

# AMERICA'S



## CIVIC HEALTH INDEX

Civic Health in Hard Times

# 2009



NATIONAL CONFERENCE  
ON  
CITIZENSHIP

# 2009 AMERICA'S CIVIC HEALTH INDEX

## CIVIC HEALTH IN HARD TIMES

National Conference on Citizenship

<b>I</b>	<b>Introduction</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Executive Summary</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>The Economic Downturn is Reshaping Civic Engagement</b>
<b>4</b>	Americans are Turning Inward and Cutting Back Civic Engagement in Tough Economic Times
<b>6</b>	Americans are Helping with Shelter and Food
<b>6</b>	Older Americans May be Shifting from Volunteering and Community Work to Private Helping
<b>8</b>	Low-Income and Less-Educated Working Individuals are Hit Hard
<b>8</b>	Lower-Income People Serve in More Personal Ways
<b>10</b>	Some Political Engagement Continues After the Election
<b>10</b>	Recent Events Have Changed Public Confidence in Institutions
<b>12</b>	<b>Strategies for Civic Renewal</b>
<b>12</b>	Providing Incentives to Become More Involved
<b>13</b>	Public Service Does Not Seem to be a Common Career Motivation
<b>15</b>	Policy Changes for Civic Engagement
<b>16</b>	<b>Who Engages?</b>
<b>16</b>	Religiosity and Connection to Others Protect Against Service Recession
<b>17</b>	The Emerging Generation: Opportunities with the Millennials
<b>18</b>	Engagement and Perceptions of the Civic Context
<b>20</b>	Feeling Empowered Makes a Difference for the Generally Unengaged
<b>20</b>	<b>Appendix: The Indicators of Civic Health</b>
<b>22</b>	Endnotes
<b>24</b>	Civic Indicators Working Group and State Partners

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## INTRODUCTION

Since 2006, the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC), in partnership with the Civic Indicators Working Group, has published annual reports called *America's Civic Health Index*. These reports have informed Americans about leading indicators of our nation's civic health and motivated citizens, leaders and policymakers to strengthen the foundations of civic engagement. *America's Civic Health Index* has become the leading gauge of how well Americans are connecting to each other and their communities, and measures rates of volunteering, voting, connections to civic and religious organizations, trust in other Americans and key institutions, and other civic behavior and attitudes.

*America's Civic Health Index* received a new level of recognition through its inclusion in the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, which was signed into law in May 2009. The Act formalized a partnership between NCoC, the U.S. Census Bureau, and the Corporation for National and Community Service to develop, refine, and implement an annual civic health assessment.

Civic health and social capital have well-established connections to issues such as disaster resilience, crime, education, public health, and American democracy. For example, students who volunteer in their communities are also engaged and successful in school; retirees who volunteer are healthier and happier; and cities with higher levels of civic engagement have better schools and other public institutions.<sup>1</sup>

The 2009 *America's Civic Health Index* is based on a nationally representative survey of 1,518 Americans and additional oversamples of 2,371 respondents in six states, conducted in May 2009. That survey and this report have two major purposes.

Our first goal is to take the pulse of American civil society at a moment of great political change and economic turmoil. Political activity reached historic levels during the 2008 presidential election, but such momentum is often difficult to sustain.

Meanwhile, our nation and the world have been experiencing the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. This crisis might

be expected to have two effects. It could encourage Americans to work together on serious problems in their communities and nation. It could also prevent Americans from participating in civil society if they feel they must turn inward and look after their own families, or if the infrastructure that recruits and supports volunteers and other active citizens shrinks because of financial cuts.

The best way to follow trends in civic participation (other than voting and election work) will be to consult the federal government's annual survey of volunteering, group membership, and local community engagement.<sup>2</sup> Federal data for 2009 will become available in 2010. Meanwhile, in NCoC's Civic Health Index survey, we asked respondents directly whether they had expanded or reduced their own civic engagement, and whether they felt their communities were responding by serving more or cutting back. These were opinion questions, not objective measures of public behavior. Still, the results were unequivocal—most Americans said they are *reducing engagement and turning inward* under the stress of the economic crisis.

Our second goal is to develop and test new measures of civic engagement that broaden our understanding of the term and more accurately capture the full range of participation. Our 2007 report explored “citizen-centered”<sup>3</sup> work and also asked a detailed battery of questions about online civic engagement, information not previously collected in surveys. Those two sets of questions have allowed us to better define modern citizenship, and some of the most meaningful items from 2007 and 2008 have been retained in the 2009 *America's Civic Health Index*.

This year's survey adds a new dimension by investigating more personal forms of civic engagement that are especially salient at moments of economic contraction, such as giving people food or shelter in their own homes. The 2009 *America's Civic Health Index* found such forms of engagement especially common among America's least advantaged citizens.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**America's Civic Health Index for 2009 shows that the economic recession is causing a civic depression. The national survey finds that 72% of Americans say they cut back on time spent volunteering, participating in groups, and doing other civic activities in the past year while the economy was free-falling.**

Although this does not mean three-quarters of our population have stopped participating, it does mean they are participating less, and thus our overall civic capacity, or cumulative social capital, has significantly decreased.

Public perception supports this finding as **66% of Americans say they feel other people are responding to the current economic downturn by looking out for themselves**, while only 19% said people around them are responding to the recession by helping each other more.

This civic downturn is troubling at a time when the need for service and civic action is especially great. In this recession, families struggle, communities hurt, and our economy refuses to stabilize. During the first quarter of 2009, 12 million Americans were unemployed, almost twice as many as last year, making it the worst quarter since the Bureau of Labor Statistics started tracking employment in 1948. In our sample, 20% of households reported the loss of a job by one of their members, and 31% had trouble affording food or medication.

At this time of grave challenges, trust in our government and in other key institutions has reached new lows. **Only 6% of Americans have a "great deal of confidence" in Congress, the Executive Branch, or banks and financial institutions, and major companies occupy the basement of public trust at only 5%.** This is a significant change as major companies were the 3rd most trusted institution in 2000 and have fallen to 10th in 2009, and banks have fallen from 2nd in 2000, 2004, and 2006 to 7th in 2009.

In these troubling times, however, there is a silver lining, a ray of hope, a demonstration of America's good heart. This year, we investigated a few new indicators of engagement – more personal forms of participation that often go unnoticed.

**In the past year:**

**50% gave food or money to someone in need who is not a relative**

**43% gave food or money to someone in need who is a relative**

**17% allowed a relative to live in their home or on their property**

**11% allowed a non-relative to live in their home or on their property**

These forms of civic engagement need to be further explored, as they are every bit as critical as activities such as charity walks and volunteering. Interestingly, people with the least means are giving the most. **Although people of modest means are less likely to volunteer than affluent Americans (29% vs. 50%), they are more likely to give food, money or shelter (24% vs. 21%).** When looking specifically at those who do not participate in traditional forms of volunteering, 39% of those making less than \$50,000 helped in other ways like providing food and shelter, versus only 27% of those in higher income brackets.

In addition to turning inward to take care of one's family and friends, Americans are also focusing their trust toward more personal institutions--**small/local businesses received the highest level of public trust**, with 31% expressing a "great deal of confidence."



Organized religion also saw an increase in trust as this institution moved from 5th place in 2002 to 2nd in 2009. Participation in religious groups played a major role in resiliency -- **40% of those who attend religious services frequently reported an increase in their civic engagement**, matched only by those who spend a great deal of time visiting their friends.

Beyond the differences between socio-economic classes, there are also interesting variations based on age and race.

**Millennials lead the way in volunteering with a 43% service rate**, compared to only 35% for Baby Boomers. Even within a generation, there are significant differences as 45% of Baby Boomers who are still in the work force volunteer, versus only 23% of those who are retired. Additionally, Baby Boomers are engaging in other ways – 38% of Baby Boomers (49% of those in retirement and 33% of those still working) gave food, money or shelter, while only 28% of Millennials did the same.

**Millennials who use social networking sites for civic causes are also more civically engaged in their communities.** Although we cannot conclude that belonging to social networking sites alone causes an increase in civic engagement, those who engage online come from diverse economic and educational backgrounds, illustrating the potential of technology in bridging traditional civic gaps. Online platforms provide engagement opportunities for many Americans who may not belong to a formal volunteering organization.

Although trust in federal government was quite low overall, **African Americans were much more likely to have some level of trust in federal government** (40%) versus Whites (22%). Yet, trust of small businesses was only 15% among African Americans versus 36% for Whites.

In the aftermath of the intense 2008 presidential campaign, only 8% of people have tried to change policies in their local communities and only 12% have contacted public officials about issues that arose in the campaign. But the political conversation

continues as **33% said that they had tried to persuade friends about issues that arose in the campaign.**

In exploring potential solutions and ways people are willing to respond to the economic downturn, we found that 32% of **Americans are “very willing” to buy U.S.-made products** (67% somewhat/very willing), and a total of 69% are somewhat/very willing to give more food to those in need.

**Tax breaks, paid time off, and educational vouchers are the incentives that people favored most** as ways of increasing levels of public engagement. Additionally, there was very high support for public policy that provides tuition credit for community service, a national deliberation involving a million Americans on an important issue, requiring all high schools to provide service-learning courses, and implementing a new civics test to emphasize the need for civic education (all garnered 65-80% support).

The most important factors when choosing a career are salary and job security, with only 6% saying the public benefit of their career was their top motivator. However, the top industry that would “allow you to do the most good for your community or country” was a socially responsible corporation at 19%, compared to Fortune 500 companies that received the lowest marks at only 7%.

Finally, in the 2009 survey, we asked, “In your opinion, how strong is the civic tradition of your state?” The top three states in this regard were Texas, Minnesota and Kansas (Vermont and Utah scored higher, but the sample sizes were too small to provide reliable estimates). Citizens of Illinois, Arizona, and Georgia were likely to rate their civic traditions as weaker than other states.

In addition to the *America's Civic Health Index* report, the National Conference on Citizenship will be partnering with local institutions to release state specific reports in California, Florida, Illinois, Minnesota, New Hampshire, and Ohio throughout the fall of 2009.

# THE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN IS RESHAPING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Americans have experienced many significant events in the past year, namely, the excitement of the presidential election, which stimulated civic participation, and the economic recession, which is forcing changes in American's daily lives and circumstances.

With these changes, it is no surprise that some Americans say they are changing the way they help others. Our survey does not measure rates of volunteering or active citizenship in a way that permits precise estimates of trends over time—the Census Current Population Supplement is a better vehicle for that. But we asked Americans their *perception* of the effect of the recession on their own and their neighbors' engagement. The responses suggest that many are less able to volunteer, but are refocusing their compassion toward others in ways that are much closer to home and respond to urgent needs during this time of economic hardship.

**Americans are Turning Inward and Cutting Back Civic Engagement in Tough Economic Times. In our survey:**

**72%** of respondents said they had cut back on the time they had spent volunteering, participating in groups, and doing the other civic activities included in the Civic Health Index (see the appendix for the full list). This does not mean that 72% have stopped participating, only that they say they are participating less.<sup>4</sup>

**66%** said that people are responding to the current economic downturn by looking out for themselves, while only 19% said people around them are responding to the recession by helping each other more.

**14%** thought that people wish they could do more but cannot find a way.

**Just 7%** felt that traditions of service from earlier times are being revived.

With news about budget and job cuts everywhere, one of the reasons for a decline in engagement—or perceived decline—could be a reduction in disposable income and time. Another reason could be budget problems in the civic infrastructure. Nonprofit organizations might, for instance, have had to lay off people who coordinated volunteering opportunities. The same thing may be happening in schools. Thirty-two percent of the sample said they knew about budget cuts in local schools (as did 40% of households with any child under 18). This may mean budget cuts in various civic- and service-related activities such as unpaid internships, events that need volunteers, and community newsletters that advertise events. In fact:

**32%** of the whole sample reports their local schools have cut staff and budget; just 1.9% report increases.

**18%** of our sample say they serve on a nonprofit board or committee that has a budget. Of those, 32% have cut their budget and 15% have increased it.

Of this group, less than **5%** say their organization has received stimulus funding from the federal government.

NCoC's *America's Civic Health Index* is composed of some forty indicators (listed in the appendix), and civic health has consistently risen when unemployment has been high.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps people generally increase their civic engagement when economic problems mount—not only by helping other citizens, but also by becoming more politically active and more attuned to news, as reflected in other measures of the Civic Health Index. On the basis of that relationship, we might have predicted that civic engagement would rise in the current economic climate.

