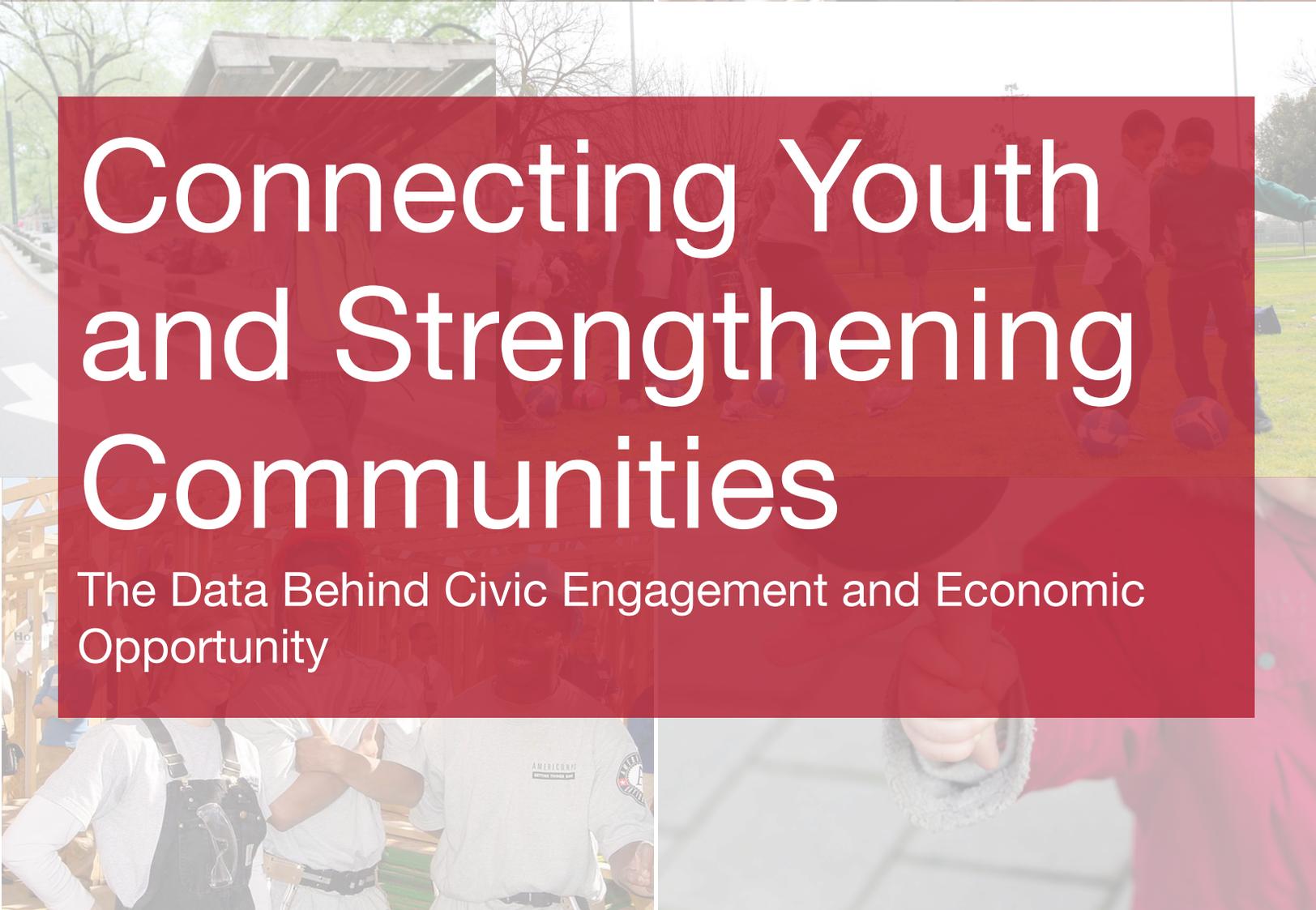




Connecting Youth and Strengthening Communities

The Data Behind Civic Engagement and Economic
Opportunity



Opportunity Nation
September 2014



Citi Foundation



Introduction

Intuitively, we know that joining an organization, attending a public meeting or donating time or money to a charitable cause can all contribute to the social good. But there is a growing body of research that highlights additional benefits for individuals and society. Civic engagement is not just a feel-good element of community life or a benign expression of citizenship. New data and research explored in this paper indicate it may also be an effective way to build social capital and valuable skills that can facilitate upward mobility for young Americans, better prepare workers for jobs, and strengthen the economic resilience of states.

The Opportunity Nation campaign is dedicated to advancing upward mobility by closing our country's widening opportunity gap and restoring the American Dream for the next generation. With our research partner Measure of America, we created the Opportunity Index, the nation's first measure of opportunity at the state and county levels. Unlike other tools that focus narrowly on one aspect of economic or community health such as the GDP or poverty level, the Opportunity Index measures multiple, often interrelated conditions that are present in different communities.

By analyzing these conditions, leaders and citizens can push for changes that expand economic prosperity to more Americans. Since it was first released in 2011, the Opportunity Index has been used to shape national dialogue, bipartisan policy and local actions intended to increase access to the American Dream.

As the Opportunity Index continues to gain traction nationwide, we have come to believe that deeper analysis of specific indicators, such as two primary forms of civic engagement—volunteerism and group membership—is critical to understanding the conditions that open doors of opportunity.

We launched this research initiative to explore how volunteerism and group membership influence positive outcomes for young Americans and the communities in which they live. This report reflects new data and rigorous analysis as well as conversations with leaders from more than two-dozen organizations and institutions who are experts on civic engagement and social capital. We are grateful to the Citi Foundation for their generous support of this project and for their commitment to expanding opportunity in the communities they serve.

Our hope is that this research initiative will spur dialogue, collaboration and a renewed focus to promote civic engagement activities as part of a larger commitment to expand opportunity. It will take all of us - private, public and nonprofit sectors - working together to ensure the rising generation gets their fair shot at the American Dream. Civic engagement can, and should, play a major role in that effort.

Civic engagement is not just a feel-good element of community life or a benign expression of citizenship. It may also be an effective way to build social capital and valuable skills that can facilitate upward mobility.



Executive Summary

This report examines the relationship between civic engagement and economic opportunity in the United States, in particular how volunteerism and group membership can build social capital for youth, promote upward mobility and contribute to a range of positive outcomes that benefit both the individual and the community. We hope to present a compelling case to employers, educational institutions and organizations that are considering volunteer or community service projects that such activities are not simply altruistic. They may also strengthen our economy and help young Americans gain the skills and experience they need to be successful.

For the first time, Opportunity Nation, with our research partner, Measure of America, explores civic engagement and economic opportunity through the lens of the Opportunity Index, a data-rich tool that measures a region's capacity to expand opportunity to residents using 16 economic, educational and

community factors. Each state is ranked and more than 3,100 counties are graded A-F annually based on how well these regions equip residents with the conditions they need to thrive.

According to the Opportunity Index, the prospects of young Americans are central to the expansion of opportunity nationwide. One of the indicators that correlates most closely with a state's Opportunity Score or a county's Opportunity Grade is the percentage of teens and young adults ages 16-24 who are neither in school nor working. The smaller the number of these "disconnected" or "opportunity" youth, the higher the Opportunity Score or Grade, indicating a greater capacity for upward mobility and economic growth in those places. **Decreasing the number of disconnected youth, then, is an urgent national priority, both to help millions of young Americans get ahead and to boost our nation's overall productivity and prosperity.**

Pathways to building social capital:



Volunteering



Working with neighbors to solve a problem



Doing favors for neighbors



Participation in any organization (including civic/service, sports, school, recreational, religious)



Participation in a civic/service organization (including charitable and fraternal)



New Data Offers Fresh Evidence, Bolsters Existing Research

Based on our work with the Opportunity Index, we embarked on this project with an understanding that the conditions that expand or restrict opportunity are interrelated. While Opportunity Nation and our partners have long considered civic engagement a vital component of economic opportunity, there was a need to ground this understanding in rigorous research and analysis.

