

ATLANTA CIVIC HEALTH INDEX



The Community Foundation
FOR GREATER ATLANTA



National Conference on Citizenship
Connecting People. Strengthening Our Country.



ABOUT THE PARTNERS

THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF GREATER ATLANTA

Since 1951, The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta has been connecting community members, nonprofits and other partners to strengthen the Atlanta region through philanthropy. There are more than 700 community foundations across the country each with one goal – to create a vital, philanthropic community within their geographic area. The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta does that right here in Atlanta within our 23-county region.

Today, we are one of the largest community foundations in the country working with more than 650 individual funds and several supporting organizations ranging in value from \$50,000 to \$190 million. Together with our donors, we average more than \$75 million in grants annually to an estimated 2,000 nonprofit organizations locally, nationally and internationally.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CITIZENSHIP

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

Congress chartered NCoC in 1953 to harness the patriotic energy and civic involvement surrounding World War II. We've been dedicated to this charge ever since. In 2009, Congress named NCoC in the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, once again memorializing our important role. This legislation codified and expanded our Civic Health Initiative (CHI) helping it become the nation's largest and most definitive measure of civic engagement.

NCoC's CHI is at the center of our work. Leveraging civic data made possible by the Corporation for National & Community Service, we have partnered with dozens of states, cities, and issue groups to draft reports and action plans to strengthen civic life. This initiative has also been an important incubator for programs such as the Civic Data Challenge and *The Civic 50*. Each program has used data and 21st century tools to create locally led, collective impact across our country. By 2020, we plan to integrate this pioneering initiative into ongoing partnerships in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.



2014 ATLANTA CIVIC HEALTH INDEX

The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta, in partnership with the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC), has once again developed a Civic Health Index for Metropolitan Atlanta. NCoC has worked with more than thirty communities and states to develop, distribute, and learn from these studies. Much like the 2012 Metropolitan Atlanta Civic Health Index, this year's report is an examination of key issues in community life and leadership throughout the metropolitan Atlanta area. Core civic health data reveal how communities engage in important civic activities such as voting, volunteering, and interacting with neighbors as compared to the largest metropolitan statistical areas in each state.

PLACES (Partnerships for Leadership and Civic Engagement Solutions) is The Community Foundation's strategy to generate more civic participation and a stronger sense of our individual and collective stake in community life. Among PLACES's tactics are opportunities to research civic life and challenges, public discussion and debate, community organizing, promoting voter participation, advocating for particular issues, training and capacity-building activities for nonprofits and neighborhood groups and building collaborations that address issues of civic importance. The Civic Health Index (CHI) offers a vehicle to measure civic behavior in our region over time as well as suggestions that will generate productive change.

NCoC has provided data selection, advice, and analysis. As in the previous CHI, the data analyzed comes from three supplemental surveys to the monthly Current Population Survey (CPS), which is administered by the US Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The CPS is part of the monthly labor statistics survey that collects data from approximately 150,000 households in the United States. The civic health data for this report came from the 2013 September Volunteering Supplement, 2012 November Voting and Registration Supplement, and 2013 Civic Engagement Supplement.

The data points we examined for the metropolitan region are:

- Participation in Formal/Informal Volunteering (including donating)
- Participation in Groups
- Social Connectedness
- Electoral Participation
- Political Action

VOLUNTEERING

Findings

The metro region prides itself on a devotion to volunteerism. Formal volunteering, such as affiliating with Hands On Atlanta, or informal volunteering, such as gathering neighbors to clean up the entrance to a subdivision, are all worthy efforts that build a sense of community. However, data reveals a slight decline in the percentage of Atlantans who volunteer. This year's percentage of residents who volunteer at least a few hours each year is 24.9%, which is down three points from the previous Civic Health Index. This decline makes the metro region rank thirty-fourth among the fifty major Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) in the nation. Volunteering with educational, religious, and sporting/arts organizations increased while volunteerism with social service organizations suffered a nearly 4% loss. There was little variance in the percentage of women and men who volunteered, 25.9% and 23.7%, respectively. There was a significant difference in the rates between whites (29.7%) and blacks (17.3%). Persons with a high school degree or equivalent had an 80.7% rate of volunteerism; those with a college degree had a 66.4% rate of volunteerism.

