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# Mobilizing Young People to Help Communities Recover from Disaster: A Case Study of CALCC Programs after the LA Wildfires

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Final Report from the CCLB, LACC, and SJCC Member Surveys

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## Executive Summary

How are service corps programs supporting communities as they respond to and recover from disaster? This paper provides insights into who is working in such service corps programs, what are their motivations for serving, and how they hope to contribute to creating more resilient communities post-disaster. The study integrates data collected from members of three different California-based conservation corps that worked to support communities as they responded to the Wildfires in the Los Angeles area in January 2025. The results, which compare across the three service corps programs, provide insights into who is participating and how these programs can provide workforce development while simultaneously engaging young people to support communities after disaster strikes.



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This research was conducted as part of the project “Workforce Development & the 4Rs,” which is coordinated out of the [Center for Environment, Community, & Equity](#) at American University.

## Note on Methods

The Conservation Corps of Long Beach (CCLB), Los Angeles Conservation Corps (LACC), and San Jose Conservation Corps (SJCC) all deployed members to help respond to the Wildfires in Los Angeles in January 2025. The Workforce Development & the 4Rs research team asked these programs to share a voluntary survey with all participants serving in their conservation corps during the period following the LA wildfires. The LACC and SJCC were surveyed between February 27-April 8, 2025. The CCLB was surveyed between March 19-April 30, 2025. A survey link was shared with corpsmembers who received several emails from the programs’ organizational leadership encouraging their participation. The response rates for each sample was 66% (LACC), 33% (SJCC), and 23% (CCLB). The results discussed in this report are based on comparative analyses of these samples.

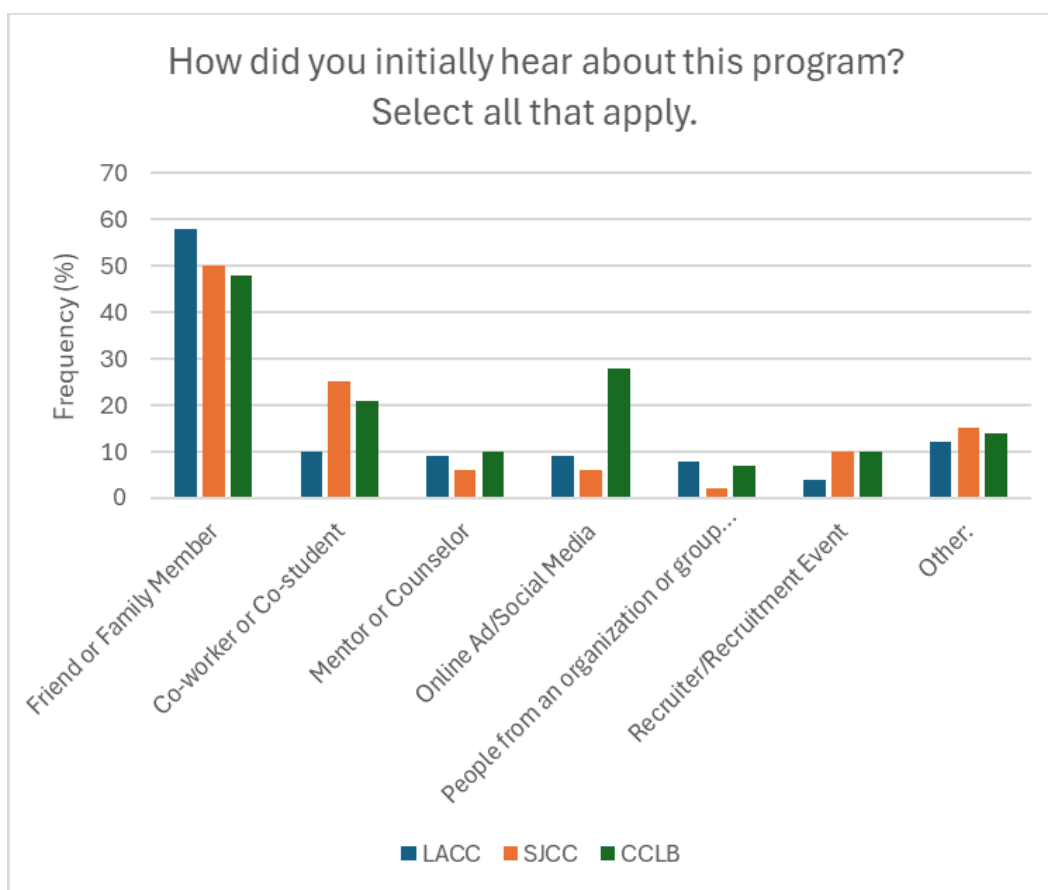
## General Background on Survey Respondents

