

Good Intentions, Gap in Action:

The Challenge of Translating
Youth's High Interest in Doing
Good into Civic Engagement



SCHOOL OF
PUBLIC POLICY

DO GOOD INSTITUTE

March 2018

Executive Summary

Volunteering has long been recognized as a primary mechanism for creating productive and active citizens. A large and diverse body of research describes how volunteering promotes beneficial outcomes for young people: volunteering enables youth to develop social connections and “soft skills” that smooth the transition to adulthood and encourage lifelong community engagement. Social institutions, such as family, religion, and schools, play important roles in the development of many young people by providing paths of entry into volunteering and other forms of community engagement.

Our research has shown that teenagers have volunteered at much higher rates over the last two decades (2002–2015) than they did the mid-1970s and late 1980s. Moreover, according to research by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) conducted over the last 51 years, the desire to do good is at an all-time high among entering college students. In 2016, HERI reported that record numbers of first-year college students felt “helping others in difficulty” and “becoming a community leader” was an “essential” or “very important” personal objective.

In this report, we analyze for the first time high school and college student data on actual student engagement taken from the Current Population Survey (CPS), which is conducted monthly by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Census Bureau. Each September between 2002 and 2015, the CPS included a supplemental survey on volunteering that collected data from a national sample of more than 55,000 households, with representative samples in every state and the District of Columbia.

Key Findings

Despite 51-year highs among entering college students in their desire to engage in their community, volunteering among high school and college students has declined since the early 2000s and remained relatively low and stagnant for the last decade. The volunteering rates for high school and college students peaked in 2003, possibly due to a post-September 11 surge in civic attitudes and behaviors. Volunteering rates for both high school and college students remained at this all-time high through 2005, but both dropped sharply in 2006. Since 2006, the high school volunteering rate has not experienced a statistically significant change, and the college student volunteering rate has not changed significantly since 2008. Similarly, the annual percentage of high school and college students who made charitable donations remained largely unchanged between 2008 and 2015.

In contrast to high schoolers and college students, the volunteering rate for adults age 25 and over continued to decrease significantly after 2006. As with high school and college students, the volunteering rate for adults age 25 and over peaked in 2003, remained at this all-time high through 2005, and then dropped sharply in 2006. Between 2006 and 2015, the volunteering rate for adults age 25 and over continued to drop significantly – by almost 2.2 percentage points overall. If the volunteering rate had not dropped at all between 2006 and 2015, we would have almost 4.6 million more 25-and-over volunteers across the country.

Surprisingly, college students volunteer less frequently than high school students.

Between 2002 and 2015, the volunteering rate for college students tended to be lower than, or essentially the same as, the rate for high schoolers. This finding is striking, given that the under-25 college student population is older, better educated, and from more affluent households – all factors that are associated with higher volunteering rates – than the population of high school students.

At the state level, both high school and college student volunteering and donation rates vary widely. To provide leaders with more actionable geographical data, we provide data on all 50 states and the District of Columbia. State volunteering rates for high school students range from 13.6 percent (Louisiana) to 43.8 percent (Maine); volunteering rates for college students vary between 18.4 percent (Arkansas) and 45.9 percent (Wyoming). Donation rates for high school students and college students are lowest in Louisiana (8.7 percent for high school students, 17.9 percent for college students) and highest in Utah (42.5 percent for high school students, 53.2 percent for college students).

The percentage of parents (adults living with their own children under age 18) who volunteer is strongly associated with state-level volunteering and donation rates for both high school and college students. However, several other factors are associated with state-level variations in volunteering and donation rates. Both high school and college volunteering rates tend to be positively associated with factors such as education (percent of the adult population with high school diplomas) and negatively associated with unemployment and poverty rates.

The positive impact of participating in volunteering and high interest in community engagement by today's young adults underscores the need to develop more quality opportunities throughout the country for this generation. Parents, high schools, colleges and universities, and others can act to develop greater levels of volunteering. We should not miss the opportunity to translate this generation's interest in engaging in their community into action.

Preferred Citation:

Grimm, Robert T., Jr., and Nathan Dietz. 2018. "Good Intentions, Gap in Action: The Challenge of Translating Youth's High Interest in Doing Good into Civic Engagement." Research Brief: Do Good Institute, University of Maryland.



Introduction

Each year in America, 60 million people on average volunteer their time with organizations that work to address problems in their communities. While volunteer work is a critical resource for many of these organizations, volunteering can also provide benefits for the volunteers themselves. Several studies have shown that volunteering provides benefits for older volunteers, including lower mortality rates, greater functional ability, and lower rates of depression later in life.¹ An equally large body of research² describes how volunteering helps to promote positive outcomes such as job readiness and work motivation, and reduces the likelihood of negative outcomes such as drug use, pregnancy, and dropping out of school³ among children, adolescents, and young adults. Social institutions, such as religious organizations, families, and educational systems, play important roles in the development of many young people by providing paths of entry into volunteer work and other forms of community engagement.⁴

While religious and family influences help to guide many young people into volunteering, the American educational system also plays an important role in providing volunteer opportunities for young people. Across America, many high schools, colleges, and universities recognize the importance of encouraging young people to volunteer. School-sponsored volunteering and community service opportunities are available in the majority of American elementary, middle, and high schools. According to the most recent national study,⁵ 68 percent of principals reported that their K-12 schools offered community service to their students. This 2008 rate was higher than the rate reported in the 1999 report, in which 64 percent of K-12 principals reported that their schools made these opportunities available.

Meanwhile, colleges and universities also offer many opportunities to serve, and record numbers of college students want to make doing good one of

their highest priorities. Research from the annual Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) *American Freshman* study⁶ (see figure 1) shows that 77.5 percent of students entering college in fall 2016 list “helping others who are in difficulty” as an “essential” or “very important” objective, the highest percentage in the 51-year history of the survey. This percentage has increased substantially in recent years: by almost 11 percentage points since 2006 and by over 16 percentage points since 2001. Figure 1 also shows sharp recent increases in the percentage of entering students who list “becoming a community leader” as an important objective. The large changes in these rates in the last few years illustrate the need for college administrators to provide community engagement opportunities to meet the demands of their students.

“Social institutions, such as religious organizations, families, and educational systems, play important roles in the development of many young people by providing paths of entry into volunteer work and other forms of community engagement.”

¹ Corporation for National and Community Service, Office of Research and Policy Development. *The Health Benefits of Volunteering: A Review of Recent Research*, Washington, DC 2007. Available at https://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/07_0506_hbr.pdf.

² For a brief summary of research studies on the beneficial impacts of youth volunteering, see “Indicators on Children and Youth: Volunteering,” Child Trends Databank, updated December 2015. Washington, DC: Child Trends. Available at https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/20_Volunteering.pdf.