● Atlanta 2013 ● Atlanta 2011



Takeaways

Volunteerism is an important activity in any community and a key contributing factor to a high quality of life. To help draw newcomers to the region and enhance the lives of those of us already enjoying Atlanta, we must promote the benefits and specific needs met by participating through formal and informal volunteering. Nonprofits should consider finding new ways to recruit and welcome volunteers.

In today's era of high economic stress for the nonprofit sector, volunteers are essential to stable, efficient service delivery. This requires effective communication by nonprofit organizations about the value of volunteer activities; recognition of employers for incentivizing employee volunteerism; and creativity in providing compelling, flexible volunteer experiences. Volunteerism by children and youth facilitated by families, schools, faith-based organizations, and civic groups helps to develop the habit and mindset of paying one's "civic dues" and contributing to social well-being.



Photo provided by the Corporation for National & Community Service

DONATING

Findings

Contributing in amounts of \$25.00 or more increased since the prior Index. Metro Atlanta's local philanthropists – of all stripes – increased their giving by four points. Atlanta ranked 20th with 53.9% of Atlanta residents giving \$25 or more in charitable donations in 2013. In Georgia, 50.5% of Georgians gave \$25 or more in charitable donations and in the US 50.1% did similarly. In 2011, 50.1% of Atlanta residents gave at this level compared to 49.7% in the state and 51.8% nationally.

● Atlanta 2013 ● Atlanta 2011



Atlanta ranked 20th for donating \$25 or more to charitable causes, compared to 36th in 2011

Percentage of Atlantans Who Donated \$25 or More to Charitable Causes

Takeaways

The people of the metropolitan region are generous. While the data does not provide insight into the range of monetary gifts or for what purpose, to be ranked anywhere in the top 20% is cause for celebration. Providing information and opportunities for smart giving is an essential service. Locally, a relatively new opportunity is the Georgia Gives Day. Coordinated by the Georgia Center for Nonprofits, the project is an online donation event held each November. The 2014 event raised \$2,438,998 from 17,742 individual donors. Donations ranged from one dollar to \$50,000. Participation and donations were both higher than the inaugural year and the bulk of donations were from residents of the metropolitan region. One of the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta's primary services to our donors are detailed reports on specific issues and nonprofit organizations. These reports serve as a tool to assist local philanthropists make informed decisions about their charitable giving.

SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

Findings

In 2013, 9.9% of Atlanta residents worked with neighbors to improve or fix something in the neighborhood. 9.3% of Georgia residents worked with neighbors and 7.6% of those nationally did so. Atlanta ranked 8th on this indicator. In 2011, 10.2% of Atlanta residents were involved in working with neighbors, ranking 12th among MSAs. This is compared to 8.5% in the state and 8.7% nationally in 2011. Ranking 16th, 9.4% of the residents in Atlanta attended at least one public meeting where community issues were discussed. In Georgia 8.9% attended such meetings with 8.3% doing so nationally. In 2011, 8.5% of Atlanta residents attended meetings and was ranked at 29th of the top 50 MSAs. This is compared to 8.2% in Georgia in 2011 and 9.1% in the US as a whole. In 2013, Atlanta ranked 28th in the rate of people who exchanged favors with their neighbors a few times a week or more (i.e., "frequently"), with the rate of 10.4%. Nationwide, 12.1% of Americans say they frequently exchange favors with their neighbors compared to 11.4% of all Georgia residents. In 2011, the Atlanta estimate for this indicator was 13.3%, while the Georgia and US rate were both 14%.

