

Massachusetts Civic Health Assessment Fact Sheet 2011

In this section, we present percentage point estimates of several important civic indicators and a relative ranking for MA. While each indicator represents an important aspect of civic health in MA, no one indicator should be treated as the sole representation of the state's civic health. This section provides several types of information. In the first section, we present:

- Percentage point estimate for 2010 for civic engagement indicators for Massachusetts and the nation, and national ranking for 2010 when available.
- We also include estimates for various indicators from past years to help provide some perspective. For some indicators, we have the 2009 estimate and for others, we have a combined 2008-2009 estimates.ⁱ For voter turnout and registration, we provide the 2006 estimates, as a best comparison to the 2010 Midterm elections.
- In the Table below, we provide summary statistics containing the 2010 estimates, Massachusetts's ranking for 2010, and *moving averages* of those indicators. The moving average is a pooled estimate taken from the combined 2008, 2009 and 2010 data, to give you an idea of the recent *trend*.ⁱⁱ

In the second section, we present national and state specific trends in three aspects of civic health: Political Action, Social Connection and Public Work. We created three composite variables representing each aspect using multiple indicators, and compared the state-specific trends with the national trends. This section is meant to provide a larger picture of the state's civic health, and a way to help identify potential narratives or areas for further exploration in your custom analysis.

In the third section, we provide historical graphs of major indicators to provide longer-term trends of the civic health in Massachusetts.

In the last section, we present an overview of the civic practice in MA, based on what CIRCLE found out about legislation and notable practices in voter laws, civic education, and community service. We also provide basic state-wide demographic information and employment statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics data.ⁱⁱⁱ

Massachusetts Estimates:

- Massachusetts ranked 21st in volunteering in 2010, with a volunteering rate of

- 28.5%. The national volunteering rate in 2010 was 26.3%. An estimated 1,510,000 residents volunteered in MA in 2010. In 2009, 26.6% of Massachusetts residents volunteered their time.
- Massachusetts ranked 11th in voter turnout in 2010, with the turnout rate of 52.2% for citizens age 18 and over. The national turnout was 45.5% for all citizens aged 18 and up. MA's voter turnout in 2006 was 55.4%, which ranked the state at 11th. In 2006, the national voter turnout for all eligible (citizen) voters was 47.8%.
 - Massachusetts ranked 14th among all states in the rate of citizens who are registered to vote, at 68.8%. Massachusetts's voter registration rate in 2006 was 72.4%, which is when the last midterm elections were held. National voter registration rate for all eligible citizens in 2010 was 65.1% and 67.6% in 2006.
 - Massachusetts ranked at 31st in working with neighbors to solve community problems in 2010, with the rate of 7.9%. Nationwide, 8.1% of Americans worked with neighbors in 2010. The national rate for 2009 was 8.8%, while the rate for MA was 10.9%.
 - Massachusetts ranked 46th in the rate of people who exchanged favors with their neighbors a few times a week or more (i.e., "frequently"), with the rate of 12.8%. Nationwide, 15.2% of Americans say they frequently exchange favors with their neighbors. This national rate is similar to the last available estimate from 2008-2009, which was 16.2%. In MA, the last estimate from 2008-2009 for this indicator was 17.3%.
 - Massachusetts ranked 13th in the rate of people who talk about politics with friends and family at least a few times a week, at 28.7%. National rate for this indicator was 26.0% in 2010, which is considerably lower than the rate from 2008-2009, which was 39.3%. In Massachusetts, the 2008-2009 estimate for this indicator was 42.3%.
 - Massachusetts ranked at 27th in the rate of people who said that they eat dinner with their family a few times a week or more, with the rate of 88.7%. The national estimate for this indicator was 88.1% in 2010. In 2009, the national rate for this indicator was 89.1%, and in MA, it was 90.7%.
 - MA ranked 29th in the rate of people who belong to religious, neighborhood, school, sports and other types of groups in their communities with the rate of 34.5%^{iv} in 2010. Furthermore, 10.7% of people in MA take a leadership role in an organization by serving as an officer or serving on a committee. Nationally, 33.3% of people belong to one or more groups, and 9.1% take leadership roles in the community.

See Table 1 for the percentage point estimates for each of these indicators, along with a moving average of the past three assessments (when data are available).

