

The Texas Civic Health Index

*“FOSTER THE PEOPLE: EXPLORING THE TEXAS CIVIC HEALTH INDEX”
FRIDAY, MARCH 28, 2014*



Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life

- ▶ An Organized Research Unit within the College of Communication at UT-Austin.
- ▶ *Mission: To understand and overcome obstacles to civic engagement.*
 - ▶ 5 educational programs for middle-, high-school, and college-aged youth.
 - ▶ 3 outreach programs to encourage voter registration and public dialogue.
 - ▶ Major research projects include the TX Civic Health Index

Goal of the Civic Health Index

Overcoming the obstacle of awareness:

“To educate Americans about our civic life and to motivate citizens, leaders and policymakers to strengthen it.”

- National Conference on Citizenship

What Does it Take to Have a Healthy Democracy?



**political
participation**



civic involvement



**social
connectedness**

Why call it “civic health”?





Is Texas
living with an
undiagnosed crisis
of civic health?

Three Questions

1. What story is this graph telling you?
2. What are the opportunities and/or obstacles for engagement?
3. What can be done?

Chart A

Age and Political Participation in Texas

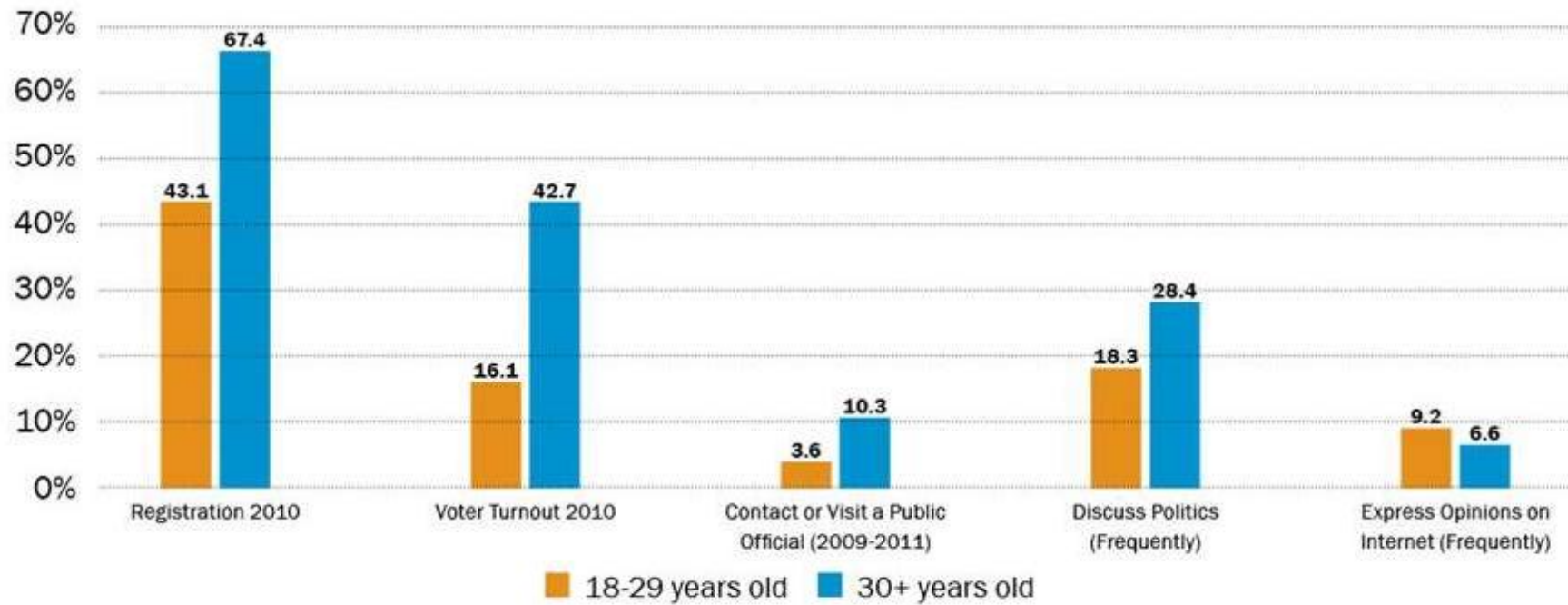
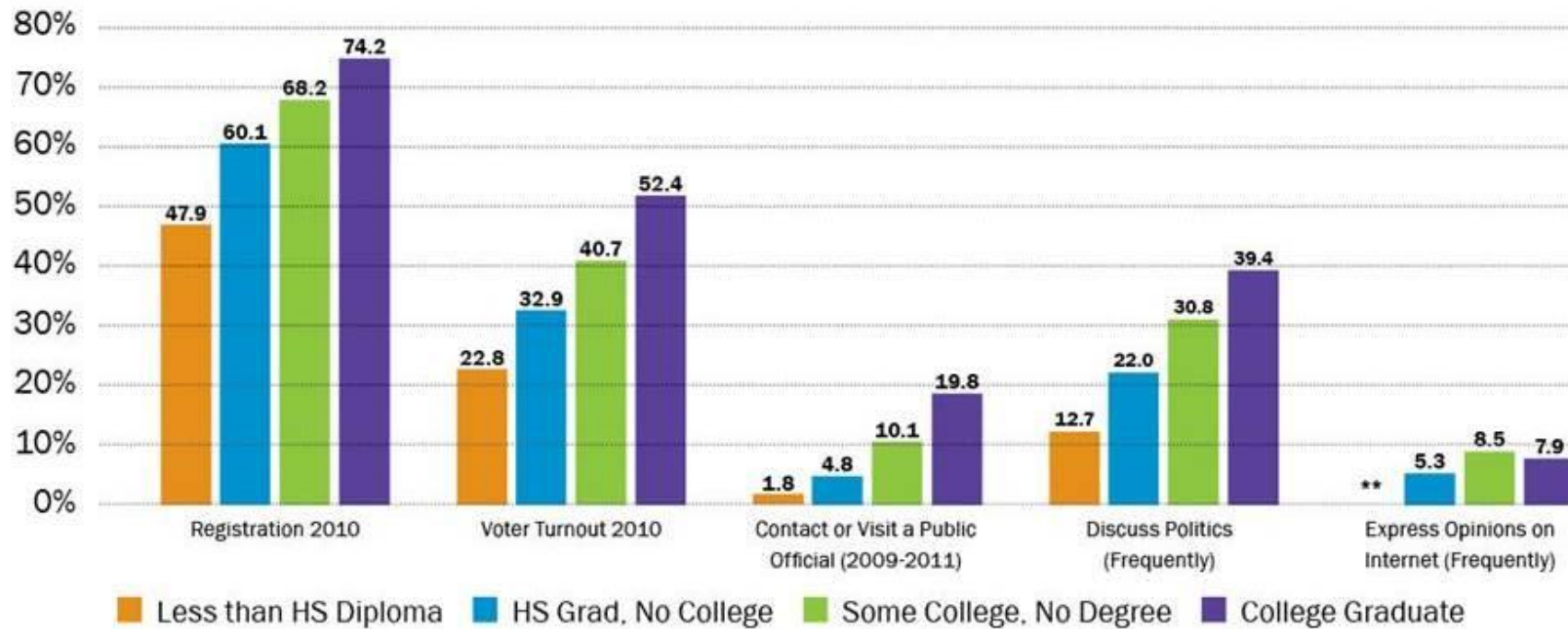


Chart B

Education Levels and Political Participation in Texas



**No data available

Texas Ranking on Political Participation

Indicator	Percent	Ranking among 51 states
Voter registration (2010)	61.6	42 nd
Voting (2010)	36.4	51 st
Contacted or visited a public official	8.9	49 th
Talk about politics with friends and family frequently	26.0	44 th

Why?

- ▶ Non-competitive elections
- ▶ Inconvenience
- ▶ Shrinking/changing media coverage

