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Indigenous Leadership
For Boreal Conservation 30

The Pew Charitable Trusts Trust

Reflections on Service

During its 75th year, Pew worked to help communities thrive by conserving the environment, strengthening democracy, and improving civic infrastructure.

Winter 2024 | Vol. 26, No. 1



61%

Protected areas in Chilean Patagonia sequester 61% of the region's carbon, storing twice as much carbon per hectare as the Amazon's forests and showing the need for improved funding for Chile's protected areas.

Pew is partnering with a robust network of nongovernmental organizations, universities, and government agencies in Chile to enhance the protection of this area through the country's park and reserve system, while also promoting public-private partnerships for new conservation efforts.

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Cover: Getty Images

Milestones That Lead to a Better Future



“Writers sometimes say that crafting a narrative is like driving a car at night: You can only see as far as your headlights—but you can make a long trip that way if you just keep going.”

The Pew Charitable Trusts reached some important milestones in 2023, including our 75th anniversary. As we marked the occasion with volunteer work and planned for the future, we also reflected on the values that help us achieve measurable results: innovation, nonpartisanship, and integrity; a focus on impact; a commitment to equity and inclusion; and a true humility in how we listen to—and work with—local communities and other partners.

In this issue of *Trust* we’re sharing some of the accomplishments we achieved with your support. Among them: Six of the nation’s eight largest banks now offer small-dollar loans, enabling their customers to avoid expensive payday loans, and a new income-driven repayment plan for student loans to make it easier for borrowers to repay their debts and avoid default. Along with our work on other pocketbook issues like retirement savings, where we are helping states expand eligibility for individual retirement accounts, these changes will directly improve people’s lives.

Other milestones from last year are leading toward better care of the natural world, whether through the protection of more than 2 million acres of Australian lands and waters or a historic agreement among nearly 200 nations of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity that will, for the first time, protect the high seas—the two-thirds of the ocean outside national borders. Those and other successes for the environment are detailed in this issue.

Each survey from Pew Research Center is a milestone on the path to better understanding each other. And last year saw important, groundbreaking surveys of Asian, Black, and Hispanic Americans that offered new insights into the nuances of how these growing groups of citizens see the world. Other Center studies looked at such bedrock institutions as the American family and the impact of new, transformative technology like artificial intelligence.

A story from Canada in this issue offers another marker of progress. For more than two decades Pew has worked with many partners and stakeholders to preserve Canada’s boreal forest. Last year, leadership of the endeavor was passed to the Indigenous Leadership Initiative (ILI). Indigenous-led initiatives have been essential to the campaign’s success since its inception. The boreal is home to many wildlife species and is an essential nursery for North America’s bird populations, and as a carbon storehouse it plays a global role in managing climate change. Now, as ILI Executive Director Valérie Courtois says in our story, we enter a new era, “one that ensures Indigenous peoples

are recognized and supported as the appropriate and natural leaders of conservation on their own homelands.”

We renewed efforts to help states improve how they manage their budgets, plan for the future, and better serve taxpayers. Our work began with a first-of-its-kind 50-state survey to see which states use multiyear revenue and spending forecasts and multiyear stress tests to gauge risks, anticipate shortfalls, and tackle looming challenges to their finances. Pew has long worked with states to help them use data-driven methods to evaluate programs and improve their effectiveness. This new work seeks to outline steps for states on their path to a more resilient financial future.

Writers sometimes say that crafting a narrative is like driving a car at night: You can only see as far as your headlights—but you can make a long trip that way if you just keep going. Through our evidence-based approach and ability to bring diverse perspectives together on some of the critical issues of the day, Pew keeps moving forward and, we hope, provides some illumination to light the way. And as we go, here’s to more milestones in 2024 marking our journey to a better future.



Susan K. Urahn, *President and CEO*

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THE BIG PICTURE

Glaciers blanket a bay at the bottom of the planet in Chilean Patagonia. The photograph, taken on one of South America's southernmost islands in Alberto de Agostini National Park, helps to demonstrate not only that nature is stunning to behold but also that it consists of pristine ecosystems that are the lifeblood of the people and animals who live in them. Pew's Chilean Patagonia team, Chile's national forest service and protected areas agency (CONAF), and the Fundación Áreas Protegidas arranged to exhibit this scene and 15 others for a show in Chile's National Congress to let the pictures tell the story.





Sue Urahn, CEO of The Pew Charitable Trusts, and Pew Research Center President Michael Dimock at the Pew 75th Anniversary Speaker Series. *The Pew Charitable Trusts*

Americans Hate Divisiveness. We Need to Demand More From Our Leaders

BY SUSAN K. URAHN AND MICHAEL DIMOCK

The potential shutdown of the federal government in January illustrates the risks of America's deep political divide. Although history will judge the effect of this political moment on our economy and society, we must recognize the potential for long-term damage to our communities today.

The distressingly low level of trust Americans have in their government—and in each other—is well documented in a new study by Pew Research Center. The troubling results are captured in one sentence from the study: "Americans' views of politics and elected officials are unrelentingly negative, with little hope of improvement on the horizon."

The proof for this harsh assessment is in the numbers. Today, 65% of Americans say they always or often feel exhausted thinking about politics, and 55% feel angry. Only 10% always or often feel hopeful about politics. So it is not surprising that 63% of Americans express little or no confidence in the future of the U.S. political system.

The survey uncovered more discouraging data:

- 79% of Americans use negative words to describe their feelings about politics; the two most common are "divisive" and "corrupt."
- Just 16% say they trust the federal government always or most of the time.

“People can agree or disagree about how well government performs and how to address any perceived problems. But to say that government gets nothing done is simply wrong. Despite the frustration of political gridlock, our experience—as well as the experience of other nonprofits, community organizations, and individuals—shows that partisanship can give way to compromise and solutions.”

- 61% of the public say that talking about politics with people they disagree with is stressful and frustrating.
- And 28% of Americans have an unfavorable view of both parties, compared with just 6% who said the same thing in 1994.

As the leaders of The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Center (a subsidiary of the Trusts), we worry about the erosion of trust and America’s move toward a distinctly unhealthy cynicism. But does the survey mean that American politics has run into a cul-de-sac with no way out? Surprisingly, no.

This negativity about politics does not mean that the public lacks opinions about how our system can be improved. An overwhelming majority—87%—favor term limits for members of Congress. And nearly two-thirds would do away with the Electoral College and have the winner of the popular vote become president.

People can agree or disagree about how well government performs and how to address any perceived problems. But to say that government gets nothing done is simply wrong. Despite the frustration of political gridlock, our experience—as well as the experience of other nonprofits, community organizations, and individuals—shows that partisanship can give way to compromise and solutions.

For example, millions of Americans are getting connected to high-speed broadband and will be able to access essential services including education and health care, thanks to a provision in the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021.

Policymakers also came together in 2020—while the Senate was controlled by Republicans and the House of Representatives was controlled by Democrats—to pass the Great American Outdoors Act, facilitating greater public access to open spaces and recreation, along with providing funding to help fix our aging and beloved national parks.

And in Louisiana, South Carolina, and a number of other states, legislators from both parties are finding better alternatives to prison for nonviolent offenders, reducing burdensome costs to taxpayers while protecting public safety.

Although these examples and others give the two of us hope, the findings from our survey are clear: Democracy is under stress, which is a message we Americans must not ignore.

So how do we as a country move forward to strengthen our democracy?

By remembering, primarily, that compromise is not capitulation. After all, compromise is essential in a democracy as large and as diverse as ours. We Americans can resist the temptation to fall into the pattern of polarization, in which a win for your side must by definition be a loss for mine, and instead choose to discuss and debate the issues themselves. And we need to elect leaders who can see past their ideologies to focus on solutions, and who demonstrate that dialogue can bridge division.

To underscore this point, another finding from the study stands out: 57% of Americans believe that partisan conflicts receive too much attention these days. And 78% say there is too little focus on important issues facing the country. But if we want something different in the political dialogue, we the people need to demand it by rejecting divisive rhetoric and rewarding substance and solutions.

As we approach the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, it’s a good time to remember that America has experienced eras of extreme divisiveness in the past. At each of those times, our nation ultimately progressed by choosing to work across partisan and ideological divides for the common good.

The political will to do so—as it should in a democracy—originates in the people demanding more of their leaders, and their leaders responding.

—

Susan K. Urahn is president and chief executive officer of The Pew Charitable Trusts and Michael Dimock is president of Pew Research Center, a subsidiary of The Pew Charitable Trusts. This article originally appeared on Newsweek.com on Dec. 12, 2023.



A firefighting aircraft drops a flame retardant during California wildfires in 2022. *Patrick T. Fallon/AFP via Getty Images*

A Roadmap for Managing Wildfire Costs

BY DEMETRA AOSPOROS

The growing threat and cost of wildfires—which continue to make the news, with fires recently ravaging California and Maui—prompted Congress to create the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission in 2021. In September the commission released a report with scores of recommendations meant to buffer the financial, environmental, and public health fallout associated with these fires.

The report recommended that the federal government better track spending on wildfires across agencies and ensure that wildfire grant programs are more accessible to communities. It also suggested federal-level investment in wildfire mitigation to reduce risks as well as provide incentives for state and local governments to invest in risk-reduction activities. Several of these recommendations were based on The Pew Charitable Trusts’ research on wildfire spending and budgeting.

For example, Pew found that mitigation activities—such as forest management and fire-resistant construction and landscaping—can reduce the severity and costs of fires and that funding of such activities has risen in recent years, but the scale of the problem requires additional investment to reduce future risks. The commission’s report said that as much as \$24 billion in funding has been allocated to forest management and wildfire activities through the Inflation Reduction Act and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, but the U.S. Forest Service and Department

of the Interior estimate that they will need more than triple that amount over the next 10 years to effectively address wildfire risk.

Pew’s research also found that federal, state, and local spending on wildfires is not sufficiently tracked and reported, which creates a data gap for policymakers. This spending can be difficult to track because it involves a complex set of activities undertaken by multiple agencies and entities across federal, state, local, and Tribal governments. Pew’s main recommendation would address this at the federal level through a budget “crosscut” for wildfire spending—a standard method of reporting that shows how much federal agencies are spending, broken down by types of activities and geographic allocation.

The 50-member nonpartisan commission is composed of representatives from federal agencies; state, local, and Tribal governments; and experts from the private sector. Its recommendations include a focus on the impact of wildfires on public budgets and, if implemented, would address fiscal challenges previously identified by Pew research.

“Wildfires are becoming a bigger burden on budgets at all levels of government,” says Colin Foard, who manages Pew’s fiscal federalism program. “Understanding their full costs is key to helping build the case for more sustained funding in mitigation, which could reduce risk in the long term.”

America's New Tipping Culture

A broad majority of Americans say they're being asked to tip service workers more frequently than in the past. Around 7 in 10 U.S. adults (72%) say tipping is expected in more places today than it was five years ago, a finding that tracks with anecdotal reporting and has even been dubbed "tipflation." But even as Americans say they're being asked to tip more often, relatively few have a great deal of confidence about when and how to do so. Only about a third say it's extremely or very easy to know whether (34%) or how much (33%) to tip for different types of services.

Nor is there consensus on whether tipping—which is built into the pay structures and business models of many service industries—is more of a choice or an obligation for consumers. Around 2 in 10 Americans (21%) say it's more of a choice, while 29% say it's more of an obligation. The largest share (49%) says it depends on the situation, underscoring the lack of a single set of rules or expectations.

Pew Research Center surveyed nearly 12,000 U.S. adults to find out how they feel about the common, yet sometimes confusing, custom of tipping, including whether they themselves would or wouldn't tip in specific situations.

The survey found that the public is more likely to oppose (40%) than favor (24%) suggested tip amounts, and Americans broadly oppose (72%) automatic service charges. Americans' tipping behaviors also vary widely by situation. For example, among those who use each type of service, 92% say



kaarsten/Getty Images

they always or often leave a tip when eating at sit-down restaurants, while just 25% say the same when ordering a coffee. For most people (77%), the quality of the service they receive is a major factor in deciding whether and how much to tip.

The survey comes at a time when tipping—a practice that Americans broadly embrace yet have long felt conflicted about—is undergoing significant structural and technological changes. These changes include the expansion of digital payment platforms and devices that encourage tipping as well as the spread of mandatory service charges.

—Demetra Aposporos

Philadelphia's Wage Tax Has Little Impact for Residents

Philadelphia has made small annual reductions to its resident wage tax rate for some three decades, since its high of 4.96% in 1995. It resumed the cuts in 2023, reducing the wage tax rate from 3.79% to 3.75%. However, an analysis from Pew's Philadelphia research and policy initiative shows that on a year-to-year basis, the cut had little impact on the overall local tax burdens of resident households, reducing them by less than one-tenth of a percentage point.

Pew's report, "The Local Tax Burden on Philadelphia Households," found that the overall local tax burden was lowest, in percentage terms, on homeowners who receive the city's \$80,000 homestead exemption and highest on low-income renters of market-rate apartments. "The latest tax cut was not enough to change the imbalance in tax burdens in just one

year, with highest-income homeowners seeing a \$75 reduction in taxes owed per year while the reduction dropped to \$49 per year for the highest-income renters," said Thomas Ginsberg of Pew's Philadelphia research and policy initiative.

