

ILLINOIS



CIVIC HEALTH INDEX

2009



2009 ILLINOIS CIVIC HEALTH INDEX

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INTRODUCTION

Illinois has experienced more than its fair share of political ups and downs in recent years: it is the state where President Barack Obama started his career as a community organizer and a politician, but Illinoisans also saw Governor Blagojevich indicted for fraud, solicitation, and bribery, and former Governor George Ryan sent to federal prison for corruption. These political scandals could have repercussions for how Illinoisans relate to their government and communities. Therefore, it is especially important to track Illinois' civic health.

Tracking and assessing our civic health is an important basis for public policy, just like measuring our gross national product. To that end, the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC), in partnership with the Civic Indicators Working Group, has published annual reports since 2006, each entitled *America's Civic Health Index*. In 2009, NCoC formalized a partnership with the U.S. Census Bureau and the Corporation for National and Community Service through the passage of the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, in which Congress charged these three partner organizations with developing, refining, and implementing annual measures of America's civic health. Having good measures of our country's civic performance will enable policymakers, private and public institutions, and citizens to adjust, strengthen, and improve the range of activities, attitudes and behaviors that make up our nation's civic life.

This year, NCoC collaborated with the McCormick Freedom Project to assess Illinois' civic health in this difficult time. In addition to political scandals, Illinoisans are also being hit by the recession, like fellow Americans nationwide. Illinois' unemployment rate as of May 2009 was 10.1 percent, worse than national average (9.4%), and in our survey:

12% experienced lay-offs,

7% experienced foreclosure, and

26% had trouble affording essentials, at some point in the past year.

This is a unique and particularly difficult time for Illinois; because of this, it is important to assess Illinoisans' reactions to the current situation so that citizens and officials can determine a future course of action. Using Civic Health Index data and the Current Population Survey's Volunteering Supplement, this report describes the levels and quality of civic engagement among Illinoisans in comparison to the national average, tracks longitudinal trends that are unique to Illinois, and provides practical implications for policy and practice related to civic engagement in Illinois.

In April 2009, Knowledge Networks surveyed a total of 3,889 nationally-representative participants for the National Conference on Citizenship. These participants were part of Knowledge Networks' survey panel. National Conference on Citizenship prepared a separate national report, which was released on August 27, 2009, and available at www.NCoC.net.

For this report, 516 respondents from Illinois completed the survey on the Internet. Knowledge Networks' national panel is carefully chosen using random-digit sampling, address-based sampling, and cell-phone based sampling to minimize potential biases. Knowledge Network also includes households that do not have Internet connection by providing connection and necessary equipment to those who do not have access at home.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Illinois Civic Health Index 2009 shows that Illinoisans are hurt by both economic recession and loss of trust in their state government. One in ten Illinoisans in the workforce are currently unemployed, and according to our survey, 26% of Illinoisans had trouble affording essentials such as food and medication, 12% experienced lay-offs, and 7% went through a foreclosure at one point during the past year. Reacting to the string of political scandals surrounding major players, Illinoisans showed significantly lower levels of trust toward their state government compared to national average.

These factors, an economic crisis and state-wide political scandals, have grave implications for Illinois' civic health. Our survey showed that 76% of Illinoisans, compared to 72% nationwide, cut back on time spent on volunteering, participating in groups and doing other civic activities in the past year. While cutting back on civic engagement is consistent with the national trend this year, our findings show that **Illinoisans have been cutting back on civic engagement for the past several years, and at a faster pace than others in the U.S.** Just a couple of years ago in 2006, Illinoisans were more likely to volunteer (29.9%) than national average (26.7%). But the latest findings show that they were significantly less likely to volunteer (24.9%) than national average (26.5). While the nation as a whole has been volunteering at a higher rate in the past three years, Illinoisans decreased their volunteering sharply.

Illinois has been astutely described as "leaderless" because of the major political scandals that plague Illinoisans at both state and community levels. Only 15% of Illinoisans said they believed the state government did the right thing most of the time, compared to 27% of nation as a whole. Furthermore, **Illinoisans' confidence in the state's civic traditions was among the lowest of all states.** The lack of trust in the state government seems to have a pervasive impact on their view of formal institutions. Many Illinoisans are reluctant to get involved in formal civic institutions such as local policy making or volunteering through organizations.

But not all is lost. **Illinoisans still maintain high levels of trust toward others' good intention and honesty on a personal level.** In fact, they may be looking for an outlet of their goodwill and desire to engage through less formal channels. Alternative forms of engagement, such as working with neighbors on a community problem, are on the rise.

Our survey also highlighted a lack of engagement and trust among Millennials in Illinois. They were less likely to volunteer, work with neighbors to solve problems, or attend public meetings where community issues are discussed than their peers nationwide. **While Millennials led older generations in volunteering rate nationwide, Millennials were the least likely to volunteer in Illinois.** Almost half of Illinois Millennials said that they had hardly any confidence that their state government will spend the federal stimulus money wisely. Illinois Millennials see a state government that has abused the public trust and may not feel compelled to contribute to a seemingly broken system. This is a major concern, as today's young people are the elected officials of tomorrow.

Although our findings from Illinois generally indicate that Illinoisans have been disappointed, frustrated and even disillusioned by the economic crisis and political scandals, **Illinoisans showed strong support for federal legislations that propel our nation's civic agenda forward.** They were particularly likely to support legislations that integrate civic engagement with education, such as providing tuition for service, requiring a new Civics test, and incorporating service learning as part of school curriculum. The enthusiasm toward educating the youth in civics may indeed reflect citizens' disappointment in their government and realization that they must educate students about the critical role of active citizenship in building an honest, ethical government. The McCormick Freedom Project and the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition have coproduced *Civic Blueprint for Illinois High Schools* to provide useful guidelines for teaching active citizenship to their students.

