



Center for Social Development

GEORGE WARREN BROWN SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

# National and International Volunteerism Among Volunteers in the United States, 2005

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## Background

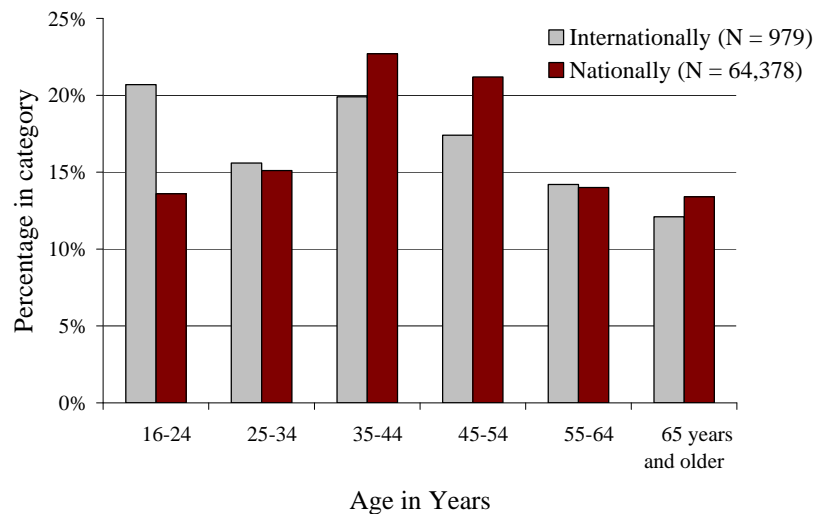
The purpose of this report is to identify differences in key demographic characteristics of individuals volunteering domestically in the United States and those that spend some of their time volunteering internationally. Data for this report were gathered from the September 2005 volunteer supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS)—a monthly survey of approximately 60,000 households. The volunteer supplement includes questions about service performed domestically and abroad, including the duration and frequency of volunteer activities. More detailed information about sampling, definitions, and analysis can be found under Methodological Notes at the end of this report.

## Major Findings

### Age

Although individuals who volunteered internationally were significantly younger than those who only volunteered domestically, the age difference was only about 2½ years—indicating a relatively small difference overall. A larger difference was revealed, however, when considering only those ages 16-24. Young people in this category were 1.7 times more likely to volunteer when part or all of their activities were performed overseas.

Volunteerism by Age Group



### Gender

Although a greater percentage of women reported volunteering both internationally and nationally (54% and 58%) compared to men (46% and 42%), both genders were equally likely to volunteer domestically or abroad.<sup>1</sup>

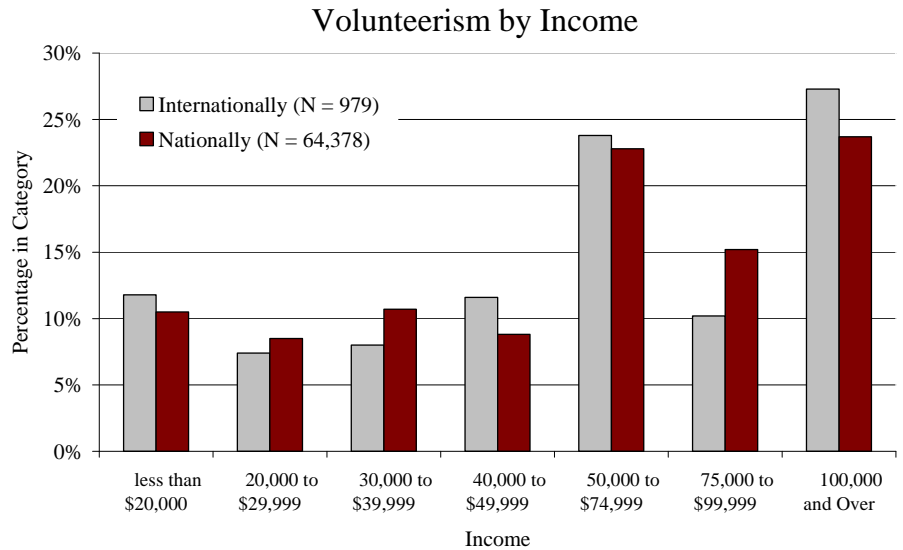
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The authors gratefully acknowledge Amanda Moore McBride and Margaret Sherraden for their editorial support and helpful conversations, and the Ford Foundation for providing funding for this research.

