

# Data for Action

## Volunteerism in New Jersey

Spotlight Brief No. 3 | January 2026

Volunteerism is a core pillar of New Jersey's civic infrastructure and nonprofit capacity. According to the New Jersey Department of State, nearly 1.9 million residents formally volunteered between September 2022 and September 2023, contributing more than 104 million hours of service valued at approximately \$3.7 billion. This civic participation expands organizational reach, strengthens social connectedness, and helps stabilize service delivery—especially as many nonprofits continue to navigate workforce shortages, rising service demand, and constrained resources.

National research further shows that volunteering is closely associated with broader forms of civic engagement, underscoring its role as both a critical support to nonprofit operations and an indicator of community resilience.

- **Volunteerism is a major economic input into NJ's nonprofit and civic systems:** 104.8M hours (≈ \$3.7B).
- **Participation is substantial but not universal:** about 1 in 4 NJ residents formally volunteered (during the period Sept 2022–Sept 2023).

- **Volunteerism connects to broader civic life:** in NJ, 57.1% of residents donated \$25+ to charity and 22.8% belonged to an organization (Sept 2022–Sept 2023).
- **National service is an added capacity layer:** 8,100+ people serve through national service in NJ across 630+ locations, supporting tutoring/mentoring, disaster response, veterans, health, and environmental justice.
- **Informal helping matters, too:** at the national level, 51% of adults (16+) reported informally helping neighbors (Sept 2020–Sept 2021).

## NEW JERSEY'S NONPROFIT SECTOR AT A GLANCE

### New Jersey Volunteerism at a Glance (2023)



**1,910,895** residents formally volunteered through NPOs



**104,768,245** hours of service contributed



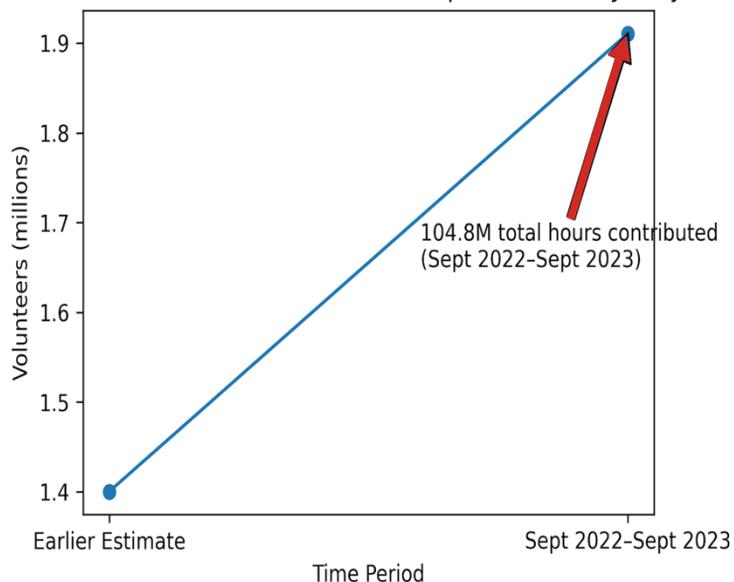
**\$3.7 billion** estimated economic value of volunteer time



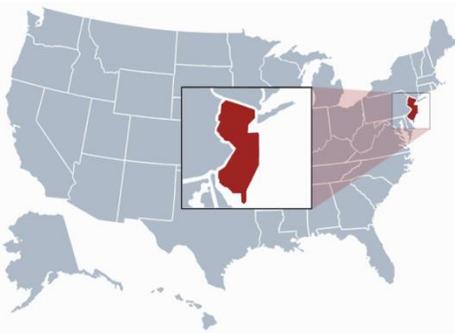
**25.7%** of NJ residents formally volunteered

Source: New Jersey Department of State, Office of Volunteerism. *New Jersey Volunteering and Civic Life Statistics* (Sept. 2022–Sept. 2023), based on U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey.

Growth in Formal Volunteer Participation in New Jersey



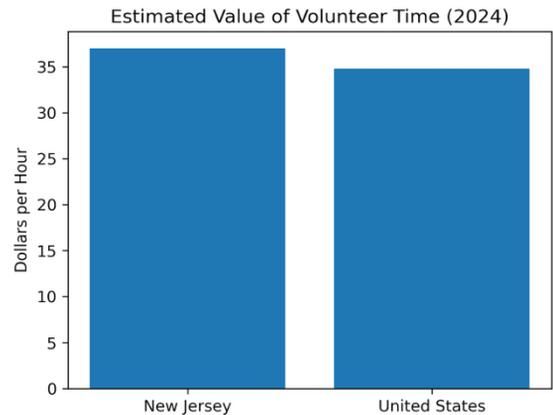
## Why Volunteerism Matters for New Jersey's Nonprofit Sector



Volunteer labor functions as an auxiliary workforce—supporting program delivery, fundraising events, mentoring, governance, and community outreach. For many nonprofit organizations, volunteers provide capacity that would otherwise require significant financial resources, allowing nonprofits to sustain services, expand programming, and remain responsive to community needs. This role is particularly important in New Jersey, where nonprofits report rising demand for services alongside persistent staffing shortages and financial pressures, making volunteer engagement an essential strategy for maintaining

operational stability. Volunteerism also reflects broader civic health: individuals who volunteer are more likely to participate in other forms of civic life, including donating to charitable causes, joining community organizations, and engaging in local problem-solving. As a result, volunteer participation not only strengthens nonprofit operations but also contributes to the social capital, trust, and connectedness that underpin resilient communities.