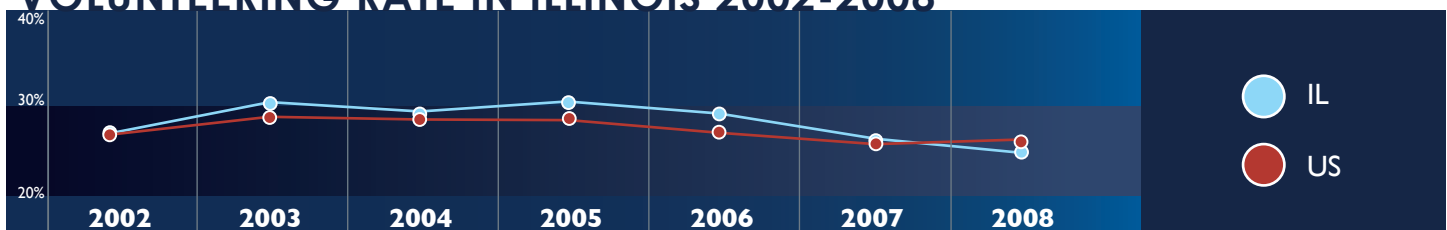
ILLINOIS CIVIC HEALTH COMPARED TO THE NATIONAL AVERAGE

In this section, we refer to the Current Population Survey (CPS) from the Census Bureau to estimate the general engagement level among Illinoisans on four major indicators of civic engagement: volunteering, attendance of public meetings where community issues are discussed, working with neighbors to solve or improve a community problem, and voting.

Illinois' civic health is in a state of continuous decline, made worse by the current economic climate. Fewer Illinoisans volunteer and when they do volunteer, they spend fewer hours on volunteering per year than they did several years ago. In 2008, Illinois' volunteering rate lagged significantly behind the national average for the first time since 2002.¹ In 2008, Illinois

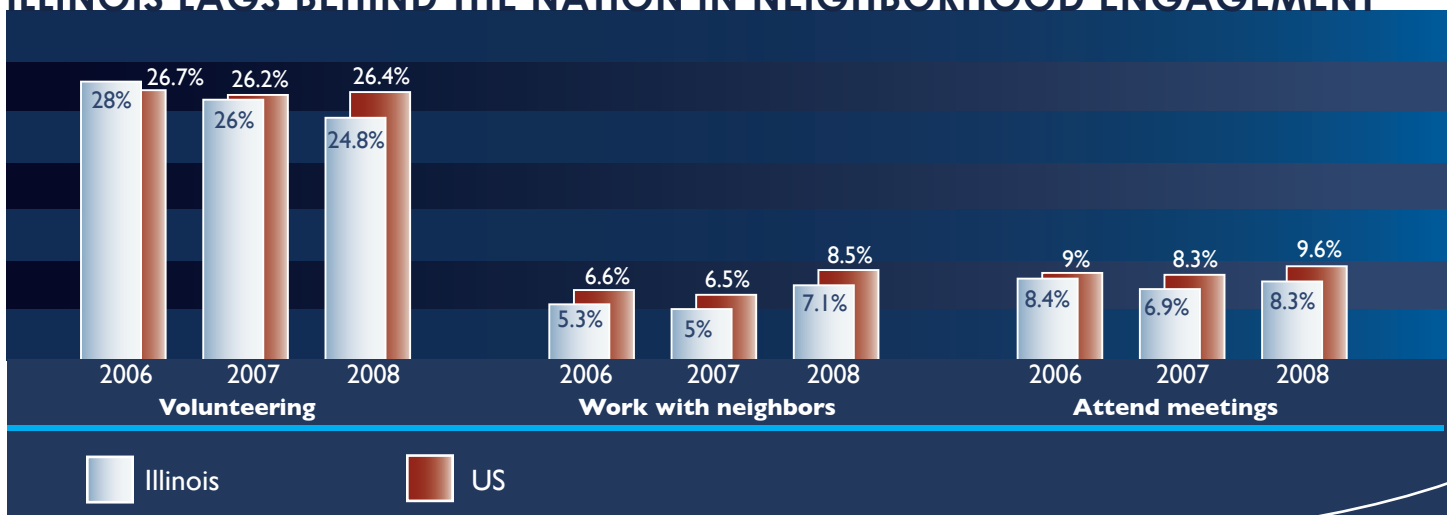
ranked 37th in volunteering rate at 24.8%.² The civic decline in Illinois appears to have been ongoing for the past five years - in 2004, the statewide volunteering rate was 29.1% and in 2008, it was 24.8%. From 2003 to 2005 the number of Illinois volunteers held steady at 2.9 million volunteers. In 2008, an estimated 2.5 million Illinoisans volunteered, representing a decline of 500,000 volunteers. Similarly, Illinoisans donated 356 million hours in 2003 but just 279 million hours in 2008, which is a 22% reduction. This recent decline is a result of both a smaller portion of Illinoisans volunteering, but also of a reduced number of hours per volunteer (37 hours in 2003 to 28 hours in 2008). This sharp decline may threaten Illinois' service core, reducing the amount of service volunteers accomplish in the state.

VOLUNTEERING RATE IN ILLINOIS 2002-2008



On other indicators of civic health, Illinois was also behind the national average, though the number of people attending a public meeting and working with neighbors did increase from 2007 to 2008. Nationally, Illinois ranked 40th on attendance of public meetings to discuss community affairs, 43rd on working with other in the community to solve a problem, and 37th in voting.³

ILLINOIS LAGS BEHIND THE NATION IN NEIGHBORHOOD ENGAGEMENT



THE INDICATORS OF CIVIC HEALTH

The Civic Health Index assesses several other indicators of engagement that are not measured in CPS. In the following section, we compare national and Illinois data on 40 indicators of civic engagement based on Civic Health Index data.⁴

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.

	National	Illinois
Belong to group or organization	48%	49%
Attend a club meeting	27%	31%
Work on a community project	19%	18%
Attend religious services at least once a month	39%	38%

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.

	National	Illinois
Definitely or generally agree that most people are honest	67%	67%
Definitely or generally agree that most people try to be helpful	58%	62%

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.

	National	Illinois
Whole family eats dinner together	60%	63%
Spend a lot of time visiting friends	40%	44%
Spend a lot of time communication with others using a computer, cell phone, or other electronic device	58%	65%

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.

	National	Illinois
Attended a community meeting in which there was a discussion of community affairs*	16%	15%
Worked with other people in your neighborhood to solve a community problem*	13%	9%
Tried to change local policies in a place like a school, workplace, college or neighborhood	8%	9%

Giving and Volunteering

Voluntary contributions of time and money address serious public problems and support civil society.

