



THE 2025 COMPASSION REPORT

DEAR AMERICA,

IN OUR DARKEST MOMENTS, OUR HUMANITY SHINES BRIGHTEST.

When disasters strike or conflict rages, our communities show up, with love and resolve, guided by the unwavering light of collective compassion.

When a child falls, we don't stop to ask how they look, live, or pray. We lift them up, because that's the very soul of who we are.

Muhammad believed in every one of us. He showed us that true greatness is defined not by who we knock down, but by how many we lift up. As he said,

“SERVICE TO OTHERS IS THE RENT YOU PAY FOR YOUR ROOM HERE ON EARTH.”

When we feel fractured by fear, compassion isn't just an option – it's a necessity. Compassion invites us to face our fears with curiosity, fostering the courage and empathy to truly step into someone else's shoes. Compassion is a bridge, helping us move forward by finding common ground and understanding across divides.

Our collective decision to act with compassion is the antidote to division, polarization, and hate. Compassion is more than a feeling; it's a skill we can measure – a muscle we can strengthen.

As Muhammad knew, even the smallest act of kindness is a spark, powerful enough to ignite a flame that can transform the world.

Now is the time to ignite that flame. Join me in signing the Ali Compassion Pledge.

EVERY HAND WE LIFT, HONORS THE GREATNESS WITHIN US ALL.

Commit to meeting hate head-on with compassion. It never failed Muhammad, and it won't fail you.

With compassion



Lonnie Ali

Chair of the Muhammad Ali Index
Co-Founder of the Muhammad Ali Center

DEAR FRIEND,

For some, it may seem ironic that a man who built a living by knocking people out in the boxing ring would be the impetus for a national study on compassion. Yet, Muhammad Ali was much more than a boxer. The legacy he established outside the boxing ring was so fully dedicated to lifting people up that the Muhammad Ali Center, a cultural institution established in his name, is now leading an effort to strengthen communities across America..

IN THE SPIRIT OF MUHAMMAD ALI, COMPASSION IS ABOUT TO SHAKE UP THE WORLD!

The Champ died on June 3, 2016. His week-long memorial service attracted the greatest demonstrations of respect and admiration many of us have ever seen for one man. Vastly diverse groups of people from all around the world journeyed to his hometown of Louisville, Kentucky to publicly say goodbye to a man who was known for embodying compassion.

Unfortunately, the unity the world witnessed during Muhammad's memorial services has faded. Since then, we've watched our nation become more polarized. People have anchored themselves in singular ideas, hate speech has risen to alarming levels and offensive behaviors seem to be increasingly more common.

Our nation cannot continue down this path. It is imperative that we pause to recognize the perilous trajectory we find ourselves on and make the necessary corrections to collectively serve as our brothers' and sisters' keepers.

That's why we launched the Muhammad Ali Index. This ambitious research study by the Muhammad Ali Center not only reveals the state of compassion in our nation, but it also offers recommendations on how we can begin moving in healthier directions.

Like Muhammad Ali, we believe that people are deserving of a hand-up when they stumble even if they have different beliefs than our own. We believe that people who look differently than us should not be given a cold shoulder when their load in life gets too heavy to carry. Nor should people be disqualified from our sincere concern just because they don't always see life the way we do.

COMPASSION MATTERS.

As a result, the Muhammad Ali Center is committed to establishing kindness, generosity and concern as common core values; values that the Muhammad Ali Index will regularly measure, nurture, and celebrate.

Additionally, because this initiative is being done in the name of a man who never backed down from a righteous fight, this work won't be done in the shadows. The Muhammad Ali Center will use this initiative to collaborate with cities, community organizations, legislators and common citizens to take bold steps to promote agendas that undermine hate, dismantle polarization and unite us all.

In this inaugural Compassion Report are research findings that make a strong case for our nation to establish a compassion agenda. It also identifies hopeful responses from a wide variety of people who are ready for America to move in a more caring direction.

The 2025 Muhammad Ali Index findings are clear: the time is now for more compassion.

Fortunately, demonstrating compassion doesn't require money, degrees or prestige. Everyone can do it – including you.

Don't wait to join this movement. Visit our website to sign the Ali Compassion Pledge. Encourage your organization to become one of our Impact Partners. Consider donating to support our activation strategies. Or more importantly, share the news about the Muhammad Ali Index with someone who needs to know about this work.

Whatever you do, do not sit on the sidelines. Get up and get involved because compassion needs you in the game.

Gratefully yours,



DeVone Holt
President & CEO
Muhammad Ali Center
AliCenter.org

COMPASSION AND THE POWER IN ALL OF US

“IMPOSSIBLE IS NOT A FACT. IT’S AN OPINION. IMPOSSIBLE IS NOT A DECLARATION. IT’S A DARE. IMPOSSIBLE IS POTENTIAL. IMPOSSIBLE IS TEMPORARY. IMPOSSIBLE IS NOTHING.”

—MUHAMMAD ALI

The power to use our voices, take action, and build bridges is the power to change the world. Change is not impossible—it is within our grasp.

In today’s world “us versus them” ideologies are thriving. People are stuck – unable to find tools to bridge their differences. It feels too hard, too big, too complex...but that is not a fact. It is an opinion. We can cross divides. I have seen it first-hand.

In my role as Special Representative to Muslim Communities, and in other roles across three presidential administrations, I had the honor of talking with and learning from people all over the world. I was inspired by the power of young people who wanted to see change. They sought a better world through a more compassionate way of interacting with each other. Across classrooms, sports fields, and community initiatives in nearly 100 countries, I witnessed how they explored their power to change assumptions and build connections. And I witnessed how it made them feel. These acts of compassion transformed not just relationships but lives.

The Muhammad Ali Index on Compassion was born out of the knowledge that our American communities need a better way to be good neighbors and friends. Just because you may pray, love, learn or live in a way that is different from your neighbor does not mean you are powerless to engage with respect, civility, kindness, and compassion.

The Muhammad Ali Index dares us to envision and build a nation rooted in compassion. It challenges our political leaders, educators, artists, athletes—each of us—to make compassion a tool for change. By measuring compassion, inspiring collaboration, and driving action, this Index embodies Muhammad Ali’s legacy and the belief that a compassionate America is not only possible—it is essential.

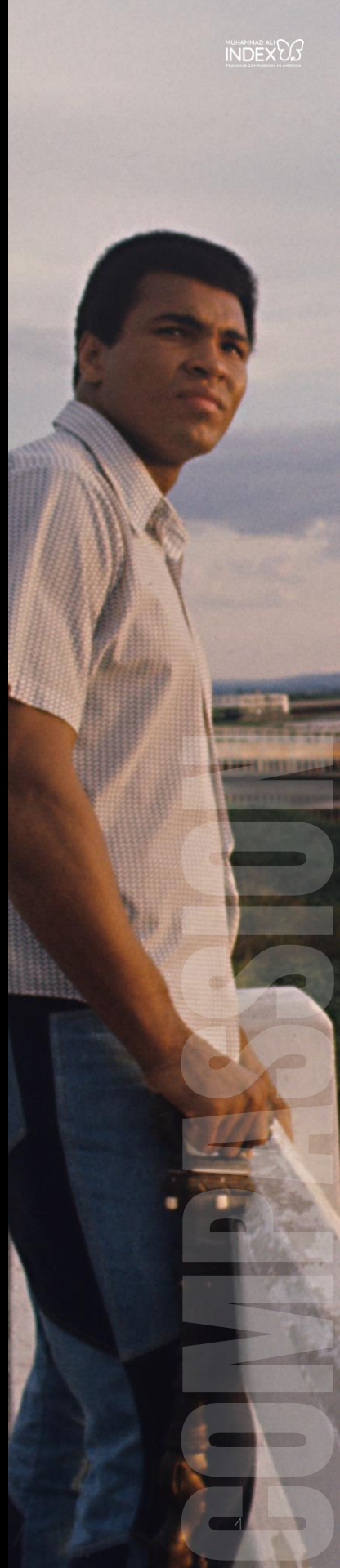
"THE AMERICA WE DREAM OF IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE. IT BEGINS WITH US DARING TO BELIEVE, TO ACT, AND TO LEAD WITH COMPASSION."

This is our declaration: that we, as Americans, will champion compassion—for ourselves, for our neighbors, and for our nation.

Let us begin now.



Farah Pandith
Muhammad Ali Global Peace Laureate
Foreign Policy Strategist | Former U.S. Diplomat | Global Expert
in Countering Violent Extremism



THE MUHAMMAD ALI INDEX INTRODUCES

THE COMPASSION REPORT

Muhammad Ali is more than a global icon. He was a torchbearer of compassion, using his unparalleled influence to inspire a better world. As a world-renowned athlete, a fearless advocate for peace, and a relentless champion for justice, Ali made compassion the heart of his life and legacy.

