

# 2019 GEORGIA CIVIC HEALTH INDEX™



GEORGIA  
**family connection**  
PARTNERSHIP



**National Conference on Citizenship**  
*Connecting People. Strengthening Our Country.*



## ABOUT THE PARTNERS

### GEORGIA FAMILY CONNECTION PARTNERSHIP

Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP) believes all people have the ability to become productive citizens. We work toward measurably better outcomes for a Georgia where all children are healthy, primed for school, and succeed when they get there; where families are stable, self-sufficient, and productive; and where communities are vibrant, robust, and thriving.

A nonprofit, public-private intermediary, GaFCP convenes public and private organizations and key community members committed to improving conditions and prospects of children and families. By connecting creative solutions, GaFCP expands, improves, and cultivates efforts that work to eliminate barriers and inefficiencies, while making effective use of existing resources and services.

GaFCP helps to strengthen communities so that they, and our state, can prosper—and will use the Civic Health Index to continue conversations and spark action around Georgia's civic engagement. [www.gafcp.org](http://www.gafcp.org)

### GEORGIA MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION

Based in Atlanta, the Georgia Municipal Association is a voluntary, nonprofit organization that provides legislative advocacy, educational, employee benefit and consulting services to its 538 member cities and whose mission is to anticipate and influence the forces shaping Georgia's cities. [www.gmanet.com](http://www.gmanet.com)

### NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CITIZENSHIP

The National Conference on Citizenship 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 innovative national service project, and our cross-sector conferences. At the core of our joint efforts is the belief that every person has the ability to help his or her community and country thrive. [www.ncoc.org](http://www.ncoc.org)

*We are grateful to our funders for their generous support and commitment to Georgia's civic health:*

**Community Foundation of Central Georgia**

**East West Bank**

**Knight Foundation**





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	4
Definition of Terms and Concepts.....	5
Civic Health in Georgia.....	6
County-Level Civic Health Data.....	7
Social Connectedness.....	8
Community Involvement.....	12
Political Action.....	14
Confidence in Institutions.....	18
Next Steps/Best Practices.....	22
iCivics.....	23
Technical Note.....	24
Endnotes.....	25
Civic Health Index Partners.....	26

## INTRODUCTION

In 2013, the Georgia Family Connection Partnership—along with the Carl Vinson Institute of Government, GeorgiaForward, and the National Conference on Citizenship—published the first-ever *Georgia Civic Health Index™* (CHI). The second edition of the *Georgia CHI* examines the way Georgians interact with each other, with their communities, and with political life.

This report compares the ways Georgia’s civic health has changed since the 2013 CHI was published. It also explores the way civic participation changes across demographic variables—income, educational attainment, age, race/ethnicity, and geography.

Finally, the report compares Georgia’s rates of civic participation to other states and to national averages. The goals of this report are to support and broaden existing conversation; to create and promote new conversations; and to examine strategies and evidence-based practices to improve civic health at the state and local levels.

### What is Civic Health?

Civic health includes a wide range of civic engagement indicators, from social interactions among friends and family to the ways people participate in groups and communities. Civic health also reflects the ways people express themselves politically—in traditional measures like voter registration and turnout, as well as more social measures like discussing politics and sharing information.

**The report examines three main areas of civic health:**

- **Social Connectedness**
- **Community Involvement**
- **Political Action**

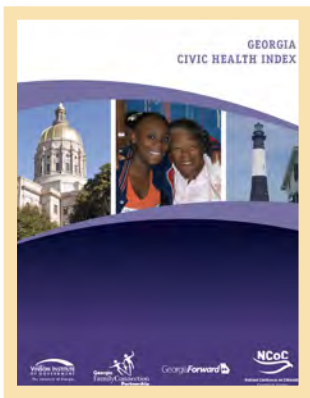
### Why is Civic Health Important?

Civic participation is one of the cornerstones of democracy, and strong civic health is vital to a healthy, functioning democracy. Active engagement with those elected and appointed to represent a given community helps ensure the best interests of that community are promoted and protected.

Strong civic health is associated with positive population outcomes, from improved public health to stronger workforce development.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, research conducted by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) found strong links between volunteering and employment. The CNCS report, “Volunteering as a Pathway to Employment,” found that volunteers have a 27% higher likelihood of finding a job after being out of work than non-volunteers. Additionally, volunteers without a high school diploma had a 51% higher chance of finding employment, and volunteers in rural areas had a 55% higher likelihood of finding employment. These statistics have added significance given that civic participation typically increases with higher levels of education and income.

Strong social cohesion—talking to neighbors, doing favors for neighbors, trusting neighbors, and seeing and hearing from friends and family—has been linked to better public health outcomes, including improved child development and adolescent well-being, improved mental health, lower violent crime rates and youth delinquency, and reduced mortality.

Improving Georgia’s civic health at state, regional, and local levels can help the state achieve improved outcomes for children, families, and communities—a goal that GaFCP, Georgia Municipal Association, and other partners work diligently each day to realize.



The first-ever Georgia Civic Health Index was released in 2013.

# DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

## Civic Health

Civic health reflects the degree to which citizens participate in their communities, from local and state governance to interactions with friends or family. Civic health also relates to the overall well-being of neighborhoods, communities, states, and the nation.

## Civic Engagement

Civic engagement is the act of working with local institutions and fellow residents to promote meaningful actions, movements, and relationships within a community or population. This can take many forms, from voter registration rates to talking politics with friends or family, and from trusting local businesses to participating in community groups. Some measures of civic engagement are political, some are social, and some are individual, but each reflects something important about a community's civic health.

## Social Connectedness

Social connectedness is defined as a series of interactions between friends, families, and neighbors, such as eating dinner with friends or family and trusting your neighbors.

## Community Involvement

Community involvement refers to the ways people interact with fellow residents beyond their friends, family, and immediate neighbors. These actions include group membership, charitable giving, volunteer rate, and attending public meetings.

## Political Action or Political Participation

Political action and participation refer to the ways people influence local government and public institutions, including voting in state and local elections, contacting public officials, discussing politics, and buying or boycotting goods to reflect political opinions.

## Confidence in Institutions

Confidence in institutions refers to the degree to which residents believe that various local institutions, including public schools, media, and corporations, will do what is right.

## GENERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

### Long Civic Generation (Born before 1931)

The Long Civic Generation is the last raised before World War II. This report does not include this generation in its discussion of trends in Georgia, as the sample size for this population was too small to produce reliable data.

### Silent Generation (1931-1945)

The Silent Generation refers to people born in the middle of the Great Depression and preceding World War II.

### Baby Boomers (1946-1964)

The Baby Boomer generation was born in the years after World War II, when the United States experienced a large increase in birth rates.

### Generation X (1965-1980)

This generation follows the Baby Boomers and is sometimes referred to as the "baby bust," as it was the beginning of a decline in birth rates in the United States.

### Millennials (1981-1995)

This designation refers to those born in the 1980s and 1990s, when there was a brief spike in birth rates attributed to the maturation of the Baby Boomer generation.

### Generation Z (1996 and later)

Generation Z represents those born in the late 1990s and 2000s.

