

NSSE 2018 – Selected Results on Civic Engagement

Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness | George Mason University

March 2019

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) collects information from first-year (FY) and senior (SR) students about the characteristics and quality of their college experiences. George Mason University has participated in NSSE every three years since 2000. In 2015 and 2018, NSSE was administered to all FY and SR students at Mason, with a total response rate of 24% and 18%, respectively. The document presents selected results from self-comparison (2015 vs. 2018) and peer comparison with peer institutions (2018) on civic engagement items. Complete NSSE results for the university, by college/school, and by department are available at <https://ira.gmu.edu/survey-results-and-reports/>.

Highlights of Major Findings

2015 vs. 2018 Self-Comparison

Overall

2015 vs. 2018 by FY and SR Separately

- Mason FY students in 2018 reported a significantly lower level of civic engagement than their 2015 counterparts as measured by eight of the ten items in Figures 1 and 2 (11-36% in 2018 vs. 17-52% in 2015).
- At the SR level, 36-37% Mason students in 2018 participated in local or campus-related activities (e.g., informed themselves about local or campus issues, discussed local or campus issues with others), significantly lower compared to 41-42% in 2015 (Figure 5).
- Compared to 2015, a smaller percentage of Mason students in 2018, regardless of level, gave high ratings to their ability to help people resolve disagreements with each other; resolve conflicts that involve bias, discrimination, and prejudice; and contribute to the well-being of their community (57-68% in 2018 vs. 64-77% in 2015 at the FY level, Figure 3; 59-71% in 2018 vs. 70-78% in 2015 at the SR level, Figure 7).
- No significant change occurred between 2015 and 2018 in the percentage of students having had courses with community-based projects (service learning), a finding consistent at both the FY and SR levels (Figures 4 and 8).
- Over one-half of the students in both 2015 and 2018 reported that Mason experience contributed to their growth as informed and active citizens, despite a significant decrease at the FY level (Figures 4 and 8). Further analyses revealed that all four civic engagement components (influence-oriented, participation-oriented, ability to make a difference through participating in civic activities, and having courses with community-based projects (service-learning)) helped to contribute to students' growth as informed and active citizens.

2015 FY vs. 2018 SR

- Among those who took both NSSE 2015 (as FY) and NSSE 2018 (as SR), there was a significant increase at the SR level in discussing with others or informing themselves about state, national, or global issues (46-55% in 2015 compared to 69-72% in 2018, Figure 9). On the other hand, SR students were less likely to give high ratings to their ability to resolve conflicts that involve bias, discrimination, and prejudice compared to their first year (65% in 2015 vs. 56% in 2018, Figure 11).
- As expected, more SR students reported having had courses with community-based projects (service-learning) than they did during the first year (50% vs. 37%, respectively, Figure 12).

Subgroup

By Gender

- Decreased engagement in civic activities since 2015 was more evident among male students, particularly at the FY level (11-27 percentage point decrease on six of the first ten items, Table 1).
- Female students, while also less engaged in local or campus issues, slightly increased participation rates in activities addressing state/national/global issues, a finding especially true at the SR level (Table 1).
- Consistent drop in ratings for ability to make a difference through civic engagement was observed among male SR students (9-12 percentage point decrease since 2015, Table 1).

By First-Generation (FG) Status

- FY Non-FG students experienced the largest decrease in civic engagement, especially in activities related to local/campus issues (8-13 percentage point decrease since 2015, Table 2).
- Though not statistically significant, increased engagement in state/national/global issues was observed among FG students at both FY and SR levels and among non-FG students at the SR level (Table 2).
- Drop in ratings for ability to make a difference through civic engagement was most evident among non-FG SR students (7-17 percentage point decrease since 2015, Table 2).

By Ethnicity

- White FY students experienced the biggest decrease in civic engagement, particularly with regard to local/campus issues (9-19 percentage point decrease since 2015, Table 3).
-
- Though not statistically significant, increased participation in activities related to state/national/global issues was observed among several subgroups, most noticeably among Hispanic and White students at the SR level (Table 4).
- In terms of ratings for ability to make a difference through civic engagement, Asian and White SR students experienced the biggest drop since 2015 (9-13 and 5-14 percentage points decrease, respectively, Table 4).

2018 Peer Comparison

- In 2018, Mason students participated in local or campus-related activities (e.g., inform themselves about, or discuss with others about local/campus issues) at a significantly lower rate than those in peer institutions (33-36% for Mason vs. 42-43% for peers at the FY level, Figure 9; 36-37% for Mason vs. 41-42% for peers at the SR level, Figure 13).
- Mason SR students also trailed significantly behind their counterparts at peer institutions in 2018 in self-reported ability to help people resolve disagreements with each other, lead a group where people from different backgrounds feel welcomed and included, and contribute to the well-being of their community (69-74% for Mason vs. 74-78% for peers, Figure 15).
- Looking across levels, 39-45% Mason students in 2018 reported having had some courses with community-based projects, significantly lower compared to 51-55% at peer institutions; 52-56% Mason students reported that college experience contributed to their growth as informed and active citizens, again significantly lower compared to 60-61% at peer institutions (Figures 12 and 16).

