2018 TEXAS CIVIC HEALTH INDEX™

The University of Texas at Austin Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life Moody College of Communication





National Conference on Citizenship Connecting People. Strengthening Our Country



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The National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC) is a congressionally chartered organization dedicated to strengthening civic life in America. We pursue our mission through a nationwide network of partners involved in a cutting-edge civic health initiative and our cross-sector conferences. At the core of our joint efforts is the belief that every person has the ability to help their community and country thrive. ncoc.org

RGK CENTER FOR PHILANTHROPY AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

The RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service prepares the next generation of nonprofit and philanthropic leaders through graduate education and research. Research areas address pressing issues in philanthropy, nonprofit management, sustainable community leadership, and global civil society. The RGK Center's collective work, ranging from graduate course offerings to international exchange programs, new books, and publications, is all focused on helping the nonprofit leaders of today and tomorrow make informed and innovative contributions to the public good. <u>rgkcenter.org</u>

THE ANNETTE STRAUSS INSTITUTE FOR CIVIC LIFE

The Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life in the Moody College of Communication at The University of Texas at Austin was founded in the year 2000 on the belief that active, engaged citizens are made, not born, and that society benefits from increased citizen participation in civic life. The Institute's focus is in four areas – civic campus, civic schools, civic communities, and civic nation. These areas drive the Institute's research and educational programs, prepare ordinary citizens for extraordinary leadership, participation, and to have an impact at home, school, work, in the community and society. The Institute bears the name of Annette Greenfield Strauss, former mayor and member of the Dallas City Council and seeks to honor her legacy as a respected elected official, philanthropist, and active citizen. <u>annettestrauss.org</u>

This report was produced in collaboration with the National Conference on Citizenship, the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life, the RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service, Leadership Austin, the Austin Community Foundation, KLRU - TV, and KUT Radio.











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HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

The U.S Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS) asks questions to approximately 60,000 households nationwide. This survey includes occasional supplements on topics such as volunteering, civic engagement, and voting. From that data, this report focuses on: 1) the rates of political, civic, and social engagement among Texans; 2) state-by-state comparisons, and 3) other factors that correlate with the overall rates of participation, such as income, education, and age of the population. The survey findings reported here, unless otherwise noted, are obtained from the CPS data. The year for each of the findings ranges from 2013 to 2017, and the exact year is noted in each section.

While the report findings are based on a scientifically rigorous sample of citizens, it is important to note that each data point has a small margin of error. Therefore, the numbers reported here should be considered thoughtfully. Small numeric differences across groups of citizens may not be meaningful either substantively or statistically. For more background on the issues covered in this update, please access the 2013 Texas Civic Health Index by visiting the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life website at <u>annettestrauss.org</u>.

A note on race: Texas is a diverse state made up of 53% Non-Hispanic whites, 29% Hispanics, 13% African-Americans, and 4% Asians. The analysis below, however, does not evaluate measures of civic health according to race. A long and rich history of academic research has consistently found that differences in participation and engagement across races are largely driven by socioeconomic factors.¹ Because data cited in this report could not account for individual-level socioeconomic differences, results are not presented according to race in order to avoid conclusions misattributing race as a cause for differences in civic health.

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The Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life thank the staff of its national partner, the National Conference on Citizenship, for its guidance and support, particularly its Program Director, Lisa Matthews. The Institute is also indebted to the many community collaborators who provided support for this report.

1 Marvin Olsen (1970) "Social and political participation of blacks"; Jan Leighley and Arnold Vedlitz (1999) "Race, ethnicity, and political participation"; and Frederick Solt. (2010). "Does economic inequality depress electoral participation?"

TEXAS CIVIC HEALTH CHECKUP

Thriving communities and a healthy democracy depend on active citizen participation. Through political engagement, citizens have an opportunity to influence governmental action and the policies that affect their lives. By joining groups, volunteering, donating, and helping neighbors, citizens have an opportunity to directly impact their communities and enrich the lives of others around them. Research has shown that when levels of political participation, community involvement, and social connectedness are relatively high, a state enjoys the benefits of civic health.

We think of "civic health" as the way that communities are organized to define and address public problems. Communities with strong indicators of civic health have higher employment rates, stronger schools, better physical health, and more responsive governments.²

The importance of these actions, and the lack of information we know about them, led the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life to publish the first Texas Civic Health Index[™] (CHI) in 2013. Given the state's rapidly growing and changing population demographics, and our nation's evolving political landscape, the civic habits of Texas' residents deserve revisiting. This report provides an update to the 2013 Texas CHI and presents an assessment of civic health in Texas in 2018.

