

# Taking a Wider View of Civic Engagement

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Annual conference of the Sustainability Education Alliance of New Brunswick  
November 21, 2017

# Shaken Faith

“I've never been so worried, so stressed out and so shocked. Most unnerving has been the division of the country and the hatred that came out of groups of people who can't discuss anything, can't understand each other, can't talk...It's like they don't even speak the same language.”

Nicole Bacharan, French political scientist speaking about the French presidential elections, May 2017.



Brian Gable, The Globe and Mail, February 4, 2017

“The current era of polarization is not just a thin version of democracy, it undermines democracy.”

Diana Hess & Paula McAvoy, The Political Classroom

# Deconsolidation of Democracy

"What we find is deeply concerning. Citizens in a number of supposedly consolidated democracies in North America and Western Europe have not only grown more critical of their political leaders. Rather, they have also become more cynical about the value of democracy as a political system, less hopeful that anything they do might influence public policy, and more willing to express support for authoritarian alternatives. The crisis of democratic legitimacy extends across a much wider set of indicators than previously appreciated."

Roberto Stephan Foa & Yascha Mounk, *Journal of Democracy* 2016

# The Crises of Citizenship

| Crisis   | Manifest By                                      | Signs of Health   |
|--|--|---|
| <u><b>Ignorance</b></u> of civic knowledge and processes                           | Disengagement from formal politics               | Reengagement with political processes                       |
| <u><b>Alienation</b></u> from politics and civil society                           | Disengagement from non-formal civil associations | Active participation in civil society                       |
| <u><b>Agnosticism</b></u> about the values of democracy and democratic citizenship | Rise in political and social extremism           | Non-violent, deliberative and respectful political activity |

# Youth and Democratic Participation

## Phase 1: Survey Adapted From the Youth Electoral Study – Australia

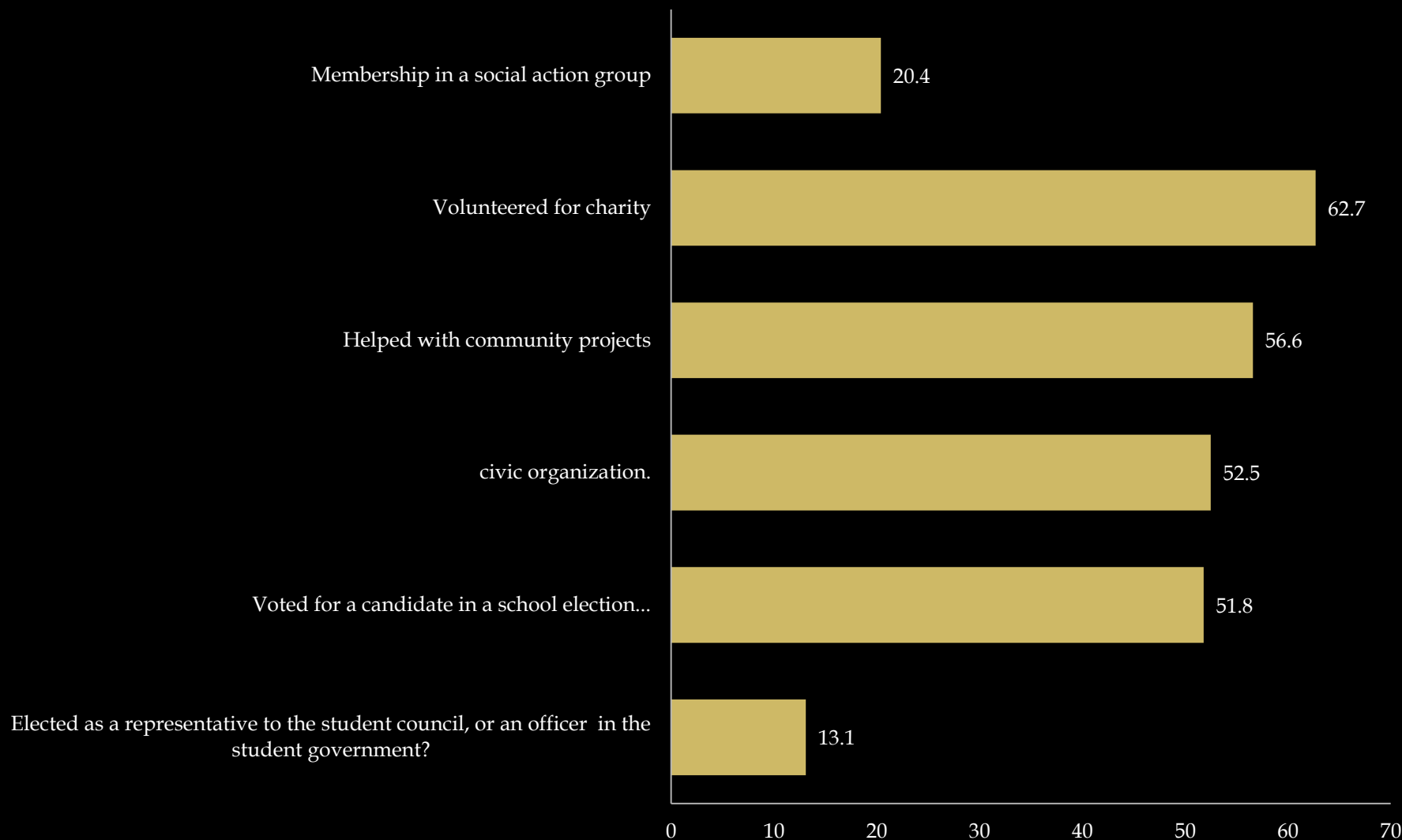
|                    | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------------|-----------|---------|
| Maritime Provinces | 1050      | 55      |
| Alberta            | 858       | 45      |
| Total              | 1908      | 100     |

