

# Executive summary

## *Introduction*

**H**ow involved are Illinoisans in their communities? In what ways? Can we encourage them to be even more engaged in their communities and connected with each other?

This is the first comprehensive statewide report on the types and levels of civic engagement in Illinois. The report provides benchmark data about community involvement. It describes how Illinois people are engaged, and it reveals why some people are not engaged. Finally, this report offers 68 recommendations for stimulating citizen participation in their communities.

We find that most Illinoisans are involved in some form of community activity, but the forms of their activity vary remarkably. Some are most interested in political activity. Others participate in a church, synagogue, temple, or mosque (hereafter, “place of worship”) but have little other community involvement. Still others focus their activity on their children’s activities or their jobs, while some socialize informally.

In the summer of 2000 and early in 2001, the Illinois Civic Engagement Project commissioned survey research and focus group interviews. We join the important national discussion about civic engagement in the United States. Unlike some national studies that say American communities are facing a civic crisis, we cannot say whether civic engagement is declining in Illinois. We don’t know, because this study has not been done before. We hope this benchmark study will be enriched by many discussions and further studies in the years to come. Our concern about the state of civic participation is as old as Tocqueville’s study of America in the 1800s. But it is as fresh as the Robert D. Putnam’s 1995 article, “Bowling Alone,” and his release of a new nationwide survey of civic engagement on March 1, 2001. Putnam has sparked an important national discussion about citizen participation and how that relates to the strength of American communities.

We hope to spark an equally spirited discussion about civic engagement in Illinois. But we go further. We want more than study and debate. So in this report we provide 68 useful, practical suggestions for ways that individuals, leaders, institutions, organizations, and businesses can stimulate and enhance civic engagement in Illinois communities. Our suggestions emerge from our study (see pages 15-30 for the list of action steps).

#### MOTIVATIONS:

### *Why people get involved*

We asked a series of questions in the survey research and of the focus groups about why people choose to get involved in their communities. The three top reasons are:

1. Altruism: They want to make their community a better place or influence public policy in some way. This was most important to 68%.
2. Faith or fellowship: They respond to their own religious beliefs, or they like to be with people they enjoy. Important to 62%.
3. Rational calculation or self-interest: They want to make useful contacts, advance their job or career, or perhaps even run for office. This general reason, while significant, was not nearly as important as the first two reasons. Important to 23%.

#### BARRIERS:

### *Why people are not more involved*

We also asked a series of questions about what prevents people from being more involved in their communities. The top reasons are:

1. Time pressure due to family (59%) and job (58%) responsibilities.
2. They were not asked to be involved (32%), or they do not feel a part of the community (13%).
3. They do not know enough about the issues (26%), or they do not know how to get involved (23%).
4. They feel they are already involved and cannot be more involved (22%).
5. Rational calculation: They think it is not worth their time and trouble, that nothing will come of their involvement (12%), that people want too much of their time (32%), or they don't like to join groups (17%).
6. Lack of resources: They believe they don't have the skills (13%) or money it takes (18%) to be involved.
7. Poor health (17%) or lack of transportation (9%).
8. They do not like the people who are involved (8%), or no groups exist that deal with issues of interest to them (14%).

Of great significance is that participants and non-participants sometimes differ on why they are not more involved. The single biggest difference between the two groups is that the non-participants are far more likely to say they have not been asked.

## PROFILE OF ILLINOIS:

### *Eight major types of activity and seven major engagement groups*

This report creates a profile of Illinois that identifies eight important forms of civic engagement activity. Those eight activities become our measures of civic engagement. After extensive analysis, the profile also describes seven basic engagement groups according to their most significant levels of activity (See Tables 1 and 2). The distinctions among the seven groups make it evident that many Illinois people choose their activities selectively. They make choices about what to do. The fact that they are selective should help Illinois leaders develop processes and structures that build upon that civic reality and not expect everybody to be doing everything.

This summary identifies why people choose to get involved or not get more involved. It then lists the eight major forms of civic engagement activity and the profile of the seven types of people. Finally, the research identifies some important differences among Illinoisans according to people's race, gender, age, political party, geographic residence, income, and level of education.

