

# 2011 FLORIDA CIVIC HEALTH INDEX



## THE NEXT GENERATION

**BOB GRAHAM CENTER**  
FOR PUBLIC SERVICE  
**UF** UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA



The Florida Joint  
Center for Citizenship  
*A Partnership for Florida's Civic Health*



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at the UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA



**National Conference on Citizenship**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### *Florida's Millennial generation:*

The huge cohort of young people ages 18–29 present both a major challenge and opportunity for policymakers and how civic culture takes shape in the Sunshine State over the next few decades.

Known as the Baby Boomlet because they actually outnumber the members of the Baby Boom generation, these teens and twenty-somethings are coming of age at an important time for Florida and the nation. Soon to be the third largest state in the country, Florida is at the leading edge of many of the major demographic shifts of the 21st Century. The Florida Millennials are part of an emerging “majority-minority” state at the forefront of an ethnically and racially diverse, multi-hued America in which voices traditionally marginalized should have participation in governance.

The extent to which these young men and women organize, volunteer, vote and petition their representatives ultimately will determine how well Florida is governed. Thus, it is vital to understand how engaged younger Floridians are now in terms of political action, their connection to family, friends and neighbors, their participation in group activity and their attentiveness to volunteering and problem-solving in their neighborhoods and communities.

The insights they bring to this new age will be vital for a fully representative democracy. Florida is a microcosm of the nation, and this is reflected for both good and ill in the current state of civic engagement among its younger citizens. But being in the mainstream is a mixed blessing when the mainstream itself is wanting: the nation's youth are simply not that engaged with its civic culture. Indeed, while the civic engagement levels of Millennials in Florida were close to the national average for Millennials, they still were nonetheless below average. Specifically, on seven of nine civic engagement indicators, Florida Millennials ranked below the national average, and on two they were at the national average. Being just below, or at, the national average are hardly results to celebrate, and there is clearly room for improving the civic engagement levels of Millennials.

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### *Consider these key findings:*

- Civic engagement levels of Millennials in Florida are between 7 and 20 percentage points below that of Millennials in the most engaged states in the nation.
- Millennials in Florida are less engaged by a measure of 2 to 23 percentage points than those aged 30 and over in Florida (who themselves are generally less engaged than the nation).
- Less than half of the Millennial generation in Florida was registered to vote in 2010, and of those who were registered, a little over one-in-five actually voted, despite the fact Florida had two high profile races for governor and U.S. Senate, and a major grassroots movement, the Tea Party conservatives, challenging health-care reform, the economic stimulus and other major issues facing the nation.
- Non-electoral political action—engagement beyond the simple act of casting a ballot—is almost non-existent for Florida's Millennials. For example, only 3% contacted or visited a public official. The result is that public officials are simply not likely to hear about the concerns and passions of younger Floridians.
- Florida's Millennials have one of the lowest rates (ranked 48th in the nation) of participating in any type of civic, community, school, sports or religious group.
- Millennials in Florida are ranked among the bottom ten states for community engagement, such as volunteering, attending public meetings and working with neighbors in the community.
- Social class—household income and education—strongly affect civic engagement patterns. Specifically, education has a powerful effect. Those Millennials with no college experience are civically marginalized. Their voices are unheard in city halls, the statehouse and Washington. Failing to complete high school and have at least some college level experience means that a citizen will live in a “civic wilderness” where needs and opinions go unheard through political or civic processes.
- Differences in patterns of civic engagement based on race/ethnicity are not as evident among Millennials in Florida as they are among those over 30. Access to education, and also technology that might facilitate civic engagement—such as Internet use—appear to be reshaping patterns of participation among racial and ethnic minorities.
- Social connectedness boosts civic engagement among Millennials. Those that frequently talk to neighbors, eat dinner with other household members, and communicate with friends and family on-line tend to be more engaged than those that do not.



## INTRODUCTION

The coming of age of the Millennial generation—the huge cohort of young people ages 18–29 (born 1982–1993)—represents a potentially seismic shift in American politics, society and culture. In sheer size, these teens and twenty-somethings outnumber the adults of the Baby Boom generation. In racial and ethnic terms, they are the most diverse generation in American history: some 40 percent are non-white. And they're the most educated, with a larger percentage attending college and fewer dropping out of high school than ever before.<sup>1</sup>

But, they have grown up in a period of unprecedented technological change and entered adulthood during the worst economic collapse since the Great Depression and at a time when their nation was fighting two wars simultaneously.

To the degree they involve themselves in the political process—in 2012, 16 million more will be eligible to vote than in 2008—Millennials have the potential to dramatically influence national policy and priorities.

Florida is at the forefront of this profound demographic shift. It is an emerging “majority-minority” state with one of the largest young, non-white populations in the nation. As a haven for predominantly white retirees, it is also at the leading edge of what some have depicted as an emerging gulf in values and outlook between the two largest

single demographics in the United States: the baby boomers born between 1945 and 1964, and the Millennials. Together, they will make up the bulk of the population in Florida, which will soon overtake New York as the third most populous state in the nation.

The goal of this report is straightforward: to describe and explain the civic engagement levels of Florida Millennials compared to other generations as well as to their fellow Millennials in other states. We hope this provides both a glimpse into the future health of the state and a spur to community discussions about ways to strengthen local, state and national civic engagement in Florida.

This is our fourth report to examine levels and patterns of civic engagement in the Sunshine State.<sup>2</sup> It is a continuation of those earlier efforts to document and understand the civic condition of our nation and its communities. However, unlike prior reports, the 2011 *Florida Civic Health Index* focuses upon Millennial Floridians who—in time—will profoundly shape civic life in the state.

As with prior reports, we are using data from the Current Population Survey (CPS), collected by the U. S. Bureau of the Census. Specifically, these data are taken from the CPS volunteering supplement, voting/registration supplement and the civic engagement supplement. All the data are taken from the 2010 CPS surveys.<sup>3</sup>

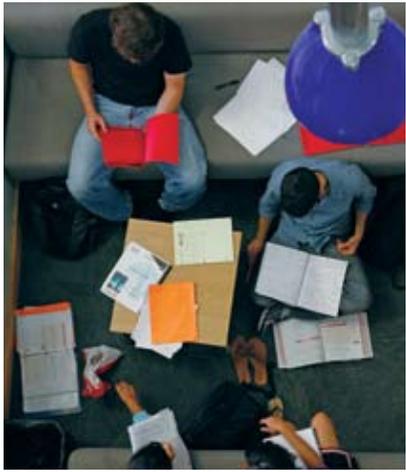
## WHAT'S INSIDE

Civic Health Indicators.....	4
Civic Engagement of Millennials in Florida .....	5
Demographics of Civic Engagement Among Millennials in Florida .....	8
Social Connectedness and Civic Engagement Among Millennials in Florida .....	13
Promoting Civic Engagement Among Florida's Millennials .....	16
About the Partners .....	17
State and Local Partnerships.....	18

1 See, for example, the Pew Research Center report, “Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next,” <http://pewsocialtrends.org/files/2010/10/millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change.pdf> and the CIRCLE report “Understanding a Diverse Generation: Youth Civic Engagement in the United States,” [http://www.civicyouth.org/wpcontent/uploads/2011/11/CIRCLE\\_cluster\\_report2010.pdf](http://www.civicyouth.org/wpcontent/uploads/2011/11/CIRCLE_cluster_report2010.pdf)

2 See Florida Civic Health Index 2008, <http://www.ncoc.net/202>, Florida Civic Health Index 2009: Communities and the State's Civic Destiny, <http://www.ncoc.net/index.php?tray=content&tid=top57&cid=2kc29>, and A Tale of Two Cities: Civic Health in Miami and Minneapolis-St. Paul, <http://www.ncoc.net/ttrelease>

3 Findings are based on our analysis of the Census Current Population Survey (CPS) data. Any and all errors are our own. Volunteering estimates are from the CPS September Volunteering Supplement 2010. Voting and registration data come from the CPS November Voting/Registration Supplement, 2010, and all other civic engagement indicators, come from the 2010 CPS Civic Engagement Supplement. Estimates for the volunteering indicators (volunteering, attending a public meeting and working with neighbors to fix a problem) are based on U.S. residents ages 16 and older. All other estimates 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). Because we draw from multiple sources of data with varying sample sizes, we are not able to compute one margin of error for the state across all indicators. In Florida, the margins of error for major indicators varied from +/- 1 to 2%, depending on the sample size and other parameters associated with a specific indicator. The analysis of the Millennial generation is based on a smaller sample, with a margin of error of +/- 2 to 3%.