	National	Illinois
Volunteered in the past 12 months*	40%	43%
Willing to spend more time volunteering	40%	38%

Staying informed

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

	National	Illinois
Generally follow news about the government and public affairs	62%	63%
Use the internet at least once a week to gather information about politics, a social issue, or a community problem	18%	22%
Watch a presidential candidate's speech online	21%	25%
Watch an online video in support of or opposition to a presidential candidate	21%	23%

Understanding civics and politics

Related to the previous category, these measures measure to what degree Americans feel informed.

	National	Illinois
Feel able to understand politics and government	45%	49%

Participating in politics

Regardless of one's political views and attitudes toward government, it is important to influence democratic institutions.

	National	Illinois
Voted in the 2008 Presidential Election	78%	77%
Since the election, contacted elected officials about any issues that were discussed during the campaign	12%	11%
Tried to persuade friends about an issue that was discussed	33%	28%

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.

	National	Illinois
My vote matters	70%	71%
People like me have a say	47%	49%
Government in Washington generally does what is right	27%	30%
Great deal of confidence in the people who run the press, such as newspapers, and news magazines	10%	10%

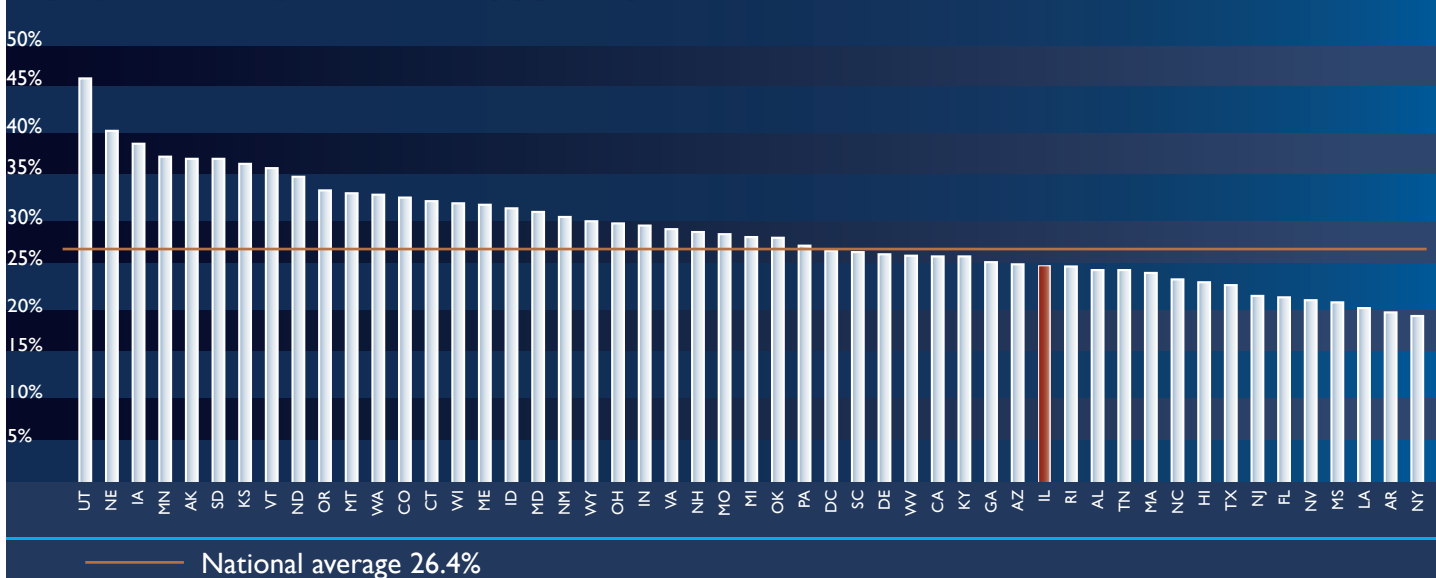
Expressing political views

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.

	National	Illinois
Write a letter or email to the editor of a newspaper or magazine	5%	6%
Try to talk to someone about why they should vote for a candidate or party	32%	29%
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%	15%
Express opinions about political or social or community issue by:		
Email	45%	45%
Blog	5%	4%
Writing on Someone Else's Blog	9%	10%
Social networking site	17%	15%
Facebook causes Application	7%	8%
Making a photo, video, audio	7%	8%
Commenting on Someone Else's photo, video, audio	14%	13%
Instant Messaging	14%	15%
Text messaging	17%	15%
Voting in favor or against a video or news story on YouTube or Digg	8%	10%

*Although the same questions are asked in CPS Volunteering supplement, the rates are different due to difference in sampling methodology, sample size, and survey method (interview vs. online survey).

VOLUNTEERING RATE IN 2008 BY STATE



ILLINOISANS LOSING PATIENCE AND TRUST, BUT SHIFTING CIVIC FOCUS

A string of recent scandals involving former governors Rod Blagojevich and George Ryan, Senator Roland Burris, and Chicago mayor Richard Daley has left Illinoisans angry, suspicious, and confused. After Blagojevich's indictment, State Senator Christine Radogno explained "We've been leaderless for a long time. Consequently, our state is floundering."⁵ These scandals' effects are not just symbolic; researchers at the University of Illinois-Chicago calculated the corruption's cost to state taxpayers to be at least \$500 million a year, which translates to \$109 per family.⁶ In response to these frustrations, Illinoisans hold little trust in their state government, especially compared with the national average. **While 27 percent of Americans said that they trust their state government to do what is right all or most of the time, just 15 percent of Illinoisans showed the same trust in their state government.** Illinoisans' perceptions of Illinois' civic tradition is among the lowest in the country, with nearly a third (30 percent) of Illinoisans stating that their state's civic tradition is "not very strong."

