

2016 CONNECTICUT CIVIC HEALTH INDEX™



National Conference on Citizenship
Connecting People. Strengthening Our Country.

DataHaven





ABOUT THE PARTNERS

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CITIZENSHIP

The National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC) 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 and 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.

EVERYDAY DEMOCRACY

Everyday Democracy was established in 1989 by The Paul J. Aicher Foundation, a national, nonpartisan, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing deliberative democracy and improving the quality of public life in the United States. To achieve this, Everyday Democracy helps neighborhoods, towns, and cities develop their own capacity to bring together people of all backgrounds and views to talk and work together to solve problems, create measurable change, and create communities that work for everyone.

SECRETARY OF THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT

Secretary of the State of Connecticut Denise W. Merrill has served as the state's chief elections official since 2011. As Secretary, she has dedicated her career to advocating for policy changes that expand voter participation, encouraging civic engagement, curbing the influence of money in elections, and championing the cause of civic education in the schools. Secretary Merrill is at the forefront of leveraging technology to expand voting access and increase accuracy in the electoral system.

DATAHAVEN

DataHaven is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization with a 25-year history of public service to Connecticut. Our mission is to improve quality of life by collecting, sharing, and interpreting public data for effective decision making. We are a partner of the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership, an initiative of the Urban Institute and approximately 40 local partners to further the development and use of neighborhood information in policymaking and community building.

CONNECTICUT CAMPUS COMPACT

Connecticut Campus Compact is one of 34 state and regional affiliates of Campus Compact. Founded in 1985 by the presidents of Brown, Georgetown, and Stanford Universities and the president of the Education Commission of the States, Campus Compact has become a national coalition of nearly 1,100 colleges and universities committed to the public purposes of higher education.

WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

Wesleyan University was founded in 1831 by Methodist leaders and Middletown citizens. Named for John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, Wesleyan is among the oldest of the originally Methodist institutions of higher education in the United States. Located in Middletown, Conn., Wesleyan offers instruction in 46 departments and 45 major fields of study and awards the Bachelor of Arts as well as graduate degrees.



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AUTHORS:

Mary Buchanan, *Project Manager, DataHaven*

Erica Pandey, *Research Assistant, DataHaven*

Mark Abraham, *Executive Director, DataHaven*

CONTRIBUTORS:

Valeriano Ramos Jr., *Director of Strategic Alliances, Everyday Democracy*

Rachael Weiker, *Associate Director, Civic Health Initiatives, National Conference on Citizenship*

Jeff Coates, *Research & Evaluation Director, National Conference on Citizenship*

Cameron Blossom, *Communications Associate, National Conference on Citizenship*

INTRODUCTION

Once again, we are proud to release a report on the state of civic health in Connecticut! In 2011, we published the first-ever report on our state's civic health, and this, the 2016 Connecticut Civic Health Index Report, helps us to gain new perspectives on this important topic.

Why is this important? Because while we have tracked indicators like voting statistics and economic measures in the past, we have not systematically tried to find out more about social behavior and its connection to the way people relate to their government and communities. More importantly, this report gives us a tool to develop new ways to encourage people to be involved in their democracy. Without that broad level of involvement, the strength of our democracy is unsustainable.

Since 2011, some things have changed in the civic life of Connecticut, but others have not.

The correlation of income to actions such as registering to vote, voting, speaking to public officials, and talking politics persists, here as elsewhere in the country. The stark contrast between the wealthy and the poor in our state — the so-called “Two Connecticut” — is as evident in statistics on voting behavior as it is in educational opportunity. Despite a generally higher level of educational attainment in our state, people who are poor or who have lower levels of formal education participate less in our government at all levels. This continues to be the primary challenge for the state, one that the data and findings in this report corroborate. There is also a significant gap between old and young voters in terms of participation. While Connecticut has improved its efforts to register younger voters through online voter registration and other policy changes, closing the gap remains another significant challenge.

On the other hand, there has been some increase in social participation of people with their families and neighbors and a small but noticeable difference in voting participation in some elections. The report also reveals other interesting findings with regard to trust in institutions, a recently added civic health indicator.

Of course, the real question for us as a state is: What are we going to do with this information? We are optimistic that it will catalyze even further the momentum the Connecticut Civic Health Project has gained since the publication of the 2011 report. In our call-to-action section of the report, we share with you part of our agenda for civic renewal in Connecticut — our commitment to moving forward.

We also hope that this report will afford us the opportunity to more deeply ponder what is really going on in our society, both here and throughout the world. Relevant to this introspection is the narrative of political and economic



Elizabeth Park, Hartford, CT, Photo by Robert Gregson, Connecticut Offices of Culture and Tourism

thinker Jeremy Rifkin on what he called “The End of Work.” He said that the advent of technology would force us to rethink the definition of work and compensation to ensure that enough people would be part of the civil society.

Perhaps in the same way, we need to rethink the way we talk about “participation.” Young people relate to their world and each other in new and different ways. Minority communities have their own associations, groups, TV stations, and hangouts. What does this mean for our government and our democracy? How can we welcome the next generation of citizens in order to ensure the civic health of our society continues to thrive?

We are proud to share with you some of the ideas generated by that committed group of individuals who have formed the Connecticut Civic Health Advisory Group. Their commitment to this work following the first report in 2011 has far exceeded our wildest expectations. They and the thousands of others who have participated in the Civic Health Project were determined not to let the 2011 report sit on a shelf, but rather seized the opportunity to come up with imaginative ideas and programs to fulfill the promise of Connecticut’s rich civic history. With the 2016 Connecticut Civic Health Index Report, we are confident that this important work will find new energy and vision and continue to inspire others.

To those who continue to be part of this movement for civic renewal in Connecticut, we say thank you! To those who will join us on this venture, we say welcome!



Martha L. McCoy
Martha McCoy

*Co-Chair, Connecticut Civic Health
Advisory Group
Executive Director, Everyday Democracy*



Denise W. Merrill

**The Honorable
Denise W. Merrill**

*Co-Chair, Connecticut Civic Health
Advisory Group
Secretary of the State of Connecticut*

KEY TERMS AND INDICATORS

The indicators defined below measure important elements of civic health in Connecticut, but no single statistic tells the entire story; the indicators should be examined together to create a complete picture of Connecticut’s civic health.

Civic health is determined by how well diverse groups of residents work together and with government to solve public problems and strengthen their communities.

Civic engagement refers to people’s overall level of participation in community life and local affairs. To measure civic engagement, we look at the percentage of people who do things such as volunteer, give to charity, belong to groups or organizations, attend public meetings, and work with neighbors to fix community problems.

Political participation is measured by the patterns of voting and non-electoral political activities such as meeting with elected officials, expressing an opinion to public officials, talking with friends and family about politics, using the Internet to share a public opinion, and boycotting or “buy”-coting a product or service.

Social networks are the voluntary relationships people have with each other. We measure social networks by looking at how often families eat dinner together, connect with family or friends, and talk with or exchange favors with neighbors. Community cohesion refers to the level of trust that arises from social networks and is gauged by how much people trust their neighbors. When social networks are strong, people are usually better able to come together, talk, and solve local problems.

Institutional presence refers to the impact that institutions have on the community and is measured by the level of confidence that people have in corporations, public schools, and the media.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report assesses numerous indicators related to civic participation and community engagement in Connecticut. Gauging the current state of civic health in Connecticut, this study follows the research reviewed in the 2011 Connecticut Civic Health Index Report. It offers a comparison of Connecticut's current civic health to previous years and to the civic health of the nation and other states.

By this report's measures, Connecticut exhibits relatively strong civic health among its residents, many of whom help to resolve local problems through volunteering and leadership opportunities. They build close-knit communities, with most people frequently connecting with neighbors and staying in touch with friends and families. A majority of Connecticut adults are confident in institutions like public schools, and many adults also voice their public opinions through discussion, voting, or other means.

This report also identifies areas where civic health falters, such as relatively low statewide voting rates. Further, differences in opportunities for civic participation exist between groups of people. In some cases, differing participation rates may result from deep-rooted, structural inequities based on socioeconomic status, race, or other demographic characteristic that prevent many Connecticut residents from participating more actively.

Key Findings

By some indicators of civic health, Connecticut residents demonstrate significantly stronger levels of engagement than the national average; they participate at higher rates of volunteering, attending public meetings, charitable giving, talking with and trusting neighbors, voting in local elections, and having confidence in the media or public schools. However, compared to other states, Connecticut performed relatively poorly in other measures of engagement, including registering to vote, belonging to a school or community association, joining a church group or other religious group, and having confidence in corporations.

Rising participation in recent years in some activities – working with neighbors to fix community issues, contacting public officials, eating dinner with family, and talking with neighbors – fuels improvements to civic health in Connecticut. But civic engagement has fallen in other areas such as volunteering, charitable giving, belonging to an organization, voting in national elections, and exchanging favors with neighbors.

Table 1. A Snapshot of Connecticut's Civic Health Findings

		CT*	U.S. Avg	CT Rank	+/- % since 2010**
COMMUNITY LIFE	Volunteer	27.8%	25.4%	22nd	-3.3%
	Give to charity (\$25 or more)	56.2%	50.1%	12th	-2.2%
	Work with Neighbors on a Community Issue	8.6%	7.6%	22nd	+1.3%
	Belong to a Community Group	35.1%	36.3%	36th	-1.8%
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION	Register to Vote in 2012 Presidential Election	70.5%	71.2%	34th	n/a
	Vote in 2012 Presidential Election***	62.7%	61.8%	26th	-4.5% (from 2008)
	Register to Vote in 2014 Midterms	65.1%	64.6%	29th	-1.5%
	Vote in 2014 Midterms	46.7%	41.9%	19th	-2.6%
	Vote in Local Elections (Always or Sometimes)	63.5%	58.5%	24th	n/a
	Contact a public official	13.8%	10.8%	19th	+0.1%
SOCIAL NETWORKS	Eat Dinner with Family (Frequently)	88.7%	87.8%	28th	+1.3%
	Talk with Neighbors (Frequently)	45.5%	41.4%	11th	+2.6%
	Exchange Favors with Neighbors (Frequently)	11.7%	12.1%	33rd	-2.9%
INSTITUTIONAL PRESENCE	Public Schools (A Great Deal or Some)	88.1%	84.5%	13th	n/a
	Media (A Great Deal or Some)	59.2%	55.0%	12th	n/a
	Corporations (A Great Deal or Some)	63.9%	64.5%	36th	n/a

* 2013, unless otherwise noted

** 2010, unless otherwise noted

*** Nationally, voter turnout reached a 40-year high in 2008.

Meanwhile, overall participation rates mask gaps in civic participation between groups of people. In fact, **demographic and socioeconomic characteristics define trends** in participation in civic activities.

By many measures, **high-income and college-educated adults demonstrate better civic health** than adults with lower income or levels of education. Participation rates based on income or education vary most widely on indicators of voting and volunteering.

Table 2. Indicators by Income and Education Levels	No High School Diploma	Bachelor's Degree or more	Family Income less than \$35k	Family Income \$75k or more	CT Total
Voter Turnout, 2012 Presidential Election	40.4%	75.3%	45.7%	71.5%	62.7%
Volunteering, 2013	13.1%	37.2%	20.6%	34.5%	27.8%

In general, involvement in **civic pursuits increases with age**. The youngest adults have lower participation rates than older adults in nearly all measures of civic health and are particularly less involved in the electoral process. If adults 18 to 24 years had registered and voted at the same rates as older adults in 2012, the number of voters in Connecticut would have increased by around 100,000.

