



# indicators of social trust

IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA

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community  
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# *Indicators of Social Trust in Northern Virginia*

## Overview

- Defining Social Trust
- Why Social Trust Matters
- Measures of Social Trust in Northern Virginia
- Conclusions
- Activity



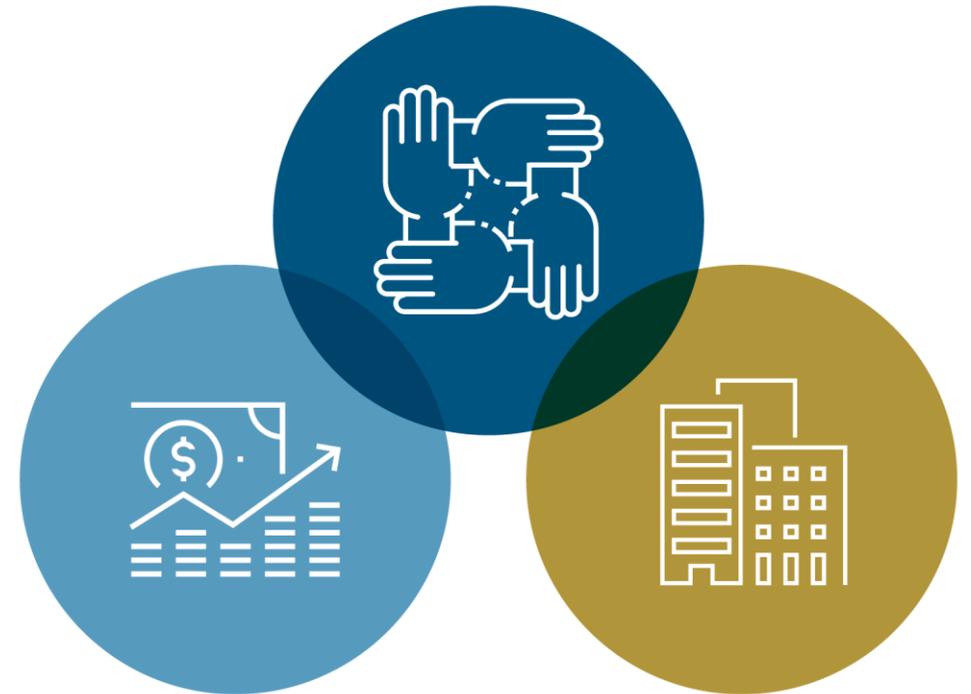
# Defining Social Trust

## Social Trust is:

- an expectation about the general **cooperativeness** and **helpfulness** of individuals and organizations
- a **faith** in people.
- a belief in the **honesty, integrity,** and **reliability** of others outside of your close family or friends.

# Why Social Trust Matters

- There is a robust causal relationship between **trust** and **economic growth** and **better public institutions**.
- In the United States, trust is also correlated with **declining optimism** and **growing economic inequality**



# Trust as measured by the General Social Survey (GSS)

## Fair



Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you if they got a chance, or would they try and be fair?

## Helpful



Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful, or that they are mostly just looking out for themselves?