There was an exception, however: the severe recession of 1981-1983, when unemployment reached double digits. In that period, the Civic Health Index fell significantly. Meeting attendance, religious attendance, and volunteering were some of the components that fell in that period and pushed the Index down. It is possible that we are seeing an analogous civic decline in the current recession.

In severe recessions, there could be a kind of threshold effect: growing need usually encourages more engagement, but not when economic pressures on individuals and organizations become too great and people have to turn inward. Unemployment would only be one aspect of this problem; another aspect would be funding cuts in nonprofit organizations and agencies that provide opportunities for civic engagement. Civil society in contemporary America revolves around programs with budgets, funders, and paid staff; it is therefore vulnerable to cuts.

Although we do not yet have hard data to gauge national trends in the nonprofit sector during this recession, anecdotal evidence suggests a somewhat paradoxical situation. On one hand, there is an increase in the number of people who are available and willing to volunteer their time; but on the other, there is nowhere for them to go. There are laid-off workers who are willing to volunteer substantial amounts of time as unpaid interns to keep up their skills and open up networking opportunities.<sup>13</sup> In fact, Volunteer.org has reported a 30% increase in the number of visitors this year, and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Philadelphia

## ECONOMIC CLIMATE

During the past 18 months of recession, millions of Americans have found themselves without jobs or have faced other serious economic challenges. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were a total of 3.5 million lay-offs between December 2007 (when the recession started) and May of 2009, when the Civic Health Index surveys were conducted. During the first quarter of 2009, 12 million Americans were unemployed, almost twice as many as last year, making it the worst quarter since the Bureau started tracking employment in 1948. The impact of economy is reflected in multiple facets of the society; at the state level, budget cuts have led to funding cuts in services<sup>5</sup> and personnel cuts<sup>6</sup> in social service agencies. In fact, the government/nonprofit sector has experienced the worst job cuts, with more expected to come.<sup>7</sup>

Impacts of the recession are felt at home too. Recent surveys suggest that Americans are cutting cost of living by living with their parents,<sup>8</sup> pulling children out of expensive daycare (partly because some of them are no longer working)<sup>9</sup>, or using coupons to save money.<sup>10</sup> The rising need for help with food is illustrated by the increase in the number of Americans who enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: 26 million in 2007 and 32.2 million in 2009, which is a 24% increase.<sup>11</sup> Responses to our survey for *America's Civic Health Index* reflected these national statistics. In our sample:

**20% of households reported the loss of a job by one of its members**

**31% had trouble affording food or medication.**

**4% fell behind in mortgage payment or lost their homes to foreclosure (and additional 3% had a household member in that situation).**

experienced a 25% increase in the number of inquiries about becoming a mentor.<sup>14</sup> Some Americans are willing to spend more hours volunteering because they cannot give cash.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, the government/nonprofit sector has seen the worst job cuts among all sectors and many are unable to take advantage of the willing volunteers. Lay-offs appear to be happening most significantly in smaller nonprofits that rely on private donors and small grants, but are also occurring in large agencies.<sup>16</sup> Last winter, a survey of employers conducted by National Association of Colleges and Employers suggested that employers planned on reducing the number of internships by nearly 21%.<sup>17</sup> In the Civic Health Index, states that had the highest unemployment rates had lower volunteering rates than states that had lower unemployment rates.<sup>18</sup>

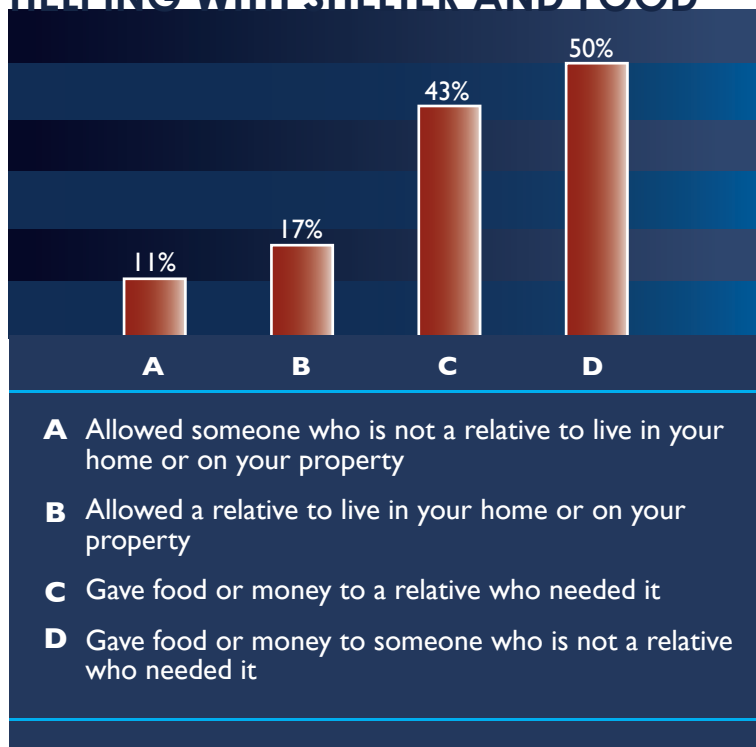
It is important to note that we asked about changes in civic engagement overall. Certain forms of engagement, such as volunteering, could remain stable—especially given recent federal efforts to promote volunteer service—while other ways of engaging fall. That would be consistent with an impression that people are doing less overall. We will know more when the U.S. Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics report the results of the Volunteering Survey next year.

## Americans are Helping with Shelter and Food

The 2009 *America's Civic Health Index* finds much evidence that we are directly helping people very close to ourselves by giving food and shelter to relatives and non-relatives in need. Almost half of all respondents had given food or shelter to someone other than a relative in the last year. We do not know whether these forms of assistance have grown during the recession; certainly, the need for them has.

These forms of civic engagement need to be further explored as they are every bit as critical, often more critical, than activities such as charity walks and volunteering that are typically more common among affluent Americans. In focus groups that CIRCLE (The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement) conducted before the 2008 election, giving people shelter emerged as a demanding form of “service” offered by some people who were not otherwise involved in civil society. For example, one young woman in Baltimore began the focus group by saying that she was uninvolved in her community, but she later described feeding a friend, counseling her, and letting her stay in her one-room apartment (with her own small child) because this friend was hiding from drug dealers. This is significant “service” of a type that usually eludes survey research.

## AMERICANS ARE HELPING WITH SHELTER AND FOOD



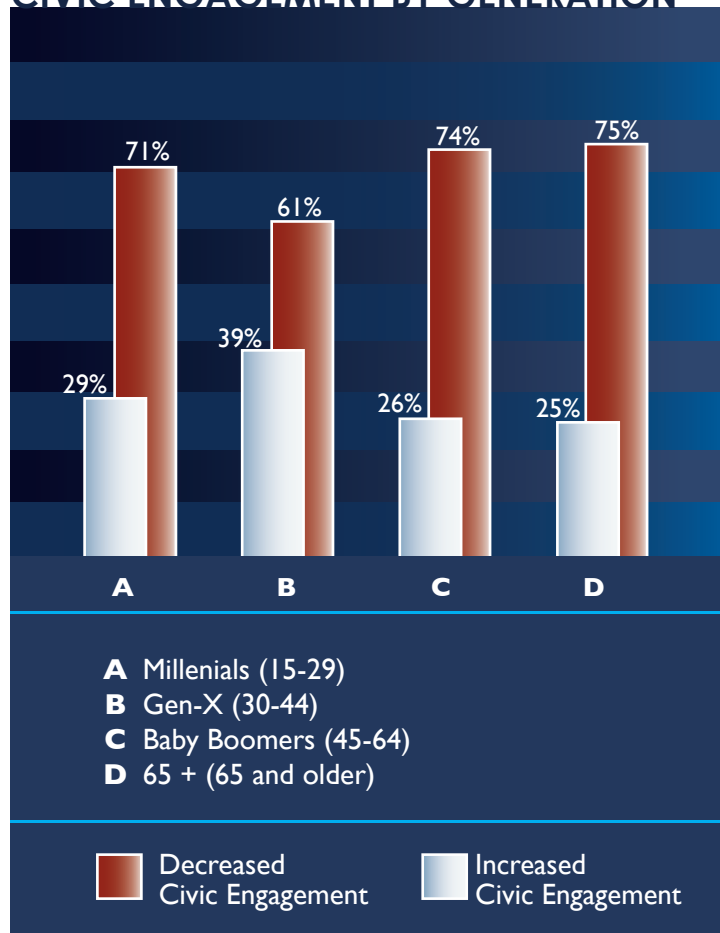
## Older Americans May be Shifting from Volunteering and Community Work to Private Helping

In the past, the Civic Health Index and other surveys have generally found that older people have volunteered, voted, and otherwise participated more than younger people. This year, however, younger people (currently, members of the Millennial Generation and Generation-X) have emerged as leaders in formal volunteering: 43% of Millennials and Generation-Xers volunteered in their communities, while 35% of Baby Boomers and 42% of Age 65+ did. Similar proportions—between 71% and 75%—of people in each generation said they had reduced their own engagement, but the proportion who cut back was highest among Age 65+.

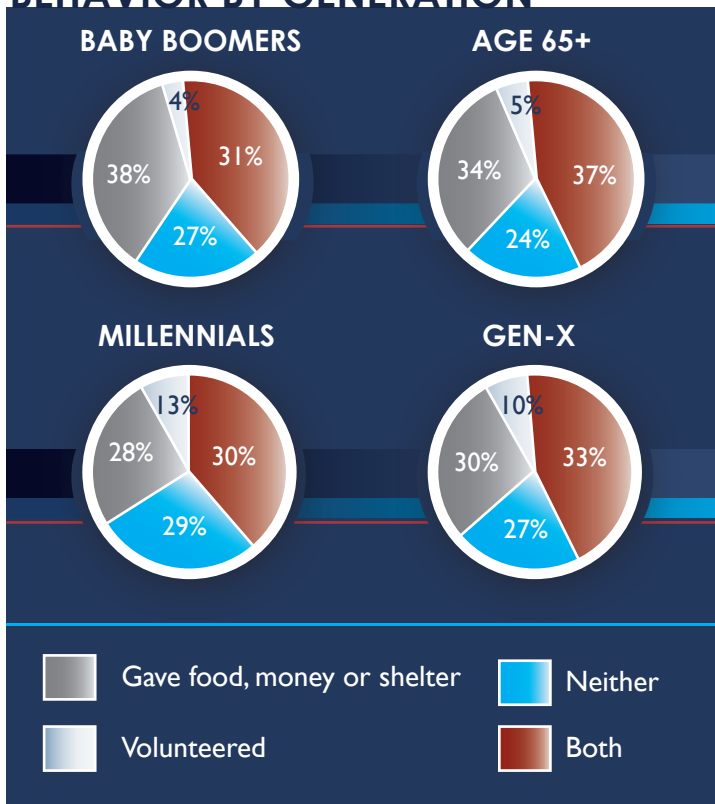
In this document, Millennials refer to people who are aged 15 to 29, Generation-Xers are people aged 30 to 44, Baby Boomers are people aged 45 to 64 and Age 65+ refers to people who are 65 or older, unless otherwise noted.



