

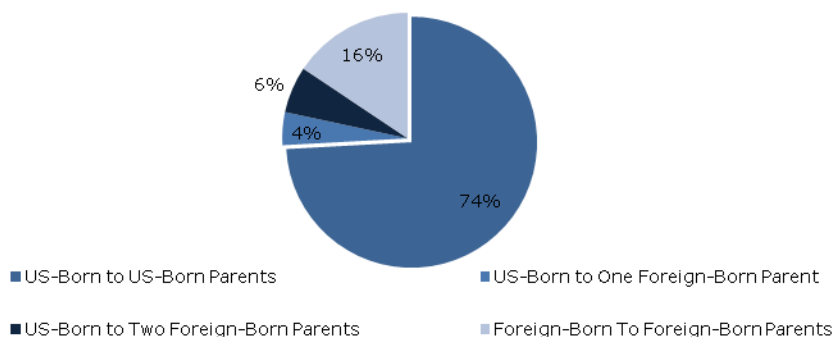
Volunteering among Youth of Immigrant Origin

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The United States continues to be a diverse nation that attracts individuals from all over the world. In 2007, approximately one in four (26%) young people aged 18 to 29 had at least one parent who was born outside of the United States, and 16% were born outside of the United States². Children of immigrants and foreign-born youth are some of the fastest growing populations in the United States (Levine, 2008)³ and in some states, youth of immigrant origin exert significant electoral power by accounting for more than 10% of the share of registered voters (AZ, FL, NV, NH, CA, IL, NY, and TX).⁴ Youth with foreign-born parent(s) represent the fastest growing portion of the youth (ages 18-25) population, growing at an average of 5.5% a year between 1994 and 2006 (Marcelo & Lopez, 2006).⁵

In this fact sheet, the term “youth of immigrant origin” refers to 18 to 29 year old residents of the United States who have at least one foreign-born parent. Texts and graphs refer to all youth of immigrant origin unless otherwise noted. These youth include (1) U.S.-born youth with one or two foreign-born parents (40.7%), (2) foreign-born youth who have obtained U.S. citizenship through naturalization (12.9%), and (3) non-citizen youth (46.4%). Non-citizen youth, especially without permanent residency, may have limited rights to participate in certain forms of civic engagement such as AmeriCorps, some service-related scholarships, and various civil-service positions.

Figure 1: Parental Immigration Breakdown (Ages 18-29)



Source: CPS September Supplement, 2007

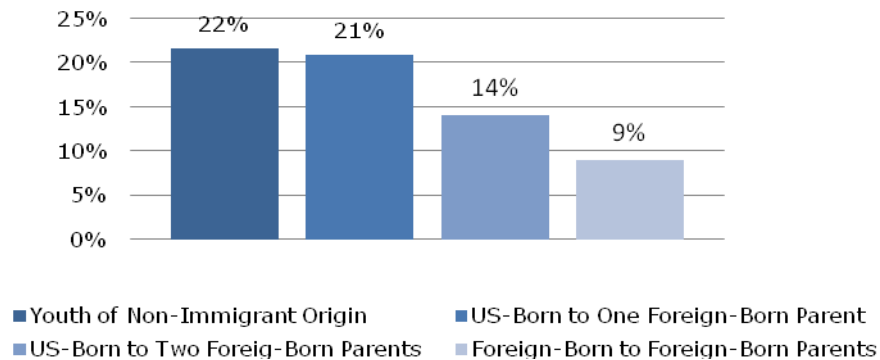
Note: Youth who were born outside of the United States to U.S.-Born parents are included in the “U.S.-Born to U.S. Born parents group.”

This fact sheet presents information on volunteering and civic engagement among youth of immigrant origin. In this fact sheet, “youth of immigrant origin” is defined as young people (age 18 to 29) living in the United States who either were born outside of the United States or have one or more parents who were born outside of the United States. This fact sheet will also explore relationships between volunteering and several important demographic factors such as gender, education, and citizenship status. The fact sheet is based on data from the most recent Census Population Survey (CPS) Volunteering Supplements, administered from 2005 to 2007 and other available data sets on volunteering and civic engagement among youth of immigrant origin.