Using data collected from the U.S. Census Bureau and other government sources over a number of years as well as information from the Opportunity Index, Measure of America ran several regression models to test various hypotheses (a detailed technical appendix and spreadsheets are available at the end of this report). Our data analysis focused on five forms of civic involvement frequently associated with pathways to building social capital:

- Volunteering
- Participation in any organization (including civic/service, sports, school, recreational, religious)
- Participation in a civic/service organization (including charitable and fraternal)
- Working with neighbors to solve a problem
- Doing favors for neighbors

We used a variety of research methods and variables; analyzed impacts on individuals within metro areas and states; and controlled for mitigating factors, such as race and socioeconomic status. We tested different definitions of civic engagement—both formal and informal—to better understand which specific types of involvement best predict the economic opportunity of youth on an individual level and across communities more broadly. We also conducted an extensive literature review and interviews with more than two dozen experts in the field.

Our research demonstrates a correlation between increased levels of civic engagement and positive outcomes for youth and for states. Specifically, our findings indicate:

- Youth who volunteer are considerably less likely than their non-volunteering peers to be disconnected from work and school.
- Civic engagement - specifically volunteering and participation in a civic or service organization - is a significant predictor of economic opportunity across states.
- Volunteerism has an inverse relationship with income inequality. In places with higher rates of volunteerism, income inequality tends to be lower.

Our Findings:



Youth who volunteer are considerably less likely than their non-volunteering peers to be disconnected from work and school.



Civic engagement - specifically volunteering and participation in a civic or service organization - is a significant predictor of economic opportunity across states.



Volunteerism has an inverse relationship with income inequality. In places with higher rates of volunteerism, income inequality tends to be lower.



This data builds on an existing body of knowledge that links civic engagement to economic opportunity. It strengthens the argument that certain types of activities – particularly volunteering and participating in civic and service organizations – confer both individual and collective benefits. It suggests that increased civic engagement can help young Americans gain the skills and experience they need to embark on meaningful career pathways.

We know that civic engagement is a powerful way to create, reinforce and expand social capital and impart transferrable skills to individuals, and is essential if we are to build the stronger communities we envision for America’s rising generation. Research shows it can serve as an effective conduit to positive educational and career outcomes for low-income youth.¹ We also know that social capital – the intangible networks, relationships and personal interactions that enhance information sharing, cooperation and collective problem-solving – strengthens trust and a sense of community.² These assets are critical to the expansion of upward mobility, as higher rates of economic mobility and lower rates of income inequality are found in areas with more social capital.³ Civic engagement can help low-income youth build social capital and find meaningful education and career pathways, and it also enhances a region’s economic resilience.⁴

At the same time, we recognize that a complex web of factors are involved for these goals to be achieved. Many things occur in a person’s life that encourage or prevent participation in civic life, and engagement often flows both ways. That is, involvement in one’s

community often stems from existing factors that make participation easier and more accessible, while the act of civic engagement itself can lead to personal and professional growth that, in turn, promotes such participation. It is therefore imperative that more Americans, particularly teens and young adults, have access to civic engagement opportunities and the benefits they confer.

As the United States struggles with a weakened economy, sluggish wage growth and rising income inequality, access to civic engagement activities has become a pressing equity issue. This is why promotion of such activities, especially among teens and young adults who are most at risk for falling off track, is so vital. Unless we work together—schools, nonprofits, employers and community leaders—to intentionally offer rich civic engagement opportunities to Americans who currently lack them, we risk generations of youth being cut off from the benefits, both individual and collective, of such involvement. That’s a risk we can simply not afford.

This report aims to provide fresh data analysis, elevate promising examples and bolster existing evidence about the important role civic engagement plays in enhancing individual and societal well-being. Our research highlights how the conditions in a community often work in tandem, allowing us to find key levers that help address tough community challenges. We hope this analysis prompts new conversations, collaborations and investments focused on the value and impact of civic engagement and how such engagement can be leveraged to expand access to opportunity to more Americans.



The Opportunity Index

Where you live shouldn't determine how far you can go in life. The Opportunity Index is the nation's first – and only – tool to holistically measure opportunity.

Indicators

Economy

Jobs	Unemployment rate
Wages	Median household income
Poverty	Poverty (% of population below poverty line)
Inequality	80/20 Ratio
Assets	Banking Institutions
Affordable Housing	Households spending less than 30% of household income on housing
Internet Access	High-speed Internet

Education

Preschool	Preschool (% ages 3 and 4 in school)
High School Graduation	On-time high school graduation (% of freshman who graduate in four years)
Postsecondary Completion	Associate Degree or Higher (% of adults 25 and older)

Community

Group Membership	Percentage of adults ages 18 and over involved in social, civic, sports and religious groups
Volunteerism	Percentage of adults ages 18 and older who did volunteer work any time in the previous year
Youth Economic and Academic Inclusion	Young people not in school and not working (% ages 16-24)
Community Safety	Violent crime (per 100,000 population)
Access to Health Care	Medical doctors (per 100,000 population)
Access to Healthy Food	Grocery stores and produce (per 10,000 population)

Measurement



All the indicators are weighted equally. Each of the three dimensions makes up one-third of the final Index value.



Scores are calculated for all 50 states and Washington, D.C. and 3,100+ counties.

Sources

- American Community Survey
- County Business Patterns and Population Estimates Program
- National Center for Education Statistics
- U.S. Bureau of Labor
- U.S. Census Bureau
- U.S. Department of Education
- U.S. Department of Justice
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



For full list of sources, visit www.opportunityindex.org



The Power of Civic Engagement

Individual Benefits

We all have a vested interest in making sure teens and young adults find their way to economic self-sufficiency and stability.

According to the Opportunity Index, one of the factors that correlates most closely with a region's Opportunity Score is the number of 16-24 year olds who are neither in school nor working. The lower the percentage of these "disconnected youth," the higher a region's score. If we want the United States to remain internationally competitive and sustain a healthy middle class at home, we all have a vested interest in making sure teens and young adults find their way to economic self-sufficiency and stability. Becoming more engaged in one's community and accruing social capital and valuable skills can help advance that goal. Opportunity Nation believes that all sectors – employers, schools, faith-based organizations, nonprofits and funders – have a role to play in increasing civic engagement.

Research shows that the absence of economic opportunity is often a significant factor for youth becoming disconnected. Meanwhile, volunteering is recognized as both a worthwhile activity in itself and as a pathway to long-term societal engagement, instilling a sense of civic responsibility that carries into adulthood. Researchers also find that youth who participate in service projects and join groups are significantly more likely to become adults who vote and engage in service to their community.⁵ Perhaps most importantly, volunteering often enables the acquisition of transferrable job-readiness and professional skills (computer literacy, problem solving, communication, teamwork, project management, etc.) and the strengthening of relationships and networks that build social capital which, in turn, can lead to additional positive opportunities.



Disconnected Youth and Volunteering

About 40 percent of today's 5.8 million disconnected youth live in the 25 largest U.S. metro areas, which include urban and suburban areas, based on how metro areas are measured by the U.S. Census Bureau.⁶ To determine whether civic engagement is associated with youth disconnection, we controlled for multiple factors including race and ethnicity; the number of children the young adult has; and the educational attainment of their parents, a common proxy for socio-economic status.

Our analysis found a strong negative association between youth in the 25 largest U.S. metro areas who volunteer and the likelihood they are disconnected from work or school. **Teens and young adults who volunteer, across all races and socioeconomic levels, are less likely to be disconnected, compared to their peers who do not volunteer.**

These findings are particularly relevant as research shows a strong link between educational attainment and civic engagement, with highly educated Americans participating more in civic activities, a fact that has been documented in thousands of scholarly studies since 1924.⁷ Unfortunately, the educational attainment gap is growing in the U.S. Today, children from families at the bottom of the income distribution

have only a 17 percent chance of going to college, while those at the top have an 80 percent chance.⁸ Volunteering, therefore, may offer a critical path to upward mobility for low-income youth who are at greatest risk for being shut out of one of the most powerful routes to the middle class: education.

