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Research Note #95

KEY STATS

Number of Americans who

- ✓ volunteer mainly with arts groups: **1 million**
- ✓ volunteer secondarily with arts groups: **0.6 million**
- ✓ provide free artistic services to non-arts groups: **7.1 million**

VOLUNTEERS WITH ARTS OR CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS: A 2005 PROFILE

By Bonnie Nichols

In 2005, roughly 65.4 million people of 16 years or older volunteered with organizations in the U.S. Although only 1.6%, or 1 million people, volunteered primarily with arts or cultural groups, the data portray these Americans as older, better educated, and more giving of their time than volunteers with other types of organizations.

Arts volunteers put in more hours with their respective organizations than volunteers with most other types of groups, and they often assist by engaging in music or other performances or by fundraising. Compared with all volunteers, a considerably higher percentage of arts

volunteers are asked to help by a relative, friend, or coworker—suggesting an element of social networking among arts volunteers. On the other hand, they are less likely to be married or in the labor force.

Those demographic trends are reversed in the case of Americans who do not volunteer with arts or cultural groups, but who nevertheless provide free music, performances, or other artistic services to non-arts and non-cultural organizations—mainly to churches or schools. At 7.1 million volunteers, this population is several times larger than the number of volunteers with arts or cultural organizations,

and it is generally younger and less educated.

This note is the third in a series of NEA publications that investigate the connections between volunteering and the arts. The previous two publications—*The Arts and Civic Engagement: Involved in Arts, Involved in Life* (November 2006) and *Volunteering and Performing Arts Attendance: More Evidence from the SPPA* (March 2007)—reported that arts participants are active and civically engaged members of their communities. This Research Note uses data from the September 2005 Current Population Survey (CPS) to

profile Americans who volunteer primarily with arts or cultural organizations.

Arts Volunteers in Aggregate

A variety of organizations compose the survey’s arts or cultural category. Included are media and communications outfits such as public radio and TV stations; visual arts and ceramic groups; museums, zoos, and aquariums; performing arts organizations such as symphony orchestras and theaters; and historical and literary societies.

Of all the types of organizations that utilize volunteer workers, arts or

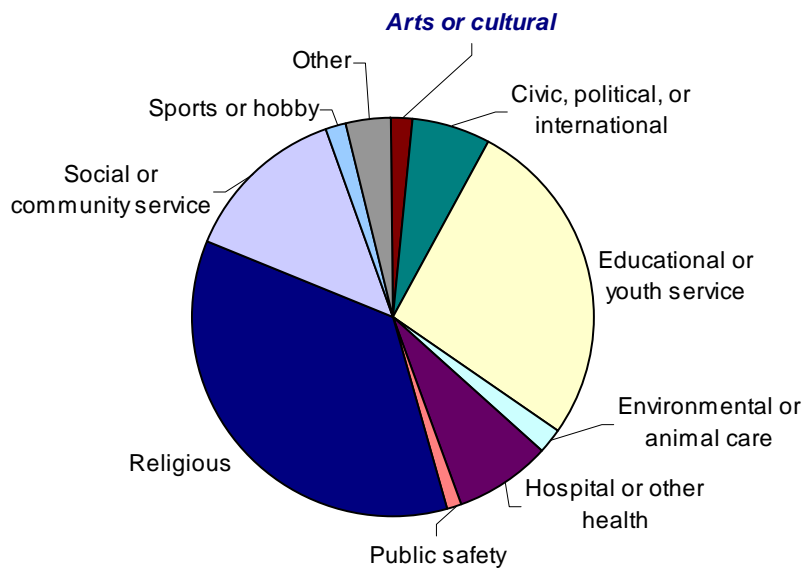
cultural organizations are among the least common. The September 2005 CPS counted 65.4 million volunteers, and yet only 1 million (1.6%) volunteered with arts or cultural organizations as their main volunteer organization (the organization for which they volunteered the most annual hours).