Volunteering Rates Among Youth of Immigrant Origin

Overall, in 2007, youth of immigrant origin were less likely to volunteer than their non-immigrant peers. According to U.S. Census Bureau data, youth of immigrant origin who were born outside of the United States or had two parents born outside of the United States had significantly lower volunteering rates than their peers. As seen in Figure 2, volunteering rates were lower among youth of immigrant origin, but especially if these youth were either born outside of the United States themselves or had two parents born outside of the United States.

≡ **Figure 2: Volunteering Rates by Parental Nativity Status (Ages 18-29)**



Source: CPS September Volunteering Supplement,

It is important to note that these differences are not adjusted for family income or educational status—issues treated later in this fact sheet. Also, these differences come from a snapshot of today’s young people. It could be that the process of becoming acculturated to the United States will narrow the gap between the native-born and the foreign-born later in their lives.

Types of Volunteering Service

As seen in Table 1, both youth of immigrant origin and their non-immigrant peers tended to do their volunteering work at religious organizations, children’s educational organizations, or social service agencies. Youth of immigrant origin and their non-immigrant peers generally engaged in similar types of volunteering work. Table 2 shows

the percentage of young volunteers who served in various capacities.⁶ Both youth of immigrant origin and non-immigrant youth were most likely to serve as tutors or mentors to younger children and adolescents and/or participate in fundraisers. These activities were closely followed by general labor and food preparation/distribution.

Table 1: Primary Place of Service (18-to-29 year-olds)

Rank	Youth of Immigrant Origin	%	Non-Immigrant Youth	%
1	Religious Organizations	31%	Religious Organizations	31%
2	Children's Educational Organization	21%	Children's Educational Organization	20%
3	Social and Community Service Agencies	15%	Social and Community Service Agencies	15%

Source: CPS September Volunteering Supplement, 2007

Table 2: Portion of Youth Volunteers Serving in Various Capacities (18-to-29 year-olds)

Rank	Youth of immigrant origin	%	Non-Immigrant Youth	%
1	Tutoring/Teaching	23%	Tutoring/Teaching	23%
2	Mentoring Youth	21%	Mentoring Youth	23%
3	Fundraising	21%	Fundraising	23%
4	Food Preparation, Collection & Distribution	19%	Engage in General Labor, Supply	21%
5	Engage in General Labor, Supply	18%	Food Preparation, Collection & Distribution	20%

Source: CPS September Volunteering Supplement, 2007

How Youth of Immigrant Origin Became Involved

When asked how they first became involved with their primary volunteering organization⁷, some differences emerged for youth of immigrant origin and non-immigrant youth. In both groups, recruitment is important: over 40% of youth of immigrant origin and non-immigrant youth who volunteered reported that they were asked to do so while other 40% or so became volunteers by approaching the organization themselves (See Table 3).

Table 3: How Youth First Became Volunteers for the Primary Volunteering Organization

	Youth of Immigrant Origin	Non-immigrant youth
Approached the Organization themselves	42.3%	39.8%
Was asked by Someone	46.7%	44.0%
Became Involved in Some Other Way	10.9%	16.2%

Source: CPS September Supplement, 2007

There were some differences in when and how young volunteers were connected to their primary volunteering organizations. Youth of immigrant origin were more likely to have become involved with their primary volunteering organization through social network (19%) than family network (12%), while non-immigrant youth were slightly more likely to become involved via family network (16%) than social network (13%). These differences might suggest that youth of immigrant origin are less likely to have family members who

are already involved in volunteering, and instead gain access to volunteering through social networks outside of the family. See Table 4.

