

# 2011 PENNSYLVANIA CIVIC HEALTH INDEX



PROMOTING CIVIC EDUCATION  
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Chartered by Congress



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## ABOUT THIS REPORT AND TECHNICAL NOTES

The 2011 Pennsylvania Civic Health Index Report is linked to a national initiative of the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC), an organization chartered by Congress that began publishing *America's Civic Health Index* in 2006. In 2008, NCoC began partnering with local institutions to produce state-level reports. In 2009 NCoC was incorporated into the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, and directed to expand the civic health assessment in partnership with the Corporation for National and Community Service and the U.S. Census Bureau. The NCoC Civic Health Index is designed to assess ways that everyday citizens take part in civic life—through political activity, service, charitable giving, social connectedness, and access to information and current events.

Pennsylvania is part of NCoC's growing coalition of 25 states and cities developing more localized assessments of their community's civic health. Throughout this report, we provide comparative data that show how Pennsylvania ranks among all 50 states and Washington, D.C. on measures of civic health. This look at how we connect with one another and who participates in political, civic, and even social activities will help us to develop strategies for encouraging civic engagement and community building.

Unless otherwise noted, findings presented in this report are based on an analysis of the Census Current Population Survey (CPS) data provided by CIRCLE (the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement) at Tufts University. Volunteering estimates are from the CPS September Volunteering Supplement, 2002-2010; voting and registration data come from the CPS November Voting/Registration Supplement, 1972-2010; and all other civic engagement indicators, such as discussion of political information and connection to neighbors, come from the CPS Civic Engagement Supplement, 2008-2010.

Estimates for the volunteering indicators (e.g., volunteering, working with neighbors, making donations) are based on US residents ages 16 and older. Estimates for civic engagement and social connection indicators (e.g., exchanging favors with neighbors, discussing politics) are based on US residents ages 18 and older. Voting and registration statistics are based on US citizens who are 18 and older (eligible voters). Anytime we examined the relationship between educational attainment and engagement, estimates are based only on adults ages 25 and older, assuming that younger people may still be completing their education, unless otherwise stated.

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 Pennsylvania, the margins of error for major indicators varied from +/- 0.9% to 2.1%, depending on the sample size and other parameters associated with a specific indicator. Any analysis that breaks down the sample into smaller groups (e.g., gender, education) will have smaller samples and therefore the margin of error will increase. It is also important to emphasize 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.

Other data from the 2010 U.S. Census, the Congressional Budget Office, the Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center, the Pew Research Center, and other state agencies, research groups, and nonprofit organizations were also used in the preparation of this report.

*This report is the result of a collaboration among the National Constitution Center, the Center for Democratic Deliberation at the Pennsylvania State University, and the National Conference on Citizenship.*

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# INTRODUCTION

Since its establishment in 1681 by William Penn, Pennsylvania has played a pivotal role in our nation's democracy and civic life. It was in Pennsylvania's largest city, Philadelphia, that the two most significant documents in our nation's history were drafted and signed: the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution. In nearby Valley Forge, during the harsh winter of 1777, our nation's first volunteer army was formed, and Philadelphia served as our nation's capitol from 1790-1800. As one of the thirteen original colonies, Pennsylvania played a major role in the formation of the union, and it has continued to play an important role in United States history ever since. Throughout this long history, the spirit and dedication of the Founding Fathers has been reflected in generations of everyday Pennsylvanians who, when called upon, have served their communities and their nation as volunteers and engaged citizens. These Pennsylvanians understood the importance of active and engaged citizenship and are as much a part of Pennsylvania's civic heritage as the Founding Fathers themselves.

Pennsylvania consists of a diverse landscape of large metropolitan areas, small cities and townships, rich farmland, and vast expanses of largely undeveloped wooded and mountainous areas, valued mostly for their timber and other natural resources or their recreational uses. Philadelphia, in the Southeast corner of the state, draws visitors worldwide to Independence Mall, the birthplace of American freedom; to its vibrant artistic and cultural attractions; and to the famous cheesesteak establishments in South Philly. As home to several *Fortune 500* companies, the City of Brotherly Love is also a major financial center and a former railroad and industrial hub that has evolved into a center for health education and research. Pittsburgh, in the western part of the state, was once known as Steel City but in recent years has reinvented itself as "a 21st-century leader in education, computer science, medical research, sports entertainment, and boutique manufacturing."<sup>1</sup> In between these two large metropolitan areas are smaller cities and towns, rolling hills, vast forests, and millions of acres of productive farmland. Pennsylvania also has one of the most complex systems of governance in the nation, with 4,871 local governments including 66 counties, 1,016 municipalities, 1,546 townships, 1,728 special district governments, and 515 school boards.<sup>2</sup>

Pennsylvania, like much of the industrial northeast, has suffered economically from the dramatic decline of the manufacturing sector over the past 40 years.<sup>3</sup> The state was also hit hard by the Great Recession of 2007-2009, driving up unemployment and poverty rates and creating a \$5.9 billion budget shortfall in fiscal year 2010.<sup>4</sup> In 2011, Pennsylvania's economy was on the road to recovery, with unemployment falling to 7.6% in December 2011 as compared with the annual average of 8.7% in 2010.<sup>5</sup> Yet many families in Pennsylvania still struggle to make ends meet and reliance on public assistance remains high. With unemployment still widespread, overall work hours down, and more people losing their health insurance, the demand for cash assistance, food stamps, medical assistance, and children's health insurance was significantly higher at the end of 2011 (in the case of food stamps, more than 50% higher) than when the recession began in 2007.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to these economic challenges, Pennsylvania faces difficult problems with its crumbling infrastructure,<sup>7</sup> an aging population,<sup>8</sup> and the availability and affordability of health care and health care insurance.<sup>9</sup> It also faces a variety of environmental problems, ranging from the effects of acid rain<sup>10</sup> and acid mine drainage,<sup>11</sup> to the protection of the Chesapeake Bay watershed<sup>12</sup> and the reclamation of brownfields and other environmentally tainted industrial sites.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps the biggest challenges Pennsylvania will face in the coming years involve the economic, environmental, and social impacts of Marcellus Shale. In 2009 alone, drilling in the Marcellus Shale brought more than 23,000 jobs and an estimated \$3 billion in economic activity to Pennsylvania,<sup>14</sup> but it also has raised concerns about the potential contamination of drinking water, stresses on Pennsylvania's roads and infrastructure, and other environmental and social problems.<sup>15</sup>

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# 4,871

is the number of local governments in Pennsylvania, one of the most complex systems in the nation.

Whether Pennsylvania succumbs to these challenges or thrives in the new millennium will depend, in large measure, on the state of its civic health. If the people of Pennsylvania build on the strengths of their civic profile—their relatively high levels of community engagement and political participation—they can not only elect good political leaders but also play a significant role in shaping their own destiny. If, on the other hand, they fail to take care of their civic health, they risk making ill-informed choices and having little say about the future of their Commonwealth. In the final analysis, it is up to each and every citizen to decide whether to get involved and invest in the civic infrastructure and the educational programs necessary for a healthy democracy.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the second annual report on the civic health of Pennsylvania. The findings of the 2010 *Pennsylvania Civic Health Index* revealed that Pennsylvanians vote at about the same rate as citizens nationally and were slightly more likely to contact a public official, buy or boycott a product for social or political reasons, and participate in a political rally or march. They were less likely to discuss politics with family or friends, however, or to give money to a political candidate or party. On measures of community engagement, the findings of this year's report are again mixed. Pennsylvanians were slightly more likely to do volunteer work or make charitable contributions but less likely than other Americans to work with neighbors to address a community problem. In terms of social connectedness, the findings for Pennsylvania remain close to the national averages. Pennsylvanians are still slightly below the national average in using the Internet to talk with family and friends and in exchanging favors with their neighbors, but they are a bit more likely than other Americans to talk with their neighbors and to have dinner with their families at least a few times a week.

In short, this year's data shows that, in general, there have been no drastic changes in the civic health of Pennsylvania relative to the previous year. Pennsylvanians continue to score near the national average on most measures of political and community engagement. Pennsylvania's rankings nationally were up slightly on measures of voting, volunteering, and donating to charity, and its rankings were up significantly for two measures of community engagement: participating in community groups and working with neighbors to solve community problems.

**On one measure of civic health, however, Pennsylvania showed a deep decline: the frequency with which citizens of the Commonwealth discuss politics with their family and friends.** In the 2010 report, 34.7% of Pennsylvanians reported that they talked frequently about politics with their families or friends, which ranked the state 45th in the nation. In the most recent study, only 20.9% of Pennsylvanians said that they talked about politics frequently, dropping the state to 50th in the nation.

The most recent data reveals other causes for concern as well. Across a number of measures, the effects of differing levels of income and education are clearly evident. We also can see that, on many measures of civic health, race or ethnicity makes a difference, as does one's geographical location—whether one lives in an urban, rural, or suburban area. These differences point to a possible lack of opportunity or incentive for civic engagement among certain segments of Pennsylvania's population, and they point to some of the most fruitful avenues for promoting more citizen involvement in politics and civic life. For too many people in Pennsylvania, opportunities for—or barriers to—engagement are tied to their socio-economic status. Those lacking financial resources and educational opportunities also clearly lack pathways to meaningful engagement, as do those living in particular locations.

# 20.9%

of Pennsylvania residents said they talked frequently about politics in 2010—ranking 50th in the nation.



This study utilized a variety of key indicators, such as voting, participation in public meetings, and talking and working with friends and neighbors to assess Pennsylvania's civic health. To begin illuminating patterns and trends in those indicators, we combined some of our individual measures of civic health into three composite measures: social connectedness, political action, and public work. These composite measures do not tell the whole story but provide a helpful framework for assessing the state of Pennsylvania's civic health.

