



2008

CIVIC HEALTH INDEX

BEYOND the VOTE



NATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON
CITIZENSHIP

AMERICA'S CIVIC HEALTH INDEX 2008 BEYOND

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the **VOTE**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The National Conference on Citizenship would like to give special thanks to the following foundations for their generous support of this project:

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

McCormick Foundation

Surdna Foundation

Case Foundation

Our key partners:

Civic Enterprises

CIRCLE, Tufts University

Saguaro Seminar, Harvard University

Lou Frey Institute, University of Central Florida

Harry T. Wilks Leadership Institute, Miami University

INTRODUCTION

The National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC) is the nation's leading advocate for civic participation and the only organization chartered by Congress to play that role. The NCoC created *America's Civic Health Index* to assess how the American people were performing on a wide array of indicators of civic health. Just as the U.S. collects data on our economy to inform policies that maintain its strength, the NCoC wanted the nation to have reliable data on the attitudes, behaviors, and actions of Americans related to their civic life. This information is designed to inform and motivate individuals, leaders and policymakers at all levels to strengthen the civic engagement of our people.

Since *America's Civic Health Index* was first published in 2006, and featured in TIME Magazine, the NCoC has published annual reports to inform Americans about

their civic attitudes and behaviors, the state of our civil society and democracy, and existing and emerging trends that can inform new policies and initiatives to strengthen civic life. These reports are motivated by a belief that our democratic system and our communities are healthier, stronger, and more just when many citizens participate actively—helping to discuss, define, and address our nation's problems and shape our values and culture. This is our definition of “civic engagement,” and we measure it with the evolving list of survey questions shown in the Appendix.

The creation of *America's Civic Health Index* and report was a cooperative effort of the NCoC, The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) at the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship & Public Service at Tufts University, and the Harvard University's Saguaro Seminar: Civic Engagement in America. The NCoC would like to give special thanks to the members of its Civic Health Working Group.

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IAN STORRAR, Chief Operating Officer of Mobilize.org; former Director of Youth Programs of Common Cause.

In July 2008, Peter D. Hart Research Associates administered a new nationally representative survey for the National Conference on Citizenship, reaching 1,005 telephone respondents (using random-digit dialing) and 1,000 respondents in an online panel. Survey research in general is moving from telephone surveys to online surveys, and both modes have limitations and advantages. For this report, we have reported results from the random-digit-dial telephone survey only. We cite results from the online panel when we believe that Internet research provides illuminating additional evidence. Hart Research also surveyed 1,612 respondents in Ohio, California, and Florida, using online panels, and these results will be used in a complementary report, being released in October 2008, comparing the civic health of individual states, and highlighting state-specific themes and key findings. Results were analyzed by Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg and Peter Levine at CIRCLE, and informed by the NCoC Civic Health Working Group.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2008 survey finds that Americans are actively engaged with this year's presidential election. For example, more than half said they had tried to persuade someone else to vote for or against a particular candidate; and 39% said they had watched an Internet video that supported or opposed a presidential candidate. **But more say they are "frustrated" (43%) than "excited" (19%) by the presidential election.**

We know that Americans will engage in many ways after the election. For instance, recent federal surveys have found that 26-28 percent of adults volunteer each year. And more than half of all Americans are members of at least one voluntary group

or association. Consistent with historic trends, these forms of engagement will no doubt continue after Election Day.

Not many people expect to work on the issues raised in the campaign after Election Day. Just fourteen percent, for instance, were confident that they would try to change local policies in schools, neighborhoods, or the workplace. Less than 20% were sure they would talk about the issues raised in the campaign after it is over.

However, citizens overwhelmingly support changes in laws and policies that would support greater citizen engagement between elections.

87%

support giving every young person the opportunity to earn tuition money by completing a year of national or community service;

80%

favor holding a national deliberation on a major issue and requiring Congress to respond to what citizens say;

76%

would like to see service-learning (combinations of classroom learning and community service) required in schools; and

67%

would strengthen civic education by requiring new tests in that subject

These opinions are largely bipartisan and intergenerational.

The 2008 Civic Health Index and other surveys conducted since 2004 support the following **overview of the state of civic health:**

Levels of conventional community participation and connectedness (belonging to groups, attending meetings, working on community projects, and trusting other citizens) **are low compared to 20 or 30 years ago.**

People are more engaged in formal politics (voting, giving money to candidates, talking about the election) than they were in the 1990s, but such engagement is volatile and driven by political and news events.

Rates of volunteering spiked after 9/11 and continued to grow and remain high through 2005, but have declined since that time.

There are considerably more options today for expressing political views than existed 30 years ago, and some (such as voting on online videos or commenting on blogs) are quite prevalent, engaging people who previously were not engaged.

Members of the Millennial Generation (born between 1980-1995) are the most racially and ethnically diverse generation in American history, and are volunteering at higher rates than their parents did at the same point in their lives. This engagement is very uniform across racial and ethnic lines, while older generations showed a pattern of differing and unequal engagement across ethnic groups. The Millennials' parent generation, Baby Boomers, were more likely to belong to groups and clubs when they were young, but the prevalence of the Internet is helping the Millennial Generation to get more involved. However, we classify more than half of the Millennials as "not very engaged." A substantial group (17%) is involved in volunteer service but not in other types of engagement; they may need help connecting their service to leadership in formal groups and clubs and political participation.

Their parents' generation, **the Boomers**, are reaching the point when civic engagement typically reaches its peak and are quite broadly engaged—twice as much as the Millennials at this point in history. More than a third of them are deeply involved in several different forms of civic work, which makes them potential leaders and mentors. As they enter and near retirement, we need to tap their civic energy and skills. Because both the Millennials and Boomers represent 75-80 million Americans, in each generation, even small shifts in civic behavior can have a transformative effect.

People without college educations are underrepresented in most aspects of politics and civil society, although **younger people who have never attended college do participate in online groups, which may provide opportunities to engage them more.**

Overall, **African Americans are more engaged than whites**—especially in this election cycle. African

Americans surpass the rest of the population in voting, going to political meetings and rallies, talking to other people about politics, and also attending local meetings to discuss community issues.

Americans give ambivalent responses to most words and phrases that are used to describe and promote civic engagement.

"Democracy" elicits a relatively high level of negative responses, especially from Generation X (ages 30-44). Contrary to some news reports that "community organizing" is controversial and associated with the political left, it actually evokes thoughts of charity and helping others. **Overall, we still need more compelling ways to talk about active and collaborative civic engagement in simple language that connects to how Americans communicate about their civic activities.**

THE 2008 CAMPAIGN

IS A CIVIC

OPPORTUNITY

The 2008 election has drawn relatively high levels of citizen participation. Voter turnout in the primaries was the highest since 1972, according to the Center for the Study of the American Electorate¹; and some Americans have been inspired to participate in ways that go beyond voting—from knocking on doors to making political videos. In our survey:

52% said they had tried to persuade someone else to vote for or against a particular candidate;

39% said they had watched an Internet video that supported or opposed a presidential candidate;

33% had watched a presidential candidate's speech online;

26% said they had displayed a bumper-sticker or poster or worn a button related to the campaign;

15% said they had given money to a candidate or party;

13% said they had attended a political meeting or rally; and

7% said they had volunteered for a presidential campaign²

News reports about large numbers of campaign contributors and large crowds at political rallies in 2008—combined with the comparatively high rates of

participation found in our survey—suggest that this is a remarkably participatory election.³

The Generations

For the purpose of this report,

Millennials are 15-29 years old;

Generation X are 30-44 years old;

Baby Boomers are 45-64 years old;

Seniors are 65 and older

In short, many Americans are engaged right now—talking and thinking about issues and personally taking action. Their engagement provides an opportunity to broaden and deepen democracy and civil society in the United States.

But there is no guarantee that electoral participation in the presidential election will translate into continued political participation or other forms of civic engagement beyond November. Voter turnout spiked in 1992, for example, yet the 1990s were generally a period of low voting and political activity. We also know that non-political forms of engagement, such as joining voluntary groups and attending local meetings, may decline when voting rises. The NCoC's 2006 Civic Health Index found "consistent" and "relentless" declines in "community connectedness—attending meetings, belonging to groups, trusting other people, and the like," even though "political activities and expression of political views" had increased in recent years.⁴

This year's survey finds that participating in non-political civic activities, such as volunteering, does not predict how

excited individuals are about the election, once we statistically control for other factors, such as age, ethnicity, and educational background. In other words, electoral participation is different from volunteer service, and increasing the former does not automatically boost the latter.

To compound the challenge, participation and enthusiasm in the 2008 election so far have been highly uneven. In our survey, 19% of respondents called the campaign "exciting and inspiring," 22% said "satisfactory"; 12% said "irrelevant," but 43% said "frustrating."⁵ The low proportion who called the campaign "irrelevant" suggests that most people do think it matters. But the group who chose the word "frustrated" to describe their feelings was more than twice as large as the "excited" group. There were significant differences by party-identification, race, and age.

WHO IS EXCITED?

The following groups showed the highest levels of excitement about the election: African Americans, Asians, and, to a lesser extent, Latinos; Democrats, especially strong Democrats; and people with more years of education, also showed the highest levels of excitement. The Millennials were more excited than older Americans. Their lead in excitement was not statistically significant, but they were significantly less likely than older people to be frustrated.⁶

Attitudes toward the Election, by Generation

Even when we account for race/ethnicity, age, education, and party identification, we find that people who are more engaged in the election are also more excited about it. Political activism, political discussion, and trusting the government and the media are all more common among the excited people.⁷ It may be that political activism and discussion make people more excited and trusting of institutions, or that excitement and trust lead them to engage, or both.

