

May 2008



Still Serving:

Measuring the Eight-Year Impact
of AmeriCorps on Alumni



This report was co-authored by the Corporation for National and Community Service and Abt Associates Inc., under contract number ABT03T004.

Corporation for National and Community Services
Office of Research and Policy Development

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The mission of the Corporation for National and Community Service is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. Each year, the Corporation engages more than four million Americans of all ages and backgrounds in service to meet local needs through three major programs: Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America.

The Corporation partnered with Abt Associates Inc., an independent and non-partisan research firm, to conduct the study.

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CEO Message

It is a great pleasure for the Corporation for National and Community Service to present the most definitive longitudinal study ever on the long-term effect of AmeriCorps service on former members. *Still Serving: Measuring the Eight-Year Impact of AmeriCorps on Alumni* compares AmeriCorps members who served in 1999-2000 with a like group who expressed interest in joining AmeriCorps but did not enroll, providing scientifically rigorous data that illuminates the powerful and lasting impact of a single year of AmeriCorps service. And there's big news: it turns out that AmeriCorps is not only a conduit to intense service, it is also America's pipeline to public service careers. In short, a year of AmeriCorps service influences many to pursue careers as teachers, nonprofit managers and government employees – this at a time when America is bracing for crisis-level workforce and leadership shortages in the nonprofit and government sectors.

Since its inception in 1994, more than 540,000 individuals have served in AmeriCorps. These members, most of whom gave at least a year of dedicated, intensive service, have tackled some of our nation's toughest problems, including illiteracy, homelessness, gang violence, and drug abuse. AmeriCorps members remain on the front lines of service every day, and have in recent years stepped up their role in recruiting, training, and managing volunteers of all ages and backgrounds — they supported 1.7 million community volunteers in 2007 alone. Together, AmeriCorps members and the volunteers they mobilize serve with more than 4,100 organizations nationwide, from national nonprofits like Boys and Girls Clubs, Red Cross, Teach for America and Habitat for Humanity to small, local faith-based groups. Increasingly they are part of organizations that are at the forefront of social entrepreneurship, serving and producing the next generation of nonprofit leaders. In all these ways, AmeriCorps members are “getting things done” and making a difference in communities from coast to coast.

When we embarked on this study eight years ago, we believed it was important to determine the impact of AmeriCorps service on individuals who serve. While those who join AmeriCorps are already active in their communities prior to service, one of the most remarkable findings of the study confirms the intuitive belief that community service given in a dedicated, intensive way changes the person serving – not just for a day or during their period of service – but in a way that has lasting effects on their lives and behavior. We are now able to demonstrate for the first time that one year of service in AmeriCorps creates long-term positive impacts on AmeriCorps alumni eight years later. These alumni continue to be highly civically engaged in their communities whether as public servants, volunteers, or in a variety of community activities.

In fact, sixty percent of AmeriCorps State and National alumni work in a nonprofit or governmental organization, continuing to solve their communities' most pressing needs. Nearly half (46 percent) pursue careers in specific fields such as education, social work, public safety, government or military service. These results are significant as our nation attempts to fill millions of nonprofit and public sector jobs, and counter critical shortages in fields like education and nursing. Nonprofit employers also look to alumni as a valuable source for employees, hiring many alumni who first served in their programs as AmeriCorps members. And AmeriCorps is a clear entrée to public service for minority alumni and alumni from disadvantaged circumstances, as both groups are significantly more likely to choose public service careers than their non-AmeriCorps peers.

The results of this study suggest that AmeriCorps has the potential to make an even more profound difference in our country in the future. Not only does AmeriCorps provide individuals with immediate opportunities to serve, but AmeriCorps service also spurs these individuals to be agents of positive change in their communities after their service is complete. Equipped with the leadership skills and “can do” spirit gained through AmeriCorps, these alumni continue to be models and catalysts for civic engagement, working with public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and other individuals to create a stronger and more equitable society for all Americans.

David Eisner, Chief Executive Officer, Corporation for National and Community Service

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Co-authored by:

Abt Associates Inc.
Workforce and Civic Renewal Group
Cambridge, Massachusetts
Bethesda, Maryland

Ryoko Yamaguchi, Project Director
Philip Gordon, Deputy Project Director
Christopher Mulvey, Associate Analyst
Fatih Unlu, Associate
Laura Simpson, Senior Analyst
JoAnn Jastrzab, Principal Investigator
Christopher Winship, Harvard University, Principal Investigator
Cristofer Price, Project Quality Advisor
Ken Lam, Senior Associate
Cay Bradley, Senior Analyst
Melanie Brown-Lyons, Senior Analyst

Corporation for National and Community Service
Office of Research and Policy Development
Washington, D.C.

Robert Grimm, Jr., Director
Kevin Cramer, Deputy Director
LaMonica Shelton, Associate Director for Policy and Communications
Nathan Dietz, Senior Research Associate and Statistician
Lillian Dote, Policy Analyst
Shelby Jennings, Research Communications Specialist

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Introduction and Study Overview

Still Serving: Measuring the Eight-Year Impact of AmeriCorps on Alumni is a longitudinal study that assesses the outcomes and impacts of national and community service on individuals who serve in AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC). The objective of the study is to identify the effects of AmeriCorps on members' civic engagement and volunteering, employment and careers, educational attainment, and life satisfaction. The findings in this report reflect a longer-term assessment of the impact of participation in AmeriCorps approximately eight years after enrollment in the program. The study includes a nationally representative sample of more than 1,700 AmeriCorps members who served in 108 AmeriCorps State and National programs across the country, and 475 AmeriCorps members in three (of then, five) NCCC regional campuses enrolling in 1999–2000, and similar numbers of individuals in State and National and NCCC comparison groups. The Corporation partnered with Abt Associates Inc., an independent and non-partisan research firm, to conduct the study.



programs. Since the program's inception in 1994, more than 540,000 Americans have served with tens of thousands of nonprofit organizations, public agencies, and faith-based organizations nationwide. In return for their service, AmeriCorps members receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award that they can use to pay for college or to pay back qualified student loans.

AmeriCorps is administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service (the Corporation), an independent government agency, the mission of which is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. AmeriCorps encompasses three distinct programs, including AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps NCCC, and AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA).

AmeriCorps has its roots in our nation's long tradition of service, civic engagement, and citizen action to address community needs. It emerged out of a national service movement that began with Franklin D. Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s and early 1940s and was furthered by the creation of the Peace Corps, VISTA, Foster Grandparents, and other national service programs in the 1960s.

AmeriCorps: A Program Overview

AmeriCorps is a national service program that engages 75,000 individuals in intensive, results-driven service each year. AmeriCorps programs address the needs of communities in education, the environment, public safety, disaster relief, and other human needs. AmeriCorps also increases the capacity of nonprofit organizations to serve their communities by mobilizing volunteers, expanding services, raising funds, and creating sustainable

The National and Community Service Act of 1990 funded new and existing community service initiatives at the state and local levels, providing them with a unified structure and national focus. In 1993, the Corporation for National and Community Service was established to connect Americans of all ages and backgrounds with opportunities to give back to their communities and their nation. It merged the work and

staff of two predecessor agencies, ACTION and the Commission on National and Community Service. In 1994, the first class of 20,000 AmeriCorps members began their volunteer service in more than 1,000 communities (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2008a). Under the Clinton Administration, AmeriCorps grew to support 50,000 members per year.

In his State of the Union Address following the September 11, 2001 attacks, President Bush proposed expanding AmeriCorps to 75,000 members per year; this was implemented in 2004. The critical role of national service in disaster response and rebuilding was demonstrated in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, which devastated the Gulf Coast in 2005. In response to these hurricanes, more than 10,000 AmeriCorps members have provided 3 million hours of volunteer service and mobilized or managed 229,000 volunteers to help Gulf Coast communities recover and rebuild (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2007a, 2007b).

This study focuses on the impacts of service in the AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps NCCC programs on members who served during the 1999–2000 program year. Both programs improve the nation’s communities through intensive community service using different program structures and delivery mechanisms.¹



State and National

AmeriCorps State and National programs support a broad range of local service programs that engage Americans in intensive service to meet critical community needs. AmeriCorps State and National provides funding to a large network of public and nonprofit organizations that sponsor service programs around the country, including thousands of faith-based and other community organizations, higher education institutions, Indian tribes, and public agencies. These groups recruit, train and oversee AmeriCorps members to meet critical community needs in education, the environment, public safety, health, and other human needs. The year this study began, program year 1999–2000, the AmeriCorps State and National programs enrolled approximately 36,000 members. Currently there are over 67,000 members annually (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2006b). Members serve with thousands of community- and faith-based organizations, providing valuable services such as tutoring and mentoring youth, building affordable housing, and coordinating after-school programs. More importantly, AmeriCorps members recruit and manage other community volunteers to multiply efforts to serve communities.

NCCC

The AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps is a team-based, full-time residential program for individuals aged 18 to 24. Members are based at regional campuses organized by teams of 10 to 12, and take on a series of six to eight week projects throughout their respective regions. Service activities are diverse and include environmental preservation, youth development, building and renovating low income housing, and disaster response and relief. All NCCC members are trained in CPR, first aid, and other disaster services, and approximately 15 percent of members are also trained as firefighters. NCCC teams can be deployed rapidly to meet the nation’s public safety and disaster response needs and can nimbly respond to other national priorities. Since 2005, more than 3,100 NCCC members have served in the Gulf Coast

on more than 650 separate disaster-related services projects. Currently, there are 1,100 members serving with the NCCC.

In exchange for a year of full-time (1,700 hours) service, AmeriCorps members receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award of \$4,725 that can be used toward higher education, or to repay qualified student loans. Members who serve part time receive a partial Segal AmeriCorps Education Award. Many educational institutions now match the amount of the award. Members also receive a modest living allowance, health benefits, training, and deferment of student loans during service.

Research Design

Still Serving: Measuring the Eight-Year Impact of AmeriCorps on Alumni is designed to assess the outcomes and impacts of national and community service on members who served in AmeriCorps State and National and NCCC, eight years after enrolling in 1999–2000.

The study is designed to address the following research questions:

- What is the impact of AmeriCorps on members' civic engagement?
- What is the impact of AmeriCorps on members' careers?
- What is the impact of AmeriCorps on members' educational attainment?
- What is the impact of AmeriCorps on members' life satisfaction?

The research uses a quasi-experimental design, where a nationally representative sample of individuals who participated in AmeriCorps State and National and NCCC in 1999–2000 are compared to a similar group of individuals who did not participate in the program (Shadish, Cook, &

Campbell, 2002). This type of research design has a treatment group (AmeriCorps members) and a matched comparison group (individuals who did not participate in AmeriCorps).²

In selecting comparison groups for this study, the goal was to identify individuals who demonstrated both an awareness of AmeriCorps and an interest in service. The State and National comparison group is composed of individuals who had indicated knowledge of, and interest in, AmeriCorps by contacting the Corporation's toll-free information line and requesting information about the program, but who did not actually enroll during the study period. For reasons of comparability, the comparison group was limited to those contacting the information line during roughly the same period as did individuals in the program group—summer to fall of 1999.

The NCCC comparison group was selected from the pool of individuals who applied for entry into the NCCC during the spring 1999 recruitment selection process,³ met the program's eligibility requirements, and either did not enroll because of a limited number of slots in the program or declined an invitation to enroll.

Survey data were collected from AmeriCorps and comparison group individuals at four time points. The baseline survey was administered in 1999, after application for entry, but prior to program participation for AmeriCorps participants. A post-program survey was administered a year later in 2000 when AmeriCorps participants completed or were near completion of their program. A third survey was administered in 2004 to obtain supplemental information. The fourth wave collected survey data in 2007.

As documented in the baseline report for this study,⁴ in general, the treatment and comparison groups for each



Exhibit 1: Data Collection

Instrument	Timing^a	Focus
Baseline Survey (1999–2000)	Members: Within days of enrolling Comparison Group: 3–4 months after inquiring about AmeriCorps (roughly when they might have enrolled)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior service experience • Other background characteristics • Attitudinal information related to outcomes
Post-Program Survey (2000-2001)	State and National Members: 1–2 months after completing service (approximately 1 year after baseline survey) NCCC Members: During final 1–2 weeks of service (approximately 10 months after baseline survey) Comparison Group: 12–15 months after baseline survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitudinal information related to outcomes • Information on AmeriCorps program experience (members only)
Post-Program Supplemental Survey (PPSS) (2003-2004)	Members: 3 years after baseline survey (approximately 2 years after most members completed their service) Comparison Group: 3 years after baseline survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional background information to model probability of program participation • Social networking behavior • Additional information on program experience (members only) • Limited data on post-program activities
Follow-Up Survey (2007)	Members: 8 years after baseline survey (approximately 7 years after most members completed their initial year of service) Comparison Group: 8 years after baseline survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitudinal and behavioral information related to outcomes • Limited data on post-program activities • Information about the Segal AmeriCorps Education award usage (members only)

^a A note on survey timing: The duration of AmeriCorps programs was generally between 10 and 12 months. Cases were released for the post-program and post-program supplemental interviews at 12 and 36 months after baseline interview. Most respondents were interviewed within a few weeks of survey release. In some instances, it took longer (up to five months) to locate and interview respondents.

AmeriCorps program were similar in age and in outcomes measured at baseline. Appendix C presents descriptive statistics that show the comparison of measures for individuals in both State and National and NCCC by treatment and comparison status.⁵ To mitigate the threat of selection bias, propensity score analysis (PSA) was incorporated into the design of this analysis (Becker & Ichino, 2002; Rosenbaum & Rubin, 1984). PSA estimates treatment effects by comparing treatment cases with comparison group cases that are about as likely to be selected into the treatment group based on their observable characteristics. The study collected a great deal of information about background and motivational characteristics that might affect both selection into treatment and the outcomes of interest. Examples of these characteristics include exposure to

service during childhood and prior participation in service. This information was used, along with participants’ baseline characteristics, to create a measure of each respondent’s likelihood to join AmeriCorps State and National or AmeriCorps NCCC—i.e., their propensity score. The effect of participation in AmeriCorps State and National or AmeriCorps NCCC was estimated by comparing AmeriCorps members with individuals from the comparison group who had similar likelihoods of enrolling in AmeriCorps. This approach is described in more detail in Appendix I.

In the 1999–2000 program year, from which the study sample was drawn, total enrollment in State and National, NCCC, and VISTA programs was over

40,000 members. From the State and National and NCCC programs, a nationally representative sample of full-time, first-year members enrolling in program year 1999–2000 was selected for inclusion in this study. The sample consisted of 1,717 individuals who served full-time in one of 108 AmeriCorps State and National programs and 475 individuals who served full-time in AmeriCorps NCCC in three, of the then five, NCCC regional campuses. The comparison group for the State and National program consisted of 1,524 individuals, and the comparison group for the NCCC program consisted of 401 individuals.

Two previous reports were included as part of this longitudinal study on the impacts of AmeriCorps participation. The baseline report, *Serving Country and Community: A Study of Service in AmeriCorps, A Profile of AmeriCorps Members at Baseline*, was released in June 2001, and provides a description of AmeriCorps participants and programs. The follow-up report, *Serving Country and Community: A Longitudinal Study of Service in AmeriCorps, Early Findings*,⁶ released in December 2004, found that AmeriCorps had positive short-term impacts on members' connection to community, knowledge about problems facing their community, participation in community-based activities, and personal growth in the years following their service when compared to the comparison group of non-participants.

Methodology

Results from two types of analyses are presented in the report. The first type consists of descriptive analyses of characteristics of AmeriCorps participants in the 1999–2000 program years. These analyses utilize data from the 2007 follow-up survey, and use sampling weights such that a reported mean (e.g. mean age) represents an estimated average of the population of State and National or NCCC participants in the 1999–2000 program year.

The second type of analysis is a quasi-experimental impact analysis that is used to make inferences about the effects of AmeriCorps program participation in 1999–2000 on outcomes measured eight years later in

the 2007 follow-up survey. The impact analysis estimates the effects of participation by comparing the outcomes for AmeriCorps members with outcomes for similar individuals who did not enroll in AmeriCorps (comparison groups), using propensity score analysis to address possible selection bias. The use of a comparison group enables the study to describe the average effects of treatment on the treated.

As in the 2004 report (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2004), several of the civic engagement outcomes are constructed from groups of related survey questions.⁷ The study analyzes these program outcomes in terms of *changes*—the changes between baseline and post-program values of the same measures. These changes (which could be negative as well as positive) are then compared between program members and comparison group members. The study estimates the effects of treatment (participation in AmeriCorps) separately for AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps NCCC programs.⁸ The impact estimates are thus conceptually *difference in differences*: the difference between the change from baseline to post program experienced by the treatment group (members), and the analogous change experienced by the comparison group (similar non-members).

For these civic engagement outcome measures, the study also estimates separate impacts for subgroups of the treatment and comparison groups. In many cases, the study finds the estimated impacts of AmeriCorps participation are different for



Blacks/African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, and individuals from disadvantaged circumstances. For further insight into these outcomes, the researchers also examine differences in responses to the individual questions used to construct these outcomes between the program and comparison group members, overall and within subgroups. The researchers perform similar analyses for the employment, education, and life satisfaction categories, looking at differences in responses to the questions used to measure these outcomes.⁹

Limitations

Certain methodological limitations are inherent to this study. The findings reflect the outcomes of members approximately eight years after they enrolled in AmeriCorps. Finding significant long-term effects is often much more difficult than short-term effects as impacts tend to fade over time. Participants in both the treatment group and comparison group may have experienced many other important life events that have influenced them during the follow-up period.

