

**THE DOSOMETHING.ORG**

**INDEX ON YOUNG PEOPLE**

**AND VOLUNTEERING**

**2012**

**THE YEAR OF FRIENDS  
WITH BENEFITS**



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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DoSomething.org is one of the largest organizations in the USA for young people and social change. It is important to our work that we know how, why, and where young people want to volunteer. Consequently, earlier this year, we conducted a national survey on young people and volunteering.

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first comprehensive national survey of teens and volunteering that incorporates respondents as young as 13 – 15 years old.

Ninety three percent of teens say they want to volunteer; but a far smaller percentage of young people actually do volunteer. This Index exposes why some teens and college students volunteer and why some don't, and gives insight into how to close that gap.

We are sharing this report externally because we believe young people are a fantastic untapped resource. They are creative, passionate, and frustrated by the problems grown-ups have created and/or been unable to fix. We hope this Index inspires organizations, schools, companies, etc to unlock the power of young people.



A yellow ribbon graphic with a 3D effect, tilted diagonally across the page. The text "TABLE OF CONTENTS" is written in bold black capital letters on the ribbon.

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# SURVEY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Survey data were collected between January 25 and February 1, 2012 by two of the three leading international survey research companies, Survey Sampling International (SSI) and Research Now (RN). The sample was collected online and conforms to the highest standards of stratified random sampling available for online data.

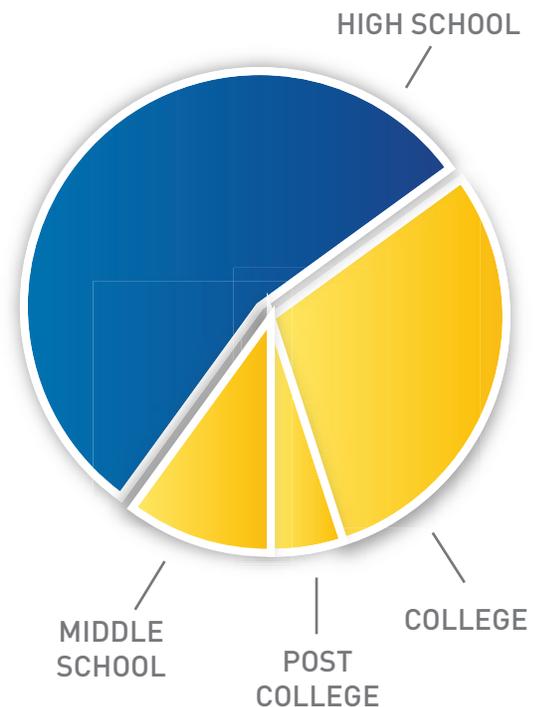
These data aim to be representative of internet-using 13 – 22 year olds in the U.S., with an emphasis on DoSomething.org’s primary age demographic: those of high-school age (14 – 18 years old). About 10% of survey respondents were of middle school age, 55% were high school age, 30% college age, and 5% post-college age.

In total, 4,363 valid responses were collected, yielding an 87% completion rate of those who began the survey and fit our age criteria. The survey contained 62 questions, of which an individual respondent answered between 29 and 49 questions, depending on their responses.

All questions were designed by DoSomething.org’s in-house data scientists (see pg. 6) who carefully studied previous such surveys and research. Some questions in this survey are based on questions used by universities and federal agencies in previous studies while others were fully developed by DoSomething.org.

While the DoSomething.org survey was conducted using some of the most advanced sampling techniques available for internet research, the survey is not representative of young people in at least one way: it does not capture young people who do not use the internet. However, according to the Pew Research Center’s Internet & American Life Project 2009 Parent-Teen Cell Phone Survey, 93% of teens use the internet. Given the continued spread of internet availability, it is likely that the percentage of teens using the internet is now even higher.

A post-stratification weight was applied to the sample to produce a distribution by age to match that of the 2010 U.S. Census. It should also be noted the DoSomething.org data captured age based on year of birth; because the survey was conducted in January, age is accurate except for those born in January. Month data were not captured because of the sensitivity of personally-identifiable data collection for young teens. Other than age, the demographics of 13 – 22 year olds in the study map closely to demographic data obtained from the 2010 U.S. Census. (For a comparison, [SEE APPENDIX A.](#))



# INTRODUCTION

# THE SOCIAL VOLUNTEER

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Why do young people volunteer? Previous research painted an idyllic picture: common answers included, “to make a difference in people’s lives” and “to work on an issue I care about deeply.” Unsurprisingly, when you ask someone the direct question “why do you volunteer?” the answers tend to be altruistic. (Who is going to say, “Because I want a scholarship” or “Because I can meet girls.”)

Human behavior is not always driven by altruistic motivations – not even volunteering. Thus, in addition to asking young people directly why they volunteer, we also asked questions that indirectly revealed motivations for volunteering. (SEE APPENDIX B.) That’s how we discovered that, for a young person, having friends that volunteer regularly is the primary factor influencing a young person’s volunteering habits.

It matters more than things like wanting to help improve his local community or working on an issue he cares about deeply. In fact, for determining volunteering behavior, whether or not a young person’s friends volunteer regularly is nearly twice as important as having the ability to work on an issue he cares about deeply.

The importance of friends’ volunteering habits holds true for this hypothetical young person whether his family is affluent or impoverished, whether he is deeply religious or atheist, and most surprisingly, whether or not he spends much time with his friends outside of school. Apparently, young people can peer pressure each other remotely. (Perhaps they’re inciting each other to volunteer via texting, for example.)

