



# ILLINOIS CIVIC HEALTH INDEX

# 2010



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2010 *Illinois Civic Health Index* illustrates how systemic disregard for civic education has resulted in a citizenry that lacks the capacity, knowledge, and desire to effectively engage in the democratic process, and how decades of political scandals have resulted in systemic distrust in government. Illinois civic health factors measured in this report, which include participation in elections, participation in civil society, and social capital, are, for the most part, only narrowly different from national statistics. The congruence of Illinois statistics with national statistics however is not praiseworthy. The universally low figures for basic civic engagement such as voting, attending public meetings where a policy issue is discussed, or volunteering is shocking for a country that prides itself on having a democracy that is a model for other societies. The cultural challenge before us is significant, crucial, and requires decades of civic disengagement to be replaced with healthy civic habits grounded in early hands-on civic education so that “practicing democracy” is routine.

The *Illinois Civic Health Index* analyzes several frequently measured areas of civic participation, identifies recently passed reforms in specific areas, and makes pointed recommendations for reforms to improve our democracy. The civic indicators measured range from quintessential civic engagement actions such as registering to vote and voting, to various “formal” and “informal” methods of civic participation. Formal participation is identified as actions taken in conjunction with an organized effort such as group participation, leadership in a group, or financially contributing to a cause, whereas informal participation explores how we as individuals are interconnected to the community and stay informed on government and community issues. For example, this report highlights that despite an electrified 2008 Presidential contest that included Illinois’ own Barack Obama, Illinois’ voter registration rate ranked 33rd among all states at 70.9%, which was nearly identical to the national voter registration rate of 71.0%. Having a popular candidate from Illinois failed to increase the voter registration rate or voter turnout beyond the national average. In fact, Illinois’ voter registration rate and voter turnout rate *declined* between the 2004 and 2008 elections. The most common reason given for not registering to vote, both nationwide (40.8%) and in Illinois (38.5%), was lack of interest in the election.

As for other notable civic indicators, only 26.3% of respondents performed at least one political act other than voting. Of the 26.3% respondents, the most frequent political act, at 14.1%, was showing support for a particular candidate or party, followed by



11.2% contacting a public official, and 10.8% buying or boycotting a product. A mere 9.6% attended a public meeting and only 3.1% exercised their First Amendment rights through protesting or participating in a march or rally. Despite valuing leadership as a society, in Illinois, only 9.9% of residents collectively attend meetings, belong to an organization, and take a leadership role in the community. As for how Illinoisans display their interconnectedness, Illinois ranks 46th in the rate of people 18 and older who exchange favors with their neighbors at least a few times a week and who report they eat dinner with their family at least a few times a week.

While this analysis of civic health indicators paints the picture of a dire democracy, **this is an outstanding opportunity to harness the public’s optimism that political systems can change.** The Citizen Advocacy Center highlights a medley of policy reforms that would directly increase government accessibility, transparency, and accountability and promote holistic civic education. Holistic civic education is multifaceted and community-based. It includes family structures that model civic participation, and government institutions that place a priority on the development of citizens with strong civic values. A healthy democracy requires that government entities have policies that ensure and protect the public’s capacity to participate in the democratic process as well as a civically literate citizenry that knows how government operates and has the confidence and skills to identify, address, and take action on issues important to them.

# INTRODUCTION

The Illinois citizenry has an uphill battle when it comes to energizing and engaging the public so that a healthy democracy can flourish. Illinois' sordid political history dates back to the 19th Century and is punctuated by outrageous political scandals that taint our democracy: political machines that manipulate contracts and jobs for political support, corruption scandals at every level of government, and six governors indicted for criminal activity or political corruption either during or after being in office. The most recent event is the federal indictment and prosecution of former-Governor Rod Blagojevich on public corruption "pay to play" charges. In the summer of 2010, jurors returned a unanimous verdict on only one count. They were unable to agree on the remaining 23 charges. After the impeachment and removal of former-Governor Blagojevich, Governor Pat Quinn created the Illinois Reform Commission to identify government reforms in areas such as ethics, procurement, campaign finance, and open government. An assessment of the fiscal impact of political corruption was part of the discussion. A report titled, "The Depth of Corruption in Illinois: Anti-Corruption Report Number 2" from the University of Illinois at Chicago Department of Political Science, states that the "corruption tax" for the Chicago and Illinois taxpayer was estimated at \$500 million annually. The report indicates that the \$500 million figure is derived from two avenues: testimony at Illinois Reform Commission hearings that about 5% of state government contracts are awarded to political cronies and campaign contributors, and comprehensive research by the University assessing the costs of major scandals over the last four decades.<sup>1</sup> In a time when Illinois' unemployment rate slightly exceeds the national average<sup>2</sup> and the state budget deficit is one of the worst in the nation,<sup>3</sup> Illinois residents simply cannot afford to be civically disengaged from Illinois' political system.

Our broken political system has resulted in Illinoisans developing a systemic distrust in government and a deep-seated concern about corruption and the role of money in politics. According to a 2008 Midwest Democracy Network survey funded by the Joyce Foundation about Midwesterners' attitudes towards government, a large majority of Illinois residents (77% overall) trusts government to do what is right "only some of the time." 52% "only some of the time" trust government and 25% almost never trust government. Just two in ten (20%) trust government "most of the



time" and only three in one hundred (3%) "almost always" trust state government to do what is right. For Illinoisans, "corruption in state government" and "the influence of money in state politics" continue to be major concerns; nearly half (49%) say they are "extremely" concerned about corruption in state government, and almost the same number (46%) are "extremely" concerned about money in politics.<sup>4</sup>

Our democracy is weak and Illinoisans face an environment of civic shut-out. There is no adequate training for the citizenry to learn in a practical manner what it means to be a "good citizen," and few resources are available to teach people how to flex their civic muscles. The conspicuous absence of mandated civic education that is hands-on and teaches youth how to understand and navigate government creates an environment wherein people lack the confidence, skills, and capacity to affect government decision-making and to make their voices heard on issues important to them. Furthermore, local and state institutions are devoid of fundamental democratic protocols and rife with policies and practices that are antagonistic to citizen participation.

A healthy democracy requires a combination of a citizenry that has the capacity, resources, and confidence to effectively engage in the democratic process and government policies that value accessibility, transparency, and accountability. The release of the 2010 *Civic Health Index* is a prime opportunity to rebuild civic engagement through harnessing the public outrage over anti-democratic practices and scandals that has made Illinois politics material for late-night comedy shows as well as the public's optimism that our political system can be reformed.

# SEIZING THE MOMENT TO STRENGTHEN ILLINOIS' CIVIC HEALTH

2008 was a pivotal year in American politics with the election of President Barack Obama. Registration drives, community organizing, and the use of social media took center stage in engaging the public in the democratic process. The 2010 elections in Illinois proved to be equally exciting. Intense competition over President Obama's former U.S. Senate seat played a crucial role in determining which political party will control the U.S. Senate. As many as 17% of voters remain undecided a mere month before the election.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, a close gubernatorial race has resulted in ethics reform taking center stage with unemployment and Illinois' devastating fiscal condition. In 2009, after the impeachment and removal of Governor Rod Blagojevich, the public was outraged by consecutive governors being indicted on corruption charges and demanded political reform. The Illinois General Assembly largely resisted instituting comprehensive reforms but passed dramatic revisions to the state's public records request law, the Freedom of Information Act, and instituted Illinois' first campaign contribution limits. Additionally, public pressure by reform organizations highlighted the secretive, closed-door redistricting process that routinely produces maps wherein legislators choose their constituents rather than constituents choosing their legislators. The result was the Illinois State Redistricting Committee holding multiple hearings to examine the process as well as a coalition of organizations attempting to place a proposed Constitutional amendment on the ballot to reform redistricting.

Despite Illinoisans' lack of trust in government, they remain optimistic about the future and still have hope for change in state government. Fifty-eight percent of those surveyed by the Midwest Democracy Network disagreed that "money will always influence government decisions, so it is not worth trying to reduce the amount of money in politics," and 67% rejected the idea that "corruption in government will always be a problem, so trying to fix it will not make much difference." Lastly, the most important value Illinoisans would like to see at work in their state government is honesty. Seven in ten (70%) Illinois residents say "honesty" is an "extremely" important characteristic for state government, followed by "accountability" (rated as "extremely" important by 59%). Residents of Illinois also want their state government to be responsive (53%), proactive (52%), and transparent (48%).<sup>6</sup> When civic engagement coincides with the political will of policy makers, reform is possible. For



example, 91% of Illinoisans surveyed in the Midwest Democracy Network survey said "'right to know' laws that give the public more access to state government decisions on spending and programs" make a difference.<sup>7</sup> In 2009, the Illinois Attorney General launched a campaign to reform the state's antiquated public records access law, which was supported by organizations like the Illinois Press Association, and the Citizen Advocacy Center. The approval of the proposed law by the Illinois General Assembly was significant as Illinois' Freedom of Information Act is now one of the strongest in the United States.

# CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND ITS INDICATORS

Civic engagement describes a broad composite of behaviors, including several of the most frequently measured forms of civic participation. This report examines the results of the civic engagement survey by looking at three distinct categories of civic participation: 1) participation in elections, 2) formal forms of participation, other than acts related to elections, which are identified as volunteering, philanthropy, group membership, and leadership, and 3) informal forms of participation, including political socialization, interconnectedness, and accessing news and information using data from the Census Current Population Survey, November Voting Supplement, September Volunteering Supplement and Civic Engagement Supplement (see Technical Notes). This report also highlights the notable discrepancy in rates of civic participation between non-Hispanics and Hispanics, the fastest growing minority group in Illinois. The analysis is based upon data derived from the Census Current Population Survey and Civic Engagement Supplement.



in federal and/or state elections. Registering people to vote is the first step towards ensuring that they have the capacity to vote on Election Day. Federal and state elections in the United States are administered locally, which means that every state has the ability to set different procedural rules for elections, including the process by which citizens register to vote. For example, some states mandate that in order to vote, voters must be registered some time prior to the election while other states allow voters to register on Election Day itself.

Despite an electrified Presidential campaign won by former Illinois Senator Barack Obama, Illinois ranked 33rd among all states in voter registration rate (70.9%). That registration rate was comparable to the national voter registration rate of 71.0% for all eligible citizens in 2008. What is disconcerting, however, is that having a popular candidate from Illinois was not enough to increase the voter registration rate. Furthermore, Illinois' voter registration rate *declined* by four percentage points compared to the registration rate for the 2004 presidential election.

## PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS

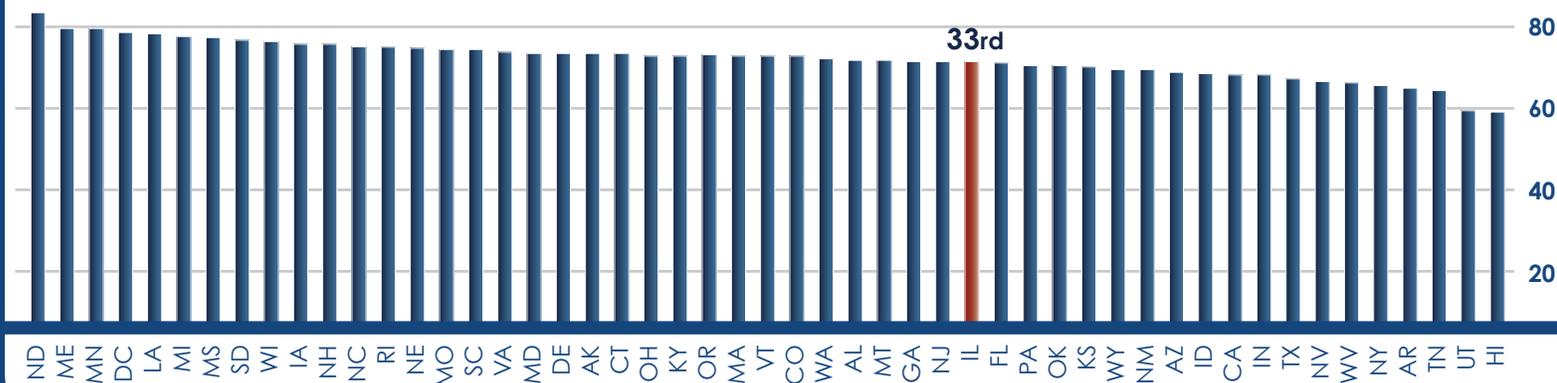
Voter registration and voter turnout are typical measures of voter engagement. Voter engagement is a function of election laws and policies; so these laws and policies, good or bad, have a direct impact on voter participation and ultimately inform people's attitudes about state politics. Administrative procedures for elections and management of the activities of partisan actors are crucial elements in determining whether a state holds fair and competitive elections.

### VOTER REGISTRATION

Voter registration is a formal act in which a prospective voter's name is entered into a database, thus allowing that person to vote

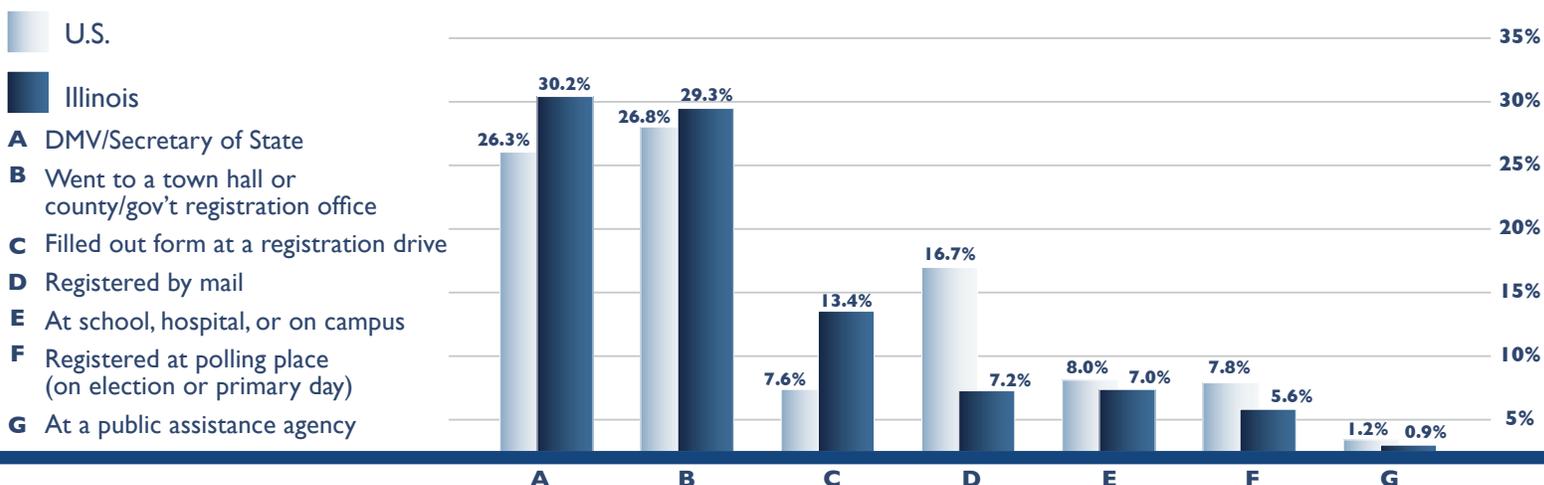
**FIGURE 1: VOTER REGISTRATION**  
2008 NATIONAL AVERAGE - 71.0%

ILLINOIS AVERAGE - 70.9%



Voter registration at government agencies and voter registration drives in Illinois occurs at a rate higher than that of the national average. However, Illinoisans do not avail themselves as frequently as their national counterparts of registering at other locations, such as at schools or hospitals, on campuses, at the polling place, or through public assistance agencies. The most dramatic difference between Illinois and national averages was that Illinoisans registered by mail far less frequently than citizens nationwide (7.2% vs. 16.7%).

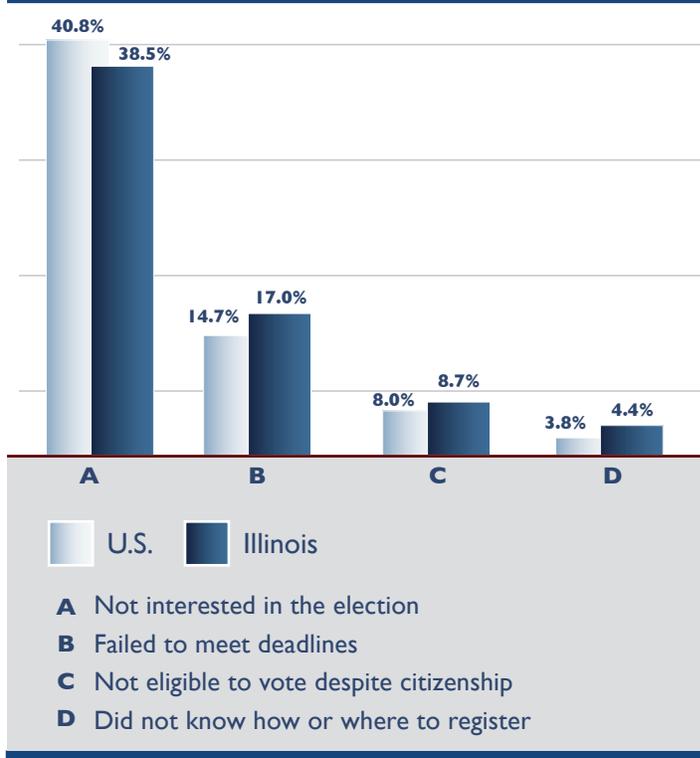
**FIGURE 2: RATES OF REGISTRATION BY METHOD**



The most common reason given for not registering to vote, both nationwide (40.8%) and in Illinois (38.5%), was lack of interest in the election. Additional reasons given related to accessing the system included voters failing to meet registration deadlines and not knowing where or how to register. Moreover, Illinoisans' lack of understanding related to the process of registering to vote exceeded national statistics on all parameters.

The lack of interest in election outcomes highlight the systemic deficiency in civic engagement and is a stark indicator for why as a society we must evaluate how we engage in the democratic process and how to dismantle institutional barriers to participation. For example, Illinois has a history of making the voter registration process confusing. In 1994, after the passage of the 1993 National Voter Registration Act (the Federal "Motor Voter Act" that sought to increase voter registration by allowing people to register at the DMV when applying for or renewing their licenses), Illinois created a registration system wherein individuals could register for only *federal* elections at local public offices or the DMV *unless* the voter proactively requested to register for *both* state and federal elections. The registration system was confusing to those who were

**FIGURE 3: RATES OF NOT REGISTERING BY REASON GIVEN**



registering voters as well as prospective voters trying to register. Eventually the registration system was dismantled, but only after a lawsuit was filed and a court ruled the system a violation of the State Constitution.<sup>8</sup> A more current example for why those in Illinois may have a more difficult time in accessing the registration process, as compared with the national average, is that commonly frequented facilities, such as schools, hospitals, and campuses are not automatic places of voter registration in Illinois. Only election authorities, municipal clerks, township/road district clerks, precinct committee members, and Secretary of State driver's license facility employees are automatically eligible to register voters. All other entities, such as libraries, high schools, elementary schools, universities and colleges, and health care facilities may only be appointed to register voters upon written request to be "Deputy Registrars."<sup>9</sup> Lastly, Illinois does not have Election Day registration. The combination of low civic interest in elections, government policies that make it difficult for people to register to vote, and a lack of fundamental civic education that promotes building healthy civic habits at a young age results in eligible voters not valuing how they can have their voices heard through elections.

### VOTER TURNOUT

Voter turnout is a measure of the percentage of eligible voters, whether registered to vote or not, who cast a ballot in any given election. Illinois ranked 37th in voter turnout among citizens 18 and older in the November 2008 election, with a turnout rate of 62.6%, compared with 63.6% nationally. Notably, as with voter registration, Illinois' voter turnout declined by three percentage points compared with the average turnout for the 2004 Presidential election despite former Illinois Senator Barack Obama being on the ballot in 2008.



### RATES OF VOTING AMONG ALL ELIGIBLE VOTERS AND AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS IN 2008

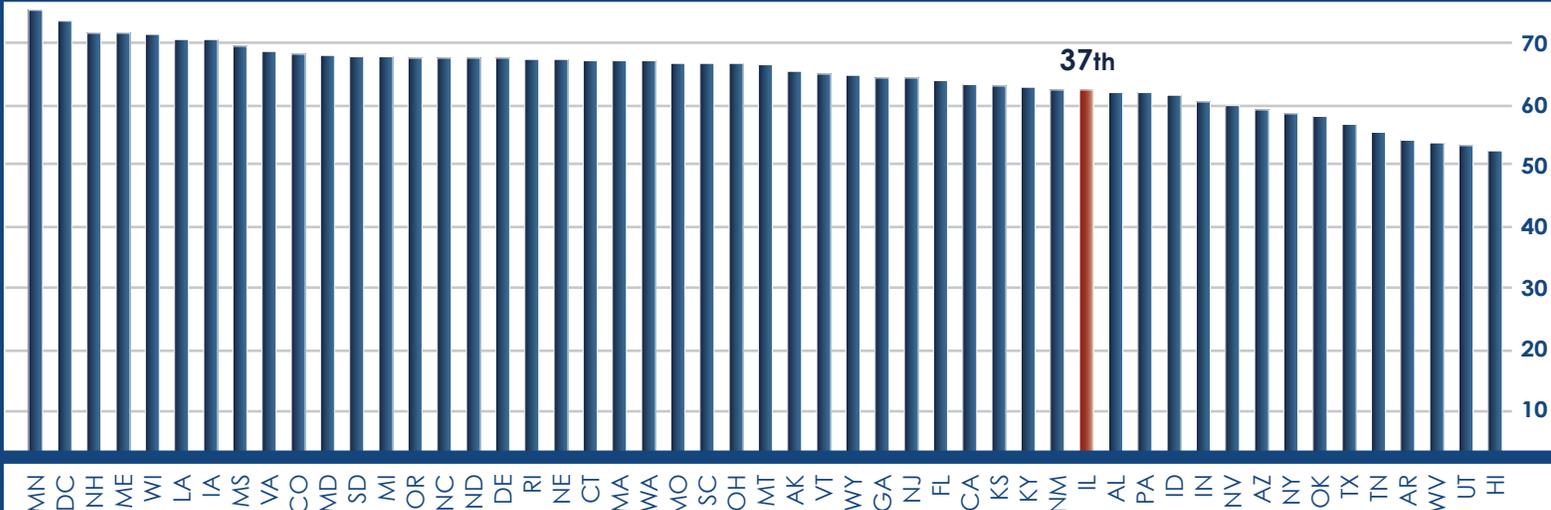
	Illinois	U.S./National
Turnout among all eligible voters	62.6 %	63.6 %
Turnout among registered voters	88.4 %	89.6 %

When Illinoisans were asked why they did not vote, the most frequent reason given was lack of time, which at 23.3% was higher than the national average of 18.9%. The second most frequent reason was the feeling that their vote did not make a difference. Illinois voters more often felt that their vote did not make a difference compared with the national average (20.3% vs. 14.4%). Despite the lack of time being the most frequent reason given for not voting, the discrepancy between state and national averages is most significant with respect to Illinoisans feeling that their vote would not make a difference. This nearly 6% difference from the national average illustrates the citizenry's lack of faith in the current political system as well as lack of experience and confidence that civic engagement will affect meaningful change.

