

# 2015 MICHIGAN CIVIC HEALTH INDEX



Michigan Nonprofit Association



National Conference on Citizenship  
Connecting People. Strengthening Our Country.



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### **MICHIGAN NONPROFIT ASSOCIATION**

Incorporated in 1990, Michigan Nonprofit Association is a statewide membership organization dedicated to serving the diverse nonprofit sector through civic engagement, capacity-building, data and technology, training, and advocacy. MNA manages multiple programs and affiliates including Michigan Campus Compact, Highway T, and The LEAGUE Michigan, and is a sponsoring organization for AmeriCorps State and AmeriCorps VISTA.

### **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.

### **MICHIGAN CAMPUS COMPACT**

Michigan Campus Compact is a coalition of college and university presidents who are committed to fulfilling the public purposes of higher education. Campus Compact member presidents are joined together in their commitment to the development of personal and social responsibility as integral to the educational mission of their campuses.

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The Council of Michigan Foundations (CMF) is a community of nearly 350 member organizations committed to growing the impact of Michigan philanthropy through investing in the state's charitable organizations, convening business, government and nonprofit leaders, collaborating on critical issues, seeking innovative solutions, sharing knowledge, and advocating. CMF members represent more than 90 percent of Michigan's organized philanthropic assets.

### **THE MICHIGAN COMMUNITY SERVICE COMMISSION**

The Michigan Community Service Commission (MCSC) is the state's lead government agency on volunteerism. For more than 20 years, the MCSC has been promoting service as a strategy to address Michigan's greatest challenges and providing vision and resources to strengthen communities through volunteerism. To help advance their mission, the MCSC relies on four signature programs: Michigan's AmeriCorps, Mentor Michigan, Volunteer Michigan, and the Governor's Service Awards.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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A thriving Michigan requires active, knowledgeable citizens. They build relationships and social networks that are the foundation for strong communities, successful democracies, and economic vitality. It is therefore essential for us to measure the civic health of the state and to develop methods for improving it. That is the purpose of this report.

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### Goals of the Report

The *Michigan Civic Health Index* offers key survey findings that help us to:

- **Understand how Michigan citizens participate in public life.**
- **Ignite conversations about civic health among Michigan's citizens.**
- **Drive public policy decisions that foster positive civic engagement.**
- **Inform civics education in Michigan's schools, from kindergarten through college graduation.**
- **Assist public and nonprofit agencies as they develop civic outreach strategies.**
- **Promote inclusive, people-centered public systems.**

To those ends, we strive to present data insightfully and discuss ways in which Michigan's civic health can be sustained and improved. This has led us to **five primary recommendations**, which we summarize here and elaborate on throughout the report.





### **Recommendation One:** Build Michigan's Neighborhoods as the Cornerstones of Civic Life

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Neighborhood interaction is a building block of community development. If people feel connected to one another through their neighborhood, they will do more to take care of one another. Although two-thirds of Michiganders trust all or some of their neighbors, we infrequently talk to them or do favors for them. Michigan needs social engagement strategies that build communication and cooperation among neighbors.

**Recommendations: Nonprofit organizations and local governments should develop neighborhood outreach programs that leverage existing activism and social media. They also should promote policy strategies that utilize good design, walkability, and entrepreneurialism as a means of nurturing neighborhood connectedness.**

### **Recommendation Two:** Access the Right to Vote

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Although Michigan ranks highly for all of the voting indicators examined, Michigan's youngest, least educated, and least wealthy citizens also are the least likely to vote. Other states have adopted nonpartisan policies that have increased voter turnout. Michigan risks losing its leadership role in registration and voter turnout if we do not act with urgency.

**Recommendations: The Michigan Secretary of State should continue the use of mobile registration units; Michigan should follow the majority of U.S. states in adopting "no-excuse" absentee voting and early in-person voting; and nonprofit organizations should work collaboratively to facilitate increased access to the ballot box for all Michigan citizens.**

### **Recommendation Three:** Connect to Millennials as the Next Generation of Civic Leaders

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Millennials, the youngest population surveyed, were born in 1981 or after. Compared to older generations, Millennials are the least likely to talk with neighbors, attend public meetings, give money to charity, and vote.

**Recommendations: Younger Millennials should discuss this report in high school civics courses and draft plans for enhancing the state's civic health; high schools and colleges should develop and offer a wide range of service learning courses; and employers of older Millennials should facilitate civic engagement among their employees.**

### **Recommendation Four:** Leverage the Experience of the "Silent" Generation

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This report demonstrates that the so-called Silent Generation, people born from 1931-1945, is anything but silent. Michigan's oldest citizens engage most fully in civic and political activities.

**Recommendation: Michigan's nonprofit and community leaders should leverage the civic assets of the Silent Generation by developing intergenerational civic projects that will enable this senior generation to mentor members of those generations following it.**

### **Recommendation Five:** Activate Civic Engagement through Education

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People with a higher level of education tend to participate most fully in important aspects of civic life. This conclusion leads to two recommendations.

**Recommendations: First, for civic as well as economic reasons, Michigan's workforce development policies should place greater stress on the importance of post-secondary education as a means of producing more active and informed citizens; and, second, Michigan's students should learn about the value of civic engagement from the day that they walk into their kindergarten classes to the day they graduate from post-secondary institutions.**

# INTRODUCTION

## Why Does Civic Health Matter?

Our civil society is comprised of social networks that create norms of behavior. Our networks control how and what information we share. Networks help establish reputations, create opportunities, and spark change. By participating in networks with one another, we set expectations for ourselves and others that are not codified in law. When we belong to a network of neighbors, we pick up garbage off the sidewalk, leave our porch lights on, report crime, and help with neighborhood projects. These behaviors benefit the entire neighborhood with safer streets, increased property values, and a more vibrant and economically vital community. When we speak up, volunteer, attend public meetings, and give money to charity, our civic participation makes our public institutions more responsive to community needs and even seems to bring economic benefits. Civic health and economic health usually go together. Understanding Michigan's civic health, and working to sustain and improve it, enables us to maximize our potential to improve the quality of life for all of our citizens.

### DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The 2015 Michigan Civic Health Index is based on analysis of the U. S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS). The CPS is part of a monthly labor statistics survey that collects data from approximately 150,000 U.S. households. Civic health data comes from the 2013 September Volunteering Supplement, 2012 November Voting and Registration Supplement, and 2013 Civic Engagement Supplement. Following the CPS, and in collaboration with the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC), we analyzed:

- Social Connections
- Civic Engagement
- Political Participation
- Confidence in Public Institutions

We discuss also these demographic indicators:

**Generation** – Generational data was divided into four categories:

- Millennials – Born in 1981 or after
- Generation X – Born 1965-1980
- Baby Boomers – Born 1946-1964
- Silent Generation – Born 1931-1945

**Educational Attainment** – Educational attainment is subdivided into less than high school, high school diploma, some college, and a Bachelor's degree or higher.

**Household Income** – Household income is based on combined annual income for people sharing a household, and it is expressed as the following ranges: less than \$35,000, \$35,000-\$49,999, \$50,000-\$74,999, and \$75,000 and higher.

## MICHIGAN'S CIVIC HEALTH: *At-a-Glance*

In this section, we compare Michigan's civic health to the other forty-nine states and District of Columbia. These scores demonstrate Michigan's strengths as well as areas where Michigan's civic health needs improvement.<sup>1</sup>

Michigan's civic health performance is uneven. Michiganders perform very well on indicators measuring connectedness to family and friends, but we trail almost every other state when it comes to interacting with neighbors. We shy away from group participation and group leadership, yet volunteer our time to causes that are important to us. We don't often attend public meetings or meet with public officials, but Michigan ranks among the highest states for voter registration and voting in national elections. Although these are apparently conflicting patterns of engagement, they reveal both the state's civic strengths and its opportunities for improvement.

