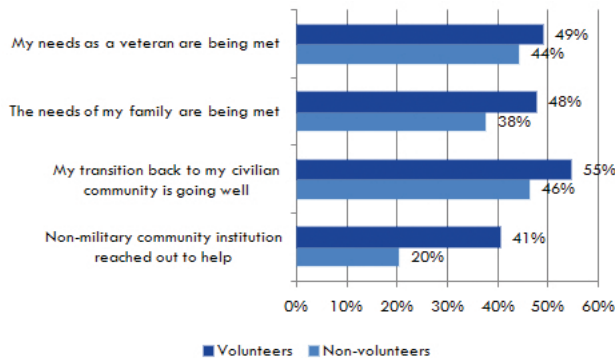


VOLUNTEERING EASES RETURN TO CIVILIAN LIFE FOR YOUNG VETERANS

Recent veterans who have volunteered since returning to the United States show a better adjustment to civilian life than their fellow returned servicemen and women who have not volunteered, according to a new CIRCLE report entitled "Volunteering and Civic Engagement among Recent Veterans."

Graph 1: Transition to U.S. Among Volunteering and Non-Volunteering Veterans



Source: Civic Enterprises OIF/OEF Veterans Survey

The report shows that volunteering helps bolster ties to the community and eases the transition back to civilian life. It draws on information on veteran volunteering trends from Civic Enterprises' survey of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) veterans, the Census 2008 Current Population Survey Volunteering Supplement, and the 2009 Civic Health Index. Fifty-five percent of volunteering veterans say the transition is going well, a full nine percentage points higher than non-volunteering veterans. Forty-eight percent of volunteering veterans also report that the needs of their family are being met compared with 38 percent of non-volunteering veterans.

"America's soldiers who dedicate their service to our country often return with strong skills and seek ways to participate more actively in their communities," said CIRCLE Director Peter Levine. "Veterans have a lot to give, and getting civically involved can help ease the transition back into civilian life and foster valuable relationships among veterans and community members of all ages."

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THE RESEARCH ROUNDUP COLUMN HIGHLIGHTS RECENT RESEARCH FINDINGS COMMISSIONED OR GENERATED BY CIRCLE. ALSO INCLUDED IS AN UPDATE ON NEW CIRCLE PRODUCTS SUCH AS FACT SHEETS, RESEARCH ARTICLES, RESEARCH ABSTRACTS, BIBLIOGRAPHIES, AND DATASETS.

VETERANS SHOW COMMITMENT TO SERVICE WHEN GIVEN MEANINGFUL OPPORTUNITIES

Serving in the military may have given a large portion of veterans the opportunity, motivation, and skills to participate more actively in their communities upon their return. For instance, 39 percent of veterans who have volunteered since their return from OIF/OEF were not regular volunteers before serving in the military.

The data showed how service abroad influenced their service back home, suggesting that veterans are looking for opportunities to use the skills they learned in the military. Those veterans who spent most of their time on planning and reconstruction (e.g., rebuilding roads, infrastructure, humanitarian assistance, training local leaders) were slightly more likely to volunteer back home than those who took part in other activities (such as combat, medical assistance, etc.).

Although 61 percent of OIF/OEF veterans strongly agree that American citizens have a basic responsibility to serve the public, the report shows only 25 percent of returned veterans who served after 2001 volunteer—a rate slightly lower than that of the general public. Meanwhile, older veterans volunteer at a higher rate and more frequently than people with no military background, suggesting that established community connections may lead to more opportunities for veterans' involvement.

MEANWHILE, OLDER VETERANS VOLUNTEER AT A HIGHER RATE AND WITH MORE INTENSITY THAN PEOPLE WITH NO MILITARY BACKGROUND, SUGGESTING THAT ESTABLISHED COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS MAY LEAD TO MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR VETERANS' INVOLVEMENT.

MILITARY AND NON-MILITARY INSTITUTIONS COULD HELP ENCOURAGE VETERANS TO SERVE

Veterans' organizations played a potent role in getting returned soldiers civically engaged, as 78 percent of those asked to serve by a

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veterans' organization have done so. Unfortunately, 74 percent of younger, non-volunteering veterans reported they had never been asked to serve by any organization, and 75 percent said they did not possess information on meaningful civic engagement opportunities. When contacted and given meaningful opportunities, veterans have proven to be active citizens.

Despite a lower volunteer rate among recently returned veterans, veterans of all generations were more likely than the general public to have attended a community meeting in the past 12 months, worked on a community project, or collaborated with a neighbor to solve a community problem. According to data from the Civic Health Index, the general veteran population was more likely to say that they would be willing to donate time to help change policies compared to the general public.

LESS DISPARITY BETWEEN WHITE AND LATINO VOLUNTEERING VETERANS COMPARED TO GENERAL PUBLIC

Consistent with the data in previous CIRCLE reports, veterans with more education also volunteered at higher rates. Non-white soldiers were more likely than white soldiers to respond that they had a desire to volunteer during active duty by a difference of seven percentage points.

NON-WHITE SOLDIERS WERE MORE LIKELY THAN WHITE SOLDIERS TO REPORT A DESIRE TO VOLUNTEER DURING ACTIVE DUTY BY A DIFFERENCE OF SEVEN PERCENTAGE POINTS.

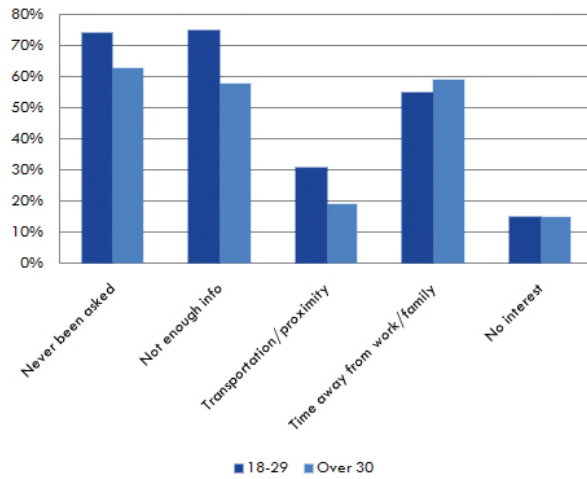
Latino veterans were just as likely as white veterans to become involved in their communities upon returning from duty - closing the volunteering gap that is normally seen between Whites and Latinos.

VETERANS LESS MOTIVATED BY FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

As a whole, veterans were not as motivated by financial incentives to become civically engaged as was the general public. Property tax reductions were shown to be the most appealing incentives for inspiring veterans to volunteer, followed by non-financial training opportunities. Overall, recently returned

soldiers 30 and younger were significantly more likely to get involved with their communities if they were informed of opportunities by a respected fellow veteran. Older veterans were more likely to volunteer if given the chance to volunteer with their spouses or children.

Graph 2: Reasons for Not Volunteering, % of Veterans who Agree/Strongly Agree



Source: Civic Enterprises OIF/OEF Veterans Survey

The fact sheet on volunteering and civic engagement among recent veterans can be found at <http://www.civicyouth.org/?p=364>. ★