Corpsmembers were asked the date on which they had started their service. At the time when the LACC corpsmembers took the survey, they had been serving on average for about 9 months, although a quarter of participants had only been serving for around 2.5 months. SJCC corpsmembers had been serving on average for about 7 months, although a quarter of participants had only been serving for 1.5 months. CCLB members had been serving on average for about 8 months, while a quarter of participants had only been serving for about 4 months.

### How did participants learn about the program?

Participants were asked to select all of the ways that they had heard about the corps programs from a set list of options. The most common option for members of all three programs was hearing about the programs through personal connections. For instance, 58% of LACC, 50% of SJCC, and 48% of CCLB reported first hearing about the program from a friend or family member. Hearing about the program from a co-worker or co-student was also somewhat common among SJCC and CCLB, with 25% and 21% of the members of each program having selected this response, respectively. Notably, a quarter of CCLB members (25%) had heard about the program through an online ad or social media, while the percentage was less than 10% for the other two programs. The figure below displays the frequencies for each of the 3 groups:





#### Who do participants know that currently or previously served in the corps?

A majority of participants in LACC and SJCC reported having known someone who was participating or previously participated in the program when they applied (55% and 58%, respectively). In contrast, only about a third of CCLB members (34%) reported knowing someone. Of the people participants had known, it was most common to have known a friend or family member who had previously served in the corps (44% of LACC, 44% of SJCC, and 21% of CCLB, respectively). Knowing a co-worker or co-student was also somewhat common, with 14% of LACC, 21% of SJCC, and 14% of CCLB selecting this answer.

<b>Did you know anyone who is currently participating or previously participated in this program when you applied? (Select all that apply)</b>	<b>LACC N=133</b>	<b>SJCC N=48</b>	<b>CCLB N=29</b>
Co-worker or co-student	14%	21%	14%
Friend or family member	44%	44%	21%
Mentor or counselor	2%	0%	3%
Person/people from an organization or group (e.g. environmental group, service group, religious group, social media channel)	2%	2%	0%
Other	2%	0%	3%
Did not know anyone	45%	42%	66%

