

The Common Good: Volunteering in the Commonwealth

Findings from the 2021 Serve Kentucky Citizen Survey





serve.ky.gov

April 2021

Serve Kentucky's mission is to engage Kentuckians in volunteerism and service to positively impact our communities. As a state service commission, our team oversees AmeriCorps funds and programs, and we work with local partners across the Commonwealth to support and promote service and volunteering.

In January 2021, Serve Kentucky conducted a survey. We asked you to tell us how you make a difference. And you responded! We received 1,264 responses, from every region in the Commonwealth. We heard from citizens from all walks of life. To our knowledge, this the highest level of response for any state's survey on volunteer habits and priorities. The results reflect the strength of Kentucky's communities and the many ways Kentuckians contribute:

- Kentuckians volunteer in large numbers. When asked, "What do you do to make a difference, volunteer, serve others or contribute to your community," 71% of respondents offered detailed examples. In fact, only ten percent of Kentuckians report that they don't volunteer.
- Volunteering is exactly what we all agree on, no matter where we live. Which is significant— finding something we all agree on is hard these days. 97% of Kentuckians agree with this statement: "I support the work of Serve Kentucky to engage AmeriCorps members and volunteers to solve local, state and national problems."
- Kentuckians want to do more. A majority of surveyed Kentuckians volunteer in more than one way for more than one organization. After the pandemic, 37% of Kentuckians want to do more than they did before.
- National surveys and rankings can be hard on Kentucky. One recent one says 28% of us volunteer. By asking about informal, neighbors-helping-neighbors volunteering, we got higher results. And our volunteer rates are consistent across regions, and the size of the community.
- While national studies underestimate Kentuckians' service, awareness of AmeriCorps is lower in the Commonwealth than across the country (37% to 50% percent).

I wish every Kentuckian could dive into these stories. Each person told us how she makes a difference, and how he wants to build a better community. Each is a force multiplier for good. Each person gives her heart, hands and voice to make life just a little better for those around her. We are excited to share these results with you, but this is where the conversation starts. As Serve Kentucky crafts a state service plan for 2021-2024, we will be working in your communities to create, promote and support new volunteer opportunities. We will expand our great AmeriCorps programs, invent new ones, and look for new ways to build up local communities. To get things done for all Kentuckians, we need you. We are all Team Kentucky, and together we can create the common good in the Commonwealth.

Joe Bringardner
Serve Kentucky Executive Director

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Work, Faith, Family and Friends: How Kentuckians Volunteer

In the first month of 2021, Serve Kentucky conducted a survey to learn how and why people volunteer. More than 1,200 Kentuckians from every region of the Commonwealth contributed their ideas. We learned that Kentuckians volunteer at levels far above what we expected. We learned we help each other in many settings and in many ways. And that there's more to be done. We learned that, above all, Kentuckians agree on helping each other and making a difference.

We learned that we are all Team Kentucky.

One of the roles of a state service commission is to create a plan for civic engagement for the state. After a challenging 2020, Serve Kentucky hired the McMahon Consulting Group to conduct a statewide survey on volunteer habits and priorities. Our results show that **Kentuckians help each other at rates well above the national average.** In fact, *only 10% of those surveyed report that they do not volunteer.*

Kentuckians volunteer in huge numbers.

Kentuckians are generous with their time and talents. Nine in ten report doing some kind of volunteering. When asked, "What do you do to make a difference, volunteer or serve others in your community," **71%** of Kentuckians offered specific examples. These volunteer rates are much higher than other surveys. In 2018, the Corporation for National and Community Service published "[Volunteering in America](#)," a comprehensive report of volunteer trends and data. "**28.1%** of Kentucky residents volunteer, ranking them **39th** among states," the research shows, adding that "**51.2%** of residents do favors for neighbors." Kentuckians might find this surprising—the Commonwealth is legendary for its hospitality and friendliness. Anyone who is from Kentucky knows how proud we are of our culture of neighbors helping neighbors. Volunteering is not just what we do, it is who we are.

It is difficult to know why national surveys of volunteering place Kentucky near the bottom. While our methods and questions were different than other surveys, we are confident that no state survey has ever reached 1,260 citizens from one state.

Of course, not every good deed counts as volunteering. Parenting, work, giving to charities, where people shop, how they vote—any number of things that count as civic engagement, but not the strict definition of volunteering. But the fact is, people do not live their lives worrying about what is and is not volunteering. They do care deeply about their time and their actions, and how to use them to help others.

This report demonstrates how Kentuckians volunteer, and why. It tracks volunteer habits and priorities by age, region of the state, and the size of the community people live in. The report will guide the work of Serve Kentucky to create, promote and support volunteer and service opportunities across the Commonwealth for the next three years.

Kentuckians volunteer in many ways.

There are many ways to volunteer, from a day of service to a weekly (even daily) engagement. A majority of Kentuckians (**51%**) participate in project-based, episodic volunteering, followed by the traditional, formal volunteering on a regular basis for an organization. A similar number (**47%**) report that they volunteer *informally*, helping other people as needed, just because that's what neighbors do. "I try to help neighbors or other community members in small efforts by helping with groceries, or getting things they aren't able to," reports a Lexington resident. "During the pandemic I made cards for those in the nursing home when they weren't able to have visitors."

Our survey finds that **32%** of Kentuckians serve "routinely, as a trained volunteer for a school or organization." That's a significant percentage of the population, nearly one in three people, providing a needed service on a consistent basis. A similar number (**31%**) participate in skills-based volunteering. Skills-based volunteering differs from providing a direct service, such as tutoring or mentoring young people, or cleaning a community park. Skills-based volunteering leverages the specialized skills and talents of professionals like lawyers, accountants or general contractors to strengthen the infrastructure of nonprofits, helping them build and sustain their capacity to successfully achieve their missions.

In addition to the large percentages of Kentuckians who volunteer, it is impressive to see how many volunteer in a number of ways. In the same way that people give to many charities, they also donate their time to many causes. When asked, "What kind of volunteering do you do?," on average, **Kentuckians volunteer in 2.7 different ways** (or settings).

"I help with food drives and deliveries, I do caroling and send cards to a drug rehabilitation facility and nursing homes. I take care of the church building and that of sister churches. With school, we volunteer at soup kitchens, crisis centers, blood drives, leading instruction at libraries, grading state KYOTE tests, hosting university student observers and teachers, trash pickup, preparing for and hosting prom, sitting on and chairing school committees, volunteering for bingo to raise money for school functions. I volunteer in any capacity needed and try to instill this in my children as well."

-Volunteer from West Liberty



This offers an insight for community leaders. While some organizations may think of volunteers as one person doing one thing (one person is a Big Brother, another is a Board Member and a third is a Rotarian, for instance), that is not an accurate reflection of the many roles people play in a community. In fact, some volunteers seem to be everywhere. Take this example: “I volunteer with my church and with my school. I am a National Honor Society adviser and an adviser for the YMCA Kentucky Youth Assembly. I incorporate service into school instruction. I volunteer in Morgan, Rowan, and Magoffin Counties.”

Kentuckians volunteer for a number of reasons.

Volunteer service is a highly personal thing. Volunteering is putting one’s values into action. **Sixty percent** of volunteers do at least some of their volunteer work **on their own**, underlining

What kind of volunteering do you do?

I volunteer from time to time on different projects.

51%

I volunteer informally, to help neighbors or my neighborhood.

47%

I volunteer routinely as a trained volunteer for a school or organization.

32%

I use my professional expertise to support an organization (skills-based volunteering).

31%

I serve as a board member for a nonprofit or commission.

28%

I don't volunteer.

10%

this personal choice. When asked, “How (and with whom) do you volunteer?” Kentuckians told us how they share their time and talents in groups as well. Kentucky has a strong culture of workplace volunteering, with nearly half (**45%**) of respondents reporting work as a venue for their volunteer work.

Faith, friends and family (highlighted below) make up a large proportion of Kentuckians’ motives for volunteering. These findings are largely consistent across the state, though there are slight differences among age groups and community size as described later in this report.



Listening to and learning from volunteers helps us to better support them. As Serve Kentucky develops a State Serve Plan, we will look to communities and organizations to be catalysts, offering tailored opportunities to different people to contribute as they wish. It almost goes without saying: we need each other more than ever before. Civic engagement is one of the greatest facets of American life. Service and volunteerism make good people into Great Americans. And Team Kentucky has as many great Americans as any state in the nation.

How (and with whom) do you volunteer?



“I work with kids daily. I volunteer in the 3rd grade class at Carr Elementary and I love it! I work with each child every day to see what I can do to help them succeed. Even when we were out due to Covid I stayed in contact with them throughout each week to make sure they were doing okay on their work and to see if they needed anything.”

-Volunteer from Fulton

Getting back to work: Volunteering after the pandemic

It almost goes without saying: we need each other more than ever before. Civic engagement is one of the greatest facets of American life. Service and volunteerism make good people into Great Americans. And Team Kentucky has as many great Americans as any state in the nation.

We are living through challenging times, from a global pandemic, to a reckoning over the racism that has plagued our society from its beginnings. COVID-19 created a number of problems at the same time, shutting down nonprofits at the very moment people needed the most help. Some people kept serving through it all. Others were stuck at home for the duration.

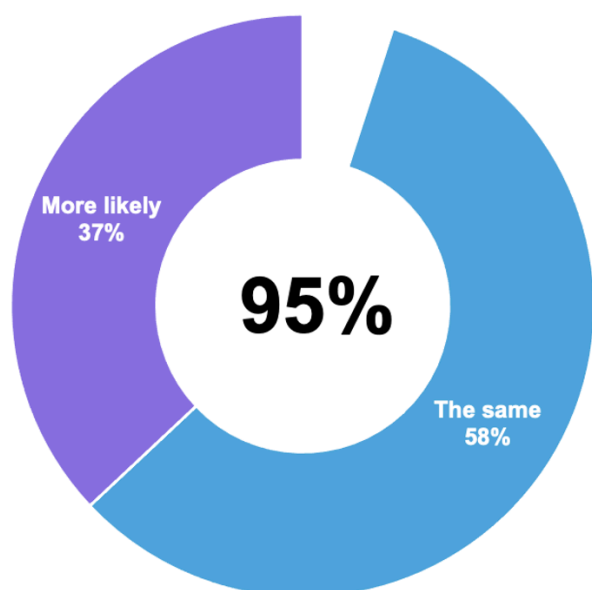


Nonprofits in Kentucky report that charitable giving is down, just at the time when people needed the most help. The pandemic has also meant that organizations had to cut back the amount of volunteer opportunities to serve people.

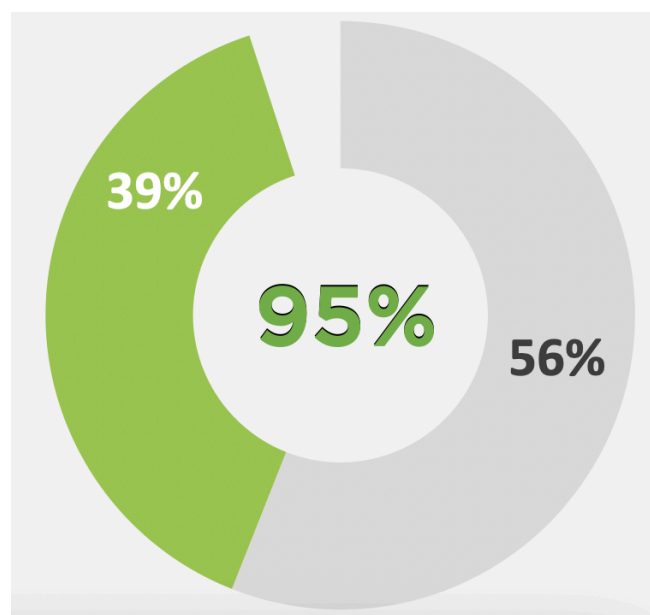
In May 2020, Points of Light published [*Civic Life Today: A look at American civic engagement amid a global pandemic*](#), a study about the impact of the pandemic on nonprofits. Points of Light reports, “Every aspect of our lives and livelihoods has been called to attention as the COVID-19 pandemic and social inequities continue, forcing us to re-evaluate our norms and discover new paths forward.” Giving is down by 75% across the country, but there’s a silver lining: requests to volunteer are up 85%. People are eager to help.

Serve Kentucky asked these same questions in January 2021, when infection rates were at their highest. Whose responsibility is it “to get involved to rebuild our communities and country after COVID-19?” **Kentuckians scored fifteen points higher** on this question than national respondents (97% to 82%--see page 13).

When asked “After the coronavirus pandemic passes, are you more or less likely to volunteer?” Kentuckians said “More likely” or “about the same” at exactly the same rate, **95%**, as the rest of the country. It is uncanny: the chart on the left is Kentuckians’ willingness “to maintain their



Kentucky respondents: More or less likely to volunteer after the pandemic.



National respondents (Source: Points of Light)

current level (**58%**) of involvement or do more (**37%**) to get involved and make a difference after the pandemic passes.” The chart on the right is the results Points of Light measured with a national survey. One Louisville resident reported, “We have lost a lot of trust in our neighbors through this pandemic, and a lot of lives have been hit really hard. We all need to be there for our fellow citizens now, and after the pandemic is over.”

What matters most: Kentuckians' greatest concerns

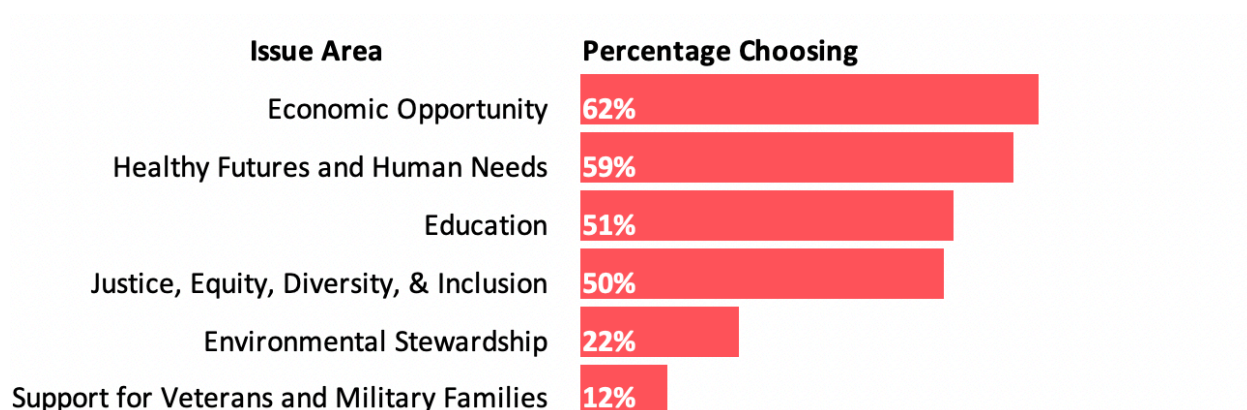
Our research shows that Kentuckians are not waiting for anyone—neither government leaders, nor state or local organizations—to tackle the issues they see in their communities. They jump in to make a difference. The issues Kentuckians care about are reflected in their volunteer service—and Serve Kentucky's funding priorities.

Survey participants shared their priorities for the strategic deployment of volunteer resources. Investigators asked three levels of questions:

- If you could solve one problem in your community, what would it be? **964 responses**
- Of Serve Kentucky's focus areas, which are most important to you? **2,892 responses**
- "What are the greatest areas of concern where you live?" (Choose up to three under the focus areas). **8,276 responses**

Kentuckians' Key Priorities

When asked to choose among Serve Kentucky's issue areas, respondents were given the opportunity to select up to three categories. (1,132 people answered the question, selecting 2.5 issue areas each, on average). Their choices are clustered into pairs—meaning that out of nearly 3,000 responses, there are distinct patterns to public opinion. Each of the issue areas are linked, but six in ten Kentuckians report that *Economic Opportunity* and *Healthy Futures and Human Needs* are at the top of their list of important issues. *Education* and *Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion* were selected by half of the respondents. *Environmental Stewardship* and *Support for Veterans and Military Families* also received significant responses. More than one in ten Kentuckians choosing *Support for Veterans and Military Families*, reflecting Kentucky's reputation as a veteran-friendly state.



