



Which Civic Service assignments best promote volunteering?

The intensity of the voluntary commitment of Civic Service participants varies depending on their profiles and the type of assignment carried out. Although Civic Service participants are on average slightly more likely to volunteer than other people of a comparable age, both before and after the assignment, their degrees of commitment vary depending on their level of qualification, employment status and gender.

Nearly half of the participants said that their assignment had a positive impact on their desire to volunteer, but the actual amount of volunteering they did after the assignment was not, on average, any higher than before getting involved in Civic Service. Assignments carried out in associations better encourage involvement in volunteering than those carried out in the public sector.

only 14% of them significantly increased the time they consecrated to volunteering after their assignment and 17% decreased this time. Regardless of the participants' profiles, assignments carried out in the non-profit sector² are more likely to increase the frequency of volunteering afterwards. Those who felt that their Civic Service actions were useful to others were more invested in various forms of volunteering afterwards. Providing young volunteers with quality supervision during their assignment also has a positive effect.

After the publication of a paper on the educational and professional profiles of Civic Service participants (Francou and Ploux-Chillès, 2020), INJEP and *Agence du Service Civique* took an interest in these young people's volunteering careers and the role of their assignment in their profiles. This research on Civic Service participants, carried out in 2019 as a collaboration between INJEP and ASC, describes how much time the participants spent volunteering before and after their assignment. It shows that participants¹ volunteer more frequently, on average, than young people in general, both before and after their assignment, and that those who volunteered before their assignment have a similar profile to young volunteers at national level: they are more likely to be qualified, students and male (*Baromètre DJEPVA sur la jeunesse*, 2018). Although a significant share of the participants said that their assignment had a positive impact on their desire to volunteer (44%),

Before their assignment: the participants are slightly more likely to volunteer than the average.

Of the former Civic Service participants, 42% had volunteered their time in the year preceding their assignment, which is slightly higher than the percentage observed in the general population of 18-25-year-olds³ (36%). Volunteers who gave up time every week are particularly overrepresented among Civic Service participants (20% compared to 15% in the general population). Those who volunteered before their Civic Service assignment are more likely to be qualified, more likely to be students until recently before or during their assignment and more likely to be men. 51% of the participants who obtained a tertiary qualification before their assignment had already volunteered, compared to 40% of participants whose highest qualification was the baccalaureate, and 26% who had a CAP or BEP vocational qualification. 57% of the participants who were students during their assignment had volunteered before,

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Table 1

Volunteering experiences and type of referral to Civic Service, by type of organisation

Type of host organisation:	% of Civic Service participants who...		
	had voluntary commitments in the 12 months preceding their assignment	became involved in Civic Service volunteering because an organisation offered them an assignment	were referred to Civic Service by a careers guidance and work placement organisation
An association or federation of associations (excluding sports associations)	49	17	10
A sports club or sports federation	68	52	6
A teaching establishment	31	10	14
A sociocultural or leisure establishment	34	16	16
A health establishment	28	6	16
A careers guidance and work placement organisation	26	12	30
A public State body	29	8	20
A regional authority	39	13	16
Another type of structure	34	10	17
All together	42	18	13

Synopsis: of the participants who were mainly hosted at an association or federation of associations, 49% had volunteered in the 12 months preceding their Civic Service assignment. 17% said they were referred to Civic Service because their organisation offered them an assignment and 10% said they were referred to Civic Service by a careers guidance and work placement organisation.
Scope: Civic Service participants who completed their assignment between October 2017 and September 2018.
Source: INJEP-ASC, Enquête Service Civique 2019.

whereas 35% of those who had left the school system a year before their assignment had done likewise. Men were slightly more likely to have previously signed up to voluntary activities than women (47% compared to 39%), while women represented 59% of Civic Service participants as a whole. The characteristics of those who volunteered before their assignment are in fact very similar to the characteristics of all 18 to 25-year-old volunteers (*Baromètre DJEPVA*, 2018), among whom we also find an overrepresentation of graduates, students and men. A higher level of qualification is one of the factors that increases commitment to volunteering. In the general population, young people with a vocational CAP or BEP diploma tend to be less committed than the average for 18-25-year-olds (29%). Indeed, these vocational pathways are less common among Civic Service participants: 7%, compared to 16% of 18-24-year-olds in general⁴. As is the case for all young French people, participants living in priority urban districts (*quartier prioritaire de la politique de la ville*, QPV) are less represented than others from more privileged backgrounds.

The size of the municipality the young person comes from (urban or rural) has no influence on the degree of participation. Additionally, young participants who said that their parents volunteer regularly are more likely to do so themselves, and this is the case even when the effect of the other variables influencing volunteering are taken into account.

