



Americans Have Broad Gaps in Their Knowledge of the Civil Rights Movement, Despite near Unanimity on the Importance of Teaching And Learning From it

A New Survey Finds Americans Share Deep Appreciation of the Civil Rights Movement ahead of the Anniversary of the March on Washington

August 22, 2022 – A new [survey released by More in Common](#) found deep appreciation among Americans for the civil rights movement and broad support for teaching about the movement and its legacy, despite polarized debates about race and the teaching of American history in today's public discourse.

77% of Americans believe the civil rights movement "advanced the values of freedom and equality in my country," according to the national opinion research released ahead of the 59th anniversary of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech that took place on August 28, 1963. Fully 80% expressed that the movement is an "important example of Americans exercising their right to protest."

Alarming, very few Americans can name some of the most important leaders in the civil rights movement, nor identify important moments in the struggle, beyond Dr. King.

"The anniversary of the March on Washington on August 28 is a moment to remember the voices and events from that era," **said Coco Xu, the research analyst** for More in Common U.S. who led the study "But it's clear to us that there are many civil rights leaders whose roles in the struggle are unknown to most Americans."

While the March on Washington and Brown v. Board of Education, among others, are prominent in Americans' memories, the same survey found that Americans are less likely to recall events where civil rights activists encountered resistance or violence. This is despite 79% of respondents agreeing that every American student should learn about the civil rights movement, activists and the struggles and obstacles they faced.

"The civil rights movement isn't a static event in our history but the collection of decades of events, leaders and activists pushing for change," **added Xu**. "That work has never stopped. In some ways, it has grown. The legacy of the civil rights movement is an inspiration to younger



Americans and to people around the world striving for freedom, equality and to attain better opportunities for themselves and their children. The broad support among Americans for learning more about the movement suggests that there are opportunities to deepen our shared understanding and honor the movement’s legacy.”

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About More in Common U.S.

[More in Common U.S.](#) is a non-partisan research and civic nonprofit that studies the forces pulling America apart, seeking to disrupt polarization and forge a stronger sense of what Americans have in common.