

**NJ DataBank**

This website with data from a wide array of sources presents in a user-friendly manner with visuals and comparisons. We invite all citizens, the media and politicians to visit the site, access data in 14 policy areas, and use this information to better understand local issues, assess policy and geographic needs, and hold government accountable.

**NJ Databank Index**

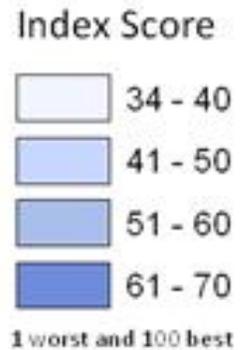
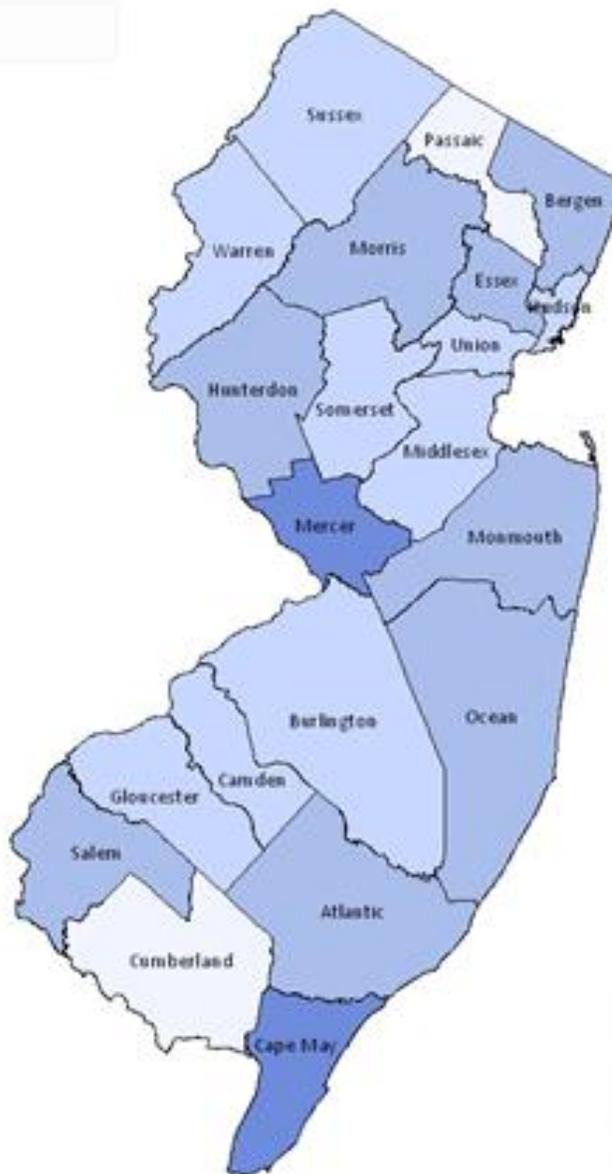
Indexes provide a measure to compare NJ counties with each other and over time.

**NJ DataBank**

- Business
- Civic Engagement
- Education
- Elections
- Environment
- Government
- Health
- Housing
- Income
- Labor
- Population and Aging
- Public Safety
- Technology
- Transportation

# Civic Engagement Index

Map Snip



# New Jersey DataBank Index

## VOLUME 1 ISSUE 1 | CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement is the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people. It often involves partnerships and coalitions that help mobilize resources and influence systems, change relationships among partners, and serve as catalysts for changing policies, programs, and practices

(CDC/ATSDR Committee for Community Engagement in Fawcett et al., 1995).

The New Jersey Civic Engagement Index shows how New Jersey's counties perform on in three areas of Civic Engagement - community interaction, community involvement and political participation. The Index provides the means to measure county residents' participation on a set of indicators

Civic Engagement Index				
	2010 Index	2010 Rank	change in score from 2008	change in rank from 2008
Atlantic	46.9	13	-7	-5
Bergen	47.1	12	-10	-6
Burlington	49.0	11	2	1
Camden	54.4	7	4	4
Cape May	75.4	1	7	0
Cumberland	40.3	19	4	1
Essex	57.8	3	-2	1
Gloucester	45.0	16	0	0
Hudson	26.8	21	-16	-2
Hunterdon	57.7	4	0	1
Mercer	66.1	2	-1	0
Middlesex	41.4	18	-3	-1
Monmouth	54.0	8	0	1
Morris	57.0	5	-2	-2
Ocean	55.5	6	-1	1
Passaic	36.0	20	2	1
Salem	44.2	17	-9	-7
Somerset	51.1	9	6	6
Sussex	49.4	10	3	4
Union	45.9	15	-1	-2
Warren	46.2	14	3	4

# New Jersey DataBank Index

## VOLUME 1 ISSUE 1 | CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

and then compare the results over time and across counties. Details on sources and methodology are listed below.