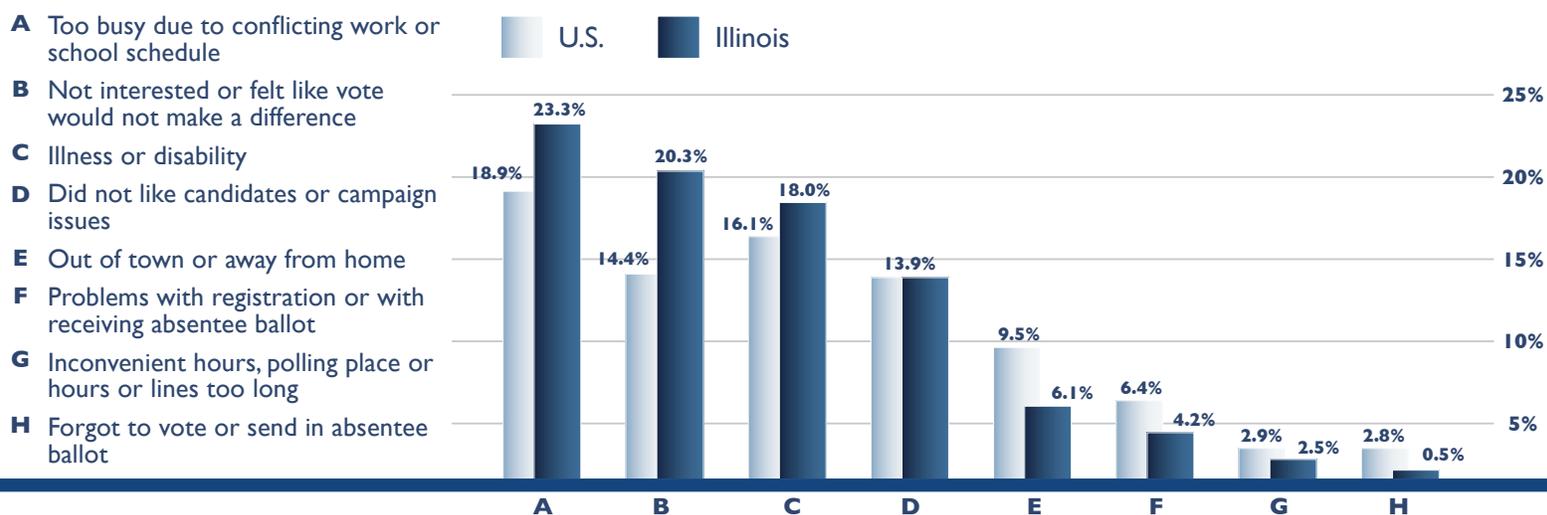
### FIGURE 4: VOTER TURNOUT

2008 NATIONAL AVERAGE - 63.6%

ILLINOIS - 62.6%



**FIGURE 5: RATES OF NOT VOTING BY REASON GIVEN**



In addition, Illinoisans voted before Election Day, whether by mail or not, at shockingly low rates compared with the national average. This is not surprising as, at the time of the survey, Illinois had a restrictive absentee ballot law that limited the circumstances under which an absentee ballot could be cast. This statistic will most likely improve in future elections as the General Assembly recently passed a law in 2009 that markedly removed restrictions to absentee ballot voting.

**Voter Registration: Enacted Reforms**

In August 2009, the Illinois General Assembly passed Public Act 96-0553, which was effective without delay and allows any registered voter to receive a ballot by mail on demand. Previously very restrictive, “no excuse absentee voting,” provides that Illinois voters shall not be required to specify a reason for voting by mail.<sup>10</sup>

**Voter Turnout: Enacted Reforms**

The Illinois legislature also passed Public Act 96-0832, which includes new campaign disclosure laws and campaign contribution limits for candidates seeking election and for the political parties that support them.<sup>11</sup> While most provisions will not go into effect until January 2011, some requirements relating to independent expenditure campaigns went into effect in July 2010. The law requires all political committees to designate themselves either as a candidate political committee, political party committee, political action committee, or ballot initiative committee for purposes of applying specific campaign contribution disclosure requirements or campaign contribution limits outlined in the new law. Significant portions of the new law include:

- A candidate political committee may not accept contributions over \$5,000 from any individual; over \$10,000 from any corporation, labor organization or association; or over \$50,000 from a candidate political committee or political action committee;

**RATES OF VOTING BY FORM, OTHER THAN CASTING A BALLOT ON ELECTION DAY**

	Illinois	U.S./National
Voted by mail	3.8%	21.2%
Voted before Election Day	21.2%	29.8%

- A political party committee may not accept contributions over \$10,000 from any individual; over \$20,000 from any corporation, labor organization or association; or over \$50,000 from a political action committee;
- A political action committee may not accept contributions over \$5,000 from any individual; over \$10,000 from any corporation, labor organization or association; or over \$50,000 from a candidate political committee or political action committee;
- Ballot initiative committees may accept contributions in any amount from any source;
- Self-funding candidates are subject to reporting requirements when they loan themselves more than \$250,000 for statewide office or \$100,000 for all other elective offices;
- All independent expenditures of \$3,000 or more must be disclosed to the State Board of Elections within two days of the expenditure; and
- A Campaign Finance Reform Task Force is created that is charged with conducting a thorough review of the implementation of the campaign finance reform legislation in the State of Illinois, as well as the feasibility of subsidized political campaigns in exchange for voluntary adherence to the expenditure limitations.

Recognizing the quote from U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis that “sunlight is the best disinfectant,” more comprehensive disclosure laws will increase people’s capacity to make informed decisions by knowing how campaigns are funded and how candidates use funds to execute campaigns. Although the campaign reform legislation was not as comprehensive or restrictive as desired by the public, the legislation was a first step to address Illinois’ reputation of a “Wild West” political atmosphere.

### Needed Reforms throughout the State Election System

Easing restrictions on voter registration, improving access to the ballot, instituting civic education to build healthy civic habits, and providing tangible examples to inform the public as to how increased voter registration and voter turnout results in healthy democratic communities is crucial. To these ends, Illinois’ civic health would benefit by the following policy reforms:

- Mandate hands-on civic education in primary and secondary schools to build healthy civic habits. With respect to election administration, all elementary and secondary schools should automatically be places of registration and create incentive programs to promote youth participation in election judge programs.
- Allow Election Day registration which enables eligible voters to register and vote on Election Day. As a significant reason for not registering to vote was a failure to meet registration deadlines, Election Day registration would increase opportunities for voters to participate in elections. Statistics have shown that election turnout rates are higher in those states that have same-day voter registration.<sup>12</sup>
- Embrace technology as a means to increase registration, such as through online voter registration implemented in Arizona and California.
- Establish clear standards for provisional ballots. Currently, election officials do not have adequate direction on when to allow a challenged voter to vote a regular ballot rather than a provisional ballot. Provisional ballots cast in the wrong precinct, even if cast at the correct polling site or in the correct county, will not be counted for any electoral race, potentially disenfranchising a great number of eligible voters.



- Increase voter choice by easing restrictions on candidates attempting to access the ballot. Illinois’ traditionally high petition-signature requirements, combined with short timelines for gathering candidate signatures, is a deterrent to individuals seeking public office and results in few candidate choices for the electorate.
- Remove barriers to placing referenda on the ballot. Illinois currently has very restrictive binding and advisory ballot access provisions, diminishing the capacity of citizens to have their voices heard on important policy issues and directly affect policy decisions. Voter interest in election issues, and presumably voter turnout, would be positively impacted by increasing the ability of the citizenry to place referenda on the ballot.
- Produce comprehensive electronic voters’ guides in advance of elections so the electorate can become informed on the issues before casting their ballots.
- Strengthen campaign contribution and expenditure disclosure laws to increase public information regarding the financing of campaigns and to promote more competitive elections.
- Revive cumulative voting for the Illinois House of Representatives and educate the citizenry as to how different voting systems can promote voter choice at the polls and diversity of representation.
- Reform Illinois’ system of redistricting, in which politicians currently choose their voters behind closed doors in a process that is the antithesis of democracy. The redistricting process needs to be reformed to provide greater transparency and accountability and ensure voters choose their political representatives, not the other way around.

# PARTICIPATION IN CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

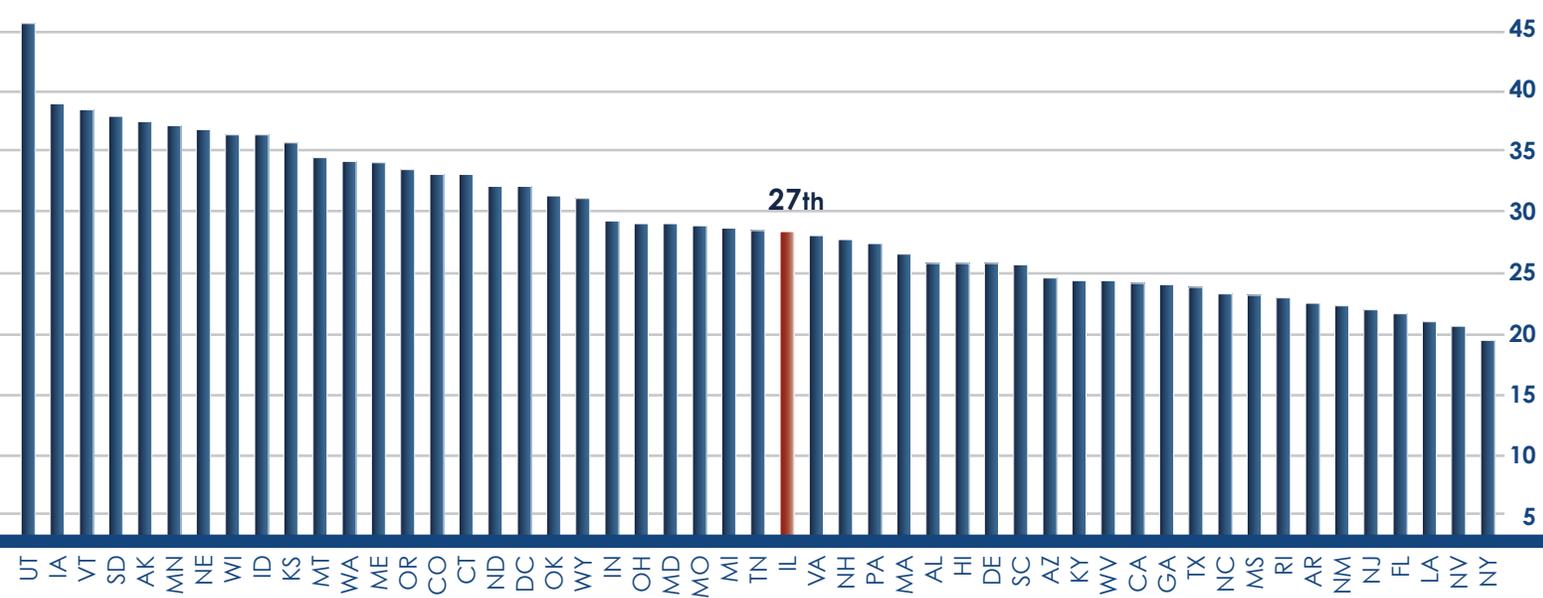
While the importance of voting in a democracy cannot be overstated, voting by itself is not the only significant factor in determining the civic health of a population. Civic health is also reflected in other measures of civic participation, such as the strength of leadership and the rate of group affiliation, as well as through diverse social interactions, both formal and informal, by which community members illustrate they are invested in local institutions. Indicators that demonstrate participation include volunteering, donating to causes, belonging to groups, engaging in political acts outside of elections, showing leadership among peers in group involvement, having personal connections with others, and being informed about the surrounding community. For purposes of this report, "formal" forms of participation include volunteering with or donating to groups; "informal" forms of participation include attending a meeting where a public issue is discussed and fixing a problem in the community with neighbors. Recognizing that informal forms of participation in civil society strengthen social capital, this report also includes an analysis of interpersonal connections and access to news and information. Through this report's analysis, a picture of the strength of Illinois' social capital emerges. Social capital is a sociological term that refers to connections within and between human networks. These measures help elucidate Illinois' strengths and weaknesses in building the capacity of its residents to participate effectively in civic affairs.

