Nearly 5,000 respondents across Indian Country weighed in on the things that matter most to them in the 2021 Indigenous Futures Survey. Native peoples shared their opinions about national issues including elections, education, law enforcement, media, and healthcare, as well as how they’re simply feeling in this moment.

**WHO RESPONDED?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Respondents</th>
<th>4,925</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Top 3 States**

(Highest number of respondents)

- California: 503
- Washington: 314
- New Mexico: 292

**Indigenous Identification**

- Enrolled in Federally Recognized Tribe: 69%
- Not Enrolled: 27%

**Income**

- Less than $44,999: 38%
- $45,000-$89,999: 32%
- More than $90,000: 30%

**Residence**

- City: 54%
- Rural: 10%
- Small Town, Next to Rez: 8%
- Small Town, Not Next to Rez: 10%
- Reservation: 18%

**Education**

- Doctorate: 6%
- Master's: 19%
- Bachelor's: 26%
- Associates/Technical degree: 11%
- Some College: 26%
- High School: 10%
- Less than High School: 2%
KEY TAKEAWAYS

On the topics of: identity & well-being, trust in institutions, media habits, women in leadership, and political engagement, several points emerged.

Overall well-being and mental health improved
Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, respondents noted their overall well-being and mental health improved slightly from the previous year.

Vast majority of respondents vote
The vast majority of respondents vote in federal, state, and local elections. Eighty-four percent reported voting in 2020, with 79.7% indicating they planned to vote in 2022.

Climate change is driving their choice at the polls
For voters, especially those who identify as liberal, climate change is driving their choice at the polls, followed by issues of racism and healthcare.

Cost of living, economy, and immigration are top priorities
Cost of living, economy, and immigration are top priorities for those who identify as conservative.

Low trust in federal, state, and local governments
Respondents have low trust in federal, state, and local governments to make good decisions about issues that Native communities face.

Native peoples continue to feel unseen
85% of respondents feel they are rarely represented in media and 85% feel that most Americans wrongly believe there are few Natives left living in America.

Respondents believe that Natives are more visible in mainstream society
While a majority of respondents feel that Natives are rarely represented (or represented inaccurately) in media, they also perceive a shift in visibility of Native peoples, with nearly 63% of respondents believing that Natives are more visible in mainstream society.

Respondents are “feeling upset when there are no portrayals of Natives”
The lack of representation has an effect, with more than 83% of respondents “feeling upset when there are no portrayals of Natives” in mainstream media.

New TV series centered on Natives are popular with Native viewers
74% of respondents have watched Reservation Dogs, and 25% have watched more than one program that centers or features Native characters and themes.

Majority want to see more women in leadership
A majority want to see more women in leadership positions, with 95% of women and 85% of men in support.

IFS is a collaborative effort of IllumiNative and Native Organizers Alliance in partnership with the Research for Indigenous Social Action and Equity (RISE) Center
Regardless of enrollment status or place of residence, nearly all survey respondents noted how important their identity as Native people and as members of their Tribal nations is to them.

**WHO RESPONDED?**

- **69%** Federally enrolled
- **9%** Not enrolled, descendant of one or more American Indian/Native American/Alaska Native/First Nations (25% or more based on all tribes I descend from)
- **4%** Not applicable - my Indigenous People/Community do not have tribal enrollment
- **9%** State enrolled
- **6%** Not enrolled, descendant of one or more American Indian/Native American or Alaska Native tribes (less than 25% based on all tribes I descend from)
- **4%** Other
- **4%** Eligible but not enrolled

**NATIVE IDENTITY IS IMPORTANT**

- **95%** of respondents say being Native is an important part of their identity
- **85%** say that being a member of their Tribe is an important part of their identity
PARTICIPATING IN CULTURAL ACTIVITIES MATTERS TO RESPONDENTS

- 96% Know or share Native history
- 90% Eat or cook Native foods
- 94% socialize with/have Native friends
- 82% Attend pow wows

INVISIBLE IN AMERICA

While for nearly all respondents being Native and practicing their culture was important to their identity, they also felt an erasure of their existence in the broader American life. Respondents overwhelmingly believe that the greater American public does not know they exist. And nearly 70% have experienced racial discrimination.

- 85% Feel that the average Americans thinks there are hardly any Natives left
- 84% Feel that the average American does not care about the experiences of Native peoples
- 67% Experience discrimination because they are Native

IFS is a collaborative effort of IllumiNative and Native Organizers Alliance in partnership with the Research for Indigenous Social Action and Equity (RISE) Center
Today, there is more Indigenous-created TV content and more TV shows featuring Native peoples than ever before. But the entertainment industry has a long way to go to satisfy the Native viewer’s desire to see more representation on screen.