It may not feel surprising that social networks impact the volunteering behavior of young people (for teens, peer pressure is as pervasive as air); yet in other surveys on young people and volunteering, the volunteering habits of friends was ranked as the 5th most important factor influencing volunteering rates, or lower. Whoops.

That’s how we discovered that, for a young person, having friends that volunteer regularly is the primary factor influencing a young person’s volunteering habits.



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## FOR A SOCIAL ASK, USE A SOCIAL INCENTIVE

Ask everyone who signs up for an event to bring a friend. As an incentive, enter participants into a raffle for a free dinner for them and their friends.

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A whopping 75.9% of those whose friends volunteer on a regular basis also volunteer. Yet only 41.7% of those whose friends do not volunteer regularly, also volunteer.

While there are many factors that influence volunteering behavior, the social nature of volunteering is a theme that weaves throughout our results. This is true for finding out about volunteer opportunities: only 19% of those who volunteered came up with the idea to volunteer themselves; over half (57%) were invited by someone: a friend, family member, or other adult.

We also found a surprising correlation between religion and volunteering, as it pertains to young people's social networks. A young person's volunteering habits aren't influenced significantly by how important she believes religion is in her life, but they are influenced by the frequency of her religious attendance.

It's the community and the action that matters.

**[Volunteering is] influenced by the frequency of her religious attendance.**

As with religion, so with athletes: young people who work out on a sports team are 18% more likely to have volunteered than those who work out on their own.

Who knew peer pressure could be such a good thing?



# THE UNCONVENTIONAL VOLUNTEER

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Most reports and research projects, including those conducted by the federal government, define volunteering as “work done through an organization for which there is no pay.” By this definition, and according to federal data, 22.5% of young adults (16 – 24 year olds) volunteered in 2011.

Not For Profits aren’t offering teens what they want. Teens want to do their own thing.

But not all young people who volunteer do so with organizations. (Or maybe they don’t use the word, “organization.”)

Google Trends indicates that since 2004, use of “organization” has steadily fallen to less than half of its former frequency. In the last 12 months, the words “group” and “club” have been used 10 and 16 times as often as “organization,” respectively.)



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## CUSTOMIZE VOLUNTEERING EVENTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

For example, customize the event location. Keep events close to people’s homes, and make sure a car is not required.

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According to our survey data, which uses a definition of volunteering that encompasses work done for no pay for any group or organization, with friends, or by oneself, more than half (54.2%) of young people volunteered in 2011. (Looking just at volunteer work done for organizations, our results are consistent with federal data.)

This means many young people are volunteering in unconventional ways that aren’t being captured by traditional volunteering research. According to our survey, of young people who volunteered in 2011, 40% did not volunteer with a traditional “organization” *at all*, but instead volunteered with clubs, groups, their family alone, friends alone, or on their own. Thus, our survey offers a far more comprehensive and accurate look at the volunteering habits of young people, much of which has slipped past previous scrutiny.

For many young people, volunteering is a casual affair, with respect to both where they do it and when they do it. Eighteen percent of those who volunteered in 2011 weren’t involved in any clubs or organizations, period. Of those who volunteered, over half volunteered less than every few months. Only 5% volunteered weekly (that’s 2.8% of all young people).

So it’s not just the “Presidents” who are volunteering. In fact, only 7% of young people see volunteering as one of the few most important things in their lives. Five percent of those who volunteer don’t even have a particular social cause they care about.

As you’ll see throughout the findings, the themes tying young people to volunteering are often more about their social network, and helping in intermittent and informal ways, rather than sustained efforts to solve a particular issue. That’s great, because it means there are a whole new set of ways we can discover to engage this generation in volunteering.

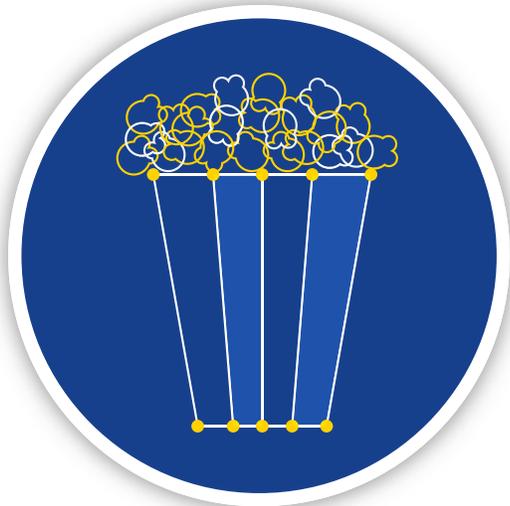
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# KEY FINDINGS

# WHO VOLUNTEERS?

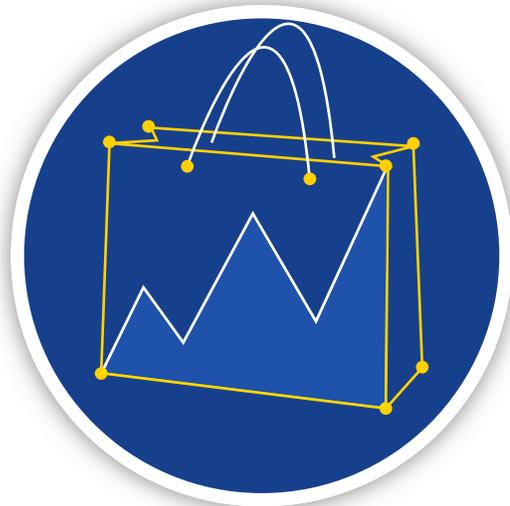
## MOVIE BUFFS + MALL RATS

*See mom! I DO need to go to the mall.* Adults may see going to the movies or the mall as time-wasting activities for their children, but these are social activities that can complement and even lead to pro-social behavior. Why? We suspect these activities are indicative of strong social networks, and serve to strengthen them further. As mentioned above, social influence is crucial to volunteering behavior. That is why teens are:



**22%**

MORE LIKELY TO VOLUNTEER IF THEY WATCH BETWEEN 1 AND 3 MOVIES A MONTH



**26%**

MORE LIKELY TO VOLUNTEER IF THEY VISIT A MALL BETWEEN 1 AND 3 TIMES A MONTH

It's important to note that while young people who go to the movies and the mall more frequently also tend to come from wealthier families, the increased rate of volunteering exists for movie watchers and mall goers regardless of family wealth.

Unsurprisingly, the benefits of social interaction apply beyond the mall and movie theater. In general, 63% of those who spend most of their time outside of school with friends have volunteered in the last twelve months, vs. 56% who spend some time outside of school with friends, 46% for those who spend very little time outside of school with friends, and only 27% of those spending no time at all with friends outside of school.

Young people who go to the movie theater or the mall are more likely to volunteer than those that don't.



**52%**  
**OF TEENS THAT  
TEXT  
VOLUNTEER**

#### **TECHNOLOGY: TEXTERS VS TALKERS (LOL vs Ha Ha Ha)**

Young people who text, volunteer. Young people who regularly send text messages are 13% more likely to have volunteered in the last 12 months than those who own or share a mobile phone but don't regularly text, and 38% more likely to have volunteered than those who don't own or share a mobile phone.

While disparities in family wealth explain some of the difference between those with and without phones, wealth doesn't explain text rates. Text rates actually increase for many low-income and minority groups. (According to the latest data from the PEW Internet and American Life Project, White, non-Hispanic youth send an average of 50 texts per day; for Black, non-Hispanic youth, it's 80; for Hispanic youth, it's 100.) If more texting indicates more social engagement, that seems to mean a higher likelihood of volunteering.

Volunteer habits of young people also vary by what types of technology they use the most and how they communicate with their peers. Those who spend most of their time communicating with friends face-to-face volunteer the most (55.4%), followed by those who text (52.3%), communicate online (51.9%), and talk on the phone (49.3%). Perhaps even more important is the gap between those using social technologies, and those who spend their time using solo technologies, like watching TV, for which 43.3% volunteer.

**Volunteer habits of young people vary by what types of technology they use the most and how they communicate with their peers.**

Texting has different impacts for guys and girls. For guys who regularly send text messages, 49.8% volunteer on a regular basis (slightly lower than the overall volunteer rate for guys of 50.3%), but for girls who regularly send text messages, 57.2% volunteer regularly, slightly higher than the average (56.2%). Girls who text: it's time to send your guy texting buddies a message: volunteering is gr8.

Finally, volunteer opportunities are still mostly found in the offline world. Young people are 66% more likely to look for volunteer opportunities by talking to people vs. going online. The top offline sources: 41.9% of young people talked to friends, 38.2% talked to family and 25.1% talked to a teacher.

By region, volunteering rates for young people are highest in the Northeast and lowest in the South.

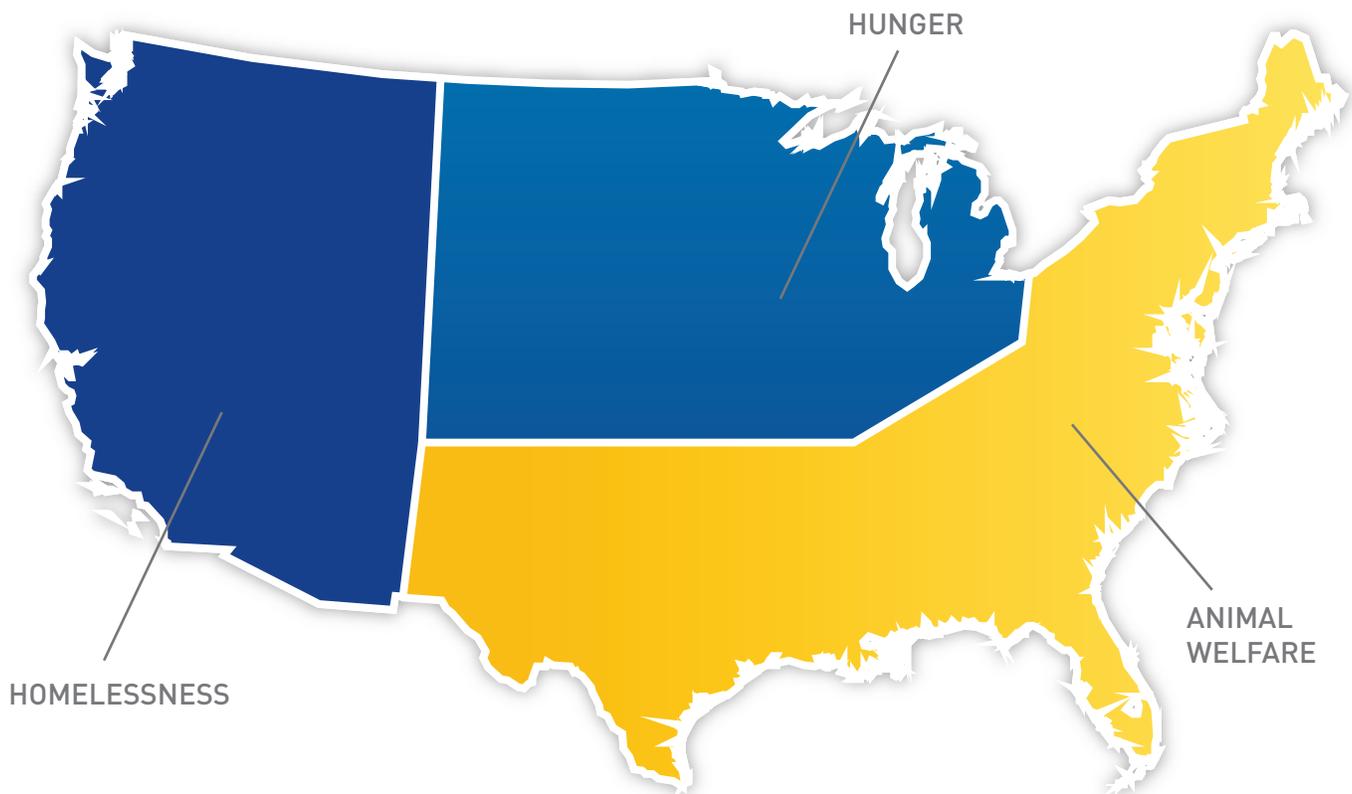
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### BY REGION: NORTH VS SOUTH