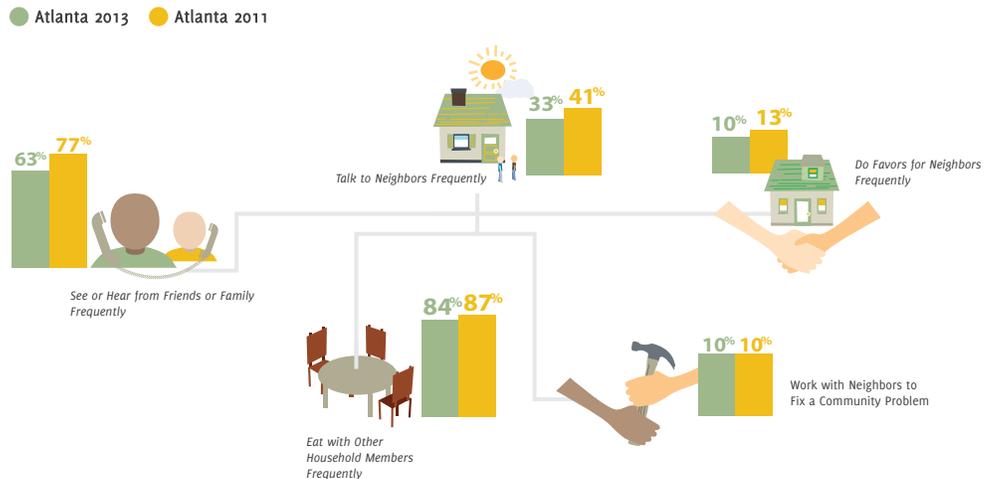
In 2013, 63.0% of Atlanta residents said they saw or heard from friends and family at least a few times a week, placing Atlanta at 49th among the top 50 MSAs on this indicator. On the state level, 70.3% of Georgians said they saw or heard from family or friends a few times a week or more and 79.0% of those in the US indicated the same. Atlanta ranked at 44th in the rate of people who said that they eat dinner with their family a few times a week or more, with the rate of 83.7%. National estimate for this indicator was 87.8% in 2013 and 86.9% in Georgia. In 2011, Atlanta ranked 36th on this indicator with 87.4% saying they ate dinner with their families a few times a week or more compared to 90.1% in state and 89.5% nationally.

Involvement in a group (think PTAs, Rotary, and book clubs) is a personal investment and promotes the well-being of individuals and the community in which they live. Our 2010 independent survey conducted by the Schapiro Group, found that 39% of residents participated in groups. The 2012 Metro Atlanta Civic Health Index reported that slightly more than 41.3% of metro Atlantans are members in a group of some type. This year's data indicates that 33.9% are members of a community group, a seven-point decline from the previous Index. That Index informed us of a clear lack of willingness, interest or ability among metro Atlantans to lead or serve on committees within the groups in which they were affiliated (9.7%). However, new data indicates an even lower (6.5%) percentage of us taking leadership roles.



84%

of Atlantans eat dinner with family members frequently, compared to 87% in 2011.



Takeaways

The disparity between the willingness to participate and the willingness to lead is an interesting finding. As with volunteerism, a key to increased participation and leadership, particularly within formal groups, is consistent communication of the benefits. This may include effective messaging about what the individual gains, e.g. new relationships, skills and, experiences, as well as the positive impact volunteers have on the goals of the group. One can look at the success of the Atlanta Beltline, Meals on Wheels or Hands-On Atlanta to see the enormous impact of volunteers and charitable giving. Given the increased demographic variety and flux of our communities, it is important to advance both formal and informal mechanisms for developing residents' sense of community.

ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION AND VOTING

Findings

Citizens of the region increased their voter registration and voting rates considerably from the 2008 presidential election to the 2012 Presidential Election. In the 2012 Presidential Election, 64.0% of Atlanta’s eligible citizens (i.e., US citizens ages 18 and over) reported voting. 72.6% were registered to vote.

One way people engage in politics is through dialog. Atlanta ranked 19th in the rate of people who talk about politics with friends and family at least a few times a week, at 27.4%. In Georgia, the rate for this indicator was 28.1% in 2013 and in the US it was 27.0%. In 2011 the rate in Georgia was 32.5% compared to 29.3% nationally. In Atlanta, the 2011 estimate for this indicator was 33.1%. Atlanta ranked 21st in local voting with 33.4% of Atlanta residents saying that they often voted in local elections such as for mayor or school board, compared with Georgia’s 36.6% and the US’s 33.0% in 2013. In 2011, 30.7% of Atlanta residents voted at this frequency while 34.5% did so in Georgia. In 2011, 33.2% of individuals in the US reported that they voted often in local elections.