**18%**

of Millennials participate in group activities.

## CIVIC HEALTH INDICATORS

The U.S. Census Bureau now collects numerous questions about volunteering and political and civic engagement as part of its Current Population Survey (CPS). Rather than reporting every individual indicator of civic engagement now asked by CPS, we define four separate areas of civic engagement.

- Electoral engagement.**  
Percentage of eligible U.S. citizens over 18 years old who were registered to vote in the 2010 elections, and percentage turnout among eligible voters in the 2010 elections;
- Non-electoral political engagement.**  
Percentage who contacted a public official, and percentage who bought or boycotted a product based on the social values of a company;
- Group engagement.**  
Percentage who belong to any group, i.e., religious, school, neighborhood or sports/recreation;
- Community engagement.**  
The percentage who reported undertaking any volunteer activity, percentage attending a public meeting, percentage exchanging favors with neighbors, and percentage working with neighbors to fix a problem in the community.

The analysis that follows first reports the level of civic engagement for each indicator for Millennials in Florida and provides a national ranking. It also compares the level of engagement among younger Floridians to other age groups (aged 30 to 45, 46 to 64, and over 65). We then examine civic engagement levels across different demographic groups of Millennials. Finally, we assess how social connections—eating dinner regularly with household members, communicating via the Internet and talking to neighbors— affect the civic engagement level of Millennials.

**Table 1.**  
**Snapshot of Millennial Civic Engagement in Florida**

	Florida Millennials	National Average For Millennials	Florida Millennials National Ranking	Most Engaged State For Millennials	Florida "Youth Engagement Gap"	Florida "Generation Gap"
<b>Registered to vote in 2010</b>	44%	44%	31st	North Dakota, 62%	-18%	-15%
<b>Voted in 2010</b>	21%	22%	34th	North Dakota, 35%	-14%	-23%
<b>Contacted or visited public official</b>	3%	4%	41st	Oregon, 15%	-12%	-6%
<b>Bought or boycotted product based on values of company</b>	6%	7%	32nd	Oregon, 26%	-20%	-3%
<b>Group participation (any group)</b>	18%	23%	48th	Colorado, 36%	-18%	-12%
<b>Volunteered for any group</b>	18%	21%	44th	Utah, 37%	-19%	-2%
<b>Attended public meeting</b>	2%	4%	46th	Montana, 10%	-8%	-6%
<b>Did favors for neighbors a few times per week or more frequently</b>	11%	11%	40th	Hawaii, 18%	-7%	-5%
<b>Worked with neighbors to fix problem in neighborhood</b>	2%	4%	44th	Montana, 9%	-7%	-6%

Registration figure for North Dakota actually refers to percentage that were eligible to vote, as the state does not have a registration requirement in order to vote. The "Youth engagement gap" is the difference between the percentage of Florida's Millennial generation engaged in each activity and the percentage of Millennials engaged in the most engaged state in the Union. The "Generation gap" is the difference between the percentage of Florida's Millennials engaged in each action and the percentage over 30 engaged in each action.

# CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OF MILLENNIALS IN FLORIDA

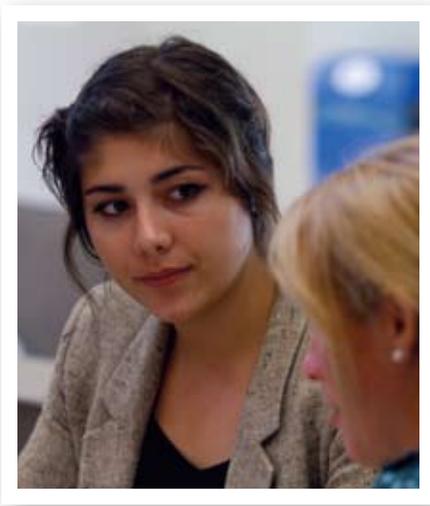
Florida Millennials have the depressing distinction of being the most disengaged group in one of the most civically disengaged states in the nation. In terms of volunteerism, voter turnout and other measures of civic engagement, Florida has consistently ranked near the bottom among the 50 states. The implications of this for the future civic health of the Sunshine State are enormous, given that they soon will be the largest single voting cohort in the nation: 45 million compared to some 40 million aging Baby Boomers. Even the somewhat encouraging news that nearly half of them (44%) do register to vote is diminished by the fact that only one in five actually did vote in the 2010 midterm election.

Indeed, there is not a single indicator of civic engagement in which at least half of Florida Millennials are engaged. Figures 1 through 4 show the level of civic engagement for each indicator across each age group in Florida. Table 1 (“Snapshot of Millennial Civic Engagement in Florida”) on page 4 compares the civic engagement of Florida’s Millennials with that of Millennials nationally. Registering to vote is their most widespread activity, but there is no evidence that Millennials are somehow opting for some non-electoral forms of political engagement to explain their absence at polling places. Only 3 percent contacted or visited a public official, which means that state political leaders are essentially inoculated from the views of their youngest constituents. Only 7 percent boycotted or bought a product based on the values of a company. The very real risk is that Millennials will be subjected in the coming years to policies and programs enacted in their name by lawmakers unhindered by their interests or scrutiny.

In other measures of engagement that are less overtly political—group and community engagement—Florida’s Millennials again showed at best a benign interest. Given that they have come of age during a time when many Sunshine State schools as well as Bright Futures Scholarships have required set hours of community service, this finding suggests the values promoted have not taken hold. Just 18 percent are involved in either group participation or volunteering. Interestingly, age or generational differences were less apparent for volunteering. That might have more to do with the comparatively lower levels of volunteering among Floridians in general, however, than it does with Millennials showing exceptionally higher penchant for joining organizations or causes. Beyond these two indicators, however, Millennial group and

community engagement levels were low. Just over 10 percent exchanged favors with neighbors a few times a week or more often, and only 2 percent attended a public meeting or worked with neighbors to fix a problem in their neighborhood. Indeed, on all the indicators for group and community engagement, Millennials in Florida ranked no higher than 40th nationally.

A common excuse for this lack of engagement is that young adults are, well, young. They will, like the generations that preceded them, grow into civic engagement. As they establish careers, settle down and form families, so this argument goes, Millennials will become more and more engaged with issues confronting their communities. Yet while there is clearly a relationship between age and levels of civic engagement nationally, Florida itself seems to offer a stark counter-example. Floridians aged 30 and over simply are not that much more civically engaged than Millennials. Indeed, on only three of the indicators did the “generation gap”—i.e., the difference between the percentage of those in Florida aged 18-29 engaged in each action and the percentage over 30 engaged in each action—reach double digits (for registration, turnout and group participation). Furthermore, with the exception of turnout, the “youth engagement gap”—i.e., the difference between the percentage of Florida young people engaged in each activity and the percentage of young people engaged in the most engaged state in the nation—exceeded the generation gap. Simply put, this finding suggests that we should be concerned about the lack of civic engagement among Floridians of all age groups—and especially concerned about the young.



3%

of Millennials contacted or visited a public official.



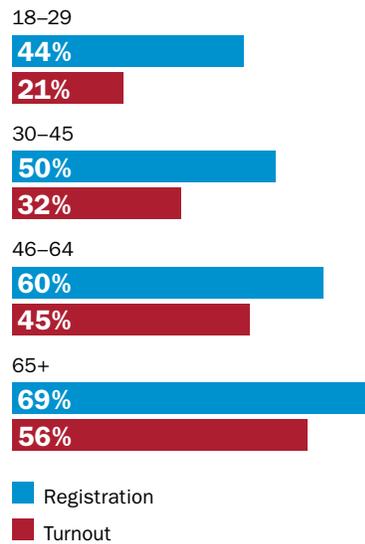
Findings suggest that we should be concerned about the lack of civic engagement among Floridians of all age groups—and especially concerned about the young.



**21%**

of Millennials turned out to vote.

