



2008

# CIVIC HEALTH INDEX



BEYOND the VOTE



Ohio's

# OHIO'S 2008 CIVIC HEALTH INDEX

# BEYOND

In a

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# the **VOTE**

## Battleground State

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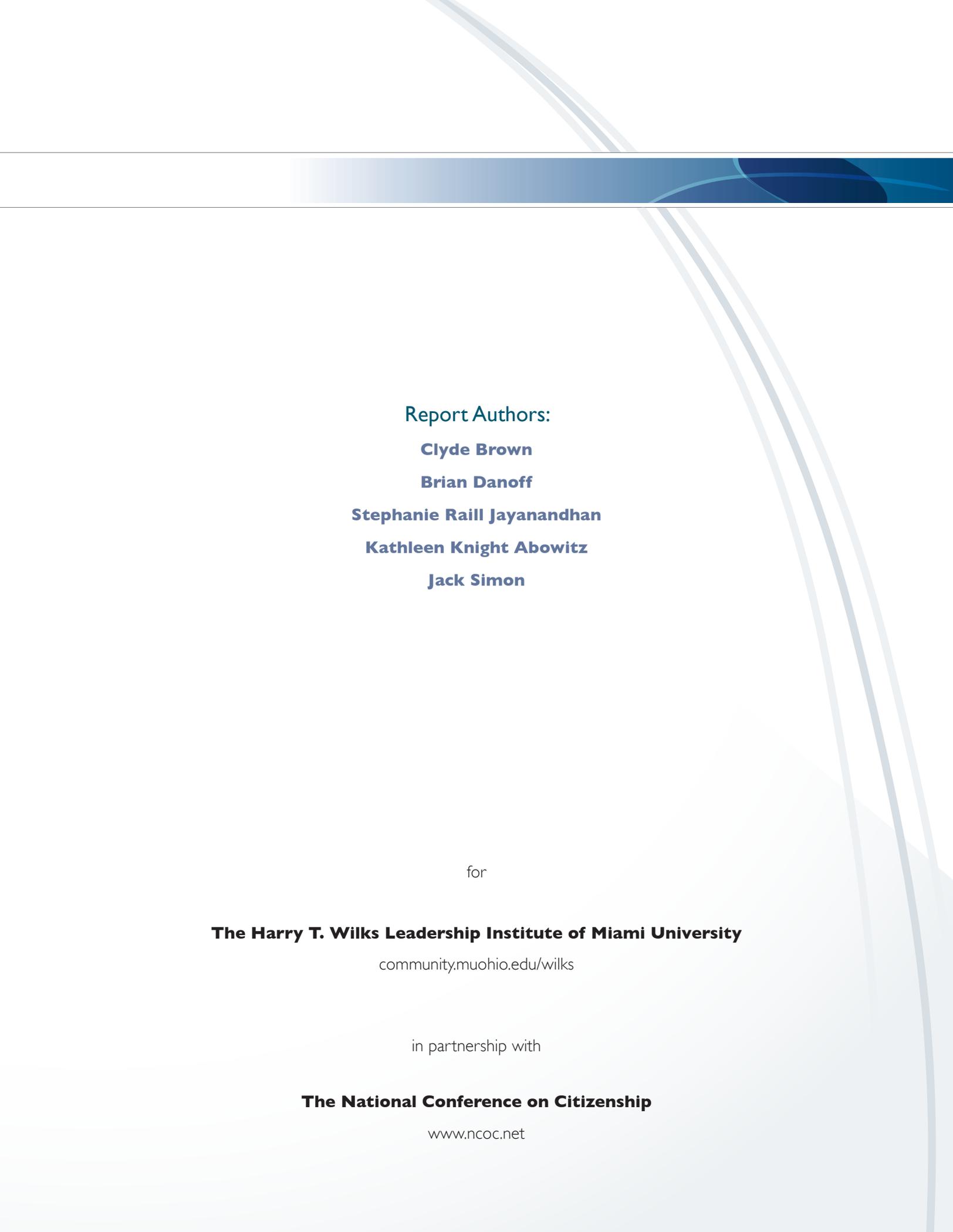
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# ABOUT THE REPORT <sup>2</sup>

**T**he National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC) was founded in 1946 and in 1953, was granted a formal charter from Congress, charging it with the responsibility of promoting more effective citizenship and working with other organizations to encourage the development of active, informed, and conscientious citizens. Throughout its rich history, NCoC has worked to achieve these goals in a variety of ways, including an annual conference that brings together the leading public and private initiatives to strengthen citizenship in America.

In 2006, NCoC launched an ambitious initiative to establish a national index to measure the state of America's civic health. Since that time, developmental work on the Civic Health Index has been undertaken in partnership with the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), Harvard's Saguro Seminar: Civic Engagement in America, and a wide range of distinguished scholars and practitioners. The Civic Health Index is intended to help the nation chart its progress toward building and maintaining engaged, effective, and responsible citizens.

Unlike the federal government which takes the lead in gathering information that helps to provide a picture of the nation's economy, there is no centralized source of information about the condition of America's civic health. To begin to remedy this condition, NCoC and its partners drew on a variety of public and private surveys that have collected data that are important indicators of key aspects of civic health. NCoC's 2006 report, *America's Civic Health Index: Broken Engagement*, documented a 30 year-long decline in the nation's civic health. The 2007 report, *Renewed Engagement: Building on America's Civic Core*, gave hope to the bleak picture of civic decline by identifying a core of about 15 percent—roughly 36 million people—who participate in impressive ways and stand out as civic leaders. It is those citizens, the report argued, who serve as a foundation upon which to build a stronger civic America. The 2008 report, *Beyond the Vote*, takes note of increased levels of citizen activity

surrounding the presidential elections and argues that a central challenge for the nation's civic health will be that of capitalizing on and maintaining post-election engagement, particularly among young people.

To address the longer term question of developing a stable and continuing data collection system, NCoC and others have been working with the U. S. Census Bureau. The Current Population Survey (CPS) has been collecting data on voter turnout for more than 20 years. In 2002, in partnership with the Corporation for National and Community Service and others, the CPS began collecting annual data on volunteering in America. In 2006, the CPS added items indicating the extent to which citizens attend public meetings in their communities and work in cooperation with others to help solve community problems. In this report, we use the CPS data to paint a broad picture of civic health, and then use the online NCoC data to take a closer and more detailed look at Ohio's civic health. Beginning in 2008, the CPS will partner with NCoC to greatly expand the range of information it collects in relation to the civic engagement of American citizens. As these data become available annually, they will permit NCoC and its state partners to improve measurement and to routinely monitor the civic condition of the nation and the states.

## The Sample

The survey data on which this report is based were collected as part of a national online sample taken by Peter D. Hart Research Associates in July 2008. Hart Research partnered with Greenfield Online for sample recruitment for the online sample of respondents (both national and state) for the Civic Health Index survey.

Greenfield maintains a pre-recruited, opt-in global respondent panel in addition to utilizing their proprietary Real-Time Sampling (RTS) capabilities. Greenfield's proprietary Real-Time Sample provides a significantly larger sample to draw from for each survey, above and beyond Greenfield's pre-recruited panel. These respondents are continuously recruited for surveys, in real-time, via a wide network of hundreds of website affiliates, providing access to a broad universe of respondents nationally and regionally beyond the pre-recruited panel.

Respondents are recruited via ads placed on various Web sites, and there is a double opt-in process for participants to join the panel.

Respondents receive a small cash incentive for the completion of a survey. The panel and Real-Time Sampling do not include people who do not use the Internet.

The sample for this survey was structured to achieve targets for gender, age, race/ethnicity and census region. Quotas were put in place to ensure these targets were achieved to produce a nationally representative sample of the target audience. The Ohio sample includes 437 respondents; the national online sample surveyed 1,000 respondents..

## Introduction

This report represents a collaboration between the Harry T. Wilks Leadership Institute at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, and The National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC) in Washington, D.C. Miami University, founded in 1809, is a public university located in south-west Ohio committed to excellence in liberal arts undergraduate education as well as the active engagement of its students in both curricular and co-curricular life. The Wilks Leadership Institute is one expression of that commitment. The Wilks Institute promotes community-based learning experiences that prepare students to become engaged public leaders and informed global citizens while also enriching and giving back to the communities that surround and support Miami University.

The National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC) is the nation's leading advocate for civic participation and the only organization chartered by Congress to play that role. The NCoC created America's Civic Health Index to assess how the American people were performing on a wide array of indicators of civic health. On September 22, 2008, the National Conference on Citizenship issued *America's Civic Health Index 2008: Beyond the vote*, its third annual report on the nation's civic health based on a survey of 2,005 respondents, using phone interviews and online surveys. In 2008, NCoC also chose to study in more depth the civic life of three states – namely, Ohio, Florida, and California. This report offers an analysis of the survey results from Ohio.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**T**his report represents the first attempt to comprehensively assess the health of Ohio's civic life. While many measures exist for evaluating Ohio's well-being in economic arenas, or with respect to education, there has not been an effort to systematically report to the public on Ohio's civic life – that is, on the relative rate and success of Ohio citizens' efforts to make a difference in their communities through both political and non-political processes and associations.<sup>3</sup> We analyze data from our pool of 437 Ohio survey respondents and also draw on data from the NCoC national online sample of 1,000 respondents.

As a swing state over which national political battles have recently been fought, Ohio is often in the political news, particularly every four years during presidential elections. But how are Ohioans involved beyond the election, in their communities and in civic and political life beyond the voting booth?

**Ohio ranks 24th in the nation in its civic health index score.** Using Current Population Survey data, we measured rates of volunteering, voting, working with others, and attending public meetings. Ohio ranks near the middle of the list of 50 states and the District of Columbia by each of these measures.

**Many Ohioans are active in community service efforts, but other forms of civic engagement are rarer and more sporadic.** 46% of our Ohio sample reports that they had volunteered in their communities in the last year. Such positive involvement provides Ohio villages, towns and cities with enormous energy and resources for social progress. Of some concern, however, are the rates at which Ohioans are civically engaged beyond volunteering in organizations. Fewer than 1/3 attended a club meeting in the last year; about 1 in 5 respondents had worked on a community project; and about 1 in 6 reported having attempted to change a local policy in their community, school or workplace in the last year.

