

The Miami Foundation

ISSUE SPOTLIGHT

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN GREATER MIAMI



FIU Jorge M. Pérez
Metropolitan Center

This brief was prepared by The Miami Foundation in partnership with FIU's Jorge M. Pérez Metropolitan Center as our commitment to help Miamians learn and engage with issues that matter most to our community. Thanks to Frederick A. DeLuca Foundation for investing in our data capacity to create products like this. Special thanks to leaders from Engage Miami, Catalyst Miami, FLIC, WeCount and our friends at the Miami-Dade County for their insights which were critical to this brief.

The Miami Foundation's commitment to help fellow Miamians learn and engage with issues that matter most to our community.

Civically engaged communities are stronger communities, with better employment rates, schools, health, and governance¹. Simply put, if we desire to create a Greater Miami where everyone can thrive, we must have a civically engaged community.

But what does it mean to be civically engaged? How do we measure it? How do we increase it? We explored civic health data and tapped into local insights from Miami's leading practitioners.

Read on to learn about this critical catalyst of change, its key metrics, and ideas on how we can contribute to our community's civic health.

What is Civic Engagement

To know where we stand, let's first define what we're measuring. Civic engagement can mean so many things for so many people. For this brief, we turned to how AmeriCorps defines it: **“Civic Engagement is the constellation of activities individuals engage in to make a difference in their communities.”**²

There is no “right way” to be civically engaged. If we had to simplify the formula:



Civic participation = Civic participation is more than just your right to vote. The range of activities can largely be categorized into one of two pillars: political participation and community participation.

Civic infrastructure = Civic infrastructure is the established systems, processes, and physical spaces created in a community to give individuals the ability, agency, and opportunity to participate.

[Read on to see how Greater Miami fares on key metrics for Civic Participation and Civic Infrastructure.](#)



Where We Stand

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

- VOTER REGISTRATION
- VOTER TURNOUT
- ATTENDING PUBLIC MEETINGS
- DONATING TO A POLITICAL CAUSE

CIVIC PARTICIPATION

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

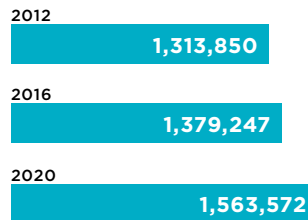
Community members can shape where they live through powerful political tools like voting and participation in public processes. We examine political participation across four key metrics.



VOTER REGISTRATION ³

This data helps us track our community's intention to vote and how it might change over time.

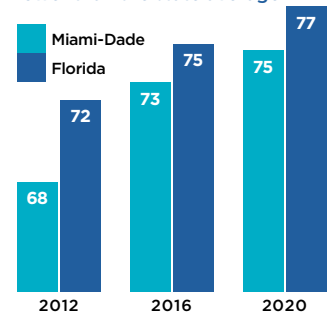
Voter registration in M-DC has been steadily rising, possibly reflecting the growing population. As of May 31, 2024, however, 1,454,383 were registered to vote, which is lower than 2020 final totals.



VOTER TURNOUT ³

This data helps track how many people actually voted in elections.

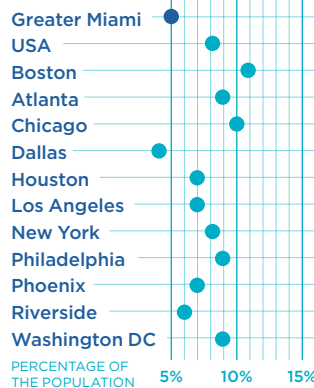
While voter registration has been increasing, voter turnout in M-DC has continued to be consistently lower than the state average.



ATTENDING PUBLIC MEETINGS ⁴

Attending public meetings is a powerful way to voice priorities, especially for those who cannot vote.

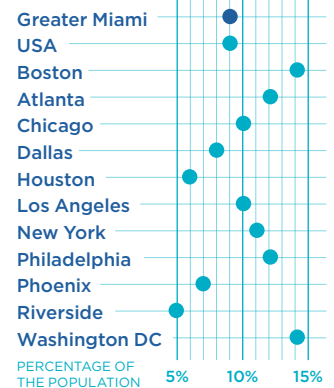
Public Meeting Attendance



DONATING TO A POLITICAL CAUSE ⁴

For those not actively campaigning or participating in elections, donating to political causes enables community members to support priorities they care about.

