



The State of Volunteerism in RI



Prepared for The Volunteer Center of RI

Research by:

The Center for Marketing Research, Johnson & Wales University, 2001

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Sponsored by:

The Rhode Island Foundation

Letter to the RI Nonprofit and Funding Community

The Rhode Island Foundation and the Volunteer Center of Rhode Island are pleased to present this report to the Rhode Island Nonprofit and Funding Community. The data compiled herewith provides a snapshot of volunteerism in the state of Rhode Island, prior to the events of September 11, 2001. Local data is then compared to national data on volunteerism, provided by the Independent Sector, through its Giving and Volunteering in the United States 1999 report.

It is our hope that this information will be used to help nonprofit organizations better position themselves in recruiting and motivating volunteers. While the report shows that Rhode Island adults volunteer less than our national counterparts, it also indicates opportunities for the nonprofit sector to improve our ranking. Among these opportunities are using community groups and workplaces to promote volunteer needs, as well as providing family appropriate and episodic experiences to prospective volunteers.

You may obtain an electronic version of this document by going to www.vcri.org. For more information about The Rhode Island Foundation, please visit www.rifoundation.org.

Sincerely,

Ron Gallo, President
The Rhode Island Foundation

Kelly Nevins, Executive Director
The Volunteer Center of Rhode Island

Executive Summary and Recommendations

The first statewide survey on volunteerism, conducted on behalf of the Volunteer Center of Rhode Island and funded by The Rhode Island Foundation, found that while Rhode Islanders are giving of their time to non-profit organizations, they are less generous than the national norm based on findings from the Independent Sector's 1999 study on giving (the latest data available for comparison at the time this report was compiled). The findings of this study, meant to serve as a benchmark for the future, provide an interesting look at the current state of volunteerism and highlight opportunities for improvements.

Nationally volunteers average 15 hours of their time monthly, while only 17% of Rhode Island volunteers give more than 10 hours per month. Interestingly, key segments of the Rhode Island community are under-represented among volunteers.

- Although 26 to 54-year olds account for 62% of all Rhode Island volunteers, only 43% of the total age group volunteers. Comparatively, 62% of that age group volunteers nationally.
- Similarly, only 25% of those aged 55 and over volunteer in Rhode Island while 47% do so nationally.
- Due in large part to community service initiatives among Rhode Island students, both in high school and college, 18 to 25-year olds represent 19% of all volunteers in Rhode Island and volunteer at a rate equal to the national norm (46%) as a percentage of the total age group.
- The proportions of volunteers of Caucasian and Hispanic ethnicity in RI volunteer significantly less than their national counterparts. While 59% of those of Caucasian ethnicity volunteer nationally, slightly less than half (49%) of Caucasian Rhode Islanders do so. The gap among those of Hispanic origin is more significant. While close to half of those of Hispanic origin volunteer nationally (46%), only 36% of Hispanic Rhode Islanders volunteer.

Rhode Island volunteers are an altruistic group, significantly more so than their national counterparts. They give of their time out of a sense of "feeling compassion for those in need." While this motivation is also true nationally, Rhode Islanders were significantly more likely to mention it as a reason for volunteering than the national average, 93% of total mentions versus 86% respectively.

A tangible connection to a group seems to be a major factor in creating awareness of opportunities leading to volunteerism. Learning of an opportunity to volunteer through their place of work or a group affiliation was cited by nearly half of all Rhode Island volunteers. Nonprofit organizations should work with local companies and community groups (such as churches, civic organizations, etc...) to generate awareness of the need for volunteers.

Not having been asked and not knowing how to become involved combined for nearly 25% of the total reasons mentioned by Rhode Islanders as barriers to volunteering. Additionally, Rhode Islanders cited a lack of free personal time most frequently as a reason for their not volunteering. However, it is not apparent if lack of free time is the true reason or whether non-volunteers may be interested in short term, episodic volunteer opportunities.

Research Objectives and Methods

As the only statewide volunteer center to provide services to people of all ages from all communities, the Volunteer Center of Rhode Island (VCRI) was interested in assessing the level of volunteerism in the state. Additionally, the agency was interested in how Rhode Islanders' volunteer activity compared to national figures gathered by the Independent Sector in 1999. Furthermore, VCRI wished to understand the motivations behind people's decisions to volunteer or not in order to cultivate appealing volunteer opportunities for people.

Funded by a grant from The Rhode Island Foundation, the Center for Marketing Research (CMR) at Johnson & Wales University was engaged to gather this data. Led by Professor Anthony Fruzzetti, Director, the CMR team decided on a combination of methods to execute this research project.

The data was collected by both random-digit-dial (RDD) phone surveys and intercept interviews. The intercept interviews were conducted throughout downtown Providence to take advantage of the daytime influx of workers and students from throughout the state. The RDD sample was used to insure that all RI communities were sampled. The RDD sample was generated by having interviewers dial random numbers within the given telephone prefixes for towns outside of the greater Providence area.

In total, 501 respondent surveys were collected during the months of December 2000 and January 2001. All percentages quoted are "Valid Percentages," which do not include missing responses.

The margin of error for the total sample size of 501 is + 5%. The margin of error for the sub-sample of volunteers (182) is + 7%. Statistically significant differences have been noted at the 90% level.

