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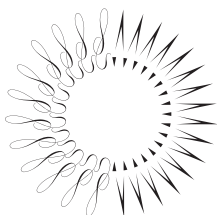
To Help the Earth Endure

Pew joins an ambitious global partnership to help governments, Indigenous peoples, and local communities protect vast regions of lands and waters essential to the future of the planet—and humanity.



Bob Carey/Getty Images

TIME CAPSULE



In 2001, The Pew Charitable Trusts and a network of advocates from nearly 40 states and the District of Columbia partnered with policymakers and researchers to increase the availability and quality of pre-K education programs. The coalition elevated pre-K efforts above partisan politics and brought rigorous research to bear on critical questions of policy, practice, and financing—work that helped lead to significant financial and policy gains. In the states where Pew invested substantially, enrollment increased by almost 470,000 children, accounting for 81% of the total national growth in the number of 4-year-olds signed up for pre-K. And, according to the National Institute for Early Education Research, by 2011—the year Pew released its final report on the subject—total enrollment in pre-K exceeded 1.3 million children nationwide, up from approximately 700,000 in the 2001-02 school year.

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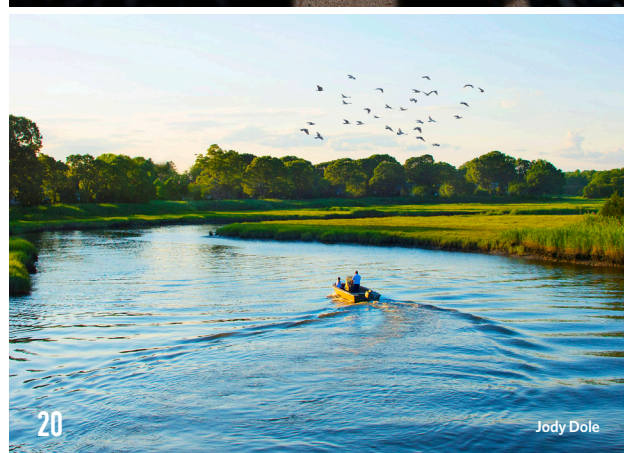
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Cover: Northern lights swirl above a chalet in Yellowknife, the capital of the Northwest Territories in Canada, a focus area of Pew's new Enduring Earth partnership. Ken Phung/Shutterstock

Big Ideas, Big Results



by the end of this decade, covering 1.5 billion acres. The effort will use a model with a proven record of success called project finance for permanence (PFP) and aims to raise \$2 billion within the first five years, with \$600 million of that from philanthropic contributions and the rest from governments. PFPs tie sustained funding to measurable goals, including specific social, environmental, and policy milestones. Five PFP projects have been completed around the world, and one that's in development seeks to build upon the nearly 16% of the Northwest Territories in Canada that Indigenous communities have already protected and deliver accountable progress toward the Canadian government's conservation pledges.

The leadership of Indigenous communities most affected by the protected areas will be central to these efforts. These leaders' knowledge built over generations and their commitment to their lands and waters not only inspires this work but guides it. You'll learn more about this effort and its big—and enduring—impact in this issue.

Estuaries—a mosaic of wetlands, marshes, coastal grasslands, and offshore habitats—make up a small fraction of the Earth's waters but play a critical role in preserving our environment. In 1972, Congress created the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, or NERR, which is a partnership between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and states along the coasts and Great Lakes. Pew has been working to expand both the size and the impact of the NERR network since 2018. As Pew's Tom Wheatley notes in this issue, "Estuarine reserves are incredibly valuable from an economic standpoint, as a barometer of climate change, and as an educational tool."

More than 200 species of birds and 120 species of fish live, feed, and reproduce in Connecticut's estuaries. To help protect this valuable ecosystem, 52,000 acres along Connecticut's southeastern shore recently became the nation's 30th NERR. This new reserve is expected to bring big results, including a better understanding of climate change and the economic value of estuaries, and foster diversity, equity, and inclusion for underserved communities along the shoreline. You'll find the full story of Connecticut's new NERR in the following pages.

Democracy, of course, is itself a big idea—that citizens determine their own governance by voting. But

it is an idea under stress as people who make their voices heard through the ballot box are stressed as well from the pandemic, economic uncertainty, and widespread dissatisfaction with politics as usual. As the Pew Research Center discovered in a 2021 survey of advanced economies, public skepticism about the competence and fairness of democratic governments is not limited to the United States. In eight of 17 publics, half or more of those polled said their political system needs major changes or a complete overhaul—and also said they have little or no confidence that the system can be changed effectively. Some of this dissatisfaction with democracy is tied directly to the pandemic. As the Center's Richard Wike and Janell Fetterolf point out in *Trust*, "People who believe their country is doing a poor job dealing with the pandemic are consistently more likely to say they're dissatisfied with the way their democracy is working."

Criticizing representative democracy or even feeling less than enthusiastic about it is not the same as giving up on democracy. In fact, Wike and Fetterolf point out that many people want more democracy and a stronger role "in making decisions about the important issues that shape their lives." That would certainly be a big and positive change as the pandemic recedes and the work of strengthening democracy around the world moves forward.

Not every big idea leads to a big result. But we can make progress on every significant challenge—from protecting oceans and conserving critical ecosystems to improving government effectiveness and rebuilding public confidence in the democratic process—when we follow the facts, apply our best scientific knowledge, and work in partnership.

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THE BIG PICTURE

The massive Garibaldi glacier dwarfs travelers aboard an inflatable boat who have come to explore this region of Chilean Patagonia in the Alberto de Agostini National Park, where the Andes, the world's longest continental mountain chain, meets the ocean. The Pew Charitable Trusts has partnered with Chilean nongovernmental organizations, universities, and governmental agencies to help preserve Patagonia's remarkable natural resources.

Jeff Mauritzen/Getty Images



King penguins congregate in the French Southern and Antarctic Lands, home to the species' largest colony. Bruno Marie

Summit Yields New Ocean Protections

BY CAROL KAUFMANN

World leaders pledged to adopt new marine protections in an area ranging from the tropical South Pacific Ocean to the frigid Southern Ocean during the One Ocean Summit in Brest, France, which convened in February.

French President Emmanuel Macron announced measures that will expand marine protections by about 386,000 square miles (1 million square kilometers) in the Southern Lands marine reserve around three archipelagos—Saint Paul and Amsterdam Islands, the Kerguelen Islands, and the Crozet Islands. These are unpopulated territories rich in biodiversity that are part of the French Southern and Antarctic Lands in the southern Indian Ocean. The expansion creates the largest marine protected area (MPA) in French waters by far, representing about 15% of the country’s global exclusive economic zone, and more than doubles the percentage of French waters that are highly protected.

Also at the conference, French Polynesia President Édouard Fritch committed to creating a new MPA and establishing artisanal fishing zones around 118 islands in the South Pacific Ocean. The MPA, which will protect 193,000 square miles (500,000 square kilometers), has long been supported by local mayors and community members in the archipelago, which President Fritch

acknowledged by calling the area Rāhui Nui, or “big rāhui”—a Tahitian reference to the traditional Polynesian practice of restricting access to an area or resource to conserve it.

The moves mark successes for the Pew Bertarelli Ocean Legacy Project, which has long supported efforts to expand protections in French waters and Polynesia.

In addition, six governments pledged support for the Cape Town Agreement for the Safety of Fishing Vessels, a treaty that will make it easier for countries to deter illegal fishing, identify and investigate fishers who operate outside the law, and help ensure that crews have safe and decent working conditions. When the International Maritime Organisation adopted the treaty a decade ago, it named 2022 as the target year for it to be fully ratified, which will happen when 22 states with a combined fleet of at least 3,600 eligible vessels finalize their ratifications. The commitments made at the summit bring treaty ratification one step closer.

“While this is a major step forward, there’s still more work to be done for the job to be complete,” says Peter Horn, director of The Pew Charitable Trusts’ international fisheries project. “We hope that more countries will be inspired to follow these commitments by ratifying this critical treaty.”

4 Scenarios for Philadelphia’s Recovery

Philadelphia’s economy has been hit hard by the COVID-19 shutdown, with employment down about 5 percentage points more than the nation as a whole. The Pew Charitable Trusts, in collaboration with the William Penn Foundation, has launched “Philadelphia’s Fiscal Future,” a series of reports to explore the various possibilities ahead for the city and its economy. This research aims to provide city officials and civic stakeholders with an understanding of the current baseline of the city’s economy and opportunities for charting a path forward over the next five years.

Pew commissioned Econsult Solutions Inc., a Philadelphia-based firm, to help develop this series. The first report examined how Philadelphia’s economy performed in the decade leading up to March 2020 and the pandemic’s impact on the city’s economy. In the latest report, Econsult developed four potential scenarios for the city’s economic future through mid-2025. Not meant as predictions, the scenarios provide a range of possibilities, quantifying the number of jobs at risk for the city.

The research focused on jobs as a key metric, and two primary unknowns that will affect that number. One is the degree to which in-person activity resumes. The other is how well the city generates and retains new business investment.

Under the first scenario, Overall Growth, the economy sees a high level of in-person activity and business growth, resulting in 774,900 jobs in mid-2025, or up about 36,100 from the pre-pandemic number. In the second, Uneven Gains, the city regains pre-pandemic growth levels in only some parts of the economy, resulting in job totals around 754,500 (up 15,700 from pre-pandemic).

In the third scenario, Competitive Loss, Philadelphia fails to regain its pre-pandemic share of jobs and economic activity, which results in 727,600 jobs (down 11,200 from pre-pandemic). The fourth scenario, Stunted Recovery, has limited growth leading to substantial employment loss, with 704,800 jobs (down some 34,100).

“The scenarios illustrate what’s at stake—70,000 jobs—and the importance of policymaker decisions in setting the course for a post-pandemic recovery,” says Elinor Haider, who directs Pew’s Philadelphia research and policy initiative.

—Demetra Aposporos

More in U.S. Now Religiously Unaffiliated

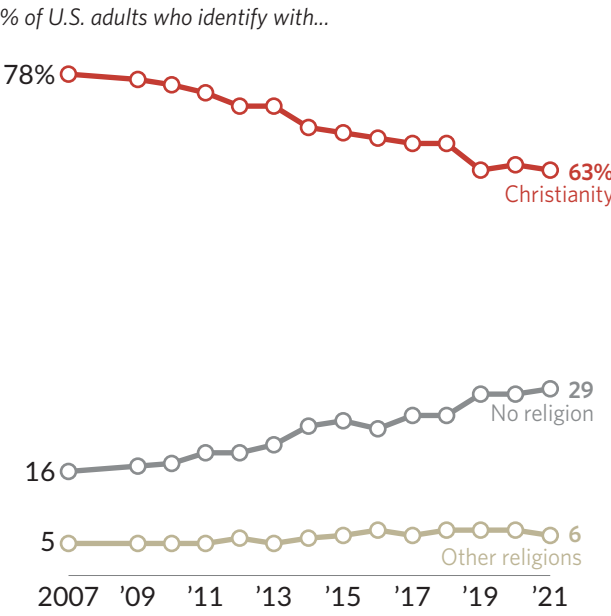
The secularizing shifts evident in American society so far in the 21st century show no signs of slowing. The latest Pew Research Center survey of the religious composition of the United States finds that the religiously unaffiliated share of the public is 6 percentage points higher than it was five years ago and 10 points higher than a decade ago.

Christians continue to make up a majority of the U.S. populace, but their share of the adult population is 12 percentage points lower in 2021 than it was in 2011. In addition, the share of U.S. adults who say they pray on a daily basis has been trending downward, as has the share who say religion is “very important” in their lives.

Currently, about 3 in 10 U.S. adults (29%) are religious “nones”—people who describe themselves as atheists, agnostics, or “nothing in particular” when asked about their religious identity. Self-identified Christians of all varieties (including Protestants, Catholics, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and Orthodox Christians) make up 63% of the adult population. Christians now outnumber religious “nones” by a ratio of a little more than 2 to 1. In 2007, when the Center began asking its current question about religious identity, Christians outnumbered “nones” by almost 5 to 1 (78% vs. 16%).

—Demetra Aposporos

In U.S., roughly 3 in 10 adults now religiously unaffiliated



Source: Pew Research Center



To Help The Earth Endure

A new partnership turns to a proven financing model for vast and lasting conservation that benefits people and nature.

By John Briley

The North Nahanni River winds through the Northwest Territories in Canada, where Enduring Earth will join with the leadership of Indigenous nations whose conservation efforts have already protected nearly 16% of the land of the territory. *Robert Postma/Getty Images*

As a girl growing up in the hamlet of Tulit'a, on the wind-strafed shore of Great Bear Lake—"Sahtu," in the Dene language—in the Northwest Territories of Canada, Ethel Blondin-Andrew led a life inextricably tied to the land, waters, and wildlife of her home.

