

Snapshots of America's Families

Adults' Environment and Behavior

Parental Participation in Volunteer or Religious Activities



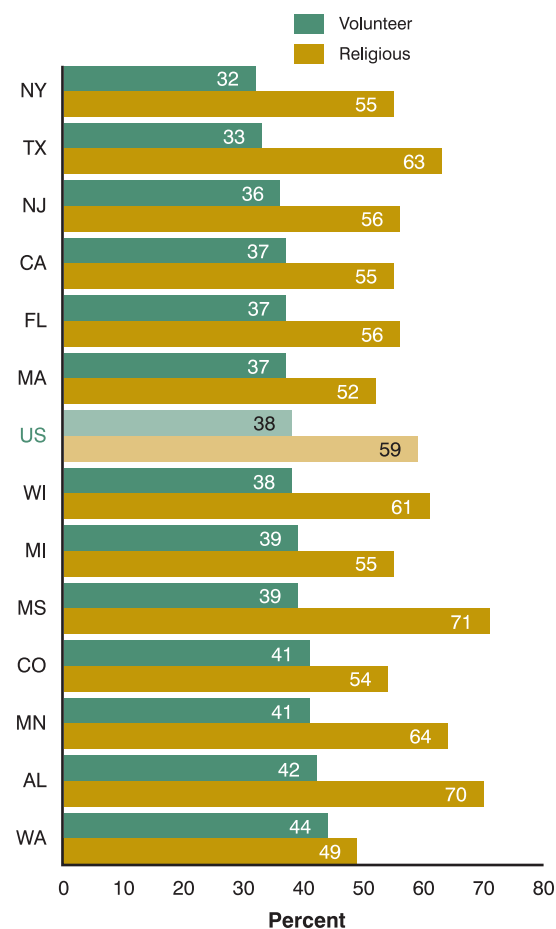
Developmental psychologists have long noted that parents serve as role models, shaping the behaviors and habits of their children. Children whose parents act as strong positive models may be more likely to withstand harmful pressures from peer groups. One way parents act as role models is by demonstrating citizenship through volunteer work. Another way is by participating in religious activities, which may enhance the importance of moral and spiritual values in their children's lives.

The new work requirements of welfare reform may make it harder for some low-income parents to find time for volunteer or religious activities. However, if a parent's work adds structure and routine to household functions, families might find it easier to incorporate such activities into their lives. In turn, the social support and structure these activities provide may help parents cope with the changes required by welfare reform. An additional benefit is that higher levels of volunteer work in a community may strengthen the private support system for families in need.

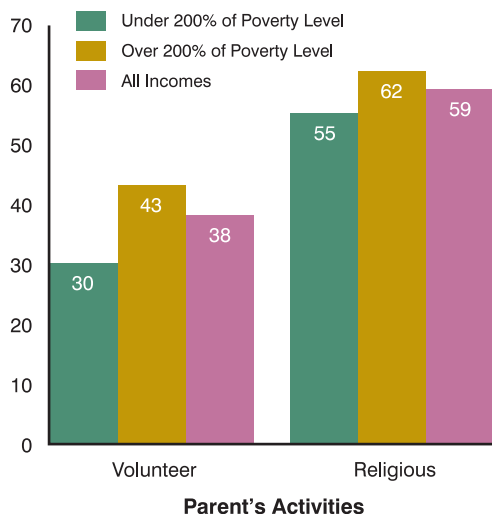
Nationally, 59 percent of children lived with a parent who reported participating in religious activities at least a few times a month, with 55 percent of

low-income children (below 200 percent of the poverty level) and 62 percent of higher-income children in this category, a statistically significant difference. Thirty-eight percent of all children lived with a parent who volunteered a few times

Children Living with a Parent Who Participated in Volunteer or Religious Activities, by State, 1997



Children Living with a Parent Who Participated in Volunteer or Religious Activities, by Family Income, 1997



Source: Child Trends and Urban Institute

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Assessing
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This *Snapshot* presents findings from the National Survey of America's Families (NSAF), a 1997 survey of 44,461 households with and without telephones that are representative of the nation as a whole and of 13 states. As in all surveys, the data are subject to sampling variability and other sources of error.

