



Effective Strategies – Equitable Systems – Strong Communities



# Activating Grassroots Power for Health and Social Justice

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# Today's Takeaways

- Grassroots and intermediary organizations responded to community needs in 2020 but could've been more effective with greater supports.
- We can strengthen grassroots organizations by strengthening intermediaries!





A photograph of a city street with parked cars and trees. The street is lined with parked cars on the left side, and there are large, leafy trees on the right side. In the background, there are multi-story buildings. The overall scene is a typical urban street view.

# Agenda

Introductions

Context of Studies

Findings from Grassroots Groups in  
Lower-Income Communities of Color

Findings from Intermediary  
Organizations

Recommendations for Activating  
Grassroots Power

Audience Q & A



# Welcome



**Your Co-Host:**  
**Rianna Grissom**  
Senior Analyst •  
Community Science



**Your Co-Host:**  
**David Chavis**  
Principal Associate/CEO •  
Community Science

## Your Panel:



**Ariana Beedie**  
Director of Neighborhood  
Engagement • Indianapolis  
Neighborhood Resource Center



**Rahsaan Harris**  
CEO • Citizens  
Committee of New York  
City



**Mike Espinoza**  
Director • The Children's  
Movement Fresno

# Context of the Studies

The COVID-19 pandemic and heightened awareness of systemic racism in law enforcement and other systems.

- **Volunteer-led grassroots organizations (VGOs)** are often the “first responders” to their neighbors’ health and social justice needs. VGO's include:
  - block and neighborhood associations
  - tenant and homeowners' associations
  - civic and cultural associations, and
  - mutual aid groups
- Little engagement by public health and other agencies responding to the crises
- Limited up-to-date research on VGO leadership, capacity, or effectiveness

