



MARYLAND CIVIC HEALTH INDEX

2010



Civic Voices, Civic Health



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MARYLAND CIVIC HEALTH INDEX 2010: Civic Voices, Civic Health

The Mannakee Circle Group

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For over two centuries, the United States has depended on ordinary citizens as much (or more so) than government actions in order to thrive. What people do together for the common good often determines the quality of life in a community or spells the difference between thriving and struggling. This is civic health.

In this, the first-ever *Maryland Civic Health Index*, the Free State finds itself ahead of the national average on almost every major indicator of civic health. Marylanders are highly connected to information, discuss issues and politics often, and vote in greater proportions than the national average. More Maryland citizens are members of organized groups and are leaders of those groups than is the national norm.

However, for a state whose public education system is the first in the nation, according to *Education Week*,¹ that pioneered a number of civic literacy programs, that has an exemplary state university and community college system, that has one of the highest per capita median incomes in the nation, and that is Washington, D.C.'s closest neighbor — Maryland is not as highly ranked as one would expect it to be. On many measures, Maryland is not at the front but in the middle of the pack.

Indeed, while the top-line numbers give cause for satisfaction, a closer look in some areas reveals disparities where Maryland still has progress to make. Furthermore, in community conversations held in different locations throughout the state, participants pointed to an everyday life that is often filled with stress, which gets in the way of people fully entering and participating in public life.

This report, a collaboration between the Mannakee Circle Group, the Maryland Commission on Civic Literacy, Common Cause Maryland, the Center for Civic Education, and the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC), is an analysis of state data that is included in the NCoC's 2010 *America's Civic Health Index*. The data that underlie the report were analyzed by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) under the authority of the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009, which mandated the use of certain U.S. Census data to create such an annual index.²



To augment the data analyzed by CIRCLE, the Maryland partner organizations convened several community conversations in different regions of the state to discuss civic health over the summer and early fall of 2010.

In addition, state partners (led by the Maryland Commission on Civic Literacy) sponsored Maryland's first-ever Civic Literacy Summit. At the Summit, several hundred Maryland educators, leaders, and citizens reflected on the state's civic health and made a series of recommendations for ways to improve it. They fall into four broad suggestions:

1. Take concrete steps to improve individuals' connection with the civic life of Maryland, including more civic education efforts for youth, building on existing service-learning programs, and other capacity-building for adults.
2. Foster greater connectedness between and among citizens and the many constituent parts of communities, including local organizations, businesses, institutions, and others.
3. Explore more deeply areas where Maryland has yet to make civic progress, including cultural, economic, and other areas of disparity in participation.
4. Communicate more and highlight the importance of civic health, including disseminating the results of this report and establishing an annual civic literacy summit.

These and additional recommendations are provided in more detail in the report.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

The Mannakee Circle Group, Common Cause Maryland, and the Maryland Commission on Civic Literacy partnered with the NCoC to develop and prepare the *Maryland Civic Health Index*.

The NCoC, in partnership with the Civic Indicators Working Group, has published *America's Civic Health Index* annually since 2006. Through the passage of the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act in 2009, NCoC formalized a partnership with the U.S. Census Bureau and the Corporation for National and Community Service. The act charges these three partner organizations with developing, refining, and implementing annual measures of America's civic health. Having good measures of our country's civic aptitudes will enable policymakers, private and public institutions, and citizens to strengthen the range of activities, attitudes, and behaviors that makes up our nation's civic life. This year, NCoC has partnered with 13 states and four cities to assess civic health at the state and local levels.

This report includes not only data and findings relevant to Maryland, but also includes the voices and thoughts of Marylanders. Maryland state partners held a number of community conversations in the months leading up to publication of this report, hearing from a range of citizens about how they think we are doing in terms of civic health.

This process culminated with the state's Civic Literacy Summit on October 23, 2010. Held at Anne Arundel Community College, the Summit brought together hundreds of participants including educators, political and organizational leaders, students, and others. At the Summit, participants looked in-depth at the various components of civic health and crafted recommendations that will move the Free State forward.

This report contains findings from the data as well as the voices we heard as we listened and deliberated together.

BY THE NUMBERS, AT A GLANCE: HOW MARYLAND COMPARES ON SELECTED INDICATORS*

MAJOR INDICATOR	MARYLAND	NATIONAL AVERAGE	RANKING AMONG STATES
Volunteering	29.4%	26.8%	23rd
Working with neighbors	9.2%	8.8%	26th
Voting (2008 Presidential election)	68.3%	63.6%	11th
Registration (2008 Presidential election)	73.9%	71.0%	18th
Exchanging favor with neighbors	16.6%	16.0%	27th
Eat dinner with a member of household at least a few times a week	86.8%	89.1%	47th
Engaged in one or more non-electoral political acts	28.0%	26.3%	24th
Group membership	40.0%	35.1%	15th
Talk about politics with friends and family	45.8%	39.3%	5th

* An expanded indicator chart can be found on page 15

WHAT IS CIVIC HEALTH?

In thinking about the health of a nation, state, or community, some may first think about economic prosperity, or political power, or perhaps (in the case of nations) military might. Some may focus on quality of education, on the physical well-being of residents, or whether there are gaps between different groups.

Civic health is another measure of the well-being of a community, state, or nation.

The United States is founded upon the principle of self rule. The people of the United States are citizens, not subjects. This requires a citizenry that willingly shoulders its basic civic obligations and also works together so that communities can thrive. For over two centuries, the United States has been a land where voluntary associations and their benefits to communities are as important (or more so) than government action.

The term “civic health” reflects that important participatory aspect of self-rule — that layer of life that is comprised of what we do when we are not just hard at work or alone with family. Using civic health as a lens, we can look at what happens in public life, as we interact with one another, with our communities, and with government.

Beyond being intrinsically good for democracy, civic health has a strong bearing on the life of communities. A community with strong civic health is more resilient when hardship hits, has more effective governance, and is a better place to live. A low level of civic health can lead to dysfunctions in communities that make it harder to address pressing public problems.

Researchers have pointed to a number of useful ways to measure civic health. For the purposes of this report, as is the case for the *America's Civic Health Index*, we focus on five broad elements:

- **Service and Volunteering:** To what extent are citizens stepping forward, engaging in service to and with fellow community members?
- **Group Membership and Leadership:** To what extent are citizens joining organizations and other groups that meet on a regular basis? How many are stepping forward as leaders of these groups?



- **Connecting to Information:** To what extent are citizens getting informed, by connecting to news from print, broadcast, and online sources, as well as by talking with neighbors and friends about political issues?
- **Social Connectedness:** To what extent are citizens inclined to interact with neighbors, working together informally to fix things in the community or even just to know one another?
- **Political Action:** To what extent are citizens voting and taking other political actions beyond voting, such as talking or meeting with office holders, writing letters to the editor for publication in newspapers, or attending rallies or meetings?

Taken together, these elements give a sense of Maryland's civic health.

While individual snapshots of data and rankings against other states and comparisons with national averages are interesting, more important is how the Index changes from year to year. This first report will provide initial data that will be added to in subsequent reports.

Over time, Maryland citizens and leaders can look at how different indicators change over time, how they react to policies and circumstances, and can make decisions about how best to move forward.

