



AmeriCorps

Empowering Change in National Service: Exploring Personal Growth, Initiative, and Self-Confidence in AmeriCorps Members

AmeriCorps Member Exit Survey Analysis 2017-2022

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Abstract

This report explores the “Getting Things Done” pathway of the AmeriCorps Member Exit Survey (MES) from 2017 to 2022. The AmeriCorps Member Exit Survey (MES) is a survey developed by the Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE) to learn how members understand and internalize their service experience upon exiting their programs.¹ One of four theoretical pathways underpinning the AmeriCorps Member theory of change, “Getting Things Done” refers to AmeriCorps members’ ability to self-start, go beyond what is required, and persevere in the face of challenges. This pathway gauges members’ orientation to become agents of change. Overall, regardless of age or program, AmeriCorps members reported feeling confident in their abilities to stick to their aims and accomplish their goals, commit to solving difficult problems, handle unforeseen situations and circumstances, think of solutions to challenges, and rely on their coping abilities to remain calm when faced with difficulties.

¹ AmeriCorps. “AmeriCorps Member Exit Survey Fact Sheet.”

https://www.americorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/MES%20Fact%20Sheet_061423_final_508.pdf

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Introduction: The AmeriCorps Member Exit Survey

AmeriCorps' mission is to "improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering".² In addition to striving to improve communities and the lives of individuals served through its programs, AmeriCorps values the development of its service members and volunteers into empowered and engaged citizens as reflected in the AmeriCorps pledge on the previous page. To that end, AmeriCorps' Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE) designed the AmeriCorps Member Exit Survey (MES) to capture members' attitudes and service experiences upon their exit from the program.³

The MES examines members' experiences across the three AmeriCorps programs: AmeriCorps State and National (ASN), AmeriCorps NCCC (NCCC), and AmeriCorps VISTA (VISTA).⁴ Since 2015, over 360,000 AmeriCorps members have responded to this survey. From 2017 to 2022, between 77 to 80 percent of members completed the survey each year.

MES data is collected on a rolling basis. Whenever a member departs service, they are given 180 days to complete the MES. Members that complete their term or depart service early whether it be because of an emergency, voluntarily leaving before completion of service, or some other reason, all take the MES. Although members may begin their AmeriCorps service before turning 18 years of age, responses used in this report are comprised of those who had started their term of service while 18 years of age or older.

Key components of the AmeriCorps service experience are mapped to "pathways" meant to articulate the AmeriCorps member theory of change.⁵ Questions featured in the MES broadly fall into four "pathways" and into an additional five "domains (see Graphic 1)"⁶:

² AmeriCorps. "About." <https://americorps.gov/about>.

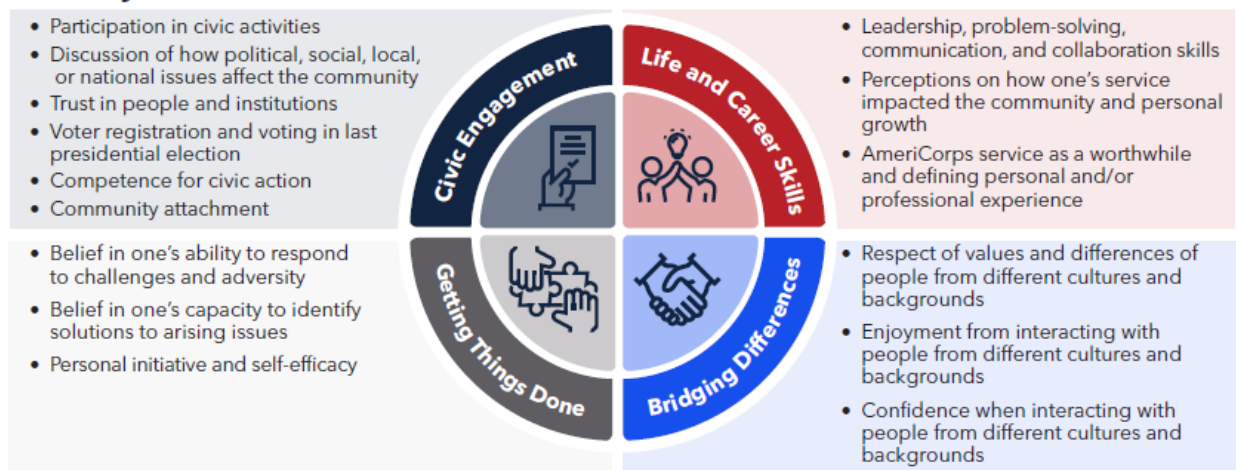
³ For questions on this data, analysis, and report please contact the Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE) at AmeriCorpsMES@cns.gov. For general questions about ORE, please email Evaluation@cns.gov.

⁴ AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers do not currently take the MES, though forthcoming surveys aim to include ACS volunteers' participation.

⁵ "Appendix A: AmeriCorps Member Theory of Change". ORE Member Exit Survey Justification Part A.2 (2021). <https://omb.report/omb/3045-0094>.

⁶ AmeriCorps. "AmeriCorps Member Exit Survey." https://www.americorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/MES_Survey_Visual_08082023_final_508.pdf

AmeriCorps Member Exit Survey Pathways and Domains (Graphic 1)



Domains



This report provides an overview of the connections between AmeriCorps members' service and the Getting Things Done pathway from 2017 through 2022 using responses to the MES of members across all three programs (ASN/NCCC/VISTA) while simultaneously examining how age relates to members' responses.⁷ For many younger members, AmeriCorps is the first "real world" experience they will have after finishing high school or college. For older members, it's an opportunity to apply "real world" experience and develop new skills. To that end, AmeriCorps emphasizes providing its members with experiences which they will take with them after they leave service. This paper examines how members of different ages and in different programs feel about their ability to "get things done" as they leave service.

⁷ For past analyses and reports, please see the following: <https://www.americorps.gov/evidence-exchange/highlights-ameri-corps-member-exit-survey-dataset>

For publicly available data, please view AmeriCorps' Open Data: <https://data.americorps.gov/>

Key Takeaways

Regardless of age or program, AmeriCorps members reported high levels of self-confidence across the ten MES questions comprising the “Getting Things Done” pathway (Table 1). Though slight variations exist amongst age groups and across programs as described in the corresponding sections of this report, AmeriCorps members overall feel they can “get things done”:

- **Solving difficult problems:** from 2017 to 2022, more than 91 percent of members across all programs and ages felt confident in their ability to solve difficult problems upon exiting service.
- **Navigating opposition:** from 2017 to 2022, less than 44 percent of members across all programs and ages agreed with their ability to overcome opposition. Less favorable responses to this question may be attributable to the phrasing and connotation of sub-question 8b’s statement: “If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want”.
- **Sticking to aims and accomplishing goals:** from 2017 to 2022, more than 86 percent of members across all programs and ages showed consistency in effort and perseverance to accomplish their goals.
- **Dealing with unexpected events, confidently:** results show that across all programs and ages from 2017 to 2022, more than 91 percent of members upon their exit from service felt confident in their ability to deal efficiently with unexpected events.
- **Handling unforeseen situations:** from 2017 to 2022, more than 90 percent of members across all programs and ages strongly agreed with their ability to handle unforeseen situations due to their resourcefulness.
- **Investing effort to solve problems:** upon exit from service from 2017 to 2022, more than 94 percent of members across all programs and age groups agreed with their ability to solve most problems if they invest the necessary effort.
- **Remaining calm when faced with difficulties:** from 2017 to 2022, more than 88 percent of members across all programs and age groups agreed with their ability to use *internal assets* to remain calm when facing difficulties through relying on their coping abilities.
- **Finding solutions when confronted with problems:** more than 89 percent of members across all programs and ages from 2017 to 2022, agreed with their ability to find several solutions when they are confronted with a problem. It is

evident that overall, there is a strong trend in member agreement regarding their problem-solving skills.

- **Thinking of solutions when in trouble:** results from 2017 to 2022 show that more than 91 percent of members across all programs and ages strongly agreed with their ability to think of a solution if they were in trouble.
- **Handling whatever comes their way:** since 2017, more than 90 percent of members across all programs strongly agreed with their ability to handle whatever comes their way. High responses to this statement suggest a strong member change and action orientation to the world upon exit from service.

Table 1: “Getting Things Done” MES Questions and total % of members responding positively:

Dimensions of “Getting Things Done”	MES question: “How much do you agree or disagree that each of the following statements describes you?”	Total % of all members across all programs and ages from 2017-2022 that Agree or Strongly agree with question:
Solving difficult problems	a) I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.	More than 91%
Navigating opposition	b) If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.	Less than 44%
Sticking to aims and accomplishing goals	c) It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.	More than 86%
Dealing with unexpected events, confidently	d) I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.	More than 91%
Handling unforeseen situations	e) Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.	More than 90%
Investing effort to solve problems	f) I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.	More than 94%
Remaining calm when faced with difficulties	g) I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.	More than 88%
Finding solutions when confronted with problems	h) When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.	More than 89%
Thinking of solutions when in trouble	i) If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution.	More than 91%
Handling whatever comes their way	j) I can usually handle whatever comes my way	More than 90%

“Getting Things Done”

The AmeriCorps service experience provides a structured environment in which members can gain hands-on experience with consequential and deliberate action, carrying much of the responsibility expected in the “real world.” The “Getting Things Done” pathway is defined as instilling motivation to solve problems and promoting the ability to take initiative in coordinating and executing goals and endeavors.⁸ It broadly includes the concepts of personal initiative, grit, and confidence in one’s actions, encompassing many requisite traits needed to be successful in creating community change.



