

CENTRAL INDIANA

CENTER FOR URBAN POLICY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

AUGUST 2001

Community Participation and Perceptions in Central Indiana

How Do We Compare?

The Center for Urban Policy and the Environment (center) surveyed over 6,400 people from Central Indiana households about perceptions of quality of life indicators. A national study, the *Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey*, included similar questions to the household survey regarding patterns of volunteering, perceived impact on community, and community ratings as a place to live. Data from the national survey can be compared with the results of the household survey for Central Indiana.

Central Indiana Residents Volunteer for Church-related Activities

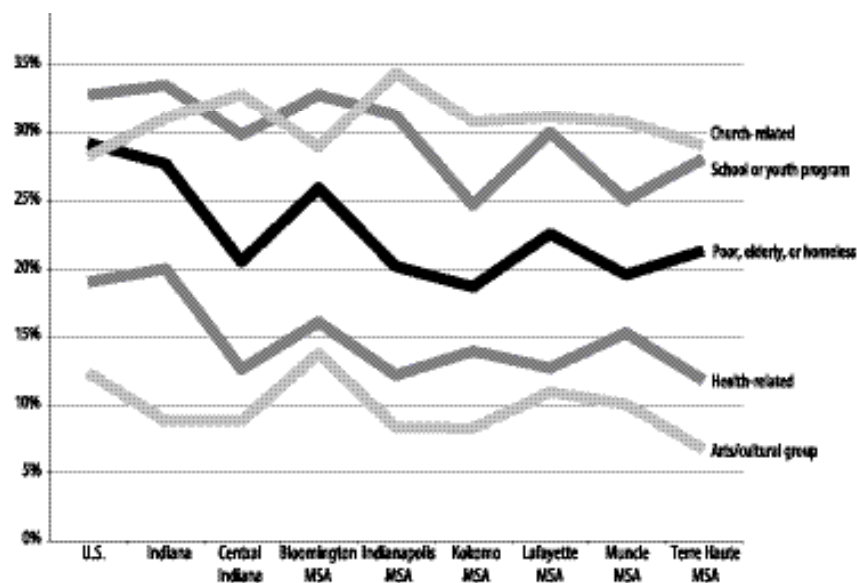
In the United States and Indiana more people volunteered for school or youth programs and programs that serve the poor, elderly, and homeless than for other programs. In Central Indiana, church-related programs and school and youth programs enjoyed the highest rates of volunteerism. As

Figure 1 illustrates, Central Indiana residents reported lower levels of volunteering for all the categories of volunteering that were asked about in both surveys, except for church-related. The Indianapolis MSA respondents reported the highest level of volunteering for

church-related activities (34 percent) among Central Indiana MSAs; higher than the national or Central Indiana average. In contrast, Bloomington MSA respondents reported the lowest level of volunteering for church-related activities (29 percent). However, Bloomington MSA respondents reported the highest

level of volunteering for arts and cultural activities (14 percent) among the MSAs, higher than the national or Central Indiana averages, as well as the highest levels for youth and education-related activities (33 percent), the same as the state and national average.

Figure 1: Volunteering by Type of Activity

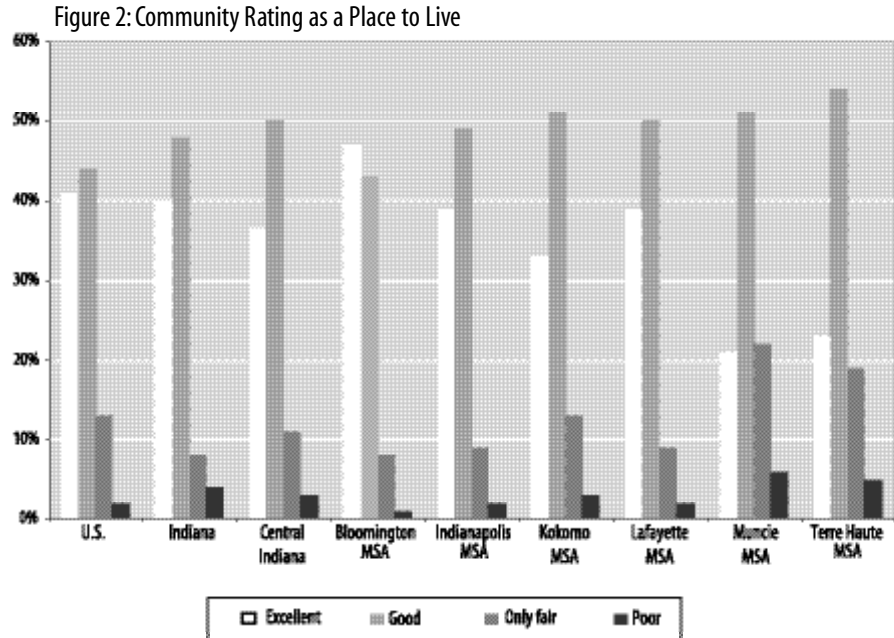


A MSA describes a geographic area consisting of a central city with a population of at least 50,000 surrounded by a densely populated area that is socially and economically integrated. The Central Indiana region includes six MSAs that consist of a total of 18 counties. The other 26 counties in Central Indiana are non-MSA counties.



Bloomington and West Lafayette Residents Rate Their Communities Higher

As Figure 2 illustrates, a slightly lower percentage of respondents rated their community as excellent in Central Indiana (37 percent) than in the United States (41 percent) and Indiana (40 percent). In contrast, across Central Indiana MSAs there was more diversity, with 47 percent of Bloomington MSA residents rating their community as excellent compared to 21 percent of Muncie residents and 23 percent of Terre Haute residents.