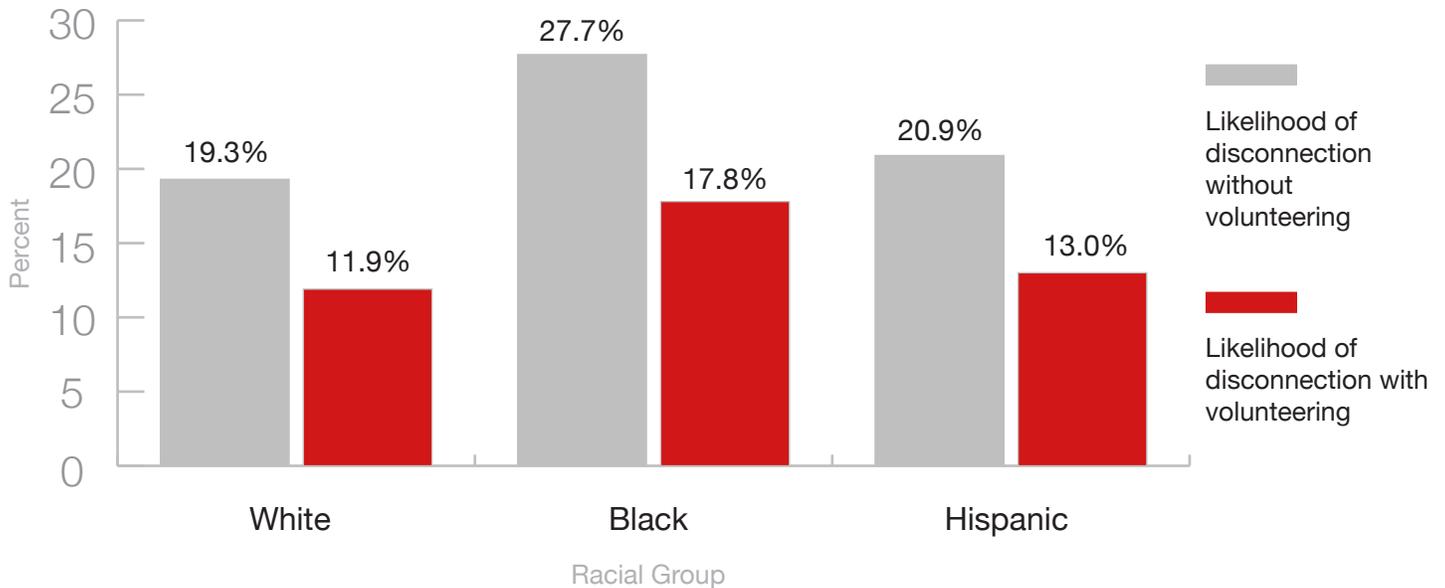
Controlling for differences across all 25 cities, **the chance that a young adult is disconnected from work or school drops in half, from 11.1 percent to 5.73 percent, if he or she volunteers.**⁹

Our findings suggest that volunteering may serve as an important bridge to deeper civic participation and economic well-being for youth ages 16-24.

- The likelihood that a white, low-income youth is disconnected falls from 19.3 percent to 11.9 percent if he or she volunteers.
- The likelihood that a black, low-income youth is disconnected falls from 27.7 percent to 17.8 percent if he or she volunteers.
- The likelihood that an Hispanic, low-income youth is disconnected falls from 20.9 percent to 13.0 percent if he or she volunteers.



Volunteerism linked to lower likelihood of disconnection among low-income youth



At the same time, we acknowledge youth disconnection is complex and has a range of causes and remedies. We present this finding as one of several routes that can and should be used to address the national crisis of nearly six million “disconnected” 16-24 year olds, whose talents and energies are currently relegated to the sidelines. We believe all of our talent must be on the field if our nation and our neighborhoods are to prosper. Civic engagement is one way to reach youth who are currently disengaged from education, the economy and society, and help them embark on a productive path.

Building on the work of leading researchers who found the gap between lower-income and middle-

and upper-income youth is widening in terms of volunteer participation and opportunity, our analysis suggests that providing volunteer opportunities to low-income youth may help bridge the growing opportunity divide.¹⁰ This concern is underscored by studies that show unequal access to important civic learning opportunities in America’s schools, such as exploring current events and political issues in classes; hands-on service learning; and extracurricular activities that focus on how government functions and give students the chance to interact with civic role models, among others.¹¹ These opportunities equip students with valuable knowledge and experiences that empower them to engage and establish habits that can impact future behavior.¹²

Further Evidence

Our findings complement current research that connects volunteering to other positive outcomes such as increased self-esteem, future earning potential, socio-economic status and occupational prestige.^{13 14} One study found that people who volunteer are 27 percent more likely to find work after engaging in such activity, because they strengthen professional and social networks, grow in confidence and sharpen their skills.¹⁵ Our findings also support clear evidence that volunteering fosters pro-social behavior¹⁶ and improved employment outcomes, especially for African-American youth.¹⁷



The Power of Civic Engagement

Collective Benefits



High volunteerism rates and high rates of group membership are associated with higher overall opportunity and, specifically, higher economic opportunity.

We examined two forms of civic engagement that are captured in the Opportunity Index – volunteerism and group membership - and tested the strength of their relationship to economic opportunity (measured in the Opportunity Index by jobs, wages, poverty, inequality and access to banking institutions, affordable housing and the Internet).

The data indicate a moderate, positive correlation between a state's overall Opportunity Score and the percentage of people who volunteered or who were members of an organization. High volunteerism rates and high rates of group membership are associated with higher overall opportunity and specifically, higher economic opportunity across the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

In addition:

- Higher volunteerism rates are associated with lower rates of **disconnected youth** across all 50 states and the District of Columbia
- Higher volunteerism rates are associated with lower rates of **income inequality** across all 50 states and the District of Columbia

Similar to our first analysis that looked at the country's 25 largest metro areas, this examination of all 50 states and Washington D.C. found a correlation between volunteerism and youth disconnection. Places with higher levels of volunteerism had lower rates of teens and young adults ages 16-24 who were disconnected from school and work.



Income Inequality

Our analysis also shed some light on one of today's hottest topics: rising income inequality. Rather than focusing on the extremes of wealth distribution, however, our analysis compared the household incomes at the 80th percentile with those at the 20th percentile. In this way, we were able to capture inequality at the middle of the spectrum, where most Americans live.

These findings underscore the importance of networks and relationships in expanding access to economic opportunity. They also highlight how volunteering and income inequality affect each other. Income inequality tends to be higher in places with less social capital. Volunteering can offer an effective way to rebuild social capital, which in turn, plays a role in increased economic opportunity and lower income inequality. So in places with high levels of income inequality, volunteerism rates tend to be lower, and vice versa. This evidence suggests civic engagement may be a key ingredient for building economic opportunity at the state level.

62.6
million

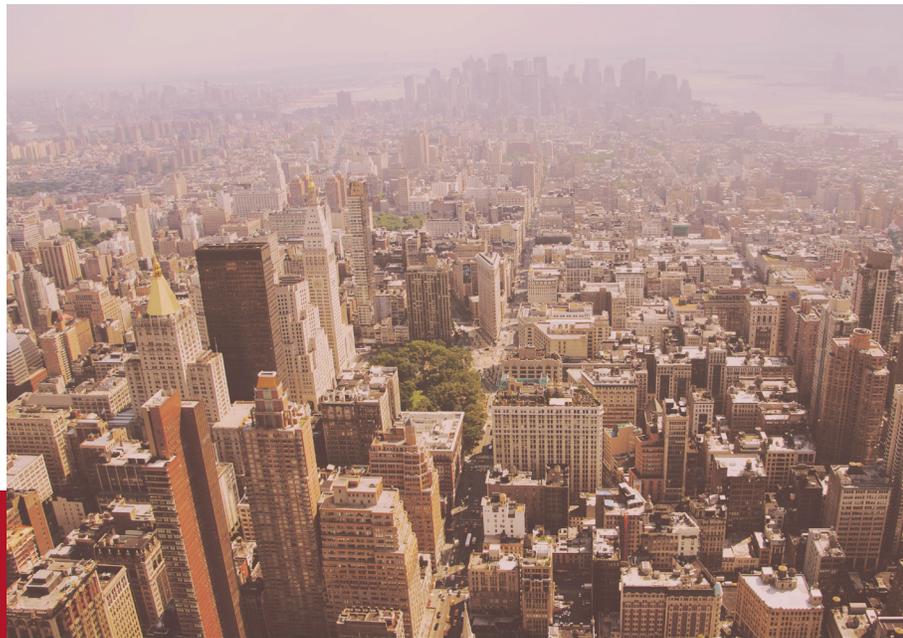


Americans
volunteered in
2013.