Under each of the issue areas, respondents were asked to choose up to three specific priorities. Based on the issue areas selected, a list of six specific concerns was pre-populated. This chart shows the most frequent answers, in proportion to how often they were selected:

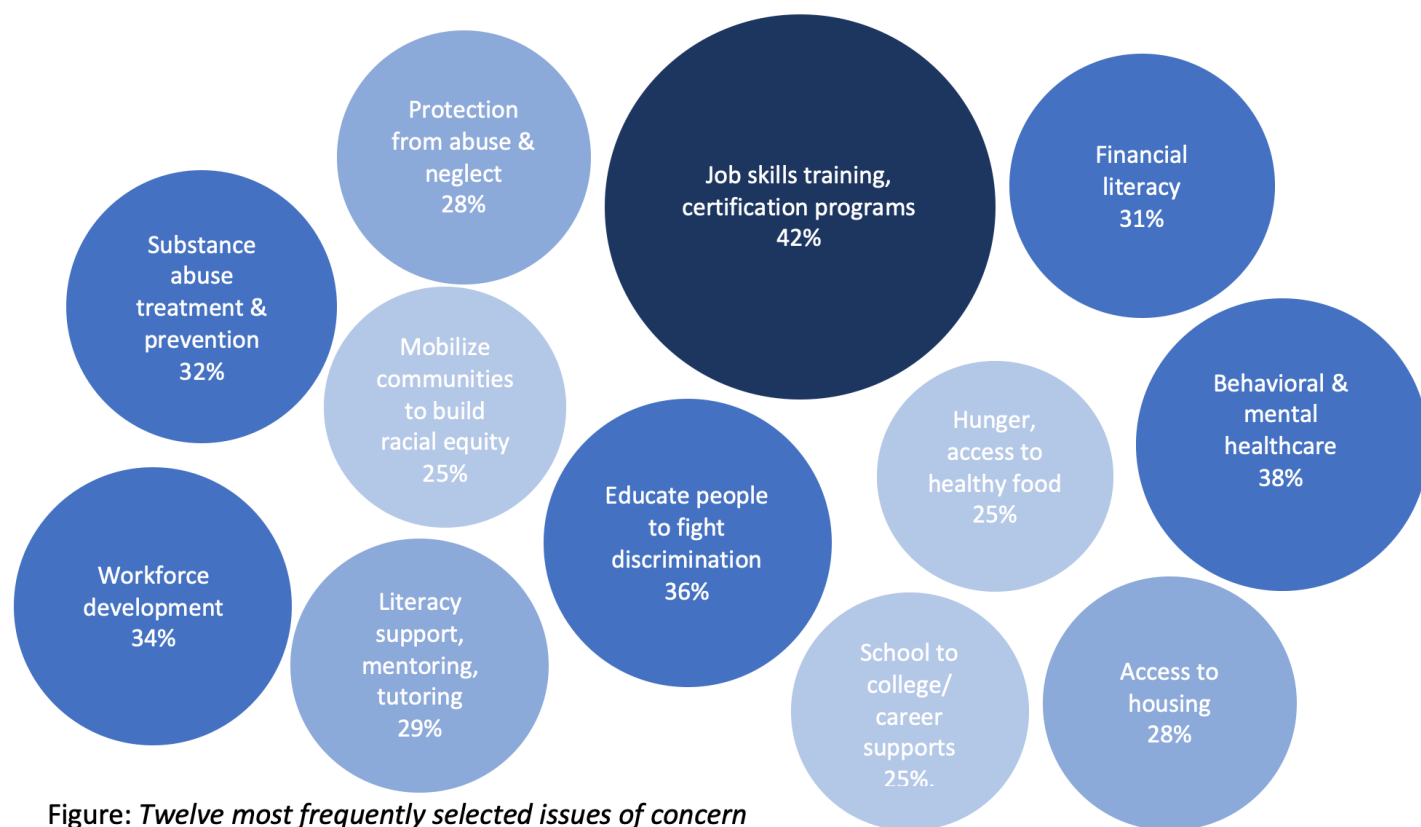


Figure: *Twelve most frequently selected issues of concern*

The issues Kentuckians care the most about are interconnected. Respondents from high school to retirement are concerned with economic opportunity, fairness and prosperity. Job skills training and workforce development were the first and fourth most common priorities for Kentuckians. Even education is seen through an economic lens, with a large percentage of Kentuckians looking for better college and career supports for their children.

But people want more than jobs. They also want fair and equal access to healthcare, housing and, especially, justice. It is notable that justice and equity are important to Kentuckians, regardless of the size of the community. In fact, fighting discrimination and building racial equity are listed more often than hunger and access to healthcare. Of the healthcare issues that were selected, behavioral and mental health care and substance abuse treatment and prevention are the most frequently cited concerns.

The theory of “the wisdom of crowds” states that a diverse group of local, independent thinkers can make better decisions than even the most informed individuals. The survey results suggest that Kentuckians as a whole are committed to improving systems, and they devote their

volunteer efforts to making life better for individuals. There is cause for optimism and tremendous opportunities to unleash Kentucky's citizens to solve state and local problems. Even though there is strong popular support for solving the concerns listed above, the less common priorities are also essential. While Kentuckians are more likely to prioritize economic issues over education, no one would suggest schools do not need citizen support. Likewise, suicide prevention, stopping domestic violence, and welcoming home veterans are essential,



even if they do not appear at the top of this list. The list above is a complete ranking of the 37 sub-categories, in order of selection.

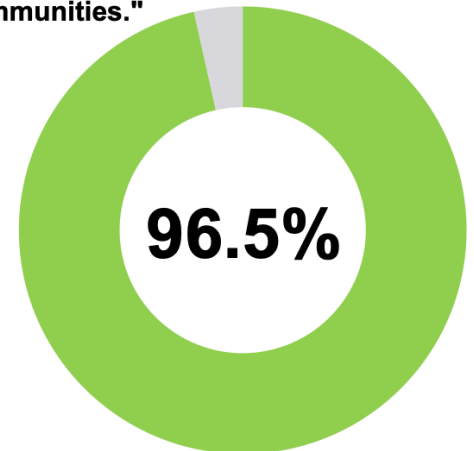
Kentuckians agree on helping others.

For all of the coverage of our fragmented politics and public disagreements, it is uplifting to realize Kentuckians have a great deal of shared values. There is a compelling amount of common ground that rarely receives attention, but professionals who work with volunteers know this very well. When it comes to helping others, Kentuckians not only agree on our mutual connections, but there is nearly consensus that we are responsible for each other.

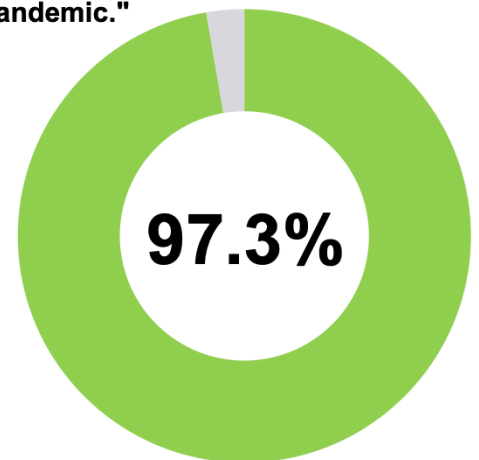
Investigators posed three yes or no questions in the survey to gauge the level of agreement with three statements. The first asked whether people support Serve Kentucky's work mission. The results are a strong endorsement of the mission. While about ten percent of people did not respond, the others agreed in overwhelming numbers, meaning that more than nine in ten people support the role of a modest state agency effort to create, promote and support volunteer and service opportunities across the state. A respondent from Harrodsburg put it this way: "I'm not sure what Serve Kentucky does, and I won't be a part of a political game, but I support volunteerism any way I can."

Like many others, this person also agreed with the following statements about getting involved after the pandemic and playing a part in building a more just and inclusive Kentucky. While these statements are designed to capture broad sentiments and values, they point to two more controversial elements: what is the role of the individual in a community, and what is a person's willingness to bring their values to life and play their part? The comments people provided demonstrate nuanced differences in political opinions, but also a sense that we are all in this together. "No one should be treated worse than anyone else, particularly if you are black or brown, or if you come from Appalachia," one said. "I believe if we work together, we accomplish so much more," reports another. "This could also allow for healing, especially among those that have been on opposite sides of the political spectrum. In the end, we all have to live together, so let's work together."

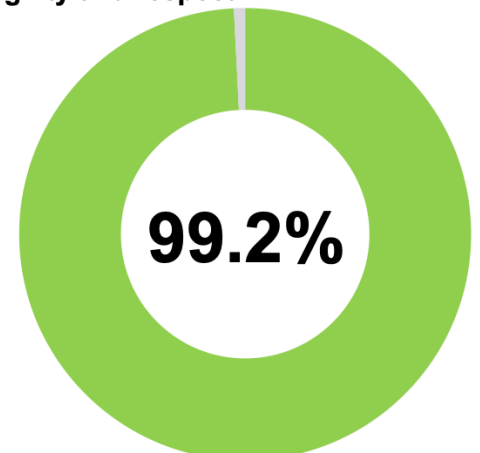
"I support the work of Serve Kentucky to engage Kentuckians in volunteerism and service to positively impact our communities."



"We must get involved to rebuild our communities after the coronavirus pandemic."



"I want to play my part in building a Kentucky where everyone is treated with dignity and respect."



Volunteering across generations

While Serve Kentucky is not concerned with measuring volunteer service habits across gender or race, for instance, there is a compelling argument for tailoring messages and opportunities for people according to their age cohort. Investigators asked people to select the generation to which they belong.

While Kentuckians have a great deal in common, there are some useful findings about volunteer preferences and issue priorities for people in specific age groups. (Detailed charts begin on page 18.) Even with a broad definition of volunteering, volunteer rates vary from 84% to 92%, a minor difference across age groups. The groups whose volunteer habits have the most in common are the *oldest and the youngest*, who are more likely to volunteer from time to time and with friends. Surprisingly, they are both most interested in job training and fighting discrimination. They are also the most likely groups to serve routinely, as trained volunteers.

Gen Z (24 and under) is the group that is most likely to volunteer more after the pandemic. Only one-third are aware of AmeriCorps, presenting an opportunity for targeted outreach.

Millennials (25-37) have the lowest volunteer rates, though they are still quite active. Like Gen X, half of surveyed Millennials volunteer through work. They are also the two groups most likely to list behavioral and mental healthcare. Nearly half of the surveyed Millennials are aware of AmeriCorps, the most of any group.

Gen X (38-54) respondents volunteer at high rates on their own and from time to time, and also in formal, routine settings, through work or a faith community. They are the most likely to volunteer as a neighbor helping a neighbor, and as a skilled volunteer.

Baby Boomers (55-73) volunteer at the highest rates. They have similar habits and concerns as Gen X (being most concerned with job skills training and workforce development). Boomers are the most likely to serve on boards. They are the group that is least familiar with Serve Kentucky and AmeriCorps.

Greatest Generation (74 and over) volunteer at very high rates, most often with friends or through their faith community. They are the least likely to volunteer on their own.



Volunteering and community size

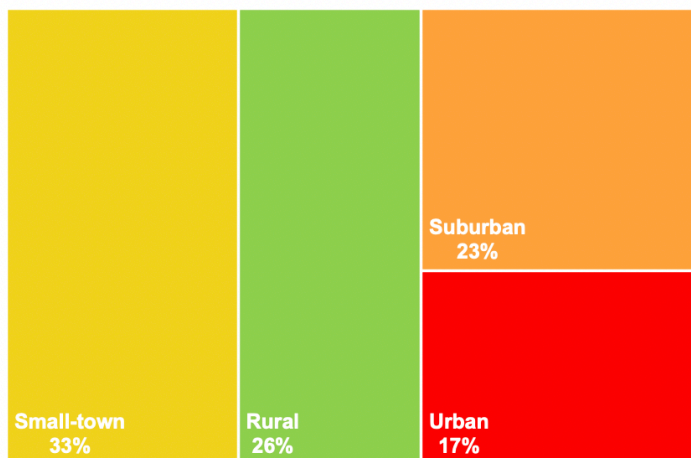
Pundits frequently define American society along regional and cultural differences. We are often told that groups of people think and act in different ways. This research shows how much we have in common.

Serve Kentucky designed the survey to provide details about volunteer habits and priorities across a number of categories. More than many states, Kentuckians have a strong sense of state pride and common affinity. Nonetheless, we also identify as a member of a local community. Further, Kentuckians care deeply about the kind of community they live in. Respondents were offered four choices to describe where they live:

Urban Kentucky
Suburban Kentucky
Small-town Kentucky
Rural Kentucky

This color coding matches with the population heat map below, with green reflection the lowest population density and red depicting the highest.

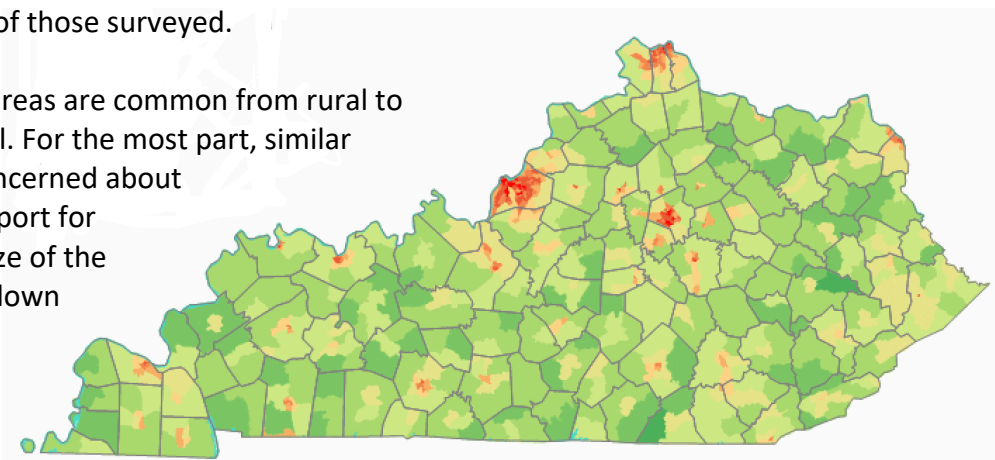
These community types reflect the population density of the Commonwealth. While the *rates* of volunteering are consistent (89 or 90%, regardless of community size) across the state, volunteer *engagement* varies depending on the size and location of the community. (Detailed charts start on page 19. Data by region starts on page 21.)



Similarities across community size

Kentuckians volunteer at remarkably high rates, whether they live in the country or more populated areas. In addition to volunteer rates, there are many things that are common across Kentucky, no matter the size of the community. For example, no matter how many organizations there are in the community, similar numbers of volunteers serve *on their own*, ranging from 55% to 65% of those surveyed.

Interestingly, some issue areas are common from rural to urban communities as well. For the most part, similar numbers of people are concerned about education, health and support for veterans, no matter the size of the community. Even drilling down further, there are specific concerns that have equal



weight in all kinds of communities. These include universal education-related issues such as early childhood education and literacy, mentoring and tutoring. Other commonalities are veteran homelessness, access to behavioral and mental health care, weatherization and access to legal help for people in poverty. Most surprisingly, every group rated the need to educate others to fight discrimination as a very high priority. As with the age groups, it is clear that people across the Commonwealth seek respect, no matter where they live.

Distinct lessons from different communities

Certain issue areas are not held in common by Kentuckians of all community sizes. Justice, economics and the environment are viewed in widely different ways across the state. Here are some significant findings from the research into the different kinds of places where Kentuckians live:

Rural Kentucky (26%, 321 respondents)

Kentuckians who live in rural areas volunteer at high rates (89%), and most often volunteer informally (as a neighbor helping a neighbor) and on their own, through the workplace and through a faith community. They are the least likely to volunteer more after the pandemic.

Rural Kentuckians care most about economic issues, such as workforce development and job skills training, with particular concerns about limited opportunities for young people. Internet connectivity is a frequently named issue.

Issues that are of much higher concern to rural Kentuckians than to others include intimate partner violence, abuse and neglect of vulnerable communities, substance abuse and school absenteeism. Rural Kentuckians are the group most concerned about providing legal services to people who cannot afford them. They also seek support to improve health and physical activity.

Small-town Kentucky (33%, 416 respondents)

By far, the largest numbers of survey respondents live in Kentucky's small towns. Like other groups, they volunteer at high rates (90%). Like rural Kentuckians, they tend to serve on their own, through work and with their faith community. Like suburban Kentuckians, they volunteer episodically, informally and routinely, in that order.

Like rural Kentuckians, those who live in small towns care most about workforce development and job skills training, as well as substance abuse treatment and behavioral and mental health care. Kentuckians in small towns have the highest rates of interest in support for out-of-school time programming and GED attainment. Engagement of and community reintegration for returning veterans are also high priorities. Small town Kentuckians are as concerned about educating people to fight discrimination as urban Kentuckians.

Suburban Kentucky (23%, 283 respondents)

Kentuckians who live in the suburbs volunteer at high rates (90%), and most often volunteer informally (as a neighbor helping a neighbor) and on their own, through the workplace and through a faith community.

Kentuckians in suburbs have the highest rates of interest in support for veterans and military families and have the most concern about human trafficking and disaster response and mitigation.

Of all the groups, suburban Kentuckians have the broadest range of concerns. Like their urban neighbors, suburban Kentuckians state that their top concerns include to “educate people to fight discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, sexual orientation, disability, and gender identity or expression,” and to “mobilize communities to build racial equity.”