The evaluation uses a quasi-experimental design where the outcomes of AmeriCorps members in the

treatment group are compared to those of individuals in a matched comparison group. While the evaluation does not use an experimental design to randomize treatment assignment, researchers applied rigorous statistical procedures, such as propensity score analysis, to help mitigate selection bias and support causal inferences (Rosenbaum & Rubin, 1984). The effects of quasi-experimental research may be sensitive to the analytic techniques selected, and researchers attempting to replicate these results using different analytic techniques and assumptions may find that results differ.¹⁰ Furthermore, like all longitudinal studies, maintaining the study sample over a period of eight years is often challenging and requires significant resources and time (Groves, 2006). The response rate for the *Still Serving: Measuring the Eight-Year Impact of AmeriCorps on Alumni* report is 71 percent, when calculated based on the respondents to the previous wave of the study. When calculated based on all respondents from the 1999 baseline survey, the response rate is 58 percent. Response rates and non-response variation over time may also affect the representativeness of participants used for the analyses.¹¹

Exhibit 2: Characteristics of AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps NCCC Programs, 1999–2000 Program Year

	State and National	NCCC
Enrollment	36,000	1,000
Locations	700 grantees ^a	5 regional campuses
Age range of members	17+	18–24
Operated by:	Local, state, and national nonprofits, government agencies	The Corporation
Recruitment	Local ^b	National
Type	Primarily non-residential	Residential
Participation	Both full-time and part-time	Full-time only
Number of service projects per member	Generally one primary project, often with smaller short-term projects	4–6 projects

^a Some grantees operate in more than one location.

^b During the 1999–2000 program year, some applicants to AmeriCorps State and National were identified through a national recruitment effort implemented by the Corporation. Those applicants were referred to local programs based on their geographic and service interests for consideration as part of those programs’ standard selection and enrollment process.



In addition, this report is based on the AmeriCorps program and its members during the 1999–2000 program year. Since that time, the program has continued to evolve and there are some important differences between AmeriCorps programs today and the program nearly a decade ago. During the 1999–2000 program year, slightly more than half of all members (56%) served in full-time AmeriCorps programs. The study’s treatment group only included first-year full-time members. Today, many AmeriCorps members serve less than full-time in part- or reduced part-time programs. During the 2005–2006 program year, 44 percent of members served in full-time AmeriCorps programs, and 56 percent served part- or reduced part-time (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2008b). In addition, during the study year, the primary issue area addressed by AmeriCorps was the

provision of services to children and youth. While the majority of AmeriCorps programs continue to serve children and youth, the Corporation has also increased its focus on promoting public safety and disaster relief following the tragedy of September 11, 2001 and the devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Organization of this Report

The report begins with a description of the characteristics of AmeriCorps members, and is followed by four sections assessing the impacts of AmeriCorps on members’:

- Civic Engagement;
- Employment;
- Education; and
- Life Satisfaction.

Each section focuses on the longer-term impacts of the AmeriCorps experience on members eight years after enrollment. Members are compared to a similar group of respondents who expressed interest in the AmeriCorps, but did not enroll. Also included in this report are comparisons between members and national averages or benchmarks, using data from national population surveys.

Characteristics of Study Participants

In this section the study provides a description of the population of State and National and NCCC AmeriCorps members for the 1999–2000 program year. The results are intended to serve as a backdrop for all other analyses through this report.

Age

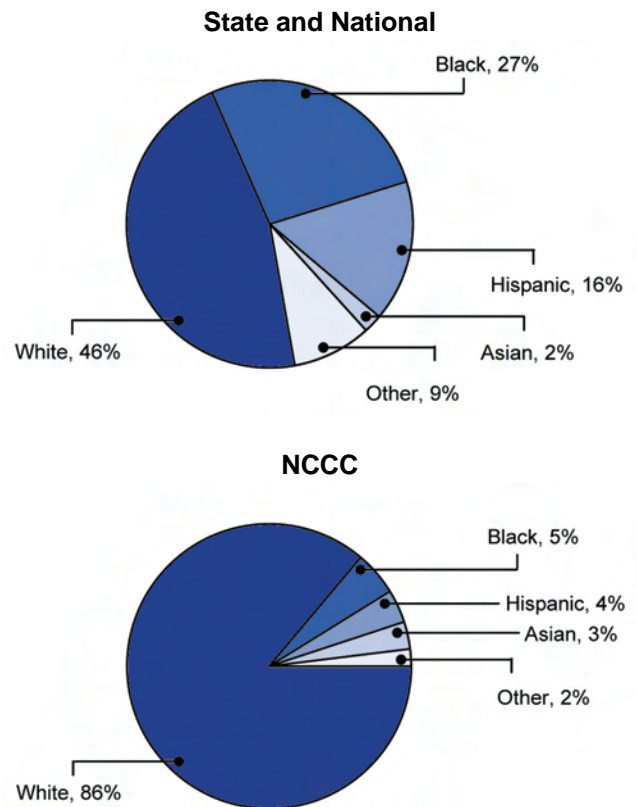
Participation in AmeriCorps State and National is open to U.S. citizens 17 years of age or older, and most State and National members in the study sample joined when they were between the ages of 17 and 24. Not surprisingly, enrollment in State and National often occurred at transition periods in young peoples' lives—age at enrollment peaked at around 18 and then again at around 22, roughly corresponding to traditional graduation points from high school and college. However, State and National programs enrolled older members as well, suggesting that participation in full-time national service is an attractive option for individuals throughout their lifetimes. The average age at enrollment was 28 years for State and National sample members, with a median age of 23.8. Members' ages ranged from 17 to 79 at baseline. Since the results in this report assess impacts eight years following member enrollment, the average State and National member is now approximately 36 years old, with a median age of 31.

Participation in AmeriCorps NCCC is limited to individuals between 18 and 24 years of age. Given NCCC's narrower age range, the mean age at enrollment for study participants was 21.5 years old. The median age at enrollment was 22.1. Now eight years later, the mean age for an NCCC member is 29.5 years old, with a median age of 30.1.

Race

The Corporation encouraged AmeriCorps programs to recruit a diverse set of members, a policy that contributed to a racially and ethnically diverse group

Exhibit 3: Race and Ethnicity of Members in 1999



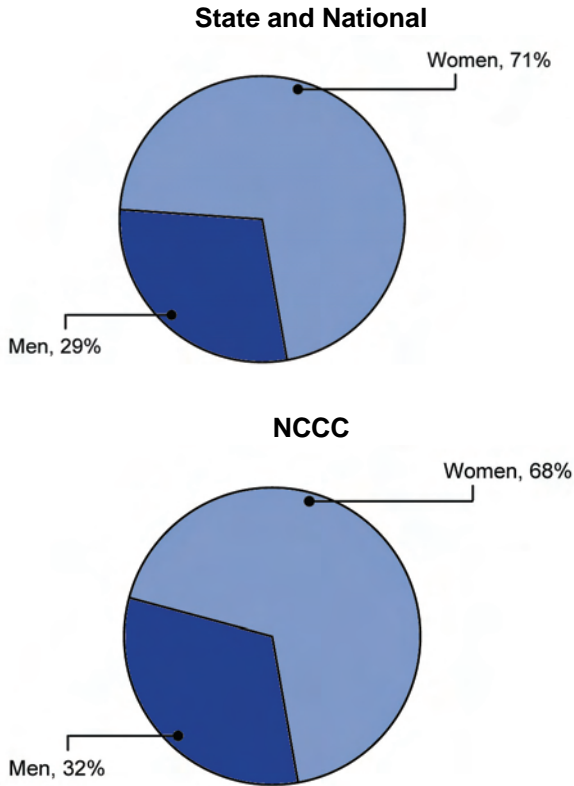
of participants. At baseline, slightly less than half (46%) of State and National sample members were white, compared to the majority of NCCC sample members (86%), and compared to 75 percent of the national population that were white in 2000 (U.S. Census 2000). Blacks/African Americans represented a quarter of State and National members (27%), while Hispanics/Latinos represented another 16 percent. At baseline, five percent of the NCCC members were Black/African American and four percent were of Hispanic/Latino origin.¹²

Gender

Particularly noteworthy was the predominance of women in the sample, who accounted for over two-thirds of the membership of both the State and National

programs (71%) and NCCC (68%) at baseline. In comparison, 65 percent of employees in the nonprofit sector are women (Odendahl & O'Neill, 1994).

Exhibit 4: Gender of Members in 1999



Disadvantaged Circumstances

One of the goals of AmeriCorps is to provide service opportunities for those from economically disadvantaged circumstances. Study participants were asked whether in their youth or in the year prior to joining AmeriCorps, they received public assistance, such as welfare, food stamps, or Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) assistance; lived in public housing or other project-based housing; or received other housing assistance such as Section 8 or housing vouchers. Since these assistance programs are generally means-tested, individuals from economically disadvantaged circumstances were defined as respondents receiving public assistance from any of these government programs.

Overall, 36 percent of AmeriCorps State and National sample members and 18 percent of NCCC sample members received public assistance or lived in public housing either during their youth or in the year before applying to AmeriCorps.

While growing up, more than a quarter of the State and National members (26%) lived in households receiving public assistance, 10 percent lived in public housing, and 5 percent received other housing assistance. For NCCC members, 17 percent received public assistance as youth, 3 percent lived in public housing, and 2 percent received other housing assistance.

In the year before applying to AmeriCorps, 15 percent of State and National members were on public assistance, 5 percent lived in public housing, and 5 percent received other housing assistance. For NCCC members, only one percent received public assistance in the year prior to serving in AmeriCorps, and less than one percent received public housing and other housing assistance.

Educational Attainment

Overall, at baseline, AmeriCorps members had more formal education than the general population. Ninety-two percent of State and National sample members had at least a high school diploma or GED when they enrolled in AmeriCorps, compared to 82 percent of Americans over the age of 18. Thirty percent of the State and National members had earned a bachelor's degree before enrolling in AmeriCorps, which is 8 percentage points higher than the national average of 22 percent in 1999–2000. Eight years later, 70 percent of State and National members have college degrees. NCCC sample members were similarly more educated than the rest of the nation at baseline. Ninety-nine percent of NCCC members had graduated from high school or attained a GED when they started their term of service, and 50 percent had their bachelor's degree at baseline in 1999–2000. After eight years, 85 percent of NCCC members have a college degree.

The Impacts of AmeriCorps

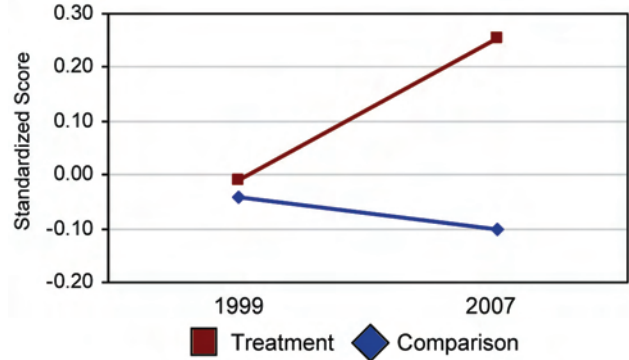
This section presents the longer-term impacts of AmeriCorps service on members' civic engagement, employment, education, and life satisfaction. As described in the methodology section of this report, impacts are measured by comparing the results reported by AmeriCorps members to the results reported by the comparison groups. Findings are reported separately for AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps NCCC. When available, national benchmarks are included to provide additional context for the results.

To facilitate interpretation, the study uses several approaches in describing findings. First, line graphs, displaying the mean baseline (1999) and 2007 scores¹³ for treatment and comparison groups, are presented for each outcome. These graphical representations present a clear picture of the changes in outcomes over time. Exhibit 5 displays a sample graph, which illustrates the changes experienced by the State and National treatment and comparison groups for a hypothetical outcome.

The hypothetical outcome, like several of the outcomes in the report, is constructed from a series of related survey questions. The slight upward slope on the red line indicates that, on average, State and National members experienced a slight gain for this outcome over the eight-year period following enrollment. During the same time period, as shown by the blue line, the comparison group experienced a decrease for this outcome. Based on this chart, the study would conclude that the estimated effect of program service is positive.



Exhibit 5: Sample Effect Size Graph



Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.24, statistically significant at the $p < 0.01$ level.

The study also uses statistical significance and effect sizes to interpret the impacts. In fact, the difference in the sample chart¹⁴ is statistically significant,¹⁵ and the estimated effect size would be called “medium-sized,” using standards conventionally employed by policy researchers. Effect size is a standardized measure of the treatment (AmeriCorps program) effect, which can be used to compare the results across outcomes. The effect size represents the magnitude of the average treatment effect for each outcome relative to the amount of natural variation in that outcome. Effect sizes are increasingly used in educational research where conventional guidelines suggest interpreting an effect size of .20 as a small effect, .50 a medium effect, and .80 a large effect (Cohen, 1988; Lipsey, 1990). For the purposes of assigning descriptive labels to the effect sizes in this report, the researchers have adopted the following guidelines: small effect = $0 < \text{effect size} < 0.34$; medium effect = $0.35 < \text{effect sizes} < 0.64$; large effect = $0.65 < \text{effect size} < 1$. The study estimated the effect sizes illustrated in these graphs with the same method used in the 2004 report. This enables the researchers to compare the impacts of service in AmeriCorps on outcomes in both 2004 and 2007.

Exhibit 6: State and National Effect Size by Outcome

The impact analysis estimated the effects of participation in AmeriCorps by comparing changes in the outcomes for AmeriCorps participants over time with changes in the outcomes for similar individuals who did not enroll in AmeriCorps (comparison groups), using Propensity Score Analysis to address possible selection bias.

	2004	2007
Civic Engagement-Related Outcomes		
Connection to Community (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the strength of his/her connection to the community, as represented by the strength of feelings toward the community, including attachment, awareness, and commitment.	0.51**	0.24**
Identify and Understand Problems in the Community (Attitude/Knowledge): Represents the respondent's self-assessed understanding of social problems in his/her community, such as environment, public health, and crime.	0.30**	0.26*
Importance of Neighborhood Participation (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the importance of being active in his/her neighborhood, including reporting crimes, keeping the neighborhood clean, and participating in neighborhood organizations	0.27**	0.03
Civic Obligations (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the importance of participating in various civic activities, including voting in elections and serving on a jury.	0.16*	0.06
Confidence in Ability to Work with Local Government (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the feasibility of working with local or state government to meet a range of community needs, such as fixing a pothole or getting an issue on a statewide ballot.	0.21**	0.28**
Ability to Lead a Successful Community-Based Movement (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the feasibility of starting a grassroots effort to meet a range of community needs, such as starting an after-school program or organizing a park cleanup program.	0.33**	0.25**
Appreciation of Cultural and Ethnic Diversity (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the importance and desirability of relationships between people who do not share the same cultural and/or ethnic background.	0.03	0.04
Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups (Behavior): Provides the respondent's report of the frequency with which he/she personally uses techniques for encouraging constructive group interactions, such as encouraging participation by other team members and supporting others' right to be heard.	0.06	0.26
Constructive Group Interactions (Behavior/Experience): Provides the respondent's report of the frequency with which he/she participated in group situations during which constructive interactions, such as working out conflicts and sharing ideas, occurred.	0.02	0.23
Personal Growth Through Community Service (Attitude): Represents the respondent's assessment of the impacts of his/her prior volunteer activities during the previous year with respect to personal growth, including exposure to new ideas, changing beliefs, and learning about the real world.	0.31**	0.04

Exhibit 6: State and National Effect Size by Outcome *Continued*

	2004	2007
Personal Effectiveness of Community Service (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the impacts of his/her prior volunteer activities during the previous year with respect to making community contributions, developing attachments to the community, and making a difference.	0.38**	0.02
Active in Community Affairs (Behavior): Represents the frequency with which he/she participates in community-based activities, including attending community meetings and writing to newspapers to voice opinions.	0.16**	0.19*
Voting Participation (Behavior): Represents whether respondent voted in 2000 Presidential election in 2004 column and the 2004 Presidential election in 2007 column.	0.01	-0.05
Social Trust (Attitude): Represents the extent to which the respondent believes that other people can be trusted.	NA ^b	-0.02
Volunteering Participation (Behavior): Provides likelihood that respondent served as a volunteer at any point following Fall 2000 for 2004 results and within 12 months prior to survey for 2007.	0.07	0.07
Employment-Related Outcomes		
Importance of Service-Oriented Careers (Attitude)^a: Represents respondent's opinion about whether his/her current job is a position that contributes to others, such as working to correct inequalities and being of direct service to others.	0.10	0.21
Public Service Employment (Behavior): Represents how likely respondent is to be working in a public service career.	0.07*	0.26**
Education-Related Outcomes		
Educational Progress (Behavior): Represents respondent's educational attainment at the time of survey.	-0.01	-0.07
Life Satisfaction Outcomes		
Life Satisfaction (Attitude): A new outcome for the 2007 survey that measures overall satisfaction with life, through satisfaction with career, financial, situation, physical health, close relationships with friends and family, religious or spiritual life, and leisure activities.	NA ^b	0.26*
<p>** Indicates statistical significance at the 0.01 level. * Indicates statistical significance at the 0.05 level. ^a Outcome is modified for 2007 analysis. See Appendix G for a more detailed explanation of the outcome. ^b NA indicates "Not Applicable" because this outcome was not measured on previous surveys.</p>		

Exhibit 6: NCCC Effect Size by Outcome

The impact analysis estimated the effects of participation in AmeriCorps by comparing changes in the outcomes for AmeriCorps participants over time with changes in the outcomes for similar individuals who did not enroll in AmeriCorps (comparison groups), using Propensity Score Analysis to address possible selection bias.

