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[What is a healthy democracy?](#)

[What makes a healthy democracy? Education and Population health, to start.](#)

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Issues to Watch 2023: A Healthy Democracy—what is it and how can we preserve it?

What is a healthy democracy?

When we think of all the tasks we should follow to stay healthy out in the world today—washing hands, exercising, eating right, wearing a seatbelt—rarely do we consider how a healthy democracy affects our well-being and the well-being of everyone in that democracy, not just those who share our homes or social circles.

Supreme Court Justice [Ruth Bader Ginsburg \(RBG\)](#) [was once asked](#), “What do you think is the biggest threat to our democracy?” She responded, “A public that doesn’t care about preserving the rights we have.” The right she’s referring to are the rights we have as U.S. citizens and participating in the processes that protect those rights and freedoms is the core of our democracy. As RBG so eloquently stated, when we stop caring about our rights, stop participating in the events that uphold them, and stop demanding that our elected officials act on the will of their people, our healthy democracy is threatened.

A healthy democracy is one that builds open, responsive, and accountable institutions and processes that serve the needs and preferences of the public.

Two elements that both signify and build a healthy democracy are

- 1) prioritizing the health of citizens, and
- 2) supporting citizens’ formal and informal education, so they can fully participate in the democratic process. A healthy democracy will not continue without population participation, so *you* must do your part.

What can *YOU* do to strengthen our democracy?

According to [Healthy Democracy Healthy People](#), there are immediate and ongoing ways you can help by using your voice to engage and influence, such as

- ✓ encouraging people to register to vote and then to actually go to the polls,
- ✓ providing input on policies that you feel are important,
- ✓ learning about and educating others on voting policies in your state, and
- ✓ making civic engagement a priority in your community.

Here are a few more ways you can help strengthen democracy throughout the year.

Visit non-partisan news sources to understand the issues of the day.

The [Interactive Media Bias Chart®](#) from [Ad Fontes Media, Inc.](#) shows how your favorite

news sources fall on the reliability and bias spectrum.



[Register to vote](#) and make sure your [registration is current](#) before each election.



What makes a healthy democracy? Education and population health, to start.

How does education affect democracy?

Education and democracy go hand-in-hand. In public schools across the country, students are gaining insight into the value of political involvement. The article [Public education, democracy, and the future of America](#) from The Christian Science Monitor states that public schools in the United States remain the foundation of the education system, and study after study has shown that the more education people have, the more they vote and participate in a nation's political process.

The article further states, "There are some indications that ... education simply increases the general feeling that voting is a social and civic norm, the right thing to do." Education normalizes and encourages political involvement, which in turn contributes to the health of our nation's democracy.

But how does education contribute?

Education increases society-wide support for democracy, and democracy relies on high participation to be successful. According to the National Bureau of Economic Research working paper, [Why Does Democracy Need Education?](#) "more educated democracies are more stable than the less educated ones ... and the relationship between education and democracy holds within as well as across countries.

Go vote and take others with you!

Read the ACS October Voting Tips & Tricks, [It's](#)

[General Election Time!](#) to learn about your state's guidelines for early, absentee, and in-person voting.



Share your views with your elected officials via a letter, email, phone or survey



Educate yourself on local issues and meet with officials to understand their points of view.



Join with other like-minded individuals to strengthen your voice. For information

on how to find others who share your political beliefs and to learn how you can take an active role in the planning, decision making, and execution of local and national initiatives, read the [ACS May Voting Tips & Tricks, Get involved! How can you be an involved citizen and an informed voter?](#)



The evidence suggests ... that education causes democracy.”

The paper also explains that this educational transmission process is vital in a democracy because effective democracies are dynamic, evolving forms of government that demand independent thinking by the citizenry. The opportunity for positive social and political change rests in citizens’ hands.

Healthy democracy is reliant on the education of its citizens, and the more educated an individual is, the more empowered they feel to voice their input and participate in the process. In addition, they are more likely to possess the know-how to help positively shape and change the political landscape.

Learning comes in all shapes and sizes through the two main types of education, **formal** (primary, secondary, and post-secondary learning that is based on a set curriculum) and **informal** (learning that results from activities related to daily life experiences, work, family, or leisure). The article *Public education, democracy, and the future of America* from The Christian Science Monitor examines primary and secondary formal education—elementary through high school.