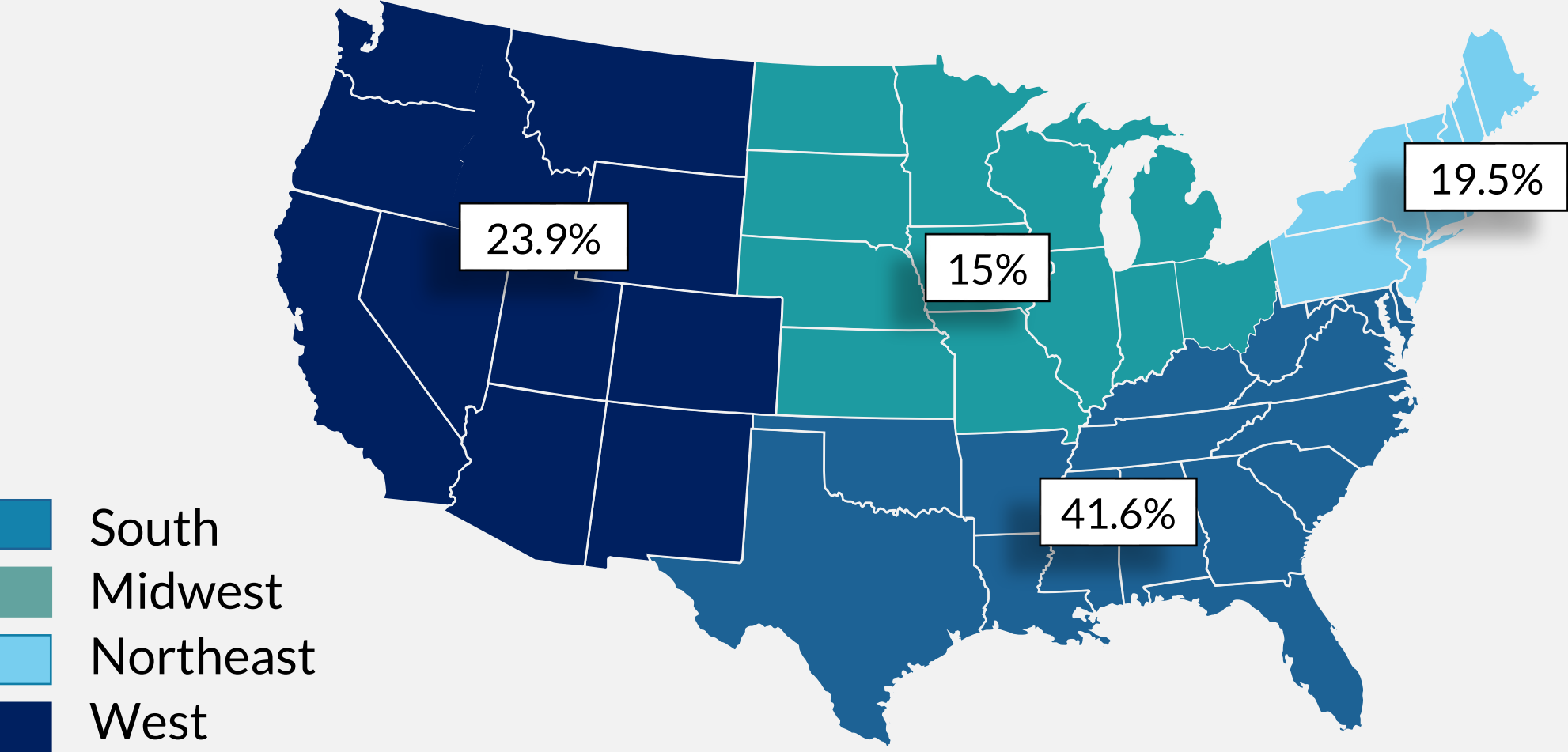


# National Grassroots Study

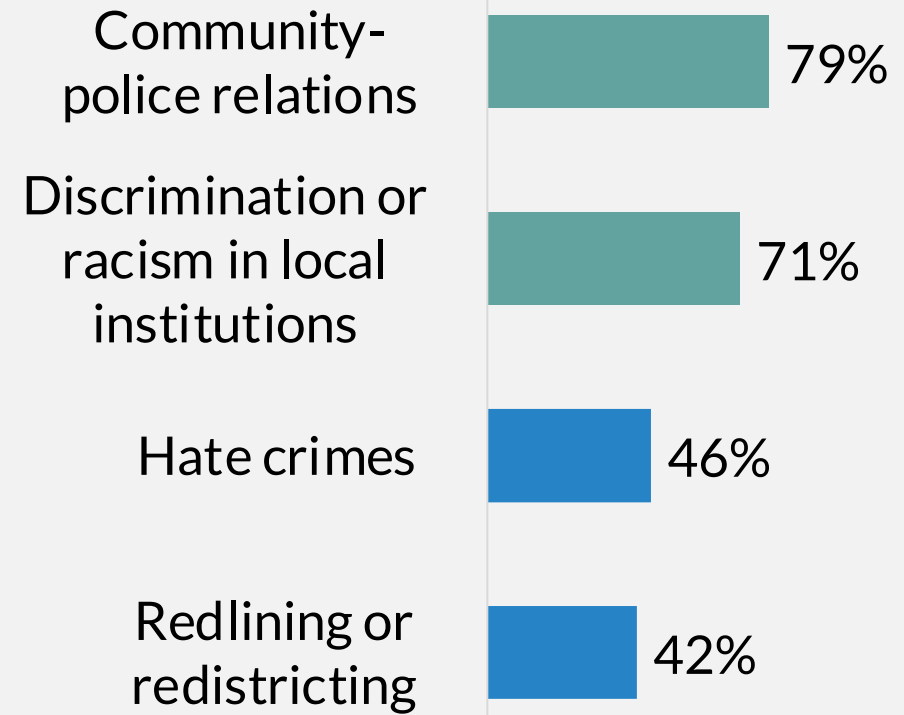
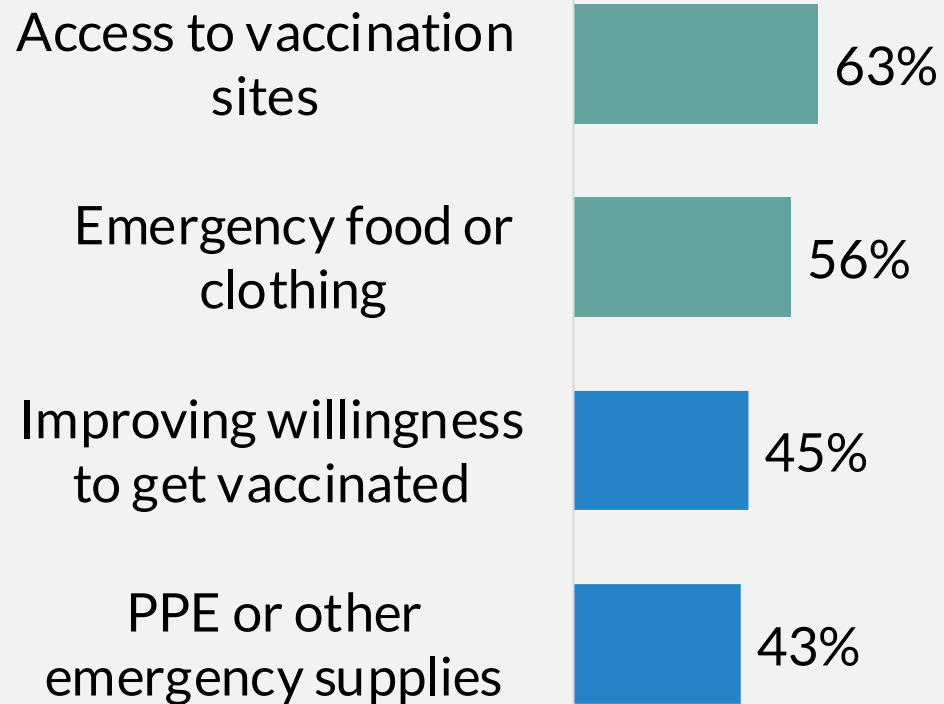
## **Volunteer-led Grassroots Organizations (VGOs)**