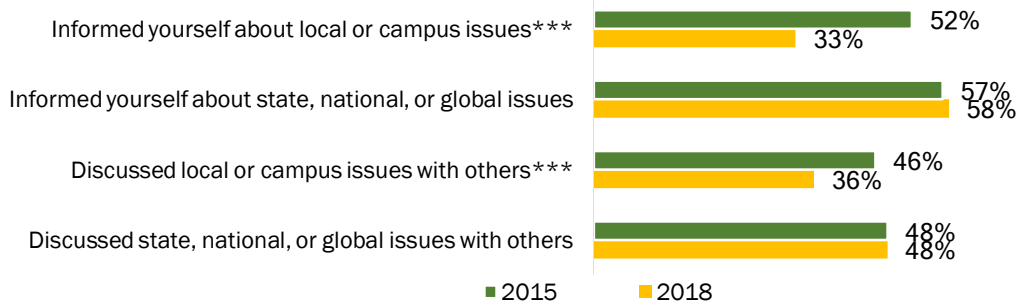
Important Notes

- For items addressing participation-oriented and influence-oriented civic engagement (e.g., Figures 1 and 2), the stem is “During the current school year, whether course- related or not, about how often have you done the following?”.
- For items addressing ability to make a difference through civic engagement (e.g., Figure 3), the stem is “Select the response that best represents your ability to do the following:”.
- *<.05, **<.01, ***<.001, t-test (2-sided).
- Mason Korea students were not included the analysis results.
- Peer institutions for civic engagement module items (all except those covered in Figures 4, 8, 12, and 16) are Central Michigan University, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, Kennesaw State University, North Carolina State University, Northern Arizona University, University of Missouri-St. Louis, and University of Nevada-Las; peer institutions for core item comparisons (Figures 12 and 16) are Texas Tech University, The University of Texas at Dallas, University of Alabama at Birmingham, University of Central Florida, University of Illinois at Chicago, and University of South Florida.

2015 vs. 2018 Self-Comparison

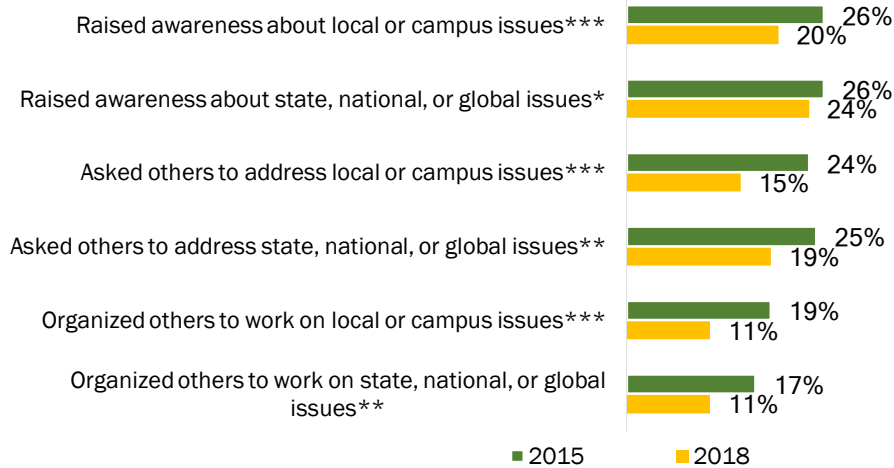
First-Year Students

Figure 1. Participation-Oriented Civic Engagement for FY: 2015 vs. 2018



Based on n=634-637 in 2015 and n=673-676 in 2018. Percentages are for 'often' and 'very often' combined.

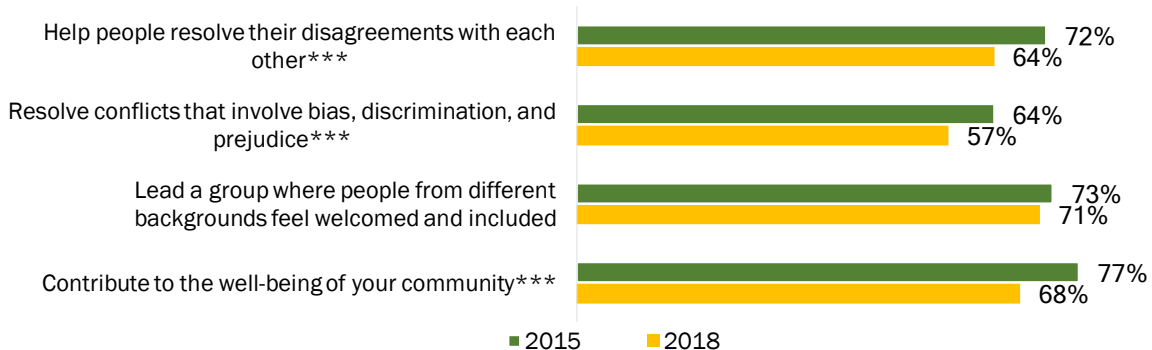
Figure 2. Influence-Oriented Civic Engagement for FY: 2015 vs. 2018



Based on n=628-636 in 2015 and n=666-674 in 2018. Percentages are for 'often' and 'very often' combined.

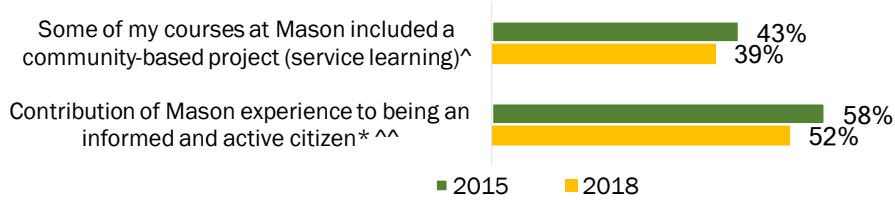
Figure 3. Ability to Make a Difference through Civic Engagement for FY: 2015 vs. 2018

Indicate Your Ability to Do the Following:



Based on n=631-637 in 2015 and n=675-676 in 2018. Percentages are for '5' or above combined on a 7-point scale from 1='poor' to 7='excellent'.