	2004	2007
Civic Engagement-Related Outcomes		
Connection to Community (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the strength of his/her connection to the community, as represented by the strength of feelings toward the community, including attachment, awareness, and commitment.	0.39**	0.37**
Identify and Understand Problems in the Community (Attitude/Knowledge): Represents the respondent's self-assessed understanding of social problems in his/her community, such as environment, public health, and crime.	0.29*	0.10
Importance of Neighborhood Participation (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the importance of being active in his/her neighborhood, including reporting crimes, keeping the neighborhood clean, and participating in neighborhood organizations	0.08	0.26*
Civic Obligations (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the importance of participating in various civic activities, including voting in elections and serving on a jury.	0.09	0.19
Confidence in Ability to Work with Local Government (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the feasibility of working with local or state government to meet a range of community needs, such as fixing a pothole or getting an issue on a statewide ballot.	0.34*	0.42**
Ability to Lead a Successful Community-Based Movement (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the feasibility of starting a grassroots effort to meet a range of community needs, such as starting an after-school program or organizing a park cleanup program.	0.21	0.53**
Appreciation of Cultural and Ethnic Diversity (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the importance and desirability of relationships between people who do not share the same cultural and/or ethnic background.	-0.39**	0.19
Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups (Behavior): Provides the respondent's report of the frequency with which he/she personally uses techniques for encouraging constructive group interactions, such as encouraging participation by other team members and supporting others' right to be heard.	-0.16	0.09
Constructive Group Interactions (Behavior/Experience): Provides the respondent's report of the frequency with which he/she participated in group situations during which constructive interactions, such as working out conflicts and sharing ideas, occurred.	-0.12	0.16
Personal Growth Through Community Service (Attitude): Represents the respondent's assessment of the impacts of his/her prior volunteer activities during the previous year with respect to personal growth, including exposure to new ideas, changing beliefs, and learning about the real world.	0.58**	0.10

Exhibit 6: NCCC Effect Size by Outcome continued

	2004	2007
Personal Effectiveness of Community Service (Attitude): Represents the respondent's opinion about the impacts of his/her prior volunteer activities during the previous year with respect to making community contributions, developing attachments to the community, and making a difference.	-0.03	0.51*
Active in Community Affairs (Behavior): Represents the frequency with which he/she participates in community-based activities, including attending community meetings and writing to newspapers to voice opinions.	0.44**	0.18
Voting Participation (Behavior): Represents whether respondent voted in 2000 Presidential election in 2004 column and the 2004 Presidential election in 2007 column.	0.10	-0.06
Social Trust (Attitude): Represents the extent to which the respondent believes that other people can be trusted.	NA ^b	0.36**
Volunteering Participation (Behavior): Provides likelihood that respondent served as a volunteer at any point following Fall 2000 for 2004 results and within 12 months prior to survey for 2007.	0.16**	0.28*
Employment-Related Outcomes		
Importance of Service-Oriented Careers (Attitude)^a: Represents respondent's opinion about whether his/her current job is a position that contributes to others, such as working to correct inequalities and being of direct service to others.	-0.20	0.22
Public Service Employment (Behavior): Represents how likely respondent is to be working in a public service career.	0.08	0.14
Education-Related Outcomes		
Educational Progress (Behavior): Represents respondent's educational attainment at the time of survey.	-0.02	-0.01
Life Satisfaction Outcomes		
Life Satisfaction (Attitude): A new outcome for the 2007 survey that measures overall satisfaction with life, through satisfaction with career, financial, situation, physical health, close relationships with friends and family, religious or spiritual life, and leisure activities.	NA ^b	0.39**
** Indicates statistical significance at the 0.01 level.		
* Indicates statistical significance at the 0.05 level.		
^a Outcome is modified for 2007 analysis. See Appendix G for a more detailed explanation of the outcome.		
^b NA indicates "Not Applicable" because this outcome was not measured on previous surveys.		

Civic Engagement

Political scholars and researchers have advanced many arguments regarding the value of engagement in civic and political affairs (Bennett & Resnick, 1990; Habermas, 1984-1987; Verba, Schlozman, Brady, & Nie, 1993). Generally speaking, civic engagement is a fundamental requirement for a healthy democracy (Barber, 1984; Hutchins, 1952), and where participation rates are too low, democracy may no longer be viable (Powell, 1982). Widespread civic participation guarantees that all voices and viewpoints are heard in the public sphere, which may not happen if fewer people participate (Piven & Cloward, 1988; Schlozman, 1984). Civic engagement also has positive benefits for the active participant, including the development of civic skills that encourage more effective participation (Brady, Verba, & Schlozman, 1995). Finally, civic engagement can promote “bridging” social capital, which leads to stronger, more diverse social networks (Briggs, 2003) and ultimately a healthier society.

Unfortunately, there is some indication that Americans may be less involved in their communities than in the past, turning into passive observers rather than active participants (National Conference on Citizenship, 2006). Over the past 30 years, Americans have reduced public meeting attendance by 35 percent and their participation in civic organizations has decreased by half (Putnam, 2000). As civic engagement diminishes, so do the social networks, norms, and institutions that strengthen the civic health of the country (National Conference on Citizenship, 2006).

AmeriCorps recognizes the importance of community participation and is designed, in part, to provide civic engagement and leadership opportunities for all program members. Participation in AmeriCorps helps members realize that they are able to make an impact in their communities in addressing some of our country’s most pressing needs (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2008c).



At its core, civic engagement is about a person’s understanding of problems in the community, willingness to address the problems, and level of involvement designing solutions to the problem (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). These attributes can be measured across several stages of involvement. First, does one actively reflect on and assess the status of one’s community? In doing so, does one perceive the challenges the community faces? Second, does one believe that one has the ability to successfully work

for change? Third, does one leverage observations and a sense of empowerment with a corresponding responsibility for the wellbeing of one’s community? Does this result in direct action on behalf of the community? Applying learning and motivation theory (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2000), the researchers on this study created a three-stage framework for assessing civic engagement—Assess, Empower, and Act.

The study measures several aspects and dimensions of civic engagement by developing a series of outcomes that represent themes. Each outcome is composed of a set of related questions. For example, one aspect of civic engagement is an

individual's *connection to community*, which is measured by a series of questions including: "Do you have a strong attachment to your community," "Are you aware of what can be done to meet important needs in your community," and "Do you feel you have the ability to make a difference in your community?"

The civic engagement outcomes assessed in this section follow the three stages of involvement—Assess, Empower, and Act. In the first stage of assessing the needs of the community, the study examines:

- Connection to community;
- Identification and understanding of problems in the community; and
- Importance of neighborhood participation and civic obligations.

For the second stage of becoming empowered as a force for change, the study assesses:

- Confidence in ability to work with local government;
- Confidence in ability to organize community activities;
- Constructive personal behavior in groups, constructive interaction in groups, and appreciation of cultural and ethnic diversity; and
- Personal growth and effectiveness through community service.

For the third stage, direct action of civic engagement was measured by:

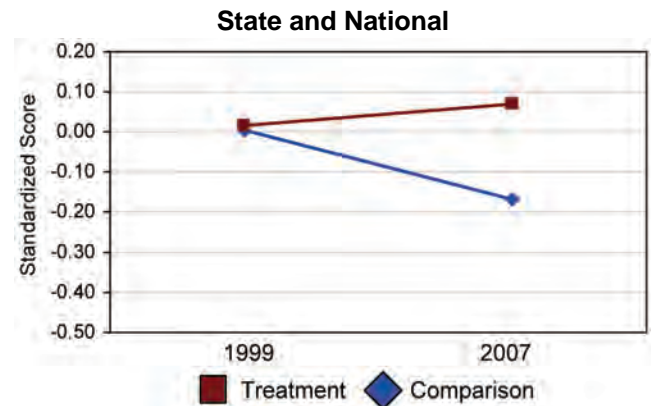
- Participation in community affairs and voting;
- Social trust;
- Volunteering; and
- Donating to charitable causes.

Assess

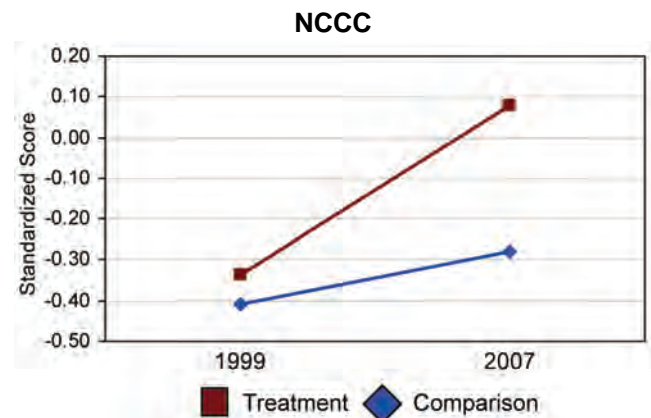
Eight years after enrolling in AmeriCorps, State and National and NCCC members are more likely to assess and reflect on the needs of their community.

State and National and NCCC members are significantly more likely than the comparison group to have a strong *connection to community*, as characterized by their level of commitment and attachment to their communities and awareness of the social issues facing their communities. For State and National members, there is a small effect size for connection to community (effect size = 0.24). State and National members score higher on measures of their level of connection to community (mean = 0.07) than

Exhibit 7: Connection to Community



Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.24, statistically significant at the $p < 0.01$ level.



Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.37, statistically significant at the $p < 0.01$ level.

the comparison group (mean = -0.17). While the effect size is statistically significant, it is smaller than the 0.51 effect size measured in 2004. For NCCC members, there is a medium effect for connection to community (effect size = 0.37), as NCCC members score higher on connection to community (mean = 0.08) than the comparison group (mean = -0.28). The effects for NCCC have persisted since 2004, and are approximately as large (effect size = 0.39).

The effects of program participation are particularly pronounced for some subgroups of members. Both Blacks/African Americans (effect size = 0.48) and members from disadvantaged circumstances (effect size = 0.36) who participated in State and National have statistically significant differences compared to similar individuals in the comparison group. When individual components of connection to community are analyzed, Blacks/African Americans who participated in these programs are 10 percentage points more likely to have an understanding of how to meet the needs of their community than Black/African American members of the comparison group (77% compared to 67%). In addition, 79 percent of Black/African American State and National members indicate they have the ability to make a difference in their communities, compared to 71 percent of the comparison group. Of members from disadvantaged circumstances, 61 percent say they are connected to their communities, versus 54 percent of individuals from the disadvantaged circumstances comparison group.

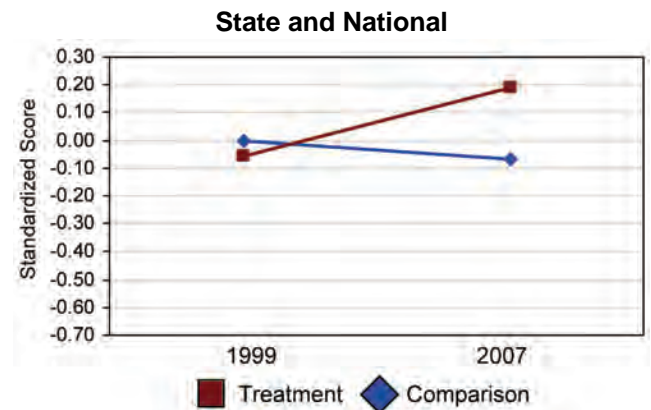
State and National members are also significantly more likely to be able to *identify and understand problems in their community*. Among the specific problems facing communities are illiteracy, crime, lack of civic involvement, public health issues, and environmental issues. State and National members are more likely to identify and understand social problems in the community (mean = 0.19), than the comparison group (mean = -0.07). There is a small effect of participation (effect size = 0.26), which is slightly smaller than in 2004 (effect size = 0.30).

For NCCC members, there is no significant difference between the treatment and comparison

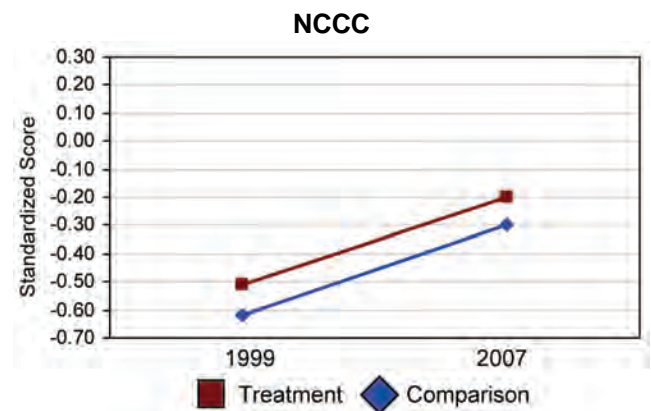
groups on identifying and understanding social problems in the community (effect size = 0.10), although NCCC members score higher (mean = -0.20) than the comparison group (mean = -0.30). In 2004, there were statistically significant differences between NCCC members and their comparison group (effect size = 0.29).

When responses to specific questions are analyzed, State and National members report that they understand the local environmental (59%) and literacy (59%) issues more than their peers in the comparison group (52% and 49%, respectively). For NCCC, members and their comparison group report their understanding of local environmental (55% and 57%) and literacy (35% and 37%) issues at similar rates. Within demographic subgroups, Hispanic/Latino State

Exhibit 8: Identify and Understand Problems in Their Community



Positive effect of participation. Effect Size = 0.26, statistically significant at the p<0.05 level.



No effect of participation. Effect Size = 0.10, p>0.05 level.

and National members (mean = 0.14) are significantly more likely than the comparison group (mean = -0.56) to be able to identify and understand problems in their community. At 0.71, the effect size is large.

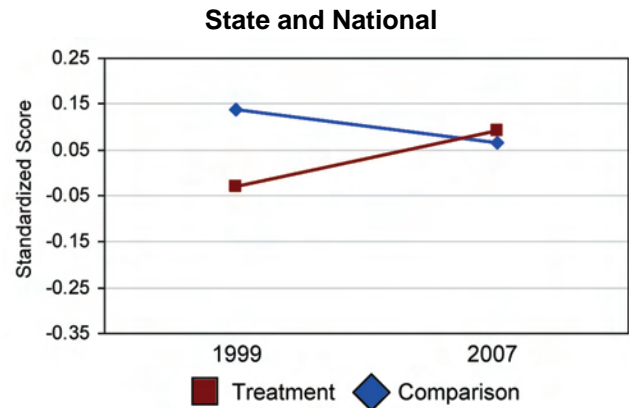
Hispanic/Latino State and National members are more than twice as likely to indicate that they understand the problems associated with the lack of civic engagement in their communities, as Hispanic/Latino members of the comparison group (42% to 17%). Fifty-five percent of Hispanic/Latino State and National members indicate that they understand local public health problems facing the community, while only 36 percent of the comparison group shares these perceptions.

Another aspect of assessing community needs, as a stage of involvement, is the importance of being a responsible citizen. These neighborhood obligations may include reporting crimes, participating in neighborhood organizations, helping to keep the neighborhood clean and safe, and helping others who are less fortunate. Overall, State and National members are not significantly different from the comparison group in reporting on the *importance of neighborhood participation*. State and National members score negligibly higher on the importance of neighborhood participation (mean = 0.09 vs. comparison group mean = 0.07). The non-significant effect size is 0.03, compared to the statistically significant effect size of 0.27 in 2004.

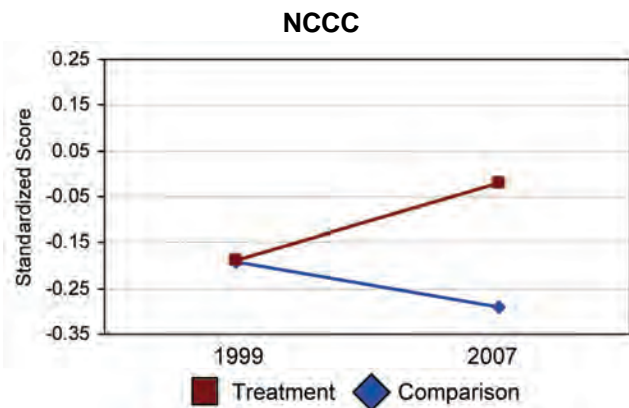
For NCCC members, however, the effects of service appear for the first time. NCCC members are significantly more likely to understand the importance of neighborhood participation (mean = -0.02), than the comparison group (mean = -0.29). There is a small effect of participation (effect size = 0.26), which exceeds the non-significant effect size in 2004 (effect size in 2004 = 0.08; $p = 0.40$).

Hispanic/Latino State and National members (mean = 0.26) are significantly more likely than their comparison group (mean = -0.15) to report the importance of neighborhood participation (effect size = 0.43). Almost 96 percent of Hispanic/Latino State and National members report that keeping the neighborhood safe is a

Exhibit 9: Importance of Neighborhood Participation



No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.03, $p > 0.05$ level.

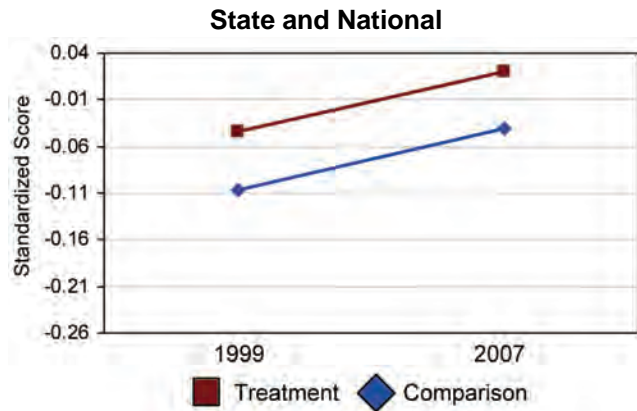


Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.26, statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

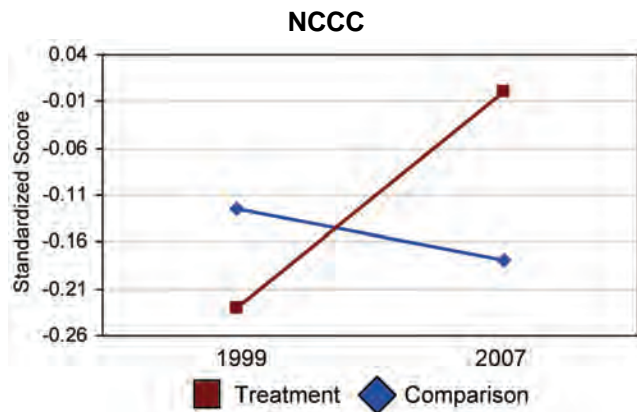
very important obligation, compared to 83 percent of the comparison group. Likewise, 57 percent of State and National members of Hispanic/Latino origin report that participation in neighborhood organizations is very important compared to 35 percent of Hispanics/Latinos in the comparison group.

Neighborhood obligations are closely related to *civic obligations*. The study asked respondents about the importance of serving on juries, voting in elections, and keeping informed about news and public issues. For both State and National and NCCC members, results are not statistically significant. State and National members (mean = 0.02) score higher than the comparison group (mean = -0.04), but the difference is not significant. Similarly, NCCC members (mean = 0.00) score higher than the comparison group (mean = -0.18), but the difference is not significant.

Exhibit 10: Civic Obligations



No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.06, $p > 0.05$.



