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## Youth Helping America - Building Active Citizens: The Role of Social Institutions in Teen Volunteering

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# YOUTH HELPING AMERICA

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*Building Active Citizens:  
The Role of Social Institutions in Teen Volunteering*

*November 2005*



## AUTHORS

ROBERT GRIMM, JR., Director, Office of Research and Policy Development, CNCS

NATHAN DIETZ, Research Associate and Statistician, Office of Research and Policy Development, CNCS

KIMBERLY SPRING, Policy Analyst, Office of Research and Policy Development, CNCS

KELLY AREY, Policy Analyst, Office of Research and Policy Development, CNCS

JOHN FOSTER-BEY, Senior Advisor, Office of Research and Policy Development, CNCS

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# INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At a time when many are worried that the United States is experiencing a general decline in civic and political engagement, volunteering appears particularly strong among today's young people. While volunteering is just one form of community involvement, research has shown that it is often connected to other forms of engagement, and, among youth, volunteering plays a valuable role in shaping how youth learn to interact with their community and develop the skills, values, and sense of empowerment necessary to become active citizens.<sup>i</sup>

In an effort to better understand the attitudes and behaviors of young people in America around volunteering, service-learning and other forms of community involvement, the Corporation for National and Community Service, in collaboration with the U.S. Census Bureau and Independent Sector, conducted the Youth Volunteering and Civic Engagement Survey (the Youth Volunteering Survey), a national survey of American youth. Between January and March of 2005, 3,178 Americans between the ages of 12 and 18 were asked about their volunteer activities and experiences with school-based service-learning projects, as well as their involvement with school, family, religious congregations, and community associations.



The following report will highlight the state of youth volunteering and consider the relationship between youth volunteer behavior and three primary environments where youth form their social networks: family, religious organizations, and school. These social institutions play an essential role in connecting youth to volunteer opportunities and encouraging them to become engaged in service. Fostering environments that encourage volunteer activities are critical to creating a commitment to service and community involvement that will remain with them for their lifetime. Through this analysis, we look to build on existing research that has demonstrated that connections to the community and volunteering form a positive feedback loop, whereby opportunities provided to youth to engage with others leads to a greater sense of reciprocity and trust that in turn leads youth to develop a personal ethic of community engagement.<sup>ii</sup>

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge the U.S. Census Bureau for all of its efforts in designing and implementing this survey, particularly the work of Ken Kaplan. We are indebted to the intellectual contributions of Independent Sector, which has been involved in the design of this study from the beginning. We would particularly like to mention the contributions of Christopher Toppe and the Points of Light Foundation in working with us on the analysis of the findings. We are likewise grateful to Tom Sander and Connie Flanagan for providing us with insightful comments in the drafting process. Finally, we thank David Reingold for his support and ideas throughout the project.

We appreciate the support provided through Independent Sector by The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), The Coca-Cola Company, The Levi Strauss Foundation, the MetLife Foundation and the Lilly Endowment, Inc. for this national study.

*This brief is the first report in the Youth Helping America Series.*

# YOUTH HELPING AMERICA EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**MAJOR FINDING:** An estimated 15.5 Million teens participated in volunteer activities during 2004, contributing more than 1.3 billion hours of service.

In the winter of 2005, the Corporation for National and Community Service, in collaboration with the U.S. Census Bureau and Independent Sector, conducted the Youth Volunteering and Civic Engagement Survey, a national survey of 3,178 American youth between the ages of 12 and 18. The survey collected information on teen volunteering habits, experiences with school-based service-learning, and other forms of civic engagement. This report presents key findings from the survey, including an analysis of the relationship between the level of volunteer commitment among youth and three major social institutions: family, religious congregations, and school.



According to the survey, the state of youth volunteering in America appears robust: an estimated 15.5 million teenagers participated in volunteer activities through a formal organization during 2004, contributing more than 1.3 billion hours of service. **That translates into a rate of 55 percent – more than one and a half times the adult rate of 29 percent** as established by the the Census and Bureau of Labor Statistics' 2004 Current Population Survey figures, which used the same questions and definitions as the Youth Volunteering Survey.

Teens tend to serve fewer hours and with less regularity than their adult counterparts. For example, the study found that the typical youth volunteer contributes 29 hours of service each year, compared to 52 hours for the adult volunteer population.

Like other studies, this survey confirmed the likelihood that young people will volunteer is related to their connections to the community through the social institutions of family, religious congregations, and schools. For example, the study found that:

- When compared to a youth with no family members who volunteer, a youth from a family where at least one parent volunteers is almost two times more likely to volunteer, and nearly three times more likely to volunteer on a regular basis.
- 64 percent of teenagers who attend religious services regularly also volunteer, compared to 41 percent among those youth who do not attend religious services at all.
- 38 percent of youth, an estimated 10.6 million teenagers, have engaged in community service as part of a school activity, and 65 percent of these youth were engaged in service-learning related activities, such as planning or reflecting on the service project.
- What's more, only 5 percent of youth attributed their volunteer activities to a school requirement.
- High school students are more likely to volunteer than junior high school students – 58 percent compared to 49 percent, respectively.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Going beyond previous studies linking volunteering to individual and social characteristics, this analysis also looked at the frequency of youth volunteering, and at the relationship between social institutions and their level of volunteer commitment.

To aid in that analysis, the authors of the study categorized those who volunteered twelve or more weeks a year as “regular” volunteers; those who volunteered three to eleven weeks a year as “occasional” volunteers; and those who volunteered one or two weeks a year as “episodic” volunteers. Using these criteria the survey found that:

- 39 percent of the teenagers who volunteer are regular volunteers, compared with 55 percent of adult volunteers who fall in that category, while 35 percent of youth are occasional volunteers and 27 percent are episodic volunteers.
  