**A significant number of Ohio respondents (82%) express skepticism about the integrity of government, believing that government is run largely in the interest of the powerful few.** While such distrust in government was seen among respondents in the national survey as well, a greater percentage of Ohio respondents agreed that government was not run in their interests. Such significant levels of distrust provide a disturbing reflection of Ohioans' views about the health of their democratic institutions.

**Ohioans do not expect to discuss or actively work on the key political issues of the day once the 2008 election is over.** The focus of this study, "Beyond the Vote," tries to turn the spotlight on the ways citizens will continue to be engaged in their communities and political processes after the buzz of the national presidential election fades away. To be sure, most Ohioans are likely to remain involved in their communities after the election, and Ohioans will continue to volunteer in organizations. However, engagement with public policy issues is likely to decrease once the election is over. Like much of the nation, Ohio's civic engagement is episodic, and political engagement tends to revolve around high profile national elections.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the bulk of Ohio's ongoing community work tends to be done by a small core of her citizenry. This civic core of Ohio's population is to be commended, but cannot tackle the challenges that we face on their own.

**Ohioans strongly favor a number of policy proposals that are aimed at sustaining greater levels of citizen engagement between elections.**

Such policies would provide stronger policy mechanisms at the state and federal levels for educating about and supporting the work that ordinary citizens of all ages can contribute to their communities. For example:

**86%**

of Ohioans support giving every young person the opportunity to earn tuition money by completing a year of national community service;

**82%**

favor holding a national deliberation on a major issue and requiring Congress to respond to what citizens say;

**75%**

would like to see service-learning (combinations of classroom learning and community service) required in schools.

Sources: 2008 NCoC Ohio Online Survey.

Support for these policy initiatives in Ohio is consistent across political affiliations, and representative of national support for these ideas. Such measures could help ensure that Ohioans are more consistently involved in civic and political affairs of their community, rather than becoming interested only during the election season.

**We find evidence that some demographic groups are leading the way for others in civic engagement:** both African-American and Millennial citizens stand out as reaching higher levels of engagement in their communities. The respondents in

the generation called Millennial, the youngest group of citizens we sampled, showed signs of higher participation in community activities. Moreover, African-American respondents were at least as involved and in some cases more involved than White Ohioans in community activities. We found women to be under-represented in political activism. We also found that online forms of civic engagement, or “netizenship,” are bringing some new people to civic and community involvement through electronic forums.

Democracy works best when diverse citizens are consistently engaged in their communities and political life. This means that government officials, educators, business leaders, nonprofit workers, students, and community leaders all need to think creatively about ways to encourage and to tap the civic energies of Ohioans. By studying Ohio’s civic health, and building on the support expressed in this survey for improving it, we believe that *The Ohio 2008 Civic Health Report: Beyond the Vote in a Battleground State* can help provide direction and momentum for civic renewal.

# THE CIVIC

# LANDSCAPE

IN OHIO 2008

**O**hio often serves as a mirror for the rest of the nation, a fact that springs from its unique geography. Located between the east coast and the middle of the nation, Ohio acts as the gateway into the Midwest, but is a place where three distinct cultures —East Coast, Southern, and Midwestern —merge. It is also a state of regions, each reflecting various aspects of American life writ large.<sup>5</sup>

The Northeast of the state has long been heavily industrial, with strong ties to industry, steel, and unions. Northwest Ohio encompasses Toledo, and Central Ohio contains the capital, Columbus. The Southeast and the Southwest parts of the state, more economically diverse, encompass Cincinnati, Dayton, and more rural and poorer areas including the Appalachian

southeast. The different regions of Ohio tend to be quite distinct culturally and politically. Ohio's regionalism is one of the great challenges of governance in the state, but this diversity is also a strength shared with the nation.

In its regional diversity and historical mix of rural and urban populations, Ohio is in many respects a microcosm of the nation as a whole, both in its composition and in its civic health. "Ohio was the first entirely American state, and one which ever since has seemed an epitome of American normalcy."<sup>6</sup> It is said that Ohio is a bellwether in national presidential elections, but the state's civic

health indicators are also representative of some of the nation's strengths and weaknesses when it comes to the involvement of citizens in their communities. In short, Ohio can provide insight into of some key national trends and problems.

While there is much truth in the idea that Ohio is a microcosm, Ohio also faces its own particular challenges that have important implications for the state's civic health. Ohio, at present, faces economic and educational challenges that are particularly daunting. Having lost over

## The Generations

For the purpose of this report,

**Millennials** are 15-29 years old;

**Generation X** are 30-44 years old;

**Baby Boomers** are 45-64 years old;

**Seniors** are 65 and older

200,000 manufacturing jobs between 2000 and 2007, Ohio's unemployment rate has in recent years been significantly higher than the national rate.<sup>7</sup> In the home mortgage crisis of 2008, Ohio was particularly hard-hit; as of September 2008, Ohio's foreclosure rate was the third highest nationally.<sup>8</sup> In addition, Ohio's educational outcomes show problems. In 2002, Ohio's high school graduation rate was 71%, and 23 percent of Ohioans hold bachelor's degrees compared with a national average of 27 percent.<sup>9</sup> A significant number of young adults in our state are failing to finish high school and fewer are going on to post-secondary education. Since people with Bachelor's degrees are more likely to be civically engaged than those whose formal educations ended in high school, these statistics are troubling.<sup>10</sup> Our economic and educational challenges are intertwined with the civic health of our state, though our present challenges are more severe than in many other places. Such challenges call for urgency and creativity in addressing problems of civic health.

With its 20 Electoral College votes and an electorate that is divided fairly evenly along partisan lines, Ohio has again emerged as a crucial "battleground" state in the 2008 presidential election. As a result of its electoral significance, Ohio is seeing a steady stream of presidential campaign events in the months leading up to the election. But once the candidates, the crowds, and the national journalists disappear after November 4th, what will be the status of Ohio's civic health, and how might it be improved further? This report seeks to shed light on this question.

# OHIO'S CIVIC HEALTH INDEX 2008

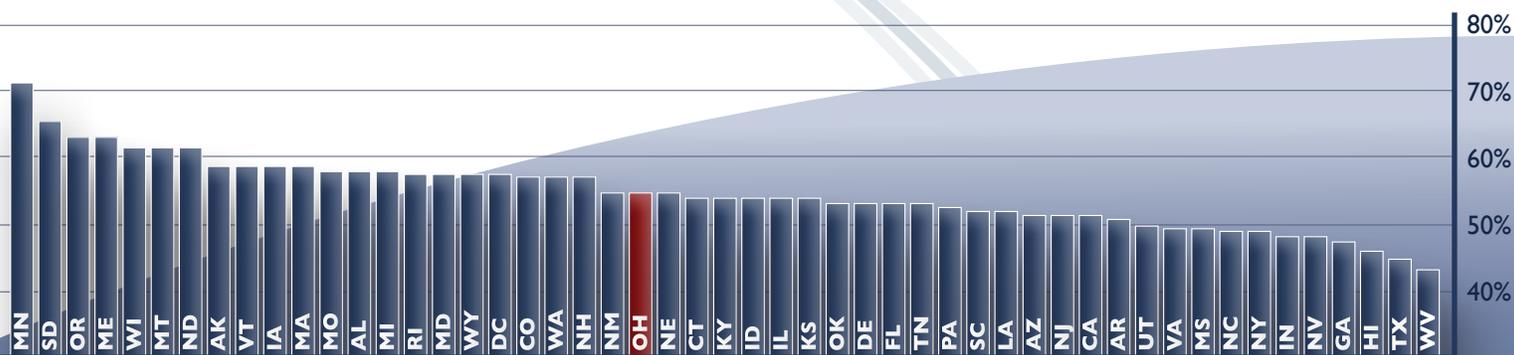
**In this report, we take the first step toward building an index of Ohio's civic health.<sup>11</sup> We begin with the limited data that are currently available from the Current Population Survey.**

In the longer term, future reports will incorporate additional CPS data as it becomes available. We expect that future CPS data will add to our understanding of Ohio's civic health. We do not, however, without significant changes in society, expect that they will alter the fundamental picture suggested by the results presented here.

We begin with the simple act of voting. A bare minimum civic responsibility in democratic systems requires that citizens engage in the opportunity to exercise choice in the selection of those who would govern. Without widespread participation in free elections, a critical link in the chain of accountability is broken and citizens yield control over the choices made by their leaders. Figure 1 shows the average turnout across the past three elections (2002-2006) by state. Minnesota set a standard for the nation: an average of over seven out of ten Minnesota registered citizens showed up to vote. In another half-dozen states, an average of more than 60 per cent of registered citizens exercised their right to choose. At the other end of the spectrum, there were 11 states – anchored by West Virginia – in which,

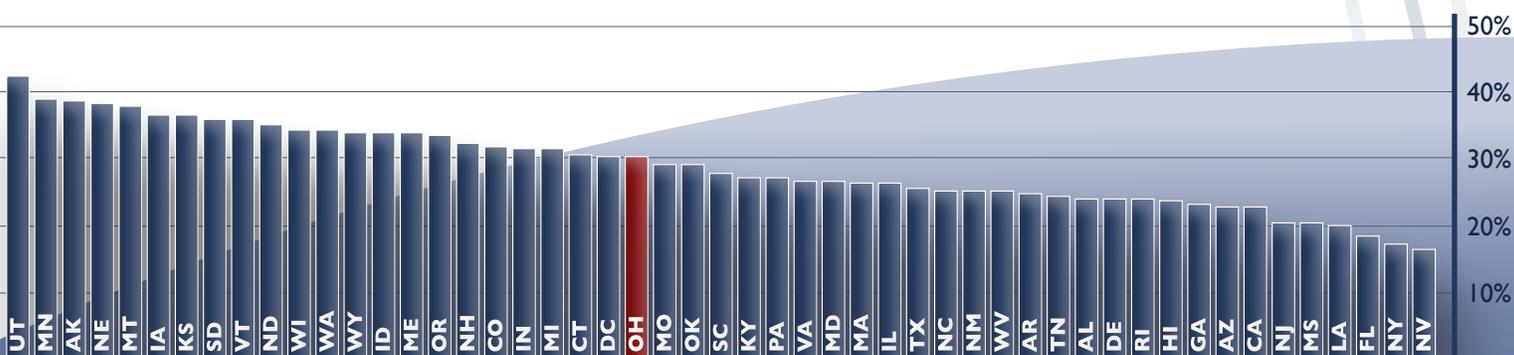
on average, less than half of the registered voters went to the polls. Ohio fell near the middle of the list of fifty states and the District of Columbia. Ranked at number 23, only slightly more than half (54.2%) of those who are registered actually voted. About 70 percent of Ohioans over 18 are registered to vote; this means that less than 40 percent of Ohio's eligible population typically votes in a general election.

