



State of Neighbors Research: Executive Summary

An overview of quantitative research on the meaning and role of “good neighbors” in today’s communities

The familiar bedrock brand philosophy, *Like a Good Neighbor*, inspires us to ask what a neighbor is and, more importantly, what it means to be a good neighbor. As part of its ongoing commitment to strengthening communities, State Farm® commissioned a survey by Harris Poll to examine how people across the United States see neighbor relationships.

Background

In 2011, State Farm shared results from its first-ever State of Neighbors survey, which examined the expectations and behaviors of neighbors across the country. During the past few years, neighborhoods have begun to change quickly and so have neighbors’ expectations. In 2015, State Farm commissioned another State of Neighbors survey and the results show a gap between desired and actual neighbor-to-neighbor interactions.

Summary of Key Findings

Overall, the survey found that good neighbors are universally regarded as being proactive, helpful and respectful across all generations and cultures in the U.S. Often, neighbor relationships are nuanced. The study found, for example, that although neighbors want privacy, they also want to feel an innate sense of trust and safety among their neighbors, hoping they help watch out for property and personal safety.

Shared values and connectedness

Many neighbors today share a mutual desire to be more connected. Knowing there is a desire amongst neighbors to feel more connected to one another. As part of the release of the study findings, State Farm asked [Harriette Cole](#), an etiquette expert and nationally recognized advice columnist, to weigh in on where neighbors can start.

“We make connections all the time, at the office, in the grocery store, on social media, so we should also be able connect with the people we share our lawns and streets with; it all starts with saying hello and finding commonalities,” said Cole.

Bridging the good neighbor gap

The survey also found disconnect between how neighbors want to interact and how they’re actually socializing, especially when it comes to age. As well as noting a large expectation gap in terms of welcoming new neighbors.

“One of the easiest ways to start developing strong neighbor relationships, appears to be as simple as welcoming a new neighbor into the neighborhood,” said Cole. “There are so many wonderful things technology has done to bring neighborhoods closer together, but welcoming a new neighbor face-to-face is a gesture that can’t be replaced. It sets neighbors on a path to socialize further and develop stronger long-term relationships.”

Across all generations there is a clear desire to socialize, as over three-quarters (76 percent) of neighbors say they would “definitely attend a neighborhood get-together.” Millennials were far more likely to list “socializing” as a good neighbor trait, and yet they are the least likely to have engaged in face-to-face conversations with neighbors in the last month. This may be because they are turning to alternate methods of socializing, including social media, texting, and even online games.



Further demonstrating the shift away from face-to-face interaction, instead of borrowing a cup of sugar from a neighbor, they may be texting friends across town when they could find what they're looking for right next door.

Data Highlights

Neighborhood Gatherings are seen as important but few opt to organize them

- Almost six in ten (58%) say it is important for neighbors to come together and socialize
 - African-Americans are more likely than others to say it is important for neighbors to come together and socialize (66%)
 - Hispanics say it is at least somewhat important for neighbors to come together and socialize (62%)
- Nearly three-quarters (76%) say they would definitely attend a neighborhood get-together if their neighborhood had them.
 - Yet only half (53%) (of those who interact with their neighbors) participate in neighborhood activities
- Just over a quarter (28%) have helped organize a neighborhood event (among those whose neighborhoods have events)
 - Men (16%) are more likely than women (11%) to have organized a neighborhood event.
 - African Americans indicated higher rates of participation in neighborhood get-togethers (61%)
 - Hispanics regularly get together for holidays/events in the neighborhood (47%)

Welcoming is important, but not happening

- 75 percent of neighbors say it is important to welcome new neighbors, but only 41% say they were welcomed when they moved in. Only 46% actually welcomed someone new into the neighborhood
- Seven in ten (70%) of Hispanic Millennials feel that it is important that neighbors are greeted when they move into a neighborhood – yet only four in ten (39%) of them welcomed someone else into the neighborhood

Most good neighbor characteristics are universal, though there are some differences between demographics and settings

- Top neighbor traits include respecting privacy and not making excessive noise while watching out for neighbors' property and safety
 - Six in ten (61%) say that helping a neighbor out with an unexpected need is a trait of a good neighbor
 - Watching out for others' safety (69%) and property (77%), as well as helping out with an unexpected need (61%) are cited by at least three in five Americans as good neighbor characteristics
- Millennials were far more likely than their older counterparts to include 'socializing' as a good neighbor trait (55% among millennials vs. 45% to 48% among older generations) – yet they are least likely to have engaged in face-to-face conversations with neighbors in the last month (58% among millennials vs. 61% to 79% among older generations)
- Certain Good neighbor traits are cited more important to African Americans than to the other neighbors:
 - Checking in on elderly neighbors (60% vs. 55% total)
 - Socializing with fellow neighbors (57% vs. 49% total)
 - Helping out neighbors with financial needs (17% vs. 7% total)



- On what it means to be a good neighbor, Hispanics are less likely to cite a variety of characteristics, indicating they may have a broader definition of a good neighbor.

The likelihood of knowing a neighbor's name varies across groups

- Millennials tend to know fewer neighbors' names – they are also more embarrassed by this.
 - 17% report knowing none of their neighbors' names
- Baby boomers – even those who know none of their neighbors by name – are the least likely group to be embarrassed
 - 58% say they know one/some/few of their neighbors' names

Digital Neighbors are emerging

- Hispanics are more likely to use social media to engage with people in their neighborhood compared to neighbors overall
 - Over a third (36%) of Hispanics are familiar with social media use in their neighborhood – making them one of the most likely groups to cite social media use (27% average)
 - Slightly above average, two in five (40%) Hispanic millennials are familiar with social media use in their neighborhood (vs. 35% of total millennials) and are more likely to use social media with their neighbors (35% vs. 27% total)
- 7% of millennial males report playing online games with a neighbor

In summary, the research shows that most neighbors – regardless of age or cultural background – want to be more connected to one another. Although based on the disconnect we see between attitudes and actions, it appears that many neighbors may not know how to develop those relationships. When neighbors feel empowered to open their door to other neighbors, they build strong neighbor relationships which lead to vibrant neighborhoods and communities.

About the Survey

The survey was conducted online between June 12 and June 30, 2015 among a national sample of 6,051 U.S. adults 18 years old and over. Data were demographically weighted to reflect the U.S. general population. Harris Poll ensured the national sample included a representative number of completes among Hispanic respondents. A total of 1,434 interviews were conducted among Hispanic respondents – where they were offered the option to take the survey in Spanish, if they so desired.

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To explore the survey data further, visit www.statefarm.com/neighbors. Share your #GoodNeighbor stories by connecting with State Farm on www.goodneighbors.com.