Table 3. Indicators by Age	18-24 years old	25 or older	CT Total
Voter Turnout, 2014 Midterm Elections	20.1%	49.9%	46.7%
Vote in Local Elections (Always or Sometimes)*	29.0%	67.5%	62.6%

*pooled data - 2010, 2011, 2013

By most civic measures, participation varies between racial and ethnic groups, **but White adults are the most civically engaged**. African Americans also demonstrate strong involvement in community groups and political action. **All adults connect with family and friends at equal rates**.

Table 4. Indicators by Race/Ethnicity	Whites	African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos	CT Total
Voter Turnout, 2012 Presidential Election	65.8%	62.2%	n/a	47.0%	62.7%
Belong to a Community Group*	40.8%	40.3%	31.0%	26.6%	38.8%
Trust in Neighbors (All or most)*	67.1%	40.9%	n/a	38.2%	61.7%
Eat Dinner with Family (Frequently)*	88.8%	82.3%	88.4%	88.4%	88.3%

*pooled data - 2010, 2011, 2013

This report provides an overall evaluation of civic health in Connecticut, highlights measures in which Connecticut performs strongly, and brings attention to areas that could be improved. Identifying when and for whom low participation exists and understanding why it occurs are crucial for policymakers and community leaders who seek to build stronger civic health for each individual and town throughout the state.

Population Characteristics of Connecticut and the United States, 2013

POPULATION

CT - 3,596,080
U.S. - 316,128,839

INCOME

Median Household Income:

CT - \$67,098
U.S. - \$52,050

Poverty Rate:

CT - 10.7%
U.S. - 15.8%

EDUCATION

Adults without HS Diploma:

CT - 10.7%
U.S. - 15.8%

Adults with Bachelor's or More:

CT - 37.2%
U.S. - 29.6%

AGE & GENDER

	CT	U.S.
Ages 18-24	9.4%	10.0%
65 or Older	15.1%	14.1%
Female	51.3%	50.8%

RACE & ETHNICITY

	CT	U.S.
White	69.3%	62.4%
African American	9.6%	12.3%
Latino	14.7%	17.1%
Asian-American	4.1%	5.0%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey 1-year estimates, 2013

MEASURES OF CIVIC HEALTH

Robust civic health results from participation in a variety of spheres, from civic engagement to political participation to social interactions. Tracking indicators representative of these activities provides an assessment of the state of civic health among Connecticut residents.

Civic Engagement

Participation in community life through different civic pathways provides opportunities for everyday civic contributions, allowing individuals to find personal enrichment while addressing local issues. The community's civic health thrives when its members join together and strengthen their social networks while providing meaningful and valuable service.

Connecticut residents surpass national averages for participation in several aspects of civic life, including volunteering and giving activities. Of residents polled in the 2013 Census Current Population Survey (CPS), 27.8% volunteered, placing Connecticut in the top half of 50 states and the District of Columbia in a national ranking.¹ These volunteering efforts were valuable; for example, in 2014, an hour of work from a volunteer in Connecticut was worth on average \$26.79.² Further, 56.2% of adults donated \$25 or more to charity the same year, ranking the state 12th nationally. In 2012 alone, individuals in Connecticut contributed philanthropically a total of \$3.2 billion in 2012. According to the report *Giving in Connecticut 2015*, published by the Connecticut Council on Philanthropy, individuals and foundations in Connecticut gave \$4.66 billion in charitable contributions during 2013.

However, Connecticut residents have volunteered and donated less over recent years. Rates declined by 3.3 percentage points and 2.2 percentage points since 2010, respectively — even as national rates were steady. In addition, charitable donations made in Connecticut are low in comparison to the state's relative income. In 2012, Connecticut ranked second in average annual household income (\$91,371 compared to \$62,645 nationally), but it ranked 19th in average annual household charitable contribution (\$5,500 compared to \$5,296 nationally). In other words, the average Connecticut family earned 46% more than the average American family in 2012, yet donated just 4% more to charity.³ The relatively low average rate of donation as a percentage of income implies that the capacity to give among many Connecticut residents is higher.

Chart 1. Connecticut Volunteering vs United States Averages (2006-2013)

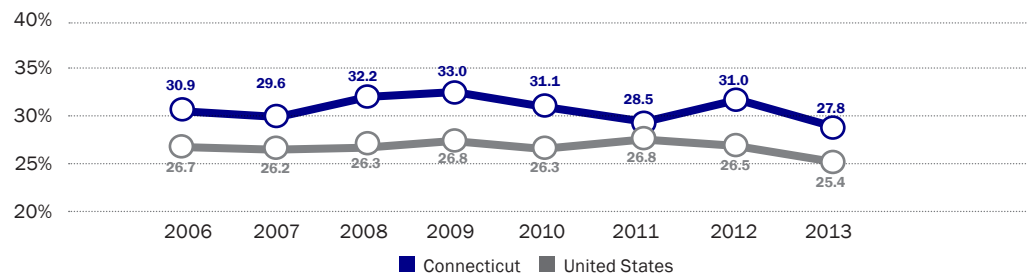
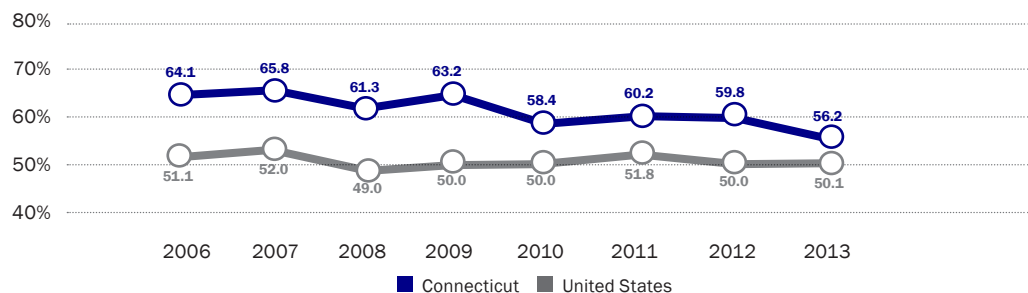


Chart 2. Connecticut Charitable Giving (\$25 or more) vs United States Averages (2006-2013)



In 2013, Connecticut adults were also more likely than the average to invest time in community issues, with 10.4% attending a public meeting — a share higher than the national average of 8.3% — and ranking 22nd for working with neighbors to fix community problems.

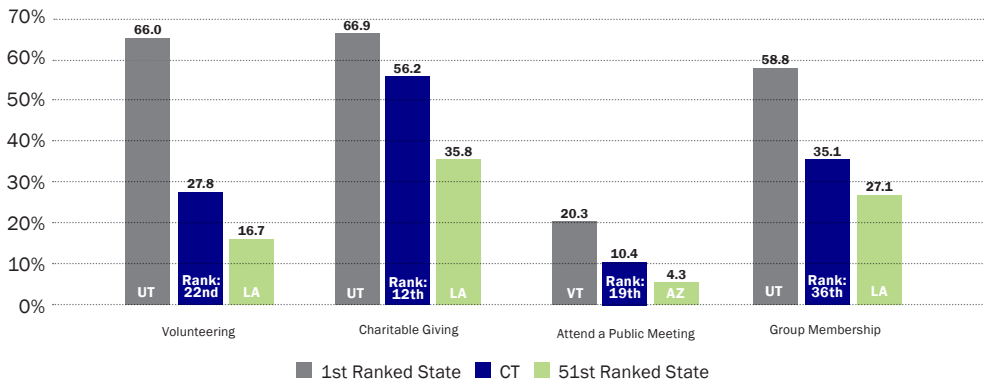
Creating Spaces for Community Conversations and Action on Public Issues

Between 2011 and 2014, Connecticut’s Old State House and The Connecticut Network (CT-N) sponsored five very successful “town hall meetings” on a range of topics: “Renewing our Democracy: What Connecticut Can Be,” “Leadership Starts with You: Parents’ Role in Citizenship,” “Moving from Tragedy to Action: The Power of Community” (focusing on community engagement after the Newtown tragedy), “Out of the Shadows: A Community Conversation about Mental Health,” and “Rules of Engagement: Baby Boomers vs. Millennials.” Funded by Connecticut Humanities, these events, attended by more than 400 community and civic leaders and public officials and watched by thousands on CT-N, created spaces for Connecticut residents to talk about public issues and take civic action to improve their communities and our state.



Photo courtesy of Connecticut’s Old State House

Chart 3. Connecticut Volunteering, Philanthropy, and Group Membership, 2013



In 2013, more than a third of state residents reported membership in at least one group, another outlet for civic engagement. A higher share of Connecticut adults (11.3%) held leadership roles in these groups than the national average (9.7%). But participation varied depending on the type of organization. Slightly more Connecticut adults joined service organizations than the national average – reflecting Connecticut’s healthy culture of engagement – and about 10% of residents of both Connecticut and the U.S. were a part of a sports or recreation association. But a relatively low share of adults belonged to a school, neighborhood, or community group. Moreover, the state ranked 50th out of 51 for participation in religious institutions (including churches, synagogues, and mosques), not counting attendance at religious services.

Many Connecticut residents are dedicated volunteers or active members of group organizations. According to the 2013 CPS, Connecticut’s group membership tracked national rates, yet participation in each type of group in other states doubled Connecticut’s rate, indicating that more residents could be involved in organizations. Communities would benefit from a broader array of citizens participating in engagement efforts.

Making It Easier to Volunteer, Donate, and Vote

Through a partnership between United Way of Connecticut, CivicsFirst CT, and Everyday Democracy, the Connecticut Civic Health Project launched the Civic Participation Resource Guide page on the United Way’s 2-1-1 website. The page offers information on volunteering, donating, learning about public issues, voting, and a host of civic engagement opportunities. The page can be accessed at: <http://www.211ct.org/CivicParticipation/>

Political Participation

A healthy democracy is based on a strong relationship between elected officials and their constituents. Participation in the democratic process is one of the most direct forms of civic engagement, allowing residents to impact their community through opinion and action, and many consider it to be a civic duty. Political participation is often measured through registration and voting, but informal action – through non-electoral civic activities – is also indicative of an individual's or a community's commitment to improving local and national affairs.

In 2012, the year of the last presidential election, Connecticut had a relatively low voter registration rate (70.5% of eligible adults, ranked 34th) and an average voter turnout (62.7% of adults registered to vote, ranked 26th). These rates were lower than during the previous presidential election in 2008, when 67.2% of registered Connecticut adults voted. **Recent changes in voter registration as well as targeting groups with low voter registration and turnout (through Get Out the Vote canvassing and other efforts) will likely lead to improved rates of voter participation in the state.**

Connecticut Expands Access to Voting

Since 2012, Connecticut has passed legislation eliminating barriers to voting and allowing more citizens to participate and exercise their civic right. In 2012, the state legislature passed Election Day Registration, which allows residents to register and vote on Election Day. Online voter registration to supplement the existing mail-in system, with a deadline to register a week before elections, was passed in 2015.