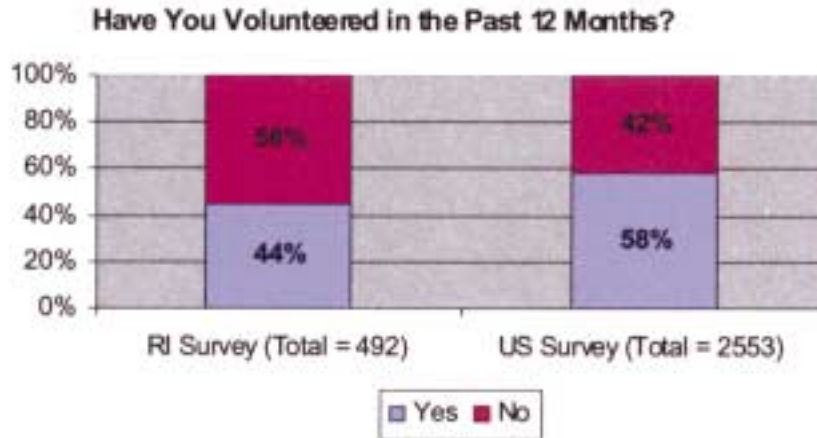
Recommendations for Future Research

If this study is to serve as a benchmark for future tracking studies, it is important to establish a level of continuity from year to year. However, having been the first statewide survey on volunteerism for the Volunteer Center of Rhode Island and The Rhode Island Foundation, a few changes should be considered for follow-up surveys.

- Adding a rating scale to "Reasons cited for volunteering" should be considered in order to assess how important each attribute is in contributing to volunteerism.
- When asking non-volunteers about the reasons they do not volunteer, a probing question should be asked of those who cite "personal schedule too full" or "may be unable to fulfill volunteer commitment." They should be probed to evaluate if a one-time or episodic volunteer opportunity would appeal to them.
- Future studies should explore whether the events on Sept. 11, 2001 had any effect on motivation to volunteer.

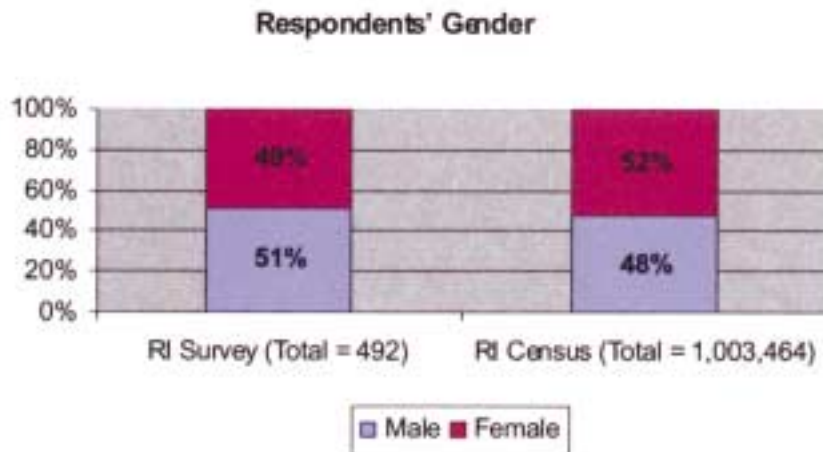
Detailed Findings

Total Respondent Characteristics



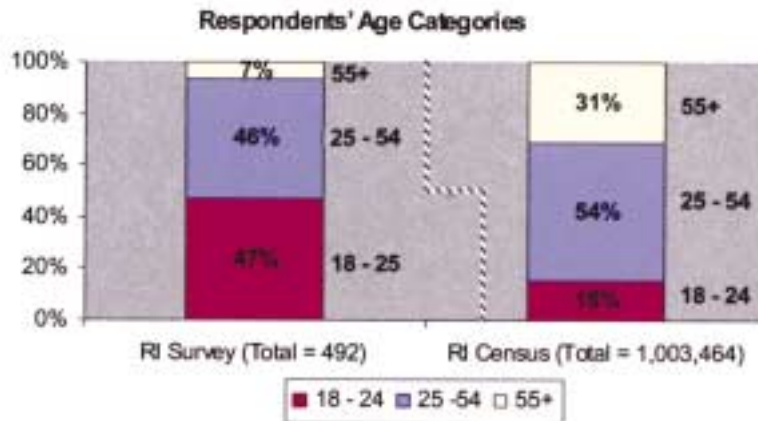
Less than half the respondents indicated they have volunteered in the twelve months prior to the survey. Compared to the US average of 59%, Rhode Islanders have volunteered significantly less frequently in the past twelve months.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