"My dad traveled by dog team and fished on the lake in the dead of winter," she says. "He hunted, fished, and foraged year-round, no matter where we were. I grew up in clothes made from skins and hides, and we lived on a seasonal diet—lots of birds in the spring and the cache of dry meat and dry fish in the winter. I've always had a lot of respect and admiration for people who could hunt and trap."

Blondin-Andrew, 71, is Shúhtagot'ine (Mountain Dene), born of people who have lived in this sparsely populated sliver of the boreal forest since time immemorial. She went on to be the first Indigenous woman elected to the Parliament of Canada in 1988 and today is a senior adviser with the Indigenous Leadership Initiative (ILI), a group working to advance Indigenous nationhood throughout Canada and help Indigenous people steward their lands and futures and strengthen their communities and culture.

"We've been working for years to regain authority over our lands, and our lives," says Blondin-Andrew. "For way too long we have been a forgotten people to many, but we have persisted here and we know better than others how to care for this place. And we will build a better future for our people."

Central to this effort is protection of the richly biodiverse boreal forest and the lakes, rivers, and communities within it. And although the ILI—with support from the International Boreal Conservation Campaign founded by The Pew Charitable Trusts—has had success in helping to protect vast swaths of ancestral lands, these efforts have run into challenges familiar to similar efforts across the globe, including how to secure sustained funding.

This is one reason Pew has partnered with The Nature Conservancy, WWF, and ZOMALAB—the family office of philanthropists Ben and Lucy Ana Walton—on an initiative to secure large-scale, durable conservation projects including long-term funding and capacity building around the world. The partnership, called Enduring Earth, is founded on the principle that successful projects of any nature require robust conservation and social development targets, thoughtful planning, and sufficient financing, capacity, and

accountability to achieve those targets. Globally, the United Nations Environment Programme has identified a \$4.1 trillion gap between what's needed to secure climate change, biodiversity, and land degradation targets and what's currently invested.

Enduring Earth is built on the success of a model called project finance for permanence. A PFP secures long-term investment in conservation initiatives by tying full and sustained funding to measurable goals, including social and environmental gains, and continuing the financing only if those benchmarks are met.

All the pieces of a proposed conservation initiative—from specific social, environmental, and policy milestones to the long-term financing of the conservation system and a representative and independent governance system to oversee the project—must be in place before donors sign over their investment in the initiative.

This model was first applied to conservation beginning nearly two decades ago with the Great Bear Rainforest project in Canada, which secures 19 million acres of Pacific rainforest and supports First Nation-led economic enterprises tied to the conservation of their lands. That was followed by PFPs in Costa Rica and the Amazon Region Protected Areas project, which safeguards a nearly 150 million-acre network of protected areas in the Brazilian Amazon.

Since then, PFPs have brought durable conservation for protected areas of Peru and Bhutan. And a PFP is in development that builds upon conservation planning efforts by Indigenous nations in the Northwest Territories of Canada—efforts that have already secured the protection of nearly 16% of the land area of the territory.

Enduring Earth is launching this year with ambitious goals: to ensure the long-term protection of up to eight critical ecosystems around the globe over the next five years, with an aspirational goal of securing 20 critical ecosystems—comprising approximately 1.5 billion acres—by 2030. Accomplishing this would contribute greatly to the growing global ambition to protect 30% of Earth's land and ocean by 2030—an effort known as "30 by 30." To meet its goals, Enduring Earth aims to raise \$2 billion within the first five years, with \$600 million of that from philanthropic contributions and the rest from governments.

To decide where these projects would occur, the Enduring Earth team has agreed on a set of criteria, similar in many ways to how Pew chooses to do all of its conservation work. These include selecting areas with high biodiversity, stable governance, and a strong commitment to conservation and high-level political champions; ensuring that each PFP has clear, science-based conservation objectives and associated community development goals; and working with reliable in-country partners, local stakeholders, and

governments, who always play a big role in designing and implementing these efforts. Another key criterion is that, for each PFP, Enduring Earth can identify a clear path for the project to transition from philanthropic funding to 100% in-country financing.

Canada, and the Northwest Territories in particular, are promising places to invest under those criteria. The territory houses the world's largest unpolluted lake, the Great Bear Lake, and North America's deepest freshwater body, the Great Slave Lake (Tucho), along with the fourth-longest undammed river in the world, the Mackenzie River (Dehcho), and the majestic, glacially hewn canyons of Nahanni National Park Reserve.

"When flying over this region, you can't even tell people live here," says Dahti Tsetso, who is Dene and deputy director of the ILI. "That's how well we have taken care of our lands, and we have a responsibility to keep doing so."

The areas protected so far include expansive forests of poplar, spruce, fir, and jack pine, spaces that are home to some of the billions of birds that nest in the Canadian boreal, along with crystal clear lakes and mighty rivers. In 2018, for instance, the Dehcho First Nations led the creation of the Edézhíe Protected Area/National

Wildlife Area, which covers nearly 5,500 square miles of lands within their traditional territory, including the Horn Plateau, Hay River Lowlands, and Great Slave Lake Plain.

Edézhíe also harbors habitat for many at-risk species, including woodland caribou, wolverine, short-eared owl, and wood bison.

Perhaps most importantly, Edézhíe is the first Indigenous protected area that Canada counted toward its international land protection commitments and shows that Indigenous-led conservation can convey benefits far beyond helping nature to thrive.

The Dehcho First Nations, inspired by successful models in other First Nations in Canada as well as similar efforts in Australia, created an Indigenous Guardians program. Community members work in Edézhíe on efforts as varied as disaster response, active land management, and cultural programming.

"The number of jobs is significant," says ILI director Valérie Courtois. For example, northeast of the Dehcho First Nations, the Łutsel K'e Dene First Nation launched the Ni Hat'ni Dene Rangers (which translates to "Watchers of the Land" in the local Dënesųłiné

Right: Under the watchful eye of her grandmother and family matriarch, Catherine Ot'e Blondin, Ethel Blondin-Andrew as an infant is held by a Shúhtaot'ine/Mountain Dene woman named Marie Hahchille outside her grandparents' house in Tulit'a. *Courtesy of Blondin-Andrew*

Bottom: Tulit'a, which in Slavey means "where the rivers or waters meet," is a hamlet in the Sahtu region of the Northwest Territories in Canada located at the junction of the Great Bear River and the Mackenzie River. *Angela Gzowski/NWT Tourism*





Members of Łutsël K'é Dene First Nation gather for a round dance celebrating their successful effort to protect Thaidene Nënë—sacred ground that is one of the largest protected areas in North America, three times the size of Yellowstone National Park. Pat Kane

language). The program employs a dozen people in a community of around 400 on the northeastern arm of Great Slave Lake—which proportionately is the equivalent of hundreds of thousands of jobs in Toronto.

In fact, a 2016 analysis by Social Ventures Australia Consulting of the current and future value of Indigenous Guardians work in the Northwest Territories showed a return on investment of \$2.50 to \$4 for every \$1 spent. “The programs in Łutsel K’e and Dehcho launched just eight years ago, but they already deliver significant social, economic, and environmental benefits,” the analysis found. “With more time and sustained funding, the Łutsel K’e and Dehcho guardians could deliver even more benefits, similar in scale to those achieved by more mature guardian programs in Australia.”

As Courtois notes, “The long-term benefit includes lower rates of suicide, incarceration, violence against women, and better health—less obesity and diabetes, for example. Many northern communities are in need of relief from these deep social ills.”

That’s motivation enough for Indigenous nations to work with Pew, the federal and territorial governments, philanthropists, and other nonprofit partners on developing a PFP that would build on—and help sustain—these gains. But a PFP could also have major implications for fighting climate change and improving the health of the planet: In its peatlands, bogs, and plant life and beneath its vast layer of permafrost, the Northwest Territories stores an estimated 44 billion

tons of carbon—more than is emitted annually from all sources globally.

The prospect of sustaining this protection and replicating it around the world is what excites the Enduring Earth partners, says Pew senior vice president Tom Dillon, who leads the organization’s conservation work and led the development of several PFPs before coming to Pew.

“A main motivation underlying Enduring Earth is to build on each success with a model that communities and governments all over the world can use to achieve their conservation ambitions, instead of starting from scratch every time,” Dillon says. “Indigenous and other local communities have centuries of knowledge and experience in managing their lands and waters. It’s important to us that they benefit directly from these initiatives and that we galvanize government support to make their conservation aspirations durable.”

And history has shown that without local and national buy-in, conservation projects are bound to fail. So a key piece of Enduring Earth and the PFP model in general is to work with partners at both levels to ensure that projects incorporate the leadership of communities most connected to protected areas and enable their ongoing participation and secure long-term government commitments. For its part, the Canadian government has pledged to conserve 25% of its landmass by 2025 and reach the 30% milestone by 2030. Collaboration with Indigenous governments—including those in the

Northwest Territories—will be essential for Canada to meet these targets.

To date, five PFP projects have been completed around the world, protecting about 225 million acres. The Bhutan for Life PFP, for example, provides the country with bridge financing to care for its 10 protected areas, which constitute more than 50% of the country’s landmass, and the biological corridors connecting them. Bhutan, where a government credo states that “gross national happiness is more important than gross domestic product,” is home to dazzling biodiversity—high alpine peaks, lush forests, rushing rivers, and a storybook assortment of wildlife, from tigers and Asiatic elephants to snow leopards and white-bellied herons.

If successful, that 14-year project will help sequester 35.1 million tons of carbon, including through clean-energy projects at the household level, and make one-fifth of Bhutan’s population—mostly poor, rural residents—more resilient to climate change.

The rationale for banding together to launch Enduring Earth is to leverage each partner’s distinct expertise and networks to create a portfolio of PFPs.

“The Enduring Earth partners have come together in recognition that they can accomplish more together than they can alone,” says Zdenka Piskulich, managing director of Enduring Earth and former executive director of Forever Costa Rica, a PFP that enabled the country to become the first developing nation to meet its 30% protected area goals. “While there will be many approaches to reversing the loss of nature and addressing the climate crisis, the Enduring Earth partnership applies a proven solution that can help governments, local leaders, and communities protect nature at scale and in perpetuity.”

WWF has worked on three PFPs, including the ones in Brazil and Bhutan as well as one in Peru, and has an extensive staff on the ground around the world. The Nature Conservancy has long been a leader in innovative conservation financing and has a history of supporting Indigenous-led conservation efforts, including a PFP in the Great Bear rainforest in Canada as well as Forever Costa Rica. ZOMALAB brings expertise in financial analysis and negotiating and a deep commitment to community economic development. And Pew is known for its nonpartisan approach to initiatives and its objective, science-based advocacy in pursuit of large-scale conservation outcomes.

Also, by combining forces in planning, financing, negotiating, and resource mobilization, the four organizations can achieve results faster and on a greater scale than by going it alone.

“Leading scientists have raised alarm about threats to biodiversity around the world,” Dillon says. “We need to act fast and act big, and all of the partners agreed that Enduring Earth is an excellent way to do that.”

Embarking on any large-scale partnership with numerous participants carries risks, and this one is no different. Each group has its own history, institutional culture, and ways of getting things done. That’s why the four organizations have spent so much time crafting a shared-governance structure and specifying responsibilities for how decisions will be made. And, as with any large endeavor today, individual PFPs may face resource constraints from governments that are struggling to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic or other economic downturns.

But the payoff of working through such challenges promises to prove invaluable. Protected areas provide a cornucopia of health, cultural, and other benefits to urban and rural communities alike, including food, drinking water, construction materials, fuel for heating and cooking, and medicines for people living near or inside conserved systems. These areas also spur economic benefits: Nature-based tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors in the world.

A 2015 study supported by the Natural Capital Project at Stanford University found that the world’s protected areas contributed roughly \$600 billion annually to their countries’ economies. In some developing countries, visits to protected areas are among the largest sources of foreign-exchange earnings.

Still, in many places, such progress is tenuous. The Northwest Territories government, for one, has grown accustomed to an economy based on natural resource extraction, so the PFP there, to be successful, must show that an alternate future is viable—for nature and people.

Indigenous leaders, too, face significant issues in their communities that go beyond stewardship of nature, with Courtois noting that “they have to worry about these economic models and how it’s going to work, and have to worry about who has a broken window, who’s in jail, who’s sick.”