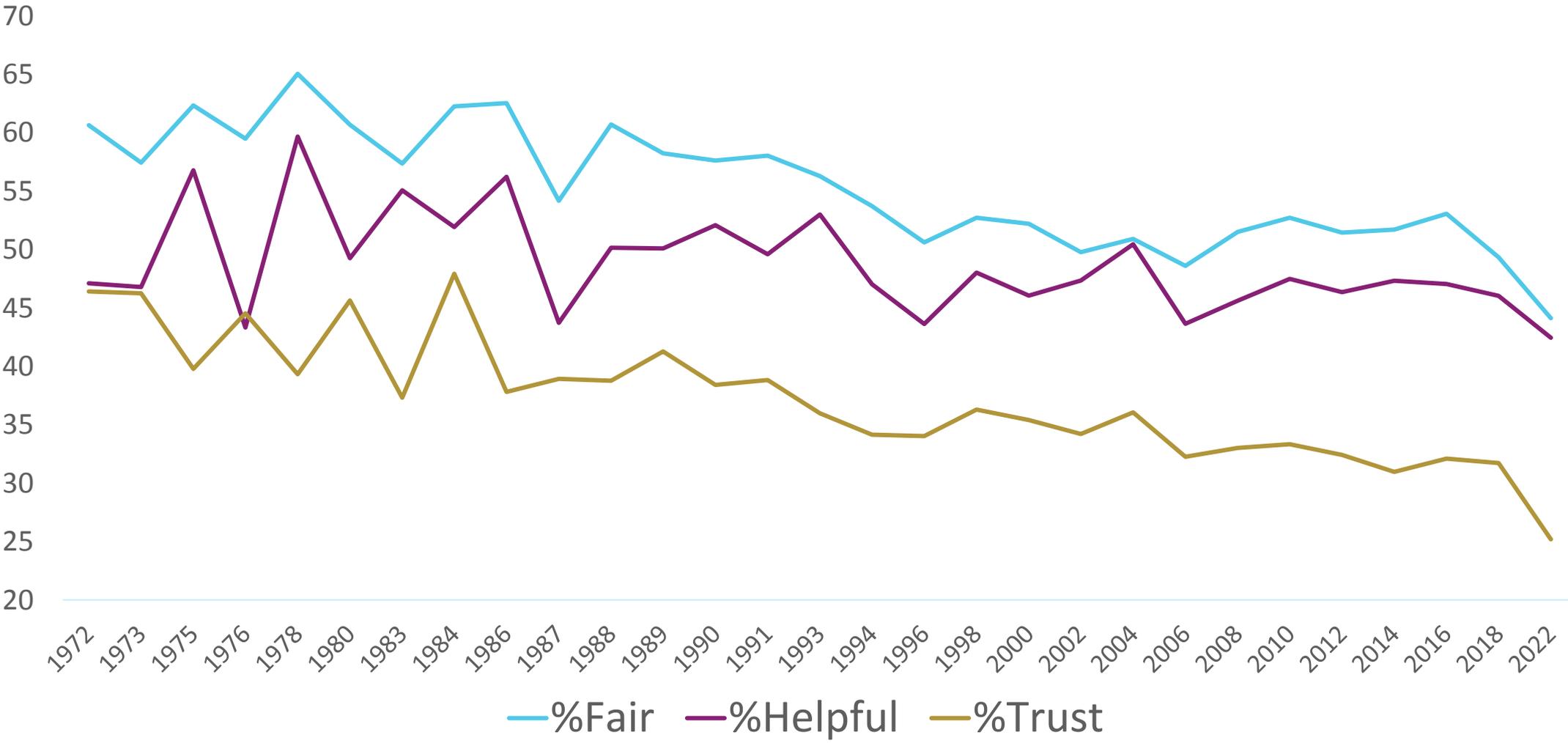
## Trust



Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?