This pathway hypothesizes that members develop or otherwise enhance these qualities through the hands-on experience of serving in the field and/or with organizations doing community change work. During AmeriCorps service, members experience similar challenges, roadblocks, and frustrations that they would otherwise experience in the course of their work in the professional world, therein being presented with opportunities to develop and improve mechanisms to cope with these trials and move forward.⁹

Most AmeriCorps members are young adults aged under 25 (see Table 2), and much of the theoretical basis for the *Getting Things Done* pathway is rooted in the development of skills and capacities of these younger populations.¹⁰ That said, many programs do not impose an age limit, and a sizable number of AmeriCorps members are over 25 years of age (Table 2). Capturing how older adults and seniors may apply

⁸ AmeriCorps. “AmeriCorps Member Theory of Change”. 2015.

⁹ Bandura A. (1977). Self-efficacy: toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological review*, 84(2), 191-215. <https://doi.org/10.1037//0033-295x.84.2.191>

¹⁰ The MES will be replaced by an expanded, enterprise-wide survey available for all AmeriCorps participants, including AmeriCorps Seniors Volunteers. This revised participant experience survey will be administered as a pre-post survey rather than only being provided upon a member’s exit; participants will be given the survey at both the start and end of service. Questions in this pathway will be modified to measure self-efficacy (see Conclusions section of report).

their existing experience and skills during their service is also of interest when exploring this MES pathway.

Theoretical support backing the Getting Things Done Pathway speaks to both the skills development of younger members and older members:

- **Positive Youth Development:** theories of human development infrastructure, specifically positive youth development theory, point to the importance of younger individuals having opportunities to develop empowerment assets (external assets), as well as positive social and identity assets (internal assets) to overcome adversity.¹¹ The AmeriCorps service experience provides several critical components needed for developing these internal and external “assets”.¹²
- **Emerging Adulthood:** many AmeriCorps members partake in their service experience during a critical period in their lives known as “emerging adulthood” (ages 18 - 25 in industrialized nations). At ages when they may not quite fully feel adult but neither adolescent, a majority of members complete their service terms during a point in their lives full of possibility and opportunities for self-determination. The member service placement offers exposure to new ideas and experiences at an uncertain but receptive time in many members’ lives as they figure out their beliefs and identities.¹³

Older Members: For older adults who join AmeriCorps, many of these competencies, and confidences may have already been developed through their personal and professional lives. Though AmeriCorps may not present their first experiences in the “real world”, these members are still provided opportunities to further develop and deploy their skills as they serve communities across the country. Volunteerism among older adults has shown to be related to positive physical, cognitive, and psychological health.¹⁴

- **Social Learning Theory:** regardless of age or degree of professional experience, AmeriCorps service provides its members’ the platform to take initiative, go beyond what is required, and be consistent in effort. In environments conducive to practicing self-starting behaviors, members have opportunities to try and demonstrate the

¹¹ Youth.gov. “Positive Youth Development”. <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/positive-youth-development>

¹² ORE Member Exit Survey Justification Part A.2.

¹³ Arnett, J.J. (2005). Emerging adulthood: Understanding the new way of coming of age. In Arnett, J.J & Tanner, J.L. (Eds.), *Emerging Adults in America: Coming of Age in the 21st Century* (pp. 3 - 19). American Psychological Association.

¹⁴ Anderson, N. D., Damianakis, T., Kröger, E., Wagner, L. M., Dawson, D. R., Binns, M. A., Bernstein, S., Caspi, E., Cook, S. L., & The BRAVO Team. (2014). The benefits associated with volunteering among seniors: A critical review and recommendations for future research. *Psychological Bulletin*, 140(6), 1505-1533. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0037610>

persistence, focus, and proactivity needed to navigate challenges. Members not only learn about their own abilities but learn from one another in how to be confident in their actions as they collectively face adversity.¹⁵

Aided by the development of these behaviors upon leaving service, members can help solve long-standing, systemic community problems of any size. The AmeriCorps ethos of “Getting Things Done” is primed to maximize its impact on both younger *and* older members as they either start to or continue to explore and define their identities. Differences in how age groups respond to this pathway’s questions are explored throughout this analysis.

Analysis: “Getting Things Done” By Age and AmeriCorps Program

This report highlights responses to the 10 sub-questions of question 8 of the MES, listed below:

Question 8: How much do you agree or disagree that each of the following statements describes you?

- a) I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.
- b) If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.
- c) It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.
- d) I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.
- e) Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.
- f) I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.
- g) I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.
- h) When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.
- i) If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution.
- j) I can usually handle whatever comes my way

First Analysis

All Programs Combined
from FY 2017-2022

- *Disaggregated by Age Groups*
 - 18-24
 - 25-44
 - 45-65
 - 65+

Second Analysis

By Program in FY 2022
(AmeriCorps State and
National, VISTA, and NCCC)

- *Disaggregated by Age Groups*
 - 18-24
 - 25-44
 - 45-65
 - 65+

¹⁵ Bandura A. (1971). Social learning theory. General Learning Press.

Two graphs accompany the analysis of each sub-question: 1) analyzing responses disaggregated by age group over time (2017 – 2022), and 2) analyzing responses disaggregated by age group *and* by AmeriCorps program *just* in 2022. Member responses in 2022 were analyzed to provide a point-in-time analysis of the most recently available data. Response options for all 10 sub-questions include: “Strongly agree”, “Agree”, “Neither agree nor disagree”, “Disagree”, and “Strongly disagree”. Both graphs display the percentages of members that answered with “Strongly agree” or “Agree” to represent the total percentage of members responding affirmatively.

Data Compiled by Fiscal Year

Though members complete the MES on a rolling basis, data is typically compiled by fiscal year (FY) for analyses. For example, FY 2017 is from October 1, 2016 to September 30, 2017. Members are categorized into their respective fiscal years according to the date of when they finished their service term or departed their program early. This report refers to fiscal year whenever mentioning data pertaining to a given year.

Other Analytical Considerations:

Selection Bias

AmeriCorps members who elect to participate in AmeriCorps service programs may already be more driven and determined than the general population, therefore it is important to note that members that self-select into service have the potential to skew responses more favorably.

Social-desirability Bias

Similarly, when participants are given the MES, they are being asked to perform a self-evaluation. Oftentimes, the questions may reflect some deep and personal aspects of oneself. Therefore, rather than answering truthfully, some members may choose to frame themselves in a more positive light when answering these questions. This can also cause responses to be skewed from the truth. This is known as social-desirability bias, and this occurs when survey respondents provide answers that do not reflect their actual beliefs and feelings to come across as more “socially desirable”.

Age Distribution of Members by Program

As previously noted, a majority of members across all three AmeriCorps programs are aged younger than 25.¹⁶ Table 2 below shows the percentages of members in each group across programs for all years in this analysis.

¹⁶ As mentioned, the MES presently excludes AmeriCorps Seniors programs where participants are aged 55 and older. Though “emerging adulthood” captures members aged up to 25, MES analyses will use ages 18 to 24 as the youngest group of members to better align with US Census data/estimates.

Of note is that NCCC Corps Members are required to be aged between 18 and 26 years old, whereas NCCC Team Leaders have no upper age limit. The age limit of NCCC Corps Members was increased to 26 years old as part of the CARES Act passed by Congress in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁷ That said, a preponderance of all NCCC Corps Members and Team Leaders are still aged under 25 years old upon starting service. Because the counts of NCCC Corps Members or Team Leaders aged 45 to 64 or 65+ in any given year are rare or often nonexistent, these members are excluded from this analysis.