## % INCREASED/DECREASED CIVIC ENGAGEMENT BY GENERATION



## TYPES OF HELPING BEHAVIOR BY GENERATION

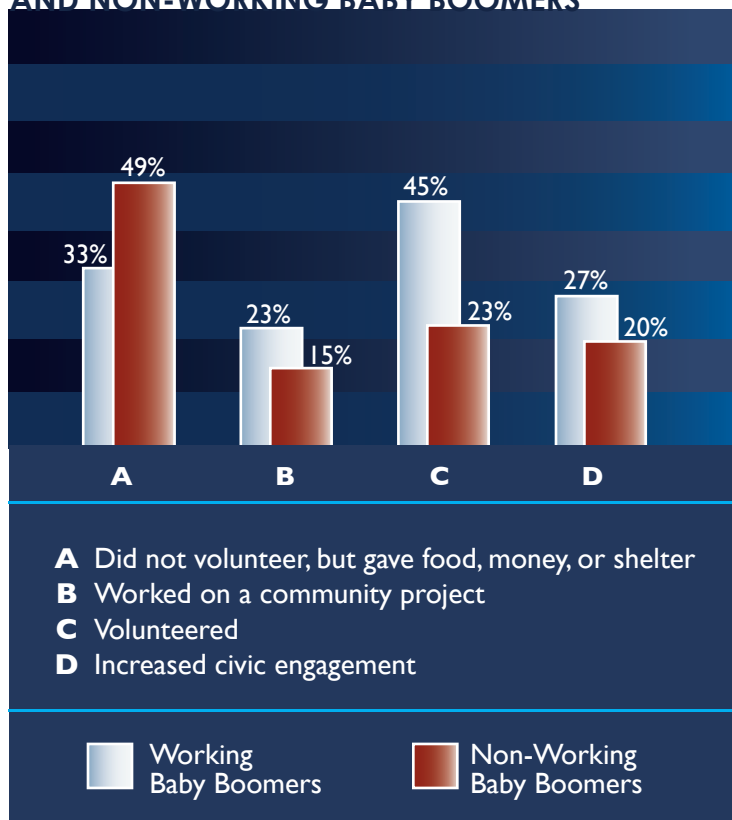


Although older people say they have cut back on their civic engagement overall and report lower volunteering rates than their younger peers, they are still helping in other ways. Sixty-five percent of Baby Boomers and 71% of Age 65+ either gave food or money or provided shelter to others who needed it. Although only 35% of Baby Boomers volunteered, an additional 38% of them provided food, money, or shelter. Overall, 75% of Age 65+ and 73% of Baby Boomers engaged in some type of helping behavior. Baby Boomers were especially likely to open their homes to others who needed it (26%). The proportions of each generation who did *nothing* are fairly similar and fall with age. Furthermore, Baby Boomers and those aged 65 or older were more likely to be deeply involved in community affairs than younger generations – they were more likely to attend public meetings where community affairs are discussed, and work with their neighbors to improve conditions in their community.

Baby Boomers, who had the lowest volunteering rate in this survey this year, may be in an especially difficult and yet important position in the current economic climate because they tend to juggle responsibilities for both their (now grown-up) children and their own parents. According to a 2005 study of Baby Boomers by The Pew Charitable Trusts, Baby Boomers provided substantial amounts of financial and practical (e.g., childcare, housework) help to their adult children.<sup>19</sup> With the current recession, it is likely that Baby Boomers are feeling more pressure than ever to help their own children, who may no longer have jobs or may be unable to afford childcare or housing. In fact, there is an increase in the portion of young people living with their parents—in 2007, 50% of 18- to 24-year-olds reported living with their parents and in 2009, this figure was 52.5%, suggesting that Baby Boomers are taking back adult children in their homes.<sup>20</sup> Thus, Baby Boomers are still likely to be helping others as much as they always have, but in a less public way this year because they are addressing immediate needs close to home.

Baby Boomers who are out of the labor force (retired, disabled, or “other”) are less engaged than Baby Boomers who are still working. Out of the Baby Boomer generation sampled, 23% are retired, whereas 57% are employed. Retired Baby Boomers are most likely to give food, money, or shelter and not volunteer, whereas employed Baby Boomers are much more likely to volunteer. Working may provide opportunities and networks that encourage volunteering. We know from previous research from the AARP that Baby Boomers believe they are leaving the world in worse condition than they inherited it and that tens of millions of them expect to give back to improve their communities.<sup>21</sup> Baby Boomers are clearly finding ways other than volunteering to do so.

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AMONG WORKING AND NON-WORKING BABY BOOMERS



## Low-Income and Less-Educated Working Individuals are Hit Hard

Lower-income individuals reported cutting back civic engagement more than their higher-income counterparts. Respondents whose household income was less than \$50,000—about half the national population—were more likely to say they had cut back on engagement, compared to those who had higher incomes.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, individuals with less education were more likely to have cut back a lot on engagement. Individuals in the higher educational and income bracket were more likely to report that they were engaging more (35.4% of those who earned \$100,000 or more, 36.8% with a bachelor's degree or more). In contrast, only 13% of those who have less than a high school diploma<sup>23</sup> reported increasing their civic engagement.

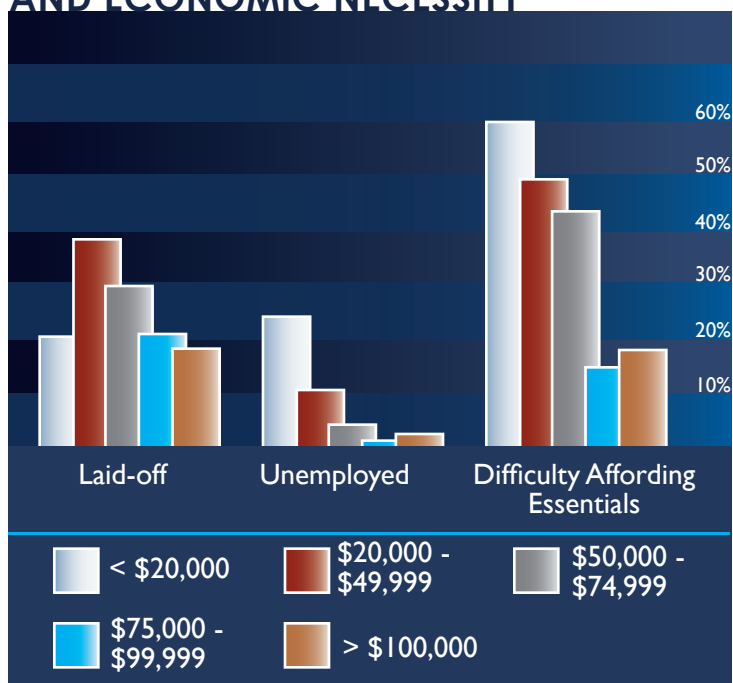
External factors, namely, economic necessity, may have influenced the ways in which people are engaging this year. Within the labor force of our sample (those who are available to work), a large portion of households whose income is between \$20,000 and \$75,000 have experienced job loss, lay-offs, and/or difficulty affording essentials.

## Lower-Income People Serve in More Personal Ways

Research has traditionally found large “civic gaps” between people with higher income and/or more education and those with lower income and education. On a question about traditional volunteering (for example, doing unpaid work for organizations, schools, and religious organizations), there was a large difference between respondents in lower and higher income brackets.

This year, we have broadened the definition of service and asked our participants about various ways they have been helping others. We found that people, especially in the lower income brackets, are channeling their good intentions into different ways of helping. Among non-volunteers, respondents in the lower income brackets were more likely to have given food, money, or shelter to those who were in need. When combining all forms of service, the civic gap is much smaller than the gap for the traditional definition of service (i.e., volunteering). Instead of (and often in addition to) cleaning parks, tutoring children, or helping out in an animal shelter,

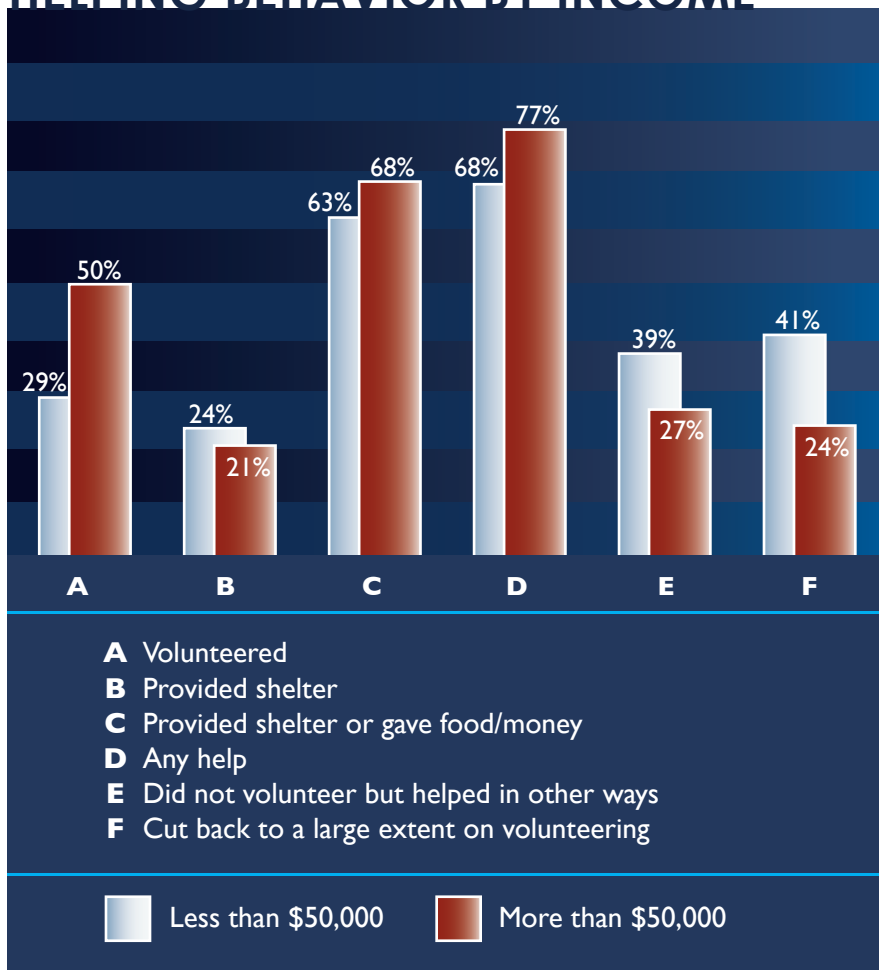
## INCOME, EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND ECONOMIC NECESSITY



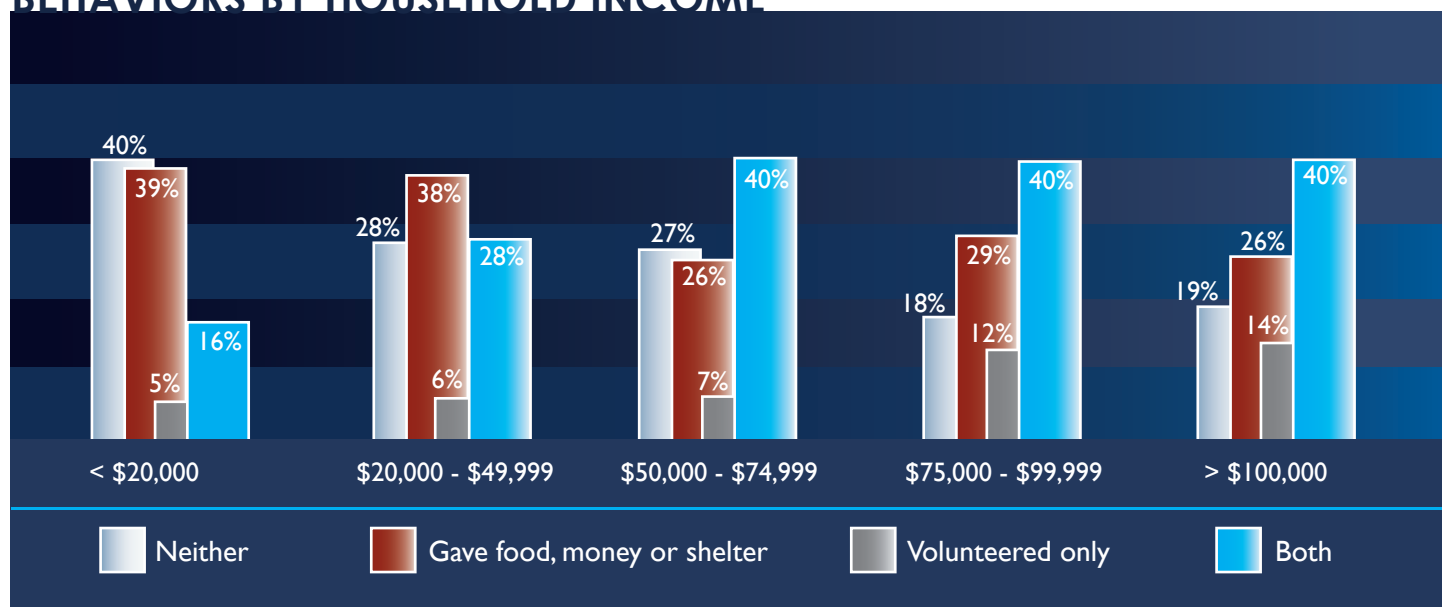
low-income people were opening up their homes, feeding their friends, and sharing their wealth (even if they are themselves needy) to support others.

Similarly, adults (18 and over) without college experience were far less likely to engage in traditional civic behaviors such as volunteering, going to public meetings to discuss community affairs, and voting. Generally speaking, respondents with any college experience were about twice as likely to have engaged in these traditional ways. However, respondents without college experience were more likely to provide shelter for those who needed it and give food or money to their relatives. Educational gaps were much smaller for other indicators of civic engagement, such as working with others in the neighborhood to solve a problem. Fifteen percent of college-educated adults compared to 11% of non-college adults said they participated in community projects. The need for such projects may be especially evident in low-income communities—at all times, and particularly during recessions.

