

The Democracy Audience Map



Democracy
Communications
Collaborative

+ HARMONY LABS

Meeting the Moment

Advocates and communicators are operating in a fractured media environment where audiences engage with vast amounts of information from all kinds of messengers, on a variety of platforms and devices, every day. There's no longer a single source or strategy that has the ability to reach everyone at once.

Audiences are choosing where and how they want to engage with content based on their distinct values, concerns, and beliefs. These media choices have serious implications for Americans' attitudes and sense of agency toward democracy and governance.

The stories and messengers people are choosing to engage with can ultimately shape how they see democracy working for them (or, importantly, *not* working for them)—and whether they can be moved toward increased pro-democracy belief and action.

The Stakes for Democracy

There is a broad, bipartisan coalition of individuals and organizations working to protect and improve the foundational infrastructure of democratic governance. But a significant portion of pro-democracy content is designed by, and for, people who are already concerned and activated about the future of American democracy—committed supporters we have already successfully engaged.

The current media environment requires us to adapt. If we want to reach and inspire new audiences with a shared vision for the future of our democracy, we need a different approach. We can no longer rely on overly broad audiences or paid targeting tactics, and must earn people's attention. We need to tailor our messages, messengers, and outreach strategies to the values, beliefs, and civic superpowers that meet people where they already are.

The Democracy Audience Map provides analysis and tools to help pro-democracy communicators meet this moment.

The Opportunity

Field-wide alignment with an audience-first approach

To reach Americans who don't already agree with us, and truly change how they think about and engage with democracy, we need to make several strategic shifts.

The Democracy Audience Map provides a shared framework to achieve this goal—one broad enough to apply to our field's many different missions and approaches to pro-democracy work. Moving beyond demographics and partisanship, it uses real human values and attitudes, along with real-world testing insights, to deliver a suite of tools that can be used by advocates, communicators, funders, and leaders to inform campaigns, set priorities, and evaluate investments.

Strategic Shifts

Traditional reliance on demographics and political ideology



Embrace pluralism and understand Americans based on values

Education (one-way messaging that talks at audiences)



Persuasion (inspiring audiences based on their values and concerns)

Creating content that only resonates with us and people like us



Strategically diversify CTAs, platforms, outlets, messages, messengers

An Overarching Goal

A set of shared beliefs audiences hold when our collective work is done

The goal of this work is not to create a single message or convince every audience to think like you. It's a shared direction and framework that advocates, communicators, and creators can adapt for many different audiences, purposes, and goals.

At the core of this work is a clear narrative that stretches across all our individual missions. This provides a baseline understanding of where we are now, and a way to gauge whether our collective communications are moving people toward pro-democracy belief and action. And it can help inform communication goals and opportunities for each audience.

Narrative Goal for Democracy

We govern ourselves

In America, the people hold power, with equal right to shape the rules we live by and country we live in. We do this through our government, our communities, and as individuals.

When we do this well, the country works for more people

The best way for Americans to be free, safe, and prosperous is for our institutions (inside and outside of government) to be accountable to the majority while protecting the equal rights of every individual.

Sometimes we fall short

This happens when we give special favors to donors, use violence and intimidation, block the will of the majority, and deny minorities protection of the law. When this happens, we can use our power to repair and improve those institutions so they work for more people.

Every American can be part of repairing and improving our country

We can be safe, free, and prosperous by making our institutions representative of, accountable to, and active in serving the people.

Introducing the Democracy Audience Map

8 values-distinct audiences for democracy

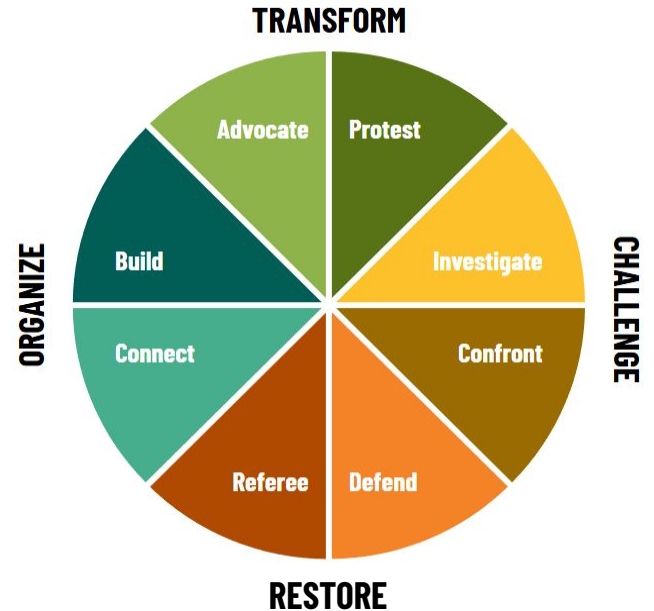
The Democracy Audience Map is organized by values and motivations, not demography or ideology. Each Audience is named for their unique civic superpower.

North-South Axis: Orientation toward change

- **Transform**: Improve America to make it work better for more people.
- **Restore**: Protect the rules, norms, traditions, and way of life that makes America special.

East-West Axis: Approach to participation

- **Challenge**: Disrupt the status quo and challenge systems that they don't see working for them and Americans like them.
- **Organize**: Organize ideas, people, and resources to build power within America and its institutions.



Audience-First Approach

Making the Map

Audiences defined by values and attitudes about democracy

Most audience frameworks start with demographics. This one starts with core values. Drawing on social science research, we identified the values and attitudes that shape how Americans relate to democracy—not just what people believe, but what role they want to play.

From those core values, we built a map that segments every American and reflects their distinct media ecosystem, their feelings about democracy, and the role they want in shaping it. For each audience, we developed profiles covering motivation, behavior, institutional orientation, media habits, and demographics—practical tools for understanding and reaching new audiences with pro-democracy communications.

Audiences are groups of people with:

Shared values

Similar preferences for their role in governance

Similar media consumption habits

Shared stories (view of protagonists, antagonists, etc.)

Methods & Approach

Using a combination of survey and opt-in media panel data, we identified 8 values-distinct audiences to create profiles that include cross-platform media behavior, detailed attitudinal data, and strategic insights based on real-world content testing.

Opt-in media panel

300K

people in the U.S.

Quantitative analysis of a

2,000

person survey, and

Qualitative analysis of

11

open-ended survey question responses

Behavioral media consumption data covering:

Streaming

YouTube

Social

News

Desktop

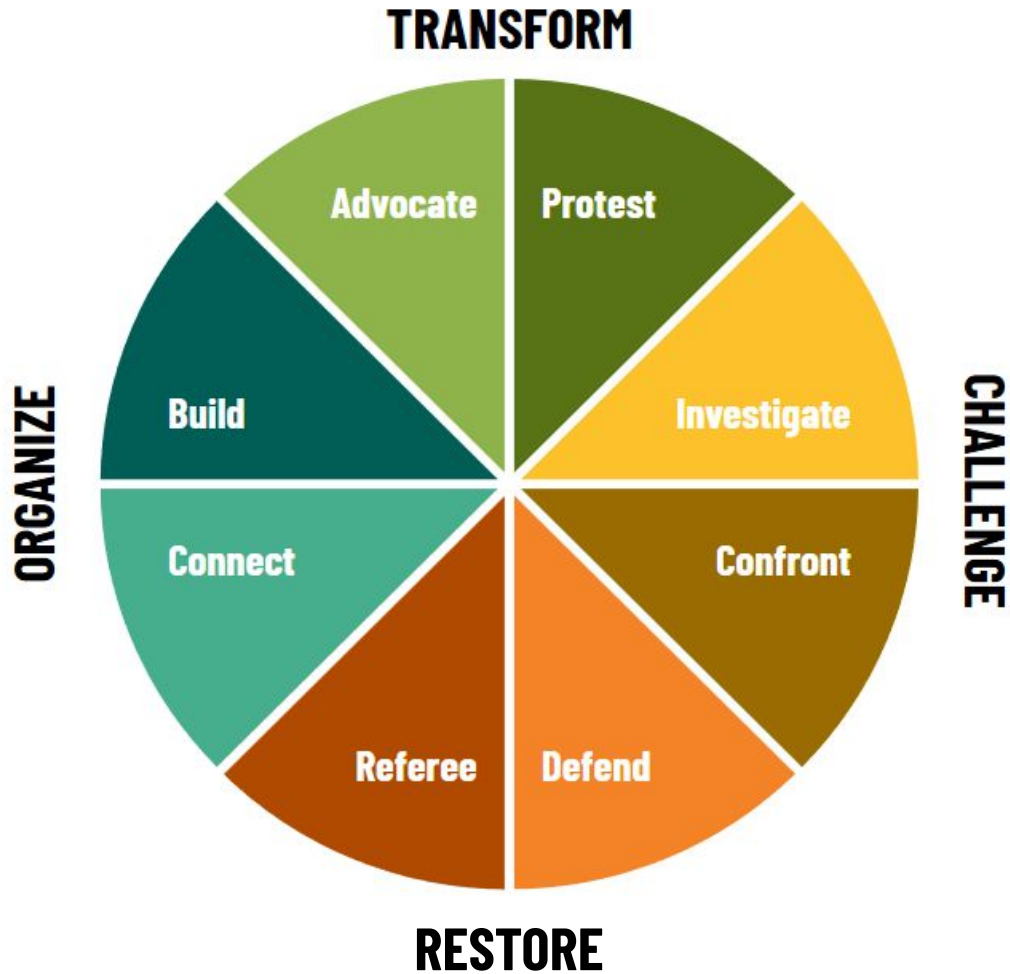
Mobile

Strategic Insights from

50

Randomized controlled trial (RCT) tested content

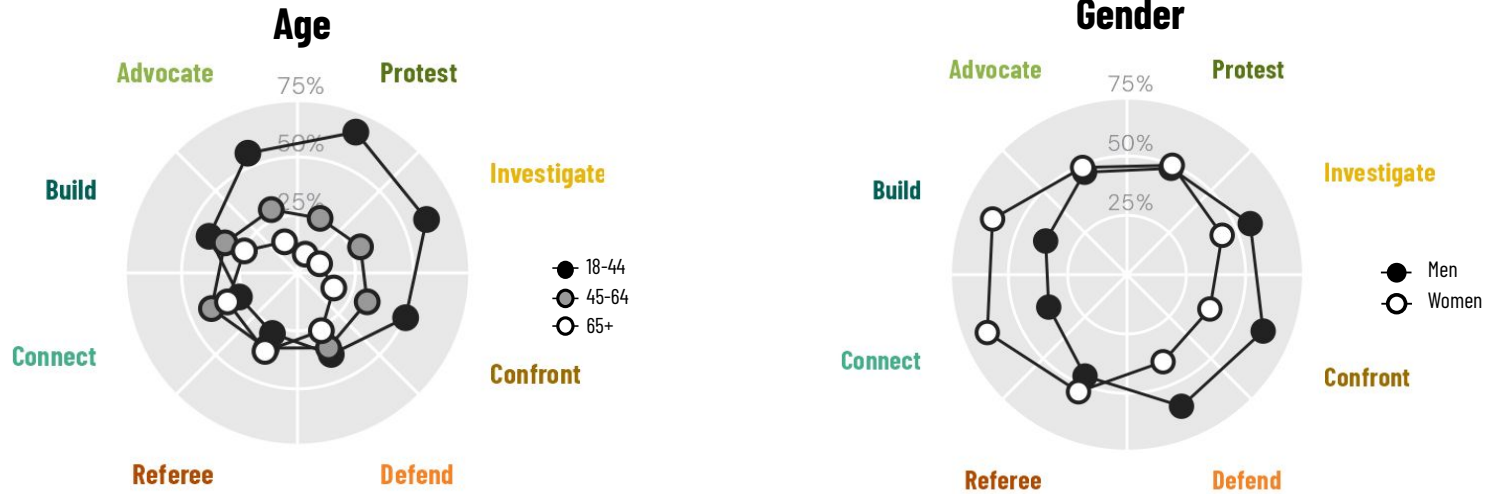
Note: all media featured in this report is clickable.



