

The Benefits of Community Service Employment (PY2005)

Prepared for Senior Service America, Inc.
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The Benefits of Community Service Employment

The customer satisfaction data for SCSEP participants provide important insights into the participants, their experiences, and the benefits accrued both during and immediately after participation. The current analyses involve a nationwide survey of individuals active from March 2005-February 2006. The data from the surveys were combined with individual records from SPARQ, the administrative database that captures participant activity while individuals are in SCSEP as well as their employment outcomes. Together, these data provide a wealth of information from which to try to answer some fundamental questions about the SCSEP program and its benefits for participants.

In the first part of this paper, we explore those characteristics of the participants that associated with their perceptions of the benefits associated with SCSEP program. In the second part of the paper, we explore the circumstances at exit and how they are associated with the perception of benefit.

Who are the SCSEP participants?

Before looking at the relationships between participant characteristics and perceptions of benefit, the first tables review the basic characteristics of the participants in the sample used for the analyses, a random sample drawn for the PY 2005 survey. (See Table 1) Previous analyses have shown that the demographics presented here are comparable to the whole of the SCSEP population served in that program year.

To summarize, the majority of SCSEP participants are over 60, white and female. Seventy percent have a high school diploma or more, and over 30 percent have some education and training beyond a high school diploma. There is a high degree of racial and ethnic diversity among participants: nearly 30 percent are black and over 9 percent are Hispanic.

Table 1: Age, Race, Ethnicity, Gender and Education

Age60	Less than 60	7607	30.4%
	60 and over	17418	69.6%
	Total	25025	100.0%
Race	American Indian	764	3.2%
	Asian	974	4.1%
	Black	7086	29.6%
	Pacific Islander	99	.4%
	White	14982	62.7%
Ethnicity	Did not volunteer	742	3.0%
	Not Hispanic	21956	87.7%
	Hispanic	2325	9.3%
Gender	Did not volunteer	34	.1%
	Female	18085	72.3%
	Male	6905	27.6%

Table 1: Age, Race, Ethnicity, Gender and Education, continued

Age60	Less than 60	7607	30.4%
Education	8th grade or less	2600	10.4%
	9-12, no diploma	4763	19.0%
	HS diploma or equivalent	9840	39.3%
	Some college	4798	19.2%
	Associates degree	409	1.6%
	Vocational/technical degree	341	1.4%
	BA/BS	1552	6.2%
	Post graduate education	705	2.8%

Beyond the basic demographics, most participants have other characteristics, many of which are seen as barriers to employment (Table 2). The most common barrier for participants, aside from being in a family that is below poverty (81 percent), is poor employment history, which accounts for 69 percent of all participants.

Table 2: Barriers to Employment

Barrier	Response	Number	Percent
Homeless	No	24542	98.1%
	Yes	467	1.9%
Literacy Skills Deficient	No	22102	88.4%
	Yes	2890	11.6%
Family Below Poverty	No	4693	18.8%
	Yes	20261	81.2%
Limited English Proficiency	No	22825	91.3%
	Yes	2175	8.7%
Poor Employment History	No	7884	31.5%
	Yes	17111	68.5%
Other Social Barrier	No	21213	84.8%
	Yes	3790	15.2%
Displace Homemaker	No	22717	90.8%
	Yes	2288	9.2%
Culturally Isolated	No	18893	75.6%
	Yes	6109	24.4%
	Nationwide	25002	100.0%

While many people in the past have stayed in the program for 5, 10 or even 20 years, the average duration in the program when participants have exited is now somewhat less than two years. The average length of participation for those still in the program is a little higher but still less than two years.

Table 3: Duration in Program for Exitters

	Number	Average Number of Days	Minimum	Maximum
Duration	15159	588.8	1	7872

Perceived Benefits

There are three areas of perceived benefit identified for assessment. One area is the receipt of training that prepares participants for success in their assignment (Question 12) and for success in their job, post participation (Questions 19 and 20). Questions 12, 19 and 20 in Table 4 represent that focus. Participants rate the training received in the host agency assignment to help them be successful in their assignment more highly than the training in the host agency assignment that is meant to prepare them for employment.