## HELPING BEHAVIOR BY INCOME

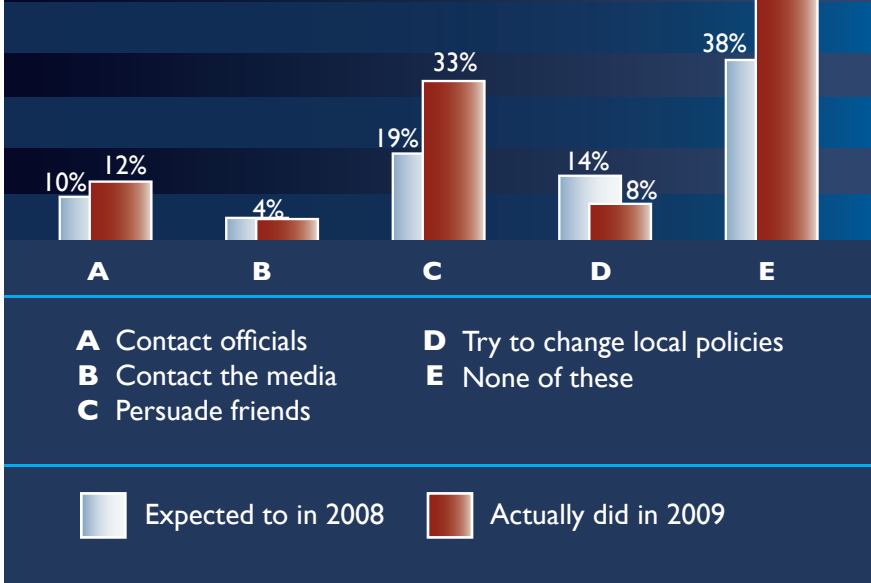


## TYPES OF HELPING BEHAVIORS BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME



## POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT AFTER THE ELECTION

Totals are greater than 100%, because individuals did more than one thing. Respondents are separate, though both nationally representative, groups of individuals from 2008 and 2009.



### Some Political Engagement Continues After the Election

In the 2008 survey, conducted before the presidential nominating conventions, we asked people whether they expected to engage after the election in any of four possible ways:

- contacting elected officials about issues raised in the campaign,
- contacting the media about such issues,
- discussing such issues with friends, and
- working to change local policies in schools, workplaces, etc.

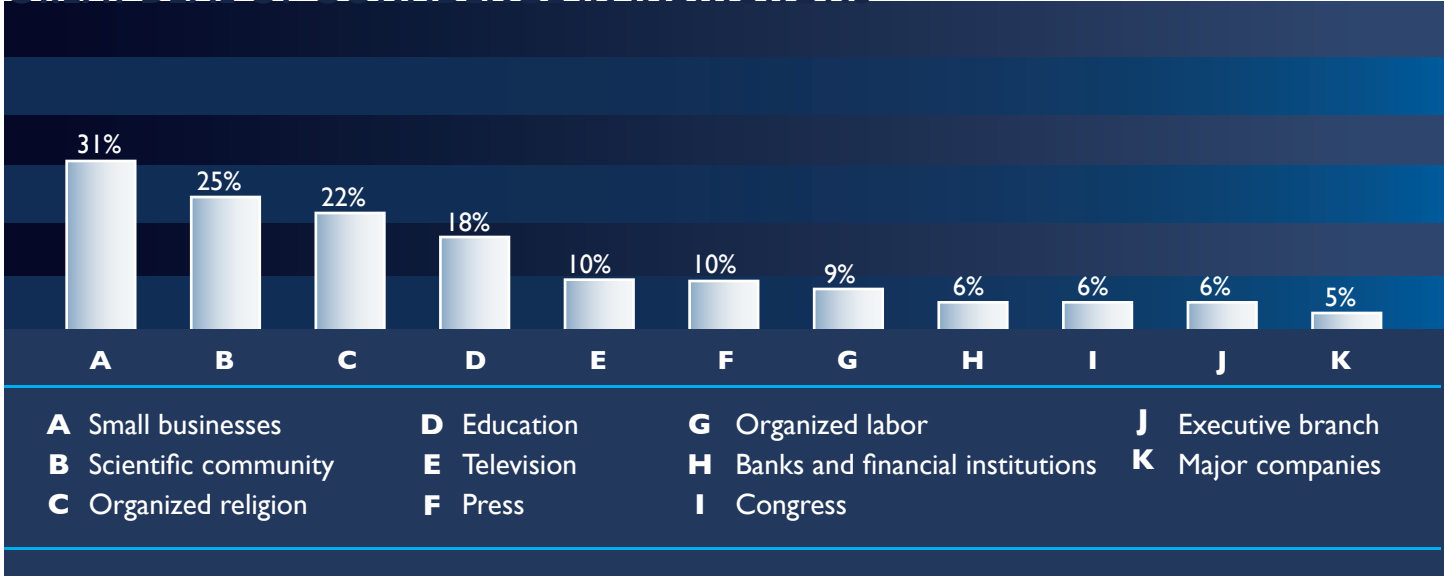
In 2009, we asked our respondents whether they had actually engaged in these ways since Election Day. Most (63.5%) had not done any of these things yet. The results for specific activities were quite consistent with people's predictions a year ago, except that they have so far been less likely to try to change local policies and more likely to try to persuade friends.

The 2008 election may have produced a substantial stimulus for public discussion and deliberation, but citizens may still find it difficult to change policies in local institutions. Persuading friends seems to be the standard first step: 90% of the respondents who did *any* of these things tried to persuade friends.

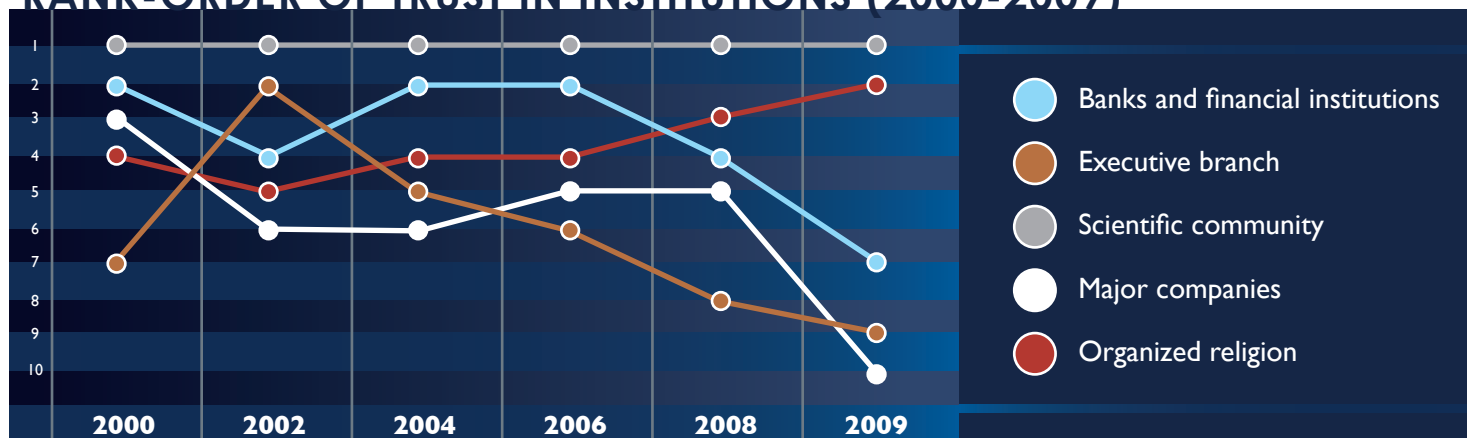
## Recent Events Have Changed Public Confidence in Institutions

The public mostly shows low levels of trust in various social institutions, with the exception of small businesses, which top the list. Banks and other financial institutions, the federal government, and major companies are at the bottom. The graph shows those who have a "great deal of confidence" in each institution.

## GREAT DEAL OF CONFIDENCE IN INSTITUTIONS



## RANK-ORDER OF TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS (2000-2009)



Similar questions have been asked on the General Social Survey from 1973-2008 (but without “small businesses,” which we added). Generally, our 2009 results are lower than the historical trends, but that is not necessarily because of a real decline in trust; it could be a result of differences in sampling methods. If we compare the *order* in which people ranked various institutions over time, we see that banks and major companies have fallen to near the bottom of the list of trusted institutions, whereas in the past they were often ranked second or third. This is no doubt a result of the current economic crisis.

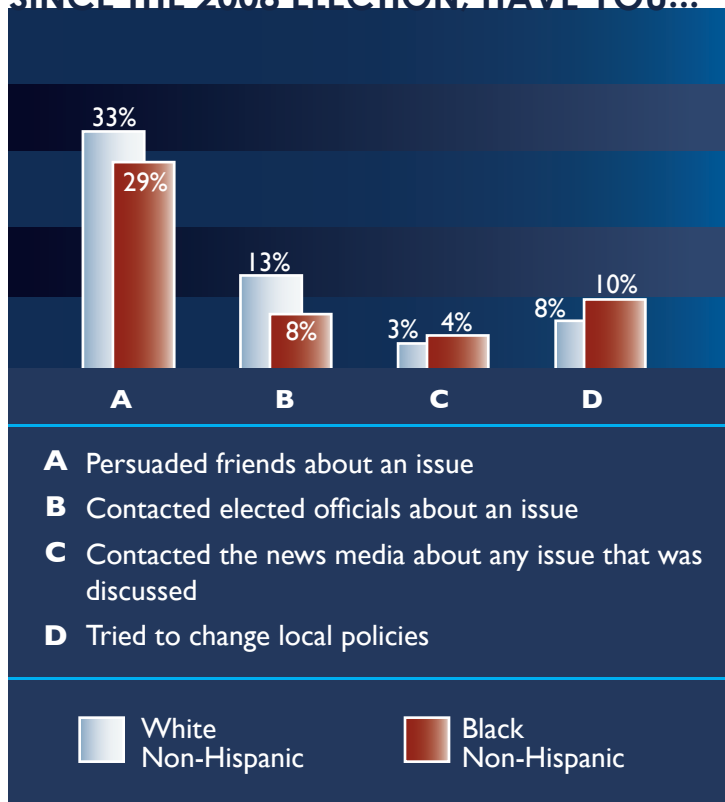
Fifty-nine percent said they have some trust in the federal government to spend stimulus money wisely, compared to 60.4% for state governments and 67% for local governments. These results are surprisingly similar; usually trust is much higher for local governments. When our survey was fielded in May, the public seemed to be reasonably confident in the federal administration’s handling of the stimulus money, but attitudes toward the Obama Administration are shifting rapidly, according to other surveys.

We also found that levels of trust in various institutions varied greatly between people of different ethnic backgrounds this year. African Americans in our sample indicated much higher levels of trust in the federal government than Whites (40% versus 22%), while African

Americans showed lower levels of trust in local and small businesses than Whites (15% versus 36%). Generally speaking, trust in federal government does not vary much by race/ethnicity, and this was true when we asked the same question in 2007 and 2008. The fact African Americans were significantly more likely to put a great deal of trust in the federal government this year may reflect a particularly high level of excitement for our nation’s first African American president.

In addition, African Americans were, and continue to be, highly politically engaged throughout the past year. Many are using technology to stay politically engaged: 40% used e-mail to discuss political issues within the past year, 21% expressed opinions via text message (more than any other racial group), and 22% watched presidential candidates’ speeches online during the campaign. Since the election, 29% of African Americans have tried to persuade friends about an issue that was discussed in the 2008 Presidential campaign. African Americans were also more likely to wear a campaign button or display signs than any other race.