Table 1:

	Latest Estimates (2010)	Latest Ranking (2010)	Moving average (2008-2010 pooled)
Volunteering	28.5%	21st	26.4%
Voting (2010 Midterms)	52.2%	11th	N/A
Registration (2010 Midterms)	68.8%	14th	N/A
Working with neighbors to fix something or improve something in the community	7.9%	31st	8.4%
Doing favor for neighbors frequently	12.8%	46th	15.8%
Group membership	34.5%	29th	33.5%
Eat dinner with a member of household frequently	88.7%	27th	90.0%
Talk about politics with friends and family frequently	28.7%	13th	37.7%
Talk with family and friends on the Internet or via Email frequently	65.9%	1st	61.0%

National and State Specific Trends in Political Action, Social Connection and Engagement in Public Work

The Census now asks numerous questions about volunteering and political and civic engagement. That long list of items can produce a confusing picture. To clarify the civic health of your state and to help you tell a compelling story, we have created three composite measures.

1. **“Political action”** means conventional political engagement: mainly efforts to influence the government and other large institutions. It is composed of these four items: voting, discussing politics with family and friends a few times a week or more, contacting public officials, and buying or boycotting products. An individual receives one point for each activity that he or she reports. The state’s mean is the average score for all residents age 18+.
2. **“Social connectedness”** is composed of eating dinner with other members of your household a few times a week or more, communicating with friends or family online a few times a week or more, talking with neighbors a few times a week or more, and doing favors for neighbors a few times a week or more. Again, individuals get one point for each act they report, and the state mean is the average of all residents’ scores.
3. **“Public work”** means attending meetings and working with neighbors to fix or improve something. Drawing on the terminology of Harry Boyte (and antecedents such as Alexis de Tocqueville), public work refers to the combination of talking about issues and directly acting on them. A person is scored as participating in public work if he or she both attends meetings and works with neighbors. The rate for the state is the proportion of all people 16 and older who do both.

National Findings

At the national level, we make the following observations

1. Political action: In the United States as a whole, almost 41% of adults reported no political acts in 2010, and about 35.6% said they had done just one act. The average number of political acts per person was slightly less than one. A small group was highly active: 7.7 percent reporting at least three acts, and 1.9 percent reporting four acts.

Americans were considerably more likely to be politically active if they were older, more educated, White or African American, married, employed, and suburban or rural. For example, 65% of Whites and 60.3% of African Americans reported at least one political act, versus 37% of Latinos. More than 72% of people age 45+ reported at least one political act, versus 40.2% of people age 20-24. Three quarters of college graduates

reported at least one political act, versus 33.8% of adults without high school diplomas. Often, these disparities are cumulative, so that the differences in political engagement between older, White college graduates and younger Latinos without college experience are vast. [could specify that difference.] To illustrate this difference, we compared Younger (under 30) Latinos without college experience with older (45+) Whites who have college degrees. 68% of the young Latinos without college experience were engaged in no political action, compared to just 13.0% of the older, white, college graduates. Gender had a very small effect, and being African American was a positive predictor of political engagement, since African Americans were more likely to engage than Whites of the same socioeconomic status.

2. Social connections. Most Americans were at least somewhat connected socially. Nationally, 11.9% reported no forms of social connection at all. The mean connectedness score nationally was 1.8, and the largest group (34%) reported two forms of social connection: for example, family dinners plus talking with neighbors. The most social group (6.6% of all respondents) reported all four forms of engagement.

Demographic differences were generally smaller for social connectedness than they were for political action. Older people were less connected and more likely to be alone. For age 65+, 16.7% of people reported no social connection behaviors, compared to 7.8% of teenagers (ages 16-19). The mean number of social connection behaviors for ages 16-19 was 1.9, versus 1.5 behaviors for ages 65+. Married people were more engaged than single, never married people (average number of social connection behaviors 2.0 versus 1.6). More education correlated with greater social connection--college graduates reporting a mean of more than two acts compared to 1.4 acts per adult without a high school diploma. Put another way, 18.7% of people without high school diplomas appeared to be socially isolated (reporting no acts), compared to just 8.7% of college graduates. Residents of central cities were less connected than suburban and rural residents, albeit not by large margins. In general, gender was not strongly related to civic engagement, but men were at a higher risk of being socially isolated than women.