Surprisingly, given the accessibility that absentee and early voting offers people, 21.6% of registered voters in our MSA cited they were “too busy” to cast a ballot during the 2012 presidential election. Other roadblocks include illness (19.3%), not caring for the candidates/ issues (9.5%), registration problems (7.9%) and inconvenient hours or polling locations (3.6%). There were few notable differences among subgroups in the 2012 election – gender, especially. Sixty-two percent of women and 65.6% of men voted that year. Age represented the largest disparities, with 54.4% of Millennials (born in 1981 or later) voting while 74.1% of Baby Boomers (born 1946 – 1964) voted.



Takeaways

The small uptick among registered voters and actual voting is encouraging. The more residents exercising their right to vote may produce more choices among candidate platforms, elected officials’ willingness to respond to constituents’ concerns and a more informed electorate. There have been dedicated efforts within the nonprofit sector to help residents meet candidates, debate the issues and get to the polls.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One would be hard pressed to find many individuals in the metropolitan region for whom “democracy” is not a core value. Whether or not we have a common understanding of democracy and any consensus on its practical application is the agenda of civic debate and discussion. When we have listened well, we hear our neighbors hoping for accountable leadership, safe forums for critical exchange, equitable distribution of influence and opportunity as well as a respite from alienation and its ever present sidekick, frustration.

A community that is civically vibrant has the potential for smart growth, attracting persons and businesses that seek an environment in which skepticism is trumped by intelligence and generosity. And while we love our region, and the communities and neighborhoods within it, it is clear from the data that we are little more than modestly civically healthy. The persistence of uninformed indifference to our neighbors, families, friends, to the bonds that form a sense of community can stagnate our economic growth.

We offer some simple recommendations to increase the civic health in metropolitan Atlanta.

- **Visit websites such as Neighborhood Nexus (www.neighborhoodnexus.org)** to develop an understanding of your neighborhood’s assets and challenges based on data.
- **Meet your neighbors.** Engage with your neighbors. Begin a neighborhood listserv.
- **Call, visit or email your local elected and appointed officials.** Express your opinions and offer your expertise. Try to be specific and timely.
- **Vote – at all elections.** Georgia has made it incredibly easy for persons to vote with early voting periods and absentee ballots if you are unable to make it to the poll on election days. Make sure you are registered by visiting the Georgia Secretary of State’s website. If you have difficulties registering or being able to cast a ballot, report it immediately to your county board of elections.
- **Organize voter registration drives.** Offer to take people to the polls on election days, volunteer at the polls.
- **Consider running for a local, elected position.** If you are an elected official, take the time to meet and listen to your constituents’ views and concerns in a substantive way.
- **Commit at least one act of random kindness each month.** Ask for nothing in return.
- **Find an issue or nonprofit organization** that stirs your senses and find ways to support it with your time, talents and treasure. Volunteer, make donations, and offer advice. There are many ways to connect through organizations such as Volunteer Match, Hands On Atlanta, among others.
- And, of course, **check The Community Foundation’s website to find information about a variety of community initiatives** such as One Region, the Neighborhood Summit, the Neighborhood Fund, Achieve Atlanta and others. Let us know how we can be of assistance.



Photo provided by The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta

TECHNICAL NOTES

Unless otherwise noted, findings presented in this Report are based on CIRCLE's analysis of the Census Current Population Survey (CPS) data. Any and all errors are our own. Volunteering estimates are from CPS September Volunteering Supplement, 2002-2013, voting and registration data come from the CPS November Voting/Registration Supplement, 1972-2012, and all other civic engagement indicators, such as discussion of political information and connection to neighbors, come from the 2013 CPS Civic Engagement Supplement.