They are most likely to volunteer after the pandemic, but they have the lowest rates of awareness of AmeriCorps and Serve Kentucky.

Urban Kentucky (17%, 214 respondents)

Kentuckians who live in urban areas volunteer at high rates (90%). They are the *least* likely to volunteer as a in an official capacity as a trained volunteer—except as a “skilled volunteer” providing professional talents to support an organization, which they are the *most* likely to do. Urban and suburban Kentuckians are more likely to volunteer with friends than through the workplace.

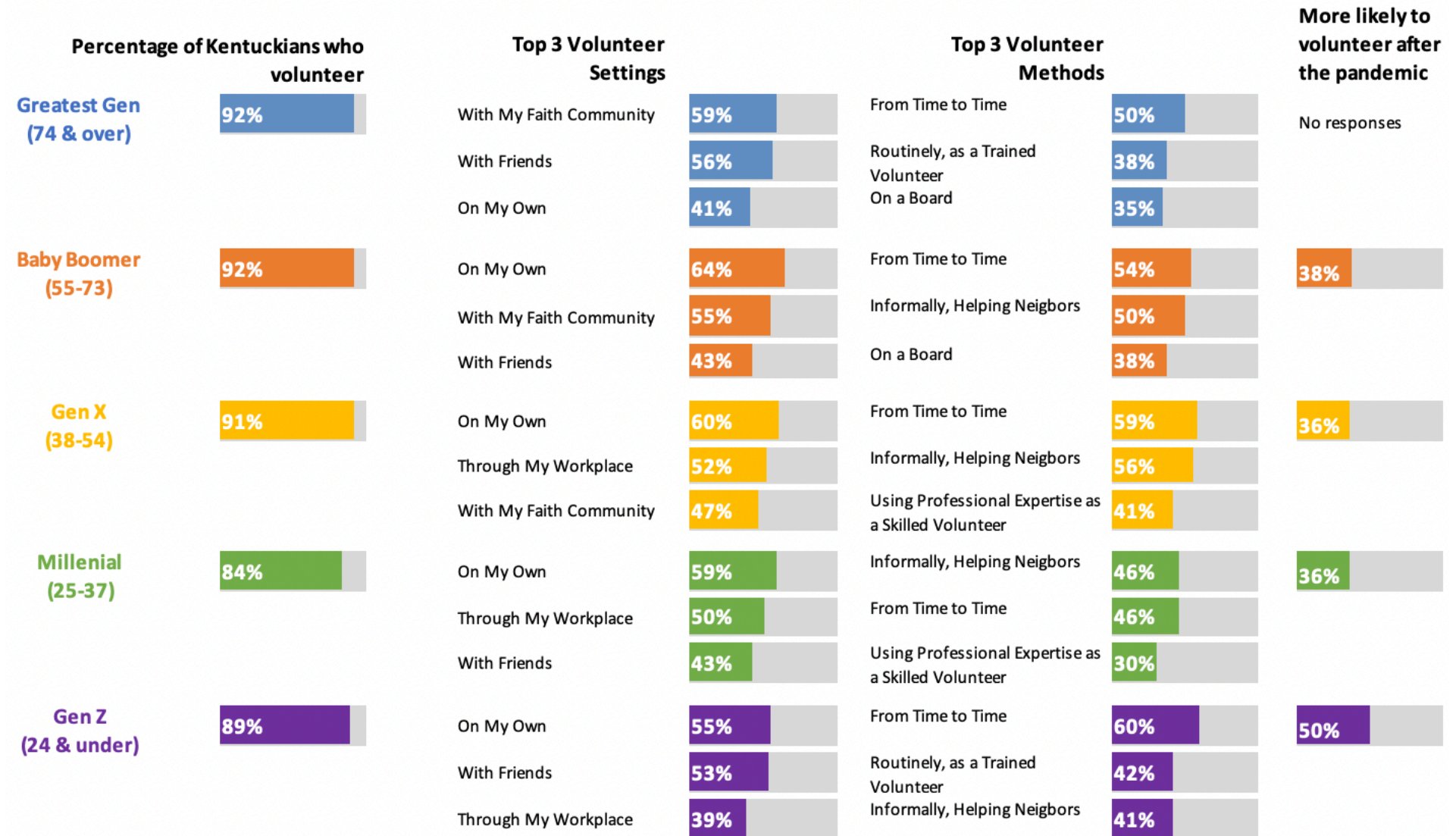
While there are key similarities between rural and urban Kentuckians (they are more likely than other groups to invent their own volunteer opportunities), urban Kentuckians have the most varied priorities across issue areas. Two-thirds of Kentuckians in cities seek to mobilize communities to build racial equity. They are twice as likely as others to seek support for New Americans in the Commonwealth. They are more likely to support environmental issues, specifically better parks and more environmental education. Most importantly, urban Kentuckians are more likely than others to list access to health care, housing and food than other groups.

Urban Kentuckians are the only group with greater than 50% of respondents aware of AmeriCorps. They also have the highest rates of awareness of Serve Kentucky.

Data dashboards

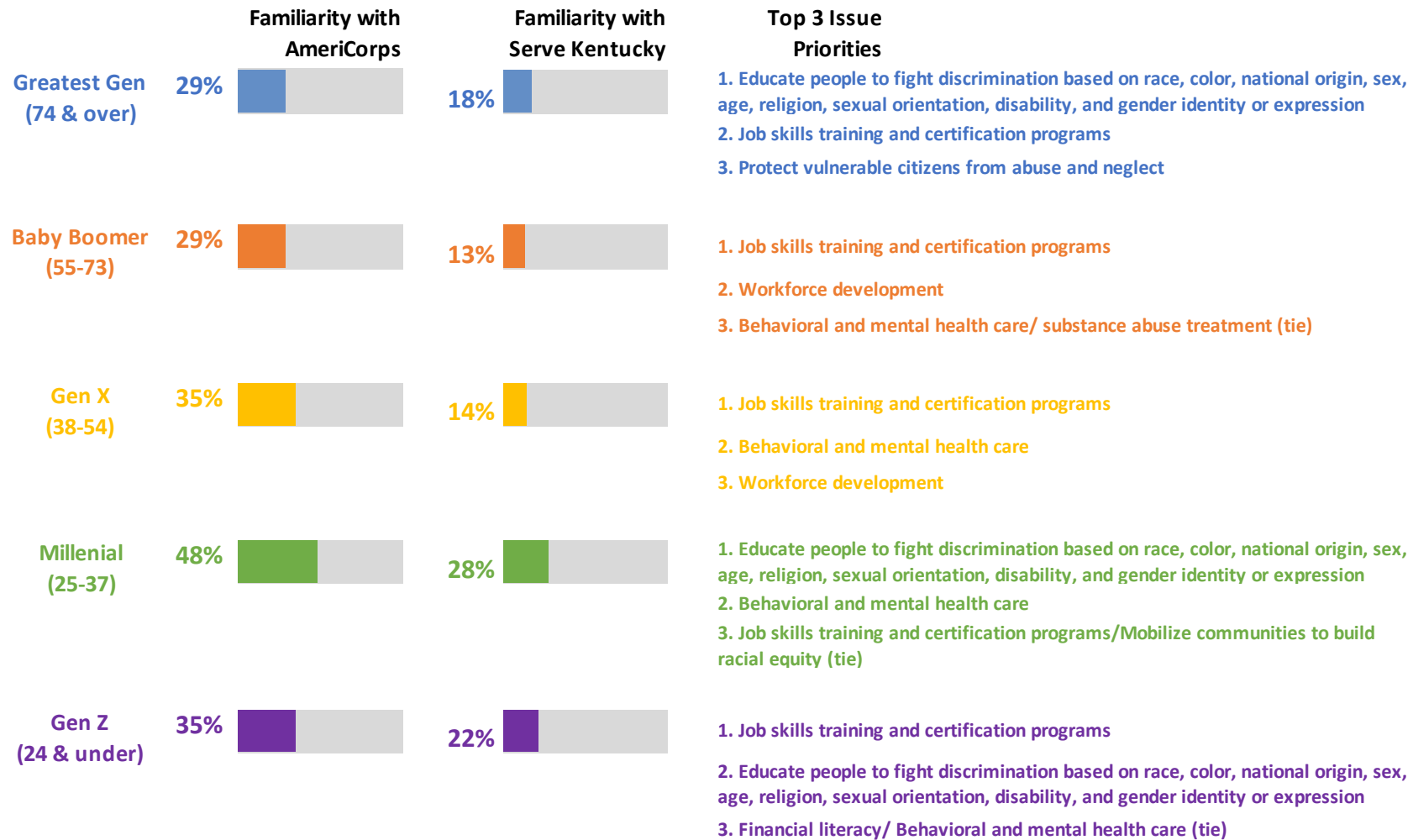
Volunteer habits and preferences for each generation of Kentuckians

There are many ways to volunteer, from a day of service to a weekly (even daily) engagement. A majority of Kentuckians of all ages participate in project-based, episodic volunteering "from time to time," followed by neighbors helping neighbors informally. Most Kentuckians participate in their volunteer experiences "on their own" as a reflection of their values put into action. The differences in volunteer preferences across generations present opportunities for organizations and communities to unleash civic engagement.



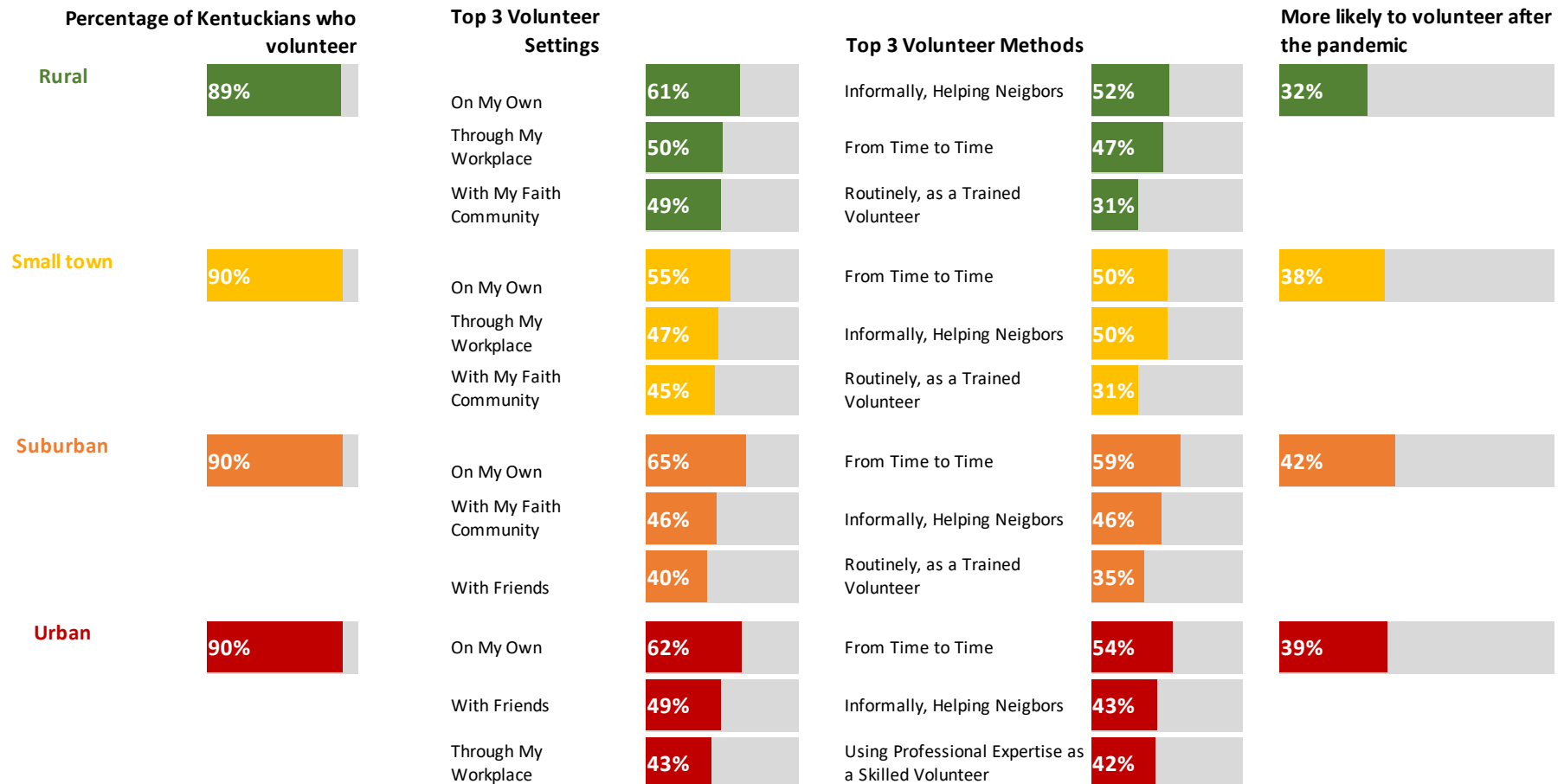
Awareness and priorities for each generation of Kentuckians

Kentuckians understand that they are the hearts, hands and voices for their communities. We have an opportunity to connect people with volunteer opportunities that match their interests-- if we can raise the awareness of our partners and programs. Survey participants selected issues as their priorities from a list of 37 issues that Serve Kentucky has identified. A complete list of these is in the appendix.



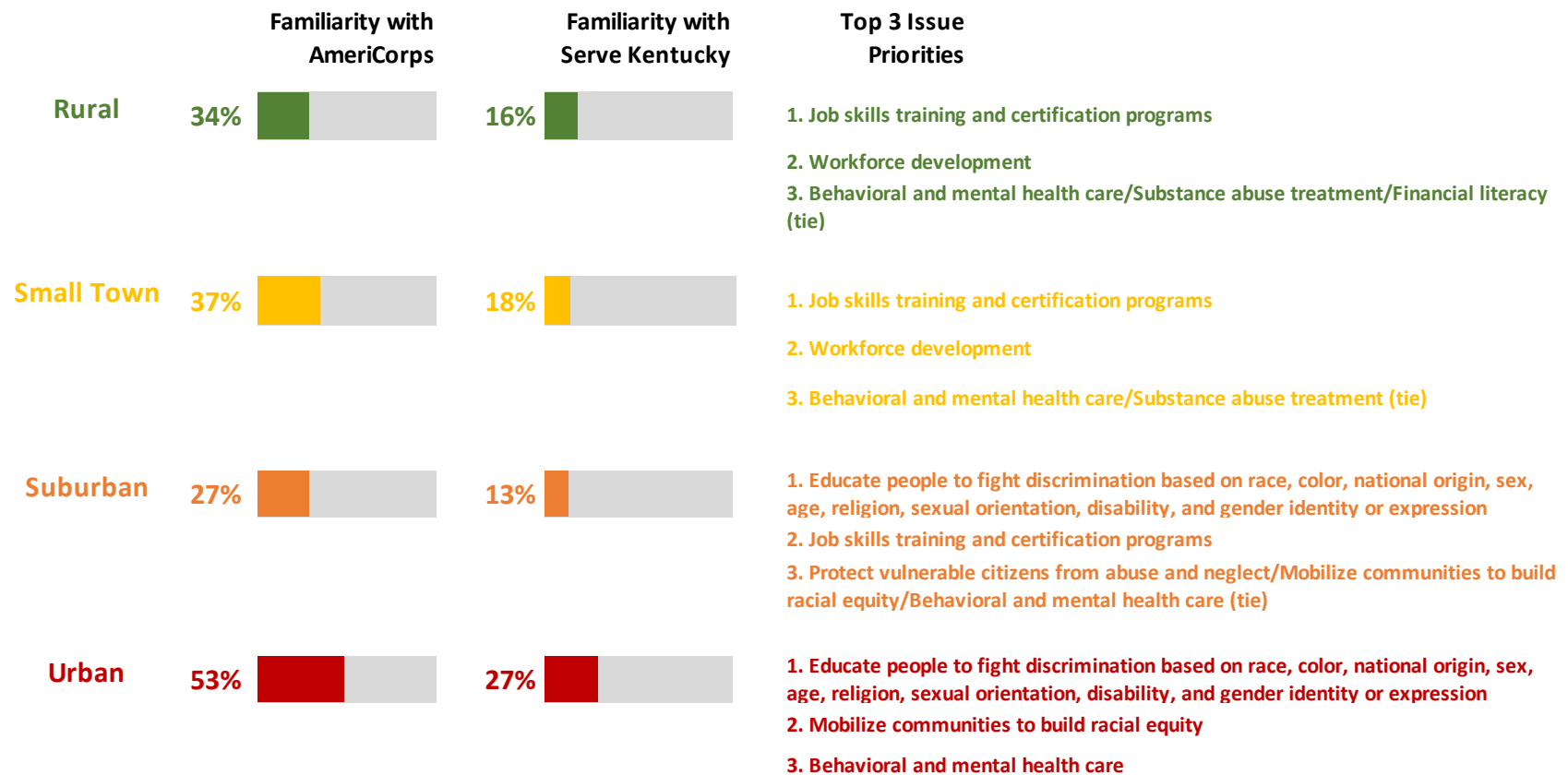
Volunteer habits and preferences for people according to community size

We asked respondents to tell us how they would describe where they live, with four choices: Rural (26% of respondents), Small town (33%), Suburban (23%) and Urban (17%). Interestingly, Kentuckians volunteer at nearly the same rates, regardless of the their community. Regardless of their community, more than half volunteer *on their own*, though workplace and serving through a faith community are also above the national averages.



