

Study Shows One-Third of America's Volunteers Serve through Religious Organizations

Faith-based organizations have a profound impact on volunteering in the United States, according to a report released today by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

The Volunteering in America 2009 report found that more than one third of America's 61.8 million volunteers (35.9 percent) served with or through a religious organization in 2008, more than any other type of organization.

"Using this information, nonprofit organizations can work to create new partnerships focusing on volunteer service," said Joshua DuBois, executive director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. "There are millions of volunteers who want to be a part of critical efforts from mentoring children to improving schools to helping their neighbors meet their basic needs. The President has called upon all of us to join together in these difficult times, and this report highlights the possibilities of doing just that."

Previous research from the Corporation found that volunteers who serve with faith-based organizations are the most likely to continue serving. Seventy percent of volunteers who serve primarily through religious organizations continue serving from year to year, higher than any other type of organization. Despite the popularity of volunteering through faith-based organizations, only about 15 percent of nonprofit charities report partnerships with faith-based organizations.

"Religious organizations are a key source of potential volunteers for nonprofit organizations," said Nicola Goren, the Corporation's acting CEO. "Nonprofits looking to expand their reach and impact may find it beneficial to work more closely with religious organizations in their communities, especially in these tough economic times."

The 2009 report found that even during an economic downturn, when charitable giving experienced a significant drop, volunteering remained steady. Volunteering in America 2009, the most comprehensive data ever assembled on volunteer trends and demographics, found that a total of 61.8 million Americans volunteered through an organization in 2008, up one million from the previous year. Those volunteers dedicated more than 8 billion hours of service worth an estimated \$162 billion.

To make it easier for Americans to volunteer, the Corporation worked with the White House to launch a new Serve.gov website in June. At Serve.gov, organizations can post their needs, and potential volunteers can find local opportunities simply by entering their zip codes. The site includes do-it-yourself toolkits with instructions for finding and filling local needs, and a blog featuring stories of service from people all across the country.

"Volunteering in America 2009" is based on data obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics through a "volunteering supplement" to the Current Population Survey from 2002 to 2008. Volunteers are defined as persons who did unpaid work through or for an organization. The report includes information for all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and 198 cities, including 51 large cities, 75 mid-size cities, and 72 additional cities, based on

Metropolitan Statistical Areas. This information includes the volunteer rate; the types of organizations through which residents serve; their main volunteering activities, the average hours per year and volunteer rates for age and gender demographic groups, and key trends and highlights.

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