It is often said that “what gets measured gets improved.” It is our hope that by measuring Maryland's civic health, we can begin working together to improve it over time and continue to create a state with an exemplary civic fabric and public life.

MARYLAND'S CIVIC HEALTH

Maryland's civic health in all aspects is respectably ahead of national averages, and when compared with other states, Maryland is ranked in the top half on almost all major indicators.

On two data points, Maryland is ranked near the top and near the bottom at once. Maryland is 5th among all states in the share of adults who talk about politics with friends and family. However, it is 47th among states when it comes to the proportion of adults who say they eat dinner with family members almost every day.

This dichotomy — highly connected to others when it comes to public issues, while at the same time less connected when it comes to informal interpersonal interactions — tells a story of a highly engaged Maryland that struggles with day-to-day pressures.

Community conversation participants said they felt this dichotomy strongly. While many pointed to positive and hopeful things in the community, many nonetheless emphasized how hard it can be to find the time and energy to engage with civic life.

As a participant in one community conversation said, *"There are not a large percent of people involved with everything, but there is always enough. The people who are involved believe in what they do and understand the importance of taking care of the community."*



**“A highly engaged Maryland
that struggles with day-to-day pressures”**



DIMENSIONS OF MARYLAND'S CIVIC HEALTH

SERVICE AND VOLUNTEERING

“Most people want to help and be a part of something good.” —
Community-conversation participant

Service and volunteering is often the first thing people think of when they think about civic health.

This kind of service ranges from helping out at a local food pantry, to signing up to clean up a streambed on a weekend, to bringing meals to seniors who are not mobile. These are just a few examples of service. There are many more.

Volunteering and service are on the rise in many communities. *“Most people want to help and be a part of something good,”* said one community-conversation participant, in thinking about service and volunteering.

Maryland is the first and only state to require service-learning as a condition of high school graduation. This is an educational movement that connects concrete service opportunities to classroom instruction. The State of Maryland has a requirement for all Maryland high school students to participate in 75 hours of service-learning in order to graduate. In the 2008-2009 year, 4 million students engaged in 11,451 service-learning projects across the 24 school systems; the Maryland Department of Education estimates that the volunteer time of 2008 graduates contributed \$42 million in value throughout Maryland. While most of these student volunteers are not reflected in the Civic Health Index, research has shown a link between quality service-learning programs and later civic activities as an adult.

Maryland ranks 23rd among states for volunteering among residents age 16 and older in 2009. Among these Marylanders, 29.4% report volunteering at least once in the previous 12 months. This is slightly ahead of the national rate, which is 26.8%.

Community-conversation participants explicitly (and positively) linked adult service with what happens in schools: *“Kids who go through service-learning keep it going,”* said one.

Participants in the Civic Literacy Summit, most of whom are educators, felt that more progress could be made on this indicator if deeper attention were paid to the role of civic education (including service-learning) in school. Research suggests that a key determinant of the effectiveness of service-learning in fostering civic behaviors is the quality of the program. *“Service-learning has never really had funding,”* said one Summit participant. *“That has created lack of training, implementation, and inconsistency.”*

Another challenge to cultivating greater service, according to Summit participants, comes as a result of the high-accountability culture Maryland has fostered in education. In some respects this is driven by the No Child Left Behind act. “Thousands of schools across the nation are responding to the reading and math testing requirements ... by reducing class time spent on other subjects and, for some low-proficiency students, eliminating it,” according to a March 26, 2006 *New York Times* piece.³ This has been the case in Maryland. According to the *Task Force Report on Social Studies Education in Maryland*, “Thirty-three percent of the Maryland elementary school principals ... reported a moderate to great decrease in civics instruction.”⁴

Maryland has many high-stakes tests. *“This is a huge challenge to civic engagement and civic literacy,”* said a Summit participant. *“It creates pressure that keeps teachers from creating learning opportunities which really engage the youth.”*

The top three avenues for volunteering in Maryland are religious organizations (31.5% reported this as the type of organization with which they spent the most time volunteering); children's or educational organizations (22.8%); and other social or community service organizations (13.4%). Community-conversation participants affirmed this in their own reflections: *“A lot of our community service tends to be religiously affiliated or for school,”* said one conversation participant. *“In my church – there's a school across the street, and we tutor kids in the afternoon,”* added another.

According to the Federal government's chief public resource on volunteering, volunteeringinamerica.gov, an estimated average of 1.3 million adult residents volunteered in Maryland between 2007 and 2009.

Maryland ranks 26th in the share of people who reported working with neighbors to solve community problems in 2009, with a rate of 9.2%. Nationwide, 8.8% of Americans age 16 and older report working with neighbors to improve the community in the past 12 months.

The data from Maryland suggest that the rates of people who work with their neighbors have been increasing, which mirrors a national trend.

Women are more likely than men to take part in service as a volunteer. One third (33.0%) of Maryland women are volunteers, compared with one quarter (25.3%) of men.

The intuitive sense that once someone begins volunteering, they find it worthwhile and tend to repeat the behavior holds true in Maryland. Of those who volunteered in 2009, 73.0% said they had volunteered in 2008 as well. More than half of Maryland's volunteering community (52.4%) are regular volunteers, saying that they spend 12 or more weeks in the year volunteering.

Giving time not only helps the community and fosters a sense of personal efficacy — but it also may have a direct financial benefit to community organizations. Of those Marylanders who volunteered in the previous 12 months, 52.7% reported that they had also made a donation of \$25 or more.

Women are more likely than men to report that they had given \$25 or more: 56.5% compared with 48.6% of Maryland men.

From the Civic Literacy Summit:

Participants, mostly educators, at the Civic Literacy Summit focused strongly on Maryland's service-learning programs and culture. As the first and only state to require service-learning as a condition of high school graduation, Maryland can be justifiably proud of its leadership in this area. However, participants recognized that there is progress still to be made in this area, as the state's mid-range ranking makes clear.

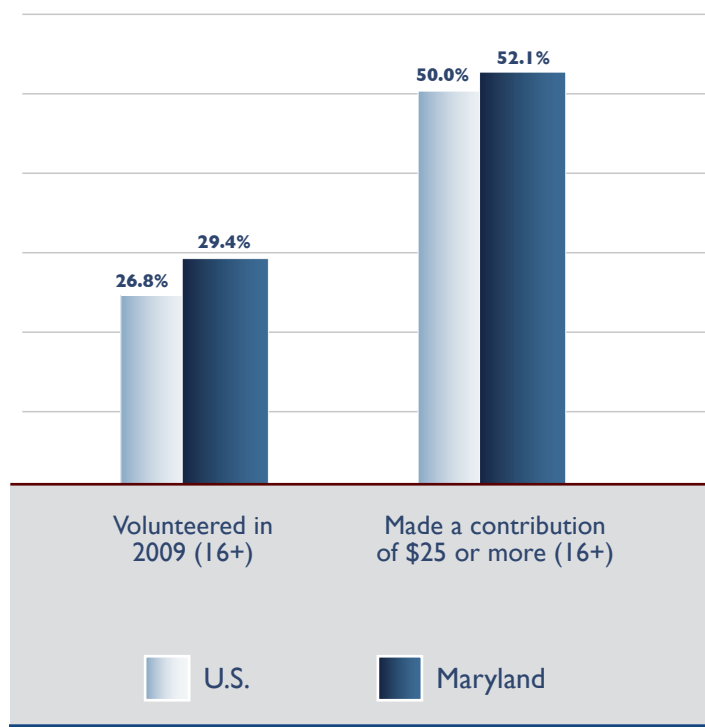
As one community-conversation participant said, somewhat pessimistically: *"It's like anything else. If you don't have it in school, you don't get it. Families won't teach it."*