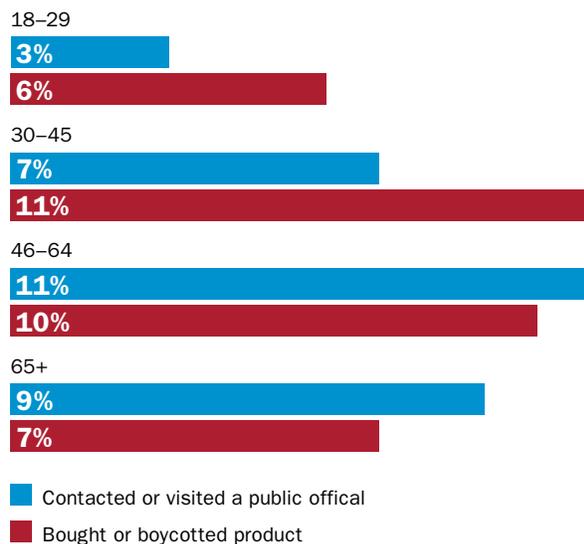
**Figure 1.**  
Electoral Engagement by Age in Florida, 2010



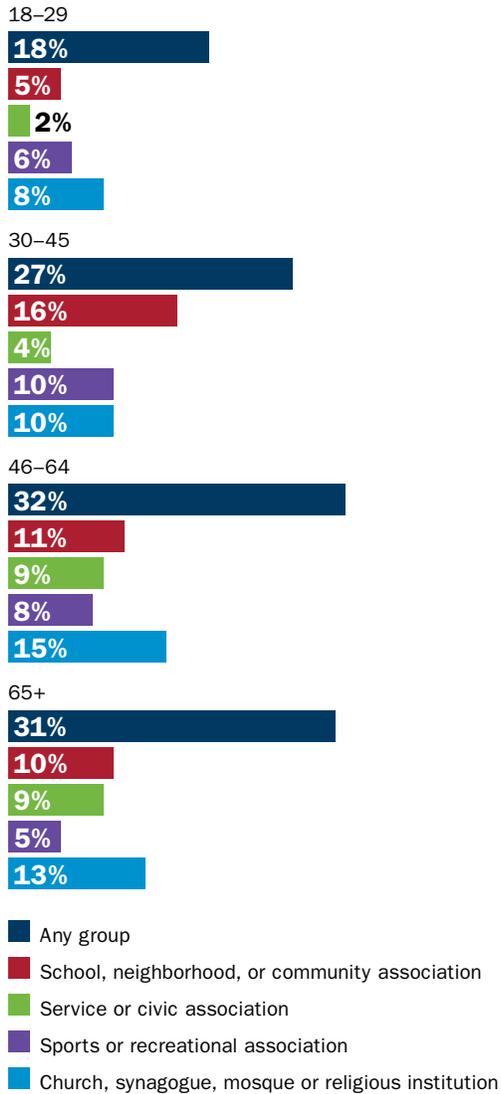
**6%**

of Millennials bought or boycotted a product based on the social values of a company.

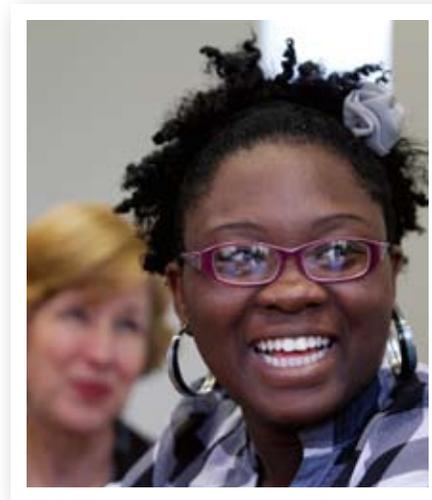
**Figure 2.**  
Non-Electoral Political Engagement by Age in Florida, 2010



**Figure 3.**  
**Group Engagement by Age in Florida, 2010**



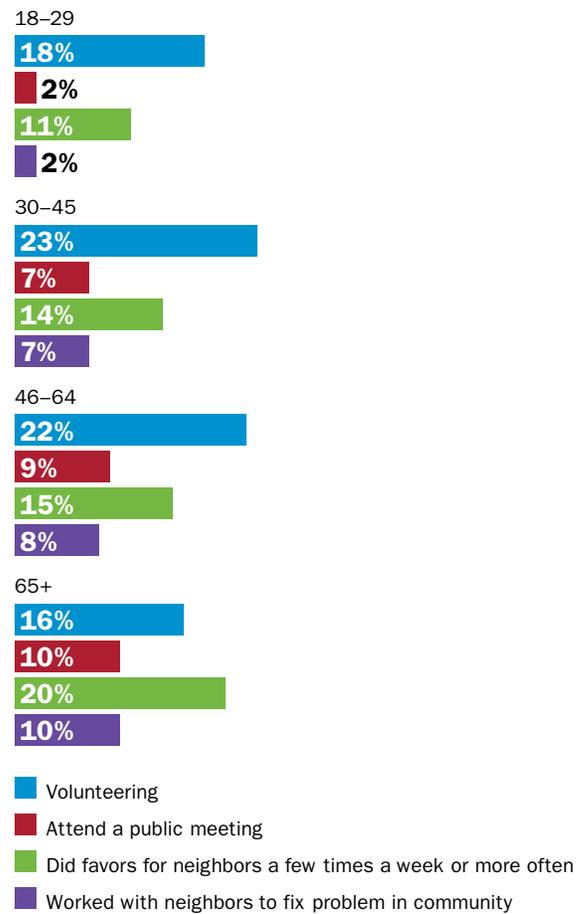
**Note:** some individuals are members of more than one type of group.



**6%**

of Millennials participated in a sports or recreational association.

**Figure 4.**  
**Type of Community Engagement by Age in Florida, 2010**



**Note:** All items in this graph reference ages 16-29, except for "exchanging favors" which is 18-29.

# THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AMONG MILLENNIALS IN FLORIDA

But what are the factors that promote civic engagement? Is education an important determinant? Does having a college degree make one more likely to volunteer at a local food bank or petition a local lawmaker than merely having a high school diploma? What role does race or ethnicity play? Are men or women more likely to volunteer? Now that we've looked at various indicators of civic health among the Millennials, let's examine factors that may be associated with increased levels of engagement within the cohort of Floridians aged 18 to 29. We'll also compare them to their elders.

We're looking at four characteristics:

- Education
- Race/Ethnicity
- Family income
- Gender

## Education

There is clearly a strong correlation between educational attainment and civic participation. Among the attributes measured, education has the most effect on voter registration and turnout. That said, there is a huge gap among Millennials between signing up to vote and actually doing it. Overall, Florida's Millennials are still clearly less engaged than older Floridians with the same college experience. And while the increased emphasis on community service in high schools in Florida clearly has a strong impact on volunteering among Millennials, that effect seems to dissipate as they move through college into adulthood.

In our survey of Millennials, we classify education status as:

1. those who are not currently enrolled in college and who have had no college experience;
2. those who are currently enrolled in high school;
3. those who are currently enrolled in college;
4. those who are either college graduates or who began college but are no longer enrolled.

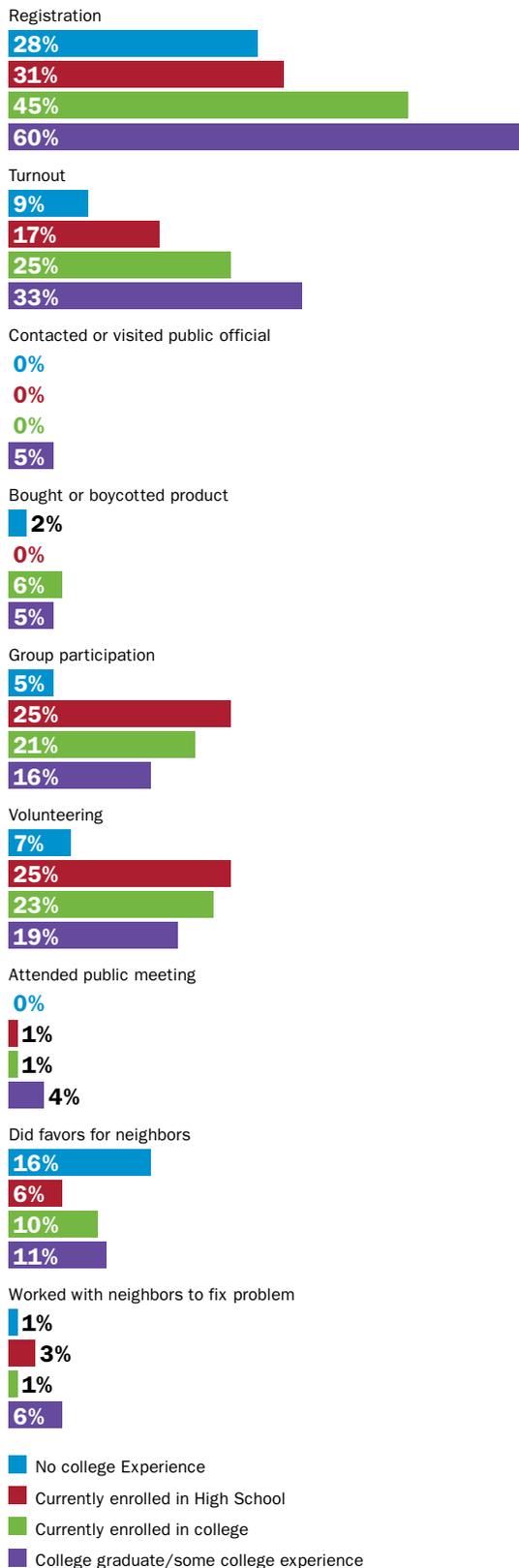
Among those over 30, we simply distinguish between those who had college experience (college graduates or some college credit) and those who did not have college experience (no high school diploma or only graduated from high school). Figure 5 shows that the effects of education were most visible for Millennials when it came to registration and turnout. That effect was most evident among those who had graduated from college or who had some college experience rather than currently being enrolled in college. It may also reflect life cycle effects, as those Millennials who had graduated from college likely will be among the older cohorts of the generation.