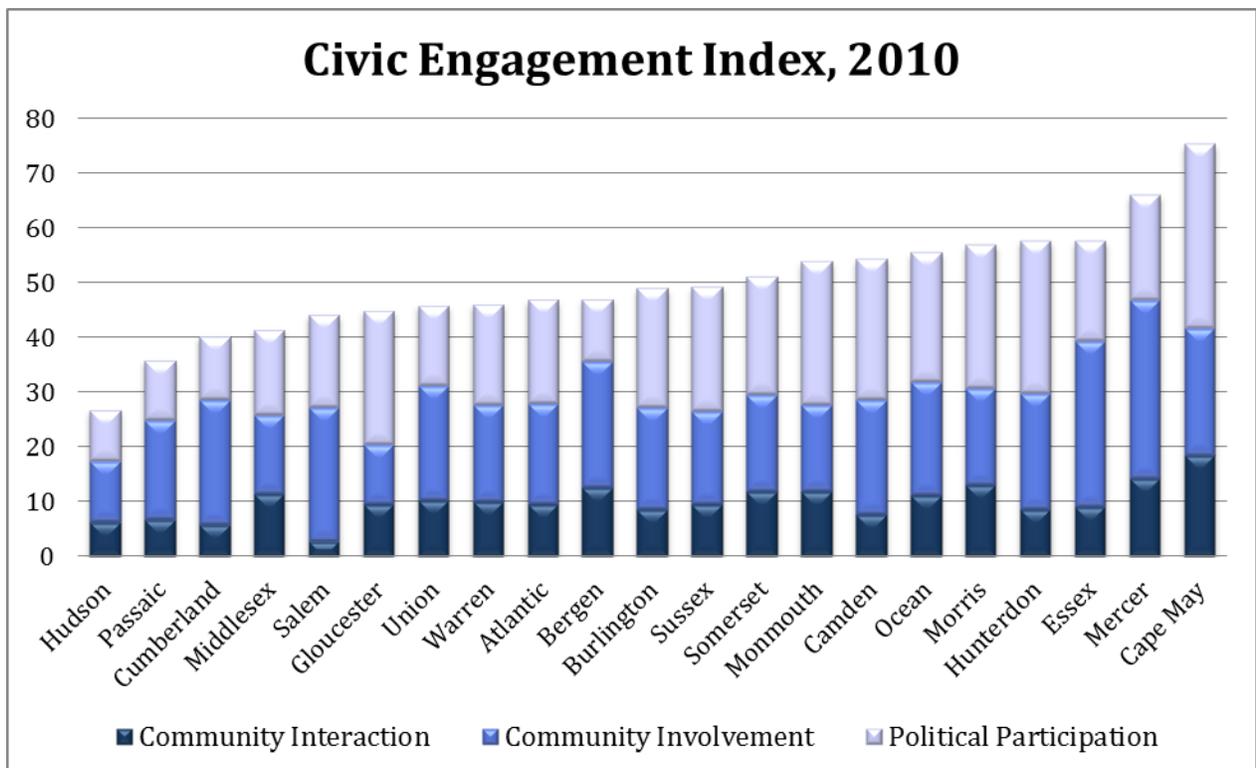
New Jersey's counties ranged, on a scale of a possible 100 points (best score), from 27 to 75. In 2010, Cape May was the most civically engaged county (and in 2008). The next two counties were Mercer and Essex counties, scoring 66 and 58 respectively. The least civically engaged county was Hudson County with a score of 27, followed by Passaic County with a score of 36 and Cumberland County with a score of 40.

Cape May County's high overall Index score was due to its high scores in community interaction and political participation. Cape May County also had the greatest increase in score from 2008 to 2010 with 7 points ensuring it retained the number 1 rank. Somerset

County scored next with an increase in score of 6 points moving up in the rankings to 9<sup>th</sup>. Cape May and Somerset counties' gains were due to small increases across all indicators. Hudson County had largest drop in score, 16 points, moving down in the rankings to last place. The biggest factor was that Hudson County's political participation fell by more than 15 percent from 2008 to 2010. Bergen County also faced a steep drop of 10 points due primarily to a drop in political participation. Atlantic County's score fell by 7 points and was due primarily to a drop in community interaction.

### The Indicators

The New Jersey Civic Engagement Index shows how New Jersey's counties perform on three dimensions: community interaction, community involvement and political participation. The key indicator for **community**



**interaction** is the number of visits to the library (municipal and county) as reported in the annual New Jersey Public Library Survey. The community interaction indicator accounts for 20 percent of the overall index. Because libraries are a central community organization, visits to the library are able to capture local level engagement - from toddler reading hour to computer training workshops - that does not discriminate by income level or citizenship. Cape May County had the greatest number of library visits per capita at 11.1, followed by Mercer County with 8.4 and Morris County at 7.5. Salem had the lowest at 0.7.