Table 3: Links to Primary Volunteering Organizations

Connection	How They Became Connected	Youth of Immigrant Origin	Non-immigrant youth
Family Network	Approached the organization because a relative was already involved	5.9%	8.5%
	A relative asked them to volunteer	5.7%	7.8%
	Total Family Network	11.6%	16.3%
Social Network	Approached the organization because a friend/co-worker/roommate was already involved	7.7%	4.0%
	A friend/co-worker asked them to volunteer	8.8%	7.4%
	Boss or employer asked them to volunteer	2.4%	1.8%
	Total Social Network	18.8%	13.2%
Direct involvement with Org. or School	School Requirement	2.0%	3.7%
	Someone in organization or School asked	23.0%	23.2%
	My own involvement with the organization	17.0%	11.2%
	Total Direct Connection with the Org.	42.0%	38.4%
Other*		27.6%	32.1%

Source: CPS September Supplement, 2007

Note: "Other" links included, but not limited to court-order for community service, public appeal, and public housing requirement.

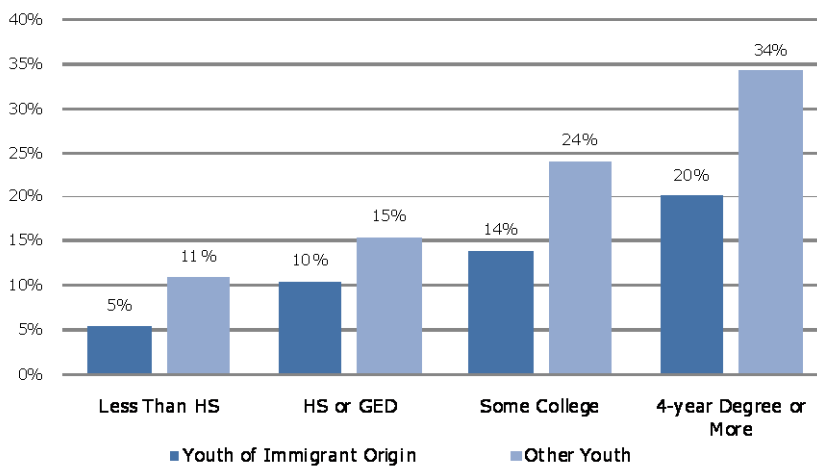
Factors Related to Volunteering

In this section, we explore various demographic factors that have been found to be associated with higher or lower volunteering rates in previous research of the general population. These factors include educational attainment, school enrollment, income, marital status, age, gender, citizenship status, and levels of acculturation. The findings highlight the fact that volunteering is not universally uncommon among youth of immigrant origin, meaning that there are factors that are associated with much higher rates of volunteering. At the same time, the findings described in the section below will show that the patterns that are observed in the general population do not always hold for youth of immigrant origin.

Education

Educational attainment is one of the strongest predictors of volunteering.⁸ It is theorized that individuals with more education are likely to be provided with opportunities, context, and skills that are ideal for volunteering, such as peers and colleagues who also volunteer, a stable and active community where there are abundant volunteer opportunities, and experiences with past volunteering (perhaps via college/university). As found in previous studies of the older immigrant population,⁹ youth of immigrant origin who had more education had higher rates of volunteering. Twenty percent of youth of immigrant origin with a college degree volunteered compared to five percent of youth of immigrant origin

Figure 3: Volunteering Among 18-29 by Education and Immigrant Origin



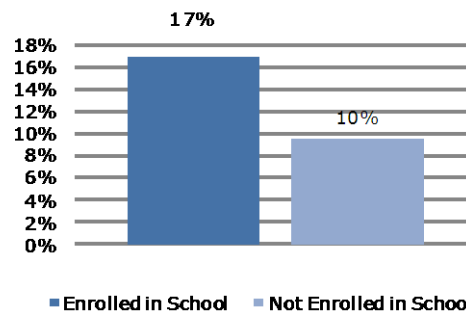
Source: CPS September Volunteering Supplement, 2007

with less than high school diploma. At the same time, the gap between youth of immigrant origin and others remained at all educational levels.¹⁰ This may suggest that education is not the only barrier against volunteering for youth of immigrant origin. See Figure 3.