However, *online* engagement and civic activities, such as volunteering, do *not* predict a positive attitude toward the 2008 campaign, once we account for other factors. Our

statistical model suggests that a young person who leans Democratic in this election season will be enthusiastic regardless of whether he or she uses online tools.

Consistent with news reports about the election, we found strong partisan differences when we conducted the survey in July (before the political conventions and shortly after Hillary Clinton had suspended her campaign): 32% of Democrats stated that the 2008 campaign was “exciting,” as compared to 9% of Republicans and 14% of Independents. On the other hand, 58% of Republicans described the same campaign as frustrating compared to only 34% of Democrats and 45% of independents. This, however, is a finding that may change rapidly during the presidential campaign season, and we were unable to ask follow-up questions to illuminate the underlying causes of their frustration.

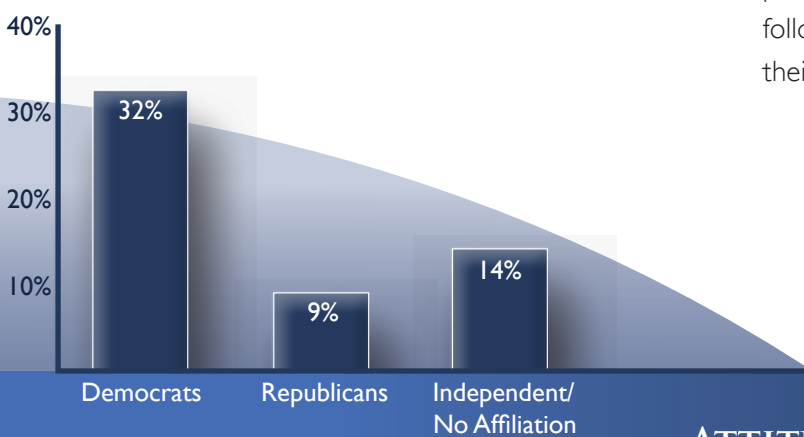


FIGURE 1
ATTITUDES TOWARD THE ELECTION,
BY PARTY (% “EXCITED”)

MOST PEOPLE DO NOT EXPECT TO BE VERY INVOLVED AFTER NOVEMBER 4TH

We know that Americans will engage in many ways after the election. For instance, recent federal surveys have found that 26-28 percent of adults—more than 60 million Americans—volunteer each year.⁸ And more than half of all Americans are members of at least one voluntary group or association—55% in our survey and 62% in the 2004 General Election Survey. Consistent with historic trends, these forms of engagement will no doubt continue after Election Day.

It is a different question whether Americans will act voluntarily on issues that were specifically raised during the political campaign. We asked people whether they expect to engage after the election in any of four possible ways:

- 1 contacting elected officials about issues raised in the campaign,
- 2 contacting the media about such issues,
- 3 discussing such issues with friends, and
- 4 working to change local policies in schools, workplaces, etc.

We expected inflated results due to social desirability bias and unrealistic expectations. Sixty-two percent said that they might do at least one of these things; but each specific action drew fairly low responses and 38% of respondents answered that they would “definitely not” or “probably not” do *any* of these activities (which were asked as separate questions).

There were significant differences among the various forms of engagement. Contacting the media and elected officials were much less likely than talking to friends and working on local policies.⁹

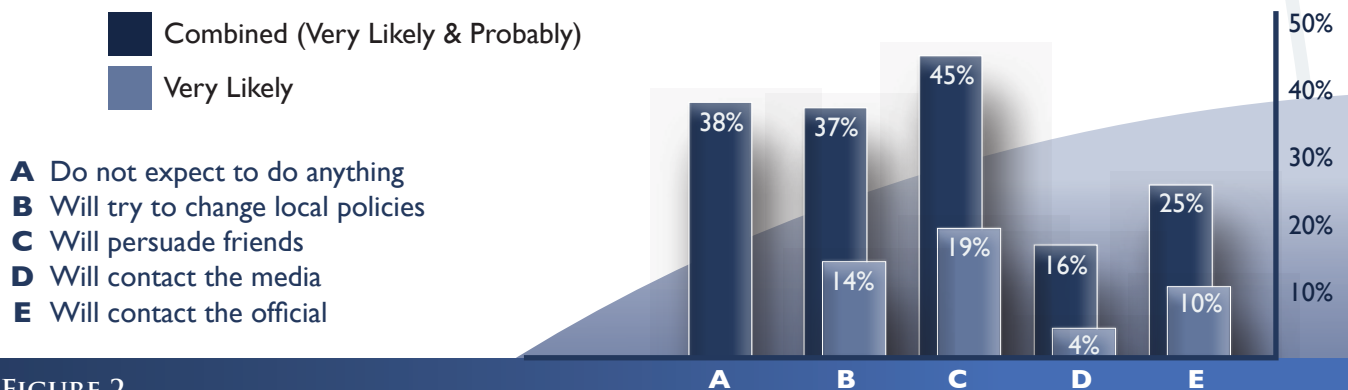


FIGURE 2
EXPECTED ACTIVITIES AFTER THE ELECTION

AMERICANS FAVOR POLICY CHANGE TO INSTITUTIONALIZE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Our survey finds that most Americans do not expect to engage voluntarily on issues raised in the campaign, but there is strong support for laws and other policies that would encourage civic engagement.

This discrepancy between personal behavior and policy preferences is not unusual. For example, according to a recent Pew survey, 90% of Americans favor tighter fuel efficiency standards for automobiles; but most people do not (or perhaps cannot) voluntarily buy the most fuel-efficient cars currently on the market.¹⁰ Similarly, in last year's Civic Health Index survey, 67% of respondents said it was important for them personally to volunteer, yet Census surveys show an adult volunteering rate of about 27% each year. Such discrepancies may be evidence of hypocrisy or may show that individual voluntary action is impossible for some and that new policies are needed to support engagement.

The strong support for public policies that capture some of the momentum generated by the Presidential election and institutionalize it in ways that can help sustain the civic and political participation of Americans beyond the election gives us hope that with smart policies, we can improve civic life.

Last year's Civic Health Index report found strong support for civic engagement. Asked the best way to address problems in their community, very few chose "let the government define the problem and take action." An outright majority favored collaboration between citizens and institutions. But many respondents said opportunities for such work were inadequate. For instance, only 43% of respondents said there was a place where they could go to discuss issues facing their communities.

This year, we tested seven potential policy reforms that have been publicly proposed as ways to encourage civic engagement and enhance partnerships between citizens and the government.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Civilian Conservation Corps, an initiative of President Franklin Roosevelt that would mobilize 3 million jobless men over a decade to work on improving the nation's public lands. Since that time, many Presidents and the U.S. Congress have proposed policies and initiatives to increase the civic engagement of Americans. Some Presidents have created opportunities for Americans to serve overseas; others have offered tuition or loan assistance in exchange for a commitment of service; others have promoted civic education and linked those efforts with new service opportunities; and still others have promoted linking classroom learning with community service experiences. A new effort, called "ServiceNation," is promoting a comprehensive set of policies that would create

opportunities for more Americans to serve over their lifetimes – from Kindergarten beyond retirement; to tackle major challenges – such as epidemic levels of high school dropouts, polluted rivers, and deadly malaria overseas; and to serve full-time, part-time or as traditional volunteers in the United States or abroad. To be effective, public policies must meet Americans where they are and respond to the real incentives that would engage them in civic life.

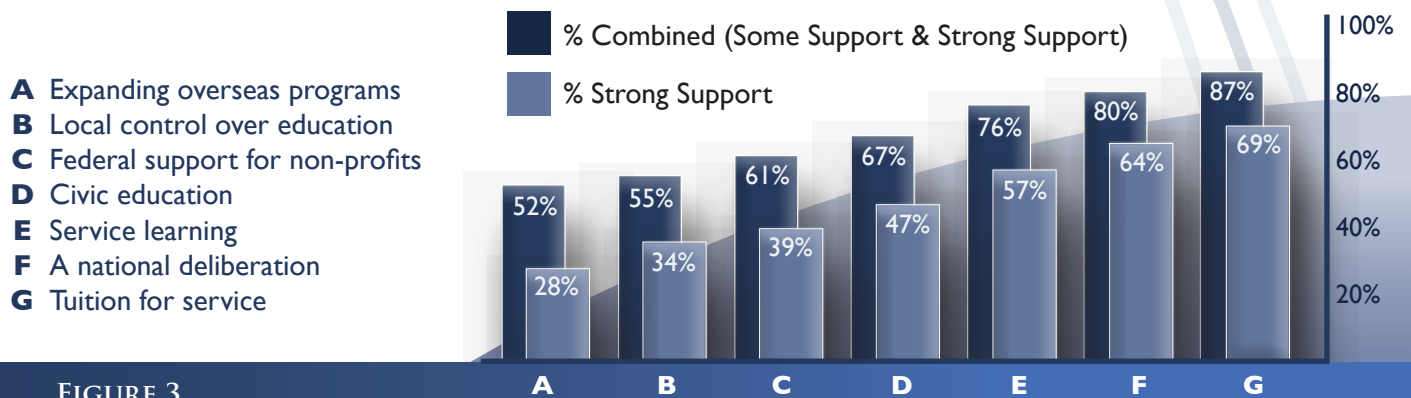


FIGURE 3
SUPPORT FOR POLICY PROPOSALS

Tuition money for service:

In our 2008 survey, the most popular proposal was “offering every young person a chance to earn money toward college or advanced training if they complete a full year of national or community service.” This idea would mean a substantial expansion of existing education awards, which currently provide \$4,725 in tuition funds for volunteers who serve full-time for a whole year (most of these positions are competitive and scarce). Sixty-nine percent strongly favored this proposal. Only 9% opposed it, 6% strongly. Support was bipartisan, with 65% of Republicans giving strong support and 75% of Democrats.