# Where Students Engage

| Category              | 1   | 2   | 3  | 4  | 5 | Total |
|-----------------------|-----|-----|----|----|---|-------|
| Community Service     | 273 | 121 | 34 | 9  | 4 | 441   |
| Religious Engagements | 66  | 22  | 4  | 2  | 0 | 94    |
| Health Service        | 62  | 11  | 10 | 1  | 0 | 84    |
| Sports Service        | 48  | 18  | 8  | 1  | 1 | 76    |
| Advocacy Groups       | 23  | 14  | 4  | 2  | 0 | 43    |
| Civic Organizations   | 27  | 9   | 1  | 0  | 1 | 38    |
| Total                 | 501 | 198 | 63 | 15 | 7 | 776   |

Where Students Engage

Percentage of students who have engaged in activities.





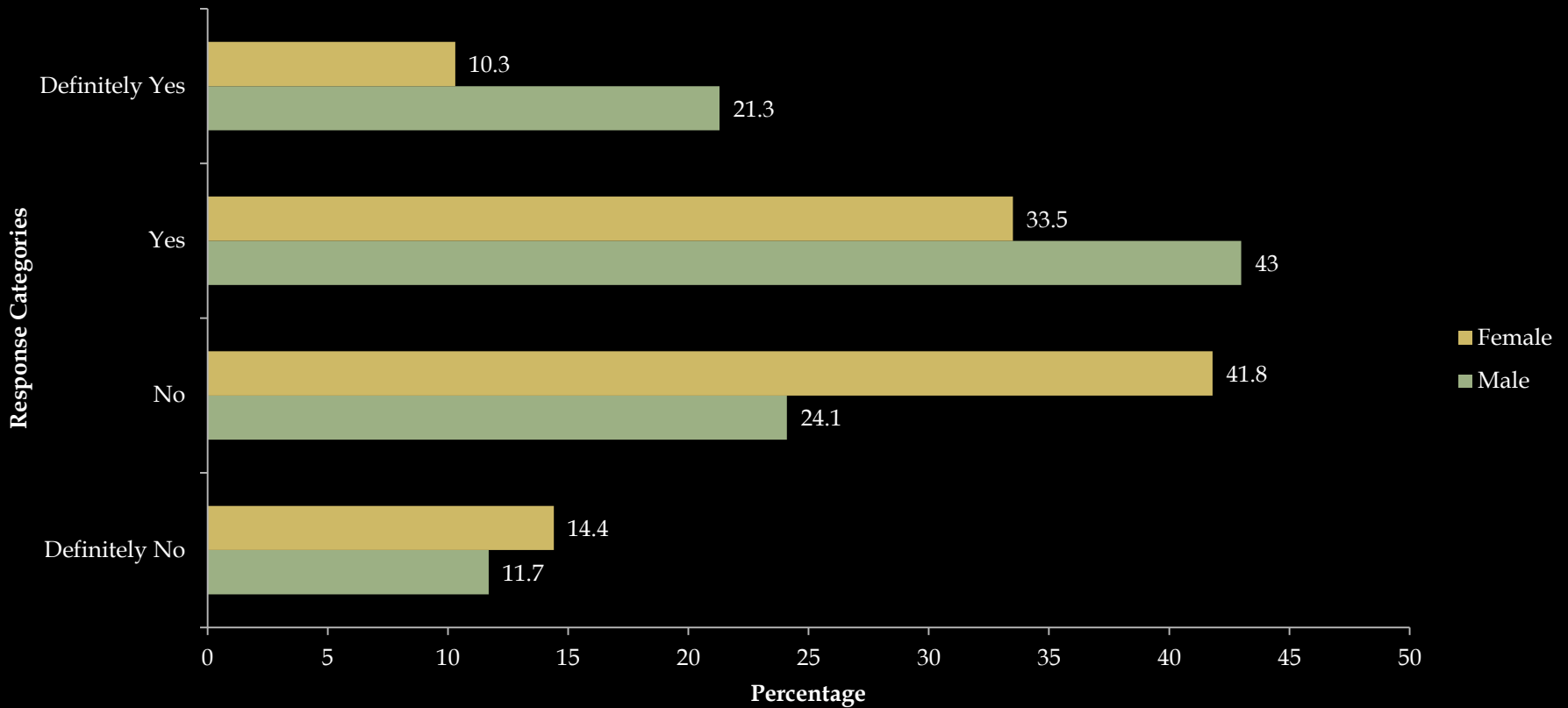
# Quantitative Data: Findings

## **The Triple Narrowing of Politics**

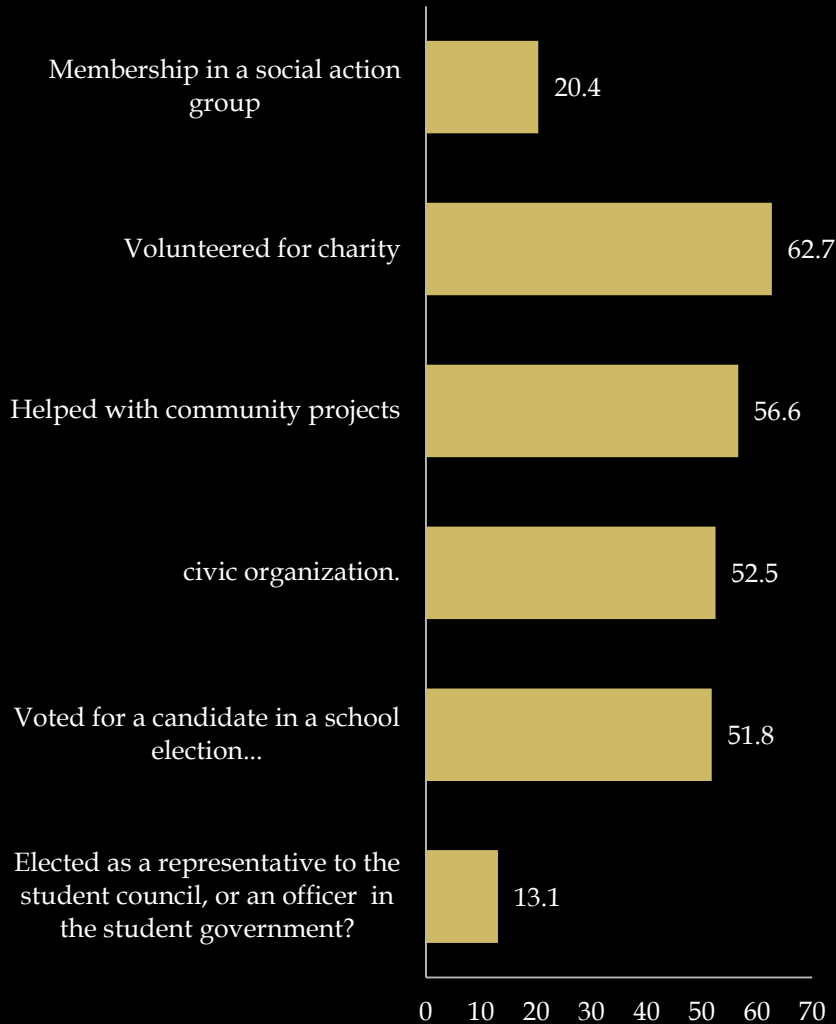
- Narrow conceptions of what counts as politics
- Narrowing their own participation to what they see as the realm of the non-political
- Narrowing the political sphere to one where men are more at home than women

