

Profile

My parents told me “*You should volunteer because community service is good to get in to college.*”
...But when I had just graduated from college they said, “*Aren’t you going to graduate school? Why are you still working in a nonprofit making so little money?*”

Respondents Under 25 Years of Age

A closer inspection of who these young people are and how they responded to our survey will be helpful to those recruiting on college campuses, designing youth leadership programs, developing service-learning programs, and looking for more effective ways to galvanize young people’s commitment to social change work.

Respondents under 25 years comprise 20% of the overall sample.

- This group has more women and whites than the overall sample: 83% are female, and 76% are white. This suggests that the near future will likely see the nonprofit sector continue its trend of being overwhelmingly staffed by white women.
- Volunteer experience among young people is tremendously high. 90% have volunteered during their youth, and nearly half cite this as influencing their decision to work in the nonprofit sector.
- Fewer respondents under 25 are currently working in the nonprofit sector (46% compared to 59% for the whole sample), though more of them (57% compared to 47% for the whole sample) said that their ideal next job is in the nonprofit sector. A significantly higher number of young people are currently unemployed, 21%, and working in the for-profit sector, 20%, than older respondents. This suggests that despite their desire to work in a nonprofit, young people are experiencing factors limiting their ability to realize this goal. Focus group participants often spoke of the difficulties they had in getting their first nonprofit job, citing financial barriers and the steep competition for open positions.
- Of those currently seeking a job outside of their organization, 62% are committed to staying in the nonprofit sector. This, coupled with the data above, bodes well for the nonprofit sector in terms of new talent currently within the pipeline and those hoping to become part of it.
- More respondents under 25, 27%, are considering starting a new nonprofit compared to 20% for the whole group.
- Executive aspirations are high: a larger percentage of respondents under 25 want to be an executive director someday.
- The need to further develop technical skills, external connections and networks, and leadership capabilities were cited as the top three prerequisites for the executive director role.
- The vast majority, 90%, feel that they are learning and growing in their current position; however, they feel more under-utilized than older respondents.
- 67% believe that they will need an advanced degree to continue to develop professionally, illustrating the perceived value of higher education as a means to advance in the nonprofit sector.
- Respondents under 25 have significantly more financial concerns about committing to the sector than older respondents, the biggest being not earning enough to support a family, which ranked third with the entire group.