

# **ARE AMERICORPS ALUMNI MORE LIKELY TO CHOOSE EMPLOYMENT IN PUBLIC GOOD SECTORS?**

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## **PURPOSE**

The aim of this report is to help determine the effect, if any, of Washington AmeriCorps service on participants' career choices. More specifically, it seeks to answer whether a correlation exists between participation in Washington AmeriCorps and post-service employment in sectors that are considered to focus on the public good, such as government, education or health.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This report contains the findings from comparing the fourth quarter, 2005, fields of employment of Washington AmeriCorps alumni employed in Washington to those of the overall Washington employed population. The sectors considered “oriented toward the public good,” and therefore examined, were government (North American Industry Classification System code 92), community, civic and religious (NAICS code 813), elementary and secondary school (NAICS code 6111), and health (NAICS code 62). The two populations compared in this analysis are AmeriCorps members who served between the program years (similar to the school year) of 2000-2001 to 2004-2005 employed in Washington and the overall employed population of Washington. The NAICS codes for the AmeriCorps alumni were provided by the Employment Security Department of the State of Washington. The data on employment by NAICS code for the population of Washington employed individuals were downloaded from the U.S. Census Bureau website.

All reported differences are statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level using a Chi Square test. Results are presented using the Odds Ratio analysis commonly used in medical research, which expresses how many times more likely an outcome is for one group over another (e.g., 2.2 or 3.1 times more likely).

It should be noted that this analysis has several limitations:

- It covers only AmeriCorps alumni employed in Washington state, corresponding to 70 percent of AmeriCorps members who served between the program years 2000-2001 and 2004-2005. Thus, the analysis does not account for the 30 percent of AmeriCorps members who are either not employed or employed out of state.
- It covers only correlations, not causality, between AmeriCorps service and fields of employment. That is, it does not control for factors influencing employment other than AmeriCorps service, such as age, gender and propensity for certain types of employment. Thus, differences presented are not necessarily due to AmeriCorps service.

- It uses organizational affiliation as a proxy for serving the public good. This is a simplification that is likely to have exceptions. For example, some AmeriCorps alumni may work for a traditional private sector in a way that serves the public good.

## **FINDINGS**

### **AmeriCorps Alumni are More Likely than Non-Alumni to Work in the Nonprofit Sector**

Employed AmeriCorps alumni are 4.1 times more likely than non-AmeriCorps workers to work in the general services nonprofit sector. The general services nonprofit sector consists of most organizations with nonprofit tax status, excluding private schools and health organizations (organizations categorized as NAICS code 813). Primarily, that sector comprises community, civic and religious organizations such as basic services providers, social services agencies, associations, labor unions and faith-based organizations. The percentage of employed AmeriCorps alumni that work in the general services nonprofit sector is 3.7 percent, compared to .9 percent of non-AmeriCorps workers. That is a statistically significant difference.

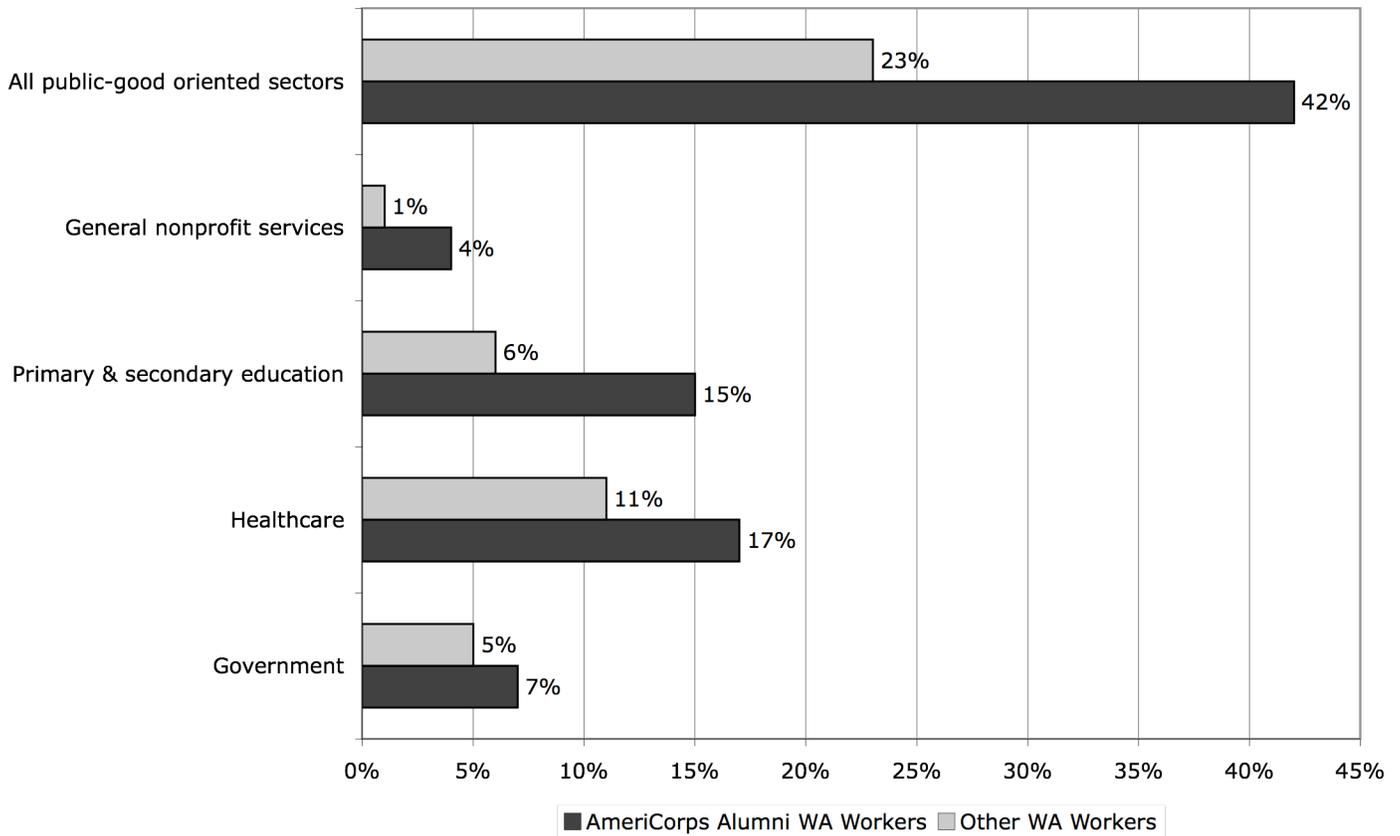
### **AmeriCorps Alumni are More Likely than Non-Alumni to Work in Primary and Secondary Education**