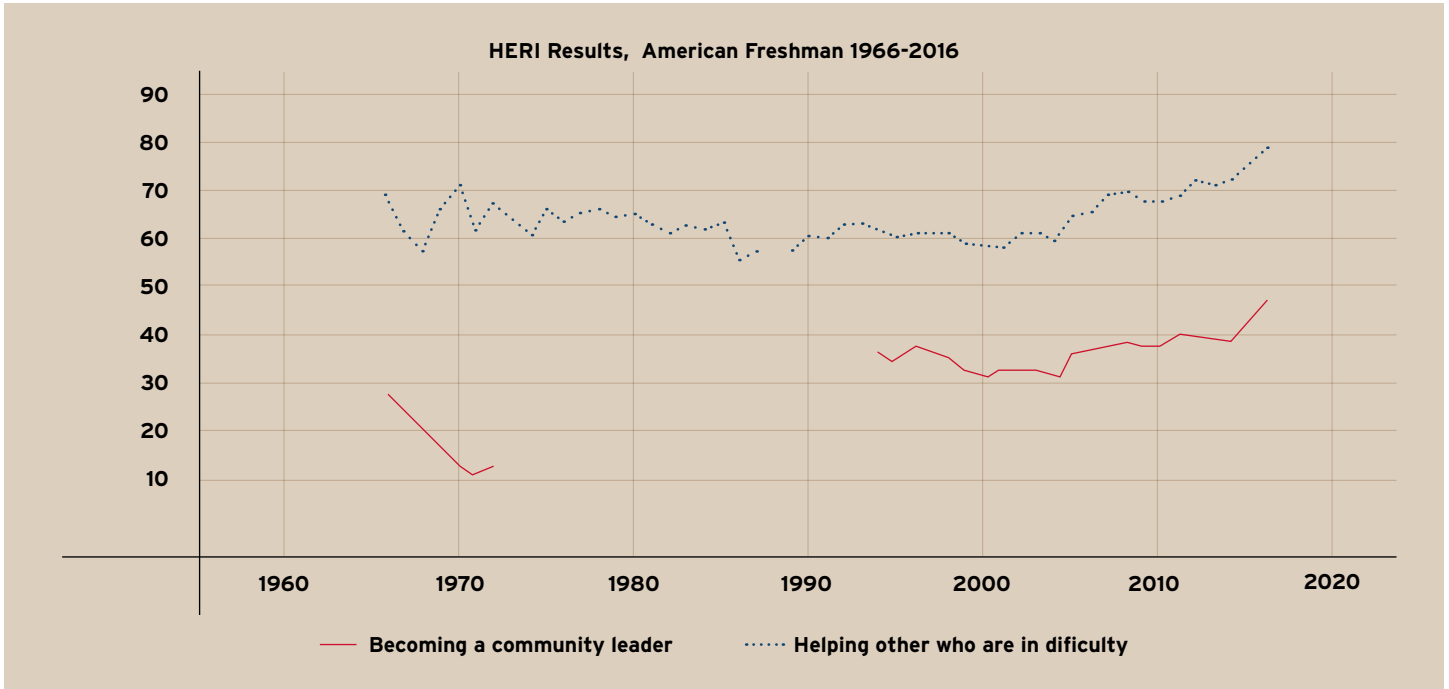
³ See Michelsen, E., Zaff, J. E., & Hair, E. (2002). *Civic engagement programs and youth development: A synthesis*. Washington, DC: Child Trends, available at <https://www.issuelab.org/resource/civic-engagement-programs-and-youth-development-a-synthesis.html> (accessed February 21, 2018); and Zaff, J. E., & Michelsen, E. (2002). *Encouraging civic engagement: How teens are (or are not) becoming responsible citizens*. Washington, DC: Child Trends, for details.

⁴ Grimm Jr, R., Dietz, N., Spring, K., Arey, K., & Foster-Bey, J. (2005). *Building Active Citizens: The Role of Social Institutions in Teen Volunteering*. Youth Helping America. Corporation for National and Community Service. Available at https://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/05_1130_LSA_YHA_study.pdf.

⁵ Spring, Kimberly, Robert Grimm Jr, and Nathan Dietz. “Community Service and Service-Learning in America’s Schools.” Corporation for National and Community Service (2008). <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED506728.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2018).

⁶ Eagan, K., Stolzenberg, E.B., Zimmerman, H.B., Aragon, M.C., Sayson, H.W., & Rios-Aguilar, C. (2017). *The American Freshman: National Norms for Fall 2000*. Higher Education Research Institute, University of California, Los Angeles Graduate School of Education and Information, 3005 Moore Hall, Mailbox 951521, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1521. Available at <https://www.heri.ucla.edu/monographs/TheAmericanFreshman2016.pdf>.

Figure 1: Pro-social attitudes among entering college students, 1966-2016



The positive impact of participating in volunteering and high interest in community engagement by today's young adults underscores the need for national-level data on youth volunteering and civic engagement. In this report, we present new statistics about the civic behaviors of young adults nationwide who are enrolled in high school or college. We analyze official government data collected by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics



(BLS) and the U.S. Census Bureau to show how participation rates for two civic activities – contributing time to organizations (volunteering) and contributing money to charitable causes (donating) – have varied over time for high school and college students. We also show how high school and college volunteering and donating vary by geographical area.

Our data source is the Current Population Survey (CPS) Volunteer Supplement, which was conducted each September from 2002 to 2015 by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Census Bureau. Each CPS Volunteer Supplement was administered to a national sample of more than 55,000 households, with representative samples in every state plus the District of Columbia. Each year, on average, the CPS sample collects data from more than 90,000 respondents ages 15 and over,⁷ including 16,000 respondents ages 15–24, on average. For additional reliability, we base the state statistics presented in this report on a pooled national sample (2012–2015) of 50,000+ respondents ages 15 to 24, with at least 500 respondents per state.

⁷We report statistics for the 16-and-over population, even though the CPS collects data from respondents who are 15 years old, to follow the convention of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). In the annual brief series, Volunteering in the United States, BLS defines adult volunteers as people ages sixteen or older who did work through an organization in the previous twelve months for which they were not paid. BLS imposes a minimum age of 16 because, in most states, residents must be 16 to work for pay without their parents' permission. In this report, we include 15-year-old respondents in the sample to improve our coverage of high school students. However, even with 15-year-old students included in the sample, most high school freshmen are excluded: in September of survey week, most 15-year-olds are entering tenth grade.

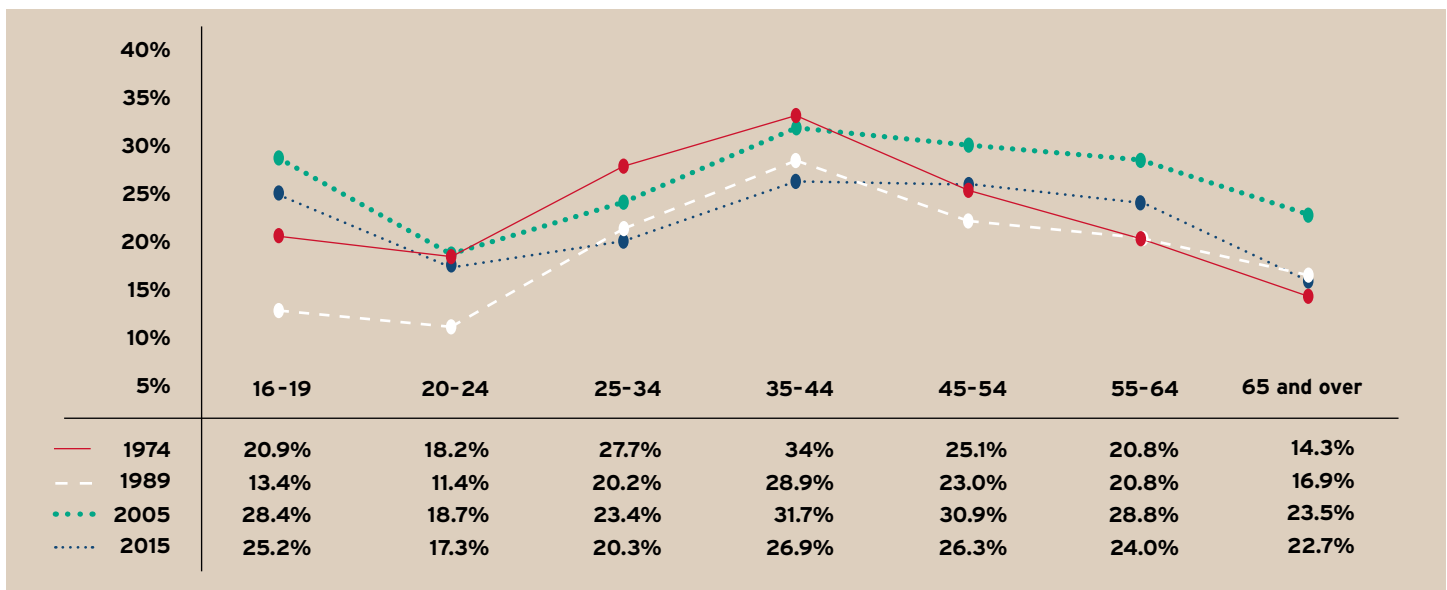
Volunteering by Age: Historical Trends

Young adults (under age 25) are less likely to volunteer than people in mid-life, especially those aged 35–44, while volunteering rates for age groups older than 44 are generally lower (figure 2 below shows that volunteering rates tend to follow an S-shaped curve). These patterns, which have been observed in Canada as well as the U.S.⁸ reflect the fact that people develop stronger connections to their communities – becoming homeowners, starting families, and/or advancing in their careers – as they age. Before the volunteering rate begins to rise to its midlife peak, however, it tends to decline: teenagers as a group are more likely to volunteer than young adults aged 20 to 24, whose volunteering rates are generally lower than any age group except those over 75. The volunteering rates of these college-age young adults are influenced by many forces that are part of the transition to adulthood: young people encounter important life events such as, choosing their own educational path, working for pay, and managing their own finances for the first time. Many young people are taking on these responsibilities while living apart from their parents and away

from familiar support systems in their hometowns, which may also contribute to the decline in participation rates.

