



2017 VETERANS CIVIC HEALTH INDEX™

**EMPOWERING MILITARY VETERANS
FOR STRONGER COMMUNITIES**

**AMERICAN
EXPRESS**



GOT YOUR SIX



National Conference on Citizenship
Connecting People. Strengthening Our Country.



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Got Your 6 is a national campaign dedicated to empowering veterans and strengthening communities across the nation. The campaign unites cross-sector partners who believe that veterans are uniquely suited to tackle society's most pressing challenges. Got Your 6 believes that veterans are best served when they continue their service here at home. As a coalition, Got Your 6 integrates these perspectives into popular culture, brings together veterans and non-veterans in order to foster understanding, and empowers veterans to lead a resurgence of community here at home. www.gotyour6.org

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Launched in 1858 as a dry goods store in New York City, Macy's, Inc. has grown into one of the nation's premier retailers, employing 130,000 Americans across some 800 stores under the Macy's, Bloomingdales, and Blue Mercury brands. In addition to its iconic celebration of American heritage, the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade, the company has been a steadfast leader in community giving, contributing a total of \$58 million to nonprofits in 2016 and donating 180,000 hours of employee service. As part of this commitment, Macy's is proud to be the founding sponsor of Got Your 6 and has helped to rally associates and customers in raising more than \$8.3 million in support of the millions of men and women who have served our country. www.macysinc.com

AMERICAN EXPRESS

Through its Community Service funding theme, American Express invests in projects that provide meaningful volunteer and civic engagement opportunities so that community members can play an active role in strengthening their neighborhoods from within. American Express recognizes that veterans continue to lead the way in serving our communities and is proud to support efforts to highlight their role as leaders and civic champions. American Express is a global services company, providing customers with access to products, insights and experiences that enrich lives and build business success. Learn more at americanexpress.com. www.americanexpress.com

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CITIZENSHIP

The National Conference on Citizenship 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 and 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 his or her community and country thrive. www.ncoc.org



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report would not be possible without support from American Express and Macy’s.

Special thanks to the Got Your 6 coalition and to the teams at the National Conference on Citizenship and Be The Change, Inc. for their continued guidance and support.

INTRODUCTION

Launched in 2015, the Veterans Civic Health Index (VCHI) is the first report of its kind to examine the civic health of America's veterans. When veterans return home, their multifaceted contributions as engaged volunteers, neighbors, and citizens in turn enhance our nation's overall civic health. The VCHI has become an essential resource for demonstrating how investing in our country's veterans brings strength to all of our communities.

The 2017 VCHI affirms for the third year in a row that veterans volunteer, assist neighbors, join civic groups, vote, and engage public officials at rates higher than their non-veteran counterparts. Last year, the VCHI took a closer look at civic engagement in Baltimore, a focus of national media attention, and offered recommendations specific to the 2016 election cycle. This year, we take a closer look at how grassroots veteran organizations large and small rushed to the service of millions of Americans affected by natural disasters throughout 2017.

Goals of this Report

- **Foster understanding about the civic strengths of the veteran population;**
- **Empower veterans to lead a resurgence of civic engagement across the country;**
- **Inspire non-veterans to engage in their communities alongside veterans;**
- **Explore veterans' contributions to natural disaster relief and recovery.**

Primer on Civic Health

What is civic health?

Civic health is a community's capacity to work together to solve problems. It is determined by how well diverse groups of residents cooperate among themselves and with government to address public issues and strengthen their communities.

Why does civic health matter?

Civic health has far-reaching consequences at the individual, local, and society-wide levels:

- **Individual well-being:** When we look at the civic health of veterans, we are focused on the extent to which they are engaged in their communities through volunteer service, political participation, involvement with neighbors and local groups. These types of activities are proxies for a sense of purpose, social connectedness, and belonging, which are so vital to individual physical, psychological, and emotional well-being.
- **Strength of local communities:** At the local level, civic health is closely associated with social capital. Communities that cultivate higher levels of social capital – that is, where residents are knit together in dense networks of strong and weak ties – have greater ability to tackle challenges that require intensive trust and cooperation. For example, abundant social capital is a commonly recognized driver of economic development, educational opportunity, responsive government, and lower crime.
- **Health of American democracy:** Finally, civic health has important implications for democratic processes and institutions, which depend on robust citizen engagement. In an environment where trust in government is eroding, however, citizens increasingly refrain from voting, openly discussing politics, or contacting public officials. Patterns of civic disengagement might also manifest as heightened political polarization, a signal of diminishing goodwill between citizens – and lawmakers – who inhabit different ends of the ideological spectrum.