This number is partly contingent on survey terminology. For the purpose of the CPS, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) defines arts volunteers as people who devote their greatest number of volunteer hours to arts or cultural organizations. Yet an

additional 640,560 people identify arts or cultural organizations as secondary groups with which they volunteer.

The demographic profile of this population is similar to that of the 1 million Americans who volunteer primarily for arts or cultural groups.¹ While the remainder of this Research Note will consider arts or cultural volunteers only in terms of the BLS definition (1 million arts volunteers in 2005), it is worth noting that more than 1.6 million people volunteer for arts or cultural groups as either their main or secondary organizations.

Percentage Distribution of Volunteers by Type of Main Organization (2005)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, September 2005 Supplement to the Current Population Survey.

Regional Divisions

There are too few arts or cultural volunteers to provide a dependable count by state. Fortunately, counts by regional division are reliable. At this geographic level, the Pacific Division, which includes the states of California and Washington, had the largest sheer total of arts or cultural volunteers (228,518),

while the East South Central Division, composed of Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee, had the smallest (30,213).²

When we adjust for population, however, we find that **the West North Central Division, which includes Minnesota, is the division with the highest concentration of arts volunteers—nearly 55**

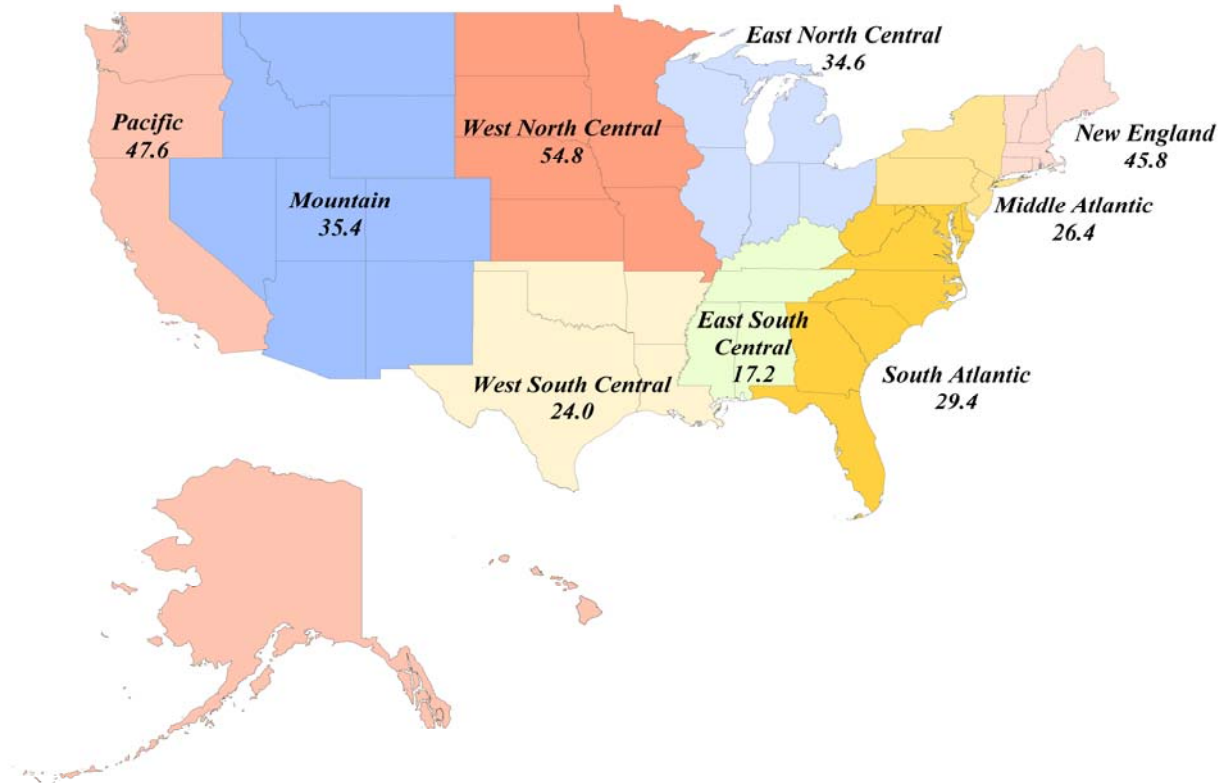
arts volunteers for every 10,000 people. Per capita tallies also show that the Pacific Division ranks second—about 48 arts volunteers per 10,000 people, and the East South Central Division ranks lowest—17 for every 10,000 residents.