School Enrollment

Among school-age youth of immigrant origin, school enrollment was associated with higher volunteering rates. That is, youth who were in high school, college, or any other type of educational institutions were almost twice as likely to

Figure 4: Volunteering Rate Among Youth of Immigrant Origin (18-24 Years Old) By School Enrollment



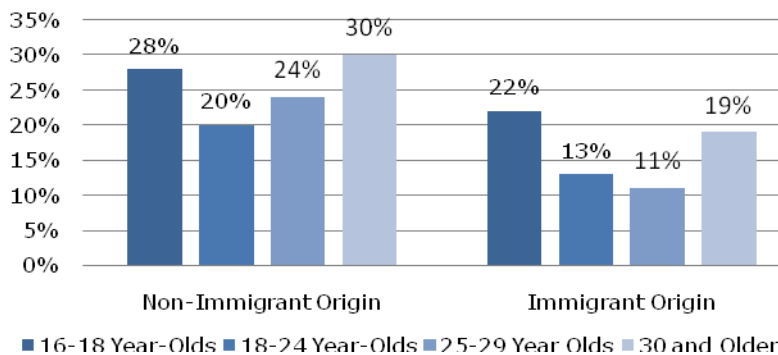
volunteer as their peers who were not currently enrolled. This is expected given that schools tend to provide institutionalized opportunities for volunteering through courses, graduation requirements, and student organizations. Thus, it seems that for youth of immigrant origin, being in school not only provides education but also opportunities to volunteer and become involved.

Age

Generally speaking, age is a strong predictor of volunteering. In the general population, 18-to-24 year-olds volunteer at lower rates than high-school-age youth and individuals who are 25 years of age or older.¹¹ Young people today are delaying some of the major life-transitions such as marriage, purchase of a first home, and having children until their late twenties and early thirties. These delays correspond with a delay in civic and political engagement.¹² In fact, the volunteering rate was higher among 25-to-29 year-olds than 18-to-24 year-olds among youth of non-immigrant origin.

However, our findings for youth of immigrant origin did not follow this pattern. Among youth of immigrant origin, 18-to-24 year-old youth were slightly *more* likely to volunteer than 25-to-29 year-old youth. More research is needed to understand why youth of immigrant origin seem to follow a different developmental trajectory. However, differences in timing of life transitions and educational attainment may be related to a lack of increase in the volunteering rate during the late 20s. The observed difference is likely to be associated with the educational gap between youth of immigrant origin and their peers. Youth of immigrant origin are more likely to have no high school diploma or equivalent (24%) than their peers (11%).¹³ Educational attainment is associated with many other factors such as income and rate of marriage/child-rearing, which are in turn predictors of volunteering.¹⁴ A lower high school completion rate may mean that this population receives fewer institutionalized volunteering opportunities (offered as high school courses, graduation requirements, and/or school-based service organizations).¹⁵ Not receiving sufficient opportunities for volunteering in high school and college could interfere with formation of civic identity later in life, which is why providing civic opportunities for young people is crucial.¹⁶

Figure 5: Volunteering Rates by Age

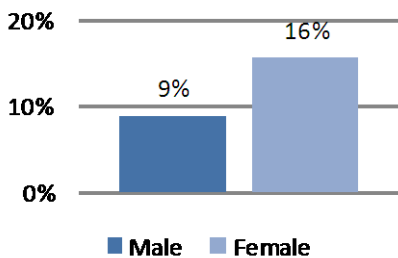


Source: CPS September Supplement, 2007

Income

Household income is an indicator of social class and has been found to predict higher volunteering rates in the general population (Xu, 2005).¹⁷ Similarly to education, higher income may be associated with an overall lifestyle and environment that affords better infrastructure for volunteering. Although past research would suggest that higher income would also be associated with higher volunteering rates among youth of immigrant origin, such analysis was not conducted with the youth of immigrant origin population in this fact sheet for various reasons.¹⁸ However, both education and income are important predictors of civic engagement as they relate to social class.