While this view may not be accurate in every respect, Summit participants felt a key leverage point in fostering greater service in Maryland is the school system. The Summit workgroup that focused on this issue made recommendations that specifically sought to improve service-learning programs, and also integrate it beyond schools and classrooms:

- Greater emphasis on creating a culture in which civic education and service is incorporated from the early grades through higher education
- Emphasis on quality of service, student ownership of projects, increased reflection, and demonstrated learning
- Increase funding and support for service-learning programs



FIGURE 1: VOLUNTEERING AND GIVING



“[High stakes testing] is a huge challenge to civic engagement and civic literacy. It creates pressure that keeps teachers from creating learning opportunities that really engage youth.”

— Civic Literacy Summit participant

PARTICIPATING IN GROUPS

“Who’s going to carry the torch?” — Community-conversation participant

Organizations such as churches, neighborhood associations, service clubs and more are the backbone of our communities. Without such organizations, many services and programs that people depend on would not happen.

One measure of a community’s civic health is how many people belong to groups and organizations. And, of these members, how many can be considered “leaders,” holding an official position with the group.

In most communities, people who take part in one organization are much more likely to be members of another, or to be leaders.

Maryland ranks 15th among states in the rate of people 18 and older who belong to religious, neighborhood, school, or sports groups in their communities, with a rate of 40.0%. This outstrips the national rate of group membership of 35.1%.

Just belonging to an organized group is one important step in civic life and contributes to a community’s civic health. However, there are further steps that can be taken. One such important step is to actually show up to meetings. While fewer Marylanders show up than are group members, the share of people who do so remains ahead of the national share. In Maryland, 24.8% of adults say they have attended a meeting of a group or organization in the past twelve months, while just 21.5% say so nationally.

In other words, roughly one in four Marylanders says they attend one or more group meetings per year. This is cause to be optimistic, yet in communities this often translates into a sense that there aren’t enough people willing to step forward. *“In our community, it’s a small amount of people who get in there and really do help,”* said one community-conversation participant. *“In our PTA, we have high membership, but the same group always shows up,”* agreed another.

There is a generational component to group membership and activities. Maryland’s Millennial Generation (those born 1981 or later) is least likely to attend public meetings (96.4% did not in the previous 12 months) or to have worked with others to fix something in their neighborhood. Baby Boomers (born 1946 to 1964), on the other hand, are most likely to have worked with others to fix something in the neighborhood (13.7% say they did).

Local groups typically depend on their membership rolls to find leaders to serve in key positions and make sure the groups can function. In Maryland, 11.1% of people say they have taken on a leadership role in an organization by serving as an officer or serving on a committee of an organization. (This compares to 10.1% nationally.)

Just being a member of an organization tends to make an individual more likely to be engaged in other ways. Marylanders in leadership positions are even more likely to participate. For example, among organization leaders in Maryland, more than 90% say they also volunteer, compared with just 22% of Marylanders who do not belong to groups at all.

Education — especially college — has a strong correlation to leadership. While 11.1% of Marylanders say they serve in a leadership capacity for an organization, among Marylanders with college experience the share jumps to 14.9%. What’s more, while 62.5% of Marylanders have college experience, they make up 86.6% of leaders.

Being a leader also correlates strongly to whether a person participates in politics in ways beyond voting, especially when leaders are compared with people who do not participate in groups. In Maryland, 70.4% of leaders express their political voice in ways beyond voting, while just 12.9% of nonparticipants do so. (Among people who participate in groups but not as leaders, the share is 39.6%.) Leaders are more likely to vote in Maryland, at a rate of 96.2% in 2008, compared with 69.0% of people who do not participate in groups.

With just over one in ten Marylanders stepping into group leadership roles, some community-conversation participants expressed concern. *“No one ever wants to be the PTA president,”* lamented one. *“Who’s going to carry the torch?”* asked another. *“It doesn’t seem like people are inspired to carry the torch.”*

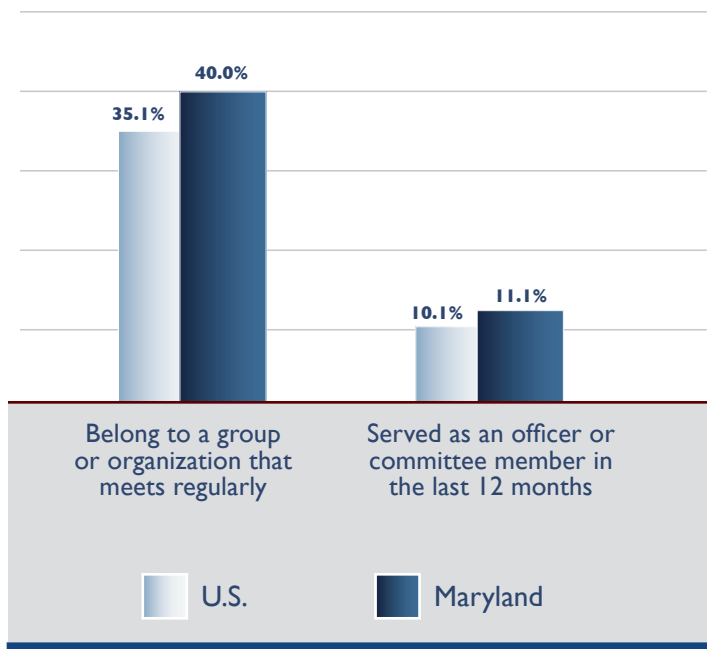
From the Civic Literacy Summit:

Participants at the Civic Literacy Summit made recommendations focused on connecting existing networks and resources with community groups. For instance, one recommendation focused on linking the needs of organizations with members of the business community who may be looking for avenues to donate time or money.

Summit participants also thought structurally about ways to make individual involvement more likely. The Summit workgroup on group participation made these recommendations:

- Connect funding and resource needs of groups to organizations and businesses looking to give
- Facilitate partnerships between schools and local community organizations
- Require residential developers to think broadly and intentionally about the civic impact of their work (i.e. building community centers, parks, and bike or walking paths).

