

Research-to-Results

Fact Sheet

Child TRENDS

...information for the general public and the media on kids who volunteer.

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TEENS AS VOLUNTEERS

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BACKGROUND

Adolescents who volunteer do better in school, feel more positive about themselves, and avoid risky behaviors (for example, using drugs).¹ Teens who participate in service activities also are more likely to vote, and to have a positive work ethic and a socially responsible attitude as adults.² In addition to benefits for the individual, the contributions made by youth through volunteering can make a difference for their communities and society. This fact sheet describes the characteristics of children and youth who volunteer, their level of involvement in volunteering, and the role models and opportunities that they have to volunteer. It describes both how young people are served by programs that promote community service and how volunteer service benefits them as well as others.

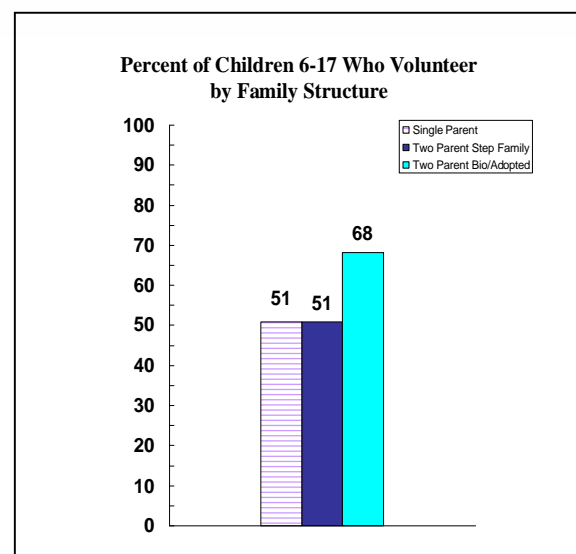
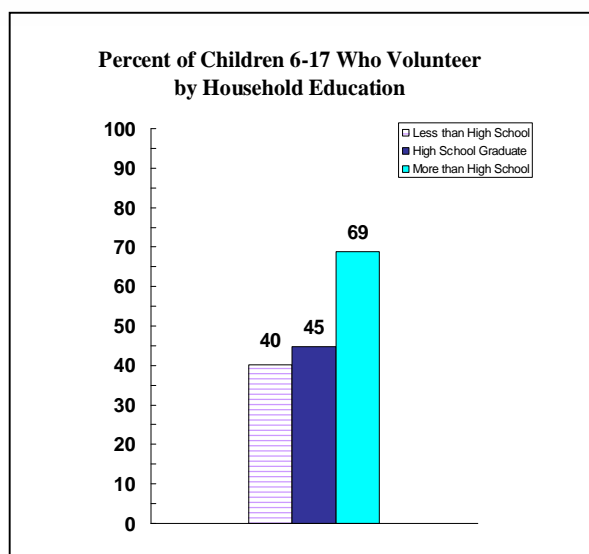
OVERALL FACTS

Data from the National Survey of Children's Health, 2003 indicate:

§ Nearly 60 percent of 12-17-year-olds, or 15 million, participated in some type of community service.

§ Slightly more girls (64 percent) than boys (56 percent) volunteered.

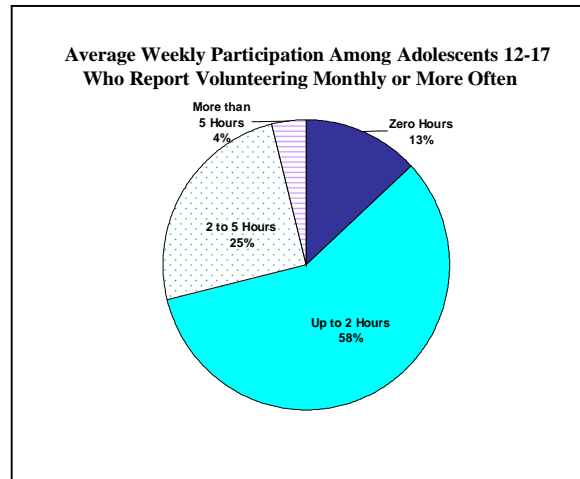
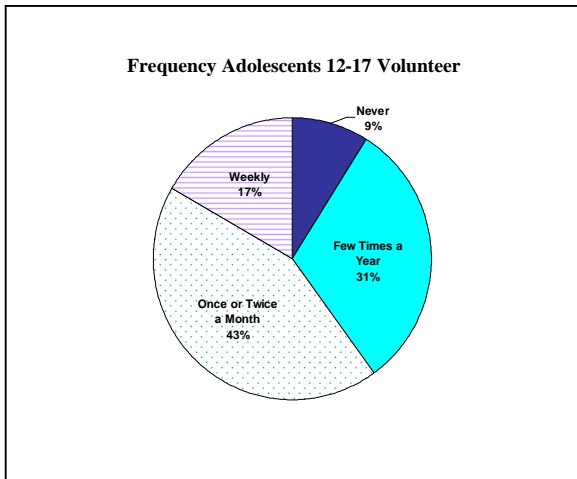
§ Teens from advantaged backgrounds were more likely to volunteer than were teens from other backgrounds. For example, adolescents in families headed by two biological or adopted parents and those with better educated parents volunteered at the highest rates.