## CIVIC HEALTH IN GEORGIA

Georgia generally lags national averages in measures of civic health, though some compelling differences exist among a few indicators between the 2013 report and the current data. This increasingly diverse state with its growing population is the primary economic hub of the Southeast, and includes large rural areas that rely on agriculture production. Strengthening Georgia's civic health is key to ensuring that all Georgia residents enjoy the benefits of the state's growth and increased economic well-being. Compared with all 50 states and the District of Columbia, Georgia does not display strong civic health across most measures.

**Table 1. Georgia Civic Health Rankings At-a-Glance**

<b>At or Above National Averages</b>	
Frequently post views about political, societal, or local issues on the internet or social media	13th
Donations to political organizations (\$25 or more)	27th
Frequently provide food, housing, money, or help for friends or extended family	29th
Frequently talk to or spend time with people of different racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds	29th
<b>Below National Averages</b>	
Frequently discuss political, societal, or local issues with family or friends	33rd
Attend a public meeting	34th
Bought or boycotted a product or service	36th
Voting	37th
Voter registration	37th
Voted in last local election	40th
Volunteering	44th
Frequently volunteering	44th
Frequently discuss political, societal, or local issues with neighbors	44th
Frequently read, watch, or listen to news or information about political, societal, or local issues	44th
Work with neighbors to do something positive for neighborhood or community	45th
Donations to charitable or religious organizations (\$25 or more)	47th
Frequently doing favors for neighbors	47th
Contacted or visited a public official	49th
Group participation	49th
Frequently hear from or spend time with family or friends	50th
Frequently talk with or spend time with neighbors	50th

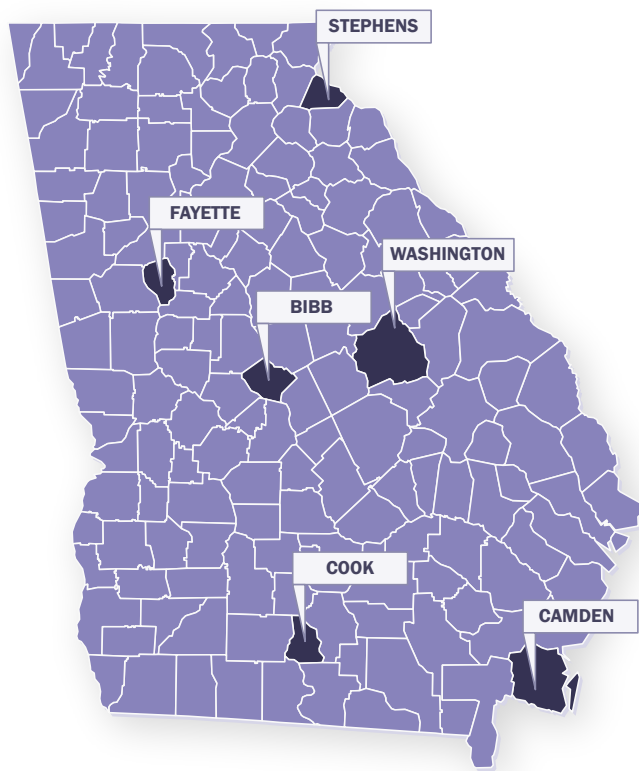
The report shows that overall civic health in Georgia has shown little improvement, and in most areas has declined from the first report produced in 2013 to current data. For example, voting in local elections dropped from 29th to 40th; volunteering dropped from 34th to 44th; contacting a public official dropped from 34th to 49th; group membership or participation dropped from 28th to 49th; and donating to charitable or religious organizations dropped from 40th to 47th.

Some state indicators from the 2019 report suggest promising opportunities for our state, however. The frequency that Georgians provide food, housing, money, or help to friends or extended family matches the national average (ranking 29th), with Georgia millennials engaging in this way at rates higher than both the state and national averages. Georgia ranks 29th for frequently talking to or spending time with people of different racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds. Georgians post views about political, societal, or local issues on the internet or social media at a rate above the national average.

## COUNTY-LEVEL CIVIC HEALTH DATA

This report looks beyond state-level trends to examine county-level civic health data. Six Georgia counties—Bibb, Camden, Cook, Fayette, Stephens, and Washington—participated in local civic health survey data collection over the last two years. The survey included the core civic health questions used to generate the state data for the Civic Health Index, and each county had the opportunity to add survey questions of local interest.

Methods of data collection varied with most using a snowball sampling or convenience sampling technique. Data collection methods included door-to-door contacts in various neighborhoods, self-administered at local businesses and agencies, and online. Only Bibb County used a random digit-dialing method conducted by an institute in a local university. Total population and sample sizes are provided below in Table 2.



**Table 2. County, County Population, and Sample Size**

Counties	Population	Sample Size	Percentage
Bibb	154,194	402	0.26
Camden	52,092	362	0.69
Cook	17,103	244	1.42
Fayette	109,495	701	0.64
Stephens	25,584	299	1.16
Washington	20,680	218	1.05

## SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

Social Connectedness is a measure of how individuals interact with each other and involves both the quality and number of connections an individual has with those in his or her social circle. Social connectedness fulfills the basic human need for relationships and extends from interactions with family and close friends to broader groups and communities. It is an essential component of healthy communities and promotes individual health and well-being. Interactions with family, friends, and neighbors are the foundation for building trust and community cohesion, and measuring individuals' interactions with these groups demonstrates social connectedness.

### How often did you hear from or spend time with family and friends?

Across the board, Georgians reported that they value time spent with family and friends. More than 80% of Georgians reported that they frequently hear from or spend time with family and friends. While the difference between most demographic groups was not appreciable, there are some differences in the frequency of spending time with family and friends by gender, geographic location, and family income.

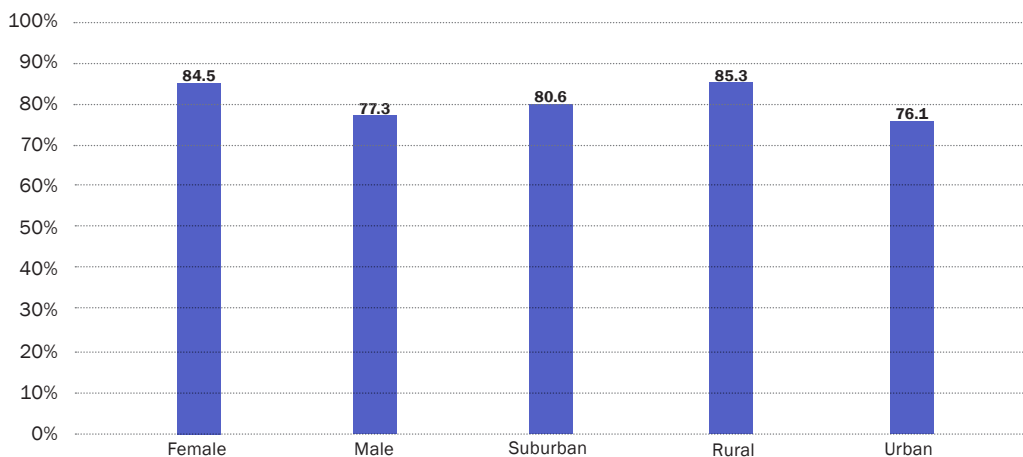
- Only 77.3% of males reported spending time frequently with their families and friends as compared to 84.5% of females.
- 85.3% of Georgia residents who live in rural communities reported communicating or spending time with family and friends more frequently than those living in urban (76.1%) or suburban (80.6%) communities. It is possible that individuals residing in rural communities, where there tends to be less geographic mobility, live in closer proximity to family and friends.

