

2017



DOING GOOD IS GOOD FOR YOU

STUDY





VOLUNTEERISM CONTRIBUTES TO A HAPPIER AND HEALTHIER LIFE

It could be debated that nothing promises as many personal rewards as volunteering does. More and more studies are demonstrating our physical and mental health can benefit in many ways through volunteering.

The *2017 Doing Good Is Good for You Study*, in partnership with VolunteerMatch, once again affirms these results: from feeling better to enhancing well-being and providing a sense of personal enrichment and satisfaction (in other words, being happier), “doing good” is good for you. Let’s not forget that people who are happier live longer!

“It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Volunteering has a proven positive effect on our physical and mental health

Three-quarters (75 percent) of people who volunteered in the past 12 months tell us volunteering has made them feel physically healthier. More than one-third (34 percent) of those who volunteer find participating in this activity helps them better manage their chronic illnesses. Compared with those who have not volunteered in the past 12 months, volunteers are significantly more (78 percent) likely to feel they have control over their health.

Hispanic volunteers are even more likely to report feeling physically healthier (72 percent versus 55 percent for non-Hispanics) and better able to manage their chronic illness (48 percent versus 25 percent for non-Hispanics) through their volunteer activities.

A Carnegie Mellon University study found adults over 50 who volunteered on a regular basis were less likely to develop high blood pressure, a major risk factor for heart attack, stroke, heart failure and metabolic syndrome.¹

The connection between volunteering and mental/emotional health is even more dramatic. Almost all volunteers note an improvement in mood (93 percent), as well as lower stress levels (79 percent – up from 73 percent in our first study completed in 2010), and improved self-esteem (88 percent). Volunteers believe they are more calm and peaceful and have more energy to a greater extent than those who have not volunteered in the past year.

1. Carnegie Mellon University. "Volunteering reduces risk of hypertension in older adults." *Science Daily*. 13 June 2013.

Of people who volunteered in the past 12 months...

88%

note improved self-esteem

93%

note an improvement in mood

75%

feel physically healthier

78%

feel they have greater control over their health and well-being

79%

experience lower stress levels

34%

can better manage their chronic illnesses

Volunteering also provides intrinsic benefits, which enrich our lives beyond our expectations

Most volunteers report an enriched sense of purpose in life (94 percent), an expanded worldview (89 percent) and having learned valuable things about themselves (88 percent) from their volunteerism. In fact, volunteers have consistently higher scores (by about 15 percent) than non-volunteers on nine well-established measures of emotional well-being including personal independence, capacity for rich interpersonal relationships and overall satisfaction with their life.

So it comes as no surprise that this healthier, more fulfilled outlook is accompanied by added social benefits. Volunteers note developing friendships through their volunteer activities (85 percent). They also report having a higher capacity to enjoy socializing compared with those who do not volunteer.

94%

of volunteers report an enriched sense of purpose

89%

of volunteers report an expanded worldview

85%

of volunteers have developed friendships through volunteering



“Volunteering is an incredibly rewarding and important part of my life.”

It is amazing to see what can be done to help both people and animals in need when you get involved with organizations that are dedicated to their mission. The impact of contributing time is real and meaningful — whether it's helping a dog find the perfect forever home after living in a shelter for several months or assembling a bundle of much needed supplies that will be delivered to an underprivileged child in Philadelphia. The thing about volunteering that is unexpected and never ceases to surprise me is how much it seems to give back to my life as well. I'm grateful to have the ability to dedicate time to these causes, and very appreciative that UnitedHealthcare supports employee involvement with charitable organizations through volunteering grants, matching donations and company volunteer opportunities.”

Jocelyn Barton, volunteer

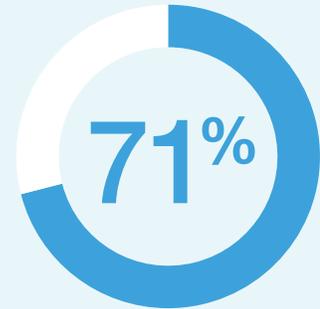
Employers benefit from having healthier and better-functioning employees

Employers benefit in three critical ways when they encourage employee participation in volunteer activities:

- 1 Employees are happier and healthier, resulting in better productivity and reduced sick time**
- 2 Employees develop their professional skills**
- 3 Employees are more engaged**

As a result of their volunteer activities, employees believe they **develop professional skills** (87 percent), as well as **learn better time management** (86 percent). Stronger teams result from volunteering as employees also believe these activities **develop their people skills/teamwork** (92 percent, up from 87 percent in 2013) and **strengthen relationships** (77 percent).

Support for volunteerism reflects well on the employer



Almost three-fourths of employees who volunteer through work report feeling better about their employer.

Employers play a critical role in ensuring both community and volunteer needs are met

In a time-starved world, lack of time is the main barrier to volunteering. Employers can help by allowing employees to volunteer on paid time (91 percent). Employers can facilitate volunteering by providing training (90 percent) and encouraging use of professional skills on volunteer assignments (88 percent). Other ways to support employee volunteering include providing transportation (84 percent), allowing employees to solicit donations at work (82 percent) and organizing volunteer days/activities (82 percent).

But time is not the only barrier these days. Decreased financial support also threatens many nonprofits and could limit volunteer opportunities going forward. Additionally, nonprofits have specific needs when it comes to volunteers — those willing to make long-term commitments, those with specific skills and those who meet certain requirements such as availability during the workday (from a survey of 700 volunteer managers, executive directors and other volunteer program professionals across the U.S., *Volunteer Screening Trends & Best Practices Report: 2017, Verified Volunteers*).



MAKE A DIFFERENCE BY VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering provides benefits beyond measure. Communities are stronger and volunteers feel good about their contributions. The intrinsic benefits of helping others foster physical and emotional health, as well as a strengthened sense of well-being. Happy, well-adjusted people become more productive, collaborative employees, and more supportive, positive family members. And when employers encourage these efforts, they earn greater respect from their employees.

“These are trying times, where people feel overwhelmed and don’t know what they can do to help. Don’t underestimate the profound impact one person can have when they find a cause or an organization they are passionate about and they spend some time helping to achieve a common good,”

said Shannon Loecher, UnitedHealthcare Social Responsibility, who finds that

“Within the work ‘Do Good. Live Well.’ has done, we consistently hear from individuals that ‘we didn’t think anyone cared.’ It’s in that moment when I realize when you do something good for someone else, it really does make you feel good.”



Where to begin

Finding the right volunteer opportunity is important — look for something that matches your interests, personality and expertise. UnitedHealthcare’s “Do Good. Live Well.” initiative is aimed at inspiring a new level of service and volunteerism in communities across the country. “The Do Good. Live Well.” website, dogoodlivewell.volunteermatch.org, offers tools to search and sign up for volunteer opportunities in partnership with VolunteerMatch. As might be expected, finding volunteer opportunities via a website or other online sources has seen the largest growth (*from 5 percent in 2010 to 23 percent in 2016*).

Research methodology

The findings from this study are based on a national survey of 2,705 adults age 18 and over conducted by Kantar TNS, one of the world's largest marketing research firms. Kantar TNS conducted the online survey between Nov. 29 and Dec. 12, 2016. This study is the third in a recurring research effort for UnitedHealth Group, parent company of UnitedHealthcare, beginning in 2010 and repeated in 2013.

Data were weighted to ensure a representative sample of the total U.S. adult population.

2,705
adults surveyed