Table 2: Percentages of MES Respondents in Each Age Group						
AmeriCorps State and National Members						
	2017 (n=54,580)	2018 (n=53,296)	2019 (n=53,135)	2020 (n=49,173)	2021 (n=47,970)	2022 (n=43,692)
18 to 24	68.4%	67.9%	68.9%	68.6%	70.4%	68.1%
25 to 44	24.4%	24.8%	24.1%	23.6%	23.2%	24.2%
45 to 64	5.3%	5.4%	5.1%	5.4%	4.8%	5.4%
65+	1.9%	1.9%	2.0%	2.3%	1.7%	2.2%
All ages	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
NCCC Members						
	2017 (n=1,795)	2018 (n=1,497)	2019 (n=1,425)	2020 (n=1,428)	2021 (n=1,256)	2022 (n=1,268)
18 to 24	98.7%	97.9%	97.9%	98.4%	94.7%	90.8%
25 to 44	1.3%	2.1%	2.1%	1.6%	5.3%	9.2%
45 to 64	***	***	***	***	***	***
65+	***	***	***	***	***	***
All ages	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
VISTA Members						
	2017 (n=8,449)	2018 (n=8,477)	2019 (n=8,241)	2020 (n=7,826)	2021 (n=8,219)	2022 (n=6,888)
18 to 24	59.7%	60.3%	60.5%	58.6%	61.6%	60.4%
25 to 44	31.4%	30.8%	30.0%	29.9%	29.1%	28.9%
45 to 64	7.4%	7.3%	8.0%	8.8%	7.3%	8.2%
65+	1.4%	1.6%	1.5%	2.6%	2.0%	2.4%
All ages	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
All Programs' Members Combined						
	2017 (n=64,825)	2018 (n=63,270)	2019 (n=62,801)	2020 (n=58,427)	2021 (n=57,445)	2022 (n=51,848)
18 to 24	68.1%	67.6%	68.4%	68.0%	69.6%	67.7%
25 to 44	24.7%	25.0%	24.4%	23.9%	23.6%	24.5%
45 to 64	5.4%	5.5%	5.3%	5.7%	5.0%	5.7%
65+	1.7%	1.8%	1.9%	2.3%	1.7%	2.2%
All Ages	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

¹⁷ AmeriCorps. "AmeriCorps NCCC". <https://americorps.gov/serve/americorps/americorps-nccc>

“Getting Things Done” Pathway Questions

8a: I Can Always Manage To Solve Difficult Problems If I Try Hard Enough

AmeriCorps seeks to instill motivation in members to solve community issues and develop an attitude to take action. The results in Figure 8A.1 show that upon exiting their programs, more than 86 percent of all members from 2017 to 2022 felt they could solve difficult problems if they tried hard enough. Over 90 percent of members aged between 18 to 24 and 25 to 44 agreed with this statement during this period. All age groups from 2021 to 2022 experienced decreases (though no group displayed greater than a 2.4 percentage point decrease).

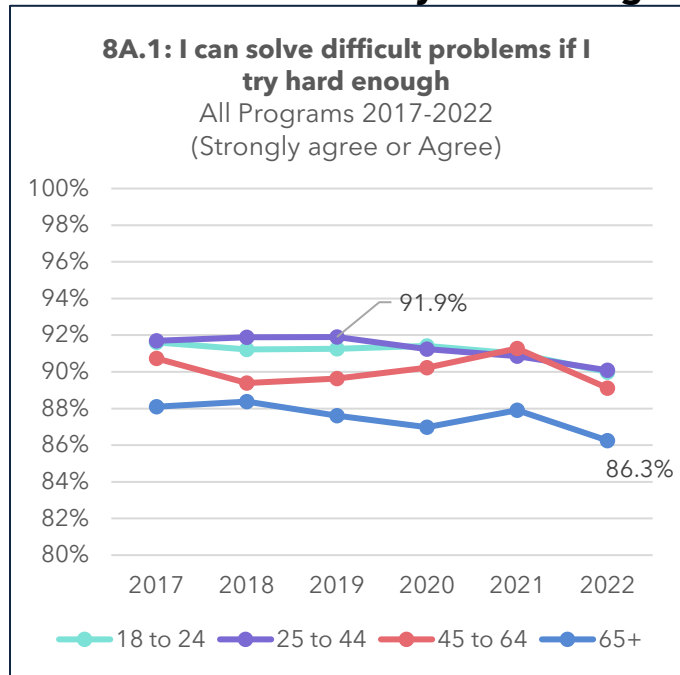
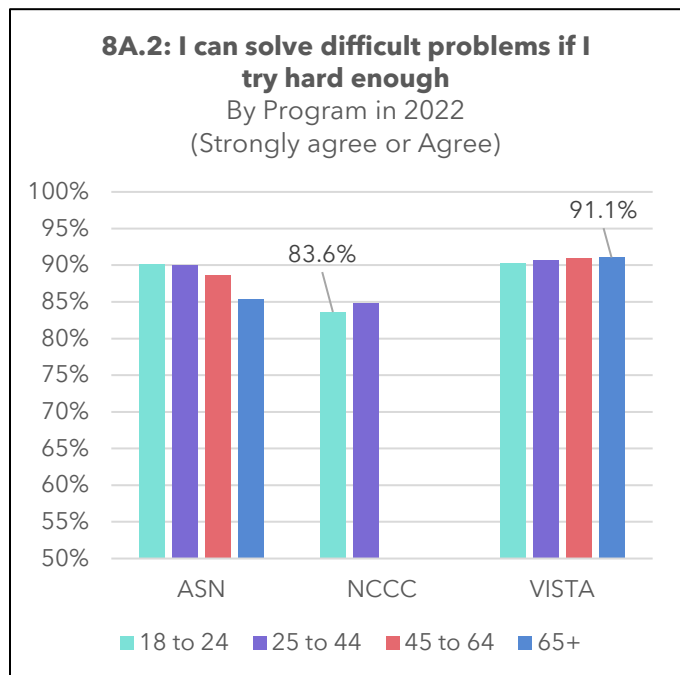
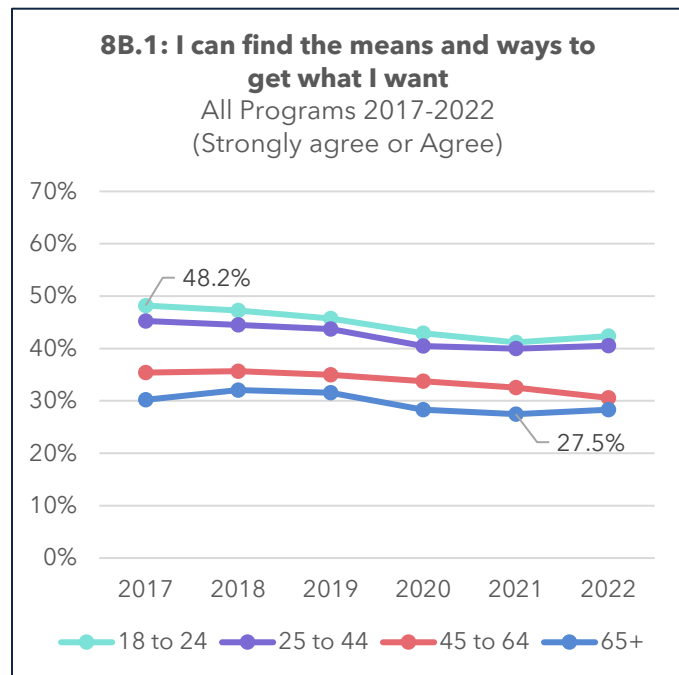


Figure 8A.2 shows that in 2022 a majority of members across all programs and ages generally felt they could solve difficult problems if they tried hard enough. Although percentages slightly vary by age group, there is less variation across programs themselves - NCCC members agreed with this statement slightly less than ASN or VISTA members, but still reported a high level of agreement overall.

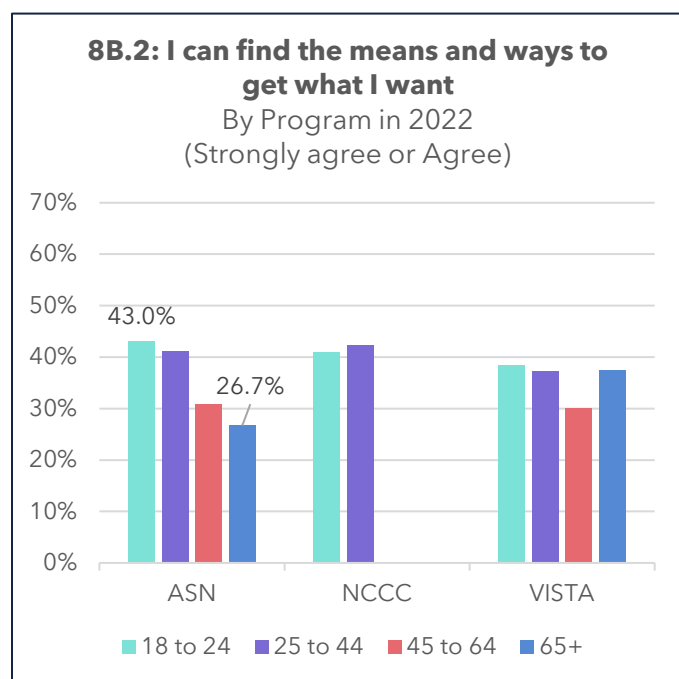


8B: If Someone Opposes Me, I Can Find the Means and Ways to Get What I Want

AmeriCorps members will have to navigate opposition while serving, learning how to better work with colleagues or community members as a result. At face value, an AmeriCorps member's perception of their ability to overcome opposition diminishes with age. From 2017 to 2022, less than 50 percent of members across all programs agreed with the statement: "If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want" (Figure 8B.1). Younger members overall felt they could get what they wanted more than those aged 45 and up, although all age groups trended downward from 2017 to 2022. Of all questions asked, question 8b received the lowest percentages of members agreeing with the statement in question. Though not definitively the reason why, the framing of this question itself may have possibly affected this question's responses given it can invoke notions of manipulation.

