



# 2019 HAWAI'I™ CIVIC HEALTH INDEX



HAWAI'I COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION  
*Amplify the Power of Giving*



National Conference on Citizenship  
*Connecting People. Strengthening Our Country.*



## ABOUT THE PARTNERS

### HAWAI'I COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

The Hawai'i Community Foundation, with over 100 years of community service, is the leading philanthropic institution in the State of Hawai'i. We steward over 900 funds, including more than 200 scholarship funds, created by donors who desire to transform lives and improve communities.

Over the last two years, we have developed a framework for **CHANGE** as a practical tool to apply an equity lens to the development of our grant programs, strategies and initiatives. The framework uses data to highlight and analyze the greatest inequities in our state and identifies indicators to measure impact over time. The framework focuses on people and place to drive the power of collective action around shared goals to address Hawai'i's most complex issues. Each letter in the framework represents a sector of focus.

Through the framework, our hope is to inspire a movement for **CHANGE** that will create a Hawai'i where every person has the opportunity to thrive. The large scale, meaningful impact that we strive to deliver for Hawai'i is fueled and supported by our deep community knowledge and partnerships with philanthropists, nonprofits, businesses, and government. For more information, please visit [www.hawaiicommunityfoundation.org](http://www.hawaiicommunityfoundation.org).



### NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CITIZENSHIP

The National Conference on Citizenship is a congressionally chartered organization dedicated to strengthening civic life in America. We pursue our mission through a nationwide network of partners involved in a cutting-edge civic health initiative, innovative voting and data collection initiatives, as well as our cross-sector conferences. At the core of our joint efforts is the belief that every person has the ability to help their community and country thrive. Learn more at [ncoc.org](http://ncoc.org).

**We are grateful to our funders for their generous support and commitment to Hawai'i's civic health:**

*Omidyar 'Ohana Fund at the Hawai'i Community Foundation  
Daniel K. Inouye Institute Fund at the Hawai'i Community Foundation  
With support from SMS Consulting, LLC and PBR Hawai'i & Associates, Inc.*

**And we are grateful to the individuals who consented to speak with us on this issue and to the many citizens of Hawai'i who took the time to participate in our community survey and share their ideas with us.**



## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Hawai'i Context</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Overall Findings</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Findings: Home Ownership Factors</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>Findings: Generational Differences</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>Identifying Barriers</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>Finding Solutions</b> .....	<b>24</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>31</b>
<b>Technical Note</b> .....	<b>32</b>
<b>Endnotes</b> .....	<b>32</b>

## INTRODUCTION

---

Civic health reflects the degree to which citizens participate in their communities, from local and state governance to interactions with friends or family. Civic health also relates to the overall well-being of neighborhoods, communities, states, and the nation. Civic engagement is the act of working with local institutions and fellow residents to promote meaningful actions, movements, and relationships within a community or population. This can take many forms, from voter registration rates to talking politics with friends or family, and from trusting local businesses to participating in community groups. Some measures of civic engagement are political, some are social, and some are individual, but each reflects something important about a community's civic health.

---

Hawai'i citizens are increasingly disengaged in important areas of public discussion and decision-making. Voter turnout (calculated as a percent of registered voters who turned out to vote), as one key measure, indicates the magnitude of Hawai'i's decline. In 1959, voter turnout was 93.6% - the highest it's been since statehood. In 2014, it was the lowest at 52.3%. (In 2018, the most recent election, the turnout was 52.7%)<sup>1</sup> Hawai'i has finished last in voter turnout for the last five presidential elections in a row.<sup>2</sup>

The Hawai'i Community Foundation (HCF), community leaders, and other partners are deeply concerned with the downward trends evident in Hawai'i civic engagement. Low civic engagement in areas such as voting results in a negative feedback loop: instead of broad and diverse input, policies are increasingly shaped by only the most interested and well-resourced entities, which further increases public cynicism and erodes citizen participation. This negative loop tends to result in decreasing attendance at public meetings, less voicing of one's opinion and contacting public officials, and ultimately possibly undermining confidence in government altogether, all trends we are seeing more and more across our state.

If we hope to have a community where citizens regularly and actively participate in and collaborate on community issues, rebuilding a sense of *'ohana and aloha*,<sup>3</sup> we need to engage, energize and empower our people to find community solutions to ensure Hawai'i's societal health and well-being. A civil society should depend on civic engagement, and increasing the quantity and quality of community engagement by more of our citizens is **critical to Hawai'i's future**. Community members must be able to engage around contentious and tough issues. We must pay special attention to Hawai'i's youth and to those who feel disenfranchised. A healthy Hawai'i will have compassionate and ethical leaders; informed, empowered and active citizens; resilient and adaptive organizations; and an accountable and transparent government.



## Study Background and Data Sources

---

HCF explored community and civic engagement in the islands in partnership with the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC), an organization dedicated to strengthening civic life in America. This Hawai'i *Civic Health Index* (CHI) summarizes our findings, which draw on supplementary information made available from the U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS)<sup>4,5</sup>; the 2017 Hawai'i Well-Being Study conducted by SMS Consulting, LLC (SMS); interviews and an online survey conducted for HCF by PBR Hawai'i & Associates, Inc. (PBR); and other sources as noted.

## Reporting Groups

---

In looking at the overall data, two key demographic factors stood out and demonstrated significant differences in responses.

The first was **home-ownership** – people in households who own their home seem to be much more engaged with their community compared with non-homeowners. Non-homeowners are mostly renters or people who live in a home and do not pay rent (most often adults living with their parents, or elderly living with their children).

The second was **generational**, with vast differences in responses between different age groups. For this report, generations are defined by the following:

- **Generation Z**, born between 1996 and 2009 - 8 to 21 years old in 2017;
- **Millennials**, born between 1982 and 1995 - 22 to 35 years old in 2017;
- **Generation X**, born between 1965 and 1981 - 36 to 52 in 2017;
- **Baby Boomers**, born between 1946 and 1964 - 53 to 71 in 2017;
- **Silent Generation**, born between 1931 and 1945 - 72 to 86 in 2017; and, where sufficient data is available;
- **Long Civic Generation**, born in 1930 or earlier - 87 or older in 2017.

## Graphic Presentations

---

Much of the data is presented in bar charts. Some charts “stack” outcomes that are not mutually exclusive, such as the percent of persons who frequently talk or spend time with family or friends. The magnitude of the various scores seen when they are “stacked” should be viewed as an index to compare generations with respect to the overall group of behaviors being considered, and not a total count of discrete behaviors. The x-axis is labelled as an index where this is relevant. Additionally, all rankings are based on all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

In this report, **home ownership and generational differences** stood out and demonstrated significant differences in responses.



## HAWAI'I CONTEXT

---

Before examining the data, we should consider Hawai'i's social framework.

---

### **“Community” is Changing**

The communities that provide meaning and structure to people's lives are increasingly diverse. They may be place-based, institution-based, culture-based or virtual. Communities may keep in touch through everyday encounters, planned gatherings, formal meetings, or by emails, chat groups or other online means.

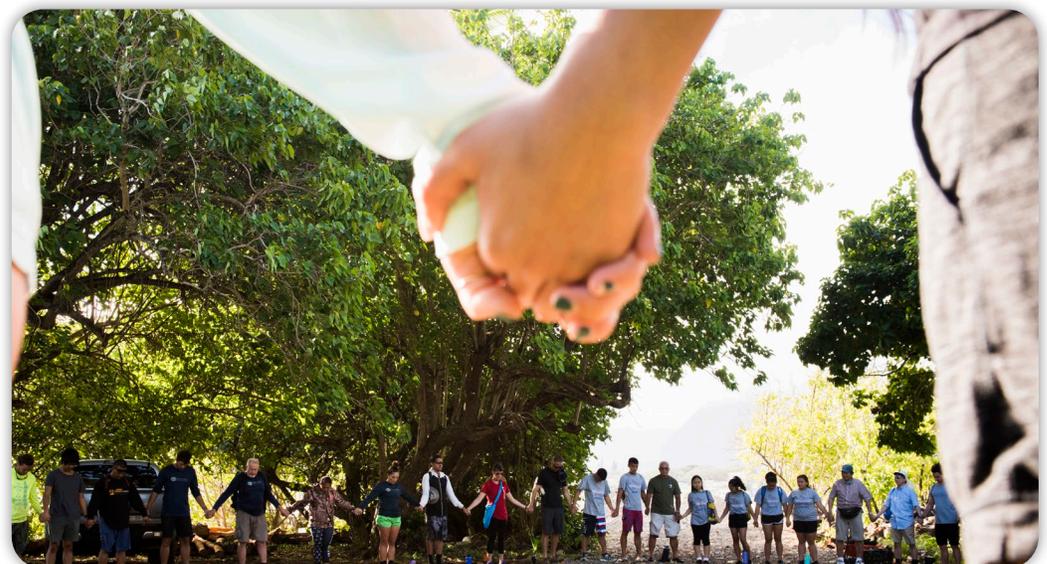
A century ago in Hawai'i's plantation-era, social contacts were rooted where people lived, and because of the way plantation owners had organized worker camps, these generally aligned with ethnicity (then defined as nationality). Native Hawaiians, who were rarely employed by plantations, remained in their own communities, established well before the plantations. World War II, statehood (1959) and the following years of expanding educational and economic opportunity coupled with suburban real estate development served to initiate some ethnic mixing in Hawai'i neighborhoods. Yet, neighborhoods remained a strong organizing influence on family and community life.

Today's families find themselves in their own neighborhoods less often due to factors such as long working hours, long commutes or children attending schools and activities not located near home. This makes it more difficult to initiate and maintain contact with neighbors, and while it varies between rural and urban areas, and in some Neighbor Island<sup>6</sup> vs. O'ahu communities, it seems to be a reality for many households, especially for younger generations.

Although neighborhoods may hold less sway over people's community connections, targeted interviewees and survey respondents reported ties that nonetheless reinforce the bonds of immediate family and/or family heritage. Some were very involved with social or community groups that grew out of their children's activities, such as hula, baseball, paddling or golf. Others, while living in an urban high-rise setting where most immediate neighbors were not known, found meaning in connecting with cultural or community organizations, or through other social activities.

*“Somebody's always coming and somebody's always going.  
We're hardly ever home together.”*

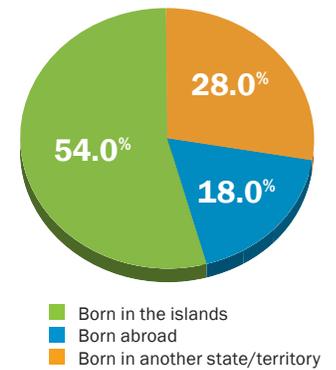
**- MAHEA, KAILUA, O'AHU, GEN X**



## Place of Birth and Family/Community

An estimated 54% of Hawai'i residents were born in the islands<sup>7</sup>, and many of these long-term residents identify with multiple and interconnected communities that link different generations, ethnic groups, workplaces, and neighborhoods. The sense of family and community may span multiple islands, beginning with their own or their grandparents' town of birth and extending to their current island residence, and that of their children or grandchildren.

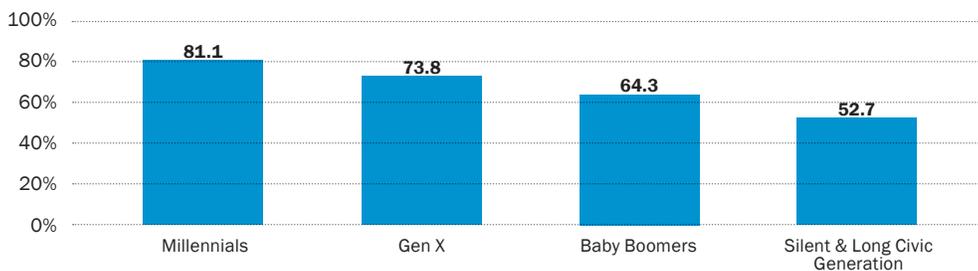
Conversely, this means some 28% of Hawai'i residents were born in another U.S. state or territory, and 18% were born abroad. For this combined 46% of the state's population, "family" and "community" very likely extend far beyond the islands, representing physically broader zones of concern and responsibility, and at least initially, possibly less connectedness to communities in Hawai'i. In addition, "family" in Hawai'i may consist of non-biological relationships i.e., friends.