**Table 1. Michigan Civic Health Rankings and Averages At-a-Glance<sup>2</sup>**

		Rank	MI %	US Avg.
SOCIAL CONNECTIONS	Eat dinner with household members frequently	11	91%	88%
	See or hear from family/friends frequently	23	79%	76%
	Trust most or all of the people in the neighborhood	28	61%	56%
	Talk with neighbors frequently	48	35%	41%
	Do favors for neighbors frequently	43	11%	12%
	Work with neighbors to fix something in the community	33	7%	8%
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT	Volunteering	19	28%	25%
	Charitable giving (\$25 or more)	34	50%	50%
	Group participation (any type)	32	36%	36%
	Officer or member of committee for a group/organization	38	10%	10%
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION & VOTING	Discussed politics with friends/family frequently	34	27%	27%
	Voting in local elections (always or sometimes)	17	65%	59%
	Voting (2012 Presidential election)	14	67%	62%
	Registered to vote (2012)	8	78%	71%
	Used Internet to express a public opinion	24	8%	8%
	Bought or boycotted a product/service	15	15%	13%
	Attended a public meeting	42	7%	8%
	Contacted or visited a public official	37	10%	11%
CONFIDENCE IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS	Public schools (a great deal or some)	12	89%	85%
	Media (a great deal or some)	20	57%	55%
	Corporations (a great deal or some)	22	67%	65%

## SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Social capital refers to the benefits derived from accomplishing together that which we could not do alone. It is, in the words of Robert Putnam, “the collective value of all ‘social networks’ and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other.”<sup>3</sup>

Building social capital begins with the people closest to us. Our interactions with family, friends, and neighbors seed social networks that solve problems collectively. Our social networks grow from actions like talking with one another, eating dinner together, doing favors for one another, and working together to fix or improve something in our communities. Some studies show that family togetherness has become less and less common in the United States over time.<sup>4</sup> This decline may endanger the vast social benefits derived from spending time with family.

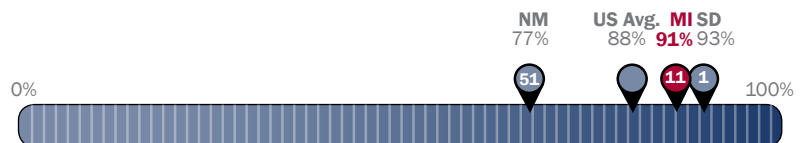
In Michigan, however, family togetherness is thriving. Michigan ranked within the top half of states for measures of familial contact. Yet, when we turn to view neighborhood interaction, Michigan ranks near the bottom for talking to neighbors and exchanging favors.

### Ties to Family & Friends

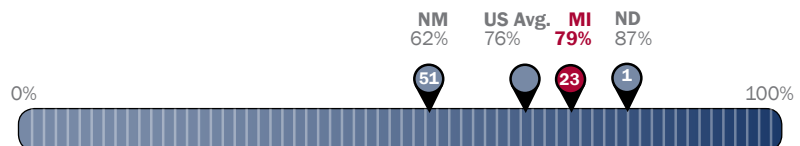
Eating dinner together generates conversation about our daily lives, our views, and our beliefs. According to recent studies, not only does eating dinner together enhance family dynamics, it also is linked with such positive youth outcomes as increased self-esteem, resiliency, and improved academic performance.<sup>5</sup>

Michigan fares well when it comes to eating together as a household, ranking 11th among all states. Over 90% of Michiganders surveyed eat dinner with family members a few times a week or more, which is 3% higher than the national average.

#### EAT DINNER WITH MEMBERS OF HOUSEHOLD FREQUENTLY



#### HEAR FROM FAMILY/FRIENDS FREQUENTLY



Frequent communication with friends and family connects us to extended social networks that help us build social capital. Many of us have been linked to a job, a childcare provider, or a volunteer opportunity through personal networks. Michigan ranks 23rd among the fifty states and the District of Columbia for having frequent contact with family and friends. Nearly 80% of Michiganders surveyed see or speak with friends and family at least a few times a week.



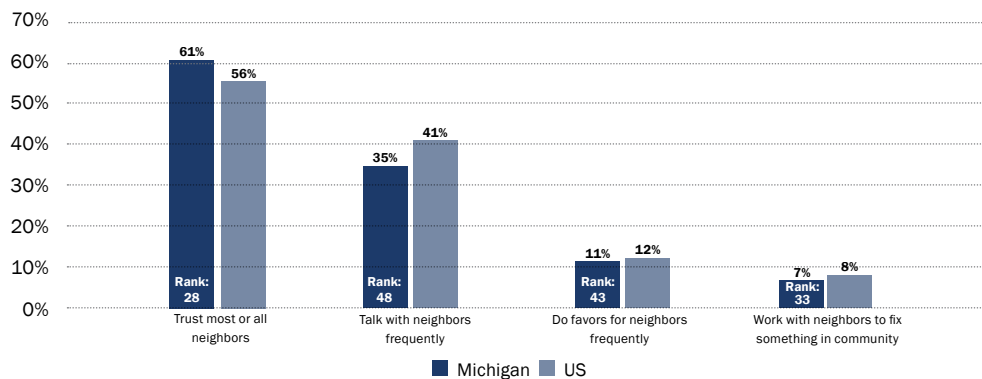
## Interacting with Neighbors

Forming bonds with neighbors creates a sense of kinship that can lead to greater well being. Practically speaking, frequent contact with neighbors tends to influence us to do things like maintain the appearance of our homes, clean up litter off the sidewalk, and keep an eye out for our neighbors' children. These types of behaviors create safer, more vibrant neighborhoods. Neighborhood gatherings and events create neighborhood attachments, and people who feel attached to their neighborhoods are likely to contribute to its prosperity. In addition to social benefits, a 2010 Knight Foundation study found that cities with the highest levels of attachment had the highest rate of GDP growth.<sup>6</sup>

Almost two-thirds of Michiganders trust most or all of the people living in their neighborhood, ranking Michigan 28th among U.S. states. Although the majority of Michiganders surveyed trust their neighbors, we interact with one another infrequently. More than one-third of Michiganders speak to their neighbors a few times a week or more, and 14% said they never speak to their neighbors.

Only 11% of Michiganders frequently do favors for neighbors like helping with chores, housesitting, and lending garden or other household tools. More than 36% never do favors for neighbors. Just over 7% of people surveyed work with neighbors to fix or improve something in the community.

**Chart 1. Interactions with Neighbors**



Michigan's scores on social connectedness tell us that Michiganders seem to focus more on familial connections than external relationships. While Michigan's level of family connectedness is encouraging, our low rankings for various neighborhood interaction indicators are troublesome.

### Recommendation One:

#### Build Michigan's Neighborhoods as the Cornerstones of Civic Life

Social media offers an effective way to build familiarity and trust among neighbors, and foster the type of collective action that improves quality of life in our communities. Michigan's civic leaders and nonprofit community should develop neighborhood discussion forums using existing online social networks like Facebook and NextDoor to improve community connections. This also may help engage the highly digital Millennial generation in more frequent neighborhood interactions.

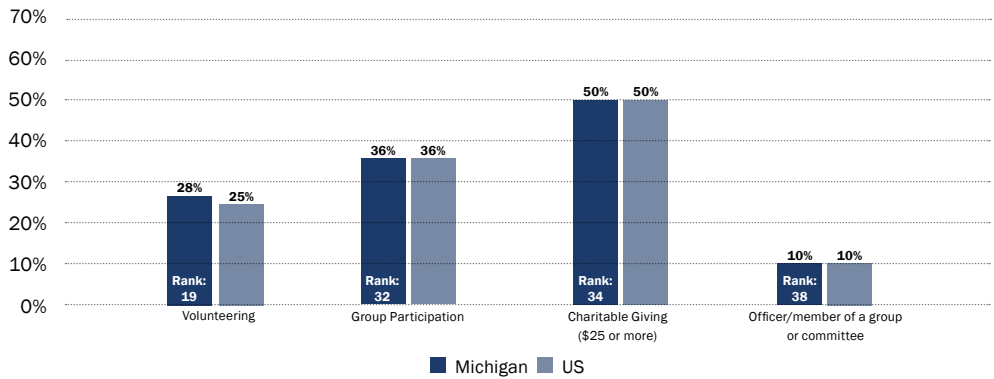
Citizens can advocate with their elected officials for placemaking initiatives that promote good design, walkability, and entrepreneurialism as a means of nurturing connectedness.<sup>7</sup> Engaging block clubs and other grassroots civic groups in neighborhoods containing many low-income households can encourage neighborhood interaction and build upon existing activism. Neighborhood empowerment encourages the development of civic-minded neighborhoods.

# CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

We are engaged civically when we take action to improve our communities or engage in processes to make life better for others and ourselves. We can measure civic engagement by examining such activities as group membership, volunteering, and charitable donations.

Of the civic engagement behaviors measured, Michigan is most engaged in volunteering, ranking 19th among other states. Although Michigan does not rank quite as well as most other states for group participation, giving money to charity, and serving as an officer or member of a committee, we perform close to the national average for all of these indicators. This suggests that while there is room for improvement in Michigan, low national averages reveal a widespread challenge to civic health.

**Chart 2. Civic Engagement in Michigan**



## Group Participation

Belonging to groups helps establish social networks that address structural problems and improve public systems through collective action. Imagine our communities without Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA), block clubs, veterans groups, faith-based organizations, honor societies, sports leagues, and the like. Group participation is an effective way of ensuring citizen representation and institutional accountability.

Michigan ranks 32nd in the nation for group participation. Thirty-six percent of people surveyed participate in at least one organization, which is the national average. The most popular type of group participation is associated with faith-based organizations like churches, synagogues, and mosques. Nineteen percent of people participate with a religious institution. School and neighborhood groups followed at 14%, sports and recreation groups at 9%, and service and civic groups at 7%. Ten percent of Michiganders serve as officers or members of a committee for an organization, which also matches the national average.

As with Michigan's low level of interaction with neighbors, low group participation suggests a lost opportunity for the type of meaningful connectedness that yields benefits for us both individually and collectively.

## Volunteerism & Charitable Giving

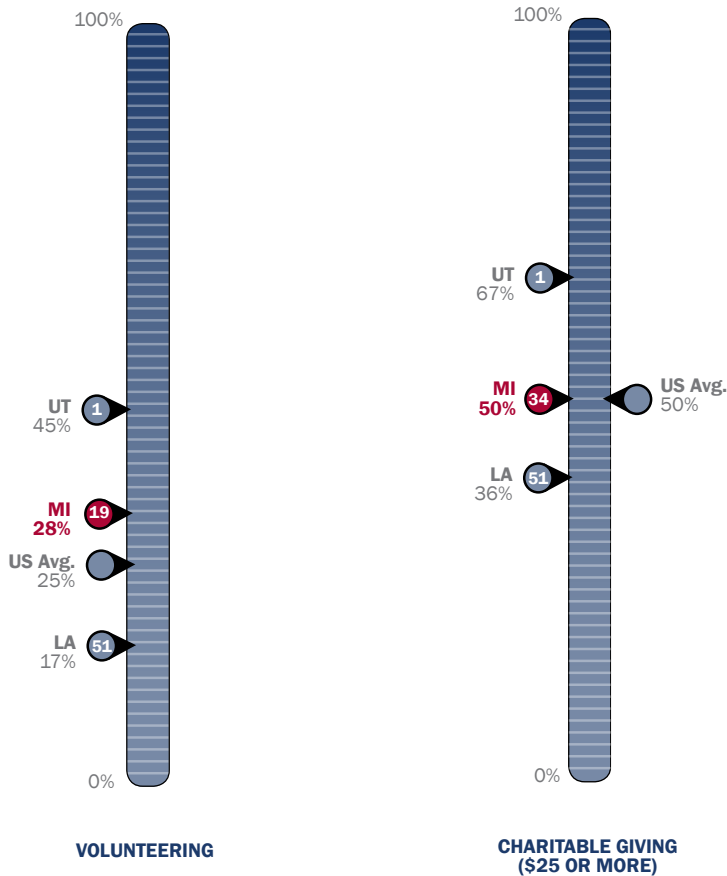
Volunteering and charitable giving connects us to one another and establishes networks that produce societal benefits; we contribute our time and money to support nonprofit organizations devoted to good causes. We feed the hungry, house the homeless, aid the sick, help disadvantaged youth, and care for the elderly. Volunteer networks and charitable contributions readily fill gaps and weave safety nets for many citizens who would otherwise suffer without these efforts. Research also demonstrates there are social and mental health benefits to the volunteer in addition to the beneficiaries of volunteerism. Volunteering has been shown to decrease depression and improve overall life satisfaction, and is associated with successful aging.<sup>8</sup> Helping others may be the fountain of youth.



Michigan, which ranked 32nd for volunteerism in the 2012 Civic Health Index, climbed to 19th in 2013. Michigan ranks 34th when it comes to giving \$25 or more to charity.

# 19th

Michigan's rank for volunteering. In 2012, the state ranked 32nd.



## POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

We can view our participation in politically-focused activities as an indicator of how engaged we are in our democracy. Although voting is the most prominent means of political participation, activities like attending public meetings and meeting with public officials also demonstrate our engagement. Even the act of talking politics with family or friends demonstrates how connected we may or may not feel to our political system.

### Expressing Political Opinions

Talking politics with family and friends is a way of gathering information that may lead to greater involvement in the civic world. Michiganders infrequently discuss politics with one another. Only about 27% of respondents talk politics more than a few times a week, placing Michigan 34th in the U.S. Almost the same number of Michiganders never talk politics.

**Table 2. Michigan Rankings in Political Participation**

	Rank	Michigan	US Avg.
Discussed politics with family/friends frequently	34	27%	27%
Used Internet to express a public opinion	24	8%	7%
Bought/boycotted product or service	15	15%	13%
Attended a public meeting	42	7%	8%
Contacted or visited a public official	37	10%	11%

As Internet usage has become more prevalent and increasingly accessible, some of us use the Internet to express opinions about politics or the community. Michigan ranks near the median (24th in the U.S.) for frequent use of the Internet to express a public opinion. Nearly 8% of those surveyed use the Internet to share opinions. This suggests that few Americans, including Michiganders, take advantage of the readily available Internet to express their civic views.

### Engaging in Political Action

Choosing what products we will and will not buy and which companies with whom we'll do business is a means of civic engagement. Some people boycott organizations whose political beliefs differ from their own (e.g., companies that treat workers unfairly or create products that harm our health or the environment). More than 15% of Michiganders surveyed buy or boycott products as a means of political expression, ranking Michigan 15th among states and the District of Columbia.

Attending public meetings is another way of becoming involved in political activity. Only 7% of Michiganders surveyed attend public meetings, ranking Michigan 42nd, but only 1% below the national average.

In addition to attending meetings, we can become involved by contacting our public officials directly to express our opinions. Constituents can email, call, or visit members of Congress and their State Legislatures. However, Michiganders rarely contact public officials at any level of government. Michigan ranks 37th for that indicator. This suggests either Michiganders do not view contacting a public official as a viable means of expressing an opinion, do not know how to contact a public official, or have no interest in communicating their opinions to public officials.

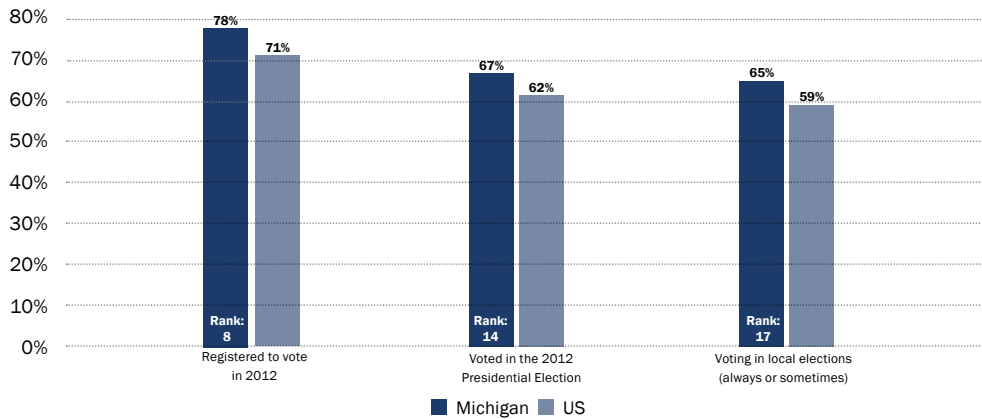
# Voting

Voting for elected officials is a litmus test of how engaged we are in our democracy. It is our right as American citizens and the means by which we exert our collective decision-making power. Voting is the formal way we make our voices heard and choose our public leaders. When few of us vote, we exercise less collective influence over who makes public policy and how policy-makers craft the laws and regulations that affect our everyday lives.

