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In Tough Times, Volunteering In America Remains Strong

New Federal Report Ranks 50 States and 200 Cities, Shows Young Adults & “Do-It-Yourself” Volunteers Leading Compassion Boom

(Washington, DC) – A new report released today by the Corporation for National and Community Service finds that even during a time of prolonged economic recession, volunteering has remained steady, fueled by a compassion boom led by young adults and a wave of do-it-yourself volunteers working with their neighbors to fix problems.

[Volunteering in America 2009](#), the most comprehensive data ever assembled on volunteer trends and demographics, found that a total of 61.8 million Americans volunteered through an organization in 2008, up one million from the previous year. America’s volunteers dedicated more than 8 billion hours of service in 2008, worth an estimated \$162 billion.

While the formal volunteering rate in America remained relatively stable at 26.4 percent, other less-formal ways of serving in communities have dramatically increased. The number of people who worked with their neighbors to fix a community problem rose by 31 percent, from 15.2 million in 2007 to 19.9 million in 2008, suggesting an emerging trend of self-organized ‘do-it-yourself’ service, a trend the Obama Administration is working to encourage through its United We Serve initiative and [Serve.gov](#) website.

“In this time of economic distress, we need service and volunteering more than ever to build a new foundation for growth,” said First Lady Michelle Obama. “This report suggests that Americans are responding to the hardship around them by reaching out in service to others, giving their time when they cannot give their money. It reminds us of the generosity of the American spirit, and challenges us to work harder to make service part of the daily life of every American.”

The fact the volunteering held steady during a time of high unemployment and foreclosure rates was welcome news to nonprofit and government leaders, who are facing increasing demands at a time of dwindling resources. Previous research would suggest that volunteering should drop during an economic downturn, because volunteer rates are higher among job-holders and homeowners. Volunteering trends for 2008 stand in stark contrast to charitable giving, which experienced the steepest decline in the past 53 years last year.

The report also found an increase in volunteering by young adults (age 16-24), rising from 7.8 million in 2007 to 8.2 million in 2008. The finding aligns with other indicators suggesting a strong service ethic among the millennial generation, including a 217 percent increase in applications to AmeriCorps over the past 8 months.

The research is based on annual surveys of approximately 100,000 individuals collected by the U.S. Census and the Bureau of Labor Statistics in partnership with the Corporation. The [VolunteeringInAmerica.gov](#) website contains nine years of data on volunteering, and rankings, volunteer trends and demographic information for every state and almost 200 large and mid-sized cities. It is produced to help national, state and local leaders better understand volunteering trends and demographics and use the data to develop effective strategies for recruiting and retaining volunteers.

“Driven by young adults and neighbors with a do-it yourself spirit, Americans are responding to tough times by reaching out to help others in need,” said Nicola Goren, Acting CEO of the Corporation. “The need is great, the momentum is strong, and potential is unlimited for ushering in a new era of service in America.”

To make it easier for Americans to volunteer, the Corporation worked with the White House to launch a new [Serve.gov](#) website in June. At [Serve.gov](#), organizations can post their needs, and potential volunteers can find

local opportunities simply by entering their zip codes. The site includes do-it-yourself toolkits with instructions for finding and filling local needs, and a blog featuring stories of service from people all across the country.

Nonprofits Turning to Volunteers to Fill the Gap

As part of this year's report, the Corporation supported Johns Hopkins University to conduct a nationwide survey about the impact of the economy on a sample of over 1,400 nonprofit organizations. The results show that 80 percent of nonprofits have experienced significant economic stress, with more than a third indicating the stress is "severe" or "very severe."

In the wake of declining financial and staff resources, more nonprofits are relying on and increasing their demand for volunteers. The Hopkins study found that between September 2008 and March 2009, more than a third (37 percent) of nonprofit organizations reported increasing the number of volunteers they use, and almost half (48 percent) foresee increasing their use of volunteers in the coming year. That effort could also help with fundraising challenges since this report also discovered that individuals who volunteer are more than twice as likely to donate to a charity or nonprofit organization as individuals who do not volunteer: 78.2 percent of volunteers made a charitable contribution worth \$25 or more as compared to 38.5 percent of non-volunteers.

Key State and City Findings

- For the fourth year in a row, Utah was the top volunteer state with a volunteer rate 43.5%, followed by Nebraska (38.9%), Minnesota (38.4%), Alaska (38%), and Iowa (37.1%).
- Minneapolis-St. Paul once again ranked number one among large cities at 38.4%, followed by Portland, OR (36.7%), Salt Lake City, UT (36.5%), Seattle, WA (34.3%), and Kansas City, MO (33.4%).
- Mid-size cities, particularly those in the Midwest, have on average higher volunteer rates than large cities, and residents of mid-size cities contribute more hours to volunteering.
- In the second annual look at volunteering in 75 mid-sized cities, Provo, Utah, again led the nation with a whopping 62.9 percent volunteer rate, followed by Iowa City (42.9%), Ogden, UT (43.6%), Madison, WI (41.5%), and Topeka, KS (40.7%).
- Although women are more likely than men to be volunteers – in fact, working mothers have the highest volunteer rates of all – men are more likely to participate in their community in less formal ways.

