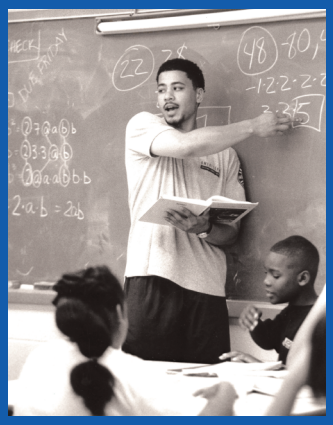
Serving Country and Community: A Longitudinal Study of Service in AmeriCorps

Early Findings

December 2004



Corporation for NATIONAL & COMMUNITY SERVICE

AMERICORPS

This report was prepared for the Corporation for National and Community Service under Contract Number ABT97T005 with Abt Associates Inc. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the Corporation for National and Community Service. No official endorsement by the Corporation for National and Community Service is intended or should be inferred.

Corporation for National and Community Service

Office of Research and Policy Development

December 2004

Created in 1993, the Corporation for National and Community Service engages more than 1.5 million Americans annually in improving communities through service. The Corporation supports service at national, state, and local levels through:

Senior Corps, the network of programs that helps Americans age 55 and older use their skills and experience in service opportunities that address the needs of their communities. Senior Corps includes the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), Foster Grandparent Program, and Senior Companion Program;

AmeriCorps, whose members serve with local and national organizations to meet community needs while earning education awards to help finance college or training; and

Learn and Serve America, which helps link community service and learning objectives for youth from kindergarten through college as well as youth in community-based organizations.

This report is in the public domain. Authorization to reproduce it in whole or in part is granted. The suggested citation is: Corporation for National and Community Service, Office of Research and Policy Development, *Serving Country and Community: A Longitudinal Study of Service in AmeriCorps, Washington, D.C., 2004.*

Upon request, this material will be made available in alternative formats for people with disabilities. This report is also available on the Corporation's Web site at: http://www.nationalservice.org.

Prepared for
Corporation for National
and Community Service
1201 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20525

Prepared by
JoAnn Jastrzab, Project Director
Leanne Giordono
Anne Chase
Jesse Valente
Anne Hazlett
Richard LaRock, Jr.
Derrick James
Abt Associates Inc.

Serving Country and Community: A Longitudinal Study of Service in AmeriCorps

Early Findings

December 2004

Corporation for National and Community Service
Office of Research and Policy Development

Prepared by:
JoAnn Jastrzab, Project Director
Leanne Giordono
Anne Chase
Jesse Valente
Anne Hazlett
Richard LaRock, Jr.
Derrick James

Abt Associates Inc.
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Abt Associates Inc.

Acknowledgements

This study was conducted by Abt Associates Inc. for the Corporation for National and Community Service. The report authors wish to acknowledge the contributions of many individuals to this study. First of all, we would like to thank the individuals in the study sample—both AmeriCorps members and comparison group members—for the time they spent answering our surveys and talking with interviewers on the telephone. We appreciate their time, candor, and thoughtfulness.

We also want to thank the AmeriCorps*State and National and AmeriCorps*National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) programs that participated in the study for their help in administering the baseline survey to incoming members. We especially want to recognize the eight programs that participated in the process study, hosting us through rounds of site visits and responding to our questions, and allowing us access to staff, members, and service projects. During the design of this study, the thoughtful insights of the AmeriCorps programs we visited were essential to the construction of our *Theory of Change*, providing the foundation for development of the outcome measures.

Numerous individuals at the Corporation for National and Community Service provided guidance and thoughtful advice throughout the five-year course of the study, beginning with Susan Labin, our original Project Officer. Susan provided the initial enthusiasm and dedication to detail that helped shape the design of our outcome measures. Marcia Scott followed as Project Officer and guided us through much of the data collection and analysis design. Her contributions to this study, along with those of her colleagues Lance Potter, Bill Bentley, Charles Helfer, and Carol Hafford, were invaluable. We especially appreciate their support and advice. The current staff at the Office of Research and Policy Development guided this study through the final data collection and analysis. Kevin Cramer, David Reingold, Robert Grimm and Nathan Dietz helped shape the analysis with their insightful comments and questions. We also recognize the ongoing support for this study provided by the Corporation's Board of Directors and, in particular, the vision and leadership of former Board members Dr. Leslie Lenkowsky and Dr. Thomas Erlich.

Our Technical Working Group provided sage advice throughout the study. In particular, Dr. Christopher Winship helped us navigate through difficult analytic decisions at key time points during the study. Helpful suggestions were made by all members of the Working Group, which also included JoAnn Intili, Ellen Irie, James L. Perry, Alan Melchior, Tom Smith, D. Wayne Osgood, and Carol Weiss.

Finally, this report would not be possible without the valuable support of our colleagues. As reviewer and advisor to the project, Dr. Nancy Burstein's commitment to technical excellence and quality greatly enhanced the design of our analysis and reporting. Survey Directors Todd Robbins and David Deal, along with the rest of Abt's Survey Group, achieved high response rates on the multiple rounds of data collection for this study. Finally, editor and production coordinator Jan Nicholson processed our draft and final documents with considerable care and insight.

Content

Overview of Findings **1**

Chapter 1: Study Overview **3**
- AmeriCorps: Continuing the Tradition of Service in America 3
- The Corporation and AmeriCorps 3
- Study Design 6
- Organization of this Report 11
- Glossary of Evaluation Terms 12

Chapter 2: AmeriCorps*State and National Program Characteristics **15**
- Strengthening Communities and Providing Needed Services 17
- Developing AmeriCorps Members 19

Chapter 3: A Profile of AmeriCorps Members **23**
- Demographic Characteristics 23
- Reasons for Joining AmeriCorps 25
- The AmeriCorps Experience 26

Chapter 4: The Impact of AmeriCorps **39**
- Method Used to Estimate Impacts 39
- Summary of Impacts 40
- Impacts on AmeriCorps Members 44
  - Civic Engagement 47
  - Education 58
  - Employment 61
  - Teamwork and Other Life Skills 64
- Conclusion 69

Appendices:

A Comparison of Treatment and Comparison Groups
B Detailed Description of Impact Analysis
C Programs Participating in the Study
D General Theory of Change Model: AmeriCorps
E Survey Instruments
Baseline: AmeriCorps, Comparison Groups
Post-Program: AmeriCorps*State and National, AmeriCorps*NCCC, Comparison Groups
Post-Program Supplemental Interview: AmeriCorps and Comparison Groups
AmeriCorps Program Director Survey
F Analytic Sample
G Development of Composite Measures
H AmeriCorps Weights
I Detailed Results from the Impact Analysis
J Detailed Results from the Subgroup Analysis
K AmeriCorps*State and National Program-Level Analysis
L Documents Consulted
M Surveys Reviewed for the Study

Overview of Findings

Serving Country and Community: A Longitudinal Study of Service in AmeriCorps is an evaluation to assess the long-term impact of AmeriCorps on participants' (referred to as *members*) civic engagement, education, employment, and life skills. This report presents early findings on the impacts of AmeriCorps on members' attitudes and behavior. Most of the outcomes are assessed when AmeriCorps members enrolled in the program and approximately one year later as they were completing their term of service, although a limited number of impacts cover the period three years after enrollment.

The study sample comprises a nationally representative sample of more than 2,000 AmeriCorps members from over 100 AmeriCorps*State and National programs and three (of five) AmeriCorps*National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) regional campuses, as well as almost 2,000 non-members in comparison groups. The study compares changes in the attitudes and behavior of AmeriCorps members over time to those of similarly interested individuals not enrolled in AmeriCorps, controlling for interest in national and community service, member and family demographics, and prior civic engagement. The study was conducted by Abt Associates Inc., an independent social policy and research firm, under contract to the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Key Findings

Overall, the study found that for numerous outcomes, participation in both AmeriCorps*State and National and AmeriCorps*NCCC resulted in statistically significant positive effects on participants. The effect of AmeriCorps participation in the AmeriCorps*State and National program is consistently positive across a majority of civic engagement, employment, and life skills outcomes, and over half of the effects are statistically significant. While the effects of participation for the AmeriCorps* NCCC program are more mixed, the results are generally positive.

The effect of participation was particularly strong on measures of ***civic engagement***, a key priority for the Corporation. The study found that participation in both AmeriCorps*State and National and AmeriCorps*NCCC resulted in statistically significant positive impacts on members' connection to community, knowledge about problems facing their community, participation in community-based activities, and personal growth through service. While AmeriCorps members increased their level of civic engagement on many of the outcome measures, scores for comparison group members typically showed little or no change during the same period.

The study found that in the short term, AmeriCorps participation had no significant impacts on measures of ***educational outcomes***. It is important to note that individuals in the comparison group had at least one extra year to advance their education while AmeriCorps members were engaged in the program. AmeriCorps members are also allowed up to seven years to use their education awards, suggesting additional time may be needed to observe the impacts of AmeriCorps participation on educational outcomes.

The study found that AmeriCorps participation had a meaningful impact on ***employment outcomes***. Most notably, participants in AmeriCorps*State and National programs were significantly more likely to choose careers in public service compared to the comparison group. While AmeriCorps*NCCC participation does not appear to have impacted career choices, AmeriCorps*NCCC members did experience statistically significant increases in their work skills compared to the comparison group. These findings suggest that the Corporation's efforts to support member development and skills-building are yielding positive results.

The study did not identify any significant positive effects of AmeriCorps participation on the selected ***life skills***, including appreciation of cultural and ethnic diversity and constructive group interactions. These early findings suggest it may be important for the Corporation to strategize about better ways to support the development of members' interpersonal skills, and to promote an environment in which diversity is embraced.

In addition to assessing the overall impacts of AmeriCorps*State and National and AmeriCorps* NCCC programs, analyses were conducted to explore whether the effects of AmeriCorps participation differ across demographic subgroups of members. A program-level analysis was also conducted to determine whether effects of participation differ across programs with different programmatic characteristics. Although minor differences were identified for some subgroups, these differences were not statistically significant. The findings suggest the effects of AmeriCorps participation are not concentrated in particular subgroups, but are experienced by all members. The findings were also consistent across program characteristics and member experiences. Although AmeriCorps programs differ substantially, these findings indicate that the AmeriCorps model produces outcomes that are generally applicable across AmeriCorps programs.

The study also provides descriptive information about AmeriCorps*State and National programs participating in the study and a profile of members' experiences in AmeriCorps.

The findings in this report reflect only the initial results of a long-term longitudinal study. The longer-term impact of participation in AmeriCorps on members' civic engagement, education, employment, and life skills may not be known for several years. Subsequent reports will assess whether the early outcomes identified in this study will be sustained over time and whether new areas of program impact will appear.

Chapter 1

Study Overview

AmeriCorps: Continuing the Tradition of Service in America

AmeriCorps is one of our country's largest national service programs, engaging more than 50,000 individuals annually in intensive service to meet critical needs in education, public safety, health, and the environment. Since its creation in 1993, more than 350,000 men and women have served in the program. This report is based upon the initial stage in a series of studies to examine the effect of participation in AmeriCorps on service participants.

AmeriCorps builds on our country's long history of citizens engaged in volunteerism and service to their community. When Alexis de Tocqueville toured our young country in the early nineteenth century, he commented on the American spirit of voluntary effort for the common good. [1] As early as 1910, Americans envisioned citizen-service on a national scale.[2] With its roots in Franklin D. Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s and early 1940s, an institutionalized service movement has developed over the decades. In the early 1960s, President Kennedy established the Peace Corps, expanding national service to the international community. Later in that decade, the Economic Opportunity Act expanded national service with the creation of Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), the National Teacher Corps, and the Neighborhood Youth Corps.

More recently, the National and Community Service Act of 1990 has funded existing and new local and state community service initiatives and provided them with a unified structure and national focus. The National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 furthered the national service movement by creating the Corporation for National and Community Service, a public agency that provides Americans of all ages and backgrounds with opportunities to serve their communities. The Act also established AmeriCorps as a national service program.

The Corporation and AmeriCorps

The ***Corporation for National and Community Service*** is an independent government agency established in 1993 by the National and Community Service Trust Act. The Corporation's mission is to engage Americans of all ages and backgrounds in community-based national service that is intended to address the Nation's education, public safety, human, and environmental needs in order to achieve direct and demonstrable results. [3] In addition to AmeriCorps, the Corporation provides opportunities for millions of individuals to engage in meaningful service in their communities through the Senior Corps and Learn and Serve America programs.

---

1 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*.

2 William James, "The Moral Equivalent of War." Lecture 11 in *Memories and Studies.* New York: Longman Green and Co., 1911, pp. 267–296.

3 The Corporation is now working with the USA Freedom Corps to promote a culture of citizenship, service, and responsibility.

AmeriCorps is a national service initiative funding a network of community-based programs open to all Americans age 17 and older. In exchange for a year of full-time (1,700 hours per year) or sustained part-time community service, AmeriCorps participants, referred to as *members*, receive an education award of up to $4,725 that can be used toward higher education or vocational training, or to repay qualified student loans. Members also receive a subsistence stipend while they serve. In the 1999–2000 program year, from which the study sample was drawn, over 40,000 members enrolled in AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps programs address community needs in education, public safety, human services, and the environment; increase the capacity of nonprofit organizations to serve their communities; and support and encourage greater engagement of citizens in volunteering.

This study focuses on the effects of service on members who serve in two of the three main AmeriCorps programs: AmeriCorps*State and National programs and the AmeriCorps*National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC).[4]

- ***AmeriCorps*State and National Programs*** comprise the largest set of AmeriCorps programs and are operated by national multi-state nonprofit organizations and community-based nonprofit organizations. AmeriCorps*State members enroll through a network of local community-based organizations, educational institutions, and other agencies receiving Corporation funding through their gubernatorially appointed state service commissions. AmeriCorps*National programs are funded through national nonprofit service organizations, such as Habitat for Humanity and Communities in Schools, that operate programs in multiple states. In program year 1999–2000, AmeriCorps*State and National programs enrolled approximately 36,000 members. The minimum age for participating is 17. About half of the members were 22 to 30 years old, but many were in their 30s and 40s. In the year of intake into this study, about three-quarters of the members served full-time. FY2000 funding for AmeriCorps*State and National programs totaled $228 million. An additional $70 million was funded through the National Service Trust, most of which provided education benefits and education awards to AmeriCorps*State and National members.[5]
- ***The AmeriCorps*National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC)*** is a ten-month, full-time, residential service program operated by the Corporation for individuals aged 18 to 24. The program takes its inspiration from the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps, which put thousands of people to work restoring the national environment. The NCCC attempts to combine the best practices of civilian and military service using a team-based approach to serve communities. NCCC's residential structure is intended to emphasize discipline, mental and physical conditioning, responsibility, and accountability. In program year 1999–2000, approximately 1,000 members were enrolled across five NCCC regional campuses. FY2000 funding totaled $18 million. In addition, a

[4] The third AmeriCorps program, Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), was not included in this study. VISTA is a highly decentralized program; its members serve individually or in small groups and focus primarily on building capacity in local communities. In contrast, AmeriCorps*State and National and AmeriCorps*NCCC members focus on the provision of direct services. Since the VISTA experience and member profiles differ appreciably from the other programs, the effects of service participation may be different from those for State and National and NCCC members. Additional information about AmeriCorps programs and structure can be found at www.americorps.org.

[5] A small percentage of these trust funds supported NCCC and VISTA members.

small percentage of the $70 million funded through the National Service Trust provided education benefits and education awards to NCCC members. Members spent approximately half of their time at the regional campuses serving their local communities, and half off-site on *spikes* with their team members where they served communities across their region.

As summarized below in Exhibit 1.1, AmeriCorps*State and National and AmeriCorps*NCCC represent quite different program models. In addition to NCCC's narrower age range, NCCC members were relocated geographically to one of five regional campuses where they lived in converted military bases or hospitals. NCCC members are organized into teams and they spend just about all of their time with their team members, including traveling (and living) around the region conducting short-term community service projects in local communities.

Exhibit 1.1

Characteristics of AmeriCorps*State and National and AmeriCorps*NCCC Programs, 1999–2000 Program Year

	State and National	NCCC
Enrollment	36,000	1,000
Locations	700 grantees[a]	5 regional campuses
Age range of members	17+	18–24
Operated by:	Local, state, and national nonprofits, government agencies	The Corporation
Recruitment	Local[b]	National
Type	Primarily non-residential	Residential
Participation	Both full-time and part-time	Full-time only
Number of service projects per member	Generally one primary project, often with smaller short-term projects	4–6 projects

a Some grantees operate in more than one location.

b During the 1999–2000 program year, some applicants to AmeriCorps*State and National were identified through a national recruitment effort implemented by the Corporation. Those applicants were referred to local programs based on their geographic and service interests for consideration as part of those programs' standard selection and enrollment process.

Study Design

Research Questions and Analytic Approach

Serving Country and Community: A Longitudinal Study of Service in AmeriCorps was designed as a longitudinal study to determine the outcomes and impacts of national and community service on members who serve in the AmeriCorps*State and National programs and the AmeriCorps*National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC). Findings in this report reflect only the first part of what is expected to be a long-term effort to assess the effects over time of participation in AmeriCorps. This initial report describes members approximately one year after enrollment in the program. Influences of the program on members may change over time. Some effects may take time to materialize, while others may dissipate over time. The longer-term effects on members may not be known for years to come.

This study was designed to address three objectives, as specified by the Corporation:[6]

- Describe AmeriCorps programs
- Describe AmeriCorps members
- Describe the impact of AmeriCorps on members' attitudes and behaviors

Findings reported in the next three chapters of this report correspond to these three research objectives.

To address these objectives, the Corporation undertook the current longitudinal study of the long-term effects of participation in AmeriCorps. Impact evaluations measure the degree to which a particular program, service, or intervention affects its intended target group. The ideal strategy for assessing program impacts is to employ an experimental design in which program applicants are randomly assigned into two groups: treatment (enrolled in the program) and control (excluded from enrollment in the program). However, during the 1999–2000 program year, when this study was implemented, AmeriCorps was still in the process of building national awareness and many local programs were struggling to recruit enough qualified candidates to fill their enrollment targets. Therefore, the Corporation determined that implementation of random assignment would not be feasible. In order to assess impacts, the study relied upon a quasi-experimental design that used a comparison group of individuals similar to the individuals enrolled in AmeriCorps.

[6] One of the main goals of the Corporation is to improve the lives of those who serve. Of the eight legislative purposes of the agency, educational development and civic responsibility are benefits that are intended to accrue to service participants (45 C.F.R. Subpart E sections 2522.500–550). These purposes are reflected in the Corporation's mission and vision statement, which includes expanding a sense of community and creating an active citizenship where Americans feel greater responsibility towards others.

The Research Sample

The study includes a nationally representative group of over 2,000 full-time members from AmeriCorps*State and National programs and the AmeriCorps*National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) in the 1999–2000 program year, as well as almost 2,000 individuals in two comparison groups.

Sample Size

	AmeriCorps	Comparison
State and National	1,752	1,524
NCCC	476	401
Total	2,228	1,925

State and National members in the study include individuals who enrolled in a nationally representative sample of 108 programs;[7] the NCCC member sample comprises all first-year members enrolled in three (of five) NCCC regional campuses.[8] The sample includes individuals who enrolled in the programs between September 1999 and January 2000. Only full-time first-year members—those who did not have prior AmeriCorps experience—were selected for inclusion in the study.

In selecting comparison groups for this study, our goal was to identify individuals who demonstrated both an awareness of AmeriCorps and some interest in participation in service. The State and National comparison group comprised individuals who had indicated knowledge of, and interest in, AmeriCorps by contacting the Corporation's toll-free information line and requesting information about the program, but who did not actually enroll during the study period. For reasons of comparability, the comparison group was limited to those contacting the information line during roughly the same period as individuals in the program group—summer to fall 1999.

The NCCC comparison group was selected from the pool of individuals who applied for entry into the NCCC during the spring 1999 recruitment selection process[9] but either did not enroll because of a limited number of slots in the program or were invited to enroll, but declined.

Comparison groups:

State and National: individuals who inquired about AmeriCorps but who did not actually enroll

NCCC: individuals who were invited to enroll but who declined, plus eligible applicants on the wait list for the program

The central challenge of a comparison group design stems from the fact that the individuals in the comparison group may not be absolutely equivalent to those who enrolled in AmeriCorps on some important characteristic that influences program outcomes. Since we expected applicants for national service programs to have potentially unobservable qualities (motivation, commitment, interest) that differentiate them from the average individual, the comparison group selection process placed primary emphasis on finding a pool of individuals who would be comparable on this set of unobservable characteristics. We have drawn comparison groups from seemingly similar populations. Because the NCCC comparison group was drawn from a limited pool of quite similar candidates to

[7] For purposes of efficiency, only programs projected to enroll five or more full-time members were included in the study.

