

UNITEDHEALTH GROUP®

# DOING GOOD IS GOOD FOR YOU

2013 Health and Volunteering Study





## WELCOME

For the people of UnitedHealth Group, our business goals and social mission are inextricably entwined. To help people live healthier lives and modernize the health care system, we believe it is necessary to be active and responsible citizens in our local communities and around the world. Volunteerism plays a vital role in our mission, leveraging our greatest asset—our people—in making a difference.

UnitedHealth Group has been a national leader in providing volunteer programs at work. We are proud to have achieved double-digit increases in participation every year since 2007. Last year, 81 percent of UnitedHealth Group employees and 96 percent of the executives volunteered in their local communities.

Volunteering also is an important part of a healthy lifestyle. In 2010, we released a pioneering study that identified the health benefits of volunteering, particularly among the senior population. The results reinforced what we suspected — that volunteers feel healthier.

Our current work picks up on these findings and helps us understand how and why volunteering is linked to better health. The following is the result of this research.

Sincerely,

Kate Rubin  
Vice President of Social Responsibility  
UnitedHealth Group

---

“Volunteerism plays a vital role in our mission, leveraging our greatest asset—our people—in making a difference.”

## INTRODUCTION

# Doing Good is Good for You.

Good health is as much of a journey as it is a destination. Traditionally, our health has been left to the care of our doctors, nurses and other health professionals who have done so much for us in clinical settings. In recent years we have started to realize that good health means much more than a set of numbers tracking height, weight, heart rate and cholesterol. It starts with the individual. It means taking an integrated approach to wellbeing that includes not only our physical health, but our emotional health, our sense of purpose, our connections to our community and our overall quality of life.

### VOLUNTEERING MAKES A DIFFERENCE

There are many paths to good health, but regardless of which we take, volunteering can help us. We now know people who volunteer *feel* better—physically, mentally and emotionally better. And our volunteers tell us that they are convinced their health is better because of the things they do when they volunteer. People who volunteer manage their stress better and feel a stronger connection to their communities. In all of the pathways we take to good health, being a volunteer can help to make a meaningful difference.

### EMPLOYERS GET HEALTHIER TOO

Of course, if people are feeling healthier because they are volunteering, they will feel better at work as well. But in addition to the great benefit of employees who feel healthier, employers find that volunteering employees are less stressed, more engaged, and are developing important work and “people” skills. That makes employers feel good too.



# VOLUNTEERING HAS A POWERFUL IMPACT ON HEALTH

## PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH



People who volunteer report that they feel better in numerous ways.

# 76%

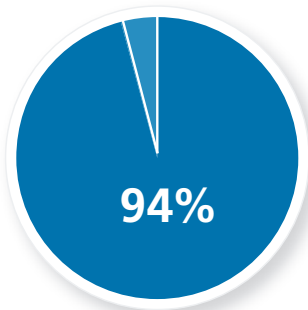
of people who volunteered in the last twelve months say that volunteering has made them feel healthier

Over three-quarters of people who volunteered in the past twelve months told us that volunteering has made them feel physically healthier—in fact, most say that one of the reasons they decided to volunteer was the belief that doing volunteer work would be good for their health. Add to that, volunteers are more likely than non-volunteers to consider themselves in excellent or very good health, and they are more likely to say that their health has improved over the past 12 months.

There is an even stronger connection between volunteering and mental/emotional health.

Volunteers have better personal scores than non-volunteers on nine well-established measures of emotional wellbeing including personal independence, capacity for rich interpersonal relationships and overall satisfaction with life. Volunteering also improved their mood and self-esteem.

It's true—Volunteering makes us *feel* better. And while we're feeling better, we're also helping all kinds of other people who benefit from our volunteer efforts feel better too. Everybody wins when we volunteer.



94% of people who volunteered in the last twelve months say that volunteering improves their mood



Volunteering isn't just something healthy people do. Everyone can reap benefits. Our study involved a representative sample of adults across the country: young, old, in good health and in poor health. Remarkably, we see older individuals and those who suffer from multiple chronic conditions taking on volunteering—and feeling better as a result.

## STRESS LESS

Good news—Volunteering helps us manage and lower our stress levels.



The health impacts of stress are well-documented—physically, mentally, emotionally and behaviorally, too much stress takes a toll. Volunteering helps us to manage stress—the majority of people who have volunteered in the past 12 months say that volunteering has lowered their stress levels. Volunteers are more likely than U.S. adults overall to report that they felt calm and peaceful most of the time, and that they had a lot of energy most of the time, over the past four weeks.