- The stronger the social ties, the more likely a teen is to be a regular volunteer:
  - Youth with at least one parent who volunteers are nearly three times more likely to be regular volunteers than youth from non-volunteer families – 33 percent and 11 percent, respectively.
  - Youth who attend religious services regularly are nearly twice as likely to be regular volunteers as those who do not attend services.
  - Students who report doing better in school are more likely to volunteer regularly than are students who do not do as well.
  
- High school students are more likely to be regular volunteers than are junior high school students – 24 percent and 15 percent, respectively.

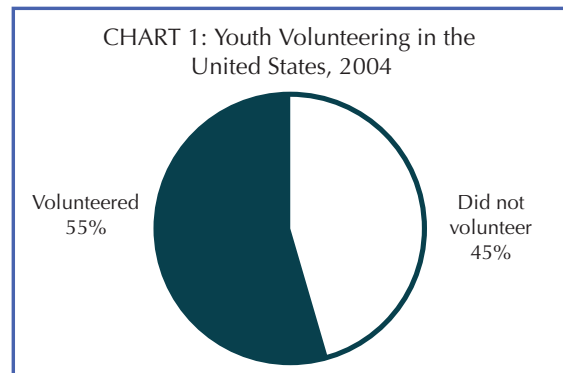
This report marks the first step in developing a comprehensive model of volunteering behavior among youth that will include other factors such as race, gender, age, income, and other household factors. Preliminary analysis of the significance of social institutions, even after controlling for several demographic characteristics, suggests that the institutional variables used in this report are key to explaining volunteering behavior among youth and building active citizens. Future analysis will further explore these links.



# VOLUNTEERING AMONG YOUTH

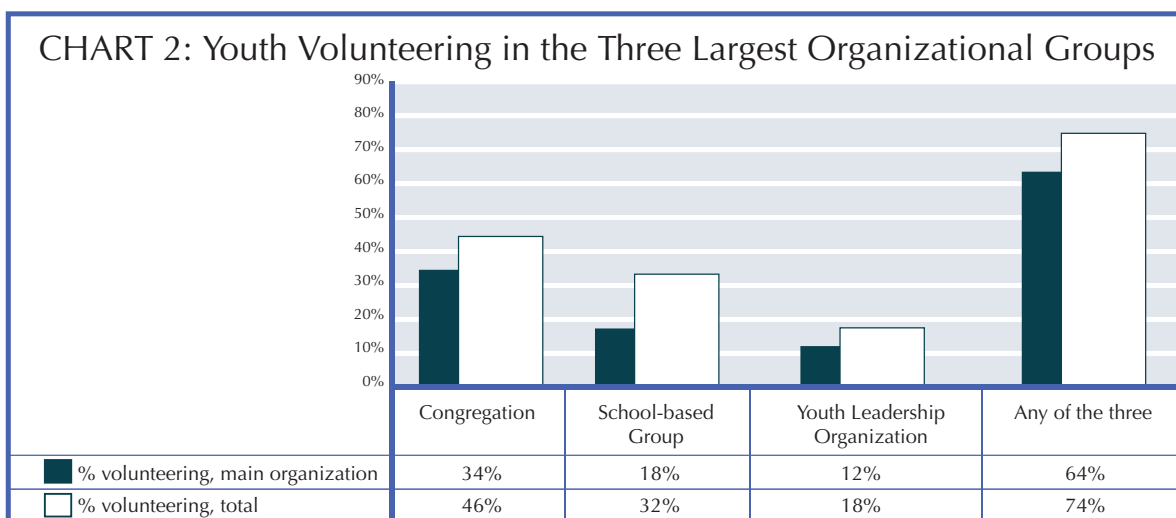
The Youth Volunteering Survey asked young people between the ages of 12 and 18 about their volunteering activities by employing the same volunteering questions from the Current Population Survey's (CPS) Supplement on Volunteering in America, an annual survey conducted in collaboration with the Corporation, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the U.S. Census Bureau. Like the CPS, the Youth Volunteering Survey asked respondents whether they have done any activities for an organization for which they were not paid, except for expenses. [See page 17 for the volunteer questions utilized by the Youth Volunteering Survey.]

The study found that the majority of youth volunteered during 2004, with 55 percent reporting that they volunteered to at least some extent during the previous year. This translates into an estimated 15.5 million teens who participated in volunteer activities. Youth were also asked the number of weeks and how many hours per week that they volunteered with an organization in the previous year. Overall youth between the ages of 12 and 18 contributed over 1.3 billion hours in service to organizations such as religious congregations, schools, and youth leadership organizations.



To examine the possibility that school service requirements might be a factor in the high volunteering rate, youth were asked how they came to be involved with the organization with which they volunteered. We discovered that only 5 percent of youth reported that they became involved with the main organization with which they volunteer as the result of a school requirement.

Our study also found that youth tend to volunteer most often with three types of organizations: religious congregations, schools, and youth leadership organizations, which include such organizations as the Boy & Girl Scouts, the 4-H Club, Kiwanis (Key Club and Builders Club) and the National Honor Society. The majority of youth who volunteer, or 64 percent, reported that one of these three organizations was the main organization with which they volunteered.<sup>iii</sup> In addition, 74 percent of volunteers served with one or more of these organizations to at least some extent. [See Chart 2] Not only do these three types of organizations tend to provide opportunities for youth to volunteer, they are also important sites for the development of youth socialization and tend to have a high expectation for community service.

