



# AMERICAN ASPIRATIONS





**AMERICAN  
ASPIRATIONS**



**DO YOU NEED TO**





**AMERICAN  
ASPIRATIONS**

**DO YOU NEED TO**

**ABOUT YOUR CAUSE?**



**AMERICAN  
ASPIRATIONS**

**DO YOU NEED TO**

**“CHANGE THE NARRATIVE”**

**ABOUT YOUR CAUSE?**

# Visionary Leaders & Organizations

## BUSINESS



Johnson & Johnson



Investing in Employment and Hope

## GOVERNMENT & MULTINATIONAL



Department  
of State



USAID  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

United States Senate

## PHILANTHROPY

BILL & MELINDA GATES foundation



MacArthur  
Foundation

the David & Lucile Packard FOUNDATION

## NGOs & ACADEMIC



HARVARD  
UNIVERSITY

Stanford  
University

Planned  
Parenthood®



# What We'll Discuss Today



# What We'll Discuss Today

Identifying Negative Narratives



# What We'll Discuss Today

Identifying Negative Narratives



# What We'll Discuss Today

Identifying Negative Narratives

Developing New Narratives



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Identifying Negative Narratives

Developing New Narratives



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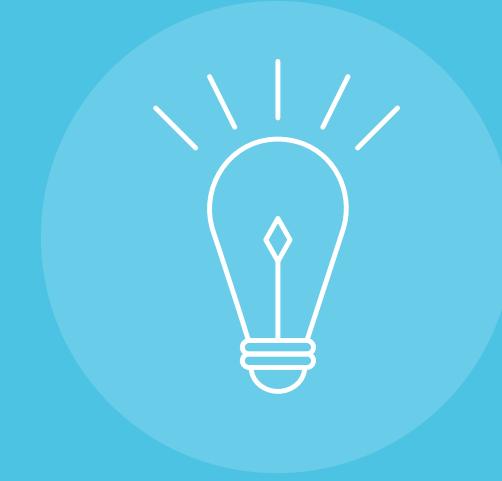
Identifying Negative Narratives

Developing New Narratives

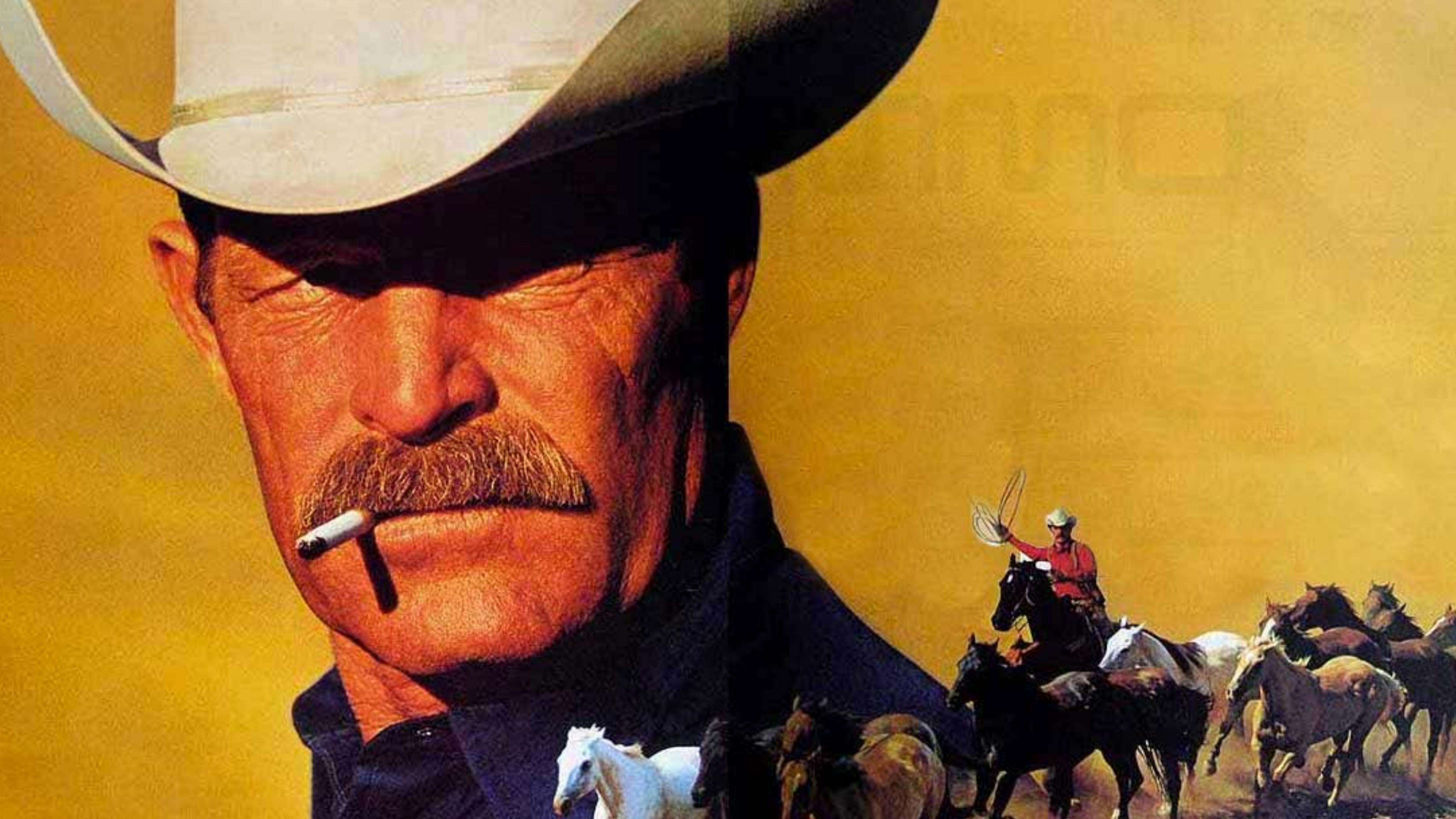
Driving Narrative Change



Pick a topic. Any topic.

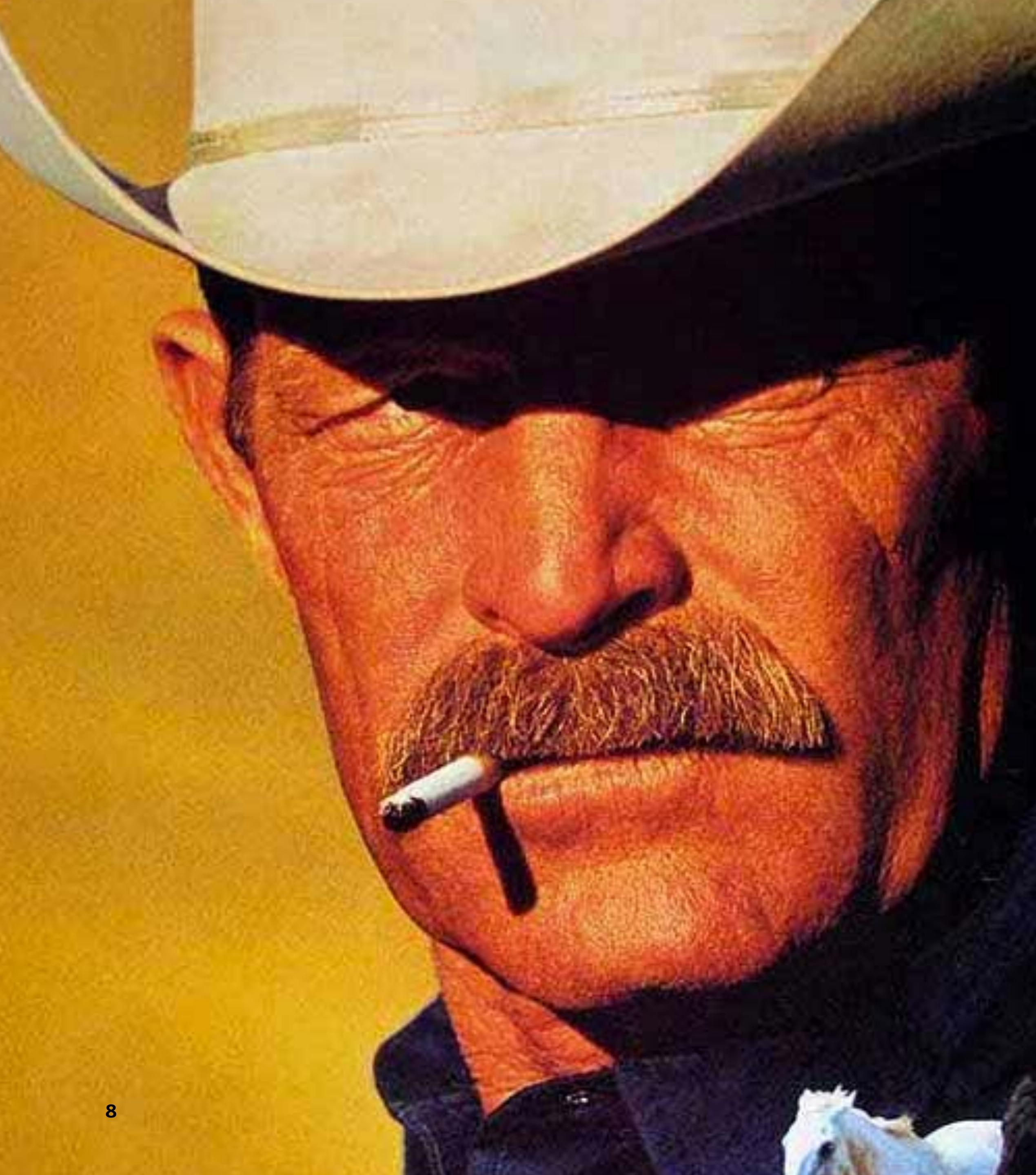


Cultural narratives are ideas about people  
and society that are common in the  
culture and sound like “common sense.”









# 80%

A country where people  
take responsibility for  
themselves



The background of the slide shows a group of people working on a house under construction. Some workers are visible in the foreground, while others are in the background near a white pickup truck. The scene depicts a community effort in a rural or semi-rural setting.

**80%**

A country where people  
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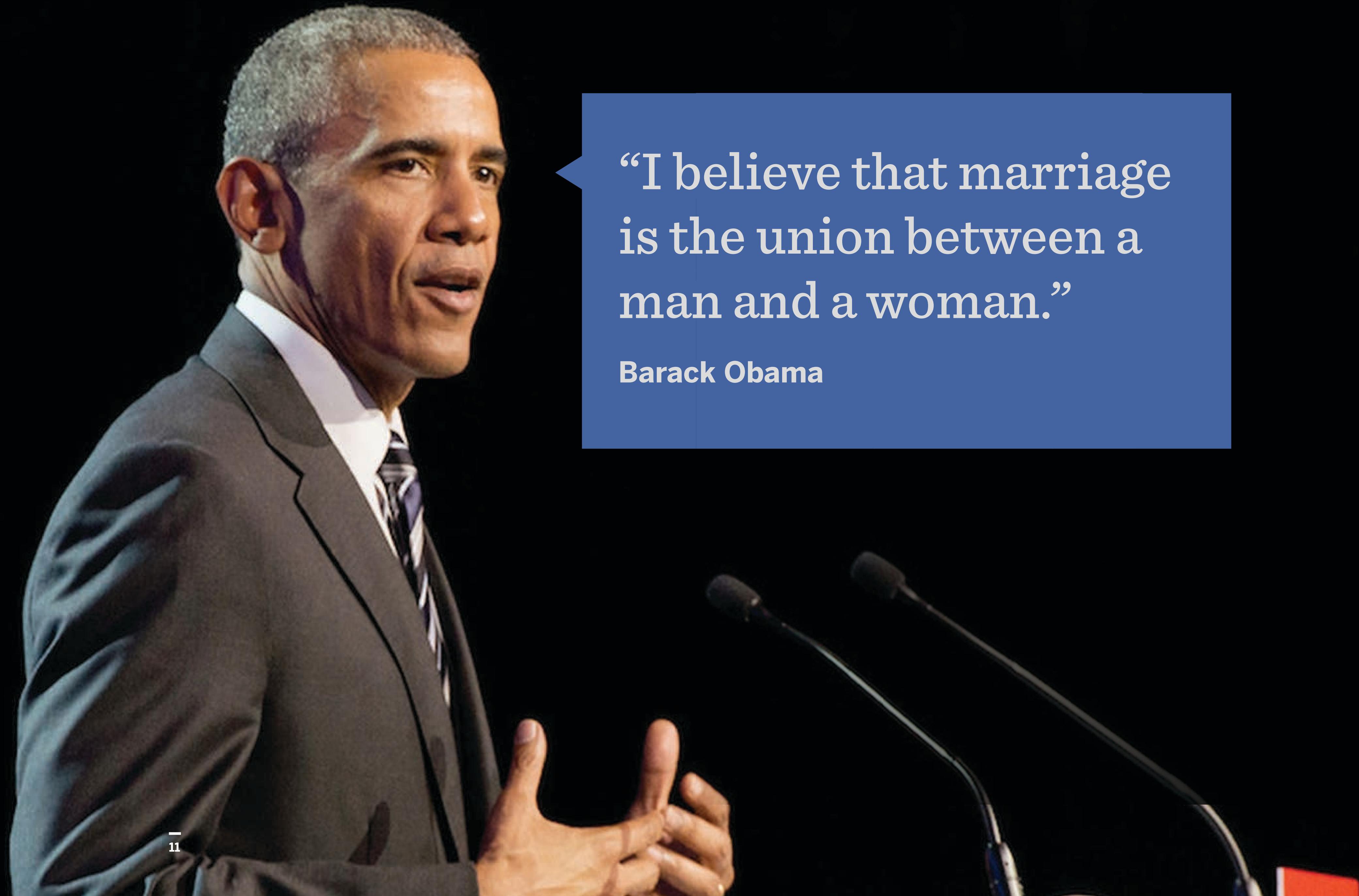
**74%**

A country where  
people look out  
for others

What negative narratives  
do you need to disrupt?



Connect your cause to the aspirations  
and values of your audience



“I believe that marriage  
is the union between a  
man and a woman.”

Barack Obama

## LOVE & COMMITMENT DESERVE PROTECTION

THEY SURVIVED LONG DISTANCE  
DATING. CANCER. AND 16 YES OR  
NO VOTES ABOUT THEIR MARRIAGE.