# 78%

of people who volunteered in the last 12 months say that volunteering lowers their stress levels

Doing good for others helps us to stress less, and less stress is an important component of staying healthy.

## SENSE OF PURPOSE AND QUALITY OF LIFE



People who volunteer feel a deeper connection to their communities and to other people.

A core component of good health is to have a sense of purpose and meaning in your life.

Almost everyone in our survey who volunteered in the past 12 months says that volunteering enriches their sense of purpose in life, that they are helping to make their community a better place, and that volunteering helps them learn valuable things about the world and about themselves.

Volunteering helps people connect and socialize—volunteers are more likely than non-volunteers to socialize and they do so more frequently. Most tell us that they have developed new friendships as a result of volunteering.

The satisfaction that comes from assisting other people in need, drives a sense of purpose, and that purpose helps to create a sense of wellbeing and health.



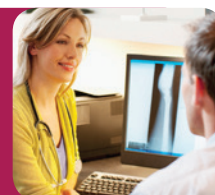
Of people who have volunteered in the past 12 months...

**95%** say they are helping to make their community a better place

**96%** say that volunteering enriches their sense of purpose in life

## ENGAGED WITH THEIR HEALTH

Volunteers are more informed health care consumers and are more involved in taking care of their health.



# 80%

of the people who have volunteered in the past 12 months say that they feel they have control over their health

Volunteers say that they feel they have control over their health. Our study showed that volunteers, compared to non-volunteers consider themselves more knowledgeable about their health and chronic conditions. They are more likely to actively seek out information about their health, they discuss their health with their doctor more frequently than do non-volunteers, and will bring up information they have found in their research with their doctor.

Volunteers are more engaged health care consumers. Engaged people make better health care decisions. Better health care decisions result in better health. It's all good.



About a quarter of the people who have volunteered in the past 12 months say that volunteering has helped them to manage a chronic illness. Physically, volunteering helps keep them active, but even more importantly, volunteering takes their mind off of their own problems and helping other people just makes them feel better. Doing good for others is good for you!

## EMPLOYER HEALTH

# Volunteering helps employers get healthier too.

Nationally, over half of employees have volunteered. This means that the benefits employees gain through volunteering cascade into the workplace and that employers, in turn, benefit in a number of ways.

Employers directly see the benefits of physically and mentally healthier employees. The value of better health and reduced stress documented in this study are clear. Healthier employees drive lower health care costs and higher productivity. Employees who experience lower levels of stress are more present and engaged, which further reduces health care costs and elevates on-the-job performance.

Employees who volunteer also bring more refined job skills to the workplace which provides a significant benefit to their employer. Functional job competencies such as marketing, management, or finance skills are honed through volunteer experiences. Volunteering by definition requires strong people and teamwork skills as well as the ability to manage time effectively. Both of those skill categories are in high demand in the workplace. And finally, volunteering with colleagues creates stronger, more collaborative relationships which add value in any work setting.

Employers who support volunteering programs in the workplace experience even deeper benefits — employees appreciate their employers when volunteering programs are offered in the workplace, and the goodwill that is generated can drive positive results directly to the bottom line.

We look at the ways volunteering builds value in the workplace below.

## VOLUNTEERING DEVELOPS WORK SKILLS



# EMPLOYER HEALTH

## VOLUNTEERING DEVELOPS WORK SKILLS THAT BENEFIT THE EMPLOYER

Whether you are talking about functional job skills or interpersonal, team-building skills, volunteering provides an opportunity for employees to learn and develop skills that make them more proficient and effective in the workplace in important ways. Almost half of current volunteers say that volunteering has helped them with their career. We asked them how.



Volunteers make time to volunteer, taking hours or days from leisure and family activities and rearranging busy schedules to be there for others. More than three-quarters of people who told us that volunteering helped their careers said that volunteering has taught them about time management.



Employers often organize volunteer days or community activities for groups of employees. This makes it easier for employees to find and access volunteer activities and also provides an opportunity for co-workers to get to know each other outside the usual work environment. Employees value these kinds of activities: 64 percent of employees who currently volunteer said that volunteering with work colleagues has strengthened their relationships.



Volunteers engage in many different types of activities, but often what they do involves working collaboratively with other people, with organizations and in diverse community environments. For example, the top cited volunteer activities involved tutoring and teaching, working to prepare or distribute food with charitable organizations, coaching teams, and providing services to individuals in need—all activities that place a premium on collaboration and communications. In our survey, 87 percent of people who said that volunteering helped their career responded that volunteering has developed their people skills and teamwork skills.