- Online survey with 427 responses
- 63% of the sample were from the top 30 metropolitan cities in the U.S.
- 59% identified as a neighborhood association
- Most served predominantly White and middle-class communities

# Lower-Income Communities of Color (n=113)



# Top Pandemic and Social Justice Efforts





# VGOs' Perceived Effectiveness

**Groups who felt they had been effective** in addressing the pandemic or in their social justice organizing were more likely to:

1. Have nonprofit or 501(c)3 status; and
2. Say it was easier to get help when needed.

This was regardless of the type of pandemic or social-justice related efforts they had pursued in their communities.

# Top Capacity Needs for VGOs

1. Collaborating with other neighborhood or grassroots groups (49%)
2. Improving community organizing (48%)
3. Recruiting and sustaining members (22%)
4. Increasing membership participation (21%)

# Hear From Our Panelists

1. Reactions to the data? Surprises? Important things we missed? Something you want to emphasize?
2. How can grassroots organizations address public health and social justice crises like what we've recently faced? Can you share examples of either?
3. In what additional ways can these organizations be engaged to increase impact on public health and social justice issues? What could they do more of (with or without assistance)?
4. Based on the data or your experience, what makes these organizations most effective?
5. Based on the data or your experience, what are the top capacity needs for grassroots organizations?