Demography Isn't Enough

Traditional segmentation approaches can miss the meaningful differences

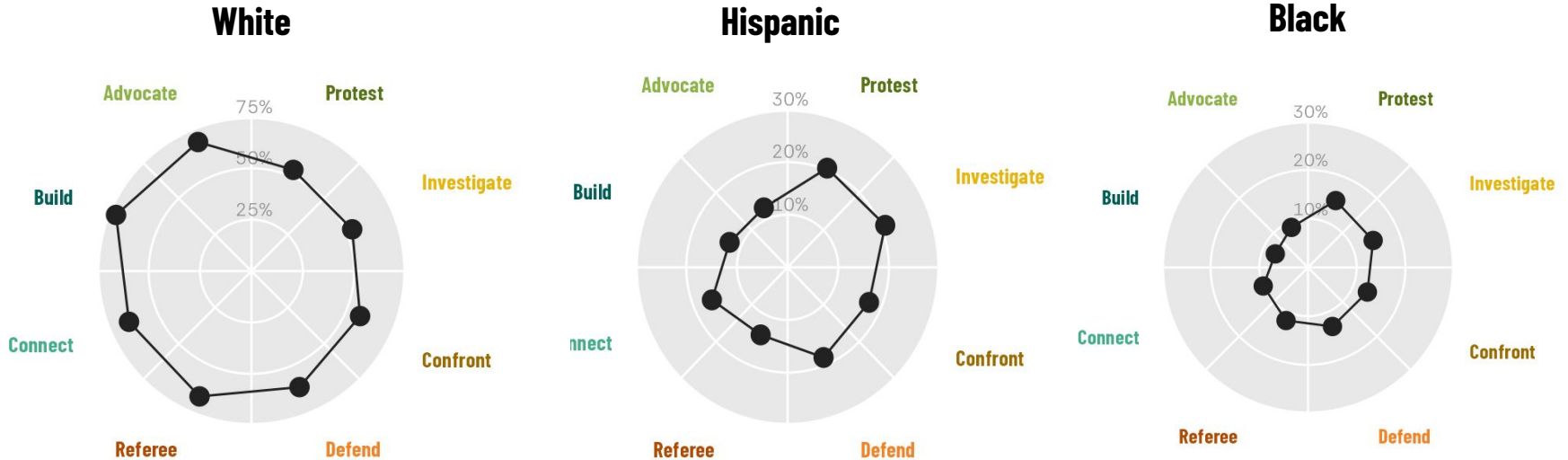
Here, we see how the 8 Audiences distribute on traditional demographic dimensions—age and gender. On average, women tend to hold communal values, and men tend to hold individual values, but many audiences are balanced. Age cohorts distribute unevenly, with the younger segments over-indexing in the Transform (north) and Challenge (east) sections of the Map.



Values Give Cultural Context

Combined with values, demographics help identify and reach under-engaged audiences

Here, we see how the 8 Audiences distribute by race, with more racially diverse audiences tending to over-index on the side of the map interested in challenging the system. It's also no surprise that younger audiences are more racially diverse.

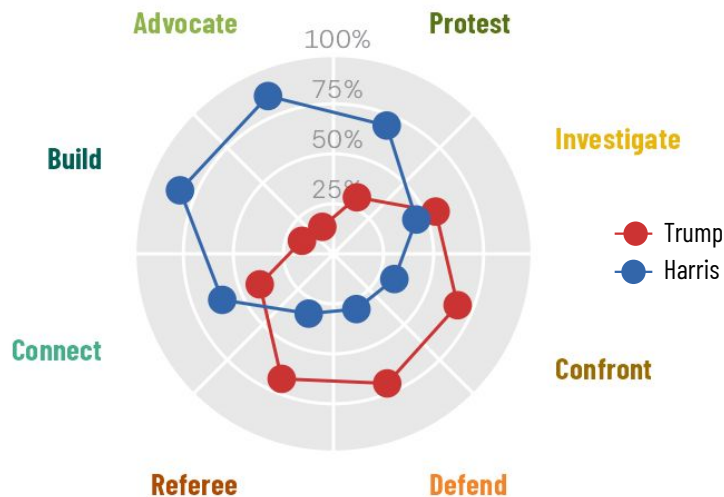


Values Don't Align Perfectly with Partisanship

Segmentation strictly by partisanship can miss the most persuadable

Both major parties are represented all over the map and don't align perfectly with conservative or liberal values. There are also audiences who are more mixed—and every audience has a share of independents, although they over-index in Advocate and Protest—but that doesn't automatically make them more persuadable.

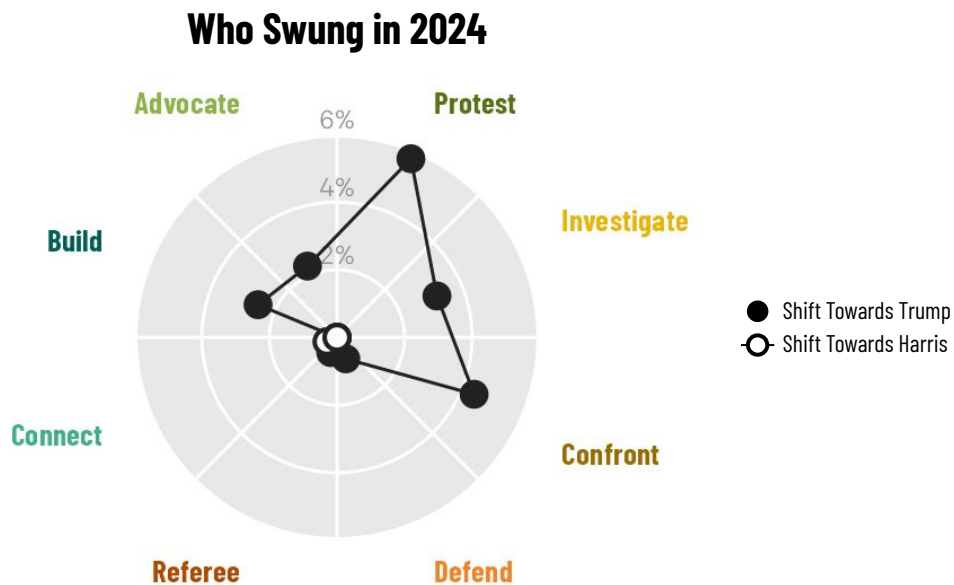
2024 Vote Choice (Two-way)



Values Also Help Identify the Most Moveable

Attitudes and actual behaviors become powerful predictors of civic engagement

When we use values and behaviors to understand audiences, we can identify opportunities not captured by straightforward, partisan voting behavior.

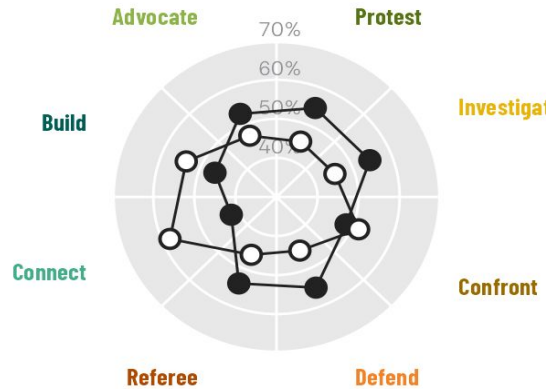


Attitudes on Democracy

Attitudes reveal where audiences stand on the pro-democracy ladder of engagement

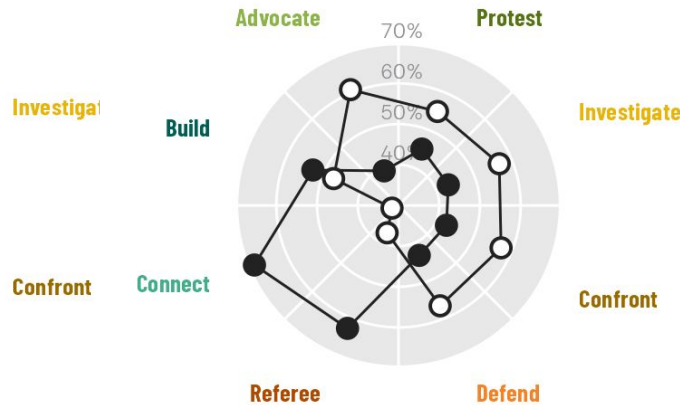
Audiences may be strongly divided on how they're defining issues in the system (who is the threat), what needs to change (how do we fix things), and what success looks like for American democracy (how will we know what's working). But a wide majority of all audiences believe in some version of a pro-democracy future.

Who is the threat?



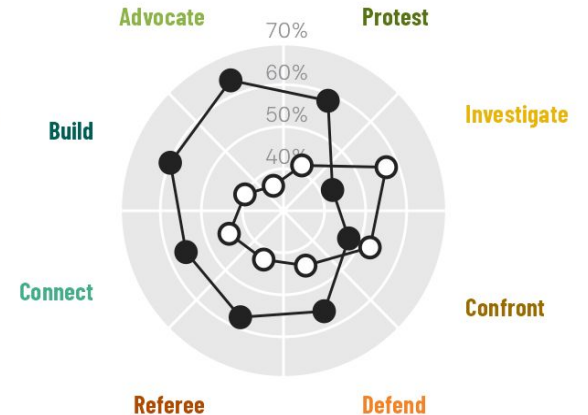
- Congress Doesn't Serve Us
- The President Overreaches

How do we fix things?



- Work Within the System
- Expose and Challenge

How will we know what's working?



- Different but Working Together
- Trust Our Representatives

Media Preferences

Values also reveal the places audiences choose to be informed and entertained

When we group audiences by their values, we get groups of people who tend to get their news from the same place, watch the same TV shows, and like their information delivered in similar formats.

Distinctive News Sites

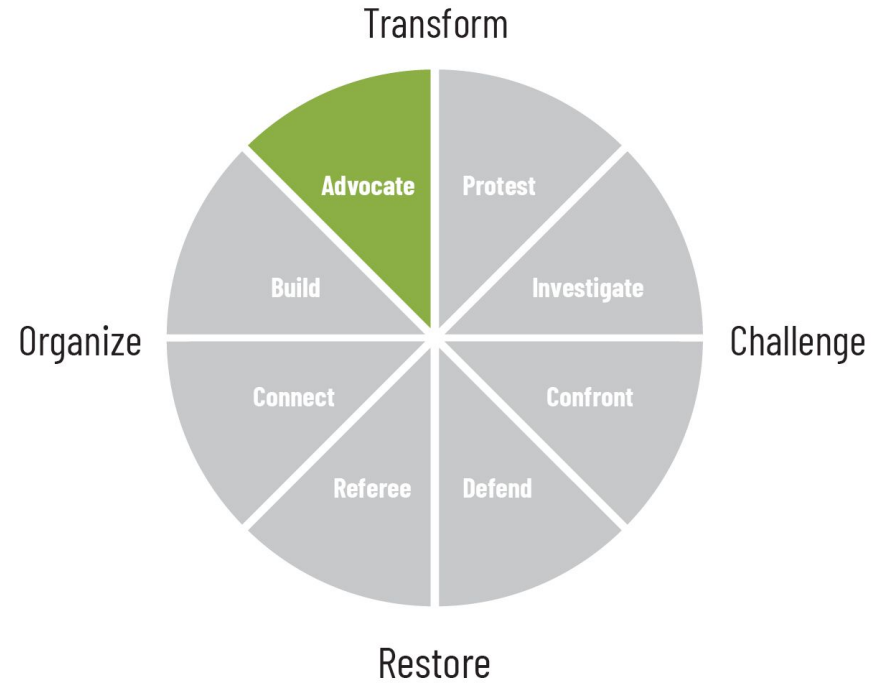


Distinctive Informational TV



Meet the Audiences

Advocate



Advocate: How Can They Contribute?