Through acts of kindness, generosity and a genuine care for others, Ali broke down barriers and united people across divisions of race, politics, religion and culture. He showed us compassion isn't just a virtue—it's a transformative force, a powerful response to suffering and a rallying cry for meaningful change.

With unshakable resolve, Ali used his platform to fight against injustice, polarization and hate—forces that continue to challenge our collective pursuit of a more compassionate world.

The Muhammad Ali Index: A National Study on Compassion in America

This inaugural Compassion Report embodies the Muhammad Ali Center's commitment to fostering a just and compassionate world where all people can reach their own greatness – just as Muhammad Ali envisioned.

This national research study combines a unique blend of human and artificial intelligence to track and predict the state of compassion in America. We call it the **Muhammad Ali Index**.

The 2025 Muhammad Ali Index explores the national cultural insights and behavioral trends shaping compassion in America, alongside a comprehensive survey of 12 diverse cities. Together, these methodologies provide a captivating initial snapshot of the nation's compassion levels.

In future Compassion Reports, the Muhammad Ali Center plans to expand its survey to include rural communities and additional urban populations. For 2025, we have captured a vital perspective on compassion through diverse voices sharing a story we all need to hear.

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Key Objectives of the Index:

The goal of the Muhammad Ali Index is to increase compassion in America and globally by disrupting the root causes of hate and polarization. Specifically, we aim to:



Galvanize Compassion Partnerships.

The Muhammad Ali Index invites a powerful network of public and private *'Impact Partners'* to adopt, amplify and harness this report to help inform their policies, procedures and programs in cities throughout the nation.



Root Out Polarization and Hate.

By measuring and predicting trends related to hate, discrimination and division, the Muhammad Ali Index provides critical insights into the roots and rise of polarization and the compassionate strategies needed to counteract it.



Empower Civic and Community Leaders.

By providing leaders with our vetted research data, the Muhammad Ali Index empowers them to create change in their communities. This can be achieved through innovative and impactful compassionate programs, or through policy initiatives. This data will empower leaders to tackle both immediate and emerging community challenges.



Inform National and Global Conversations.

The findings from the Muhammad Ali Index will challenge and inform national discussions on uniting divided groups and individuals. By identifying where compassion is thriving or lacking, the Muhammad Ali Index will shape narratives to promote a more empathetic and inclusive society.

METHODOLOGY

Understanding Compassion in America: Today and Beyond

The Muhammad Ali Center partnered with sparks & honey, a cultural intelligence consultancy, to analyze the primary drivers, opportunities and barriers for compassion in America. This work was done through combining an in-depth cultural and behavioral study with a comprehensive survey.

The Muhammad Ali Index Analytical Framework



PHASE 1: Cultural Analysis

The research underpinning this report yielded a five-layer compassion framework which illustrates how compassion—or its absence—manifests across American culture. The five core *Layers of Compassion* in the Muhammad Ali Index are: self, individuals, groups, local and nation. Each layer is aligned with specific trends, offering valuable insights into the current state and trajectory of compassion in the United States.

To develop these findings, sparks & honey utilized their proprietary trend taxonomy and AI-integrated tools (Q-Omni's Cultural Intelligence Application). This approach analyzed research studies, social media conversations and investments in compassion-focused products and programs to measure and predict compassion in America.

Analysis Time Period: June 2022 – June 2024



METHODOLOGY



PHASE 2: Behavioral Analysis

Our research included an in-depth analysis of social media over a two-year period to explore how Americans discuss compassion. This revealed a spectrum of positive and negative sentiment and identified key Compassion Sweet Spots.

The six Compassion Sweet Spots we discovered are: Spirituality, Self-care, Healthcare, Education, Sports and Politics. These are familiar social environments with established rules, rituals and shared values where compassion naturally takes center stage.

Each of these culturally significant sweet spots has a disproportionate impact on fostering compassion in society. They offer leaders powerful opportunities to drive meaningful change. Since compassion is already a prominent theme in these spaces, they provide readily available pathways to advance compassionate agendas quickly and effectively.

Analysis Time Period: June 2022 – June 2024

Compassion Sweet Spots

	Spirituality 	Self-Care 	Education 	Health Care 	Sports 	Politics 
People Leading Compassion Conversations Online	Spiritual leaders Mindfulness practitioners	Psychologists Sociologists Executive coaches	K-12 teachers Community organizers	Doctors Nurses Health aides	Athletes Coaches Fans	Politicians Activists
Key Topics in Each Compassion Sweet Spot	Empathetic acceptance	Shared humanity	Compassion skilling	Compassion as vocation	Team mentality	Acknowledging humanity
	Moral education	Over-striving	Compassion fatigue	Reframing "failure"	Coach & mentor influence	Compassion as strength
	Judgement of self & others	Disconnection	Compassion role models	Understanding trauma through empathy	Athletes as public servants	Compassionate policy-making

METHODOLOGY



PHASE 3: Index Development

To better understand the state of compassion in America, we gathered thousands of responses from residents across 12 diverse cities through a 33-question survey. Grounded in cultural and behavioral research, the survey explored perspectives on compassion at individual, community and national levels.

Research Parameters:

- Sample Size: 5,417 respondents, ages 18-72
- Geographic Scope: Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas/Fort Worth, Denver, Jacksonville, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Louisville, New York City, Phoenix, San Antonio and Seattle.
- Timeline: August 5, 2024 – October 8, 2024
- **Note:** City-specific sampling was designed to align with U.S. Census demographic data to ensure representative insights. Future Muhammad Ali Index research will expand to include rural communities and additional cities across America, broadening the scope of the findings.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The State of Compassion in America: Strategic Analysis and Future Trends

This *Compassion Report* offers a comprehensive examination of compassion in America by drawing from extensive cultural trends, behavioral studies, and survey insights. Key highlights include:

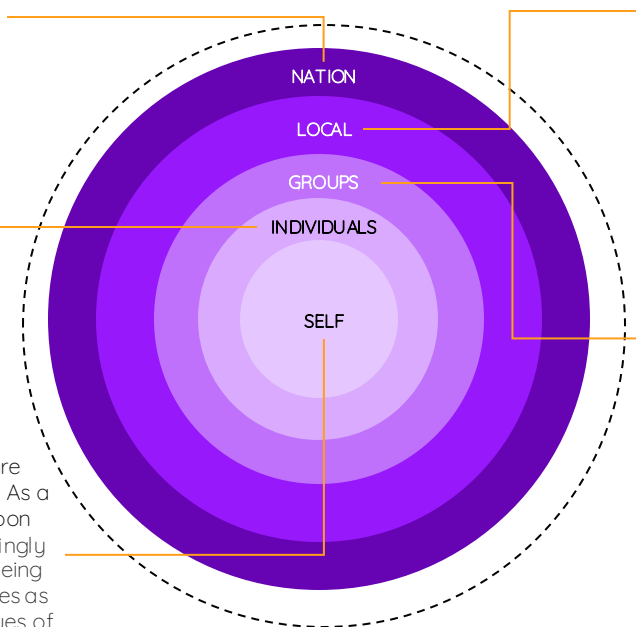
- 01 Five Layers of Compassion:** Exploring compassion through interconnected layers: compassion for self, compassion for other individuals, compassion for other groups, compassion for local communities and compassion for the nation.
- 02 Compassion Sweet Spots:** Identifying six culturally significant environments—Spirituality, Self-care, Healthcare, Education, Sports, and Politics—where compassion emerges as a central theme due to shared rules, rituals and moral standards.
- 03 Local Resident Perspective:** Amplifying voices from 12 pilot cities to provide actionable recommendations for leaders on how and where to strengthen compassionate efforts and make impactful investments.

The Five Layers of Compassion: Trends Shaping Compassion In The Next 2-3 Years

Polarization: American opinions are becoming more polarized, and people are taking on more extreme views as part of their identities.

Moral Imperative: People are increasingly urging brands, institutions and individuals to prioritize societal well-being over personal gain —stemming from a growing belief that moral responsibility is essential for a well-functioning society.

Human Longevity: Humans are living longer than ever before. As a result, people are reflecting upon their purpose and are increasingly prioritizing their overall well-being and longevity. This focus serves as a response to widespread issues of mental health challenges, loneliness and burnout.



Microcultures: People are looking to find and participate in communities built around shared identities, values and civic beliefs to contribute to the greater good of their local area.

Blurred Identity: Generational and cultural battles are underway as people, particularly Gen Z, are challenging the constraints of binary identities and campaigning for greater acceptance of others.

