

Texas Ranks Among Lowest in Nation for Political Participation and Civic Involvement

Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life report evaluates state's civic health and provides recommendations

AUSTIN, Texas – June 4, 2013 – On the heels of the 83rd Legislative Session, the [Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life](#) at [The University of Texas at Austin](#) and the National Conference on Citizenship today released the [Texas Civic Health Index](#), the first nonpartisan, comprehensive evaluation of community and political engagement in Texas. Following a session in which a large number of bills were passed affecting the lives of all Texans, the study found that Texas has one of the nation's lowest political and civic participation rates.

“This report should be a wake-up call for all Texans who care about the future of our state,” said Annette Strauss Institute Director and [Journalism Professor Regina Lawrence](#). “By not being civically engaged, too many Texans are ceding control over the direction of our state to an active few. We hope the findings in the Texas Civic Health Index will spur conversation and debate, and inspire people to become more actively engaged.”

The report data was obtained primarily from the 2011 U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey on Voting, Volunteering and Civic Engagement. Following are key findings from the report, which ranks Texas among the 50 states and Washington, D.C.:

- In 2010, Texas ranked 51st in voter turnout, 42nd in voter registration, 49th in the number of citizens who contact public officials and 44th in the number of people who discuss politics a few times a week or more.
- Rates of civic involvement are also relatively low, with Texas ranking 43rd in donating, 42nd in volunteering and 37th in group membership. Income, education, age, race/ethnicity and citizenship status correlate with civic involvement. Gender matters as well, with women more likely to be civically involved than men.
- Texas ranks 16th in the number of people who help their neighbors by exchanging favors a few times a week or more, and this neighborliness is higher among those in lower socioeconomic brackets. However, Texas ranks 47th in terms of neighborhood trust.
- Higher levels of education correlate with higher levels of almost every measure of political participation and civic involvement analyzed in the Civic Health Index.
- Hispanic Texans and immigrants are significantly less likely to participate in almost every form of civic engagement, highlighting the importance of efforts to more fully involve these groups in the state's civic life.

“While this report shows some alarming weaknesses in the state’s civic health, there is reason for hope,” said Ilir Zherka, executive director of the National Conference on Citizenship. “Our partners at the Annette Strauss Institute are doing critical work to start a statewide conversation to ensure all Texans are actively engaged in their communities.”

The report also includes suggestions for reshaping the state’s civic environment. Large-scale recommendations include improving civic literacy through schools, increasing access to higher education, increasing the supply of and demand for public affairs information and engaging citizens through digital and social media platforms. Ideas for individuals include creatively engaging legislators and reaching out to friends and neighbors to join in election-related activities.

To read the full report and join the conversation, visit <http://txcivichealth.org>, or join the conversation on Twitter at [@astraussinst](https://twitter.com/astraussinst) [#txciviclif](https://twitter.com/txciviclif).

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