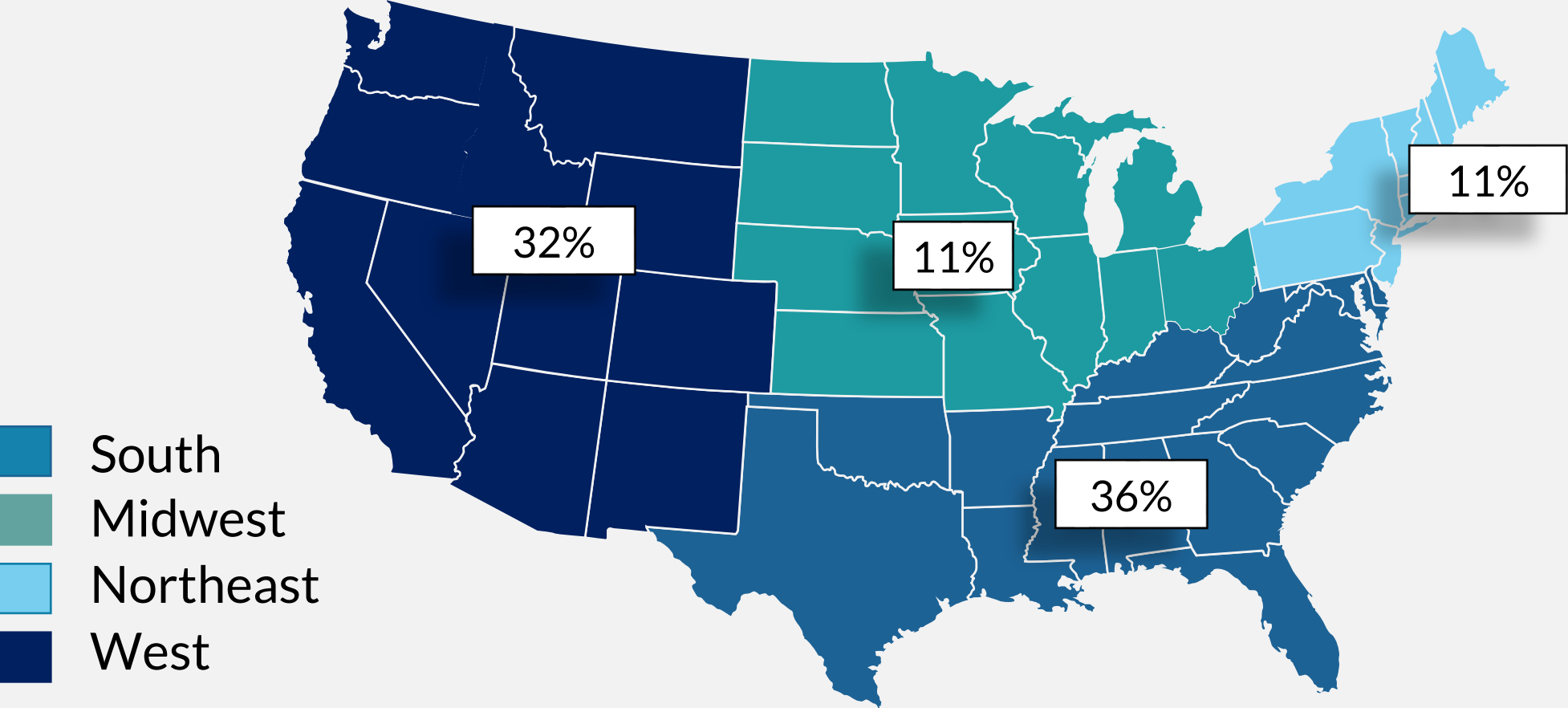


# National Intermediary Study

## Intermediary Organizations

- Online survey with 28 responses and 4 interviews
- 50% of the sample were from the top 30 metropolitan cities in the U.S.
- 64% identified as a nonprofit
- Most served lower-income areas, but the primary race of the communities varied

# Intermediary Organizations (n=28)



# Top Technical Assistance Offered by Intermediaries

1. Issue-specific workshops and webinars (64%)
2. Leadership and organizational development (64%)
3. Training on advocacy, community organizing, or coalition building (61%)
4. Fundraising and proposal writing (36%)



# Top Networking and Fundraising Opportunities Offered by Intermediaries

1. Peer-learning or communities of practice (64%)
2. Linking grassroots leaders to larger institutions (64%)
3. Convenings for specific issues, coalition building (43%)
4. Small seed or incentive grants (under \$2,000) (39%)

# Top Capacity Needs of Intermediaries

Rank	Type of Resource Needed	%
1	Additional funding for grants	74
2	Additional resources for convening nonprofits and grassroots groups	67
3	Additional staff capacity for more grant-making opportunities	59



# Hear From Our Panelists

1. Reactions to the data? Surprises? Important things we missed? Something you want to emphasize?
2. What are the most effective things that your organization does to improve the success and sustainability of grassroots organizations?
3. How do you define or even possibly measure success?
4. What are the biggest challenges currently facing your organization's work supporting grassroots organizations? How can those challenges be addressed?
5. What do you think "we" (the field) need to know more about when it comes to activating the grassroots, increasing their effectiveness in addressing public health and social justice issues, and the ways to best support them?



# Recommendations for Activating Grassroots Power

1. Continue to **develop the inventory and database** of VGOs and Intermediaries for research, monitoring, and action.
2. Conduct **research on what leads to VGO and intermediary effectiveness** in addressing public health, social justice, and other critical issues facing their communities.
3. Generate or **compile resources** that can be used by the VGOs to address public health and social justice issues.
4. **Convene an active network or hub for intermediaries** and other support services for VGOs and related community-led organizations.



Community  
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## Audience Questions





THANK YOU