Volunteering rates for young people are highest in the Northeast (59.6%) and lowest in the South (50.9%). The West (55.9%) and Midwest (52.0%) come in 2nd and 3rd, respectively. Young people in the Northeast are 17% more likely to have volunteered than young people in the South.

## ISSUE TEENS CARE ABOUT THE MOST

(according to region)



## Young people living in cities are the most likely to have volunteered (58.2%).

### CITY VS COUNTRY

By city type, young people living in rural areas and suburbs are equally likely to have volunteered (53.6% and 53.3% respectively), but young people living in cities are the most likely to have volunteered (58.2%). In rural areas, the #1 issue young people care about is hunger; in suburbs it's animal welfare; in cities, it's homelessness.

### PRIVATE VS PUBLIC

For volunteering, private school pays. Private high school students are 25% more likely to have volunteered in the past 12 months than public high school students. Versus public high school students, private school students who volunteer are...

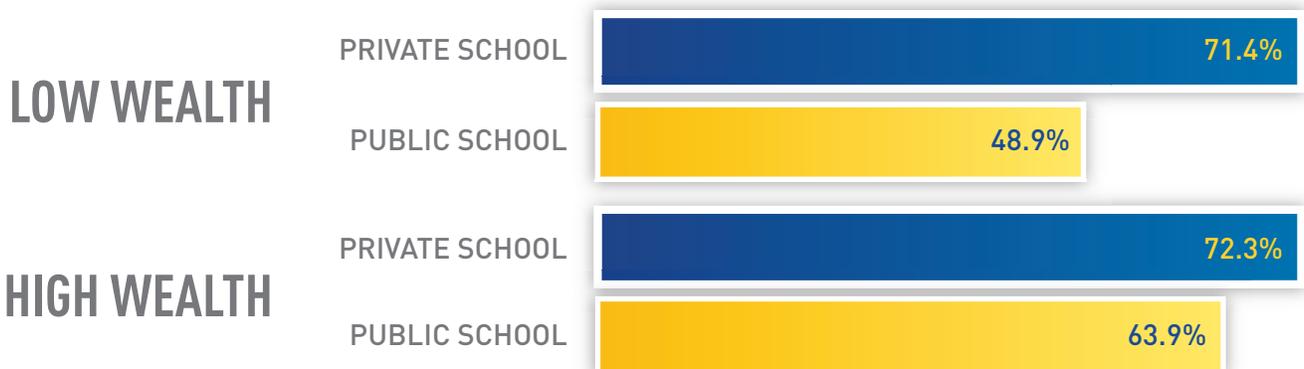
- ▶ more than twice as likely to be involved in a political campaign than public high school students (7.3% vs. 3.0%).
- ▶ 50% more likely to have volunteered at an event organized by their family, and more than twice as likely to have volunteered at an event organized by friends.

### HIGH WEALTH VS LOW WEALTH

Family wealth matters, but the right school closes the gap. Of young people from low-wealth families, 43.9% have volunteered in the past year, compared to 69.6% for young people from wealthy families.

This relationship varies substantially based on the type of school one attends. For young people from low-wealth families who go to private school, 71.4% volunteer. For those in public school, 48.9% volunteer. (Rates are much lower for those in some other types of schools and not in school.) For young people from higher wealth families, the difference between private and public is 72.3% versus 63.9%. This gap is less than half the gap for young people from low-wealth families. In other words, which school a young person attends seems to have a much larger influence on volunteering rates for young people from low-wealth families. And actually, in private schools, the gap in volunteering between low-wealth and high-wealth youth disappears.

For volunteering, private school pays.



Volunteer rates also vary across causes. Young people from high-wealth families are more likely to have volunteered on almost every social cause, in particular the arts and international issues, where rates are 2 to 3 times as high as for young people from low-wealth families. (The same gap exists for fundraising.) The causes for which young people from low-wealth families keep pace with or outstrip young people from high-wealth families are: working with cultural groups, the homeless, and the poor.



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#### **OFFER MEANINGFUL OPPORTUNITIES**

Young people from low-wealth families often don't volunteer because they aren't asked, don't have the resources, or aren't offered opportunities that will improve their own community. Give them opportunities to volunteer and they will come.