How is Civic Health Measured?

This report measures civic health using three groups of engagement indicators in the Current Population Survey, which draw upon data from the 2015 Volunteering Supplement, 2016 Voting and Registration Supplement, and the 2013 Civic Engagement Supplement.

- **Volunteer service:** To what extent are veterans engaged in volunteer service?
- **Community involvement:** To what extent are veterans involved with neighbors and community-based organizations?
- **Political engagement:** To what extent are veterans voting and participating in democratic processes?

CIVIC HEALTH: *In the News*

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Bastrop County recovery group 'desperate' for volunteers after Harvey



Volunteerism flourishes after Northern California wildfires



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New evidence shows how automatic voter registration increased

NEWS

LATINO

In remote areas of hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico, volunteers are a lifeline

By Maria Hasky and Corbin Smith / Jan. 17, 2018 / 1:12 PM ET / Updated Jan. 17, 2018 / 5:30 PM ET



Pew Research Center

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PUBLICATIONS TOPICS DATASETS METHODS INTERACTIVE

FACTANK
NEWS IN THE NUMBERS

JULY 31, 2017



Millennials and Gen Xers outvoted Boomers and older generations in 2016 election

Forbes / Leadership / #ChangeTheWorld

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DEC 4, 2017 @ 03:23 PM 5,090

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VETERAN REINTEGRATION: *Reframing the Opportunity*

Veteran reintegration is fundamentally about harnessing our nation's leaders and battle-tested problem-solvers for the good of our communities.

Veterans bring years of leadership development, sharply honed skill sets, experience working in high-performing teams, and a fierce commitment to the greater good. They are America's greatest assets.

Yet each year, when a quarter-million service members take off the uniform and return to civilian life, our country greets veterans with equal parts reverence and bewilderment. Too often, Americans see veteran reintegration as a perplexing problem. The stereotype of veterans "broken" by war remains pervasive. As a result, we have grown accustomed to expecting very little of our returning veterans.

In reality, the quarter-million veterans who return home each year present an unparalleled opportunity. Veteran reintegration is fundamentally about harnessing our nation's leaders and battle-tested problem-solvers for the good of our communities. As this report underscores, there is ample evidence showing that returning veterans are disproportionately stepping into vital roles as volunteers, community leaders, and engaged citizens. To empower veterans is to strengthen America's civic health.

Far from the responsibility of one government agency, veteran reintegration requires Americans in every sector to call upon veterans to lend their talent and tenacity. If we succeed at this, it will become commonplace to see veterans busy starting companies, launching nonprofits, teaching and mentoring youth, fighting poverty, fighting sickness, responding to emergencies, running for office, and telling stories that inspire all of us. This is the true promise of veteran reintegration.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report highlights the pivotal role that veterans play in strengthening America's civic health. In stark relief to nationwide declines in civic engagement, veterans continue to step forward for their communities – in good times and especially hard times. As such, veterans are poised to lead a larger civic resurgence, combating patterns of disengagement, social isolation, and community fragmentation.

Key Findings



Volunteer Service

In addition to volunteering at a higher rate than non-veterans, America's veterans are also logging more service hours – 177 hours per year compared to 132 among non-veterans.



Community Involvement

Veterans are both talking to and doing favors for their neighbors at a higher rate than their non-veteran peers. This pattern holds among younger and older veterans.



Political Engagement

Veterans are among America's most dedicated voters: 73.8% of veterans always or sometimes vote in local elections compared to 57.2% of non-veterans. In addition, veterans are engaging elected officials and discussing politics at higher rates.



Shifting Demographics

Younger generations of veterans are increasingly female and ethnically diverse, reflecting broader demographic and cultural shifts in America. Today, one in six veterans under 50 is female.



Natural Disasters

Veteran-led organizations and self-deployed veterans quickly mobilized to the frontlines of recovery operations, helping fellow Americans rebuild their homes and livelihoods after the devastating hurricanes and fires which affected residents of Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, California, and beyond in 2017.