The Indigenous residents there know that the future can be built on their knowledge and traditions. Last winter Blondin-Andrew, on one of her frequent forays into the Mackenzie Mountains with her husband, hosted an Indigenous Guardian camp.

“It was minus 50 [Celsius] (minus 58 degrees Fahrenheit), and we slept in a tent,” she recalls. “I woke up with frost on my arm, but these young people were out there working the land, working for the future. We have traveled a long way, and I have hope for the conservation economy, that it can enable people who have been ignored for too long.”

In the end, that’s at the core of Enduring Earth: protecting natural spaces for the ultimate benefit of all life, including humanity.

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John Briley is a staff writer for Trust.

Global Public Opinion in an Era of Democratic Anxiety

“The future of liberal democracy has come into question.”



By Richard Wike and Janell Fetterolf

As democratic nations have wrestled with economic, social, and geopolitical upheaval in recent years, the future of liberal democracy has come into question. In countries across the globe, democratic norms and civil liberties have deteriorated, while populists have enjoyed surprising success at the ballot box. Newly democratic nations have struggled while more-established, once self-assured democracies have stumbled, exposing long-simmering weaknesses in their social fabrics and institutional designs.

These trends have been well-documented by organizations such as the Economist Intelligence Unit, Freedom House, International IDEA, and the Varieties of Democracy project, which measure and track the quality of democracy around the world. Public opinion researchers have also focused on these issues by examining how citizens think about democracy and its alternatives. At the Pew Research Center, we’ve applied a comparative, cross-national lens to explore global trends in attitudes toward political representation and individual rights.

Our international surveys reveal four key insights into how citizens think about democratic governance: For many, democracy is not delivering; people like democracy, but their commitment to it is often not very strong; political and social divisions are amplifying the challenges of contemporary democracy; and people want a stronger public voice in politics and policymaking.

For many, democracy is not delivering

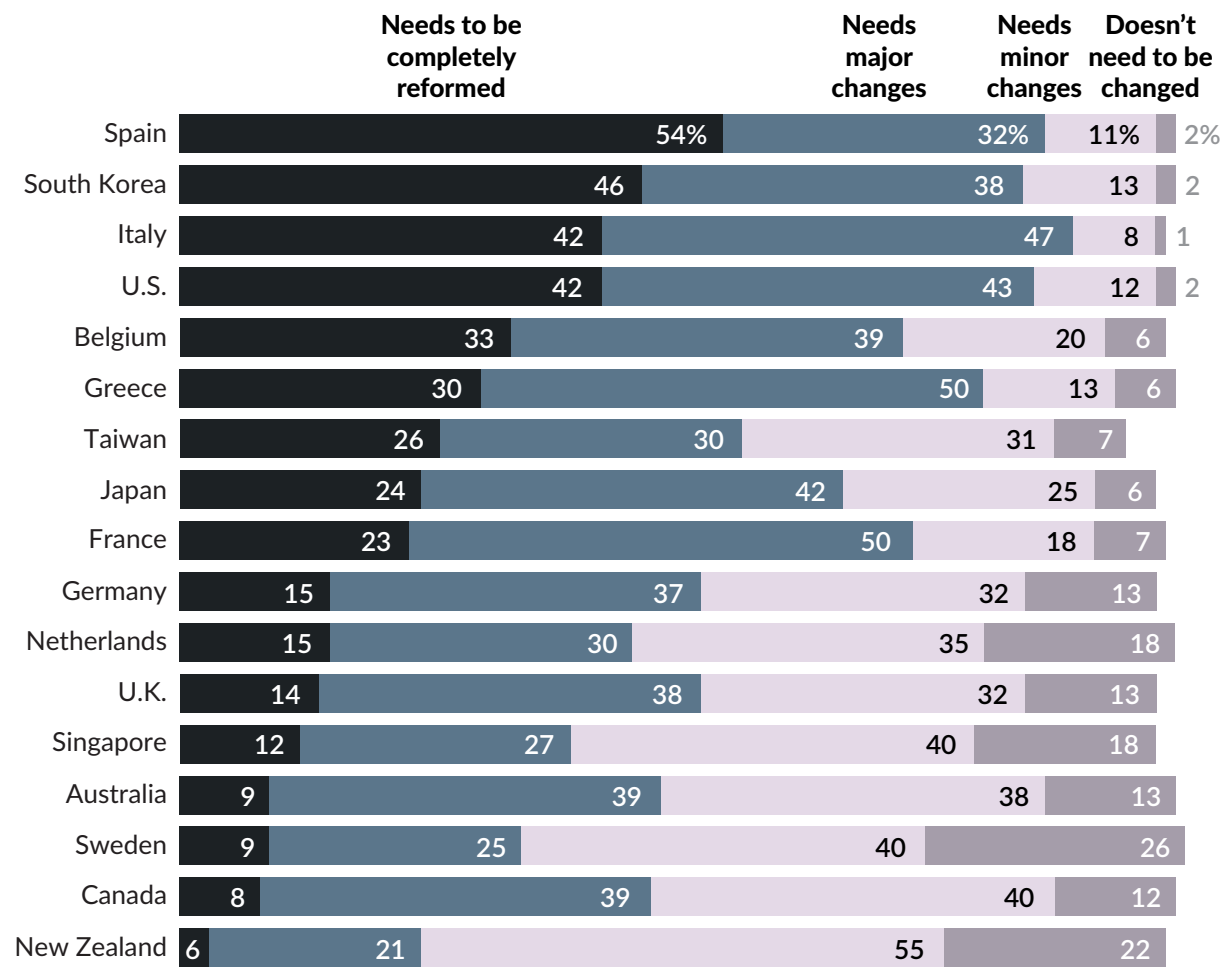
In part, the current moment of anxiety about liberal democracy is linked to frustration with how democratic societies are functioning. Pew Research Center surveys have consistently found large shares of the public in many countries saying they are dissatisfied with the way their democracy is working. And for many, this dissatisfaction is leading to a desire for political change. A median of 56% across 17 advanced economies surveyed in 2021 say their political system needs major changes or needs to be completely reformed. Roughly two-thirds or more express this opinion in Italy, Spain, the U.S., South Korea, Greece, France, Belgium, and Japan.

Even where the demand for significant political reform is relatively low, substantial minorities want at least minor changes. In all of the publics surveyed, fewer than 3 in 10 say the political system should not be changed at all.

However, there is widespread skepticism about the prospect for change. In eight of the 17 publics, roughly half or more of those polled say the political system needs major changes or a complete overhaul and say they have little or no confidence the system can be changed effectively.

Large shares in many publics say their political system needs reform

% who say the political system in (survey public)...



Note: Those who do not answer not shown.
Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey.
“Citizens in Advanced Economies Want Significant Changes to Their Political Systems”

This discontent and disillusionment with the political status quo is tied to many factors, including economic performance, governmental competence, and the overall fairness of the political and economic system. Our research over time has shown that when people think their countries are performing poorly on these dimensions, confidence in democracy often slips. Over the past decade and a half, people around the world have experienced a global financial crisis and more recently a pandemic-driven global downturn. Many have grown pessimistic about the long-term economic future, and our data has illustrated how economic pessimism feeds dissatisfaction with the way democracy is working and weakens commitment to democratic values.

In 2019, we analyzed data from 27 countries to better understand what was driving dissatisfaction with the way democracy is working. We found that the strongest predictor of being dissatisfied was being unhappy with the current state of the national economy. Another significant predictor was how someone feels about economic opportunity. People who said the statement “most people have a good chance to improve their standard of living” did not describe their country well were more likely to be dissatisfied with the way democracy is functioning. The economic prospects for the next generation also matter. In the survey we conducted across 17 advanced economies in spring 2021, dissatisfaction with the way democracy is working was much more

common among people who expect that when children in their country today grow up, they will be worse off financially than their parents. The economic pessimists are also especially likely to think their country’s political system needs major changes or needs to be completely reformed. For example, in the United Kingdom, 61% of respondents who are pessimistic about the next generation’s financial prospects think their country needs significant political reform, compared with just 34% among those who are optimistic that the next generation will do better financially than their parents. The same survey highlighted the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on attitudes toward democracy. People who believe their country is doing a poor job of dealing with the pandemic are consistently more likely to say they are dissatisfied with the way their democracy is working and that they want significant changes to the political system. For instance, 73% of Germans who feel their country is handling the crisis poorly say they believe their political system needs major changes or should be completely overhauled, while just 32% of those who think the country is handling it well express this view. Beyond the state of the economy and public health, opinions about whether countries are living up to basic principles of fairness and justice affect how people feel about the political system. Are political elites, for example, able to manipulate the system to their own advantage? In many countries, large shares of the public say yes. Across 27 nations we polled in 2018, a median of 54% said that most politicians in their country are corrupt. This sentiment was especially high in Greece (89%) and Russia (82%). When we asked Americans a similar question in the fall of 2020, two-thirds said most politicians are corrupt. Perceptions of fairness, or unfairness, in the judicial system also shape how people feel about their democracy. In our 2018 survey, for example, 68% of Hungarians who felt the court system in their country did not treat everyone fairly were dissatisfied with democracy. Only 32% of those who said they had a fair judiciary were similarly dissatisfied. Just as people want their individual rights respected within the judicial system, they want their fundamental rights respected in the arena of public debate. In our 2018 international survey, people mostly said they had freedom of speech in their country; however, those who said they did not have it were significantly more likely to be unhappy with the way their democracy is working.

People like democracy, but their commitment to it is often not very strong

Broadly speaking, democracy is a popular idea. When asked about it, people generally say it’s a good way to

govern. However, enthusiasm for it as a political system, and for specific democratic rights and institutions, is often tepid. This lack of commitment, which is driven in part by the frustration many feel about the functioning of democracy, may be one reason some would-be autocrats and political entrepreneurs have been able to bend the rules and norms of liberal democracy with relatively few consequences. As a 2017 Pew Research Center survey demonstrates, people in regions around the world broadly embrace representative democracy. A median of 78% across the 38 nations polled said that “a democratic system where representatives elected by citizens decide what becomes law” is a very or somewhat good way to govern their country. More than half expressed this view in every country polled. However, even at this broad level, enthusiasm for representative democracy was somewhat subdued—a median of only 33% said it is a very good approach to governing. In addition to representative democracy, the survey found considerable support for direct democracy. Across the 38 countries polled, a median of 66% said “a democratic system where citizens, not elected officials, vote directly on major national issues to decide what becomes law” is a very or somewhat good way to govern their country. As we’ll discuss below, the appeal of direct democracy speaks to the demand many citizens express for more public involvement in politics. However, the same survey found substantial support for nondemocratic approaches to governing. For example, a median of 49% believed a system in which “experts, not elected officials, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country” would be very or somewhat good. And while autocracy was less popular, it was embraced by a remarkably large share of the public in many nations. A median of 26% considered “a system in which a strong leader can make decisions without interference from parliament or the courts” a very or somewhat good way to govern. Even military rule had its supporters. A median of 24% said “a system in which the military rules the country” would be a very or somewhat good system. In five countries—Vietnam, Indonesia, India, South Africa, and Nigeria—roughly half or more expressed this opinion, as did at least 40% in another six nations. And higher-income nations weren’t completely immune: 17% in the United States, Italy, and France believed military rule could be a good way to run the country. The fact that so many citizens in “consolidated” democracies seemed willing to embrace military rule may seem a striking finding, but it’s largely consistent with what other survey research projects, such as the World Values Survey and the Voter Research Group, have found over time.

In many countries, people who place themselves on the right of the political spectrum and those with less formal education are more likely to support alternatives to democratic governance. For example, 27% of Americans who identified as conservative thought autocracy would be a good way to govern, compared with 14% who identified as liberal. And 20% of conservatives supported military rule, compared with 12% of liberals. People with lower levels of educational attainment were more likely to consider military rule a good way to govern in 23 countries.

Beyond democracy as a system of government, there is also limited commitment to some specific democratic principles. In a 2019 Pew Research Center survey, most people said nine democratic rights and institutions tested were important. But again, these views varied widely across regions and countries, and in some places, relatively few said it is very important to have them in their country.

A median of more than 67% across 34 countries rated a fair judicial system, gender equality, and freedom of religion as very important. But there was less support for holding regular competitive elections, freedom of speech, and press freedom. A median of roughly 6 in 10 or fewer said it was very important to have free expression on the internet or to allow human rights groups and opposition parties to operate freely.

Attitudes toward free expression illustrate the challenges of living up to and interpreting democratic principles, even in countries where democratic values are widely endorsed. In a 2015 Pew Research Center survey, a median of 80% across 38 countries believed people should be able to publicly make statements that criticize their government’s policies, but only 35% said the same about statements that are offensive to minority groups or are religiously offensive. And only around a quarter said people should be able to publicly make statements that are sexually explicit.

