentionally Joined

17%▼

Ever part of a community

**Most Common Type of Community**

41%▲

None



26%▼

Neighborhood/  
Town Community

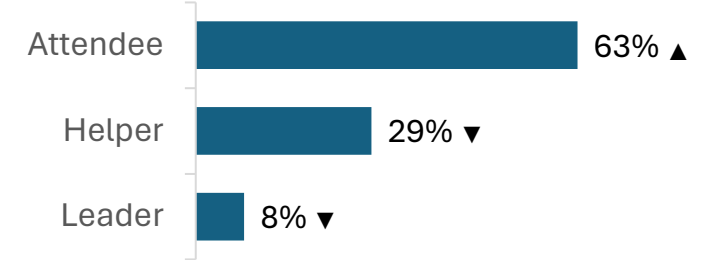


14%▼

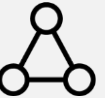
Hobby/Interest club  
or group community



## Type of Involvement



## Most Common Reasons To Become Part of A Community



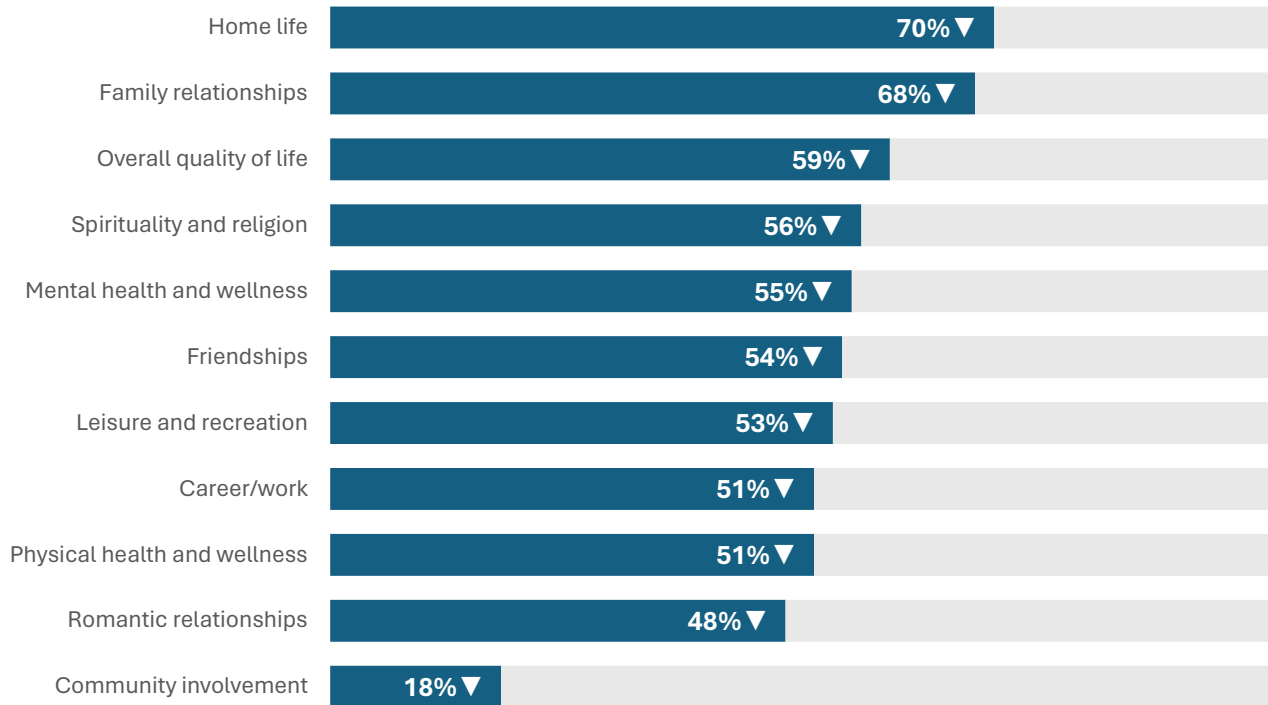
- 23% I was raised in the community
- 21% It is part of my identity
- 20% I was invited to attend an event or gathering