The data used to create Figure 2 were all taken from CPS Volunteer Supplements conducted between 1974 and 2015.⁹ While the Volunteer Supplement was conducted on an annual basis from 2002 to 2015, BLS and Census also fielded versions of the survey in 1974 and 1989. In each version of the survey, the focus was on volunteer work, defined as unpaid work performed by individuals through or for an organization to distinguish it from community activities that take place without the involvement of an organization. In every CPS survey, college-age young adults (ages 20 to 24) are less likely to volunteer than those of high school age (age 16 to 19). Figure 2 shows that the difference in volunteering rates between these two age groups has grown larger in recent years, mainly because teenagers are volunteering at substantially higher rates than they were in the late 1980s or mid-1970s.

Figure 2: Volunteer rates over the life cycle



⁸ Reed, P., & Selbee, K. (2001). Patterns of volunteering over the life cycle. Unpublished report, Statistics Canada.

⁹ Dietz, Nathan, and Grimm, Robert T., Jr. (2016). "Doing Good by the Young and Old: Forty Years of American Volunteering." *Nonprofit Quarterly* November 17. Available at <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/2016/11/17/good-young-old-forty-years-american-volunteering/>.

To better understand the difference in volunteering rates between the 16-19 and 20-24 age groups, we can divide the under-25 age group into categories based on their educational attainment. Among adults, education has been called “the most consistent, and often strongest, predictor of volunteering.”¹⁰ The CPS statistics published in the annual BLS brief “Volunteering in the United States”¹¹ consistently show that the volunteering rate for adults age 25 and over with college degrees is much higher than the volunteering rates for adults with some college, those who have earned high school diplomas but have not attended college, and those who have not earned high school diplomas. The tables in the BLS brief present volunteer statistics broken down by educational attainment, but only for adults age 25 and over because most American adults have finished with their formal education after reaching that age. This report presents trend statistics for two of the largest subgroups of the under-25 population: high school students and college students.

High School and College Students Volunteering Trends: 2002-2015

High school and college students contribute a substantial number of volunteer hours to organizations across the United States. On average, between 2013 and 2015, nearly 2.8 million – or 28.5 percent – of U.S. high schoolers, aged 15 and over,¹² volunteered almost 237 million total volunteer hours annually, which represented a total value¹³ of about \$5.47 billion to religious, educational, and other organizations. Likewise, on average, almost 3.1 million (26.1%) college students annually volunteered close to 331 million total volunteer hours between 2013 and 2015, which represented a total of more than \$7.6 billion to religious, educational, and other organizations. The typical (median)¹⁴ high school volunteer contributed 33 hours a year and the median college student volunteer gives 36 hours a year.

The wording of the two main CPS questions used to identify volunteers¹⁵ remained consistent throughout this entire period, which allows us to study trends in volunteering from 2002 until 2015. Figure 3 illustrates trends in volunteering with an organization for American adults ages 25 and over and for those aged 15 to 24, while Figure 4 shows the 2002-2015 trend in volunteering rates for college students (under age 25), and high school students.

Figure 3 shows that the national volunteering rate for the 15-24 age group has declined since the peak levels of 2003-2005. The volunteering rate for both age groups (15-24 and 25 and over) increased significantly between 2002 and 2003, and both rates stayed at the new peak level for the next three years. While neither volunteering rate has rebounded to pre-2006 levels, the 25-and-over volunteering rate continued to decline over the last ten years, while the rate for ages 15 to 24 remained more stable. The 2.2 percentage point drop in the 25-and-over volunteering rate between 2006 and 2015 was larger than any single-year change observed during this timeframe. To put this change into perspective, if the 2015 volunteering rate had stayed at its 2006 level, about 4.6 million additional adults nationwide aged 25 and over would have volunteered. Meanwhile, the 2015 volunteering rate for ages youth and young adults 15-24 is almost the same (22.2 percent) as it was in 2006.

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¹⁰ Musick, Marc A., and John Wilson (2008). *Volunteers: A Social Profile*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, p. 119.

¹¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016). “Volunteering in the United States, 2015.” February 26: Available at <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/volun.nr0.htm>.

¹² See note 7 for details about reporting statistics for 15-year-old respondents.

¹³ These dollar amounts are based on the Independent Sector (IS) estimates for an hour of volunteer time (<https://www.independentsector.org/resource/the-value-of-volunteer-time/>). Since we use pooled data from 2013 through 2015 to calculate hours volunteered, we use an average of the 2013, 2014 and 2015 IS hourly value estimates to calculate the total value of this service.

¹⁴ By definition, half of all volunteers in each group contribute more than the median number of hours, and half contribute less. We report hours volunteered by the median volunteer, rather than average (mean) hours per volunteer, because the small number of volunteers who serve a great many hours distort the average values.

¹⁵ See the Appendix for the exact wording of the two main CPS volunteer prompts.

Figure 3: Annual Volunteering Rates, Ages 15-24 and 25 and Over, 2002-2015

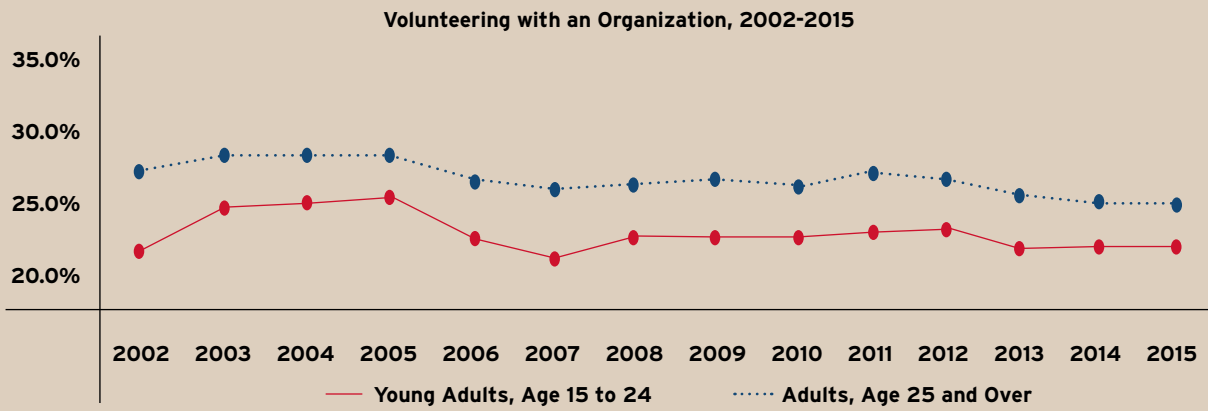


Figure 4: Annual Volunteering Rates, High School Students and College Students, 2002-2015