[8] Members from the Western, Capital, and Central NCCC campuses were included in the study. A list of the State and National programs whose members were included in the study appears in Appendix C.

[9] Candidates are recruited and selected during the spring for subsequent enrollment in the NCCC during the fall and winter.

the program, the match is better than that for the State and National program. In addition to the similarities, because we were unable to employ an experimental design (random assignment), we needed to consider the possibility that those who joined were systematically different from those who inquired but did not enroll, and that these differences, and not participation in the program, accounted for differences in outcomes. If there was such selection bias, then effects identified by the study may be due to differences in the types of individuals in the two groups and not necessarily to program participation.

As documented in the baseline report for this study,[10] in general the treatment and comparison groups were quite similar in age and on some outcome measures. The AmeriCorps*NCCC treatment and comparison groups, which were drawn from a very similar pool of individuals, were more comparable on a wide variety of outcome measures and demographic characteristics than were the AmeriCorps*State and National treatment and comparison groups. In addition to the similarities, there were several demographic and attitudinal differences between the treatment and comparison groups for both programs when they entered the sample. For example, State and National members were more likely to be men and less likely to be white than were members of the comparison group. NCCC members were more highly educated than their counterparts in the comparison group. However, both comparison groups scored higher on some measures of civic engagement than did members at baseline. Appendix A presents the comparison of measures for individuals in both State and National and NCCC by treatment and comparison status.[11]

To mitigate the threat of selection bias, Propensity Score Analysis (PSA) was incorporated into the design of the post-program analysis. PSA estimates treatment effects by comparing treatment cases with comparison group cases that have a similar probability of selection into treatment based on their measured characteristics. The study collected a great deal of information about background and motivational characteristics that might affect both selection into treatment and the outcomes of interest, such as exposure to service during childhood and prior participation in service. This information was used, along with some baseline characteristics, to create for each study respondent a measure of their likelihood to join AmeriCorps*State and National or AmeriCorps*NCCC—i.e., their propensity score. Treatment effects were estimated by comparing AmeriCorps members with comparison group members who had similar probabilities of enrolling in AmeriCorps. This approach is described in more detail in Appendix B.

Process for Identifying Outcome Measures

As part of the design stage, evaluation staff visited six AmeriCorps programs to identify the types of outcomes that may be associated with participation in the program. The programs visited were selected by Corporation program staff because they were perceived to be both of high quality (and therefore likely to have member outcomes) and representative of the range of program models in AmeriCorps. On these visits, we observed service activities and talked with administrators, members,

---

[10] The baseline report, released by the Corporation in 2001, provided detailed information on characteristics of the study participants. The report can be accessed at http://www.nationalservice.org.

[11] For additional discussion of the comparability of the AmeriCorps and comparison groups, see Chapter 4 in Jastrzab, JoAnn, Lawrence Bernstein, Lisa Litin, Sytske Braat-Campbell, Eric Stickney, Ellyn Artis, and Leanne Giordono, *A Profile of AmeriCorps Members at Baseline.* Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates Inc., June 2001.

and alumni. Our goals were (1) to develop an understanding of how participation could affect members and (2) to identify the categories of outcomes that may be linked with participation. We then used a *theory of change* or logic model to construct a model for each program.

The program-specific models identified the program activities and how these activities were hypothesized to be causally linked to particular member outcomes. Each model was reviewed by the corresponding program staff for accuracy and comprehensiveness. The program-specific models were used to develop a more general model of change that could be adapted across the range of AmeriCorps programs (see Appendix D). The model anticipated that study participants' attitudes would precede, and be directly related to, their subsequent behaviors. It indicates that AmeriCorps program activities were expected to lead to a number of short-term outcomes observable at the end of the program. Those outcomes fall into the following four broad outcome areas:

- Civic Engagement
- Education
- Employment
- Teamwork and Other Life Skills

The composite outcome measures defined by the study (see Chapter 4) correspond to these short-term expected outcomes. To the extent possible, the study relied on outcome measures that have been previously used and validated on other studies—for example, the General Social Survey, the Independent Sector Surveys on Giving and Volunteering in the U.S., and the Teach for America survey. (See Appendices L and M for a full list of documents and references consulted for this study.) During the period of instrument development in 1998, however, existing measures were not available for many of the complex attitudes and behaviors examined in the study. The design phase of the study included an instrument development process that included a review of existing measures, adaptation and development of new measures, and field testing and content validation.

The study was based on three rounds of participant data collection, as presented in Exhibit 1.2. In addition to collecting information from individuals in the study sample, we also collected information from the program directors of the AmeriCorps programs in which study members were enrolled about the basic characteristics of those programs. As well as reporting on member outcomes, this report includes analysis of selected programmatic features and participants' perceptions of their program experiences.

Copies of the surveys used on this study are provided in Appendix E.

Caveats

The readers of this report should be cognizant of several issues related to this study. First, as noted earlier, this report reflects the initial stage in a long-term, longitudinal assessment of the effects of participation in AmeriCorps. Our findings reflect the outcomes of members approximately one year after they enrolled in AmeriCorps. The longer-term impacts of participation in AmeriCorps will be assessed in future rounds of the study, and the final effects on members may not be known for several years. Second, most of the outcomes measured are attitudinal, not behavioral. At this time, it remains unknown whether attitudinal changes identified in this study will result in subsequent behavioral

change, which will be assessed in future phases of this study. Finally, this report is based on the AmeriCorps program and its members during the 1999–2000 program year. Since that time, the program has continued to evolve, and there are some important differences between AmeriCorps now and the program that was operational during the study period. Specifically, more AmeriCorps members serve less than full time in part- or reduced-time programs; during the 1999–2000 program year the vast majority of members were enrolled full-time in AmeriCorps. Our study included only full-time AmeriCorps members.[12] In addition, during the study year, the primary issue area addressed by AmeriCorps was the provision of services to children and youth. More recently, the Corporation has increased its focus on promoting public safety and homeland security programs following the tragedy of September 11, 2001.

Exhibit 1.2

Three Rounds of Participant Surveys

Data Collection	Timing[a]	Focus
Baseline Survey Fall 1999–Winter–2000	*Members:* within initial days of enrollment in AmeriCorps *Comparison Group:* 3–4 months after inquiring about AmeriCorps (roughly comparable to the time they would have enrolled in AmeriCorps)	• Prior service experience • Other background characteristics • Attitudinal information related to outcomes
Post-Program Survey Late Fall 2000–Spring 2001	***State and National Members:*** 1 year after baseline; approximately 1–2 months after the treatment group completed their AmeriCorps service ***NCCC Members:*** During last weeks of participation in the program; approximately 10 months after baseline ***Comparison Group:*** 12 months after baseline	• Attitudinal information related to outcomes • Information on AmeriCorps program experience (members only)
Post-Program State and National Member Supplemental Survey[b] Fall 2002–Spring 2003	***Members:*** 3 years after baseline survey (approximately 2 years after most members completed their service) ***Comparison Group:*** 3 years after baseline survey	• Additional background information to address selection bias • Social networking behavior • Additional information on program experience (members only) • Limited data on post-program activities

a A note on survey timing: The duration of AmeriCorps programs was generally between 10 and 12 months. Cases were released for the post-program and post-program supplemental interviews at 12 and 36 months after baseline interview. Most respondents were interviewed within a few weeks of survey release. In some instances, it took longer (up to five months) to locate and interview respondents.

b The third round of data collection on this study was originally intended to collect follow-up data on sample members. However, because of the decision to employ Propensity Score Analysis, the objective changed to collecting additional background and motivational information about sample members.

[12] Fifty-eight percent of members served full-time in program year 2002–2003.

Organization of this Report

This study of AmeriCorps was conducted by Abt Associates Inc., an independent social policy and research firm, under contract to the Corporation.

As noted earlier, the remainder of this report is organized around the three research objectives for the study. We begin by providing a context for the study in Chapter 2, describing characteristics of the AmeriCorps*State and National programs in this study based on information provided by their program directors (NCCC programs were not included in this analysis because of the small number of campuses studied). In Chapter 3, we describe the characteristics of AmeriCorps members in the study, along with their perceptions of the program experience. Finally, in Chapter 4 we provide our findings about the effect of AmeriCorps participation, the primary focus of this study. Outcomes are presented for both AmeriCorps*State National and AmeriCorps*NCCC. Both attitudinal and behavioral outcomes are reported. Where possible, we compare the outcomes with extant data from national studies or surveys measuring comparable outcomes.

A glossary of evaluation terms used in this report is presented on the next page.

This report is intended for a broad audience. Discussion of technical issues and additional information about the study are provided in appendices; these appendices are listed in Exhibit 1.3.

Glossary of Evaluation Terms

Effect Size: A standardized measure of the treatment (AmeriCorps program) effect, which can be used to compare the results across outcomes. The effect size represents the magnitude of the average treatment effect for each outcome relative to the amount of natural variation in that outcome. Effect sizes are increasingly used in educational research, where conventional guidelines suggest interpreting an effect size of around .20 as a small effect, .50 a medium effect, and .80 a large effect.

Experimental Design: A research strategy in which eligible applicants are randomly assigned into treatment and comparison groups. Individuals assigned to the treatment group are invited to enroll in the program being studied; comparison group members are barred from entering the program during the study period. At the end of the study period, differences between the two groups can be attributed to the opportunity to participate in the program.

Propensity Score Analysis (PSA): An analytic technique that estimates treatment effects by comparing treatment (AmeriCorps members) and comparison group members who have a similar probability of participation, making full use of available data on characteristics of individuals in the study sample.

Quasi-experimental Design: A research strategy in which program (treatment) and comparison group members are assigned non-randomly but in which controls are introduced to minimize threats to the validity of the findings.

- ***Treatment Group:*** A group of individuals who participate in a program or intervention. This study includes two treatment groups: AmeriCorps*State and National members and AmeriCorps*NCCC members.
- ***Comparison Group:*** A group of individuals who are similar to those in the AmeriCorps groups but who did not enroll in AmeriCorps during the study period. Comparison groups were formed as follows:
  - ***State and National Comparison Group:*** Individuals who inquired about AmeriCorps but who did not enroll in any AmeriCorps program during the study period.
  - ***NCCC Comparison Group:*** Individuals who applied to the NCCC and were invited to enroll in the program but who declined, along with eligible individuals on the wait list to enroll in the NCCC. The comparison group includes only individuals who did not enroll in any AmeriCorps program during the study period.

Selection Bias: The potential bias in impact estimates resulting from differences between AmeriCorps members and individuals in the comparison group. The study used Propensity Score Analysis to minimize the effects of selection.

Statistical Significance: The probability that we would have observed the difference we found between AmeriCorps participants and individuals in the comparison group simply by chance, if there were no actual difference between the two groups. In the tables throughout the report, statistical significance is indicated for effects where there is a 5 percent or less chance that such a difference would have occurred by chance.

Exhibit 1.3

Appendices

A	Comparison of Treatment and Comparison Groups
B	Detailed Description of Impact Analysis
C	Programs Participating in the Study
D	General Theory of Change Model: AmeriCorps
E	Survey Instruments Baseline: AmeriCorps Comparison Groups Post-Program: AmeriCorps*State and National AmeriCorps*NCCC Comparison Groups Post-Program Supplemental Interview AmeriCorps Comparison Groups AmeriCorps Program Director Survey
F	Analytic Sample
G	Development of Composite Measures
H	AmeriCorps Weights
I	Detailed Results from the Impact Analysis
J	Detailed Results from the Subgroup Analysis
K	AmeriCorps*StateNational Program-Level Analysis
L	Documents Consulted
M	Surveys Reviewed for the Study

Chapter 2

AmeriCorps*State and National Program Characteristics

1999–2000 AmeriCorps Enrollment	
Total Enrollment	
State and National	37,000
NCCC	1,000
VISTA	2,000
Percent of programs enrolling full-time and part-time members	
Both full-time and part-time members	53%
Full-time members only	47%

In this chapter we describe characteristics of AmeriCorps*State and National, by far the largest AmeriCorps component.[13] AmeriCorps*State and National programs are operated by nonprofit organizations and other agencies that receive funding from the Corporation. The organizations receiving grants, referred to in this report as *sponsoring organizations*, are responsible for recruiting, selecting, and supervising AmeriCorps members. In most programs, AmeriCorps members provide services at their sponsor organization, examples of which include schools and neighborhood health clinics. In addition, sponsoring organizations often partner with other local organizations, referred to as *host sites*, where the AmeriCorps members also provide services. Individuals who receive the services or benefits of the services provided by AmeriCorps members are referred to as *service beneficiaries*.

Our study included a nationally representative sample of 108 AmeriCorps programs out of the approximately 700 programs that operated during the 1999–2000 program year.[14] The average State and National program enrolled 34 members, with participation ranging from a low of 5 to a high of 442 among the programs reporting, with a median of 25 members. On average, programs enrolled 21 full-time members and 13 part-time members in program year 1999–2000.[15] About one-third of the programs were small, enrolling 15 or fewer members. The largest programs were either statewide or in large metropolitan areas.[16] Exhibit 2.1 displays the range of program size. Only 5 percent of the programs had a residential component, where members lived on site.

Generally, the Corporation funds AmeriCorps programs in three-year cycles, and the 1999–2000 cohort represented the last year in the second round of three-year cycles. The majority (67 percent) of AmeriCorps programs funded in 1999–2000 received funding for at least four years (Exhibit 2.2).

---

[13] Information for the AmeriCorps*NCCC programs included in the sample is not included in this part of the report, due to the small number of programs included in the sample. NCCC members are assigned to one of five regional campuses; members in three of those campuses were included in the study.

[14] The data source for this chapter is the AmeriCorps Program Director Survey. Data were weighted to reflect the entire State and National program. Anecdotal data were based on site visits to AmeriCorps programs, conducted as part of the evaluation. A list of AmeriCorps programs whose members were included in the study is provided in Appendix C.

[15] For efficiency purposes, programs enrolling fewer than five full-time members were excluded from participation in the study.

[16] The two largest programs in our sample were operated by the Washington State Service Corps and the Houston Reads Commission.

Exhibit 2.1

AmeriCorps*State and National Program Size: Number of Members

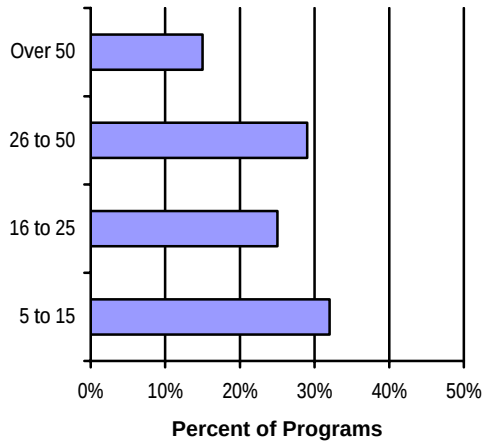
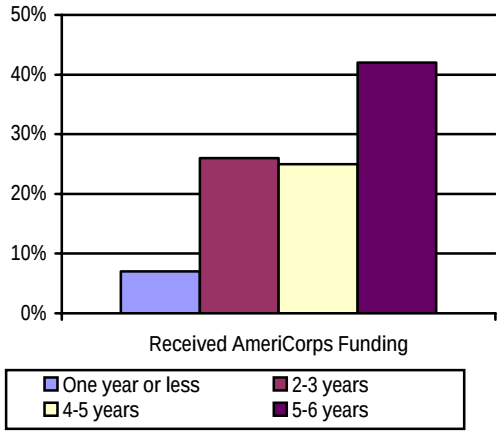


Exhibit 2.2

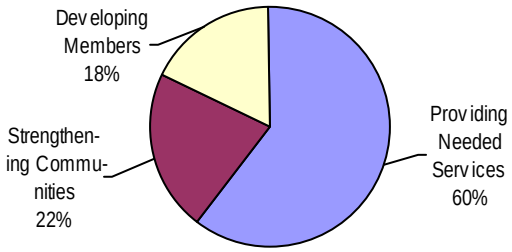
How long has your organization been in operation/received AmeriCorps *State and National funding?



During the study year, the Corporation for National and Community service identified three key areas—providing needed services, strengthening communities and developing members—to be addressed by programs, and specified services for children and youth as a national priority for AmeriCorps grantees. In combination with the local context, these objectives ultimately influence the program organization, the services provided, and recruitment strategies.

Exhibit 2.3

Most Important Goal



We asked program directors to rank the three national AmeriCorps goals in order of importance to their programs. As indicated in Exhibit 2.3, a majority of the programs (60 percent) rated Providing Needed Services as their most important goal, with Strengthening Communities and Developing Members each being the most important for about 20 percent of the programs.

In the following sections, we describe AmeriCorps' programming as organized by these goals, reporting separately for Developing Members, since this report focuses specifically on the effect of participation in AmeriCorps on members.

Strengthening Communities and Providing Needed Services

AmeriCorps' Sponsoring Organizations

Most AmeriCorps programs (64 percent) were operated by community-based organizations. State agencies operated an additional 10 percent of the programs, including faith-based programs that represented 6 percent of the sample in the 1999–2000 program year.[17] Less than 10 percent of programs were administered by each of the following agency types: local education agencies, other local government agencies, four-year colleges, community colleges, private foundations, and other agencies.

Organizations that sponsored AmeriCorps programs appear to have been generally stable. Eighty-three percent had been in operation for more than five years; less than 2 percent had been in operation one year or less. AmeriCorps sponsoring organizations deployed members throughout their communities, with the typical program providing services at an average of 13 different locations or host sites. The organizations that sponsored AmeriCorps programs themselves provided a wide array of services, as indicated in Exhibit 2.4, with education being the most common, followed by economic development and public health. Most organizations offered more than one type of service.

Exhibit 2.4

Services Offered to Communities by Organizations that Sponsored AmeriCorps

Education	51%
Economic development	39%
Public health	39%
Job training/placement	37%
Housing-related activities	29%
Parenting skills development	25%
Child care	22%
Mental health	20%
Environment	19%

Multiple responses allowed

Host Sites

AmeriCorps programs normally partner with other local organizations—referred to as *host sites*—to provide service opportunities to members. The typical AmeriCorps program provided services at 13 different locations in addition to services at the sponsoring organization. A sizeable majority of programs (85 percent) relied on host sites for the provision of some of their service opportunities; only 15 percent of the programs had members serving only in their own organization. Most host sites had an existing relationship with the AmeriCorps sponsor prior to becoming a service site (59 percent). Most programs relied on their staff to select host sites (42 percent) or used a competitive process (41 percent). Members were involved in host site selection in about a fifth of the programs (18 percent). All host sites were involved in planning service activities, and in 60 percent of the sites, the staff participated in the provision of service along with members.

Service Areas

AmeriCorps programs provided a wide array of services. As noted above, the Corporation specified four issue areas to be addressed by AmeriCorps programs. Consistent with AmeriCorps's national priority in the year of the study —provision of services to children and youth—educational services were by far the most common activity for the programs, with almost three-quarters (73 percent)

[17] In fiscal year 2003, AmeriCorps*State and National awarded over $62 million (approximately 38 percent of all grant awards) either directly to community-based organizations or to secular and faith-based organizations partnering with community-based organizations.

reporting education as a major service area. Other service areas represented by at least 20 percent of the programs fell into the category of "meeting other human needs" and include economic development (31 percent), public health (26 percent), and housing-related services (22 percent). Nineteen percent of the programs provided services under the environmental issue area. Only one of the four issue areas—public safety—was not addressed by at least 10 percent of the programs.

Teams working in the *education* field offered services to preschoolers, older youth, and adults. One program developed a curriculum to provide educational enrichment to preschool children before they enter the formal education system. Members at another program provided tutoring and mentoring services to at-risk youth. A final example of educational service offered by AmeriCorps members was the provision of adult literacy training to ex-offenders returning to their community in a major urban area. AmeriCorps programs addressing *other human needs* featured opportunities for members to serve at organizations providing health-related outreach and services. Such services included a program designed to provide guidance for low-income families with newborn children.[18]

AmeriCorps members in programs with an *environmental* focus served on projects devoted to forestry management and habitat preservation, the restoration of an important local waterway, tasks related to creation and preservation of recreational amenities such as trails and campsites, and teaching children about the natural environment in their region.

Examples of AmeriCorps *public safety* projects included working with local police departments to develop and sustain community policing programs, reporting code violations, conducting crime watches at local high schools, and helping police with traffic enforcement.

