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Michigan Study Makes Recommendations for Improving Civic Life and Strengthening Communities

2015 Michigan Civic Health Index Shows Disparities in Michiganders Civic Health Performance

Lansing – A report released today by the Michigan Nonprofit Association, in conjunction with the National Conference on Citizenship, measures the engagement of Michigan residents in important civic activities such as voting, volunteering, interacting with neighbors, community participation, and charitable giving. The [2015 Michigan Civic Health Index](#) finds that Michigan’s civic health performance shows disparities and makes five primary recommendations for improvement.

Civic health is a community’s capacity to work together to resolve collective problems. On a community level, strong civic health positively affects local GDP, economic resilience, upward income mobility, public health, and student achievement. On an individual level, civic health is shown to improve people’s overall health – physical, emotional, social, and mental.

“Vibrant, livable communities require active, knowledgeable citizens. The 2015 Michigan Civic Health Index measures Michigan’s civic habits across a wide range of indicators that will guide the nonprofit sector’s strategies to achieve that vision,” said Donna Murray-Brown, President and CEO of Michigan Nonprofit Association.

The report finds that Michiganders perform very well on indicators measuring connectedness to family and friends and volunteer their time to causes that are important to them. Michigan also ranks among the highest states for voter registration (ranking 8th out of the 50 states and the District of Columbia) and voting in national elections (ranking 14th). By contrast, Michigan trails almost every other state when it comes to interacting with neighbors (ranking 48th). Michiganders also shy away from group participation and group leadership and don’t often attend public meetings or meet with public officials.

“The Michigan Nonprofit Association is doing critical work by promoting a conversation about civic life,” said Ilir Zherka, Executive Director of the National Conference on Citizenship. “This report reveals Michigan’s civic health strengths and weaknesses. Working together, I know Michiganders can leverage their strong familial and friendship networks towards greater community action and an even better civic life.”

Key Findings

- Although most Michiganders trust some or all of their neighbors (61%), they interact with them infrequently (35%).
- Michigan ranks well compared to other states for voter registration and voting in national elections (78% and 67% respectively), but voting behaviors differ starkly across lines of age, educational attainment, and affluence.
- Generations engage in civic life differently from one another. Millennials (those born in 1981 or after) engage less fully in more traditional modes of participation like public meeting attendance and voting (3% and 47% respectively), but they hold their own when it comes to volunteering, boycotting or buying products, and using the Internet to express opinions (26%, 16% and 9% respectively).

- The Silent Generation (people born from 1931-1945) demonstrates the most robust participation of all groups.
- Educational attainment has the most powerful correlation to civic engagement of any of the demographic indicators studied. The most educated citizens are the most fully engaged in our democracy.

The 2015 Michigan Civic Health Index is the second in a series of reports. The [inaugural report](#) was published in June 2013. The surveys are based on analysis of the U. S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS).

To read the full 2015 Michigan Civic Health Index, including five primary recommendations, please visit www.mnaonline.org.

NCoC's Civic Health Initiatives elevate the discussion of our nation's civic health. NCoC works with national, state, and city partners to measure how much people trust their neighbors, are active in their communities, and interact with their government. More information is available [here](#).

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Michigan Nonprofit Association (MNA)

Incorporated in 1990, MNA is a statewide membership organization dedicated to serving the diverse nonprofit sector through civic engagement, capacity building, data and technology, training, and advocacy. MNA manages multiple programs and affiliates including Highway T, The LEAGUE Michigan, Michigan Campus Compact, and is a sponsoring organization for AmeriCorps State and AmeriCorps VISTA. For more information, visit www.mnaonline.org

National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC)

[The National Conference on Citizenship](#) is a congressionally chartered organization dedicated to strengthening civic life in America. We pursue our mission through a cutting-edge civic health initiative, an innovative national service project, and cross-sector conferences. At the core of our efforts is the belief that every person has the ability to help their community and country thrive.