## Outside Influences and Diversity

Hawai'i has become more diverse since statehood, and intersections with the world beyond its shores, both economically and socially, are more ubiquitous due to immigration, tourism, the resort/second home industries, outside investment, and communications. These linkages, of course, are accelerated by digital technologies, and thus it is not surprising that the degree of connections to persons of different racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds is inversely correlated with age. This appears corollary to the national observation that the Millennial generation itself is the most racially diverse to date in the U.S.

**Table 1. Frequently Spend Time with People of Different Racial, Ethnic, or Cultural Backgrounds**



Source: U.S. Census, Current Population Survey, 2017

Having frequent interactions with others of diverse backgrounds is one of the distinguishing features of Hawai'i's community. The overall Hawai'i rate, at 70.0%, compares to the national CPS 2017 average of 56.0%.

Frequent contact with persons of diverse backgrounds was higher for urban and rural residents of Hawai'i (73.5% and 72.2%, respectively), compared to suburban residents (those living in an outlying part of a city or town e.g., Hawai'i Kai) at 63.9%, and tends to be positively correlated with family income (78.0% for those earning \$75,000 or more vs. 60.5% for those earning less than \$35,000).

**Millennials** are most likely to frequently spend time with people of different racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds.

# THE IMPACTS OF A CHANGING ECONOMY AND IMMIGRATION

As early as the 1850's, as the sugar industry (and later pineapple industry) grew, contract laborers were brought to the islands. By the early 20th century, laborers from China, Portugal, Japan, the Philippines, Korea, Puerto Rico and Okinawa had moved to the islands and many elected to stay. More recently immigrants from Vietnam, Thailand and Pacific Island nations have made Hawai'i their home.

Economic changes were accompanied by in-migration, including those seeking opportunity in the new industries, military families and later part-time residents seeking retirement or second homes. These influences have been strongest from the U.S. and Canadian west coasts, as well as from Asia and the Pacific Islands.

A Compact of Free Association (COFA) between the U.S. and citizens of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Republic of Palau has supported substantial migration from these Pacific islands to Hawai'i since 1986, at increasing rates in recent years. In 2019, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that 16,680 COFA migrants live in Hawai'i.

Hawai'i's Baby Boomer and older residents grew up in or moved to a Hawai'i that featured rapid change in social, economic and physical landscapes, due in large part to statehood (1959) and the visitor industry. The visitor industry took off after introduction of jet service to the islands in 1960, as well as the escalating U.S. involvement in the Vietnam war soon after, and major outside investments in hotel and resort infrastructure.

In contrast, Gen X and younger generations in Hawai'i have grown up with a strong visitor presence in most of their daily lives. In 2018, the state recorded 9.8 million visitors or 15 visitors per 100 residents on an average day. But ratios, and therefore the touchpoints on daily lives, range tremendously by area, from 10 per hundred on O'ahu, to 34 or 36 per hundred in Kaua'i and Maui counties, respectively.

## Hawai'i and National Outcomes

In 2013, the last year where a full comparison is possible across the major CHI indicators, Hawai'i ranked number one in the nation for "Confidence in the Media" and last in "Voting." (While the 2012 data was used for the ranking on "Voting," Hawai'i continues to rank last on this indicator for the elections through 2018.)

**Table 2. Hawai'i Civic Health Index Rankings – Top Ten and Bottom Ten Indicators**

Civic Health Index Indicator	National Rank
Confidence in Media - A great deal or Some	1st
Use the Internet to express a public opinion?	2nd
Confidence in Corporations - A great deal or Some	4th
Do favors for neighbors	11th
Group participation: School group, neighborhood or community association	20th
Eat dinner with other household members	21st
Group participation: Sports or recreation association	22nd
Trust the people in your neighborhood	23rd
Talk with neighbors	24th
Charitable giving (\$25 or more)	27th
How often did you hear from family/friends?	37th
Group Participation - Any Type	37th
Talk politics with family or friends	40th
Nonelectoral participation: Contacted or visited public official?	40th
Nonelectoral participation: Bought or boycotted a product or service?	41st
Volunteering	43rd
Group participation: Service or civic association	43rd
Group participation: Church, synagogue, mosque, or religious institution	44th
Attended a public meeting	47th
Voting (2012)	50th

Hawai'i's overall scores on most of the CHI Indicators surveyed by CPS 2017 were not substantially different from national averages. Besides the substantial discrepancy in voting rates where Hawai'i's voting turnout is the lowest in the nation, Hawai'i varied significantly from national averages (more than 20% difference on survey scores, and beyond the estimated margin of error for each group of variables) only in terms of:

- More diverse social interactions – 70.0% reported frequently talking or spending time with people of different racial, ethnic or cultural background vs. only 56.0% of people nationwide.
- Less likely to buy or boycott a product or service – at 11.5% for Hawai'i vs. 13.9% nationwide.

These findings are discussed on page 10.

## OVERALL FINDINGS

Various studies have found numerous benefits of neighborhood, community and civic involvement, including more resilience during times of stress or disaster, greater personal satisfaction, as well as individual and public health benefits.<sup>8</sup> These overall findings highlight areas of concern as well as areas where Hawai'i exhibits a true sense of community and civic health.

### Social Relationships

Social connectedness is defined as a series of interactions between friends, families, and neighbors, such as eating dinner with friends or family and trusting your neighbors. It is a measure of how individuals interact with each other and involves both the quality and number of connections. These relationships are needed to build trust and are an essential component of healthy communities and individual well-being.

#### Family and Friends

In Hawai'i as elsewhere, many connections begin with family and friends. For the locally born, these are often people located in-state, but as surveyed by CPS, they also consider contacts with those residing anywhere. Overall, rates of contact with family or friends by Hawai'i residents is very similar to national averages, but is highest for Millennials, 88.0% of whom report frequently hearing from friends or family.

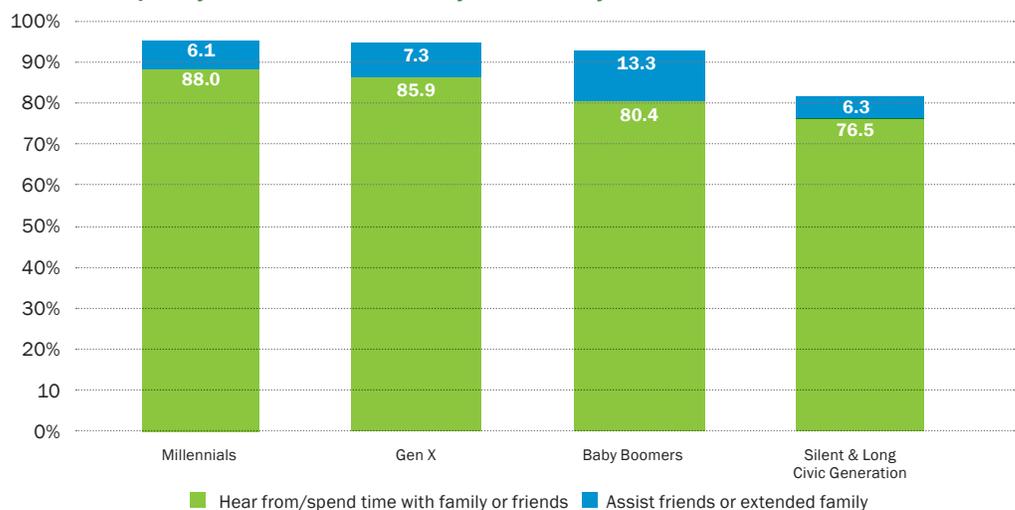
Comparison to the national average by generation is available through the CPS 2014 only, and is based on 2010, 2011, and 2013 survey inputs. In that earlier study, frequently hearing from family and friends was reported at 75.8% nationally vs. 74.3% for Hawai'i overall. The CPS 2014 results are lower overall than reported in CPS 2017, but are consistent in showing the highest prevalence of contacts among Millennials.

While spending time or hearing from friends and family appears to decline with older cohorts, frequently providing food, housing, money or other help for friends or extended family was most common among Baby Boomers, at 13.3%. Despite their relatively young age, 6.1% of Millennials also reported frequently providing such assistance to friends or extended family.



**Frequent contact with family or friends** is high for all generations, but is highest for Millennials and frequency declines for older cohorts.

**Table 3. Frequently Contact or Assist Family or Friends by Generation**



Source: U.S. Census, Current Population Survey, 2017

**Graphic 1. Differences Also Existed in Income, Geography, and Education**



Families earning \$50,000 to \$74,999 were 20% more likely to frequently provide assistance to family and friends compared to those from families earning more than \$75,000.<sup>9</sup>



Those living in rural areas were most likely to report frequently hearing from family and friends at 85.7%



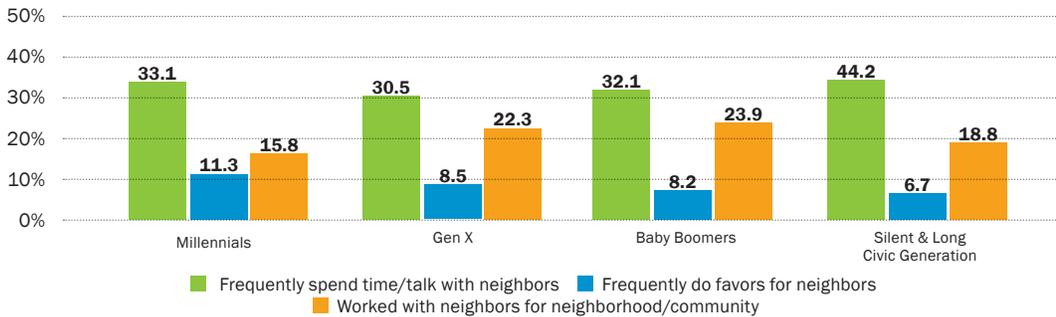
Those with a bachelor's degree or more education reported the highest percentage having frequent contact with family or friends at 84.0%

**Neighborhood Ties**

Most Hawai'i residents evidence strong ties to their neighborhoods as well as their families and friends (we rank 11th in "do favors for neighbors" and 23rd in "trust the people in your neighborhood")<sup>10</sup>, with the types of connections varying by generation. Millennials most often reported frequent favors for their neighbors, while those of the Silent and Long Civic Generations, many of whom are assumed to be retired, are more likely to talk to or spend time with their neighbors. Participation in more organized events, such as working with neighbors to do something positive for one's neighborhood or community, was more frequent among the Baby Boomer generation than the others.

While Hawai'i continues to exhibit some level of "neighborliness" at a similar level as the national average (with 33.0% of both groups indicating they frequently talk or spend time with neighbors, and 67.1% reporting they do so infrequently or "never"), it is important to nurture these relationships. These connections help open up conversations with people with different perspectives, and to build a sense of community.

**Table 4. Engagement with Neighbors by Generation**



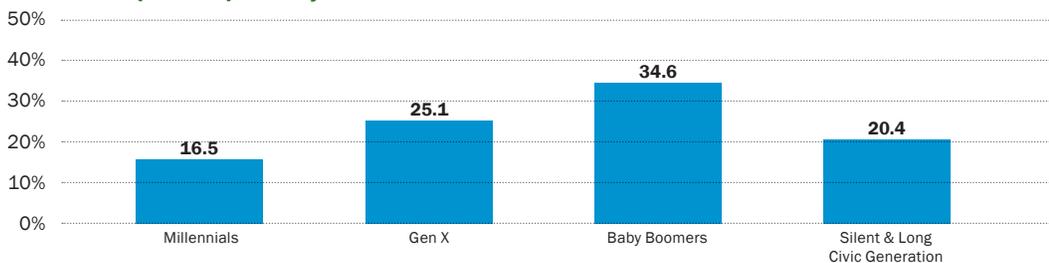
Neighborhoodly connections may increase slightly with age, but the types of engagement may change.

Source: U.S. Census, Current Population Survey, 2017

**Group Participation**

Hawai'i ranks lower on a national scale with various group activities (44th for participation in church, synagogue, mosque, or religious institution; 43rd for service or civic association; 37th for any group participation; 22nd for sports or recreation association; and 20th for school group or neighborhood or community association)<sup>11</sup>. CPS 2017 appears to show declining participation by age in group activities, with Millennials reporting only about half the activity as Baby Boomers. As might be expected with advancing age, participation by Silent and Long Civic Generation members is lower.