**Social connectedness** refers to the extent to which residents of the state engage in social interactions with their friends and families. This composite measure includes questions about how often families eat dinner together, communicate with friends via the Internet, visit with neighbors, and exchange favors with neighbors. When people are highly "connected," they are usually better able to come together, communicate effectively, and solve local problems. Yet high levels of social connectedness do not, in themselves, indicate good civic health. Although social connectedness may be an important prerequisite to civic and political engagement, it does not guarantee that people will give of their time or participate actively in organized charitable or political causes.

**Political action** refers to conventional political activities intended to influence government or other large institutions. It is composed of these four measures: voting, discussing politics with family and friends, contacting public officials, and buying or boycotting products.

**Public work** refers to a composite measure that consists of a combination of attending meetings and working with neighbors to fix community problems. Nationally, only 4.7% of the public met this rather stringent definition of public work, yet that still represents some 11.2 million people who got involved in some fashion to work on public problems at the local level.

**Civic health** is not just the sum total of these composite measures, as there are other key indicators used in the study that are not included in these composite measures. Yet they *can* be used to sketch the broad outlines of our portrait of Pennsylvania's civic life. We will then flesh out that portrait with other indicators of civic health, such as the rates of volunteering and participation in community groups. Taken together, all of these civic health indicators will allow us to develop a more complete and nuanced understanding of how well the citizens in Pennsylvania are able to work together - and with their local, state, and federal governments - to solve public problems and strengthen their communities. They also will help shape our recommendations for promoting more engaged citizenship, more productive public deliberation, and more cohesive and cooperative communities. Pennsylvania faces difficult political, social, and economic challenges in the 21st century. It is crucial that its citizens have the civic knowledge and skills they need to meet those challenges.



African Americans and Latinos in Pennsylvania were at higher risk of being socially isolated.

In general, Pennsylvania resembles the rest of the nation in our composite measures of civic health. On the measure of **social connectedness**, Pennsylvania scored only slightly lower than the national average, with some interesting differences across demographic categories, including:

- African Americans and Latinos were at higher risk of being socially isolated.
- Pennsylvania's elders (age 65+) were the most socially isolated, with 18.9% engaging in none of the four activities that make up the composite.
- As in the nation as a whole, education correlated with social connectedness; better educated Pennsylvanians are more socially connected.

On the composite measure of **political action**, Pennsylvania scored slightly below the national average but exhibited many of the same characteristics and tendencies as the national sample. There were a few interesting findings, however. Statistics from Pennsylvania show that:

- African Americans were the most engaged racial or ethnic group, with 64% reporting at least one political action, versus 58% of Whites and only 23.3% of Latinos.
- As in the nation as a whole, age correlated with political engagement, with 68% of Pennsylvanians over age 65 taking at least one political action, as compared with fewer than a third of Pennsylvanians ages 18-24.
- As in the nation as a whole, education was the best predictor of political action in Pennsylvania, with 79% of college graduates engaging in at least one political act as compared with only 36% of adults without high school diplomas.

On the composite measure of **public work**, Pennsylvania's score is slightly higher than the national average, and again the patterns both resembled and differed from those found in the nation as a whole. The findings on these two indicators reveal that:

- African Americans were more involved in public work than Whites in Pennsylvania, while the reverse was true nationally.
- Nationally, 5.4% of employed and 4.0% of unemployed people (16 and older) engaged in public work. However, unemployed Pennsylvanians were slightly *more* likely than people with jobs to participate in public work.
- As was the case nationally, older Pennsylvanians (age 65 and above) were more involved in public work than young people, but rates of public work for ages 20-24 and 25-35 in Pennsylvania were higher than the national average.
- Public work was most common in rural areas and least prevalent in urban areas.
- As elsewhere, public work correlated with education, but the rates of participation for the lowest educational levels were better in Pennsylvania than in the United States as a whole.
- Overall, the gaps in public work by race, age, and education were less sharp in Pennsylvania than in other states.

**64%**

of African Americans reported engaging in at least one political action in 2010.



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Our composite measures only begin to tell the story of civic life. Indicators not included in the composite measures shed additional light on important aspects of civic engagement, and moving averages for some of these indicators point to possible trends, both positive and negative. Furthermore, demographic breakdowns reveal that political and civic engagement among Pennsylvanians varies significantly across income and educational levels. Age and race are also important factors in many of our measures of civic health. Clearly, not all citizens in Pennsylvania are equally engaged, and the data both reveals those differences and points to some of the ways that these gaps in civic participation might be addressed. Through civic education and targeted programs, Pennsylvania could do much more to involve those who have been disengaged or marginalized from politics and civic life in the Commonwealth.

Some of the more significant findings from our detailed analysis of the civic health indicators for Pennsylvania include:

- Pennsylvania ranked 29th in volunteering in 2010, with a volunteerism rate of 26.9%. The national volunteering rate in 2010 was 26.3%. An estimated 2,700,000 residents volunteered in Pennsylvania in 2010. In 2009, 27.6% of Pennsylvania residents volunteered some of their time.
- Pennsylvania ranked 35th in voter turnout in 2010, with a turnout rate of 43.9% for citizens age 18 and over; the national turnout was 45.5%. Pennsylvania's voter turnout in 2006 was 47.6%, which ranked the state 28th nationally. In 2006, the national voter turnout rate for all eligible voters was 47.8%.
- Pennsylvania ranked 33rd among all states in the rate of citizens who are registered to vote, at 64.6%. Pennsylvania's voter registration rate in 2006, when the last midterm election was held, was 64.9%. The national voter registration rate for all eligible citizens was 65.1% in 2010 and 67.6% in 2006.
- Pennsylvania ranked 29th in working with neighbors to solve community problems in 2010, with 8.3% of respondents reporting such neighborhood collaborations. Nationwide, 8.1% of Americans claimed to have worked with neighbors in 2010. In 2009, the national rate on this measure was 8.8%, while the rate for Pennsylvania was 7.3%.
- Pennsylvania ranked 33rd in the rate of people who exchanged favors with neighbors frequently (defined as a few times a week or more). Only 14.4% of Pennsylvanians said they frequently exchange favors with their neighbors, compared to 15.2% of Americans nationwide. The national rate on this measure has not changed much since 2008-2009, when it was 16.2%. At that time, 15.9% of Pennsylvanians indicated that they frequently exchanged favors with neighbors.
- Pennsylvania ranked 17th in the rate of people who belong to religious, neighborhood, school, sports, and other types of groups and organizations in their communities. Pennsylvanians participated in groups at the above-average rate of 37.1%, whereas Americans nationwide only participated at a rate of 33.3%. Pennsylvanians also reported taking leadership roles in groups at a rate higher than the national average, with 11.0% of Pennsylvanians saying that they served as an officer or a member of a committee for a local group, compared with only 9.1% nationally.
- Pennsylvania ranked 43rd in the rate of people who said they eat dinner with their family a few times a week or more, with a rate of 86.6%. The 2010 national estimate for this indicator was 88.1%. In 2009, 90.4% of Pennsylvanians and 89.1% of Americans nationwide reported eating dinner with their family a few times a week.
- Pennsylvania ranked 50th in the rate of people who talk about politics frequently with their friends and family (defined as at least a few times a week). Only 20.9% of Pennsylvanians reported talking with their friends or family about politics frequently, compared with 26.0% of Americans nationwide. Both the Pennsylvania and national rate have declined significantly since the 2008-2009 survey, when the rates were 34.7% for Pennsylvania and 39.3% for the nation.
- Pennsylvania ranked 45th in the rate of people who communicated with friends or family frequently on the Internet (defined as at least a few times a week). Only 48.1% of Pennsylvanians reported talking with friends and family over the Internet, while nationally the rate was 54.3%.



## 35th

Pennsylvania ranks 35th nationally in voter turnout.

Indicators of Social Connectedness	PA Data (2010)	National Ranking (2010)	Trend (pooled PA data for 2008-2010)*
Volunteering	26.9%	29th	27.4%
Voting (2010 Midterm)	43.9%	35th	N/A
Registration (2010 Midterm)	64.6%	33rd	N/A
Working with neighbors to fix something or improve something in the community	8.3%	29th	7.6%



Doing favor for neighbors frequently	14.4%	33rd	15.4%
Group membership	37.1%	17th	36.8%
Eat dinner with a member of household frequently	86.6%	43rd	89.1%
Talk about politics with friends and family frequently	20.9%	50th	30.0%
Talk with family and friends on the Internet or via email frequently	48.1%	45th	50.1%

*\* Trends in this table refer to estimated figures from the three most recent years of data (2008, 2009 and 2010), which can smooth out the year-to-year variations and give readers an understanding of how Pennsylvanians have typically performed on a variety of indicators in recent years. Comparing the 2010 data with the trend can provide readers with some ideas about whether 2010 was a typical or unusual year on various civic indicators.*

The ultimate goal of this report is to inspire active citizenship and productive public dialogue to encourage civic health. The analysis and recommendations in this study provide a foundation for local, regional, and statewide discussions of how best to improve the civic health of the Commonwealth and its people. Civic health is the key to an empowered citizenry, cohesive communities, and effective public policy-making—the hallmarks of a high-functioning democracy. In fact, it is essential to the furtherance of American freedom, as outlined by our nation’s founding document. As President Theodore Roosevelt noted, “The people themselves must be the ultimate makers of their own Constitution.”

The habits and skills of engaged democratic citizenship are learned, not inherited. In order to achieve the goal of civic health, Pennsylvania must broaden its civic engagement while continuing to promote civic education. If Pennsylvania aspires to become a more vibrant and civically engaged and inclusive state, it needs leaders committed to democratic participation, and it needs to commit to educating and empowering its citizens. Even in those measures where Pennsylvania compares favorably with other states, there is room for improvement. With bold leadership and an active citizenry, Pennsylvania can build a stronger representative democracy and find solutions to its problems that work for all of its citizens.