Table 4: Provision of Training

Questions	Number	Average	Minimum	Maximum
Q12. During my community service assignment, my host agency gave me the training I needed to be successful in my assignment.	14334	8.1	1	10
Q19. How much of the skills and training you need to your current job did you gain from your community service assignment?	6419	6.2	1.0	10.0
Q20. Overall, how helpful was your community service assignment(s) in preparing you for success in your current unsubsidized job?	6510	7.15	1	10

The second perceived benefit is improved outlook on life compared to before participating in SCSEP (Table 5). The third area is overall satisfaction, which is represented by the ACSI (Table 6). Satisfaction can be seen as the participant's general sense how much they benefit overall from the program. The score of 81 on the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) is high compared to the scores normally given to various government programs, indicating a high perceived level of benefit.

Table 5: Change in Outlook on Life

	Response	Count	Percent
Q15. Compared to the time before you started working with the Older Worker Program, how would you rate your outlook on life?	Much more negative	457	2.8%
	A little more negative	764	4.7%
	About the same	3513	21.5%
	A little more positive	3890	23.8%
	Much more positive	7390	45.3%
	Don't know	298	1.8%

Table 6: ACSI

Number	ACSI Score	Minimum	Maximum	Response Rate
15806	81.1	0	100	62.9%

Participant Characteristics and Perceived Benefits

As with any social program, key questions include who benefits and under what circumstances do those benefits occur. Of all the individual participant characteristics, education is the most consistently important in relation to all three benefit areas. As evident in Tables 7 through 11, lower education levels are associated with higher positive ratings.

Table 7: Education and Q12

Dependent Variable: Q12. During my community service assignment, my host agency gave me the training I needed to be successful in my assignment. (Range 1-10)

Education	Average Q12 Rating	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
8th grade or less	8.503	.096	8.315	8.691
9-12, no diploma	8.287	.067	8.156	8.419
HS diploma or equivalent	8.029	.042	7.947	8.112
Vocational/technical degree	7.764	.207	7.359	8.169
Some college	7.659	.057	7.547	7.772
Associates degree	7.434	.186	7.070	7.799
BA/BS	7.498	.097	7.308	7.689
Post graduate education	7.375	.144	7.093	7.658

In Table 7, the lowest score differs from the highest by 13 percent.

Table 8: Education and Q 19

Q19. How much of the skills and training you need to your current job did you gain from your community service assignment? (Range 1-10)

Education	Average Q19 Score	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
8th grade or less	7.259	.159	6.948	7.570
9-12, no diploma	6.728	.110	6.512	6.944
HS diploma or equivalent	6.129	.076	5.980	6.279
Vocational/technical degree	6.314	.380	5.569	7.058
Some college	5.375	.102	5.175	5.575
Associates degree	5.276	.361	4.568	5.983
BA/BS	5.401	.179	5.049	5.752
Post graduate education	4.932	.265	4.412	5.452

In Table 8, the lowest score differs from the highest by over 30 percent.

Table 9: Education and Q20

Q20. Overall, how helpful was your community service assignment(s) in preparing you for success in your current unsubsidized job? (Range 1-10)

Education	Average Q20 Score	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
8th grade or less	7.873	.152	7.575	8.170
9-12, no diploma	7.520	.108	7.308	7.732
HS diploma or equivalent	7.070	.074	6.925	7.214
Vocational/technical degree	6.531	.372	5.802	7.260
Some college	6.463	.100	6.267	6.659
Associates degree	6.389	.345	5.713	7.065
BA/BS	6.241	.177	5.894	6.588
Post graduate education	6.030	.256	5.528	6.532

In Table 9, the lowest score differs from the highest by 24 percent.