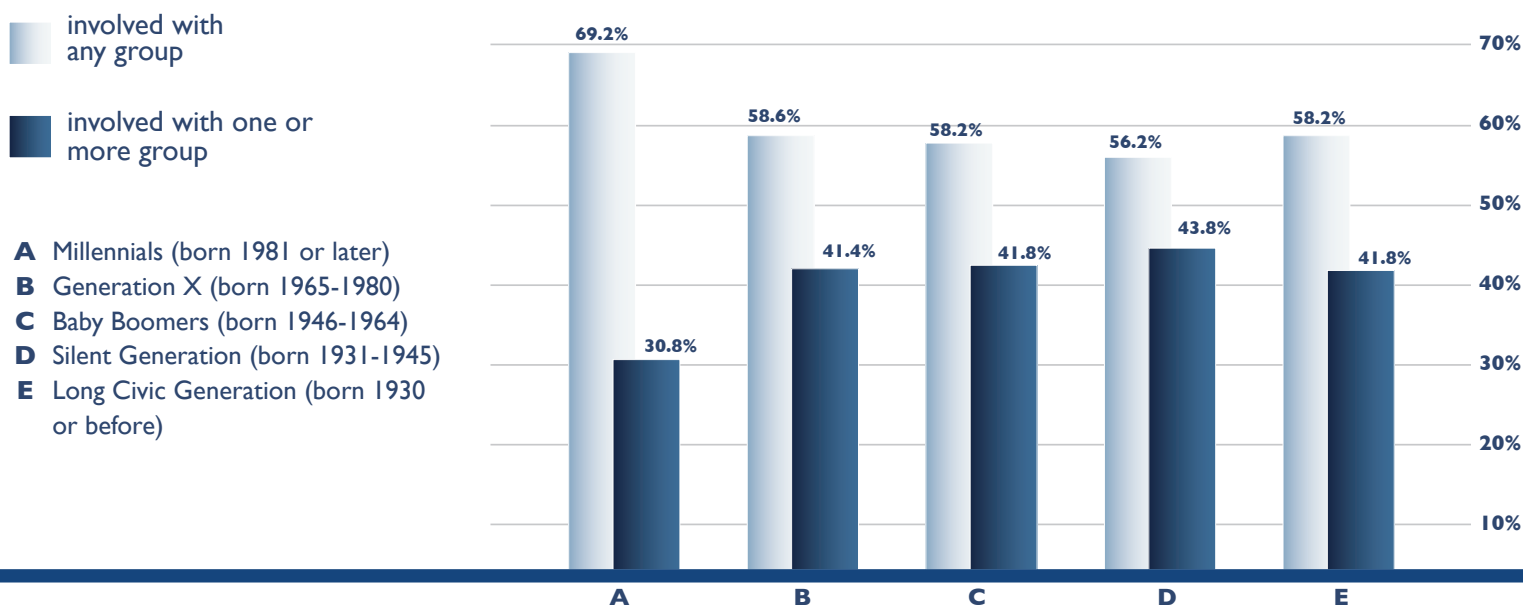
FIGURE 2: GROUP PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP



“We have high membership, but the same group always shows up.”

— Community-conversation participant

FIGURE 3: GROUP INVOLVEMENT



CONNECTING TO INFORMATION

“People in Maryland are connecting to information, but to what end?” -Civic Literacy Summit participant

When it comes to civic health, a key indicator is staying informed (for instance, by keeping up with the news or searching the Internet), and discussing current events with others.

This indicator looks at how often people read newspapers or watch the news, as well as how often they discuss politics or issues with family and friends.

Overall, this is an indicator where Maryland's civic health appears to be strong. This may be no surprise, given the state's proximity to Washington, D.C. and the relatively large proportion of residents who are involved with government and politics.

The state ranks 5th in the rate of people 18 and older who talk about politics with friends and family at least a few times a week, at 45.8%. Nationally, 39.3% of Americans 18 or older discuss politics with friends and family a few times a week or more.

Younger Marylanders are especially more likely than their peers elsewhere to connect with information, discussing politics with their friends and family or gathering news frequently. More than three quarters (75.5%) of Maryland “Generation X” residents (born 1965 through 1980) are connected in this way, compared with 67.9% nationwide. For Maryland’s Millennial Generation, 67.6% are highly connected to information (versus 58.0% nationwide).

In fact, some community-conversation participants expressed dismay at the dynamic created in talking politics with their friends and family. It’s almost too much, for these individuals. *“Half of my family is very strong one way and half the other way,”* said one participant. *“It’s hard to be in the middle of those views to speak out.”*

Maryland is also comfortably ahead of national results when it comes to how often people say they keep up with the news media. One in five (21.4%) say they read newsmagazines at least a few times a week, compared with 16.8% nationally. Six in ten (60.8%) say they get the news from the radio at least a few times a week (54.5% nationally). Almost seven in ten (69.7%) say they read the newspaper a few times per week or more (67.5% nationally).

Marylanders aged 25 and up with no college experience accessed information and engaged in political conversation less frequently (27.5%) than did those with college experience (43.6%).

More than a third (36.6%) of Marylanders get news frequently as well as discuss politics with friends and family, while one quarter (25.6%) does neither. Millennials are most likely to do neither (32.4%) and Baby Boomers are most likely to do both (38.8%). Marylanders who both access information and talk politics are also likely to engage in political acts beyond voting (41.5%).

Marylanders are just as likely to get news from the TV as the national average (85.8% versus 86.0% nationally).

Also of interest is that Marylanders are more likely (23.2%) than the national rate (19.7%) to get news and information from the Internet (blogs, chatrooms, or independent news).

Even with these relatively high levels of information consumption, some community-conversation participants were worried about how well their friends and neighbors were doing in this respect — and gave themselves low marks, too. *“I get the newspaper every day, but never read it,”* said one community-conversation participant. *“People are informed on a very surface level. They tend to get their info from one place, maybe with an agenda. You can’t just listen to one person,”* said another. (However, this critical concern may be seen, in fact, as a symptom of a high degree of media literacy).

From the Civic Literacy Summit:

Participants at the Civic Literacy Summit made recommendations focused on both improving the quality of people’s media

consumption, but also increasing the amount and quality of people’s interactions on issues. They also felt it important to dig deeper into why people consume certain types of information, and to better use the communication potential of the Internet.

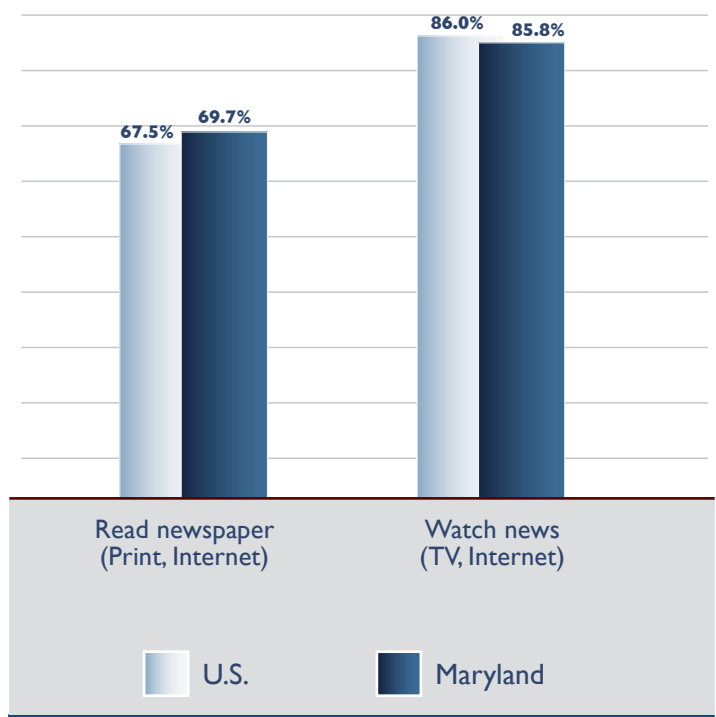
The Summit workgroup on connecting with information made these recommendations:

- Collect more data on the demographic and attitudinal factors of those consuming information (e.g., education level, socio-economic level, reason for discussing politics)
- Create public forums to model civility in public discourse and discuss bias in the media. Integrate these two elements in the school setting as well. Bring together people from different parts of the state, not just homogeneous groups
- Explore how to use social media to spread information, connect people, and activate them using the information with which they have connected
- Actively teach information literacy so citizens can better make sense of and utilize the increasing number of information sources available

“You can’t just listen to one person.”

