INSIDE

The Pew Charitable Trusts

Trust

Big Challenges Big Answers

Conserving vast lands and waters, improving citizens' interactions with the courts, removing impediments to medical care, and more—Pew has helped find solutions that allow people to thrive and communities to flourish.

Winter 2025 | Vol. 27, No. 1

The Pew Charitable Trusts

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Research shows that people who have access to retirement savings in their workplace are 15 times more likely to save than people who don't. The Pew Charitable Trusts' retirement savings project is working with states to create auto-IRA programs for businesses that lack them so that workers can save for the future and be less dependent on government programs in retirement.

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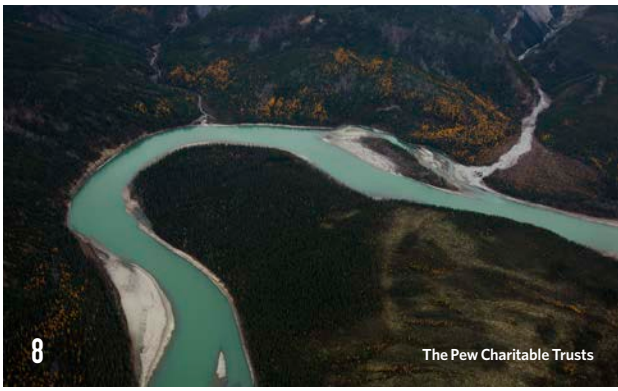
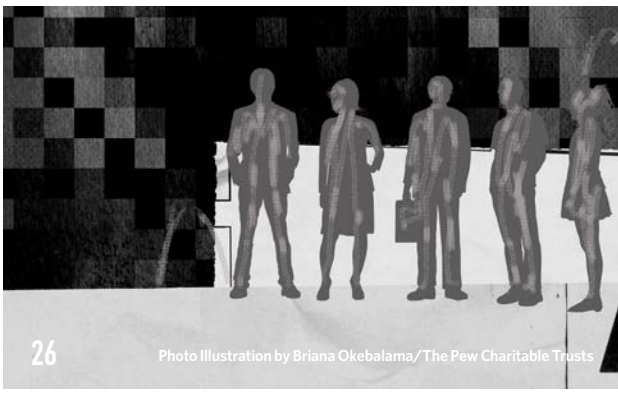
Cover: Ondrej Kubicek/Getty Images





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Founded in 1948, The Pew Charitable Trusts uses data to make a difference. Pew addresses the challenges of a changing world by illuminating issues, creating common ground, and advancing ambitious projects that lead to tangible progress.

Finding Answers

Finding answers to problems can sound pretty simple—just identify the concern, find what seems like the most straightforward solution, and you're done. Except that it's never that easy. A lot depends on how you conduct that search for possible answers. Often, it requires concentrated research and study—without any preconceived answers in mind. And it often requires partners who can bring different perspectives to what are multifaceted challenges.

Relying on data and pursuing results with nonpartisan rigor and strong partners are the hallmarks of how The Pew Charitable Trusts operates. In this issue of *Trust*, I'm struck by how all of our significant accomplishments from 2024 flowed from this approach.

Housing, for example, is now a major concern in the United States, with home prices and rents up dramatically since the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the same time, vacant office space has increased. So there's one possible solution that seems like a pretty obvious answer—convert the empty buildings to residential use. But laws and local zoning practices hamper this approach, and often make it hard to build new affordable housing as well. So we engaged in deep research to find ways that developers and local governments might economically convert office space into dorm-style housing that would be within reach for many now shut out of the housing market. Other research from Pew informed legislation passed in Arizona, Colorado, and Hawaii that will allow more housing such as accessory dwelling units in those states.

The aftereffects from the pandemic played out in other ways too, offering new lessons for many concerns, including how we treat opioid use disorder. Methadone is a highly effective medication for addiction, but for many years, the only way people could receive it was by making daily trips to special clinics, disrupting their efforts to find work and take care of their families. During the times of social distancing, federal rules changed to allow patients to get up to a 28-day supply of methadone instead of a daily dose. Pew used research to argue that those rules continue as the world returned to normalcy—and last year the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration decided to keep the 28-day rule in place. The result: Patients and their families will have less stress and easier access to care.

The painstaking first steps in the search for answers often plays out in laboratories where scientists seek to find causes and cures for diseases. For 40 years, Pew has provided early-career scientists with support through the Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical

Sciences. We recognize young scientists doing promising biomedical research and support their efforts. As you'll read in this issue, the model has been so successful that Pew branched out in 1991 with a Latin American program, worked with The Alexander and Margaret Stewart Trust in 2014 to add a special track for biomedical scientists studying cancer, and started the Innovation Fund in 2017 to encourage collaboration among alumni of the programs to conduct interdisciplinary research exploring key issues in human biology and disease.

Relying on data and pursuing results with nonpartisan rigor and strong partners are the hallmarks of how The Pew Charitable Trusts operates.

Answers to some of the questions of how to best conserve our environment also come from research, including hearing from those who live on the land. Last year, Pew was proud to join 22 Indigenous governments and organizations, the governments of Canada and the Northwest Territories, and private donors to support Indigenous-led stewardship of 146,000 square miles of important and biodiverse lands and waters in northern Canada. The agreement to permanently protect the area will allow future generations to care for the land they've always called home, supporting community priorities such as Indigenous Guardians programs that contribute to local jobs, climate research, and emergency response.

Stories like these give us hope and help us chart an effective path forward. As we start a new year, I hope you are inspired by the progress we can make together—relying on facts, respectful partnerships, and a committed search for solutions.

Susan K. Urahn, *President and CEO*

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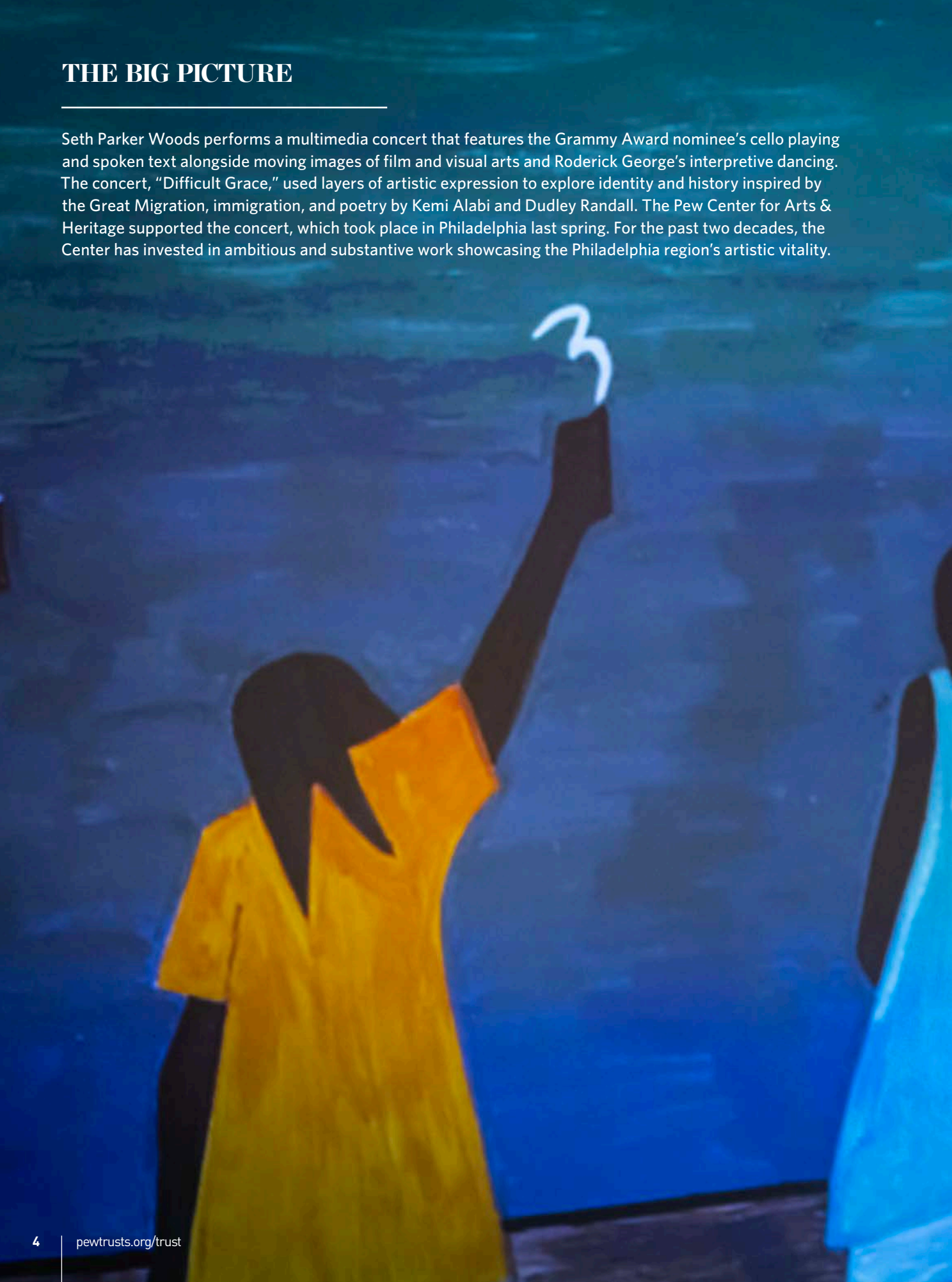
THE BIG PICTURE

Seth Parker Woods performs a multimedia concert that features the Grammy Award nominee's cello playing and spoken text alongside moving images of film and visual arts and Roderick George's interpretive dancing. The concert, "Difficult Grace," used layers of artistic expression to explore identity and history inspired by the Great Migration, immigration, and poetry by Kemi Alabi and Dudley Randall. The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage supported the concert, which took place in Philadelphia last spring. For the past two decades, the Center has invested in ambitious and substantive work showcasing the Philadelphia region's artistic vitality.



Eric Sucar


Spencer Platt/Getty Images

Racial Inequities in Student Loan Repayment

BY DEMETRA APOSPOROS

Black and Hispanic student loan borrowers are more likely to have difficulty repaying their loans than their White peers and are also more likely to face barriers to completing degrees. This, coupled with other educational and economic barriers grounded in structural, historic, and disparate practices in the housing and labor markets, can make payments more challenging and lead to loan default.

The findings come from a Pew Charitable Trusts report issued in December that included a representative survey of student loan borrowers who first received undergraduate loans between 1998 and 2018, as well as a review of academic literature on the topic of student loan repayment and race. (Default, which occurs after 270 days of nonpayment, often triggers severe economic consequences for borrowers, such as seizure of tax refunds, wage garnishments, high fees, and a decline in creditworthiness.)

The report comes at a relevant time for policymakers because collections of defaulted loans will resume in 2025, after a pause that began in March 2020 because of the pandemic. This suspension on collections was part of a larger moratorium on federal student loan payments, which ended in October 2023. During the pandemic, many borrowers reported facing increased financial pressures, and as payments resumed last year, many expected to see both an uptick in their monthly bill totals—other than their student loans—and a decrease in their savings.

Pew's research shows that the repayment system does not work effectively for a large number of participants. Over the past 20 years, half (50%) of Black and 2 out of 5 (40%) Hispanic student loan borrowers have had a loan default, compared with less than a third (29%) of White borrowers. Additionally, about three-quarters of Black (74%) and Hispanic borrowers (75%) who experienced default reported doing so multiple times, compared with 56% among White borrowers.

The report also found that the repayment difficulties that many Black and Hispanic borrowers encounter may be partly explained both by heavy financial burdens and by educational circumstances. For example, both borrower populations are more likely than their White peers to encounter challenging educational circumstances, such as being the first in their family to pursue a postsecondary degree or being limited to part-time enrollment; both can make it harder to navigate higher education. "Millions of borrowers have recently reentered the collections system for the first time in several years, and new defaults are set to begin occurring as early as summer 2025," says Ama Takyi-Laryea, a senior manager on Pew's student loan initiative. "Pew's findings suggest that targeted changes to student loan default rules and requirements would be an important step in helping to address racial disparities in loan repayment and support all struggling borrowers."

Pew's research found three changes that could help these borrowers: enabling direct enrollment into an income-driven repayment plan, which bases payments on income and family size; reforming collections requirements—especially costly fees—that make it harder for borrowers to remain financially stable and repay their loans; and better matching borrowers with the right options for their circumstances.

Americans Feel Good About Job Security—But Not Pay

Amid low unemployment nationwide, U.S. workers feel good about their level of job security, and relatively few expect to look for a new job in the coming months, according to a Pew Research Center survey released in December.

Still, only half of workers say they are extremely or very satisfied with their job overall. And a much smaller share is highly satisfied with their pay: 30%, down from 34% a year earlier.

The survey, conducted in October among 5,273 employed U.S. adults, found that White workers and older workers have the highest job satisfaction. Fifty-five percent of White workers report being extremely or very satisfied, compared with 44% of Hispanic workers, 43% of Black workers, and 42% of Asian workers. Among workers ages 65 and older, two-thirds say they are highly satisfied with their job while just 43% of workers ages 18 to 29 say the same.

Workers with middle and upper family incomes are more likely than those with lower incomes to express high levels of job satisfaction (53% and 54% vs. 42%).