Like more than 9,000 other married gay couples, Neredya and Christina Valentin-Macias have fought for one another. For better, for worse. In sickness and in health. Because that's what you do. After all the hearings, debates, votes, and more than two years of marriage equality, it's time to say "congratulations" to them. And to everyone in Massachusetts. Learn more at [MassEquality.org](http://MassEquality.org)

MASS EQUALITY  
EDUCATION FUND



*Hattaway Communications, 2005*

**LOVE & COMMITMENT DESERVE PROTECTION**

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MASS EQUALITY  
[MassEquality.org](http://MassEquality.org)

**Frame it first.**



*Hattaway Communications, 2005*

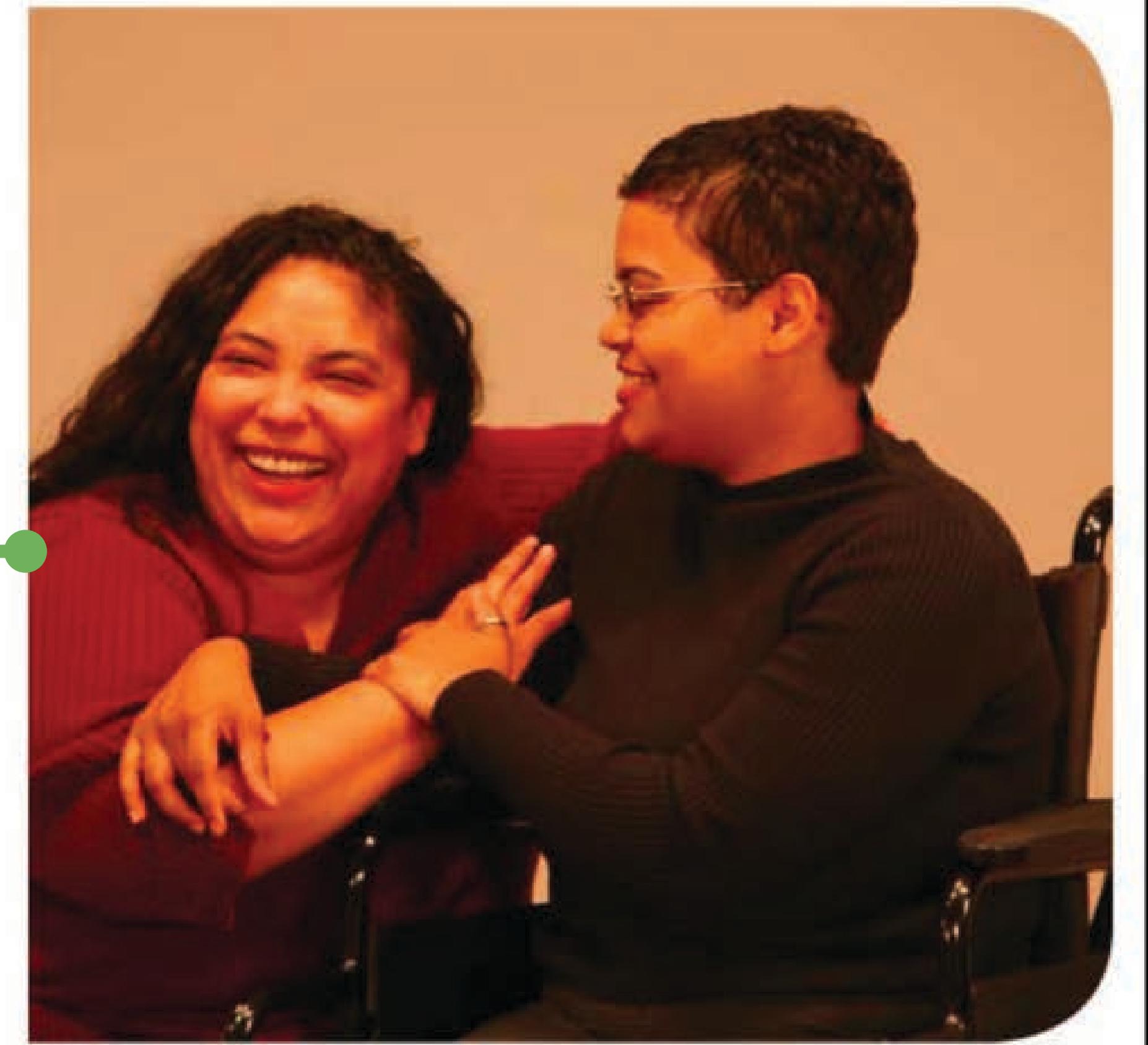
LOVE & COMMITMENT DESERVE PROTECTION

THEY SURVIVED LONG DISTANCE  
DATING, CANCER, AND 16 YES OR  
NO VOTES AROUND THEIR MARRIAGE

## Create Inspiring Images.

Like more than 8,000 other married gay couples, Neddyn and Christopher never imagined they would be among the first to say "I do" in Massachusetts. In sickness and in health. Because that's what you do. After all the hearings, debates, votes, and more than two years of marriage equality, it's time to say "congratulations" to them. And to everyone in Massachusetts. Learn more at MassEquality.org

MASS EQUALITY  
Education Fund



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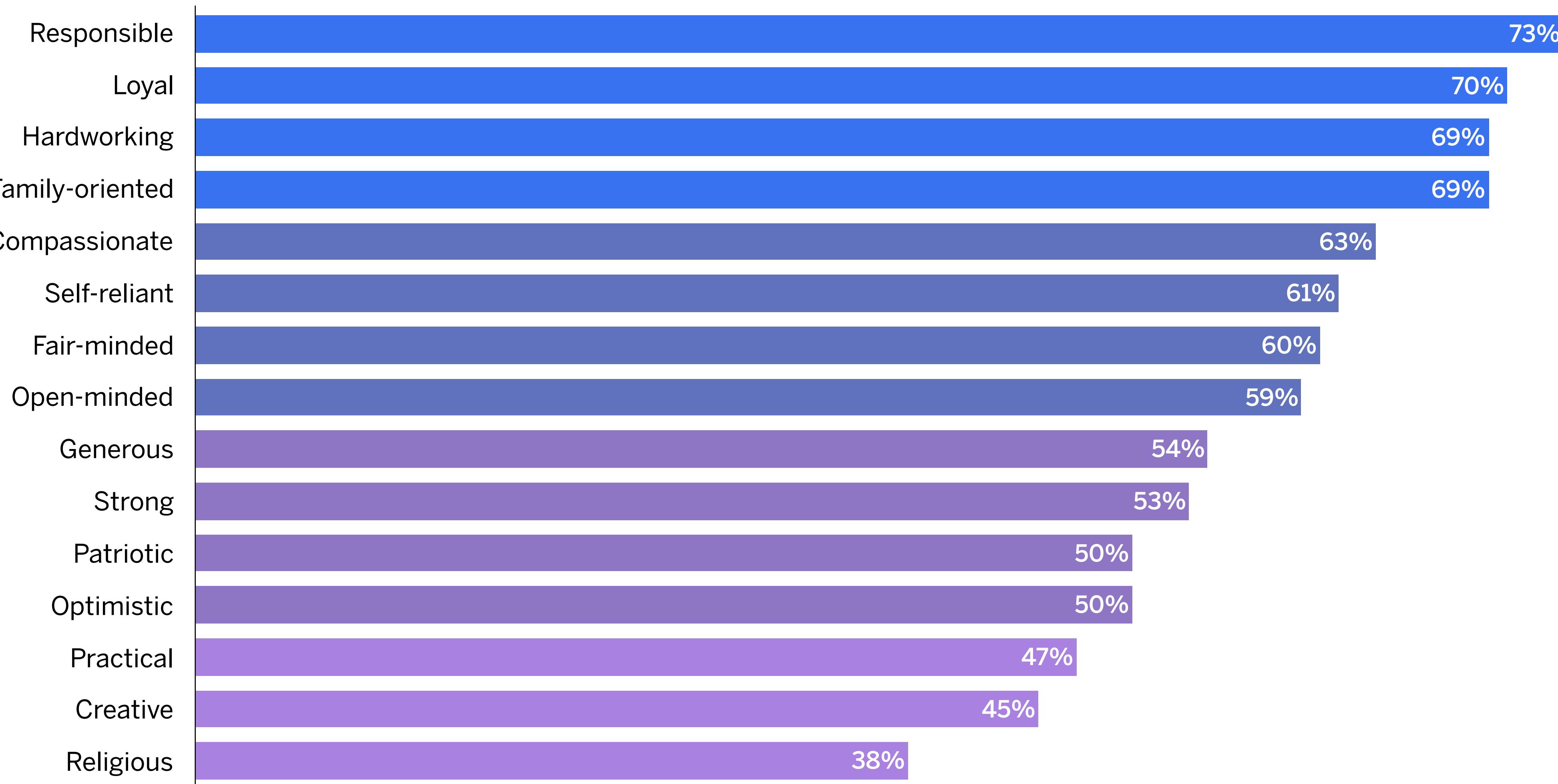
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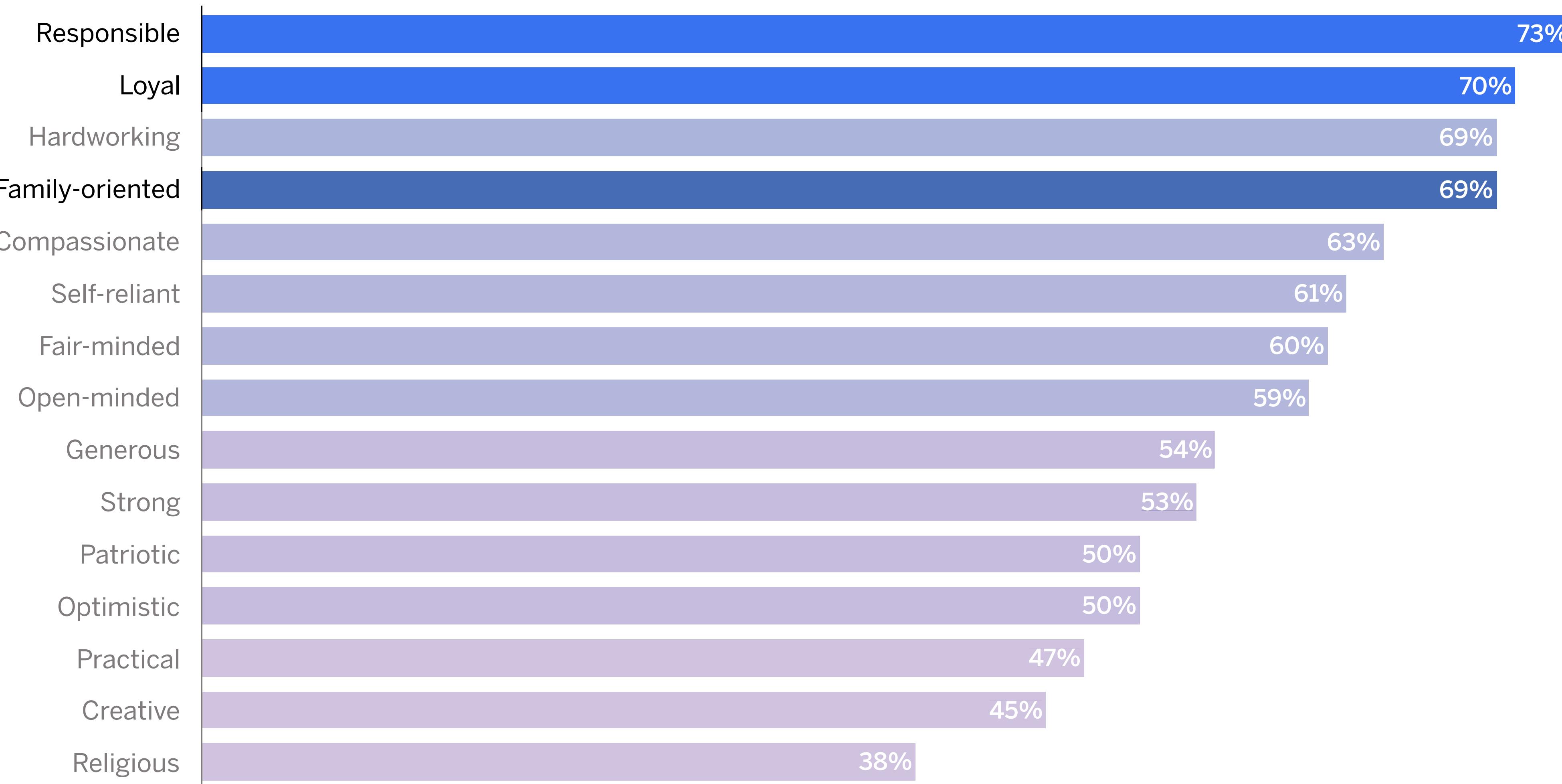


*Hattaway Communications, 2005*

# “How important are each of these personal values?”

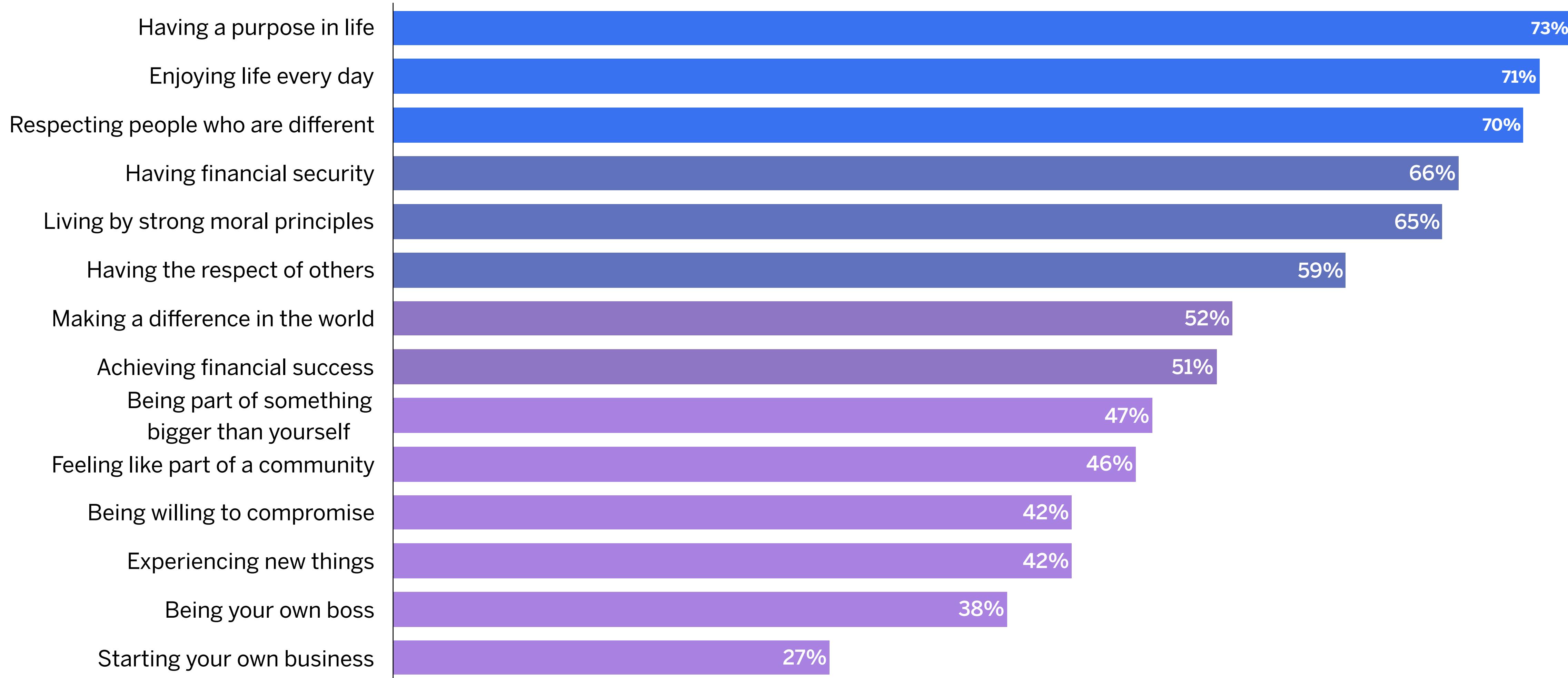


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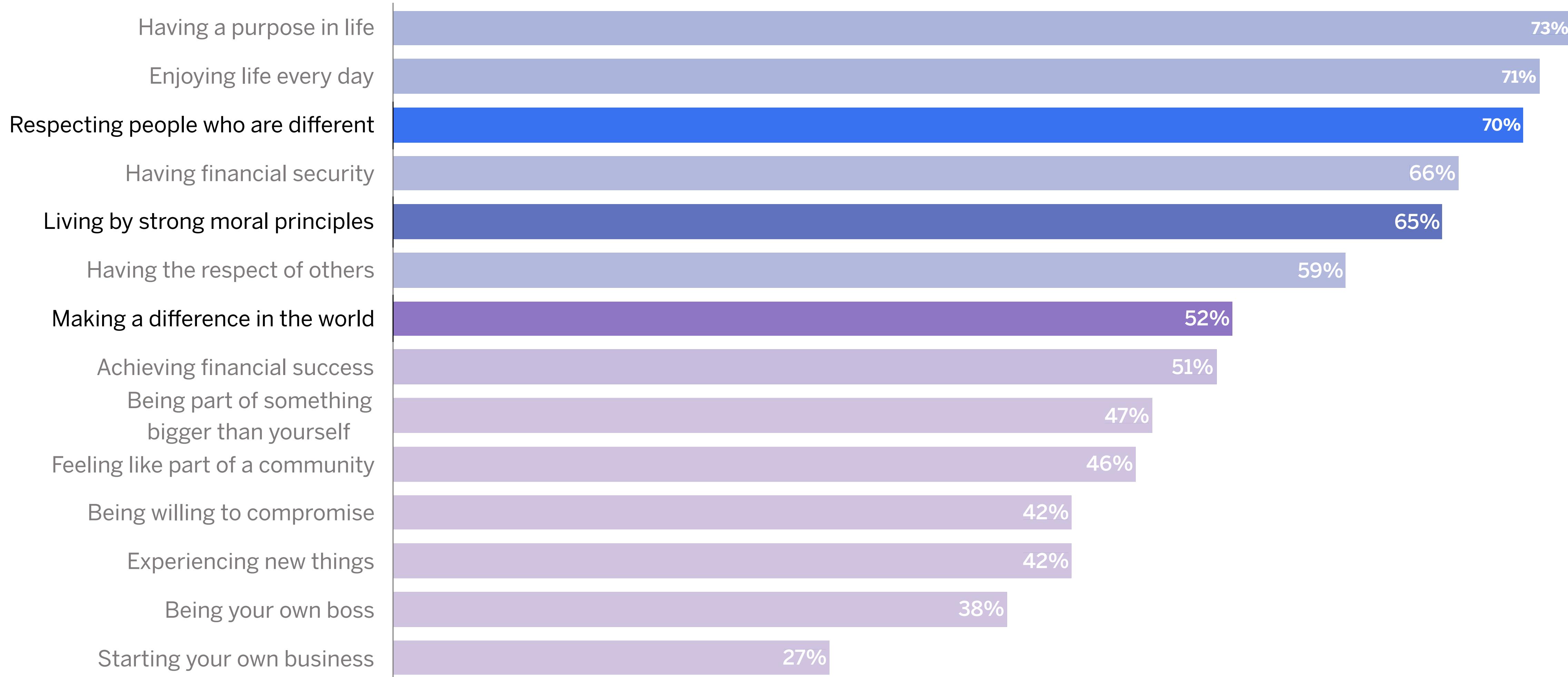