Of nearly 5,000 respondents to the 2022 Indigenous Futures Survey, the majority feel most represented by shows that are centered on Native characters and stories. Most respondents agree they feel most represented by Native actors portraying Native characters, and when shows and films feature Native characters and stories.

**REPRESENTATION**

I feel represented when Native actors/actresses portray Native American characters.

- **Strongly Disagree:** 2.6%
- **Disagree:** 7.2%
- **Neither Disagree Nor Agree:** 17.8%
- **Agree:** 38.8%
- **Strongly Agree:** 33.6%

I feel represented when TV shows and films feature Native characters, stories and experiences.

- **Strongly Disagree:** 5.3%
- **Disagree:** 13.4%
- **Neither Disagree Nor Agree:** 22.1%
- **Agree:** 38.1%
- **Strongly Agree:** 21.2%
Respondents were asked about viewing habits regarding several Native-centered shows or shows featuring Native characters and stories. A large majority, 74%, have seen Reservation Dogs, while a quarter of all respondents have watched at least two of the shows.

Note: Respondents could select all that apply.

### WHO IS WATCHING?

#### Gender
- **Women:** 64%
- **Men:** 21%
- **Two-Spirit:** 7%

#### Residence
- **Urban:** 54%
- **Reservation:** 18%

#### Age
- **Age 18-24:** 25%
- **Age 25-39:** 29%
- **Age 40-49:** 36%
- **Age 50+:** 9%

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Following record-breaking Native voter turnout in 2020, nearly 5,000 respondents to the Indigenous Futures Survey in 2022 signal even higher turnout in the 2022 midterm elections, which notoriously have a lower voter turnout. The respondents, 63% of whom were women with an average age of 44, identify across the political spectrum, from liberal to conservative. The majority also have had some college or associate’s degree.

**Building Native Power and Political Participation**

- **77.1%** voted in 2020
- **79.7%** planned to vote in 2022

### Who Planned to Vote in 2022?

- Democrat: 55%
- Republican: 5.6%
- Independent: 20.4%

**Voters Continue to Be Older**

Planned to Vote in the 2022 Midterm Elections (by Generation)

- **24.8%**: Boomer or Older (58+ years old)
- **30.3%**: Gen X (42-57 years old)
- **35%**: Millennials (26-41 years old)
- **9.9%**: Gen Z (18-25 years old)
MAJORITY OF VOTERS ARE HIGHER INCOME EARNERS
More than 42% of future voters are from households earning $75,000 or more.

Planned to Vote in the 2022 Midterm Elections (by Income)

- More than $135,000: 15.5%
- $105,000 - $134,999: 9.9%
- $75,000 - $104,999: 16.8%
- $45,000 - $74,999: 24.6%
- $15,000 - $44,999: 24%
- Less than $15,000: 9.2%

THE ISSUES NATIVE VOTERS CARE ABOUT
There are large differences in what mattered to voters based on whether they identify as liberal or conservative.

Liberals’ Top Issues
- Climate Change: 55%
- Racism: 40.4%
- Healthcare: 33.6%
- Cost of Living: 29.6%
- COVID Pandemic: 23.5%
- Other: 23%
- Economy: 18.9%
- Abortion Bans: 17.1%
- Gun Control Laws: 12.7%
- Jobs: 11.1%
- Immigration: 10.7%
- Violent Crimes: 8.7%

Conservatives’ Top Issues
- Cost of Living: 40.4%
- Economy: 33.6%
- Immigration: 29.6%
- Climate Change: 23.5%
- Racism: 23%
- Healthcare: 18.9%
- Abortion Bans: 17.1%
- Gun Control Laws: 12.7%
- Jobs: 11.1%
- Immigration: 10.7%
- Violent Crimes: 8.7%

2022 voters identified the top issues that would determine their vote:
Nearly 5,000 respondents to the Indigenous Futures Survey 2.0 weighed in on how much trust they put into the institutions of government, media, schools, medicine, and the election system. Since 2020, faith in all systems has decreased. With the exception of the U.S. electoral system, few Native respondents have faith in our country’s systems.

**DISTRUST OF GOVERNMENT IS EXTREMELY HIGH**

Respondents have little faith in federal, state, and local governments to make good decisions about issues that Native communities face.

Do **NOT** trust the U.S. government to make good decisions about the issues that Native communities face

96%

Do **NOT** trust their local and state government to make good decisions about the issues that Native communities face

91%

Native peoples are **8.5x** more likely to trust tribal governments versus the federal government to address issues that matter to them.