### *Eight major civic engagement activities and profile of seven major engagement groups in Illinois*

Eight major civic engagement activities in Illinois:

1. Community Involvement Activities (secular)
2. Religious and Faith-based Activities
3. Contribution Activities (secular)
4. Political Activities
5. Discussion of Politics and Current Events
6. News Exposure Activities
7. Technology-Based Activities
8. Informal Socializing

Profile of Illinois: Seven "engagement groups" according to significant activities:

1. Civic Leaders: Broadly and Highly Engaged (8% of sample)
2. Community Activists: Politically Engaged (11%)
3. Faith-based Activists: Religiously Engaged (22%)
4. Cyber-Activists: Technologically Engaged (16%)
5. Informal Socializers (11%)
6. Informed Contributors: Passively Engaged (16%)
7. The Relatively Disengaged (16%)

### *Definition and measures of civic engagement*

This research defines "civic engagement" broadly. Other research shows that all forms of citizen interaction and participation contribute to a community's strength. Thus, our definition includes everything from joining an organization to donating to a charity to socializing informally. We cast a wide net and try to count all of the ways that people tell us they are connected with one another outside of their family routines. Then we summarize the activity into eight basic categories, which become our basic measures of civic engagement:

## *Summary description of the eight major types of civic engagement activity*

1. **Community Involvement Activities (secular):** Such activities include volunteering, membership and participation in organizations, working with others to solve community problems, serving on a board, and attending a committee meeting or a board or council meeting. Almost two-thirds of our respondents (66%) reported volunteering time to at least one type of organization. More than one in five (22%) respondents volunteer in youth organizations, and 14% volunteer in civic organizations. Nearly half the respondents (49%) were involved in some kind of humanitarian activity, which is the leading form of community action. More than eight in 10 (83%) belong to at least one type of secular group or organization.
2. **Religious Activities:** Nine in 10 Illinoisans (91%) claim some form of religious affiliation. Two-thirds (67%) belong to a place of worship, and 47% attend religious services weekly. About seven in 10 (72%) contributed money to a place of worship within the past year, and one in five served actively on a board in the past three years. (This type does not include volunteering for a faith-based organization; those activities are included in “Community Involvement” above.)
3. **Contribution Activities:** Almost nine in 10 (87%) reported giving money to a secular charitable or religious organization within the past year, and almost six in 10 (58%) reported giving to both. Almost nine in 10 (88%) also reported donating food, clothing, or toys to a needy family or charitable organization, and 15% reported donating blood. (Our overall score here, however, excludes giving to religious organizations.)
4. **Political Activities:** About eight in 10 (82%) reported voting in the November 2000 national election. (This is somewhat higher than the Illinois State Board of Election’s figure of a 69% official voter turnout, but methods of measuring “voter turnout” are in dispute.) About one in six (16%) said they attended a candidate forum, debate, or information night in the past year. About one in 10 (9%) said they worked for a party or candidate in 2000. About one in seven (15%) reported giving money to a political action committee, candidate, interest group, or political cause in the past year. One in twenty (5%) said they had run for public office at some point, and another 16% said they had thought about running.
5. **Discussion of Politics and Current Events:** One in five (20%) said they discuss local politics or community affairs almost every day, and two-thirds said they do so weekly with family members, co-workers, or friends and neighbors.
6. **News Exposure Activities:** Illinoisans watch local television news more frequently than they listen to radio news or read newspapers. That is consistent with national trends. More than seven in 10 (72%) watch the television news every day, while half (50%) read the newspaper every day. Six in 10 (60%) listen to radio news every day. Nearly four in 10 (38%) reported watching or listening to a talk show or call-in show about news or public affairs on radio or television several times a week.

Of those who watched or listened, one in five (22%) said they had attempted to call one of the shows. About one in seven (13%) said they watch C-SPAN several times a week, while about half (54%) said they generally do not watch it.

7. **Technology-Based Activities:** This category is a place to look for new forms of civic engagement. Excluding e-mail used for work, almost half (46%) reported using e-mail at least several times a week, with one in four (26%) reporting daily usage. Seven in 10 overall (72%) have used the Internet. For information about current events and public affairs, one in six (16%) use the Internet every day, and four in 10 (40%) use it at least several times a month. One in four have visited Web sites for local schools or community colleges (26%) and local government (24%). About one in 20 (6%) have visited the site of a local civic group. Four in 10 (38%) have never used e-mail, and almost three in 10 (28%) have never used the Internet. Very few (4%) are using chat rooms every month to discuss current events.