QUESTION

# “How important are each of these personal aspirations?”

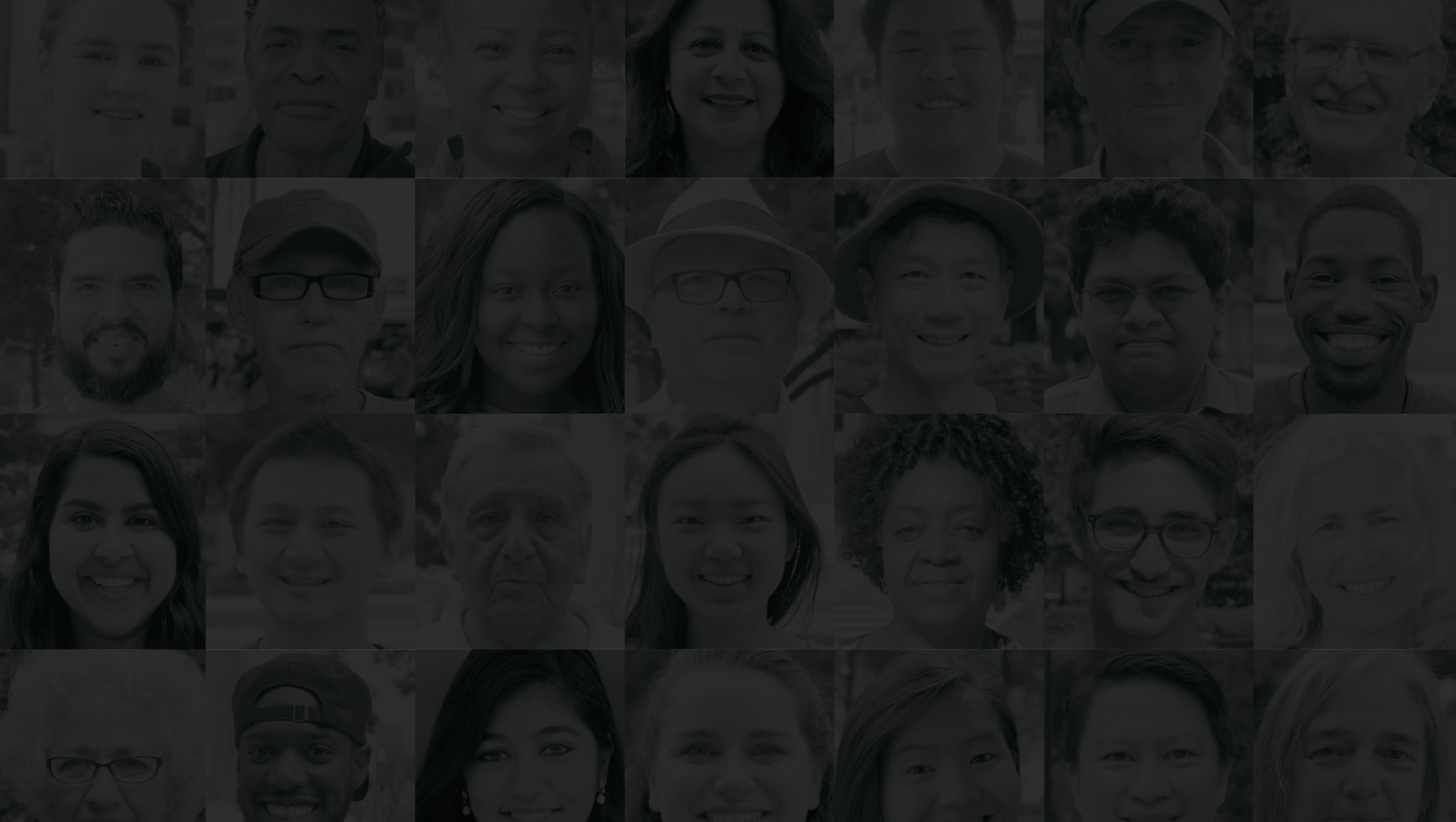


# “How important are each of these personal aspirations?”





Beware of buzzwords!  
Define important words in your own terms.





**FREEDOM**

**EQUALITY**

**RESPECT**

**RESPONSIBILITY**

**OPPORTUNITY**

**CONTRIBUTION**

**COOPERATION**

**INCLUSION**

**OPTIMISM**

A black and white photograph of four people in a park. A woman in the foreground is bending over, holding a plastic bag and a piece of trash. Behind her, another woman is also bending over, and further back, two more people are visible, one holding a flag. They are all wearing shirts with a circular logo featuring a tree. The scene is set in a grassy area with trees in the background.

# RESPONSIBILITY





*“Being in business doesn’t mean you have to be nice to people or actually care for the betterment of everybody.”*

Latino man, 28, Tampa  
Somewhat liberal Democrat



*“Being in business doesn’t mean you have to be nice to people or actually care for the betterment of everybody.”*

Latino man, 28, Tampa  
Somewhat liberal Democrat



*“Do they have to help the homeless or help improve roads? That’s not what a business is all about.”*

White man, 53, Portland  
Somewhat conservative Republican



## DOMINANT NARRATIVE

The only responsibility  
of business is to  
maximize profits and  
shareholder returns.

## DOMINANT NARRATIVE

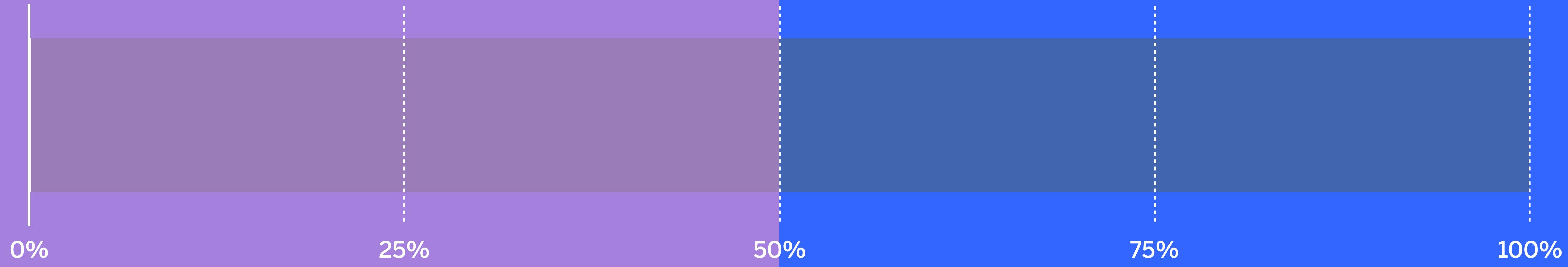
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## NEW NARRATIVE

Businesses have responsibilities to their employees, customers and communities—not just their bottom line.

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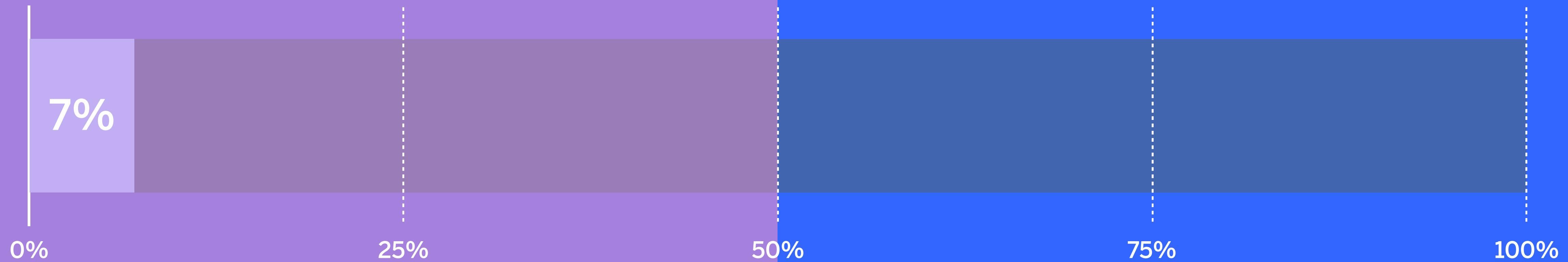


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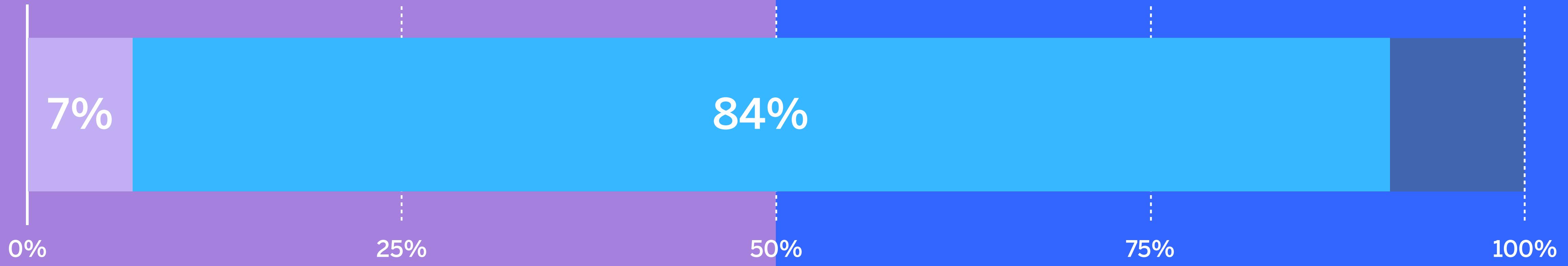


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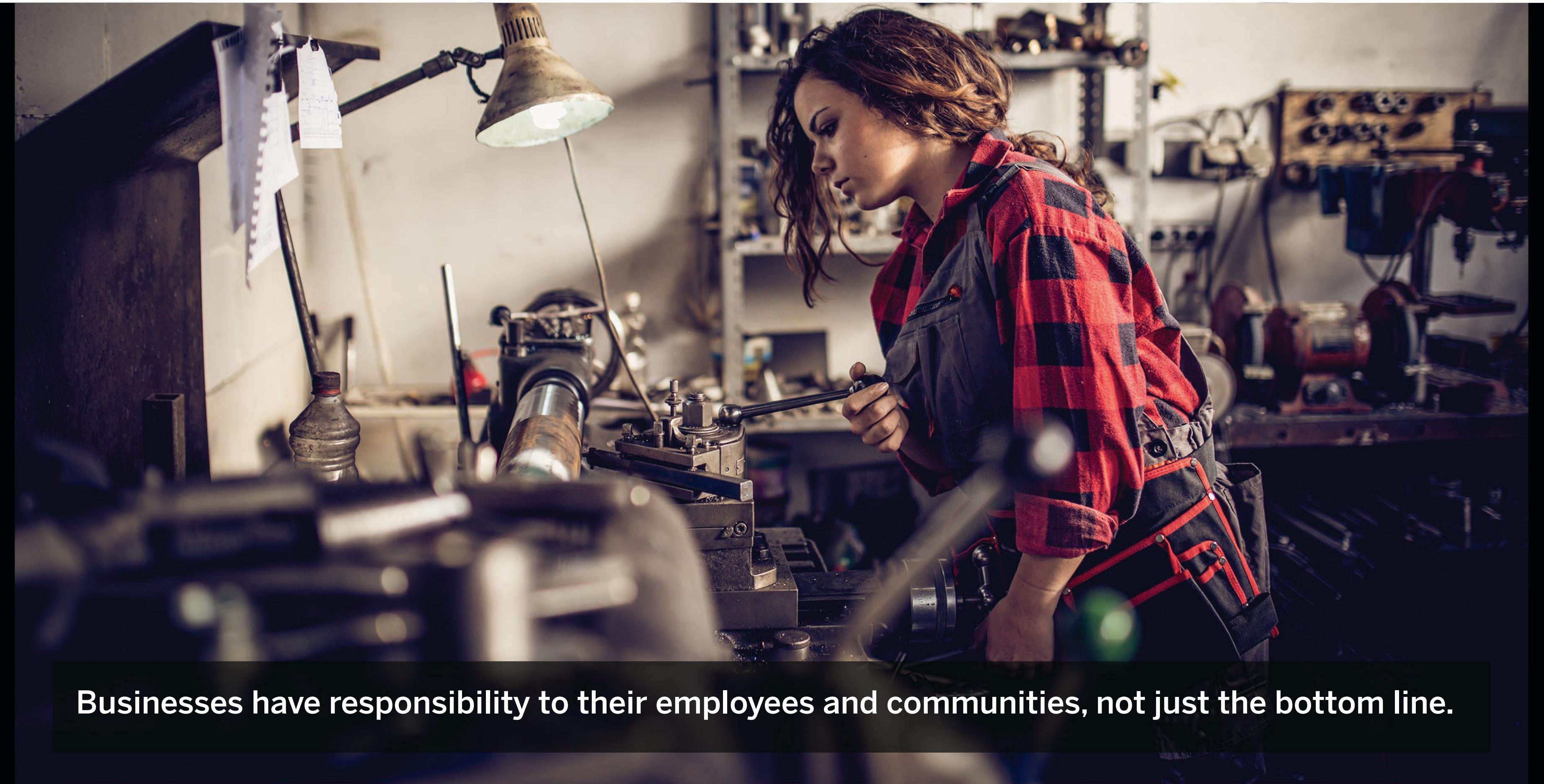
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## NEW NARRATIVE

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YouTube Search



Businesses have responsibility to their employees and communities, not just the bottom line.

**TAKE ACTION MN**

**TakeAction Minnesota**  
Published on Dec 20, 2017

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American Aspirations  
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He's a responsible businessman.  
He pays his workers a living wage.