Chart C

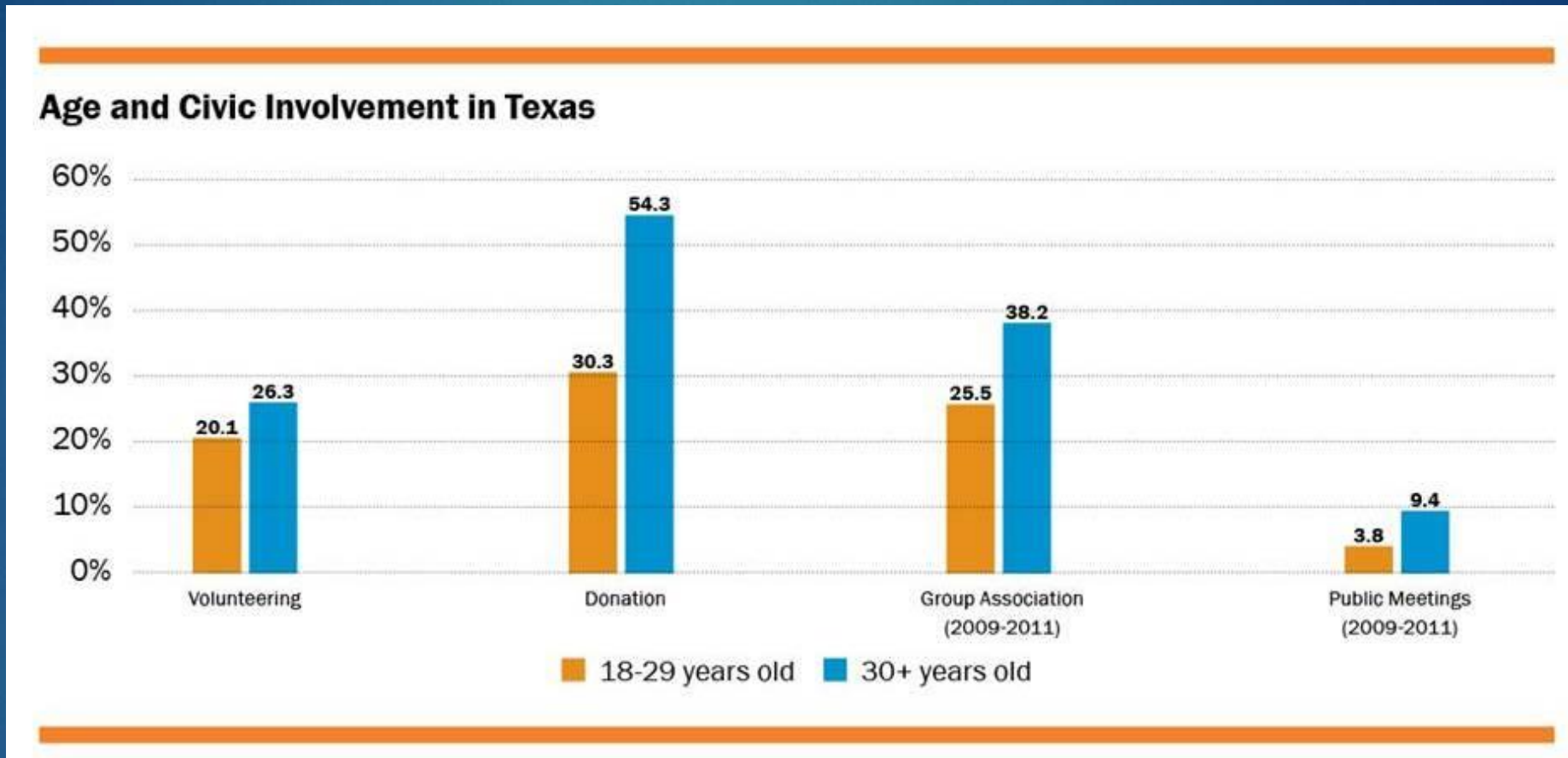
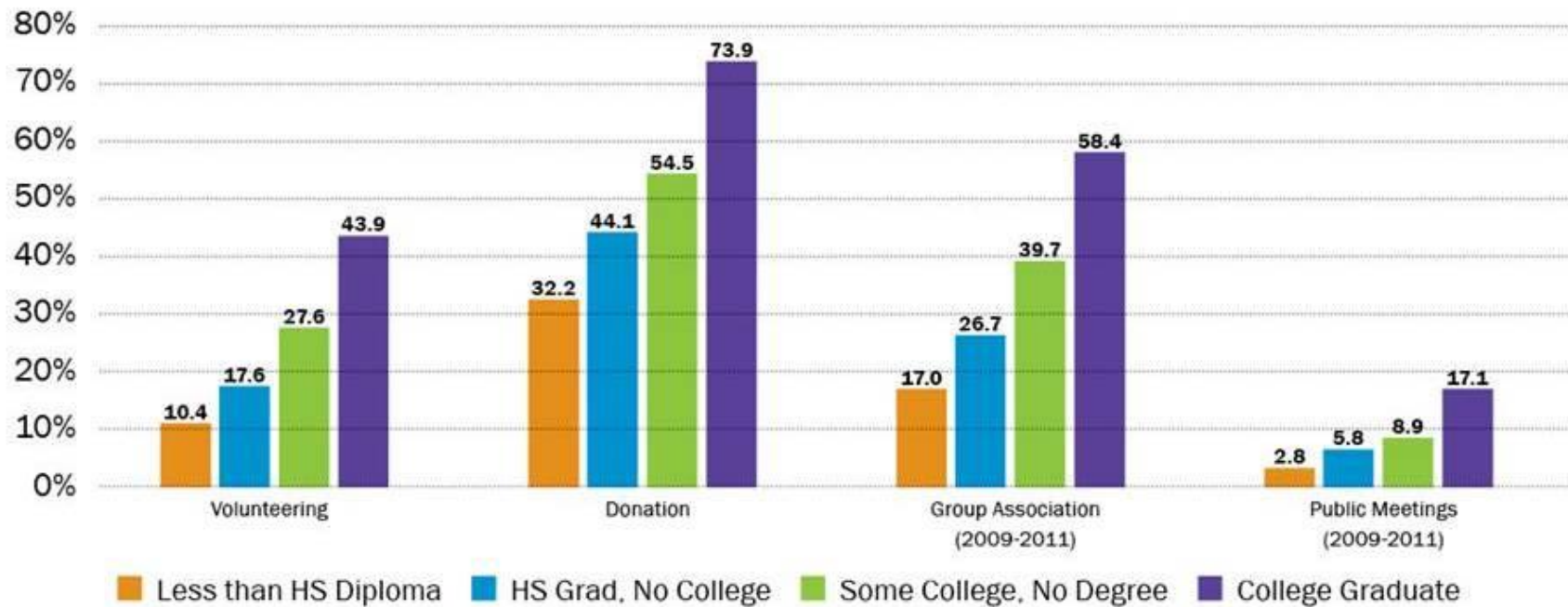