When the study was implemented, AmeriCorps, still a comparatively new program, was not yet operating at scale nationally and some programs were struggling to achieve their recruiting targets. Some programs reduced their usual eligibility requirements in order to enroll more individuals in the program and come closer to their recruitment targets. Only 70 percent of AmeriCorps programs reported that newly enrolled State and National members met, or were very close to meeting, the sponsoring organization's planned eligibility requirements.

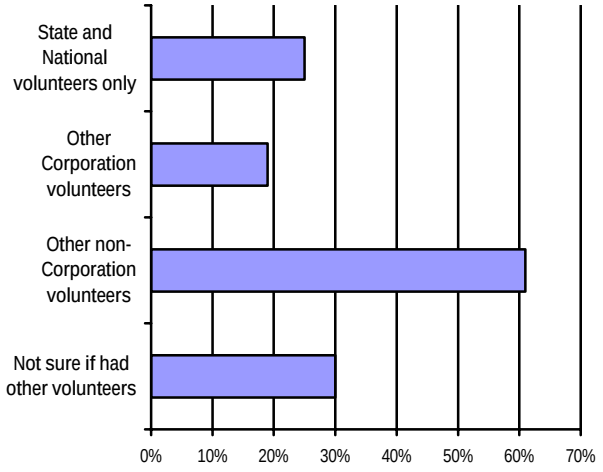
[18] Levin, Marjorie, Sytske Braat-Campbell, and Ellyn Artis, *Program Practices Report: Assessment of Long-term Impacts on Service Participants.* Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates, October 2001.

Reliance on Other Volunteers

Many of the organizations sponsoring AmeriCorps relied on other volunteers in addition to their members, as indicated in Exhibit 2.5. In 1999 approximately one-fifth of these organizations recruited volunteers from Senior Corps or Learn and Serve America, the other major Corporation programs, and 61 percent of the organizations relied on volunteers from outside the Corporation umbrella. AmeriCorps members helped build their sponsoring organization's capacity by participating in volunteer recruitment on at least an occasional or frequent basis in 93 percent of the programs for these sponsoring agencies. A quarter of the organizations had no volunteers other than AmeriCorps members.

Exhibit 2.5

Sponsor Reliance on Volunteers Other than AmeriCorps*State and National Members



Developing AmeriCorps Members

As noted earlier, one of the three main goals of AmeriCorps programs is developing members by providing opportunities for members to develop an ethic of service and civic responsibility, increase their educational opportunities, and engage in service with people of diverse backgrounds.[19] AmeriCorps programs took their member development goal seriously, with the average program devoting 34 percent of staff time to planning and leading member development activities. The average number of full-time staff working with AmeriCorps members was about four per program, and 38 percent of programs featured team leaders, generally second-year or more experienced members who are given additional leadership opportunities. The program directors were also asked to describe the level of importance of building members' skills in the following four areas:

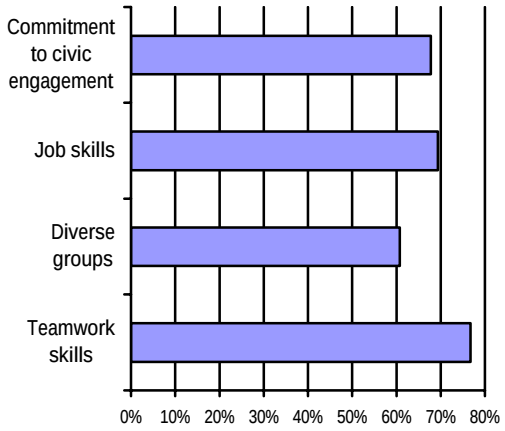
- Developing a commitment to civic engagement, social responsibility, and volunteerism;
- Making sure members learn skills that they can use on the job, or in future employment;
- Ensuring that members have the opportunity to serve with members from diverse backgrounds; and
- Developing members' teamwork and leadership skills.

[19] Corporation for National and Community Service, *2000 Administrative and Program Guidance.*

As indicated in Exhibit 2.6, all four areas were rated highly, with most programs reporting it was "very important" that their members develop these skills.

Exhibit 2.6

Programs' rating of the development of members' skill areas while in AmeriCorps*State and National as "very important"



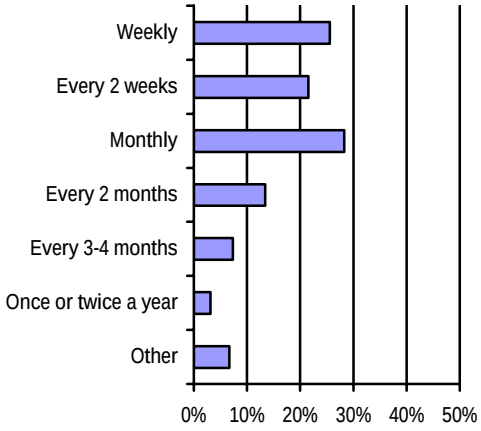
Multiple responses allowed.

Formal Training

A primary way to promote member development is through formal trainings or educational activities. Member development began during the initial days following program enrollment through orientation for new members. Orientation sessions generally covered both requirements specific to the AmeriCorps program, such as specification of allowable activities, and training in the skills that would be required on service projects, such as tutoring or principles of environmental stewardship. The average AmeriCorps program devoted just under 8 days to orienting new members; days devoted to orientation ranged from 1 to 25 for the programs in our study.

Exhibit 2.7

How often does the organization offer member development opportunities to AmeriCorps*State and National members?



Following the orientation, programs convened additional membership development activities—formal and informal training and information sessions. Approximately one-quarter of AmeriCorps programs offered member development opportunities on a weekly basis. Over three-quarters of these programs offered member development opportunities at least once per month (see Exhibit 2.7). The average AmeriCorps program devoted 34 percent of staff time to planning and leading member development activities.

In addition to member development activities provided by the programs' sponsoring organization, many members received training at host agencies where they provided community services. Just over four-fifths of host sites offered development opportunities to members of the AmeriCorps team assigned to them. The majority (73 percent) of AmeriCorps organizations mandated that host sites provide formal orientation for incoming members.

AmeriCorps programs typically offered members a variety of development opportunities. Some of the most frequently offered development opportunities are listed in Exhibit 2.8, with percentage of programs offering and the average duration in hours. Members typically work in teams so it is not

surprising that almost all programs offered team-building training, averaging three days in length. The most intensive training provided was in the development of substantive skills related to service activities, with four-fifths of the programs providing such training for an average of 40 hours each.

Exhibit 2.8

Development Opportunities Offered by AmeriCorps*State and National Programs

	Percent of programs offering	Average hours
Team-building	96%	24
Mediation/conflict resolution	88	9
Substantive skills related to service activities	80	40
Cross-cultural/diversity education	76	9
Leadership training	76	17
Communication/public speaking skills	75	10
CPR/first aid training	73	10
Information about community resources	72	11
Career awareness	61	15
Job search skills	57	9
Interpersonal skills	57	9

Topics for member development that were offered less frequently included: college or formal continuing education credit (22 percent of programs), budgeting/personal finances (27 percent), community mobilizing (30 percent), and adult education (36 percent).

As will be described in the next chapter, members varied in their educational levels and experience. Programs attempted to provide member development activities that addressed the needs and interests of most members. As noted in the following chapter, a majority of members (83 percent of State and National and 85 percent of NCCC) reported they were “very” or “somewhat” satisfied with the training, workshops, or educational program.

The number of member development hours offered by each program varied considerably. Sixteen percent of programs offering member development provided opportunities lasting one week or less. An additional 21 percent offered more than one week and up to two weeks. On the upper end, 14 percent of programs offering member development opportunities provided their members with over six weeks of potential development time during their year of service. Thirty-two percent of the AmeriCorps directors in our study reported that the implementation of their member development activities went “very well” during the 1999–2000 program year, with an additional 50 percent describing it as “good.”

Member Development as Part of the Service Experience

On average, members spent two-thirds of their time working on service projects where they had direct contact with service beneficiaries. However, service beneficiaries were not immediately visible in

some projects, such as clearing trails in public parks to make them more accessible, or helping to renovate homes for low-income families. Even in those cases where beneficiaries were not present during the service activity, members often returned to the service site after it was completed to observe individuals who may have been benefiting from their service. Reflection—a group activity in which members and staff collectively discuss the service project's benefit to the community and corresponding social justice issues—was a strategy used regularly by many programs to reinforce the service activity. This was thought to strengthen the ties made during common experiences such as orientation and group service projects.

Many programs offered members the opportunity to engage in service beyond that performed at their regular service sites through independent service projects that were often developed by the members and carried out on evenings and weekends. Forty-six percent of AmeriCorps programs incorporated these activities into their monthly service schedule. Almost all programs (96 percent) also encouraged members to link their service experience with the national AmeriCorps program to promote national identity and visibility.

Initiatives organized by the Corporation to increase members' identification of AmeriCorps as a national program included the designation of National Service Days where AmeriCorps members and other volunteers came together on a regional or statewide basis to address needs in selected communities. These National Service Days reinforced the idea that AmeriCorps extends beyond the local program to a national movement intended to promote widescale service, such as the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service.

Planning for the Transition from AmeriCorps

A key component of the AmeriCorps experience is ensuring that members are prepared for the transition out of the program to professional careers or higher education. Towards this end, over three-quarters of AmeriCorps programs provided transition activities for members preparing to leave the program. The most frequent transition service was an individual meeting between the member and AmeriCorps program staff, with 67 percent of AmeriCorps programs offering this service. Other transition activities included half- and full-day workshops (offered by 32 and 24 percent of programs, respectively) and workshops lasting more than one day (39 percent of programs).

To assist in the provision of transition assistance, the Corporation published *Next Steps: Life After AmeriCorps*. Approximately 60 percent of AmeriCorps programs used this guide on an informal basis. Another 22 percent of programs used the guide to create formal training for members. Among programs receiving copies of this guide from the Corporation, over 90 percent distributed it to their members.

As discussed in this chapter, AmeriCorps programs focused on addressing their three goals of providing necessary services to communities, strengthening communities by building organizational capacity including volunteer leveraging, and developing members. Due to the emphasis most programs placed on member development, it is reasonable to consider whether their AmeriCorps experiences influenced members. The effect of participation in AmeriCorps on member outcomes will be reported later in Chapter 4. But first, in the next chapter we describe the individuals who enrolled in AmeriCorps during our study period.

Chapter 3

A Profile of AmeriCorps Members

In this chapter we describe the members: their demographics, prior participation in service, motivations for enrolling in AmeriCorps, and perceptions of the AmeriCorps experience. Data sources for this chapter are the three rounds of surveys of AmeriCorps members.

The AmeriCorps*State and National and AmeriCorps*NCCC programs are organized quite differently, and those program structures may have influenced members' AmeriCorps experience. State and National members are recruited by local nonprofits, schools, and other agencies to help address local community needs. Members serve full- or part-time over a 10–12 month period.[20] Individuals enrolling in the State and National program must be at least 17 years of age, and there is no upper age limit. The NCCC, on the other hand, is a residential program operated by the Corporation, in which members are assigned to live on one of five regional "campuses," generally former military bases or hospitals. Enrollment is limited to individuals between the ages of 18 and 24. During their 10-month full-time service period, NCCC members spend considerable time off campus providing services throughout the region, living temporarily in schools or other facilities provided by the community. Some NCCC members also participate in disaster relief efforts such as flood relief or fighting wildfires. Typically, NCCC members are assigned to about six service projects over their 10-month service period.

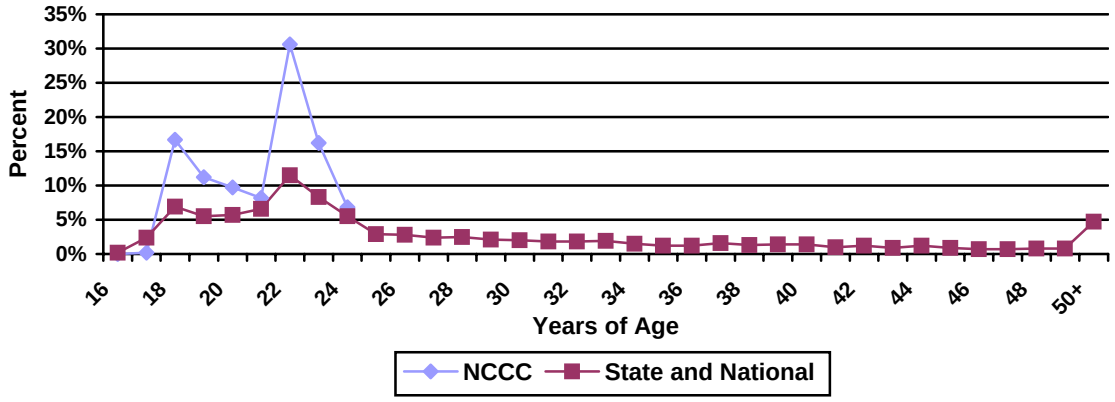
Demographic Characteristics

Participation in AmeriCorps is open to U.S. citizens 17 years of age or older. As mentioned above, the State and National program has no other age restrictions, while the NCCC is restricted to individuals between 18 and 24 years of age. Most State and National members joined before they entered their late twenties. Not surprisingly, enrollment often occurred at transition periods in young peoples' lives—age at enrollment peaked at around 18 and then again around at 22, roughly corresponding to traditional graduation points from high school and college (see Exhibit 3.1). Given its more restricted age requirements, this pattern was particularly pronounced in the NCCC program. While the majority of State and National members were in their late teens and early twenties, these programs attracted an older cohort as well, suggesting that participation in full-time national service is an attractive option for individuals throughout their lifetimes (see Exhibit 3.1). The average age at enrollment was 28 years for State and National members and 21.5 for NCCC members; the median age for State and National and NCCC members was 23.8 and 22.1, respectively.

[20] Part-time members were not included in this study.

Exhibit 3.1

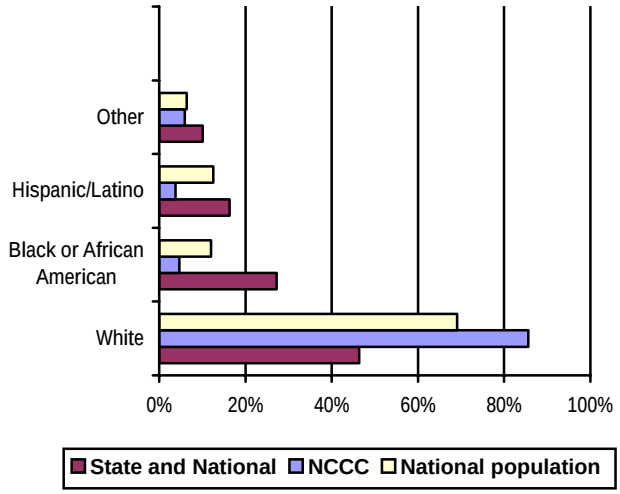
Distribution of AmeriCorps Members by Age



With respect to race and gender, the composition of the AmeriCorps membership was distinct from the makeup of the nation's population at large. The ethnic composition of the AmeriCorps* State and National membership was more diverse that that of the general population, while the NCCC membership was less so. Slightly less than half (46.4 percent) of State and National members were white, compared with the majority of NCCC members (85.5 percent) as well as the national population (69.1 percent) (Exhibit 3.2). AmeriCorps programs were encouraged by the Corporation to recruit a diverse set of members, a policy that may have led to racially and ethnically diverse participation. Also noteworthy was the predominance of women, who accounted for over two-thirds of the membership of both the State and National programs (71 percent) and NCCC (68 percent).

Exhibit 3.2

Race and Ethnicity of AmeriCorps Members



In part due to the residential nature of the program, nearly 100 percent of the NCCC members reported that they were single and had never been married at the time of enrollment. NCCC's upper age restriction further contributed to the predominance of "unattached" members. Among State and National members, nearly 15 percent reported being married at enrollment, with another 13 percent either widowed, divorced, or separated. Three years after enrollment, a higher proportion of members were married. Slightly less than a quarter (24.7 percent) of the State and National members and about a tenth (9.6 percent) of the NCCC members were married.

As summarized in Exhibit 3.3, over 90 percent of both State and National and NCCC members were high school graduates or had earned their GED. The percentage of individuals with one of these two

credentials increased by about 5 percent during the three years after enrollment in AmeriCorps. In general, NCCC members were more highly educated than their counterparts in the State and National program; and members of both the State and National and NCCC programs had achieved a higher level of educational attainment than the rest of the country.

Exhibit 3.3

Educational Attainment of AmeriCorps Members

	State and National		NCCC		National Population[a]	
	At enrollment	3 years after enrollment	At enrollment	3 years after enrollment	Overall	Individuals 18–24
High school diploma or equivalent	92.3%	95.0%	99.4%	99.7%	82.1%	74.7%
Bachelor's degree	29.8	39.9	50.4	55.4	22.2	22.2

a Figures quoted are for individuals 18 years of age or older. Source: Population Estimate Program, U.S. Census, 1998.

Reasons for Joining AmeriCorps

Participation in AmeriCorps was expected to be a full-time commitment (or sustained part-time service) for one or more years, and members received only a modest living allowance, typically the equivalent of minimum wage or lower, for their service. Given the more lucrative employment opportunities available in the robust economy of the late 1990s when they entered the program, it is revealing to examine why members originally decided to enroll in AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps members, both State and National and NCCC, were asked to assess the relevance of potential influences on their decision to inquire about the AmeriCorps program.

Exhibit 3.4 highlights the top enrollment motivations reported by State and National and NCCC members. Both participant groups were motivated primarily by a desire to help the community. Beyond this common denominator, however, motivations diverged. State and National members appear to have been influenced heavily by the potential for AmeriCorps service to support their future educational and career aims. In contrast, NCCC members were more motivated by a desire to pursue activities that are outside the mainstream in support of a social justice agenda.

Exhibit 3.4

Most Important Enrollment Motivators for AmeriCorps Members

Percent answering "quite relevant" or "very relevant"	
State and National	**NCCC**
You wanted to…	You wanted to…
• Help the community (77%)	• Help the community (88%)
• Acquire skills useful for school or job (75%)	• Do something outside the mainstream (83%)
• Earn the education awards benefit (70%)	• Work with people who share your ideals (67%)
• Serve in this field (69%)	• Reduce social or economic inequality (67%)

It is also instructive to examine the least important enrollment motivators reported by AmeriCorps members (Exhibit 3.5). For members of both State and National and NCCC, the influence of friends and family was a consistently less critical motivating factor than many of the personal and career-related factors noted above.

Exhibit 3.5

Least Important Enrollment Motivators for AmeriCorps Members

Percent answering "quite relevant" or "very relevant"	
State and National	**NCCC**
• Volunteering was an important tradition in your family and among friends (33%) • You had a friend or family member who was applying or participating (33%) • An AmeriCorps organization or one like it helped you (or a loved one) in the past (23%)	• You had a friend or family member who was applying or participating (23%) • You needed a job (14%) • An AmeriCorps organization or one like it helped you (or a loved one) in the past (6%)

The AmeriCorps Experience

The vast majority of members reported that their AmeriCorps experience was not what they expected (Exhibit 3.6). In fact, nearly one-third described it as "not at all as expected." This feedback suggests that marketing and outreach activities may not have accurately or comprehensively shaped members' understanding of program activities and responsibilities. The link between expectations and perceptions of the program is important, as indicated in Exhibit 3.7. Members whose service experience was as expected were more likely to say they would enroll in AmeriCorps if they had to decide again.

Exhibit 3.6

AmeriCorps Expectations

	State and National	NCCC
Service experience compared to expectations:		
Exactly as expected	13%	7%
Somewhat as expected	55	60
Not at all as expected	32	33

Exhibit 3.7

Would Definitely Enroll in AmeriCorps Again

	State and National	NCCC
Service experience compared to expectations:		
Exactly as expected	89%	100%
Somewhat as expected	78	64
Not at all as expected	66	56

While enrolled in AmeriCorps, members engaged in a varied array of service activities. The program experience began with a formal orientation for both State and National and NCCC members. As can be seen in Exhibit 3.8, both State and National and NCCC members were widely engaged in tutoring and mentoring activities, which was consistent with the national emphasis on providing services to children and youth.

NCCC members in particular had the additional likelihood of being exposed to a more physical blend of activities including the cleaning of trails or renovation and construction work.

Attended orientation:	
AmeriCorps*State and National	94%
AmeriCorps*NCCC	98%[21]

Exhibit 3.8

Service Activities While in AmeriCorps

	Percent participating	
Did you do any of the following while you were in AmeriCorps:	**State and National**	**NCCC**
Tutor, mentor, or take care of children, teenagers, or adults?	82.3%	88.4%
Clean trails or do other environmental work?	62.4	97.3
Organize or do administrative work for programs that help needy individuals?	59.1	55.1
Help renovate, construct, or clean offices or buildings for needy people?	49.4	86.8
Help to take care of sick, elderly, or homeless people?	42.6	66.8
Work involving disaster relief?[a]	—	29.5

a Asked of NCCC members only. Disaster relief was not a priority for AmeriCorps*State and National until after the tragedy of September 11, 2001.

