

## Study: Interest in global 'voluntourism' continues to grow

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The number of Americans interested in volunteer vacations continues to climb, according to a new University of California San Diego Extension survey, but there are dramatic differences between the generations.

Two-thirds of high school students and about half of the college students surveyed say they have participated in discussions in the past year related to traveling to other regions to provide volunteer service, whereas less than half of the adult population, and only one-quarter of retirees, say they have done so.

Overall, the survey found that over two-thirds (69 percent) of Americans have participated in donating money or time to a global cause, up from the 48 percent in a spring 2008 poll conducted by UC San Diego Extension.

"More and more people in all stages of life are thinking of becoming global 'voluntourists,'" says Bob Benson, director of the Center for Global Volunteer Service at UC San Diego Extension. "People are looking to volunteer their time in meaningful ways that make contributions to people in regions other than their own, and younger people are especially eager to make voluntourism part of their lifestyle."

The 2009 poll was conducted by Caravan Opinion Research Corporation during March 2009 by telephone interviews with a nationally representative sample of 1,000 adults, and supplemented by an in-depth online survey of more than 300 adults conducted in May 2009 by UC San Diego Extension. The margin of error was plus or minus three percentage points.

The top five types of volunteer assignments the survey respondents want are:

Education or artistic and cultural development - 23 percent

1. Provide spiritual or emotional assistance - 19 percent
2. Improve health and nutrition - 18 percent
3. Construct roads, homes and technology infrastructure - 14 percent
4. Environmental clean up or agriculture assistance - 12 percent

Despite the interest in frequent service to the global community, surprisingly, fewer than 7 percent of respondents, regardless of age, expressed an interest in making global service a type of career. The top three motivations for a desire to volunteer were:

1. (tie) Pursue a cause or purpose you believe in - 30 percent
1. (tie) Contribute something meaningful to the community - 30 percent
2. Feel needed and helpful - 23 percent

Survey respondents plan to prepare for future voluntourism in a variety of ways:

1. Talk to others who have done so - 86 percent
2. (tie) Take a class or read a book - 77 percent

2. (tie) Visit Web sites to see what is available - 77 percent
3. Learn some of the language of the place you want to go - 76 percent
4. Start saving money and look for financial sponsors - 70 percent

Approximately two out of three Americans (63 percent) would prefer their volunteer vacation outside of the United States, with Africa topping the list of desired places to help. The top four desired global travel destinations for volunteering are:

1. Africa - 14 percent
2. (tie) Australia - 11 percent
2. (tie) Europe - 11 percent
3. South America - 8 percent

Benson, who spent two years in the Peace Corps in South America in the 1990s, helped start the Center for Global Volunteer Service because UC San Diego Extension saw a need for more grass-root approaches that match U.S. citizens of all ages with volunteer opportunities. The Center offers voluntourism experiences and online learning about global service.

UC San Diego Extension has created first-of-its-kind, self-paced online courses to help potential volunteers determine if foreign volunteering is right for them and prepare them to have a productive, safe experience. Information is available at <http://www.extension.ucsd.edu/cgvs>

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