

# Civic Engagement

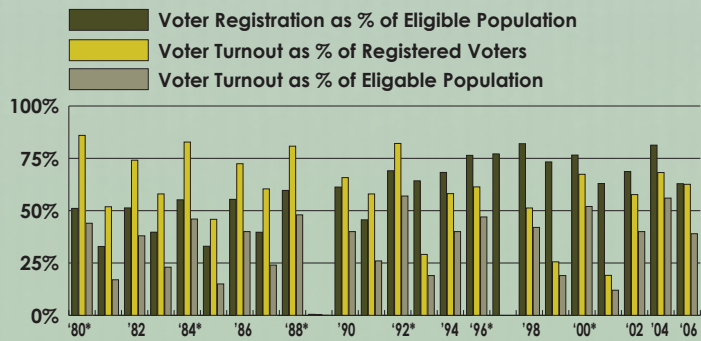
Being connected to, investing in, and belonging to the community is the essence of democracy, social responsibility, and stewardship for the future of the community. Residents are engaged civic participants. We welcome diversity of perspectives, age, gender and orientation, cultures, races, and ethnicities in governance that guides our community.

### 3. Voter turnout

Voting is fundamental in a democracy, and is considered a good indicator of overall quality of life.

#### Percentage of eligible population that registers and votes

The percentage of eligible citizens registered and casting votes indicates citizens invested in our community who see the value in working to make it even better. In 2004, voters turned out in record numbers in many states demonstrating a renewed interest in politics, policy, and future direction. In 2006, voter turnout was not as high, which is typical in a non-presidential election year. Although voter registration and turnout have both increased over time, turnout has remained flat as a percentage of eligible population.



Source: Washoe County Registrar of Voters, Secretary of State Official Election Abstracts, elections in odd number years until 1995 are for Reno and Sparks only and do not include the unincorporated county voters. After 1990, population age 18 and over are estimated by the Census Bureau. \* Presidential year. Note: voter registration dropping as a percentage of eligible population is a result of purging inactive voters over time.

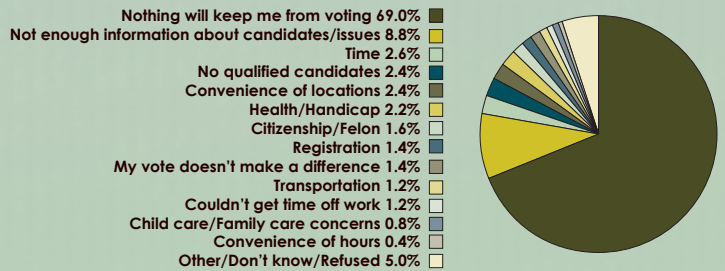
#### Barriers to voting

TMT created the Voter Turnout Quality of Life Compact in 2004 with the New Voters Project, Nevada Museum of Art, Washoe County Registrar of Voters, and the Washoe County Library System to support early voting and access to voting. The collaboration was so successful <sup>1</sup> it was extended for the 2006 elections. A total of 17,161 citizens took advantage of early voting at Washoe County Library locations during the 2006 general election. This was the highest total for any early voting location in Washoe County (41% of the 41,906 early turnout). Early voting was offered at nine libraries for both the primary and general elections. In addition, Meet the Candidates events were held at three libraries: Sparks, South Valleys, and Northwest Reno.



Courtesy Washoe County

#### What are the biggest barriers that could keep you from voting in the next election?



Source: MarkeTec phone survey for TMT, December 2007

#### 4. Effective government engagement

Civic responsibility includes having the ability to effectively participate in the governing process. The diversity of elected or appointed members of community boards, councils, commissions, as well as government staff, also demonstrate that government is representative of and responsive to our citizens.

#### Citizen participation in the government process

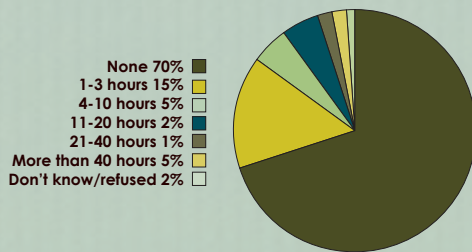
Effectively participating in the government process is central to a democracy. According to a recent report, 21.3% of people in Nevada engaged in civic life in 2006 (6.2% of whom attended public meetings), ranking 51<sup>st</sup> across states in the Civic Life Index.<sup>2</sup> Understanding barriers to meaningful participation could increase future engagement.<sup>3</sup> According to TMT's December 2007 community survey of Washoe County residents, aside from voting, 29.4% reported