All generations were supportive. The “Seniors” were by a small margin the least supportive, but they still favored it by 63% to 8.5%. A recent report showed that among many potential incentives to enlist more older Americans to make significant commitments to volunteer service, the ones that ranked by far the highest were education awards that they could earn and transfer to a child, grandchild or other needy person.¹¹ Young adults who have never attended college were somewhat less supportive than college students (63.5% of this group versus 69% of young adults who had attended some college favored the idea strongly.)

AMERICANS FAVOR POLICY CHANGE TO INSTITUTIONALIZE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT (CONT.)

A national deliberation:

The second most popular option was “involving more than one million Americans in a national discussion of an important public issue and requiring Congress to respond to what the citizens say.” This proposal had been developed by *AmericaSpeaks* and was endorsed by John Edwards during the presidential primary campaign.¹² Eighty percent favored this idea, including 64% strongly. Fourteen percent opposed it, 7 percent strongly. Again, support was bipartisan, with 60% of Republicans strongly in favor, compared to 70% of Democrats.

In our 2007 *America’s Civic Health Index* report, we identified people as “deliberators” if they had “been involved in a meeting (either face-to-face or online) to determine ideas and solutions for problems” and if that

discussion included people who held views different from their own. We found that 18 percent of Americans had been involved in such open-ended, practical discussions with people of diverse views. These deliberators proved to be especially committed to civic engagement and tended to be older than average. When we asked this year about a large, official, national deliberation, support was strong across all demographic groups, but relatively less so among the elderly, those without any college background, and men (as compared to women). It would appear that while the elderly were the most likely to deliberate, the Millennials were most enthusiastic about a new opportunity to do so. African Americans were the most supportive of all racial/ethnic groups.

Service-learning:

The combination of community service with academic study, known as “service-learning,” is offered in half of American high schools.¹³ Recent research shows that the vast majority of high school students, including 90 percent of those most at risk for dropping out, want service-learning in their schools.¹⁴ Federal support for service-learning, provided through the Learn & Serve America program at the Corporation for National and Community Service, is offered on a competitive grant basis. There are no federal provisions in federal law that require schools to offer service-learning; however, some jurisdictions, including the State of Maryland, require a minimum number of service-learning hours to graduate from high school.

We asked about making service-learning universal and mandatory: “requiring all high school students to do community service as part of their work for one or more courses.” We put the question this way in order to discourage people from responding favorably to the general idea of service without considering possible costs or tradeoffs. Despite the high bar we had set, support was strong: 75.5% favored the idea, 57% strongly. Seventy-seven percent of Republicans and 76% of Democrats backed the idea—almost perfect bipartisanship—although Republicans were somewhat more likely to give it strong support. There were some demographic differences. Young adults with no college experience were not as supportive

(only 34% strongly favored a mandate), despite evidence that service-learning benefits less successful high school students. Women in the Baby Boomer generation overwhelmingly supported the idea, 72% strongly. Support rose gradually with age: the Millennials were the least supportive (although more than half favored the proposal strongly), and the Seniors showed the most enthusiasm. Among people who had themselves been enrolled in high school within the last year (82 individuals in the telephone survey), three quarters supported mandatory service-learning, and 51% supported it strongly.

Civic education:

In 2006, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Civics Assessment found that only 27% of high school seniors were “proficient” in the subject, and only 5% were “advanced.”¹⁵ Such low levels of civic knowledge raise alarms about the future vibrancy of our democracy and its institutions, which depend upon citizens and leaders with a thorough understanding of American history and government.

We asked about “requiring high school students to pass a new test on civics or government.” Sixty-seven percent favored the idea, 47% strongly. We had deliberately made the idea controversial by including the idea of a “new test.” We recognize that there would be other ways to strengthen civic education, such as developing new curricula or providing teacher education, but again

we wanted to set a high bar to test the depth of support. Even with the implication that testing would be increased, this proposal received wide backing. Republicans, men, people with college educations, and older people showed relatively stronger support. Only 32% of young adults with no college educations gave strong support. Among people of high school age, a minority (44%) supported the “new test,” 25% strongly. This seems a relatively high level of support for a new test.

AMERICANS FAVOR POLICY CHANGE TO INSTITUTIONALIZE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT (CONT.)

Federal support for nonprofits:

In 2001, the White House created a new Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, and in 2002, the USA Freedom Corps – a national service council and office that coordinated community and national service policy across the U.S. government. Both efforts worked closely with nonprofits across America and the world. In 2001, the White House issued a new report, *Unlevel Playing Field*, that showed the significant barriers that faith-based and smaller community-based nonprofits face in accessing federal support for the delivery of social services. In 2003, the White House issued a report from its Task Force on Disadvantaged Youth, showing the lack of coordination among federal agencies and non-profits in serving the needs of the more than 15 million youth at risk of reaching productive adulthood. The two efforts put in place executive orders, legislation, and new funding to support non-profits in the provision of a wide array of social services, including mentoring children, prisoner re-entry, volunteer mobilization and more.

Local control over education:

We asked respondents whether they favored “changing the law so that local citizens must take the lead in setting standards and choosing tests for students in their local schools.” We posed this question because the No Child Left Behind Act has centralized control over education by increasing the importance of state and federal tests,

We asked about “providing federal money to support nonprofit, faith-based, and civic organizations that use volunteers.” This idea proved somewhat controversial. Sixty-one percent of respondents favored the idea (39% strongly), but 31.5% opposed it, including 17% strongly. Support was almost perfectly bipartisan: 39% of Democrats and 40% of Republicans strongly supported the idea. African Americans showed the highest level of support: 60% strongly favored it. White males over the age of 55 were among the most likely to oppose the idea: 46% were against it, 31% strongly. Although we cannot tell whether the mention of “faith-based” organizations was responsible for the controversy, there were differences by religious affiliation. People who identified as Protestants were most divided: 42% in strong support and 20% in strong opposition—which may reflect the diversity of Protestant denominations. Attendance at religious services was not a clear predictor of opinions on this question, although regular attendees were more supportive than occasional ones (65% versus 58%).

which influence the curriculum. Critics have argued that the Act thereby discourages citizen engagement with education. Fifty percent favored increasing local citizen control (34% strongly); but 36.5% opposed this idea (21.5% strongly). In general, people with more education were less supportive, perhaps reflecting their comfort

with expert-designed tests and curricula. People at least 25 years old who had never attended college were very supportive (60% in favor, 40% strongly), whereas respondents with graduate educations were strongly opposed. The generational pattern was unusual: all age groups held similar views except members of Generation X, who were distinctly less supportive. Interestingly, there were no statistically significant differences by political party.

Expanding the Peace Corps and related programs:

We asked about “funding and promoting overseas service as a way of improving our relations with other countries.” This idea prompted decidedly mixed opinions, with 52% in favor (28% strongly) and 42% against (26% strongly). Republicans were less likely than Democrats to back the proposal. Women liked the idea less than men, and 34% of Baby-Boomer women opposed it strongly. This was an interesting contrast to their very strong support for service-learning, which almost always occurs locally

instead of overseas. Millennials were about 12 points more likely than other generations to favor the idea, perhaps reflecting their upbringing in a globalized society that has broken down many traditional borders.

Overall, we find strong support for four proposals: college tuition for service; a national deliberation; mandatory service-learning; and new tests for civic education. Three of these ideas relate to civic education, broadly defined. We deliberately set a high bar by mentioning mandates and tests; other ways of enhancing civic education and youth service would probably be even more popular. The other ideas that we tested drew substantial support but would also provoke some controversy.

HOW TO

TALK ABOUT

ENGAGEMENT

So far, we have argued that although high levels of engagement during the campaign represent an opportunity, civic engagement will not automatically continue just because many voters are involved politically right now. We have also argued that an important way to sustain engagement is to change federal and other laws and policies to encourage and support various specific forms of participation, such as community and national service, civic education, and large-scale policy deliberations.

Our efforts to sustain civic engagement will depend on how we talk about this goal. Terms like “citizenship,” “service,” “politics,” and, indeed, “civic engagement” have problematic connotations—and different connotations depending on the audience. As a first step to improve the effectiveness of how we talk about engagement, we asked respondents to say what first came to their mind when they heard two terms randomly selected from a list of six: “service,” “citizenship,” “civic engagement,” “democracy,” “social entrepreneurship,” and “community organizing.”

This was just a first step. It is important to probe other words and phrases—such as “patriotism,” “community service,” “activism,” and “politics,” among others—and to discuss such concepts in situations that allow follow-

up questions and explanations. However, the following results provide useful preliminary guidance. Here we report combined data from the telephone sample (in which respondents replied orally, and their answers were transcribed) and the online sample (in which participants typed their contributions), for a total of 4,010 responses (about 668 for each word/phrase).¹⁶

Overall, we find that most Americans do not associate any of these words or phrases with an active form of citizenship in which individuals and groups voluntarily discuss, define, and address public problems. In general, these terms suggest individual “helping” behavior or roles for formal institutions such as the government; and some words simply puzzle most respondents.