Table 10: Education and Q15

Q15. Compared to the time before you started working with the Older Worker Program, how would you rate your outlook on life? (Range 1-5)

Education	Average Q15 Score	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
8th grade or less	4.34	.044	4.253	4.425
9-12, no diploma	4.18	.031	4.115	4.238
HS diploma or equivalent	4.14	.022	4.092	4.177
Vocational/technical degree	3.87	.113	3.651	4.093
Some college	4.08	.029	4.023	4.136
Associates degree	3.97	.099	3.775	4.164
BA/BS	4.05	.043	3.962	4.132
Post graduate education	3.90	.062	3.774	4.017

In Table 10, the lowest score differs from the highest by about 9 percent.

Table 11: Education and ACSI
ACSI (Range 0-10)

Education	Average ACSI Score	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
8th grade or less	85.55	.785	84.015	87.094
9-12, no diploma	83.52	.549	82.448	84.600
HS diploma or equivalent	80.49	.338	79.828	81.153
Vocational/technical degree	79.36	1.651	76.128	82.599
Some college	77.07	.459	76.168	77.969
Associates degree	73.10	1.503	70.153	76.045
BA/BS	74.82	.792	73.267	76.373
Post graduate education	72.73	1.151	70.471	74.984

In Table 11, the lowest score differs from the highest by about 17 percent.

Education is significantly associated with the full range of benefit measurements. The size of those associations is indicated by the difference in the highs and lows for each benefit measure, from 9 to 30 percent. Next to education, age is the most important factor, but it is only significant for some outcomes. On some outcome measures, older participants rate the outcomes higher than younger participants. However, age is not related to the rating of Question 20 (overall preparation for employment) or Question 15 (outlook on life).

Table 12: Age and Q12

Q12. During my community service assignment, my host agency gave me the training I needed to be successful in my assignment. (Range 1-10)

Age	Average Q12 Score	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Less than 60	7.64	.069	7.506	7.778
60 and over	9.00	.055	7.887	8.104

In Table 12, the low score differs from the high by over 15 percent.

Table 13: Age and Q19

Q19. How much of the skills and training you need to your current job did you gain from your community service assignment? (Range 1-10)

Age	Average Q19 Score	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Less than 60	5.74	.127	5.488	5.986
60 and over	6.12	.104	5.913	6.320

In Table 13, the low score differs from the high by over 6.5 percent.

Table 14: Age and ACSI
ACSI (Range 0-100)

Age	Average ACSI Score	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Less than 60	75.86	.561	74.758	76.960
60 and over	80.80	.443	79.935	81.671

In Table 14, the low score differs from the high by just over 6 percent. As evident from the percentage differences, age has less of an association with the rating of benefits than does education.

Along with education and age, gender is sometimes a factor that relates to perceived benefits. There is considerable variation in the relation of gender with the different outcomes of interest. Gender has a small but significant relationship with Q12.

Table 15: Gender and Q12

Variable: Q12. During my community service assignment, my host agency gave me the training I needed to be successful in my assignment.

Gender	Average Q12 Score	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Female	7.95	.054	7.841	8.052
Male	7.62	.098	7.422	7.808

The low score differs from the high by just over 4 percent. Gender has a stronger relationship with Q19 and Q20, as well as with the ACSI. The low score for Q19 differs from the high by over 9 percent. The low score for Q20 differs from the high by about 8 percent. However, gender is not related at all to Q15, the question about changes in outlook on life.

Table 16: Gender and Q19

Q19. How much of the skills and training you need to your current job did you gain from your community service assignment? Q20. Overall, how helpful was your community service assignment(s) in preparing you for success in your current unsubsidized job?