Volunteers with Arts or Cultural Organizations in 2005

Regional division	Total	Per 10,000 people
Northeast		
New England	65,290	45.8
Middle Atlantic	106,558	26.4
Midwest		
East North Central	159,402	34.6
West North Central	108,474	54.8
South		
South Atlantic	165,085	29.4
East South Central	30,213	17.2
West South Central	80,927	24.0
West		
Mountain	71,932	35.4
Pacific	228,518	47.6

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, September 2005 Supplement to the Current Population Survey.

**Volunteers with Arts or Cultural Organizations in 2005
Per 10,000 People**



**Average Age of Arts
Volunteers**

With a median age of 51, arts or cultural volunteers are older than volunteers with all other types of organizations. On average, arts volunteers are 7 years older than volunteers with all organizations, and 12 years older than volunteers with educational or youth service organizations, which

attract the youngest volunteers. Additionally, 23% of cultural or arts volunteers are ages 65 and over—10 percentage points higher than the share of all volunteers in that age group. If this trend continues, arts and cultural organizations could receive an infusion of volunteer workers as the Baby Boomer population ages and the U.S. retiree

count multiplies. By 2020, for example, the number of Americans ages 65-84 will climb to 47.4 million, an increase of almost half the 2006 number.³

Median Age of Volunteers in 2005

All organizations	44
Arts or cultural	51
Civic, political professional or international	48
Educational or youth service	39
Environmental or animal care	43
Hospital or other health	47
Public safety	41
Religious	47
Social or community service	46
Sports or hobby	44
Other	45

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
September 2005 Supplement
to the Current Population Survey

Other Demographic Characteristics

Women volunteer at a higher rate than men. In 2005, 58% of all volunteers were women. Arts or cultural volunteers display a similar gender distribution. Of the 1 million arts volunteers, 60% are women. Even so, arts or cultural volunteers are more evenly distributed by gender than volunteers with several other types of organizations. For example, 77% of volunteers with public safety organizations (including volunteer fire fighters) are men, and 70% of volunteers with hospitals or other health organizations are women.

Whites represent 86% of all volunteers, and arts or cultural volunteers are similarly concentrated among whites (87%).

African Americans, however, are 9% of all volunteers, but only 5.4% of arts volunteers. Asians make up almost 6% of arts volunteers, 2.5 percentage points higher than their share of all volunteers.

Hispanics, who can be of any race, are underrepresented as arts or cultural volunteers.

Only 4% of arts volunteers are Hispanic, almost 3 points below their share of all volunteers.

The best-educated volunteers are those who volunteer with arts or cultural organizations.

Almost 62% of arts volunteers have college degrees, higher than the share of college-educated volunteers with all other types of organizations. The share of arts or cultural

volunteers with college degrees is 18 percentage points higher than the share of all volunteers (about 44%), and 11 points higher than the college-educated share of environmental or animal care volunteers, the group that ranks second in college education (about 50%).

Perhaps due in part to their older ages, arts or cultural volunteers are less likely to be married and less likely to have children under age 18. While 62% of all volunteers are married, only 49% of arts volunteers are. Moreover, 23% of arts volunteers (7 percentage points higher than the share for all volunteers) are of “other” marital status, a category that includes widows and widowers.