There are many different ways to be a “good citizen,” of course, and our study takes that into account. For some, being a good citizen may mean voting in elections, donating money to political candidates, or making their political views known at a town meeting or campaign rally. For others, it might mean something very different: getting involved in their local community, raising money for a worthy cause, or joining forces with neighbors to clean up a local park. The measures of civic health used in this study span a range of behaviors and activities, from talking or exchanging favors with neighbors to more traditional forms of political participation, such as contacting public officials or going to the polls on Election Day. However Pennsylvanians define what it means to be a good citizen, the data examined in this study will allow us to compare their levels of active engagement to those of other states and to suggest ways that the Commonwealth might improve its civic health profile through education, institutional reforms, and programs designed to encourage citizen involvement in the democratic process.

## CIVIC HEALTH FINDINGS

In this section, we unpack “social connectedness,” one of our composite measures, by presenting data on each of the individual measures we used to assess how Pennsylvania residents connect with one another through social activities. Research and experience tell us that people who are socially connected are more likely to come together for civic or political reasons as well. Social connectedness is essential for individual health and well-being, as well as building communities that thrive. As such, it is particularly important to consider how social connectedness is impacted along demographic lines such as educational attainment, race and ethnicity, and age. The table that follows compares the data from Pennsylvania on these measures to the national findings. It also compares the data for 2010 to pooled data from 2008-2010, which helps us to see any trend that might be developing in these measures of civic health.

# 17th

Rank of Pennsylvania nationally in number of citizens belonging to one or more groups.



Indicators of Social Connectedness	PA Data (2010)	National Ranking (2010)	National Data (2010)	Trend (pooled PA data for 2008-2010)*	Trend (pooled National data for 2008-2010)*
Talk frequently with neighbors	45.4%	15th	42.3%	46.4%	44.6%
Exchange favors with neighbors frequently	14.4%	33rd	15.2%	15.4%	15.8%
Frequently eat dinner with a household member	86.6%	43rd	88.1%	89.1%	88.7%
Connect often with family and friends on the Internet or via email	48.1%	45th	54.3%	50.1%	53.8%

\* Trends in this table refer to estimated figures from the three most recent years of data (2008, 2009 and 2010), which can smooth out the year-to-year variations and give readers an understanding of how Pennsylvanians have typically performed on a variety of indicators in recent years. Comparing the 2010 data with the trend can provide readers with some ideas about whether 2010 was a typical or unusual year on various civic indicators.

When we break down these statistics demographically, they reveal some interesting facts:

- Members of the so-called Millennial generation (born after 1980) are far less likely than older Pennsylvanians to have dinner with their families, talk with their neighbors, or exchange favors with their neighbors. They are significantly more likely, however, to talk with friends or family via the Internet.
- There is a significant “digital divide” in Pennsylvania, as those living in rural areas and those with lower income and less education are significantly less likely than other Pennsylvanians to talk with family and friends via the Internet.
- Men score lower than women on all four measures of social connectedness, with significantly fewer men (43.6%) than women (52.1%) using the Internet to communicate with friends and family. Fewer men also talk (43.1%) and exchange favors (12.9%) with neighbors than women (47.4% of women talk to neighbors; 15.7% exchange favors with neighbors).
- Among young people age 18-24, those with some college experience are more likely to have dinner with their families and talk with friends and family via the Internet than those with no college experience, but they are actually less likely to talk or exchange favors frequently with their neighbors.
- Among people over age 25, only 13.8% of those with less than a high school education communicate with friends and family via the Internet, while 70.1% of those with a college degree use the Internet to talk with friends and family. This is the only indicator of social connectedness that revealed large differences among Pennsylvanians over 25 with varying degrees of educational attainment.
- Despite living farther apart from their neighbors, rural residents are more likely to talk and exchange favors frequently with their neighbors than those living in urban areas, although they were slightly less likely to have dinner with their families than Pennsylvanians living in urban or suburban areas.
- Comparisons by race and ethnicity reveal significant differences between Whites and African Americans on measures of Internet connectivity and talking with neighbors, while Latinos were significantly less inclined than either Whites or African Americans to say they talk or exchange favors with neighbors frequently.



**13.8%**

of those with less than a high school education communicate with friends and family online, compared with 70.1% of those with a college degree.

Indicators Related to Race/Ethnicity	Whites	African Americans	Latinos	Total
Eat dinner with household members	86.4%	86.8%	92.2%	86.6%
Connect with family and friends via Internet	48.4%	39.9%	47.8%	48.1%
Talk with neighbors	45.6%	52.3%	31.2%	45.4%
Exchange favors with neighbors	14.8%	14.8%	6.5%	14.4%

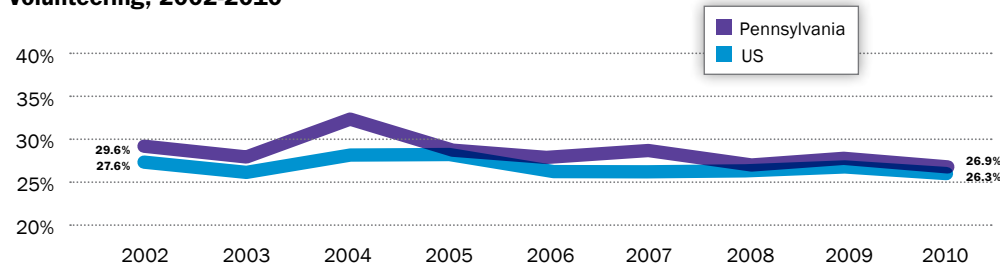
In this section, we look more closely at indicators of community engagement in Pennsylvania. We examine trends, as well as comparisons with other states, on a variety of measures of involvement in community groups and civic activities. Specifically, we examine the extent to which people in Pennsylvania:

- Volunteer, work with neighbors to solve local problems, and serve on or lead community groups or committees.
- Donate to charitable causes.
- Participate in various types of local organizations, such as school or youth groups, service or civic organizations, and sports or recreational groups.

### VOLUNTEERING AND WORKING WITH NEIGHBORS

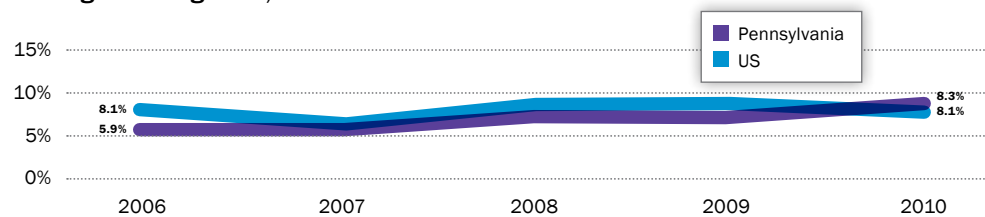
An estimated 2,700,000 Pennsylvanians volunteered in 2010. That's 26.9% of the population, which ranked Pennsylvania 29th in the nation in volunteering. Since 2002, overall volunteer rates have declined slightly, both nationally and in Pennsylvania, but Pennsylvania's rate has remained close to the national average.

#### Volunteering, 2002-2010



Another important indicator of civic health is the willingness of people to work with neighbors to solve community problems. While Pennsylvania has trailed the national average on this figure in recent years, slightly more Pennsylvanians (8.3%) reported working with neighbors on community problems in 2010 than was the case for the US as a whole (8.1%). Still, Pennsylvania ranked 29th nationally on this measure of civic health.

#### Working with Neighbors, 2006-2010



Who are these volunteers? And in what ways do they participate? In order to answer those questions, we analyzed volunteerism by race/ethnicity, household income, geography (urban, suburban and rural) and educational level, and we looked at not only volunteering but also two other measures of community involvement: working with neighbors to solve a problem, and serving as a leader or a member of a committee within a community organization. In general, more women (30.0%)

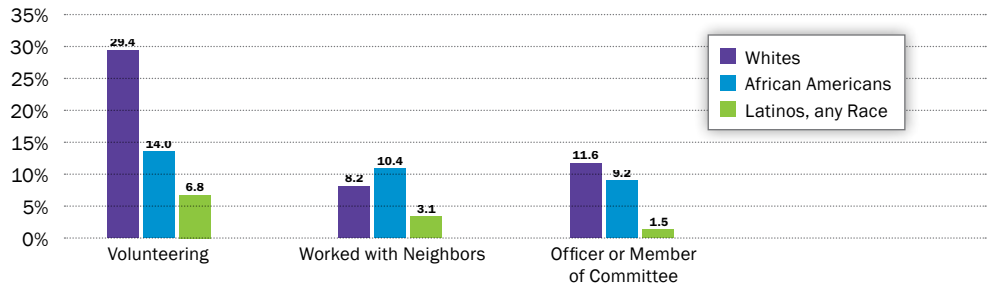
# 2.7 Million

Number of Pennsylvanians who volunteered in 2010, a rate of 26.9%.



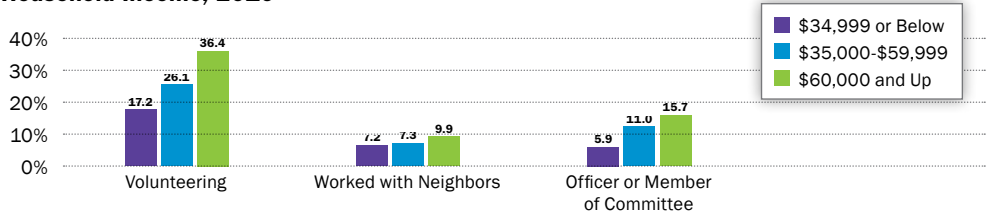
volunteer than men (23.6%) in Pennsylvania, and while Whites in Pennsylvania were more likely to volunteer or serve as a leader or member of a committee, African Americans were more likely to work with their neighbors to solve community problems.