Awareness and priorities for Kentuckians who live in rural, small town, suburban and urban communities.

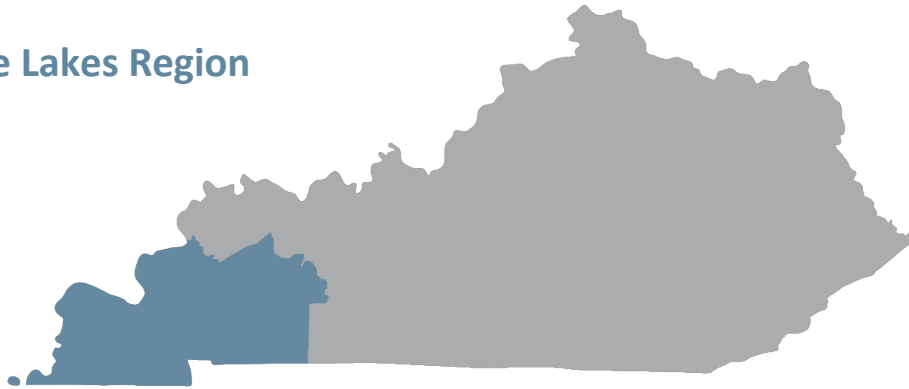
People who live here have a strong common bond as Kentuckians, but we are also fiercely attached to our communities. And Kentuckians in different types of communities experience different issues and have different priorities.



Regional dashboards

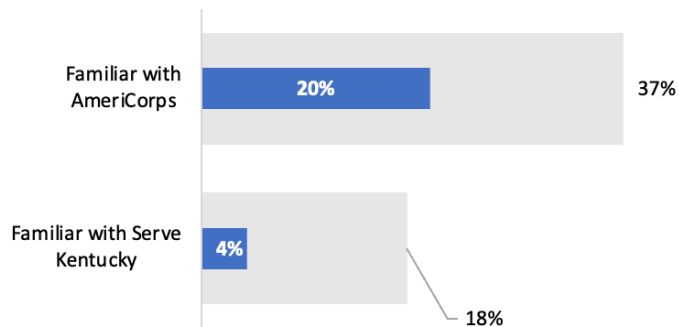
Serve Kentucky asked people to describe which region they live in Kentucky. These are the regions that the Cabinet for Health and Family Services uses to deliver services to support children and families.

The Lakes Region



The Lakes Residents

All Kentuckians

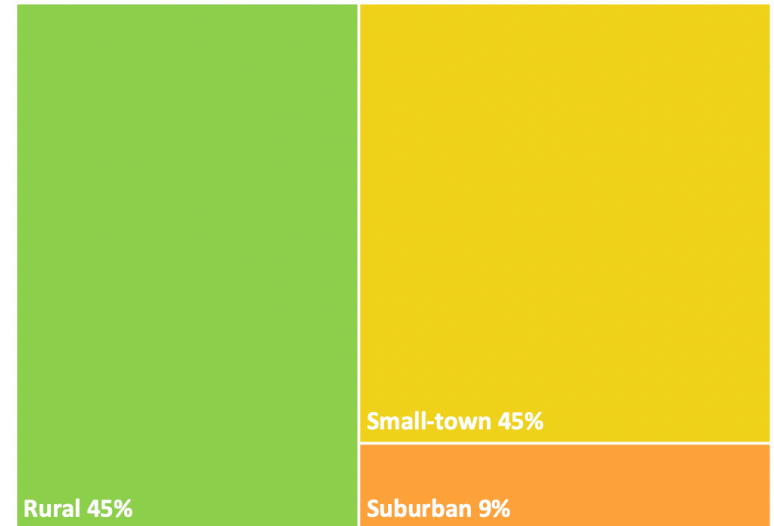


Volunteer Voices:

“I volunteer with community organizations that support our community in ways such as healthcare, sexual violence prevention aspects, and anti-violence initiatives.”

“I’m a Volunteer firefighter/EMT, a Red Cross volunteer, and a Healthy Paducah participant.”

Population Density

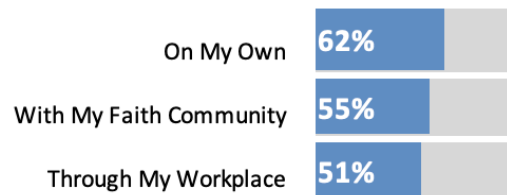


Percentage who volunteer

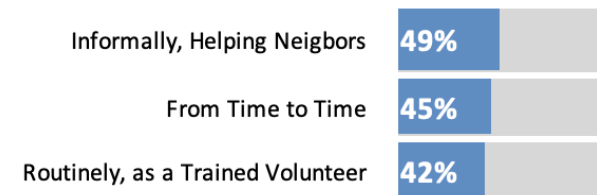
The Lakes

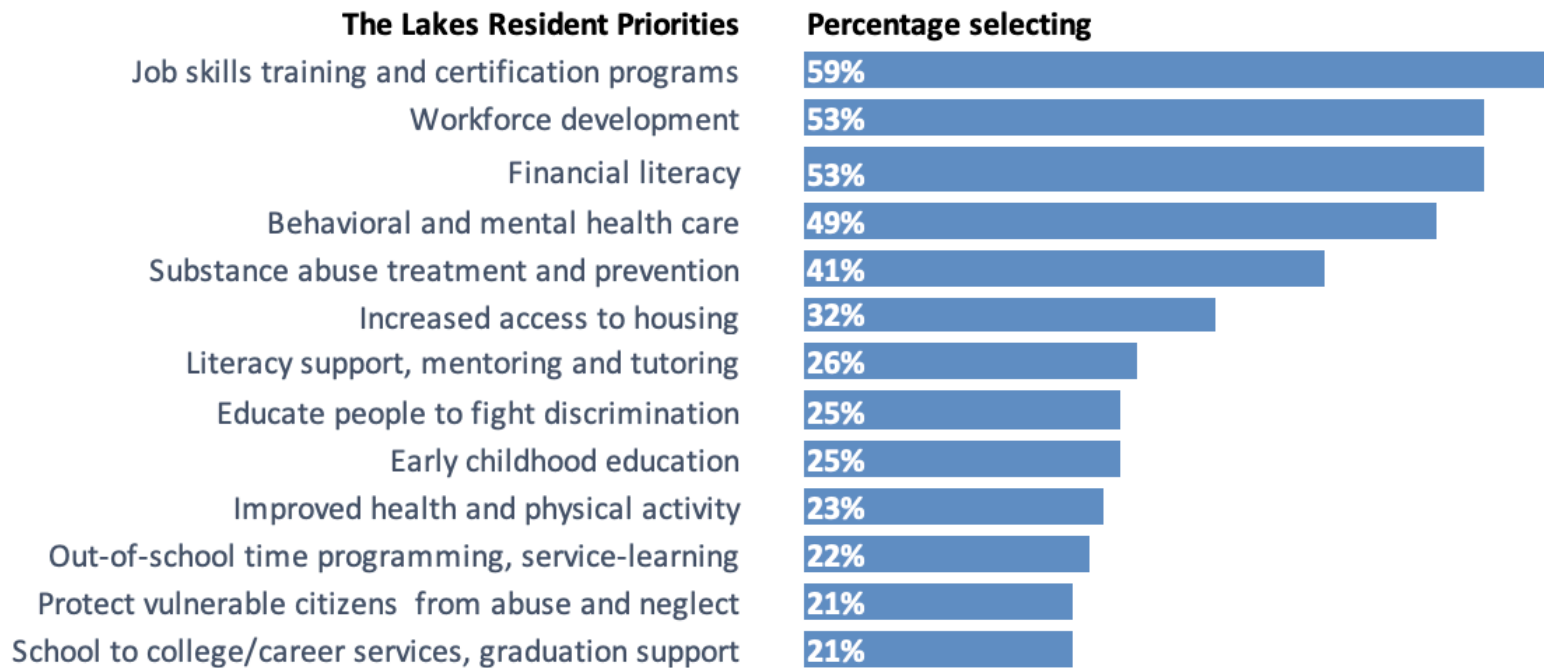
90%

Top 3 Volunteer Settings



Top 3 Volunteer Methods



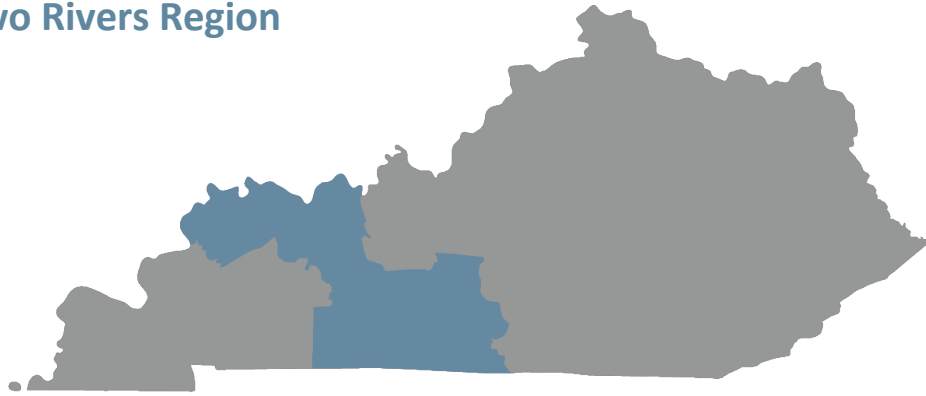


If I could solve one problem in my community...

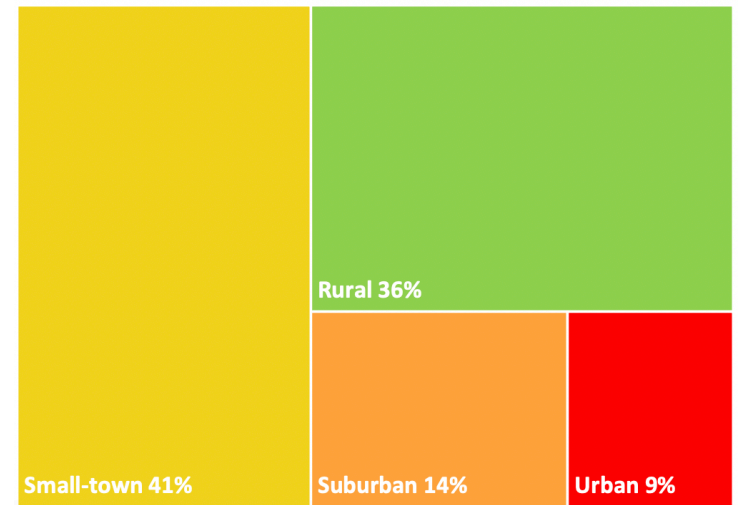
“Poverty. Most of the people in Fulton don't have good housing, a car, or even a job or money. I feel bad for the kids that come in with no coat or ripped shoes because their family just can't afford to get them one or new clothes. I try to donate as much as possible and pass my kids clothes down to the school to help the kids that need it! I wish I could help everyone!”

“I believe that there is a lack of pride of ownership. As I drive through my community, I see people who have little, and care a lot for what they have. I also see people who have more, and care little. I also see some properties that are in disrepair and vacant and know they have gotten that way because the owners simply would rather let them be run down, than to let go of and sell the property. I feel like that is a waste, when there are others who would be able to put the property to good use.”

Two Rivers Region

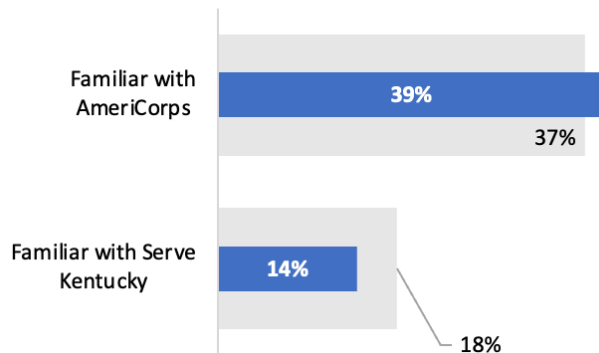


Population Density



Two Rivers Residents

All Kentuckians



Volunteer Voices:

“As a Chemo Buddy, I listen to those in chemotherapy infusion treatment and make them comfortable. This may be getting a drink, snack, blanket or a pillow. Or it might be listening to their story, so they aren’t alone.”

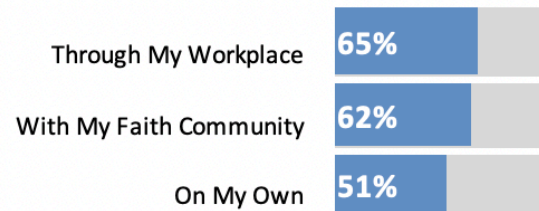
“I serve on committees that promote Substance Abuse Awareness/Education and child abuse prevention education, plus I do what I can through my church.”

Percentage who volunteer

Two Rivers

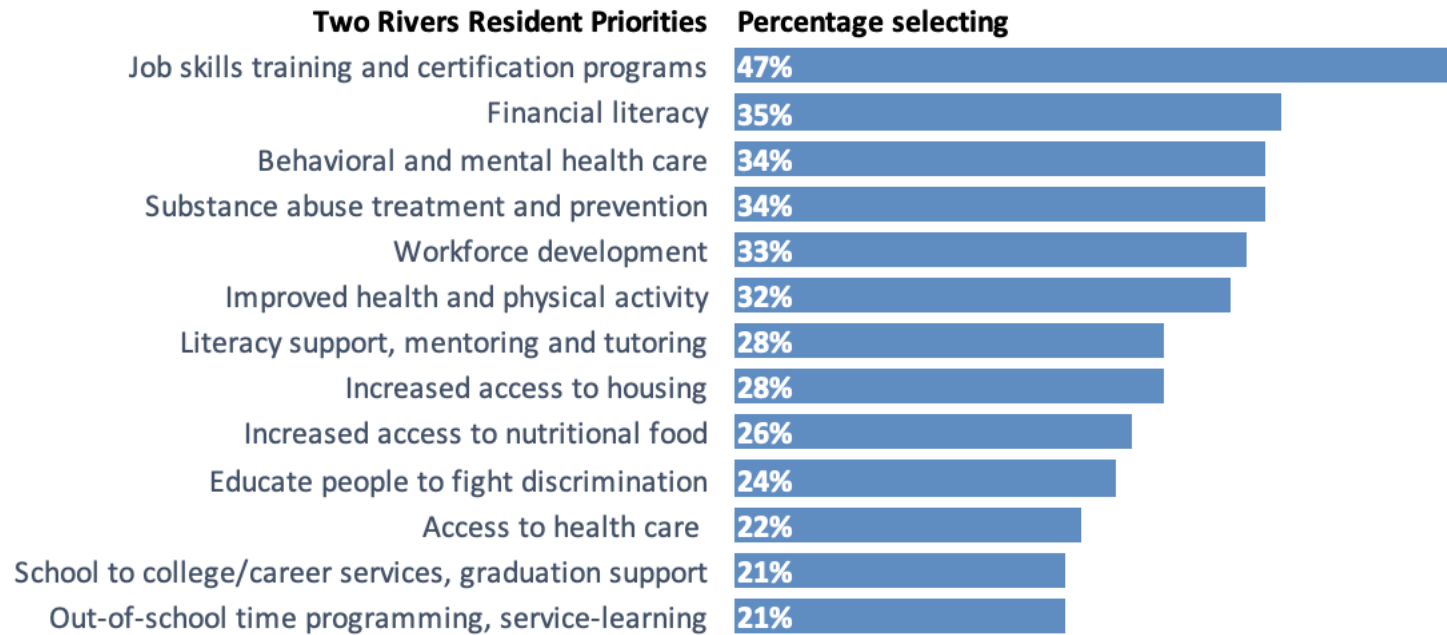


Top 3 Volunteer Settings



Top 3 Volunteer Methods





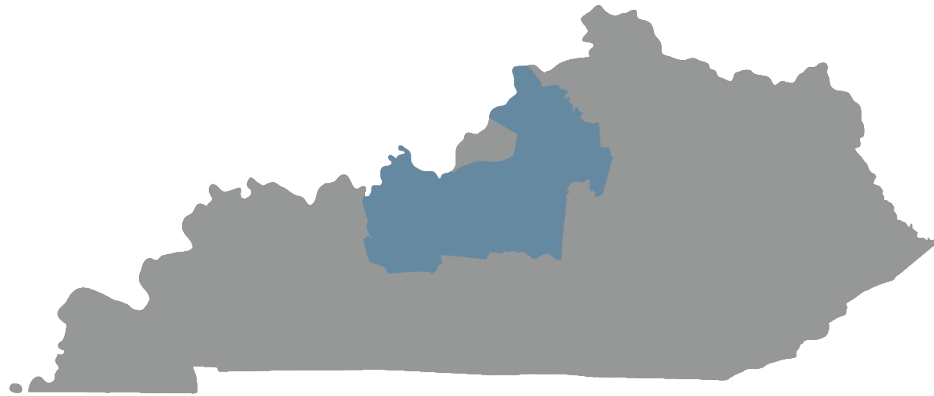
If I could solve one problem in my community...