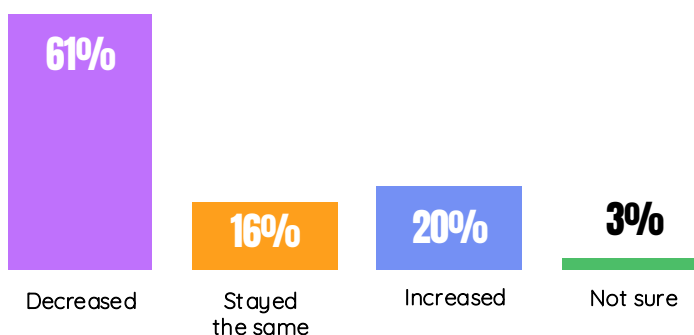
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Muhammad Ali Index reveals four key insights into the future of compassion in America:

Despite Polarization, Compassion Persists in America

More than 60% of Americans believe compassion has declined since 2020, a perception likely influenced by evolving media habits. As Americans increasingly curate their own “truths” through personalized news consumption, finding common ground becomes more challenging. Nearly half (46%) of survey respondents report avoiding dating people with opposing political beliefs, underscoring how polarization affects even personal relationships. Polarization is present in 30% of American cultural discourse, with its influence expected to remain strong over the next two to three years.

How do people think compassion has changed over the past 4 years?



However, behavioral metrics tell a more nuanced story. Compassionate actions — including volunteerism, charitable giving, and disaster recovery efforts — have remained stable or shown modest growth. Remarkably, online searches for “compassionate inquiry” have surged by 4,000% in the past five years, signaling a growing national appetite for bridging divides through dialogue and understanding.

Compassion-Related Searches July 2019 – July 2024



+4,000%

Increase in searches for compassion content in the last five years



Compassion is a Skill—A Muscle We Can Strengthen

Muhammad Ali Index research reveals that compassion is not merely a natural emotional response, but a teachable and measurable skill.

Neuroscience studies show individuals who engage in intentional compassion-building activities experience notable improvements in empathy, compassionate behavior and community engagement. This data underscores compassion as a skillset which can be cultivated through purposeful efforts and consistent practice. These findings hold transformative potential for reimagining approaches to community building, workforce development and social infrastructure design.

The Muhammad Ali Index research highlights several critical resources that individuals, organizations, and communities can leverage to develop “compassion muscles,” each offering unique strengths:



Faith-based Leaders - Religious and spiritual leaders demonstrate a particular effectiveness in driving long-term behavioral change through deeply rooted cultural programs and activities.



Sports Leagues - Athletic organizations and sports figures model how individual achievement can align with team goals, effectively bridging multiple demographics and inspiring collective action.



Grassroots Leaders - Neighborhood-level leaders, including nonprofit leaders, educators, medical professionals, and local politicians, provide vital on-the-ground expertise, translating compassion principles into actions that resonate with local needs.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When asked about who they prefer to learn from about becoming more compassionate, 60% of Muhammad Ali Index respondents chose “everyday people”—far surpassing teachers/trainers (24%) and activists (18%). Compassion from ordinary individuals is perceived as a genuine, voluntary act, free from professional obligations. This strong preference for everyday people highlights the importance of rethinking compassion training, emphasizing peer-driven and community-focused approaches.

Despite a majority of U.S. companies (60%) investing in etiquette training in 2024 covering topics like harassment and professional behavior—our findings suggest a more impactful approach may lie in engaging natural community leaders to conduct these sessions. By creating spaces where individuals who demonstrate compassion in their daily lives can share their practical wisdom, organizations can better connect with skeptics who distrust authority figures. This method taps into people’s natural preference to learn from trusted peers, making compassionate practices more relatable, authentic and effective for both businesses and employees.

Nurturing Self-Compassion Strengthens Entire Communities

There is a clear correlation between personal well-being and community health. People with lower self-compassion are 40% less likely to view others compassionately, creating negative ripples across neighborhoods and cities. Conversely, witnessing kind actions inspires similar behavior in others, building momentum for positive change.

Cities like Louisville and Seattle, where residents report higher self-compassion levels, highlight this connection. These communities show greater awareness of mental health resources and stronger perceptions of local compassion. The findings underscore a powerful pattern: nurturing individual well-being lays the foundation for stronger, more compassionate communities.

**COMPASSION
FROM
ORDINARY
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IS PERCEIVED
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Healthcare, Housing, and Childcare Investment are Critical for Compassion

The Muhammad Ali Index identified key foundational services common in cities with high levels of compassion. Survey respondents in these cities highlighted mental health services (68%), affordable housing (65%), childcare access (62%) and outreach programs for unhoused populations (62%) as “compassionate must-haves.”

While many pilot cities provide initiatives across these areas, public awareness of these programs peaks at just 28%. This gap reveals that investment in programming alone is insufficient—cities must also prioritize strategic communication and outreach to showcase their efforts.

Research suggests that leveraging Compassion Sweet Spots, such as local sports organizations to showcase a city’s compassionate “must-have” initiatives could effectively encourage greater community engagement and positive change.

The Muhammad Ali Index reveals “must haves” for compassionate cities, beginning with fundamental stability:

68%

Mental health services

65%

Affordable housing

62%

Childcare access

62%

Houseless outreach

INSIGHTS THROUGH THE FIVE LAYERS OF COMPASSION: A CULTURAL ANALYSIS

Compassion Layer 1

Self-Compassion: The Foundation of All Compassion

Compassion starts with the individual, where self-care and personal wellness are critical foundations for broader compassionate action.

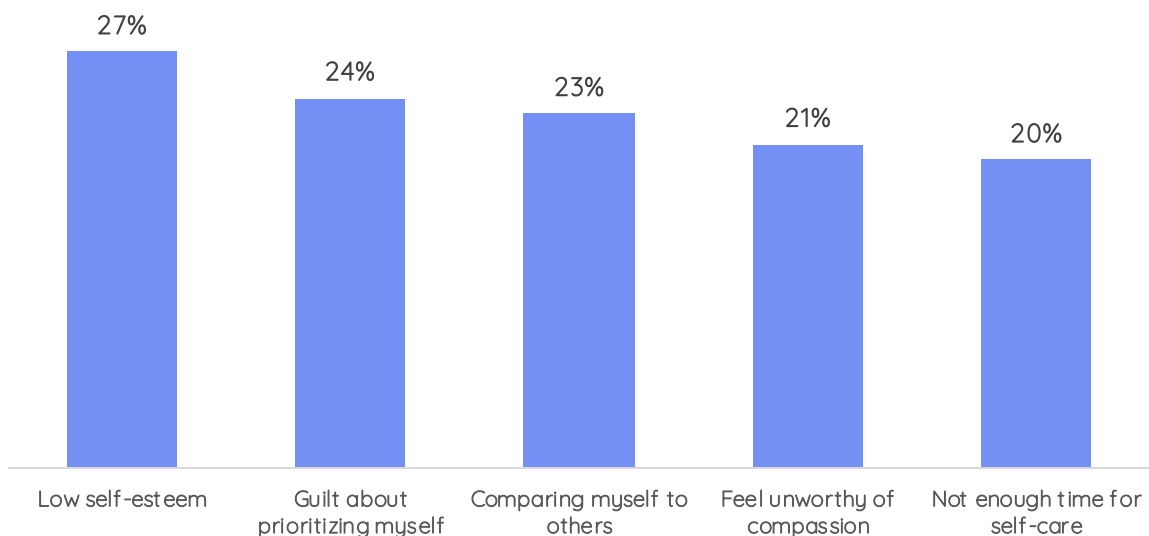
Research from the Muhammad Ali Index highlights a direct link: individuals with higher self-compassion are more likely to demonstrate compassion toward others. However, self-compassion is not just a personal virtue—it is a vital skill that fuels social connection and collective well-being.

The Index reveals troubling barriers to self-compassion. One-third of Americans (33%) report below-average levels of self-compassion, often citing low self-esteem, guilt about prioritizing themselves, comparisons to others and feelings of unworthiness. These challenges frequently lead to isolation and loneliness—issues compounded by the U.S. Surgeon General’s classification of loneliness as a critical public health concern.

Remote workers and young adults face particularly high levels of social isolation, with our increasingly digital world paradoxically intensifying feelings of disconnection.

Top Reasons people struggle to be self-compassionate

Gen Z, Millennials, and Women/women-identifying individuals tend to struggle more with these barriers





Professional burnout further erodes self-compassion and empathy, particularly among healthcare workers, who now experience triple the compassion fatigue compared to pre-pandemic levels. Workplace stress diminishes not only personal well-being but also community engagement, underscoring the need for systemic changes.

To address these challenges, organizations and community leaders must adopt innovative approaches to foster individual and community well-being. Beyond traditional wellness programs, solutions should include accessible community spaces, structured burnout prevention initiatives like paid leave and intergenerational support networks. Success must be measured not only by reductions in stress and loneliness but also by increases in compassionate behaviors, ensuring individual well-being becomes the foundation for a more connected and compassionate society.

63%

of people say it is possible to be compassionate towards others without being compassionate towards oneself

&

40%

of people with lower self-compassion are less compassionate overall compared to those with higher self-compassion, indicating there is a ceiling on compassion if you have low self-compassion.