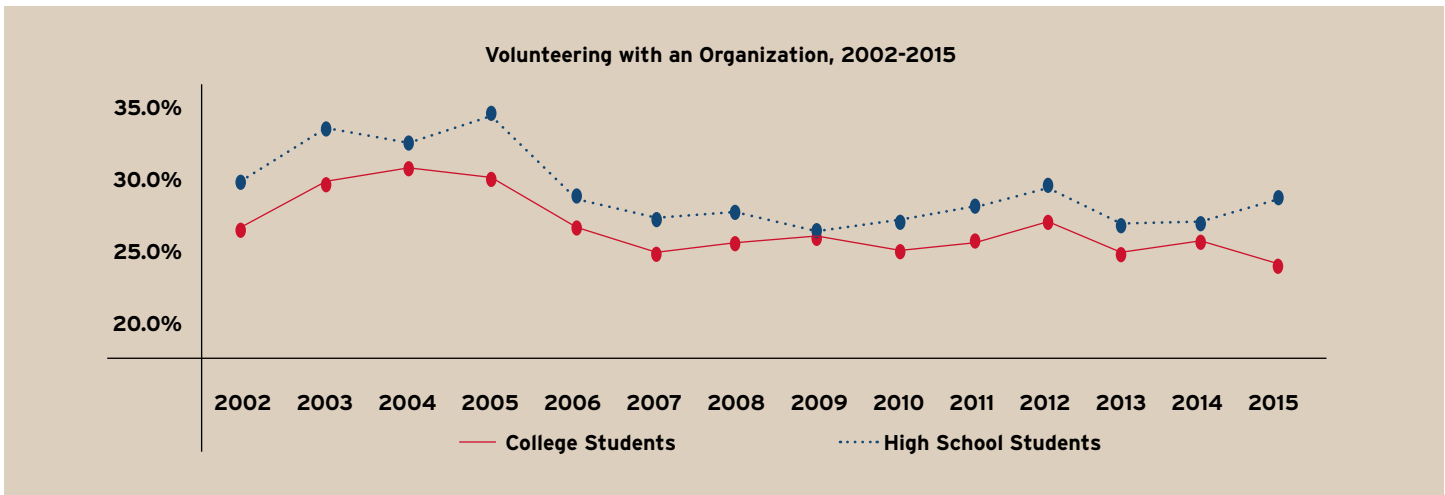


Figure 4 shows the time trends in volunteering rates for high school students and college students, who together comprise over half of the 15-24 age group. A 2006 report on college student volunteering published by the Corporation for National and Community Service¹⁶ attributed the 2003-2005 peak in volunteering rates to the nation's reaction to the events of September 11, 2001. Figure 4 suggests that the "9-11 effect" began to fade for high school and college students in 2006; the 2007 decline in college student volunteering rates was also statistically significant, but so was the rebound in 2008, which occurred during the Great Recession. The volunteering rate for college students has not changed significantly since 2008, while the high school volunteering rate has not changed significantly since 2006.

As Figure 4 illustrates, high school students tend to volunteer slightly more frequently than college students; the average difference of about two percentage points is often statistically significant.¹⁷ This persistent difference in volunteering rates is surprising, given that almost all high school-age youth are enrolled in high school, while young adults who attend college tend to come from more affluent households, to have parents with more formal education, and to be older and better educated themselves – all factors that are associated with higher levels of volunteering.

Donating to Charity

According to the annual *Giving USA* report,¹⁸ the amount contributed to charities, in real dollars, from all sources reached a record high level in 2015 for the second year in a row. The report notes that individual donors, more than corporations, foundations, or bequests, were the primary reason for the most recent increase. In 2008, the CPS Volunteer Supplement began asking respondents if they have made charitable gifts of \$25 or more in the last year.



¹⁶ Dote, Lillian, Kevin Cramer, Nathan Dietz, and Robert Grimm Jr. "College Students Helping America." Corporation for National and Community Service (2006). Available at <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED494174.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2018).

¹⁷ There is a statistically significant difference between the high school volunteering rate and the college student volunteer rate in the following years: 2002-2003, 2005-2007, 2012, 2015. In each instance, the high school rate is higher.

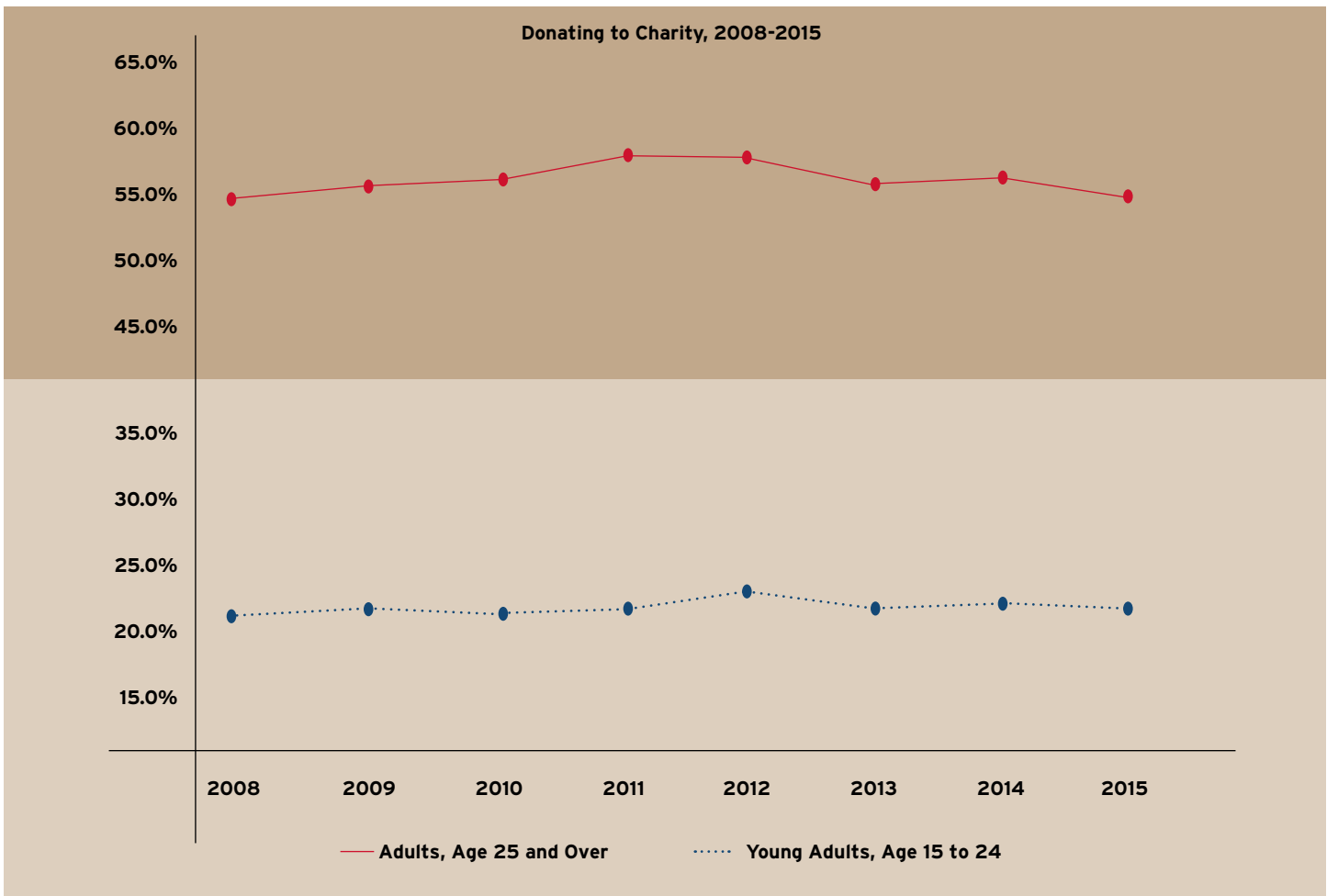
¹⁸ "See the Numbers – Giving USA 2016 Infographic." Giving USA Foundation (2017). Available at <https://givingusa.org/see-the-numbers-giving-usa-2017-infographic/> (accessed February 21, 2018).

Figure 5 demonstrates a general conclusion found by other studies of charitable contributions: youth and young adults (age 15 to 24) are less likely to donate than older adults (age 25 and over). For many adults, contributions of money are more feasible than contributions of time; for youth and young adults aged 15 to 24, participation depends on available resources, although younger donors are more likely to use new technology to contribute money than older ones are.¹⁹ Figure 5 also shows that the donation rates (percentage of people contributing to charity) has stayed remarkably stable since 2008. Each year from 2008 to 2015, between 54 and 58 percent of adults age 25 and over made contributions to charitable causes worth \$25 or

more; the donation rate increased significantly in 2009 and 2011 around the Great Recession, while declining significantly in 2013 and 2015.