[U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics]

Further Evidence

Our findings add to the growing body of literature focused on the economic benefits of civic engagement. Researchers have found that civic engagement is linked to lower increases in unemployment and increases in the ability of states to weather the recession and build economic resiliency.^{18 19} A major 2013 study referenced earlier in this report, the Equality of Opportunity Project, also found that areas with greater upward mobility tended to share several characteristics, including lower levels of income inequality and higher levels of social capital.²⁰



Economic Opportunity

Using the lens of the Opportunity Index, a 10 percentage point increase in the number of adults who participate in a civic or service organization is associated with a 12 point increase in a state's overall "Economic Opportunity Score" on the Index after controlling for race, ethnicity, county of birth and educational attainment level in that state.

All participation isn't equal, however. Our analysis found that membership in civic and service organizations had a stronger correlation to economic opportunity in states than did membership in other kinds of organizations, such as sports, religious or social groups.

It is important to note that our study did not include an exploration of causality, namely whether participation in a civic or service organization drives economic opportunity. Rather, our analysis found that states with higher levels of group membership tend to score higher on measures of economic opportunity on the Opportunity Index, indicating a relationship between the two.

Employer-led cross-sector skill building

The corporate community can play a leading role in helping to build the skills of youth through employer-sponsored volunteer programs. The Ritz-Carlton, for example, partnered with nonprofit America's Promise Alliance in 2009 to launch "Succeed Through Service," a skills-based volunteering program designed to prepare at-risk students for a successful future. Ritz-Carlton employees work

27%



Volunteering is associated with a 27% higher odds of employment

[Corporation for National and Community Service]



one-on-one at the hotels and in schools with at-risk students to teach them critical life and career skills while introducing them to the importance of giving back. So far, 15,000 students have participated in the program, which is active in 38 U.S. schools and has been introduced at an additional 42 schools and children's organizations around the world.



Other Forms of Civic Engagement

Our data analysis focused on five types of civic engagement measured by the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey that are often linked to the accrual of social capital (volunteering; group membership; participation in a civic or service organization; working with neighbors; and doing favors for neighbors). Of course, there are many others that fall outside of the scope of our report that are major drivers of civic life in America. Among them are traditional activities, such as voting and civic education; initiatives such as national service that pay a stipend, i.e. AmeriCorps; and emerging approaches through the Internet and social media, such as online giving, hashtag campaigns on Twitter, and "sharing" and "liking" Facebook infographics and stories to prompt action by public officials, for example.

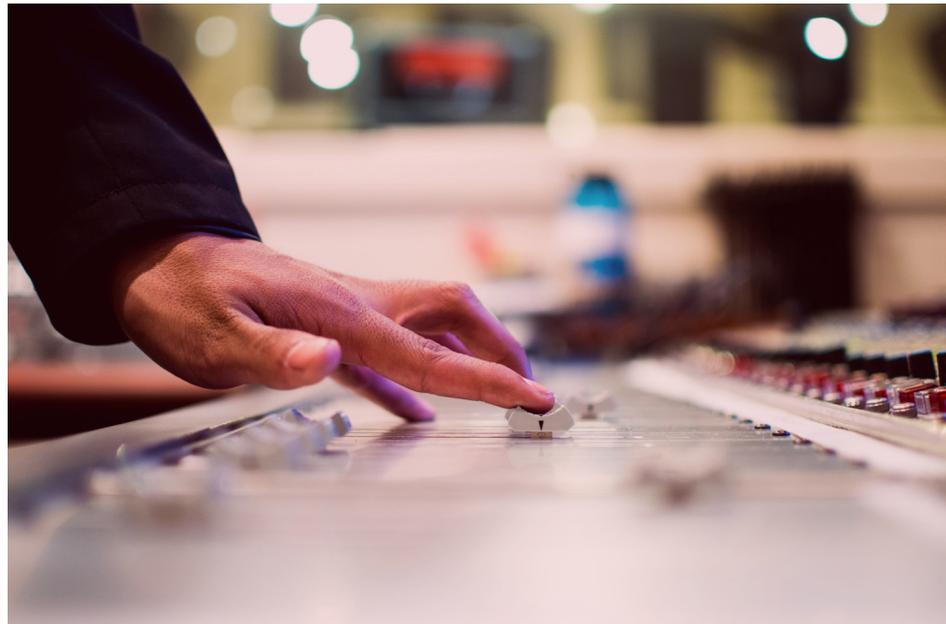
Many of these activities help communities to achieve stronger social cohesion and enable individuals to build networks in a variety of ways, including coming together to tackle thorny policy and political issues. In many cases, young Americans are leading the way.

18.5%



Volunteer rates
among 20-24
year olds.

[U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics]



Group Membership Facts

In 2013, Utah claimed the highest percentage of adult group membership—48.5%, compared to the national average, 35.6%, and ranked 16th overall on the Opportunity Index. Nevada, meanwhile, reported the lowest level of group membership at 28.1% and ranked 51st on the Index.



Youth Led Models

Digital Engagement

Young researchers at MIT's Center for Civic Media are developing a smartphone app that would allow you to be an "effective" and engaged citizen as you simply walk down the street. Action Path could alert you to a rally occurring a block away from you, for example, and ask you if you'd like to document the event and share on social media. These social entrepreneurs are redefining what it means to be a "good citizen" in the 21st century.



Recognizing that the high cost of college and fear of crippling debt are barriers for many low-income students who might otherwise pursue post-secondary education, Young Invincibles, a nonprofit dedicated to mobilizing and expanding opportunities for youth, started the Student Impact Project. This advocacy and leadership program trains students to push for reinvestment in public higher education. It tracks

Participatory Democracy

In recent years, forms of "participatory democracy" have encouraged and enabled everyday Americans to become more involved in the decision-making process of government. One example is participatory budgeting, a process that empowers people to decide together how to spend public money.

Recently, the Participatory Budgeting Project (PBP), a nonprofit organization supporting the growth of participatory budgeting in the U.S., partnered with the City of Boston and several youth organizations to launch Youth Lead the Change. In June 2014, more than 1,700 teens and young adults voted in the first youth participatory budgeting process in the U.S. They decided how to spend \$1 million of the city's capital budget including: upgraded playground equipment; Chromebooks for high school students; new sidewalks; and dedicated wall space for visual and graffiti artists. City officials say they are committed to working with the youth initiative in the future.

Mobilizing young adults to become engaged

pertinent legislation and creates data to help these student leaders make their case to officials and the media, including state report cards and an interactive map to compare state commitments. Students meet with legislators and testify at State House hearings to advocate for increased investments and scholarships.



Future Study



Our analysis underscores the importance of providing volunteer opportunities to low-income youth who are less likely to have social networks that help them secure such participation and who are at highest risk for educational, economic and social disconnection. These opportunities must be structured in an accessible way so that these teens and young adults, many of whom face time constraints and logistical challenges, such as difficulty finding transportation, can access them and take full advantage of the benefits they confer.

While we can point with confidence to the value of volunteering and formal participation in a service or civic organizations as paths to advancing economic opportunity, the nonprofit field lacks enough data to fully capture all the ways Americans engage with each other that could help to build social capital and expand economic opportunity. Our research did not find a correlation between more informal kinds of engagement—such as working with neighbors and doing favors for neighbors—and economic opportunity, but that doesn't necessarily mean a connection doesn't exist. Furthermore, research indicates that these informal interactions contribute to other positive outcomes such as social cohesion and a sense of community.