Political and social divisions are amplifying the challenges of contemporary democracy

Most modern democracies are increasingly diverse, with globalization, economic restructuring, immigration, and urbanization all contributing to social and cultural change. Recent trends from Pew Research Center surveys indicate that in many advanced economies, a growing share of the public views diversity as a strength of their society. In Greece, for example, the share who say having people of many different racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds makes their country a better place to live more than doubled between 2017 and 2021. Over the same period, favorable views of diversity increased by about 10 percentage points or more in

Japan, the Netherlands, the U.K., and Spain. Slightly smaller increases can be seen in Germany, South Korea, Australia, and Sweden.

Despite more people welcoming diversity, many continue to see racial and ethnic discrimination as a serious challenge. A median of 67% across the same 17 publics say racial or ethnic discrimination is a problem where they live. Roughly 3 in 10 or more in Germany, Spain, the U.K., Greece, France, the U.S., and Italy say it is a very serious problem in their country. Younger adults and those on the ideological left are often more convinced on this point. In the U.S., about two-thirds of Americans on the left say racial and ethnic discrimination is a very serious problem in their country, compared with only 19% of Americans on the political right.

Ideological and partisan differences are also a concern in some advanced economies. This is especially true in the U.S., where 90% say there are strong conflicts between people who support different political parties (the U.S. is tied with South Korea for the highest percentage on the survey). Whether cleavages are based on race, ethnicity, or ideology, citizens who worry about these fault lines are often less satisfied with the way democracy is working and more likely to want significant reforms to their political systems.

The global pandemic has, if anything, intensified perceived political and social divisions. Across the 17 advanced economies we surveyed in 2021, a median of 61% say their country is more divided than before the outbreak. Moreover, the share of the public that feels this way has risen substantially as the pandemic has worn on. In the spring of 2020, only months into the crisis, just 29% of Canadians believed they were more divided, but a year later 61% express this view. We also found that people who think their country is more divided today are particularly likely to be dissatisfied with the state of democracy and to want political reform. COVID-19 may have provided a unifying threat in its early days, but the sense of unity has dissipated.

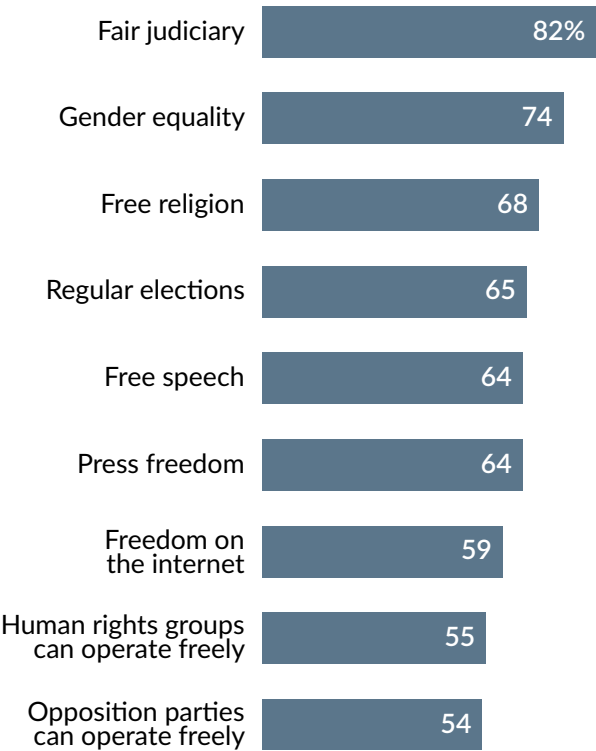
People want a stronger public voice in politics and policymaking

As our surveys have shown, citizens have no shortage of criticisms about the current state of democracy. But they also show that people haven’t given up on democracy—in fact, instead of turning away from it, many want more democracy and a stronger voice in the political system.

Clearly, many are frustrated with the way political representation is working, and they are more than a little frustrated with elected representatives. In a 34-nation Pew Research Center survey in 2019, a median of 64% disagreed with the statement “most elected officials care what people like me think.” While most feel politicians

Global support for democratic principles in 2019

% who say it is very important to have ____ in their country



Note: Percentages are medians based on 34 countries. Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. “Democratic Rights Popular Globally but Commitment to Them Not Always Strong”

are not listening to them, many also see government working for the few rather than the many. A median of 50% disagreed with the statement “the state is run for the benefit of all the people,” while 49% agreed. And troublingly, in several countries where long-term trends are available, the belief that the state is run for the benefit of everyone in society has decreased significantly over time. For example, 88% of Italians in 2002 said their government was run for the benefit of all, but only 30% held this view in 2019. Over the same nearly two-decade period, the share who feel their state is run for the benefit of everyone also dropped significantly in Germany, Poland, the U.K., the U.S., Bulgaria, Turkey, Russia, South Africa, Ukraine, and Kenya.

However, all of this frustration has not necessarily led to apathy or helplessness. Despite the disconnect with political elites, many still think they have some agency over what happens in politics. Across 34 nations polled in 2019, a median of 67% agreed that voting gives ordinary people some say about how the government runs things.

But beyond voting, there is also considerable interest in reforms and democratic innovations that could provide citizens with a more active voice in decision-making. As noted above, the idea of direct democracy—where citizens vote directly on what does or does not become law—is popular around the globe. And a fall 2020 survey of France, Germany, the U.K., and the U.S. found that citizen assemblies, or forums where citizens chosen at random debate issues of national importance and make recommendations about what should be done, were overwhelmingly popular. Around three-quarters or more in each country said it is very or somewhat important for the national government to create citizen assemblies. About 4 in 10 considered it very important. As a recent report by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development highlights, these efforts at deliberative democracy have become increasingly common in nations around the world in recent years. Regardless of what one thinks about direct or deliberative democracy, the fact that so many people seem interested in these ideas speaks to the widespread desire for a more active voice in the political system.

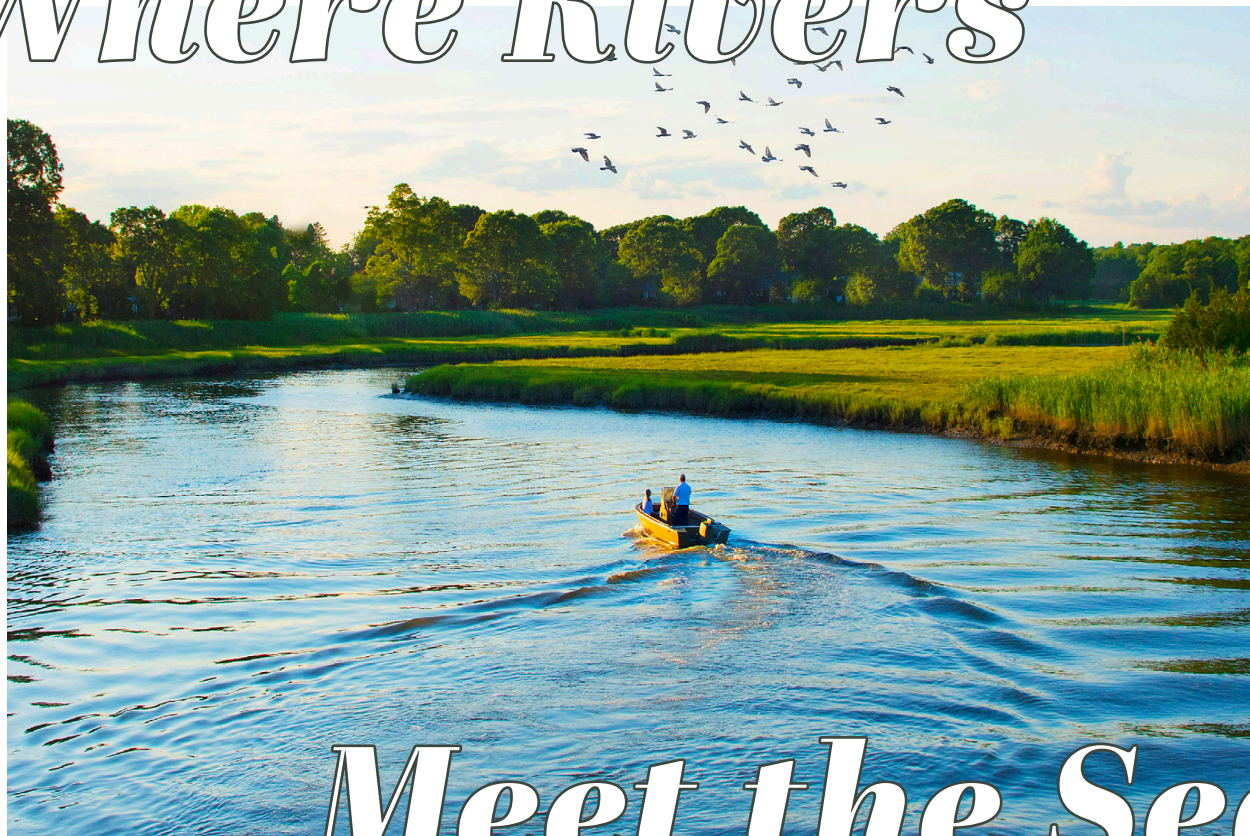
A new analysis of the ways in which people understand and value democracy also highlights the importance of voice. We recently asked people in Australia and the U.K. to describe what democracy means to them in their own words, and many spoke of the need for citizens to have a voice in government. Many used language describing democracy as a system in which elected officials listen to the public and citizens have a strong influence on decisions. One woman from the U.K. said that to her, democracy means that “everyone in their country of residence, including myself, deserves our views to be listened to and acted upon.”

Reversing the well-documented negative trends regarding the health of democracy around the world will be difficult and complicated, but our research suggests ordinary citizens want a voice in this discussion, and they believe a healthy democratic system will include a stronger role for them in making decisions about the important issues that shape their lives.

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Richard Wike is director and Janell Fetterolf is senior research of global attitudes research at the Pew Research Center.

Where Rivers



Meet the Sea

An estuary in Connecticut highlights the benefits of studying and enjoying the nation's network of estuarine research reserves—and why there should be more.

By Carol Kaufmann

A grand osprey nest sits atop a wooden post rising above golden switch grass at the mouth of the Connecticut River, right where it pours into Long Island Sound. The nest is one of many that the majestic fish-eating raptors use as a home base—and a perch to spy their next meal.

It's also part of a popular science project. "Osprey Nation," organized by the Connecticut Audubon Society along with the state's Department of Energy and Environmental Protection—known as DEEP—is made up of 400 volunteers who keep an eye on the birds. When osprey mothers vacate the nest, observers kayak out and count eggs—and record the birds' ongoing remarkable turnaround story. A half-century ago, the raptors were ingesting DDT through the fish they ate, thwarting their ability to reproduce, and they nearly went extinct. But the pesticide was banned in the early 1970s, and now the birds are thriving. Last year the volunteers counted 858 fledglings, according to the 2021 Osprey Nation report.

And now there will be opportunity for even more study because the osprey's home slice of a 52,160-acre area—along Connecticut's southeastern shore from Old Saybrook east to Mystic—has become a National Estuarine Research Reserve, or NERR. In January, Connecticut joined a five-decade-old national system comprising 30 coastal sites in 23 states and Puerto Rico that's designated to protect and study estuaries—those areas where land meets an ocean or Great Lake.

The Pew Charitable Trusts began working in 2018 to support the expansion of the NERR network and existing sites as the organization's ocean conservation work grew to include coastal habitats. "Though they often don't get the attention of ocean initiatives, the estuarine reserves are incredibly valuable from an economic standpoint, as a barometer of climate change and as an education tool," says Tom Wheatley, who works on Pew's ocean conservation team. "In addition, the sites consist of lands and waters that are already public, so they don't require additional large purchases of valuable coastal property."

Established through the Coastal Zone Management Act in 1972, the reserve system is a partnership program between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the coastal states. NOAA provides funding and guidance; each state's site is managed by a lead state agency or university—in this case, the University of Connecticut—and works with many local and regional partners. Day-to-day management of each reserve remains in the hands of the state.

Getting a reserve designation can take time; most take about five years. Connecticut was an anomaly, taking about two decades with various interruptions, such as Hurricane Sandy. Members of the public weighed in as well, since they regularly hike, picnic, birdwatch, bike, fish, swim, and sail in the spaces that now make up the reserve.

The reserves are "nationally significant and locally relevant," says Kevin O'Brien, supervising environmental analyst at DEEP, who was a steering committee member for the reserve site. "And the conditions here in Connecticut's NERR are diverse, like you want in a financial portfolio."