Despite all these fluctuations, the 25 and over donation rate has always stayed within tight boundaries: the rate in 2015 (55.0 percent) was about the same as the 2008 rate (54.8 percent). The donation rate for the 15–24 age group has been even more stable over time. Only once, in 2012, has the rate fallen outside the range of 21.6 percent to 22.6 percent; this is also the only time that the year-to-year change in the donation rate for this age group has been statistically significant.²⁰

Figure 5: Annual Donation Rates, Ages 15-24 and 25 and Over, 2008-2015



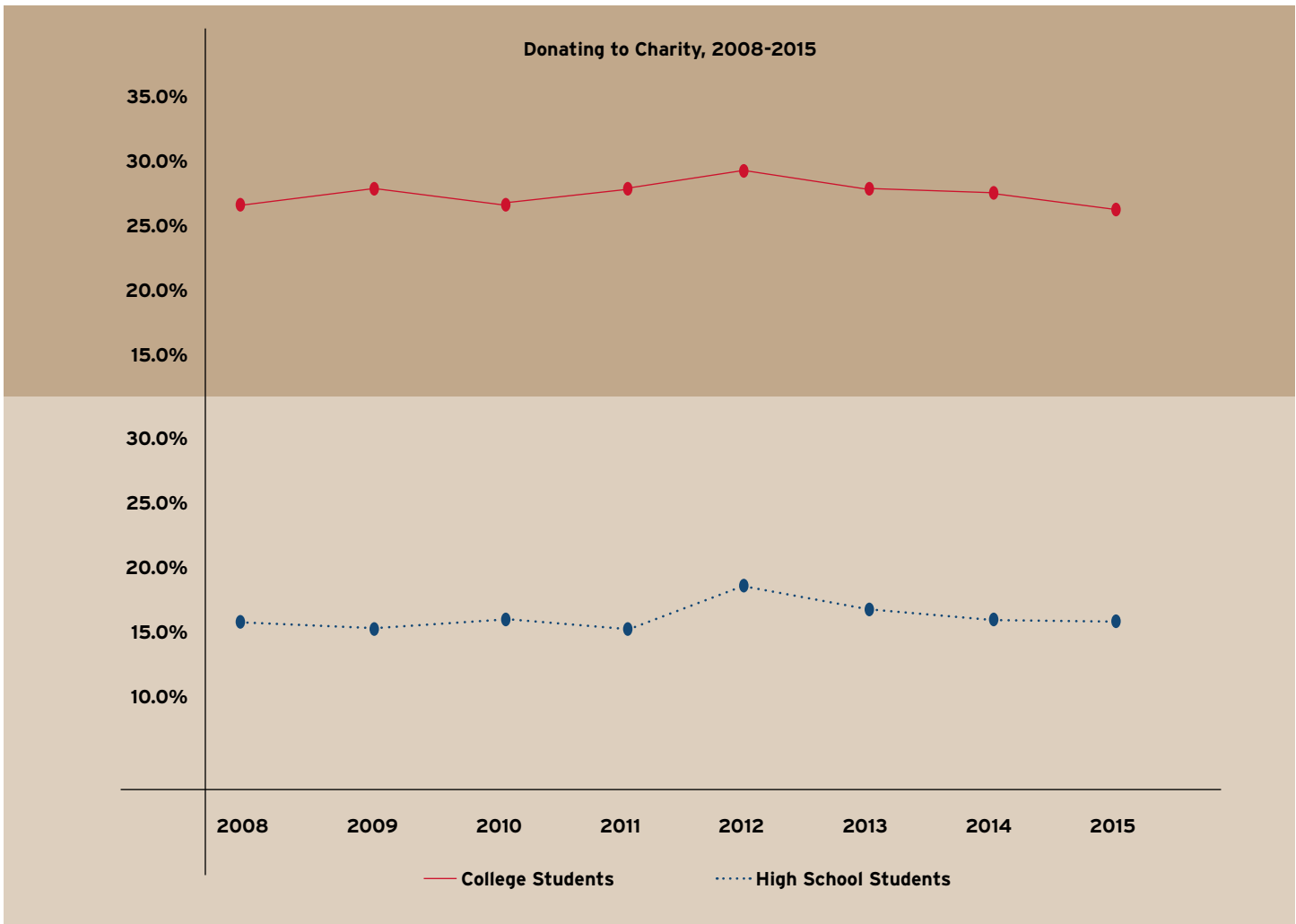
¹⁹ “The Next Generation of Charitable Giving: The Charitable Habits of Generations Y, X, Baby Boomers, and Matures.” Blackbaud Institute (2016). Available at <https://institute.blackbaud.com/asset/the-next-generation-of-american-giving-the-charitable-habits-of-generations-y-x-baby-boomers-and-matures/> (accessed February 21, 2018).

²⁰ The 2012 “bump” in the left-hand panel of Figure 5 is obviously the exception to the general pattern of stability in the donation rate for the 15–24 age group. While the increase may have been driven by events, such as the presidential election or Hurricane Sandy, that stimulated giving, it is unclear why these events might have affected the donation rate for this age group in 2012, while similar events in other years had much smaller impacts, if any.

As Figure 6 shows, the donation rates for high school and college students have also been relatively stable between 2008 and 2015. The year-to-year change in donation rate has only been statistically significant once for high school students (an increase, in 2012) and has never been significant for college students.

However, unlike volunteering, college students have always been much more likely than high school students to make charitable contributions: the donation rate for college students has always been at least ten points greater than the rate for high school students between 2008 and 2015.

Figure 6: Annual Donation Rates, High School Students and College Students, 2008-2015



Volunteering and Donating by State: High School and College Students

One of the primary strengths of the CPS survey design is that it collects a representative data sample for every state. Even though the state sample sizes approach or exceed 1,000 observations for most states, we pool data from the 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 Volunteer Supplements to calculate reliable state-level statistics for high school and college students. Table 1, in the Appendix, contains the proportion

of state high school and college students, as well as the proportion of state residents ages 15–24 and 25 and over, who volunteer their time and donate to charitable organizations. Table 2, also in the Appendix, presents state rankings for each of these groups. The maps in Figures 7 and 8 illustrate the differences in volunteering rates for college and high school students across states.

Figure 7: High School Student Volunteering Rates by State, including Washington, D.C., 2012-2015