Pew's model was based on 10 hypothetical representative households with varying levels of income, property values, and consumer purchases. The \$80,000 homestead exemption is widely used by homeowners but is not available to renters or their landlords. The model assumes that renters shoulder the property tax as part of their rent, which is typically passed on from landlords who are ineligible for the homestead exemption. Pew's model did not analyze nonresident taxes.

—Daniel LeDuc

Utah Leads the Way on Wildlife Crossings

Wildlife collisions with vehicles occur frequently in Western states, and they are costly in terms of lives lost—some 5,000 deer and 1,000 elk die each year in Utah, and, more importantly, so do some of the people who hit them. A 2019 study estimated that such accidents cost Utah taxpayers nearly \$138 million per year in human injuries and deaths and in damage to vehicles. But wildlife crossings, which are over- and underpasses designed specifically to help animals safely traverse roads, can help alleviate this problem. That’s why Utah approved a \$20 million appropriation dedicated to wildlife crossings for 2023; it was the largest dedicated appropriation for wildlife crossings outside of California and will be used to address a collision hot spot near the junction of interstates 80 and 25.

These crossings are often built along traditional animal migration routes, so they also help play a crucial role in maintaining ecological connectivity between natural areas, which can enhance the resilience of

wildlife habitat in the face of climate change. Utah built the first wildlife bridge in the U.S. in 1975, located near the town of Beaver on Interstate 15 in 1975, and since then has built more than 50 wildlife crossings.

As Utah lawmakers from both parties gear up for their 2024 legislative session starting in February, The Pew Charitable Trusts’ U.S. conservation project and its partners are working with them to build on the success of the 2023 funding in hopes of securing a reoccurring funding commitment, one that would cover multiple years. “Multiyear funding would be another first for Utah and would enhance the state’s ability to build wildlife crossings in an expedited fashion year in and year out,” said Matt Skroch, who directs Pew’s U.S. conservation project. “It would also be another hallmark of the state’s continued leadership on wildlife conservation and driver safety through investments in this vital infrastructure.”

—Daniel LeDuc

A rendering shows what Washington state’s Snoqualmie Pass wildlife overpass on I-90 will look like when it’s completed in 2029. These overpasses, like those in Utah and other Western states, connect animal habitats along traditional migration routes, allowing them safe passage. *Washington State Department of Transportation/Flickr Creative Commons*



U.S. Women Make Gains in Highest-Paying Occupations but Still Lag Men

Women now make up 35% of workers in the United States' 10 highest-paying occupations—up from 13% in 1980—and have increased their presence in almost all of these occupations, which include physicians, lawyers, and pharmacists.

Still, women remain the minority in nine of the 10 highest-paying occupations, according to a November report from Pew Research Center. (The exception is pharmacists, 61% of whom are women.) And that 35% share of women across the 10 occupations remains well below women's share of the overall U.S. workforce (47%).

Workers in the 10 highest-paying occupations typically earn more than \$100,000 a year—over twice the national average of \$41,000. And women's presence has changed more noticeably in some of these occupations than in others. Since 1980, the share of women dentists has more than quadrupled (from 7% to 33%), the share of women physicians has roughly tripled (from 13% to 38%) and the share of lawyers who are women has risen from 14% to 40%.

The shares of women working in high-paying engineering fields have increased by smaller margins since 1980: Women make up less than 10% of sales engineers and petroleum, mining, and geological engineers.

And up in the air, only 7% of airplane pilots and navigators are women, compared with 2% in 1980.

With some of these high-paying occupations—including physicians, lawyers, dentists, and pharmacists—requiring specialized graduate degrees, women have increasingly earned degrees that are required for these jobs. The Center report found that women now make up about half of those receiving several professional, advanced degrees such as Juris Doctor (52% of recipients today are women, versus 30% in 1980), Doctor of Dental Surgery or Doctor of Dental Medicine (51% versus 13%), and Doctor of Medicine (50% versus 23%).

Women now also earn 63% of Doctor of Pharmacy degrees, and pharmacists are also the only occupation in the top 10 where women

make up the majority. This could be because the field offers flexible work hours, a collaborative environment, and family-friendly policies, according to economic research.

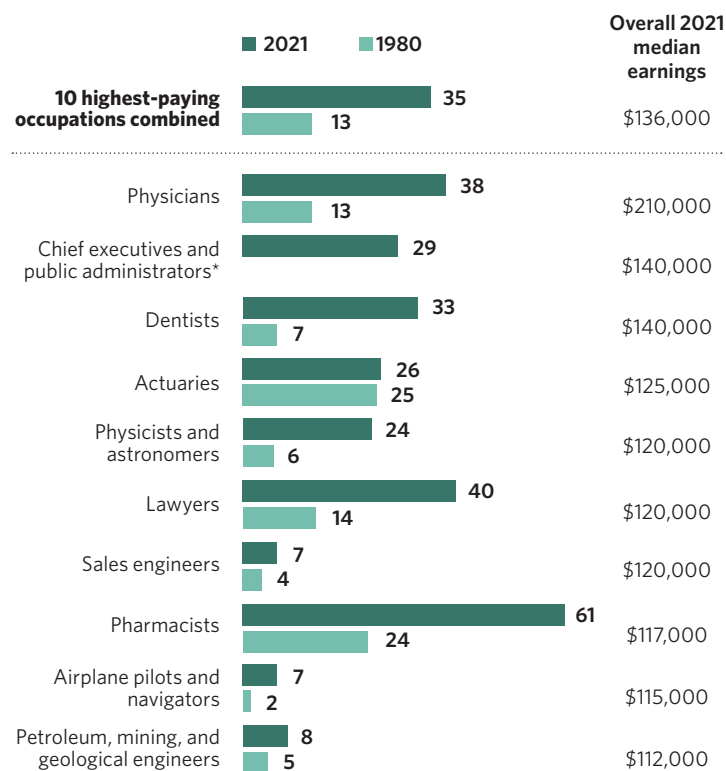
But the report found that women remain in the minority among those receiving certain bachelor's degrees required for some high-paying occupations: mathematics or statistics (42% of recipients today are women, unchanged from 1980), physics (25% versus 13%), and engineering (23% versus 9%).

Outside of undergraduate major selection, there are other reasons women may experience barriers to entering high-paying occupations, even as they achieve parity in many advanced degree programs, the report says. Gender differences in household and parenting responsibilities may play a role, as could gender discrimination.

—Daniel LeDuc

Since 1980, women have increased their presence in most of the 10 highest-paying occupations in the U.S.

Among workers in the 10 highest-paying occupations, % who are **women**




* Data for chief executives and public administrators from the 1980 census is not available.

Note: Highest-paying occupations are based on 2021 median earnings estimates.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER



Looking Back on a Year of Milestones

A wide-angle photograph of the Colorado River flowing through the Grand Canyon. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright orange and yellow glow that illuminates the river and the surrounding canyon walls. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and light blue. The river is in the foreground, and the canyon walls rise on either side, receding into the distance.

Last year marked the 75th anniversary of The Pew Charitable Trusts. It also was a year of significant advancements in the organization's mission to help communities thrive by conserving the environment, strengthening democracy, and improving civic infrastructure.

From its founding, Pew has studied the problems that hold people back and helped fix them, and our appetite to take on large and significant challenges has only grown. Today, we work at the local, state, and national levels in the United States to strengthen democracy and our civic infrastructure, as well as around the globe to promote conservation.

By always keeping our efforts nonpartisan and guided by facts, Pew has developed the ability to convene parties on all sides of an issue and find the common ground that leads to lasting solutions to difficult problems.

We've learned a lot of lessons along the way. For one, we learned that those lasting solutions come from asking challenging questions: How do we make government more responsive? How can we help citizens' voices be heard? How can we protect the ocean and conserve public lands for the long term? How do we best help shape the future of our hometown of Philadelphia?

Some of the answers to those questions can be found in our achievements from last year: Pew's recommendations informed new U.S. Department of Education policies that help make it easier for many people with student debt to repay their loans, reducing delinquency and default rates. Pew Research Center surveys of underrepresented voices

showed nuances in the views and attitudes of Asian, Hispanic, and Black Americans—helping us better understand each other.

Our efforts helped lead to passage of a new international treaty to protect the high seas, which make up two-thirds of the ocean. And for the 15th year, Pew's "State of the City" report took stock of Philadelphia, its economy, and the views of its residents to help inform policymakers and civic leaders.

Another essential lesson we've learned is that we can't make change by ourselves. We seek out partners, building a community of philanthropists who share our vision and drive to create innovative, results-producing projects. Our partners played key roles in last year's achievements. A prime example is the Pew Bertarelli Ocean Legacy Project—a partnership with philanthropist and ocean advocate Dona Bertarelli—which provided the technical assistance for Ecuador's historic debt-for-nature swap, which will fund permanent protection of the Galápagos Islands and the nation's marine ecosystem.

We've also learned how critical diversity, equity, and inclusion are for improving the world. In Australia, for instance, we've worked even more closely with Indigenous leaders to assist their efforts in establishing new conservation areas—which last year grew by more than 2 million acres on the island continent.

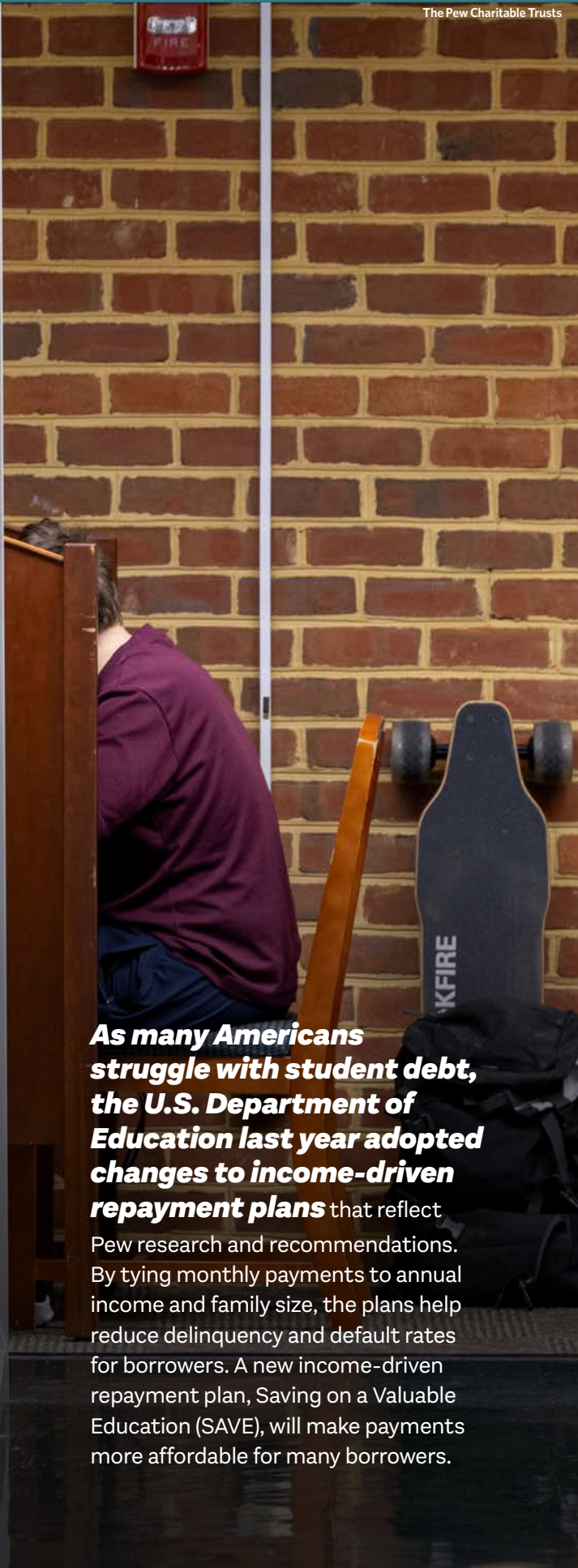
As we embark on the journey toward our 100th anniversary, Pew's leadership, staff, and partners are committed to keeping our eyes trained forward, seeking opportunities for our work to make the world a better place.



Oli Scarff/Getty Images

To help make banking more consumer friendly and affordable,

six of the eight largest U.S. banks by January 2023 had begun offering small loans or lines of credit to customers with low or no credit scores, and many large banks had also eliminated or substantially improved their overdraft programs and fees—changes that aligned with Pew recommendations. Loans of up to \$1,000 are now available almost immediately and repayable in equal installments over at least three months' time—making them affordable for consumers, many of whom had previously turned to high-cost payday loans, which were at least 15 times more expensive than the new bank-issued loans.