<sup>1</sup> After factoring in sampling bias, men were actually more likely to volunteer internationally proportional to women, but not by a significant margin ( $\chi^2_{MH} = 3.49, p = .062, df=1$ ).

**Income**

Volunteers were not more likely to volunteer internationally than nationally based on household income. However, individuals in higher-income households volunteered more frequently both domestically and abroad.



**Ethnicity**

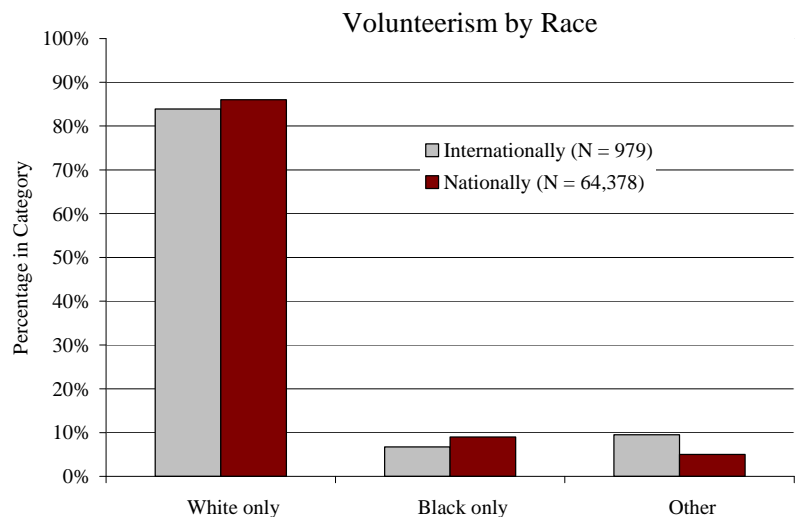
About 12 percent of those who volunteered internationally were of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, compared to only 7 percent of those volunteering domestically only. Although Hispanics and Latinos constitute only a minority of volunteers overall, they are 1.7 times more likely to volunteer when they spent at least part of their time volunteering internationally.

**Country of birth**

Greater than 16 percent of those who volunteered internationally were born outside of the United States, while only 7 percent of those who only volunteered domestically were foreign-born. This indicates a significant difference in volunteer rates for non-native citizens, who were 2.6 times more likely to volunteer when they spent at least part of their time volunteering overseas.

**Race**

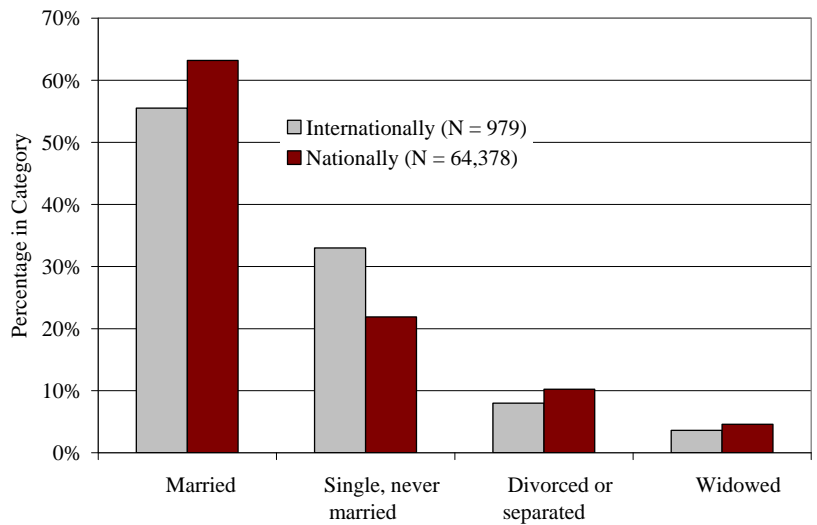
Race was significantly associated with volunteer status. Although the difference between the volunteering rates of Whites who volunteered nationally and internationally was not significant, Blacks were more likely to volunteer nationally than internationally (9% compared to 7%). Those identifying as non-White and non-Black volunteered twice as frequently when at least part of their time was spent volunteering internationally (10% and 5% respectively).