Roughly half of all volunteers said they used work skills—such as marketing, management or finance skills, in their volunteering activities. And even more, three quarters of people who said that volunteering helped their career responded that volunteering helped them refine existing professional skills and build new ones. In addition, 71 percent agreed that volunteering has provided them with job-related contacts and networking opportunities.

New volunteers found some additional benefits—56 percent of new volunteers felt that volunteering would help their career and 49 percent of people new to volunteering said that volunteering has helped with their career in the paid job market.



## EMPLOYER HEALTH

### GET ENGAGED

When employers promote volunteering, it not only builds better health and job skills, it earns goodwill. Employees appreciate their employers when volunteering programs are supported in the workplace. Four out of five employed people who have volunteered through their workplace in the past 12 months say that they feel better about their employer because of the employer's involvement in volunteer activities. The vast majority agree that volunteering strengthens relationships among colleagues at work.

81%

of employed volunteers who volunteered through their workplace agreed that volunteering together strengthens relationships among colleagues

### MODEST INVESTMENT, MEANINGFUL IMPACT

Volunteering is good for people and good for the employers for which those people work. Here's more good news — there are many economical ways to get employees engaged in volunteering. While employees value being able to volunteer on paid time for volunteer efforts, other policies get high marks as well.

Volunteering policies that employees think are valuable:

- Giving a volunteer grant to a nonprofit when an employee volunteers time there
- Organizing volunteer activities for groups of employees
- Posting opportunities in a newsletter, bulletin board or website
- Recognizing employees for volunteering activities through internal company communications channels



## SUMMARY

# Aligned, Engaged, Go.

Increasingly we've come to recognize that getting to a better, higher-value, more sustainable health care system takes collective action. Employers, providers, consumers all have a role. And progress comes more quickly when interests are aligned, people are connected and we have great evidence to guide us.

Volunteering stands out as an activity that has all the right stuff. We've known for a long time that the hours and resources that individuals contribute through volunteer efforts make our communities better places. What this research affirms is that there is a lot more: volunteering makes folks feel better. Volunteers are more active and engaged in their communities and in their health. The health and wellness benefits that volunteers reap are real and important.

Furthermore, employers play a significant role in enabling volunteering, and enjoy real benefits as a consequence. Healthier, more engaged employees are more productive. Building goodwill has both intangible and tangible rewards.

It's not often we find this kind of win-win activity. Doing good is good for us. We can do more. Do better. Let's go.

## Research Methodology

The findings presented here are based on a national survey of 3,351 adults conducted by Harris Interactive, an international leader in population research and survey methodology. The survey was fielded between February 9 and March 18, 2013.

The survey was conducted both online and by telephone (a mixed mode design) to ensure full representation of U.S. adults, including traditionally difficult-to-reach populations. This resulted in 2,705 adults (or 81 percent) of the sample who were recruited from Harris' national consumer research panel; and 646 (or 19 percent) of the sample who were recruited through random-digit-dial methods and interviewed by telephone (one-third via mobile phones, two-thirds via landline phones). We detected small, but important, differences between the responses of the online and telephone survey samples.

The results were weighted using propensity scoring methods to maximize representation of the total U.S. adult population. We highlight results in this report that are statistically significant, as well as meaningful to social and business policy.



## About UnitedHealth Group

UnitedHealth Group (NYSE: UNH) is a diversified health and well-being company dedicated to helping people live healthier lives and making health care work better. With headquarters in Minnetonka, Minn., UnitedHealth Group offers a broad spectrum of products and services through two business platforms: UnitedHealthcare, which provides health care coverage and benefits services; and Optum, which provides information and technology-enabled health services. Through its businesses, UnitedHealth Group serves more than 80 million people worldwide. For more information, visit UnitedHealth Group at [www.unitedhealthgroup.com](http://www.unitedhealthgroup.com).

## About the Optum Institute

Optum has established the Optum Institute to serve as an authoritative source of analytical insights on the rapidly changing U.S. health care landscape, while acting as a constructive enabler of sustainable health. The Optum Institute works in partnership with consumers, health professionals, hospitals, employers, governments, health plans, and the life sciences industry, to help transform health care delivery. More information is available at [institute.optum.com](http://institute.optum.com).

**UNITEDHEALTH GROUP**



[www.unitedhealthgroup.com](http://www.unitedhealthgroup.com)

UnitedHealth Group Center  
9900 Bren Road East, Minnetonka, Minnesota 55343

©2013 UnitedHealth Group. All Rights Reserved. UnitedHealth Group is a registered trademark with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.