3. "Public work" as we define it (relatively stringently) was uncommon. Among all Americans age 16+, 4.7% met the definition and 95.3% did not. Note, however, that 4.7% of the national population represents a large cadre of active citizens, roughly 11.2 million people who are attending meetings and working at the local level on public problems.

Like other forms of civic engagement, public work is correlated with education. Just 1.2 percent of adults without high school diplomas met our criteria, rising to 9.4% of college graduates. That means that America's venues of public work were dominated by middle-class people. As with political action, Latinos were less likely to participate: 1.9% met the definition compared to 5.5% of non-Hispanic whites and 4.3% of African

Americans. Native Americans were the most likely to participate, at 6.2%, perhaps reflecting opportunities through tribal governance. As seen in the political action, the differences in opportunities and engagement appear cumulative. Just 1.4% of young Latinos who have no college experience met the definition of public work, compared to 11.8% of older whites with college degrees. Married people were almost three times as likely to participate as single people, perhaps because married couples with children are able to engage through schools. There was a steep age curve, with just 1.3% of teenagers (16-19) meeting the definition, rising to a peak of 6.8% for ages 55-64 and falling off thereafter. Public work was more common in rural areas than in cities and suburbs, albeit not dramatically so (5.4% in rural areas versus 4.1% in center cities).

Massachusetts Findings

In general, the patterns observed at the national level applied in Massachusetts. The commonwealth's rating on the three composites was somewhat above the national averages (mean of 1.92 social connections versus 1.8 nationally; mean of 1.05 political acts versus .92 nationally; and 5.7% involved in public work versus 4.7% nationally.) Here we note some other differences.

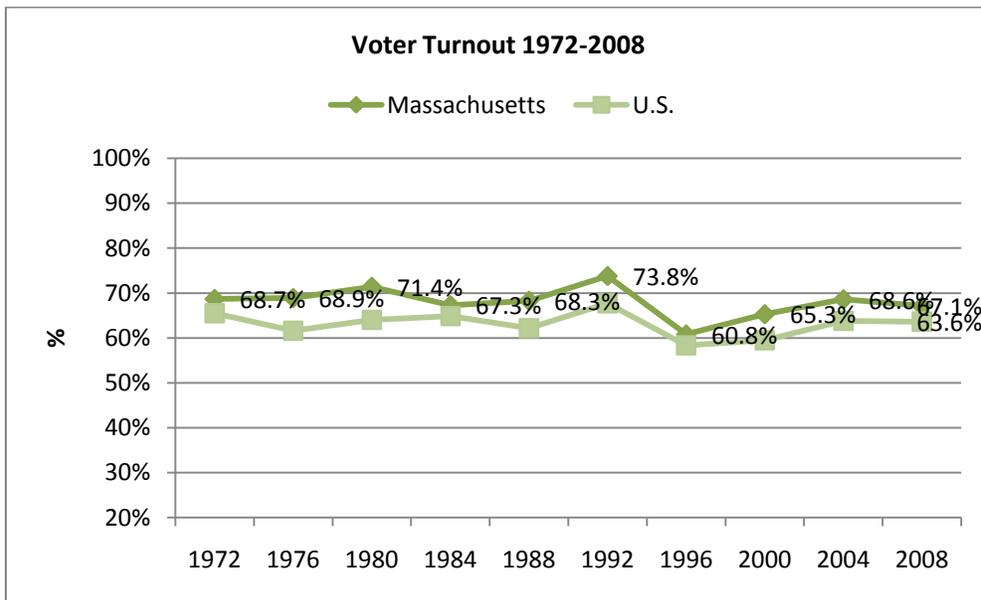
1. Political action: Nationally, African Americans came close to Whites in political action, despite socioeconomic inequalities. But not in Massachusetts, when the average number of political acts by Whites in 2010 was more than twice the number for Blacks. Put another way, 71.5% of Whites took part in at least one act, versus 38.5% of Blacks. Latinos were still further behind, with 30.9% taking part in a political act. The age disparity in civic engagement was notable nationally but pronounced in Massachusetts, where more than three quarters of people age 55+ participated in at least one way, compared to less than half of ages 16-34. Political engagement was much lower in the Commonwealth's central cities than in its suburbs: 46% of urban residents were not engaged at all. As elsewhere in the United States, education strongly correlated with political participation. College graduates reported an average of 1.47 political acts, and more than 80% of them did something political. High school drop outs reported an average of 0.5 acts, and 60.5% did nothing.
2. Social connectedness: As nationally, people became more isolated with advanced age, but the isolation rate of the state's elders was slightly lower than the national average. The state's Latinos were at low risk of social disconnection, just 4.6% scoring zero on the social scale. Twenty-three percent of the state's high school dropouts reported no connections at all, meaning lower educational attainment predicted higher risk of social isolation.
3. Public work: The age gap in public work was strong in MA, with just 2.4% of 20- to 24-year-olds meeting our criteria, whereas 8.7% of those ages 55-64 were engaged in public work. Married people living with their spouse were most likely to participate, at 8.3%. Education was a strong predictor: almost 10% of college

