



CIRCLE

The Center for Information & Research on
Civic Learning & Engagement

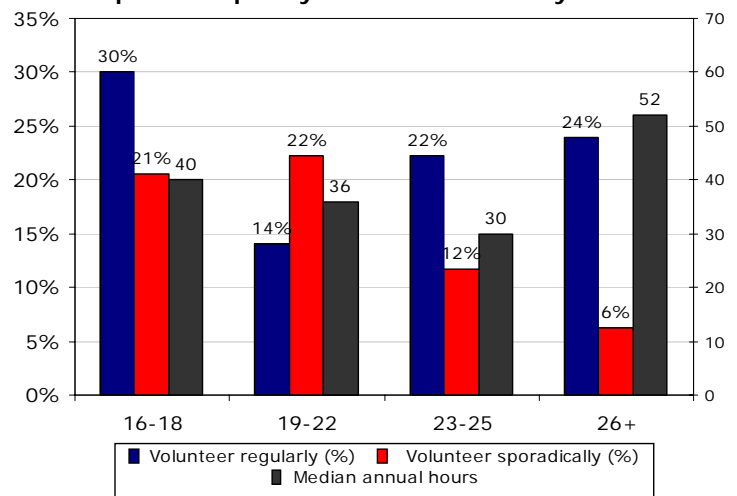
Time Spent in Volunteer Activity: 2002 and 2003

By Sara E. Helms, Research Assistant¹
August 2004

In recent years, young people— particularly high school students and college freshmen— have exhibited rising volunteering rates.² Most Americans report that they volunteer. However, those who say they volunteer range from people who contribute a few hours each year to those who work every day on an unpaid basis. This fact sheet looks more closely at the intensity of young people's volunteering. We see large differences in the amount of time spent volunteering if we examine young people versus older adults, young people of different ages, and young people who live in various states.

Age cohorts demonstrate differing levels of intensity of volunteer activity. Using the *Civic and Political Health of the Nation (2002)*, the prevalence of regular versus sporadic volunteers in different age groups can be compared. As seen in Graph 1, 16-18 year olds show higher levels of regular volunteer activity than any other age group. However, as individuals move through young adulthood, regular volunteer activity falls drastically, recovering as they move through their mid-twenties and beyond. Sporadic— that is, episodic— volunteer rates are higher for 16-18 year olds and 19-22 year olds than for those age 23-25 and 26+. In particular, those aged 26 and older have the lowest levels of sporadic activity, at 6 percent.

Graph 1: Frequency of Volunteer Activity



Source: CIRCLE/*Civic and Political Health of the Nation, 2002*; and Current Population Survey Volunteer Supplement, 2002

Another way to measure the intensity of volunteer activity uses median annual hours of volunteer activity reported by volunteers. The patterns seen above emerge when comparing median annual hours of volunteer activity by age groups using the Current Population Survey September Volunteer Supplements of 2002. This, too, can be seen in Graph 1.³

State by State Volunteer Hours for 2002 and 2003

States differ tremendously in their levels of volunteering.⁴ They also vary with respect to hours spent volunteering. Using the CPS Volunteer Supplement data, the hours spent in volunteer activity can be compared across states and age groups. Among volunteers in 2002, the national median for annual hours spent performing volunteer activity is 38 hours for 16-25 year olds, and 52 hours for those aged 26 and older, as shown in Table 1.⁵ For the younger group, median annual hours varied from a high of 61 hours in Utah, to a low of 20 hours in Kentucky and North Carolina. California follows Utah with a median 52 hours, followed by Alaska, Alabama, and Pennsylvania, all at 50 hours. States displaying low median hours spent volunteering include Minnesota, Missouri, and Vermont (all 24 hours).

In each state except Colorado, individuals aged 26 and older spend more time volunteering than those 16-25. In Colorado, both groups spent a median of 40 hours volunteering. As in the younger group, Utah residents age 26 and older spend more time volunteering than those in other states, with median annual hours of volunteer activity of 104 hours. Idaho is a distant second, with 80 median annual hours, followed by Wyoming at 64 hours and Washington at 62 hours. The bottom five states for 26+ year olds include North Dakota and Colorado at 40 hours, Ohio and New Hampshire at 42 hours, and Missouri at 45 hours. Those five states have higher median annual hours than the national median hours for the younger group. There is evidence that some states have a proclivity toward intense volunteer activity, while others move in the opposite direction; Utah tops both age groups, and Missouri is near the bottom of both groups.

As in 2002, the national median for annual hours spent volunteering in 2003 is higher for 26+ year olds, at 52 hours, than for 16-25 year olds, at 40 hours, as seen in Table 2. In three states, however, the median is the same for both age groups. In New Mexico (48 hours), California (52 hours) and New York (60 hours), 16-25 year olds and 26+ year olds had the same median annual hours.

For 16-25 year olds, New York had the highest median annual hours, at 60 hours. Following closely were New Jersey at 54 hours, and California, Nevada, and Utah all at 52 hours. Georgia displayed the lowest median annual hours of volunteering, with 19 hours. Also exhibiting low hours were Maine, North Carolina, North Dakota, and South Dakota, all at 24 hours.

The older group, those 26 years old and older, displayed a similar pattern. Utah had the highest, with 104 median annual hours. Nevada followed with 72 hours, then Idaho and Virginia each with 70 hours. Although North Carolina's 16-25 year olds were at the bottom of their group, the state's 26+ year olds were near the top, with 63 median annual hours. North Dakota had the lowest median annual hours, at 32 hours, followed by Wisconsin (40 hours), Iowa (41 hours), and Kansas (44 hours).