**Volunteerism by Marital Status**

**Marital status**

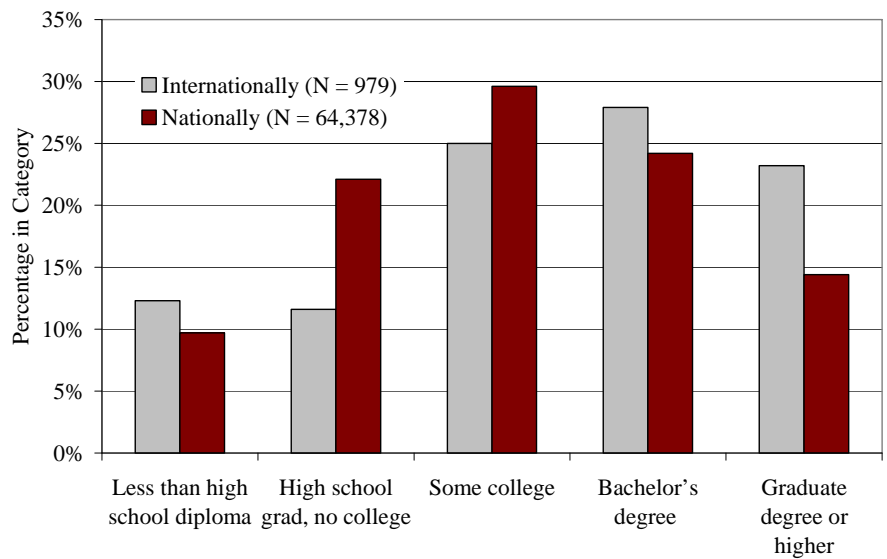
Marital status was significantly associated with volunteer status. Fewer married individuals volunteered internationally than domestically only. This held whether these volunteers were still married, divorced, separated, or widowed. However, single individuals, who had never married, were more likely to volunteer internationally (33% compared to only 22% volunteering only in the US).



**Educational Attainment**

Educational attainment was significantly associated with volunteer status. Those either with very little education (less than a high-school diploma) or a high degree of education (bachelor's degree or higher) were more likely to volunteer when at least a portion of their volunteer activities occurred overseas, while those with a high school diploma or only some college were less likely to volunteer overseas. The greatest differences existed among high school graduates with no college, 22 percent of whom volunteered nationally only, compared to 12 percent who volunteered internationally. Conversely, those with a graduate degree or higher were more likely to volunteer internationally (23%) compared to nationally only (14%).

**Volunteerism by Education**



**Employment Status**

Little difference existed between the volunteer status of those individuals who were employed, unemployed, retired, or not in the labor force. Those employed full-time were 1.5 times more likely to volunteer nationally than internationally (77% and 70% respectively), compared to part-time workers who were more likely to volunteer internationally than nationally (30% and 23% respectively).

### **Student Status**

The odds of students volunteering internationally were 1.8 times the odds of students volunteering nationally only; 15 percent of those volunteering abroad were students compared to only 9 percent of those volunteering domestically being students. There was no association between volunteer location and level of education (high school or college) among volunteers who were students. Likewise, there was no association between student status (full or part time) and location of service.