Among the 29% of workers who are not too or not at all satisfied with their pay, the top reason given is that their wages haven't kept up with increases in cost of living, and 54% say a major reason they are dissatisfied is that they don't earn enough to pay their bills.

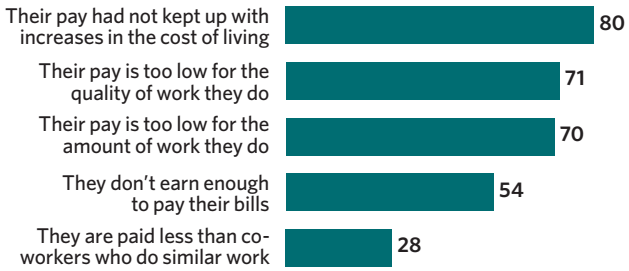
Lower-income workers who are dissatisfied with their pay are far more likely than those with middle and upper incomes to cite the fact that they don't earn enough to pay their bills (69% vs. 51% and 30%).

Workers are now much more likely than they were in 2022 to say it would be difficult for them to get the kind of job they'd want if they were to look for a new one—52% of workers say this would be difficult, compared with 37% in 2022.

—Demetra Aposporos

Falling behind cost-of-living increases is top reason for workers' dissatisfaction with pay

Among employed adults who are not too/not at all satisfied with their pay, % saying each of the following is a ***major reason***



Based on those who are not self-employed. Other response options included "Minor reason" and "Not a reason."

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

COVID-19's Lingering Effects on Philadelphia's Wage and Earnings Tax

When the COVID-19 pandemic ushered in remote and hybrid work, Philadelphia officials wondered how it would affect their wage and earnings tax, especially the portion paid by nonresidents who commuted into jobs based in the city.

Revenue from the nonresident wage tax has long been a key part of the city's finances, and is nearly half of the city's annual revenue. In fiscal year 2024, it raised an estimated $848 million from nonresidents who use fewer public city services and pay a lower rate than residents. An analysis published in October by The Pew Charitable Trusts' Philadelphia research and policy initiative shows that the makeup of this levy has changed, with proportionally more tax coming from Philadelphians and proportionally less from nonresidents. Controlled for inflation, the amount raised by the nonresident tax has dropped substantially over the past 10 years.

"While remote and hybrid work has reduced the number of commuters working in the city, the improved strength of the city's economy has bolstered the resident share of the wage tax by producing increased jobs held by Philadelphians," says Katie Martin, who directs Pew's Philadelphia initiative.

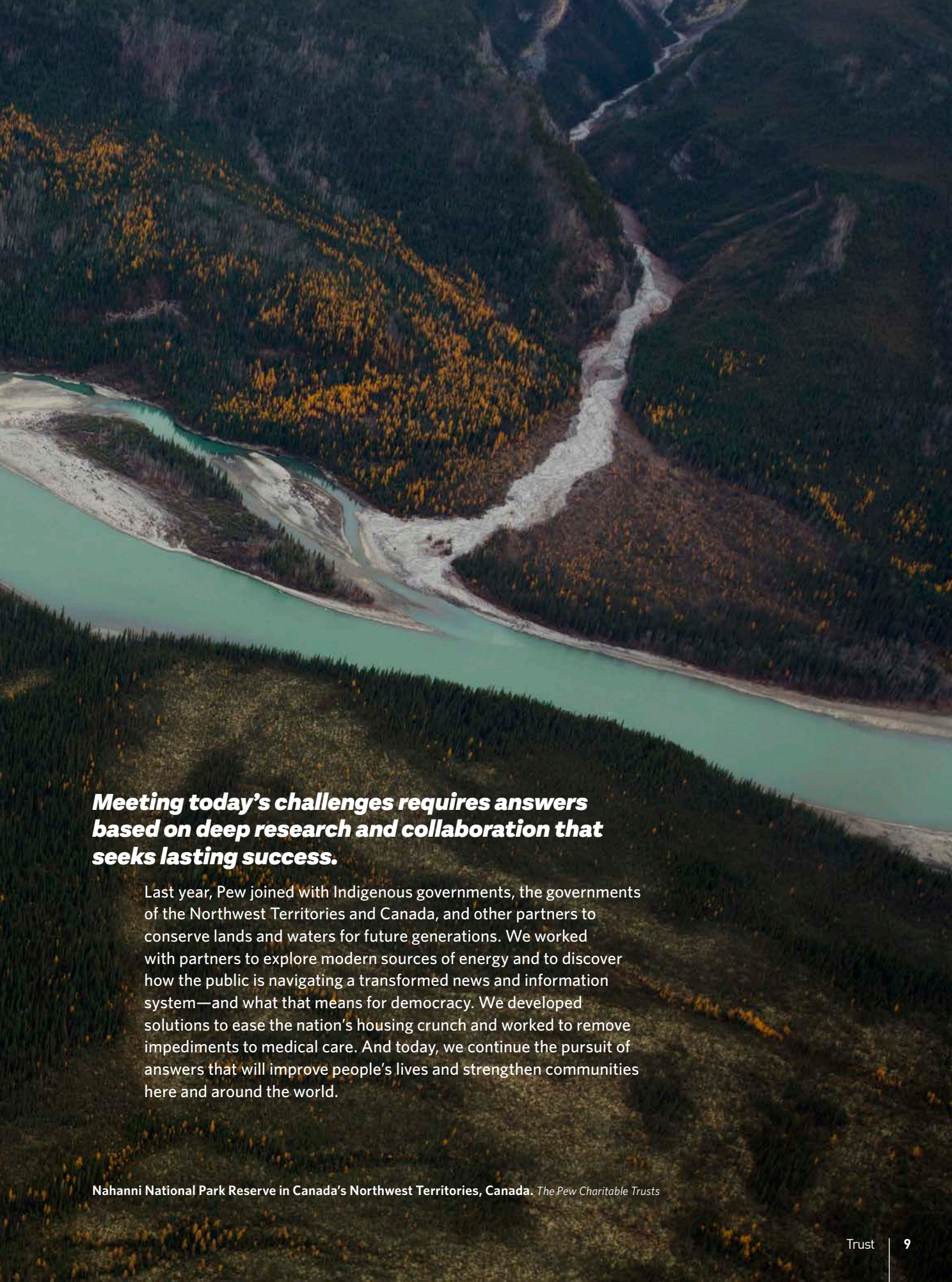
She says that through all these changes, the tax has continued to produce about half of all locally generated revenue for city government—an estimated $2.51 billion in fiscal 2024 and a projected $2.63 billion in fiscal 2025, which began July 1.

For years, Philadelphia officials have debated whether the city should be less dependent on the wage tax, which is considered to be more volatile than other revenue sources. Some argue that the tax hurts the city's ability to retain businesses and residents. But the tax still brings in hundreds of millions of dollars each year from nonresidents, and removing it could put more of a burden on city residents through increases in levies that many nonresidents do not have to pay.

The latest research comes as Philadelphia officials currently debate the city's overall tax structure via the Philadelphia Tax Reform Commission, which expects to release its findings in early 2025.

—Daniel LeDuc

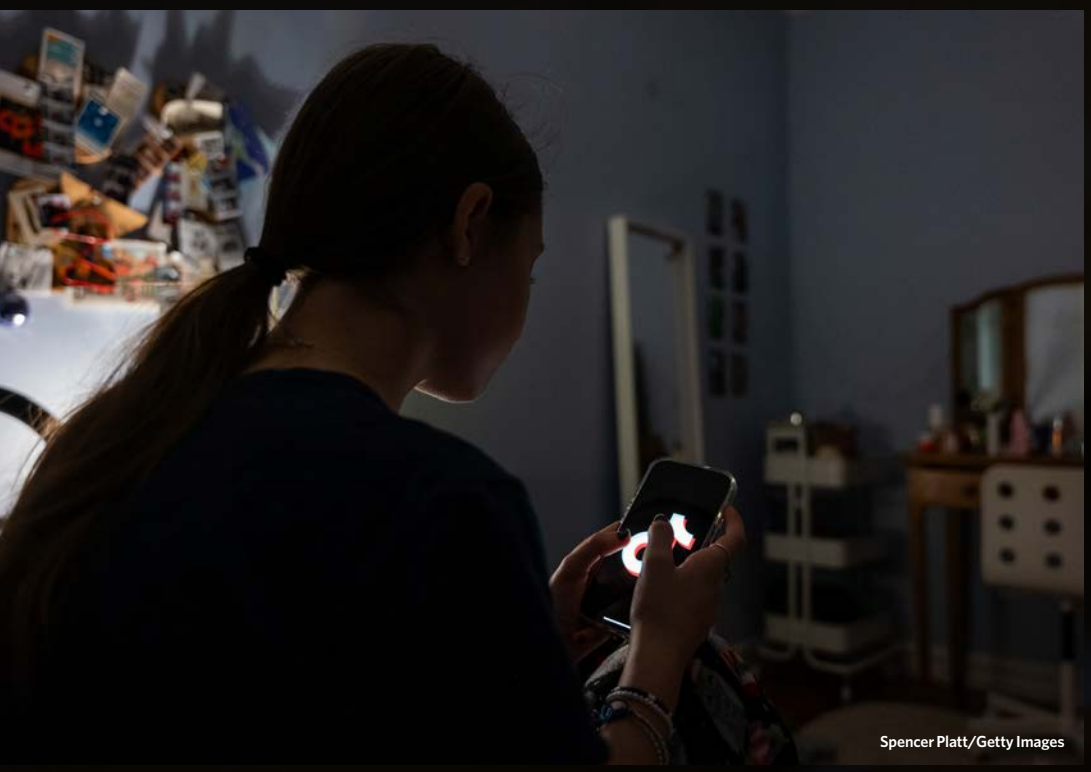
Collaborating *to Find* Answers



Meeting today's challenges requires answers based on deep research and collaboration that seeks lasting success.

Last year, Pew joined with Indigenous governments, the governments of the Northwest Territories and Canada, and other partners to conserve lands and waters for future generations. We worked with partners to explore modern sources of energy and to discover how the public is navigating a transformed news and information system—and what that means for democracy. We developed solutions to ease the nation's housing crunch and worked to remove impediments to medical care. And today, we continue the pursuit of answers that will improve people's lives and strengthen communities here and around the world.

Nahanni National Park Reserve in Canada's Northwest Territories, Canada. *The Pew Charitable Trusts*



Spencer Platt/Getty Images

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH Knight Foundation

New technology is transforming how people consume news and seek information,

with digital sources becoming an important part of Americans' news diets and social media playing a crucial role, especially for younger adults. Most Americans see news on social platforms, though fewer cite news as a reason for using them. Across sites, younger users are much more likely to see information about breaking news. The findings come from a new partnership between Pew Research Center and Knight Foundation, a five-year effort launched last year.

At a time of shrinking local news sources, the Pew-Knight Initiative's early analysis found that the share of people paying close attention to local news dropped in the past six years and that while most Americans say they value local news, a relatively small share—15%—said they had paid for it in the past year. With high-quality news and information essential to an effective and stable democracy, the initiative will examine the quickly evolving information landscape from the standpoints of consumers and producers of news, seeking to go beyond measuring the information that people receive and to understand what they chose to trust, act upon, and share with others.

Many Colorado rivers take life from snowmelt high in the Rocky Mountains and then flow across state lines, supplying water to 18 states and Mexico.

In August, the Colorado Water Quality Control Commission approved an Outstanding National Resource Waters, or ONRW, designation for 385 miles across 15 rivers and streams. These designations safeguard waters from future harm and preserve the high quality of rivers, lakes, and wetlands that provide clean drinking water and wildlife habitat and support recreational activities including fishing, swimming, and paddling. Pew worked as part of a coalition with local partners to seek the designation. And in December, New Mexico followed suit, adding more than 250 miles of rivers within the Rio Grande, Rio Chama, Cimarron, Pecos, and Jemez watersheds to its ONRW designations.

State courts in the U.S. decide cases that touch the lives of millions of Americans each year.

Pew's analysis of national data showed that up to 42% of civil cases are about debt collection, and that in 7 out of 10 of those cases, the person being sued doesn't show up in court and ends up with an automatic ruling against them. The reasons for not appearing in court vary, but often it's because people don't know they're being sued. Last year Minnesota, Tennessee, and Oklahoma passed bipartisan legislation resulting from Pew's research to improve citizens' interaction with their court systems, focusing on debt cases.

Background: Mark Gilliland for The Pew Charitable Trusts

Warming faster than the global average, the Northwest Territories of Canada is a remote and delicate region that has suffered from widespread forest fires and other effects of climate change.

An unprecedented agreement approved in November aims to enhance the region's security by investing in Indigenous communities and their conservation ambitions.

Pew joined 22 Indigenous governments, the governments of the Northwest Territories and Canada, and other private donors to sign the agreement—NWT: Our Land for the Future—which uses a model called "project finance for permanence," or PFP, that aligns policy and funding commitments to deliver large-scale, sustained investments in conservation and community economic development. The agreement will support Indigenous-led stewardship of lands and waters, adding or enhancing protections for up to an estimated 38 million hectares (380,000 square kilometers/146,700 square miles), and will support community priorities such as Indigenous Guardians programs that contribute to local jobs, climate research, and emergency response.