8. **Informal Socializing:** Americans get together in many ways beyond their place of work and formal organizations and institutions. Informal socializing is an important aspect of the social fabric because it provides ways for people to bond with each other, and those bonds help build communities. Seven in 10 respondents (70%) said they participate at least monthly in a small informal group for socializing or recreation such as playing cards, meeting for dinner or drinks, golfing or bowling, or similar activities. Almost half (47%) do so several times a month, and one of eight (13%) do it several times a week.

#### SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF THE PROFILE OF ILLINOIS:

#### *Seven engagement groups categorized by civic engagement activity*

Extensive analysis of the survey research data led us to see that only a small percentage of Illinoisans is highly engaged in all activities. Most who are engaged seem to specialize in one or a small number of the activity types. And a small percentage of Illinoisans is not very engaged – that is, not involved in any activities, or involved at a level far lower than other people in Illinois. We label each “engagement group” with a name for the sake of conversation and summarization, but we want to be clear that people in each group also engage in some of the other activities at lower levels (see Table 1).

We also discovered that people in the different groups had different reasons for becoming engaged or not being more engaged. Those motivations and barriers are explained in the full report and become significant for people who want to learn more about how to motivate leaders and others to be more involved.

**Table 1 – A Profile of Illinois  
Overall Activity Profile of Civic Engagement Groups  
[Percentiles of Average Scores on Civic Engagement Activities for Each Group]**

<b>Seven Engagement Types</b>	<b>Total Civic Engagement and Eight Categories of Engagement</b>								
	<b>Total Civic Engagement</b>	<b>Community Involvement</b>	<b>Religious Activity</b>	<b>Contribution Activity</b>	<b>Political Activity</b>	<b>Discussion of Politics &amp; Curr. Affairs</b>	<b>Active Exposure to Sources of News</b>	<b>Technology-Based Activities</b>	<b>Informal Socializing</b>
<b>Civic Leaders</b>	95 <sup>th</sup>	95 <sup>th</sup>	80 <sup>th</sup>	82 <sup>nd</sup>	93 <sup>rd</sup>	83 <sup>rd</sup>	62 <sup>nd</sup>	74 <sup>th</sup>	64 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Community Activists</b>	86 <sup>th</sup>	75 <sup>th</sup>	46 <sup>th</sup>	75 <sup>th</sup>	86 <sup>th</sup>	85 <sup>th</sup>	71 <sup>st</sup>	70 <sup>th</sup>	78 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Faith-Based Activists</b>	68 <sup>th</sup>	68 <sup>th</sup>	86 <sup>th</sup>	70 <sup>th</sup>	65 <sup>th</sup>	52 <sup>nd</sup>	61 <sup>st</sup>	51 <sup>st</sup>	54 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Cyber-Activists</b>	47 <sup>th</sup>	45 <sup>th</sup>	36 <sup>th</sup>	39 <sup>th</sup>	45 <sup>th</sup>	67 <sup>th</sup>	35 <sup>th</sup>	80 <sup>th</sup>	71 <sup>st</sup>
<b>Informal Socializers</b>	36 <sup>th</sup>	50 <sup>th</sup>	37 <sup>th</sup>	68 <sup>th</sup>	38 <sup>th</sup>	28 <sup>th</sup>	34 <sup>th</sup>	40 <sup>th</sup>	88 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Informed Contributors</b>	34 <sup>th</sup>	39 <sup>th</sup>	43 <sup>rd</sup>	67 <sup>th</sup>	50 <sup>th</sup>	70 <sup>th</sup>	63 <sup>rd</sup>	36 <sup>th</sup>	33 <sup>rd</sup>
<b>The Relatively Disengaged</b>	9 <sup>th</sup>	31 <sup>st</sup>	45 <sup>th</sup>	26 <sup>th</sup>	32 <sup>nd</sup>	14 <sup>th</sup>	24 <sup>th</sup>	42 <sup>nd</sup>	27 <sup>th</sup>

**Table 2**  
**Overall Rank of Each Group for Each Type of Activity\***

<b>Seven Engagement Types</b>	<b>Total Civic Engagement and Eight Categories of Engagement</b>								
	<b>Total Civic Engagement</b>	<b>Community Involvement</b>	<b>Religious Activity</b>	<b>Contribution Activity</b>	<b>Political Activity</b>	<b>Discussion of Politics &amp; Curr. Affairs</b>	<b>Active Exposure to Sources of News</b>	<b>Technology-Based Activities</b>	<b>Informal Socializing</b>
<b>Civic Leaders</b>	1	1	2	1	1	1-2	2-3-4	2	4
<b>Community Activists</b>	2	2	3-4-5	2	2	1-2	1	3	2
<b>Faith-Based Activists</b>	3	3	1	3-4-5	3	5	2-3-4	4	5
<b>Cyber-Activists</b>	4	5	6-7	6	5	3-4	5-6	1	3
<b>Informal Socializers</b>	5	4	6-7	3-4-5	6	6	5-6	5-6	1
<b>Informed Contributors</b>	6	6	3-4-5	3-4-5	4	3-4	2-3-4	7	6
<b>The Relatively Disengaged</b>	7	7	3-4-5	7	7	7	7	5-6	7

\*Multiple ranking for an activity indicates a tie for that activity.

