

## Where Does The Time Go?

A survey sponsored by United Media Enterprises a Scripps-Howard Company, and conducted by Research and Forecasts, Inc. (New York: Newspaper Enterprise Association, 1983)

### VOLUNTEERING DURING LEISURE TIME

Volunteerism in America has a long and well respected history. Recently, it has taken on a new importance in America. President Reagan appointed a Task Force on Private Sector Initiatives in 1981 to identify ways to increase the private sector's role in social services. By publicizing the needs of voluntary organizations, the task force hopes to inspire Americans to give more of their leisure time to helping others.

Robert V. Van Fossan, in an article for Industry Week, stresses the importance of the role volunteerism plays in America today:<sup>4</sup>

For too long...America's economy has been viewed as falling into two sectors - government and business - which compete for people, for capital, and for power. We usually hear arguments about which of these two sectors is more likely to solve the great problems facing us. Yet, progress in many

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4. Robert V. Van Fossan, "Our Economy Needs Vital 'Third Sector,'" Industry Week, 19 October 1981, p. 13.

## Use of Leisure Time

areas of American life, such as health care, education, law and the arts is infinitely tied into a key Third Sector of our economy, the volunteer sector. The well-being of our nation's economy is inseparably linked to the well-being of this third sector.

The United Media Enterprises Report on Leisure in America probed the extent and nature of volunteerism among Americans today, and found that volunteer work is an important facet of leisure time. Results show that almost half of adult Americans say they participate in volunteer activities, and those who do average about 17 hours per month in volunteer work.

### TABLE 2.11: VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

Do you participate in volunteer activities?

	<u>n</u>	
Yes	46	Average number of hours a month of volunteering is 17.
No	53	
Don't know/No answer	1	
(Number of respondents)	(979)	

Which volunteer activities do you participate in?

<u>Five most frequent activities:</u>	<u>n</u>
Church	39
Hospital	13
Schools	12
Elderly care	9
Kids and sports	8
(Number of respondents)	(447)

Although many Americans mention various ways they help their neighbors and friends informally, most volunteers concentrate their efforts at the institutional level. Church-centered volunteer activities are mentioned most frequently, by 39% of the volunteers. Hospitals (13%) and schools (12%) follow the church in offering the most opportunities for volunteer work.

The survey results also show that volunteerism is not clearly linked to different levels of family responsibility. A majority of dual-career family members, with very little leisure time, manage to find the time to volunteer. Most singles, with a great deal of time, do not. Older Americans, who are especially consistent in their view that leisure time should be spent helping others (see Chapter One), are among the least likely actually to volunteer, probably because their age and health problems often prevent them from doing so.

TABLE 2.12: PARTICIPATION IN VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES BY LEVEL OF FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY

	<u>Participating</u> %	<u>(Number of Respondents)</u>
Teenagers	51	(74)
Singles	40	(207)
Age 65 and over	38	(151)
Married, no children	42	(60)
Parents with grown children	59	(171)
Traditional parents	42	(142)
Dual-career parents	59	(169)
Single parents	39	(44)

## Use of Leisure Time

Although family responsibility (or the amount of available free time) has no clear relation to volunteer activity, age clearly does. Volunteerism is high in the mid-teenage years. It tapers off between the ages of 18 and 34, the years when most Americans are finishing school, beginning careers, and starting families. Volunteerism is highest from ages 35-64, when most Americans have established careers and families, and have settled into their communities as well. After the age of 65 volunteerism tapers off again. People with at least some college background, and to some extent those with incomes exceeding \$10,000, are particularly likely to participate in volunteer activities.

**TABLE 2.13: PARTICIPATION IN VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES BY AGE**

<u>Age</u>	<u>Participating</u> %	<u>(Number of Respondents)</u>
14-17	52	(75)
18-24	38	(186)
25-34	40	(222)
35-49	59	(217)
50-64	55	(198)
65 and over	38	(151)