## FORMAL FORMS OF PARTICIPATION

### VOLUNTEERING & PHILANTHROPY

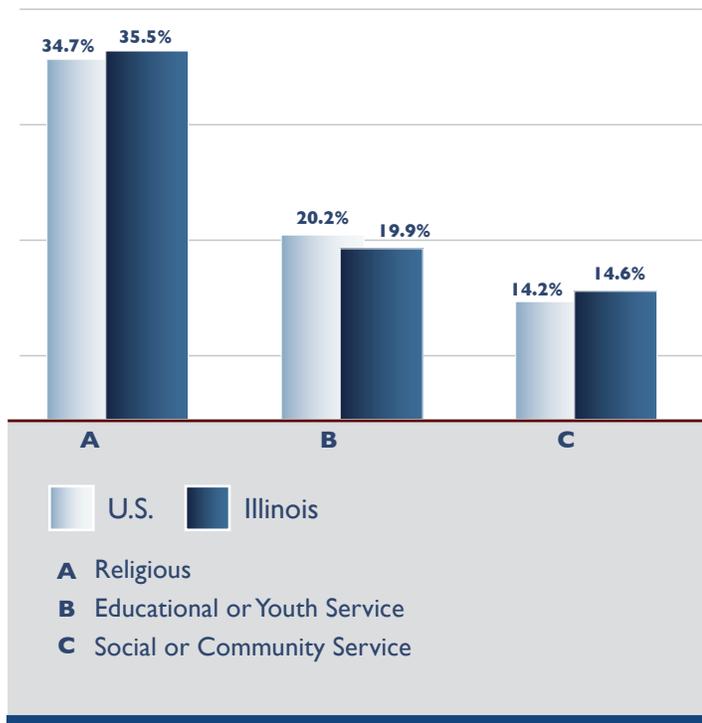
Volunteering is the practice of people working on behalf of others or for a particular cause without receiving payment for their time and services; it is one way for citizens to come together to address challenges facing their communities and is a vital component of community engagement. Philanthropy is the practice of contributing personal wealth to charitable or religious causes. For this report, donations to charitable causes focus on areas such as poverty and disaster relief, health care and medical research, education, the arts, and the environment. Respondents to the survey were asked about their behavior during the previous twelve months. Illinois, with a population of more than 12 million, is the fifth most populous state in the country. According to [VolunteeringinAmerica.gov](http://VolunteeringinAmerica.gov), an estimated average of 2.6 million residents per year volunteered in Illinois between 2007 and 2009. Illinois ranked 27th in the nation for the rate of volunteering among residents ages 16 and older in 2009, with 28.3% of respondents volunteering at least once in the twelve months prior to the survey, compared with the national rate of 26.8%. Illinois' volunteer rate has increased by three percentage points since 2008.

**FIGURE 6: VOLUNTEERING**  
**2009 NATIONAL AVERAGE - 26.8%**      **ILLINOIS - 28.3%**

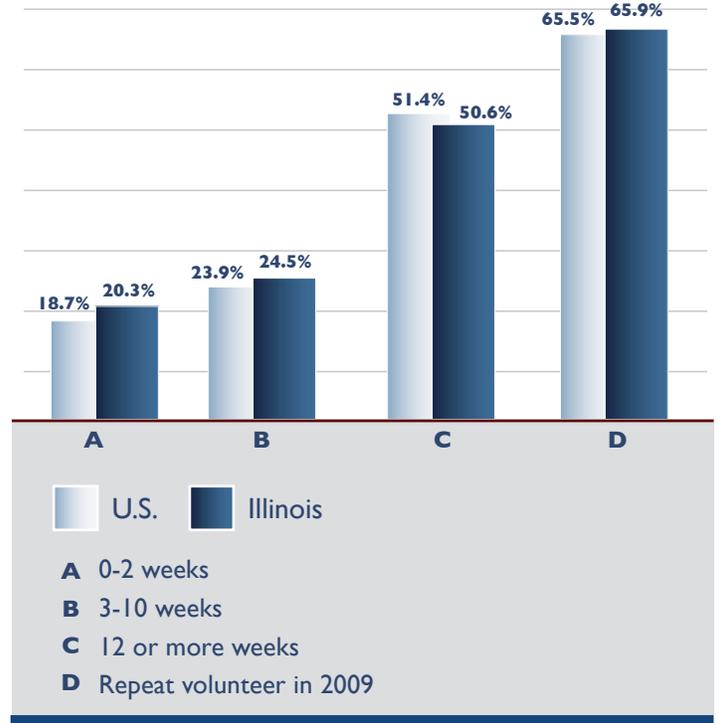


Illinoisans volunteer most often with religious groups. Educational, social, or community service agencies are the second-tier group followed by civic, political, professional, health, animal, environmental, public safety, or sports organizations. Illinois has slightly longer-term volunteers compared to the nation as a whole: A greater percentage of individuals volunteer for longer periods of time and repeated their volunteerism in a subsequent year. In addition to volunteering at a slightly higher rate than the national average (28.3% vs. 26.8%), Illinoisans also contribute financially to causes more frequently than the national average (52.4% vs. 50.0%).

**FIGURE 7: RATES OF VOLUNTEERING BY TYPE OF ORGANIZATION**



**FIGURE 8: RATES OF VOLUNTEERING BY LENGTH OF TIME AND RATE OF VOLUNTEER RETENTION**



A notable finding in the table to the right is that, both in Illinois and nationwide, it is far more common for people to donate money to causes than to volunteer their time. While there are many possible hypotheses for the vast difference in people preferring to give money over time, one issue to immediately consider is the cultural changes in how individuals interact with each other. As comprehensively examined in his book *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam examines how changes in work patterns, family, technology, and television have impacted social interactions and how historically, less people are participating in group activity.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, studies have documented the steady decrease in leisure activity.<sup>14</sup> People are making specific and directed decisions regarding how to spend leisure time, and the lack of cultural emphasis on valuing civic engagement is directly impacted. In deciding how to spend time, more people are deciding that donating to a cause is preferable to participating in a cause.

**RATES OF FORMAL PARTICIPATORY ACTS**

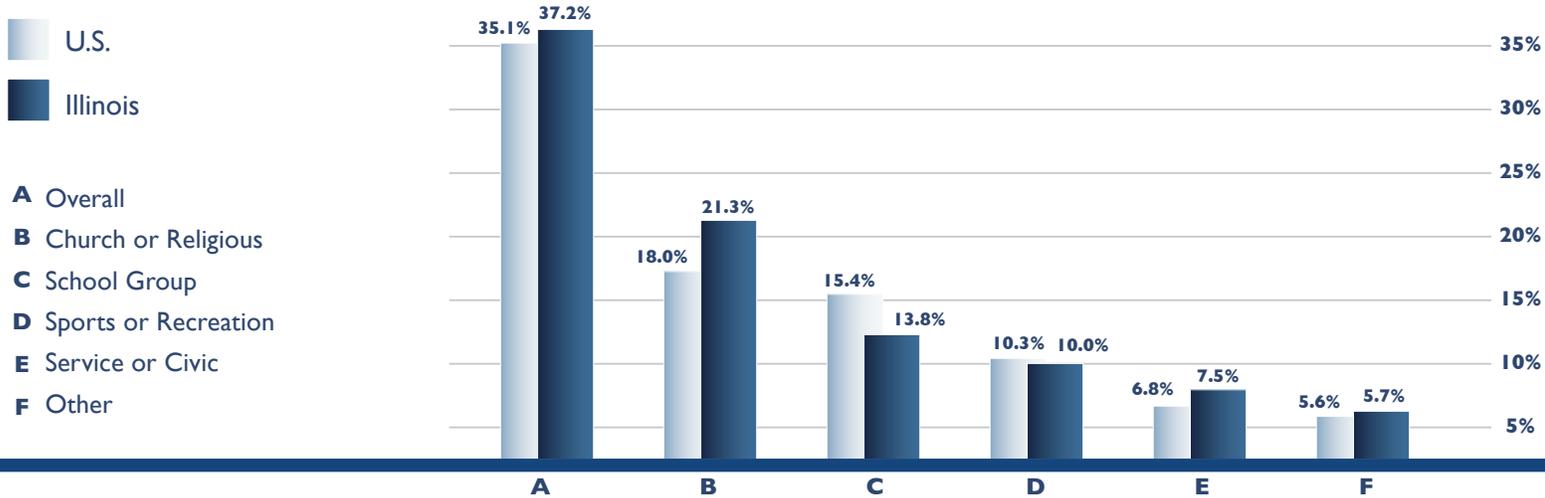
	Illinois	U.S./National
Volunteering	28.3 %	26.8 %
Making a contribution over \$25	52.4 %	50.0 %

**Volunteering and Philanthropy: Enacted Reforms**

Illinois is working to improve resources for volunteerism and service efforts. The Serve Illinois Commission is comprised of 25 commissioners appointed by the Governor. The Commission’s vision is an Illinois where all citizens recognize their ability and responsibility to help strengthen their communities through voluntary service. It works to expand volunteerism throughout Illinois, involving people of all backgrounds, cultures, and ages. The enabling legislation of the Serve Illinois Commission charges the