One example of how democracy is being taught in schools comes from The Global Oneness Project, a free multimedia platform for educators and students that focuses on issues facing humanity, which offers a course on Habitats for a Healthy Democracy. The course teaches junior high school students how to uphold democracy. Beyond the course’s thought-provoking lessons and activities that prompt students to consider and envision a healthy democracy in their lives and in the communities in which they live, the key takeaway message for 6–8 graders is a strong call to action:

In the twenty-first century, the democratic principles of equality, freedom, and civic engagement should be more actively integrated into society. If Americans work together to embody these basic principles and the attitudes and beliefs that support them, we might foster unity and a healthier democracy.

How does population health affect democracy?

There is a strong correlation between population health outcomes and the strength of democratic institutions.

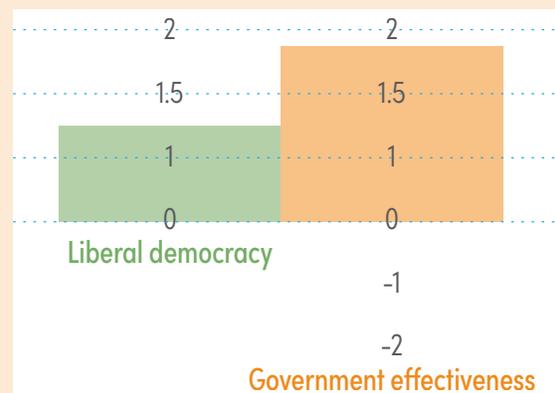
According to the article [Does democracy lead to better health?](#), evidence suggests that because democracies are often driven by the needs of the population rather than the leadership, the overall health of a population leads to a mix of both higher expenditure on public services and better public service delivery.

In other words, citizens care about being physically and mentally healthy and want to see investments in the health sector. This results in elected officials caring about the health care system and overall health of their electorate. This caring translates into increased investment in health and wellness, such as creating more public parks, increasing access to mental health services, and advocating for paid family leave. Evidence suggests a direct correlation between population health outcomes and the strength of democratic institutions.

The chart below shows a correlation between democracy and government effectiveness, using data from the Government Effectiveness Index, produced by [The World Bank](#) as part of the [Worldwide Governance Indicators](#) project.

[Does democracy lead to better health?](#) also discusses the Liberal Democracy Index, which is produced by the [Varieties of Democracy](#) (V-Dem) project at the [University of Gothenburg](#). As you can see in the chart on page 6, as the United States experienced increasing levels of liberal democracy—elections and suffrage rights, freedom of expression and association, equality before the law, and judicial and legislative

Government effectiveness vs. liberal democracy, 2020
United States perceptions of quality of public services, civil service, and policy formulation and implementation (positive values mean higher effectiveness).