The participants who volunteered in the past are more likely to complete their assignment in an association than in a public service or similar organisation.

These different degrees of voluntary commitment among participants have an influence on the types of assignments the volunteers choose, both in terms of the type of organisation and the field of the assignment. Notably, sports associations host the most participants who had already volunteered (68%) [table 1, p. 2]. Non-sports associations also host more of such participants than average (49%), while careers guidance and work placement organisations, health establishments and State bodies host significantly fewer

(respectively, 26%, 28% and 29%). The recruitment channels for the different types of organisation can partly explain these differences: of the participants who say they were attracted to Civic Service because an organisation offered them an assignment directly (18% of the total), 60% had already volunteered before their assignment, compared to 42% on average. Participants who were directly recruited by an organisation are indeed overrepresented in sports associations (52%), and to a lesser extent in non-sports associations (17%), than in the average of all other categories of organisation (10%). Inversely, only 29% of participants who were referred to Civic Service by a careers guidance and work placement organisation (local jobs counselling centre, young people's information network, Pôle Emploi [the French national job centre], school establishment, etc.) had volunteered before their assignment. These young people referred to Civic Service by youth support organisations more frequently carry out assignments in careers guidance and work placement organisations (30% of participants from such support establishments) and in State bodies (20%), than in the average of all other categories of organisations (11%).

A desire to volunteer that is not always fulfilled

Although young participants in Civic Service give a bit more of their time on average to volunteering than others, this study sought to assess whether they were even more committed after the assignment. There are two ways of measuring the effect of the assignments: the "objective" approach involves comparing the frequency of volunteering before and after the assignment, and the "subjective" approach entails asking participants whether the assignment influenced their desire to volunteer. These two approaches give divergent results. Although 44% of the participants said that their assignment had a positive influence on their desire to volunteer, compared to 3% who said the effect was negative, the objective approach shows significant stability in the frequency of volunteering before and after the assignment. Based on the categories used [Method box, p. 3], 14% of participants increased the amount of volunteering they

did after the assignment, whereas 17% decreased it. For a majority of participants (69%), volunteering frequency remained stable before and after the assignment, 22% of whom volunteered before and after their assignment and 47% neither volunteered before nor after.

Assignments in associations better encourage volunteering than those in the public sector

However, the effects on volunteering are highly varied depending on the type of host organisation, the degree of supervision and the conditions of the assignment. A regression analysis was performed to isolate the effects of each variable defining the assignment's influence on the frequency of voluntary involvement on one hand, and on positively influencing the desire to volunteer, on the other.

This analysis shows that the type of organisation plays a significant role, both in instilling young people with the desire to volunteer and in genuinely raising the level of volunteering. Associations, and particularly non-sports associations, have the biggest positive impact on increasing volunteering, as opposed to the other types of organisation on offer, the majority of which operate in the public sector. Thus, carrying out an assignment in a non-sports association increases the probability of participants increasing the time they spend volunteering, compared to assignments at regional authorities (11 additional points⁵), those at teaching establishments (+9 points), careers guidance and work placement organisations (+9 points), and to a lesser extent, sociocultural and health establishments, and State bodies. The same results can be observed in relation to the desire to volunteer, with even greater effects. However, around one third of the positive effect on volunteering of assignments completed in the non-profit sector can be explained by the fact that 12% of the participants stayed on as volunteers in their host structure, which is only possible in the non-profit sector.

Although the volunteers are attached to one host organisation, they can also volunteer at other locations on a secondary basis during their assignment. Volunteering at an association on a secondary basis raises the probability of participants increasing their voluntary commitments by 7 points,

whereas volunteering at a regional authority reduces this probability by 7 points. The fact that associations are better at encouraging volunteering than the public sector is thus also verified in the case of secondary voluntary actions.

How young volunteers feel and their level of supervision: factors that encourage volunteering

The participants were also questioned about how they felt during their assignment. Such feelings play an important role in the desire to volunteer: feeling useful to others, taking pride in one's work and feeling part of a team are associated, as expected, with a greater desire to get involved in volunteering, whereas feeling exploited or bored have the opposite effect. Indeed, the participants who said they "always" or "often" felt useful to others or part of a team have a probability of increasing their voluntary commitments by 3 additional points compared to those who "never" or only "sometimes" had such feelings. More surprisingly, the feeling of being exploited also correlates with an increase in voluntary practices, in equal proportions, even though, as we have seen, such people say that their desire to get involved has decreased.