**FIGURE 10: RATES OF GROUP MEMBERSHIP BY GROUP TYPE**



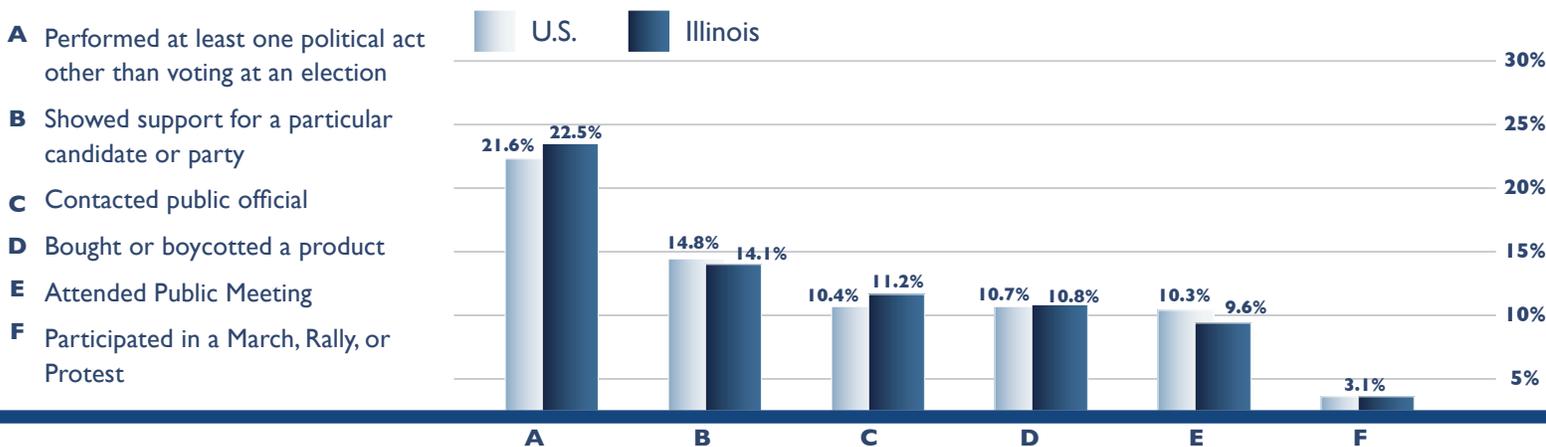
The most frequently cited indicator of participation in a group is attending a meeting of that group; Illinoisans attend meetings for groups or organizations at about the same rate as nationally (21.8% vs. 21.5%). When it comes to leadership, defined as individuals serving as officers or members of committees for groups or organizations, Illinois has a slight edge compared with the national rate (11.2% vs. 10.1%).

**RATES OF GROUP PARTICIPATION BY ACTIVITY**

	Illinois	US/National
Attended a meeting of a group or organization	21.8 %	21.5 %
Served as officer or member of committee for a group or organization	11.2 %	10.1 %

More than one-fifth of respondents in Illinois performed at least one political act other than voting, the same rate as nationwide (26.3% vs. 26.3%). The most frequent political act engaged in other than voting at an election happens to be related to elections, namely, showing support for a particular candidate or party, with Illinoisans falling slightly short of the national average (14.1% vs. 14.8%). The next two most frequently cited acts are contacting a public official or buying or boycotting a product. On these two parameters, Illinoisans engage at a rate equal to or slightly higher than their national counterparts (11.2% vs. 10.4%, and 10.8% vs. 10.7%, respectively). However, in the fourth most commonly cited political act other than voting, attending a public meeting, Illinoisans lag behind their national counterparts (9.6% vs. 10.3%). Finally, Illinoisans exercise their First Amendment right through protesting or participating in a march or rally as infrequently as the rest of the nation, with only 3.1% in Illinois and nationally reporting they have engaged in these types of activities.

**FIGURE 11: RATES OF PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL ACTS OTHER THAN VOTING**



While most of the Illinois statistics for engaging in a political act other than voting are slightly higher or equal to the national average, the levels of engagement overall are far too low for a society that prides itself on being a representative democracy. These statistics mirror the results generated in a report by the McCormick Foundation's Freedom Museum titled, "Americans' Awareness of First Amendment Freedoms." Of 1,000 adults randomly surveyed, 70% were able to recall freedom of speech as one of the First Amendment rights, but only 10% were able to recall freedom of the press; 9% identified freedom of assembly; and shockingly only 1% knew the freedom to petition the government was included in the First Amendment.<sup>16</sup> At a time when a vast majority of the public is unaware of their First Amendment rights and how to affect change, it is consistent that a mere 3.1% of individuals would engage in actions that overtly utilize their protected freedoms to have their voices heard on issues important to them. The citizenry's lack knowledge related to civic rights and how to engage, and the ensuing lack of capacity to influence government decision-making, are interrelated and systemic deficiencies. Moreover, the statistical discrepancy between the state (9.6%) and the nation (10.3%) with respect to attendance at a public meeting is consistent with earlier poll results that revealed one reason Illinoisans do not vote is because they are skeptical about whether their participation makes a difference.

Despite the low rates of political engagement, the survey does point to specific indicators that, when read in conjunction with one another, illustrate a climate conducive to political engagement. For example, there is a strong correlation between group membership and political participation. One could surmise that when people become civically engaged, they do so with people with whom they normally associate. This correlation presents a tremendous opportunity when examining how to increase civic health in Illinois and highlights that educating the public about how to be civically engaged requires a holistic community approach by identifying issues of public concern at the structures and institutions where people habitually spend time. Integrating elements of basic civic engagement is an essential manner in which to increase the likelihood of political engagement that will in turn lead to a healthier democracy.

## LEADERSHIP

Society needs leaders with well-developed skills. Leaders take a more active role in civil society and traditionally show greater capacity and confidence in civic engagement. A society with leaders who have well-honed civic skills results in a stronger participatory democracy. For purposes of this report, to be considered a leader, a person must have been an officer or served on a committee of any group or organization in the last twelve months.



In Illinois, 9.9% of residents attend meetings, belong to an organization, and take a leadership role in the community. Leaders, comprising 8.5% of Americans overall, are highly engaged in all forms of civic engagement, at levels far above those of group participants and non-participants alike.

The following national trends form a picture of what leadership looks like, and they mirror Illinois trends. Educational attainment has a strong correlation to leadership, and therefore to civic participation. Only 3.5% of Americans 25 or older with no college experience are leaders, compared with 13.5% of those who have college experience. Furthermore, though 57.0% of Americans have college experience, they make up 83% of leaders. In other words, Americans without college experience are severely underrepresented in leadership roles in communities across the U.S.

The differences between leaders and non-participants are large in all indicators, and the gap is especially large in types of civic engagement that take more commitment and skills, such as working with neighbors to improve the community and expressing political voice. In fact, two-thirds (67%) of leaders express political voice in one or more ways, in strong contrast to the rate of 13.7% among non-participants and even 42.4% among group participants. The rate of volunteering is strongly correlated with the degree of participation in groups: Leaders volunteer at a rate of 75%, compared with 42% of group participants and 15% of non-participants who volunteer.

Nationally, 27.7% of leaders, compared with 12.9% of group participants and 4.0% of non-participants, worked with neighbors to fix something in the community. Leaders were also about 50.0% more likely to vote in the November 2008 Presidential election compared to non-participants. It is clear that greater participation in civil society is highly predictive of civic behaviors. This makes sense, as formal membership, and especially taking a leadership role, generally provide people with ample opportunities to serve the community and work with others. Illinois follows this clear trend: Greater than one in five non-participants volunteer. Having group affiliation alone is also related to higher volunteering rates in Illinois.

# INFORMAL FORMS OF PARTICIPATION

*Political Socialization: Staying Informed through Interconnectedness and Accessing News and Information*

A healthy democracy demands informed citizens, meaning people who understand current issues, opportunities for change, and other people's views and interests. In other words, it demands that its citizens are politically socialized through everyday informal interactions and procurement of news. Political socialization is the teaching and learning of political knowledge, beliefs, and values. Political socialization begins in childhood, but continues throughout life. Agents of political socialization include parents, schools, peers, mass media, and other social institutions. To shed light on Illinoisans' status of political socialization, statistics illustrating how often Illinoisans engage in political discussion with family and friends and how often they access news are helpful. Newspaper reading traditionally has a strong correlation with civic and political participation and presents exposure to professionally reported news. Other news sources, such as those on the Internet, have proliferated and represent potential assets to democracy and civil society. Discussing politics with friends

and family creates an opportunity to share and to process the information provided by news sources and to exchange knowledge drawn directly from experience.

## INTERCONNECTEDNESS

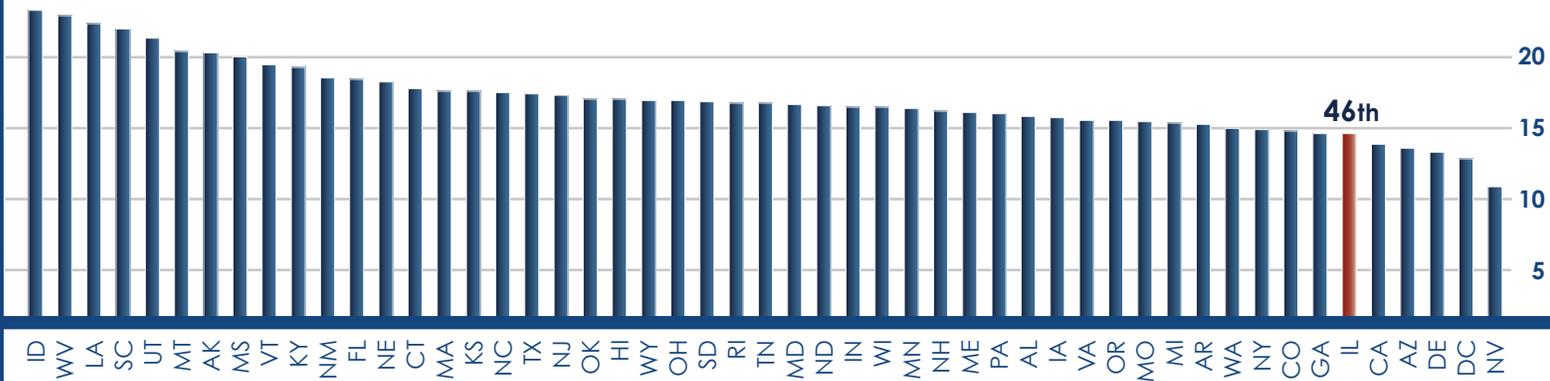
Interpersonal connections are known to have strong positive effects on health and well-being and may be pathways to civic and political participation. Evidence of interpersonal connections with peers, family, and friends includes the frequencies with which people communicate with friends and family by e-mail or on the Internet, eat dinner with any member of their household, talk with their neighbors, and exchange favors with neighbors.

The results are mixed. Illinois ranks 46th in the rate of people 18 and older who exchange favors with their neighbors at least a few times a week, at a rate of 14.5%, compared with 16.2% of Americans nationwide. Favors includes acts of kindness, such as watching each other's children, helping with shopping, house sitting, lending garden or house tools, and others. Illinois ranks 46th in the rate of people 18 and older who say they eat dinner with their family at least a few times a week, at a rate of 86.9%, compared with 89.1% nationally.