**Table 5. Group Participation by Generation in Hawai'i**

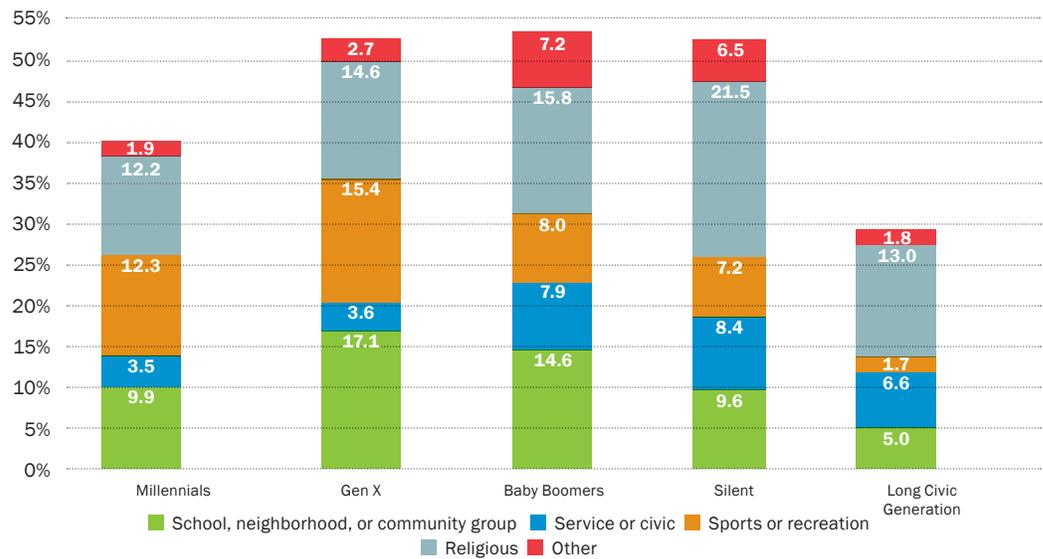


Source: U.S. Census, Current Population Survey, 2017

On the other hand, Hawai'i Millennials and Baby Boomers led other generations in terms of the average number of groups, both showing respondents active in an average of 2.2 groups each. Gen X averaged 1.5 groups per respondent, and the Silent and Long Civic Generations 1.8. Participation in groups is also positively correlated with family income.

Unfortunately, the most recent survey did not report participation by type of group; for this we rely on the CPS 2014, where the relevant data was pooled from surveys conducted in 2010, 2011 and 2013. In these older survey results, with prompts by types of organizations, overall participation is higher, with the “lag” between Millennials and other groups greatly reduced compared to CPS 2017, and the differential between Gen X and Baby Boomers largely eliminated. This earlier survey was also able to differentiate Silent from Long Civic Generation members, showing that group activity remained strong through the Silent Generation, whose members ranged from 65 to 82 years of age at the survey times.

**Table 6. Type of Group Participation by Generation in Hawai'i**



\*Millennials ranged from ages 15 to 31 at times of pooled data collection; only those aged 18+ were surveyed.

Source: U.S. Census, Current Population Survey, November 2013 Civic Engagement Supplement (data pooled from 2010, 2011 and 2013)

The more granular information also shows that participation with school, neighborhood, and community associations was highest for Gen X, while activity by Baby Boomers, Silent and Long Civic Generations was boosted by their more active participation with churches, synagogues, mosques or other religious institutions. Religious group participation was also relatively high for Millennials, and equivalent in frequency to their activity in sports or recreation associations. Also, notable, participation in service or civic associations was highest for Silent Generation members and declines consistently with younger generations.

Overall, Hawai'i's rates of group membership are similar to those observed nationwide.



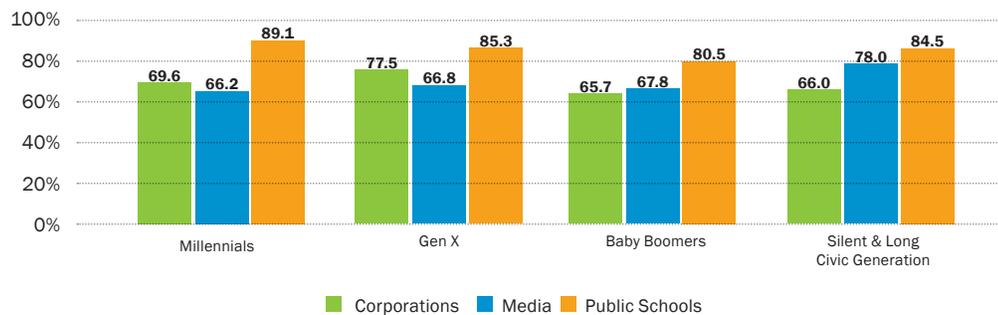
The prior survey in 2014, with **breakout by type of group**, captured more overall participation and smaller differences by generation.

## Confidence in Institutions

Confidence in institutions refers to the degree to which residents believe that various local institutions, including public schools, media, and corporations, will do what is right. Unfortunately, the data does not include confidence in other institutions or groups that could be meaningful, such as government in general, or community leaders. This is a critical indicator of civic health as trust is needed to build strong relationships and encourage community engagement.

Based on pooled CPS data collected between 2010 and 2013, two-thirds or more of Hawai'i residents expressed some or a great deal of confidence in major societal institutions, including corporations (highest rate for Gen X), the media (highest rate for Silent Generation) and public schools (highest rate for Millennials.) The chart below compares confidence levels for each generation and type of institution in order to illustrate the similarity of overall confidence levels among the four generations. Unfortunately, there was insufficient sample to present data for the Long Civic Generation, and this information was not made available to this study in the CPS 2017.

**Table 7. Confidence in Institutions by Generation**



\*Millennials ranged from ages 15 to 31 at times of pooled data collection; only those aged 18+ were surveyed.

Source: U.S. Census, Current Population Survey, November 2013 Civic Engagement Supplement (data pooled from 2010, 2011 and 2013 surveys)

According to this pooled data, Hawai'i residents as a whole are more likely than other Americans to report some or a great deal of confidence in corporations (ranked 4th nationally) and the media (ranked 1st nationally), but somewhat less confidence in public schools (ranked 29th nationally). Confidence in corporations and the media also correlated with higher income for Hawai'i residents, while that in public schools declined with higher income.

## Community Engagement and Giving

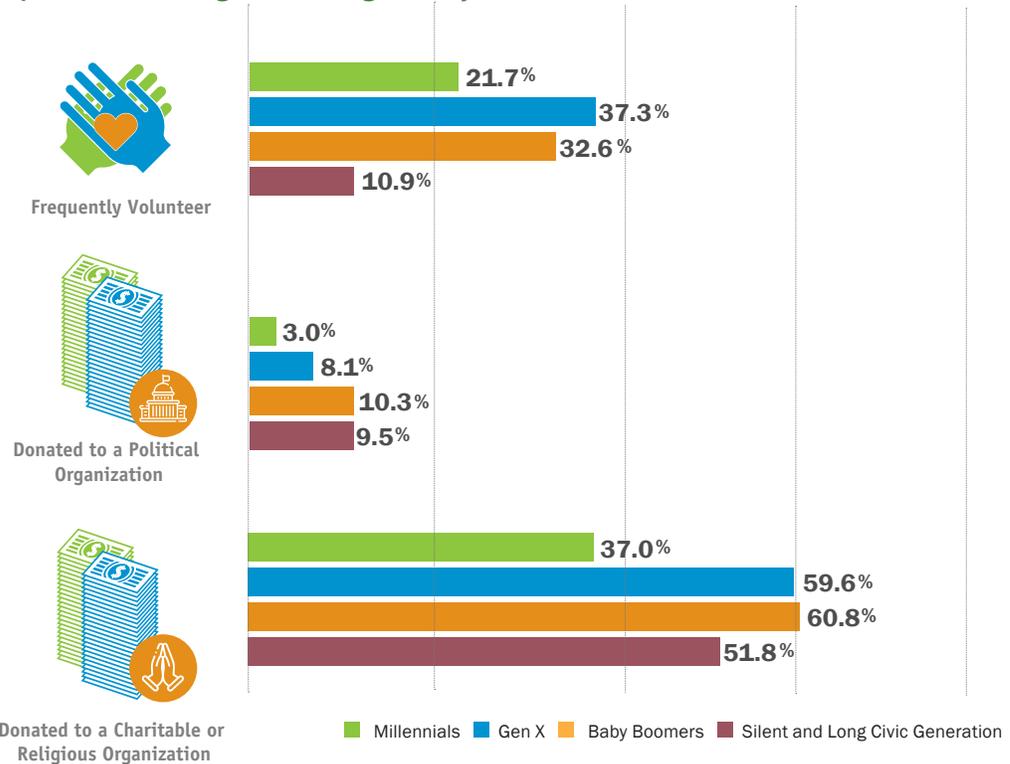
People may use service activities to make a positive impact in their communities by working together to address critical issues. In the midst of a tough economy, this is particularly important as volunteer services and donations can make all the difference.

Overall Hawai'i rates of volunteerism and charitable or religious donations are similar to national averages with the possible exception of donations to political organizations, which appear lower for Hawai'i. However, there are notable differences by generation.

Volunteering and giving is most prevalent in the middle, higher earning years evidenced by the Gen X and Baby Boomer generations who were 36 to 52, and 53 to 71, respectively, at the time of the most recent survey in 2017. These habits were far less prevalent among Millennials, who were aged 22 to 35 at the time of survey, and lagged notably in all categories tracked. In terms of donations, the survey asked whether respondents had given \$25 or more. One possible challenge for Millennials in this instance, is that they may have less available to donate; however, they also volunteer less than all but the Silent and Long Civic generations.

Confidence in institutions is generally high.

**Graphic 2. Volunteering and Donating Rates by Generation**



**AVERAGE ANNUAL VOLUNTEER HOURS BY GENERATION**



Source: U.S. Census, Current Population Survey, September 2017 Volunteering and Civic Engagement Supplement

While Gen X showed the greatest share of members who reported frequent volunteering, Baby Boomers reported substantially more volunteer hours over the prior 12 months compared to other groups. With Baby Boomers aged 53 to 71 at the time of survey, it could be surmised that a substantial share of this group was retired yet still in good health, and therefore had the resources and ability to volunteer more than average. On the other hand, Millennial and Gen X persons, at the time aged 22 to 35 and 36 to 52, respectively, would have been more likely to be in their prime child rearing and/or career building life phases.

**Political Involvement**

Political action in this report refers to voter registration and turnout, contacting elected officials and expressing political opinions, whether to a government body or politician, or just having discussions with friends or family about political or social issues. Engaged citizens who feel they can have a voice on community issues is fundamental to a healthy democracy.

**Voting**

Hawai'i's voting participation has lagged the national trend for some time and appears particularly troubling lately. The state's low turnouts have been attributed to apathy owing to the general dominance of incumbents and the Democratic Party, a sense of isolation from national politics, and even to the culture of inclusion, which, although positive, can make people less comfortable taking positions.

Volunteering and giving is most prevalent in the middle, higher earning years.

Baby Boomers reported 30 to 40% more volunteer hours over the prior 12 months compared to other groups.