The Washington Post

Business

Marlin Steel's smart matrix for job and wage growth

They do well, we do well; we do well, they do well. That's the deal."

3:53 PM - 23 Jan 2018

2 Likes

Jessica English @jess4justicenow · Jan 20  
Kathryn sharing her experience of going to the State Capitol with an agenda  
#WorthFightingFor as a member of @TakeActionMN She's leading with a

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She works hard and still can't make ends meet. Does her employer have a responsibility to pay her a living wage?



\$240 EVERY TWO WEEKS  
\$6,240 PER YEAR

CNNMoney

3:53 PM - 23 Jan 2018

2 Likes

Jessica English @jess4justicenow · Jan 20  
Kathryn sharing her experience of going to the State Capitol with an agenda #WorthFightingFor as a member of @TakeActionMN She's leading with a

Join the movement  
for living wages.  
**Together we can  
make a difference!**



A Facebook post from TakeAction Minnesota. The post features a large text message encouraging businesses to pay living wages. It includes a link to their website for more information. Below the post are standard social media interaction buttons for Like, Comment, Share, and a dropdown menu. Engagement metrics show 69 likes, 68 shares, and 4 comments. A comment from Stephanie Gasca is visible, expressing gratitude. A text input field for writing a comment is at the bottom, along with several emoji icons.

TakeAction Minnesota

Like This Page · June 28, 2017 ·

All businesses have a responsibility to pay living wages, so everyone can provide for their families. Join the movement here:

[www.takeactionminnesota.org/  
blog/post/living-wage/](http://www.takeactionminnesota.org/blog/post/living-wage/)

---

Like Comment Share

69 Top Comments ▾

68 Shares 4 Comments

**Stephanie Gasca** Thank you! I look

Write a comment...

# Framing Tool

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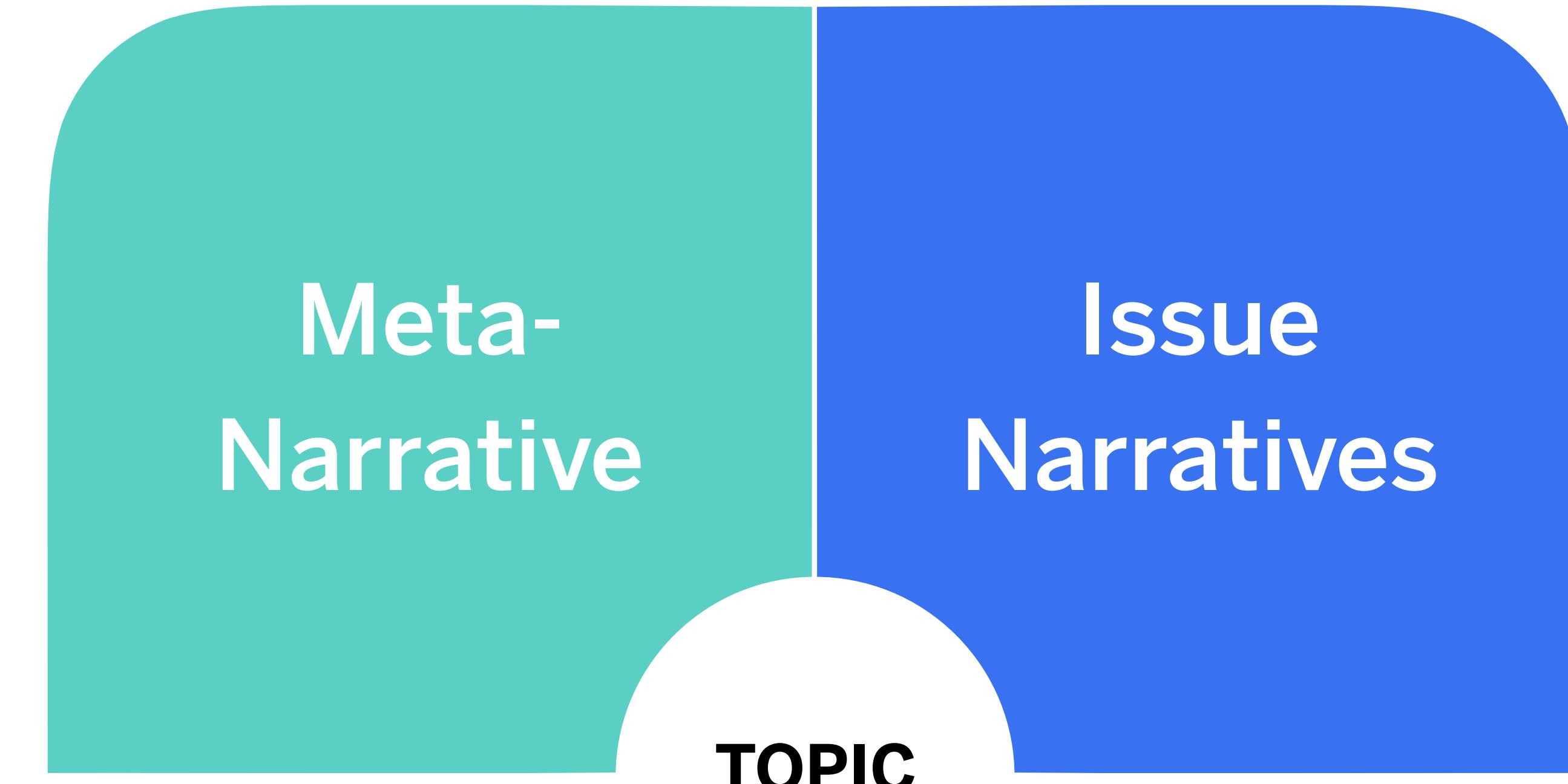
TOPIC

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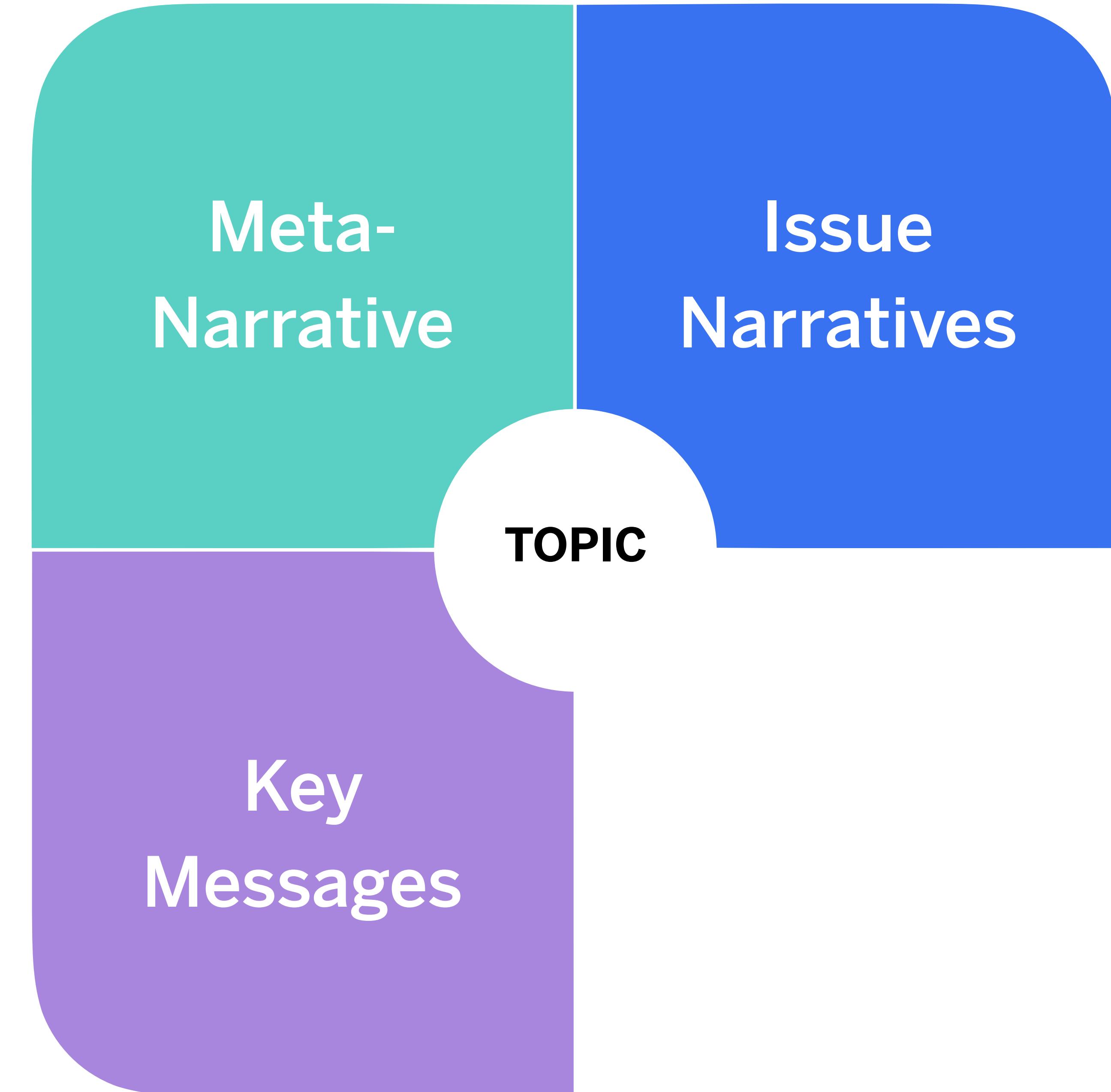
Meta-  
Narrative

TOPIC

# Framing Tool



# Framing Tool



# Framing Tool





## **Living Wage**

## Meta-Narrative

---

**Businesses have responsibilities to their employees and communities, not just the bottom line.**

**Living Wage**

## Meta-Narrative

**Businesses have responsibilities to their employees and communities, not just the bottom line.**

## Issue Narratives

**All businesses have a responsibility to pay living wages.**

**Living Wage**

## Meta-Narrative

**Businesses have responsibilities to their employees and communities, not just the bottom line.**

## Issue Narratives

**All businesses have a responsibility to pay living wages.**

## Living Wage

## Key Messages

**Paying good wages drives economic growth in our communities.**

## Meta-Narrative

Businesses have responsibilities to their employees and communities, not just the bottom line.

## Issue Narratives

All businesses have a responsibility to pay living wages.

## Living Wage

### Key Messages

Paying good wages drives economic growth in our communities.

### Strategic Stories

Jane Doe is a responsible business leader. She pays her employees living wages.

## EQUITY

Opportunity is not equal in America, even for people who work hard. Many people still face barriers because of their race, gender or where they were born.

It takes more than our individual hard work to succeed. We all need tools like education, health care and a job that pays enough.

Government has a responsibility to make sure the economy works for everyone—not just wealthy and powerful corporations.

Government doesn't invest enough in public schools, health care and other essentials that benefit all of us.

Our government should spend less money on prisons and more on schools and job training, so more people can get good jobs.

Everyone has equal opportunity in America, if they work hard.

32%

If you're willing to work

34%

Government should cut taxes to drive economic growth

21%

Government spends too much on Social Security, and puts too little into other essentials

10%

Closing prisons will put more people in jail

26%

Opportunity is not equal in America, even for people who work hard. Many people still face barriers because of their race, gender or where they were born.

32%

## CONTRIBUTION

America would be better off if all of us did our part for the good of our communities and country.

America would be better off if everyone just took responsibility for themselves.

25%

17%

58%

Taxes are our contributions to our communities and country—to build our roads, educate our kids and keep our country safe.

Taxes are a burden on our families and businesses.

16%

19%

64%

Corporations should pay their fair share of taxes to support schools, roads, airports and other things that make our economy work.

Corporations should be taxed less. Otherwise, they will raise prices on consumers and ship jobs overseas.

12%

18%

70%

Businesses have responsibilities to their employees, customers and communities—not just their bottom line.

The only responsibility of businesses is to maximize profits and shareholder returns.

6%

16%

78%

As Americans, we can change the system—just like Americans won better wages, safer workplaces and civil rights in the past.

The system is broken in America. We should throw it out and start over.

10%

22%

68%

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## DOMINANT NARRATIVE

America's diversity has its  
upsides and downsides.

Too many different groups in  
the same place creates  
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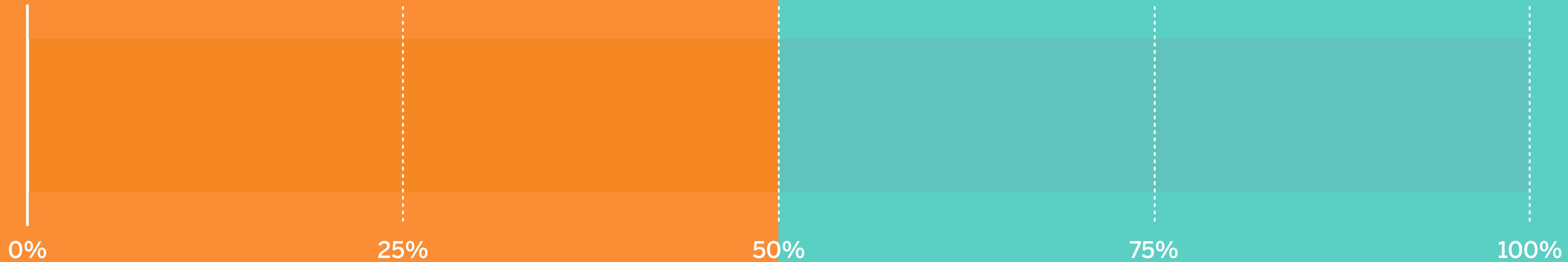
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When Americans respect one another and work together, it makes our country stronger.

