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# New Gallup Report Shows Americans Believe in Their Communities, but Many Doubt Their Ideas Will Be Heard

*Residents who believe someone would listen to their ideas are more than twice as likely to feel motivated to give back to their communities, but just one in three Americans expect to be heard.*

**WASHINGTON, D.C. — Oct. 28, 2026 —** Gallup and the Walton Family Foundation today released *The Power of Community Voice: How Being Heard Expands Opportunity*, a new report revealing a disconnect between Americans' desire to improve their communities and their confidence that their voices matter. The findings also point to an opportunity: Americans who believe their ideas will be heard are more than twice as likely to feel motivated to give back to their cities and towns.

The survey found that seven in 10 U.S. adults (72%) agree the area where they live is worth investing in, three in five (60%) feel hopeful about its future and half (50%) say their town or city is moving in a positive direction. About half (49%) feel a strong sense of responsibility to help improve their town or city, and 46% feel motivated to give back.

However, far fewer Americans are confident they can help shape local solutions. Fewer than half (42%) agree that people like them have a voice in local decisions that matter, and just one in three (34%) agree that someone would listen if they had an idea to improve their town or city. Four in 10 (40%) neither agree nor disagree, and 26% disagree.

**Being Heard Is Linked to Motivation to Give Back**

Americans who expect someone to listen to their ideas are more likely to want to contribute to their communities. More than two-thirds (71%) of residents who agree someone would listen feel motivated to give back to their communities, compared with 33% of those who neither agree nor disagree or who disagree. Those who expect to be heard are also more likely to agree that their area is worth investing in (85% vs. 65%).

"We believe opportunity grows when people have the power to shape their own futures and a voice in the future of their communities," said Luis Gonzalez, director of communications at the Walton Family Foundation. "That's why we work alongside local leaders and residents to support solutions rooted in their experiences, ideas and aspirations."

**Americans Have Mixed Views of Their Communities' Preparedness**

Confidence that a community is ready for what comes next shows a similar pattern. Four in 10 adults (40%) agree their town or city is prepared to handle future challenges, while 34% neither agree nor disagree and 26% disagree.

Preparedness is closely tied to motivation as well. Six in 10 residents (60%) who agree their community is prepared feel motivated to give back, compared with 36% of those who are neutral or disagree. Those who see their community as prepared are also more likely to say it is worth investing in (88% vs. 60%).

The survey cannot determine which comes first, but the pattern is consistent with Gallup and the Walton Family Foundation's broader research on opportunity. Access to opportunity in America expands when people report a greater sense of self-empowerment and when they are part of resilient communities that offer stronger conditions.

"Americans aren't short on willingness to improve their communities. Half already feel a responsibility to help, and nearly as many feel motivated to act," said Justin Lall, a principal at Gallup. "What's in shorter supply is the belief that it would make a difference. Only a third expect anyone would listen to their ideas, and those who do are more than twice as likely to want to give back. The question for local leaders isn't just whether residents can participate, but whether they have reason to think it matters."

**Younger Adults Are Equally Motivated but Less Positive About Their Communities**

Adults aged 18 to 34 are less likely than adults 55 or older to agree their community is worth investing in (64% vs. 76%), to feel hopeful about its future (54% vs. 66%), to expect someone would listen to their ideas (30% vs. 38%) or to believe their community is prepared for future challenges (38% vs. 45%). Younger adults are also somewhat less likely to say people like them have a voice in local decisions that matter (40% vs. 45%).

Despite these differences, motivation to give back is nearly identical across age groups: 45% of adults aged 18 to 34 feel motivated to contribute, compared with 46% of those aged 35 to 54 and 47% of adults 55 or older. Even among younger Americans who feel less heard and less optimistic about their communities, the desire to contribute remains strong.

The findings suggest that for communities, the challenge is not simply creating ways for residents to participate, but making participation feel meaningful. Many Americans already want to help improve the places where they live. When people believe their voices matter and have meaningful opportunities to contribute, they are more willing to get involved, and a community can draw on that willingness to better shape its future.

To read the full report, visit https://www.gallup.com/analytics/709121/opportunity-in-america.aspx.

**Methodology**

Results are based on a Gallup Panel™ web study completed by 6,732 U.S. adults, aged 18 and older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. All responses were collected between Feb. 26-March 6, 2026. The Gallup Panel is a probability-based panel of U.S. adults who are randomly selected using address-based sampling methodology. Gallup also recruits using random-digit-dial phone interviews that cover landlines and cellphones.

For results based on the overall sample of adults, the margin of sampling error at the 95% confidence level is ±1.5 percentage points for response percentages around 50% and is ±0.9 percentage points for response percentages around 10% or 90%. Margins of error for subgroups are higher. All reported margins of sampling error include computed design effects for weighting. In addition to sampling error,

question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

**About the Walton Family Foundation**

The Walton Family Foundation is, at its core, a family-led foundation. Three generations of the descendants of our founders, Sam and Helen Walton, and their spouses work together to lead the foundation and create access to opportunity for people and communities. We work in three areas: improving education, protecting rivers and oceans and the communities they support, and investing in our home region of Northwest Arkansas and the Arkansas-Mississippi Delta. To learn more, visit waltonfamilyfoundation.org and follow us on Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and X.

**About Gallup**

Gallup delivers analytics and advice to help leaders and organizations solve their most pressing problems. Combining more than 80 years of experience with its global reach, Gallup knows more about the attitudes and behaviors of employees, customers, students and citizens than any other organization in the world.