



# Volunteering as a Pathway to Employment

The economic downturn that has plagued the United States economy over the last half-decade has increased the need for pathways to employment for the millions of Americans struggling to find work. Government leaders, nonprofits, and news media have long provided anecdotal evidence that volunteering can increase employment prospects by helping job-seekers learn new skills, expand their networks, and take on leadership roles. Despite this, there has been little quantitative research to date that has established an association between volunteering and finding a job.



The Research & Evaluation Office within the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the federal agency for service and volunteering, took on the challenge to better understand the relationship between volunteering and employment. The resulting report, **“Volunteering as a Pathway to Employment: Does Volunteering Increase Odds of Finding a Job for the Out of Work?”** provides the most compelling empirical research to date establishing an association between volunteering and employment in the United States.

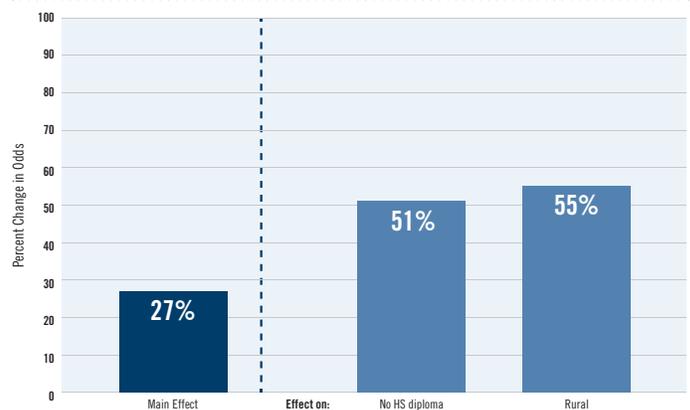


## Key Findings

- Volunteers have a 27 percent higher odds of finding a job after being out of work than non-volunteers
- Volunteers without a high school diploma have a 51 percent higher odds of finding employment
- Volunteers living in rural areas have a 55 percent higher odds of finding employment

CNCS also found that volunteering is associated with an increased likelihood of finding employment for all volunteers regardless of a person's gender, age, ethnicity, geographical area, or the job market conditions.

### Percent Change in Odds of Employment Associated With Volunteering



*Note: The percent change in odds was calculated by combining log-odds coefficient from the main effect with the coefficient from the interaction effect, and then exponentiating the results.*

## How Volunteering Could Help Individuals Find Employment

Prior research has shown that volunteering can increase a person's social connections (social capital) and skill sets (human capital), two factors that have been shown to be positively related to employment outcomes. In addition, some workers may see volunteering as a possible entry route into an organization where they would like to work. Our results also suggest that individuals with limited skills or social connections – particularly those without a high school education - may see an extra benefit to volunteering, helping to level the playing field.





## Implications

“The evidence is accumulating that service and civic engagement boost employment. This new study...makes the strongest case so far...and shows that those who volunteer are more likely to get a job after being out of work. For individuals, the message is clear: if you are looking for work, get experience and contacts by volunteering. For policymakers, the message is to support organizations that enlist volunteers. That will pay off for the people who serve as well as for those they help.”

- PROFESSOR PETER LEVINE, TUFTS UNIVERSITY

- **For the Out of Work:** Consider volunteering while looking for work to build skills and personal networks. Visit [Serve.gov](https://www.serve.gov) to find volunteer opportunities in your area.
- **For Nonprofits:** Target those who have the most to gain by volunteering – out of work individuals, particularly people without a high school degree or people living in rural areas. Volunteer recruitment may then have two purposeful outcomes: improvements to communities and better employment outcomes for community members. CNCS offers volunteer recruitment and management resources at [NationalService.gov/Build-Your-Capacity](https://www.nationalservice.gov/Build-Your-Capacity).
- **For Policymakers:** Consider volunteering as one of several strategies to increase employment. The promotion of volunteerism may be considered an additional pathway for employment opportunities for those out of work. Learn more about how CNCS is building volunteering opportunities in local communities at [NationalService.gov](https://www.nationalservice.gov).

## CNCS Provides Pathways to Employment Opportunities

As the federal agency for service and volunteering, CNCS provides vital leadership, support, and funding to individuals and organizations. CNCS works with its partners, workforce agencies, and nonprofit organizations across the country to promote service and volunteering to positively impact communities, build capacity, and also help Americans acquire the skills, education, and training they need for employment.

- CNCS and our grantees help disconnected youth, new Americans, veterans, military families, seniors, people with disabilities, and others acquire the skills, education, and training they need for employment.
- National Service recruits and manages more than 4.7 million community volunteers through AmeriCorps and Days of Service to multiply the impact of national service participants and strengthen nonprofit and faith-based organizations.

To read the full report and methodology, visit [NationalService.gov](http://NationalService.gov).  
For media inquiries, contact [pressoffice@cns.gov](mailto:pressoffice@cns.gov).

## Methodology

This report utilized data from the Current Population Survey September Volunteering Supplement, sponsored jointly by CNCS, the U.S. Census Bureau, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The data span a 10-year period from 2002-2012, and the nationally representative sample includes individuals 16 years or older who were out of work and interested in working. The data were analyzed to answer two questions:

- Is volunteering associated with an increased likelihood of employment for individuals out of work?
- If so, does the relationship between volunteering and employment vary by demographic characteristics, labor market conditions, and community-level factors?

By examining respondents' volunteer and employment status over two years, statistical analyses measured the association between volunteering and employment independent of other factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, labor market conditions, and geographic area.



*The mission of CNCS is to improve lives, strengthen communities,  
and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering.*

To find opportunities to serve in your area, visit [Serve.gov](http://Serve.gov).

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