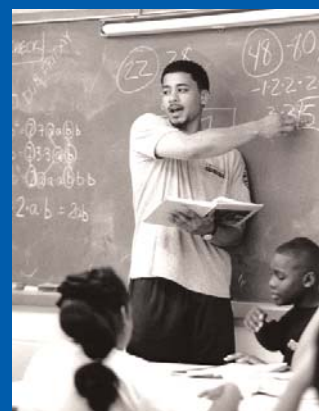
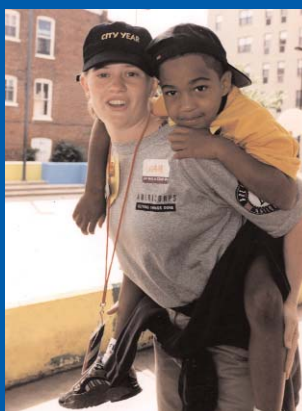
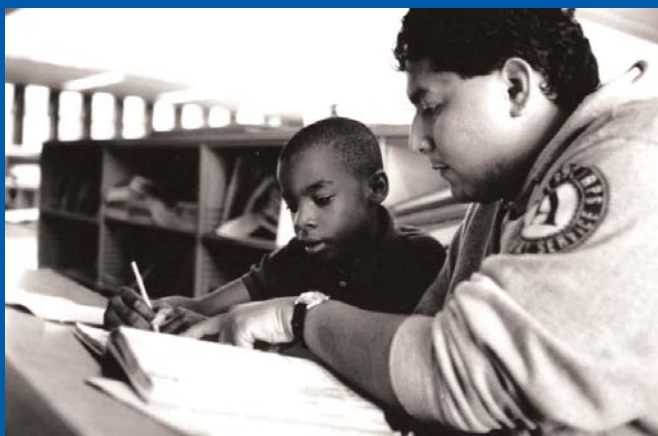


Serving Country and Community: A Longitudinal Study of Service in AmeriCorps

Early Findings

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Corporation for
**NATIONAL &
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Overview of Findings

Serving Country and Community: A Longitudinal Study of Service in AmeriCorps is an evaluation to assess the long-term impact of AmeriCorps on participants' (referred to as *members*) civic engagement, education, employment, and life skills. This report presents early findings on the impacts of AmeriCorps on members' attitudes and behavior. Most of the outcomes are assessed when AmeriCorps members enrolled in the program and approximately one year later as they were completing their term of service, although a limited number of impacts cover the period three years after enrollment.

The study sample comprises a nationally representative sample of more than 2,000 AmeriCorps members from over 100 AmeriCorps*State and National programs and three (of five) AmeriCorps*NCCC regional campuses, as well as almost 2,000 non-members in comparison groups. The study compares changes in the attitudes and behavior of AmeriCorps members over time to those of similarly interested individuals not enrolled in AmeriCorps, controlling for interest in national and community service, member and family demographics, and prior civic engagement. The study was conducted by Abt Associates Inc., an independent social policy and research firm, under contract to the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Key Findings

Overall, the study found that for numerous outcomes, participation in both AmeriCorps*State and National and AmeriCorps*NCCC resulted in statistically significant positive effects on participants. The effect of AmeriCorps participation in the AmeriCorps*State and National program is consistently positive across a majority of civic engagement, employment, and life skills outcomes, and over half of the effects are statistically significant. While the effects of participation for the AmeriCorps*NCCC program are more mixed, the results are generally positive.

The effect of participation was particularly strong on measures of *civic engagement*, a key priority for the Corporation. The study found that participation in both AmeriCorps*State and National and AmeriCorps*NCCC resulted in statistically significant positive impacts on members' connection to community, knowledge about problems facing their community, participation in community-based activities, and personal growth through service. While AmeriCorps members increased their level of civic engagement on many of the outcome measures, scores for comparison group members typically showed little or no change during the same period.

The study found that in the short term, AmeriCorps participation had no significant impacts on measures of *educational outcomes*. It is important to note that individuals in the comparison group had at least one extra year to advance their education while AmeriCorps members were engaged in the program. AmeriCorps members are also allowed up to seven years to use their education awards, suggesting additional time may be needed to observe the impacts of AmeriCorps participation on educational outcomes.

The study found that AmeriCorps participation had a meaningful impact on *employment outcomes*. Most notably, participants in AmeriCorps*State and National programs were significantly more likely to choose careers in public service compared to the comparison group. While AmeriCorps*NCCC participation does not appear to have impacted career choices, AmeriCorps*NCCC members did experience statistically significant increases in their work skills compared to the comparison group. These findings suggest that the Corporation's efforts to support member development and skills-building are yielding positive results.

The study did not identify any significant positive effects of AmeriCorps participation on the selected *life skills*, including appreciation of cultural and ethnic diversity and constructive group interactions. These early findings suggest it may be important for the Corporation to strategize about better ways to support the development of members' interpersonal skills, and to promote an environment in which diversity is embraced.

In addition to assessing the overall impacts of AmeriCorps*State and National and AmeriCorps*NCCC programs, analyses were conducted to explore whether the effects of AmeriCorps participation differ across demographic subgroups of members. A program-level analysis was also conducted to determine whether effects of participation differ across programs with different programmatic characteristics. Although minor differences were identified for some subgroups, these differences were not statistically significant. The findings suggest the effects of AmeriCorps participation are not concentrated in particular subgroups, but are experienced by all members. The findings were also consistent across program characteristics and member experiences. Although AmeriCorps programs differ substantially, these findings indicate that the AmeriCorps model produces outcomes that are generally applicable across AmeriCorps programs.

The study also provides descriptive information about AmeriCorps*State and National programs participating in the study and a profile of members' experiences in AmeriCorps.

The findings in this report reflect only the initial results of a long-term longitudinal study. The longer-term impact of participation in AmeriCorps on members' civic engagement, education, employment, and life skills may not be known for several years. Subsequent reports will assess whether the early outcomes identified in this study will be sustained over time and whether new areas of program impact will appear.

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