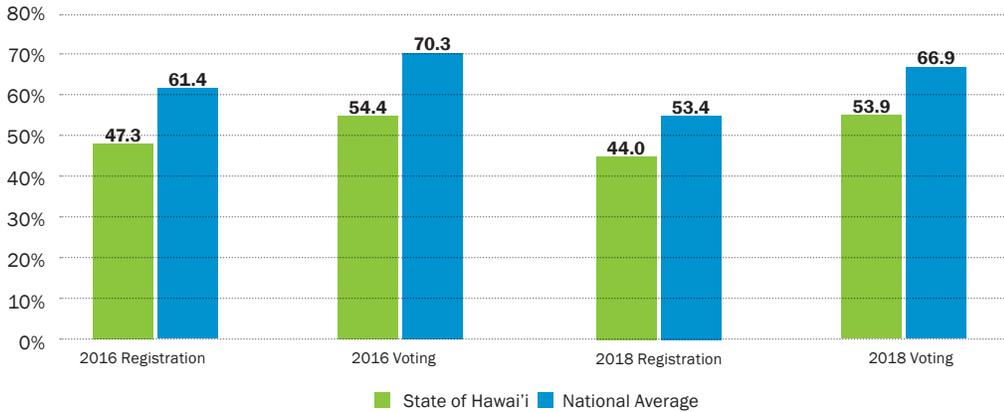
*"If you're a caregiver, that's the priority... If you're a parent, that's the priority."*

- JEANNE, HA'IKŪ, MAUI, BABY BOOMER

*“Since we [company] serve everyone, it’s not good business to take sides. If you are for one candidate that means you are against the other candidates, which is not good business.”*

- RICHARD, HILO, HAWAII, BABY BOOMER

**Table 8. Voting and Registration Rates Compared to National Averages**

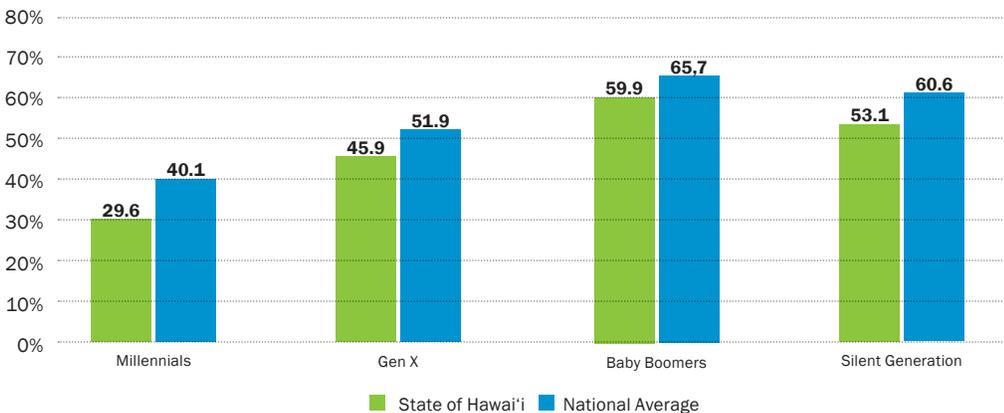


Hawai'i residents were about **20% less likely to vote** than other Americans during the past two election cycles.

Source: U.S. Census, Current Population Survey, November 2016 and November 2018 Voting and Registration Supplements

Examining the data by generation shows substantially more voting interest by Baby Boomers compared to other groups, and a trend of declining participation by younger age groups. The 2016 election would have been the first presidential election for which some of the Millennial generation were eligible to vote. Only 40% of eligible Millennials registered, while only 30% of those registered voted. There was inadequate data to report voting activity for the Long Civic Generation in this year, and detail by generation was not available for the 2018 data.

**Table 9. 2016 Voting and Registration Rates by Generation**



Voting and registration for the November 2016 Election was **highest among Baby Boomers and lowest for Millennials.**

Source: U.S. Census, Current Population Survey, November 2016 Voting and Registration Supplement

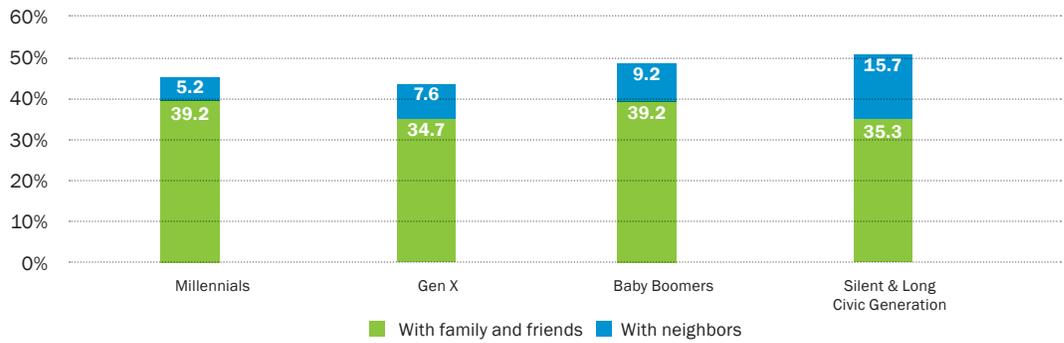
**Other Political Action**

Compared to other Americans, Hawai'i residents are less likely to discuss political, societal, or other local issues with family members, but both groups appear generally reserved with their neighbors.

Hawai'i generations do not exhibit significant differences, but older generations appear more willing to discuss such issues with their neighbors on a frequent basis. This likely reflects their more frequent contacts with neighbors, as noted previously, and possibly a greater social homogeneity to their neighborhoods that comes with longer and more stable homeownership.

**Less than half** frequently discuss political, societal, and local issues with family, friends, and neighbors.

**Table 10. Frequently Discussing Political, Societal, or Local Issues by Generation**

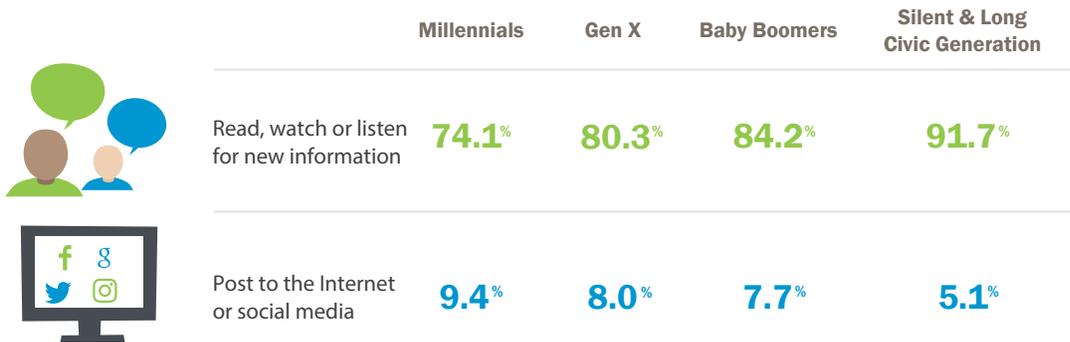


Source: U.S. Census, Current Population Survey, 2017

The possibly low levels of conversation do not mean residents are uninterested in political, societal, or local issues. Hawai'i residents are slightly more likely than the U.S. average to post views about political, societal or local issues, and more likely to read, watch or listen to news for information about such issues.

In Hawai'i, all generation groups appear to be interested in this arena, but the nature of involvement varies. Millennials are more likely than others to post their opinions to the Internet or other social media, while they were somewhat less active in seeking such information by reading, watching or listening to other media. The reliance on these more traditional sources of information is high overall, but understandably most prevalent with older generations.

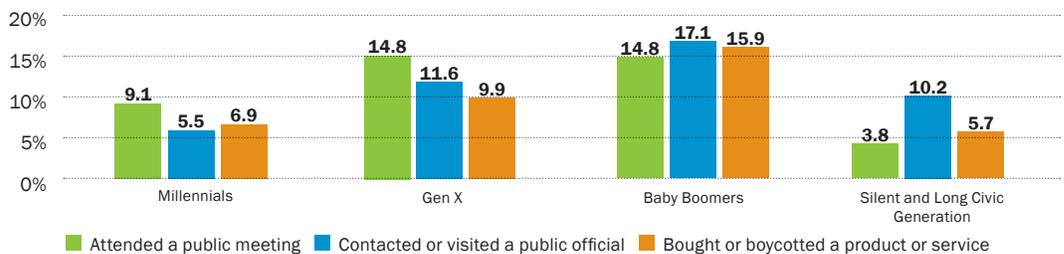
**Graphic 3. Seeking or Sharing Political Information by Generation**



Source: U.S. Census, Current Population Survey, 2017

On the other hand, active demonstration of one's political or civic views by a variety of measures varies significantly by generation. Baby Boomers led all other groups in terms of their likelihood to attend a public meeting, or to contact or visit a public official. Baby Boomers and Gen X were tied in terms of their interest in using consumer activity to express their political or social views.

**Table 11. Hawai'i Political Involvement by Generation**



Source: U.S. Census, Current Population Survey, 2017

It may be assumed that the Silent and Long Civic generations, at 72 years and older at the time of survey, had fewer opportunities to actively engage on these non-electoral civic activities. However, there does also appear to be a trend of younger generations being less comfortable or interested in such public demonstrations expressing personal opinions.



**All groups seek out or share information** on political, societal, or local issues, but the means vary.

**Baby Boomers are most active** in various public expressions of their viewpoints.

## FINDINGS: Home Ownership Factors

Hawai'i home ownership may be an underlying factor in and/or strong indicator for the level of civic engagement. People in households who own their home are much more engaged with their community compared with non-homeowners. Non-homeowners are mostly renters or people who live in a home and do not pay rent (most often adults living with their parents, or elderly living with their children.)<sup>12</sup> In 2017, 42% of occupied housing units were renters.<sup>13</sup>

One other factor that may play into this mix is the recent proliferation of short-term vacation rentals and out-of-state owners. Unfortunately, extensive data to analyze the impact of these visitor accommodations and non-Hawai'i owners on our communities is not currently available.

However, in general, non-homeowners are significantly less likely to “feel connected to the community where they live” and “know and trust their neighbors.”

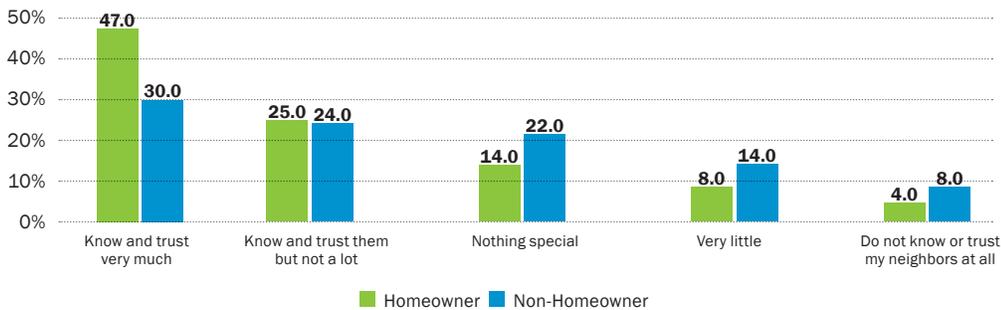
**Graphic 4. How Connected Do Homeowners and Non-Homeowners Feel to Their Community**



In general, **non-homeowners** are significantly less likely to “feel connected to the community where they live” and “know and trust their neighbors.”

Source: SMS Hawai'i Well-Being Study, 2017

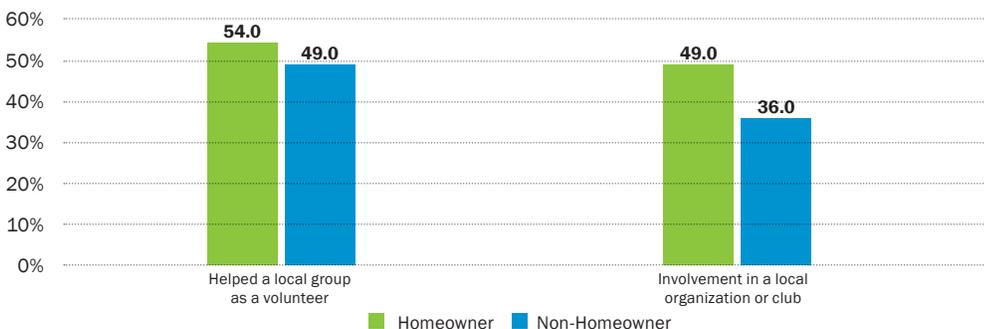
**Table 12. Trust in Neighbors by Home Ownership in Hawai'i**



