Breast Cancer Screening Higher in Civically Engaged Adults in the U.S.

American Cancer Society research among the first nationally to examine links between breast cancer screening and citizen involvement

ATLANTA, July 14, 2026 — Civic engagement isn't just good for democracy — it may quietly support women's health, too. New findings from researchers at the American Cancer Society suggest that women in the United States who take part in their communities by voting, attending public meetings, or volunteering are more likely to stay on top of routine breast cancer screening, like mammography. The cross-sectional study is to be published today in *CANCER*, an interdisciplinary international journal of the American Cancer Society.

"The connection isn't surprising, as being civically engaged could increase someone's motivation to stay healthy by strengthening their sense of life purpose and role in their community," said Dr. Jordan Baeker Bispo, principal scientist, cancer disparity research at the American Cancer Society and lead author of the report. "Also, civic engagement could foster relationships and social networks, which can facilitate access to material, informational, and social resources for screening."

For the study, researchers analyzed data from the 2023 National Health Interview Survey. Measures of civic engagement included participation in the most recent local election, attendance at public meetings, and volunteering in the past year. Mammogram utilization was examined by age, education, income, and race/ethnicity in models adjusted for multiple sociodemographic factors and self-rated health status.

Analyzing data from 5,733 women, the results showed past-year mammography screening for breast cancer was higher among those who voted, attended a public meeting, or volunteered compared to those who did not. The strongest associations came from voting. An estimated 68% of women who voted reported getting a mammogram in the past year, compared to 58% of those who didn't vote. Associations were generally positive across subgroups and consistently stronger for those with limited educational attainment. For example, women with a high school education or less who participated in two or more measures of civic engagement were 47% more likely to report breast cancer screening in the past year compared to those who were not civically engaged.

"We think this data also has important implications for healthcare systems. They can play an important role in supporting civic engagement through programs like healthcare-based voter registration campaigns and by partnering with community-based organizations to deliver outreach," added Baeker Bispo. "Efforts like these could encourage more people to get regular health checkups, including preventive care services."

"These findings show that civic engagement doesn't just strengthen our communities, it can also improve individual health," said Lisa Lacasse, president of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. "Our volunteers are not only advocating for greater access to breast cancer screening through legislation like the SCREENS for Cancer Act, but they are also leading by example by prioritizing their own preventive care. Having the privilege of working alongside these dedicated advocates every day, these results come as no surprise."

Other ACS researchers contributing to this study include Dr. Hyunjung Lee, Dr. Ahmedin Jemal, and senior author Dr. Farhad Islami.

Additional ACS Resources:

- Breast Cancer Screening Guidelines
- Mammogram Information
- CancerRisk360™
- Breast Cancer Information
- Volunteer for American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

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About the American Cancer Society

The American Cancer Society is a leading cancer-fighting organization with a vision to end cancer as we know it, for everyone. For more than 110 years, we have been improving the lives of people with cancer and their families as the only organization combating cancer through advocacy, research, and patient support. We are committed to ensuring everyone has an opportunity to prevent, detect, treat, and survive cancer. To learn more, visit cancer.org or call our 24/7 helpline at 1-800-227-2345. Connect with us on Facebook, X, and Instagram.

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