



2018 HOUSTON CIVIC HEALTH INDEX™

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ABOUT THE KINDER INSTITUTE FOR URBAN RESEARCH

Rice University's Kinder Institute for Urban Research is a "think and do" tank that advances understanding of the challenges facing Houston and other urban centers through research, policy analysis and public outreach. By collaborating with civic and political leaders, the Kinder Institute aims to help Houston and other cities. For more, visit www.kinder.rice.edu.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Commissioned by Houston Endowment, this study examines the state of civic health in Greater Houston (the Houston MSA) to better understand civic attitudes and behaviors as well as political participation. The objective of this report is to frame discussions with community leaders and local stakeholders about how to address and improve specific indicators of Greater Houston's civic health; this report does not offer specific policy recommendations.

Data Sources

This study primarily uses three sources of data. The first is survey results from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS), aggregated to the level of Greater Houston and demographically weighted by the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC). This data is pooled to create a three-year sample, except for questions on voting and registration and for ranking different metro areas, which are based on single-year samples. The second is the Kinder Houston Area Survey (KHAS), an annual survey of Harris County residents. The third source is election results from the Harris County Clerk's office and the Texas Secretary of State, which have been collected and processed by the Center for Local Elections in American Politics (LEAP).

Key Findings

This study examines the state of civic health in Greater Houston to better understand civic attitudes and behaviors as well as political participation.

- Greater Houston residents are about 12 percentage points less likely to trust all or most of their neighbors than the average American. Greater Houston ranks towards the bottom on this indicator compared to other large metro areas (42nd out of 50).
- Greater Houston residents are about 4 percentage points less likely to volunteer than the average American. Greater Houston ranks towards the bottom on this indicator compared to other large metro areas (46th out of 50).
- Residents of the region struggle to discuss politics with their families as well as communicate with elected officials.
- Greater Houston has had difficulty incorporating naturalized citizens into political life. Naturalized citizens are about 7 percentage points less likely to be registered to vote than native-born citizens, and 12 percentage points less likely to frequently discuss politics with friends and family.
- Despite the large shares of Hispanic residents throughout the region, people with Hispanic surnames are underrepresented in the Harris County electorate, candidate pool, and as a share of local elected officials.
- Women are underrepresented in the Harris County candidate pool, and as a share of local elected officials.



INTRODUCTION

In 1840 the City of Houston adopted its official seal, which prominently features a train, even though the railroad would not reach Houston for over ten more years.¹ This forward-looking spirit and fortunate geography has helped Houston and the surrounding area to become one of the most economically productive regions in the nation. In fact, only 21 nations, not including the United States, have an annual economic output greater than that of the Houston metropolitan area, the nine-county region hereafter referred to as Greater Houston.² This massive economic output has attracted many non-native Houstonians to move to the area in the hopes of finding better jobs and better lives. As a result, Houston is now the nation's fourth largest city. This same migration has contributed to Greater Houston's diversity. Indeed, as of 2010, Greater Houston narrowly edged out New York City as the nation's most racially/ethnically diverse metro area.³ In addition, Fort Bend County, which lies squarely in Greater Houston, is the most diverse county in the United States.⁴

Although much has been written about Greater Houston's tremendous growth and diversity, less is known about its civic and political development. This report aims to fill that gap by assessing the civic health of Greater Houston. Civic health is best defined as "...the way that communities are organized to define and address public problems. Communities with strong indicators of civic health have higher employment rates, stronger schools, better physical health, and more responsive governments."⁵ In general, the more civically healthy a community is, the better able its residents are to come together to address its problems. Civic health can be thought of as having three parts: social connectedness, civic involvement, and political participation. Social connectedness involves the relationships individuals have with other members of their community. From informally socializing with neighbors to helping community members in times of need, social connectedness builds trust, networks and social capital. Civic involvement, such as volunteerism or charitable giving, are non-political forms of engagement that often bring people and groups together in more formal and regular contact. The third dimension of civic health is political participation—from voting in elections to running for office, the cornerstone of democracy is citizens' active participation in the electoral process. This study examines all three dimensions of civic health to form a holistic view of the social, civic, and political fabric of Greater Houston.

This study finds that despite Greater Houston's economic and cultural vibrancy, it tends to lag behind other large metro areas in terms of civic health. For example, based on 21 indicators of civic health compiled by NCoC, Greater Houston ranks on average 36th out of the 50 largest metropolitan areas in the country. Furthermore, social connectedness, civic involvement, and political participation all tend to be lower for traditionally marginalized populations, including non-white residents, less educated residents, and the foreign-born, compared to more advantaged groups such as those who are Anglo (non-Hispanic white), better educated residents, and native-born citizens. Greater Houston's struggle to ensure that all residents can access educational and economic opportunity reflects this disparity. While the region's economic growth and racial and ethnic diversity offer much to build from, Greater Houston continues to grapple with its history of racial segregation and discrimination, the growing concentrations of poverty, and the challenge to ensure that all residents can meaningfully participate in civic life.

Although much has been written about Greater Houston's tremendous growth and diversity, less is known about its civic and political development.

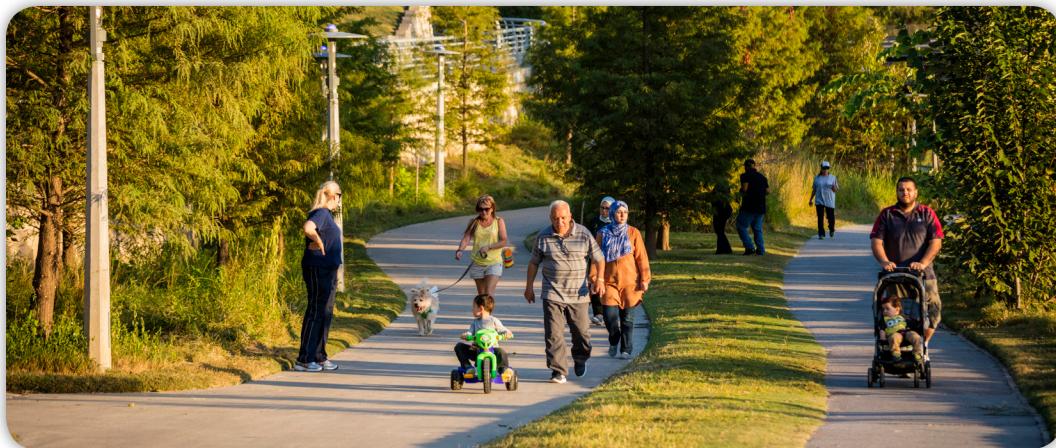
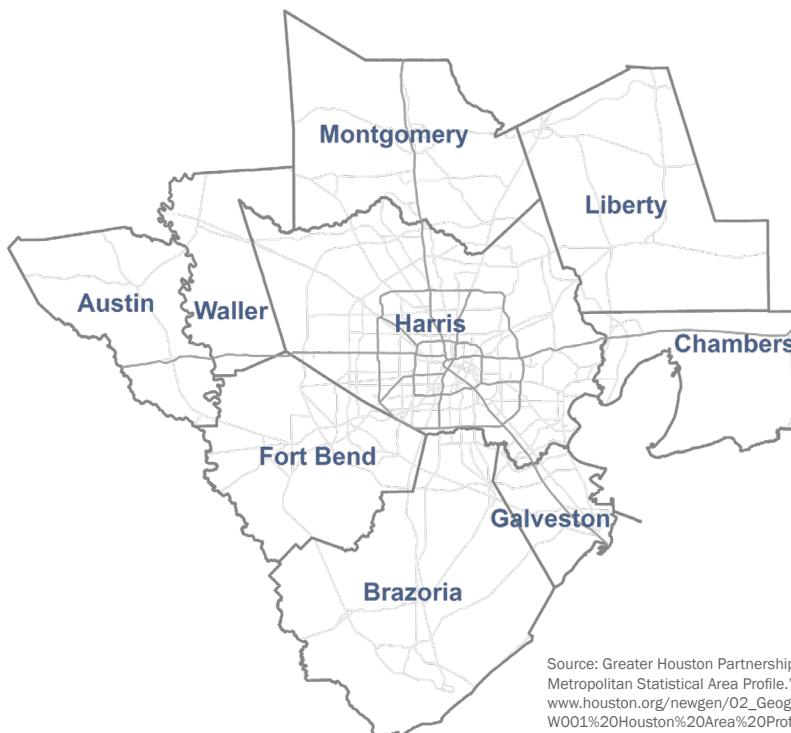


Photo by Jonnu Singleton, SWA Group. Courtesy of Buffalo Bayou Partnership.

Data Sources

The survey data primarily comes from various studies of the Current Population Survey (CPS), aggregated to Greater Houston and demographically weighted to representative population demographics by NCoC.⁶ The surveys are useful in determining social connectedness, civic involvement, and informal political activities. Examples of the latter include communicating with elected officials or talking about politics with friends or neighbors. The CPS data is available for both the most recent survey year, which is between 2013 and 2016, depending on the study in question, and as a pooled sample of respondents from the three most recent surveys. This study generally relies on the pooled three-year estimates, since the larger number of respondents means a smaller margin of error. However, the rankings of metro areas are based on the one-year sample.⁷ Turnout and voter registration questions from the CPS are also based on single-year samples.⁸ The CPS data is supplemented by data from the Kinder Houston Area Survey (KHAS), an annual survey of Harris County residents conducted by the Kinder Institute for Urban Research.

Figure 1. Map of Greater Houston



According to the 2012-2016 American Community Survey, Greater Houston had a population of about 6.5 million people. That population is about 38% Anglo (non-Hispanic white), 17% African-American, 7% Asian, and about 36% Hispanic.