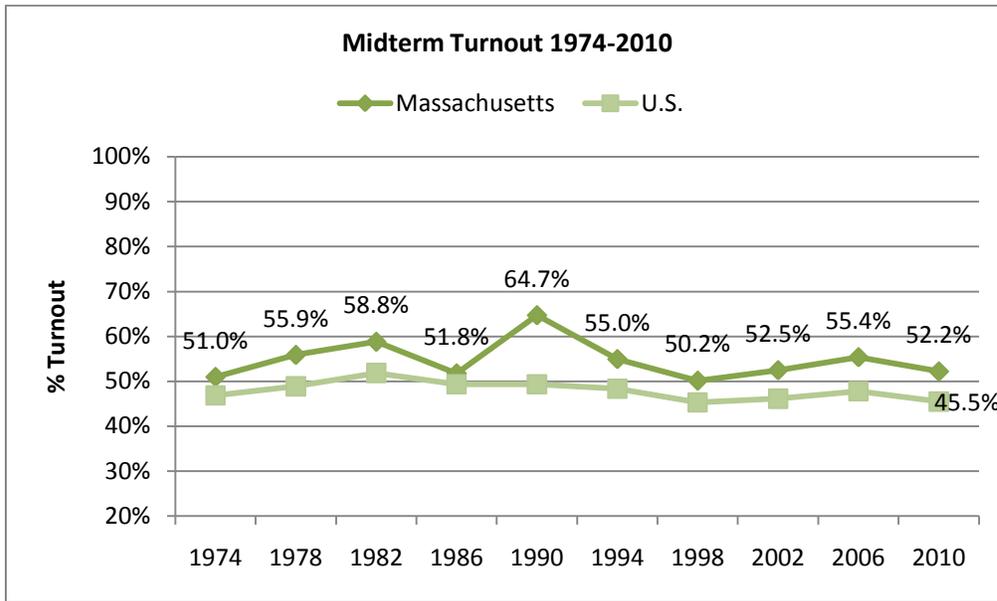
graduates met the criteria, versus no one in the sample who had less than a high school diploma. In short, middle-aged, educated, married couples seemed especially active. The cities and suburbs showed the same rate of public work (5.8%).

Graphs of Historical Trends for the Major Indicators

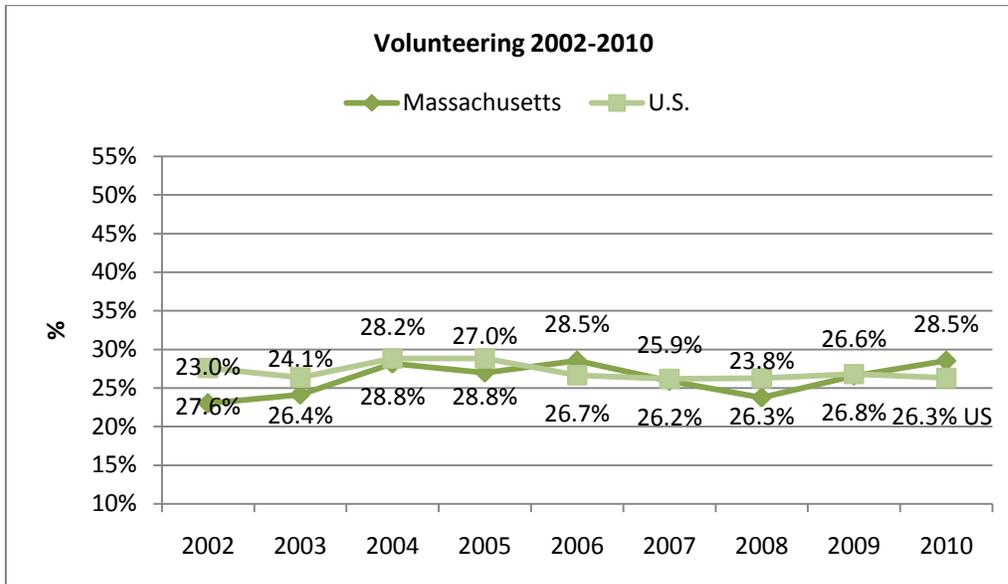
It is also important to understand how state's civic health has changed over time. Historical data are available for some, though not all, civic health indicators. Below are graphs for the percentage point estimates for the years in which data are available, along with national statistics.