As Figure 6 shows, those aged 30 and over with college experience were only six percentage points more likely to be registered than

their Millennial generation counterparts. This underscores the point that education is the major factor in reducing the "costs" of registering to vote. However, life cycle effects do appear to be at work when it comes to voting. Millennials with college experience were 18 percentage points less likely to turn out to vote in 2010. Thus, factors other than the barriers to voter registration—likely factors that affect Millennials in all states—explain the lower turnout among younger Floridians when compared to their older counterparts.

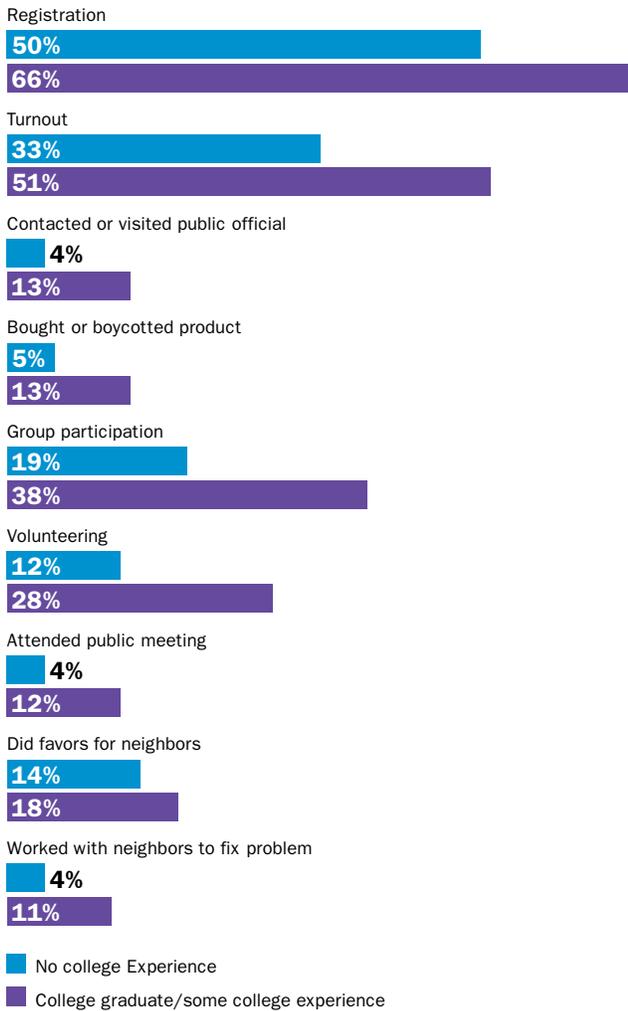
Perhaps the most interesting finding in Figure 5 was the effect of education on group participation and volunteering. For these indicators, it was the Millennials currently enrolled in high school who were the most engaged. Indeed, the volunteer rate for Millennials in high school was only three percentage points

**Figure 5.**  
Effect of Education on Levels of Civic Engagement Among Millennials in Florida



**Note:** Turnout is calculated based on eligible voters, not registered voters.

**Figure 6.**  
**Effect of Education on Levels of**  
**Civic Engagement in Florida, Age 30+**



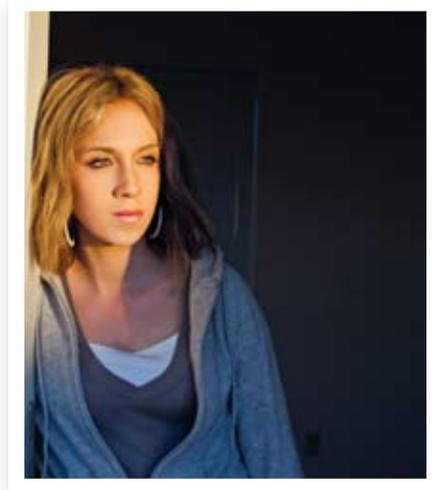
less than the rate for their elders. This might be a reflection of high school courses or scholarship requirements that stipulate a certain number of hours of volunteer activity or group participation, or the fact that for many high school students volunteering is a “resume booster” for college admissions. The drop in volunteering as a student moves into college also might be a function of older students working full- or part-time jobs. They simply may not have the time to devote to volunteering. Whatever the cause, policy makers and community leaders should study what efforts might help retain or foster the enthusiasm for engagement among Millennials after they leave high school.

One important point: Millennials with no college experience are among the most mar-

ginalized when it comes to civic engagement. Less than 10 percent of this group voted in 2010. In fact, with the exception of exchanging favors with neighbors, fewer than one out of every 10 Millennials with no college experience volunteer or engaged in the various activities measured. Thus the people who likely are the most marginalized economically—few well-paid jobs await those with just a high school diploma—are further isolated from the political order. If Florida is to have an engaged citizenry, then education has an absolutely pivotal role to play. Given the low levels of engagement exhibited by those aged 30 and above with no college experience, it appears that there are few other institutions—if any—to rival universities and colleges in contributing toward the skills necessary to be an active and engaged citizen.



**60%**  
 of Millennials in Florida who had college experience registered to vote.



**1 in 10**  
 Millennials with no college experience volunteer or engage in the various activities measured.

## Household Income

One feature is fairly constant across all modes of civic engagement and across generations: the less affluent tend to be the most marginalized in terms of their levels of engagement. That merely underscores the importance of better integrating these Floridians into the civic life of the Sunshine State.

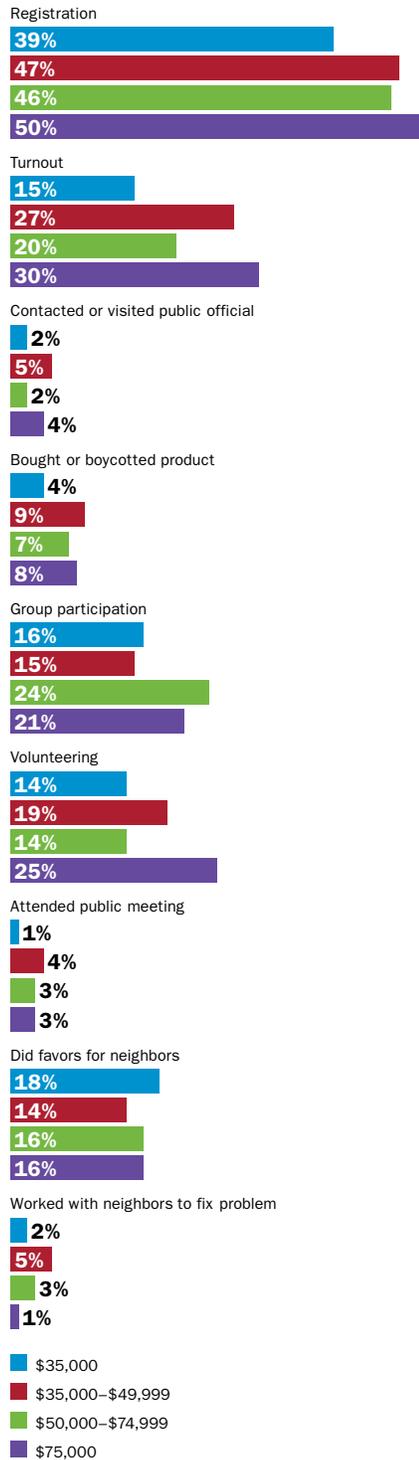
Figures 7 and 8 show the effect of household income on civic engagement among Millennials. Of course, for those aged 29 and under, this is capturing, in many instances, the effect of parental income on the level of engagement, rather than the individual's own income. Indeed, this may explain why among Millennials the effects of income on civic engagement levels are rather uneven. Only in terms of registering, voting and group participation was there a noticeable difference by income. It would appear that any socio-economic differences in civic engagement are more evident among those aged 30 and over.