A quick word can be said about how Ohio compares to its neighboring states of Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. Ohio ranks second on the list, behind Michigan (58.2%), but ahead of the others, including West Virginia which had the lowest voter turnout rate (43.7%).



**FIGURE 1**  
**CIVIC HEALTH INDICATOR 1: AVERAGE VOTING TURNOUT 2002-2006**

Alexis deTocqueville observed of America in 1835 that “in no country of the world has the principle of association been more successfully used or applied to a greater multitude of objectives than in America.” Indeed, voluntary associations are at the heart of citizen engagement and America’s claim to be a pluralist democracy. It is in associations and nonprofit organizations that we promote culture, engage in nonpartisan and partisan politics, practice religion, perform charitable acts, solve community problems, and hundreds of other purposes. By aggregating citizens with common interests and incorporating them in the decision-making process, associations give voice and power to ordinary citizens. The viability of voluntary associations depends, however, on the willingness of citizens to contribute their time and other resources to these activities.



**FIGURE 2**  
**CIVIC HEALTH INDICATOR 2: VOLUNTEERING 2006-2007**

Figure 2 shows, by state, the average—for 2006–2007—percentage of citizens age fifteen and greater who reported that they had undertaken volunteer activities in the past year. Utah tops the list with more than 40 percent of its citizens reporting that they had volunteered during the past year. Several other states are within striking distance of the Utah volunteering rate, including Minnesota, Alaska, Nebraska and Montana. At the bottom of the list are three states with volunteering rates of less than 20 percent. Again, Ohio ranks 23rd with a volunteering rate of 30.1%. Ohio pulls up the national average of 26.4%, but Ohio lags behind Indiana (31.0%) and Michigan (30.8%) in this regard.

# OHIO'S CIVIC HEALTH INDEX CONT.

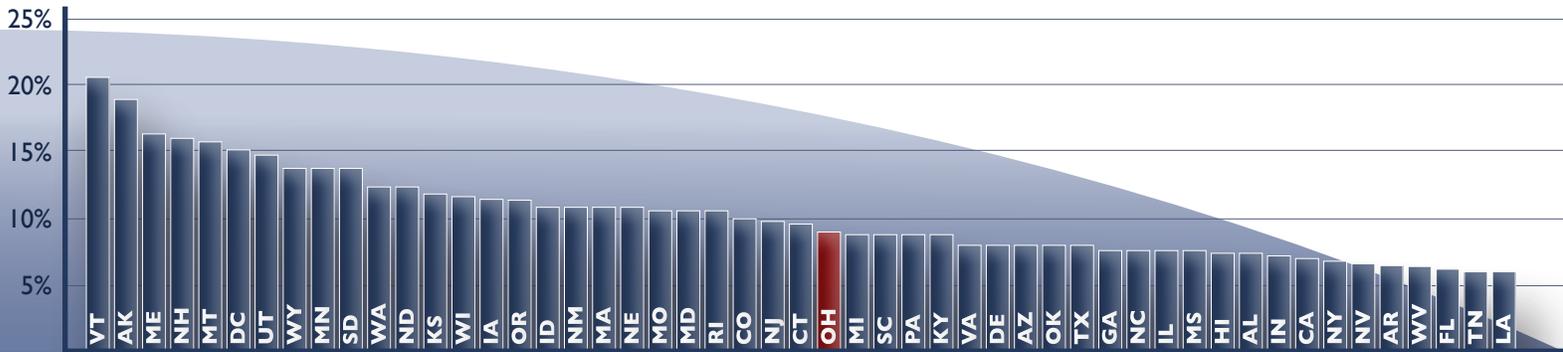
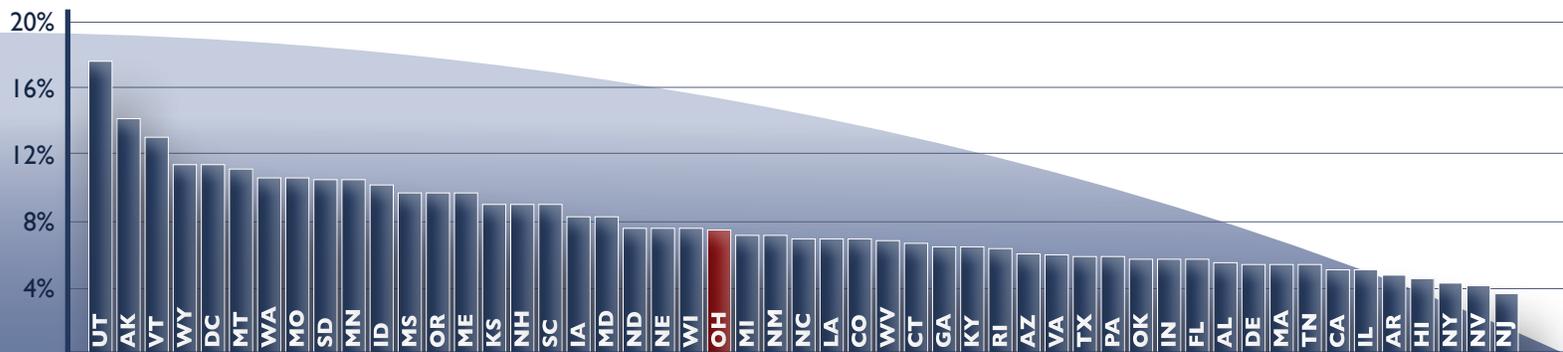


FIGURE 3  
CIVIC HEALTH INDICATOR 3: ATTENDING PUBLIC MEETINGS

The third indicator considers the extent to which citizens age fifteen and older choose to involve themselves directly in the process of governing. Figure 3 shows the average – for 2006-2007 – percentage of citizens who reported that they had attended a public meeting during the past year. With strong traditions of participatory local governance, Vermont tops the list with more than 20 percent of its citizens reporting that they attended a public meeting. Alaska falls only slightly behind with over 19 percent of its citizens attending public meetings. Ohio is below the national median, ranking 27th, at 9.2%. Among its regional neighbors, it is tied with Michigan and more engaged than Pennsylvania (9.0%), Kentucky (8.9%), Indiana (7.0%), and West Virginia (6.1%). At the bottom of the list, three states have less than 6 percent of citizens reporting participation in public meetings.



CIVIC HEALTH INDICATOR 4:  
WORKING WITH OTHERS ON COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

FIGURE 4

Our final civic health indicator focuses on collaborative problem solving. Communities with strong civic cultures are those in which citizens have the skills and the inclination to join together to address issues of common concern. Figure 4 shows the average percentage – for 2006-2007 – of citizens older than fifteen who report that they have worked with other people in their neighborhood to fix a problem or improve a condition in their community. Once again, Utah stands out at the top of the list with almost 18 percent of its citizens reporting that they have worked with others to address community issues. Ohio, again, falls in the middle compared to other states but with an engagement rate only one-third that of Utah. Ranked 23rd, Ohioans are slightly more involved in neighborhood and community improvement projects than are the citizens of the surrounding states. At the bottom of the list, collaborative community problem solving appears to be almost non-existent. Fewer than four percent of New Jersey’s citizens reported that they have worked with others in their neighborhood.

Combining these four measures, Figure 5 shows Ohio’s Civic Health Index based on the data from the Current Population Survey. Ranked 24th among states in the nation, Ohio earns a civic engagement score of 25.3. For comparative purposes Ohio ranks slightly lower on the Index than Michigan (21st), and higher than Kentucky (29th), Pennsylvania (32nd), Indiana (34th) and West Virginia (48th).

We underscore the point that we regard this as a first approximation in an effort to measure Ohio’s civic health. Additional measures will be available through the CPS in the future and they can be incorporated into subsequent Ohio Civic Health Indexes. That said, our first approximation leads unalterably to the conclusion that Ohio’s civic health is in the middle of the pack when compared to other states in the nation. But that fact should not provide comfort, as rates of national civic engagement show signs of distress. While we may not yet need to reach for the defibrillator, there is much that could and should be done to improve the civic health of the Buckeye state.



FIGURE 5  
OVERALL CIVIC HEALTH INDEX 2007

# 2008 KEY FINDINGS OF THE NCCOC'S OHIO ONLINE SURVEY

## Ohio mirrors the nation in mixed levels of civic engagement.

In both Current Population Survey data presented in the previous section as well as in the online NCoC data reported in this section, Ohio is representative of the nation as a whole. Ohio mirrors the nation in many respects when it comes to levels of civic engagement. Almost half of the Ohio respondents reported volunteering in their community, but fewer said they were involved in more politically-oriented community work, such as attending a community meeting or attempting to change a policy at their school, workplace, or neighborhood.

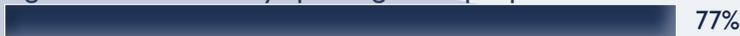
About 46% of Ohio respondents reported that they had volunteered in the last year, as compared with 48% of national online survey respondents. Census data provides a more modest assessment of Ohio's volunteering rates, as noted above. Clearly, a significant portion of Ohio's citizens devote time to improving their communities.

Ohio citizens, like their national counterparts, report relatively high levels of social trust and communication with family and friends.

These activities by Ohio citizens help build social capital, a key asset for civic engagement and problem-solving. Communication networks help build social trust among community members, and help facilitate cooperation for mutual benefit.<sup>12</sup> Community members who talk,

visit or see one another on a regular basis are more likely to trust one another and be able to work together on their collective challenges. These healthy rates of spending time and communicating with friends and family signal that Ohioans possess positive assets for helping to solve community disputes, problems, and crises.

Agreed that "Generally speaking, most people are honest."



Agreed with the statement, "I spend a lot of time communicating with friends using a computer, cell phone or other electronic device"



Agreed with the statement "My whole family usually eats dinner together."