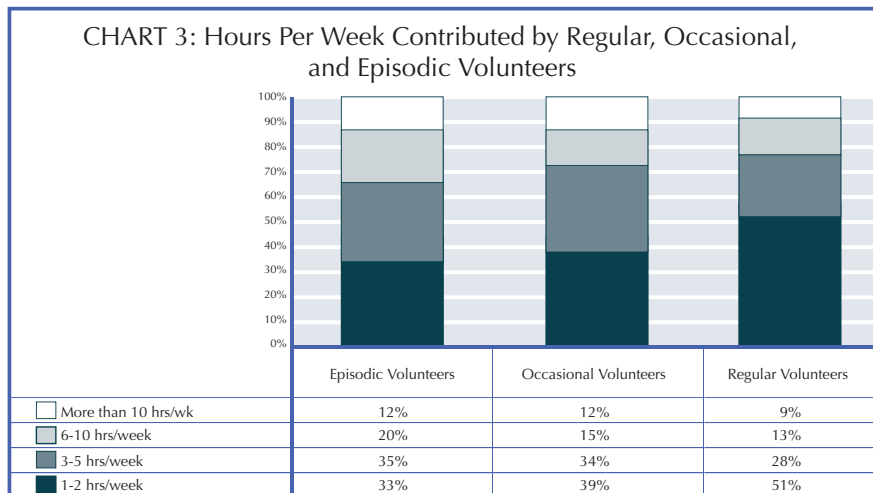


# VOLUNTEER COMMITMENT

**MAJOR FINDING:** An estimated 5.9 million, or 39 percent of those youth that volunteer, serve with an organization on a regular basis.

The intensity with which youth volunteer varies widely, with some teens volunteering only once in the previous twelve months while others served with an organization for several hours every week of the year. In part this may be because organizations seek to utilize volunteers in different ways based on the nature of their programs. For example, those organizations that look to further research and awareness of health issues often utilize volunteers for campaigns and special events, such as walk-a-thons, while organizations devoted to providing tutoring or mentoring programs may need individuals who are able to commit to a regular schedule. However, previous research has demonstrated that the more regularly an individual volunteers, the more likely he or she is to be civically and politically engaged in other ways.<sup>iv</sup> In analyzing the findings from this survey, we were interested in exploring this notion that the frequency of volunteer activities, or youths' volunteer commitment, is related to their engagement with social institutions.

For the survey, respondents who indicated that they volunteered with an organization were asked how many weeks during the past year they had served with that organization. We categorized the responses to this question to create a measure of volunteer commitment.<sup>v</sup> These categories are: regular volunteers, occasional volunteers, episodic volunteers, and nonvolunteers. In utilizing these categories, we were able to explore not only the significance of whether a teen volunteers or not, but the importance of their level of commitment to volunteering.



**REGULAR VOLUNTEERS:** those youth who reported volunteering through an organization twelve or more weeks in the previous twelve months

**OCCASIONAL VOLUNTEERS:** those youth who reported volunteering through an organization between three and eleven weeks in the previous twelve months

**EPISODIC VOLUNTEERS:** those youth who reported volunteering through an organization two weeks or less in the previous twelve months

**NONVOLUNTEERS:** those youth who reported that they had not volunteered through an organization in the previous twelve months

The majority of youth volunteer for only a few hours each week. [See Chart 3] This means, as a general rule, that the more weeks per year that they serve with an organization, the more hours per year they contribute overall. While the typical regular volunteer contributes 80 hours per year with their main organization, the occasional volunteer serves 16 hours, and the episodic volunteer serves 5 hours.



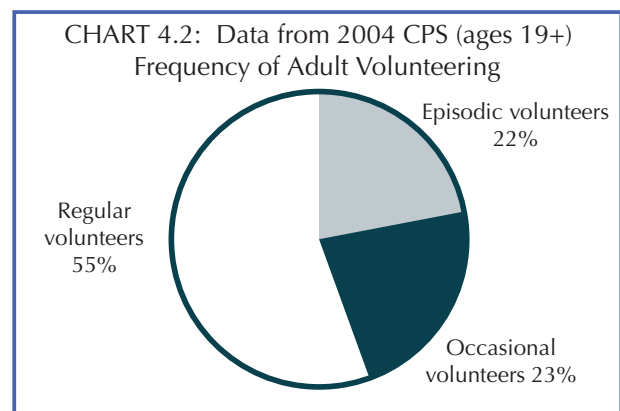
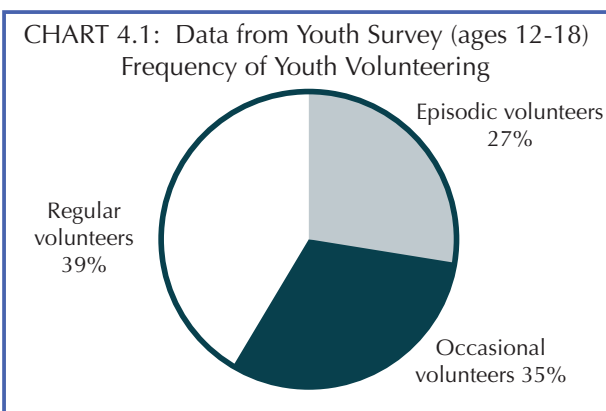
# VOLUNTEER COMMITMENT

**MAJOR FINDING:** Youth are volunteering at a higher rate than the adult population, 55 percent to 29 percent, but adult volunteers are more likely to engage in such activities on a regular basis.

Among those youth who volunteer, 39 percent, or an estimated 5.9 million, served on a regular basis, or at least twelve weeks out of the year – that is, they volunteer with a single organization approximately once a month or more often. This compares to 35 percent of volunteers who served occasionally, or between three and eleven weeks a year, while 27 percent of volunteers are what we would consider as episodic volunteers, or those who volunteered during only one or two weeks out of the year.<sup>vi</sup>

Since the Youth Volunteering Survey utilized the same volunteer questions as the CPS, we were able to draw some comparisons between youth and adults in relation to their volunteering habits.<sup>vii</sup> We found that youth are volunteering at a higher rate than the American adult population, which according to the CPS had a volunteering rate of 29 percent between September 2003 and September 2004.<sup>viii</sup> This considerable difference in volunteering rates between youth and adults may be the result of several factors, including the emphasis in many secondary schools on community service and service-learning.<sup>ix</sup> Moreover, there is emerging evidence of particularly strong civic behaviors and attitudes among younger Americans.<sup>x</sup>

In comparing the results between the two surveys, we also found that youth tend to volunteer with less intensity than adult volunteers, with the typical youth volunteer contributing 29 hours per year, compared to 52 hours for the adult population. [See the charts 4.1 and 4.2] There may be several reasons for the lower level of intensity by youth, including the possibility that nonprofits do not look to engage more youth in more intensive volunteer activities. Previous research has shown that nonprofits have a tendency to recruit more mature volunteers, while relatively few actively look to engage youth as volunteers.<sup>xi</sup> In addition, it may be that teens tend to have less predictable schedules and participate in a variety of activities. However, we wonder whether nonprofits may be missing an opportunity to engage more youth more intensively, fostering the positive benefits to youth and organizations that come from more regular activities.



# SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

**MAJOR FINDING:** Compared to a youth with no family members who volunteer, a youth from a family where at least one parent volunteers is almost twice as likely to volunteer, and nearly three times more likely to volunteer on a regular basis.



Given our interest in examining volunteering as a learned social behavior, we wanted to explore some of the key social institutions that help to guide and shape youth development. We began by identifying three environments that play formative roles in youth development: family, religious institutions, and school. Not only are these environments where youth develop their identity and attitudes, they are also important areas where youth develop their social networks. Volunteering is an activity that has the potential to expand an individual's sense of community through interacting with others from different backgrounds. In this way, primary social institutions that encourage service, such as family, religious institutions, and schools, have the potential to foster in youth a sense of community that extends beyond their immediate circle.

We begin with the initial site where youth develop their identity, attitudes, and relationship to a community – their family.

## FAMILY AND VOLUNTEERING

Youth development begins with the family, which has a formative impact on youth attitudes and behaviors. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the volunteering habits of the family, particularly the parents, would have a significant impact on the volunteering habits of youth. Previous research has demonstrated that the parents' volunteering activities influences the likelihood that youth will volunteer during their childhood and later in adulthood. By volunteering, parents provide a role model for engaging with the larger community.<sup>xiii</sup>



# FAMILY VOLUNTEERING

When looking at family volunteering, we created seven mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories. These categories differentiate between the immediate family, which consists of both parents and siblings, and the extended family, which consists of aunts, uncles, and grandparents. The Youth Volunteering Survey recorded information on these family members only. However, the survey did not record information on the number of members in each respondent's family.

Category 1: Both parents and at least one sibling volunteer

Category 2: Both parents but no siblings volunteer

Category 3: One parent and at least one sibling volunteer

Category 4: One parent volunteers

Category 5: Neither parent volunteers, but at least one sibling volunteers

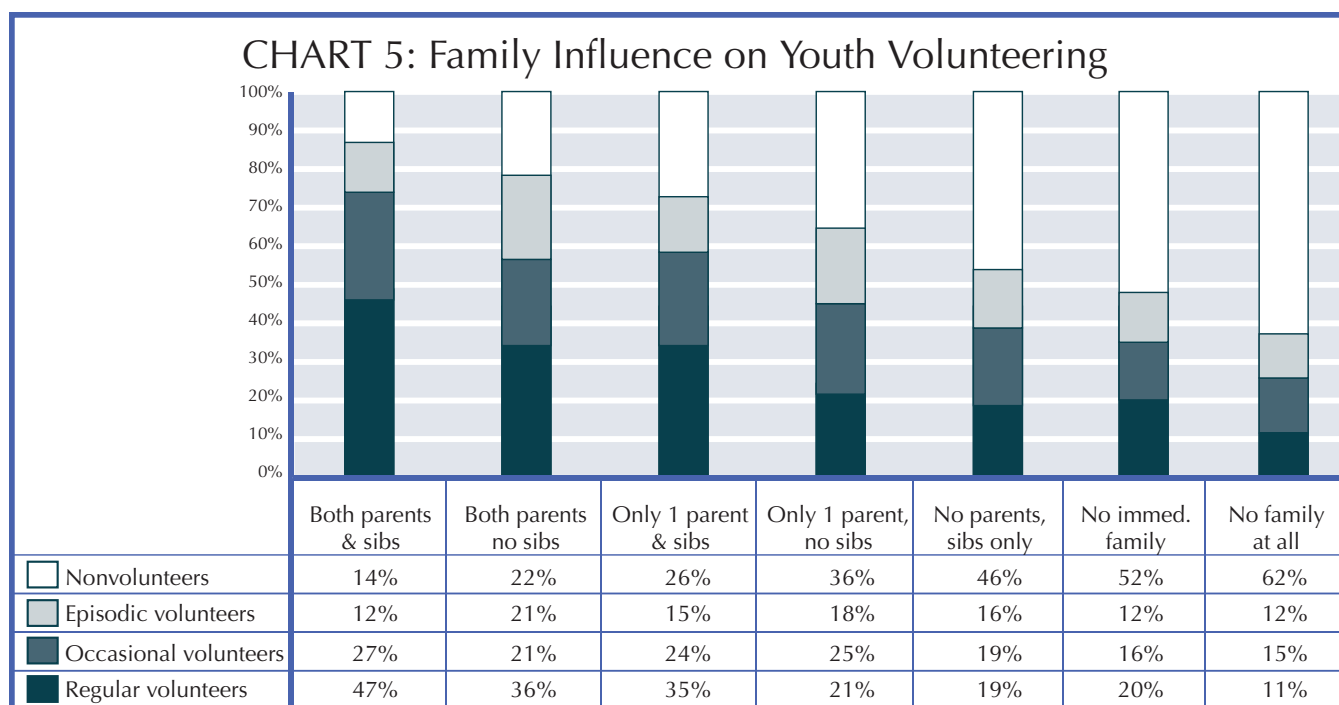
Category 6: No one in their immediate family volunteers,  
but at least one member of the extended family volunteers

