Sioux Falls Civic Engagement and Voter Registration

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— A Beacom Research Fellows Report | Augustana Research Institute

Commissioned by Our Savior's Lutheran Church

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Project Background

The Augustana Research Institute, through the Beacom Research Fellows Program, undertook this study of civic engagement in collaboration with Our Savior's Lutheran Church. The project focuses on voter registration and demographic data, which will be used by Our Savior's Lutheran to tackle social issues that impact the community and neighborhoods in Sioux Falls. Our Savior's Lutheran aims to help the underrepresented population of Sioux Falls increase their voice by encouraging all eligible citizens to register to vote. This project's objective is to help Our Savior's Lutheran identify how the demographics of the different Census tracts in Sioux Falls correlate to voter registration numbers. The data will allow Our Savior's Lutheran to examine what outreach methods would be most impactful in the different neighborhoods of Sioux Falls. In addition, the Augustana Research Institute studied how civic engagement is connected to and affects voter registration nationally, statewide, and locally.

To complete this goal, we have examined the relationship between the number of registered voters in Sioux Falls and a variety of demographic information which has been combined into an interactive map that will be explored in ***Map and analysis***. The demographics we look at are:

- Gender
- Age
- Race and Ethnicity
- Education
- Median Household Income
- Homeowners
- Occupation

We examined, but did not include, many other demographics, which can be found in Appendix A.

Civic Engagement

Civic engagement is the standards and measurements used to determine how active citizens are in influencing the government and their fellow citizens. Three main measurements are used to measure civic engagement: voter participation, political engagement, and group affiliation. Voter participation includes voter turnout, registration, etc. Political engagement includes influencing how others vote, wearing a campaign button or sticker, giving money to a political campaign, attending political meetings, trust in government and news, and civic and U.S. history education (Atwell et al., 2021). Group affiliation includes religious groups, unions, community organizations, and political parties (Atwell et al., 2021).

Civic engagement is an incredibly important aspect of a democratic society. When a country has high civic engagement, it sees many benefits including " higher community satisfaction rates, lower unemployment rates, and greater economic resilience" (Everyday Democracy, 2021).

According to a 2017 Pew Research Center survey of the civically engaged, registered voters believed participating in jury duty, keeping up with government current events, donating, or volunteering are more important aspects of being a good citizen than people who were not registered to vote (Pew Research Center, 2017). Of the people surveyed, 39% of registered voters said they had volunteered for no pay in the past 12 months compared to only 15% of non registered voters (Pew Research Center, 2017). If civic engagement is not thriving in a country, the government will be unaware of how to better serve its citizens, therefore, citizens will not know how to serve each other to create a society that benefits everyone living in it.

Measure 1: Voter Participation

Although there are many ways people may practice civic engagement, voter participation is an integral one, and will be the focus of this report. Voter participation is an important type of civic engagement to study because it can be measured more accurately and comprehensively than other types; additionally, voter participation is associated with other types of engagement. Voter turnout is measured at every election, local and national, which makes it easy to compare voter participation over time and between many variables, including race, age, gender, and education.

Comparing national voter turnout between the 2016 presidential election and the 2020 presidential election showed an increase in voter participation of 5%, or 17 million people, which was the highest voter turnout of the 21st century with 66.8% of eligible voters submitting a ballot (Atwell et al., 2021). The increase in voter turnout at the 2020 presidential election was seen across all demographics, but the largest increase was seen in voters between the ages of 18 and 34 years old which increased by 8% from 2016 to 2020 (Atwell et al., 2021). Race and ethnicity are also associated with voter turnout, with the non-Hispanic White population generally comprising the largest group of voters. In 2020, the total population of the United States consisted of 67% non-Hispanic Whites, but they made up 71% of the voter population (Fabina, 2021). As shown in Figure 1, the largest voter turnout by race is non-Hispanic White voters followed closely by non-Hispanic Black voters, with non-Hispanic Asian voters and Hipanic voters holding steady at around 50% (Fabina, 2021).