Key Findings

- Political participation remains extremely low. Based on figures from the 2016 general election, the state ranked 44th in voter registration and 47th in voter turnout among the 50 states and the District of Columbia. This ranking is a slight improvement from the 2013 Texas Civic Health IndexTM, where Texas was ranked last (51st) in voter turnout during a midterm election year.
- A dislike for the candidates and the issues is the reason Texans did not vote in 2016. In contrast, the top reason given for not voting in 2012 was "too busy" or had a "conflict with work" and dislike of the candidates and issues ranked a distant third.
- Texans do not regularly talk about politics. When asked how frequently they talk about politics with friends and family, only 23% say they do so often ranking the state 50th in the nation.
- Donating and volunteering is not a priority for many Texans. Texas ranks in the bottom quarter of states in supporting charitable organizations: 46% of Texans donate at least \$25 to a charitable organization annually and 23% report doing volunteer work in their communities in the past year.
- **Texans make relatively good neighbors.** Texans rank slightly above the national average and 24th among the states and the District of Columbia in doing favors for their neighbors.



Communities with strong civic health have higher employment rates, stronger schools, better physical health, and more responsive governments.

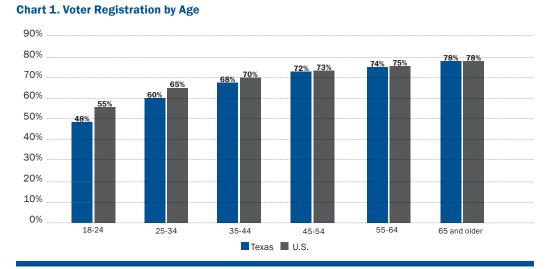
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Robust political participation is fundamental to civic health. A resilient democracy requires citizens who vote regularly. Texas ranks lower than most other states in political participation.

Voter Registration and Turnout

U.S. citizens are required to register before being eligible to vote. In voter registration, Texas ranks 44th out of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, with only 68% of all eligible citizens being registered to vote. This is well below the national leader, District of Columbia, where 82% of citizens are registered to vote.

In Texas, there is a great disparity among age groups when it comes to voter registration, with older Texans being registered to vote at much higher levels than younger Texans. For the 2016 general election, only 48% of Texans ages 18 to 24 were registered to vote, while 78% of Texans over the age of 65 were registered. The voter registration level of older Texans is nearly identical to their U.S. counterparts. The national average for state voter registration among those ages 18 to 24 is 55%. Texas ranks 7 percentage points below the national average for the youngest age group. This problem is amplified by the fact that Texas' electorate is younger than the national average.



Only **32%** of Texans ages 18-24 voted in the 2016 election.

The figure below describes the strong relationship between educational attainment and voter registration and turnout. Only 32% of Texans with no high school diploma voted in 2016, while 74% of those with a bachelor's degree turned out to vote.

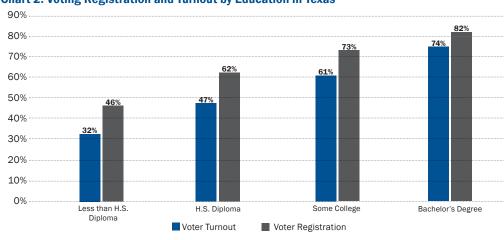
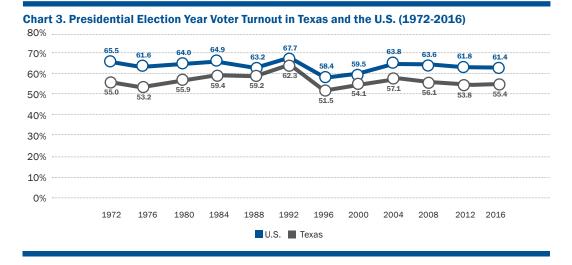


Chart 2. Voting Registration and Turnout by Education in Texas

In 2010, a midterm election year, Texas ranked dead last (51st) compared to other states and the District of Columbia for voter turnout. In 2016, a presidential election year, Texas ranked 47th, with 55% of citizens voting in the general election. While Texas's rank has slightly improved, it is still well behind the national average of 61%. Texas continues to be one of the lowest-ranked states in the nation in both voter registration and voter turnout.