This initiative is part of, and received support from, Enduring Earth—a collaboration among Pew, The Nature Conservancy, World Wildlife Fund, and ZOMA LAB—that seeks to advance PFPs around the world and enable nations to accelerate conservation that benefits local communities and achieves biodiversity, climate, and sustainable development goals.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Bezos Earth Fund, Ducks Unlimited, Inc., Metcalf Foundation, The McLean Foundation, The Sitka Foundation, Waltons Trust, The Wyss Foundation, and ZOMA LAB.

Jamie Stevenson

The Pew Charitable Trusts

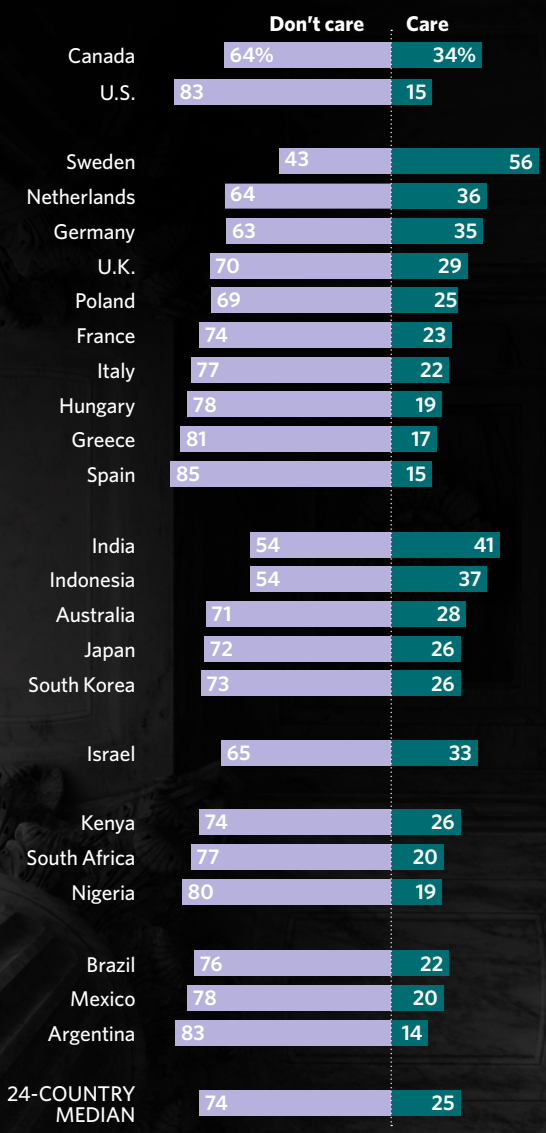
The health of democracy has declined in many nations.

Pew Research Center has been surveying people in various countries on their views of democracy for several years and found that while the concept of representative democracy remains popular, enthusiasm for it has slipped since 2017. In 2024, a median of 54% across 31 countries were dissatisfied with how their democracy is working. And in a 2023 survey of 24 countries, 74% said elected officials don't care what people like them think, and 42% said none of the political parties in their country represent their views.

Many say policies in their country would improve if more elected officials were women, people from poor backgrounds, and young adults. There were more mixed views on electing more businesspeople and union members. And overall, there was less enthusiasm for having more elected officials who are religious.

Most do not believe elected officials care what people like them think

*% who say elected officals **care/don't care** what people like them think*

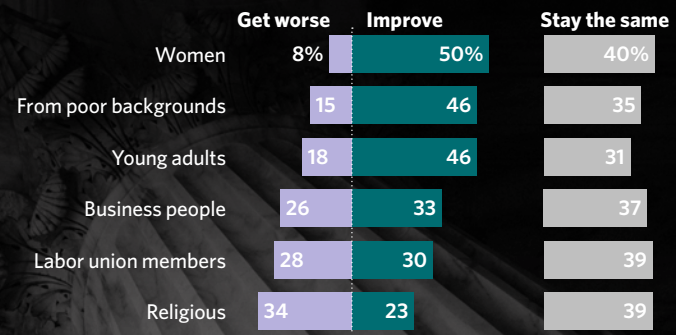


Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Many around the world say policies would improve if more women, people from poor backgrounds, and young adults were in office

% who say policies in their country would ___ if more elected officals were ...



Percentages are medians based on 24 countries. "Labor union members" not asked in Japan. Those who did not answer are not shown.

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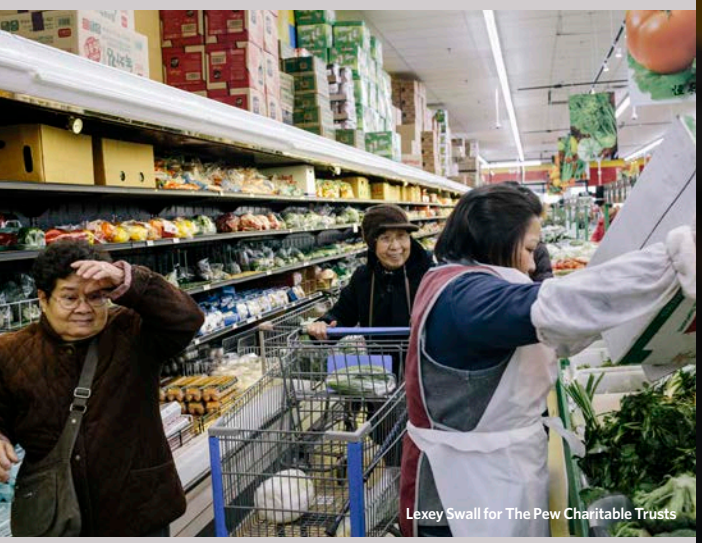
Zach Camp/Unsplash



Lexey Swall for The Pew Charitable Trusts

Over the past three decades, immigrants were a main source of population growth in Philadelphia

—an influx not seen at such levels since 1940. As of 2022, they represented 15.7% of the city's population, and as these new arrivals adapt to the city and the United States, they're transforming what it means to be a Philadelphian. To help policymakers and the public understand this demographic shift, Pew issued a series of reports last year exploring immigrants' roots and documenting their impact on the local economy, housing, and other areas, with comparisons to the role of foreign-born residents in nine other U.S. cities and their surrounding metro areas.

It became easier for those with opioid use disorder to receive treatment thanks to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

relaxing federal requirements for how methadone is dispensed at opioid treatment programs. The new regulations, which Pew advocated for, improve access to care and flexibility for patients and are a permanent extension of the rules enacted during the COVID-19 pandemic that were meant to encourage social distancing and keep people safe. Methadone is a highly effective medication that previously most patients could only access daily at opioid treatment programs, making it difficult for those with work and family responsibilities to receive the drug. Now, patients can obtain a 28-day supply of methadone and aren't required to have counseling as a prerequisite for treatment, and other types of providers—such as physician assistants and nurse practitioners—can dispense it.

The Pew Charitable Trusts

The Pew Charitable Trusts

Wind energy is poised to be a major economic force in Louisiana.

Pew's energy modernization project last year focused on the state in a major report for policymakers that showed that Louisiana is primed to be a leader in providing the goods and services needed to build offshore wind for the nation, an industry that could generate more than $100 billion in private investment and nearly 50,000 jobs. The research found that more than 450 Louisiana companies stand to benefit from the expansion of wind energy nationally and in the Gulf of Mexico. The report outlined ways to maximize opportunities to strengthen businesses and position the state for large contracts and to solidify Louisiana's leadership in the industry by coordinating state government, higher education networks, economic development organizations, and innovation clusters.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH The Rankin Foundation

At the bottom of the world, the remote and rocky South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands

and the surrounding nutrient-dense Atlantic Ocean waters teem with tens of millions of whales, seals, and birds, including the world's largest penguin colony of 1 million breeding pairs of chinstrap penguins on Zavodovski Island. In February, the U.K. and local governments fortified safeguards for 64,000 square miles in its marine protected area. Full protections now encompass approximately 173,000 square miles—an area roughly twice the size of the U.K. The move forever protects critical whale migration routes and penguin foraging habitat from human activity such as fishing and tourism. As part of the Great Blue Ocean coalition, Pew Bertarelli Ocean Legacy contributed key science about baleen whales and the regional impact of climate change to the review that led to the governments' action. The full protections will support essential analysis of the effects from a changing climate not only in these waters but also in the wider Southern Ocean region stretching to Antarctica.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Philanthropist and ocean advocate Dona Bertarelli

Background: Alex Rogers
Foreground: Liam Quinn/Flickr Creative Commons

Lexey Swall for The Pew Charitable Trusts

With home prices soaring and rents skyrocketing, millions of Americans are struggling to afford housing.

Pew helped policymakers with research last year to reimagine their approach to housing. One study highlighted the viability of converting office buildings into co-living dorm-style apartments that reduce construction costs and enable lower rents. Other research informed legislation passed in Arizona, Colorado, and Hawaii that will allow more housing such as accessory dwelling units. And with many buyers unable to obtain small mortgages and turning to riskier financing options, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau cited Pew research in an advisory opinion that said federal home financing rules apply to one of those options—land contracts in which a buyer pays the seller in installments and only takes full legal ownership of a property after making the final payment.

Four decades

OF INVESTMENT IN INNOVATIVE SCIENCE

By Karen Hopkin

Fungal pathogens such as this strain growing in a petri dish sit at the heart of Clarissa Nobile's work. The professor of molecular and cell biology at the University of California, Merced, studies how communities of microbes in human beings can sometimes work together to cause disease. Her research could change what science knows about microbial interactions, and potentially help combat infectious diseases. In 2015, Pew supported Nobile's groundbreaking research. *Ian Bates for The Pew Charitable Trusts*

Pew biomedical scholars' cutting-edge research helps advance science and public health

When David Mendoza-Cózatl, a 2006 Pew Latin American fellow in the biomedical sciences, got an email soliciting applications for the Pew Innovation Fund, he sprang into action. The program provides alumni from any of the Pew biomedical programs with funding to pursue collaborative, intensely interdisciplinary projects. Mendoza-Cózatl was hoping to explore the relationships that plants establish with bacterial communities—interactions that can benefit both parties. "My expertise is in plant biology," he says. "But I know nothing about bacteria. So, I went to the Pew website and asked: Who works with the microbiome?"

Clarissa Nobile's name came up, and Mendoza-Cózatl sent her a note. "I've always wanted to get more into the agricultural side of things," says Nobile of the University of California, Merced, a Pew biomedical scholar from 2015. "So, I thought, why not?"

"That's the power of Pew," says Mendoza-Cózatl. "All it took was one email to establish our collaboration." A few Zoom meetings later, the pair had refined their proposal, which focuses on how bacteria can facilitate a plant's iron uptake. About 30% of the world's population is iron deficient, so coming up with ways to enhance iron levels in crops "could be an agricultural game changer," says Nobile. Pew agreed and awarded the pair an Innovation Fund grant in 2022.

This partnership is just one example of the collaborative and cooperative spirit that continues to thrive as the Pew biomedical programs celebrate a major anniversary: It's been 40 years since the Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences was founded in 1985. In that time, the program, the first in the organization's history to carry the Pew name, has supported more than 800 outstanding young researchers, many of whom have gone on to receive major scientific awards, including six Nobel Prizes. In the ensuing years, Pew's biomedical programs continued to grow, expanding to include the Pew Latin American Fellows Program in the Biomedical Sciences, which launched in 1991. In 2014 Pew and the Alexander and Margaret Stewart Trust partnered to launch the Pew-Stewart Scholars Program for Cancer Research. Three years later, in 2017, the Pew Innovation Fund began.

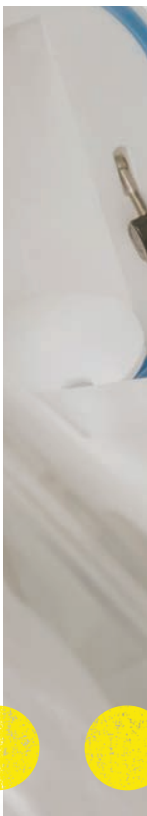
Clarissa Nobile places a tube of fungal pathogen cells in a centrifuge, part of an experiment to construct a new mutant strain at her lab in California. In addition to investigating microbe communities in humans, Nobile is also collaborating with Pew Latin American fellow David Mendoza-Cózatl, a plant biologist, to explore the relationship between plants and bacterial communities. Their research could lead to increasing iron levels in crops—and helping iron-deficient people. ***Ian Bates for The Pew Charitable Trusts***

All of these programs bring together cohorts of talented early-career scientists—assistant professors in the case of scholars and postdocs in the case of fellows—and provide them with significant funding over two to four years. In addition, the programs bring these participants together for an intensive week of science and socializing every year. By doing so, The Pew Charitable Trusts not only supports promising young investigators at a critical juncture in their academic journeys, but also cultivates relationships, mentorships, and collaboration and exposes participants to a broad range of innovative ideas designed to ignite their curiosity and trigger rewarding new avenues of research. Those efforts ultimately deepen understanding of biological systems and pave the way toward improving human health.

"It's the most impactful and meaningful philanthropic life sciences programs I've ever worked with," says Craig Mello of the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School, Worcester, former National Advisory Committee chair to the program and a 1995 biomedical scholar. "It instills the importance of sharing ideas and reinforces the philosophy that the mission of science is to benefit humanity and make a positive impact on the world."

The trick lies in supporting cohorts of imaginative, interdisciplinary individuals who are pioneers and leaders in their fields. "Over the past four decades, Pew has provided funding for the sorts of high-risk, high-reward projects that early-career faculty don't typically have the luxury to carry out," says Ana-Rita Mayol, the director of Pew's biomedical programs. "This investment has helped to advance cutting-edge and award-winning science that's made a real difference in people's lives. And it has supported scientists who are community-minded and collaborative."