— Community-conversation participant

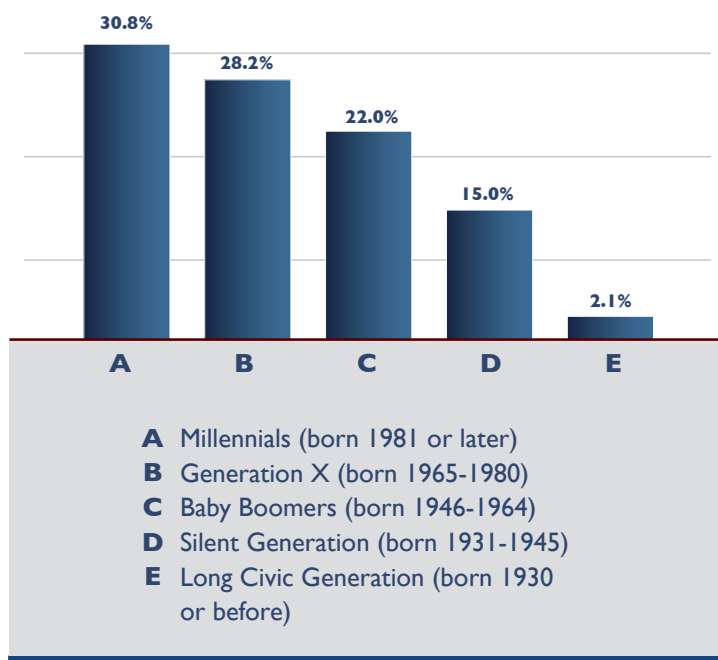
FIGURE 4: CONNECTING TO INFORMATION



“I get the newspaper every day, but never read it.”

— Community-conversation participant

FIGURE 5: ACCESSING CURRENT EVENTS THROUGH THE INTERNET



SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

“It’s a constantly moving cycle.” — Community-conversation participant

There is a dimension of civic health not connected to the official things people do, but with all the unofficial things they do in relation to one another. Communicating by phone or email with friends, eating dinner together with family, talking with others on the block — all these social connections contribute to the civic health of a community.

Some members of the community even help one another, exchanging favors such as trading childcare or mowing each other’s lawns. These kinds of informal interactions increase the bonds in a community and increase its civic health. Similarly, having relatively weak social connections can reduce the civic health in a community.

While Maryland is relatively strong in terms of the degree with which residents interact with one another on issues, when it comes to more informal social connections the story is more mixed.



Maryland ranks 27th in the rate of people 18 and older who exchange favors with their neighbors, with the rate of 16.6%. Nationwide, 16.0% of Americans say they exchange favors with their neighbors at least a few times a week. One community-conversation participant who spoke frequently with neighbors provided a positive assessment: *“There are a lot of opportunities to [be] a good neighbor here,”* the participant said. *“There are lots of opportunities to help one another out.”*

Among Marylanders, being socially connected (that is, people who say they talk with neighbors, communicate with friends and family, or eat dinner with family) tends to correlate with much higher rates of volunteering. Four in ten (41.3%) Marylanders who are socially connected also report volunteering, compared with 20.7% of those who are not socially connected.

Recently having been through a number of remarkable weather events that created regional dislocations (two snow storms and a wind- and rain-storm that left many without power for days), many community-conversation participants pointed to the bonding effect that such experiences can have. *“The snowstorm . . . really showed how we worked together and helped one another out,”* said one participant.

Maryland is slightly ahead of the national rate when it comes to just talking with neighbors. Half (50.3%) of Marylanders say they talk with neighbors at least a few times per week (compared with 45.8% nationally).

When it comes to using the Internet to connect, Maryland is well ahead of the other states. More than six in ten (60.8%) Marylanders say they talk with friends and family using the Internet (versus 53.6% nationally).

“The snowstorm . . . really showed how we worked together and helped one another out.”

— Community-conversation participant

Good news notwithstanding, community conversations revealed that many Marylanders feel overstretched and say it is difficult to find the time or energy to connect with neighbors. *“I don’t know any of my neighbors,”* said one participant. *“I just sleep and eat there.”* For many, the time pressures arise from work. On a national level, in fact, employed Americans are less likely to be connected to family or neighbors and exchange favors with others (14.2%) than are unemployed Americans (18.7%). In Maryland, 14.9% employed people are connected with others and also exchange favors.

Even when it comes to family, Marylanders in community conversations expressed difficulty and the data bear this out. Maryland ranks 47th in the rate of people 18 and older who say that they eat dinner with their family at least a few times a week, with the rate of 86.8% (compared with 89.1% nationally).

“I live in one county and I [work] in another; until I had kids I didn’t know a thing about where I lived.”

— Community-conversation participant

For many community-conversation participants, the logistical realities of work can be too pressing. *“People move around so much and so quickly, it’s a constantly moving cycle,”* said one. *“I live in one county and I [work] in another; until I had kids I didn’t know a thing about where I lived,”* said another.

Others in community conversations painted a dire picture of our abilities and inclinations to connect with others. *“The values of society are changing. People are becoming more self-centered, not civic-minded,”* said one. Another community-conversation participant put a fine point on a psychological barrier that some may have when it comes to engaging with others: *“We’re terrified of each other; unless you live in an old neighborhood you don’t have a front porch; beyond being terrified of each other we don’t know how to interact,”* the participant said.

However, when it comes to social connectedness, education appears to make little difference. This is significant because in almost all other indicators of civic health, greater educational attainment is connected to the likelihood of being civically engaged (especially when it comes to those with college experience vs. those with no college experience). While 15.3% of Marylanders with no college experience are socially connected and also exchange favors with neighbors, 16.9% of Marylanders with college experience are socially connected and do favors for neighbors.