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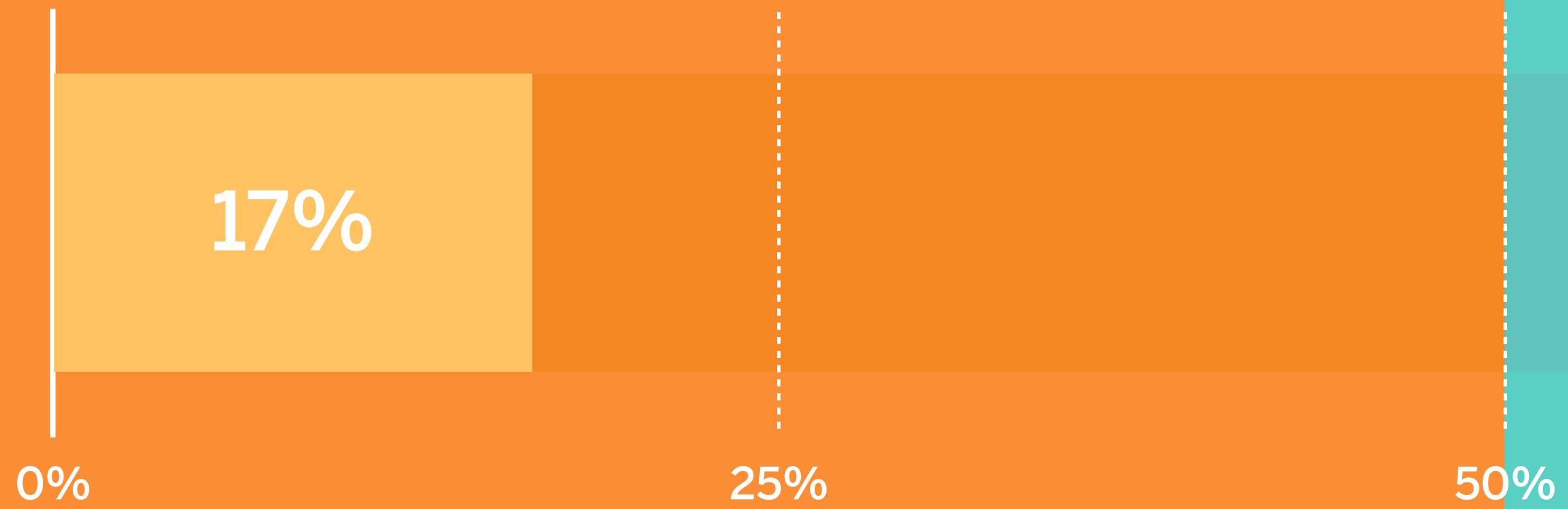
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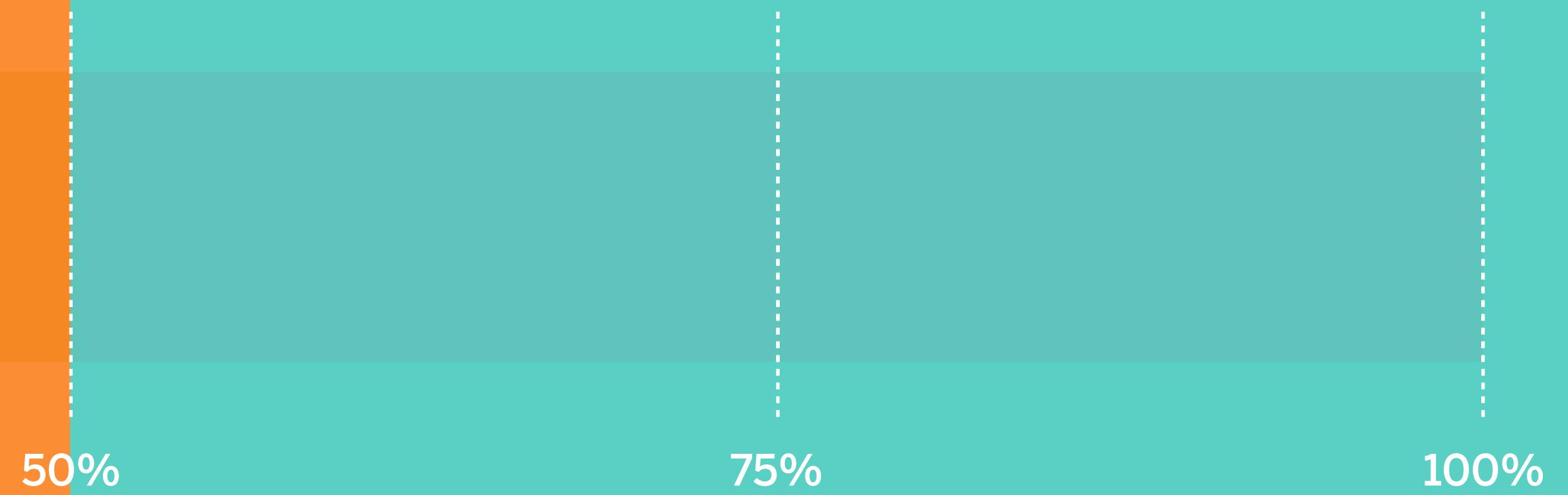
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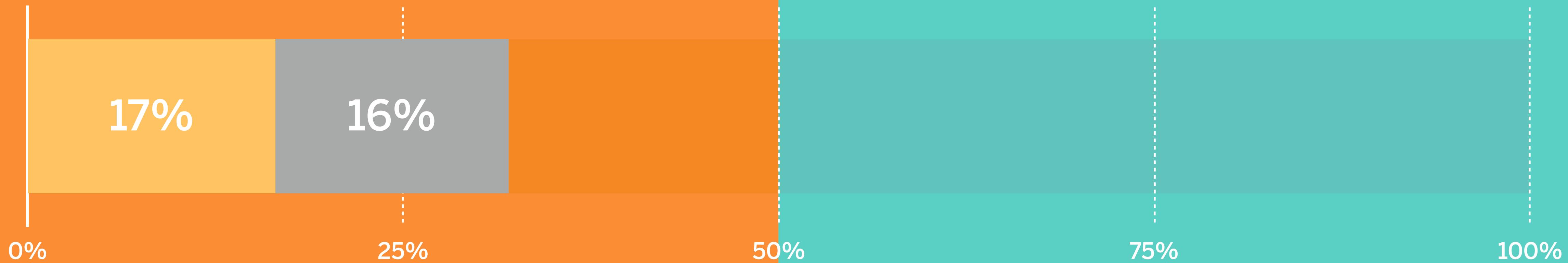
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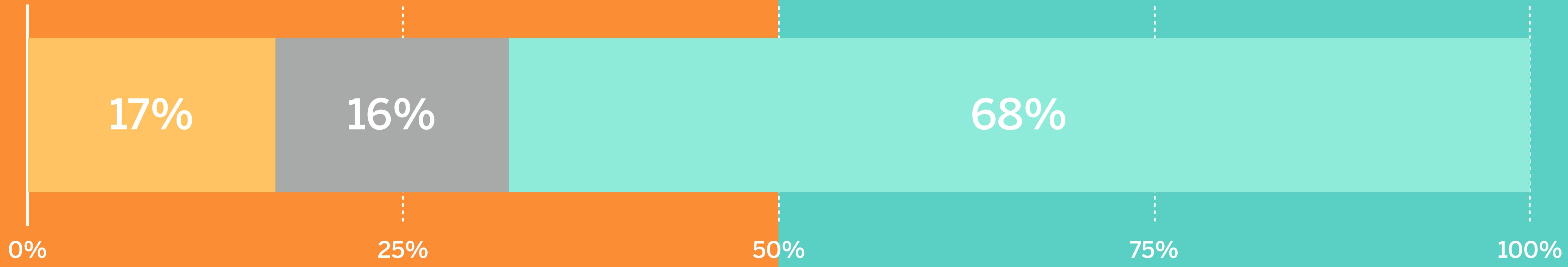
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**Meta-Narrative**

**Issue Narratives**

**Key Messages**

**Strategic Stories**

## **Meta-Narrative**

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work together, it makes our country stronger.

## **Issue Narratives**

## **Key Messages**

## **Strategic Stories**

## Meta-Narrative

America's diversity is our unique strength.  
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## Issue Narratives

To succeed in our diverse society, you must  
know how to work with people who have  
different backgrounds, life experiences and  
perspectives. That's why colleges work to  
create diverse campus communities and  
educational experiences.

## Key Messages

## Strategic Stories

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## Issue Narratives

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## Key Messages

Colleges need to have the freedom and flexibility to continue providing the diverse educational experiences that all students need to succeed in the workplace and the world.

## Strategic Stories

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## Strategic Stories





## DOMINANT NARRATIVE

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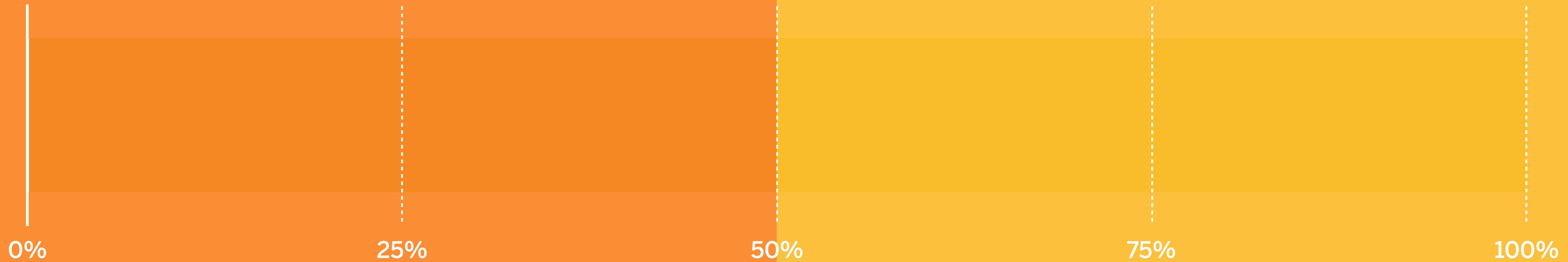
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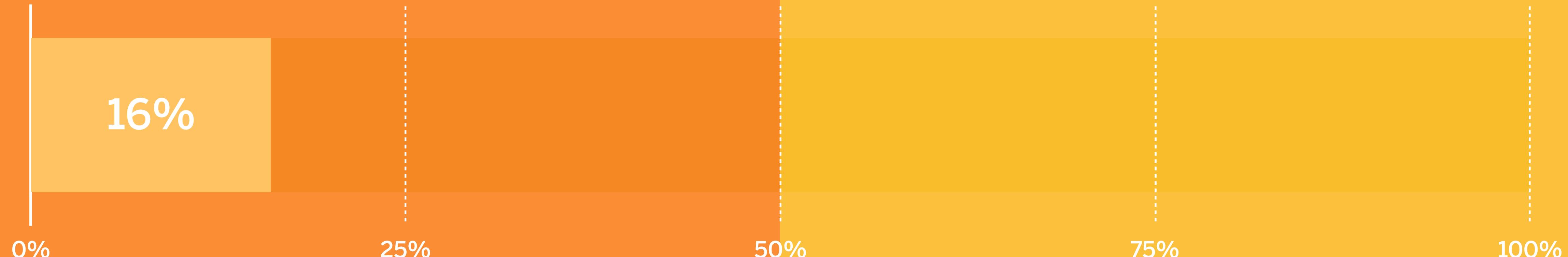
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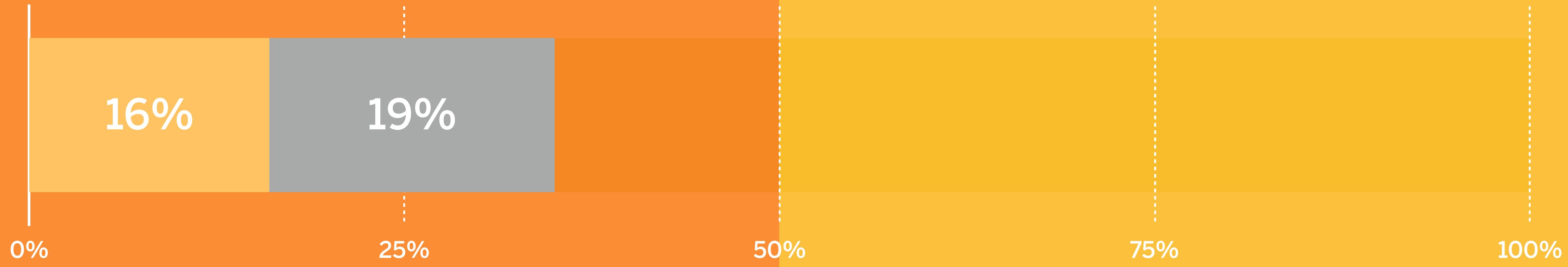


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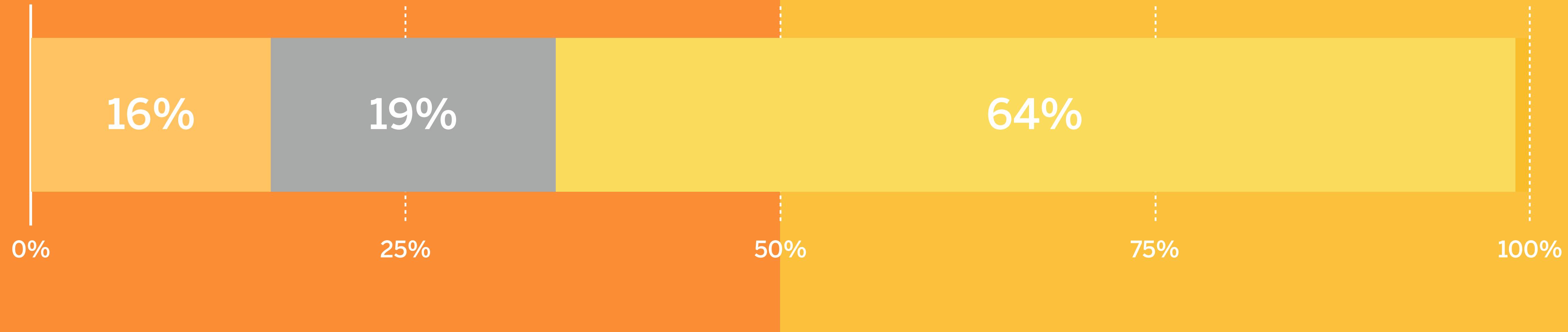


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**Meta-Narrative**

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**Key Messages**

**Strategic Stories**

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Too often, powerful special interests get special tax breaks. We should close loopholes that let them get away without paying their fair share.

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## Strategic Stories

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## Key Messages

Our government should invest more in public schools, not tax breaks for the wealthy.

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## Strategic Stories



# Workbook



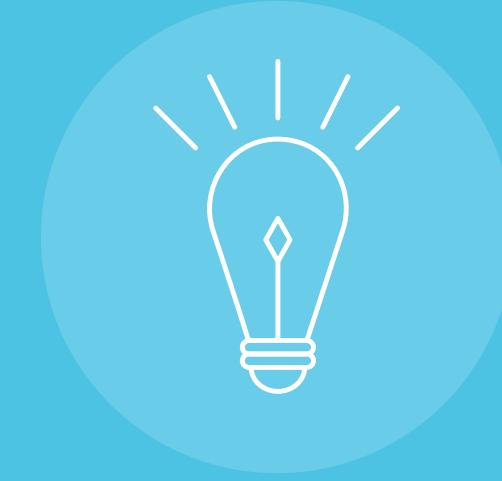


Learn more at



Learn more at

AmericanAspirations.com



It takes more than a message to drive  
narrative change.



