

Facts on Volunteering in the Points of Light Era

American Volunteering Trends from 1989 to Today



23 million more Americans are volunteering today than in 1989.¹

- Since 1989, the reported number of Americans volunteering has increased from 38.04 million to 61.80 million last year, an increase of more than 60%.
- The rate of volunteering since 1989 has increased by a third from, 20.4% of all Americans in 1989 to 26.4% last year.

More than twice as many youth are volunteering as volunteered in 1989.

- 8.24 million young people ages 16-24 volunteered last year, compared to 3.53 million in 1989.
- The volunteer rate for young people ages 16-24 has climbed over 60% from 13.4% in 1989 to 21.9% last year.
- About a third of twelfth grade students (33%) volunteered at least once per month in 2006, up from 24% measured in 1991.
- In 2008, 69.7% of students entering college believed it was very important to help others, the highest percentage since 1970, when 71.7% reported that they held this belief. In 1999, 60.8% of students entering college reported this belief.
- Becoming a community leader is also increasingly important to youth, with 35.2% of entering freshmen last year rating it “very important” or “essential.”

Baby Boomers and Older Americans are both over 40% more likely to volunteer than the same age groups in 1989.

- For mid-life adults today (aged 45-64), the volunteer rate is over 29%, up from 22% in 1989.
- Volunteering rates for Americans aged 65 and older rose from 16.9% in 1989 to 23.5% in 2008.

Volunteering with educational and youth organizations is up around 75%.

¹ A slight difference between the Current Population Survey (CPS) instruments from 1989 and 2002-2008 makes comparisons imperfect. Respondents in later years received one additional prompt that respondents in 1989 did not. When the Corporation for National and Community Service adjusted the 2005 CPS data to eliminate the impact of the extra prompt, volunteer rates declined only fractionally. 2008 numbers have not been adjusted.

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- People are more likely to volunteer with educational or youth service organizations today than in 1989 (26.0% of volunteers, up from 15.1% in 1989) and with social or community service organizations (9.9% to 13.3%).
- In 1989, the most common place for people to volunteer was with religious groups (37.4%) and today it is still the most common (35.9%).

Trends in Volunteering: Volunteers By Age Group	1989	2008
Baby Boomer (45 - 64 years old) volunteer rate	22.0%	29.1%
Adult volunteer rate	20.4%	26.4%
Older Adults (65+) volunteer rate	16.9%	23.5%
Young Americans (16 - 24 years old) volunteer rate	13.4%	21.9%
Trends in Volunteering: Volunteering with Organizations by Type	1989	2008
Religious	37.4%	35.9%
Educational or youth service	15.1%	26.0%
Social or community service	9.9%	13.3%
Hospital or other health	10.4%	8.2%
Other	6.3%	6.6%
Civic, political, professional or international	13.2%	5.5%
Sport, hobby, cultural or arts	7.8%	3.3%

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