Figure 6: Volunteering Among Youth of Immigrant Origin by Gender



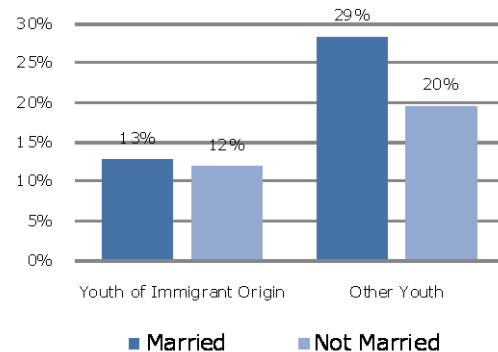
Gender

Young females of immigrant origin were more likely than their male peers to volunteer (Figure 6). Furthermore, past research noted that female immigrants under-report their volunteering activities more often than males do, due to possible gender differences in perception of various activities.¹⁹ This suggests that the gender gap in volunteering among immigrants may be larger than reported here.

Marital Status

Marital status is a traditional predictor of volunteering. However, youth of immigrant origin differ from non-immigrant youth on both likelihood of marriage before age 30 and the relationship between marriage and volunteering. First, youth of immigrant origin are more likely to be married before age 30 than non-immigrant youth. Thirty percent of youth of immigrant origin were married, compared to 23% of their peers. Furthermore, marital status *did not* predict volunteering for youth of

Figure 7: Marital Status and Volunteering Rates for Youth Aged 18-29

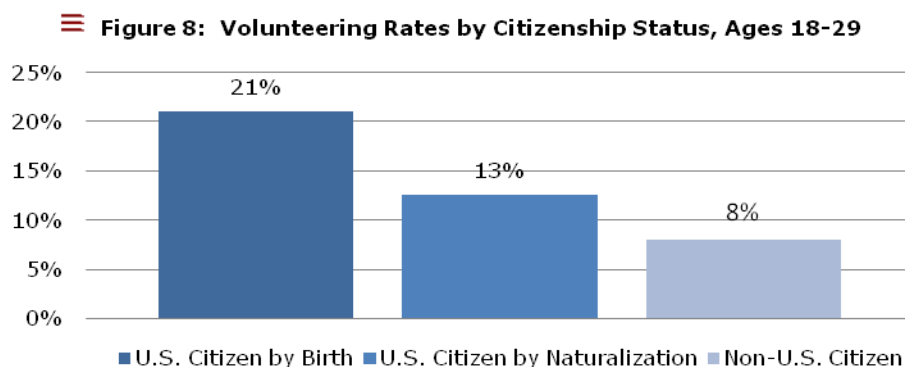


Source: CPS September Supplement, 2007

immigrant origin, while being married was associated with higher volunteering rates for youth of non-immigrant origin (See Figure 7).

Citizenship

Youth of immigrant origin who were born in the United States (i.e., have parent(s) born outside of the United States) were more likely to volunteer than naturalized citizens and non-U.S. citizens (“residents”). However, it is important to note that a large number of youth of immigrant origin have gone through the naturalization process specifically to serve in the armed forces. According to United States Department of Defense, five percent of all armed forces personnel are foreign-born. Of 65,000 such personnel, two-thirds are naturalized. Since 2001, over 37,000 immigrants were naturalized to join the force.²⁰ Serving in the armed forces is an exceptional form of civic engagement that would not be considered as “volunteering” in our current survey but nonetheless should not be overlooked. Finally, non-U.S. citizen youth may experience some limitations in their rights to perform certain services such as AmeriCorps and obtain civic-oriented employment, which may influence their volunteering rate.