Several of the experts we interviewed lamented the field's lack of nuanced data. They called for more detailed, culturally sensitive information that can more fully capture the potential impact of informal and non-traditional interactions and activities. For example, the word "volunteer," which is used in the

Current Population Survey, doesn't hold a lot of meaning for Spanish-speakers for whom the word doesn't precisely translate. Neighborhoods with high numbers of post-adjudicated residents may regard "community service" as a punishment rather than a common good. Additionally, though Millennials are known to be service-oriented, they don't always follow traditional paths to getting involved and some may be distrustful of government; as a result, their various forms of engagement simply aren't measured comprehensively in many of the current survey models. This generation is also likely to engage with online communities and activism, which can create a platform for face-to-face engagement, but often falls outside traditional channels. For all of these reasons, we lack adequate measures to track certain kinds of engagement and their potential link to expanding opportunity. This area is ripe for further investigation and could yield interesting results in future studies.

Finally, some of the partners we interviewed voiced strong concern that the civic engagement supplement of the Current Population Survey might be shortened or eliminated altogether, due to federal budget cuts and shifting priorities. In fact, nonprofits and service organizations focused on civic engagement rely on this information. They strenuously support the continuation of federal data collection and ask that it be improved and expanded upon. They argue that these surveys are essential to measure the impact and value of various forms of civic participation and involvement, including their potential to build paths to economic mobility and more vibrant communities.



Calls to Action



expansion of
cross-sector
initiatives

membership in
civic & service
organizations

volunteer
programs by
employers

use of the
Opportunity
Index

collection of
civic engage-
ment data

- We support the expansion of cross-sector initiatives that promote volunteering—and equal access to such opportunities—among all youth, particularly low-income teens and young adults who can most benefit from the personal and professional networks and skill-building such activities offer.
- We advocate increased membership in civic and service organizations for Americans of all ages, as such participation correlates with higher levels of economic opportunity for communities, among other benefits.
- We urge more business leaders and employers to launch and lead volunteer programs, civic projects and mentoring initiatives as a way to ensure that professionals are interacting face-to-face with youth. Not only will these investments help more young Americans build the skills, confidence and networks they need to succeed in today's workforce, but they will also support higher levels of opportunity at the community level.
- We encourage the widespread use of the Opportunity Index to help communities explore the conditions present in their county and state that are enhancing or restricting opportunity, including the percentage of disconnected youth, the percentage of adults who volunteer and the percentage of adults who are members of a group or organization.
- We strongly recommend the continued collection of detailed civic engagement data and the expansion and refinement of such information in the future, as it is critical to the field and to exploring forms of engagement not currently measured. Such data could yield useful information about additional ways to expand economic mobility.



Conclusion



Opportunity Nation and our partners are committed to ensuring that young Americans receive the resources and supports they need to embark on meaningful education and career pathways. If this goal is achieved, our economy will flourish and our communities will thrive.

Education remains one of the most powerful routes to opportunity and must be prioritized. **But our analysis, bolstered by existing research, suggests that other avenues to upward mobility—namely volunteering and participation in civic and service groups—may also be critical.** The evidence suggests that civic engagement may not only contribute to the health of communities, but also to the prospects of individual Americans, by helping them accrue social capital and professional skills. At a time when far too many Americans are being left behind, particularly low-income youth, volunteering and civic engagement can and should be a key part of ensuring today's teens and young adults get their fair shot at the American Dream.



Civic Engagement

Activities that build on the collective resources, skills, expertise and knowledge of citizens to improve the quality of life of communities. Examples of such participation include political and nonpolitical actions such as voting and registering to vote, attending a rally, donating to a charity or volunteering at a soup kitchen.

For our analysis, we considered five types of civic engagement often associated with the accrual of social capital that are measured by the U.S. Census Bureau: volunteering; participation in any organization; participation in a civic or service organization; working with neighbors to solve a problem; and doing favors for neighbors.

Civic and Service Organizations

Include diverse organizations usually focused on charitable causes and fundraising, many of which rely on volunteers to staff events, provide services or participate in activities. Examples could include groups such as the Lion's Club, American Legion, Rotary Club, Boy Scouts of America, Habitat for Humanity and Big Brothers Big Sisters, among others.

Disconnected Youth

The number of teens and young adults ages 16 to 24 who are currently not in school or working. Also referred to as "Opportunity Youth."

Economic Opportunity

The chance to improve one's financial well-being and security, particularly crucial for economically disadvantaged people who often need supports in order to achieve economic stability.

The Opportunity Index includes seven key factors essential to the creation and expansion of economic opportunity: jobs; wages; poverty level; income inequality; and access to banking, affordable housing and the Internet.

Income Inequality

Describes the inequitable distribution of total income across households.

The Opportunity Index measures income inequality as the ratio of household income of the 80th percentile of U.S. incomes to that of the 20th. The higher the ratio, the higher the rate of income inequality. In New York City, the place with the highest level of income inequality in the U.S., households in the 80th percentile have incomes 8.5 times higher than those in poorest 20 percent.

Social Capital

The idea that social and professional networks have value, both for the individual and the collective. Social capital confers benefits such as: information about job openings; access to political candidates; collective influence that comes from membership in a religious or neighborhood group; and knowledge and connection fostered by active communities including online forums that share advice and resources.

Volunteer

A person who willingly offers himself or herself for a service or undertaking without receiving pay.



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* In this analysis, low-income youth refers to youth of low socio-economic status, defined as youth whose parents did not graduate from high school.
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Stakeholder Interviews

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Introduction

The aim of this research is to examine the relationship between civic engagement and economic opportunity in the United States. As part of our analysis, we use the Opportunity Index as a lens through which to explore this relationship.

Americans demonstrate their civic engagement in many different ways. In this analysis, we analyze a host of civic behaviors—volunteering for any organization (church, children’s school, etc.); working with neighbors to solve a problem in the community; participating in any community organization; participating in a service or civic organization; and doing favors for neighbors. While there are no doubt other aspects of civic engagement—voting, for example—we focus on these measures as they are often cited in the literature as pathways to building social capital. And it is through the accumulation of social capital that civic engagement is theorized in the literature to increase economic opportunity. By testing several different definitions of civic engagement, we are able to better understand which “civic” acts are most associated with the economic opportunity of youth and across states more generally.

Economic opportunity, which can also be defined in many ways, is most often related to employment opportunities. In this analysis, we use two different measures of economic opportunity, the Jobs and Local Economy dimension of the Opportunity Index and the youth disconnection rate included in the Community Health and Civic Life Dimension. The Jobs and Local Economy dimension of the Opportunity Index measures seven key themes related to economic opportunity: jobs, wages, poverty, inequality, assets, affordable housing and Internet access. The youth disconnection rate is the percentage of youth (16-24) who are neither in school nor working. The logic behind selecting the youth disconnection rate is that the absence of economic opportunity for these youth is a central cause of their disconnected status, that their reduced educational attainment impairs their current (and future) economic opportunity, and that

their current disconnected status will echo across their life course in terms of lower wages and higher unemployment, among other adverse outcomes.

This analysis is divided into three sections.

In Section I, we test the relationship between civic engagement and economic opportunity for youth using multi-level logistic regression models. We test two different acts of civic engagement: volunteering for any organization and working with neighbors to solve a problem in the community. We focus on the impacts of volunteering as it is acknowledged in the literature both as a worthwhile activity in itself and as a pathway to long-term societal engagement, instilling a sense of civic responsibility that youth carry with them into adulthood. Specifically, researchers find that youth who volunteer are more likely to become adults who vote and engage in service to their community. We also look at the influence of working with neighbors to solve a problem as this is a metric often cited in the literature as an indicator of social capital.

In Section II, we analyze the relationship between civic engagement and economic opportunity at the state level. We look at the correlations between volunteering for any organization and participating in any organization (group membership) on all other components of the Opportunity Index to identify which indicators in the Index are most associated with civic engagement measures.

In the final analysis, Section III, we test the relationship between civic engagement and economic opportunity at the state level once again, this time using regression models. We use the following measures of civic engagement: participating in any organization; participating in a service organization; and doing favors for neighbors. We use the Jobs and Local Economy dimension of the Opportunity Index as our measure of economic opportunity.

Section I: Disconnected Youth

Data and Methods (Parameters of the Study)

For this analysis, we use data from the Volunteer Supplement of the Current Population Survey, September 2010, accessed through the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS-USA) database. The probability sample used to collect the data was designed to represent the universe of all persons in the civilian, non-institutional population of the United States living in households. The survey asks respondents about activities that occurred in the past 12 months.