Similarly, only 17% of arts volunteers have children under age 18. This figure is 20 percentage points lower than the share of all volunteers with children under 18.

The abundance of older volunteers, including retirees, may contribute to low labor force participation by arts or cultural volunteers.⁴ **Compared with volunteers with every other type of organization, arts or cultural volunteers have the lowest labor force participation.** For example, 36% of arts

volunteers are not in the labor force, almost 8 percentage points higher than the share of all volunteers who are not. By contrast, high labor force participation was reported by public safety volunteers (86% in the labor force), and by volunteers with sports or hobby outfits (82%) and environmental or animal care groups (76%).

As suggested earlier, these demographics differ dramatically from those of the 7.1 million people who technically are not arts volunteers, but who nevertheless provide free

artistic services to other types of organizations. By far, the largest share volunteered with religious organizations—61%. Another 23% provided artistic services to educational or youth groups.

This population is about 10 years younger—its median age is 41 versus 51 for arts volunteers. Moreover, non-arts volunteers providing free artistic services are generally less educated than arts volunteers: 38% had college degrees versus 62% of arts volunteers defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Selected Demographics of Non-Arts Volunteers Providing Artistic Services to Other Types of Organizations

Characteristics	Volunteers with arts or cultural organizations	Non-arts volunteers who provide artistic services to other organizations
Median age	51	41
<i>Percent distribution:</i>		
Education		
Less than a high school diploma	1.2	10.7
High school graduate	10.6	18.6
Less than a bachelor's degree	26.5	32.6
College graduate	61.6	38.2
Marital status		
Single, never married	28.6	25.7
Married, spouse present	48.7	60.3
Other marital status	22.7	13.9
Presence of own children under 18 years		
No own children under 18 years old	82.9	61.1
With own children under 18 years old	17.1	38.9
Labor force		
In civilian labor force	63.9	71.6
Not in civilian labor force	36.1	28.4

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
September 2005 Supplement to the Current Population Survey.

Annual Hours Spent
Volunteering

Arts or cultural volunteers spend more time volunteering than people with nearly all other types of organizations. In 2005, arts volunteers spent a median of 70

hours on volunteer activities, 20 hours more than the median time amount for all volunteers. The median for volunteers with arts or cultural organizations exceeded the median for civic or political volunteers by 31 hours, and it exceeded the median for envi-

ronmental or animal care volunteers by 21 hours. Contributing a median of 96 annual hours, only public safety volunteers spent more time volunteering.

Median Annual Hours Spent Volunteering in 2005

All organizations	50
Arts or cultural	70
Civic, political professional or international	40
Educational or youth service	36
Environmental or animal care	49
Hospital or other health	25
Public safety	96
Religious	52
Social or community service	32
Sports or hobby	50
Other	45

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
September 2005 Supplement
to the Current Population Survey

Volunteer Activities

Among the various activities conducted by arts or cultural volunteers as part of their service, **music, performance, or other forms of artistic engagement** were the most commonly reported. Thirty-seven percent of

arts or cultural volunteers did artistic activities compared with 12% of all volunteers. Although fundraising was the most frequently performed activity among all volunteers (30%), a higher percentage of arts or cultural volunteers, 35%, helped with

fundraising. Other activities often performed by cultural or arts volunteers were professional or managerial assistance (28%), general labor (21%) and office services (21%).

Activities Performed by Arts or Cultural Volunteers in 2005
(percentages)

	All volunteers	Arts or cultural volunteers
Coach, referee, or supervise sports	8.9%	0.5%
Tutor or teach	21.3	13.8
Mentor youth	17.6	12.6
Usher, greet, or minister	13.1	17.2
Collect, prepare, or distribute food	26.3	17.5
Collect, make, or distribute clothing, crafts, or goods other than food	16.2	9.7
Fundraise or sell items to raise money	29.7	34.6
Provide counseling or medical care	7.4	0.7
Provide general office services	12.8	21.0
Provide professional or managerial assistance	17.7	28.2
Engage in music, performance, or other artistic activities	11.5	37.4
Engage in general labor, or supply transportation	22.5	21.3
Other	16.3	13.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
September 2005 Supplement to the Current Population Survey.