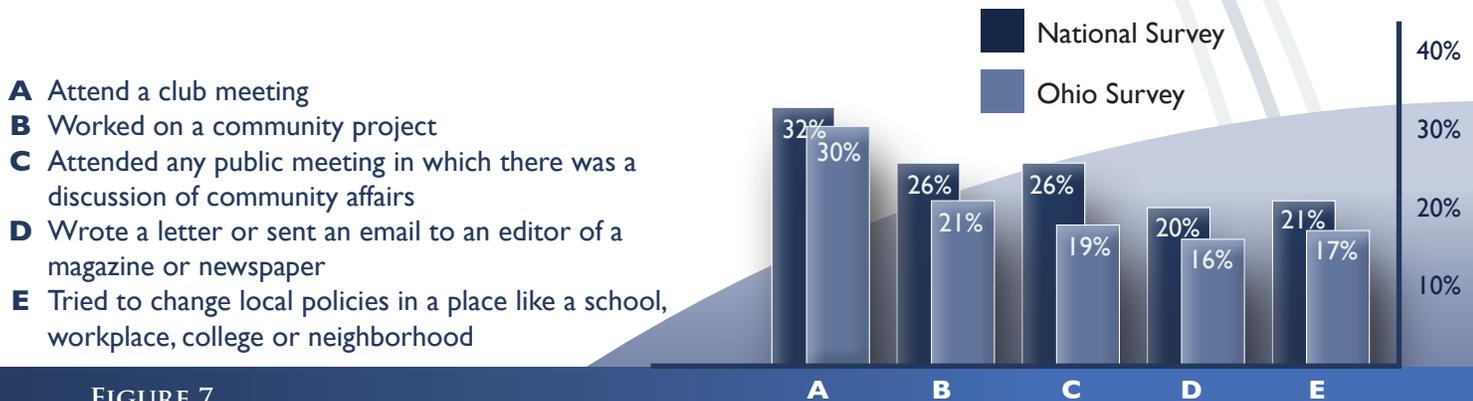


Agreed with the statement "I spend a lot of time visiting friends."



FIGURE 6  
SOCIAL TRUST AND COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Yet when we asked respondents to tell us about their specific community activities, we found smaller percentages reporting involvement in community work and problem-solving.

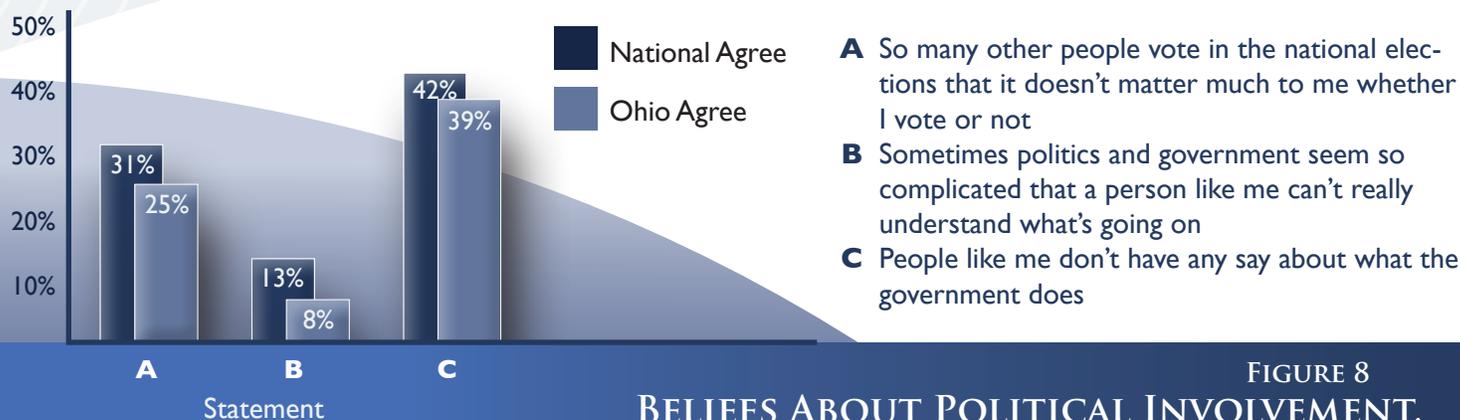


**FIGURE 7**  
**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES,** Reported activities in last 12 month period  
**OHIO AND NATIONAL RESPONDENTS**

Ohioans are more likely to go to club meetings and work on community projects than go to public meetings or try to change a policy in a school or workplace. While Ohioans are less likely to work with other people in their neighborhoods to fix or improve something, their rates of involvement generally follow national trends for preferring non-political engagement activities, such as volunteering or working on a community project over more explicitly political activities. These are missed opportunities to take social capital, built through positive levels of community participation, and turn it into political engagement that will enhance local and state democratic institutions and processes.

When it comes to different types of political engagement, Ohioans enjoy some slight civic benefits when it comes to being a “battleground state” in presidential elections. Ohio respondents were somewhat more likely to think their vote matters, when compared to the national online survey respondents. Ohioans are somewhat more likely to believe they have a grasp of politics; they were less likely to find politics too complicated to understand. However, they were as likely as the national online sample to feel they lack a voice in their government; a full 39% of Ohioans in our survey believe they do not have any say in what government does.

# KEY FINDINGS OF THE NCoC'S OHIO ONLINE SURVEY CONT.



**FIGURE 8**  
**BELIEFS ABOUT POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT,**  
**OHIO AND NATIONAL RESPONDENTS**

Of the 25% of Ohioans that agreed that “so many other people vote in the national elections that it doesn't matter much to me whether I vote or not,” 9% of the respondents strongly agreed with that statement, while the remaining 16% simply agreed. Of the 39% who reported that “people like me don't have any say about what the government does,” 13% of Ohioans strongly agreed and 26% agreed with the statement.

When it comes to political involvement during a year of increasingly active presidential campaigning, Ohio respondents in our survey showed evidence of modest involvement in the past 12 months.



**FIGURE 9**  
**POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT,**  
**IN OHIO AND THE NATION**

Since the focus on Ohio as a Presidential battleground has resulted in voter registration efforts around the state, we were interested in learning more about the 42% of Ohioans who had stated that someone had talked to them about registering or getting out to vote. We found that 56% of African-American Ohioans reported being

asked in the past 12 months, compared to just 40% of White Ohioans. This suggests that outreach efforts to African-American voters are having some impact. Similarly, more females (46%) than males (38%) said that someone had talked to them about getting out to vote. In breaking down voter registration requests by generation, almost half

of Millennials and Boomers reported being asked, while only 38% of Generation X and 32% of Seniors had been asked. Finally, around 40% of those with an undergraduate degree or less reported being asked, compared to more than 50% of those with a graduate education. Taken together, this data suggests that outreach efforts to African-Americans, women and the young are reaching their target groups; however, outreach to people with less than a graduate school education is not seeing the same result.

On the whole, Ohio again mirrors the nation on most measures of political involvement, with one difference: contributions of money to candidates or parties. Ohioans are less likely to have donated to a candidate or political party. This finding may be due to the fact that Ohioans have, on average, been harder hit by evaporating manufacturing jobs, the current mortgage crisis, and other economic down-trends.

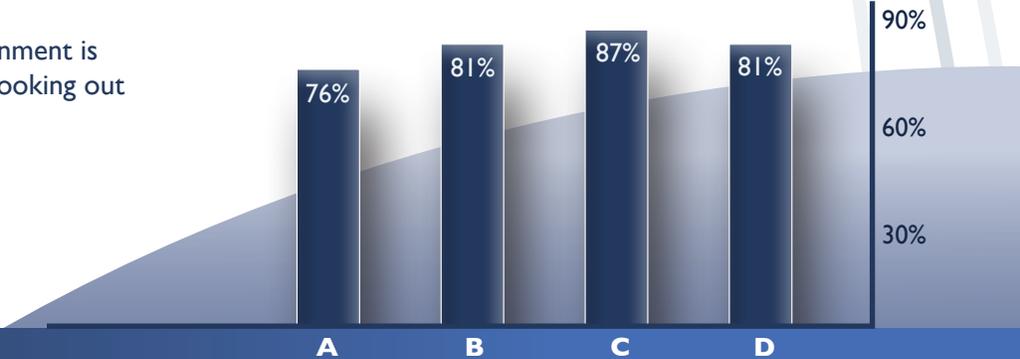
**Ohioans are skeptical about the integrity of the government and the media.**

Ohio state government has faced corruption scandals for more than a decade. What some characterize as Ohio’s “pay to play” political culture was brought fully into public view when former Governor Bob Taft (1999-2007) was implicated in a campaign finance scandal with political donor and rare coin dealer Tom Noe. Dubbed “Coingate” by the media, this scandal followed months of national scrutiny on Ohio election laws and procedures following the results of the 2004 presidential elections, when reports of election tampering were widespread. These are among the issues that may cause Ohioans to believe that government is not working in their interests.<sup>13</sup> Ohio’s democracy faces “enormous challenges,” and public confidence in government is relatively weak.<sup>14</sup>

A full 82% of Ohio respondents, as compared with 77% of the national survey respondents, agreed with the statement that the government is not run with their interests in mind. While all age groups in our sample agreed with this statement, the Millennials were slightly less likely to agree with this statement.

**Statement:** Would you say the government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves?

- A** Ohio Millennials agree
- B** Ohio Generation X agree
- C** Ohio Boomers agree
- D** Ohio Seniors agree



**FIGURE 10**  
**PERCENTAGES IN OHIO REPORTING GOVERNMENT RUN**  
**IN INTEREST OF FEW, BY GENERATION**

# KEY FINDINGS OF THE NCoC'S OHIO ONLINE SURVEY CONT.

Ohioans are in agreement with the respondents in the national online survey with respect to their belief that government is not run in their interest. These findings align with a 2008 Gallup Poll which found a deterioration in confidence in U.S. government institutions. "Just 26% of Americans say they are satisfied with the way the nation is being governed, the lowest in the eight-year history of the Governance poll and tying a 1973 Gallup reading as the lowest ever."<sup>15</sup>

Related findings show that citizens in Ohio lack confidence in the press. When asked how much confidence they have in people who run the press, such as newspapers and news magazines, 59% said "only some" and 34% said "hardly any." A full third of all Ohioans over 29

have hardly any confidence in the press, and this finding in Ohio is substantiated by other national surveys. A national poll of 800 respondents in 2007 showed "significantly declining percentages of Americans saying that they believe all or most of media news reporting," with just under one quarter or 24% of respondents saying they believe little or none of the reporting in the media.<sup>16</sup>

Ohioan respondents in our survey believe that government is not run with the average citizen's interests in mind. They understand media to be at best a somewhat reliable source of information. This popular skepticism points to particularly tough challenges for those who wish to strengthen democratic institutions in the state of Ohio.