### PA Volunteering, Neighborhood Engagement and Community Leadership by Race and Ethnicity, 2010



Income is also strongly linked to volunteerism. People who earn more than \$60,000 a year are much more likely to volunteer, work with neighbors to solve local problems, or serve as a leader or member of a committee in a community group than those who earn less than \$35,000.

### PA Volunteering, Neighborhood Engagement and Community Leadership by Household Income, 2010

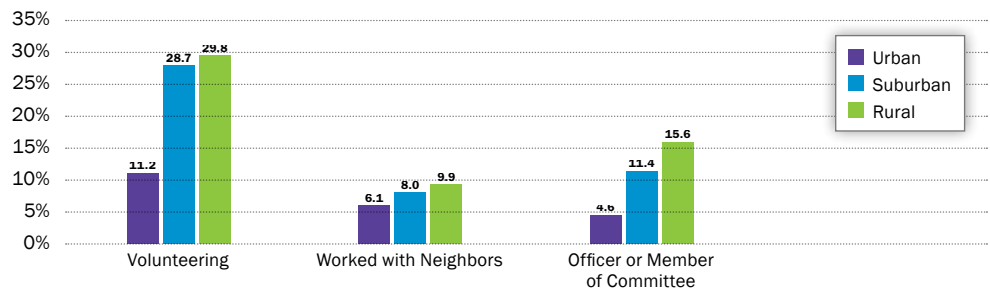


**11.2%**

of Pennsylvanians living in urban areas volunteer versus 29.8% of those who live in rural areas.

Gaps in volunteerism and collaboration with neighbors are also seen when one compares those living in urban or suburban locations with those living in rural areas. In general, those living in rural areas are more likely to volunteer, work with their neighbors to solve problems, or serve as an officer or a member of a committee in a community organization than those living in urban or suburban areas.

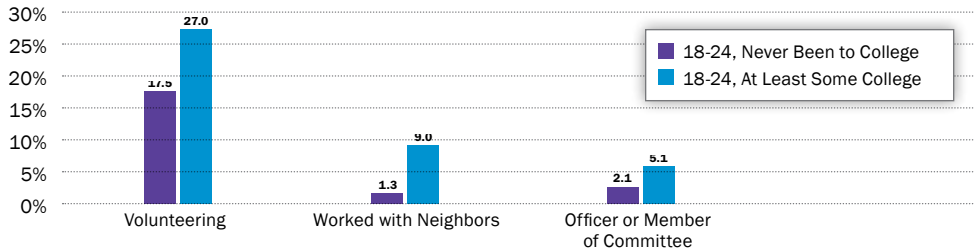
### PA Volunteering, Neighborhood Engagement and Community Leadership by Geography, 2010



Most striking is the impact of educational attainment on rates of volunteering and community engagement. Among younger people, the differences between those with at least some college and those who have never been to college are clearly evident, as those with some college are about twice as likely to volunteer or serve as an officer or a committee member in a local organization. Those with some college experience are also many times more likely to work with neighbors to solve community problems.

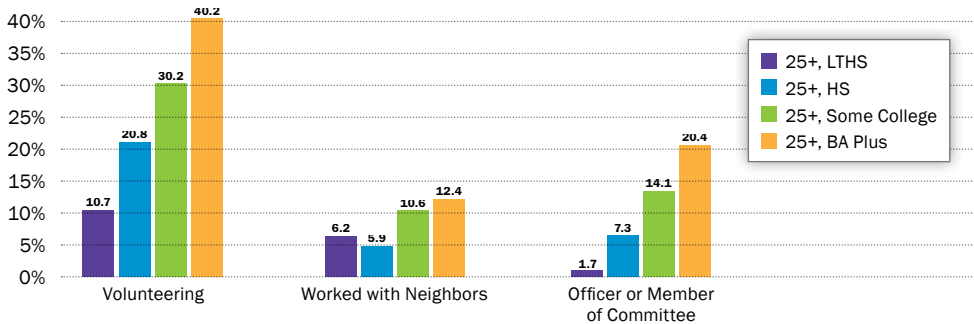


**PA Volunteering, Neighborhood Engagement, and Community Leadership by College Experience, Ages 18-24 and Older, 2010**



Education is also the best predictor of community engagement for Pennsylvanians over the age of 25, as those with a college degree are about four times more likely to volunteer or attend a public meeting than those with less than a high school education. Those with a college education are 12 times as likely as those with less than a high school education to serve as an officer or a member of a committee within a local community group.

**PA Volunteering, Neighborhood Engagement, and Community Leadership by Educational Attainment, 25 and Older, 2010**



**51.6%**

Rate of charitable giving among Pennsylvanians in 2010, ranking 26th in the nation.



**CHARITABLE GIVING**

According to the U.S. Census survey data, 51.6% of Pennsylvania residents donated money, assets, or property with a combined value of more than \$25 to charitable or religious organizations in 2010, ranking Pennsylvania 26th in the nation. In terms of the total amount of money donated by both individuals and foundations, another study ranked Pennsylvania 7th in the nation in 2005—a year when Pennsylvanians donated a total of \$7.94 billion to charitable causes, accounting for 3.6% of all giving in the United States. Still, Pennsylvania lagged behind the nation in the *growth* of charitable giving between 1995 and 2005, increasing its charitable giving by 101% (compared with 151% nationally) over that period.<sup>16</sup>

**Giving to Charity (donation valued at more than \$25)**

Indicators of Charitable Giving	PA Data (2010)	National Ranking (2010)	National Data (2010)	Trend (pooled PA data for 2008-2010)	Trend (pooled National data for 2008-2010)
Gave \$25 or more to charity	51.6%	26th	50.0%	51.8%	50.4%

Pennsylvanians have a lot of choices when it comes to charitable giving. The state’s Bureau of Charitable Organizations reports that there are 10,485 registered charities in the state, and that does *not* include “bona fide religious institutions,” most law enforcement organizations, educational institutions, hospitals, veterans’ organizations, volunteer firefighters, ambulance associations, senior citizens centers, nursing homes, and Parent-Teacher Associations.<sup>17</sup>

In Pennsylvania, as in most states, wealthier and better-educated suburbanites are most likely to donate to charity. Those who donate also tend to be older, female, and white. Not surprisingly, income and age makes a big difference in charitable giving. While only 38.3% of Pennsylvanians with an income of less than \$35,000 donated \$25 or more, for example, 61.7% of those earning over \$60,000 contributed at least that amount. Similarly, while only 38.6% of Pennsylvanians over 25 with less than a high school education contributed at least \$25 to charity, more than seven out of ten (70.5%) with a college degree contributed. It is perhaps also not surprising that young people in general are less likely to contribute to charity, but again education makes a big difference. Among Pennsylvanians 18-24, only 13.7% of those without college experience contributed to charity, while 24.7% of those with at least some college contributed.

### GROUP PARTICIPATION

Pennsylvanians join a wide range of civic, community, school, sports, and religious organizations and groups. The 2010 U.S. Census survey data shows that Pennsylvania ranked 17th in the nation on this measure of civic health, with 37.1% of its residents (compared with 33.3% nationally) belonging to or participating in some sort of organization within their community.

Participation in organizations or groups takes many different forms and is related to a number of demographic variables, including gender, geographical location, race and ethnicity, college experience, and income. Women, for example, are more likely to participate in groups than men, but tend to favor school, community, or church-related groups over the civic, service, or sports and recreational groups preferred by men.

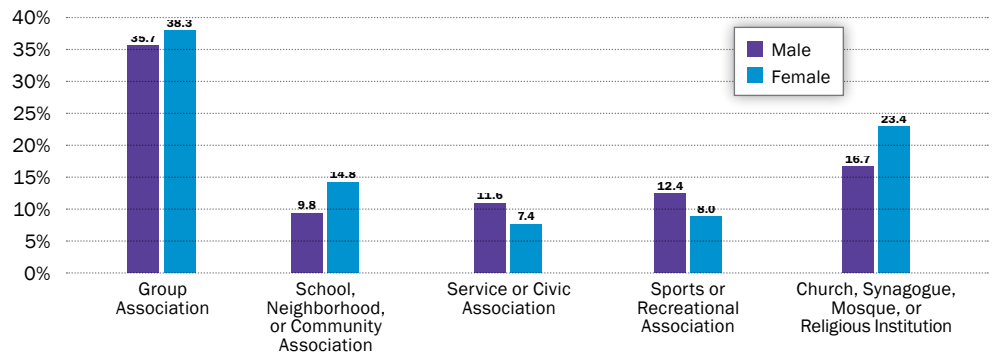


## 17th

Pennsylvania ranked 17th in the nation in group participation, with 37.1% of its residents engaged in some sort of organization.