“Service”

This word elicited responses from most respondents who were asked about it; only 12% gave no response or said they didn't know what to say. Twenty-seven percent said something about helping others in their local community. Typical responses included “giving back to others,” “helping people” or “clubs and organizations.” Almost as many (26%) mentioned the military. Only two percent gave a negative response, and less than one percent cited the United States or American identity. Twenty-three percent—a relatively high proportion in comparison to the other words we probed—offered responses that were unique or difficult to categorize, meaning that the term “service” has many different definitions.

“Citizenship”

The most common type of response (at 27%) involved American identity: being born or naturalized in the United States or not being foreign. A substantial proportion of these responses drew contrasts between American citizens and immigrants: for example, “I am an American. I belong to the best country in the world. People who become American citizens should speak English.” An additional 8% mentioned national origin without specifying the United States—for them, “citizenship” meant belonging to any country. One fifth of the sample gave responses that mentioned some kind of right or duty that comes with legal citizenship, such as voting or jury duty. Twenty-nine percent of Republicans and 18% of Democrats thought of rights or duties. A relatively large number (13%) gave a vague positive response, such as “loyalty” or “honor.” About 6% cited some form of local engagement or helping other people, for example, “Small town citizens doing the right thing on a daily basis.” Very few responses were negative about the concept itself. Less than 10 percent chose not to respond.

“Civic engagement”

Almost one third of respondents felt they did not know what this phrase meant, and another 22 percent gave miscellaneous responses that we were unable to classify. Despite the popularity of the phrase in education today, Millennials were the most likely (at 42%) to say they didn't know what it meant. Eighteen percent of the whole sample mentioned community involvement or helping others. Sixteen percent mentioned forms of political

participation or political institutions, such as the city government. Six percent cited rights or duties, usually in a vague way. Three percent gave a vague positive response (such as “good” or “important”) and about 2 percent offered a negative answer such as “Fluff, PR stuff,” or “uptight formal pretension.”

“Democracy”

This word provoked a wide range of responses, including a relatively high rate (13%) of negative answers: e.g., “unfair, a joke, crooks...” “Time to get back on track and do something for our people,” “not here in ‘the land of the free’ -- Taxed to death,” or “I believe that we live in a ‘democracy’ that caters to big business and certain ‘rich’ lobb[y]ists...” When they heard the word “Democracy,” 19% of the Generation-X respondents gave vague, negative responses, compared to 10% of Millennials, 13% of Boomers and 10% of Seniors. A smaller number—eight percent—gave vague positive responses such as

“good,” “wonderful,” or “glad to be part of it.” Neutral answers were frequent. One in five cited some kind of right or duty, such as voting. Another 12% mentioned rules of decision-making, such as majority-rule; and 9% cited the government. Almost 7% invoked American identity or citizenship; but only two respondents mentioned community involvement or helping others, and only three respondents offered any form of citizen political engagement other than voting.

HOW TO TALK ABOUT ENGAGEMENT? (CONT.)

“Social entrepreneurship”

We were thinking of citizens' efforts to address social problems by creating new programs or organizations (including new businesses). Very few respondents had these ideas in mind. Thirty-eight percent said they did not know what this phrase meant. The Millennials were more likely than others to answer this question, although 32% of them declined. An additional 23% gave responses that we were unable to interpret or classify. Seventeen

percent provided answers that suggested they were thinking about standard businesses or capitalism in general. Seven percent mentioned somehow helping other people or working in the community, which came fairly close to our conception. Four percent gave negative answers, for instance, “people stealing from me,” “That sounds like a pathetic socialist nanny state,” or “do not like, sounds republican.”

“Community organizing”

The most common category of responses, at 31%, involved helping others locally. These responses suggested that the respondents basically identified community organizing with volunteering or charity, although sometimes there was an emphasis on the process of being organized (e.g., “group of people getting together for one cause”). Older respondents were less likely to mention helping behaviors. Twenty-one percent said they did not know what this phrase meant. Ten percent gave

a vague positive response (“good,” “important”) and five percent offered a vague negative answer (“opinionated,” “pushy,” or “waste of time”). Almost 6% mentioned a particular community organization such as the YMCA, labor unions, or a neighborhood watch. A total of about 5% either cited political activity or the government in some way. Only seven individuals mentioned Barack Obama, who has talked extensively about his community organizing experience.

It would appear that all these words and phrases have some promise but also significant limitations. “Citizenship” most commonly invoked United States national identity, not any form of activity by individuals and voluntary groups. It would be important to build on the rarely expressed view that citizenship implies some kind of civic action.

“Service” and “community organizing” elicited many responses about completely non-controversial “helping” behavior. We believe that fully engaged citizens not only provide free labor but also discuss underlying issues and engage with political institutions; but these forms of participation do not come into many Americans' minds when they hear “service” or “community organizing.” For community organizers, our survey suggests that their challenge is not that people associate their work with controversial political movements, but rather than they think of it as a “helping” behavior, like service.

“Democracy” had relatively prevalent negative connotations, especially for Generation X, and for many

it meant a formal process of voting or decision-making. It seems important to show that democracy is at its best when citizens personally participate, although few respondents volunteered responses suggesting that they were thinking along those lines.

Few people knew what “social entrepreneurship” or “civic engagement” is. The largest groups of respondents who offered replies to these terms cited, respectively, business and the government (not citizen-centered action). These phrases may have potential; their main disadvantage right now is the high proportion of respondents who have not heard them before.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT CLASSIFICATIONS

In the remaining sections of this report, we compare groups of Americans using pie-charts. The following shows the *whole population*, age 15 and older, and subsequent charts show specific demographic groups.

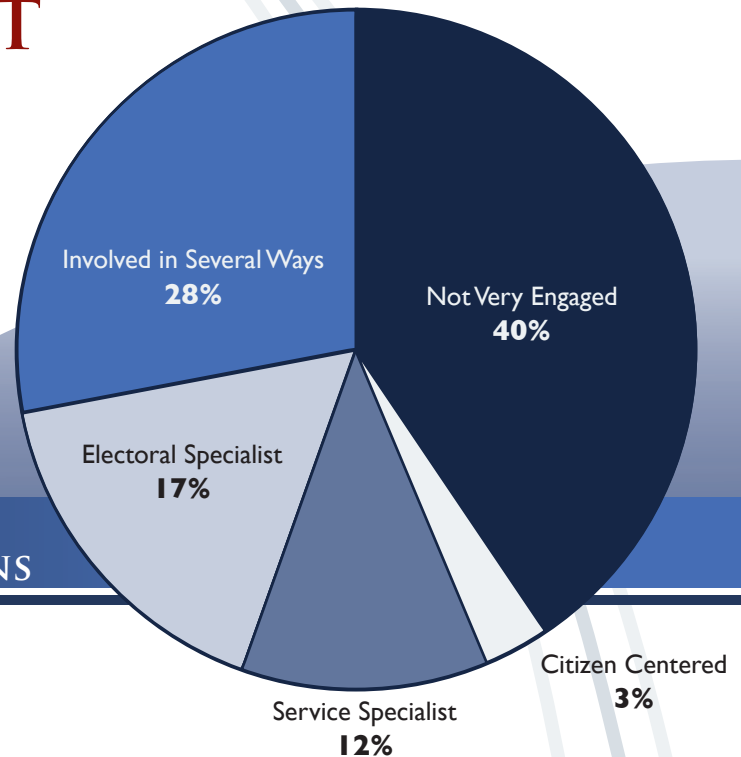


FIGURE 4
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT CLASSIFICATIONS

Definitions

Electoral specialists: Engaged in three or more electoral activities (registering, voting, volunteering for a candidate or campaign, attending political meetings and rallies, giving money to a candidate in person, giving money to a candidate online, and talking to someone about voting for a particular candidate).

Service specialists: Engaged in three or more service activities (volunteering, belonging to a group/organization, going to a club meeting, and working on a community project).

“Citizen-centered”: *Both* attended a public meeting where community issues were discussed and worked with people in the community to solve a problem.

“Involved in several ways”: Qualified for more than one of the above categories.

“Not very engaged”: Qualified for none of these categories.

Note that because some people are involved in several ways, the slices labeled “electoral specialists,” “service specialists,” and “citizen-centered” do not include everyone who qualified for those categories. Those who qualified for more than one are “involved in several ways.”

FOR SPECIAL OPPORTUNITIES INCREASING ENGAGEMENT

This year's Civic Health Index asked respondents about many forms of civic participation. A closer look at subgroups reveals opportunities for increasing and sustaining their civic engagement

THE WORKING CLASS IS DISENGAGED, BUT TECHNOLOGY MAY HELP

On all the traditional measures of civic engagement, people with college degrees are far more active than people who have not attended college; and adults without high school diplomas lag furthest behind. Although the relationship between education and civic engagement has long been noted—in fact, it is the “best documented finding in American political behavior research”¹⁷—this relationship has become more pronounced over the last three decades. Opportunities for working-class people to engage have eroded, while more professional associations and interest groups recruit college graduates.

