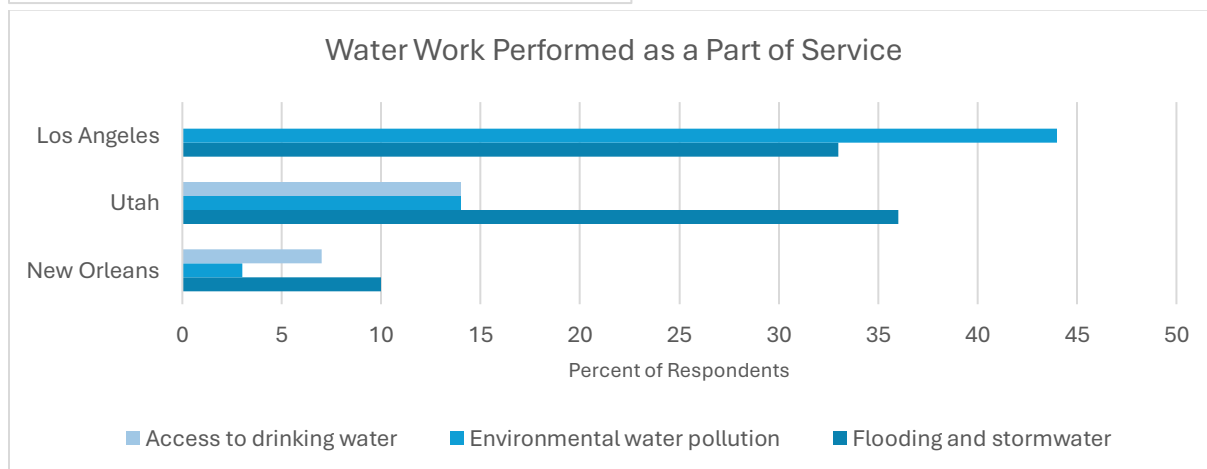
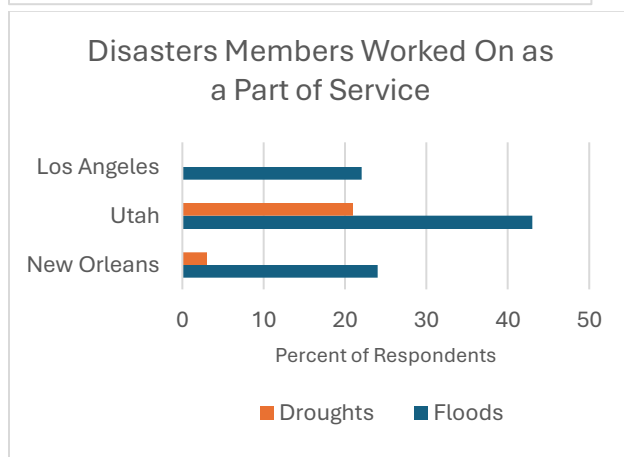
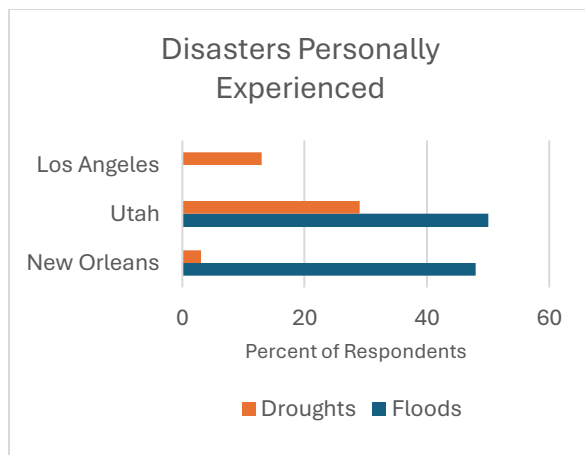


Michael Culbert  
DataCorps Fellowship Final Report  
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This summer, The Center for Environment, Community, and Equity (CECE) sent a cohort of DataCorps fellows around the United States to assist with CECE's ongoing project studying service corps members and volunteers in organizations that help communities respond to disasters. Across three locations, we had the opportunity to learn about these incredibly meaningful projects. The organizations eagerly welcomed our team of researchers to study their work, demonstrating toward us the same enthusiasm they direct toward their own service. We learned a lot about the many benefits these individuals provide to their communities and the diverse benefits they receive from their service. These organizations can tailor their training to the needs of the particular disasters that impact their communities, including wildfires and an increasing number of water-based disasters.

The Los Angeles Conservation Corps (LACC) is a good example of how service organizations facilitate local communities' resiliency efforts. When wildfires wracked the area earlier this year, the LACC was able to mobilize well-organized, trained teams to assist wildland firefighters. The training that corps members received benefited the response effort, as more people were readily available to combat the intensity and resource stress of the wildfires. At the same time, 78 percent of survey respondents in the LACC mentioned skills training as a reason they joined the corps, which was higher than any other motivation. The strength of this response is indicative of a mutually beneficial relationship apparent in these programs.

I was particularly interested in the work these organizations perform around water-related disasters. Due to the complex and interconnected nature of water systems, there is a high barrier to entry to water management work. These programs' model of providing skills training in exchange for environmental work could present one avenue toward dealing with the increasing water challenges faced by the United States. In many of the areas we visited, water is a key concern. Across all three sites about a quarter of respondents reported having worked on flooding and in the Louisiana and Utah sites many reported personally experiencing floods. A large number of respondents in California reported working on environmental water pollution, whereas respondents in both Utah and California had high rates of working on floods.



As the risk of water-based disasters increases, generating resilience within communities that face disaster is important to improving outcomes. These groups promote important experience and training for improved adaptability in an uncertain world while simultaneously placing people in positions to help their communities. Additionally, the members themselves benefit from acquiring skills, knowledge and training. After their time in the corps, volunteering and serving in the corps has increased the number of people within communities that possess skills to respond to disasters, increasing the overall level of preparedness in at-risk areas. As

water-based disaster becomes more prevalent, this model appears to present a promising start to engaging local communities in resilience efforts.