The two indicators for **community involvement** are the number of registered non-profit organizations per capita and the number of religious organizations per capita which together account for 40 percent of the overall Index. Non-profit organizations are the means by which residents can work collaboratively to mobilize resources and influence systems. Rather than weighting one variable double, we include two variations of the role of non-profits. With the non-profit organizations indicator, we make no distinction between types of non-profit organizations assuming that all add to community involvement. To compare between counties of different population sizes, we measure the number of non-profit organizations per capita. The second community involvement indicator, the number of religious organizations per capita, singles out religious organizations because they are the one type of organization with a genuine local focus whereas some political and community non-profits have a state-wide focus and tend to locate in the state capital Trenton or the state's largest city Newark,

which would skew the totals for Mercer and Essex counties. With the greater number of religious organizations, the more choices individuals have for engagement without financial or cultural constraints.

Mercer County had the most number of registered non-profit organizations per capita with 90 per 1,000 people, followed by Hunterdon County with 67 per 1,000 and Cape May County with 66 per 1,000. Hudson County had the lowest at 28 per 1,000 people. The number of religious organizations per 10,000 populations varied between Essex County with the highest 9.63 and Gloucester County with 4.05. There were three other counties with the number of religious organizations per 10,000 populations below 5: Morris, Monmouth and Sussex.

The two indicators for **political participation** are the percent of the population registered to vote and the percent of the eligible population registered to vote which together account for 40 percent of the overall Index. Voting is perhaps the greatest means citizens have for civic engagement. To participate, one must be registered. Rather than weighting one variable double, we include two variations of voter registration. We focus on registration because actual voter turnout often reflects competitive state and national elections rather than local civic engagement. The first indicator measures voter registration as a percentage of the entire population - all residents over the age of 18, those who are eligible to vote as well as those who are not. The second measure is the percent of the eligible population registered to vote, in this case all residents over the age of 18 who are citizens of the United States. In this way we include an immigrant element only where it impedes civic engagement through voting.

# New Jersey DataBank Index

## VOLUME 1 ISSUE 1 | CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

---

Citizenship should not impede other forms of civic engagement.

For voter registration, Cape May had the highest percentage of registered voters for the whole population, 71 percent, as well as the eligible to vote population, 74 percent. Hunterdon County was second for percentage of registered voters for the whole population with 68 percent. For the percent of eligible voters registered, Morris and Hunterdon counties both had 70 percent. Hudson County had the lowest percentage of registered voters for the whole population with 49 percent, followed by Passaic County with 53 percent. In terms of the population eligible to vote, Cumberland and Bergen counties had the lowest rate of participation with 61 percent, and Passaic, Salem and Hudson counties had 62 percent.

### Methodology

In order to create the Index, each of the indicators must be comparable. The first step therefore is to create a common scale across rates, percentages, and other scores. We do this by measuring from the average. Raw indicator scores are converted to “z-scores”, which measure how far any value falls from the mean of the set, measured in standard deviations. The general formula for normalizing indicator scores is:

$$Z = (x - \mu) / \sigma$$

where  $x$  is the indicator's value,  $\mu$  is the unweighted average and  $\sigma$  the standard deviation for that indicator and  $z$  is the resulting z-score. In order to make the resulting scores more accessible, we translate them from a scale of -3 to 3 to 0 to 20 for each indicator. With five indicators, the total

possible points is then 100.

### Sources

- Number of registered non-profit organizations - Internal Revenue Service, Exempt Organizations Business Master File (Nov 2010 and Dec 2008). The Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, <http://nccsdataweb.urban.org/>
- Number of religious non-profit organizations - Internal Revenue Service, Exempt Organizations Business Master File (Nov 2010 and Dec 2008) IRS subsection, Religion. The Urban Institute, National Center for Charitable Statistics, <http://nccsdataweb.urban.org/>
- Number of Registered Voters in New Jersey - Division of Elections, Department of State, New Jersey (General Elections, November 2, 2010 and November 8, 2011) [http://nj.gov/state/elections/results\\_archive\\_doe.html](http://nj.gov/state/elections/results_archive_doe.html)
- Number of library visits as reported in the New Jersey State Library's New Jersey Public Library Survey, 2008 and 2010 - [http://ldb.njstatelib.org/ldb\\_home/statistics/2010\\_data](http://ldb.njstatelib.org/ldb_home/statistics/2010_data)  
<http://ldb.njstatelib.org/Statistics/2008-data.php>
- Population statistics for calculating per capita numbers are from the American Community Survey, 2008 and 2010.

Authors: Stephanie Hoopes Halpin, Marc Holzer, Quintus Jett, Suzanne J. Piotrowski, and Gregg G. Van Ryzin.