## Post-Election Activity: Most Ohioans do not expect to be engaged after Nov. 4th

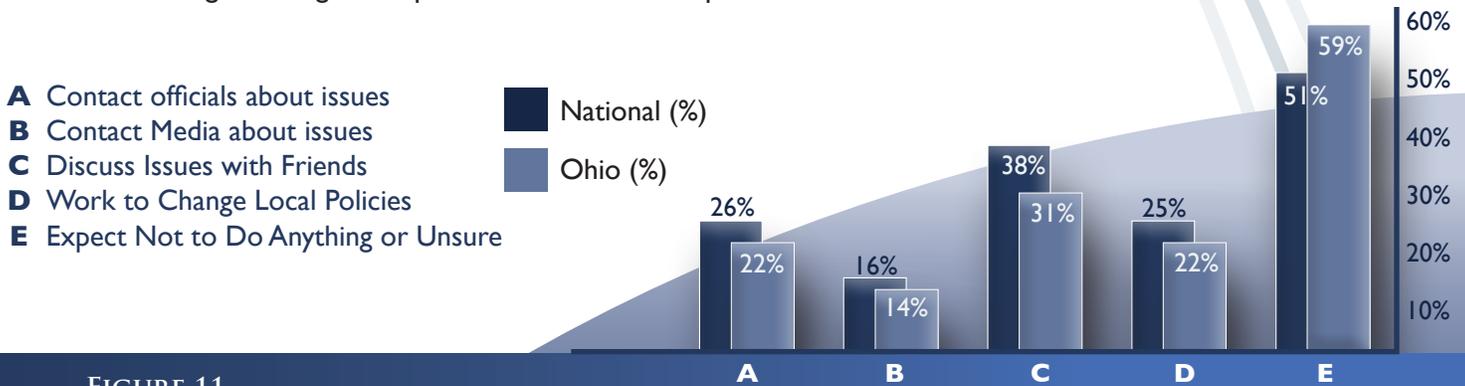
Most Ohioans say they are not likely to act on issues raised during the 2008 political campaigns after the election is over. This finding is cause for concern about the health of our democratic institutions.

In this report, we have delineated two distinct but overlapping types of engagement. Community engagement typically includes activities such as volunteering, and political engagement measures are those having to do with citizens' involvement in the processes of public life and governing. Community engagement rates in the U.S. and Ohio seem healthy. Recent federal surveys have found that more than 60 million Americans volunteer each year, and more than half of all Americans are members of at least one voluntary group or

association—55% according to the 2008 NCoC national phone survey and 62% according to the 2004 General Election Survey.<sup>17</sup> Consistent with historic trends, participation in these forms of engagement is expected to remain high after Election Day. Yet political engagement rates should raise some concern. In our online survey, Ohioans reported that they will join the many Americans in continuing their community engagement activities, but their political engagement will be comparatively far less active.

In the online survey, respondents were asked whether they expect to engage after the 2008 Election in any of four possible ways:

- 1 Contacting officials about issues raised in the campaign,
- 2 Contacting media about such issues,
- 3 Discussing issues with friends, and
- 4 Working to change local policies in schools, workplaces, etc.



**FIGURE 11**  
**RESPONDENTS (%) PLANNING TO ENGAGE IN**  
**POST-2008 ELECTION ACTIVITIES**

The Ohio engagement responses can be divided into “Very Likely” and “Probably Likely” categories for each activity. For contacting officials the division is 7% and 15%; for contacting media 3%, 11%; discussing issues with friends 7%, 24%; and working to change local politics 5%, 17%. There are differences among the four activities with talking to friends being the most likely and contacting the media the least likely.

We expected inflated results due to social desirability bias (over-reporting of activities that would be viewed favorably by others) and unrealistic expectations of future activities. However, only 8% of respondents in the Ohio sample expect to do all four activities after the election. Seven percent plan to do three; 9% two; 17% one; and 59% were either unsure about their plans or did not expect to do any of the four activities. The corresponding levels of activity for the national sample are: all four (11%), three (7%), two (10%), one (21%) and zero or unsure (51%).

In each of the four activities, national respondents indicated a greater likelihood of expected participation in future civic activities than Ohio respondents. However, the differences between the two samples are small. The expected activity with the largest difference is discussing issues with friends where Ohioans are at a seven percent deficit.

# OHIOANS FAVOR POLICY CHANGE TO INSTITUTIONALIZE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

While our survey found that most Ohioans do not expect to be engaged on issues raised by the 2008 election, we saw strong support in the data for laws and other policies that would encourage and institutionalize civic engagement. Following the NCoC's 2008 national survey, the Ohio and National online oversamples gauged support for seven policy reforms that would encourage greater civic engagement and closer relationships between citizens and government in this area. The seven policy proposals are:

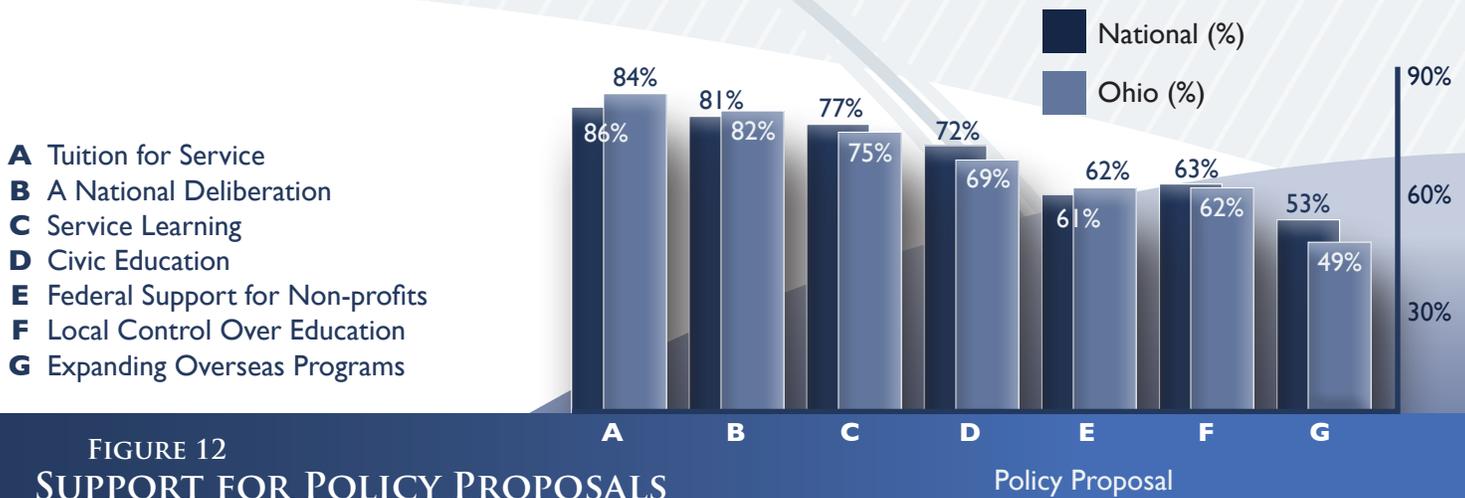
- 1 Tuition money for service
- 2 A national deliberation
- 3 Service-learning
- 4 Civic education
- 5 Federal support for nonprofits
- 6 Local control over education
- 7 Expanding overseas programs

The context for these particular policy proposals is provided by the 2008 NCoC Report:

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Civilian Conservation Corps, an initiative of President Franklin Roosevelt that would mobilize 3 million jobless men over a decade to work on improving the nation's public lands. Since that time, many Presidents and the U.S. Congress have proposed policies and initiatives to increase the civic engagement of Americans. Some Presidents have created opportunities for Americans to serve overseas; others have offered tuition or loan assistance in exchange for a commitment of service; others have promoted civic education and linked those efforts with new service opportunities; and still others have promoted linking classroom learning with community service experiences. ... To be effective, public polices must meet Americans where they are and respond to the real incentives that would engage them in civic life.

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they "favor strongly," "favor not so strongly," "oppose not so strongly," or "oppose strongly" each of the seven policies to institutionalize civic engagement. We report the favor vs. oppose split in Ohio, as well as the two levels of support in each instance. As is seen in Figure 12 there is very strong support for six of the seven proposals, each receiving substantial majorities, with one proposal reflecting an

evenly divided sample. These finding are very similar to the NCoC's national phone sample where support for the proposals ranged from a low of 52% (Expanding Overseas Programs) to a high of 87% (Tuition for Service). We are encouraged by the public support for these proposals because we think each has great potential to improve civic life in America.



**FIGURE 12**  
**SUPPORT FOR POLICY PROPOSALS**  
**TO INSTITUTIONALIZE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

**Tuition Money for Service:**

Among Ohioans in the 2008 survey, the most popular proposal was “offering every young person a chance to earn money toward college or advanced training if they complete a full year of national or community service.” This idea would mean a substantial expansion of existing education awards, which currently provide \$4,725 in tuition funds for volunteers who serve full-time for a whole year (most of these positions are competitive and scarce). Eighty-six percent favored this proposal (47% strongly and 39% not so strongly), while 14% oppose. Support for this proposal (and all the others with one exception) was bipartisan and intergenerational (see last paragraph of this section).

**A National Deliberation:**

The second most supported option by Ohioans was “involving more than one million Americans in a national discussion of an important public issue and requiring Congress to respond to what the citizens say.” This proposal had been developed by AmericaSpeaks and was endorsed by John Edwards during the presidential primary campaign.<sup>18</sup> Eighty-two percent support the idea (39% strongly and 43% not so strongly) and 18% do not favor it.

**Service Learning:**

The combination of community service with academic study, known as “service-learning,” is offered in half of American high schools.<sup>19</sup> Recent research shows that the vast majority of high school students, including 90 percent of those most at risk for dropping out, want service-learning in their schools.<sup>20</sup> Federal support for service-learning, provided through the Learn & Serve America program at the Corporation for National and Community Service, is offered on a competitive grant basis. There are no federal provisions or laws that require schools to offer service-learning; however, some jurisdictions, including the State of Maryland, require a minimum number of service-learning hours to graduate from high school. The survey asked about making service-learning universal and mandatory: “requiring all high school students to do community service as part of their work for one or more courses.” We put the question this way in order to discourage people from responding favorably to the general idea of service without considering possible costs or tradeoffs. One-fourth (24%) of those in the sample oppose this suggestion; while an overwhelming three-fourths majority (75%) favor it (33% strongly and 42% not so strongly).