**TABLE 2.14: PARTICIPATION IN VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES BY EDUCATION**

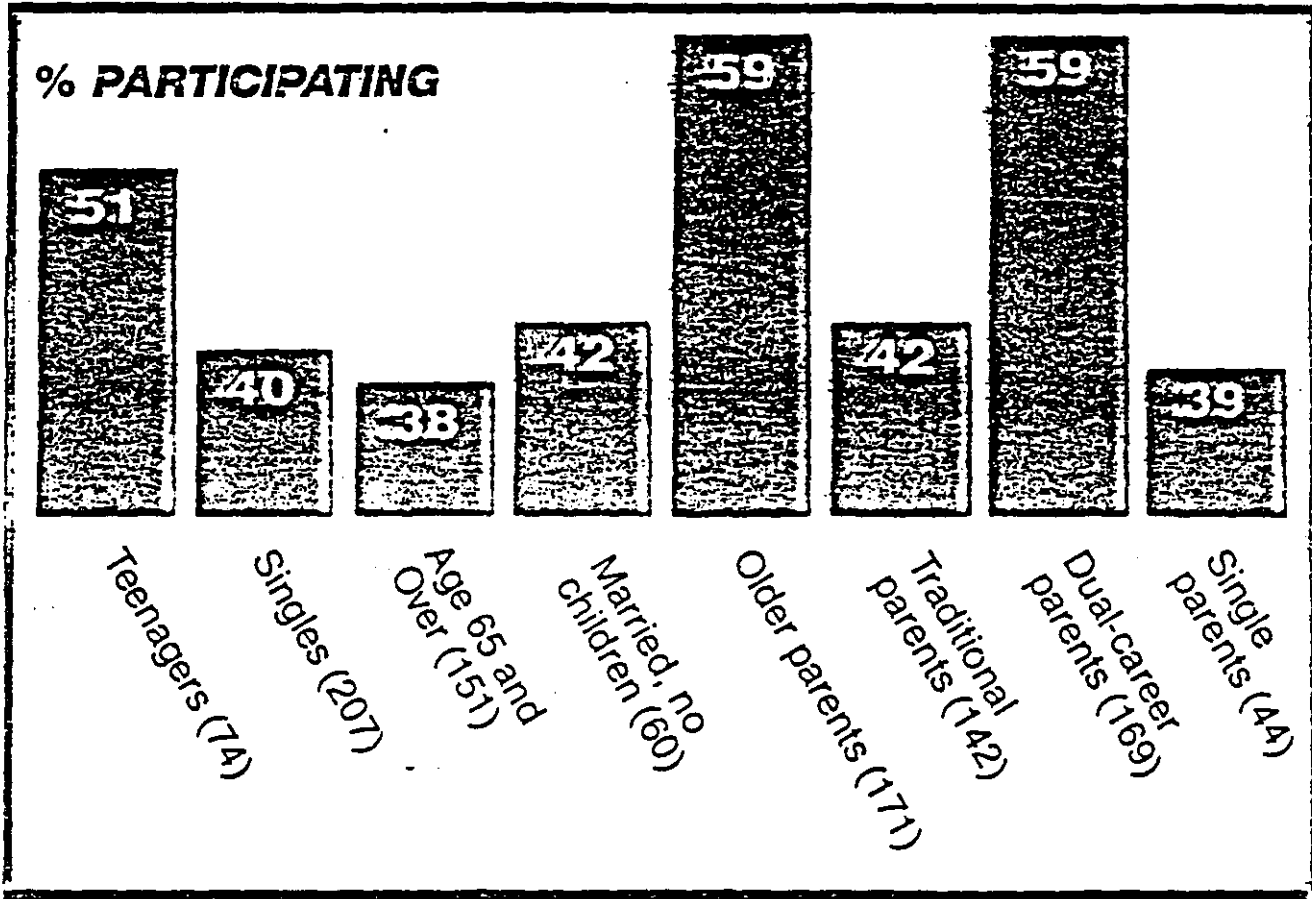
<u>Education</u>	<u>Participating</u> %	<u>(Number of Respondents)</u>
8th grade or less	41	(174)
Some high school	45	(216)
High school graduate	43	(367)
Some college	53	(166)
College graduate	61	(137)

**TABLE 2.15: PARTICIPATION IN VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES BY INCOME**

<u>Income</u>	<u>Participating</u> %	<u>(Number of Respondents)</u>
Less than \$10,000	36	(185)
\$10,000 - \$14,999	52	(122)
\$15,000 - \$19,999	42	(138)
\$20,000 - \$24,999	52	(157)
\$25,000 - \$29,999	45	(102)
\$30,000 - \$39,999	54	(95)
\$40,000 and over	56	(103)

Table 2.12:

## Participation in Volunteer Activities by Level of Family Responsibility



Source: The United Media Enterprises Report on Leisure in America.