## SINCE THE 2008 ELECTION, HAVE YOU...





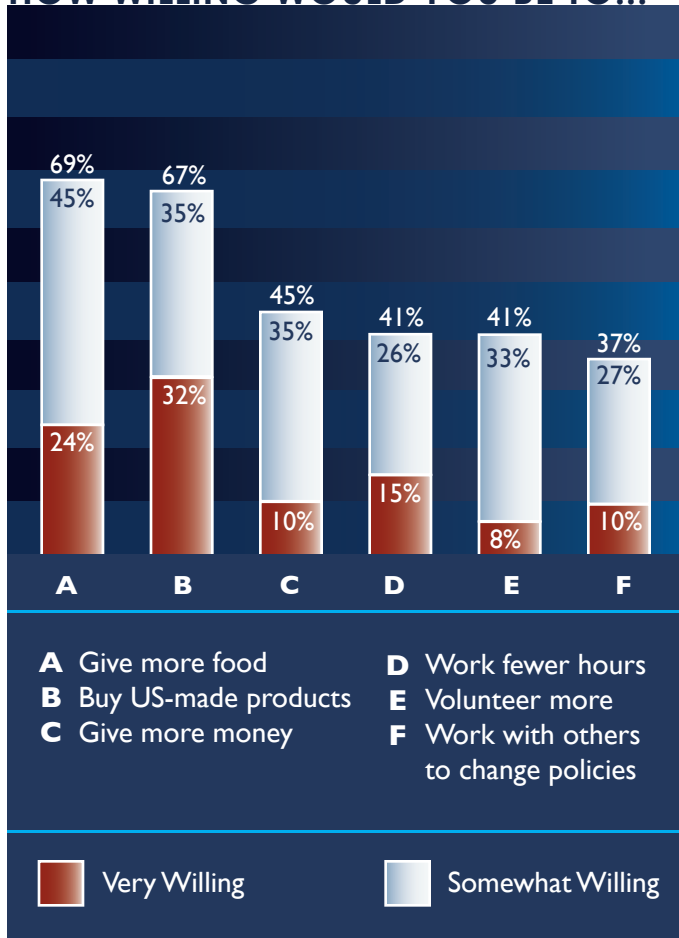
# STRATEGIES FOR CIVIC RENEWAL

**NCoC not only measures and tracks civic engagement, but also seeks opportunities to promote and expand it. To that end, we asked respondents how willing they would be to take action to help others during the economic downturn.**

Very small proportions said they would be “very willing” to increase their contributions of money and time or to work with others to change policies. These are classically “civic” responses to a public problem, and apparently there is not much appetite for expanding them. Somewhat higher proportions were very willing to favor US products in their own consumer choices or to give more food—relatively private and personal acts.

This graph shows the proportions of people who are “very willing” and “somewhat willing” to take each of these actions. Responses about socially desirable behaviors tend to be inflated in surveys, so readers may wish to use the “very willing” responses as the best measures of openness to engagement. On the other hand, the proportions of people who are “somewhat willing” to take these actions are much higher, which suggests at least some potential for growth.

## HOW WILLING WOULD YOU BE TO...



## Providing Incentives to Become More Involved

To understand what types of incentives might motivate people to get more engaged in their communities, NCoC asked people to rate nine incentives on the likelihood they would get them more engaged.

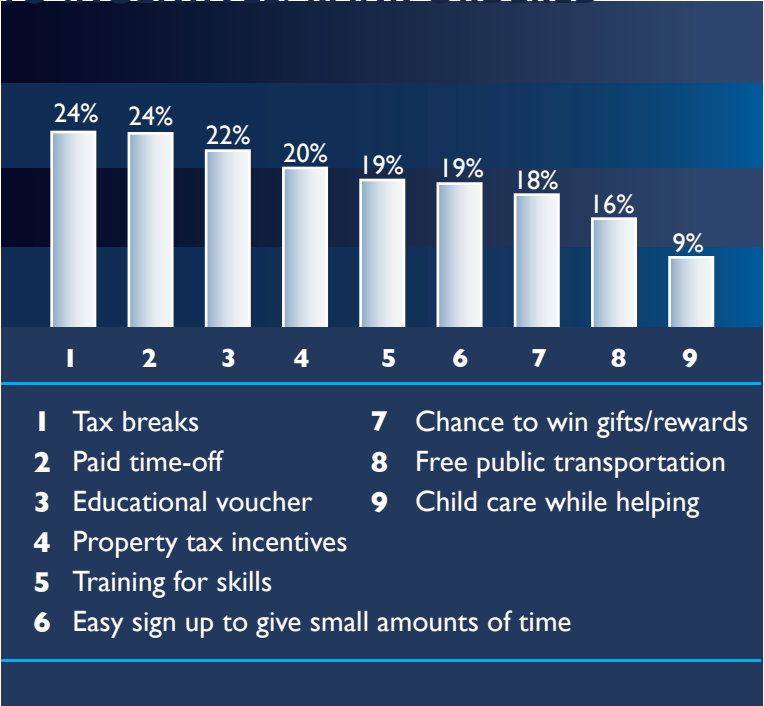
Overall, the most popular incentives were giving tax breaks and paid time-off for volunteering, at 24% each, followed by educational vouchers at 22%. Although these incentives were generally popular for all age groups, each generation had different rankings, reflecting changing priorities and motivation at different stages of life.

Younger generations were far more likely to respond to various incentives positively than older generations. Age 65+ were particularly reluctant to say that these incentives would motivate them. For example, only 10% of age 65+ said that tax breaks would motivate them to engage more, compared to 24% support overall. Instead, incentives like property tax break and free public transportation were relatively more attractive to age 65+.

We also explored responses from specific groups of respondents to understand what might motivate people who are generally less engaged. Among non-volunteers, paid time-off won approval from

19% of respondents, followed by educational vouchers (18%) and tax incentives (17.5%). The people who had cut down on civic engagement were generally less likely to respond positively to incentives. However, they were just as likely to say that paid-time off for volunteering would motivate them. Among the people whose household incomes were less than \$50,000, free public transportation was particularly popular (20%, compared to 13% among higher income respondents), in addition to tax incentives (30%) and paid time-off (27%). Although providing childcare was overall the least popular incentive, it was relatively better received among respondents who had a minor child living with them (16%

% RESPONDING POSITIVELY TO INCENTIVES, RANK ORDERED



compared to 7% of people without a minor child). Overall, it appears that some Americans are looking for ways to make volunteering and engagement a more integrated and relatively low-cost part of their lives. That is, when people are already short on resources, they are not likely to become more engaged unless there is concrete (and often financial) support for volunteering and engagement. As noted above, only 14% of those surveyed said they wished they could do more but lack opportunities. But opportunities are different from incentives such as tax breaks or paid time-off. Incentives seem to have some potential for raising engagement.

Public Service Does Not Seem to be a Common Career Motivation

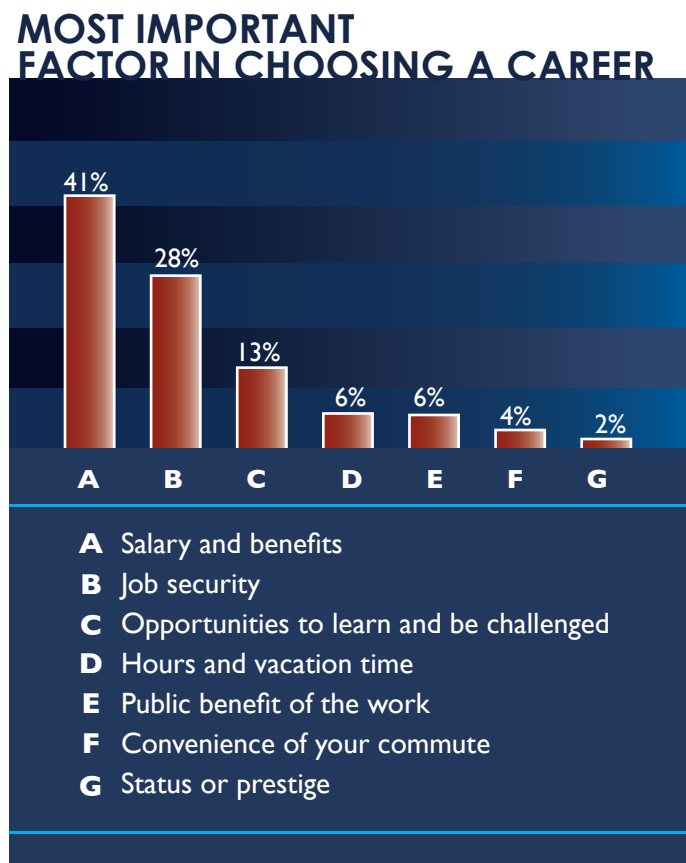
Another way to encourage civic engagement is to make it an aspect of work life, rather than reserving it for after-work and after-school time. Society needs teachers, police officers, soldiers, citizen-engineers, citizen-physicians, and citizen-entrepreneurs as well as volunteers, voters, and donors. With more than one-third of the federal workforce retiring over the next five years, many in mission-critical positions, public service also means attracting the best and brightest to serve in the federal government.

In the 2009 *America's Civic Health Index*, we asked people about their interest in serving the public through their work. As might be expected, "public benefit" did not emerge as a major motivator for most people—only 6% chose it as

TOP 3 INCENTIVES BY GENERATION

	PRIORITY #1	PRIORITY #2	PRIORITY #3
ALL AGES	Tax Breaks (24%)	Paid Time-Off (24%)	Educational Voucher (22%)
MILLENNIALS	Educational Voucher (32%)	Paid Time-Off (29%)	Tax Breaks (28%)
GENERATION-X	Paid Time-Off (32%)	Tax Breaks (28%)	Educational Voucher (27%)
BABY BOOMERS	Tax Breaks (23%)	Paid Time-Off (21%)	Property Tax Incentives (20%)
AGE 65+	Property Tax Incentives (15%)	Easy Way to Sign Up (13%)	Free Public Transportation (12%)

their top motivation. (There may, however, be other lines of questioning that could better uncover people's desire to make a difference in the world through meaningful work.) The relatively low priority for public benefit of one career may also reflect the current economic hardship: for many, working in the public and nonprofit sectors may simply be unaffordable because of relatively low wage and a lack of job security due to high risk of lay-offs in the public sector.

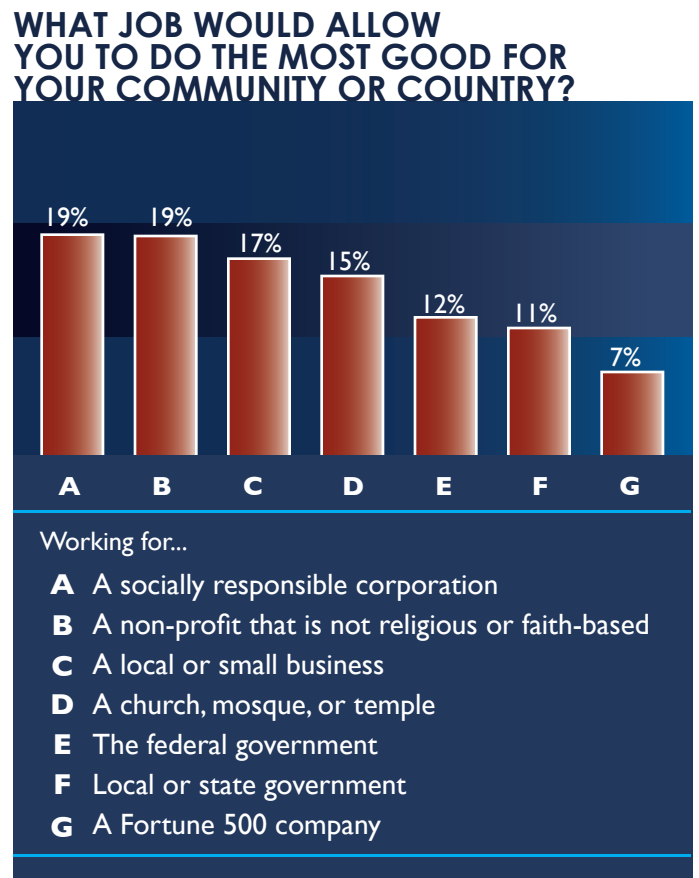


When asked about the least important factor, the same pattern emerged. Status and prestige were least important, followed by commuting issues and then the “public benefit” of the work.

There were very small generational differences. Millennials (who have the most choice of careers because they are young), chose “public benefit” at a 6.5% rate.

The people who chose the “public benefit” (213 respondents) were more likely to have BAs or higher degrees, to attend religious services almost weekly or more, to volunteer; to donate money and food, and to have increased their time on volunteering; but they were also more likely to be in the lower income brackets (less than \$50,000).

Belief in the value of working for a secular nonprofit rose with income, and belief in the public value of government careers fell with income.



Another way of investigating the intersection of civic engagement and career choices is to ask people what kind of work they would consider most publicly beneficial. We asked what kind of job would “allow you to do the most good for the community or country”? There was certainly no consensus; answers were divided fairly evenly across the options we offered. The top choice was working for a socially responsible corporation, although local and state jobs plus federal government jobs drew a combined 23%.