38.3% trust tribal government

4.5% trust federal government

**NO FAITH IN MAJOR INSTITUTIONS**

- **96%** don’t trust the media to accurately portray Native peoples
- **91.2%** don’t trust K-12 schools and colleges to teach accurate information about Native peoples
- **93.8%** don’t trust police to treat Native peoples fairly
- **93.8%** don’t trust medical professionals to provide quality medical care to Native peoples
SINCE 2020, DISTRUST IN HEALTHCARE AND K-12 EDUCATION HAS GROWN

K-12 Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Trust K-12 schools to provide quality education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Healthcare

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Trust medical professionals to provide quality healthcare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE 2020 ELECTION

Participants trust the US electoral system the most, with a majority of participants (62.2%) trusting the results of the presidential election in 2020.

Yet, there remains a sharp contrast between liberals and conservatives regarding the fairness of the 2020 election.

“The 2020 election was fair”

71.3% of self-identified liberals agreed
34.7% of conservatives agreed

Of those who disagreed or strongly disagreed that the 2020 election was fair:

14.2% are enrolled members of a federally recognized tribe
82.1% are not enrolled members

Older respondents largely agree that the 2020 election was fair.

60.5% Age 30-49 agree it was fair
71.7% Age 50+ agree it was fair

Respondents 18-29 were more divided, with 50% of respondents believing it was fair.

10% Strongly disagree
8.1% Disagree
31.9% Neither disagree or agree
28.5% Agree
21.5% Strongly agree

IFS is a collaborative effort of IllumiNative and Native Organizers Alliance in partnership with the Research for Indigenous Social Action and Equity (RISE) Center
Indigenous Futures Survey respondents in 2021 had experienced a pandemic, significant changes in the economy and unemployment numbers, a slight increase of Native visibility with the growing popularity of Native-centered TV shows, and a slow return to a more typical daily life after quarantine. With that in mind, respondents answered the 5 questions from the World Health Organization’s well-being index, intended to assess current mental well-being.

While more than half of respondents (56.4%) have felt cheerful and in good spirits more than half of the time or most of the time, and more than half (51.6%) have felt calm and relaxed more than half of the time or most of the time, the majority of respondents answered negatively regarding their well-being for three of the five index measures.

Percent of respondents who stated:

**I have felt cheerful and in good spirits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At no time</th>
<th>Some of the time</th>
<th>Less than half of the time</th>
<th>More than half of the time</th>
<th>Most of the time</th>
<th>All of the time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**I have felt calm and relaxed**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At no time</th>
<th>Some of the time</th>
<th>Less than half of the time</th>
<th>More than half of the time</th>
<th>Most of the time</th>
<th>All of the time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Percent of respondents who stated:

I have felt active and vigorous

- At no time: 7.2%
- Some of the time: 25.5%
- Less than half of the time: 26.2%
- More than half of the time: 22.3%
- Most of the time: 15.9%
- All of the time: 2.9%

I woke up feeling fresh and rested

- At no time: 12.4%
- Some of the time: 26.9%
- Less than half of the time: 22.8%
- More than half of the time: 18.6%
- Most of the time: 16.8%
- All of the time: 2.5%

My daily life has been filled with things that interest me

- At no time: 12.4%
- Some of the time: 26.9%
- Less than half of the time: 22.8%
- More than half of the time: 18.6%
- Most of the time: 16.8%
- All of the time: 2.5%
Visibility of women in leadership positions has increased in recent years, with more women, including Native women, being elected to offices at all levels.

**THERE IS A STRONG DESIRE TO SEE MORE NATIVE WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS**

An overwhelming majority of respondents want to see more Native women in leadership.

**Women’s Response**
- 95% More
- 4% Neutral
- 1% Less

**Men’s Response**
- 85% More
- 13% Neutral
- 2% Less

**NATIVE WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP IS BENEFICIAL**

More than 90% of men and 96% of women think a Native woman in a leadership position is beneficial. In part, because:

- They believe it would lead to more visibility for women-led movements and issues like Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and abortion rights.
- They are tired of the “incompetency” of male leadership and sexism within leadership.
A majority of respondents report a noticeable increase in Native women taking on leadership roles over the past decade. This increase is viewed positively with the vast majority being able to identify positive outcomes for their communities and Native people broadly.

72% Report noticing an increase in Native women in Tribal leadership roles over the past decade

84% Report noticing an increase in Native women in overall leadership roles over the past decade