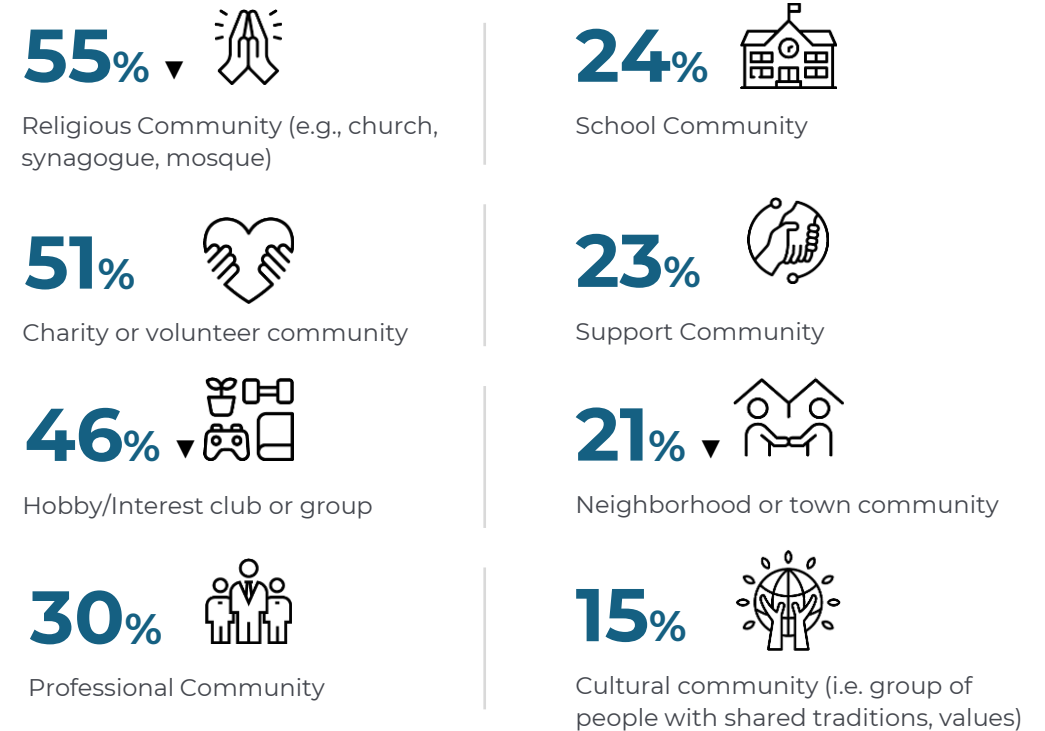
# Community Skeptics

**Attitudes & Behaviors:** While Community may not be important to Community Skeptics, they overwhelmingly rate their quality of life below average. However, for those that *are* involved in a community, their sense of belonging is similar to the U.S., with a few exceptions.

## Quality of Life (Good/excellent)



## Belonging (Very strong/strong)





# Community Skeptics

**Demographic Profile:** Community Skeptics skew rural, lower income, less education, and are more likely to have a disability.