**FIGURE 12: EXCHANGE FAVORS WITH NEIGHBORS**

2009 NATIONAL AVERAGE - 16.2%

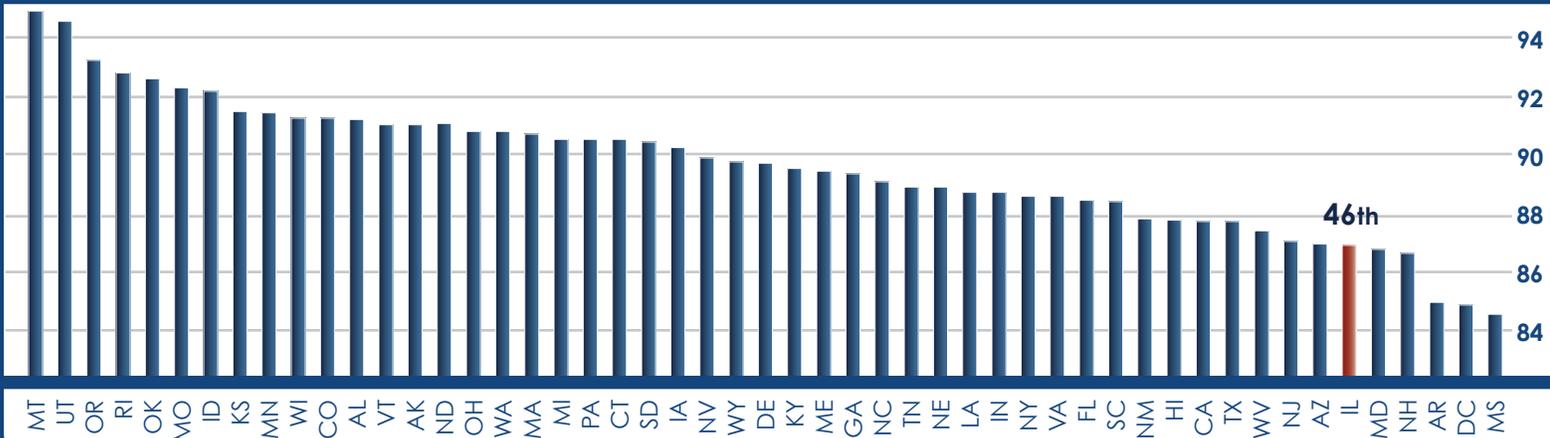
ILLINOIS - 14.5%



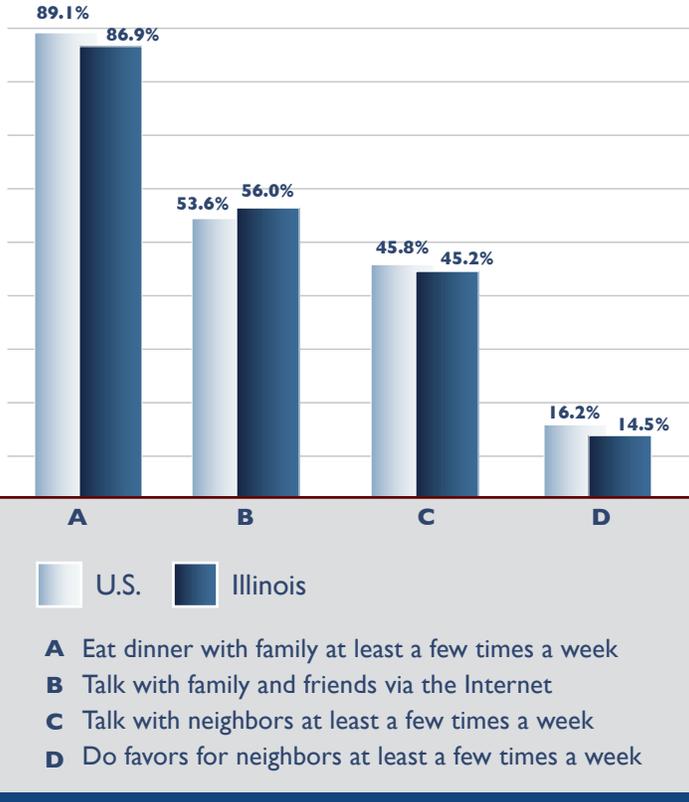
**FIGURE 13: EAT DINNER WITH FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS**

2009 NATIONAL AVERAGE - 89.1%

ILLINOIS - 86.9%



**FIGURE 14: FREQUENCY OF INTERACTIONS WITH FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND NEIGHBORS**



With respect to attending meetings where a public issue is discussed or working with a neighbor to solve a problem in the community, Illinois ranked slightly higher than the national average (10.0% vs. 9.9% and 9.0% vs. 8.8%, respectively). Illinois ranked 28th in 2009 in the rate of people ages 16 and older who work with neighbors to improve the community.

**RATES OF INFORMAL PARTICIPATORY ACTS**

	Illinois	US/National
Attending a meeting where a public issue(s) was discussed	10.0%	9.9%
Fixing something with your neighbors	9.0%	8.8%

Illinoisans are quite similar to the national average in the way they relate to others and do favors for their neighbors. Almost 14% are well-connected and do favors for their neighbors, while about 8% are less connected. Unlike most other states, there is no gap between urban and rural areas in Illinois in the portion of people who do favors for their neighbors. This is because rural Illinois residents are far less likely to exchange a favor with neighbors (14.0%) than their nationwide peers (19.5%). Nationally, the elderly are most likely to be connected and exchange favors, but in Illinois,

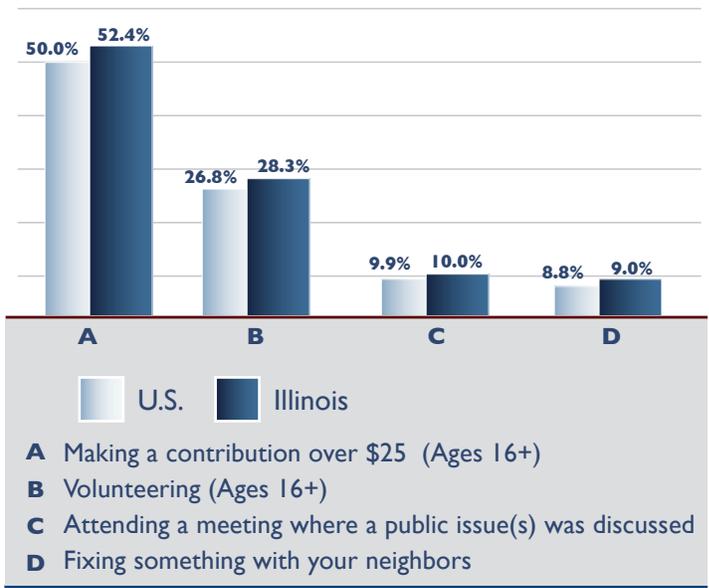


Generation Xers, born 1965-1980, are slightly more likely to do so (17.5%) than either the elderly, born prior to 1946 (15.2%) or Baby Boomers, born 1946-1964, (13.5%).

In Illinois, being connected closely with others and exchanging favors with neighbors are each related to higher rates of volunteerism; those who do both, volunteer at a high rate (41.9%). Similarly, those who have close ties to others and do favors for their neighbors are more likely to report working with others to fix a problem (17.5%) compared with those who lack such community connections (9.8%).

There is a striking gap in participation rates between formal and informal activities. The difference in the rate of volunteering with religious, educational, youth service, social, or community service entities, acts of formal participation, as opposed to the rate of individuals coming together to address a community-based issue or attending a meeting where public issues are discussed, which are informal acts of participation, is significant (28.3% vs. 10% in Illinois).

**FIGURE 15: COMPARISON OF RATES OF BOTH FORMAL AND INFORMAL PARTICIPATORY ACTS**



There are many factors that contribute to these statistics. It is undeniable that the lack of knowledge with respect to how government operates and how to use the medley of civic tools to impact government decision-making is partially responsible for the low level of participation once again highlighting the detriment caused by the lack of hands-on civic education. The lack of healthy civic habits, which include the failure of the general public to know what their First Amendment rights are and how to use them effectively, also impact this figure. For example, the above findings indicate that even if individuals identify an issue of concern, such as opposing a community development or particular allocation of tax dollars, virtually no action is being taken. These statistics might be vastly different if civic education of youth was a priority in our society, where at an early age young people not only learn the three branches of government, but gain practical knowledge, skills, and confidence as to what happens within local, state, and federal government entities and how to have their voices heard on issues important to them. Perhaps then attending a meeting where a public issue is discussed would have meaning and value to citizens who have increasing demands on their time.



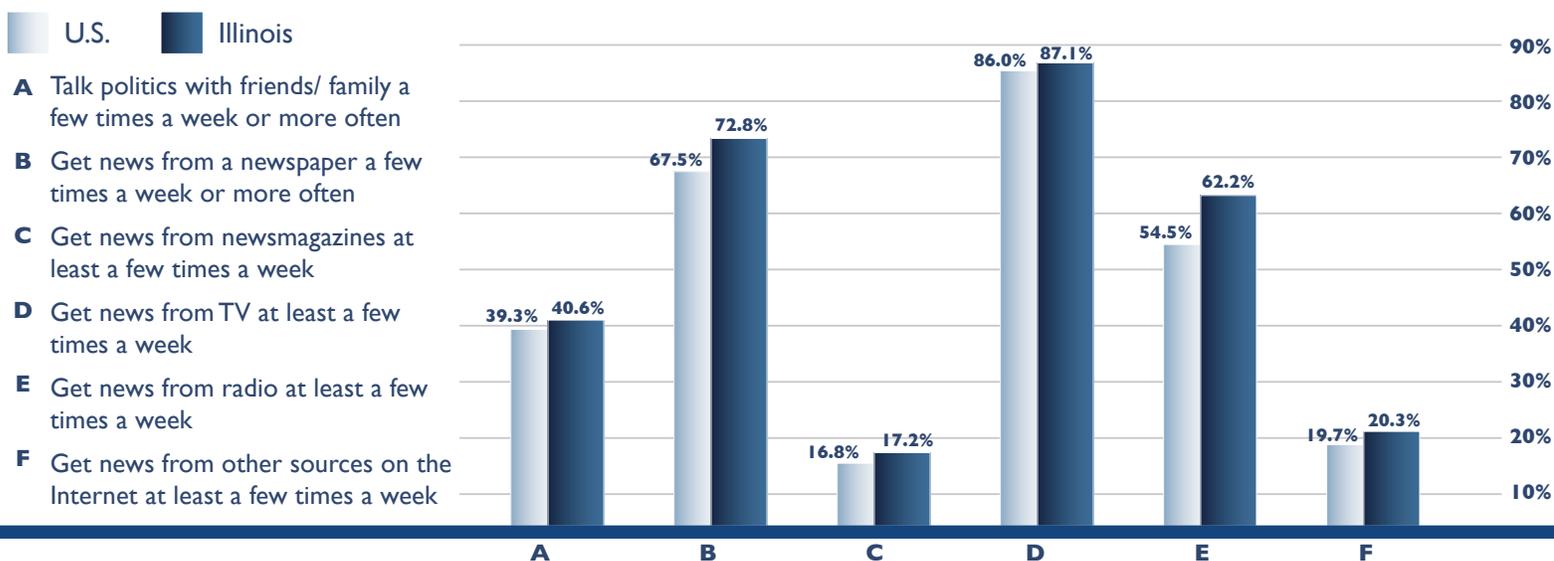
### ACCESSING NEWS AND INFORMATION

Accessing information frequently and broadly and having political discussions with others are independently correlated with increased civic engagement. More importantly, doing both has an even stronger relationship with civic engagement. Those who do not consume news are far less likely to participate in the various indicators of civic engagement discussed in this report. Nationally, 44.4% of Americans who both access information and discuss it express their

political voice in some way, compared with 13.6% of those who do neither. Among respondents who reported frequent access to news and information and frequent discussions with others, 14.9% report that they worked with neighbors to fix or improve on something in the community, compared with a mere 5.0% of those who infrequently accessed news and information and engaged in less-frequent discussions with others. Illinois compares favorably with national averages on all parameters related to accessing news and information: Illinoisans more frequently talk politics with friends and/or family, and get news from newspapers, newsmagazines, TV, radio, and proliferating Internet news sources compared with their nationwide counterparts.