Source: SMS Hawai'i Well-Being Study, 2017

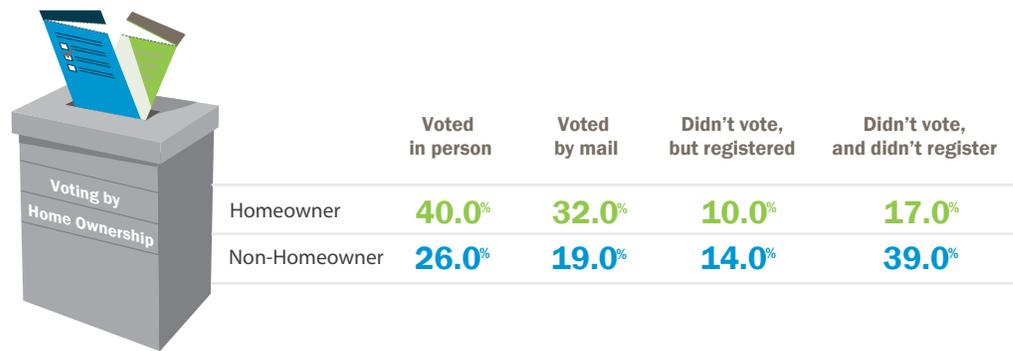
Non-homeowners are also less likely to be involved in community groups, and were significantly less likely to have voted in November 2016.<sup>14</sup>

**Table 13. Involvement in Community Groups by Home Ownership in Hawai'i**



Source: SMS Hawai'i Well-Being Study, 2017

### Graphic 5. Voting Behavior by Home Ownership in Hawai'i

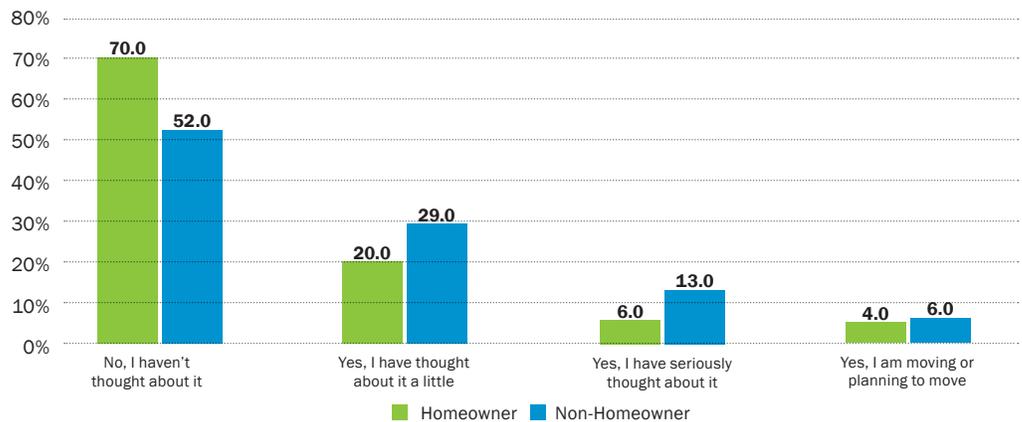


Source: SMS Hawai'i Well-Being Study, 2017

One reason that non-homeowners are less connected with their community may likely be attributed to moving more frequently than homeowners. They are not in a community, street, or place long enough, and likely they are surrounded by other non-homeowners who are also regularly moving. Homeownership provides a level of stability. Early data from the 2019 Housing Study indicates that homeowners spend an average of 20 years in their current home while renters spend an average of six years in their home.

One visible indicator of the level of dissatisfaction that non-homeowners have with their current conditions is the greater likelihood of non-homeowners to think about moving away from Hawai'i. Some of the reasons for this appear to be a combination of job availability that will pay enough to be able to afford a home in Hawai'i, the overall cost of living in Hawai'i, and the weaker connection non-homeowners may have to Hawai'i.

**Table 14. Considered Moving Away from Hawai'i by Home Ownership**



Source: SMS Hawai'i Well-Being Study, 2017



## FINDINGS: *Generational Differences*

On similar indices, the Hawai'i data reveal significant differences by generation, and younger groups stand out with lower rates of participation on many measures. We examined those generational differences more deeply with insights from additional sources, including a 2017 survey conducted by SMS<sup>15</sup>, and a 2016 nationwide survey of Millennials (EIG 2016).<sup>16</sup>

### Stressors for Younger Generations

Factors influencing rates of community or civic participation for Millennials and also Gen X members include:

- **Lower earnings:** Millennials are by definition at earlier, therefore generally lower earning life phases, but prevalence of poor economic conditions early in their careers may have also exerted long-term disadvantages. According to EIG 2016, at ages 18 to 33, U.S. Gen X households averaged \$63,400 in income, but more recently for Millennials, it was only \$61,000 at the same age group. Nationwide, 21% of Millennials stated they believed their standard of living would be worse than that of their parents, while only 38% believed it would be better.
- **Lower education and job skills:** While Millennials are more educated than prior generations at their age level, people accumulate more education and skills over time, and these lead to more income as well as potentially more satisfying avenues to volunteering. Education itself is correlated with higher community and civic participation.
- **Higher debt:** According to EIG 2016, two-thirds of Millennials and 81% of college-educated Millennials nationwide reported at least one source of long-term debt outstanding. The study reported that while the net wealth of Millennials (households under age 35) in 2011 was about \$6,700, their median debt was \$45,300. While only 30% of students took out loans to finance their education in the mid-1990s, half borrowed in the 2013-2014 school year. Between 2004 and 2014, there was an 89% increase in the number of student borrowers, as well as a 77% increase in their average balance. A significant majority of Millennials are worried about their ability to repay their student loans, and 43% believe their student debt has limited their career options.
- **Higher housing costs:** The median priced single-family home on O'ahu sold for \$800,000 in June 2019, and the median priced condominium for \$432,500. In April, median single-family home prices in other counties ranged from \$355,000 to \$819,500 (Hawai'i and Maui counties, respectively), and condominium prices from \$418,500 to \$627,500 (Hawai'i and Maui counties, respectively). Even for those lucky enough to have sufficient income to support the related mortgage, saving for a down payment is a daunting task for first time homebuyers who don't already have equity in the local marketplace.

Rentals are no easier: A 2019 study found that a full-time Hawai'i worker would need to earn \$36.82 per hour to afford the \$1,914 monthly fair market rent on a two-bedroom home.<sup>17</sup> This was the highest wage required nationwide, and compares to Hawai'i's minimum wage of \$10.10 per hour and the average wage for renter households of \$16.68 per hour.

*"Affordability of living in Hawai'i is a pretty big factor for my generation... All of them, the main priority is to provide for family."*

-JACOB, PĀLOLO, O'AHU, MILLENNIAL



*“Things would be easier if I worked in the community where I lived... my brain wouldn’t be as stretched.”*

-MAHEA, KAILUA, O’AHU GEN X.



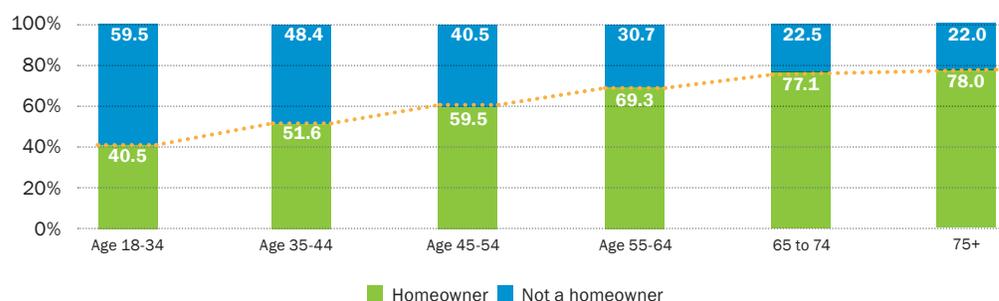
**Home ownership**  
in Hawai’i increases  
with age.

- **Longer commutes:** In Hawai’i as elsewhere, a common means of addressing high housing costs is to move to areas located farther from the urban core and/or centers of employment. On O’ahu, this has driven rapid population growth in the west, even though most jobs remain in central or east Honolulu. Following this trend, O’ahu recorded a 63% increase in “super commuters” (those who travel 90 minutes or more to get to work) to almost 17,000 persons between 2010 and 2015, the highest rate of increase in the nation. Although it is not clear how much is due to bad traffic or to the earlier start times for work and school, workers on O’ahu left home earlier than the U.S. average workers to get to work. 46% of workers on O’ahu left home before 7am compared to the U.S. average of 31%.<sup>18</sup>

The pattern varied a lot by area however. Thus, a corollary of high housing costs is more family or personal time lost to commuting; this is compounded for those who may have dependents also requiring transportation to or from school and other activities.

- **Lower Home Ownership:** Homeownership is the exception for Millennials and remains relatively low even for Gen X, particularly in Hawai’i, where a 20% down payment on the median priced condominium or single-family home on O’ahu would now be about \$80,000 or \$160,000, respectively. This compares to \$56,000 for a single-family home nationwide. Homeownership is a leading indicator of community connection since owners have financial and other commitments to a location, while renters are more mobile.

**Table 15. Hawai’i Home Ownership by Age**



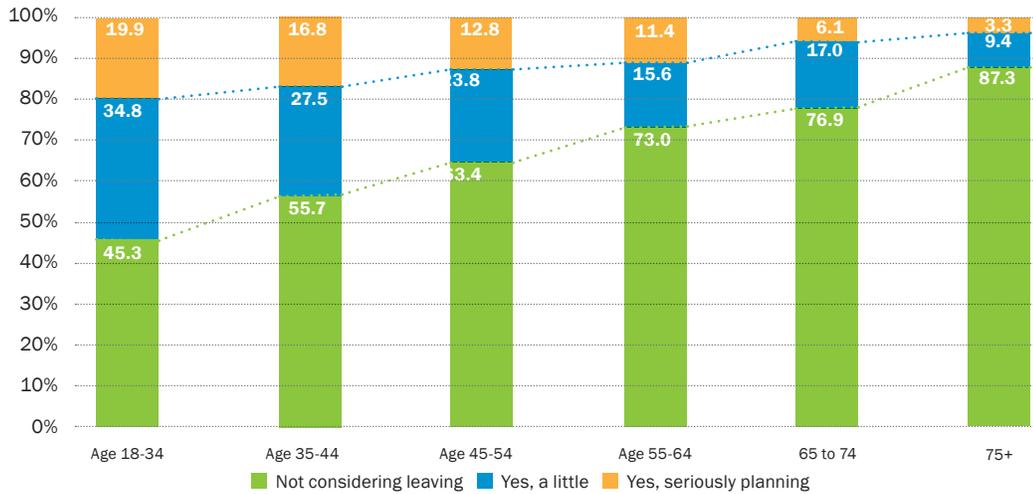
Source: SMS Hawai’i Well-Being Study, 2017

- **Resulting emphasis on family:** In Hawai’i, the combined challenges of financial and time stresses tend to affect younger households and those with dependents disproportionately. Several of the younger household heads interviewed reported a need to focus almost exclusively on their own family’s well-being, with little additional resources available to devote to possible community or civic interests. Even so, many household members still feel they spend inadequate time with their families.
- **Larger Household Sizes:** Related to the cost of housing and lower incomes, an estimated 42.0% of Hawai’i Millennials live in households of four or more persons, compared to 28.0% of the general population, and many continue to live with their parents or extended family even after finding full-time employment or establishing their own families.<sup>19</sup> The 2017 SMS survey found that while larger household sizes may promote daily family or friend connections, they tend to be associated with lower engagement scores.

## Leaving Hawai'i

Many of the above characteristics are also common to those who are considering moving away from Hawai'i. The 2017 SMS survey found that 86% of respondents had not thought at all, or only thought a little bit about moving out of state in the previous 12 months, but interest in leaving the state is dramatically greater the younger the respondent.

**Table 16. Hawai'i Residents Considering Leaving Hawai'i by Age**



Younger residents are more likely to consider leaving Hawai'i.