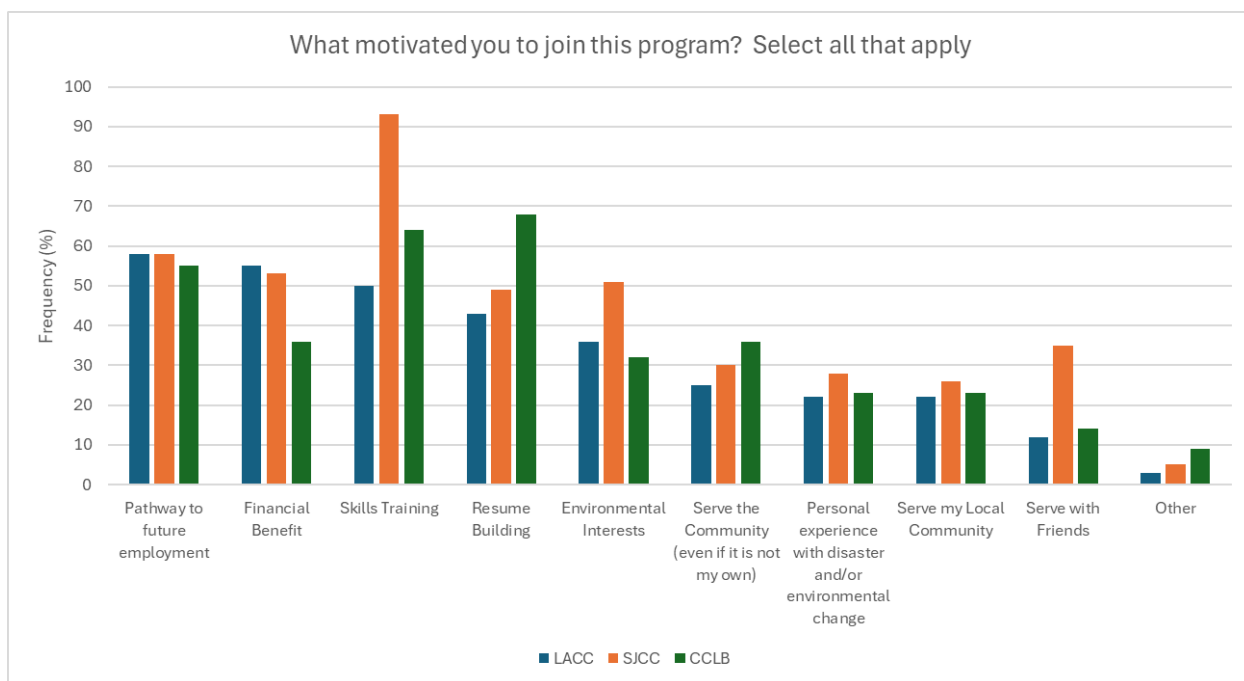


## Motivations for Joining the Corps

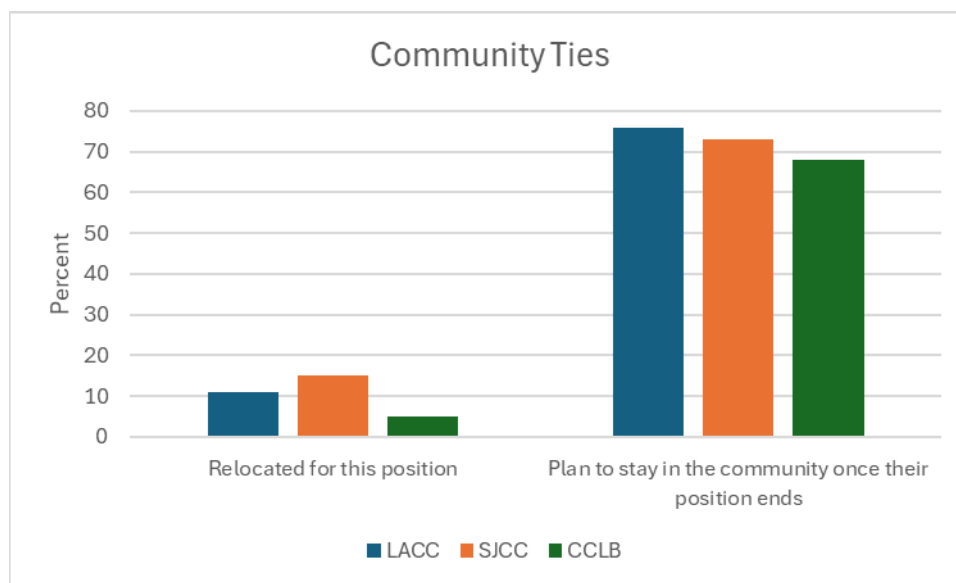
Participants were asked what motivated them to participate in the corps and were shown a list of possible options. They reported a variety of motivations for serving. In general, the top motivations for members across the three programs were related to their employability and careers, including skills training, pathway to future employment, and resume building. A majority of corpsmembers in each program were motivated by a pathway to future employment (LACC 58%, SJCC 58%, and CCLB 55%), but there was greater variation between the programs on other motivations. For example, skills training was a top motivation for SJCC, with an overwhelming majority (93%) selecting this answer. Members of LACC and CCLB also were motivated to acquire skills training but to a lesser extent; only 50% of LACC and 64% of CCLB selected this response. Financial benefit was a top motivation for LACC members (55%) and SJCC members (53%), but less so for CCLB members (36%).