### **Dependent Children**

Those with dependent children under 18 years old tended to volunteer less frequently internationally compared to nationally only (25% and 37% respectively), and were 1.8 times more likely to volunteer nationally only.

### **Organization Sponsoring the Volunteer**

Volunteers, both national and international, were most likely to describe the main organization with which they volunteered as a “religious organization.” However, 51 percent of those spending some or all of their time volunteering internationally reported that the main organization with which they volunteered was a religious organization, compared to only 35 percent of national volunteers. Volunteers also frequently spent time in “social and community service groups” and “children’s educational, sports, or recreation groups” (see Table 2 in Appendix).

### **Activities Performed**

Those volunteering at least once internationally reported engaging in most volunteer activities more frequently than those volunteering nationally only. This indicates that international volunteers may engage in a more diverse range of activities than domestic only volunteers. In some areas, international volunteers participated in certain activities at nearly three times the rate of national volunteers (see Table 3 in Appendix).

## **Summary and Conclusion**

Although international volunteering may impose significant personal costs due to service relocation and associated living expenses, income does not appear to predict higher rates of international over national volunteering. However, because individuals with higher incomes continue to volunteer more frequently both nationally and internationally than those with lower incomes, obstacles preventing low-income individuals from volunteering nationally may similarly prevent them from volunteering overseas. Programs wishing to involve economically disadvantaged volunteers may need to offer more incentives or financial supports to encourage participation.

International volunteering opportunities may also be limited for less-educated individuals. Twice as many high school graduates with no college volunteer domestically than internationally. This pattern was reversed among those with a graduate degree or higher, suggesting an even more pronounced effect of education on placement location. Highly-educated individuals may volunteer more frequently internationally as professionals with a specific skill set are often in greater demand by hosting countries. Other reasons for higher volunteer rates among educated individuals may be related to increased exposure to educational institutions promoting international volunteer opportunities, or greater personal interest in global issues as a result of education.

Ethnic minorities and those born outside of the United States may also have greater access to, or interest in, international volunteer opportunities. The strong correlation between a volunteer's country of birth and the internationality of their service placement indicates that foreign-born Americans may have a strong desire to serve in their country of origin, or may be more globally-minded than to their native-born counterparts. Higher international volunteering rates could also be attributed to program eligibility requirements, many of which require or prefer foreign-language competency skills.

Because a large portion of individuals in the "other" racial category are likely ethnic minorities, the relevance of this category may disappear if ethnicity and country of birth are controlled for in a multivariate analysis. The racial category, "Black or African-American," is an exception to the finding that racial and ethnic minorities volunteer more frequently internationally. This is consistent with previous research where people of color are more likely to volunteer domestically in their local communities.

Volunteering domestically and abroad follow similar life cycle patterns, which peak between the ages of 35 to 54. A major exception, however, is a high frequency of youth under age 24 volunteering internationally compared to a low frequency volunteering nationally. Because international volunteer opportunities often require a more rigorous time commitment, the greater freedoms typically available to individuals in this age range may place international volunteering within reach. As volunteer rates appear to taper off with older age, more effort may need to be exerted to recruit older adults in both national and international service.

International volunteer opportunities may be limited for those with heavy domestic responsibilities, as indicated by lower rates of participation in international service by those employed full-time and those with dependent children. Likewise, single individuals may volunteer more often internationally due to lack of family obligations and increased freedom to leave for extended periods of time. Nonetheless, married people remain the largest group represented in both national and international service. This suggests that marriage alone may not explain rates of international service.

Programs with eligibility requirements flexible enough to accommodate volunteers from various life circumstances may help increase rates of participation from members of groups with domestic responsibilities. As an example, corporate volunteer programs that sponsor international volunteer opportunities for their employees may be one way to increase participation among those who are employed full-time. Likewise, programs that arrange opportunities for families to serve overseas together may attract individuals with dependent children.