The sample in this analysis consists of 3,038 youth (16-24) living in the 25 most populous metro areas in the United States. Using multi-level logistic regression models, we test whether volunteering and working with neighbors to solve a problem in the community affects the likelihood that a young person is disconnected. A respondent is considered a volunteer if he/she has engaged in any volunteer activity in the past 12 months. The questions relating to volunteer activity the survey are as follows:

This month we are interested in volunteer activities; that is activities for which people are not paid, except perhaps expenses. We only want to include volunteer activities that you did through or for an organization, even if you only did them once in a while.

Since September 1st of last year, have you done any volunteer activities through or for an organization?

Sometimes people don't think of activities they do infrequently or activities they do for children's schools or youth organizations as volunteer activities. Have you done any of these types of volunteer activities?

A respondent is considered to have worked with neighbors if he/she engaged in any work with neighbors in the past twelve months. The question relating to working with neighbors in the survey is as follows:

Since Sept. 1st, have you worked with other people from your neighborhood to fix a problem or improve a condition in your community or elsewhere?

A disconnected youth is defined as a person aged 16-24 who is neither enrolled in school nor has a job. This includes those listed as "not in labor force."

To parse out whether it is the civic engagement activity, rather than other factors that are influencing the youth's likelihood of disconnection, we control for characteristics commonly associated with youth disconnection in the literature (Flanagan and Levine, 2010). The controls in the final model are: race and ethnicity (white/Latino/black), the number of children the young person has, and the educational attainment of their parents, a common proxy for socio-economic status (Putnam et. al, 2012). Low socio-economic status we define as youth where neither parent has completed high school. Middle socio-economic status is defined as those with at least one parent with a high school degree or the equivalent. Upper/middle socio-economic status are youth where at least one parent has completed an associate's degree or higher. These are common standards used in the literature to define socio-economic status by parental educational attainment. The benefit of using a multi-level model structure is that we are able to control for contextual effects, i.e. the differences across cities that may be influencing the youth disconnection rate.

Findings

Part 1: The effects of volunteering on youth disconnection

The results of the analysis suggest that youth who volunteer are less likely to be disconnected, controlling for race, number of children and socio-economic status. Black youth are more likely than whites to be disconnected. Latinos youth are as likely as whites to be disconnected, once socio-economic status is taken into account. Socio-economic status and number of children predict disconnection status, in the expected directions. The more children a young person has, the more likely he or she is to be disconnected. The higher the socio-economic status, the less likely the young person is to be disconnected. Controlling for all the above conditions, volunteer status (whether or not the young person has volunteered in the past year), is a strong, negative predictor of youth disconnection. Youth in all 25 metro areas who volunteer, across all races and socio-economic statuses, are less likely to be disconnected, compared to those who do not volunteer. While there are differences in the likelihood of youth disconnection across cities, volunteering significantly reduces the likelihood of a youth being disconnected across all 25 metro areas.

- Across the 25 metro areas, the chance that a young person is disconnected, controlling for city-level differences, is 11.1 percent. For young people who volunteer, that chance falls to 5.73 percent.
- The likelihood that a non-volunteer, black youth of low socio-economic status is disconnected is 27.7 percent. This chance falls by over 35 percent if he or she is a volunteer.
- The likelihood that a non-volunteer, Latino youth of low socio-economic status, with one child, is disconnected is 28.5 percent. This likelihood falls to 18.4 percent if she's a volunteer.

Part 2: The effects of working with neighbors to solve a problem on youth disconnection

Unfortunately, there was not a significant relationship between working with neighbors and youth disconnection.

Discussion

This research suggests that volunteering may reduce the likelihood of youth disconnection. The findings demonstrate a clear, negative relationship between volunteering and disconnectedness, controlling for common factors associated with youth disconnection: race, socio-economic status and parenthood status. Youth in the nation's 25 largest metro areas who volunteer are considerably less likely than their non-volunteering counterparts to be disconnected.

These findings complement current research in the volunteer literature which connect volunteering to positive outcomes such as increased self esteem, future earning potential, socio-economic status and occupational prestige (Johnson, Beebe, Mortimer and Snyder, 1998; Yates and Youniss, 1996).

There is a competing explanatory story of self-selection bias. Young people who self-select to volunteer may be the same types of young people who are least likely to be disconnected. It is possible that it is this selection bias, not the volunteering itself, that reduces the likelihood of disconnection.

To test the selection bias hypothesis, we reversed the variables in the model. We set the disconnection status as a predictor of volunteer status, rather than the other way around. We found that this model was a poorer fit for the data, suggesting that the self-selection bias hypothesis is inferior to the original posed in this research i.e. that it is volunteering that influences the likelihood to become disconnected, not just the other way around.

There is also clear evidence in the literature that, even controlling for the self-selection bias, volunteering fosters pro-social behavior (Uggen and Janikula, 1999) and improved employment outcomes, especially for African American youth (Jastrzab, Blomquist, Masker, and Orr, 1997). When considered in tandem with previous findings, this analysis can be interpreted to suggest that the act of volunteering may reduce the likelihood that an urban young person will become disconnected.

Putnam et al. (2012) explain how the gap between working class and upper/middle class youth is widening in terms of volunteer participation and opportunity. Coupled with Putnam et al.'s findings, our analysis highlights the importance of providing volunteer opportunities for youth of low socio-economic status. These youth are least likely to have parents or social networks to draw on to help them secure volunteer opportunities, least likely to already be volunteering, and most at risk of disconnection.

Section II: Volunteerism and Group Membership Correlation Analysis

Data and Methods (Parameters of the Study)

In this correlation analysis, we examine the relationships between civic engagement and various indicators of economic opportunity in the 2013 Opportunity Index. Here civic engagement is measured using volunteerism rates and group membership rates.

Volunteer rates are calculated from the Current Population Survey, Volunteering Supplements, 2011 and 2012, and defined as the percentage of adults 18 and older who did volunteer work through or for an organization at any time in the previous year. Group

membership rates are calculated from the Current Population Survey, Civic Engagement Supplements, 2010 and 2011, and defined as the percentage of adults 18 and over who report being members of social, civic, service, recreational or religious groups in the previous year.

The Opportunity Index is made up of 16 indicators, which are divided into three dimensions: Jobs and Local Economy; Education; and Community Health and Civic Life. Each indicator is calculated using reliable, official national datasets. Those data sources are: the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the U.S. Census Bureau, the Federal Communications Commission, the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The following table summarizes the themes and indicators that make up the 2013 Opportunity Index.

Dimension	Theme	Indicator
Jobs and Local Economy	Jobs	Unemployment Rate (%)
	Wages	Median Household Income (\$)
	Poverty	Poverty (% of population below poverty line)
	Inequality	80/20 Ratio (Ratio of household income at the 80th percentile to that of the 20th percentile)
	Assets	Banking Institutions (commercial banks, savings institutions, and credit unions per 10,000 residents)
	Affordable Housing	Households Spending Less than 30% of Household Income on Housing Costs (%)
	Internet Access	High-Speed Internet (% of households for states; 5-level categories for counties)
Education	Preschool	Preschool (% ages 3 and 4 in school)
	High School Graduation	On-Time High School Graduation (% of freshmen who graduate in four years)
	Postsecondary Completion	Associate Degree or Higher (% of adults 25 and older)
Community Health and Civic Life	Group Membership	Group Membership (% of adults 18 and older involved in social, civic, sports, and religious groups) [STATES ONLY]
	Volunteerism	Volunteerism (% of adults ages 18 and older) [STATES ONLY]
	Youth Economic and Academic Inclusion	Youth Not in School and Not Working (% ages 16-24)
	Community Safety	Violent Crime (per 100,000 population)
	Access to Health Care	Primary Care Providers (per 100,000 population)
	Access to Healthy Food	Grocery Stores and Produce Vendors (per 10,000 population)

To test the strength of the relationships between civic engagement and economic opportunity, we used the Pearson's r correlation coefficient, which ranges from 0 and 1; 1 indicates a perfect correlation, and 0 denotes no relationship; 0.4 to 0.6 is considered to be a moderate correlation; and 0.7 to 0.9 signifies a strong correlation between variables (Dancey and Reidy, 2004).