Category 7: No one in their immediate or extended family volunteers



# FAMILY VOLUNTEERING

The Youth Volunteering Survey asked youth about the volunteering habits not only of their parents, but also among their siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles. We found that parents have the strongest relationship to teen volunteering, followed by the immediate family, and finally the extended family. The more volunteer role models that youth have, the more likely they are to volunteer and volunteer regularly. We found that, compared to a youth with no family members who volunteer, a youth from a family where at least one parent volunteers is almost two times more likely to volunteer, and nearly three times more likely to volunteer on a regular basis.<sup>xiii</sup> Likewise, whereas 64 percent of nonvolunteers reported that no one in their family volunteers, only 14 percent of youth who have two parents and siblings who volunteer reported that they had not volunteered in the previous year. Of those youth with parents and siblings who volunteer, nearly half, or 47 percent, are also regular volunteers. [See Chart 5]



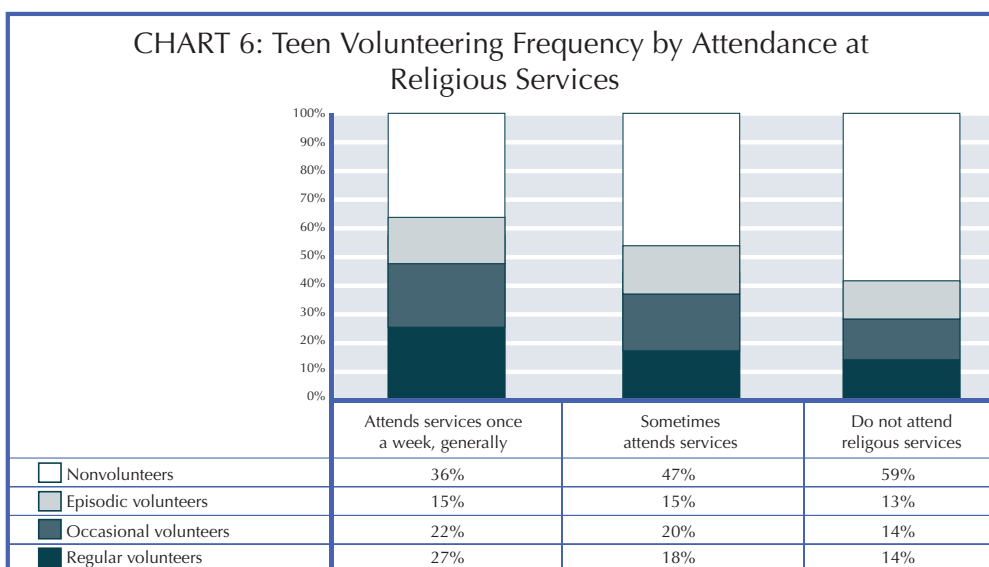
The major findings around a youth with at least one parent who volunteers is determined by combining Categories 1, 2, 3, and 4 in the above chart. See endnote xiii.

# ATTENDANCE AT RELIGIOUS SERVICES AND VOLUNTEERING

**MAJOR FINDING:** Consistent attendance at religious services is associated with volunteering, with those youth who generally attend religious services weekly nearly twice as likely to be regular volunteers as those youth who do not attend religious services at all.

Respondents to the survey were asked how frequently they attended religious services in the past year, outside of weddings or funerals. Based on their responses, we found a strong correlation between the frequency with which respondents attend religious services and volunteering.<sup>xiv</sup>

According to the survey, 62 percent of youth attend religious services to at least some extent, and 49 percent of youth are regular attendees – that is they attend religious services generally every week. The population of youth who regularly attend religious services are the most likely to volunteer, with an overall volunteering rate of 64 percent. This compares to 53 percent of those who said that they attend religious services infrequently and 41 percent of those who reported that they do not attend religious services at all. In addition, those who regularly attend religious services are nearly twice as likely to volunteer regularly than those who do not attend religious services at all. [See Chart 6]



While regular involvement in religious services appears to translate into a greater amount of involvement in volunteer activities, many of those volunteer activities are not taking place with the religious congregation. Among the respondents who regularly attend religious services, only 47 percent said that the main organization that they volunteer with is a religious congregation. The rest volunteer with an organization other than a religious congregation; 8 percent volunteer with a faith-based organization that is not a religious congregation, while the remaining youth, 45 percent, serve with a secular organization. This finding indicates that religious attendance may be part of a larger social network that provides youth with the opportunities and encouragement to engage in the community. Involvement with religious congregations may connect youth with volunteering opportunities, and it is also likely that the value placed on service in these organizations contributes to an expectation for youth to engage in volunteering and helps to instill in them an ethic of service that they carry with them into other areas of their lives.

# SCHOOL AND VOLUNTEERING

School is a key area for youth socialization. Not only is it a place where youth begin to develop an identity apart from their family, it is also a context in which youth begin to develop a sense of a larger community to which they belong. In addition, previous research has shown that involvement in volunteering through schools, whether through community service or service-learning, can lead to improvements in self-esteem and academic achievement. In response to the overall decline in civic engagement among Americans, the past decade has seen a growing debate on the role that educational institutions should play in promoting civic education in schools.

Over the past twenty years, more schools have begun to recognize and arrange community service activities for their students. A national survey of school principals by the Department of Education in 1999 found that 46 percent of public high schools and 38 percent of public middle schools offer service-learning opportunities for their students, while 83 percent of high schools and 77 percent of middle schools organize community service opportunities. This compares to only 9 percent for service-learning opportunities and 27 percent for community service opportunities among public high schools in 1984, a sign that the majority of America's schools today place an emphasis on the value of service.<sup>xv</sup>



**MAJOR FINDING:** 38 percent, or approximately 10.6 million teenagers nationwide, have engaged in community service as part of a school activity, and 65 percent of these youth were engaged in the service-learning related activities of planning and/or reflecting on the service project.