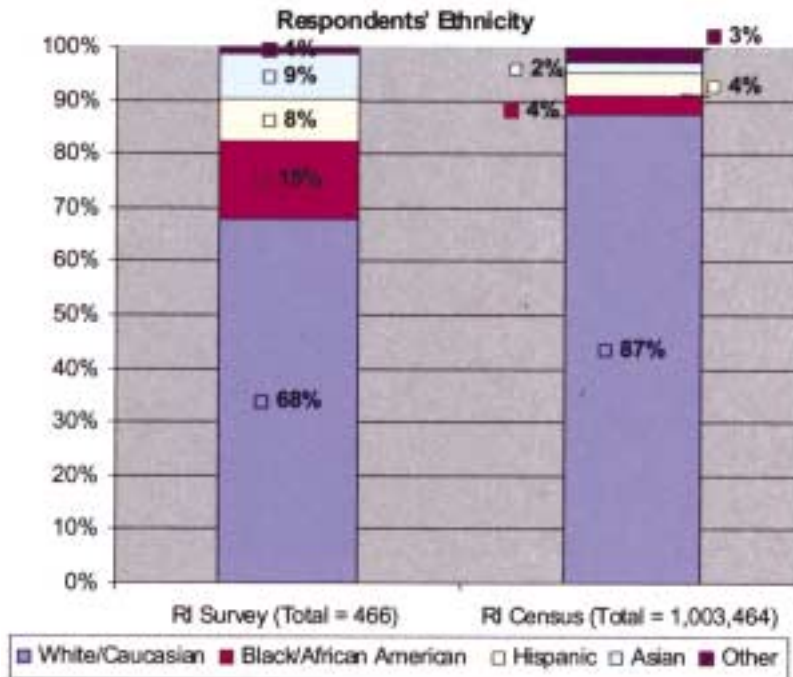


Males and females are represented proportionately in the VCRI survey on volunteerism compared to 1990 RI Census figures.

Detailed Findings



Compared to 1990 RI Census data, the age distribution of the RI volunteerism survey respondents is not representative of the state. Significantly more respondents were between 18 and 25-years old compared to the state. Therefore, in all subsequent analyses of the survey data, the data will be weighted so it is more representative of the RI population. The weighting will insure the data is not unduly influenced by the preponderance of respondents 25 and under.

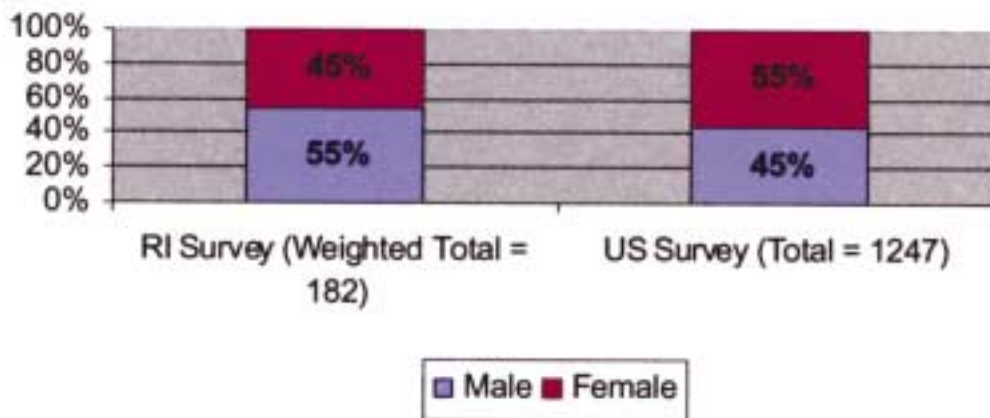


The survey data is more diverse ethnically than the state's population in general.

Volunteers

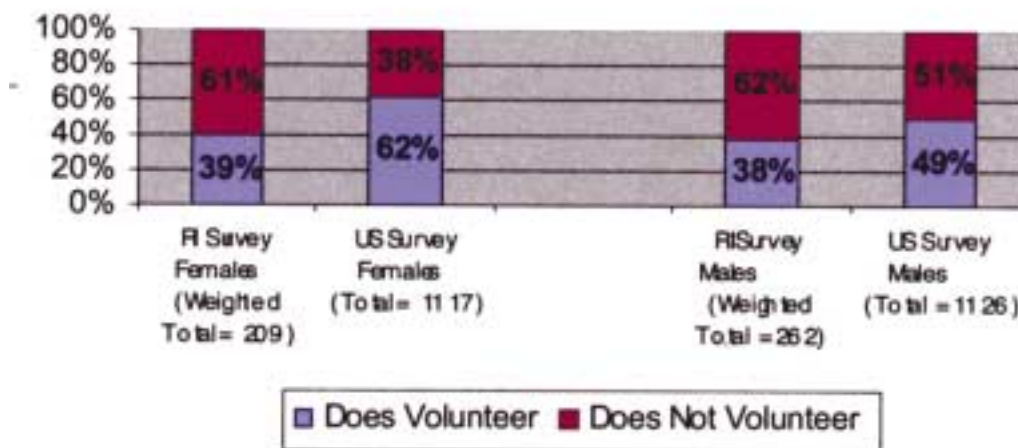
Who Volunteers?