These scandals and subsequent declines in public morality may be hampering Illinoisans' motivation to become more involved in civic life. Data suggests that Illinoisans are reluctant to become involved in local policymaking. Just 33 percent of Illinoisans said they were willing to get more involved to change local policies, compared with 37 percent of all Americans. A larger percentage

of Illinoisans also said they were unwilling to get more involved to change policies, with 30 percent of Illinoisans saying they were unwilling, versus 24 percent of Americans as a whole. Illinoisans showed lower levels of support for a policy that would involve local citizens setting standards and choosing tests for students in their schools (40 percent of Illinoisans willing compared with 50 percent nationwide). **Seventy-six percent of Illinoisans also reported cutting back on civic engagement in the past year, compared with 72 percent nationally.**

Though Illinois' volunteering rate has significantly declined from 2004 to 2008⁷, Illinoisans do not seem to be losing all of their civic commitments. Rather than being involved in more formal methods of volunteering, **Illinoisans are participating in less structured activities such as working with neighbors and attending public meetings.** This could be due to two contributing factors. On one hand, Illinoisans may be detaching from their state or city institutions due to aforementioned lack of trust, but they are turning instead to a more personal, neighborhood-level type of service. On top of this, because economic needs have risen, Illinoisans may lack the resources to participate in formal volunteering (such as discretionary income and time, or access to transportation), and instead are turning inward to help family members, friends and neighbors.*

MILLENNIALS SHOW LOWER ENGAGEMENT AND EFFICACY IN ILLINOIS

Civic Engagement on the Decline for Illinois Millennials

Nationally, Millennials lead all generations in civic engagement, with a rate of 43 percent engaged in civic activities. **Illinois Millennials (aged 15-29) showed lower levels of civic engagement and efficacy than their national peers, and were less likely to volunteer than their generational counterparts.** A full 77 percent of Illinois Millennials reveal cutbacks since 2008 in civic engagement as opposed to 71 percent nationally. A mere four percent report working with neighbors to solve problems, compared with 10 percent nationwide.

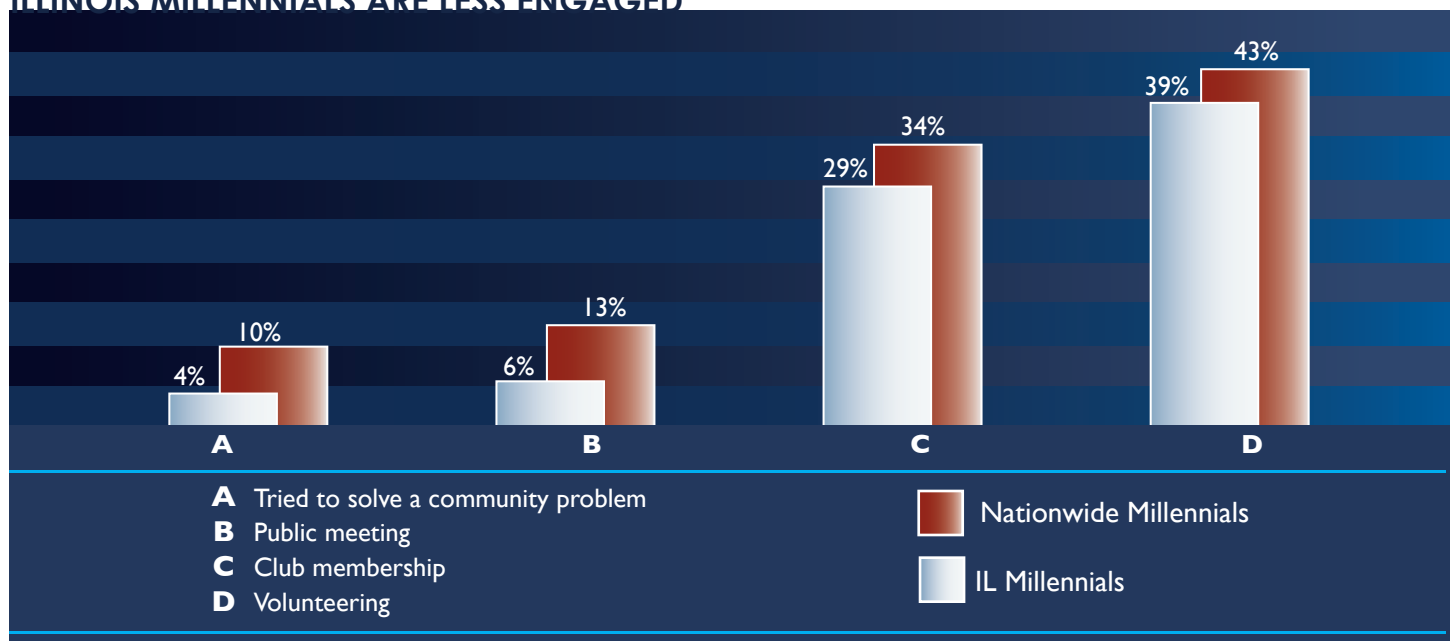
Illinois Millennials volunteer at a rate (39 percent) lower than Gen-Xers (47 percent) and Seniors (48 percent) within Illinois, but also less than the national average for their generational cohort (43 percent). They were also less likely to attend a public meeting where community matters were discussed, belong to club or donate to charitable organizations.

Political Scandal May Impact Lack of Civic Engagement

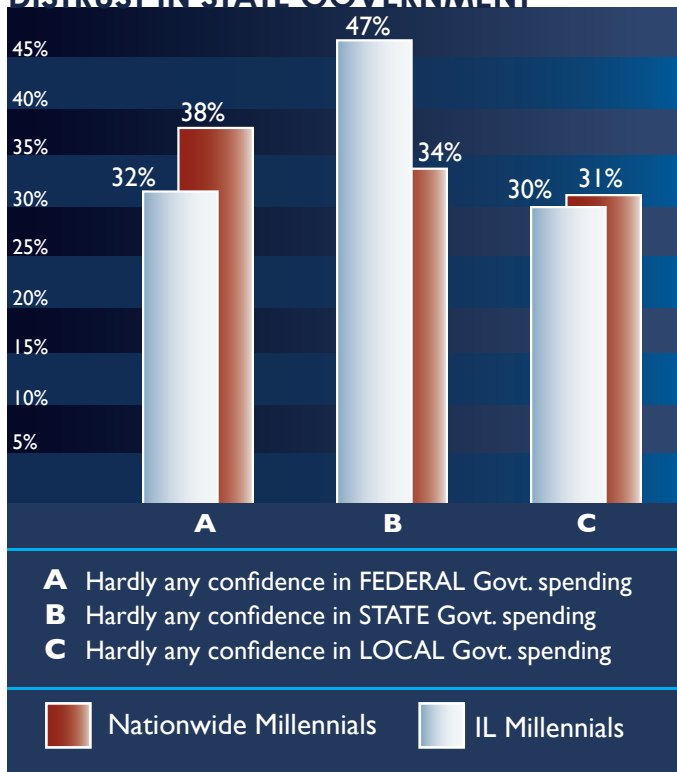
Most strikingly, **Illinois Millennials showed substantially less trust for state government, while trust of national and local governments remained on par with national averages.** This comes as little surprise given the prevalence of political scandal in the state throughout their adolescence and early adulthood, a formative period for civic identity. The State of Illinois is on the verge of having its fourth governor in four decades tried on criminal charges, attempting to balance a budget \$9 billion in the red, and on a systemic level, is riddled with a pay-to-play culture of political corruption.

