



Spotlighting the 2023 Civic Engagement and Volunteering (CEV) Supplement Series: Virtual Volunteering

November 2024

The Spotlighting the CEV series explores important findings from the Civic Engagement and Volunteering (CEV) Supplement of the Current Population Survey. Conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau in partnership with AmeriCorps, the CEV is a nationally representative, valuable resource for understanding various types of civic engagement over time. This key findings brief highlights trends related to virtual volunteering in 2023 and discusses how this information can be applied to foster the civic health of society.

What is virtual volunteering and why does it matter?

Technological advances and expanding internet access across the U.S. are creating new opportunities for volunteers to serve online.

- *Virtual volunteering* consists of volunteer activities that are performed online.
- *Hybrid volunteering* includes a mix of in-person and online activities.

Virtual and hybrid volunteering can make service more accessible by removing geographic restrictions and increasing flexibility.

In 2023, AmeriCorps collaborated with [experts at the University of Maine](#) to develop a new question about virtual volunteering for the CEV (see sidebar). If respondents report they formally volunteered for an organization in the past year, the new question asks them to indicate the proportion of their volunteer work they completed in person versus online.

The 2023 CEV represents the first data on virtual and hybrid volunteering to be collected in a Census Bureau population survey. Moving forward, CEV data will allow for long-term analysis of virtual volunteering trends.

One in five formal volunteers in America are virtual or hybrid

CEV data from 2023 shows that the majority of formal volunteers served in person: 82 percent of Americans who volunteered through an organization between September 2022 and 2023 did so completely face to face.

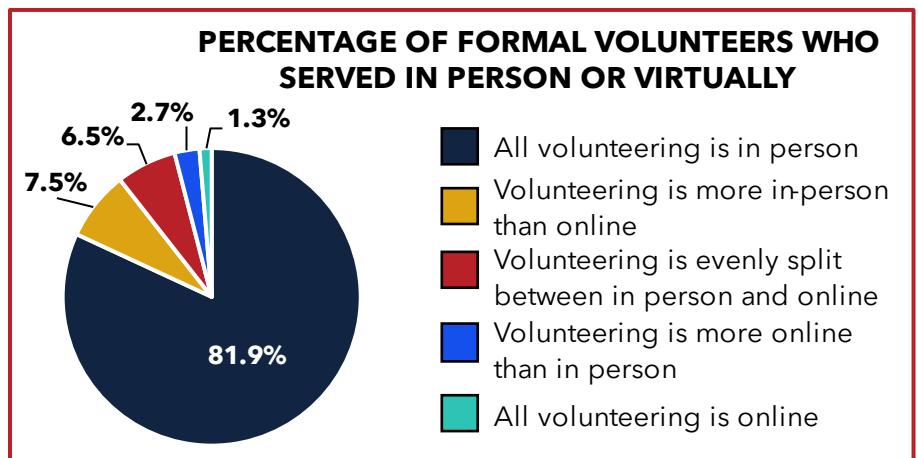
Virtual volunteers who served exclusively online represented only one percent of all formal volunteers.

Hybrid volunteering was relatively more common, with 17 percent of formal volunteers reporting their service involved a mix of in-person and online activities.

Taken together, over 13.4 million Americans engaged in volunteer activities through an organization that were either completely or partially online in 2023.

About the 2023 CEV Data

The [2023 CEV](#) collects data in the following areas: organizational engagement, engaging with neighbors, political engagement, economic engagement, and engaging with friends, family, and social issues. It has been administered biennially since 2017 with related datasets going as far back as 2002. CEV data can support [actionable insights](#) and data-driven decision making.