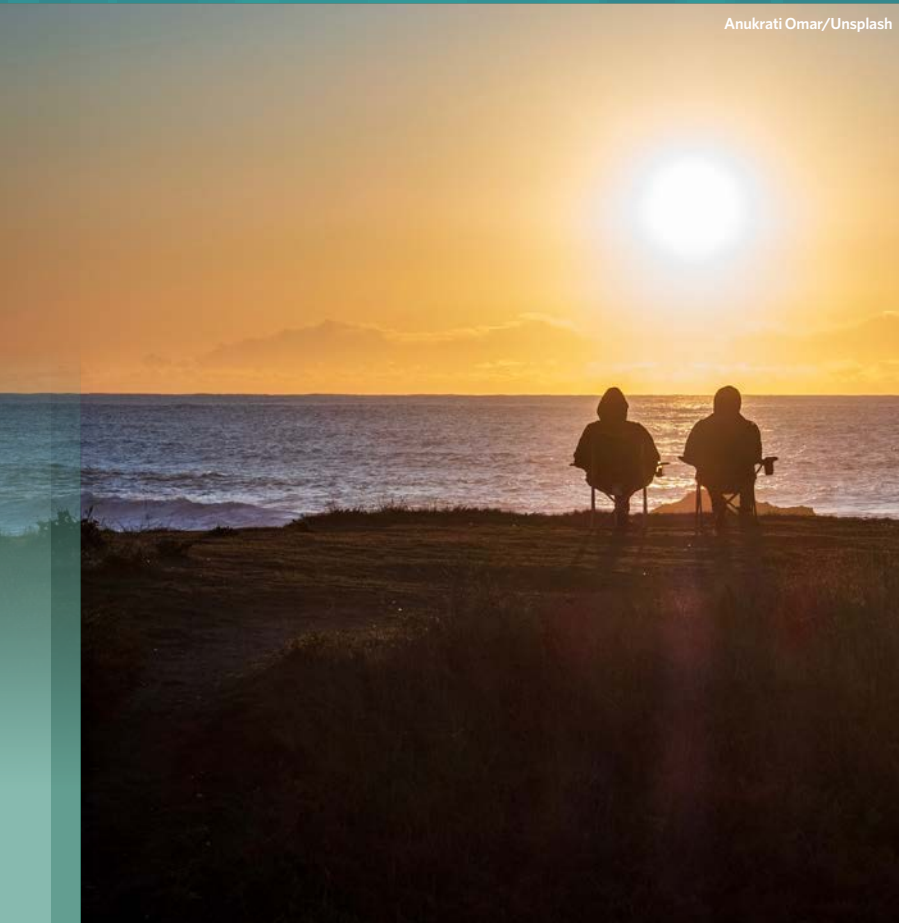
Ted S. Warren/AP Images

The new year began with more people having access to the lifesaving drug buprenorphine.

The drug for treating people with opioid use disorder is proved to reduce overdose deaths, curb illicit drug use, slow infectious disease transmission, and help people stay in treatment. Outdated federal regulations had required health care providers to have special permission to prescribe buprenorphine, but Pew helped lead a public education campaign about the drug, and in late December 2022, President Joe Biden signed the bipartisan Mainstreaming Addiction Treatment Act. The law permits any licensed provider to prescribe buprenorphine, giving underserved rural populations and communities of color better access to the drug and a lessening of the stigma of using medication to treat addiction.

As many Americans struggle with student debt, the U.S. Department of Education last year adopted changes to income-driven repayment plans that reflect Pew research and recommendations. By tying monthly payments to annual income and family size, the plans help reduce delinquency and default rates for borrowers. A new income-driven repayment plan, Saving on a Valuable Education (SAVE), will make payments more affordable for many borrowers.

Anukrati Omar/Unsplash



To help more Americans save for retirement, three states created automatic individual retirement account programs in 2023.

Minnesota, Nevada, and Vermont approved plans that allow workers whose employers don't offer IRAs to be automatically enrolled in state-sponsored retirement programs. Research shows workers are 15 times more likely to save if they can use payroll deduction. Pew supports development of the plans, which are now in place in 15 states. Although some state programs are in their infancy, more than 715,000 savers in the seven states with active programs have amassed nearly \$1 billion in assets since 2017.



People have faith in their democracy when they understand how their government works—and can tell leaders their views.

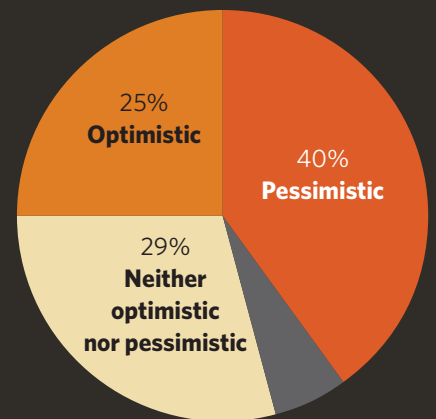
Pew helps accomplish this with its annual State of the City report for its hometown of Philadelphia. Last year marked the 15th edition, offering a view of the city’s economic strengths and challenges. The report showed that the unemployment rate had dropped to 5.9% and that the city’s finances were unexpectedly strong, with a \$775 million fund balance at the end of fiscal year 2022. But the report also found many Philadelphians struggling to find suitable housing with an affordable price—nearly half of city residents spend at least 30% of their income on rent. Pew also convened a range of civic leaders for a far-reaching conversation on the challenges facing the city, including the need for greater equity.

Pew Research Center issued reports on modern family life and on parenting today.

When thinking about the future of the nation, 4 in 10 Americans say they are pessimistic about the institution of marriage and the family. Coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, 76% of parents say they are extremely, very, or somewhat worried about their children struggling with anxiety or depression—higher than concerns about violence or drug use.

Many Americans are pessimistic about the future of the family

% saying, thinking about the future of our country, in general, they feel ___ about the institution of marriage and the family



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer or said they don't know (6%) is shown but not labeled.

Helping people understand each other and ensuring policymakers know what is on the minds of their constituents are essential for a healthy democracy.

With this in mind, Pew Research Center published a series of reports based on surveys that highlight the views and perspectives of underrepresented voices. A May report explored the diversity of people of Asian origin living in the United States and views of their self-identity, based on a survey conducted among 7,006 Asian adults—the largest nationally representative survey of its kind. An August report examined Martin Luther King Jr.’s legacy 60 years after the March on Washington and Americans’ views of progress on racial equality, forms of protest, and what needs to change. And a September report probed key questions about Black Americans’ experience with the news.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Pew Research Center’s Asian American portfolio was funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, with support from The Asian American Foundation; the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative DAF, an advised fund of Silicon Valley Community Foundation; the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; the Henry Luce Foundation; the Doris Duke Foundation; The Wallace H. Coulter Foundation; The Dirk and Charlene Kabcenell Foundation; The Long Family Foundation; The Sobrato Family Foundation; Lu-Hebert Fund; Gee Family Foundation; Joseph Cotchett; the Julian Abdey and Sabrina Moyle Charitable Fund; and Nanci Nishimura. The strategic communications campaign to promote the research was made possible with support from the Doris Duke Foundation, and the Leaders Forum also provided valuable thought leadership on the project.

The journalist research program was funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, with support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

While half of Asian adults in the U.S. identify most often by their ethnicity, many other labels are also used to express Asian identity in the U.S.

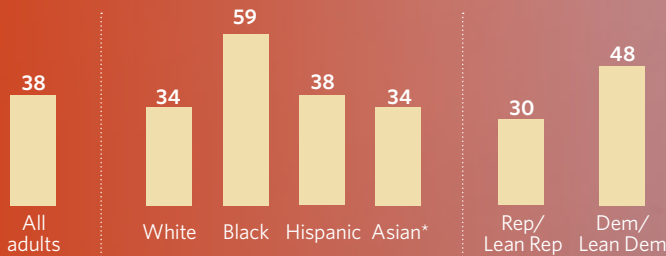
% of Asian adults who use _____ most often to describe themselves



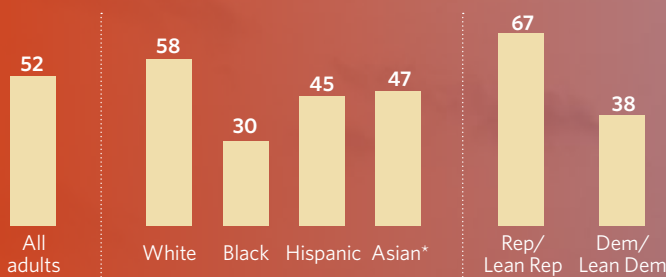
Views on King's legacy and the country's progress on racial equality differ by race, ethnicity, and party

% saying ...

Their personal views on racial equality have been influenced by Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy a great deal or a fair amount



The U.S. has made a great deal or a fair amount of progress in ensuring racial equality in the past 60 years

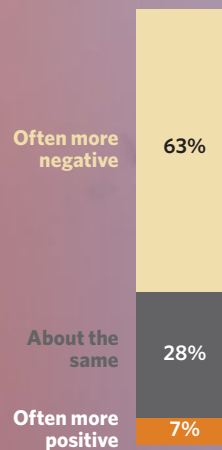


* Estimates for Asian adults are representative of English speakers only. Note: White, Black, and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Most Black adults say news about Black people is more negative than news about other groups

% of U.S. Black adults who say the news they see or hear about Black people is ___ than the news about other racial and ethnic groups



With the future of democracy dependent upon citizens understanding the implications of new technology,

Pew Research Center last year released a series of reports on how Americans view artificial intelligence. Surveys focused on how people see AI affecting their jobs, how workers are hired and evaluated, and whether they want it to play a role in their health care. Among the key findings: 52% of Americans are more concerned than excited about AI in daily life, compared with just 10% who say they are more excited than concerned; 36% feel a mix of excitement and concern.

In a historic step for ocean conservation, the United Nations adopted a treaty to protect biodiversity in the high seas.

The agreement, long championed by Pew, came after more than 20 years of negotiations, and will cover waters beyond national jurisdiction that harbor a wide range of biodiversity, from marine mammals and deep-sea corals to phytoplankton, hydrothermal vents, and enormous schools of fish. The high seas cover two-thirds of the ocean, so establishing safeguards there is necessary to achieving the global goal of protecting 30% of the ocean by 2030, a target known as “30 by 30,” which the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity adopted in December 2022.



Divedog/Shutterstock



Scott Portelli/Getty Images

Ecuador completed the largest-ever debt conversion to protect the Galápagos Islands and their marine ecosystem.

The deal, known as a debt-for-nature swap, will generate more than \$450 million to support marine protection and conservation over the next 20 years, including an endowment that will provide in perpetuity at least \$12 million annually. Made possible with technical assistance from the Pew Bertarelli Ocean Legacy Project, the move provides Ecuador with the financial resources to protect the Galápagos Islands, will help the country address pressures from climate change and overfishing that threaten its diverse ecosystem, and will assist the local economy and communities that depend on the continued abundance of wildlife, such as the brightly colored Sally Lightfoot crabs seen here.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Philanthropist and ocean advocate Dona Bertarelli

The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity adopted a fund to generate and distribute support for the goal of protecting 30% of the globe's land, ocean, and fresh waters.

The funding will help developing countries, which are home to most of the world's biodiversity, develop sustainable, effective, and equitable conservation protections. Pew worked through the Pew Bertarelli Ocean Legacy Project to support the fund's creation.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Philanthropist and ocean advocate Dona Bertarelli

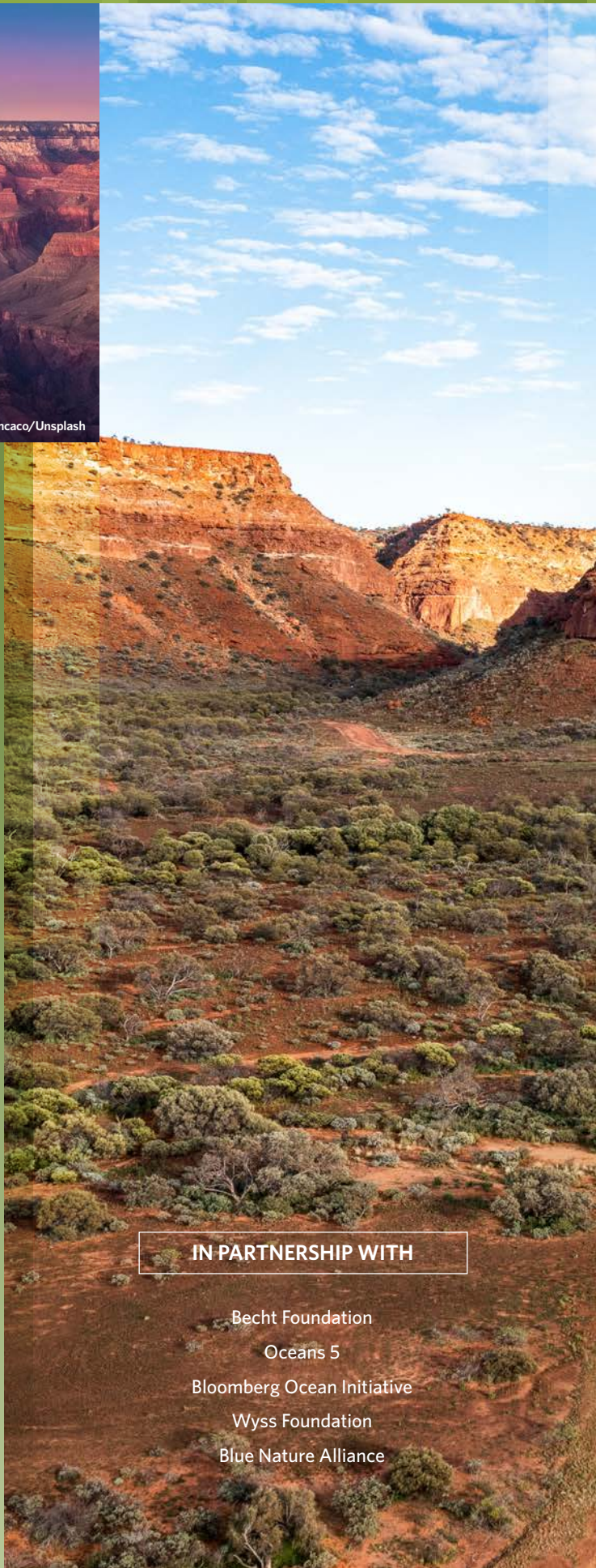
Blue Nature Alliance



Jad Limcaco/Unsplash

President Joe Biden designated the Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni—Ancestral Footprints of the Grand Canyon National Monument in August, protecting

approximately 1 million acres of forests and grasslands to the north and south of Grand Canyon National Park (above) in Arizona. The monument's name reflects the significance of the Grand Canyon area to many Tribal Nations, and its boundaries closely reflect a proposal long advocated by local Tribes—including the Havasupai Tribe, Hopi Tribe, Hualapai Tribe, Kaibab Paiute Tribe, Las Vegas Band of Paiute Tribe, Moapa Band of Paiutes, Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah, Navajo Nation, San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe, Yavapai-Apache Nation, Pueblo of Zuni, and Colorado River Indian Tribes—to permanently protect this important region. The landscape near the park has been at risk of uranium mining and other extractive activities, and conserving these regions has been central to Pew's ongoing efforts to protect U.S. public lands.