Gender	Average Q19 Score	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Female	6.06	.103	5.859	6.262
Male	5.49	.202	5.090	5.881
	Average Q20 Score			
Female	6.95	.099	6.756	7.143
Male	6.41	.168	6.082	6.740

Table 17: Gender and ACSI

Gender	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
Female	81.59	9.225	81.150	82.031
Male	79.46	.389	78.700	80.223

The perceived benefit of particular interest in this analysis is the change in outlook that participants experience. In the previous analyses, we looked at each characteristic's individual relation to Question 15 (change in outlook) as well as the other questions associated with benefit. Now, we examine whether those same characteristics together had some relation to Question 15. Table 18 shows the results of looking at gender, education, and age together. Age and education are significant when considered together, each being independently related to Question 15. Gender was not a significant factor related to participants' assessment of change in outlook when looked at simultaneously with education and age, just as it had not been significant when considered alone.

Table 18: Participant Characteristics and Question 15

Q15. Compared to the time before you started working with the Older Worker Program, how would you rate your outlook on life?

Gender	Education	Age60	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Female	8th grade or less	Less than 60	4.10	1.120	201
		60 and over	4.21	.981	741
		Total	4.19	1.013	942
	9-12, no diploma	Less than 60	4.13	1.035	434
		60 and over	4.18	1.037	1748
		Total	4.17	1.037	2182
	HS diploma or equivalent	Less than 60	3.97	1.115	1386
		60 and over	4.14	1.028	3759
		Total	4.09	1.055	5145
	Vocational/technical degree	Less than 60	3.71	1.305	76
		60 and over	3.97	1.156	102
		Total	3.86	1.225	178
	Some college	Less than 60	3.96	1.103	803
		60 and over	4.05	1.055	1622
		Total	4.02	1.072	2425
	Associates degree	Less than 60	3.57	1.225	92
		60 and over	4.01	1.027	112
		Total	3.81	1.139	204
	BA/BS	Less than 60	3.95	1.105	217
		60 and over	4.07	1.076	393
		Total	4.03	1.087	610
Post graduate education	Less than 60	3.83	1.170	99	
	60 and over	3.89	1.177	180	
	Total	3.87	1.172	279	
Total	Less than 60	3.97	1.115	3308	
	60 and over	4.12	1.040	8657	
	Total	4.08	1.063	11965	
Male	8th grade or less	Less than 60	4.35	.831	92
		60 and over	4.09	.998	488
		Total	4.13	.977	580
	9-12, no diploma	Less than 60	3.90	1.208	184
		60 and over	4.02	1.051	566
		Total	3.99	1.092	750

Table 18: Participant Characteristics and Question 15, continued

Q15. Compared to the time before you started working with the Older Worker Program, how would you rate your outlook on life?

Gender	Education	Age60	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Male	HS diploma or equivalent	Less than 60	3.95	1.008	384
		60 and over	3.99	1.030	855
		Total	3.98	1.023	1239
	Vocational/technical degree	Less than 60	3.67	.976	15
		60 and over	4.08	.845	26
		Total	3.93	.905	41
	Some college	Less than 60	3.89	1.103	242
		60 and over	4.03	1.082	433
		Total	3.98	1.091	675
	Associates degree	Less than 60	3.79	1.215	24
		60 and over	4.03	1.000	34
		Total	3.93	1.090	58
	BA/BS	Less than 60	3.83	1.028	152
		60 and over	4.09	1.010	257
		Total	3.99	1.023	409
	Post graduate education	Less than 60	3.74	1.304	70
		60 and over	4.00	1.069	141
		Total	3.91	1.156	211
	Total	Less than 60	3.93	1.081	1163
		60 and over	4.03	1.035	2800
		Total	4.00	1.050	3963
Total	8th grade or less	Less than 60	4.18	1.043	293
		60 and over	4.16	.989	1229
		Total	4.17	.999	1522
	9-12, no diploma	Less than 60	4.06	1.094	618
		60 and over	4.14	1.042	2314
		Total	4.12	1.054	2932
	HS diploma or equivalent	Less than 60	3.96	1.093	1770
		60 and over	4.11	1.030	4614
		Total	4.07	1.050	6384
	Vocational/technical degree	Less than 60	3.70	1.252	91
		60 and over	3.99	1.098	128
		Total	3.87	1.170	219
	Some college	Less than 60	3.94	1.103	1045
		60 and over	4.04	1.060	2055
		Total	4.01	1.076	3100
	Associates degree	Less than 60	3.61	1.221	116
		60 and over	4.01	1.017	146
		Total	3.84	1.128	262
	BA/BS	Less than 60	3.90	1.074	369
		60 and over	4.08	1.050	650
		Total	4.01	1.061	1019

Table 18: Participant Characteristics and Question 15, continued

Q15. Compared to the time before you started working with the Older Worker Program, how would you rate your outlook on life?