However, we find that younger people who have never attended college are reasonably well represented in online groups. Thus the Internet, mobile phones, and other new technologies provide opportunities to reduce inequality, at least among younger generations.

The 2008 America's Civic Health Index survey confirms the civic-engagement gap between college graduates and other citizens.



FIGURE 5
TRADITIONAL FORMS
OF ENGAGEMENT,

BY EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

We are especially concerned about the younger generation, because inequalities today will affect the *future* of our democracy. If we focus on people younger than 30, the gaps shown above are even more pronounced. Another way to document the differences between young Americans with and without any college experience is by

means of pie charts that categorize people by types of engagement. The following charts show that non-college-educated young people are twice as likely to be uninvolved, and none of them are involved in several ways.¹⁸

Young adults with Some College Experience

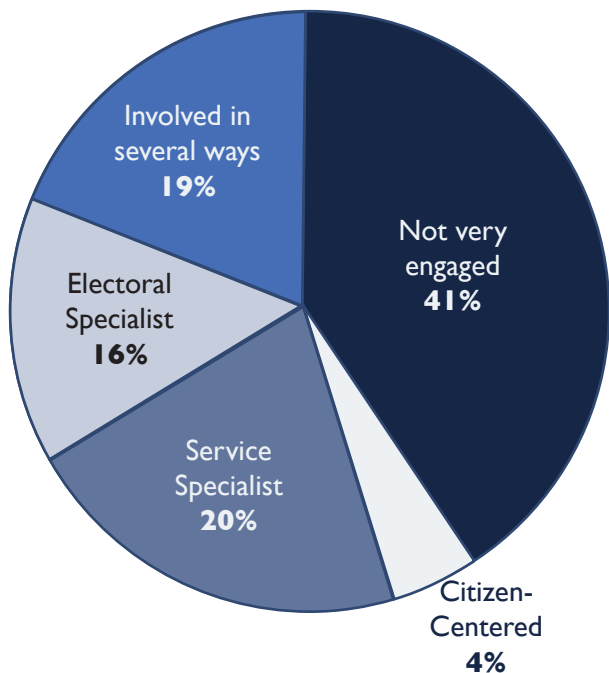
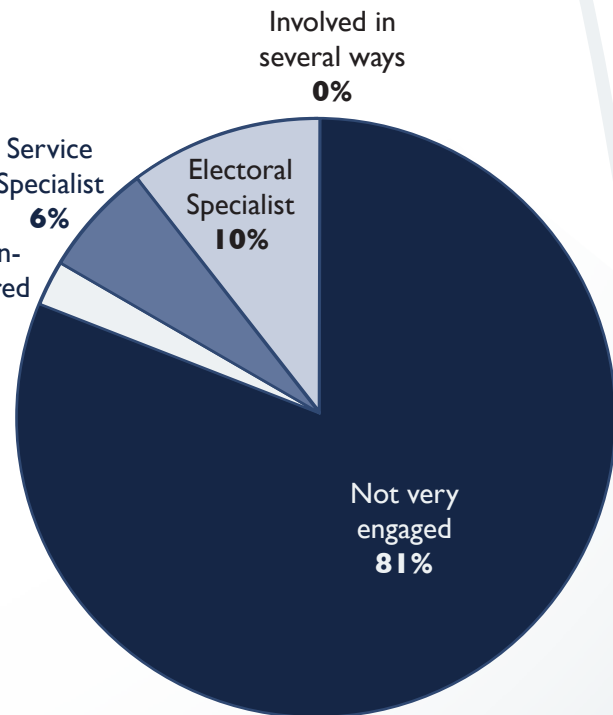


FIGURE 6



Young adults with No College Experience

THE WORKING CLASS IS DISENGAGED, BUT TECHNOLOGY MAY HELP (CONT.)

Online activities have a somewhat different profile from traditional, face-to-face engagement. Considering adults of all ages, we find that college graduates simply use the Internet more—for example, they communicate with friends and family using computers at almost twice the rate of their non-college peers—and they are also more likely to use online tools for civic and political purposes.

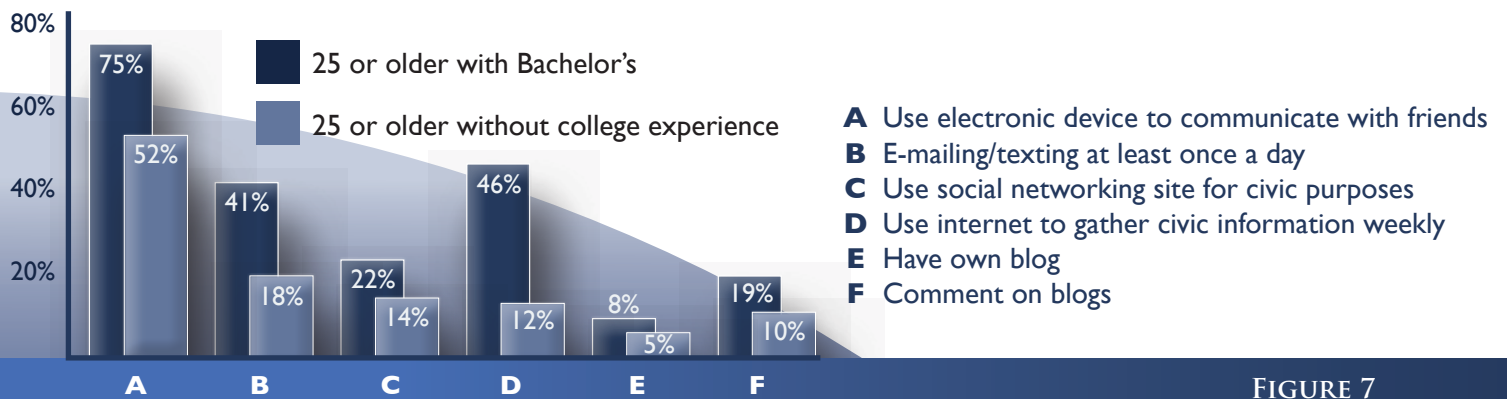


FIGURE 7
ONLINE ENGAGEMENT,
BY EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

However, when we compare a younger group—college-educated adults under 30 with their peers who have no college experience—rates of online participation are higher and some of the gaps are not very severe. For example, college-educated and non-college-educated young adults use social networking sites for social and political purposes at similar rates.

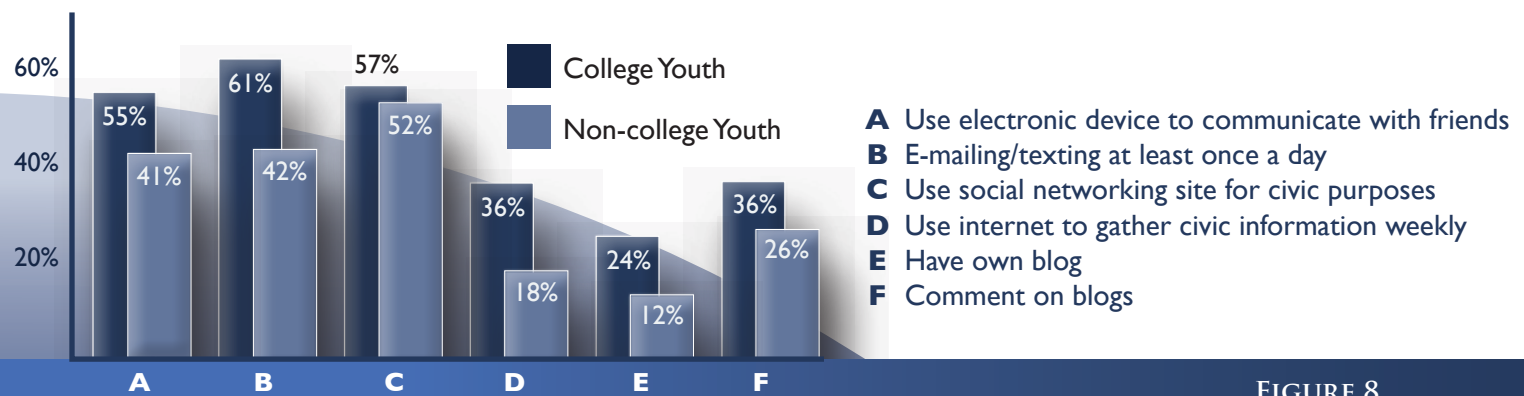


FIGURE 8
ONLINE ENGAGEMENT FOR UNDER-30s,
BY EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

It makes sense that gaps in civic engagement are less consistent online than offline. Everyone who can gain access to the Internet has basically identical access to the same sites. In contrast, many offline organizations recruit people who have special skills or status, charge money to join and participate, and otherwise select citizens who are more advantaged.

Online participation may or may not be as meaningful or effective as traditional forms of civic participation. For example, it is not clear that emailing opinions about political issues can compensate for not attending political meetings and events, or that communicating online about spirituality can replace membership in a religious congregation. However, there at least seems to be a potential to use digital networks to recruit people of diverse backgrounds who are otherwise being left out of civil society.¹⁹

AFRICAN AMERICANS ARE ENERGIZED

The 2008 America's Civic Health index survey finds African Americans more engaged in almost every respect than the population as a whole. The main exception is volunteering, which includes the kind of episodic volunteering experiences that are often organized in offices and other workplaces. It appears that sustained, voluntary civic activity is more common among African Americans than in other groups.