When we think of voting, most of us probably think about voting for President. But voting in state and local elections affects the quality of government and life in our states and local communities. Local elections typically carry ballot measures that determine tax rates and spending for police and fire departments, schools, public parks, and libraries.

On the whole, Michigan enjoys high rates of voter participation. The state ranks 8th in voter registration, and 14th for voting in the 2012 Presidential Election, and 17th for voting in local elections. Michigan is approximately 6% higher than the national average for all three voting indicators.

**Chart 3. Michigan's Voting Behavior**



**Recommendation Two:**  
**Access the Right to Vote**

Although Michigan has a very strong record for voter registration and voter turnout, our subgroup analysis (later in this report) reveals that our youngest citizens vote the least, significantly less than older generations. Michigan voting also lags among citizens with a lower income and educational attainment.

All members of civil society have a vested interest in a knowledgeable, active citizenry. Political leaders and their constituencies should work in tandem to improve access to the polls for young adults, low income citizens, and Michiganders with lower levels of formal education.. Secretary of State should continue to build its mobile-registration efforts. Early in-person voting can provide greater access to voting and flexibility in the wake of demanding work and child care schedules.<sup>9</sup> Given the success of early voting and “no-excuse” absentee voting in most other states, Michigan should extend early voting opportunities and no-excuse absentee ballots to all Michiganders.<sup>10</sup>

Studies show also that nonprofit organizations’ efforts to register more citizens to vote and to provide voting reminders increased the likelihood of voting.<sup>11</sup> The nonprofit community can assist Michigan voters greatly by continuing and increasing efforts to get out the vote, especially in communities with marginalized populations.



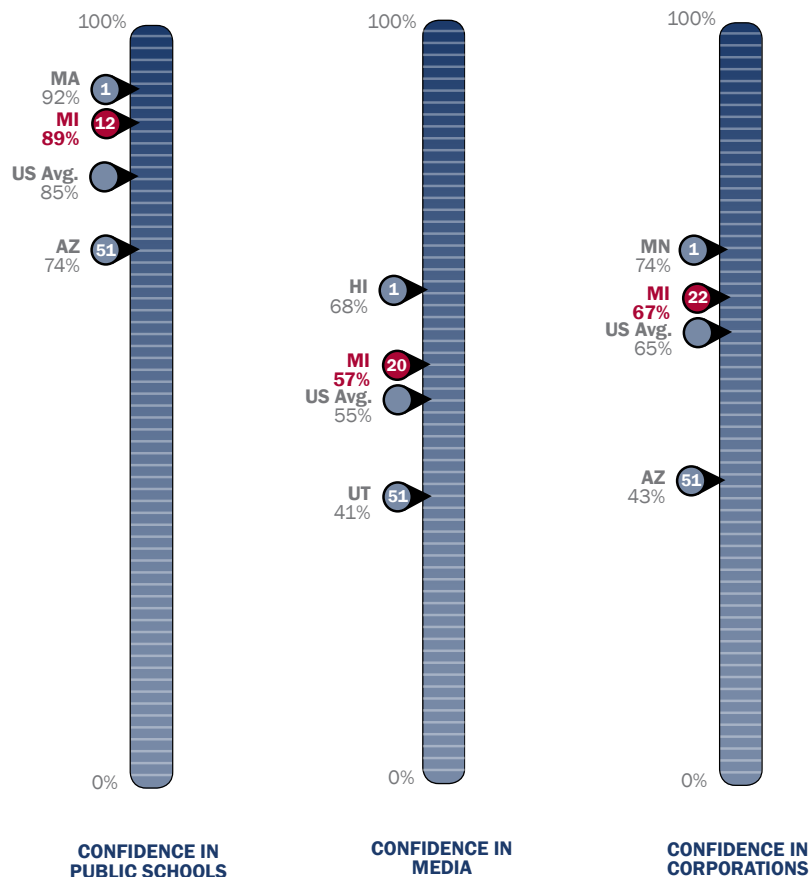
## CONFIDENCE IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Most Americans interact with our public school systems, corporations, or the media daily. Almost everyone has an opinion about them. The CPS survey asked respondents how confident they are that these institutions “will do what is right.”

This indicator is more than a measure of confidence that these institutions are carrying out their functions; it is a measure of whether or not we believe these institutions are performing with integrity. For example, do we believe that public schools are doing well when it comes to educating our youth? Do we believe the media strives to be fair when gathering and disseminating information? Do the corporations for whom we work and from whom we buy our cars, clothes, food, or services tend to treat employees fairly, market their products and services accurately, monitor the practices of their suppliers, and sell safe products?<sup>12</sup>

The vast majority of Michiganders have confidence in Michigan’s public schools. Among all U.S. states and the District of Columbia, Michigan ranks 12th for confidence in public schools with nearly 89% of respondents indicating some to a great deal of confidence in them.

Michigan ranks in the top half of states for having some to a great deal of confidence in the media and in corporations, and our responses are comparable to national responses. As in the nation at large, confidence in the media and corporations is significantly lower than it is for public schools.



# DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN

In this section, we examine Michigan’s civic health within the context of demographic groups. We emphasize key differences and patterns of behavior that suggest where we may improve access to networks and enhance civic engagement. Where warranted, we draw on external research to discuss factors influencing behaviors among people in different age groups and Michiganders with different levels of education and income.

## Civic Health Across Generations

Each of us is affected by the social transformations that took place during our coming of age. Consider the massive changes to American life over the last 50 years—increased geographic mobility, the shift from a manufacturing-based to a service-based economy, and the proliferation of mass media and the Internet. It comes as no surprise that different generations have distinct approaches to civic engagement.

### Social Connections

The generations studied eat dinner as a household and hear from family and friends at rates consistent with Michigan’s overall averages.

Differences emerge when we consider neighborhood interaction. Just 44% of Millennials trust their neighbors, compared to 76% of the Silent Generation. Twice as many respondents from the Silent Generation speak with neighbors frequently than those from the Millennial generation. Gen Xers most often do favors for neighbors, but still at a low rate of 13%. Fewer than 10% of Michiganders from any generation work with their neighbors to fix or improve things in the community.

**Table 3. Generations and Social Connections**

	Millennials	Gen X	Baby Boomers	Silent Gen.
Trust all or most of their neighbors	44%	62%	62%	76%
Talk with neighbors frequently	25%	34%	36%	53%
Do favors for neighbors frequently	9%	13%	10%	12%
Work with neighbors to fix or improve something in the community	5%	8%	8%	9%

**Generational Breakdown:**

- Millennials - (born 1981 or later)
- Gen X - (born 1965-1980)
- Baby Boomers (born 1945-1964)
- Silent Generation (born 1931-1945)

## Group Participation

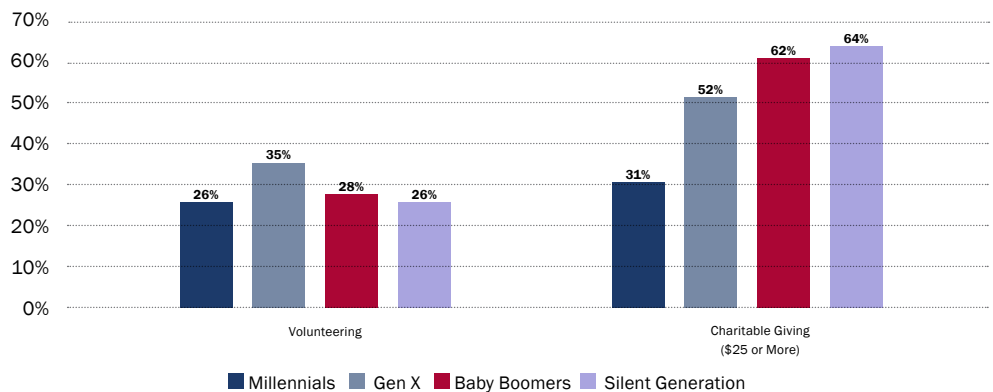
The Silent Generation is the most engaged in group participation of all generations, with 45% of those surveyed participating in at least one organization. It is followed by Generation X at 39%, Millennials at 34%, and Baby Boomers at 32%. Types of group participation measured include faith-based groups, school and neighborhood groups, sports and recreation groups, and service and civic groups. Religious institutions are the most popular group affiliation for all four generations. Sports and recreation groups are the least popular for Baby Boomers and the Silent Generation, and service and civic organizations are the least popular for Millennials and Generation X. About 10% of the members of all generations serve as an officer or member of a committee.