# Nationally, trust in others is declining

## Exhibit 1. National trends in trust, according to GSS data, 1972-2022

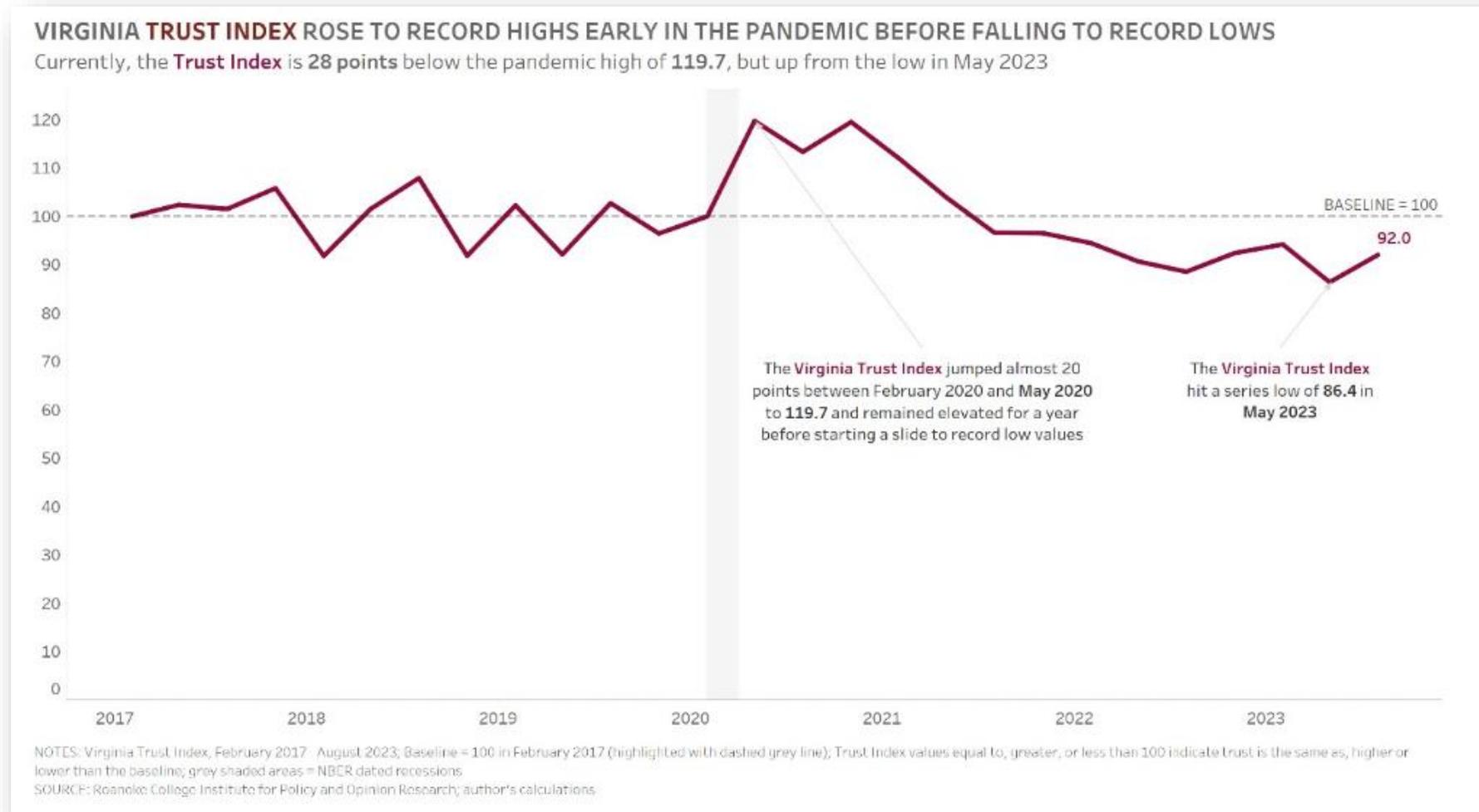


Source: Insight Region® analysis of the General Social Survey, 2024.

# Data Source: The General Social Survey

<b>Data Strengths</b>	<b>Data Limitations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nationally representative, interview survey of the U.S. adult household population.</li><li>• Data have been collected biennially over 50 years</li><li>• Response rates exceeding 60 percent.</li><li>• Within 12 months of data collection, data are made available to the public</li><li>• Spanish-speaking respondents have been included since 2006</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ability to conduct analyses at the city- or neighborhood-level is limited.</li><li>• Given the GSS started in 1972, collection of respondent demographic information about race and gender has evolved over time.</li></ul>

# The Virginia Trust Index



Source: Kassens, AL. Roanoke College Poll: Virginia Trust Index Report 2023, Poll Release, *Roanoke College*. September 20, 2023. Available at: [https://www.roanoke.edu/news/rc\\_poll\\_trust\\_2023](https://www.roanoke.edu/news/rc_poll_trust_2023)

