

2015 NORTH CAROLINA CIVIC HEALTH INDEX

Connections at the Heart of Our Innovation



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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THE 2015 NORTH CAROLINA CIVIC HEALTH INDEX

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Institute for Emerging Issues (IEI) is proud to announce the release of the 2015 North Carolina Civic Health Index, from which this Executive Summary is excerpted. The report, authored by IEI, is produced in partnership with the National Conference on Citizenship. A full copy of the report can be accessed at emergingissues.org.

The 2015 North Carolina Civic Health Index highlights an extraordinary opportunity: to strengthen our communities, lift our statewide economy, and improve the bottom lines of businesses of all sizes by improving civic health. In sponsoring this report, IEI extends its tradition of helping North Carolinians identify consensus strategies for enhancing our future economic prosperity.

What is civic health? It is the social and economic vitality that results when citizens interact productively with their neighbors, involve themselves in community institutions, and actively engage in public issues. Communities with high levels of civic health benefit from strong social networks characterized by trust and common purpose. These networks offer essential advantages, including an enhanced innovation capacity that bolsters economic resilience and increasingly drives wealth creation. Improved civic health has proven to be a powerful potential economic differentiator.

To determine North Carolina's civic health, we analyze indicators drawn from special Census and other government surveys. We look at such things as rates of volunteering and giving, voting, working in groups and with neighbors, and having confidence in public institutions. We compare North Carolina to other states, and summarize research confirming the relationship of high levels of civic health to positive social and economic outcomes.

Our Key Findings

- Contrary to the beliefs of many, overall, North Carolina's current levels of civic engagement are no better than national averages.
- There are some key areas in which we depart from national averages:
 - We participate at higher levels in schools, neighborhoods, community groups, and religious institutions compared to national averages, and at lower rates in sporting and recreational groups.
 - We have **lower trust in the media** than the national average.
 - We have some unique civic engagement assets, including **a high number of veterans who make up our engagement superstars**.
- Our efforts to enhance civic health must include outreach to under-engaged demographic subgroups, including young adults, racial and ethnic minorities, and persons with lower incomes or lower educational attainment.
 - Young adults' rates of participation on several indicators lag those of older adults by more than 25 percentage points.
 - **Young adults have more trust in corporations, the media, and public schools** than their older counterparts.
 - Generally, African-Americans and Latinos in North Carolina report lower levels of civic participation than do whites and non-Latinos.
 - Families with incomes above \$75,000 report civic engagement levels that far outpace those of families earning no more than \$35,000 for most, but not all, indicators.
 - **Individuals holding at least a bachelor's degree are substantially more engaged** on most measured indicators than persons with just a high school diploma.
- Rural and urban communities are more challenged to engage residents than suburban communities. In particular, rural residents report substantially less volunteering activity.

Our examination embeds North Carolina's civic health within a context of ongoing, rapid demographic transformation. In 25 years, North Carolina will be a top-seven "mega-state" by population and is expected to become a majority-minority state. We are quickly greying, browning, and urbanizing. Despite North Carolina's impressively advanced economy and leadership in many high-growth industries, median household incomes in our state are flat, the income gap is widening, and we are seeing rising poverty in our urban centers.

The 2015 North Carolina Civic Health Index invites all North Carolinians to reflect on the relationship between civic health and social and economic well being at this time of profound transformation in state demographics and the global economy. It includes numerous specific recommendations for improving civic health statewide and within under-engaged groups.

Together, we must set our sights far beyond average as we create a shared vision for our future. Higher levels of civic engagement will strengthen North Carolina communities and differentiate the state economically in an increasingly competitive world. Read the full report at emergingissues.org.

North Carolina Civic Health At-a-Glance vs. US Averages		North Carolina	US Average
INTERACTIONS WITH NEIGHBORS ¹	Talk with neighbors frequently	44.0%	41.4%
	Do favors for neighbors frequently	13.2%	12.1%
	Trust the people in your neighborhood all or most of the time	55.2%	55.8%
	Work with neighbors to fix something in the community	8.1%	7.6%
GROUP PARTICIPATION ²	Group participation with at least one organization	38.5%	36.3%
	Group participation: school group, neighborhood, or community association	17.7%	13.9%
	Group participation: service or civic association	6.3%	6.8%
	Group participation: sports or recreation association	7.5%	9.9%
	Group participation: church, synagogue, mosque, or other religious institution	25.0%	19.4%
	Group participation: any other type of organization	4.7%	5.0%
	Officer or member of committee for group or organization	10.6%	9.7%
VOLUNTEER & GIVE ²	Volunteering	26.0%	25.4%
	Charitable giving (\$25 or more)	53.3%	50.1%
CONFIDENCE IN INSTITUTIONS ²	Express confidence in corporations (some or a great deal)	62.0%	64.5%
	Express confidence in media (some or a great deal)	49.5%	55.0%
	Express confidence in schools (some or a great deal)	85.4%	84.5%



THANK YOU TO OUR BUSINESS COMMITTEE ON CIVIC HEALTH

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¹ Current Population Survey 2013: November Civic Engagement Supplement age 18+; and September Volunteering Supplement

² Current Population Survey 2013: November Civic Engagement Supplement age 18+

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