Key Takeaways

Recognize that veterans are our strongest pillar of civic health. Veterans are volunteering, voting, and getting involved in their communities at rates higher than their non-veteran counterparts. This is a powerful but often overshadowed reality.

Put empowerment at the core of veteran reintegration. Instead of framing veteran reintegration as a series of challenges, we need to shift the conversation towards the massive untapped opportunity to harness veterans' unique training and leadership experience.

Expect veterans to lead the push for civic health. Because of their steadfast drive to continue a life of service, America's veterans are uniquely positioned to lead a society-wide resurgence in civic engagement. The task ahead is to think boldly about how public, private, and community-based organizations can come together to catalyze such a resurgence.

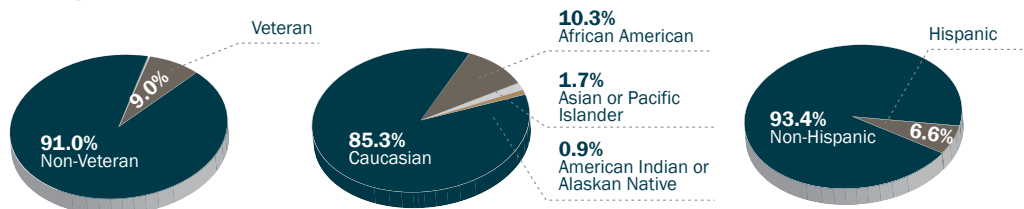
Table 1. Veteran and Non-Veteran Civic Health

	Veterans	Non-Veterans
Average number of hours volunteered	177	132
Vote in local elections (always or sometimes) ¹	73.8%	57.2%
Attended a public meeting	11.5%	8.3%
Worked with neighbors to fix problems in the community	10.5%	7.7%
Gave to charity (\$25 or more)	58.5%	51.0%
Contact public officials ²	16.7%	10.3%

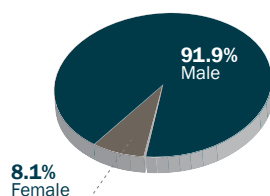
AMERICA'S VETERAN POPULATION

Demographics of America's Veteran Population

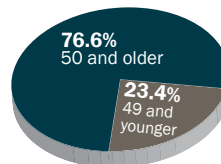
Population



Gender



Age



Veterans comprise less than 10% of American adults.

There are 21.8 million veterans in the United States, approximately 9% of the adult population. The average age of all veterans is 63 years. Veterans are more likely than non-veterans to be married, to have completed high school, and to have progressed to college. Veterans are also more likely to be employed and have higher levels of income than non-veterans.

23.4% of veterans are under 50 years of age.

How are key demographics of America's veteran population changing? This report segments veterans under 50, referred to as "young veterans," and veterans 50 and over, referred to as "older veterans." Nearly one in four veterans (23.4%) fall into the younger cohort with an average age of 38 years while three in four (76.4%) fall into the older cohort with an average age of 68 years. Among young veterans, 100% volunteered to serve in the military and 44.3% of them served in the period after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

One in six veterans under 50 is female.

One of the most striking demographic trends is the steadily growing proportion of females among younger veterans: 15.7% of the under 50 veterans are female, compared to 5.8% of 50 and over veterans. Female veterans are not just younger, they are also more diverse – with higher representation of African Americans and Hispanics – and more highly educated. Additionally, 45.3% of female veterans progress to college compared to 36.4% of male veterans and 31.9% of female non-veterans.

Veterans, like America, are increasingly more diverse.

The ethnic composition of America's veterans largely tracks the U.S. population at large, with 85.3% Caucasian, 10.3% African American, 1.7% Asian or Pacific Islander, and 0.9% American Indian or Alaskan Native.