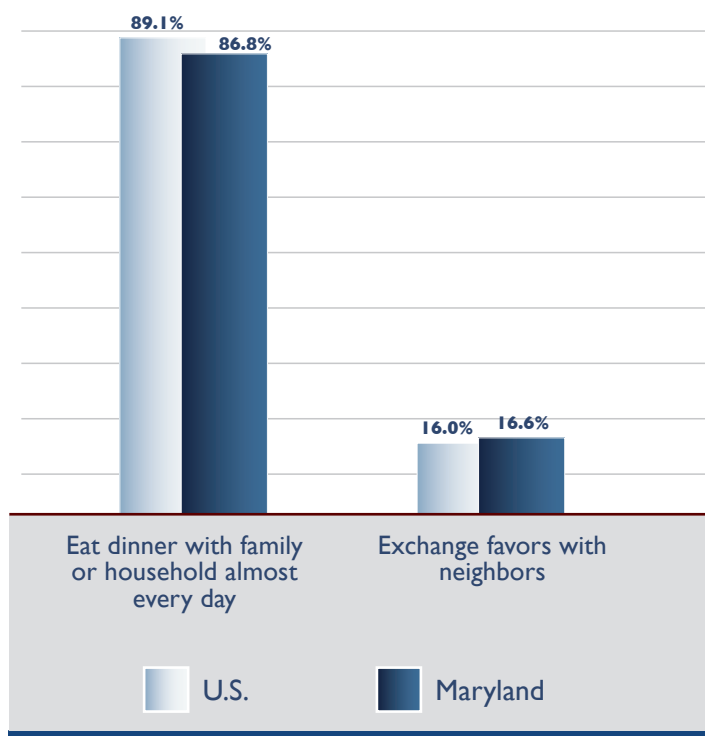
From the Civic Literacy Summit:

Participants at the Civic Literacy Summit made recommendations focused on the need to provide spaces for people to interact in the community as well as to make it psychologically easier to do so.

Summit participants also saw there are many ways to be of help to others in the community that might not be captured in the data (for instance, being available as an emergency resource for neighborhood kids is important, yet might not be reported in a survey as it is not tangible). The Summit workgroup on social connections made these recommendations:

- Schools, business leaders, and churches should hold community conversations, not only for their own organizational goals but also to open space for people to be a community
- Teach helping others as a way of life by example, both by offering help frequently and by reaching out for help when needed
- Host more all-community events where people can interact informally (e.g. community BBQ)

FIGURE 6: CONNECTING WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS



POLITICAL ACTION

“Many people don’t have the time to act on the information they acquire.” — Civic Literacy Summit participant

The degree to which citizens participate actively in our democratic form of government is one of the important measures of civic health.

At the most basic level, one key measure of political action is voting — both registering to vote and actually making it to the polls and casting a ballot. The strength of our democracy depends on people of all ages and backgrounds being politically engaged enough to go to the polls and vote for the candidates they think will best represent their interests and perspectives.

But that is not the only kind of political action.

The civic health of a community is further strengthened when citizens actively participate beyond just voting — by attending meetings, communicating directly with office holders and elected officials, or by expressing their opinions about political issues in letters to the editor, on neighborhood email lists, and blogs.

Maryland ranked 11th in voter turnout among 18 and older citizens for the November 2008 election, with a turnout rate of 68.3% for the same population. Maryland’s voter turnout has increased by three percentage points compared with the average turnout of the 2004 Presidential election. The national voter turnout for citizens 18 and over was 63.6% for the November 2008 election. Voter turnout in the United States rises and falls, but continues to rank consistently below the level of turnout in other well-established democratic countries. For example, according to the International Institute for Democratic Assistance, Western European democracies have maintained an average voter turnout of 77% since 1945.⁵

“We can actually be proud of our elected officials.”

— Civic Literacy Summit participant

Maryland’s Baby Boomers are most likely to have voted, while Millennials are least likely. Almost three quarters (74.4%) of Maryland Baby Boomers voted in the Presidential election in 2008, while just over half (55.5%) of Millennials voted.

While Maryland ranks in the top third for voter turnout, many community-conversation participants believe that voting rates should be much higher. *“I think it’s embarrassing how low our voter rates are, especially for young people,”* said one participant. Another countered, *“It could be better, but it could be a lot worse.”*



Maryland ranked 18th among all states in voter registration rate, at 73.9%. The national voter registration rate in 2008 was 71.0%. Maryland’s voter registration rate has remained relatively stable compared to the registration rate of the last Presidential election in 2004.

Maryland women are more likely than men to be registered and to have voted. More than three quarters of women (77.1%) say they are registered and 71.5% say they voted in the 2008 Presidential election. For Maryland men, 70.3% are registered and just 64.6% say they voted in 2008.

Among those who registered, turnout was relatively high in Maryland (as it is nationally). More than nine out of ten registered voters (92.3%) voted in 2008, compared with 89.6% nationally.

However, some make the argument that voting is really the least to expect of a citizen. Other kinds of political actions are of great importance, too.

The Civic Health Index looks at these other political actions: contacting or visiting a public official, attending meetings where issues are discussed, buying or boycotting a product for political reasons, taking part in a march or rally, or showing support for a particular candidate by donating or volunteering.

Maryland ranks 24th in the percentage of people 18 and older who say they have engaged in at least one type of political act in the prior 12 months, at 28.0%. Nationally, 26.3% of Americans 18 and older engaged in at least one type of political act.

“I think it’s embarrassing how low our voter rates are, especially for young people.”

— Community-conversation participant

From the Civic Literacy Summit:

Participants at the Civic Literacy Summit made recommendations focused on improving the frequency and quality of actions beyond voting. Their focus was primarily on young people as the place where policies would have the highest leverage.

The Summit workgroup on political participation made these recommendations:

- Teach civic skills (dialogue, making decisions as a group, bringing people together) better in the early grades
- Better support citizen, especially youth, involvement in political activity and community issues
- Publicly reinforce ways and means of political action in the home and community (like voting with your kids, talking issues and politics at dinner, etc.) through public service announcements, billboards, public statements of officials, media outlets, etc.



