

FACT SHEET

MCCORMACK GRADUATE SCHOOL OF POLICY AND GLOBAL STUDIES GERONTOLOGY INSTITUTE

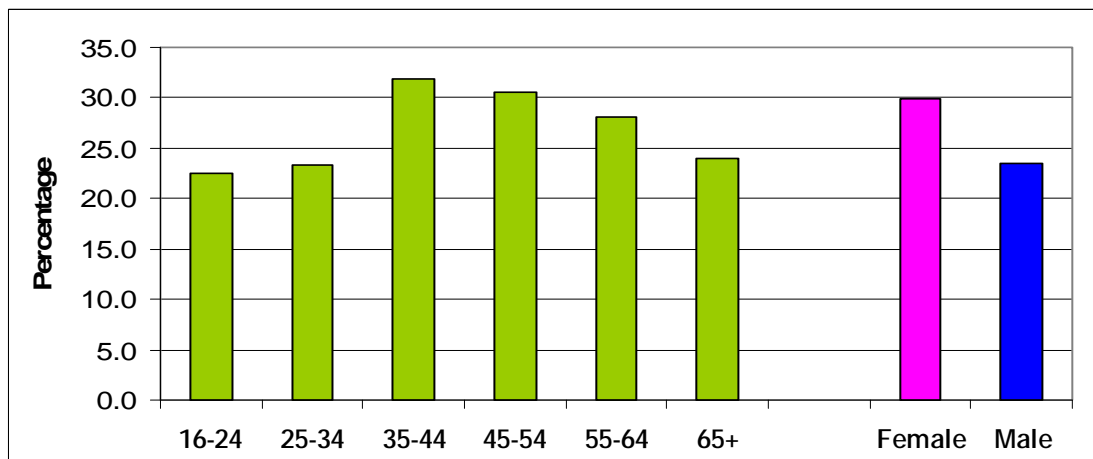
Volunteering among Middle-Aged and Older Adults in the United States

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This fact sheet describes volunteer activity among middle-aged and older adults in the United States. Data from the 2011 version of the Current Population Survey (CPS) from the Bureau of Labor and Statistics are employed to describe this behavior.

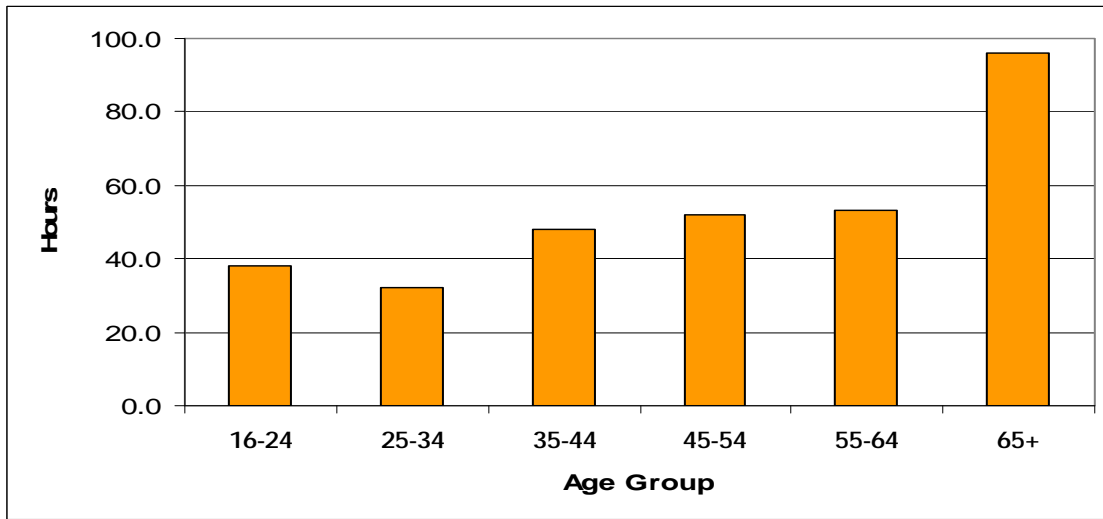
Volunteering is a common form of social engagement and research shows this activity has benefits for both the volunteer and the community at large. Volunteering is associated with greater social integration and with having a larger social network, factors which are important for positive health outcomes. Middle-aged and older adults volunteer at a relatively high rate. Specifically, 28.1% of those aged 55 to 64 and 24.0% of those aged 65 and older report volunteering (see Figure 1). Females (29.9%) and those aged 35-44 (31.8%) report the highest percentages of volunteering

Figure 1. Volunteering by Age Group and Gender (2011)



While middle-aged and older adult age groups do not report the highest percentages of volunteering, they do report the highest median annual hours of volunteering. In fact, annual volunteering hours increases with age (see Figure 2). Those aged 55 to 64 report a median of 53 hours of volunteering annually and those aged 65 and older report a median of 96 hours of volunteering annually.

Figure 2. Median Annual Hours of Volunteering by Age Group (2011)



Adults aged 65 and older report volunteering for many groups (see Figure 3). The most common forms of volunteering among seniors are through religious (47%) and social service (17%) organizations. Volunteering in hospitals (10%) and educational settings (8%) were also important outlets for this type of helping behavior.

Figure 3. Types of Volunteering Reported among Persons Age 65 and Older (2011)

Participating in volunteering provides meaningful social roles that are positively related to mental and physical health, as well as survivorship. The positive aspects of volunteering combined with the fact that older adults volunteer more time than younger adults suggest that older adults in particular play a crucial role as volunteers, benefiting both themselves and their communities.