PROFILE OF ILLINOIS:

*The Seven Engagement Groups*

We identify the first four groups as leaders and activists because they are engaged in various activities at levels far higher than the typical person in the total sample. Only the first group of “Civic Leaders” is highly involved in everything, while the next three groups are more specialized in their high levels of activity.

1. Civic Leaders: Broadly and Highly Engaged (8% of sample)

Civic Leaders are highly engaged in many community activities, in political activities, in religious activities, and discussion of current events – and they make donations to causes they deem worthwhile. They seem to show up everywhere. People ask them to be involved, and they ask others. More than eight in 10 (82%) say they have been asked to get involved in the past year, and nearly the same number (79%) have asked others to get involved. The group is evenly divided between men and women. With one in four (24%) being African American, this group contains the highest percentage of African Americans of all seven engagement groups. The Civic Leaders lead the way in every respect. They are highly educated and highly motivated. Two-thirds have a four-year college degree. The median age of people in this group is 49 years old.

2. Community Activists: Politically Engaged (11%)

The typical Community Activist is similar to the Civic Leader, with high levels of involvement in community groups, informal socializing, and making donations. These people are highly engaged in political activity and discussion of current events, but less involved in religious activity. The dropoff in religious activity is what separates them from the Civic Leaders group (See Tables 1 and 2). Nearly two-thirds (64%) of this group is male, and more than eight in 10 (83%) are white. Half of this group (51%) has a college degree. This is the group with the highest proportion of people (72%) who are married or partnered. The median age of people in this group is 47 years old.

3. Faith-Based Activists: Religiously Engaged (22%)

What makes the typical person in this group stand out is a very high level of religious involvement. The Faith-Based Activist has even more place-of-worship and faith-based activity than the Civic Leaders. For this group, religious activity is the most important activity. The typical person in this group belongs to and is active in a church, synagogue, mosque, or temple, and is also highly engaged in community activity and makes donations. This group is only moderately involved in technology-based activities and informal socializing. The typical Faith-Based Activist also engages in discussions about current affairs and is exposed to news sources more than most Illinoisans. More than six in 10 (62%) are women, and the racial makeup is typical of the overall sample, with eight in 10 being white (82%) and 14% being African American. More than half (54%) live in the Chicago suburbs and almost one in five (18%) lives in Chicago. While 70% are married/partnered, one in eight (13%) is widowed. The median age of people in this group is 48 years old.

4. Cyber-Activists: Technologically Engaged (16%)

The Cyber-Activist is more technologically engaged than the typical person in any other group. The Cyber-Activist discusses politics and current events and socializes informally at fairly high levels. But the typical member is significantly less engaged than the other leaders and activists in religious activity, exposure to sources of news, and making donations. General community involvement is average. More than four in 10 (44%) of their households have children, and nearly one in five (18%) have pre-school children. Only 2% are widowed, and 44% are single. Nearly half (48%) call themselves political independents. The median age of people in this group is 33 years old, making this the youngest group by far.

5. Informal Socializers (11%)

The most common way that these people connect with others in their communities is in informal settings (see Table 2). They are average in general community involvement, and their contribution activity is moderately high. But they don't discuss politics or current affairs much, nor do they spend much time watching the news or reading newspapers. More are single (46%) than married/partnered (43%) – which is different from the statewide figures. Nearly six of 10 (59%) are male, nine in 10 are white. While their median age is 45 years old, they tend not to be middle-aged, but clustered in the youngest or oldest age groups.

6. Informed Contributors: Passively Engaged (16%)

The Informed Contributors are older and keep informed by discussing current affairs and paying attention to the news. They also make monetary donations and are moderately active politically, but they are not as active in religious or technological activity. Nor do they spend much time socializing informally. One in six (16%) is widowed, six in 10 are women, and three-fourths have household incomes less than \$50,000. More than four in 10 (45%) are Democrats, with the rest evenly split between Republicans and independents, making this the group with the highest proportion of Democrats. The median age of people in this group is 55 years old, the oldest of the seven groups.