This engagement also creates pathways for skill-building and leadership development, as volunteers gain practical experience, expand social and professional networks, and deepen their understanding of community needs. Over time, these experiences can foster sustained civic participation, encouraging individuals to take on greater responsibility, support local initiatives, and contribute to long-term community problem-solving efforts. In this way, volunteerism not only addresses immediate service gaps but also helps cultivate the next generation of civic and nonprofit leaders.



### Formal Volunteerism in NJ (Level + Time Trend)

- **Primary measure:** 25.7% formal volunteer rate (1.91M volunteers; 104.8M hours).
- **Trend framing:** Participation increased from ~1.4M to ~1.9M volunteers.

Source: New Jersey Department of State, Office of Volunteerism. (2024). Volunteering in New Jersey: September 2022–September 2023 data from the U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey Civic Life Supplement.

### Economic Value of Volunteer Time (NJ vs. U.S.)

- New Jersey value per volunteer hour: \*\*\$36.97
- National value per volunteer hour: \$34.79 (2024)

Source: Independent Sector. (2024). The Value of Volunteer Time, 2024. Washington, DC: Independent Sector.

### Volunteerism as Civic Participation (NJ Indicators)

- **Volunteered formally:** 25.7%
- **Belonged to an organization:** 22.8%
- **Donated \$25+ to charity:** 57.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). Current Population Survey, Volunteering and Civic Life Supplement (September 2022–September 2023). Data for New Jersey reported by the New Jersey Department of State, Office of Volunteerism.

## Formal + Informal Civic Life (How We Define “Volunteerism”)

- While New Jersey’s official statistics focus on formal volunteering, national research shows that informal acts—like helping neighbors—are also a major part of civic life, with about 51% of adults reporting this kind of support.
- Formal volunteering (NJ rate) + Informal helping (national benchmark) = fuller civic ecosystem.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau & AmeriCorps. (2023). Volunteering and Civic Life in America (analysis of the Current Population Survey Civic Engagement and Volunteering Supplement, September 2021).

## SPOTLIGHT: Newark

Newark sits at the center of New Jersey’s nonprofit and civic ecosystem and is a key site for volunteer engagement pipelines, supported by its concentration of higher education institutions, anchor organizations, and community-based nonprofits. These institutions play an important role in connecting residents, students, and professionals to service opportunities that address local needs ranging from food security and education to neighborhood revitalization and public health. This “hub” dynamic reflects Newark’s position as a service center as well as a training ground for civic participation, where volunteerism often intersects with workforce development, experiential learning, and community partnerships.



**Local capacity layer (national service):** Across New Jersey, AmeriCorps and other national service participants serve at more than 630 locations statewide, supporting tutoring and mentoring programs, disaster preparedness, environmental initiatives, and organizational capacity-building, including volunteer coordination. These members not only deliver direct services but also help nonprofits develop systems for recruiting, training, and retaining volunteers, thereby strengthening long-term organizational effectiveness. This infrastructure includes Newark-based service sites and partners, reinforcing the city’s role as a focal point for mobilizing volunteers, building cross-sector collaborations, and expanding the capacity of nonprofits to respond to evolving community needs across the region. In this way, national service functions as a bridge between individual civic participation and sustained institutional impact within New Jersey’s nonprofit sector.

Recommendation (Action)	Intended Impact
<b>Invest in volunteer management capacity</b> (training, scheduling, retention systems)	Improves volunteer retention and converts episodic volunteering into sustained capacity.
<b>Expand skills-based volunteering</b> (finance, HR, IT, communications, evaluation)	Fills specialized gaps that small/medium nonprofits cannot staff easily.
<b>Build cross-sector pipelines</b> (universities, employers, faith communities)	Creates repeatable volunteer pathways and strengthens civic participation.
<b>Measure volunteer inputs consistently</b> (hours, roles, retention)	Makes volunteer labor legible as part of organizational capacity and community resilience.

### Sources:

**AmeriCorps** (2024). Volunteering and civic life in America: New Jersey profile.

**Independent Sector** (2024). The value of volunteer time (2024 estimates). Washington, DC: Independent Sector.

**New Jersey Department of State, Office of Volunteerism** (2024). New Jersey volunteering and civic engagement statistics (Sept. 2022–Sept. 2023) based on the U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey Civic Engagement Supplement.

**New Jersey Department of State** (2024). AmeriCorps New Jersey bulletin: Civic engagement and volunteerism update.

**U.S. Census Bureau** (2023). Current Population Survey (CPS) Civic Engagement and Volunteering Supplement, September 2022–September 2023. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.