Illinois Millennials see a state government that has abused the public trust and may not feel compelled to contribute to a seemingly broken system. They also may be reacting more demonstrably to political scandal given the lack of positive experiences in their lifetime from which to balance these negative assessments. Critical to reversing these trends is a renewed focus on civic education in public schools statewide.

ILLINOIS MILLENNIALS ARE LESS ENGAGED



ILLINOIS MILLENNIALS SHOW DISTRUST IN STATE GOVERNMENT



Civic Blueprint Principles

- Formal instruction in U.S. government, history, law, and democracy
- Discussion of current local, national and global current events
- Service learning
- Civics-oriented extracurricular activities;
- Giving students “authentic voice” in school governance
- Participation in simulations of democratic structures and processes

One Solution: Improve Civic Education

The Illinois Reform Commission, asked by Governor Pat Quinn to make comprehensive and independent recommendations for political reform, identified civic education as worthy of “further inquiry”. They wrote, “Illinois schools should consider mandating a curriculum that teaches students about the staggering costs of political corruption and the need for honest, ethical government.”

Enter the *Civic Blueprint for Illinois High Schools*. A product of a 2009 conference co-sponsored by the McCormick Freedom Project and the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition, the Blueprint maps out six specific pathways for Illinois high schools to take that will help students build a foundation for lifelong civic engagement. The pathways include activities and instruction ranging from classroom discussion of current events and democratic simulations to extracurricular activities and service-learning opportunities. The result? Students who understand first-hand the critical role an educated, informed and active citizen plays in shaping our government and society.

The Blueprint encourages teams of teachers and principals to conduct a “civic audit” to evaluate how well their schools integrate civics across the curriculum via the six principles. It also connects students, teachers, administrators and policymakers with civic education resources provided by Coalition members to help address existing gaps. Successful completion of the audit results in statewide recognition as a Democracy School.

To learn more about this initiative and the work of the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition visit the Democracy Schools Web site: <http://www.freedomproject.us/democracyschools>

WHAT MOTIVATES ILLINOISANS TO BECOME MORE ENGAGED?

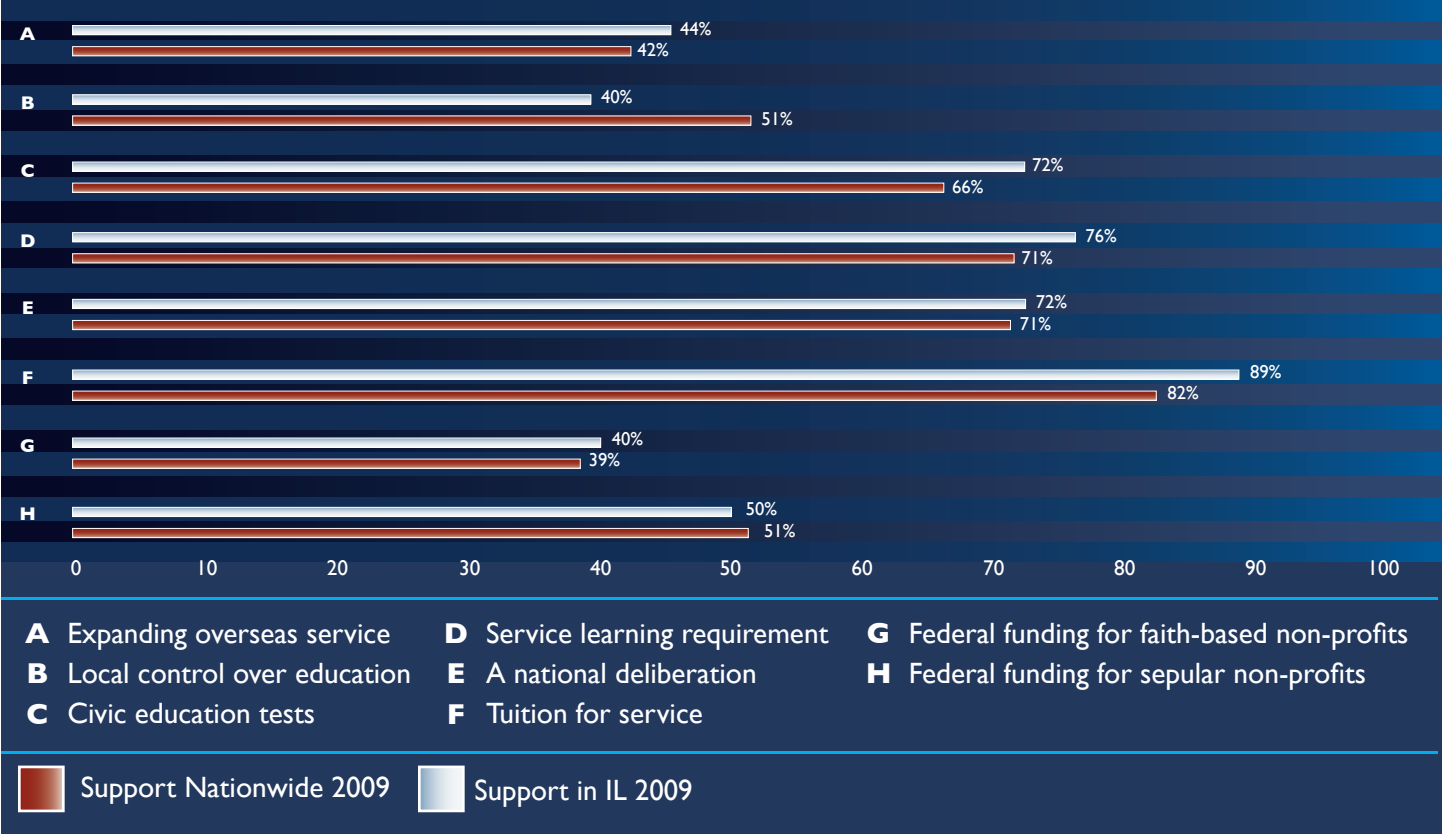
Although the people of Illinois appear to have low confidence in the civic tradition of their state and feel distrustful toward the state government given recent events, it does not mean they will continue to reduce their civic engagement. In fact, our findings suggest that **many people in Illinois are willing to become more engaged given the right incentives, as well as support civics-oriented policies.** Additionally, many still feel positively about the federal government.