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

- Becht Foundation
- Oceans 5
- Bloomberg Ocean Initiative
- Wyss Foundation
- Blue Nature Alliance



From Queensland in the northeast, to Macquarie Island in the Southern Ocean, to vast stretches of the west, Australia made strides in conservation last year.

The island continent remains one of the most intact and biodiverse places on the planet, and Pew worked with governments, local partners, and Indigenous groups to conserve and maintain this natural place. More than half a million acres were added to Queensland protected areas that include the habitat of threatened species such as the koala, greater glider, red goshawk, and golden shouldered parrot, and the government provided new funding for Indigenous Ranger programs. Queensland also created an 88,000-acre national park on Gudjala country that links two existing national parks covering nationally significant wetlands.

The Australian government nearly tripled the size of the Macquarie Island Marine Park to cover the national exclusive economic zone around the island, which is a World Heritage site and home to penguins, seals,

whales, fish, and migratory seabirds. Pew and its partners assisted in developing more than 14,000 statements of support from scientists, stakeholders, and the Australian public in favor of the designation.

And in Western Australia, national parks were created or expanded: On Baiyungu country in the Exmouth Gulf region, land and sea parks were established covering nearly 1.3 million acres, protecting marine nurseries for humpback whales, dugong, and turtles. The new Pimbee National Park and an expansion of the existing Kennedy Range National Park (shown here) on Yinggarda country in the Gascoyne region now cover nearly 700,000 acres. Western Australia also launched a new phase of the Fitzroy River National Park in partnership with Bunuba Traditional Owners, a region of more than a half million acres that links to other existing conservation areas.

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HOW STATES MANAGE THEIR BUDGETS

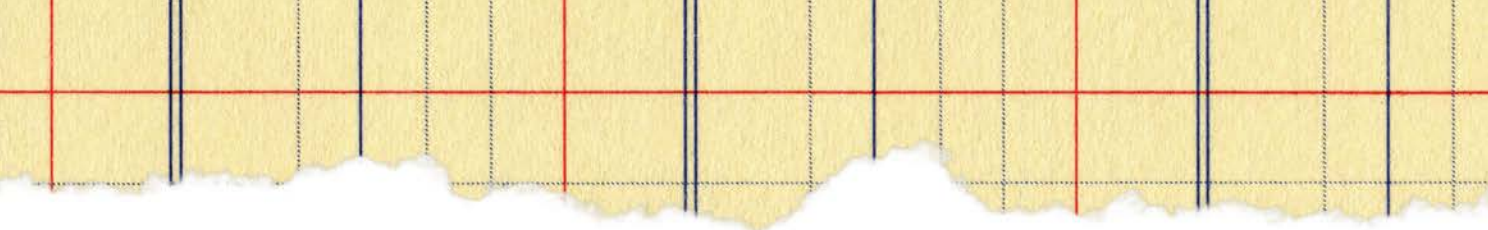
8

—AND HOW THEY **DON'T**

BY STEPHEN FEHR

16

17



Pew is marshaling its efforts to help states use data-driven ways to manage their budgets, plan for the future, and better serve taxpayers.

State government leaders throughout the nation head into 2024 better prepared to manage the ups and downs of their finances than they were at the start of the Great Recession in 2007.

Often with technical assistance from The Pew Charitable Trusts, many states have adopted practices and policies strengthening their budgets since that downturn: Several states built large rainy day reserve funds, paid down public pension liabilities, worked to lessen the effects of volatile revenue sources, and evaluated which spending programs were effective and provided value for taxpayers.

Despite these reforms, many state policymakers are still managing budgets for the short term. This leaves states vulnerable to future budget deficits from economic downturns and evolving risks such as natural disasters, climate change, population swings, and technological advancements. And it also makes managing good times difficult when short-term calculations result in unsustainable spending growth or missed opportunities to pay down debt and public pension liabilities.


So Pew is marshaling its efforts to help states adopt standards in public budgeting aimed at preserving past successes while emphasizing long-term fiscal health.

“This is the ideal moment for this work. What states experienced during the COVID pandemic created a real appetite for long-term budget analysis to guide planning,” says Mary Murphy, a senior director on fiscal and economic policy at Pew. “Every state wants its revenue forecast to be as accurate as possible, and policymakers are looking for new ways to use available data to help them assess the long view and to help prepare for the unexpected.”

Murphy’s team spent much of the last year researching budget practices in each state and interviewing key executive and legislative branch officials, culminating in a first-of-its-kind 50-state report released in November.

The report will serve as a foundation upon which the team will identify states that could benefit from Pew’s assistance going forward. Several state officials already have expressed interest in participating, Murphy says.

The report—“Tools for Sustainable State



Most states are enjoying record surpluses, driven largely by federal pandemic aid and higher-than-expected growth in tax revenue. This has empowered states to make historically large tax cuts and spending increases from 2021 to 2023.

Budgeting”— focuses on two fiscal practices grounded in data and evidence. They are long-term budget assessments, which project and study state revenue and spending for multiple years, and multiyear stress tests, which gauge risks, anticipate shortfalls, and tackle looming challenges.

Far from wonky and abstract methods, Pew’s intensified focus centers directly on the operations of state governments closest to most Americans’ daily lives. Regardless of their political views, Americans rely on a healthy, well-managed public sector to provide education, public health and safety, transportation, and workforce development. The U.S. economy also counts on the fiscal impact of state governments, whose budgets total over \$2 trillion, or about 10% of gross domestic product.

The report adds to a growing range of nonpartisan, fact-based research at Pew that collectively seeks to improve the nation’s “civic infrastructure” from which policymakers can draw to solve problems, whether managing fluctuations in state budgets, expanding broadband connectivity, modernizing the civil legal system, or improving public health.

The budget report found that 15 states have produced long-term fiscal assessments, 13 have performed stress tests, and eight have conducted both. The eight are Alaska, California, Connecticut, Maryland, Montana, New Mexico, New York, and Utah.

But even some of those states employing the desired assessments still lack the rigorous methods that could inform fiscal decisions such as how much money the state should set aside in reserves. In some of the states, officials don’t reveal what their tests show or reach conclusions about how their data would affect the ability to balance revenue and spending well into the future.

Pew’s report highlights opportunities for states to adopt, improve, and expand the use of long-term assessments and stress tests and to make them a standard part of their budgeting process in a sustainable way that ensures a more stable fiscal future. This is especially important now in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Most states are enjoying record surpluses, driven largely by federal pandemic aid and higher-than-expected growth in tax revenue. This has empowered states to make historically large tax cuts and spending increases from 2021 to 2023.

As the report notes, “going forward, state leaders must be able to assess whether their decisions will be affordable over the long term or will jeopardize their ability to solve state problems or even sustain programs and services in the future. Unfortunately, the nature of state budget processes discourages such long-term thinking.”

The report marks Pew’s effort to turn that kind of thinking around and help states better plan for the future.

How long-term budget assessments work

Colorado has demonstrated the importance of long-term thinking. When the state received its latest round of federal pandemic assistance in 2023, the standard annual budget process might have resulted in lawmakers and the governor channeling money into existing programs and services with recurring costs or creating new ones. But once the federal stimulus money ran out, the state would not have the resources to continue paying for them.

“There was great agreement that we couldn’t do that to the state,” says Lauren Larson, who was state budget director then. “We had a thin budget to begin with, and we couldn’t put it on a razor’s edge.”

Instead, she says, officials took a long-term approach by spending nearly all of the money on one-time investments. The stimulus, she said, was a “gift” because it encouraged Colorado to expand its multiyear planning to manage the stimulus money in a way that would keep the state budget structurally balanced.

Structural balance is at the heart of long-term budget assessments that Pew and other experts encourage. The practice of projecting revenue and expenditures over several years is frequently neglected by state policymakers who often focus on balancing the budget a year or two at a time. In its report, Pew recommends a minimum of three years’ projections beyond the current budget year from key revenue and spending categories in states’ general funds.

Disclosing the numbers is not enough, though. Just as crucial is analyzing and explaining the data so policymakers and residents recognize future risks that could knock a hole in budgets and offering recommendations on how to sustain long-term healthy budget balances during turns in the economy.

That’s what happened in mineral-rich New Mexico. Its long-term budget assessment in 2022 warned of recurring deficits through 2050 because of falling oil production as the world economy shifts to alternate energy sources. Lawmakers prudently adjusted future budget revenues by shoring up endowments and trust funds to boost investment earnings.

Pew’s report—as well as many state budget analysts—says officials often overlook the importance of tracking spending when assessing the long-term health of finances. Recurring expenditures include costs that the government must fund every year, such as salaries and materials. The report says officials should include in their stress testing and long-range assessments any government fund in which a shortfall or surplus could affect the budget balance.

“By neglecting to consider spending, states risk understating the size of potential budget shortfalls and, therefore, failing to adequately prepare for them,” the report says.

Long-term assessments also have to take into account surpluses, which also influence budget stability. Maryland, like many states, recently has been enjoying excess revenue in the wake of federal pandemic aid. After assessing the state’s long-term finances, Maryland officials found the surpluses would decline through fiscal year 2028 in part because of increased education and retirement benefit obligations. This finding was a result of officials beginning their analysis by isolating what portion of surplus revenue was temporary because of the federal aid and how much of state spending was ongoing.

A forward-looking assessment of structural balance and potential risks benefits taxpayers—and can save them money. Long-term financial planning that identifies risks is one of the core factors S&P Global uses when it rates bonds sold to investors, says Geoffrey Buswick, an S&P managing director. The higher a state’s credit rating, the lower the cost to taxpayers of repaying bonds, which finance capital projects such as construction and renovation of roads, schools, airports, prisons, parks, water projects, and other infrastructure. Only a dozen states hold the highest, or AAA, rating.

The importance of stress testing

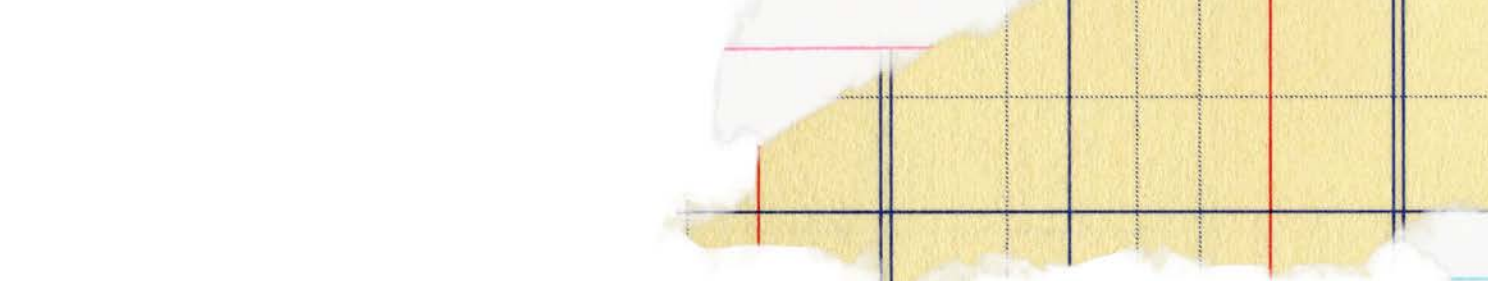
Stress testing informs long-term assessments with factual data such as how much revenue a state would lose in a hypothetical recession. The practice was an offshoot of the 2008 financial crisis. Congress passed the landmark Dodd-Frank Act in 2010 requiring large banks and other financial institutions to perform stress tests to ensure that they could cover losses and pay creditors without a taxpayer bailout.

