

VOLUNTEERING AMONG NON-COLLEGE YOUTH AND YOUTH OF IMMIGRANT ORIGIN

Despite the upward trend in youth volunteering, both non-college youth and youth of immigrant origin (those with at least one foreign-born parent) are less likely to volunteer than their counterparts, according to two new CIRCLE Fact Sheets: "Volunteering Among Youth of Immigrant Origin" and "Volunteering and College Experience." The research is based on data from the U.S. Census, Current Population Survey (CPS) and the National Conference on Citizenship's Civic Health Index.

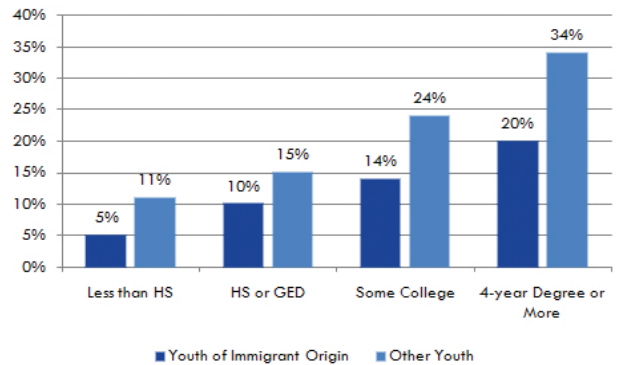
Approximately 43% of the 20- to 29-year-old population has no college experience. In addition, approximately one in four (26%) young people age 18 to 29 had at least one parent who was born outside the United States; 16% of youth aged 18 to 29 were born outside of the United States.

EDUCATION PROVIDES PATHWAY TO VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

Research shows that young adults (age 20 to 29) with no college experience are half as likely to volunteer compared to young adults with college experience. For youth of immigrant origin, education also had a strong impact on volunteer rates. According to the authors, youth of immigrant origin who were enrolled in any kind of educational institution were almost twice as likely to volunteer as their non-enrolled peers, suggesting that education provides relevant knowledge and skills as well as opportunities to volunteer.

As the authors suggest, not receiving sufficient opportunities in high school could affect the formation of civic identity later in life, which is why providing volunteering opportunities is crucial. According to CIRCLE Lead Researcher Kei-Kawashima-Ginsberg, "This research should encourage schools and community leaders to make sure everyone has opportunities to volunteer, so that regardless of background, no young person slips between the cracks."

Graph 1: Volunteering Among 18-29 year olds by Education and Immigrant Origin



Source: CPS September Volunteering Supplement, 2007

ACCORDING TO THE AUTHORS, "YOUTH OF IMMIGRANT ORIGIN WHO WERE ENROLLED IN ANY KIND OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION WERE ALMOST TWICE AS LIKELY TO VOLUNTEER AS THEIR NON-ENROLLED PEERS, SUGGESTING THAT EDUCATION PROVIDES RELEVANT KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS AS WELL AS OPPORTUNITIES TO VOLUNTEER."

YOUTH OF IMMIGRANT ORIGIN FIND VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH ALTERNATIVE VENUES

Youth of immigrant origin were more likely to mention social networks in response to how they got involved with volunteering, whereas non-immigrant youth cited families more often. The report also finds that youth of immigrant origin who either spent more than 15 years in the United States or who immigrated before the age of ten were more likely to volunteer than those who spent less time in the U.S.

The authors suggest that becoming an active participant in the community may take time. It is possible that the families of immigrant youth do not yet have as strong ties to the community as families of non-immigrant youth.

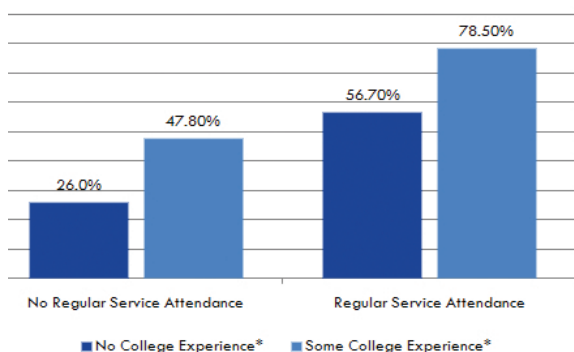


CIRCLE Director Peter Levine notes, “We need immigrants, one of the fastest growing segments of our population, to be involved in our communities. Volunteering benefits those who serve and those whom they help. Communities, policy-makers, and institutions must provide better access to volunteer opportunities for young immigrants.”

NON-COLLEGE YOUTH MAY BENEFIT FROM NEW MEDIA AND RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

The fact sheet “Volunteering and College Experience” shows that religious organizations and new media may offer pathways to volunteering opportunities for non-college youth. Generally speaking, religious service attendance is associated with higher rates of volunteering. For non-college youth, this remains the case: non-college youth who attend religious services are twice as likely to volunteer as those who do not attend services regularly. Moreover, when asked for which type of organization they volunteered, “religious” organizations were the top choice for young people regardless of college experience. Religious organizations could serve as a venue for non-college youth to access more institutionalized forms of volunteering (opportunities that college-bound youths have access to through school).

Graph 2: Volunteering and Religious Service Participation by College Attendance (Ages 18-29)



Source: America's Civic Health Index 2008

The study found that young people who used new forms of media for civic purposes, such as social networking sites (Myspace, Facebook), Youtube, and text messaging, also volunteered at a higher rate than those who did not. Non-college youth who used new media for civic purposes were between 10 and 40 percent more likely to volunteer than those who did not.

NON-COLLEGE YOUTH WHO USED NEW MEDIA FOR CIVIC PURPOSES WERE BETWEEN 10 AND 40 PERCENT MORE LIKELY TO VOLUNTEER THAN THOSE WHO DID NOT.

As the authors point out, the data should be interpreted with caution as the use of new media is also connected with other factors relating to volunteering, such as income. While more research is needed on the topic, new media could be a tool to break down barriers to volunteering by helping youth with no college experience find information related to volunteering opportunities.

Both Fact Sheets can be downloaded from CIRCLE's Web site. “Volunteering Among Youth of Immigrant Origin” can be downloaded from <http://www.civicyouth.org/?p=354> and “Volunteering and College Experience” can be downloaded from <http://www.civicyouth.org/?p=350>. ★