As was seen with voter registration, voter turnout is the lowest in the youngest age groups. Only 32% of Texans ages 18 to 24 voted in the 2016 election. This is 11 percentage points less than the national average of 43% for the same age group. Older Texans voted at a much higher rate, although still below the national average in every age group.



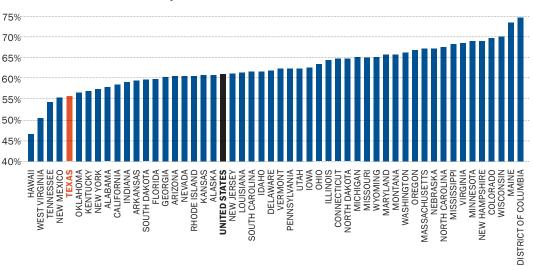




Photo Credit: Daemmrich Photography Texas ranked 47th in voter turnout and 44th for voter registration for the 2016 presidential election.

Chart 4. Voter Turnout in 2016 by State

Reasons for Not Voting

The chart below lists the various reasons Texans chose not to vote in the 2016 presidential election. The most frequent response (28%) was they "didn't like the candidates or campaign issues." This is a notable departure from the response given in 2012, when only 13% of Texans avoided voting because of dislike of the candidates and issues. In 2012, the most common reason for not voting was shared by 21% of Texans who were "too busy" or had a "conflict with work."

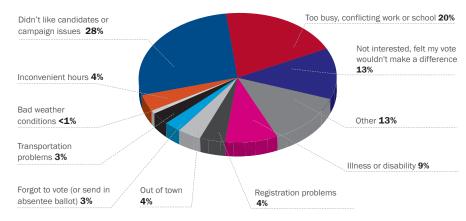
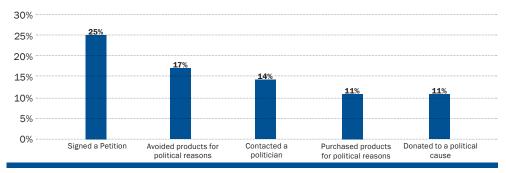


Chart 5. Reasons for Texans Not Voting in 2016

Other Forms of Political Participation³

Voting, while very important, is only one of many ways for a citizen to be politically engaged. When asked about other forms of political participation, 41% of Texans revealed having participated in at least one activity in the past year, compared to 46% for all Americans. The graph below illustrates the most common forms of non-voting political participation among Texans.

Chart 6. Other Forms of Political Participation in Texas



Texans who have attained a higher level of education are more likely to take part in one of these types of political participation: 58% of those with a bachelor's degree have participated in at least one type of non-voting political activity, compared to only 18% of those with no high school degree.



Photo Credit: KUT Radio

14% of Texans contact their elected officials.

The impact of education is particularly evident when looking at those who have contacted an elected official. As can be seen from the graph below, only 3% of those with no high school diploma report contacting an official, compared to 26% of those with a four-year college degree.

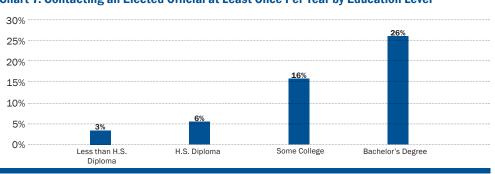


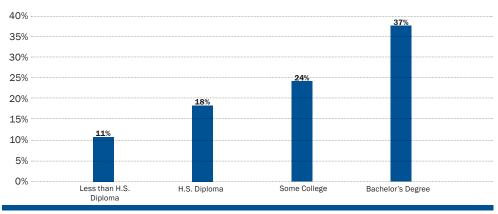
Chart 7. Contacting an Elected Official at Least Once Per Year by Education Level

For those under age 30, the most common form of non-voting political participation is signing a petition. Of those 18-to-29 years old, 25% report having signed a petition.

Discussing Politics

A regular practice of discussing politics with family and friends is an indicator of vibrant civic health. Texas, however, ranks 50th in the nation, with only 23% of Texans saying that they frequently discuss politics. This is less than half of the percentage of respondents from the national leader – the District of Columbia – who talk about politics with their family and friends at a rate of 48%.