## COMMUNITY SERVICE AND SERVICE-LEARNING

While some community service and service-learning activities through school are mandatory for students, school-based requirements represent a small percentage of volunteering engagement among youth. Only 5 percent of youth attributed their volunteering activities to a school requirement. In addition, while mandated community service may not have the same positive impacts as voluntary service, research has also demonstrated that youth benefit from organized planning and reflection of their service experience, such as occurs during participation in service-learning activities.<sup>xvi</sup>

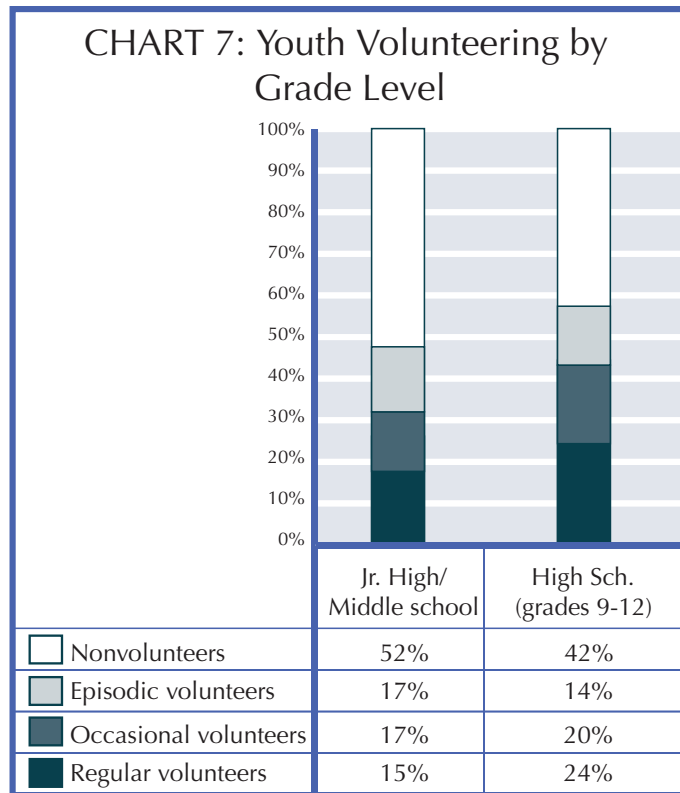
Respondents were asked whether they had ever performed any community service as part of a school activity or requirement. We found that 38 percent of youth, or approximately 10.6 million youth nationwide, have taken part in these kinds of activities. We also asked respondents who had engaged in this type of school-based service activity whether they had helped to plan the activity or write about and reflect on their service experience, both signs that they were engaged in service-learning activities. We found that 65 percent of those engaged in school-based service took part in one or both of these activities – 36 percent, or 3.8 million participants, helped to plan their service project and 51 percent, or 5.4 million, wrote about or reflected on their service experience in class. While space does not allow us to explore these school-based activities further, it is our intention to analyze this data further in an effort to better understand youth experiences with community service and service-learning.

# SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

**MAJOR FINDING:** High school students are more likely to volunteer (58 percent) and to be regular volunteers (24 percent) than junior high school students (49 percent and 15 percent, respectively).

When looking at school enrollment among the respondents, we found that it has a significant relationship with the likelihood that teens volunteer. Overall 55 percent of those enrolled in school participate in volunteer activities, including 72 percent of private school students and 52 percent of public school students. Meanwhile, only 26 percent of those not enrolled in school are engaged in volunteering. In addition, the grade-level of youth, while strongly correlated with age, does more to explain the likelihood and frequency of volunteering than age alone. We found a lower volunteering rate among those in junior high school, while high school students are more likely to be engaged in volunteer activities and to be engaged on a regular basis. [See Chart 7]

The differences between volunteering rates among high school and junior high school students parallels their level of engagement in school-based community service projects, including service-learning activities, with high school students more likely to have had experience with community service activities through a class. This experience with school-based community service brings students into contact with organizations outside of the school environment and may be one factor in explaining how schools serve as sites where students develop social networks that in turn lead to engagement through other community organizations.



## ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

The success that teens find in their academic life is related to their likelihood of volunteering. We found that the higher their grade point average, the more likely it was that teens volunteered and volunteered regularly.<sup>xvii</sup> The study found a particular distinction between those students who maintained an average grade of B+ or higher and those who reported a lower grade average. This distinction is particularly sharp in relation to regular volunteering. However, it is likely that the relationship of grades to volunteering is also part of a larger set of positive expectations and social networks for this group. Those students with high academic achievement may be more engaged in other activities, may have more opportunities to be asked to volunteer, and may feel more empowered to effect change in their community.

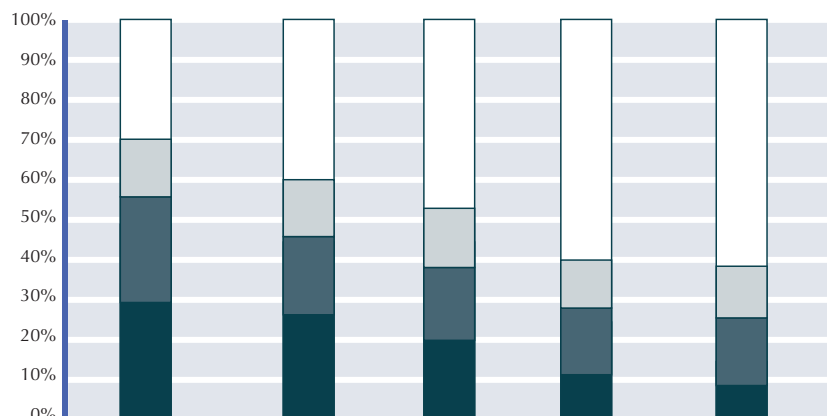
# ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

These findings also indicate that we are missing an important segment of the youth population, one that would greatly benefit from the experience of volunteering. While the majority of schools provide opportunities to volunteer, those students with lower academic achievement are not volunteering at the same rate as those reporting higher academic achievement. In fact, when looking at whether students were engaged in school-based community service or service-learning, we find that those students with lower academic achievement are less likely to have had such an experience. For example, while 43 percent of students reporting a grade average of B+ or higher indicated that they had been involved in community service as part of a school activity, only 26 percent of those with a grade average of C or lower reported similar activities.