7. The Relatively Disengaged (16%)

For every activity except religious activity, the people in this group are less active than people in any of the other groups. They rank particularly low on discussion of politics and current events and regular news exposure, they tend toward more religious activity (see Table 2). It is a consistently low level of engagement on the other six types of activity that defines this group. More than half (52%) have a high school diploma or less, and nearly half (47%) are in households in the lowest income category, those making up to \$30,000 a year. Democrats and independents are equal in number (38%), with just 23% being Republican. The median age of people in this group is 48 years old.

## *Differences in involvement by race, gender, age, education, employment, region, and party*

**Race:** There is no significant difference between whites and African Americans on their overall level of civic engagement. (Our sample size of other racial or ethnic groups was not large enough to make significant comparisons.) On specific types of activity: African Americans have a higher level of community involvement than whites. African Americans also volunteer to more types of organizations and have a higher level of religious activity and news exposure. Whites have a higher level of secular contribution activity and technology-based activity. They are similar in their levels of political activity.

**Gender:** Men and women do not differ in their overall level of civic engagement, although they do differ in the particular forms of engagement. Men are significantly more active in informal socializing, discussion of politics and current affairs, and technology-based activities, while women are significantly more involved in church activities, and women volunteer to more types of organizations. There are no significant differences in the level of political activity, news exposure, and contribution activity.

**Age:** This study divides adults into three age groups: 60 and older, 40 to 59, and under 40. People between 40 and 59 years old have the highest level of total civic engagement, while the oldest group has the lowest level. However, the pattern of generational involvement depends upon the type of activity. The mid-range group has the highest level of community involvement, political activity, discussion of politics and current affairs, and contributions. The youngest group has the lowest level of political activity and contributions. The oldest group has the highest level of religious activity and exposure to news. The youngest group has the highest level of technology-based activity and informal socializing. In those two categories, the oldest group is lowest in both.

**Education:** Overall, persons with higher levels of education have a greater level of civic engagement. A higher level of education is also correlated with four specific activities: community involvement, political activity, technology-based activity, and contributions. Education level is less significant when it comes to religious activity, news exposure, and discussion of politics and current events.

**Employment:** Those with full-time jobs have a higher level of civic engagement than those with part-time jobs. Retired people have the highest level of news exposure, and those with full-time jobs the highest level of technology-based activity. Retired people and those with part-time jobs have higher levels of church activity.

**Region:** The level of engagement does not differ dramatically among the four regions: city of Chicago, Chicago suburbs, northern/central Illinois, and southern Illinois. However, Chicago suburbanites have the highest level of contribution activity, while Chicago and southern Illinois residents have the lowest. Chicago residents have the highest level of news exposure. Southern Illinois residents have the highest level of political

activity. Northern/central Illinois residents report the highest level of informal socializing. No significant differences for religious activity were found across the four regions.

Political Party: Republicans show the highest level of total civic engagement, religious activity, and contribution activity. Both Republicans and Democrats are more likely to participate in political activity and be exposed to the news. Independents and Republicans are more likely than Democrats to engage in technology-based activities and to socialize informally.

### *Employers have impact on civic engagement*

Employers can have a profound impact on civic engagement in Illinois. Employers' encouragement of community participation is positively correlated with volunteer or contribution activity by employees and with their total level of civic engagement activity. Nearly four of 10 of the employees (38%) said their employer encourages them to volunteer for community projects. More than one in four (28%) reported that their employer gives incentives or recognition to employees who volunteer, and one in four reported that their employer gives money to organizations for which their employees volunteer. Employee contributions to a local charitable organization (aside from religious organizations) are positively correlated to the number of reported employer efforts in this area.

### *Engagement is also related to perceptions of one's community*

We thought it was important to ask people about the context in which their social engagement takes place. Not surprisingly, we found that the more favorably people view their community, the greater their level of civic engagement. Citizens' higher level of civic engagement was related to more positive evaluations of their local government and politics and the role they could have in it.

Overall, one in three (33%) of our respondents viewed their community as an excellent place to live. Another 48% called it good. Almost one in five (18%) rated their communities fair or poor. People in the Chicago suburbs are the most likely to have a sense of civic pride and to rate their community as an excellent place to live.