TIME INVESTMENTS IN VOLUNTEERING

Adolescents have different service interests, such as organizing a fundraiser or volunteering at a nursing home. They also have different amounts of time in which to volunteer, given the demands of school, homework, out-of-school time activities and jobs, and family responsibilities.

§ Adolescents reported that they were most likely to volunteer once or twice a month and, on average, to spend one to two hours each time that they volunteered.



ROLE MODELS FOR VOLUNTEERING

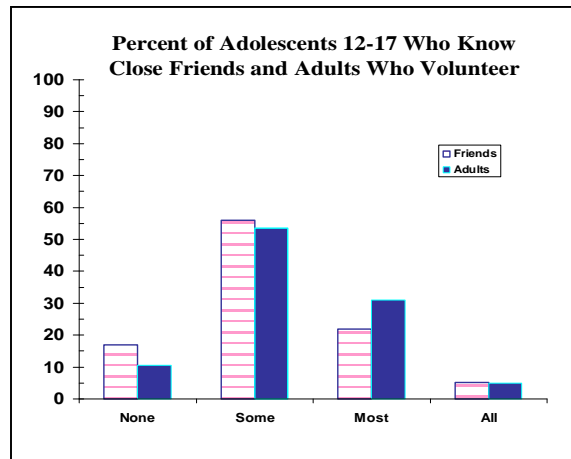
America’s Promise asked parents of teens about their own involvement in service activities.

§ Approximately 7 in 10 parents of adolescents reported volunteering in the past year.

America’s Promise also asked adolescents how many of their friends and how many of the adults in their lives volunteered.

§ More than 80 percent of teens reported that some, most, or all of their friends volunteered.

§ Less than 10 percent of teens did not know any adults who volunteered.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOLUNTEERING

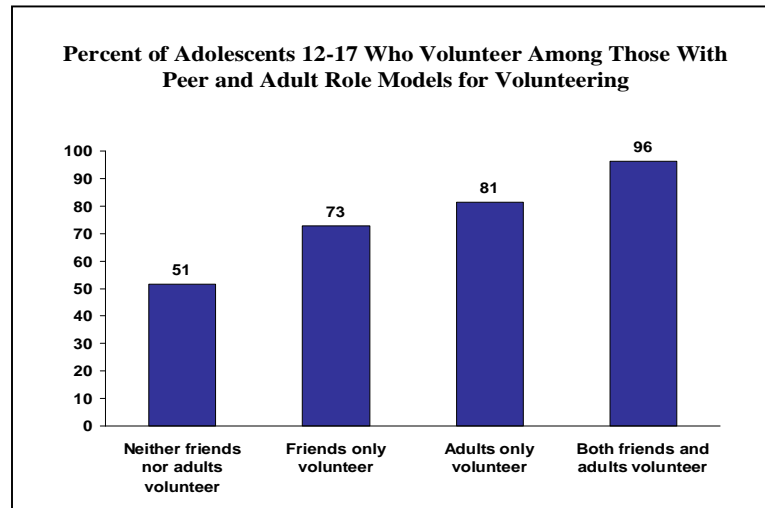
Despite exposure to volunteering, some youth may not know how to get involved. Asking youth directly to volunteer is one approach that may stimulate interest and continued involvement in service activities.

§ Nearly 60 percent of teens reported that their schools had provided them with an opportunity to volunteer.

Teens also reported being asked to volunteer by their congregation or by a community-based organization (51 percent) and by their parents (41 percent).

THE INFLUENCE OF A CULTURE OF VOLUNTEERING

Although volunteering appears to be widespread, are adolescents with multiple role models more likely to volunteer? Yes, they are.



§ Approximately 50 percent of teens volunteered even if they did not have any role models for volunteering.

§ Knowing either peers or adults who volunteer increased the likelihood that a youth would volunteer. Having friends who volunteer increased the likelihood of volunteering to 73 percent, and having only adult role models increased that likelihood to 81 percent.

§ Finally, 96 percent of teens who knew both peers and adults who volunteered reported volunteering themselves.

Note: Unless otherwise stated, all estimates are based on data from America's Promise: Alliance for Youth National Promises Study, 2005-200. Available online at <http://www.americaspromise.org/ECEP.aspx?id=3150>.

¹ Moore, C.W., & Allen, J.P. (1996). The effects of volunteering on the young volunteer. *The Journal of Primary Prevention*, 17(2), 231-258.

² Zaff, J., & Michelsen, E. (October 2002). *Encouraging Civic Engagement: How Teens Are (or Are Not) Becoming Responsible Citizens* (Research Brief). Washington, DC: Child Trends. <http://www.childtrends.org/files/K6Brief.pdf>.

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