In addition to the variation in core services, feedback suggests that State and National and NCCC members also engaged in activities that added to the richness and value of their experiences. Survey results indicate that a strong majority of both State and National and NCCC programs incorporated responsibilities or activities that emphasized members' active participation in shaping their AmeriCorps experience. Specifically, over two-thirds of all members from both State and National and NCCC noted that as part of their service experience they:

- Planned or led a meeting or activity;
- Wrote a letter or memo;
- Gave a presentation or speech; or
- Developed guidelines for some aspect of their AmeriCorps service project.

These activities may have served the foundation for members to undertake similar activities after they left AmeriCorps.

In addition to the varied program content and context discussed above, the majority of State and National and NCCC members also had their AmeriCorps experience enriched through exposure to diverse communities, membership, and service recipients. This service delivery environment was, in

[21] On each of the NCCC campuses, all members are enrolled on the same day which is followed by a week of group orientation. The small number of NCCC members who reported they did not attend orientation may have joined the program late, due to personal or logistical issues, or some individuals may have forgotten attending orientation activities.

part, created by members living or serving in communities that were culturally different from the places where they grew up. While this opportunity was reported by the majority of State and National members (56 percent), it was a nearly universal benefit for NCCC members (94 percent). This was a clear reflection of NCCC's residential feature and the tendency of the Corporation to assign members to campuses away from their home regions.

This diverse service delivery environment was further enhanced by the composition of both the membership and service recipient population. Over 50 percent of State and National and NCCC members said they "very often" or "always" worked with members from diverse backgrounds and with service recipients whose backgrounds differed from their own.

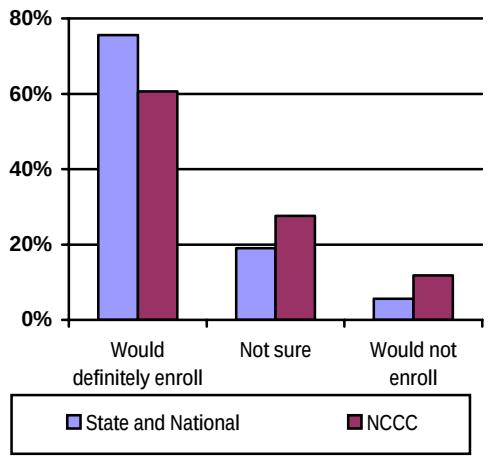
While the specific content and context of the program varied, the net result was that nearly three-quarters (72 percent of State and National, 75 percent of NCCC) of all members perceived that their AmeriCorps experience enhanced their understanding of people "different from themselves."

Satisfaction with AmeriCorps Experience

Participants in the State and National programs were particularly enthusiastic about their AmeriCorps experience. When asked to rate their satisfaction with AmeriCorps, 65 percent of all State and National members reported they were "very satisfied," and 24 percent that they were "somewhat satisfied," with their overall service experience. By contrast, only 38 and 23 percent of all NCCC members, respectively, reported the same.[22]

Exhibit 3.9

Would you enroll in AmeriCorps again?



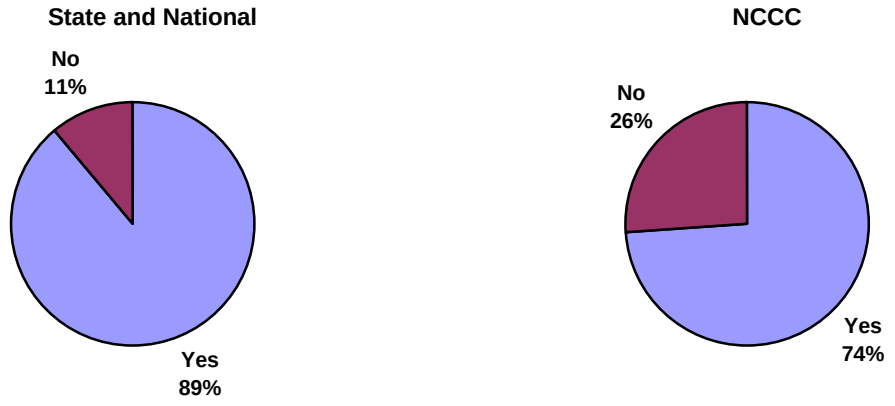
Note: There were 666 missing observations for NCCC.

These perceptions of the program were generally confirmed when members are asked to hypothetically revisit their initial decision to enroll. Specifically, when asked "Knowing what you know now, if you had to decide all over again whether to join AmeriCorps, what would you decide?" a solid majority (76 percent of State and National, and 61 percent of NCCC) stated they "would definitely enroll" (see Exhibit 3.9). In fact, not only would a majority of former members have "re-enrolled," an even greater proportion (89 percent State and National, 74 percent NCCC) of former members would recommend the AmeriCorps experience to a friend (Exhibit 3.10).

[22] NCCC members were surveyed during the last weeks of their program participation, in contrast to State and National members who were interviewed approximately three to five months after they left the program. NCCC members' assessment of their program experience may have been influenced by their most recent service project and emotions associated with the end of their participation in the program.

Exhibit 3.10

Percentage of Members Who Would Recommend AmeriCorps to a Friend



Additional feedback from the survey provided insight into specific aspects of the program that contributed to this largely satisfactory experience (Exhibit 3.11). Clearly standing out as a near universal point of satisfaction among State and National members is the community service experience and the opportunity to establish relationships with co-workers. While NCCC members were consistently less satisfied with their overall AmeriCorps experience, these dimensions of the program were (in relative terms) the most meaningful to them as well. In comparing satisfaction levels with various program components for State and National and NCCC members, it is important to recall the differences between the two programs in the structure of their service experience. State and National members generally worked in their home community providing basic services through a community-based or other local organization. NCCC members were relocated to one of five regional campuses; then, during their year of service, they moved as many as a half dozen times to provide services to communities throughout their region, living in the different communities for periods from one to four weeks.

In addition to gauging their satisfaction, feedback from members also provided important insight into specific accomplishments that contributed to an enriching AmeriCorps experience. While NCCC members may not have been as satisfied with their overall service experience as their State and National counterparts, their sense of accomplishment was strong.[23]

The feedback suggested that AmeriCorps participants experienced the greatest sense of accomplishment through their contribution to the community and individual service recipients. As can be seen in Exhibit 3.12, both State and National and NCCC members nearly universally perceived that they "made a difference in the life of at least one person." While the consensus is not quite as strong, members also widely reported that their program experience succeeded in helping them gain some perspective on their values and the world around them.

[23] Most NCCC members completed the post-program survey while they were in the last week of the program; members who left the NCCC before the end of the service period were contacted by telephone to complete the post-program survey.

Exhibit 3.11

Satisfaction with Aspects of the AmeriCorps Program

	State and National		NCCC	
	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied
Providing services to the community	67%	25%	38%	24%
Establishing a relationship with your co-workers	65	25	43	21
Learning new skills on the job	61	26	44	20
Gaining an understanding of the community where you worked	53	31	20	33
Participating in training, workshops, or educational programs	51	32	25	30
Gaining an understanding of the organization(s) where you worked	48	34	24	34
Establishing a relationship with your supervisor	53	25	25	27

Note: Percentages have been rounded.

Exhibit 3.12

Perceptions of AmeriCorps Accomplishments

	State and National		NCCC	
Perceived Accomplishment	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Agree
You felt you made a difference in the life of at least one person	68%	29%	68%	23%
You felt you made a contribution to the community	62	32	43	49
You were exposed to new ideas and ways of seeing the world	42	45	48	41
You re-examined your beliefs and attitudes about yourself	40	44	42	43
You felt like part of the community	47	43	29	47
You changed some of your beliefs and attitudes	31	48	33	44
You did things you never thought you could do	42	35	50	28
You learned more about the “real world”	39	38	29	36

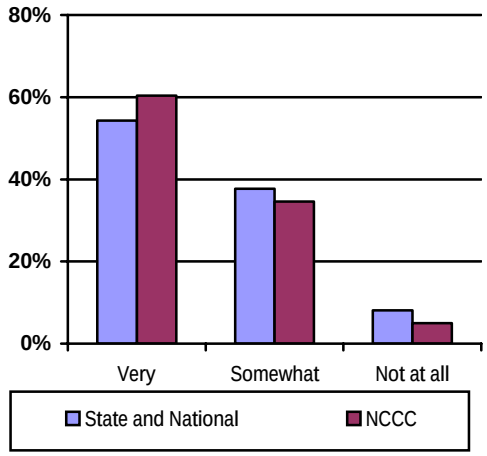
Note: Percentages have been rounded.

Specifically, approximately 85 percent of both State and National and NCCC members agreed that, as a result of their AmeriCorps experience, they “re-examined their beliefs and attitudes” and were “exposed to new ideas and ways of seeing the world.” This introspection and enhanced personal “vision” may, in part, have been fueled by a program culture that has resulted in extensive journal writing among members (84 percent did so “frequently” or “occasionally”).

While the contributing factors are undoubtedly numerous, the majority of both State and National and NCCC members ultimately described their AmeriCorps experience as "transformational," as indicated in Exhibit 3.13. Open-ended survey responses, below, provide insight into their perceptions.

Exhibit 3.13

To what extent did you find your AmeriCorps participation transformational?



Personal Transformation through AmeriCorps: Member Observations

- "I didn't have a direction, when I joined AmeriCorps. It gave me experience working with kids and it gave me a direction, more balance."
- "My experience in AmeriCorps let me see a world I didn't know existed it made me understand better the struggles of poor people."
- "It got me interested in policy because I felt like there was only so much I could do through direct service and needed to learn more about health policy. So I'm now in graduate school."
- "I became an adult in the year I entered AmeriCorps and it changed my outlook on life. It made me a lot more aware of different cultures."
- "I found hidden talents that I wasn't sure that I had."
- "It improved my self-esteem. I'm currently putting together a mentoring program for alcoholics and addicts."

Feedback from both State and National and NCCC members suggests that these accomplishments were, in part, facilitated by the creation of a highly supportive service environment. As summarized in Exhibit 3.14, most members consistently reported that their service was performed in an arena where they felt both challenged and respected.

Despite the largely satisfactory and supportive nature of the AmeriCorps experience, a notable proportion of members (particularly NCCC) agreed with certain frustrations posed in the questionnaire. Several of these key factors are summarized in Exhibit 3.15, where it can be seen that lack of understanding of, and apathy towards, AmeriCorps in the community remained a significant concern. This finding was particularly prevalent among NCCC members, and may be associated with their moving from one community to another, where they did not have a long-term opportunity to engage with local community members.

Exhibit 3.14

AmeriCorps Program Environment

	State and National		NCCC	
	Regularly	Sometimes	Regularly	Sometimes
You felt respected by other members	74%	22%	74%	24%
You felt appreciated by service recipients	72	25	71	26
Staff and supervisors would complement you when you did something well	70	23	60	32
Staff and supervisors challenged you to do your best	65	25	66	27
Other AmeriCorps members challenged you to do your best	42	40	54	39

Exhibit 3.15

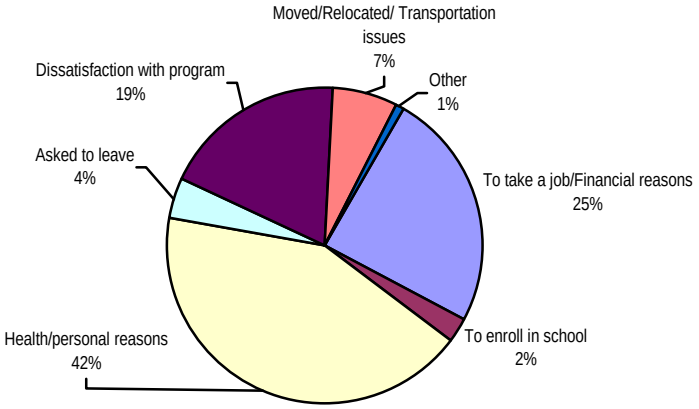
Experienced Frustration and Challenge while in AmeriCorps

	Percent answering "Yes"	
	State and National	NCCC
Lack of understanding of AmeriCorps by others	59%	76%
Apathy/lack of initiative from community members	44	66
Lack of continuity in service activities	37	58
Too much administrative work	25	50

Finally, it is important to note that one in four State and National members (26.3 percent) did not complete their term of service. Feedback from these participants suggests that a variety of factors and influences played a role in their decisions to discontinue their program commitment. As can be seen in Exhibit 3.16, approximately one-quarter of the dropout population cited either employment or financial obligations as their main reason for not completing their AmeriCorps term. An additional 42.7 percent cited health or "personal" reasons, which may also reflect financial obligations or other pressures.

Exhibit 3.16

Main Reason for Not Completing Term of AmeriCorps Service (State and National Members)



Among those who left the program prior to completion, approximately one in five State and National members (19 percent) cited dissatisfaction with the program itself as a primary motivator. While this represents only about 5 percent of the entire cohort of members included in the study, it is nonetheless important to examine the range of issues that could have led to program attrition. As can be seen in Exhibit 3.17, the most prominent source of dissatisfaction involved supervisors, management, or administration. The more content-related aspects of the program (e.g., interest in project, physical demands, pay) were rarely cited as a main reason for early departure.

Exhibit 3.17

Reason for Dissatisfaction with the AmeriCorps*State and National Program[a]

Disagreement with the supervisor	24%
Poor organization, management, or administration	12
Disagreement with other members	5
The pay was not adequate	3
Serious problems or abuses	2
The program was too hard (physically)	1
The service projects were not interesting	1

a Of the 19.2% who did not complete their term of service due to dissatisfaction with the program, the percentage who answered "yes" for the given reason.

Percentages have been rounded. Multiple responses allowed.

Perceptions of Career-Related Benefits

Approximately 75 percent of State and National members and 60 percent of NCCC members were motivated to enroll in AmeriCorps because they thought that the AmeriCorps experience would equip them with skills useful in school or in a job. After their term of service was over, members were asked to assess the extent to which AmeriCorps activities were related to any current or long-term career or job interests. Nearly half (46 percent) of State and National members believed the activities in which they were engaged in AmeriCorps were "not at all related" to any current or long-term job aspirations; approximately 39 percent felt their activities were "somewhat related"; and the remaining 15 percent believed AmeriCorps activities were "very related." For NCCC members, the story was quite similar: 33 percent said their activities were "not at all related," nearly 48 percent believed they

were “somewhat related,” and only 19 percent felt their experience was “very related” to any current or long-term career goals.

It should be noted, however, that this somewhat mixed feedback on the “career-relatedness” of the AmeriCorps experience in part reflects the career ambiguity faced by many in this general age group. Many young adults finishing high school or even college do not have clear current or future career aspirations against which the AmeriCorps experience can be judged. It may also have to do with members rethinking their career plans after they had “tried out” different types of work as part of the AmeriCorps experience. While program experience might not always have had a direct connection to future career interests, a majority of AmeriCorps members recognized the potential value of the AmeriCorps experience in promoting future employment success (Exhibit 3.18).

Exhibit 3.18

Career-Related Benefits of AmeriCorps

	State and National		NCCC	
	Quite a bit	A great deal	Quite a bit	A great deal
Improve your performance on the job	74%	22%	74%	24%
Improve your chances of finding a job	72	25	71	26
Improve your chances of getting a promotion	70	23	60	32
Make a career change	65	25	66	27

Note: Percentages have been rounded.

While enrolled in AmeriCorps, members were engaged in community service on a daily basis. They received first-hand experience in what it takes to improve communities and the lives of the people who live within them. They also reaped the rewards that come from a job well done—a job that impacts the lives of others. The desire to do community service was self-reinforcing; at program completion, 65.6 percent of State and National members and 74.4 percent of NCCC members said they would “definitely” be involved with community service in the future. Taking it one step further, four out of every five AmeriCorps member said that their AmeriCorps experience made it “more likely” or “much more likely” that they would participate in community service in the future.

Participation in Service after AmeriCorps

Level and Frequency

When interviewed for the post-program survey, 66 percent of State and National members and 74 percent of NCCC members indicated they would continue to engage in service. Two years later, the percentage of members actually engaging in service after they left the program was remarkably similar: 63 percent of State and National and 78 percent of NCCC members reported that they had

participated in volunteer service.[24] These rates are considerably higher than the national average of 26 percent of the U.S. population who said they had volunteered in the last 12 months.[25]

While rates of volunteerism were higher during the two years after participation in AmeriCorps, among those involved in service, both State and National and NCCC members were more likely to perform volunteer service on an occasional basis rather than volunteering regularly. When asked how often they volunteer, about half of the members from both programs reported participating on an occasional basis. Patterns were very similar for the two programs, as shown in Exhibit 3.19, and suggest less regular participation in service than the national pattern for individuals who engaged in service. It may also be that after a year of full-time service, former members may have applied different definitions to the frequency of service categories.[26]

Exhibit 3.19
Frequency of Participation in Service after AmeriCorps

	One-time basis	Occasionally	Regularly
State and National	15%	50%	34%
NCCC	17	51	32
National population[a]	6	39	55

Pew Partnership. *Ready. Willing and Able.* Administered by the Campaign Study Group, 2000 (representative sample of U.S. population, age 18 and over).

Activities

What was the nature of the work AmeriCorps alumni performed when they volunteered? The preponderance of their activity centered around the direct services that were a major part of their AmeriCorps service experience. Direct services included working with children and youth; giving advice, information, or counseling; cooking, shopping, or providing transportation; and building or repairing. State and National and NCCC members reported very similar patterns of post-AmeriCorps volunteering.

Voting

Voting is an important indicator of civic engagement. State and National and NCCC alumni had higher rates of voting than the nation as a whole during the 2000 Presidential election. As shown in Exhibit 3.20, both State and National and NCCC former members were more likely to register and vote in the 2000 election than the national population and in particular the national population aged 18–24, based on self-reporting.

---

24 Prior to joining AmeriCorps, members already demonstrated a high involvement in service. Over 80 percent of State and National members, and over 90 percent of NCCC members, had participated in service at some point prior to their enrollment in the program. Well over half (58 percent) of State and National members and 70 percent of NCCC members had served during the previous year.

25 U.S. Census Bureau. *Current Population Survey*, September 2002.

26 According to the U.S. Census Bureau, those in the national population who volunteer serve, on average, 36 hours annually. *Current Population Survey*, September 2002.

Exhibit 3.20

AmeriCorps Member Voter Registration and Turnout, 2000

	State and National	NCCC	National Population[a]	
			18+	18-24
Percent registered to vote	84%	87%	64%	45%
Percent who reported they voted	72	75	55	32

a Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Based on those 18 years and over.

Response to September 11

The third round of data collection for this study took place soon after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington DC. We asked AmeriCorps alumni about some of their activities in response to September 11 and compared them to activities reported in a national study.[27] As might be expected given their relative youth, a higher percentage of State and National and NCCC alumni reported donating their time than did the national population, while a lower percentage donated money, as indicated in Exhibit 3.21. In addition, as a result of September 11, a higher percentage of former State and National and NCCC members than that of the national population reported participating in an activity in which they would not have otherwise engaged.

Exhibit 3.21

AmeriCorps Member Behavior in Response to September 11

	State and National	NCCC	National Population[a]
Did you personally donate any of the following to a charity or non-profit organization in response to the September 11th terrorist attacks? *(multiple responses)*			
Donated money	37%	31%	58%
Donated blood	11	25	13
Donated time	18	20	11
Donated something else	19	14	6
Donated none of above	47	44	30
As a result of September 11th, did you personally participate in any of the following activities that you would not have otherwise attended?			
Spiritual activity	30	31	20
Community activity	25	28	15
Local neighborhood activity	17	15	7
Did not participate in any activity above	58	57	70

a Source: Independent Sector. *A Survey of Charitable Giving After September 11, 2001*. Prepared by Wirthlin Worldwide, October 2001. http://www.independentsector.org. N=1,009 adult Americans.

In Chapter 4 we present the impacts of AmeriCorps participation on members.

[27] Independent Sector: *A Survey of Charitable Giving After September 11, 2001*. Conducted by Wirthlin Worldwide. October 2001. http//www.independentsector.org. (n=1,009 adult Americans).