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# WHY THEY VOLUNTEER

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## TOP 5 ISSUES

We asked young people to describe the issues for which they would be most interested in volunteering. Animal welfare was #1. And yet, young people tend not to volunteer on animal issues. The problem is they don't know how to help, or haven't been offered any good ways to help. (That problem is up to non-profits.)

1. ANIMAL WELFARE
2. HUNGER
3. HOMELESSNESS
4. THE ENVIRONMENT
5. THE ECONOMY



**#1**

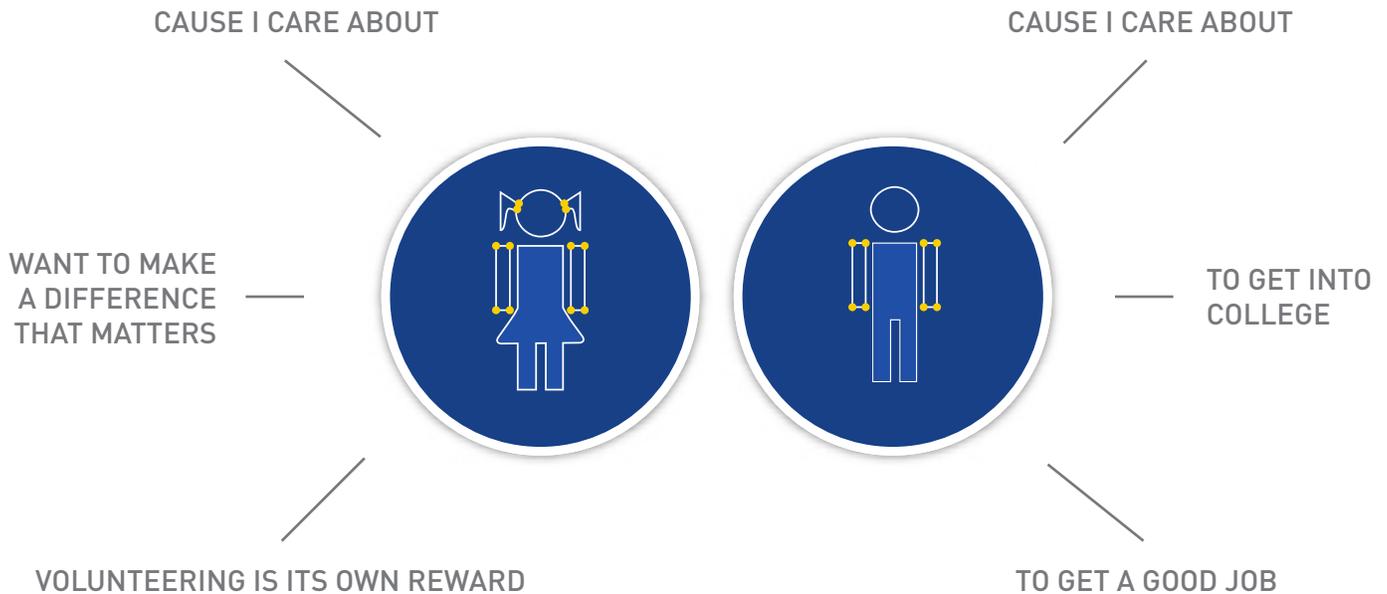
**TEENS CARE  
ABOUT ANIMALS  
THE MOST**

## GUYS VS GIRLS

For both guys and girls, making a difference on an issue they care about is their #1 stated reason for volunteering. (Their #1 revealed motivation is still friends. [SEE APPENDIX B](#) for an explanation of revealed and stated motivations.) Girls are still all about making a difference. But for guys, other things matter too: getting into college and getting a better job are their second and third top stated reasons to volunteer, respectively.

Luckily, research shows colleges and employers tend to favor candidates with volunteer experience.

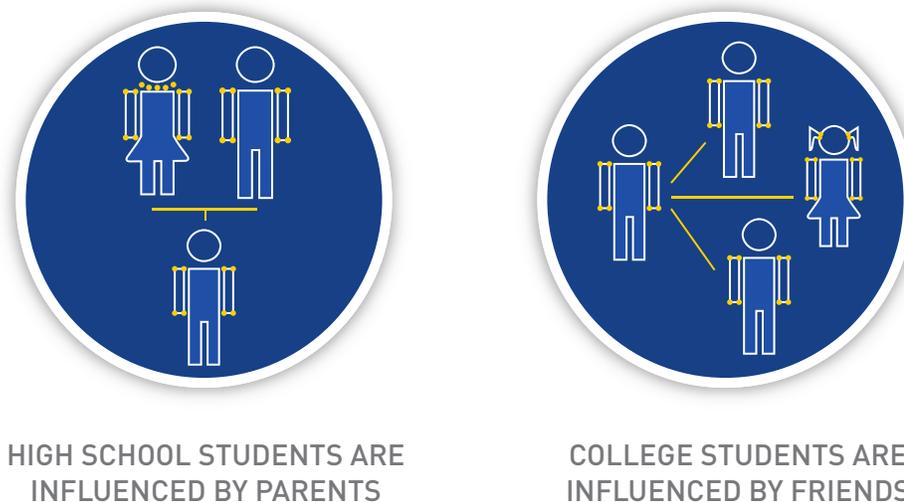
## WHY GUYS AND GIRLS VOLUNTEER



## HIGH SCHOOL VS COLLEGE

The influence of friends on young people's volunteering habits increases with age (and, in college, becomes 4X as strong as family influence), but through high school the influence of family is still marginally more substantial, with the most impactful time being middle school and early high school. In other words, parents: act early.