# Data Source: The Virginia Trust Index\*

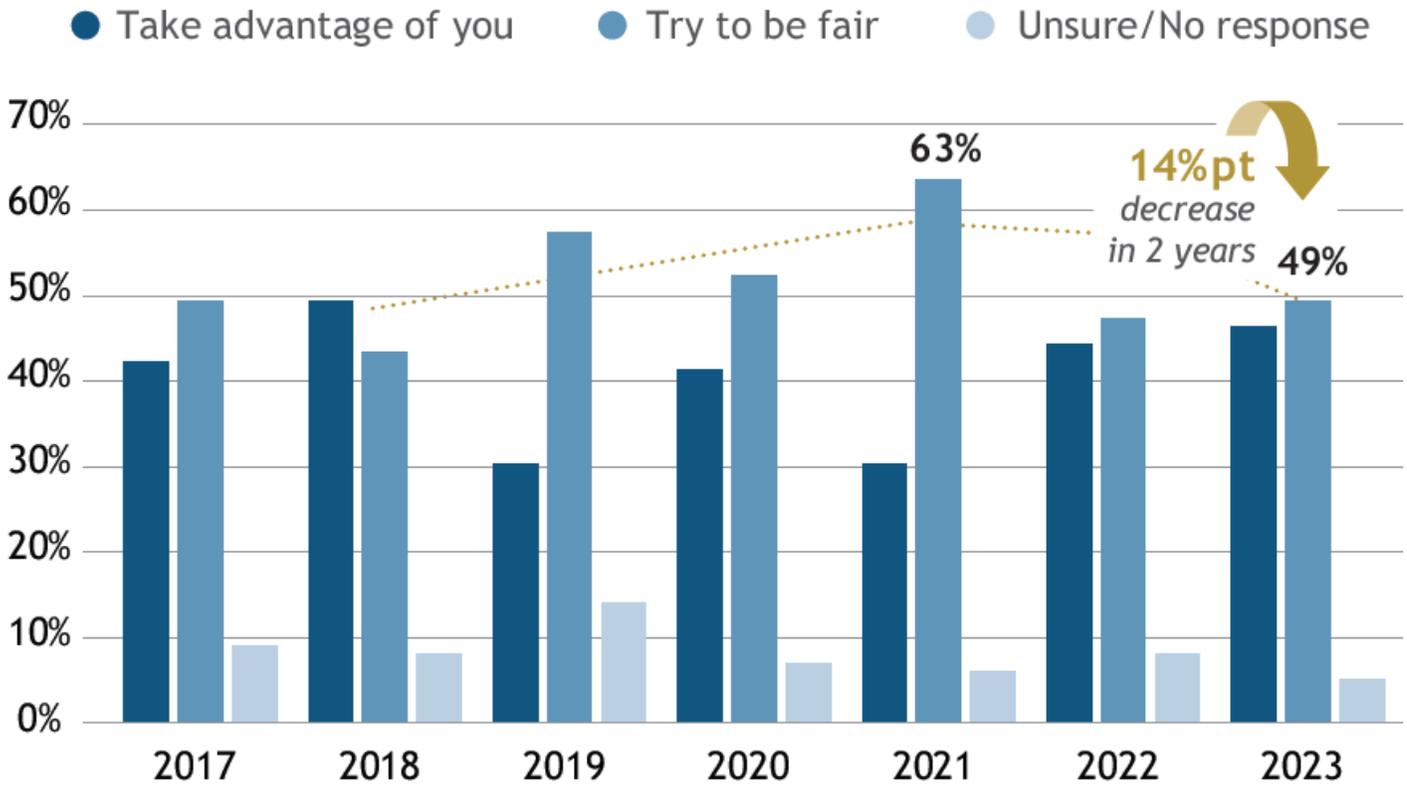
Data Strengths	Data Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Same survey questions developed by the GSS</li><li>• Data collected quarterly from February 2017 through November 2023</li><li>• Random digit dialing of both landlines and cell phones, along with web-based surveys</li><li>• Sample is weighted by age, race, gender</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No representation of non-English speakers.</li><li>• Northern Virginia is defined broadly (i.e., including the counties of Fauquier and Stafford, and the city of Fredericksburg)</li></ul>

\*The Virginia Trust Index is created by the Institute for Policy and Opinion Research (IPOR) at Roanoke College. IPOR is a part of the American Association for Public Opinion Research's (AAPOR) Transparency initiative, which requires methods to be thoroughly vetted on a regular basis. IPOR is also a charter member of AAPOR Code of Professional Ethics and Practices

