The Belonging Barometer

THE STATE OF BELONGING IN AMERICA (REVISED EDITION)

OVER ZERO

American Immigration Council

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Revised Edition Notes

In March 2023, Over Zero and the American Immigration Council released the first national survey of belonging in the United States—*The Belonging Barometer: The State of Belonging in America.* This initial study created a new measure (The Belonging Barometer), designed and reported findings from a nationally representative survey, and demonstrated the connections between belonging and critical life outcomes. The report's ideas and findings have been met with enthusiastic response and robust engagement, and we are grateful to the original author, Dr. Nichole Argo, and the original research team for their contributions, to our organizational partners for their consultation, and to readers and field leaders for their continuing engagement and work to foster belonging.

This new edition, completed by Over Zero in June 2024, updates and builds upon the foundational work of the first report. It includes the following additions, changes, and corrections:

» Corrections and Changes:
- Due to the discovery of a dataset anomaly, descriptive statistics have been updated.
- The endnotes and citations have been updated throughout the report.
- The original report suggested that, in some life settings, when controlling for socioeconomic status, other key factors like race ceased to be associated with belonging. This finding has been corrected: While socioeconomic status predicts belonging most consistently, other demographic and individual factors continue to predict belonging across life settings.
- A typographical error in the original report led to a misreported finding about who tends to report being treated as "less than." The corrected finding is that Americans who agree with having been treated as less than others tend to identify as non-white rather than as white. Also, in the original report respondents who selected that they neither agree nor disagree with having been treated as "less than" were included in the percentage of those who agreed that they had experienced this. The report has now provided disaggregated percentages and a corresponding chart.
- Due to concerns related to question validity, this edition removes reference to the finding that belonging is associated with a greater inclination to get to know others across lines of difference. Where applicable, it updates analyses on the relationship between belonging and respondents' agreement that increasing neighborhood diversity is beneficial.
- An error in the response options for the questions regarding the diversity of one's coworkers led to a false conclusion in the original report, and that finding has been removed.

» Additions and Updates:

- In the original report, family and friend belonging was presented as intimate belonging. To provide greater clarity, this report disambiguates the findings related to these two settings and adds new analyses, charts, and endnotes.
- The endnotes now include more extensive notes on the statistical analyses performed.
- A more detailed and navigable appendix, now called "Supplemental Materials," has been provided.
- Phrasing has been updated to match the survey and support further replication.
- Charts have been updated to more clearly depict the relationship between belonging, various outcomes, and demographic/individual factors. In the original report, most of the charts depicted the estimated marginal means; they have been updated to reflect the underlying regressions. The accompanying text has been updated to match.

We release this revised edition of the report as part of our commitment to interdisciplinary, cross-sectoral learning and discovery and look forward to the ways it will further the collaboration and learning that was sparked by the original version across the field.

Acknowledgments

This report is the product of a partnership between Over Zero and the Center for Inclusion and Belonging at the American Immigration Council.

Over Zero

Over Zero creates long-term societal resilience to political and identity-based violence and other forms of group-targeted harm. It connects cross-sector research to practice and equips diverse leaders with the tools and connections that they need to take action in their communities.

Center for Inclusion and Belonging, American Immigration Council

The Center for Inclusion and Belonging houses the signature culture and narrative change programs of the American Immigration Council. The Center also convenes institutions and stakeholders nationwide who share the common goal of building a more cohesive America where all people are welcomed and included.

Original Report Authors

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Executive Summary

Belonging is a fundamental human need, and one that is linked to many of the most complex challenges of our time. Without a sense of belonging, individuals and communities suffer; with it, they thrive. Yet, because belonging is notoriously difficult to measure, it is often ignored when attempting to address the deep fractures in our societies.

One purpose of this report is to call attention to belonging as a factor that matters deeply for leaders and stakeholders across diverse sectors. We make the case for including belonging in the design and implementation of programs and policies across all areas of life in the United States. A second purpose is to propose a nuanced new tool for measuring belonging—the Belonging Barometer—that is robust, accessible, and readily deployable in the service of efforts to advance the common good. **As with any new tool, it is our hope that the Belonging Barometer can, and should, be refined and improved upon over time. We offer it up to changemakers across the world and welcome feedback and collaboration.**

In this report, we review the concept of belonging and introduce a new measure, the Belonging Barometer. We then describe initial findings based on a nationally representative survey regarding the relationship between the Belonging Barometer and health, democracy, and intergroup dynamics in the United States. Next, we report on the state of belonging across five life settings: family, friends, workplace, local community, and the nation. Lastly, we briefly discuss emerging themes and considerations for designing belonging interventions. We present findings from an exploratory analysis of the dataset and include statistically significant analyses regardless of effect sizes in the hopes that future researchers will continue expanding upon this work.

Key Findings From This Report

- **Belonging is measurably multifaceted.** Belonging is about the quality of "fit" between oneself and a setting. When one belongs, they feel emotionally connected, welcomed, included, and satisfied in their relationships. They know that they are valued for who they are as well as for their contributions, they can bring their whole and authentic self to the table, and they are comfortable expressing their thoughts and opinions regardless as to whether they diverge from dominant perspectives. In addition, they understand how things work within a given setting, feel treated equally, and perceive that they are able to influence decisions.

- **Belonging is vital for American society.** Belonging Barometer scores were associated with critical life outcomes in **health** (e.g., better general health;[1] increased life satisfaction;[2] decreased pain,[3] stress,[4] and loneliness[5]), experiences in the **workplace** (e.g., increased retention[6] and greater willingness to recommend one's job[7]), **social cohesion** (e.g., higher satisfaction with local community;[8] increased trust in one's neighbors,[9] other local residents,[10] other Americans,[11] local government,[12] and U.S. government;[13] more civic

engagement;[14] increased confidence that residents' involvement in their community can change the way it is run;[15] more engagement with local social actions;[16] decreased feelings of marginalization (as measured by fear of demographic change) at the local[17] and national levels;[18] and more openness to diversity[19]), and **democracy** (e.g., greater satisfaction with life[20] and democracy in the United States;[21] increased support for democracy[22]).

- **A majority of Americans experience non-belonging (ambiguity or exclusion) in the workplace, their local communities, and/or the nation.** We use non-belonging as a cumulative term that includes people who ranked in the bottom two thirds of the Barometer measure, categorizing those who scored between 2.34 and 3.66 as unsure or ambiguous about whether they belong and those who scored between 1 and 2.33 as experiencing exclusion. Sixty-four percent of Americans reported non-belonging in the workplace, 67% in the nation, and 74% in their local community. Further, 17% of Americans did not report experiencing belonging in any of the life settings that we measured, and a very small subset (0.6%) reported experiencing exclusion in all life settings. The lack of belonging may hold significant costs to individuals, institutions, and our society as a whole. At the same time, a majority of Americans (60%) reported family belonging, and a majority of Americans (57%) reported friend belonging.

- **Socioeconomic status and other demographic factors are strongly associated with belonging.** We found that across **life settings** Americans were more likely to report belonging if they also saw themselves as better off or much better off economically than the average American. Other associated factors included being older (for all life settings); identifying as a man vs. a woman (for family, nation, and workplace); and identifying as heterosexual (straight) vs. homosexual (gay), bi/pansexual, asexual, or queer (for family, friends, and nation). Belonging also correlated with race (local), and religion (family, local, national, and workplace).[23,24,25,26,27] The association of socioeconomic status and other demographic factors with belonging suggests that belonging interventions—in families, workplaces, friend groups, local communities, and at the national level—would benefit from being designed with an eye towards the systemic factors that influence individual experiences.

- **A substantial percentage of Americans feel they are treated as "less than others" in their daily lives.** Specifically, 20% reported feeling treated as less than others when interacting with local law enforcement, 15% reported feeling treated as less than others when voting, 21% reported feeling treated as less than others when interacting with local elected officials, and 15% reported feeling treated as less than others when shopping at local stores. Experiencing indignities was associated with reporting less belonging across all life settings—not only in local communities, but also nationally, in the workplace, and even among friends and family.[28] The Americans who reported being treated as "less than" tended to be younger, non-citizen immigrants, identify as non-white, identify as men, identify as not heterosexual (straight), and/or reported lower subjective socioeconomic status.[29] People in the range of demographic categories who

reported being treated as "less than others" in their local communities suggests a broad social breakdown in civic norms and behavior, or at least the experience of such, among a wide set of groups. It also presents an opportunity for local communities to inquire about whether their residents experience indignity in daily interactions, and to seek to address any issues.

- **Our research suggests that belonging and diversity are related,** an insight that will grow increasingly important as the United States becomes increasingly diverse. Americans with more diverse friendships reported higher levels of overall friendship belonging.[30] Moreover, non-Hispanic white Americans living in ethnically/racially diverse neighborhoods reported less fear of demographic change as they experienced more local belonging.[31] Our research suggests that there is a relationship between belonging and diversity, and we encourage future researchers and practitioners to explore this interaction more deeply. However, our survey also reveals that large percentages of Americans lack friendships with people of a different race/ethnicity, partisan affiliation, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or country of origin.

In today's polarized, socially segregated, and increasingly diverse America, investments in belonging are more urgent than ever. Fortunately, beyond this report, there is burgeoning research on how to design effective belonging interventions, and there are already organizations and communities piloting such work. As work in this space continues, understanding what is and what is not working, and why, will be critical for advancing the field. While this report serves as a "snapshot" of belonging in the United States today, the Barometer (and further variations and versions of the tool) can be adapted to measure levels of belonging over time (e.g., for workers, students, residents, citizens), or to track pre- and post-intervention changes. Our hope is that by creating an increasingly robust measure, it will be possible to tailor interventions to improve belonging, and to identify the interventions that work best within a particular context.

To further explore any aspect of this report, or to learn how to use the Belonging Barometer in your town, team, office, etc., please contact Over Zero at belonging@projectoverzero.org.

Introduction

Introduction

The need to belong is among our most primal drives,[32] shaping our personal, societal, and political experiences in the 21st-century. Indeed, scholars have linked some of the most complex challenges of our time—loneliness,[33] caring for an aging population,[34] various forms of social and political division,[35] and school violence[36]—to belonging. Yet belonging is notoriously difficult to measure. As a result, it is often ignored when attempting to address the deep fractures in our societies, or is given only passing consideration—and rarely with a substantive evidence base.

One purpose of this report is to call attention to belonging as a factor that matters for key stakeholders, leaders, and philanthropists in the United States today who care about health, democracy, and intergroup relations. Another is to propose a way of measuring belonging that is robust, accessible, and readily deployable in the service of efforts to advance the common good. Like all measures, the Belonging Barometer can be improved upon as it gains wider deployment. To begin that process, we offer it up to changemakers across the world and invite your feedback.

This report reviews the concept of belonging and introduces a new measure, the Belonging Barometer. Then, based on findings from a nationally representative survey (*n* = 4,797), it reveals the ways in which the Belonging Barometer scores are associated with survey measures related to health and wellbeing experiences, attitudes towards democracy, and intergroup dynamics. Next, it reviews the state of belonging in America across five life settings—family, friends, workplace, local community, and the nation. It further explores two themes emerging from these data: the relationship between diversity and belonging and that belonging in one life setting correlates with belonging in other life settings. We close with a short introduction to belonging interventions.

The Roots of Belonging

In 1995, Baumeister and Leary (1995) advanced their "belonging hypothesis": "that human beings have a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships" (p. 497).[37] They contended that "belonging is not only good but that the desire to belong is a deeply rooted human motivation that, underpinned by our ancestral origins, permeates our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors" (Allen et al., 2021, p. 1134).[38] Nearly 30 years later, Baumeister reflected on the relevance of the "belonging hypothesis" in an interview stating, "the core point of the belongingness hypothesis is that people have an innate motivational drive to form and maintain interpersonal bonds with other people" (Allen et al., 2021, p. 1138).[39] The need for belonging is integrally connected to how we perceive and pursue our life goals.[40]

In fact, our brains are wired for belonging, and we are psychologically primed to form positive emotional bonds before we are even born. In the womb, our hearts beat in tandem with those of our mothers[41] and, when we're born, our hormones and brain activity mirror our caregivers' in a process called "biobehavioral synchrony."[42] This phenomenon lays the biological foundation from which empathy emerges later in life, and helps to shape our capacity to connect with others

in the future. These are among the reasons why some scholars have deemed belonging to be as important as our need for love[43] and as necessary to our survival as food or water.[44]

As we will discuss later in this report, individuals who experience belonging are happier, healthier, and more resilient.[45] They enjoy improved cognition, creativity, and performance, as well as bolstered immune systems, which protect them from stress and disease.[46] Within wider society, belonging is associated with increased civic engagement and trust.[47] And, at a time when we seek to strengthen our pluralistic practices in the United States, belonging may help to facilitate social cohesion by improving individuals' ability to process information that may be discordant with their worldview.[48]

It is no surprise, then, that belonging lays the foundation for thriving individuals and strong communities. Susie Wise, Stanford University professor and author of *Design for Belonging,* writes:

> *...belonging is the key that unlocks the best in everyone. Kids who feel they belong learn better in school. Elders with a sense of belonging stay healthy and aware. Immigrants who belong thrive in their new communities. Having a sense of belonging leads to flourishing in every environment and group, big and small, from your home to the culture at large.[49]*

Belonging & Othering

Research on belonging nearly always associates belonging with positive outcomes and non-belonging with negative ones. But this binary characterization is based on a snapshot of belonging relationships at a single moment. Since belonging is a need, those experiencing non-belonging will seek to fill it in some way. How one chooses to satisfy their need to belong could be harmful if done in a way that threatens their own healthy functioning or is detrimental to societal cohesion.[50] Think, for instance, of a drug addiction that is acquired because the drug enables a desperately needed sense of connection and wellbeing,[51] or, of narratives where some form of societal exclusion served to push individuals toward belonging within an extremist community.[52]

Indeed, one way that people forge a sense of belonging is by **othering** members of other groups. john a. powell and Stephen Menendian, both at UC Berkeley's Othering and Belonging Institute, call group-based othering "the problem of the twenty-first century." They write:

> "**Othering**…is treating people from another group as essentially different from and generally inferior to the group you belong to."
> —Susie Wise
>
> For a longer definition and explanation, see john a. powell, "the mechanisms of othering."

> *In a world beset by seemingly intractable and overwhelming challenges, virtually every global, national, and regional conflict is wrapped within or organized around one or more dimension of group-based difference. Othering undergirds territorial disputes, sectarian violence, military conflict, the spread of disease, hunger and food insecurity, and even climate change.[53]*

Setting a boundary between "us" and "them" can often lead to a stronger sense of belonging within the "us."[54] But even without othering, moving closer to one group of people can often mean moving farther apart from another group, an observation that reminds us that belonging is not just dynamic (always changing) but sometimes also compensatory (e.g., in a life of limited time and energy, an increased investment and experience of belonging in one life setting may mean a decreased sense of belonging in another).

The realities described above highlight the need for deeper contextual and longitudinal examinations of belonging. Specifically, future work can seek to understand how shifts in belonging and othering interact with societal bridges and divisions, and with our society as a whole. For now, we start by providing a baseline snapshot of belonging in America.

Why Create a Belonging Barometer?

Given widespread acknowledgment of the power of belonging within the social sciences, one might expect there to be a clear and shared definition for the term, or perhaps a standardized means of assessment. Unfortunately, neither is the case.[55] Scientific research on belonging has developed in parallel across different disciplines and sectors, often leading to measures that are long and hyperspecific (e.g., tailored to the nursing profession, schools or sports teams, Anglican congregants, etc.) or that lack nuance (e.g., a one-item survey question).[56] Thus, while the past 30 years have produced striking findings about the many impacts of belonging (itself, or through adjacent constructs such as social connection, social cohesion, loneliness, isolation, rejection, or ostracization), neither the measures used nor the populations studied are easily comparable. We created the Belonging Barometer in an attempt to fill this need, and to provide richer, more nuanced insights about belonging.

Introducing the Belonging Barometer

As mentioned in the Roots of Belonging section above, upon reflection of their 1995 belonging hypothesis decades later, Roy Baumeister in a 2021 interview stated, "The core point of the belongingness hypothesis is that people have an innate motivational drive to form and maintain interpersonal bonds with other people" (Allen et al., 2021, p. 1138).[57] It is not merely about social connection. For social psychologists Greg Walton and Shannon Brady, **belonging**:

> *...involves two parties, 'I' and 'here,' and, at least implicitly, an evaluation of who I am (or can become) and what the setting allows (or can allow)...It is a more general inference, drawn from cues, events, experiences, and relationships, about the quality of fit or potential fit between oneself and a setting.[58]*

Environments of "fit" allow us to pursue our goals, and belonging is fundamentally connected to goal pursuit. Environments that lack a "fit" are problematic because they hinder our goals.

Alternatively, they might simply feel irrelevant to us (e.g., "I don't care if I belong on Wall Street.").

The idea that one is part of a system or environment that "fits,"[59] or doesn't, sets belonging apart from constructs that more specifically deal with social relationships (like social connectedness, loneliness, isolation, rejection, or ostracization).[60] While social relationships can be a source of belonging, one can feel belonging without them (for instance, in settings where they do not, or do not yet, have strong relationships). One can also lack belonging despite having friends in a setting, especially if they feel that one of their **social identities** is marginalized there.[61]

> **Social identity** is a person's sense of who they are based on their group membership.

Further, belonging does not always involve the presence of other people—one can feel a sense of belonging to an environment (e.g., a park, mountain, or tribal land).[62]

The Science of "Belonging Uncertainty"

Belonging and belonging uncertainty are separate but related factors. Belonging uncertainty is the sense that one's belonging is tentative, up for negotiation, and always at stake. It occurs when environmental cues indicate that one's identity (e.g., race, religion, or national origin) might not be compatible with success (e.g., at school or work, or within the community).[63] For instance, if a student who wants to become a math professor notices that the hallways in the math department are covered solely with pictures of male mathematicians, she may wonder if her aspirations are realistic.

People might think they belong most of the time, but still perceive and be reactive to threats—even subtle ones—to that belonging. When a person perceives that threats to their belonging are a possibility, they vigilantly monitor for such cues in the environment, which can take energy away from the social, educational, or professional task at hand. In the scientific literature, college students who experienced belonging uncertainty were more likely to disengage from school, and failed to build the relationships that they needed to succeed in the long term.[64] Perceiving that one's belonging is at stake can also lead to a tendency to interpret negative experiences as matters of exclusion rather than situations that everyone goes through as part of a normal human experience.

People from minority, underrepresented, and stigmatized groups often find themselves in situations of belonging uncertainty because environmental cues tend to reflect the status quo. However, anyone can experience belonging uncertainty—and perhaps all of us experience it more amidst unsettled times, which are accompanied by both culture change and power shifts. Belonging uncertainty is greatest when people want to belong in a space—when they think it is valuable for them and who they want to be or become—but there is some deep question about their ability to belong there. While this study focuses on belonging, future work should also seek to track belonging uncertainty.

Creating a Measure for Multifaceted Belonging

There are many facets of experience that could influence how one "fits" or could potentially "fit" within an environment.[65] Those ultimately included in the Belonging Barometer were generated based on a review of the scientific literature, and in consultation with a cross-disciplinary team of academic reviewers (see "Acknowledgments" on pp. iii-v). When selecting items, we sought to reflect the multifaceted nature of belonging, keep the measure short enough to enable widespread usage, and make it easy to apply to diverse contexts. The facets of experience included in the Belonging Barometer are:

- Feeling **emotionally connected**
- Being **welcomed and included**
- Perceiving that one is **able to influence decision-making**
- Feeling able to be **one's whole and authentic self**
- Being **valued as a person** and **for one's contributions**
- Being **in relationships that are as satisfying as one wants them to be**
- Feeling **like an insider** who understands how the environment works
- Feeling comfortable **expressing one's opinions**
- Being **treated equally**
- Feeling that one **truly belongs**

During our search to identify key and representative facets of belonging, we realized that several popular concepts—which might be seen as adjacent to belonging—provide a useful conceptual lens into items on the measure.

For instance, **social connection** and its opposites—loneliness and **social isolation**—often come to mind when people think about belonging. The concept of loneliness, in particular, has risen to popular consciousness in recent years, due in part to the gravity of its health associations: Experiencing loneliness has been shown to have the same life-shortening impact as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.[66] The U.S. Surgeon General, Vivek Murthy, has framed loneliness as a public health crisis—a "loneliness epidemic"—affecting not only our health, but also our performance in schools and workplaces, and even the sense of division and polarization within U.S. society.[67] Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to increased reports of loneliness in many populations.[68]

The Barometer taps into social connection by measuring the following themes: emotional connection, feeling welcomed and included, and relationship satisfaction.

> **Loneliness** is the feeling of being alone, regardless of the amount of social contact. It is the subjective feeling that you're lacking the social connections that you need or want. For more, see Loneliness and Social Isolation Linked to Serious Health Conditions.

> **Social isolation** is a lack of social connections. It can lead to loneliness in some people, while others can feel lonely without being socially isolated. See Loneliness and Social Isolation Linked to Serious Health Conditions.

Another adjacent concept is **psychological safety**. Studies in organizational psychology have established the importance of psychological safety for human resources and collaborative teams over the past 20 years,[69] and the term rose to prominence within the business community in 2015 after Google found it to be the most important factor associated with high-performing teams within its corporation.[70] There, psychological safety outperformed a host of more expected predictors of team performance, such as the number of top performers on the team, collective team intelligence, the use of consensus-driven decision-making, overall team workload or stress, and having team members that are co-located. It turns out that when people feel free to share dissenting, diverse perspectives or off-beat ideas—all actions that psychological safety facilitates—their teams solve problems more quickly and creatively. While psychological safety—in short, feeling sufficiently safe to be vulnerable and take risks[71]—has been studied and applied to business teams, the mechanism by which it works is relevant to any collaborative community, be it a family, friend group, local community, etc.

> **Psychological safety** is a shared belief held by members of a team (or community) that others on the team (or community) will not embarrass, reject, or punish them for speaking up with ideas, questions, and concerns, or for admitting mistakes.

The Barometer reflects aspects of psychological safety by measuring the following themes: being able to freely express one's opinions, being valued for one's self and contributions, and perceiving that one is able to bring one's whole and authentic self to the table (not having to hide or diminish parts of one's identity).[72]

A last concept, considered essential to belonging by john a. powell, Director of the Othering and Belonging Institute, is the idea of agency, or **co-creation**.[73] This is the ability to co-create the organizations, systems, and structures that shape one's future, if desired. According to powell, feeling welcomed and included does not equate to belonging unless you are also able to *influence outcomes*. "Belonging or being fully human," powell writes, "entails being respected at a basic level that includes the right to both co-create and make demands upon society."[74]

> **"Belonging is being accepted and invited to participate. More than that, it means being able to raise issues and confront harsh truths as a full member of a community."**
> – Susie Wise, *Design for Belonging*

The Barometer taps into elements of co-creation by measuring the following themes: the perception that one is treated equally by others within the community of reference, feeling like an "insider" who understands how the system of reference works, and seeing oneself as able to influence decisions.

The Barometer in Context: Life Settings

The Belonging Barometer can be used across different contexts, whether that be a classroom or school, a social program or community center, an office or organization, a town or country. For this report, we examined Barometer scores across five life settings in the United States: **family, friendships, workplace, local community**, and the **nation**. We chose these settings in part because they are primary components of modern life, where most people have reason to want to belong.

