

# Mobilization

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## **Definition:**

Mobilization refers to the act of organizing or preparing something, such as a group of people, towards an action or for a purpose. The concept of mobilization brings people together to address existing problems within their communities and beyond. It encourages people to participate in decision making processes, as decisions affect communities and community members.

Mobilization of a community typically involves educated and informed community members. The community must first be adequately informed of the issue at hand. Secondly, they must be informed of the necessary actions based on that information to ensure positive and sustainable change. This information relies heavily on data, because the more data that is available, the more accurately one can determine the potential magnitude of problems.

## **Significance:**

Mobilization embodies the direct act of being civically or politically engaged; actions such as starting a food bank in your community or simply voting in your local or federal elections are themselves acts of mobilization. It is important to take into account the significance of having an adequately informed community in order to optimize the positive changes that come from mobilization.

Hahrie Han, a professor at Stanford University with a PhD in Political Science, has made profound contributions in defining levels of engagement through her research focused on organizational factors. Through her research she has distinguished between the levels of engagement organizations utilize by categorizing them into lone wolves, mobilizers, and organizers. The most significant factor she found that differentiates highly active organizations is the way they transform their members' motivations and capacities for involvement.

Lone wolves are those who do not put effort into engaging others. Their focus is on building [power](#) by becoming an accurate source of information for decision-makers, rather than engaging others. Mobilizers build [power](#) by focusing on getting as many people involved as possible, but they do not try to transform volunteers' capacities for



further activism. Some individuals may only act once, and some may become further involved long term as mobilizers allow individuals to self-select the level of activism they want. Organizers build [power](#) by investing in the leadership skills of their members and creating a greater collective capacity by increasing the number of individuals responsible for engaging others. Organizers have a greater capacity to build power by engaging others in deeper ways.

A core distinction between mobilizers and organizers is that mobilizers do not seek to transform individual's interests the way that organizers do.

Mobilizers are focused on building their membership base so that there is a higher number of members ready to act at any level of activism, maximizing an organization's potential to generate transactional outcomes. Organizers develop individual's ability to take action through training and reflection. Mobilizing and organizing are mutually reinforcing approaches, as mobilizing cultivates a prospect pool that can be used to identify potential leaders, and organizing enables the work of mobilizing by developing high-quality leaders capable of recruiting future activists.

Mobilization through adequately informing a community of an issue at hand and the tools necessary to effectively combat that issue allows individuals to identify essential resources for social transformation. Mobilization leads to effective community organizing that can rally mass momentum for civic and political engagement within a community.

### **Key Ideas/Tools:**

Activities used for community mobilization:

- Community meetings
- Community coalitions
- Canvassing
- Listening groups
- Door-to-door sessions where mobilizers discuss potential action in privacy with community members

Tactics used to mobilize:

- Lobbying
- Petitions/Letter-Writing
- Marches
- Public meetings



## Further Scholarly Resources:

### Articles:

Binder, A., Heiss, R., Matthes, J., & Sander, D. (2020). Dealigned but mobilized? Insights from a citizen science study on youth political engagement. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 24(2), 232–249. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2020.1714567>

Han, H. (2018, August 3). *First Chapter: How Organizations Develop Activists by Hahrie Han*. Medium.  
<https://medium.com/challenges-to-democracy/first-chapter-how-organizations-develop-activists-by-hahrie-han-c2b8dc7e231e>

Slenkovich, K., Nixon, G., Richardson, T. L., Varsimashvili, Z., & Wiersema, J. (1999). *Mobilizing Communities: Methods and Approaches*.  
<https://www.aiha.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/04-Mobilizing-Communities.pdf>