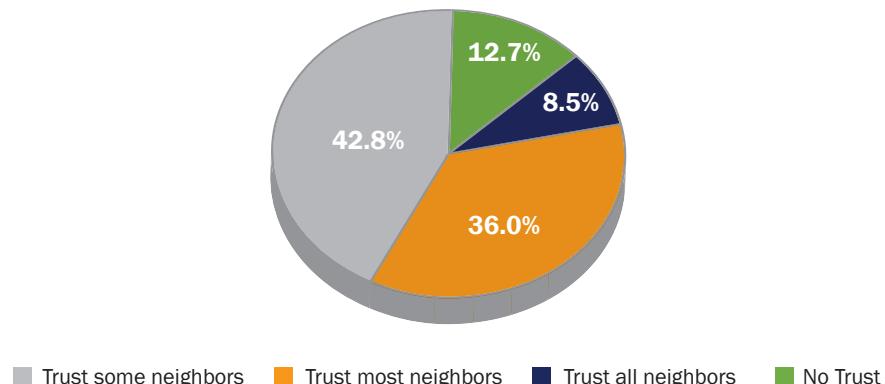
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 ACS, prepared by Social Explorer.⁹

The second data source includes official election returns, candidate characteristics, and registration statistics collected and aggregated by LEAP. These data are collected from numerous sources, most notably the Harris County Clerk's office and the Texas Secretary of State. All data collected by LEAP are aggregated either to the City of Houston or to Harris County. The LEAP data cover elections held in Harris County between 2004 and 2016.⁹

SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS: *Trust & Neighborliness*

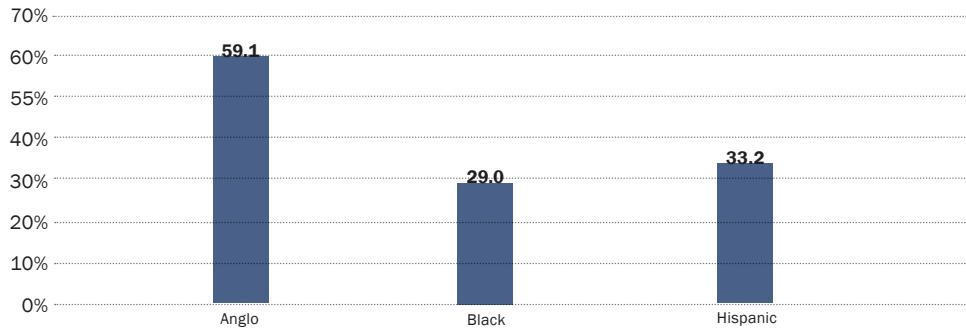
Trust in others is a key feature of civic health. Research suggests that those who are trustful are more apt to work with others to solve community problems and are likely to be more civically engaged.¹⁰ Trust in general has been declining in the United States, and as of 2010 to 2013, only 56 percent of Americans reported that they trust all or most of their neighbors.¹¹ The rate in Greater Houston does not compare favorably to the national rate. As can be seen in Figure 2, just over two in five Greater Houston residents trust most or all of their neighbors. This is 12 percentage points below the national average, and slightly lower than the Texas average. Among large metropolitan areas, Greater Houston also ranks close to the bottom, at 42nd out of 50.

Figure 2. Trust in Neighbors in Greater Houston



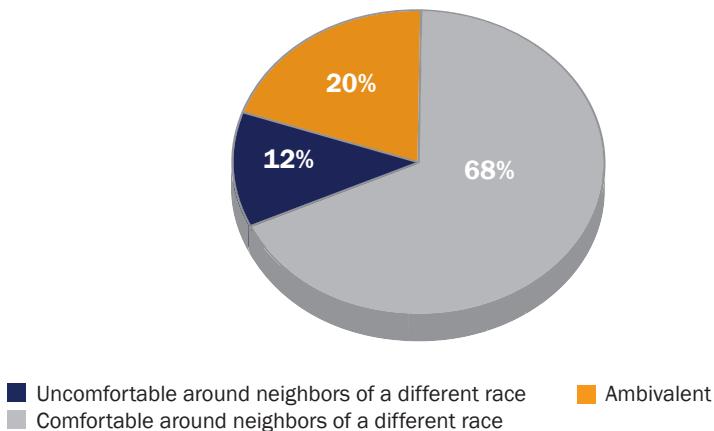
Why is trust lower in Greater Houston than in the nation as a whole? Inequality suggests itself as a possible explanation; while Greater Houston's median household income is actually about \$5,500 higher than the national average, the region does suffer from income inequality.¹² According to a 2012 Pew study, Greater Houston is the most segregated by income of any of the 10 largest metro areas in the U.S., and is the second most segregated by income among the 30 largest metro areas in the U.S.¹³ Furthermore, a 2012 Brookings Institute study found that the City of Houston itself was the 11th most unequal of the 50 largest cities in the U.S.¹⁴ This is problematic for civic health. Income inequality tends to lead to distrust, due in large part to two factors – greater pessimism about the future in unequal economies, and a lack of a sense of “common fate” among people of different socioeconomic status.¹⁵

Figure 3. Greater Houston Residents Who Trust Most or All Neighbors, by Race



CPS data also indicate that trust varies greatly by race/ethnicity (Figure 3). About three in five Anglo residents in Greater Houston trust all or most of their neighbors, compared to one-third of Hispanic and African American residents. This may be a legacy of historic and contemporary discrimination suffered by those groups.¹⁶ Similarly, discrimination has led to unequal opportunities for marginalized groups, which may explain low levels of trust. Long-term impoverished neighborhoods in Harris County tend to have predominantly Hispanic or African American populations, and those living in impoverished communities tend to be less trusting.¹⁷

Figure 4. Racial Discomfort in Harris County



Some research suggests racial diversity promotes distrust, though the effects are somewhat nuanced.¹⁸ However, there is little evidence of widespread racial discomfort in Harris County (Figure 4). While there is no available data for Greater Houston as a whole, according to the 2012 Kinder Houston Area Survey (KHAS), just 12% of Harris County residents say they are uncomfortable around neighbors of a different race.¹⁹ Furthermore, a 2017 Kinder Institute study found that Houstonians of all races generally think that relations among the area's largest racial/ethnic groups have improved over time.²⁰

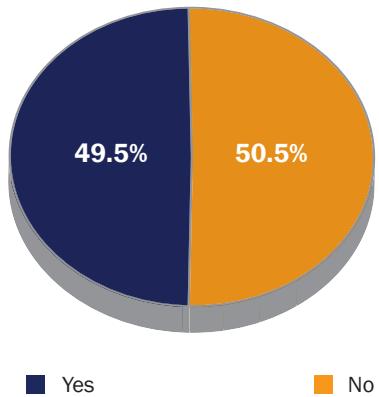
Greater Houston's residents may tend to distrust their neighbors, but do they interact with them? The evidence is mixed. About 42% of Greater Houston residents report talking to their neighbors frequently.²¹ This is less than one percentage point lower than the national average, but places Greater Houston at 33rd out of the 50 largest metro areas. Conversely, about one-fifth (18%) of Greater Houston's residents never talk with their neighbors, which is about two points greater than the national average (16%). About 15% of Greater Houston residents report frequently doing favors for neighbors, a figure that is slightly higher than the national average (about 14%), making Greater Houston 10th out of the 50 largest metro areas.



CIVIC INVOLVEMENT

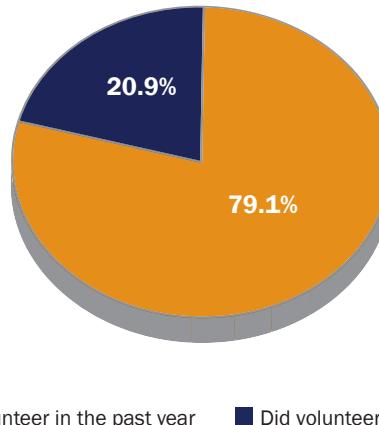
Social connectedness, as measured by trust, is relatively low in Houston. Does this carry over into more demanding forms of civic engagement? This section assesses the degree to which Greater Houston residents are civically involved, based on three key indicators: giving to charity, volunteering, and participation in formal groups, such as parent-teacher associations or service organizations such as the Rotary Club. Greater Houston tends to perform better on these indicators than on measures of social connectedness, but as will be seen, there are shortcomings.

Figure 5. Annual Charitable Giving of \$25 or More in Greater Houston



Roughly half (49.5%) of Greater Houston's residents report donating at least \$25 to charity annually (see Figure 5). This is only half a point lower than the national average (50%), but places Greater Houston at 36th out of the 50 largest metro areas. It should be noted that distrust and economic inequality, both of which are relatively high in Greater Houston, have been linked by scholars to lower levels of generosity.²²

Figure 6. Volunteerism in Greater Houston

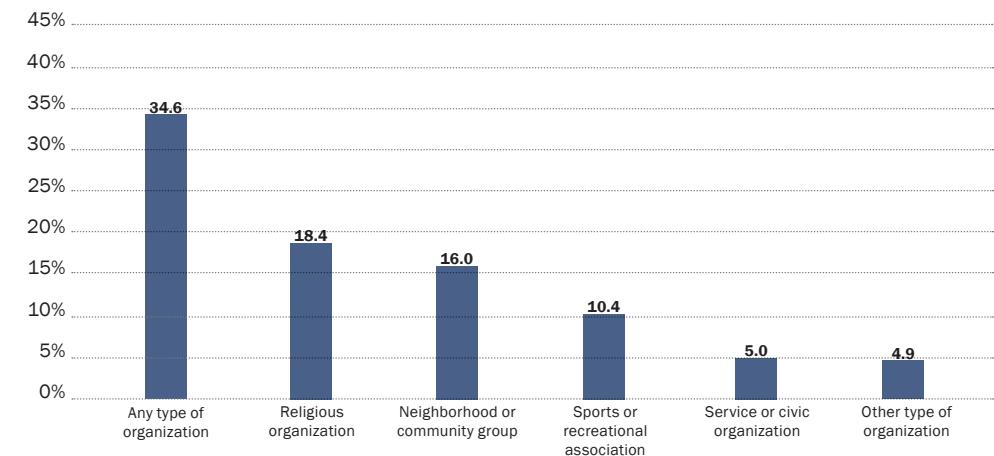


Rates of volunteerism also seem to lag in Greater Houston (Figure 6). Per the CPS, just over one-fifth of Greater Houston residents report volunteering through an organization each year, which is about four percentage points lower than the national average, putting the region at 46th out of the 50 largest metro areas. Similarly, about 5% of Greater Houston's residents report working with their neighbors to improve something in their neighborhood, about 2.5 percentage points lower than the national average.