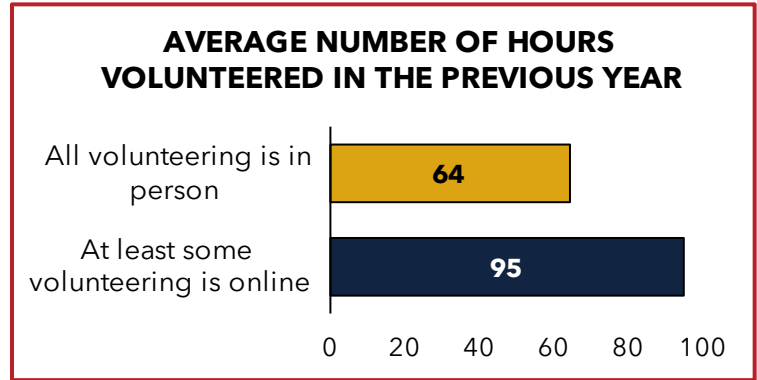




Virtual and hybrid volunteering represents over \$41.5 billion in economic value

On average, virtual and hybrid volunteers reported engaging in more hours of service per year (95 hours) compared to those who volunteered solely in person (64 hours).

Collectively, virtual and hybrid volunteers served more than 1.2 billion hours and contributed over \$41.5 billion in economic value.¹

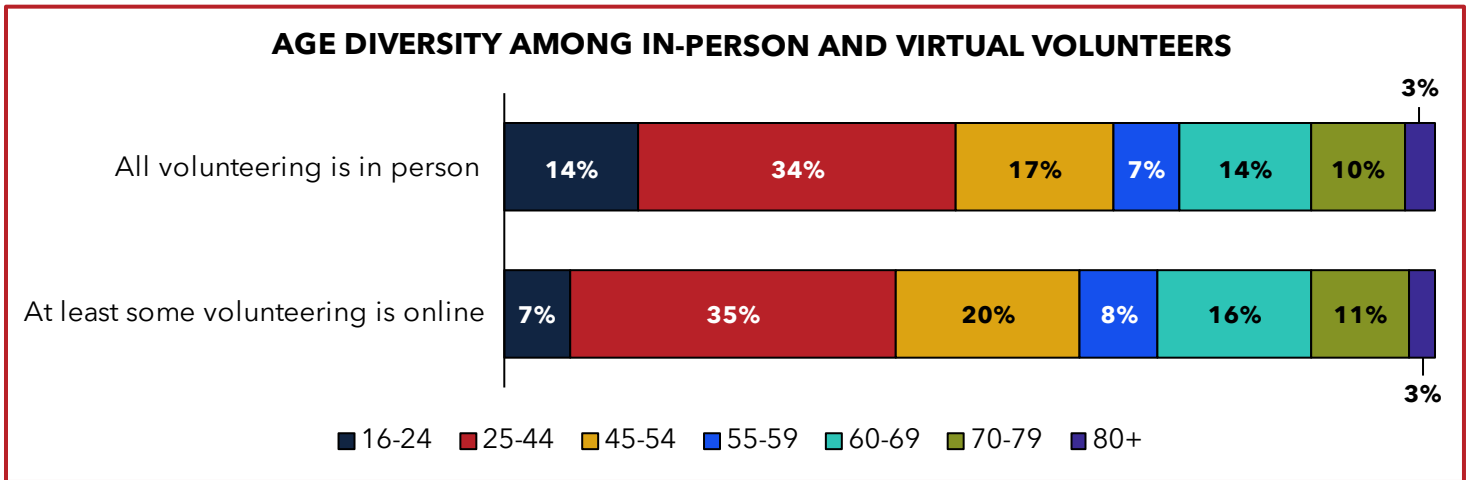


Virtual and hybrid volunteers are slightly older, more likely to live with a disability, and have more education than in-person volunteers

Although older adults and people living with a disability are less likely to formally volunteer in the first place, these groups were overrepresented among virtual and hybrid volunteers.²

CEV data from 2023 shows that the typical virtual or hybrid volunteer was slightly older (49 years of age on average) than the typical in-person volunteer (46 years of age on average). People 55 years of age and up also had a higher virtual or hybrid volunteering rate (20 percent) than people under age 55 (17 percent).

Similarly, the rate of virtual and hybrid volunteering was higher among those living with a disability (20 percent) than among formal volunteers who are not (18 percent).