## Volunteerism & Charitable Giving

Volunteerism spikes with Generation X. More than a quarter of Millennials, Baby Boomers, and members of the Silent Generation volunteer, compared to more than one-third of Generation X respondents. The number of people who donate \$25 or more to charity annually increases steadily from the youngest to the oldest generation. Less than half as many Millennials as the eldest Silent generation donate \$25 or more to charity.

**Chart 4. Generations and Volunteerism & Charitable Giving**



## Political Participation

Members of older generations attend public meetings at a rate well above that of younger generations. Only 3% of Millennials attend public meetings, compared to more than 13% of the Silent Generation. In addition, a significantly larger proportion of the Silent Generation also contacts public officials. However, generational differences are small with regard to talking politics with family and friends, using the Internet to express a public opinion, and buying or boycotting specific products and companies.

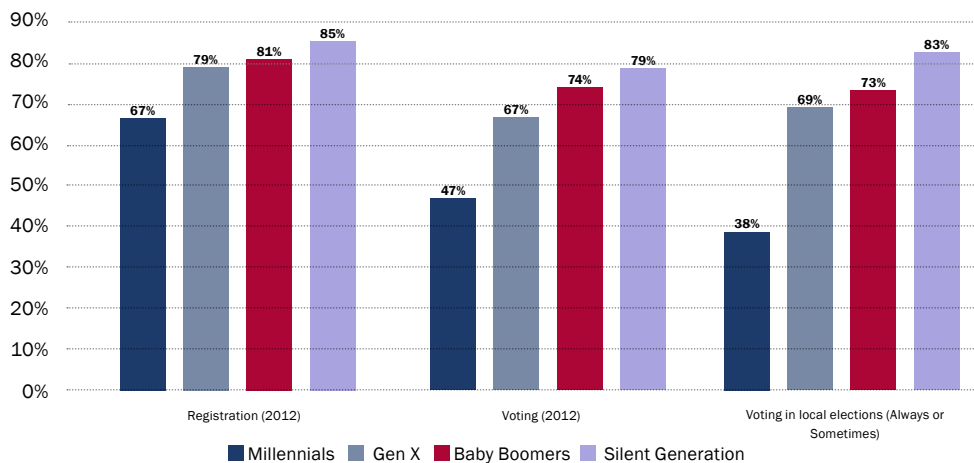
**Table 3. Generations and Political Participation**

	Millennials	Gen X	Baby Boomers	Silent Gen.
Discussed politics with family/friends frequently	29%	26%	26%	30%
Used the Internet to express a public opinion	9%	8%	8%	7%
Bought/boycotted product or service	16%	15%	16%	12%
Attended a public meeting	3%	8%	7%	14%
Contacted or visited a public official	8%	10%	11%	14%

## Voting

The youngest generation is far less likely to vote than all older generations. Sixty-seven percent of Millennials are registered to vote, compared to more than 85% of the Silent Generation. When it came to the 2012 Presidential election, just 47% of Millennials voted, which is 20% lower than Gen X, 27% lower than Baby Boomers, and 35% less than the Silent Generation. Stark differences exist for voting in local elections as well.

**Chart 5. Generations and Voting Behavior**



### **Recommendation Three:**

#### **Connect to Millennials as the Next Generation of Civic Leaders**

In his book, “The Good Citizen,” Russell Dalton writes about a college student who traveled 2000 miles to volunteer after Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans. In the same conversation, the student admitted to not having voted in the last election.<sup>13</sup> This account is one of many demonstrating that young people are not necessarily disengaged in civic life so much as they are differently engaged than their older, more traditional counterparts. Millennials stand out from other generations as having the lowest participation rates for activities like voting and giving money to charity. However, Millennials are also the most likely of all generations to use the Internet to express a public opinion. They are just as likely as their older cohorts to talk politics and boycott or purchase products as a form of political expression.

We must also keep in mind that the Millennial generation includes citizens currently age 15 to 35, so multiple junctures of engagement are possible. To engage younger Millennials, we recommend that Michigan’s Civic Health Index be disseminated to all of Michigan’s high school and college civics educators to offer ample exposure to issues affecting Michigan’s civic health. Also, we propose that high school and college service learning strategies be broadly implemented.

Finally, Michigan’s business and nonprofit communities should collaborate with Millennial employees to build engagement. Together, they can develop corporate citizenship programs that empower employees to direct corporate philanthropy, provide pro-bono services to nonprofits, and support employees in their efforts to volunteer for causes that matter to them. These programs will build employee civic engagement through institutional supports, increase worker satisfaction, expand the capacities of nonprofits, and reduce employee turnover.



### **Recommendation Four:**

#### **Leverage the Experience of the Silent Generation**

The Silent Generation has spoken loud and clear. Overall, our older Michiganders are taking the reins when it comes to civic participation. We suggest that there is much to be gained by inviting members of the Silent Generation to join with the nonprofit community in facilitating intergenerational advisory panels.

By mentoring Millennials and Gen Xers, the Silent Generation could share its experience and insight, encourage the younger generations to participate more fully, and build a pipeline of new Millennial and Gen X leaders. In turn, younger generations can share their strategies for communication and engagement using newer technologies and methods of organizing and provide guidance for members of the Silent Generation who are seeking encore careers.



# A SPOTLIGHT ON MILLENNIALS

Millennials are the largest generation living in the United States, representing a third of our total population. They are the most diverse and highly educated generation in American history.<sup>14</sup> There are 2.4 million Millennials in Michigan. As they age, Millennials will have a profound effect on Michigan's governance and economy.

Like all generations before them, Millennials have been shaped by the events of their time. Millennials came of age in the midst of rapid technological change, globalization, and economic uncertainty. Many Millennials were in their twenties during the economic downturn of 2007, and they struggled to find jobs and pay for post-secondary education.

In 2014, 31% of 18- to-34-year-old Americans lived with their parents. Millennials have a lower rate of homeownership than young adults in previous generations, in part due to labor market woes that started with the Great Recession.<sup>15</sup> Millennials are waiting longer to marry and start families than the generations before them. As a consequence, they are less anchored to place as their center of community than other generations.

Millennials are certainly the most digital generation. Access to the Internet and mobile technology have shaped the way they conduct their lives. They are accustomed to having instant information, swift transactions, and broad social networks with people whom they may or may not frequently communicate with in person.

## Tap into Millennial's Philanthropic Potential

The Millennial Impact Project studies Millennial engagement with their employers and nonprofit organizations.<sup>16</sup> They make the following observations:

- **Millennials are agile.** They use mobile technology for everything from donating to crowdfunding campaigns and signing up to volunteer. Nonprofits seeking to engage Millennials should use mobile-friendly applications and email as their primary mode of communication.
- **Millennials respond favorably to websites offering a clear mission statement** and ease of direct contact. Nonprofits offering online giving opportunities and gift impact reports are more likely to garner donations from Millennials as well.
- **Studies show that Millennials prefer micro-volunteer opportunities** – one-time commitments of 1 to 3 hours. Because many Millennials report enjoying team projects and peer-to-peer interactions, creating group volunteer opportunities could draw more joiners as well.
- **Nonprofit organizations can engage Millennials to serve on advisory boards.** Millennials can offer their perspectives as members of our youngest generation in the workforce, and the advisory board experience can provide them with valuable networking and leadership skills development opportunities.

## Educational Attainment

Of all of the demographic traits analyzed, educational attainment demonstrates the strongest positive correlation to the greatest number of civic health indicators.

## Social Connections

People with a Bachelor's degree or higher are more likely to trust their neighbors and work with neighbors to fix or improve something in the community. Nevertheless, they are no more likely to speak with neighbors or do favors for them. In fact, individuals with only a high school diploma speak with neighbors more frequently than groups with a higher level of education.

**Table 4. Educational Attainment and Social Connections**

	Less than HS	HS Diploma	Some College	Bachelor's or Higher
Trust all or most of their neighbors	n/a	58%	58%	73%
Talk with neighbors frequently	n/a	44%	33%	33%
Do favors for neighbors frequently	n/a	10%	11%	11%
Work with neighbors to fix or improve something in the community	3%	3%	7%	16%

## Group Participation

Group participation increases steadily with educational attainment. Michiganders with a Bachelor's degree or higher are most likely to participate in any kind of group and are most likely to serve as an officer or member of a committee.