VETERANS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: *National Trends*

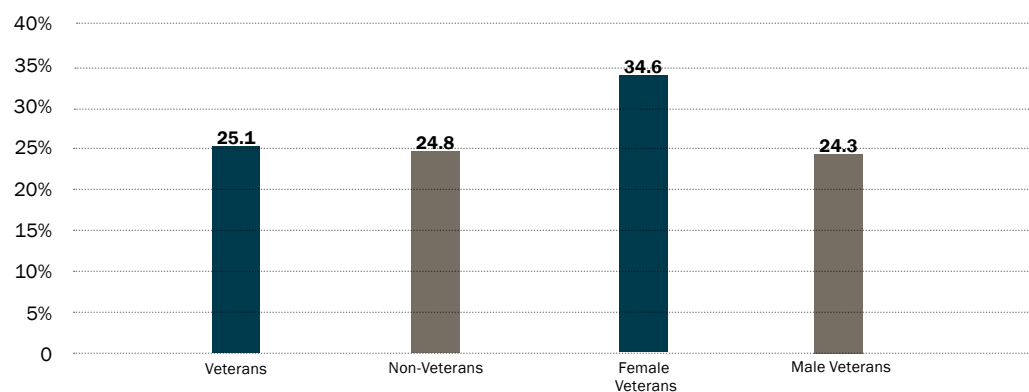
Americans who have answered our nation's highest calling to military service continue to set a lifelong example for fellow citizens. The 2017 VCHI shows for a third consecutive year that veterans are champions of America's civic health along multiple fronts – as volunteers, voters, and neighbors ready to lend a helping hand.

Volunteer Service

Volunteer service is a bedrock of civic health. In good times and hard times, volunteers help to make their communities more resilient by delivering critical services, aiding vulnerable populations, and promoting trust and goodwill among residents.

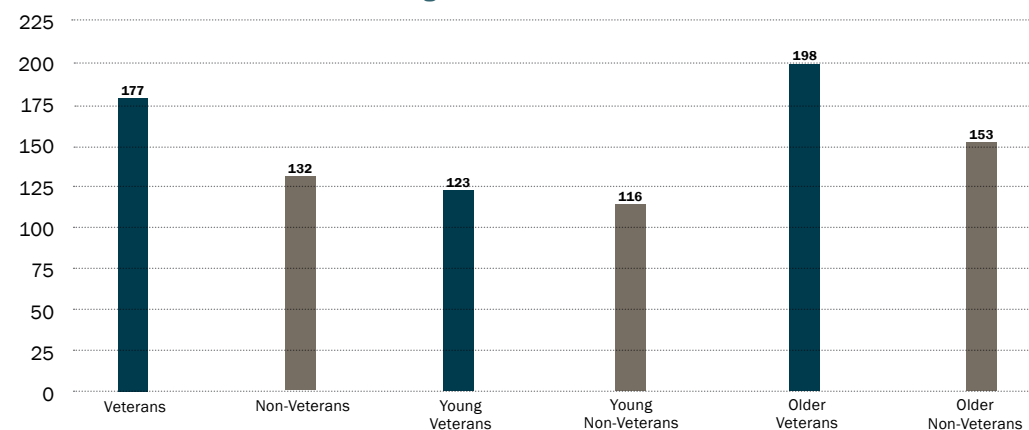
Overall, veterans volunteer at a rate just slightly above the national non-veteran population – 25.1% versus 24.8%. As shown below, female veterans are leading the pack: 34.6% of female veterans are volunteers versus 24.3% of male veterans (and 27.7% of non-veteran women).

Chart 1. Veteran and Non-Veteran Average Annual Volunteer Hours in 2015



At the same time, there is a key distinction between volunteer rate and time spent volunteering. When we look at volunteer hours, it's clear that veterans are amongst our most stalwart column of support. When veterans volunteer, they are more likely to go "all-in" compared to non-veterans. For example, veterans over 50 spent an average of 198 hours volunteering in 2015 compared to 153 hours among their non-veteran peers. This trend holds for veterans under 50, who spent an average of 123 hours volunteering in 2015 compared to 116 hours among their non-veteran peers. Nearly 60% of veterans regardless of age are considered "regular" volunteers, devoting 12 weeks or more per year, versus just below 50% of non-veterans in that category.

Chart 2. Veteran and Non-Veteran Average Annual Volunteer Hours in 2015



Community Involvement

Community involvement is the quality of one's connections to his or her neighbors and the extent to which they are knit together in mutually supportive networks. Moreover, participation in groups in one's community can foster the sense of belonging and purpose – and lifelong relationships – so critical to civic health.

Major life events such as relocating, losing a job, retiring, or loss of a loved one put all of us at risk of social isolation. Isolation, in turn, makes it harder to maintain physical, psychological, and emotional well-being. Transitioning out of the military is a similarly significant life event that can disrupt a veteran's sense of belonging and purpose. At such junctures, a community that consistently asks veterans to plug in, get involved, and take leadership is a community where reintegration is more likely to succeed.