Less common motivations across all programs were environmental interests, personal experience with disaster and/or environmental change, serving the local community, serving the community even if it was not their own, and serving with friends. Again, there was some variation between the programs. Although “environmental interests” was a less common motivation for LACC or CCLB members—only about a third of LACC (36%) and CCLB (32%) selected this motivation—this was a motivation for over half (51%) of SJCC members. It was also more common for SJCC members to report motivation to serve with friends, but little over a third (35%) selected this response compared to only 12% of LACC and 14% of CCLB.

The figure below displays the frequency of responses across all three groups.



Participants were asked whether they had relocated for their work with the corps. Only 11% of LACC, 15% of SJCC, and 5% of CCLB said they had relocated to serve in the corps. Participants were also asked whether they planned to stay in the community once their positions ended. Again, most participants across all programs agreed: the majority planned to stay in the area (76% of LACC, 73% of SJCC, and 68% of CCLB, respectively).



#### What types of disasters have participants worked on?

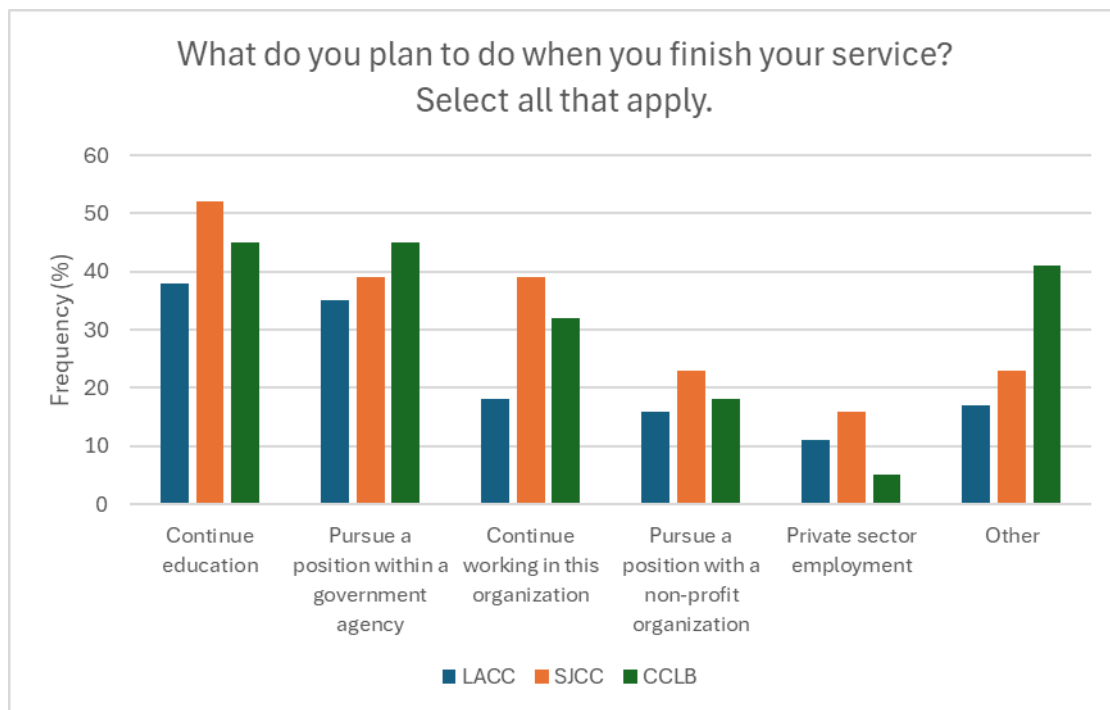
Participants were asked to select from a list of types of disasters on which they could have worked while serving in the corps. Nearly half of members of the LACC (45%) and CCLB (47%) reported having worked on wildfires. This finding is unsurprising given that each program reported deploying members to work on disaster response in the wake of the devastating wildfires in LA. Only 14% of SJCC members reported working on wildfires. However, almost a quarter of SJCC members (24%) and CCLB members (24%), as well as 27% of LACC members, also said they had worked on floods. Drought was a common disaster for CCLB members, with about a quarter (24%) reporting working on drought. Many members had not worked on any disasters (40% of SJCC, 38% of SJCC, and 34% of CCLB, respectively).