The reserve's shoreline is a geographic mosaic: wetlands, marshes, shallow-water and offshore habitats, cold-water corals, bluffs, pebbled and sandy beaches, coastal grasslands, and two populated communities on the Connecticut and Thames rivers sitting between New York City and Boston on some of the last undeveloped coast of Long Island Sound.

Even choosing the boundaries for a reserve in such a diverse area yielded surprises. "We started with a blank slate," says Patrick Comins, executive director of the Connecticut Audubon Society, who has been involved in the NERR's formation for about a decade and who also oversees Osprey Nation. "We know the Connecticut River is a vital component of Long Island Sound and watershed. But in the discovery process, we found species we didn't know existed—like some rays, and dogfish, which are on the global endangered list."

Better known is the menagerie of animals that make the area home. More than 200 species of birds, 1,200 species of invertebrates, and 120 species of fish use the state's southeastern estuaries to live, feed, and breed, or as a way station during migrations—and 400 of them are on the state's endangered species list.

Reserves, especially ones popular with the public, also drive local economies.

Regulars include eastern coyote, big brown bats, and the northern leopard frog. Twelve kinds of snakes slither and seven kinds of turtles creep through pristine forests. Blue, green, hermit, and horseshoe crabs crawl around the beaches. Offshore, commercially important lobsters, quahogs, and oysters use the estuary as a nursery and spawning grounds, and natural oyster beds give fish a safe haven.

Largemouth bass, winter flounder, Atlantic salmon and Atlantic sturgeon, skates and rays, lobsters, and two kinds of shark swim where freshwater and saltwater mingle. Sea mammals are there, too. Seals, porpoises, dolphins, and humpback whales forage in the reserve. And above it all, loons, gulls, plovers, cormorants, snowy owls, bald eagles, and—of course—the ospreys fly.

"It's like a living laboratory," O'Brien says.

Climate Change Testing Ground

And like all working laboratories, this coastal one produces science.

"We're so excited to welcome the Connecticut site into the system," says Erica Seiden, who manages the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) program at NOAA. Its membership "will allow more data and research to be applied to address climate change and other major impacts to our coasts."

In Connecticut, much like the rest of the world, rising air temperatures, water temperatures, and water levels have all contributed to increased flooding. But in a coastal ecosystem that's heavily populated, flooding can be more apparent—and dangerous.

"The floods that used to happen every decade will now happen every one to two years," says Jim O'Donnell, executive director of the Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation, who has been conducting research on the coastal ecosystem of Long Island Sound for 30 years. "What interventions make sense? How do we protect infrastructure while preserving ecosystems? That's the value of a national system" of estuarine reserves.

The new reserve is in eastern Connecticut, where pristine marshlands have been protected and preserved by aggressive management policies—with which, for the most part, towns and residents have complied, unlike in other coastal areas and marshlands around the country. By using the same types of data, measuring systems, and technology across all the country's estuarine reserves, managers of the reserves can compare notes—gaining valuable insights for which flood prevention practices actually work.

"Estuarine habitats such as salt marshes and oyster reefs help reduce damage from flooding, coastal storms, storm surges, and other damaging consequences of sea level rise," says Pew's Wheatley. "As coastal populations continue to grow, conserving these natural



Above: Tree swallows hover above Goose Island, a patch of land in the Connecticut River’s estuary. In late summer, an untold number of swallows swoop in from all over the region, forming a shape-shifting vortex in the sky before landing on the island’s reeds at dusk. The phenomenon, called a murmuration, attracts boaters, kayakers, and sightseers eager to watch nature’s show and listen to the loud hum of flapping wings. *Jody Dole*

Previous page: Beneath the gently flowing waters of Lord Cove in the Connecticut River estuary lie plentiful vegetation and healthy breeding grounds for numerous fish—a vital part of the nation’s newest National Estuarine Research Reserve. *Jody Dole*

defenses will become even more important. And NERRS can play important outsized roles in protecting these special places.”

Big storms also pose big threats. Damage in Connecticut from 2012’s Hurricane Sandy, one of the most destructive natural events to hit the state, cost \$360 million in repair, response, and restoration, according to *Nature* magazine. To minimize damage from future storms, other reserves are using nature-based solutions such as sand and silt to build up the marshes and sustain the water’s rising. Such conservation measures can pay off: For every \$1 invested in disaster mitigation, communities save \$6 in recovery costs, according to the Multi-Hazard Mitigation Council, a public-private partnership established by Congress.

“Our estuary is under attack from rising sea levels, and big storms like Sandy are expected every five to 10 years,” says John Forbis, vice chairman of the

Connecticut Audubon Society’s Roger Tory Peterson Estuary Center in Old Lyme, who also worked on the site selection for the NERR. “Now, we’ll have access to the NERR club, which is very friendly and helpful, and we all benefit. We’re all in it together and with NOAA’s help, we have the best minds mobilized to handle” the effects of floods.

Because they occupy the areas where sea meets the land, “all the reserves are uniquely suited as sentinel sites for climate change,” says O’Brien. “They can also mobilize people to be scientists.”

Estuary University, a School for All

Connecticut’s estuarine reserve is also a classroom. Already in place are hands-on science programs for students, third grade to college: Project Oceanology, a nonprofit run by school districts in collaboration with state colleges and universities, allows residents of all

ages to get their hands dirty—and wet—as they study the ecology of their marine environments on land, in shallow waters, and in Long Island Sound.

On shore, students use nets to capture fish and study their diversity. In the water, they ride research vessels into the sound to count seals or sea gulls or visit an oyster farm and record sizes of the bivalves. They use oceanographic equipment to measure the temperature, salinity, dissolved oxygen, turbidity, pH, and carbon dioxide of the water—key data for monitoring the health of the ocean. They examine live lobsters and discuss the demise of the crustaceans in the region.

“As a teacher, I can help my students make more immediate connections when they’re outside in the environment, when the sea is around them,” says Kathy Howard, a teacher at Marine Science Magnet High School in Groton, a town of 40,000 on the coast. “And more and more teachers in the area are going outside to teach, instead of just relying on a classroom.”

The resources of NOAA also help teachers such as Howard in reserves across the country. The agency currently offers workshops to train teachers on how to use the estuaries as classrooms and provides online curriculum materials, data, and lesson plans. And Connecticut’s academic lessons will also likely help another NERR.

In addition to existing education programs, the new reserve designation is inspiring ideas for other science collection projects, says Jamie Vaudrey, a

member of the steering committee who is a professor of marine sciences at the University of Connecticut at Avery Point, the seaside campus that will also host the reserve’s headquarters. One project could feature citizen photographs taken of the same place over time, providing a real-time look at how a key place can transform. “People on a walk or hike stand in the same place, looking at the same view, and shoot,” she says. “Then, they upload their shots to a central database and create a record of how the estuary changes over time.”

An Economic Driver

Reserves, especially ones popular with the public, also drive local economies.

A study released last year by the nonprofit Restore America’s Estuaries and NOAA found that the nation’s estuaries constitute only 4% of the U.S. continental landmass but are home to 40% of the country’s population and responsible for 47% of the nation’s gross domestic product. In addition, a June 2021 analysis by NOAA and Pew found that four of the country’s NERR sites generated at least \$165 million in combined annual revenue for their communities, including 1,762 jobs. According to DEEP, Long Island Sound—which also borders New York state—generates some \$7 billion for the regional economy.

Tourism is a big reason for that. In the summers, Connecticut’s southern shores attract vacationers, beach lovers, crabbers, fishers, kayakers, and sailors. Designated trails through coastal forests support hiking, birding, and mountain biking.

Because they strengthen local economies as well as serve as outdoor classrooms and scientific laboratories, estuarine reserves will almost certainly expand in number around the country. Wisconsin is investigating creating a reserve in Green Bay—the largest freshwater estuary in the world—to complement the state’s existing one in the St. Louis River estuary on Lake Superior.

Louisiana, too, is in the process of forming a reserve; Pew is working with scientists, allied organizations, and national, state, and local officials to help the state enter the NERR system. The Bayou State is “the country’s last coastal state without a reserve, and arguably the most threatened by climate change and sea level rise,” says Pew’s Wheatley. “The NERRS program is a great one for Pew to support, and one that fits in incredibly well with the goals we have to advance U.S. coastal conservation.”

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Carol Kauffman is a staff writer for Trust.



Armed with nets, summer campers with the Roger Tory Peterson Estuary Center search the Lieutenant River for aquatic invertebrates. Connecticut’s reserve provides practical opportunities for school-age kids to get their hands dirty—and wet—while learning science.
Courtesy of the Roger Tory Peterson Estuary Center



Courts Shifted Online During the Pandemic

The changes marked a reimagining of how justice is administered—but also exposed what still needs to be done to make the civil court system accessible to all.

BY TOM INFELD

America's civil courts—which handle debt collection and other disputes for millions of people each year—had been inching forward in recent decades to modernize procedures and to embrace technology that would permit video hearings and electronic filing of paperwork, easing the burden on those not represented by lawyers.

Then came the pandemic. Court systems throughout the nation had to curtail or eliminate in-person hearings, so to keep the wheels of justice turning, many proceedings had to be moved online—and fast.

The result was a quick and remarkable transformation in many courthouses for civil litigants—who, unlike criminal defendants, are not guaranteed a right to a lawyer—as they navigated complicated legal issues such as being sued for allegedly not paying debts. A report released in December by Pew's civil legal system modernization project found that within weeks of the pandemic's onset, every state and the District of Columbia had initiated virtual hearings, and most had begun to permit litigants to file documents via the internet. Texas, for example, which had never held a civil hearing via video before the pandemic, conducted 122,000 of them in April and May 2020.

Although researchers lacked complete data, they noted that court officials across the country—including judges, administrators, and attorneys—pointed to an increase in appearances at these video

hearings compared with pre-pandemic in-person hearings. In Arizona, for example, the number of people who lost cases by default for failing to appear at a hearing fell 8% from June 2019 to June 2020.

Litigants' failure to appear for hearings is often the reason they lose cases. From 2010 to 2019, for example, more than 70% of defendants in debt-collection cases across multiple court jurisdictions failed to appear at hearings and had default judgments entered against them, according to the Pew project's research.

But once the pandemic hit, defendants could present themselves in video conference, use online portals, or even email to verify making a disputed rent payment or, in a child support case, to report a job loss. Women seeking protection from abuse orders no longer had to face their abusers in the courtroom. And litigants didn't have to take a day off from work, arrange transportation, or find child care to appear in court.

"The courts made a heroic effort to get online, and it's really commendable how they created ways for people to access the system without any risk to public health," says Pew's Qudsiya Naqui, who co-authored the report, "How Courts Embraced Technology, Met the Pandemic Challenge, and Revolutionized Their Operations."

She noted that 30 million Americans each year have to navigate legal problems in court without a lawyer, with 1 in 3 U.S. households facing a housing, family, or debt

issue serious enough to draw them into the legal system.

"These are cases that can have significant life consequences," Naqui says. "For example, if you are not able to get online and modify your child support payment because you lost your job due to the pandemic, you could end up in arrears for child support that can result in incarceration in some states."

Yet for all the technological advances that courts adopted, the report also found that for some people without lawyers, the civil legal system actually became more difficult to navigate when the pandemic shut the courthouse door. Many people without lawyers, who in the past could have walked into a court clerk's office to ask for help, were stymied: Some don't have access to a computer or the internet, the report said. Legal terminology can be difficult for those without training. And for people with disabilities or limited English skills, the hurdles are even higher.

At the same time, large debt collectors, operating with significant professional legal assistance, have leveraged the new court technology to their advantage. The Pew report noted that ProPublica, an independent investigative news organization, found that debt collectors have used electronic filing to file lawsuits in bulk, often thousands at a time.

In contrast, the report also found that eight states didn't create a similar mechanism for people without lawyers to electronically file paperwork in debt collection lawsuits, and nine states didn't do so in eviction cases. Given that more than 90% of defendants in debt collection and eviction cases do not have a lawyer, they were at a substantial disadvantage when attempting to respond to debt collection and eviction lawsuits in these jurisdictions.

The Pew project to modernize the civil courts—created in 2018 with a goal of making the civil legal system more open, efficient, and equitable for the millions of people who navigate courts without a lawyer each year—has been working with partners in several states that are leading modernization efforts.

One of those states is Utah, where state Supreme Court Justice Deno Himonas says he's optimistic that thoughtful progress will continue when the pandemic eases and courts go back to in-person business.