THE FIVE LAYERS OF COMPASSION

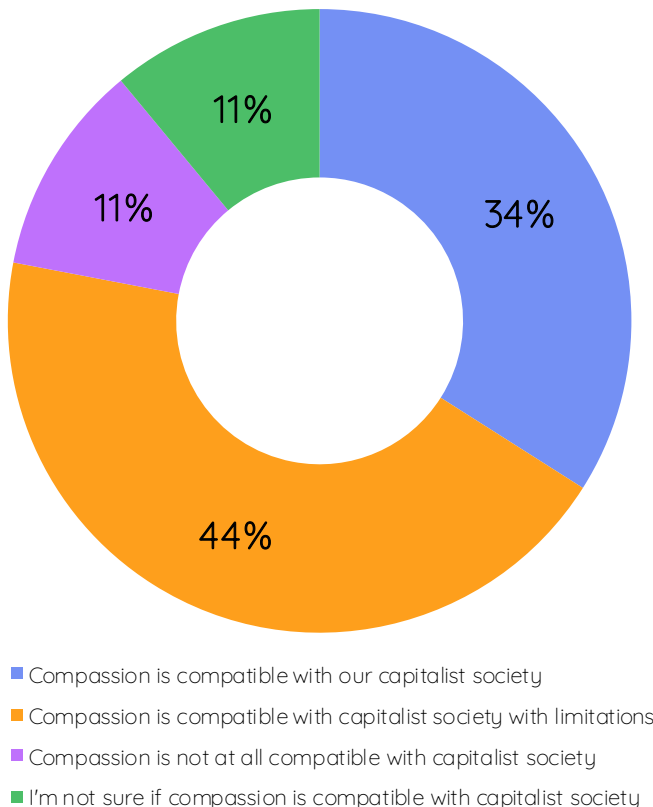
Compassion Layer 2

Interpersonal: How We Treat Individuals

The Muhammad Ali Index reveals that people tend to have the most compassion for their family (74%) and friends (68%) — more than themselves (67%). However, as social circles expand, compassion deteriorates. This trend is evident in service-oriented interactions, with increasing reports of incivility toward healthcare workers, flight attendants, and public-facing employees. Coupled with a rise in online bullying, this signals a broader erosion of compassionate engagement in shared spaces.

Over the next 2-3 years, the Muhammad Ali Index predicts two key shifts in how Americans treat one another. First, trust is moving away from major institutions toward community organizations as agents of societal good. Notably, nearly 1 in 4 people (22%) feel compassion is incompatible with a capitalist society.

Is compassion compatible with capitalism?



How much compassion do you have for the following people?

67%

Compassion for myself

74%

Compassion for family

68%

Compassion for friends

46%

Compassion for neighbors

33%

Compassion for people in my city

32%

Compassion for people from my state

31%

Compassion for people from other states

37%

Compassion for international tourists

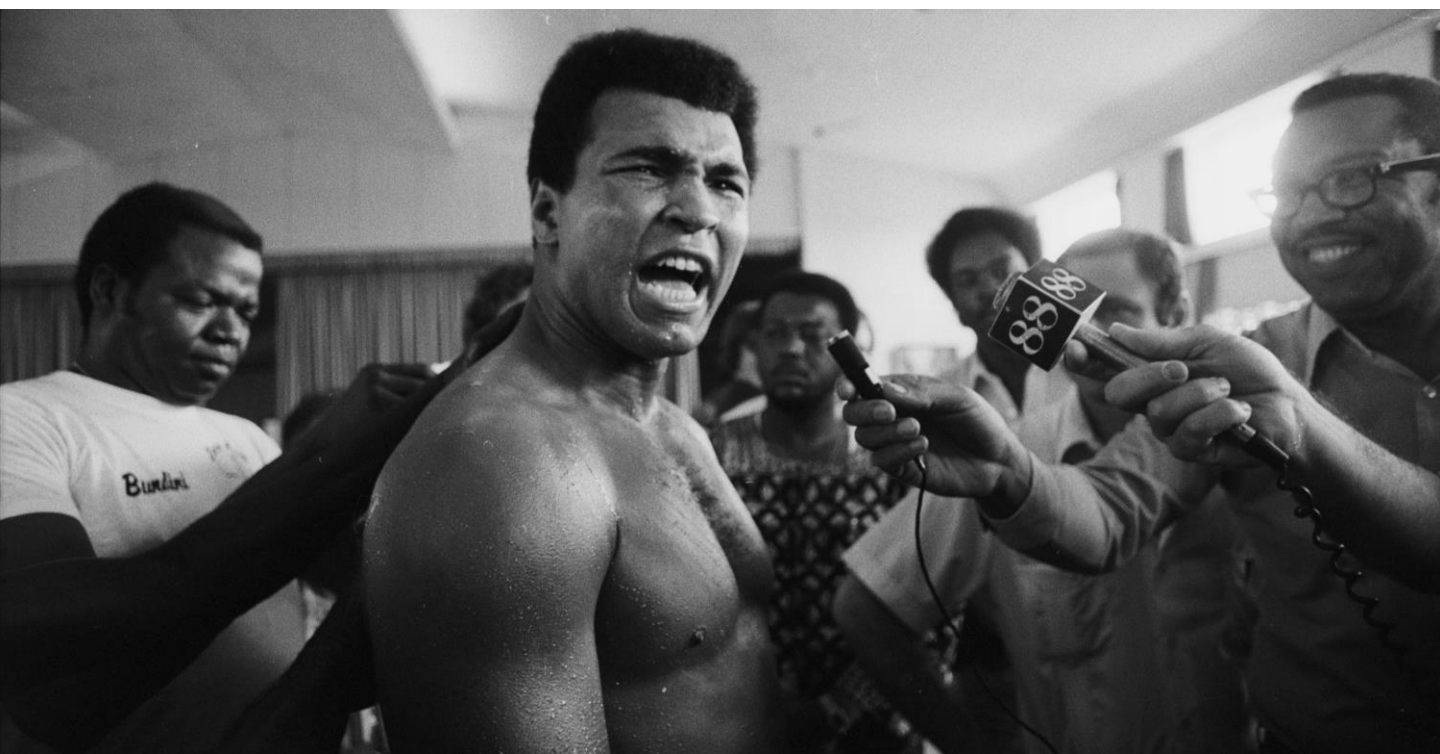
THE FIVE LAYERS OF COMPASSION

Second, the pandemic transformed interpersonal dynamics, fostering passive-aggressive behaviors that challenge traditional notions of connection. Businesses responded, with 60% offering etiquette training in 2024, yet only 11% of people report turning to coworkers for compassionate support. Business leaders and large corporations ranked lowest in fostering compassionate cities (8% and 6%, respectively), highlighting the need for more innovative approaches to workplace compassion.

It is often assumed that professionals such as healthcare workers, teachers, and caregivers are the most effective facilitators of compassion. However, these groups frequently suffer from burnout, as evidenced by nearly 100,000 TikTok mentions of “compassion fatigue” among care workers between January 2022 and July 2024.

Survey data highlights the importance of looking beyond traditional professions for compassion role models: 60% of respondents said they would prefer to learn about compassion from “everyday people” rather than teachers (24%) or activists (18%).

So, who can best cultivate compassion in America? The Muhammad Ali Index suggests focusing on athletes, thought leaders, and spiritual guides, whose influence can inspire communities and create sustainable pathways for compassion development. Shifting from traditional workplace programs to peer-driven models and leveraging figures with natural community influence could be the key to fostering meaningful and lasting compassionate change.



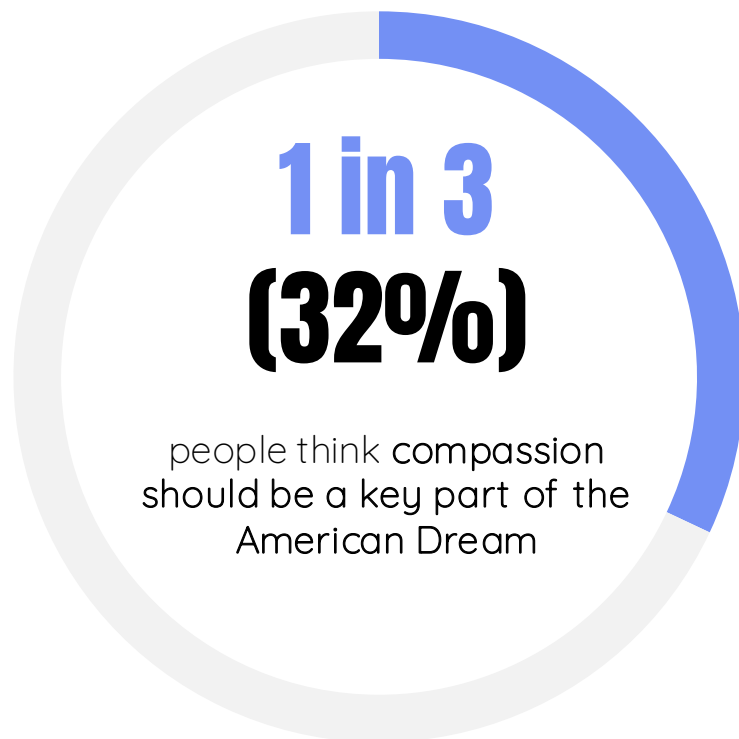
THE FIVE LAYERS OF COMPASSION

Compassion Layer 3

Group: Navigating “Us” versus “Them”

With fewer than one in three Americans reporting they “feel compassion for all,” addressing group-level compassion has become a critical societal challenge. This compassion gap is particularly pronounced along socioeconomic lines, with low levels of compassion reported for individuals with criminal convictions (29%), undocumented migrants (25%) and those in higher socioeconomic classes (22%).