Going the extra mile to bring these investigators together each year lays the groundwork for them to make enduring professional and personal connections. "Pew creates a real cohort, a real community that continues even after you leave," says Lee Niswander of the University of Colorado, Boulder, a 1995 biomedical scholar who took over for Mello as chair in 2024. Attending the meetings, she says, "opens up amazing intersections that you wouldn't establish otherwise." Such novel combinations can give rise to truly groundbreaking research.



FOSTERING TALENT

Pew's investment in each of its individual grantees is life-changing from the start. "When you have an organization as prestigious as Pew say, 'We think your work is worthy of being recognized,' it gives you the confidence to tackle difficult projects that other people are telling you are too risky," says Song Tan of Pennsylvania State University, a 2001 biomedical scholar.

And the added funding (anywhere from $130,000 to $300,000 over the course of the grants) certainly helps. "At that point in my career, I didn't have any grants for the work on RNA interference," says Mello, who went on to win a Nobel Prize for discovering this process, commonly called RNAi, which has since been developed into a tool for selectively blocking the activity of target genes. "It was just too totally off the map. So, Pew had a huge impact on my science—and on the whole RNAi field."

Receiving a Pew scholarship also boosts grantees' visibility at a time when making connections is crucial. "I got five invitations to give seminars that first year alone," says Sonya Neal of the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), a 2020 biomedical scholar. "Once you start giving these talks, it's like a domino effect that just explodes to the point where everyone knows about your work."

Some of those seminar invites come from fellow scholars. "We see each other at conferences, follow each other on social media, track each other's careers, and cheer for each other's successes," says UCSD's Kim Cooper, a 2015 biomedical scholar and Innovation Fund investigator. "I deeply respect and appreciate the Pew program for the community it builds."

A large part of that community-building takes place at Pew's annual gatherings. These meetings provide a healthy mix of intellectual engagement and outdoor adventure, a structure that encourages the scholars and fellows to get to know one another socially, outside of an academic setting. "The Pew meetings are the best I've ever been to," says Nuo Li of Duke University, a 2018 biomedical scholar who also has an Innovation Fund grant. In addition to hearing about an incredibly broad swath of biomedical science from investigators at the top of their fields, Li valued the opportunity to exchange ideas and get advice about how to manage a successful lab. At one meeting, Li says, "I remember kayaking through the Florida mangroves with Jesse Goldberg." As a 2014 biomedical scholar, Goldberg was a few years ahead of Li in his career trajectory and was able to offer assurance and suggestions for navigating regulatory hurdles and other setbacks. "It helped me put things into perspective," says Li. "I left the meeting refreshed and invigorated and excited to focus on my science."

Putting liquid growth media—a solution that helps cultivate microorganisms—into an anaerobic chamber helps scientists in the Nobile lab grow *Clostridium perfringens*, a common cause of food poisoning, together with a naturally occurring fungus that lives on the human body. *Ian Bates for The Pew Charitable Trusts*

A Brief History of The Pew Biomedical Programs

Since 1985, when the Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences announced its first class of innovative scientists, the program has supported groundbreaking research by early-career scientists working to improve human health. Today, Pew's biomedical programs offer awards through three different program branches and an Innovation Fund. Over the course of 40 years, the community of scholars and fellows participating in Pew's programs have won an array of prestigious honors—there have been six Nobel Prize winners, five Lasker Award recipients, 12 MacArthur "Genius Grant" Fellowship awardees, and two Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences winners, among others.

1985: PEW SELECTS ITS FIRST CLASS OF BIOMEDICAL SCHOLARS

The Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences awarded funding to its first class of 19 scientists in 1985. The following year, the program held its first annual meeting in Phoenix—and each year since, it has brought together members of Pew's scientific community.

1991: PEW AWARDS ITS FIRST CLASS OF LATIN AMERICAN FELLOWS

Early Pew scholars, all working in the United States, recognized the opportunity to expand their community and support science beyond this country's borders. This led to the development of the Pew Latin American Fellows Program in the Biomedical Sciences, which debuted in 1991 and funds talented scientists from Latin America for two years of postdoctoral training in the United States. Nearly 70 percent of fellows accept additional funding and return to their home country to establish their own labs.

2014: LAUNCH OF THE PEW-STEWART SCHOLARS PROGRAM FOR CANCER RESEARCH

Pew partnered with the Alexander and Margaret Stewart Trust to launch the Pew-Stewart Scholars Program for Cancer Research in 2014 to support early-career scientists seeking to uncover treatments and cures for cancer.

2017: PEW CREATES THE INNOVATION FUND

As a vote of confidence in the power of collaborative, interdisciplinary research, Pew created the Innovation Fund in 2017 to encourage partnerships among alumni of Pew's biomedical programs. Each year, pairs of researchers are selected as Innovation Fund investigators; they receive $270,000 over three years for joint research projects.

Craig Mello, far right, a 1995 biomedical scholar and 2006 Nobel laureate in physiology or medicine, works with a grad student. Mello studies how genetic information is passed from one generation to another, and believes Pew's assistance early in his career had a major impact on his work—and on the RNA science field in general. Along with colleague Andrew Fire, he made a serendipitous discovery in 1998 involving RNA, which enabled the creation of a new class of therapeutics to take on harmful genes—so far 5 drugs have been approved to treat potentially fatal genetic disorders and many more are in clinical and pre-clinical development. ***Molly Peters for The Pew Charitable Trusts***

But most importantly, the breadth of the scholars' and fellows' collective expertise guarantees exposure to a range of exciting new ideas and technologies. "That inspires me to apply more novel, cutting-edge techniques to our work," says Christina Towers of the Salk Institute for Biological Studies (a 2022 Pew-Stewart scholar). At a recent meeting, Towers, who studies cancer cell metabolism, was encouraged by the neuroscientists in her cohort to try using optogenetics—a popular method for controlling the activity of nerve cells—to manipulate the metabolic reactions of cancer cells in mice. "It was definitely outside my wheelhouse," she said. "But talking to the neurobiologists made me feel like it was within reach, so now my lab is developing this tool to pursue a new set of interesting biological questions."

Scholars also bring a range of ideas and experiences from a broad swath of institutions. "Pew values diversity in their programs," says Nobile, who was the first Pew biomedical scholar at the University of California, Merced, the newest institution in the UC system, where nearly three-quarters of the students are the first in their family to attend college. "Going to Pew meetings and interacting with people from a variety of backgrounds in terms of experience, expertise, fields, different kinds of institutions, and different countries has really been transformative."

Sitting in on talks from wide-ranging and unfamiliar fields can definitely get the creative juices flowing. Roozbeh Kiani, who studies systems neuroscience at New York University (biomedical scholars class of 2016), was transported by a presentation on modeling the spread of the Zika virus. "Looking at those slides, I thought, 'Forget about the countries, forget about the map, just focus on those lines connecting one node to another,'" he says. "They reminded me of the complex neural networks that make up the human brain." Inspired by that unexpected flash of insight, Kiani developed a statistical method for deducing the architecture of a neural network based on the activity of just one of its constituent neurons—information that could someday be used to manipulate a network's activity to, say, replace painful memories, alter perceptions, or reduce the damage caused by a stroke. Being able to make that kind of intellectual leap, from tracking pandemics to tracing neural networks, is something that Kiani says "pretty much happens only at Pew meetings."

COLLABORATION IS KEY

In addition to novel intellectual connections, Pew meetings foster personal connections that lead to fruitful collaboration. Based on the relationship they built at Pew meetings, Kiani and Li have elected to pool their resources and expertise to examine the neural mechanisms that allow monkeys and mice to make decisions—and change their minds. By identifying mechanisms that apply across this evolutionary span, Li says their project, which is supported by an Innovation Fund grant, could yield findings that are relevant to the workings of the human mind. "I wouldn't have seen this coming when I started my lab eight years ago," says Li. "Pew has certainly shaped the trajectory of my research and given my work more purpose."

Tan agrees with the importance of cultivating relationships. "The camaraderie and trust you build at Pew meetings is key to collaboration," he says. Almost two decades after they met, Tan launched a joint project with Cheng-Ming Chiang (a 1996 biomedical scholar and currently a member of the advisory committee). Chiang studies BRD4, a protein that plays a key role in gene regulation in both normal cells and cancer cells. He has been working on finding small molecules that will disrupt BRD4's interaction with cancer-promoting proteins without compromising its ability to bind to chromosomal DNA, or chromatin, and to regulate the activity of normal genes. That's where Tan comes in.

Tan's specialty is determining the structures of large complexes of gene-regulatory proteins with chromatin. He's attempting to show how BRD4 binds to chromatin and other proteins. Figuring out how to selectively disrupt specific BRD4 interactions could hold the key to developing targeted cancer therapeutics with fewer side effects.

"I have been talking to structural biologists for the past five or six years," says Chiang. "And nobody wanted to collaborate, because they thought the project was too risky." Although the BRD4 study is not currently funded by Pew, it's exactly the type of work Pew typically supports. "They encourage unconventional thinking, and they like to see proposals that are high risk and high impact," says Chiang.

Sonya Neal works at her lab at the University of California, San Diego. Through the Pew program, Neal, a 2020 biomedical scholar, met 2022 Pew-Stewart scholar Christina Towers of the Salk Institute for Biological Studies, who studies cancer cell metabolism. The two scientists are combining their expertise to study how pancreatic cancer progresses. ***Alan Nakkash for The Pew Charitable Trusts***

The workspace of Neal lab trainees is not only a place to study disease-causing enzymes but also an incubator for testing new ideas, fostering questions, and developing curious minds—common practices of the more than 1,000 scientists who make up Pew's biomedical research community. ***Alan Nakkash for The Pew Charitable Trusts***

To pursue such projects, scholars team up with other scholars, fellows, and even the advisors. "My lab is highly collaborative," says Neal. "I'm always looking for new technologies to apply to our model systems because we're a question-driven lab, and I feel like a diversity of approaches helps us move forward." And the Pew meetings are ripe with opportunity. "I have no shame," laughs Neal. "When I hear about an exciting new technology, I just run up to that person and say, 'Oh my gosh, can we talk more about how I can adopt this in my lab?' It just inspires me to innovate."

Neal recently teamed up with Towers to develop techniques that will allow her to explore how the proteins she studies fuel the progression of pancreatic cancer. "Knowing exactly how this works could provide new therapeutic targets for pancreatic cancer," says Neal, who bonded with Towers over lunch at a Pew meeting. The two decided, then and there, to join forces. "It's funny because we work right across the street from each other," says Towers. "But we had never had a conversation about our science. The Pew meeting was the catalyst."

Meanwhile, just down the hall at UCSD, Cooper had been talking with Elizabeth Villa, a 2017 biomedical scholar, about taking a closer look inside chondrocytes, bone-building cells that swell up to 20 times their original size. Cooper was certain that Villa's skills with microscopy could shed light on how they achieve this remarkable feat, and also thought the project seemed a natural fit for an Innovation Fund grant. "But the Innovation Fund is limited to Pew alumni, so we had to wait for Elizabeth to 'graduate' to apply," says Cooper.

When Villa texted her to say they'd gotten the grant, Cooper replied with a celebratory string of emojis and tears in her eyes. "This came through at a time when I really needed a win," she says. Midcareer can be particularly challenging, because investigators are no longer eligible to apply for early-career support. "Knowing that people at Pew still believed in my ideas—not just at the beginning but through the arc of my career—that meant a lot," she says.

"The Innovation Fund is a way for our grantees to rekindle connections with each other, and for Pew to reinvest in them," says Mayol. And grantees take that investment seriously. "Because Pew has given us so much, I think a lot of us come out wanting to give back to Pew," says Neal. Former scholars recommend other scholars and fellows for faculty positions, volunteer for the program's advisory committee, and continue to support the program by nominating outstanding candidates—year after year. "I'm trying to be a Pew superspreader and everyone knows it," laughs Neal.

And of course they continue to carry out the sort of science that Pew first encouraged them to do. "Although I had Pew funding several decades ago, it still influences what I do today," says Tan. "Pew makes you want to be a better scientist and tackle problems that have true impact. I am so grateful to be part of the Pew family."

Karen Hopkin is a longtime science writer based in Boston.

How U.S. Public Opinion Has Changed in 20 Years of Pew Research Center Surveys

By Jenn Hatfield

Photo Illustration by Briana Okebalama/The Pew Charitable Trusts

When The Pew Charitable Trusts created Pew Research Center in 2004, we were surveying Americans using the established industry method at the time: calling people on their landline phones and hoping they'd answer. As the Center marked its 20th anniversary last year, survey methods have become more diverse, and we now conduct most of our interviews online.

Public opinion itself has also changed in major ways over the last 20 years, just as the country and world have. Here's a closer look at how Americans' views and experiences have evolved on topics ranging from technology and politics to religion and social issues.

The rise of the internet, smartphones, and social media

The past two decades have witnessed the emergence of all sorts of technologies that let people interact with the world in new ways. For instance, 63% of U.S. adults used the internet in 2004, and 65% owned a cellphone (we weren't yet asking about smartphones). Today, 95% of U.S. adults browse the internet, and 90% own a smartphone, according to our surveys.