Illinoisans show strong support for policies that integrate service into the educational structure. **Seventy-five percent of Illinoisans support a policy that would require all high school students to do community service,** compared with 71 percent nationally; and **72 percent of Illinoisans support adding a requirement for**

students to pass a new civics or government test, a percentage slightly higher than the national average of 66 percent. Providing **tuition assistance for service was also a particularly popular policy proposal, and earned the support of 89 percent of Illinoisans and 82 percent of all Americans.**

However, Illinoisans were less supportive than the general American public of promoting local control over education; fewer Illinoisans were in favor of changing the law so that local citizens must take the lead in setting standards and choosing tests for students in their local schools. It seems as though Illinoisans want to see a stronger civic education infrastructure, but are not as willing to take the lead in the process. A lack of resources or general reluctance to take a leadership role could be a cause

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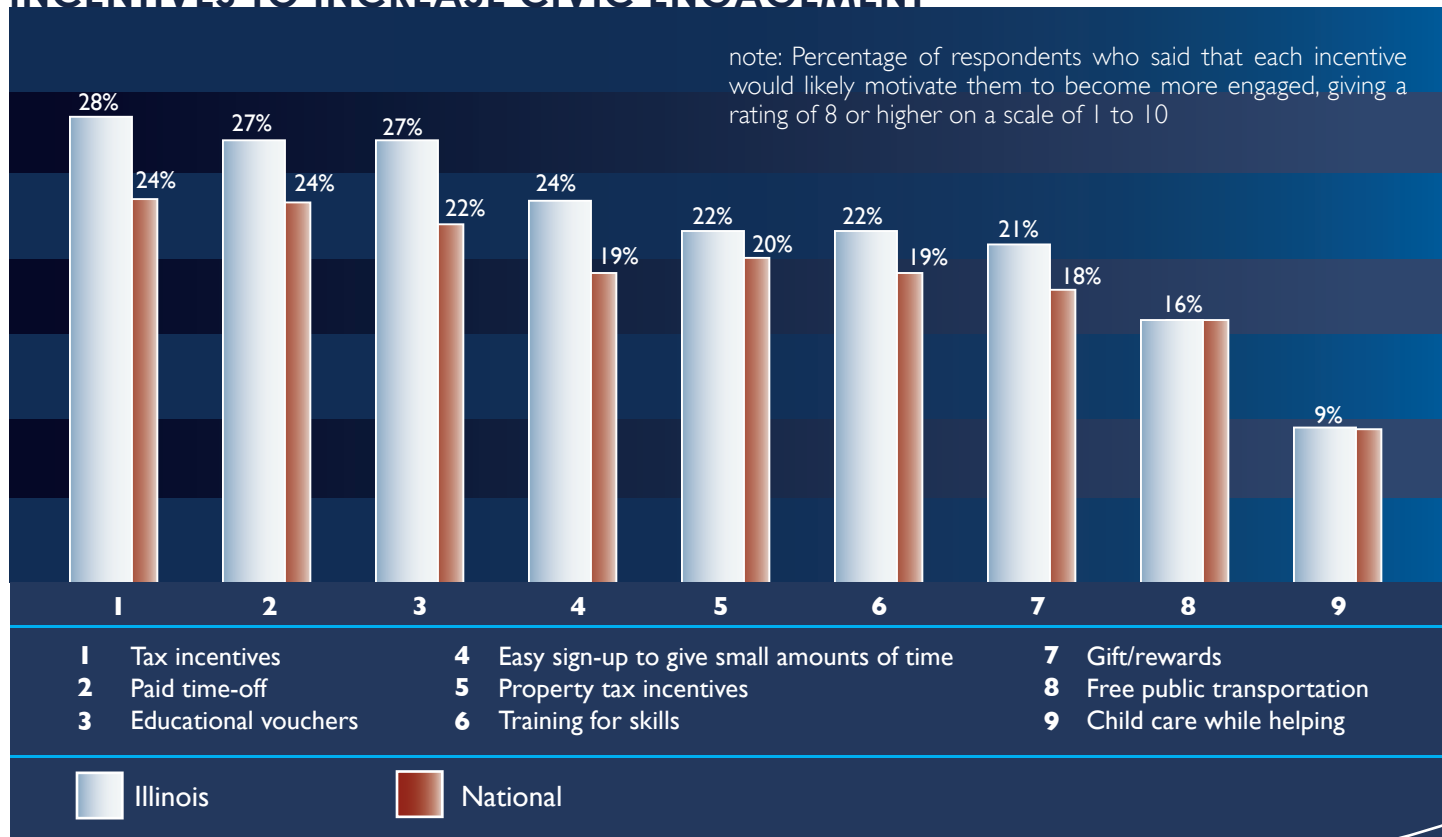


of this. Illinoisans are less likely to support policies that increase funding to non-profit organizations, as they support both of these policy proposals at approximately the same rate as the general public.

Overall, **38 percent of Illinois respondents said they were willing to volunteer more to help overcome this difficult time.** We also asked respondents specifically about various types of incentives to understand what might motivate them to increase their civic engagement. Like national respondents, Illinois respondents were most positive about tax breaks, paid time-off for volunteering, and educational vouchers. Illinoisans were different from the general population in that they were more open to increasing engagement if there were an easy way to sign up to volunteer

small amounts of time. In fact, this option was the fourth most popular option in Illinois and sixth most popular nationwide. As suggested above, this may mean Illinoisans are willing to give time for civic engagement if it does not involve major and regular time commitment. To engage more people, local community organizations may be able to recruit more volunteers by providing a hassle-free way to give time, by creating online volunteer registration for specific events, or by simply announcing opportunities where short-term volunteers are needed in various media such as radio, local newspapers, and community websites. Use of newer technology, such as social networking groups (for community volunteering) or online bulletin boards (such as Craigslist Volunteering), is increasingly popular, though not all citizens can be reached using the Internet.