Ratio of Male to Female Volunteers



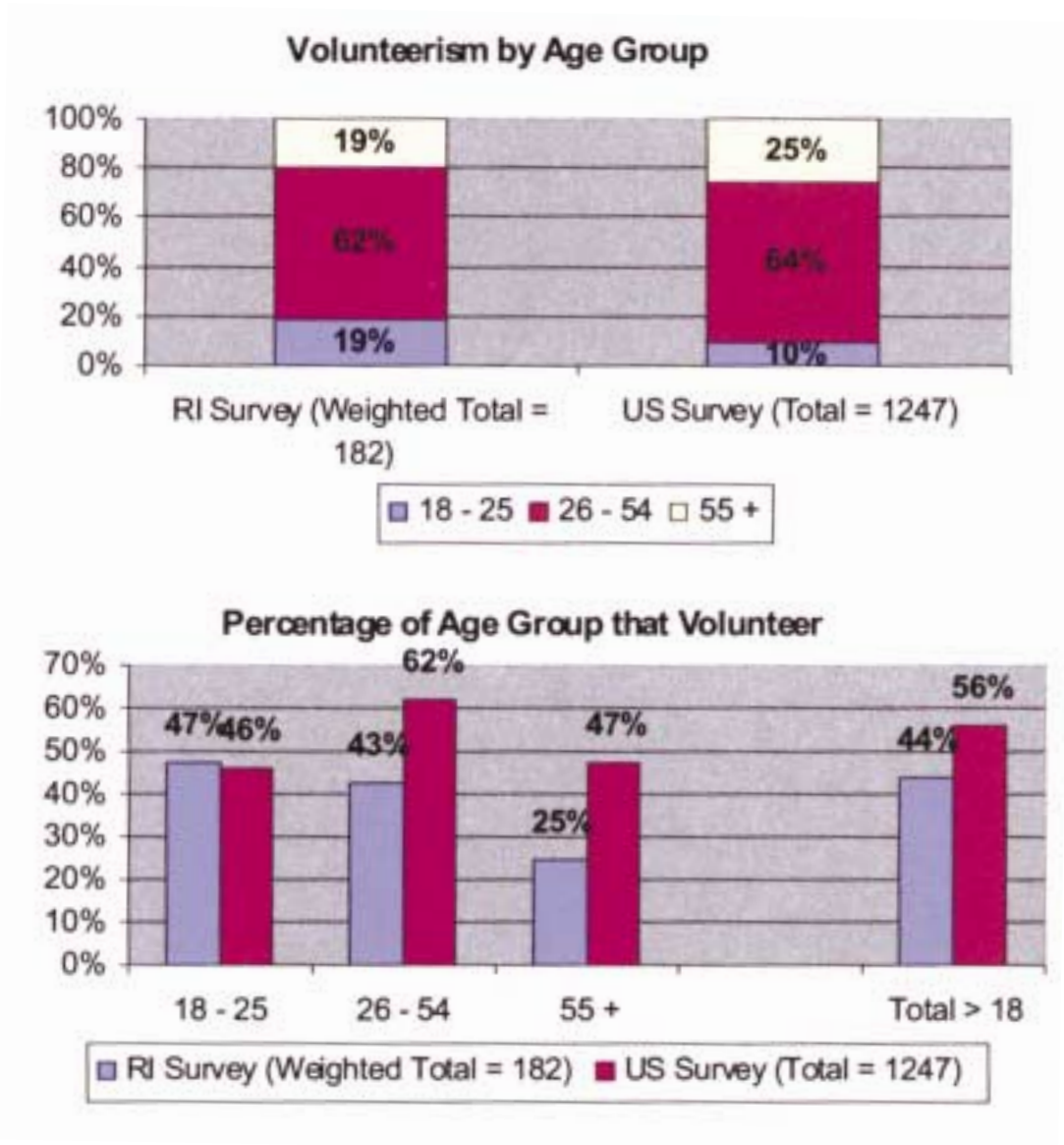
In Rhode Island, as in the US in general, the proportion of male versus female volunteers is fairly equal. However, the proportion of male volunteers in RI is slightly greater than females, opposite the national norm.