Nearly 78.0% of individuals with family incomes below \$35,000 reported spending less time and communicating less often with family and friends in comparison to 84.8% of individuals having incomes above \$75,000. Georgia's state mean is 81.1%, slightly below the national average of 85.4%.



Photo Credit: GaFCP

**Table 3. Frequently Hear From or Spend Time with Family and Friends**



The county-specific data confirm the finding that residents of rural communities communicate or spend more time with family and friends than residents of urban or suburban communities. All six counties reported higher percentages of contact with family and friends than the state average, but the highest levels were reported in the rural counties of Camden and Washington.



**Table 4. Frequently Hear From or Spend Time with Family and Friends**

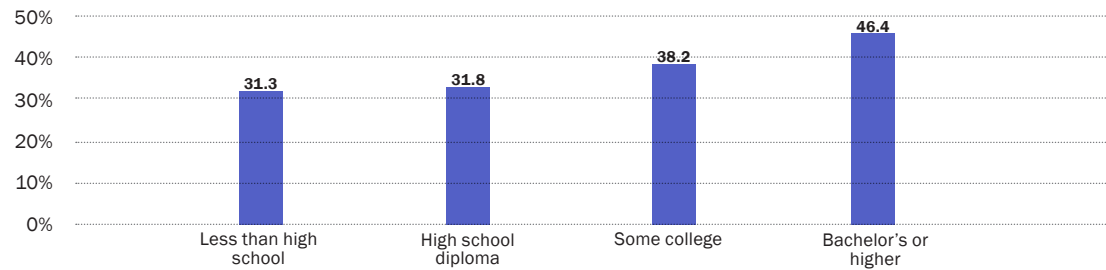
Counties	Percentage
Bibb	88.2
Camden	92.8
Cook	88.9
Fayette	91.5
Stephens	91.3
Washington	92.1
<b>GEORGIA</b>	<b>81.1</b>

### Discuss political, societal, or local issues with family or friends

Another measure of social connectedness is the extent to which individuals discuss political, societal, or local issues with family and friends. Overall, Georgians spend less time engaged in discussions about societal, political, and local issues than other ways of connecting with family and friends.

- County-level data found higher percentages of individuals who reported they frequently discuss politics with friends or family, with the highest rate in a more affluent county (Fayette, 60.1%).
- Individuals with higher levels of education reported having discussions about political, societal, and local issues more often than their peers: 46.4% of Georgians with a bachelor’s degree or higher reported connecting with family and friends in this way as compared to 31.8% of individuals with a high school diploma.

**Table 5. Frequently Discuss Political, Societal, or Local Issues with Family or Friends**



### Discuss political, societal, or local issues with neighbors

Georgians are even less likely to discuss political, societal, or local issues with neighbors than they are with family and friends.

- Just 7.7% of individuals reported discussing these issues with neighbors; and, except for age and geography, little appreciable difference across demographic groups was noted.
- While less than 10% of Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z reported having frequent discussions with neighbors about political, societal, and local issues, 12.5% of individuals born between 1930 and 1945 did have these discussions with neighbors.

**Table 6. Frequently Discuss Political, Societal, or Local Issues with Family or Friends**

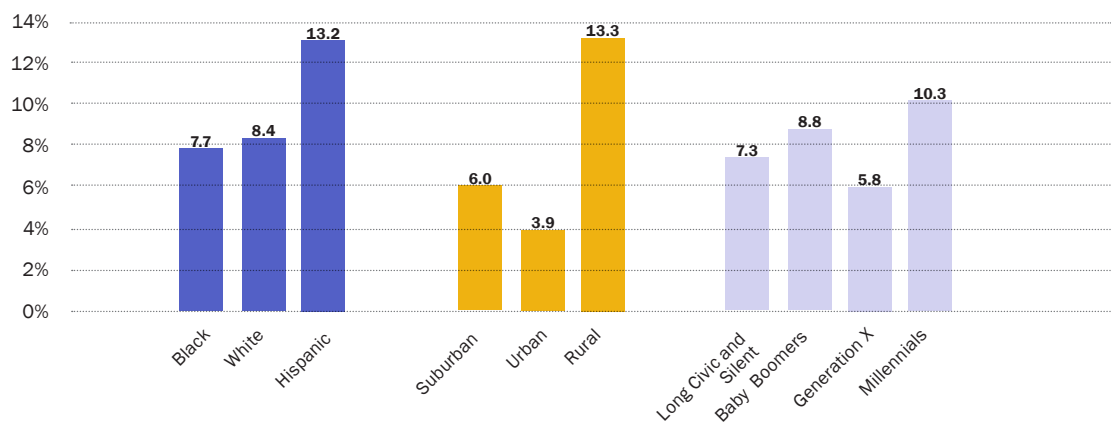
Counties	Percentage
Bibb	44.0
Camden	45.9
Cook	43.8
Fayette	60.1
Stephens	56.6
Washington	46.0
<b>GEORGIA</b>	<b>37.4</b>

### Provide food, housing, money, or help for friends or extended family

Georgians reported they did not frequently provide support to extended family or friends. Only 8.0% of Georgians reported they provided support to extended family or friends, which is equal to the national average.

- 10.3% of Georgia Millennials reported they provided food, housing, money or help to friends or extended family, higher than both the state and national rates of 7.7%.
- Rural Georgians provided food, housing, money, or help to friends and family more frequently than Georgians living in other geographic regions. Only 3.9% of urban dwellers and 6.0% of suburban residents provided help to friends or extended family compared to 13.3% of rural Georgians.
- 13.2% of Hispanic Georgians reported providing support to extended family and friends, a rate higher than the state and national averages. Black and white Georgians provided support at lower rates than Hispanics, only about 8%.

**Table 7. Provide Food, Housing, Money, or Help for Friends or Extended Family Frequently**



### Talk with or spend time with neighbors

Though Georgians value spending time with family and friends, fewer Georgians reported they frequently talked or spent time with their neighbors than the national average; 24.2% for Georgians compared to the national average of 33.0%.

- 36.5% of older Georgians born before 1930 through 1945, the Long Civic and Silent generations, reported talking or spending time with neighbors, a more frequent rate than Baby Boomers (28.0%), Generation X (23.8%), Millennials (19.3%) or Generation Z (15.8%) age groups.

- 33.7% of rural Georgians frequently spent time or talked with neighbors as compared to Georgians living in urban (25.2%) or suburban communities (20.2%).
- Individuals with incomes below \$35,000 also reported frequently talking and spending time with neighbors at higher rates than those with higher incomes.