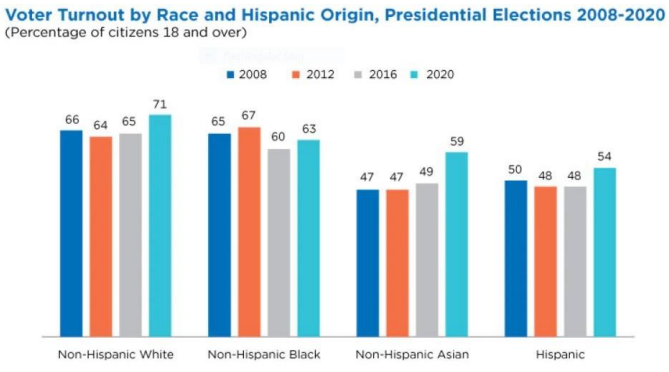

Figure 1 (Fabina, 2021)

Gender plays a role in voter participation as well, with 63% of women voting in the 2020 election compared to 59% of men (Igielnik, 2020). Finally, voting behavior varies with education levels, with 41% of the voting population consisting of individuals with college degrees, while only 35% of the United States total population has a Bachelor's degree or higher (Fabina, 2021).

On a more local level, Minnehaha County had a voter turnout percentage of 74.42% of registered voters for the 2020 presidential election, which is higher than the state average of 73.88% (South Dakota Secretary of State, 2021). The national voter turnout for citizens 18 and older was 66.8%, compared to the 58.5% of South Dakota residents 18 years and older who voted in the 2020 presidential election (Atwell et al., 2021 and United States Census Bureau, 2021). Sioux Falls specifically had 28,801 voters for the 2020 primary, and 88,831 voters for the actual 2020 presidential election (South Dakota Secretary of State, 2022). The voter turnout for the 2020 election was much larger than the 2016 election where 18,740 people voted in the primary election, and 72,249 people voted in the general election (South Dakota Secretary of State, 2022).

Measure 2: Political Engagement

The next indicator of civic engagement is political engagement. Political engagement involves every aspect of political life, except voting, that a regular citizen can participate in. This includes participating in campaigns, attending public meetings, and even citizens' knowledge of government. Unfortunately, some aspects of political engagement are decreasing in the United States, including trust in major institutions, such as the government and news (Pew Research Center, 2022). In Sioux Falls, the National Community Survey found that the overall confidence in the Sioux Falls government is 64% positive (Polco's National Research Center, 2021). The survey also found that only 11% of citizens in Sioux Falls attended public meetings in 2021, but 53% watched the meetings online (Polco's National Research Center, 2021).

However, adult educational opportunities were rated as good or excellent by 71% of people surveyed and K-12 education was rated as good or excellent by 80% of residents. The high satisfaction rating indicates the education systems in Sioux Falls are improving the knowledge base of its citizens, and a higher knowledge base correlates to increased levels of civic engagement (Polco's National Research Center, 2021).

Measure 3: Group Affiliation

The last major measurement of civic engagement is people's affiliations with groups, such as religious organizations, unions, or even book clubs. Some of the largest civic groups in the United States include political parties and religious organizations. The majority of the religious population in the United States identify as Christian (Pew Research Center, 2015). However, the number of religious Americans has been decreasing. According to a 2014 PEW Research Center survey of more than 35,000 Americans, 70.6% described themselves as Christian compared to 78.4% who described themselves as Christian in a similar 2007 survey (Pew Research Center, 2015). Of this 7.8% decrease, the number of religiously unaffiliated increased 6.7% and the number of non-Christian faiths increased 1.2% (Pew Research Center, 2015). While the number of Christians in the United States may be declining, it is still a large civic group in our country, especially in South Dakota. South Dakota ranks as the 16th most religious state in the country, with 57% of people saying religion is very important in their lives; however, only 36% of South Dakota adults attend worship services at least weekly (Lipka & Wormald, 2016).