A key question is how the events of Hurricane Harvey will influence volunteerism in Greater Houston going forward. During the height of the floods, many Houstonians and good Samaritans from outside the region rescued residents from their flooded homes. After the flood waters receded, many residents gave money and material goods, and volunteered time, to help flood victims.

Good data on volunteerism post-Harvey is not yet available, but the rates of volunteerism and charitable giving will no doubt be higher in 2017 than previous years. However, caution is advised when considering what Hurricane Harvey means for the future of civic health in Houston. Those who volunteer during disasters, but not during 'normal' times, tend to have different profiles than habitual volunteers,²³ so while volunteerism may increase in the short term it may revert to normal over the long term.

Figure 7. Percent of Greater Houston Residents Who Participate in a Group, by Type



Greater Houston ranks 24th for participation in any type of group, with Seattle ranking 1st.

As can be seen in Figure 7, about one in three Greater Houston residents participates in an organized group. This is about two percentage points lower than the national average, though this places the region just inside the upper half of large metro areas, at 24th out of 50. Greater Houston's residents are comparatively more active in religious institutions and sports organizations compared to other large metros at 15th and 14th out of 50, respectively, but in each case, participation rates are less than one percentage point off from the national average.²⁴

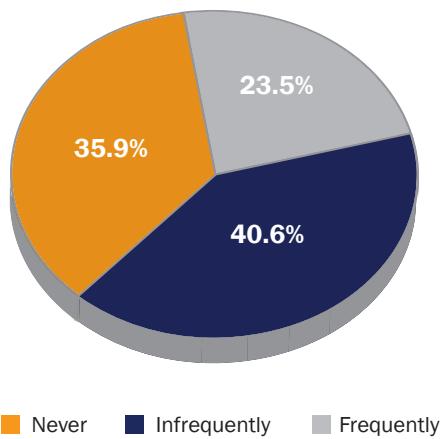


POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Civic involvement can promote civic health; volunteering, giving to charity, and participation in groups are all ways that individuals can contribute to improving their community. However, political action is often necessary to promote more systemic, long-term change. This section examines the degree to which Houstonians are politically engaged, by first examining non-electoral forms of political participation, and then voter registration and voter turnout. Finally, this section also examines a particularly intensive form of political participation: running for office.

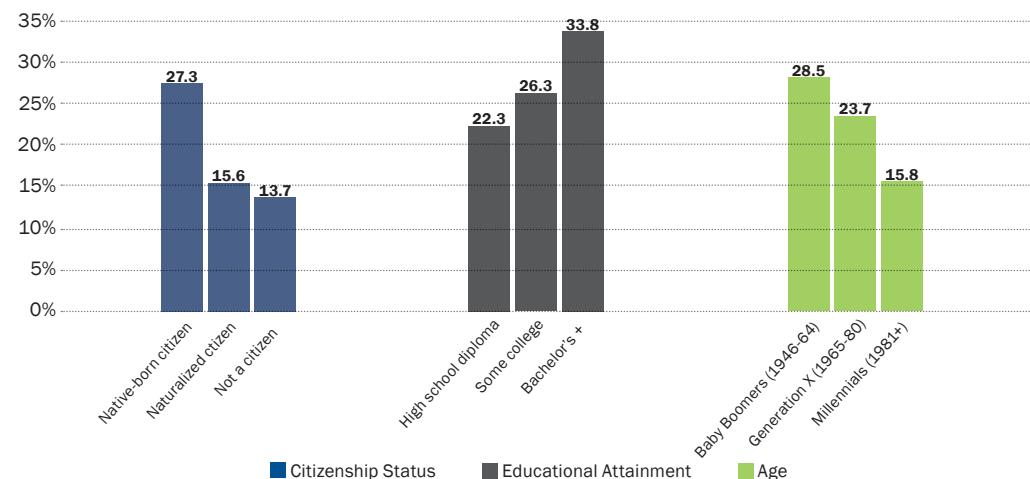
Non-Electoral Participation

Figure 8. Political Discussion with Friends/Family in Greater Houston



The most basic and least costly form of political participation is simply talking about politics. Some scholars argue that high-quality political discussion between those with different views, or deliberation, can promote mutual understanding, tolerance, and political arguments based around the good of the community rather than the interest of specific groups; however the evidence for these hypotheses is decidedly mixed.²⁵ Even so, political discussion is important for informing citizens about politics and for shaping their political views.²⁶ The informational benefits of political discussion can also lead to higher levels of voting, since lack of information about candidates and issues is a widely cited reason for abstaining from voting.²⁷ However, just under a quarter of Greater Houston residents report frequently discussing politics with their family or friends, about four percentage points lower than the national average (see Figure 8). Further, just over a third say that they never discuss politics with family or friends, which is about 5% higher than the national average. Compared to other large metro areas, this puts Greater Houston toward the bottom (43rd out of 50).

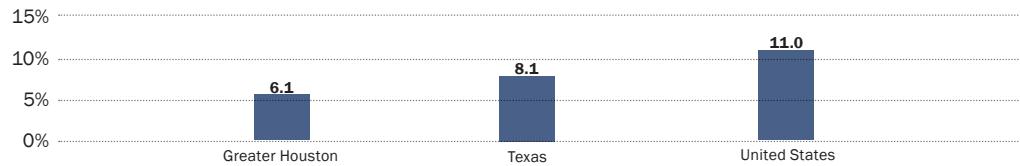
Figure 9. Percent of Greater Houston Residents who Frequently Discuss Politics, by Demographic



A nationwide poll taken before Thanksgiving 2017 showed three-fifths of Americans considered politics one of their least favorite topics of conversation, and about a third planned to deliberately avoid political conversations during the holiday.²⁸ This is unfortunate but understandable, since politics can be a contentious topic. Still, why is Greater Houston's rate so low compared to the nation? Figure 9 clearly shows that younger and less educated Greater Houston residents discuss politics less frequently than their older and/or better educated counterparts, which is consistent with national findings.²⁹ Particularly striking is how much political discussion varies by citizenship status. According to the CPS, about a quarter of native-born residents reported frequently discussing politics, which is comparable to the overall national rate.³⁰ However, the rate of political discussion among non-citizens is about half that. The rate among naturalized citizens is only slightly higher than the rate among non-citizens, suggesting that immigrants are not becoming more politically engaged after citizenship is conferred. This may help explain Greater Houston's low levels of political discussion; about 23% of the area's population is foreign-born, compared to a national average of about 13%.³¹ This finding is in keeping with studies that have found that immigrants are generally less engaged in political life; commonly cited reasons for this phenomenon include a lack of appealing candidates, poor outreach to immigrant communities, and underfunded English as a Second Language programs.³² The reader should note that undocumented immigrants are probably underrepresented in the CPS's non-citizen sample. While the CPS does not actually ask non-citizens about their immigration status, undocumented immigrants are understandably reluctant to answer official government surveys.³³

Greater Houston ranks 50th (out of 50) for contacting public officials, while Austin ranks 1st in the country.

Figure 10. Percent Who Annually Contact a Public Official, by Location



If residents do not talk to their friends and family about politics, do they contact public officials? Residents can contact officials to express their opinion on an issue or simply to bring a specific problem, such as a pothole, to their attention. However, just over one in 20 area residents contact a public official at least once every year (Figure 10). This is about five percentage points lower than the national average and puts the region in last place among the 50 largest metro areas. While Texas as a whole performs poorly on this indicator, ranking 49th out of the 50 states and D.C., being in Texas does not guarantee a low rate. The metro area where residents are most likely to contact public officials is Austin.

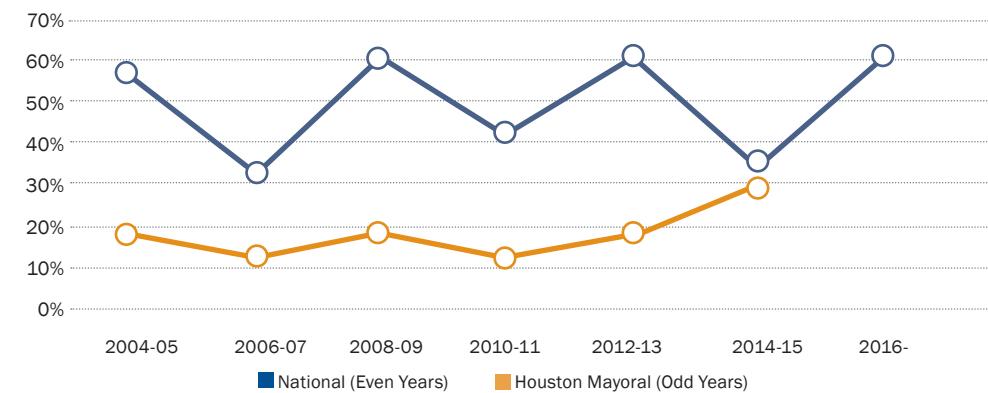
It is possible that Greater Houston's residents do not feel connected with their government. For example, in 2014 KHAS found that three-fifths of Harris County respondents believed that their local government was more concerned with the interests of business and commerce than the welfare of ordinary residents. Such individuals may feel that contacting a public official is not worth their time. Residents may also not know where their services come from. Most services within the City of Houston are provided by the city government, but in other parts of the region services are provided by a myriad of special districts, most notably municipal utility districts, commonly referred to as MUDs. In unincorporated parts of Greater Houston, it is not uncommon for residents to receive services and pay property tax to multiple special districts, such that they are often unsure where exactly their services come from.³⁴ For instance, members of the board of directors of a MUD are not required to live in the district, and often hold their meetings outside the district.³⁵ The complexity of local government in Greater Houston may explain why residents tend not to contact public officials.