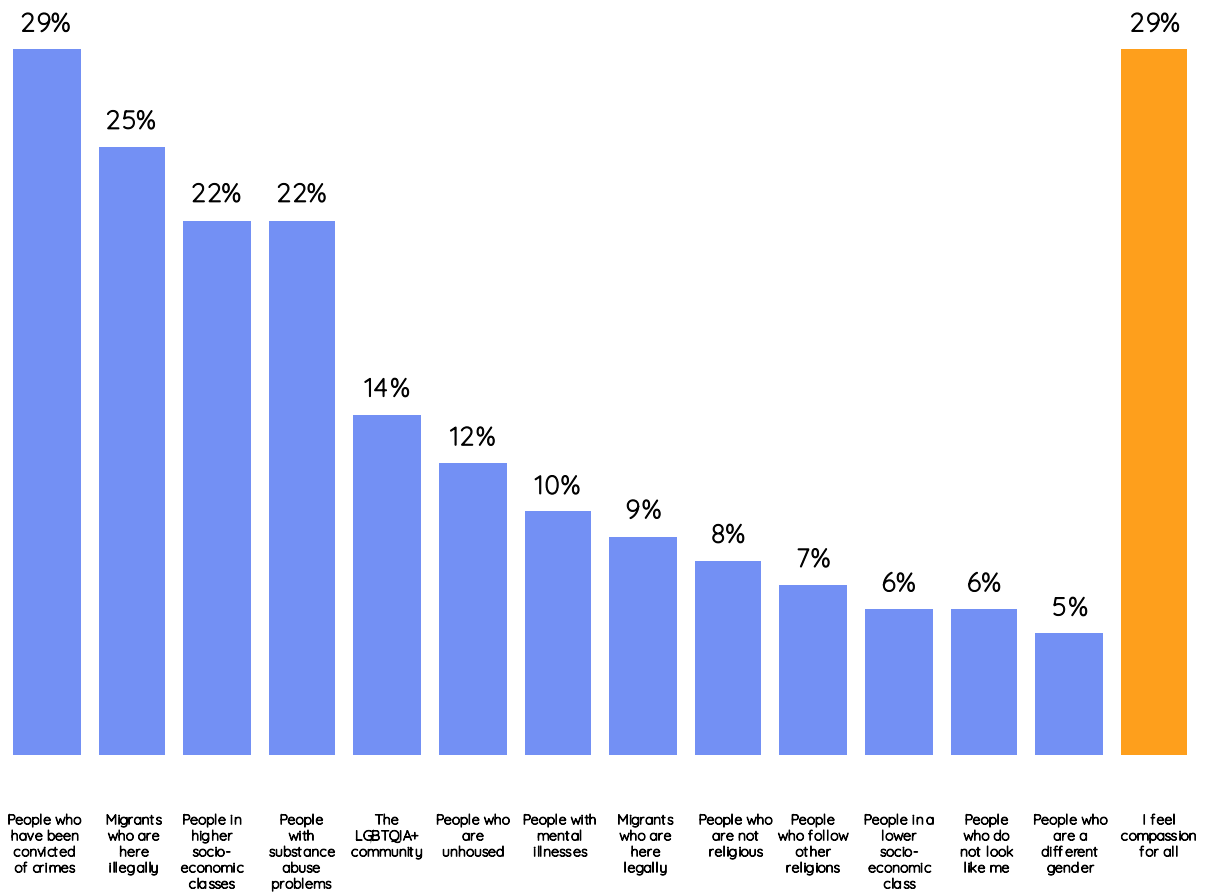
Generational and cultural dynamics play a key role in shaping group-level compassion. For instance, Gen Z is actively redefining societal values, with 29% identifying the American Dream as creating a fair and equal society. In contrast, older generations exhibit increasing resistance to anti-discrimination policies and “woke” rhetoric. These tensions are amplified on digital platforms, where both younger and older demographics experience targeted harassment. Fear of exploitation further emerges as the leading barrier to cross-group compassion, deepening societal anxieties around vulnerability and trust.

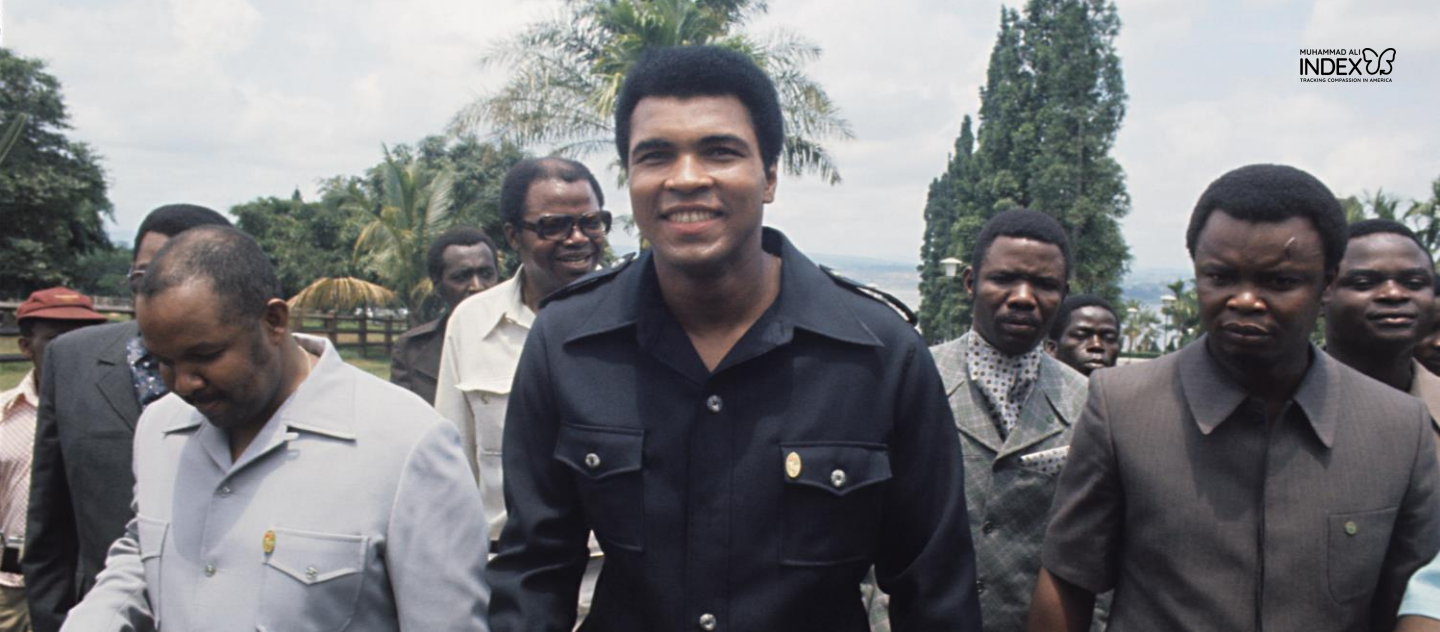


THE FIVE LAYERS OF COMPASSION

Despite these challenges, the research highlights promising pathways for fostering cross-group compassion. Religious and spiritual leaders effectively leverage narratives of interconnectedness to encourage prosocial behavior. The sports sector also demonstrates unique potential, with athletes championing social causes that extend beyond their achievements on the field. Even within political discourse, a growing appetite for empathetic dialogue is reflected in significant online conversations about bridging societal divides. These Compassion Sweet Spots emphasize the need for financial, social, and emotional investment in tangible community engagements to strengthen group-level compassion and foster meaningful connections across divides.

What groups do you find it difficult to have compassion for?





Compassion Layer 4

Local: The Power of Proximity

Our analysis highlights a significant trust gap within local communities, where 54% of Americans express greater confidence in local non-profits to lead compassionate initiatives than city officials (37%) or the national government (31%).

When it comes to implementing compassionate initiatives, community residents themselves are trusted the most (43%) - well beyond local city officials (27%) - underscoring the strategic value of grassroots mobilization in fostering community-level compassion.

Local communities emerge as pivotal hubs for compassionate action, with their infrastructures uniquely positioned to counterbalance national divisions through targeted engagement and resource integration. The Muhammad Ali Index also reveals a strong connection between city pride and compassion. Higher-scoring cities tend to have residents who express greater pride in their communities, with cultural diversity emerging as a key factor. Sixty-one percent of those proud of their city perceive it as compassionate.