In a 2011 Rock the Vote report, Connecticut ranked 48th (out of 51) for voting access, earning 4.2 out of 21 points on a scorecard evaluating state voting laws.⁴ By implementing online and same-day registration, the state has made remarkable progress in removing barriers to voting, scoring 11.2 out of 21 points according to a 2015 recalculation by DataHaven⁵ – even while many states instituted stricter voter registration laws over the same period.⁶

Currently, voters can only cast ballots early if they qualify for a special absentee ballot, and personal obligations or lines at polling places may deter voters from participating on Election Day. In 2014, a statewide constitutional amendment was voted down that would have permitted the legislature to change restrictive use of absentee ballots.

DIAGRAM 1. VOTER REGISTRATION, 2012 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

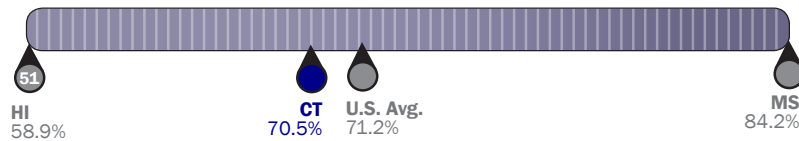
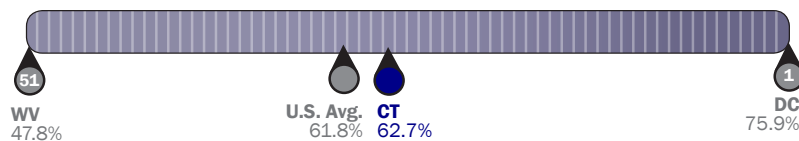


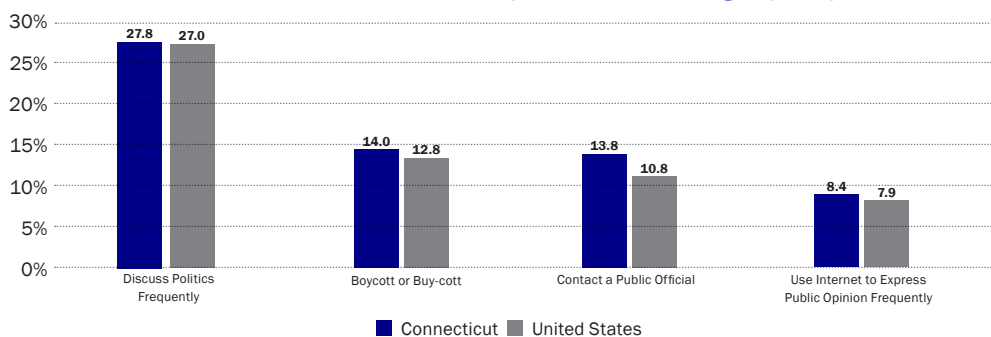
DIAGRAM 2. VOTER TURNOUT, 2012 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION



Still, participation in local elections and non-electoral activities suggests that many Connecticut residents are invested in local issues in addition to national politics. In 2013, 63.5% of eligible adults reported always or sometimes voting in local elections (ranked 24th). The statewide voter turnout for the 2014 midterm election was 46.7% (ranked 19th).⁷ Meanwhile, 13.8% of Connecticut residents got in touch with a public official, 3 percentage points higher than the national average.

Expressing an opinion is a popular form of political engagement, with more than a quarter of Connecticut residents talking with family members and friends about politics and nearly one in ten using the Internet to share an opinion on a public issue. While Connecticut residents are as likely as their national counterparts to express themselves verbally, they are even more likely than average to express a public opinion through action: in 2013, 14% boycotted or buy-cotted a product because of a political stance, compared to 12.8% nationally.

Chart 4. Connecticut's Informal Political Participation vs U.S. Averages (2013)



63.5%

of Connecticut adults always or sometimes vote in local elections, compared to 58.5% nationally.

Political involvement among constituents is pertinent to Connecticut's overall civic health. Statewide, a robust tradition of informal political expression prevails, and recent policy changes such as Election Day registration and online voter registration have made voting easier for many. But participation in the formal political process still trails national averages.

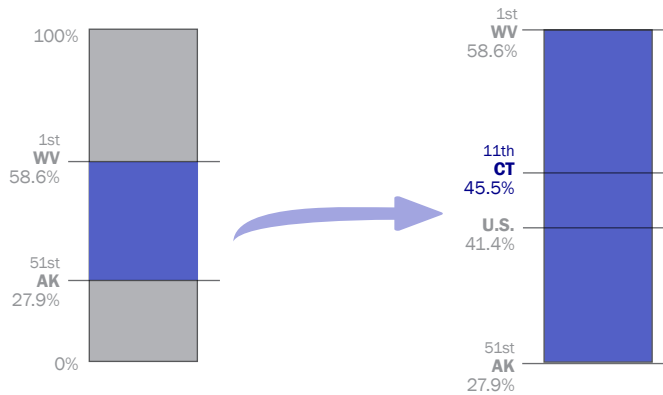
Social Networks and Community Cohesion

Social networks, whose growth is linked with decreased neighborhood crime and better individual well-being, enrich communities in many ways. Strong social ties also improve specific civic interests by increasing community cohesion and fueling movements for local improvement or social change. Further, lower unemployment in communities with high community cohesion suggests that social networks may increase economic resilience.⁸ Community resilience fostered by strong social networks may also help neighborhoods to face natural disasters and overcome crises.⁹ Interactions between families, friends, and neighbors — who form an individual's social network — measure the strength of community cohesion.

In general, Connecticut residents' levels of community interaction parallel national trends. For example, Connecticut residents and their national counterparts highly value family relationships, with most adults (nearly nine in ten) frequently eating dinner with a member of the household in 2013. With 77.8% of Connecticut adults reporting they kept in contact with family and friends frequently, the state ranked 28th overall.

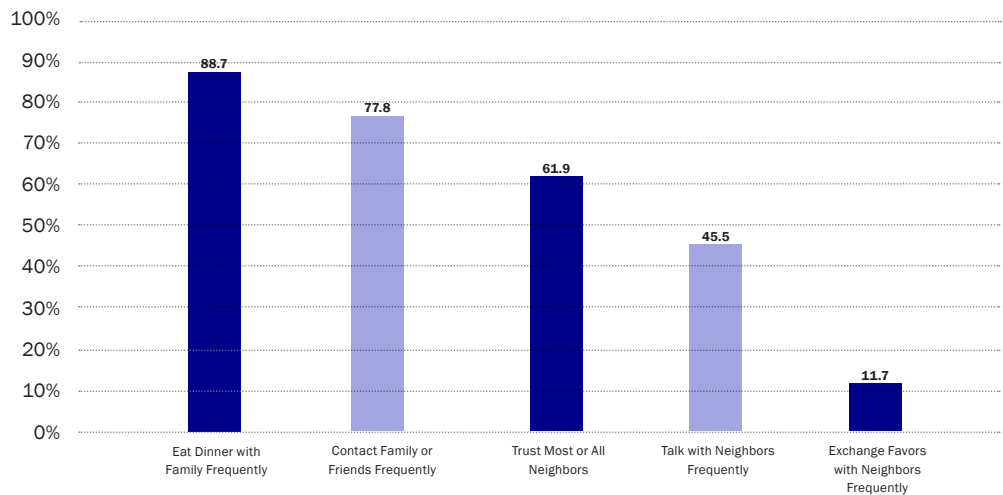
Many Connecticut residents report positive experiences with neighbors. In 2013, the percentage of adults who talked frequently with neighbors was 45.5% (ranked 11th out of 51). And the majority trusted most or all of their neighbors (61.9%), 6 percentage points higher than the national average.

DIAGRAM 3. ADULTS WHO TALK FREQUENTLY WITH NEIGHBORS



However, only 11.7% of Connecticut adults reported frequently exchanging favors with neighbors (including but not limited to watching each other’s children, house sitting, or lending tools), ranking the state 33rd. This share was similar to the percentages of residents who attended public meetings or who belonged to certain types of groups (see discussion in Civic Engagement section), but fell well below the share of residents in Utah, the top ranking state, where 23.1% of residents did favors for neighbors.

Chart 5. Social Networks in Connecticut, 2013



Many Connecticut residents count strong ties with family and friends as a part of their everyday life. But increasing interactions between acquaintances in the community – such as exchanges between neighbors, participation in groups, or attendance at public meetings – could enhance social cohesion in communities across the state.

Institutional Presence

Institutions – government, news media, corporations, hospitals, and schools – are the foundation of our society. Community members rely on these for information, services, and livelihoods. The overarching presence of institutions in the community dictates that their policies also impact individuals – shaping public opinions, participation in community activities, and other factors of civic health and well-being. Perception of institutions (measured in this report by confidence in the media, public schools, and corporations) tracks the impact that institution has on the community or on individual civic health.

A relatively high share of Connecticut residents have some or a lot of confidence in the media. In 2013, the state ranked 12th in the nation for the percentage of residents (59.2%) who had confidence in the media. According to the 2008 CPS, the vast majority of Connecticut residents regularly seek the news from various media outlets, including newspapers, TV news, or Internet sources, a widespread following that likely bolsters overall trust.¹⁰

In 2013, 63.9% of Connecticut residents expressed some or a lot of confidence in corporations, a relatively low share that ranked the state 36th out of 51. Many factors could influence opinions of corporations, including individual experience, corporate policies, or larger economic trends. **To improve further individual well-being and community civic health, private corporations could foster a more positive community presence through careful service planning, responsible employer policies, and corporate giving.**

In 2013, 88.1% of Connecticut residents expressed some or a lot of confidence in public schools (ranked 13th out of 51). This trust in public schools — which implies that many residents are satisfied with their public schools — may account for the relatively low percentage of adults involved in school groups (see Community Life section), which can provide additional support for struggling schools.¹¹

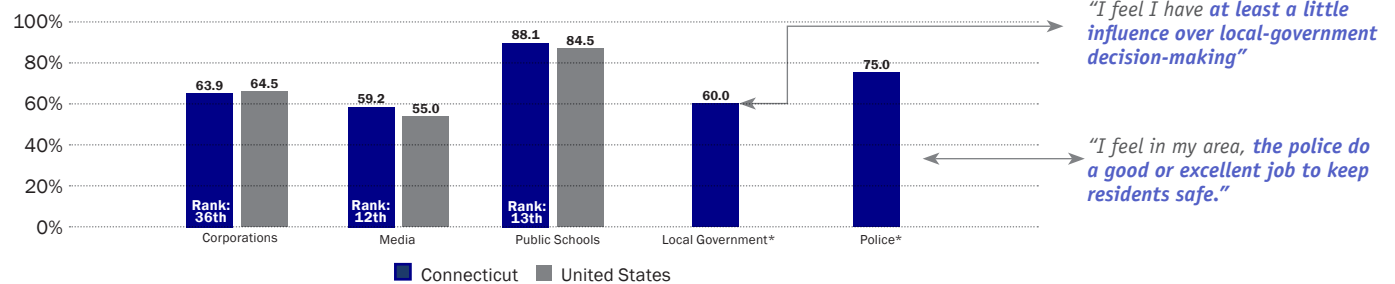
Connecticut Parent Leadership at its Best

Working through a diverse array of state and local agencies and organizations, Connecticut parents have gained knowledge, civic leadership skills, and a strong sense of empowerment to advocate on behalf of their children. Through trainings, workshops, and leadership programs, parents have learned to organize around and advocate for a whole range of issues, including schools, homelessness, mental illness/health, disabilities, and early-childhood education with a focus on achieving equitable outcomes for their children and communities.¹²

