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Civic Learning & Engagement

FACT SHEET

College Experience and Volunteering

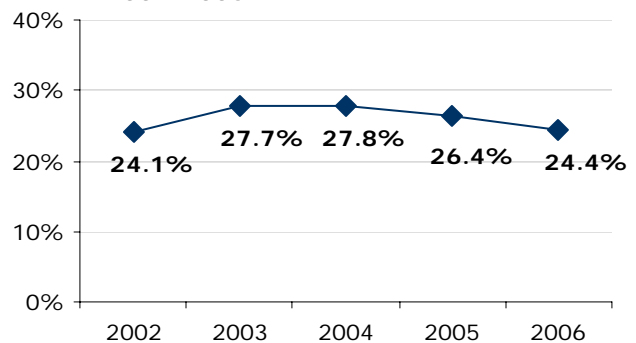
By Karlo Barrios Marcelo¹
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College experience and volunteering are positively correlated.² Substantial differences in civic activity exist between young people who attend college and young people who do not attend college.³

This fact sheet explores one form of civic engagement, volunteering. Volunteering among youth with college experience, ages 19-25, was down for the second year in a row in 2006.⁴ Figure 1 shows the volunteer rate among youth with college experience from 2002 to 2006. After an initial increase in the volunteer rate, the volunteer rate in 2005 fell 1.4 points and in 2006 it fell 2 percent to 24.4 percent. Similar declines in volunteering are evident from other data sources as well.⁵ For example, according to the Civic and Political Health of the Nation (CPHS) surveys (2002 and 2006), the volunteer rate for youth with college experience, ages 19-25, was down 4.0 points in 2006 to 36.9 percent from 40.9 percent in 2002.⁶

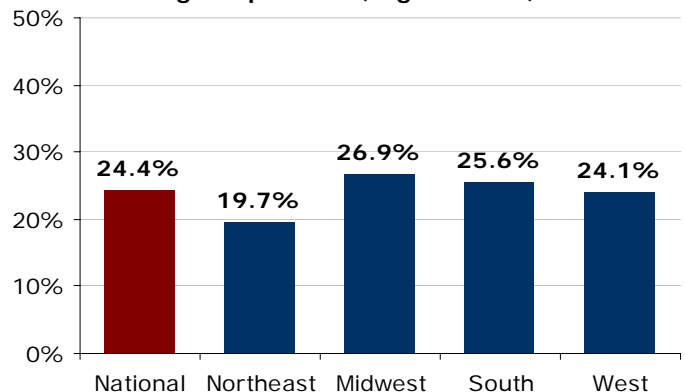
In this fact sheet, the primary source of data for volunteer rates is the September (Volunteering) Supplement of the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey.

Figure 1: Volunteer Rate Among Youth with College Experience, Ages 19-25, 2002-2006



Source: Author's tabulations from the Current Population Survey, September (Volunteering) Supplement, 2006.

Figure 2: Volunteer Rate Among Youth with College Experience, Ages 19-25, 2006



Source: Author's tabulations from the Current Population Survey September (Volunteering) Supplement, 2006

This fact sheet also presents information on types of volunteer organizations, volunteer activities, and ways that these youth get involved in volunteer activities. At the end of this fact sheet is an appendix section featuring the information by college status.⁷

Regional Variation in Volunteering

Volunteering

Volunteer rates vary by region of the country. Figure 2 shows the volunteer rate by region of the country.⁸ Among youth with college experience, those who reside in the Midwest region reported the highest volunteer rate, 10.3 percent. This volunteer rate was 2.5 percentage points above the national average. In contrast, youth in the Northeast region had the lowest volunteer rate at 19.7 percent.