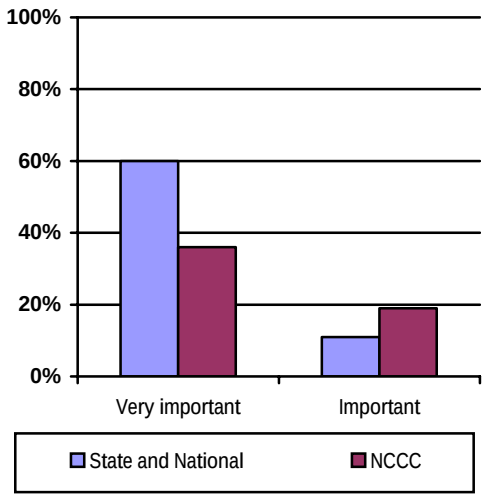
Future Plans for Education after AmeriCorps

As noted earlier, AmeriCorps members enrolled in the 1999–2000 program year were a well-educated group of men and women. Almost 93 percent of all AmeriCorps members had at least a high school diploma or GED, and over 30 percent had earned a bachelor's degree or higher. Education was important to this group, and AmeriCorps participants committed to a full year of community service in return for a modest living allowance and eligibility for a $4,725 post-program education award that could be applied to post-secondary tuition or to the payment of college loans.

When asked about their future education plans, State and National members in particular noted that their AmeriCorps experience had played an influential role. Most reported that the educational awards were either "very important" (60 percent) or "important" (11 percent) in continuing their education. Similarly, over two-thirds indicated that as a result of their AmeriCorps experience they were in fact more likely to continue with their education. NCCC members, in contrast, appeared to place somewhat less value on the importance of the education award and the influence of the AmeriCorps experience on their future educational plans, with 36 percent reporting that the awards were "very important" and 19 percent reporting "important" (see Exhibit 3.22). This may be due to the fact that NCCC members enrolled in AmeriCorps with a higher level of educational attainment than State and National members (see Exhibit 3.3).

Exhibit 3.22

Percent of AmeriCorps members reporting that educational awards were "important" or "very important"



Chapter 4

The Impacts of AmeriCorps

As discussed in Chapter 1, the key goal of this study was to estimate the impact of AmeriCorps participation in the areas of civic engagement, education, employment, and teamwork and other life skills. The theory of change developed for this study hypothesizes that AmeriCorps activities lead to positive attitudinal and behavioral outcomes within these areas. The majority of outcomes analyzed in this report are attitudinal, reflecting the hypothesis that program participation leads primarily to attitudinal changes in the short term, followed by longer-term behavioral changes. Because this report reflects the initial stage of a longitudinal study, we expect that more behavioral outcomes will be measured and analyzed in future stages of the study. The study used self-reported data[28] to explore the effects of participation on these four general areas of interest, as listed in Exhibit 4.1.

This chapter describes the results of the impact, subgroup, and program characteristics analyses conducted to explore the effects of AmeriCorps participation on member.

Method Used to Estimate Impacts

Our impact analysis estimates the effects of participation by comparing the outcomes for AmeriCorps members with outcomes for similar individuals who did not enroll in AmeriCorps (comparison groups), using Propensity Score Analysis to address possible selection bias. As noted in Chapter 1 of this report, the use of a comparison group enables us to describe the *average effects of treatment on the treated*. We estimate the effects of participation separately for AmeriCorps*State and National and AmeriCorps*NCCC programs.[29]

Most program outcomes are analyzed in terms of *gains*—the changes between baseline and post-program values of the same measures. These gains (which could be negative as well as positive) are then compared between program members and comparison group members. The impact estimates are thus conceptually *difference in differences*: the difference between the change from baseline to post-program experienced by the treatment group (members), and the analogous change experienced by the comparison group (similar non-members). In our detailed discussion of the findings, we often talk for convenience about positive or negative gains over time for AmeriCorps or comparison group members. These gains represent only point estimates, and are included to illustrate the changes experienced by AmeriCorps members and comparison group members; however, they cannot be used

[28] Data sources for this chapter include baseline, post-program, and post-program supplemental surveys. Only AmeriCorps members in the study who completed all three rounds of data collection and for whom there was a match in the comparison group are included in the analysis. See Appendix F for additional information about the analysis sample. The data reported includes individual survey items and composite measures. Appendix G presents a detailed description of the methods used to generate and verify the composite measures, including the survey items associated with each composite measure.

[29] Appendix B presents a detailed description of the analytic methods used to generate impact and gain score estimates.

to infer program effects. In contrast, when we refer to a positive impact estimate we mean that the observed increase is greater (or the decrease is smaller) for the program members, and that this greater net gain is indeed statistically significant. Similarly, a negative impact estimate means that the observed increase was smaller (or the decrease was greater) for program members and that the smaller net gain is statistically significant.

In the sections that follow, we summarize our impact findings and then present detailed results with respect to civic engagement, education, employment, and teamwork and other life skills. The chapter continues with a description of our analyses of subgroup effects and program-level effects, and concludes with a discussion of caveats.

Summary of Impacts

In this section we provide an overview of our findings on the impacts of AmeriCorps on members. Individual outcomes will be described in depth later in this chapter. It is especially noteworthy that this study identified an array of statistically significant impacts of the AmeriCorps program on its members. *The effect of AmeriCorps participation for the State and National program is consistently positive across the vast majority of outcomes and over half of the effects are statistically significant. Effects of participation for the NCCC program are more mixed, but generally positive.*

The majority of the strong, positive findings are clustered in the areas of civic engagement and employment. Furthermore, the positive findings are generally concentrated in attitudinal outcomes. However, we also find that AmeriCorps participation has positive impacts on several behavioral outcomes. Finally, we find that there is no evidence that these results differ by member characteristic/ experience (e.g., member development activities, mentoring relationships). These findings are aligned with both the AmeriCorps program model, which emphasizes service, civic engagement, and hands-on experience, and with our hypothesis that attitudinal changes would be prevalent in the short term. The findings also show that the results are applicable, on average, to all AmeriCorps members, regardless of demographic characteristics, program characteristics, or program experience, which shows that the AmeriCorps model is effective for a broad population and is not sensitive to small program-level differences.

Highlights of our analysis are presented below, followed by a detailed discussion of the findings for each outcome.

Attitudinal Outcomes. Overall, we find that participation in AmeriCorps results in numerous positive and statistically significant effects on members' attitudes, especially with respect to attitudes toward civic engagement. Specifically, participation in State and National programs results in positive, statistically significant effects for all eight civic engagement attitudinal outcomes, while participation in NCCC results in positive, statistically significant effects for half of the civic engagement attitudinal outcomes. Given the strong emphasis on service participation, civic engagement, and community involvement during the programs, we are not surprised to find such a large number of positive civic engagement outcomes. The results for education, employment, and teamwork and other life skills outcomes are less consistently positive. State and National programs show strong positive effects for both employment attitudinal outcomes, but we do not detect any statistically significant effects for the two education outcomes for either program. Finally, we find

Exhibit 4.1

Areas of Interest

Civic Engagement-Related Outcomes

Connection to Community (Attitude) represents the respondent's opinion about the strength of his/her connection to the community, as represented by the strength of feelings toward the community, including attachment, awareness, and commitment.

Community Problem Identification (Attitude/Knowledge) represents the respondent's self-assessed understanding of social problems in his/her community, such as environment, public health, and crime.

Neighborhood Obligations (Attitude) represents the respondent's opinion about the importance of being active in his/her neighborhood, including reporting crimes, keeping the neighborhood clean, and participating in neighborhood organizations.

Civic Obligations (Attitude) represents the respondent's opinion about the importance of participating in various civic activities, including voting in elections and serving on a jury.

Personal Effectiveness of Community Service (Attitude) represents the respondent's opinion about the impacts of his/her prior volunteer activities during the previous year with respect to making community contributions, developing attachments to the community, and making a difference.

Personal Growth Through Community Service (Attitude) represents the respondent's assessment of the impacts of his/her prior volunteer activities during the previous year with respect to personal growth, including exposure to new ideas, changing beliefs, and learning about the real world.

Local Civic Efficacy (Attitude) represents the respondent's opinion about the feasibility of working with local or state government to meet a range of community needs, such as fixing a pothole or getting an issue on a statewide ballot.

Grassroots Efficacy (Attitude) represents the respondent's opinion about the feasibility of starting a grassroots effort to meet a range of community needs, such as starting an after-school program or organizing a park cleanup program.

Community-Based Activism (Behavior) provides respondent's reports of the frequency with which he/she participates in community-based activities, including attending community meetings and writing to newspapers to voice opinions.

Volunteering Participation (Behavior) indicates whether the respondent served as a volunteer at any point during the two years following Fall 2000. Measured in Fall 2002/Winter 2003.

Engagement in the Political Process (Behavior) provides respondent's reports of the frequency with which he/she participates in activities intrinsic to the political process, including learning about candidates and voting in local elections.

National Voting Participation (Behavior) represents whether the respondent voted in the 2000 national election. Measured in Fall 2002/Winter 2003.

Exhibit 4.1

Areas of Interest

Employment-Related Outcomes

Importance of Service-Oriented Careers (Attitude) represents the respondent's opinion about the importance of working in a position that contributes to others, such as working to correct inequalities and being of direct service to people.

Acceptance of Responsibility for Employment Success (Attitude) represents the respondent's judgment about the extent to which he/she is personally responsible for his/her success in getting a job.

Basic Work Skills (Behavior/Experience) provides the respondent's report of the amount of experience he/she has had with fundamental work skills, including gathering and analyzing information, motivating co-workers, and managing time.

Public Service Employment (Behavior) indicates whether the respondent was employed in the public sector two years after program exit. Public sector employment is defined as education, social work, public safety, arts, religion, or full-time military service. Measured in Fall 2002/Winter 2003.

Education-Related Outcomes

Confidence in Ability to Obtain an Education (Attitude) represents the respondent's opinion about the feasibility of pursuing and obtaining an education.

Acceptance of Responsibility for Educational Success (Attitude) represents the respondent's judgment about the extent to which he/she is personally responsible for his/her academic achievements.

Educational Progress (Behavior) indicates the level of education attained two years after program exit. Measured in Fall 2002/Winter 2003.

Outcomes Related to Teamwork and Other Life Skills

Appreciation of Cultural and Ethnic Diversity (Attitude) represents the respondent's opinion about the importance and desirability of relationships between people who do not share the same cultural and/or ethnic background.

Constructive Group Interactions (Behavior/Experience) provides the respondent's report of the frequency with which he/she participated in group situations during which constructive interactions, such as working out conflicts and sharing ideas, occurred.

Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups (Behavior) provides the respondent's report of the frequency with which he/she personally uses techniques for encouraging constructive group interactions, such as encouraging participation by other team members and supporting others' right to be heard.

that participation in NCCC results in a statistically significant negative effect on one of the attitudinal life skills outcomes; there are no significant effects of State and National participation on these outcomes. These findings indicate that AmeriCorps participation has an immediate effect on members' attitudes, especially attitudes toward various aspects of civic engagement and employment. In the short term, however, AmeriCorps participation does not appear to have positive impacts on attitudes toward education or teamwork and other life skills.

Behavioral Outcomes. There are also interesting findings from our examination of the effects of participation on behavioral measures of the areas of interest. Specifically, we find several significant effects for behavioral outcomes in the area of civic engagement, with significant positive effects on one out of four civic engagement behavioral outcomes for State and National members and on two of four behavioral measures of civic engagement for NCCC member. Both State and National and NCCC also have statistically significant and positive effects on behavioral outcomes in employment, two for State and National and one for NCCC. There are no statistically significant effects of participation on education or teamwork and other life skills behavioral outcomes. These results indicate that AmeriCorps participation results in some positive behavioral changes, especially in the areas of civic engagement and employment. In the short term, we do not detect any statistically significant impacts on education or teamwork and other life skills behavioral outcomes. These findings are aligned with the results from the analysis of attitudinal outcomes, and appear to reflect our hypothesis that behavioral changes may not be as prevalent in the short term as attitudinal changes.

Subgroup and Program-Level Effects. Remarkably, we find that the outcomes are not dependent on member characteristics. Members of different race/ethnicity, gender, educational attainment, age, and religious exposure experience similar effects of AmeriCorps. For State and National members, the results are also consistent across programs. We show that program outcomes are not sensitive to variation in program characteristics and experiences; differences between State and National programs account for very little of the differences between member outcomes. These findings imply that despite substantial differences in program size, operation, and service focus, the State and National AmeriCorps model works for diverse individuals, and that the effectiveness of the model is quite robust.

Differences in Outcomes for State and National and NCCC. Both programs have numerous significant effects on measures of civic engagement, as well as on members' report of the amount of experience with basic work skills. However, findings are less consistent across the two programs for other measures, with the State and National program resulting in more statistically significant positive outcomes.

Several reasons may account for the differences in outcomes between the State and National and NCCC programs. First, as noted earlier in Chapter 1, they are two different programs, operating in different contexts, and enrolling members with quite different demographics. Information about the characteristics and AmeriCorps experiences of members from the two programs was discussed in Chapter 3. Second, the post-program survey of the NCCC members was administered during their last two weeks of participation in the program, a period emotionally charged for many members. In contrast, most State and National members completed their post-program survey several months after they had left the program. It is not uncommon for members to gain perspective on their experience

during the weeks and months following program exit. We expect that this timing may have influenced responses to this survey. For instance, the challenges associated with living and working in high-intensity, team-based settings (e.g., NCCC "spikes") may reach a peak during the last months of the program. The absence of any time for post-participation reflection prior to survey administration may have resulted in lower responses on some outcomes, such as Personal Effectiveness of Community Service or Appreciation of Cultural and Ethnic Diversity, than would have resulted from a survey several months after program exit. Finally, the study sample for State and National is much larger than that for the smaller NCCC program. It is possible to detect smaller differences between the treatment and comparison groups when using larger samples.

Exhibit 4.2 presents the direction and statistical significance of impacts on outcomes for members of AmeriCorps*State and National and NCCC. Exhibit 4.31, at the end of the chapter, provides a full listing of all outcomes studied along with their effect sizes, also for both programs.

Impacts on AmeriCorps Members

In this section we present the findings by individual outcome measures, organized by the four outcome groups, beginning with civic engagement. Findings are reported separately for State and National and NCCC.

To facilitate interpretation, we use three approaches in describing our findings. First, for each outcome we present line graphs displaying the mean baseline and post-program scores[30] for treatment and comparison groups. These graphical representations present a clear picture of the changes in outcomes over time. In these graphs, mean gains that are statistically significant at the 0.05 level are represented by solid lines, while gains that are not statistically significant (i.e., no changes) are represented by dashed lines. As described earlier in this chapter, the mean gains illustrate the changes experienced by the treatment and comparison groups; these changes alone cannot be used to infer program effects. We provide additional information to describe program impacts; the graphs are accompanied by an estimate of the effect of participation on members, including statistical significance[31] and effect size.[32] For statistically significant effects, we also report effect sizes in the text, using conventional guidelines to describe the impacts as small, medium, or large. (For more information about these technical terms, refer to the glossary in Chapter 1.) In cases where we find

---

[30] For comparability, the scores shown in the line graphs are standardized by setting the mean pretest values for participants equal to 0 and the standard deviation equal to 1 for each outcome.

[31] The p-value indicates the probability of observing the sample value for the outcome merely by chance if it is true that there is no impact from AmeriCorps participation. For example, a p-value of less than 0.01 indicates that there is less than a 1 percent chance of observing such a difference in the sample in the absence of any true treatment effect. For each outcome, we indicate whether the impact is positive or negative, if the p-value is less than 0.05; otherwise we indicate that there is no impact. For all outcomes, baseline scores for the treatment and comparison groups are not significantly different.

[32] Effect size is a standardized measure of the treatment (AmeriCorps program) effect, which can be used to compare the results across outcomes. The effect size represents the magnitude of the average treatment effect for each outcome relative to the amount of natural variation in that outcome. Effect sizes are increasingly used in educational research where conventional guidelines suggest interpreting an effect size of .20 as a small effect, .50 a medium effect, and .80 a large effect. For the purposes of assigning descriptive labels to the effect sizes, we have adopted the following guidelines: small effect = $0 \leq$ effect size ≤ 0.34; medium effect = $.35 \leq$ effect sizes ≤ 0.64; large effect = $0.65 \leq$ effect size ≤ 1.

Exhibit 4.2

Effects of AmeriCorps Participation, by Outcome and Program[a]

The analysis estimated the effects of participation in AmeriCorps by comparing changes in the outcomes for AmeriCorps participants over time with changes in the outcomes for similar individuals who did not enroll in AmeriCorps (comparison groups), using Propensity Score Analysis to address possible selection bias.

Outcome	State and National	NCCC
Civic Engagement		
Attitude:		
Connection to Community	+ **	+ **
Community Problem Identification	+ **	+ *
Neighborhood Obligations	+ **	+
Civic Obligations	+ *	+
Personal Effectiveness of Community Service	+ **	–
Personal Growth through Community Service	+ **	+ **
Local Civic Efficacy	+ **	+ *
Grassroots Efficacy	+ **	+
Behavior:		
Community-Based Activism	+ **	+ **
Engagement in the Political Process	+	–
Voting Participation[b]	+	+
Volunteer Participation[b]	+	+ **
Education		
Attitude:		
Acceptance of Responsibility for Educational Success	+	+
Confidence in Ability to Obtain an Education	+	+
Behavior:		
Educational Progress[b]	–	–
Employment		
Attitude:		
Acceptance of Responsibility for Employment Success	+ **	–
Importance of Service-Oriented Careers	+	–
Behavior:		
Basic Work Skills	+ *	+ **
Public Service Employment[b]	+ *	+
Teamwork and Other Life Skills		
Attitude:		
Appreciation of Cultural and Ethnic Diversity	+	– **
Behavior:		
Constructive Group Interaction	+	–
Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups	+	–

a Effect sizes are shown in Exhibit 4.31 at the end of this chapter.

b These outcomes were measured approximately two years after program exit, in Fall 2002/Winter 2003.

** Indicates statistical significance at the .01 level.

* Indicates statistical significance at the .05 level.

\+ Indicates positive finding, or greater net gain, which means that AmeriCorps members experienced a greater increase (or smaller decrease) than comparison group members.

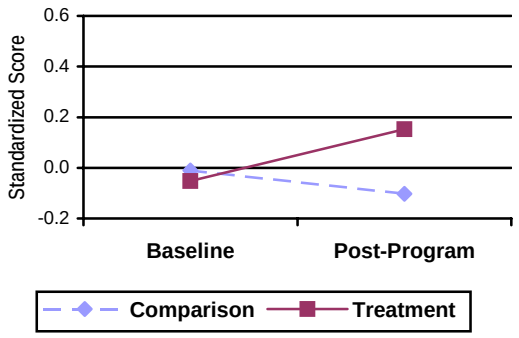
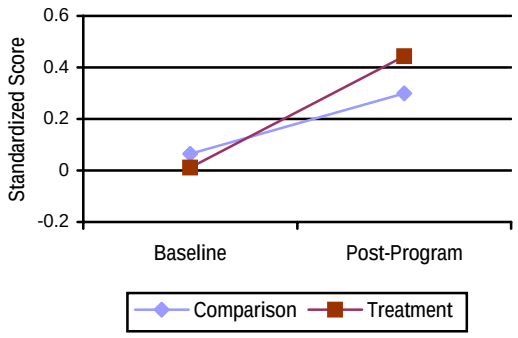
– Indicates negative finding, or smaller net gain, which means that AmeriCorps members experienced a smaller increase (or greater decrease) than comparison group members.

significant effects of participation for *behavioral* outcomes, we present results for select individual items that are part of the composite outcome measure. Presentations of findings for the individual items within behavioral measures are not as meaningful as the overall composite measure. Finally, we summarize the changes experienced by treatment and comparison groups for outcomes with statistically significant impacts.[33]

Exhibit 4.3 displays two sample graphs, with accompanying explanatory text. As stated above, solid lines represent a statistically significant mean gain (or loss), while dashed lines indicate that the group did not experience any change. The effect of participation, including effect size and statistical significance, is noted below each graph.

Exhibit 4.3

Sample Outcome

State and National	NCCC
	
Positive effect of participation Effect Size = 0.23, statistically significant at the p<.01 level.	No effect of participation. Effect Size = 0.09, not statistically significant at conventional levels.

In this hypothetical example, the upward-sloping solid line for the State and National treatment group indicates that on average, State and National members experienced a statistically significant gain for this outcome during the course of the program. During the same time period, the comparison group did not experience a statistically significant change for this outcome, as shown by the dashed line. In this case, the net result of each group's mean gains is positive, as indicated by the note beneath the graph that states "Positive effect of participation." In the NCCC graph, both treatment and comparison groups show positive mean gains, as indicated by the solid lines. However, the net result is that there is no effect of participation, because there is no statistically significant difference between the gains for the treatment and comparison groups. This impact is described by the statement "No effect of participation," shown below the graph.