"It's kind of slow going," he says. "You can think of the courts as a giant aircraft carrier that's slow to turn, but the pandemic has forced courts worldwide—certainly in the United States—to confront some of the limitations of the old model and do it rapidly. You know the old adage about necessity being the mother of invention. We were able to pivot more in a month than we could in years before."

That was true in Philadelphia Family Court, which used online technology for the first time during the pandemic. One litigant, who asked that her name not be used, is a mother of three who has spent three years

battling her former boyfriend over child custody, child support, and protection from abuse.

She had moved from Pennsylvania to North Carolina with her children. Not having to rent a car and drive back to Philadelphia for hearings—7½ hours each way—allowed her to keep her children at home and in school. Before the hearings were moved online, she says, "there were times when they'd miss three days out of five."

Still, she says the technology could be difficult to manage even though she didn't have to appear in person. She recalls a video hearing in which she sat in a virtual waiting room unable to be seen by the judge, who proceeded without her. Her alleged failure to appear was used against her in later proceedings.

She ended up getting help from a Philadelphia Legal Assistance lawyer.

"I don't know how anybody does it without a lawyer," she says. "You can't get in contact with anybody. You can't call up and ask questions. Which courtroom am I in? What time is it for today? How do I upload my employment verification for child support?"

Family Court in Philadelphia has stopped using the new technology, but Leslie Allen, the attorney who helped the woman, says she hopes it returns to video hearings and online filings. (Pennsylvania courts are looking at procedures for the future.)

"They created a system that at first was very clunky, but, a year into it, it was running smoothly," Allen says. "I heard from multiple judges and hearing officers that a higher number of people were attending their hearings. With remote technology, a lot more people were able to move forward and pursue their case."

As Pennsylvania and many other states contemplate how to adapt the lessons from the pandemic in administering civil courts, the Pew report offers recommendations to ensure that litigants—especially those without lawyers—have better access to the system.

One is that technology tools should be accompanied by simplified forms and processes to avoid the pre-pandemic norm of complicated attorney-centered procedures.

Another is that new technology should be tested with members of the public who will use it to ensure that it is accessible and meets their needs.

And, finally, court systems should collect and analyze data about their functions to better understand the effects of online processes.

"The goal should be to make the system more accessible for the millions of people who don't have access to legal counsel," Naqui says. "People should feel they had a fair, equitable experience when they go through the courts."

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

QUIZ

How Much Do You Know About Recycling and Composting Plastic?

The global plastic pollution problem is enormously challenging. The material is used in a huge range of products—from food packaging and children's toys to car tires, household appliances, and commercial packaging—and at the current rates of production, use, and disposal, the annual amount of plastic waste entering Earth's ecosystems could almost triple by 2040.

Still, plastic pollution is a solvable problem—and you can help.

Take this quiz to see if you're ready to help break the plastic wave.

Paul Taylor/Getty Images

- 1.** Does the universal chasing arrows symbol (♻️) with a number in it mean an item is recyclable?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Maybe
- 2.** Some products—coffee cups, sachets, and coffee bags—are just a few examples—are made from several layers of materials. Can these be recycled?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 3.** I've seen benches, bricks, and other products made from recycled plastic. Is this a good thing since that means the plastic won't enter the environment?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Maybe
- 4.** Is there a difference between biodegradable and compostable plastic?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 5.** Can I put compostable plastic on my compost heap?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Maybe
- 6.** Will biodegradable plastics eventually become harmless?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Maybe
- 7.** Of the following, which is the biggest source of microplastics?
 - a. Tires
 - b. Face scrubs
 - c. Fabrics

- 8.** Can my workout gear, leggings, tops, and sneakers that are made from 50% recycled plastics be recycled at the end of their life?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Maybe
- 9.** What is the best way to prevent ocean plastic pollution?
 - a. Reducing plastic use
 - b. Establishing refill systems
 - c. Improving recycling
 - d. Finding appropriate/sustainable substitutes for some plastic uses
 - e. All of the above
- 10.** Is the plastics problem too big and hard to solve?
 - a. Yes
 - a. No

Answers on page 29



A worker sits on piles of plastic at a recycling company in Antalya, Turkey, that turns the waste into materials for new products. Mustafa Ciftci/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images

The Theranos Problem Congress Must Still Solve—Patients Need Protection

BY LIZ RICHARDSON

For most of its existence, the now-defunct biotech startup Theranos operated in so-called “stealth mode”—disclosing little about the science behind its blood-testing device while boldly claiming that it could deliver faster, more convenient, and cheaper diagnostic tests to millions of people anxious to know if they had diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular disease, or scores of other conditions.

In truth, Theranos’ testing device didn’t work as advertised, a fact the company managed to conceal from investors, regulators, and customers for years until whistleblowers and a journalist exposed the firm’s misconduct. Theranos was then forced to invalidate two years’ worth of blood tests for tens of thousands of patients, and, in January its CEO, Elizabeth Holmes, was found guilty on four charges of defrauding investors, facing up to 20 years in prison.

But even though Theranos’ leaders have been called to account, the loophole they exploited to avoid independent review of their devices remains wide open, and now Congress must act to close it.

Unfortunately, U.S. House of Representatives and Senate committee leaders have yet to take up a bipartisan bill, known as the Verifying Accurate Leading-edge IVCT Development (VALID) Act, that could plug the holes in testing oversight and ensure that diagnostic products are accurate before they’re used on patients.

When Congress authorized the Food and Drug Administration to regulate medical devices, including in vitro diagnostic tests, in 1976, the agency waived regulatory requirements for tests designed, manufactured, and used all in the same lab—known as lab-developed tests (LDTs). This approach made sense decades ago, when LDTs tended to be relatively simple and were intended for small patient populations; they were designed to detect rare conditions for which there were few or no other commercially available diagnostics. But as the Theranos experience has shown, today’s LDTs are often more complex, designed for conditions as widespread as cancer or COVID-19, created to compete with FDA-approved tests, and marketed

nationally, in some cases for consumers to use in their homes without medical oversight.

If FDA had required Theranos to submit its LDTs for premarket review, as it does for other diagnostics, the agency might have been able to shield patients from harm. It could have kept Theranos products off the market and restricted the company’s unsupported marketing claims. And even if Theranos had been able to clear that initial FDA review, mandatory adverse event reporting could have enabled FDA to identify faulty tests sooner and recall them, if necessary.

But the public safety story here is not just a Theranos story. Other companies exploit the same regulatory gaps, and many people suffer after receiving false results from faulty LDTs that lead them to undergo the wrong treatment or forgo the right one.

Unfortunately, there’s little transparency in the LDT marketplace. As research from The Pew Charitable Trusts demonstrates, without FDA oversight before and after a test comes to market, or even a simple product registry, no one knows precisely how many LDTs are in use, let alone how often they fail or how many people they hurt.

That needs to change. It shouldn’t be left to whistleblowers and investigative journalists to identify LDT problems piecemeal after they occur; instead, patients and their health care providers deserve more information about the tests they rely on to diagnose life-changing and life-threatening conditions. And Congress needs to make it clear that oversight should lie with FDA.

The agency needs clear authority and resources to prevent harm; the track record shows that when it exercises its authority over diagnostics, patients and test-makers benefit alike. In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, FDA exercised its “emergency use” authority to review 125 COVID-19 LDTs. It found serious “design or validation problems” in 82 of those tests. In most cases, FDA worked with developers to rectify the issues and bring the much-needed products to market.

In the past, some labs strongly objected to FDA oversight of LDTs, but since then they’ve worked

with members of Congress to seek solutions through the VALID Act. Unlike earlier proposals, the bill has benefited from several rounds of substantive input from test manufacturers, clinical laboratories, and patient groups. And unlike previous debates around reform, there’s wide agreement across many labs and device manufacturers about VALID’s major provisions, with discussion focusing more on how regulatory oversight should be reformed—not whether it should be reformed.

The bill’s not perfect. It exempts too many devices from premarket review, and it doesn’t provide FDA with enough tools to take action against poor quality tests once they’re in use. Health committee leadership in Congress should work together to build on VALID’s framework and make it stronger, and as chair of the House committee, New Jersey Representative Frank Pallone can be a powerful voice. Congress can give FDA authority to review all diagnostics based on the risk

they pose to patients before they reach the market and monitor their performance once in use.

This requires swift action. Congress has a window of opportunity to attach the VALID Act to another bill, a so-called “must-pass” measure on user fees for medical devices that lawmakers plan to approve in 2022.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the Theranos trial both demonstrate the urgency of the problem. The longer Congress waits, the longer patients will remain vulnerable to faulty tests. When it comes to medical tests, we need safety and sunlight, not stealth—and we need it now.

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Liz Richardson directs The Pew Charitable Trusts’ health care products project. This article originally appeared on NorthJersey.com on Jan. 12, 2022.

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. **C: Maybe.** The number represents the type of plastic but doesn’t mean the item is recyclable or is likely to be recycled. Check with your local recycling program to learn which numbers they accept.
2. **B: No.** These products are made of plastic and nonplastic layers that cannot be easily and mechanically separated. Multimaterial products are rarely recycled.
3. **C: Maybe.** Recycling can help keep plastic out of the environment in the short term but, because many products aren’t recycled again, it is often not a long-term solution. Ultimately, we should focus on reducing plastic production to prevent plastic pollution.
4. **A: Yes.** Biodegradable plastic will break down naturally (first into microplastics and eventually into water, carbon dioxide, and other organics), but this process can take decades. Compostable plastic biodegrades, but only under certain conditions, such as in-home composting heaps or industrial composting facilities.
5. **C: Maybe.** Some compostable plastics break down only in specific industrial systems and should not be mixed with compostables at home—or with plastic recycling. The product label should indicate if it is fit for home or industrial composting. If not composted properly, there is a high chance that these items will stay intact or turn into extremely problematic microplastics.
6. **C: Maybe.** Biodegradable plastics need to be broken down by microorganisms or in other conditions that aren’t often present in landfills or the ocean. Many biodegradable plastics simply break down into smaller pieces as microplastics, which are a growing problem.
7. **A: Tires.** In Pew’s research, wear and tear of car tires made up 78% of the microplastic pollution studied. Improving tire design and reducing the number of miles driven (i.e., through carpooling or mass transit) could nearly halve microplastic pollution from tires by 2040.
8. **C: Maybe.** Clothing made with synthetic materials can shed microplastics and, although the clothing might be recyclable, consumers’ options for recycling—for example, by bringing items to specialized collection points—are limited.
9. **E: All of the above.** There is no easy solution to ending plastic pollution, but Pew’s “Breaking the Plastic Wave” report identifies solutions that could cut this volume by more than 80% using technologies that are available today. Achieving this requires government and business leaders to make systemwide changes.
10. **B: No.** Pew’s report found that humankind can cut annual flows of plastic into the ocean by about 80% in the next 20 years by applying existing solutions and technologies. No single solution can achieve this goal, but by taking immediate, ambitious, and concerted actions, we can greatly reduce ocean plastic pollution.

Pew experts explore innovative ideas on the most critical subjects facing our world.

Why Veterans With GI Bill Benefits Still Take Out Student Loans

More than half of borrowers used bulk of borrowed money to cover living expenses, survey shows

BY PHILLIP OLIFF, SCOTT BREES, AND RICHA BHATTARAI



Nearly 6 in 10 U.S. military veterans who have taken out student loans cite living expenses, such as housing and child care, as their main reason for borrowing, according to a first-of-its-kind, nationally representative survey of veterans who have taken out student loans.

The survey—conducted for The Pew Charitable Trusts among veterans who served after Sept. 11, 2001—helps shed light on a key mystery: why so many are taking on student loan debt despite having access to robust Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits, which cover full tuition and fees at public universities and at least partial tuition and fees at private universities. These

benefits also include stipends to cover books and supplies, as well as housing allowances.

A separate Pew analysis done earlier this year using U.S. Department of Education data found that just over a quarter of veterans in undergraduate programs took out loans, with a median amount of \$8,000 in the 2015-16 academic year.

The questions in the survey were crafted to give a better sense of how veterans use the borrowed money, including a request to rank the expenses covered with student loan dollars. Among the key findings:

- 58% of those who took out student loans said they borrowed primarily to cover living expenses.

The most commonly cited were housing costs (21%) and day-to-day expenses, such as groceries and child care (17%).

- 42% cited educational expenses as the primary cost they borrowed to cover. Most chose tuition and fees (36%), while a small proportion selected books and supplies (6%).

