



CIVIC HEALTH & ECONOMY

NCoC research has demonstrated the relationship between civic engagement and economic resilience. It found that the density and type of nonprofit organizations in a community, as well as a community’s social cohesion, are important predictors of its ability to withstand unemployment in a recession.

- **The ten states that scored the best on both nonprofit density and social cohesion had unemployment rates of 6.5% in 2010, compared with 10.8% unemployment in the lowest-scoring states.**
- **States with high social cohesion had unemployment rates 2% lower than their less-connected and trusting counterparts, even when controlling for demographics and other economic factors.ⁱ**

Research from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), entitled “[Volunteering as a Pathway to Employment](#),” provides compelling empirical evidence establishing an association between volunteering and employment.

- **Volunteers have a 27% higher likelihood of finding a job after being out of work than non-volunteers.**
- **Volunteers without a high school diploma have a 51% higher likelihood of finding employment.**
- **Volunteers living in rural areas have a 55% higher likelihood of finding employment.ⁱⁱ**

FINDINGS IN ACTION

Finding: In Arizona, most measures of civic health have been shown to lag the nation. Further, the data underscores the significant variations in civic participation rates among Arizona’s citizenry based upon education, age, ethnicity, and income.

Action: The Center for the Future of Arizona has used civic health data to help inform a statewide citizens’ agenda, foster dialogue, mobilize communities, and raise civic health as a top priority for the state among other important issues like job creation.



“We have used the civic data for three years now to set major goals for improving civic engagement and community involvement throughout Arizona. Other Arizona organizations are also using the data to set their own strategic goals. For example, the O’Connor House, an organization established and led by Justice O’Connor, is using CHI [Civic Health Index] indicators as their baseline and has set an ambitious goal adopted by more than 100 organizations – make Arizona a top 10 state on every indicator measured by CHI. Their efforts, and ours, are dependent on having consistent, reliable data.”

-Lattie Coor, Center for the Future of Arizona

ⁱ NCoC Civic Health and Unemployment II (www.ncoc.org/unemployment2)

ⁱⁱ CNCS Volunteering as a Pathway to Employment (http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/upload/employment_research_report.pdf)

FINDINGS IN ACTION

Finding: [Missouri's civic health](#) has been documented in two statewide reports. The 2013 report found some weaknesses and strengths including that the state ranked:

- **42nd in holding regular family dinners,**
- **44th in attending public meetings,**
- **41st in discussing politics,**
- **19th for trust in neighbors,**
- **7th for talking with neighbors, and**
- **15th for volunteering.**

The report highlights a few bright spots too. Residents have above-average trust in their neighbors (19th), are significantly more likely on average to talk with a neighbor (7th), and volunteer at high rates (15th).

Action: Missouri State University has led the way in engaging seven institutions across the state to ensure civic health is discussed among audiences statewide. It has been used in presentations for the local Chamber of Commerce, nonprofits in St. Louis, and the statewide annual meeting of the Missouri Economic Development Association. This is sparking efforts focused on economic development, such as the Neighbor for Neighbor initiative, which uses deliberative dialogue and civic engagement to mobilize residents of under-resourced neighborhoods to address quality of life issues and economic opportunity.

“The Missouri Civic Health Initiative has engaged six higher educational institutions across the state, as well as Missouri Campus Compact, to strengthen civic health in our state. Recognizing the critical importance of social capital and civic engagement, Missouri State University has established a new Center for Community Engagement (CCE) to improve the quality of scholarship on civic health, and to spur action oriented towards strengthening civil society in Missouri.”

-Michael Stout, Director of Center for Community Engagement

Finding: According to the 2015 Indiana CHI, Indiana also experienced important bright spots to build upon while highlighting serious gaps in participation. The state ranked:

- **3rd in eating dinner with household members,**
- **4th in seeing or hearing from family and friends frequently,**
- **46th in attending a public meeting, and**
- **47th in working with neighbors to fix or improve something in the community.**

Action: Indiana University Northwest, one of the lead partners on the CHI, has sparked dialogue to address the connections between civic health and economic sustainability. These include convening the Sustainable Civic and Community Engagement Conference, integrating themes into the meetings of the IU Northwest Chancellor's Commission on Community Engagement, holding presentations by Congressman Lee Hamilton and Justice Randall Shepard at the Chancellor's Commission on Community Engagement and in a community-university forum, and a recent article published in the E-Journal of Public Affairs “A Civic Health Dialogue and Deliberation: Engaging Business, Nonprofit and Public Leaders.”

“We focused the Chancellor's Commission on Community Engagement meetings on topics either directly or indirectly related to the Indiana CHI results, e.g., looked at the relationship between civic health and economic development, poverty, sustainability, etc.... Statements for public, private and nonprofit sector leaders indicate that they are acquiring a better understanding of the importance of civic health and its relationship to social and economic issues.”

-Ellen Szarleta, Indiana University Northwest