

The Current State of Volunteerism

Section 2: The Current State of Volunteerism

KEY POINT

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 61.8 million people had volunteered for an organization at least once between September 2007 and September 2008.

Volunteering in The United States

Volunteer Service Indicator

The volunteer service indicator is an annual national measurement of volunteer activities. The data is collected through a supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS) conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. Approximately 60,000 households are surveyed nationally as part of the CPS.

The survey includes questions to assess the nature of volunteer service in the United States, including: how many Americans are engaged in volunteer service, the frequency of their volunteer activity, the kinds of organizations with which they volunteer, the types of activities they choose, and for those who volunteered in the past - the reasons why they did not volunteer during the survey period. The data was first collected in 2002.

Current Population Survey - 2008

Highlights from the December 2008 Current Population Survey, covering the period from September 2007 – September 2008:

- The rate of volunteering was higher among women than among men across different demographic variables, including age, race, and education levels.
- 33.8 percent of parents with children under 18 years of age have volunteered compared to the 23.5 percent of persons without children of that age.
- 21.9 percent of persons 16-24 years volunteered; 22.8 percent of persons 24-35 years volunteered; 31.5 percent of persons aged 35-44 volunteered (the most active group) ; 29.9 percent of persons aged 45-54 volunteered; and 23.5 percent of persons 65 years and older volunteered in 2008.
- Employed persons were more likely to volunteer than unemployed persons or persons not in the labor force.
- Married persons volunteer at a higher rate than other marital statuses.
- 26.4 percent of the population volunteered.

For more information about the survey, visit www.bls.gov/cps.

National Value of Volunteer Time

Each year, Independent Sector, a coalition of nonprofits, foundations and corporations, calculates the national average hourly value of volunteer time. This value is based on the average earnings for private non-agricultural workers, as released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, and is increased by 12 percent to account for fringe benefits.

The 2008 national average hourly value of volunteer time is \$20.25. For more information, including average hourly values by state, visit www.independentsector.org or www.policevolunteers.org.

Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act

Signed by President Barack Obama on April 21, 2009, the Serve America Act reauthorizes and expands national service programs administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service. The Act will strengthen America's civic infrastructure through social innovation, volunteer mobilization, and building nonprofit capacity. It will also provide opportunities for Americans for all ages to volunteer. The new law is designed to strengthen the management, cost-effectiveness and accountability of national service programs by increasing flexibility, consolidating funding streams, and introducing more competition.

2009 Analysis of Registered VIPS Programs

In spring 2009, an analysis of registered VIPS programs was conducted. The information below provides a snapshot of law enforcement volunteerism.

Experience with volunteers varied significantly:

- 72 percent of law enforcement agencies have had volunteers for more than seven years.
- The total number of volunteers ranged from two to more than 8,000.
- The total number of volunteer hours contributed in the previous year ranged from 1 to 70,000.

Agencies were asked about the structure and management of their volunteer programs:

- 97 percent said they have a volunteer program manager or coordinator. Of these agencies, 50 percent said their managers were sworn employees.
- 55 percent said they coordinate Neighborhood Watch activities in their jurisdictions.
- 40 percent said they coordinated with an external program such as a Citizen Corps council, a Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, or a volunteer center to recruit volunteers.

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of various factors referred to below. The following percentages of respondents indicated that the described factor was "important" or "very important:"

- 94 percent cited value added to the department.
- 92 percent cited the ability for officers to respond to more pressing needs.
- 85 percent cited enhancing citizen understanding of the police.
- 90 percent cited the ability to provide additional services.
- 81 percent cited liability concerns.
- 81 percent cited confidentiality concerns.
- 66 percent cited turnover of volunteers.
- 63 percent cited cost to administer the volunteer program.
- 63 percent cited required training expenses.

Also of note:

- 97 percent of agencies perform a records check on potential volunteers.
- 94 percent of agencies do not accept individuals with felony convictions.
- 89 percent of agencies require volunteers to undergo orientation and/or training.
- 88 percent have written rules and regulations governing volunteer activities.
- 88 percent require an interview before acceptance into the volunteer program.
- 88 percent require some or all of their volunteers to wear uniforms
- 56 percent provide some type of insurance coverage for volunteers.
- 30 percent formally evaluate volunteers.
- 26 percent provide volunteers with non-monetary benefits, services or incentives, such as training.