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a month, with 30 percent of low-income children and 43 percent of higher-income children in this category, a statistically significant difference.

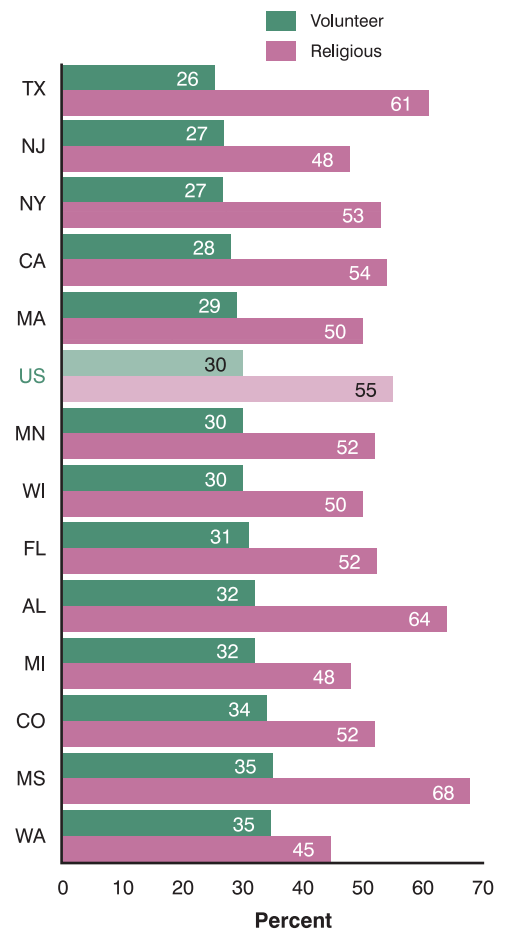
In the 13 states surveyed, 49 percent to 71 percent of children lived with a parent who participated in religious activities a few times a month or more. Percentages were above the national average in Alabama, Minnesota, Mississippi, and Texas and below in California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, and Washington.

Between 32 percent and 44 percent of children lived with a parent who volunteered at least a few times a month. Percentages were above the national average in Alabama, Colorado, Minnesota, and Washington and below in New York and Texas.

Between 45 percent and 68 percent of children in low-income families lived with a parent who participated in religious activities a few times a month or more. Percentages were above the national average of 55 percent in Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas and below average in Michigan, New Jersey, Washington, and Wisconsin.

Of children in low-income families, 26 percent to 35 percent lived with a parent who volunteered at least a few times a month or more. In Mississippi, the percentage was above the national average of 30 percent, and in Texas it was below.

Low-Income Children Living with a Parent Who Participated in Volunteer or Religious Activities, by State, 1997



Source: Child Trends and Urban Institute

Children (%) Living with a Parent Who Participated in Volunteer or Religious Activities, 1997

Parent's Activities	AL	CA	CO	FL	MA	MI	MN	MS	NJ	NY	TX	WA	WI	US
<i>Under 200% of poverty level</i>														
Volunteer	32.4	28.5	33.8	30.6	29.4	31.6	29.5	35.5	27.1	27.5	26.5	35.1	30.0	30.5
Religious	63.8	53.9	51.9	51.9	50.2	48.0	52.1	68.0	48.4	52.7	61.0	45.5	50.3	54.7
<i>Over 200% of poverty level</i>														
Volunteer	51.8	46.2	45.0	43.5	39.9	42.3	46.1	43.8	40.2	36.2	38.4	49.5	41.1	43.3
Religious	74.9	56.7	54.4	60.6	52.9	58.7	69.2	75.9	58.6	57.2	64.9	50.3	66.4	61.9
<i>All incomes</i>														
Volunteer	42.5	37.4	41.1	37.3	36.8	38.7	41.1	39.0	36.4	32.4	32.5	44.3	37.5	37.8
Religious	69.6	55.3	53.5	56.4	52.1	55.1	64.0	71.4	55.7	55.2	63.0	48.5	61.2	58.8

Figures in color represent statistically significant differences from the national average at the .05 confidence level. Figures in black are not statistically significantly different from the national average. All figures in text, charts, and table are rounded.

Source: Child Trends and Urban Institute