[33] For all outcomes, mean pretest and posttest scores, average treatment effects, effect sizes, and sample sizes are displayed in Appendix I.

Civic Engagement

Outcome Measures for Civic Engagement	
Connection to Community	Personal Growth through Community Service
Community Problem Identification	Local Civic Efficacy
Neighborhood Obligations	Grassroots Efficacy
Civic Obligations	Community-Based Activism
Personal Effectiveness of Community Service	Engagement in the Political Process

The Corporation for National and Community Service has an expansive vision for the future of civic engagement in the United States, focusing on involvement, responsibility, and effectiveness. Furthermore, promoting civic engagement is a primary goal for all of the Corporation's programs; they are encouraged to "use service to enable members to see themselves as problem-solvers, not problems; to become leaders, not just followers; and to take personal responsibility."[34] Because of the importance of civic engagement to the Corporation's mission, over half of our outcome measures focus on that dimension.

We found numerous significant effects on measures of civic engagement for both State and National and NCCC members. These findings are particularly important because when they entered the program, AmeriCorps members already demonstrated a high level of civic engagement, as did their counterparts in the comparison group. While AmeriCorps members increased their level of civic engagement on many of the outcome measures in this category, scores for comparison group members typically showed little or no change in this short-term analysis.

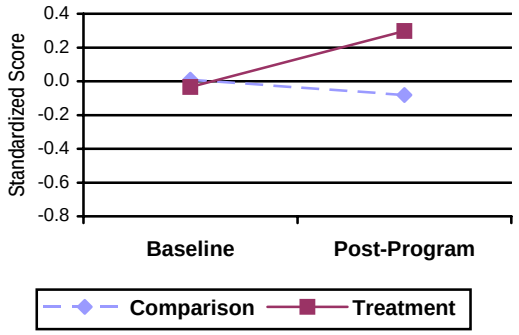
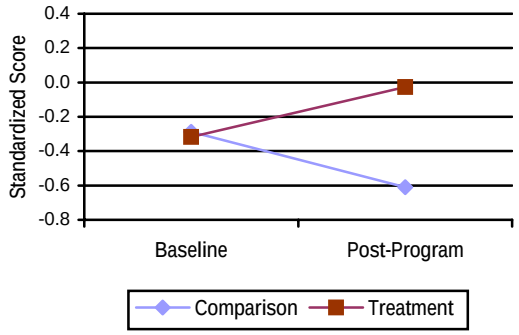
We now present detailed results on outcomes relating to civic engagement, in two groups: *attitudes* and *behavior*.

Attitudes. As part of our assessment of civic engagement outcomes, we used measures of respondents' reports of connections to, participation in, and efficacy in local communities and civil society as indicators of attitudes toward civic engagement. We also collected information about members' involvement in volunteering, voting, and civic activities as indicators of members' post-program civic behavior.

[34] AmeriCorps*State Application Guidelines. In *Corporation for National Service: 2000 Administration and Program Guide.*

Exhibit 4.4

Connection to Community, Baseline to Post-Program

State and National	NCCC
	
Positive effect of participation. Effect Size = 0.51, statistically significant at the p<.01 level.	Positive effect of participation. Effect Size = 0.39, statistically significant at the p<.01 level.

> "We envision a nation in which service helps people expand their sense of community."[35]
>
> —Corporation for National and Community Service.

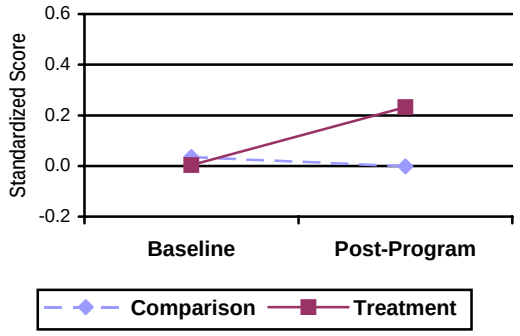
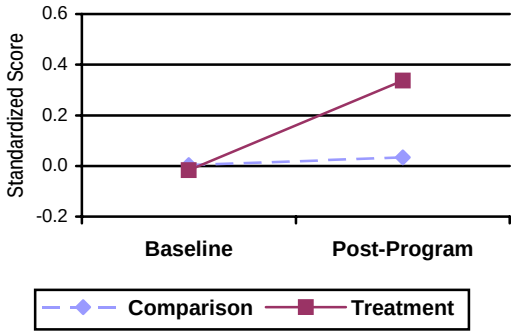
Consistent with the Corporation's vision for the role of service in strengthening sense of community, ***Connection to Community*** represents the respondent's opinion about the strength of his/her connection to the community, as characterized by the strength of feelings toward the community, including attachment, awareness, and commitment. We find that for both State and National and NCCC programs, there are positive, statistically significant effects of participation. For State and National, the mean change for program members is positive while the mean comparison group member shows no change, reflecting a medium-sized effect of participation (effect size = 0.51).[36] For NCCC, the mean change for members is positive while the comparison group shows a decline, reflecting a medium-sized effect of participation (effect size = 0.39).

[35] http://www.cns.gov/about/vision.html, January 27, 2004.

[36] As noted in the introduction to this chapter, these mean changes represent trends only; they cannot be used to infer program effects. Participation impacts are explicitly described as such in the text, and are supported by effect size and statistical significance information in the graphs.

Exhibit 4.5

Community Problem Identification, Baseline to Post-Program

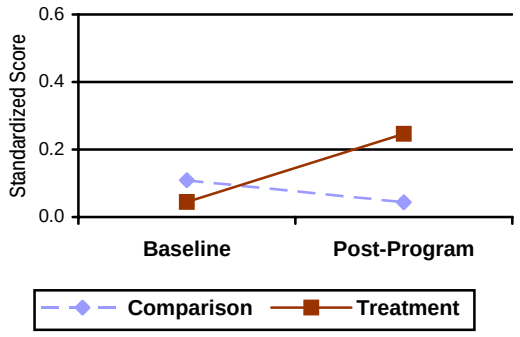
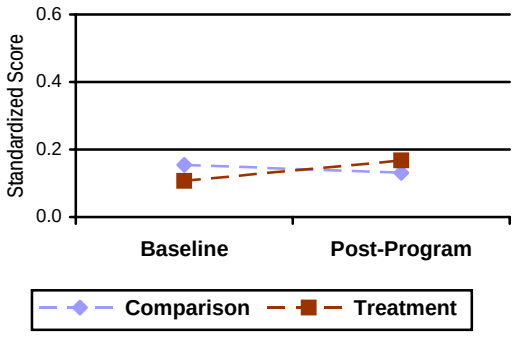
State and National	NCCC
	
Positive effect of participation. Effect Size = 0.30, statistically significant at the p<.01 level.	Positive effect of participation. Effect Size = 0.29, statistically significant at the p<.05 level.

Participation in AmeriCorps also has significant positive effects on ***Community Problem Identification***, which represents the respondent's self-assessed understanding of social problems in his/her community, such as environment, public health, and crime. Both the State and National and NCCC members show average positive gains for this outcome, while the respective comparison groups show no change. This reflects small positive and statistically significant impacts of participation for both State and National and NCCC (State and National effect size = 0.30; NCCC effect size = 0.29).

> "[AmeriCorps] really opened my eyes to the things that are going on in the world…. I worked in inner city Detroit as a tutor, and I had never seen such poverty in the [United] States—a lack of parental involvement, crowded classrooms, lack of resources—that's just one place, but it sticks out in my mind the most."
>
> —Former State and National member.

Exhibit 4.6

Neighborhood Obligations, Baseline to Post-Program

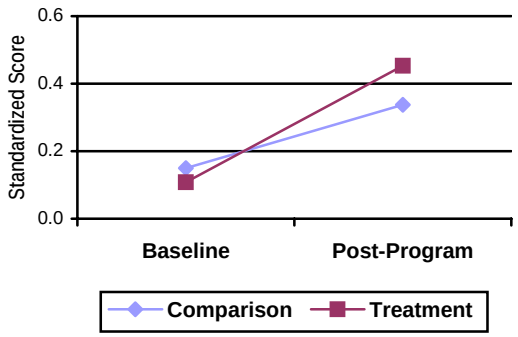
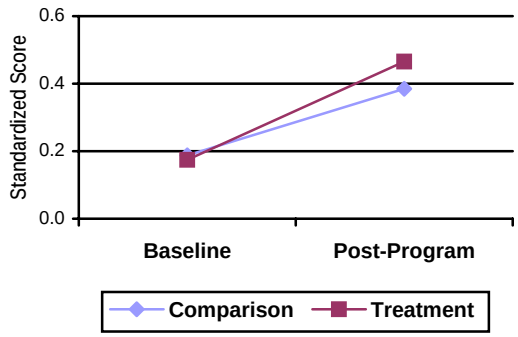
State and National	NCCC
	
Positive effect of participation. Effect Size = 0.27, statistically significant at the p<.01 level.	No effect of participation. Effect Size = 0.08, not statistically significant at conventional levels.

Neighborhood Obligations represents another aspect of civic engagement, captured in respondents' opinions about the importance of being active in their neighborhood. Reporting crimes, keeping the neighborhood clean, and participating in neighborhood organizations are neighborhood-based activities asked about in this measure. On average, the State and National members show an increase in Neighborhood Obligations while the State and National comparison group shows no change. The net effect of participation in a State and National program on this aspect of civic engagement is small but positive and statistically significant (effect size = 0.27). NCCC has no significant effect on members' attitudes toward Neighborhood Obligations.

> "[Through AmeriCorps participation] I became more aware of my surroundings and environment. for example, how little things can affect it, like the trash you throw out—how long it sticks around."
>
> —Former State and National member.

Exhibit 4.7

Civic Obligations, Baseline to Post-Program

State and National	NCCC
	
Positive effect of participation. Effect Size = 0.16, statistically significant at the p<.01 level.	No effect of participation. Effect Size = 0.09, not statistically significant at conventional levels.

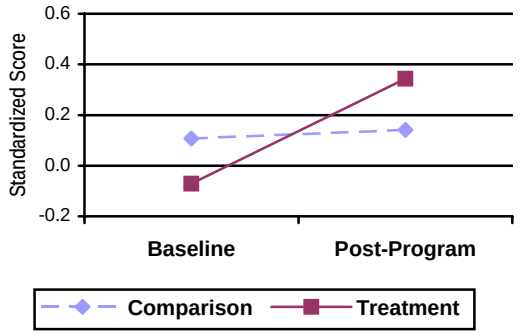
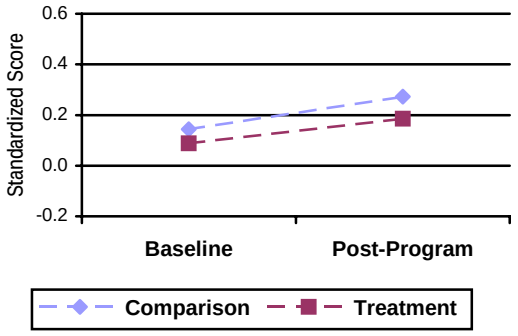
Similarly, participation in AmeriCorps has a positive impact on ***Civic Obligations*** for State and National members. Civic Obligations represents the respondent's opinion about the importance of participation in various civic activities, including voting in elections and serving on a jury. Both the State and National and NCCC treatment and comparison groups achieve positive mean gains in attitudes toward Civic Obligations. The average treatment effect on State and National members is small but positive and statistically significant (effect size = 0.16); for NCCC, the effect is positive but not statistically significant.

> "We envision a nation in which service is viewed as … a form of civic action in which people take pride."
>
> —Corporation for National and Community Service[37]

[37] Corporation for National and Community Service. About Us: Vision Statement. http://www.nationalservice.org/about/vision.html, March 31, 2004.

Exhibit 4.8

Personal Effectiveness of Community Service, Baseline to Post-Program

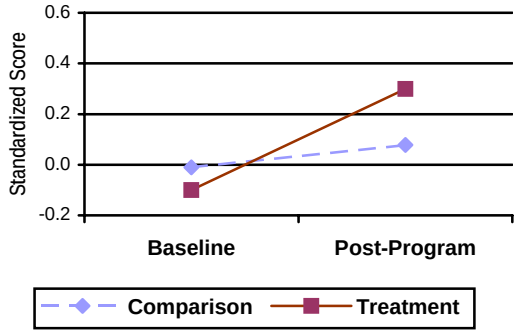
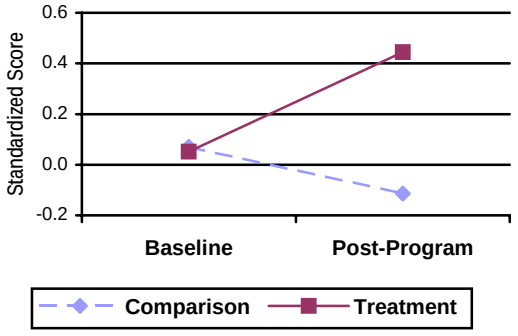
State and National	NCCC
	
Positive effect of participation. Effect Size = 0.38, statistically significant at the p<.01 level.	No effect of participation. Effect Size = –0.03, not statistically significant at conventional levels.

> "I established a tutoring program in elementary schools. I helped them tremendously in math and language arts."
>
> —Former State and National member.

Personal Effectiveness of Community Service represents the respondent's opinion about the impacts of his/her prior volunteer activities during the previous year with respect to making community contributions, developing attachments to the community, and making a difference. Participation in State and National results in a positive impact for members. On average, the State and National treatment group experiences an improvement in this outcome while the comparison group does not change, resulting in a medium-sized impact of participation (effect size = 0.38). We find that NCCC participation does not result in a statistically significant effect for this outcome.

Exhibit 4.9

Personal Growth through Community Service, Baseline to Post-Program

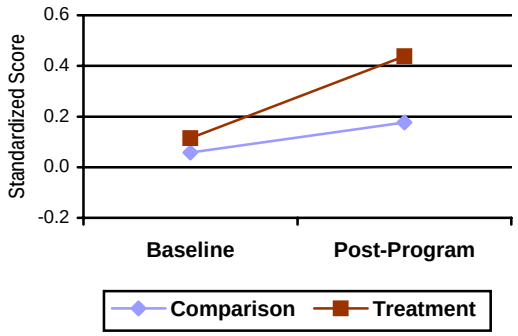
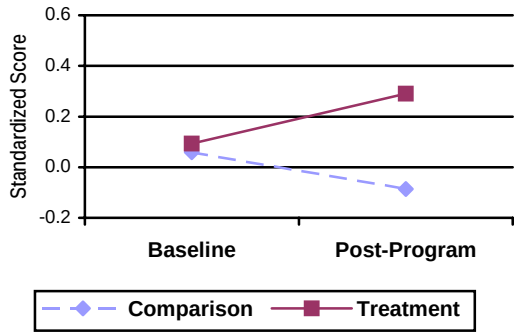
State and National	NCCC
	
Positive effect of participation. Effect Size = 0.38, statistically significant at the p<.01 level.	Positive effect of participation. Effect Size = 0.58, statistically significant at the p < .01 level.

> "[During AmeriCorps] I became more independent…. I kind of felt empowered.… [I felt that] if I work toward something I can do it…. I felt I can make a difference."
>
> —Former NCCC member.

Personal Growth through Community Service represents the respondent's assessment of the impacts of his/her volunteer activities during the previous year on personal growth, including exposure to new ideas, changing beliefs, learning about the real world, and challenging personal boundaries. We find that both State and National and NCCC participation yield positive, statistically significant effects in this outcome. For State and National, the treatment group experiences growth during the study period while the comparison group experiences no change, resulting in a medium-sized effect (effect size = 0.38). The NCCC members also show positive gains, while the NCCC comparison group members do not change, reflecting a medium-sized effect of participation (effect size = 0.58) for this outcome.

Exhibit 4.10

Local Civic Efficacy, Baseline to Post-Program

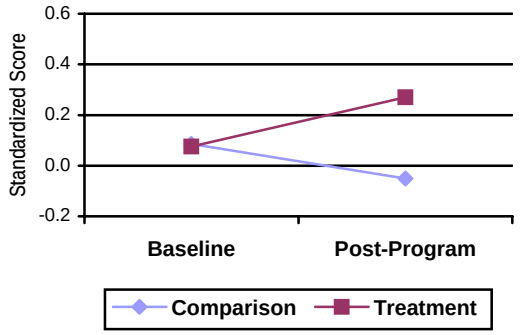
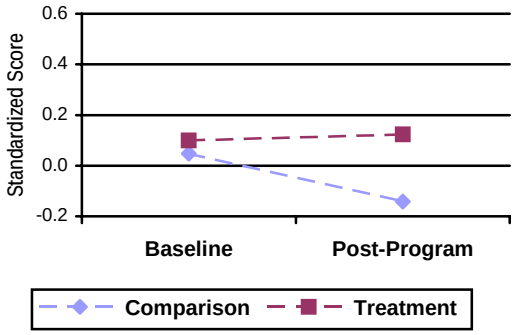
State and National	NCCC
	
Positive effect of participation. Effect Size = 0.21, statistically significant at the p<.01 level.	Positive effect of participation. Effect Size = 0.34, statistically significant at the p<.01 level.

> "Problems in communities are being solved through service—and service is a part of problemsolving initiatives in education, public safety, the environment, and other human needs."
>
> —Corporation for National and Community Service.

Local Civic Efficacy represents the respondent's opinion about the feasibility of working with local or state government to meet a range of community needs, such as fixing a pothole or getting an issue on a statewide ballot. Participation in both State and National and NCCC programs results in positive and significant effects in Local Civic Efficacy. On average, State and National treatment and comparison group members display an increase in Local Civic Efficacy. The relative change reflects a small positive effect of State and National participation (effect size = 0.21). NCCC treatment group members show an increase in Local Civic Efficacy, while the comparison group shows no change for this outcome, yielding a small positive effect (effect size = 0.34).

Exhibit 4.11

Grassroots Efficacy, Baseline to Post-Program

State and National	NCCC
	
Positive effect of participation. Effect Size = 0.33, statistically significant at the p<.01 level.	No effect of participation. Effect Size = 0.21, not statistically significant at conventional levels.

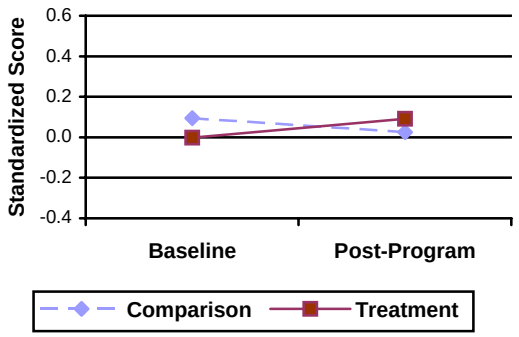
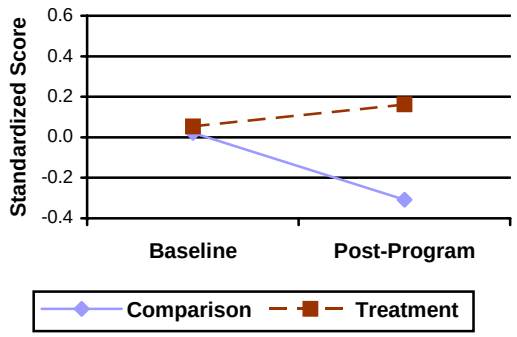
> "[In AmeriCorps] I learned about how someone can make change from a grassroots level and how big of a change they can make, starting small and making big changes."
>
> —Former NCCC member.

Consistent with the Corporation's vision of empowering members to solve community problems, ***Grassroots Efficacy*** represents the respondent's opinion about the feasibility of starting a local effort to meet a range of community needs, such as starting an after-school program or organizing a park cleanup program. We find that State and National participation results in a small positive significant effect for Grassroots Efficacy (effect size = 0.33). On average, the State and National treatment group experiences an increase in Grassroots Efficacy, while the comparison group shows a decline for this outcome. The effect of NCCC participation, while positive, is not statistically significant at conventional levels.

Behavior. The previous section assessed the effects of participation in AmeriCorps programs on attitudes toward civic engagement. We now turn to an exploration of the effects of participation on behavioral measures of civic engagement.

Exhibit 4.12

Community-Based Activism, Baseline to Post-Program

State and National	NCCC
	
Positive effect of participation. Effect Size = 0.16, statistically significant at the p<.01 level.	Positive effect of participation. Effect Size = 0.44, statistically significant at the p<.01 level.