What types of disasters have you worked on during your time with the corps? (Select all that apply)	LACC N=119	SJCC N=42	CCLB N=21
Drought	8%	10%	24%
Flooding	27%	24%	24%
Hurricanes	0%	10%	10%
Mudslides	15%	2%	10%
Tornadoes	1%	0%	10%
Wildfires	45%	14%	47%
None	34%	40%	38%



### What are participants' plans after their service?

Corpsmembers were asked what they planned to do after their service was completed. They were allowed to select all options that applied. The most common responses to this question across all groups were that members planned to continue their educations or pursue a position within a government agency. A majority of participants in SJCC (52%) reported planning to continue their education, while the percentage for the CCLB was 45%, and 38% for the LACC. Working in a government agency was most popular among CCLB members (45%), while 39% of SJCC and 35% of LACC also selected that response. Many participants in the SJCC (39%) and the CCLB (32%) also reported planning to continue working in the organization they were serving in (only 18% of LACC selected this option). Very few members planned to pursue a position within a non-profit organization or to work in the private sector after their service.





## Civic Engagement and Environmental Attitudes

Participants were asked to report the civic activities they had participated in during the past year. Across all programs and most categories, members were less civically engaged compared to the national average, though there were some exceptions. For example, CCLB members had a higher rate of buying or boycotting a product or service based on the values or practices of a company (29%) than the national average (17%). One of the most common activities participants of all programs reported was volunteering to do trail maintenance, park cleanups, tree planting, or another environmental project (LACC 29%, SJCC 10%, and CCLB 38%, respectively). However, a majority (57%) of the SJCC, over a third of the LACC (36%), and nearly a quarter of the CCLB (24%) reported having done none of the civic activities on the list in the past year.

In the past year, have you... (Select all that apply)	LACC N=115	SJCC N=42	CCLB N=21	National Average
Attended a public meeting, such as a zoning or school board meeting, to discuss a local issue	11%	7%	5%	11%*
Attended an organized protest, march, or demonstration of any kind	8%	5%	0%	9%***
Bought or boycotted products or services based on values or business practices of a company	11%	14%	29%	17%*
Contacted or visited a public official – at any level of government – to express your opinion	3%	7%	0%	11%*
Contacted the media to express a view	3%	0%	0%	11%**
Signed a petition online or in person	11%	10%	24%	32%**
Volunteered for any organization or association	7%	10%	0%	23%*
Volunteered to do trail maintenance, park cleanups, tree planting, or another environmental project	29%	10%	38%	N/A
Voted in an election if eligible	19%	19%	38%	56%*
None of the above	36%	57%	24%	N/A

\*Source: AmeriCorps. 2023. CEV Findings: National Rates of All Measures from the Current Population Survey Civic Engagement and Volunteering (CEV) Supplement, 2017-2021. <https://data.americorps.gov/Volunteering-and-Civic-Engagement/2017-2021-CEV-Findings-National-Rates-of-All-Measu/rhng-qtzw>. (Accessed 06/28/2023)