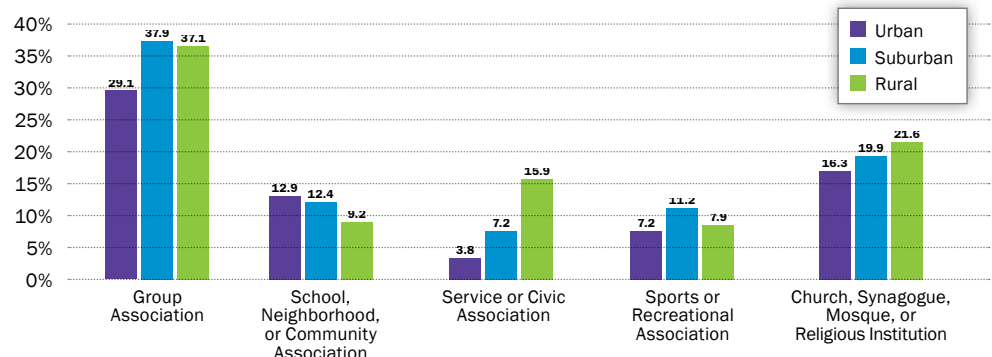
*Photo courtesy of the National Constitution Center.*

### PA Group Participation by Gender, 2010



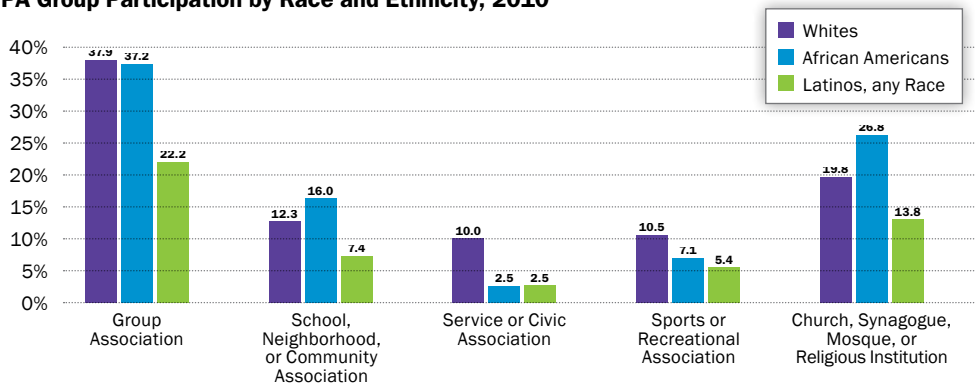
Geographical location also plays a role in group participation. In general, rural and suburban Pennsylvania residents are more likely to join an organization or group. However, people living in different geographical locations tend to get involved in certain types of groups. People in urban communities tend to be more active in school, neighborhood, or community associations, while rural Pennsylvanians gravitate toward civic or service associations and religious groups. Perhaps not surprisingly, suburbanites are the most likely to join sports or recreational groups.

### PA Group Participation by Geography, 2010



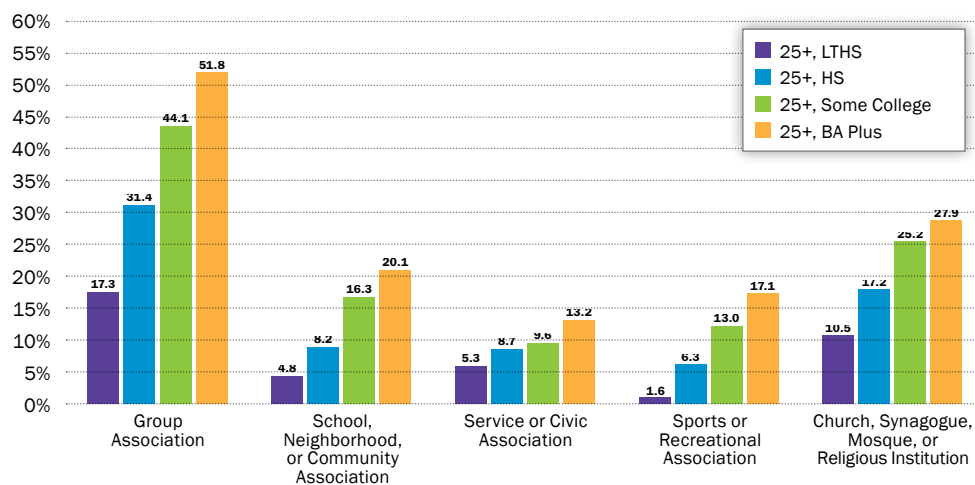
Race also matters in group or organizational affiliations. In Pennsylvania, overall group participation among Whites is slightly higher than among African Americans and significantly higher than the rate among Latinos. In looking at the particular types of groups that Pennsylvanians get involved with, we see that African Americans are more likely than Whites or Latinos to get involved in school, neighborhood or religious groups, while Whites are more likely than African Americans or Latinos to join civic or service organizations and sports or recreational groups. Latinos join civic or service groups at the same rate as African Americans, but they trail both Whites and African Americans in the rate at which they join all other types of groups.

### PA Group Participation by Race and Ethnicity, 2010



In the latest figures from the National Center for Educational Statistics, 25.9% of Pennsylvanians over the age of 25 have earned a bachelor's degree or higher,<sup>18</sup> and a college education makes a big difference in group participation. Among Pennsylvanians ages 25 and older, 44.1% of those with at least some college experience participated in a community group or organization, while only 31.4% of those with no college experience participated. Breaking down the figures, we see a clear relationship between the amount of education and group participation, with group participation of all types increasing with progressively higher levels of educational attainment. Clearly, education is a key factor in whether people choose to participate in the groups and organizations within their local communities. Pennsylvanians with college degrees are three times more likely than those with less than a high school diploma to participate in some kind of community group or organization.

### PA Group Participation by Educational Attainment, 25 and Older, 2010



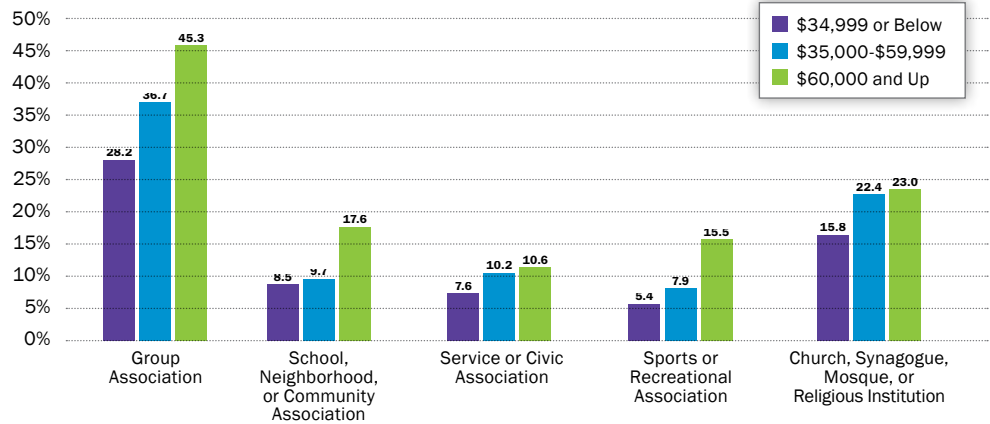
# 34.5

The difference in percentage points between Pennsylvanians with a college degree who participated in groups (51.8%) and those with less than a high school diploma (17.3%).



Income levels also matter when it comes to group participation. In every category of group association, participation increased across income levels.

### PA Group Participation by Household Income, 2010



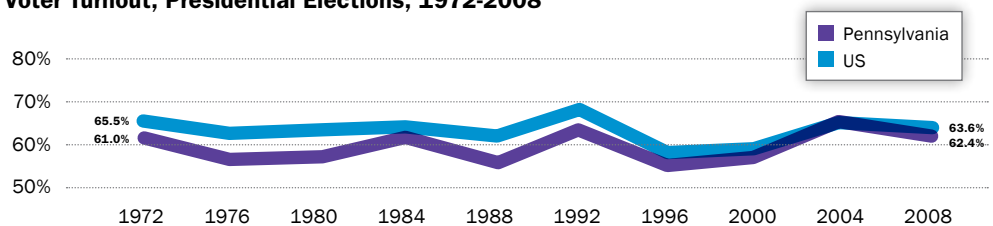
## 62.4%

Pennsylvania has lagged behind the rest of the nation's voter turnout rate in most of the last ten presidential elections. In 2008, the turnout rate in Pennsylvania was 62.4%.

When we think of political engagement and activity, we typically think of voting or writing to our elected representatives. Those are important activities, of course, but they are not the only means of political participation. Nowadays, according to political scientist Russell Dalton, many people—especially young people—express themselves politically through more “individualized forms of activity,”<sup>19</sup> such as attending political meetings or rallies; buying or boycotting products because of the political or social values associated with those products or the company that provides them; or simply talking about politics with their friends and families. According to Dalton, these alternative ways of “doing politics” reflect changing norms of citizenship that are different from traditional, “duty-based” ideas about what it means to be a “good citizen,” and they “come with their own potential advantages and problems.”<sup>20</sup>

One of those potential problems, of course, is that many people no longer view voting as an important civic duty. Over the past half century, only about 6 out of 10 American citizens have voted even in high-profile presidential elections, and even fewer young people take the time to register and vote. Many Americans are shocked to learn that their country trails all but a handful of the world's democracies in voter turnout.<sup>21</sup> Pennsylvania has lagged behind the rest of the nation's voter turnout rate in most of the last ten presidential elections, and that pattern held true again in 2008. In the 2008 election, only 62.4% of Pennsylvania's eligible voters went to the polls, compared with 63.6% nationally.

### Voter Turnout, Presidential Elections, 1972-2008

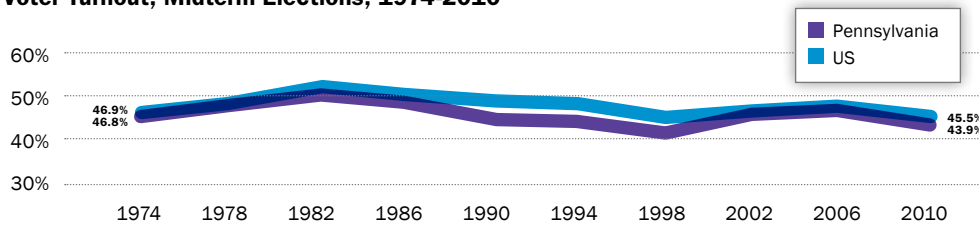


Voter registration and turnout in the midterm elections might be a better measure of whether citizens feel a civic duty to vote, as high-profile presidential elections often attract voters not otherwise engaged. According to the U.S. Census survey data, 64.6% of all eligible electors in Pennsylvania were registered to vote in 2010 (as compared with 65.1% nationally), and 43.9% of



Pennsylvania's eligible electors voted in the midterm elections. Pennsylvania thus ranked 33rd in the nation in voter registration and 35th in voter turnout in 2010. The graph below shows the long-term trend in voter turnout in midterm elections.