Voting (1972-2010)

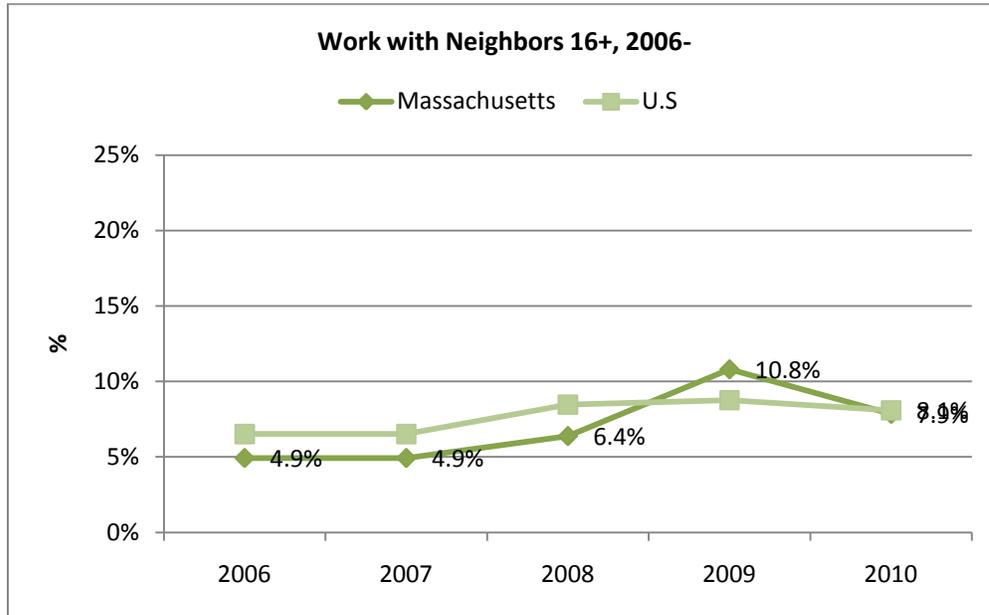




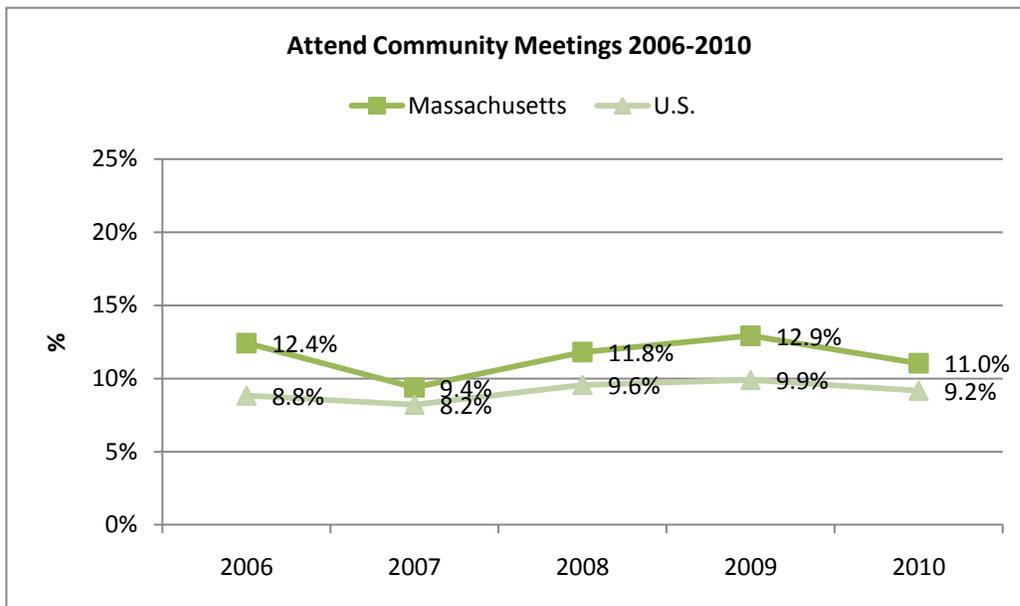
Volunteering (2002-2010) –



Working with neighbors (2006-2010)



Attending community meetings (2006-2010)



State-Specific Civic Facts

Research shows that participation in civics and government classes increases levels of political and civic involvement later in life.^v Consequently, many national school districts have made **civics education** a requirement for high school graduation. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is examining the possibility of creating such a requirement with the introduction of HB00136, which would “direct the Department of Education to include a course in civics as a high school graduation requirement.”^{vi} This bill is mirrored in the state senate with S00183^{vii} and is similar to HB00174 which seeks to establish mandatory civics and government classes in elementary and high schools “for the purpose of promoting civic service and a greater knowledge.”^{viii} The bills are currently being considered by the Joint Committee on Education.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is also considering measures to provide oversight and guidance for future engagement. S00222 proposes to “revive and continue the Special Commission on Civic Engagement and Learning.”^{ix} Moreover, HB00154, currently under consideration in committee, would award a seal of excellence to students who excel in the areas of civics, government, history, and community service.^x

Aside from its efforts to educate students in civics, Massachusetts is also considering measures to increase levels of **voting** and **electoral engagement**. The Massachusetts state legislature is attempting to increase voter registration and turnout among young people with S00310,^{xi} which would require voter registration days in public schools. The state legislature is also attempting to raise money for voter registration, civic education, and voter outreach programs by providing a “democracy in action distinctive license plate” for a fee.^{xii}