# Fair

## Exhibit 2.

Northern Virginians' belief that most people will be fair



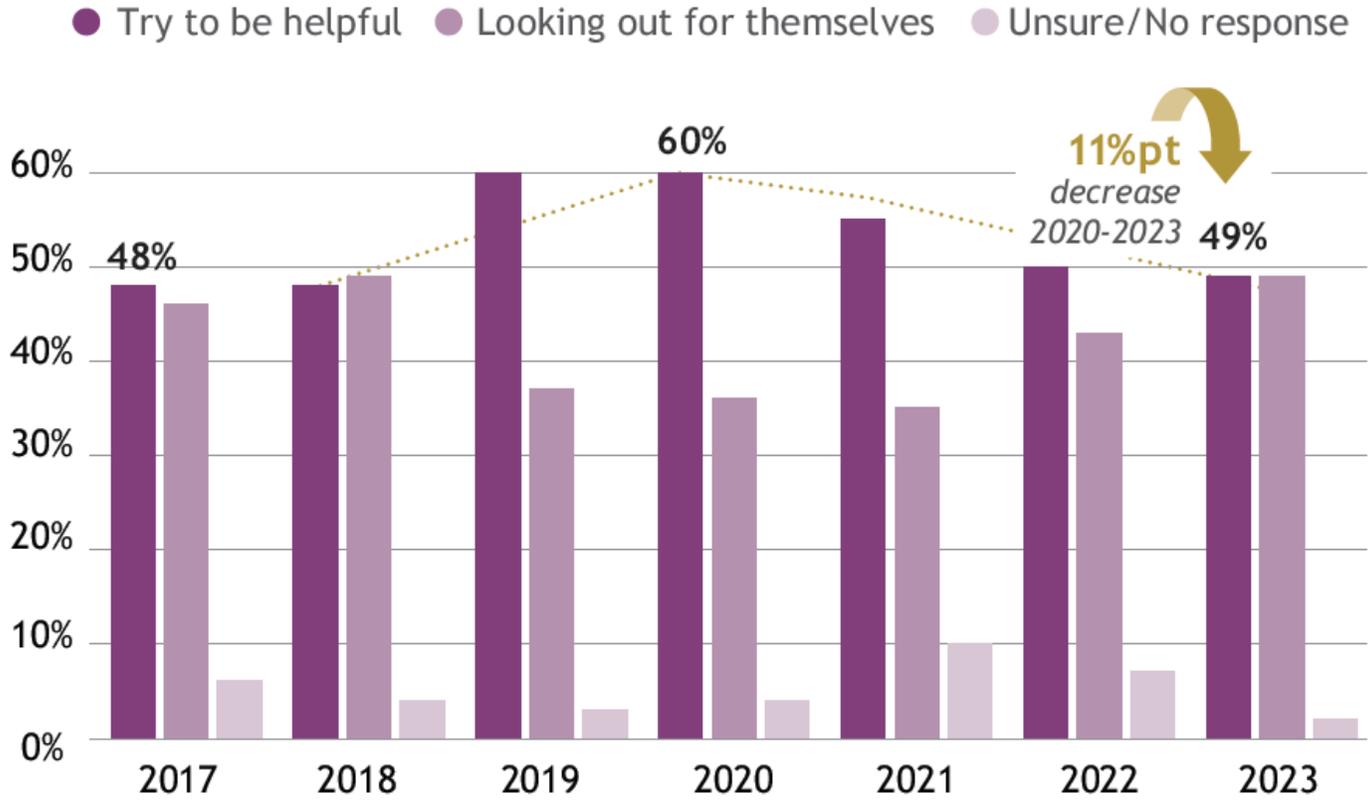
Belief that others will try to be fair *declined 14 percentage points* in the past 2 years.

Source: Insight Region® analysis of the Virginia Trust Index data, Roanoke College Institute for Policy and Opinion Research and Alice Louise Kassens (Roanoke College, Economics).