Social and economic factors predict how often Texans talk about politics. Those with lower income and less education discuss politics with less frequency. Texans earning less than \$35,000 annually profess frequently discussing politics only 14% of the time, while those making more than \$75,000 annually report talking about politics 33% of the time. The graph below shows a similar correlation by education level.





Texas ranks **50th** with only 23% discussing politics with family or friends.

0%

DISCUSSING POLITICS WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY

100%

DC 1

U.S. Avg

CIVIC INVOLVEMENT & SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

Non-political community action is indicative of civic health. Rates of donating to a charity, volunteering and group involvement, and social connectedness are each measures of the strength of our social bonds and the resilience of our communities.

Donating

In Texas, donating money is the most common form of civic involvement, with 46% of Texans reporting they give at least \$25 annually to a charitable organization. This rate is lower than most other states, ranking Texas 40th. Utah is the leader, with 65% of residents donating money.

Older and more educated Texans are more likely to donate to charitable organizations. Texans in the 18-to-24 age range donate at the rate of 24%, with a steady increase across age groups to 60% of those age 65 and older donating. Those Texans without a high school degree donate at a 27% rate, while 67% of those with a bachelor's degree or higher donate.

Volunteering

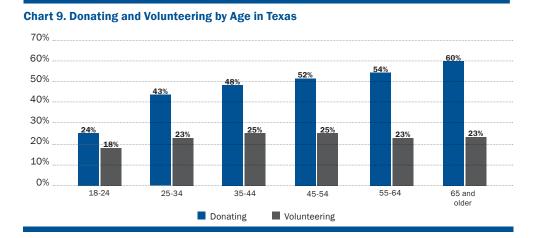
Another way for citizens to contribute to their community is to volunteer their time and energy. In Texas, only 23% of respondents said they volunteered in the past year. This puts Texas in the bottom third of states – ranking 39th. While the national average is only 25%, the highest rate was found in Utah where 39% report volunteering in the past year.

Again we see those more educated and with higher income levels volunteering at a higher level. Differences arise, however, when we look at the relationship between age and volunteering. While those in the 18-to-24 age range are again in the lowest category, only volunteering at a rate of 18%, we see the highest volunteering rates among those who are ages 35 to 44 and 45 to 54 – both at 25%. Rates slip a little in the older brackets with 23% of the 55-to-64 and 65 and older age ranges volunteering. Since volunteering for a child's school or youth organization was included in this measure, it is not surprising that the ages when adults are most likely to have school-aged children have the highest levels of volunteering.



Photo Credit: Daemmrich Photography

Civic involvement strengthens our social bonds and the resilience of our communities.



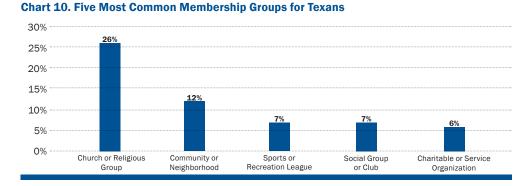
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Photo Credit: KUT Radio

Group Involvement⁴

In 2017, 35% of Texans reported being a member of at least one group, such as a religious group or sports league. The figure below describes the groups that Texans join most frequently.



Group involvement increases as age, income, and education levels rise. Only 20% of those ages 18 to 24 are members of groups, while those 65 and older are members of groups at a rate of 48%. Twenty-two percent of Texans earning less than \$35,000 are members of groups, while those making over \$75,000 are members of groups at a rate of 53%. Survey data also show that having a college degree is highly correlated with group involvement. While those with only a high school degree are members of a group 28% of the time, those with a bachelor's degree or higher are members of a group at a rate of 62%. See the figure below for a representation of group membership across age, education, and income in Texas.

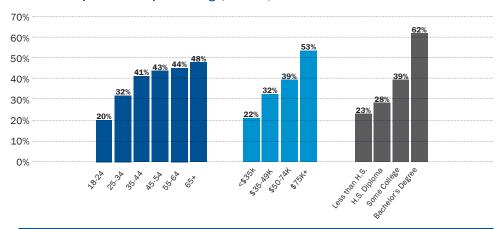


Chart 11. Group Membership Across Age, Income, and Education in Texas

⁴ Data for this section are from the 2017 Texas Media & Society Survey conducted by the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life.



Photo Credit: Corporation for National & Community Service

Group involvement increases as age, income, and education levels rise. **35%** of Texans report being a member of a community group.