“Homelessness- Our shelters are completely full. We have a community of families living by the river in tents. Drug use is also a huge issue- we need to provide better funding to rehabilitative resources.”

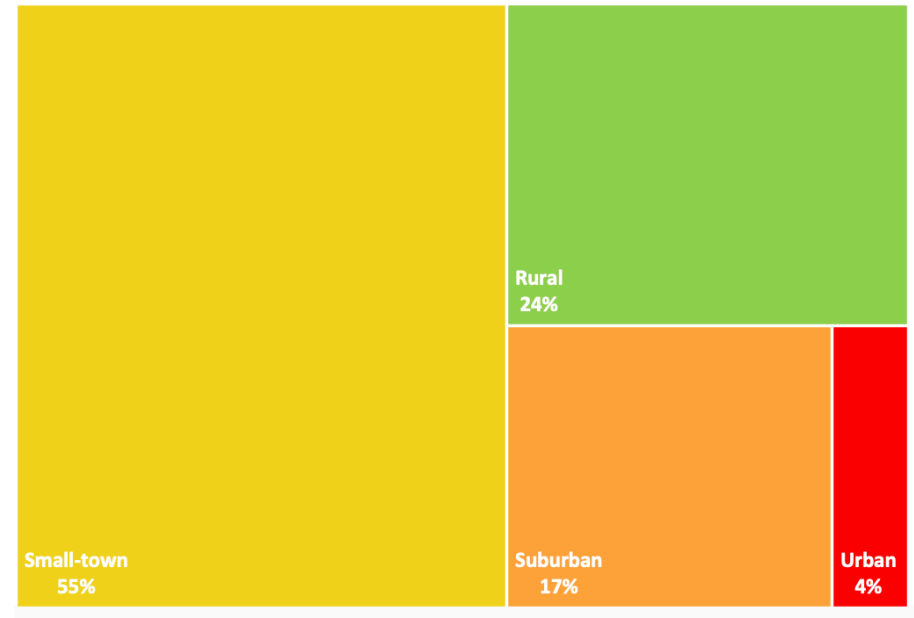
“If I could solve one problem in my community it would be that every child would have a bed to sleep on and a place to call home.”

“Poor internet connectivity for students. Due to the pandemic this issue has risen to the top in our rural, low-income area. My second concern would be to develop a mentoring program for our kids. Many being raised by grandparents or others.”

Salt River Trail Region

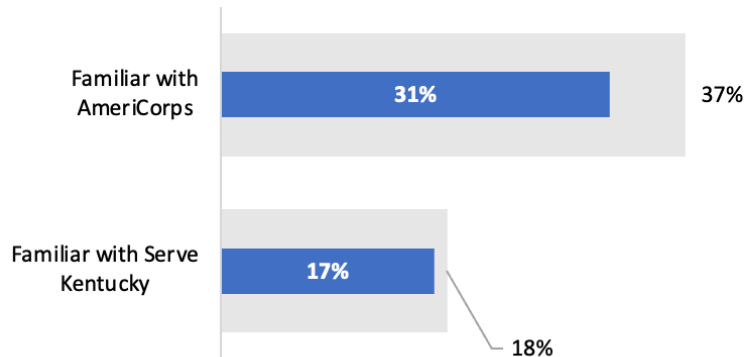


Population Density



Salt River Trail Residents

All Kentuckians



Volunteer Voices:

“My church group works with local agencies supporting children at risk, making blankets for newborns born into poverty, providing supplies to our local homeless shelters. I help the women and children’s homeless shelter and an arts group that supports women in drug court.”

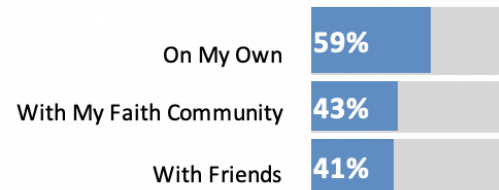
“I have put on some horseback riding weekends for veterans and people who might have been hurt on a horse.”

Percentage who volunteer

Salt River Trail

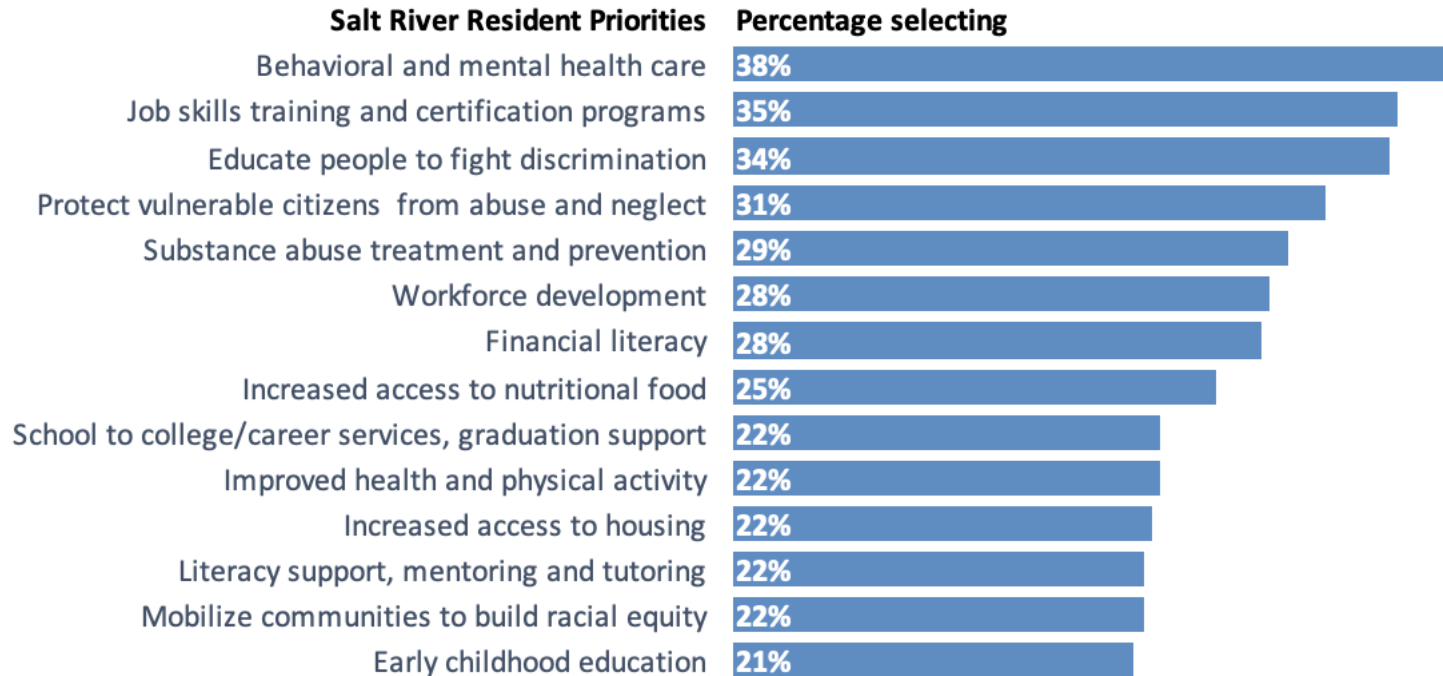


Top 3 Volunteer Settings



Top 3 Volunteer Methods





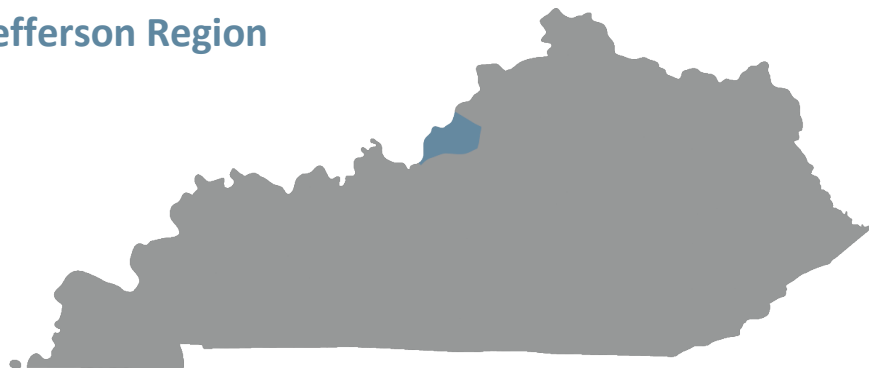
If I could solve one problem in my community...

“The downtown area needs a lot of rebuilding and growth. It seems very run down and such a waste for how much potential that our capital downtown area could be. We need more safe daycares and safe playgrounds where you do not fear to take your child to some areas of the community.”

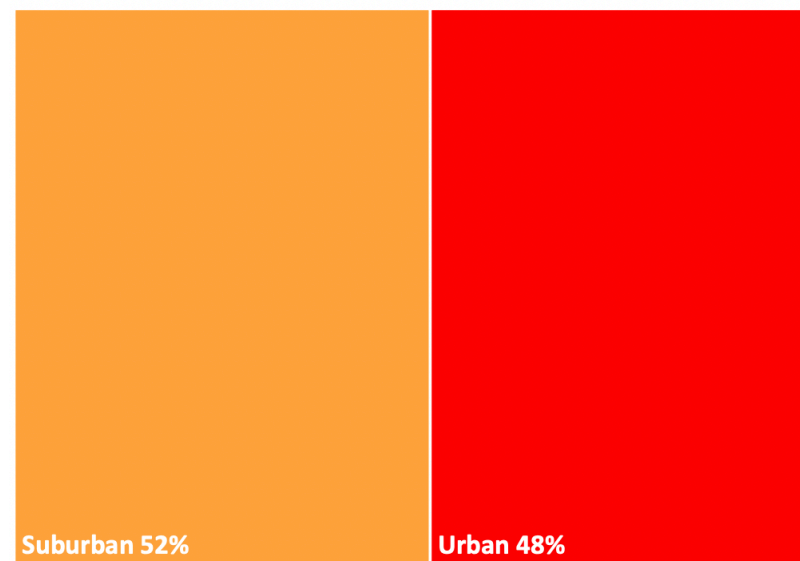
“More support for local/small businesses, which would include revitalizing downtown and making it a place people NEED to be. Accessible parking, etc. would go a long way!”

“Getting people with disabilities more included in, and involved with, their communities.”

Jefferson Region

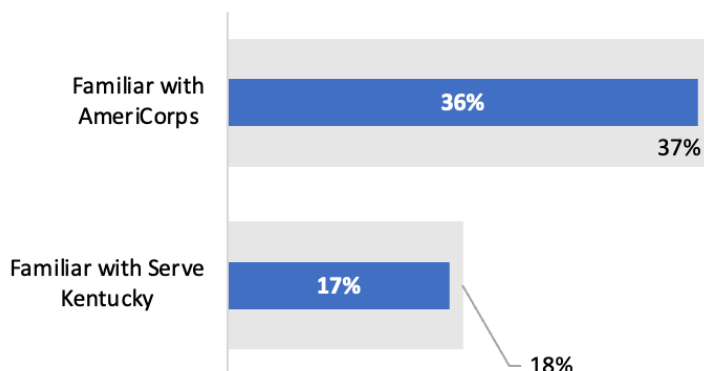


Population Density



Jefferson Residents

All Kentuckians



Volunteer Voices:

“I volunteer my time and continually develop my skills to better serve my community in the fight for racial and economic justice. This often takes the form of mutual aid organizing.”

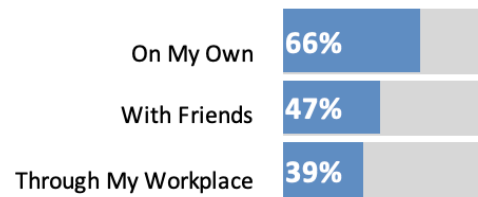
“I try to help people in need at the store or at a restaurant (buying food), helping my neighbors, or skills-based volunteering with a group to help change the social landscape of our Jewish community. I also help organize service projects for my synagogue.”

Percentage who volunteer

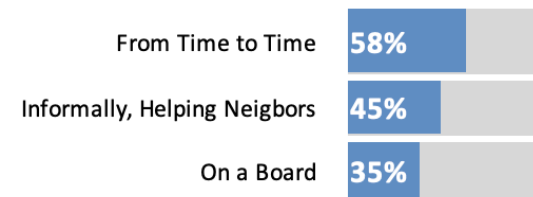
Jefferson

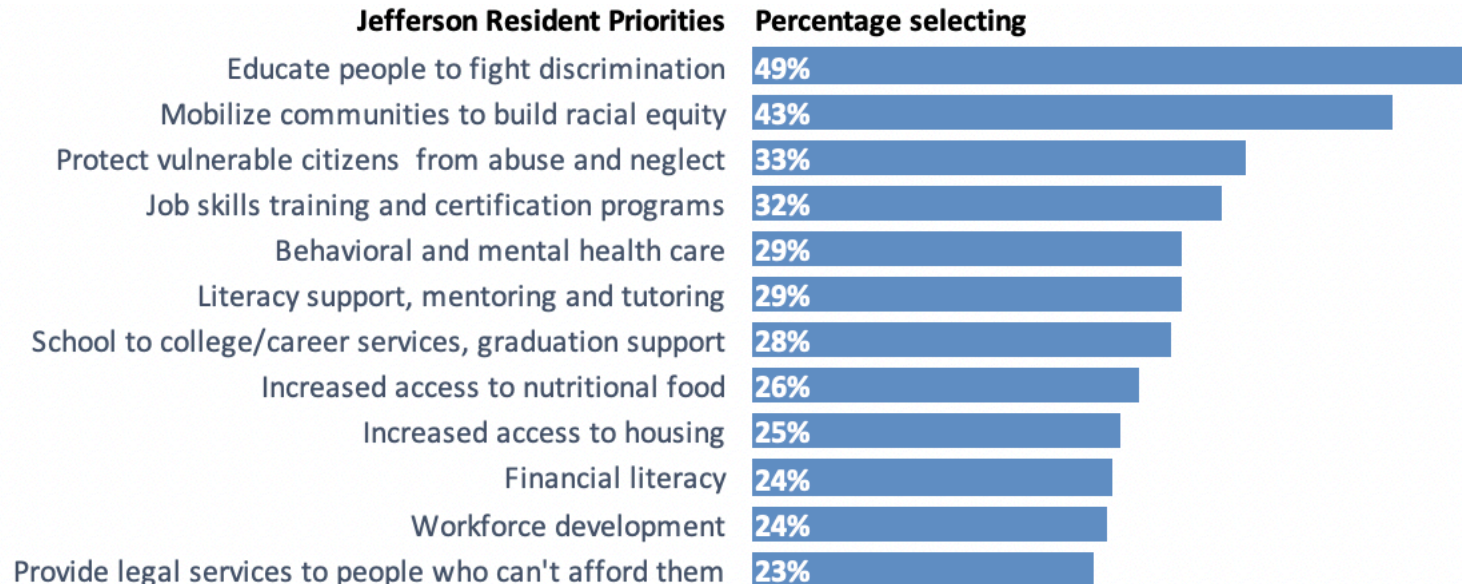
92%

Top 3 Volunteer Settings



Top 3 Volunteer Methods





If I could solve one problem in my community...

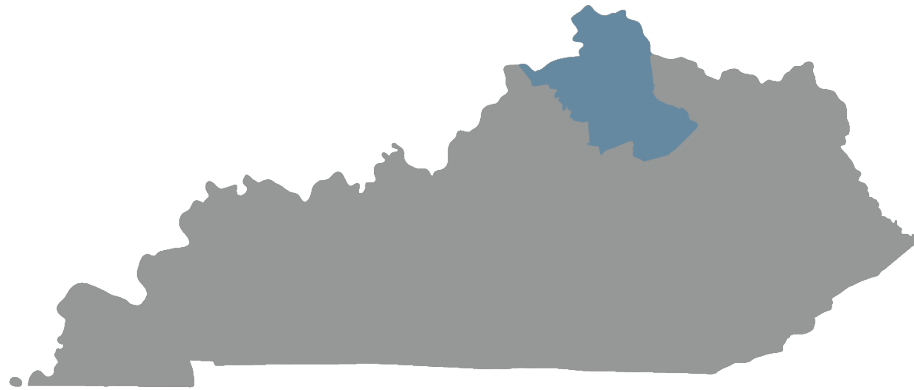
“The one problem in my community that I would solely solve, if able, would be to prevent the Floyds Fork stream and watershed from further pollution from sewage treatment plants, and work to restore the Floyds Fork to a healthy sustainable stream, supporting fish, wildlife and human activities including wading and swimming.”