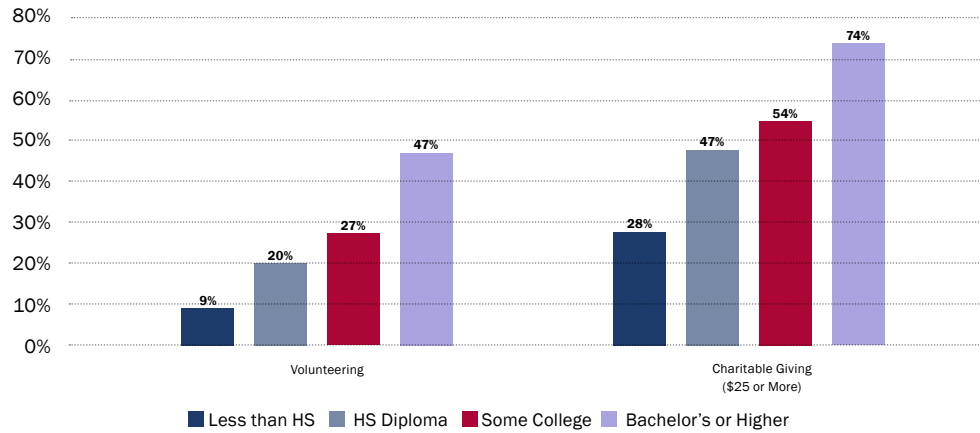
**Table 5. Educational Attainment and Group Participation**

	Less than HS	HS Diploma	Some College	Bachelor's or Higher
Participated in at least one organization	n/a	31%	35%	45%
Religious institution	n/a	18%	17%	26%
School, neighborhood, or community group	n/a	9%	14%	23%
Sports or recreation association	n/a	4%	10%	12%
Service or civic organization	n/a	7%	7%	9%
Officer or member of a committee	n/a	5%	8%	20%

## Volunteerism & Charitable Giving

Educational attainment has a profound effect on volunteerism and giving. With every tier of education, civic participation increases dramatically. Volunteerism is five times higher in the highest tier of education than in the lowest. Charitable giving also rises significantly with every level of educational attainment. Less than one-third of citizens who have less than a high school diploma give at least \$25 to charity, compared to three-quarters of people with a Bachelor's degree or higher.

**Chart 6. Educational Attainment and Volunteering & Charitable Giving**



## Political Participation

Some forms of political participation vary according to educational attainment, too. Educational attainment has a somewhat lesser effect on talking politics. More than 24% of high school graduates report talking politics, while 29% of those with a Bachelor's degree or higher do so. Yet people with a Bachelor's degree or higher buy or boycott a product or company almost three times as frequently as individuals with no more than a high school diploma. Finally, 3% of individuals with less than a high school diploma attend public meetings, compared to 6% of high school grads and 7% of people with some college. More than 12% of post-Bachelor's respondents attend public meetings.

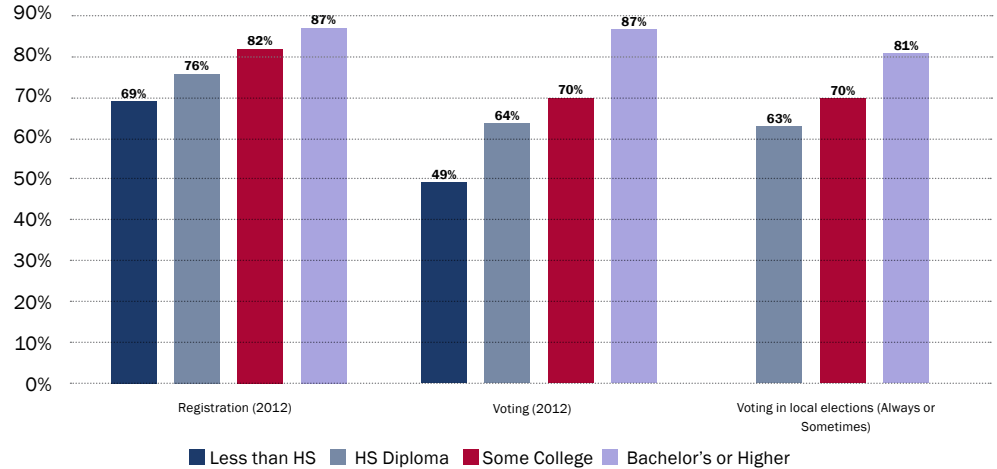
**Table 6. Educational Attainment and Political Participation**

	Less than HS <sup>17</sup>	HS Diploma	Some College	Bachelor's or Higher
Talked politics with family/friends frequently	n/a	25%	29%	29%
Used the Internet to express a public opinion	n/a	6%	11%	7%
Bought/boycotted product or service	n/a	9%	18%	24%
Attended a public meeting	3%	6%	7%	12%
Contacted or visited a public official	n/a	8%	10%	17%

## Voting

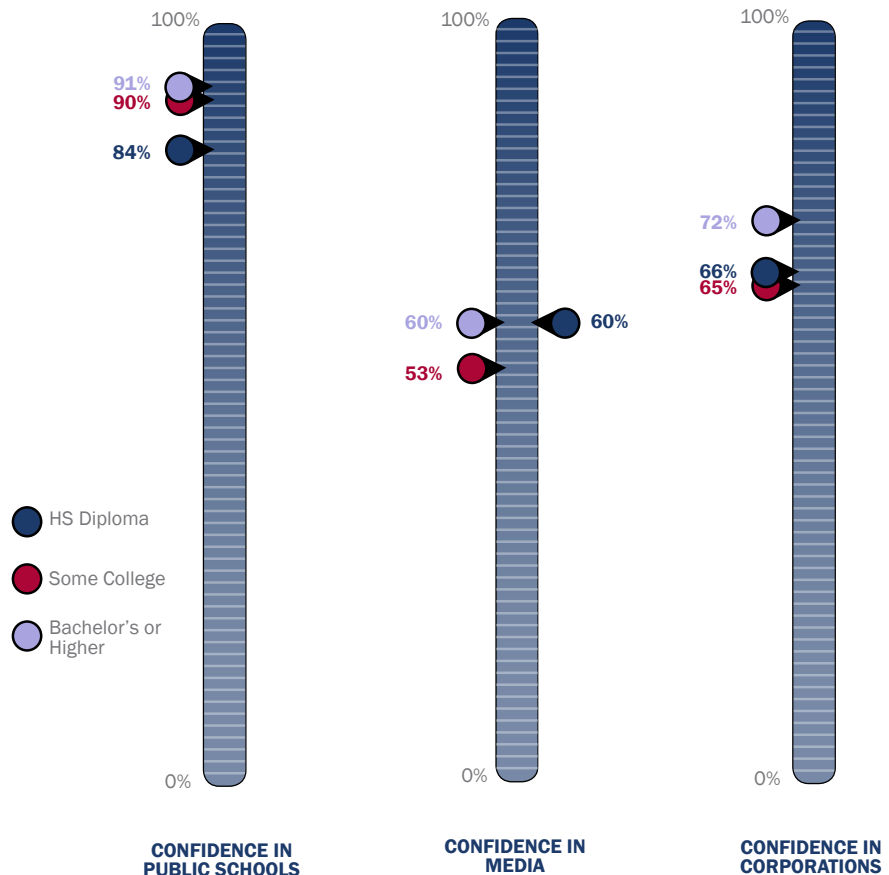
Voting also increases with educational attainment. Voter registration increased nearly 20% between the lowest and highest tiers of education and voting in national elections increased 38%.

**Chart 7. Educational Attainment and Voting**



## Confidence in Public Institutions

Educational attainment is less firmly associated with confidence in public institutions. Although there is increased confidence in public schools and corporations with higher education, people with no more than a high school diploma had the same level of confidence in the media as those with a Bachelor's degree or higher and more confidence in the media than people with some college.