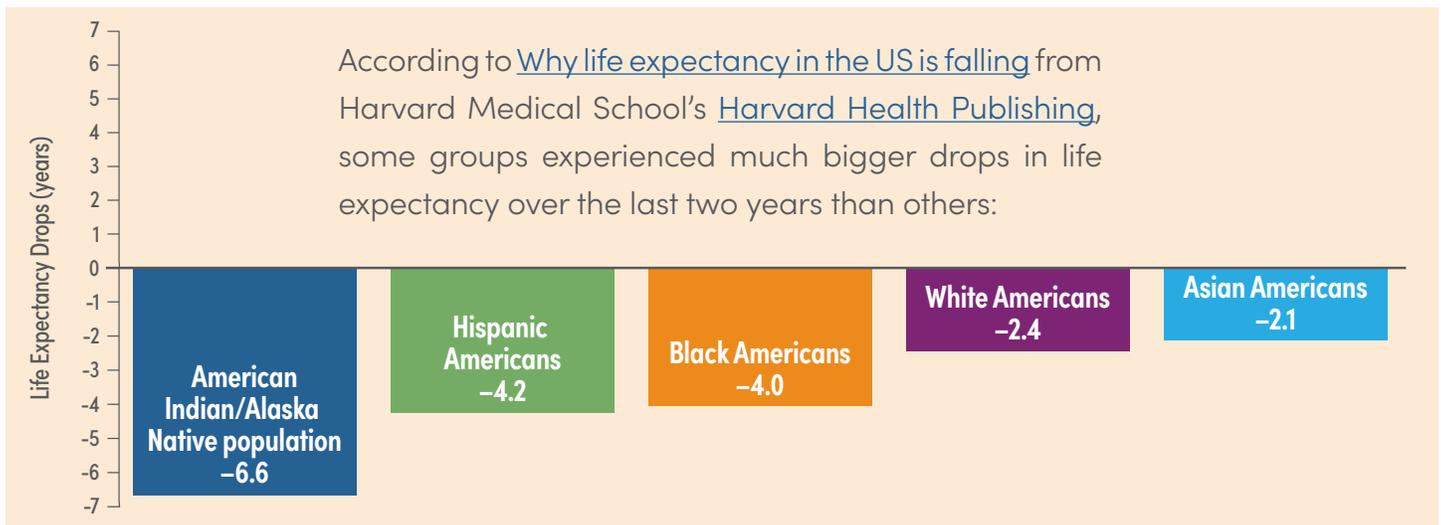
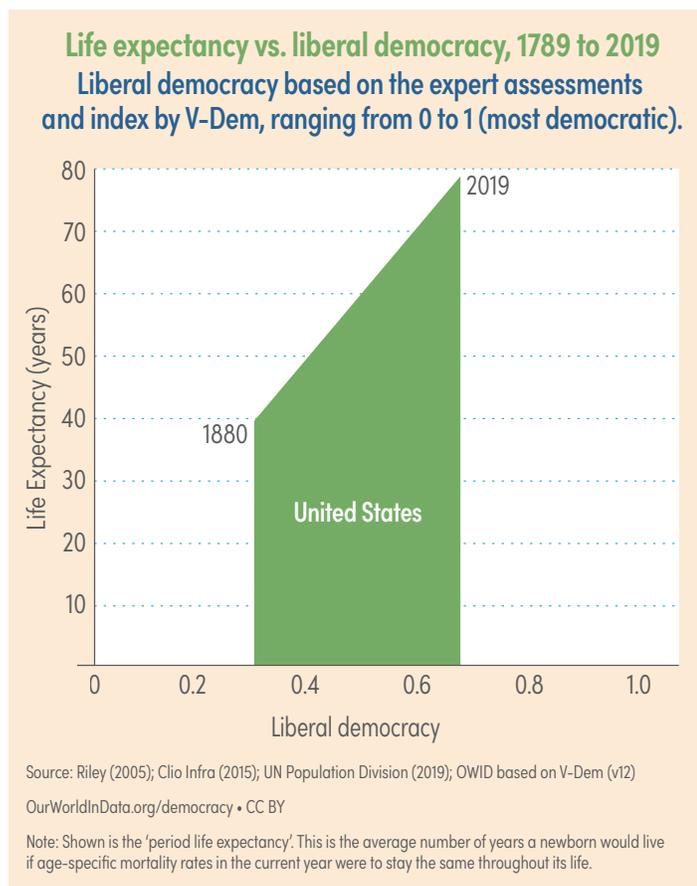


Liberal democracy based on the expert assessments and index by Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem), ranging from 0 to 1 (most democratic).

Source: OWID based on V-Dem (v12); World Bank via V-Dem (v12) OurWorldInData.org/democracy-health • CC BY

constraints on the executive—it also experienced higher life expectancy, something that has changed since this data was captured.

The last two years has shown a gradual decline in U.S. life expectancy; according to a press release from the [CDC's National Center for Health Statistics \(NCHS\)](#), life expectancy is now 76.1 years (the lowest since 1996), with a decline of 1.8 years in 2020 and 0.9 years in 2021—the biggest two-year drop since 1921–1923. Why the drop? COVID-19 is to blame for much of the change, accounting for 50 percent of the decline from 2020–2021. But the U.S. also saw an increase in that timeframe in deaths due to accidents and unintentional injuries (16 percent of the decline), heart disease (4.1 percent), chronic liver disease and cirrhosis (3.0 percent), and suicide (2.1 percent).



The article further explains how public health and political leaders play an important role in limiting these disparities, particularly for marginalized, disadvantaged citizens. Some states with the lowest life expectancies are also the ones with the most uninsured residents; their political leaders, however, have turned down Medicaid expansion.