Belonging as a Scale

Non-belonging
Unbelonging

Exclusion   Ambiguity   Belonging
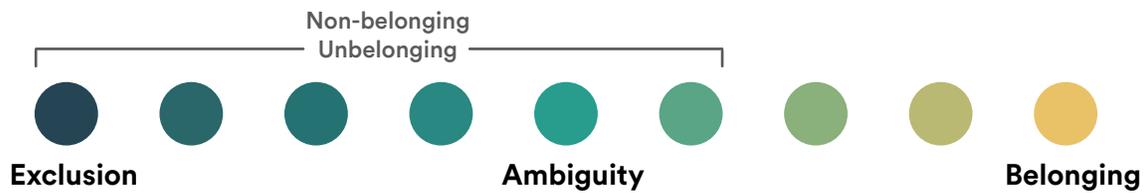
In the real world, belonging is not a switch but a scale—and throughout this report we have used the terms belonging, ambiguity, and exclusion to describe where one falls along this gradient.[75]

On one side of this gradient is **belonging**, in which one experiences social connection, psychological safety, and a sense of agency within a group, with all the richness that belonging entails.

At the other end of the spectrum is **exclusion**, in which one feels left out, ignored, rejected, or ostracized. To experience exclusion is to lack a desired connection to an environment. In the scientific literature, exclusion is associated with negative emotions like sadness and anger, as well as attitudes such as distrust, and outcomes such as decreased performance in work or school, and antisocial behavior.[76]

Between the extremes of belonging and exclusion is **ambiguity**. Here, scores reflect a middle ground. On the one hand, one may feel neither belonging nor exclusion. Alternatively, they might report experiencing strong belonging on some Barometer items and strong exclusion on others, presenting an intense ambivalence that averages out to a neutral score.

In this report, we have at times grouped ambiguity and exclusion under the umbrella term **non-belonging**. Similarly, throughout the report we hypothesize that some of the people who landed in the zone of non-belonging might actually have been anticipating or experiencing **unbelonging**, which has its own unique psychology. As Mary Healy writes:

> ...to 'unbelong' is to have what was thought to be certain or taken for granted removed, disconnecting us from others...In such cases, membership belonging has been revoked, removed or challenged in some way...unbelonging becomes positioned as a place of exile and danger, of homelessness and rootlessness for those who once belonged, but are now abandoned as outsiders.[77]

This research did not directly measure feelings of unbelonging. However, we recognize it is an important topic and could be a valuable perspective for future studies using this method.

Regardless of context, the negative emotions and action tendencies[78] that can be associated with ambiguity, exclusion, and unbelonging are a reminder of just how urgent it is that we move forward in our communities and organizations with an eye towards belonging, bringing all of us along and leaving none of us behind.

Methodology

The Barometer scale—and the survey instrument in its entirety—was informed and reviewed by a team of scientists from the fields of social psychology, sociology, political science, anthropology, and medicine, with specializations in democracy, intergroup relations, extremism, and health (see "Acknowledgments" on pp. iii-v).

Barometer Design

The 10-item Barometer is pictured below, as adapted for the local community setting. While nine items on the scale capture elements we have associated with social connection, psychological safety, and co-creation, discussed above, the tenth item allows respondents to project onto their answer whatever belonging means to them: "When I'm [with my family / with my closest friends / with my coworkers / interacting with people in my local community / interacting with other Americans], I feel like I truly belong." Items three, four, and nine are framed such that higher scores indicate less belonging (as a data quality check) and are calculated accordingly (these statements, which are "reverse-scored," are indicated with an asterisk). Barometer items were randomized on the survey; all items were rated on a 1-5 scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree).

<div style="background-color:#F5A95F; padding:20px;">

Belonging Barometer
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
(1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree)

1. I feel **emotionaly connected** to [name of respondent's local community].[79]

2. People in [name of respondent's local community] **welcome and include me** in activites.

3. I am **unable to influence decision-making** in [name of respondent's local community].*

4. I feel **unable to be my whole and authentic self** with people in [name of respondent's local community].*

5. People in [name of respondent's local community] **value me and my contributions.**

6. My relationships with others in [name of respondent's local community] are **as satisfying as I want them to be.**

7. **I feel like an "insider"** who understands how [name of respondent's local community] works.

8. I am **comfortable expressing my opinions** in [name of respondent's local community].

9. I am treated **as "less than" other residents** in [name of respondent's local community].*

10. When interacting with people in [name of respondent's local community], **I feel like I truly belong.**

</div>

Data Collection

The findings in this report are drawn from a nationally representative sample of 4,797 respondents ages 18 and above. Data were collected in December 2021 by YouGov, which offered the survey to its panel of 5 million U.S. respondents. YouGov employed a technique referred to as *sample matching*, a method of modeling a truly random sample of the population of interest, to produce the final dataset.[80] The resulting matched dataset was then weighted to account for any differences between matched cases and the sample frame.

A description of the survey sample can be found in the Appendix—Description of the Sample section.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

In the present research, we wanted to determine whether the Belonging Barometer could detect a latent variable that captured the experience of belonging across different life settings and went beyond the distinct experiences of co-creation, psychological safety, and social connection that the scale items specifically addressed. To test this, we performed a series of five factor analyses, one for each life setting, to understand whether responses to the Belonging Barometer items followed particular patterns that would suggest that they are capturing experiences that go beyond those directly measured.

Across life settings, we found no evidence of latent subscales capturing co-creation, psychological safety, or social cohesion. Instead, responses to all 10 items of the Belonging Barometer followed a pattern that suggests that the experience of belonging goes beyond what the items are explicitly measuring.

In the "Supplemental Materials", we report the component coefficients for each item of the Belonging Barometer, across life settings, in descending order from those that account for the most variability in the data to the least.

Calculating Belonging Scores

For this report, we created a composite measure of belonging for each respondent, in each life setting (a composite is a combination of the 10 belonging items into a single score). We then broke the Barometer scores into three equal sections: 1-2.33 (Exclusion), 2.34-3.66 (Ambiguity), and 3.67-5 (Belonging).

Exclusion
1-2.33

Ambiguity
2.34-3.66

Belonging
3.67-5

- Respondents whose score on the Belonging Barometer was in the lowest third (1-2.33) are in the "Exclusion" category, because they predominantly "disagreed" that the 10 items of belonging existed in their life in that particular setting (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree).

- Respondents whose score was in the middle third (2.34-3.66) are in the "Ambiguity" category because they might have "disagreed" with some statements and "agreed" with others, or frequently selected "3," meaning, "neither agree nor disagree."

- Respondents whose average score placed them in the top third (3.67-5) fall into the "Belonging" category because they predominantly "agreed" with the belonging statements (4=agree, 5=strongly agree).

Reporting

In this report we sometimes discuss the relationship between belonging and various demographic and individual factors. We first employed regressions to identify which demographic and individual factors are associated with belonging (per a given life setting) when all others were held constant. Only if a factor remained statistically significant is it included within the narrative report. However, the Supplemental Material includes graphs depicting belonging as it relates to a range of major demographic and individual factors, e.g., race, gender, generation, sexual orientation, religion, immigration category, and socioeconomic status—even if they were not statistically significant in a multivariate regression.

A Note to the Reader

In this report, we present the results of an exploratory analysis aiming to start understanding the relationships between belonging and experiences among friends and family, in the workplace, and in our local and national communities. Thus, statistically significant analyses that may be of interest have been reported, regardless of their effect size, in the hopes that future researchers will continue expanding upon this work. For those who are interested in the effect sizes, they have been included in the endnotes.

- **Defining "statistical significance."** Throughout this report, we only report on findings that are statistically significant, meaning the relationships we are reporting are likely caused by something other than chance. This is the case when the p-value for the relationship we are reporting is less than the commonly used alpha of 0.05.

- **Sharing regardless of effect size.** Effect sizes convey the magnitude of a statistical relationship or experimental effect. Larger effect sizes indicate stronger relationships between variables, an indication that the relationship may have more practical meaning of significance than small effect sizes. This does not suggest that small effect sizes are not important, especially when they may present across broader populations. We invite researchers to further explore these relationships in their future work.

- **Differentiating between correlation and causation.** Throughout this report we often talk about associations between belonging and other factors. Please note that any relationships identified between belonging and any other factor in this report are *correlational*, meaning that they change together (if one increases, the other increases; or, if one increases, the other decreases). But correlation is not causation: An association between belonging and another factor—for example, trust—does not necessarily mean that belonging causes trust, or vice versa. Establishing causal linkages between belonging and outcomes identified in this report will require further research, and, specifically, controlled experiments.

- **Referring to Americans.** Since we derived findings in this report from a nationally representative sample, we sometimes refer to "Americans" rather than "respondents." For the purposes of this report "Americans" is intended to refer to anyone 18 or above who currently resides in the United States (this was the eligibility criteria for our study). Two percent of respondents in this study were immigrant non-citizens—they are included in our reference to Americans.

The Power of Belonging in the United States Today

The Power of Belonging in the United States Today

This report includes many noteworthy findings, but perhaps the most important is this: **Belonging is associated with better health & wellbeing and more civic and social cohesion at the local and national levels, and, conversely, non-belonging is associated with worse outcomes in these same domains.** Although we demonstrate this with selected outcomes below, readers should note that what we report here is not an exhaustive account of the associations we found. Future reports will delve deeper into the relationships between belonging and health & wellbeing experiences, attitudes towards democracy, and intergroup dynamics.

Health & Wellbeing

Previous research has shown that people with a robust sense of social connection have stronger immune functioning[81] and are less susceptible to disease.[82] They heal faster from injuries,[83] live longer,[84] and report up to 70% less cognitive decline.[85] They are also said to experience higher levels of motivation[86] and more happiness.[87] We wanted to see if the Belonging Barometer's more multifaceted measure—which includes items related to psychological safety and co-creation—would have similar results, or perhaps even add explanatory value.

As our health & wellbeing are affected by our experiences across life settings, we used respondents' highest belonging score in any life setting to examine relationships to health- & wellbeing-related measures. We found that experiencing lower levels of belonging with this measure was associated with the more frequent experience of physical and emotional pain,[88] stress,[89] and loneliness.[90] Conversely, experiencing greater levels of belonging was associated with reporting greater life satisfaction[91] and better general health.[92] This latter finding is compatible with experimental research demonstrating the positive correlational effects of a college belonging intervention on Black Americans' later-reported career satisfaction and success, psychological wellbeing, and community involvement and leadership.[93]

Figure 1:

The relationship between belonging and the frequency with which respondents report experiencing pain.

Pain frequency scores were calculated by averaging responses to the following three questions:

- During the past four weeks, how often have you accomplished less than you would like as a result of any physical problems?
- During the past four weeks, how often have you accomplished less than you would like as a result of any emotional problems, such as feeling depressed or anxious?
- During the past four weeks, how often did you need to take medication to relieve pain?

Belonging and the Frequency of Experiencing Pain

Frequency with which Respondent Experiences Pain [Higher numbers indicate more frequent pain experiences]

Highest Belonging Score Experienced Across Life Settings [Higher numbers indicate greater reported belonging]
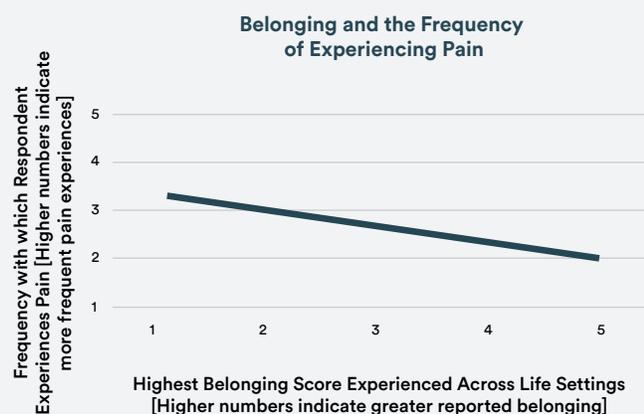
Health & Wellbeing, cont'd.

Figure 2:

The relationship between belonging and the frequency with which respondents report experiencing stress.

Stress frequency scores were calculated by averaging responses to the following four questions:

- In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?
- In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?
- In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?
- In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?
- Please note, the second and third questions were reverse-scored so that higher scores indicate more frequent experiences of stress.

Belonging and the Frequency of Experiencing Stress

Frequency with which Respondent Experiences Stress [Higher numbers indicate more frequent stress experiences]

Highest Belonging Score Experienced Across Life Settings [Higher numbers indicate greater reported belonging]
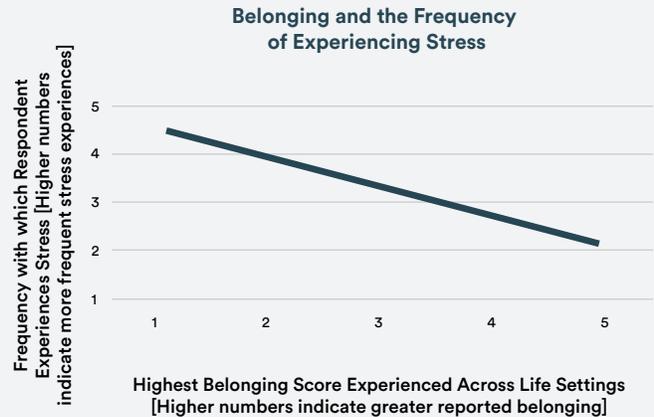
Figure 3:

The relationship between belonging and the frequency with which respondents report experiencing loneliness.

Loneliness frequency scores were calculated by averaging responses to the following three questions:

- How often do you feel that you lack companionship?
- How often do you feel left out?
- How often do you feel isolated from others?

Belonging and the Frequency of Experiencing Loneliness

Frequency with which Respondent Experiences Loneliness [Higher numbers indicate more frequent loneliness experiences]

Highest Belonging Score Experienced Across Life Settings [Higher numbers indicate greater reported belonging]
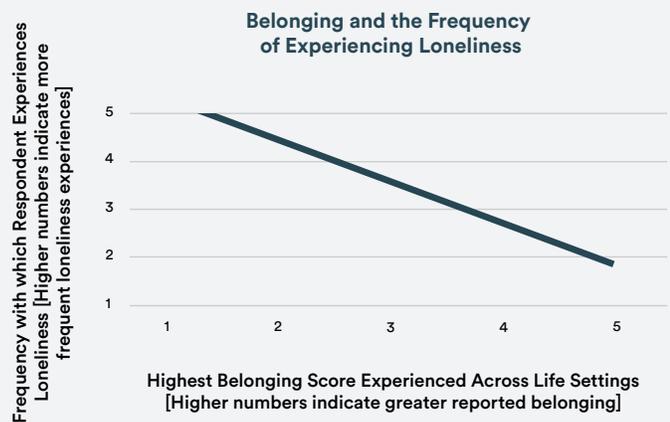
Figure 4:

The relationship between belonging and respondents' satisfaction with their lives as a whole.

Belonging and Life Satisfaction

X-axis: Highest Belonging Score Experienced Across Life Settings [Higher numbers indicate greater reported belonging]

Y-axis: Life Satisfaction [Higher numbers indicate greater life satisfaction]
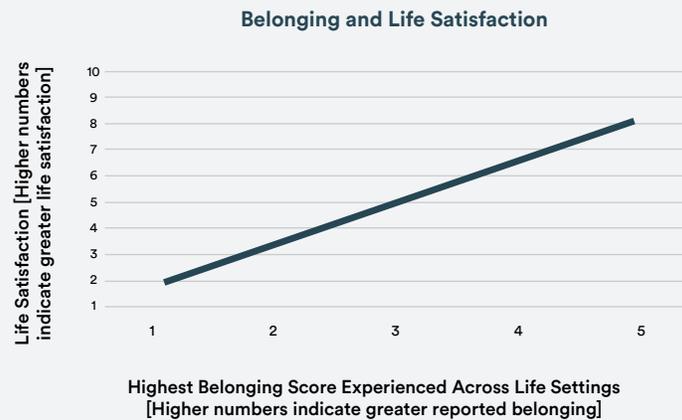
Figure 5:

The relationship between belonging and respondents' perception of their health, in general.

Belonging and General Health

X-axis: Highest Belonging Score Experienced Across Life Settings [Higher numbers indicate greater reported belonging]

Y-axis: General Health [Higher numbers indicate better reported general health]
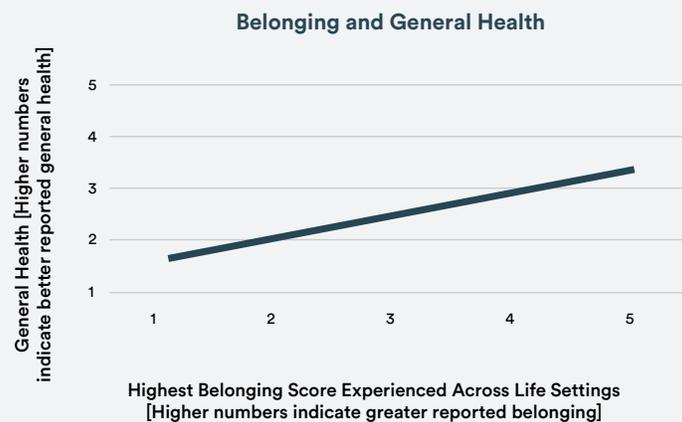
Overall, these findings corroborate what the scientific community has learned about the positive health impacts of belonging and its adjacent concepts from the scientific literature. Additionally, because it includes aspects of belonging beyond social connection, the Belonging Barometer has the potential to *add* to the conversation. We note that the health outcomes associated with the Belonging Barometer continue to be statistically significant even when we control for loneliness.[94] In sum, **the Barometer makes a contribution to our understanding of the interconnections between belonging and health.**

In the Workplace

Other research has shown that workplaces that have cultivated a healthy sense of belonging are likely to see more employee creativity,[95] better job performance[96] (even among CEOs[97]), increased organizational loyalty[98] and higher retention rates among workers,[99] and fewer employee health complaints and missed days at work.[100]

In our workplace data, experiencing greater levels of workplace belonging was associated with a greater likelihood of recommending one's job to a friend or family member.[101] See additional workplace findings on pp. 30-32, "Belonging in the Workplace."

Figure 6:

The relationship between workplace belonging and the likelihood with which respondents would recommend their job to a friend or family member.

Workplace Belonging and the Likelihood of Recommending One's Job

Likelihood of Recommending One's Job
[Higher numbers indicate greater likelihood of recommending one's job]

Workplace Belonging
[Higher numbers indicate greater reported belonging]
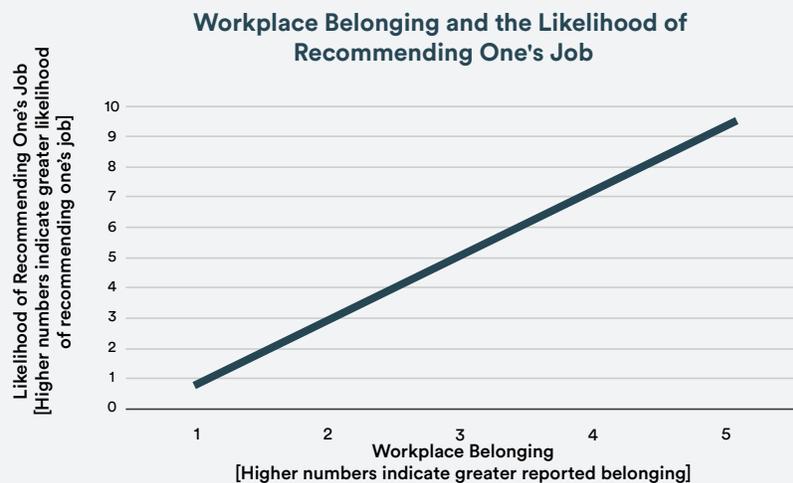
Civic & Social Life

Other research has shown that societal belonging and trust are correlated with lower crime rates and stronger economic growth.[102] Belonging has also been linked to more effective governance, and, in a recent study, lack of belonging was a stronger predictor of distrust in the U.S. federal government than race or age.[103] In our data, experiencing greater levels of belonging in one's local community was associated with varied measures of social cohesion.

Satisfaction. Experiencing greater levels of local belonging was associated with more satisfaction with one's local community as a place to live.[104]

Figure 7:

The relationship between local belonging and satisfaction with one's local community as a place to live.

Local Belonging and Satisfaction with One's Local Community

Satisfaction with One's Local Community [Higher numbers indicate greater satisfaction with one's local community]

Local Belonging [Higher numbers indicate greater reported belonging]
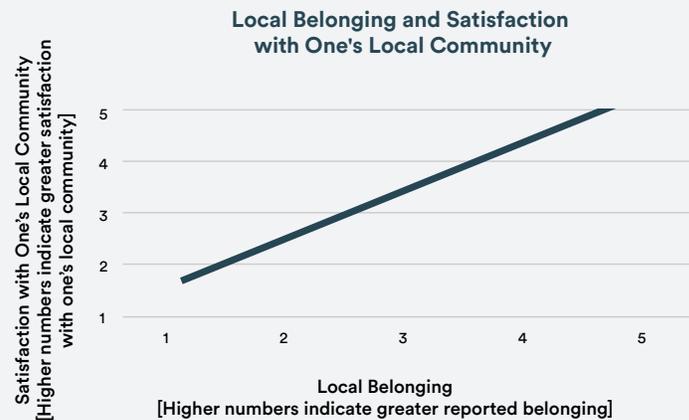
Trust. Experiencing greater levels of local belonging was associated with more frequently trusting neighbors,[105] local community members,[106] fellow Americans,[107] and the local[108] and national[109] government to act in the best interest of respondents and their families.

Figure 8:

The relationship between local belonging and trust in one's neighbors, local community residents, fellow Americans, local government, and the United States government.

With the exception of trust in one's local government, all trust scores are the average of two items:

- How much of the time can you trust [target] to act in ways that are considerate of you and your family?
- How much of the time can you trust [target] to do what is in the best interests of the [relevant context]?

Local Belonging and Trust in One's Neighbors

Trust in One's Neighbors [Higher numbers indicate greater levels of trust]

Local Belonging [Higher numbers indicate greater reported belonging]

Figure 8:

The relationship between local belonging and trust in one's neighbors, local community residents, fellow Americans, local government, and the United States government.

**Local Belonging and Trust
in other Local Residents**

Trust in Other Local Residents
[Higher numbers indicate greater levels of trust]

Local Belonging
[Higher numbers indicate greater reported belonging]

**Local Belonging and Trust
in Fellow Americans**

Trust in Fellow Americans
[Higher numbers indicate greater levels of trust]

Local Belonging
[Higher numbers indicate greater reported belonging]

**Local Belonging and Trust
in Local Government**

Trust in Local Government
[Higher numbers indicate greater levels of trust]

Local Belonging
[Higher numbers indicate greater reported belonging]

**Local Belonging and Trust
in the United States Goverment**

Trust in the United States Government
[Higher numbers indicate greater levels of trust]

Local Belonging
[Higher numbers indicate greater reported belonging]

Civic Engagement and Social Action. Experiencing greater levels of local belonging was associated with engaging in more civic commitments through organizations and institutions like schools, social clubs, religious institutions, political and activist groups, neighborhood organizations, and others.[110] Similarly, experiencing greater levels of local belonging was associated with engaging in more social actions, such as trying to set up a new service or program (or to stop the closure of an existing one), volunteering for local services (e.g., childcare, youth services, parks, community centers), recruiting members to an organization or group, organizing community events, or participating in other local activities.[111]

Figure 9:

The relationship between local belonging and the number of civic commitments that the respondent has engaged in during the past 12 months.