### Voter Turnout, Midterm Elections, 1974-2010



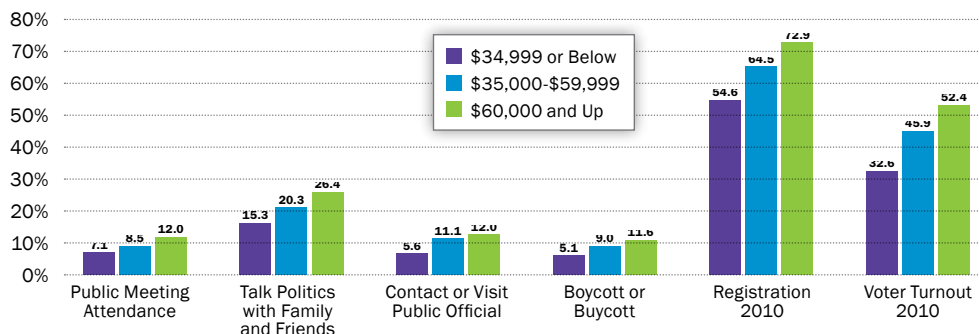
One particularly interesting way of looking at voting patterns in our state is by age. While only 22.6% of the so-called Millennial Generation turned out to vote in the 2010 elections, more than half of all Pennsylvanians born before 1964 showed up at the polls that year. There were other significant differences evident in the voting statistics as well. Among those young people 18-24 who had never been to college, a paltry 9.0% voted in 2010, while 21.5% of those with at least some college experience voted.

Politics involves more than just voting, of course, and people who choose not to vote might still engage in politics by contacting governmental officials or by attending public meetings. As we already noted, young people in particular seem more inclined toward non-electoral forms of politics, such as buying or boycotting a product for political reasons. Yet these other ways of “doing politics” remain relatively uncommon. According to the 2010 U.S. Census CPS data, only 9.4% of Pennsylvania residents contacted or visited a public official, only 9.4% attended a public meeting, and only 8.6% bought or boycotted a product because of the political or social values associated with that product.

Most surprising, however, was our finding that only 20.9% of Pennsylvanians reported talking about politics with friends and family at least a few times a week. This was down significantly from the 34.7% figure derived by pooling data from 2008 and 2009. Nationally, “talking about politics” declined from 39.3% in 2008-2009 to 26.0% in 2010, perhaps reflecting that people talked less about politics after the historic presidential election of 2008. Still, Pennsylvania’s decline was especially dramatic, and it dropped Pennsylvania from 45th to 50th in the national rankings on this measure.

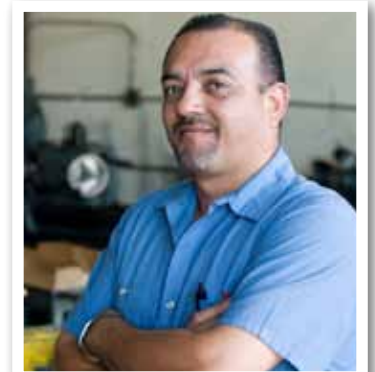
Political engagement, like most aspects of civic health, varies significantly by income levels, race and ethnicity, geographic location, and educational attainment. Wealthy people are much more likely to attend public meetings, talk politics with family and friends, contact or visit local officials, and boycott or buy products or services because of the political or social values associated with them. They are also much more likely to register to vote and to turn up at the polls. As the bar graph below reveals, higher income Pennsylvanians were more likely to participate in all measures of political engagement, with the differences especially striking on measures of voter registration and turnout.

### PA Political Engagement by Household Income, 2010



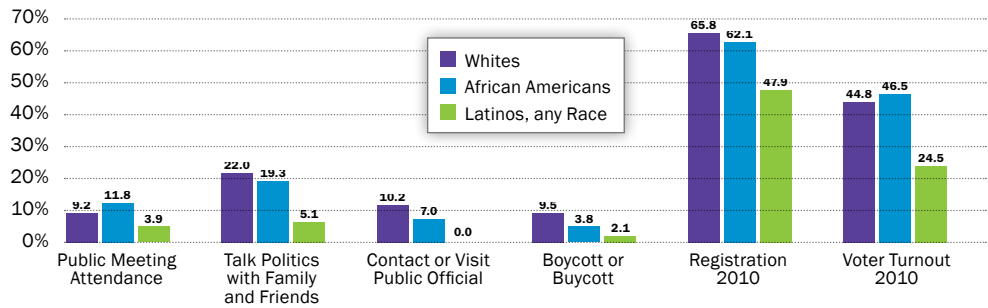
# 22.6%

While only 22.6% of the so-called Millennial Generation turned out to vote in the 2010 elections, more than half of all Pennsylvanians born before 1964 showed up at the polls that year.



The patterns of political participation across race and ethnicity are less clear but even more intriguing. One way of interpreting political action is through creating a composite measure defined by the following indicators: voting, discussing politics with family and friends a few times a week or more, contacting public officials, and buying or boycotting products. Using this composite measure, an individual receives one point for each activity that he or she reports.<sup>23</sup> In Pennsylvania, African Americans were the most politically engaged racial or ethnic group, with 64.0% reporting at least one political action versus 58.0% of Whites and just 23.3% of Latinos. African Americans were more likely than Whites to attend a public meeting and turn out to vote, and they talked politics and contacted or visited public officials almost as frequently as Whites. Latinos, on the other hand, trailed both Whites and African Americans on all our measures of political action and deliberation.

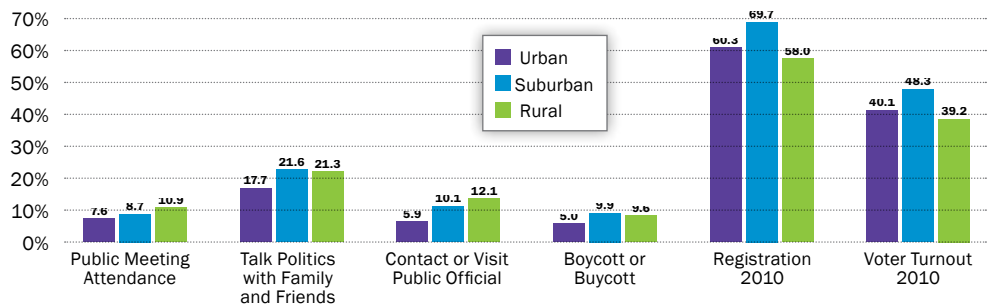
### PA Political Engagement by Race and Ethnicity, 2010



In Pennsylvania, African Americans were the most politically engaged racial or ethnic group, with 64.0% reporting at least one political action versus 58.0% of Whites and 23.3% of Latinos.

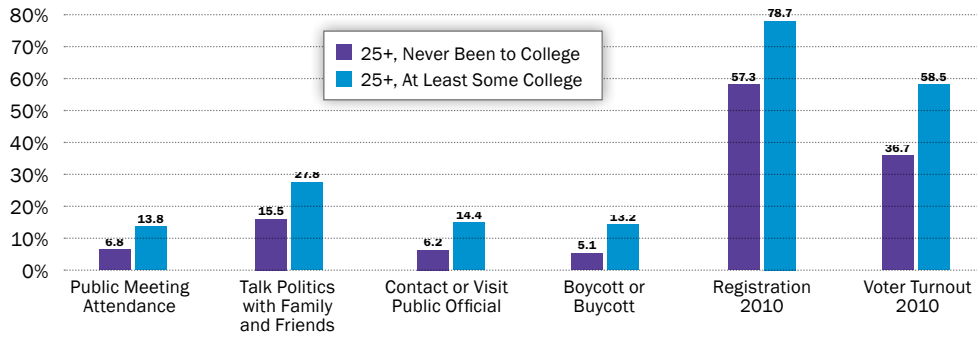
Data on political participation by geographical location also reveals some interesting contrasts. While people living in rural areas were the most likely to attend public meetings and contact or visit a public official (and were virtually tied with suburbanites in talking about politics with friends and family), they were the least likely to register to vote and turn out on Election Day. Put another way, rural Pennsylvanians seem more inclined toward registering their political views in person than via the ballot box. This may, in some measure at least, reflect Pennsylvania's strong tradition of political deliberation in town hall or Grange hall meetings in rural Pennsylvania.

### PA Political Engagement by Geography, 2010



Education also influences political action and deliberation, and across the board, Pennsylvania residents with at least some college experience were more likely to involve themselves in political activities than those who never went to college. Among Pennsylvanians 25 and older, those with at least some college were about twice as likely to attend public meetings, contact a public official, or engage in consumer politics by buying or boycotting a product because of the political or social values associated with it. They also were significantly more likely to register to vote and turn out at the polls.