Advocates' superpower is action. They have a strong **transformative** vision, and will show up when and where they're needed.

They sign petitions, mobilize for equity, and organize rallies. They know what they want: an inclusive, pluralistic democracy freed from corporate control. And they are confident about how to get it: **organized** pressure on the system to catalyze real change.

They are passionate about fighting for people, but they tend to do it from a distance.

Democracy Through Their Lens

The Problem They See

The powerful have captured institutions meant to serve the public.

The Solution They Believe In

The people themselves demand structural transformation, not cosmetic fixes.

Survey Highlights

- **"Who does the most damage to America's system?"**
58% of Advocates answered: "rich people who corrupt the system with money."
- **"What are America's problems mainly caused by?"**
70% of Advocates answered: "specific groups that have too much power."
- **"Who do you trust most to stand up for your rights and needs?"**
Advocates answered: "community organizers," "community members," and "myself."

Advocate: Who Are They?

Advocates tend to be white, younger, and urbanites or suburbanites. Nearly half have 4-year college degrees (notably higher than other audiences), but they are also less likely to be parents, and less likely to attend religious services than other audiences. At the polls, they reliably turn out at high rates—especially for major elections.

- 56% age 44 or younger
- 49% women, 47% men, 4% other
- 68% White, 12% Hispanic, 9% Black, 5% Asian
- 32% urban, 53% suburban, 15% rural
- 65% earning <\$100K / year
- 44% with 4-year college degree
- 81% with no children under 18
- 75% seldom/never attend religious services
- 53% Democrat, 8% Republican, 29% Independent

Heroes



“Bernie Sanders—because he fights for regular people, he is tenacious, and he doesn’t lie.”



“Ruth Bader Ginsburg—an iconic leader in her field and a consistent trailblazer for positive community movement forward for a better future.”



“Heather Cox Richardson—what a tremendously effective historian and human who is doing so much to educate Americans on American history and current events going on today.”

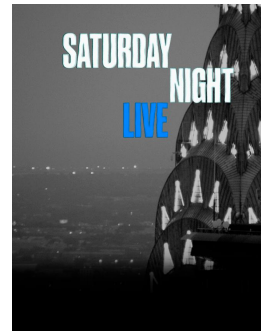
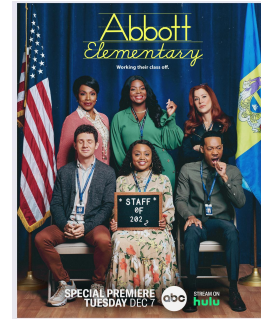
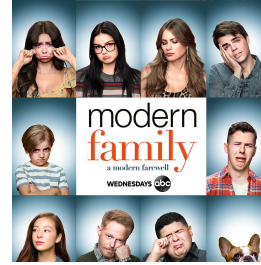


“Marsha P Johnson for being herself and fighting for change in a harmful society.”

Advocate: Where Are They In Culture?

Advocates are highly engaged with a diverse mix of media. Consistent themes in the shows and stories they consume, from entertainment media and YouTube channels to news, reflect a desire to deeply understand the world around them and their belief that systems and institutions can be transformed.

They are drawn to prestige television that features critical observations on difficult and dark themes, but also ensemble casts that highlight competent, conscientious, and collaborative characters working together (often against institutional opposition). The throughline is intellectual seriousness: content that respects the audience's capacity for complexity while also letting them breathe.



Advocate: Where Do They Get Informed?

When it comes to where they're getting information, Advocates are drawn to newer forms of journalism that name systemic injustice directly, and are spending time on traditional and progressive media outlets.

Long-form content is the default, not the exception, from marathon debate live-streams and hour-plus podcast episodes to deep, investigative reporting and op-eds.

They're also watching reaction channels on YouTube that feature creators responding to and engaging with current events or other media, especially calling out where rules feel misused and where first-person personality and opinion are layered onto raw material.



Advocate: Where Are They Scrolling?

Advocates are just as much at home consuming a podcast or scrolling Instagram as they are spending time with traditional media outlets.

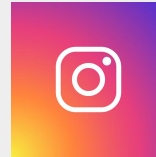
Advocates have some of the highest reach on podcasts and over-index on YouTube and Spotify—good places to feature detailed, in-the-weeds discussions with a punchy tone.

If they're on desktop, they over-index on Reddit, where they're exploring subreddits from "r/politics" and "r/news" to "r/amitheasshole," "r/mildlyinfuriating," and "r/todayilearned."

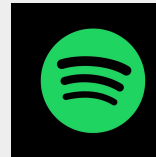
Distinctive Social Platforms



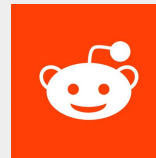
Advocates over-index by 6% on YouTube usage compared to other audiences



Advocates over-index by 9% on Instagram usage compared to other audiences



Advocates over-index by 8% on Spotify usage compared to other audiences



Advocates over-index by 5% on Reddit usage compared to other audiences

Advocate: How Can You Reach Them?

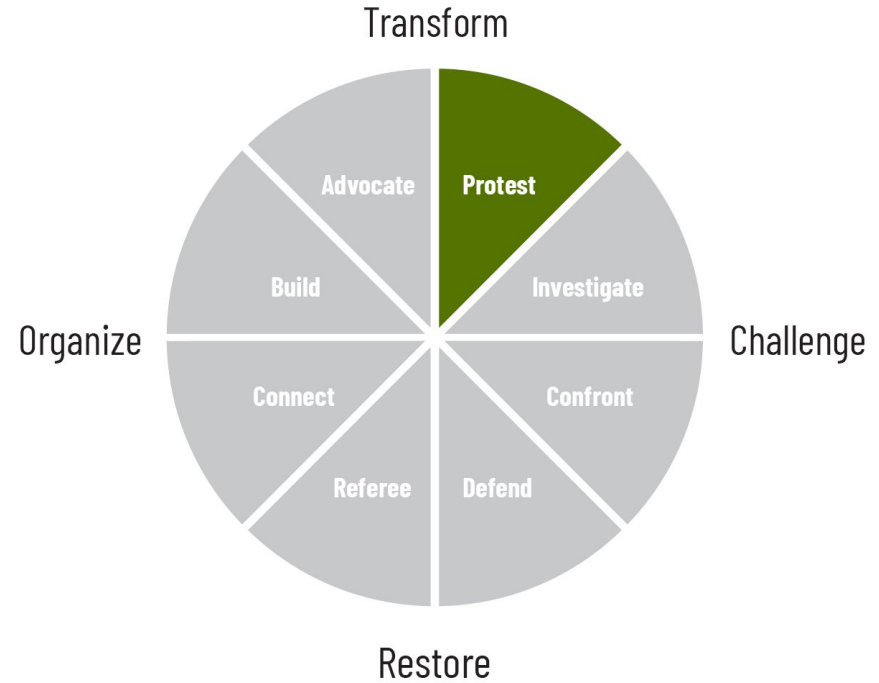
Advocates are the most activated of any audience. They believe that the system is flawed and must be transformed. They're the only audience where "protesters refusing to budge until there is complete change" ranked as the primary action, above "voters connecting with representatives." They will speak up, loudly and frequently, if given the right call-to-action.

Where are they stuck? Finding allies to advocate alongside. They need inspiration to keep acting, and acting often, which can also make them more susceptible to inadvertent backlash (movement away from the narrative goal)—making it important to feature a future to work towards, not just the problems ahead.

Content Design

Format	Long-form, investigative journalism across "new" journalism and traditional sources; late night TV; conversational commentary.
Tone & Style	Content that embraces deeply reported news and satirical treatments.
Trusted Messengers	Radical reformers who name systemic injustice directly and demand structural transformation, rather than incremental fixes.
Calls to Action	They are ready to act; they just need to know when and where to show up.

Protest



Protest: How Can They Contribute?

Protesters have vision. They can imagine our country's possibilities, dream of a better tomorrow, and use their creativity to capture public attention.

They're **transformers**. But they're also outsiders, motivated to **challenge** institutions with good trouble like boycotting, walking out, and disrupting.

Even if they're invited to the meeting, they find more power in demonstrating outside to dismantle systems they don't see working.

Democracy Through Their Lens

The Problem They See

A few powerful people pursue their own narrow interests, while ignoring the needs, voices, and ideas of the least powerful.

The Solution They Believe In

They haven't found it yet. They're searching for solutions, but often don't trust institutions enough to join one productively.

Survey Highlights

- **"Who does the most damage to America's system?"**
47% of Protesters answered: "rich people who corrupt the system with money."
- **"What are America's problems mainly caused by?"**
61% of Protesters answered: "specific groups that have too much power."
- **"Who do you trust most to stand up for your rights and needs?"**
"Activists" and "organizations that are taking action to be heard and seen by the government."

Protest: Who Are They?

Protesters are the youngest and the most racially diverse audience on the Democracy Audience Map. They are disproportionately urban, have more students and unemployed individuals than other audiences, and are one of the audiences least likely to be religious. They have notably lower turnout than other audiences, and when they do vote tend to be Dem-leaning surge voters.

- 66% age 44 or younger
- 50% women, 48% men, 2% other
- 53% White, 20% Hispanic, 15% Black, 6% Asian
- 37% urban, 50% suburban, 13% rural
- 75% earning <\$100K / year
- 35% with 4-year college degree
- 75% with no children under 18
- 66% seldom/never attend religious services
- 47% Democrat, 16% Republican, 29% Independent

Heroes



“Malcolm X because he challenged the status quo.”



“Zohran Mamdani because he is a great speaker and potential leader. He is not afraid to speak for what he believes even if the people around him strongly oppose him.”



“Julian Assange. He could have chosen a quiet, easier life outside the spotlight but instead devoted himself to exposing war crimes and corruption, at enormous cost to his health and safety.”



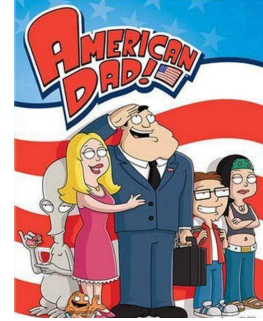
“Harriet Tubman because she persevered through multiple trials and tribulations. She did not allow the rules, the non-believers, nor those who tried to stop her do so.”

Protest: Where Are They In Culture?

Protesters seek out media that highlights anti-institutional irreverence often paired with genuine creative energy. Their preferred style operates at the intersection of chaos and critique—content that doesn't defer to authority and is full of energy.

Their media choices oscillate between boundary-pushing comedy (that can even lean offensive) and warmer content that doesn't take itself too seriously. Content that prioritizes imperfect authenticity over polish, disorder over structure, and collective identity over individual heroism.

While Protesters aren't always seeking direct political content, political discourse is an ever-present undercurrent in the media they consume—from *American Dad!* and *Squid Game* to gaming commentary.



Protest: Where Do They Get Informed?

Protesters don't engage with traditional news media as much as other audiences, but when they do it reflects their preference for outsider-coded outlets, with stories about things like accountability and platform-governance, in outlets like *The Daily Beast* and *The Verge*.

They are a native YouTube audience, where authenticity is the name of the game. Their YouTube content isn't too slick or overly produced, and reflects the feeling that the independent beats the institutional.



Protest: Where Are They Scrolling?

Protesters have among the highest daily use of any audience for YouTube, Instagram, and Spotify, seeking out content that feels independent and creative.