Local Belonging and Civic Engagement

Civic Engagement
[Higher numbers indicate participation in a greater number of civic commitments]

12
11
10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0

1   2   3   4   5

Local Belonging
[Higher numbers indicate greater reported belonging]
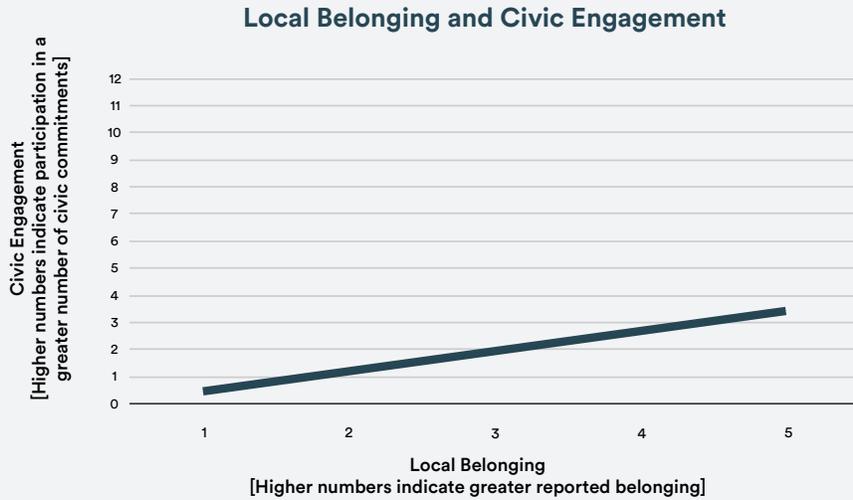
Figure 10:

The relationship between local belonging and the number of social actions the respondent has taken in the past 12 months.

Local Belonging and Taking Social Actions

Social Actions
[Higher numbers indicate participation in a greater number of social actions]

12
11
10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0

1   2   3   4   5

Local Belonging
[Higher numbers indicate greater reported belonging]
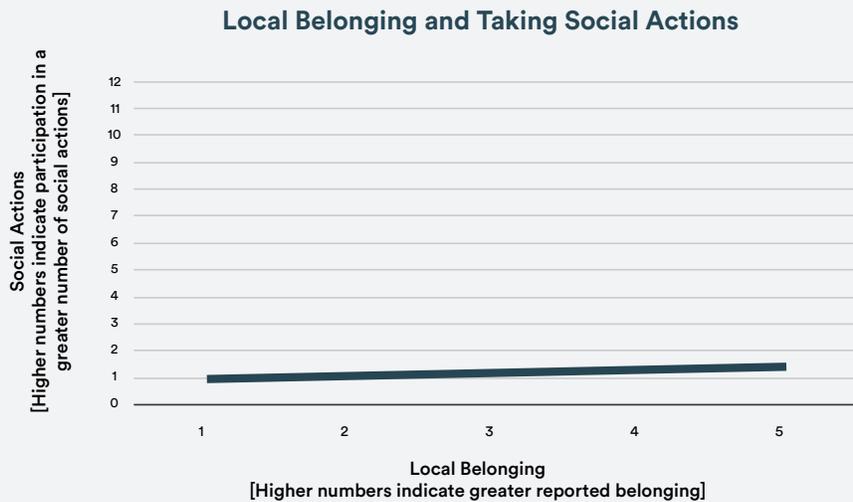
Community Efficacy. Experiencing greater levels of local belonging was associated with stronger agreement that when local residents get involved in their communities, they can change the way the community is run.[112]

Figure 11:

The relationship between local belonging and the extent to which respondents agree that local residents can impact how the community is run.

Local Belonging and Community Efficacy

Community Efficacy
[Higher numbers indicate greater agreement that local residents can impact how the community is run]

Local Belonging
[Higher numbers indicate greater reported belonging]
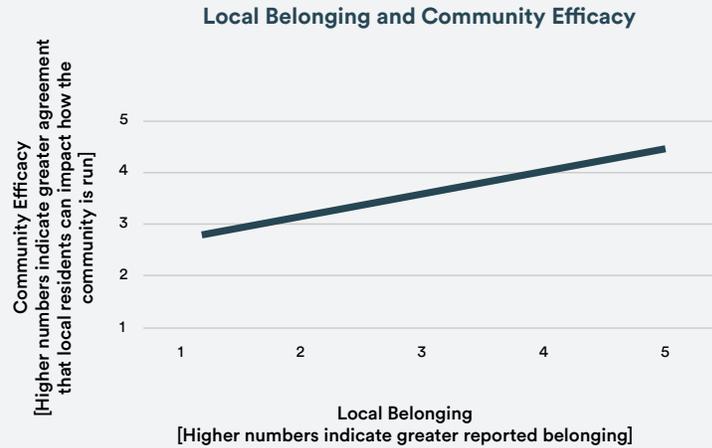
Local Marginalization. Experiencing greater levels of local belonging was also associated with reporting less agreement with statements that indicate a feeling of marginalization, such as "The demographic landscape in [respondent's local community] has changed so much already that I sometimes feel like a stranger here."[113]

Figure 12:

The relationship between local belonging and agreement with statements that may indicate feelings of local marginalization.

Local marginalization scores were calculated by averaging responses to the following three statements:

- "The demographic landscape in [my community] has changed so much already that I sometimes feel like a stranger here."
- "When I think about the anticipated demographic changes in [my community], I worry that I or my family will be left behind."
- "When I think about the anticipated demographic changes in [my community], I feel excited for the new opportunities my family and I might have."

Please note, the last question was reverse-scored so that higher scores indicate more feelings of local marginalization.

Local Belonging and Feelings of Local Marginalization

Feelings of Local Marginalization
[Higher numbers indicate stronger feelings of local marginalization]

Local Belonging
[Higher numbers indicate greater reported belonging]
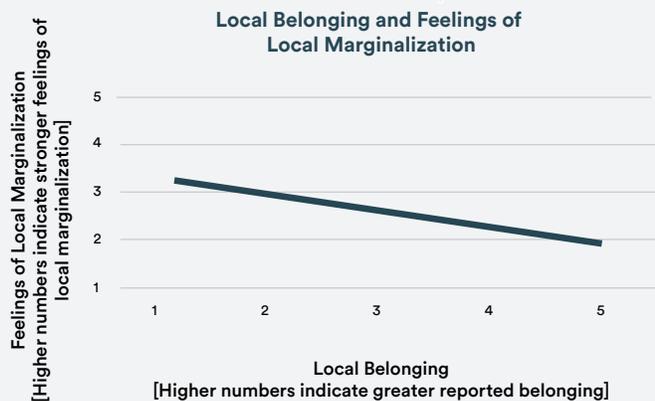
Openness to Local Demographic Change. Census projections show that by 2045, non-Hispanic white Americans will no longer be a majority in the national population.[114] Today in the United States, we see an uptick in inflammatory rhetoric and conspiracy theories that push a threat-based frame and attempt to stoke fear and anxiety about demographic change among white populations.[115] Such narratives have fueled shootings and other coordinated acts of violence.[116]

We asked respondents about their openness to demographic change in their own community. In our data, experiencing greater levels of local belonging was associated with an increased likelihood of agreeing with a statement suggesting that it would be a good thing for more people of diverse race, religion, or nationality to move to one's neighborhood.[117]

Figure 13:

The relationship between local belonging and the extent to which respondents agree that more diversity is beneficial to their neighborhoods.

Local Belonging and Openness to Local Demographic Change

Openness to Local Demographic Change [Higher numbers indicate greater openness to local demographic change]

Local Belonging [Higher numbers indicate greater reported belonging]
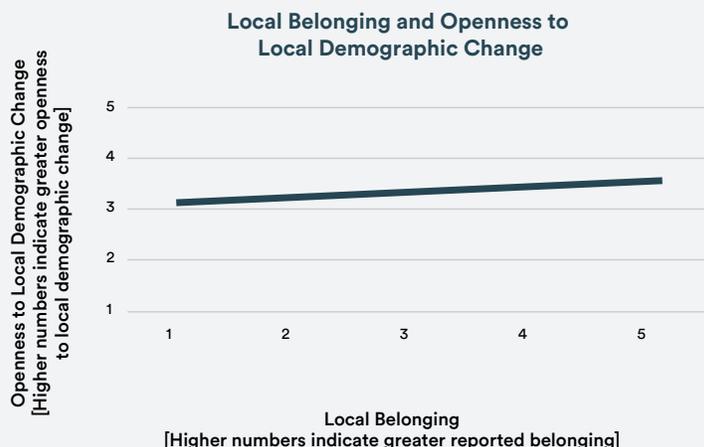
National Belonging

Recent years have seen rising concerns around political violence[118] and threats to democracy[119] in the United States. In our data, we explored the relationship between belonging and variables related to democracy.[120]

Satisfaction with life and democracy in the United States. Experiencing greater national belonging was associated with greater satisfaction with the United States as a place to live[121] and with democracy in the United States.[122]

Figure 14:

The relationship between national belonging and satisfaction with the United States as a place to live.

National Belonging and Satisfaction with the United States
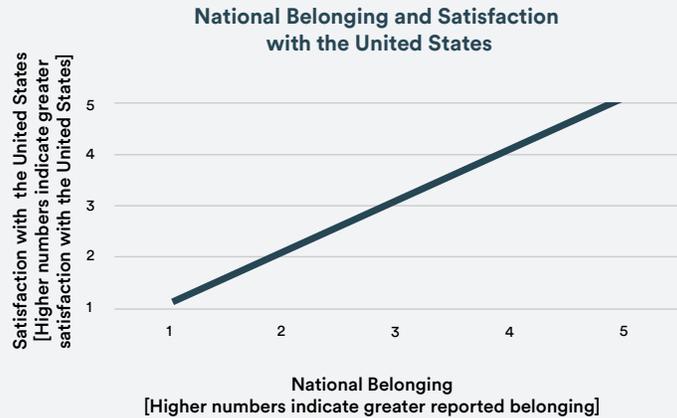
Figure 15:

The relationship between national belonging and satisfaction with democracy in the United States.

National Belonging and Satisfaction with Democracy in the United Statess
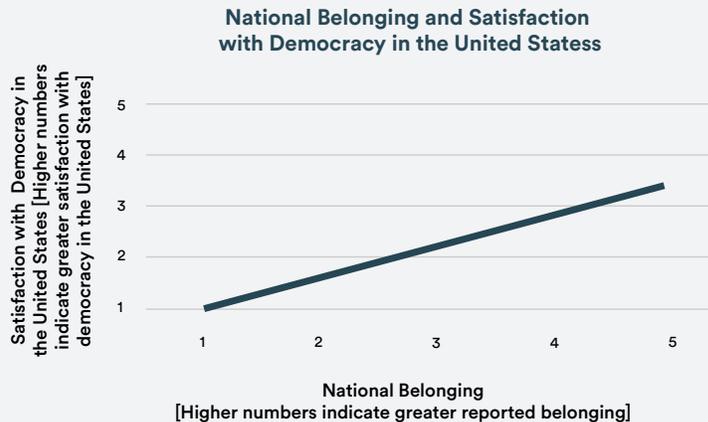
Support for non-democratic government. Experiencing greater levels of national belonging was also associated with lower likelihood of agreeing with the sentiment that, in some cases, a non-democratic government can be preferable to a democratic one.[123] Specifically, a one-unit increase in national belonging was associated with a respondent being 39% less likely to agree with the statement that non-democratic forms of government can be preferable to democratic ones.

Summary

In closing, our research suggests that belonging may have an important relationship with essential elements of thriving—from trust to health—in some of the most important American life settings. Fortunately, other research shows that investments in belonging can be effective (see p. 49, "Belonging Resources"), and there are theoretical and empirical reasons to believe that when belonging increases in one life setting, it tends also to increase in other life settings (see "Belonging is Interconnected Across Life Settings" on p. 42).

# The State of Belonging in the United States Today

The State of Belonging in the United States Today

People do not experience belonging uniformly across all parts of their lives. A person may feel a strong sense of belonging in their family yet feel alienated in the workplace; one may feel excluded in the local community but experience deep belonging among their friends. There may even be places where we do not want to belong.

As revealed in the results below, the state of belonging in the United States today is a mixed bag. While there are areas of concern, there are causes for optimism as well.

Non-belonging is Pervasive

Our survey results suggest that non-belonging (a cumulative term including people experiencing ambiguity and exclusion) is widespread throughout American life. In fact, a *majority* of Americans reported non-belonging in the workplace (64%), the nation (67%), and their local community (74%). While more Americans did report experiencing belonging in the most intimate parts of life, a substantial proportion also reported non-belonging among their friends (44%) and in their families (40%). ***Indeed, 17% of Americans reported non-belonging across all five life settings.*** The majority of those experiencing non-belonging in either the workplace, their local community, and/ or the nation reported experiencing belonging ambiguity, not exclusion. Please note, in Figure 16, percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Figure 16:

The percentage of respondents that experience belonging, ambiguity, or exclusion across life settings.

Levels of Belonging Across Life Settings in the US

Setting	Belonging	Ambiguity	Exclusion
Family (N=4797)	60%	30%	10%
Friend (N=4797)	57%	38%	6%
Workplace (N=4797)	36%	50%	14%
Local (N=4797)	26%	60%	14%
National (N=4797)	32%	56%	11%
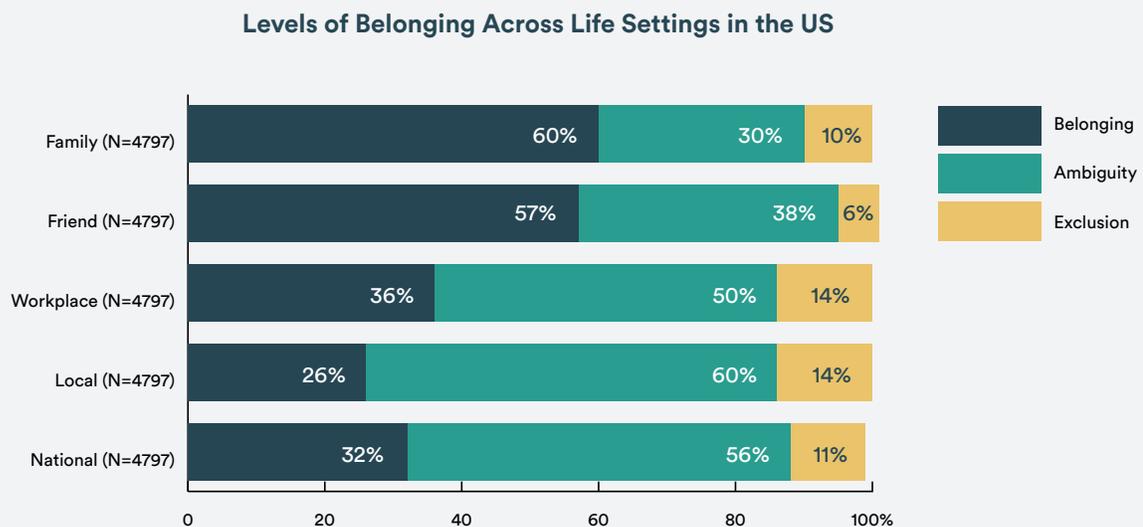
*These percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Belonging Among Family & Friends

As described in the Introduction, our early attachments to a caregiver help to shape our future experiences with belonging.[124] As we grow, research shows that children need at least one healthy attachment to thrive.[125] That attachment can come from family,[126] friends, neighbors, teachers, coaches, etc.[127]

Despite news reports in recent years of how our most intimate networks have been impacted by the pandemic,[128] or larger societal divisions,[129] Americans reported their highest rates of belonging with family and friends (compared to this report's other life settings).

In our sample:

- Median family size: **7**

- **89%** of respondents reported having family members that they could call upon for practical support.

- Average number of adverse childhood events experienced: **2.6**

- Median number of friends: **3**

What is the state of family & friend belonging in the United States?

When asked to rate belonging in their families, defined as "the adults and children with whom you are related by birth, marriage, or adoption and with whom you have a regular relationship," three out of five Americans, on average, reported belonging. The findings were similar (57%) when Americans rated belonging to their "closest friends, those with whom you communicate regularly." **However, although these numbers represent the strongest levels of belonging across all the life settings examined in this report, about 40% of Americans experienced either ambiguity or exclusion in what could be their most intimate relationships.**

Figure 17 (N=4797):

The percentage of respondents that experience family belonging, ambiguity, or exclusion.

- Belonging
- Ambiguity
- Exclusion

10%
30%
60%

Figure 18 (N=4797):

The percentage of respondents that experience friend belonging, ambiguity, or exclusion.

- Belonging
- Ambiguity
- Exclusion

6%
38%
57%
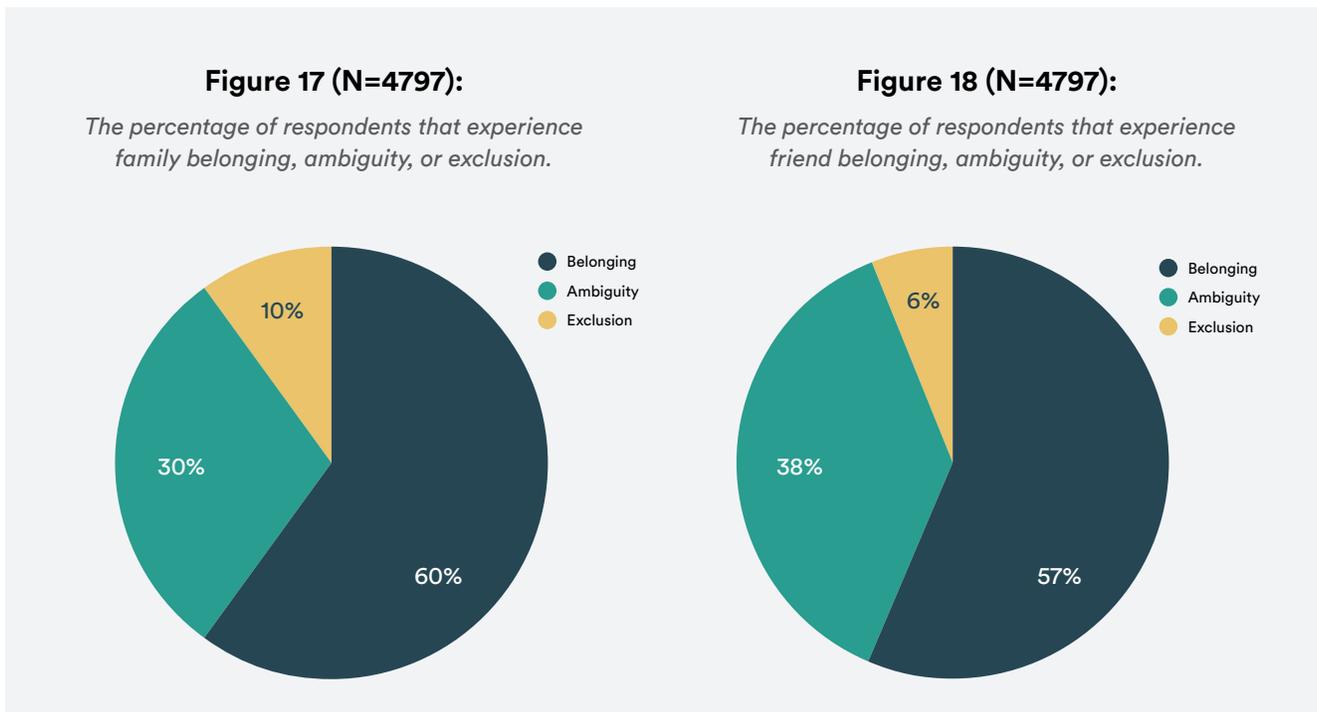
What demographic and individual factors are associated with belonging in our most intimate life settings?

Family Belonging

In our data, experiencing greater levels of family belonging was associated with higher socioeconomic status, having a faith tradition, identifying as straight, being older, and identifying as a man.[130] These demographic factors continued to predict family belonging even when controlling for having more family support, and experiencing fewer adverse childhood events (like losing a parent; enduring food scarcity; or being emotionally, physically, or sexually abused).[131] (See "Supplemental Materials" for additional demographic information.)

Friend Belonging

Experiencing greater levels of friend belonging was associated with higher socioeconomic status, being older, and identifying as having a sexual orientation other than straight (e.g., gay, queer, bisexual).[132] These demographic factors continued to predict friend belonging even when controlling for having more friends.[133] (See "Supplemental Materials" for additional demographic information.)

It is worth noting that subjective socioeconomic status was the best predictor of both family and friend belonging, respectively. Socioeconomic disparities are often deeply intertwined with other systemic issues of marginalization in the United States, such as previous policies of redlining and other features of systemic racism. This suggests that *systemic* approaches will need to be a part of envisioning belonging interventions for the life settings of family and friendship. (For more on interventions, see pp. 45-47).

We found that having, on average, more diverse friendships is associated with experiencing greater levels of friend belonging.[134] Similar findings have been reported with regard to college students.[135] We would encourage deeper exploration of this association and the mechanisms behind it. (For more on the interrelated nature of belonging and diversity, see "The Interdependence of Diversity & Belonging" on pp. 40-41.)

Figure 19:

The relationship between friend belonging and respondents' average number of diverse friendships.

To measure the number of diverse friendships, we averaged responses to six questions:

- Using your best estimate, what number of your friends are from a different:
    – racial or ethnic group
    – religious orientation
    – political party
    – sexual orientation
    – socioeconomic status
    – or national origin
  than you?

Friend Belonging and Number of Diverse Friends

Average Number of Diverse Friends [Higher numbers indicate greater numbers of diverse friends, on average]

Friend Belonging [Higher numbers indicate greater reported belonging]
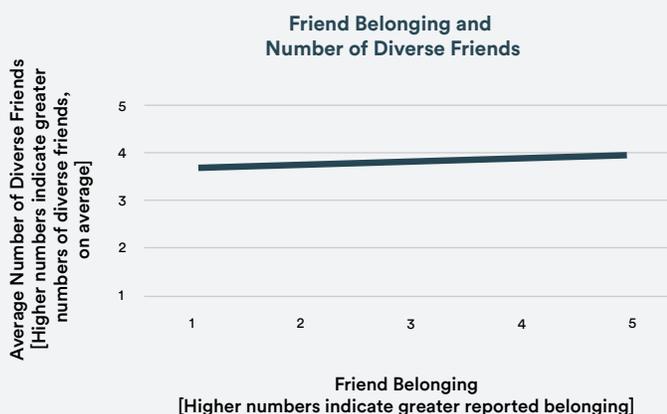
Are family and friend belonging more strongly associated with certain outcomes than belonging in other life settings?

When comparing belonging scores across all life settings, family belonging was most strongly correlated with pain,[136] stress,[137] and loneliness,[138] with greater levels of family belonging associated with less frequently experiencing emotional and physical pain,[139] stress,[140] and loneliness.[141] General health[142] was most strongly associated with both friend and family belonging (i.e., better health was associated with more belonging in these life settings), and greater life satisfaction was most strongly correlated with greater levels of national belonging.[143] When we controlled for the frequency with which respondents experience loneliness, these associations continued to be statistically significant, but the relationships were much weaker.

Our results also suggest a positive association between friendship belonging and the number of civic commitments that respondents engaged in over a 12-month period,[144] as well as the number of social actions that they took over the same period.[145] We also observed a negative correlation between friendship belonging and feelings of local[146] and national[147] marginalization, as measured by agreement with statements like, "The demographic landscape in [my community] or [America] has changed so much already that I sometimes feel like a stranger in my own [community] or [country]," and, "When I think about the rapid pace of change in [my community] or [America], I worry that I or my family will be left behind." Those who reported more friendship belonging were more likely to disagree with these statements.