Initial findings suggest a need for further research to understand why some groups are more willing or able to volunteer domestically or overseas. Future research may also explore the implications of these differences for volunteers, home and host communities, and nation states. Because all variables in this analysis were cross-tabulated, some differences between locations of service may disappear if additional variables are controlled for in a multivariate analysis.

Appendix

Table 1: 2005 selected demographic characteristics of volunteers from the US, (weighted data, numbers in thousands) <sup>1</sup>

Demographic Characteristic	All Volunteers		Volunteered at least once internationally		Volunteered nationally only	
	Number (N= 65,357)	Percent of US Population	Number (N=979)	Percent of Sample	Number (N= 64,378)	Percent of Sample
<b>Gender</b>						
Men	27,370	25.0%	452	46.2%	26,918	41.8%
Women	37,987	32.4%	527	53.8%	37,460	58.2%
Total, both sexes	65,357	28.8%	979	100%		100%
<b>Age by decade*</b>						
16-24 years	8,955	24.4%	203	20.7%	8,753	13.6%
25-34 years	9,881	25.3%	153	15.6%	9,728	15.11%
35-44 years	14,809	34.5%	195	19.9%	14,615	22.7%
45-54 years	13,826	32.7%	171	17.4%	13,655	21.2%
55-64 years	9,173	30.2%	139	14.2%	9,034	14.0%
65 years and older	8,712	24.8%	119	12.1%	8,593	13.4%
Total, 16 years and over	65,357	28.8%	979	100%		100%
<b>Income level<sup>2</sup></b>						
less than \$20,000	6,084	17.2%	99	11.8%	5,985	10.5%
20,000 to \$29,999	4,875	20.2%	63	7.4%	4,813	8.5%
30,000 to \$39,999	6,136	26.2%	68	8.0%	6,068	10.7%
40,000 to \$49,999	5,085	28.8%	97	11.6%	4,988	8.8%
50,000 to \$74,999	13,164	33.9%	200	23.8%	12,964	22.8%
75,000 to \$99,999	8,766	39.7%	86	10.2%	8,680	15.2%
100,000 and Over	13,705	44.0%	230	27.3%	13,476	23.7%
missing	33,998	17.6%	136	13.9%	7,403	11.5%
<b>Ethnicity*</b>						
Hispanic/Latino	4,511	15.4%	116	11.8%	4,395	6.9%
Non-hispanic/Latino	60,846	30.8%	863	88.2%	59,983	93.2%
<b>Citizenship status*</b>						
Native born	43,424	28.8%	606	83.6%	42,818	93%
Foreign born <sup>2</sup>	3,448	2.3%	119	16.4%	3,329	7.2%
<b>Race*</b>						
White only	56,170	30.4%	821	83.9%	55,349	86.0%
Black only	5,879	22.1%	65	6.7%	5,814	9.0%
Other	3,308	21.7%	93	9.5%	3,215	5.0%
<b>Marital status*</b>						
Married	41,234	33.6%	543	55.5%	40,691	63.2%
Widowed	2,998	22.2%	34.8	3.6%	2,963	4.6%
Divorced or separated	6,679	24.1%	78.4	8.0%	6,601	10.25%
Single, never married	14,445	23.0%	322.6	33.0%	14,123	21.9%
<b>Educational attainment*</b>						
Less than high school diploma	6,364	15.3%	120	12.3%	6,244	9.7%
High school grad, no college <sup>3</sup>	14,339	20.7%	113	11.6%	14,225	22.1%
Some college <sup>4</sup>	19,329	32.3%	245	25.0%	19,085	29.6%
Bachelor's degree	15,857	42.9%	273	27.9%	15,583	24.2%
Graduate degree or higher	9,468	50.1%	227	23.2%	9,240	14.4%
<b>Employment status</b>						
Employed	44,894	31.3%	688	70.3%	44,206	68.7%
full time*	35,225	29.8%	483	70.2%	34,193	77.4%
part-time*	9,669	38.2%	205	29.8%	10,013	22.7%
Unemployed	1,978	26.4%	37	3.8%	1,940	3.0%