### Do favors for neighbors

Like the rest of the nation, Georgians do not frequently exchange favors with neighbors. In 2017, only 7.4% of Georgians reported they frequently do favors for neighbors compared to 9.6% nationally. Across demographic subgroups, rural Georgians and those born before 1930 through 1945 reported doing favors more frequently than their counterparts in other age groups. Both groups had a higher frequency of exchanging favors compared to the state and nation.

- 11.4% of the Long Civic and Silent generations frequently did favors for neighbors, compared to 7.3% of Millennials and 7.0% of Baby Boomers. Only 4.2% of Generation Z reported that they frequently did favors for neighbors.
- 14.5% of rural Georgians exchanged favors with neighbors, which is approximately three times more often than did urban (3.3%) and suburban (5.3%) Georgians.

### Work with neighbors to do something positive for neighborhood or community

Only 17.3% of Georgians work with neighbors to do something positive for the neighborhood or community as compared to the national rate of 20.9%. There are appreciable differences among Georgians when comparisons are made based on household income and educational attainment.

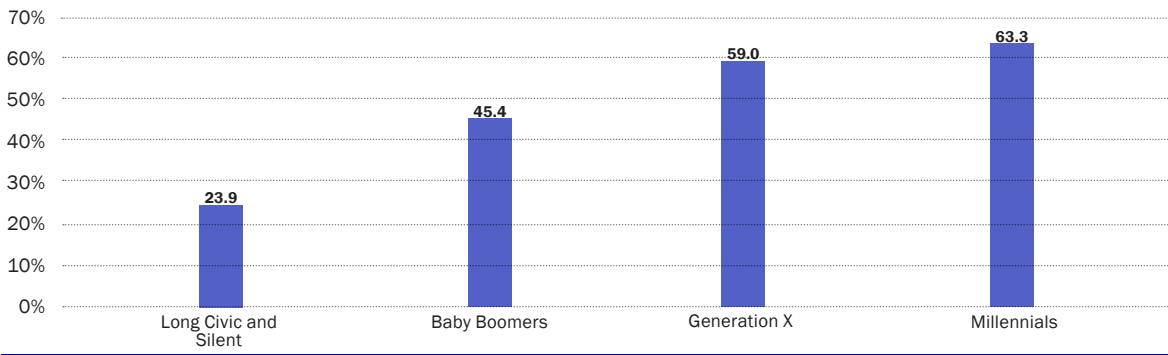
- One in four (25.1%) Georgians with family incomes over \$75,000 work with neighbors to do something positive for the neighborhood or community compared to fewer than 14.0% of other income brackets.
- Likewise, 27.6% of Georgians with a bachelor's degree or higher work with neighbors to do something positive in the neighborhood, which is substantially higher than individuals with some college (17.7%), a high school diploma (10.4%), and less than a high school diploma (6.3%).

### Talk or spend time with people of different racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds

Georgians talk or spend time with people of different racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds at a rate of 54.9%, similar to the national average of 56.0%. While there was no appreciable difference between most demographic groups, there was a significant difference in the percentage of Millennials and Generation X that spend time with people of different racial, ethnic, or cultural groups compared to the Long Civic and Silent generations.

- Fewer than one of four (23.9%) individuals born before 1930 through 1945 spent time with or talked to people of different racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds.
- The percentages of Millennials (63.3%) and Generation X (59.0%) who talk to and spend time with people of different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds are more than twice that of the Long Civic and Silent generations, and higher than the state and national averages.

**Table 8. Frequently Talk or Spend Time with People of Different Racial, Ethnic, or Cultural Backgrounds**



## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Community involvement describes the actions and relationships Georgia residents have beyond their own immediate family and friend circles, and illustrates how Georgians participate in their neighborhoods and communities. Patterns in volunteering, charitable giving, and group membership can reveal opportunities for growth in communities, with higher levels of community involvement generally correlating with indicators associated with strong communities. Broadly, Georgia ranks lower than average for indicators of community involvement, and these gaps represent challenges to Georgia communities, as well as a clear need for innovative, collaborative solutions.

### Volunteering

Georgia ranks near the bottom of the nation for volunteerism at 44th. Only 26.5% of Georgia residents reported volunteering, 18.9% reporting they volunteered frequently. Of the neighboring states, only Florida is ranked lower in volunteering than Georgia, at 51st in the nation. However, just 0.3% of respondents reported never volunteering, close to the national average of 0.8%.

- White residents and black residents volunteer at similar rates—27.7% and 25.6%, respectively, while Hispanic residents report lower rates of volunteering, at 9.6%.
- While slightly fewer black residents report volunteering than white residents, black residents report slightly more total hours of annual volunteer work than white residents—97.6 hours versus 92.4 hours, respectively.
- Urban residents at 30.5% also have a higher rate of volunteering than do suburban (26.4%) and rural (26.9%) residents.

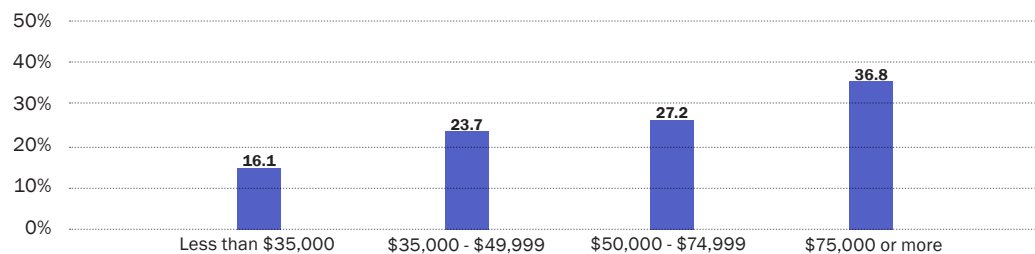
For people who are seeking employment, volunteering is associated with significantly increased likelihood of finding employment. However, volunteering is associated with Georgia residents who already have higher levels of education and income, and with older residents, indicating that increased volunteerism among younger residents and residents without a college degree or high income could be a significant opportunity for networking and employment opportunities.

Ensuring opportunities for volunteering is an important role for all community members, including organizations, employers, and the faith sector. Traditional volunteering opportunities may occur during times that are convenient for people with office jobs and “9 to 5” work schedules, and at times that may be inconvenient for residents who do shift work, from health care workers to the food industry. Ensuring that volunteer opportunities are both widely available and accessible to different schedules is an opportunity for all communities, and one that correlates with workforce development.



