

VOLUNTARISM AMONG OLDER ADULTS

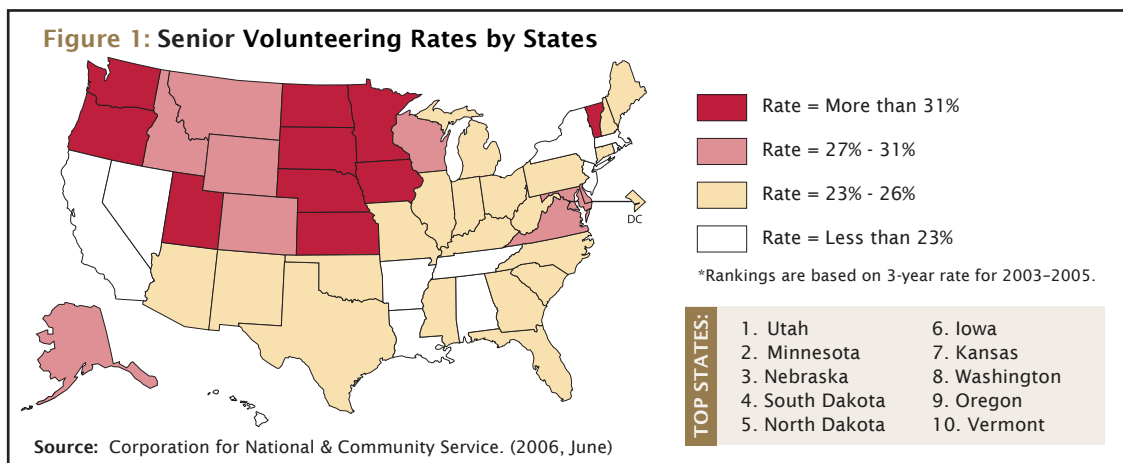
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Question 1: Is it common for older adults to volunteer?

- According to the September 2005 Current Population Survey (CPS), 34.2% of those ages 35-49, 30.7% of those age 50-64 and 24.8% of those 65 and older volunteered for an organization. (Havens, 2005: Table 1).
- In a 2003 survey, AARP found that “About half (51%) the 45 and older population report volunteering when asked [whether]... they volunteer for a non-profit, charity, school, hospital, religious organization, neighborhood, association, civic or other group.... an additional 36% reported behaviors that were not captured by the traditional volunteering question but could be considered to be in service to communities or persons.” (AARP, 2003: 6).

Question 2: How much do older adults volunteer?

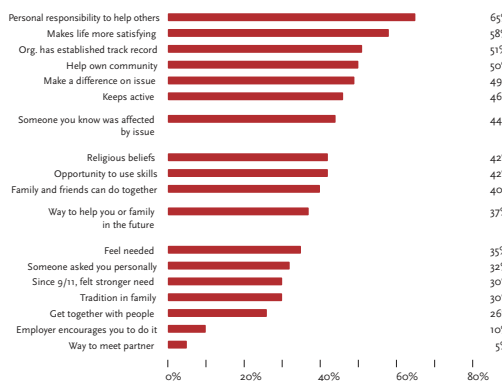
- According to the September 2005 Current Population Survey (CPS), 19.0% of volunteers ages 55 to 64 years volunteered between 1-14 hours, 23.3% volunteered between 15-49 hours, 14.8% volunteered between 50-99 hours, 30.1% volunteered between 100-499 hours, 6.6% volunteered over 500 hours, and 6.3% did not report their annual hours. (United States Department of Labor & Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005: Table 2).
- According to the September 2005 Current Population Survey (CPS), 13.4% of volunteers aged 65 years and older volunteered between 1-14 hours, 19.8% volunteered between 15-49 hours, 13.8% volunteered between 50-99 hours, 37.0% volunteered between 100-499 hours, 8.6% volunteered over 500 hours, and 7.4% did not report their annual hours. (United States Department of Labor & Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005: Table 2).
- In a 2003 survey, AARP found that “45 and older volunteers largely contribute their time sporadically—48% say they have no regular volunteer schedule, while 38% are regular volunteers, who pitch in each month.” (AARP, 2003: 9).
- In a 2003 survey, AARP found that “volunteers who are not employed average 19 hours per month compared to 12 hours by employed individuals, but the not employed are no more likely than the employed to be volunteers or to have regular volunteer commitments.” (AARP, 2003: 9).
- Using 2003-2005 CPS data, the Corporation for National and Community Service found that volunteer rates vary by state, with a minimum 3-year average of 13.7% and a maximum of 51.8%. (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2006: 29).



Question 3: What organizations do older adults volunteer for?

- According to the September 2005 Current Population Survey (CPS), 8.0% of volunteers aged 55 to 64 volunteered for a civic, political, professional, or international organization, 13.5% volunteered for an educational or youth service organization, 2.1% volunteered for an environmental or animal care organization, 8.9% volunteered for a hospital or other health organization, 1.4% volunteered for a public safety organization, 41.2% volunteered for a religious organization, 15.5% volunteered for a social or community service organization, 3.8% volunteered for a sport, hobby, cultural, or arts organization, and 4.0% volunteered for other organizations. 1.7% could not be determined. (United States Department of Labor & Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005: Table 4).

Figure 2: Percent of Volunteers 45 and Older Who Call Various Motivations Very Important Reasons To Volunteer



Source: AARP (2003).

Question 4: What motivates older adults to volunteer?

- According to the September 2005 Current Population Survey (CPS), 42.1% of volunteers ages 65 and older directly approached the organization to volunteer, 41.0% of volunteers were asked by someone else (1.6%), 14.2% became involved in other ways, and 2.7% did not report on how they became involved in their organization. (United States Department of Labor & Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005: Table 6).
- In a 2003 survey, AARP found that the most commonly given reasons for volunteering include: a personal responsibility to help others (65%), to make life more satisfying (58%), organization has an established track record (51%), to help their own community (50%), to make a difference on an issue (49%), and to remain active (46%). (AARP, 2003: 28).

Question 5: What is the relationship between paid work and volunteering?

- According to the September 2005 Current Population Survey (CPS), 29.8% of full time workers volunteered, compared to 38.2% of part time workers, 26.4% of the unemployed, and 24.4% of those not in the labor force. (United States Department of Labor & Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005: Table 1).

Question 6: What do employers do to encourage volunteering?

- Employees, ages 50 to 70, who were able to reduce their hours on the job in 2002 reported an average increase of 6 annual hours volunteered in the time period from 2002 to 2004. (McNamara, 2006).
- In a 2003 survey, AARP found that 10% of adults over the age of 45 cited “employer encourages [them]” as a very important motivation for volunteering. (AARP, 2003: 28).
- In a 2005 survey of employees and retirees from four selected firms, “almost three quarters (72%) of employees and retirees indicated Moderate to Very High Interest in pursuing volunteer activities through the workplace in retirement.” (Center for Corporate Citizenship & Volunteers of America, 2005: 9).

References

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