Community-Based Activism represents the frequency with which the respondent participates in community-based activities, including participating in community meetings, joining organizations, and writing to newspapers to voice opinions. Participation in AmeriCorps results in statistically significant positive effects on Community-Based Activism behavior for both State and National members and NCCC members. On average, the State and National members experience a gain in Community-Based Activism behaviors, while the comparison group members experience no change, reflecting a small effect of participation (effect size = 0.16). The NCCC member group shows no change in Community-Based Activism while NCCC comparison group members show a significant decrease, yielding a medium-sized effect of participation (effect size = 0.44).

The Community-Based Activism outcome is composed of three behavioral items. Exhibit 4.13 displays the direction of effects and level of significance for these individual items. These results for individual items reflect the net positive effects found for the outcome as a whole.

Exhibit 4.13

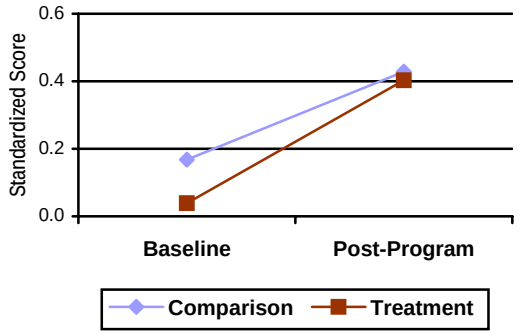
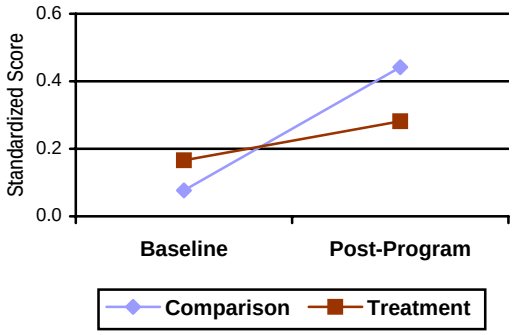
Community-Based Activism

	State and National	NCCC
How often do you participate in events such as community meetings, celebrations, or activities in your community?	+	+ **
How often do you join organizations that support issues that are important to you?	+	+
How often do you write or email newspapers or organizations to voice your views on an issue?	+ **	+ **

** Indicates statistical significance at the .01 level.
* Indicates statistical significance at the .05 level.

Exhibit 4.14

Engagement in the Political Process, Baseline to Post-Program

State and National	NCCC
	
No effect of participation. Effect Size = 0.10, not statistically significant at conventional levels.	No effect of participation. Effect Size = 0.25, not statistically significant at conventional levels.

Engagement in the Political Process reflects political behavior on a broad scale. It represents the frequency with which the respondent participates in activities intrinsic to the political process, including learning about candidates and voting in local elections. Despite mean positive changes for treatment and comparison members of both programs, the net results of participation are not statistically significant, indicating that there is no impact of participation for either State and National or NCCC. These results are not surprising, given the prohibition on engaging in political activities (e.g., political campaigns) during AmeriCorps.

Exhibit 4.15 displays the results for the individual survey items that are included in the Engagement in the Political Process outcome. The directions of the net effects for these behavioral items reflect the results for the overall outcome.

Exhibit 4.15

Engagement in the Political Process

	State and National	NCCC
Vote in local elections	+	–
Try to learn as much as I can about candidates or ballot questions	+	–
Keep informed about local or national news	+ *	–

* Indicates statistical significance at the .05 level.

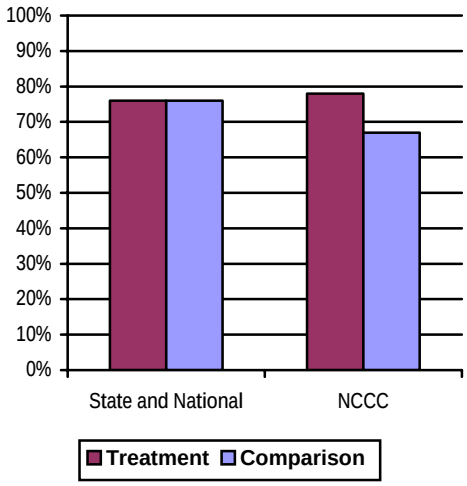
As a separate survey item, the study asked respondents about their participation in the 2000 national elections, as an indication of ***Voting Participation***. We find that 77 percent of State and National members and 76 percent of comparison group members voted in the 2000 national elections. This slight difference reflects our finding that participation in the State and National program is not

associated with a significant effect on Voting Participation. NCCC members are over 10 percent more likely to vote in the 2000 election than comparison group members. However, this difference is not statistically significant.

We also tested whether participation in State and National programs had an effect on voting for respondents who had not voted in the 1998 national election. Specifically, we tested whether 1998 member non-voters participated in the 2000 national election. We find that there is no significant difference in the voting behavior of previous non-voters in the two elections, for either State and National or NCCC.

Exhibit 4.16

Voted in the 2000 Election

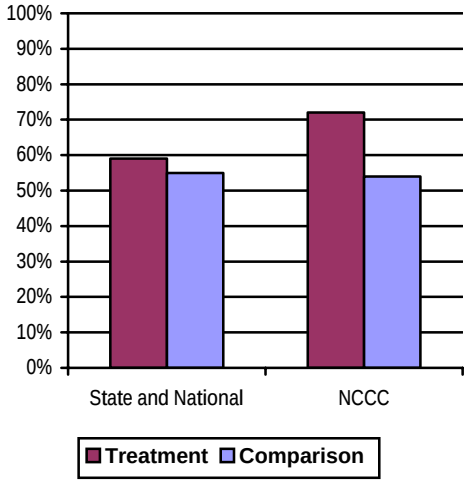


State and National: No effect of participation
Difference = 0 percentage points, not statistically significant at conventional levels

NCCC: No effect of participation
Difference = 11 percentage points, not statistically significant at conventional levels

Exhibit 4.17

Voted in the 2000 Election but Did Not Vote in the 1998 Election



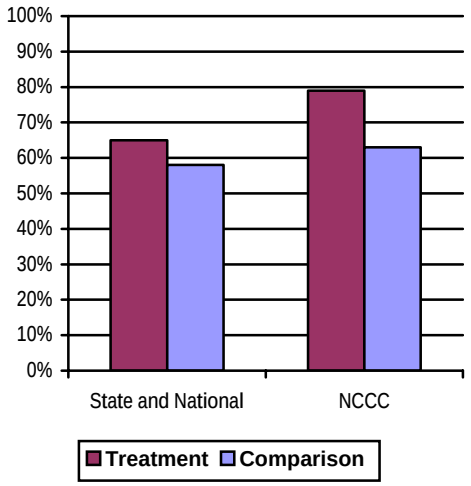
State and National: No effect of participation
Difference = 4 percentage points, not statistically significant at conventional levels

NCCC: No effect of participation
Difference = 18 percentage points, not statistically significant at conventional levels

Volunteering Participation addresses respondent participation in volunteer activities at some point during the two years following Fall 2000, the approximate completion of service for program members. As noted earlier, at post-program, 66 percent of State and National members and 74 percent of NCCC members indicated that they in tended to continue to participate in service, figures that are very similar to the number who reported actually engaging in service two years later. We find that there is not a statistically significant difference between State and National members and comparison group members. In contrast, NCCC members are 16 percent more likely to participate in volunteer activities, reflecting a statistically significant difference between the groups. Seventy-eight percent of NCCC former members participated in volunteer activities after Fall 2000, as compared with 63 percent of NCCC comparison group respondents, reflecting a positive impact of NCCC participation on volunteering participation.

Exhibit 4.18

Participated in Volunteer Activities

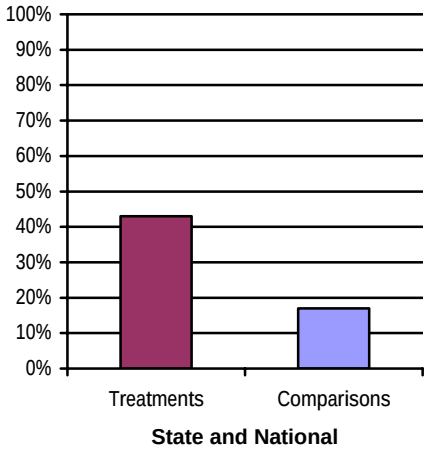


State and National: No effect of participation
Difference = 7 percentage points, not statistically significant at conventional levels

NCCC: Positive effect of participation
Difference = 16 percentage points, statistically significant at the p<.01 level

Exhibit 4.19

Participated in Volunteer Activities after Fall 2000, but Did Not Volunteer in 5 Years Before Baseline



State and National: Positive effect of participation
Difference = 25 percentage points, statistically significant at the p<.01 level

We also tested the effect of program participation on a subgroup of respondents who had not participated in volunteer activities during the five years prior to baseline. We find that State and National participation has a positive and significant effect on volunteering after Fall 2000 for those individuals who had not volunteered during the five years prior to baseline. On average, State and National members without recent volunteering experience are 13 percent more likely to have volunteered since Fall 2000 than the comparison subgroup, similarly identified. This hypothesis was not tested for NCCC participation, due to the small sample size.

Summary of Results for Civic Engagement Outcomes

As shown in the sections above, AmeriCorps participation yields numerous positive impacts in the area of Civic Engagement for both State and National and NCCC members. These results are important because they reflect the capacity of AmeriCorps to strengthen existing beliefs in and commitments to civic engagement and community service, and to awaken new ones. Furthermore, the study provides evidence that AmeriCorps participation also results in a demonstration of members' commitment to civic engagement, through positive impacts on several behavioral outcomes.

Given our hypothesis that attitudinal changes generally precede behavioral change, additional time is needed before we can determine whether AmeriCorps participation results in widespread positive impacts on members' demonstration of their commitment to their neighborhoods, communities, and country.

Education

Every AmeriCorps member who completes a year of full-time service is eligible for an education award of $4,725. The award can be used for education or training with qualified institutions, or to repay qualified student loans, for a period of seven years after completing service. This award is a clear indication of the Corporation's commitment to advancing the educational prospects of members. Furthermore, individual AmeriCorps programs often support members' attempts to further their education by providing opportunities to complete their GED. Consistent with this commitment, the study measures the effects of participation on members' attitudes toward their own ability to achieve educational milestones.

Outcome Measures for Education
Confidence in Ability to Obtain an Education
Acceptance of Responsibility for Educational Success
Educational Progress

The estimated effects on program members' ***Confidence in Ability to Obtain an Education*** (the respondent's judgment of the feasibility of pursuing and obtaining an education), and on their ***Acceptance of Responsibility for Educational Success*** (the respondent's judgment about the extent to which they are personally responsible for their academic achievements), though positive, are not statistically significant.

Exhibit 4.20

Confidence in Ability to Obtain an Education, Baseline to Post-Program

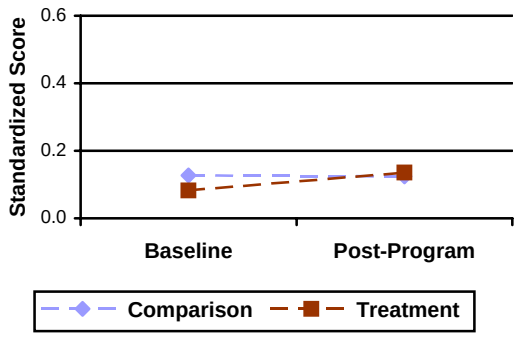
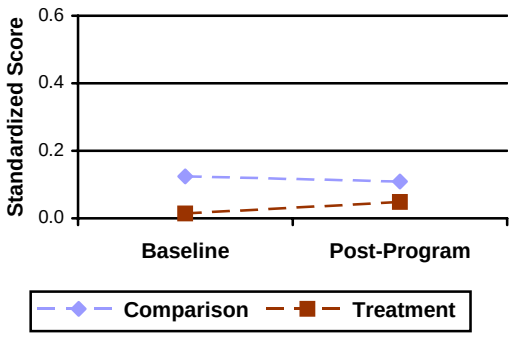
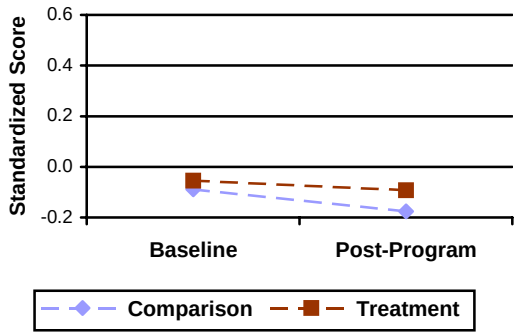
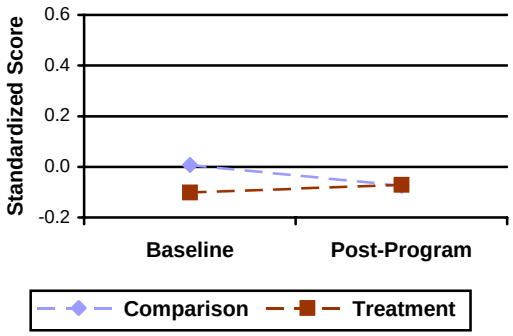
State and National	NCCC
	
No effect of participation Effect Size = 0.06, not statistically significant at conventional levels.	No effect of participation Effect Size = 0.05, not statistically significant at conventional levels.

Exhibit 4.21

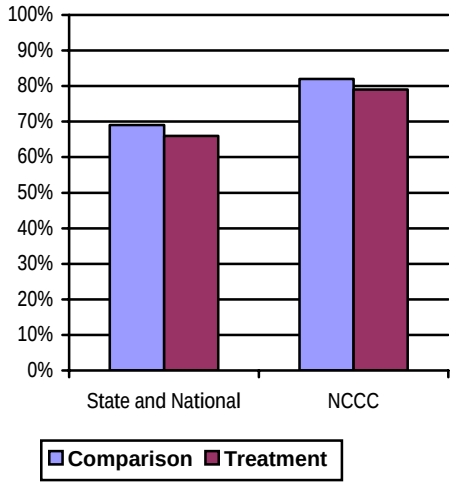
Acceptance of Responsibility for Educational Success, Baseline to Post-Program

State and National	NCCC
	
No effect of participation Effect Size = 0.05, not statistically significant at conventional levels.	No effect of participation Effect Size = 0.11, not statistically significant at conventional levels.

The effects of program participation on ***Educational Progress*** are also measured. Educational Progress is measured dichotomously for treatment and comparison group members according to whether or not they were in pursuit of or had attained a bachelor's or associate's degree by Fall 2002/Winter 2003, two years after program exit. We examined this variable only for those individuals who did not have a bachelor's degree at baseline. Despite lower levels of educational progress shown by the treatment groups for both State and National and NCCC, we find that there are no statistically significant effects of participation on the pursuit of further education for the subset of the study sample.

Exhibit 4.22

Educational Progress



State and National: No effect of participation
Difference = –3 percentage points, not statistically significant at conventional levels

NCCC: No effect of participation
Difference = –4 percentage points, not statistically significant at conventional levels

Summary of Results for Education Outcomes. Overall, we find that in the short term, AmeriCorps participation has no significant impacts on measures of educational attitudes or degree attainment. However, it is important to note that comparison group members had at least one additional year of opportunity to pursue an education while AmeriCorps members were enrolled in the program. Furthermore, AmeriCorps members are allowed up to seven years to use their education awards, suggesting that positive impacts of AmeriCorps may become evident after additional time has passed.

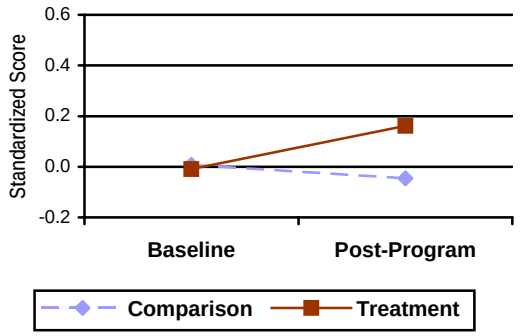
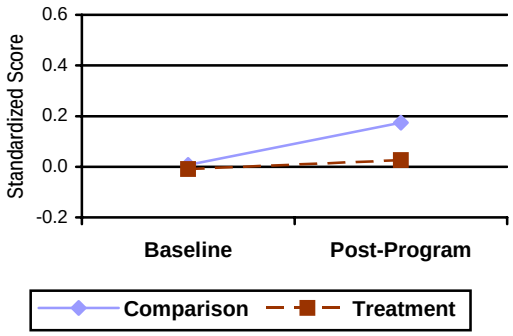
Employment

The Corporation is dedicated to improving the employment options available to AmeriCorps graduates through member development activities, skill-building service projects, and mentoring opportunities. Additionally, AmeriCorps members work with public servants, who often supervise members or partner with AmeriCorps programs, providing exposure to potential careers in the public sector. This study captures both attitudinal and behavioral employment indicators, reflecting the Corporation's interest in this area.

Outcome Measures for Employment
Importance of Service-Oriented Careers
Acceptance of Responsibility for Employment Success
Basic Work Skills
Public Service Employment

Exhibit 4.23

Acceptance of Responsibility for Employment Success

State and National	NCCC
	
Positive effect of participation Effect Size = 0.23, statistically significant at the p<.01 level.	No effect of participation Effect Size = 0.13, not statistically significant at conventional levels.

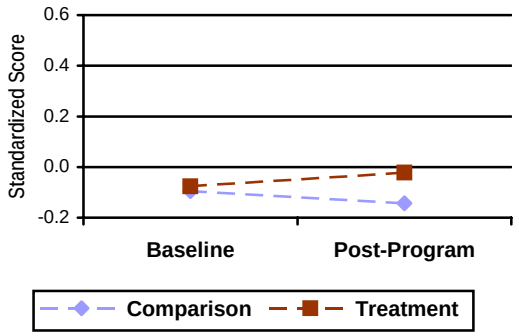
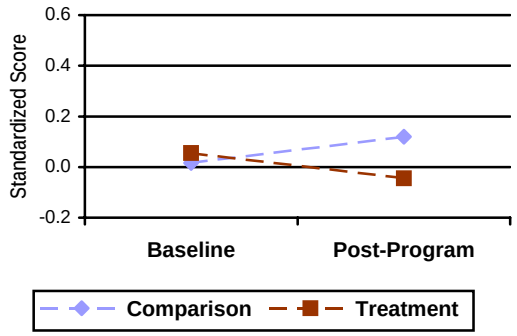
> "[During AmeriCorps] I gained self-confidence [and] leadership skills…. Before AmeriCorps I would have settled for secretary work like I'd done in the past—now I look for leadership positions—I changed the way I market myself. I now have a personal belief in myself. Even if I don't know how, I know I can make change happen."
>
> —Former State and National member

Acceptance of Responsibility for Employment Success indicates the respondent's judgment about the extent to which he/she is personally responsible for his/her success in getting a job. As reflected in the accompanying statement by a former State and National member, we found that State and National participation has a small but statistically significant positive effect on this outcome (effect size = 0.23). On average, the treatment group experiences a mean gain while the

comparison group does not change. For the NCCC sample, the pattern is similar but the estimated effect of participation is not significant.

Exhibit 4.24

Importance of Service-Oriented Careers, Baseline to Post-Program

State and National	NCCC
	
No effect of participation Effect Size = 0.10, not statistically significant at conventional levels.	No effect of participation Effect Size = 0.20, not statistically significant at conventional levels.

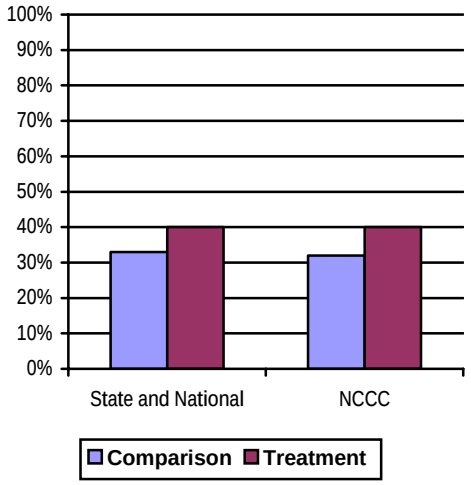
Importance of Service-Oriented Careers indicates the respondent's opinion about the importance of working in a position that contributes to others, such as working to correct inequalities and being of direct service to people. The treatment and comparison groups for both programs show no change between baseline and post-program, resulting in no significant net effects of participation for either program.

