



Behavioral Guide to Political Participation

This primer is created by CitizenBe, a team of social and behavioral scientists working with organizations to promote sustainable political participation. We hope this helps you understand how to change behavior among your users and begin testing through your platform.

1

Attitudes don't always lead to behavior.

We tend to confuse passion for action and forget that there is a strong **intention-action gap**. While attitudes matter, environmental barriers inhibit action even when motivation is high. Fortunately, many of these barriers are easily identifiable and can be overcome when we think carefully about how context influences behavior.

2

We quickly adapt to 'new normals.'

We can't sustain high energy, good or bad, for long periods of time. Some people try but often burn out. Most people **habituate** to new situations. We compare today with yesterday, not with last year, and our most recent experiences become the **status quo**.

3

Action now can lead to less action later.

Moral licensing happens when people do one good thing and decide they've done enough, suppressing future action. For example, someone who put in a lot of effort going to the Women's March may feel they've done their part and pass up other opportunities. This is particularly relevant for people who are new to civic engagement.

4

Social norms are incredibly powerful.

We pay attention to what people do (**descriptive norms**) and what people think we should do (**injunctive norms**). Norms make it easier for people to make decisions, and to feel justified in the decisions they make. Our perceptions of social norms are much stronger motivators than information or rewards.

5

Many of our intuitions are wrong.

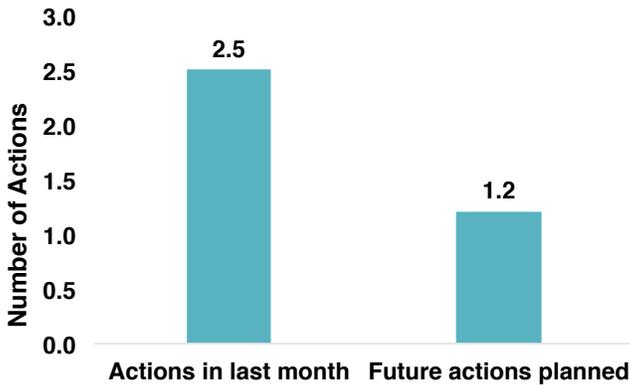
To know whether we're encouraging the right set of behaviors to sustain habits, we need to **test our assumptions** and support claims with evidence. By creating hypotheses, running tests, and measuring results, we can better understand how to help people become active participants in the political process.



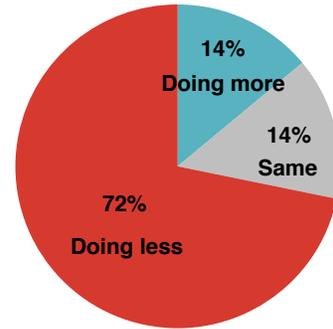
Our Recent Findings

We're investigating what drives political participation. We want to learn how to sustain behavior over for the long-term so that taking action once increases your chances of taking action again.

People are planning to take fewer actions than they did last month.



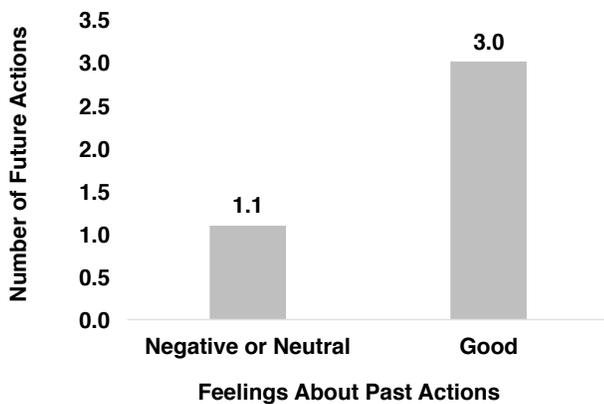
On average, people took 2.5 actions last month, but are only willing to take 1.2 next month if given the opportunity.



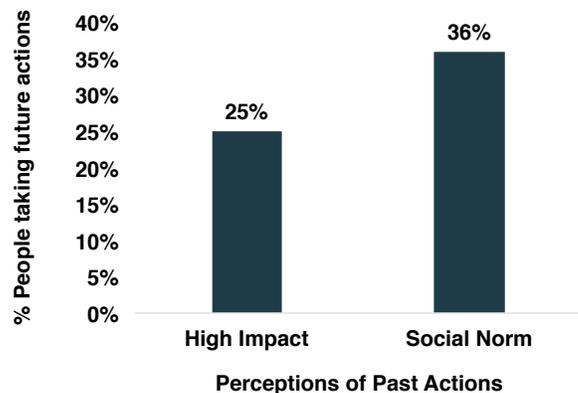
Percentage of people doing more vs. less

And, only 14% of people are planning to do more than they did last month. (72% will do less, and 14% will do the same amount.)

But feelings during recent actions influences willingness to act again.



People who *felt good* while taking past actions were willing to take more action in the future.



Perceived *social norms* were much stronger motivators of behavior than perceived *impact*.