Table 1 shows the five highest and lowest states in terms of volunteer rates among youth with college experience.⁹

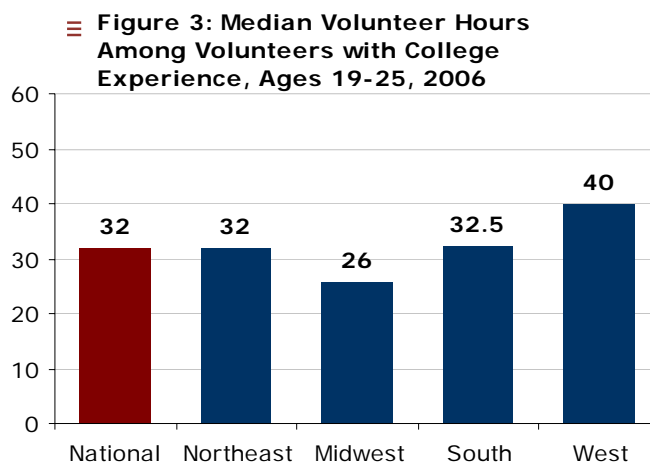
Table 1 – Volunteer Rate Among Youth with College Experience, ages 19-25, 2006

Top 5 States	Volunteer Rate
Utah	44.0%
Oregon	41.6%
Alaska	38.2%
Colorado	34.2%
South Dakota	34.1%
Lowest 5 States	
Nevada	10.0%
New York	12.7%
New Mexico	14.3%
West Virginia	14.7%
Missouri	15.2%

Source: Author's tabulations from the Current Population Survey, September (Volunteering) Supplement, 2006

Median Volunteer Hours

While youth in the Midwest region had the highest volunteer rate among all regions in 2006, the median volunteer with college experience in the Midwest region reported the lowest median hours of volunteering, at 26 hours. In contrast, while volunteering was less prevalent among youth in the West than in the Midwest, the median amount of volunteering among volunteers in the West region was 40 volunteer hours, eight more hours than the national median, and 14 hours more than among youth with college experience in the Midwest.



Source: Author's tabulations from the Current Population Survey, September (Volunteering) Supplement, 2006.

Type of Volunteer Organization

Volunteers with college experience performed their service for a wide variety of organizations. However, the single most common category of organization volunteered for was religious in nature. In 2006, 29.9 percent of volunteers with college experience reported they had volunteered for a religious organization, 19.6 percent volunteered for social and community service organizations, and 19.1 percent for children's educational, sports, or recreational organizations. Volunteers with college experience were least likely to volunteer for an immigrant/refugee assistance organization. See Table 2.

Table 2 – Type of Organization Volunteered for, by Volunteers with College Experience, Ages 19-25, 2006¹⁰

Type of Organization	Percentage of Volunteers with College Experience
Religious	29.9%
Social and community service	19.6%
Children's educational, sports, or recreational	19.1%
Other educational	12.2%
Hospital, clinic, or healthcare	7.5%
Health research or health education	6.5%
Some other type of organization	6.0%
Civic	4.2%
Youth services	3.7%
Environmental or animal care	3.1%
Cultural or arts	2.3%
Sports or hobby	1.9%
International	1.6%
Public safety	1.3%
Political party or advocacy	1.2%
Labor union, business, or professional	0.7%
Immigrant/refugee assistance	0.0%

Source: Author's tabulations from the Current Population Survey, September (Volunteering) Supplement, 2006

Type of Volunteer Activity

There are many ways volunteers can perform their service. Young volunteers with college experience were most likely to tutor or teach (23.5 percent), mentor youth (22.5 percent), and “engage in general labor, supply transportation for people” (20.8 percent). Youth with college experience were least likely to “provide professional or management assistance including serving on a board or committee.” See Table 3.

Table 3 – Type of Volunteer Activities among Volunteers with College Experience, Ages 19-25, 2006¹¹