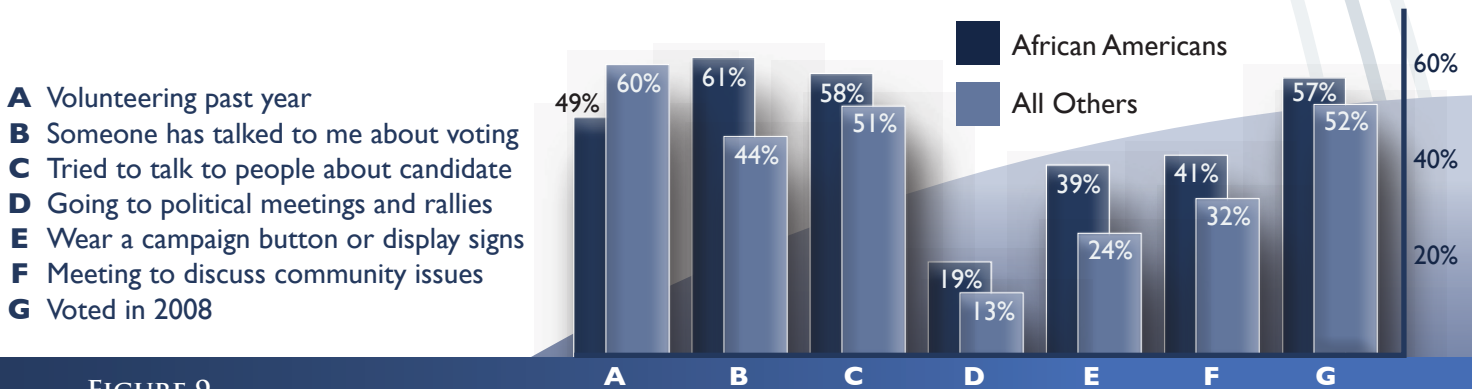


FIGURE 9
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICANS AND OTHERS

This pattern did not begin with the 2008 campaign, although certainly African American participation is high this year, given the nomination of the first African-American presidential candidate by a major party. Previous research has frequently found that African Americans, especially youth, are more civically engaged than whites and Latinos of similar education, age, and income. For example, CIRCLE's 2006 national survey found that African American youth were ahead of all other racial and ethnic groups of young people on the following indicators: *regular* volunteering, raising money for charity, persuading other people about elections, displaying signs and buttons, donating money to parties and candidates, belonging to political groups, contacting the print and broadcast media, and canvassing.²⁰

The comparatively high level of civic engagement of African Americans represents an asset that should be recognized and built upon.

TWO SPECIAL GENERATIONS: THE MILLENNIALS AND THE BOOMERS

The Baby-Boomers and the Millennials are both worthy of special attention. They are large groups: there are 77 million Boomers and 82 million Millennials. Millennials are showing strong interest in civic participation and reversing some of the declines observed among youth since the 1970s. Meanwhile, the Boomers are reaching the period of life when typically we see the highest levels of civic engagement, thanks in part to resources such as savings, networks, community ties, and knowledge that accumulate over time. The two generations are linked in that most of the Millennials' parents are Boomers.

The Millennials so far appear to be considerably more civically engaged than their immediate predecessors, "Generation X." The voting turnout of young adults (ages 18-29) almost doubled in the 2008 primaries and caucuses compared to the most recent comparable year (2000).²¹ There were also substantial youth turnout increases in 2004 and 2006. Youth volunteering rates are higher in the 2000s than they were in the 1990s.

Compared to the Baby Boomers when they were young adults, Millennials are somewhat more likely to volunteer. They are less likely to vote and to participate in face-to-face civil society, as reflected by questions about attending meetings, belonging to groups, and attending religious services.²² Declines in face-to-face engagement occurred before the widespread use of the Internet; but clearly, today's youth have new opportunities for online interaction. Overall, if we compare Millennials to previous generations when they were young, the Millennials appear more engaged than Generation X and engaged in *different ways* from the Boomers.

Comparing *today's* levels of engagement for the Millennials and the Baby Boomer Generation reveals that more Boomers are engaged in demanding ways. Thirty-eight percent of the Boomers, versus 15% of the Millennials, are classified as "involved in several ways."

More Boomers are performing service activities, although the Millennials include more people who are *only* involved in service ("service specialists"). This may reflect the expansion of community service opportunities available to younger citizens through high school and college over the past decade, and the lack of connection between this service and other forms of engagement (such as voting or local problem solving).

This difference is consistent with other studies and with developmental theory, which presumes that people accumulate civic skills and connections as they grow older. But people develop more or fewer skills depending on how many opportunities they have to practice active citizenship. That is why it is crucial to provide opportunities for the Millennials today.

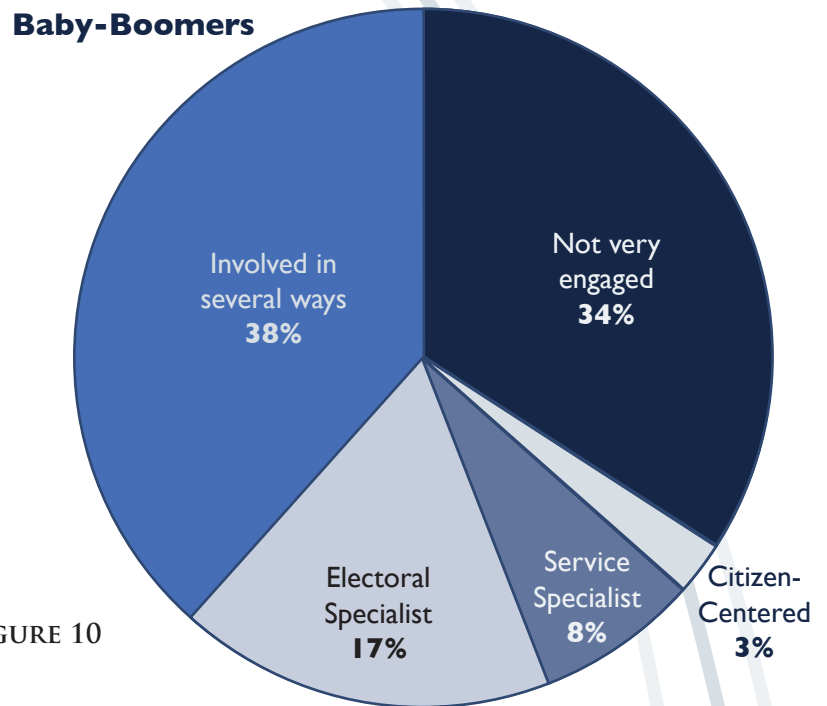
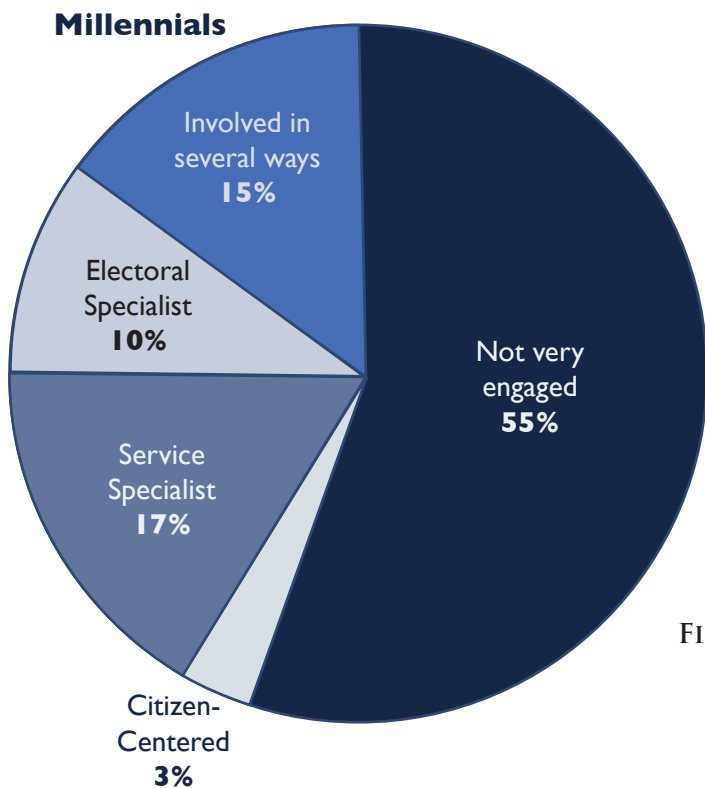


FIGURE 10

People who are now between the ages of 25 and 29 are not as involved as their younger peers are. Half as many of them are excited about the campaign (15% versus 29%), they are much less likely to report being contacted about voting (35% versus 62%), and they are less likely to attend meetings or work on community problems. They may not have any less interest in civic and political issues, but rather may temporarily lack networks and institutions in which to participate. Many have left school and college but have not yet started their own families. They are eligible for very few programs that involve civic experiences or civic education—a gap that deserves more attention.

Among Millennials, gaps in civic engagement by race and ethnicity are typically small. For instance, the volunteering rate is exactly the same for White and non-White Millennials, at 56%. There is only a three-point difference in rates of attending meetings between Whites and non-Whites. Recent Census surveys have found virtually equal voting rates between young Whites and young African Americans (although young Latinos lag behind).²³ In contrast, there are rather substantial differences in civic engagement by race and ethnicity for older generations.

TWO SPECIAL GENERATIONS: THE MILLENNIALS AND THE BOOMERS (CONT.)