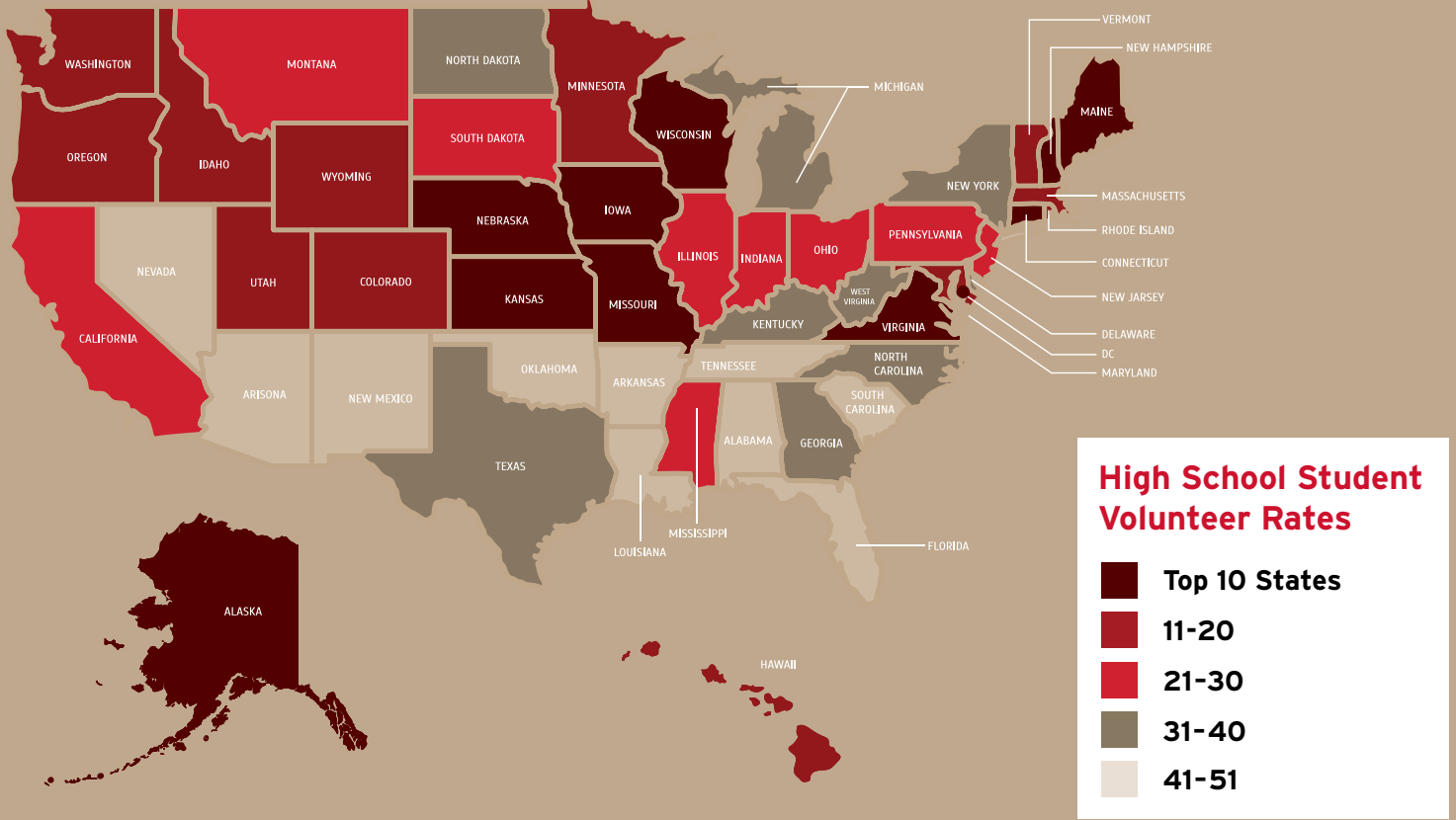
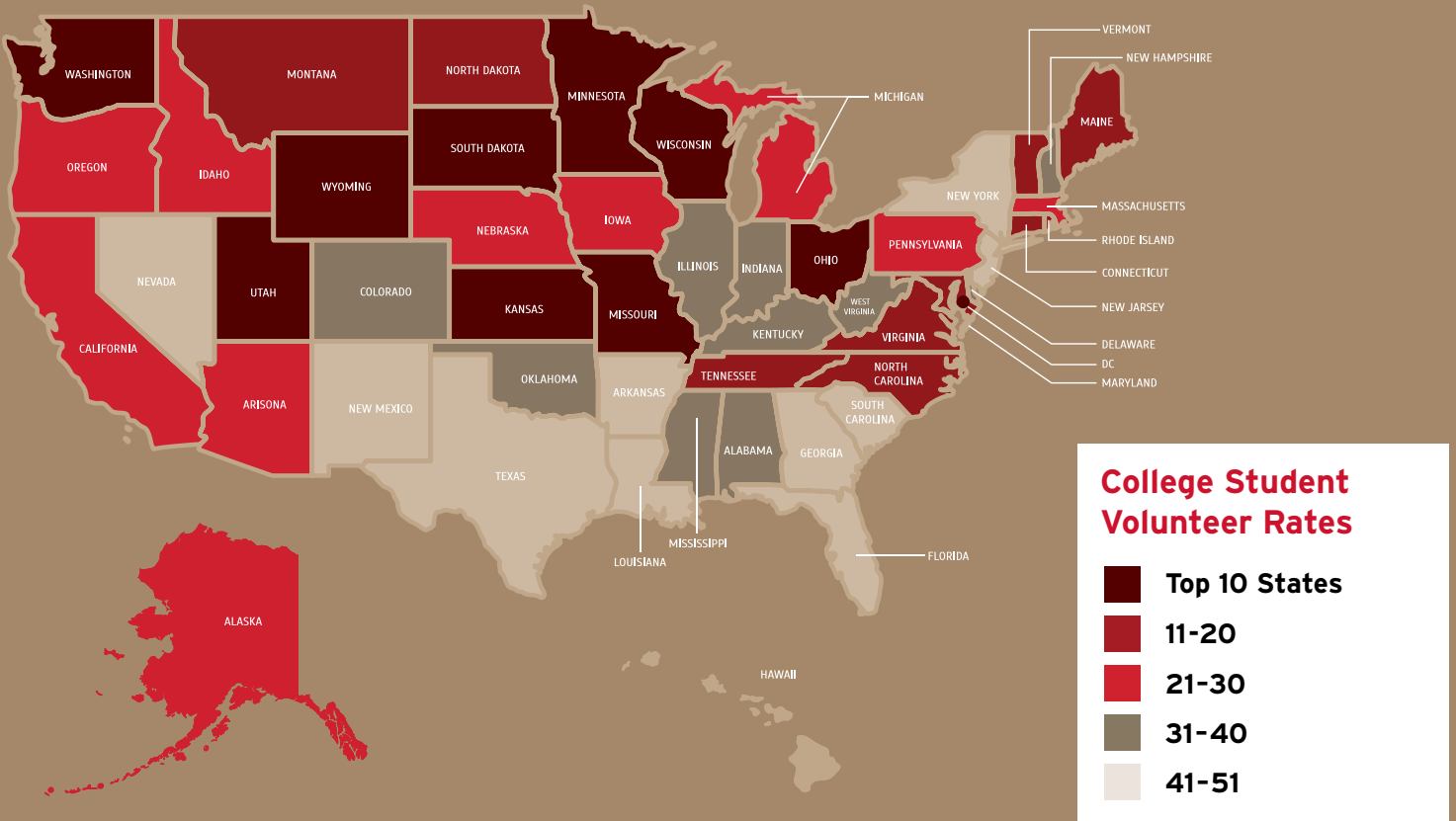


Figure 8: College Student Volunteering Rates by State, including Washington, D.C., 2012-2015



The statistics in Table 1 show how much volunteering rates for high school and college students have varied across states in recent years. Across the country, only three states – Kansas, Missouri and Wisconsin – are ranked in the top ten for volunteering among both high school students and college students. Between 2012 and 2015, the top five states for high school (ages 15–19) volunteering are Maine (43.8%), Kansas (43.5%), Connecticut (42.9%), Nebraska (41.3%), and Wisconsin (39.9%), while Oklahoma (21.2%), New Mexico (19.9%), Arkansas (18.9%), Tennessee (17.9%), and Louisiana (13.6%) have the lowest rates for high school students. For college students, Wyoming (45.9%), Utah (38.5%) and Kansas (36.7%) had the highest volunteering rates from 2012 to 2015, while Washington and the District of Columbia tied for fourth at 36.1%. The five states with the lowest volunteering rates for college students include Nevada (19.5%), Texas (19.0%), New Jersey (18.7%), New York (18.6%), and Arkansas (18.4%).

Many empirical research studies that rely on CPS data to construct local-area volunteering statistics^{21 22} also use metropolitan statistical areas as the geographic unit of analysis. For example, a 2007 report²³ found that “Long average commutes to work, high poverty rates, lower education levels, low volunteer retention rates [defined as the percentage of volunteers in a given year who also volunteer in the following year], lower numbers of local nonprofit associations and groups, a high percentage of multiunit housing, and high population density all tend to increase a community’s chance of having low volunteering rates. On the other hand, there are other factors that protect or promote growth in volunteering. Volunteering seems to be higher in communities with shorter commutes to work, high average education levels, high levels of homeownership, high rates of volunteer retention, and many nonprofit organizations in the community.”

Our analysis indicates that some, but not all, of these factors are associated with state-level differences in volunteer and donation rates among high school and college students. Certain demographic factors, such as the volunteering rate for parents and the proportion of residents with high school educations, are positively

associated with high-school and college student volunteering, while unemployment and poverty rates tend to be lower in states where high-school and college volunteering is more prevalent. Similarly, several state-level factors that are correlated with volunteering rates (parental volunteering, percent of adults who are high school graduates, unemployment rate, and poverty rate) are also correlated with donation rates among high schoolers.