How Volunteers Became Involved

While 43% of arts or cultural volunteers used their own initiative to become involved with the organizations for which they did volunteer work, a slightly higher percentage, 44%, reported being asked to volunteer. A similar percentage of all volunteers, 43%, began volunteering because they were asked.

The question of *who* asked them to volunteer, however, distinguishes arts volunteers from volunteers with other organizations. True, 26% of all volunteers and 22% of arts volunteers became involved because they were asked by someone in the organization—a difference of 4 percentage points. Yet 20% of arts volunteers were asked to help by a relative, friend, or co-worker—6 percentage points higher than the share reported

by all volunteers. This finding suggests that compared with other organizations utilizing volunteer workers, **arts or cultural organizations may rely more heavily on social networking to attract volunteers.**

How Volunteers Became Involved

(percentages)

	Approached the organization	Asked by:					Other	Not reporting
		Total Asked	Boss or employer	Relative, friend, or co-worker	Someone in the organization	Someone else		
All volunteers	40.3%	42.8	1.5	14.1	25.9	1.2	14.4	2.4
Arts or cultural volunteers	42.8%	44.3	0.6	20.2	22.0	1.4	11.5	1.4

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
September 2005 Supplement to the Current Population Survey.

Technical Notes

The data in this note originated with a supplement to the September 2005 Current Population Survey. A monthly survey of 60,000 households, the CPS is a joint project between the Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau and the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Volunteers are defined as people who performed unpaid volunteer activities for an organization at any point from September 1, 2004, through the survey period in September 2005. With one exception, the estimates are for volunteers 16 years and over. Counts of volunteers by educational attainment apply only to people 25 years and over. Estimates for race groups do not sum to totals

because data are not presented for all races. In addition, persons identified as Hispanic may be of any race.

For more information, see White, Stephanie Boraas. "Volunteering in the United States, 2005," *Monthly Labor Review*, February 2006.

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Endnotes

¹ Secondary arts volunteers are older (median age 51); concentrated among whites (84%); well-educated (68% have college degrees); less likely to be married (18% are of “other marital status”) or have school-age children (74% do not have children under age 18); or working (36% are not in the labor force).

² **New England** (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont).

Middle Atlantic (New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania).

East North Central (Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin).

West North Central (Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota).

South Atlantic (Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia).

East South Central (Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee).

West South Central (Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas).

Mountain (Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, New Mexico, Montana, Utah, Nevada, and Wyoming).

Pacific (Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington).

³ U.S. Census Bureau, “U.S. Interim Projections by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin.” March 18, 2004.

⁴ The labor force includes all people classified as employed *or* unemployed. Examples of those not in the labor force (neither working nor seeking work) include retirees, homemakers, and students.