Political Donations



Miami fared below the national average and had lower rates of public participation and donation to political causes, compared to most of its urban peers.



Where We Stand

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

- INFORMAL HELPING
- CHARITABLE GIVING
- BELONGING TO AN ORGANIZATION
- VOLUNTEERISM

CIVIC PARTICIPATION COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Outside of the political process, a community's civic health is also shaped by how we show up for our neighbors, our local organizations and for each other.



INFORMAL HELP ⁴

Informal helping is aiding others outside of a formal organizational setting, such as doing favors for neighbors.

36%

GREATER MIAMI

51% USA



CHARITABLE GIVING ⁴

Charitable giving motivates people to engage actively in society and support the common good.

27%

GREATER MIAMI

48% USA



BELONGING TO AN ORGANIZATION ⁴

Participation in any groups, organizations, or associations provides a sense of belonging and community.

14%

GREATER MIAMI

24% USA



VOLUNTEERISM ⁴

Donating your time or skills without pay for the benefit of others or to a cause demonstrates civic responsibility and a commitment to community development.

14%

GREATER MIAMI

23% USA

Greater Miami falls below the national average on all forms of community participation: formal and informal giving, organizational membership, and volunteering. This framework may not capture the nuanced form of giving from Miami's diverse diaspora that gives back to their home communities.



Where We Stand

CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE

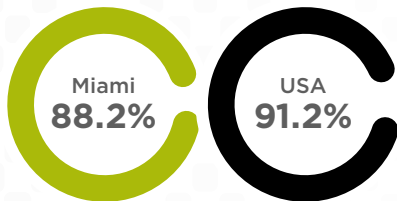
Civic infrastructure provides us with spaces to meet, make our voices heard, engage in cultural activities, enjoy nature and feel like we belong.¹

Simply put, civic infrastructure is the vehicle that enables civic engagement to happen. Without the infrastructure, participation is challenging. We can explore this infrastructure through indicators measuring the availability and utility of public services such as libraries, parks and digital connectivity.



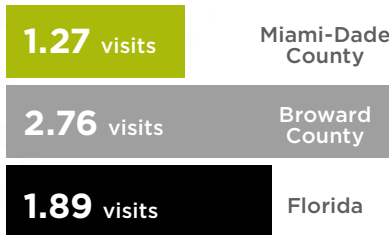
ACCESS TO BROADBAND ⁵

This tracks the percentage of households with access to stable internet.



ACCESS TO LIBRARIES ⁶

This tracks the average number of visits Miamians made to their public libraries.

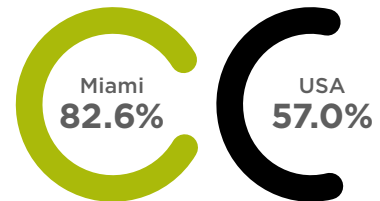


* Per capita



ACCESS TO PARKS & RECREATION FACILITIES ⁷

This tracks the percentage of the population living within one mile of a park.



Miami's civic infrastructure fares better than the national average for access to parks, but lags behind peers in digital connectivity and use of public libraries.



Barriers to Civic Engagement

WAVERING TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS

26%

of Americans have a favorable view of the media: the lowest record in the last 5-years in the [Gallup-Knight Trust in Media study](#).

Bottom Ranked

In a global survey measuring trust in institutions, the US ranked [23 out of 28 countries](#). The “trust score” was [46, ten points below the global average](#).



Nationally you are seeing people kind of lose trust in additional government institutions..., but I think that trend frankly leaves a lot more space for trusted nonprofits to provide information and guidance on big issues.

— Community Leader

MIAMI'S TRANSITIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

54%

of Miami-Dade residents are foreign-born. Many come from previous homes with troubled political pasts, leading to political despair and civic inaction.

4X

the national rate of new residents.

In 2022, 2.7% of Miami-Dade County's population had moved from another country in the past 12 months, versus 0.6% nationally.



South Florida is a unique place because we have so many transplants...a lot of people who live here but don't necessarily see themselves as residents... they are less likely to do the homework that you need to do to actually be civically engaged.