### Recommendation Five:

#### Activate Civic Engagement Through Education

Data demonstrates that the more educated we are, the more likely we are to participate in groups, vote, volunteer, and give money to charity. We can promote an awareness of civic engagement to Michiganders at every educational juncture from elementary school through high school and later in college. Working with the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators and individual districts to integrate the Michigan Civic Health Index (MICH) as part of the Michigan civics curriculum provides one opportunity to raise the visibility of Michigan's civic health as an educational priority. By making MICH part of the curriculum, we believe that high school students can be tasked with identifying and discussing the ways to enhance civic engagement in the state as part of their civics graduation requirement.

Michigan's nonprofit community should continue to partner with K-12 educators, colleges, and universities in further development of service learning courses and structured opportunities for philanthropy education. Such courses are proven high impact practices that strengthen retention and graduation rates. They also can open opportunities for civic participation, foster the development of a cadre of future leaders, and deepen understanding of varieties of civic engagement. Courses with a philanthropic component have had a powerful influence on eventual charitable giving; in particular, such programs should be supported by Michigan's foundation community because they lead to educational success and can create a virtuous circle, building future donors and volunteers for the nonprofit organizations that the foundations support.

## Household Income

Examining civic engagement patterns among households with varying levels of income reveals that for most indicators, Michigan households with more income participate more in civic activities. This raises important questions about potential barriers to civic participation in Michigan. Studies show that citizens lacking wealth and income often are not able to exert as much influence over public life as those citizens who are more financially affluent. This can lead citizens with few financial resources to feel alienated from public officials and processes. Differences in participation according to income may also be attributed to deficient resources in time or lack of information about opportunities to express opinions or get involved.

## Social Connections

Although households earning less than \$35,000 annually have the least trust in neighbors, they talk with neighbors and do favors for them as much or more than households at other income levels.

**Table 4. Household Income and Social Connections**

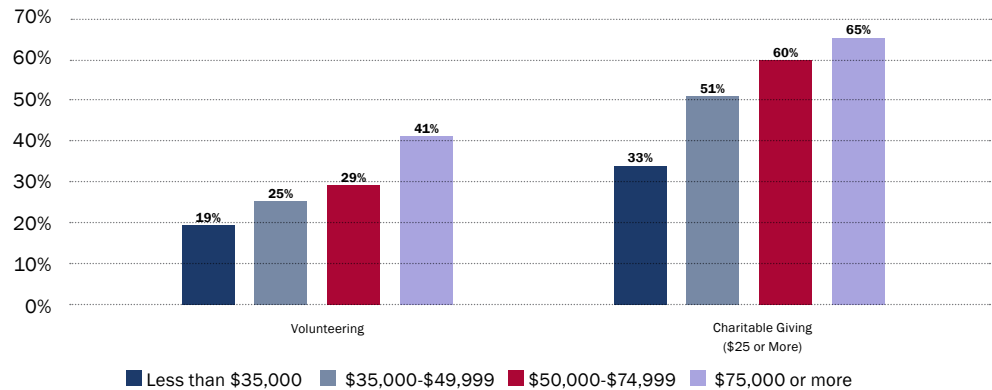
	Less than \$35k	\$35k - \$49,999	\$50k - \$74,999	\$75,000 or more
Trust all or most of their neighbors	46%	67%	65%	74%
Talk with neighbors frequently	37%	32%	37%	34%
Do favors for neighbors frequently	12%	10%	11%	10%
Work with neighbors to fix or improve something in the community	5%	4%	9%	10%



## Volunteerism & Charitable Giving

The more a family earns, the more we observe volunteerism and charitable giving. Nineteen percent of families earning less than \$35,000 annually volunteer, compared to 41% of households earning more than \$75,000. One-third of households earning less than \$35,000 give at least \$25 to charity, which rises at every level of income to reach 65% of households earning over \$75,000 per year.

**Chart 8. Household Income and Civic Engagement**



## Political Participation

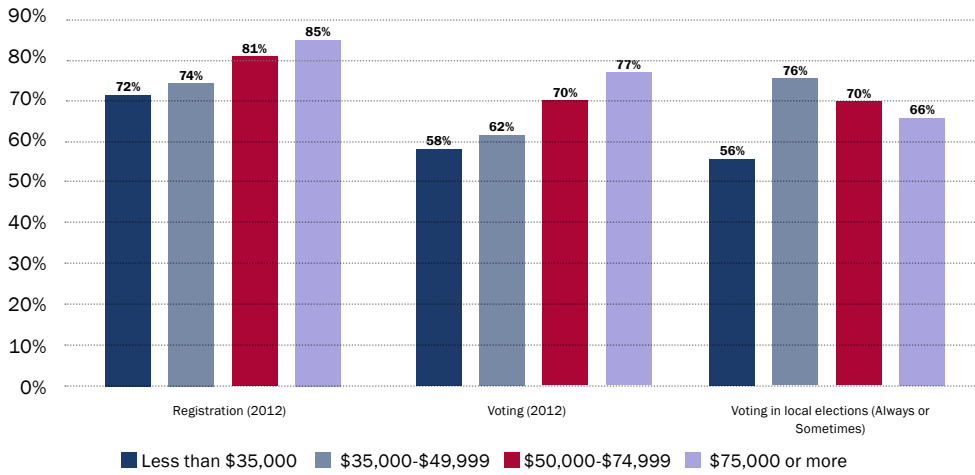
Households earning \$50,000-\$74,999 have the highest level of political engagement. They talked politics the most, attended public meetings most often, most frequently bought or boycotted a product or company, and most frequently contacted public officials.

**Table 6. Household Income and Political Participation**

	Less than \$35k	\$35k - \$49,999	\$50k - \$74,999	\$75,000 or more
Discussed politics with family/friends frequently	24%	26%	33%	27%
Used the Internet to express a public opinion	9%	9%	7%	6%
Bought/boycotted product or service	11%	15%	24%	16%
Attended a public meeting	6%	5%	10%	8%
Contacted or visited a public official	8%	8%	14%	11%

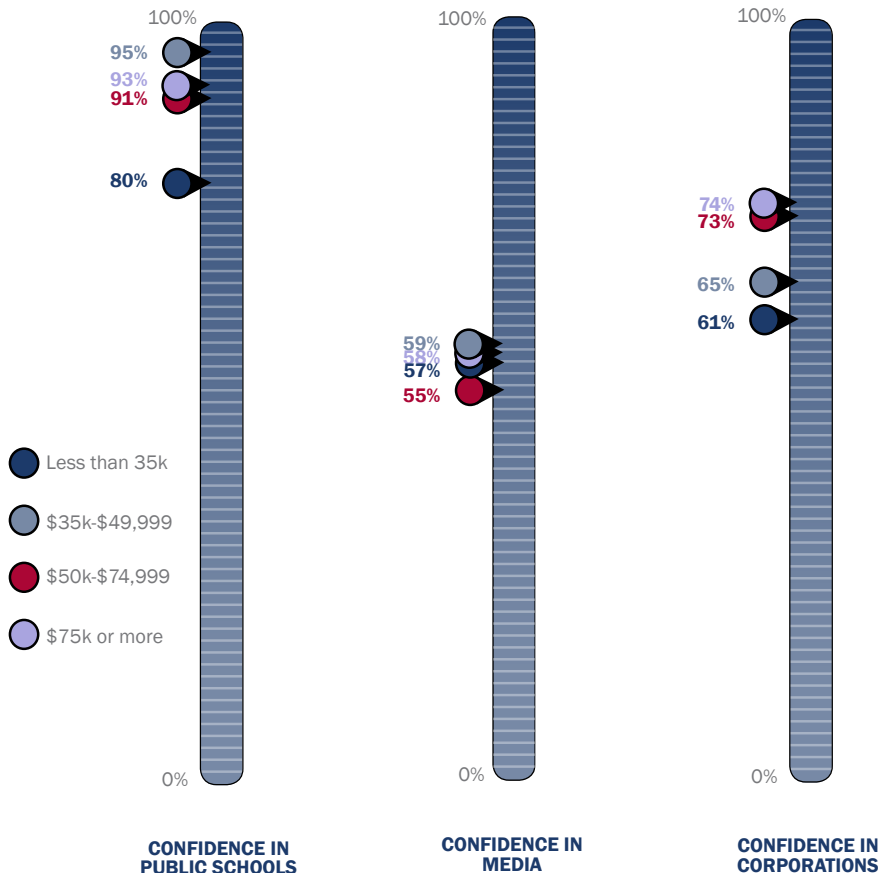
Voting increases with household income although at narrower margins than voting increases with greater educational attainment. Households earning less than \$35,000 annually are the least likely to register and to vote in local and national elections. Members of households earning at least \$75,000 per year are the most likely to register and vote in presidential elections. There is one exception to this pattern — households with incomes between \$35,000 and \$49,999 comprise the largest cohort of people voting in local elections.