Democratic Millennials tend not to have any friends who are Republicans, whereas Republican Millennials often do have Democratic friends. In part, the reason may be a relative shortage of younger Republicans: they

represented only 22% of the Millennials in our sample (including both strong Republicans and those who leaned to that party). Democratic Boomers were also unlikely to have Republican friends, even though Boomer Democrats outnumbered Boomer Republicans by only six points (34% to 28%).

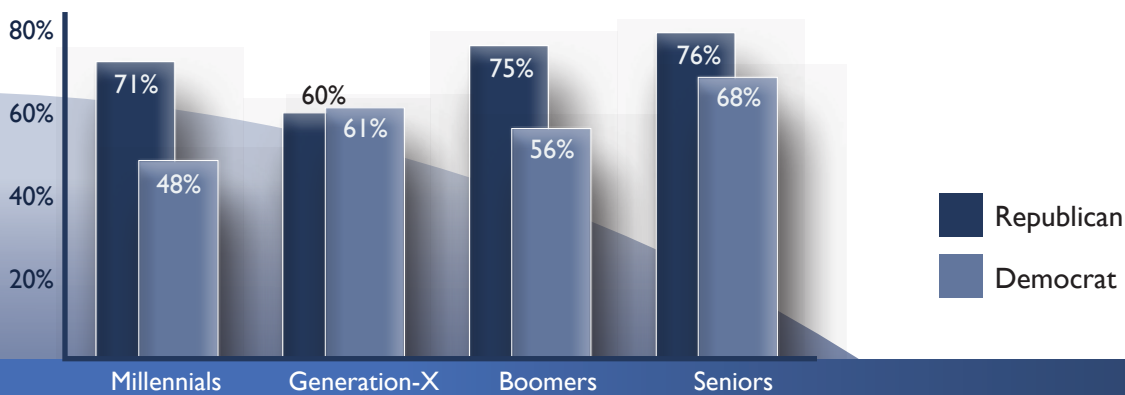


FIGURE 11
% WHO HAVE CROSS-PARTISAN FRIENDS

On other measures, the Boomers' attitudes, behaviors, and feelings almost always fall between those of the younger (Gen-X and Millennials) and the older (Seniors) generations. But Baby Boomers are a diverse or evenly divided group whose opinions, attitudes, and behaviors differ by background.

Gender:

Female Boomers and male Boomers were deeply divided in their support for various policies that are related to civic engagement. For example, 72% of female Boomers strongly supported a proposal for high school service-learning requirement, while only 47% of male Boomers showed the same level of support. Similarly, 60% of female Boomers strongly favored a proposal to require high school students

to pass a new civic test, while 49% of male Boomers expressed this opinion. Seventy-three percent of female Boomers strongly supported National Deliberation while only 60% of male Boomers did. On other hand, Boomer males were slightly more likely to support the expansion of overseas programs; 32% of male Boomers and 25% of female Boomers expressed strong support for this proposal.

Race/Ethnicity:

Some of the deepest divides between racial groups were observed among the Boomers. For example, 64% of White Boomers reported volunteering while only 42% of non-White Boomers did. This finding is especially striking considering that there was no difference at all for Millennials (56% for both).

Findings are similar for group membership. Seventy-seven percent of White Boomers and 48% of non-white Boomers reported belonging to some sort of volunteering or community group.

Finally, we want to emphasize that traditional polling techniques may misrepresent Millennials, especially when surveys are used to compare them to other generations. In the 2004 National Exit Polls, 20 percent of voters under the age of 30 said that they had cell phones only, compared to one percent of those aged 75 or older.²⁴ People who only use mobile phones are virtually impossible to reach in telephone polls; but people who rarely or never use the Internet are hard to recruit for online panels.

Peter D. Hart and Associates conducted our 2008 survey using both methods. The online sample produced higher estimates of civic engagement for the Millennials and often put them ahead of other generations that they trailed in the phone survey. When we compared Millennials to other generations, discrepancies between the two samples were greater than in other aspects of this survey.

Volunteering and community projects:

In the telephone sample, 56% of Millennials reported volunteering in the past year—almost the same as the average (59%) for the whole sample. Nineteen percent had worked on a community project, less than the 33% rate in the whole population. In the online sample, however, the Millennials were, by a substantial margin, the most likely to volunteer and also ahead of the other generations in community projects. Presuming that they actually are more involved in these ways, part of the explanation may be opportunities provided by schools and colleges.

Local advocacy:

27% of Millennials had tried to change local policies, slightly more than the 24% for the population as a whole. In the online sample, they were by far most likely to change local policies than other generations.

Discussing the election:

According to the telephone sample, rates of talking about the election were fairly even for all generations. According to the web sample, Millennials were more likely than any group except Seniors to talk about the election.

WHERE WE STAND:

AMERICA'S

CIVIC HEALTH

IN 2008

The National Conference on Citizenship

conducts America's Civic Health Index to inform citizens and policymakers about the state of our civil society and democracy every year, much as economic studies provide timely reports of growth, inflation, and unemployment. The NCoC's 2006 report, *Broken Engagement*, used strictly comparable historical surveys to track changes in 40 indicators that we categorized in the following clusters:

1

**Connecting with
civic and religious
groups**

2

Trusting others

3

**Connecting to
others through
family and friends**

4

**Giving and
volunteering**

5

Staying informed

6

**Understanding
politics &
government**

7

**Participating in
politics**

8

**Trusting and feeling
connected to major
institutions**

9

**Expressing political
views**

TRENDS SINCE THE 1970s

Putting all the indicators together produced the following story of decline followed by some recent recovery:

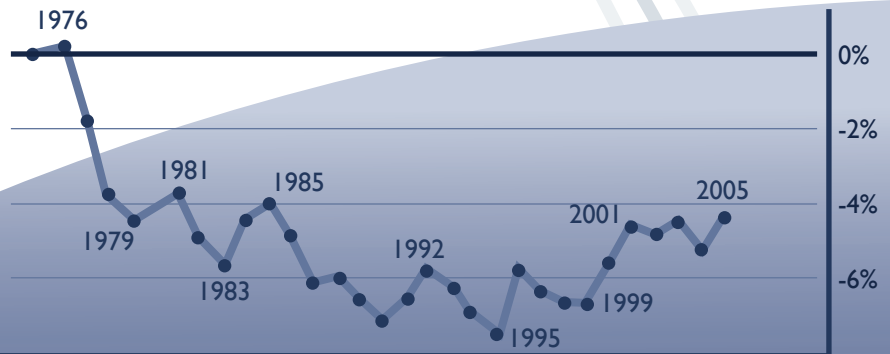


FIGURE 12
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICANS AND OTHERS

Since that report, the NCoC has been working to embed civic indicators in federal surveys and to develop new trend lines appropriate for an era of online civic engagement. The Bureau of the Census and the United States Department of Labor are also asking several additional questions this year about civic engagement on the annual Current Population Survey.

We do not recommend comparing the results of the 2008 Civic Health Index directly to recent surveys; the changes we find in indicators of civic engagement are small and more likely the effects of our new and improved methodology than of actual shifts in public behavior.²⁵ However, the 2008 results are broadly consistent with other surveys conducted since 2004. Therefore, we are confident that the following generalizations remain true:

Levels of conventional community participation and connectedness (belonging to groups, attending meetings, working on community projects, and trusting other citizens) are low compared to 20 or 30 years ago.

People are more engaged in formal politics (voting, giving money to candidates, talking about the election) than they were in the 1990s, but such engagement is volatile and affected by major news events.

There are considerably more options for expressing political views than existed 30 years ago, and some (such as voting on online videos or commenting on blogs) are quite prevalent.

THE INDICATORS OF CIVIC HEALTH 2008

In 2008, we find people involved in the following ways. This list reflects our current working definition of “civic health” and is a baseline for future studies that will repeat the same methodology.

Connecting to civic and religious groups. Such groups are the seedbeds of democracy. They recruit and educate citizens, bring them together for discussion, and increase their capacity for improving society. We find the following rates of connection in 2008:

55% Belong to any group or organization

33% Work on a community project

36% Attend a club meeting

48% Attend religious services at least once a month

Trusting other people. Trust correlates with associational membership because one must have at least limited trust in at least some others before one can work with them voluntarily; and collaborative work often enhances trust.

36% Definitely or generally agree that most people are honest

58% Definitely or generally agree that most people try to be helpful

Connecting to others through family and friends: Close interaction with families and/or friends promotes health and well-being and supports civil society by providing the information, encouragement, and networks that people need to engage in larger groups and communities. Interacting with people who may have different views helps to broaden perspectives, so this year we asked about people's partisan affiliation and whether they had friends of the other party.

53% Whole family usually eats dinner together

40% Spend a lot of time visiting friends

69% Spend a lot of time communicating with friends using a computer, cell phone, or other electronic device

35% Communicate with friends more than once a day using email, the World Wide Web, instant messages, or phone text messages

39% Identify with one political party and have friends in the other party

Citizen-centered engagement. “Citizen-centered” engagement means bringing diverse groups of citizens together both to discuss and define an issue and to work voluntarily to address it. Citizen-centered engagement thus combines deliberation with action.²⁶

33% Attend a community meeting in which there was discussion of community affairs

39% Work with other people in your neighborhood to fix or improve something

21% Both attend a community meeting and work with other people in the neighborhood

26% Try to change local policies in a place like a school, workplace, college, or neighborhood

Giving and volunteering: According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, nearly 61 million Americans – 26% of the U.S. population 16 and older - volunteered in their communities in 2007. The Corporation for National and Community Service reports that these volunteers gave “8.1 billion hours of service worth more than \$158 billion to America’s communities.”²⁷ Americans also give more than \$300 billion each year to charity.²⁸ These contributions fund civil society and address essential needs.