Education is a strong predictor of both becoming a formal volunteer and serving at least partially online. Virtual and hybrid volunteers had substantially more education, on average, than in-person volunteers. About 69 percent of those who performed volunteer activities online have a college degree compared to 48 percent of formal volunteers who served face to face.³

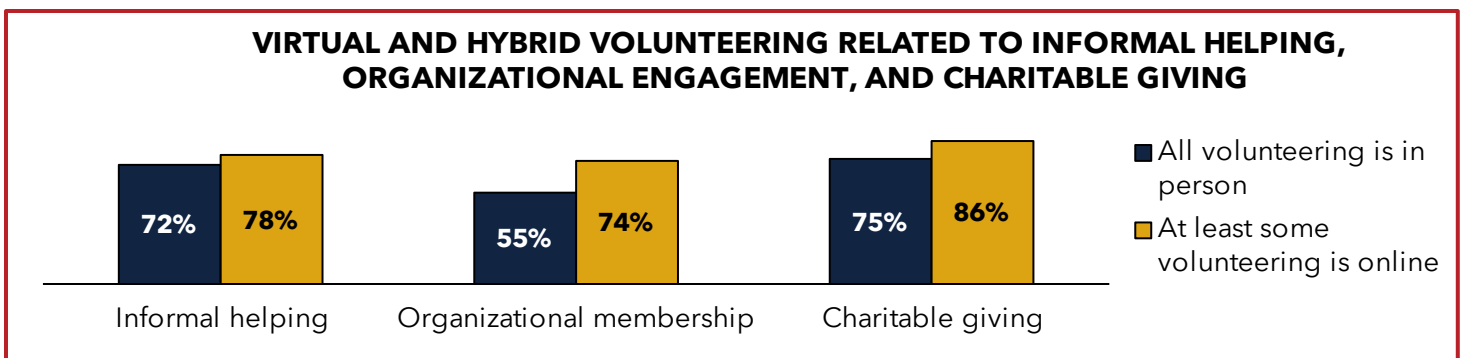
¹ Value of Volunteer Time. (2024). Independent Sector. <https://independentsector.org/resource/value-of-volunteer-time/>
² People living with a disability represent 13 percent of the US population but only 9 percent of formal volunteers in the 2023 CEV data. The formal volunteering rate is 29 percent among those 16-54 compared to 27 percent among those 55+.
³ Learn more about the demographics of virtual and hybrid volunteers on the University of Maine [Virtual Volunteerism Project website](#).



Virtual and hybrid volunteering is related to informal helping, organizational engagement, and charitable giving

Findings from the 2023 CEV suggest that virtual and hybrid volunteering complements rather than displaces other forms of civic engagement.

For example, virtual and hybrid volunteers informally helped their neighbors, belonged to organizations, and donated to charity at higher rates than in-person volunteers. This pattern is most striking with organizational membership: 74 percent of virtual and hybrid volunteers reported membership in an organization compared to 55 percent of in-person volunteers.



What do these findings mean?

First-of-its-kind data from the 2023 CEV shows that virtual and hybrid volunteering is already generating substantial economic value, engaging diverse groups of volunteers, and complementing other forms of civic engagement. The potential for virtual and hybrid volunteering practices to make service more accessible for mid-life and older adults, as well as people living with disabilities, is especially promising. These findings suggest that offering virtual and hybrid options to all volunteers, including those who already serve in-person, can yield additional benefits.

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About These Figures: Following historical U.S. Census Bureau practice, formal volunteering rates are calculated as the estimated share of volunteers in the population over the estimated total civilian noninstitutional population.

Explore the Data: The CEV data is available for public use. Visit the AmeriCorps Open Data portal at <https://data.americorps.gov>. For more information about the CEV data and findings, please reach out to the AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation at AmeriCorpsCEV@americorps.gov.

About the Office of Research and Evaluation: The [AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation](#) assists AmeriCorps and its partners in collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data and insights about AmeriCorps programs and civic life in America. For more information on this study and other studies funded by AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation, please contact evaluation@americorps.gov.

About AmeriCorps: AmeriCorps, the federal agency for national service and volunteerism, provides opportunities for Americans to serve their country domestically, address the nation’s most pressing challenges, improve lives and communities, and strengthen civic engagement. Each year, the agency places more than 200,000 AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers in intensive service roles; and empowers millions more to serve as long-term, short-term, or one-time volunteers. **Learn more at [AmeriCorps.gov](https://www.americorps.gov).**