Millennials were more positive than other generations about careers in the federal government, with 15% picking these jobs as most beneficial.

People are nearly three times as likely to feel they are doing the most good by working for a socially responsible corporation (19%), versus a Fortune 500 company (7%). This implies that major corporations could tout their social responsibility over their financial bottom line as a means of recruitment.

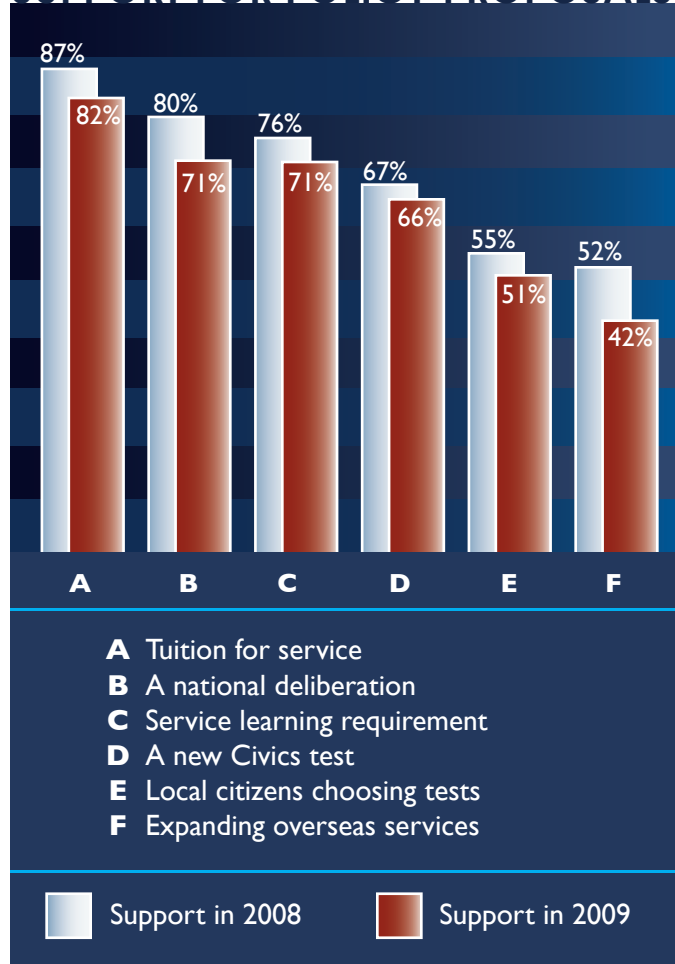
## Policy Changes for Civic Engagement

At any time, and especially in periods of economic crisis, it is important to consider the policy context for civic engagement. By changing laws and policies, the government can either enable or frustrate civic engagement. These consequences are too rarely weighed when Congress considers major legislation and perhaps a “civic impact statement” should accompany any federal legislation reported out of committee in the Congress. Such a statement could provide Members of Congress with information on how the changes in policy would affect volunteering, public dialogue, participation in civic groups, social and political trust and other indicators of civic health. At a minimum, it would prompt Congress to consider not just the economic, unfunded mandate, environmental, and other effects of legislation, but also the civic impacts.

In 2008 and again in 2009, we asked respondents their opinions of various policy changes that might enhance civic health in the United States. Many ideas were popular, although most were marginally less so in 2009 than in 2008 (a difference that might be caused by changes in survey methodology rather than real shifts in public opinion). The top choice in both years was to offer all young Americans the opportunity to earn money for college by devoting a year to national and community service. The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, which Congress passed and President Obama signed into law earlier this year, takes a strong step in that direction, both by increasing the number of full-time and part-time national service positions from 75,000 to 250,000 over five years, and by increasing the value of the education award each national service participant receives at the end of their service. The second-most popular idea, a national deliberation on an important issue, has been seriously considered with respect to health care reform but has not yet been implemented. The three proposals involving secondary education have not been included in prominent federal legislation or executive branch policy.

One more idea was tested in both 2008 and 2009, but we changed the question enough to preclude direct comparison between the two years. In 2008 we asked about offering federal support to nonprofits, including faith-based organizations. A narrow majority of 51% favored this idea, 39% strongly. In 2009, we split the question into two items, one concerning federal aid for *secular* nonprofits, and the other concerning federal aid for *faith-based groups*. About 51% favored funding for secular nonprofits; 37% supported assistance to faith-based organizations. The latter is clearly more controversial and raises constitutional questions that Congress and previous Administrations have attempted to address through legislation and executive orders.

## SUPPORT FOR POLICY PROPOSALS



### Policy Proposals Tested

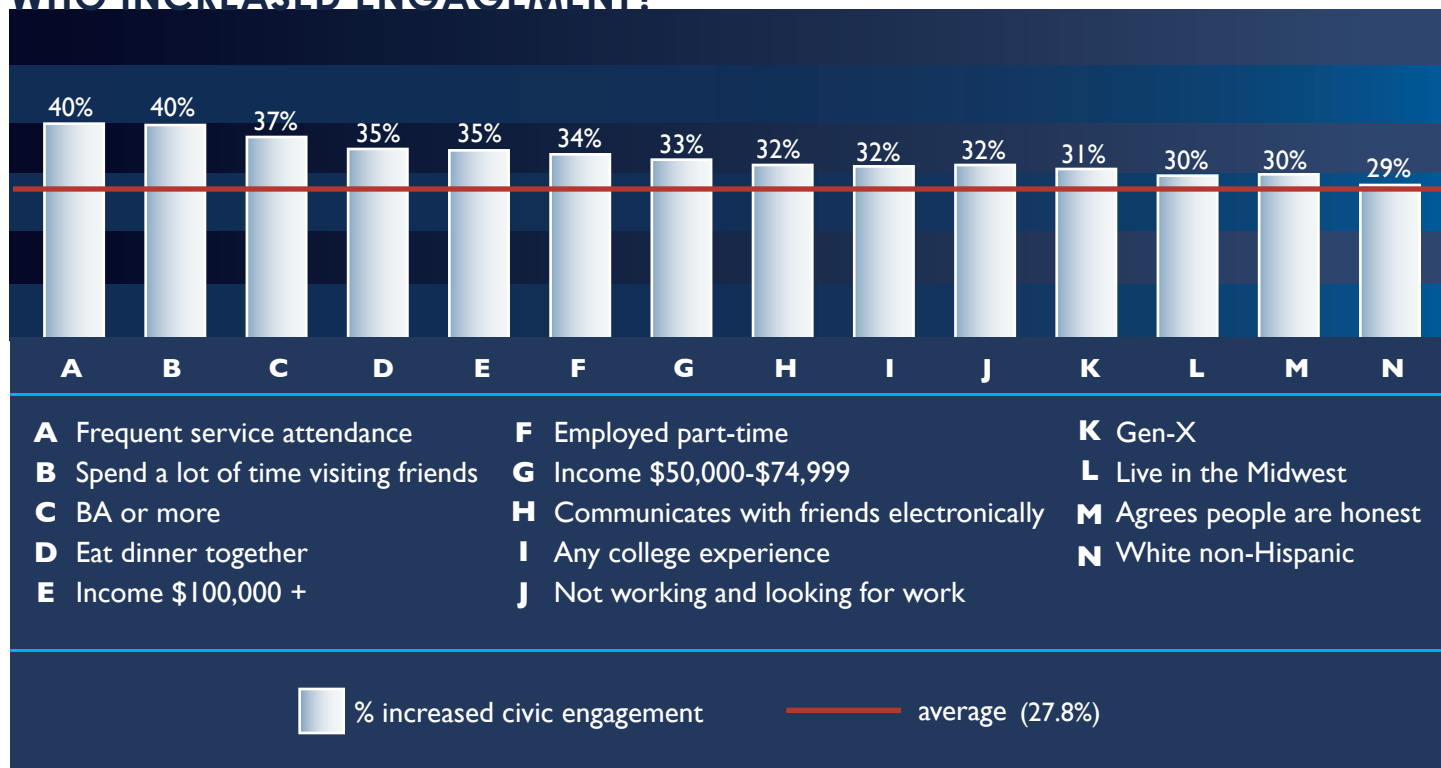
- A) Offering every young person a chance to earn money toward college or advanced training if they complete a full year of national or community service
- B) Involving more than one million Americans in a national discussion of an important public issue and requiring Congress to respond to what the citizens say
- C) Requiring all high school students to do community service as part of their work for one or more courses
- D) Requiring high school students to pass a new test on civics or government
- E) Changing the law so that local citizens must take the lead in setting standards and choosing tests for students in their local schools
- F) Funding and promoting overseas service as a way of improving our relations with other countries
- G) Providing federal money to support secular nonprofit organizations that use volunteers
- H) Providing federal money to support faith-based organizations that use volunteers

# WHO ENGAGES?

## Religiosity and Connection to Others Protect Against Service Recession

Strong connections to others and to the community protect against a decrease in civic engagement during an economic recession.<sup>24</sup> In our whole sample, 72% said they had cut down on their civic engagement; but among frequent participants in religious services, a significant portion (40%) had *increased* the amount of time they put into volunteering and other civic activities. They responded quite differently from those who attend services less often, only about 20% of whom increased civic engagement by any extent. Regular religious attendees were also more likely to feel their communities responded to the current economic situations by helping each other more. Attendance at religious services appears to provide some protection against declines in civic engagement during tough economic times.

## WHO INCREASED ENGAGEMENT?



Other indicators of social capital (visiting with friends often, eating together as a family, and belonging to a club) predicted higher levels of engagement *after controlling for religious service attendance and demographic factors*. We found that regardless of education, age, ethnicity, marital status, or income level, people who are well-connected to their family and friends are far more likely to have increased civic engagement this year.



## The Emerging Generation: Opportunities with the Millennials

*TIME Magazine* proclaimed 2008 “The Year of the Youth Vote.”<sup>25</sup> More than half of American citizens between the ages of 18 and 30 voted, a strong showing by historical standards. The nadir was 37% in 1996, and each presidential election since then has seen an increase in youth voting. Millennials are also committed volunteers, compared to young people of the past 30 years. In general, building on improvements in young people’s civic engagement seems a promising strategy for national civic renewal.

In the 2009 Civic Health Index, Millennials emerge as the “top” group for volunteering. However, the differences by age are generally small. The only group that stands out this year are the Boomers, who volunteer at a rate about six percentage points lower than others. Despite the fact that Millennials have a higher volunteering rate than Boomers, a greater proportion of Millennials *neither* volunteer *nor* give money, food, or shelter, compared to Boomers. Millennial’s housing situations may not be conducive to providing shelter or food as their age (as young as 15 in our sample) may mean they still live with parents or in student housing. Also, because they are young, Millennials needing to call for help may be more likely to lean on their family, especially parents or grandparents, before approaching those inside their peer network, due to their limited resources.

Millennials may have more opportunities for formal volunteering than Boomers do (e.g., through high school or university), but less access to disposable income, as a significant portion of Millennials are currently unemployed or going to school. Millennials may be seeking opportunities to volunteer and keep up or increase their skill levels as they complete their education and find themselves without employment. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that 15.5% of people aged 18 to 24 were unemployed during the first quarter of 2009, nearly double the national average.