With the federal legislation as a model, several state and local elected officials and public employee retirement system managers followed Dodd-Frank with their own stress tests of public pension fund assets, which had plummeted during the recession after already having been weakened from years of insufficient contributions and rising benefit costs. Pew's public sector retirement systems project has assisted states in improving the financial condition of their pension funds using stress tests.

Utah was the first state to stress test its budget, an outgrowth of its work with Pew on evidence-based rainy day fund policies that set targets for reserves. "This was all happening at about the same time as early Dodd-Frank Act bank stress testing," says Jonathan Ball, Utah's legislative fiscal analyst, recalling a debate in 2015 between then-Governor Gary Herbert's staff and legislators over reserve levels. "Someone said, 'Hey, what about applying Dodd-Frank stress testing to state budgets?' Indeed, our first stress test just took the economic scenarios from Dodd-Frank and applied them to state revenues and spending."

Utah's latest stress test in 2022 consisted of an analysis of all state revenue sources, an examination of major expenditures that drove the budget such as education and Medicaid, and an inventory of budget buffers and reserves to evaluate whether they would adequately cushion the impact of lost revenue and increased spending during a recession. Economists

Going forward, state leaders must be able to assess whether their decisions will be affordable over the long term or will jeopardize their ability to solve state problems or even sustain programs and services in the future. Unfortunately, the nature of state budget processes discourages such long-term thinking.



combined the amount of expenditures and revenues over a five-year period, which they called the “total value at risk.” In 2022, the amount at risk was as high as \$5.6 billion.

“The stress tests resulted in a contingency plan of sorts that we call our fiscal toolkit,” Ball explains. “The toolkit is simply a prioritized list of budget buffers including tax increases, budget cuts, and rainy day funds.”

Lawmakers concluded from the toolkit that the state had ample reserves to cover the \$5.6 billion at risk. The lesson learned, Ball says, was it is better to have tools in place to avoid hasty, crisis-driven solutions when a critical fiscal situation occurs. “The value of stress testing is in the doing—the exercise itself and the data it generates,” he says. “If you train for adverse conditions before they are thrust upon you, your training will kick in when faced with real adversity and you’ll avoid crisis decision-making. You’ll have options.”

Moody’s Analytics, an economic research firm, and S&P Global, which provides data and ratings about state debt, joined Utah and other states in testing stress scenarios that help elected officials prepare in advance for a turn in the economy. In 2022, at a time when many economists were warning a recession was possible, Montana officials prepared a stress test showing the size of budget shortfalls that would occur every eight, 10, 14, 20, and 40 years. Concerned there would not be enough money to cover the deficits, state lawmakers increased the cap on the state’s rainy day fund by more than 250%, according to Pew’s report, to put aside money to cover downturns.

States with volatile tax collections particularly benefit from stress testing. For example, California measures personal income from capital gains taxes, which fluctuate because people often sell equities depending on stock market performance.

Gabe Petek, the California legislative analyst, says twice a year officials conduct a budget analysis with elements of a stress test. “We first project revenues, spending, and the budget bottom line,” he says. “If the state faces deficits, we estimate how much of those future budget problems the state could cover with its reserves based on a median revenue scenario. Then we conduct sensitivity analysis to determine how likely the budget is to break even, taking into account current economic conditions and, based on those, the range of economic scenarios going forward.”

Simply establishing stress testing does not go far enough, Pew contended in the report. The hope is that policymakers will study the data from testing that will lead to practices and policies to plan for emergencies and ensure that the budget will be structurally balanced for several years. The report noted, for example, that North Carolina’s stress test advises policymakers how much funding should be set aside for unforeseen events. And the state backs that up by requiring automatic deposits of revenue growth into the rainy day fund until reaching the level of savings.

No budgeting tools assure that states can resolve difficult fiscal and political challenges. Forces outside a state’s control—fluctuating oil prices or a pandemic—make it impossible to perfectly predict revenue and spending trends at a given time. Because of this uncertainty, says the Government Finance Officers Association, states should adopt plans making clear how and when reserves will be replenished and the budget will return to structural balance. Adds Petek of California: “Building and maintaining a prudent budget reserve is arguably the most effective way a state can strengthen its fiscal resilience prior to a downturn.”

Kil Huh, a Pew senior vice president who heads the government performance division, says too few states point toward consistent, long-term fiscal stability. The stakes of inaction are high for state residents, which is why Pew has launched this latest effort: “Without planning ahead,” Huh says, “when spending exceeds revenue, state leaders may need to make significant cuts or implement tax increases precisely at the time when residents need help the most.”

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Stephen Fehr is a former state fiscal expert for The Pew Charitable Trusts and has covered state governments for the Kansas City Star and The Washington Post.



Pat Kane



Hemis/Alamy

A lone trapper (left) navigates through boreal forest in Canada's Northwest Territories. The boreal zone extends across the entire country, including Quebec, where a winter tent (above) sits among conifers in Mashteuiatsh, a First Nation reserve and the site of a meeting between members of the International Boreal Conservation Campaign and Indigenous leaders.

In Canada, Indigenous Leaders Take Mantle of Longtime Boreal Forest Stewardship Effort

Move could set the standard for transitioning to Indigenous-led conservation elsewhere

By Tom Dillon and Valérie Courtois

A steady breeze carries the smell of smoking goose and beaver meat to a circle of people gathered on the shore of lake Pekuakami on a brilliant mid-June day in the Innu community of Mashteuiatsh, Quebec. The group is sharing stories about working together, some for more than two decades, on a campaign to conserve the lands and waters of the boreal forest in Canada, which spans 1.3 billion acres from coast to coast and is one of the largest intact forest and wetland ecosystems on Earth.

We came together in Mashteuiatsh to celebrate an important milestone: the passing of the helm of the International Boreal Conservation Campaign (IBCC) from the campaign partners to the Indigenous

Leadership Initiative (ILI). As Valérie said in a June 15 announcement about the move, this step could “usher in a new era—one that ensures Indigenous peoples are recognized and supported as the appropriate and natural leaders of conservation on their own homelands.”

Pew and its partners created IBCC in 1999 to raise awareness of the need to conserve a vital ecosystem found only in the world's high northern latitudes. Laced with freshwater wetlands, the boreal forest in Canada is home to many wildlife species and is an essential nursery for North America's bird populations. With the ability to store up to twice as much carbon per acre as tropical rainforests, the boreal forest is also globally important in the race to manage climate change.



The boreal is also home to hundreds of Indigenous communities; Indigenous-led initiatives have been key to IBCC's success since its inception. ILI continues to focus on establishing Indigenous conservation systems that respect Indigenous Nationhood, including Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas managed by Indigenous Guardians stewardship programs. This approach sustains nature and helps restore Indigenous languages, cultures, and community well-being.

The partnership between Pew and ILI represents the latest step in the evolution of this conservation work in Canada and comes as the government of Canada deepens its commitment to Indigenous-led conservation. For example, at the December meeting of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity in Montreal, Canada pledged at least \$800 million to support four project finance for permanence initiatives—led by Indigenous communities in the boreal forest, Pacific coastal rainforest, high Arctic, and Hudson Bay region—and announced the creation of the first countrywide Indigenous Guardians program to recognize and develop the work Indigenous peoples do in stewarding lands and waters. Indigenous-led initiatives that work with Indigenous Nations to revitalize their own cultures and stewardship responsibilities are good for communities, for nature, and for Canada.

Under the U.N. Convention on Biological Diversity, almost every nation has committed to protecting at least 30% of its lands and waters by 2030—a target known as “30 by 30”; the Paris Agreement calls for similarly high ambitions to limit carbon emissions. These goals cannot be met without the support and leadership of Indigenous peoples, whose homelands constitute as much as half of the world's remaining intact ecosystems and harbor up to 80% of Earth's unique species.

But Indigenous-led conservation is much more than a method for achieving international goals; it is also a model for meeting the responsibilities that we all share to justice, equity, and respect for all peoples. It is not only about guardianship of nature but also fundamentally about the inherent rights of Indigenous communities.

As ILI builds networks within Canada, its example can also be a model for other countries. Pew has been proud to play a role in supporting the development of ILI and is even prouder to remain a trusted partner now. As our relationship has deepened, we have learned that for an organization to support Indigenous leadership and the ideas generated from Indigenous Nations, we must be willing to step back and set aside our established ways. One challenge for the field of conservation is that organizations and donors must recognize that they



Valérie Courtois, executive director of the Indigenous Leadership Initiative (ILI), holds a handmade gift intended for ILI's new office. From now on, the group will lead the conservation of boreal forests in Canada. *Indigenous Leadership Initiative*





Sources: Natural Resources Canada;
Natural Earth; General Bathymetric
Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO)

Photo: Getty Images

cannot always prioritize their own brands and goals if they are to be true supporters of Indigenous-led conservation. For the reasons stated above, it is vital that we all work to support and sustain self-sufficient Indigenous-led organizations, with growing capacity for conservation and a long-term future.

Indigenous peoples who are engaged in conservation efforts sustain lands and waters for the good of all people. Creating space for Indigenous leadership and decision-making on Indigenous homelands will benefit our shared futures.

Following the sharing circle in Mashteuiatsh, our group gathered for a community feast of moose stew and smoked goose and beaver, celebrating IBCC’s progress and the dividends that the work will pay for nature and wildlife far into the future. We also recognized that each group represented had much more to do for the planet and its people—a quest that we all knew we’d be undertaking with each other’s support.



Inside a shaputuan, a tent built by the native Ilnu community, International Boreal Conservation Campaign partners and Indigenous leaders gather for dinner.
Indigenous Leadership Initiative

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Tom Dillon is a senior vice president at The Pew Charitable Trusts, leading the organization’s work on conservation and environment initiatives in the United States and around the world. Valérie Courtois is the executive director of the Indigenous Leadership Initiative.

A ‘Dismal’ View of the Nation’s Politics

A Pew Research Center survey finds that Americans’ views of politics and elected officials are unrelentingly negative—with little hope of improvement.

BY TOM INFIELD

Heading into this year’s presidential election, Americans are profoundly disillusioned with the state of the nation’s politics—more so than in decades.

Disgusting, divisive, dysfunctional. Corrupt, crazy, confusing. Broken, bad, sad. These were among the negative terms that 8,480 members of the Pew American Trends Panel came up with when they were asked to use one word or phrase to describe politics today.

Another term often used in a September report by Pew Research Center—aptly titled “Americans’ Dismal Views of the Nation’s Politics”—was “exhausted.” Almost two-thirds of participants said they were mostly or always exhausted with politics, and 55% said they were often or mostly angry. Only 10% said they were mostly hopeful.

There’s more: Americans are dissatisfied with the people running for president in 2024 (63%), the survey found; nearly 6 in 10 (56%) gave no answer or said “nothing” when invited to identify a strength in the American political system; just 4% said the system is working extremely or very well; and about 6 in 10 (63%) expressed “not too much” or zero confidence in the future of the system.

“It wasn’t just a negative picture; it was deeply negative,” says Carroll Doherty, the Center’s director of political research. “We found very harsh responses to the way politics is going today. People have always made fun of politicians and been cynical about them, but this is a new level.”

Overwhelming majorities of Americans said that lobbyists and special interests hold too much sway in politics, that presidential elections last too long and cost too much, and that both Republicans and Democrats are more focused on fighting each other than on solving the nation’s problems.

“The report has a warning quality to it for elected officials of both parties,” Doherty says. “This dissatisfaction is very deep and very broad, and it’s not going away. Confidence in the future is very low. It definitely is a sign that people don’t think things are

working very well.”

Historically, dismay with the system has led to low voter turnout. Yet voter turnouts in 2018, in 2020, and again in 2022 were the highest in decades for each respective slot in the election cycle.

Doherty says the higher turnouts appear to be the product of fear and anger, which cut across all categories of age, race, sex, and education—and even political affiliation.

“People on both sides—especially the partisans, who are really dug in—think that there would be disastrous consequences if the opponent won the election,” Doherty says. “I think that is what is driving turnout. It is fear of what might happen if their side loses.”

Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania, agrees that fear is driving turnout. But she finds hope in seeing that Americans still care enough to vote—because it means that they haven’t entirely given up on the system.

“The survey does have some good news,” Jamieson says. “If you landed from Mars and looked at the survey, you would say, ‘This is really dismal.’ But the fact that a reasonable percentage of people still think their vote makes a difference—that is really important. If you are giving up on the system—that is, if you don’t think there is any chance it is going to change—then you are in a far worse place.”

Jamieson praised the scope of the survey of Pew’s American Trends Panel members, who represent a randomly selected sample of U.S. adults. The poll was conducted online in July 2023 in both English and Spanish.

“This is a master survey,” Jamieson says. “We have seen pieces of this in other surveys, but this puts it all together.” Although the survey asked precise questions, she says, it also gave respondents the open-ended chance to voice their feelings.

She notes that although around half of respondents couldn’t or wouldn’t name a single strength in the political system, 12% of respondents who did

name a strength cited constitutional structures of government. Americans who paid attention to their civics lessons, she says, have learned that having three independent branches of government—president, Congress, and the courts—provides stability in troubled times.