Social media was just taking off in 2004, the year Mark Zuckerberg launched "The Facebook" (as it was known then) from his Harvard dorm room. Since then, Americans have widely adopted social media. These platforms have also become a key source of news for the U.S. public, even as concerns about misinformation and national security have grown.

Meanwhile, many traditional news organizations have struggled. In 2004, daily weekday newspaper circulation in the U.S. totaled around 55 million. By 2022, that had fallen to just under 21 million. Newspapers' advertising dollars and employee counts have also decreased.

In this more fragmented news environment, Americans have become less trusting of the information that comes from news organizations. On the whole, however, more people still say they trust information from news organizations than from social media.

Other emerging technologies

Some technological changes over the past 20 years haven't been as widely adopted, and a few still sound like science fiction. For example, Elon Musk announced this year that his company Neuralink had implanted a computer chip in a living person's brain. The chip is intended to allow people to use phones or computers simply by thinking about what they want to do on the the devices—an idea that Americans are largely hesitant about.

Other innovations we've surveyed about that might have seemed far-fetched back in 2004 include driverless passenger vehicles, space tourism, AI chatbots like ChatGPT, and gene editing to reduce a baby's risk of developing serious health conditions. Our research suggests that Americans are still getting introduced to and forming opinions of these technologies, so we'll likely see public attitudes evolve on these and other novel ideas over the next 20 years.

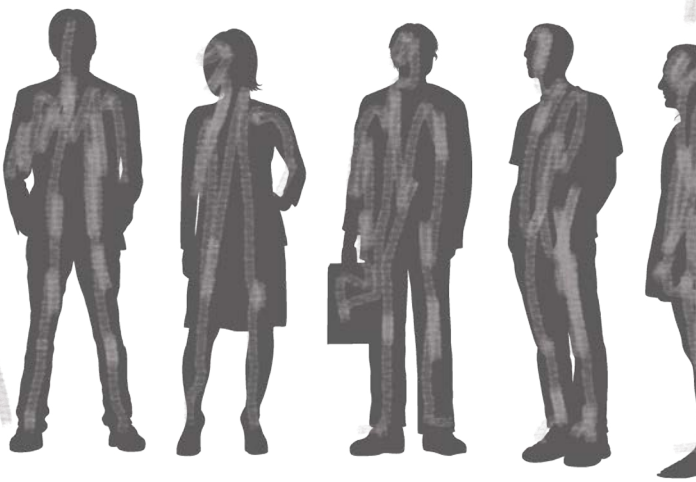
Declining trust in national institutions

Around the Center's founding in 2004, 36% of Americans said they trusted the federal government to do what is right just about always or most of the time. By April 2024, just 22% said the same.

This is part of a longer-term decline in trust. In 1964, 77% of Americans trusted the federal government to do the right thing all or most of the time. There have been a few periods of increased trust in the decades since, including shortly after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. But since 2008, fewer than 30% of Americans have said they trust the government to do the right thing all or most of the time.

Views of Congress and the Supreme Court have also become more negative over the past 20 years. In 2006, 53% of Americans had a favorable view of Congress, but after some ups and downs, that share fell to 26% in 2023. And the share of adults who view the nation's highest court favorably is near its lowest mark in almost 40 years of data.

The years during and after the coronavirus pandemic have also seen a more general distrust of people who were once considered experts. Many Americans were dissatisfied with the communication they received about the pandemic from public health officials, and close to half thought officials were unprepared for the initial coronavirus outbreak in the United States. Most Americans still trust scientists to act in the public's best interest, but fewer say this now than in 2020.



More diversity in the U.S. and its government

The U.S. has become much more diverse over the past 20 years on several measures, including immigrant status. Today, immigrants account for 13.8% of the nation's population—near the record high from 1890—and they have come from just about every country in the world.

Racial and ethnic diversity has also increased. Between 2004 and 2022, the U.S. population grew by 14%, according to the Census Bureau. But the Asian, Hispanic, and Black populations all grew at faster rates—74%, 55%, and 22%, respectively—while the White population remained stable. As a result, the share of Americans who are White fell from 68% in 2004 to 59% in 2022.

As the country has become more diverse, so have its voters—and its leaders. The 118th Congress was the most racially and ethnically diverse in history, and the number of women in Congress is at an all-time high. Majorities of President Joe Biden's judicial appointments were women and racial or ethnic minorities, a first for any president.

Still, there's some skepticism that women will ever achieve parity with men in political leadership. In 2023, 52% of Americans said it is only a matter of time before there are as many women in political office as men, while 46% said men will continue to hold more high political offices.

Growing dissatisfaction with the Democratic and Republican parties

In the early 2000s, very few Americans had unfavorable views of both the Democratic and Republican parties. But over the next two decades, the share saying they dislike both major parties increased, reaching 28% in 2023.

This is just one element of Americans' broad dissatisfaction with politics. As trust in political institutions declines, few Americans now think the political system is working even somewhat well. Majorities say that most elected officials don't care what people like them think and that ordinary people have too little influence on Congress' decision-making. And most see little or no common ground between Republicans and Democrats on the economy, the environment, the budget deficit, immigration, gun policy, or abortion.

As a result, many Americans say they regularly feel angry or exhausted when they think about U.S. politics, and very few feel hopeful and excited. When asked for the one word or phrase they'd use to describe politics today, some of the most common answers are "divisive," "corrupt," and "messy."

Around 3 in 10 Americans now have unfavorable views of both parties

% of U.S. adults who have an unfavorable view of both the Republican and Democratic parties

Note: Based on those who rated both major parties.
Source: Pew Research Center

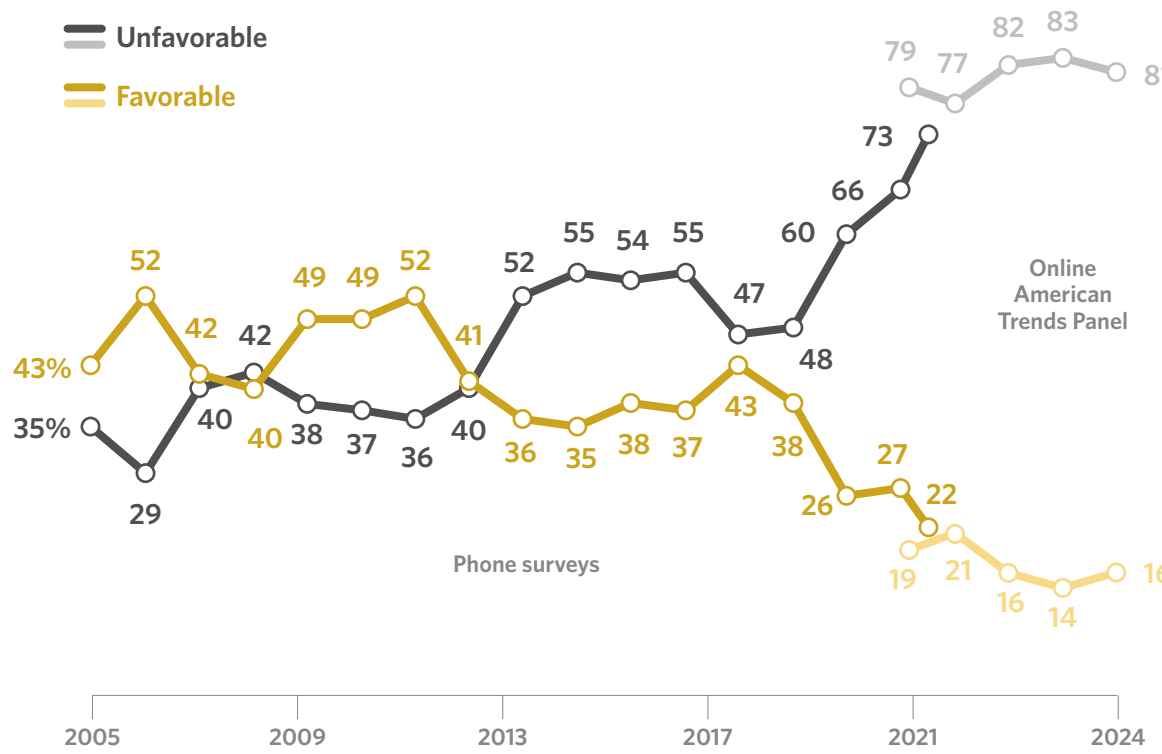
China's emergence as a perceived threat—and even an enemy

Americans' views of China have become increasingly negative over the past two decades. In 2005, the first year we asked this question, 35% of U.S. adults had an unfavorable view of China. Today, about eight-in-ten view China unfavorably, and about four-in-ten say it is an enemy of the U.S., as opposed to a competitor or a partner.

In an open-ended survey question in 2023, half of Americans named China as the country that poses the greatest threat to the U.S.—about three times the share who named Russia, the second-most common answer. In contrast, China was only the third-most popular answer in 2007, behind Iran and Iraq.

Most Americans hold an unfavorable view of China

% who have a(n) ___ opinion of China



Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.
Source: Pew Research Center

The rise of the religiously unaffiliated

Many Americans describe themselves as atheist, agnostic, or "nothing in particular." At the Center, we refer to this group as religious "nones."

The share of Americans who identify as religious nones is significantly higher than it was when we began asking this question about religious identity in 2007. In recent years, the share of religious nones has mostly been stable, around 28%. But it's too early to tell whether this population is leveling off or will continue to grow.

Still, religious nones are currently one of the largest religious groups in the United States. They trail Protestants, who make up 41% of U.S. adults, but make up a larger share of the population than Catholics (20%) and all other faiths (8%).

While they don't identify with any organized religion, many religious nones do hold some religious or spiritual beliefs. For example, most say there is some higher power or spiritual force in the universe, though just 13% say they believe in "God as described in the Bible."

Another reversal: Marijuana legalization

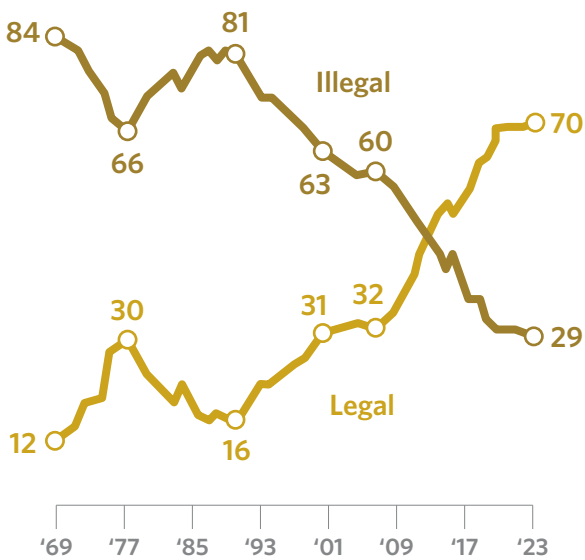
Support for legalizing marijuana has also been on the rise in the U.S. over the past two decades. Around the time the Center was established in 2004, just a third of U.S. adults said marijuana should be legalized, but that rose to 70% by 2023.

The change in attitudes is even starker when looking at the longer term. In 1969, just 12% of Americans supported legalizing marijuana. It wasn't until 1996 that any state legalized the drug for medical purposes, and it took until 2012 for states to begin legalizing it for recreational purposes.

Today, 38 states and the District of Columbia have legalized marijuana for medical and/or recreational use.

U.S. public opinion on legalizing marijuana, 1969-2023

Do you think the use of marijuana should be made legal, or not?



Note: No answer and no opinion responses are not shown.
Source: Pew Research Center

Increasingly polarized views on climate change, guns, abortion

On several issues, the pattern is not just that Americans' views have changed markedly over the past two decades. It's that Democrats and Republicans have grown further apart in their views, eroding areas of common ground between the parties. (In this essay, as in most Center publications, "Democrats" and "Republicans" refer to people who identify with or lean toward that party.)

Consider climate change. In 2009, Democrats were already 36 percentage points more likely than Republicans to say climate change is a major threat to the U.S. (61% vs. 25%). But by 2022, that partisan gap had grown to 55 points: 78% of Democrats, but just 23% of Republicans, considered climate change a major threat.

Globally, people in many advanced economies tend to have similar levels of concern to U.S. Democrats. A median of 75% of adults across 19 countries we surveyed in 2022 said climate change is a major threat to their country.

The topic of guns has become increasingly partisan, too. In 2003, 56% of Republicans and 29% of Democrats said it was more important to protect Americans' right to own guns than to control gun ownership, a 27-point gap. But by 2022, that gap had swelled to 63 points (81% vs. 18%).

These changes coincided with major court rulings, including the Supreme Court's 2008 decision in District of Columbia v. Heller, which held that the Second Amendment guarantees an individual's right to have a gun.

Abortion is another subject where partisan divisions have grown. In 2007, 63% of Democrats said abortion should be legal in all or most cases. That share has grown to 85% today, following the Supreme Court's 2022 decision to overturn Roe v. Wade, which had enshrined the constitutional right to abortion in 1973.