# OHIOANS FAVOR POLICY CHANGE TO INSTITUTIONALIZE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

## **Civic Education testing:**

We asked about “requiring high school students to pass a new test on civics or government.” Sixty-nine percent liked this proposed requirement (26% strongly and 43 not so strongly) and 31% did not. In 2006, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Civics Assessment found that only 27% of high school seniors were “proficient” in the subject, and only 5% were “advanced.”<sup>21</sup> Such low levels of civic knowledge raise alarms about the future vibrancy of our democracy and its institutions, which depend upon citizens and leaders with a thorough understanding of American history and government.

## **Local Control over Education:**

We asked respondents whether they favored “changing the law so that local citizens must take the lead in setting standards and choosing tests for students in their local schools.” We posed this question because the No Child Left Behind Act has centralized control over education by increasing the importance of state and federal tests, which influence the curriculum. Critics have argued that the Act thereby discourages citizen engagement with education. Sixty-two percent favored local initiative and control (21% strongly and 41% not so strongly) with the remaining 39% opposing the idea.

## **Federal Support for Nonprofits:**

In 2001, the White House created a new Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, and in 2002, the USA Freedom Corps – a national service council and office that coordinated community and national service policy across the U.S. government. Both efforts worked closely with nonprofits across America and the world. In 2001, the White House issued a new report, *Uneven Playing Field*, that showed the significant barriers that faith-based and smaller community-based nonprofits face in accessing federal support for the delivery of social services. We asked our Ohio sample about “providing federal money to support nonprofit, faith-based, and

civic organizations that use volunteers.” This proposal also received affirmative support by sixty-two percent of those in the sample (24% strongly and 38% not so strongly) and was received negatively by a minority of 38%.

## **Expanding Overseas Programs:**

We asked about “funding and promoting overseas service as a way of improving our relations with other countries.” This was the proposal that most evenly divided the Ohio sample with a bare majority (52%) opposing the idea and slightly less than a majority (49%) favoring it (13% strongly and 35% not so strongly). It is also interesting to note here the greater support for domestic service-learning as compared to overseas service.

The responses in the Ohio and national samples are very similar. While the two change places on specific items in terms of the most positive responses, the difference is never more than four percent, well within the margin of error. The two samples reveal essentially identical levels of support for the seven policy proposals.

With respect to the Ohio sample, all of the proposals except Expanding Overseas Programs have bipartisan majority support from Republicans and Democrats. Among the six proposals with more than majority support,

Republicans range from a low of 60% for Local Control over Schools to a high of 87% for Tuition Money for Service, and Democrats range from a high of 86% for Tuition Money for Service to a low of 60% for Federal Support for Nonprofits. All of the proposals have majority support among the four age categories, except Expanding Overseas Programs which received slightly less than fifty percent support from Generation-Xers (49%), Baby Boomers (46%) and Seniors (49%). Millennials, perhaps not surprisingly, were least supportive of a new Civic Education test; 52% of them support the idea.

## Special Opportunities

In this section we look more closely at the civic participation of women and men, to investigate whether some aspects of public participation are split along gender lines. Further, we explore other segments of Ohio's civil society, Millennials and African-American Ohioans. Finally, we look at an emerging factor in public participation – “netizenship” or online participation. We find that online participation does engage some people who would not otherwise be engaged in the political process. However, a more significant barrier to overcome is that between discussion of issues—whether online or face to face—and political or community action.

### Women are underrepresented in political activism

Men and women reported similar levels of community involvement – slightly over half did at least one community involvement activity. More men were highly involved (12% compared to 8%) The same was true for political discussion. Around 80% of both men and women participate in at least one form of political discussion; men were very slightly more likely to be highly involved in political discussion. But 5% more women (48% compared to 43% of men) reported volunteering in the last year.

In political activism, men were much more involved. Almost 85% of women reported they did not do any of the activities on the political activist scale; 77% of men were

inactive. Men were more likely to be highly involved in political activism too; no women at all reported they did all four activities.

47% of men, but only 42% of women, reported they did not do any online civic activities. But men and women were equally represented among “netizens” – those who do 5 or more of the nine online civic activities we asked about. More women than men are doing a few (1-2) or several (3-4) netizenship activities. This suggests that online engagement may help women “clear the first hurdle” to participating in one or a few activities.

# KEY GROUPS PROVIDE PROMISE: MILLENNIALS, AFRICAN-AMERICANS, AND NETIZENS

## Millennials point to a promising future for civic engagement in Ohio

Ohio Millennials (aged 18-29), the next generation of Ohioans that will shape our community and political life, were found to be positively engaged in their communities. On some indicators they lead the way in solving problems in their communities. Millennial citizens, like their national counterparts who responded to the online survey, were more likely than other generations to attend a club meeting, engage in a community project, or work with others in their neighborhood to fix or improve something.

Millennials were also more likely to volunteer among all the generations surveyed. 59% of Ohio Millennials surveyed having volunteered in their community in the last year, as compared with 46% Generation X citizens, 44% Baby Boomers, and 32% Seniors.

Millennials build a great deal of social capital in their collective community efforts and volunteer work; they build networks of cooperation and trust through the work they are doing in their communities. Moreover, some Millennials are turning this community involvement into political engagement, through their involvement in political processes.

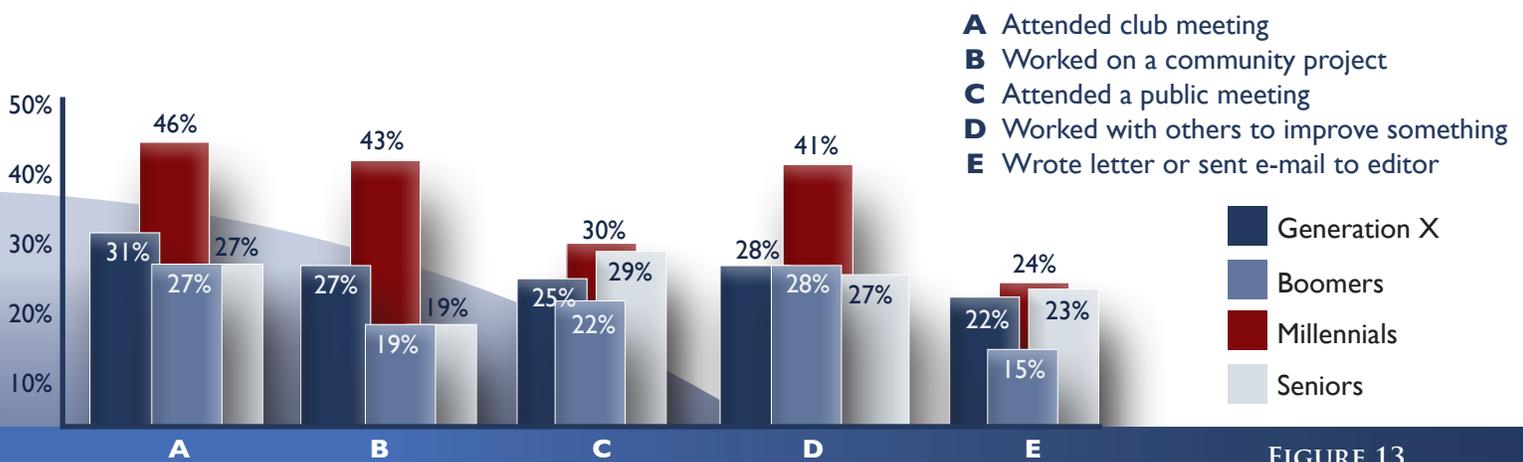


FIGURE 13  
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT INDICATORS,

REPORTED BY GENERATION IN NATIONAL ONLINE SURVEY

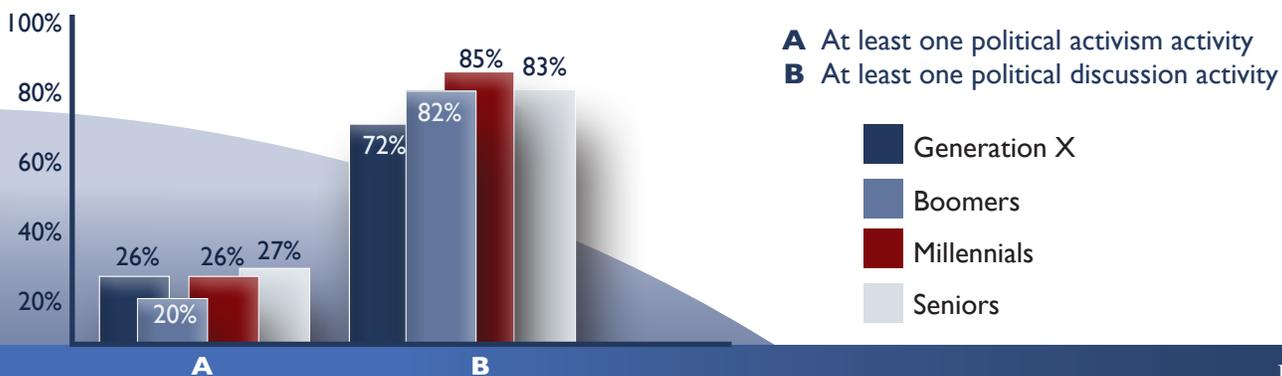


FIGURE 14  
POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT,

REPORTED BY GENERATION IN NATIONAL ONLINE SURVEY

Because Millennials make up a small portion of our overall sample, the potential for sampling error makes it difficult to report specific percentages for Ohio with confidence. However, the Ohio numbers for Millennials' engagement closely track the national sample, so we report the *national results* in Figure 13.

Nationally, Millennials were as likely to have participated in at least one political activism activity, and were more likely to have participated in at least one political discussion activity.

### African-Americans report high levels of engagement

Consistent with the findings of the national report, African-American Ohioans are at least as involved, and often more involved, than White Ohioans in a range of civic activities. More than half of African-Americans reported that they participated in at least one community involvement activity, whereas only about half of White Ohioans did. African-Americans also reported higher participation in politically activist activities. Levels of participation in political discussion and netizenship were similar for both White and African-American Ohioans.<sup>22</sup> Slightly more African-American respondents say that they are registered to vote; however almost exactly the same percentage of African-Americans and Whites (64%) report having voted in the Ohio presidential primary.