59% Volunteer (phone sample)²⁹

Staying informed: Valuable participation requires information, which can be gleaned from other citizens, the news media, the Internet, and many other sources. The following indicators measure efforts to stay informed:

43% Read the newspaper daily

54% Generally follow news about the government and public affairs

30% Use the Internet at least once a week to gather information about politics, a social issue, or a community problem

33% Watch a presidential candidate’s speech online

39% Watch an online video in support of or opposition to a presidential candidate

THE INDICATORS OF CIVIC HEALTH 2008 (CONT.)

Understanding civics and politics: Related to the previous category, these measures measure to what degree Americans feel informed.

49% Identify the Republican Party as more conservative than the Democratic Party

51% Feel able to understand politics and government

Participating in politics: Regardless of one's political views and attitudes toward government, it is important to influence democratic institutions.

84% Registered to vote

13% Attend political meeting or rally

57% Voted in a primary or caucus in 2008 (NB: actual turnout was about 30% of eligible voters)

15% Give money to a candidate or party

7% Volunteer for a presidential campaign in 2008

6% Making a political contribution online

46% Been asked to register or vote

Trusting and feeling connected to major institutions: Trust in government and the mass media can be understood as a subjective attitude that often (but not invariably) correlates with taking voluntary political action. Trust can also be understood as a measure of how *trustworthy* our institutions actually are.

74% My vote matters

23% Government in Washington generally does what is right

52% People like me have a say

22% Government is run for the benefit of all (67% say that it is run by a few big interests looking out for themselves.)

58% Confidence in the people who run the press, such as newspapers and news magazines: 58% have “only some,” and 9% have “a great deal.”

Expressing political views: Voting is a powerful means of making choices, but it communicates the voter's views very imperfectly. Fortunately, citizens have other opportunities to say more precisely what they believe about public issues.

14% Write a letter or email to the editor of a newspaper or magazine

52% Try to talk to someone about why they should vote for a candidate or party

26% Wear a campaign button, put a campaign sticker on the car, or place a campaign poster in the window or in front of the house

57% Express opinions about a political or social or community issue using email, 57%; on your own blog, 11%; by writing or commenting on someone else's blog, 19%; on a social networking site such as MySpace or Facebook, 26%; by making a video, audio, or photo and sharing it online, 17%; by commenting on someone else's video, audio, or photo online, 27%; by participating in a chat room, 10%; with instant messaging, 27%; with text messaging, 30%; or by voting in favor or against a news story of video on a site like YouTube or Digg, 17%.

ENDNOTES

- 1** Center for the Study of the American Electorate, "2008 Primary Turnout Nearly a Record, Study Finds," press release, June 10, 2008
- 2** The online sample confirmed these findings by generating very similar results for all these campaign-related activities—including watching online speeches and videos—with one exception: talking to other people about candidates, which was 14 points more common in the phone sample. Further research should investigate whether telephone samples are biased in favor of people who talk more.
- 3** For example, the proportion of people who said they had given money to a candidate was higher than in any American National Election Study (ANES) poll since 1976, and the 12% who said they had attended a political meeting or rally was up from 7% in the November 2004 ANES.
- 4** For example, National Conference on Citizenship, *Broken Engagement: America's Civic Health Index*, 2006, p. 15
- 5** The online sample produced quite similar responses to these questions.
- 6** These results are based on a regression model with controls for demographics.
- 7** These results are based on scales composed of several separate questions, identified through factor analysis. The scales were "netizenship" (using several online forms of engagement) "community involvement," "political activism," and "political discussion."
- 8** U.S. Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Current Population Survey (CPS) volunteering supplement*.
- 9** The online survey found fewer people who expect to talk to friends and work to change local policies, which again suggests that telephone survey respondents may be more likely to want to talk and more connected locally.
- 10** Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, "Mixed Signals on Energy Policy," March 6, 2008.
- 11** AARP and Civic Enterprises, *More to Give: Tapping the Talents of the Baby Boomer, Silent and Greatest Generations* (September 2008).
- 12** Joe Goldman et al, "Millions of Voices: A Blueprint for Engaging the American Public in National Policy-Making," Washington, DC: AmericaSPEAKS, 2004. See also proposals by Bruce Ackerman and James S. Fishkin and others.
- 13** Rebecca Skinner and Chris Chapman, "Service-learning and community service in K-12 public schools," *National Center for Education Statistics: Statistics in Brief* (NCES 1999-043).
- 14** John M. Bridgeland, John J. Dilulio, Jr., and Stuart C. Wulsin, "Engaged for Success Service-Learning as a Tool for High School Dropout Prevention," a report by Civic Enterprises in association with Peter D. Hart Research Associates for the National Conference on Citizenship (April 2008).
- 15** U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, *National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment*.
- 16** Each respondent was prompted for responses to two words/phrases.
- 17** Norman H. Nie, Jane Junn, and Kenneth Stehlik-Barry, *Education and Democratic Citizenship in America* (Chicago, 1996), p. 31.
- 18** Young adults with no college experience means people between the ages of 20-24 with no college experience and no recent enrollment in high school, plus people between the ages of 25-29 with no college experience. Young adults with college experience means people between the ages of 20 and 29 who have attended college. In the phone sample, there are 59 non-college youth and 114 college youth.
- 19** We also looked at the population between the ages of 16-22, but the sample size is small and classifications are difficult since most people are still in the midst of their educations. Gaps in online participation by education were smaller in this subsample.
- 20** Mark Hugo Lopez, Peter Levine, and others, "The 2006 Civic and Political Health of the Nation" (CIRCLE, 2006). These are simple comparisons without any controls for education or income, which would increase the gap.
- 21** See Emily Hoban Kirby, Karlo Barrios Marcelo, Joshua Gillerman, and Samantha Linkins, "The Youth Vote in the 2008 Primaries and Caucuses," CIRCLE Fact Sheet, June 2008 (via www.civicyouth.org).
- 22** These comparisons are based on comparable survey data from DDB Needham and the General Social Survey. For details, see National Conference on Citizenship, *Broken Engagement: America's Civic Health Index*, 2006.
- 23** Mark Hugo Lopez and Emily Kirby, "Electoral Engagement Among Minority Youth," CIRCLE Fact Sheet, July 2005.
- 24** National Exit Poll data collected by Edison/Mitofsky
- 25** Steven J. Rosenstone and John Mark Hansen, *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America* (Longman Classics, 2002) and other studies find that surveys of civic engagement yield different responses depending on what time of year they are asked and how the questions are introduced and presented. These differences can be larger than actual changes in civic engagement from one year to the next. Our 2008 Civic Health Index represents a new methodology and survey instrument and was asked at a different point in the political cycle than any historical survey.
- 26** Cynthia Gibson, *Citizens at the Center: A New Approach to Civic Engagement* (Washington, DC: Case Foundation, 2006).
- 27** Corporation for National and Community Service, *Volunteering in America* (Washington, DC, 2008).
- 28** *Giving USA 2008*, a publication of the Giving USA Foundation that is researched and written at the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University.
- 29** Our two-part question on volunteering was identical to that used in the Census Current Population survey, yet our result is much higher. The same pattern has been observed in other surveys. We believe that whether one volunteers is more a matter of degree than a "yes" or "no" question. When respondents are primed to think of many varieties of engagement in a survey like this one on civic health, they are much more likely to answer a question about their own volunteering affirmatively.



NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CITIZENSHIP

Founded in 1946 and chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1953, the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC) is a leader in promoting our nation's civic life. We track, measure and advocate civic participation and engagement in partnership with other organizations on a bipartisan, collaborative basis. We focus on ways to enhance history and civics education, encourage national and community service, and promote greater participation in the political process.

Many distinguished Americans have been involved with the growth and development of the NCoC over the years including Presidents Harry S. Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower and Chief Justices Earl Warren and Warren Burger. The roster of board members, advisors and guest speakers at NCoC events represent a diverse spectrum of leaders from across government, industry, academia, community and nonprofit organizations and the media; people like Senators Robert Byrd and Lamar Alexander, philanthropists Ray Chambers and Eugene Lang, authors David McCullough and Walter Isaacson, scholars Robert Putnam and Stephen Goldsmith, MTV's Ian Rowe, ABC's Cokie Roberts, AOL's Jean Case, Facebook's Sean Parker, former Clinton Administration advisor William Galston and former Bush Administration advisor John Bridgeland.

The NCoC's accomplishments are many, ranging from fueling the civic energy of the Greatest Generation freshly home from WWII to leading the celebration of our nation's Bicentennial in 1976. The NCoC helped establish the observance of Citizenship Day, every September 17, the week in which we were chartered to hold our annual conference focusing on building an active and engaged citizenry. Most recently, the NCoC has produced *America's Civic Health Index*, the Nation's leading measure of citizen actions and attitudes.

To advance our mission to better understand the broad dimensions of citizenship today and to encourage greater civic participation, the NCoC has developed and sustained a network of over 250 like-minded institutions that seek a more comprehensive and collaborative approach to strengthening our system of self-government.

For more information, please visit www.ncoc.net

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