Figure 4. Service Learning and Mason Contribution to Growth in Civic Engagement for FY: 2015 vs. 2018



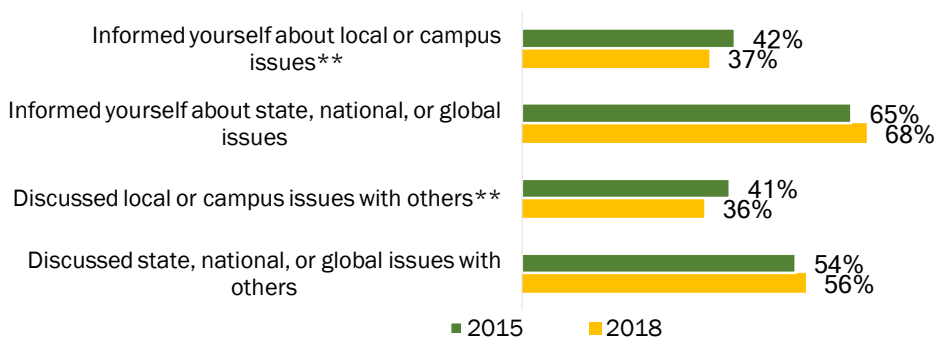
Based on n=684 and 632 in 2015 and n=719 and 699 in 2018.

^ Percentages are for 'some', 'most', and 'all' combined on a 4-point scale from 'none' to 'all'.

^^ Percentages are for 'quite a bit' and 'very much' combined on a 4-point scale from 'very little' to 'very much'.

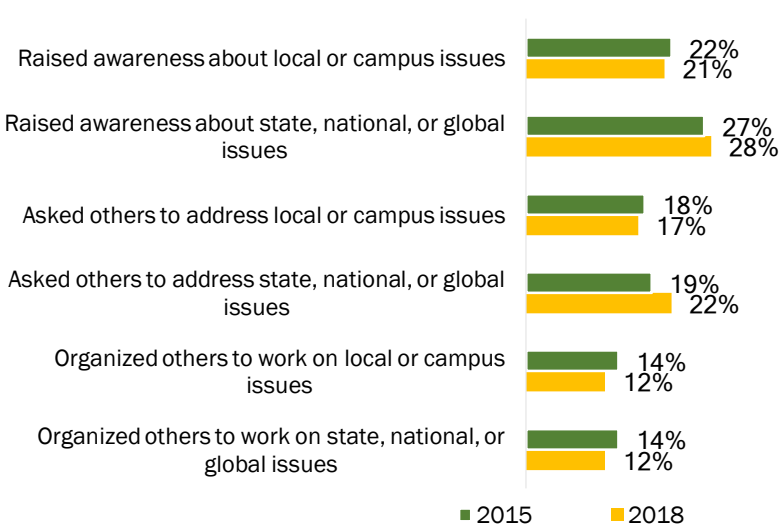
Senior Students

Figure 5. Participation-Oriented Civic Engagement for SR: 2015 vs. 2018



Based on n=966-973 in 2015 and n=892-894 in 2018. Percentages are for 'often' and 'very often' combined.

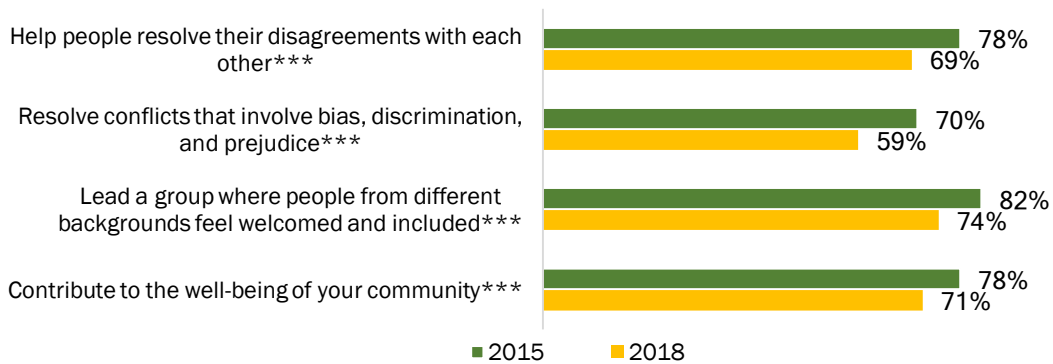
Figure 6. Influence-Oriented Civic Engagement for SR: 2015 vs. 2018



Based on n=962-971 in 2015 and n=884-892 in 2018. Percentages are for 'often' and 'very often' combined.

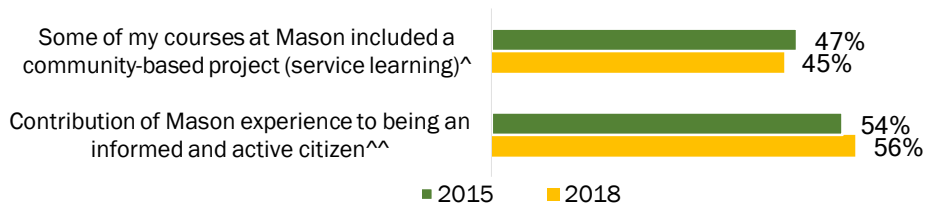
Figure 7. Ability to Make a Difference for SR: 2015 vs. 2018

Indicate Your Ability to Do the Following:



Based on n=967-974 in 2015 and n=893-897 in 2018. Percentages are for '5' or above combined on a 7-point scale from 1='poor' to 7='excellent'.