We also tested the relationship between the change in volunteerism and group membership rates over time (2011 to 2013) against the 2013 Opportunity Index components. For example, we looked at whether an increase in volunteerism from 2011 to 2013 was associated with a higher overall Opportunity Index score in 2013 or a higher Jobs and Local Economy dimension score in 2013. None of these relationships were significant.

Findings

We find moderate, negative correlations between volunteerism and income inequality and between volunteerism and disconnected youth. Volunteerism is moderately, positively correlated with the Jobs and Local Economy dimension of the Index. Group membership is also moderately, positively correlated with the Job and Local Economy dimension of the Index.

Both volunteerism and group membership are moderately, positively correlated with the overall Opportunity Index score of states.

- Across the 50 states and the District of Columbia, high volunteerism rates are associated with higher overall opportunity and higher economic opportunity.
- Across the 50 states and the District of Columbia, higher rates of group membership are associated with higher overall opportunity and higher economic opportunity.
- Across the 50 states and the District of Columbia, higher rates of volunteerism are associated with lower rates of disconnected youth.
- Across the 50 states and the District of Columbia, higher rates of volunteerism are associated with lower rates of income inequality.

Discussion

This correlation analysis demonstrates that states with higher levels of civic engagement have higher levels of economic opportunity. This evidence suggests that civic engagement may be a driving force of economic opportunity at the state level. To get a more refined understanding of the relationships observed in the above correlation analysis, we proceed to a regression analysis, which allows us to control for race, ethnicity, nativity, educational attainment and urban compositions of each state and the District of Columbia.

Section III: Linking Economic Opportunity and Civic Engagement across states and the District of Columbia

Data and Methods (Parameters of the Study)

For this final analysis, we look at the relationship between civic engagement and economic opportunity at the state level. We use data from the 2013 Opportunity Index (data collected in 2011) and the Current Population Survey-Civic Engagement Supplement (2011). We measure the level of economic opportunity in a state with the Jobs and Local Economy dimension score. To measure civic engagement, we use three indicators: the percent of the 18+ population participating in a service organization, the percent of the 18+ population participating in any organization, and the average frequency with which people 18+ help their neighbors.

The probability sample used to collect the data on civic engagement was designed to represent the universe of all persons in the civilian, non-institutional population of the United States living in households. The survey asks respondents about activities that occurred in the past 12 months.

Civic engagement data is collected at the individual level and aggregated to the state level using population weights provided in the dataset. The questions relating to organization participation in the survey are listed below. A person is considered to have participated in any organization if he/she answered yes to any question (a) through (e) listed below. A person is considered to have participated in a service organization if he/she answered yes to question (b).

Next, I will give you a list of types of groups or organizations in which people sometimes participate. (Have you/Has NAME) participated in any of these groups during the last 12 months, that is since November 2010:

- (a) A school group, neighborhood, or community association such as PTA or neighborhood watch group?
- (b) A service or civic organization such as American Legion or Lions Club?
- (c) A sports or recreation organization such as a soccer club or tennis club?
- (d) A church, synagogue, mosque, or other reli-

gious institution or organization, NOT COUNTING (your/his/her) attendance at religious services?

- (e) Any other type of organization that I have not mentioned?

Frequency of helping neighbors at the state level is calculated as the average level of frequency of helping neighbors reported by respondents in that state. The survey question relating to helping neighbors in listed below.

How often did (you/NAME) and (your/his/her) neighbors do favors for each other? By favors we mean such things as watching each others children, helping with shopping, house sitting, lending garden or house tools and other small things to help each other – basically every day, a few times a week, a few times a month, less than once a month, or not at all?

- (1) Basically every day
- (2) A few times a week
- (3) A few times a month
- (4) Once a month
- (5) Less than once a month
- (6) Not at all

Using linear regression models, with civic engagement variables as predictors and economic opportunity as the dependent variable, we analyze the impacts of civic engagement on economic opportunity across states. We control for the percent black, the percent Hispanic, the percent foreign-born, and the educational attainment level in each state. We measure educational attainment using the 2013 Opportunity Index Education dimension score at the state level.

Alternative models: We also tested whether levels of civic engagement in a state impact the change in economic opportunity between 2011 and 2013. These results were not significant. Additionally, we tested the relationship between disconnected youth and civic engagement at the state level. This relationship was not significant once we controlled for the state poverty level. We also controlled for % of population living in a metro areas but this was not significant.

Findings:

We find that civic engagement is a significant predictor of economic opportunity across states, even once we control educational attainment level, the percent black, the percent Hispanic, and the percent

foreign-born in each state. In fact, the percent of people participating in a service organization is a stronger predictor of economic opportunity than percent black, percent Hispanic, educational attainment or percent foreign-born.

Both participating in any organization and participating specifically in a service organization are significant predictors of economic opportunity. The frequency with which people help their neighbors was not a significant predictor of economic opportunity. Service organization participation is a better predictor of economic opportunity compared to participating in any type of organization (religious, school, sports, etc.). The impact of service organization participation on economic opportunity does not vary by the percent of blacks or Hispanics in each state.

- The percentage of adults participating in service organizations significantly predicts the level of economic opportunity in that state.
- The percent of people participating in a service organization is a stronger predictor of economic opportunity than educational attainment rates in that state.
- An extra percentage point of service organization participation is associated with an increase in the economic opportunity score by 1.2 points, con-

trolling for race, ethnicity, nativity and educational attainment levels in that state.

- A 10% increase in service organization participation is associated with an increase in the economic opportunity score by 12 points (controlling for race, ethnicity, nativity and educational attainment levels in that state).

Discussion

These findings suggest that participation in organizations, particularly service or civic organizations, is associated with increased economic opportunity at the state level. These results add to the growing body of literature focused on the economic benefits of civic engagement. Researchers have found that civic engagement is linked to decreases in unemployment and the ability of states to weather the recession (National Conference on Citizenship, 2011). Now, with this report, we can add overall economic opportunity to the lengthy list of benefits associated with increased levels of civic engagement.

Endnotes:

For detailed results of each analysis, please refer to the Excel spreadsheet. The analysis for each section is listed on the corresponding worksheet.

Section I.

The effects of volunteering on disconnected youth across 25 metro-areas

Dependent variable: Likelihood of youth to be disconnected

Level 1: Urban youth 16-24

Level 2: 25 largest metro areas¹

Data: Current Population Survey, Volunteer Supplement Septembet 2010

Number of youth= 3038

Number of cities=25

Multi-level logistic regression	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<i>Fixed Effects</i>			
volunteer status	-	-0.87***	-0.57**
middle SES	-	-	-0.51***
middle/upper SES	-	-	-1.25***
# of own children	-	-	0.41*
black	-	-	0.47**
latino	-	-	0.10
intercept	-2.08***	-1.93***	-1.43***
<i>Random Effects²</i>			
Intercept	0.25*	0.26*	0.25*
Log-likelihood (model fit statistic)	-1073.62	-1058.67	-1018.95
Logit regression coefficients reported			
*Significant at the 0.05 level			
** Significant at the 0.01 level			
*** Significant at the 0.001 level or greater			

¹Metro areas include: Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Charlotte, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, Minneapolis, New York, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburg, Portland, Riverside, St. Louis, San Antonio, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, Tampa, Washington, D.C.

²The *random effects* parameter measures whether there are differents in the likelihood of being disconnected across the 25 metro areas. This parameter is significant across all models.

Testing self-selection bias: The effects of disconnection status on likelihood to volunteer for youth across 25 metro-areas

Dependent variable: Likelihood of youth to volunteer

Level 1: Urban youth 16-24

Level 2: 25 largest metro areas¹

Data: Current Population Survey, Volunteer Supplement Septembet 2010

Number of youth= 3038

Number of cities=25

Multi-level logistic regression	Model 4
<i>Fixed Effects</i>	
disconnection status	-0.58**
middle SES	0.46*
middle/upper SES	1.31***
# of own children	-0.04
black	-0.76***
latino	-0.39**
intercept	-1.82***
<i>Random Effects²</i>	
Intercept	0.32*
Log-likelihood (model fit statistic)	-1512.07
Logit regression coefficients reported	
*Significant at the 0.05 level	
** Significant at the 0.01 level	
*** Significant at the 0.001 level or greater	

¹Metro areas include: Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Charlotte, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, Minneapolis, New York, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburg, Portland, Riverside, St. Louis, San Antonio, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, Tampa, Washington, D.C.