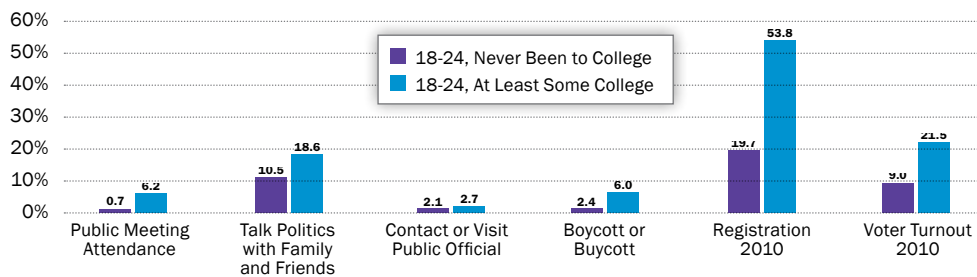
### PA Political Engagement by College Experience, Ages 25 and Older, 2010



Among those between the ages of 18 and 24, education again made a difference. Young Pennsylvanians with at least some college experience were far more likely to register to vote and turn out at the polls, and they were also significantly more likely to attend public meetings, talk about politics with family and friends, and buy or boycott a product or service for political reasons. Overall, the pattern is clear: college experience significantly increases the likelihood that a young person will engage in political deliberations and action.

College experience significantly increases the likelihood that a young person will engage in political deliberations and action.

### PA Political Engagement by College Experience, Ages 18-24, 2010



On most measures of civic health, then, Pennsylvania resembles its sister states and the nation as a whole, but there are some intriguing differences. From the composite measures we first examined, we learned that Pennsylvania ranked slightly below national averages on measures of social connectedness and political action but slightly ahead of the rest of the nation on measures of public work, which include working with neighbors and attending community meetings. African Americans did better than Whites on our composite measures of public work in Pennsylvania, and the gaps in public work by race, age, and education were somewhat less pronounced in Pennsylvania than in other states.

As we fleshed out our portrait of Pennsylvania's civic health, we discovered still more interesting differences between Pennsylvania and the rest of the nation. While Pennsylvanians ranked quite high in the percentage of its residents who talked frequently with their neighbors and participated in community groups, they seemed especially reluctant to talk about politics with their family and friends.

As we mentioned earlier, declines nationwide in the percentage of people who talk frequently about politics may reflect the dissipation of excitement over the historic 2008 presidential campaign. Yet Pennsylvania declined on this measure both in percentage terms and in its national ranking: in other words, Pennsylvanians appear to have become even less likely to talk about



politics than their counterparts in other states. Moreover, Pennsylvanians remain ranked in the lower half of states on virtually all other measures of *political* engagement. Pennsylvanians join service or civic groups, church and religious groups, and recreational and sports-related groups at higher rates than other Americans, and their overall group involvement is significantly higher than the national average. But they seem less inclined to register to vote and show up at the polls, and they are slightly less likely than other Americans to contact a public official or make consumer decisions based on the political or social values associated with particular products or services. And, as we've already noted, they are *far* less likely than other Americans to talk about politics with family and friends.

In short, Pennsylvanians might be described as engaged in their communities but comparatively less political and less deliberative in the ways in which they are engaged. Three factors may explain that dichotomy: (1) patterns of exposure to political news and information, (2) civic education, and (3) opportunities for political deliberation and engagement.

## INFORMATION, EDUCATION, AND DELIBERATION



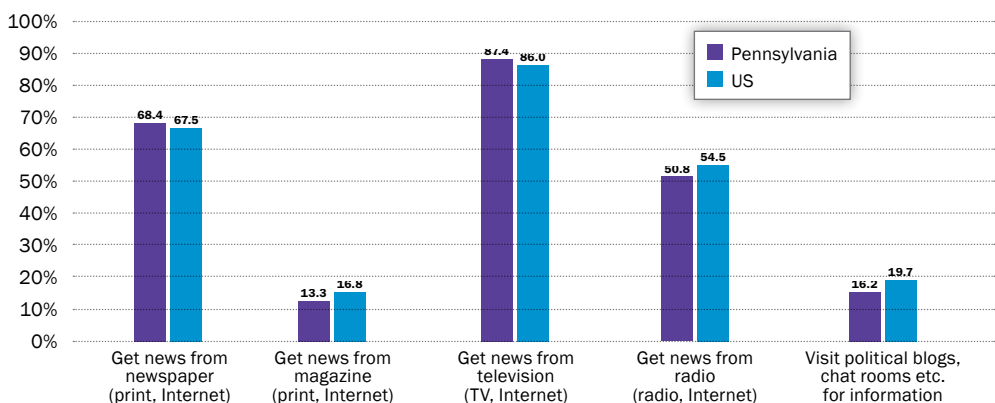
**16.2%**

of Pennsylvania citizens report visiting political blogs or chat rooms for obtaining news information.

Why is it that Pennsylvania ranks at the bottom of the states in talking about politics with their friends and family? Why is it that the state ranks comparatively high in involvement with non-political groups, like church or recreational organizations, but low in more traditional forms of political participation, like voting? Part of the explanation might involve the news habits of Pennsylvanians, which like other measures of civic health, vary widely across demographic categories such as age, race, income, and education. As a 2007 report from the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press concluded, "more informed Americans enjoy keeping up with the news, believe they have a personal stake in what goes on in Washington, and are significantly more likely to register to vote than people who know less..."<sup>24</sup> When trying to explain the political behaviors of Pennsylvanians, it is thus important to ask: Do Pennsylvanians pay attention to political news? And, when they do, where do they get most of their news and political information?

While data on access to information was not collected in 2010 by the U.S. Census Current Population Survey (CPS), data from the 2008 and 2009 Civic Engagement Supplement can help us begin answering these questions. From a pooled estimate combining data on media use from 2008 and 2009, we can get a sense of how Pennsylvanians get their political news and how those news habits vary across demographic categories.<sup>25</sup> In general, the data show that, like most Americans, Pennsylvanians get their news mostly from television, with 87.4% of respondents indicating they watched television news (either on TV or online) "a few times a week or more." By comparison, 68.4% of Pennsylvanians said they got news frequently from newspapers (again, either in print or online), with only 16.2% identifying blogs, chat rooms, and other Internet sites as news sources they relied upon frequently.

**PA and US Access to News Information**





Although the CPS data does not allow us to ascertain whether Pennsylvanians are following the national trend toward getting *all* sorts of news online rather than through traditional media,<sup>26</sup> it does reveal some interesting facts about the news habits of Pennsylvanians—and how they compare with the rest of the nation. Here are some of the most noteworthy findings:

- According to the 2010 Pennsylvania Civic Health Index, based on analysis of 2008 CPS data, Pennsylvania ranked 11th in the nation in the proportion of its citizens who watched television news programs a few times a week or more, but 32nd in the percentage of people who read newspaper stories frequently, 35th in readership of newsmagazines, 39th in listening to radio news, and 43rd in getting their news from political blogs, chat rooms, or other news sources on the Internet.
- Suburban and rural Pennsylvanians were significantly more likely to read newspapers (whether in print or online) than those living in urban areas.<sup>27</sup>
- Men were much more likely to listen to news on the radio than were women (55.4% versus 46.7%).
- Millennials (those born after 1980) were the least likely of all generations to get their news from newspapers or television, but they were more likely than older Pennsylvanians to consult blogs, chat rooms, and other Internet sources.
- Wealthier Pennsylvanians (\$60,000 and up) consulted all sorts of news sources more frequently than those making less money.
- Pennsylvanians over 25 with less than a high school education were far less likely than those with a high school diploma or a college education to consume any sort of news. Those with a college degree were more than four times more likely than those with less than a high school education to read newsmagazines, and they were about seven times more likely to listen to news on the radio or consult a political blog, chat room, or other news source on the Internet.
- Among young people (18-24), those with no college experience were more likely than those with at least some college to watch TV news frequently (76.3% compared with 73.5%), but they were less likely to consult every other type of news source.<sup>28</sup>

These findings suggest that Pennsylvanians, while similar to people across the nation in most of their media habits, tend to rely on television, while they are somewhat less inclined to read newspapers and newsmagazines, listen to political news on the radio, or consult non-traditional media on the Internet, such as political blogs or chat rooms. Those who did seek out additional news or political information on the Web tended to be the same people who scored higher on many of our other measures of civic engagement: white, male suburbanites who are wealthier and better educated than the average Pennsylvanian. There was one exception to this rule, of course: Millennials (those born after 1980) were the *most* likely of any age group to say that they turn to the Internet for political news and information.

In addition to patterns of media usage, Pennsylvania's relatively low levels of political activity may reflect weaknesses in how its schools educate for citizenship. In recent years, the emphasis across the nation has been on strengthening educational programs in science and math—at the expense, in some cases, of the broad, liberal education that equips young people for engaged citizenship. Beginning in 2017, Pennsylvania will require a 12th grade civics education course for graduation, and a Social Studies proficiency test will be administered to all students.<sup>29</sup> But it is not enough to teach young people about the branches of government or how a bill becomes a law. In order to participate in democratic deliberation and decision-making, students also need substantive knowledge about important political, social, and economic issues, and they need the critical thinking and communicative skills necessary to *participate* effectively in the democratic process.

Finally, the comparatively low levels of political engagement among Pennsylvanians may reflect a lack of opportunities for deliberation and participation in civic affairs. Historically, as we noted earlier, Pennsylvania has been the site of some of the great debates in US history, and the

Millennials were the most likely of any age group to turn to the Internet for political news and information.



Commonwealth has a strong tradition of public deliberation in town hall meetings, Grange halls, and other local venues. The Commonwealth also has a strong tradition of participatory democracy and citizen involvement in school board meetings, township and county councils, and other deliberative and decision-making bodies. In recent years, however, some town hall forums have become platforms for angry protestors bent on “sending a message” to Washington,<sup>30</sup> and more and more Pennsylvanians—like Americans everywhere—have become spectators rather than active participants in civic life. As Pennsylvania faces the challenges of the 21st century, it is important that ordinary citizens—not just experts and organized special interest groups—have a say in the decisions made in their name. And it is especially important that younger Pennsylvanians and others who have, in the past, felt alienated or excluded from the political process be given new opportunities to participate.

