

ISSUE BRIEF:

State Rankings of Civic Life



The Civic Life Index represents the first time that the Corporation for National and Community Service has attempted to measure overall community participation on a state-by-state basis. Since we recognize that the civic health of a community is vital to its ability to address its needs, we have developed an index composed of 12 indicators that represent four distinct categories of civic life within the states: 1) volunteering for an organization; 2) neighborhood engagement; 3) voting; and 4) civic and nonprofit infrastructure. In the index, equal weight was given to each of the four categories of civic life. Within each of the four categories, equal weight was given to each indicator. The weighted index score for each state represents a weighted average of the indicator scores from each of the civic life categories. In 2006, the first year of the index, the score for the U.S. was set to 100. All state scores were re-scaled based on their weighted index score.

TOP TEN STATES FOR CIVIC LIFE

STATES	INDEX SCORE
1. Montana	126.0
2. Vermont	123.4
3. Alaska	121.8
4. South Dakota	121.7
5. Wyoming	119.0
6. Minnesota	118.6
7. Iowa	118.0
8. Oregon	116.7
9. Maine	114.9
10. Missouri	113.9

BOTTOM FIVE STATES FOR CIVIC LIFE:

BOTTOM 5 STATES FOR CIVIC LIFE	INDEX SCORE
47. Texas	91.1
48. New York	88.7
49. Georgia	88.2
50. Louisiana	87.6
51. Nevada	86.3

(Continued)

WHY IS CIVIC LIFE IMPORTANT?

- Substantial research suggests that communities with greater so-called "social capital" are more likely to have higher levels of parental engagement in schools, stronger markets, less crime, and lower incidence of illnesses. They are also more likely to have the tools to build a stronger and more vibrant community that is better equipped to solve its most pressing needs. Research has shown that individuals with more social connectedness are more likely to volunteer and be healthier.
- As with the volunteer results, monitoring civic life provides a valuable tool to community leaders to help build more effective and healthier communities.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- The Civic Life Index score varied greatly across the states, ranging from a high of 126 to a low of 86.3, with the U.S.' score at 100.
- The Midwest had a Civic Life Index score of 108.4, making it the highest among all regions.
- Montana had the highest Civic Life Index score in the nation, with a score of 126.
- Vermont ranked second in the nation on the Civic Life Index, with a score of 123.4.
- Utah and Alaska have the highest percentage of residents who work with their neighbors to fix or improve something in the community (18.4% and 15.0%, respectively).
- Minnesota and Wisconsin have the highest percentage of residents who voted in 2004 (73.0% and 71.5%, respectively).
- South Dakota and Minnesota have the highest percentage of residents who voted in 2006 (56.1% and 55.6%, respectively).
- Vermont and Alaska have the highest percentage of residents who attended a public meeting in 2004 (21.8% and 18.7%, respectively).

- The District of Columbia and Iowa have the highest number of small nonprofit organizations per capita (both with 6.83 organizations per 1000 residents).
- The District of Columbia and Vermont have the highest number of large nonprofit organizations per capita (both with 4.12 organizations per 1000 residents).

The twelve civic life indicators are:

Volunteering for an Organization

- Volunteer Rate
- Volunteer Hours
- Volunteering More Than 12 Weeks (regular volunteers)

Neighborhood Engagement

- Percent Attending Public Meeting
- Number of Times Attending Public Meeting
- Percent Working with Neighbors to Improve Community
- Number of Times Working with Neighbors to Improve Community

Voting

- Voting in 2006 Mid-Term Elections
- Voting in 2004 Presidential Elections

Civic and Nonprofit Infrastructure

- Large 501(c)(3) Organizations per Capita
- Small 501(c)(3) Organizations per Capita
- Congregations per Capita

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

For more detailed state-level information on volunteering and civic engagement, go to www.nationalservice.gov.

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