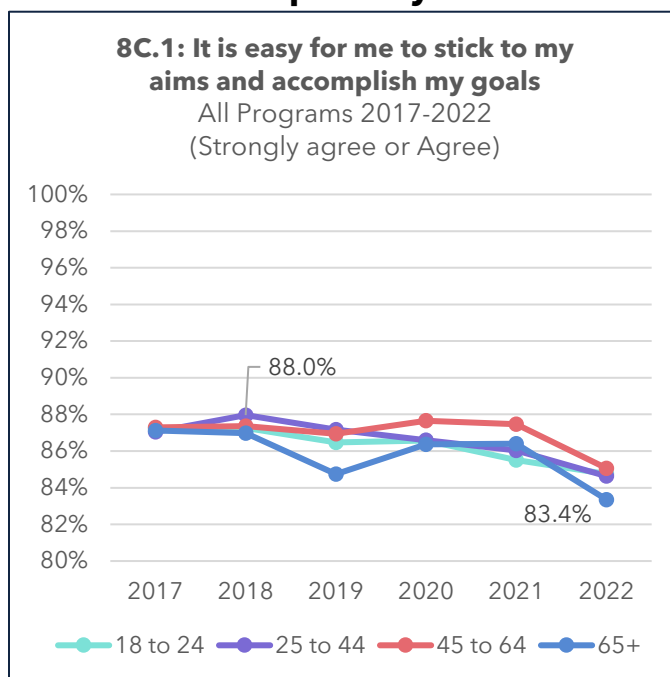


In 2022, members aged 18 to 24 and 25 to 44 across all programs proportionately felt they could find the means and ways to get what they want more than members aged 45 to 64 and 65+ (Figure 8b.2). A notable exception being VISTA members aged 65+ who reported similar levels of agreement as younger VISTA members. This is the only question where NCCC members outscore another program's members.



8C: It is Easy for Me to Stick to my Aims and Accomplish my Goals

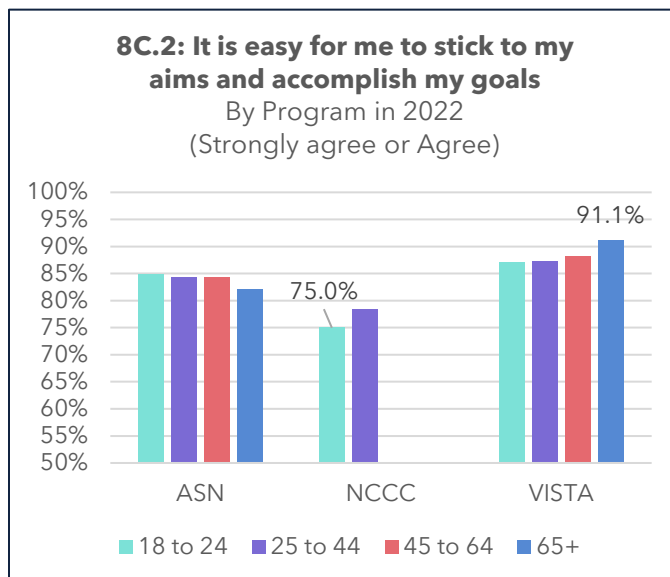
“Getting things done” encompasses the ability to self-start, go beyond what is required, be consistent in effort, and persevere in the face of challenge. From 2017 to 2022, more than 83 percent of members across all programs felt like they could easily stick to their aims and accomplish their goals (Figure 8C.1). Though the responses of all age groups each year trended downward over time, all age groups generally responded to this question at consistently similar rates.



A note on decreasing values starting in 2020/2021:

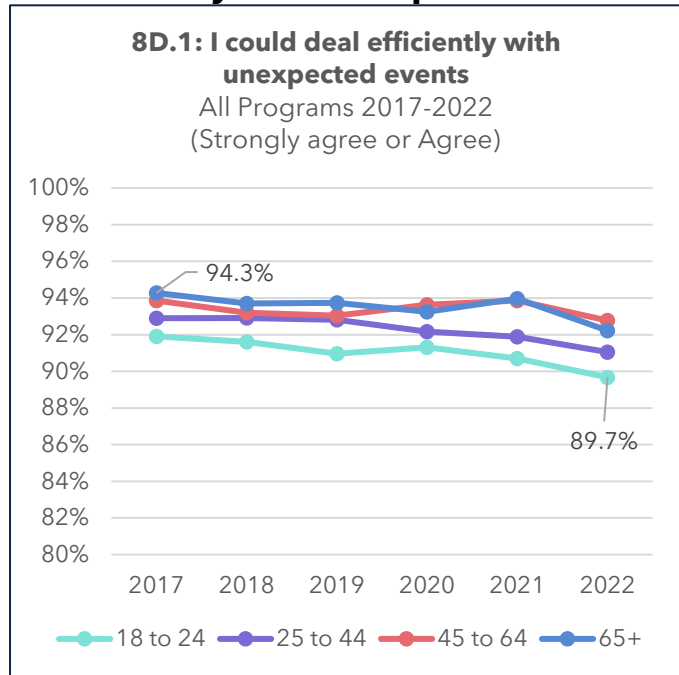
Several graphs display a percentage decline in “Strongly agree” and “Agree” responses starting in 2020 and 2021. Though not tested, the prevalence of the COVID 19 pandemic certainly affected responses to the MES as it did to all facets of society. COVID’s effects on the AmeriCorps member experience should be considered when examining trends in MES data.

In 2022, almost all age groups across AmeriCorps programs reported at least 82 percent of members feeling that they could stick to their aims and accomplish their goals (Figure 8C.2). The proportion of VISTA members that agreed with this statement in 2022 increased with age, and all VISTA age groups outscored all ASN and NCCC members. ASN members responded consistently across age, whereas older NCCC members (25 to 44) agreed they could stick to their aims and accomplish their goals proportionately more than younger NCCC members (18 to 24), of which only 75% agreed.

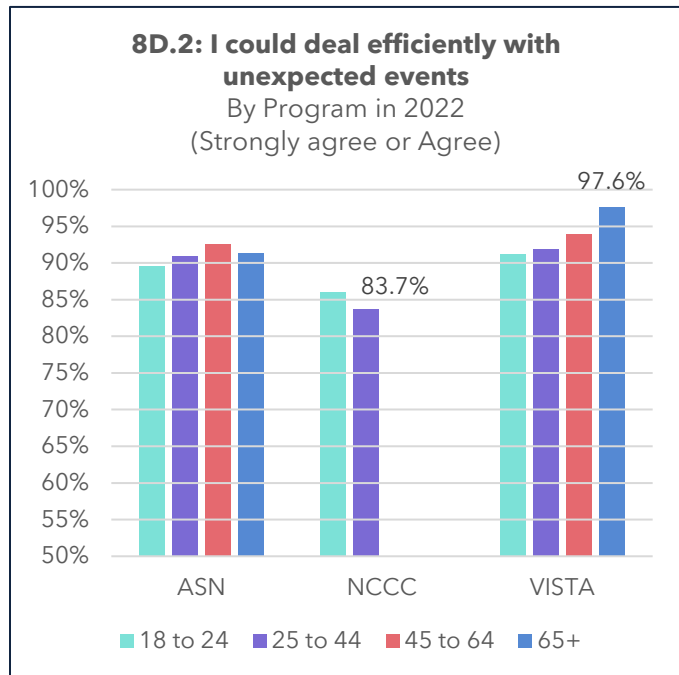


8D. I Am Confident That I Could Deal Efficiently with Unexpected Events

Successful experiences have the potential to generate higher levels of self-confidence to handle unexpected events, and an AmeriCorps term of service offers many opportunities for said successful experiences. Results show that across all ages from 2017 to 2022, more than 89 percent of all members felt confident in their ability to deal efficiently with unexpected events (Figure 8D.1). Older members felt they could deal with unexpected events more than did younger members, though all age groups felt confident in their abilities overall.