— Local Public Official

MIAMI'S CIVIC ACTION NONPROFITS: UNDER-RESOURCED AND OVERSTRETCHED

Only 6%

of Miami's 1,231 Give Miami Day 2023 nonprofits listed civic engagement, advocacy, and human rights as their key area of focus. Overall, M-DC has a lower rate of membership organizations (civic, political, faith-based) per capita compared to the state and national average. ⁸

\$ Constraints

43% of civic engagement nonprofits are small-budget organizations with an annual budget < \$250,000. For 44%, more than half of their funding is restricted, compared to 39% of funds for other mission-categories. This is an added strain on the impact these organizations can have in the long run. ⁸



We have a lot of nonprofits and that's good, but I also think there's an overinvestment generally in the philanthropic space towards services-based models that don't prioritize civic engagement. There's often a conflating of civic engagement with lobbying and as a result, self-imposed limitations from philanthropy in terms of how they can advance and invest in civic engagement.

— Nonprofit Leader



Enablers of Civic Engagement

Local WINS and OPPORTUNITIES for Strengthening Civic Engagement

Greater Miami has benefited from the unique ecosystem of unprecedented collaboration and prioritization of civic engagement in our public spheres. Here are some highlights of how Miami's civic health is getting stronger:

-  **Thrive 305:** Conducted in 2021, this was the largest public engagement initiative in Miami-Dade County's history with over 26,400 community voices that came together to design a blueprint for a more civically engaged Greater Miami.
 -  **Miami-Dade Digital Equity Plan:** By 2022, **Miami Connected** digital inclusion programs supported over 75,000 families in getting digitally connected. To double-down on these, Miami-Dade County released its first-ever Broadband and Digital Equity Plan in 2023 advancing equity and access to this key pillar of civic infrastructure.
 -  **Press Forward South Florida:** This newly launched local effort is aligned with a national \$1 billion movement to increase access to local news by mobilizing philanthropic resources across the country.
 -  **Florida Civic Advance:** Miami-Dade County is an active participant in this statewide nonpartisan initiative advancing civic health in Florida's communities. This year, Miami-Dade was chosen as one of three pilot sites to test evidence-based strategies, and for measuring and implementing civic health action.
- Civics Education:** In collaboration with community partners and the Miami-Dade County Library System, M-DC is designing a Miami-Dade County Civic Engagement Academy for Civics Education.
- Thriving Public Infrastructure:** 82% of Miami residents have access to public parks (vs. 57% nationally). Miami has 52 public libraries and 9 municipal partner libraries. The Miami-Dade Public Library was named **2024 Library of the Year** by the Florida Library Association — a testament to this wonderful resource in our community!
- Cross-sector Collaboration:** The collaborative efforts of coalitions such as **Philanthropy Miami** and **Partnership Miami** along with the Miami-Dade County's Civic & Philanthropic Partnerships team, are indicative of the collective efforts working to advance the civic interest for all in Miami.



**Learn More.
Act More.**

**“You receive
as much as
you give
to your
community.”**

LEARN MORE

LEARN



Find the information you need

In this one-stop-shop **Vote Miami** and learn what voter turnout has looked like locally in **this dashboard**.

INFORM



Explore what matters to Miami-Dade residents by digging into the **Thrive 305 Action Plan**.

ACT MORE

VOTE



Check your voter eligibility and registration

Register to attend a candidate forum and make an informed choice in the upcoming Miami-Dade County elections.

VOLUNTEER



There are so many changemakers working hard every day to make Miami a better place for all. Find your cause and show-up for your community:

volunteer.miami.edu/
handsonmiami.org/
unitedwaymiami.org/volunteermiami/

LEAD



Become an active leader to build Miami's future by applying to one of the many enriching programs available in Miami: **for youth**, **for neighborhood mobilizers**, and **for professionals** building Miami's future.