For many, these results may be surprising, in part because the Post-9/11 GI Bill offers a Monthly Housing Allowance designed to cover—or significantly defray—the cost of housing while veterans are enrolled in a college or university. But the results lend support to reports that living costs have become “dominant components of the cost of attending college” relative to tuition costs. That’s particularly the case for older students, such as veterans, who often have to juggle other financial obligations, including possibly caring for children or other family members.

Pew’s recent analysis of federal Education Department data shows that student veterans are twice as likely as the general student population to have dependents of their own, which may increase their living expenses relative to more traditional students.

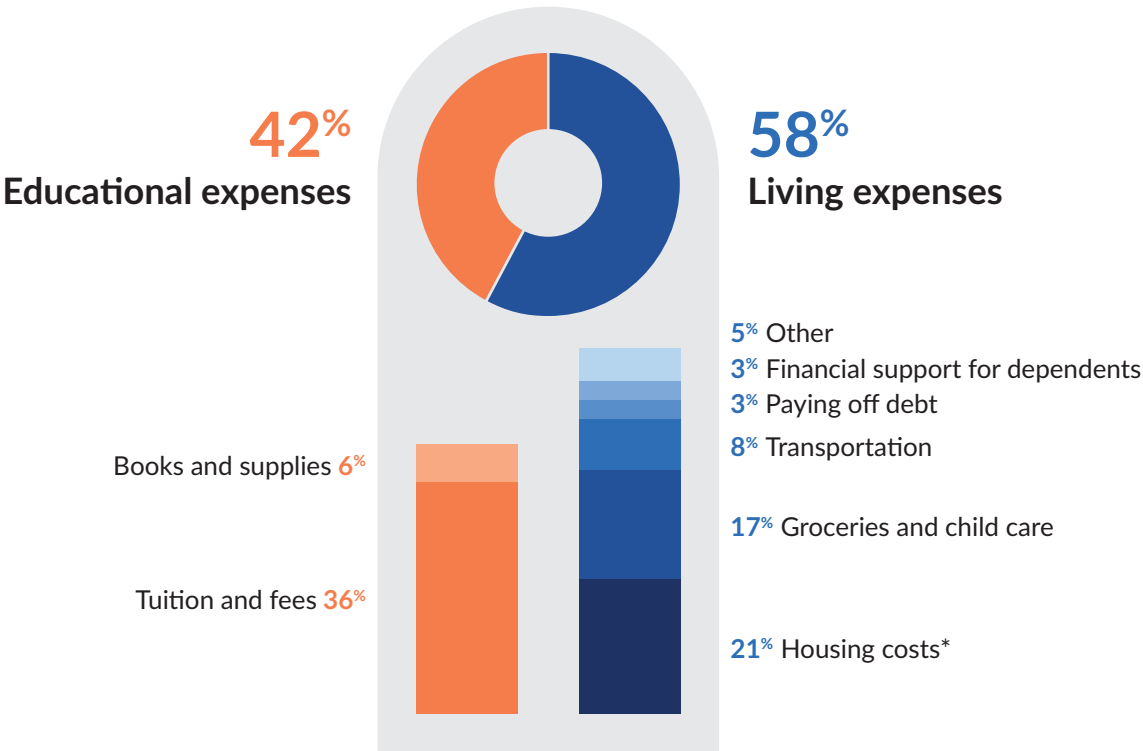
In the coming months, Pew plans to take a closer look at the extensive data in this unique survey to create a more detailed picture of the scope and scale of veteran student loan debt. Future work will take a deeper dive into the specific factors that may be connected to this borrowing, such as experiences using the Post-9/11 GI Bill’s Monthly Housing Allowance, utilization of other financial aid resources, socioeconomic factors, credit earned for military skills and knowledge, and other relevant issues.

This analysis is based on data from an online survey conducted by Penn State’s Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness on behalf of The Pew Charitable Trusts. The nationally representative survey of 3,180 veterans was open to respondents from Nov. 14, 2020, to Jan. 5, 2021. The margin of error with design effect for the total sample is plus or minus 1.9 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

Phillip Oliff is a director, Scott Brees is an officer, and Richa Bhattarai is an associate with The Pew Charitable Trusts’ student loan research project.

Most Veterans Who Take Out Student Loans Do So to Pay Living Expenses

Housing and day-to-day costs most cited uses of borrowed dollars



*Expense categories do not add up to 100% due to rounding.
Source: The Pew Charitable Trusts

Stateline, an initiative of The Pew Charitable Trusts, is a team of veteran journalists who report and analyze trends in state policy with a focus on fiscal and economic issues, health care, demographics, and the business of government. More stories are available at pewtrusts.org/stateline.

Small Cities Worry Cybersecurity Money Won't Reach Them

BY JENNI BERGAL

The ransomware attack that struck Salem, New Hampshire, a year and a half ago forced the town to shut down its entire computer network—with chaotic consequences.

Officials couldn't process car registrations, and residents couldn't pay taxes or water and sewer bills online. Workers couldn't fully plan for the next year's budget. Police and fire department computers dropped offline.

The town didn't pay the ransom, and its cyber insurance company sent in experts to restore the network, Town Manager Chris Dillon said. Most systems were down for about a week after the October 2020 attack, but it took about a month to fully return to normal.

"It was a nightmare," Dillon said in an interview with Stateline. "A lot of towns think their systems are OK. But it just takes one person clicking on one link to take down the whole system."

Dillon and many other city and county government officials are excited about a new \$1 billion federal cybersecurity grant program included in the \$1.2 trillion infrastructure law. The money will be distributed to states over four years, beginning later this year. States will be required to divvy up at least 80% among local governments, and 25% of the total allocated to each state must go to rural areas.

But many smaller cities and counties worry they'll miss out on the grant money because they "don't have the knowledge and the planning to put a proposal together," said Brenda Wilson, executive director of the Lane Council of Governments, an intergovernmental organization in Oregon.

"In rural communities, the IT person, who is probably also the public works director or the city

recorder, is expected to know what software they need to buy or how at risk they are," Wilson said. "They just don't know. How can they put together a plan to submit to the state?"

Ransomware has wreaked havoc on local governments in the past several years. It typically spreads when hackers email malicious links or attachments that people unwittingly click on. Malware then hijacks the computer system and encrypts data, holding it hostage until victims either restore the system on their own or pay a ransom, usually in bitcoin, in exchange for a decryption key.

Last year, there were at least 77 successful attacks on local and state governments and another 88 on school districts, colleges, and universities, according to Brett Callow, a threat analyst for cybersecurity company Emsisoft.

Earlier this month, officials in Bernalillo County, New Mexico's most populous county, had to shut most of their buildings to the public for several days, suspend some services, and stop visits at the jail after a ransomware attack took systems offline. A week later, the Albuquerque Public Schools district was victimized in an apparently unrelated cyberattack, prompting officials to cancel classes districtwide for two days.

While it's typically local governments that get hit, states do as well. In December, ransomware hit the information technology agency that serves Virginia's state legislature.

Also in December, a cyberattack crippled computers at the Maryland Department of Health. A month later, state health workers still were having problems getting important data and accessing shared drives.

States are better prepared to deal with cybersecurity attacks, though. They have IT departments, chief information security officers, staff, and resources. Local governments, particularly smaller ones, often don't, and are much easier targets, cybersecurity experts say.

Cybersecurity might not be high on the list of local governments' priorities—but it should be, according to Alan Shark, executive director of the CompTIA Public Technology Institute, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit that provides consulting services to local governments.

"Digital equipment doesn't show rust like bridges and physical stuff," Shark said. "This money can replace that infrastructure and update stuff rather than put Band-Aids onto old legacy equipment."

Shark said local governments badly need the grant money from the new program, which will be administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The federal Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency will provide expertise and help assess grant applications.

Ransomware has wreaked havoc on local governments. Hackers email malicious links or attachments that people unwittingly click on, and malware hijacks the computer system and encrypts data, holding it hostage until victims restore the system on their own or pay a ransom.

States will need to submit plans detailing how the money would be spent, and they must be approved by the federal cybersecurity agency before any project can be funded. States also will have to match from 10% to 40% of the cost over time, depending on the plan. Local governments won't have to submit plans to the federal agencies, and it remains to be seen what type of information they'd have to submit to the state.

Federal agencies haven't released details about how the grant money can be used. But many state and local officials and cybersecurity experts think it will include things such as training and education, conducting cyber assessments, replacing hardware, and updating software.

The law makes it clear that governments can't use the money to pay ransom after a cyberattack.

The grant money should be used not only to prevent governments from being blindsided by cyberattacks, Shark said, but also to ensure that they have adequate backup systems that aren't connected to the network. That way, if they're attacked, they can restore their systems more easily.

But Shark also worries that the grant process might turn out to be too complicated for many smaller local governments.

"There are smaller jurisdictions figuring, 'There's no way I can do this.' They don't have the staff resources to fill out reams of paperwork. Requirements may be too onerous. Or they figure they'll never get it anyway," Shark said. "Hopefully, the states will find a way to reach those smaller jurisdictions that have a need as much as anybody else."

Wilson, of the Lane Council of Governments in Oregon, said many of her state's more than 240 incorporated cities are tiny and rural. Her group, whose members include Lane County and the city of Eugene, contracts with small governments that can't afford their own staff and acts as their city attorney, finance department, or IT department.

Wilson said she wants to see state agencies and statewide associations such as hers guide smaller communities, to help them get a share of the money and to come up with their own cybersecurity strategies.

But even larger Oregon cities, such as Eugene, which has its own IT and cybersecurity staff, could use some of that funding, she added. In July, Eugene officials said they needed \$3.4 million for cybersecurity software and system upgrades.

Dan Lohrmann, a chief information security officer at Presidio, a global digital services and cybersecurity company, said it's not just local governments that need help. In many state governments, for example, not all systems have multi-factor authentication, a security technology that confirms identity before someone logs in, usually through a randomized one-time password or number sent to a smartphone or email address, he noted.

"States could use the grant money to raise the bar across the board and make sure they are able to face the new round of threats in 2022," said Lohrmann, a former chief information security officer for Michigan.

But the primary goal for states, he added, will be to help local communities.

"Each state is going to have to figure out how they move the football down the field to improve the cybersecurity of the cities, counties, and townships," Lohrmann said.

Town Manager Dillon hopes Salem is one of them. While it upgraded its email scanning software after the ransomware attack and made some other improvements, leaders want to do more, he said.

"We will be applying for whatever we can. We're hoping we can use it to do a complete cybersecurity audit of our system so we can identify areas where we may need improvement," he said. "I'm excited about this grant program. I think it's a great opportunity for towns like ours."

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Jenni Bergal is a staff writer for Stateline.

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

IMPROVING PUBLIC POLICY



Sea lions lounge in the foreground of glaciers in Chilean Patagonia’s Bernardo O’Higgins National Park, an area in the southern part of the country marked by fjords and icebergs and home to a variety of animals. *Ignacio Palacios/Getty Images*

Chile takes an important step in creating Tic-Toc Marine Park

In December, the Chilean Council of Ministers for Sustainability voted to approve creating the 251,800-acre Tic-Toc Golfo Corcovado Marine Park in the Los Lagos region of Chilean Patagonia. The area is rich in biological diversity and known for its abundance of blue, humpback, and pilot whales; Chilean and Austral dolphins; and other vulnerable species. The park’s final approval is in the hands of the president; from there it will head to the Office of the Comptroller General of the Republic. The board’s action marks a significant step forward for Pew’s Chilean Patagonia project’s objective to establish marine protections that will safeguard ecologically rich coastal waters in the Patagonia region.

Diagnostic test oversight preserved

In November, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services helped ensure that the Food and Drug Administration has the ability to protect patients from unsafe laboratory-developed tests. To do so, HHS reversed a 2020 policy that had prevented FDA from requiring a premarket quality check for such tests. These diagnostic tools analyze blood, saliva, and other human samples to test for diseases and illnesses, including COVID-19. Pew’s health care products project—which published the report “The Role of Lab-Developed Tests in the In Vitro Diagnostics Market”—had advocated for this policy reversal in support of the goal of adequate safety oversight for all diagnostic tests, no matter where they are developed.

International Seabed Authority expands mining limits in the Pacific

In December, the International Seabed Authority (ISA) issued a decision that would prohibit mining in about 200,000 square miles across four areas in the Pacific Ocean’s 1.7 million-square-mile Clarion-Clipperton Zone, which stretches from Hawaii to Mexico. The action means that if the ISA approves regulations being developed that would allow seabed mining to begin in international waters, these four areas would be part of more than 760,000 square miles that would be off-limits. The decision also sets an important benchmark for excluding other swaths of valuable habitat from mining and advances Pew’s seabed mining project’s efforts to prevent mineral extraction on the ocean floor unless and until effective environmental regulations are in place that ensure that deep-sea ecosystems will not be harmed.