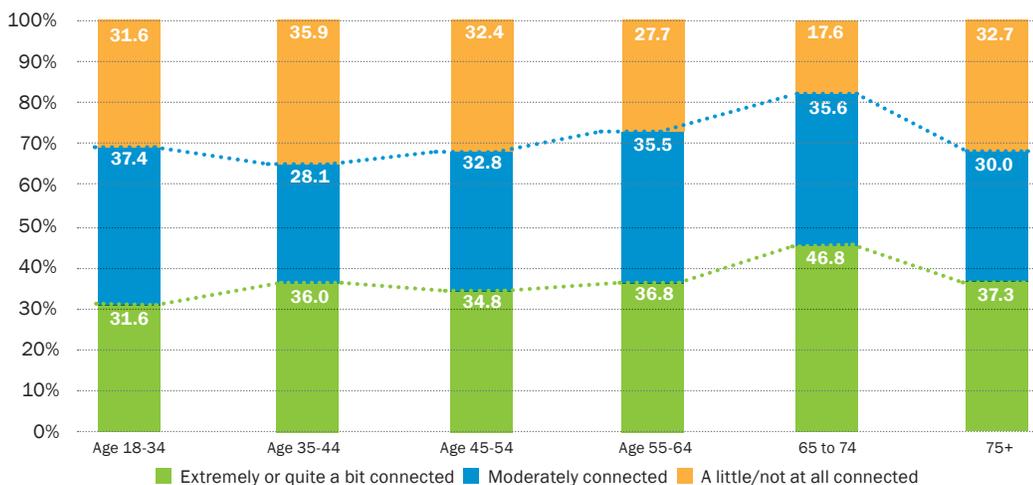
Source: SMS Hawai'i Well-Being Study, 2017

The 2017 SMS survey is consistent with recent U.S. Census findings that Hawai'i's population declined in 2017 and 2018, with some 13,000 residents leaving O'ahu alone between July 1, 2017 and July 1, 2018. Over a longer, 8-year period (April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2018) the State's population grew by some 60,000 persons overall, but that may be attributed to natural increase, or the excess of local births over deaths. When migration is considered, some 55,600 persons left Hawai'i for other U.S. locations over the period, a number that is barely offset by the net positive international migration of about 55,000 persons.<sup>20</sup>

## Community Connections

In 2017, the SMS survey also asked respondents how connected they felt to their (physical) community. This did not yield a clear trend by age, but Millennials were least likely to say they felt extremely or quite a bit connected, and Gen X members were most likely to say they felt only a little or not at all connected to their community. While connectivity measures tended to increase by age between age 35 and 74, after age 75, the sense of disconnect from the community reappears.

**Table 17. Hawai'i Residents' Sense of Community Connection by Age**



The sense of community varies by generation.

Source: SMS Hawai'i Well-Being Study, 2017

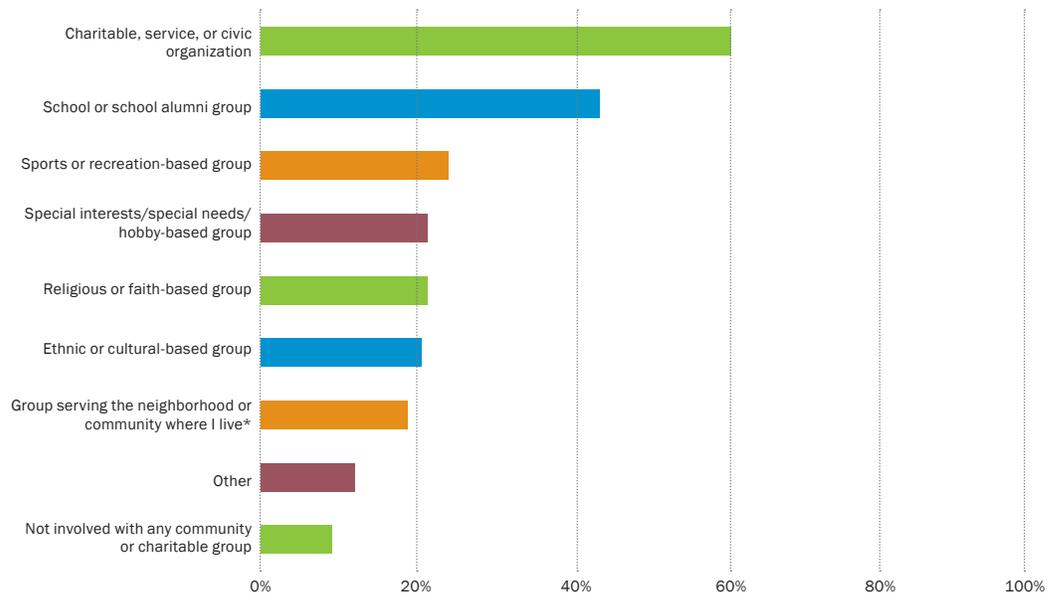
## IDENTIFYING BARRIERS: *A Call for Civic Action*

Hawai'i's recent voting record alone, one of the most common measures of civic engagement, poses a call for action. This troubling trend, taken together with other contexts described above, provide a framework for considering the overall findings and conclusions of this report. While the CPS data suggests Hawai'i's CHI scores are similar to national averages overall, rates of political engagement are generally low, and there appear to be declining rates of engagement with younger age groups, and less engagement among non-homeowners (who are more often younger as well).

Hawai'i's results seem to demonstrate that healthy family and community ties do not necessarily lead to more civic engagement. But the closeness of a community, especially an island community and particularly one as diverse as Hawai'i's, can also lead to a reluctance to speak out.

To provide further insights, HCF conducted an online survey that reached over 450 Hawai'i residents aged 18 and over between July 3 and August 23, 2019 and PBR conducted several in-depth interviews with representatives of various demographics. Neither source is considered a scientific sample and it should be noted that the respondents may be biased as only 8% of respondents indicated they were not involved with any community or charitable group and only 9% indicated they did not vote in either the 2016 or the 2018 elections which does not match the voting rate for Hawai'i's population as a whole. However, these respondents provide further insights to the "whys" of the statistical observations, and many suggested solutions to our community engagement challenges.

**Table 18. Hawai'i Residents Involvement with Groups through Participation and Charitable Giving**



\* Not including Home Owners' (HOA), Apartment Owners' (AOAO), or other groups associated with the property you live in or own.

Source: HCF Online Survey via PBR, 2019

The next section summarizes the reported barriers to participation, and sets forth ideas to break through some of those barriers. Where percentages are cited in this section, they are based on outcomes of the 2019 online survey unless otherwise noted.

## What Makes Involvement Difficult?

Competing demands for time are significant barriers to increasing participation, particularly for those in the labor force or family life phases.

- **Job Demands:** Not having enough time due to long working hours or multiple jobholding was the top impediment cited for not being able to be as involved in community or charitable groups as the respondent wished, cited by 51.4% of respondents overall, but by 55.2% to 66.7% of all respondents aged 54 or less. Among 18 to 24 year olds (Gen Z), 66.7% cited this reason, representing more than twice as many as Gen Z respondents who cited the demands of schoolwork or studying (26.7%).
- **Family Obligations:** Caring for children, parents, or other family members was the second most frequently cited obstacle, at 34.0% overall. This average finding is primarily due to its significance for those 35 to 44 years old (54.8% cited) and for those 45 to 54 years old (43.2%). Conversely, only 20.0% of Gen Z respondents cited this reason.
- “I’m already as involved as I care to be” (at 22.8%) and “Can’t afford to donate any more (or at all)” (at 22.1%) were the next circumstances most often cited as discouraging respondents from being as involved with community or charitable groups as they wished.

Additional factors that have been noted to discourage participation include:

- Long commute to work;
- Haven’t found a cause or group that motivates;
- Personal health or living space constraints;
- Don’t feel welcome or don’t feel have anything of value to contribute;
- Discomfort with observed means of community and civic participation;
- Lack of information regarding how to contribute; and
- A sense of being overwhelmed in terms of community needs.

*“There’s so much out there, it’s hard to pick where to give your time and money to. So, a lot of people just give a little here and there. They find it hard to focus on one or two causes where they could make a difference... There’s a saturation of need. The needs of the community are so great.”*

**-JACOB, PĀLOLO, O’AHU MILLENNIAL**



## FINDING SOLUTIONS

Through interviews and surveys, key challenges were identified, and possible remedies were proposed to help break through these barriers to engagement. Following are more context and specific ideas for these general solutions:

- Bridge generations
- Promote youth participation and cultivate leadership
- Embrace technology
- Bridge length of residence divides
- Address renter challenge
- Change the forum
- Promote voting
- Address the stress

### Breaking Barriers: *Bridge Generations*

Millennials are very aware of the time and financial challenges they face. But in Hawai'i as elsewhere, young people have found creative ways of supporting relationships they care about, such as communicating with friends and ranking services via social media, or developing "sharing economy" solutions to conserving and stretching resources.

Towards the older end of the generation spectrum, Baby Boomers are quite active in volunteerism and in-person group participation, but are often also pressed for time, and seniors may find it difficult to maintain physically demanding levels of participation. And like Millennials, the Silent or Long Civic generation members may be more aware of their limited financial resources.

Sponsorship or promotion of programs to support inter-generational mentoring might help to promote transfer of differing skill sets and resources between generations, for overall community benefit. Where some youth may now feel unneeded or uncomfortable with established means of community engagement, they could be empowered as mentors in technology or other special skills to older cohorts. For example, if Millennials can help seniors extend their community connections and engagement via electronic media, it could maintain a larger volunteer base while also helping to keep seniors more engaged, healthy and independent.

Experienced Baby Boomers and Silent Generation members could serve as coaches to Millennials and upcoming Gen Z members with respect to community organization, board governance, Hawaiian traditional and cultural practices, the value and rewards of community engagement, and how to select causes that are meaningful and make good use of one's individual skills and other resources.

*"While I know people my age with great skills, there is little chance to get on 'important' boards unless you know someone."*

-ONLINE SURVEY RESPONDENT, GEN X



## Breaking Barriers: Promote Youth Participation and Cultivate Leadership

Other initiatives might be particularly aimed at boosting interest in and access to community and civic engagement for younger persons. Efforts might include:

- Refresh the teaching of civics in classrooms – to ensure understanding of the fundamentals and functioning of U.S. government, and the health and wellness benefits of an engaged citizenry.
- Promote and enhance councils for young civic leaders such as the annual Youth & Government Program<sup>21</sup>, that mirror the functioning of governing bodies or not-for-profit boards. Such bodies could have real reporting opportunities, such as providing briefings or suggestions to county councils or legislative bodies. In the online survey, this approach was endorsed by 22% of respondents overall, but did not attract much attention by the youngest respondents.
- Support the establishment of more young-leader divisions of established service and civic organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce and many trade industry groups have already done.
- The CPS data suggest that Millennials are in the habit of doing favors for neighbors. Find means of extending this generosity such as via programs in the schools and workplaces to establish and reward habits of volunteerism, or offering counseling on leadership styles and how to identify and address areas of need.
- Support and advocate for social and emotional learning (SEL) programs for all students to build needed skills and competencies for college, career and community readiness and success. SEL has been shown to lead to more positive social behaviors and peer relationships, to reduce conduct problems, to reduce emotional distress - including depression, anxiety, stress, and social withdrawal – and to improved academic achievement.<sup>22</sup> These skills also encourage community participation (see story box).

*“My nephew just took an online civics class that he says satisfies his high school requirement for a 16-week ‘Participation in Democracy’ class. He completed it in 3 hours. What’s up with that?”*

**-MIKI, MĀNOA, O’AHU, BABY BOOMER**



# BUILD SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS EARLY

Mariah Flynn, Education Program Coordinator for the Greater Good Science Center, discusses in an article for the Greater Good Magazine “Can Social-Emotional Skills Strengthen Democracy?” She cites a 2017 study by John B. Holbein at Brigham Young University that points to the positive impact social and emotional health has on individuals’ political participation in the future.

Holbein reviewed a 20-year-old program called Fast Track which was one of the earliest programs that included teaching students social and emotional learning (SEL) skills like self-awareness and management. Compared to the control group, Fast Track students showed positive changes in SEL skills like empathy and self-efficacy. Even 20 years later, participants demonstrated their higher gains.

Holbein then matched these participants with state voting records and found that those who participated in Fast Track as children were also significantly more likely to vote as adults, by as much as 14%.

After considering a number of potential benefits of the program that could have influenced this outcome, his models suggested that it was the “improvement of psychological and social abilities that had the greatest impact.”

As Flynn states, “Why would that be the case? Those who are able to put themselves ‘in someone else’s shoes’ may be more motivated to mobilize and vote on behalf of others. The ability to self-regulate emotions and behaviors—and display grit or perseverance—may come in handy in the stress of waiting in a three-hour-long line at the polls. In addition, developing these SEL skills can reduce the likelihood of negative life events (like teenage pregnancy or criminal activity), and those who experience events like these are much less likely to vote.

There are many reasons for educators to teach social-emotional skills—and we now might be able to add a healthy democracy to that list.”