Belonging in the Workplace

People spend a great deal of time in the workplace, which makes it an important life setting in which to examine individual belonging.[148] Indeed, prior research has linked aspects of workplace belonging to individual wellbeing, life satisfaction, and physical and mental health.[149]

Additionally, understanding workplace belonging is crucial to U.S. businesses.[150] Studies show that groups of people with different life experiences and perspectives are better at problem solving than homogeneous groups,[151] and that diverse teams perform better—helping bolster business success (e.g., bottom lines and competitiveness). But a team's diverse perspectives are of no help if its members aren't willing to share them (for instance, by voicing half-finished thoughts, challenging popular ideas, or asking questions out of left field).[152] By cultivating a culture of belonging, employers can create an environment that fosters the sharing of diverse perspectives.[153]

In prior studies, workplace belonging has been associated with increased employee engagement, retention, and loyalty,[154] as well as fewer health complaints[155] and days missed at work.[156] But often, either the measures or populations used in these studies make them difficult to compare. We wanted to see whether the Belonging Barometer would reveal similar relationships between belonging and the workplace.

We asked respondents to indicate their current employment status. Responses to this question were used to direct respondents only to questions that were relevant to their experiences (e.g., unemployed respondents were not asked about workplace belonging).

In our sample:

- **51%** of respondents were employed

- **24%** of respondents were retired

- **6%** of respondents were unemployed

- **5%** of respondents were students

- **15%** of respondents indicated that they were not working for another, unlisted, reason

*Note:
Total exceeds 100% due to rounding

What is the state of workplace belonging in the United States?

As shown earlier, in our sample (which included both blue- and white-collar American workers), 36% reported belonging, 50% reported ambiguity, and 14% reported exclusion in the workplace life setting. The average workplace belonging score was 3.3 out of 5, falling in the category of ambiguity. **Sixty-four percent, or almost two out of three employees in the United States today, experience non-belonging (a cumulative measure of ambiguity and exclusion) at work.**

Figure 20:

The percentage of respondents that experience workplace belonging, ambiguity, or exclusion.

Workplace Belonging (N=4797)

Legend:
- Belonging
- Ambiguity
- Exclusion

14%
36%
50%
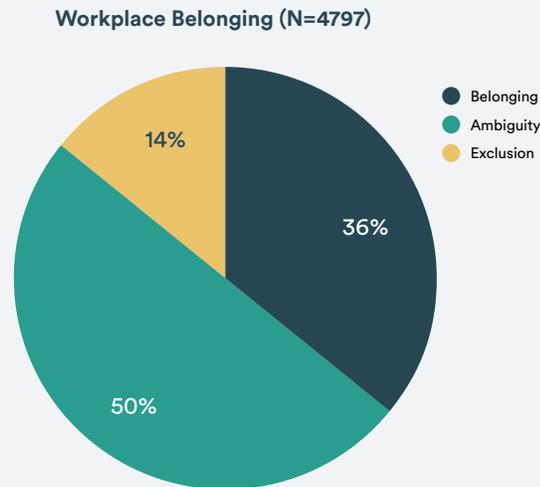
What demographic and individual factors are associated with workplace belonging?

We found that workplace belonging is associated with subjective socioeconomic status—or how well-off one perceives themselves compared to the average American—age, gender, and having a faith tradition. Specifically, perceiving oneself as better off than others, being of advanced age, having a faith tradition, and identifying as a man were all associated with experiencing greater levels of workplace belonging.[157] These demographic factors, with the exception of respondent gender, continued to predict the experience of workplace belonging even when controlling for the frequency with which the respondent experiences stress (less frequent stress was associated with more workplace belonging) and for being a parent, which was associated with more workplace belonging.[158] While race[159] was also independently associated with workplace belonging, this factor was no longer statistically significant when controlling for the other variables described above. (See "Supplemental Materials" for additional demographic details.)

As with family and friend belonging, here we also see that perceived socioeconomic status is one of the best predictors of workplace belonging. If those who perceive themselves as less well-off experience lesser levels of workplace belonging, interventions in the workplace may need to consider their employees' systemic experiences—*including* those experienced outside the workplace—when they design belonging interventions. (For more discussion on this, see "Conclusion" on pp. 43-48.)

> **"Companies…must adjust to and empathize with the unique trauma populations face, and plan long term—with an equity lens—for the different modes of support employee groups will need."**
>
> *The Power of Belonging: What It Is and Why It Matters in Today's Workplace, Coqual*

Why? Stressors resulting from systemic experiences are not easily put aside as one moves from one life setting to the next. Belonging interventions must therefore take a holistic view of employee wellbeing to provide equitable support for specific groups considering their unique stressors and circumstances.[160] For example, findings from a recent CoQual pulse survey of college-educated employees suggest that, while the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted all employees, it has had a disproportionately negative impact on employees of color, especially Black employees, who, relative to their white colleagues, were most likely to report having experienced a COVID-related death in the family; and on working mothers, who may have had to take on greater childcare responsibilities.[161] Additionally, people of color (in particular, Black Americans) in the United States experienced higher rates of COVID-19 infection and death compared to white Americans, and were disproportionately impacted by surges caused by new variants.[162] By identifying the systemic challenges confronting employees, workplaces can begin to support them in ways that matter for belonging.

Is workplace belonging associated more strongly with certain outcomes than belonging in other life settings?

In our survey, workplace belonging was associated with greater willingness to recommend one's job to a friend or family member (as discussed on p. 17).[163] It was also associated with longer retention at an employee's current job.[164] Also congruent with prior research,[165] workplace belonging in our survey was associated with greater life satisfaction[166] and better general health.[167] At a time of increasing social segregation in the United States,[168] workplaces may provide an opportunity to facilitate the type of effective intergroup social contact[169] that can increase cross-group empathy and perspective taking.

Belonging in Our Local Communities

U.S. towns, cities, suburbs, and rural areas are social and democratic laboratories: While at the forefront of global innovation and rapidly evolving social and economic dynamics,[170] they represent the "third places"—locations other than home and work—where Americans may experience commonality across differences and feel empowered to affect change.[171] It is in our local communities that Americans develop habits of association and practice civic participation (or not),[172] which play a critical role in shaping Americans' trust in government, institutions, and one another. In many ways, the idea of a flourishing democratic society is built upon them.[173] In our sample, local and national belonging scores were highly correlated.[174]

Our society is also reliant upon **social cohesion**.[175] Other studies have shown social cohesion to be associated with economic resilience[176] and increased participation and community engagement.[177] Community engagement, in turn, has been linked to more inclusive, representative governance[178] and higher-performing public schools (even in communities with similar socioeconomic status).[179]

Unfortunately, social engagement and belonging at the local level has been declining since the late 1960s,[180] with more than 50% of Americans today reporting a lack of connection to their neighborhood.[181] Meanwhile, people today tend to live in environments where they are surrounded by people similar to themselves, a structural reality which leads to echo chambers, amplifying existing views and ideologies, suppressing social contact across socioeconomic, racial, or geographic lines, and discouraging understanding and dialogue across lines of difference.[182] The last decade has also seen a downward trend in trust—in other residents, local government, and institutions.[183] This is concerning, since distrust in institutions can disrupt adherence to social norms and previously shared values, potentially making society less predictable (which would reinforce a cycle of distrust).[184]

We sought to better understand how local-level belonging relates to various measures of social cohesion and attitudes towards democracy. To do this, we first asked respondents: "What is the name of the municipality where you live (e.g., your town, city, etc.)?" In all follow-up questions—about satisfaction, trust, civic engagement, voting, desire to get to know other locals who were different from them, or agreement that greater diversity would benefit their community—the municipal name they wrote was inserted into the question stem.

In our sample:

- **70%** of respondents reported feeling fairly or very satisfied with their neighborhood

- **64%** of respondents reported feeling fairly or very satisfied with their local community

- **65%** of respondents reported being engaged in at least one civic activity in the last 12 months

- **65%** of respondents agreed with the sentiment that local citizens can impact how their community is run

- **71%** of respondents reported voting in their last local election

- **40%** of respondents agreed with the sentiment that more diversity is beneficial to their neighborhood

- **43%** of respondents agreed with the sentiment that more diversity is beneficial to their community

Social cohesion is defined as the quality of interactions among members of a geographic community and measured as the strength of a community's social relations, residents' positive emotional connectedness to the community, and how strongly committed residents are to the common good.

What is the state of local belonging in the United States?

The average local belonging score was 3.17 out of 5 (ambiguity), ranking as the lowest score of all life settings.[185] As noted previously, just over one in four Americans reported feeling a sense of belonging in their local community (26%), while nearly three out of four Americans (74%) reported non-belonging (specifically, 60% reported ambiguity and 14% reported exclusion).

Figure 21:

The percentage of respondents that experience local belonging, ambiguity, or exclusion.

Local Belonging (N=4797)

- Belonging
- Ambiguity
- Exclusion

14%

26%

60%
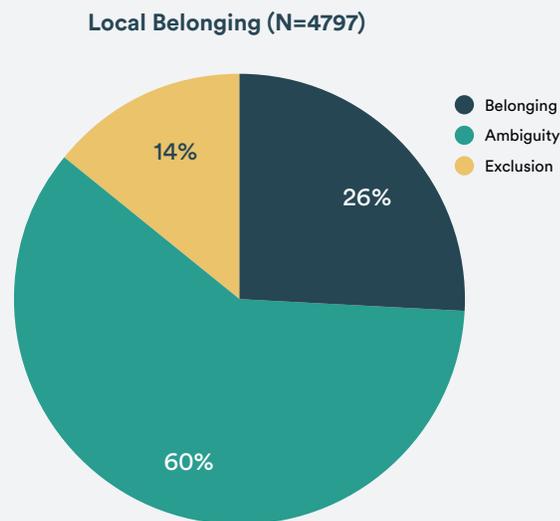
What demographic and individual factors are associated with local belonging?

We found that local belonging is associated with subjective socioeconomic status, having a faith tradition, age, and race. Specifically, higher perceived socioeconomic status, having a faith tradition, advancing age, and identifying as non-white were all associated with greater levels of local belonging.[186] These associations, with the exception of age, continued to be statistically significant even when controlling for the extent to which someone feels that they are treated as less than others in local settings, the frequency with which they experience stress, the extent to which they engage in civic commitments, their educational experience, and where they live (e.g., urban, rural). More strongly agreeing that one is treated as less than others in local settings, more frequently experiencing stress, and higher levels of education were associated with reporting lesser levels of local belonging. Conversely, engaging in more civic commitments and living in more urban areas was associated with reporting greater levels of local belonging.[187] (See "Supplemental Materials" for additional details.)

Is local belonging associated more strongly with certain outcomes than belonging in other life settings?

In our survey, local belonging was associated with measures of social cohesion and intergroup dynamics. When comparing belonging scores across all life settings, greater local belonging was most strongly correlated with reporting more civic engagement,[188] more agreement that local citizens can affect change,[189] greater satisfaction with the local community as a place to live (see Figure 7),[190] and greater trust in local government,[191] neighbors,[192] and local community residents (see Figure 8).[193]

We asked respondents whether they feel treated as *less than others* when interacting with law enforcement or locally elected officials, voting, or shopping at local stores. Twenty percent of Americans said they felt they were treated as less than others when interacting with local law enforcement. **On average, Americans who reported feeling treated as "less than" in local interactions also tended to report more feelings of local marginalization (e.g., "feels like a stranger" and "fear being left behind").[194]** Fifteen percent felt this way about voting; 21% felt this way with respect to interacting with local elected officials; and 15% felt this way with respect to shopping at local stores.

Figure 22:

Percentage of respondents that agree or disagree with statements indicating that they have been treated as less than others in local settings.

Feelings of Being Treated as Less than Others
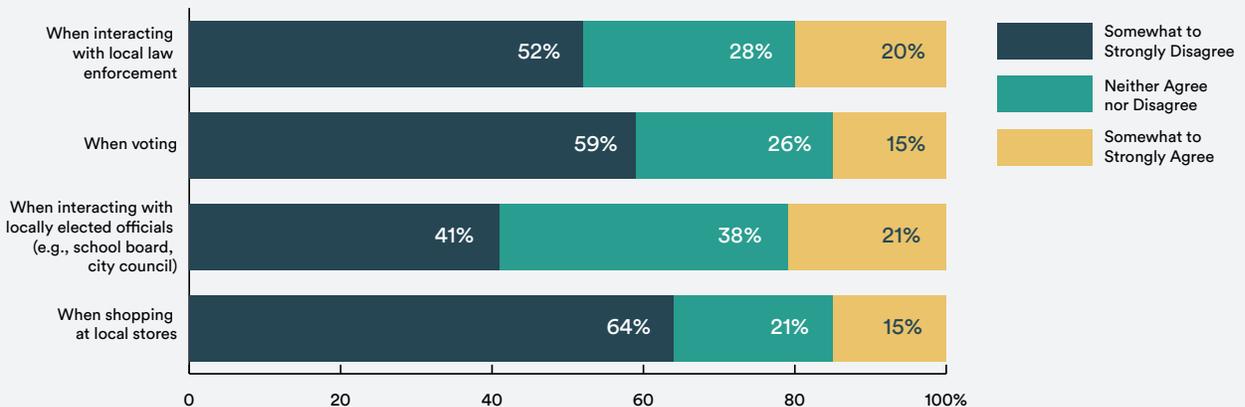
Additionally, for non-Hispanic whites—the group currently receiving the most attention in research dealing with perceptions of demographic change—a sense of belonging appears to counteract anxieties around demographic change.[195] On average, white residents who experienced strong exclusion and lived in an ethnically/racially diverse neighborhood reported a greater fear of losing their place amidst demographic change, while whites with strong belonging who lived in an ethnically/racially diverse neighborhood were less likely to fear demographic change.[196]

In sum, our research suggests that efforts to improve local belonging may have clear benefits for local communities, and that these efforts may be especially important for communities expecting to experience change and increased diversity in the foreseeable future.

Belonging in the Nation

As a range of thought leaders have noted, American democracy is at a dangerous inflection point.[197] The age and strength of our democratic institutions may serve as a bulwark against authoritarianism, yet nearly every esteemed measure of international democracy shows U.S. scores to be in democratic decline.[198] Reasons for this are many and complex—e.g., leaders who flout democratic norms and foment "us vs. them" frames, as well as growing threats of political violence and election interference, the divisive effects of social media, and so on.[199]

The political philosopher Hannah Arendt once warned that authoritarianism "bases itself on loneliness, on the experience of not belonging to the world at all, which is among the most radical and desperate experiences of man."[200] While most analyses of U.S. democracy do not take belonging (or adjacent concepts such as loneliness or social connection) into account,[201] scholars have linked non-belonging to both societal and institutional mistrust—with ramifications for democracy—and to extremism.[202] These are not small stakes. Indeed, the number of hate groups in the United States has doubled since 1999[203] and domestic extremism is on the rise.[204] Further, the U.S. Department of Justice has identified social isolation as a risk factor associated with individuals becoming involved in both group-based and lone-actor terrorism in the United States,[205] and a global review of the root causes for violent extremism found that a host of psychological states related to non-belonging—such as isolation, loneliness, depression, low self-esteem, personal alienation, friendlessness, and feeling like a misfit—appeared to make a person more vulnerable to radicalization and violent extremism.[206]

It can also be useful to consider how Americans are making sense of this moment. Studies show that while Americans across partisan (and other) lines hold much in common when it comes to national identity[207] and salient political issues,[208] they are often unaware of these similarities. Instead, many Americans worry that our nation will not hold a place for them, their family, or their way of life in the future.[209] In tandem with this worry, in recent years Americans have lost trust—in each other (horizontal trust) and in their media platforms, politicians, and democratic institutions across the board (vertical trust).[210] During this same period, conspiracy

theories have fed into false mainstream claims, such as the baseless and untrue "Stop the Steal" election denialism that ultimately laid the groundwork for the January 6th Capitol Insurrection.[211] Some surveys have also found an increase in public support for non-democratic policies and political violence.[212]

Below, we report on the relationship between belonging and several variables related to democracy.

What is the state of U.S. national belonging?

Thirty-two percent of respondents reported a sense of national belonging, 67% did not (56% fell in the range of ambiguity, and 11% reported exclusion). Please note, percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Figure 23:

The percentage of respondents that experience national belonging, ambiguity, or exclusion.

National Belonging (N=4797)

- Belonging
- Ambiguity
- Exclusion

32%
56%
11%
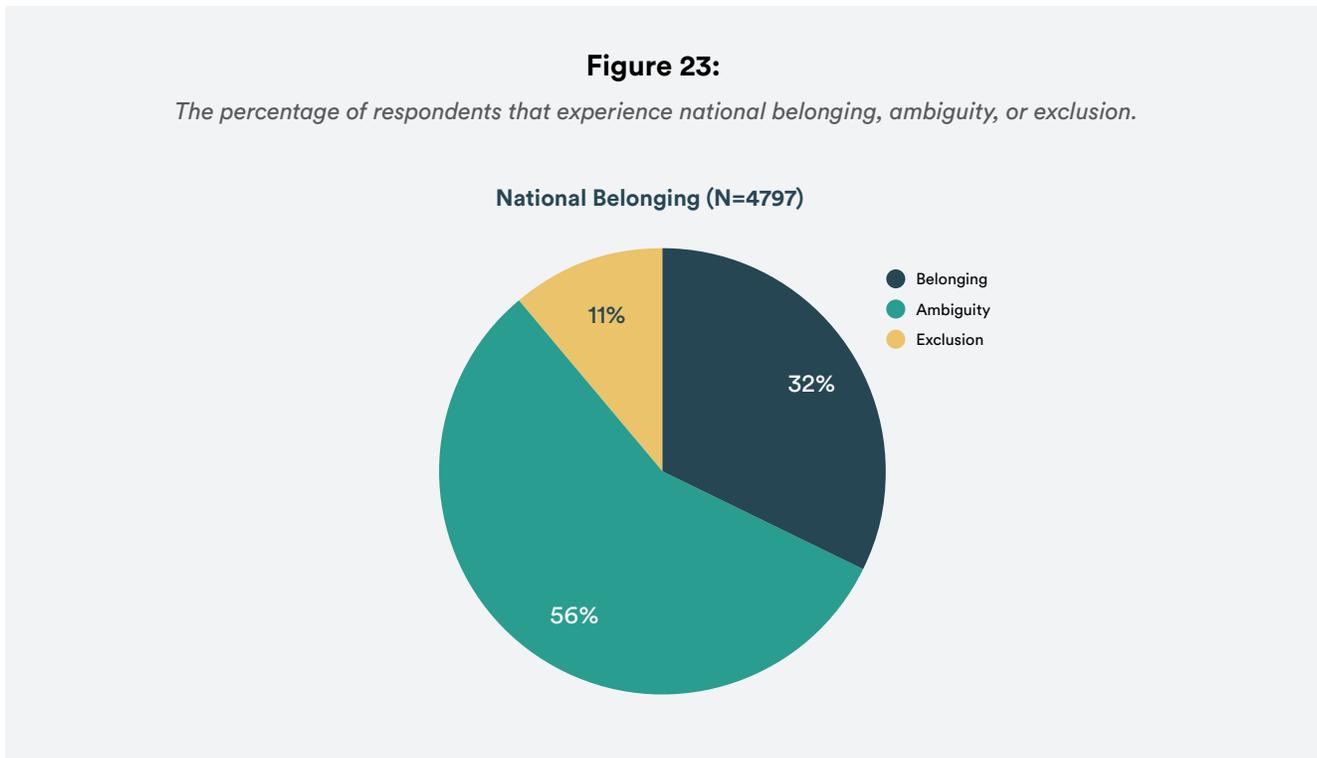
What factors are associated with national belonging in the United States?

In our study, national belonging was associated with the respondent's age; having a religious or faith tradition (compared to being atheist/agnostic) and its importance to the respondent; subjective socioeconomic status; sexual orientation; and gender. Advancing age, having a religious or faith tradition and its increasing importance, perceiving oneself as generally better off than others, and identifying as heterosexual or straight were all associated with reporting greater levels of national belonging. Identifying as a woman, compared to a man, however, was associated with reporting lesser levels of national belonging.[213] (See "Supplemental Materials" for additional information.)

Is national belonging associated more strongly with certain outcomes than belonging in other life settings?

When comparing belonging scores across life settings, reporting greater levels of national belonging was the life setting most strongly associated with greater satisfaction with the United States as a place to live.[214] Greater national belonging was associated with being less likely to agree with the statement that our democracy is beyond repair,[215] and was also associated with indicating support for democracy, rather than indicating that a non-democratic government may sometimes be more preferable.[216]

Figure 24:

The percentage of respondents that agree or disagree with statements regarding national issues.

When I think about the rapid pace of change in America, I feel excited for the new opportunities I might have. (N=4797) — 33% / 36% / 32%

When I think about the rapid pace of change in America, I worry that I or my family will be left behind. (N=4797) — 39% / 29% / 32%

The demographic landscape in America has changed so much already that I sometimes feel like a stranger in my own country. (N=4797) — 43% / 27% / 30%

I feel that when average Americans get involved (voting, protest, advocacy, etc.) they can change the way our nation is run. (N=4797) — 16% / 24% / 60%

Legend:
- Strongly disagree or disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Strongly agree or agree

*These percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Emerging Themes

The Interdependence of Diversity & Belonging

Diversity can benefit friendships, families, schools, houses of worship, communities, businesses, and countries. As mentioned earlier, because diverse groups bring novel perspectives to the table, they often experience enhanced creativity and more effective problem solving. As a consequence, communities where diverse residents live alongside one another enjoy better outcomes in health, education, and income (on average) compared to segregated communities.[217] Additionally, companies that have a diverse workforce significantly outperform companies that do not.[218]

> When we refer to **diversity** in this report, we mean the range of human differences, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes, religious or ethical values system, national origin, and political beliefs.

But the picture isn't quite that simple. The same studies that point to the beneficial effects of diversity also find that it can come with significant costs "due to difficulty in communication, difference in preferences, and conflict between polarized groups," to quote the authors of one such study.[219] Based on the findings of this report, we believe that it is worth exploring if and how efforts focused on belonging can help mitigate various types of backlash to diversity.

If diversity without belonging can backfire, belonging without diversity is similarly suboptimal. In genetics, diversity increases a species or population's ability to adapt and survive.[220] In communities, as described above, belonging without diversity means poorer outcomes in community health, education, income, and workplace performance. Why? Groups characterized by belonging but lacking diversity risk growing insular in their thinking: Studies show that they focus less on facts[221] and process facts less carefully.[222] Further, without having dissenting voices to make them aware of biases in their decision making, homogeneous groups are less likely to think outside of their comfort zone, which also makes them less innovative.[223] Lastly, when belonging is limited to homogeneous groups it is often accompanied by othering, becoming a source of division vis-a-vis larger society.

Pairing belonging with diversity can spark new configurations of ideas, solutions, and stories. Together, belonging and diversity are creative, generative, and transformative. One supports the other in a virtuous cycle.

Findings from across life settings in this report underscore ways in which belonging and diversity are interdependent, as highlighted below.

Friendship

- **Diverse friendships are associated with higher friendship belonging.[224]** Americans who had more than one diverse friendship reported higher percentages of friendship belonging than Americans with one or zero diverse friendships (65%, 56%, and 32%, respectively).

- **Friendship belonging is associated with fewer feelings of national marginalization.**[225] Americans who reported friendship belonging were significantly less likely to report feeling marginalized ("like a stranger in my own country" and "worry that I or my family will be left behind") due to national demographic change.