America’s largest banks make major overdraft changes that will help consumers

Five of the country’s largest banks—Bank of America, Wells Fargo, U.S. Bank, Truist, and Regions Bank—recently announced that they would eliminate and/or reduce fees for several products that had been functioning as high-cost small-dollar loans, saving consumers hundreds of millions of dollars annually. In the case of Bank of America, Pew’s consumer finance project estimates that these changes will save low- and moderate-income households more than \$800 million annually, especially benefiting Black and Hispanic customers, who pay a disproportionate share of overdraft fees. The Bank of America changes come a year after the bank had launched a safe small-installment loan that met Pew’s published standards, enabling the bank to provide liquidity to customers without harmful penalty fees. Wells Fargo, Truist, and Regions Bank announced that, on top of fee changes, they will launch small-installment loans or small-dollar lines of credit. The developments mark progress toward the project’s goal of expanding affordable small loans from banks while curtailing harmful forms of small credit.

Marine conservation expands in waters around Ecuador, Costa Rica

The presidents of Ecuador and Costa Rica recently issued decrees that will protect more migratory waters for vulnerable marine species. In Ecuador, President Guillermo Lasso’s measure will expand the Galápagos Marine Reserve by 23,000 square miles, increasing its size to nearly 75,000 square miles. When finalized, the enhanced protection will include 11,500 square miles of no-take area along the reserve’s Galápagos-Cocos Ridge, an important part of the swimway between Ecuador and Costa Rica for highly migratory species such as hammerhead sharks, silky sharks, and leatherback and green sea turtles. Costa Rica President Carlos Alvarado Quesada’s decree will expand the Cocos Island National Park from 785 square miles to more than 21,000 square miles and the Seamounts Marine Management Area from 3,700 square miles to roughly 41,000 square miles. The Costa Rica and Ecuador directives will safeguard marine life through a network of large-scale protected areas in the Eastern Tropical Pacific region and will mark an important milestone for the Pew Bertarelli Ocean Legacy Project, the Blue Nature Alliance, and other partners.



A green sea turtle swims among a school of sergeant major fish off the Galapagos Islands. *pkphotoscom/Getty Images*

INVIGORATING CIVIC LIFE

Report released on rental code enforcement in Philadelphia

In November, the Philadelphia research and policy initiative released “Rental Code Enforcement in Philadelphia,” a report examining how Philadelphia enforces building code standards among rental properties. Unlike some other cities, Philadelphia has no program for regularly inspecting rental properties, with officials responding only to formal complaints. In December, Pew hosted a virtual convening featuring the report as well as information on health impact assessments, which encourage policymakers to incorporate health considerations into policy decisions across multiple sectors, including housing. Nearly 50 people attended, including housing advocates and developers, city administration officials, City Council staff, and representatives of health care organizations.

Pew hosts convening on stigma as a barrier to addressing the opioid epidemic in Philadelphia

Panelists at a Pew-hosted meeting in December addressed the complexities of stigma associated with opioid use disorder. Stigma is viewed as a significant barrier to successful recovery and quality of and access to care, and Philadelphia policymakers have cited it as an ongoing challenge in addressing the city’s opioid epidemic. Panelists recommended health care systems changes, including increasing the ease of access to treatment for those with opioid use disorder and simpler referral processes from emergency room and primary care physicians to in- and outpatient facilities. The panelists also suggested that clinicians emphasize positive reinforcement and reward adherence to treatment plans rather than stress the negative consequences of noncompliance. The convening included 85 attendees from hospitals, nonprofit health care providers and advocates, and city administration officials as well as other suburban government officials.

Pew Fellows in the Arts make best-of list

Plays from two Pew Fellows in the Arts were highlighted in The New York Times’ roundup of the “Best Theater of 2021.” James Ijames’ (2015 fellow) “Fat Ham,” presented online by Philadelphia’s Wilma Theater, was lauded as a streaming theater highlight. In addition, Tina Satter’s (2019 fellow-in-residence) “Is This a Room” on Broadway was named as one of the best live productions of the year.



The play “*Is This A Room*,” conceived and directed by Pew fellow Tina Satter, turns an FBI interrogation into a Broadway thriller staged at the Lyceum Theatre in New York in 2021. Chad Batka

INFORMING THE PUBLIC

Americans share views on suffering, philosophical questions

The Pew Research Center released in November a report examining Americans’ views on why suffering exists in the world and other significant philosophical questions. The study finds that “sometimes bad things just happen” reflects Americans’ thinking either very well (44%) or somewhat well (42%). Yet it is also quite common for Americans to feel that suffering does not happen in vain. More than half of U.S. adults (61%) think that suffering exists “to provide an opportunity for people to come out stronger.” Many Americans lay some blame for the suffering that occurs in the world at the feet of individuals and societal institutions. Roughly 7 in 10 adults (71%) say the phrase “suffering is mostly a consequence of people’s own actions” aligns at least somewhat well with their views. A similar share of all adults (69%) express support for the statement “suffering is mostly a result of the way society is structured.”

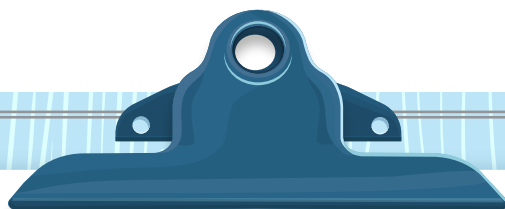
Black immigrants are a growing percentage of the United States’ Black population

A Pew Research Center report released in January found that 1 in 10 Black people in the U.S., or roughly 4.6 million, are immigrants. Between 1980 and 2019, the nation’s Black population grew by 20 million, with the Black foreign-born population accounting for 19% of this growth. The Black immigrant population will account for roughly a third of the U.S. Black population’s growth through 2060, according to the Center’s analysis of Census Bureau data. The Black immigrant population is projected to grow by 90% between 2020 and 2060, while the U.S.-born population is expected to grow 29% over the same time span. Migration from Africa has fueled the bulk of the growth of the Black foreign-born population since 2000. In that year, roughly 560,000 African-born Black immigrants lived in the U.S. By 2019, that number had more than tripled to over 1.9 million. And many of these immigrants are newer arrivals to America: 43% of African-born Black immigrants immigrated to the U.S. from 2010 to 2019, higher than the shares among all U.S. immigrants (25%) and Black immigrants from the Caribbean (21%), Central America (18%), and South America (24%) in the same time period.



Sharp partisan divisions—and divergence within political parties—remain, analysis shows

The Pew Research Center published in November its eighth political typology, an analysis that sorts the American public into nine distinct groups based on their political values and attitudes. The study highlights that, even at a time of deep partisan polarization, the gulf that separates Republicans and Democrats sometimes obscures the divisions and diversity of views that exist within both partisan coalitions and that many Americans do not fit easily into either one. Republicans are divided on some principles long associated with the GOP, including an affinity for businesses and corporations, support for low taxes, and opposition to abortion. Democrats also face substantial internal differences, such as on the importance of religion in society.



Suicide Is an Urgent Public Health Problem in America

The Pew Charitable Trusts has launched a suicide risk reduction project and reports that suicide screening can connect people to treatment and save lives. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that more than 47,500 people died by suicide in 2019—which translates to one death every 11 minutes—and more than 12 million adults had thoughts of suicide.

More than
47,000 people
die by suicide each year.

Suicide was the
12th-leading cause of death
in the country
in 2020.

From 1999 to 2019, the suicide rate **increased 33%** across all sexes, races, and ethnicities.



Rate increase among females:

139%

American Indian
& Alaska Native

68%

White

65%

Black

37%

Hispanic

15%

Asian & Pacific
Islander



Rate increase among males:

71%

American Indian
& Alaska Native

40%

White

9%

Black

9%

Hispanic

10%

Asian & Pacific
Islander

Screening tools for suicide risk can **help reduce death and connect people to treatment**, but these tools are not widely used.

About half

of all people who die by suicide interact with the health care system within a month of their death, giving health care providers a critical opportunity to screen for suicide risk.

Eight hospital emergency departments found

30% fewer suicide attempts

among patients who were screened for suicide risk and received evidence-based care, such as additional screening and follow-up phone calls, compared with patients who were not screened.



Hospitals and health systems can implement evidence-based suicide screening to identify patients at risk and connect them to lifesaving care.

If you or someone you know needs help, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-8255 or text TALK to 741741 to reach a Crisis Text Line counselor.



Ocean, People, Planet

Vast and powerful, the ocean can appear invincible—but it has never been in more danger. A new multimedia initiative from The Pew Charitable Trusts examines the state of the ocean, details the threats, and offers potential solutions—based on data, science, and traditional knowledge—that are collaborative and achievable.

Learn more at pewtrusts.org/oceanpeopleplanet



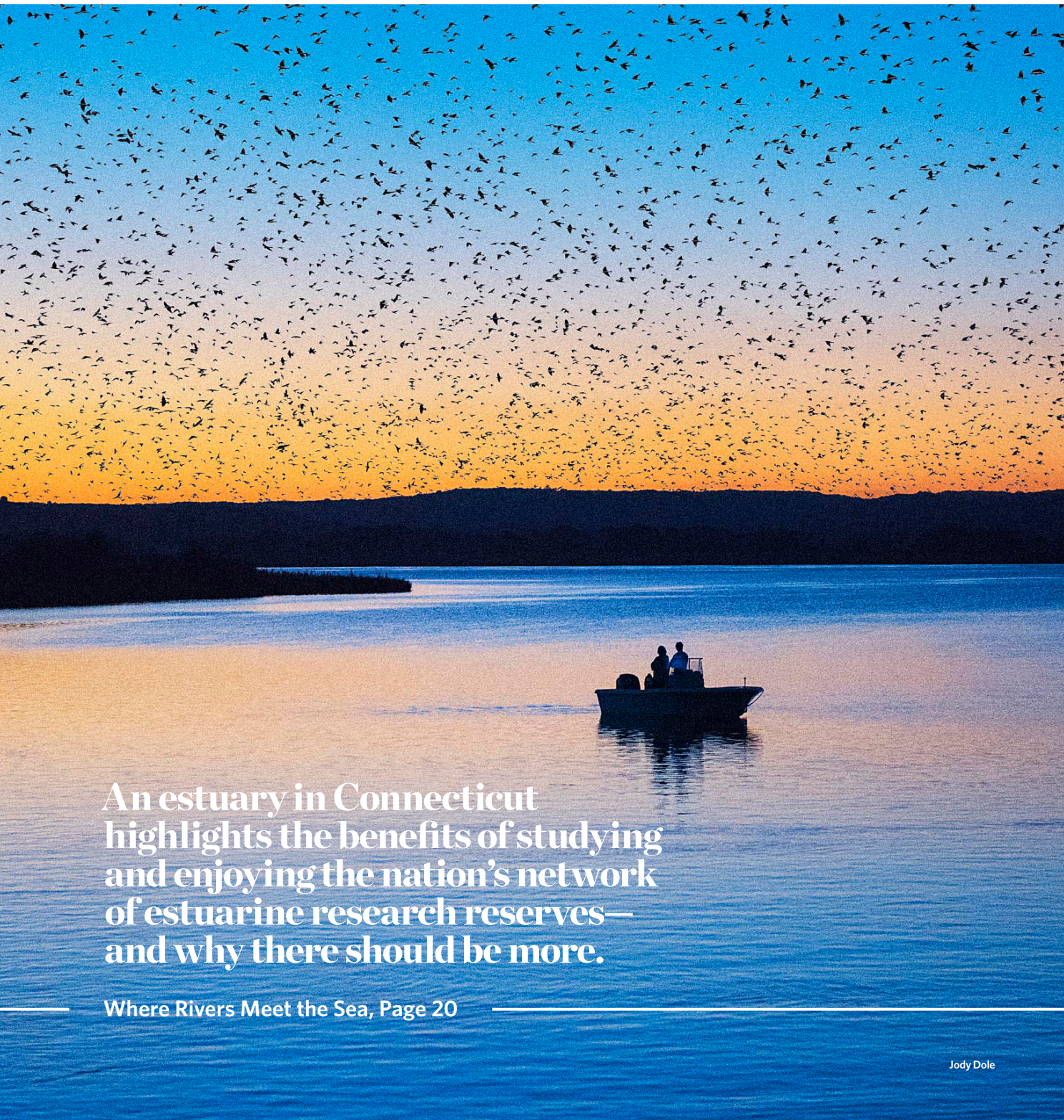
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highlights the benefits of studying
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and why there should be more.

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Jody Dole