Community involvement can manifest simply as neighbor-to-neighbor interaction. The table below shows that veterans not only talk with their neighbors at higher rates than non-veterans, they are also lending a helping hand with greater frequency. The table below also shows that this trend is cross-generational. While veterans are unquestionably exemplary neighbors, we see some evidence that communities should pay more attention to older veterans in their midst. Notably, 69.1% of veterans over 50 say they frequently hear from family and friends compared to 75.5% of non-veterans over 50.

Table 2. Veterans and Non-Veterans Involved in the Community

	Young Veterans	Young Non-Veterans	Older Veterans	Older Non-Veterans
Hear from family and friends	69.8%	76.7%	69.1%	75.5%
Do Favors for neighbors	12.1%	11.0%	16.7%	13.2%
Talk with neighbors	41.0%	37.8%	50.4%	45.7%

Ever since political scientist Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* called attention to declining rates of membership in civic associations, group membership has been a telling indicator of civic health. When we look specifically at civic associations, both veterans over and under 50 belong to civic associations at higher rates than non-veterans. The difference is quite dramatic in the older cohort, 20.3% of which belongs to civic associations versus just 7.7% of non-veterans over 50. Affirming Putnam's thesis, just 9.5% of younger veterans belong to civic associations compared to 4.5% of their non-veteran peers.

Table 3. Veterans and Non-Veterans Involved in the Community

	Young Veterans	Young Non-Veterans	Older Veterans	Older Non-Veterans
Belong to a service or civic association	9.5%	4.5%	20.3%	7.7%

Yet, when we expand out to look at belonging to any kind of community-based group, a slightly different trend emerges. While older veterans still belong to at least one group at a higher rate (46.1%) than their non-veteran peers (37.5%), younger veterans and non-veterans report nearly identical levels of group affiliation – 34.8% versus 34.4%, respectively. Clearly, younger generations are choosing to affiliate with groups other than civic associations. Unfortunately, the Census does not distinguish between online and offline groups.

Finally, since charitable giving is a widespread form of community involvement, we also see that veterans donate at higher rates than non-veterans. 58.5% of veterans donate at least \$25 to a charity in a given year versus 51.0% of non-veterans.

Political Engagement

The 2017 VCHI shows that veterans are politically engaged at rates higher than their non-veteran peers. We look at three indicators of political engagement: voting, contacting elected officials, and discussing politics with family and friends.

This is most clearly seen when it comes to voting, the principal manner in which citizens participate in the democratic process. Overall, 73.8% of veterans always or sometimes vote in local elections compared to 57.2% of non-veterans. Older veterans are the most diehard voters. Fully 78.5% of veterans over 50 say they always or sometimes vote in local elections, versus 71.2% of non-veterans over 50. Reflecting generational differences in voting propensity, both veterans and non-veterans under 50 vote at lower rates. Still, young veterans show signs of early maturity as politically engaged citizens: 59.5% of veterans under 50 say they always or sometimes vote in local elections versus 48.7% of non-veterans under 50.

Table 4. Voting Rates by Veteran Status and Age Cohort

	Young Veterans	Young Non-Veterans	Older Veterans	Older Non-Veterans
Voting in local elections always or sometimes	59.5%	48.7%	78.5%	71.2%

In a representative democracy, citizen interaction with officials (at any level of government) also constitutes a vital form of political participation. Here again, veterans are disproportionately engaged: 18.1% of veterans over 50 have contacted or visited a government official compared to 14.3% of non-veterans over 50, while 12.2% of veterans under 50 have done so compared to 7.8% of non-veterans under 50.

Table 5. Contacting Public Officials by Veteran Status and Age Cohort

	Young Veterans	Young Non-Veterans	Older Veterans	Older Non-Veterans
Contacted or visited public official	12.2%	7.8%	18.1%	14.3%

Open political discourse is also a barometer of a healthy democracy. We see that 39.3% of veterans over 50 report frequently discussing politics with family and friends compared to 31.1% of their non-veteran peers. Similarly among young veterans and their peers, 27.7% of veterans under 50 report frequently discussing politics with family and friends versus 23.0% of their non-veteran peers.