Voter Participation

The most obvious form of political participation is voting. This section examines the degree to which the people of Greater Houston and Harris County participated in both national, including presidential and midterm, and local elections from 2004 to 2016.

The first step to voting in American elections is registering to vote. On one hand, the registration form in Texas is only one page long, and is available in four languages (English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Mandarin Chinese).³⁶ Although filling out the form is not difficult, would-be voters must register at least 30 days prior to a particular election to be eligible to vote in that election.³⁷ People who are eligible to register may not think about it in time; later deadlines and especially same-day voter registration tend to increase the number of citizens who actually vote.³⁸ Furthermore, although it is currently being litigated, Texas has a voter I.D. law, and recent research suggests that voter I.D. laws discourage people from attempting to register and lead to lower overall voter turnout.³⁹ In 2010, an estimated 83% of voting-age citizens in Harris County were registered to vote, nearly identical to the estimated Texas rate (about 84%).⁴⁰ Therefore, at minimum, just under one in five voting-age citizens in Harris County are not registered.⁴¹

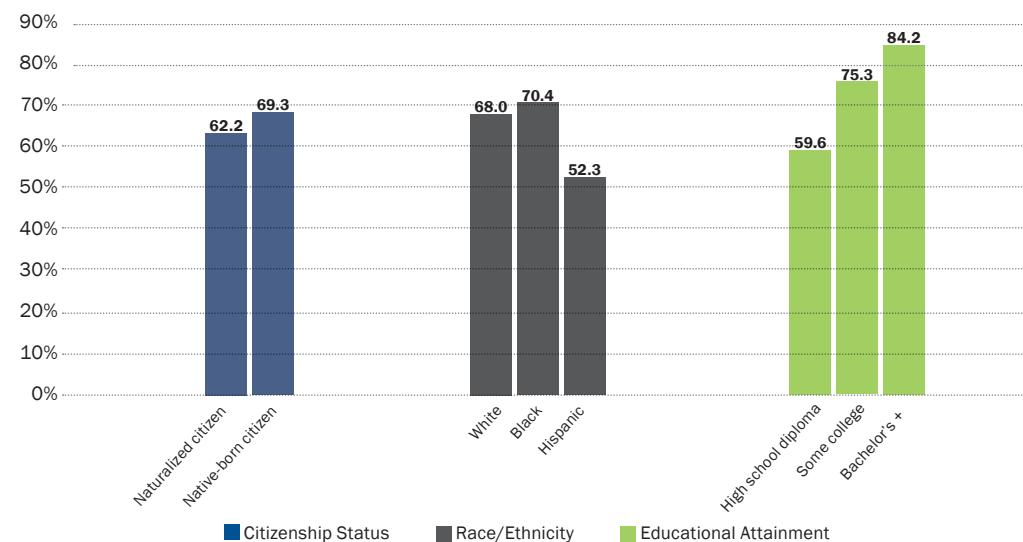
Figure 11. Turnout Among Registered Voters in November Elections, 2004-2016



Do those who are registered vote? Per the Harris County Clerk's Office, the turnout rate among registered voters in presidential elections hovered around 60% from 2004 to 2016, versus 30-40% in midterm years (Figure 11).⁴² This is typical of the turnout rate in Texas among registered voters. In contrast, in 2016, a presidential election year, an estimated 65.5% of registered voters in the U.S. actually voted.⁴³

The voter turnout rate in Houston mayoral elections is far lower; per the Harris County Clerk's Office the turnout rate among registered Houstonians in November elections from 2005 to 2013 fluctuated in the mid-to-high teens.⁴⁴ The 2015 mayoral election did see higher turnout; just over a quarter of registered Houstonians voted in the November election, with slightly lower turnout in the runoff.⁴⁵ Houston's city elections are off-cycle, meaning they are not held at the same time as national and state elections. This may contribute to low turnout; a study of turnout in California mayoral elections suggests that turnout is about 22% higher when elections are held simultaneously with the presidential election, versus when they are off-cycle.⁴⁶

Figure 12. Percent of Citizens in Greater Houston who are Registered to Vote, by Demographic

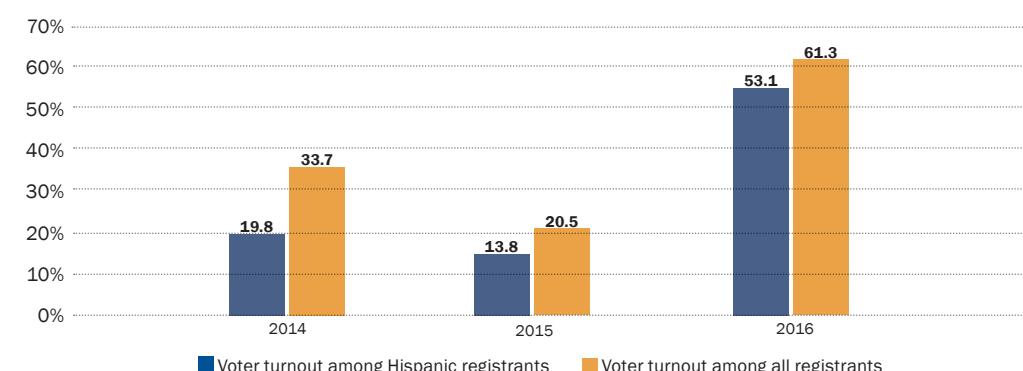


A 1983 Texas Law requires both public and private high schools to provide voter registration forms to seniors. However, the Texas Civil Rights Project has found that only 14% of public high schools statewide complied. In Harris County, the number of voter registration forms requested in 2016 by local high schools covered less than 10% of high school seniors.

Source: B. Stevens; B. Downes; M. Marziani; and C. Champion (2017). "The High School Vote: How Texas fails to engage the next generation of voters." Texas Civil Rights Project and the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. <http://texascivilrightsproject.org/report-high-school-vote-texas-fails-engage-next-generation-voters/>

Elected officials tend to be more responsive to the demands of voters than non-voters, making it problematic if the electorate is not representative of the overall population.⁴⁷ Electoral participation is hardly even among all demographics in the Houston area (Figure 12). Per the CPS, in 2016 less educated citizens were far less likely to be registered than their better educated counterparts; the registration rate among those with only a High School diploma is about 24 percentage points lower than the rate among those with a Bachelor's degree. In line with national trends, Hispanic residents are less likely to be registered to vote than those of other demographics. Those who self-identify as Hispanic are 16-18 percentage points less likely to be registered to vote than those who self-identify as white or black.⁴⁸ It should be noted that due to the structure of the data on this particular question, the registration rates for whites and blacks include those of Hispanic ethnicity who also self-identify as one of those races (those respondents are also included when calculating the Hispanic registration rate). Given the low registration rate among Hispanic citizens, the rate among solely non-Hispanic white citizens is likely considerably higher. Furthermore, just as naturalized U.S. citizens are less likely to talk politics compared to native-born citizens, they are also less likely to be registered to vote by about seven percentage points.

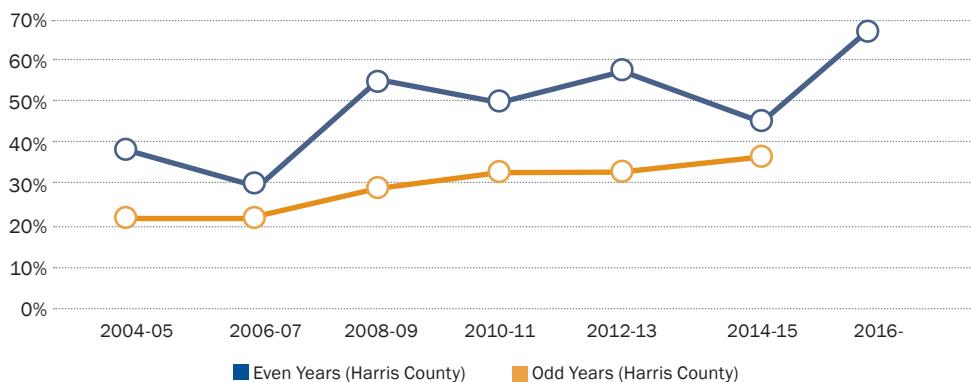
Figure 13. Participation of Hispanic Surnamed Voters in Harris County, 2014-2016



Source: Harris County Clerk's Office, Election Division.

Hispanic residents are now a plurality in Harris County, with 41% of residents reporting being of Hispanic origin in 2010.⁴⁹ However, data indicate that this large and fast-growing population is not fully represented in the electorate. As can be seen in Figure 13, the turnout rate among Hispanic surnamed voters in Harris County is consistently lower than the overall turnout (i.e. among all registered voters).⁵⁰ The gap narrowed in 2016, with turnout among Hispanics only about eight points lower than the overall turnout rate in Harris County.