### *So what? Addressing the three sectors with 68 ideas to stimulate civic engagement*

In our project and in other work about civic engagement around the country, the question inevitably arises, "So what? Why does all of this matter? What can we do?"

We have a partial answer. We have built a list of 68 recommendations to stimulate citizen participation in their communities (see page 15). Most of these suggestions emerge directly from the research, while several come from a combination of our research, the work of others, and our lived experiences. One conclusion that emerges from this work is that leaders have to do a better job of articulating to one another and to their constituencies what "civic

engagement” means. This study shows that community involvement means different things to different people, and leaders can build on that reality. It is with that in mind that we offer the 68 recommendations. Some may not seem new, but in the context of this analysis of civic engagement in Illinois, we fervently hope that these recommendations will be viewed under a new and hopeful light. Our recommendations are divided into these categories:

1. 6 action steps for everyone
2. 10 things individuals can do
3. 10 things leaders can do
4. 8 things places of worship should encourage
5. 10 things people in the business/private sector can do
6. 10 things people in the government/public sector can do
7. 9 things people in the nonprofit sector can do
8. 5 ways the three sectors can collaborate

We deliberately made an effort in this report to keep three distinct sectors of Illinois in mind: the public/government sector, the private/business sector, and the nonprofit sector. Each sector faces different challenges, and when it comes to civic engagement, some of our recommendations overlap but others are distinct for each one.

#### TOWARD THE FUTURE:

#### *Keep up with two Web sites*

This project deals with how Illinois citizens connect and interact with one another. Therefore, we are giving the project an “extended life” with the creation of two Web sites.

Illinois Civic Engagement Project. The first is about this project itself. Go to [civic.uis.edu](http://civic.uis.edu), the site of the Illinois Civic Engagement Project (but do not type “www” first!). It contains additional information and links to other civic engagement initiatives around the country.

Illinois Electronic Neighborhood, which is accessible by a link from our civic engagement project site. A product of this project, the Illinois Electronic Neighborhood is our effort to provide ongoing information about local Illinois initiatives that enhance civic engagement. There is not only information there about interesting projects around the state. There is also a form you can complete to let us know about creative civic activities or projects being done in your neighborhood or in a group with which you are affiliated. Let’s make this an ongoing conversation! Go to [civic.uis.edu](http://civic.uis.edu) and then click on Illinois Electronic Neighborhood, or contact *Illinois Issues* or the United Way of Illinois for more information.

## *About the Illinois Civic Engagement Project*

The United Way of Illinois and *Illinois Issues* magazine directed this Illinois Civic Engagement Project, with funding from Caterpillar Inc., Peoria; State Farm Insurance, Bloomington; the Woods Fund of Chicago; and the McCormick Tribune Foundation, Chicago. The United Way of Illinois, based in Oak Brook, serves 106 local United Ways. *Illinois Issues* is a unit of the Institute for Public Affairs at the University of Illinois at Springfield.

The Survey Research Office and Institute for Public Affairs at UIS conducted the telephone survey research, and the firm of Lipman Hearne, Inc., of Chicago conducted the focus groups under the institute's direction. In addition, the Donors Forum of Chicago assisted with in-kind support, the establishment of the steering committee, and project development.

This is the first report, a benchmark study, about the level of civic engagement in Illinois, with a focus on activity at the local level.

The Survey Research Office conducted a telephone survey of a random sample of 1,050 Illinoisans between November 2000 and February 2001. Lipman Hearne, Inc., conducted seven focus groups in December 2000 and January 2001 in Chicago, Deerfield, Peoria, and Carbondale.

## *Summary*

We discovered that most Illinoisans are civically engaged in some way, but their forms of participation and interaction differ significantly. A small percentage are involved in many ways, but most people are more specialized or selective in their forms of engagement. Some focus almost exclusively on their church, for example, while others thrive on political activity. To make sense of the many forms of civic engagement, the research led us to develop a description of seven basic civic engagement groups, which present a new kind of profile of Illinois.

The good news is that many Illinoisans are engaged in their communities. People are still making a difference where they live. The bad news is that people feel significant barriers to participation in their communities.

The challenge for individuals is to choose to make a difference in their communities. They can make that choice, and many do.

The challenge for leaders is to understand what motivates people to become involved. They should remember that we're living in an age when most people already feel they don't have enough time to do what they want to do.

The challenge is to ask people to become involved in ways that satisfy people and in time frames that are manageable.