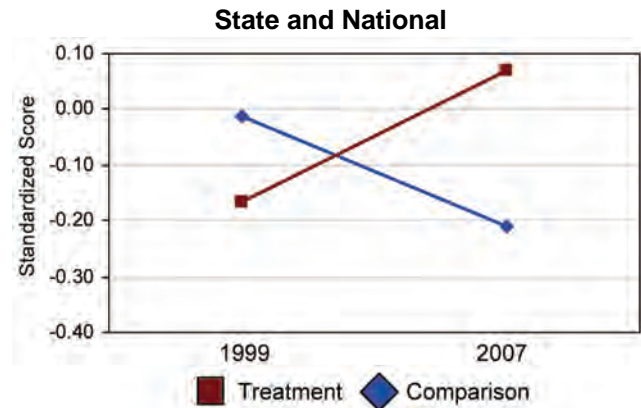
No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.19, $p > 0.05$.

Empower

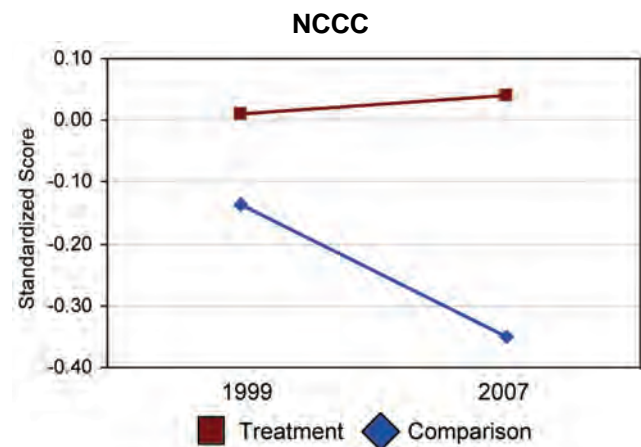
State and National and NCCC members are more empowered to work for the betterment of their community than the comparison group.

The most important civic impact of AmeriCorps on members is, perhaps, a sense of empowerment or self-efficacy—a strong belief that they can make a difference. Both State and National and NCCC members have greater *confidence in their ability to work with local government* to address community needs. Examples of community needs include fixing a pothole, building an addition onto a local community center, and getting an important issue on a statewide ballot. State and National members score higher on local civic efficacy (mean = 0.07) than the comparison group (mean = -0.21). There is

Exhibit 11: Confidence in Ability to Work with Local Government



Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.28, statistically significant at the $p < 0.01$ level.



Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.42, statistically significant at the $p < 0.001$ level.

a small effect for self-reported confidence in members' ability to work with local government (effect size = 0.28) that has increased since 2004 (effect size in 2004 = 0.21).

For NCCC members, there is a medium effect size for self-reported confidence in ability to work with local government (effect size = 0.42). NCCC members score higher (mean = 0.04) than the comparison group (mean = -0.35). The effects for NCCC have increased and continued to be statistically significant since 2004 (effect size in 2004 = 0.34).

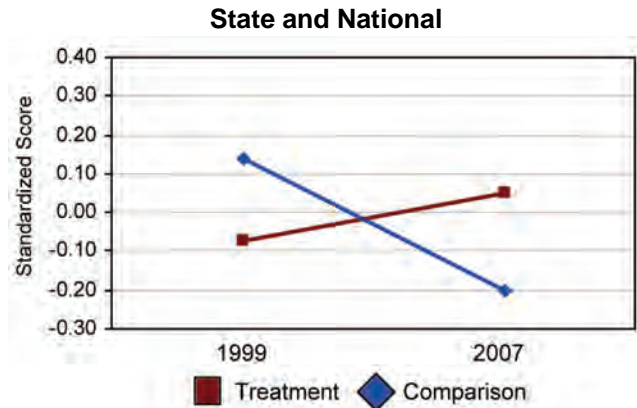
When responses to individual questions are analyzed, 41 percent of State and National members indicate that they believe that they definitely would be able to get the local government to fix a pothole on their street, compared to 38 percent of individuals from the comparison group. Forty-one percent of NCCC members believe they definitely would be able to get the local government to fix a pothole on their street, compared to 34 percent of individuals from the comparison group.

Within subgroups, when asked about their level of confidence in their ability to work with local government to build an addition onto a local community center, non-white State and National members are twice as likely as their comparison group to have confidence. Twenty percent of minority State and National members could work with local government, compared to nine percent of the comparison group. Similarly, State and National members from disadvantaged backgrounds are twice as likely as individuals from the comparison group to believe they could definitely work with local government to get an addition built. Fourteen percent of State and National members from disadvantaged circumstances could work with local government, compared to seven percent in the comparison group.

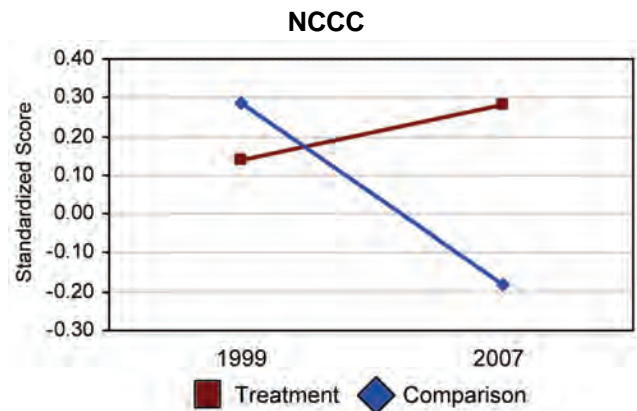
Respondents were also asked about their level of confidence in starting a community-based movement to address a community need. Meeting a community need included organizing an event to benefit a charity or religious organization, starting an after-school program for children whose parents work, and organizing an annual clean-up for a neighborhood park. Participation in AmeriCorps has a statistically significant impact on members' views of their *ability to lead a successful community-based movement* to address challenges facing their community.

For State and National members, there is a small effect size for self-reported ability to lead a successful community-based movement (effect size = 0.25). State and National members score higher on self-reported ability to lead a successful community-based movement (mean = 0.05) than the comparison group (mean = -0.20). While the effect

Exhibit 12: Ability to Lead a Successful Community-Based Movement



Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.25, statistically significant at the p<0.01 level.



Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.53, statistically significant at the p<0.01 level.

size is statistically significant, it is smaller than the statistically significant 0.33 effect size from 2004.

For NCCC members, there is a medium effect for self-reported ability to lead a successful community-based movement (effect size = 0.53). NCCC members score higher on self-reported ability to lead a successful community-based movement (mean = 0.28) than the comparison group (mean = -0.18). In 2004, the effect of NCCC on members' self-reported ability to lead a successful community-based movement was not significant, indicating that NCCC's program effects may require several years to be realized.

Respondents were asked about their ability to start an after-school program with others in their community. Fifty-nine percent of State and National

members and 60 percent of NCCC members believe they would definitely be able to collaborate with others in their community to start an after-school program for children, compared to 52 percent and 52 percent in their respective comparison groups.

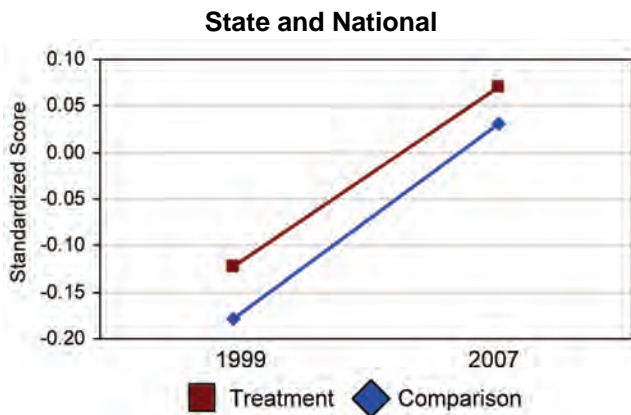
In addition to empowerment and efficacy, individuals must also be able to connect with others to build social networks that generate “social capital.” Social capital is defined as the collective value of social networks and the inclinations of individuals in them to do things to help each other (Saguaro Seminar, 2008). Bridging social capital “requires that we transcend our social and political and professional identities to connect with people unlike ourselves” (Putnam, 2000). To assess the impact of AmeriCorps participation on members’

connections to others, the study asked respondents about their behaviors and interactions in groups, and their appreciation of cultural and ethnic diversity.

The study finds that there are no significant differences between State and National members and their comparison group on *constructive personal behavior in groups* (effect size = 0.26), *constructive group interactions* (effect size = 0.23), or *appreciation of cultural and ethnic diversity* (effect size = 0.04). These findings are similar to the 2004 findings for State and National members, which were also not significant.

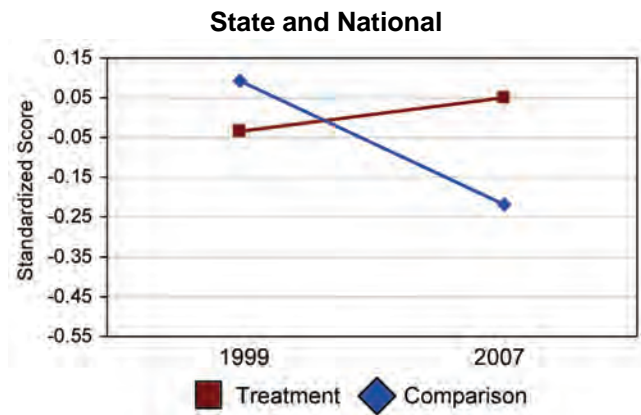
Similarly, there are no significant findings for NCCC members and their comparison group on constructive personal behavior in groups (effect size

Exhibit 13: Appreciation of Cultural and Ethnic Diversity

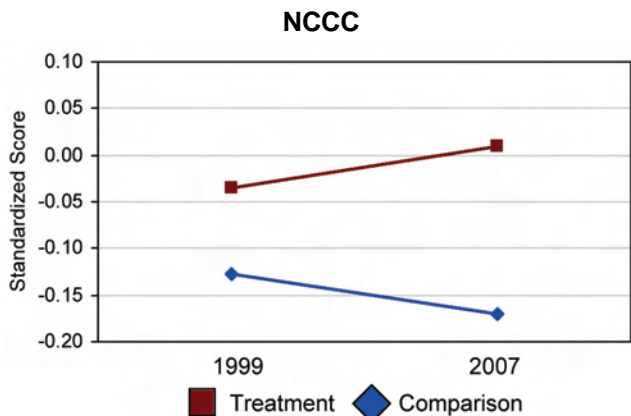


No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.04, p>0.05 level.

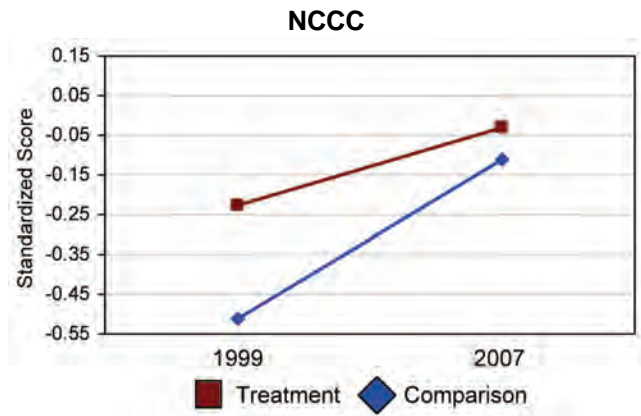
Exhibit 14: Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups



No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.26, p>0.05 level.



No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.19, p>0.05 level.



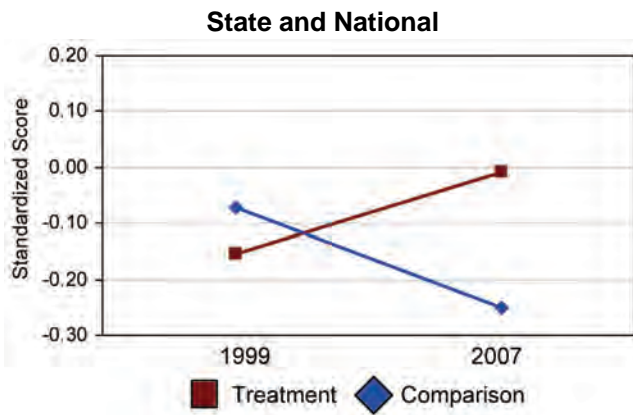
No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.09, p>0.05 level.

= 0.09), constructive group interactions (effect size = 0.16), or appreciation of cultural and ethnic diversity (effect size = 0.19). In 2004, constructive personal behavior in groups and constructive group interactions were also not significant for NCCC members. Appreciation of cultural and ethnic diversity, however, was significant and negative in 2004. Thus, the short-term negative significant finding for NCCC members, for appreciation of diversity, appears to have dissipated over time.

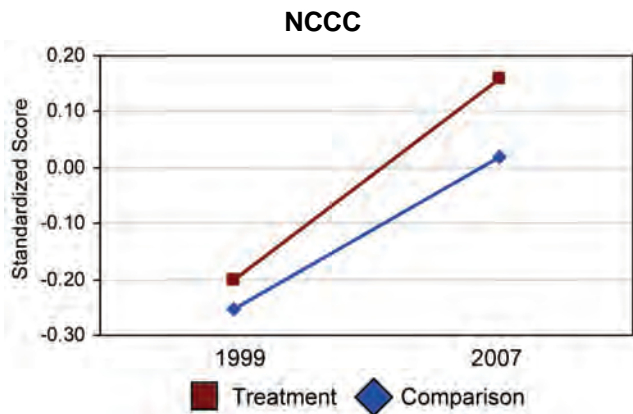
Researchers also assessed the effects of AmeriCorps participation on members' *personal growth through community service* and *personal effectiveness of community service*. Personal growth through community service is measured as whether respondents feel that their community service

activities led to changes, such as a re-examination of their beliefs and attitudes, exposure to new ideas, and learning about the "real world." There are no significant differences for State and National members (effect size = 0.04) on personal growth through community service. In 2004, there was a statistically significant effect (effect size = 0.31). Similarly, there are no significant differences between NCCC members and the comparison group (effect size = 0.10). In 2004, there was a statistically significant medium-size effect between members and the comparison group (effect size = 0.58). Clearly the effects of service on both State and National and NCCC members' personal growth through community service have faded over the past eight years.

Exhibit 15: Constructive Group Interactions

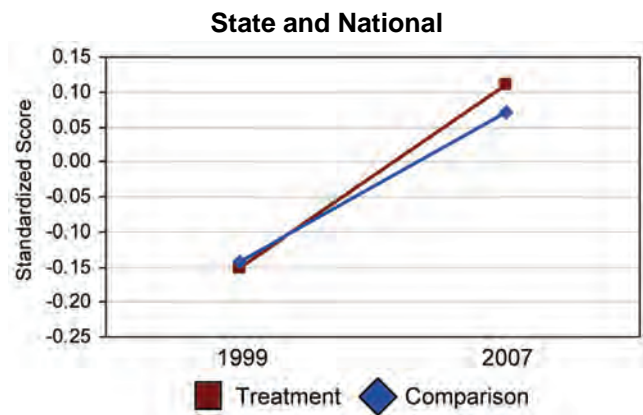


No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.23, $p > 0.05$ level.

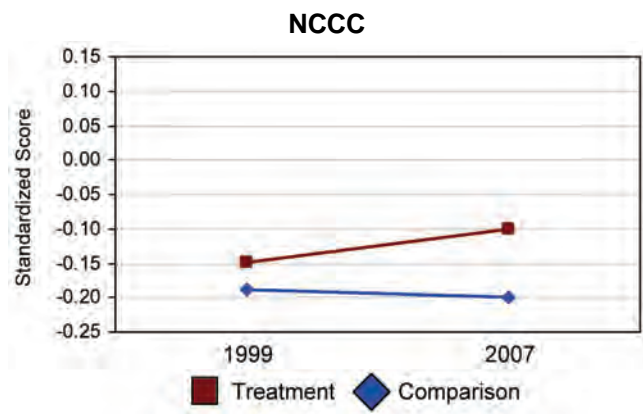


No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.16, $p > 0.05$ level.

Exhibit 16: Personal Growth Through Community Service



No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.04, $p > 0.05$ level.



No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.10, $p > 0.05$ level.

Personal effectiveness of community service is measured as whether respondents feel that their community service made a contribution to the community, made a difference in the life of at least one person, or made the respondent feel like part of the community. There are no significant differences for State and National members with respect to personal effectiveness (effect size = 0.02). In 2004, however, there was a statistically significant effect (effect size = 0.38). For NCCC members, there is a statistically significant medium effect (effect size = 0.51). In 2004, there were no significant differences between NCCC members and their comparison group on personal effectiveness of community service (effect size = -0.03), which may indicate that NCCC program effects take time to be realized.

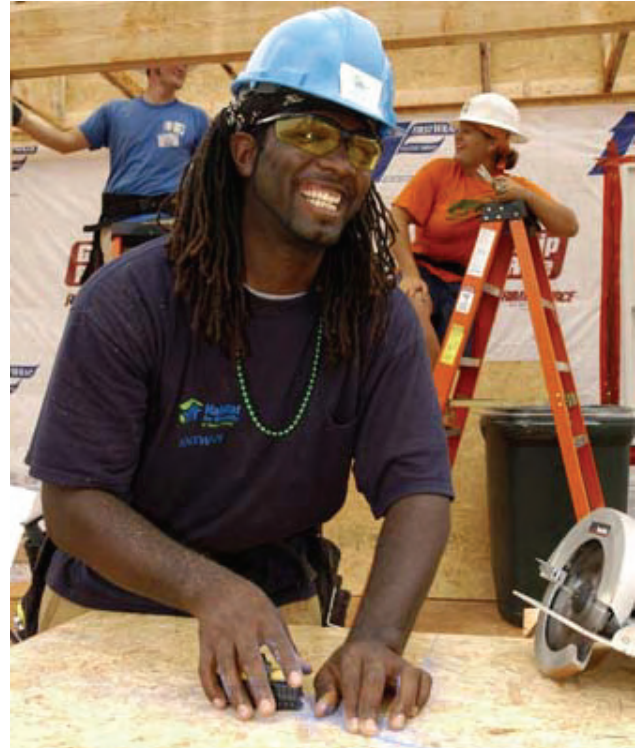
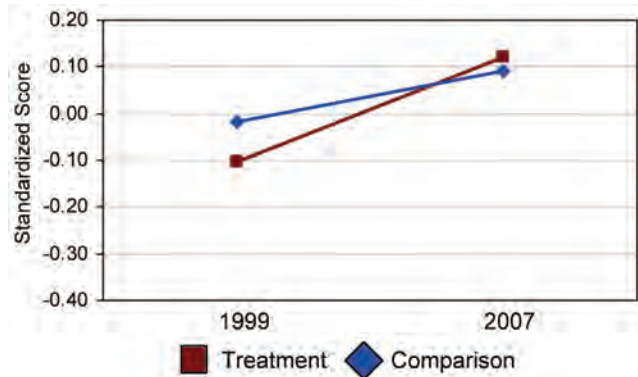


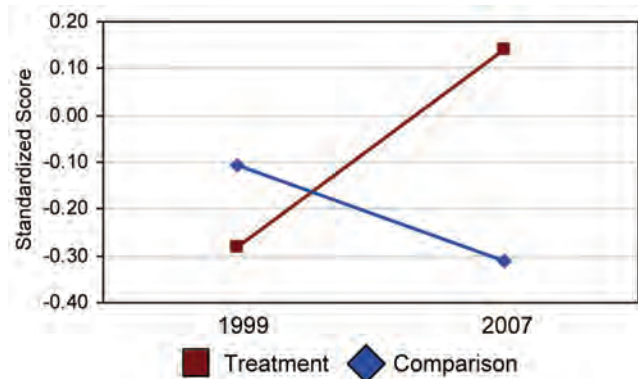
Exhibit 17: Personal Effectiveness of Community Service

State and National



No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.02, $p > 0.05$ level.