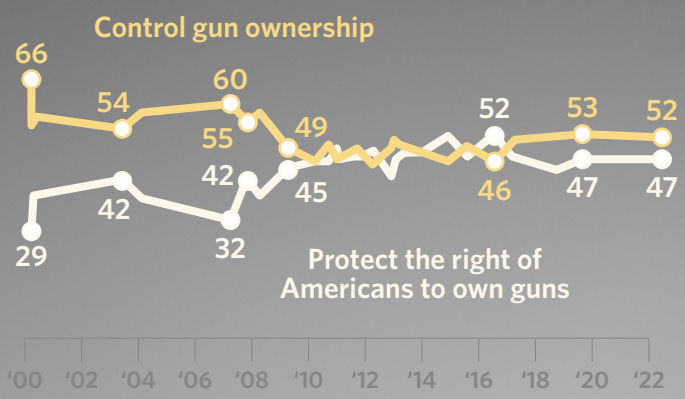
By comparison, there has been relatively little change in opinion among Republicans: About four-in-ten continue to say abortion should be legal in all or most cases. As a result, the partisan gap has soared from 24 points in 2007 to 44 points today.

Global views vary, but support for legal abortion has generally grown over the past decade in Europe, Latin America, and India. A median of 66% of adults across 27 places we surveyed now say abortion should be legal in all or most cases. In most places where we can measure political ideology on a left-right scale, people on the left are more likely than those on the right to support legal abortion. But the U.S. has by far the largest gap between the two sides.

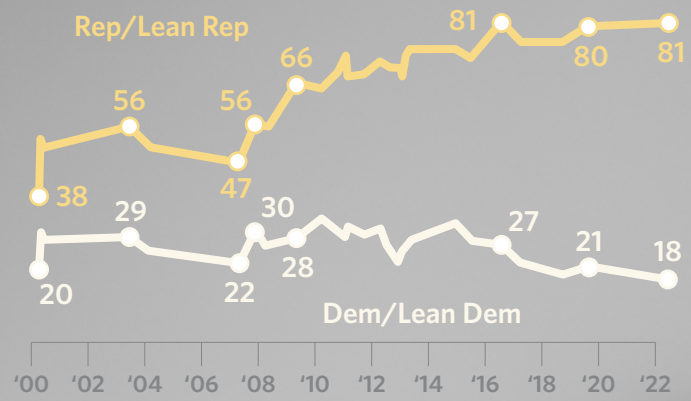
Jenn Hatfield is a writer and editor at Pew Research Center.

Public remains closely divided over controlling gun ownership and protecting gun rights, with Republicans and Democrats holding opposing views

% who say it is more important to ...



% who say it is more important to protect the right of Americans to own guns ...



Notes: Share of respondents who did not offer an answer not shown. 2019 and 2022 data from Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel; prior data from telephone surveys
Source: Pew Research Center

Nathan Chiu/Getty Images

Heights Philadelphia's Programs Help Students Prepare for College and Career

A graduate who's now an educator discusses the Pew grantee's critical role in his successes

Left: Three students who participated in Heights at the 2024 Graduation Celebration at Citizens Bank Park. Right: Kali Avans (right) poses with Heights Philadelphia's president and CEO, Sean Vereen, at the organization's second annual Fall Fest. *Paola Nogueras*

Heights Philadelphia, a Pew Fund for Health and Human Services in Philadelphia grant recipient works with low-income students, with an emphasis on Black, Latino, and first-generation-to-college youth. Its programs, which take place at local middle and high schools and at colleges around the country, help students set and achieve goals for educational and career success. Through individualized advising, partnerships that reduce barriers to college and workforce success, pathways to well-paying careers, and community support, Heights serves as a catalyst for the economic mobility of its participants and supports a more equitable and thriving city.

We spoke with Kali Avans, a graduate of one of Heights' programs. An educator for more than 12 years, he has taught children from preschool to second grade in the city's public schools and is currently dean of students for School Lane Charter School in Bensalem, Pennsylvania. Avans is also a member of Heights' alumni engagement leadership team. He received a bachelor's degree from Dickinson College and a master's degree and doctorate in education from Cabrini University.

In this interview, Dr. Avans explains how he was influenced by his experience with Heights prior to 2022 when it was called Philadelphia Futures.

What was your experience growing up in Philadelphia, and before participating in Heights' programs?

I grew up in West Philadelphia and had some very scary experiences growing up there—such as witnessing gun violence, police brutality, and poverty. In light of these circumstances, I envisioned a life better than the one I was experiencing. Before participating in Heights, I knew that education would be my way out but wasn't exactly sure how I would achieve my goals.

When did you participate in Heights' programs, and are there any standout moments from your experience?

I began participating in the fall of 2003 when I was a freshman in high school. I was introduced to Jennifer Reed, a staff member (now with the school district) who helped me sign up for college visits, learn about and partake in exciting academic enrichment summer programs, and assisted me with my college search and application process. I think my biggest standout moment was being introduced to my mentor, Adam Levy, who has had—and continues to have—many major and positive impacts on my life. Adam exposed me to foods I had never considered trying, taught me how to drive, and imparted his wisdom around what it takes to be successful in college. He sees me as part of his family.

What tools did you gain from Heights' program that helped you succeed in college and in your career path?

Networking, being resourceful, and multitasking are some skills I picked up on from my Heights experience that helped me be successful in my college and career paths. I was taught to look someone in the eyes and shake their hand, to not be afraid to introduce yourself, and to know who is in the room, because they could provide opportunities for you. Being engaged in Heights, my extracurricular activities, and working part time taught me how to juggle multiple responsibilities. I do believe that at some point I would have obtained these skills but not at the pace I was able to with Heights' programming.

Was there a particular staff member or volunteer that had a big impact on your life?

Gabriel Bryant was a staff member who had an incredible impact on me. He was someone who looked like me and shared similar life experiences and helped me navigate my way through high school and college. Gabe would share his wisdom and advice, like taking care of things ahead of time so that I would not be overwhelmed and what to expect as a first-year college student. He always emphasized taking advantage of the resources on campus if I found myself struggling academically.

What advice would you give a young person or family that's looking to get involved in Heights Philadelphia's middle or high school programs?

I would recommend that they remain consistently persistent and simply trust the process. I'd tell them to take advantage of every opportunity, no matter how big or small it may seem. Amazing things will happen when you take a leap of faith into what is known and unknown.

Based on all of your experiences, what advice would you give a young person still in middle or high school as they consider college and a career?

I would tell them: Think about something that you are passionate about, and if you had to do it for free, what would it be? Does it propel you further and build you up? Does it allow you to have a positive impact? How are you able to lift people up as you climb?

What made you want to continue to engage with Heights as an alumnus?

When I left for college, I was told that when I graduate to be sure I leave my campus better than the way I found it. I have the same mindset with Heights. The program gave me so much, and I feel it's my obligation to give back by pouring into the alumni program.

What do you think makes Heights unique and so important to helping create a more equitable Philadelphia?

Heights' agenda is to assist the aims and aspirations of students who are marginalized or may not have the access and resources to reach their fullest potential. It levels the playing field for students who face adversity. Students from backgrounds similar to my own are provided with what they need to live in their purpose.

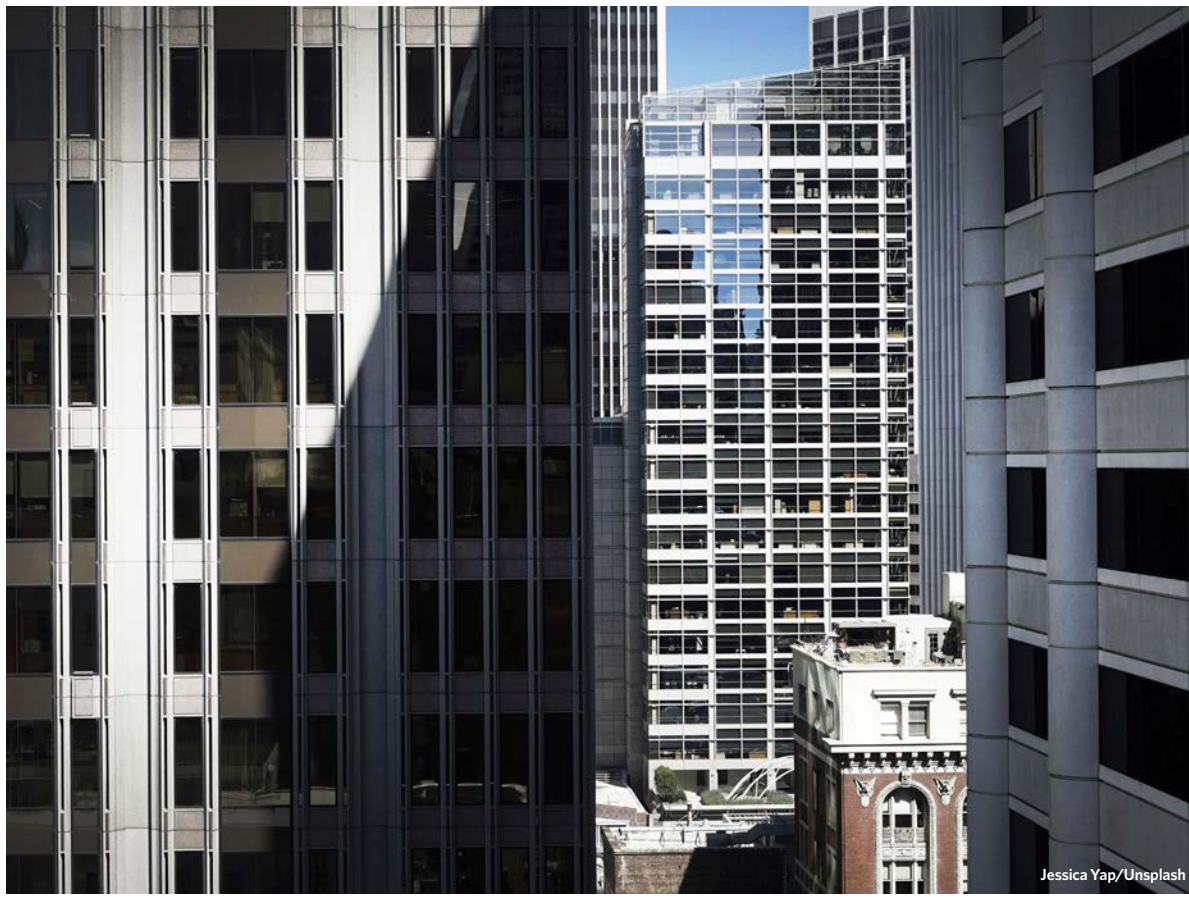
Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your experience or where it has led?

Having access to students with similar aspirations as me was a motivating factor to participate in Heights. Experiencing summer programs on college campuses each year gave me a better understanding of what to expect academically at the collegiate level. Potential without ambition and courage is a waste of talent. I am forever grateful that this program provided me with the tools to go above and beyond the expectations I set for myself. I was able to maximize my potential, ambition, and courage to realize my talents.

Pew awarded Heights Philadelphia $3 million over five years in March 2023 to expand its capacity to provide low-income students—with an emphasis on Black, Latino, and first-generation students—with programming and support for college and career success.

The Silly Rule That's Helping Keep Housing Costs High

BY ALEX HOROWITZ



Jessica Yap/Unsplash

In too many American cities, numerous downtown office buildings sit barely used, their absence of workers gutting nearby businesses. Meanwhile, hundreds of residents, too poor to afford shelter, sleep on the streets. Addressing these problems is within our grasp.

We can start by getting rid of local rules that require that apartment windows can be opened.

Think about it. When was the last time you opened a window in an office high-rise? Or in a big city hotel room? This rule, made before the invention of air-conditioning and mechanical ventilation, serves little practical purpose today. An open window may be pleasant in the right weather, yet it is also one of the biggest barriers to addressing some of our nation's most serious problems: housing affordability, homelessness, and struggling city downtowns.

I recently co-wrote research at The Pew Charitable Trusts in conjunction with the global architectural firm Gensler that found that dispensing with this rule makes it financially feasible in some cities to build a new form of affordable housing: college-dorm-style single-room units, each with its own window, closet, fridge, and microwave, with shared spaces within the center of each floor for cooking, bathrooms, laundry, and socializing.

This model, which reflects the fact that office buildings tend to have plumbing buried within their

cores, can fit about three times as many apartments on each floor as a conventional design and shaves 25% to 35% off construction costs. Most importantly, developers could charge $750 a month in Minneapolis, $850 in Denver, and $1,000 in Seattle —rents that are about half those for median-priced apartments in typical buildings in those cities, and thus within reach for residents earning 30% to 50% of the median income in those areas. And for those in need of subsidized housing, this model makes far better use of government money: The $300,000 subsidy that builds a single low-income Denver studio could instead create 13 of these units there.

The benefits for cities and for society at large would be substantial: fewer people living on the streets, revitalized downtowns, walkable access to jobs and transit, and a sense of community for residents. Each floor of the building would be secured with key-card access and become a small neighborhood. Institutions such as hospitals, universities, and cities looking for supportive housing could rent an entire floor.

By supporting a variety of residents of differing ages and income levels—new arrivals to a city, seniors, young professionals, people who need affordable housing—these developments could avoid the problems that previously plagued public housing. Usually built far from job centers, prior developments concentrated poverty by only allowing residents with very low incomes—problems that factored into today's housing woes.

In the years before the 1970s, homelessness was rare. That's largely because low-cost urban housing was widely available in the form of single-room occupancies—buildings comprising small rooms with shared bathrooms that were managed more like a hotel, dorm, or hostel. In 1950, there were more than 200,000 units in New York City alone, which was one-tenth of the entire rental stock. New arrivals to a city from elsewhere in the U.S. or abroad were especially likely to live in SROs.