1. Washoe County received a national public participation Savvy Award for their 2004 Election Campaign; 2004 results posted on TMT's Web site "collaborate for quality of life" page  
 2. Corporation for National & Community Service, Volunteering in America: 2007 State Trends and Rankings in Civic Life  
 3. Additional measures have been suggested (inventory of e-government transactions capable of being conducted

online, number of nontraditional government office hours, number of government offices outside traditional central facilities, inventory of leadership opportunities) and although these measures indicate government accessibility, there aren't central data sources, and the data could fluctuate greatly over time. As available, TMT will attempt to track additional measures on [www.truckeemeadowstomorrow.org](http://www.truckeemeadowstomorrow.org)

participating in the government process in the last year, while 67.8% did not. Of those participating in the government process, 25.2% reported general community service/meetings, followed by 20.4% corresponding with officials, 20.4% lobby/campaign/donations, 8.2% committee/board member, 6.8% jury duty/legal system, 4.1% flyers/petitions/protest and 2.7% general volunteer engagement.

**Citizen engagement with local government (hours per month 2007)**



Source: MarkeTec phone survey for TMT, December 2007

### Diversity on community boards, councils, and commissions, and in local government

Levels of participation and inclusion in local government can be influenced through outreach campaigns and leadership training to widen future candidate pools, for both citizens and employees. TMT surveyed the three local governments and will post data on its Web site related to the diversity of staff, as well as elected and appointed members of community boards, councils and commissions as available.

Citizen involvement with local government (local entity percentage of population)				
<b>City of Reno (2006 Services Survey)</b>				
Attended a City Council meeting, in the past 24-months		12.0%		
Watched RenoTV-13		31.0%		
Accessed Web site		49.0%		
<b>City of Sparks (Citizen Participation Survey)</b>				
Never attended a meeting of local elected officials	73.8%	79.0%	75.7%	
Watched a public meeting on TV	58.4%	46.0%	62.4%	
Used Internet to conduct business with Sparks	N/A	29.0%	29.5%	
Volunteer time to group or activity in Sparks	38.0%	36.0%	42.3%	
<b>Washoe County (2007-08 Budget Objectives)</b>				
Hours original programming WCTV-17	361	380	524	500
Viewers who watch WCTV-17	N/A	50%	48%	50%
The County Line, electronic newsletter readership	1,382	1,495	1,550	2,500
Monthly visitors to Web site	80,000	120,000	157,500	200,000

### 5. Civility & neighborhood pride

Giving your best here and now indicates civic and social connectivity, strengthens inclusion, and provides a sense of pride and community.

#### Civic and social connectivity

Identifying whether people are contributing to the community, and other issues of civic and social connectivity, will allow the community to dialog and initiate responsive efforts to improve measures of what we increasingly value in our community. In TMT's December 2007 community survey of Washoe County residents, 82.6% reported being happy living in the community, while only 10.8% responded that they are simply biding their time until they can move; of the

latter, 15.1% plan to leave for better social opportunities, followed by 12.3% weather, 12.3% growth/population, 11% better cultural opportunities, 9.6% way of life/family, 6.8% general change/new start, 5.5% better job opportunities, 5.5% expense/cost of living, 5.5% crime/safety/health, and 2.7% better educational opportunities. Similarly, 73.4% of respondents said they are intentionally investing their time and energy in this community. In addition, 45.6% of respondents, reported a homeowners or neighborhood association where they live, but only 21.4% of these respondents reported that the association strengthens their connection to the neighborhood or the community.

Of TMT community survey respondents, 14% reported having a personal experience of racial or ethnic bias in this community in the last year. According to the draft 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey results, 22.9% of Washoe County students reported they had been a victim of a racial slur in the past 30 days.

### 6. Emergency preparedness

Households with emergency kits and businesses with disaster recovery plans denote stewardship for the future of our families and our community. Public information campaigns could improve this indicator

#### Households with emergency kits and businesses with disaster response plans

Typically, emergency preparedness includes having an emergency kit that would allow you to be self-sufficient for up to three days and having a battery-operated radio, as well as a family emergency plan that's been practiced. In TMT's December 2007 community survey, only 45.2% of respondents reported being prepared for an emergency vs. 25.6% being unprepared. This compares to 33.4% of the same respondents reporting that their place of employment is prepared vs. 12.2% reporting that their place of employment was unprepared for an emergency. These percentages compare to the 24% of TMT's November 2007 eSurvey business respondents reporting that their business did not have a disaster response plan to deal with emergencies and disasters.



Courtesy Yann Ling