Another example of group affiliation is political parties. Unfortunately, the political parties in the United States have become increasingly polarized recently. The results of a 2021 CBS News poll, reported in the Civic Health Index, showed that over 50% of Republicans and 40% of Democrats think of the opposing political party as "enemies" (Atwell et al., 2021). As the political parties become more polarized, communication and collaboration become more difficult. The breakdown in communication could harm civic engagement which relies on collaboration between groups.

Some alternative measures of group affiliation in Sioux Falls specifically that were measured by the National Community survey include sense of community, opportunities to participate in social events, and sense of community pride. 65% of residents rated connection and engagement with their community as excellent or good (Polco's National Research Center, 2021). Opportunities to participate in social events and activities in Sioux Falls was rated as excellent or good by 73% of residents, and community pride was rated at 70% (Polco's National Research Center, 2021). Overall, Sioux Falls' group affiliation seems to be relatively high.

Data and Methods

Data Sources

We received our demographic data from the 2020 American Community Survey to create the maps that follow. The estimates presented in this report are based on a five-year period of data collection, from 2016 - 2020. The American Community Survey is administered by the United States Census Bureau to gather more detailed and frequent demographic information about the American public than is gathered by the decennial census. This information is then presented to the public through a series of tables. We have added an appendix that includes table numbers for each data set that has been used to create the maps.

Our data for voter registration comes from the registered voter file for the city of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and was obtained from the Minnehaha county auditor. The voter registration list, received on April 5, 2022, contained records for registered voters current as of 2022.

Methods

First, we geocoded registered voter addresses (mapped to latitude and longitude coordinates) using the Census Bureau's geocoding service (available online at https://geocoding.geo.census.gov/). This made it possible to determine which Census tract each voter lived in, then to count the number of registered voters in each tract. Using QGIS, we mapped the addresses of active registered voters. Then we calculated the number of active registered voters located within each Census tract. It should be noted that the number of registered voters is current as of 2022, whereas our demographic information comes from data collected from 2016 through 2020. Additionally, some registered voters may no longer live at the address recorded in the voter registration file; it is possible they have moved to a different neighborhood or even out of state without updating their voter registration records here. As a result, all data should be considered a best estimate, but subject to error. Finally, we compared voter registration and voter history to demographic variables for each Census tract. The results of those comparisons are presented as scatter plots in the accompanying slide presentation, as well as maps. Readers should keep in mind that all comparisons are among Census tracts, not among individuals.

Results

The results of our analysis are presented in an accompanying slide presentation. The maps presented in the slides, as well as maps of additional demographic variables, are available online as a Tableau Public workbook. Links to both the slide presentation and Tableau Public maps can be found at https://augie.edu/findings.

Appendix A

Data Sources for Interactive Maps

Variable and Report	Table_Column_Row	Notes
Information from Table DP05: ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates		
Total population	DP05_0001E	Number given in table
Percent of Male	DP05_0002PE	Percent given in table
Percent of Female	DP05_0003PE	Percent given in table
15-24 Years	DP05_0008E + DP05_0009E	Equation to add the population that is 15-19 to the population that is 20-24
25-44 Years	DP05_0010E + DP05_0011E	Equation to add the population that is 25-34 to the population that is 35-44
45-64 Years	DP05_0012E + DP05_0013E + DP05_0014E	Equation to add the populations that are 45-54, 55-59, and 60-64
65 Years +	DP05_0015E + DP05_0016E + DP05_0017E	Equation to add the populations that are 65-74, 75-84, and 85+
Percent of White	DP05_0064E / DP05_0063E * 100	Equation to find percent of the total population who is White
Percent of Black/African American	DP05_0065E / DP05_0063E * 100	Equation to find percent of the total population who is Black/African American
Percent of American Indian/Alaska Native	DP05_0066E / DP05_0063E * 100	Equation to find percent of the total population who is American Indian/Alaska Native
Percent of Asian	DP05_0067E / DP05_0063E * 100	Equation to find percent of the total population who is Asian
Percent of Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	DP05_0068E / DP05_0063E * 100	Equation to find percent of the total population who is Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
Percent of some other race	DP05_0069E / DP05_0063E * 100	Equation to find percent of the total population who is Some Other Race
Percent of Hispanic or Latino (Any race)	DP05_0071E / DP05_0063E * 100	Equation to find percent of the total population who is Hispanic or Latino
Percent of Non-Hispanic or Latino - White alone	DP05_0077PE	Percent given in table
Percent of Non-Hispanic or Latino - Black or African American alone	DP05_0078PE	Percent given in table
Percent of Non-Hispanic or Latino - American Indian and	DP05_0079PE	Percent given in table