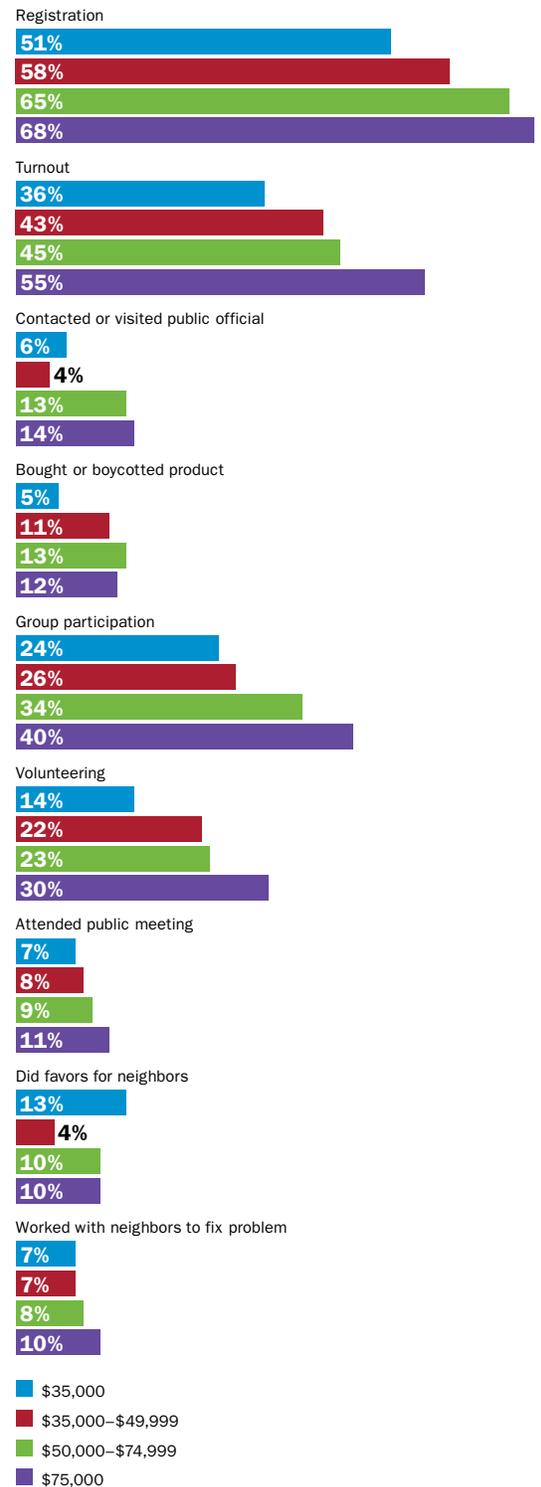
# 25%

25% of Millennials with incomes of \$75K or more volunteered.

**Figure 7.**  
Effect of Household Income on Levels of Civic Engagement Among Millennials in Florida



**Figure 8.**  
Effect of Household Income on Levels of Civic Engagement, Age 30+

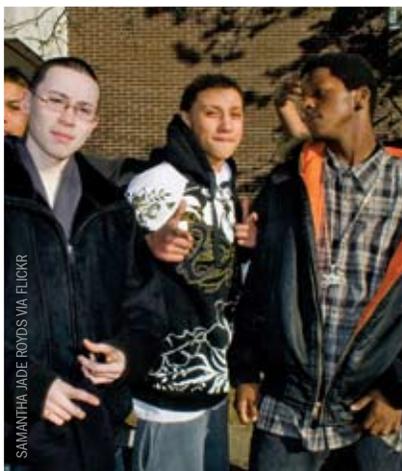


## Race/Ethnicity

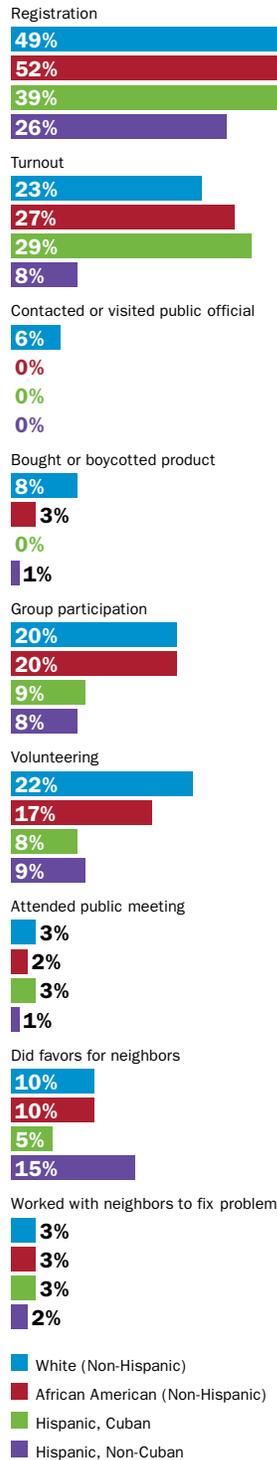
Race and ethnicity have been found to be a leading cause of variations in the level of civic engagement nationally, with minorities exhibiting lower levels of civic engagement. But these distinctions are beginning to blur and even disappear among the younger generation of Floridians. We distinguish the civic engagement patterns of whites (non-Hispanic), African Americans (non-Hispanic) and Latinos. Among Hispanics, we further distinguish between those of Cuban and non-Cuban background.

As Figure 9 shows, it is of great interest that among Millennials, whites are generally not more likely to be civically engaged than minorities. That's a crucial and promising finding in a "majority-minority" state like Florida. Whites only outperformed on one of the three measures of non-electoral political engagement (contacting or visiting a public official). Indeed, on the item about contacting or visiting a public official, whites were the only group of Millennials to have engaged in this action. In terms of electoral engagement, African Americans were the group most likely to have registered to vote in 2010, and in terms of voter turnout, Cubans were the group with the highest turnout. Non-Cuban Hispanics were the group least likely to be civically engaged, with the exception of doing favors for neighbors. This in many ways reflects an historic pattern of behavior for newly arrived immigrants. The question is whether the institutions exist to better integrate this group into the civic life of Florida.

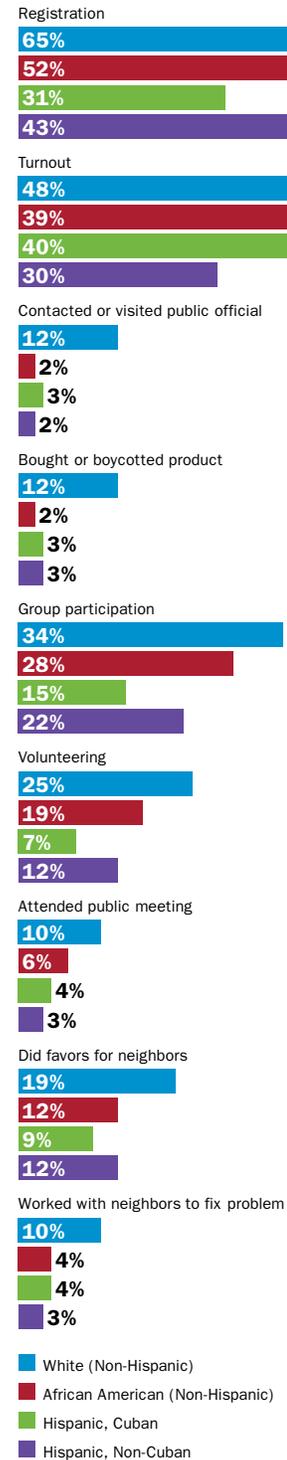
The effect of race/ethnicity on civic engagement for Millennials stands in contrast to that exhibited by those aged 30 and over (Figure 10). Here, whites were the group that was most engaged across every indicator. Whether life cycle effects will eventually produce the same patterns for Millennials is uncertain. If it does not, then generational replacement will likely result in the disappearance of racial differences evident in civic engagement, especially as Millennials as a group are more diverse in term of race and ethnicity than those aged 30 and over.