Photo Credit: GaFCP

**Table 9. Volunteering by Household Income in Georgia**





**Table 10: Volunteered in the Last 12 Months**

Counties	Percentage
Bibb	37.2
Camden	69.1
Cook	46.4
Fayette	78.6
Stephens	59.1
Washington	65.5
GEORGIA	<b>26.5</b>

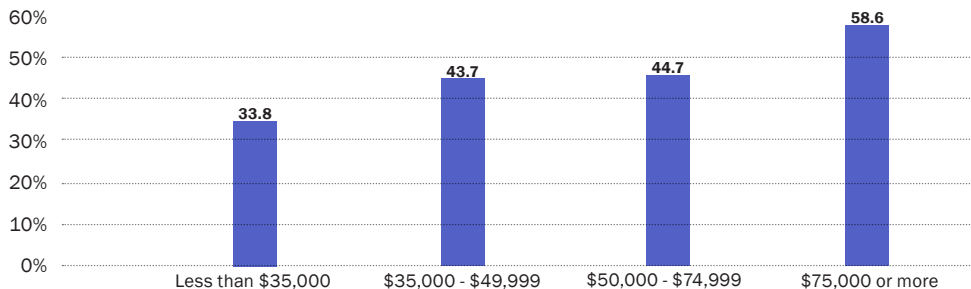
### Charitable giving

Georgia ranks near the bottom of the nation for charitable giving, with 45.0% of Georgia residents reporting donations to a charitable or religious organization, compared with a national average of 52.2%. At 47th in the nation, this represents a decline in reported charitable giving compared with data from the 2013 *Georgia CHI*, in which 49.7% of Georgia residents reported donating to charity, which ranked Georgia 40th that year. However, when looking at donations to political organizations, Georgia is much closer to the national average, with Georgia at 8.3% of residents reporting donations to a political organization and the national average at 8.7%.

As might be expected of charitable giving trends, donation increases with higher age, income, and education levels. However, interesting differences exist among other variables:

- Females are slightly more likely than males to donate to a charitable or religious organization (47.4% for females and 44.4% for males), but males are slightly more likely than females to donate to a political organization (9.0% for males and 7.7% for females).
- 53.7% of suburban residents are significantly more likely to donate to charity than urban residents (33.3%) or rural residents (34.5%).

**Table 11. Charitable Giving by Income (\$25 or More)**



## Group participation

Georgia is near the bottom at 49th in the nation for group participation, with 20.9% of residents reporting that they belong to any group. The number of groups Georgians belong to is in line with the national average of two.

As with several other indicators of civic health, group participation increases with age, higher levels of education, and higher levels of income.

- Urban Georgia residents are more likely to belong to groups, at 26.8%, than are suburban residents (19.9%) or rural residents (20.3%). This may be partially explained by geographic proximity to groups in urban areas and number of groups available in urban areas.
- Females report slightly higher levels of group participation than males—22.1% versus 19.6%.
- Hispanic residents had the lowest rate of group participation at 5.5%. White residents had the highest rate, 23.4%, followed by black Georgians at 18.2%.

Some younger residents, such as Millennials and Generation Z, may think about group membership in different ways than previous generations did, and so there may be some group participation among these generations that is not captured by traditional survey questions.

## POLITICAL ACTION

Political action refers to voter registration and turnout, contacting elected officials, and expressing political opinions. Overall, Georgia scores lower than national averages for these indicators, but did improve in voter registration and turnout for national elections between 2010 and 2016. Georgia has some of the lowest rates in the nation for contacting public officials. Even with improvement in voting rates, Georgia still has room for improvement in increasing political action by citizens.

### Voting

Compared with data from the 2010 elections, which included both state and national elections, both Georgia's voter registration and voter turnout are up significantly. In the 2013 *Georgia CHI* survey, data from the 2010 national and state elections showed Georgia residents reported that 62.0% were registered to vote, and of these 43.6% actually voted. In the 2016 national election cycle, Georgia residents surveyed reported that 69.4% were registered to vote, and 60.2% actually voted.

A comparison of county-specific data to the Georgia average reveals higher percentages of voter turnout and registration in all six counties. The greatest differences were found in Washington and Bibb counties, with 88.9% and 83.7%, respectively, voting, and 95.9% and 91.7%, respectively, registered to vote.

**Table 12. Voting and Registration Rates in Georgia by County**

Counties	Voted	Registered
Bibb	83.7	91.7
Camden	65.9	74.0
Cook	65.8	75.0
Fayette	79.9	84.9
Stephens	69.7	81.7
Washington	88.9	95.9
<b>GEORGIA</b>	<b>60.2%</b>	<b>69.4%</b>

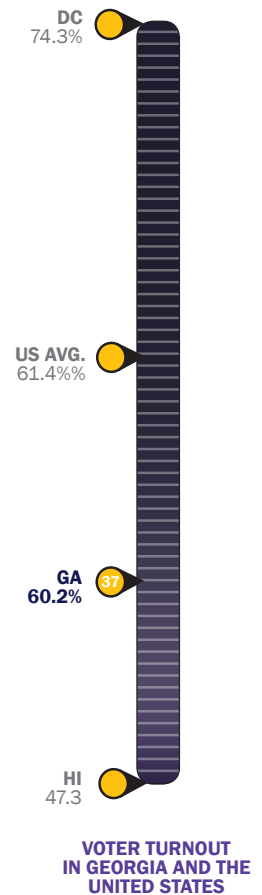
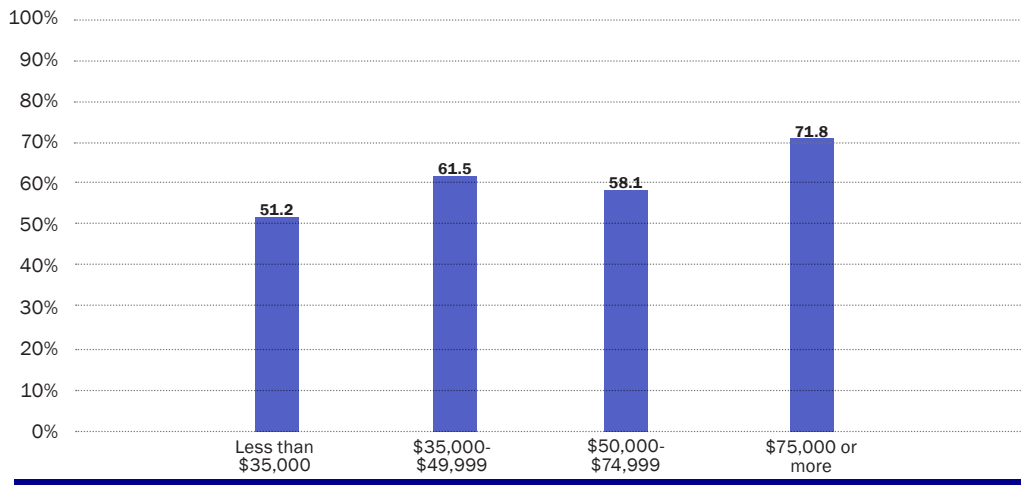
While Georgia's ranking fell on several indicators in other sections of the report, these numbers represent a slight improvement in Georgia's rank for both indicators. In the 2013 *Georgia CHI*, Georgia was ranked 41st in the nation for voter registration, and 38th in the nation for voter turnout. The most recent data place Georgia at 37th in the nation for both registration and voting.

When looking at characteristics that correspond with high levels of voter registration and turnout, as in the 2013 *Georgia CHI*, higher income and higher levels of education were strongly associated with higher levels of voter registration and turnout.

- Voter turnout increased significantly with age, with Millennials and Generation X reporting lower levels of voting, at 49.5% and 58.4%, respectively, compared with Baby Boomers and the Silent Generation, at 66.9% and 75.8%, respectively.
- The Silent Generation had the smallest difference between voter registration and voter turnout.
- Females reported slightly higher levels of voting than men.
- White Georgians voted at higher rates, 62.6%, compared to black Georgians at 59.7%.