Characteristics	All volunteers 16 and over (thousands)	Percentage of Volunteers by Type of Main Organization, 2005 ¹									
		Arts or cultural	Civic, political professional or international	Educational or youth service	Environmental or animal care	Hospital or other health	Public safety	Religious	Social or community service	Sports or hobby	Other
Total	65,357	1.6%	6.4%	26.2%	1.8%	7.7%	1.3%	34.8%	13.4%	1.7%	3.5%
Gender											
Men	27,370	1.5	8.2	24.4	1.8	5.5	2.4	34.0	14.2	2.7	3.8
Women	37,987	1.6	5.0	27.6	1.8	9.2	0.5	35.4	12.8	1.1	3.3
Age											
16 to 24 years	8,955	1.4	4.2	32.4	2.5	8.2	1.5	27.5	14.9	1.3	3.6
25 to 34 years	9,881	1.1	6.8	33.6	2.1	6.6	1.7	29.1	13.1	1.9	3.1
35 to 44 years	14,809	1.1	4.8	37.9	1.3	5.8	1.1	31.2	10.5	1.9	3.1
45 to 54 years	13,826	1.3	6.8	25.6	2.1	7.7	1.3	36.8	11.4	2.2	3.1
55 to 64 years	9,173	2.2	8.0	13.5	2.1	8.9	1.4	41.2	15.5	1.6	4.0
65 years and over	8,712	2.7	8.2	6.2	0.9	10.1	0.8	45.0	18.0	1.0	4.7
Race and Hispanic ethnicity											
White	56,170	6.5	6.5	26.3	2.0	8.0	1.4	33.8	13.5	1.8	3.6
Black or African American	5,879	5.2	5.2	23.8	0.5	4.8	0.5	45.5	12.3	1.0	2.9
Asian	2,055	6.0	6.0	28.6	0.5	8.8	0.5	33.6	13.3	1.0	2.5
Other	437	3.8	3.8	41.5	3.0	3.0	1.5	29.5	10.9	2.0	3.0
Hispanic	4,511	0.9	5.8	31.9	0.9	5.7	1.0	37.1	9.5	1.4	3.9
Education²											
Less than a high school diploma	2,837	0.4	5.2	20.9	0.4	5.7	1.5	45.5	13.5	0.8	5.0
High school graduate	12,594	0.7	6.3	23.7	1.3	7.9	2.1	38.9	12.2	2.2	3.3
Less than a bachelor's degree	16,452	1.4	6.5	26.1	1.8	7.9	1.3	35.8	12.6	1.8	3.4
College graduate	24,517	2.2	7.3	26.0	2.0	7.4	0.7	33.5	13.9	1.7	3.5
Marital status											
Single, never married	14,445	2.0	6.1	29.3	2.7	8.5	1.6	26.1	15.4	1.6	4.1
Married, spouse present	40,611	1.2	6.2	26.8	1.4	6.7	1.3	38.1	12.1	1.9	2.9
Other marital status	10,301	2.2	7.2	19.8	2.0	10.3	0.8	34.0	15.7	1.3	5.1
Presence of own children under 18 years³											
No own children under 18 years old	41,069	2.1	7.6	17.2	2.3	9.5	1.5	36.0	16.0	1.6	4.3
With own children under 18 years old	24,288	0.7	4.2	41.5	0.9	4.6	0.9	32.8	9.1	2.0	2.2
Employment status											
Civilian labor force	46,872	1.4	6.6	27.7	1.9	7.5	1.5	33.5	13.1	2.0	3.4
Employed	44,894	1.4	6.7	27.4	1.9	7.6	1.5	33.6	12.9	2.0	3.4
Full time	35,225	1.4	7.2	26.5	1.9	7.6	1.7	33.4	13.2	2.2	3.5
Part time	9,669	1.4	4.8	30.5	2.0	7.6	1.0	34.6	11.9	1.5	3.1
Unemployed	1,978	1.5	4.4	34.0	1.5	5.8	1.6	29.3	16.7	1.0	3.4
Not in the labor force	18,485	2.0	5.9	22.6	1.5	8.0	0.6	38.2	14.2	1.1	3.9

¹ Main organization is defined as the organization for which the volunteer worked the most hours during the year.

² Data refer to persons 25 years and over.

³ Own children include sons, daughters, stepchildren, and adopted children. Not included are nieces, nephews, grandchildren, and other related and unrelated children.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
September 2005 Supplement to the Current Population Survey.