Social Connectedness

Data on social connectedness and neighborliness suggests that Texas may not be living up to the promise that its state motto – The Friendship State – suggests. By surveying how often people talk to their neighbors, how much they trust their neighbors, and how often they do favors for their neighbors, we can gain insight into the level of social connectedness within Texas communities. Unfortunately in two of these measures, Texas ranks among the 10 worst states.

Only 38% of Texans say they talk to their neighbors frequently – placing Texas 41st of 50 states and the District of Columbia. Texas ranks 20 percentage points lower than West Virginia, the state with the most talkative neighbors.

Texans ranked 24th in the country in doing favors for their neighbors, with 13% reporting they do so frequently. While this is still low, it is slightly above the national average of 12%. There are few differences among age groups, but interestingly, we do see an inverse relationship between neighborliness and education and income, with less educated and lower income-earning respondents doing favors for their neighbors slightly more often than those with more education and higher incomes. Those earning below \$35,000 a year report doing frequent favors, at a rate of 14%, while only 12% of those earning more than \$75,000 annually report exchanging favors frequently with neighbors.

TRUST THE PEOPLE IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

100%

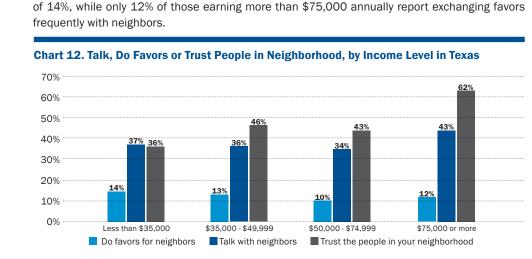
UT 1

U.S. Avg.

560

TX 45

0%



When looking at levels of trust between neighbors, Texas is ranked 45th, with 48% trusting their neighbors most or all of the time. This is nearly 30% below the national leader, Utah, where neighborly trust occurs at a rate of 77%. There also are large differences in trust between educational attainment levels. Texans with no high school degree only trust their neighbors 33% of the time, while those with a college degree trust their neighbors 61% of the time. This gap also exists between income groups, with Texans earning less than \$35,000 annually only trusting their neighbors 36% of the time, while those earning over \$75,000 trust their neighbors 62% of the time.



Photo Credit: KUT Radio

RECOMMENDATIONS

Overcoming Texas' civic health deficiencies requires intervention and investment at all levels of society including our social systems, public institutions, and ourselves. There are many efforts that will be necessary to meet these challenges. Below are a few recommendations for ways Texans can improve their civic health.

Reimagine Civics Education. Civic knowledge and skills are learned early, so the more our schools, parents, grandparents, and community organizations teach the habits of civic engagement, the stronger Texas will be in the long term. It is our collective responsibility to modernize the way we prepare the next generation to take on the duty of self-governance.

Explore Opportunities for Institutional, Systems-level Changes. The United States has been called a laboratory for democracy with each of the 50 states testing their unique blend. Many states have different rules and laws regulating political participation that undoubtedly lead to state-by-state differences in engagement. It would benefit the health of our communities to make use of this laboratory and use best practices from other states that support civic life.

Develop Civic Leaders. Strong leadership has the potential to guide the future in positive ways that strengthen our social connectedness and build resiliency in our communities. As the population of Texas continues to diversify, it is important to develop civic leaders who can represent the values and priorities of all Texans. Texans should strive to create educational opportunities that build skills around civic leadership, running for office, and non-profit board service.

Encourage Innovation. As Texas grows, it also changes - creating the need for new and diverse pathways for engagement. Citizens need to reduce obstacles for civic participation. Utilizing innovative engagement methods, online platforms, and harnessing new technology will jumpstart our civic health.

Support Organizations That Invest in Texas. Whether it is a neighborhood association, a local nonprofit, or school, it is important to invest time and money in organizations focused on making Texas better. There are organizations in every community that are working daily to solve problems and make lives better by bringing Texans together. Find a way to get involved.

CONCLUSION

The benefits of civic health remain elusive for many Texans, and on most measures of civic engagement Texas does not compare favorably with other states. These findings should sound an alarm for anyone who cares about the future of Texas and of the United States more broadly. Texas is currently the second most populous state in the nation, and the state of Texas' civic health has social and economic implications far beyond the state's borders.