Table 6. Discussing Politics by Veteran Status and Age Cohort

	Young Veterans	Young Non-Veterans	Older Veterans	Older Non-Veterans
Discuss politics with family or friends	27.7%	23.0%	39.3%	31.1%

VETERANS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: *Local Snapshot*

2017 was a devastating year for American communities affected by natural disasters. With three massive hurricanes and wind-whipped wildfires across California, it also ended up being the most costly year of disaster relief on record in the United States. In every case, America's veterans stepped up to repair damaged homes, remove debris, prepare warm meals, and help communities heal. As the nation's attention turned elsewhere, many veterans are still there.

HOUSTON, TEXAS

Team Rubicon responds to Hurricane Harvey

As the wettest hurricane ever recorded in the United States, Harvey caused catastrophic flooding that displaced more than 30,000 Americans and took the lives of more than 100 individuals. For three months beginning in September 2017, Team Rubicon's "Operation Hard Hustle" mobilized 2,155 veterans who volunteered a total of 120,810 hours repairing homes, removing debris, and coordinating volunteers. Their work spanned 1,011 work orders and represented an estimated \$3.3 million in cost savings. Due to Team Rubicon's fundraising in the wake of Hurricane Harvey, the nonprofit was able to support a long-term recovery plan for Houston that will rebuild 100 homes over two years.

"Our mission has always been, let's take these idle assets in our communities and prepare them to be first responders...These men and women have all been trained in specific skills, but there's no framework for tapping into that potential. It's just sitting there. It's this latent possibility."

- Jake Wood, U.S. Marines veteran and co-founder of Team Rubicon
(Source: as quoted by CNBC)



HURRICANE HARVEY BY THE NUMBERS

108 deaths

51.88 inches of rain

16,876 homes destroyed

Estimated > \$75 billion in losses

PUERTO RICO

Months later, veterans are still serving fellow Americans in Puerto Rico

Just after Hurricane Maria slammed Puerto Rico, Army veteran Jason Maddy showed up to help with relief. "I don't think that I could look myself in the mirror and know that I walked away from the people here," Maddy told NBC. "They say in the Army that you never leave a soldier behind and we can't leave these Americans behind." Maddy was supposed to return home in two weeks but he ended up staying for almost four months and ended up launching a nonprofit, Veteran Disaster Relief, to raise money, collect supplies, and deploy volunteers. (Source: NBC News and CNN)

"They are Americans. They deserve help, they deserve support, and they deserve not to be forgotten."

**-Jason Maddy, U.S. Army veteran
(Source: NBC News)**



HURRICANE MARIA BY THE NUMBERS

4,000 deaths estimated*

3.4 million residents of Puerto Rico left without electricity

Estimated > \$90 billion in losses

*Estimates on deaths caused by Hurricane Maria vary greatly and remain in flux, but reported estimates typically fall between 1,000 and 5,000.

CALIFORNIA

Veterans spend their holidays helping victims of wildfires

Throughout the holidays of 2017, Team Rubicon activated 30 volunteers to remove debris from the Detwiler Fire near Mariposa and mobilized 53 volunteers for recovery operations as part of the Lilac Fire in San Diego County. Their volunteer service totaled 2000 hours and saved nearly \$60,000 in costs.

(Sources: 89.3 KPCC, Team Rubicon)

"A lot of veterans don't like to be home, especially if they're alone...A lot of them volunteered specifically just to be around their tribe."

**Yusra Kaupilla, U.S. Marines
veteran and Team Rubicon planning
section chief**



2017 CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES BY THE NUMBERS

46 deaths

10,800 structures destroyed

1,381,405 acres burned

Estimated > \$10 billion in losses

RECOMMENDATIONS

Day in and day out, veterans are vanguards for America's civic health. Far beyond active military duty, this report reveals that veterans carry their drive to serve to the frontlines of every American community as committed volunteers, diehard voters, and exemplary neighbors. Part of what it means to fulfill our sacred trust to veterans is for all of us to find ways to further empower veterans as leaders of a resurgence in civic engagement.

Recommendations for Veterans

- **Join a veteran empowerment organization in your area.** There is an impressive network of local organizations led by fellow veterans who are looking for members, volunteers, and leaders to step forward. These organizations provide a diverse range of opportunities to form genuine friendships, serve the community, and contribute to emergency relief efforts. Find a list of organizations at www.gotyour6.org/partners/nonprofit.
- **Never underestimate the power of a personal invitation.** Even though veteran organizations exist in most communities, it often takes an authentic personal invitation from one veteran to another for someone to actually show up. Consider practical ways to empower existing members, family, and friends to invite other veterans easily, such as via postcards, Facebook groups, and informal gatherings.