Source: [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/can\\_social\\_emotional\\_skills\\_strengthen\\_democracy](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/can_social_emotional_skills_strengthen_democracy)

## Breaking Barriers: *Embrace Technology*

That “community” need not be place-based is as real for Silent Generation members who rely on Facebook to keep up with their grandchildren and great grandchildren living 3,000 miles away, as it is for Millennials and Gen X’ers who keep in touch with friends via social media systems. Consideration of “civic health” should accept technology-based communities and consider in what ways they provide resilience, health and wellness benefits that are comparable to, or superior to, place-based communities, and in what ways their shortcomings might be mitigated.

For instance, recent anecdotal discussion of a Maui-based young leaders (ages 25 to 40) group reported its Millennials were more inspired to provide monetary donations via targeted giving opportunities available to them via social media and other systems over traditional channels such as United Way or established nonprofits. How can such inspiration be encouraged, yet ensured to be going to causes that have been validated and efforts that can be expected to be effective?

It may be worthwhile to compile best practices information on how to cultivate large online responses into longer lasting or more broadly applicable initiatives such as the Ellers proposed (see story box). Conversely, more discussion on when it is not appropriate to amplify local or place-based nonprofits or other community initiatives with the power of digital, online resources would likely be worthwhile.



## FORMING ONLINE COMMUNITIES

Online “communities” can be formed around a single issue almost instantly but can also dissolve quickly. For example, the May 2019 search and rescue effort for hiker Amanda Eller in the Makawao Forest Reserve on Maui reportedly raised \$77,000 via a GoFundMe page within a few days of the local fire department suspending its search. This enabled her friends to extend search efforts and also to develop some enabling technologies. Ms. Eller was found before all funds were expended and her family reported that surplus funds could be used for related new initiatives including developing an app (application software) to help with search and rescue efforts, installation of cameras in forest reserves and other initiatives.

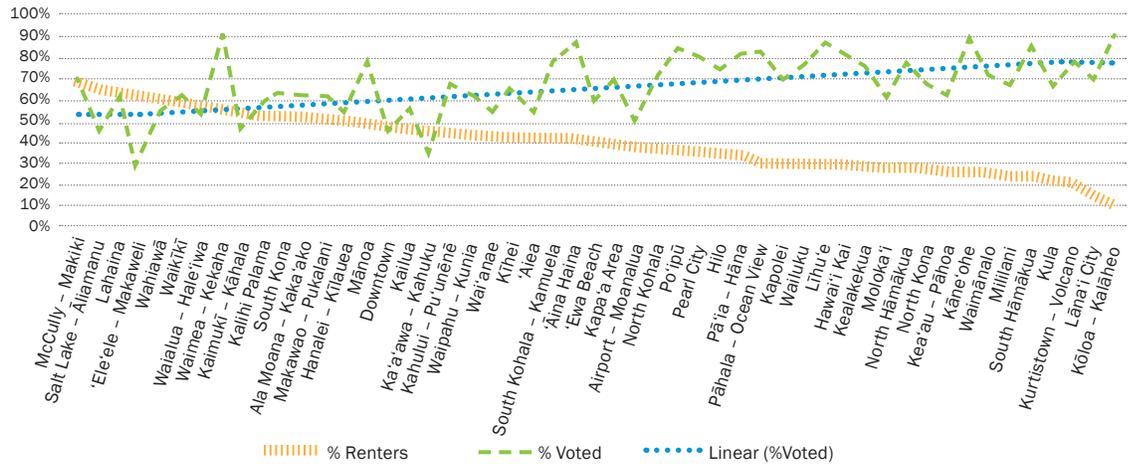
## Breaking Barriers: *Bridge Length of Residence Divides*

Hawai’i’s deeply knit “island born” community can also be intimidating to newcomers, or exacerbate their differences. The same can be said for renters who move into communities of multi-generation homeowners who all appear to know one another. Support for projects or community efforts specifically designed to promote interaction of newcomers and long-time residents may be effective in breaking through such barriers. Such projects could range from initial ice breakers (e.g., give your neighbor a flower or lei day, or recognize “National Good Neighbor Day”)<sup>23</sup>, to long-term collaborative projects designed to combine the differing skills and resources of long-term and new comers to any community.

## Breaking Barriers: Address Renter Challenge

There is a significant difference in the level of community engagement for those who own their homes and are fairly stable and those who may be more transient and rent their homes. While self-reported voting rates are often overstated, there appears to be a relationship between the percent of renters in a community and the percent who vote in that community as reported by respondents.

**Table 19. Relationship Between Percentage of Renters and Percentage of Voters by Community**



Source: SMS Hawai'i Well-Being Study, 2017

Targeted community building activities in areas with a high percentage of renters may help to reduce this divide. It may be possible to build engagement via school and alumni groups as these are also the most likely areas of engagement.

## Breaking Barriers: Change the Forum

Many people view traditional means of capturing public input such as attending a public meeting, testifying at a government hearing, or writing a letter to the newspaper to be intimidating or not a satisfying use of their time. There's a "big group dynamic" to public meeting and hearing environments that often feature some authority figure and audience that appear to be judgmental. As one interviewee said, "...you've got to be so passionate about something to overcome that fear or intimidation, usually leaving the ones who do speak out being those that are very concerned..." On top of that, the typical forum does not offer real civic engagement since most meetings limit testifiers to a few minutes and offer no opportunity for meaningful, productive discourse.

# CHANGING THE FORUM

A 2003 community engagement and visioning process in Maui County known as Focus Maui Nui was organized by the Maui Economic Development Board (MEDB) in collaboration with Fern Tiger Associates. Focus Maui Nui was the prelude to the update of the Maui County General Plan. It attracted support from the Maui County Planning Department and numerous private foundations made a concerted effort to design its outreach for maximum participation of its residents. Over a 3-1/2-month period, Focus Maui Nui conducted 167 sessions, reaching some 1,700 residents across all three islands of the County. It achieved broad demographic representation by age, ethnicity, place of residence, length of residence, and occupation. Significantly, the strategies of the process enabled those who did not typically attend or testify at public meetings or hearings to participate. The groups were generally kept to no more than 15 participants for each 90-minute interactive session. The sessions were offered at all times of the day, any day of the week, wherever the "hosts" felt was most convenient for them and the group they gathered - including offices, churches, homes, classrooms, community centers as well as on beaches, in garages, and porches. According to the former President & CEO of MEDB, this format "... is expensive. It's an investment, but it's as costly or more costly to a project or an issue to not reach out broadly in a meaningful way."

## Breaking Barriers: Promote Voting

Some of those interviewed for this study in 2019 were dissatisfied at where the country was headed and if they hadn't voted in the last election, intended to in the next. While the online survey was strongly biased to those who had voted in one or both of the last two elections (91%), among those who did not vote in one or both elections, the most common reason by far was that the candidates were not inspiring (27%).

13% did not vote because they do not like politics (18% of voters 25 to 34 years of age cited this reason) and 13% don't think their vote makes a difference (40% of voters 45 to 54 years of age cited this reason). Forgetting to register (18%) or to vote (10%) were also significant factors.

Many ideas for removing the barriers to voting were suggested through the online survey including these:

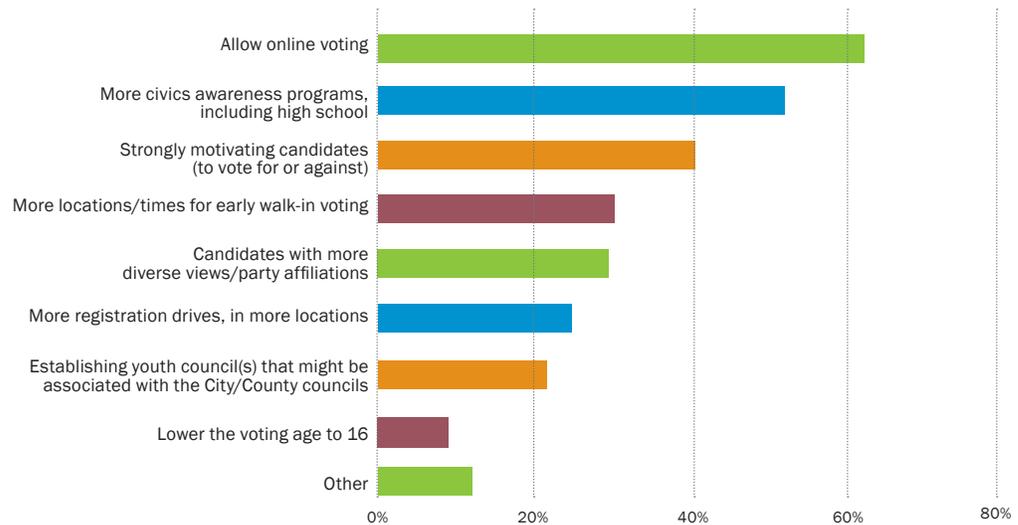
- Develop a central, web-based site to generate interest and provide easily accessible, unbiased information including summaries of candidates and their views.
- For younger residents, provide programs that promote excitement and understanding about the significance of registering to vote and voting. These might target popular social media platforms that feature relatable peers, celebrities, thought leaders or other influencers.
- Develop programs targeted to Native Hawaiian communities and/or communities that may be distrustful of government and the elections process.
- Support online voting – in the online survey, this was the most agreed-upon solution to encouraging more voting in Hawai'i ("by you or your peers"), chosen by 62% of all respondents. Not surprisingly, the youngest respondents were the most supportive of this option (80% of those 18 to 24 years of age and 74% of those 25 to 34 years of age) but all age groups expressed support. Only those over 75 years of age, at 47%, did not have at least half of respondents in support of online voting.
- Support and promote online voter registration and the ability to update registration information.
- Providing more civic awareness programs, including but not necessarily limited to high school programs, was the second most popular means of encouraging voter turnout in the online survey, with 51% supporting. This was strongly endorsed by nearly all generations, including the youngest.
- Having strongly motivating candidates (to vote for or against) (40%) and providing more locations and times for early walk-in voting (31%) were the next two most popular ideas suggested by online survey respondents. Expanding times should also consider weekend and evening schedules.
- Lowering the voting age to 16, was suggested by only 8% of total respondents to the online survey, but was suggested by 27% of Gen Z respondents. This could allow registration drives to locate at high schools.

*"Many people before me made big sacrifices to give me this privilege, so I should use it to express my beliefs ... And if I want to see change in this country, then I need to start by voting, in order to have some justification for articulating the change I hope to see and participate in."*

-NICOLE, EAST O'AHU, MILLENNIAL



**Table 20. Factors That Would Encourage Voting as Specified by Hawai'i Residents**



Source: HCF Online Survey via PBR, 2019

### Breaking Barriers: Address the Stress

Finally, since some of the biggest barriers to community and civic participation are the unavailability of time or financial resources beyond providing for one's own family, the success of ongoing local and national efforts to support the general affordability and quality of life for typical households are critical for civic health.

One bright light addresses the growing need to provide care for older family members who are no longer independent. A recent study suggested that Hawai'i is one of the nation's leaders in implementing and supporting family caregiver programs, with specific mention of the Kupuna Caregivers Program initiated by the state in 2017. The program provides financial support for people who care for elderly family members while remaining in the workplace.<sup>24</sup> Private and public interests could also continue to lobby for and amplify efforts to provide:

- More quality, affordable housing near to jobs;
- More quality, affordable childcare and preschool near to families and parents;
- More affordable educational options and better means of financing and/or refinancing higher education; and
- More opportunities for affordable living, working, playing and learning within each community, or even within an area that can be accessed on foot.