And the survey certainly underscored that these are troubled times. Just 16% of the public—among the smallest share in seven decades—trusts the federal government to do the right thing at least most of the time, the survey says. Distrust is widespread, but Republicans feel it the most: About half as many Republicans as Democrats—26% versus 54%—agreed with a statement that “the federal government does more for ordinary Americans than people give it credit for.”

Jamieson also takes note of the decline of public confidence in the Supreme Court, which, when compared to the president and Congress, “always in the past seemed immune to the public perception that everything is going wrong,” she says. Now, a majority of Americans—54%—have an unfavorable opinion of the court.

The political parties fare no better. Since the mid-1990s, the percentage of Americans holding an unfavorable view of both major parties has quadrupled, with 61% now holding a dim view of the Republicans and 60% having a negative view of the Democrats. Many people say they would welcome a third party, but the survey also found considerable skepticism that more parties would make it easier to solve the nation’s problems.

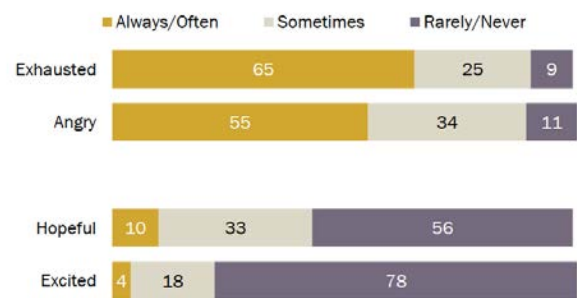
The Americans who are most engaged in politics are the ones feeling the most worn out, with 72% of highly politically engaged adults saying that, always or most of the time, they feel exhausted. The exhaustion goes beyond interaction with government or politicians; it intrudes into families, neighborhoods, and workplaces, with the research showing that 61% of U.S. adults find it stressful and frustrating to discuss politics with people who hold different views from their own. The level of that frustration is up by 11% since 2019—influenced, no doubt, by the highly fraught 2020 election and its aftermath.

The New York Times, in an article that referenced the Center’s survey, suggested that the United States is “a country unified by discontent.” Doherty says it is also a country united by the desire for change. Despite the public’s malaise, the survey found enthusiasm for a number of significant changes that might improve the system.

Among the popular ideas for changes are imposing term limits on members of Congress, imposing age limits on all elected federal officials and Supreme Court justices, and eliminating the Electoral College to have presidential elections determined by the popular vote.

How Americans feel when they think about politics

% who _____ feel each of the following when thinking about politics these days



Source: Pew Research Center

Among other potential changes, Republicans are nearly unified (93%) in supporting a requirement that all voters present a government-issued photo ID at the polls, as opposed to 61% of Democrats favoring such a requirement. Conversely, Democrats are much more in favor (80%) than are Republicans (45%) of automatic voter registration for all eligible citizens.

More Democrats than Republicans favor increasing the number of justices on the Supreme Court, but around half of survey respondents are not enamored with the idea.

More young adults than older adults favor making structural changes to Congress—expanding the size of the House of Representatives and altering the manner in which the 50 states are represented in the Senate. Neither of these ideas have majority support from all survey respondents.

And with legislatures in some states seeking state-level solutions to nationally divisive matters, including social issues such as abortion, a majority of people (54%) say they’re extremely or very concerned that their personal rights could depend on what state they live in. Democrats feel this more strongly than Republicans do.

As the nation barrels into this year’s elections—which will decide the presidency, control of Congress, and many state offices across the land—the public’s nerves are clearly frayed.

“We’re headed into a presidential election where people are feeling negative, at the moment at least, about their choices,” Doherty says. “The desire for change from the status quo crosses party lines. The public is not aligned on everything, but there’s definitely a lot of sentiment for change of some sort.”



Tom Infield is a longtime Philadelphia journalist and frequent contributor to Trust.

5 Facts About Hispanic Americans and Health Care

BY ALEC TYSON AND MARK HUGO LOPEZ

Hispanic Americans have long faced health care challenges in the United States, including lower health insurance rates and less access to preventative care.

Language and cultural barriers, as well as higher levels of poverty, are among the social and economic factors contributing to disparate health outcomes for Hispanic Americans. These disparities were apparent during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, when Hispanics were far more likely than White Americans to have died from the virus.

Here are five key facts about Hispanic Americans and health care, based on a 2021 Pew Research Center survey of Hispanic adults and other sources:

1 **Hispanic adults are less likely than other Americans to have seen a health care provider recently and to have a primary care provider.**

Seven in 10 say they've seen a doctor or other health care provider in the past year, compared with 82% among Americans overall. Hispanics are also slightly less likely than Americans overall to say they have a primary care provider (68% vs. 76%).

Health care access among Hispanic immigrants differs markedly based on how long they have lived in the U.S. More recent arrivals are less likely than those who have been in the country longer to have seen a doctor recently and to have a primary care provider. For example, 48% of Hispanic immigrants who have been in the U.S. for a decade or less report having a primary care provider, compared with 79% among those who have been in the U.S. for more than two decades.

Recent arrivals make up a declining share of Hispanic immigrants in the U.S. And more broadly, immigrants account for a declining share of the overall U.S. Hispanic population. In 2021, they made up 32% of all Hispanic Americans, down from 37% in 2010.

2 **Hispanic Americans are less likely than people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds to have health insurance.** As of 2021, the uninsured rate among Hispanics under age 65 was 19%, according to KFF, formerly known as the Kaiser Family Foundation. That was higher than the share among Black (11%), White (7%), and Asian Americans (6%). (These figures include rates among children as well as adults.)

While comparatively high, the uninsured rate among Hispanic Americans under age 65 in 2021 was down from 33% in 2010, before the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, according to KFF.

Lower rates of health insurance coverage play a major role in Hispanic Americans' less frequent interactions with health care providers.

The relative youth of the U.S. Hispanic population may be another factor at play. The median age of Hispanic Americans was 30 as of 2020, compared with 41 for non-Hispanic Americans, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Among both Hispanic and non-Hispanic Americans, younger people are less likely than their elders to have seen a health care provider recently and to have a primary care provider.

3 **Many Hispanic Americans say worse health outcomes for Hispanics are tied to occupational and structural factors.** Some 53% of Hispanic adults say a major reason why Hispanic people generally have worse health outcomes is that they're more likely to work in jobs that put them at risk for health problems. About half (48%) say a major reason is that Hispanic people have less access to quality medical care where they live.

At least four in 10 Hispanic adults also point to communication problems arising from language or cultural differences (44%) and pre-existing health conditions (40%) as major reasons. (Majorities view all of these factors as at least minor reasons for disparate health outcomes among Hispanic adults.)

The coronavirus outbreak took an especially heavy toll on Hispanic Americans when compared with



FG Trade/Getty Images

White Americans. Hispanics also face higher rates of certain diseases like diabetes than some other Americans.

When it comes to progress in health outcomes for Hispanic people, 51% of Hispanic adults say health outcomes have gotten a lot or a little better over the past two decades, compared with 13% who say they've gotten a lot or a little worse; 34% say they've stayed about the same.

4 About a third of Hispanic Americans—including 58% of Hispanic immigrants—say they prefer to see a Spanish-speaking health care provider.

Overall, 35% of Hispanic adults strongly or somewhat prefer seeing a Spanish-speaking doctor or other health care provider for routine care.

A larger share (51%) say it makes no difference whether the doctor they see speaks Spanish or not. And 13% say they would rather not see a Spanish-speaking doctor.

Attitudes are broadly similar when it comes to seeing a Hispanic doctor or health care provider. A third of Hispanic adults say they would prefer to see a Hispanic doctor for routine care, while 59% say it makes no difference and 7% say they would rather not.

Among Hispanic adults, immigrants are much more likely than those born in the U.S. to prefer seeing a Spanish-speaking doctor (58% vs. 12%) and to prefer seeing a Hispanic doctor (47% vs. 20%). About half of Hispanic immigrants in the U.S. mostly speak and read in Spanish.

Hispanic Americans account for 19% of the U.S. population. But only 9% of the nation's health care practitioners and technicians are Hispanic, according to a 2021 Pew Research Center analysis of federal government data. And just 7% of all U.S. physicians and surgeons and 7% of registered nurses are Hispanic.

5 Black Hispanic adults are more likely to report negative health care experiences than other Hispanic adults. Overall, about half of Hispanic adults (52%) say they've had at least one of six negative health care experiences asked about in the Center's 2021 survey, including feeling rushed or having to speak up to get the proper care. This is similar to the share of all U.S. adults who report having at least one of these types of negative experiences.

However, there are notable differences among Hispanics by race. Hispanic Americans who identify as Black are much more likely than White Hispanic adults to have faced negative health care experiences. For instance, 52% of Black Hispanic adults say they've had to speak up to get proper care, compared with 31% of White Hispanic adults. And Black Hispanic adults are 15 percentage points more likely than White Hispanic adults to say they've received lower-quality care (37% vs. 22%).

Although negative health care experiences are fairly common, most Hispanic adults have generally positive opinions about their latest health care interaction. A 56% majority say the quality of care they most recently received from doctors or other health care providers was excellent or very good, while another 28% say it was good. Fewer (14%) say the care they received was only fair or poor. Black and White Hispanic adults are about equally likely to give positive ratings of their most recent health care experience.

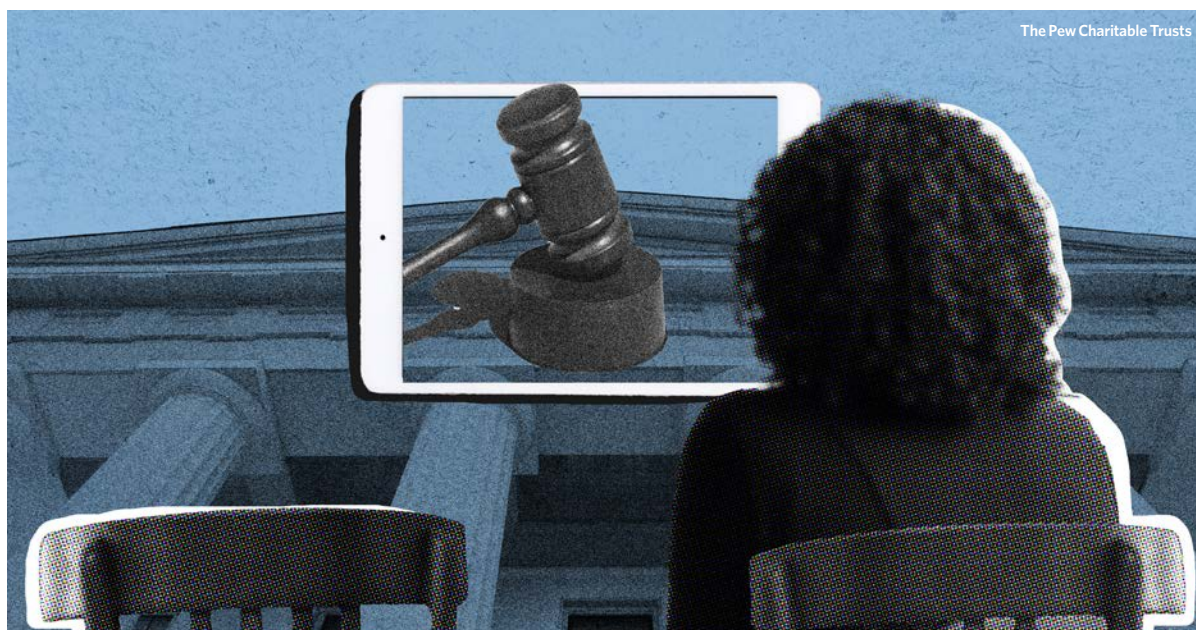
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Alec Tyson is an associate director of research and Mark Hugo Lopez is director of race and ethnicity research at Pew Research Center.

Debt Collection Cases Continued to Dominate Civil Dockets During Pandemic

Available state court data shows long-term trend not slowed by COVID-19

BY CASEY CHIAPPETTA



The Pew Charitable Trusts

Consumer debt collection lawsuits continued to fill state civil court dockets throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a new analysis by The Pew Charitable Trusts. This finding builds on research showing that debt claims have grown to dominate state civil court dockets in recent decades. A previous national analysis showed that these suits rose from an estimated 1 in 9 civil cases in 1993 to 1 in 4 in 2013, and that trend does not appear to have slowed in recent years, according to available data from nine states.

Although the coronavirus public health emergency initially paused filings of certain nonemergency case types, plaintiffs continued to file debt collection lawsuits. Nationwide data is not readily available, but in nine states (Alaska, Colorado, Connecticut, Indiana, Missouri, New Mexico, Texas, Utah, and Wisconsin) where researchers could get access to comparable data for 2013, 2018, and 2021, debt cases made up 42% of civil dockets in 2021—up from 38% in 2018

and 29% in 2013.

Of those nine states, two saw their proportion of debt cases constitute about half of civil dockets in 2021—New Mexico (51%) and Texas (48%). Part of the increase in the proportion of debt cases from 2018 to 2021 was likely caused by decreases in landlord-tenant cases due to pandemic-related state eviction moratoria.