Since Maryland is the only state with a high school community service requirement (although several large city school districts have also enacted service requirements,²⁴) the state-level volunteer results do not appear to be driven by required community service policies. While Maryland has above-average volunteering rates for high-school and college students, ranking in the top twenty in both categories, several states have higher participation rates for one or both groups. Furthermore, the state data show that, for high school and college students, the volunteering and donation rates are not closely related. For instance, of the 10 states with the highest donation rate for high school students, only four (Connecticut, Wisconsin, Missouri, and Alaska) are also in the top 10 for volunteering. Of the top 10 states with the highest college student donation rate, only three (Wyoming, Utah, and Missouri) are also in the top 10 for volunteering, and five (Alabama, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Nevada) are ranked 30th or lower for volunteering. However, the connection between state-level volunteering and donation rates is much stronger for the older population (age 25 and over) than for high school students or college students. Among the top 10 states for volunteering for all adults age 25 and over – Utah, Minnesota, South Dakota, Idaho, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Kansas, Alaska, Vermont, and Iowa – only two (Vermont and Iowa) are not in the top twenty states for the 25-and-over donation rate.

²¹ Rotolo, T., Wilson, J., & Dietz, N. (2015). Volunteering in the United States in the Aftermath of the Foreclosure Crisis. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 44(5), 924-944.

²² Corporation for National and Community Service, Office of Research and Policy Development. “Volunteering in America: 2007 City Trends and Rankings,” Washington, DC 2007. Available at https://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/VIA_CITIES/VIA_cities_summary.pdf (accessed February 21, 2018).

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Helms, S. E. (2013). Involuntary volunteering: The impact of mandated service in public schools. *Economics of Education Review*, 36, 295-310.

“We believe these results should spur parents, high schools, colleges, universities, states, and others to invest more time in developing quality opportunities for this generation of young adults.”



Conclusion

This brief presents several historical trends in volunteering rates, based on data collected over the last forty years by official government statistical sources. The volunteering rate for teenagers has increased substantially between the mid-1970s and the mid-2010s, while the volunteering rates for all age groups – including high school students, college students, and the 25-and-over population – reached an all-time high between 2003 and 2005 before dropping substantially in 2006. Between 2006 and 2015, the volunteering rate for adults age 25 and over has declined substantially – by 2.2 percentage points – while high school and college volunteering rates

were about the same in 2015 as they were in 2006. At the same time, record levels of young college students are placing a high priority on helping others and becoming community leaders. Given that the peak levels of interest in helping others is not translating to similarly high levels of community engagement, we should not miss the opportunity to translate this generation’s eagerness to help their communities into action. We believe these results should spur parents, high schools, colleges, universities, states, and others to invest more time in developing quality opportunities for this generation of young adults.

Appendix

Data Sources and Methodology

The Current Population Survey (CPS) is a monthly survey of about 55,000 households that has been conducted for more than 50 years. The CPS is the primary source of information on the labor force characteristics of the U.S. population.²⁵ The Current Population Survey's Supplement on Volunteering (Volunteer Supplement), which was conducted every September between 2002 and 2015 by the U.S. Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics with support from the Corporation for National and Community Service, serves as the primary source of data for this report.

The CPS Volunteer Supplement began by asking respondents two primary questions about their activities in the preceding twelve months:

This month, we are interested in volunteer activities, that is activities for which people are not paid, except perhaps expenses. We only want you to include volunteer activities that (you/NAME) did through or for an organization, even if (you/he/she) only did them once in a while. Since September 1st of last year, (have you/has NAME) done any volunteer activities through or for an organization?

Since **September 1st of last year**, (have you/has NAME) done any volunteer activities **through or for an organization?**

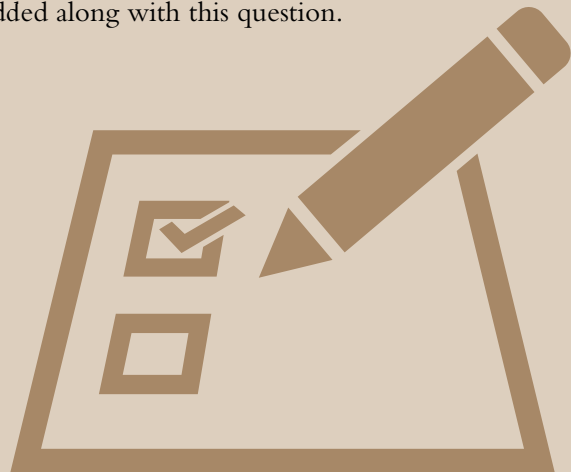
Sometimes people don't think of activities they do **infrequently or activities they do for children's schools or youth organizations** as volunteer activities. **Since September 1st of last year**, (have you/has he/has she) done any of these types of volunteer activities?

The respondent was counted as a volunteer if he or she answered "yes" to either of these two questions. Most of the follow up questions on the Volunteer Supplement were devoted to details about respondents' volunteer service: which organizations they volunteered with (respondents can name up to seven organizations), what type of organizations they served with, how many hours they volunteered

at each organization, how they became acquainted with their primary organization (the one where they served the most hours), and what types of activities they performed at their primary organization. In 2006, in recognition of the limitations of only studying formal volunteering, two long-standing and extensively used questions on civic engagement – attending public meetings where community affairs were discussed, and working with neighbors to fix or improve something – were added to the Volunteer Supplement. In 2008, a third question – about donating to charity – was added:

During the (previous year), did [you or anyone in your family] donate money, assets, or property with a combined value of more than \$25 to religious or charitable organizations?

This question is the first of several questions about charitable contributions that have been added to the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), a nationally representative longitudinal study that has collected data from a national sample of families and households for over forty years. The PSID data are used for the landmark Philanthropy Panel Study, which has been conducted by Indiana University's Lilly Family School of Philanthropy since 2002. Given the space considerations on the CPS, none of the PPS follow-up prompts, including questions about the amount contributed or the type of organization receiving the contribution, were added along with this question.



²⁵ For more information about the CPS, please visit: <http://www.census.gov/cps/> or <http://www.bls.gov/cps/> (accessed February 21, 2018).

Most of the Figures in this brief are based on annual data from the 2002-2015 CPS Volunteer Supplements. In each case, the statistics are calculated using weights that account for the sample design, population characteristics, and nonresponse to the baseline labor force survey and the Volunteer Supplement. Some statistics, such as the population statistics cited in the executive summary and the state statistics in Tables 1 and 2 (in the Appendix), are calculated after pooling data from multiple years of CPS supplements and applying population weights. The summary statistics in the executive summary are based on weighted, pooled CPS Supplement data from 2013 through 2015; the state statistics in Tables 1 and 2 are based on weighted, pooled data from 2012-2015.

For more information about CPS volunteer statistics, please visit the Volunteering and Civic Life in America website (<https://www.nationalservice.gov/vcla>; accessed February 21, 2018), published by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). This website contains a wide variety of volunteer statistics measured at the national, regional, state and metropolitan area levels; the Technical Note and Glossary, accessible at <https://www.nationalservice.gov/vcla/technical-note> (accessed February 21, 2018) contains detailed information about these statistics.