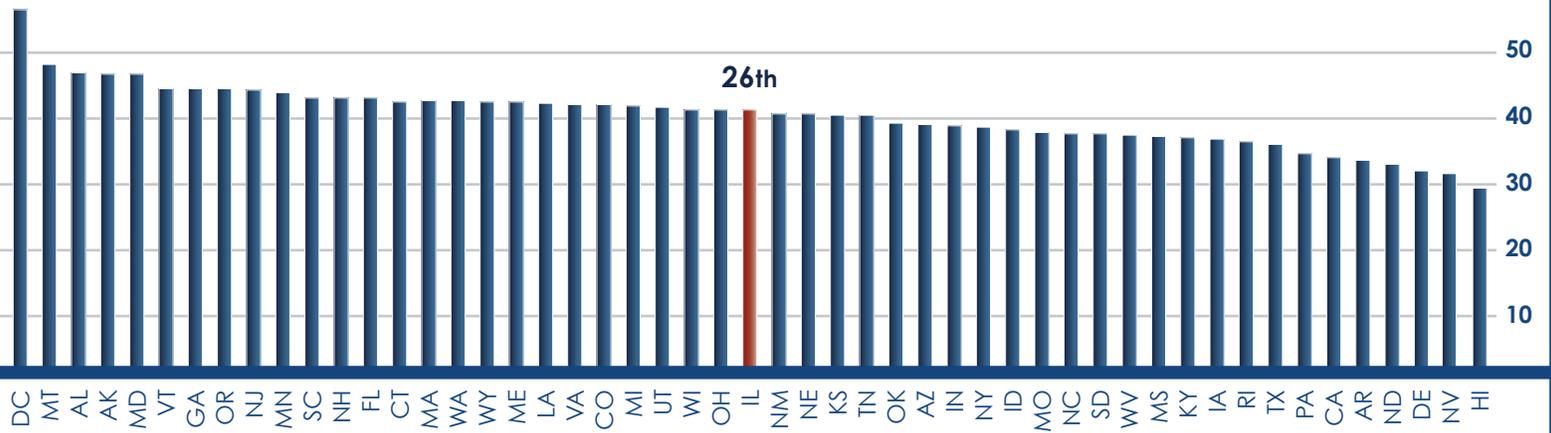
In Illinois, a relatively small portion of residents show low news consumption and low engagement in political discussions (26.4% vs. 30.4% nationwide). Instead, Illinoisans are more likely than average to keep up with the news without discussing issues with friends and family (31.6% vs. 25.7% nationwide).

**FIGURE 16: FREQUENCY OF ACCESSING NEWS AND INFORMATION**

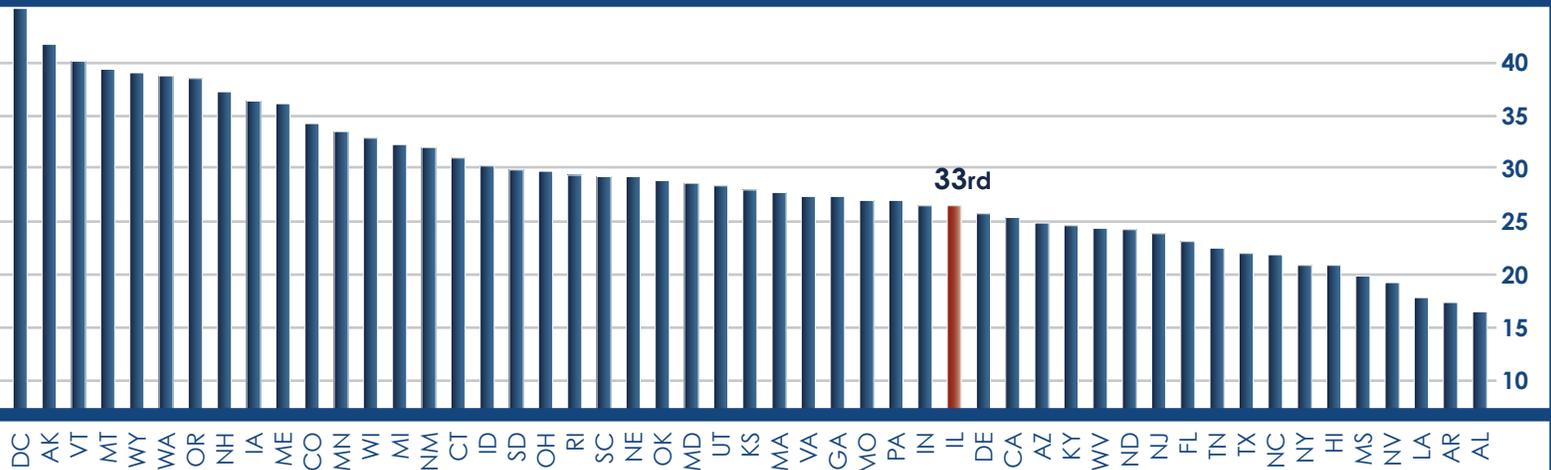


Illinois ranks 26th in the rate of people 18 and older who talk about politics with friends and family at least a few times a week (40.6% vs. 39.3% nationwide). Illinois ranks 33rd in the percentage of people 18 and older who engaged in at least one type of political act, 26.3%, which is the same rate as the national average.

**FIGURE 17: DISCUSS POLITICS WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS**  
**2008 - 2009 NATIONAL AVERAGE - 39.3% ILLINOIS - 40.6%**



**FIGURE 18: PARTICIPATE IN ONE OR MORE NON-ELECTORAL POLITICAL ACTIVITIES**  
**2008 - 2009 NATIONAL AVERAGE - 26.3% ILLINOIS - 26.3%**



Access to news predicts the likelihood of volunteering in Illinois: Those who report high news consumption with or without political discussion are more likely to volunteer than those who report low news consumption. Access to information also predicts whether people fix something in the community with neighbors. Those who keep informed, discuss politics with friends and family, or both, are more likely to donate money than those who do neither. Nationwide, there is a strong correlation between educational background and news consumption or discussion: Adults 25 and older who have no college experience are far less likely to access information and engage in political conversation than those who have college experience (21.5% vs. 37.0%). Illinois residents with no college experience are relatively more likely than their national counterparts to consume and discuss news (21.9% do both and 32.1% do neither).

A well-informed citizenry needs to be able to ask well-reasoned questions and have a knowledge base by which to evaluate information distributed by public bodies. Since the founding of our democracy, news distribution and consumption has been a crucial element of our democracy; it is an avenue by which to monitor and hold government accountable for anti-democratic activities and demand political reform. Accessing news and information, whether through traditional avenues of newspapers and broadcasts or contemporary avenues of the Internet and citizen journalism, provides an effective way for members of a community to gather information about common issues of concern, keep informed, critically evaluate policy issues, and identify opportunities for community involvement. Furthermore, for citizens who are engaged in the democratic process, learning how to use news outlets to advocate for a particular viewpoint is a crucial civic skill.

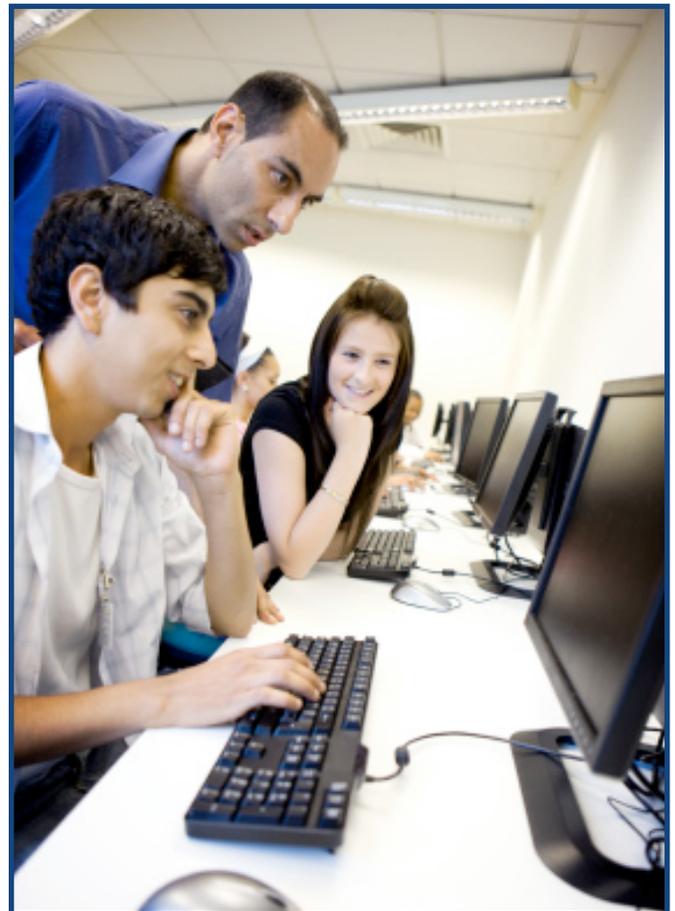
### **IMPROVING PARTICIPATION IN CIVIL SOCIETY**

A combination of civic education and an evaluation of how the public is able to access news is a crucial element to boosting participation in civic society. Specific recommendations and questions being asked by the citizenry about news consumption should include:

- Improve Illinois' Open Meetings Act, the law that mandates the public's right to attend government meetings, so that public notice and public meeting agenda notice provisions are strengthened, reduce provisions that allow a public body to meet and discuss public issues behind closed doors, mandate an opportunity for public comment at all meetings subject to the statute, and implement and increase penalties for violation.
- Institute civic education in primary and secondary schools that includes helping young people develop healthy civic habits and allow critical evaluation of issues of public concern as identified by young people. Such education will build leadership skills, promote community policy discussions, and attendance of government meetings.
- Reform of media laws is necessary to restore the balance of power rightfully in the hands of the citizenry and needs to include the mandate that those entities who use the public's airwaves produce content that is in the public interest. For example, during election season, candidates for public office should be entitled to free air time, and public interest programming should be redefined to focus on substantive news stories that focus on policy positions of candidates rather than the typical "horse race" stories.

• In evaluating the quality of news information consumed by the citizenry, and in promoting community dialogue on comment issues, the following questions should be asked:

- How many papers or blogs serve your community?
- What is the readership/circulation and who own(s) the news outlet(s)?
- What is the letter to the editor policy?
- Do news outlets let public officials run columns on a regular basis, and is the citizenry afforded the same opportunity?
- Does the press provide accurate coverage and use the Freedom of Information Act to investigate?
- Does your paper cover citizen events or civic concerns adequately?
- Do the articles reflect news and comments beyond standard press releases?