**Chart 9. Household Income and Voting**



## Confidence in Public Institutions

Significant differences exist among different income groups in their confidence in public institutions. Income produces the strongest variance in institutional confidence among demographic subgroups. Those who make the most (\$75,000 or more) have the most confidence in corporations while those who make the least (less than \$35,000) have the least confidence. However, the largest gap in confidence in schools occurs between those making \$35,000-\$49,999 and those making less than \$35,000 – a 15% difference. This could be an indication that those earning less have a very different experience with public schools than those who earn more. The comprehensive, integrated civic education recommended above will provide students with the tools to engage more fully in civic life and understand why engagement is important.



# CONCLUSIONS

## Key Findings:

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- Although most Michiganders trust some or all of our neighbors, we interact with them infrequently.
- Michigan ranks well compared to other states for voter registration and voting, but voting behaviors differ starkly across lines of age, educational attainment, and affluence.
- Generations engage in civic life differently from one another. Millennials engage less fully in more traditional modes of participation like public meeting attendance and voting, but they hold their own when it comes to volunteering, boycotting or buying products, and using the Internet to express opinions.
- The Silent Generation demonstrates the most robust participation of all groups.
- Educational attainment has the most powerful correlation to civic engagement of any of the demographic indicators studied. The most educated citizens are the most fully engaged in our democracy.

To address these findings, we make the following recommendations:

### **Recommendation One:** Build Michigan's Neighborhoods as the Cornerstones of Civic Life

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**Nonprofit organizations and local governments can develop neighborhood outreach programs that leverage existing activism and social media. We also advocate neighborhood development strategies that promote good design, walkability, and entrepreneurialism as a means of nurturing neighborhood connectedness.**

### **Recommendation Two:** Access the Right to Vote

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**We recommend increased use of proven voter mobilization strategies: mobile registration units by Michigan's Secretary of State; early voting; "no-excuse" absentee voting; and vigorous nonprofit organizational efforts to increase access to the ballot box for all Michigan citizens.**

### **Recommendation Three:** Connect to Millennials as the Next Generation of Civic Leaders

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**Younger Millennials should discuss this report in high school civics courses and draft plans for enhancing the state's civic health; high schools and colleges should develop and offer a wide range of service learning courses; and employers should foster and facilitate civic engagement among their employees.**

### **Recommendation Four:** Leverage the Experience of the Silent Generation

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**Michigan's nonprofit community and civic leaders can and should leverage the civic assets of the Silent Generation by developing intergenerational civic projects that will enable this senior generation to mentor members of those generations following it.**

### **Recommendation Five:** Activate Civic Engagement through Education

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**This conclusion leads to two recommendations: first, for civic as well as economic reasons, Michigan's workforce development policies should place greater stress on the importance of post-secondary education as a means of producing more active and informed citizens; and, second, Michigan's students should learn about the value of civic engagement from the day that they walk into their kindergarten classes to the day they graduate from post-secondary institutions.**

# ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Although state rankings offer insights, sometimes the rankings exaggerated minimal differences among the states. For example, Michigan is ranked 42nd in citizens attending a public meeting, yet only 1% separated it from the national average (a statewide 7% compared to a national 8%). As a consequence, we paid careful attention not only to Michigan's rankings but to its standing in the ranking as compared to national averages.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all data presented in this report is from 2013. In all instances, percentages reported are rounded to the nearest whole percent.

<sup>3</sup> Putnam, Robert D. *Bowling Alone, The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2000.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Fishel, Anne K. *Home for Dinner: Mixing Food, Fun and Conversation for a Happier Family and Healthier Kids*, American Management Association, 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Knight Foundation, *Soul of the Community 2010, Why People Love Where They Live and Why It Matters: A National Perspective*.

<sup>7</sup> Craft, Sarah. *The Michigan Municipal League. The Economic Impact of Placemaking*, June 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Thoits, Peggy A. and Hewitt, Lyndi N. *Volunteer Work and Well-Being*, *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 2001, 42(June), 115-131.

<sup>9</sup> Kasdan, Diana. Brennan Center for Justice. *Early Voting: What Works*. October 31, 2013. [https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/publications/VotingReport\\_Web.pdf](https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/publications/VotingReport_Web.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Early in-person voting allows citizens to cast a vote before Election Day during an early voting period at various locations established throughout the state. States offering "no-excuse" absentee voting allow voters to request an absentee ballot without stating a reason for her/his desire to vote absentee. For further definition and a list of voting methods available across states, see National Conference of State Legislatures, *Absentee and Early Voting*, <http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/absentee-and-early-voting.aspx>

<sup>11</sup> LeRoux, Kelly and Krawczyk, Kelly. *Can Nonprofit Organizations Improve Voter Turnout? Findings from an Agency-Based Voter Mobilization Experiment*. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 43(2): 272-292.

<sup>12</sup> It is important to note that this measure is not an indication of trust, but rather, of confidence in the institutions presented. This is not an indication of confidence in government. CPS data does not yield insight about trust in local, state or federal government. The Pew Foundation provides an assessment of public trust in government from 1958-2014 that combines data from Pew Research Center, National Election Studies, Gallup, ABC/Washington Post, CBS/New York Times, and CNN Polls. Those findings may be accessed here: <http://www.people-press.org/2014/11/13/public-trust-in-government/>

<sup>13</sup> Dalton, Russell J. *The Good Citizens: How a Younger Generation is Reshaping American Politics*, CQ Press, Washington DC, 2008.

<sup>14</sup> 15 Economic Facts About Millennials, Council of Economic Advisers, The White House, October 2014, [https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/millennials\\_report.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/millennials_report.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Cause, Influence and the Next Generation Workforce, The 2015 Millennial Impact Report, The Millennial Impact Project, <http://fi.fudwaca.com/mi/files/2015/07/2015-MillennialImpactReport.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Sample size was insufficient to report data for this indicator within this group.



## 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 Michigan.





## TECHNICAL NOTE

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, voting estimates from 2012 November Voting and Registration Supplement, and all other civic engagement indicators, such as discussion of political information and connection to neighbors, come from the 2013 CPS Civic Engagement Supplement.

Using a probability selected sample of about 150,000 occupied households, the CPS collects monthly data on employment and demographic characteristics of the nation. Depending on the CPS supplement, the single-year Michigan CPS sample size used for this report ranges from 576 to 859 (civic engagement supplement) to 2,055 (volunteer supplement), and to 2,039 (voting supplement) residents from across Michigan. 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 U.S. residents ages 16 and older. Estimates for civic engagement and social connection indicators (e.g., favors with neighbors, discuss politics) are based on U.S. residents ages 18 and older. Voting and registration statistics are based on U.S. citizens who are 18 and older (eligible voters). When we examined the relationship between educational attainment and engagement, estimates are based on adults ages 25 and older, based on the assumption that younger people may be completing their education.

Because multiple sources of data with varying sample sizes are used, the report is not able to compute one margin of error for Michigan 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.

# CIVIC HEALTH INDEX

## State and Local Partnerships

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

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

## STATES

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### Alabama

University of Alabama  
David Mathews Center for Civic Life  
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

### Georgia

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

### Illinois

McCormick Foundation

### Indiana

Center on Congress at Indiana University  
Indiana Bar Foundation  
Indiana Supreme Court  
Indiana University Northwest  
IU Center for Civic Literacy

### 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  
Center for Study of Citizenship at Wayne State University

### 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  
Campus Compact of New Hampshire  
University System of New Hampshire  
New Hampshire College & University Council

### New York

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

### North Carolina

Institute for Emerging Issues

### 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

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

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### Latinos Civic Health Index

Carnegie Corporation

### Veterans Civic Health Index

Got Your 6

### Millennials Civic Health Index

Mobilize.org  
Harvard Institute of Politics  
CIRCLE

### Economic Health

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



## CITIES

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### **Atlanta**

Community Foundation of 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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