Gender	Education	Age60	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
	Post graduate education	Less than 60	3.79	1.224	169
		60 and over	3.94	1.130	321
		Total	3.89	1.164	490
Total		Less than 60	3.96	1.106	4471
		60 and over	4.10	1.039	11457
		Total	4.06	1.060	15928

Table 18a: Question 15 Test with Gender, Education and Age

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Q15. Compared to the time before you started working with the Older Worker Program, how would you rate your outlook on life?

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power ^a
Corrected Model	183.226 ^b	31	5.911	5.302	.000	.010	164.347	1.000
Intercept	51177.968	1	51177.968	45904.570	.000	.743	45904.570	1.000
Gender	.231	1	.231	.207	.649	.000	.207	.074
Educationcats	48.465	7	6.924	6.210	.000	.003	43.471	1.000
Age60	20.087	1	20.087	18.018	.000	.001	18.018	.989
Gender * Educationcats	12.930	7	1.847	1.657	.115	.001	11.597	.692
Gender * Age60	.019	1	.019	.017	.895	.000	.017	.052
Educationcats * Age60	12.918	7	1.845	1.655	.115	.001	11.587	.692
Gender * Educationcats * Age60	13.329	7	1.904	1.708	.102	.001	11.955	.708
Error	17722.091	15896	1.115					
Total	280613.000	15928						
Corrected Total	17905.317	15927						

a. Computed using alpha = .05

b. R Squared = .010 (Adjusted R Squared = .008)

In relation to Question 15, comparing outlook before being in the program with their current state, participants who are younger and better educated are less favorable in their assessment of outlook compared to their older and less well educated counterparts. The above analysis shows that age and education both have an independent association with Question 15. There is no interaction¹, however, between age and education.

Initial Observations

- Those with more education generally perceive less benefit from the SCSEP program.
- Women are generally more positive about their training experience than are men, although no gender difference exists in regard to outlook on life. This suggests that women and men benefit equally from the SCSEP program.
- Older and less educated people are generally more positive about their experience than their younger, better educated counterparts. People who are younger and better educated may be attractive as participants given the higher entered employment rate

¹ In [statistics](#), an **interaction** is a term in a [statistical model](#) in which the effect of two, or more, variables is not simply additive. (Wikipedia)

grantees wish to achieve. However, these younger and better educated participants may expect and need a higher level of training and quality from the host agency experience to feel they have been well served.

Participation Status and Perceived Benefits

As noted earlier, we are often concerned about who benefits from specific social service programs and under what circumstances. The participant characteristics analyses provide some insights into which participants benefit from SCSEP. Those who are older and less well educated see themselves benefiting more than those who are younger (under 60) and better educated.

In this section, we look at circumstances that are associated with the perception of benefit. The outcomes considered previously are considered for two sets of participants under different circumstances, those individuals participating in SCSEP at the time of the survey and those SCSEP participants who exited—former participants at the time of the survey.

The analyses that follow establish several more insights into the circumstances that are associated with more perceived benefit.

- Those still in the program reported receiving more benefit than those who had exited, whether they had exited for unsubsidized employment or for other reasons.
- Among those who had exited for unsubsidized employment, those who had unsubsidized employment with a government or non-profit agency, reported having received more benefit than those who had gone to work for a private sector employer.

Table 19 establishes the baseline, the responses of 16,000 program participants from the customer satisfaction survey for PY 2005. This includes individuals who were current participants in the SCSEP program as well as individuals who had left the program within the previous 12 months. It clearly shows that the majority of all participants, current and former, report that their lives are better because of the program.