And according to the [Healthy Democracy Healthy People coalition](#), states and countries that have more accessible voting policies and higher levels of civic participation are healthier across multiple public health measures.

How can we ensure a healthy democracy and strengthen the democratic system?

To ensure a healthy democracy, we must have buy-in and participation from our citizens. Unfortunately, confidence in a healthy democracy in the United States is low. According to a poll by [The Associated Press–NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#), “Just 9 percent of U.S. adults think democracy is working “extremely” or “very well,” while 52 percent say it’s “not working well.”

Why do people feel that way?

Gary Fields and Christina A. Cassidy, authors of the Associated Press article [Many remain critical of state of US democracy](#), believe fallout from the 2020 election has left a huge dent in U.S. citizens’ confidence in our election integrity and overall democracy.

Want to know more about election integrity and how you can strengthen and encourage trust in the voting system? Read ACS’ September 2022 article [Election Integrity: Everyone is watching...but is the U.S. doing the right thing?](#)

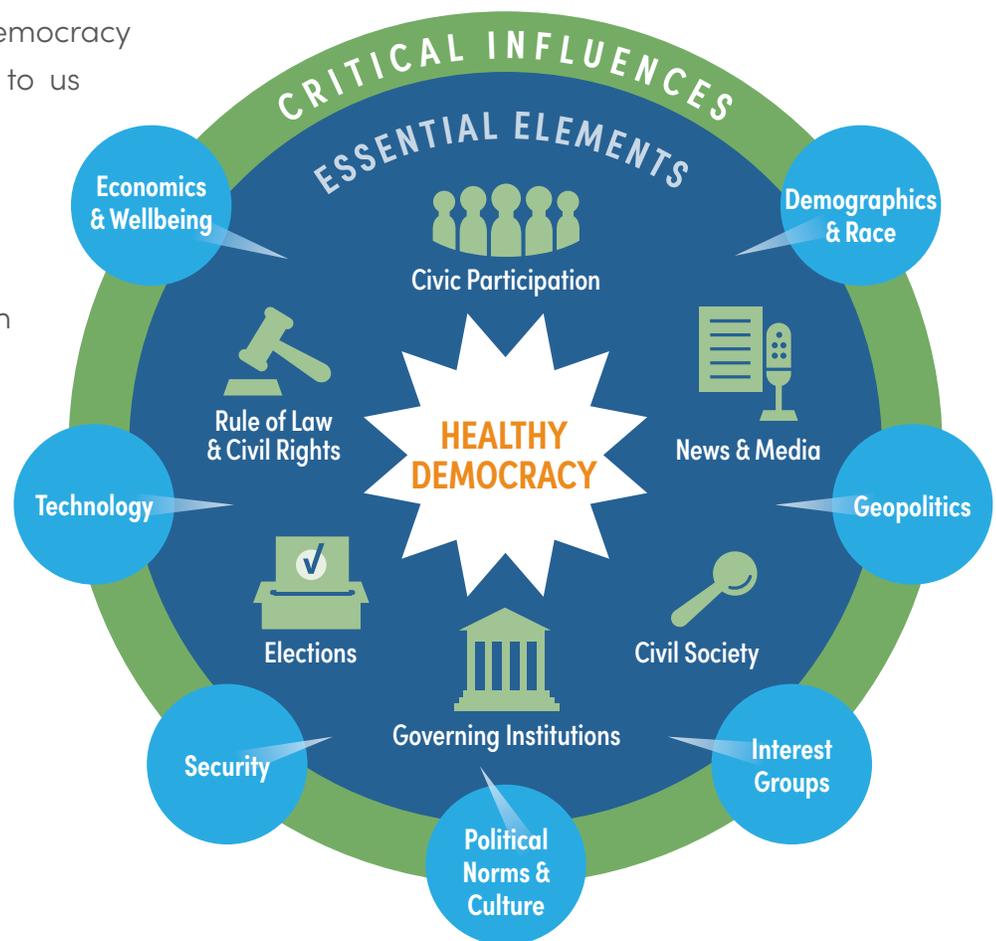


How do we change that opinion?