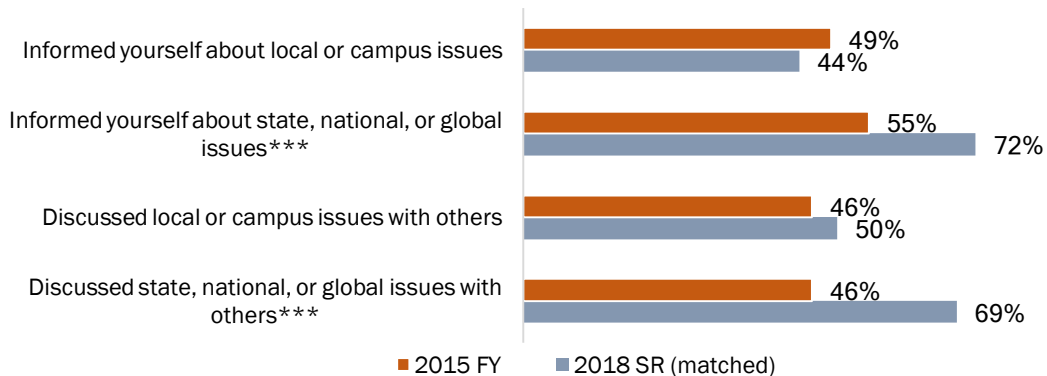
Figure 8. Service Learning and Mason Contribution to Growth in Civic Engagement for SR: 2015 vs. 2018



Based on n=1040 and 970 in 2015 and n=942 and 922 in 2018. ^ Percentages are for 'some', 'most', and 'all' combined on a 4-point scale from 'none' to 'all'. ^^ Percentages are for 'quite a bit' and 'very much' combined on a 4-point scale from 'very little' to 'very much'.

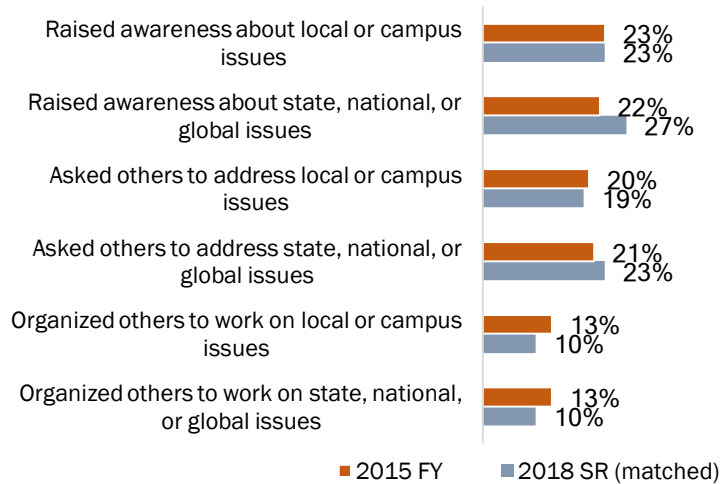
2015 FY vs. 2018 SR Comparison

Figure 9. Participation-Oriented Civic Engagement: 2015 FY vs. 2018 SR (matched cases only)



Based on 110-112 matched cases. Percentages are for 'often' and 'very often' combined. ***p<.001, Paired Samples Test (2-sided).

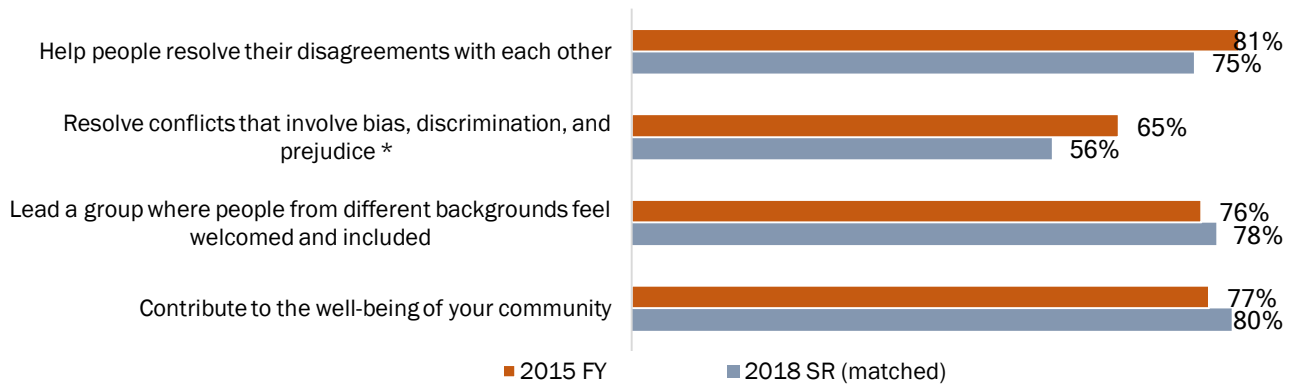
Figure 10. Influence-Oriented Civic Engagement: 2015 FY vs. 2018 SR (matched cases only)



Based on 110-112 matched cases. Percentages are for 'often' and 'very often' combined.

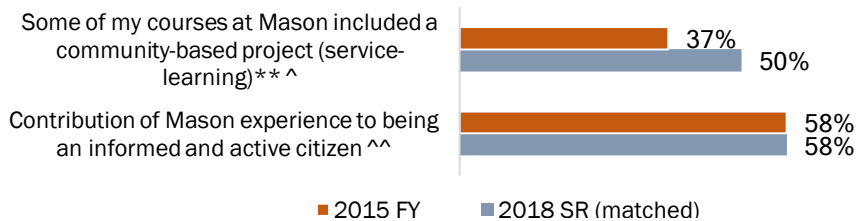
Figure 11. Ability to Make a Difference through Civic Engagement: 2015 FY vs. 2018 SR

Indicate Your Ability to Do the Following:



Based on 111-112 matched cases. Percentages are for '5' or above combined on a 7-point scale from 1='poor' to 7='excellent'. *p<.05, Paired Samples Test (2-sided).