A pattern emerges from this report allowing us to see a relationship between socioeconomic differences and levels of engagement. The data presented above show those who are younger, those with lower levels of education, and those earning less income are less civically engaged. The civic health of Texas needs to be addressed with these realities in mind. While efforts to improve the symptoms of our ailing civic health can alleviate our engagement problems, the findings of this report suggest we will not see lasting and sustainable change until we address the root cause. Finding solutions to these challenges will not be easy - they require our leaders to be forward-thinking and our citizens to be active and engaged.

We hope this report becomes a tool for policy discussion, a catalyst for community conversations, and a reason for renewed social connection. By highlighting the practices that define civic health, and the vast room for improvement in all of these areas, we hope each Texan discovers relatively simple and everyday actions that will lead to dramatic progress in the state of Texas's civic health.

TECHNICAL NOTE

Unless otherwise noted, findings presented in this report are based on the National Conference on Citizenship's (NCoC) analysis of the U.S. Census Current Population Survey (CPS) data. Any and all errors are NCoC's. Volunteering estimates are from CPS September Volunteering Supplement from 2015, voting estimates from 2016 November Voting and Registration Supplement, and all other civic engagement indicators, such as discussion of political information and connection to neighbors, come from the 2013 CPS Civic Engagement Supplement.

Using a probability selected sample of about 150,000 occupied households, the CPS collects monthly data on employment and demographic characteristics of the nation. Depending on the CPS supplement, the single-year Texas CPS sample size used for this report ranges from 1,121 to 1,848 (civic engagement supplement) to 4,215 (volunteer supplement), and to 4,732 (voting supplement) residents from across Texas. This sample is then weighted to represent population demographics for the state.

Estimates for the volunteering indicators (e.g., volunteering, working with neighbors, making donations) are based on U.S. residents ages 16 and older. Estimates for civic engagement and social connection indicators (e.g., favors for neighbors, discussing politics) are based on U.S. residents ages 18 and older. Voting and registration statistics are based on U.S. citizens who are 18 and older (eligible voters). When we examined the relationship between educational attainment and engagement, estimates are based on adults ages 25 and older, based on the assumption younger people may be completing their education.

Because multiple sources of data with varying sample sizes are used, the report is not able to compute one margin of error for Texas across all indicators. Any analysis that breaks down the sample into smaller groups (e.g., income, education) will have smaller samples and therefore the margin of error will increase. Furthermore, national rankings, while useful in benchmarking, may be small in range, with one to two percentage points separating the state/district ranked first from the state/district ranked last.

It is also important that our margin of error estimates are approximate, as CPS sampling is highly complex and accurate estimation of error rates involves many parameters that are not publicly available.

The Texas Media & Society Survey seeks to capture the voice of Texans and Americans on the media, civic engagement, and politics over time. Launched in 2015 as an endeavor of the Moody College of Communication, the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life, and the School of Journalism, the survey reveals the attitudes of Texans and Americans on media and politics, measures habits of news consumption, and offers insight into how people become informed in the digital age. In 2017, survey questions were asked of a sample of 986 Texans and 1,058 Americans. Survey weights have been employed in this report to adjust for demographic differences between our sample and the populations of Texas and the United States. For more information about the survey, including the full questionnaire and methodology, visit txmediaandsociety.org.

CIVIC HEALTH INDEX

State and Local Partnerships

NCoC began America's Civic Health Index in 2006 to measure the level of civic engagement and health of our democracy. In 2009, NCoC was incorporated into the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act and directed to expand this civic health assessment in partnership with the Corporation for National and Community Service and the US Census Bureau.

NCoC now works with partners in more than 30 communities nationwide to use civic data to lead and inspire a public dialogue about the future of citizenship in America and to drive sustainable civic strategies.

STATES

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Center for the Future of Arizona

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California Forward Center for Civic Education Center for Individual and Institutional Renewal Davenport Institute

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District of Columbia ServeDC

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Michigan Nonprofit Association Michigan Campus Compact Michigan Community Service Commission Volunteer Centers of Michigan Council of Michigan Foundations Center for Study of Citizenship at Wayne State University

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Missouri State University Park University Saint Louis University

Millennials Civic Health Index

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New Hampshire

Carsey Institute Campus Compact of New Hampshire University System of New Hampshire New Hampshire College & University Council

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North Carolina Institute for Emerging Issues

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Pennsylvania

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Economic Health

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