In fact, this is a central premise of SCSEP from its inception. That is, there is a belief that when an older person is engaged in active community service work, is learning, and receives a stipend for that work, those older people will personally benefit. As seen in Table 19, a high percentage of participants indicate that they do benefit (70% indicate they have “a little more positive” or “much more positive” outlook on life) as a result of program participation.

Table 19: Outlook on Life

Q15. Compared to the time before you started working with the Older Worker Program, how would you rate your outlook on life?

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Much more negative	457	2.9	2.9
A little more negative	765	4.8	7.6
About the same	3514	21.9	29.6
A little more positive	3896	24.3	53.9
Much more positive	7395	46.1	100.0
Total	16027	100.0	

Table 20 compares the same outlook rating for current participants and for participants who had recently exited. While 75 percent of participants still in the program say they are a little or much more positive about life, only 66 or 67 percent of exiters are a little or much more positive. The SCSEP program is considered successful when participants obtain unsubsidized employment. Given that definition of success, we might expect those who leave the program without a job (those who exited for other reasons) to be less positive than those who exit for a job. But, they are not. There is no difference in perceived benefit between those who exited without a job and those who exited with a job. Moreover, those who exit the program with unsubsidized employment are less positive than those who are still in the program. See Table 20. The ACSI scores in Table 21 further confirm that participants’ perception of benefit is substantially different depending on whether they are current participants or have exited.

Table 20: Question 15 and Exit Reason

Exit Reason * Q15. Compared to the time before you started working with the Older Worker Program, how would you rate your outlook on life?

Exit Reason		Much more negative	A little more negative	About the same	A little more positive	Much more positive	Total
Exited for Regular Employment	Count	99	173	824	772	1488	3356
	%	2.9%	5.2%	24.6%	23.0%	44.3%	100.0%
Exited other reasons	Count	212	332	1482	1455	2609	6090
	%	3.5%	5.5%	24.3%	23.9%	42.8%	100.0%
Did not exit (current participants)	Count	146	260	1208	1669	3298	6581
	%	2.2%	4.0%	18.4%	25.4%	50.1%	100.0%
Total	Count	457	765	3514	3896	7395	16027

Table 21: ACSI and Exit Reason

Exit Reason	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Exited for Regular Employment	79.665	.423	78.835	80.494
Exited for Other Reason	77.750	.314	77.135	78.365
Did not exit (current participants)	84.929	.304	84.333	85.524

One of the most difficult findings to understand is that successful exiters, those with unsubsidized jobs, are less positive about the benefit of the SCSEP program than those who stayed in the program. It is important to know whether this true for all of those in

unsubsidized employment or only those in certain types of jobs? Table 22 compares outlook and ACSI of those in unsubsidized employment who had jobs with for-profit employers to those in the non-profit sector. Both comparisons show that a large part of the difference in benefit ratings between those still in the program and those who exited for employment is related to the lower ratings for those working in the for-profit sector.

Table 22:

Q15. Compared to the time before you started working with the Older Worker Program, how would you rate your outlook on life? On satisfaction with the program(ACSI)?

Employer Type by Question		N	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
Q15	For-profit	119 ²	3.83	1	5
	Government	5954	4.07	1	5
	Not-for-profit	8930	4.07	1	5
	Self-employment	22	3.73	1	5
	Total	15025	4.06	1	5
ACSI	For-profit	119	73.42	.00	100.00
	Government	5863	81.54	.00	100.00
	Not-for-profit	8810	81.16	.00	100.00
	Self-employment ³	23	78.74	22.22	100.00
	Total	14815	81.24	.00	100.00

Secondary analyses were conducted to determine if these differences might be related to the amount of earnings (either the average wage or the percent of people working full- or part-time). The results were negative. The average wages and proportion of full- and part-time work were approximately the same for government/not-for-profit and for-profit employment.