“I'd like to see economic justice so that everyone has the same opportunities to provide for themselves. Volunteers can waver and donations can run dry, what then do people do? They shouldn't need volunteers in order to eat. Less barriers towards financial security for all.”

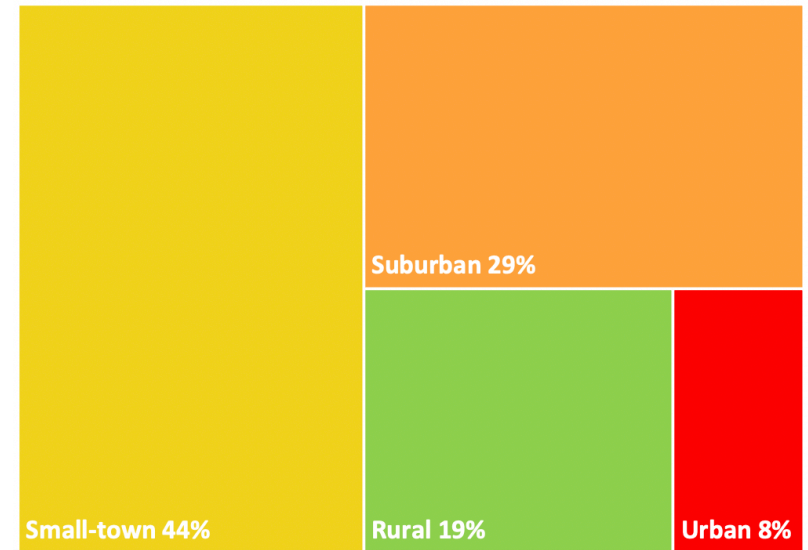
“Adding value to a community while not sending the message it has no value to begin with.”

“Community service and civic engagement are vital and necessary. It is equally as important to make sure the space we take up and the services we offer don't overpower the narrative and identity of areas we serve.”

Northern Bluegrass Region

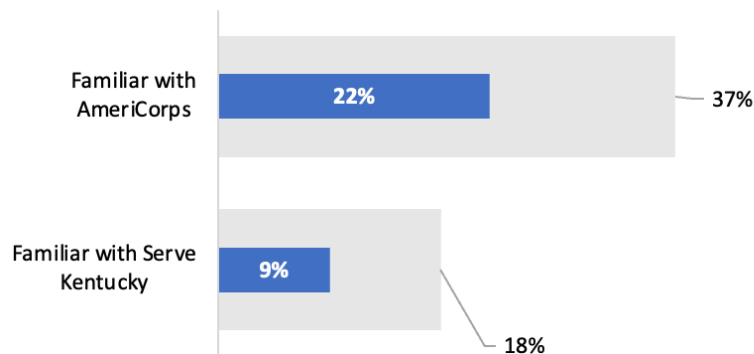


Population Density



Northern Bluegrass Residents

All Kentuckians



Volunteer Voices:

“I am building a farming business that integrates for profit activities that support low-income community members as well as helps foster a tighter sense of community in Sadieville area residents.”

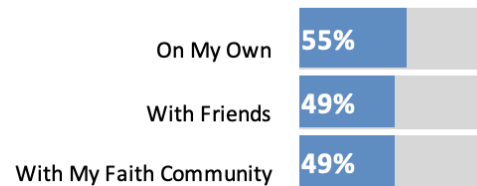
“I pass out food one Saturday a month and pass out a hot meal for each family member. We also provide each family with gallons of milk and bakery items breads, deserts, whatever we have for that week. I'm a retired Marine Vet, I help out the VA when I can.”

Percentage who volunteer

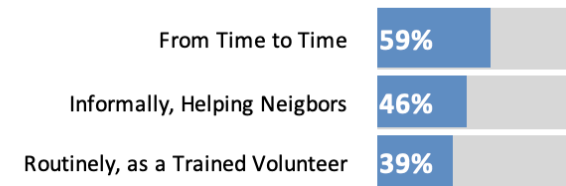
Northern Bluegrass

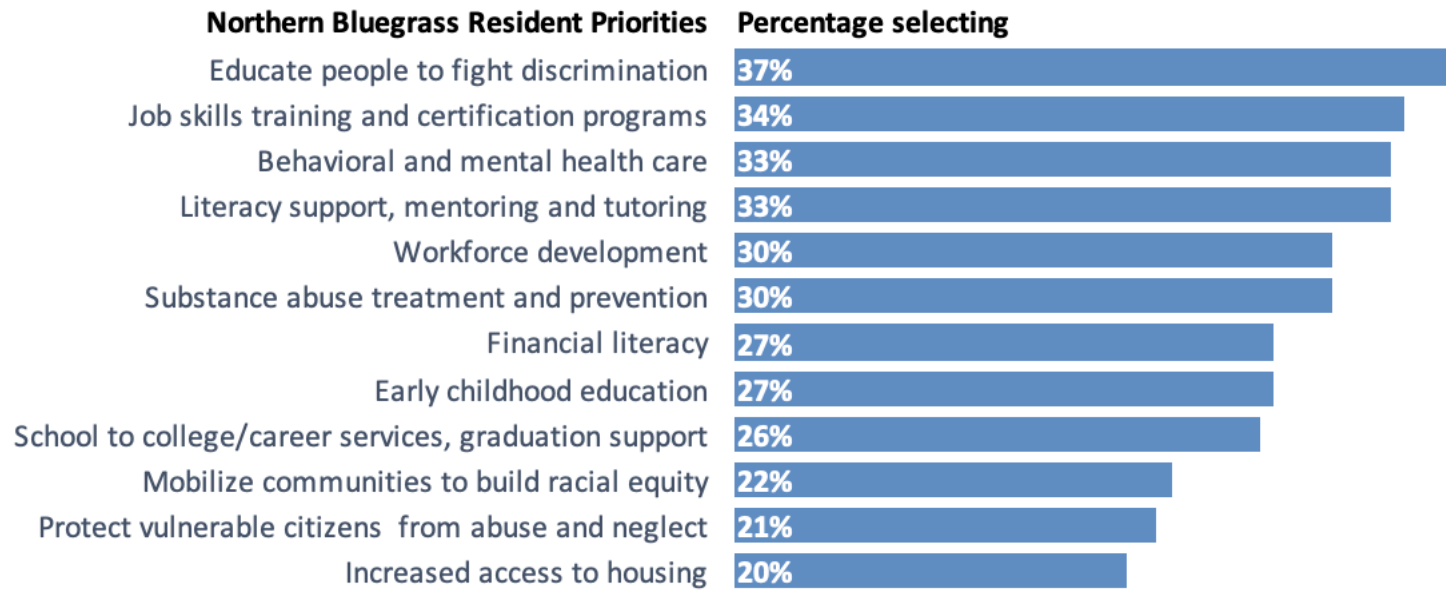


Top 3 Volunteer Settings



Top 3 Volunteer Methods





If I could solve one problem in my community...

“The problem I would like to solve would be intolerance due to misinformation. Addiction awareness - prevention, assistance in overcoming and maintaining sobriety.”

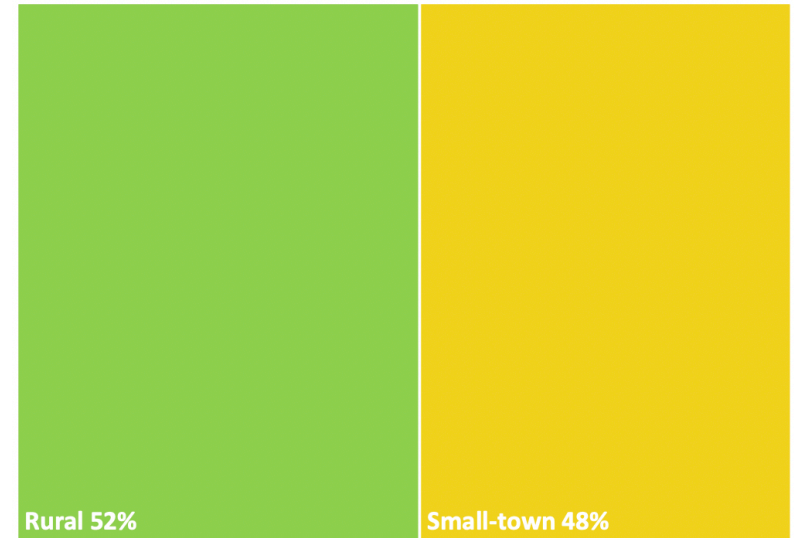
“More affordable housing for those who are lower-income – households with less than 40k a year. Providing equal and affordable access to internet is huge right now. As a teacher in a rural part of Scott County, many of my students have not had equal access to education during the pandemic due to lack of high-speed internet. Jobs, unemployment forms, Covid testing and vaccine sign ups and much more are all online. Without internet access, our most vulnerable community members are put at a further disadvantage.”

“We have to address the lack of mental health help in order to address the drug problems.”

Northeastern Region

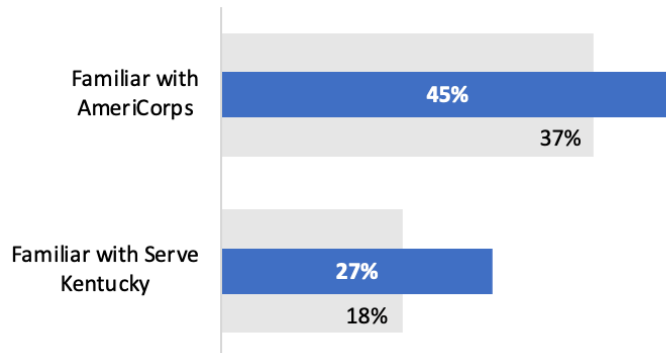


Population Density



Northeastern Residents

All Kentuckians



Volunteer Voices:

“I help with food delivery, work free clinics, help build houses, clean walking trails, trash pick-ups. I attend meetings as asked or just help in projects as needed.”

“I deliver food to shut ins, pack weekly bags of food for students, serve as a court appointed special advocate, serve on a number of boards, and help families in need of assistance during COVID.”

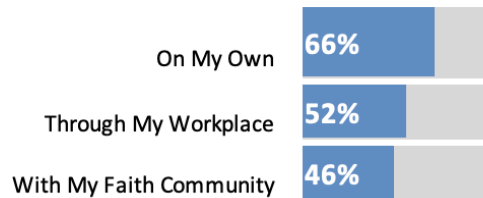
“I’m on the Trail Town Task Force and Cave Run Storytelling Festival Board. I’m a Deacon, and I mentor in a college volunteer group.”

Percentage who volunteer

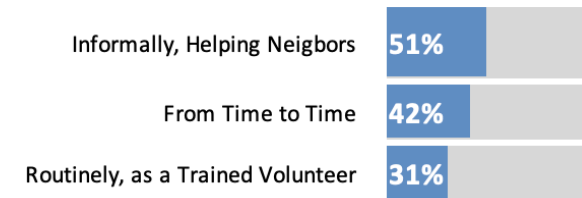
Northeastern

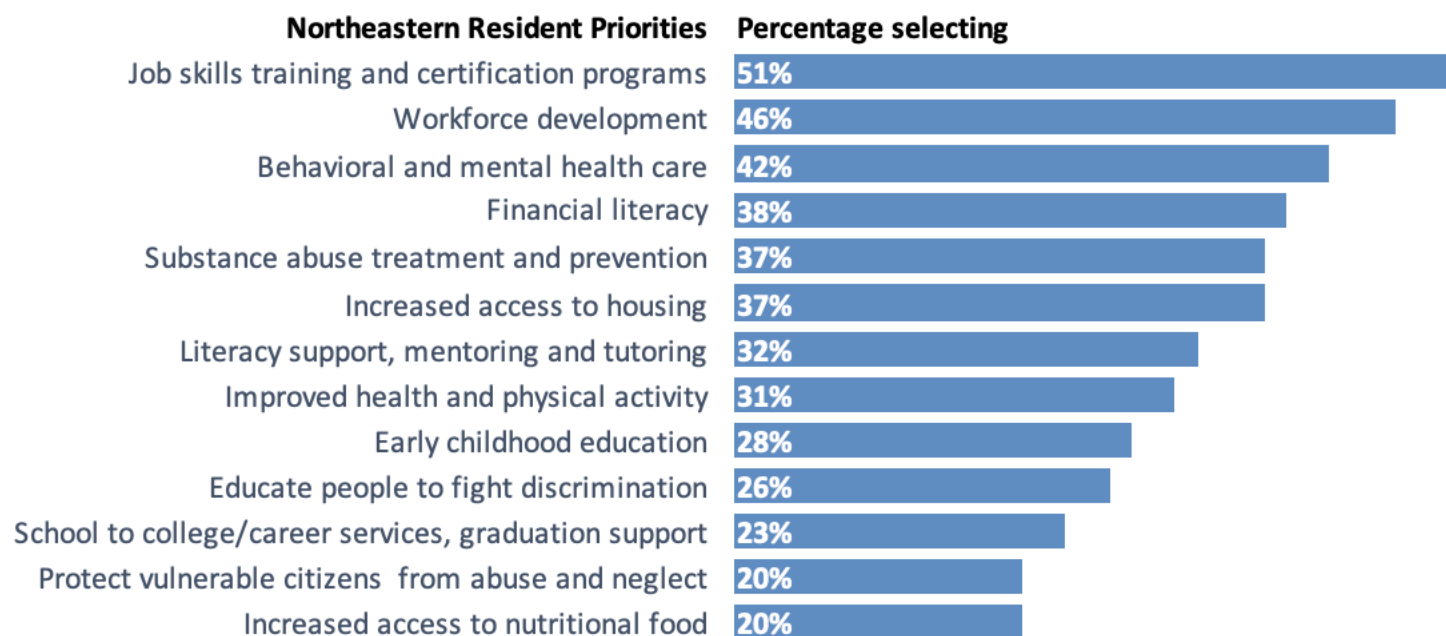
93%

Top 3 Volunteer Settings



Top 3 Volunteer Methods





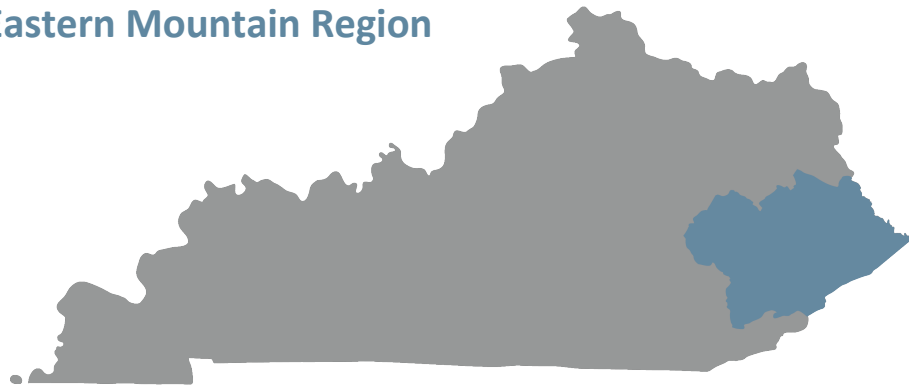
If I could solve one problem in my community...

“Access to quality health care so that the community would participate in preventive health care screenings.”

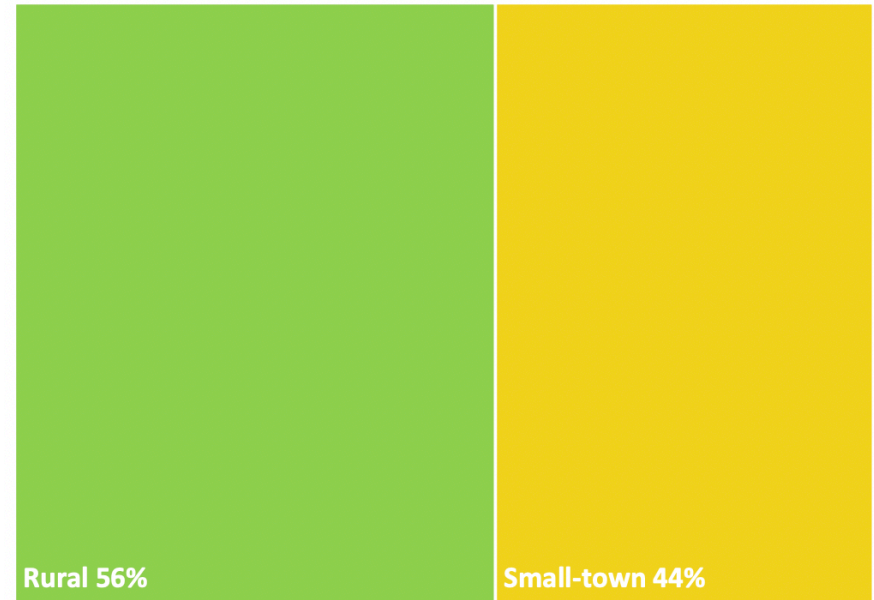
“Most often the biggest barrier in our region is lack of transportation due to lack of public transport in rural areas. Telehealth has assisted with the barrier to medical appointments that lack of transportation presented but many are still left with struggling to find ways to the store for groceries, to pick up medications, etc.”