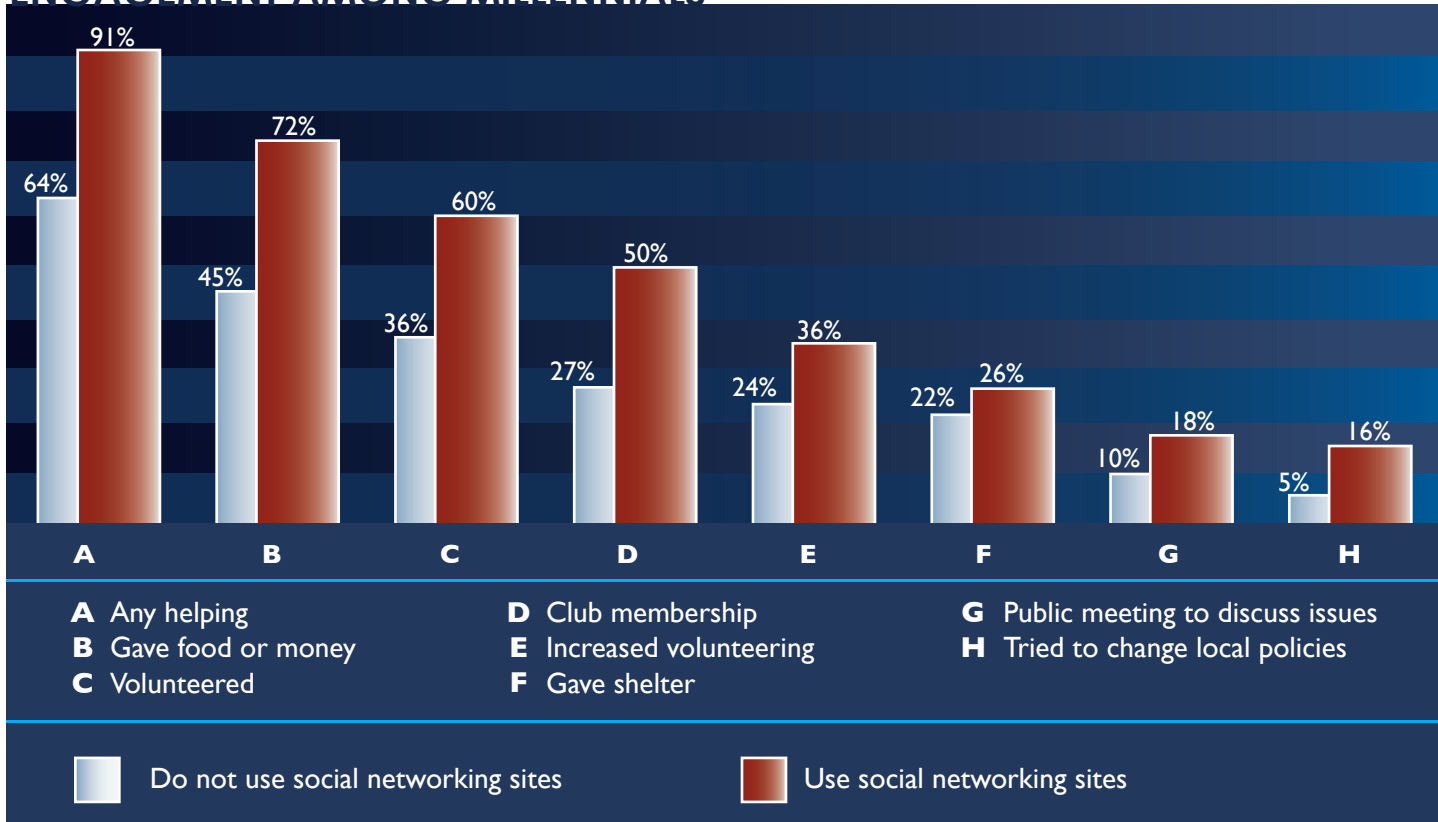
Millennials responded well to various possible incentives for increasing their civic engagement, especially the voucher for college education. The most common response was “Would be VERY helpful (10),” with an average response of 5.9 on a 1-10 scale. They also thought paid time off from work and tax incentives would be significant. They gave more positive responses to many of the incentives suggested than other generations.

In the past, we have found the youngest members of our society, the Millennials, utilize new technology for civic purposes the most. For example, they are far more likely to use the Internet, blogs, web-content, text messaging and social networking sites to gather civic-related information and express their opinions.

This year’s survey allowed us to explore the relationships between online forms of engagement and community-based civic activities. We selected a group of Millennials who use social networking sites to promote civic causes, express their opinions on issues, and gather information related to civics, and compared their levels of engagement to that of their peers. We found that Millennials who use social networking sites for civic purposes are far more likely to actively engage in their own communities in each of the activities we measured.

Although we cannot conclude that belonging to social networking sites *promotes* civic engagement in their community, it is encouraging that civic use of social networking sites cut across income and educational gaps, meaning that low-income youth and youth without college experience were nearly as likely to use social networking sites for civic purposes as youth who had higher income or college experience. As we found in 2008, the civic engagement gap appears to be smaller among young people who engage online, and this year, we found that young Americans who are highly engaged online come from diverse economic and educational background, and are also highly engaged off-line.

## ONLINE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AMONG MILLENNIALS



It is possible that young Americans are building online connections that open doors to opportunities not previously available to young people from all backgrounds. Online engagement opportunities are less structured and more accessible to everyone because there is usually no membership fee for social networking sites and users can join or create opportunities for civic engagement quickly and without bureaucracy. In a way, online platforms provide organic and more grassroots forms of engagement. Online engagement is not only for Millennials. In fact, this type of civic engagement opportunity might be especially important during a recession, when formal infrastructure for civic engagement is breaking down (for example, via lay-offs in nonprofit sector). Online platforms provide engagement opportunities for many Americans who may not belong to a formal volunteering organization.

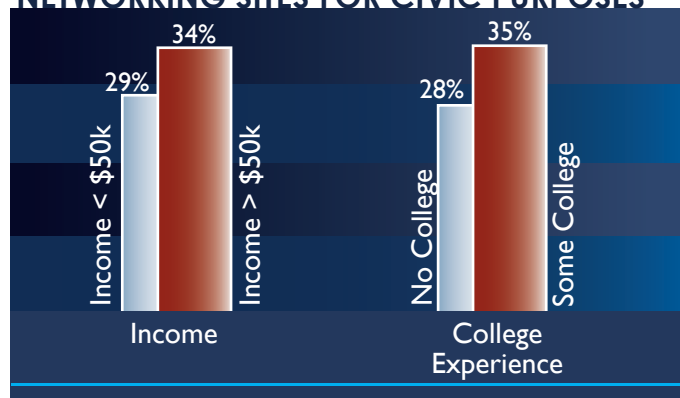
### Engagement and Perceptions of the Civic Context

In the 2009 survey, we asked, "In your opinion, how strong is the civic tradition of your state?" The top three states in this regard were Texas, Minnesota and Kansas.<sup>26</sup> (Vermont and Utah scored higher, but the sample sizes were too small to provide reliable

estimates.) On the other hand, citizens of Illinois, Arizona, and Georgia were likely to rate their civic traditions as weaker than other states.

Few, if any, significant differences in civic engagement emerged between residents of high- and low-scoring states that could not be explained by differences in demographics (e.g., income and education). However, state average civic perception did predict the portion of people in the state who said they trusted state and local governments. This finding suggests that citizens'

### PROPORTION OF MILLENNIALS USING SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES FOR CIVIC PURPOSES



collective perception of civic tradition is associated with the state-level trust in its government. This seems complimentary to key findings of the *Soul of the Community*<sup>27</sup> project of the Knight Foundation and Gallup, where they have investigated individual's psychological connection with their community and their resulting citizen engagement.

Individuals differed in how they felt about the civic tradition of their states. This individual feeling was a very strong predictor of civic engagement. For example:

**54%** of those who thought their state had a strong civic tradition volunteered, compared to 31% who thought it was “not very strong.”

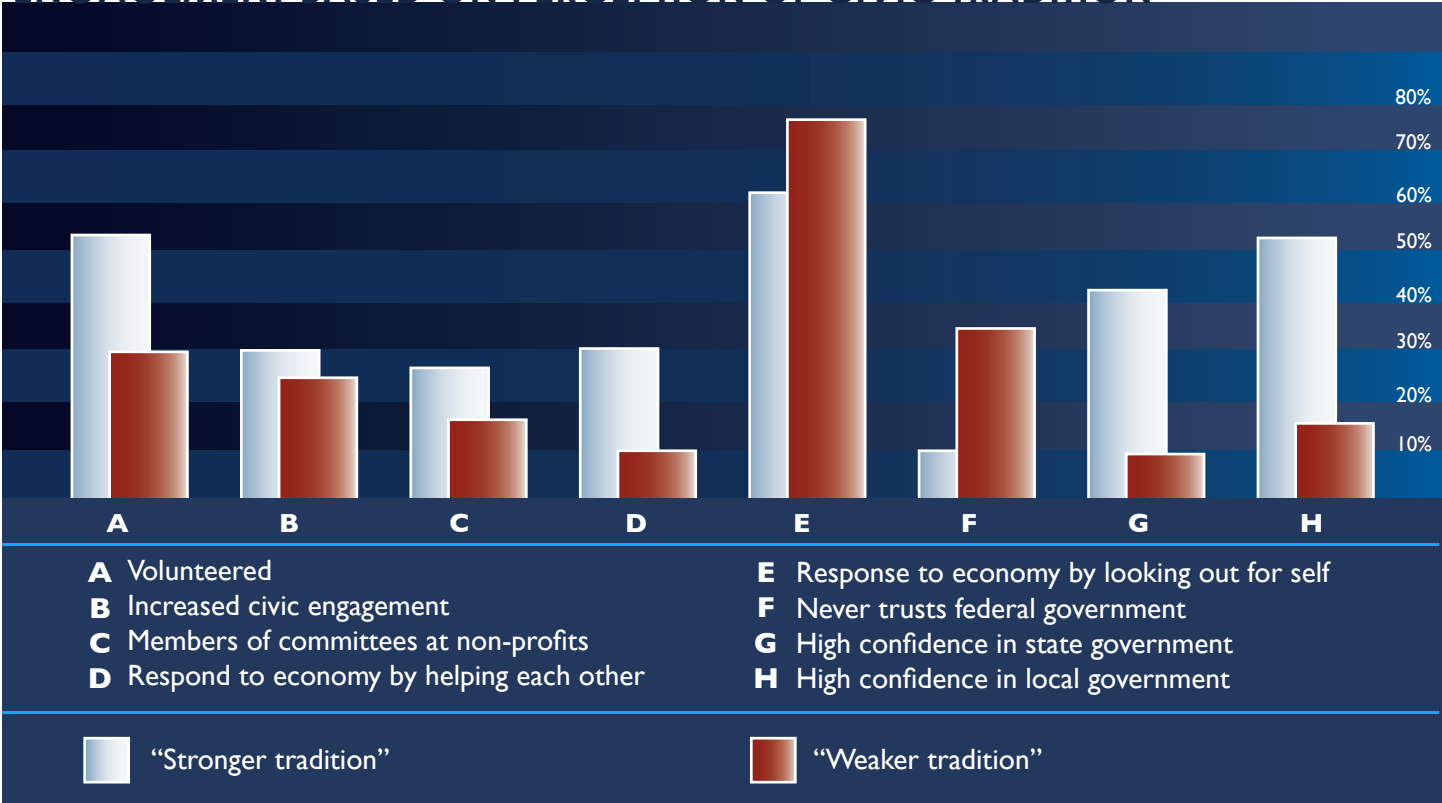
**32%** of people who thought their states’ civic traditions were strong increased their civic engagement, compared to 25% who saw “weaker” traditions.

**29%** of those who thought their states had strong civic traditions were members of nonprofits or committees that had budgets (compared to 16-17% in among those who saw an “average” or “weaker” traditions).

**32%** of people who thought their states’ civic traditions were strong also thought their communities responded to the current economy by helping one another (compared to 9% who saw their states’ traditions as “weaker” than average).

Our analysis showed that an individual's perception of a state's civic tradition predicts various forms of engagement above and beyond the person's education, income level, race, religious service attendance and social connection to others.<sup>28</sup> There are at least two ways to interpret this finding. First, being engaged may enhance opinions about the civic culture. Certainly, people who are engaged have more favorable views of their own states’ civic traditions, *regardless* of what other people in the same states feel. Second, believing other people are civically engaged may encourage an individual to engage. One of the barriers to promotion of civic engagement is a perception that very few people are highly engaged. Thus, spreading the idea that civic engagement is common in one's state (or in local one's community, or among peer group members) may actually yield higher levels of engagement.

ENGAGEMENT BASED ON PERCEPTION OF CIVIC TRADITION



## Feeling Empowered Makes a Difference for the Generally Unengaged<sup>29</sup>

As in much previous research, we find a positive relationship between a citizen's feeling of empowerment and whether he or she is civically engaged. Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with a series of three statements that concerned their personal efficacy:

- People like me don't have any say about what the government does.
- So many other people vote in the national elections that it doesn't matter much to me whether I vote or not.
- Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on.

For the entire sample, those who strongly disagreed that politics and government seem so complicated were more likely to attend a club or community meeting (36%), work on a community project (25%), and attend public meetings (27%), than those who gave a disempowered response.<sup>30</sup> Findings were similar for those who strongly disagreed with the other two statements.

This is true for those demographic groups who have been considered less engaged in the past: low-income and less educated. It is true of Millennials and African Americans.<sup>31</sup>

**39%** of African Americans who strongly disagreed with the statement "sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on" also attended a public meeting regarding community affairs within the past year. (Only 14% of those who agree with the preceding statement have attended a meeting).