Percentage of Men and Women who Volunteer



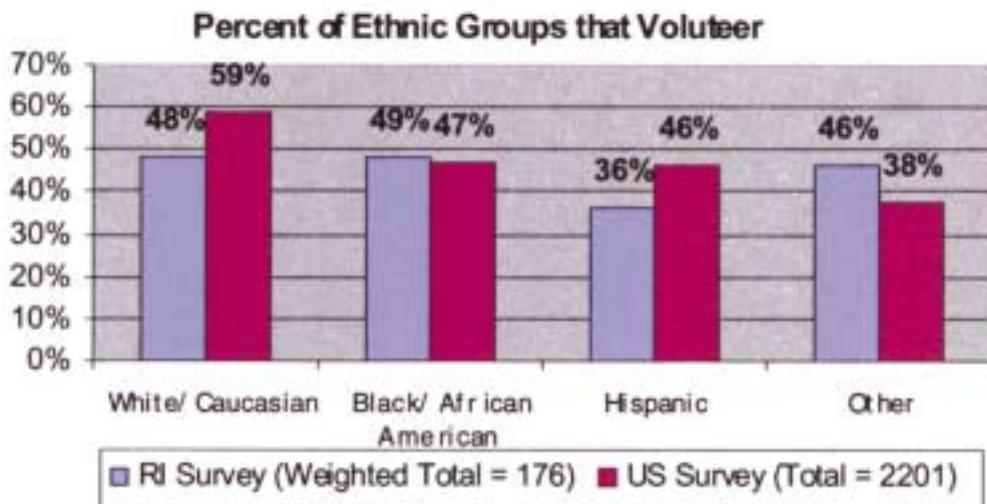
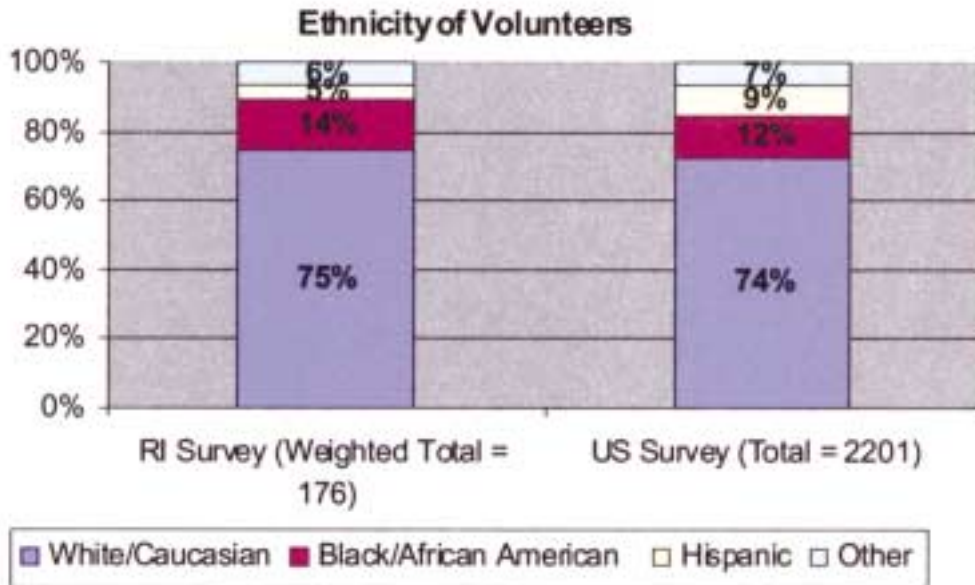
While the proportion of both females and males who volunteer in RI is equal across genders, both proportions are significantly lower than the US averages. The percentage of females volunteering in RI, 39% is significantly lower the national average of 62%.

Volunteers



The percentage of RI respondents between 18- to 25-years old indicating they had volunteered in the past 12 months is comparable to the national average. Volunteerism among those 26 and older is significantly lower than the national norms however.