FIGURE 7: VOTER TURNOUT 1972-2008

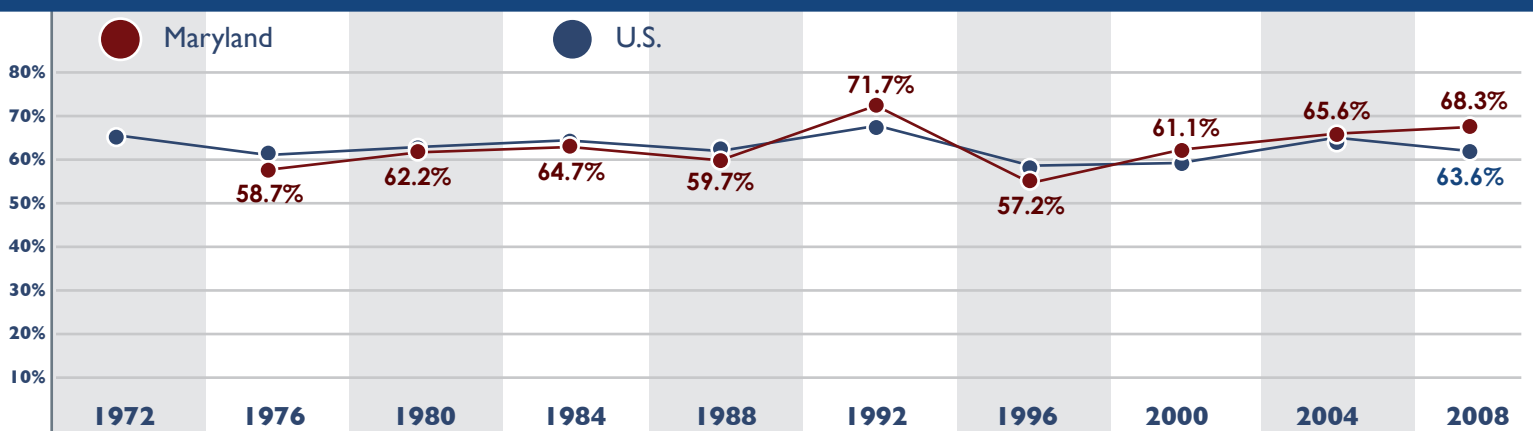
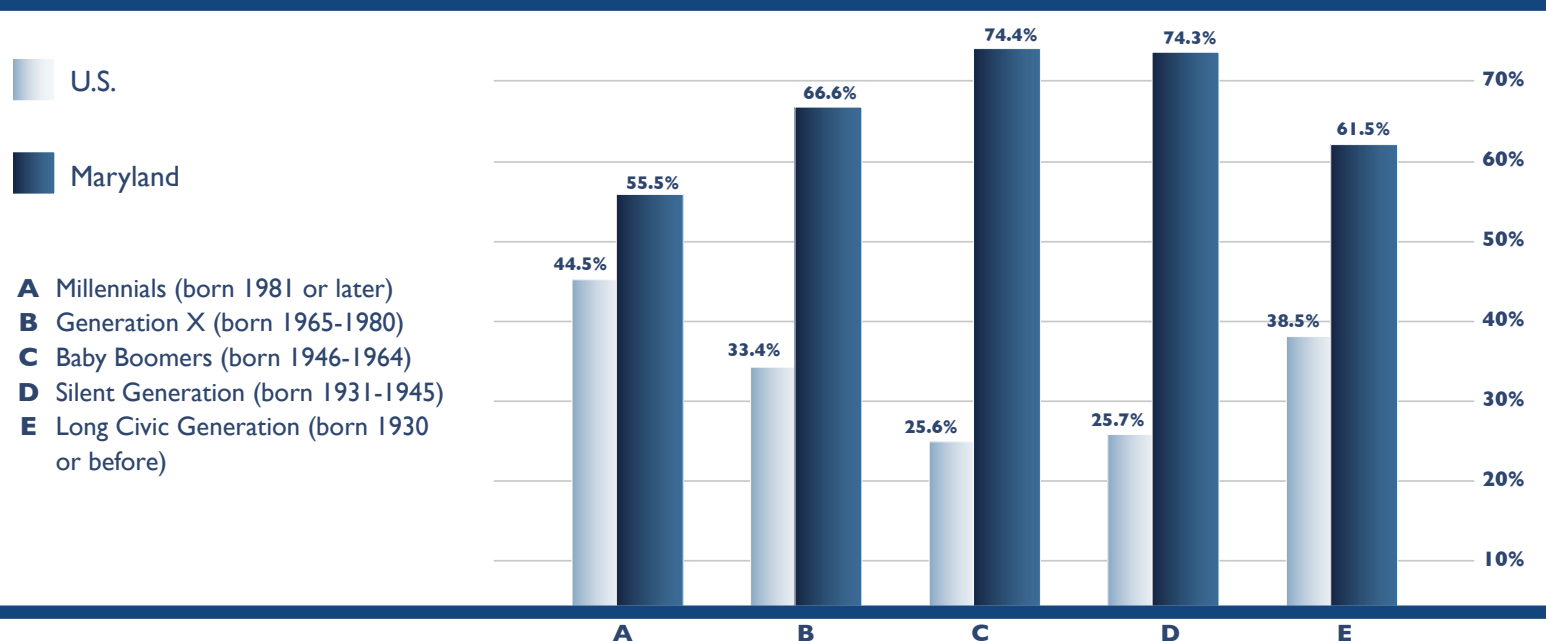


FIGURE 8: VOTING, BY GENERATION



CULTURAL AND CLASS DIMENSIONS OF DIVERSITY

“It depends on where you live.” — Community-conversation participant

People from all walks of life contribute to a community's civic health. Some cultural groups are active as group members. Some tend to vote more than others. People from still other cultures help one another out in the community more. All of this adds to a community's civic health.

African American Maryland citizens were significantly more likely to both be registered (78.2%) and to vote (74.4%) compared with Caucasian Maryland citizens (73.2% registered and 67.1% voted).

Though they turned out to the polls at the highest rates, African American Marylanders were not as likely as their Caucasian counterparts to engage in a political act beyond voting (25.4% vs. 31.3%).

In terms of social capital and connectedness, Caucasian Marylanders were the most likely to say that they had dinner with household members almost every day (65.9%). Latinos were the second most likely (60.3%).

Additionally, 45.6% African American Marylanders said they talk politics with their family or friends a few times a week or more, on par with Caucasian respondents (46.8%). Latinos were less likely to say they talk politics a few times or more a week (42%).

African American Marylanders were much less likely (21.8%) than Caucasian (33.4%) respondents to say they volunteered, but they were almost as likely to say they did favors for neighbors a few times a week or more (16.1% vs. 17.9%).

Family income has a connection to the ways and to what extent individuals participate in civic life. For instance, 34.8% of Marylanders whose family income is less than \$35,000 per year say they are members of groups. That share jumps to 46.6% for Marylanders whose annual family income is \$75,000 or more.

However, on informal measures of social connectedness, a different pattern is apparent when it comes to family income. Marylanders whose family income is less than \$35,000 per year are the most likely to say they exchange favors with neighbors a few times a week or more (19.7%), compared with 17.3% among Marylanders with family income over \$75,000 annually. Similarly, Marylanders

whose family income is between \$35,000 and \$49,999 annually are the most likely to say that they talk to neighbors a few times per week or more.

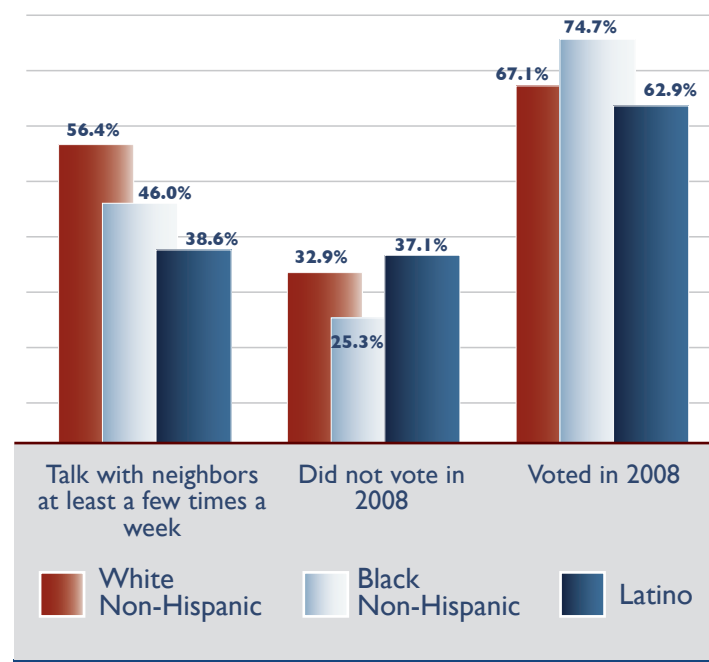
From the Civic Literacy Summit:

Participants at the Civic Literacy Summit made recommendations focused on learning more about where disparities exist in Maryland, not just for some Marylanders but for all.