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Retired/not in labor force	18,485	24.4%	254	26.0%	18,231	28.3%
<b>Student status</b>						
Non-student*	58,842	28.6%	836	85.4%	58,006	90.1%
Student*	6,514	9.9%	143	14.6%	6,371	9.9%
Part-time student	408	21.5%	12	1.2%	397	0.6%
Full-time student	6,106	32.7%	131	13.4%	5,975	9.3%
In high school	3,245	33.3%	63	6.4%	3,182	4.9%
In college or university	3,270	30.2%	80	8.2%	3,190	5.0%
<b>Dependent child status*</b>						
With children under 18 yrs.	24,288	37.0%	240	24.5%	24,048	37.3%
Without children under 18 yrs.	41,069	25.5%	739	75.5%	40,330	62.7%

<sup>1</sup>Numbers may not sum to totals due to rounding

<sup>2</sup>Includes naturalized citizens and non-citizens

<sup>3</sup>Includes high school diploma or equivalent GED

<sup>4</sup>Includes associates degree or no degree

\*National or international volunteers status is significantly associated with selected demographic category, ( $\alpha = 0.5$ )

Table 2: 2005 organizational characteristics of volunteers from the US, (weighted data, numbers in thousands)<sup>1</sup>

Type of Organization*	Volunteered at least once internationally		Volunteered nationally only	
	Number (N=979) <sup>1</sup>	Percent of Sample	Number (N=64,378) <sup>2</sup>	Percent of Sample
Religious org.*	502	51.4%	22,250	34.6%
Social and community service group	99	10.1%	8,652	13.4%
Children's educational, sports, or recreational group	91	9.4%	12,985	20.2%
Other educational group	47	4.8%	2,646	4.1%
Cultural or arts org.	46	4.8%	970	1.5%
International org.	34	3.4%	288	0.5%
Hospital, clinic, or healthcare org.	26	2.7%	2,695	4.2%
Environmental or animal care org.	25	2.5%	1,146	1.8%
Youth services group	19	1.9%	1,358	2.1%
Some other type of org.	17	1.8%	2,172	3.4%
Sports or hobby group	12	1.3%	1,116	1.7%
Health research or education org.	10	1.0%	2,279	3.5%
Civic org.	8	0.8%	2,603	4.0%
Labor union, business, or professional org.	9	0.9%	661	1.0%
Political party or advocacy group	5	0.5%	554	0.9%
Public safety org.	2	0.2%	838	1.3%
Immigrant/refugee assistance*	1	0.1%	110	0.2%
missing	25	2.6%	1,056	1.7%

<sup>1</sup>Not necessarily referring exclusively to an international volunteer organization

<sup>2</sup>Numbers may not equal total due to rounding

\*National or international volunteers status is significantly associated with organizational status, ( $\alpha = 0.5$ )



Table 3: 2005 type of activities performed by volunteers from the US, (weighted data, numbers in thousands) <sup>1</sup>

Type of Activity	Volunteered at least once internationally		Volunteered nationally only	
	Number (N=979) <sup>1</sup>	Percent of Sample	Number (N=64,378)	Percent of Sample
Mentor youth*	359	36.7%	11,144	17.3%
Engage in general labor or supply transportation*	348	35.6%	14,383	22.3%
Collect, prepare, distribute, or serve food	324	33.1%	16,869	26.2%
Tutor or teach*	322	32.9%	13,586	21.1%
Fundraise or sell items to raise money	305	31.1%	19,133	29.7%
Provide professional or management assistance including serving on a board or committee*	297	30.3%	11,270	17.5%
Collect, make, or distribute clothing, crafts, or goods, other than food*	281	28.7%	10,315	16.0%
Engage in music, performance, or other artistic activities*	253	25.9%	7,233	11.2%
Provide information, be an usher greeter or minister*	214	21.9%	8,373	13.0%
Provide counseling, medical care, fire/EMS, or protective services*	198	20.2%	4,663	7.2%
Provide general office services	151	15.4%	8,207	12.8%
Any other type of activity	139	14.2%	9,881	15.4%
Coach or referee	84	8.6%	5,712	8.9%
Missing	5	0.5%	1,122	1.7%