Recommendations for Non-Veterans

- **Move beyond “thank you for your service.”** Too often, non-veterans shy away from conversation with veterans. Challenge yourself to speak to a veteran just the way you would with other neighbors, friends, and colleagues. There's no better way to overcome stereotypes of veterans as “broken heroes.”
- **Show up in the community alongside veterans more regularly.** In addition to Veterans Day and Memorial Day, seek out other opportunities to volunteer and break bread with veterans. If they're not already doing it, ask schools, nonprofits, and faith communities in your area to organize events throughout the calendar year that bring veterans and non-veterans together.

Recommendations for Businesses

- **Adopt a comprehensive strategy to hire veterans.** Smart businesses hire veterans not just to capitalize on hiring incentives but because they bring unique skill sets, discipline, and leadership to any kind of team. Ensure your hiring managers and HR team are making it easy for veterans to learn about job openings, whether through websites, job fairs, or social media groups that target veterans.
- **Empower veterans to shape an inclusive culture.** Create space for veterans to gather in employee affinity groups and in leadership roles which can help foster civic health in the workplace. This encompasses everything from opportunities for veterans to share more about their experience of serving our country to opportunities for non-veteran employees to serve veterans in the community.

Recommendations for Nonprofits

- **Ask veterans to get involved.** One key takeaway from the VCHI is that veterans remain committed to serving their communities long after they take off the uniform. Recognizing this, nonprofit leaders must do their part to reach out to veterans, asking them to lend their extraordinary skills for the greater good. Consider collaborating with veteran-focused organizations to reach veterans more effectively.
- **Convene local leaders to develop a shared veterans civic health plan.** Nonprofit leaders are often uniquely poised to convene nonprofit, business, and government leaders. Seize the opportunity to develop an action plan that will more fully leverage veterans' strong commitment to civic engagement and promote a wider civic health resurgence. There is nothing more powerful than making veterans a core part of the solution to the biggest challenges we face.

Recommendations for Media & Entertainment

- **Ensure responsible representations of veterans.** Film and television portrayals of veterans should aim for more authentic multi-dimensional characters that move beyond the "broken hero" stereotype. News reporters and producers should also avoid sweeping or sensationalized statements about veterans which have caused Americans to believe that the majority of veterans are suffering from PTSD, homeless, or prone to violence.
- **Find new opportunities to elevate veterans' voices.** Veterans have unique perspectives on a wide swathe of local matters, public debates, and current events far beyond war or veterans affairs. Inviting veterans to be part of the conversation across diverse contexts gives non-veterans a much-needed chance to hear from veterans as fellow citizens, parents, business-owners, and experts.

Recommendations for Policymakers

- **Expand discussion to include veterans' issues beyond the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).** Since less than half of America's veteran population is enrolled at VA, policymakers should ensure that leaders across all agencies and sectors are advancing policies that will improve veterans' livelihoods.
- **Scale and replicate community-based veterans programs that are working at the local level.** Veterans transition back into communities, not to government agencies. Everyday, innovative public-private partnerships are flourishing at the local level, yet they need resources to grow their impact. Policymakers should expand existing funding channels and create new ones to further stimulate these community-based veterans programs.

Recommendations for Philanthropists and Investors

- **Mentor and invest in veteran entrepreneurs and social innovators.** Veterans bring a combination of leadership, purpose, team-building experience, and work ethic, which make them extremely attractive as founders. Every venture capital fund and charitable foundation should find opportunities to support veterans as they start businesses and nonprofits of any size.
- **Collaborate to drive a veteran-led civic resurgence.** Veterans are already outsized contributors to America's civic health, yet there is a huge opportunity to empower them on a larger scale through interconnected local, state, and national programs. Funders should consider pooling resources for greater collective impact.

CONCLUSION

The 2018 Veteran's Civic Health Index reveals that America's veterans are national treasures not just because of their service while in uniform but because of their lifetime of continued service thereafter. It also distills a major opportunity. Each year, a quarter of a million veterans come home seeking opportunities to serve their community, do meaningful work, and rally to the aid of fellow citizens when emergencies occur. It is up to us to make those opportunities a reality.