The Summit workgroup focused on cultural and class dimensions of civic health made these recommendations:

- Widely disseminate the value of *Maryland's Civic Health Index* as a powerful tool to use in tracking shifts and changes in civic engagement
- Provide funding to extend the capacity of the *Maryland Civic Health Index* to capture the civic engagement of *all* Marylanders
- Convene discussions with relevant organizations including Maryland State Department of Education, the Maryland Higher Education Commission, the Interfaith Conference, the Maryland Council for the Social Studies, and the Maryland Commission on Civic Literacy to extend the *Maryland Civic Health Index*.
- Convene an annual civic literacy summit to include the broadest range of members of Maryland's communities

FIGURE 9: RACE & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



MARYLAND'S CIVIC HEALTH INDICATORS COMPARED WITH NATIONAL RESULTS

ACTIONS THAT INFLUENCE GOVERNMENT

MARYLAND

NATIONAL

VOTER REGISTRATION, TURNOUT AND FULFILLMENT RATES (2008)

Voter registration	73.9%	71.0%
Voter turnout	68.3%	63.6%
Voter turnout for 18-to-29 year olds	55.5%	51.1%
Voter fulfillment rate	92.4%	89.6%

EXPRESS POLITICAL VOICE IN OTHER WAYS

Discuss politics frequently with family/friends	45.8%	39.3%
Participate in non-voting political activities	28.0%	26.3%
<i>Political activities include:</i>		
Contacted or visited a public official	10.1%	10.9%
Attended a meeting where political issues were discussed	10.8%	10.1%
Bought or boycotted a product or service	11.2%	10.1%
Took part in a political march, rally, protest, or demonstration	3.9%	3.1%
Gave time or money to a candidate or party	18.0%	14.6%

FOLLOW THE NEWS AND STAY INFORMED

<i>Follow news several times a week or more:</i>		
Read newspaper (print, Internet)	69.7%	67.5%
Read newsmagazine (print, Internet)	21.4%	16.8%
Watch news (TV, Internet)	85.8%	86.0%
Listen to news (radio, Internet radio)	60.8%	54.5%
Get news from blogs, chat rooms or independent news	23.2%	19.7%

ACTIONS THAT BUILD COMMUNITY

MAINTAIN CLOSE TIES TO FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND NEIGHBORS

Eat dinner with family or household almost every day	86.8%	89.1%
Talk with family and friends via email or on the Internet	60.0%	53.6%
Talk with neighbors several times a week or more	50.3%	45.8%
Exchange favors with neighbors	16.6%	16.0%

PARTICIPATE IN AND PROVIDE LEADERSHIP TO ORGANIZATIONS

Attended meeting of any group or organization	24.8%	21.5%
Belong to group or organization that meets regularly	40.0%	35.1%
Served as officer or committee member in last 12 months	11.1%	10.1%
Worked with neighbors to fix a community problem	9.2%	8.8%

GIVE TIME AND MONEY TO CAUSES AND HELPING OTHERS

Volunteered in 2009	29.4%	26.8%
Made contributions of \$25 or more	52.1%	50.0%

MARYLAND CIVIC HEALTH INDEX PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

- **The Mannakee Circle Group**, represented by Brad Rourke
- **Maryland Commission on Civic Literacy**, represented by Marcie Taylor-Thoma
- **Common Cause Maryland**, represented by Susan P. Schreiber

ABOUT THE MANNAKEE CIRCLE GROUP

The Mannakee Circle Group helps organizations engage better with the public. It works only with organizations that hold a public trust — advising on strategy and social media, and designing, executing, and telling the story of large civic projects. Better engagement leads to smoother relations, more effective initiatives, and deeper impact. www.mannakeecircle.com

ABOUT THE MARYLAND COMMISSION ON CIVIC LITERACY

The Commission on Civic Literacy's purpose, as established by legislation, is to promote civic education and restore the civic mission of our schools by establishing a representative membership of individuals and organizations to meet, support, develop, and coordinate civic education programs for use in Maryland schools and throughout society. Our ultimate goal is to promote an enlightened and responsible citizenry committed to democratic principles and actively engaged in the practice of democracy. <http://www.msa.md.gov/msa/mdmanual/26excom/html/09civilliteracy.html>

ABOUT COMMON CAUSE MARYLAND

Common Cause Maryland works to strengthen democracy and make government at all levels more open, honest and accountable to the people of our state. We work to curb the influence of special interests, to promote ethics in government, and to enable ordinary citizens to make their voices heard in the political process and fully participate in our democracy. Common Cause Maryland is a chapter of Common Cause, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization founded in 1970. www.commoncause.org/md



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Center for Civic Education

MARYLAND CIVIC LITERACY COMMISSION

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The Honorable Jean Baron, District Court of Maryland for Prince George's County

The Honorable Anthony Brown, Lieutenant Governor of Maryland

Mr. Christopher Eddings, *The Daily Record*

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Dr. Judith Brooks Smith, Education that is Multicultural Committee

Ms. Wanda Speede, Maryland Higher Education Commission

Dr. Marcie Taylor-Thoma, Coordinator of Social Studies, Maryland State Department of Education

Mrs. Julie Ayers, Maryland State Department of Education

Ms. Tamara Barron, Baltimore City Public Schools

METHODOLOGY

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 CPD 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 Maryland Report, the sample size for citizen engagement was 4,808 and the sample size for volunteering was 2,500.

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 Maryland 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 +/-2.3% for Maryland.⁶ 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/CivicHealth2010. Rankings and data for all 50 states and 51 largest metropolitan areas are available at <http://civic.serve.gov>. The 2010 state report, *Maryland's Civic Health Index* can be found online at www.ncoc.net/MD

CIRCLE (The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement) conducts and promotes research on the civic and political engagement of Americans between the ages of 15 and 25. A part of the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University, CIRCLE has received funding from The Pew Charitable Trusts, Carnegie Corporation of New York and several other foundations.

Four community conversations were held in Baltimore City, Carroll County (2), and Howard County. The Baltimore City and Carroll County conversations were comprised primarily of educators, while the Howard County conversation was comprised of general community members. The purpose of these conversations was to shape thinking and generate reaction to various aspects of civic health.

At the Civic Literacy Summit, held at Anne Arundel Community College on October 23, 2010, more than 200 educators, political leaders, and community members heard a brief presentation giving overall findings for the Civic Health Index, and divided into workgroups to make recommendations.

ENDNOTES

¹ 2010 *Education Week* “Quality Counts” data

² See Methodology, p. I 6. Unless otherwise noted in the text or by footnote, data in this report are from CIRCLE.

³ *New York Times*, “Schools Cut Back Subjects to Push Reading and Math,” March 26, 2010

⁴ *Task Force Report on Social Studies Education in Maryland: The Challenge and the Imperative*, 2007

⁵ International Institute for Democratic Assistance, http://www.idea.int/vt/survey/voter_turnout3.cfm, accessed 11/21/2010

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, Table 4a, <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2008/tables.html>,



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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

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CALIFORNIA - California Forward, Common Sense California, Center for Civic Education

FLORIDA - Florida Joint Center for Citizenship

ILLINOIS - Citizen Advocacy Center, McCormick Foundation

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SEATTLE - Seattle City Club, Boeing Company, Seattle Foundation

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