# Third Narrowing: Politics as a Man's World

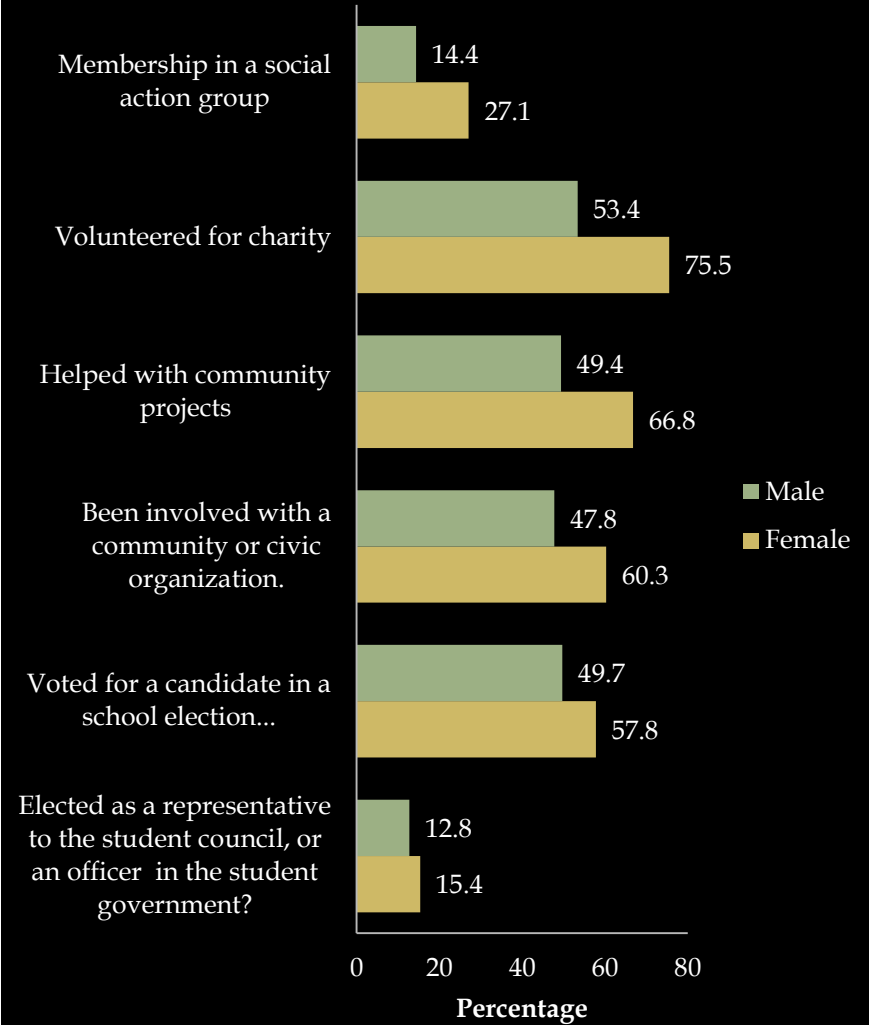
Do you personally feel prepared to vote in a Federal election? by Gender



### Percentage of students who have engaged in activities.



### Male-Female breakdown of participation in activities



## Consensus

# A Civic Republican Approach to Citizenship

Central to the civic republican ideal, citizenship education should foster a sense of both agency and responsibility– the belief that individual citizens can make a difference and should have the disposition to try to do so.