The supervision and support given to young people during their assignments are also factors to take into account. The participants who said that their supervisors gave them guidance regarding the objective of the assignment while letting them choose how to achieve it were more likely

to increase their voluntary commitments than those who said that their supervisors simply gave them instructions on what needed to be done and how to do it (+3 points). These participants also increased their commitments more than those who said they had no supervisors or ones that gave them no instructions at all. It thus appears that a supervisor who is present but gives the participants a degree of autonomy is a factor that increases voluntary commitment. Clotilde Talleu (2019) also demonstrated the existence of a link between giving young people autonomy and the feeling of being useful. Meeting people from other social backgrounds during the assignment also increases voluntary commitment: those who said they had such encounters were more likely to want to volunteer and to actually increase their voluntary commitments. The effect on volunteering was more pronounced when the participants said they had met people from less privileged backgrounds than their own.

Factors linked to the type of contract signed do not appear to have much influence: weekly working hours and the overall duration of the assignment were not correlated with commitment. However, when the assignment was stopped due to the participant quitting their position, due to force majeure, or due to the participant finding a job elsewhere, the probability of increasing voluntary commitments after the assignment decreased.

The participant's circumstances 6 months after the assignment had little effect on increasing commitment. The only

method

The effects of Civic Service on commitment: advantages and disadvantages of the objective and subjective approaches

The objective approach enables young participants to be questioned on concrete facts that leave less room for interpretation. However, the low number of participants whose answer changed is partly linked to the low number of answer options (at a specific time of year/a few hours per month/a few hours per week), meaning that the research was only able to measure the biggest changes and could not detect more gradual developments. Additionally, young participants were only asked about their voluntary commitments between the end of their assignment and the questionnaire, which took place between 6 and 18 months later. This excludes any potential long-term effects of the assignment on volunteering. Participants who finished their assignment longer ago in relation to the date of the questionnaire (between 16 and 18 months before) were in fact more likely to have increased their voluntary commitments than those who finished more recently (6 to 8 months): 19% compared to 13%.

The subjective approach was thus a means of completing the analysis, since the participants who declared that the assignment had inspired them to volunteer had potentially not, or not yet, had the opportunity to fulfil this desire.

Table 2

Comparison of voluntary commitment levels before and after the assignment

		AFTER THE ASSIGNMENT				
		No, never	Yes, at a specific time of year	Yes, a few hours per month	Yes, a few hours per week	Total
BEFORE THE ASSIGNMENT	In %					
	No, never	47	4	2	3	57
	Yes, at a specific time of year	4	7	1	1	13
	Yes, a few hours per month	3	1	4	2	9
	Yes, a few hours per week	5	2	2	12	20
Total	58	15	10	17	100	

Please note: the figures in each box are rounded to the nearest whole number, therefore, the sum of the rounded figures of each line and column does not always equal the corresponding "total".

Synopsis: 57% of Civic Service participants did no volunteering in the 12 months preceding their assignment. 58% did no volunteering since completing their Civic Service assignment, and 47% did no volunteering, neither before nor after their assignment.

Scope: Civic Service participants who completed their assignment between October 2017 and September 2018.

Source: INJEP-ASC, Enquête Service Civique 2019.

participants found to be more committed after the assignment (+4 points) and to have a greater desire to volunteer were those waiting to return to their studies. In contrast, being in employment or seeking employment has a negative effect on the desire to volunteer. These results show that participants whose circumstances allow them enough free time for voluntary commitments are more likely to participate in them after their assignment.

The type of assignment has no effect on decreasing commitment

In parallel, we looked at the types of assignments that were more likely to discourage young people from voluntary commitments prior to their assignment. Assignments that were stopped due to "serious misconduct" or cases of

"force majeure" more often led to a decrease in commitment (36 and 32 additional points respectively compared to completed assignments). The participants who were supported by members of the structure and those who carried out their assignments in sports were less likely to decrease their volunteering commitments. Apart from these factors, few variables relating to Civic Service assignment are correlated to such a decrease, meaning that the proportion of young people who reduced their commitments was more or less the same regardless of the type of assignment. However, some factors in the participants' profiles do influence the likelihood of a decrease but have little effect on the increase; the oldest volunteers, men, and those whose parents are also committed volunteers are less likely to decrease their volunteering time. However, participants who changed

their place of residence between the start of their assignment and the time of the questionnaire are more likely to decrease their involvement in volunteering (+11 points).

1. In this article, the term "participants" is used for Civic Service volunteers as a distinction from any volunteering activities they perform outside of this context.
2. The non-profit sector refers to associations and federations, including sports bodies and excluding all other categories in table 1.
3. Source: Baromètre DJEPVA sur la jeunesse 2018, authors' calculations
4. Source: Insee-Drees, Enquête nationale sur les ressources des jeunes, authors' calculations.
5. These are the average marginal effects of a logistic regression, expressed in percentage points. The results table is available as supplementary data on www.injep.fr

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