S00298 would allow for online voter registration before an election,^{xiii} while S00301 would allow for “election day registration” at the polling location.^{xiv} In addition, S00296^{xv} proposes that new residents of the Commonwealth achieve permanent voter registration status within Massachusetts. There are also two bills being considered, HB00209 and HB00205, which would remove certain restrictions from absentee voting.^{xvi} To address the voting desires of non-citizen residents, HB00202 would “enable cities and towns to extend voting rights in municipal elections to certain non-citizens of the Commonwealth.”^{xvii}

According to *Volunteering in America*, Massachusetts had a volunteering rate of 26.6%, similar to the national rate of 26.8%.^{xviii} In an attempt to encourage greater levels of **community service** and involvement, the Massachusetts state legislature is considering S00946 which would establish a “Commonwealth Citizen Service Initiative.”^{xix} Furthermore, the Commonwealth is considering some programs to establish a community service requirement among certain populations. HB03233 would, if approved, commission the Department of Labor and Workforce Development to study the “feasibility of requiring recipients of unemployment benefits to volunteer for community service while receiving

benefits.”^{xx} In addition, the state legislature is considering authorizing “local school committees to create a community service graduation requirement” through HB01076.^{xxi}

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DOE) took steps to provide **service learning** opportunities in the schools. It currently offers two separate grants to fund programs that incorporate service-learning for all grade levels, with a focus on middle school.^{xxii} Moreover, the DOE initiated the Community Service-Learning Grants Program which encourages schools or school districts to implement service learning initiatives as well as having extensive online resources for service-learning projects. The DOE is continuing its MassONE program which provides online resources for educator collaboration and resource sharing. They are using MassONE in an effort to communicate more effectively among Service-Learning Program grantees.^{xxiii} The DOE has also initiated the Community Service Learning Advisory Council^{xxiv} which provides oversight on state-wide service learning initiatives.