FOUR QUESTIONS FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION OR COMMUNITY TO ANSWER

On a scale from 1 to 10 (10 being best), how well does your business, nonprofit, or local community empower veterans to continue serving as they return home?

List the names of veteran-focused organizations in your community that are empowering veterans as they return home. Make a brief note describing what they are doing.

List the names of non-veteran organizations in your community that are empowering veterans as they return home. Make a brief note describing what they are doing.

What's one concrete step your organization or community can take to better empower veterans returning home? Are there opportunities for partnership?

ENDNOTES

¹ United States Census Bureau. *Current Population Survey Civic Engagement Supplement*. 2013. [census.gov](https://www.census.gov).

² CPS Civic Engagement Supplement, [census.gov](https://www.census.gov)

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 for veterans.

TECHNICAL NOTE

Unless otherwise noted, data findings presented in this report are based on NCoC's analysis of the Census Current Population Survey (CPS) data. Any and all data errors are our own. Volunteering estimates are from the CPS September Volunteering Supplement, 2015; voting and registration data come from the CPS November Voting/Registration Supplement, 2016; and all data on other civic engagement indicators come from the CPS Civic Engagement Supplement, 2013. Using a probability-selected sample of about 60,000 occupied households drawn from geographically based sampling units, the CPS collects monthly data on employment and demographic characteristics of the nation. Depending on the CPS supplement, the single-year CPS sample sizes for veterans included in this report were 3,538 (Civic Engagement Supplement); 7,142 (Volunteering Supplement); and 9,018 (Voting Supplement).

In order to get the demographic estimates of the veterans' background, the sample data was weighted by the veteran weight, computed by the Census Bureau. The veteran weight is designed in such a way that estimates will accurately track the official statistics reported by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The comparative non-veteran sample demographics are estimated using the final population weight, also computed by the Census Bureau. For all estimates of civic health indicators, we use the specific weights computed for each supplement. These civic engagement weights account for non-response bias.

In this report, we include all veterans for demographic reporting. For age-specific, group-based reporting, we include veterans and non-veterans who are 20 years old and older. We did this because there are very few veterans who are 19 or younger. In this report, we made comparisons between veterans and non-veterans between ages 20 and 49, and comparisons between veterans and non-veterans aged 50 and older.

The Census CPS administers three different surveys from which civic indicators for this report are drawn. The September Volunteering Supplement—which is administered annually—includes questions about volunteering (e.g., frequency and types of volunteer work), community involvement, and charitable contribution. The Civic Engagement Supplement—which was administered annually between 2008 and 2011, and again in 2013—includes questions about political engagement (e.g., political discussion and voting in local elections), and social connection (e.g., favors for neighbors, seeing friends). Statistics about voter participation in national elections come from the Voting and Registration Supplement, which is administered in even years. The estimates are based on US citizens.

All surveys, including federal surveys, are subject to sampling error. Margin of error is influenced by multiple factors including sample size, estimate size, population size, and other parameters. Therefore, we do not report one margin of error across all indicators. With that said—due to the large sample sizes in this report (3,538 for the smallest supplement)—sampling error is quite small, within one to two percentage points. However, 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.

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 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
DataHaven
Connecticut Humanities
Connecticut Campus Compact
The Fund for Greater Hartford
William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund
Wesleyan University

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

Indiana University Center on Representative
Government
Indiana Bar Foundation
Indiana Supreme Court
Indiana University Northwest
IU Center for Civic Literacy

Kansas

Kansas Health Foundation

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
St. 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 University of Texas at Austin
The Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life
RGK Center for Philanthropy & Community
Service

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 6

Millennials Civic Health Index

Mobilize.org
Harvard Institute of Politics
CIRCLE

Economic Health

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

CITIES

Atlanta

Community Foundation of Greater Atlanta

Austin

The University of Texas at Austin

RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service

Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life
Leadership Austin

Austin Community Foundation

KLRU-TV, Austin PBS

KUT 90.5 - Austin's NPR Station

Chicago

McCormick Foundation

Houston

Center for Local Elections in American Politics

Houston Endowment

The Kinder Institute

Kansas City & Saint Louis

Missouri State University

Park University

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

Twin Cities

Center for Democracy and Citizenship

Citizens League

John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

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