The CPS currently does not measure indicators of confidence in local or state governments. In 2014, a survey conducted by the non-partisan Pew Research Center indicated that 24% of American adults trusted in the federal government most of the time (though research has also shown that residents tend to trust their local government more than the federal government).¹³ In 2015, a survey conducted by DataHaven showed that 60% of all Connecticut adults believed they had at least a little influence over local government decision-making, and 75% felt that the police force in their area did a good job keeping residents safe.¹⁴

5.5
Nonprofit organizations in Connecticut for every 1,000 residents.

Chart 6. Connecticut's Confidence in Institutions



*Source: DataHaven, 2015 Community Well-being Survey

Another type of institution — nonprofit organizations — often depends on a corps of individuals and local resources to address community issues or provide other public benefits. Nonprofits may have a more direct impact on civic health than other institutions: providing opportunities for civic engagement; staging interactions between residents (including volunteers and clients); employing many local residents; and increasing community pride by connecting individuals to local issues and solutions. Researchers with the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC) also found a relationship between higher nonprofit density (particularly of associations and membership-based nonprofits) and lower unemployment rates, indicating that nonprofits may also strengthen the economic resilience of a community.¹⁵

Most Connecticut residents have favorable experiences with institutions. Connecticut's nonprofit network — with 5.5 nonprofits per 1,000 residents compared to a national nonprofit density of 4.9 nonprofits per 1,000 residents — should be considered an asset to both civic and economic health.¹⁶

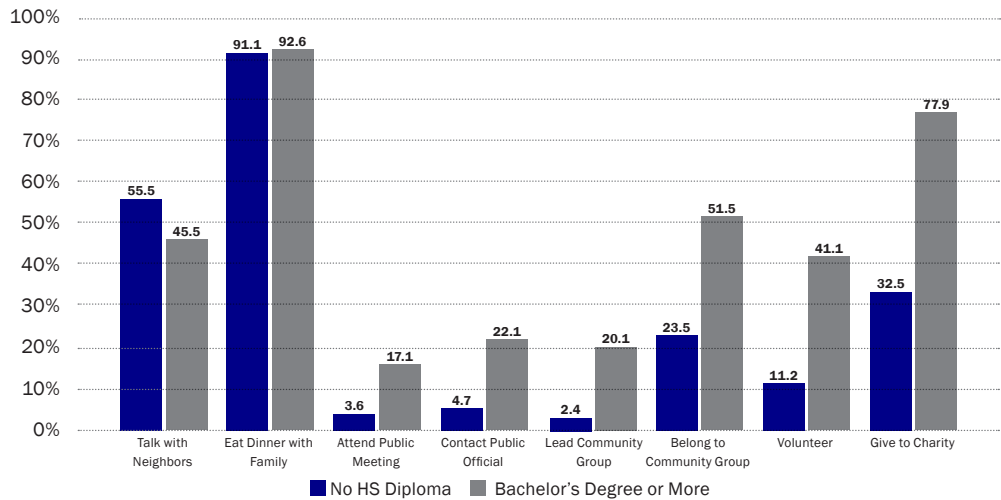
CIVIC HEALTH SUBGROUPS: A Closer Look

A deeper analysis reveals notable differences in civic engagement based on demographic characteristics, including age, gender, and race or ethnicity. These distinctions highlight the motivations behind participation in certain activities as well as some of the barriers to vibrant civic health facing certain groups. For many civic activities, differential participation rates have origins more profound than individual choice and may be emblematic of systemic inequities.

Economic Factors Weigh In

The 2011 Connecticut Civic Health Index Report noted patterns of engagement based on economic factors, which 2015 data continue to reflect.¹⁷ Civic engagement correlates strongly with education and income. Generally, it is highest among college-educated adults or residents of top-earning households, with the exception of some indicators of social interaction.

Chart 7. Civic Health by Education in Connecticut



Data is pooled from 2010, 2011, 2013

A discussion of socioeconomic factors must also consider that income inequality in Connecticut is among the highest in the nation.¹⁸ Indeed, 8% of families are millionaire households (a higher share than any state except Maryland)¹⁹ while one in ten people live in poverty. As the 2011 Civic Health Index Report also concluded, these socioeconomic divisions create “Two Connecticut” and influence vastly different well-being outcomes, including civic health.

Also, geographic and racial/ethnic lines define these differences so that concentrated poverty neighborhoods (in which the poverty rate is above 40%) disproportionately are home to people of color and are located in major cities, including Bridgeport, New Haven, Hartford, Waterbury, and New Britain.²⁰ Conditions that plague lower-income neighborhoods — such as high crime or blighted public spaces — deter positive interactions between residents and break down social ties so that stark differential advantages in civic health may originate in neighborhood income differences and related racial/ethnic and educational divides.²¹ According to CPS data, urbanites have the lowest overall civic health, while dwellers of suburbs and, in particular, rural towns appear to demonstrate stronger social cohesion and participation in community life.

Research shows that in Connecticut’s metropolitan regions, very high-income households are increasingly concentrated within certain geographic areas — even more so than many other urban areas in the United States — raising concerns about the declining share of middle-class, mixed-income neighborhoods that have traditionally been places of high opportunity.²²

A correlation between community engagement and economic resilience supports efforts to boost civic health, especially in low-income communities. A 2011 NCoC report found that overall, states with higher rates of participation in civic activities — including volunteerism, voter registration, and attendance at public meetings — demonstrated lower unemployment rates during the Great Recession (2007 to 2009), even after controlling for other factors. Working with neighbors had the strongest relationship, with a 1.0% increase in a state’s rate correlating with a 0.3% drop in statewide unemployment.²³

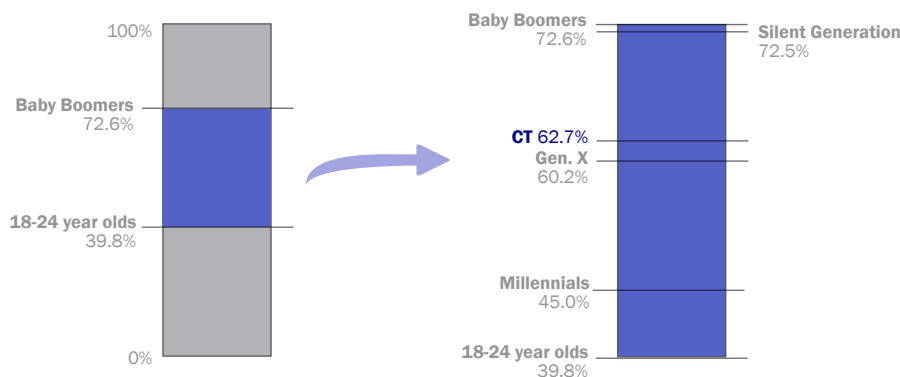
Civic Engagement and Age

Civic participation increases with age, according to measures in this Index. Generally, young adults demonstrate the lowest rates of engagement, which peak among older adults, including the Baby Boomer Generation or the Silent Generation. For the purposes of this report, young adults are defined as adults 18 to 24 years, the Baby Boomer Generation are those born from 1946 to 1964, and the Silent Generation includes adults born from 1931 to 1945.

In measures of civic engagement and political participation in particular, wide disparities in involvement exist based on age. In 2013, young adults were significantly less likely than others to attend a public meeting (2.1% of adults 18 to 24 years compared to 11.8% of all other adults) or to give to charity (23.9% of adults 18 to 24 years and 62.5% of adults 25 years and older). Meanwhile, older people were much more likely to engage civically. Of the Silent Generation, 18.6% had attended a public meeting, and 70.2% donated to charity.

Civic data reflect the relative political disengagement of Connecticut youth. Young adults (18 to 24 years) were least likely to register to vote, with a 47.1% registration rate compared to a rate of 79.6% among Baby Boomers (the generation with the strongest civic participation overall). Of all eligible young adults (18 to 24 years) in Connecticut, 39.8% voted in the 2012 presidential election, compared to 72.6% of Baby Boomers. The age disparity in voter turnout widened for local elections, for which the share of Silent Generation adults who voted locally (82.3%) was nearly three times the share of young adults who voted (29%), according to pooled data from 2010, 2011, and 2013.²⁴

DIAGRAM 4. CONNECTICUT VOTER TURNOUT, 2012 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, BY AGE



Generational Breakdown:

Millennials - (born 1981 or later)

Gen X - (born 1965-1980)

Baby Boomers (born 1945-1964)

Silent Generation (born 1931-1945)

Age-specific characteristics likely cause, in part, individual differences in community and political involvement. Most young adults are students or entry-level workers. These occupations, often coupled with busy schedules and small paychecks, may limit the time and money that many young adults can invest in the community, through engagement opportunities and group membership. Meanwhile, many older adults do not work at full-time jobs and tend to be more financially stable than other age groups.²⁵ As a result, older people may have more resources to devote to community issues.

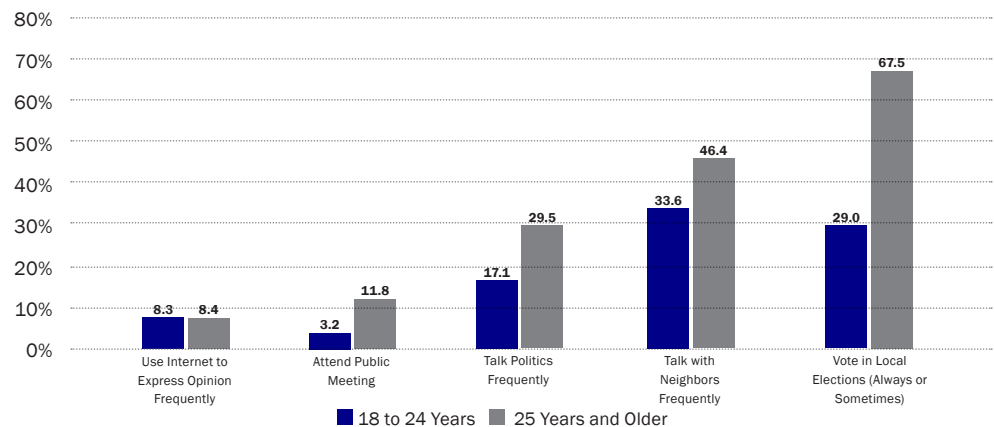
In addition, young people are residentially mobile: in 2013, 25% of Connecticut residents 18 to 24 years had moved from their homes in the past year, compared to 5% of residents 70 years and older.²⁶ Moving from place to place may prevent individuals from cultivating strong attachments to their communities, lowering personal involvement in organizations or interest in local politics (as young adults' lower voter turnout for local compared to the presidential elections suggests).