²The *random effects* parameter measures whether there are differents in the likelihood of being disconnected across the 25 metro areas. This parameter is significant across all models.

Section II.

Opportunity Index correlations by state, 2013

Indicator	Correlation Coefficient with Opportunity Index	Correlation Coefficient with Volunteerism	Correlation Coefficient with Group Membership
2013 Unemployment Rate (%)	-.524**	-0.4517**	-0.4633 **
2013 Median Household Income (2010 \$)	.642**	0.2012	0.25
2013 Poverty (% of population below poverty line)	-.845**	-0.4122 **	-0.4161 **
2013 80/20 Ratio (Ratio of household Income at the 80th percentile to that of the 20th percentile)	-.365**	-0.5653 **	-0.4811 **
2013 Banking Institutions (commercial banks, savings institutions, and credit unions per 10,000 residents)	.479**	0.3717 **	0.3345 *
2013 Households Spending Less than 30% of Income on Housing (%)	0.022	0.2869 *	0.3031 *
2013 High-Speed Internet (5-Level Categorical)	.640**	0.1389	0.1202
2013 Preschool (% ages 3 and 4 in school)	.282*	-0.2386	-0.1091
2013 On-Time High School Graduation (% of freshmen who graduate in four years)	.753**	0.4536 **	0.4202**
2013 Associate's Degree or Higher (% of adults 25 and older)	.717**	0.3536 *	0.3544 **
2013 Violent Crime (per 100,000 population)	-.381**	-0.3304 *	-0.2783 *
2013 Youth Not in School and Not Working (% ages 16-24)	-.908**	-0.5212 **	-0.4933**
2013 Primary Care Providers (per 100,000 population)	.595**	0.1966	0.1855
2013 Grocery Stores and Produce Vendors (per 10,000 population)	.432**	-0.0782	-0.0261
2013 Group Membership (% of adults 18 and over involved in social, civic, sports, and religious groups)	.595**	0.9008**	1
2013 Volunteerism (% of adults ages 18 and Education dimension	.595**	1	0.9008**
Jobs and local Economy dimension	n/a	0.3738 **	0.395**
	n/a	0.5707**	0.5531 **

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level or greater;

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Section III.

The effects of civic engagement on economic opportunity at the state-level

Dependent variable: Jobs and Local Economy dimension of Opportunity Index

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
% in service organizations	0.60***	-	-
% in any organization	-	0.42***	-
frequency of help to neighbors	-	-	0.10
% black	-0.30**	-0.45***	-0.52***
% hispanic	-0.35*	-0.57***	-0.57**
% foreign-born	0.43**	0.43**	0.41*
R-squared	0.62	0.55	0.39
Standardized regression co-efficients reported			
*Significant at the 0.05 level			
** Significant at the 0.01 level or greater			
*** Significant at the 0.001 level or greater			

Adding Educational Attainment to the model:

Across states, the % of people participating in a service organization is a stronger predictor of economic opportunity than % black, % Hispanic, education attainment or % foreign-born

	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
% in service organizations	0.51***	-	-
% in any organization	-	0.29**	-
frequency of help to neighbors	-	-	0.02
% black	-0.19*	-0.34***	-0.36**
% hispanic	-0.12	-0.31*	-0.26
% foreign-born	0.16	0.16	0.07
Education index score	0.44***	0.43***	0.53***
R-squared	0.76	0.67	0.60
Standardized regression co-efficients reported			
*Significant at the 0.05 level			
** Significant at the 0.01 level or greater			
*** Significant at the 0.001 level or greater			

Citi Foundation and Opportunity Nation's Partnership Connecting Youth and Strengthening Communities: The Data Behind Civic Engagement and Economic Opportunity

The Citi Foundation and Opportunity Nation partnered in 2014 to deepen our understanding of how civic engagement can open doors of economic opportunities for young Americans and expand the economic resilience of U.S. states. Our new report shows that specific forms of civic engagement—volunteering and participation in service or civic groups—can accelerate the accrual of social capital and professional skills that can help youth embark on meaningful educational and career pathways. In addition, our analysis found that places with higher levels of civic engagement tend to offer greater economic opportunity to residents, including better jobs, higher wages, and affordable housing.

Connecting Youth and Strengthening Communities is intended to spur dialogue, collaboration and a renewed commitment to promote volunteer service opportunities as a way to expand opportunity nationwide.

Thanks to the collaboration between the Citi Foundation and Opportunity Nation, we now have richer information about how volunteering can improve outcomes for youth and how membership in civic or service organizations can contribute to the economic well-being of states and cities.

The Citi Foundation has made a strong commitment to the issue of expanding economic opportunities for youth. The Citi Foundation's Pathways to Progress initiative, a \$50 million commitment to help 100,000 low-income youth in 10 major U.S. cities, is focused on fostering career readiness through civic engagement, summer employment, entrepreneurship training and mentoring. These approaches are designed to help youth develop the workplace skills and leadership experience necessary to compete in today's global economy, and improve the communities in

which they live.

A key component of Pathways to Progress is ServiceWorks, a powerful example of cross-sector leadership to promote civic engagement activities as a path towards college and career success. This national program, powered by AmeriCorps, the Citi Foundation and Points of Light, uses volunteer service as a strategy to help 25,000 low-income teens and young adults ages 16 to 24 develop the skills they need to prepare for college and careers. AmeriCorps VISTAS will work with young people in 10 cities: Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Newark, San Francisco, St. Louis and Washington, D.C..

Youth who participate in ServiceWorks have structured opportunities to lead volunteer service projects and receive skills training and success coaching designed to help them establish a goal-setting plan toward a plan of college and career. They work alongside professionals and civic leaders, building valuable networks. These activities can yield positive outcomes, for individuals and society. Our study shows that the likelihood that teens and young adults are disconnected is cut in half when they volunteer.

"ServiceWorks will work to strengthen their community of support so that they can more fully recognize and exercise their power as change agents," said Tracy Hoover, president of Points of Light. "Through skills building and by encouraging them to apply and test those skills leading community projects, ServiceWorks will help these young people exercise their power to effect positive change in their communities."

"As the needs of employers continue to evolve, it is crucial that young people are prepared with the workplace skills and leadership experience necessary to

compete in a 21st Century economy,” said Brandee McHale, Chief Operating Officer of the Citi Foundation. “The findings of this report by Opportunity Nation confirm that civic engagement and volunteerism activities—like those happening through ServiceWorks—can be an effective onramp for helping young people move towards college and career success.”

The Citi Foundation and Opportunity Nation are committed to helping more Americans, particularly teens and young adults ages 16-24, access volunteering, service learning, and other forms of community engagement that can lead to positive educational and economic outcomes. According to the Opportunity Index, which measures 16 key economic, educa-

tional and civic factors that are essential to expand upward mobility to residents, the lower the number of disconnected youth, the higher a region’s capacity to promote opportunity. Initiatives like ServiceWorks, which focus on low-income youth in some of America’s biggest cities, are designed to empower young Americans, a goal that will strengthen our economy and our communities.

It will take all of us - private, public and nonprofit sectors - working together to ensure the rising generation gets their fair shot at the American Dream. Civic engagement can, and should, play a major role in that effort.

Citi Foundation



The Citi Foundation

The Citi Foundation works to promote economic progress in communities around the world and focuses on initiatives that expand financial inclusion. We collaborate with best-in-class partners to create measurable economic improvements that strengthen low-income families and communities. Through a “More than Philanthropy” approach, Citi’s business resources and human capital enhance our philanthropic investments and impact.

For more information, visit www.citifoundation.com.

Opportunity Nation



Opportunity Nation is a bipartisan, national coalition of more than 300 businesses, nonprofits, educational institutions and community leaders working to expand economic opportunity. Opportunity Nation seeks to close the opportunity gap by amplifying the work of its coalition members, advocating policy and private sector actions, and releasing the annual Opportunity Index, a composite measure at the state and county levels of economic, educational and civic factors that foster opportunity.

For more information, visit www.opportunitynation.org.



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