# Civic Participation

*“Promoting civic participation is a central purpose of schools, and so it is central to the work of teachers.”* Keith C. Barton

# Means of Participation

| Formal Politics  | Political Advocacy   | Civil Society   | Grassroots/Community Action   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <p>Characterized by engagement in the formal political system including: voting, attending political meetings and rallies, joining political parties, participating in campaigns, presenting to legislative committees, running for office, etc.</p> | <p>Characterized by engagement outside of the structures of the formal political system with the intention of affecting change within, through, or to those structures including: signing petitions, boycotting, demonstrating, lobbying, etc.</p> | <p>Characterized by engagement within ongoing civil society organizations or institutions including: labour unions, religious groups, environmental organizations, service clubs, professional associations, and other NGOs</p> | <p>Characterized by peripheral, sporadic, or temporary engagement with a community group or project including: volunteering, working on short-term projects, involvement with community sporting or cultural events, etc.</p> |

# Knowledge for Participation

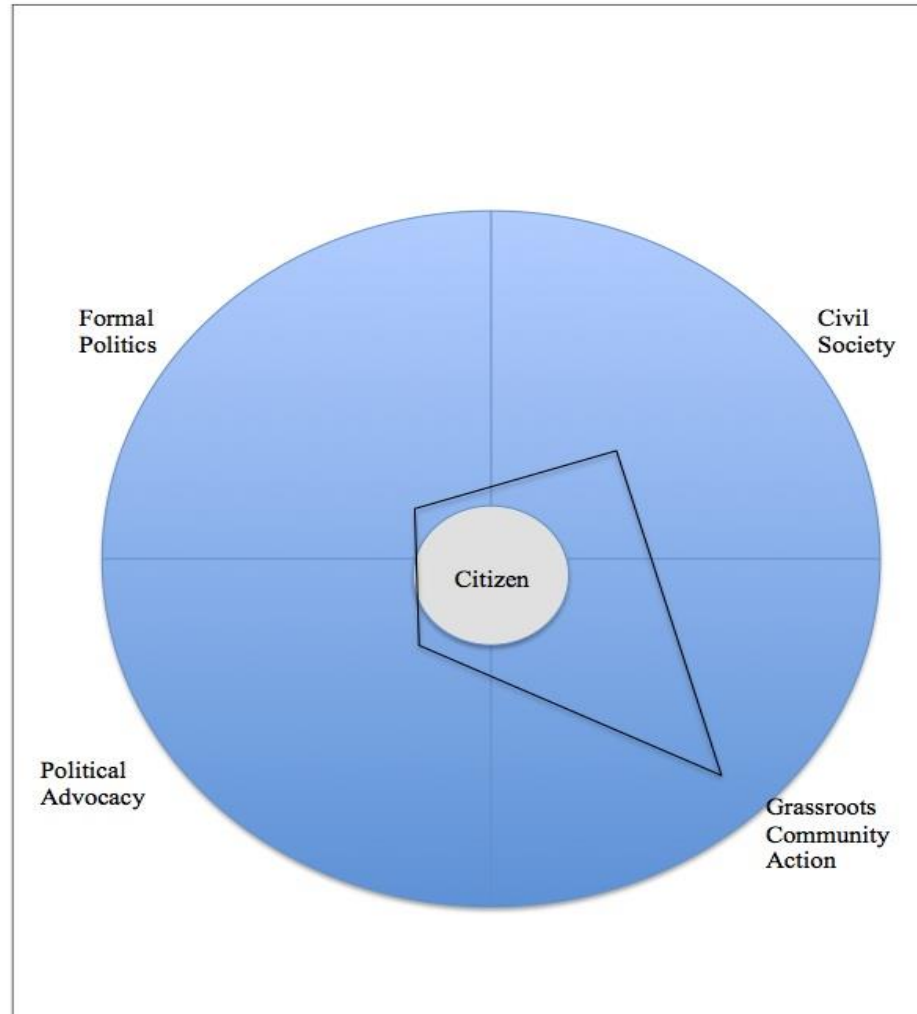
| Formal Politics   | Political Advocacy  | Civil Society  | Grassroots/Community Action   |
|---|---|--|---|
| <p>Characterized by theoretical and applied knowledge of the formal political system including: the history of its development, underlying principles, central structures, key issues and controversies related to its functioning, comparative context</p> | <p>Characterized by theoretical and applied knowledge of the range of ways of citizen engagement outside of the structures of the formal political system with the intention of affecting change within, through, or to those structures.</p> | <p>Characterized by theoretical and applied knowledge of civil society including the organizations that make it up and the ways they operate to provide social goods and a check on state power and influence.</p> | <p>Characterized by theoretical and applied knowledge of the community including the individuals and groups that make it up, key issues facing it, the range of opportunities for long-term and short-term engagement at the community level.</p> |