However, advances in technology and social media continue to shape civic participation and are more supportive of youth engagement habits. While significantly fewer Echo Boomers (born after 1980) conversed about politics than other generations (20.6% compared to 29.5% of all adults, pooled data), they were most likely to use the Internet to express a public opinion (9.4% compared to 8.4% of all adults, pooled data). Younger adults also participate in online activism – in which millions of annual users support political and social movements through web-based petitions – more often than older adults. For example, in 2013, Echo Boomers worldwide comprised more than one-third of the 700,000 petition creators and 274 million petition signers of the online activism platform Change.org.²⁷



Litchfield, CT, Photo by Robert Gregson, Connecticut Offices of Culture and Tourism

Chart 8. Civic Health by Age in Connecticut



Data is pooled from 2010, 2011, 2013

Text, Talk, and Act Youth Dialogues: Creating Opportunities for Youth Engagement Around Mental Health

Everyone knows that youth like to text! In May, October, and November 2015, more than 800 high school youth in Greater Hartford participated in Text, Talk, Act (TTA) conversations and small group dialogues on mental health. Youth leaders were trained to plan and facilitate the live conversations at their schools. Some of the youth are now planning future school and community events designed to dispel myths and stereotypes among youth about mental health. Civic Life Project created two short films on the TTA conversations and small group dialogues that can be seen on YouTube. Everyday Democracy, Connecticut Youth Forum Leadership Network, Civic Life Project CT, and East Hartford High School partnered on this Connecticut Civic Health Project initiative.²⁸

In response to age-based gaps in civic participation, groups statewide have introduced initiatives to improve youth civic health, including amendments to voter registration laws that have expanded voting access (see Political Participation section) and an enhancement of civic education in public schools through the newly-adopted social studies framework and other efforts. As social media and online activism continue to play important roles in civic engagement, social and political movements will become more accessible to all, including youth.

Civics Education in Connecticut Gets a Boost

In 2012, the Connecticut Civic Health Project convened members of the Connecticut Council for the Social Studies, the Secretary of the State's Office, Everyday Democracy, Connecticut Network, and Civics First CT to examine civics education in the state. The task group developed and distributed a survey to civics teachers, and the survey responses informed a number of recommendations on ways to strengthen civics education in the state. That same year, Secretary of the State Denise W. Merrill launched "Connecticut Election Project 2012," which provides online materials and resources to teachers on the electoral process and voting with integrated language arts, math, and social studies cross-content.²⁹ The materials can be accessed at: <http://ct.gov/sots/cwp/view.asp?a=3176&q=510978>

Civic Participation by Gender

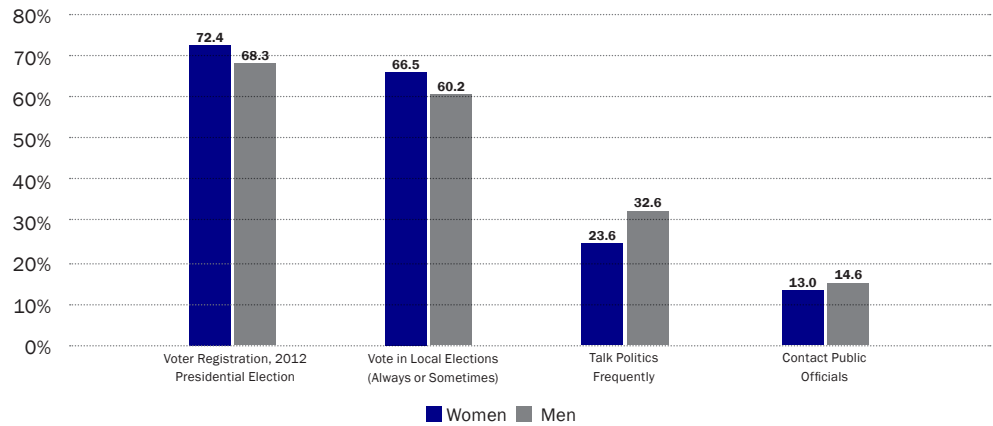
In most spheres of civic health, women are slightly more engaged than men. But for certain activities, exceptional gender-based distinctions arise.

For example, in 2013 women were much more likely to volunteer than men (31.1% and 24.2% respectively), or to be involved in school, neighborhood, or community groups and with religious institutions. Yet a significantly larger share of men than women participated in sports or recreation groups and service or civic associations.

Eighty-four percent of women talked regularly with family or friends in 2013, compared to 70.8% of men. Meanwhile, men were more likely than women to talk with family or friends specifically about politics (32.6% and 23.6%, respectively). They also contacted public officials more often than women, which may reflect research indicating that men generally express greater interest in politics than women.³⁰ "Political interest" notwithstanding, women were more likely than men to participate in the democratic process formally: the rates of women registering to vote; voting for president; or casting ballots in local elections each were about five percentage points higher than those of men.

Notwithstanding these findings, participation of women in Connecticut's state boards and commissions continues to lag behind that of their male counterparts. According to a report published by the Secretary of the State and a press release she issued in May 2012, "in 2011, women only represented 40.1% of the appointed membership on state boards and commissions. This was an increase in representation for women by 1.6 percentage points [since 2009], when women represented 38.5% of the appointed membership on state boards and commissions." Secretary Merrill further concluded that "while there was an increase in female appointments, women are still under-represented on state boards and commissions when compared to the overall female population in Connecticut by a figure of 11.2% (U.S. Census figures for 2011 show that 51.3% of Connecticut's population is female). Despite this gap, there was a 10% decrease in the number of state boards and commissions reporting they had no female representation. In 2011, the figure stood at 13.7% compared to the 2009 figure of 15.3%."³¹ Efforts by the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women and the various appointing authorities account in part for this slight improvement.

Chart 9. Political Participation by Gender in Connecticut



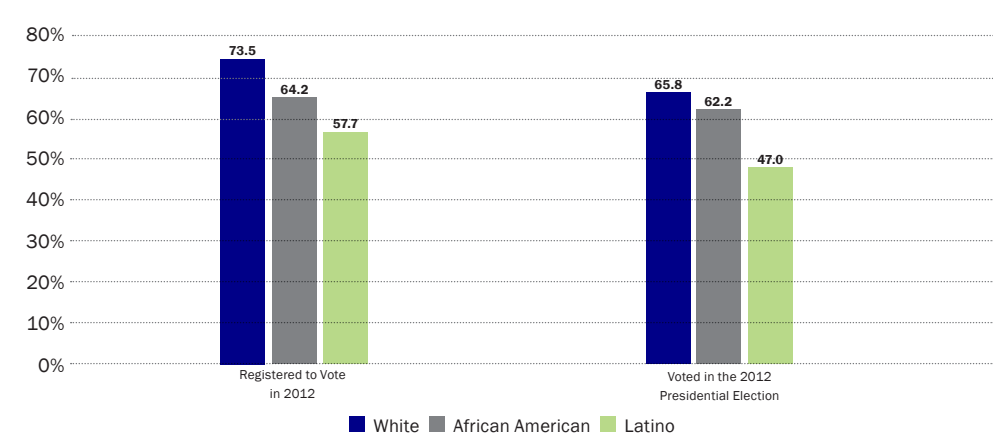
Participation by Race and Ethnicity

Statewide, engagement in civic activities varies between racial and ethnic groups. In general, White followed by African American/Black residents have the highest levels of involvement, while Asian American and Latino adults demonstrate lower participation.³² However, many distinctions in civic habits based on race or ethnicity may be related to larger socioeconomic and structural inequities (as noted in the Economic Factors Weigh-In section).

According to pooled data from 2011-2013, a significantly larger share of Whites (63.3%) gave to charity compared to Asian Americans (48.3%), African American or Black adults (39.7%), and Latino residents (38.1%). However, charitable giving correlates directly with disposable income, so these disparities may be more indicative of wealth than of willingness to give. White adults were also most likely to give time volunteering, but the range in participation was narrower (from 16.8% of Latinos to 32.2% of Whites, pooled data).

Both Whites and African Americans/Blacks demonstrate higher concern for political issues (compared to other groups), a trend mirrored in national data.³³ For example, these groups were much more likely than their Asian American or Latino counterparts to participate in non-electoral political activities such as boycotting, contacting public officials, or discussing politics. Similarly, eligible White and African American/Black residents were more likely to participate in the democratic process – with significantly higher voter registration rates and voter turnout rates for local and national elections – than eligible Latinos.

Chart 10. Connecticut Registration and Voting Rates in 2012 by Race/Ethnicity



The fact that many eligible Latino and Asian American voters are immigrants or the children of immigrants may partially explain their relative political disengagement. English proficiency is significantly correlated with registering and voting, likely because materials such as outreach, registration forms, and ballots are more readily available in English.³⁴ The process of assimilation — adaptation of the foreign language and customs (including politics) of a new society — occurs gradually, so that some first- and second-generation immigrants may lack the English proficiency often necessary (or political interest often inherent) in political participation. Nationally, naturalized U.S. citizens and U.S. citizens born of immigrant parents have lower voter turnout rates than the overall population.³⁵ Hence, efforts to increase voter outreach and education among Latino, Asian, and other immigrants in their native languages may positively impact their political participation.

Latino Voter Canvassing and GOTV Works!

In 2012, the Hartford Votes/Hartford Vota Coalition and the Hartford Public Library (a founding member) conducted neighborhood canvassing of 124 Latino voters who participated in their Latino Voter Engagement project. An evaluation of the project found that 64% of the canvass participants voted in the 2012 Presidential Election and that those who were canvassed twice voted at a rate of 21% higher than the others. In addition, voter turnout among those who were part of the canvass was 9.1% higher than overall turnout in the same voting districts and 6.7% higher than the citywide turnout rate.

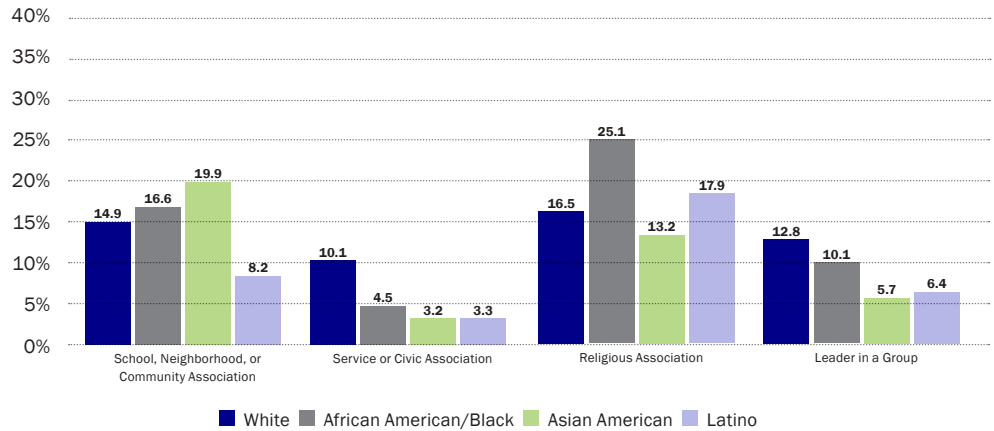
Differential rates of political participation are also evident when looking at the percentages of Latinos and African Americans/Blacks who participate in appointed state boards and commissions. A report published by the Office of the Secretary of the State in 2012 found that in 2011 there was a slight improvement among African Americans/Blacks but no significant improvement by Latinos in their levels of participation in these state panels.³⁶ In a press release issued in May 2012, Secretary Merrill concluded: “We see now for the first time since we have collected this data that the percentage of African Americans serving on boards and commissions [9.5%] is finally at parity with the African American population of Connecticut [9.4%].” This is a significant improvement over 8.1% reported for 2009. However, she added that “less than 4% of the appointees on these important panels are Hispanic,” a fact that contrasts with U.S. Census 2010 data that shows Hispanics/Latinos in Connecticut being the largest (now 13.4% of the state’s population, compared to 9.4% in 2000) and second fastest-growing minority group in the state (after Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders). Secretary Merrill went on to add that “making our state boards and commissions more representative of the population of our state will mean better government oversight and better decision making. And we clearly have more work to do in that regard.”