The center, through a collaborative effort with the Central Indiana Regional Citizens' League (CIRCL), surveyed 6,448 households in Central Indiana between July and September 2000. Selected survey results were used by CIRCL as part of the development of a Central Indiana Quality of Life Index. The survey instrument was designed to be comprehensive in identifying citizens' perceptions of the quality of life in the region. In addition to an overview of the entire survey, the center will provide detailed analysis focusing on specific topics covered by this survey, including perceptions about public safety, growth, arts and cultural involvement, outdoor water recreational opportunities, and civic engagement. Readers may contact the center regarding the availability of these papers. For information on survey methodology, refer to *Central Indiana Household Survey 2000: An Overview*.

The Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey is comprised of a national sample of 3,000 respondents and representative samples of 40 communities nationwide, including a sample of 1,000 respondents in Indiana. The national survey, conducted in the fall of 2000, maps the civic behavior of communities and builds off work done by Robert Putnam, author of *Bowling Alone: Collapse and Revival of the American Community*. In Indiana, this national survey was sponsored by the Indiana Grantmakers Alliance and analyzed by Wolfgang Bielefeld, Ph.D., for the Indiana University Center on Philanthropy. National results as well as links to Indiana can be found at www.cfsv.org/communitysurvey. Both the national survey and the Central Indiana Household Survey included questions that examined patterns of volunteering, perceived impact on community, and community ratings as a place to live.

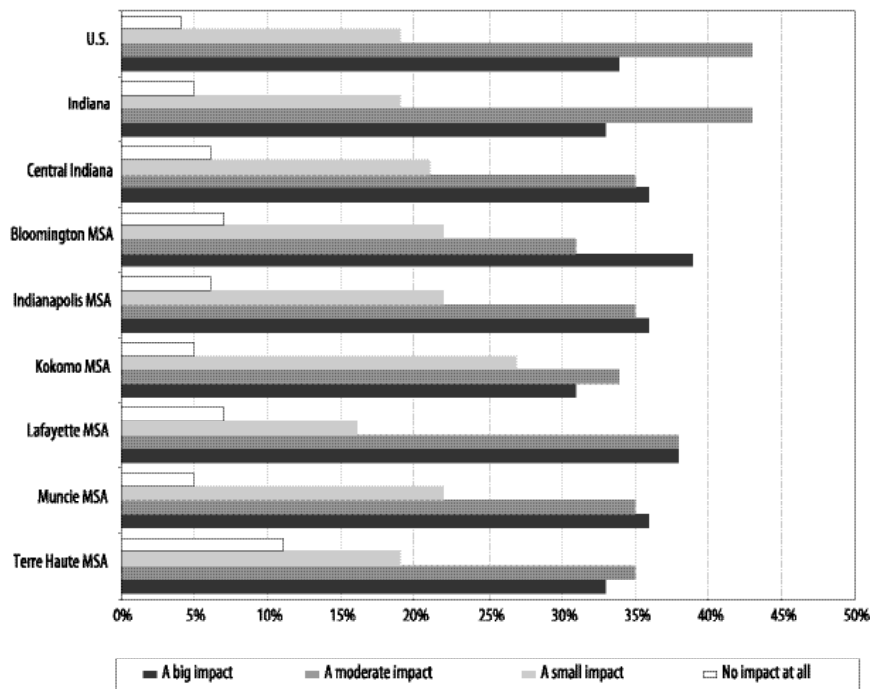


More Than One-Third of Central Indiana Residents Believe They Can Have a Big Impact on Their Community

Central Indiana residents (36 percent) were slightly more likely than respondents in the nation (34 percent) or state as a whole (33 percent) to think that they could have a big impact in making their community a better place to live. Central Indiana respondents (6 percent) also were slightly more likely than those in the nation (4 percent) and state (5 percent) to feel they had no impact. While there was some variance among the metropolitan areas regarding big impact on a community (Bloomington at 39 percent compared to Kokomo at 31 percent), there was also variance among those who thought they could have no impact on making their community a better

place to live. In the Terre Haute MSA, 11 percent of the people felt that they had no impact compared to the Kokomo MSA and Muncie MSA where 5 percent felt that way. There was also quite a variance among MSAs regarding those who felt that they could have a small impact in making their community a better place to live, with a high of 27 percent in Kokomo and a low of 16 percent in Lafayette. This compares to 19 percent of both the U.S. and Indiana respondents who answered that way and a slightly higher percent (21 percent) of Central Indiana residents who felt that way.

Figure 3: Perceived Impact in Making Your Community a Better Place to Live





Central Indiana's Future: Understanding the Region and Identifying Choices

Central Indiana's Future: Understanding the Region and Identifying Choices, funded by an award of general support from the Lilly Endowment, is a research project that seeks to increase understanding of the region and to inform decision-makers about the array of options for improving the quality of life for Central Indiana residents. The Center for Urban Policy and the Environment faculty and staff, with other researchers from several universities, are working to understand how the broad range of investments made by households, governments, businesses, and nonprofit organizations within the Central Indiana region contribute to quality of life. The geographic scope of the project includes 44 counties in an integrated economic region identified by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.



Central Indiana Region

During the summer of 2000, the center surveyed over 6,400 people from Central Indiana households regarding perceptions of quality of life indicators such as the economy, environmental and public safety issues, and accessibility to recreational and cultural amenities. This issue brief shows how survey results for Central Indiana compare to a national study that included Indiana, the *Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey*. Both surveys included questions that examined patterns of volunteering, perceived impact on community, and community ratings as a place to live.

The Center for Urban Policy and the Environment is part of the School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis. For more information about the Central Indiana Project or the research reported here, contact the center at 317-261-3000 or visit the center's Web site at www.urbancenter.iupui.edu.

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