When asked about voting in local elections specifically, many of the trends from national and state elections continued.

**Table 13. Local Voting by Household Income**



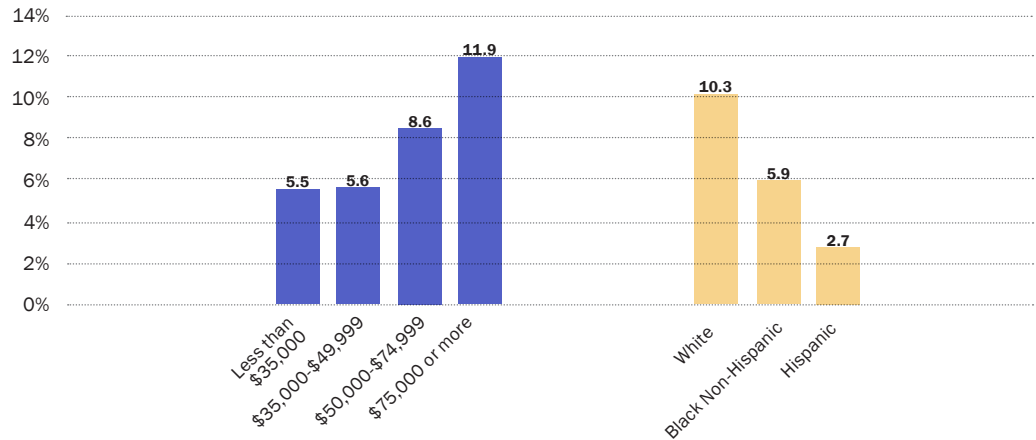
### Contacting public officials

Just 8.3% of Georgia residents reported contacting a public official in 2017, a decline from the 2011 rate of 12% and less than the national rate of 11.4%. Georgia ranked 49th in contacting public officials.

- Rural residents were more likely to contact their public officials than suburban or urban residents.
- The likelihood of contacting a public official increased with age, more education, and higher income levels.
- Men were more likely to contact public officials than women, 9.4% versus 7.4%.
- White Georgians were more likely to contact public officials at 10.3%, compared to black Georgians (5.9%) or Hispanic Georgians (2.7%).

Communication with public officials is an important step in ensuring that a community's interests are represented in decision-making. Georgia's low rates of contacting public officials indicates there is a need for education and training regarding the importance of, and the process for, working with public officials, especially among populations with the lowest rates of contacting public officials.

**Table 14. Communication with Public Officials by Household Income and Ethnicity**



### Sharing views, reading news, and expressing political opinions

Georgians share their views on political, societal, or local issues on the internet or social media more frequently (7.9%) than the national average of 7.1%, ranking Georgia 13th in the nation.

As to be expected, young people (Generation Z and Millennials) are more likely to post frequently than older Georgians, and the likelihood of posting frequently increased as education and income levels decreased.

Frequent posting is also one of the few indicators for which women reported higher levels than men, and black residents and Hispanic residents reported posting at higher rates than white residents. The young ages of those reporting more frequent posting also may explain some of the other demographic correlations as well, as many are still in school or beginning their careers, and younger generations are more racially diverse than previous generations.

Compared with the national average of 75.0%, Georgia lags the rest of the United States in frequently reading, watching, or listening to news or information about political, societal, or local issues, at 71.2%. This ranks Georgia 44th in the nation for this indicator, and of Georgia's neighboring states, only Florida ranks lower at 46th. As with many other indicators of civic health, the percentages of frequently reading, watching, or listening to news or information about political, societal, or local issues increases with age, income, and education.

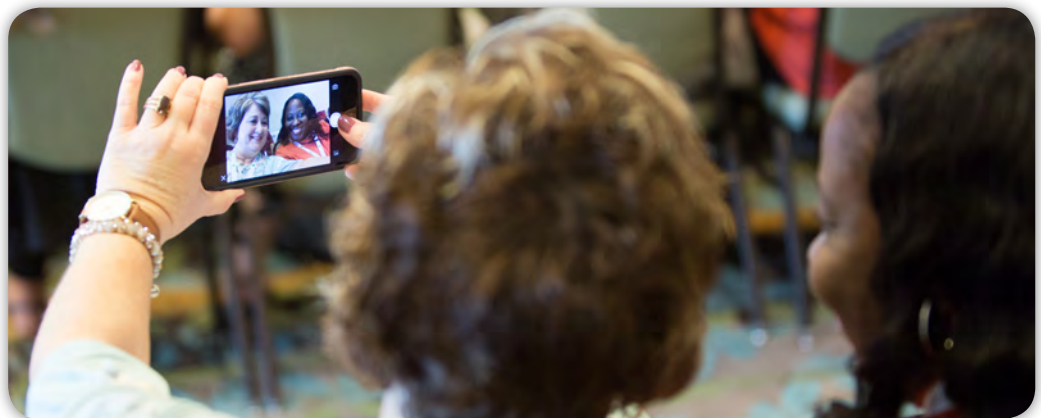


Photo Credit: GaFCP



Georgians also report slightly lower rates of buying or boycotting a product or service as a political action, at 12.3%, compared with the national average of 13.9%, which ranks Georgia 36th nationally. The rate of buying or boycotting a product or service increased significantly with age, income, and education; just 2.2% of residents with less than a high school education report buying or boycotting, compared with 21.9% of residents with a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Furthermore, white Georgia residents were more likely to buy or boycott than black or Hispanic Georgians, and men were more likely than women to buy or boycott. Suburban residents were the most likely to buy or boycott, and rural Georgians were the least likely. These correlations may be partially explained by age and education. Additionally, rural Georgians and those with lower incomes may have fewer choices of goods and services to buy or boycott, or less financial freedom to express themselves with their wallets.

Attending public meetings is an avenue for engaging with fellow residents, as well as relaying ideas and feedback to various public entities. At the state level, 10.1% of residents reported attending a public meeting, which was close to the national average of 10.7%. At the county level, residents reported much higher rates of attending public meetings.

**Table 15. Attended a Public Meeting in Which There Was a Discussion of Community Affairs in Last 12 Months**

Counties	Percentage
Bibb	26.3
Camden	57.9
Cook	31.3
Fayette	42.8
Stephens	32.2
Washington	42.0
<b>GEORGIA</b>	<b>10.1</b>



Photo Credit: GMA

## CONFIDENCE IN INSTITUTIONS

This report does not compare and rank Georgia across states regarding confidence in institutions because the data were not available. Instead, this report examines the level of public trust in government at the federal, state, and local levels and provides data on public confidence in institutions based on research and national polling data.

### Trust in the federal government

Citizens are more trusting when they perceive that their government will keep its promises. “Public trust can be defined as the extent to which citizens trust the government to do what is right, to do it honestly, to do it fairly, and to do it efficiently,” the National Research Center (NRC) stated in Analysis of Public Trust Survey in 2012.<sup>2</sup>

Public trust in the federal government over the past decade remains near historic lows. According to a Pew Research Center study conducted in late 2017:

- Only 18%—about 1 in 5—Americans surveyed say they trust the federal government to do what is right “just about always” (3%) or “most of the time” (15%);
- 66%—2 out of 3—Americans say they can trust the government only some of the time; and,
- 14% report they can never trust the government.<sup>3,4</sup>

The survey queried 1,503 U.S. adults on the government’s role and its performance on 12 measures in the chart below.