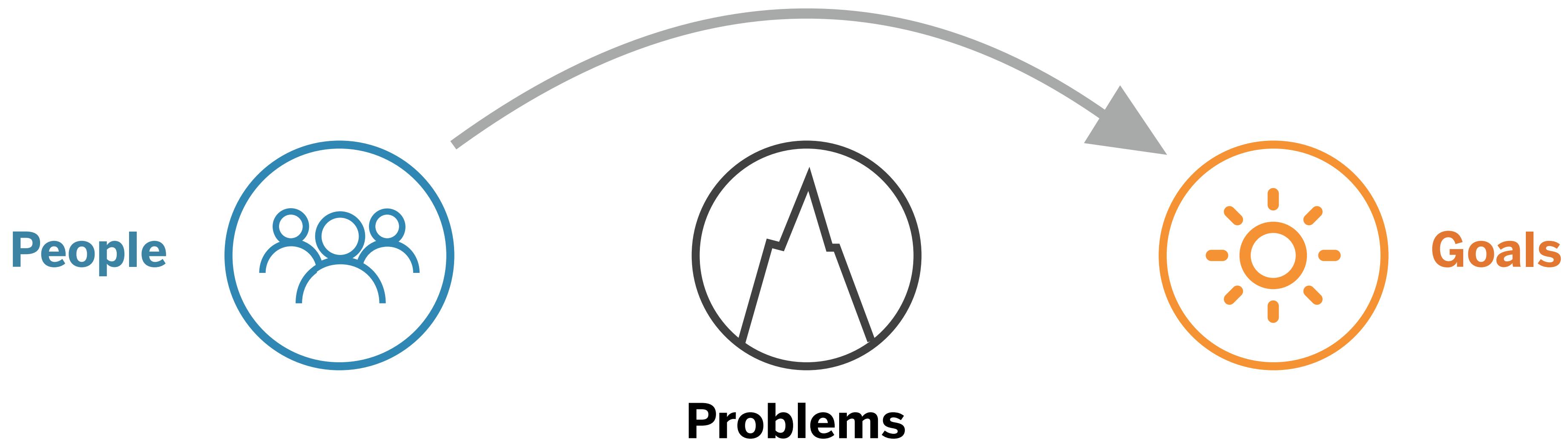
**People**

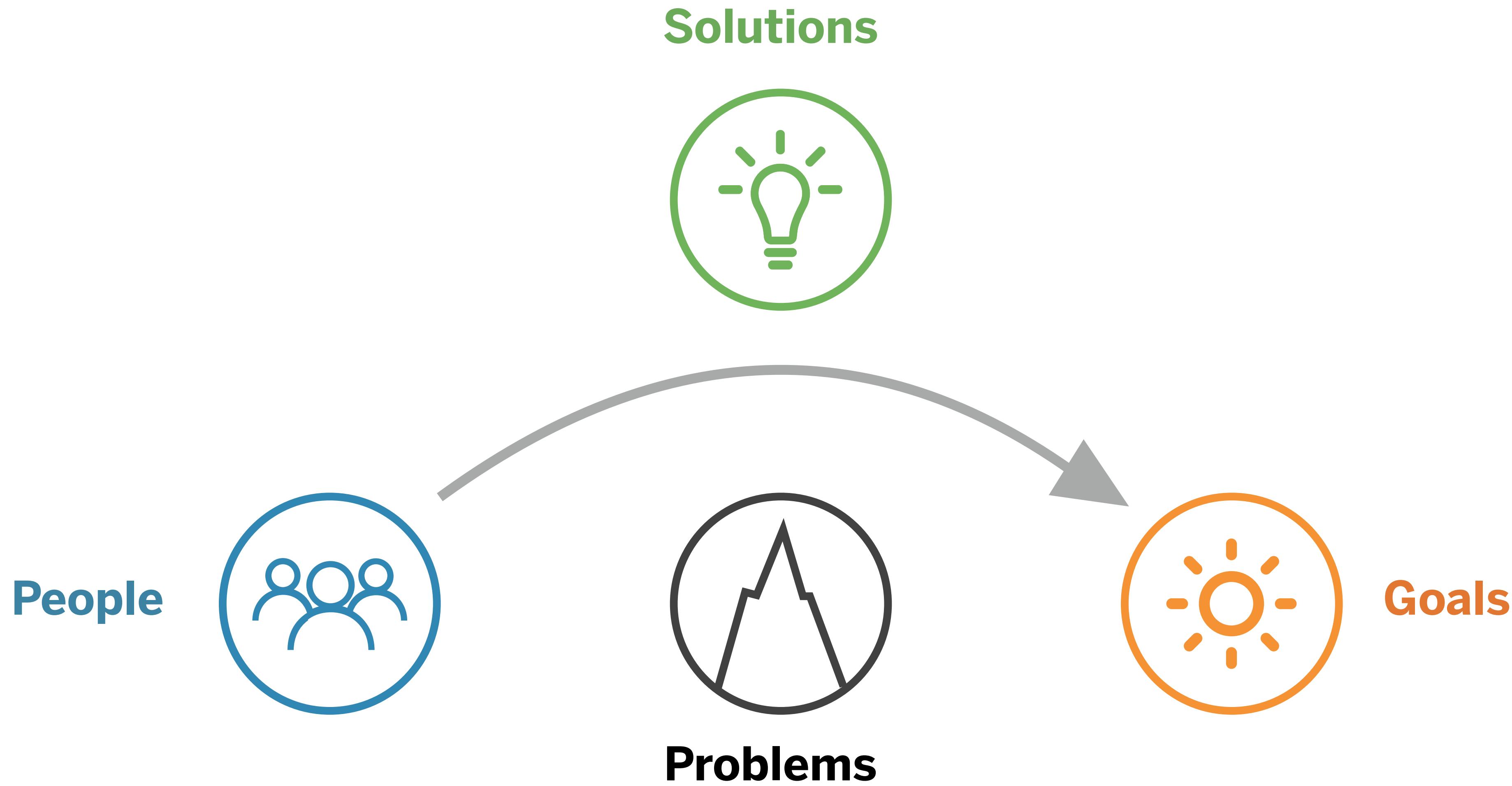


**People**









# Negative Narrative: Welfare

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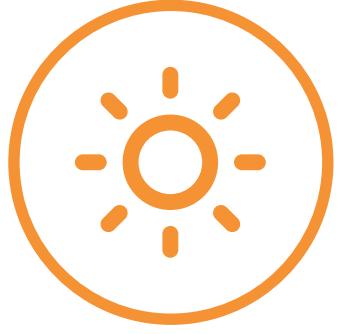


**Lazy people who don't want to work**

# Negative Narrative: Welfare



**Lazy people who don't want to work**

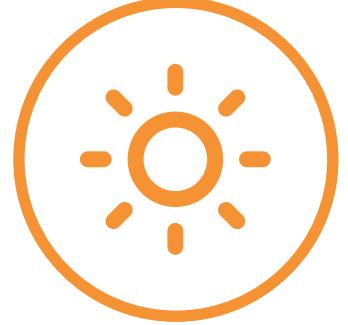


**Get something for nothing**

# Negative Narrative: Welfare



**Lazy people who don't want to work**



**Get something for nothing**

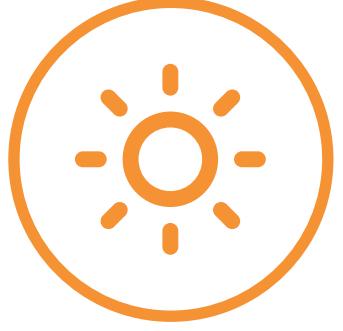


**Lack of initiative and work ethic**

# Negative Narrative: Welfare



**Lazy people who don't want to work**



**Get something for nothing**



**Lack of initiative and work ethic**



**Welfare handouts from government**

# Positive Narrative: Tools for Fighting Poverty

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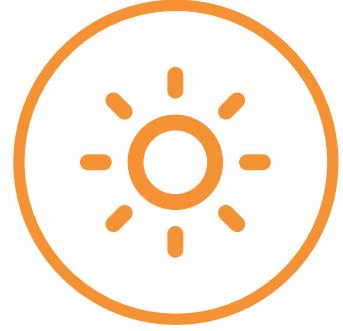


**Families working hard to get ahead**

# Positive Narrative: Tools for Fighting Poverty



**Families working hard to get ahead**

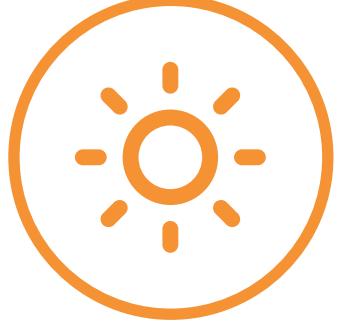


**Financial security: job, home, education, retirement**

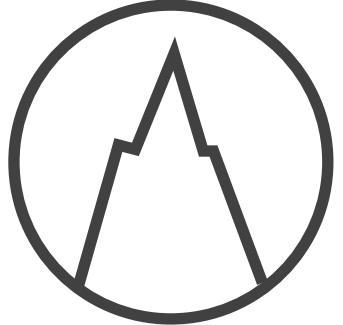
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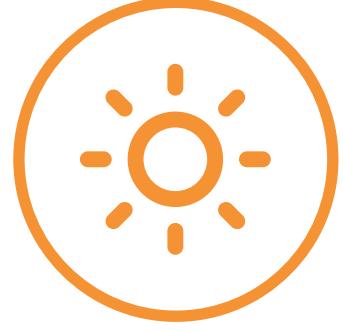


**Many children don't get an equal start in life**

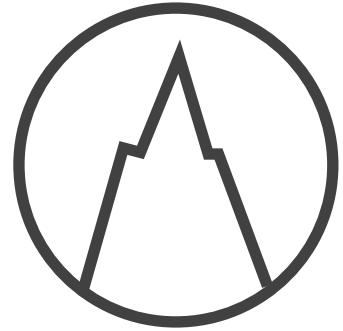
# Positive Narrative: Tools for Fighting Poverty



**Families working hard to get ahead**



**Financial security: job, home, education, retirement**



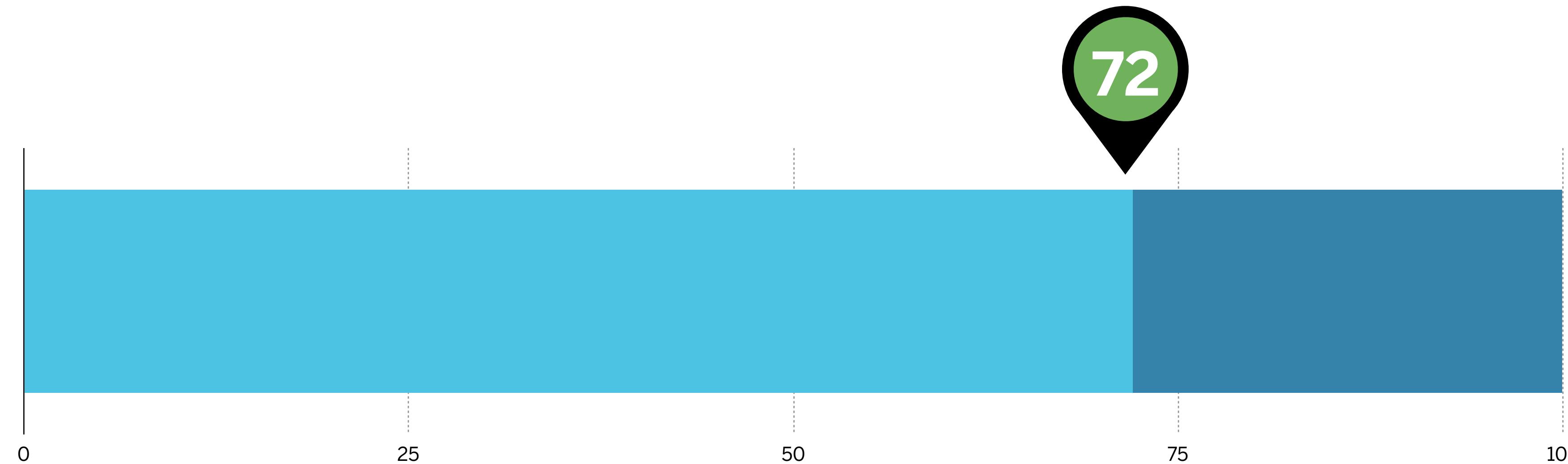
**Many children don't get an equal start in life**



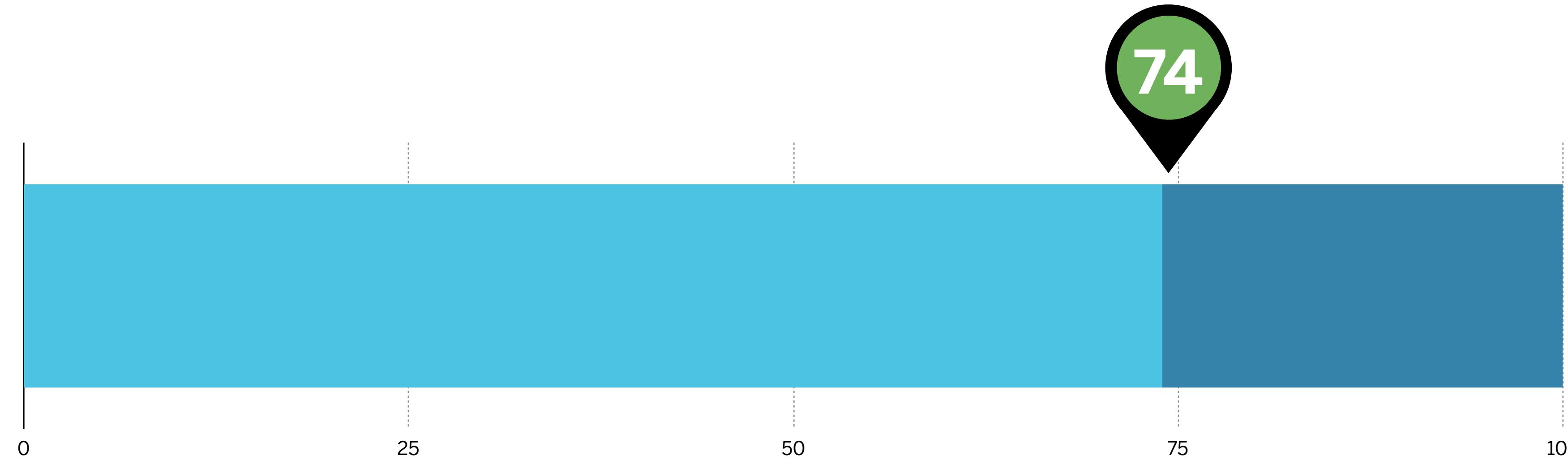
**Proven tools that help everyone save and invest for the future**

A lot of kids **don't get an equal start in life**, because their families struggle just to make ends meet. Government should offer **hard-working families** proven **tools** to help parents become more **financially secure** and save to send their kids to **college**, so that their children have an **opportunity** to become successful, **independent** adults.

A lot of kids **don't get an equal start in life**, because their families struggle just to make ends meet. Government should offer **hard-working families** proven **tools** to help parents become more **financially secure** and save to send their kids to **college**, so that their children have an **opportunity** to become successful, **independent** adults.



Middle-class Americans are the **engine of our economy**. To **get the economy moving** again, it makes sense for government to offer proven tools that help people save to buy a home and start a business, so that more people can **enter the middle class** and **achieve financial security**.



**THE ROAD  
TO YES**

How to Build Public Support for  
Government Action to Help People  
Achieve Financial Security

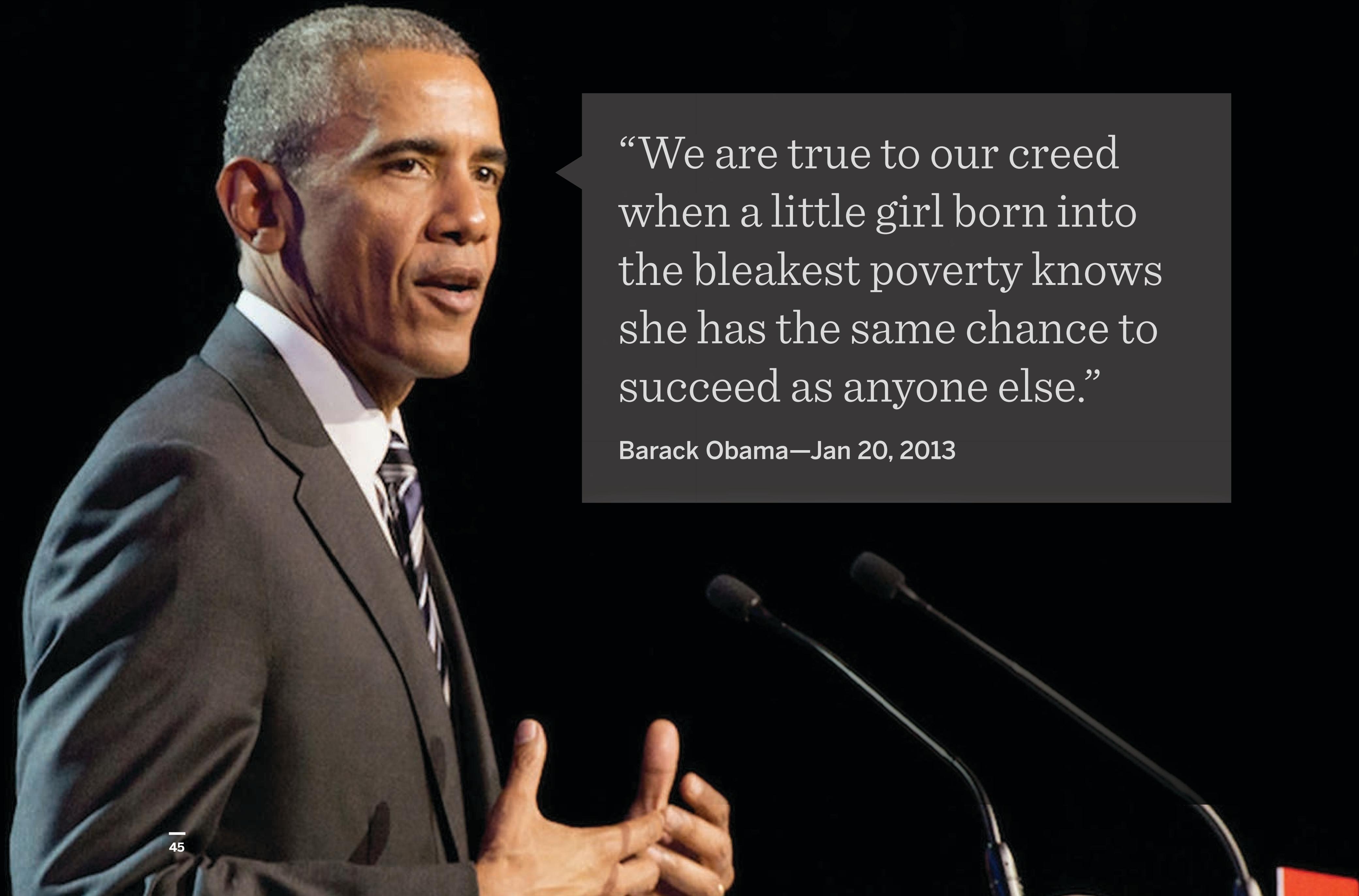
Would you favor or oppose  
government implementing  
policies that help American  
families build savings and other  
financial resources in order to  
achieve financial security?