MA STATE DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT^{xxv} (SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, American Fact Finder^{xxvi}):

- Population: 6,547,629 (2010)
- 9.6% Hispanic, Any Race (2010)
- 14.1% Foreign Born (2005-2009)
- 7.0% live below the poverty line (2005-2009)
- 88.4% have graduated high-school (2005-2009)
- 37.8% have a 4-year college degree (2005-2009)
- 27.1 – average number of minutes to workplace (2005-2009)

Table 2: MA Unemployment Rate 2011:

	MA	National
% Unemployed – April, 2011	7.8%	9.0%
% Unemployed—April 2010	8.6%	9.8%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Technical Notes:

Findings presented above are based on CIRCLE's analysis of the Census Current Population Survey (CPS) data. Any and all errors are our own. Volunteering estimates are from CPS September Volunteering Supplement, 2002 - 2010, Voting and registration data come from the CPS November Voting/Registration Supplement, 1972-2010, and all other civic engagement indicators, such as discussion of political information and connection to neighbors, come from the 2010 CPS Civic Engagement Supplement.

Estimates for the volunteering indicators (e.g., volunteering, working with neighbors, making donations) are based on U.S. residents ages 16 and older. Estimates for civic engagement and social connection indicators (e.g., exchanging favor with neighbor, discussing politics) are based on U.S. residents ages 18 and older. Voting and registration statistics are based on U.S. citizens who are 18 and older (eligible voters). Any time we examined the relationship between educational attainment and engagement, estimates are only based on adults ages 25 and older, based on the assumption that younger people may still be completing their education.

Because we draw from multiple sources of data with varying sample sizes, we are not able to compute one margin of error for the state across all indicators. In Massachusetts, the margins of error for major indicators varied from +/- 1.3% to 2.7%, depending on the sample size and other parameters associated with a specific indicator. Any analysis that breaks down the sample into smaller groups (e.g., gender, education) will have smaller samples and therefore the margin of error will increase. It is also important to emphasize that our margin of error estimates are approximate, as CPS sampling is highly complex and accurate estimation of error rates involves many parameters that are not publicly available.

Endnotes

ⁱ For several civic engagement indicators, such as talking about politics and doing favors for neighbors, we are only able to produce a combined 2008-2009 estimates for data quality reasons.

ⁱⁱ Moving averages are not the same as “2008-2009 estimates” that are given for various indicators above. The moving averages include data from 2008, 2009 and 2010.

ⁱⁱⁱ Currently, 2010 Census only provides population counts and not detailed demographic profiles. Therefore, we have used the pooled 2005-2009 American Community Survey data for state demographic profile.

^{iv} The percentage point estimate refers to the portion of people who said they belong to any of the groups presented (religious, school, neighborhood, or sports/recreation).

^v Rodgers, 2004; Kahne and Spote, 2008, 2005, 2004

^{vi} <http://www.malegislature.gov/Bills/187/House/H00136>

^{vii} <http://www.malegislature.gov/Bills/187/Senate/S00183>

^{viii} <http://www.malegislature.gov/Bills/187/House/H00174>

^{ix} <http://www.malegislature.gov/Bills/187/Senate/S00222>

^x <http://www.malegislature.gov/Bills/BillText/8626?generalCourtId=1>

^{xi} <http://www.malegislature.gov/Bills/187/Senate/S00310>

^{xii} <http://www.malegislature.gov/Bills/187/House/H01811>

^{xiii} <http://www.malegislature.gov/Bills/187/Senate/S00298>

^{xiv} <http://www.malegislature.gov/Bills/187/Senate/S00301>

^{xv} <http://www.malegislature.gov/Bills/187/Senate/S00296>

^{xvi} <http://www.malegislature.gov/Bills/187/House/H00209>

^{xvii} <http://www.malegislature.gov/Bills/187/House/H00202>

^{xviii} <http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/MA>

^{xix} <http://www.malegislature.gov/Bills/187/Senate/S00946>

^{xx} <http://www.malegislature.gov/Bills/187/House/H03233>

^{xxi} <http://www.malegislature.gov/Bills/187/House/H01076>

^{xxii} <http://www.doe.mass.edu/csl/grants.html>

^{xxiii} <http://www.doe.mass.edu/csl/massone.html>

^{xxiv} <http://www.doe.mass.edu/boe/sac/councils/csl.html>

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^{xxv} Statistics are for those who are aged 25 and older.

^{xxvi} <http://www.factfinder.census.gov>