Figure 14. Early Voting in November Elections, 2004-2016

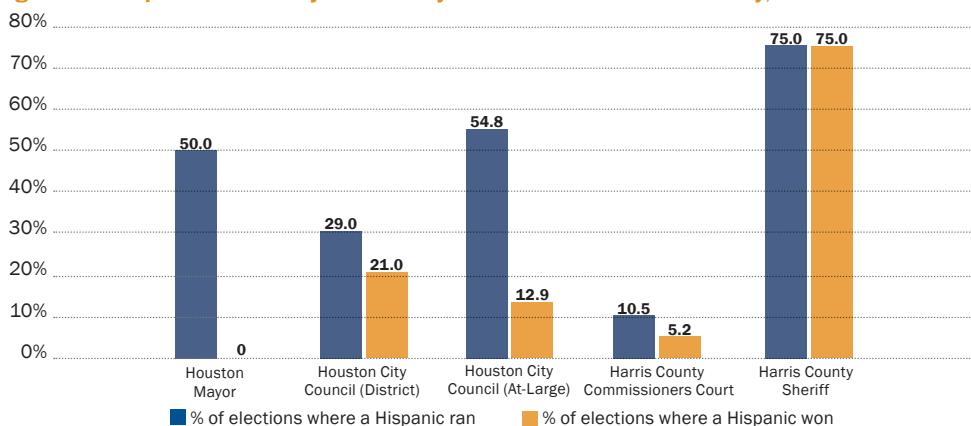


The way local residents vote has changed dramatically over the past decade. In November 2004, 38% of Harris County voters cast their ballot for president early, whereas in November 2016, two-thirds of Harris County voters did so (Figure 14). Early voting tends to be lower in gubernatorial and Houston mayoral elections than presidential elections.⁵¹ This may be because overall turnout for midterm and local elections tends to be lower, so voters see less need to vote early to avoid long lines. Early voting may also be tied to voter enthusiasm; about 3.9% of all Harris County registered voters cast their ballot early either at an early voting center or by mail in the 2018 March Democratic Primary, versus only 1.5% in 2014.⁵² That said, while early voting has increased, the overall turnout rate in Harris County and Houston has not. This is in keeping with recent academic research, which has not found strong evidence that early voting increases turnout.⁵³

Electoral Participation: Running for Office

Running for office is a highly intensive form of political participation. This section examines two important questions. The first is who runs for and holds local office, concentrating on Hispanics and women. The second question is whether anyone runs for office; that is, the extent to which elections in the Houston area are contested. As previously noted, Hispanic people are a plurality of residents in Harris County but are underrepresented in the electorate; is the same true of candidates and office-holders? Women, on the other hand, face special challenges when running for office; how do they fare in Houston? The data on candidates is for City of Houston and Harris County offices from 2004 to 2016, whereas the data on current officeholders is from 2017, and includes the City of Houston, suburban municipalities in Harris County, and the 25 school districts that govern K-12 education in Harris County.⁵⁴ Women are identified based upon their first name. Hispanics are identified based upon their surname's presence on the Census Bureau's list of over 12,000 Hispanic surnames.⁵⁵ This is the best available means of coding candidates and office-holders, but this coding is probabilistic rather than definite; those with unusual or non-indicative names may be missed.⁵⁶

Figure 15. Hispanic Candidacy and Victory in Houston and Harris County, 2004-2016

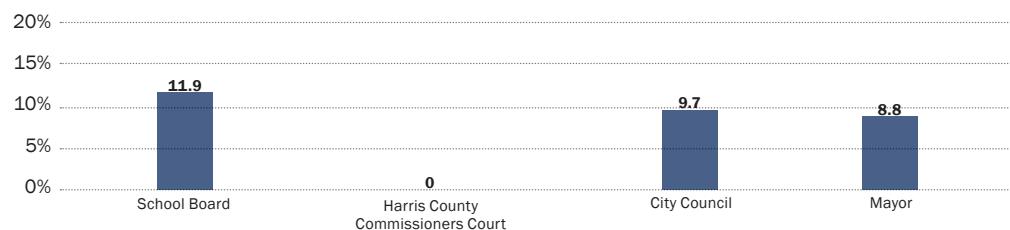


Hispanic residents, or at least persons with Hispanic surnames, are underrepresented in the candidate pool for both Harris County and City of Houston offices (Figure 15). The numbers presented in Figure 15 represent the percentage of elections where at least one candidate with a Hispanic surname was on the ballot, which should not be mistaken with the percentage of candidates who are Hispanic. This is a very minimal standard, but elections without any Hispanic surnamed candidate are quite common in Houston and Harris County. Hispanic candidates were successful in elections for Harris County Sheriff from 2004 to 2016; Hispanic surnamed candidates ran in and won three elections over this time period. Hispanic surnamed candidates were far less successful in other county and municipal offices. Except in the at-large seats of the Houston City Council, which are elected citywide, the typical election in Houston does not feature any candidate with a Hispanic surname, and an even smaller percentage are won by Hispanic surnamed candidates.⁵⁷ However, this may be changing; a 2018 report by the *Houston Chronicle* indicated that a record number of Hispanics are seeking office in Harris County.⁵⁸

Figure 16. Percent of Harris County Elected Officials with a Hispanic Surname, 2017

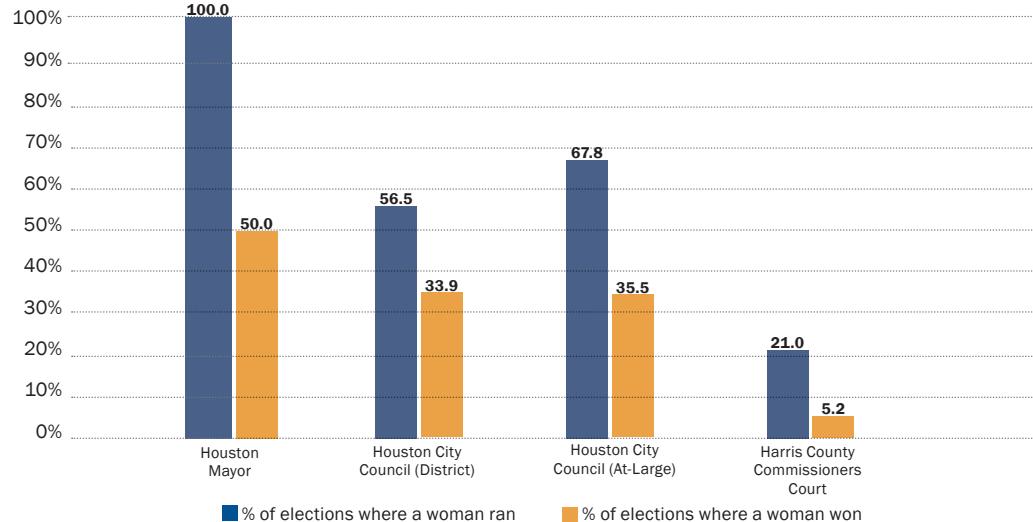
As of 2017, 9 of the Houston City Council's 16 seats were held by Anglo (non-Hispanic white) Houstonians. Strikingly, while 6 of the 11 district-based seats were held by non-Anglos, only 1 of the 5 at-large seats was.

Source: FSG



These trends hold for municipal and school district officials in Harris County as of 2017.⁵⁹ Only about 9% of the county's municipal mayors, and about a tenth of its councilmembers, have a Hispanic surname. Hispanic residents do a bit better in terms of school board membership, with about 12% of area school board members having a Hispanic surname.⁶⁰ Thus, it seems that the Hispanic population of Harris County is not reflected in the make-up of public officials, though this may reflect a lack of ethnic integration across the county, such that some cities and districts have relatively few Hispanic residents.

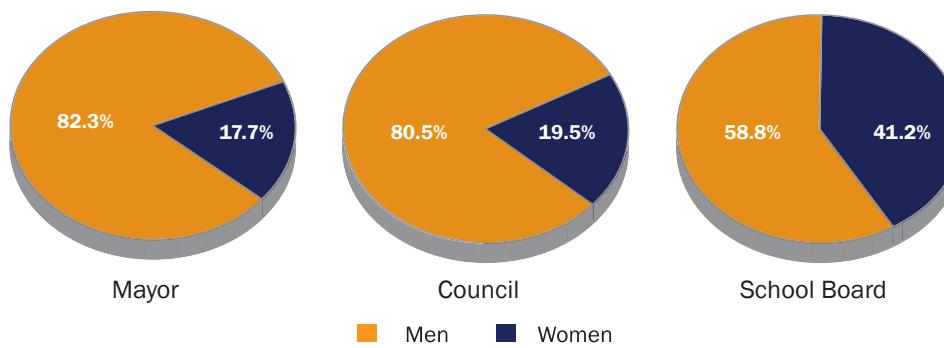
Figure 17. Female Candidacy and Victory in Houston and Harris County, 2004-2016



Source: Lappie, J (2017). "The State of Local Democracy in Houston and Harris County." Kinder Institute for Urban Research, Rice University, Houston, TX.

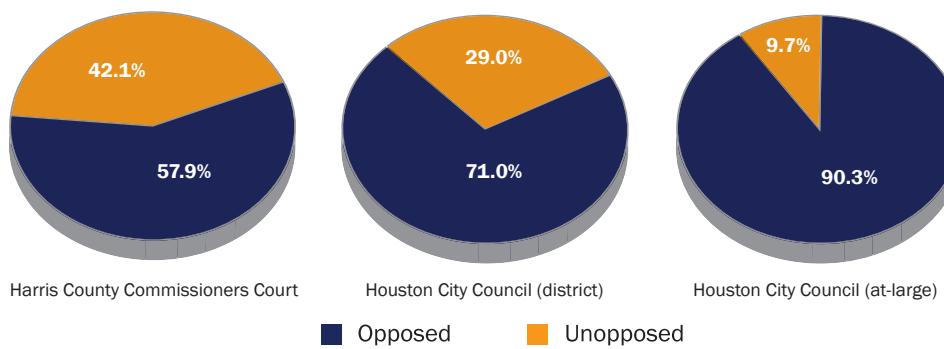
Women running for office do face challenges men tend not to, such as confronting gendered stereotypes and sexist critiques.⁶¹ Despite this, research shows that women perform comparably at the ballot box to their male counterparts, a finding that suggests that the greatest barrier to the representation of women is at the candidate entrance stage.⁶² However, many elections in Harris County lack women on the ballot (Figure 17).⁶³ It is noteworthy that between 2005 and 2015 there was always a woman on the ballot for mayor of the City of Houston, and Annise Parker served three terms as mayor.⁶⁴ Women were less successful in elections for Harris County Commissioners Court; an estimated one-fifth of elections from 2004 to 2016 featured at least one woman candidate, and only 5%, or one election, was won by a woman. No woman appeared on the general election ballot for Harris County Sheriff from 2004 to 2016.⁶⁵

Figure 18. Proportion of Office Holders by Gender in Harris County, 2017



The composition of elected officials in Harris County in 2017 reflects a similar pattern. An estimated one-fifth of mayors and city councilmembers in municipalities within Harris County are women. Women compose a far larger share of school board members (estimated at around two-fifths).