# A New Focus On Civil Society and Community Action

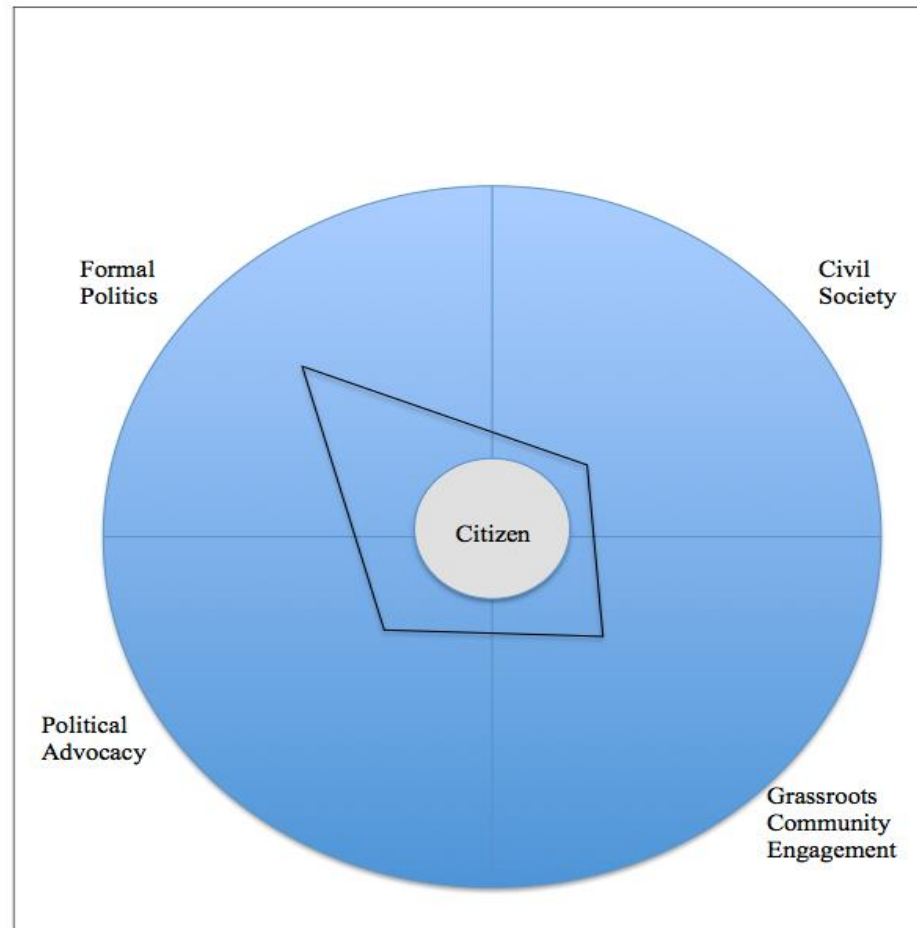
“A strong civil society reduces the burdens on the state to provide public goods. It monitors and holds accountable both the state and the market. It permits groups with a diversity of norms and mores to form, so that the whole population need not agree about everything to cooperate effectively. And it enhances the political power of individuals who lack money, offices, and connections.” Peter Levine



# Civic Engagement Profile



# Civic Knowledge Profile



# Key Questions

What can we do to enhance civic education and engagement in New Brunswick?