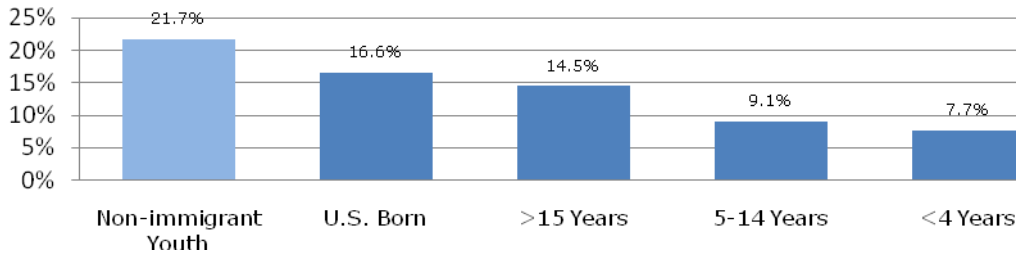


Source: CPS September Supplement, 2007

Years Spent in the United States and Volunteering

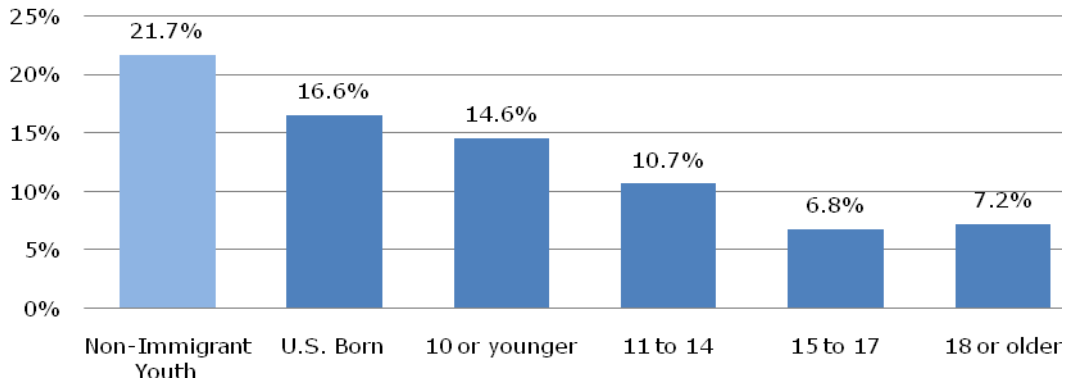
The number of years since migration to the United States is considered a rough measure of acculturation levels. We examined the relationship between acculturation levels and volunteering rates. For the purpose of this fact sheet, respondents were categorized into “U.S. Born (to foreign-born parents),” “In U.S. for 15 or more years,” “in U.S. for 5-10 years,” and “immigrated in the last 4 years.” As expected, the number of years in the United States was a strong predictor of volunteering rate (See Figure 9). Though still lower than the volunteering rate among youth of non-immigrant origin, youth of immigrant origin who were born in the United States or spent at least 15 years in the United States were far more likely to volunteer their time than those who had spent less time in the United States. We also examined the relationship between the age at immigration and volunteering rates (See Figure 10). Again, we found that youth who had either been born in the United States or had immigrated at a young age (age 10 – roughly the age at which children are in elementary school) had higher volunteering rates than youth who had come to the United States at an older age.