NCCC



Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.51, statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Act

Once individuals have assessed and are empowered to improve their communities, they have the necessary tools to turn their attitudes into behaviors; that is, they can turn their knowledge into action. AmeriCorps service is intended to instill and reinforce active behaviors in its members. Recognizing that there are many ways for members to act on behalf of their communities, the study measured members' community activities, voting, volunteering, donating, and social trust. These activities are among the most critical for civic engagement because they are measures of actual behaviors.

Eight years after serving in AmeriCorps, State and National members continue to be especially active in community affairs; there are no impacts on NCCC members.

State and National members are significantly more likely to be *active in community affairs* as measured by attending community meetings, supporting organizations and issues they find important, and publicly expressing their opinions. Results indicate

that State and National members are significantly more likely to be active in their communities. State and National members exhibit a small effect (effect size = 0.19), scoring higher on community-based activism (mean = 0.03) than the comparison group (mean = -0.15). The effect is slightly larger than the 0.16 effect size from 2004.

Subgroup analyses of State and National members reveal that AmeriCorps has a medium effect (effect size = 0.37) on Black/African American's likelihood of being engaged in the political process (mean = 0.16) when compared to Blacks/African Americans in the comparison group (mean = -0.21). Furthermore, non-white State and National

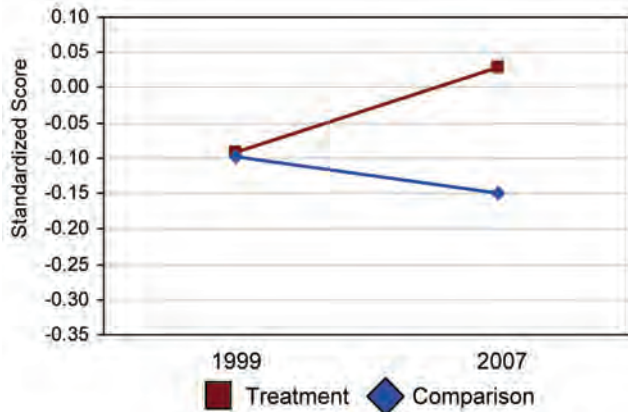
members, taken as a whole, report a small effect (effect size = 0.28) of service on measures of community participation (mean = 0.02), when compared to non-white individuals in the comparison group (mean = -0.25).

Participation in AmeriCorps has no significant effect on NCCC members' level of community engagement (effect size = 0.18), although members score higher (mean = -0.12) than the comparison group (mean = -0.29). This is a considerable change from 2004, when NCCC members were significantly more likely to be active in community affairs (effect size = 0.44).

Analysis of responses to specific questions indicates that State and National members are slightly more likely than individuals in the comparison group to participate in community meetings, events, and activities (69% compared to 63%). Similarly, when NCCC respondents were asked how often they participate in community meetings, events, and activities, 20 percent of NCCC members reported that they participated, compared to 17 percent of the comparison group.

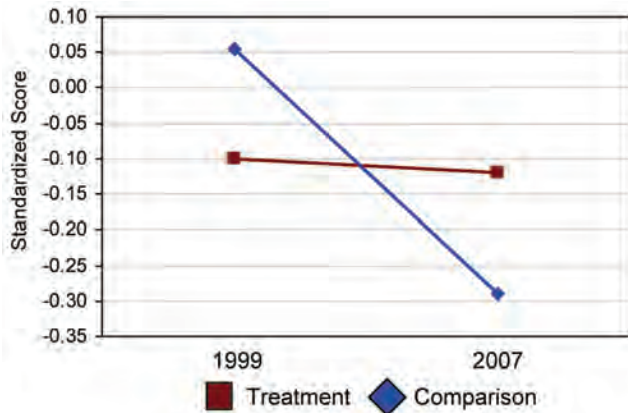
Exhibit 18: Active in Community Affairs

State and National



Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.19, statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

NCCC



No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.18, $p > 0.05$ level.

AmeriCorps had no impact on State and National and NCCC members' voting rates in the 2004 Presidential election. Voting rates for State and National members in the 2006 Congressional mid-term election were lower than for the comparison group, while there were no differences for NCCC members.

Voting in national elections is one of the most recognizable forms of civic engagement and is fundamental to democracy. Although members are prohibited from engaging in any political activities during their service, AmeriCorps provides many members with their first exposure to addressing the issues facing communities and their first opportunity to work with community organizations and government officials.

To assess members' level of voting eight years after serving in AmeriCorps, the study measures whether State and National and NCCC members:

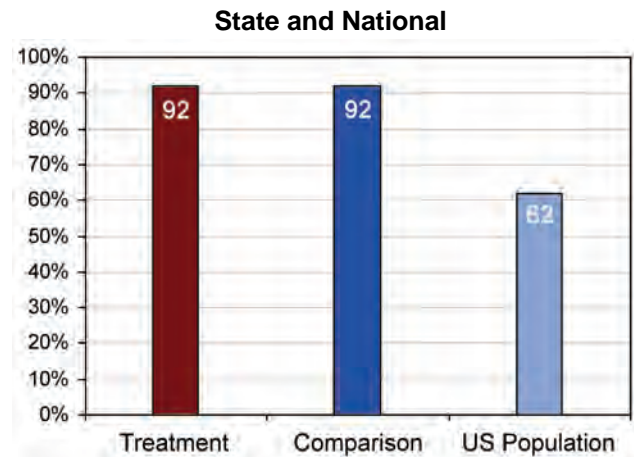
- Are registered to vote;
- Voted in the 2004 Presidential election; and
- Voted in the 2006 Congressional mid-term election.

Registering to vote is the essential first step in participating in our nation's democratic process. The study finds that there are no statistically significant differences between State and National members and their comparison group in registering to vote. Nearly all State and National (92%) members were registered voters in 2007, the same percentage as the comparison group. Both groups exceeded the national voter registration rate of 62 percent in 2006 (U.S. Census, 2008). Similarly, there were no significant differences between NCCC members (94%), and their comparison group (95%), but both groups exceeded the national population in voter registration.

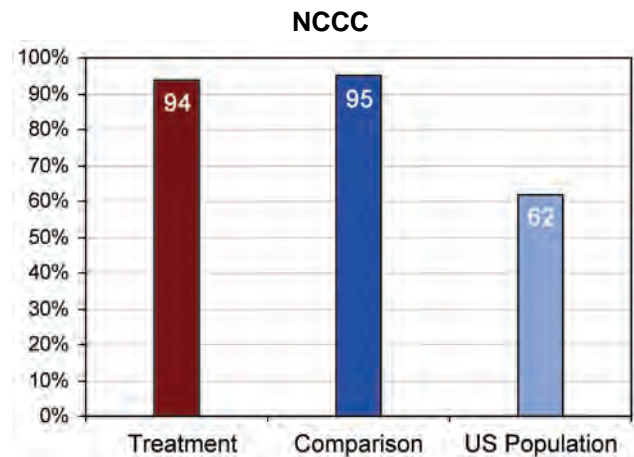
From 2000 to 2006, the percentage of registered voters across the nation declined. However, during the same time period, the percentage of State and National and NCCC members registering to vote increased. In 2000, 64 percent of Americans over the age of 18 were registered to vote. In 2006, 62 percent of eligible Americans were registered to vote (U.S. Census, 2008). In comparison, 84 percent of State and National members were registered to vote in 2000, while 92 percent are currently registered to vote. Similarly for NCCC, 87 percent of members were registered to vote in 2000, while 94 percent are currently registered to vote.

A stronger indication of civic engagement is participating in our democracy by voting in elections. In the 2000 Presidential election, 77 percent of State and National and 78 percent of NCCC members reported voting. In comparison, 76 percent of the State and National comparison group and 67 percent of the NCCC comparison group voted in 2000. The voting rates for both

Exhibit 19: Percent Registered to Vote



No effect of participation.
Effect Size = -0.01, p>0.05 level.



No effect of participation.
Effect Size = -0.07, p>0.05 level.

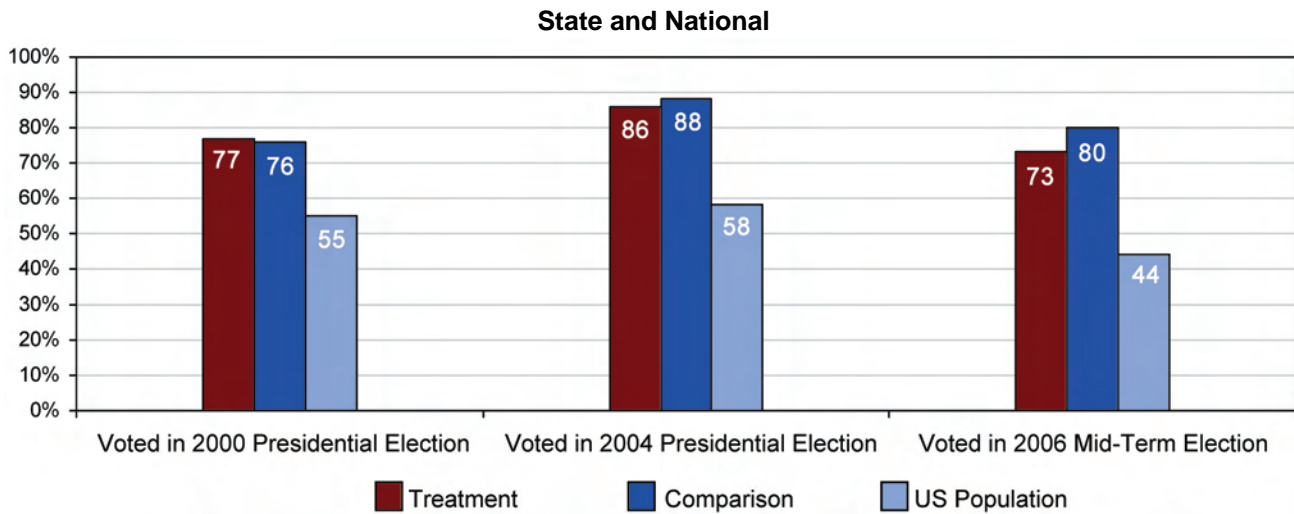
AmeriCorps members and the comparison group are significantly higher than the 55 percent of eligible Americans who voted in 2000 (U.S. Census, 2008).

More recently in the 2004 Presidential election, 86 percent of State and National members voted, compared to 88 percent of their comparison group. NCCC members were also slightly less likely to vote than their comparison group (91% compared to 93%) The differences for both State and National and NCCC were not statistically significant. When compared to the voting rates for the national population in the 2004 Presidential election, both State and National and NCCC members, and their comparison groups, voted at significantly higher rates than the average of 58 percent (U.S. Census, 2008).

Historically, fewer people vote in Congressional mid-term elections than in presidential elections (Born, 1990; U.S. Census, 2008a; 2008b). The 2006 election was no exception, attracting fewer voters than even pre-election forecasts predicted (McDonald, 2006). Mid-term elections may have decreased participation either because Congressional elections mainly attract more committed voters while Presidential elections attract less committed voters (Campbell, 1966) or because presidential

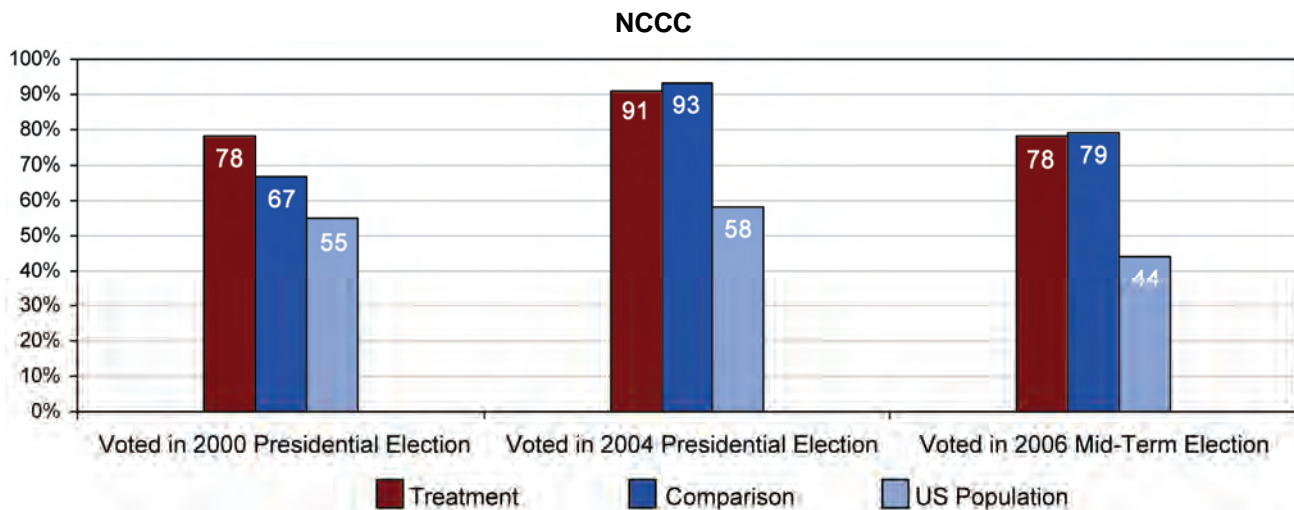
supporters may be turned off by negative campaign messages in mid-term elections (Kernell, 1977). Mid-term Congressional elections tend to revolve more around local issues, especially the level of constituency service provided by elected officials (Ansolabehere, Snyder, & Stewart, 2000; Cain, Ferejohn, & Fiorina, 1987). Thus, participation in mid-term elections is an important indicator of engagement with local civic issues, perhaps even more so than participation in Presidential elections.

Exhibit 20: Percentage of Population Who Voted in National Elections



For "Voted in 2004 Presidential Election", no effect of participation.
Effect Size = -0.07, $p > 0.05$ level.

For "Voted in 2006 Mid-Term Election", negative effect of participation.
Effect Size = -0.15, statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.



For "Voted in 2004 Presidential Election", no effect of participation.
Effect Size = -0.06, $p > 0.05$ level.

For "Voted in 2006 Mid-Term Election", no effect of participation.
Effect Size = -0.03, $p > 0.05$ level.

This study finds that similar to national trends, voting rates among study participants were lower in the 2006 Congressional mid-term elections compared to the 2004 Presidential election. In the 2006 Congressional mid-term elections, 73 percent of State and National members and 78 percent of NCCC members voted, compared to 80 percent and 79 percent of their respective comparison groups, and 44 percent of adults nationally (U.S. Census, 2008). The differences between State and National members and their comparison group are significant ($p = 0.03$) and negative. The differences between the NCCC members and their comparison group are not significant.

In addition to voting, respondents were also asked about several other forms of political activity, including contacting a government official to express an opinion, working as a volunteer for a political party or candidate on a campaign, or talking to people regarding voting for a specific candidate or party. For these measures of political engagement, results are not significant for either State and National or NCCC. These sustained longer-term effects are not surprising, since AmeriCorps programs and AmeriCorps members are prohibited from engaging in political activity during their service. Results are also not significant within subgroups, with one important exception. State and National members from disadvantaged circumstances are significantly more likely than disadvantaged individuals in the comparison group to have contacted a government official to express an opinion on a local or national issue (effect size = 0.39).

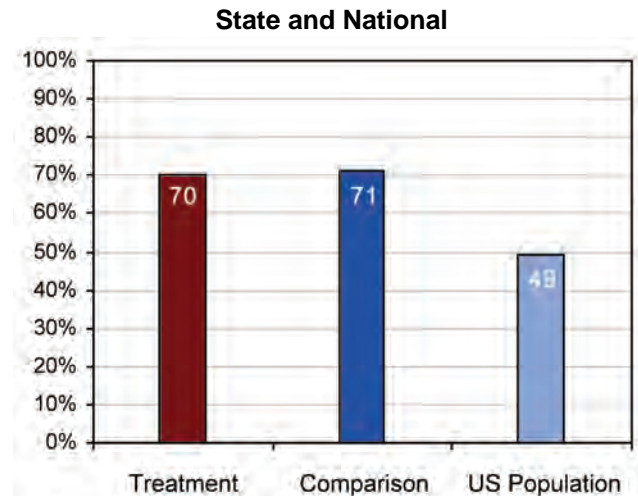
AmeriCorps has no impact on State and National members’ social trust and a positive impact on NCCC members’ social trust.