Whether this is a result of the failure of schools to effectively engage them in volunteer activities or their own decision to remain uninvolved, this population, which is already disengaged academically, would benefit from opportunities to interact with adults outside of their family, develop their own voice and connections to their community, and feel empowered to make a difference. Research has demonstrated that when disengaged youth are introduced to quality volunteer opportunities, the likelihood that they will engage in risky behaviors decreases and their level of social trust increases.<sup>xviii</sup>

CHART 8: Youth Volunteering Status by Educational Achievement



	A or A+	A- / B-	B	B- / C+	C or lower
Nonvolunteers	30%	41%	47%	60%	64%
Episodic volunteers	13%	15%	16%	12%	12%
Occasional volunteers	27%	18%	17%	16%	15%
Regular volunteers	29%	26%	21%	11%	9%



# CONCLUSION

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The intention of this brief was to present the key findings on the current state of volunteering among youth and to consider the role of social institutions in the volunteer habits of youth between the ages of 12 and 18. The findings from the Youth Volunteering Survey demonstrate that the majority of youth today are engaging in their community as active participants through their volunteering activities, and that a substantial number are making regular contributions to organizations through service.



In exploring three primary social institutions for youth – family, religious congregations, and school – we found that these institutions do have a relationship, not only with the likelihood that youth will volunteer, but also with the frequency of their volunteer activities. When youth are members of a family that includes volunteering as part of its activities, the youth themselves are more likely to volunteer. To the extent that a youth is from a family where at least one parent volunteers, the teenager is almost twice as likely to volunteer, and nearly three times more likely to volunteer on a regular basis when compared to youth with no family members who volunteer.

At the same time, involvement with religious congregations and school influence the likelihood that youth will volunteer. If we measure the level of engagement with religious congregations by the frequency of their attendance at religious services and with schools by the level of their academic achievement, we find that youth who are more engaged in these institutions are more likely to have a greater commitment to service in their community.

Research on volunteering suggests that such characteristics as gender, race, and education are related to the likelihood of volunteering. Previous studies on volunteering in America have shown, for example, that females are more likely to volunteer than males, whites are more likely to volunteer than minorities, and college graduates are more likely to volunteer than those with only a high school diploma.<sup>xix</sup> While the information collected through our survey does not contradict these findings, a growing body of work suggests that volunteering is a learned social behavior, rather than an outcome of such characteristics as gender or race.<sup>xx</sup>

This report is intended as the first step in our process of developing a more comprehensive model of volunteering behavior among youth. In future work, we plan to examine the effects of social institutions on youth volunteering using an analysis that takes other factors into account, such as race, gender, age, income, and other household variables. By taking these other variables into account, we will be able to test the significance of social institutions on the extent to which youth are committed to volunteer activities. Preliminary analysis suggests that the institutional variables discussed in this brief have a significant amount of explanatory power, even after controlling for demographic characteristics.<sup>xxi</sup> The final results of this analysis will be published in our forthcoming full report on Youth Helping America.

- i. For discussions of the role community service in positive youth development, see Yates & Youniss (1996); Kirkpatrick Johnson, Beebe, Mortimer & Snyder (1998); Oesterle, Kirkpatrick Johnson, & Mortimer (2004); Yates & Youniss. (1998); Zeldin & Topitzes (2002); Marks & Kuss. (2001); and Flanagan, et.al. (1998).
- ii. On the role of community service in fostering connections to the community and social trust, see Flanagan, Gill & Gallay (2005); Verba, Schlozman, & Brady (1995); and Youniss, McClellan & Yates (1997).
- iii. Respondents could name up to four organizations at which they volunteered, and answered a battery of questions – about hours per week and weeks per year served, how they became associated with the organization, and typical activities – about the first two organizations mentioned. For respondents who reported serving at two or more organizations, the main organization is the organization where the respondent reported serving the most weeks per year. Chart 2 displays the percentage of respondents whose main organization was a given type, as well as the percentage of members who reported serving at one or more organizations of that type, though not necessarily as the main organization.
- iv. On the impact of regular volunteering on other forms of civic engagement, see Keeter, Zukin, Andolina, & Jenkins (2002).
- v. In the definition, weeks per year refers only to the main organization. For respondents who reported serving at two or more organizations, the main organization is the organization where the respondent reported serving the most weeks per year. See note iii above.
- vi. These percentages are based only on the population of youth who volunteer. When considering the total youth population, that is including nonvolunteers, we found that 20.9 percent of teens volunteer on a regular basis, 18.6 percent volunteer occasionally, and 14.3 percent of youth volunteer episodically.
- vii. The adult population is defined as those aged 19 and older.
- viii. A note on comparing the results of the Youth Volunteering Survey with the CPS Volunteer Supplement: The volunteering rate among youth is considerably higher than the findings from the adult population of the CPS. Even when we consider volunteering rates for those between the ages of 16 and 18, which were included in both surveys, we find a higher volunteering rate. However, our survey asks youth directly about their volunteering behaviors while the CPS Volunteer Supplement is primarily an adult survey that also asks adults to report on the volunteering behaviors of late teenagers in their household. Since much youth volunteering is episodic and occasional, it is possible that a parent may not always know about their child's volunteering behaviors. We intend to conduct further analysis of these differences in the future.
- ix. Since the youth volunteering survey includes initial questions that ask respondents about a variety of activities, that may trigger greater recall for some respondents when asked about volunteering activities in particular.
- x. See for example, Sander & Putnam (2005) and Lopez et al (2005), as well as volunteering trends in research conducted by UCLA in their annual freshman survey and CIRCLE.
- xi. Research on the practices of nonprofit organizations in volunteer recruitment and management include the 2003 *Volunteer Management Capacity in America's Charities and Congregations* by the Corporation for National and Community Service, the UPS Foundation, and USA Freedom Corps.
- xii. For other research that demonstrates the connection between family and youth volunteering, see Yates & Youniss (1996); Youniss, et al. (2001); Yates & Youniss (1998); Marks & Kuss (2001); CIRCLE (2002); Hodgkinson et al (1996); and Toppe et al (2002).
- xiii. Probability ratios compare volunteering rates of the combined family volunteering categories of 1 through 4 to the family volunteering category 7. Actual ratios are 1.95 for volunteering and 2.88 for regular volunteering. This ratio increases to 2.26 for volunteering and 4.09 for regular volunteering when comparing a youth in a family where both parents and at least one sibling volunteer and a youth in a family with no members who volunteers.
- xiv. For other research that explores the connection between involvement in religious organizations and volunteering, see Oesterle, S., M. Kirkpatrick Johnson, J.T. Mortimer (2004); Yates & Youniss (1996); Toppe et al (2002).
- xv. The percent of schools with service-learning and community service opportunities are based on the 1999 National Student Service-Learning and Community Service Survey, conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education through the Fast Response Survey System (FRSS) and the 1984 survey of high schools conducted by Newmann and Rutter. A third study conducted in 2004, the study of Community Service and Service-Learning in Public Schools conducted by Westat with support from the National Youth Leadership Council found that 45 percent of high schools and 30 percent of middle schools provided service-learning, while 83 percent of high schools and 70 percent of middle schools offered community service opportunities to students, indicating that the increase from 1984 has largely stabilized over the past several years.
- xvi. We recognize important differences between community service and service-learning, particularly in relation to the impact that these activities have on youth social and academic development. Future reports will deal more specifically with the role of service-learning on youth development. For the relationship between school-based service and positive youth development, see Billig (2002), Torney-Purta (2002); Yates & Youniss (1996); and Kirkpatrick Johnson, Beebe, Mortimer, & Snyder (1998).
- xvii. While we decided to include results based on the respondents' GPA, it is important to note that this is self-reported information. We found that the distribution of GPA scores reported through this survey to be skewed, with over 75 percent of respondents reporting a GPA of B or higher. Research has shown that secondary school grades tend to be inflated in self-reporting when compared to GPAs as reported by schools. For more on grade inflation, see Koretz & Berends (2001).
- xviii. For the impacts of service on social trust and risky behaviors, see research by Flanagan, Gill & Galay (2005); Turney-Purta (2002); and Billig (2000).
- xix. See findings from national studies of volunteering conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Population Survey's annual supplement, "Volunteering in America" and Independent Sector's series on "Giving and Volunteering in the United States."
- xx. For research on demographics, social networks and volunteerism, see Kirkpatrick Johnson, Beebe, Mortimer, & Snyder (1998); Marks & Kuss (2001); and Frisco, Muller & Dodson (2004).
- xxi. As discussed by Marks and Kuss (2001), demographic characteristics such as this have a mixed record of performance as explanatory variables in models of volunteering behavior and community service.