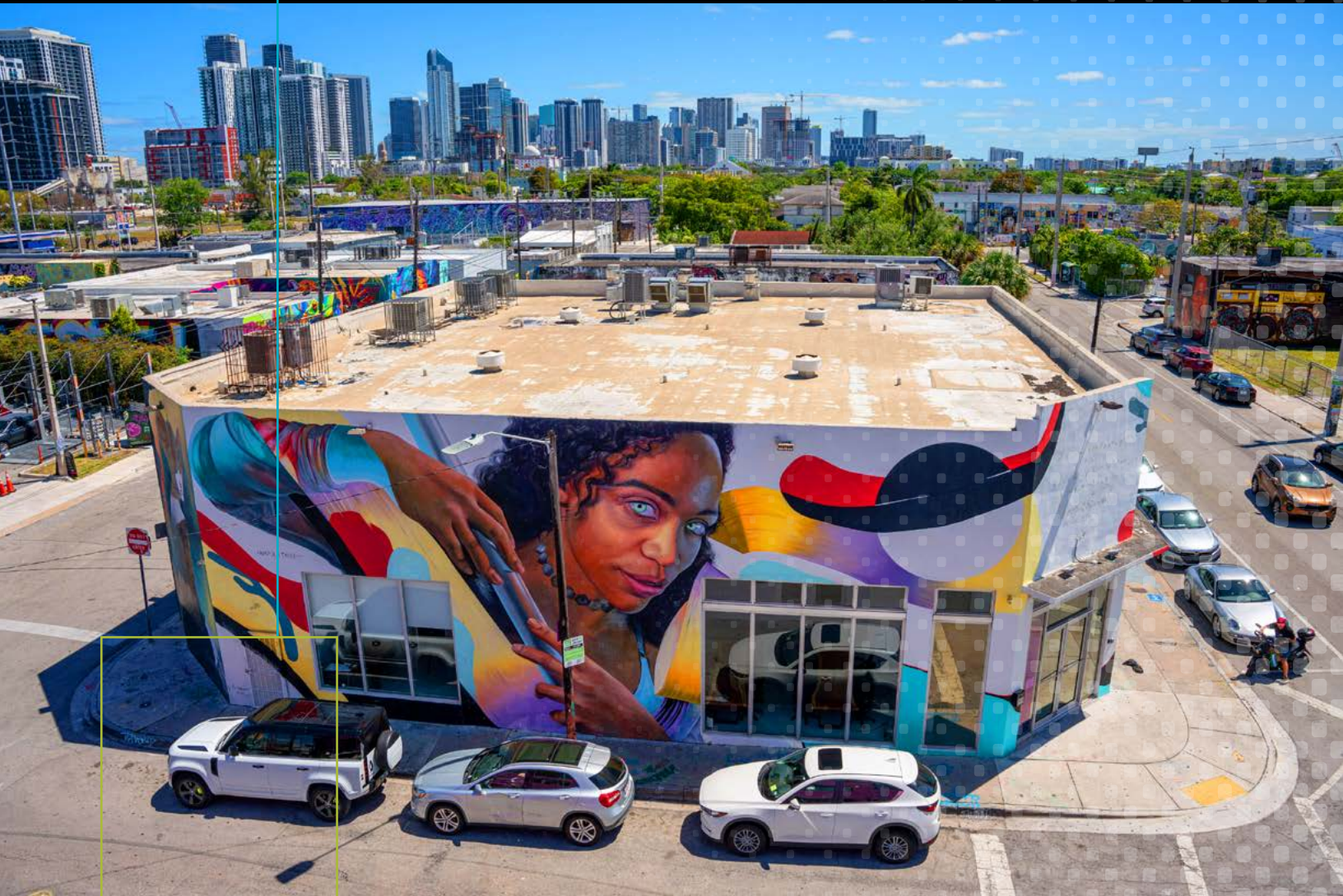
INVEST



Support local nonprofits working in advocacy and civic engagement on **Give Miami Day**.

If you are interested in learning more and donating to local champions of civic action in Greater Miami, write to us at insights@miamifoundation.org

Here's to a thriving Greater Miami.
Here's to our home.



REFERENCES & DATA SOURCES

1. [County Health Rankings National Report](#)
2. [AmeriCorp Spotlight on Civic Engagement](#)
3. [Miami-Dade County Elections Department](#)
4. [Volunteering and Civic Life in America](#)
5. [U.S. Census Bureau \(2022\) ACS- 1 Year Estimate](#)
6. [Florida Division of Library and Information Services](#)
7. [National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network \(CDC\)](#)
8. [Give Miami Day, 2023](#)

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