

Exploring the Intersection of Civic, Social, and Community Health

May 2024

The Issue

Civic, social, and community health are more than inter-related – they mutually reinforce one another. As civic health increases, so do the social networks, norms, and trust within a community. Civic participation encompasses a range of activities – formal and informal – including voting, volunteering, and other community service such as environmental clubs and community gardening. Civic participation provides mutual benefits – there is direct benefit to the community as a whole, as well as social, psychological, and health benefits to the individuals who participate.

Webinar Summary & Highlights

Thought leaders Anita Chandra, Vice President and Director of RAND Social and Economic Well-Being, and Michael Stevenson, Co-Director with County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, led an exploration of the ways in which civic, social, and community health are synergistic, and shared data, evidence, and promising solutions.

- **Civic health** has two components. **Civic infrastructure** includes places, policies, and practices that create and cultivate environments where everyone in a community can exchange ideas and solve problems together. **Civic participation** is the way people engage in community life to improve conditions through activities such as voting and volunteering. Civic infrastructure creates opportunities for people to engage in civic participation.
- The **healthiest counties** in the U.S., as measured by length and quality of life, **have well-resourced civic infrastructure** including better access to local news outlets, broadband, and public libraries. These counties also have **more social and economic opportunity, and higher rates of civic participation** including voter turnout.
- **Social capital** through engagement in community life, public affairs, and volunteerism **can counterbalance some of the effects of race on healthcare inequality**.
- **Resilient communities** have strong relationships between individuals, as well as strong connections and coordination across community organizations.

Access and share the webinar [recording](#) and [slide deck](#).



Resources

[2024 National Findings Report: Creating thriving communities through civic participation.](#)

Released by County Health Rankings & Roadmaps (CHR&R), this report highlights the importance of civic infrastructure to create and maintain healthy communities, calling attention to addressing structural barriers like policies, laws, and practices to maximize civic participation.

[Advancing Health Equity and Wellbeing.](#) A variety of reports are included on this site related to RAND's support of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's efforts to build a Culture of Health in America, and expressly addresses health equity and collective wellbeing.

[Advancing a Well-Being Narrative.](#) RAND and Metropolitan Group produced this work about how community leaders can advance community and collective wellbeing including through social connection and civic participation.

[CHR&R's What Works for Health Civic Health Curated Strategy List.](#) Evidence-informed strategies to strengthen opportunities for people to participate in their community are included in this list. These solutions focus on civic infrastructure, or the spaces and policies that facilitate connection and make civic participation possible.

[CHR&R's What Works for Health on Public Deliberations.](#) A description of the evidence and benefits of public deliberations as a civic and community health strategy.

[Civic Arkansas.](#) CA network of civic organizations from across the state are improving civic health by empowering communities to solve problems collectively at the local level.

[Citizen University.](#) This non-profit organization provides programs and other resources to equip Americans to catalyze civic culture.

[Examining Civic Engagement Links to Health.](#) In this report, the authors review what the scientific literature presents about the relationship between health and civic engagement. The report examines whether health is a cause of civic engagement, a consequence of it, or both; causal mechanisms; and where there are gaps in knowledge for the field.

[Civic Health](#) and [Strengthening Democracy for Better Health.](#) These podcasts from CHR&R's In Solidarity series feature interviews with the country's brightest minds and biggest thinkers.

[Join or Die.](#) This documentary film explores civic engagement, what makes democracy work, why American democracy is in crisis, and what we can do about it.

[Santa Monica Wellbeing Index.](#) Information on the Santa Monica Civic Wellbeing Index and the importance of social connection and community capital are included in this site. See this [video](#) on how RAND supported the City of Santa Monica, and this [video](#) from the project that demonstrates how data was translated into an intervention to address social connection.

Healthy Places by Design builds and supports a movement to advance action that results in more socially connected and equitable communities.

healthyplacesbydesign.org