Alaska Native alone		
Percent of Non-Hispanic or Latino - Asian alone	DP05_0080PE	Percent given in table
Percent of Non-Hispanic or Latino - Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	DP05_0081PE	Percent given in table
Percent of Non-Hispanic or Latino - Some other race alone	DP05_0082PE	Percent given in table
Citizen & Voting Age Population	DP05_0087E	Citizen 18 and over population
Percent of Citizens	(DP05_0087E/DP05_0001E) * 100	Equation to find percent of the total population who can vote
Percent of Male Citizens	DP05_0088PE	Percent given in table
Percent of Female Citizens	DP05_0089PE	Percent given in table
Total housing units	DP05_0086E	Percent given in table
Information from Table S1901: Income in the Last 12 Months (In 2020 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)		
Total Households	S1901_C01_001E	Number given in first column of table
Median Household Income (dollars)	S1901_C01_012E	Number given in first column of table
Mean Household Income (dollars)	S1901_C01_013E	Number given in first column of table
Total Families	S1901_C02_001E	Number given in second column of table
Median Family Income (dollars)	S1901_C02_012E	Number given in second column of table
Mean Family Income (dollars)	S1901_C02_013E	Number given in second column of table
Total Nonfamily households	S1901_C04_001E	Number given in fourth column of table
Median Nonfamily household Income (dollars)	S1901_C04_012E	Number given in fourth column of table
Mean Nonfamily household Income (dollars)	S1901_C04_013E	Number given in fourth column of table
Information from Table S1501: Educational Attainment		
Population of 25 years and over	S1501_C01_006E	Number given in table
Percent of Less than 9th Grade	(S1501_C01_007E/S1501_C01_006E) * 100	Equation to find percent of population over 25 with less than 9th grade

Percent of 9th-12th Grade (No diploma)	(S1501_C01_008E/S1501_C01_006E) * 100	Equation to find percent of population over 25 with 9th-12th grade (no diploma)
Percent of High School Graduates	(S1501_C01_009E/S1501_C01_006E) * 100	Equation to find percent of population over 25 with High School diploma
Percent of High School Graduate or Higher	(S1501_C01_014E/S1501_C01_006E) * 100	Equation to find percent of population over 25 with High School diploma or higher
Percent of Some College (No Degree)	(S1501_C01_010E/S1501_C01_006E) * 100	Equation to find percent of population over 25 with some college (no degree)
Percent with Associate's Degree	(S1501_C01_011E/S1501_C01_006E) * 100	Equation to find percent of population over 25 with Associate's degree
Percent with Bachelor's Degree	(S1501_C01_012E/S1501_C01_006E) * 100	Equation to find percent of population over 25 with Bachelor's degree
Percent with Bachelor's Degree or Higher	(S1501_C01_015E/S1501_C01_006E) * 100	Equation to find percent of population over 25 with Bachelor's degree or higher
Percent with Graduate/Professional Degree	(S1501_C01_013E/S1501_C01_006E) * 100	Equation to find percent of population over 25 with Graduate/Professional degree
Information from Table S1602: Limited English Speaking Households		
Percent of all households speaking Spanish	S1602_C02_002E	Percent given in first column of table
Percent of all households speaking Other Indo-European languages	S1602_C02_003E	Percent given in first column of table
Percent of all households speaking Asian and Pacific Island Languages	S1602_C02_004E	Percent given in first column of table
Percent of all households speaking Other languages	S1602_C02_005E	Percent given in first column of table
Percent of limited English-speaking households	S1602_C04_001E	Percent given in fourth column of table
Information from Table B05012: Nativity in the United States		