49

Average Age

Gender

54% Woman

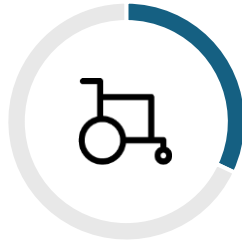
45% Man

1% Other

25% ▾

Children in HH

## Have Disability



32% ▲

## Education

44% ▲

High school or less

32%

Some college

24% ▾

College grad+

## Work Environment

63%

In-person

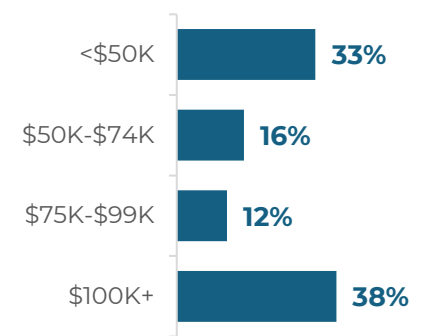
19% ▾

Hybrid

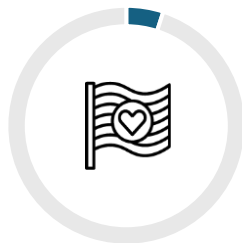
18%

Remote

## Income



## LGBTQ+ Community



5%

## Urbanicity

26% ▲

Rural

51%

Suburban

23%

Urban

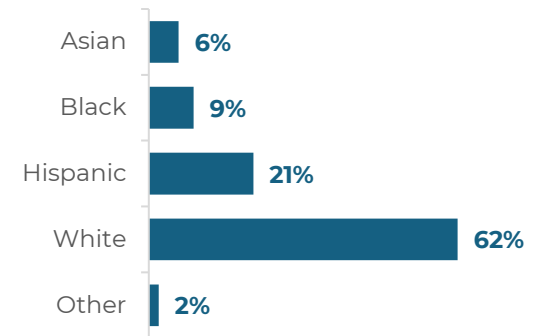
## Employment



47% ▲  
Not employed


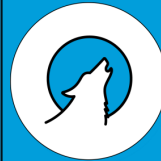
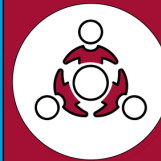
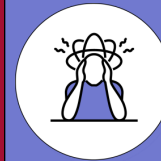

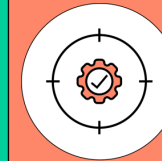
53% ▾  
Employed

## Race





# Frequency of Engagement

	Community Skeptics	Lone Wolf	Community Organizers	Anxious Followers	Parent Socialites	Specific Engagers
<b>Frequency of engagement, at least monthly</b>						
Religious community (e.g., church, synagogue, mosque, etc.)	80%	69%	75%	79%	76%	82%
Hobby/interest club or group community (e.g., gardening, book club, yoga, etc.)	54%▼	59%▼	73%	76%	77%	74%
Support community (e.g., Alcoholics Anonymous, patient support group, etc.)	55%	53%	56%	83%	68%	69%
Cultural community (i.e., a group of people with shared traditions, values, identities, etc.)	21%	42%▼	64%	43%	71%▲	65%
Activist or advocacy community	13%	40%	-	-	63%▲	-
Professional community	63%	41%▼	58%	41%	71%▲	47%
Charity or volunteer community	43%	40%▼	45%	45%	62%	60%
Neighborhood or town community	33%▼	40%▼	50%	48%	60%▲	61%▲
School community	49%	47%	44%	39%	63%▲	42%
Other	88%	80%	77%	56%	100%	96%
<b>Meeting Types (Mean)</b>						
In-person	65.8	66.0	73.9▲	70.2	63.1▼	73.2▲
Virtually	34.2	34.0	26.1▼	29.8	36.9▲	26.8▼

# Limitations

- **Methods Related**
  - English only
  - Nonprobability panel sample
- **Research Related**
  - Research was narrowly focused on importance of and motivations to become a member of a community
  - Opportunity exists for deeper analysis around formation of communities, why people stay, what prompts change within a group or community
- **Applications**
  - This research did not specifically explore or address how organizations can use this research to enhance their own communities

# Discussion

- √ Community engagement is strongly associated with higher quality of life ratings. **How do organizations encourage greater community involvement & participation?**
- √ One barrier mentioned was 'not knowing where to start.' **How do we make it easier for people to know how to start?**
- √ **How might organizations leverage these findings to identify individuals based on the role they may want to play – attendee, helper, leader?**

**Key advice:**

**Invite a friend**

# Navigating the Modern Social Landscape: Understanding Community Dynamics, Barriers, and Well-being in the United States

## ABSTRACT

The United States grapples with a well-documented loneliness epidemic. The seismic societal shifts exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic have redefined the landscape of daily human interactions, ushering in remote work and altering the temporal fabric of our social lives. In this evolving context, the very definition of community has undergone a transformation in the modern era.

This research endeavors to address critical questions pertaining to community dynamics in contemporary society. Firstly, it seeks to quantify the number of communities individuals are actively a part of, the types of communities individuals are a part of, and the depth of engagement within those communities. Secondly, it aims to unravel the processes of joining these communities. Thirdly, the study investigates the barriers individuals encounter when attempting to join communities, identifying obstacles that may impede social integration.

Recognizing the importance of demographic nuances, the research is exploring variations in the findings across different demographic groups, considering factors such as age, gender, religious affiliation, and employment status. Additionally, a segmentation analysis is being performed to categorize the U.S. population into types of community members. By doing so, the study aims to paint a comprehensive picture of the intricate interplay between individual characteristics and community engagement.

The practical implications of this research extend beyond academia. The results of the survey will be leveraged to inform individuals seeking meaningful connections, employers aiming to foster supportive work environments, and parents navigating the complexities of social development in their children. By providing actionable insights, this research aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding the societal and individual implications of evolving community dynamics in the modern era.

# Thank You

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