Pew's analysis found that although the number of cases has fluctuated over time, debt cases have continued to dominate the docket irrespective of broader economic trends. In 2018, when the country's economic outlook was positive (based on indicators such as unemployment rate and job growth), the proportion of debt filings did not drop from five years earlier. That year, in states with available data, 10 out of 12 jurisdictions saw debt collection lawsuits as the most common case type. In 2021, when millions of Americans continued to face uncertainty linked to job

loss and illness, the number of debt collection lawsuits filed still took up a large proportion of the cases in the jurisdictions where they were heard.

Additionally, Pew found that in the jurisdictions with available data, roughly 1 in 20 adults with a debt in collections were sued in 2021, and these lawsuits remained the most prevalent civil court case type in 13 out of 16 states.

Most debt cases are business-to-consumer suits involving a corporate plaintiff represented by a lawyer and an individual defendant navigating the court system without such help. In jurisdictions with available data, Pew found in a 2020 report that more than 70% of debt suits end in a default judgment—an automatic judgment for the plaintiff that occurs when defendants do not respond to or participate in cases against them. These numbers parallel recent state data that found the percentage of default judgments was 71% in Utah’s District Court in 2019 and 63% in Michigan in 2021.

The 2021 data shows no signs of relief for courts overburdened by debt cases—or for defendants facing

the significant consequences that such litigation can have. As more states report this data, they will be able to track these trends and further explore what’s happening in their courts, what the problems are, and what potential solutions they can implement.

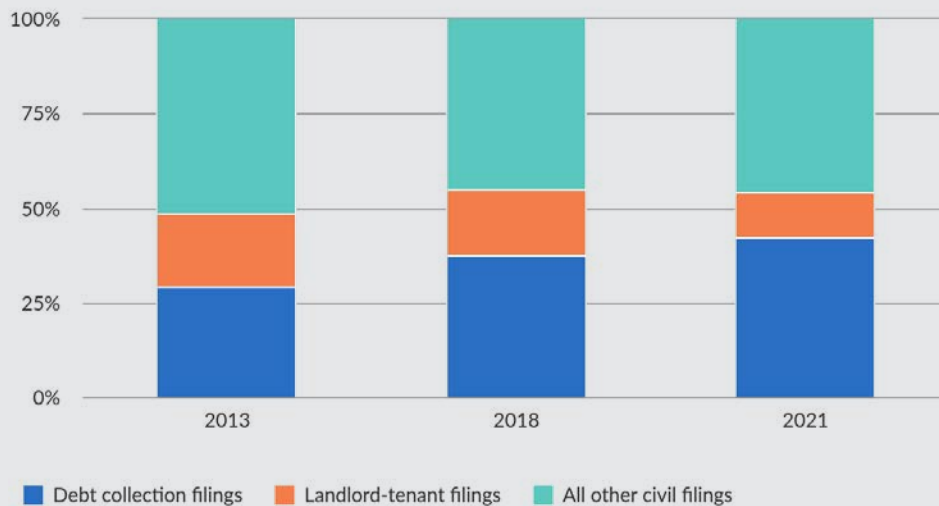
Better state-level debt litigation data would help court officials and state leaders identify the right policy solutions for their jurisdictions that level the playing field for defendants and ensure that both parties can fully participate in cases. Collecting more and better data also could support courts in taking data-informed steps to rebalance or “right-size” their dockets. Such improvements could help connect defendants with resources, such as legal aid providers. Doing so would allow them to better navigate these matters and make the most of their day in court.



Casey Chiappetta is a principal associate with The Pew Charitable Trusts’ civil legal system modernization project.

Debt Matters Represent Large and Growing Share of Civil Cases

Proportion of consumer debt lawsuits in 9 states with available data in 2013, 2018, and 2021



Notes: These figures reflect only the percentage of debt claims cases heard in jurisdictions that reported the number of debt collection filings and total civil filings in their public statistical reports. Several states did not report landlord-tenant filings for select years: Indiana in 2013 and 2018; New Mexico in any of the three years; Utah in 2018.

Sources: Figures include data from Alaska, Colorado, Connecticut, Indiana, Missouri, New Mexico, Texas, Utah, and Wisconsin. Numbers were pulled from individual state statistical reports and dashboards or were shared by third parties with access to civil court data.

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The Human Impact of Solving Plastic Pollution

Indian activist explains how tackling plastic waste is much more than a commodity issue



Volunteers in bright orange vests attempt to clear a path through discarded plastic bottles and other trash that block a dam near the town of Krichim, Bulgaria. AFP via Getty Images

Plastic pollution is a global problem with no single solution. As The Pew Charitable Trusts' 2020 report "Breaking the Plastic Wave" found, everyone from producers to consumers could help reduce the amount of plastic entering the ocean by 80% by 2040 using existing solutions.

The report also found that waste pickers—people who collect, sort, and recycle materials as part of the informal recycling sector—are responsible for approximately 60% of plastic recycling globally. But their role is largely unrecognized, and they're exposed to unsafe conditions and significant health risks.

Kashtakari Panchayat, an organization in Pune, India, that supports waste pickers and their families, worked with Pew to use our Breaking the Plastic Wave Pathways Tool ("Pathways") to assess different approaches to reducing plastic pollution in the city. As part of the project, Kashtakari Panchayat last year released a report, "What We Waste: Household Waste Generation and Recovery by Waste Pickers in Pune," providing a detailed look into the waste system in Pune.

This interview with Lubna Anantkrishnan, a managing trustee at Kashtakari Panchayat, has been edited for length and clarity.

How urgent is the plastic pollution problem in Pune, and in India generally?

The plastic pollution crisis is situated within an environmental movement as well as a waste management movement, both of which are gaining a lot of traction in India.

As part of the government's Clean India initiative, which dates back to 2014, cities are being pushed to improve data on their waste management systems, which has brought a lot of attention to waste management in general.

And of course, there's naturally a growing focus on plastic waste because it's one of the more challenging wastes to handle. It's one of the newer wastes too; it wasn't that prevalent 20 or 30 years ago, and now about 50% of the waste that's being produced in Pune is plastic waste.

The more plastic waste you have lying in hot, huge landfills, the more scope there is for fires, which are toxic and dangerous to the people in the vicinity.

So cities are focusing on improving their ability to manage plastic waste, innovate handling of plastic waste, and there's growing attention being paid to how plastic producers in India can be held accountable for the waste and data. Starting next year, plastic producers in India will need to bear the cost of picking up, collecting, sorting, and recycling (or otherwise handling) the plastic waste they produce.

How does your organization fit within the plastic waste landscape in India?

Kashtakari Panchayat works to strengthen the lives and livelihoods of waste pickers, who not only contribute to recycling but also, in a sense, subsidize the municipal waste collection services through their activities. In Pune, waste pickers are largely women from the lower caste—meaning that they've faced years of marginalization that's pushed them into an occupation that's very, very difficult. They're self-employed entrepreneurs, and their primary earnings are from the sale of scrap. That means they get no social protections or benefits, and no guaranteed minimum income. The harassment they face from citizens and law enforcement has gone down in Pune in recent years, but that's not the case for waste pickers in other parts of the country.

Because of a very strong labor movement and because in Pune they're fairly well organized, about 4,000 local waste pickers have formed a cooperative called SWaCH, which is now part of the waste management system in Pune. But right now, waste pickers' access to waste is being threatened in a big way.

So their livelihoods are at risk?

When there was no money in waste management, when there was no dignity in the work or support for the work and strong caste-based discrimination for the

occupation, these highly marginalized individuals got pushed into waste picking to survive. Now, with the strong national and international discourse on sustainable waste management, and particularly on plastic waste management, there is a huge interest in waste. Private players want to gain control over the recyclable parts of waste or to win massive contracts to set up "technologies" like waste-to-energy, advanced recycling, and chemical recycling—which municipalities will end up subsidizing until those facilities shut down. And waste pickers do not have the bargaining power to compete with these kinds of private entities.

All this means that instead of bringing attention, recognition, and tangible support and improvements to the lives of people who have been holding up the recycling sector for decades, what we are doing is setting up an incentive structure that will dispossess them of their livelihoods.

How has Kashtakari Panchayat responded to that threat?

What we at KP attempt to do is bring the contribution of the waste pickers into the spotlight, not just through stories but also through hard evidence of their contribution to recycling. We also work to directly provide support to this community to strengthen their livelihoods and the overall welfare of waste pickers and their families. We work on initiatives that support waste pickers to enhance and increase the levels of recycling by setting up systems to handle typically non-recycled materials, provide decentralized and supportive infrastructure to encourage maximum source segregation, and more.

Apart from this, we do several other things: We provide emergency support for waste pickers' health and for the education of their children. If they're eligible for government benefits, we help them fill out the forms. We help them bargain with their scrap dealers for better terms. We're also looking at supporting waste pickers to potentially set up recycling units themselves. One thing we found through our work with Pew is a lack of transparency in terms of what recycling actually costs, what costs are truly borne, and which remain hidden. This is an area of work in the future for us.

Waste pickers have developed an expertise in different materials. Can you tell us more about that?



Lubna Anantkrishnan
SWaCH Pune Cooperative

Waste pickers need to be able to look at any object around them, figure out what it's made of, and then decide how best it should be handled, which is no easy thing. It's something they've learned through sheer trial and error and ingenuity, using methods like holding something up to the sun to gauge its opacity, or banging it on the ground and scrunching it to see what sound it makes. Different polymers of clear plastic sound different; they tear differently. The expertise waste pickers have is invaluable.

You can't displace waste pickers without paying a price for it and without any rehabilitation strategy for them. You need to create a just transition into the future of waste management.

"Waste pickers need to be able to look at any object around them, figure out what it's made of, and then decide how best it should be handled, which is no easy thing."

What are some of the barriers to this?

Everyone likes the idea of recycling, right? But that entails bringing in the waste and sorting it into so many different categories, which means you need a space to be able to do that, and you then need a space to be able to store the material until you're ready to sell it. Most citizens would be uncomfortable with waste pickers sorting outside their places of residence. The problem there is that we're so much more obsessed with visual cleanliness than with what happens to our waste; that can lead to a worse outcome in how waste is handled, just because we want our streets to look clean.

What other important stakeholders, in addition to waste pickers, are you working with in this process?

There's definitely a multitude of stakeholders in the waste management sector now. We worked closely with the local government, which very graciously shared its data and allowed us access to some of its facilities and to ask questions; that gave us insight into how the waste is handled. We also looked at how aggregators, scrap dealers, and recyclers are handling waste—all of whom are very critical stakeholders as we look at the privatization of waste management.

What about the data that was collected and used in the Pathways tool to analyze the plastics system in Pune? Has anything useful come from that?

Pathways has helped us get a much clearer picture of how waste is handled within the city. That's in addition to our close collaboration with the local government. And I think that's going to continue: We'll look at data, ask questions, and actually improve the kind of data that we're collecting for the city.

It's been very useful to work with not only the local government but also with other stakeholders to create a data-sharing culture in a space where good data is very difficult to come by. The whole point is to make sure that systems are set up to manage plastic, and to manage waste in general, that are environmentally and socially sound.

Not just in Pune, but at a country level as well?

Yes, we definitely hope so. We want our model to be replicable in practice, not just in theory.

How did you end up doing this work?

I didn't actively choose to come into this field. But I got a small taste of it and got completely sucked in. Working with waste pickers is supremely interesting; the waste pickers in Pune that I've had the privilege of interacting with are super inspirational and knowledgeable. It's just a pleasure to work with them.

And in the end, it's the people that are important.

Yes. The one message I'd like to get out far and wide is that when you think about recycling and think about solving the plastic crisis, you need to think about what happens to the people in recycling today. When you think about polluters paying, are you thinking about what they're paying for and who they're paying? When you talk about eliminating plastic sometime in the future, do the benefits go to the people engaged in this work? Any system that doesn't account for these people is perhaps an environmentally better outcome, but it's depriving people of their livelihoods. It's not just a materials crisis. There are livelihoods and people involved—people who've been marginalized and pushed into this livelihood. Failing to consider them is actively unjust.

It's Time to Fix Housing in America: Start With Financing and Zoning

BY ALEX HOROWITZ

The belief that reaching the American dream starts with owning a home is at the heart of an idea that emerged with post-World War II prosperity and has remained a standard ever since. But the reality is that millions of Americans in cities and states around the country struggle to afford housing, either to own or to rent.

For nearly a century, homeownership has been the largest source of wealth for most American families. Safe, traditional mortgages have been pivotal to achieving financial security and independence. But as home prices and rents skyrocket—and because outdated policies make small mortgages expensive for lenders and often unavailable for borrowers seeking low-cost homes—many families are struggling to afford reliable housing.

This is a serious problem for people across all demographics, but Black, Hispanic, rural and Indigenous households are particularly affected. And some have turned to riskier and more costly alternative financing arrangements, such as land contracts, seller-financed mortgages, lease purchases, and personal property loans.

Approximately 36 million Americans have used such arrangements to purchase a home. They are pitched to potential homebuyers as a pathway to homeownership when traditional mortgages are not available. But they often result in borrowers not achieving their goal of owning and can hurt their future homeownership and wealth-building opportunities.