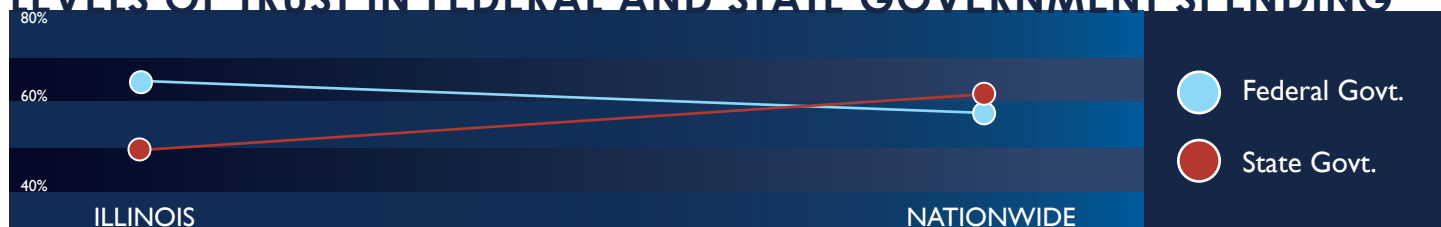
INCENTIVES TO INCREASE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



Illinois respondents showed higher than average levels of trust in the federal government with 65.8 percent of Illinoisans expressing the opinion the federal government will spend stimulus money responsibly, compared to 59.5 percent nationally. Further, 30.2 percent of Illinoisans said that they can trust the government in Washington to do what is right “Just about always” or “Most of the time.” Nationally, 25.6 percent said the same thing.

The most striking thing about these numbers is that usually, people tend to trust their state government and federal government at similar levels, and if anything, place greater trust in state government. This is the case for the national data; Illinoisans showed a reversed pattern as they showed much greater level of trust in the federal government than Illinois government.

LEVELS OF TRUST IN FEDERAL AND STATE GOVERNMENT SPENDING



ENDNOTES

¹ For estimates of volunteering rate and historical trends, we rely on Census' Current Population Survey. Most information on CPS comes from www.volunteeringinamerica.gov.

² CPS samples have smaller margin of error than Civic Health Index due to larger sample size. However, small differences in percentage point estimates should be interpreted with caution. Differences larger than 1.5% are likely to be statistically significant and reliable differences.

³ Voter turnout estimate was derived from the CPS November 2008 supplement.

⁴ Differences in percentage point estimates between Illinois and the national average should be interpreted with caution. Whenever the difference is less than seven percentage points, the finding should be interpreted with caution, as the difference may not be significant, due to margin of error associated with the study samples.

⁵ <http://www.suntimes.com/news/metro/blagojevich/1351475,w-illinois-corruption-blagojevich-122708.article>

STEPS FOR ILLINOIS' CIVIC RENEWAL

Although Illinois did not fare as well as the national average on some measures of civic engagement, there were some bright spots. Differing from their perceptions of state government, **Illinoisans showed greater trust in people's good intentions**, thinking that generally people try to be helpful (62 percent among Illinoisans versus 58 percent nationwide). They were also more likely to feel that their peers are helping each other through the tough economic times (22 percent among Illinoisans compared with 19 percent nationally), showing that Illinoisans' attitudes about their peers remain positive. Additionally, a lower percentage of Illinoisans (23 percent) noticed staff and budget cuts in their school district compared with the national average of 32 percent, which is positive news on the economic front. Illinois seems to have a strong civic core, that is, a small group of people who are highly engaged; the problem, then, lies in the mobilization of other Illinoisans who are generally disengaged. Without incentives, those who are generally disengaged might not get involved due to the recent political disappointments.

On a positive note, many Illinois political officials recognize the pattern of dishonesty and inefficiency perpetuated by other state politicians. In order to bring energy back into the citizenry, significant steps have been taken to help change overall perceptions of Illinois politics. For example, the "Illinois Accountability Portal" which passed both Houses in 2009 (but not yet signed by Governor Quinn), would increase transparency by enabling Illinoisans to see where their tax dollars are being spent. According to the *Daily Herald*, the Illinois "state citizenry has seen more than its share of wasteful, extravagant spending in state government, not to mention corruption,"⁸ which makes this bill an important step in giving more power back to citizens. In addition, Governor Quinn signed a bill entitled "Illinois' Jobs Now!" in July 2009, to help encourage economic growth.⁹ In the midst of widespread citizen disappointment, these developments illustrate a promising effort to help regenerate active citizenship in Illinois.

⁶ <http://www.dailyherald.com/story/?id=295548>

⁷ See Volunteering in America report.

⁸ Citizens need this portal to accountability. Daily Herald, April 8, 2008. <http://www.dailyherald.com/story/?id=168291>

⁹ \$31 billion for more jobs, better roads. Chicago Sun Times. July 14, 2009. <http://www.suntimes.com/news/politics/1664595,CST-NWS-capital14.article>

*NOTE:

The University of Illinois - Springfield has recently completed an independent survey of civic activity in Illinois that can be compared to their 2001 study. A full report of their findings is forthcoming.