If we hope to improve Pennsylvania’s civic health, we must invest in education, and we must rebuild the civic infrastructure of the Commonwealth. We need to find new ways to empower those who have been less engaged, especially young people, and we need to do more to foster a culture of public deliberation and civic engagement. In the conclusion to this report, we offer some ideas for improving the civic health of Pennsylvania by teaching young people what it means to be a “good citizen” and by giving Pennsylvanians more opportunities to participate in civic life. Some of our recommendations are already being tried here or in other states, while others are somewhat more experimental. In either case, they represent some of the most promising ideas for sustaining or even improving Pennsylvania’s civic health.



We need to find new ways to empower those who have been less engaged, especially young people, and we need to do more to foster a culture of public deliberation and civic engagement.

*Photo courtesy of the National Constitution Center.*

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In recent years, scholarship on the civic health of our nation has concluded that we are a “democracy at risk,”<sup>31</sup> a “diminished democracy,”<sup>32</sup> a nation in which citizens increasingly seem content to watch others do their politics for them rather than get involved themselves.<sup>33</sup> There have been many different explanations for this retreat from public life, ranging from the effects of television and new information technologies to failures on the part of our political leaders. Yet whatever the causes, the solutions seem clear. If we hope to improve the civic health of Pennsylvania, we need to do two things: (1) better educate people for their role as citizens in a democracy, and (2) rebuild the civic infrastructure of Pennsylvania, providing more opportunities for public deliberation and citizen engagement.

Pennsylvania in particular has a unique civic history as the birthplace of our democracy and the origin of the concept of civic engagement. In the footprint of Independence Hall, where the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution came to life, Pennsylvanians have a duty to engage as citizens and lead by example—that is, the example set by our founding fathers. This is why the National Constitution Center and its partners are investing in important tools like the Civic Health Index to help all citizens better understand both how far we’ve come and how far *We the People* have to go.

### EDUCATION FOR CITIZENSHIP

People are not *born* citizens; they must be *educated* for citizenship. Yet many of our young people lack the most basic requirements of engaged citizenship: information and media literacy, critical thinking and reasoning skills, and the ability to speak and write about public issues. The new emphasis on civics and social studies in Pennsylvania’s K-12 curriculum standards is a start, but it doesn’t go far enough. In a recent report on the state of civic education in America, *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future*, a national task force convened at the invitation of the US Department of Education concluded that civic learning needed to be “an integral component of every level of education, from grade school through graduate school, across all fields of study.”<sup>34</sup> In furtherance of that broader vision of civic education and learning, we recommend the following:

- Renewed emphasis in K-12 education on the *communicative* skills of citizenship: how to read, listen, and think critically; how to research a political controversy and construct a well-reasoned argument; how to speak in public and how to communicate interpersonally and in small groups;

and how to recognize and resist the techniques of the demagogue and the propagandist. Above all, young people need to learn about the *ethics* of civil democratic deliberation. We must teach our young people what it means to deliberate “in good faith” with a commitment to the “common good.”

- Better teacher preparation, with an emphasis on new models of classroom instruction designed to empower students and teach them the habits and skills of engaged citizenship. We need more training institutes that prepare our state’s teachers to lead classroom discussions of “real-world” issues and controversies. We need new deliberative models of classroom instruction that cultivate the skills of discussion and debate.<sup>35</sup> We need to support programs, like those that incorporate “student voice,” which are proven to help develop students’ citizenship skills by giving them decision-making power within their own schools.<sup>36</sup>
- Continued support for the efforts of groups like the Pennsylvania Coalition for Representative Democracy (PennCORD)<sup>37</sup> and the Pennsylvania Educational Alliance for Citizenship (PEAC), which promote citizenship education in K-12 schools. Organizations like PennCORD and PEAC not only promote civics education, but also the broader educational requirements of engaged citizenship, such as communication skills and increased knowledge of history, geography, economics, and cultures.
- Continued incorporation of proven approaches to service-learning into the state-wide educational structure. We should assess the efficacy of programs, like the federal Learn and Serve America Program,<sup>38</sup> that aspire to cultivate the habits and skills of engaged citizenship. Those that prove effective should be supported and expanded. We also should expand the state-wide reach of nonprofit organizations, like the Institute for Global Education and Service Learning, that work with local schools and community organizations to create new and more effective service learning programs.<sup>39</sup>
- Support and expand programs to make college more accessible and affordable for all Pennsylvanians, particularly those from low-income, geographically isolated and historically underrepresented groups. Due to the connection between higher education and greater civic participation, we need to expand efforts to increase the number of underrepresented students in the state’s colleges and universities. We should support programs designed to improve recruitment and retention of such students, like the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s College Access Challenge Grant Program,<sup>40</sup> and we should provide more financial aid services to all college students through the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA).<sup>41</sup>
- Support efforts to reform and reinvigorate general education requirements in the state’s colleges and universities. Educating for citizenship should be as high a priority as educating for the workplace. The humanistic and social science disciplines that prepare students for citizenship, like history, philosophy, political science, and communication studies, should be as integral to the general education curriculum of the state’s colleges and universities as the hard sciences and math. Curriculum resources that emphasize our democratic principles and traditions, like *The American Presidency Project*<sup>42</sup> or *Voices of Democracy: The U.S. Oratory Project*,<sup>43</sup> should be supported and expanded. In short, Pennsylvania’s colleges and universities should emulate the spirit of the Land Grant Movement of the late 19th century, treating education for citizenship as an integral part of higher education’s mission in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Educating for citizenship should be as high a priority as educating for the workplace.



## CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE

While it is important that Pennsylvanians be educated for citizenship, education alone cannot sustain the civic health of the Commonwealth. We also must provide more opportunities and incentives for citizens to “get involved”; at the very least, we should work to remove barriers to civic engagement. Unfortunately, there are a number of forces discouraging citizen participation, from obstacles to voter registration, to a media climate that discourages constructive discussions, to a “digital divide” that puts segments of the population at a civic disadvantage. Some of these are large, systemic problems not easily solved at the state or local level. Yet we can take steps to improve what might be called the civic infrastructure of Pennsylvania.

Those steps range from reforms in the laws governing voting and voter registration, to programmatic initiatives designed to provide citizens with more opportunities for participation in public deliberations and policy-making. Our recommendations in this area include:

- Voter education programs designed to provide factual information about the duties and responsibilities of the various elected officials in the Commonwealth, from the Governor to members of the state legislature, judges, county and township officials, and other local administrators and decision-makers. In addition, voters should be provided more access—perhaps online—to factual, unbiased information about the candidates for each position and their records.
- Reforms in the laws governing voter registration, voter access, early and absentee voting, provisional voting, and election administration to assure that all Pennsylvanians have an equal opportunity to vote and that their votes are accurately counted. Since the 2000 presidential election, many states have adopted reforms that have improved the efficiency and integrity of the voting process through the use of new technologies and other means. There also have been several major studies of “best practices” in voter registration and election administration.<sup>44</sup> Pennsylvania should learn from these studies and institute reforms designed to promote more access and greater integrity in the election process.
- Encourage more community conversations about public problems. We need to promote more productive town halls and community forums by employing proven models of public deliberation and by enlisting the help of expert organizers, moderators, and facilitators. We need to build more partnerships with national organizations devoted to public dialogue and deliberation, such as the National Issues Forum<sup>45</sup> and the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation.<sup>46</sup>
- Use new technologies to create the 21st-century equivalents of the Chautauqua and the New England Town Meeting. We need to create ongoing conversations about public issues not only in local town forums but also statewide via social media and online deliberative forums. We should continue to explore new ideas for online deliberation, such as those developed in recent years at a series of conferences at Carnegie Mellon, Stanford University, the University of California, and the University of Leeds in Great Britain.<sup>47</sup> We should also work for wider implementation of various approaches to online deliberation developed by organizations such as the Public Sphere Project.<sup>48</sup>
- Work to bridge the digital divide between urban and rural dwellers, the old and the young, the rich and the poor, and those with differing educational backgrounds. Pennsylvania should pursue federal support for efforts to expand broadband access to rural and other underserved areas through the Broadband Initiatives Program administered by the Department of Agriculture.<sup>49</sup> We should also work to make telecommunications and information services available to all Pennsylvanians through the Federal Communication Commission’s Universal Service Program for Schools and Libraries.<sup>50</sup>



If Pennsylvania is to continue making history in the new millennium, it will need to adjust its educational system and its civic infrastructure to the new realities of the 21st century.

None of these recommendations alone will assure the civic health of the Commonwealth. But, together, they can get us moving in the right direction—toward a healthier, more robust culture of participatory democracy. Pennsylvania has played a major role in the history of the American democracy. If the Commonwealth is to continue making history in the new millennium, it will need to adjust its educational system and its civic infrastructure to the new realities of the 21st century.



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# CIVIC HEALTH INDEX

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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  
Center for Civic Education  
Center for Individual and  
Institutional Renewal\*  
Davenport Institute

### 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

Commonwealth of Kentucky,  
Secretary of State's Office\*  
Institute for Citizenship & Social Responsibility,  
Western Kentucky University\*  
Kentucky Advocates for Civic Education\*  
McConnell Center, University of Louisville\*

### Maryland

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

### Massachusetts

Harvard Institute of Politics\*

### Minnesota

Center for Democracy and Citizenship

### Missouri

Missouri State University

### New Hampshire

Carsey Institute

### New York

Siena College Research Institute  
New York State Commission on  
National and Community Service\*

### 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

Center for Democratic Deliberation\*  
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\*  
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