**TOTAL  
FAVOR:  
64%**

**TOTAL  
OPPOSE:  
33%**

HATTAWAY  
COMMUNICATIONS

FORDFOUNDATION



“We are true to our creed  
when a little girl born into  
the bleakest poverty knows  
she has the same chance to  
succeed as anyone else.”

Barack Obama—Jan 20, 2013



# The New York Times

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## In Address, President Will Focus on the Middle Class

“Mr. Obama will insist that only ‘a thriving middle class’ can stimulate long-term growth and that Americans must be given the **tools** to succeed...”

FEBRUARY 9, 2013



**"I am trying to apply  
the lessons and tips  
from the presentation  
to all of the materials  
I touch."**

*-Deputy Chief of Staff for Budget and Policy, HUD*





## ACF awards \$12.5 million to help **hard-working families** save money

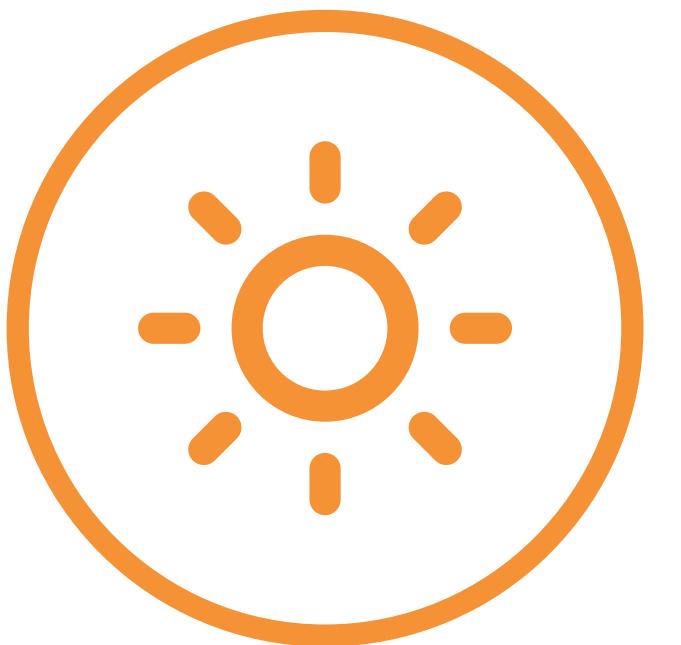
### Matched savings program creates path to **financial independence**

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Americans **working** to achieve **financial security** will get much-needed assistance through Assets for Independence (AFI), a program funded by HHS' Administration for Children and Families' Office of Community Services.

ACF will award 45 grants totaling \$12.6 million to community-based organizations that have designed programs to complement the efforts of individuals and families who have **taken the initiative** to save money.

"These organizations found innovative approaches to help **families trying to work their way into the middle class**," said Acting Assistant Secretary for the Administration for Children and Families Mark Greenberg. "Assets for Independence grantees demonstrate that the American dream — owning a **home**, continuing one's **education** or starting **a small business** — can still be a reality for some of our nation's **hardest-working individuals and families**..."



## Goals

Tangible benefits  
of financial  
security  
mentioned



## People

People portrayed  
as striving



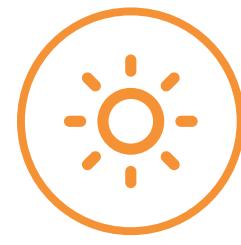
## Problem

Lack of opportunity  
highlighted



## Solution

Proven tools  
shown to  
empower people



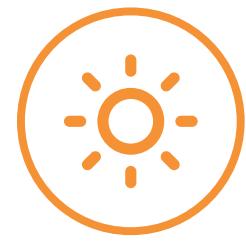
Help people become financially secure.

Help people save enough for retirement.

Help families save for college.

Help people become homeowners.

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0  
0  
0



Help people become financially secure.

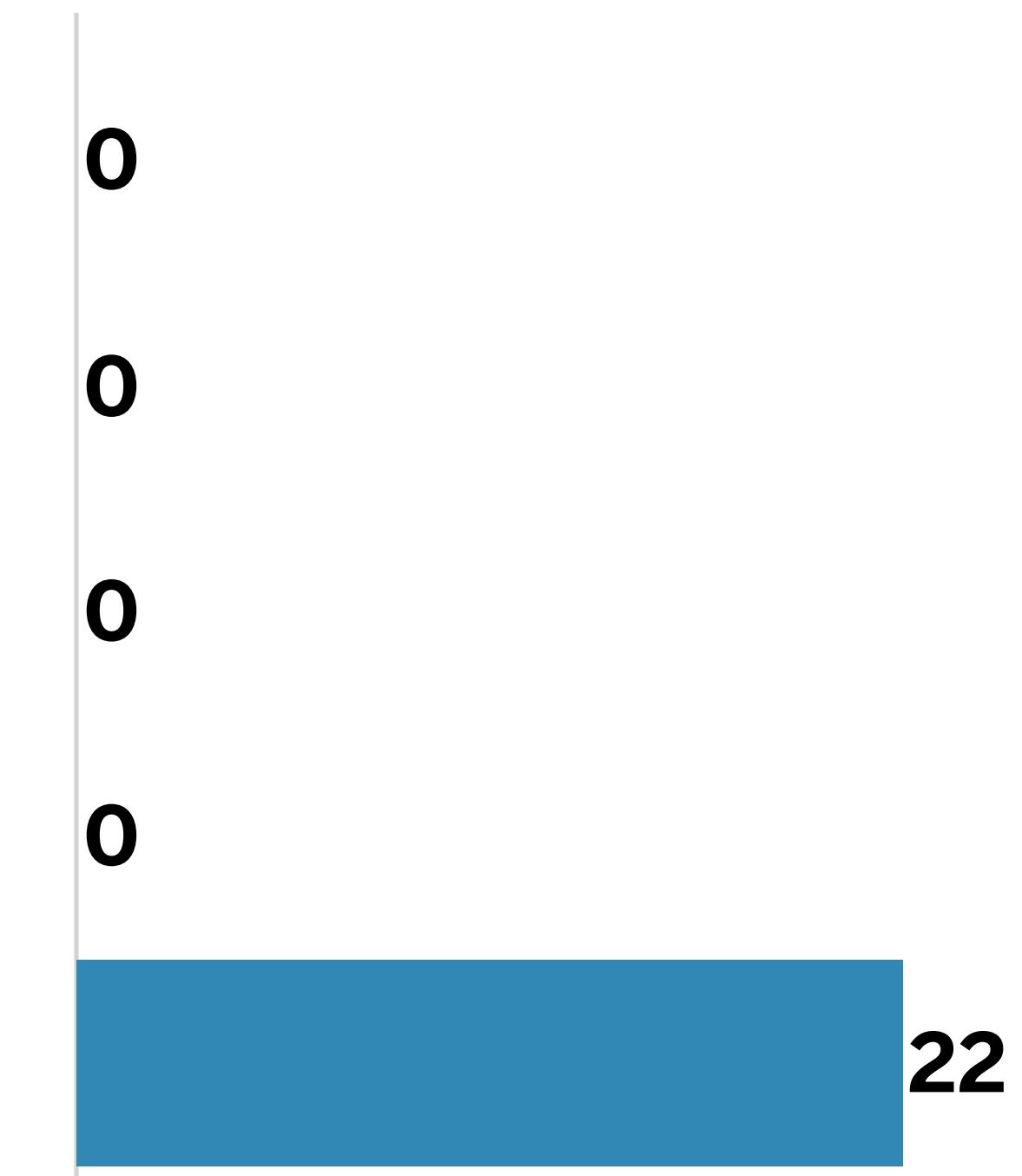
Help people save enough for retirement.

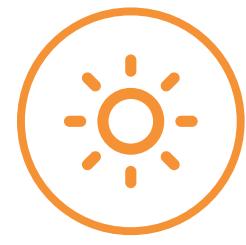
Help families save for college.

Help people become homeowners.



Poor people are hardworking.





**Help people become financially secure.**

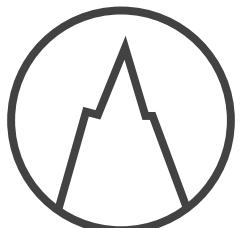
**Help people save enough for retirement.**

**Help families save for college.**

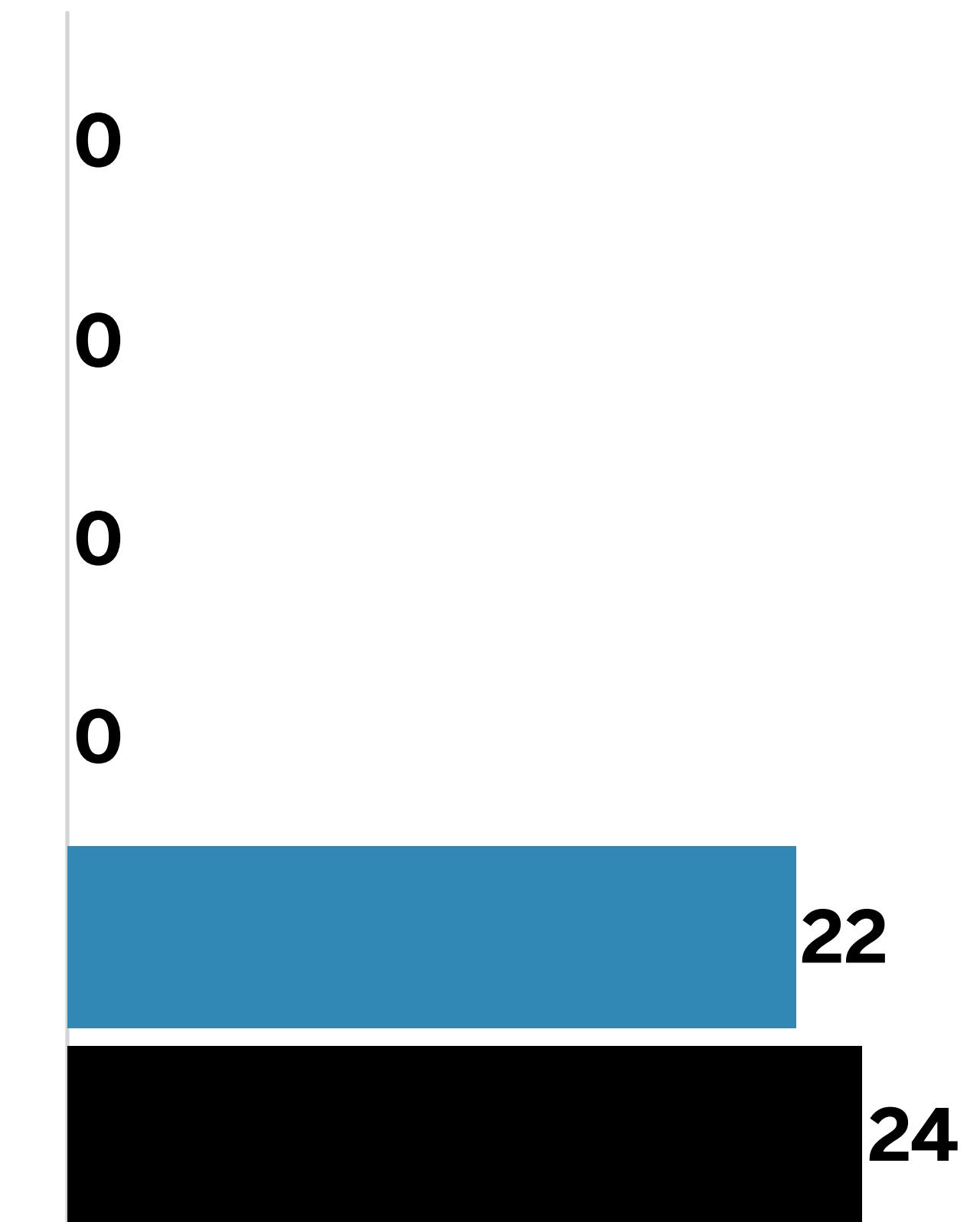
**Help people become homeowners.**

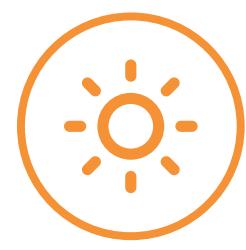


**Poor people are hardworking.**



**Lack of opportunity holds people back.**





Help people become financially secure.

Help people save enough for retirement.

Help families save for college.

Help people become homeowners.



Poor people are hardworking.



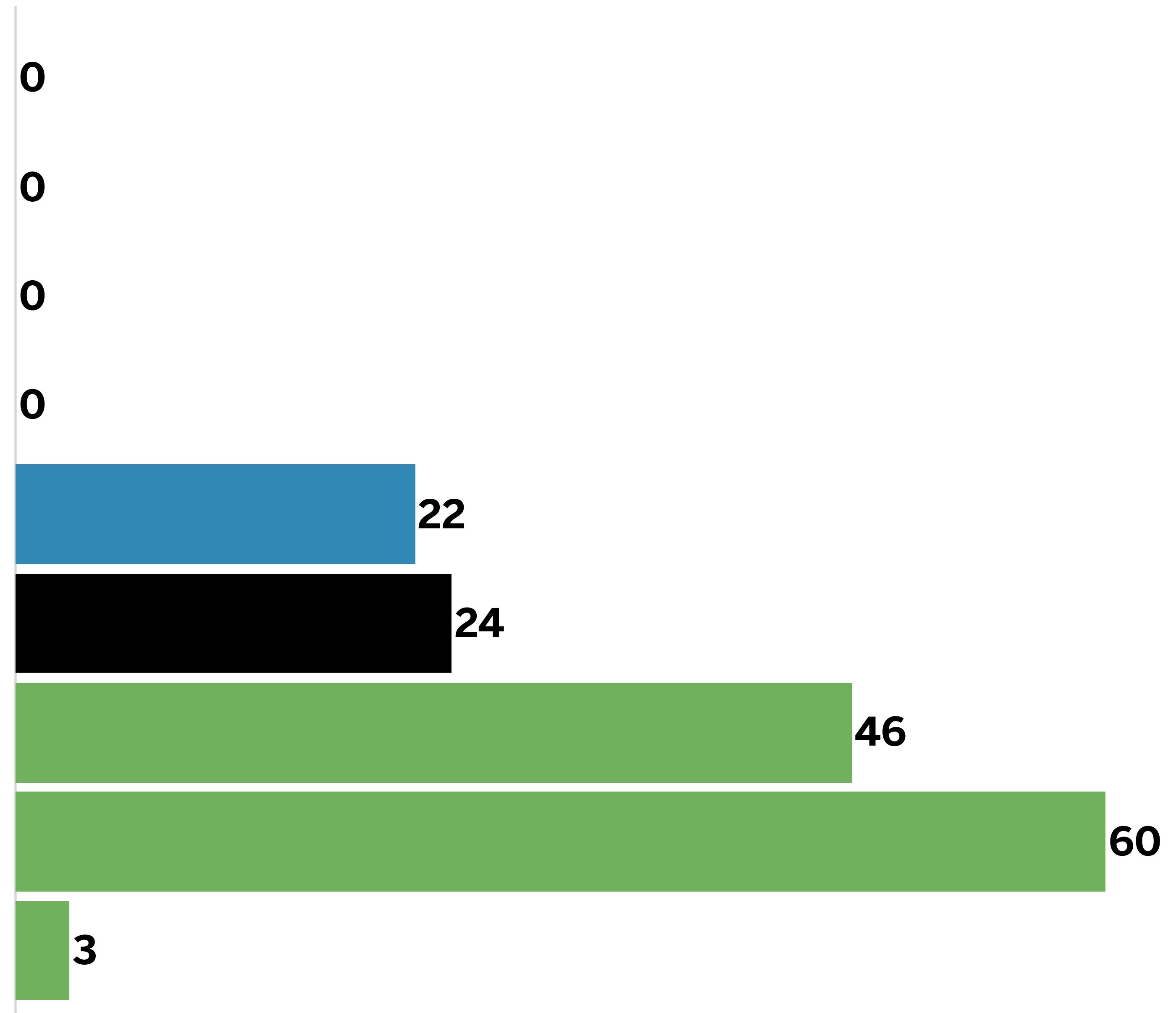
Lack of opportunity holds people back.