## WHO IS THE INFLUENCE?



## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

70.7% of those who strongly agree with the statement, “I believe I can make a difference in my community” volunteered in the last 12 months; only 24.4% of those who strongly disagree volunteered. People who believe they can make a difference, do.

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## REQUIREMENTS

The percentage of young people reporting the need to fulfill some kind of volunteering requirement at school varies by school level:

**22.1%** | MIDDLE SCHOOL

**33.4%** | HIGH SCHOOL

**28.0%** | COLLEGE

While school requirements play a role in young people’s volunteering habits, the majority of volunteer work done by young people is not done because of mandates, but personal motivation.



# HOW THEY VOLUNTEER

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## #1 WAY: FUNDRAISING

Overall, fundraising is the #1 way young people volunteer. (38.5% of young people who volunteer have fundraised for charity.)

It makes us wonder, do we have teens to thank for all of the money donated to charities? Lol.

For charities, young people are a secret weapon – they can do the dirty work of asking adults for donations. A donation pitch from a passionate teen is way more influential than a cold call or that newsletter you were thinking about sending.

Rather than a call, newsletter or email, charities should consider sending a text.

Also, rather than a call, newsletter or email, charities should consider sending a text. Young people who text frequently are more likely to fundraise (23.2%) than those who frequently go online (20.7%).

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## THROUGH RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

Religious youth groups are the primary organizer of volunteering activities for young people. Versus other young volunteers, young people who have volunteered with a religious group are 34% more likely to have fundraised, 50% more likely to have worked with old or sick people, and 84% more likely to have worked with homeless or poor people. The only issues on which they are less likely to have volunteered: helping out at a library, historical society, or cultural group.

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## VOLUNTEERING IMITATES EXTRACURRICULARS

Young people who are members of a sports team are most likely to volunteer with kids in a sports or recreation program. The number one way of volunteering for young people who play a musical instrument: working with an arts or cultural organization.

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## GUYS VS. GIRLS

Of those who volunteered in the past twelve months, the number one way guys volunteered was participating in environmental clean-ups, whereas girls volunteered primarily by fundraising for charities.

Guys volunteer in ways that tend to require more physical activity, like environmental clean-ups (29% more likely than girls) and working with young people in sports and recreation programs (27% more likely than girls).

Girls tend to work with marginalized populations more, like old/sick people (16% more likely than men) and homeless/poor people, fundraising for charity (23%) as well as in music + the arts (28%), and international issues (71%).

Girls who volunteer are more active than guys who volunteer. Fifty one percent of girls who volunteer do so once per month or more. For guys, it's forty five percent.

Also, while a higher percentage of girls volunteer than guys, the gap in college is half of what it is in high school (Versus high school, college sees a 1 point decrease in volunteering for girls, and almost a 4 point gain for guys.)

Finally, while girls volunteer more overall, in cities guys have a slight edge in volunteering.

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## HIGH SCHOOL VS. COLLEGE

Overall, for those who have volunteered, animals, hunger and homelessness are top causes. This varies by age: high school students spend more time fundraising and playing sports with youth, while college students replace fundraising with something most high school students (i.e., most of those under 17 years old) cannot do: give blood. For those who can't give blood yet, just wait: the free cookies are delicious.

## TOP VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES FOR HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH



FUNDRAISING



CLEAN-UPS



WORKING WITH KIDS IN  
A SPORTS RECREATION  
PROGRAM

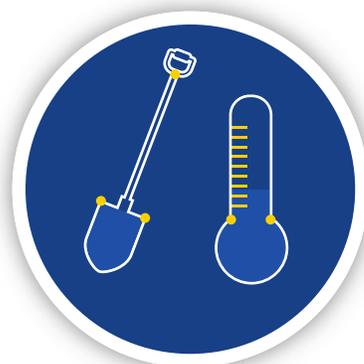
## TOP VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES FOR COLLEGE YOUTH



DONATING BLOOD



FUNDRAISING



CLEAN UPS/WORKING WITH  
SICK + OLD PEOPLE

High school students who volunteer are also active more often than college students who volunteer. Fifty four percent of high school students who volunteer do so once per month or more. Of college students who volunteer, only 46% do so that often.

## BY ACTIVITY

Which types of people are most likely to do certain volunteer activities? (If you're running one of these activities, you'll want to target recruiting at these groups.\*)

For example, those who fundraise for charity are most likely to be involved in a sports team or a religious youth group, or they are simply a dedicated student.

## IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS HAVE YOU EVER...

	MOST LIKELY GROUP	SECOND MOST LIKELY GROUP	THIRD MOST LIKELY GROUP
FUNDRAISED FOR CHARITY	SPORTS TEAM PRACTICE/GAMES	RELIGIOUS YOUTH GROUPS/SERVICES	DOING HOMEWORK/STUDYING
WORKED IN A POLITICAL CAMPAIGN	STUDENT CLUB MEETINGS/EVENTS	PLAYING MUSIC, ART, OR DRAWING	WORKING AT MY JOB OR INTERNSHIP
HELPED OUT AT A LIBRARY, HISTORICAL SOCIETY, OR CULTURAL GROUP	RELIGIOUS YOUTH GROUPS/SERVICES	DOING HOMEWORK/STUDYING	READING FOR FUN

\*Groups were determined by responses to this question: "During a typical week in the last 12 months, of the following activities (found below in columns 2 - 4), on which 3 did you spend the most time:"



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### LOOKING TO RUN AN ENVIRONMENTAL CLEAN-UP?