Local Community

- **A sense of local belonging, as well as resident interactions characterized by dignity and equality, are associated with less fear of demographic change.** Local non-belonging,[226] and separately, feeling treated as "less than" in local interactions (such as interactions with law enforcement or local officials, or while voting or shopping at local stores) were associated with "feeling like a stranger in my own community" and "worry that I or my family will be left behind" due to demographic change.[227]

- **Local belonging is associated with thinking that increased diversity in one's neighborhood would be a good thing.** When asked whether increased diversity in their neighborhood would be a good thing or not, strong local belonging scores indicated residents who were considerably more likely to agree.[228]

Generally

- **Belonging in *any* life setting is related to reduced anxiety about one's "fit" and future in their community.** In our dataset, belonging in any life setting—with family, with friends, at work, in one's local community, or even in the nation—was associated with a decrease in "feeling like a stranger in my own community" and "worrying that I or my family will be left behind" due to demographic change.[229]

Belonging is Interconnected Across Life Settings

In our dataset, higher belonging in one life setting correlated with higher belonging in other life settings.[230] This suggests the possibility that increases in belonging *within any of the life settings* might reverberate into other life settings, with far-reaching effects. However, correlation is not causation—it may also be the case that correlations between life settings are the result, for example, of a third unmeasured variable such as individual differences (e.g., that individuals with strong interpersonal connection skills may report more belonging in one setting and may also be more likely to report belonging in another). While this study cannot establish causal links, further investigation can help to determine if belonging—or lack thereof—might have a causal influence across settings, and, if so, with what limitations or constraints.

In our survey, belonging experiences across life settings were deeply interconnected. Belonging in one life setting correlated with belonging in each of the other life settings. One potential explanation is that the connection, safety, and agency one feels with friends, for example, may spill over towards greater connection and engagement at the local and national levels. This may mean that investments in targeted and localized initiatives bent on building friendship capacity— such as socioemotional learning in schools, youth sports, or arts organizations—could contribute to civic and democratic gains (all the better if these are diverse friendships, see p. 28).

On the other hand, experiences of *not belonging* may also spill over into other settings. Respondents who reported being treated as "less than" in their local interactions, for example, were also more likely to report less belonging across *all* life settings, not only in their local community[231] but also nationally,[232] in the workplace,[233] and even among friends[234] and family.[235] Thus, indignities experienced at the local level may undermine feelings of belonging in settings we would not have thought related. This could mean that investments in belonging at the local level— such as building up civic infrastructure to foster inclusive social contact and pluralistic practice, designing programs to support healthy intergroup contact, and bolstering efforts to address discrimination—may have potential to reverberate well beyond local belonging.

For stakeholders who wish to invest in belonging, this is an important takeaway: Leaders, policymakers, and funders who are committed to building more vibrant, inclusive, and pluralistic spaces in America have a chance to influence belonging and wellbeing in life settings beyond their immediate focus.

Conclusion

Summary

The need to belong is fundamental to the human experience and notoriously difficult to measure. The term is used interchangeably with adjacent concepts such as social connection and loneliness, but belonging extends beyond social relationships. Walton and Brady (2017) define belonging as a "general inference…about the quality of fit or potential fit between oneself and a setting. It is experienced as a feeling of being accepted, included, respected…" (p. 272).[236] Environments where we don't "fit" hinder our goals, of whatever nature they may be, and can lead to negative outcomes. A desire to better understand this is one of the reasons why we created the Belonging Barometer.

In lieu of a commonly accepted definition or measure for belonging, we created the Belonging Barometer and sought to draw richer insights about its role in American life. The 10-item Barometer captures various facets of belonging, including items that reflect popular themes of social connection, psychological safety, and co-creation.

In our nationally representative survey, **the Belonging Barometer was associated with critical outcomes in the United States.** Americans who experienced belonging were healthier[237] and less stressed.[238] They were more satisfied at work[239] and in their local communities,[240] experienced increased trust in each other and in our systems of governance,[241] and were more engaged citizens.[242] Perhaps most importantly, during this unsettled time, they were less fearful of demographic change,[243] and were more supportive of democratic systems of governance[244] and satisfied with U.S. democracy.[245]

This study also suggests that **diversity and belonging may be connected,** an insight that will grow increasingly important as the United States becomes increasingly diverse. We all win when we strive to build belonging in diverse workplaces or civic spaces. Conversely, we all lose when we don't combine diversity with belonging. Increasing diversity and demographic change can pose challenges, but belonging may alleviate common anxieties.[246]

Unfortunately, **non-belonging is widespread throughout American life in the work, local, and national settings** (non-belonging is a cumulative term including people who experienced belonging ambiguity and exclusion). In fact, the majority of Americans reported non-belonging in three life settings: the workplace (64%), the nation (67%), and their local community (74%). Perhaps more concerningly, nearly one in five Americans reported feeling non-belonging across each and every life setting measured here—meaning they did not feel a "fit" with their friends and family, workplace, local community, or the nation.

Who is more or less likely to belong? Across the life settings, **Americans were more likely to report belonging** if they saw themselves as better off or much better off economically than the average American (across all life settings); were older (across all life settings); identified as a man vs. woman (family, national, and workplace); or identified as heterosexual (straight) vs. homosexual (gay), bi/pansexual, asexual, or queer (family, friends, local, and nation).[247] Though these results

may not be surprising, they are critically important. Our society transmits the parameters of belonging through cues, events, experiences, and relationships. These daily realities across American life settings appear to be imparting a message to these demographic groups, that, at least sometimes: "You don't belong."

By demonstrating that lower levels of stress, more diversity in one's social network, and greater community engagement are also associated with belonging, this study offers individuals actionable pathways for increasing their wellbeing. But unfortunately, not all factors associated with our sense of belonging are our choices to make. For instance, the experience of being "treated as less than others" in respondents' daily lives was associated with non-belonging across *all* life settings—not only in the local community but also nationally, in the workplace, and even among friends and family.[248] While systemic racism or other forms of marginalization likely play some role in this phenomenon, the Americans who reported being treated as "less than" tended to be younger, non-citizen immigrants, identify as non-white, identify as men, identify as not heterosexual (straight), and/or report lower subjective socioeconomic status.[249] This suggests a broad social breakdown in civic norms and behavior, or at least the experience of such among a wide set of groups, and also presents an **opportunity for local communities to inquire about dignity in daily interactions as experienced by their own residents, and address any issues that are identified.**

In some life settings belonging also correlated with race (local) and religion (family, local, national, workplace). Regardless of life setting, subjective socioeconomic status was almost always the best predictor of belonging.[250] This suggests that socioeconomic status, which is itself influenced by marginalizing systems—for instance, systems that prevent wealth accumulation, such as redlining, or that block opportunities, such as racism or xenophobia, etc.—may explain variation in belonging more than some demographic factors. Thus, **belonging interventions—in families, workplaces, local communities, or at the national level—must be designed with an eye towards the systemic life experiences that influence an individual beyond the setting at hand.[251]**

We close by highlighting one last finding from our survey: Higher belonging in one life setting correlates with higher belonging in other life settings.[252] It is therefore possible that investments in one life setting or sector could hold benefits for others. In our view, this presents further opportunity for common cause among policymakers, practitioners, researchers, leaders, and funders.

To Build Belonging

Our hope is that this work will support organizations and individuals working in communities, government, philanthropy, business, and health, among others, to **take note** of the importance of belonging, **take action** to foster it in the spaces they lead, and **take time** to do so thoughtfully and with intention.

Efforts to increase belonging, sometimes referred to as **belonging interventions**, can and do work. For instance, by addressing a student by their first name in a letter being sent to the home, a school principal increased a sense of connection among socially excluded adolescents.[253]

In another intervention, first-year college students were provided with narrative framing that demonstrated "social adversity as common and transient" and found that the benefits were particularly pronounced for African-American students, whereby "the GPAs of the intervention-treated African Americans rose over time" and "African Americans reported being healthier and visiting the doctor less frequently."[254] And, in a separate study, by replacing objects that evoked masculine stereotypes of computer science with neutral objects, a computer science department increased women's interest and anticipated belonging in the field (while also not reducing belonging among men).[255] In "The Many Questions of Belonging," Greg Walton and Shannon Brady offer a summary of useful, evidence-based approaches for creating belonging.[256]

We hope that organizations, workplaces, and communities will invest in belonging by being intentional in how they structure their groups and teams, how they create connections, and how they design their spaces. That said, stakeholders who wish to do this work should also proceed with care, taking into consideration that belonging interventions can be ineffective, or even backfire. Consider, for instance, the potential impact of a common, well-intended statement such as "I want you to belong," or the request that students repeat a mantra like "I belong" to themselves. These strategies can inadvertently imply that most other people in that setting feel they belong, highlighting a person's felt lack of belonging, and offering little hope for their future.[257]

Efforts to increase belonging can fail when they target the wrong belonging-related psychological process for a specific group.[258] Recall that belonging involves a perceived "fit" between the self and a context. Walton and Brady (2017) argue that, to draw inferences about their belonging in any given context, people ask six key questions, even if implicitly; the way that one answers these questions informs their behavior in that setting, often making their expectations come true.[259] The questions are: *Does anyone here notice me? Are there people here that I connect to? Do people here value (people like) me? Is this a setting in which I want to belong? Could I be more than a stereotype here? Are people like me compatible with this setting or behavior?* Of course, the same situation might yield different answers to the six questions for different people, as everyone is informed by their own experiences, group identities, and more. The goal of psychology-based belonging interventions is to vary cues in the environment in ways that help all people answer the six questions affirmatively, regardless of where they are coming from.

Knowing how to do this is not always easy, or obvious, but when an intervention targets the wrong belonging-related psychological process (for a given community, or sub-population), it will likely be ineffective. It is therefore important to understand when and for whom the different questions of belonging arise within a given context—and this often requires baseline research. For example, having "swag" sent to new college students to promote affiliation increased belonging among white students but not Black students,[260] perhaps because minority students—who faced the possibility of group-based devaluation—were less concerned with affiliation and more concerned with being respected and valued.[261]

Belonging interventions may also be ineffective when exercises seem inauthentic or coercive, or when people fail to connect an exercise to their broader personal experience.

Belonging is about the symbolic meanings people draw from experiences,[262] but that doesn't mean that concrete resources and realities don't matter—to the contrary, people draw symbolic meaning from pictures on a wall, the diversity modeled in leadership, and the systemic privileges or barriers placed before them. If we do everything we can to increase belonging for a particular individual or group, but then they cannot take advantage of that new, secure sense of belonging to pursue their goals due to resource or structural barriers, it will fail. For that reason, for some populations, efforts to increase belonging will need to address systemic barriers alongside programmatic and psychological ones.

We hope that a better understanding of belonging and its stakes leads to efforts to increase belonging across sectors and settings, and that some of the ideas referenced here and in the Belonging Resources page are a helpful foundation. Additionally, given the importance of thoughtful design and the fact that efforts to increase belonging will be delivered in complex social contexts, we deem it critical—for individual stakeholders and for the belonging field as a whole that we hope will emerge—to commit to a robust evaluation of belonging intervention outcomes and a mechanism for the sharing of best practices.

Using the Belonging Barometer

To that end, the Belonging Barometer offers a start in the following ways:

- **Provides baseline assessments.** The Barometer can draw insights about belonging and its relationship to outcomes of interest throughout a community or among particular groups of people in that community. Assessments such as this can contribute to overall understanding of a context; they can also identify differences between groups within that community and areas where work is needed.

- **Informs the design of programs, interventions, and communications.** Analyses such as those within this report can determine which belonging themes are most important to the population, enabling the identification of themes that might be prioritized in programming.

- **Enables longitudinal tracking over time.** The Barometer can be adapted to measure levels of belonging over time. For example, institutions might want to incorporate longitudinal tracking of belonging (among workers, students, residents, citizens, etc.), or track changes pre- and post-intervention. By surveying belonging in more than one setting over time, larger collaborations could see whether an improvement in belonging at a localized setting (e.g., family services, youth sports teams, or via a YMCA) translates into an improvement in belonging at the community level (a town).

Who Might Use the Belonging Barometer?

A few examples include:

- **Schools and universities** looking to devise support services, report on student wellbeing, or demonstrate programmatic or interventional impacts over time.

- **Workplaces** wishing to track belonging within teams or across the workforce over time, identify areas of focus for improving belonging, or derive evidence-based insights to inform new programs or interventions.

- **Funders** who desire nuanced relational feedback from their grantees, or who wish to support their grantees with resources that can help them: a) assess their own relationship to program participants and communities, or b) demonstrate programmatic or intervention impacts.

- **Community centers and programs** who wish to make belonging a theme in their operations, seek impact measures, or are looking for evidence-based ways to target and improve their programming.

- **Mayors and town managers** who wish to appeal to prospective residents, or desire baseline or longitudinal feedback from the community about what is working or how things might be improved.

- **National think-tanks or governmental departments** that wish to track citizen wellbeing (as a whole or across sub-populations), examine relationships between belonging and other outcomes, or better understand the impact of national events on belonging overall (or across regions, sub-populations, etc.).

- **Civil society organizations focused on democracy** who wish to further explore the relationship between democracy and belonging and explore or experiment with related programming.

- **Hospitals, healthcare institutions, and public health institutions** seeking to identify how patients, participants, and communities feel in relation to their physical spaces and programs, and to evaluate potential belonging interventions and their impact on health.

Belonging Resources

We hope readers find the following list of books, articles, podcasts, websites, videos, and real-world examples useful, though it is far from exhaustive. We also encourage readers to visit the Othering and Belonging Institute's Resource Page; it provides a regularly updated array of belonging resources—including toolkits, case studies, the Inclusiveness database, and academic articles and blog essays—in one place.

To Explore Belonging Generally

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For Business

Amabile, T., & Kramer, S. (2011). *The progress principle: Using small wins to ignite joy, engagement, and creativity at work*. Harvard Business Review Press.

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Binder, R., Poropat, M., & Berger, S. (2022). *Why belonging matters now more than ever: Fostering a sense of belonging among public service employees makes all the difference.* Accenture.

Civic Alliance. *Corporate civic playbook.*

Coqual (2022). *The power of belonging: What it is and why it matters in today's workplace.*

Creary, S. (2019, March 26). *Beyond diversity: How firms are cultivating a sense of belonging.* Knowledge at Wharton.

Glassdoor Team. (2021). *What is Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging?* Glassdoor for Employers.

Health Action Alliance, Civic Alliance, Ad Council, and Belonging Begins with Us: *Cultivating belonging in the workplace: An employer guide.* And: Health Action Alliance. (2022, October 13). *Building a culture of belonging: Insights from business leaders* [Video].

Huppert, M. (2017, October 25). *Employees share what gives them a sense of belonging at work.* LinkedIn Talent Blog.

Jacob, K., Unerman, S., & Edwards, M. *Belonging: The key to transforming and maintaining Diversity, Inclusion and Equality at work.* Bloomsbury Business.

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For Communities

Belong: The Cohesion and Integration Network. Belonging initiatives in the UK.

Belonging Begins with Us Campaign. Belonging Begins with Us is a partnership between the Ad Council and a coalition of partner organizations to create a more welcoming nation where everyone can belong. See also, the Community Toolkit.

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Hammond, Z. (2015). *Culturally responsive teaching and the brain: Promoting authentic engagement and rigor among culturally and linguistically diverse students*. Corwin.

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For Kids

Carroll, Kevin. (2019). *A kids book about belonging.*

Endnotes

1. A linear regression established that respondents' highest score across the five Belonging Barometers could statistically significantly predict self-reported general health, $F(1, 3,229)$ = 222.784, $p < .001$, medium effect size, and respondents' highest score across the five Belonging Barometers accounted for 6.5% of the explained variability in self-reported general health. The regression equation was: predicted self-reported general health = 1.223 + 0.428 x (highest score across the five Belonging Barometers).

2. A linear regression established that respondents' highest score across the five Belonging Barometers could statistically significantly predict life satisfaction, $F(1, 3,229)$ = 599.301, $p < .001$, large effect size, and respondents' highest score across the five Belonging Barometers accounted for 15.7% of the explained variability in life satisfaction. The regression equation was: predicted life satisfaction = 0.406 + 1.538 x (highest score across the five Belonging Barometers).

3. A linear regression established that respondents' highest score across the five Belonging Barometers could statistically significantly predict the frequency of physical and emotional pain, $F(1, 3,229)$ = 105.003, $p < .001$, small effect size, and respondents' highest score across the five Belonging Barometers accounted for 3.1% of the explained variability in the frequency of physical and emotional pain. The regression equation was: predicted frequency of physical and emotional pain = 3.628 - 0.324 x (highest score across the five Belonging Barometers).

4. A linear regression established that respondents' highest score across the five Belonging Barometers could statistically significantly predict the frequency of experiencing stress, $F(1, 4,795)$ = 850.555, $p < .001$, large effect size, and respondents' highest score across the five Belonging Barometers accounted for 15.1% of the explained variability in the frequency of experiencing stress. The regression equation was: predicted frequency of experiencing stress = 5.068 - 0.585 x (highest score across the five Belonging Barometers).

5. A linear regression established that respondents' highest score across the five Belonging Barometers could statistically significantly predict the frequency of experiencing loneliness, $F(1, 4,794)$ = 1059.237, $p < .001$, large effect size, and respondents' highest score across the five Belonging Barometers accounted for 18.1% of the explained variability in the frequency of experiencing loneliness. The regression equation was: predicted frequency of experiencing loneliness = 6.009 - 0.830 x (highest score across the five Belonging Barometers).

6. A linear regression established that workplace belonging could statistically significantly predict the length of tenure at one's job, $F(1, 2,606)$ = 119.702, $p < .001$, small effect size, and workplace belonging accounted for 4.4% of the explained variability in the length of tenure at one's job. The regression equation was: predicted length of tenure at one's job = 1.612 + 0.319 x (workplace belonging). Please note, respondents were not able to indicate a tenure of less than one year; we share this finding as a general trend that warrants further research.

7. A linear regression established that workplace belonging could statistically significantly predict willingness to recommend one's job to a friend or family member, $F(1, 3,434)$ =

1772.024, *p* < .001, large effect size, and workplace belonging accounted for 34% of the explained variability in willingness to recommend one's job to a friend or family member. The regression equation was: predicted willingness to recommend one's job to a friend or family member = -1.403 + 2.186 x (workplace belonging).

8. A linear regression established that local belonging could statistically significantly predict satisfaction with one's local community, $F(1, 4,795) = 2506.403$, *p* < .001, large effect size, and local belonging accounted for 34.3% of the explained variability in satisfaction with one's local community. The regression equation was: predicted satisfaction with one's local community = 0.781 + 0.907 x (local belonging).

9. A linear regression established that local belonging could statistically significantly predict the frequency of trusting one's neighbors, $F(1, 4,697) = 1402.756$, *p* < .001, large effect size, and local belonging accounted for 23% of the explained variability in the frequency of trusting one's neighbors. The regression equation was: predicted frequency of trusting one's neighbors = 1.54 + 0.595 x (local belonging).

10. A linear regression established that local belonging could statistically significantly predict the frequency of trusting other local residents, $F(1, 4,795) = 2960.999$, *p* < .001, large effect size, and local belonging accounted for 38.2% of the explained variability in the frequency of trusting other local residents. The regression equation was: predicted frequency of trusting other local residents = 0.970 + 0.723 x (local belonging).

11. A linear regression established that local belonging could statistically significantly predict the frequency of trusting Americans, $F(1, 4,794) = 833.603$, *p* < .001, large effect size, and local belonging accounted for 14.8% of the explained variability in the frequency of trusting Americans. The regression equation was: predicted frequency of trusting Americans = 1.606 + 0.417 x (local belonging).

12. A linear regression established that local belonging could statistically significantly predict the frequency of trusting local government, $F(1, 4,608) = 1055.111$, *p* < .001, large effect size, and local belonging accounted for 18.6% of the explained variability in the frequency of trusting local government. The regression equation was: predicted frequency of trusting local government = 1.167 + 0.581 x (local belonging).

13. A linear regression established that local belonging could statistically significantly predict the frequency of trusting the U.S. government, $F(1, 3,211) = 254.084$, *p* < .001, medium effect size, and local belonging accounted for 7.3% of the explained variability in the frequency of trusting U.S. government. The regression equation was: predicted frequency of trusting U.S. government = 1.521 + 0.316 x (local belonging).

14. A linear regression established that local belonging could statistically significantly predict the frequency of engaging in civic commitments, $F(1, 4,795) = 267.789$, *p* < .001, small effect size, and local belonging accounted for 5.3% of the explained variability in the frequency of engaging in civic commitments. The regression equation was: predicted frequency of engaging in civic commitments = -0.28 + 0.741 x (local belonging).

15. A linear regression established that local belonging could statistically significantly predict

confidence that residents' involvement in their community can change the way it is run, $F(1, 4,795) = 657.045$, $p < .001$, medium effect size, and local belonging accounted for 12.1% of the explained variability in confidence that residents' involvement in their community can change the way it is run. The regression equation was: predicted confidence that residents' involvement in their community can change the way it is run = 2.377 + 0.416 x (local belonging).

16. A linear regression established that local belonging could statistically significantly predict the frequency of engaging in local social actions, $F(1, 4,795) = 80.875$, $p < .001$, small effect size, and local belonging accounted for 1.7% of the explained variability in the frequency of engaging in local social actions. The regression equation was: predicted frequency of engaging in local social actions = 0.844 + 0.114 x (local belonging).

17. A linear regression established that local belonging could statistically significantly predict feelings of local marginalization, $F(1, 4,795) = 481.110$, $p < .001$, medium effect size, and local belonging accounted for 9.1% of the explained variability in feelings of local marginalization. The regression equation was: predicted feelings of local marginalization = 3.579 - 0.331 x (local belonging).

18. A linear regression established that local belonging could statistically significantly predict feelings of national marginalization, $F(1, 4,795) = 95.820$, $p < .001$, small effect size, and local belonging accounted for 1.9% of the explained variability in feelings of national marginalization. The regression equation was: predicted feelings of national marginalization = 3.482 - 0.178 x (local belonging).

19. A linear regression established that local belonging could statistically significantly predict agreement with the statement that more diversity in one's neighborhood is beneficial, $F(1, 4,697) = 28.640$, $p < .001$, small effect size, and local belonging accounted for 0.6% of the explained variability in agreement that more diversity in one's neighborhood is beneficial. The regression equation was: predicted agreement that more diversity is beneficial = 3.020 + 0.108 x (local belonging).

20. A linear regression established that national belonging could statistically significantly predict satisfaction with the United States as a place to live, $F(1, 4,795) = 3440.909$, $p < .001$, large effect size, and national belonging accounted for 41.8% of the explained variability in satisfaction with the United States as a place to live. The regression equation was: predicted satisfaction with the United States as a place to live = 0.12 + 1.013 x (national belonging).

21. A linear regression established that national belonging could statistically significantly predict satisfaction with U.S. democracy, $F(1, 3,211) = 554.639$, $p < .001$, large effect size, and national belonging accounted for 14.7% of the explained variability in satisfaction with U.S. democracy. The regression equation was: predicted satisfaction with U.S. democracy = 0.405 + 0.599 x (national belonging).

22. A binomial logistic regression was performed to ascertain the effect of national belonging on the likelihood of agreement that, in some cases, a non-democratic government can be preferable to a democratic one. The logistic regression model was statistically significant,

$\chi^2(1)$ = 61.025, p < .001, small effect size (odds ratio of 0.608, 95% confidence interval of 0.537 and 0.690). The model explained 3.4% (Nagelkerke R2) of the variance in the likelihood of agreement that, in some cases, a non-democratic government can be preferable to a democratic one and correctly classified 81.1% of cases. The predictor variable (national belonging) was statistically significant. Increasing national belonging was associated with a decreased likelihood of agreement that, in some cases, a non-democratic government can be preferable to a democratic one.

23. A linear regression established that subjective socioeconomic status, age, gender, sexual orientation, and having a faith tradition could statistically significantly predict family belonging, $F(5, 3,357)$ = 69.979, p < .001, medium effect size, and subjective socioeconomic status, age, gender, sexual orientation, and having a faith tradition accounted for 9.4% of the explained variability in family belonging. The regression equation was: predicted family belonging = 2.524 + 0.193 x (subjective socioeconomic status) + 0.004 x (age) + 0.065 x (identifying as a man) + 0.258 x (identifying as heterosexual [straight]) + 0.322 x (having a faith tradition).