Employed AmeriCorps alumni are 2.9 times more likely than non-AmeriCorps workers to work in elementary or secondary education (categorized as NAICS code 6111). The percentage of employed AmeriCorps alumni that work in elementary or secondary education is 15.3 percent, compared to 5.9 percent of non-AmeriCorps workers. That is a statistically significant difference.

### **AmeriCorps Alumni are More Likely than Non-Alumni to Work in the Healthcare Sector**

Employed AmeriCorps alumni are 1.5 times more likely than non-AmeriCorps workers to work in the health sector including hospitals, residential and nursing facilities, ambulatory care and social assistance organizations (organizations categorized as NAICS code 62). The percentage of employed AmeriCorps alumni that work in the healthcare sector is 16.6 percent, compared to 11.4 percent of non-AmeriCorps workers. That is a statistically significant difference.

**Figure 1. Percentage of Washington Workers in Public-Good Oriented Sectors**  
 (Sources: Washington Employment Security Department and U.S. Census Bureau, Q4 2005)



**AmeriCorps Alumni are More Likely than Non-Alumni to Work in the Government Sector**

Employed AmeriCorps alumni are 1.4 times more likely than non-AmeriCorps workers to work in the government sector (federal, local or state government, categorized NAICS code 92). The percentage of employed AmeriCorps alumni that work in the government sector is 6.5 percent, compared to 4.8 percent of non-AmeriCorps workers. That is a statistically significant difference.

## **AmeriCorps Alumni are More Likely than Non-Alumni to Work in all the Public-Good Oriented Sectors Combined**

Employed AmeriCorps alumni are 2.4 times more likely than non-AmeriCorps workers to work in any of the public-good sectors presented above (NAICS codes 6111, 62, 813 and 92). The percentage of employed AmeriCorps alumni that work in the combined public good sectors is 42.1 percent, compared to 23.0 percent of non-AmeriCorps workers. Like the differences noted above, this too is a statistically significant difference.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This analysis suggests that Washington AmeriCorps participants are more likely than other Washington workers to be employed in sectors focusing on the public good. These sectors are made up of organizations in government, healthcare, elementary and secondary education and nonprofit services.

This analysis does not determine whether the greater frequency of employment in public-good oriented sectors among AmeriCorps alumni stems from their AmeriCorps service. Findings from other research are mixed. Supporting the claim that AmeriCorps increases the likelihood of employment in a public-good oriented sector are findings from a post-service survey recently administered to Washington AmeriCorps participants (unpublished). Many respondents said that their AmeriCorps experience influenced their career plans, most often in the direction of greater commitment to jobs that—like AmeriCorps—serve social causes. For example, many report that AmeriCorps led them to an increased interest in teaching. On the other hand, a pre- and post-service survey found that participation in Washington AmeriCorps has no effect on a participant's view of the importance of service-oriented careers (Boccalandro, 2006).

In sum, this analysis suggests that Washington AmeriCorps alumni disproportionately work in sectors oriented toward serving the public good and that it is possible that this is, at least in part, a result of the AmeriCorps experience itself. Nevertheless, truly understanding this propensity toward public-good oriented work among Washington AmeriCorps alumni and what leads to such choices requires further research.

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