Cities like Seattle, Louisville, and Atlanta demonstrate successful models of community compassion, driven by three critical success factors:

- 01** Comprehensive integration of resources connecting mental health, housing, and community programs.

- 02** Active civic participation supported by effective communication systems.

- 03** Leadership that prioritizes inclusive community development.

THE FIVE LAYERS OF COMPASSION

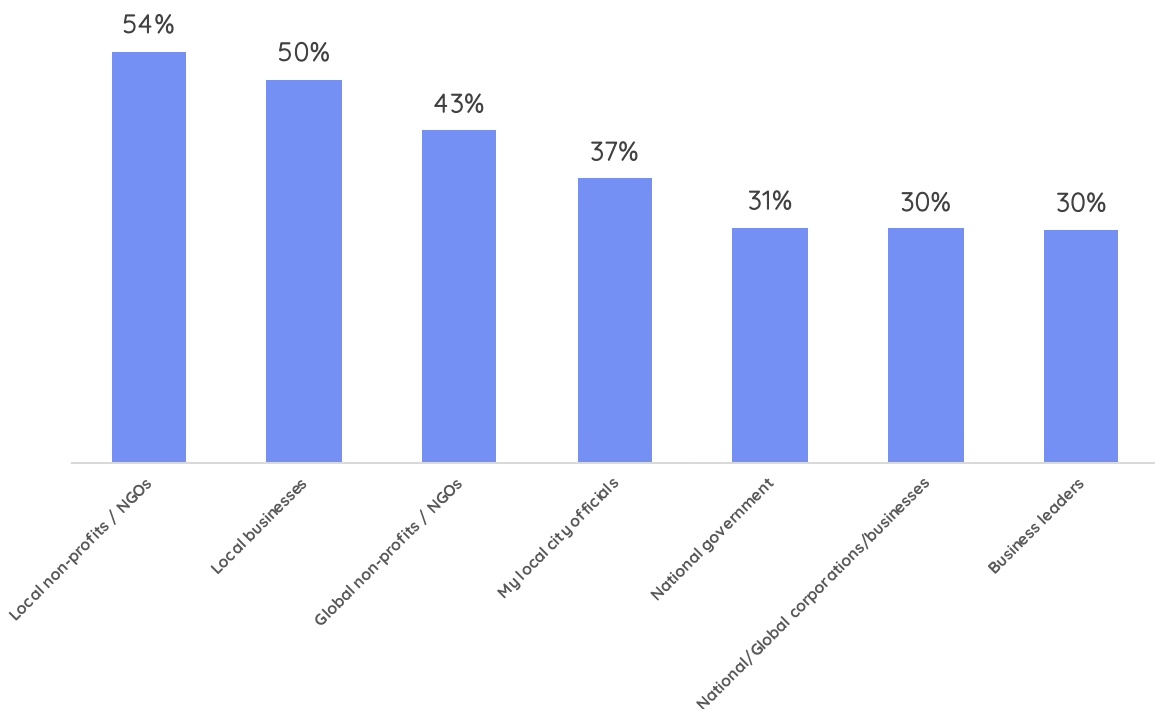
Conversely, lower-scoring cities such as Las Vegas and Jacksonville report fewer opportunities for career growth, resources and community engagement. As the nation grapples with critical challenges to social cohesion, public interest in revisiting historical community-building models—like local markets and neighborhood associations—is growing. The data emphasizes that successful compassion agendas require dual investments: strengthening institutional frameworks and fostering civic participation. Keys to success include:

01 Celebrating visible wins that unify residents.

02 Sharing measurable impact data to build trust.

03 Reinforcing cycles of community pride, social trust and compassionate action.

Institutions People Trust to Implement Compassionate Initiatives in their Cities





Compassion Layer 5

Nation: The Challenge of Scale

At the national level, polarization is expanding beyond traditional political boundaries, fundamentally altering how Americans perceive and interact with one another. Our analysis reveals troubling patterns of social fragmentation, with 61% of respondents reporting a decline in compassion over the past four years. This erosion manifests across various dimensions, from consumer behavior to personal relationships, with 46% of Americans avoiding cross-political dating.

Despite these challenges, the research uncovers significant resilience factors that highlight opportunities for fostering national compassion. Indicators such as a 4,000% rise in “compassionate inquiry” engagement over the past five years reflect a growing desire for constructive dialogue. Shared values endure despite political divides, with one-third of Democrats and one-quarter of Republicans recognizing common non-political values. Additionally, 70% of Americans want to reduce aggressive political rhetoric, and 43% remain optimistic about future compassion levels. These findings point to an undercurrent of social cohesion that can be strategically nurtured.

Global

Though not an official layer, we recognize that compassion reaches further, extending to the world, the environment, animals—and beyond. While this broader perspective was not the central focus of the current research, it presents compelling opportunities for future exploration into ‘global compassion.’ Additionally, it highlights the potential for scaling the Muhammad Ali Index across different nations, offering a pathway to understanding and fostering compassion on a truly global scale.

70%

of Americans want to reduce aggressive political rhetoric

&

43%

remain optimistic about future compassion levels

INTRODUCING THE NET COMPASSION SCORE (NCS): A NEW PERSPECTIVE FOR AMERICA

The inaugural Muhammad Ali Index scores compassion in America through the lens of 12 diverse pilot cities across the country, introducing a new common metric called the Net Compassion Score (NCS). This metric empowers individuals and leaders to take actionable steps to improve both personal and community compassion levels.

The Index introduces a scale ranging from -100 (least compassionate) to 100 (most compassionate) to measure compassion across American cities. Data from the 12 cities reveals moderate scores across the board, with the highest score at 16 and the lowest at -13. These results highlight both the strong foundations for compassion and significant opportunities for improvement in every city.

The NCS is calculated through asking residents to rank their city on a scale of 1 to 10 for the following:

- 01** How compassionate a city's residents are to others?
- 02** How compassionate do residents believe their city is?
- 03** How compassionate do residents think the United States is?

The NCS methodology categorizes respondents as:

<p>Promoters (8-10)</p> <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid #ccc; margin: 5px 0;"/> <p>Those who view themselves and their cities as compassionate.</p>	<p>Detractors (1-5)</p> <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid #ccc; margin: 5px 0;"/> <p>Those to believe themselves and their city not to be compassionate.</p>	<p>Neutrals (6-7)</p> <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid #ccc; margin: 5px 0;"/> <p>Those who hold moderate views on compassion.</p>
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Beyond the Net Compassion Score, each city was also analyzed through a traditional index to examine how residents' perceptions of compassion differ from the combined average, providing deeper insights into local attitudes and identifying opportunities for growth.

NET COMPASSION SCORES

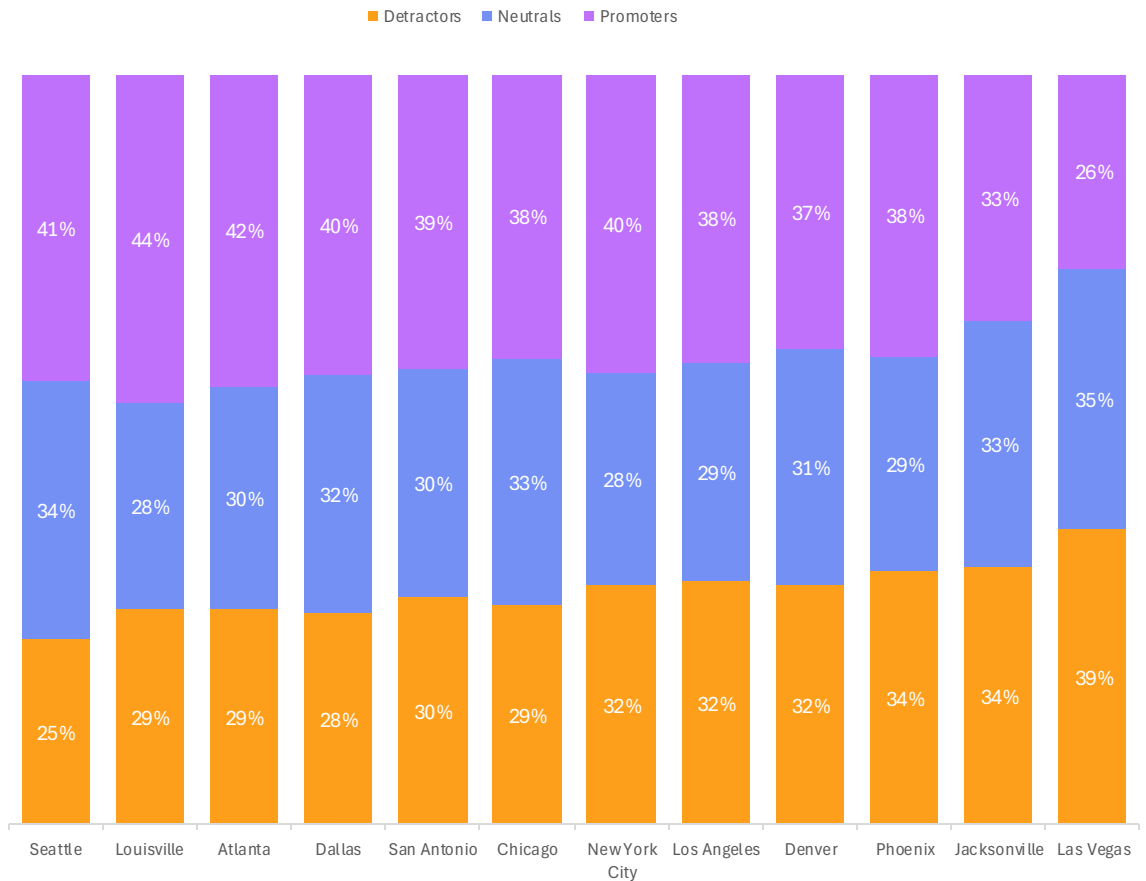
Most People Feel Their City is More Compassionate than the United States

The NCS is scored on a scale of -100 to 100, and all of the pilot cities fall within the median.