Figure 19. Percent of Elections that are Unopposed in Houston and Harris County, 2004-2016



Source: Lappie, J (2017). "The State of Local Democracy in Houston and Harris County." Kinder Institute for Urban Research, Rice University, Houston, TX.

Having a choice to make on Election Day is fundamental to the health of democracy. Turnout rates and the demographics of the electorate cannot influence the outcome of an election when it is unopposed. When looking at Harris County and the City of Houston, no sheriff or mayoral election was unopposed in Houston from 2004 to 2016. Conversely, just under one-third of district-based elections for Houston City Council were unopposed in this time period (Figure 19). The at-large seats on the Council do tend to be contested; only about 10% were unopposed. This is likely because the at-large seats are elected on a city-wide basis; the pool of potential candidates is larger than for the district-based seats.

Contestation might be higher if municipal elections were partisan rather than non-partisan; political parties have a vested interest in recruiting candidates to run for public office.⁶⁶ However, about two-fifths of Harris County Commissioners Court elections were unopposed, despite those offices being partisan. The fact that the major parties do not nominate candidates in many of these contests is surprising; parties cannot hope to win office and influence public policy if they do not contest elections.

CONCLUSION

Houston, and Greater Houston as a whole, are economically and culturally vibrant. However, while the situation could be worse, there are clear problems in terms of its civic health. Among its largest problems are low levels of trust, low voter turnout, the inadequate incorporation of Hispanics and immigrants into political life, and a surprisingly large number of uncontested elections. There are certainly positives in terms of the indicators of civic health: Greater Houston residents are reasonably likely to help their neighbors, and the vast majority of Harris County residents express no discomfort around fellow residents of a different race. Still, there is clearly room for improvement.

One of the most fundamental issues facing Greater Houston is the low level of trust residents tend to have in their neighbors. Trust is in many ways the foundation of good civic health. Those who trust others are the ones most likely to work with others to help overcome the problems facing a community.⁶⁷ Any efforts to build civic health in Greater Houston will need to confront the problem of distrust head on.

Solving large-scale community problems often requires political action. Equal political participation is important in securing civic health. Without it, community problems risk being solved in an inequitable way. However, participation in political life is not even across society in Houston. Naturalized citizens tend to be much less politically engaged than native-born citizens, despite having the same political rights.⁶⁸ Similarly, the region's Hispanic population is underrepresented in political life. While Hispanic residents are a plurality of the population in Houston and Harris County, they have considerably lower voter turnout rates than non-Hispanics and provide a significantly lower share of candidates and local elected officials. This is problematic, since research suggests that feelings of political alienation among marginalized groups tend to decrease when more members of that group win political office.⁶⁹

Houston and Harris County also face more general problems with political participation. Voter turnout is low in Houston mayoral elections, though this is admittedly not a Houston-specific problem.⁷⁰ However, Houston is a major city, where the municipal government possesses many vital powers. Furthermore, a surprisingly large proportion of elections for Houston City Council and for the Harris County Commissioners Court are unopposed. Voters and candidates are both needed in order to have a healthy democracy; Houston and Harris County could use more of both.

TECHNICAL NOTE

Unless otherwise noted, data findings presented in this report are based on the National Conference on Citizenship's (NCoC) analysis of the U.S. Census Current Population Survey (CPS) data. Any and all errors are NCoC's. Volunteering estimates are from CPS September Volunteering Supplement (most recent year is 2015), voting estimates are from the November Voting and Registration Supplement (most recent year is 2016), and all other civic engagement indicators, such as discussion of political information and connection to neighbors, come from the CPS Civic Engagement Supplement (most recent year is 2013).

Using a probability selected sample of about 150,000 occupied households, the CPS collects monthly data on employment and demographic characteristics of the nation. Depending on the CPS supplement, the single-year Houston CPS sample size used for this report ranges from 337 to 498 (civic engagement supplement) to 983 (volunteer supplement), and to 984 (voting supplement) residents from across the Houston Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). This sample is then weighted to representative population demographics for the district. Estimates for the volunteering indicators (e.g., volunteering, working with neighbors, making donations) are based on U.S. residents ages 16 and older. Estimates for civic engagement and social connection indicators (e.g., favors for neighbors, discussing politics) are based on U.S. residents ages 18 and older. Voting and registration statistics are based on U.S. citizens who are 18 and older (eligible voters). When we examined the relationship between educational attainment and engagement, estimates are based on adults ages 25 and older, based on the assumption that younger people may be completing their education.

Because multiple sources of data with varying sample sizes are used, the report is not able to compute one margin of error for Houston MSA across all indicators. Any analysis that breaks down the sample into smaller groups (e.g., gender, education) will have smaller samples and therefore the margin of error will increase. Furthermore, national rankings, while useful in benchmarking, may be small in range, with one to two percentage points separating the state/district ranked first from the state/district ranked last.

It is also important to note that our margin of error estimates are approximate, as CPS sampling is highly complex and accurate estimation of error rates involves many parameters that are not publicly available.

ENDNOTES

¹ J.H. Perera. "Taking a closer look at Houston's official flag." *Houston Chronicle*. May 3, 2016. <http://www.chron.com/business/article/Taking-a-closer-look-at-Houston-s-official-flag-7389042.php>

² "About Houston: Facts and Figures." <http://www.houstontx.gov/abouthouston/houstonfacts.html>

³ M. Emerson; J. Bratter J. Howell, P.W. Jeanty, and M. Cline. "Houston Region Grows More Racially/Ethnically Diverse, With Small Declines in Segregation." Kinder Institute for Urban Research, and the Hobby Center for the Study of Texas. (2012).

⁴ Fort Bend's population has the closest to an even breakdown of the nation's four largest racial/ethnic groups (Anglos, Asians, Hispanics, and African Americans) of any U.S. county. See: S. Klineberg and J. Wu. "Diversity and Transformation among Asians in Houston." Kinder Institute for Urban Research, Rice University. (2013).

⁵ Definition provided by NCoC. See: Civic Health Index, National Conference on Citizenship. <https://www.ncoc.org/chi/> For a thorough overview of the definition of civic health, and its three dimensions, see R. Lawrence; D. Wise; and E. Einsohn. Texas Civic Health Index™. Annette Straus Institute for Civic Life, and the National Conference on Citizenship (2013). https://moody.utexas.edu/sites/default/files/TX_CHI_TX.pdf

⁶ These CPS studies are: the 2013-2015 Volunteering Supplements, which includes respondents 16 and older. The 2016 Voting and Registration Supplement, which contains only citizens over age 18. Finally, the 2010-2013 Civic Engagement Supplement, which contains respondents over age 18 (this survey was not administered in 2012).

⁷ A word of caution is warranted when discussing the rankings: the substantive difference between metro areas at the top or bottom of the rankings is not necessarily large. See the technical note at the end of this study.

⁸ It would be unwise, for example, to compare the 2014 and 2016 CPS questions on voting, since the former is a midterm year and the latter a presidential year.

⁹ Note that a small proportion of the City of Houston is located in Fort Bend and Montgomery counties. Results from these parts of Houston are not included when examining election results.

¹⁰ See: N. Kwak, D. Shah, and R.L. Holbert. "Connecting, Trusting, and Participating: the Direct and Interactive Effects of Social Associations". *Political Research Quarterly*. 57(4) (2004), p. 643-52.

¹¹ On the decline of trust in the U.S., see: J. Lagasse. "ACA Helped Reverse Decline in U.S. Trust, Research Shows." *Healthcare Finance News*. Oct. 12, 2017. <http://www.healthcarefinancenews.com/news/aca-helped-reverse-decline-us-trust-research-shows>

¹² 2012-2016 American Community Survey, a product of the U.S. Census Bureau. Median household income (in 2016 inflation-adjusted dollars). Prepared by Social Explorer.

¹³ Interestingly, of the 30 largest metros in the U.S., the three most segregated are all in Texas: San Antonio, Greater Houston, and Dallas-Fort Worth. See: R. Fry and P. Taylor. "The Rise of Residential Segregation by Income." Pew Research Center. Aug. 1, 2012. <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2012/08/01/the-rise-of-residential-segregation-by-income/>

¹⁴ "Income Inequality in America's 50 Largest Cities, 2007-2012" Brookings Institute (2014). <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Appendix.pdf> See also: A. Berube. "All cities are not created unequal." Brookings Institute. (2014). <https://www.brookings.edu/research/all-cities-are-not-created-unequal/>

¹⁵ E Uslaner and M. Brown. "Inequality, Trust, and Civic Engagement." *American Politics Research*. 33(6)(2005), p. 868-94.

¹⁶ Some research suggests that not only one's own life experience, but also the experience of one's ancestors in the past, can affect generalized trust. Uslaner (2008) suggests that the historic mistreatment of African Americans in the U.S. may explain the relatively low levels of generalized trust among African Americans. See: E. Uslaner "Where you stand depends upon where your grandparents sat: the inheritability of generalized trust." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 72(4)(2008), p. 725-40

¹⁷ Research suggests that those living in impoverished areas tend to be more distrustful, due to the relative disorder (including but not limited to crime) and feelings of powerlessness found in impoverished areas. See: E. Ross; J. Mirowsky; and S. Pribesh. "Powerlessness and the Amplification of Threat: Neighborhood Disadvantage, Disorder, and Mistrust." *American Sociological Review*. 66(4)(2001), p 568-91. On the relationship between long-term impoverished neighborhoods in Greater Houston and race, see: O'Connell, H and Howell, J (2016). "Disparate City: Understanding Rising Levels of Concentrated Poverty and Affluence in Greater Houston." Kinder Institute for Urban Research, Rice University.