To find young people to participate, first turn to student clubs, school sports teams, and religious youth groups. They'll be most likely to turn out for your event.

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## BY GROUP

Which types of volunteering are a certain group of people most likely to do? (If you're looking to engage young people from one of the following groups\*, you'll want to choose one of the corresponding activities.)

## GROUP

	FAVORITE ACTIVITY	SECOND FAVORITE ACTIVITY	THIRD FAVORITE ACTIVITY
SPORTS TEAM PRACTICE/GAMES	SPORTS OR RECREATION PROGRAM	FUNDRAISED FOR CHARITY	ENVIRONMENTAL CLEAN-UP
RELIGIOUS YOUTH GROUP/SERVICES	FUNDRAISED FOR CHARITY	WORKED WITH SICK OR OLD PEOPLE	WORKED WITH THE HOMELESS OR POOR
TEXTING	FUNDRAISED FOR CHARITY	SPORTS OR RECREATION PROGRAM	WORKED WITH SICK OR OLD PEOPLE

\*Groups were determined by responses to this question: "During a typical week in the last 12 months, of the following activities (found below in columns 2 - 4), on which 3 did you spend the most time:"



**TRY THIS**

---

### LOOKING TO ENGAGE GAMERS IN VOLUNTEERING?

Ask them to fundraise for their favorite charity or they're also likely to enjoy participating in an environmental clean-up or, suprisingly, working with young people in a sports or recreation program. Quidditch might be a good option.

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# PERKS OF BEING A VOLUNTEER

## HAPPINESS

Young people who volunteer are happier. (Those who volunteer score 24% higher on a life satisfaction scale, which consisted of five statements, such as “In most ways my life is close to ideal,” to which respondents indicated their level of agreement.)

Happiness varies for young people based on the volunteer activities they do. Below, choose your activity, and discover your potential happiness, on a scale from 1 – 100. (Hint: It might be time to inflate that soccer ball sitting in your closet.)



At the bottom of the list of volunteer activities is working in a political campaign. (Yes, young people, sometimes politics make us feel that way too.)

Happiness also comes to those who volunteer more often. Moving from those who volunteer once a year to those who volunteer once a week, happiness increases from 58 to 69 on a hundred point scale. What about those who volunteer more than once a week? They're no happier than the once-a-weekers. The lesson? Everything in moderation. Even saving the world.

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Young people who volunteer feel more engaged in their local communities than those who do not volunteer. (Those who volunteer score 24% higher on a civic engagement scale, which consisted of four statements, such as “It is important to me to contribute to my community and society,” to which respondents indicated their level of agreement.)

As with happiness, community involvement is also different for young people who do different volunteer activities. So what activities are associated with greater community involvement? Here is the redemption for political campaigns – young people who worked on a political campaign had the highest community involvement (77.1 on a hundred point scale) out of young people who volunteer.

### IF YOU... THEN YOUR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IS...



How do you both maximize happiness and connection to your community? Work with poor or homeless people. That was #1 when happiness and community involvement were combined.

Second and third place are taken by those who work with clubs on local and international issues. It seems that working within the bounds of a club, i.e., a social group, may influence both personal happiness and engagement with the community.

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## ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

On average, people who volunteer do better in school than those who don't volunteer. That's not to say if you (yes you, young person with a sub-A GPA who isn't volunteering) start volunteering, you'll get A's, but hey, maybe you will. And even if you don't, at least you'll get a consolation prize: the knowledge that you've made the world a better place.

**32%** | DON'T VOLUNTEER: GET A'S

**48%** | VOLUNTEER: GET A'S

## WORRIES

For high school students who volunteer, their worries for the future are all about college: getting in, doing well, and most importantly, paying for it. That's right: more young people worry about paying for college than getting into college. High school students also ranked paying for college as a bigger worry than getting a good job, having enough money, the health of the environment, crime rates in their neighborhood, their personal health, or dying. (Hint: for adults and organizations looking to engage young people, incentives related to college are a strong option.)

## TOP WORRY FOR THE FUTURE



FOR HIGH SCHOOL  
STUDENTS, IT'S PAYING  
FOR COLLEGE

**TRY THIS**

---

### OFFER THE RIGHT INCENTIVES:

High school (and college) students are worried about paying for school. So when offering incentives to volunteer, don't always turn to free t-shirts. Consider scholarships. (E.g., everyone who volunteers is entered into a raffle for a scholarship.)

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A yellow ribbon graphic with a 3D effect, tilted upwards from left to right. The word "CHECKLIST" is written in bold, black, uppercase letters across the center of the ribbon.

# CHECKLIST

## WE THINK YOUNG PEOPLE ARE AMAZING

So in addition to sharing this research with you, we've compiled some suggestions. Simply, it's time to redefine what volunteering means. Stuffing envelopes is soooo yesterday. Instead, offer opportunities that are...

### **SOCIAL**

For many young people, volunteering is desirable and enjoyable because they get to hang out with their peers. In particular, young people want to:

Work with Friends: For young people, this is the #1 attribute of a desirable volunteer activity

Work with Guys AND Girls: Most young people want to work with at least SOME volunteers of the opposite gender. We didn't ask why.