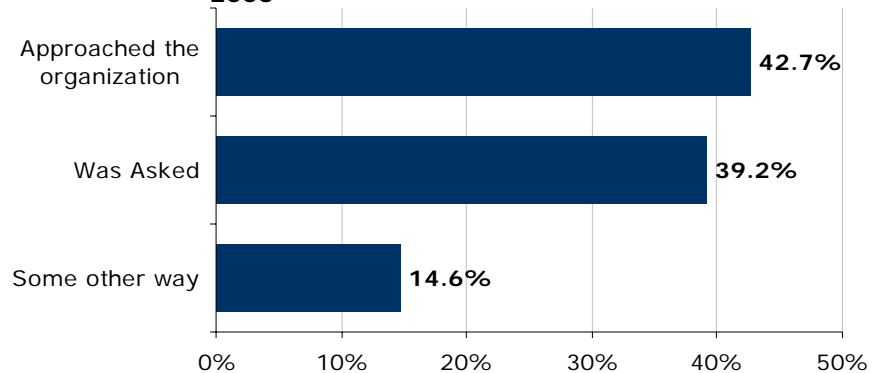
<i>Volunteer Activity</i>	<i>Percentage of Volunteers with College Experience</i>
Tutor or teach	23.5%
Mentor youth	22.5%
Engage in general labor, supply transportation for people	20.8%
Fundraise or sell items to raise money	19.9%
Collect, prepare, distribute, or serve food	16.9%
Other activity	14.8%
Engage in music, performance, or other artistic activities	13.7%
Collect, make, or distribute clothing, crafts or goods other than food	12.1%
Coach, referee, supervise sports team	10.3%
Provide general office services	9.7%
Provide counseling, medical care, fire/EMS, or protective services	8.6%
Be an usher, greeter or minister	7.9%
Provide professional or management assistance including serving on a board or committee	7.6%

Source: Author's tabulations from the Current Population Survey, September (Volunteering) Supplement, 2006

How Youth with College Experience Become Involved in Volunteering

The plurality of youth with college experience volunteered their time with an organization because they approached the organization (42.7). Also, a significant percentage reported approaching the organization as the way they became involved (39.2 percent).

Figure 4: How Volunteers with College Experience, ages 19-25, Become Involved with an Organization, 2006



Source: Author's tabulations from the Current Population Survey, September (Volunteering) Supplement, 2006

Table 4 shows who asked volunteers with college experience to volunteer. The majority of the time someone in the organization reached out to these volunteers (51.7 percent), while friends and relatives were also persons who asked these volunteers to become involved.

Table 4 – Who Asked Volunteers with College Experience to Become Involved with an Organization in 2006

Someone in the organization	51.7%
Friend	16.8%
Relative	16.7%
Co-worker	5.3%
Boss or employer	5.0%
Someone else	3.5%

Source: Author's tabulations from the Current Population Survey, September (Volunteering) Supplement, 2006

Of those volunteers with college experience who reported that they became involved with an organization through "some other way," Table 5 shows that the plurality of these high school volunteers became involved with an organization through their "own involvement in the organization/school."

Table 5 – Other Ways Volunteers with College Experience Become Involved with an Organization in 2006

Own involvement in the organization/school	33.0%
Family member's involvement in the organization/school	16.8%
Other	16.5%
School requirement	13.6%
Friend's, co-worker's, or roommate's involvement in the organization	10.6%
Responded to public appeal in newspaper/radio/TV/flyer/Internet	4.9%
Court-ordered community service	2.7%
Referred by volunteer organization	1.3%

Source: Author's tabulations from the Current Population Survey, September (Volunteering) Supplement, 2006

Appendix

Table A – Volunteer Rates Among 19-25 year olds by College Status and Region of the Country, 2006

	Current College students	College Graduates, not enrolled	College experience, not enrolled	No College Experience
National	26.0%	30.9%	22.7%	8.3%
Northeast	18.2%	26.5%	20.4%	6.3%
Midwest	29.2%	34.5%	24.2%	10.3%
South	27.0%	32.8%	23.2%	8.7%
West	26.0%	28.4%	22.0%	8.3%

Source: Author's tabulations from the Current Population Survey, September (Volunteering) Supplement, 2006

Table B – Median Volunteer Hours Among 19-25 year olds by College Status and Region of the Country, 2006

	Current College students	College Graduates, not enrolled	College experience, not enrolled	No College Experience
National	30	36	33	33.5
Northeast	32	24	30	54
Midwest	24	40	30	24
South	30	40	32	34
West	37	39.5	40	40

Source: Author's tabulations from the Current Population Survey, September (Volunteering) Supplement, 2006

Table C – Type of Volunteer Organization Among 19-25 year old Volunteers by College Status, 2006¹²