“Fatalism. Too many people have given up and feel they can't change their own lives or others; they say things are what they are -- bad -- and will never get better.”

Eastern Mountain Region

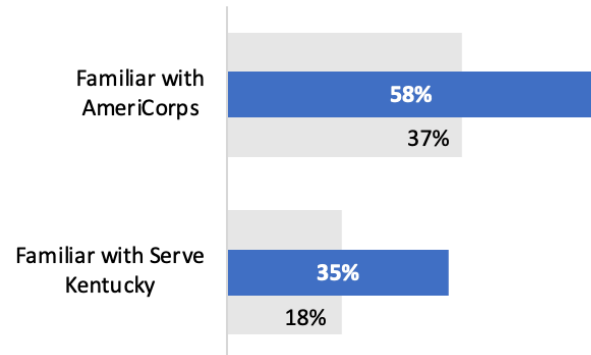


Population Density



Eastern Mountain Residents

All Kentuckians



Volunteer Voices:

“I volunteer my time to other housing organizations throughout the state of Kentucky to further the creation of affordable housing.”

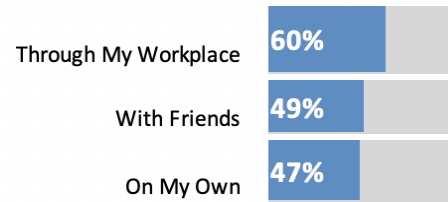
“I live in a very small rural community with many elderly couples and do my best to help them as I can. I also volunteer at my local animal shelter and donate things they need. I frequently donate clothes and toys that my daughter is no longer using to local churches.”

Percentage who volunteer

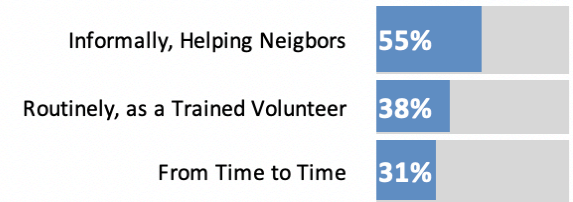
Eastern Mountain

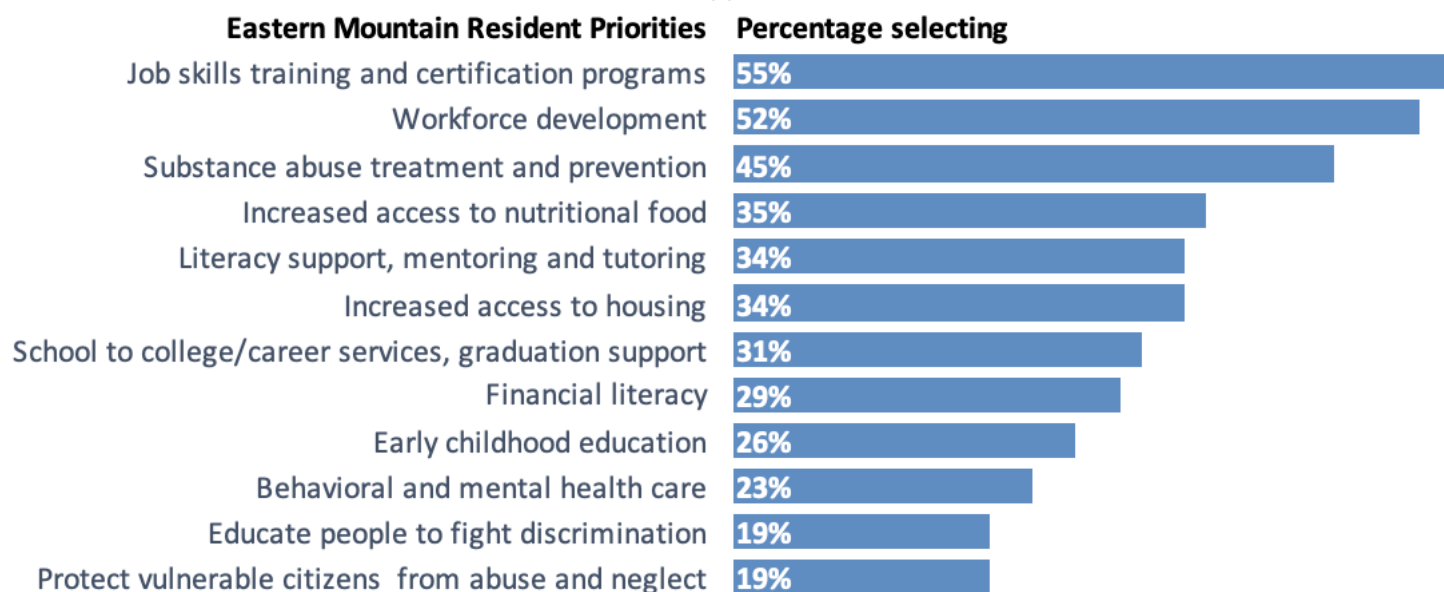
86%

Top 3 Volunteer Settings



Top 3 Volunteer Methods





If I could solve one problem in my community...

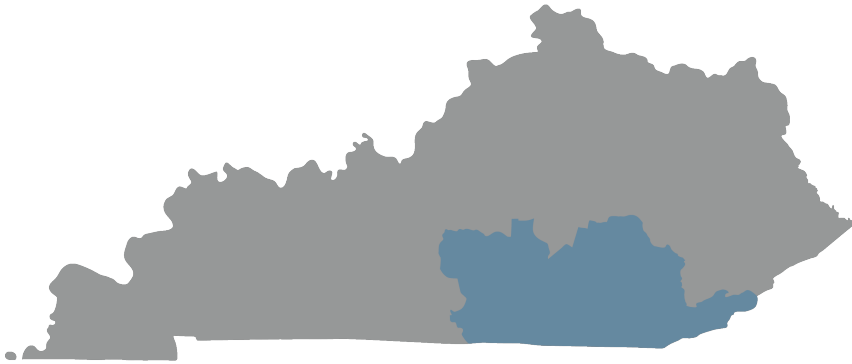
“If I could solve one problem in my community it would be to address the high rates of K-12 students who are chronically absent from school.”

“Stop hunger, especially in children right now. Give them access to school supplies they need for online school and develop more low-income housing for the homeless.”

“There needs to be more jobs in the mountains, so our children don’t have to leave just to make a living.”

“For a small town, we have a big homeless problem that needs to be addressed. Also, our country needs to come together and for people to get along.”

Cumberland Region

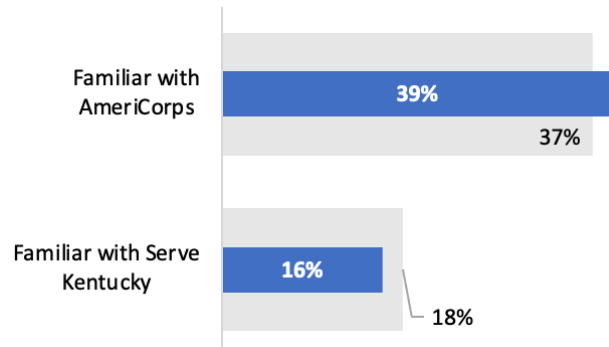


Population Density



Cumberland Residents

All Kentuckians



Volunteer Voices:

"I check in on the elderly and helping them as needed. Providing medical assistance checking blood pressure and vital signs and assessment of wound care and advising them to follow up with their doctors."

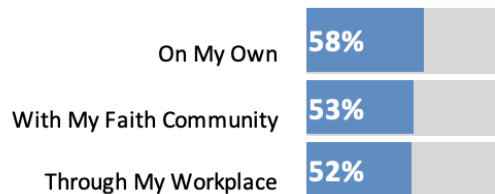
"I volunteer at our homeless shelter, make blankets for Hospice, and hats for our infants at our hospital. I volunteer at my church where needed."

"I travel around our town with bags of food and warm clothing items and distribute them to the homeless community. I also prepare and deliver meals to a few elderly people that live close by my home that have no close family."

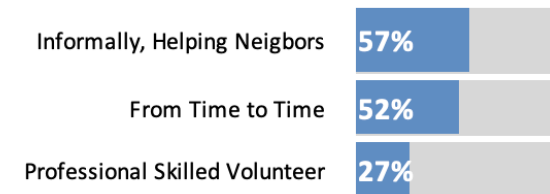
Percentage who volunteer

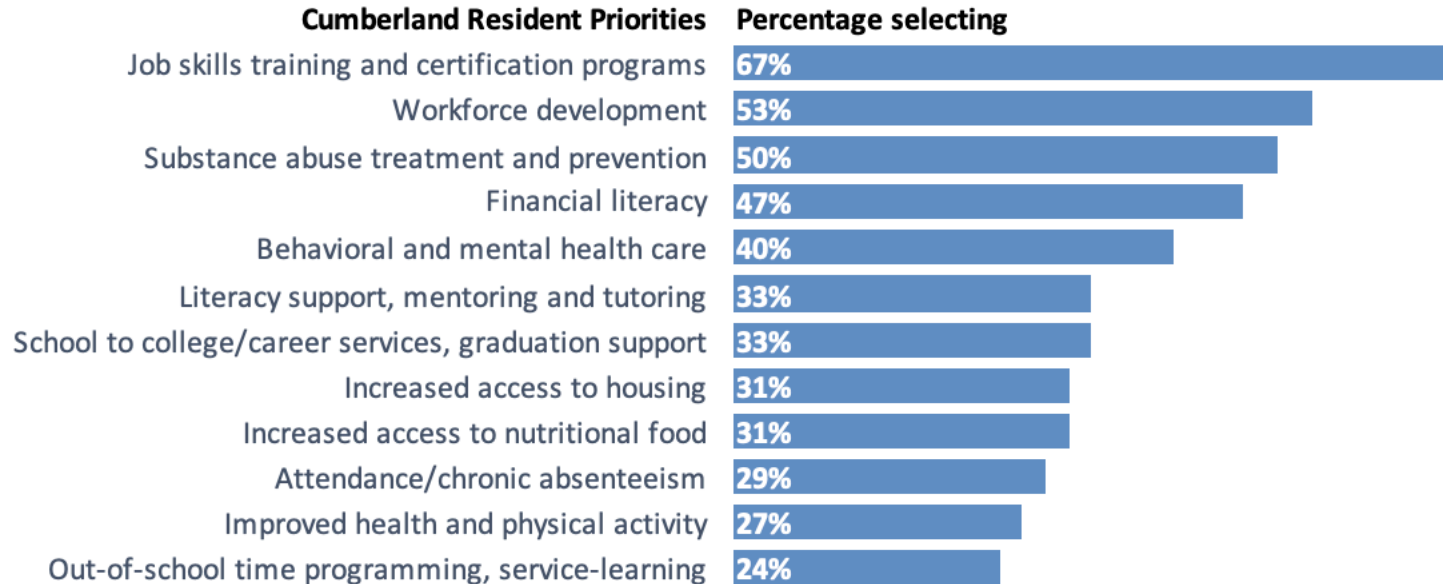


Top 3 Volunteer Settings



Top 3 Volunteer Methods





If I could solve one problem in my community...

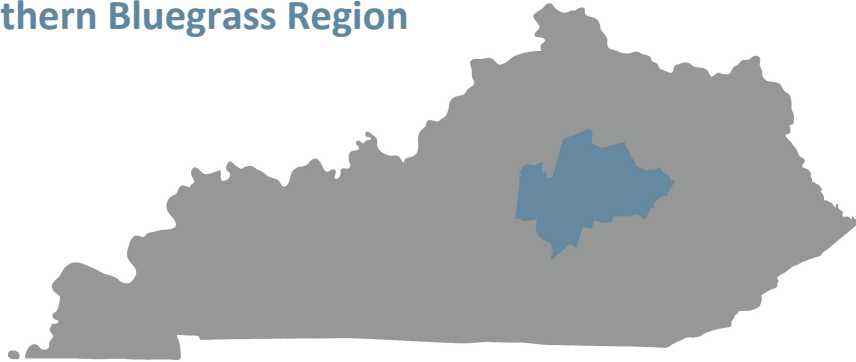
“Opportunities for all ages-- job opportunities, recreation, health and fitness. Activities that build community. Senior citizen activities. Music and arts in the community. Celebration of Appalachian culture. Diversity.”

“We are a small coal town. We need jobs in this area. Drug addiction is also a problem but maybe if we had job opportunities, the drug problem wouldn't be as bad.”

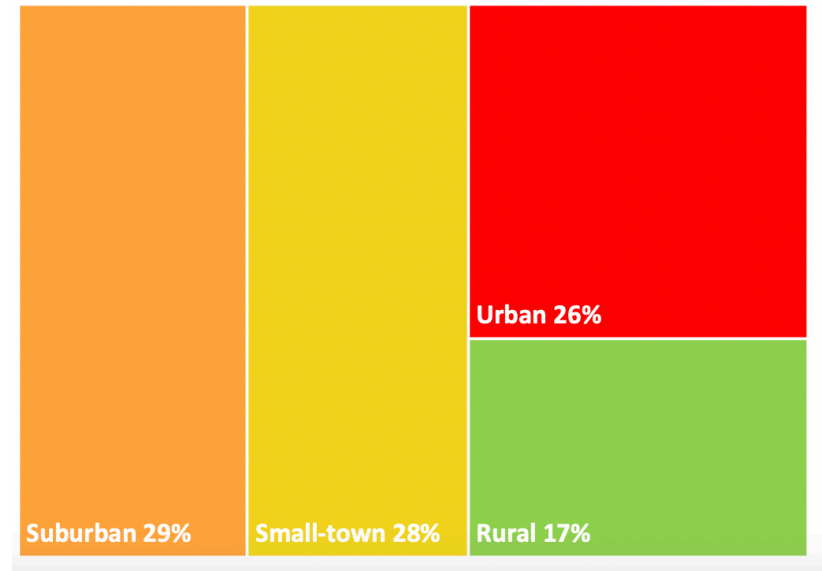
“I would want to help the homeless community that we have in Somerset. It seems to be progressively getting worse, with more numbers each year. It seems to be one of the worst problems we have, as everyone turns their head to the situation.”

“Hunger. Every child would leave school with some type of food for the evenings.”

Southern Bluegrass Region

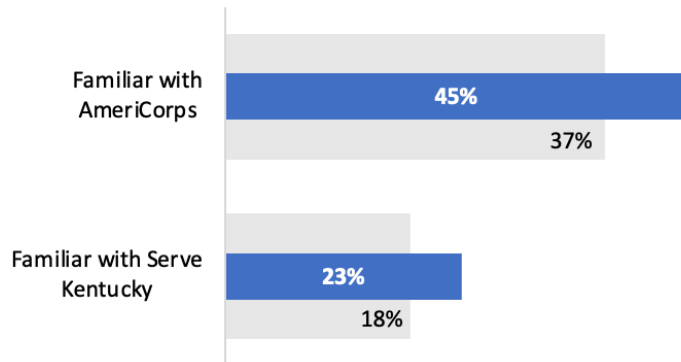


Population Density



Southern Bluegrass Residents

All Kentuckians



Volunteer Voices:

“I utilize my Spanish language knowledge as a healthcare provider to volunteer in refugee clinics.”

“I volunteer with Bluegrass Care Navigators (hospice). I sit with people as they are in the process of dying and keep them company. I also volunteer for Northfarm in Lexington Kentucky for 20 weeks of the year, growing and harvesting food for local use.”

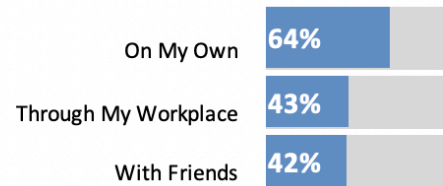
“Supporting folks in or seeking to gain access to recovery to Substance Use Disorder, helping folks move residencies, assisting with small, raised gardening beds. I also serve on Foster Care Review Board.”

