

State of Volunteerism Research: Overview and Data Highlights

State Farm® investigated what motivates people to volunteer, as well as identified and explored barriers to volunteering.

State Farm uses its reach -- 19,000 agents and nearly 70,000 employees across the United States -- to help communities. State Farm has an opportunity to demonstrate that being a good neighbor is more than a slogan. State Farm is the brand that helps -- leading the way and inspiring us to give back to our communities by making it easy to take action at NeighborhoodofGood.com™

Background

In November of 2016, State Farm fielded an online survey of 5,182 respondents across generations. The purpose of the survey was to better understand how and why U.S. residents volunteer and the role that volunteerism plays in communities across the country. The Survey identified who volunteers (and at what level, how much, how often), who does not volunteer, and why they volunteer (motivators) to determine the root causes and give us insights on how to inspire and incent volunteerism.

Summary of Key Findings

The definition of volunteering has broadened with the emergence of share-worthy experiences and new ways to give time. From fun runs to social challenges, “volunteering” can take many forms.

- *43 percent believe creating social content for or participating in a social challenge to raise awareness of a cause is volunteering.*
- *63 percent consider fundraising for a charity by participating in a running or walking event, gala or golf tournament to be volunteerism.*
- *38 percent consider raising money for a charity or cause via a crowd funding site to be volunteering.*
- *The top three activities considered to be volunteering are: 1) serving meals to those in need (82 percent), 2) donating time to work at or organize a community event (80 percent) and 3) assisting a neighbor with a household project or errand (74 percent).*

Most people (76%) report volunteering at least once a year. Even though people claim they’re interested in volunteering more, spending time with family and friends often takes precedence.

- *When using a broader definition of volunteerism, 3 in 4 people reported volunteering at least once in the last year.*
- *Many reported prioritizing volunteering, but admitted volunteering less often than they would like (35 percent).*
- *Others were interested in volunteering, but admitted that it wasn’t a priority when compared to spending their leisure time with friends and family (38 percent).*
- *Only a small percentage of the population has indicated having no interest in volunteering (10 percent).*

Group volunteering opportunities could entice people to give back more often, especially if the experience itself is an opportunity to foster existing relationships.

- Most people want to volunteer alongside people they know (77 percent)
- Though digital volunteerism is growing in popularity, 77 percent of people still prefer to volunteer in-person
 - o 23 percent said they preferred volunteering online or through a digital opportunity
- Big group events, like clean-ups or a holiday effort, are a popular preference. 64 percent of respondents said they would like to volunteer through a big group event.

The biggest barriers to volunteering come down to time constraints and tough schedules, whether real or imagined. However, with broadening definitions of volunteerism, there may be opportunities for smaller acts of volunteerism that are more approachable within our daily lives.

- Two of the top three barriers to volunteering are related to schedules or time constraints:
 - o 22 percent say they can't find an opportunity that fits their schedule
 - o 18 percent say they worry that volunteering would require too much time.

People don't want to volunteer for the sake of volunteering, they want to contribute to a cause or support a person they care about. When it comes to volunteering, passion matters.

- 32 percent would start volunteering because they feel connected to a specific organization.
- Many volunteers, 30 percent, would volunteer because someone they care about has been affected by an issue or has needed support.
- 28 percent would volunteer to help a neighbor if asked for emergency childcare, the neighborhood watch, park clean ups or more.
- Many people, 27 percent, volunteer because they want to be a part of their community.

Most people volunteer because they value helping others, but there are many self-motivated reasons to volunteer as well.

- 68 percent of respondents said they volunteer because they consider it important to help others.
- Volunteerism is tied to our neighborhood relationships, as 50 percent reported that their volunteerism efforts make them feel like a good neighbor.
- Volunteerism is seen as a gateway to gain new perspectives (44 percent) and meet new people (33 percent).

Neighborhoods have the most to gain from volunteerism. People contribute most often to their immediate communities and neighborhoods.

- In the last year, 33 percent reported volunteering for a neighbor and 21 percent reported volunteering in the local community.
- Religious institutes were also a leading beneficiary with 28 percent reporting participating in faith-based volunteerism.