Figure 12. Service Learning and Mason Contribution to Growth in Civic Engagement: 2015 FY vs. 2018 SR



^ Percentages are for 'some', 'most', and 'all' combined on a 4-point scale from 'none' to 'all'. Based on 123 matched cases. **p<.01, Paired Samples Test (2-sided).
 ^^ Percentages are for 'quite a bit' and 'very much' combined on a 4-point scale from 'very little' to 'very much'. Based on 113 matched cases.

Subgroup Comparison

Table 1. Subgroup Comparison by Gender for FY and SR: 2015 vs. 2018

	FY				SR			
	Female		Male		Female		Male	
	2018	Change Since 2015	2018	Change Since 2015	2018	Change Since 2015	2018	Change Since 2015
Participation-Oriented Civic Engagement ^								
Discussed state, national, or global issues with others	48%	+ 3	48%	- 6	58%	+ 6*	52%	- 5*
Discussed local or campus issues with others	37%	- 8 **	32%	- 17***	39%	- 5	30%	- 7*
Informed yourself about state, national, or global issues	58%	+ 4	59%	- 4	67%	+ 5	69%	0
Informed yourself about local or campus issues	36%	- 14***	28%	- 27***	40%	- 3	31%	- 10**
Influence-Oriented Civic Engagement ^								
Organized others to work on state, national, or global issues	11%	- 5	11%	- 11***	12%	- 1	12%	- 4*
Organized others to work on local or campus issues	11%	- 5*	10%	- 14***	12%	- 2	12%	- 2*
Asked others to address state, national, or global issues	19%	- 4	18%	- 11**	23%	+ 5*	18%	- 3
Asked others to address local or campus issues	14%	- 8**	16%	- 11***	19%	+ 3	14%	- 6**
Raised awareness about state, national, or global issues	23%	- 2	28%	- 1	30%	+ 4	24%	- 4
Raised awareness about local or campus issues	19%	- 6**	21%	- 8***	23%	0	18%	- 1
Ability to Make a Difference through Civic Engagement ^^								
Contribute to the well-being of your community	70%	- 11***	63%	- 6	75%	- 6**	63%	- 9*
Lead a group where people from different backgrounds feel welcomed and included	73%	- 3*	66%	- 2	76%	- 7***	72%	- 9**
Resolve conflicts that involve bias, discrimination, and prejudice	57%	- 8**	58%	- 5	61%	- 10***	56%	- 11**
Help people resolve their disagreements with each other	66%	- 7**	61%	- 9*	71%	- 7***	64%	- 12**

FY Female: n=410-414 in 2015 and n=449-458 in 2018; FY Male: n=221-223 in 2015 and n=217-218 in 2018. SR Female: n=612-621 in 2015 and n=551-560 in 2018; SR Male: n=350-354 in 2015 and n=333-337 in 2018. ^Percentages are for 'often' and 'very often' combined. ^^ Percentages are for '5' or above combined on a 7-point scale from 1='poor' to 7='excellent'.

Table 2. Subgroup Comparison by FG Status for FY and SR: 2015 vs. 2018

	FY				SR			
	FG		Non-FG		FG		Non-FG	
	2018	Change Since 2015	2018	Change Since 2015	2018	Change Since 2015	2018	Change Since 2015
Participation-Oriented Civic Engagement ^								
Discussed state, national, or global issues with others	48%	+5	49%	-1	52%	-2	61%	+5
Discussed local or campus issues with others	41%	-6*	33%	-13***	36%	-10*	41%	-1`
Informed yourself about state, national, or global issues	58%	+5	60%	+2	65%	+5	70%	+3
Informed yourself about local or campus issues	38%	-13***	31%	-12***	39%	-7	41%	-5*
Influence-Oriented Civic Engagement ^								
Organized others to work on state, national, or global issues	13%	-3	10%	-6**	9%	-9*	16%	+1
Organized others to work on local or campus issues	14%	-4	9%	-10***	11%	-4	16%	-1
Asked others to address state, national, or global issues	19%	-5	19%	-5*	24%	+2	25%	+6
Asked others to address local or campus issues	16%	-6	14%	-9***	16%	-6	19%	+1
Raised awareness about state, national, or global issues	27%	+3	23%	-3	26%	-3	28%	+1
Raised awareness about local or campus issues	24%	-1	17%	-8***	23%	0	23%	-1
Ability to Make a Difference through Civic Engagement ^^								
Contribute to the well-being of your community	67%	-10*	69%	-7**	75%	-1	72%	-8**
Lead a group where people from different backgrounds feel welcomed and included	71%	+2	70%	-5	79%	-3	76%	-7***
Resolve conflicts that involve bias, discrimination, and prejudice	60%	-4	56%	-9**	63%	-10**	55%	-17***
Help people resolve their disagreements with each other	66%	-4	65%	-8**	74%	-2	69%	-12***

FY FG: n=201-208 in 2015 and n=251-255 in 2018; FY Non-FG: n=383-388 in 2015 and n=389-395 in 2018.

SR FG: n=201-204 in 2015 and n=197-201 in 2018; SR Non-FG: n=415-421 in 2015 and n=296-301 in 2018.

^Percentages are for 'often' and 'very often' combined. ^^ Percentages are for '5' or above combined on a 7-point scale from 1='poor' to 7='excellent'.