Table 1 – Patterns of Volunteering in 2002, by State⁶

| <i>State</i> | <i>Median Annual Hours of Volunteer Activity, Ages 16-25</i> | <i>Median Annual Hours of Volunteer Activity, Ages 26+</i> |
|------------------------|--|--|
| Alabama | 50 | 52 |
| Alaska | 50 | 60 |
| California | 52 | 58 |
| Colorado | 40 | 40 |
| Connecticut | 36 | 52 |
| Florida | 40 | 60 |
| Idaho | 46 | 80 |
| Illinois | 30 | 52 |
| Iowa | 25 | 50 |
| Kansas | 36 | 48 |
| Kentucky | 20 | 50 |
| Maine | 30 | 56 |
| Maryland | 25 | 54 |
| Massachusetts | 37 | 50 |
| Michigan | 35 | 58 |
| Minnesota | 24 | 50 |
| Missouri | 24 | 45 |
| Montana | 25 | 54 |
| Nebraska | 48 | 52 |
| New Hampshire | 30 | 42 |
| New Jersey | 36 | 56 |
| New York | 37 | 60 |
| North Carolina | 20 | 58 |
| North Dakota | 29 | 40 |
| Ohio | 30 | 42 |
| Oregon | 36 | 52 |
| Pennsylvania | 50 | 52 |
| Rhode Island | 36 | 60 |
| South Dakota | 36 | 48 |
| Texas | 48 | 60 |
| Utah | 61 | 104 |
| Vermont | 24 | 60 |
| Washington | 32 | 62 |
| Wisconsin | 25 | 45 |
| Wyoming | 32 | 64 |
| <i>National</i> | 38 | 52 |

Source: Current Population Survey, September 2002 Volunteer Supplement.

I was not able to calculate statistics for a number of states, including Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia.⁷

Table 2 – Volunteering in 2003, by State⁸

| <i>State</i> | <i>Median Annual Hours of Volunteer Activity, Ages 16-25</i> | <i>Median Annual Hours of Volunteer Activity, Ages 26+</i> |
|-----------------|--|--|
| Alaska | 36 | 62 |
| California | 52 | 52 |
| Colorado | 36 | 52 |
| Connecticut | 36 | 48 |
| Florida | 40 | 54 |
| Georgia | 19 | 56 |
| Idaho | 40 | 70 |
| Illinois | 48 | 50 |
| Indiana | 40 | 50 |
| Iowa | 30 | 41 |
| Kansas | 40 | 44 |
| Maine | 24 | 52 |
| Maryland | 44 | 52 |
| Massachusetts | 50 | 52 |
| Michigan | 40 | 52 |
| Minnesota | 35 | 45 |
| Missouri | 30 | 50 |
| Nebraska | 42 | 50 |
| Nevada | 52 | 72 |
| New Hampshire | 32 | 52 |
| New Jersey | 54 | 60 |
| New Mexico | 48 | 48 |
| New York | 60 | 60 |
| North Carolina | 24 | 63 |
| North Dakota | 24 | 32 |
| Ohio | 38 | 59 |
| Oregon | 30 | 48 |
| Pennsylvania | 45 | 52 |
| South Dakota | 24 | 45 |
| Texas | 40 | 52 |
| Utah | 52 | 104 |
| Vermont | 28 | 50 |
| Virginia | 45 | 70 |
| Washington | 50 | 60 |
| Wisconsin | 30 | 40 |
| Wyoming | 40 | 52 |
| National | 40 | 52 |

Source: Current Population Survey, September 2003 Volunteer Supplement.

I was not able to calculate statistics for a number of states, including Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, and West Virginia.⁹

Notes

¹ Sincere thanks to Peter Levine, Mark Hugo Lopez, Carrie Donovan and Emily Kirby for their helpful comments on earlier drafts. All remaining errors in fact or interpretation are my own.

² See “Volunteering Among Young People” by Mark Hugo Lopez, Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement.

³ In 2003, a different pattern appears. In 2003, the 19-22 year old group demonstrates a relatively large increase in median annual hours, increasing from 36 hours in 2002 to 48 in 2003. Both the 16-18 and 26+ age groups remained constant at their respective median hours of 40 and 52 hours.

⁴ For example, see “Youth Volunteering in the States: 2002 and 2003” by Sara Helms, Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement.

⁵ For state comparisons, only two age groups were used— 16-25 and 26 and older— due to small sample sizes in a number of states.

⁶ All calculations include only supplement respondents age 16+ who reported volunteer activity in the past 12 months. Approximately 5 percent of volunteers in 2002 do not report annual volunteer hours greater than zero (6.1 percent of those age 16-25, and 5.3 percent of those 26+). Some states had as many as 15 percent of volunteers with invalid responses. These observations with invalid responses were dropped from the calculation of median annual hours spent volunteering.

⁷ I was not able to calculate statistics for some states’ 16-25 year olds because there were too few volunteers in that age group to obtain meaningful results. While I am not confident of the significance of the results, they are available upon request.

⁸ All calculations computed only for supplement respondents age 16+ who reported volunteer activity in the past 12 months. Approximately 5.7 percent of volunteers in 2003 do not report annual volunteer hours greater than zero (7.1 percent of those age 16-25, and 5.5 percent of those 26+). Some states had as many as 12 percent of volunteers with invalid responses. These observations with invalid responses were dropped from the calculation of median annual hours spent volunteering.

⁹ See (7) above.