### **ACCESSIBLE**

For young people, proximity to home is the 2nd most important attribute of a desirable volunteer activity. Offer activities that allow young people to:

Volunteer close to home (but not at home)

Participate without needing a car

### **BRIEF, SINGULAR**

Lack of time is the #1 reason young people give for not volunteering. Make sure to offer volunteer opportunities that are:

Short (or allow people to come and go as they please)

Allow for different levels of engagement (5 min vs. an hour vs. a half day)

Only require one-time commitments

### **FAMILIAR**

Athletes volunteer most often by working with young people in sports and rec programs. Same goes for musicians with art and music programs. When designing your volunteer activity, think about:

What do young people do for fun? Can it be turned into volunteering?

### **FOCUSED ON PEOPLE**

Young people want to volunteer with people. Therefore, it's no surprise they want to volunteer for people too. When designing an activity, check:

Even if you're working on an environmental issue, is there a way to humanize it? After all, young people think sending an online message to our troops is more valuable than installing an energy efficient light bulb in their school. The difference? It's the human element

### **SPOTLIGHT-FREE**

Many young people would prefer to remain anonymous or help from a distance. In the mobile age, they're more accustomed to anonymity. Make sure to:

Offer a discrete option. To do something about a problem in their community, most young people would prefer to write an opinion letter to a local newspaper than express their views in front of a group of people. Young people are particularly averse to contacting elected officials

### **BENEFICIAL FOR VOLUNTEERS TOO**

Young people who volunteer are worried about getting into a good college and paying for it. Make sure your volunteer activity can be:

A resume booster

A ladder to scholarship opportunities

Or, at minimum, a way to make new friends

A yellow ribbon graphic with a 3D effect, featuring a shadow and a folded appearance. The word "CONCLUSION" is printed in bold black letters across the center of the ribbon.

# CONCLUSION

For teens who volunteer, social change can be a bonus. Think of volunteering as a microcosm of a teen's social world. Teens want to 1) hang out with friends, 2) connect through mobile technology (the average teen now exchanges over 5,000 texts per month), and 3) avoid commitment. Simply, volunteering isn't very different from everything else in their lives.

In fact, it's very much like a high school party: teens often decide to go last minute, avoid showing up early, and almost never stay till the end. Being first or last isn't cool. Volunteering, like everything else, is about blending in, making friends, and having a good time.

Teens are mobile, flexible, and most importantly, social. They expect the same from their volunteer activities. If you want to engage teens in volunteering, tell them they'll actually be able to change something. And, more importantly, tell them their friends will save them a seat.

# APPENDIX A

PERCENT DIFFERENCE OF DOSOMETHING.ORG DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FROM 2010 U.S. CENSUS DATA, AFTER AGE REWEIGHTING.

% of young people, 13 - 24, by race			
	2010 US Census	DS.org	%diff
White alone	76.5%	74.0%	-2.5%
Black or African American alone	15.5%	14.4%	-1.1%
American Indian, Alaska Native alone	1.3%	1.7%	0.4%
Asian alone	4.1%	6.3%	2.2%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	0.2%	0.9%	0.7%
Hispanic origin	18.6%	13.6%	-5.0%

% not in school by age			
	2010 US Census	DS.org	%diff
13 years old	1.8%	2.1%	0.3%
14 years old	1.9%	0.7%	-1.2%
15 years old	1.9%	1.0%	-0.9%
16 years old	3.9%	0.7%	-3.2%
17 years old	3.9%	4.3%	0.4%
18 years old	30.8%	23.3%	-7.5%
19 years old	30.8%	23.2%	-7.6%
20 years old	47.6%	33.4%	-14.2%
21 years old	47.6%	29.7%	-17.9%
22 years old	71.1%	54.1%	-17.0%

% of young people, 14 - 24, by gender			
	2010 US Census	DS.org	%diff
Male	51.2%	43.7%	-7.5%
Female	48.8%	56.3%	7.5%

# APPENDIX B

## STATED VS. REVEALED MOTIVATIONS

Our assessment of volunteering motivations relies on indirect questioning methods that reveal people's motivations, rather than direct questions. For example, instead of asking "why do you volunteer," we asked "why do you think other people your age volunteer?" Other questions examined actual behavior rather than preference; e.g. we asked, "Thinking of the last time you volunteered, who asked you to volunteer?" rather than "How do you prefer to hear about volunteer opportunities..."

Because mental preferences are often biased, the indirect, or revealed, questioning methods provide a clear picture of why young people volunteer than we've had before.

Revealed and stated question models were first used in applied decision research, such as economic valuations of environmental amenities (e.g., a respondent's preference for fishing on a lake vs. a river). Following this example, revealed question models use actual choices between environmental amenities made by consumers; i.e., they express revealed preferences for products. An added benefit of revealed question techniques is that they capture effects that respondents are not conscious of (vs. trying to hide). Stated question models are those that ask the consumer explicitly which option they would prefer from between a set of options; i.e., they ask consumers to put a price on a change in environmental amenity. For stated question techniques, individuals do not actually make behavioral changes – they only state that they would behave in a certain way, given a choice between hypothetical environmental amenities.

Applying this to research on motivations, each method has advantages and disadvantages. Stated motivation methods are problematic because the questions are hypothetical and actual behavior is not observed. However, they can be useful for drawing out motivations in situations that involve a large number of changing attributes. Revealed motivation models have the benefit of being based on real behavior, yet in some situations, differences between real world scenarios may not be testable.

The most accurate assessments, rather than coming from one method or the other alone, come from combining insights from the two methods, as we've done in this report. The combined model benefits both from being able to assess motivations based on actual behavior and through the construction of motivation situations that allow testing of many variables.

By asking survey questions that accessed both respondents' stated and revealed motivations for volunteering, we are able to provide a more robust view of young people's volunteering habits.

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