Percentage Distribution of Volunteers by Type of Main Organization, 2005¹

Characteristics	All volunteers 16 and over	Arts or cultural	Civic, political or professional or international	Educational or youth service	Environmental or animal care	Hospital or other health	Public safety	Religious	Social or community service	Sports or hobby	Other
Gender											
Men	41.9%	39.6%	54.2%	38.9%	41.3%	30.2%	76.9%	40.9%	44.3%	64.6%	45.6%
Women	58.1	60.4	45.8	61.1	58.7	69.8	23.1	59.1	55.7	35.4	54.4
Age											
16 to 24 years	13.7	12.6	9.0	16.9	18.8	14.7	16.4	10.8	15.2	10.6	14.1
25 to 34 years	15.1	10.6	16.2	19.4	17.5	12.9	20.0	12.6	14.8	16.5	13.1
35 to 44 years	22.7	15.8	17.2	32.7	16.0	17.2	19.3	20.3	17.8	24.9	20.2
45 to 54 years	21.2	18.2	22.7	20.6	24.8	21.3	20.7	22.3	18.0	27.4	18.6
55 to 64 years	14.0	19.7	17.6	7.2	16.1	16.3	15.4	16.6	16.2	13.0	16.0
65 years and over	13.3	23.2	17.3	3.1	6.8	17.6	8.1	17.2	17.9	7.6	17.9
Race and Hispanic ethnicity											
White	85.9	87.2	88.2	86.0	94.5	89.5	93.9	83.4	86.7	91.5	87.8
Black or African American	9.0	5.4	7.3	8.1	2.3	5.7	3.8	11.8	8.3	5.4	7.5
Asian	3.1	5.7	2.9	3.4	1.0	3.6	1.1	3.0	3.1	1.8	2.3
Other	0.7	0.6	0.4	1.1	1.1	0.3	0.8	0.6	0.5	0.8	0.6
Hispanic	6.9	4.0	6.3	8.4	3.4	5.1	5.2	7.4	4.9	5.5	7.7
Education²											
Less than a high school diploma	5.0	1.2	3.9	4.2	1.3	3.8	6.1	6.4	5.2	2.3	7.2
High school graduate	22.3	10.6	20.9	20.9	17.3	23.2	37.6	24.1	20.8	27.0	20.9
Less than a bachelor's degree	29.2	26.5	28.1	30.2	31.0	30.3	31.6	29.0	27.9	29.9	28.7
College graduate	43.5	61.6	47.1	44.7	50.4	42.7	24.8	40.5	46.1	40.7	43.2
Marital status											
Single, never married	22.1	28.6	21.3	24.7	32.9	24.6	28.0	16.6	25.5	20.9	25.6
Married, spouse present	62.1	48.7	60.9	63.4	49.7	54.2	61.6	68.1	56.1	66.9	51.7
Other marital status	15.8	22.7	17.8	11.9	17.4	21.2	10.4	15.4	18.4	12.2	22.7
Presence of own children under 18 years³											
No own children under 18 years old	62.8	82.9	75.5	41.2	80.7	77.6	73.5	65.0	74.9	57.4	76.3
With own children under 18 years old	37.2	17.1	24.5	58.8	19.3	22.4	26.5	35.0	25.1	42.6	23.7
Employment status											
Civilian labor force	71.7	63.9	74.0	75.6	76.1	70.6	86.0	68.9	69.9	82.1	68.9
Employed	68.7	60.9	71.9	71.7	73.5	68.3	82.2	66.4	66.1	80.3	66.0
Full time	53.9	47.7	60.8	54.5	56.6	53.6	70.8	51.7	53.0	67.2	53.0
Part time	14.8	13.2	11.1	17.2	16.9	14.7	11.5	14.7	13.2	13.1	13.0
Unemployed	3.0	3.0	2.1	3.9	2.6	2.3	3.8	2.5	3.8	1.7	2.9
Not in the labor force	28.3	36.1	26.0	24.4	23.9	29.4	14.0	31.1	30.1	17.9	31.1

¹ Main organization is defined as the organization for which the volunteer worked the most hours during the year.

² Data refer to persons 25 years and over.

³ Own children include sons, daughters, stepchildren, and adopted children. Not included are nieces, nephews, grandchildren, and other related and unrelated children.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

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