24. A linear regression established that subjective socioeconomic status, age, and sexual orientation could statistically significantly predict friend belonging, $F(3, 4,718)$ = 57.846, p < .001, small effect size, and subjective socioeconomic status, age, and sexual orientation accounted for 3.5% of the explained variability in friend belonging. The regression equation was: predicted friend belonging = 3.260 + 0.142 x (subjective socioeconomic status) + 0.003 x (age) - 0.160 x (identifying as heterosexual [straight]).

25. A linear regression established that subjective socioeconomic status, age, gender, and having a faith tradition could statistically significantly predict workplace belonging, $F(4, 3,394)$ = 91.858, p < .001, medium effect size, and subjective socioeconomic status, age, gender, and having a faith tradition accounted for 9.8% of the explained variability in workplace belonging. The regression equation was: predicted workplace belonging = 2.147 + 0.185 x (subjective socioeconomic status) + 0.009 x (age) + 0.070 x (identifying as a man) + 0.207 x (having a faith tradition).

26. A linear regression established that subjective socioeconomic status, age, race, and having a faith tradition could statistically significantly predict local belonging, $F(4, 3,420)$ = 68.070, p < .001, medium effect size, and subjective socioeconomic status, age, race, and having a faith tradition accounted for 7.4% of the explained variability in local belonging. The regression equation was: predicted local belonging = 2.359 + 0.132 x (subjective socioeconomic status) + 0.006 x (age) - 0.068 x (identifying as white) + 0.263 x (having a faith tradition).

27. A linear regression established that subjective socioeconomic status, age, gender, sexual orientation, having a faith tradition, and immigration status could statistically significantly predict national belonging, $F(6, 3,356)$ = 81.282, p < .001, medium effect size, and subjective socioeconomic status, age, gender, sexual orientation, having a faith tradition, and immigration status accounted for 12.7% of the explained variability in national belonging. The regression equation was: predicted national belonging = 2.131 + 0.099 x (subjective

socioeconomic status) + 0.009 x (age) + 0.051 x (identifying as a man) + 0.206 x (identifying as heterosexual [straight]) + 0.323 x (having a faith tradition) + 0.097 x (being an immigrant).

28. More agreement that one experiences being treated "less than" in local settings was negatively associated with family belonging (r = -0.212); friend belonging (r = -0.209); workplace belonging (r = -0.231); local belonging (r = -0.372); and national belonging (r = -0.310).

29. A linear regression established that age, whether someone is an immigrant, identifying as white, identifying as a man, identifying as heterosexual (straight), subjective socioeconomic status, and having a faith tradition could statistically significantly predict the extent to which someone feels that they are treated as less than others in local settings, $F(7, 3,355)$ = 48.219, p < .001, medium effect size. Respondents' age, whether someone is an immigrant, identifying as white, identifying as a man, identifying as heterosexual (straight), subjective socioeconomic status, and having a faith tradition accounted for 9.1% of the explained variability in the extent to which someone feels that they are treated as less than others in local settings. The regression equation was: predicted extent to which someone feels that they are treated as less than others in local settings = 4.786 - 0.014 x (age) + 0.363 x (whether someone is an immigrant) - 0.262 x (identifying as white) + 0.133 x (identifying as a man) - 0.241 x (identifying as heterosexual [straight]) - 0.217 x (subjective socioeconomic status) - 0.184 x (having a faith tradition).

30. A linear regression established that having, on average, more diverse friendships could statistically significantly predict friend belonging, $F(1, 4,795)$ = 166.776, p < .001, small effect size, and the average number of diverse friendships accounted for 3.4% of the explained variability in friend belonging. The regression equation was: predicted friend belonging = 3.614 + 0.066 x (average number of diverse friendships).

31. A linear regression established, on average, white respondents agreed less strongly with the statement that increasing diversity in one's neighborhood was beneficial. While this relationship persisted when controlling for racial diversity in one's neighborhood and local belonging, as the racial diversity of white respondents' neighborhoods increased and they experienced greater local belonging, the strength of their race as a predictor of their openness to diversity decreased, $F(1, 4,693)$ = 35.947, p < .001, small effect size, identifying as white, the racial diversity of one's neighborhood, and local belonging accounted for 2.2% of the explained variability in agreement with the statement that more neighborhood diversity is beneficial. The regression equation was: predicted agreement with the statement that neighborhood diversity is beneficial = 2.811 - 0.083 x (identifying as white) + 0.076 x (proportion of neighbors that are a different race or ethnicity than you) + 0.118 (local belonging).

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may think you belong, but you may still not feel a sense of belonging). *Groundedness*. There must be a referent group or place to anchor the subjective feeling of belonging (e.g., family, the vacation home, etc.). *Reciprocity.* One must feel a sense of connectedness to a referent group or place. *Dynamism*. The groups and places we are in change constantly, as does our sense of belonging. *Self-determination.* An individual must have autonomy when relating to a referent group, and there must be an equitable power relationship. See Mahar, A. L., Cobigo, V., & Stuart, H. (2013). Conceptualizing belonging. *Disability and Rehabilitation, 35*(12), 1026-1032. https://doi.org/10.3109/09638288.2012.717584

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80. The method involved over-collecting the sample by 10-15%, and then matching these cases back to a *sample frame* (based on interlocking parameters of age, gender, race, and education) generated by random sampling within the full datafile.

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88. See endnote #3 for the relationship between the highest belonging score experienced across life settings and the frequency with which the respondent experienced pain.

89. See endnote #4 for the relationship between the highest belonging score experienced across life settings and the frequency with which the respondent experienced stress.

90. See endnote #5 for the relationship between the highest belonging score experienced across life settings and the frequency with which the respondent experienced loneliness.

91. See endnote #2 for the relationship between the highest belonging score experienced across life settings and respondents' life satisfaction.

92. See endnote #1 for the relationship between the highest belonging score experienced across life settings and respondents' general health.

93. Brady, S. T., Cohen, G. L., Jarvis, S. N., & Walton, G. M. (2020). A brief social-belonging intervention in college improves adult outcomes for Black Americans. *Science Advances, 6*(18). https://doi.org/DOI:%2010.1126/sciadv.aay3689

94. A linear regression established that respondents' highest score across the five belonging barometers could statistically significantly predict the frequency of physical and emotional pain, even when controlling for the frequency of experiencing loneliness, $F(2, 3,227) = 299.004$, $p < .001$, large effect size, and respondents' highest score across the five belonging barometers and frequency of experiencing loneliness accounted for 15.6% of the explained variability in the frequency of physical and emotional pain. The regression equation was: predicted frequency of physical and emotional pain = 1.457 - 0.024 x (highest score across the five belonging barometers) + 0.361 x (frequency of experiencing loneliness). A linear regression established that respondents' highest score across the five belonging barometers could statistically significantly predict the frequency of experiencing stress, even when controlling for the frequency of experiencing loneliness, $F(2, 4,793) = 1172.551$, $p < .001$, large effect size, and respondents' highest score across the five belonging barometers and frequency of experiencing loneliness accounted for 32.9% of the explained variability in the frequency of experiencing stress. The regression equation was: predicted frequency of experiencing stress = 2.905 - 0.286 x (highest score across the five belonging barometers) + 0.360 x (frequency of experiencing loneliness). A linear regression established that respondents' highest score across the five belonging barometers could statistically significantly predict self-reported general health, even when controlling for the frequency of experiencing loneliness, $F(2, 3,227) = 193.642$, $p < .001$, medium effect size, and respondents' highest score across the five belonging barometers and frequency of experiencing loneliness accounted for 10.7% of the explained variability in self-reported general health. The

regression equation was: predicted self-reported general health = 2.393 + 0.266 x (highest score across the five belonging barometers) - 0.194 x (frequency of experiencing loneliness). A linear regression established that respondents' highest score across the five belonging barometers could statistically significantly predict life satisfaction, even when controlling for the frequency of experiencing loneliness, $F(2, 3{,}227) = 713.743$, $p < .001$, large effect size, and respondents' highest score across the five belonging barometers and frequency of experiencing loneliness accounted for 30.7% of the explained variability in life satisfaction. The regression equation was: predicted life satisfaction = 5.47 + 0.838 x (highest score across the five belonging barometers) - 0.842 x (frequency of experiencing loneliness).

95. See Kwan, H. K., Zhang, X., Liu, J., & Lee, C. (2018). Workplace ostracism and employee creativity: An integrative approach incorporating pragmatic and engagement roles. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 103*(12), 1358–1366. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000320. See also: Tu, M., Cheng, Z., & Liu, W. (2019). Spotlight on the effect of workplace ostracism on creativity: A social cognitive perspective. *Frontiers in Psychology, 10.* https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01215

96. Beal, D. J., Cohen, R. R., Burke, M. J., & McLendon, C. L. (2003). Cohesion and performance in groups: A meta-analytic clarification of construct relations. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 88*(6), 989–1004. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.6.989. See also: Oswald, A. J., Proto, E., & Sgroi, D. (2015). Happiness and productivity. *Journal of Labor Economics, 33*(4), 789-822. https://doi.org/10.1086/681096

97. See Saporito, T. J. (2012, February 15). *It's time to acknowledge CEO loneliness.* Harvard Business Review. https://hbr.org/2012/02/its-time-to-acknowledge-ceo-lo#%3A~%3Atext%3DSimply%20acknowledging%20feelings%20o

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99. A study by BetterUp found that high-belonging employees showed a 50% drop in turnover risk. See: BetterUp. (2019, September 16). *BetterUp's new, industry-leading research shows companies that fail at belonging lose tens of millions in revenue*. https://www.betterup.com/press/betterups-new-industry-leading-research-shows-companies-that-fail-at-belonging-lose-tens-of-millions-in-revenue

100. The same BetterUp study found that high-belonging employees had a 75% reduction in sick days. BetterUp. (2019, September 16). *BetterUp's new, industry-leading research shows companies that fail at belonging lose tens of millions in revenue.* https://www.betterup.com/press/betterups-new-industry-leading-research-shows-companies-that-fail-at-belonging-lose-tens-of-millions-in-revenue

101. See Endnote #7 for the relationship between workplace belonging and respondents' likelihood of recommending their job to a friend or family member.

102. For studies that look at the relationship between social connectedness and crime, see: Stuart, B., & Taylor, E. (2021). The effect of social connectedness on crime: Evidence from the great migration. *The Review of Economics and Statistics, 103*(1), 18-33. https://doi.org/10.1162/rest_a_00860; Ross, C., & Jang, S. (2000). Neighborhood disorder, fear, and mistrust: The buffering role of social ties with neighbors. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 28*(4), 401-420. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1005137713332; and, Sampson R., Raudenbush, S., & Earls, F. (1997). Neighborhoods and violent crime: A multilevel study of collective efficacy. *Science, 277*(5328), 918-924. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.277.5328.918. For studies examining the role of belonging-adjacent concepts like social capital, connectedness, and prosperity, see: Knack, S., & Keefer, P. (1997). Does social capital have an economic payoff? A cross-country investigation. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 112*(4), 1251-1288. https://doi.org/10.1162/003355300555475; Ballard, P., Hoyt, L., & Pachucki, M. (2019). Impacts of adolescent and young adult civic engagement on health and socioeconomic status in adulthood. *Child Development, 90*(4), 1138-1154. https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12998. Lastly, see: Knight Foundation. (2010, November 15). *Got love for your community? It may create economic growth, Gallup study Says* [Press release]. https://knightfoundation.org/press/releases/got-love-for-your-community-it-may-create-economic/

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104. See endnote #8 on the relationship between local belonging and satisfaction with one's local community.

105. See endnote #9 on the relationship between local belonging and trusting one's neighbors.

106. See endnote #10 on the relationship between local belonging and trusting one's fellow local community residents.

107. See endnote #11 on the relationship between local belonging and trusting one's fellow Americans.

108. See endnote #12 on the relationship between local belonging and trusting one's local government.

109. See endnote #13 on the relationship between local belonging and trusting the U.S. government.

110. See endnote #14 on the relationship between local belonging and the extent to which one engages in civic commitments.

111. See endnote #16 on the relationship between local belonging and the extent to which one engages in social actions.

112. See endnote #15 on the relationship between local belonging and the extent to which respondents believed that local residents could change how their community is run.

113. See endnote #17 on the relationship between local belonging and the extent to which respondents agreed with statements that are indicative of concerns about local marginalization.

114. Johnson, S. (2020, February). *A changing nation: Population projections under alternative immigration scenarios.* Current Population Reports, U.S. Census Bureau, 25-1146. https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2020/demo/p25-1146.pdf. See also: Vespa, J., Medina, L., & Armstrong, D. (2020, February). *Demographic turning points for the United States: Population projections for 2020 to 2060.* Population Estimates and Projections, U.S. Census Bureau, 25-1144. https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2020/demo/p25-1144.pdf. Additionally, authoritarianism is 50% heritable. Ludeke, S., Johnson, W., & Bouchard, T. J., Jr. (2013). "Obedience to traditional authority:" A heritable factor underlying authoritarianism, conservatism and religiousness. *Personality and Individual Differences, 55*(4), 375-380. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2013.03.018. Stenner, K., & Stern, J. (2021, February 11). *How to live with authoritarians: Democracies have to learn how to manage some people's innate fears of change.* Foreign Policy. https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/02/11/capitol-insurrection-trump- authoritarianism-psychology-innate-fear-envy-change-diversity-populism/; and, Stenner, K. (2005). *The Authoritarian Dynamic (Cambridge Studies in Public Opinion and Political Psychology).* Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511614712

115. For examples of how such rhetoric is aimed at minorities and immigrants, and for a review of how incendiary rhetoric "can make political violence more likely, gives violence direction, complicates the law enforcement response, and increases fear in vulnerable communities," see Byman, D. L. (2021, April 9). *How hateful rhetoric connects to real-world violence.* Brookings Institution. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2021/04/09/how-hateful-rhetoric-connects-to-real-world-violence/

116. Byman, D. L. (2021, April 9). *How hateful rhetoric connects to real-world violence.* Brookings Institution. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2021/04/09/how- hateful-rhetoric-connects-to-real-world-violence/. See also, Peters, J., Grynbaum, M., Collins, K., & Harris, R. (2019, August 11). How the El Paso killer echoed the incendiary words of conservative media stars. *New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/11/business/media/el-paso-killer-conservative-media.html

117. See endnote #19 on the relationship between local belonging and one's agreement that more neighborhood diversity is beneficial.

118. Argo, N., Brown, R., Livingston, L., Hurlburt, H., & Owens, S. (2019, December). *Building U.S. resilience to political violence: A globally informed framework for analysis and action.* Over Zero and New America. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f7f1da1ea15cd5bef32169f/t/602eed99c1b4c803c52ed8a6/1613688243138/Full+-+Building+Resilience+to+Political+Violence.pdf. See also: Kalmoe, N., & Mason, L. (2022). *Radical American partisanship: Mapping violent hostility, its causes, & the consequences for democracy.* University of Chicago Press. Westwood, S., Grimmer, J., Tyler, M., & Nall, C. (2022). Current research overstates American support for political violence. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United State of America, 119*(12). https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2116870119; and, Brown, R., Hameed, S., Hurlburt, H., Livingston, L., and Stark, A. (2022). *Violence-proofing U.S. democracy: Immediate*

priorities for philanthropy (Over Zero, New America, and Thought Partnerships Working Paper). https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f7f1da1ea15cd5bef32169f/t/61d4b6c79f768927 3c5434e6/164133037

119. Sunstein, C. (2018). (Ed.). *Can it happen here? Authoritarianism in America*. Harper Collins. And, Kleinfeld, R. (2022, September 15). *Five strategies to support U.S. democracy* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Working Paper). https://carnegieendowment. org/2022/09/15/ five-strategies-to-support-u.s.-democracy-pub-87918; International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. (2021). *The global state of democracy report 2021: Building resilience in a pandemic era.* https://www.idea.int/gsod-2021/sites/default/ files/2021-11/global-state-of-democracy-2021.pdf; and, *Freedom House (2021). Freedom in the world 2021: Democracy under siege.* https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2021/ democracy-under-siege

120. One element that significant research has explored deals with perceptions of marginalization and fears of social change. Strikingly, in November 2021, 41% of Americans agreed that they felt like a stranger in their own country. See: Jones, R. P., Jackson, N., Orcés, D., Huff, I., & Holcomb, T. (2021). *Competing visions of America: An evolving identity or a culture under attack? Findings from the 2021 American Values Survey.* Public Religion Research Institute. https://www.prri.org/research/competing-visions-of-america-an-evolving-identity-or-a- culture-under-attack/. Research has also looked at the ways in which Americans who feel this sense of marginalization are more likely to support anti-democratic policies. See: Bartels, L. M. (2020). Ethnic antagonism erodes Republicans' commitment to democracy. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United State of America, 117*(37), 22752-22759. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2007747117. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and George Floyd's death, Bartels surveyed Republicans and found that 40% agreed that "a time will come when patriotic Americans have to take the law into their own hands," and 47% agreed that "strong leaders sometimes have to bend the rules in order to get things done." This kind of anti-democratic support did not correlate with support for the GOP, but was instead associated with a sense that "the traditional American way of life is disappearing so fast that we may have to use force to save it," and "discrimination against whites is as big a problem today as discrimination against blacks and other minorities."

121. See endnote #20 on the relationship between national belonging and satisfaction with the United States as a place to live.

122. See endnote #21 on the relationship between national belonging and satisfaction with democracy in the United States.

123. See endnote #22 on the relationship between national belonging and the view that non-democratic forms of government may sometimes be preferable to democratic forms of government.

124. Cassidy, J. (1999). The nature of a child's ties. In J. Cassidy & P. R. Shaver (Eds.). *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research and clinical applications.* Guilford Press.

125. Schaffer, R. (2004). *Introducing Child Psychology.* Blackwell.

126. Theisson, A. (2021, December 8). *Is having a sense of belonging important?* Mayo Clinic Health System. https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/is-having-a-sense-of-belonging-important. See also: King, V., & Boyd, L. M. (2016). Factors associated with perceptions of family belonging among adolescents. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 78*(4), 1114–1130. https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12322

127. See Brendtro, L. K. (2006). The vision of Urie Bronfenbrenner: Adults who are crazy about kids. *Reclaiming Children and Youth, 15*(3), 162–166. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234721190_The_Vision_of_Urie_Bronfenbrenner_Adults_Who_Are_Crazy_about_Kids. Although our survey did collect data about non-friend and family social support, we did not include this in the regressions reported in this section. Please contact Over Zero if you would like more information.

128. For instance, families and friends have experienced increased stress due to isolation and increased food, economic, and housing insecurity. See: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (2021). *The COVID-19 economy's effects on food, housing and employment hardships.* https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/8-13-20pov.pdf

129. Pinsker, J. (2021, March 30). Trump's presidency is over. So are many relationships. *The Atlantic.* https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2021/03/trump-friend-family-relationships/618457/. See also: Adcox, S. (2022, May 26). *When families disagree about politics. Very Well Family.* https://www.verywellfamily.com/when-families-disagree-about-politics-4112342

130. See endnote #23 on the relationship between demographic factors and experiences of family belonging.

131. A linear regression established that socioeconomic status, age, having a faith tradition, identifying as heterosexual (straight), identifying as a man, family support, and the number of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) could statistically significantly predict family belonging, $F(7, 3{,}355) = 301.987$, $p < .001$, large effect size, and socioeconomic status, age, having a faith tradition, identifying as straight, identifying as a man, family support, and the number of ACEs accounted for 38.7% of the explained variability in family belonging. The regression equation was: predicted family belonging = 2.061 + 0.102 x (socioeconomic status) + 0.002 x (age) + 0.143 x (having a faith tradition) + 0.084 x (identifying as heterosexual [straight]) + 0.090 x (identifying as a man) + 0.415 x (family support) - 0.073 x (the number of ACEs).

132. See endnote #24 on the relationship between demographic factors and experiences of friend belonging.

133. A linear regression established that socioeconomic status, age, sexual orientation, and number of friends could statistically significantly predict friend belonging, $F(4, 4{,}717) = 55.681$, $p < .001$, small effect size, and socioeconomic status, age, sexual orientation, and number of friends accounted for 4.5% of the explained variability in friend belonging. The regression equation was: predicted friend belonging = 3.249 + 0.140 x (socioeconomic status) + 0.003 x (age) - 0.158 x (identifying as heterosexual [straight]) + 0.005 x (number of friends).

134. See endnote #30 on the relationship between having more diverse friendships and experiences of friend belonging.

135. Carey, R. M., Stephens, N. M., Townsend, S. S. M., & Hamedani, M. G. (2022). Is diversity enough? Cross-race and cross-class interactions in college occur less often than expected, but benefit members of lower status groups when they occur. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 123*(5), 889–908. https://doi.org/10.1037/pspa0000302. See also: Hussain, M., & Jones, J. M. (2021). Discrimination, diversity, and sense of belonging: Experiences of students of color. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 14*(1), 63–71. https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000117. Lastly, see: Shook, N. J., & Clay, R. (2012). Interracial roommate relationships: A mechanism for promoting sense of belonging at university and academic performance. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 48*(5), 1168–1172. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2012.05.005

136. Standardized betas: family = -0.244, friends = -0.194, work = -0.182, local = -0.161, national = -0.146

137. Standardized betas: family = -0.394, national = -0.378, local = -0.353, work = -0.352, friends = -0.315

138. Standardized betas: family = -0.458, friends = -0.393, local = -0.386, national = -0.365, work = -0.363

139. A linear regression established that family belonging could statistically significantly predict the frequency of physical and emotional pain, $F(1, 3,229) = 204.783$, $p < .001$, medium effect size, and family belonging accounted for 6.0% of the explained variability in the frequency of physical and emotional pain. The regression equation was: predicted frequency of physical and emotional pain = 3.316 - 0.282 x (family belonging).

140. A linear regression established that family belonging could statistically significantly predict the frequency of experiencing stress, $F(1, 4,795) = 883.407$, $p < .001$, large effect size, and family belonging accounted for 15.6% of the explained variability in the frequency of experiencing stress. The regression equation was: predicted frequency of experiencing stress = 4.013 - 0.376 x (family belonging).

141. A linear regression established that family belonging could statistically significantly predict the frequency of experiencing loneliness, $F(1, 4,794) = 1273.418$, $p < .001$, large effect size, and family belonging accounted for 21% of the explained variability in the frequency of experiencing loneliness. The regression equation was: predicted frequency of experiencing loneliness = 4.63 - 0.566 x (family belonging).

142. Standardized betas: family = 0.245, friends = 0.246, work = 0.231, local = 0.225, national = 0.201

143. Standardized betas: national = 0.417, local = 0.413, family = 0.407, work = 0.357, friends = 0.334

144. A linear regression established that friend belonging could statistically significantly predict the frequency of engaging in civic commitments, $F(1, 4,795) = 171.228$, $p < .001$, small effect size, and friend belonging accounted for 3.4% of the explained variability in the frequency

of engaging in civic commitments. The regression equation was: predicted frequency of engaging in civic commitments = -0.061 + 0.577 x (friend belonging).

145. A linear regression established that friend belonging could statistically significantly predict the frequency of engaging in local social actions, $F(1, 4,795) = 45.441$, $p < .001$, small effect size, and friend belonging accounted for 0.9% of the explained variability in the frequency of engaging in local social actions. The regression equation was: predicted frequency of engaging in local social actions = 0.900 + 0.082 x (friend belonging).