\*\* Source: National Sample Data from National Social Survey. cumulative file 1972-2023. Data accessed from the GSS Data Explorer website at [gssdataexplorer.norc.org](https://gssdataexplorer.norc.umd.edu/). (Accessed 06/28/2023)

\*\*\*Source: Data from Pew Research Database. <https://www.pewresearch.org/question-search/> (Accessed 06/28/2023)



## Environmental Beliefs

Participants were asked whether they consider their personal environmental impact in three aspects of daily life. A majority of respondents said that they considered their environmental impact when making decisions about what they eat (51% of LACC, 55% of SJCC, and 55% of CCLB, respectively). A larger percentage of LACC members (59%) reported considering their personal environmental impact when making purchasing decisions, while only 40% of SJCC and 50% of CCLB said the same. SJCC members were the most likely of the three programs to consider their impact when making transportation decisions (60%), while a little over half (52%) of LACC members and about a third (35%) of CCLB members said they considered it.

<b>Decisions based on Environmental Impact</b>	<b>LACC</b>	<b>SJCC</b>	<b>CCLB</b>
Do you consider your personal environmental impact when...			
making decisions about what you eat?	51%	55%	55%
making purchasing decisions?	59%	40%	50%
you make transportation decisions?	52%	60%	35%

Respondents were also asked the extent to which they feel that they as ordinary citizens have influence over governmental and business decisions related to climate. Across all three samples, members expressed either positive beliefs they can influence governmental and business decisions regarding climate, or uncertainty about their ability to influence climate protection. Relatively few respondents saw themselves as having little power to influence decisions around climate protection.

CCLB members were most optimistic about their agency: 65% said they strongly or somewhat agreed that they can influence governmental decisions regarding climate protection, and 55% agreed that they could influence business decisions regarding climate protection.

LACC and SJCC members expressed more measured agreement, but were still more likely to agree than disagree that they could influence climate protection. For LACC members, 40% agreed that they could influence government decisions and 38% agreed that they could influence business decisions. For SJCC, these figures were 29% and 34%, respectively. Despite these relatively low percentages, only 18-21% of respondents in these groups expressed disagreement that they could influence governmental or business decisions regarding climate protection.



In general, members of all three groups expressed a large degree of uncertainty towards all of these questions. When asked whether they could influence government decisions on climate, a majority of SJCC participants (51%) chose the neutral option (neither agree nor disagree), while 40% of LACC and 30% of CCLB expressed neutrality. Similarly, on influence on business decisions, nearly half (46%) of SJCC, 43% of LACC, and 35% of CCLB chose the neutral option.

Statement of Opinion		Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
<b>As an ordinary citizen, I can...</b>						
influence government decisions regarding climate protection	LACC	10%	8%	41%	33%	7%
	SJCC	5%	15%	51%	27%	2%
	CCLB	0%	5%	30%	40%	25%
influence business decisions regarding climate protection	LACC	8%	13%	43%	28%	10%
	SJCC	5%	15%	46%	27%	7%
	CCLB	0%	10%	35%	45%	10%
<b>Climate protection measures are determined by a few powerful persons; as a single citizen, I have no effect.</b>						
	LACC	13%	21%	46%	14%	4%
	SJCC	2%	29%	49%	20%	0%
	CCLB	35%	10%	35%	15%	5%

Respondents were also asked their level of agreement on the statement “climate protection measures are determined by a few powerful persons; as a single citizen, I have no effect.” Again, respondents expressed a large degree of uncertainty, with nearly half (49%) of SJCC members, 46% of LACC members, and 35% of CCLB members choosing the neutral option. Respondents also disagreed with this statement to some degree, with almost a third (31%) of SJCC, 34% of LACC, and 45% of CCLB saying they either strongly or somewhat disagreed.