To examine the barriers that borrowers face when trying to purchase safe and affordable homes, The Pew Charitable Trusts studied various alternative financing arrangements. One of the most important differences among these arrangements is the question of when the buyer receives full legal ownership of a property. In mortgage transactions, the deed—and therefore, full ownership—is typically given to the buyer at closing. However, in a land contract, for example, the seller keeps the deed and retains legal title to the property for the duration of the financing term, while the borrower typically holds what is called “equitable title.” This can create ambiguity about the

buyer's rights and responsibilities, such as who pays for taxes and upkeep, and lead to quick evictions that strip buyers of any potential home equity.

Financing challenges aren't the only roadblock to homeownership. Many Americans who want to own a home are able only to rent for now. And as rents continue to climb, many of these are finding it difficult to save for a down payment in order to get on the path toward ownership. This comes against the backdrop of a national housing shortage, stemming largely from strict zoning and land-use policies that make it harder and more expensive to build new housing, which results in higher rents and puts homeownership further out of reach.

Pew has examined several jurisdictions that updated their zoning codes to allow more housing and found that this flexibility helped these jurisdictions add new housing stock faster than new households were being formed. And while rent remains detrimentally high in many communities throughout the country, this research shows that communities updating their zoning laws in this manner kept rent growth to less than 7% over the most recent six-year period, even as rents rose by 31% nationally.

The housing shortage is a major driver of both inflation and homelessness, placing a heavy financial burden on Americans from all walks of life. There is no one solution for U.S. policymakers, but helping people obtain safe and affordable home financing is a good start toward ensuring that households capable of handling a mortgage can obtain one.

Zoning reform that allows more housing to be built is also a necessary step in solving the housing crisis and ensuring that everyone has a roof over their head.

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Alex Horowitz is a project director with The Pew Charitable Trusts' housing policy initiative. This article originally appeared in The Hill on July 10, 2023.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

*The Pew Charitable Trusts applies a rigorous, analytical approach to **improve public policy**, **inform the public**, and **invigorate civic life**, as these recent accomplishments illustrate.*

IMPROVING PUBLIC POLICY



A community response team (CRT) meets with a resident in Abilene, Texas, for a wellness check. The three-person CRT also responds to emergency calls regarding mental health, such as a suicide threat or a crisis involving drugs.

Jason Van Sickel for The Pew Charitable Trusts

Pew data shines a light on lack of awareness of 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

The mental health and justice partnerships project released results from a national survey aimed at understanding public awareness of 988, the nationwide phone number to connect directly with mental health professionals via text, chat, or call. The survey found that only 13% of adults in the United States had heard of the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline and knew its purpose. The survey also found that 988 has an opportunity to make a major impact, but it can't do so if outreach efforts fail to reach the populations in greatest need. This survey, released in May, provided useful benchmarks from which to gauge awareness of 988 moving forward and will help guide the project's future work with state 988 implementation teams.

State fiscal policy project hosts equity in infrastructure workshop

In September, the state fiscal policy project hosted a workshop on equitable investment in public infrastructure. The day-long event brought together industry experts, advocates, and policymakers across all levels of government to discuss how these stakeholders can help local communities access federal and state programs designed to reach the historically underserved. The event included workshops on how to elevate communities in infrastructure-equity conversations, how states can level the playing field, how federal agencies can more effectively achieve equity and environmental justice goals, and what successful approaches exist as models. Mitch Landrieu, senior adviser to President Joe Biden and White House infrastructure coordinator, joined Joel Wiginton, Pew's senior vice president of government relations, to share insights into how federal infrastructure dollars can reach the communities that need them the most.

Niue announces novel ocean conservation financing plan

In September, Premier Dalton Tagelagi of Niue, a small island nation in the South Pacific Ocean, announced the launch of an innovative financing plan to support the long-term conservation and management of the country's 321,000-square-kilometer (about 123,940-square-mile) exclusive economic zone. Under the approach, developed by the Blue Nature Alliance in partnership with McKinsey & Company, individuals or companies can purchase, for a one-time cost of \$148, an "ocean conservation commitment." This will provide 20 years of funding for management of 1 square kilometer (0.39 square miles) of the nation's marine waters from threats such as illegal fishing and plastic waste. The effort, which aims to raise more than \$18 million, advances the Blue Nature Alliance's objective to strengthen ocean conservation and management around the world.

National Association of Black Journalists partners with Pew for juvenile justice fellowship

Five journalists who investigate juvenile justice issues are part of the new Youth Justice Reporting Fellowship, a partnership between Pew and the National Association of Black Journalists. The fellowship, which supports early-career reporters working on local- or state-level investigative reporting focused on issues in the juvenile legal system, represents an innovative approach to sustaining momentum in the field. It also equips journalists with the knowledge of how to accurately report on juvenile justice issues, including interpreting data, to keep these issues at the forefront of public consciousness.



jacoblund/Getty Images

Oregon adopts blue carbon natural climate solutions as part of climate resilience package

In July, Oregon Governor Tina Kotek (D) signed the state's first climate resilience package, which includes Pew-backed measures to implement natural climate solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The new law requires the establishment of a carbon inventory as well as goals for carbon sequestration and storage in the state's coastal and estuarine habitat, known as blue carbon, and in other natural and working lands, such as farms and forests. A permanent fund was also created to help landowners implement carbon-capturing practices on their land. Oregon's adoption of natural climate solutions follows California's approval last year of a similar approach to removing greenhouse gases, and it advances Pew's U.S. conservation project's goal to use nature-based solutions to help slow climate change.



Highway 101 winds around the Neahkahnie mountain along the Oregon coast. Coastlines and forests are key natural features the state will rely on to sequester carbon and offset climate change. *Feng Wei Photography/Getty Images*

Two sentinel landscapes designated in Virginia

In July, Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin (R) and a coalition of federal agencies led by the departments of Agriculture, Defense, and Interior, and nonprofits including The Pew Charitable Trusts, announced the designation of two federal sentinel landscapes, which cover 2.9 million acres in the eastern portion of the commonwealth. The area, known as the Golden Crescent, is home to multiple military installations that are within or near intact forests, agricultural lands, and marsh and riverine systems that connect to the Chesapeake Bay. The Pew-backed designations, which together are being called the Virginia Security Corridor, will enable private landowners to receive prioritized government financial support for taking voluntary action to protect or sustainably manage their lands and waters, many of which are at risk due to population growth, commercial development, and climate change.



Two Southern states advance offshore wind energy supply chain

In June, the Louisiana legislature unanimously passed a Pew-backed resolution to evaluate the state's readiness to attract and expand industries that manufacture the turbines, cables, vessels, and other components required to support the development of offshore wind energy. Also in June, South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster (R) committed \$250,000 in state funding to a similar assessment of opportunities for the state to tap into the emerging offshore wind supply chain sector. The studies in Louisiana and South Carolina are a critical first step in developing the technology and infrastructure necessary to support a domestic offshore wind industry, and they advance Pew's objective to secure policy measures that will lead to economic opportunities and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.



A trolling lure hooks a Pacific albacore tuna near San Diego.

Richard Herrmann/Blue Planet Archive

Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission approves important conservation measures

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), the regional fishery management organization responsible for the conservation and management of tuna and other marine resources in the eastern Pacific Ocean, in August adopted two important Pew-backed conservation measures. It approved a comprehensive harvest strategy for albacore tuna that sets predetermined guidelines for assessing population abundance and setting fishing limits, avoiding short-term, reactive decisions in favor of those that protect the long-term health of this valuable stock. This is IATTC's first harvest strategy and provides an important model that Pew and partners can work to replicate for other fisheries in the region. The IATTC also adopted an improved vessel monitoring system that will require captains to manually report their location every six hours if their satellite tracking system fails, directs vessels to repair a broken system within 30 days, and prevents vessels with broken systems from leaving port. This update will allow better monitoring of commercial fishing vessels to reduce illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. These actions—as well as agreement to incorporate climate change into future decision-making achieved in concert with nongovernmental organization partners and government and industry stakeholders—advance Pew's goal for healthy, resilient marine ecosystems and fisheries.

INFORMING THE PUBLIC

Pew Research Center issues in-depth exploration of religion in South and Southeast Asia

For more than a decade, the Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures project has provided global analysis of religious trends and changes, including in-depth studies in more than 100 countries. In September, Pew Research Center released a major report examining the connections between religion and national identity in six countries in South and Southeast Asia. The report, “Buddhism, Islam, and Religious Pluralism in South and Southeast Asia,” found that in general, the six countries surveyed are highly religious by a variety of measures. For instance, nearly all respondents in five of the surveyed countries—Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand—identify with a religious group, and majorities say religion is very important in their lives. The lone exception on both measures is Singapore. For the vast majority of Buddhists in Cambodia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, there is widespread agreement that Buddhism is more than a religion: It’s also an important part of culture and family tradition.

Report details changes in the American family

Pew Research Center published a research package in September detailing the changing American family. The research is part of ongoing work on one of the biggest—and often overlooked—societal changes of our times: shifting family and work arrangements. A report, “Public Has Mixed Views on the Modern American Family,” highlighted Americans’ views on the future of the family, different family types, family responsibility, and what makes for a fulfilling life. The package also included an interactive feature with demographic data on how the American family has changed from 1970 to today, as well as short reads on fertility treatments, religion and family, and name changes.



Joe Raedle/Getty Images

Public thinks men, women treated differently on campaign trail, survey shows

A September report explored Americans’ views of the state of gender and political leadership, the obstacles for women seeking high political offices, and how a president who is a woman might be different from a president who is a man. The survey found that, for the most part, Americans don’t think a president who is a woman would do better or worse than a man when it comes to key leadership traits or the handling of various policy areas. At the same time, the public sees differences in the way men and women running for higher office are treated by the media. And many think candidates who are women are punished more than ones who are men for showing emotions and having young children at home, among other attributes.

Final data released for Philadelphia’s business and jobs recovery dashboard

In July, Pew posted the final data for its dashboard on Philadelphia business and jobs recovery, which has tracked the city’s economic performance during the COVID-19 pandemic as compared with the same quarter in 2019. Overall, the dashboard found that Philadelphia’s businesses have moved to a new phase beyond the impacts of pandemic-related shutdowns, as federal pandemic support has concluded and other forces, such as increasing interest rates, have a greater impact on business conditions. In addition, jobs in Philadelphia exceeded their pre-pandemic levels across sectors, but the city still lags national and regional job growth. The dashboard included nine charts on local business and job conditions, tracked by quarter, to provide local policymakers and economic leaders with near-real-time data on economic conditions in Philadelphia. The findings were shared with Philadelphia policymakers, particularly the city’s Commerce Department, local business improvement district and commercial corridor leaders, and other civic institutions.

Pew-funded project stages its world premiere

A multimedia performance had its world premiere at Philadelphia’s Girard College in May, supported by a project grant from The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage. “Be Holding” takes its text from the poem of the same title by award-winning writer Ross Gay. Tyshawn Sorey, an American composer and assistant professor of music at the University of Pennsylvania, wrote the accompanying music, which was performed by the contemporary classical group Yarn/Wire. *The New York Times* noted that “Gay’s text is nominally about a balletic, baseline scoop shot from the 1980 NBA finals, as improvised and executed by Philadelphia 76ers star Julius Erving (known as Dr. J); but it is also about the legacy of Black genius off the court and about notions of community, or its faltering absence, in the United States.”



The show “Be Holding” combines movement, speech, and music in a multimedia adaptation of a book-length poem. *Ryan Collard*

The Growing Threat of Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria

Where superbugs come from and what can be done to combat them

Common bacteria, such as those that cause urinary tract infections and sexually transmitted infections, are becoming increasingly difficult to treat. Without effective antibiotics, even simple infections could become deadly, making medical procedures like surgery, chemotherapy, and dialysis too dangerous.

2.8 Million Antibiotic-Resistant Infections Occur in the U.S. Each Year.

More than 35,000 people die as a result.

What is driving the rise in multidrug-resistant superbugs?

The more antibiotics are used, the less effective they become. Unnecessary and inappropriate use accelerates that process.

1 in 3

antibiotic prescriptions written in doctors' offices, emergency rooms, and hospital-based clinics are unnecessary—this equals about 47 million prescriptions each year.

52%

Only about half of patients treated with antibiotics for common infections received the recommended antibiotic based on established prescribing guidelines.

The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the superbug threat.

Early in the pandemic, antibiotics were often given to patients even though these drugs do not effectively treat viral illnesses.

15%

increase in infections and deaths from drug-resistant bacteria in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic across the U.S.

What can be done to combat antibiotic-resistant bacteria?

Eliminate inappropriate use of these lifesaving drugs and address the complex economic barriers hindering the development of new treatment options for patients.

Together, these efforts will help save antibiotics and protect the health of patients today and for generations to come.



AFTER
THE
FACT



Can We Disagree Better?

Beyond Polarization: A podcast series from Pew

With American democracy under stress from political polarization, the latest season of Pew's "After the Fact" podcast explores how people can begin talking with those they disagree with—without being disagreeable. For ways to find common ground, listen at pewtrusts.org/afterthefact.



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The sun's warmth in spring begins the thaw in Lac Saint-Jean, Quebec, nestled among Canada's boreal forest, the world's largest intact forest ecosystem.

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