**Figure 9.**  
Effect of Race/Ethnicity on Levels of Civic Engagement Among Millennials in Florida



**Figure 10.**  
Effect of Race/Ethnicity on Levels of Civic Engagement, Age 30+



52%

of African American Millennials were registered to vote in 2010.



To a large extent, gender differences in patterns of civic engagement have largely disappeared.

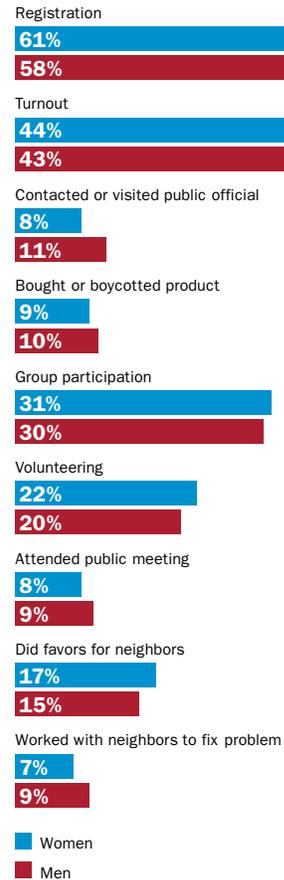
## Gender

The sizeable gains that women have made in educational attainment, earnings and employment over the last two or three generations have largely eroded gender differences in civic engagement in the United States. Figure 11 demonstrates that, to a large extent, gender differences in patterns of civic engagement have largely disappeared. Indeed, to the extent that they exist at all among Millennials, it is women who engage at higher rates, although the differences are quite small. The most noticeable gender gaps were for volunteering (7%), registration (5%), group participation (4%) and do favors for neighbors (5%). As Figure 12 shows, these differences were not as great among those aged 30 and over: indeed there was no gender gap on civic engagement greater than 3 percentage points among older Floridians.

**Figure 11.**  
Effect of Gender on Levels of Civic Engagement Among Millennials in Florida



**Figure 12.**  
Effect of Gender on Levels of Civic Engagement in Florida, Age 30+



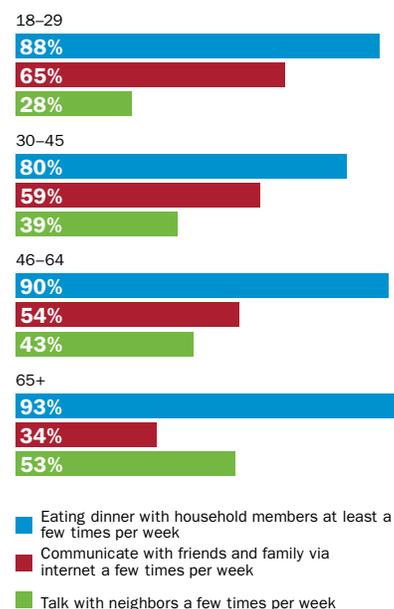
# SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AMONG MILLENNIALS ON FLORIDA

Having examined which Millennials are more or less likely to be civically engaged among various demographic groups, let's now take a look at the extent to which social networks and connections drive civic engagement. Social connectedness refers to that dimension of civic health not connected to the ostensibly public things people do, but with all the private things they do in relation to one another. These kinds of informal interactions tighten the bonds in a community and increase its civic health. Similarly, having relatively weak social connections can fray the civic health in a community. We focus on three indicators of social connectedness:

- Frequency of eating dinner with other household members
- Frequency of communicating with friends and family via the Internet
- Frequency of talking to neighbors

Figure 13 shows the frequency with which Floridians engaged in each of these activities by age group. Eating dinner with household members frequently is one of the few indicators examined where age does not seem to have an effect. As might be expected, Millennials were the most likely to communicate with friends and family online frequently, and this percentage declines as age increases. However, in terms of face-to-face interactions, Millennials were much less likely to talk to neighbors. As Table 2 shows, compared to Millennials in the rest of the nation, Florida's Millennials were somewhat above average in terms of frequently eating dinner with household members, and below average when it came to communicating with friends and family via the Internet and talking to neighbors frequently.

**Figure 13.**  
**Social Connectedness by Age in Florida, 2010**



**Table 2.**  
**Snapshot of Millennial Social Connectedness in Florida**

	Florida Millennials	National Average For Millennials	Florida Millennials National Ranking	Most Engaged State For Millennials	Florida "Youth Engagement Gap"	Florida "Generation Gap"
<b>Eat dinner with household at least a few times per week or more frequently</b>	88%	82%	8th	Kentucky, 93%	-5%	-3%
<b>Communicate with friends and family via Internet at least a few times per week or more frequently</b>	65%	69%	40th	Alaska, 82%	-17%	+15%
<b>Talk with neighbors a few times per week or more frequently</b>	28%	32%	43rd	West Virginia, 51%	-23%	-16%

The "Youth engagement gap" is the difference between the percentage of Florida's Millennial generation engaged in each activity and the percentage of Millennials engaged in the most engaged state in the Union. The "Generation gap" is the difference between the percentage of Florida's Millennials engaged in each action and the percentage over 30 engaged in each action.

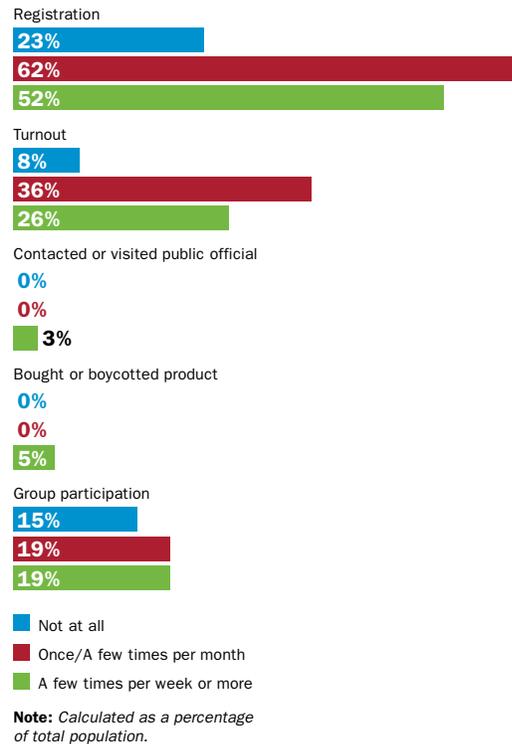
## The Effects of Social Connectedness on Civic Engagement

Figure 14 shows the effect of the frequency of eating dinner with family members on civic engagement levels of Millennials. Clearly those who never eat dinner with family members are among the least engaged of any Floridians. As the frequency of eating dinner with household members increases, the expected increase in civic engagement is not evident, except for the two non-electoral political engagement indicators. Even here the effects are diminished by the fact that so few of any Floridians partake in these forms of engagement. The effects seem more evident among those aged 30 and over (Figure 15), especially when it came to voter turnout and group participation. This raises an intriguing question: Does this form of social connectedness interact with other life-cycle variables, so that in time they will be evident among Millennials as well? Alternatively, is this type of social connectivity just less likely to affect Millennials?

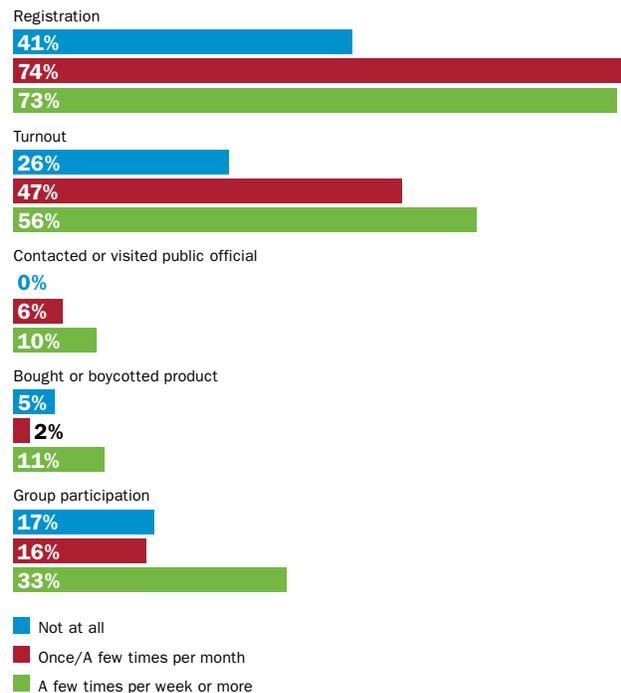
Figure 16 shows frequency of communicating with friends and family via the Internet. While this measure is by no means perfect, in that we cannot discriminate exactly how an individual is using the Internet (e.g., blogging, emailing, Facebook posts, etc.), it does serve as a useful summary of the amount of time an individual is spending on the Internet to connect with others. Among Millennials, frequent communication with friends and family certainly does not reduce levels of civic engagement, although the effects of increasing engagement levels are rather uneven. For example, while frequent Internet use boosted registration, it did not have the same effect on turnout. Frequent Internet use also increased non-electoral political engagement and group participation. Given that the “Internet effect” also appears to be evident among those aged 30 and over (Figure 17), there is certainly the potential for online social connections to come to increase levels of civic engagement, particularly since Millennials are the generation most likely to be frequently connecting online. Of course, these findings again underscore the importance of education, given that increasing levels of education—along with income—are related to Internet access.