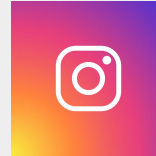
They also over-index on Snapchat (+8%), Discord (+4%) and Reddit (+5%), when compared to other audiences.

Like their neighbor Investigate, they are one of the audiences who under-index the most on Facebook (-9%), though, like all audiences, still have a high presence on the platform overall, with 81% daily usage.

Distinctive Social Platforms



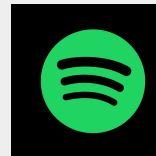
75% of Protesters are daily users of YouTube on their mobile, and another 34% are using from their desktops—over-indexing by 8% when compared to other audiences



Protesters are also heavy Instagram users, 57% daily usage on mobile, over-indexing by 13% when compared to other audiences



35% of Protesters are daily users of Snapchat, over-indexing by 8% when compared to other audiences



Protesters over-index by 7% on Spotify usage, with 20% using the platform daily

Protest: How Can You Reach Them?

Protesters are searching for a solution—they believe collective mobilization can work, but don't trust institutions enough to work within them. And they're looking to put a spotlight on injustice so that we can overcome it together.

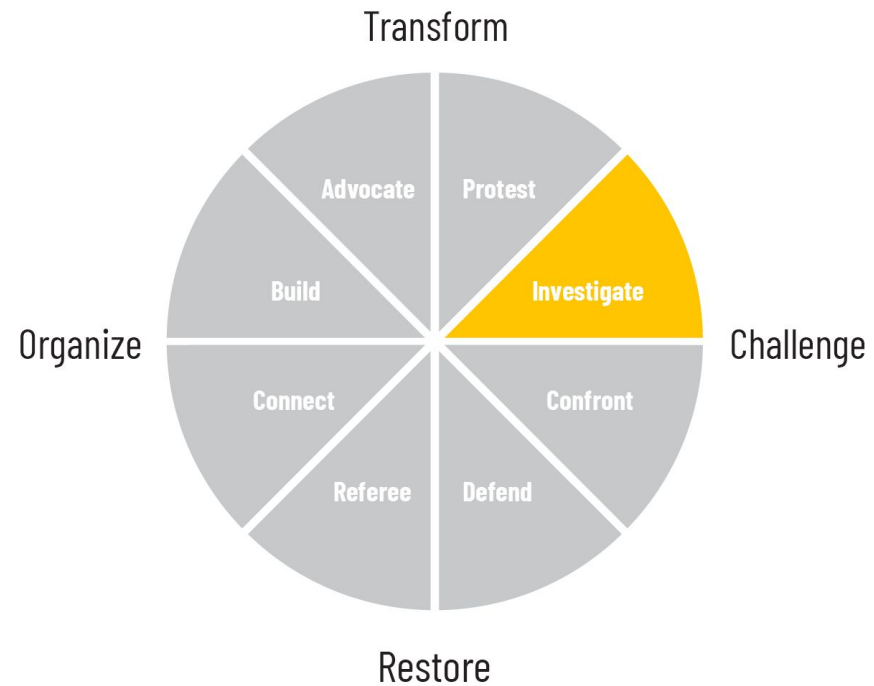
Protesters share Advocates' transformative vision (91% want to create new ways to solve problems), but are less certain about the steps they need to take to achieve this vision (only around 10% are currently taking pro-democracy action).

The challenge for Protesters is helping them convert that latent desire into organized action. One way to do that is through content that centers transformation.

Content Design

Format	Long-arc serialized storytelling; short-form video content that is high energy. Content that doesn't ask permission.
Tone & Style	Raw, authentic content that is disruptive and urgent, ditching institutional or incremental framing.
Trusted Messengers	Incorruptible outsiders and grassroots organizers, like local leaders, maternal figures, and rebels taking on the system.
Calls to Action	Low-friction, outsider-led actions like rallies and boycotts that let them make noise and disrupt unjust systems.

Investigate



Investigate: How Can They Contribute?

Investigators are dedicated to uncovering information.

They do their own research. And then they document, verify, and share it with others. They're motivated to **challenge** and expose abuses of power.

But they're also driven to **transform**, because they believe that an overlooked nugget of evidence will unlock the truth and possibility—if only they can find it.

Democracy Through Their Lens

The Problem They See

Entrenched politicians and corporations operate without accountability.

The Solution They Believe In

Exposing abuses of power and holding the powerful to account.

Survey Highlights

- **“Who does the most damage to America’s system?”**
43% of Investigators answered: “powerful people who use their influence to get away with crimes.”
- **“What are America’s problems mainly caused by?”**
51% of Investigators answered: “specific groups that have too much power.”
- **“Who do you trust most to stand up for your rights and needs?”**
Investigators answered: both “myself” and “nobody.”

Investigate: Who Are They?

Investigators are a notably younger audience and are more racially diverse than all survey respondents (generally reflective of the US average). They have more men than women, are split across income levels, and are more likely to be working full-time than other audiences. Their voting behavior is less consistent than other audiences, and they tend to be low-propensity, swing voters.

- 60% age 44 or younger
- 43% women, 57% men
- 53% White, 21% Hispanic, 14% Black, 6% Asian
- 40% urban, 46% suburban, 14% rural
- 75% earning under \$100K/year
- 33% with 4-year college degree
- 70% with no children under 18
- 56% seldom/never attend religious services
- 34% Democrat, 32% Republican, 25% Independent

Heroes



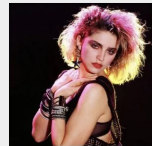
“Kim Taehyung because he’s strong and doesn’t give a fuck about what anyone thinks of him.”



“J.R.R. Tolkien, the ability to create a rich and filled-out, alternate world.”



“Senator Rand Paul, because he doesn’t seem to need handlers or spokespeople to tell him what to say or do, or scripts to read from.”



“Madonna. She is talented, self-made, controversial, and doesn’t follow rules.”

Investigate: Where Are They In Culture?

Investigators are an audience that is incredibly curious. They're consuming everything from *Rick and Morty* and *King of the Hill* to *Dexter* and *The Rookie*, shows that often feature someone doing their own research or working to understand a complex situation with an open mind.

Their fictional content reflects their skepticism—stories often assert that the institutional view of reality is a construct, insider authority figures are frequently malevolent or incompetent, and true intelligence means looking past what's presented as fact to uncover the actual machinery underneath.

The protagonist-as-investigator is a very reliable frame for this audience, especially one not afraid to speak their mind once they've discovered the facts.

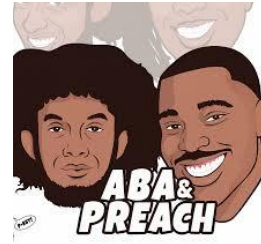


Investigate: Where Do They Get Informed?

Investigators are more likely to want to figure things out on their own, rather than be asked to trust a solution or conclusion presented to them already fully formed. They're likely to believe that the content and creators willing to dig deeper are the media worth trusting.

Documentary and gaming content also dominate in this audience, opening up other avenues to dig deep into what's going wrong and how to fix it. Investigators are happy to collaborate with people in the know, just as long as those collaborators are also self-taught and not jaded insiders.

Whether news or informational content, it has to show the act of investigating, not just the result.



Investigate: Where Are They Scrolling?

Investigators are an audience that spends a great deal of time on Instagram and YouTube on mobile, engaging with voices they already trust, like independent creators.

They also over-index on Spotify (+4%), Discord (+3%), and Reddit (+3%), when compared to other audiences.

Not surprisingly, they are one of the audiences who under-index the most on Facebook (-7%). Even so, 80% of Investigators are daily users of the platform—consistent with all audiences.

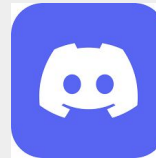
Distinctive Social Platforms



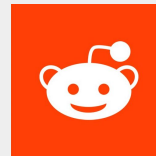
73% of Investigators are on YouTube mobile, over-indexing by 5% when compared to other audiences



Investigators over-index by 9% on Instagram usage compared to other audiences, with 53% daily usage on their mobile devices



Investigators over-index by 3% on Discord usage compared to other audiences



Investigators over-index by 3% on Reddit usage compared to other audiences

Investigate: How Can You Reach Them?

Investigators are truth-seekers. They're skeptical of entrenched politicians and corporations who seem to act with impunity. They would like to see a representative, responsive democracy—but they just don't believe it's currently working that way.

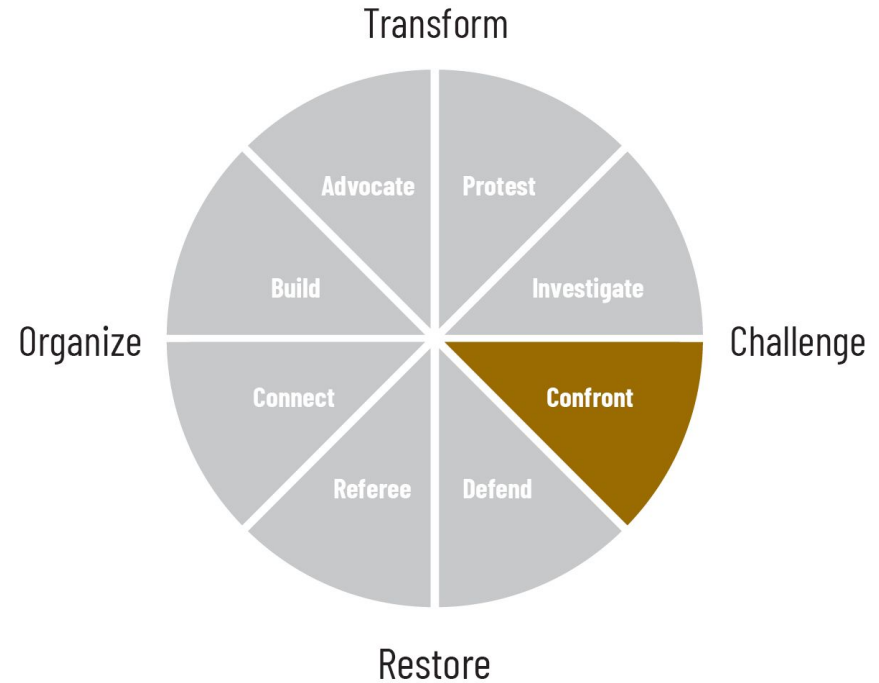
They are also one of the less activated audiences on the narrative goal, with fewer than 10% currently taking pro-democracy action (even though many more say they think it's important, and know how they'd like to engage).

The challenge for Investigators is twofold: first, closing the knowing-to-doing gap and then reaching them at the right moment.

Content Design

Format	Evidence-forward deep dives like documentaries, creator commentary, or irreverent satire that let the audience draw their own conclusions.
Tone & Style	Content should be loud, chaotic, and forensic all at once, avoiding anything that feels like a lecture.
Trusted Messengers	Whistleblowers, independent journalists, and rule-breaking truth-tellers who expose the system.
Calls to Action	Meet them with credentialed sources and evidence, not emotional appeals, and a call to uncover truth rather than join a cause.

Confront



Confront: How Can They Contribute?

Confronters value straightforwardness and hate red tape.

They're not concerned about following the rules if breaking them gets results. They're outsiders, driven to **challenge** institutions, demand answers, and take action. They believe institutions are broken because bureaucracy only serves itself. They have little patience for blaming dysfunction on complexity when incompetence is a clearer culprit.

But they also value preservation, and a **restoration** of what they view as simpler, more straightforward governance.

Democracy Through Their Lens

The Problem They See

Criminals, corruptors, and extremists have captured and defiled the system to enrich themselves at our expense.

The Solution They Believe In

Watchdogs and competent leaders who cut red tape, hold corrupt bureaucrats accountable, and return things to normal.