<sup>1</sup>Not necessarily referring exclusively to an international volunteer organization

\*National or international volunteers status is significantly associated with activity type, ( $\alpha = 0.5$ )

Table 4: Average time spent volunteering in organizations by those who volunteered in 2005 (weighted for non-response, numbers in thousands)

Variable	mean		median		sd		N	
	Intl.	Nat.	Intl.	Nat.	Intl.	Nat.	Intl.	Nat.
Annual weeks volunteered for the main organization <sup>1</sup>	24.1	21.5	20.0	12.0	32.7	29.7	358	24126
Annual hours volunteered for the main organization*	255.9	114.4	104.0	45.0	714.1	364.2	371	26304
Number of organizations	1.8	1.5	1	1	1.9	1.4	393	27675

<sup>1</sup>The main organization may not necessarily be an *international* volunteer organization.

\*Statistical significant difference, ( $\alpha = 0.5$ )

## Methodological Notes

### Sampling

Data from the volunteer supplement were collected during one week in the month of September of 2005. All members of surveyed households were asked whether they had participated in volunteer activities for the previous year, or since September 1, 2004. Those who answered “yes” were further asked whether “any of the volunteer work you've done since September 1<sup>st</sup> of last year [took] place in a foreign country, that is, outside the United States or any of its territories?” Nearly 30,000 individuals in the sampled households were asked about their international volunteer activities. Because the CPS survey is designed to provide information for all members in a household, about 70% of responses were self-reports; the remaining 30% of responses were answered by another member of the household in proxy for inaccessible respondents. Approximately 150 individuals did not respond and were counted as missing.

Statistics obtained from the CPS contain both sampling and non-sampling error due to methods of data collection. A more detailed analysis of sampling error, including specific parameters for computing the standard error of various demographic characteristics can be found under attachment 16 of the CPS supplement file for each year.

### Definitions

Volunteers in this report include civilian non-institutional individuals over 16 years of age who performed unpaid activities in an organization within or outside of the US and its territories at any point from September 1, 2004 until the survey week in September 2005.

Voluntary activities include unpaid labor (excluding expenses) specific to a formal organization; specific examples of volunteer activities are listed in Table 3. An organization includes one of eight categories of structured groups that share a common goal. The organization under which the volunteers spent the majority of their voluntary activities during the year is classified as the main organization. If the individual volunteered for more than one organization, activities performed for the main organization may not necessarily refer to volunteer activities outside of the US.

### Analysis

In order to create independent samples, the “volunteered in 2005” variable ( $N = 65,357,000$  weighted) was divided into two separate variables including those who volunteered nationally ( $N = 64,378,000$ ) and those may or may not have volunteered nationally but volunteered internationally at least once ( $N = 979,000$ ). Tables were constructed by crossing the two new volunteerism variables with sample demographic variables and volunteer variables. Frequency and type of volunteer activities include only those respondents answering affirmatively to volunteering.

Raw data were cleaned and recoded as categorized in the tables, then weighted with the CPS volunteer supplement non-response weight, based on the standard CPS weighting program, to account for non-interviewed households and population distribution ratios. Final values as reported in the tables are weighted to approximate 2005 US population parameters for individuals volunteering for an organization. Significance testing procedures were run on unweighted CPS data to more accurately represent true sample characteristics. A more detailed description of weighting issues can be found under attachment two of the CPS supplement file for each year.