146. A linear regression established that friend belonging could statistically significantly predict feelings of local marginalization, $F(1, 4,795) = 261.027$, $p < .001$, small effect size, and friend belonging accounted for 5.2% of the explained variability in feelings of local marginalization. The regression equation was: predicted feelings of local marginalization = 3.416 - 0.241 x (friend belonging).

147. A linear regression established that friend belonging could statistically significantly predict feelings of national marginalization, $F(1, 4,795) = 136.350$, $p < .001$, small effect size, and friend belonging accounted for 2.8% of the explained variability in national marginalization. The regression equation was: predicted national marginalization = 3.670 - 0.204 x (friend belonging).

148. See the American Time Use Survey (ATUS) for survey data that measures the amount of time people spend doing various activities, such as paid work, childcare, volunteering, and socializing. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. *American time use survey.* https://www.bls.gov/tus/

149. This is particularly through two mechanisms: relationships and sense of purpose. See Weziak-Bialowolska, D., Bialowolski, P., Sacco, P. L., VanderWeele, T. J., & McNeely, E. (2020). Well-being in life and well-being at work: Which comes first? Evidence from a longitudinal study. *Frontiers in Public Health, 103.* https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2020.00103

150. Baldoni, J. (2017, January 22). Fostering the sense of belonging promotes success. *Forbes Magazine.* https://www.forbes.com/sites/johnbaldoni/2017/01/22/fostering-the-sense-of-belonging-promotes-success/?sh=1f3897a110f2

151. Hong, L. & Page, S. (2004). Groups of diverse problem solvers can outperform groups of high-ability problem solvers. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United State of America, 101*(46), 16385-16389. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0403723101. More recent work has focused on the importance of cognitive diversity: Reynolds, A., & Lewis, D. (2017, March 30). *Teams solve problems faster when they're more cognitively diverse.* Harvard Business Review. https://hbr.org/2017/03/teams-solve-problems-faster-when-theyre-more-cognitively-diverse

152. Edmondson, A. C. (2018). *The fearless organization: Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth.* John Wiley & Sons. https://fearlessorganization.com/the-fearless-organization

153. Civic Alliance, Health Action Alliance, Ad Council, & Belonging Begins with Us. (2022). *Cultivating belonging in the workplace: An employer guide.* https://uploads-ssl.webflow.

com/6010e149d9130a63e7b78adb/633f00540531286ad1514020_CBWGuide_10.6%20.pdf

154. See: Goldberg, E. (2022, March 4). Why your boss wants to know your love language. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/04/business/employee-satisfaction-remote-work.html; and, Coqual. (2022). *The power of belonging: What it is and why it matters in today's workplace.* https://coqual.org/reports/the-power-of-belonging/

155. Scott, B. A., Colquitt, J. A., Paddock, E. L., & Judge, T. A. (2010). A daily investigation of the role of manager empathy on employee well-being. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 113*(2), 127–140. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2010.08.001

156. Goldberg, E. (2022, March 4). Why your boss wants to know your love language. *The New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/04/business/employee-satisfaction-remote-work.html; and, Coqual. (2022). *The power of belonging: What it is and why it matters in today's workplace.* https://coqual.org/reports/the-power-of-belonging/

157. See endnote #25 on the relationship between demographic factors and experiences of workplace belonging.

158. A linear regression established that subjective socioeconomic status, age, having a faith tradition, the frequency of experiencing stress, and being a parent could statistically significantly predict workplace belonging, $F(5, 3{,}419) = 136.275$, $p < .001$, large effect size, and subjective socioeconomic status, age, having a faith tradition, the frequency of experiencing stress, and being a parent accounted for 16.6% of the explained variability in workplace belonging. The regression equation was: predicted workplace belonging = 3.378 + 0.096 x (subjective socioeconomic status) + 0.005 x (age) + 0.139 x (having a faith tradition) - 0.278 x (the frequency of experiencing stress) + 0.099 x (being a parent).

159. A linear regression established that identifying as white could statistically significantly predict workplace belonging, $F(1, 4{,}795) = 14.638$, $p < .001$, small effect size, and identifying as white accounted for 0.3% of the explained variability in workplace belonging. The regression equation was: predicted workplace belonging = 3.229 + 0.103 x (whether someone identifies as white).

160. Coqual (2020, June 22). *New study examines why belonging at work is crucial during crisis* [Press release]. https://coqual.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/PowerOfBelonging_PressRelease.pdf

161. Coqual (2020). *New study examines why belonging at work is crucial during crisis* [Press release]. https://coqual.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/PowerOfBelonging_PressRelease.pdf

162. "The higher rates of infection among people of color likely reflect increased exposure risk due to working, living, and transportation situations, including being more likely to work in jobs that cannot be done remotely, to live in larger households, and to rely on public transportation." See: Hill, L., & Artiga, S. (2022). *COVID-19 cases and deaths by race/ethnicity: Current data and changes over time*. Kaiser Family Foundation. https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/covid-19-cases-and-deaths-by-race-ethnicity-current-data-and-changes-over-time/

163. See endnote #7 on the relationship between workplace belonging and willingness to recommend one's job to a friend or family member.

164. See endnote #6 on the relationship between workplace belonging and job tenure. Please note, respondents were not able to indicate a tenure of less than one year; we share this finding as a general trend that warrants further research.

165. In other studies, life satisfaction also increases alongside workplace belonging, which may indicate a virtuous cycle. See Bowling, N. A., Eschleman, K. J., & Wang, Q. (2010). A meta-analytic examination of the relationship between job satisfaction and subjective well-being. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 83*(4), 915-934. https://doi.org/10.1348/096317909X478557

166. A linear regression established that workplace belonging could statistically significantly predict life satisfaction, $F(1, 3,229) = 472.025$, $p < .001$, medium effect size, and workplace belonging accounted for 12.8% of the explained variability in life satisfaction. The regression equation was: predicted life satisfaction = 3.806 + 0.926 x (workplace belonging).

167. A linear regression established that workplace belonging could statistically significantly predict self-reported general health, $F(1, 3,229) = 182.107$, $p < .001$, small effect size, and workplace belonging accounted for 5.3% of the explained variability in self-reported general health. The regression equation was: predicted self-reported general health = 2.162 + 0.260 x (workplace belonging).

168. See Semuels, A. (2021, June 21). The U.S. is increasingly diverse, so why is segregation getting worse? *Time Magazine*. https://time.com/6074243/segregation-america-increasing/; Covid appears to have heightened the problem. See Li, X., Huang, X., Li, D., & Xu, Y. (2022). Aggravated social segregation during the COVID-19 pandemic: Evidence from crowdsourced mobility data in twelve most populated U.S. metropolitan areas. *Sustainable Cities and Society, 81*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scs.2022.103869

169. Tropp, L. & Dehrhone, T. (2022). *Cultivating contact: A guide to building bridges and meaningful connections between groups*. American Immigration Council. https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/cultivating-contact?emci=28972d69-953e-ed11-a27c-281878b83d8a&emdi=1385770c-aa3e-ed11-a27c-281878b83d8a&ceid=9446048

170. Liu, A. & Berube, A. (2021, November 9). *Big cities aren't dividing America. They hold the key to our collective future*. Brookings Institution. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2021/11/09/big-cities-arent-dividing-america-they-hold-the-key-to-our-collective-future/

171. Butler, S. & Diaz, C. (2016, September 14). *"Third places" as community builders*. Brookings Institution. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2016/09/14/third-places-as-community-builders/

172. Putnam, R. (2001). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon and Schuster.

173. Klinenberg, E. (2018). *Palaces for the people: How social infrastructure can help fight inequality, polarization, and the decline of civic life*. Crown Publishing Group.

174. *Pearson's r = 0.507*

175. The Social Cohesion Radar comprises nine measures: social networks, trust in people, acceptance of diversity, identification, trust in institutions, perceptions of fairness, solidarity and helpfulness, respect for social rules, and civic participation. See Dragolov, G., Ignacz, Z., Lorenz, J., Delhey, J., & Boehnke, K. (2012). *Social cohesion radar: Measuring common ground: An international comparison of social cohesion.* Bertelsmann Stiftung. https://aei. pitt.edu/74134/1/Social_cohesion_radar.pdf. The IPSOS Social Cohesion Index (ISCI) is a combination of nine measures: people trust, shared priorities, diversity, identification, system trust, fairness, helping others, respecting laws, and corruption. See IPSOS. (2020, October). *Social cohesion in the pandemic age: A global perspective.* https://www.ipsos.com/sites/ default/files/ct/news/ documents/2020-11/a_global_perspective_of_social_cohesion_in_the_ pandemic_age.pdf

176. Knack, S., & Keefer, P. (1997). Does social capital have an economic payoff? A cross-country investigation. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 112*(4), 1251-1288. https:// www.jstor.org/stable/2951271; and, National Conference on Citizenship. (2012). *Civic health and unemployment II: The case builds.* https://www.ncoc.org/wp-content/ uploads/2011/09/2012IssueBrief_CivicHealth_UnemploymentII.pdf

177. Kim, M., & Cho M. (2019). Examining the role of sense of community: Linking local government public relationships and community-building. *Public Relations Review, 45*(2), 297-306. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2019.02.002; Warner, M. (2001). Building social capital: The role of local government. *The Journal of Socio-Economics, 30*(2), 187-192. https://doi. org/10.1016/S1053-5357(00)00105-0; *Scorecard for shared prosperity: Measuring change to drive collective action.* (2020). Civic Commons. https://www.civic-commons.org/scorecard-for-shared-prosperity

178. United Nations Development Programme. (2020). *Strengthening social cohesion: Conceptual framing and programming implications*. https://www.undp.org/publications/strengthening-social-cohesion-conceptual-framing-and-programming-implications

179. National Conference on Citizenship. (2011). *Civic health and unemployment: Can engagement strengthen the economy?* https://ncoc.org/wp-content/ uploads/2015/04/2011UnemploymentCHI.pdf

180. Putnam, R. (2000). Bowling alone: America's declining social capital. In L. Crothers & C. Lockhart (Eds.), *Culture and politics: A reader* (pp. 223-234). Palgrave Macmillan. https://link. springer.com/book/10.1007/978-1-349-62397-6

181. Jackson, C., & Ballard, N. (2018, May 1). *Over half of Americans report feeling like no one knows them well.* IPSOS. https://www.ipsos.com/en-us/news-polls/us-loneliness-index-report

182. Bishop, B. (2008). *The big sort: Why the clustering of like-minded Americans is tearing us apart.* Houghton-Mifflin. https://www.goodreads.com/en/book/show/2569072

183. About three quarters of Americans trusted the US government to do the right thing in 1958, as compared to 21% who trust it "most of the time" or "just about always" today. See: *Public trust in government: 1958-2022.* (2022, June 6). Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.

org/politics/2023/09/19/public-trust-in-government-1958-2023/. For a discussion of the decline in social, institutional, and political trust, see: Brooks, D. (2020, October 5). America is having a moral convulsion. *The Atlantic*. https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/10/collapsing-levels-trust-are-devastating-america/616581/

184. Christakis, N. A., & Fowler, J. H. (2013). Social contagion theory: Examining dynamic social networks and human behavior. *Stat Med, 32*(4), 556-77. https://doi.org/10.1002/sim.5408

185. [Mean (*SD*)] for belonging scores across life settings: Family Belonging [3.719 (0.928)]; Friend Belonging [3.688 (0.789)]; Workplace Belonging [3.299 (0.872)]; Local Belonging [3.167 (0.761)]; National Belonging [3.268 (0.763)]

186. See endnote #26 on the relationship between demographic factors and local belonging.

187. A linear regression established that subjective socioeconomic status, having a faith tradition, identifying as white, the extent to which someone feels that they are treated as less than others in local settings, the frequency of experiencing stress, the frequency of engaging in civic commitments, educational experience, and living in an urban vs rural area could statistically significantly predict local belonging, $F(8, 3,416) = 168.154$, $p < .001$, large effect size, and subjective socioeconomic status, having a faith tradition, identifying as white, the extent to which someone feels that they are treated as less than others in local settings, the frequency of experiencing stress, the frequency of engaging in civic commitments, educational experience, and living in an urban vs rural area accounted for 28.3% of the explained variability in local belonging. The regression equation was: predicted local belonging = 4.246 + 0.027 x (subjective socioeconomic status) + 0.157 x (having a faith tradition) - 0.065 x (identifying as white) - 0.166 x (the extent to which someone feels that they are treated as less than others in local settings) - 0.211 x (the frequency of experiencing stress) + 0.072 x (the frequency of engaging in civic commitments) - 0.048 x (educational experience) - 0.050 x (living in a more rural area).

188. Standardized betas: local = 0.230, friends = 0.186, work = 0.152, nation = 0.116, family = 0.109

189. Standardized betas: local = 0.347, nation = 0.257, friends = 0.222, work = 0.202, family = 0.186

190. Standardized betas: local = 0.586, nation = 0.350, work = 0.267, family = 0.249 friends = 0.222

191. Standardized betas: local = 0.432, nation = 0.387, work = 0.276, family = 0.234, friends = 0.206

192. Standardized betas: local = 0.480, work = 0.338, nation = 0.333, friends = 0.315, family = 0.297

193. Standardized betas: local = 0.618, nation = 0.393, work = 0.345, friends = 0.316, family = 0.283

194. A linear regression established that the extent to which someone feels that they are treated as less than others in local settings could statistically significantly predict feelings of local marginalization, $F(1, 4,795) = 333.459$, $p < .001$, medium effect size, and the extent to which someone feels that they are treated as less than others in local settings accounted for 6.5% of the explained variability in local marginalization. The regression equation was: predicted local marginalization = 2.073 + 0.148 x (the extent to which someone feels that they are treated as less than others in local settings).

195. Much attention has been paid across disciplines to the underlying causes and dynamics of anxiety about demographic change, specifically among some white Americans. While it is

beyond the immediate scope of this report to delve more deeply into the root causes and dynamics of this perception of identity threat, we would be remiss not to note that these types of demographic fears (particularly racism and xenophobia) have been created and exploited throughout U.S. history (including, increasingly, in recent years) as a key strategy for authoritarian, anti-democratic actors.

196. See endnote #31 on the relationship between race, neighborhood diversity, and local belonging and agreement with the sentiment that more neighborhood diversity is beneficial.

197. See Levitsky, S., & Ziblatt, D. (2019). *How democracies die.* Penguin Books. See also Kleinfeld, R. (2022, September 15). *Five strategies to support U.S. democracy* [Working paper]. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/09/15/five-strategies-to-support-u.s.-democracy-pub-87918

198. Boese, V. A., Alizada, N., Lundstedt, M., Morrison, K., Natsika, N., Sato, Y., Tai, H., & Lindberg, S. I. (2022). *Autocratization changing nature? Democracy report 2022.* Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem). https://v-dem.net/media/publications/dr_2022.pdf; and, Economist Intelligence Unit. (2021). *Democracy index 2021: The China challenge.* https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2021; International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. (2021). *The global state of democracy report 2021: Building resilience in a pandemic era.* https://www.idea.int/gsod-2021/sites/default/files/2021-11/global-state-of-democracy-2021.pdf; and Freedom House (2021). *Freedom in the world 2021: Democracy under siege.* https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2021/democracy-under-siege

199. More thorough renderings of our nation's current challenges are available elsewhere. For an example, see: Coleman, P. (2022). *The way out: How to overcome toxic polarization.* Columbia University Press. Over Zero offers a range of relevant reports at: https://www.projectoverzero.org/media-and-publications.

200. Arendt, H. (1973). *The origins of totalitarianism.* Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.

201. Gruber, J. (2022, September 16). All the lonely people: Why Americans' isolation is a threat to our democracy. *USA Today.* https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2022/09/16/how-loneliness-breeds-resentment-threatens-american-democracy/8004713001/?gnt-cfr=1

202. Not belonging to society at all, or belonging to factional or polarized groups but not an overarching polity, may lead to disinterest or distrust in information from civic sources (other than one's ingroup). In terms of extremism, it is worth considering the way that belonging overlaps with the "quest for significance" theory, where extreme behavior is more likely under psychological conditions that induce a search for significance and social recognition. See Jasko, K., Webber, D., Kruglanski, A. W., Gelfand, M., Taufiqurrohman, M., Hettiarachchi, M., & Gunaratna, R. (2020). Social context moderates the effects of quest for significance on violent extremism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 118*(6), 1165–1187. https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000198

203. Miller, C., & Rivas, R. (2021). *The year in hate and extremism: Report 2021.* Southern Poverty Law Center. https://www.splcenter.org/20220309/year-hate-extremism-report-2021

204. Office of the Director of National Intelligence. (2021, March 1). *Domestic violent extremism poses heightened threat in 2021*. https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/UnclassSummaryofDVEAssessment-17MAR21.pdf

205. U.S. Department of Homeland Security. *FAQ sheet: What are risk factors and indicators?* https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/risk_factors_and_indicators.pdf. See also: Bushman, B. J., Coyne, S. M., Anderson, C. A., Björkqvist, K., Boxer, P., Dodge, K. A., Dubow, E. F., Farrington, D. P., Gentile, D. A., Huesmann, L. R., Lansford, J. E., Novaco, R. W., Ostrov, J. M., Underwood, M. K., Warburton, W. A., & Ybarra, M. L. (2018). Risk factors for youth violence: Youth violence commission, International Society for Research on Aggression (ISRA). *Aggressive Behavior, 44*(4), 331-336. https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.21766

206. Vergani, M., Iqbal, M., Ilbahar, E., & Barton, G. (2020). The three Ps of radicalization: Push, pull and personal. A systematic scoping review of the scientific evidence about radicalization into violent extremism. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 43*(10), 854-854. https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2018.1505686

207. Hawkins, S., Yudkin, D., Juan-Torres, M., Dixon, T. (2018). *Hidden tribes: A study of America's polarized landscape*. More in Common. https://hiddentribes.us/media/qfpekz4g/hidden_tribes_report.pdf

208. See the work of Beyond Conflict on how Democrats and Republicans overestimate the gap between them on major issues as well as feelings of like and dislike: Moore-Berg, S. L., Ankori-Karlinsky, L., Hameiri, B., & Bruneau, E. (2020). Exaggerated meta-perceptions predict intergroup hostility between American political partisans. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, 117*(26) 14864-14872. https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/d6bpe. The video inspired by this work, which was designed to reduce toxic polarization between Democrats and Republicans, was named a top intervention by The Strengthening Democracy Challenge at Stanford University. See the video: Beyond Conflict. (2022, October 4). *America's divided mind: Video intervention* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QzDGV1p_u_E

209. Public Religion Research Institute. (2017, May 9). *New PRRI/The Atlantic survey analysis finds cultural displacement—not economic hardship—more predictive of white working-class support for Trump* [Press release]. https://www.prri.org/press-release/white-working-class-attitudes-economy-trade-immigration-election-donald-trump/

210. Rainie, L., & Perrin, A. (2019, July 22). *Key findings about Americans' declining trust in government and each other.* Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/07/22/key-findings-about-americans-declining-trust-in-government-and-each-other/

211. See: Goodman, R., & Sang-Min, K. (2022, September). *Citizens guide to January 6th and ongoing threats to democracy.* Just Security and Protect Democracy. https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/22415614-jan6-citizens-guide_final?responsive=1&title=1; DFRLab (2021, February 10). *#StopTheSteal: Timeline of social media and extremist activities leading to 1/6 insurrection.* Just Security. https://www.justsecurity.org/74622/stopthesteal-

timeline-of-social-media-and-extremist-activities-leading-to-1-6-insurrection/; Homans, C. (2022, July 28). How 'Stop the Steal' captured the American right. *The New York Times Magazine.* https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/19/magazine/stop-the-steal.html. To this day, a significant wing of a major political party still contests "what happened" during the attack and resists accountability for those responsible—in some cases even celebrating those who were arrested as "political prisoners." See: Over Zero, New America, and Protect Democracy. (2022). *Sacred values, willingness to sacrifice, and accountability for the capitol insurrection: Exploring how deeply and why Americans hold their January 6-related views.* https://www.projectoverzero.org/media-and-publications/opportunitiesforaccountability

212. Bartels, L. M. (2020). Ethnic antagonism erodes Republicans' commitment to democracy. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, 117*(37), 22752-22759. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2007747117. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and George Floyd's death, Bartels surveyed Republicans and found that 40% agreed that "a time will come when patriotic Americans have to take the law into their own hands," and 47% agreed that "strong leaders sometimes have to bend the rules in order to get things done." This kind of anti-democratic support did not correlate with support for the GOP, but was instead associated with a sense that "the traditional American way of life is disappearing so fast that we may have to use force to save it," and "discrimination against whites is as big a problem today as discrimination against blacks and other minorities." Since 2020, there has been a debate over methods used in studies asserting an increase in American support for political violence. See Kalmoe, N. P., & Mason, L. (2022). *Radical American partisanship: Mapping violent hostility, its causes, & the consequences for democracy*. University of Chicago Press; and, Westwood, S. J., Grimmer, J.,Tyler, M., & Nall, C. Current research overstates American support for political violence. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, 119*(12). https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2116870119

213. A linear regression established that age, whether someone practices a religion and the importance of that religion, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and gender could statistically significantly predict national belonging, $F_{(6, 3356)} = 81.894$, $p < .001$, medium effect size; and age, whether someone practices a religion and the importance of that religion, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and gender accounted for 12.8% of the explained variability in national belonging. The regression equation was: predicted national belonging = 2.097 + 0.008 x (age) + 0.239 x (whether someone practices a religion) + 0.042 (importance of that religion) + 0.100 x (socioeconomic status) + 0.199 x (whether someone identifies as heterosexual [straight]) + 0.053 x (whether someone identifies as a man).

214. Standardized betas: nation = 0.646, local = 0.321, work = 0.239, family = 0.232, friends = 0.134

215. A binomial logistic regression was performed to ascertain the effect of national belonging on the likelihood of agreement that our system of governance is beyond repair. The logistic regression model was statistically significant, $\chi^2_{(1)} = 268.58$, $p < .001$, small effect size (odds ratio of 0.355, 95% confidence interval of 0.311 and 0.406). The model explained 15.8% (Nagelkerke R2) of the variance in the likelihood of agreement that our system of governance

is beyond repair and correctly classified 74.8% of cases. The predictor variable (national belonging) was statistically significant. Increasing national belonging was associated with a decreased likelihood of agreement that our system of governance is beyond repair.

216. See endnote #22 on the relationship between national belonging and the sentiment that non-democratic forms of government are sometimes preferable.

217. VanAlstine, J., Cox, S. R., and Roden, D. M. (2015). Cultural diversity in the United States and its impact on human development. *Journal of the Indiana Academy of the Social Sciences, 18*(1), 125-143. https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/jiass/vol18/iss1/10

218. Hewlett, S., Marshall, M., and Sherbin, L. (2013). *How diversity can drive innovation*. Harvard Business Review. https://hbr.org/2013/12/how-diversity-can-drive-innovation. Also, a 2015 McKinsey report on 366 public companies found that those in the top quartile for ethnic and racial diversity in management were 35% more likely to have financial returns above their industry mean. See: Hunt, D., Layton, D., & Prince, S. (2015, January 1). *Why diversity matters.* McKinsey & Co. https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/why-diversity-matters. In another study, those companies in the top quartile for gender diversity were 15% more likely to have returns above the industry mean. Rock, D., & Grant, H. (2016, December 4). *Why diverse teams are smarter.* Harvard Business Review. https://hbr.org/2016/11/why-diverse-teams-are-smarter

219. VanAlstine, J., Cox, S. R., and Roden, D. M. (2015). Cultural diversity in the United States and its impact on human development. *Journal of the Indiana Academy of the Social Sciences, 18*(1), 125-143. https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/jiass/vol18/iss1/10

220. Lynch, A. (2016). *Why is genetic diversity important?* Climate Adaptation Science Centers. https://www.usgs.gov/news/why-genetic-diversity-important

221. Levine, S., Apfelbaum, E., Bernard, M. & Stark, D. (2014). Ethnic diversity deflates price bubbles. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, 111*(52), 18524-18529. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1407301111

222. Phillips, K. W., Liljenquist, K. A., & Neale, M. A. (2009). Is the pain worth the gain? The advantages and liabilities of agreeing with socially distinct newcomers. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 35*(3), 336–350. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167208328062

223. Nathan, M. & Lee, N. (2013). Cultural diversity, innovation, and entrepreneurship: Firm-level evidence from London. *Economic Geography, 89*(4), 367-394. https://doi.org/10.1111/ecge.12016 and Díaz-García, C., González-Moreno, A. & Jose Sáez-Martínez, F. (2013). Gender diversity within R&D teams: Its impact on radicalness of innovation. *Innovation, 15*(2), 149-160. https://doi.org/10.5172/impp.2013.15.2.149

224. See endnote #30 on the relationship between having diverse friendships and experiences of friend belonging.

225. See endnote #147 for the relationship between friendship belonging and feelings of being marginalized at the national level.