Because African-Americans make up a small portion of our overall sample, the potential for sampling error makes it difficult to report specific percentages for Ohio with confidence. However, the Ohio numbers for African Americans' engagement closely track the national sample, so we report the *national results* in the tables below.



FIGURE 15  
LEVELS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

BY RACE, NATIONAL ONLINE SURVEY

**Netizenship brings some new people to the table - but the challenge is moving from discussion to action.** 81 people, or 18% of our sample, were found to be “netizens” – they have a high level of online engagement. They use email and social networking sites to express political views; watch presidential videos and debates online; and donate online to presidential

campaigns. We defined netizens as those who said “yes” to 5 or more of our 9 questions about online participation. Netizens are about as likely as other Ohioans to say they had voted in a primary election, but quite a lot less likely to say they are registered to vote and much less likely to think their vote matters.

# KEY GROUPS PROVIDE PROMISE: MILLENNIALS, AFRICAN-AMERICANS, AND NETIZENS

We wanted to find out more about netizens – specifically, whether netizens were people who were also engaged in face-to-face political or community involvement, or whether online participation was bringing more people into civic activities. We were interested in this for two reasons. One is because there are few studies about online political habits in general, and fewer still that include information about Ohio. Secondly, if online political activities do draw in new participants, state and local political campaigns may wish to increase their online presence. Our sample size was too small to allow us to report specific results with confidence, so we report general trends here in the hope of stimulating further research.

We found that over 1/3 of netizens do not participate in any of the activities that make up our community involvement scale. More than half of highly engaged netizens participated in less than two community involvement activities. Less than a quarter of netizens were highly engaged in both netizenship and community involvement. For political activism, the same pattern was evident.

For political discussion, however, the pattern was not as evident. No netizens reported that they did not participate in any political discussion activities, and more than half of netizens reported they were also very involved in face-to-face political discussions.

Netizenship shares many characteristics with political discussion, so we examined “political discussants” (those who did at least 4 of 5 political discussion activities) to see if their levels of community involvement and political activism were similar. We found that almost two thirds of political discussants did not participate in any political activism, and about a quarter of political discussants did not participate in any community activism. Therefore, it appears that although netizenship brings a small group of new people to some form of active civic participation, a significant barrier remains between discussing politics (face to face or online) and participating in political or community activities.

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

**Ohio has some real strengths on which to build as we work to improve our civic health. But some of the weaknesses in our civic health profile should raise real concern. A concerted state-wide effort is needed to address our areas of weakness. Such an effort would encompass three distinct areas of reform.**

### Education

Educational leaders and organizations, in conjunction with Ohio legislators and the Ohio Department of Education, can study these findings to draw up long-term educational objectives regarding how Ohio's civic education programs and curriculum might be enhanced or expanded. Ideas supporting service-learning in K-12 schools and in higher education have found wide support in other states and regions of the country, but Ohio's state standards and curriculum rarely

mention service-learning or other forms of education that actively promote community involvement. Ohio is one of only 20 states that does not mention service-learning in any state policy, despite high levels of support for such policies from our respondents.<sup>23</sup> Further, Ohio's 2-year and 4-year colleges and universities must be provided the incentives and support needed to help students engage their local, national, and global communities through their academic and co-curricular work. The mission of higher education in the state of Ohio, too often exclusively defined

by the economic or vocational ends that it helps students achieve, must be broadened in rhetoric and reality. Programs and opportunities for students and faculty to build community partnerships, combining academic learning with community work, should be promoted and strengthened.

## Policy reform

The national findings from the NCoC 2008 Civic Health Report mirror the Ohio report results provided here: citizens support various policy proposals that would institutionalize civic engagement. While most of these proposals relate to educational initiatives, there are organizations and movements supporting initiatives that would engage Americans in voluntary service at every age. ServiceNation is one such effort, a bi-partisan coalition working to enable legislators to take action on this policy agenda.<sup>24</sup> We would particularly highlight three policies that could be acted upon at the state level. The first is K-12

service-learning, which is currently absent in public education policy in Ohio. The second is a policy providing tuition for national or community service, given Ohio's national rankings in college affordability. Third are policy initiatives providing public deliberation forums. The Kettering Foundation is a tremendous state resource in this regard, one of the national leaders in pioneering public dialogue on important issues of the day. We encourage Ohio legislators, in public discussion forums with Ohio citizens, to consider how state legislative efforts might take action on these policy initiatives.

## Government accountability and integrity

In the 2006 report *Reforming Ohio's Democracy*, a number of important reforms are suggested to clean up the corruption that has plagued Ohio's government and election systems in the past decade, a vital step towards restoring Ohioans faith in their governmental institutions.<sup>25</sup> Laws regarding contribution limits, redistricting, and procedures for more evenhanded administration of elections are sorely needed. Reforms regarding the transparency of lobbying activities and potential ethics violations of lobbyists would bring better public scrutiny to the influence of special interests on government. While Governor Ted Strickland's popularity rating (55% approval rating as of June 2008)<sup>26</sup> provides some indication that voters are more satisfied with the current administration, the findings of this report suggest that there is a deep distrust of government at the state and federal level, distrust that the popularity of one governor will not abate. It will take serious and bi-partisan reforms to address the distrust and skepticism that voters feel about democratic institutions.

# WHERE WE STAND:

# OHIO'S

# CIVIC HEALTH

# IN 2008

The National Conference on Citizenship conducts America's Civic Health Index to inform citizens and policymakers about the state of our civil society and democracy every year, much as economic studies provide timely reports of growth, inflation, and unemployment. We investigated the state of Ohio's civic health for identical reasons. The NCoC has documented and tracked 40 civic health indicators that they have categorized in the following nine clusters. Below we report the results of the 2008 Ohio Online Survey followed by NCoC's National Online Survey so comparisons can be made.

**1** Connecting with civic and religious groups

**2** Trusting others

**3** Connecting to others through family and friends

**4** Giving and volunteering

**5** Staying informed

**6** Understanding politics & government

**7** Participating in politics

**8** Trusting and feeling connected to major institutions

**9** Expressing political views

## Selected Demographic Characteristics of the Samples (%)

Characteristics Ohio (N = 437) National (N = 1,000)

Sex Ohio (M/F - 49.7/50.3) National (M/F - 48.3/51.8)

Sources: 2008 NCoC Online Surveys.

Race		Age		Party Identification	
Ohio	National	Ohio	National	Ohio	National
Asian = 0.9	Asian = 4.0	18-29 (Millennials) = 16.3	18-29 (Millennials) = 18.0	Republican = 26.0	Republican = 27.9
Black = 9.8	Black = 12.0	30-44 (Generation X) = 37.3	30-44 (Generation X) = 32.7	Democrat = 40.0	Democrat = 38.2
Other = 2.1	Other = 3.0	45-64 (Baby Boomers) = 30.0	45-64 (Baby Boomers) = 34.3	Independent = 31.8	Independent = 29.4
White 87.2	White 76.0	65 and Older (Seniors) = 16.3	65 and Older (Seniors) = 15.0	Other Party = 2.2	Other Party = 4.6

## The Indicators of Civic Health 2008: Ohio Online Survey

In 2008, we find people involved in the following ways. This list reflects NCoC's current working definition of "civic health" and is a baseline for future studies. In this section we utilize NCoC's descriptions of the clusters of indicators. The first number reported after each indicator is the Ohio statistic and the second is the identical statistic as reported in the national online sample. Unless otherwise indicated, respondents were asked to describe their participation in the past year.

**Connecting to civic and religious groups.** Such groups are the seedbeds of democracy. They recruit and educate citizens, bring them together for discussion, and increase their capacity for improving society. We find the following rates of connection for 2008.

	OHIO	NATIONAL
Belong to any group or organization:	47%	49%
Attend a club meeting:	30%	32%
Worked on a community project:	21%	26%
Attended religious services at least once a month:	38%	39%

**Trusting other people.** Trust correlates with associational membership because one must have at least limited trust in at least some others before one can work with them voluntarily; and collaborative work often enhances trust.

	OHIO	NATIONAL
Definitely or generally agree that most people are honest:	52%	50%
Agree that most of the time people try to be helpful:	58%	61%

# WHERE WE STAND: OHIO'S CIVIC HEALTH IN 2008 CONT.

**Connecting to others through family and friends:** Close interaction with families and/or friends promotes health and well-being and supports civil society by providing the information, encouragement, and networks that people need to engage in larger groups and communities. Interacting with people who may have different views helps to broaden perspectives, so this year we asked about people's partisan affiliation and whether they had friends of the other party.

	OHIO	NATIONAL
Agreed that their whole family usually eats dinner together:	64%	67%
Spent a lot of time visiting friends:	55%	57%
Spent a lot of time communicating with friends using a computer, cell phone, or other electronic device:	67%	68%
Communicated with friends more than once a day using email, the World Wide Web, instant messages, or phone text messages:	32%	29%
Identified with one political party and reported having friends in the other party:	68%	66%

**Citizen-centered engagement:** "Citizen-centered" engagement means bringing diverse groups of citizens together both to discuss and define an issue and to work voluntarily to address it. Citizen-centered engagement thus combines deliberation with action.

	OHIO	NATIONAL
Attended any public meeting in which there was discussion of community affairs:	19%	26%
Worked with other people in their neighborhood to fix or improve something:	24%	30%
Both attended a community meeting and worked with other people in the neighborhood:	11%	6%
Tried to change local policies in a place like a school, workplace, college, or neighborhood:	17%	21%

**Giving and volunteering:** According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, nearly 61 million Americans – 26% of the U.S. population 16 and older - volunteered in their communities in 2007. The Corporation for National and Community Service reports that these volunteers gave “8.1 billion hours of service worth more than \$158 billion to America’s communities.” Americans also give more than \$300 billion each year to charity. These contributions fund civil society and address essential needs.

	OHIO	NATIONAL
Volunteered:	55%	49%

**Staying informed:** Valuable participation requires information, which can be gleaned from other citizens, the news media, the Internet, and many other sources. The following indicators measure efforts to stay informed:

	OHIO	NATIONAL
Read the newspaper daily:	36%	37%
Followed news about the government and public affairs at least some of the time:	72%	72%
Used the Internet at least once a week to gather information about politics, a social issue, or a community problem:	22%	25%
Watched a presidential candidate’s speech online:	22%	31%
Watched an online video in support of or opposition to a presidential candidate:	37%	39%

**Understanding civics and politics:** Related to the previous category, these measures measure to what degree Americans feel informed.