Table 1: Volunteering Rates and Rankings for all States and D.C., 2012-2015

State	Volunteer Rates (2012-2015)				State Ranks (2012-2015)			
	High School Students	College Students	Ages 15-24	Ages 25 and Over	High School Students	College Students	Ages 15-24	Ages 25 and Over
Alabama	21.9%	26.5%	20.8%	24.0%	46	31	38	38
Alaska	36.3%	30.3%	28.1%	34.7%	10	22	9	8
Arizona	24.4%	29.4%	22.7%	23.6%	41	23	30	42
Arkansas	18.9%	18.4%	15.8%	21.6%	49	51	49	47
California	29.1%	27.5%	23.7%	24.4%	30	29	25	36
Colorado	34.1%	24.9%	24.0%	31.2%	15	36	23	17
Connecticut	42.8%	31.2%	31.8%	28.6%	3	20	3	24
Delaware	28.2%	24.9%	20.9%	27.0%	32	37	36	28
Dist. of Columbia	27.3%	36.0%	26.0%	32.3%	35	4	16	13
Florida	23.3%	22.9%	17.8%	19.9%	43	42	46	49
Georgia	25.4%	19.5%	18.4%	24.6%	39	46	45	35
Hawaii	32.0%	20.1%	18.8%	23.6%	22	45	43	41
Idaho	32.8%	28.6%	25.9%	36.2%	20	26	19	4
Illinois	30.8%	24.4%	23.7%	25.9%	26	40	26	31
Indiana	30.5%	26.4%	23.5%	28.6%	28	32	27	23
Iowa	36.4%	28.5%	25.9%	33.9%	8	27	18	10
Kansas	43.4%	36.8%	31.1%	34.9%	2	3	5	7
Kentucky	25.8%	25.0%	18.9%	24.3%	37	35	41	37
Louisiana	13.6%	24.0%	14.4%	18.9%	51	41	51	51
Maine	44.0%	33.1%	31.4%	31.9%	1	11	4	15
Maryland	34.0%	32.8%	25.9%	29.0%	17	12	17	19
Massachusetts	33.9%	27.6%	23.9%	25.4%	18	28	24	33
Michigan	28.0%	29.1%	22.3%	28.2%	33	24	31	26
Minnesota	35.3%	35.7%	30.1%	36.6%	11	6	6	2
Mississippi	31.4%	26.3%	21.9%	23.4%	24	33	33	43
Missouri	36.4%	35.5%	25.5%	28.9%	9	8	20	21
Montana	30.9%	32.5%	27.9%	31.4%	25	15	10	16
Nebraska	41.2%	27.2%	25.1%	35.7%	4	30	21	6
Nevada	22.2%	19.5%	15.7%	20.4%	44	47	50	48
New Hampshire	36.7%	26.2%	26.4%	28.8%	7	34	15	22
New Jersey	30.5%	18.8%	21.2%	22.8%	27	49	35	45
New Mexico	19.9%	22.8%	19.9%	25.6%	48	43	40	32
New York	24.8%	18.6%	17.3%	19.7%	40	50	47	50
North Carolina	26.7%	32.6%	23.0%	26.8%	36	14	29	30
North Dakota	27.4%	32.2%	22.2%	31.9%	34	18	32	14
Ohio	31.9%	33.7%	24.0%	27.3%	23	10	22	27
Oklahoma	21.1%	24.5%	16.9%	26.9%	47	39	48	29
Oregon	34.3%	30.9%	26.8%	33.5%	14	21	13	11
Pennsylvania	29.1%	29.0%	23.4%	28.5%	29	25	28	25
Rhode Island	24.0%	32.8%	21.4%	23.4%	42	13	34	44
South Carolina	21.9%	21.5%	18.8%	24.0%	45	44	42	39
South Dakota	32.6%	35.4%	26.7%	36.2%	21	9	14	3
Tennessee	17.8%	32.4%	20.8%	25.2%	50	16	37	34
Texas	25.7%	19.0%	18.6%	24.0%	38	48	44	40
Utah	34.1%	38.5%	32.9%	47.4%	16	2	1	1
Vermont	35.1%	32.4%	27.7%	34.7%	12	17	11	9
Virginia	37.7%	31.9%	28.7%	30.5%	6	19	7	18
Washington	33.8%	35.9%	28.4%	32.5%	19	5	8	12
West Virginia	28.7%	24.6%	19.9%	21.9%	31	38	39	46
Wisconsin	39.9%	35.5%	32.1%	36.0%	5	7	2	5
Wyoming	34.7%	45.9%	27.5%	29.0%	13	1	12	20
United States	28.8%	26.4%	22.4%	26.2%				

Table 2: Donation Rates and Rankings for all States and D.C., 2012-2015

State	Donation Rates (2012-2015)				State Ranks (2012-2015)			
	High School Students	College Students	Ages 15-24	Ages 25 and Over	High School Students	College Students	Ages 15-24	Ages 25 and Over
Alabama	22.5%	38.3%	29.3%	55.5%	10	5	4	32
Alaska	25.9%	41.5%	32.1%	61.5%	3	2	2	12
Arizona	10.1%	28.6%	22.1%	53.8%	48	24	33	37
Arkansas	14.2%	23.5%	22.6%	47.9%	39	45	29	48
California	13.1%	23.9%	20.2%	52.2%	43	43	41	42
Colorado	24.7%	27.6%	26.9%	64.9%	6	30	9	4
Connecticut	23.1%	28.4%	25.7%	62.6%	9	28	16	6
Delaware	11.7%	28.5%	18.1%	57.6%	46	25	48	25
Dist. of Columbia	15.2%	28.5%	24.4%	54.9%	34	26	22	34
Florida	10.1%	23.4%	15.9%	45.5%	49	46	50	49
Georgia	16.0%	26.6%	21.4%	52.7%	29	33	36	41
Hawaii	20.0%	25.4%	23.6%	56.3%	15	40	25	28
Idaho	24.0%	33.5%	26.4%	59.0%	8	11	13	18
Illinois	21.1%	28.3%	26.2%	58.9%	12	29	15	20
Indiana	20.4%	24.8%	22.6%	57.8%	14	42	30	23
Iowa	11.5%	26.3%	21.1%	57.2%	47	36	37	26
Kansas	15.8%	31.1%	27.0%	61.7%	30	16	8	11
Kentucky	15.8%	32.3%	23.0%	53.3%	31	13	28	39
Louisiana	8.7%	17.9%	15.4%	44.2%	51	51	51	51
Maine	17.9%	26.3%	21.0%	56.8%	18	35	39	27
Maryland	17.6%	37.7%	24.6%	60.4%	19	6	20	16
Massachusetts	13.4%	20.8%	20.2%	59.0%	41	47	42	19
Michigan	12.7%	28.5%	19.6%	54.8%	44	27	43	35
Minnesota	16.7%	30.5%	25.6%	67.3%	25	18	17	3
Mississippi	25.8%	35.4%	26.7%	52.0%	4	8	10	43
Missouri	24.6%	39.1%	26.6%	59.1%	7	4	11	17
Montana	18.1%	28.7%	23.1%	58.5%	17	23	27	21
Nebraska	17.0%	26.6%	22.3%	62.2%	22	34	32	8
Nevada	22.1%	34.0%	28.1%	54.2%	11	9	6	36
New Hampshire	16.7%	26.2%	24.4%	63.0%	24	37	21	5
New Jersey	13.4%	25.5%	22.3%	58.4%	42	39	31	22
New Mexico	9.9%	27.0%	21.5%	51.2%	50	31	35	45
New York	15.7%	20.6%	19.0%	51.0%	32	49	45	46
North Carolina	17.1%	30.6%	23.9%	55.1%	20	17	24	33
North Dakota	16.6%	30.5%	26.4%	61.2%	27	19	12	14
Ohio	13.5%	29.9%	18.9%	53.6%	40	20	46	38
Oklahoma	17.0%	33.8%	19.4%	50.4%	21	10	44	47
Oregon	16.7%	23.6%	23.3%	62.1%	26	44	26	9
Pennsylvania	14.3%	26.8%	20.8%	57.6%	38	32	40	24
Rhode Island	11.8%	29.5%	22.0%	60.9%	45	22	34	15
South Carolina	20.7%	39.8%	28.3%	55.8%	13	3	5	30
South Dakota	16.0%	31.5%	24.8%	62.1%	28	14	19	10
Tennessee	14.9%	33.3%	26.2%	56.2%	36	12	14	29
Texas	15.7%	25.0%	21.1%	51.4%	33	41	38	44
Utah	42.4%	53.1%	43.9%	72.2%	1	1	1	1
Vermont	15.1%	20.7%	17.5%	53.3%	35	48	49	40
Virginia	14.7%	29.7%	24.0%	61.5%	37	21	23	13
Washington	27.5%	25.5%	27.6%	62.2%	2	38	7	7
West Virginia	16.9%	19.4%	18.7%	45.1%	23	50	47	50
Wisconsin	24.7%	31.1%	30.0%	67.8%	5	15	3	2
Wyoming	19.5%	35.5%	25.3%	55.6%	16	7	18	31
United States	16.4%	27.1%	22.3%	55.2%				