First and foremost, according to the article *Healthy Democracy Framework*, we must elect leaders who act with integrity, respect facts, and pursue the common good. A healthy democracy must also respect and protect the dignity and equal rights of everyone, make the right to vote paramount, remove structural barriers to equitable participation, expose undue influence, uphold checks and balances of power, enforce the rule of law, encourage independent journalism, and encourage a robust civil society.

The article identifies the elements that comprise a healthy democracy, and critical influences that affect those elements and shape the degree to which any or all of them can function.

Retaining a healthy democracy is attainable. It is up to us to understand how a healthy democracy thrives and to seize the opportunities that will help strengthen and restore our citizens' faith in our democracy.





ACS CEO Lori McClung will be speaking at SXSW EDU March 6–9 in Austin, Texas.

Lori, along with government leaders and early childhood experts, including Jessica Baghian, of Watershed Advisors (former Assistant State Superintendent and Chief Academic Policy Officer for the Louisiana Department of Education); Allie Kimmel, of the Office of the Colorado Governor; and Lisa Roy, of the Colorado Department of Early Childhood, will be leading a panel titled *Leadership: The First Step in Unifying Early Childhood Education Systems*. These four women will explore approaches to early childhood oversight and case studies for success and will discuss what actions should be prioritized after leadership is unified. Visit the [SXSW-EDU 2023 Facebook page](#) for more information, or head over to the [SXSW website](#) for panel schedules or to register to attend!

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

Summer 2022 Newsletter

Advocacy & Communication SOLUTIONS

ACS Today
Connected to the Issues
Summer 2022

You Gotta Fight... For Your Right... TO VOTE!
Some states have recently enacted various new voting laws and restrictions that make it more difficult for people to vote. But voting doesn't have to be stressful. Planning your voting rights can help you feel empowered if something goes wrong on election day or with your voting process. Check out our [July Voting Tip](#) to understand your rights when it comes to casting a ballot in your state.

What's the Logic Behind Logic Models?
Logic models are the sleeping giants of program planning and management. They can be an important part of planning, implementing, and evaluating efforts to move the dial on many of Advocacy & Communication Solutions (ACS) clients' priority issues, including early education, workforce development, and K-12 education. Logic models also can help clearly communicate your program's value to external audiences.

But what is a logic model? According to the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, a logic model is a road map to show how the pieces of your program or effort will come together to make change. Logic models can be especially useful when your program or project is complex and multi-faceted. Developing a logic model is simpler than you may think and doesn't require months of planning. ACS' advice: Create your logic model at the start of your program or project to ensure everyone is on the same page about what you are trying to do and what it will mean for the target audience.

In This Issue:

- Logic Models:**
 - What's the Logic Behind Logic Models?
 - Making Sense of Logic Models
 - Putting Logic Models to Work
 - Your Roadmap to Success: Easy Peasy
 - When Don't Logic Models Help?
- July Voting Tip:**
 - You Gotta Fight... For Your Right... TO VOTE!

Fall 2022 Newsletter

Advocacy & Communication SOLUTIONS

Partnering with non-profits, Political Organizations and Government Agencies

It's General Election Time!

Throughout 2022, Advocacy & Communication Solutions (ACS) has published monthly "voting tips and tricks" to help you gear up for the November General Election. Well, Election Day is almost here! Below we round up the top 5 things you need to do to prepare for November 8.

Know Your Rights

- You have the right to cast your ballot without a limitation or restriction, and federal law prohibits any kind of voter intimidation (e.g. displaying voting lines or blocking polling stations, following voters around for polling place, or threatening or aggressively questioning voters).
- You have the right to vote, even if poll workers cannot find your name.
- If the poll workers cannot find your name in the system, you still have the right to vote by using a provisional ballot. Once Election Day is over, election officials will find out if you are registered to vote and qualified and, if so, you may have your provisional ballot counted.

2022 Voting Tips and Tricks

Remember: Secret Ballot Protection is a Right!

Request: What the Heck is a Secret Ballot?

Make Room for the Right!

Don't Get Intimidated!

Help Friends Get Information!

WANT MORE?

Want to learn how communication, strategy development, advocacy, or capacity building can move your organization forward? Need an expert for training sessions or conference presentations?

Contact one of our team members, call toll free at 1-877-372-0166, or visit our website at advocacyandcommunication.org.

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