Survey Highlights

- **"Who does the most damage to America's system?"**
34% of Confronters answered: "Presidents who don't serve the Constitution."
- **"What are America's problems mainly caused by?"**
36% of Confronters answered: "bad people in a good system."
- **"Who do you trust most to stand up for your rights and needs?"**
Confronters answered: "expected government officials, but these days many can't be trusted," and "no one."

Confront: Who Are They?

Confront is majority male, slightly more suburban than other audiences, and diverse in age. Compared to other audiences, it's moderately racially diverse (and less white than all survey respondents). It has a balanced distribution across income bands. Voters in this audience are not as reliably high-turnout as other audiences, and lean Republican.

- 50% age 44 or younger
- 38% women, 62% men
- 57% White, 18% Hispanic, 13% Black, 6% Asian
- 34% urban, 50% suburban, 16% rural
- 63% earning <\$100K / year
- 29% with 4-year college degree
- 70% with no children under 18
- 50% attend religious services
- 27% Democrat, 42% Republican, 23% Independent

Heroes



“Elon Musk, for his vision and innovation in technology and space exploration, pushing boundaries to create transformative solutions.”



“My father. He taught me that a person must respect their family, state, and nation. There is no such thing as a free lunch; you only get out of life what you earn.”



“Theodore Roosevelt, he pushed forward many simple, but major, reforms—and did not take no for an answer.”



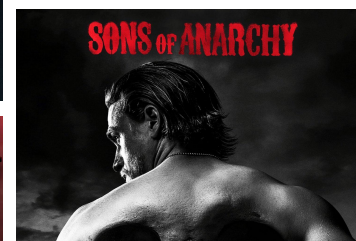
“Winston Churchill. He stood up to the bullies and supported those weaker than himself.”

Confront: Where Are They In Culture?

Confronters' media often explores concentrated, often corporate, power being exposed as fraudulent by a hero operating outside the system using whatever tools are available to them.

This tendency toward adversarial bluntness also shows up in the extended debate and long-form formats Confronters are watching. They are also comfortable watching a problem get worse before it gets better. What matters most to them is that any incompetence or corruption is explicitly named and then resolutely confronted, even if the institutional resolution itself is imperfect.

The character archetypes across their media diet are contrarian—they have looked at the official answer and found it wanting, and are pursuing their own version of truth and justice regardless of institutional approval.

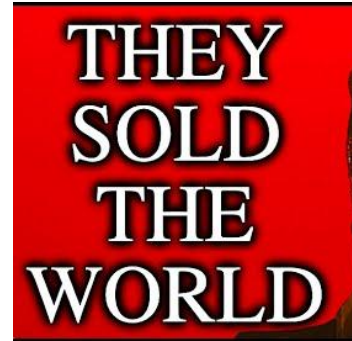
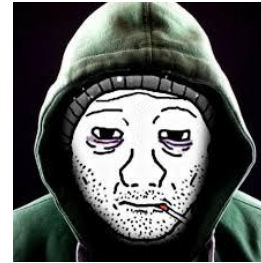


Confront: Where Do They Get Informed?

Confronters are watching content that features adversarial accountability, whether through prestige television, news media, or YouTube channels.

This audience is flexible on format and channel, and willing to engage with extended podcasts and long-form video (as long as it doesn't feel heavily managed or overly abstract). Unmanaged, unpretentious, debate-style content formats driven by conflict and disagreement are popular here.

Because this audience doesn't tend to trust national institutions, they tend to seek information and analysis from sources closer to home.



Confront: Where Are They Scrolling?

Across all platforms, Confronters seek out individuals who break ranks and highlight strong leaders doing good work. They can be found anywhere that supports extended writing and podcasts that feature unmoderated debates.

They don't over- or under-index much compared to other audiences, but Facebook mobile could be an opportunity to engage a large number of Confronters at once, and YouTube is a natural fit for debate-centric conversations.

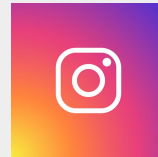
Distinctive Social Platforms



80% of Confronters are on Facebook mobile and 25% on their desktop, the top platform for reaching this audience



67% of Confronters use YouTube on mobile and another 25% use it on desktop, making YouTube one of the platforms of choice for this audience



42% of Confronters use Instagram on their mobile devices, and only 5% use it on desktop, under-indexing by 2% when compared to other audiences

Confront: How Can You Reach Them?

Confronters want a return to a simpler, unified system, and they believe someone who breaks rank will get them there. They value institutional accountability, and they believe facts should speak for themselves.

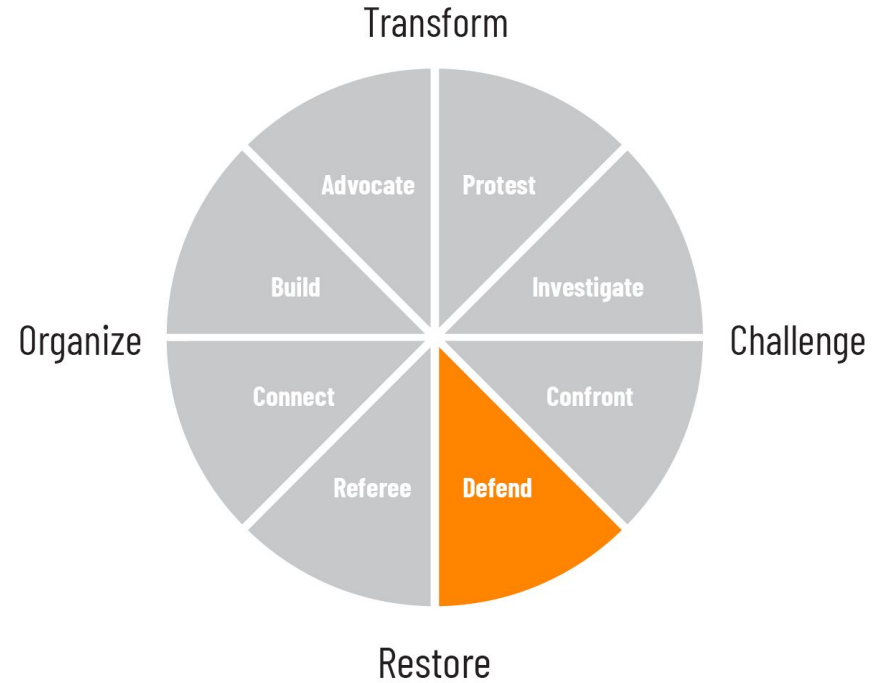
They are among the most likely to believe that “whistleblowers exposing lies and waste” (28%) are essential to make change, but they are one of the least-activated audiences, with only about 5% currently taking pro-democracy action.

The challenge for Confronters is the gap between frustration and action, so consider naming specific bad actors and specific rules being broken, and then pair that with concrete, results-oriented steps that don’t require trusting the systems they view as captured.

Content Design

Format	Long-form podcasts and unmoderated debates where participants say the unsayable using real-world examples and humor that calls out absurdity.
Tone & Style	Direct, no-nonsense, debate-style content that avoids jargon, institutional framing, or abstract systemic critique.
Trusted Messengers	Strong, competent leaders like anti-establishment politicians, system-bypassing outsiders, or moral anchors like fathers and faith leaders.
Calls to Action	Naming bad actors and offering concrete, evidence-backed steps to expose them.

Defend



Defend: How Can They Contribute?

Defenders work to **restore** and protect America's status quo and traditions.

They hold the line and are likely to say all is well with the state of the country right now. They believe they are operating outside our institutions in order to **challenge** them. While many believe those institutions aren't working, they don't see an inherent flaw in the system.

They blame bad actors—including the media—who profit from dysfunction while weak bureaucrats passively watch and politicians maneuver.

Democracy Through Their Lens

The Problem They See

Fringe actors and violent extremists gain power and subvert the system. The media amplify division and break public trust.

The Solution They Believe In

Whistleblowers work to expose lies and waste that undermine our system, and restore what matters: common sense, community, and founding values.

Survey Highlights

- **“Who does the most damage to America’s system?”**
39% of Defenders answered: “elected officials who don’t serve their constituents” (the second highest).
- **“What are America’s problems mainly caused by?”**
38% of Defenders answered: “bad people in a good system” (the most of any audience).
- **“Who do you trust most to stand up for your rights and needs?”**
“All we have is our elected officials to stand up for our rights and needs,” “the country’s constitution,” and “honest people.”

Defend: Who Are They?

Defenders tend to be older, married, and religiously observant. This is one of the more racially diverse audiences, among the least likely to have a college degree, and are more rural than several other audiences. They are consistent, high-turnout voters and one of the audiences most likely to identify as Republican.

- 62% age 45 or older
- 40% women, 60% men
- 61% White, 19% Hispanic, 13% Black, 3% Asian
- 32% urban, 48% suburban, 20% rural
- 78% earning <\$100K / year
- 24% with 4-year college degree
- 75% with no children under 18
- 54% attend religious services
- 26% Democrat, 48% Republican, 20% Independent

Heroes



“Ronald Reagan. He used his charisma, strength, and leadership skills to be a president for every American.”



“Abraham Lincoln. He united a fractured country.”



“Donald J. Trump. He says what is wrong and fixes it.”



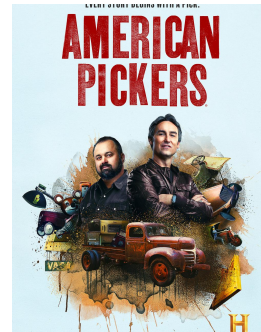
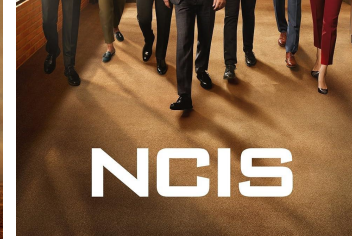
“Nelson Mandela, for his resilience and moral leadership, and his ability to forgive and unite a divided nation.”

Defend: Where Are They In Culture?

Defenders' media diet is distinctly conservative, leans nostalgic, and heavily features individuals righting wrongs. Their entertainment media is infused with a sense of American craftsmanship, American sensibility, and American values.

Their content also frequently features characters looking past official narratives in order to discover what mainstream institutions might want to keep hidden. As a result, procedurals and dramas feature prominently, as do shows built around working-class or military characters.

Overall, the register of their content is an earnest patriotism and masculine competence. Their media takes American strength seriously (without irony) and celebrates the dignity in work, loyalty, and sacrifice.



Defend: Where Do They Get Informed?

Defenders are skeptical but curious, and their media choices reflect skepticism toward credentialed expertise and official channels. They admire individuals working to restore institutions and expose villains—someone with a trustworthy background (military, law enforcement, or faith-based) and who speaks candidly, without the cultural markers often associated with progressive or partisan politics.

While they consume some national news, local news is more trusted than national media outlets, and they trust YouTube personalities who are unapologetic in sharing their perspectives.



Defend: Where Are They Scrolling?

Defenders are interested in personality-driven social and political commentary on YouTube and in hyper-local, often conservative-leaning digital outlets.

They are heavily concentrated on Facebook and reachable through a tight cluster of trusted conservative voices and local news, so engaging these voices on social media channels is worth prioritizing. Instagram has the largest negative index of any platform for this audience, and Spotify, Snapchat, and TikTok also tend not to reach them.

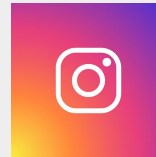
Distinctive Social Platforms



80% of Defenders are on Facebook mobile and 33% use it from their desktop, over-indexing by 7% when compared to other audiences



While 62% of Defenders use YouTube on mobile and another 20% use it on desktop, they under-index by 6% when compared to other audiences



Only 34% of Defenders use Instagram on their mobile devices, under-indexing by 10% when compared to other audiences

Defend: How Can You Reach Them?

Defenders operate outside institutions to challenge bad actors—politicians, media, and bureaucrats who enable dysfunction. They're eager to call out anyone who profits from this dysfunction, as well as those who sit by and allow it.