Figure 18 shows that the effect of frequently talking to neighbors can result in increases in registration, both non-electoral political engagement indicators and group participation. This pattern was also evident among those aged 30 and over (Figure 19). These findings suggest that some increases in the civic engagement of Millennials might occur simply by encouraging people to talk to their neighbors. The findings certainly confirm that those citizens who never engage with their neighbors will tend to be largely absent from civic life in Florida, especially beyond electoral engagement.

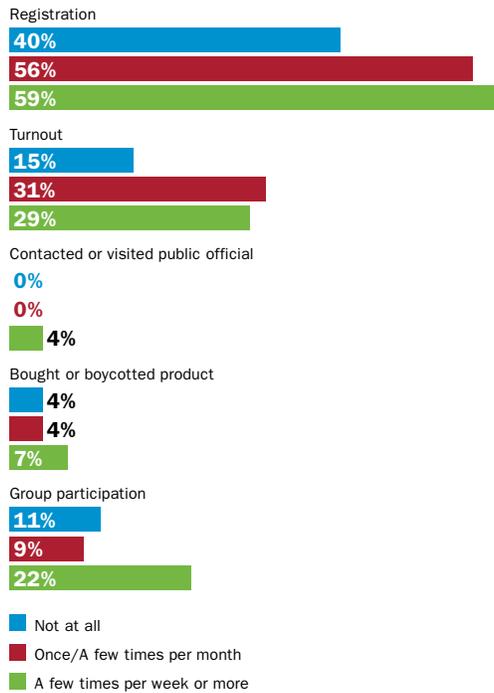
**Figure 14.**  
Effect of Frequency of Eating Dinner with Household Members on Levels of Civic Engagement Among Millennials in Florida



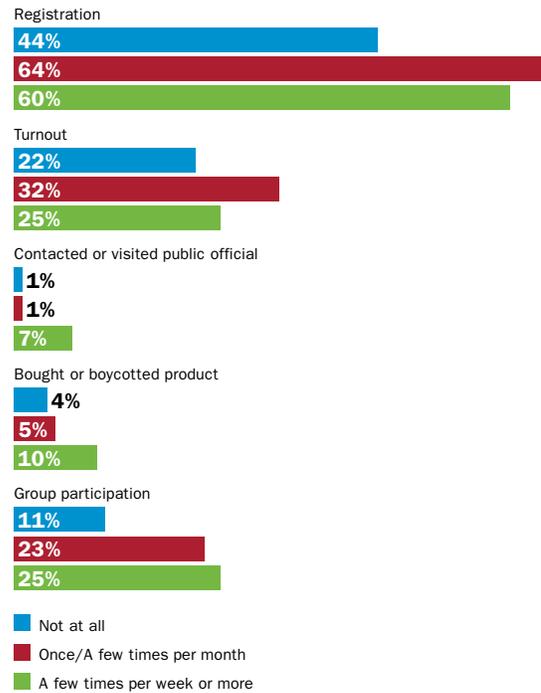
**Figure 15.**  
Effect of Frequency of Eating Dinner with Household Members on Levels of Civic Engagement, Age 30+



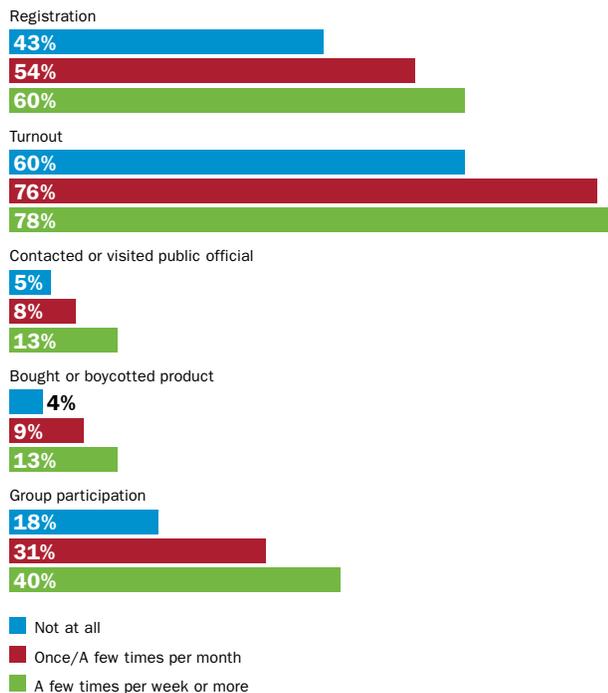
**Figure 16.**  
Effect of Frequency of Internet Use on Levels of Civic Engagement Among Millennials in Florida



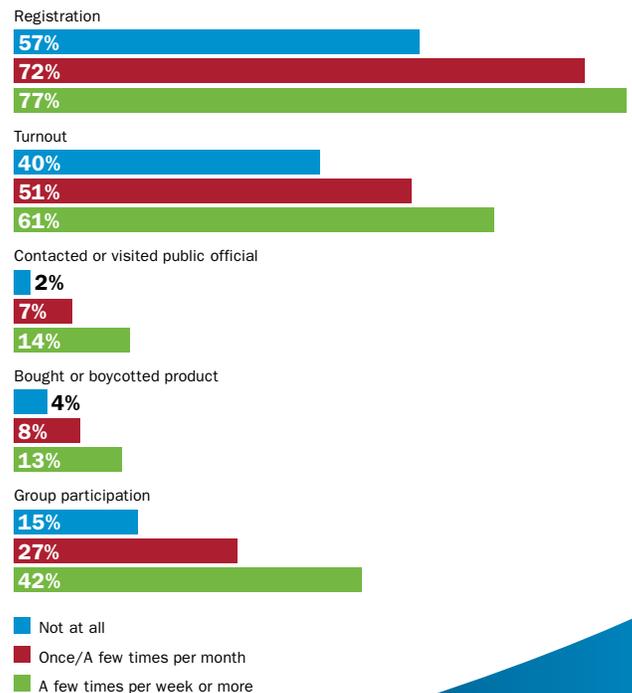
**Figure 18.**  
Effect of Frequency of Talking to Neighbors on Levels of Civic Engagement Among Millennials in Florida



**Figure 17.**  
Effect of Frequency of Internet Use on Levels of Civic Engagement, Age 30+



**Figure 19.**  
Effect of Frequency of Talking to Neighbors on Levels of Civic Engagement, Age 30+





Findings suggest that some increases in the civic engagement of Millennials might occur simply by encouraging people to talk to their neighbors.

# PROMOTING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AMONG FLORIDA'S MILLENNIALS

## Recommendations

Florida's young people need more opportunities and we need to provide meaningful pathways to becoming involved in the civic life—public, private, local and statewide—of the Sunshine State. Most importantly, Millennials need to be “asked” -- explicitly invited to become active partners in shaping our civic future. In that spirit, here are four recommendations for leaders at the city, county and state level who want to spur that youth engagement:

1. Create more opportunities to get youth involved in local government.
2. Strengthen civic education in all of Florida's Colleges and Universities and expand programs that give students the experience and know-how to organize, to debate, and to engage with public issues.
3. Provide opportunities for non-college bound youth by expanding service learning and other experiential civic education programs in Title I high schools and by supporting programs that offer community-based opportunities for civic engagement.
4. Create a statewide plan to reduce Florida's high school dropout rate and increase the number of students who go on to college.