A large and growing body of research has suggested that communities with higher levels of trust in others also tend to enjoy a wide variety of positive social outcomes (Knack & Keefer, 1997). When individuals report that “people can generally be trusted,” they tend to act in a more trustworthy manner themselves (Glaeser, Laibson, Scheinkman,

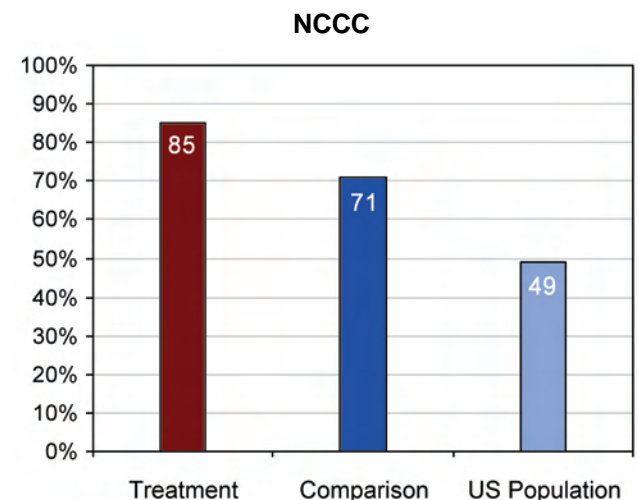
& Soutter, 2000), which allows norms of cooperation to emerge or grow in strength (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Orbell & Dawes, 1991). Under such circumstances, people find it easier to trust one another even when they do not share a history of positive experiences.

As a result, in places where trust is high, it is easier and less costly to engage in economic transactions. Trust reduces the need for government intervention to prevent exploitation and allows entrepreneurs to spend more time innovating and creating (Knack &

Exhibit 21: Social Trust



No effect of participation.
Effect Size = -0.02, $p > 0.05$ level.



Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = -0.36, statistically significant at the $p < 0.01$ level.

Keefer, 1997), which stimulates economic performance. Such an atmosphere also promotes the production of a variety of collective social goods (Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti, 1993), such as reduced income inequality (Galor & Zeira, 1993; Kawachi, Kennedy, Lochner, & Prothrow-Stith, 1997), better public education (La Porta, 1997), better public health (Kawachi, Kim, Coutts, & Subrahmaniam, 2004), and less violent crime (Galea, Karpati, & Kennedy, 2002).

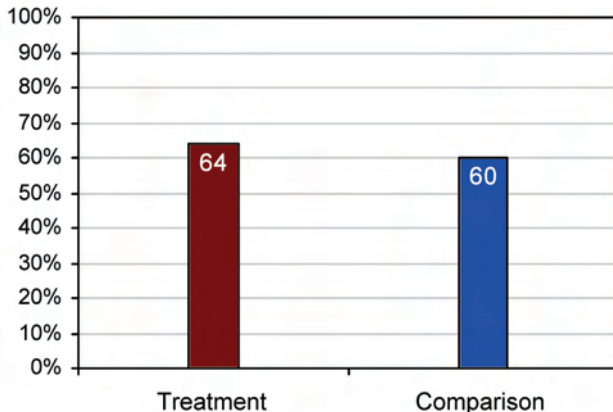
Collective action in communities is dependent on the ability of individuals to trust each other. This social trust enables neighbors to come together to address community problems. For the first time in the

Longitudinal Study, respondents were asked about their level of *social trust*, or the extent to which they believe that other people can be trusted. Seventy percent of State and National members believe other people can be trusted, compared to 71 percent of the comparison group. Although the difference between the treatment and comparison groups is not significant, both groups are well above the national average of 49 percent (General Social Survey, 2004). Differences within subgroups are also not significant.

NCCC members are significantly more likely to report that other people can be trusted. Eighty-five percent of NCCC members believe that other people can be trusted, compared to 71 percent of the comparison group. NCCC members are 14 percentage points higher than their comparison group in reporting that others can be trusted, and 36 percentage points higher than the national average (49%). This significant impact on social trust for NCCC members may result, in part, from the program's residential design and focus on team-based service. Reliance on one's team members, and successfully collaborating with others to meet community needs, may have provided the foundation for subsequent high levels of trust.

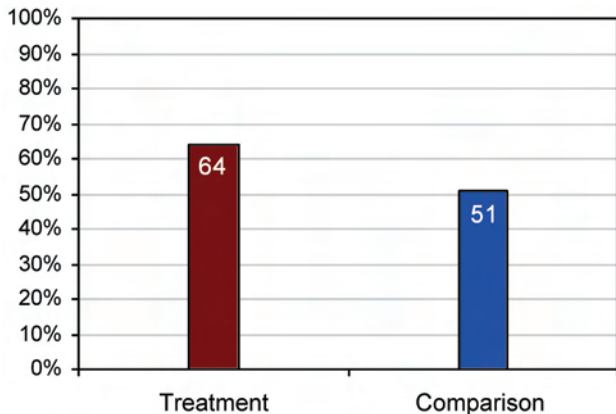
Exhibit 22: Percentage Reporting Volunteering in Past 12 Months

State and National



No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.07, $p > 0.05$ level.

NCCC



Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.28, statistically significant at the $p < 0.01$ level.

AmeriCorps has no impact on State and National members' volunteering rates, while NCCC members are significantly more likely to volunteer than the comparison group.

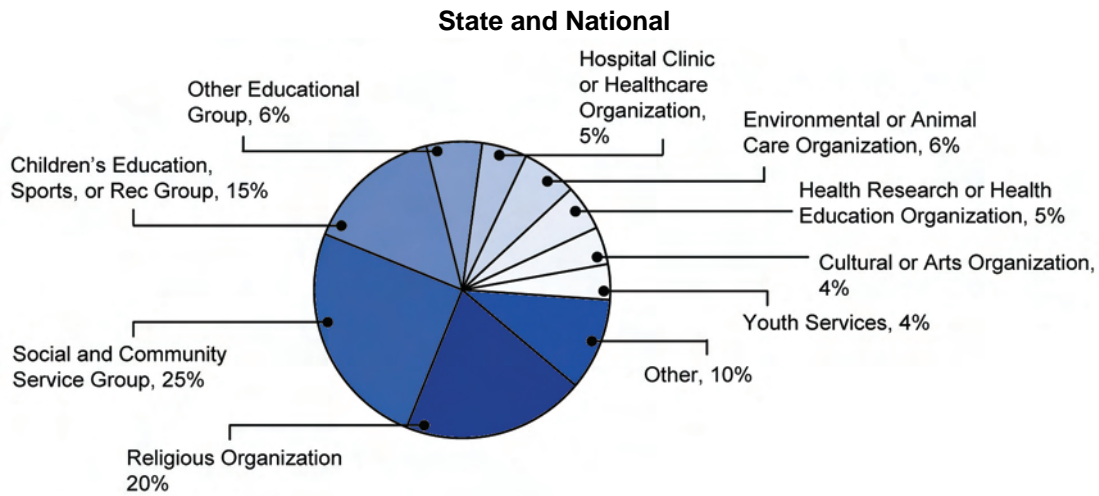
Volunteer service is one of the most important ways that an individual demonstrates one's commitment to the community. In 2007, 64 percent of State and National members report volunteering through or for an organization during the prior 12 months. The comparison group volunteering rate is 60 percent, rendering the effect not statistically significant.

Similarly, volunteering rates within State and National subgroups also are not significant. Sixty-five percent of non-whites report volunteer work through or for an organization during the past 12 months, compared to 59 percent of the comparison

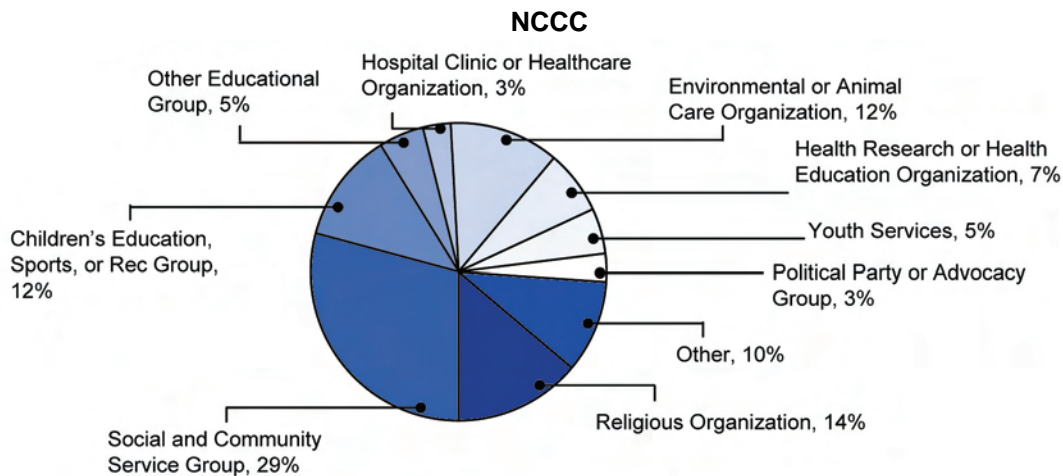
group (percentage point difference = 6.42%; not significant). Sixty-six percent of State and National members from disadvantaged circumstances report volunteer work through or for an organization during the past 12 months, compared to 53 percent of disadvantaged members from the comparison group (percentage point difference = 12.41%; not significant). Although the volunteering rates are not significant within subgroups, the fact that the subgroup rates are as high, if not higher, than the volunteering rates for whites (63%) and those from non-disadvantaged circumstances (63%) in State and National, is counter to national trends. Generally in

the United States, non-whites tend to have lower volunteering rates (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2007c). In this study, the results suggest non-whites who serve in AmeriCorps volunteer at rates similar to whites. The same is true for members from disadvantaged circumstances. Although generally individuals from disadvantaged circumstances have lower volunteering rates, the study finds that State and National members from disadvantaged circumstances volunteer at higher rates than those from non-disadvantaged circumstances.

Exhibit 23: Types of Organizations Where Respondents Volunteer



Note: Other includes all responses that received less than three percent of responses: Immigrant/refugee assistance, Labor Union, Public Safety, International Organization, Sports or Hobby Group, Government Organization, or Political Party.



Note: Other includes all responses that received less than three percent of responses: Cultural or Art Organization, Hospital Clinic, Non-Profit Organization, Sports or Hobby Group, Immigrant Refugee Assistance, Civic Organization, Labor Union, Government Organization, or Public Safety Organization.

NCCC members are significantly more likely than the comparison group to have volunteered through or for an organization during the past 12 months. On average, 64 percent of NCCC members volunteered, 13 percentage points higher than the NCCC comparison group (51%). This significant impact on volunteering rates for NCCC members may result, in part, from the program’s residential design and focus on team-based service.

The study also analyzes a subgroup of respondents who had not volunteered in the five years prior to joining or inquiring about AmeriCorps. A short-term analysis of this subgroup in 2004 found positive and significant effects on volunteering,

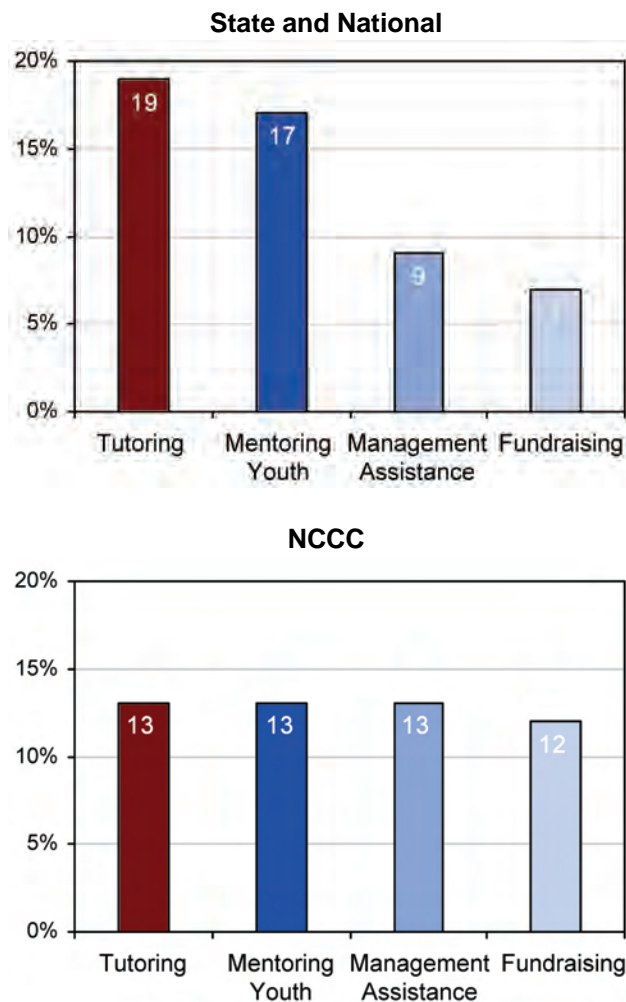
suggesting AmeriCorps has the ability to increase volunteering of individuals who have not been previously engaged in service. By 2007, the positive effects are not significant for this subgroup. Sixty-one percent of State and National members who had not volunteered in the five years prior to joining AmeriCorps did volunteer during the past 12 months, compared to 50 percent of the comparison group (percentage point difference = 11.12%).

The median number of hours volunteered by State and National members and their comparison group counterparts were both 40 hours each, in the past year. Among the subsets of those currently between the ages of 25–34 the median number of volunteer hours is 30 and 32, respectively. For NCCC members and their comparison group counterparts, all of whom are in the 25–34-year age range, the medians are 40 and 32 hours, respectively.

In general, the primary organizations with which State and National members volunteer are social and community service organizations, which receive 25 percent of their volunteer service. The second and third most frequent organizations are religious organizations (20%), and children’s educational, sports, or recreational groups (15%). NCCC members volunteer for social and community service organizations (29%), followed by religious institutions (14%), and children’s educational, sports, or recreational groups (12%).

The activities that former State and National members most frequently engage in while volunteering are tutoring (19%), mentoring (17%), providing professional or management assistance, including serving on a board or committee (9%), and fundraising (7%). Similarly, NCCC members spend the greatest proportion of their service hours tutoring (13%), mentoring youth (13%), providing professional or management assistance, including serving on a board or committee (13%), and fundraising (12%).

Exhibit 24: Most Frequent Activities Performed While Volunteering



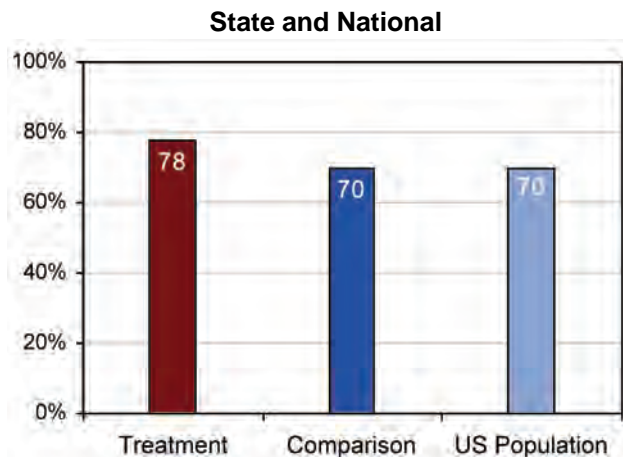
AmeriCorps has no effect on the rate at which State and National and NCCC members donate to nonprofit organizations and social causes.

In addition to being active citizens and volunteers, Americans provide important support for social causes by donating goods and financial resources. In 2006, Americans made donations of money, clothing, food, and other items valued over \$295 billion (Benevon, 2007). These donations supported the work of more than one million non-profit organizations (Troy, 2005), many of which might not be sustained at their current levels if not for the support of private citizens.

To assess donating behaviors, State and National and NCCC members were asked whether they or anyone in their families donated money, assets, or property with a combined value of more than \$25 in the past 12 months. A follow-up question asked the dollar value of the members' donations. Members were also asked whether they donated money, blood, time, clothes, food, or professional skills for Hurricane Katrina or other recent disaster relief efforts.

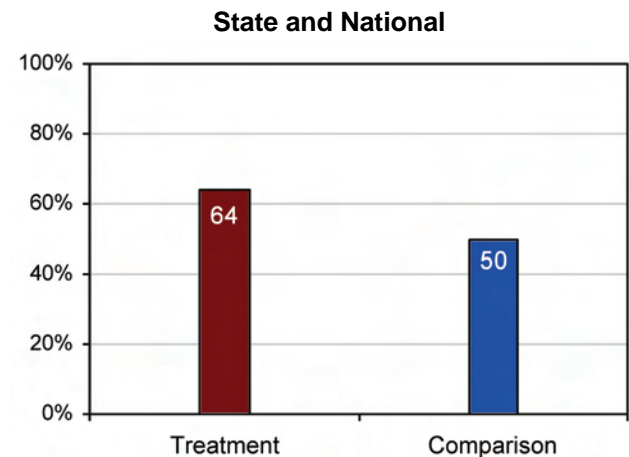
The results indicate that State and National members make donations of money, assets, or property with a combined value of more than \$25 very frequently,

Exhibit 25: Percentage of Individuals Making Donations to Organizations or Causes

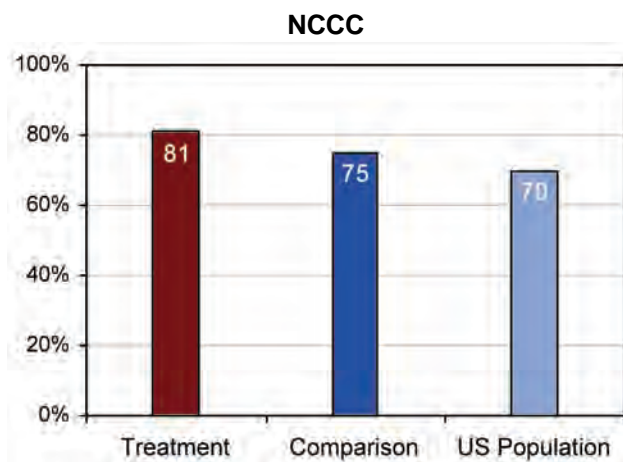


No effect of participation.
Effect Size = -0.19, $p > 0.05$ level.