Chart D

Civic Involvement by Education Level in Texas

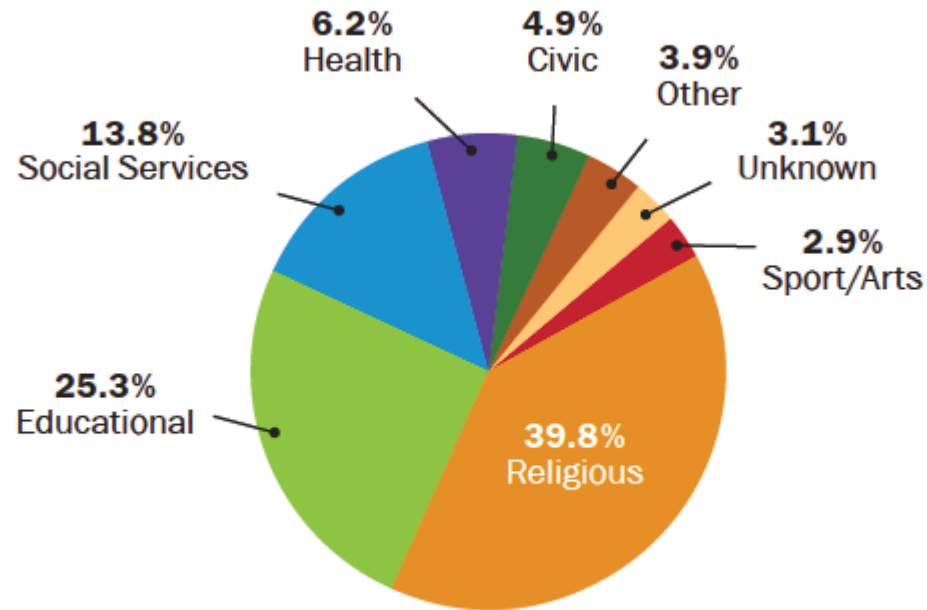


Texas Ranking on Civic Involvement

Indicator	Percent	Ranking among 51 states
Volunteering	24.7	42 nd
Charitable giving	47.3	43 rd
Belong to one or more groups	38.3	37 th
Leadership role in an organization	9.2	39 th

38% of Texans say they belong to a community group such as a religious or sports organization.