Table 3. Subgroup Comparison by Ethnicity for FY: 2015 vs. 2018

	Asian		Black/African American		Hispanic		White		Other	
	2018	Change Since 2015	2018	Change Since 2015	2018	Change Since 2015	2018	Change Since 2015	2018	Change Since 2015
<i>Participation-Oriented Civic Engagement ^</i>										
Discussed state, national, or global issues with others	41%	0	47%	+ 5	42%	- 1	52%	0	53%	+ 1
Discussed local or campus issues with others	32%	- 9*	42%	- 6	31%	- 12	35%	- 13**	40%	- 10
Informed yourself about state, national, or global issues	53%	+ 6	55%	+ 2	63%	+ 8	60%	0	60%	- 2
Informed yourself about local or campus issues	32%	- 15**	35%	- 14*	29%	- 15	35%	- 19***	34%	- 23**
<i>Influence-Oriented Civic Engagement ^</i>										
Organized others to work on state, national, or global issues	11%	- 4	11%	- 7	14%	- 5	9%	- 6*	13%	- 9
Organized others to work on local or campus issues	11%	- 7*	15%	- 6	15%	- 1	8%	- 11***	12%	- 9
Asked others to address state, national, or global issues	16%	- 5	18%	- 3	19%	- 8	19%	- 6	21%	- 8
Asked others to address local or campus issues	12%	- 12***	16%	- 9	17%	- 7	14%	- 9**	19%	- 6*
Raised awareness about state, national, or global issues	26%	+ 6	22%	- 6	28%	0	23%	- 7*	28%	+ 7
Raised awareness about local or campus issues	21%	- 4	15%	- 13	24%	0	17%	- 10***	25%	- 1
<i>Ability to Make a Difference through Civic Engagement ^^</i>										
Contribute to the well-being of your community	63%	- 10	61%	- 19	58%	- 11*	74%	- 5*	71%	- 9*
Lead a group where people from different backgrounds feel welcomed and included	64%	- 4	75%	- 4	73%	+ 5	73%	- 3	70%	- 4
Resolve conflicts that involve bias, discrimination, and prejudice	51%	- 10	63%	- 11	58%	- 3	60%	- 5*	57%	- 3
Help people resolve their disagreements with each other	58%	- 9	65%	- 15	65%	0	68%	- 7*	63%	- 5

Asian: n=111-114 in 2015 and n=144-146 in 2018; Black/African American: n=59-61 in 2015 and n=74-77 in 2018; Hispanic: n=74-75 in 2015 and n=83-85 in 2018; White: n=294-298 in 2015 and n=271-276 in 2018; Others: n=87-90 in 2015 and n=91-92 in 2018. ^Percentages are for 'often' and 'very often' combined. ^^ Percentages are for '5' or above combined on a 7-point scale from 1='poor' to 7='excellent'.

Table 4. Subgroup Comparison by Ethnicity for SR: 2015 vs. 2018

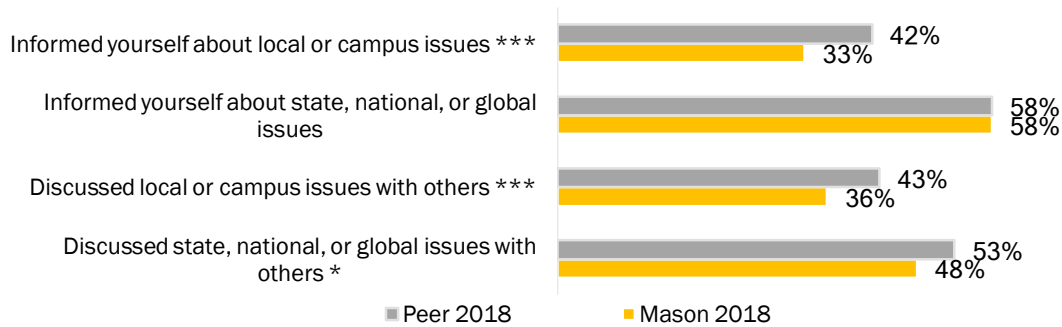
	Asian		Black/African American		Hispanic		White		Other	
	2018	Change Since 2015	2018	Change Since 2015	2018	Change Since 2015	2018	Change Since 2015	2018	Change Since 2015
Participation-Oriented Civic Engagement ^										
Discussed state, national, or global issues with others	41%	- 2	54%	+ 9	52%	- 2	64%	+ 3	54%	+ 2
Discussed local or campus issues with others	36%	- 3	35%	- 6	30%	- 8	39%	- 4	27%	- 13
Informed yourself about state, national, or global issues	53%	+ 3	58%	- 1	71%	+ 7	77%	+ 5	60%	- 3
Informed yourself about local or campus issues	35%	- 6	40%	- 6	35%	- 4	40%	- 4	29%	- 12*
Influence-Oriented Civic Engagement ^										
Organized others to work on state, national, or global issues	17%	- 6*	12%	- 4	10%	- 3	12%	- 1	10%	+ 3
Organized others to work on local or campus issues	18%	- 5*	12%	- 2	14%	+ 3	11%	- 2	8%	- 1
Asked others to address state, national, or global issues	23%	- 3	21%	- 1	22%	+ 4	22%	+ 5	18%	+ 3
Asked others to address local or campus issues	23%	- 4*	16%	- 4	17%	+ 2	16%	0	13%	+ 2
Raised awareness about state, national, or global issues	28%	- 3	36%	+ 4	29%	+ 3	29%	+ 3	18%	- 6
Raised awareness about local or campus issues	24%	- 5	19%	- 12	25%	+ 7	20%	+ 2	18%	+ 2
Ability to Make a Difference through Civic Engagement ^^										
Contribute to the well-being of your community	68%	- 11*	73%	- 9	77%	+ 2	72%	- 6*	63%	- 13**
Lead a group where people from different backgrounds feel welcomed and included	70%	- 10**	76%	- 3	74%	- 12	77%	- 5**	70%	- 14*
Resolve conflicts that involve bias, discrimination, and prejudice	61%	- 9*	65%	- 12**	61%	- 6	56%	- 14***	62%	- 5
Help people resolve their disagreements with each other	65%	- 13*	70%	- 13*	65%	- 6	70%	- 9***	71%	- 6