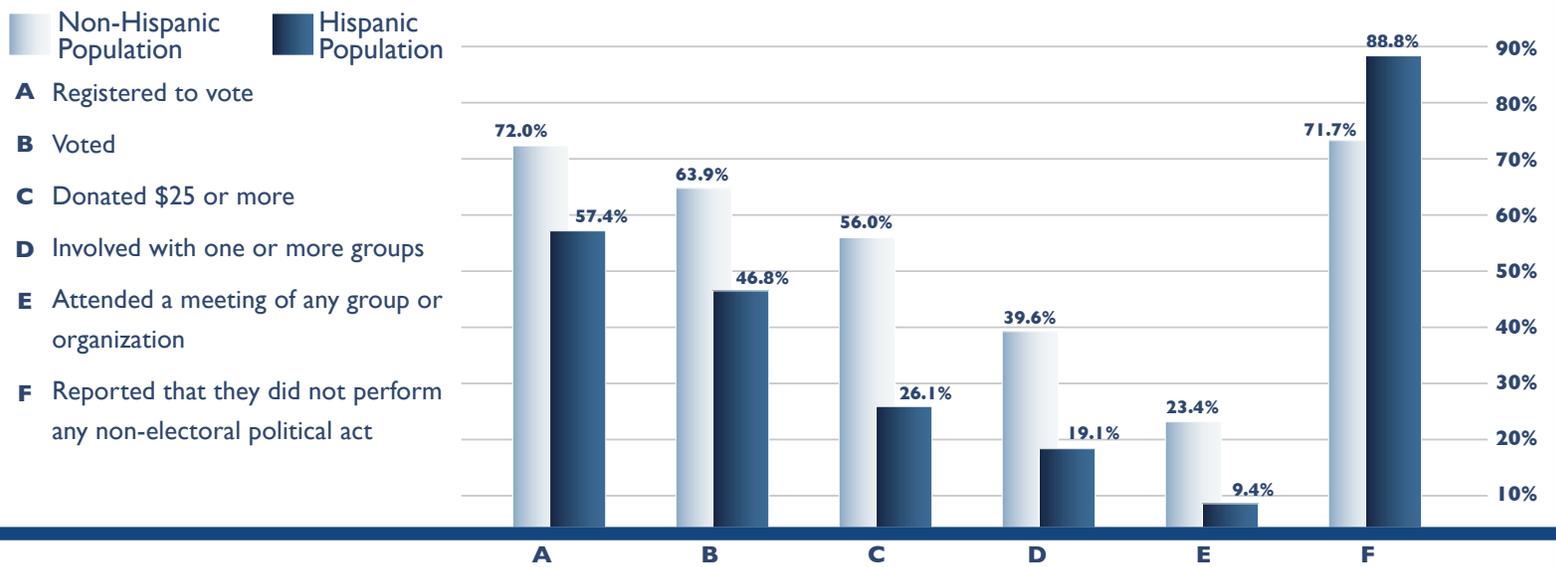


# THE CIVIC HEALTH OF THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY

In order to have a healthy civic community, it is crucial that all segments of society have the knowledge, capacity, and confidence to engage in the political process. In assessing the data collected in preparation for this report, one finds the Hispanic community was less engaged than its non-Hispanic counterparts in nearly every significant factor measured.

According to U.S. Census data, the Hispanic population is the largest minority group in the state (15.2%), as well as the fastest-growing segment of the population. Additionally, the median age of the Hispanic population is very young (26 years), and Hispanic students comprise 20% of all individuals in grades K-12.<sup>17</sup>

**FIGURE 19: RATES OF PARTICIPATION BETWEEN HISPANICS AND NON-HISPANIC POPULATIONS BY ACT**



The dire significance of such a large portion of the population being disengaged from basic practices of democracy cannot be understated. At the same time, this detrimental situation offers an outstanding opportunity to improve the civic health of our community through hands-on civic education. The integration of hands-on civic curricula in our schools would give everyone, including Hispanic young people, comprising 20% of the K-12 student population, an opportunity to harness civic power in an unprecedented manner. Consequently, as members of the Hispanic community gain improved civic skills, confidence, and capacity to participate in civic affairs, it is statistically more likely that they will increase voter registration and turnout at the polls, making this demographic a force to be reckoned with. Lastly, when we as a society make it a priority to ensure that all members of our state and nation, regardless of education level, income, or other demographic signifiers, have knowledge of how government works and how to affect government decision-making, our entire society benefits.



# HANDS-ON CIVIC EDUCATION WILL RESULT IN INCREASED CIVIC PARTICIPATION

In addition to the medley of policy reforms suggested in this report that would increase accessibility, transparency, and accountability of government entities, holistic civic education is necessary. Holistic civic education must be instituted to improve the civic health, and thereby our democracy, in Illinois. Holistic civic education is multifaceted. It is community-based and includes family structures that model civic participation and government institutions at all levels that value and nurture citizen engagement. Commitment by our leaders in education to implement hands-on civic education is crucial. In fact, the original purpose for the creation of public schools was to prepare youth for a lifetime of civic participation in their communities. Despite the fact that civic education skills are learned behaviors, just like reading, math, science, or the arts, and that civics is a subject in itself, civic education has been a low educational priority for decades: civics classes are not mandated, standardized testing of social studies is not required, and government classes focus primarily on the passive memorization of important dates and facts. Currently, Illinois' civics education attainment goals are grossly insufficient: All students are expected to learn about civics and patriotism and must take only two years of high school social studies, including one year focused on the United States government.<sup>18</sup> Illinois law merely states that "American patriotism and the principles of representative government, as enunciated in the American Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States of America and the Constitution of the State of Illinois, and the proper use and display of the American flag shall be taught.... No student shall receive a certificate of graduation without passing a satisfactory examination upon such subjects."<sup>19</sup> And while all school districts may offer a Voluntary Service Credit Program, which "enables secondary students to earn credit towards graduation through performance of community services," this program is not mandatory.<sup>20</sup>

With changing family structures and the systemic neglect of our government institutions to teach civic education, the responsibility for teaching civics falls largely on dynamic educators who are willing or able to go beyond the standard curriculum, school districts that place a priority on civic education, and civic organizations that focus on promoting civic engagement and/or supplement school efforts to impart civic knowledge. Considering that Illinois graduates nearly



85.6% of students from high school, and implicitly an even higher percentage from middle school, Illinois has a significant opportunity with a captive audience to build healthy civic habits in formative years of development.

This is a pivotal time for enacting reforms to demonstrate Illinoisans' commitment to practical civic education in our schools. The Federal "No Child Left Behind" program is in the reauthorization review process, and this presents a crucial opportunity to reinstate an emphasis on civic education. Illinois is among the majority of states that have adopted the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, which ultimately allow each state to craft the manner in which the core standards are achieved in the state, and students in the Illinois Public School currently have social studies requirements that focus partially on civic education.

## Additional recommendations for reforms include:

- Begin planting the seeds of the principles of participatory democracy in elementary school. *Knowing* how to be civically engaged is a skill that must be taught. *Being* civically engaged is a value-based action that must be practiced and needs demonstrated commitment. Most habits are developed at a young age; just like we teach our youth to develop healthy eating and exercise habits, we must also teach them healthy civic habits.
- Restore the civic mission of schools by mandating civic education in middle school and high school to develop healthy civic habits.

- Expand Illinois' Democracy Schools program, which is rapidly gaining momentum. The Democracy Schools program is an accreditation program for secondary schools providing students with authentic experiences in the rights, responsibilities, and tensions inherent in living in a constitutional democracy. Democracy schools promote civic engagement by all students, have an intentional focus on fostering participatory citizenship, and place an emphasis on helping students understand how the fundamental ideals and principles of our democratic society relate to important current problems, opportunities, and controversies.<sup>21</sup>

- Integrate into teacher-certification programs method courses on how to teach civics with an emphasis on cross-curricular strategies.
- Mandate that as part of youth service-learning programs, students partake in some kind of community-based political activity: organizing to address a community issue, attending a public meeting on an issue of concern, writing a letter to the editor, to name a few. While service-learning is very important, building the capacity of young people to identify an issue of concern, identify possible solutions to that issue, form an action plan to address the issue and execute an action plan develops problem solving and consensus building skills that are transferable to any arena in life.

## TECHNICAL NOTES

The 2010 *Civic Health Index* is based on The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement's (CIRCLE) analysis of Census Current Population Survey (CPS) data. Volunteering estimates are from CPS September Volunteering Supplement, 2007, 2008 and 2009, and data available from Volunteering in America. Voting and registration data come from the CPS November Voting/Registration Supplement, 2004 and 2008, and all other civic engagement indicators, such as access to information and connection to others, come from the 2008 and 2009 CPS Civic Engagement Supplement. For these indicators, the 2008 and 2009 data were combined whenever possible, to achieve the largest possible sample size and to minimize error.

For the Illinois Report, the sample size for citizen engagement was 6,037 and the sample size for volunteering 3,164.

Because the report draws from multiple data sources with varying error parameters, there is no exact estimate of margin of error for the national or Illinois sample. However, according to the Census Bureau, published margin of error for CPS voting and registration supplement from 2008 is +/-0.3% for the national estimate and +/- 1.5% for Illinois.<sup>1</sup> For specific population subgroups, the margin of error is greater.

The 2010 national report, *America's Civic Health Assessment* issue brief and executive summary can be found online at [www.ncoc.net/Civic Health2010](http://www.ncoc.net/CivicHealth2010). Rankings and data for all 50 states and 51 largest metropolitan areas are available at <http://civic.serve.gov>. The 2010 state report, *Illinois Civic Health index* can be found online at [www.civiced.org](http://www.civiced.org). A chronicle of Illinois Civic Health Index work since 2009 can be found at [NCoC.net/IL](http://NCoC.net/IL).

# ENDNOTES

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- <sup>2</sup> As of September 2010, Illinois' unemployment rate (seasonally adjusted) is 9.9% versus the national rate of 9.6%. <http://lmi.ides.state.il.us/download/table1.pdf>.
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- <sup>18</sup> 105 Ill. Comp. Stat. § 5/27-22. Available online: <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs4.asp?DocName=010500050HArt.+27&ActID=1005&ChapterID=17&SeqStart=149700000&SeqEnd=156200000>
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- <sup>20</sup> 105 Ill. Comp. Stat. § 5/27-22.3 Available online: <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs4.asp?DocName=010500050HArt.+27&ActID=1005&ChapterID=17&SeqStart=149700000&SeqEnd=156200000>
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## TECHNICAL NOTES

- <sup>i</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Table 4a, <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2008/tables.html>

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CITIZENSHIP

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Founded in 1946 and federally chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1953, the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC) is a leader in advancing our nation's civic life. We track, measure and promote 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 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, including Senators Robert Byrd and Lamar Alexander, Justices Sandra Day O'Connor, Stephen Breyer, Anthony Kennedy, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and Antonin Scalia, philanthropists Ray Chambers and Eugene Lang, authors David McCullough and Walter Isaacson, scholars Robert Putnam and Stephen Goldsmith, TIME Magazine's Richard Stengel, MTV's Ian Rowe, ABC's Cokie Roberts, actor Stephen Lang, AOL's Jean Case, Facebook's Sean Parker, former Clinton Administration advisor William Galston and former Bush Administration advisor John Bridgeland.

NCoC's accomplishments are many, ranging from fueling the civic energy of the Greatest Generation freshly home from WWII to helping lead the celebration of our nation's Bicentennial in 1976. NCoC helped establish the observance of Constitution Day, each September 17, and our charter mandates we hold our annual conference close to this date with a focus on building a more active and engaged citizenry.

Since 2006, NCoC has produced *America's Civic Health Index*, the nation's leading measure of citizen actions and attitudes. In April 2009, NCoC was included in the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act. To help our communities harness the power of their citizens, the Corporation for National and Community Service and the U.S. Census Bureau were directed to work with NCoC to expand the reach and impact of these metrics through an annual Civic Health Assessment.

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

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

## 2010 America's Civic Health Assessment

### Civic Life in America: Key Findings on the Civic Health of the Nation

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More information:

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