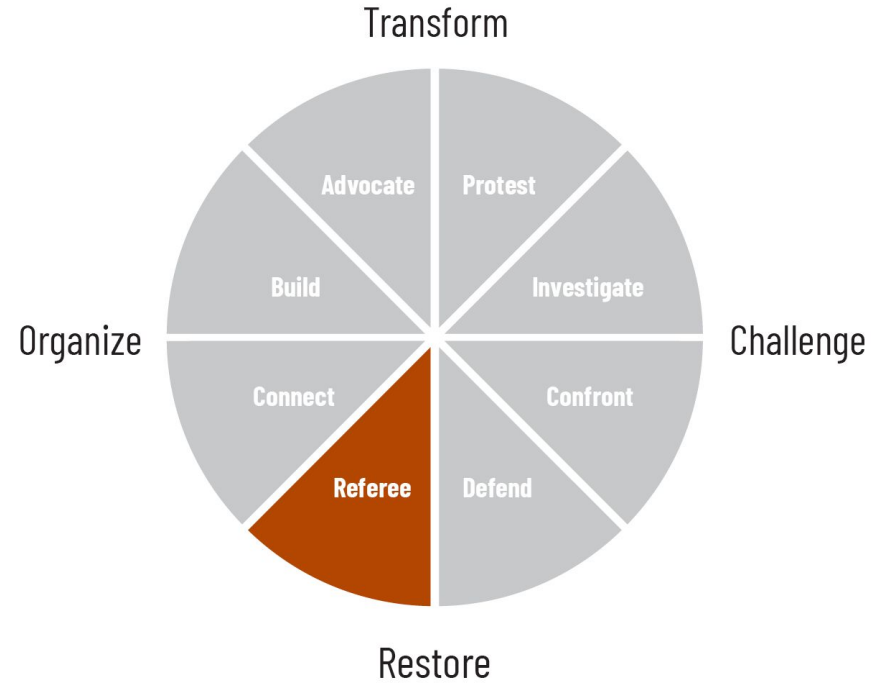
While Defenders might feel that America is under threat, they are also the most likely of any audience to believe that the country is already working as it was intended. They hold an unwavering belief in America's founding values—what's broken isn't America's values, but the people who've failed to uphold them.

The challenge for Defenders is recognizing the potential for pro-democracy improvement without triggering distrust.

Content Design

Format	Local commentary that frames contemporary challenges through a nostalgic or historical lens; content about craftsmanship and patriotism.
Tone & Style	Communications with clear stakes and patriotism, avoiding moral ambiguity or anything that reads as overtly progressive.
Trusted Messengers	Patriots and promise-keepers who put country first, like local faith-driven leaders and trusted figures who call it like they see it.
Calls to Action	Make asks local, specific, and achievable, and celebrate their commitment to protecting democracy.

Referee



Referee: How Can They Contribute?

Referees are resilient. They keep institutions functional, performing the difficult and often overlooked tasks required to **restore** them like enforcing the rules and ensuring fair process.

Although they experience institutional dysfunction first-hand, they don't assume negative intent or give up on the system. Instead, they **organize**, looking for strong, moral leaders whom they can hold accountable.

The main problem they see is that others aren't working as hard as they are to do the same.

Democracy Through Their Lens

The Problem They See

If things are broken, it's because too many people have ignored the rules for too long.

The Solution They Believe In

Those with moral clarity must step in and enforce proper procedures as they were written.

Survey Highlights

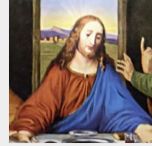
- **"Who does the most damage to America's system?"**
42% of Referees answered: "elected officials who don't serve their constituents."
- **"What are America's problems mainly caused by?"**
45% of Referees answered: "specific groups that have too much power."
- **"Who do you trust most to stand up for your rights and needs?"**
Referees answered: "myself," "honest leaders," and "the president."

Referee: Who Are They?

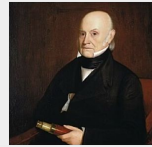
Referees are more likely than any other audience to be retirees, churchgoers, and rural voters. They tend to be older, are less racially diverse than other audiences, and nearly three-quarters lack a 4-year college degree. At the polls, they are some of the most reliable voters and lean Republican.

- 72% age 45 or older
- 53% women, 47% men
- 66% White, 14% Hispanic, 12% Black, 2% Asian
- 26% urban, 50% suburban, 24% rural
- 73% earning <\$100K / year
- 24% with 4-year college degree
- 77% with no children under 18
- 57% attend religious services
- 26% Democrat, 49% Republican, 18% Independent

Heroes



“Jesus Christ, because His revolutionary message of love and service has continued for more than 2,000 years.”



“John Quincy Adams because he served the country as a statesman, instead of serving himself and his cronies as a politician.”



“My grandfather. He was a retired World War II Army veteran that was the most honest man I ever met. Even if you didn’t want to hear it.”



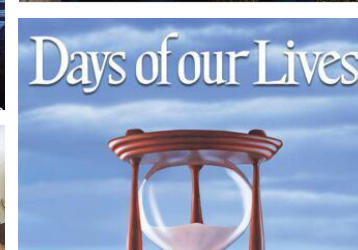
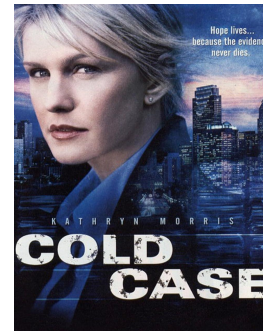
“James Madison. Founding father who wrote most of the Federalist papers explaining our constitution and new form of government.”

Referee: Where Are They In Culture?

Referees are living in a world where trust has collapsed and faithful citizens remember what the promise of America was supposed to be—and they refuse to let it disappear.

Much of their media feels nostalgic, depicting systems operating as they were designed to, and celebrates resilient communities that restore order after disorder. This is reflected in everything from soap operas to true crime and mystery series—a problem (crime, injustice, disorder) is identified, a competent person follows the evidence to recommend change, and order is ultimately restored.

They're drawn to characters who leverage institutional authority in service of community and who are often motivated by faith, family, and a strong, clear moral compass.



Referee: Where Do They Get Informed?

Referees prioritize local news and independent political commentary, as they prefer to get their news through the lens of trusted personalities and creators.

Cross- and non-partisan dialogue plays well for Referees, and a leader being consistent over time reflects trustworthiness. They have a strong desire to protect their communities, and they're looking to connect rule-breaking to the concrete harm they see impacting the people and places they care about.

While they're not as likely to engage with long-form journalism as other audiences, they do engage with stories that dig deep into their community and the characters within them.



Referee: Where Are They Scrolling?

This is an older, rural, and faith-rooted audience where Facebook anchors everything.

YouTube, despite under-indexing, still plays an important role in delivering serious, long-form explorations (but not short-form or reactive content).

About a third of Referees are on Instagram too, but their usage of that platform is significantly lower than other audiences.

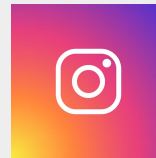
Distinctive Social Platforms



80% of Referees are on Facebook mobile, and their desktop usage over-indexes by 9% when compared to other audiences



While 61% of Referees use YouTube on mobile and another 20% use it on desktop, they under-index by 7% when compared to other audiences



Only 32% of Referees use Instagram on their mobile devices, under-indexing by 12% when compared to other audiences

Referee: How Can You Reach Them?

Referees are the backbone of civic infrastructure—institutionalists who enforce rules, trust the process, and believe the system works when good people manage it. They're one of the audiences most likely to advocate for voter engagement and rule-following, but have the lowest support for protest.

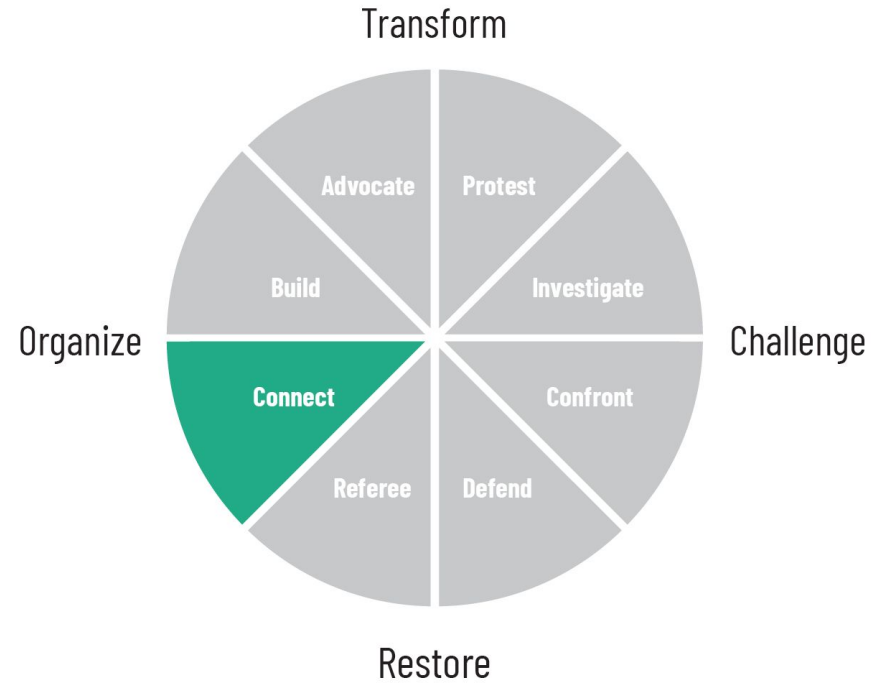
Activation opportunities for Referees need to provide them with vision and motivation. More than a quarter need help identifying how they can support the strong moral leaders working to improve American democracy—which, to them, looks like upholding and enforcing rules and restoring community bonds.

They need a specific invitation to step in to help enforce the rules, especially outside the ballot box.

Content Design

Format	Long-running series and local news; human- and community-centered content. Avoid anything overly partisan or heavily editorialized.
Tone & Style	Leads with moral clarity, sincerity, and earned authority, and avoids irony, ambiguity, and polarizing framing.
Trusted Messengers	Reliable, principled leaders who model integrity and are procedural truth-tellers.
Calls to Action	Provide ways to monitor, enforce, and participate in local civic processes—they're eager to ensure things run smoothly.

Connect



Connect: How Can They Contribute?

Connectors' superpower is bridge-building.

They go out of their way to positively engage people who hold different values and perspectives from their own. They seek to maintain the working majority, and to do so they **organize**—hosting events, working phone banks, and holding town halls.

They deeply believe in the systems of rules used to manage government and communities and have faith those systems can be **restored** with only a minor tweak here and there.

Democracy Through Their Lens

The Problem They See

Community bonds are fraying because people have forgotten how to live together.

The Solution They Believe In

People rebuild local connections through presence and service.

Survey Highlights

- **“Who does the most damage to America’s system?”**
53% of Connectors answered “Presidents who don’t serve the Constitution.”
- **“What are America’s problems mainly caused by?”**
51% of Connectors answered: “specific groups that have too much power.”
- **“Who do you trust most to stand up for your rights and needs?”**
Connectors answered: “local representatives” and “my local newspaper.”

Connect: Who Are They?

Connectors are older, less diverse, and not as likely to be college-educated as other audiences. They tend to be suburban, church-going, and family-oriented. They are reliable voters, and while they lean Democrat they have more Republicans than their Build neighbors.

- 73% age 45 or older
- 64% women, 35% men, 1% other
- 65% White, 16% Hispanic, 10% Black, 3% Asian
- 28% urban, 51% suburban, 22% rural
- 74% earning <\$100K / year
- 29% with 4-year college degree
- 78% with no children under 18
- 48% attend religious services
- 42% Democrat, 29% Republican, 22% Independent

Heroes



"Jimmy Carter. He tried to think of the country, not himself."