Where Texans Volunteer



Source: <http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/TX>

That makes Texas **37th** in the nation for group involvement.

Chart E

Talk with Neighbors (Frequently), by Education Level

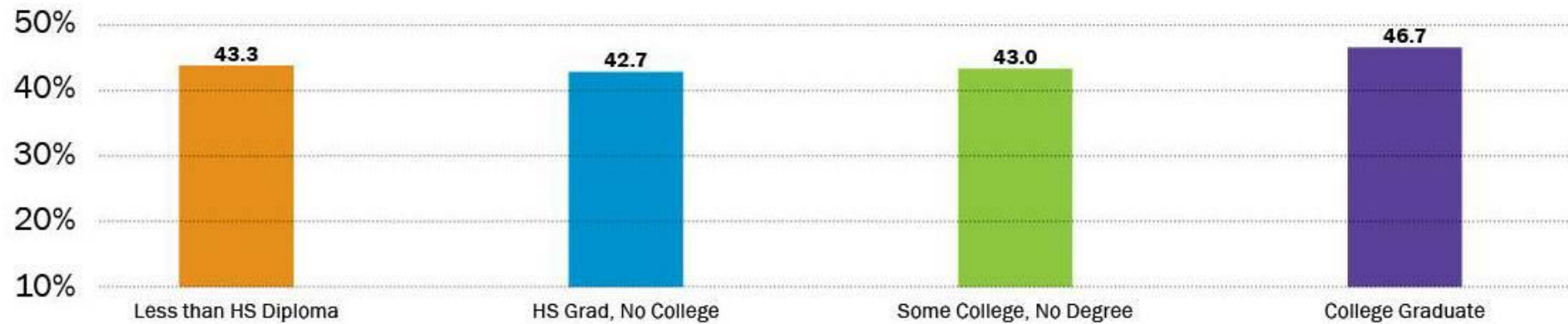
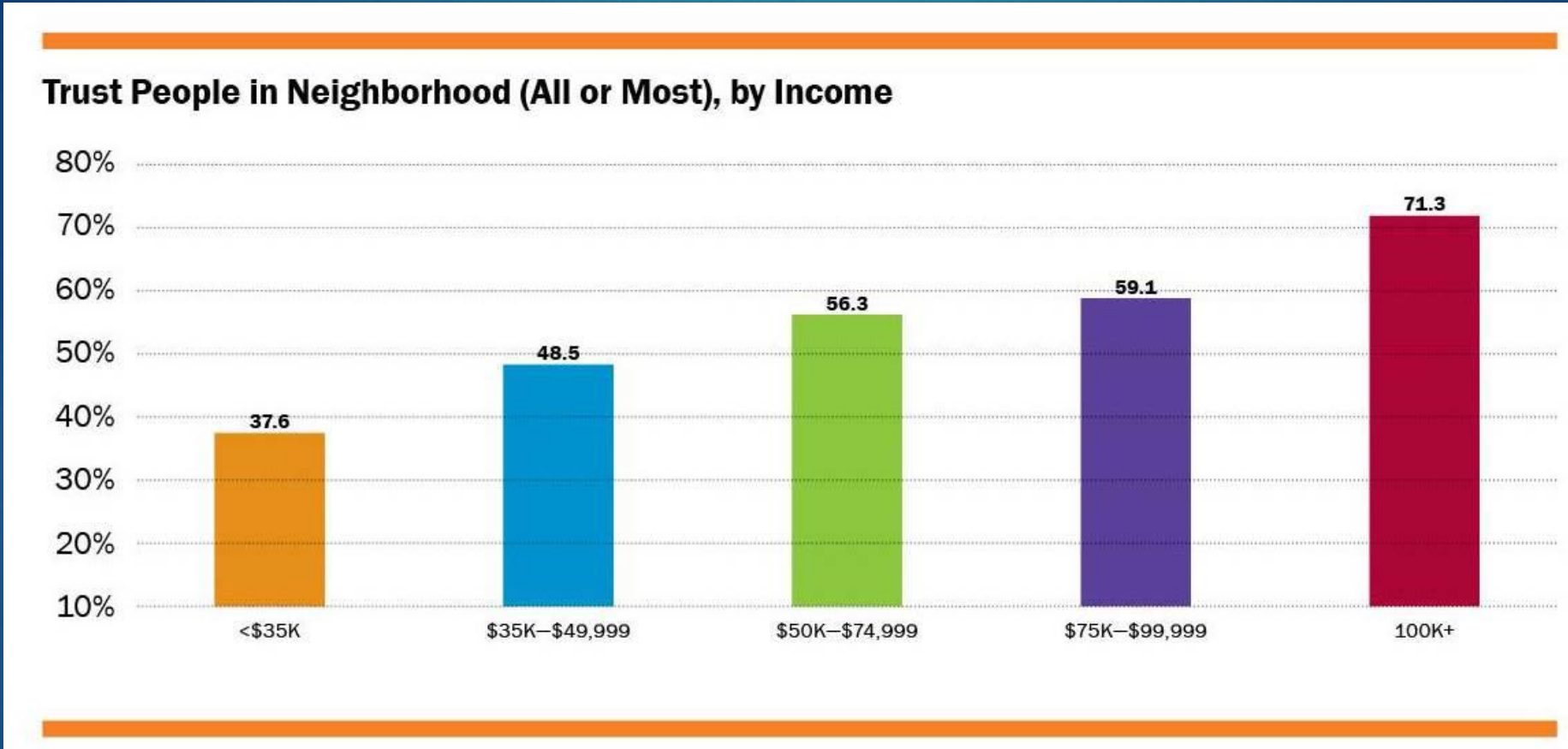