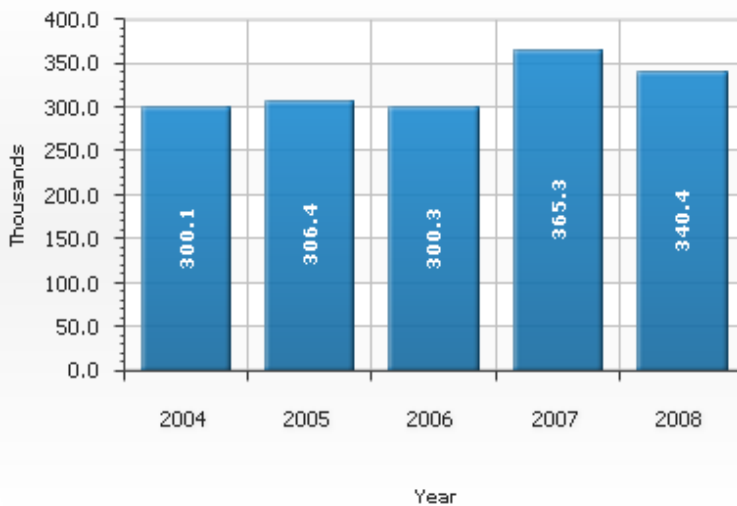
Background

"Volunteering in America 2009" is based on data obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics through a "volunteering supplement" to the Current Population Survey from 2002 to 2008. Volunteers are defined as persons who did unpaid work through or for an organization. The report includes information for all 50 states, Washington DC, and 198 cities, including 51 large cities, 75 mid-size cities, and 72 additional cities, based on Metropolitan Statistical Areas. This information includes the volunteer rate; the types of organizations through which residents serve; their main volunteering activities, the average hours per year and volunteer rates for age and gender demographic groups, and key trends and highlights.

The Corporation for National and Community Service is a federal agency that each year engages four million Americans of all ages and backgrounds through its Senior Corps, AmeriCorps and Learn and Serve America programs. For more information, visit NationalService.gov.

Statistics for this area were collected within the Oklahoma City Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Oklahoma City, OK is the only major city included in this MSA.

Number of Volunteers



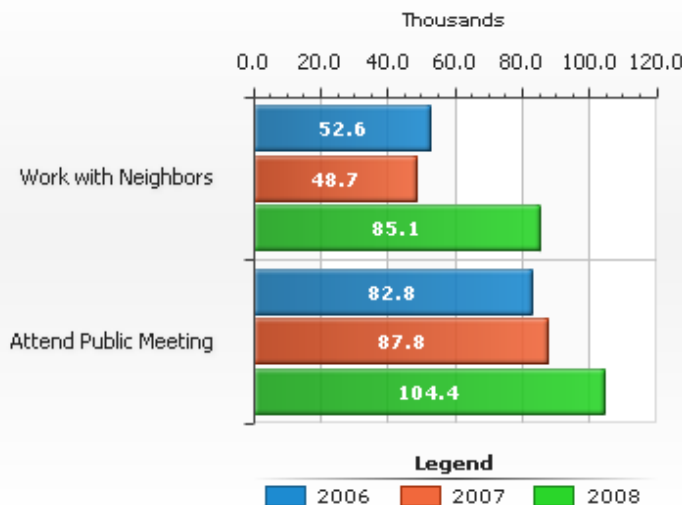
Trends and Highlights

Based on single year data (2008)

- Even with the economic crisis, the national volunteer rate remained relatively constant, from 26.2% in 2007 to 26.4% in 2008. In 2008, 61.8 million volunteers donated approximately 8 billion hours of service in communities across the country.
- 33.1% of adults volunteered in Oklahoma City in 2008, contributing 78.8 million hours of service.
- In addition to the 340.4 thousand adults in Oklahoma City volunteering in 2008, an extra 31,996 individuals worked with their neighbors to fix a problem or improve a condition in their community but did not serve through an organization.

For more information, go to <http://www.VolunteeringInAmerica.gov>

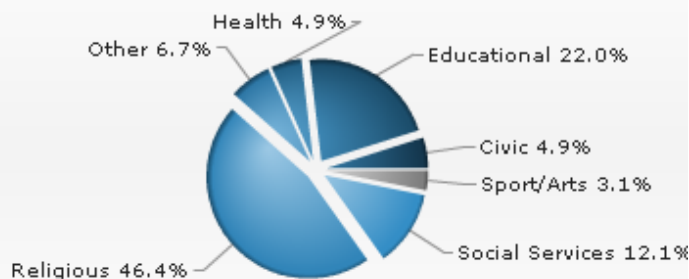
Neighborhood Engagement - Numbers



Volunteer Rate



Where People Volunteer (2006-2008)



Top Four Activities

