



One Small Step FAQ for BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

What is StoryCorps?

Founded in 2003, StoryCorps has given 600,000 people of all backgrounds and beliefs, in thousands of towns and cities in all 50 states, the chance to record interviews about their lives. The organization preserves the recordings in its archive at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress and has amassed the largest single collection of human voices ever gathered. StoryCorps shares stories with the public through podcasts, radio and TV broadcasts, animated shorts, digital platforms, and best-selling books. StoryCorps is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization that is independently funded by public and private sources.

What is One Small Step?

One Small Step is StoryCorps' effort to help us remember the humanity in people with whom we may disagree. One Small Step seeks to counteract the intensifying culture of contempt across the political divides by facilitating and recording face-to-face conversations that enable those who disagree to listen to each other with respect and to provide an opportunity for individuals to hear the voices and stories through our edited content and animated shorts. These conversations are not about politics but are, rather, an opportunity for people to talk about their lives. One Small Step aims to remind us that we have more in common than divides us.

The One Small Step interview methodology is based on "[contact theory](#)," which posits that under specific conditions, enemies can see the humanity in each other following meaningful face-to-face conversations. Research on StoryCorps' pilot interviews indicates that the One Small Step methodology is a powerful tool for combatting the growing culture of contempt in the United States. One Small Step conversations create lasting connections between people and help participants feel heard, respected, and less afraid.

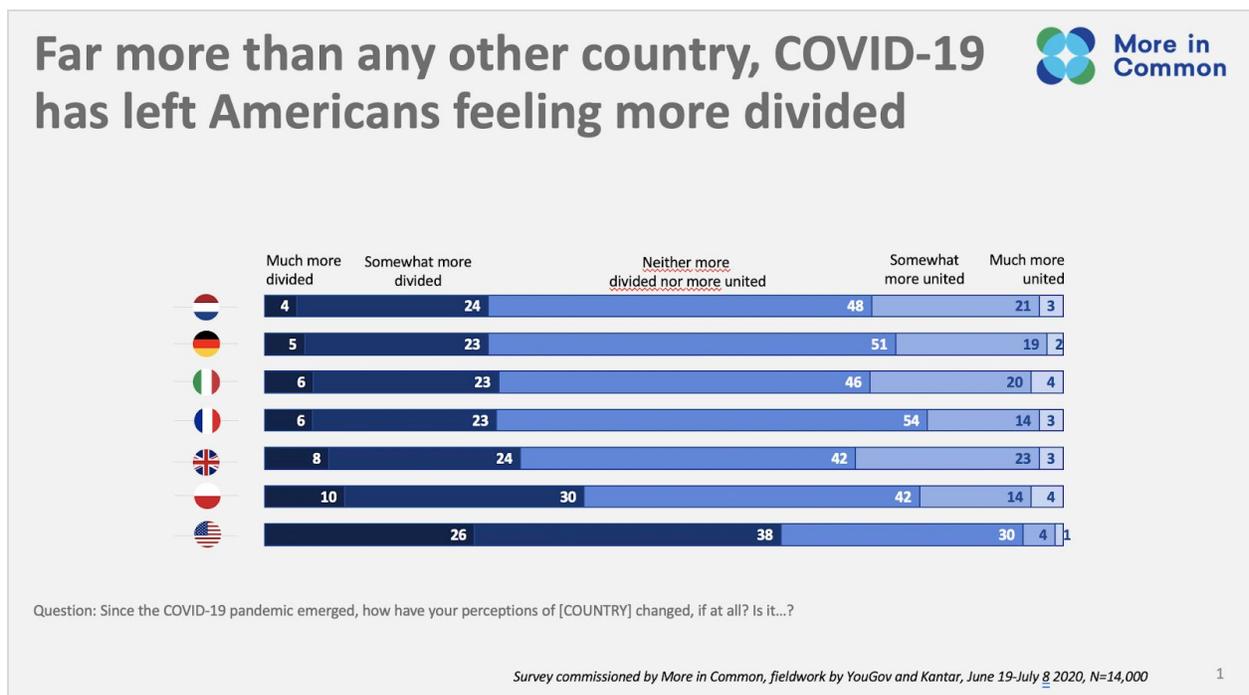
One Small Step is working to help people in America get past the labels of “Republican” or “Democrat” and “liberal” or “conservative,” to find our common humanity, and to remind Americans of the shared values that unite us.

One Small Step is a three-year effort (2020-2022). Work in 2020 is anchored in four cities including Birmingham, Alabama; Wichita, Kansas; and two additional cities to be announced in the weeks ahead. The goal of One Small Step is to convince the country that it’s our patriotic duty to see the humanity in people with whom we may disagree.

Why do we need One Small Step?

A [recent study](#) showed that about 40 percent of Americans view the other party as “downright evil;” one in five Republicans and Democrats agree with the statement that their political adversaries “lack the traits to be considered fully human.”

A 2020 study from the international initiative [More in Common](#) found that America was the most divided of all the western democracies:



In a October 2020 survey reported on by Politico, researchers [found](#) that Americans are increasingly open to violence across the political divide: about 1 in 5 Americans with a strong political affiliation says they are quite willing to endorse violence if the other party wins the presidency.

This is a crisis of contempt in America, one that risks tearing apart the fabric of our civil society and pitting neighbors against neighbors. One Small Step is StoryCorps' effort to be part of the solution, reminding Americans that no matter how fierce our political differences, our fellow citizens are neighbors, not enemies.

Who can participate in One Small Step?

Anyone in the United States can participate in One Small Step through StoryCorps' cutting edge recording technology which allows for participants to record interviews remotely and at a safe social distance. While all are welcome to participate, throughout 2020 StoryCorps will be anchoring its efforts in Birmingham, Wichita and two other cities to be announced. There is no cost to participate.

When did One Small Step originate?

StoryCorps first conceived of One Small Step as a response to the societal divides laid bare during the 2016 election. We found that individuals were eager to have conversations with people who hold opposing views, but were challenged to identify a person with whom they could have such a conversation. During the pilot phase (2018-19), the organization recorded hundreds of test interviews between pairs of individuals, including people who were meeting for the first time, in 40 cities. In nearly every case, participants walked away feeling enriched by the experience.

What can a One Small Step participant expect?

Participants are strangers of differing political perspectives matched with each other by StoryCorps in each city. StoryCorps shares a one paragraph autobiography, no last name attached, with the other participant prior to the interview. When they come together for a conversation, they agree on the questions they will talk about, such as, "Who has been the most influential person in your life?" "How do you want to be remembered?" "Was there an experience in your life that formed your political views?" Conversations are then facilitated over StoryCorps', a virtual interview recording platform that allows for participants to engage in a manner that adheres to COVID-19 safety guidelines. An interview is approximately 40 minutes, with additional time for set up. Total time: 90 minutes.

Why did StoryCorps choose the four cities in which it is anchoring One Small Step in 2020?

Based on research, polling, and other factors, StoryCorps believes these cities can demonstrate how to take a step away from toxic polarization, and can serve as a

model of courageous listening for the rest of the country. StoryCorps wants everyone in these cities to be aware of One Small Step, and wants everyone who is interested to have the chance to record.

Who funds StoryCorps? What is their affiliation with NPR?

StoryCorps is an independent nonprofit organization. A StoryCorps recording airs each Friday on NPR's "Morning Edition."

StoryCorps' One Small Step is made possible by the generous support of the Fetzer Institute, Kate Capshaw and Steven Spielberg's The Wunderkinder Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and the Charles Koch Institute.

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