Asian: n=175-180 in 2015 and n=166-170 in 2018; Black/African American: n=75-77 in 2015 and n=77-79 in 2018; Hispanic: n=119-122 in 2015 and n=124-125 in 2018; White: n=466-471 in 2015 and n=414-423 in 2018; Others: n=122-124 in 2015 and n=100-101 in 2018. ^Percentages are for 'often' and 'very often' combined. ^^ Percentages are for '5' or above combined on a 7-point scale from 1='poor' to 7='excellent'.

2018 Peer Comparison

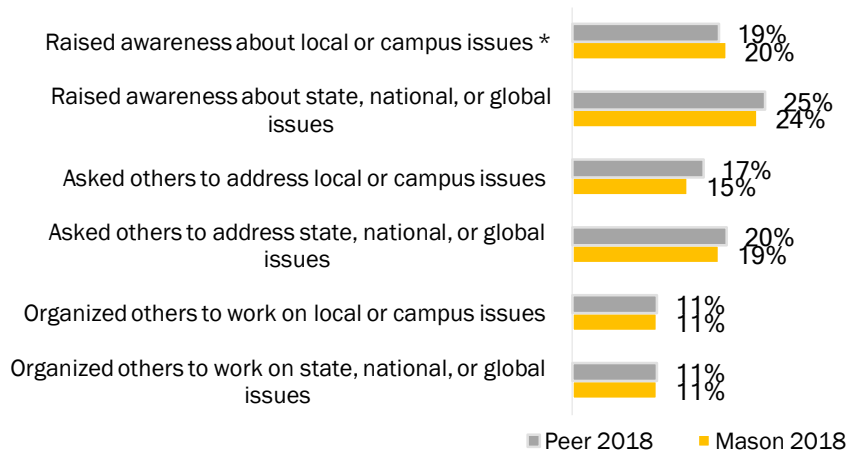
First-Year Students

Figure 13. Participation-Oriented Civic Engagement for FY: Mason vs. Peers



Based on n=3354-3357 for peer institutions and n=673-676 for Mason. Percentages are for 'often' and 'very often' combined.

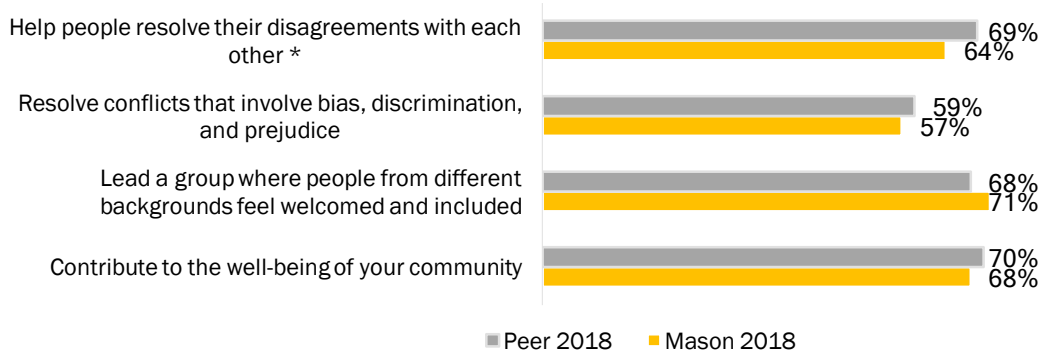
Figure 14. Influence-Oriented Civic Engagement for FY: Mason vs. Peers



Based on n=3324-3354 for peer institutions and n=666-674 for Mason. Percentages are for 'often' and 'very often' combined.

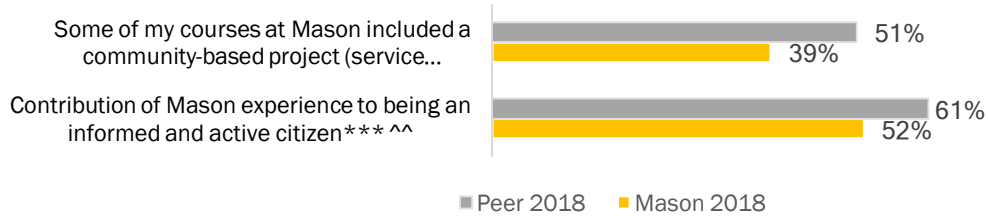
Figure 15. Ability to Make a Difference for FY: Mason vs. Peers

Indicate Your Ability to Do the Following:



Based on n=3356-3363 for peer institutions and n=675-676 for Mason. Percentages are for '5' or above combined on a 7-point scale from 1='poor' to 7='excellent'.