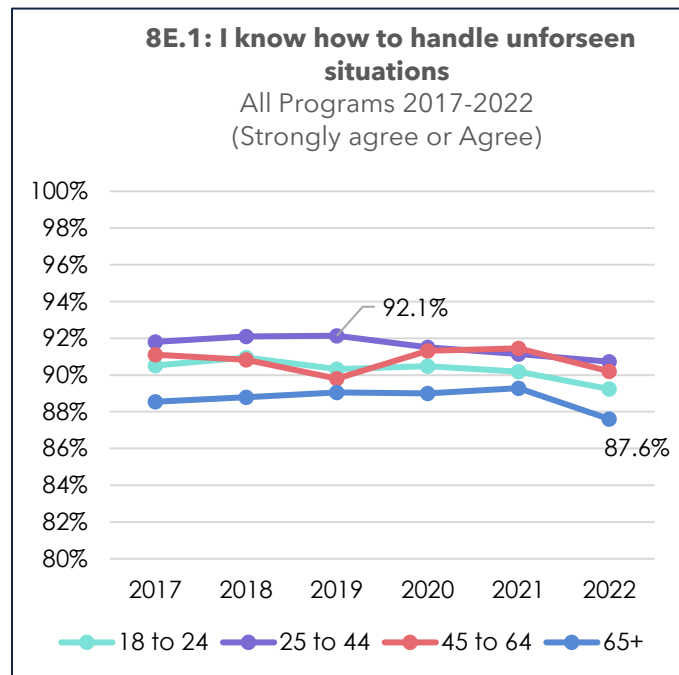


In 2022, larger proportions of VISTA members across all ages felt they could deal with unexpected events than could ASN and NCCC members (Figure 8D.2). Whereas other programs' members responded more favorably with age, the opposite held true for NCCC. Older NCCC members felt they could deal with unexpected events less than did NCCC members aged 18 to 24. Regardless of how the data is disaggregated, a majority of members across all programs agreed with this question.

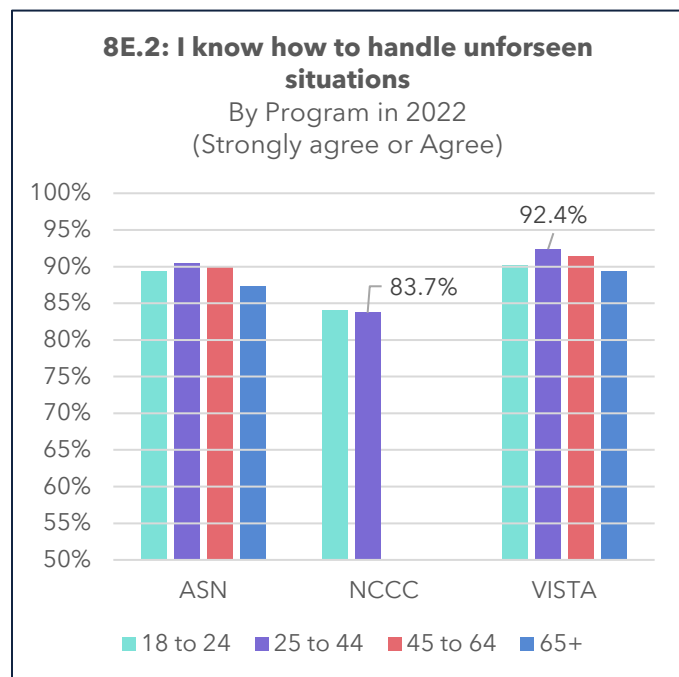


8E. Thanks To My Resourcefulness, I Know How to Handle Unforeseen Situations

Similarly, to the previous question, AmeriCorps members are often tasked to think on their feet and act adaptively. From 2017 to 2022, more than 87 percent of members across all ages felt that thanks to their resourcefulness, they knew how to handle unforeseen situations (Figure 8E.1). Though the proportion of members agreeing with this question fell over time for all age groups, members consistently reported feeling resourceful and capable to handle unforeseen situations, with members aged 25 to 44 narrowly surpassing their peers.

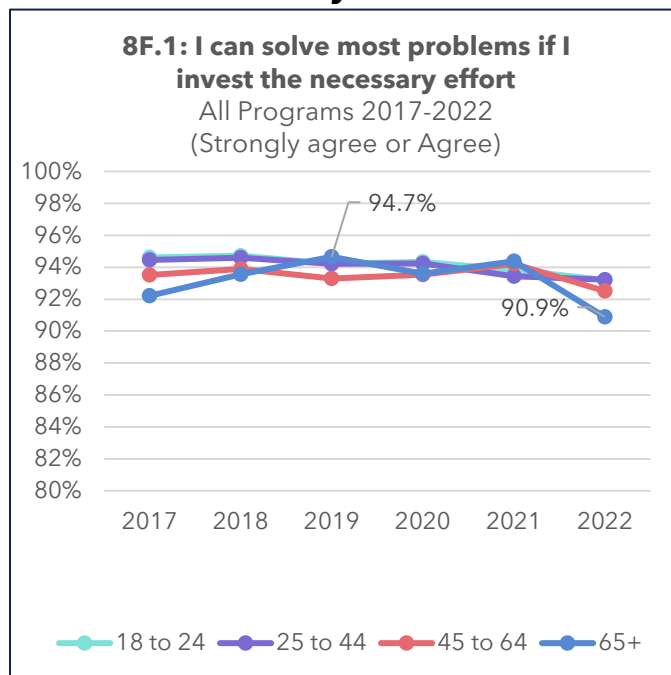


Across all age groups and programs in 2022, AmeriCorps members felt that they could handle unforeseen situations (Figure 8E.2). Although over 80 percent of NCCC members across all ages agreed with the question, NCCC members represented the smallest proportion of members across all programs and ages. Every age group of VISTA members felt they could handle unforeseen situations slightly more than ASN members of similar age groups.

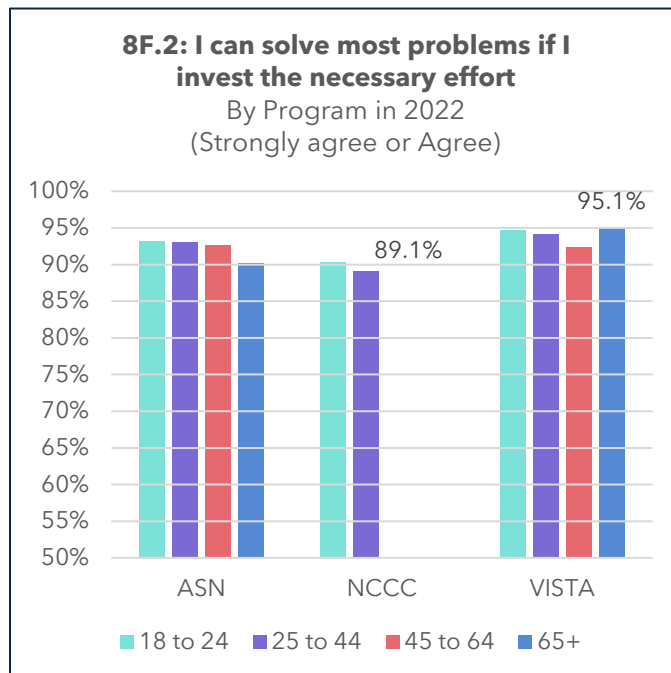


8F. I Can Solve Most Problems If I Invest the Necessary Effort

When challenges and problems arise in the course of their service, members are faced with the choice of giving up and moving on or sticking with the task at hand until it is resolved. Members overwhelmingly believe in their ability to put enough effort in to see through issues. Upon exiting service from 2017 to 2022, more than 90 percent of members across all ages felt they could solve most problems if they invested the necessary effort (Figure 8F.1). All age groups responded favorably overall to this question, with little variation year to year or age group to age group.

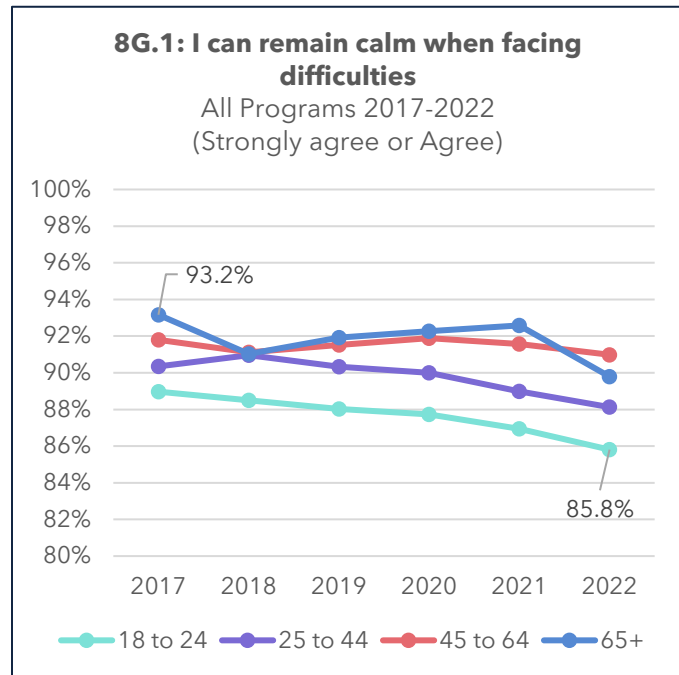


Even when broken down by program in 2022, a large majority of members across age groups and AmeriCorps programs felt they could solve most problems if they invested the necessary effort (Figure 8F.2). Though NCCC members proportionately agreed the least amongst programs, they reported similar percentages as other programs. Over 89 percent of all NCCC members felt they could solve problems if they invested the necessary effort, and furthermore only marginal differences exist between age groups of ASN and VISTA members. Younger ASN members slightly outscored older ASN members, and the oldest VISTA members (65+) slightly outscored younger VISTA members.