## CONCLUSION

We envision a Hawai'i where our citizens regularly and actively participate in and collaborate on community issues, rebuilding a sense of 'ohana and aloha, and finding community solutions to ensure Hawai'i's societal health and well-being. Our community has already identified **many possible solutions** to current barriers to engagement. These include:

- Refresh the teaching of civics in classrooms
- Support and advocate for social and emotional learning programs for students and adults
- Promote and enhance councils for young civic leaders
- Support the establishment of more young-leader divisions of established service and civic organizations
- Sponsor or promote programs to support inter-generational mentoring, training and coaching (e.g. leadership development, technology use, organizational structure and governance, etc.)
- Find means, such as via programs in the schools and workplaces, to establish and reward habits of volunteerism
- Form and support online communities
- Compile best practices information on how to cultivate large online responses into longer lasting or more broadly applicable initiatives
- Change the forum for public input to be more inclusive
- Support projects or community efforts specifically designed to promote interaction of newcomers and long-time residents (from initial ice breakers to long-term collaborative projects)
- Provide more quality, affordable housing near to jobs
- Target community building activities in areas with a high percentage of renters to help connect with long-term residents
- Provide more quality, affordable childcare and preschool near to families and parents

### Improve voting participation rates by:

- ▶ Developing a central, web-based site to generate interest and provide easily accessible, unbiased information including summaries of candidates and their views
- ▶ Providing programs that promote excitement and understanding about the significance of registering to vote and voting
- ▶ Supporting online voting
- ▶ Supporting and promoting online voter registration and the ability to update registration information
- ▶ Providing more civic awareness programs including, but not necessarily limited to, high school programs
- ▶ Recruiting strongly motivating candidates (to vote for or against)
- ▶ Providing more locations and times for early walk-in voting including weekend and evening schedules



This is not an exhaustive list but certainly points us to possible ways forward. We hope to engage, energize and empower Hawai'i's citizens to strengthen Hawai'i's communities and improve Hawai'i's institutions for a healthier society for all. We believe that every person deserves an opportunity to live a thriving life. Guided by our **CHANGE** framework, we hope to forge pathways to success to provide equitable benefit to Hawai'i's people and communities.

Hawai'i needs compassionate and ethical leaders; informed, empowered and active citizens; resilient and adaptive organizations; and an accountable and transparent government. By promoting increased engagement of our citizens in our community health, by providing opportunities to participate, by removing barriers to action, and by increasing awareness of the importance of our civic health, we can all work together towards a healthy society with a sense of 'ohana, trust, and spirit of aloha.

We hope this report becomes a tool for policy discussions, a catalyst for community conversations and actions, and a reason for renewed social connection. By highlighting the practices that define civic health, and the choice we all have to improve our well-being, we hope to engage Hawai'i's citizens in an effort to "live aloha" through **CHANGE**.



## TECHNICAL NOTE

Unless otherwise noted, 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 own. Volunteering and Civic Engagement estimates are from CPS September Volunteering/Civic Engagement Supplement from 2017 and voting estimates from 2016 and 2018 November Voting and Registration Supplement.

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 Hawai'i CPS sample size used for this report ranges from 215-747 (volunteering/civic engagement supplement) and to 1,477 (voting supplement) residents from across Hawai'i. This sample is then weighted to representative population demographics for the district. Estimates for the volunteering and civic engagement indicators (e.g., volunteering, working with neighbors, making donations) are based on U.S. residents ages 16 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 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 Hawai'i 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 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

- <sup>1</sup> Based on statewide general elections from 1959 – 2018 at <https://elections.hawaii.gov/resources/registration-voter-turnout-statistics/>.
- <sup>2</sup> From America Goes to the Polls 2016 <https://www.nonprofitvote.org/documents/2017/03/america-goes-polls-2016.pdf/>.
- <sup>3</sup> Hawaiian words often have multiple meanings. Generally, 'ohana is defined as family, relative, or kin group. Aloha has many meanings including love, affection, compassion, mercy, sympathy, pity, kindness, sentiment, grace, or charity, but also a greeting or salutation, and can reference a sweetheart or loved one. It is more fully explained as the "Aloha Spirit" law – Hawai'i Revised Statute (HRS) §5-7.5.
- <sup>4</sup> The CPS supplements utilized include the Voting and Registration Supplement, the Civic Engagement Supplement and the Volunteering Supplement.



<sup>5</sup> Two timeframes of the CPS were available for this study effort: 2014 and 2017. The 2014 dataset uses pooled data, based on survey information collected between 2010 and 2013 for the Civic Engagement Supplement, and between 2011 and 2014 for the Volunteering Supplement. The 2017 is based on single-year data collected for 2016 or 2017. Both datasets report at the statewide level in order to generate sufficient sample sizes, with various demographic breakouts provided.

<sup>6</sup> In Hawai'i, "Neighbor Islands" refers to Kaua'i, Ni'ihau, Maui, Moloka'i, Lāna'i and the Island of Hawai'i – representing all populated islands except O'ahu. The Neighbor Islands include more rural areas than does O'ahu; in 2018 their combined resident populations were estimated at 440,000, compared to O'ahu's at 980,000. U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, June 2019.

<sup>7</sup> State of Hawai'i, Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism, Research and Economic Analysis Division, "Demographic, Social, Economic, and Housing Characteristics for Selected Race Groups in Hawai'i," March 2018. (Data obtained from U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.)

<sup>8</sup> i.e., see Story Studio, "Here's why community involvement helps you live a healthier, happier life." June 4, 2019 (sponsored by the Well Being Trust). <https://blog.sfgate.com/storystudio/2019/06/04/heres-why-community-involvement-helps-you-live-a-healthier-happier-life/>

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Housing and Urban Development, as published by State of Hawai'i, Housing Finance & Development Corporation, 2017.

<sup>10</sup> Hawai'i Civic Health Indicator Rankings based on CPS 2013 data.

<sup>11</sup> Hawai'i Civic Health Indicator Rankings based on CPS 2013 data.

<sup>12</sup> SMS Hawai'i Well Being Study 2017.

<sup>13</sup> American Community Survey, 2017 Housing Characteristics.

<sup>14</sup> SMS Hawai'i Well Being Study 2017.

<sup>15</sup> SMS Consulting, LLC, "Community Well-Being Survey", 2017 (for Hawai'i Community Foundation). The 2017 SMS survey organized respondents by broad age groups; those are grouped in this presentation to roughly correlate to the generation classifications of the CPS data.

<sup>16</sup> Economic Innovation Group and EY, "The Millennial Economy: National Public Opinion Survey," September 2016. Online and cell phone survey of 1,200 persons aged 18 to 34 conducted between June 15 and 20, 2016. Estimated margin of error: 2.83%.

<sup>17</sup> National Low Income Housing Coalition, "Out of Reach," 2019, in Star-Advertiser, "Hawai'i has highest gap between wages, rent required for a 2-bedroom," July 7, 2019. The study assumed a full-time worker (40 hours per week, 52 weeks per year) should pay no more than 30% of his or her gross earnings. The hourly wage required to afford fair market rent for a 2-bedroom unit ranged from \$25.88 in Hawai'i County, to \$39.75 in the Urban Honolulu Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). These figures compare to a reported national wage requirement of \$22.96 per hour.

<sup>18</sup> Statistics Brief, April 2015, Research and Economics Analysis Division, Hawai'i State Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism.

<sup>19</sup> The EIG/EY survey, *Ibid*, reported that nationwide, 30% of persons aged 18 to 34 lived with their parents; among those who were still single, the figure was 40%.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, December 2018, "Table 4. Cumulative Estimates of the Components of Resident Population Change for the United States, Regions, States, and Puerto Rico: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2018 (NST-EST2018-04)."

<sup>21</sup> The Hawai'i State Legislature holds a Youth & Government Program every year. See <https://www.ymcahonolulu.org/youth-and-government>

<sup>22</sup> A number of studies are cited at <https://casel.org/impact/>

<sup>23</sup> Giving a lei was featured on the news story at <https://www.khon2.com/news/local-news/kupuna-life/finding-joy-in-making-giving-away-pua-kenikeni-lei/1957941242>; National Good Neighbor Day ideas can be found at <https://nationaldaycalendar.com/national-good-neighbor-day-september-28/>

<sup>24</sup> To learn more, go to <https://health.hawaii.gov/eoa/> or to <https://www.hawaiiadrc.org/> or to [https://hawaiiadrc.org/Portals/\\_AgencySite/KCG%20Info%20sheet%20071117\\_FINAL.pdf](https://hawaiiadrc.org/Portals/_AgencySite/KCG%20Info%20sheet%20071117_FINAL.pdf).

# 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, the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act directed NCoC 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

Georgia Family Connection Partnership  
Georgia Municipal Association

#### Hawai'i

Hawai'i Community Foundation

#### Illinois

McCormick Foundation

#### Indiana

Indiana University Center on Representative Government  
Indiana Bar Foundation  
Indiana Citizen Education Foundation, Inc.  
Indiana Supreme Court  
Indiana University Northwest  
IUPUI  
IU Center for Civic Literacy  
O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs

#### 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

#### 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

### **Greater 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 News

### **Chicago**

McCormick Foundation

### **Kansas City & Saint Louis**

Missouri State University  
Park University  
Washington University

### **Miami**

Florida Joint Center for Citizenship  
John S. and James L. Knight Foundation  
Miami Foundation

### **Pittsburgh**

University of Pittsburgh  
Carnegie Mellon University

### **Seattle**

Seattle City Club

### **Twin Cities**

Center for Democracy and Citizenship  
Citizens League  
John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

## CIVIC HEALTH ADVISORY GROUP

---

### **John Bridgeland**

CEO, Civic Enterprises  
Chairman, Board of Advisors, National  
Conference on Citizenship  
Former Assistant to the President of the  
United States & Director, Domestic Policy  
Council & US Freedom Corps

### **Kristen Cambell**

Executive Director, PACE

### **Jeff Coates**

Research and Evaluation Director,  
National Conference on Citizenship

### **Lattie Coor**

Chairman & CEO, Center for the Future of  
Arizona

### **Nathan Dietz**

Senior Research Associate, The Urban  
Institute

### **Doug Dobson**

Executive Director, Florida Joint Center for  
Citizenship

### **Jennifer Domagal-Goldman**

National Manager, American Democracy  
Project

### **Diane Douglas**

Executive Director, Seattle CityClub

### **Paula Ellis**

Former Vice President, Strategic Initiatives,  
John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

### **William Galston**

Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution  
Former Deputy Assistant to the President  
of the United States for Domestic Policy

### **Hon. Bob Graham**

Former Senator of Florida  
Former Governor of Florida

### **Robert Grimm, Jr.**

Director of the Center for Philanthropy  
and Nonprofit Leadership,  
University of Maryland

### **Shawn Healy**

Program Director, McCormick Foundation  
Chair, Illinois Civic Mission Coalition

### **Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg**

Director, Center for Information and  
Research on Civic Learning and  
Engagement (CIRCLE) at the Jonathan M.  
Tisch College of Citizenship and Public  
Service at Tufts University

### **Peter Levine**

Director, Center for Information and  
Research on Civic Learning and  
Engagement (CIRCLE) at the Jonathan M.  
Tisch College of Citizenship and Public  
Service at Tufts University

### **Mark Hugo Lopez**

Director of Hispanic Research, Pew  
Research Center

### **Lisa Matthews**

Program Director, National Conference on  
Citizenship

### **Ted McConnell**

Executive Director, Campaign for the Civic  
Mission of Schools

### **Martha McCoy**

Executive Director, Everyday Democracy

### **Kenneth Prewitt**

Former Director of the United States  
Census Bureau  
Carnegie Professor of Public Affairs and  
the Vice-President for Global Centers at  
Columbia University

### **Robert Putnam**

Peter and Isabel Malkin Professor of Public  
Policy, Kennedy School of Government at  
Harvard University  
Founder, Saguaro Seminar  
Author of *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and  
Revival of American Community*

### **Stella M. Rouse**

Director, Center for American Politics and  
Citizenship

### **Shirley Sagawa**

CEO, Service Year Alliance  
Co-founder, Sagawa/Jospin, LLP

### **Thomas Sander**

Executive Director, the Saguaro Seminar,  
Harvard University

### **David B. Smith**

Former Managing Director of Presidio  
Institute  
Former Executive Director, National  
Conference on Citizenship

### **Sterling K. Speirn**

Senior Fellow, National Conference on  
Citizenship

### **Drew Steijles**

Assistant Vice President for Student  
Engagement and Leadership and Director  
Office of Community Engagement, College  
of William & Mary

### **Michael Stout**

Associate Professor of Sociology,  
Missouri State University

### **Kristi Tate**

Senior Advisor, Civic & Community  
Engagement Initiatives Center for Future of  
Arizona

### **Michael Weiser**

Chairman Emeritus, National Conference  
on Citizenship



Data Made Possible By:  
*Corporation for*  
**NATIONAL &  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICE** 



**HAWAI'I COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION**  
*Amplify the Power of Giving*



**National Conference on Citizenship**  
*Connecting People. Strengthening Our Country.*