Large majorities say the government should play a major role in keeping the country safe from terrorism (94%), responding to natural disasters (89%), and ensuring that food and medicine are safe (87%). Yet smaller majorities—about six-in-10 or more—say the government is doing at least a somewhat good job in each of these areas.

Much wider differences arise between views of the government’s role and performance for these key issues, including managing the immigration system, protecting the environment, ensuring basic income for older adults, and getting people out of poverty. Fewer than 50% report that the federal government is doing a good job in these areas.



Photo Credit: GaFCP

### Trust in government by generation

Trust in government remains at or near historically low levels across generational lines. Historically, only modest differences between generational groups have been reported in trust in government. At the end of 2017, 15% of Millennials reported trusting the government, close to the percentages reported by the older generations—18% Silent; 14% Boomer; 17% Generation X.<sup>5</sup>

### Trust in government by race and ethnicity

A downward trajectory in trust in government is also seen across racial and ethnic lines. Currently, white non-Hispanic (17%), black non-Hispanic (15%), and Hispanic (23%) Americans all express historically low levels of trust in government.<sup>6</sup>

**Table 16. Ratings for the Federal Government on 12 Key Issues**

Percent who say the Federal Government is...	Doing a good job (%)	Should play a major role (%)
Keeping the country safe from terrorism	66	94
Responding to natural disasters	64	89
Ensuring safe food and medicine	61	87
Managing the U.S. immigration system	32	80
Protecting the environment	44	76
Maintaining infrastructure	51	75
Strengthening the economy	53	75
Ensuring basic income for 65+	41	71
Ensuring access to health care	36	69
Ensuring access to quality education	44	68
Helping people get out of poverty	26	67
Setting standards in the workplace	65	65

### Trust in local and state governments

Americans continue a decade-long trend of placing more trust in their local government than their state government. In 2018, 72% of U.S. adults say they have a “great deal” or a “fair amount” of trust in their local government, compared with 63% who say the same about their state government.<sup>7</sup>

The latest ratings, recorded in Gallup’s annual Governance poll, conducted Sept. 4-12 in 2018, show a continuation of fairly high levels of trust for local governments. This trend has varied little over the past two decades, recording its highest rating of 77% in 1998. Since 2001, this measure has remained in a narrow range of 68% to 74%.<sup>8</sup> Confidence in state government has varied more, from a high of 80% in 1998 when the economy was robust and unemployment low, to a low of 51% in 2009, as states were struggling to balance budgets during the Great Recession. The latest measure (63%) matches the previous year and is close to the historical average (64%) for this measure since 1972.<sup>9</sup> While confidence in state governments has improved since the recession-related drop, it has yet to fully recover.

## Trust and confidence in specific institutions

Gallup polls, some dating back to 1972, have asked the public how much trust and confidence they have in various institutions, including big and small business, schools, mass media—newspapers, TV, and radio.<sup>10,11</sup>

### *Big and small business*

In 2018, 25% of those surveyed responded they have “a great deal” (10%) or “quite a lot” (15%) of confidence in big business, while 72% reported “some” (43%) or “very little” (29%). This is the highest rating for big business since a high of 30% in 1998 and 1999 and its highest peak of 34% in 1973.<sup>12</sup>

The measures for confidence in small business run higher. In 2018, 67% of those surveyed responded they have “a great deal” (32%) or “quite a lot” (35%) of confidence in small business, while only 32% reported “some” (26%) or “very little” (6%). The highest rating for small business (70%) was reported in 2017 and the lowest rating of 57% was in 1998.<sup>13</sup>

### *Public schools*

In 2018, 29% of those surveyed reported having “a great deal” (12%) or “quite a lot” (17%) of confidence in the public schools, while 69% reported “some” (44%) or “very little” (25%) confidence. This confidence rating is lower than the 36% positive rating reported in 2017. The highest positive rating (great deal/quite a lot) for the public schools was 62% in 1975. Since 1987, positive school ratings (great deal/quite a lot) have been in a steady decline—all positive ratings reported were under 50%.<sup>14</sup>

### *Mass media*

For a general category of mass media—newspapers, TV, and radio—45% of respondents in 2018 said they had a “great deal” (14%) or a “fair amount” (31%) of trust when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately, and fairly, while 54% reported “not very much” (30%) to “none at all” (24%). The highest positive rating (great deal/fair amount) reported was in 1974 at 69%.<sup>15</sup>

When looking at the different types of mass media, newspapers received slightly higher ratings than television news or news on the internet.

**Table 17. Confidence in Media**

Mass Media for News	Great Deal/Quite a lot (%)	Some/Very little (%)
Newspapers	23	73
Television News	20	75
News on the Internet	16	65

The highest positive television news rating (46%) occurred in 1979, but since 2006 the ratings have consistently been in the low- to mid-20s with the lowest rating of 18% in 2014.<sup>16</sup>

The highest positive newspaper rating (51%) occurred in 1993, but since 2006 the ratings have been declining consistently from the 30s to the low- to mid-20s with the lowest rating of 20% in 2016.<sup>17</sup>

## Impact of trust in government

The decline of trust in government raises complex questions and challenges for our nation’s democracy. This decline in trust suggests that citizens have been feeling unheard in the conversations that sustain democracy.



However, people have held onto their trust in local government. According to research, there are many reasons that local government—both city and county—remain steady at a higher level—around 70%—over the past decade. Chief among these are local government is perceived to:

- fix real day-to-day problems and get things done;
- readily partner and be present and responsive to their residents;
- frequently use data or other hard evidence to determine the best course forward; and
- make decisions without regard to partisanship.

Today citizens expect more from government than ever before. With advancing technologies, they expect access to balanced and objective information, improved and frequent communication, and better services.<sup>18,19</sup>

Civic trust also depends on civic engagement. Local, state, and federal governments and agencies continue to embrace community engagement and build opportunities for public participation in service design and policy development. Community engagement speaks to the pressing need for democracy to do better by providing a vital role for citizens, communities, and stakeholders in the innovation and collaboration necessary to find ways forward that reflect their shared values.

Online community engagement, alongside face-to-face conversations, are powerful tools for making civic engagement happen.<sup>20</sup> Decision-makers are increasingly acknowledging the need to listen to and understand the communities they serve. Opportunities are growing for more citizens to engage in discussing the issues they care about, forge new relationships and strengthen ongoing ones, and help craft new solutions to issues using current data and emerging practices alongside evidenced-based practices shown to work.