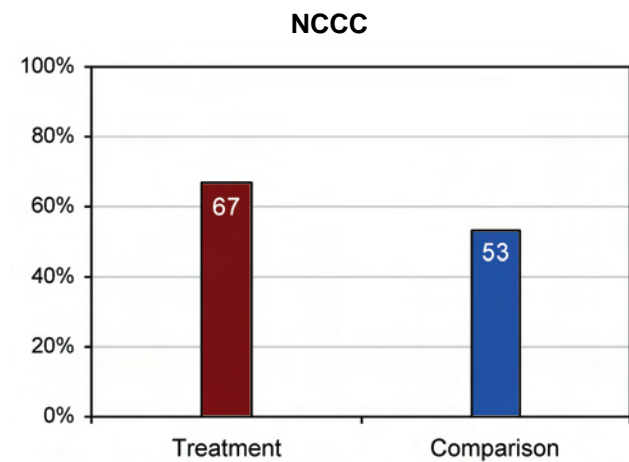
Exhibit 26: Percentage of Individuals That Donated to Hurricane Katrina Relief



Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.29, Statistically significant at the $p < 0.01$ level.



No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.14, $p > 0.05$ level.



Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.29, Statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

and at rates similar to their comparison group and the nation overall. Although the donating rates are not statistically significant, 78 percent of State and National members donated to at least one cause in the past 12 months. In comparison, 70 percent of the State and National comparison group donated money, assets, or property in the past 12 months, while overall, 70 percent of Americans made donations in the past 12 months (Panel Study of Income Dynamics, 2006).

Results are similar for NCCC members. Although there are no statistical differences between members and the comparison group, a higher percentage of NCCC members donated money, assets, or property with a combined value of more than \$25. Eighty-one percent of NCCC members donated to at least one cause in the past 12 months. In comparison, 75 percent of the NCCC comparison group donated money, assets, or property in the past 12 months, while overall, 70 percent of Americans made donations in the past 12 months.



AmeriCorps programs play a key role in organizing volunteers to help communities recover from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Since Hurricane Katrina, 10,000 AmeriCorps members have volunteered three million hours of service in the Gulf Coast region and mobilized or managed more than 229,000 volunteers (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2007a). This same institutional commitment to help Hurricane Katrina survivors holds true for State and National and NCCC members who served in AmeriCorps eight years ago.

The study asked respondents whether they had made donations in response to Hurricane Katrina, and if so, the form of their donation. Over one-third of both former State and National members and the comparison group donated money (38% and 34%, respectively), or clothes and food (35% and 33%, respectively) in response to Hurricane Katrina. For NCCC, 41 percent of NCCC members and 40 percent of the comparison group donated money for Hurricane Katrina. Almost a third contributed clothes and food (30% of NCCC members and 26% of their comparison group). State and National (18%) and NCCC (20%) members also report donating time to charitable organizations in response to Hurricane Katrina. In comparison, 14 percent of the State and National comparison group, and 8 percent of the NCCC comparison group, report donating time to charitable organizations in response to Hurricane Katrina.

Employment

AmeriCorps service provides members with the opportunity to explore different career paths, gain job-related skills, develop leadership skills, and network with community leaders, while engaged in activities that strengthen communities. For example, during their year of service, many members develop teaching skills as they teach or tutor students. Other members may be required to obtain Red Cross certification in order to serve through hospitals and healthcare organizations or provide disaster relief. Still other members learn how to manage projects and work in teams as they build homes or clear trails.

While these job training and experiential learning techniques are proven methods for workforce development, engaging in these activities through national service provides an added benefit that goes beyond merely preparing members for employment. Members are exposed to parts of society that they might not otherwise have encountered (Sagawa, Connolly, & Chao, 2008), and are introduced to careers they might not have considered. These career opportunities may have been perceived as unattainable, or may have simply been unknown had a member not served. In addition, while national service prepares members for the workforce, it can also be a conduit to careers that serve the public good. Members have the opportunity to serve in fields such as healthcare, education, and social services—fields that need visionary leaders (Sagawa et al., 2008), but are currently facing a severe shortage of qualified employees (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007, 2008).



In recent years, a decline in the number of people entering public service careers, related to an increase in competition from the private sector for talented staff, has led to a drying up of the government's "replacement stream" (National Commission on Public Service, 2003; Partnership for Public Service, 2007). Experts predict that 60 percent of the federal government workforce, and 90 percent of its senior executive service will be eligible to retire by 2017, thereby exacerbating the shortage (Council for Excellence in Government & The Gallup Organization, 2007). State and local government are not immune. They are predicted to lose more than 30 percent of their workforce to retirement, private-sector employers, and alternative careers (Carroll & Moss, 2002).

Similarly, the field of nonprofit management is facing shortages. Experts estimate that by 2016, more than 80,000 new senior managers will be needed each year to lead America's nonprofit organizations (Tierney, 2006).

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2008), more than three of every ten new jobs will be in healthcare, social services, or education. However, these fields are already facing significant employment shortages. U.S. hospitals are currently experiencing nursing shortages, and hospitals need more than 100,000 registered nurses to fill current vacancies. The United States will need 1.2 million new nurses (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007) and an additional 250,000 public health workers by 2020 to meet the nation's health care needs (Association of Schools of Public Health, 2008). In education, the National Education Association predicts that the United States will need 2 million new teachers in the next decade.

In view of the dire need for those serving the public good, the study focuses on whether service in AmeriCorps has an impact on the career choices of members, including:

- Employment in a public service career; and
- Effects on the importance of service-oriented careers.

AmeriCorps is a pipeline for careers in public service.

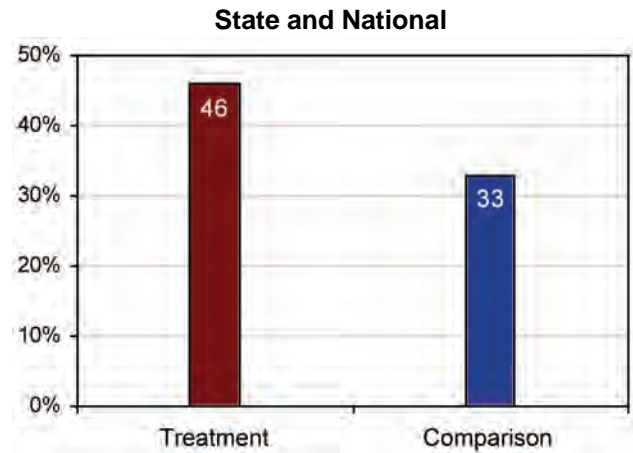
Throughout this evaluation, it is evident that not only are AmeriCorps members aware of, and empowered to meet, the needs of their communities, but members are pairing their convictions and observations with action. State and National members believe in working for the good of the community, with a statistically significant number of members pursuing careers in fields such as education, social work, public safety, arts, religion, government, or military service. Forty-six percent of State and National members are employed in these public service fields, compared to 33 percent of the comparison group. Although the difference is not significant, 43 percent of NCCC members are employed in a public service field, compared to 37

percent of the comparison group. One possible explanation for the different findings between State and National and NCCC may be a reflection of the different program models. For example, the majority of members in State and National have placements in public agencies and nonprofit organizations that sponsor service programs around the country. While engaging in service, these members are also exposed to many aspects of working directly in a public agency or nonprofit organization. In comparison, NCCC members are based at NCCC regional campuses and work in teams to complete short-term service projects of 4–6 weeks in duration for several different sponsoring organizations during their year of service.

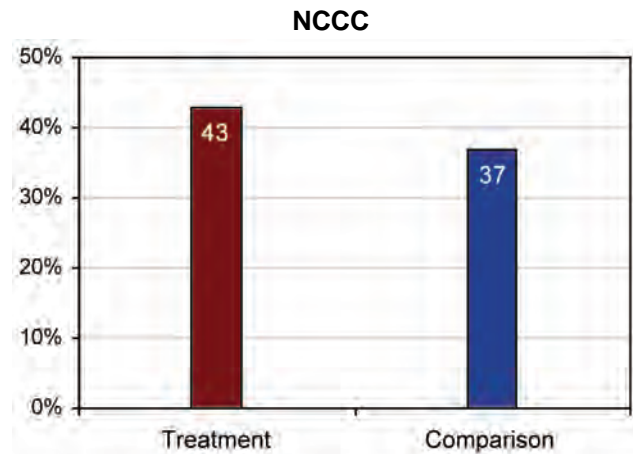
AmeriCorps has an even greater impact on the career choices of non-white members and those from disadvantaged circumstances. Non-white State and National members are significantly more likely to have a career in public service than members of the comparison group (44% compared to 26%). State and National members from disadvantaged circumstances are 20 percentage points more likely to be employed in a public service field (46% compared to 26%).

The study also examines employment sector. Employment sectors, which differ from employment fields, include government, for profit, nonprofit, and self-employment. For example, an individual working as a teacher in a public elementary school would be included in the education field and the government sector. State and National members are significantly more likely to be employed in the government sector than the comparison group. More than a third (37%) of State and National members are working for federal, state, or local governments, compared to 28 percent of the comparison group. Thirty-six percent of NCCC members report that they work for the government, compared to 33 percent of the NCCC comparison group, but these differences are not significant. Nonprofit organizations often have the most direct and consistent contact with those who are in the greatest need of social services. Twenty-four percent of State and National members and 22 percent of

Exhibit 27: Percentage of Respondents Employed in Public Service Field



Positive effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.26, Statistically significant at the $p < 0.01$ level.



No effect of participation.
Effect Size = 0.14, $p > 0.05$ level.

NCCC members report that they work for nonprofit organizations. These figures are not significantly different from those of either comparison group; 23 percent of the State and National comparison group and 21 percent of the NCCC comparison group work in the nonprofit sector. When results for the government and nonprofit sectors are combined, the findings show that 61 percent of State and National members are currently employed in either government or nonprofit sectors, compared to 51 percent of the comparison group. Fifty-eight percent of NCCC members are currently employed in the government or nonprofit sectors, compared to 54 percent of the comparison group.

Members were asked about the *importance of having a service-oriented career*. The importance of a service-oriented career was measured as the respondent's opinion about whether their current job is a position that contributes to others, such as working to correct inequalities and being of direct service to others. There are no significant differences between State and National members and their comparison group (effect size = 0.21), nor NCCC members and their comparison group (effect size = 0.22).

Within State and National subgroups, however, the impacts of service in AmeriCorps on members' opinions of the importance of having a service-oriented career are fairly large. Non-white State and National members are significantly more likely to report the importance of a service-oriented career (effect size = 0.45). State and National members from disadvantaged circumstances are also significantly more likely to emphasize service-oriented careers than their peers (effect size = 0.67).

A member's network of colleagues and peers can serve as a bridge to professional opportunities. Employment results reveal that AmeriCorps creates an environment conducive to connecting members to careers. Both State and National and NCCC members report that service in AmeriCorps introduced them to job connections, and made them aware of and helped them take advantage of opportunities. Forty-seven percent of State and National members, and 30 percent of NCCC members say that AmeriCorps gave them connections that helped them find a job. Seventy-nine percent of State and National members, and 83 percent of NCCC members report that their AmeriCorps experiences in the 1999–2000 program year gave them exposure to new career options. Sixty-seven percent of State and National members report that their AmeriCorps experiences in the 1999–2000 program year provided them with an advantage in finding a job. Seventy percent of NCCC members say that AmeriCorps gave them an advantage in finding a job.



Education

Higher levels of education are correlated with positive outcomes for both individuals and society. For example, for the individual, higher education typically results in higher earnings and greater job stability, regardless of gender or racial differences (Stoops, 2004; U.S. Census, 2007). The average annual income for a college graduate with a bachelor's degree was \$56,788 in 2006, while the income for a high school graduate with a high school diploma was \$31,071 (U.S. Census, 2007). For society, a higher level of education keeps our nation competitive in the global market, results in higher tax revenues from increased wages, contributes to lower poverty rates, and results in fewer families dependent on publicly funded programs (Jamison, Jamison, & Hanushek, 2007; National Center on Education Statistics, 1995; Sandefur & Cook, 1998).

At the same time, higher education helps to nurture the next generation of civically minded citizens (Dewey, 1923; Honeywell, 1931; Lee, 1962). College graduates are typically more civically engaged and tend to make a greater contribution to the public good. For example, they are more likely to vote, volunteer, and engage in other civic behaviors (Hart, Donnelly, Youniss, & Atkins, 2007; Metz, McLellan, & Youniss, 2003).

Recognizing the value that higher education provides to the individual and to society, AmeriCorps programs are designed to support the pursuit of postsecondary



education in several ways. National service programs often include components that increase members' understanding of the importance of education, beliefs in their ability to pursue education, and confidence that they can successfully earn a college degree.

In addition, the Corporation offers each member who completes a year of service an education award. The Segal AmeriCorps Education Award is \$4,725 for full-time service, and is pro-rated for members who serve less than full time. The award can be used for education or training with qualified institutions (such as accredited community colleges, universities, and colleges), or to repay qualified student loans, for a period of seven years after completing service. Many AmeriCorps members join State and National programs in order to receive the education award. At baseline, 70 percent of State and National members reported that the education award was quite or very relevant in motivating them to join. Fifty-three percent of NCCC members said the education award was quite or very relevant in motivating them to join.

To determine the effects of participation in AmeriCorps on members' educational progress, the study measures a variety of changes to State and National and NCCC members' educational attainment and interests when compared to their respective comparison groups. It is important to note, however, that members participated in service full-time for a year. Therefore, the comparison group had an additional year to engage in educational pursuits or employment.

The study focuses on several different educational outcomes, including level of education achieved and changes in members' personal educational goals. AmeriCorps' impact on the level of education actually achieved is measured by:

- The highest level of education completed.

Changes in personal educational goals of members are measured by:

- Effect on members' personal educational goals;
- Effect on recognizing the importance of education;
- Effect on level of education members expect to complete; and
- If the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award helped members continue their education.

Eight years after AmeriCorps, State and National and NCCC members have achieved the same level of education as the comparison group.

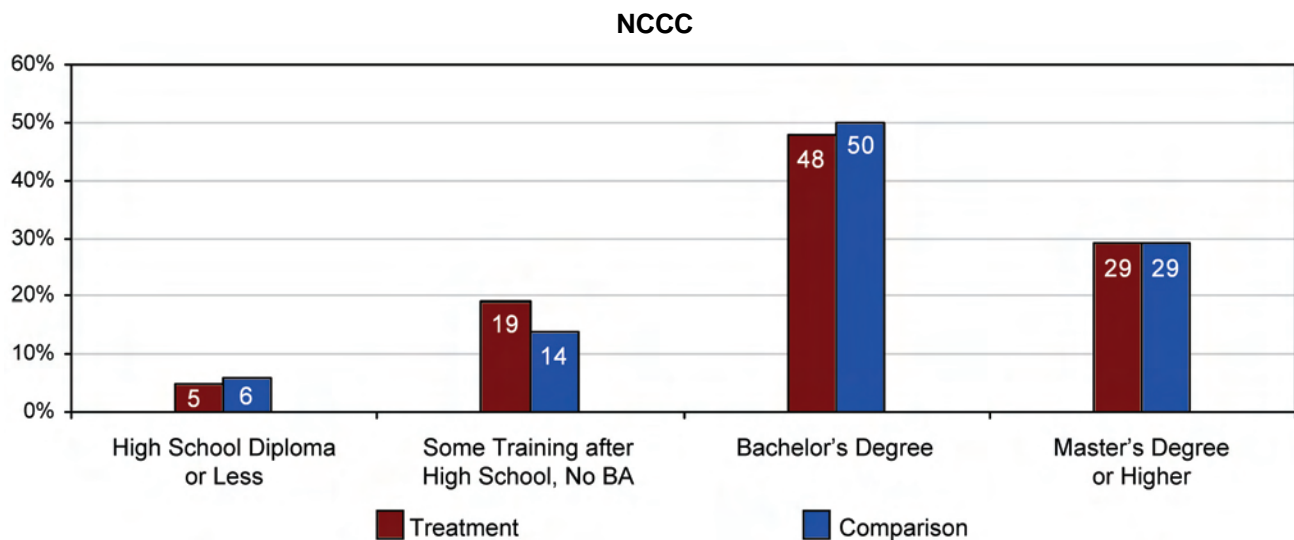
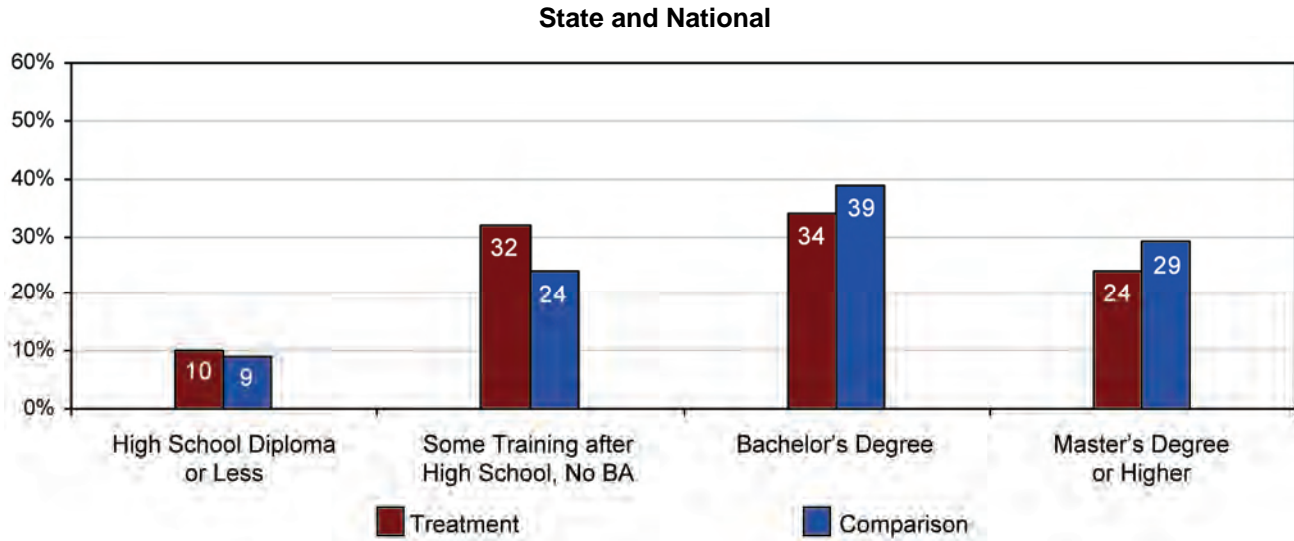
The study finds that there is no statistically significant difference in the level of education achieved for State and National and NCCC members and their respective comparison groups. Eight years after serving in AmeriCorps, members and the comparison groups have achieved similar levels of education. More than half of all study participants have either a bachelor's or master's degree. Thirty-four percent of State and National members have earned a bachelor's degree and 24 percent report having a master's degree or higher. In comparison, 39 percent of the State and National comparison group have a bachelor's degree and 29 percent have a master's degree or higher. Forty-eight percent of NCCC members have a bachelor's degree and 29 percent have a master's degree or higher. In comparison, 50 percent of the NCCC comparison group have a bachelor's degree and 29 percent have a master's degree or higher. Since members dedicate at least a year of their life to service, their educational progress may have been postponed for a year, yet State and National and NCCC members have achieved the same level of education as the comparison group.

