



# THE CIVIC PULSE

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## Introduction

In a changing world, the need for simple, effective and reliable tools to quantify operating conditions for civil society are missing. Similarly, tools that assess the confidence of civil society leaders to create social change – on a global scale – are non-existent. As the shifting space for citizen participation changes at an overwhelming pace; The Civic Pulse is a barometer designed to track and enhance our understanding of the key trends in civil society.

The ultimate objective of the Civic Pulse is to present at-a-glance data, for further investigation with deeper and more nuanced tools at the regional or country level. In this sense, The Civic Pulse should be viewed as a tool to direct further research, substantiate advocacy positions on shrinking civil society space or identify flashpoints for transformative citizen action. Indeed, when used in conjunction with other tools developed by CIVICUS such as The Civic Space Monitor (an upcoming composite pilot index on civil society space), The Civic Pulse has the potential to pioneer a whole new generation of tools to track the confidence of civil society.

The Civic Pulse is a regular panel survey of a cross-section of civil society leaders from around the world to get their views on conditions for civil society in their country. The Civic Pulse panel, in its first stage, will comprise of 500 carefully selected key leaders in civil society. With at least one panel member in each country and additional spaces relative to population size, The Civic Pulse panel aims to embrace the diversity of civil society, whilst finding synergies between localized actors in different geographical areas.

The survey will be disseminated on a quarterly basis with the intention of tracking key trends over time and space. The Civic Pulse is designed to provide regular, timely, customised, at-a-glance data on civic space. While the tool should certainly produce results of interest for researchers and academics, its use will be primarily for civil society activists and organisations themselves to make the case for improved conditions for civil society organisations, human rights defenders and activists in their country and globally. In the same way that numerous business and consumer confidence indices act as a barometer of economic conditions, a regular barometer of the health and direction of global civil society can act as a stimulus for policy-makers and public opinion to take more seriously the conditions within which social change happens. Indeed, while business communities have used this kind of tool effectively, no such equivalent currently exists for civil society.

## Background

CIVICUS is the only global network of civil society organisations and activists dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society around the world. We are proudly based in Johannesburg, South Africa, and have over 1000 members in more than 120 countries.

As a truly global network, our members provide a natural constituency for The Civic Pulse Panel. The broad nature of the alliance, and the cross cutting nature of civic space allows us to leverage our position to encompass and engage the inherent diversity within civil society. Indeed, as a leading

global network of civil society organisations and activists, CIVICUS is perfectly positioned to spearhead this ambitious and innovative project.

Working as an alliance, CIVICUS' membership base and international profile provide the necessary global outreach to embark on a project of this scope.

## Methodology

### Sample

Who will participate in the global opinion panel? As a pilot project, CIVICUS will recruit 500, key and trusted leaders in civil society. Whilst a great number of these leaders will be known to the alliance, a proportion will be either a) elected by another member of the opinion panel or b) recruited through CIVICUS' extensive networks. By maintaining a quota of new perspectives, CIVICUS will ensure that the sample includes new and fresh voices from civil society, as well as tried and trusted partners.

The Civic Pulse will use quota sampling. The sample will be broken down to adhere to certain criteria, and will attempt to ensure that the Civic Pulse purposefully engages the broadest range of perspectives within civil society.

Sampling tiers:

- At least one member of the Global Opinion Panel per country (in total 210 CSOs)
- Additional members relative to population size (in total 190 CSOs)
- 10% of the total global opinion panel will be globally focused, i.e. INGO leader (in total 50 ICSOs)
- Additional spaces for networks and umbrella organisations (50 – 60)

### Country specific survey

To ensure that there is adequate interaction between global level analysis and country level analysis, a country specific survey will be deployed at the country to cross reference the narrower findings of the Global Opinion Panel. A panel of around 300 hundred civil society actors in each country will be engaged as part of this process. As part of the pilot project, CIVICUS will test a survey in South Africa.

### Datascraping

Another way of validating findings in the Civic Pulse, datascraping of social media and media outputs in a particular country to gain a broader understanding of the current situation, highlighting key events.

### Survey design

CIVICUS will engage and convene leading experts to discuss the contents of the Civic Pulse. In the initial design stages, survey design specialists were engaged to develop a simple yet comprehensive survey.

The Civic Pulse will ask participants about the conditions for civil society in three key indicators:

1. The six components of the Enabling Environment with two additional categories for Internet freedom and volunteerism.
2. The likelihood of transformative citizen action over the next year
3. The key events over the past three months and obstacles for civil society

### Analysis

CIVICUS will use mixed method analysis to interpret the findings from the Civic Pulse.

1. Multivariate analysis – a form of visual analysis that allows to researcher to observe relationships within the data. In essence, allowing dominant patterns to emerge. Over time this data could be used to build predictive models.

2. Coding – to present the findings in an interactive map for the audience to gain a visual understanding of the various elements of the questionnaire

## Future use

Whilst The Civic Pulse will in itself provide powerful and useful data for a variety of audiences, its potential could be huge. If capitalised upon, the results could yield data that could shape global responses to both expanding and shrinking civil society space.

The Civic Pulse will sit alongside CIVICUS well-known research tools such as the Civil Society Index Rapid Assessment, the Enabling Environment Index, the Enabling Environment National Assessments and the upcoming Civic Space Monitor. By working operating as part of a broader toolbox, CIVICUS draws from years of participatory methodology development, and generating knowledge on civil society. The Civic Pulse has the potential to direct attention to where it is needed most.

However, the ultimate potential of The Civic Pulse lies in its ability to predict drivers of social change over time. This is a truly innovative element to the idea that positions organisations such as CIVICUS to respond to a rapidly changing world faster than ever before.

It is surprising that no such tool exists for civil society and could catalyse a whole new response system for embattled civil society. As our understanding of global trends increases, so does our ability to proactively respond with more effective and expeditious certainty. Indeed, the deployment of funds, campaigns, capacity building or coordinated advocacy could be empirically evidenced by the Civic Pulse, and strengthened with more in depth and nuanced research tools.

## Contact

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