In Georgia, community civic engagement is at the forefront of many local and state efforts. Some examples include:

- GaFCP launched a **Civic Health Cohort** in 2015, when three Georgia Family Connection county Collaboratives began to develop a survey instrument and collect local data on civic health to use in developing strategies to improve the civic health in their communities. Six counties are now included in the cohort.
- An **Early Childhood Health and Education Cohort**, comprised of 12 Georgia Family Connection county Collaboratives, is working together to implement county-specific strategies that address the needs of children, birth to age 8, and their families by helping children to grow up healthy, be primed for school, and read on grade level by third grade.
- The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) is sponsoring **civic dinners** where metro Atlanta residents can sit down together and have meaningful conversations about issues that matter. These conversations help ARC and its regional partners inform their work, rethink services, and plan for the future.<sup>21</sup>
- **Better Together** is a citizen-led, government-supported effort to build deeper connection, understanding, and mutual respect among the Decatur community in Georgia. The process facilitated a substantive community conversation that culminated in a “Community Action Plan focused on cultivating a more just, welcoming, inclusive, equitable and compassionate experience for all who visit, live or work in the City of Decatur.”<sup>22</sup>



Photo Credit: GaFCP

## NEXT STEPS/BEST PRACTICES

Georgia's success depends on citizens being connected to each other and involved in their communities and the political process. Research shows that civic engagement is related to improved public health outcomes, including mental health, as well as economic resilience, low unemployment, and lower violent crime rates.<sup>23</sup> These positive outcomes have been found in both adults and adolescents.

Civic engagement is associated with improved self-reported health in adults,<sup>24</sup> and higher academic achievements and better social and emotional adjustments in adolescents.<sup>25</sup>

Volunteering is associated with decreased depression and increased life satisfaction, wellbeing,<sup>26</sup> and self-reported health.<sup>27</sup> These effects have also been shown to increase over time with regular volunteering.<sup>28</sup> For seniors, volunteering is associated with increased social, cognitive, and physical activity and functioning<sup>29</sup> and decreased risk of mortality.<sup>30</sup> Youth who engage in community service are less likely to experience teen pregnancy and more likely to have more positive attitudes towards themselves and others,<sup>31</sup> as well as more social and academic competence.<sup>32</sup>

This research supports Georgia's efforts to build social cohesion, political engagement, and civic health.

Research shares a growing number of evidence-based and evidence-informed practices that can be developed and implemented in communities interested in strengthening civic health. The examples provided below have been identified by the National Center for Learning and Civic Engagement<sup>33</sup> and the Brown Center Report on American Education.<sup>34</sup>

- Provide instruction in government, history, law, and democracy using evidence-based curricula like iCivics.
- Incorporate discussion of current local, national, and international issues into classrooms.
- Design and implement programs that provide students with opportunities to apply what they learn through community service.
- Offer extracurricular activities that provide opportunities for young people to get involved in their schools or communities.
- Encourage student participation in school governance.
- Encourage students' participation in simulations of democratic processes and procedures.
- Increase attention to social-emotional learning and school climate.
- Increase opportunities for volunteerism.
- Modify built environments to increase opportunities for face-to-face interactions.
- Develop and promote urban spaces that bring people together.
- Encourage and support educational achievement.
- Develop methods to invite community members to participate in nonpartisan community activities.
- Support and promote voting.
- Support and encourage national service opportunities, including Americorps, Military, Teach for America, etc.).

**These practices include classroom as well as community activities. Several occur through schools but outside of formal classroom instruction, such as extracurricular activities and participation on school governance. Both social-emotional learning and school climate are focused on promoting a healthy, safe school environment that fosters learning and respectful engagement with peers. The message is clear—building a knowledge base is necessary but insufficient to equip citizens to participate fully in a democratic society. Interactive and participatory practices that bring community members together are required core components of a high-quality civics education designed to foster social connectedness, community involvement, and political action, and advance improvements in civic health across our state.**



## iCIVICS IN GEORGIA

When the first edition of the *Georgia Civic Health Index* (2013) revealed Georgia's civic health was not strong across several measures, Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP) began seeking opportunities and partnerships to promote and implement strategies to improve civic engagement. GaFCP quickly focused on increasing civic knowledge throughout the state as one area for improvement, understanding the important link between civic knowledge and civic participation.

The organization soon discovered existing national and state efforts around iCivics—a free, online, evidence-based civics curriculum, founded by retired U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, that uses web-based games to teach civics lessons. Today, national iCivics efforts are championed by U.S. Supreme Court Justices Sonia Sotomayor and Neil Gorsuch.

In 2017, GaFCP began partnering with the State Bar of Georgia's iCivics Committee, which was the lead organization promoting iCivics in Georgia. With funding from and in partnership with the State Bar, GaFCP is leveraging its field-based staff and statewide network to expand training opportunities to aid educators and community leaders with using the iCivics curriculum and to help spread the word about its value for increasing civic knowledge. GaFCP is also recommending that each of the six Georgia counties participating in its emerging Civic Health Cohort use iCivics as one of their targeted strategies for improving civic health in their communities.

As the iCivics partnership developed with the State Bar, multiple GaFCP staffers became iCivics trainers and broadened the reach of the curriculum beyond just school classrooms into community organizations, library systems, and summer and after-school learning programs. Furthermore, the Georgia Family Connection network and communities across the state began sharing iCivics with creative, non-traditional audiences—from their juvenile justice populations to housing authorities and Head Start teachers. Communities also developed ways to use the iCivics lessons with expanded age groups, both younger and older than the intended audience of middle and high school students.

In 2018, site traffic to iCivics in Georgia increased 12% over the previous school year, and the number of games played on the site increased by 14%, making Georgia the 7th-highest site traffic state in the nation, and 10th-highest for number of games played. Additionally, the number of teachers registered to use iCivics in Georgia has tripled from 2,971 in 2015 to 9,616 in 2018.

## TECHNICAL NOTE

Unless otherwise noted, findings presented in this report are based on the National Conference on Citizenship's (NCoC) analysis of the U.S. Census Current Population Survey (CPS) data. Any and all errors are NCoC's own. Volunteering and Civic Engagement estimates are from CPS September Volunteering/Civic Engagement Supplement from 2017 and voting estimates from 2016 November Voting and Registration 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 Georgia CPS sample size used for this report ranges from 413 to 1,547 (volunteering/civic engagement supplement) and to 1,957 (voting supplement) residents from across Georgia. This sample is then weighted to representative population demographics for the district. Estimates for the volunteering and civic engagement indicators (e.g., volunteering, working with neighbors, making donations) are based on U.S. residents ages 16 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 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 Georgia 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. 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.



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# CIVIC HEALTH INDEX

## State and Local Partnerships

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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 U.S. 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

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#### **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**

Georgia Family Connection Partnership  
Georgia Municipal Association

#### **Illinois**

McCormick Foundation

#### **Indiana**

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

#### **Kansas**

Kansas Health Foundation

#### **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 University of Texas at Austin  
The Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life  
RGK Center for Philanthropy & Community Service

#### **Virginia**

Center for the Constitution at James Madison's Montpelier  
Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

### ISSUE SPECIFIC

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#### **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

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### **Atlanta**

Community Foundation of Greater Atlanta

### **Greater Austin**

The University of Texas at Austin  
RGK Center for Philanthropy and  
Community Service

Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life  
Leadership Austin

Austin Community Foundation

KLRU-TV, Austin PBS

KUT News

### **Chicago**

McCormick Foundation

### **Kansas City & Saint Louis**

Missouri State University

Park University

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

### **Twin Cities**

Center for Democracy and Citizenship

Citizens League

John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

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