But starting in the 1970s and through the next decade, the dilapidated state of many SRO buildings and neighbors' complaints led cities to clamp down on these homes with restrictive zoning and building codes. As a result, at least one million SROs were lost from the 1970s to the 1990s, helping fuel a surge in homelessness that has only accelerated since.

The U.S. recorded its highest ever homelessness count of 653,000 in 2023 and is on track to break that record in 2024. Though there are other factors, researchers have consistently found housing costs are the biggest driver, explaining why the homelessness rate is 17 times higher in New York than Mississippi or 19 times higher in San Francisco than Houston, with the lack of low-cost housing being particularly important.

In the meantime, the post-pandemic office vacancy rate has reached a record 20% nationwide. Replacing windows and extending plumbing to each apartment pushes the cost to convert modern office buildings to more than $400 per square foot, often making these conversions infeasible even for high-end units.

In our above scenario, we chose Minneapolis, Denver, and Seattle intentionally, because they are among the few U.S. cities that have recently removed other decades-old regulatory barriers to spur more housing. For most other cities, killing the operable window requirement is just the start, as they still require large minimum or average unit sizes; restrict the sharing of bathrooms or kitchens; set high parking space minimums; or limit the number of units allowed in a building. Unsurprisingly, affordable housing supply has fallen far behind demand as the cost to build has soared in these places, with some affordable developments in California exceeding $1 million per apartment.

Our housing shortage is so deep it will take many years to erase. Yet most cities are still stuck in the old way of doing things, keeping impractical zoning and building codes on their books while sometimes pushing the less effective and costlier approach of offering heavily subsidized housing to just a small share of low-income residents. The evidence is now clear. Making it easier to build is the surest path to affordability, and these kinds of office conversions can help. If cities let apartment windows stay closed, they can open the door to vast opportunities.

Alex Horowitz is the project director of the housing policy initiative for The Pew Charitable Trusts.

This article appeared in The New York Times on Nov. 6, 2024.

Fire, Then Flood? How Some Weather-Related Disaster Types Increase Risk of Others

Government must address root causes to avoid cascading impacts and worst-case scenarios

BY MATHEW SANDERS

The South Fork wildfire caused extensive damage in and around Ruidoso, New Mexico, in late spring and summer 2024. Wildfire is one of many types of natural disasters that alter the landscape and raise the risk of other disasters, such as flooding. *Tayfun Coskun/Anadolu via Getty Images*

Over several weeks in July, when as many as five flash floods devastated the town of Ruidoso, New Mexico, the causes were not as obvious as many people might have thought. Because while rainfall during that period was significant, it wasn't particularly abnormal for July, which is the beginning of the southwest summer monsoon that typically runs through September.

What made these rains different—and devastating—is that they followed the South Fork and Salt wildfires, which scorched the same area in June, incinerating trees and other vegetation that could have helped slow floodwaters and leaving behind burn scars—burnt soil that cannot absorb rainfall, causing more intense runoff.

This is an example of how one disaster can exacerbate the risk of others, an effect known as cascading disasters. The Ruidoso fires and floods also highlight the need to understand how disaster risks are interrelated and why it is important to address those risks as early as possible, especially as the U.S. experiences a higher frequency of billion-dollar disasters over time.

To help advance that understanding, The Pew Charitable Trusts has highlighted four interrelated disaster types—extreme heat, drought, wildfire, and flooding—to identify how increased risk in one can raise the risk of another, and what can be done to break the vicious cycle.

Extreme Heat

Summer 2023 was the hottest ever—until summer 2024. In fact, August 2024 was the planet's hottest month since global records began in 1880. These records aren't driven just by extreme heat waves in a handful of states, but instead by higher temperatures across all 50 states.

This trend has consequences: Heat-related illnesses drove nearly 120,000 emergency department visits throughout the U.S. in 2023. And extreme heat increases the risk of drought by raising what scientists refer to as saturation vapor pressure, or the maximum amount of water vapor that the air can hold. In short, warmer air can capture and hold more water, which in turn means increased rates of evaporation and drier conditions on land.

Droughts

Over time, increasing saturation vapor pressure can lead to what is called a vapor pressure deficit—which measures how dry the air is near the Earth's surface. Vapor pressure deficits cause vegetation to accelerate the rate at which moisture is pulled from root systems, which can cause plants to eventually wilt and die, increasing drought severity.

In June and July—particularly before remnants of Hurricane Beryl brought needed rainfall to the South and Midwest—much of the U.S. was experiencing a drought. And droughts can be costly. For example, last year's drought conditions throughout the Southern and Midwestern U.S. led to nearly $14.5 billion in economic losses, ranking as one of the costliest disasters in 2023.

Wildfires

Droughts boost wildfire risk because vegetation becomes more flammable as it dries out. And when extreme heat and droughts combine, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the effects can be devastating—including decreased stream flow, dry soils, tree deaths, and potentially "extreme wildfires that spread rapidly, burn with more severity, and are costly to suppress."

Wildfires in the U.S. are growing larger and more intense because of three main factors: growth in the fuel load, or the burnable vegetation that influences both wildfire risk and intensity; increased development in wildfire-prone landscapes; and an increase of the vapor pressure deficit. Wildfires caused huge economic and human losses in 2023, from Maui to the Great Smoky Mountains, with more than 55,000 individual fires burning over 2.6 million acres throughout the U.S.

And the financial cost for American taxpayers is growing rapidly, with the Congressional Budget Office reporting that federal agencies' spending on fire suppression has more than tripled since the 1980s, even when adjusted for inflation. Since 2000, wildfires have burned an annual average of 7 million acres throughout the U.S., more than double the annual average of acres burned in the 1990s. As noted above, this increases the risk of a fourth type of disaster.

Floods

As shown in the Ruidoso disasters, wildfires and the burn scars they leave behind created a condition in which any significant rainfall could lead to flash flooding. As the National Weather Service (NWS) explains, "Rainfall that would normally be absorbed will run off extremely quickly after a wildfire, as burned soil can be as water-repellent as pavement. As a result, much less rainfall is required to produce a flash flood." The NWS also notes, "If you can look uphill from where you are and see a burnt-out area, you are at risk."

According to a Pew analysis of NOAA data, in the two decades since 2000, at least one flood has occurred somewhere in the U.S. on eight out of every 10 days, on average. And these events aren't limited to coastal areas. In fact, riverine and flash flooding, particularly in inland and mountainous states, do more damage each year than hurricanes and other coastal storms.

All levels of government have much work to do to reduce the impact of cascading disasters. A recent study from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine finds that while many communities have plans for hazards they are historically accustomed to experiencing, they are less likely to plan for multiple events occurring in succession.

Comprehensive approaches to resilience must use forward-looking data and science to identify the root causes of risk and offer proactive measures to reduce both the likelihood of cascading disasters and their compounding impacts on people and nature.

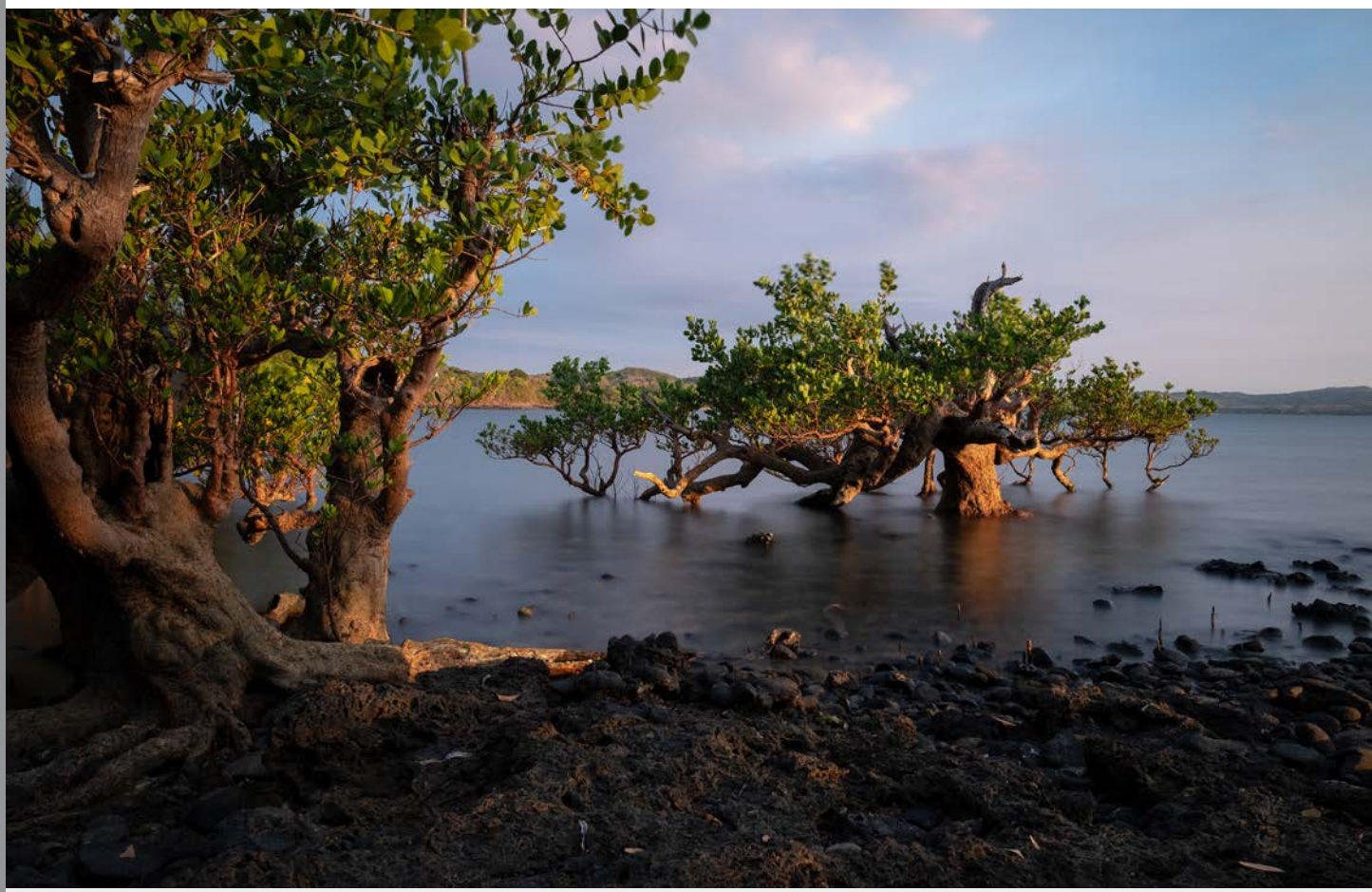
The tragic wildfires near Los Angeles illustrate how important it is for federal, state, and local governments to take urgent action to understand their ever-shifting climate-related disaster risk and to adopt holistic approaches to resilience policy, planning, and projects.

Mathew Sanders leads state-level efforts to plan for and build resilience to current and future climate-related disaster impacts for Pew's U.S. conservation project.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

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

IMPROVING PUBLIC POLICY



Mangroves arise from the waters around the island of Nosy Be, a popular tourist destination off the northwest coast of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean. *rcphotography/Getty Images*

Western Indian Ocean nations agree to strengthen safeguards for blue carbon ecosystems

At its conference of the parties in Antananarivo, Madagascar, in August, contracting parties to the Nairobi Convention—a partnership to increase the capacity of Western Indian Ocean nations to protect and manage their coastal and marine environments—took important steps to strengthen safeguards for the region's mangroves, seagrasses, and saltmarshes. These coastal wetlands are known as blue carbon ecosystems because they help mitigate the impact of climate change by removing carbon from the atmosphere and sequestering it for long periods of time. As Pew has pointed out, they also provide valuable habitat for marine species, protect shorelines from erosion, and support food security for millions of people in the region. Actions taken at the convening included decisions to protect, restore, and sustainably manage all coastal wetlands, as well as to develop a regional seagrass strategy that would cover the 10 Nairobi Convention nations and territories.

Jason Van Sickel for The Pew Charitable Trusts

Pew fosters learning on behavioral health emergency responses

In September, Pew hosted a two-day convening of partners representing three states—Texas, Ohio, and Michigan—who are participating in the Behavioral Health Emergency Response Initiative. The initiative is an opportunity for the three state teams to connect with each other and discover common opportunities and challenges in providing emergency behavioral health services. Topics discussed included better training for first responders and the need for better use of existing state and federal funding streams.

Indigenous government protects Bolivia's Gran Chaco forest

In October, the Indigenous Guaraní government of Charagua Iyambae in Bolivia established the 1.4-million-acre Parapetí River and Bañados del Isoso Protected Area, also known as Yande Yari, or "the spirit guardian of the river." This designation means that 76% of their 18.3-million-acre territory in the Gran Chaco is now protected, underscoring their commitment to conservation and sustainable land management. This milestone builds on three years of progress in developing management plans and enhancing capacities for previously established conservation areas of cultural and ecological significance. These include Ñembi Guasu Conservation Area (2.8 million acres), Irenda Guaraní Water Management Area (353,243 acres), and Guajukaka Wildlife Area (703,355 acres). Pew has supported the Guaraní government in strengthening the management of these protected areas, ensuring effective conservation of critical lands and water courses.