It is worth noting that eight years after enrolling in AmeriCorps, many former State and National and NCCC members are still in school pursuing a bachelor's, master's or higher degree. Currently, 24 percent of State and National members, and 18 percent of the comparison group, are still attending educational institutions. Twenty-five percent of NCCC members, and 21 percent of the comparison group, are still attending school. Results are not significant for either State and National or NCCC. With nearly a quarter of former State and National and NCCC members currently enrolled in higher education institutions, additional time may be needed to understand the long-term effects of AmeriCorps on members' educational attainment.

Within the State and National subgroups, 27 percent of Blacks/African Americans, 32 percent of Hispanics/Latinos and 24 percent of members from disadvantaged circumstances are currently pursuing a bachelor's, master's, or higher degree. Comparison group percentages are 24 percent, 2 percent, and 17 percent, respectively. Similar to the results for the overall group, these subgroup results are not significant.

One explanation for the large number of former AmeriCorps members and individuals in the comparison group enrolled in school pursuing a degree program eight years after baseline may be found in the recent literature on transitions to

Exhibit 28: Current Level of Education Attained



adulthood. A general trend noted by scholars of the transition to adulthood is that young adults are taking longer to complete their college education (Fitzpatrick & Turner, 2006). Compared to young adults in the 1970s, about the same proportion of college students earn their degrees in four years at or around age 22, but the number of nontraditional or older undergraduate students has nearly doubled since 1970. Further, high school students today are expressing more reluctance to take on adult responsibilities, with an increasing number saying they “feel hesitant about taking a full-time job and becoming part of the 'adult' world” (Bridle, Flanagan, Osgood, Syvertsen, & Wray, 2006). As a result, additional time may be needed to determine the effects of AmeriCorps on educational attainment.

A second explanation may be the declining purchasing power of the Segal AmeriCorps Educational Award. The amount of the education award has been fixed at \$4,725 since the program began in 1993, and has not been adjusted to reflect inflation and the rising costs of education that have occurred over the past 15 years. Adjusting for overall inflation between 1993 and 2007, the real value of the education award has declined from \$4,725 to \$3,303 in constant 1993 dollars, a decline of approximately 30 percent. At the same time, the costs for attendance at public and private higher education institutions have increased significantly. During the period from 1993 to 2005, the annual



cost of attendance at four-year public institutions increased by almost 80 percent (from \$6,365 to \$11,441 in public institutions, and from \$15,904 to \$26,489 in private institutions). Today, the award purchases less than one semester of tuition at a public higher education institution, not including room and board or other educational expenses. In addition, since the AmeriCorps education award is taxable, the value of the award is reduced by the amount of taxes paid on the award. The results suggest that while the AmeriCorps education award is an important part of members’ motivation for joining AmeriCorps and has provided support for many members to further their education, the value of the award in relation to the increasing costs of education may not be sufficient to make members more likely to complete a degree program than similar individuals in the comparison group.



State and National and NCCC members were also surveyed about whether their experience in AmeriCorps helped them see the importance of education. For State and National members, almost two-thirds of members (66%) report that serving in AmeriCorps helped them see the importance of education. Fifty-seven percent of NCCC members report that AmeriCorps helped them see the importance of education. Within the State and National subgroup of Hispanics/Latinos, Blacks/African Americans, and members from disadvantaged circumstances, the percentages are 82, 72, and 74, respectively.

Life Satisfaction

In recent years, social scientists have devoted a great deal of attention to the measurement of life satisfaction or overall happiness with one's life. The growth of such research is particularly apparent in the literature of behavioral economics and psychology, where many studies examine the relationships between self-reported life satisfaction and a variety of positive outcomes. The most common self-reported measure—a simple, “global” assessment of one's overall life satisfaction—has been shown to affect, and be affected by, responses to more specific questions about satisfaction with various “life facets” (Lance, Mallard, & Michaelos, 1995). Dozens of cross-sectional and longitudinal studies have suggested that overall life satisfaction, and its components, are positively associated with such outcomes as marriage, friendships, income, work performance (Diener, Lyubomirsky, & King, 2005) and physical health (Pressman & Cohen, 2005).¹⁶

Volunteering and being active in one's community may be a way to stimulate these positive effects. Many recent studies (Post, 2007) have suggested that volunteering and working on behalf of others can improve life satisfaction and also provide physical and emotional benefits to volunteers. For example, recent research indicates that volunteers, particularly older volunteers, have lower mortality rates than non-volunteers with similar backgrounds (Brown, Consedine, & Magai, 2005). Emotional benefits include lower expression of depression (Lum & Lightfoot, 2005) and higher rates of satisfaction with one's life (Li & Ferraro, 2006). Research also indicates that lower levels of depression and despair may directly impact physical health (Sullivan & Sullivan, 1997). Therefore, good overall health and volunteering appear to be part of a “self-reinforcing cycle” of well-being (Grimm, Spring, & Dietz, 2007).

Following these ideas, this study assesses whether AmeriCorps had an impact on members' self-reported levels of life satisfaction eight years following their AmeriCorps enrollment. The



researchers are interested in describing how the emotional benefits of AmeriCorps service accrue to members themselves, including how members feel about their physical state of being.

The impacts of AmeriCorps service on *overall life satisfaction* are assessed by asking study participants if they are satisfied with several aspects of their lives, including:

- Work or career;
- Personal financial situation;
- Physical health;
- Personal relationships with family and friends;
- Religious or spiritual life; and
- Leisure activities.

Eight years after service, State and National and NCCC members are more satisfied with their lives than the comparison group.

Service in AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps NCCC has significant positive effects on the *overall life satisfaction* of members when compared to their respective comparison groups. For State and National members, there is a small effect for life satisfaction (effect size = 0.26). State and National member score higher on overall life satisfaction than the comparison group. Similarly, for NCCC members, there is a medium effect for overall life satisfaction (effect size = 0.39), as NCCC members score higher on life satisfaction than the comparison group.

When individual questions that form the life satisfaction construct are analyzed, State and National members generally report being more satisfied than the comparison group. Members are very satisfied, compared to the comparison group, in their careers (46% compared to 41%), physical health (46% compared to 39%), relationships with family and friends (70% compared to 62%), religious or spiritual lives (54% compared to 44%), and leisure activities (43% compared to 33%). The comparison group (21%) surpasses the State and National members' (18%) response to satisfaction with their personal financial situation.

NCCC members show greater overall life satisfaction than their comparison group as well. NCCC members report being very satisfied, compared to the comparison group, with their careers (56% compared to 50%), physical health (54% compared to 48%), religious or spiritual lives (43% compared to 40%), personal financial situation (22% compared to 19%), and leisure activities (51% compared to 44%). Seventy-eight percent of individuals from the NCCC comparison group report being very satisfied with their relationships with family and friends, compared to 77 percent of NCCC members.

Exhibit 29: Percentage Reporting Very Satisfied with Aspects of Life Satisfaction

	State and National		NCCC	
	Treatment	Comparison	Treatment	Comparison
Work or Career	46	41	56	50
Financial Situation	18	21	22	19
Physical Health	46	39	54	48
Relationships with Friends and Family	70	62	77	78
Religious/ Spiritual Life	54	44	43	40
Leisure Activities	43	33	51	44

Conclusion and Implications

Still Serving: Measuring the Eight-Year Impact of AmeriCorps on Alumni is a longitudinal study designed to assess the outcomes and impacts of national and community service on individuals who served in the AmeriCorps State and National and the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC). The objective of the study is to assess the impact of AmeriCorps on members' civic engagement, employment and careers, educational attainment, and life satisfaction. The findings in this report reflect a longer-term assessment of the impact of participation in AmeriCorps approximately eight years after enrolling in the program.

There are three important considerations for interpreting the findings in this study. First, in 1999 when this study began, AmeriCorps was a relatively new federal program and the majority of young people had very little knowledge of or experience with AmeriCorps. Therefore, those individuals who were interested in AmeriCorps in 1999—regardless of whether they were in the treatment or comparison group—were generally a more select group of individuals. In general, both the AmeriCorps members and the comparison group had high rates of volunteering, voting, and other civic behaviors prior to applying to AmeriCorps. It is not surprising, therefore, that eight years after enrolling in AmeriCorps, members and the comparison group continue to exhibit high levels of civic engagement, and both groups continue to be engaged at levels well above the general public. As a result, the high levels of engagement among both the treatment and comparison groups may make it difficult to find significant effects of participation.



For example, while there is no impact of AmeriCorps State and National on volunteering or voting, both State and National members and the comparison group are much more likely to participate in these civic activities than the general public.

Second, the follow-up survey analyzed here shows that some of the short-term program effects observed

in 2004 have remained strong, or even increased in strength, in 2007, while others have diminished in strength. In general, finding significant longer-term effects are often much more difficult than finding shorter-term effects, since the impacts of a single year of intensive service could be expected to fade over time. Although about half of the impacts observed in 2004 persist into 2007,

some of the effect sizes are decreasing, suggesting that program effects may fade over time. For example, connection to community has been significant in both 2004 and 2007 for both State and National and NCCC members, but the effect size has decreased for State and National. Meanwhile, in 2004, both State and National and NCCC members were more likely than the comparison group to understand community problems, but while the program effect is still about as large in 2007 for State and National members as it was in 2004, the program effect for NCCC is no longer detectable. Also, for both programs, AmeriCorps members are no more likely than individuals from the comparison group to emphasize the importance of fulfilling civic obligations, an effect that was strong and positive in 2004 for State and National.

At the same time, other impacts appear to take several years to develop and emerge. For example, in 2004, the effect of NCCC participation on members' ability to lead a successful community-based movement was not significant. Today, the study finds a large effect for this outcome. In 2004, both State and National and NCCC members had more confidence in their ability to work with local government officials than did members of the comparison groups; today, these program effects are still significant and even stronger. Similar results are found for the NCCC, where program members are more likely to have confidence in their ability to organize community-based efforts, a program effect that was not observed at all in 2004.

Third, perhaps one of the most interesting conclusions from the study is that the results suggest different programmatic models in AmeriCorps State and National and NCCC may contribute to different types of longer-term impacts on members. State and National supports members serving directly in nonprofit organizations. These members work for organizations like the Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity, Teach for America, City Year, and hundreds of local nonprofit and community-based organizations and public agencies. As a result, the work experience and job connections these members gained during their service may have contributed to the impacts on entering careers in public service and working in the government and nonprofit sectors. At the same time, NCCC's residential design and focus on team-based service may have contributed to the impacts on social trust and other forms of civic engagement. Dependence on one's team members, and successfully collaborating with others to meet community needs, may foster the high levels of trust among NCCC members. NCCC members also engage in several different service projects across many communities during their term of service, which may partially explain the positive effects on volunteering for NCCC members.

There are interesting differences based on member characteristics. For example, AmeriCorps service continues to have long-term impacts on the civic

engagement and employment of State and National members from disadvantaged circumstances. For these members, AmeriCorps influences their commitment to volunteer service, their service to others in the community, and their feelings of connection to their community. For Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino State and National members, their experience has had a significant long-term impact on civic engagement which continues seven years after service. For example, as compared to the comparison group, Black/African American members have higher levels of engagement in the political process and feeling connected to their community. Hispanic/Latino members have higher levels of feeling connected to their community and neighborhood at large. However, Black/African American and



Hispanic/Latino State and National members' levels of voting and volunteering are similar to their respective comparison groups.

This study also reveals some areas where the impact of AmeriCorps may be in need of additional consideration. For example, the study finds that there is no statistically significant difference in the level of education achieved for State and National and NCCC members and their respective comparison groups. Eight years after serving in AmeriCorps, members and the comparison groups have achieved similar levels of education. While the Segal AmeriCorps Education Award does not appear to have an effect on degree attainment, the education award continues to be an important motivator for individuals to join AmeriCorps, and consistently is identified by members as one of the main reasons for joining. Additionally, the award appears to help members further their education, particularly for disadvantaged members, although it does not always result in degree attainment. On the other hand, it is important to note that one-quarter of members are still enrolled in school seven years after serving in AmeriCorps, and the longer-term effects on educational attainment may not be realized for several more years.

Another topic for future study could be changes in the typical service experience of AmeriCorps members since 1999–2000. The *Still Serving: Measuring the Eight-Year Impact of AmeriCorps on Alumni* report has followed State and National and NCCC members who entered service in 1999–2000; since then, both programs have undergone considerable change. For example, in 1999, the researchers selected only full-time members from State and National because, at the time, a majority of members served full time. Currently, however, slightly more than half of State and National members serve in part-time or reduced part-time programs. For the NCCC, service efforts in 1999–2000 were largely focused on conservation, such as cleaning parks, and construction, such as repairing and building parks and other public spaces. Currently, the NCCC program focuses on disaster



relief, in addition to a range of other activities to meet the needs of communities across the country. As a result, a study of a new cohort of AmeriCorps members could measure the effects of the current AmeriCorps State and National and NCCC programs, and could assess the effects of different amounts of service on member outcomes.

This report sheds light on the potential the AmeriCorps program has to make a difference in our country not only by providing service that produces community outcomes, but also by giving individuals the opportunity to be agents of positive change in communities across the nation. At a time when 37 million Americans live in poverty, about 800,000 youths are in gangs, 15 million children lack a caring adult in their lives, recovery from disasters in the Gulf of Mexico is still not complete, and environmental degradation continues to erode our natural resources, it is clear that our country needs engaged citizens to make a difference in their communities throughout their lifetimes. Moreover, numerous groups indicate that our country will face a sizeable shortage of public service professionals in the coming decades. This report suggests AmeriCorps can be a key strategy for not only building stronger communities, but also for building stronger citizens who are ready and willing to take on the challenges of today and tomorrow as highly engaged members of their neighborhoods and through careers in public service.

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Endnotes

- ¹ AmeriCorps includes a third major program, Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA). VISTA was not included in this study. VISTA is a highly decentralized program; its members serve individually or in small groups and focus primarily on building capacity in local communities. In contrast, AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps NCCC members focus on the provision of direct services. Since the VISTA experience and member profiles differ appreciably from the other programs, the effects of service participation may be different from those for State and National and NCCC members. Additional information about AmeriCorps programs and structure can be found at www.AmeriCorps.org.
- ² The ideal strategy for assessing program impacts is to employ an experimental design in which program applicants are randomly assigned into two groups: treatment (enrolled in the program) and control (excluded from enrollment in the program). However, during the 1999–2000 program year, when this study was implemented, AmeriCorps was still in the process of building national awareness and many local programs were working to recruit qualified candidates to fill their enrollment targets. Therefore, the Corporation determined that implementation of random assignment would not be feasible.
- ³ Candidates are recruited and selected during the spring for subsequent enrollment in the NCCC during the fall and winter.
- ⁴ The baseline report (Jastrzab et al, 2001), released by the Corporation in 2001, provided detailed information on characteristics of the study participants. The report can be accessed at <http://www.nationalservice.gov> or <http://www.abtassoc.com>.
- ⁵ For additional discussion of the comparability of the AmeriCorps and comparison groups, see Chapter 4 in Corporation for National and Community Service, 2004.
- ⁶ Corporation for National and Community Service (2004). *Serving Country and Community: A Longitudinal Study of Service in AmeriCorps*. Washington, DC. The report can be accessed at <http://www.nationalservice.gov>.
- ⁷ Details of the construction of these variables can be found in Appendix G.
- ⁸ Appendix J presents a detailed description of the analytic methods used to generate impact estimates.
- ⁹ Appendix J contains complete results for all outcomes studied.
- ¹⁰ Appendix K presents findings from the sensitivity analysis.
- ¹¹ Appendix E presents findings from a series of non-response analyses.
- ¹² It is important to note that the baseline survey was created prior to Census' change in asking about race and ethnicity. Therefore, for the AmeriCorps survey, the category "Hispanic" was treated as a racial category, the same as Black/African American and Asian.
- ¹³ These graphs represent *regression-adjusted* values of each outcome measured at baseline (1999) and in 2007. The outcome was rescaled so that the baseline score has a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one. The outcome value for each group was estimated using a multivariate regression model that controlled for key demographic variables, as well as variables that had different distributions for the program and comparison groups even after propensity score analysis was performed. The same regression model was used to estimate regression-adjusted values, both at baseline and in 2007, of each outcome. Appendix J contains a more complete discussion of the regression-adjustment method.
- ¹⁴ The size of the sample plays a large role in determining whether an observed difference between former AmeriCorps members and comparison group members is statistically significant. In general, it is easier to detect differences with the full State and National sample, since it is the largest. For the NCCC sample, as well as the subgroups of the State and National sample, statistical power is diminished because the sample size is smaller.

- ¹⁵ The p-value indicates the probability of observing the sample value for the outcome merely by chance if it is true that there is no impact from AmeriCorps participation. For example, a p-value of less than 0.01 indicates that there is less than a 1 percent chance of observing such a difference in the sample in the absence of any true treatment effect. For each outcome, we indicate whether the impact is positive or negative, if the p-value is less than 0.05; otherwise we indicate that there is no impact. For all outcomes, there are no statistically significant differences between the AmeriCorps and comparison groups on baseline scores.
- ¹⁶ Many studies draw a distinction between the concepts of “satisfaction” and “happiness,” arguing that satisfaction is more stable and less susceptible to changes in circumstances (Helliwell & Putnam, 2004). Pressman and Cohen (2005, p. 925) draw a similar distinction between two types of positive affect (PA): “trait PA,” which is more stable, and more similar to satisfaction, and “state PA,” which is more context-dependent and transitory. They note that changes in state PA are easier to induce in experimental and clinical study settings, which makes it easier to detect a causal effect, but that the physiological effects of these changes are not always beneficial.