	Current College students	College Graduates, not enrolled	College experience, not enrolled	No College Experience
Children's educational, sports, or recreational	17.2%	23.6%	21.5%	19.2%
Civic	5.0%	2.5%	3.5%	4.7%
Cultural or arts	2.3%	2.1%	2.0%	1.6%
Environmental or animal care	3.0%	4.9%	3.4%	1.7%
Health research or health education	6.3%	6.4%	6.1%	2.5%
Hospital, clinic, or healthcare	6.2%	9.3%	7.6%	3.4%
Immigrant/refugee assistance	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%
International	1.1%	1.1%	2.1%	0.0%
Labor union, business, or professional	0.6%	1.1%	0.8%	0.9%
Other educational	15.9%	9.8%	7.7%	3.5%
Political party or advocacy	1.2%	1.0%	1.1%	0.5%
Public safety	1.1%	0.6%	1.5%	4.5%
Religious	28.1%	30.9%	32.9%	41.4%
Social and community service	20.9%	21.8%	18.1%	13.9%
Some other type of organization	6.5%	4.2%	5.1%	5.5%
Sports or hobby	2.8%	0.8%	1.1%	1.6%
Youth services	3.8%	4.9%	3.6%	2.8%

Source: Author's tabulations from the Current Population Survey, September (Volunteering) Supplement, 2006

Table D – Type of Volunteer Activity Among 19-25 year old Volunteers by College Status, 2006¹³

	Current College students	College Graduates, not enrolled	College experience, not enrolled	No College Experience
Be an usher, greeter or minister	8.9%	7.0%	7.0%	10.8%
Coach, referee, supervise sports team	10.5%	9.8%	10.6%	6.9%
Collect, make, or distribute clothing, crafts or goods other than food	12.3%	12.4%	12.1%	10.5%
Collect, prepare, distribute, or serve food	16.1%	20.4%	18.8%	21.8%
Engage in general labor, supply transportation for people	23.0%	18.1%	19.0%	23.4%
Engage in music, performance, or other artistic activities	14.9%	12.4%	12.9%	15.2%
Fundraise or sell items to raise money	19.9%	18.8%	18.7%	19.8%
Mentor youth	22.6%	25.2%	22.6%	17.0%
Other activity	15.4%	13.8%	15.0%	18.6%
Provide counseling, medical care, fire/EMS, or protective services	7.5%	7.3%	8.4%	6.7%
Provide general office services	11.7%	7.9%	7.2%	7.5%
Provide professional or management assistance including serving on a board or committee	7.4%	9.8%	8.0%	4.9%
Tutor or teach	26.8%	23.3%	19.1%	23.2%

Source: Author's tabulations from the Current Population Survey, September (Volunteering) Supplement, 2006

Table E – How 19-25 year old Volunteers Got Involved by College Status, 2006

	Current College students	College Graduates, not enrolled	College experience, not enrolled	No College Experience
Some other way	13.9%	15.2%	15.9%	16.8%
Was Asked	36.7%	41.1%	41.8%	44.0%
Approached the organization	44.9%	40.5%	39.5%	37.7%

Source: Author's tabulations from the Current Population Survey, September (Volunteering) Supplement, 2006

Table F – Who Asked 19-25 year old Volunteers to Get Involved by College Status, 2006

	Current College students	College Graduates, not enrolled	College experience, not enrolled	No College Experience
Boss or employer	2.1%	10.8%	7.3%	4.3%
Co-worker	1.9%	9.4%	7.6%	3.5%
Friend	17.0%	15.5%	15.8%	13.9%
Relative	18.1%	11.6%	17.1%	25.9%
Someone else	5.5%	1.0%	1.9%	4.7%
Someone in the organization	53.1%	51.6%	50.2%	47.8%

Source: Author's tabulations from the Current Population Survey, September (Volunteering) Supplement, 2006

Table G – Other Ways 19-25 year old Volunteers Got Involved by College Status, 2006