"Mr. Rogers. He was kind and curious."



"Michelle Obama, she believes in what America could be."



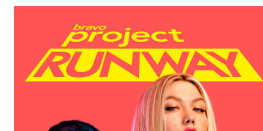
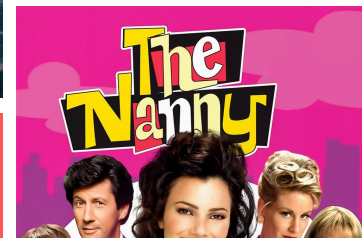
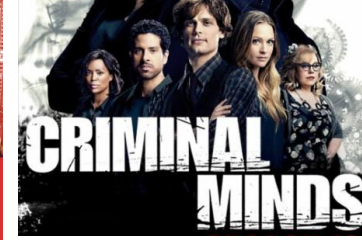
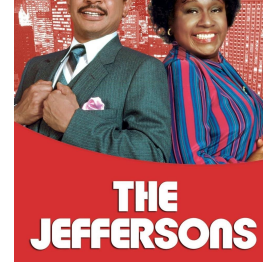
"Rosa Parks. She stood up for what she believed in and didn't back down when everyone else told her to."

Connect: Where Are They In Culture?

Connectors' media diets are people-first. They embrace human-interest journalism and celebrity news that harkens back to community values, and content that highlights teamwork and collaborative dialogue.

They're less likely to consume analytical deep dives that are firmly rooted in social or ideological frameworks, and more likely to select short-to-medium-form content with family and individuals at its core. The rules of human relationships and social decency are as important as the rule of law.

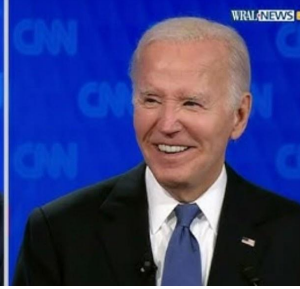
This is also reflected in the tone of their media—media that feels familiar and relational, and is almost never adversarial.



Connect: Where Do They Get Informed?

When it comes to where they get their information, Connectors prioritize local formats over national media outlets. When they aren't watching local television and reading local news, they are spending time on outlets that feature conversational, community-centered, and often faith-based information on serious and non-serious issues.

Their media choices reflect their desire to maintain social order and fairness, expressed through relationships, shared experiences, a call to service, and a commitment to treating others with respect.



Connect: Where Are They Scrolling?

Connectors tend to under-index on most of the big platforms compared to other audiences, especially on YouTube, Instagram, and Spotify.

They are, however, one of the audiences with the highest reach on mobile Facebook, making it a good place to engage them, particularly with local news collaborations and trusted, familiar voices.

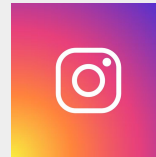
Distinctive Social Platforms



81% of Connectors are on Facebook mobile and 30% on their desktop, where they over-index by 5% when compared to other audiences



While 64% of Connectors use YouTube on mobile, they actually under-index by 4% when compared to other audiences



Only 37% of Connectors use Instagram on their mobile devices, under-indexing by 7% when compared to other audiences

Connect: How Can You Reach Them?

A large majority of Connectors agree with the foundational ideas of democracy, believe America needs to do more to achieve its promises, and think the country's problems can be solved.

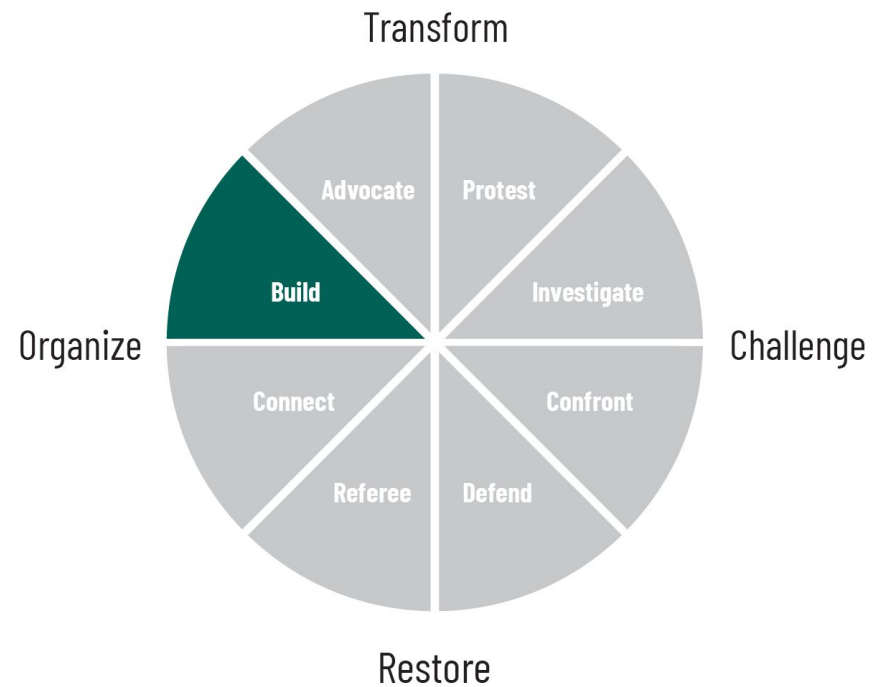
While they believe in the promise of American democracy, Connectors are less activated than other audiences. Many express a desire to act, and a significant number feel ready to.

The activation gap here is between knowing solutions exist and having a concrete reason to act on them. This can help explain where they're stuck—if they believe an insider will fix the problem, it's not uncommon to wait for them to do so.

Content Design

Format	Keep it short, conversational, and human-centered—stories about good people doing good things, not analytical deep dives or anti-heroes.
Tone & Style	Content that is warm, community-centered, and gives them a sense of belonging; adversarial content will lose them.
Trusted Messengers	Quiet, present community figures who model decency and show up for their community—faith voices, neighbors, and cross-aisle politicians.
Calls to Action	Ground action in service and obligation, with tasks that are proximate, relational, and achievable in their everyday lives.

Build



Build: How Can They Contribute?

Builders navigate systems and create pragmatic solutions.

They understand how to sufficiently leverage the bureaucracy in order to change it, often while simultaneously **organizing** allies to help, through things like fundraising and volunteering. This group reads the bylaws and meeting minutes, and they draft the policy proposals that can become the guardrails of governance.

They believe in **transforming** institutions from the inside out.

Democracy Through Their Lens

The Problem They See

Old institutions left the vulnerable behind while bad actors exploited institutional weakness.

The Solution They Believe In

Diverse everyday Americans, using the rules, construct something new that serves everyone.

Survey Highlights

- **“Who does the most damage to America’s system?”**
49% of Builders answered: “rich people who corrupt the system with money.”
- **“What are America’s problems mainly caused by?”**
62% of Builders answered: “specific groups that have too much power.”
- **“Who do you trust most to stand up for your rights and needs?”**
Builders answered: “my governor,” “the people,” and “myself.”

Build: Who Are They?

Builders are diverse in age, majority White, and are more likely to have a 4-year college degree than other audiences. They are suburbanites and 20% have a child under the age of 18. At the polls, they are consistent voters who lean Democrat, but this audience has more individuals who identify as Republican than their neighbor Advocate.

- 41% age 44 or younger
- 61% women, 37% men, 2% other
- 71% White, 12% Hispanic, 7% Black, 3% Asian
- 28% urban, 55% suburban, 17% rural
- 67% earning <\$100K / year
- 42% with 4-year college degree
- 80% with no children under 18
- 67% seldom/never attend religious services
- 55% Democrat, 12% Republican, 25% Independent

Heroes



“Barack Obama because he fought, was smart, and while flawed, seemed to genuinely care about the people.”



“FDR was bold in setting up the New Deal; much of its infrastructure we are still benefiting from today.”



“Fannie Lou Hamer for her courage and conviction and refusal to back down to white supremacy and understanding of poverty.”

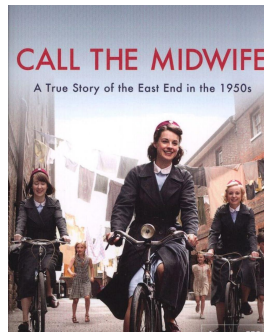
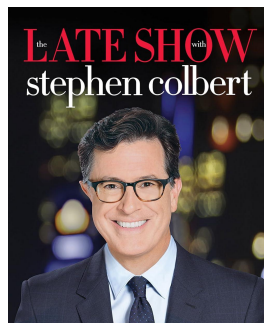
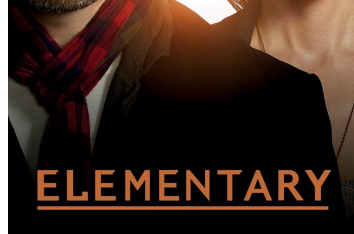


“Margaret Chase Smith. She had the balls to take a stand against McCarthyism.”

Build: Where Are They In Culture?

Builders are a deeply engaged audience, across a variety of media. They're drawn to wonky deep dives, long-arc character studies, and opinionated personality-driven content. Within that, their tastes range from late-night satirical talk shows that often touch on political or social issues and political thrillers to period dramas and historical epics.

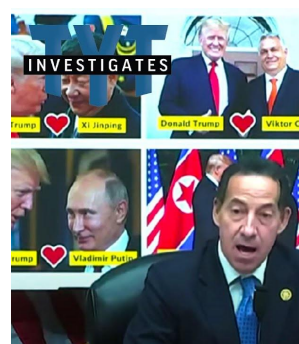
They are also attracted to deep expertise and traditional markers of institutional credibility. The look and feel of their media tends to be evidence-forward, institutionally engaged, and designed for people who read the bylaws and who want their entertainment to take governance seriously.



Build: Where Do They Get Informed?

Builders are spending time with traditional mainstream media, and they cite progressive news sources more than any other audience.

For Builders, they prioritize depth when it comes to information. They love to dig into the details—they're an audience likely to have sustained engagement and are drawn to deeply sourced information that gives them more than a high-level summary. They want to know how the system's gears are turning so that they can build something better from within.



Build: Where Are They Scrolling?

Builders are the most platform-agnostic audience on the Audience Map—no dramatic platform preferences, no obvious channel loyalties.

They don't over-index on many platforms, with the exception of podcasts, but they do tend to slightly under-index on YouTube.

The opportunity for Builders comes entirely from content format and outlet credibility, not from finding the right platform.

Distinctive Social Platforms



79% of Builders are on Facebook mobile, and their desktop usage over-indexes just slightly at 2%



While 66% of Builders use YouTube on mobile and another 25% use it on desktop, they actually under-index by 2% when compared to other audiences



44% of Builders use Instagram on their mobile devices, just about average when compared to other audiences

Build: How Can You Reach Them?

Builders are one of the most activated audiences, with a reliable progressive base. They believe in core democratic ideals, and can clearly see a role for themselves in helping America achieve them. Their approach to change emphasizes new problem-solving methods and recognizing outsiders' contributions, with a focus on durable solutions that prevent recurring problems.

While Builders have a strong perspective on how change happens overall, they can benefit from additional support in identifying the specific pro-democracy actions to take.

The challenge is coordination, especially with respect to actions that, when taken together, lead to the broader changes Builders imagine.

Content Design

Format	Traditional, long-form journalism, coalition-framing narratives, and content highlighting accountability.
Tone & Style	Start with depth and expert sources, but balance the wonkiness with humor and warmth; avoid doom and gloom.
Trusted Messengers	Lead with coalition-builders and institutional insiders who share power and bring others along.
Calls to Action	Get specific: highlight the specific avenues, specific representatives or local leaders, and the specific actions that connect citizens to power.