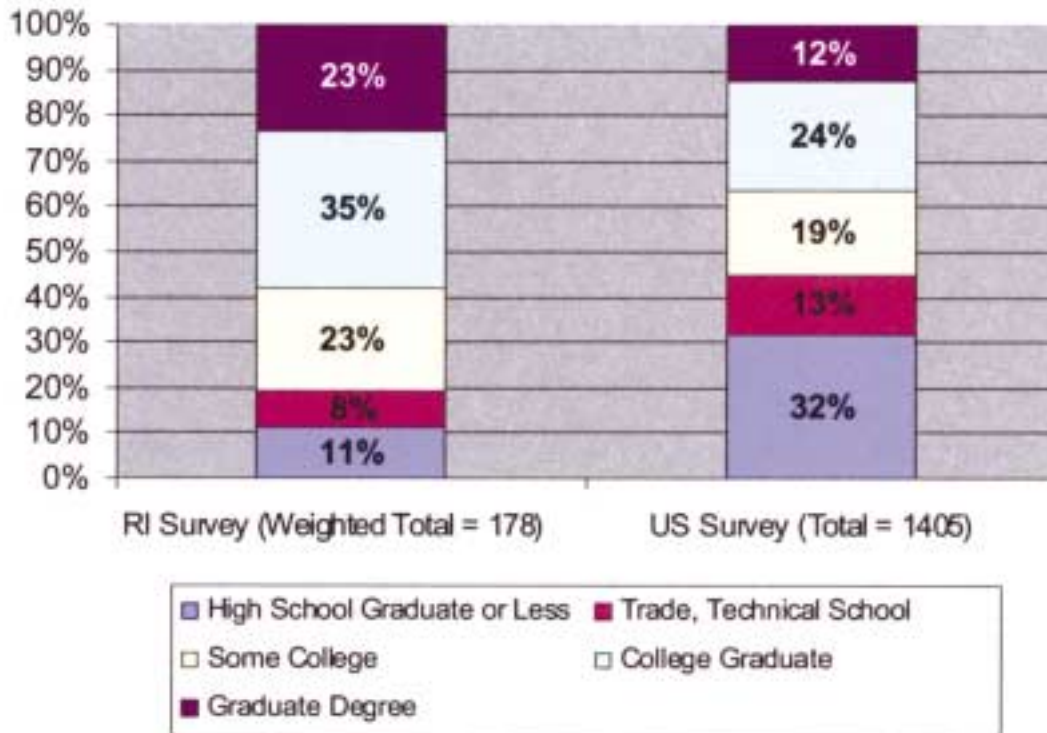
Volunteers



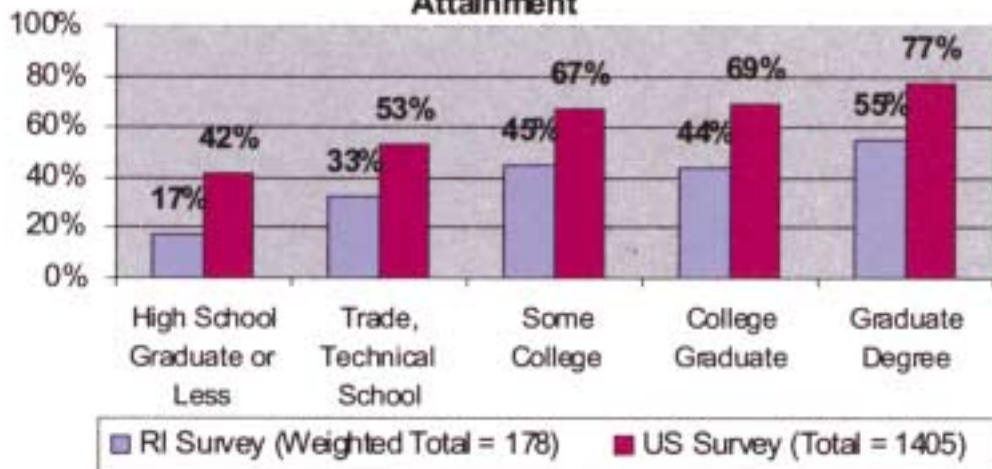
While the ethnic distribution of volunteers in RI mirrors the US, the percentages of volunteers within each ethnicity varies. The proportions of those of white and Hispanic ethnicity in RI volunteer significantly less than their national counterparts.

Volunteers

Educational Attainment of Volunteers

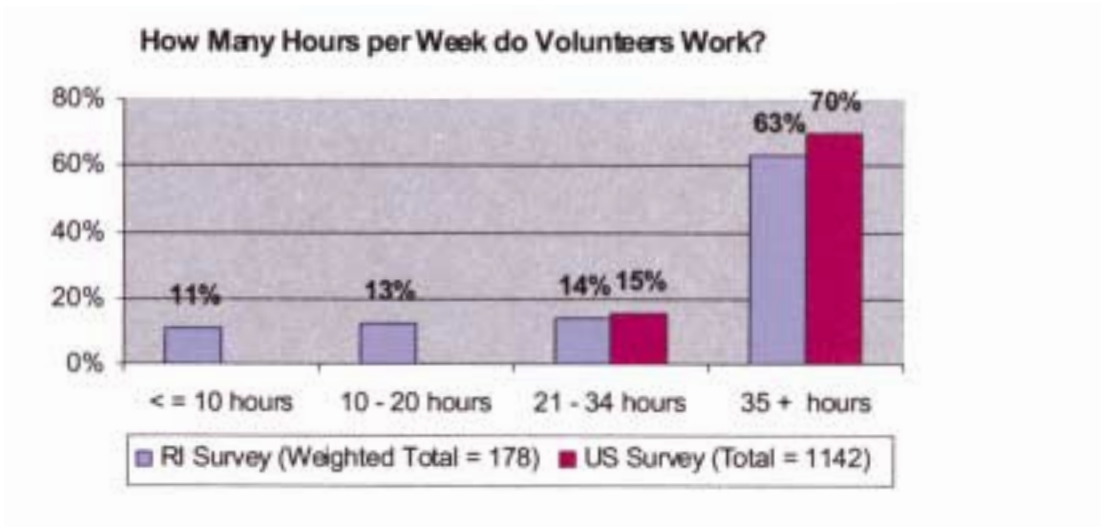


Percentage of Volunteers by Educational Attainment

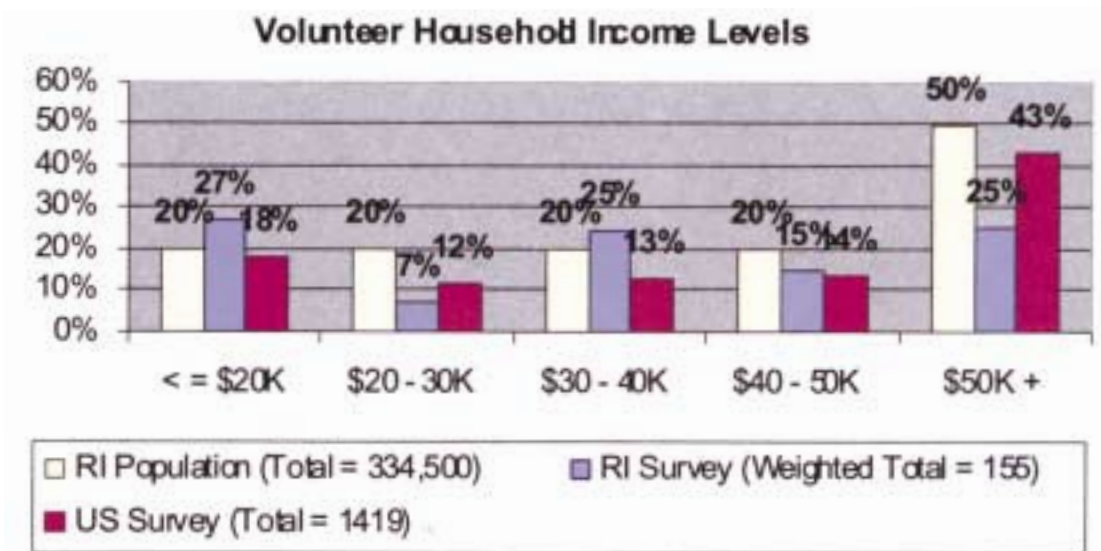


RI volunteers tend to have higher levels of schooling than the national averages. However, as a proportion of each educational level, RI is significantly behind the national norm.