¹⁸ Research suggests that trust tends to be higher in more homogeneous settings. However, the negative effects of heterogeneity may be reduced if those living in a diverse setting actually interact with their neighbors of a different race and ethnicity. See: D. Stolle; S. Soroka; and R. Johnston. "When Does Diversity Erode Trust? Neighborhood Diversity, Interpersonal Trust, and the Mediating Effect of Social Interactions." *Political Studies*. 56(1)(2008), p. 57-75. There are also likely to be differential effects by race; Marschall and Stolle (2004) suggest that racial diversity may have different effects for Anglos and African Americans, and in fact find that African Americans living in diverse areas tend to be more trusting of other people. See: M. Marschall, and D. Stolle. "Race and the City: Neighborhood Context and the Development of Generalized Trust." *Political Behavior*. 26(2)(2004), p. 125-53.

¹⁹ Defined as mostly or strongly agreeing with the statement that they are uncomfortable around those of a different race. Those who mostly or strongly disagree with that statement are coded as comfortable. Those who slightly agree or disagree, or who neither agree nor disagree, are coded as ambivalent.

²⁰ S. Klineberg. "The Kinder Houston Area Survey: Thirty-Six Years of Measuring Responses to a Changing America." Kinder Institute for Urban Research, Rice University. (2017)

²¹ Frequently is defined as every day or every week

²² On the effects of trust, see: E. Uslaner. "Producing and Consuming Trust." *Political Science Quarterly*. 115(4)(2000), p. 569-90. Note that Uslaner distinguishes between generalized and particularized trust. Those with generalized trust are those who trust people in the abstract. Those with particularized trust tend to trust people who are like them, but not out-groups. On the effects of income inequality on generosity, see: S. Cote; J. House; and R. Willer. "High economic inequality leads higher-income individuals to be less generous." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. 112(52)(2015), p. 15,838-843. Cote et al. argue that the effects of income inequality make higher income people less generous. A possible explanation for this effect is social status becoming more important in more unequal societies. See: R. Wilkinson, and K. Pickett. "The enemy between us: the psychological and social costs of inequality." *European Journal of Social Psychology*. 47(1)(2017), p. 11-24

²³ L. Michel "Personal Responsibility and Volunteering After a Natural Disaster: The Case of Hurricane Katrina." *Sociological Spectrum*. 27(6)(2007), p. 633-652.

²⁴ The CPS question on membership in a religious organization states that this must be beyond simple attendance at religious service. Note that while Greater Houston ranks highly compared to other large metro areas in terms of participation in sports and religious organizations, in neither case is Greater Houston's rate much different from the national average.

²⁵ Empirical tests often suggest no relationship between deliberation and these outcomes; that deliberation can have negative rather than positive effects; or that the benefits of deliberation occur only under a highly specific set of circumstances. For an overview, see: D. Thompson. "Deliberative Democratic Theory and Empirical Political Science." *Annual Review of Political Science*. 11(2008), p. 497-520.

²⁶ K. Cramer-Walsh. "The Democratic Potential of Civic Dialogue." In *Deliberation, Participation and Democracy: Can the People Govern?* (S. Rosenberg, editor). (2007). New York: Palgrave MacMillan. Cramer-Walsh notes that while political discussion may inform people about politics and even lead to political mobilization, it can have negative effects if it promotes an us-versus-them mentality.

²⁷ Note that abstaining from voting can mean both not turning out to vote and turning out to vote but leaving the ballot blank for some offices. The latter is referred to as under voting or ballot roll-off. For a thorough discussion of the effects of voter ignorance on participation, see: M. Wattenberg; I. McAllister; and A. Salvanto. "How Voting is like taking an SAT Test." *American Politics Research*. 28(2)(2000), p. 234-250

²⁸ C. Kahn "One in three U.S. adults to avoid talking politics over holiday season: Reuters/Ipsos Poll." Reuters. Nov. 17, 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-holidaypolitics-poll-one-in-three-u-s-adults-to-avoid-talking-politics-over-holiday-season-reuters-ipsos-poll-idUSKBN1DH1DH>

²⁹ See: D.S. Hillygus. "The Missing Link: Exploring the Relationship between Higher Education and Political Engagement." *Political Behavior*. 27(1)(2005), p. 25-47

³⁰ However, the national rate should also be driven down by non-citizens who have less reason to discuss politics.

³¹ 2012-2016 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau. Nativity by Citizenship Status, 2016. Prepared by Social Explorer. Note that a study by J. Foster-Bey, while not directly examining political participation, did find that even controlling for education and income, non-citizens and naturalized citizens were less likely to be civically engaged than native-born citizens. Foster-Bey, while cautioning that his study cannot demonstrate causation, speculates that this could be a result of limited English proficiency, unfamiliarity with cultural norms, or simple lack of opportunity. See: J. Foster-Bey. "CIRCLE Working Paper #62: Do Race, Ethnicity, Citizenship and Socio-economic Status Determine Civic Engagement?" Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE). Commissioned by the Corporation for National and Community Service. (2008).

³² T.A. Wang. "Expanding Citizenship: Immigrants and the Vote." *Democracy: A Journal of Ideas*. 28(2018).

³³ See: B. Casselman. "How Do We Know How Many Undocumented Immigrants

There Are?" FiveThirtyEight.com. Jul. 10, 2014. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/how-do-we-know-how-many-undocumented-immigrants-there-are/> Note that a 2017 PEW study suggested that roughly 575,000 undocumented immigrants live in Greater Houston. See: J. Passel and D. Cohn. "20 metro areas are home to six-in-ten unauthorized immigrants in U.S." Pew Research Center. (2017).

34 Of the roughly 950 Municipal Utility Districts in Texas, about two-thirds are in Harris, Fort Bend, and Montgomery counties.. See: J. Drew. "Municipal Utility Districts in Texas have sweeping authority to sell bonds, levy taxes." *Houston Chronicle*. (Aug 20, 2016)

35 M. Snyder. "Harvey reveals flaws of government by MUD." *Houston Chronicle*. (Oct. 19, 2017)

36 Though the form is only available in Mandarin Chinese and Vietnamese for Harris County residents. However, on the Mandarin Chinese form the characters used are traditional characters, used primarily in Taiwan and Hong Kong. Mainland China adopted simplified characters in the 1950s, (We thank Dr. Meng Yeh of Rice University for pointing this out). Source: Texas Secretary of State's office. See: <https://www.votetexas.gov/register-to-vote/where-to-get-an-application-2.html>

37 Source: Texas Secretary of State's Office. See: <https://www.votetexas.gov/register-to-vote/index.html>

38 B. Highton, "Voter Registration and Turnout in the United States." *Perspectives on Politics*. 2(3)(2004), p. 507-15

39 R Stein and C. Tchintian, "Voter ID Laws, Voter Registration, and Voter Turnout." Working Paper. (2017)

40 This rate is estimated by taking the number of registrants in Harris County and Texas in 2010 (per the Texas Secretary of State's office) and dividing it by the Citizen Voting Age Population of Harris County and Texas, as reported by the 2008-2012 American Community Survey, a product of the U.S. Census Bureau.

41 At minimum since voter registration rolls do have an error rate. Registrants who are deceased, or who have moved, usually remain on the rolls for several cycles before being purged due to inactivity.

42 The denominator used by the Harris County Clerk's office is the number of registered voters on the rolls at the time the voting system had been set-up and tested. On average this is about 55 days prior to Election Day. Thus, the Clerk's office cautions that the number of people who were actually eligible to vote on Election Day may be higher. See: <http://www.harrisvotes.com/ElectionResults.aspx>

43 The Election Administration and Voting Survey, 2016 Comprehensive Report. A Report to the 115th Congress. U.S. Election Assistance Commission (2017). See p. 21. https://www.eac.gov/assets/1/6/2016_EAVS_Comprehensive_Report.pdf

44 This rate is the turnout rate among registered Houstonians living in the Harris County portion of the city. Houstonians living in Montgomery and Fort Bend are not included. The turnout statistics shown in the figure are only from November elections; runoff elections are not included.

45 However, the rate may have been high because of the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance (HERO), which was on the ballot. HERO would have banned private businesses from discriminating based on numerous factors, including sexual orientation and gender identity.

46 M. Marschall and J. Lappie. "Mayoral Elections in California: 1995-2014." Center for Local Elections in American Politics, Kinder Institute for Urban Research, Rice University, Houston TX (2016). It should be noted that Marschall and Lappie measure turnout by voting age population, rather than registered voters.

47 This may be due to multiple causes: voters tending to elect like-minded elected officials, voters tending to communicate more with elected officials, and because a politician's re-election hinges on the attitudes of voters, not non-voters. See: J. Griffin, J and B. Newman, "Are Voters Better Represented?" *Journal of Politics*. 67(4)(2005), p. 1,206-27.

48 This is in keeping with national trends. See: Jones, J (2013). "In U.S., Voter Registration lags among Hispanics, Asians." *Gallup News*. (Nov. 6, 2013). <http://news.gallup.com/poll/165752/voter-registration-lags-among-hispanics-asians.aspx>

49 U.S. Census Bureau. Hispanic or Latino Origin by Race, 2010. Prepared by Social Explorer.

50 The CPS can simply ask survey respondents if they self-identify as Hispanic. However, citizens do not declare their ethnicity when they register to vote. The Harris County Clerk's office instead estimated the number of Hispanics voters and registrants by matching individual surnames to the Census Bureau's list of Hispanic surnames, which contains about 12,000 names. For a discussion of identifying Hispanics by surname, see: D. Word and R.L. Perkins. "Building a Hispanic surname List for the 1990s: A New Approach to an Old Problem." Population Division, U.S. Bureau of the Census. (1994). We thank Hector de Leon of the Harris County Clerk's office for providing data on Hispanic surnamed registrants and voters in Harris County.