Percentage who volunteer

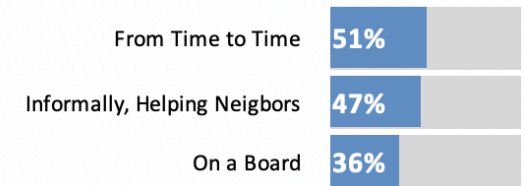
Southern Bluegrass

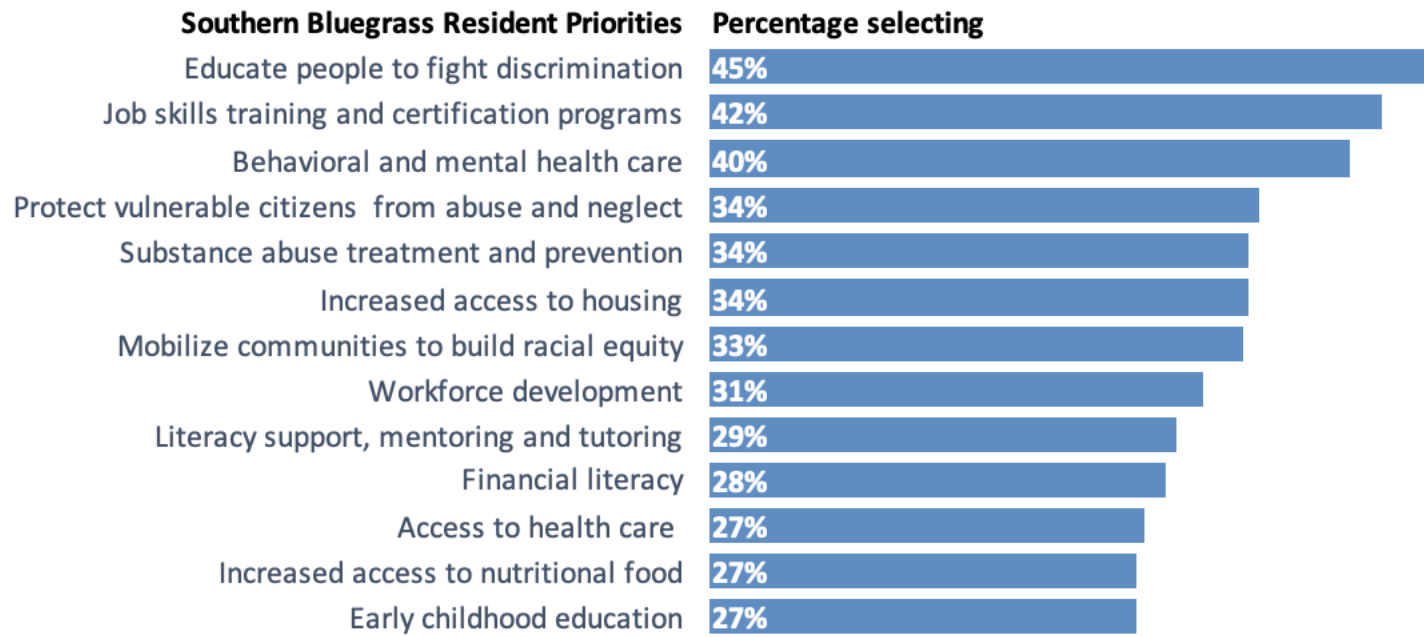


Top 3 Volunteer Settings



Top 3 Volunteer Methods





If I could solve one problem in my community...

“It would be health equity for Kentucky. This means that ALL Kentuckians are able to attain their full health potential. In other words, everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. It involves addressing the interconnected social determinants of health which include health care access and quality, education access and quality, social and community context, economic stability, and neighborhood and built environments.”

“I believe we need multi-sector collaboration to provide family support for mental health and substance abuse, equity in health, education, and economic opportunities. And that LGBTQ youth and seniors would be treated with dignity and equality.”

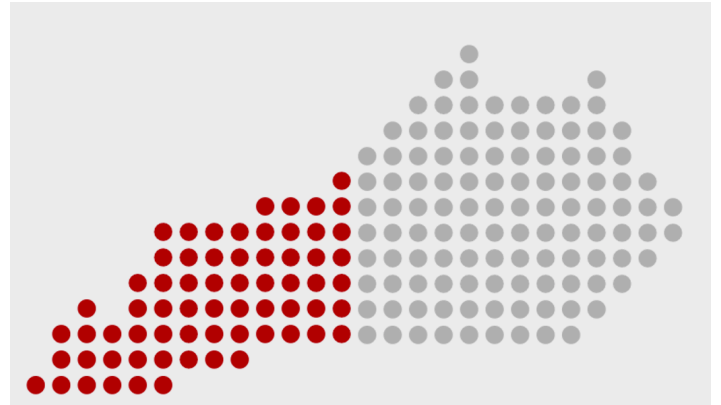
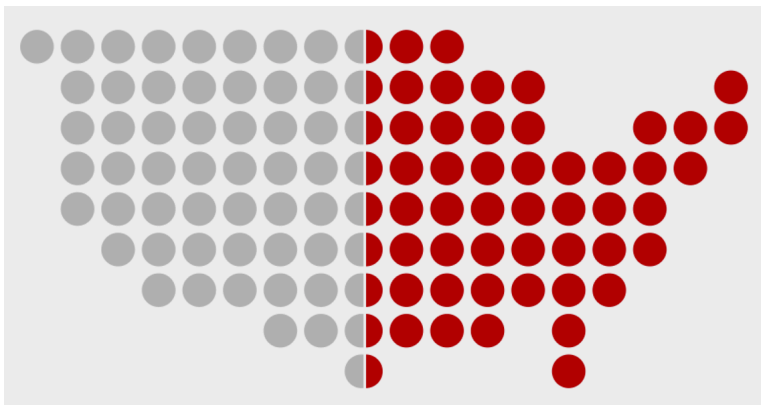
“Reform our justice system; create systematic imbedded accountability programs with benchmarks and mandatory, ongoing training and psychologic testing for law enforcement. Develop programs and policies that address prejudices and biases.”

Awareness of AmeriCorps

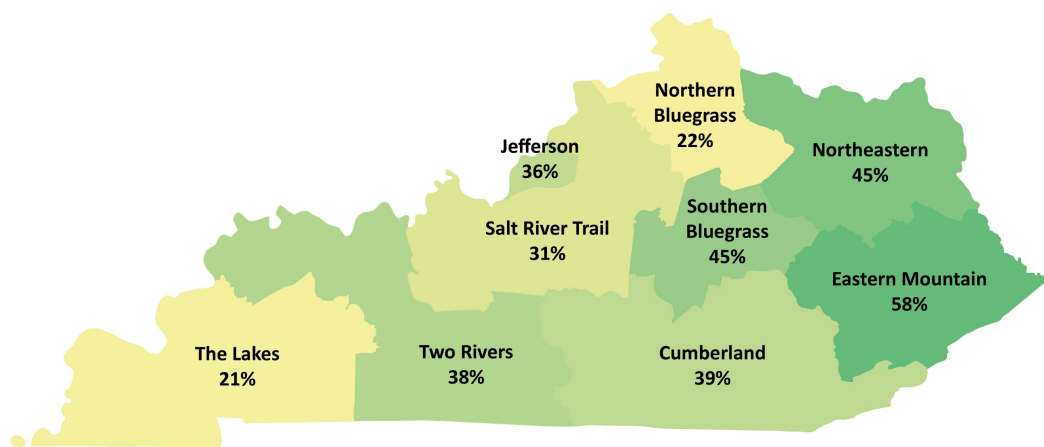
In the 25 years since AmeriCorps was created, the Commonwealth of Kentucky has awarded over \$25 million to local organizations. More than 5,000 Kentuckians have served in AmeriCorps, and Kentucky's higher education institutions have received more than \$20 million in AmeriCorps education award funds earned by AmeriCorps alumni. AmeriCorps has transformed lives, from those who have been helped, to those who received essential life and career experience. AmeriCorps has been an engine for change in Kentucky, an unqualified success.

In FY22, Serve Kentucky is poised to place more AmeriCorps members in more organizations than ever. It is essential that people are aware of AmeriCorps so that they can take advantage of the opportunity and its impact. And yet, after 25 years, awareness of AmeriCorps is mixed—in the Commonwealth and all over the country. Axis Research, a national research firm, conducted market research in 2019 to measure awareness of AmeriCorps and its programs. They determined that 94% of people in the network would recommend an AmeriCorps experience to a friend or family member, but the same network has been frustrated for years at how difficult it is to describe what AmeriCorps is. (Representing so many organizations, one member might introduce herself, "I'm an AmeriCorps member serving with FRYSC Corps to combat food insecurity with families through the Family Resource and Youth Centers in Kentucky...")

Axis found that **50% of Americans** across the country are aware of AmeriCorps. Our study shows a lower percentage here-- across the Commonwealth, **37% of Kentuckians are aware of AmeriCorps**. This suggests that there is work to be done.



For the Kentuckians who are aware of AmeriCorps, their knowledge is deep: **one-third of Kentuckians can name a local AmeriCorps program.** And in some areas of the state, *more than half* of the general public knows about AmeriCorps. The heat map to the right shows awareness of AmeriCorps by region in Kentucky. It is worth investigating why some regions are more aware than others, and whether having solid local AmeriCorps programs contributes to public awareness and even support.



Map: Percentage of people in each region of the Commonwealth who responded with a 4 or 5 on a scale of one to five to the question, "How familiar are you with AmeriCorps?"

It is not enough to know whether people have heard of AmeriCorps; it also matters what people think of it. One of the questions investigators posed in the survey was to ask whether people had served in AmeriCorps (15% of respondents have), and if so, how they would rate the experience. It is difficult to put a rating on the reputation of an entire field, particularly because there are so many different AmeriCorps programs working completely independent of each other.

One way to quantify how well people appreciate the AmeriCorps experience (particularly across programs) is to use a Net Promoter Score. In the business world, NPS is considered to be the gold standard for measuring company performance, though its use in government and nonprofits is not common. AmeriCorps' NPS for surveyed Kentucky alumni is **43.35**. (NPS ratings range from -100 (all detractors) to +100 (all promoters). Between 0 and 50 is considered good, 50-70 is excellent and above 70 is "world-class.") This high rating reflects the consistent quality of Serve Kentucky's AmeriCorps programs.

Nearly four times as many alumni recommend AmeriCorps as those who report they would not recommend it.



173 AmeriCorps Alumni completed the Net Promoter Score survey question, "How likely are you to recommend an AmeriCorps experience to a friend or colleague?"

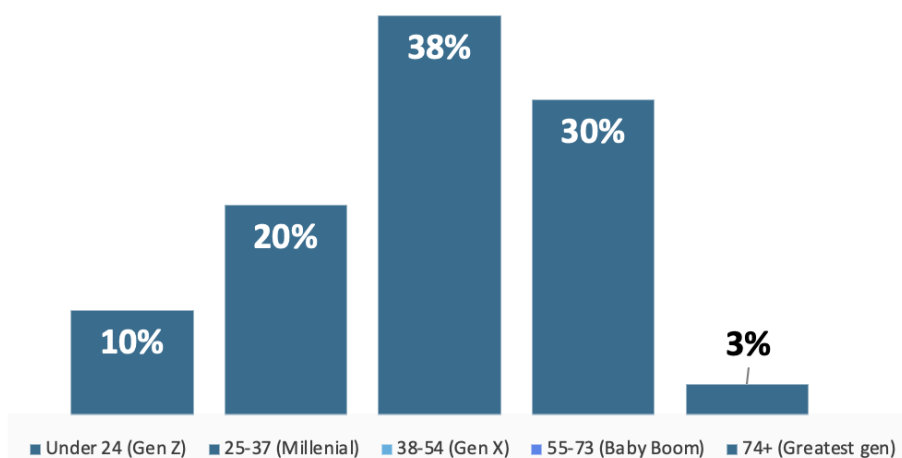
Survey Methodology

In keeping with the federal guidance on state service plans, McMahon Consulting Group worked with Serve Kentucky to ensure an open and public process to capture many voices on how best to solve state and local problems through service and volunteerism. MCG worked with Kentucky to design a survey that will align and measure public responses to the priorities outlined by Governor Beshear and the AmeriCorps Agency.

To gather feedback from Kentuckians in all 120 counties, MCG designed and conducted the survey, using a “snowball” methodology (sending the survey to partners and thought leaders and asking them to forward it to their networks). Outreach targets included users of the Volunteer Kentucky online portal, nonprofit associations and organizations, AmeriCorps staff and alumni, colleges and universities, past Governor's Service Awards winners and nominators, United Ways, Kentucky Chambers of Commerce, Kentucky Arts Council, Kentucky Historical Society, Kentucky State Parks, Kentucky Association for Volunteer Administrators, nonprofit foundations, commissioners, Kentucky YMCA Youth Association, Kentucky YMCA Alliance, Homeless and Housing Coalition of Kentucky, Kentucky Coalition Against Domestic Violence, community mental health centers, Cabinet for Health and Family Services, Family Resource and Youth Services Centers, Center for Nonprofit Excellence, Area Agencies on Aging, and through social media channels. Governor Beshear’s office also tweeted the survey link.

1,817 people viewed the survey, and 1,264 completed it. Eight were disqualified as non-Kentucky residents. Specific attention was paid to generating a cross section of responses from each of the nine state service delivery regions of the state. The map shows the number of responses in each of the regions. Participation was significant in all areas.

Most respondents are working-aged

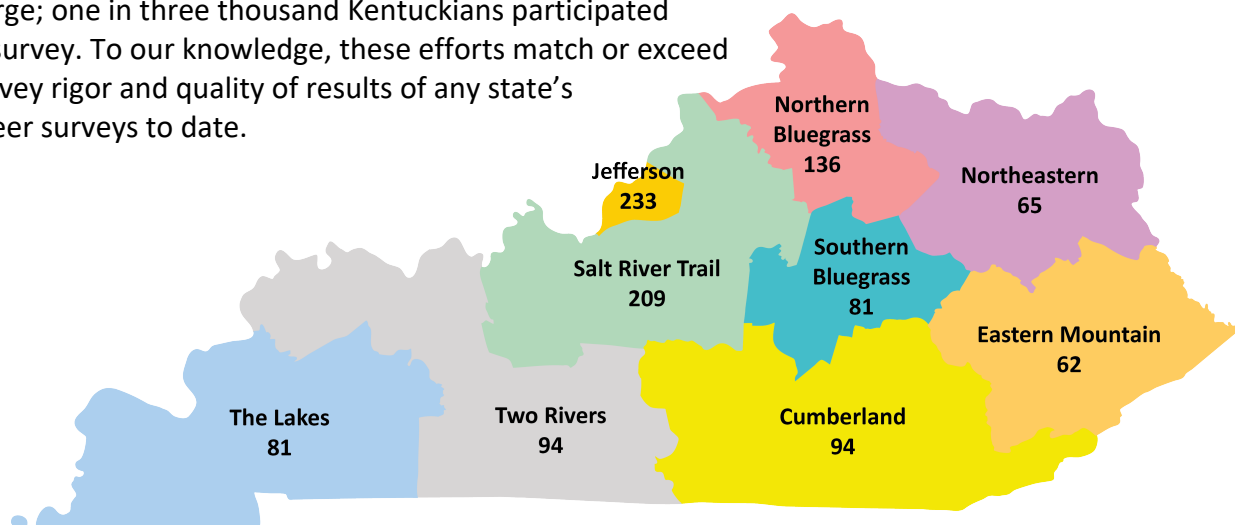


The age distribution of respondents is roughly proportional to Kentucky’s workforce, if not its population, with the most significant representation from Gen X, people aged 38-54. Even if unpaid, volunteering is labor. It makes sense that survey responses would reflect this link.

The 1,264 survey respondents were not chosen at random. Serve Kentucky’s networks, by definition, are concerned with civic engagement and volunteering, which certainly contributes to the high volunteer rates measured here. Completing a 32-question survey about volunteering may require an interest in volunteering, and the survey distribution was targeted to maximize response rates across each region. Investigators acknowledge two concerns about the use of a targeted internet survey. First, Serve Kentucky’s distribution networks are comprised of volunteer leaders, and so it is inevitable that there would be some bias in favor of

volunteering. And of course, volunteers would be more likely to volunteer to complete a survey. The high volunteer rates recorded here are due in part to this distribution method.

An additional concern relates to the form of bias known as the “halo effect”; in describing their behaviors, people are likely to depict themselves in the best possible light. These drawbacks are real and significant, and Serve Kentucky makes no claims that the volunteer rates presented are consistent across the entire population of 4.5 million Kentuckians. That said, the sample size is very large; one in three thousand Kentuckians participated in the survey. To our knowledge, these efforts match or exceed the survey rigor and quality of results of any state’s volunteer surveys to date.



Map: Numbers of survey respondents in each region of the Commonwealth

MCG utilized Zoho Survey, a licensed web-based survey tool. The survey was live for the four weeks in January 2021.

Serve Kentucky would like to acknowledge the Kentucky Nonprofit Network, all of the agencies that shared the survey link, and most importantly, all of the Kentucky citizens who took the time to share their thoughts. Further, thanks to all of Kentucky’s volunteers and AmeriCorps members who shape our communities and the Commonwealth every day.

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