Figure 9: Volunteering Rate by Number of Years in U.S. (18-29 Years Old)



Source: CPS September Supplement, 2007

Figure 10: Volunteering Rate by Age at Immigration



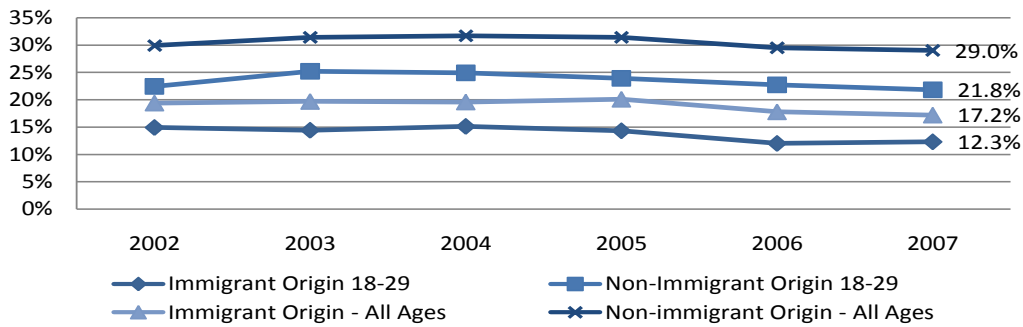
Source: CPS September Supplement, 2007

Volunteering Rates over Time

Various social and political issues are important to youth of immigrant origin, including immigration policy enforcement, discrimination in workplace, housing discrimination and hometown politics.²¹ One example of an issue that mobilized thousands of immigrants and non-immigrants alike was the immigration debate of 2006, during which new immigration policies were discussed. But can a political issue drive the volunteering rate up? We tracked changes in volunteering rates among immigrants and non-immigrants of different age groups starting in 2002, when the Census Bureau first started tracking volunteering rates, up to 2007.

A small increase in volunteering was expected among immigrants in 2006, as there was a perception of increased civic activities because of the immigration debate, especially among individuals of immigrant origin. However, there was a slight decrease in volunteering rates across all age and demographic groups. Youth of immigrant origin were no exception. In 2006, the volunteering rate of youth of immigrant origin dropped from 14% to 12% and it remained the same in 2007.²²

Figure 11: Youth Volunteering Trends by Immigrant Status



Source: CPS September Supplement, 2002-2007

Conclusions

This fact sheet presented information on volunteering among youth of immigrant origin, ages 18-29, who now represent one quarter of the United States' population in this age group. This fact sheet found that overall, young people of immigrant origin are far less engaged in voluntary service when compared to young people of non-immigrant origin. Several factors seemed to be related to volunteering rates, including education, school enrollment, citizenship status, time spent in the United States, and gender. On the other hand, a few factors that were related to higher volunteering rates (i.e., marital status and age) for non-immigrant youth were not related to higher volunteering rates among youth of immigrant origin, implying that there are probably more than demographic factors that facilitate and impede volunteering among youth of immigrant origin. Taking all the findings together, it appears that the lower engagement level of youth of immigrant origin is related to complex and interrelated factors. For example, it was found that youth of immigrant origin were less likely to become involved in volunteering through family members, which is consistent with the finding that immigrant adults over age 30 are also less likely to volunteer than their peers. This means that youth of immigrant origin are not as likely to have pre-established family connections that would introduce them to volunteering at an early age. As a result, they might have to seek out volunteering opportunities on their own or through friends. Furthermore, youth of immigrant origin, especially when they are themselves born outside of the United States or have two parents born outside of the United States, are less likely to obtain post-secondary education,²³ which also means that youth of immigrant origin are less likely to be connected to institutionalized opportunities for volunteering. Finally, the age at which a person immigrated to the United States was associated with rates of volunteering. Data showed that youth who had been in the United States for 15 or more years and/or immigrated to the United States no later than elementary school age were more likely to volunteer than those who arrived later. Practitioners and policy makers must formulate strategies and opportunities that are uniquely suited for youth of immigrant origin in order to engage this group.