	OHIO	NATIONAL
Identified the Republican Party as more conservative than the Democratic Party:	48%	44%
Felt able to understand politics and government:	69%	67%

# WHERE WE STAND: OHIO'S CIVIC HEALTH IN 2008 CONT.

**Participating in politics:** Regardless of one's political views and attitudes toward government, it is important to influence democratic institutions.

	OHIO	NATIONAL
Reported being registered to vote:	79%	76%
Voted in a primary or caucus in 2008:	63%	55%
Volunteered for a presidential campaign in 2008:	6%	8%
Attended political meeting or rally:	9%	12%
Gave money to a candidate or party:	10%	16%
Made a political contribution online:	7%	10%
Been asked to register to vote or to get out and vote:	42%	46%

**Trusting and feeling connected to major institutions:** Trust in government and the mass media can be understood as a subjective attitude that often (but not invariably) correlates with taking voluntary political action. Trust can also be understood as a measure of how trustworthy our institutions actually are.

	OHIO	NATIONAL
Responded that their vote matters:	47%	45%
Believed that "People like me" have a say in government:	35%	34%
Believed that Government is run for the benefit of a few big interests:	82%	77%
Government in Washington generally does what is right:	22%	26%
Had confidence in the people who run the press, such a newspapers and news magazines (only some to a great deal):	66%	69%

**Expressing political views:** Voting is a powerful means of making choices, but it communicates the voter's views very imperfectly. Fortunately, citizens have other opportunities to say more precisely what they believe about public issues.

	OHIO	NATIONAL
Wrote a letter or email to the editor of a newspaper or magazine:	16%	20%
Tried to talk to someone about why they should vote for a candidate or party:	34%	38%
Wore a campaign button, put a campaign sticker on the car, or place a campaign poster in the window or in front of the house:	23%	21%

**Expressed opinions about a political or social or community issue**

using email:	70%	71%
on your own blog:	14%	15%
by writing or commenting on someone else's blog:	21%	25%
on a social networking site such as MySpace or Facebook:	28%	34%
by making a video, audio, or photo and sharing it online:	25%	28%
by commenting on someone else's video, audio, or photo online:	28%	33%
by participating in a chat room, 19%, 20%; with instant messaging:	36%	41%
with text messaging:	33%	33%
or by voting in favor or against a news story of video on a site like YouTube or Digg:	18%	21%

# ENDNOTES

- 1** Written by Kathleen Knight Abowitz, *Interim Director of the Harry T. Wilks Leadership Institute and Associate Professor, Department of Educational Leadership, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio.*
- 2** This section was primarily written by Doug Dobson, Florida Joint Center for Citizenship.
- 3** Thomas Erlich (Ed.), *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing, , 2000), p. vi.
- 4** For more on the sporadic nature of American political involvement, see Steven J. Rosenstone and John Mark Hansen. *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America* (New York: MacMillian Publishing Company, 1993).
- 5** See "Five Ohios," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 4 - September 26, 2004. Available: [www.cleveland.com/fiveohios/](http://www.cleveland.com/fiveohios/)
- 6** Almanac of American Politics 2006, "Ohio: State Profile," last updated July 27, 2005. Available: [http://www.nationaljournal.com.proxy.lib.muohio.edu/pubs/almanac/2006/states/oh/oh\\_profile.htm](http://www.nationaljournal.com.proxy.lib.muohio.edu/pubs/almanac/2006/states/oh/oh_profile.htm)
- 7** For instance, in August of 2008, the unemployment rate in Ohio was 7.4%, compared to 6.1% for the nation. (*Ohio Department of Job and Family Services*, Press Release, September 19, 2008. Available: <http://jfs.ohio.gov/RELEASES/unemp/200809/UnempPressRelease.asp> ). The 2007 per capita personal income for Ohio was \$34,874 (28th in the country). This was an increase of 4.7 percent (35th in the country) from the previous year, according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. In 2007, the proportion of net earnings consisting of wages, salaries, and proprietor's income for the U.S. was 67.8 percent. In Ohio, the proportion of earnings had been slowly trending up from a low point of 65.7 percent in 1991 to a recent high of 68.8 percent in 2004. For the past three years it has steadily declined. (*Ohio Department of Development*, "Per Capita Income," available: <http://www.odod.state.oh.us/cms/uploadedfiles/Research/e200000001.pdf>
- 8** Data from the Mortgage Bankers Association. See Lisa Bernard-Kuhn, "Mortgage crisis hits new depth: One homeowner in 11 behind in payments or in foreclosure," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, September 6, 2008. Available: <http://news.cincinnati.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/AB/20080906/BIZ01/809060342/>
- 9** The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, "State of College Opportunity in Ohio, 2005." *Washington, D.C.: The Council for Opportunity in Education*, 2005, pp. 5, 7. Available: [http://www.pellinstitute.org/pdf/Final\\_OH\\_COLLEGE\\_ACCESS.pdf](http://www.pellinstitute.org/pdf/Final_OH_COLLEGE_ACCESS.pdf)
- 10** See Norman H. Nie, Jane Junn, and Kenneth Stehlik-Barry, *Education and Democratic Citizenship in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
- 11** This section adapted from Doug Dobson, *The 2008 Florida Civic Health Report*.
- 12** Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001).
- 13** "First noted in our research ten years ago and more than ever today, influencing state government is a big business, a pay-to-play game where the public-policy stakes are high and controlled by nonelected power brokers like [lobbyists] State Street Consultants, Success Group, Public Policy consultants, Government Solutions, and Townner Policy and Research." ... Today the main road to the hearts and minds of state legislators is paved with campaign money." Further, there is evidence of "the growing partnership between major lobbying firms and public decision-makers in need of every-larger campaign war chests." From Robert W. Adams and Charles Funderburk, "Interest Groups in Ohio Politics," in Alexander P. Lamis and Brian Usher, *Ohio Politics*, 2nd ed. (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 2007), pp. 461, 464.
- 14** Herbert Asher, Ann Henkener, Peg Rosenfield, Daniel Tokaji, and Catherin Turcer, "Introduction and Executive Summary," *Reforming Ohio's Democracy: What's Wrong, What We can Do About It* (Cleveland, OH: Ohio Citizen Action, October 2006). Available: <http://www.ohiocitizen.org/moneypolitics/2006/study/intro.htm>
- 15** Jeffrey M. Jones, "Trust in Government Remains Low," Gallup, September 18, 2008. Available: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/110458/Trust-Government-Remains-Low.aspx>
- 16** "Americans Slam News Media on Believability," Reuters, January 8, 2008. Available: <http://www.reuters.com/article/pressRelease/idUS160770+08-Jan-2008+PRN20080108>
- 17** U.S. Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (CPS) volunteering supplement.
- 18** Joe Goldman et al, "Millions of Voices: A Blueprint for Engaging the American Public in National Policy-Making," Washington, DC: AmericaSPEAKS, 2004. See also proposals by Bruce Ackerman and James S. Fishkin and others.
- 19** Rebecca Skinner and Chris Chapman, "Service-learning and community service in K-12 public schools," National Center for Education Statistics: Statistics in Brief (NCES 1999-043).
- 20** John M. Bridgeland, John J. Dilulio, Jr., and Stuart C. Wulsin, "Engaged for Success Service-Learning as a Tool for High School Dropout Prevention," a report by Civic Enterprises in association with Peter D. Hart Research Associates for the National Conference on Citizenship (April 2008).

**21** U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2006 Civics Assessment.

**22** We also included categories of “Asian,” “Other” and “Hispanic”; though the percentage of respondents matches the state population, the numbers of respondents are too small for us to make claims about these demographic groups.

**23** Learn and Serve America’s National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, “Policy: K-12 Service-Learning,” July 2002, updated May 2008. Available: [http://www.servicelearning.org/instant\\_info/fact\\_sheets/k-12\\_facts/policy/](http://www.servicelearning.org/instant_info/fact_sheets/k-12_facts/policy/)

**24** “Policy,” ServiceNation. Available: [http://www.bethechangeinc.org/servication/about\\_us/policy](http://www.bethechangeinc.org/servication/about_us/policy)

**25** Asher et. al., *Reforming Ohio’s Democracy: What’s Wrong, What We can Do About It*.

**26** Mark Rollenhagen, “Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland’s approval rating at 55 percent,” *Openers: The Plain Dealer Policy Blog*, June 4, 2008. Available: <http://blog.cleveland.com/openers/2008/06/grim.html>

# 2008 AMERICA'S CIVIC HEALTH INDEX

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# NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CITIZENSHIP

**F**ounded in 1946 and chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1953, the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC) is a leader in promoting our nation's civic life. We track, measure and advocate civic participation and engagement in partnership with other organizations on a bipartisan, collaborative basis. We focus on ways to enhance history and civics education, encourage national and community service, and promote greater participation in the political process.

Many distinguished Americans have been involved with the growth and development of the NCoC over the years including Presidents Harry S. Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower and Chief Justices Earl Warren and Warren Burger. The roster of board members, advisors and guest speakers at NCoC events represent a diverse spectrum of leaders from across government, industry, academia, community and nonprofit organizations and the media; people like Senators Robert Byrd and Lamar Alexander, philanthropists Ray Chambers and Eugene Lang, authors David McCullough and Walter Isaacson, scholars Robert Putnam and Stephen Goldsmith, MTV's Ian Rowe, ABC's Cokie Roberts, AOL's Jean Case, Facebook's Sean Parker, former Clinton Administration advisor William Galston and former Bush Administration advisor John Bridgeland.

The NCoC's accomplishments are many, ranging from fueling the civic energy of the Greatest Generation freshly home from WWII to leading the celebration of our nation's Bicentennial in 1976. The NCoC helped establish the observance of Citizenship Day, every September 17, the week in which we were chartered to hold our annual conference focusing on building an active and engaged citizenry. Most recently, the NCoC has produced *America's Civic Health Index*, the Nation's leading measure of citizen actions and attitudes.

To advance our mission to better understand the broad dimensions of citizenship today and to encourage greater civic participation, the NCoC has developed and sustained a network of over 250 like-minded institutions that seek a more comprehensive and collaborative approach to strengthening our system of self-government.

For more information, please visit [www.ncoc.net](http://www.ncoc.net)



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