## IMPLEMENTATION RESOURCES

### The Florida League of Cities, Inc.

[www.floridaleagueofcities.com](http://www.floridaleagueofcities.com)

The Florida League of Cities is the united voice for Florida's municipal governments. Its goals are to serve the needs of Florida's cities and promote local self-government. The League was founded on the belief that local self-government is the keystone of American democracy.

### National League of Cities

[www.nlc.org](http://www.nlc.org)

The National League of Cities (NLC) is dedicated to helping city leaders build better communities. Working in partnership with the 49 state municipal leagues, NLC serves as a resource to and an advocate for the more than 19,000 cities, villages and towns it represents. The National League of Cities has developed a framework for Authentic Youth Civic Engagement (AYCE) that “invites young people to participate in the democratic process through meaningful roles in public policy, planning, and decision-making, which can lead to improved outcomes for youth and the community.

### Florida Association of Counties (FAC)

[www.fl-counties.com](http://www.fl-counties.com)

The Florida Association of Counties helps counties effectively serve and represent Floridians by strengthening and preserving county home rule through advocacy, education and collaboration.

### The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)\*

has recently joined with the Global Perspectives Institute\*\* and the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement National Task force to develop a framework for educating students for democratic citizenship. The resulting report “A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future” can be viewed at: [www2.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/college-learning-democracys-future/crucible-moment.pdf](http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/college-learning-democracys-future/crucible-moment.pdf)

\***Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)**

[www.aacu.org](http://www.aacu.org)

\*\***Global Perspectives Institute**

[www.ucfglobalperspectives.org](http://www.ucfglobalperspectives.org)

### Florida Campus Compact

[www.floridacompact.org](http://www.floridacompact.org)

Florida Campus Compact is a coalition of over 50 colleges and universities committed to promoting community service, service-learning, and civic engagement.

### Mobilize.org

[www.mobilize.org](http://www.mobilize.org)

Mobile.org convenes and supports young adults to authentically engage with their peers to identify problems, propose solutions, and most importantly, to work together to implement these solutions on their campuses and in their communities.

### YouthBuild

[www.youthbuild.org](http://www.youthbuild.org)

YouthBuild encourages low-income young people to work toward their GEDs or high school diplomas while learning job skills by building affordable housing for homeless and low-income people and participating in leadership development activities in their communities.

# ABOUT THE PARTNERS

## The Florida Joint Center on Citizenship

The Florida Joint Center for Citizenship is a partnership between the Lou Frey Institute of Politics and Government at the University of Central Florida and the Bob Graham Center for Public Service at the University of Florida. The Joint Center grew from a 2006 bipartisan effort, launched by Congressman Lou Frey and Senator Bob Graham, to improve civic education in Florida. Since 2006, with the help of many other organizations and people, the state's Social Studies standards and benchmarks have been revised and strengthened, the Justice Sandra Day O'Connor Civics Education Act has added civics to Florida's list of tested subjects, and the Joint Center has been established by formal agreement between the University of Florida and the University of Central Florida.

## National Conference on Citizenship

At the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC), we believe everyone has the power to make a difference in how their community and country thrive.

We are a dynamic, non-partisan nonprofit working at the forefront of our nation's civic life. We continuously explore what shapes today's citizenry, define the evolving role of the individual in our democracy, and uncover ways to motivate greater participation. Through our events, research, and reports, NCoC expands our nation's contemporary understanding of what it means to be a citizen. We seek new ideas and approaches for creating greater civic health and vitality throughout the United States.

## The Bob Graham Center for Public Service

The Bob Graham Center at the University of Florida is a community of students, scholars and politically engaged citizens devoted to: enhanced citizenship; the training of current and future civic leaders; and the development of policy on issues of importance to Florida, the nation and the world.

Through rigorous coursework, research and experiential learning, the Center enables students to master competencies that are essential for citizens to discharge their rights and responsibilities within a democratic government. The Center provides a forum at which state, national and global issues of the day are debated and analyzed by policy makers, scholars, students and members of the community.

## Lou Frey Institute of Politics & Government

The Lou Frey Institute at the University of Central Florida promotes the development of enlightened, responsible, and actively engaged citizens. The Institute works to accomplish its mission: through civic education programs that encourage thoughtful debate and discussion about current policy issues; through experiential learning programs that encourage the development of civic and political skills; by working to help strengthen the civic education capacity of Florida's k-12 education system; and through research, policy analysis, and advocacy.

### Volunteer Florida

[www.volunteerflorida.org](http://www.volunteerflorida.org)

Volunteer Florida is focused on "strengthening Florida's communities through volunteerism and service. They also are responsible for administration of the AmeriCorp program.

### The Bob Graham Center for Public Service

[www.bobgrahamcenter.ufl.edu](http://www.bobgrahamcenter.ufl.edu)

The Bob Graham Center is a community of students, scholars and politically engaged citizens devoted to: enhanced citizenship; the training of current and future public and civic leaders who can identify problems and spearhead change; and the development of policy on issues of importance to Florida, the United States and the global community.

### The Lou Frey Institute of Politics and Government

[www.loufreyinstitute.org](http://www.loufreyinstitute.org)

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### Florida Joint Center for Citizenship

[www.floridacitizen.org](http://www.floridacitizen.org)

The Florida Joint Center for Citizenship is a partnership between the Lou Frey Institute of Politics and Government at the University of Central Florida and the Bob Graham Center for Public Service at the University of Florida, to improve civic education in Florida.

### The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE)

[www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org)

CIRCLE conducts research on civic education in schools, colleges, and community settings and on young Americans' voting and political participation, service, activism, media use, and other forms of civic engagement. It is based at the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University.

### National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC)

[www.NCoC.net](http://www.NCoC.net)

NCoC believes that everyone has the power to make a difference in how his or her community and country thrive. It is a dynamic, non-partisan nonprofit working at the forefront of our nation's civic life that continuously explores what shapes today's citizenry, defines the evolving role of the individual in our democracy, and uncovers ways to motivate greater participation.

# CIVIC HEALTH INDEX

## State and Local Partnerships

America's Civic Health Index has been produced nationally since 2006 to measure the level of civic engagement and health of our democracy. As the Civic Health Index is increasingly a part of the dialogue around which policymakers, communities, and the media talk about civic life, the index is increasing in its scope and specificity.

Together with its local partners, NCoC continues to lead and inspire a public dialogue about the future of citizenship in America. NCoC has worked in partnerships in communities across the country.

### STATES

#### Alabama

University of Alabama\*  
David Mathews Center\*  
Auburn University\*

#### Arizona

Center for the Future of Arizona

#### California

California Forward  
Common Sense California  
Center for Civic Education  
Center for Individual and Institutional Renewal\*

#### Connecticut

Everyday Democracy\*  
Secretary of the State of Connecticut\*

#### Florida

Florida Joint Center for Citizenship  
Bob Graham Center for Public Service  
Lou Frey Institute of Politics and Government  
John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

#### Illinois

Citizen Advocacy Center  
McCormick Foundation

#### Indiana

Center on Congress at Indiana University\*  
Hoosier State Press Association Foundation\*  
Indiana Bar Foundation\*  
Indiana Supreme Court\*  
Indiana University Northwest\*

#### Kentucky

Western Kentucky University\*

#### Maryland

Mannakee Circle Group  
Center for Civic Education  
Common Cause-Maryland  
Maryland Civic Literacy Commission

#### Massachusetts

Harvard Institute on Politics\*

#### Minnesota

Center for Democracy and Citizenship

#### New Hampshire

Carsey Institute

#### New York

Siena Research Institute  
New Yorkers Volunteer\*

#### North Carolina

North Carolina Civic Education Consortium  
Center for Civic Education  
NC Center for Voter Education  
Democracy NC  
NC Campus Compact  
Western Carolina University Department of Public Policy

#### Ohio

Miami University Hamilton

#### Oklahoma

University of Central Oklahoma  
Oklahoma Campus Compact

#### Pennsylvania

National Constitution Center

#### Texas

University of Texas at San Antonio

#### Virginia

Center for the Constitution at James Madison's Montpelier  
Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

### CITIES

#### Chicago

McCormick Foundation

#### Miami

Florida Joint Center for Citizenship  
John S. and James L. Knight Foundation  
Miami Foundation\*

#### Seattle

Seattle City Club  
Boeing Company  
Seattle Foundation

#### Twin Cities

Center for Democracy and Citizenship  
Citizens League\*  
John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

\* Indicates new partner in 2011

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Vice President for Research, America's Promise Alliance



National Conference on Citizenship



The Florida Joint  
Center for Citizenship  
*A Partnership for Florida's Civic Health*