The government should have a role in reducing poverty.

Government programs keep people out of poverty.

Government programs help people help themselves.



Government fosters dependency/  
entitlements aren't working.



People should take personal  
responsibility.



Lack of effort holds  
people back.



Poor people/aid  
recipients are lazy.



Funding for programs  
should be cut.



Education isn't necessary  
for everyone.



Talk of income inequality is  
just class warfare.



Wealthy people already pay  
enough in taxes.



Don't raise the  
minimum wage.



Income inequality is not  
harmful to the economy.







## Map Narrative Landscape



**Map Narrative  
Landscape**

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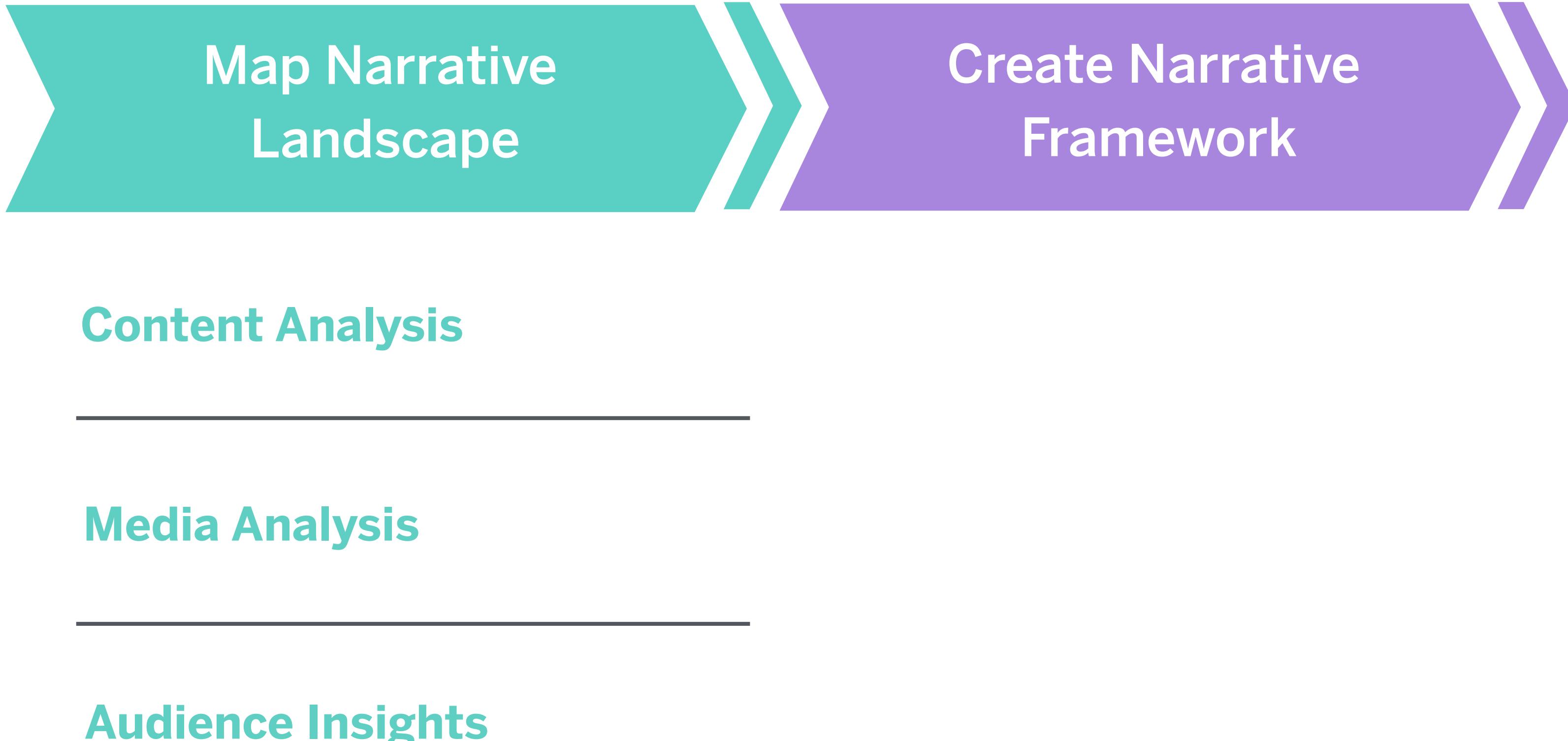
**Content Analysis**

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**Media Analysis**

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**Audience Insights**



Map Narrative  
Landscape

Create Narrative  
Framework

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**Content Analysis**

---

**Media Analysis**

---

**Audience Insights**

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graph LR; A[Map Narrative Landscape] --> B[Create Narrative Framework];
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Map Narrative Landscape

**Content Analysis**

---

**Media Analysis**

---

**Audience Insights**

---

Create Narrative Framework

**Message Research and Development**

---

**Narrative Framework**

---

**Winning Words**

---

**Strategic Stories**



Map Narrative Landscape

**Content Analysis**

---

**Media Analysis**

---

**Audience Insights**

Create Narrative Framework

**Message Research and Development**

---

**Narrative Framework**

---

**Winning Words**

---

**Strategic Stories**

Design Narrative Change Strategy

## Map Narrative Landscape

**Content Analysis**

---

**Media Analysis**

---

**Audience Insights**

## Create Narrative Framework

**Message Research and Development**

---

**Narrative Framework**

---

**Winning Words**

---

**Strategic Stories**

## Design Narrative Change Strategy

**Strategic Focus**

---

**Trusted Influencers**

---

**Compelling Content**

---

**Meaningful Engagement**

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**Measurement and Learning**



**AMERICAN  
ASPIRATIONS**

**DO YOU NEED TO *CHANGE THE*  
*NARRATIVE ABOUT YOUR CAUSE?***

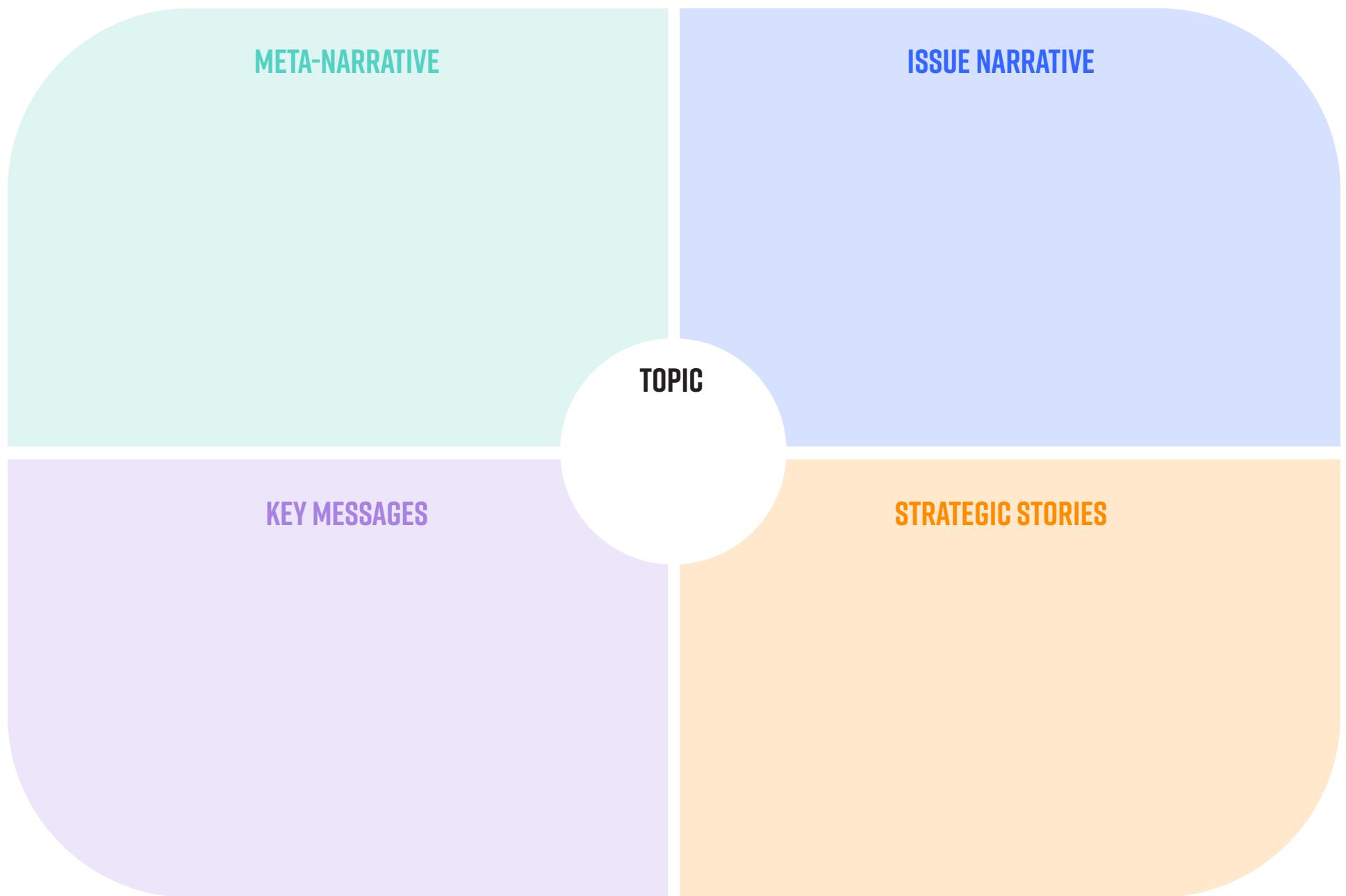
**Workbook**

**1 » WHAT TOPIC DO YOU NEED TO CHANGE THE NARRATIVE ABOUT?**

**2 » WHAT NEGATIVE NARRATIVE(S) DO YOU NEED TO CHANGE?**

### 3 » WHAT VALUES CAN YOU ASSOCIATE WITH YOUR WORK?

## 4 » FRAMING TOOL



## 5 » WHAT IS A STRATEGIC STORY YOU CAN TELL THAT DRIVE A NEW NARRATIVE ABOUT YOUR TOPIC?



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our free newsletter to receive data, insights and ideas  
for driving narrative change.**

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**AMERICAN  
ASPIRATIONS**

**NEW NARRATIVE FRAMES:**

**EQUITY, INCLUSION, CONTRIBUTION**

This document presents 15 statements that can be used to frame a wide variety of issues, under the themes of equity, inclusion and contribution. Together, these messages appeal to at least 7 out of 10 respondents to the American aspirations survey.

# EQUITY

Opportunity is not equal in America, even for people who work hard. Many people still face barriers because of their race, gender or where they were born.

It takes more than our individual hard work to succeed. We all need tools like education, health care and a job that pays enough.

Government has a responsibility to make sure the economy works for everyone—not just wealthy and powerful corporations.

Government doesn't invest enough in public schools, health care and other essentials that benefit all of us.

Our government should spend less money on prisons and more on schools and job training, so more people can get good jobs.

Everyone has equal opportunity in America, if they work hard.

32%

14%

54%

If you're willing to work hard, you can make it in America.

34%

12%

54%

Government should cut taxes and regulations on business to drive economic growth.

21%

16%

63%

Government has a responsibility to make sure the economy works for everyone—not just wealthy and powerful corporations.

Government spends too much on programs like Medicare, Social Security, and public education.

10%

30%

59%

Government doesn't invest enough in public schools, health care and other essentials that benefit all of us.

Closing prisons will put criminals back on our streets.

26%

29%

45%

Our government should spend less money on prisons and more on schools and job training, so more people can get good jobs.

# INCLUSION

Real Americans come from all walks of life. What makes you American is whether you believe in freedom, justice and equal opportunity for everyone.

America's diversity is our unique strength. When Americans respect one another and work together, it makes our country stronger.

As Americans, everyone should have the freedom to be who they want to be, without discrimination.

By and large, immigrants contribute to our economy and communities. They start new businesses, work hard doing jobs others won't do, and enrich our culture.

America has always been a nation of immigrants. We should continue to welcome new immigrants.

Real Americans are Christian, born in the U.S., and speak English.

6% 16%

Real Americans come from all walks of life. What makes you American is whether you believe in freedom, justice and equal opportunity for everyone.

78%

America's diversity has its upsides and downsides. Too many different groups in the same place creates conflict and division.

17% 16%

America's diversity is our unique strength. When Americans respect one another and work together, it makes our country stronger.

68%

American society today puts too much focus on accommodating people's individual lifestyle choices.

25% 15%

As Americans, everyone should have the freedom to be who they want to be, without discrimination.

60%

By and large, immigrants take jobs away from American workers and are a drain on our schools and welfare system. We need to take care of our own people first, before taking care of foreigners who come to this country.

22% 23%

By and large, immigrants contribute to our economy and communities. They start new businesses, work hard doing jobs others won't do, and enrich our culture.

55%

There are too many people moving to America. We need to cut way back on immigration.

17% 16%

America has always been a nation of immigrants. We should continue to welcome new immigrants.

68%

# CONTRIBUTION

America would be better off if all of us did our part for the good of our communities and country.

America would be better off if everyone just took responsibility for themselves.

America would be better off if all of us did our part for the good of our communities and country.

25%

17%

58%

Taxes are our contributions to our communities and country—to build our roads, educate our kids and keep our country safe.

Taxes are a burden on our families and businesses.

Taxes are our contributions to our communities and country—to build our roads, educate our kids and keep our country safe.

16%

19%

64%

Corporations should pay their fair share of taxes to support schools, roads, airports and other things that make our economy work.

Corporations should be taxed less. Otherwise, they will raise prices on consumers and ship jobs overseas.

Corporations should pay their fair share of taxes to support schools, roads, airports and other things that make our economy work.

12%

18%

70%

Businesses have responsibilities to their employees, customers and communities—not just their bottom line.

The only responsibility of businesses is to maximize profits and shareholder returns.

Businesses have responsibilities to their employees, customers and communities—not just their bottom line.

6%

16%

78%

As Americans, we can change the system—just like Americans won better wages, safer workplaces and civil rights in the past.

The system is broken in America. We should throw it out and start over.

As Americans, we can change the system—just like Americans won better wages, safer workplaces and civil rights in the past.

10%

22%

68%