Figure 16. Service Learning and College Contribution to Growth in Civic Engagement for FY: Mason vs. Peers



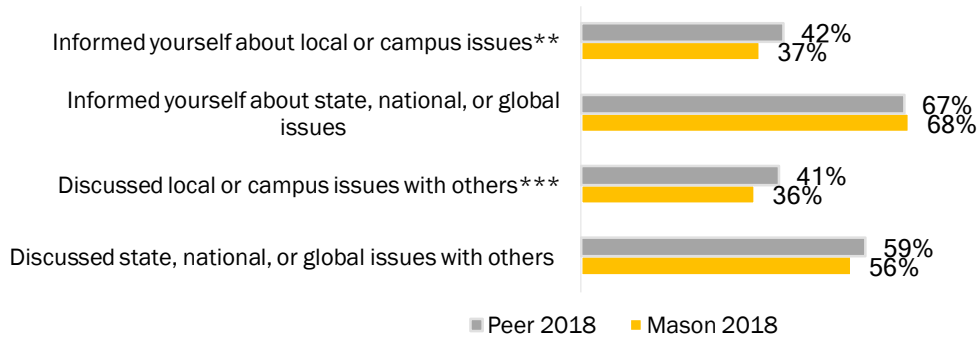
Based on n=4345 and 4143 for peer institutions and n=719 and 699 for Mason.

^ Percentages are for 'some', 'most', and 'all' combined on a 4-point scale from 'none' to 'all'.

^^ Percentages are for 'quite a bit' and 'very much' combined on a 4-point scale from 'very little' to 'very much'.

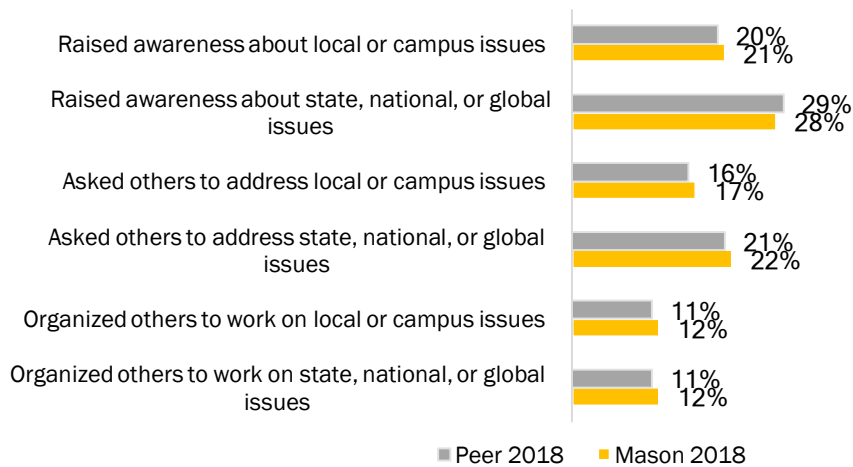
Senior Students

Figure 17. Participation-Oriented Civic Engagement for SR: Mason vs. Peers



Based on n=4205-4210 for peer institutions and n=892-894 for Mason. Percentages are for 'often' and 'very often' combined.

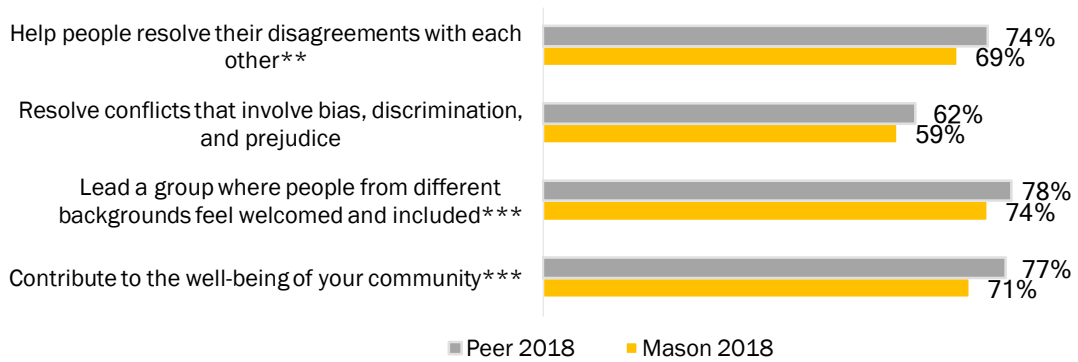
Figure 18. Influence-Oriented Civic Engagement for SR: Mason vs. Peers



Based on n=4150-4208 for peer institutions and n=884-892 for Mason. Percentages are for 'often' and 'very often' combined.

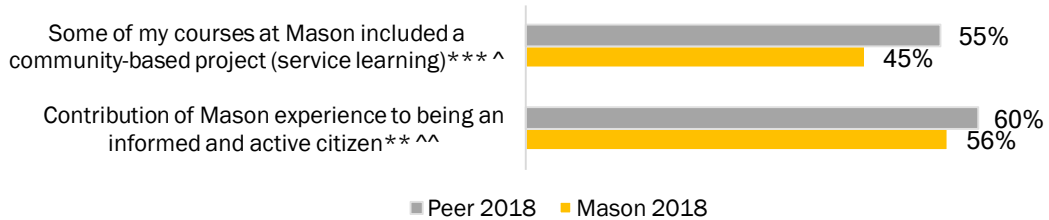
Figure 19. Ability to Make a Difference for SR: Mason vs. Peers

Indicate Your Ability to Do the Following:



Based on n=4207-4211 for peer institutions and n=893-897 for Mason. Percentages are for '5' or above combined on a 7-point scale from 1='poor' to 7='excellent'.

Figure 20. Service Learning and Contribution of College Experience to Growth in Civic Engagement for SR: Mason vs. Peers



Based on n=9829 and 9383 for peer institutions and n=942 and 922 for Mason.

^ Percentages are for 'some', 'most', and 'all' combined on a 4-point scale from 'none' to 'all'.

^^ Percentages are for 'quite a bit' and 'very much' combined on a 4-point scale from 'very little' to 'very much'.