Moving More Americans

Measuring Movement

Even though audiences start from different places, they all have a role to play in a more pro-democracy future. But to move them closer to a shared vision of that future, we need to know more than just the media they engage with or the messengers they trust.

We also need to understand their current view of democracy, what they believe needs to change, how much agency and motivation they currently feel, and what they believe they need in order to change it. To help answer these questions, we translated the non-partisan ideals in the narrative goal into testable survey questions, to measure what is working and for whom.

For example, while Investigators might be the most in need of hope that our democracy's challenges can be overcome, and Advocates might already be the most activated, there is opportunity across all audiences. Together, pro-democracy communicators can support every audience in recognizing the current problems with our democracy, inspiring hope that we can fix them, developing a vision for how to make change, and feeling the motivation to act.

Surveying Audiences to Measure Audience Agreement

The narrative goal—the shared beliefs that underpin our collective work, and that audiences will hold when our work is done—is turned into a set of five measurable statements.

We govern ourselves

- 1) Leaders need our permission to make rules for us.
- 2) We should all have equal power to choose who makes the rules.

When we do this well, the country works for more people

- 3) America can work really well by listening to most people AND protecting individual liberty.

Sometimes we fall short

- 4) Some people have too much power over the government, but we can change the system to limit their influence.

Every American can be part of repairing and improving our country

- 5) Our country can serve everyone better if every citizen votes and does their part.

For each of the statements above, we asked audience members in our survey to score them on the following scale:



Audience Per-Statement Agreement

We were looking for broad agreement with the narrative goal statements. We measured agreement both individually and in aggregate to understand what pro-democracy attitudes Audiences are starting with and what they might be willing to move toward.

	"Some people have too much power"	"We should all have equal power"	"If every citizen votes and does their part..."	"Leaders need our permission to make rules..."	"Listening to most and protecting individual rights"
Advocate	93%	90%	86%	82%	93%
Protest	88%	83%	86%	81%	92%
Investigate	78%	81%	83%	72%	87%
Confront	82%	84%	84%	73%	84%
Defend	83%	85%	89%	69%	92%
Referee	82%	87%	91%	75%	90%
Connect	85%	92%	94%	76%	92%
Build	87%	94%	92%	79%	96%

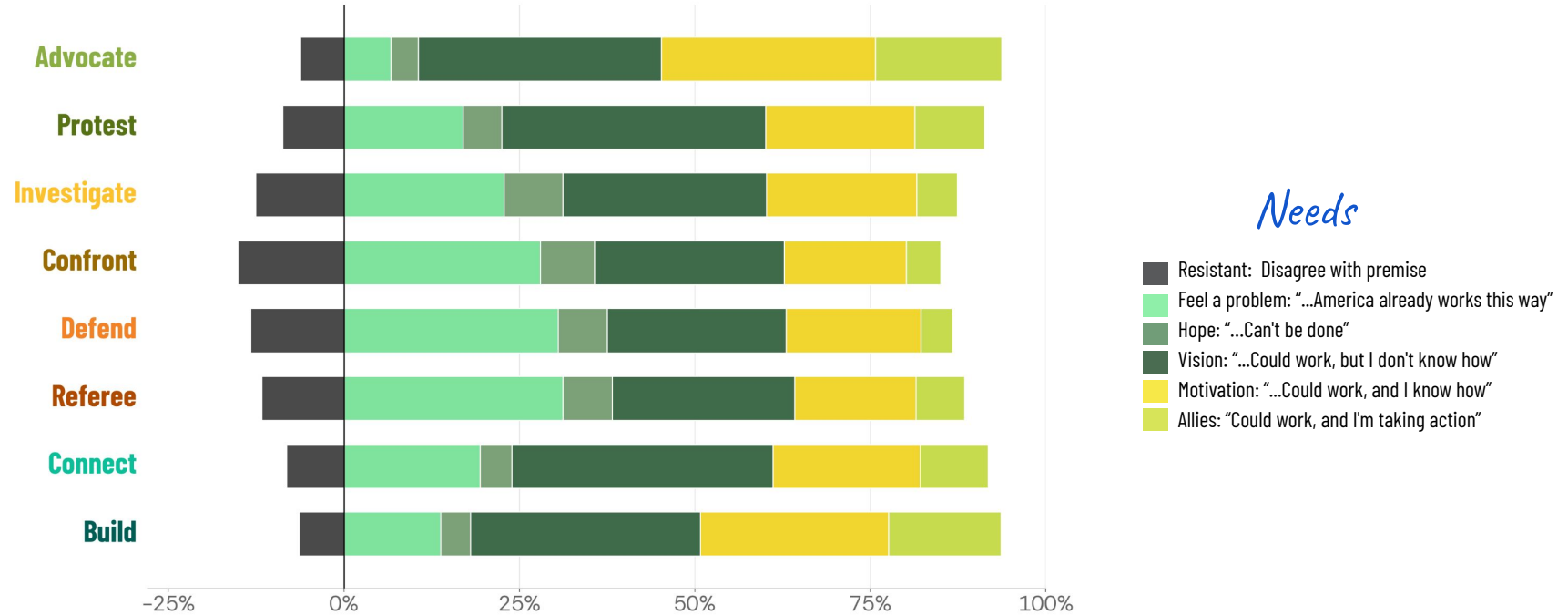
Moving People Up the Pro-Democracy Ladder of Engagement

The narrative goal statements embody five core democratic ideals. They also represent the core needs we must meet for every audience in order to move them toward increased belief and engagement.

Resistant	Feel a Problem	Hope	Vision	Motivation	Allies
<i>They reject the premise and need to believe in the value of democracy</i>	I agree with the Narrative Goal.				
	<i>They need to feel a problem because they believe that America already works this way</i>	America hasn't achieved the goal.			
		<i>They need hope, because they think fixing America can't be done</i>	It could happen.		
	<i>They need vision, because while they believe America can be improved they don't know how</i>		I do know how.		<i>I am acting.</i> <i>They need allies and are already taking action</i>
		<i>They believe in fixes and have ideas, but they aren't taking action</i>			

Audiences Start in Different Places

Knowing where each Audience's baseline is helps communicators and advocates not just tailor content to reach people where they already are in culture, but also to meet the specific needs that can move an audience toward more pro-democracy views or action.



Learning What Works, and For Whom

Using our survey instrument we tested 50 pieces of real-world content

To evaluate whether we could move audiences with content from the field, partners helped us identify 50 pieces of content for testing, many from DCC partner organizations. We used randomized controlled trial (RCT) content tests to rigorously evaluate efficacy.

Even though this content was created without knowledge of our narrative goal, we still observed significant movement within this sample. While each audience has different media consumption behavior and content preferences, testing revealed several important findings for developing pro-democracy content.

Key Takeaways

Try This:

- Content designed to reinforce the belief that “Leaders need our permission to make rules for us”
- CTAs that align with audience’s core motivations
- Content that feels familiar to the audience
- Aim for smaller-scale movement, which, when built up over time, can still be effective

Avoid This:

- Doom and gloom
- Content without calls to action
- Misalignment with the kinds of messengers and agents of change that audiences trust
- Content with lecture-style formats

Democracy Audience Map: Summary

	Advocate	Protest	Investigate	Confront	Defend	Referee	Connect	Build
Problem	Institutions captured by powerful	The powerful pursuing their own interests	Politicians and corps without accountability	Corruptors capturing the system	Extremists and media amplify division	People ignoring the rules	People not living in community	Bad actors exploiting institutions
Solution	Structural transformation	Structural transformation	Holding the powerful to account	Watchdogs hold corrupt bureaucrats accountable	Restoration of founding values	Moral enforcement of procedures	Start local with community service	Change to make something new
Ladder of Engagement	Activated, in need of allies	Need to convert desire into action	Need to close knowing-to-doing gap	Need to be motivated to act	Need to recognize problems exist	Need vision and motivation	Need help envisioning the future	Motivated to act
Content Format & Tone	Deeply reported news and satire	Raw, authentic, disruptive, and urgent	Loud, chaotic, and forensic, avoiding lectures	Direct, no-nonsense style that avoids jargon	Clear stakes, patriotism; avoiding moral ambiguity	Moral, sincere, and with earned authority	Warm, community-centered, not adversarial	Wonkiness balanced with humor and warmth
Qualities of Trusted Messengers	Radical reformers	Incorruptible outsiders and grassroots organizers	Rule-breaking truth-tellers	Anti-establishment outsiders	Patriots and promise-keepers	Reliable, principled leaders	Good neighbors and community leaders	Institutional insiders

Field Activation

How you might use the map depends on your specific role

Comms Practitioner

Build campaigns and strategies from an audience-first perspective, then layer important strategic targeting frameworks for your organization. Tailor messaging and distribution strategies for the highest impact, choose a specific call to action that aligns with the audience's motivation, and seize unique opportunities for each audience.

Field Leader

Develop an interdisciplinary strategy for your current Audience, identify adjacent audience growth and differentiation opportunities, and assess resource allocation across content creation, platform investment, and digital mobilization.

Creator or Media Maker

Experiment with integrating pro-democracy content into your existing storytelling efforts, and see how your audience reacts (and whether this content helps grow your audience to new parts of the Map).

Funder

Understand the reach of your portfolio, and explore investment strategies to expand pro-democracy reach. Support high-impact communication approaches and organizations with research-backed, nonpartisan persuasion strategies.

Thank You

Questions or comments? Get in touch: hello@harmonylibs.org
Interested in additional audience tools and information?: democracycomms.org

Appendix

Harmony Labs

Harmony Labs is a nonprofit media research lab on a mission to research and reshape society's relationship with media, using science, data, and creativity. For more than a decade, their work has helped storytellers and strategists, decision makers and dreamers, harness the immense power of media to shape a positive, pluralistic future and support human flourishing.

Their one-of-a-kind, respondent-level data infrastructure, the Narrative Observatory, empowers partners to find, reach, and resonate with the right audience in today's fragmented, contested media environments. The Narrative Observatory delivers audience-based insights, narrative and network analysis, and empirical validation of cultural strategy and content—all derived from the actual behavior of real people and true audiences, *not* from social listening, inauthentic online activity, or AI-based synthetic panels.

Democracy Communications Collaborative

The Democracy Communications Collaborative empowers leaders and communicators to build durable, nonpartisan public support for American democracy. The DCC provides the critical infrastructure necessary to understand, reach, and move Americans of different values and viewpoints to protect our way of life and increase support for democratic values. They do this through three distinct lanes of work: 1) Organizing a collective impact network; 2) Developing research & resources for coordinated nonpartisan communication; and 3) Grantmaking to fill strategic gaps and catalyze long-term change.

130+ democracy-focused organizations are DCC Partners, representing a wide range of ideologies and approaches. The network is actively growing to include more viewpoints and constituencies.

Detailed Methods

Audience Segmentation

We surveyed ~2,000 U.S. adults in a nationally representative panel about their values, beliefs about democracy, and the roles they imagine for themselves in self-governance. Factor analysis on these responses surfaced the dimensions on which Americans most differ in how they think democracy should work. We placed each respondent on a two-dimensional Audience Map and divided it into eight audience zones — Advocate, Protest, Investigate, Confront, Defend, Referee, Connect, Build — each representing a distinct democratic orientation.

Media Analysis

We characterized each audience's media viewing using Harmony Labs' Narrative Observatory behavioral consumption panels, combining Nielsen and Comscore data from more than 300,000 panelists spanning from June 2024 to June 2025. We analyzed panelist viewing behavior across more than 10,000 YouTube channels, over 10,000 streaming programs, and several hundred national news domains. For each audience we computed distinctive consumption, measured as how much their viewership over-indexed relative to the panel baseline, surfacing the streaming series, YouTube creators, and news domains to which each Audience was most drawn.