Chart E

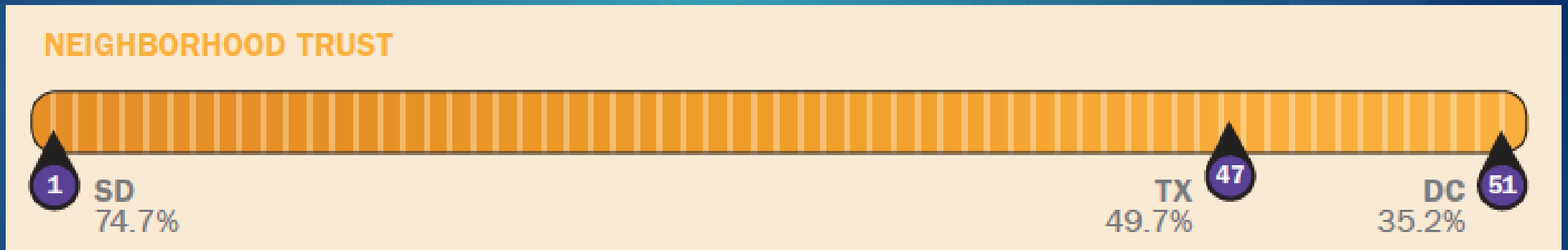


One bright spot is that Texas is filled with helpful neighbors.



Texas ranks **16th in the nation** in the number of people who regularly exchange favors with their neighbors

...yet Texans are also relatively distrustful of their neighbors...



Resources



- ▶ **Full Report Free Online @ www.txcivichealth.org**
- ▶ **Infographic**
- ▶ **“Snapshot of Everyday Voices” videos**
- ▶ **Civic Life Graphics – *download and share online.***
- ▶ **High School Classroom Lesson Plans**
- ▶ **www.VolunteeringInAmerica.gov**



What's next

- ▶ Share the report
- ▶ Help us identify stories of obstacles and successes within civic life
- ▶ Help members get savvy about candidate and issues
 - ▶ Project Vote Smart's "VoteEasy" Guide – www.votesmart.org/voteeasy
- ▶ Connect with the Institute and our resources
 - ▶ New Politics Forum
 - ▶ Executive Communication Training
 - ▶ Office of Survey Research

Let's all be 24/7 citizens!

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
	PARTICIPATE IN A POLITICAL DISCUSSION ONLINE	VOTE	WRITE A LETTER TO MY ELECTED OFFICIAL
Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
ATTEND COMMUNITY MEETING	PAY TAXES	HELP MY NEXT DOOR NEIGHBOR	READ THE PAPER
 THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN The ANNETTE STRAUSS INSTITUTE FOR CIVIC LIFE			