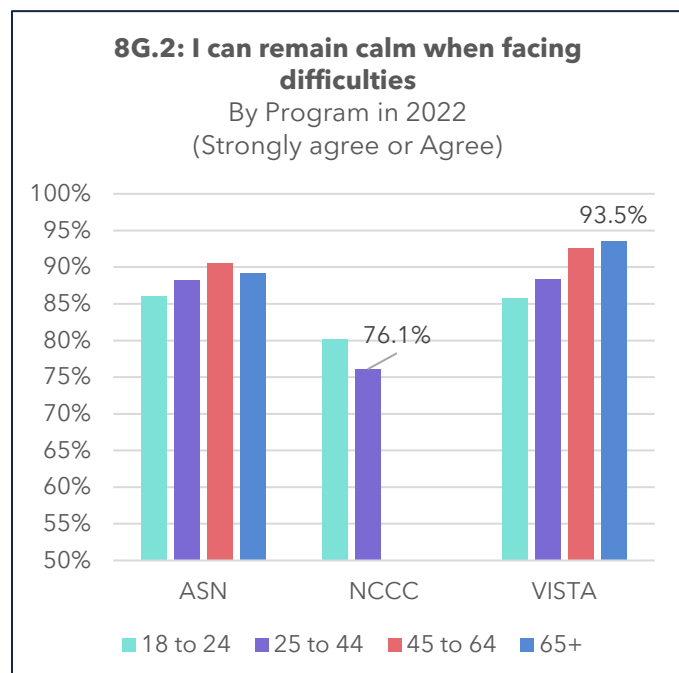


8G. I Can Remain Calm When Facing Difficulties Because I Can Rely on My Coping Abilities

Many opportunities arise for AmeriCorps members to strategically navigate challenges while serving. Members can practice remaining composed and collected as they solve issues. From 2017 to 2022, more than 85 percent of members felt they could rely on their coping abilities to remain calm when facing difficulties (Figure 8G.1). Notably however, all each year's responses for all age groups present a downward trend over time.

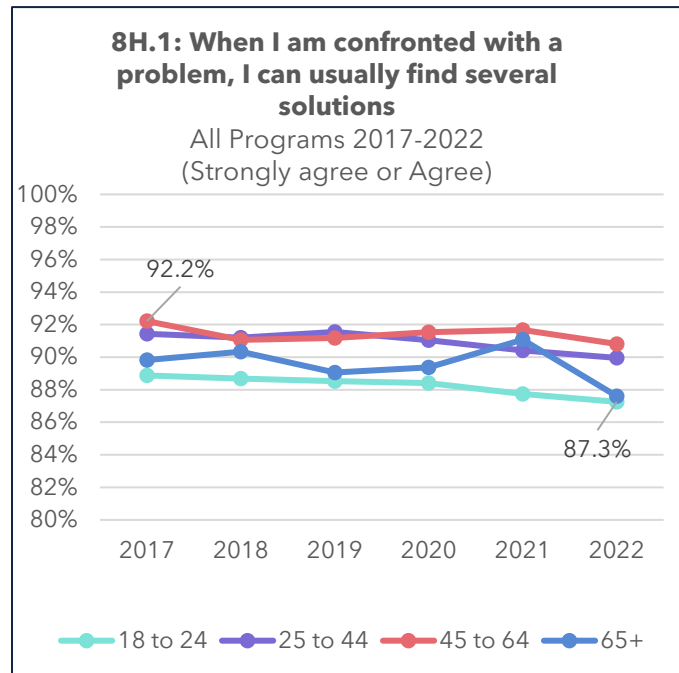


As seen in the previous figure, older members feel they can rely on their coping abilities to remain calm more than younger members even when broken down by program, the exception being older NCCC members (Figure 8G.2). In 2022, AmeriCorps VISTA members reported the highest proportion of agreeing with this question across all age groups, whereas NCCC members reported the lowest proportions.

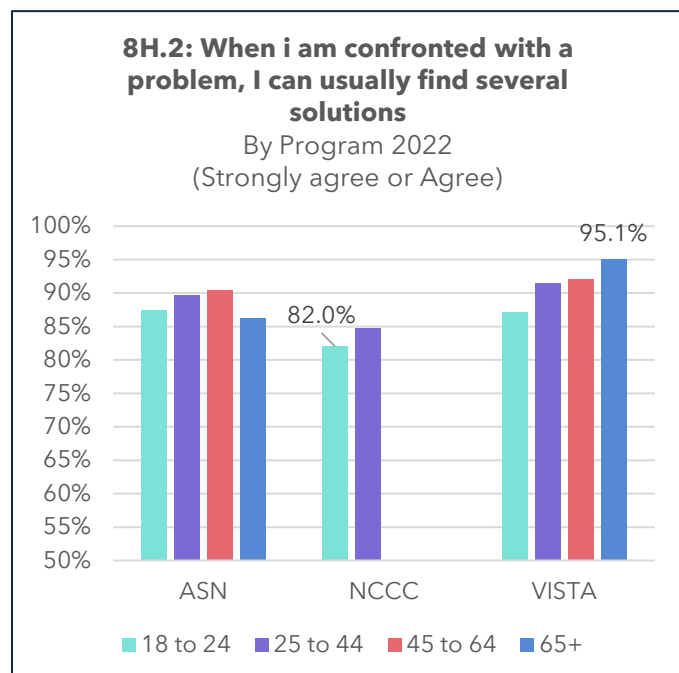


8H. When I Am Confronted with a Problem, I Can Usually Find Several Solutions

Thinking creatively is also key for AmeriCorps members to navigate challenges while serving. Between 2017 to 2022 more than 87 percent of all members felt they could find several solutions when confronted with problems (Figure 8H.1). Though most age groups agreed with this question, members aged 18 to 24 consistently agreed with this question the least out of all age groups, albeit not by a large difference.

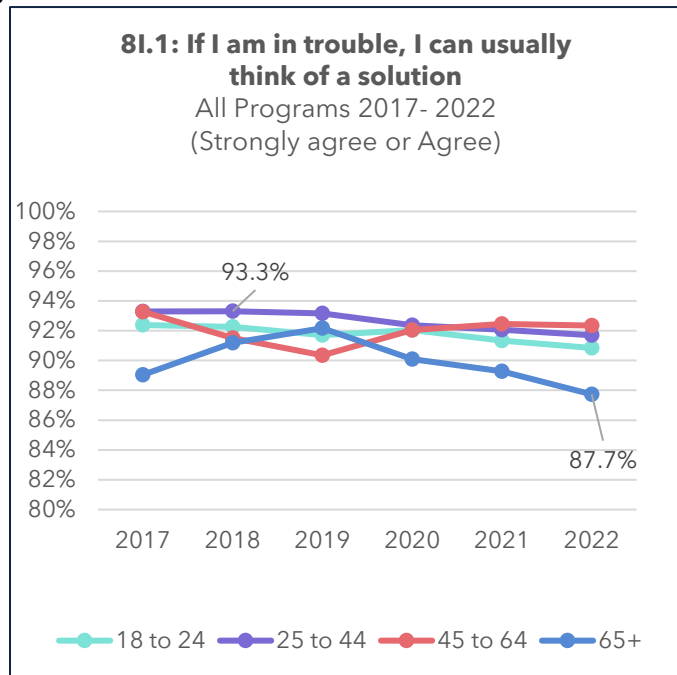


In 2022, similarly to other questions analyzed thus far, age is typically correlated with an increased proportion of members that agree with the question. An exception here are ASN members aged 65+ that represent the smallest proportion of ASN members that felt they could find several solutions when confronted with a problem. This runs counter to VISTA members aged 65+ who reported the largest proportion (95.1 percent) of members agreeing to the question (Figure 8H.2).