Similarly, those individuals who earned less than \$50,000 a year and felt empowered were more likely to go to a club or community meeting (33%), versus those who feel disempowered (22%).

Millennials, too, followed this pattern—41% of Millennials who felt empowered also worked on a community project within the past year.

**25%** of those 18+ with no college experience who felt their federal election vote counts also went to a club or community meeting within the past year.

## APPENDIX: THE INDICATORS OF CIVIC HEALTH

### METHODOLOGY

In May 2009, Knowledge Networks surveyed a total of 3,889 individuals for the National Conference on Citizenship. Participants in the survey were part of Knowledge Networks' survey panel. Knowledge Networks' national panel is carefully chosen using random-digit sampling, address-based sampling, and cell-phone based sampling to minimize potential biases. Knowledge Networks' panel also includes households that do not have Internet connection by providing connection and necessary equipment to those who do not have Internet at home (19.3% of our sample).

For this report, 1,518 nationally representative respondents completed the survey on the Internet. Knowledge Networks also surveyed additional 2,371 respondents in California, Florida, Illinois, Minnesota, New Hampshire, and Ohio separately from the national sample, and results from individual states will be released at events in these states throughout the fall of 2009. The national results shown here include the state oversamples, appropriately weighted.

**Connecting to civic and religious groups:** Such groups are the seedbeds of democracy. They recruit and educate citizens, bring them together for discussion, and increase their capacity for improving society.

- Belong to group or organization: 48%
- Attend a club meeting: 27%
- Work on a community project: 19%
- Attend religious services at least once a month: 39%

**Trusting other people:** Trust correlates with associational membership because one must have at least limited trust in at least some others before one can work with them voluntarily; and collaborative work often enhances trust.

- Definitely or generally agree that most people are honest: 67%
- Definitely or generally agree that most people try to be helpful: 58%

**Connecting to others through family and friends:** Close interaction with families and/or friends promotes health and well-being, and supports civil society by providing the information, encouragement, and networks that people need to engage in larger groups and communities.

- Whole family eats dinner together: 60%
- Spend a lot of time visiting friends: 40%
- Spend a lot of time communication with others using a computer, cell phone, or other electronic device: 58%

**Citizen-centered engagement:** “Citizen-centered” engagement means bringing diverse groups of citizens together both to discuss and define an issue, and to work voluntarily to address it. Citizen-centered engagement thus combines deliberation with action.

- Attend a community meeting in which there was a discussion of community affairs: 16%
- Work with other people in your neighborhood to solve a community problem: 13%
- Try to change local policies in a place like a school, workplace, college or neighborhood: 8%

**Giving and Volunteering:** Voluntary contributions of time and money address serious public problems and support civil society.

- Volunteer: 40%
- Willing to spend more time volunteering: 40%

**Staying informed:** Valuable participation requires information, which can be gleaned from other citizens, the news media, the Internet, and many other sources.

- Generally follow news about the government and public affairs: 62%
- Use the internet at least once a week to gather information about politics, a social issue, or a community problem: 18%
- Watch a presidential candidate’s speech online: 21%
- Watch an online video in support of or opposition to a presidential candidate: 21%

**Understanding civics and politics:** Related to the previous category, these measures measure to what degree Americans feel informed.

- Feel able to understand politics and government: 45%

**Participating in politics:** Regardless of one’s political views and attitudes toward government, it is important to influence democratic institutions.

- Voted in the 2008 Presidential Election: 78%
- Since the election, contacted elected officials about any issues that were discussed during the campaign: 12%
- Tried to persuade friends about an issue that was discussed: 33%

**Trusting and feeling connected to major institutions:** Trust in government and the mass media can be understood as a subjective attitude that often (but not invariably) correlates with taking voluntary political action. Trust can also be understood as a measure of how *trustworthy* our institutions actually are.

- My vote matters: 70%
- People like me have a say: 47%
- Government in Washington generally does what is right: 26%
- Confidence in the people who run the press, such as newspapers, and news magazines: 10% have “a great deal” of trust (and 58% have some trust)

**Expressing political views:** Voting is a powerful means of making choices, but it communicates the voter’s views very imperfectly. Fortunately, citizens have other opportunities to say more precisely what they believe about public issues.

- Write a letter or email to the editor of a newspaper or magazine: 5%
- Try to talk to someone about why they should vote for a candidate or party: 32%
- Wear a campaign button, put a campaign sticker on the car, or place a campaign poster in the window or in front of the house: 18%
- Express opinions about political or social or community Issues by:
  - Email: 45%
  - Blog: 5%
  - Writing on Someone Else’s Blog: 9%
  - Social networking site: 17%
    - Facebook causes Application: 7%
    - Making a photo, video, audio: 7%
    - Commenting on Someone Else’s photo, video, audio: 14%
    - Chat room: 7%
    - Instant Messaging: 14%
    - Text messaging: 17%
  - Voting in favor or against a video or news story on YouTube or Digg: 8%



# ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> For broad overviews, see Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Democracy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), pp. 296-350; John Wilson, "Volunteering," *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 26, (2000), pp. 231-3. See also Alberto Dávila and Marie T. Mora, "Civic Engagement and High School Academic Progress: An Analysis Using NELS Data," *CIRCLE Working Paper 52* (2007); Nancy Morrow-Howell, Jim Hinterlong, Philip A. Rozario, and Fengyan Tang, "Effects of Volunteering on the Well-Being of Older Adults," *Journals of Gerontology Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences*, vol. 58B, no 3 (2003), pp. s137-s145; and Kimberly A. Lochner, Ichiro Kawachi, Robert T. Brennan and Stephen L. Bukac, Social capital and neighborhood mortality rates in Chicago, *Social Science & Medicine*, vol. 56, issue 8 (April 2003), pp. 1797-1805.

<sup>2</sup> Current Population Survey's September Volunteering Supplement asks a variety of questions related to civic engagement and it is the best available data source for estimating rates of volunteering and civic engagement. Starting in 2007, CPS added questions about attending public meetings in which there was a discussion of community affairs," and working with "other people in your neighborhood to fix a problem or improve a condition." In 2008, CPS added a question about making a monetary contribution of \$25 or more. National- and community-level reports on volunteering and civic engagement by Corporation for National and Community Service is available at [www.volunteeringinamerica.gov](http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov).

<sup>3</sup> Cynthia Gibson, *Citizens at the Center: A New Approach to Civic Engagement* (Washington, DC: Case Foundation, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> The question was: "Compared to last year, have you cut back or increased the time you spend volunteering, participating in groups, or doing the other civic activities we've been talking about?" A whole series of civic engagement questions were asked before this question; see the appendix, "The Indicators of Civic Health."

<sup>5</sup> Preston, Caroline. Letting Go. *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*. February 12, 2009. <http://philanthropy.com/premium/articles/v21/i08/08001301.htm>

<sup>6</sup> Singh, Yoshita. Job Cuts in US fall in May, but may rise after summers: report. *Business Standard*. June 4, 2009. <http://www.business-standard.com/india/news/job-cuts-in-us-fall-in-maymay-rise-fter-summersreport/10/23/63673/on>

<sup>7</sup> Jessica Dickler and Ben Rooney, Job Market Shows Some Improvement. July 1, 2009. [http://money.cnn.com/2009/07/01/news/economy/job\\_cuts/index.htm?postversion=2009070109](http://money.cnn.com/2009/07/01/news/economy/job_cuts/index.htm?postversion=2009070109)

<sup>8</sup> Warnack, Heather Harlan. Recent Grads Move Back Home Amid Tough Job Market. *Washington Business Journal*. June 5, 2009. <http://www.bizjournals.com/washington/stories/2009/06/08/smallbl.html?page=1>

<sup>9</sup> Johnson, Alex. Recession Squeezes Day Care from Both Sides. *MSNBC*. March 27, 2009. <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/29882470/>

<sup>10</sup> Bassett, Abigail. Beat the Recession, One Penny at a Time. *CNN*. April 29 2009. [http://money.cnn.com/2009/04/28/pf/coupon\\_savings/index.htm](http://money.cnn.com/2009/04/28/pf/coupon_savings/index.htm)

<sup>11</sup> Source: USDA press release, April 3, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> The correlation coefficient is a statistic representing how closely two variables co-vary. Correlation coefficient is a measure of relationship and it does not measure how much civic health index changed over time. The coefficient for unemployment and the Civic Health Index was 0.58 (strong and positive) for the period 1975-2005. This means that when unemployment rose, so did civic health index, and when unemployment declined, civic health index was generally lower. This statistic for unemployment and volunteering was -0.023 (small and negative) for the same period.

<sup>13</sup> Needleman, Sarah E. Starting Fresh with an Unpaid Internship. *The Wall Street Journal*. July 16, 2009. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203577304574280201046918712.html>

<sup>14</sup> Bosman, Julie. From Ranks of Jobless, a Flood of Volunteers. *The New York Times*. March 15, 2009. [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/16/nyregion/16volunteers.html?\\_r=1&hp](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/16/nyregion/16volunteers.html?_r=1&hp)

<sup>15</sup> Kadlec, Dan. Nonprofit Squeeze: Donations Down, Volunteers Up. *Time*. March 19, 2009. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1886544,00.html>

<sup>16</sup> Preston, Caroline. Letting Go. *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*. February 12, 2009. <http://philanthropy.com/premium/articles/v21/i08/08001301.htm>

<sup>17</sup> Needleman, Sarah E. Starting Fresh with an Unpaid Internship. *The Wall Street Journal*. July 16, 2009. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203577304574280201046918712.html>

<sup>18</sup> We conducted a state-level analysis for the states that had a sample size of 50 or larger ( $n = 27$ ) and examined whether state unemployment rates were associated with percentage of people who reported volunteering. Unemployment data are drawn from May 2009 Bureau of Labor Statistics Data (available at: <http://www.bls.gov/web/laumstrk.htm>)

<sup>19</sup> Pew Research Center (2005). *Baby Boomers approach age 60: From the age of Aquarius to the age of responsibility*. Available at: <http://pewsocialtrends.org/assets/pdf/socialtrends-boomers120805.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Data source is CPS Basic Monthly Data June 2007 – June 2009. Percent estimates are based on 18- to 24-year-olds who described their relation to the household head as “child.”

<sup>21</sup> More to Give: Tapping the Talents of the Baby Boomer, Silent and Greatest Generations. John Bridgeland, Robert D. Putnam and Harris Wofford. Civic Enterprises in association with Peter D. Hart Research Associates for the AARP. September 2008.

<sup>22</sup> The 2008 US median household income was \$50,233. Source: [http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/income\\_wealth/012528.html](http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/income_wealth/012528.html)

<sup>23</sup> For this analysis, we included adults who are 25 or older, in order to exclude respondents who may be still completing their education. Using the same age range, 36.8% of adults age 25 or older increased civic engagement.

<sup>24</sup> We conducted a logistic regression analysis, controlling for education, household income, race, marital status, presence of children in household, age and generation, and enrollment status (in post-secondary institution). We found that weekly attendance to religious services, eating dinner together as a family, belonging to a club, and visiting friends often all predict an increase in volunteering above and beyond the influence of demographic variables.

<sup>25</sup> January 31, 2008.

<sup>26</sup> We computed perception of civic tradition of the state only for states that had a sample size of 50 or higher to obtain reliable estimates.

<sup>27</sup> Soul of the Community. Gallup Consulting and John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. June 2008. <http://www.soulofthecommunity.org>

<sup>28</sup> Personal perception of civic tradition of the state predicted higher likelihood to engage in the following behaviors: working with others to fix something, giving food or money, voting, working on a community project or attending a meeting where community affairs are discussed, after controlling for income, education, religious attendance, visiting friends, and eating dinner together.

<sup>29</sup> Feeling empowered was related to higher levels of civic engagement *after considering* educational attainment. However, readers should interpret the findings in this section with caution for two reasons. First, responses to the statements about political self-efficacy were related to educational attainment (i.e., people with more education were more efficacious and were also more civically engaged). That could account for most of the relationship between efficacy and engagement. Second, in some of the analyses in this section, sample sizes were very small.

<sup>30</sup> For these figures the statement was “Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can’t really understand what’s going on,” however every other question had results in the range of  $\pm 2$ -3% of this statement.

<sup>31</sup> Millennials and African Americans should not necessarily be considered disengaged, as compared to the other cited demographics. This year African Americans have shown engagement through voting and Millennials through volunteering.

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