# Helpful

## Exhibit 3.

Northern Virginians' belief that most people will try to be helpful



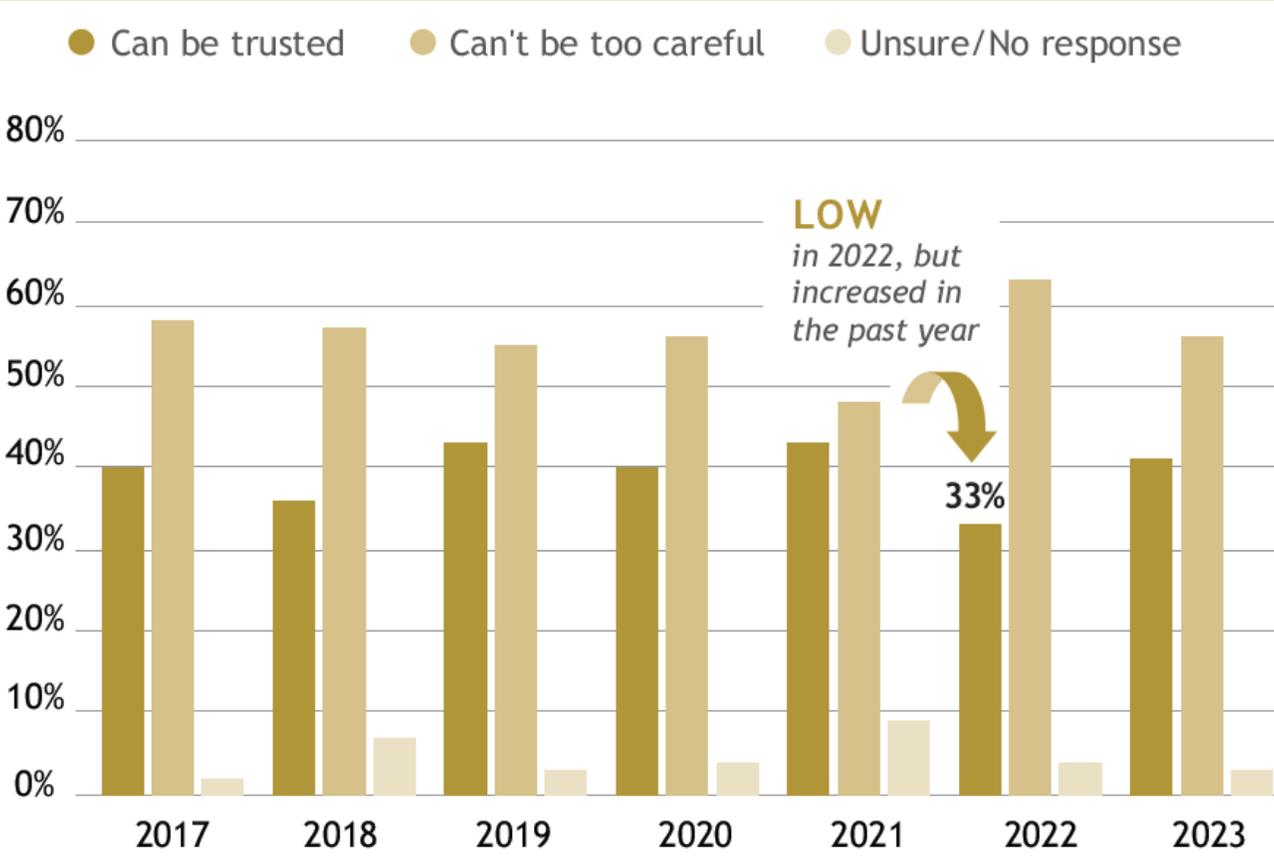
Belief that others will try to be helpful *declined 11 percentage points* between 2020 and 2023.

Source: Insight Region® analysis of the Virginia Trust Index data, Roanoke College Institute for Policy and Opinion Research and Alice Louise Kassens (Roanoke College, Economics).

# Trust

## Exhibit 4.

Northern Virginians' belief that most people can be trusted



Belief that most people can be trusted reached a **low of 33% in 2022**, but increased in the past year

Source: Insight Region® analysis of the Virginia Trust Index data, Roanoke College Institute for Policy and Opinion Research and Alice Louise Kassens (Roanoke College, Economics).

# Conclusions

- Increased trust can lead to economic growth and better public institutions.
- Trust among Northern Virginians mirrors National and State trends
  - Northern Virginian's belief that others will strive to be fair and helpful has declined in recent years.
  - Belief that others can be trusted reached a 5-year low in 2022, but increased slightly in 2023

All of us in  
Northern  
Virginia can  
shape future  
trends in social  
trust

# What do you think about Social Trust?



Take out your cell phones

Scan the QR code or visit:  
[https://www.menti.com/  
bljsvc8p6c4r](https://www.menti.com/bljsvc8p6c4r)



2024  
shape   
OF THE region™  
CONFERENCE

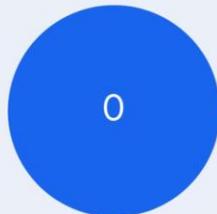
Shape of the Region Conference 2024



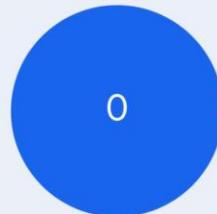


Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you if they got a chance, or would they try and be fair?

Take advantage of you



Try to be fair





# Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful, or that they are mostly just looking out for themselves?

Try to be helpful



Look out for themselves





# Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?

Most can be trusted



You can never be too careful



# Thank you for your time and attention!

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