African Americans and Latinos were less trusting in certain institutions. About 57% of both groups were confident in corporations, and 86% of African Americans believed in public schools, compared to about 91% in other groups (pooled data). When asked about local police forces in a 2015 survey, just 54% of African American/Black and 65% of Latino adults in Connecticut thought police did a good job to keep residents safe in their area, compared to 77% of Asian Americans and 79% of White adults.³⁷

Civic health data also reveal wide discrepancies by race and ethnicity in neighbor attitudes and behavior. Pooled data from 2010, 2011, and 2013 showed that 67.1% of White adults trusted all or most of their neighbors, compared to 40.9% of African American/Black adults and 38.2% of Latino adults. White residents were also more than twice as likely as any other group to work with neighbors to address local issues. Differences in social engagement based on race or ethnicity reflect Connecticut’s residential segregation and the harmful effects of neighborhood poverty, to which minorities in Connecticut are disproportionately exposed.³⁸ However, belonging to organizations may provide a venue for more welcoming interactions between community members and may also help to address local issues. Of both White adults and African American/Black adults, around four in ten belonged to at least one group, compared to 31% of Asian Americans and 27% of Latino adults (pooled data).

But participation in types of organizations varies for each racial/ethnic group, demonstrating the importance that different community issues or modes of civic participation have for racial and ethnic groups. Particularly, 25.1% of African Americans/Blacks participated in a religious institution, not including attending services, compared to 17.3% of all adults. Latinos were also more likely than average to participate in religious institutions (according to pooled data). Meanwhile, pooled data demonstrated that White adults were twice as likely to join service or civic associations as other racial/ethnic groups; a larger share of Asian-Americans and African-Americans/Blacks joined school, neighborhood, or community associations than average (19.9% and 16.6% compared to 14.4% total).

Chart 11. Connecticut Group Participation by Race and Ethnicity



Data is pooled from 2010, 2011, 2013

In addition to the aforementioned characteristics, the propensity of racial and ethnic minorities to be young and to switch residences may cause their participation rates in these civic activities to generally be lower than Whites' (see Civic Engagement and Age section for the impact of age and residential mobility on civic participation).

Table 5. Population Characteristics by Race and Ethnicity

	CT Total	Whites	African Americans	Asian Americans	Latinos
<i>Youth Population</i> Population under 25 years	31.8%	27.4%	38.8%	34.5%	45.6%
<i>Residential mobility</i> Population that moved homes in the past year	12.0%	9.5%	16.2%	18.0%	19.7%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2009-13

Understanding Our Differences

Examining subsets of the population demonstrates that civic participation differs depending on demographic characteristics. As a general rule, Whites, older adults, and highly educated people have high civic health while youth, those who identify themselves as people of color or racial or ethnic minorities, and adults with low educational attainment are less likely to be civically involved. Sometimes, low participation in a subgroup results from many individuals choosing to abstain, but in other cases it may be a symptom of systemic barriers that limit participation for certain groups. Understanding why these differences manifest and addressing barriers to engagement for vulnerable groups will bolster individual well-being and foster a culture of community civic health to be enjoyed by all.

DATAHAVEN COMMUNITY WELLBEING SURVEY

The DataHaven Community Wellbeing Survey traces its roots to a series of locally-based efforts launched over the past decade by institutions and community organizations to gather information on regional well-being and quality of life throughout Connecticut. By unifying these efforts into a single survey in 2015, the program was able to encompass the entire State of Connecticut and sections of New York State while retaining its ability to produce high-quality town, neighborhood, and regional level information. Designed with and supported by more than 100 government, academic, health care, and community partners, the survey conducted in-depth interviews with more than 16,000 randomly-selected Connecticut adults in 2015.

Information gathered by the 2015 DataHaven Community Wellbeing Survey is cited in several cases throughout this report as a way to complement the information gathered from other national and state sources.

Understanding Small Population Groups and Neighborhoods

The exceptionally large sample size of the DataHaven Community Wellbeing Survey allows policymakers and the public to study social conditions, civic health, and other factors related to health and well-being within much smaller geographic areas and demographic groups than previously possible, including data for neighborhoods, towns, and small population groups.

The ability to disaggregate data at this level is of critical importance, as it allows us to look within our communities and see who is and who is not experiencing a high quality of life across different factors. For example, while close to 82% of Connecticut residents across all age groups report being satisfied with the places where they live, the level of satisfaction ranges tremendously by neighborhood – as low as 60% in some city center neighborhoods, but 95% or higher in wealthy neighborhoods throughout the state. Results are similar for other measures, such as perceived safety and the belief that a town is a good place to raise children. These data lead to the conclusion that improving quality of life in a handful of neighborhoods could have a major impact on the state's quality of life as a whole.

Table 6. Percent of Connecticut Adults Who Believe That the Area Where They Live Is An “Excellent” Or “Good” Place to Raise Children

Overall	70% of all adults in Connecticut
By Age	64% of 18 to 34 years, 72% of 35 to 64 years, 76% of 65 years and older
By Race or Ethnicity	56% of African Americans/Blacks, 61% of Latinos, 73% of Whites, 78% of Asian Americans
By Income Level	50% of those with incomes of less than \$15,000 per year, 87% of those with incomes of \$200,000 per year or more
By Community Type	36% in urban centers, 78% in rural towns, 95% in wealthy suburban areas (on average across multiple towns within each category)

Source: DataHaven Community Wellbeing Survey, 2015, preliminary results

By applying this lens, we can also see that small population groups such as older adults, persons with disabilities, those with limited financial assets, and recent immigrants are likely to respond differently than their peers across the state. For instance, like other data sources, the 2015 Community Wellbeing Survey shows that older adults are about as likely to volunteer in their communities as adults of other age groups. However, a further disaggregation of survey data reveals that adults age 80 or above are significantly less likely to volunteer than adults age 60-79. The survey also indicates that adults age 80 or above are much more likely than adults age 60-79 to say that they almost never have access to a car when they need it (13% versus 5%). More information can be found on the DataHaven website, www.ctdatahaven.org.

CONCLUSION: *Challenges and Opportunities*

As this report has shown, there are many efforts underway to improve the civic health of our state. But even with important progress, urgent challenges remain.

There are significant gaps in the level and type of civic engagement, especially between and among: those with higher income and education and those with less; our younger and older residents; and people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Only as we understand, tackle, and close these gaps can we create a state that is civically, economically, and socially vibrant.

We — the Office of the Secretary of the State, Everyday Democracy, a growing number of sponsors, and a diverse and growing Civic Health Advisory Group — have continued to commit ourselves to assessing the civic health of our state and taking action to improve it. We know that making a difference will require us to expand and sustain our efforts. We keep at it because we believe that our great state can be even greater.

In the past four years, individuals and groups around the state have joined this effort, contributing their volunteer time, their staff time, and their passion for civic health for all. All who have been part of this sustained work know that most people want to be involved. Most people want to get to know others who aren't like themselves, dispel stereotypes, have good working relationships with each other and public officials, have a voice in the matters that affect their lives, and work together. Most people want to be part of the civic life of their neighborhoods, towns, cities, and state. Too often, people don't feel included or know where or how to begin.

All residents of the state need to know that their voices and participation are not just invited, but welcomed. They need to know that their time will be used well and that they will have a chance to be heard and make a difference. And they often need supports such as child care, transportation, flexibility in meeting times, and translation services. All of these factors make a difference in the rates of participation, whether the participation takes the form of voting, volunteering, attending parent-teacher conferences, or participating in public meetings. When someone participates, even in small ways, it makes a difference. Once someone participates for the first time, this can open the way to other forms of participation, such as sitting on public boards and commissions, joining a leadership development program, or even running for public office.

Just ask Hernan Illingworth, a parent who first served on the school leadership team at his daughter's school, then became president of the School-Parent Association, then president of the district-wide Parent Advisory Council, and, most recently, was elected as a member of the Bridgeport Board of Education. Or ask Shelly Jackson, a participant in Hartford's "A Better Response: Community Conversations on Mental Health" dialogues who shared with us the words of one of her action team members:

"Without people of courage who are willing to stand up and allow us to see them as human beings, as our neighbors and friends, we would have little hope of becoming healthy, inclusive communities."

You may also ask Angelica Moquete, a senior at East Granby High School and member of the Connecticut Youth Forum Leadership Network. She participated in Text, Talk, Act on Mental Health and subsequently asked her principal to support student-driven activities that can raise awareness about mental health at her school. These first steps of civic action can cultivate a lifetime of civic engagement.

CALL TO ACTION: *CT Civic Health Advisory Group Recommendations*

People of all backgrounds, ages, education levels, and communities can join in improving the civic life of Connecticut. Yes, there are challenges across our state, but there are also many strengths and assets.

We call on everyone who cares about the civic health of our state to join us in working to create a strong “civic infrastructure” — one that creates welcoming opportunities for participation and problem-solving for everyone, at community, regional and state levels.

As you think about possibilities for your own action, think about how you are contributing to — or would like to contribute to — the following:

- **Opportunities for children** of all backgrounds and income levels to observe and participate in community problem-solving.
- **Hands-on civics education** for all children, in every school district, taught in ways that show how civics connects to daily life.
- **Preparing young people and young adults** for lives of engaged citizenship through education of civic and social responsibilities and engagement in community-strengthening efforts, both at institutions of higher education and within places of employment.
- **Opportunities for middle-aged and older adults** to find pathways to service that will benefit people of all generations.
- **Welcoming and culturally relevant ways** for recent immigrants to take part in civic and political life.
- **Opportunities for residents** to work with each other across racial and ethnic lines.
- **Creative ways to encourage and sustain engagement** among people of all backgrounds who have not felt welcome in the life of the community.
- **Opportunities for residents to work with each other** and with public officials to make a difference on local and state-level public problems.
- **Creative uses of social media** to connect all people to civic engagement opportunities and to the call for greater civic health.
- **Opportunities for people to form relationships** across town lines to make a difference on regional public issues.
- **Helping people connect** with their neighbors.
- **A culture of belonging and participation** that strives to create “One Connecticut” that works for all parts of our diverse state.
- **Ways to tell the story** of how we are improving our civic health and inspire others to make a difference.

There are many other ways to strengthen the civic health of our communities and state. We ask you to think about the ways that are most meaningful to you and the most meaningful and doable ways you want to contribute.

THE WORK OF THE CIVIC HEALTH ADVISORY GROUP *Since the 2011 Report*

As this report has shown, the publication of the 2011 report with its action recommendations resulted in new working relationships and projects aimed at improving civic health across our state. Our diverse and growing group has worked on:

- **Opportunities for children to learn about civic life** and ways to participate civically through stronger civics education guidelines and more resources in all school districts across the state.
- **New ways to involve women and people of color** on boards and commissions.
- **New civic resources and new ways** to access those resources online, via the United Way 2-1-1 website's Civic Participation Resource Guide page.
- **Increased opportunities for residents and local leaders** to participate together in conversations and action on important issues.
- **New ways to educate people** about opportunities to participate.
- **New and stronger ways to involve high school youth and college students** in civic participation, via video making, problem solving, and conferences.
- **New ways for public libraries** to be involved in civic participation, spearheaded by the Hartford Public Library.
- **Increasing voter participation among Latino voters**, via new collaborations and groundbreaking canvassing efforts.
- **Greater accessibility** to voting opportunities.
- **New opportunities for youth participation** in issue conversations through social media.

We are beginning to see results from these efforts, but we know there is still much to do.