City NCS is based on how compassionate residents view their city to be.

US NCS is based on how compassionate residents from that city view the United States to be.

City Net Compassion Scores



City NCS:	16	15	13	12	9	9	8	6	5	4	-1	-13
US NCS:	8	10	1	0	3	4	7	1	-5	2	-5	-8

Note: NCS is scored on a scale of -100 to 100

NET COMPASSION SCORES

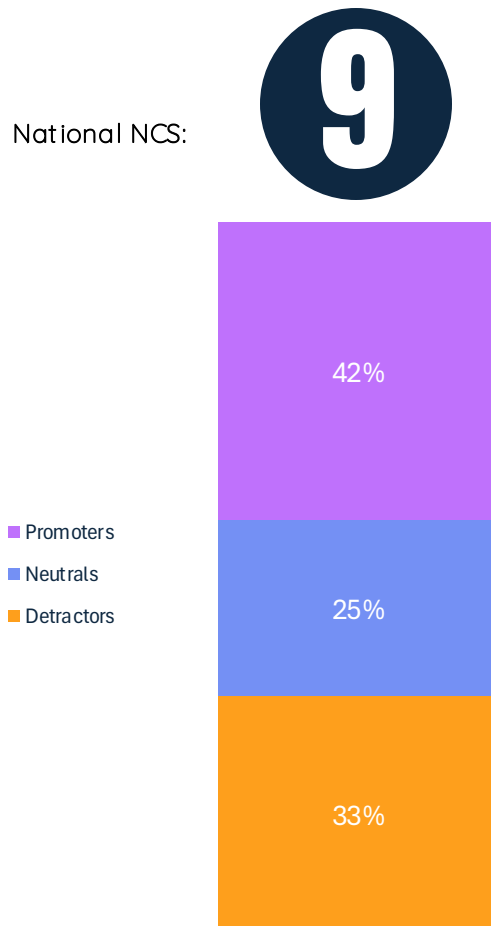
The “National” Net Compassion Score

When examining how Americans perceive compassion in their country, based on data from 12 pilot cities, the findings are cautiously optimistic.

Despite 11 of the 12 cities viewing their city as more compassionate than the nation as a whole, 42% rate American compassion highly (8-10 out of 10), 33% rate it low (1-5) and 25% fall in the middle (6-7).

This results in a National Net Compassion Score of 9, indicating that a majority view America as a compassionate nation.

“National” Net Compassion Score Based on Aggregate Survey Results



Note: NCS is scored on a scale of -100 to 100



Lessons Learned from Leading Compassionate Cities: Key Differentiators Between Higher and Lower Performing Cities

The research message for cities and organizations is clear: there are ample opportunities to build on existing compassionate practices while innovating new ways to strengthen connections between people and their communities.

Essential Community Support Systems

Higher-scoring cities like Seattle, Louisville, and Atlanta showcase the importance of essential community support systems, as residents in these areas report strong integration of social services and community resources. Citizens feel connected to mental health services, affordable housing initiatives and community programs. For example, Seattle's success is reflected in 26% of its residents frequently witnessing public displays of compassion, a testament to the city's accessible and visible support networks.

In contrast, citizens in lower-scoring cities like Las Vegas and Jacksonville say their communities lack support networks and access to resources, which results in reduced local engagement and lower overall Net Compassion Scores. The data highlights the critical role of well-integrated community resources in fostering a compassionate environment.

NET COMPASSION SCORES

Community Engagement and Civic Participation

Cities with higher Net Compassion Scores, like Louisville (15), perform better in fostering active civic participation and maintaining strong volunteer networks. Louisville residents are 12% more likely than survey participants overall to report access to community resources, highlighting a vital link between engagement opportunities and compassionate outcomes. Awareness of community initiatives and support services is notably higher in these cities, contributing to their stronger performance.

Conversely, lower-performing cities face challenges in building and sustaining community connections. For instance, Denver’s Net Compassion Score of 5 reflects limited public participation and less effective civic engagement structures. Residents in these cities report struggles with information dissemination and community mobilization, resulting in reduced collective impact and lower compassion metrics.

Economic-Social Balance and Resource Distribution

Residents of higher-performing cities report environments where economic opportunity and social support systems work hand in hand. For example, Atlanta’s residents are 22% more likely than the overall survey participants to say their city provides access to quality education. These cities are perceived as doing a better job of distributing resources equitably while fostering career opportunities and affordable housing access.

In contrast, residents of lower-performing cities often highlight struggles with economic disparities and limited social mobility. Phoenix residents, for instance, are less likely to feel their city offers adequate career opportunities or access to community resources. This imbalance often leads to financial challenges, with many residents expressing difficulty in meeting housing costs and achieving economic stability.





Leadership and Strategic Vision

Our research highlights key community metrics that local leaders can use to enhance communication and integration around community development and civic engagement.

In higher-performing cities, residents often credit leadership that prioritizes comprehensive community development. For example, Dallas residents are 7% more likely than the survey average to feel a sense of belonging and 9% more likely to believe their community is safe.

In contrast, residents of lower-performing cities often highlight the lack of cohesive systems to support compassionate community growth. For example, respondents from Jacksonville are less likely than those in other cities to observe compassion in public spaces or feel they have effective channels to share their concerns with local officials.

**IN HIGHER-
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STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A MORE COMPASSIONATE AMERICA: DRIVING SYSTEMIC CHANGE

The Muhammad Ali Index highlights four critical areas requiring coordinated time and investments to enhance compassion across the nation. Success in these areas hinges on collaboration among policymakers, corporations, sports teams, faith-based organizations and other key compassion leaders.

01 Champion Healthier Communities

The research shows that self-compassion is the foundation for all other layers of compassion. Leaders can champion healthier communities by prioritizing the following “must-haves”:

- **Enhance Mental and Emotional Health Systems:** Fund mental health services that emphasize self-compassion within local healthcare systems. Invest in activities like youth sports, cultural activities and third spaces to reduce loneliness and isolation.
- **Address Houselessness to Build Compassionate Communities:** Develop initiatives that provide stable housing, transitional support and wraparound services. Collaborate with local organizations to address root causes and create sustainable solutions.
- **Tackle Food Insecurity as a Barrier to Compassion:** Partner with local and national organizations to improve food access, develop community gardens and provide subsidies for fresh, healthy food.
- **Promote Physical Activity:** Create accessible programs and revitalize public spaces to encourage casual, active connections outside of home or work environments.