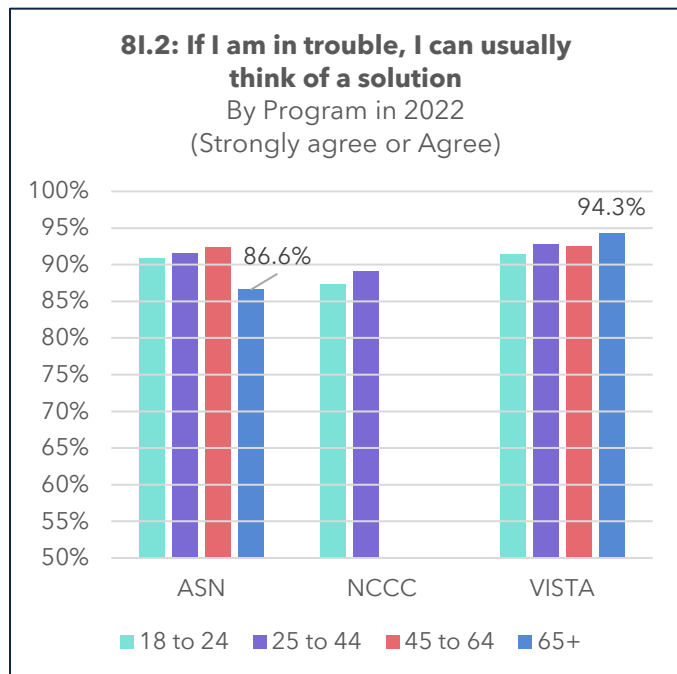


8I. If I Am in Trouble, I Can Usually Think of a Solution

While serving, AmeriCorps members can develop the personal initiative and grit needed to create community change after service. Challenges, roadblocks, and frustrations experienced while serving are similar to those they will experience in the professional world. From 2017 to 2022 more than 87 percent of members across all programs felt that they could usually think of a solution if they were in trouble (Figure 8I.1). Since 2019, members aged 65+ have consistently reported a downward trend to this question though responses remain high overall.

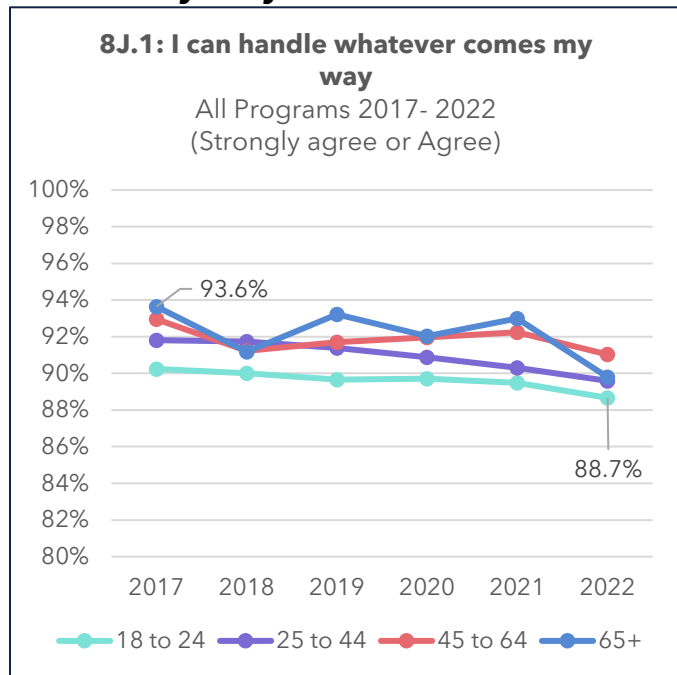


In 2022, a majority of all members across programs and age groups felt that they could think of solutions when they are in trouble (Figure 8I.2). When disaggregating by program, VISTA members aged 65+ proportionately agreed with the question the most, whereas ASN members aged 65+ agreed proportionately the least. Smaller proportions of NCCC members agreed they could think of solutions when in trouble than ASN or VISTA members of the same age.

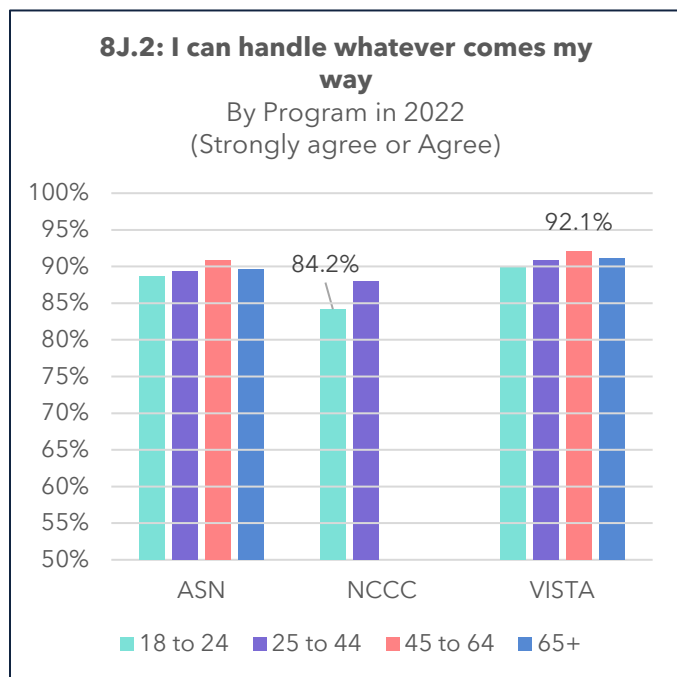


8J. I Can Usually Handle Whatever Comes My Way

AmeriCorps members can develop change and action orientations to the world, a positive self-orientation, and a sense of self-confidence through service. Since 2017, more than 88 percent of members across all programs felt they could handle whatever came their way (Figure 8J.1). Across all years, the youngest members (18 to 24 years old) agreed with this question the least out of all age groups. Like the questions before it, all age groups display a downward trend over time, but still present a picture where a large majority of members feel they can overcome difficulties.



In 2022, members overall agreed that they could handle whatever came their way (Figure 8J.2). NCCC members proportionately agreed with this question less than ASN or VISTA members regardless of age, and NCCC members aged 25 to 44 agreed more than NCCC members aged 18 to 24.



Conclusions and Considerations

During their service, AmeriCorps members have many opportunities to develop and deploy the *internal* and *external* assets necessary to succeed in future endeavors. As members solve problems, find solutions, accomplish goals, and deal with unexpected events, they learn, apply, and internalize self-starting, proactive behavior to “get things done”. Service experiences can prime AmeriCorps members to take the grit and initiative they developed through service with them through the rest of their lives.

For younger members in particular, national service can provide them with unparalleled experiences and skills their peers may not have otherwise received. Serving during the period in their lives known as “emerging adulthood”, younger members can use their AmeriCorps service to define their identities and beliefs.

For older members, national service can provide opportunities to apply their experiences and abilities, as well as opportunities to grow new skills.

Overall, even when Member Exit Survey data is disaggregated by age group and AmeriCorps program over multiple years, most members report feeling they can “get things done for America”. Members overwhelmingly feel they can:

- Invest enough effort and commit to solving difficult problems
- Stick to their aims and accomplish their goals
- Confidently handle unforeseen situations and deal with unexpected events thanks to their resourcefulness
- Rely on their coping abilities to remain calm when facing difficulties
- Think creatively and come up with multiple solutions to challenges that arise during service

Though the data between fiscal years 2017 and 2022 show overall downward trends in the percentage of members agreeing with each question each year, responses to the MES still demonstrate how a large majority of members still exhibit the necessary traits to be successful in creating community change after their hands-on-experience serving in the field and working within communities.

Effects of COVID-19 on MES Responses

During the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person activities and interactions declined across all facets of society, specifically volunteering.¹⁸ MES data shows several dips in affirmative responses across multiple questions coinciding with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. Whereas many AmeriCorps programs emphasize the in-person nature of national service and teamwork, the opportunities for working together to achieve common goals were less prevalent during this period. The MES questions have not been updated since 2016 and therefore do not specifically

¹⁸ AmeriCorps. “Volunteering and Civic Life in America”. <https://americorps.gov/about/our-impact/volunteering-civic-life>.

inquire about the role the COVID-19 pandemic or any other catastrophic event may have played in the member service experience.

Effects of Age, Education, and AmeriCorps Program on MES Responses

Disaggregating 2022 data by age and program demonstrates some differences between groups. Particularly:

- Older VISTA members (aged 65+) respond more favorably than any other age/program group in ASN, NCCC, or VISTA for 7 out of 10 questions
- VISTA members respond more favorably across all age groups than ASN and NCCC members of the same age in 6 out of 10 questions
- NCCC members of all ages respond least favorably to 9 out of 10 questions across all other program/age groups
- ASN members across all age groups generally respond less favorably than VISTA members of the same age, but will still generally respond more favorably than NCCC members regardless of age.
- There does not appear to be a uniform correlation between age and favorability of responses amongst ASN and NCCC members across all questions.

Perhaps due to older members entering AmeriCorps service with more lived experience or higher levels of educational attainment, they may already possess higher aptitudes for “getting things done”. Existing levels of self-confidence and initiative may explain older members’ more favorable responses. Table 2 earlier in this report shows that ASN and VISTA have the closest distributions of age amongst programs with slight differences, though both programs’ members skew older than NCCC.

NCCC members on average do not have as high levels of educational attainment as ASN or VISTA members, largely attributable to the younger average age of NCCC members. NCCC corps members are required to be aged 18-26 upon the start of their service, therefore are less likely to have the same degrees of lived experience as older AmeriCorps members.