Discussion

The data suggest that the community service experience is ineffective in preparing participants for unsubsidized employment in some circumstances but not others. The program seems to work for participants who obtain employment in the government or not-for-profit sector. It does not seem to do well for those in the for-profit sector.

The type of employer clearly matters in terms of outlook on life and overall satisfaction with the program. Participants in government and not-for-profit organizations have a more positive outlook (post-program participation) and higher satisfaction with the program. The assessment of preparation for employment in Questions 19 and 20 (Table 23) lends some additional support to this idea. Preparation scores are substantially lower for those in for-profit employment, especially the preparation that should have made them ready for unsubsidized employment (Question 20).

² The proportion of placements in this sample with for-profit employers is considerably smaller than the proportion in the overall SCSEP population where nearly 50 percent of employments are in this sector.

³ Not used in the analyses but included to make the data tables with total complete.

Table 23.

		N	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
Q19. How much of the skills and training you need to your current job did you gain from your community service assignment?	For-profit	56	5.02	1	10
	Government	2364	6.22	1	10
	Not-for-profit	3918	6.32	1	10
	Self-employment	8	6.38	2	10
	Total	6346	6.27	1	10
Q20. Overall, how helpful was your community service assignment(s) in preparing you for success in your current unsubsidized job?	For-profit	50	5.70	1	10
	Government	2269	7.03	1	10
	Not-for-profit	3734	7.28	1	10
	Self-employment	9	6.56	1	10
	Total	6062	7.17	1	10

A related issue is how participants' previous extremely positive experiences in their host agencies and their positive interactions with SCSEP program staff affect their attitudes when evaluating the program from the perspective of unsubsidized employment. It may be that the lower ratings given by those in private sector employment are a reflection of the degree to which the culture and climate in private sector employment differ from the culture and climate in host agencies. Participants may feel that they have given up the sense of family, the emotional support, and the feeling of being needed and making a difference that they experienced in community service when they enter private sector jobs for which they may, in fact, be less well prepared. In addition, there may be added stress in private sector employment that is reflected in the lower satisfaction and ratings of wellbeing. We do know that older workers are particularly sensitive to job stress (Johnson, 2004).⁴ It may also be that older workers perceive greater job stress in private sector settings than in public ones. Alternatively, it may be that when they are not well prepared, the stress is greater. And, it may be both.

Summary

The data for these analyses are clearly limited. We do not know about the nature of the job experiences former participants had. We only know about their experiences while in the program. We do not know much about the participants' financial situation even though we know about starting wage. As we continue to collect quarterly wage data in the coming year, analyses of financial benefit will be possible. We still do not have information about how the type of work suits participants. Do they feel that community service work is more satisfying? Do they find greater support in government and not-for-profit settings than they do in for-profit settings? Is there more stress in for-profit than in not-for-profit settings? Are participants just unprepared for for-profit settings? These

⁴ <http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=1000679>

and other questions cannot be answered at this point but are important issues in any efforts to improve the program and increase the benefits it provides to the participants and the communities in which it works.

Next Steps

There are a number of research questions that can be developed based on these analyses of customer satisfaction and administrative data:

- What are the needs of older people that they see the SCSEP program fulfilling?
- How do expectations change from before older persons enters the program through the time they are in the program to when they leave the program? How is this a model of changing needs and expectations that can be applied to other areas of community service and employment activity for older Americans?
- Can pre-program expectations be changed by SCSEP staff in a way that allows older Americans to experience more benefit from the program?
- Do these results have any implications for baby boomer retirees? Are factors such as job stress or the nature of the work important in attracting retirees back to the workforce or keeping current older employees in the workforce?
- Are activities in community service (activities in government and not-for-profits) inherently more satisfying to older Americans than work in the private sector (activities that are commercial and profit making)?
- What, if any, benefits do older people gain from SCSEP participation long term?
- Can the perceived disadvantages of private sector employment be mitigated by better or different community service training?
- What can private sector employers learn from the positive aspects of the community service experience as perceived by participants?