226. See endnote #17 for the relationship between local belonging and feelings of being marginalized at the local level.

227. See endnote #194 for the relationship between feelings of being treated as less than others and feelings of being marginalized at the local level.

228. See endnote #19 for the relationship between local belonging and agreement that more neighborhood diversity is beneficial.

229. A linear regression established that family belonging could statistically significantly predict feelings of local marginalization, $F(1, 4,795) = 89.777$, $p < .001$, small effect size, and family belonging accounted for 1.8% of the explained variability in local marginalization. The regression equation was: predicted local marginalization = 2.983 - 0.122 x (family belonging). A linear regression established that friend belonging could statistically significantly predict feelings of local marginalization, $F(1, 4,795) = 261.027$, $p < .001$, small effect size, and friend belonging accounted for 5.2% of the explained variability in local marginalization. The regression equation was: predicted local marginalization = 3.416 - 0.241 x (friend belonging). A linear regression established that workplace belonging could statistically significantly predict feelings of local marginalization, $F(1, 4,795) = 97.483$, $p < .001$, small effect size, and workplace belonging accounted for 2.0% of the explained variability in local marginalization. The regression equation was: predicted local marginalization = 2.975 - 0.135 x (workplace belonging). A linear regression established that local belonging could statistically significantly predict feelings of local marginalization, $F(1, 4,795) = 481.110$, $p < .001$, medium effect size, and local belonging accounted for 9.1% of the explained variability in local marginalization. The regression equation was: predicted local marginalization = 3.579 - 0.331 x (local belonging). A linear regression established that national belonging could statistically significantly predict feelings of local marginalization, $F(1, 4,795) = 139.790$, $p < .001$, small effect size, and national belonging accounted for 2.8% of the explained variability in local marginalization. The regression equation was: predicted local marginalization = 3.131 - 0.184 x (national belonging).

230. Correlations between all five belonging barometer scores (*Pearson's r*): Family and friend belonging (0.319); Family and work belonging (0.305); Family and local belonging (0.341); Family and national belonging (0.350); Friends and work belonging (0.341); Friends and local belonging (0.383); Friends and national belonging (0.281); Work and local belonging (0.441); Work and national belonging (0.387); Local and national belonging (0.507)

231. A linear regression established that the extent to which someone feels that they are treated as less than others in local settings could statistically significantly predict local belonging, $F(1, 4,795) = 768.446$, $p < .001$, large effect size, and the extent to which someone feels that they are treated as less than others in local settings accounted for 13.8% of the explained variability in local belonging. The regression equation was: predicted local belonging = 3.773 - 0.197 x (the extent to which someone feels that they are treated as less than others in local settings).

232. A linear regression established that the extent to which someone feels that they are treated as less than others in local settings could statistically significantly predict national belonging, $F(1, 4,795) = 509.466$, $p < .001$, medium effect size, and the extent to which someone feels that they are treated as less than others in local settings accounted for 9.6% of the explained variability in national belonging. The regression equation was: predicted national belonging =

3.774 - 0.164 x (the extent to which someone feels that they are treated as less than others in local settings).

233. A linear regression established that the extent to which someone feels that they are treated as less than others in local settings could statistically significantly predict workplace belonging, $F(1, 4,795) = 271.304$, $p < .001$, small effect size, and the extent to which someone feels that they are treated as less than others in local settings accounted for 5.4% of the explained variability in workplace belonging. The regression equation was: predicted workplace belonging = 3.731 - 0.140 x (the extent to which someone feels that they are treated as less than others in local settings).

234. A linear regression established that the extent to which someone feels that they are treated as less than others in local settings could statistically significantly predict friend belonging, $F(1, 4,795) = 218.531$, $p < .001$, small effect size, and the extent to which someone feels that they are treated as less than others in local settings accounted for 4.4% of the explained variability in friend belonging. The regression equation was: predicted friend belonging = 4.040 - 0.114 x (the extent to which someone feels that they are treated as less than others in local settings).

235. A linear regression established that the extent to which someone feels that they are treated as less than others in local settings could statistically significantly predict family belonging, $F(1, 4,795) = 225.5$, $p < .001$, small effect size, and the extent to which someone feels that they are treated as less than others in local settings accounted for 4.5% of the explained variability in family belonging. The regression equation was: predicted family belonging = 4.140 - 0.137 x (the extent to which someone feels that they are treated as less than others in local settings).

236. Walton, G. M., & Brady, S. T. (2017). The many questions of belonging. In A. J. Elliot, C. S. Dweck, & D. S. Yeager (Eds.), *Handbook of competence and motivation: Theory and application* (2nd ed., pp. 272–293). The Guilford Press.

237. See endnote #1 on the relationship between one's highest belonging score across life settings and general health.

238. See endnote #4 on the relationship between one's highest belonging score across life settings and the frequency with which one experiences stress.

239. As measured by the likelihood of recommending their job to a friend or family member. See endnote #7 on the relationship between workplace belonging and the likelihood of recommending one's job.

240. See endnote #8 on the relationship between local belonging and satisfaction with one's local community.

241. See endnotes #9-#13 on the relationships between local belonging and trust in fellow humans and local or U.S. government.

242. See endnote #14 on the relationship between local belonging and the extent to which one engages in civic commitments.

243. See endnote #17 on the relationship between local belonging and agreement with statements indicative of feelings of local marginalization.

244. See endnote #22 on the relationship between national belonging and the sentiment that non-democratic forms of government may be sometimes preferable.

245. See endnote #21 on the relationship between national belonging and satisfaction with democracy in the United States.

246. See endnote #230 on the relationship between belonging across life settings and feelings of local marginalization.

247. See endnotes #23-27 on the relationships between demographic factors and experiences of belonging across life settings.

248. See endnote #229 on the relationships between feeling treated less than others and experiences of belonging across life settings.

249. See endnote #29 on the relationship between demographic factors and feeling as though one is treated as less than others.

250. See endnotes #23-27 on the relationships between demographic factors and experiences of belonging across life settings.

251. While it is outside the scope of this report to suggest pathways for addressing group-based differences like this, **targeted universalism** was designed with these issues in mind. Developed by john a. powell at UC Berkeley, the idea behind targeted universalism is that universal societal goals can be achieved when the strategies used to pursue them are targeted by groups and based on how different groups are situated within systems, culture, and across geographies. See: powell, j. a., Menendian, S., & Ake, W. (2019, May). *Targeted universalism: Policy & practice*. Othering & Belonging Institute. https://belonging.berkeley.edu/targeted-universalism

252. See Endnote #23 on the correlations between belonging scores across all five life settings.

253. Brummelman, E., Thomaes, S., Walton, G., Reijntjes, A., Orobio de Castro, B., & Sedikides, C. (2016). *Addressing people by name reduces their loneliness, even months later: Evidence from inside and outside the laboratory.* [Unpublished manuscript].

254. Walton, G. M., & Cohen, G. L. (2011). A brief social-belonging intervention improves academic and health outcomes of minority students. Science, 331. 1447-1451. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1198364

255. Cheryan, S., Siy, J., Vichayapai, M., Drury, B., & Kim, S. (2011). Do female and male role models who embody STEM stereotypes hinder women's anticipated success in STEM? *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 2*(6). https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550611405218

256. Walton, G. M., & Brady, S. T. (2017). The many questions of belonging. In A. J. Elliot, C. S. Dweck, & D. S. Yeager (Eds.), *Handbook of competence and motivation: Theory and application* (2nd ed., pp. 272–293). The Guilford Press. In addition, Greg Walton and his team have also created a searchable database of psychologically "wise" interventions—some of which are focused on belonging—meant to help people flourish. See: Walton, G., Wilson, T., Ospina, J., & Guzman, C. *Wise interventions: A searchable database*. Mindset Scholars Network. https://www.wiseinterventions.org/database

257. Walton, G. M., & Brady, S. T. (2017). The many questions of belonging. In A. J. Elliot, C. S. Dweck, & D. S. Yeager (Eds.), *Handbook of competence and motivation: Theory and application* (2nd ed., pp. 272–293). The Guilford Press.

258. Walton, G. M., & Brady, S. T. (2017). The many questions of belonging. In A. J. Elliot, C. S. Dweck, & D. S. Yeager (Eds.), *Handbook of competence and motivation: Theory and application* (2nd ed., pp. 272–293). The Guilford Press.

259. Walton, G. M., & Brady, S. T. (2017). The many questions of belonging. In A. J. Elliot, C. S. Dweck, & D. S. Yeager (Eds.), *Handbook of competence and motivation: Theory and application* (2nd ed., pp. 272–293). The Guilford Press.

260. Hausmann, L., Ye, F., Schofield, J. & Woods, R. (2009). Sense of belonging and persistence in white and African American first-year students. *Research in Higher Education, 50*(7), 649-669. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-009-9137-8

261. Covarrubias, R., & Fryberg, S. A. (2015.) The impact of self-relevant representations on school belonging for Native American students. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 21*(1), 10-18. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0037819. This leads Walton & Brady to write, "When there is a risk of group-based devaluation, generic efforts to promote affiliation may be less effective." See: Walton, G. M., & Brady, S. T. (2017). The many questions of belonging. In A. J. Elliot, C. S. Dweck, & D. S. Yeager (Eds.), *Handbook of competence and motivation: Theory and application* (2nd ed., pp. 272–293). The Guilford Press. In fact, for those involved in bridging work, the act of bringing people together across differences is fundamental to what they do. Here, too, science offers some best practices for establishing contact imbued with belonging, and the following lessons come from the social contact literature: 1) Balance participation (work to recruit similar numbers of people from different groups), 2) Make sure participants engage as equals, 3) Ensure multiple interactions, 4) Work towards shared goals, and 5) Establish organizational support for these processes. See Tropp, L. R. & Dehrhone, T. A. (2022, September 27). *Cultivating contact: A guide to building bridges and meaningful connections between groups.* American Immigration Council. https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/cultivating-contact?emci=28972d69-953e-ed11-a27c-281878b83d8a&emdi=1385770c-aa3e-ed11-a27c-281878b83d8a&ceid=9446048

262. Walton, G. M., & Brady, S. T. (2017). The many questions of belonging. In A. J. Elliot, C. S. Dweck, & D. S. Yeager (Eds.), *Handbook of competence and motivation: Theory and application* (2nd ed., pp. 272–293). The Guilford Press

Appendix

***Descriptive data and graphs for belonging throughout the life settings are provided <u>here</u>.**

Methods

The Belonging Barometer Items per Life Setting

Below, we list the question items for each life setting. Responses were given on a 1-5 scale (1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree). All items were counterbalanced. Statements with an asterisk (*) represent negatively worded items, a method that enables us to confirm response/data quality—these were reverse-scored in analysis.

Family Belonging

Think about how you feel when you are with your family. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

> I feel emotionally connected to my family.
> Family members welcome and include me in family activities.
> I feel <u>unable</u> to influence decisions within my family.*
> I feel <u>unable</u> to be my whole and authentic self with members of my family.*
> Family members value me and my contributions.
> My relationships with family members are as satisfying as I want them to be.
> I feel like an "insider" who understands how my family works.
> I am comfortable expressing my opinions within my family.
> I feel like I am treated as "<u>less than</u>" other family members.*
> When I'm with my family, I feel like I truly belong.

Friend Belonging

Think about how you feel when you are with your closest friends. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

> I feel emotionally connected to my friends.
> My friends welcome and include me in activities.
> I feel <u>unable</u> to influence collective decisions within my friend-group.*
> I feel <u>unable</u> to be my whole and authentic self with my friends.*
> My friends value me and my contributions.
> My relationships with my friends are as satisfying as I want them to be.
> I feel like an "insider" who understands how my friend-group works.
> I am comfortable expressing my opinions amongst my friends.
> I feel like I am treated as "<u>less than</u>" other friends.*
> When I'm with my closest friends, I feel like I truly belong.

Workplace Belonging

Think about your relationship with your coworkers. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

I feel emotionally connected to my company or organization.

My co-workers welcome and include me in activities.

I feel <u>unable</u> to influence collective decisions at my company or organization.*

I feel <u>unable</u> to be my whole and authentic self with my coworkers.*

My co-workers value me and my contributions.

My relationships with my co-workers are as satisfying as I want them to be.

I feel like an "insider" who understands how my company works.

I am comfortable expressing my opinions with my co-workers.

I feel like I am treated as "<u>less than</u>" other employees at my workplace.*

When I'm with my co-workers, I feel like I truly belong.

Local Belonging

Think about your relationship to [name of respondent's local community]. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

I feel emotionally connected to [name of respondent's local community].

People in [name of respondent's local community] welcome and include me in activities.

I feel <u>unable</u> to influence local decision-making in [name of respondent's local community].*

I feel <u>unable</u> to be my whole and authentic self with people in [name of respondent's local community].*

People in [name of respondent's local community] value me and my contributions.

My relationships with others in [name of respondent's local community] are as satisfying as I want them to be.

I feel like an "insider" who understands how [name of respondent's local community] works.

I am comfortable expressing my opinions in [name of respondent's local community].

I feel like I am treated as "<u>less than</u>" other residents in [name of respondent's local community].*

When interacting with people in [name of respondent's local community], I feel like I truly belong.

National Belonging

Think now about how you feel in America. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

I feel emotionally connected to the United States.

I am welcomed and included in activities with other Americans.

I feel unable to influence decisions that affect me in America.*

I feel unable to be my whole and authentic self when interacting with other Americans.*

Americans value the contributions of people like me.

My relationships with other Americans are as satisfying as I want them to be.

I feel like an "insider" who understands how the country works.

I am comfortable expressing my opinions to the average American.

I feel like I am treated as "less than" others in this country.*

I feel like I truly belong in America.

Survey Design

All respondents answered questions about belonging, social cohesion in their local communities, and demographics. As part of the belonging component, each respondent wrote about a time when they experienced belonging OR lack of belonging within one of five life settings: family or friends, workplace, local community, or the nation. We welcome inquiries about our preliminary findings with these data—please contact Over Zero to learn more.

In addition to the core components of belonging, social cohesion, and demographics, respondents were randomly assigned to answer questions from two out of the following three topics:

- **Health:** This included questions related to general health, chronic disease, mental illness, nutrition, drug and alcohol use, stress, loneliness, self-harm, insurance, having a primary care doctor, frequency of hospitalization, frequency of use of pain medication, physical and emotional pain barriers to accomplishing daily tasks, etc.

- **Democracy:** This included questions related to satisfaction with life and democracy in the US, engagement in political news/events, view of Presidential role, support for democracy, national voting participation, trust in democratic institutions, government honesty, national pride, perceptions of the 2020 election, extent of worry about US democracy, and support for political violence.

- **Intergroup Relations:** This included questions related to intergroup threat perceptions, social dominance orientation, social identity-based activism and radicalism, and attitudes towards different societal groups.

With the exception of items in the Belonging Barometer, survey items populating the three sections described above were sourced from commonly used and validated measures from medicine and social science. Two moderate-to-difficult attention-check questions were also interspersed throughout the survey.

Data Collection

YouGov administered the survey to 6,000 respondents from its five million US panelists in November and December of 2021. The survey was administered using its proprietary survey platform, Gryphon. YouGov employed a technique referred to as sample matching to produce the final dataset. Specifically, YouGov overcollected the sample by 10-15%, and then matched these cases back to a sample frame (based on interlocking parameters of age, gender, race, and education) generated by random sampling within the full American Community Survey datafile. The resulting matched dataset was then weighted to account for any differences between matched cases and the sample frame.

Analysis

Data Cleaning

To ensure that respondents were attending to the questions and selecting meaningful answers, we included two "attention check" questions in the survey. These questions asked respondents to select a particular answer choice, for example, "Strongly disagree," to demonstrate that they were reading questions carefully. Only respondents who correctly answered both attention checks were included in analyses for a final sample size of 4,797 respondents.

Regressions

Regression analysis is a statistical tool that allows us to examine many factors simultaneously and understand how each factor uniquely and independently accounts for variation in an outcome of interest. In addition to belonging scores, when we explored demographic and individual factors, our regression models involved the following variables: subjective socioeconomic status, age, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, and immigration status. Note: These regression models are meant to be preliminary explorations of these data—in future reports, we are likely to present findings using more theoretically-informed models. Meanwhile, we encourage subject matter experts who wish to examine these data more deeply to contact Over Zero.

Description of the Sample

We provide descriptive statistics below. Note that the sample size for groups listed in orange font is very small. Because these groups represent less than 1% of the overall sample (e.g., less than 48 responses), they are often omitted from narrative content and graphs in this report. Groups that fall into this category include respondents who identify as neither a woman nor man; respondents who identify as Muslim, Eastern or Greek Orthodox, Buddhist, or Hindu; respondents who identify as asexual; and respondents who identify as Middle Eastern or Native American. When we do include these groups in our observations, we denote them with an asterisk (within this Appendix) and with a disclaimer at the base of the graph.

Survey Sample Demographics, *n* = 4,797	
Characteristic	**% of Sample**
Generation	
Gen Z	10
Millennials	29
Gen X	23
Boomers	30
Silent Generation	8
With which of the following genders do you identify?	
Men	47
Women	52
Other	1
In what sort of place do you currently live?	
Big city	18
Smaller city	17
Suburban area	36
Small town	14
Rural area	15
What is your present religion, if any?	
Agnostic	7
Atheist	9
Buddhist	1
Eastern or Greek Orthodox	<1
Hindu	<1
Jewish	2
Mormon	1
Muslim	<1

Protestant	32
Roman Catholic	17
Nothing in particular	22
Something else	6
Do you consider yourself to be:	
Asexual	<1
Bi/Pansexual	6
Heterosexual (Straight)	86
Homosexual (Gay)	4
Queer	1
Prefer not to answer	2
What racial or ethnic group best describes you?	
Asian	3
Black	9
Hispanic	13
Middle Eastern	<1
Native American	<1
White	68
Two or more races	3
Other	2
Which of these statements best describes your immigration status?	
Third-generation American or longer	60
Second-generation American	20
First-generation American	12
Immigrant citizen	6
Immigrant non-citizen	2
Which of the following describes your employment status right now?	
Working in person or remotely	51
Not working	21
Retired	24
Student	5
How would you judge your own economic situation compared to the average American?	
Much worse	7
Worse	22
Same as	44
Better	23
Much better	4

Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Democrat, Republican, or Independent?	
Democrat	38
Independent	36
Republican	26
Which language do you speak most often at home?	
English	98
Language other than English*	7
*Note: Respondents were able to select both English and another language	
What is your marital status?	
Single, that is, never married	33
Married	43
Long-term cohabitation, but never married	6
Separated, but still legally married	2
Divorced	10
Widowed	6
How many children do you have?	
None	45
One or more	55
What is the highest level of education you have completed?	
Did not graduate from high school	3
High school graduate	30
Some college	21
2-year	10
4-year	23
Postgraduate degree	14
Have you served or are you serving in the military?	
Yes	11
No	89
What most accurately describes your housing situation?	
I fully own it	25
I bought it with the help of a mortgage/loan	29
Part own and part rent (shared ownership)	1
I rent it	32
I live here rent-free	9
I occupy it in some other way	3
I don't have stable housing	1
Does anyone in your household own a gun?	
Yes	34
No	66

Limitations & Future Research

All research has limitations. Below, we list some of the limitations related to this report and to the Belonging Barometer itself.

- **Regarding the measure itself.** One thing that sets belonging apart from other measures of social connectivity is that it can be felt with respect to an environment or a place—it does not require the presence of other people. The Belonging Barometer, however, is a better measure for social settings.

- **This report is sure to raise as many questions as it answers.** Our analyses are largely descriptive, with the exception of a few fairly simple regression models, thus we neither ask nor answer a range of important research questions. Many such questions could be further explored with this dataset, and it is our intention to work with partners to do so. For example:

  ° We did not deeply examine differences in **belonging based on race or religion**. Our regression model used a binary race variable based on whether a respondent identified as white or not. While this serves to illuminate gaps in belonging between those who identify as white compared to those who identify as other races, it obscures differences between respondents of color that will hopefully be examined in the future.

  ° We consistently found that socioeconomic status was one of the best predictors of respondents' reported belonging. This implies that **systemic forces play a major role in belonging** (a finding in line with theories of belongingness). We hope that future partners with subject matter expertise will further examine these data with more theoretically-informed statistical models, and be able to utilize additional survey variables—many of which did not make it into this report—to illuminate why these findings are the case.

  ° While we focused largely on belonging and exclusion, large numbers of Americans score somewhere in between. Future work with this dataset might seek to better characterize those respondents whose composite score reflected **ambiguity.** For example, do these individuals rank some items high and others low, averaging out to neutral? Or do they feel neutral towards the Barometer items generally (e.g., perhaps not feeling that the life setting is relevant for them)? Would these different patterns correspond to different belonging-related outcomes?

  ° This report introduces both **belonging uncertainty**—the idea that you might feel that you have belonging but that it could be taken away at any moment, and **unbelonging**—the sense that you've lost a belonging you once had. These are relevant concepts for anyone trying to understand the role of belonging in U.S. life today, yet we did not yet address them with these data. How can belonging uncertainty

and unbelonging help us to better understand American society at this moment? We note that, as part of our nationally representative survey, we collected vignettes of belonging and lack of belonging across the life settings. It is possible that these qualitative data—in addition to other quantitative variables we did not report on here—could help to answer these questions.

- Future research might also examine some of the conceptual and methodological choices made in this report. For instance, the belonging scale we used for this report divided belonging scores into three equal parts—1-2.33 (exclusion), 2.34-3.66 (ambiguity), and 3.67-5 (belonging). While there is a strong rationale for this breakdown (each third corresponds, on average, to disagreement, neutrality, or agreement on the Barometer items, respectively), the number of Americans who reported belonging according to this scale are relatively low. This prompts a question: Does such a scale set too high a bar for belonging? Or, is it possible that strong belonging is more of an aspirational state and less of a reality for most people? One way to answer these questions would be to compare Barometer scores cross-nationally (to capture the effects of different cultures, social systems, etc.) or longitudinally (to identify changes over time, after significant events, etc.).

Lastly, this report identified some belonging-related associations that should be further clarified, such as:

- In our dataset, family, friend, workplace, and national **belonging increased with age.** However, other studies show that older Americans are at increased risk for social isolation and loneliness. Social connectivity is a correlate of belonging in this dataset, so how might we explain this discrepancy?

- We hope future research will probe further into the association between **being "treated as less than"** in local interactions and reporting non-belonging across all life settings. A better understanding of the patterns related to who is most likely to have these experiences, where they are most likely to happen, and how these interactions come about could help communities address the problem.

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