Percent of Natives	B05012_002E/DP05_0001E * 100	Equation to find percent of total population who was born in the U.S.
Percent of Foreign-Borns	B05012_003E/DP05_0001E * 100	Equation to find percent of total population who was born in other countries
Information from Table DP04: Selected Housing Characteristics		
Housing Tenure - Occupied Housing Units	DP04_0045E	Number given in table
Percent of Owner-Occupied Housing Units	DP04_0046PE	Percent given in table
Percent of Renter-Occupied Housing Units	DP04_0047PE	Percent given in table
Percent of 1 Housing Unit	DP04_0007PE+DP04_0008PE	Adding percent of one housing unit, detached to percent of one housing unit, attached
Percent of 2-4 Housing Units	DP04_0009PE+DP04_0010PE	Adding percent of 2 housing units to percent of 3-4 housing units
Percent of 5-19 Housing Units	DP04_0011PE+DP04_0012PE	Adding percent of 5-9 housing units to percent of 10-19 housing units
Percent of 20 or more Housing Units	DP04_0013PE	Percent given in table
Percent of Mobile Homes	DP04_0014PE	Percent given in table
No Vehicle	DP04_0058PE	Percent given in table
1 Vehicle	DP04_0059PE	Percent given in table
2 Vehicles	DP04_0060PE	Percent given in table
3 or more Vehicles	DP04_0061PE	Percent given in table
Information from Table S2401: Occupation by Sex for the Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over		
Estimate Total Civilian employed population 16 years and over	S2401_C01_001E	Number given in table
Percent of Management, Business, Science, and Arts Occupations	S2401_C01_002E/S2401_C01_001E * 100	Equation to find percent of employed population who work in management, business, science and arts occupations
Percent of Service Occupations	S2401_C01_018E/S2401_C01_001E * 100	Equation to find percent of employed population who work in service occupations

Percent of Sales and Office Occupations	S2401_C01_026E/S2401_C01_001E * 100	Equation to find percent of employed population who work in sales and office occupations
Percent of Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance Occupations	S2401_C01_029E/S2401_C01_001E * 100	Equation to find percent of employed population who work in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations
Percent of Production, Transportation, and Material Moving Occupations	S2401_C01_033E/S2401_C01_001E * 100	Equation to find percent of employed population who work in production, transportation, and material moving occupations
Information from Table B05005: Period of Entry by Nativity and Citizenship Status in the U.S.		
Total Population born outside the U.S.	B05005_001E	Number given in table
Percent of Foreign-Born Naturalized U.S. Citizens entered in 2010 or later	B05005_005E/B05005_001E * 100	Equation to find the percent of population born outside the U.S. who entered in 2010 or later and is a Naturalized U.S. Citizen
Percent of Foreign-Born Naturalized U.S. Citizens entered between 2000-2009	B05005_010E/B05005_001E * 100	Equation to find the percent of total population born outside the U.S. who entered between 2000-2009 and is a Naturalized U.S. Citizen
Percent of Foreign-Born Naturalized U.S. Citizens entered between 1990-1999	B05005_015E/B05005_001E * 100	Equation to find the percent of total population born outside the U.S. who entered between 1990-1999 and is a Naturalized U.S. Citizen
Percent of Foreign-Born Naturalized U.S. Citizens entered before 1990	B05005_020E/B05005_001E * 100	Equation to find the percent of total population born outside the U.S. who entered before 1990 and is a Naturalized U.S. Citizen
Information from Table S2801: Types of Computers and Internet Subscriptions		
No Computer	S2801_011PE	Percent of total households with no computing device (percent given in table)
Smartphone with no other Computing Device	S2801_006PE	Percent of total households with a smartphone but no other type of computing device (percent given in table)

Without Internet Subscription	S2801_019PE	Percent of total households without an Internet subscription (percent given in table)
Cellular Data with no other Internet Subscription	S2801_016PE	Percent of total households with a cellular data plan but no other type of Internet subscription (percent given in table)

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