Photo by Pramod Padhan, Hartford Public Library

The Commitments of the Connecticut Civic Health Advisory Group

With the publication of this report, the Civic Health Advisory Group commits to build on these past efforts wherever possible. We are also planning additional efforts. All that we do is aimed at creating larger and sustainable opportunities for voice, participation, and collaboration across the state.

As this report goes to press, we are planning the following activities. We invite your voice and participation.

We will help organize and lead conversations on civic health in all regions throughout the state. We will kick off the conversation on civic health at the Old Statehouse in June of 2016, with an event that highlights the themes and calls to action in this report. After that, members of our civic health advisory group will work with public officials and other civic leaders across the state to bring all kinds of people into conversations. We will provide resources so that social studies teachers can bring young people into the conversation. People will have the chance to talk with each other about the challenges they face, their own experiences, their vision for the future, and what can help our communities and state reach its civic potential.

The Secretary of the State's Office and the Civic Health Advisory Group will bring together leaders from every sector for a statewide consideration of the State of Democracy and a Call to Action. We will bring together leaders from the public, nonprofit, and private sectors to come together to discuss the current state of our democracy and their commitments to action, within and across sectors. In this way, formal and informal leaders from government, the faith community, K-12 education, business, early childhood, leadership development, parent leadership, higher education, youth-serving organizations, women's groups, Latino groups, African American groups, Asian American groups, Native American groups, the philanthropic community, the media, the nonprofit community, and others will have the chance to consider Connecticut's civic gaps and make specific proposals and commitments to close them.

We will develop a communication and media initiative to bring greater numbers of Connecticut residents into conversation and action on civic health. An important part of this will be to document and lift up stories of people across Connecticut who are getting involved, bridging divides, connecting with others, and using their voices. Individuals of all ages and backgrounds are making a difference in their neighborhoods, schools, communities, and regions.

In the past four years, we have seen a widespread desire to join with others to open up pathways for participation, strengthen how we relate to and listen to each other, and find ways to collaborate across backgrounds, generations, views, and sectors. We want to magnify the awareness of and impact of people's good work.

Please Join Us

Maybe you are already working on some aspect of civic health but you want to connect with others across Connecticut who care about similar things. Perhaps this is the first time you have considered your own role in the civic life of our state. Either way, there are many opportunities for you to be part of Connecticut's rich civic life! The Civic Participation Resource Guide available online through United Way's 2-1-1 is a good start. You can also contact the Connecticut Civic Health Project's Coordinator, Valeriano Ramos, at vramos@everyday-democracy.org, to learn how you can be part of the work of strengthening our state's civic health.

Members of the Connecticut Civic Health Advisory Group

Mark Abraham

Executive Director, DataHaven

Ingrid Álvarez-DiMarzo

Connecticut State Director
Hispanic Federation

Joseph Barber

Director, Office of Community Service and
Civic Engagement at Trinity College

Marilyn Calderón

Executive Director, Connecticut Parent
Power

Melvyn Colón

Executive Director, Southside Institutions
Neighborhood Alliance

Rick Cruz

Vice-President, Greater Bridgeport Latino
Network

Jamie M. Daniel

Director of Programming, The Connecticut
Forum

Beth Deluco

Executive Director, Civics First

Pat Donovan

Director of Memberships, League of
Women Voters of Connecticut

Marcia DuFore

Executive Director, North-Central
Connecticut Regional Mental Health
Board

Matt Farley

Executive Director, Connecticut Campus
Compact

Doug Fisher

Executive Director, Connecticut
Humanities

Bob Francis

Executive Director, RYASAP-Catalyst for
Community Change

Karen Hobert Flynn

Senior Vice-President for Strategy
and Programs, Common Cause, Inc.
Connecticut Chapter

Richard Frieder

Director of Community Development & Civic
Engagement, Hartford Public Library

Jillian Gilchrest

Senior Policy Analyst, Permanent
Commission on the Status of Women

Mui Mui Hin-McCormick

Executive Director, Connecticut Asian Pacific
American Affairs Commission

Dr. Susan Herbst

President, University of Connecticut

Dawn Homer-Bouthiette

Director for Family Strength & Parent
Leadership, Connecticut Commission on
Children

Bernard L. Kavalier

Founder & Principal, Express Strategies LLC

Dominique Lasseur

Executive Director, Civic Life Project

Charlene LaVoie

Office of the Community Lawyer, Winsted CT

Martha McCoy

Co-Chair of the Civic Health Advisory Group
& Executive Director, Everyday Democracy

The Honorable Denise W. Merrill

Co-Chair of the Civic Health Advisory Group
& Secretary of the State of Connecticut

Lourdes Montalvo

Director of Constituent Services, Office of
the Secretary of the State of Connecticut

Werner Oyanadel

Executive Director, Connecticut Latino and
Puerto Rican Affairs Commission

Matthew K. Poland

Chief Executive Officer, Hartford Public
Library

Richard J. Porth

President and CEO, United Way of
Connecticut

Cheri Quickmire

Executive Director, Common Cause
Connecticut

Valeriano Ramos Jr.

Civic Health Project Coordinator & Director
of Strategic Alliances, Everyday Democracy

Michelle Riordan-Nold

Director, Connecticut Data Collaborative *

Carmen Siberón

Program Officer, William Caspar Graustein
Memorial Fund

Paul Skaff

Director of Education & Special Projects, The
Connecticut Network (CT-N)

Diane Smith

Senior Producer for Program Development,
The Connecticut Network (CT-N)

James Spallone

Deputy Secretary of the State, Office of the
Secretary of the State

Lindsey Tengtanga

Executive Director, Connecticut Public Allies

Yanil Terón

Executive Director, Center for Latino
Progress

Nancy Thomas

Director of Initiative for the Study of Higher
Education and Public Life/Campus Counts,
CIRCLE at Tufts University

Shannon Wegele

Chief of Staff, Office of the Secretary of the
State of Connecticut

Sally Whipple

Executive Director, Connecticut's Old State
House

Elaine Zimmerman

Executive Director, Connecticut Commission
on Children

*Errata: correct title is
Executive Director

ENDNOTES

- 1 Unless specifically noted, all findings in this report are based on analysis of the most recent Census Current Population Survey (CPS) data conducted by NCoC. See About This Report and Technical Notes for more information. U.S. Census Bureau. (2012-2013). "Current Population Survey." Available at <http://www.census.gov/>
- 2 Independent Sector. (2014). "The Value of Volunteer Time." Available at http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time#sthash.lpQxul84.dpbs
- 3 Connecticut Council for Philanthropy. (2014). Giving in Connecticut. Available at <https://www.ctphilanthropy.org/sites/default/files/resources/Giving%20in%20Connecticut%202014.pdf>
- 4 Rock the Vote (2011). "Voting System Scorecard: Are states serving the rising electorate?" Available at <http://s3.rockthevote.com/downloads/2011-voting-system-scorecard-report.pdf>
- 5 2015 DataHaven analysis of Connecticut voting laws. DataHaven used the same methodology from the 2011 Rock the Vote report to calculate Connecticut's voting access scorecard, and therefore the 2015 recalculation is comparable to the 2011 Rock the Vote report scorecard.
- 6 Brennan Center for Justice. (2012). "Election 2012: Voting Law Roundup." Available at <http://www.brennancenter.org/analysis/election-2012-voting-laws-roundup>
- 7 During midterm election years, voters elect representatives for local and state offices, or for the U.S. Congress. According to the Secretary of the State (SOTS) of Connecticut, 55.6% of registered voters cast ballots in Connecticut during the 2014 midterm elections. The CPS and the SOTS data sets have different sample sizes and data collection methods and therefore should not be compared. The CPS voter turnout data are reported in the narrative to remain consistent with other CPS data cited throughout the report, and to allow national and state comparisons. For voter turnout data from the SOTS, see The Connecticut Secretary of the State. (2015). "Statistics and Data." Available at <http://www.ct.gov/sots/cwp/view.asp?q=401492>
- 8 Research by NCoC revealed that communities in which residents reported higher rates of trusting, talking to, and helping neighbors, and socializing with family and friends also had lower unemployment rates from 2006-2010, even controlling for demographic and economic factors. See National Conference on Citizenship. (2012). Civic Health and Unemployment II: The Case Builds, Washington, DC. Available at <http://www.nccoc.net/unemployment2>
- 9 Auburn Gresham and Englewood are two Chicago neighborhoods with similar demographics — both are predominantly African American with high rates of poverty and crime — but during the 1995 Chicago heat wave, Englewood saw ten times as many deaths. The low mortality rate in Auburn Gresham was attributed to the strong social connectedness and community involvement among residents. See Rodin, Judith, (2014). The Resilience Dividend: Being Strong in a World Where Things Go Wrong, New York, NY.
- 10 Ramos, Valeriano and Nancy Thomas. (2011). 2011 Connecticut Civic Health Index - What Connecticut can be: Civic Renewal for All. Everyday Democracy, the Office of the Secretary of the State of Connecticut, National Conference on Citizenship. Available at <http://nccoc.net/CTCHI>
- 11 Epstein, Joyce and Susan Dauber. (1991). "School Programs and Teacher Practices of Parent Involvement in Inner City Elementary and Middle Schools". The Elementary School Journal, Vol. 91, No. 3. Available at http://www.jstor.org/stable/1001715?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents
- 12 Programs (some of which are parent led) that gained statewide and national recognition for their work with parents include: The Parent Leadership Training Institute (Connecticut Commission on Children), Parent/Pupil Advocacy Journey (Connecticut Parent Power training), People Empowering People/PEP (UConn), Parents Supporting Educational Excellence/Parents SEE (Center for School Change), Voices for Families (Norwich Youth and Family Services), Community Parent Leadership Training (African Caribbean American Parents of Children with Disabilities/AFCAM), Next STEPs Program (Connecticut Parents Advocacy Center), Partnering with Parents Network (Connecticut Chapter of National Association on Mental Illness/NAMI), Padres Abriendo Puertas, Parent Leadership and Advocacy Training (Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities), Leadership Empowerment and Advocacy Development (Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness), Parent Leadership Academy (Enfield Public Schools), Hartford Parent University, and others.
- 13 Pew Research Center. (2014). "View of the Nation, the Constitution, and the Government." Available at <http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/26/section-2-views-of-the-nation-the-constitution-and-government/>
- 14 Residents saying they had a little, moderate, or great influence when asked to describe their ability to influence local government decision making. See DataHaven (2015). Community Wellbeing Survey. Available at <http://www.ctdatahaven.org/>
- 15 National Conference on Citizenship. (2012).
- 16 National Center for Charitable Statistics. (2015). "Quick Facts about Nonprofits." Urban Institute, Washington DC. Available at <http://nccs.urban.org/statistics/quickfacts.cfm>
- 17 Ramos, Valeriano and Nancy Thomas. (2011).
- 18 In 2012, the top 1 percent of income earners made 51 times the income of the bottom 99 percent in Connecticut, more than any other state. See Sommeiller, Estelle and Mark Price. (2015). "The Increasingly Unequal State of America." Economic Policy Institute, Washington DC. Available at <http://www.epi.org/publication/income-inequality-by-state-1917-to-2012/>
- 19 Citing a Phoenix marketing International study, CT by the Numbers. (2015). "Connecticut Ranks #2 in Millionaires; New Jersey Drops to #3." Available at <http://ctbythenumbers.info/2015/01/23/connecticut-ranks-2-in-millionaires-bumps-new-jersey-down-to-3/>
- 20 Buchanan, Mary and Mark Abraham. (2015). "Connecticut has more concentrated poverty (and wealth) than most metros." TrendCT. Available at <http://trendct.org/2015/05/27/connecticut-has-more-concentrated-poverty-and-wealth-than-most-metros/>
- 21 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2011). "Understanding Neighborhood Effects of Concentrated Poverty." Available at <http://www.huduser.org/portal/periodicals/em/winter11/highlight2.html>
- 22 Buchanan, Mary and Mark Abraham. (2015).
- 23 National Conference on Citizenship. (2011). Civic Health and Unemployment: Can Engagement Strengthen the Economy? Washington, DC. Available at <http://www.nccoc.net/unemployment>
- 24 Throughout this section, pooled (or aggregated) data from three years of CPS surveys are cited where single-year data samples for population subgroups were too small. Pooled data related to volunteering and giving are from 2011, 2012, and 2013; pooled data on all other topics are from 2010, 2011, and 2013.
- 25 DataHaven (2015). Community Wellbeing Survey. Available at <http://www.ctdatahaven.org/>
- 26 Percent of population per age group that, at the time of the survey, did not live in the same house as one year ago. U.S. Census Bureau. (2013). "Geographical Mobility in the past year by Age for Current Residence in the United States." Available at www.census.gov
- 27 Adults 18 to 34 years represented 36 percent of petition creators and 38 percent of petition signers through December 2013 on Change.org. See Smolensky, Melissa. (2013). "The Data behind Online Activism at Change.org." Chartio. Available at <https://blog.chartio.com/blog/the-data-behind-online-activism>
- 28 Text, Talk, Act on Mental Health is a text conversation platform developed by Creating Community Solutions as part of the national conversation on mental health sparked by President Barack Obama in 2013 (www.creatingcommunitysolutions.org). The Connecticut Youth Conversations and Action on Mental Health Project offers a unique opportunity for young people to participate civically through social media such as texting and through creative media projects. The Connecticut Youth Conversations and Action on Mental Health Project was funded through grants from The Fund for Greater Hartford, Children's Fund of Connecticut, and ValueOptions Connecticut.
- 29 In 2000, the Connecticut General Assembly passed legislation that required high school youth in the state to complete a half credit of civics before graduation. This initiative was spearheaded by then State Representative Denise Merrill, now Secretary of the State of Connecticut. The mandate took effect with the high school graduating class of 2004.
- 30 Verba, Sidney et al. 1995. Voice and Equality: Civic Volunteerism in American Politics. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- 31 From a 2012 Press Release from the Office of the Secretary of the State of Connecticut on findings from the Biennial Report on the Gender and Racial Composition of Connecticut State Boards and Commissions. See Secretary of the State of Connecticut. (2012). "Merrill Sees Slight Improvement in the Representation of Women and Minorities in State Boards and Commission." The Office of the Secretary of the State of Connecticut. Available at http://www.sots.ct.gov/sots/lib/sots/releases/2012/5.22.12_merrill_releases_gender_and_racial_comp_report.pdf
- 32 In this report, we use the term "African Americans/Blacks" to refer to people of African and Afro-Caribbean ancestry or origin in the United States. As both "African American" and "Black" are used interchangeably in most parts of the country, we have opted to use both terms to denote the same group of people. In this report, however, this group does not include Latinos/Hispanics of African or Afro-Caribbean ancestry or origin. We use the term "Latino(s)" to refer to people of Spanish-speaking Caribbean, Latin American, or Spanish (Spain) origin or descent. The term "Hispanic" is used by the U.S. Bureau of the Census in reference to the same group of people, and in many parts of the United States the term "Hispanic" is used more often than the term "Latino." The term "Latino" is more often used among people in that ethnic group in most parts of the northeast U.S., including Connecticut, and in some regions of the country. The term "Latino" recognizes the distinct historical and cultural diversity and richness of Spanish-speaking people from Latin America and the Caribbean, which includes language as well as diverse racial, linguistic, and ethnic cultural identities. We use the term "White" to refer to White or Caucasian individuals who do not identify as Hispanic or Latino. The term "White Not Hispanic" is used by the U.S. Bureau of the Census in reference to the same group of people, and the term "Caucasian" may also be used interchangeably to describe this group.