Pew releases first global tuna transshipment assessment

In September, Pew published the first comprehensive assessment of global tuna transshipment, which found that more than 27% of tuna caught around the world—worth about $10 billion—is transferred between vessels at sea or in port for quick transport to onshore processing facilities and markets. While the transfer process plays a significant role in the seafood supply chain, inadequate monitoring and control over this activity can provide an avenue for illegal, unreported, and unregulated fish to enter the marketplace. The Pew-commissioned assessment provides important new data to assist the five regional fisheries management organizations that oversee the global tuna catch in 90% of the world's oceans.


The Pew Charitable Trusts

California approves new law on natural resources co-management with federally recognized Tribes

In September, California Governor Gavin Newsom (D) signed into law Pew-backed legislation that supports cooperation on natural resources stewardship by codifying and encouraging co-management agreements between Tribal Nations and the state. The measure, which passed unanimously by both chambers of the California Legislature, can help Tribal Nations and the state better prepare for flooding and other natural disasters, protect critical ecosystems, preserve cultural practices and economies, and address the impacts of climate change.

Pew state fiscal policy staff brief state leaders

In August, Pew sponsored the Fiscal Directors Seminar, which convened nearly 40 state legislative fiscal directors and senior staff to discuss fiscal issues and challenges in their states. Pew staff presented research on deferred maintenance; other topics included revenue volatility and the use of artificial intelligence in budgeting. The goal of the seminar was for states to develop an action plan to leverage federal funding opportunities, better manage fiscal risks, support local leaders, and help protect their citizens from future extreme weather events.

Beware of bilby crossing, warns a road sign in Western Australia's Shark Bay, a World Heritage Site. The rabbit-like marsupials are threatened by predators such as foxes and feral cats; invasive species that compete for food; and farms, ranches, and fires that destroy their habitats. *Mayall/ullstein bild via Getty Images*

Western Australian government designates 12 new or expanded national parks and reserves

In July and August, the Western Australian government designated nine new national parks and nature reserves and expanded three existing parks, which will protect 3.3 million acres of habitat for more than 91 endemic and threatened species including the bilby, night parrot, and northern quoll. These new parks, many of which will be co-managed with First Nations people, are part of the Western Australian government's Plan for Our Parks program, which launched in 2019 in response to efforts by Pew and its partners. With these new announcements, a total of 9.9 million acres have been safeguarded.

INVIGORATING CIVIC LIFE

Religion report highlights effective approaches to countering religious bias

In September, a Pew report, "It's a Critical Time to Bridge Religious Divides," summarized research on the evidence and impact of programs designed to counter bias against religion, and to foster respect among people of different faiths and cultures. Among the study's central findings: programs that combine methods for building relationships across religions with educational programs to increase understanding of other faiths demonstrated the strongest evidence of attitudinal change. Pew presented the findings at a conference hosted by the National Conflict Resolution Center on combating antisemitism and Islamophobia for nonprofit leaders, researchers, and faith leaders.


Kriston Jae Bethel for The Pew Charitable Trusts

Study finds Philadelphia homes may not be as affordable as many thought

In July, Pew released a report, "Single-Family Home Sales in Philadelphia," exploring changes to the city's housing market from 2000 to 2021. Philadelphia had a reputation as an affordable place to buy a home, but after analyzing nearly 700,000 single-family home sales, Pew found that the city's affordability may be overstated. In 2021, the median price of a home sold to a traditional buyer, a person purchasing a home with a mortgage to serve as their primary residence, was $265,000. From 2000 to 2021, the annual share of low-cost homes—those priced at $100,000 or less, adjusted for 2021 dollars—sold decreased while the share of expensive homes sold increased. In 2000, low-cost homes accounted for 52% of all transactions; in 2021 that figure was 3%.

INFORMING THE PUBLIC

Trust in scientists ticks up

Most Americans say that they have confidence in scientists to act in the public's best interests, according to a Pew Research Center survey of 9,593 U.S. adults conducted in October. Confidence ratings have moved slightly higher in the last year, marking a shift away from the decline in trust seen during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most Americans view research scientists as intelligent (89%) and focused on solving real-world problems (65%), while fewer say they're good communicators (45%). Americans are split over scientists' role in policymaking. Overall, 51% say scientists should take an active role in public policy debates about scientific issues. By contrast, nearly as many (48%) say they should focus on establishing sound scientific facts and stay out of public policy debates.

Support for banning cellphones in schools

As lawmakers and educators crack down on cellphone use in schools, most Americans back bans on using phones in classrooms but are less supportive of full-day restrictions. Overall, 68% of U.S. adults say they support a ban on middle and high school students using cellphones during class, according to a Pew Research Center survey conducted in September. This includes 45% who strongly support this. Another 24% oppose this, while 8% say they aren't sure. Meanwhile, about one-third (36%) support banning middle and high school students from using cellphones during the entire school day, including at lunch as well as during and between classes. By comparison, 53% oppose this more restrictive approach. Young adults are less likely than older age groups to support a cellphone ban in middle or high school, either during class or the entire school day.


Loic Venance/AFP via Getty Images

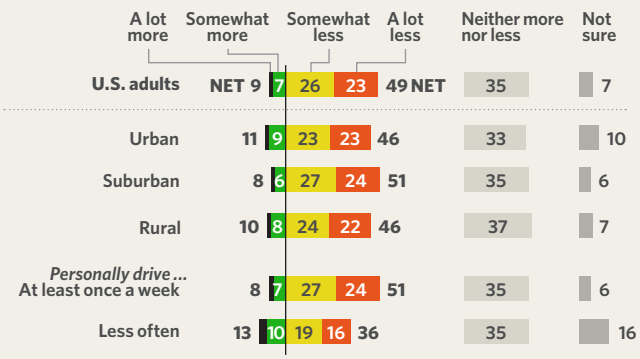
Many Americans Perceive a Rise in Dangerous Driving

Gaby Bonilla/The Pew Charitable Trusts

Many U.S. adults feel that driving in their area has become more dangerous than it was before the coronavirus pandemic. Most see cellphone distraction behind the wheel as a major problem in their local community, and about a quarter report witnessing road rage often, according to a recent Pew Research Center survey. While the pandemic-era spike in the number of fatalities from vehicle crashes in the United States has abated some, 49% of Americans today say people in their community are driving less safely compared with five years ago. This includes 23% who say people in their area are driving a lot less safely.

On balance, Americans say people in their area are driving less safely than they were before the pandemic

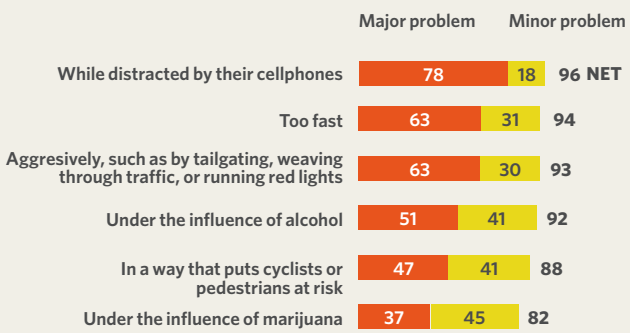
% who say that compared with five years ago, people in their local community are driving __ safely



Note: Those who gave no response are not shown. "Personally drive less often" includes those who say they drive a few times a month, seldom, or never.

Majorities of Americans see cellphone use, speeding, and aggresive driving as major problems in their area

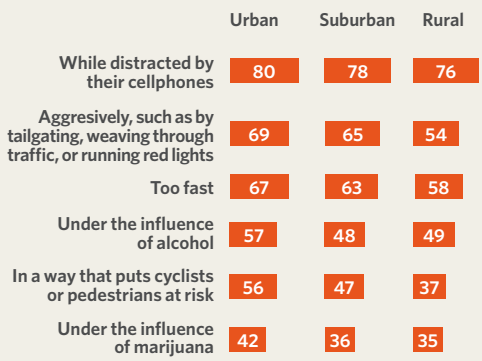
% of U.S. adults who say people driving __ in their local community is a ...



Note: Those who gave no response are not shown. Those who said each issue was not a problem or who did not respond are not shown.

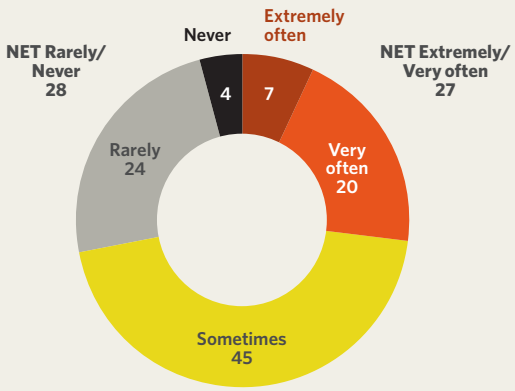
Americans' views of dangerous driving vary somewhat by the type of community they live in

*% of U.S. adults who say people driving __ is a **major problem** in their local community, by community type*



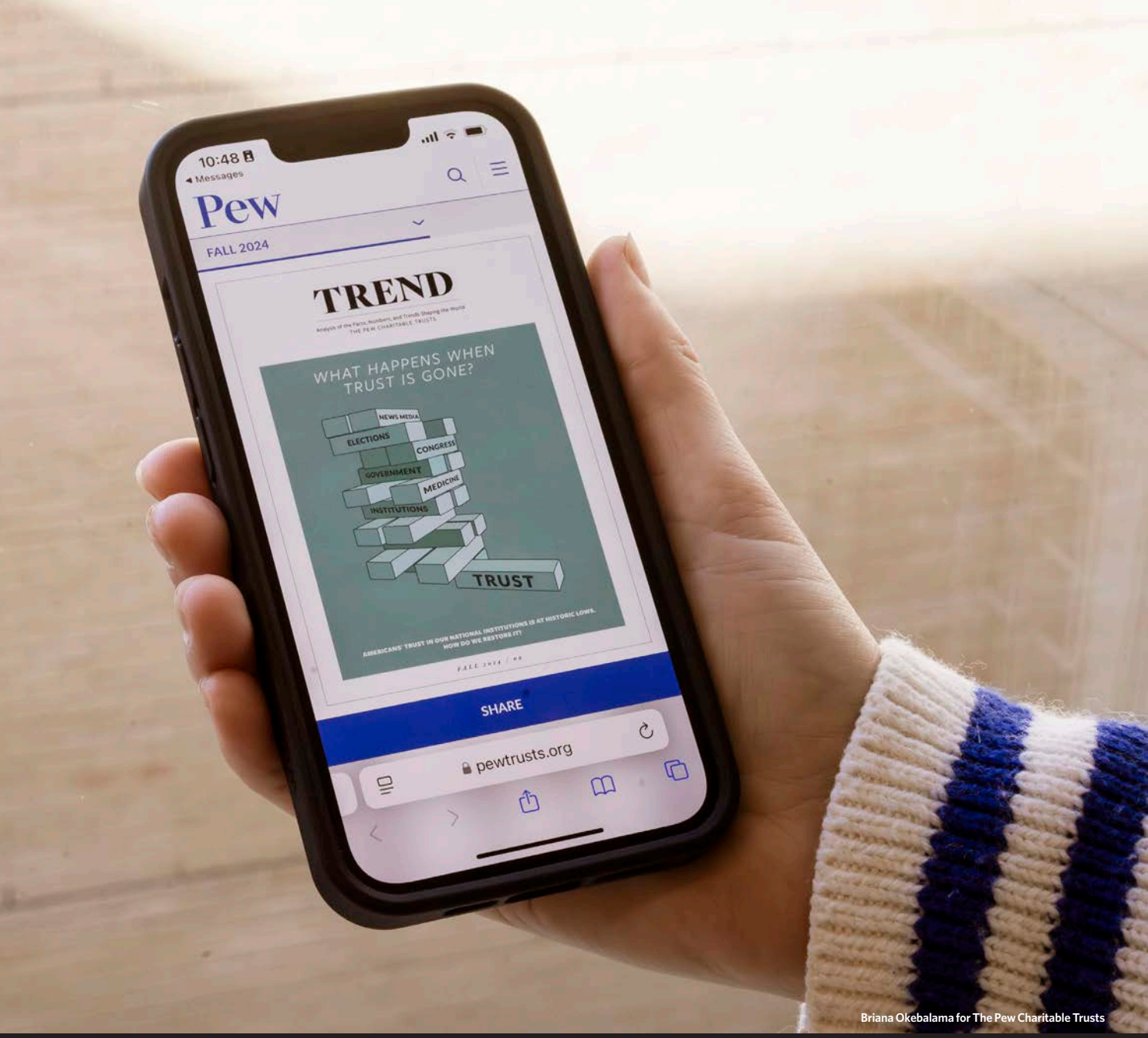
Roughly a quarter of Americans say they frequently see road rage

% of U.S. adults who say they see people displaying road rage ...



Note: Road rage was defined in the survey as "expressing uncontrolled anger toward someone else while driving." Those who said they did not know or gave no response are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults, conducted Aug. 12-18, 2024



Briana Okebalama for The Pew Charitable Trusts

What Happens When Trust Is Gone?

Americans' trust in our national institutions is at historic lows. How do we restore it? Pew's latest issue of *Trend* offers essays from expert contributors on rebuilding trust in government, the media, elections, and healthcare.

Read more at pewtrusts.org/trend.

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A scientist examines an agar plate containing *C. elegans*.

Four Decades of Investment in Innovative Science Page 18

Molly Peters for The Pew Charitable Trusts