NOTES

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- ¹ Lead Researcher and Senior Researcher at CIRCLE. We would like to thank Karlo Marcelo, Peter Levine, Surbhi Godsay and Amanda Nover for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this fact sheet.
- ² Source: Author's tabulations from the Census Population Survey, 2007 September Supplement.
- ³ Levine, P. (2008). The civic engagement of young immigrants: Why does it matter? *Applied Developmental Science*, 12, 102-104.
- ⁴ Immigration Policy Center (2008). *The new American electorate: The growing political power of immigrants and their children*. The Immigration Policy Center.
- ⁵ Marcelo, K.B. & Lopez, M.H. (2006). *Immigrant youth demographics fact sheet*. Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, College Park: MD.
- ⁶ Note that the table does not indicate a portion of *all* youth who engaged in these services. Percents represent portion of volunteers in each group.
- ⁷ In CPS September supplement, respondents were asked to discuss how they became connected with the organization at which they spent most time volunteering. For the purpose of this fact sheets, the responses were categorized into family and peer networks, and a person's direct involvement with the organization, regardless of how respondents became acquainted with the organization.
- ⁸ See Handy, F. & Greenspan, I. (2008). Immigrant volunteering: A stepping stone to integration? *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly Online First.*; Lopez, M.H. & Marcelo, K.B. (2008). The civic engagement of immigrant youth: New evidence from the 2006 civic and political health of the nation survey. *Applied Development Science*, 12, 66-73. and www.volunteeringinamerica.gov.
- ⁹ Xu, J. (2005). Why do minorities participate less? The effects of immigration, education and electoral process on Asian American voter registration and turnout. *Social Science Research*, 34, 682-702.
- ¹⁰ In Figure 3, we defined "immigrant youth" as young people aged 18-29 who had at least one parent born outside of the United States.
- ¹¹ Youth Volunteering Fact Sheet at civicyouth.org. Also see www.volunteeringinamerica.gov.
- ¹² See Flanagan, C., Levine, P. & Settersten, F. (2009). *Civic engagement and the changing transition to adulthood*. Available at www.civicyouth.org
- ¹³ Source: Author's tabulations of CPS September Volunteering Supplement 2007 data.
- ¹⁴ See Mortimer, J.T., Staff, J. & Lee, J.C. (2005). Agency and structure in educational attainment and the transition to adulthood. *Advances in Life Course Research*, 10, 131-153, for findings on trade-offs between educational attainment and life transitions.
- ¹⁵ See CIRCLE Fact Sheet, *Youth Volunteering in the States 2002-2007*. Available at: www.civicyouth.org
- ¹⁶ See Levine (2008).
- ¹⁷ See note (8)
- ¹⁸ There were several reasons for not analyzing volunteering rates by income levels for this population. First, it is difficult to estimate income level for young persons, as incomes are reported at household level, making it difficult to discern whose income is reported. Second, young people's income in one year may not be a good indicator of their overall social class, as they may be in school, transitioning from school to work, or searching for employment in any given year, depending on their rapidly changing life circumstances. Finally, reporting of household income may not be very accurate, again, because household income, not individual income is reported and a proxy person may have to estimate each household member's income.
- ¹⁹ See Handy & Greenspan (2008), p. 9.
- ²⁰ Batalova, J. (2008). Migrant Policy Center, at Migration Information Source, May 2008.
- ²¹ Suro, R. & Escobar, G. (2006) Pew Hispanic Center Report: 2006 National Survey of Latinos: The Immigration Debate. Available at <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/68.pdf>
- ²² It should be noted that a small decline in volunteering rates does not mean that immigrants did not show an increase in overall civic engagement or political engagement. Since this fact sheet focuses on volunteering, other forms of engagement were not pursued. However, various studies indicate that alternate forms of volunteering such as helping neighbors/family read/write in English, watching young children for neighbors and/or participating in ethnic clubs might be missed in traditional surveys (see Handy & Greenspan). Furthermore, it is possible that immigrants became more politically engaged because of the immigration policy debate. Interested readers should consult Census Bureau's November Election Supplement data and Pew Hispanic Center's Latino Survey for further analysis.
- ²³ Source is authors' tabulation of CPS September 2007 supplement data. It is available upon request.