	Current College students	College Graduates, not enrolled	College experience, not enrolled	No College Experience
Court-ordered community service	0.3%	2.8%	5.2%	4.5%
Family member's involvement in the organization/school	18.5%	8.5%	15.0%	48.3%
Friend's, co-worker's, or roommate's involvement in the organization	9.9%	4.3%	11.0%	5.2%
Other	7.3%	31.7%	26.1%	7.9%
Own involvement in the organization/school	40.4%	33.8%	27.0%	21.4%
Public housing requirement	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.6%
Referred by volunteer organization	N/A	N/A	2.5%	N/A
Responded to public appeal in newspaper/radio/TV/flyer/Internet	4.8%	5.4%	5.4%	5.4%
School requirement	18.9%	7.7%	6.8%	3.5%

Source: Author's tabulations from the Current Population Survey, September (Volunteering) Supplement, 2006

Notes

¹ Research Associate. I thank Mark Hugo Lopez for comments on earlier drafts of this fact sheet. All errors in fact or interpretation are my own.

² See *The 2006 Civic and Political Health of the Nation* report by Mark Hugo Lopez, Peter Levine, Deborah Both, Abby Kiesa, Emily Kirby, and Karlo Marcelo. (2006) Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE). http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/2006_CPHS_Report_update.pdf

Also see the fact sheet "Volunteering Among Young People," by Mark Hugo Lopez and Karlo Barrios Marcelo. (2007) Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE). www.civicyouth.org

³ College students may have more opportunities than non-college youth for volunteering, such as experiential learning. See *The Future of Democracy: Developing the Next Generation of American Citizens* by Peter Levine (2007).

For more on differences between non-college youth and youth with college experience, see the fact sheet "College Attendance and Civic Engagement among 18 to 25 year olds" by Mark Hugo Lopez and Brent A. Elrod, from the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE). www.civicyouth.org

Also, see the fact sheet "Volunteering Among Non-College Youth," by Karlo Barrios Marcelo for information on volunteering among youth, ages 19-25, with no college experience. www.civicyouth.org

⁴ I define college experience as young people, ages 19-25, who have either some college experience, a bachelor's degree or more, or those who are current college or graduate students. This definition includes two-year and four-year institutions.

⁵ Difficulties with measuring volunteering rates stem from two measurement issues. First, survey participants often have difficulty remembering or classifying activities as volunteer activities. Second, surveys employ different methods to acquire information on volunteering rates from survey participants. For more information and discussion of issues surrounding the measurement of volunteering, see the following:

Toppe, C. "CIRCLE Working Paper 43: Measuring Volunteering: A Behavioral Approach," (2006) Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement. www.civicyouth.org

Toppe, C. and Galaskiewicz, J. "Measuring Volunteering: Committee Report." (2006) The Points of Light Foundation. <http://www.pointsoflight.org/downloads/pdf/resources/research/CommitteeReport.pdf>

Steinberg, K., Rooney, P., and Chin, W. "Measuring of Volunteering: A Methodological Study Using Indiana as a Test Case," in the *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, Volume 31, Issue 4, 2002.

⁶ See *The 2006 Civic and Political Health of the Nation* report (CIRCLE) for more information about the survey: http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/2006_CPHS_Report_update.pdf

⁷ In the appendix of this fact sheet, there are four mutually exclusive categories for college status, ages 19-25:

1. Current College Students—current college and graduate students.
2. College Graduates, not enrolled—young people with a bachelor's degree or more who are not currently enrolled in college or graduate school.
3. College Experience, not enrolled—young people with some type of college experience (some college or bachelor's degree or more) who are not currently enrolled in college or graduate school.
4. No College Experience (non-college)—young people with no college experience, whatsoever.

⁸ Geographic regions are classified by the Current Population Survey as following: Northeast Region—Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont; Midwest Region—Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin; South Region—Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia; and West Region—Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

⁹ For state rankings of the volunteer rate, see "Volunteering in the States: 2002 to 2006," by Sara E. Helms and Karlo Barrios Marcelo. www.civicyouth.org

¹⁰ Percentages in Table 1 do not add up to 100 percent, because volunteers could select more than one organization.

¹¹ Percentages in Table 2 do not add up to 100 percent, because volunteers could select more than one volunteer activity.

¹² Percentages in Table C do not add up to 100 percent, because volunteers could select more than one organization.

¹³ Percentages in Table D do not add up to 100 percent, because volunteers could select more than one volunteer activity.