Using a probability selected sample of about 60,000 occupied households, the CPS collects monthly data on employment and demographic characteristics of the nation. Depending on the CPS supplement, the single-year Atlanta CPS sample size used for this Report ranges from 812 (civic engagement supplement) to 1,881 (volunteer supplement), 1,903 (voting supplement) residents from across Atlanta. This sample is then weighted to representative population demographics for the district. 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., favors with neighbors, discuss 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). When we examined the relationship between educational attainment and engagement, estimates are based on adults ages 25 and older, based on the assumption younger people may be completing their education.

Because we draw from multiple sources of data with varying sample sizes, we are not able to compute one margin of error for North Carolina across all indicators. 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. Data for some indicators are pooled from multiple years (2010-2013) for a more reliable estimate when sample sizes for certain cross tabulations may have been small. Furthermore, national rankings, while useful in benchmarking, may be small in range, with one to two percentage points separating the state/district ranked first from the state/district ranked last.

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

A WORD ABOUT RECOMMENDATIONS

NCoC encourages our partners to consider how civic health data can inform dialogue and action in their communities, and to take an evidence-based approach to helping our communities and country thrive. While we encourage our partners to consider and offer specific recommendations and calls to action in our reports, we are not involved in shaping these recommendations. The opinions and recommendations expressed by our partners do not necessarily reflect those of NCoC.

This *Report* should be a conversation-starter. The data and ideas presented here raise as many questions as they answer. We encourage government entities, community groups, business people, leaders of all kinds, and individual citizens to treat this *Report* as a first step toward building more robust civic health in Atlanta.

CIVIC HEALTH INDEX

State and Local Partnerships

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

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

STATES

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

Colorado

Metropolitan State University of Denver
The Civic Canopy
Denver Metro Chamber Leadership
Campus Compact of Mountain West
History Colorado
Institute on Common Good

Connecticut

Everyday Democracy
Secretary of the State of Connecticut

District of Columbia

ServeDC

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

Georgia

GeorgiaForward
Carl Vinson Institute of Government,
The University of Georgia
Georgia Family Connection Partnership

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

Michigan

Michigan Nonprofit Association
Michigan Campus Compact
Michigan Community Service Commission
Volunteer Centers of Michigan
Council of Michigan Foundations
The LEAGUE Michigan

Minnesota

Center for Democracy and Citizenship

Missouri

Missouri State University
Park University
Saint Louis University
University of Missouri Kansas City
University of Missouri Saint Louis
Washington University

Nebraska

Nebraskans for Civic Reform

New Hampshire

Carsey Institute

New York

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

North Carolina

Institute for Emerging Issues
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 Center for
Civic Engagement

Oklahoma

University of Central Oklahoma
Oklahoma Campus Compact

Pennsylvania

Center for Democratic Deliberation
National Constitution Center

South Carolina

University of South Carolina Upstate

Texas

University of Texas at San Antonio
The Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life,
University of Texas at Austin

Virginia

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

ISSUE SPECIFIC

Latinos Civic Health Index

Carnegie Corporation

Veterans Civic Health Index

Got Your Six
William & Flor Hewlett Foundation

Millennials Civic Health Index

Mobilize.org
Harvard Institute of Politics
CIRCLE

Economic Health

Knight Foundation
Corporation for National & Community
Service (CNCS)
CIRCLE

CITIES

Atlanta

The Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta

Chicago

McCormick Foundation

Kansas City & Saint Louis

Missouri State University

Park University

Saint Louis University

University of Missouri Kansas City

University of Missouri Saint Louis

Washington University

Miami

Florida Joint Center for Citizenship

John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

Miami Foundation

Pittsburgh

University of Pittsburgh

Carnegie Mellon University

Seattle

Seattle City Club

Boeing Company

Seattle Foundation

Twin Cities

Center for Democracy and Citizenship

Citizens League

John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

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Partnership Development Director, National Conference on Citizenship

Michael Weiser

Chairman, National Conference on Citizenship

Jonathan Zaff

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Executive Director, National Conference on Citizenship



National Conference on Citizenship
Connecting People. Strengthening Our Country.



The Community Foundation
FOR GREATER ATLANTA

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Corporation for
**NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE** 