ENDNOTES, *cont.*

³³ File, Thom. (2013). "The Diversifying Electorate - Voting Rates by Race and Hispanic Origin in 2012 (and Other Recent Elections)." U.S. Census Bureau. Available at <https://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/p20-568.pdf>

³⁴ Parkin, Michael and Frances Zlotnick. (2011). "English Proficiency and Latino Participation." *Politics & Policy*, Volume 39, No 4: 515-537. Available at <https://www.supportthevoter.gov/files/2013/08/English-Proficiency-and-Latino-Participation-in-U.S.-Elections.pdf>

³⁵ In 2010, overall voter turnout was 46 percent of eligible adults, 43 percent of eligible second-generation immigrants, and 37 percent of eligible immigrants (naturalized citizens). See Pew Research Center. (2013). "Second-Generation Americans: A Portrait of the Adult Children of Immigrants." Available at http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2013/02/FINAL_immigrant_generations_report_2-7-13.pdf

³⁶ Secretary of the State of Connecticut. (2012).

³⁷ DataHaven. (2015).

³⁸ Buchanan, Mary and Mark Abraham. (2015).

ABOUT THE FUNDING PARTNERS

CONNECTICUT HUMANITIES

Connecticut Humanities creates opportunities to think, learn, and understand more about ourselves, our communities, and our state. It believes that this work is essential to a democratic society, to the well-being of the people, and to the economic vitality of Connecticut. It brings together people of different viewpoints, ages, and backgrounds to learn from and about each other, discuss issues of vital concern, explore new ideas and historical perspectives, and experience the cultural richness around them.

WILLIAM CASPAR GRAUSTEIN MEMORIAL FUND

William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund has as its new mission achieving equity in education by working with those affected and inspiring all to end racism and poverty. In recognition of the depth and persistence of racial and economic inequality and its impact on children and families, the Fund has laid out a new strategic plan to guide the work of removing barriers to educational opportunity. This new mission emphasizes the importance of one of our state's strongest assets – the families and neighborhoods that have direct experience in raising children and dealing with the barriers of racism and poverty. The Fund believes that within all of us, and especially those most affected by racism and poverty, there are the strengths, determination, creativity, and wisdom we need to succeed.

THE FUND FOR GREATER HARTFORD

The Fund for Greater Hartford, formerly known as The Hartford Courant Foundation, was started in 1950, with its incorporation as a public foundation. In the early years, the Foundation's annual grants were funded by contributions from *The Hartford Courant*, one of the states' leading newspapers. The Fund entered a new era in 1979, when the 215-year-old Hartford Courant was purchased by Times Mirror Corporation of Los Angeles. The Hartford Courant Foundation's trustees understood the importance of the Foundation to the community, so as part of the purchase agreement the Foundation was restructured to become a private, independent foundation. The assets of The Fund, which consisted of stock in the Hartford Courant, were converted into a significant endowment which now funds the grants distributed each year. In 2014 alone, The Fund for Greater Hartford committed more than \$600,000 to the Greater Hartford community with a focus on its four priority areas: Arts, Community Development, Education and Health and Social Services.

Above Photo: Stony Creek CT, Photo by Robert Gregson, Connecticut Offices of Culture and Tourism



A WORD ABOUT RECOMMENDATIONS

NCoC encourages our partners to consider how civic health data can inform dialogue and action in their communities, and to take an evidence-based approach to helping our communities and country thrive. While we encourage our partners to consider and offer specific recommendations and calls to action in our reports, we are not involved in shaping these recommendations. The opinions and recommendations expressed by our partners do not necessarily reflect those of NCoC.

This report should be a conversation starter. The data and ideas presented here raise as many questions as they answer. We encourage government entities, community groups, business people, leaders of all kinds, and individual citizens to treat this report as a first step toward building more robust civic health in Connecticut.

TECHNICAL NOTE

Unless otherwise noted, findings presented in this Report are based on CIRCLE's analysis of the Census Current Population Survey (CPS) data. Any and all errors are our own. Volunteering estimates are from CPS September Volunteering Supplement, voting estimates from 2012 November Voting and Registration Supplement, and all other civic engagement indicators, such as discussion of political information and connection to neighbors, come from the 2013 CPS Civic Engagement 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 Connecticut CPS sample size used for this report ranges from 509 to 767 (civic engagement supplement) to 1,904 (volunteer supplement), and to 2,056 (voting supplement) residents from across Connecticut. This sample is then weighted to representative population demographics for the district. Estimates for the volunteering indicators (e.g., volunteering, working with neighbors, making donations) are based on U.S. residents ages 16 and older. Estimates for civic engagement and social connection indicators (e.g., favors with neighbors, discuss politics) are based on U.S. residents ages 18 and older. Voting and registration statistics are based on U.S. citizens who are 18 and older (eligible voters). When we examined the relationship between educational attainment and engagement, estimates are based on adults ages 25 and older, based on the assumption that younger people may be completing their education.

Because multiple sources of data with varying sample sizes are used, the report is not able to compute one margin of error for Connecticut 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. Data for some indicators are pooled from multiple years (2010-2013) for a more reliable estimate when sample sizes for certain cross tabulations may have been small. 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.

CIVIC HEALTH INDEX

State and Local Partnerships

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

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

STATES

Alabama

University of Alabama
David Mathews Center for Civic Life
Auburn University

Arizona

Center for the Future of Arizona

California

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

Colorado

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

Connecticut

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

District of Columbia

ServeDC

Florida

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

Georgia

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

Illinois

McCormick Foundation

Indiana

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

Kentucky

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

Maryland

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

Massachusetts

Harvard Institute of Politics

Michigan

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

Minnesota

Center for Democracy and Citizenship

Missouri

Missouri State University
Park University
Saint Louis University
University of Missouri Kansas City
University of Missouri Saint Louis
Washington University

Nebraska

Nebraskans for Civic Reform

New Hampshire

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

New York

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

North Carolina

Institute for Emerging Issues

Ohio

Miami University Hamilton Center for
Civic Engagement

Oklahoma

University of Central Oklahoma
Oklahoma Campus Compact

Pennsylvania

Center for Democratic Deliberation
National Constitution Center

South Carolina

University of South Carolina Upstate

Texas

The Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life,
University of Texas at Austin

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

Chicago

McCormick Foundation

Kansas City & Saint Louis

Missouri State University

Park University

Saint Louis University

University of Missouri Kansas City

University of Missouri Saint Louis

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

Boeing Company

Seattle Foundation

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

Resident Scholar, McCormick Foundation

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

Ted McConnell

Executive Director, Campaign for the Civic

Mission of Schools

Martha McCoy

President, 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

Chief Service Officer, National Conference

on Citizenship

Co-founder, Sagawa/Jospin, LLP.

Thomas Sander

Executive Director, the Saguaro Seminar,

Harvard University

David B. Smith

Chief of Programs and Strategy,

National Center for Service and

Innovative Leadership

Founder, Mobilize.org

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

Partnership Development Director,

National Conference on Citizenship

Michael Weiser

Chairman, National Conference on

Citizenship

Illir Zherka

Former Executive Director, National

Conference on Citizenship



cthumanities

DataHaven



Campus Compact
Connecticut



National Conference on Citizenship
Connecting People. Strengthening Our Country.



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