Volunteers



In keeping with national norms, the majority of respondents in RI find time to volunteer while working full-time, 35 hours or more per week.



Volunteers, based on these respondents, are not affluent. The majority has personal annual incomes under \$20,000.

Volunteers

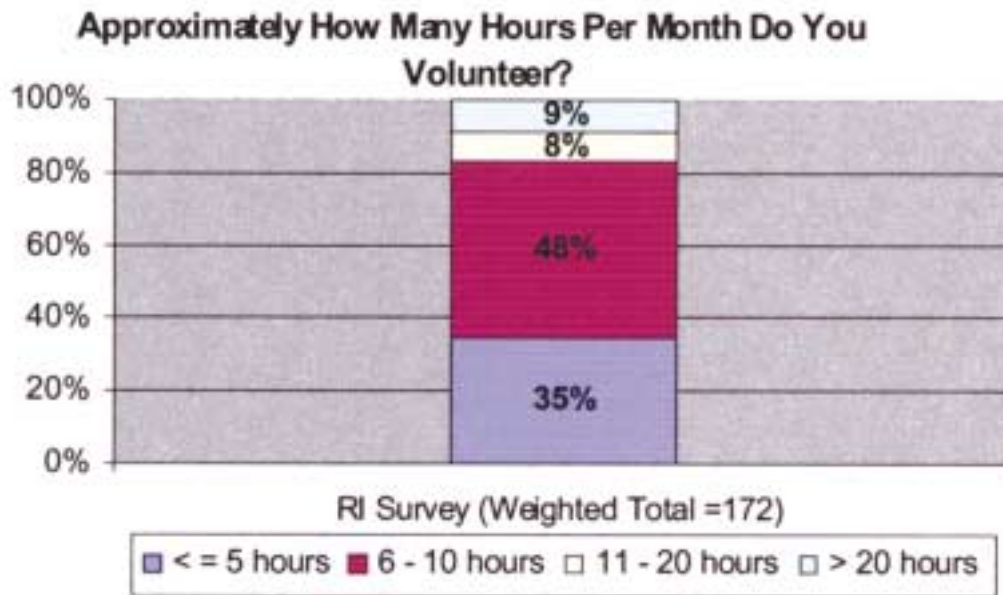
What Does Their Volunteering Look Like?

Volunteers have given their time to a variety of agencies, organizations and causes. Education and youth development agency types were popular beneficiaries of volunteerism in RI. Adult recreational programs and art/cultural agencies were among the agency types seeing little volunteerism RI.

Distribution of Volunteers and Assignments

Areas where volunteered:	RI Survey % Total Mentions	US Survey % Total Mentions
Education	15.3%	10.4%
Youth development	12.6	10.5
Health organization	10.9	6.8
Public/society	10.5	4.7
Religious organization	9.1	13.7
Environment	7.8	5.5
Work-related	5.8	6.2
Political organizations	5.2	2.8
Private/community foundations	5.0	2.0
Human services	4.9	9.5
Art/culture	3.7	5.2
Recreation —adults	2.3	5.2
Informal/alone	1.6	14.6
International/foreign	1.6	1.5
Other: not specified	4.1	1.3

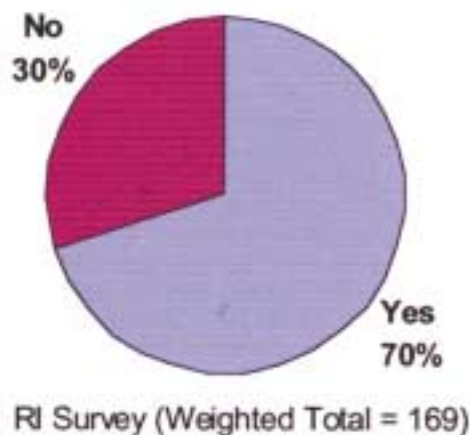
Volunteers



The majority of respondents who volunteer, 83%, give ten or less hours per month to their agencies. However, nearly half of all volunteers give between six to ten hours per month. Comparatively, the Independent Sector volunteers average 3.5 hours weekly or 15 hours per month.

The overwhelming majority of RI respondents volunteer with friends or family members.

Do You Volunteer with Family or Friends?



Volunteers

Why Do They Volunteer?

Those currently volunteering in RI cited empathetic reasons most frequently when asked what reasons listed below is most important to them. RI volunteers appear to follow national norms. However, it is important to note that the sub-category responses from the Independent Sector were not available, thus we have aggregated the responses from the VCRI survey to fit.

Reasons Cited for Volunteering

Reasons mentioned:	RI Survey % Total Mentions	US Survey % Total Mentions
<u>Feeling compassion for those in need</u>	<u>93%</u>	<u>86%</u>
You are helping others	62	
Giving back to the community	50	
Making a difference in someone's life	49	
Showing you care	47	
<u>Having an interest in the activity or work</u>	<u>63%</u>	<u>72%</u>
Having fun	49	
Gaining new experiences/skills	27	
Meeting new contacts	27	
<u>Gaining a new perspective on things</u>	<u>28%</u>	<u>70%</u>
Gaining self-respect	23	
Dealing with personal problems	8	
<u>Importance of the activity to people the volunteer respects</u>	<u>23%</u>	<u>6%</u>
Recognition from school or work	23	

Volunteers

The majority of those volunteering in RI mentioned learned of opportunities through a direct association such as their workplace, group association or knowing someone who could benefit from their activity. Thus, a tangible connection to an agency seems to be a major factor in creating awareness of opportunities.