> "People might have an idea of how they want to help, but not have an avenue. AmeriCorps was a direct avenue to service that I could then carry on to my personal life and career."
>
> —Former State and National member

We also explored the effects of participation on the likelihood of ***Public Service Employment***. This dichotomous variable indicates whether a member of the treatment or comparison group was working in the public sector (education, social work, public safety, arts, or religion) or enlisted in the military or national guard two years after program exit, in Fall 2002/Winter 2003. We find a positive and statistically significant difference between State and National members and their comparison group. Forty percent of former State and National members are employed in public service, making them 7 percent more likely than their comparison group members to report employment in public service three years after baseline. Although 40 percent of NCCC members are employed in public service, in comparison with 32 percent of their comparison group, participation in the NCCC program does not result in a statistically significant effect on post-program employment in public service.

Exhibit 4.25

Employed in Public Service



State and National: Positive effect of participation.
Difference = 7 percentage points, statistically significant at the p<.05 level

NCCC: No effect of participation.
Difference = 8 percentage points, not statistically significant at conventional levels

The study found that participation in AmeriCorps has positive significant effects on members' assessment of their ***Basic Work Skills,*** including gathering and analyzing information, motivating co-workers, and managing time. The average treatment effect on State and National members is small, positive, and statistically significant (effect size = 0.15). State and National members show a mean gain in Basic Work Skills while comparison group members show no change in this outcome. For NCCC, the impact of participation on Basic Work Skills is medium-sized, positive, and statistically significant (effect size = 0.46). The NCCC treatment group shows an average increase in these behaviors between baseline and post-program, while comparison group members show no change.

Exhibit 4.26

Basic Work Skills, Baseline to Post-Program

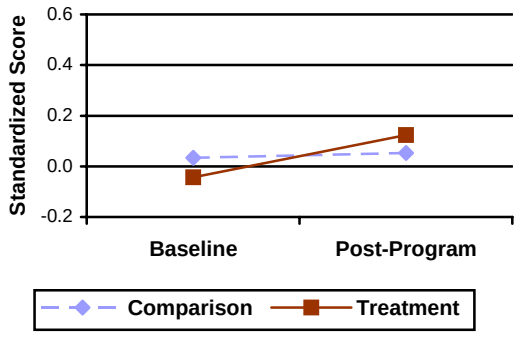
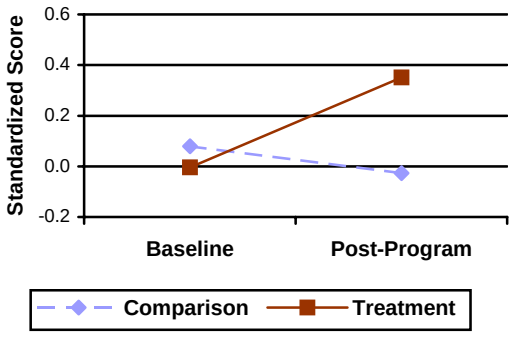
State and National	NCCC
	
Positive effect of participation Effect Size = 0.15, statistically significant at the p<.05 level.	No effect of participation Effect Size = 0.46, statistically significant at the p<.01 level.

Exhibit 4.27 shows the average treatment effect for individual survey items that are included in the Basic Work Skills outcome. The results for the individual items generally reflect the findings for the outcome as a whole.

> "I learned how to deal with people on a more professional level than when I was in high school…. It helped me with my work ethic, and [to] appreciate deadlines a little more."
>
> —Former NCCC member

Exhibit 4.27

Basic Work Skills

	State and National	NCCC
Solving unexpected problems or finding new and better ways to do things	+	+*
Knowing how to gather and analyze information from different sources such as people/organizations	+	+
Listening and responding to other people's suggestions or concerns	+	+
Stopping or decreasing conflicts between people	+	+
Leading a team by taking charge, explaining and motivating co-workers	+ *	+
Negotiating, compromising, and getting along with co-workers, supervisors	+	+
Learning new ways of thinking or acting from other people	+	+
Adapting your plans or ways of doing things in response to changing circumstances	–	+ *
Managing your time when you're under pressure	–	+
Dealing with uncomfortable or difficult working conditions	+	+ **

** Indicates statistical significance at the .01 level.
* Indicates statistical significance at the .05 level.

Summary of Results for Employment Outcomes. This study shows that AmeriCorps participation has a meaningful impact on both attitudinal and behavioral employment outcomes, especially for State and National members. Most notably, AmeriCorps participation leads to a significant difference in the career choices of members, with significantly more State and National members choosing public service employment than comparison group members. We expect that in the future, it will be possible to assess the longer-term impacts of participation on these and other employment outcomes. In the meantime, our short-term results indicate that the Corporation's efforts to support member development and skills building are yielding favorable results.

Teamwork and Other Life Skills

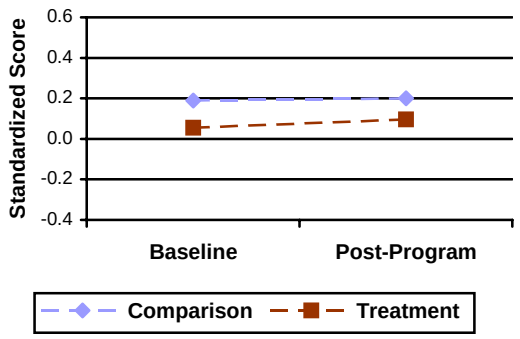
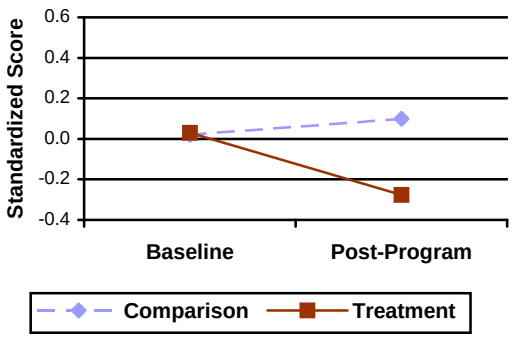
The Corporation for National and Community Service regularly provides training, team-building, and reflection opportunities to support AmeriCorps members' ability to interact in team settings with groups of diverse individuals. This study reports on respondents' interpersonal skills, including

attitudes toward cultural and ethnic diversity and behavior in group settings, in order to estimate the effects of AmeriCorps participation on these skills.

Outcome Measures for Teamwork and Other Life Skills
Appreciation of Cultural and Ethnic Diversity
Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups
Constructive Group Interactions

Exhibit 4.28

Appreciation of Cultural and Ethnic Diversity, Baseline to Post-Program

State and National	NCCC
	
No effect of participation Effect Size = 0.03, not statistically significant at conventional levels.	Negative effect of participation Effect Size = –0.39, statistically significant at the p<.01 level.

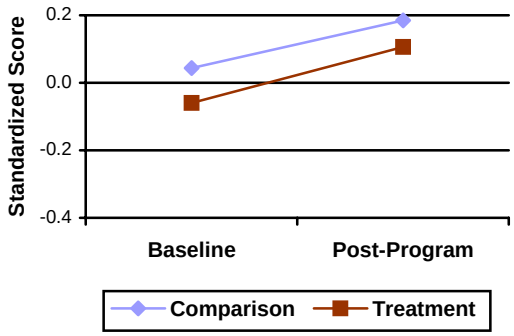
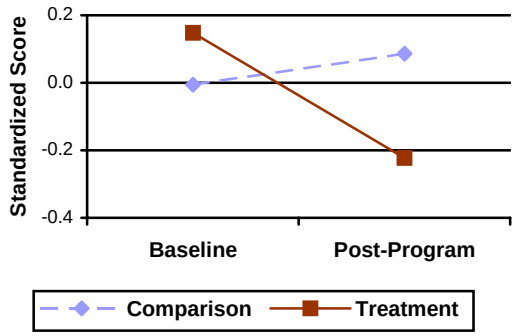
> "We envision a nation in which service promotes partnerships at all levels of society and builds bridges among seemingly disparate groups to improve the quality of life of people in our nation"
>
> —Corporation for National Service

The study captures data about life skills that help people to forge connections with others by measuring respondents' attitudes toward cultural and ethnic diversity, reflecting the Corporation's commitment to promoting respect for diversity. During the 1999–2000 program year, programs were encouraged to enroll a diverse set of members as defined by age, race/ethnicity, education levels, and other demographic characteristics. ***Appreciation of Cultural and Ethnic Diversity*** represents the respondent's opinion about the importance and desirability of relationships between people who do not share the same cultural and/or ethnic background. We find that the effect of State and National participation is not significant. In contrast, NCCC participation results in a medium-sized statistically significant negative effect for this outcome (effect size = –0.39). On average, the treatment group becomes less positive in their appreciation for diversity during their participation in the program, while the comparison group's mean score does not change.

Given the striking nature of this result, as the only significant negative finding in the study, we would like to explore some possible reasons for this result. It is important to note that NCCC members live and work in extremely close proximity to one another, which can lead to challenges in the form of interpersonal conflicts. We suspect that these challenges may lead to short-term disillusion with the concept of working in diverse groups, which is reflected in the greater mean loss for the treatment group. The comparison group also shows a loss, but the magnitude of the loss is less than that of the treatment group, possibly because the comparison group is less likely to be exposed to the kinds of living and working conditions that would expose them to highly diverse groups. In addition, as we noted earlier, the survey was administered during the last weeks of the program before members had had time to reflect on their experiences. These hypotheses are based on our observations of the NCCC programs, as well as our conversations with NCCC staff. We are unable to test our hypotheses as part of this short-term analysis; additional time, experience, and reflection may lead to more positive findings on this outcome over time.

Exhibit 4.29

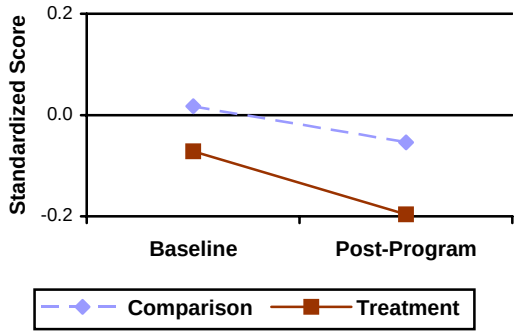
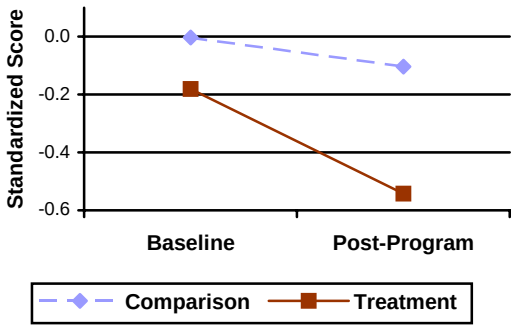
Constructive Group Interactions, Baseline to Post-Program

State and National	NCCC
	
No effect of participation Effect Size = 0.02, not statistically significant at conventional levels.	No effect of participation Effect Size = –0.12, not statistically significant at conventional levels.

Constructive Group Interactions represents the frequency with which the respondent has participated in group situations during which constructive interactions, such as working out conflicts and sharing ideas, have occurred. We find that there are no significant effects of participation in either State and National or NCCC programs with respect to this outcome.

Exhibit 4.30

Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups, Baseline to Post-Program

State and National	NCCC
	
No effect of participation Effect Size = 0.06, not statistically significant at conventional levels.	No effect of participation Effect Size = –0.16, not statistically significant at conventional levels.

The study also examined members' attitudes and experiences in team settings. ***Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups*** indicates the frequency with which the respondent personally uses techniques for encouraging constructive group behavior. This includes, for example, encouraging participation by other team members and supporting others' right to be heard. The study finds that participation in AmeriCorps does not have a significant effect on Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups for either the State and National or NCCC program.

Summary of Results for Life Skills Outcomes. As described, this study does not identify any significant positive effects of AmeriCorps participation on selected life skills, including group interactions. Furthermore, we note that participation in NCCC yields the only statistically significant negative result in the study, for respondents' appreciation of ethnic and cultural diversity. Given that these findings reflect only short-term results, we hypothesize that additional time may yield more positive findings. In the meantime, however, it may be important for the Corporation to strategize about better ways to support the development of members' interpersonal skills, and to promote an environment in which diversity is embraced.

Subgroup Effects

The overall effects presented in the sections above were astonishingly similar across member subgroups. In addition to the specific hypotheses that are tested on selected subgroups, as described earlier in this chapter, a broader analysis was conducted to explore whether the effect of AmeriCorps service differs across demographic subgroups. This analysis looked at the following subgroups:

- Race/ethnicity: Hispanic/Latino, African American, and White;
- Educational attainment: Less than one year of college, One or more years of college (no degree), and Bachelor's degree or higher;
- Gender: Male and Female;

- Age: State and National—Less than 23, Greater than 23; NCCC—Less than 21, Greater than 21; and
- Religious Exposure: High religious exposure and Low religious exposure.[38]

The analysis was conducted on those outcomes for which pre- and post-program scores were measured. The first step of the analysis calculated the effect of AmeriCorps participation within each subgroup for each outcome. The second step tested whether the effects of participation differed across the subgroups within each demographic. Each model was fit separately for State and National and NCCC members. For each demographic group we tested, the null hypothesis was that the average effect of participation is the same across demographic subgroups. Although we find differences for some subgroups, we are unable to claim that the few statistically significant differences are not the result of chance, given the number of statistical tests that were performed.[39] In addition, the subgroup analysis yielded no meaningful patterns within the data. These results indicate that the effects of AmeriCorps participation are not concentrated in particular subgroups, but are experienced by members of all types.[40]

Program-Level Effects

The program-level analysis was designed to determine whether effects of participation differed across members enrolled in different State and National programs, and, if so, whether we could identify program characteristics or individual experiences that explained those differences. We hypothesized that particular program characteristics or individual experiences, such as program focus or member development opportunities, might lead to different individual outcomes.

The analysis was conducted in two steps.[41] The first step was an exploration of the extent to which member outcomes varied within and between programs. We find that differences between programs account for very little of the difference in member attitudinal outcomes. Overall, outcomes for members in the same program are as similar (or dissimilar) as they are to those for members in other programs.

In order to fully explore possible effects of individual members' program experiences, we then proceeded to analyze the relationship between a combination of individually reported program experiences and program characteristics and member outcomes. Based on a preliminary descriptive analysis of program characteristics, we identified variables of interest for inclusion in the analysis.

---

[38] Religious exposure is a composite measure that represents the level of religious activity in which the individual was engaged during his or her youth, including family connections to religious organizations and frequency of attendance at religious services. Individuals whose score fell above the group median are categorized as religious, while individuals who scored below the median are categorized as not religious.

[39] Given the 180 subgroup tests that were conducted at an alpha of 0.05, an average of 9 tests would be expected to have an associated p-value of less than 0.05. Placing a 95 percent binomial confidence interval around this mean gives a range of 5 to 16 tests one would expect to have associated p-values of less than 0.05, merely by chance, even if there were no effect. The subgroup analysis generated 14 subgroup tests with associated p-values of less than 0.05, which falls within the expected range; thus one cannot claim that these results were not the result of chance.

[40] Appendix J presents detailed results from the subgroup analysis.

[41] Appendix K contains a detailed description of the program-level analysis.

These variables included such characteristics as program focus and size, member development opportunities, and activities to help members build transferable skills. (See Exhibit 4.32 for a list of program characteristics.) These data were gathered both from program directors and from individual members.

Consistent with our findings from the first stage of the analysis, the results of this phase indicate that there is no consistent effect across outcomes of interest for any program characteristic or reported experience. While we recognize that programs differ substantially, these findings indicate that the AmeriCorps model produces outcomes that are applicable, on average, to all participating programs.

Conclusion

This study yields extremely promising findings about the short-term effects of AmeriCorps participation on members' attitudes and behaviors. Participation in the State and National program yields positive and statistically significant impacts for over half of all outcomes, and participation in NCCC yields positive and statistically significant impacts for over one-third of all outcomes. Moreover, the number of statistically significant positive outcomes exceeded the single (non-significant) negative outcome for State and National as well as the limited and largely non-significant number of negative outcomes for the NCCC. Notably, we find numerous positive impacts on civic engagement and employment outcomes, which are a priority for AmeriCorps programs and the Corporation for National and Community Service. These findings illustrate the effectiveness of the AmeriCorps program model, which emphasizes service, civic engagement, and hands-on experience. The results for education and teamwork and other life skills are less consistently positive, with few statistically significant results, highlighting those areas in which the Corporation can target future improvements. The study also shows that the results for State and National programs are not sensitive to differences in program structure or member experiences. Finally, the study finds that these results are applicable to all AmeriCorps members, regardless of demographic characteristics, indicating that the AmeriCorps model is appropriate for the general population.

Despite these encouraging findings, we recognize that additional time is necessary to determine the duration of these impacts and to explore the long-term results for other outcomes. Future study will reveal the extent to which AmeriCorps participation delivers significant long-term changes in the lives of AmeriCorps members.

Exhibit 4.31

Effect Size, by Outcome and Program[a]

The impact analysis estimated the effects of participation in AmeriCorps by comparing changes in the outcomes for AmeriCorps participants over time with changes in the outcomes for similar individuals who did not enroll in AmeriCorps (comparison groups), using Propensity Score Analysis to address possible selection bias.

	State and National	NCCC
Civic Engagement-Related Outcomes		
Connection to Community (Attitude)	0.511**	0.385**
Community Problem Identification (Attitude/Knowledge)	0.302**	0.293*
Neighborhood Obligations (Attitude)	0.267**	0.083
Civic Obligations (Attitude)	0.158*	0.093
Personal Effectiveness of Community Service (Attitude)	0.381**	-0.032
Personal Growth Through Community Service (Attitude)	0.311**	0.576**
Local Civic Efficacy (Attitude)	0.205**	0.342*
Grassroots Efficacy (Attitude)	0.332**	0.213
Community-Based Activism (Behavior)	0.162**	0.439**
Engagement in the Political Process (Behavior)	0.103	-0.249
Voting Participation (Behavior)[b]	0.007	0.104
Volunteering Participation (Behavior)[b]	0.069	0.164**
Education-Related Outcomes		
Confidence in Ability to Obtain an Education (Attitude)	0.056	0.049
Acceptance of Responsibility for Educational Success (Attitude)	0.049	0.112
Educational Progress (Behavior)[b]	-0.014	-0.023
Employment-Related Outcomes		
Acceptance of Responsibility for Employment Success (Attitude)	0.225**	-0.131
Importance of Service-Oriented Careers (Attitude)	0.103	-0.203
Basic Work Skills (Behavior/Experience)	0.147*	0.462**
Public Service Employment (Behavior)[b]	0.071*	0.078
Outcomes Related to Teamwork and Other Life Skills		
Appreciation of Cultural and Ethnic Diversity (Attitude)	0.029	-0.385**
Constructive Group Interactions (Behavior/Experience)	0.016	-0.119
Constructive Personal Behavior in Groups (Behavior)	0.060	-0.160

** Indicates statistical significance at the .01 level

* Indicates statistical significance at the .05 level.

a The effects in this table are presented as Effect Size for all outcomes except: Voting Participation, Volunteering Participation, Public Service Employment, and Educational Progress. The Average Treatment Effect on the Treated is presented for these four outcomes, since they are measured as dichotomous variables.

b These outcomes were measured approximately two years after program exit, in Fall 2002/Winter 2003.

Exhibit 4.32

Program Characteristics Included in the AmeriCorps Program-Level Analysis[a]

Program characteristics reported by Program Directors:

- Organization type (e.g., state agency, community-based agency)
- Faith-based organization
- Number of years organization received AmeriCorps funding
- Focus of organization (i.e., match w/focus of AmeriCorps program)
- Priority of member development
- Number of AmeriCorps program sites
- Percent of members originating from community served
- Number of AmeriCorps members enrolled
- Use of non-AmeriCorps volunteers
- Member involvement in volunteer recruitment
- Frequency of formal member development activities
- Ratio of full-time employees to members
- Successful implementation of member development programs
- Use of AmeriCorps teams
- Percent of members who served alone at site
- Percent of members' time spent on project with direct service beneficiary contact.

Program characteristics reported by AmeriCorps members:

- Frequency of service with other members at the same location
- Frequency of direct contact with service beneficiaries
- Frequency with which members work in community where they live
- Frequency of service with members from other backgrounds
- Frequency of member involvement in planning service activities
- Frequency of service to recipients from different backgrounds
- Frequency of program meetings or trainings
- Frequency of reflection on experience
- Level of relationship between service activities and long-term career/job interests
- Proportion of members who developed relationship with mentor
- Focus of service activities (education, environment, public safety, other human needs)
- Diversity of other members in program (race/ethnicity, age, education)
- Frequency of leadership opportunities
- Relationship with program staff and supervisors.

a Appendix K presents the detailed results of the program-level analysis.

Corporation for
NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE

Corporation for National and Community Service • www.nationalservice.org

SENIOR CORPS S

AMERICORPS A

LEARN AND SERVE L

USA Freedom Corps
Make a Difference. Volunteer.