51 This is the percentage of Harris County registrants who voted for governor who cast their ballot early, and the percentage of City of Houston registrants (Harris County portion only) who voted for mayor of Houston who cast their ballot early. It does not incorporate people who did vote on Election Day but left the ballot blank for those offices. However, under voting for offices as prominent as president, governor, or mayor is minimal.

52 Texas Secretary of State's Office, early voting statistics. Statistics collected are the cumulative statistics for the last day of early voting before the March primaries. For 2018, see: <https://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/earlyvoting/2018/mar2.shtml>. For

2014, see: <https://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/earlyvoting/2014/feb28.shtml>"

53 Some scholars argue that early voting may even drive down turnout, at least when implemented without same-day voter registration. See: B. Burden; D. Canon; K. Mayer; and P. Moynihan. "Election Laws, Mobilization, and Turnout: The Unanticipated Consequences of Election Reform." *American Journal of Political Science*. 58(1)(2013), p. 95-109.

54 This does not include the Harris County Board of Education, which only has direct responsibility for three highly specialized schools.

55 Elected officials and candidates could also be flagged for having a first name that is common among Hispanics, but uncommon among non-Hispanics (ex: Juan, Jimena). However, very few candidates/officials in this dataset were flagged that way. Women are coded based upon the proportion of people with that name who are women per the Social Security Administration.

56 It should be noted that identifying Anglo and African American candidates based on surname is generally not possible. Hispanics can be, though as noted there is still an error rate for those with unusual or non-indicative surnames. The error rate is likely higher among married women who take their spouse's surname. While coding based on surname is not a perfect system, it is the best solution available. For instance, the Texas Secretary of State's office flags Hispanic voters by surname to determine who should be sent bilingual election notices. see: S. Hsu and J. Wagner (Jan. 22, 2018). "Trump Election Fraud Commission bought Texas election data flagging Hispanic voters." *Texas Tribune*. <https://www.texastribune.org/2018/01/22/trump-election-fraud-commission-bought-texas-election-data-flagging-hi/> . One study comparing the Hispanic surname list to the self-reported race/ethnicity of insurance recipients found that coding Hispanics by surname successfully identifies about 80% of Hispanics as Hispanic, and 98% of non-Hispanics as non-Hispanic. In each case the success rate is modestly higher for men than women. See: M. Elliott, A. Fremont, P. Morrisson, P. Pantoja, and N. Lurie (2008). "A New Method for Estimating Race/Ethnicity and Associated Disparities Where Administrative Records Lack Self-Reported Race/Ethnicity." *Health Services Research*. 43(5), p. 1722-1736.

57 At-large seats tend to hinder the election of minority candidates, including Hispanics. See: D. Leal; V. Martinez-Ebers; and K. Meier. "The Politics of Latino Education: the Biases of At-Large Elections." *Journal of Politics*. 66(4)(2004), p. 1,224-44.

58 O. Tallet. "Record number of Latinos fill ballot in Houston." *Houston Chronicle*. (Mar. 1, 2018).

59 The source of this data is the 2017 Texas State Directory, with the exception of School Board members, who are not included in the directory. The directory will not account for any changes in the make-up of elected officials since the date of publication. School Board members are identified from the school board websites and are accurate as of December 27, 2017.

60 This number incorporates only school districts governing K-12 education. It does not include the Harris County Board of Education, which has direct responsibility for only three highly specialized schools.

61 J. Lawless. "Sexism and Gender Bias in Election 2008: A More Complex Path for Women in Politics." *Politics and Gender*. 51(1)(2009), p. 70-80

62 D. Niven. "Throwing Your Hat Out of the Ring: Negative Recruitment and the Gender Imbalance in State Legislative Candidacy." *Politics and Gender*. 2(2006): p. 473-489. See also: Lawless, 2009

63 Women are identified based on their first name. As with Hispanic candidates, this means that identifying candidates as men or women is probabilistic. Candidates and office-holders with unusual or mixed-gender names (ex: "Sam," "Pat") could also be identified if they had a picture on an official website, or by the pronoun chosen by media outlets covering that person's activities. Candidates who went only by an initial (or initials) for their first name (ex: A.B. Smith) were assumed to be male.

64 Note that this is a very minimal standard to meet. It speaks only to the presence of a woman on the ballot, rather than the presence of viable female candidates. For instance, in 2015 there were only three candidates with a serious chance of winning the mayoral election, all of whom were male.

65 One woman did seek the Democratic nomination for Sheriff.

66 Studies of contestation in local elections are few. However, the literature on judicial elections does suggest that incumbent judges in states with partisan elections are much more likely to be challenged for re-election than those in states with non-partisan elections. See: M.G. Hall "State Supreme Courts in American Democracy: Probing the Myths of Judicial Reform." *American Political Science Review*. 95(2)(2001), p. 315-30.

67 See: N. Kwak; D. Shah; and R.L. Holbert. "Connecting, Trusting, and Participating: the Direct and Interactive Effects of Social Associations". *Political Research Quarterly*. 57(4) (2004), p. 643-52.

68 With the exception of holding the Presidency since the U.S. Constitution limits that office to native-born citizens.

69 However, other factors also matter; descriptive representation alone cannot solve the problem of political alienation. See: A. Pantoja and G. Segura. "Does Ethnicity Matter? Descriptive Representation in Legislatures and Political Alienation among Latinos." *Social Science Quarterly*. 84(2)(2003), p. 441-60

70 For a discussion of mayoral turnout in major U.S. cities, see: T. Holbrook and A. Weinschenk. "Campaigns, Mobilization, and Turnout in Mayoral Elections." *Political Research Quarterly*. 67(1)(2014), p. 42-55.

CIVIC HEALTH INDEX

State and Local Partnerships

NCoC began America's Civic Health Index in 2006 to measure the level of civic engagement and health of our democracy. In 2009, NCoC was incorporated into the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act and directed to expand this civic health assessment in partnership with the Corporation for National and Community Service and the US Census Bureau.

NCoC now works with partners in more than 30 communities nationwide to use civic data to lead and inspire a public dialogue about the future of citizenship in America and to drive sustainable civic strategies.

STATES

Alabama

University of Alabama
David Mathews Center for Civic Life
Auburn University

Arizona

Center for the Future of Arizona

California

California Forward
Center for Civic Education
Center for Individual and Institutional Renewal
Davenport Institute

Colorado

Metropolitan State University of Denver
The Civic Canopy
Denver Metro Chamber Leadership
Campus Compact of Mountain West
History Colorado
Institute on Common Good

Connecticut

Everyday Democracy
Secretary of the State of Connecticut
DataHaven
Connecticut Humanities
Connecticut Campus Compact
The Fund for Greater Hartford
William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund
Wesleyan University

District of Columbia

ServeDC

Florida

Florida Joint Center for Citizenship
Bob Graham Center for Public Service
Lou Frey Institute of Politics and Government

Georgia

GeorgiaForward
Carl Vinson Institute of Government, The University of Georgia
Georgia Family Connection Partnership

Illinois

McCormick Foundation

Indiana

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

Kansas

Kansas Health Foundation

Kentucky

Commonwealth of Kentucky,
Secretary of State's Office
Institute for Citizenship & Social Responsibility,
Western Kentucky University
Kentucky Advocates for Civic Education
McConnell Center, University of Louisville

Maryland

Mannakee Circle Group
Center for Civic Education
Common Cause-Maryland
Maryland Civic Literacy Commission

Massachusetts

Harvard Institute of Politics

Michigan

Michigan Nonprofit Association
Michigan Campus Compact
Michigan Community Service Commission
Volunteer Centers of Michigan
Council of Michigan Foundations
Center for Study of Citizenship at Wayne State University

Minnesota

Center for Democracy and Citizenship

Missouri

Missouri State University
Park University
Saint Louis University

University of Missouri Kansas City

University of Missouri Saint Louis
Washington University

Nebraska

Nebraskans for Civic Reform

New Hampshire

Carsey Institute
Campus Compact of New Hampshire
University System of New Hampshire
New Hampshire College & University Council

New York

Siena College Research Institute
New York State Commission on National and Community Service

North Carolina

Institute for Emerging Issues

Ohio

Miami University Hamilton Center for Civic Engagement

Oklahoma

University of Central Oklahoma
Oklahoma Campus Compact

Pennsylvania

Center for Democratic Deliberation
National Constitution Center

South Carolina

University of South Carolina Upstate

Texas

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

Virginia

Center for the Constitution at James Madison's Montpelier
Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

ISSUE SPECIFIC

Latinos Civic Health Index

Carnegie Corporation

Veterans Civic Health Index

Got Your 6

Millennials Civic Health Index

Mobilize.org

Harvard Institute of Politics
CIRCLE

Economic Health

Knight Foundation

Corporation for National & Community Service (CNCS)
CIRCLE

CITIES

Atlanta
Community Foundation of Greater Atlanta
Austin
The University of Texas at Austin
RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service
Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life Leadership Austin
Austin Community Foundation
KLRU-TV, Austin PBS
KUT 90.5 - Austin's NPR Station
Chicago
McCormick Foundation

Houston
Center for Local Elections in American Politics
Houston Endowment
The Kinder Institute
Kansas City & Saint Louis
Missouri State University
Park University
Washington University
Miami
Florida Joint Center for Citizenship
John S. and James L. Knight Foundation
Miami Foundation

Pittsburgh
University of Pittsburgh
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Seattle
Seattle City Club
Twin Cities
Center for Democracy and Citizenship
Citizens League
John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

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Founder, Saguaro Seminar
Author of *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*

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