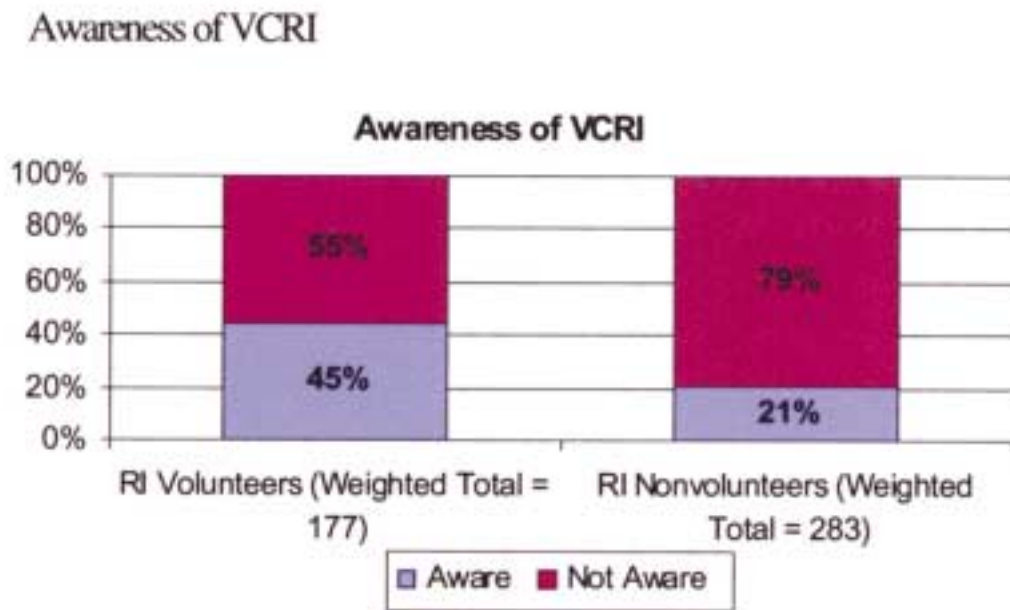
How learned of volunteer activities:	RI Survey % Total Mentions
Through participation in a group, organization or through workplace	48.0%
Someone asked me to volunteer	35.6
Had a family member or friend in an activity or benefiting from activity	22.2
Sought out activity on my own	16.1
Saw an advertisement (printed)	3.0
TV/radio ad	0.8
Other: not specified	5.4
Have searched internet for volunteer opportunities	10.2%

Nationally, according the Independent Sector, 89.5% of those asked to volunteer do volunteer while 22.3% of those not asked volunteer. The majority of those volunteering nationally learned of the opportunities in three different ways: they were asked; through participation in an organization; or through a family member or relative.

Those nationally asked by someone most frequently reported being asked by: a friend (50%); someone at their religious establishment (32%); a family member or relative (19%); or someone at work (12%).

National respondents who learned of their volunteer activity through participation in an organization most frequently cited their: place of worship (56%); workplace or employer (24%); school or college (15%); membership in a service club or professional association (13%); through another voluntary organization (13%).

Awareness of VCRI



Nearly half of the survey respondents who volunteer, 45%, are aware of the Volunteer Center of RI. Significantly, fewer non-volunteers are familiar with VCRI, only 21%.

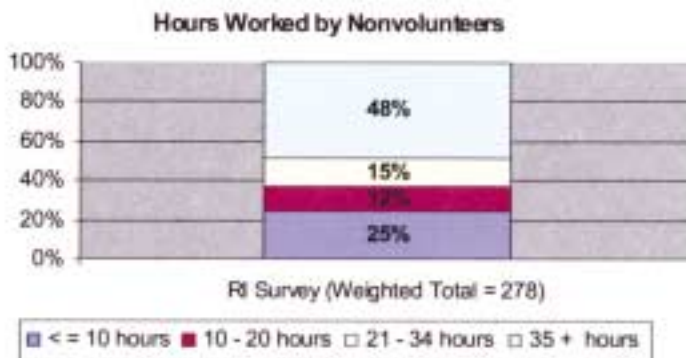
Barriers to Volunteering

Reasons for Not Volunteering

Reasons Cited:	RI Survey % Total Mentions
Personal schedule is too full	41.7%
Don't know how to get involved	12.7
No one ever asked	11.8
Age	11.4
May be unable to fulfill volunteer commitment	8.2
Nothing interesting	7.3
Health problems	5.9
No transportation	5.1
People should be paid for their work	4.7
Young children (have)	4.1
Other	5.6

While lack of time was cited most frequently (42%) as a reason for not having volunteered, 25% of the mentions related to a lack of information. Not having been asked and not knowing how to become involved combined for nearly a quarter of the total mentions.

Non-volunteer Demographics



While nearly half of the RI non-volunteers indicated they worked full-time, as a group fewer of them work full-time compared to RI volunteers.