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## Volunteering Questions in the Youth Volunteering Survey

**The Definition of Volunteering:** Volunteer activities are things you do for others for which you are not paid, except perhaps for expenses. I only want you to include volunteer activities that you did for an organization or place of worship, even if you only did them once in awhile.

### **The Two Volunteering Questions:**

Since January 1st of last year, have you done any volunteering activities through or for an organization?

Sometimes people don't think of activities they do infrequently or activities that they do for a community as part of a club, school, or church as volunteer activities. Since January 1st of last year, have you done any of these types of volunteer activities?

*Respondents were coded as volunteers if they answered "yes" to either question.*

# METHODOLOGY

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## DESCRIPTION OF UNIVERSE AND SAMPLING METHODOLOGY

The universe of the 2005 Youth Volunteering and Civic Engagement Survey consisted of about 10,000 households selected from expired Current Population Survey (CPS) housing units.<sup>1</sup> The sample units for the Youth Volunteering Survey were selected from households with at least one persons aged 12-18. The goal was to have a final completed interview sample of at least 3,000 persons age 12-18 interviewed with one person per household selected using a randomized selection function.

Two weeks prior to the beginning of the interview period, an advance letter was sent to the households selected from the CPS. This letter gave a brief description of the survey and provided a Census Bureau 1-800 telephone number that could be used to opt their teens out of the interview. The remaining households were then contacted by telephone and if the respondent did not receive the letter, it was read to them providing another opportunity to refuse the interview. A sample teen, if present, was then selected for the detailed interview. Again, we asked permission to speak to the teen.

## EFFORTS TO MAXIMIZE RESPONSE

The detailed interview with the sampled teen was also conducted over the phone. The interviews were conducted by interviewers working out of one of the Census Bureau's three centralized telephone facilities. The Census Bureau telephone center staff performed standard procedures to keep the noninterview rate as low as possible. If necessary, at least ten attempts were made to get a completed interview. Calls took place after 3 p.m. local time with at least two call attempts on weekends.

## RESPONSE RATE AND BIAS

The overall response rate for the survey was 44 percent. Census obtained a 45 percent response for the screener and a 97 percent response for the detailed interview, making the overall rate (45% times 97%) = 44 percent. Due to the response rate, Census investigated the possibility of systematic differences between the interviewed and noninterviewed universes. They examined several CPS demographic characteristics of the two universes to determine if a bias may exist. They looked at the family income, size of household, urban/rural, and the race, ethnicity, sex, education, marital status, and employment status of the head of household. They did not find a statistical difference between the attributes of the two universes.

## WEIGHT ESTIMATION

The final weight for each case is the product of the inverse of the selection probability (accounting for selection to the CPS and selection into the volunteer survey), a weight adjustment to account for noninterviews, a first-stage weighting factor to reduce the variance due to the selection on non-self-representing primary sampling units (PSUs), and a second-stage weighting factor to bring sample estimates into agreement independent population controls by age, race, and sex.

<sup>1</sup>The original samples for the CPS surveys were selected from 1990 decennial census files with coverage in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. For information about the methodology used for the Current Population Survey, visit [www.bls.census.gov/cps](http://www.bls.census.gov/cps).



# NOTES

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