**FUND MENTAL
HEALTH
SERVICES THAT
EMPHASIZE
SELF-
COMPASSION
WITHIN LOCAL
HEALTHCARE
SYSTEMS.**

KEY TAKEAWAYS

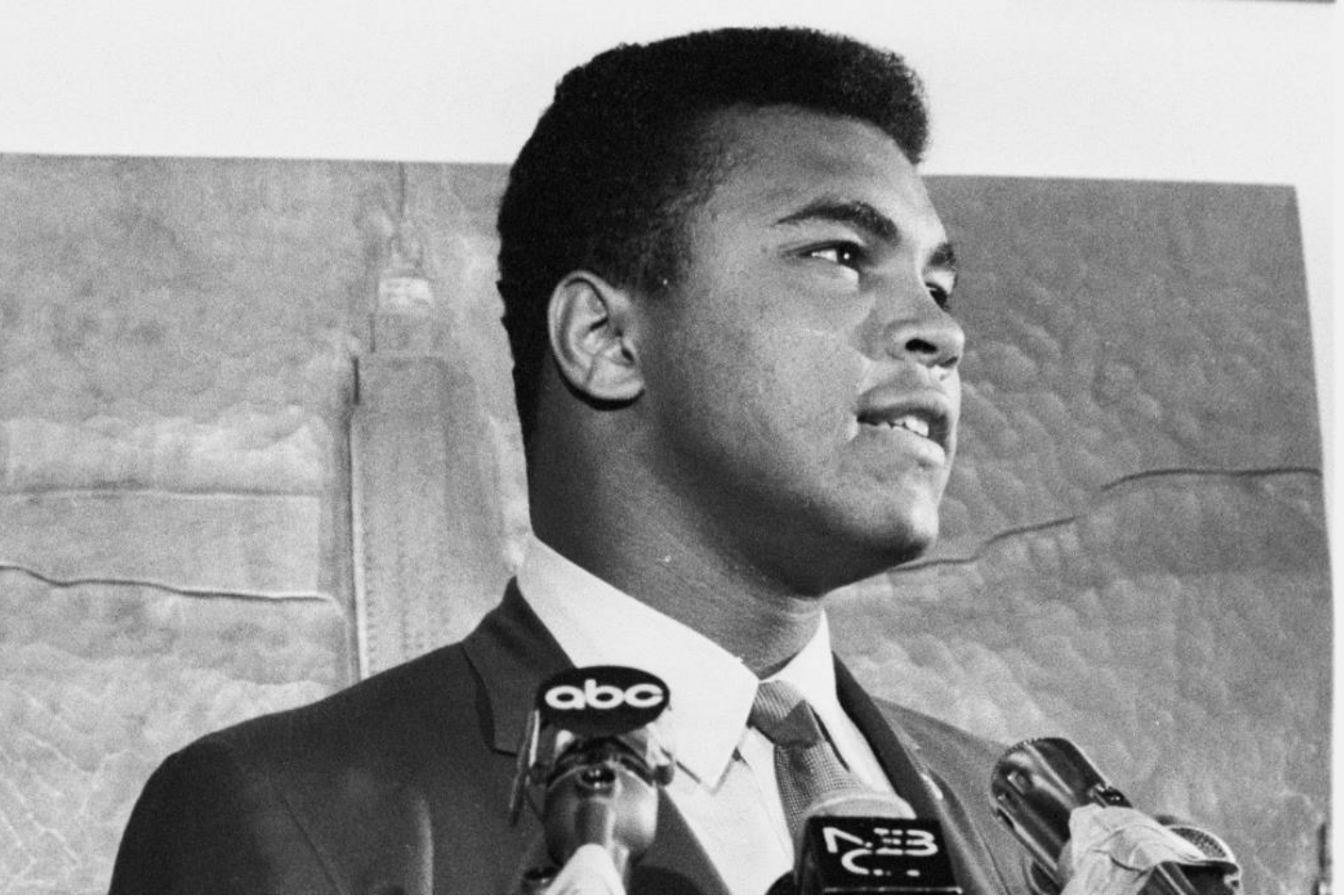
02 Build the Skill of Compassion

Compassion is both an inherent trait and a teachable skill. Neuroscience studies reveal that intentional compassion-building programs significantly enhance empathic behaviors and community engagement. To foster compassion, the Muhammad Ali Index recommends:

- **Create Curriculums:** Develop comprehensive compassion education programs with self-compassion as the foundation. Build coalitions that bring together nonprofits, civic leaders, athletes, coaches, educators and spiritual leaders to drive collective action. Partner with corporations and trade organizations to embed compassion practices into HR and employee training programs.
- **Develop Scalable Campaigns:** Launch impactful awareness campaigns at both national and local levels. Collaborate with municipal leaders and community influencers, including athletes, healthcare professionals, educators and spiritual figures to promote compassion as a skill everyone can learn.
- **Recognize and Measure Success:** Establish evaluation frameworks to track progress and amplify successful compassion initiatives. Create community awards to recognize and grow impactful projects, ensuring sustained momentum for compassion-building efforts.

EMBED COMPASSION PRACTICES INTO HR AND EMPLOYEE TRAINING PROGRAMS.





03 Invest in Compassion

The Muhammad Ali Index research reveals that all 12 pilot cities have significant opportunities to improve their Net Compassion Scores. Strengthening compassion requires coordinated investments from both public and private sectors. The following recommendations can help cities foster compassion through strategic funding and collaboration:

- **Build a Compassion Innovation Network:** Establish networks connecting venture capitalists, financial institutions and corporate philanthropies to fund and scale compassion-focused initiatives.
- **Champion Participatory Budgeting:** Encourage community involvement in budgeting decisions to direct investments toward impactful programs. Prioritize funding for cultural spaces, local initiatives and community engagement activities that promote compassionate connections.
- **Establish New Public-Private Partnerships:** Create innovative partnerships that align corporate initiatives with social policy objectives. Model compassion-focused infrastructures on successful public-private collaborations, such as affordable housing partnerships, to build lasting community impact.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

04 Empower Pride in Place

The data highlights a strong correlation between community pride and compassion. To foster this connection, stakeholders should focus on the following strategies:

- **Enhance Quality of Life for All:** Develop environmental programs and innovative approaches to address houselessness and improve community spaces.
- **Foster Inclusive Connections:** Expand cultural celebrations and build on existing networks of compassionate cities. Programs like those by Charter for Compassion and Compassionate USA provide scalable examples.
- **Highlight Everyday Acts of Compassion:** Use digital platforms and creative media like social campaigns, art contests and photo essays to showcase compassionate actions within local communities.



THE INAUGURAL MUHAMMAD ALI INDEX: A CALL TO ACTION

The inaugural Muhammad Ali Index reveals an inspiring truth: compassion in America is far from lost. While concerns about faltering compassion persist, our research uncovers fertile ground for nurturing stronger, more connected communities. Despite the challenges of polarization, the majority still view America as a compassionate nation. For the first time, we have identified Compassion Sweet Spots and actionable pathways to strengthen compassion across the country.

The Muhammad Ali Center is dedicated to continuing this important work. With your support, we aim to track the growth of compassion, expanding our research to include rural areas and additional urban communities. These insights will equip organizations and leaders with the tools they need to drive meaningful change.

Now that the 2025 research is complete and the report is accessible, it's time for action.

Sign the Ali Compassion Pledge and use the tools available to model compassion in your community.

TOGETHER, WE CAN BUILD A MORE COMPASSIONATE AMERICA, ONE MEASURABLE ACT AT A TIME.

The world needs your example.

For more information about the Muhammad Ali Index, visit aliindex.org.



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LEADERSHIP AND TEAM

Leadership

Lonnie Ali

Co-Founder, Muhammad Ali Center

DeVone Holt

President & CEO, Muhammad Ali Center

Farah Pandith

Muhammad Ali Global Peace Laureate,
Former Diplomat, Author, Foreign Policy Expert

Simon Cohen

Lead, Muhammad Ali Index

Cultural Strategy, Research & Design

Robb Henzi

Partner and Head of Social Impact Practice,
sparks & honey

Dani Thibodeau

Vice President, Cultural Strategy, sparks &
honey

Carrera Kurnik

Strategist & Anthropologist, sparks & honey

Omnicom Media Group Primary Research

Muhammad Ali Center

Erin Herbert

Vice President of Education & Programming

Ashley Parrott

Vice President of Development

Annie Moore

Senior Marketing Manager

Dustin Vogt

Digital Communications Manager

Garret McCorkle

Education Manager

Annie Varghese

Education Associate

Muhammad Ali Index Advisors

Mayor Greg Fischer

Mayor of Louisville, 2011-2023

Christopher Graves

Founder, The Resonance Code, LLC

Adnan Kifayat

Founder, Blueprint Strategies, LLC

Mayor Ron Nirenberg

Mayor of San Antonio, 2017-Present

Trisha Prabhu

Founder & CEO, ReThink Inc.

Ellett Toomey

Senior Director of Development, Planet Word

Honorary Advisor Barbara Sexton-Smith

Former Deputy Mayor of Louisville

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With Gratitude

Ann Curry

Authentic Brands Group

Cami Pyne

Donald Lassere

Face of Compassion Participants

field theory and Stephen Beasley

Idealist and Ami Dar

Jeanie Kahnke

Marilyn Jackson

All friends and supporters of the
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Muhammad Ali Center Board of Directors
Index Committee

Mary Casey

Senior Associate, KY Financial Group

Emilie Deutsch

Retired Vice President, Original Programming
and Features at CBS Sports

Rufus Friday

CEO, Consultant, Marketing Strategist at
Rufus Friday Consulting, LLC

Colin Gottlieb

UK Media Executive

Dr. Christopher Jones

Associate Professor Surgery Director, Section
of Hepatobiliary & Transplant Surgery at
University of Louisville School of Medicine

Kris Sirchio

Founder/CEO of Net Positive/Sirchio Family
Office

Thomas Williams

Attorney at Stoll Keenon Ogden PLLC

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HATE HEAD-ON WITH
COMPASSION. IT NEVER
FAILED MUHAMMAD,
AND IT WON'T FAIL YOU.**