## Demographic Profile of Corpsmembers

The statistics below compare the corps member samples to nationally representative data. It is important to note that the demographics of California and the programs may differ from the national population data.

### Gender Identity

Compared to national averages, the programs were predominantly male. Across all three programs, a vast majority of members identified as male (81% of LACC, 78% of SJCC, and 84% of CCLB, respectively) while few members identified as female (only 19% of LACC, 12% of SJCC, and 16% of CCLB, respectively).

Gender	LACC N=112	SJCC N=41	CCLB N=19	National Average*
Male	81%	78%	84%	49.5%
Female	19%	12%	16%	50.5%
Trans Male/Trans Man	0%	2%	0%	
Trans Female/Trans Woman	1%	0%	0%	
Gender Queer/Gender Non-Conforming	0%	2%	0%	
Other	0%	5%	0%	

\*Source: US Census Bureau (2022). Quick Facts. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045222>

### Race and Ethnicity

Participants were asked about their race and ethnicity based on US Census categories. The LACC and CCLB members were more likely to identify as Black compared to national averages (25% of LACC and 29% of CCLB). A relatively larger portion of SJCC members were Asian, with 30% identifying as such compared to only 6% nationally. Over a third of CCLB members (36%) identified as two or more races, compared to just 3% nationally. Many participants selected “other” instead of one of the races listed. This included over a third (36%) of LACC members, 43% of SJCC members, and 14% of CCLB members.

Race	LACC N=72	SJCC N= 23	CCLB N=14	National Average*
White	22%	17%	14%	76%
Black	25%	4%	29%	14%
Asian or Asian American	4%	30%	7%	6%
American Indian or Alaska Native	7%	4%	0%	1%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0%	0%	0%	<1%
Other	36%	43%	14%	—
Two or More Races	6%	0%	36%	3%

\*Source: US Census Bureau (2022). Quick Facts. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045222>

Participants of all programs were also predominantly Hispanic or Latino/a; an overwhelming



majority of LACC and SJCC (86% and 92% respectively) and about two-thirds of CCLB members (68%) identified as Hispanic or Latino/a. These percentages compare to 20% of the national population.

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>LACC N=111</b>	<b>SJCC N=38</b>	<b>CCLB N=19</b>	<b>National Average*</b>
Hispanic or Latina/o	86%	92%	68%	20%
Not Hispanic or Latina/o	14%	8%	32%	80%

\*Source: US Census Bureau (2022). Quick Facts. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045222>

### Educational Attainment

Participants were asked the highest level of education they had achieved. A majority of LACC and SJCC members reported having a high school diploma (57% and 63%, respectively). Additionally, about a fifth of the LACC members (18%) and SJCC members (20%) had completed some college. Almost a third of CCLB members reported having completed some college and 42% had a high school diploma.

<b>Education Level</b>	<b>LACC N=109</b>	<b>SJCC N=41</b>	<b>CCLB N=19</b>	<b>National Average (ages 18-29)*</b>
Some Middle School/Middle School Graduate	1%	0%	0%	–
Some High School	19%	7%	5%	11%
High School Graduate	57%	63%	42%	32%
Some College	18%	20%	32%	25%
2-year degree/Associate's, Technical, or Vocational	2%	3%	11%	8%
4-year (Bachelor's) Degree	3%	6%	5%	19%
Professional (Master's)	0%	0%	5%	4%
PhD, MD, JD	0%	0%	0%	

### Age

Members of all programs were of similar ages. LACC participants were all between the ages of 19 and 29, with an average age of 22. SJCC members were all between the ages of 19 and 26, with an average age of 21. CCLB corpsmembers were all between the ages of 20 and 27, with an average age of 23. Below is the age distribution by percentiles.

<b>Percentiles</b>	<b>LACC N=102</b>	<b>SJCC N=38</b>	<b>CCLB N=19</b>
25th	20	19	21
50th	21	21	23
75th	23	22	25



## Acknowledgements

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## Partners & Sponsors





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