APPENDIX: UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS SPRINGFIELD'S CENTER FOR STATE POLICY AND LEADERSHIP

Separate from the *Illinois Civic Health Index* and the CPS data, another survey of civic engagement in Illinois was conducted in 2009 by the University of Illinois Springfield's Center for State Policy and Leadership as a follow-up to their 2001 Illinois Benchmark Survey. This report shows similar trends of decreased engagement as the Civic Health Index, but charts them over a longer period of time using similar questions, but different methodologies. The following are selected preliminary results from the forthcoming 2009 UIS survey, which show a mix of stability and change from their 2001 results.ⁱ

In terms of community involvement and volunteer activities, 63% of the 2009 respondents reported they had been involved in community volunteer activities or tried to do so something about a community issue or problem *over the past five years*, virtually the same proportion as in 2001. And, according to one measure, the 2009 proportion who reported regular volunteering to at least one secular community group, project or cause *over the past year* is 42%, the same as the proportion who reported regular secular volunteering in 2001.ⁱⁱ

Evidence of decreases in volunteer activities, however, is seen as well. The proportion who reported secular volunteering *only* on an occasional basis appears to have been cut nearly in half, from almost 25% in 2001 to about 13% in 2009. And, the proportion who reported NO volunteer hours per week increased from about 40% in 2001 to nearly 50% in 2009, with declines found both in the proportions who reported secular and religious-based volunteer hours. Nearly 60% of the 2009 respondents said they were spending about the same amount of time on volunteer activities in their community as they did a year ago while nearly one-quarter (24%) said they were spending less time and 15% said more time. This finding is actually slightly more positive than that found in 2001, when 63% said they were spending the same amount of time as one year ago, 24% said less time and 11% said more time.ⁱⁱⁱ

For working on community/neighborhood needs, issues and problems, the UIS survey found slightly greater proportions in 2009 than in 2001 who reported that they, in the past year, attended a meeting of a group dealing with neighborhood needs/issues (32% vs. 28%) and worked with others to try to solve a community/neighborhood problem (30% vs. 28%). However, a

significant decline is found for those who reported attending meetings of official local government boards/councils in the past year, 20% for 2009 respondents compared to 36% in 2001.

64% of 2009 respondents reported active membership in at least one local secular group or organization, which is somewhat lower than 68% who reported such in 2001; the average number of local groups for which all sample members reported active membership is about 1.5 in both survey years.^{iv}

Several measures point to a decline in the Illinois public's religious-based activities from 2001 to 2009. These include a decline in reported membership in a church/synagogue/mosque (67% to 57%), a decline in the proportion who reported attending religious services at least once a week (47% to 38%) and a decline in the proportion who reported contributing money to a church/synagogue/mosque in the past year (72% to 58%). A smaller decrease is found in the proportion who reported volunteering any time to a church/synagogue/mosque in the past year (36% in 2001 to 32% in 2009). Church members are actually quite stable in this regard, with somewhat fewer than half reporting any volunteering and about one in five reporting regular volunteering in both years. However, when asked later about how many of their estimated volunteer hours per week "are spent on activities specifically related to your religious faith," an increase from 2001 to 2009 in the proportion who reported NO hours is found even for church members (49% to 60%) and regular attendees (44% to 53%).

Monetary contributions to a charitable organization in the past year were reported by 72% of the 2009 respondents, basically on par with 2001 (73%). And, contributions of food, clothing or toys to the needy in the past year were reported by 85%, again almost as many as in 2001 (88%).

For the more political activities, only small changes are found for contributions to a PAC, interest group or cause in the past year (15% in 2001 and 12% in 2009) and participating in a march, protest or demonstration in the past two years (6% in 2001 and 8% in 2009). Virtually no change is found for contacting a public official or a member of their staff in the past year (about one-third in both years) and active membership in a local political club or organization (4% in both years).

Perhaps surprisingly, two campaign-related activities show stability from 2001 to 2009 -- reports of working for a party or candidate in the past year (9% in 2001 and 10% in 2009) and reports of contributing money to a party or candidate in the past year (18% in both years). And, reports of attending a candidate forum/debate/voter information night or a candidate rally or speech actually show a decrease from 24% in 2001 to 17% in 2009.^v Voting in the 2008 November general election was reported by 63% of the 2009 respondents, virtually the same proportion who actually did so, and more than the estimated 58% of eligible Illinoisans who voted in the 2000 general election.^{vi}

When asked how their involvement in last year's election campaigns was affected by the presence of the internet, 65% of all respondents said it did not make much difference while just over one-third (34%) said it increased their involvement. No respondent said it decreased their involvement. For 16% of all respondents, particular candidates, campaigns or interest groups led to this increased involvement -- with about one in ten specifically mentioning Barack Obama or his campaign.

ⁱ The 2009 survey was conducted through telephone interviews with about 700 randomly-selected members of the Illinois public by the Survey Research Office within the Center for State Policy and Leadership at UIS. Interviewing was conducted from mid-May through late July of 2009. The benchmark 2001 telephone survey was conducted with about 1,000 randomly-selected respondents. The full report will be released before the end of the year. The benchmark 2001 results can be accessed through: <http://cspl.uis.edu/OfficeOfExecutiveDirector/CivicEngagement/FinalReport.htm>. As with the CPS, the UIS survey used different sampling and questionnaire design than the CHI survey so rates may differ.

ⁱⁱ If regular volunteering to/participation in charity recreational events (e.g., bikes, walks, bowling, trivia nights) is excluded, the proportion who reported volunteering time on a regular basis to a secular group, project or cause in 2009 is 33%, lower than in 2001. Questions in 2001, however, did include one where respondents were asked about volunteering "to any charity or social service organization in the past year -- like to a food pantry, a homeless shelter or a charitable fundraising campaign."

ⁱⁱⁱ Unlike the 2001 survey, the 2009 survey also asked about more informal volunteering, like helping out other people or groups or by doing various things that benefit their neighborhood or community as a whole. It was found that reports of this informal volunteering increased the estimate of total secular volunteering to 71% (16% higher than without this informal aspect) and the estimate of volunteering on a regular basis to 48% (6% higher than without this aspect).

^{iv} The full report will describe the differences in 2001 and 2009 local membership measurements. For two types of local membership groups specifically asked about in both survey years, the 2009 incidence of active membership appears basically on par with or just slightly higher than that in 2001 -- local recreation leagues or sports teams (11% in 2001 and 14% in 2009) and groups sharing a common interest or hobby (32% in 2001; 33% and 2009). For two others types, the 2009 incidence is somewhat greater than that found in 2001 -- groups relating to youth and schools (17% in 2001 and 23% in 2009) and local groups that relate to the respondent's job, occupation, and profession (18% in 2001 and 24% in 2009).

^v In 2001, these were asked as two separate questions. They were asked together in 2009.

^{vi} Illinois turnout estimates for eligible respondents are from the US Elections Project, George Mason University, and compiled by Michael McDonald. See: <http://elections.gmu.edu/index.html>. It should be noted that 81% of the 2001 UIS survey respondents indicated voting in the general election in 2000. A change in question wording in the 2009 survey apparently brought about more accurate voting turnout reports.

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