Like the potential for lived experience to affect how a member responds to the MES, the choice of AmeriCorps program may affect a member’s responses as well. Across all programs, AmeriCorps members will participate in many of the same kinds of activities and have similar experiences as they “get things done”, though inherent differences exist between the three AmeriCorps programs. Future work exploring this topic can further answer how specific activities or kinds of service projects more often featured in specific programs may affect a member’s opportunities to develop their grit, initiative, and drive.

Future Work - Using the *General Self-Efficacy Scale*

The ten questions comprising the “Getting Things Done” pathway of the MES are taken from the General Self-Efficacy Scale developed by Schwarzer and Jerusalem.¹⁹ Whereas the Self-Efficacy Scale is meant to provide an overall score of self-efficacy by finding the sum of the ten questions, the MES ask participants to answer these question through Likert scale response options. The existing MES questions therefore cannot adequately explain the level of an AmeriCorps member’s self-efficacy, though the MES can still speak to members’ self-confidence to persevere through adversity. Future iterations of the MES and the forthcoming Pre- and Post-Service Participant survey will re-introduce these ten questions to match how the General Self-Efficacy Scale asks its questions.



¹⁹ Schwarzer, R., & Jerusalem, M. (1995). General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) [Database record]. APA PsycTests. <https://doi.org/10.1037/t00393-000>

Appendix: Percentage of Affirmative Responses by Question, Year, and Program

Respondents could answer each question using one of five options on a Likert Scale. The tables below show the percentage of members that responded with either of the two affirmative responses (“Strongly agree” or “Agree”) to each question. Responses are organized by question, age group, year, and program.

Question 8: How much do you agree or disagree that each of the following statements describes you?

(Strongly Agree or Agree)

8a) I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.

By Age from 2017 to 2022

Year	18 to 24	25 to 44	45 to 64	65+
2017	91.6%	91.7%	90.7%	88.1%
2018	91.2%	91.9%	89.4%	88.4%
2019	91.3%	91.9%	89.6%	87.6%
2020	91.4%	91.2%	90.2%	87.0%
2021	91.0%	90.8%	91.3%	87.9%
2022	90.0%	90.1%	89.1%	86.3%

By Program and Age in 2022

Age	ASN	NCCC	VISTA
18 to 24	90.2%	83.6%	90.3%
25 to 44	90.0%	84.8%	90.7%
45 to 64	88.7%		90.9%
65+	85.4%		91.1%

8b) If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.

By Age from 2017 to 2022

Year	18 to 24	25 to 44	45 to 64	65+
2017	48.2%	45.3%	35.4%	30.2%
2018	47.3%	44.5%	35.7%	32.1%
2019	45.7%	43.7%	35.0%	31.6%
2020	42.9%	40.4%	33.8%	28.3%
2021	41.2%	40.0%	32.5%	27.5%
2022	42.4%	40.5%	30.6%	28.3%

By Program and Age in 2022

Age	ASN	NCCC	VISTA
18 to 24	43.0%	41.0%	38.4%
25 to 44	41.1%	42.4%	37.1%
45 to 64	30.7%		30.0%
65+	26.7%		37.4%

8c) It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.

By Age from 2017 to 2022

Year	18 to 24	25 to 44	45 to 64	65+
2017	87.2%	87.0%	87.3%	87.1%
2018	87.3%	88.0%	87.4%	87.0%
2019	86.5%	87.2%	86.9%	84.7%
2020	86.6%	86.6%	87.7%	86.4%
2021	85.5%	86.0%	87.5%	86.4%
2022	84.8%	84.6%	85.1%	83.4%

By Program and Age in 2022

Age	ASN	NCCC	VISTA
18 to 24	84.8%	75.0%	87.0%
25 to 44	84.2%	78.3%	87.3%
45 to 64	84.4%		88.1%
65+	82.0%		91.1%

Appendix, continued:

Question 8: How much do you agree or disagree that each of the following statements describes you?

(Strongly Agree or Agree)

8d) I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.

By Age from 2017 to 2022

Year	18 to 24	25 to 44	45 to 64	65+
2017	91.9%	92.9%	93.9%	94.3%
2018	91.6%	92.9%	93.2%	93.7%
2019	91.0%	92.8%	93.0%	93.7%
2020	91.3%	92.2%	93.6%	93.2%
2021	90.7%	91.9%	93.9%	94.0%
2022	89.7%	91.1%	92.8%	92.2%

By Program and Age in 2022

Age	ASN	NCCC	VISTA
18 to 24	89.6%	86.0%	91.2%
25 to 44	91.0%	83.7%	91.8%
45 to 64	92.5%		94.0%
65+	91.3%		97.6%

8e) Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.

By Age from 2017 to 2022

Year	18 to 24	25 to 44	45 to 64	65+
2017	90.5%	91.8%	91.1%	88.6%
2018	91.0%	92.1%	90.8%	88.8%
2019	90.3%	92.1%	89.8%	89.0%
2020	90.5%	91.5%	91.3%	89.0%
2021	90.2%	91.1%	91.5%	89.3%
2022	89.2%	90.7%	90.2%	87.6%

By Program and Age in 2022

Age	ASN	NCCC	VISTA
18 to 24	89.3%	84.1%	90.2%
25 to 44	90.5%	83.7%	92.4%
45 to 64	89.9%		91.4%
65+	87.3%		89.4%

8f) I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.

By Age from 2017 to 2022

Year	18 to 24	25 to 44	45 to 64	65+
2017	94.6%	94.5%	93.5%	92.2%
2018	94.7%	94.6%	93.9%	93.6%
2019	94.2%	94.2%	93.3%	94.7%
2020	94.3%	94.2%	93.5%	93.6%
2021	93.8%	93.4%	94.2%	94.4%
2022	93.2%	93.2%	92.5%	90.9%

By Program and Age in 2022

Age	ASN	NCCC	VISTA
18 to 24	93.1%	90.3%	94.6%
25 to 44	93.1%	89.1%	94.2%
45 to 64	92.6%		92.3%
65+	90.1%		95.1%



Appendix, continued:

Question 8: How much do you agree or disagree that each of the following statements describes you?

(Strongly Agree or Agree)

8g) I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.

By Age from 2017 to 2022

Year	18 to 24	25 to 44	45 to 64	65+
2017	89.0%	90.4%	91.8%	93.2%
2018	88.5%	91.0%	91.1%	91.0%
2019	88.0%	90.3%	91.5%	91.9%
2020	87.7%	90.0%	91.9%	92.3%
2021	86.9%	89.0%	91.6%	92.6%
2022	85.8%	88.1%	91.0%	89.8%

By Program and Age in 2022

Age	ASN	NCCC	VISTA
18 to 24	86.0%	80.2%	85.8%
25 to 44	88.2%	76.1%	88.4%
45 to 64	90.6%		92.6%
65+	89.1%		93.5%

8h) When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.

By Age from 2017 to 2022

Year	18 to 24	25 to 44	45 to 64	65+
2017	88.9%	91.4%	92.2%	89.8%
2018	88.7%	91.2%	91.1%	90.3%
2019	88.5%	91.5%	91.2%	89.0%
2020	88.4%	91.0%	91.5%	89.4%
2021	87.7%	90.4%	91.7%	91.1%
2022	87.3%	90.0%	90.8%	87.6%

By Program and Age in 2022

Age	ASN	NCCC	VISTA
18 to 24	87.5%	82.0%	87.2%
25 to 44	89.7%	84.8%	91.5%
45 to 64	90.5%		92.1%
65+	86.3%		95.1%

8i) If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution.

By Age from 2017 to 2022

Year	18 to 24	25 to 44	45 to 64	65+
2017	92.4%	93.3%	93.3%	89.0%
2018	92.3%	93.3%	91.5%	91.2%
2019	91.7%	93.2%	90.3%	92.2%
2020	92.0%	92.4%	92.1%	90.1%
2021	91.3%	92.1%	92.5%	89.3%
2022	90.8%	91.7%	92.3%	87.7%

By Program and Age in 2022

Age	ASN	NCCC	VISTA
18 to 24	90.9%	87.3%	91.3%
25 to 44	91.5%	89.1%	92.7%
45 to 64	92.3%		92.6%
65+	86.6%		94.3%

Appendix, continued:

Question 8: How much do you agree or disagree that each of the following statements describes you?
(Strongly Agree or Agree)

8j) I can usually handle whatever comes my way.					By Program and Age in 2022			
By Age from 2017 to 2022					By Program and Age in 2022			
Year	18 to 24	25 to 44	45 to 64	65+	Age	ASN	NCCC	VISTA
2017	90.2%	91.8%	93.0%	93.6%	18 to 24	88.7%	84.2%	89.8%
2018	90.0%	91.7%	91.2%	91.2%	25 to 44	89.4%	88.0%	90.8%
2019	89.7%	91.4%	91.7%	93.2%	45 to 64	90.8%		92.1%
2020	89.7%	90.9%	92.0%	92.0%	65+	89.6%		91.1%
2021	89.5%	90.3%	92.2%	93.0%				
2022	88.7%	89.6%	91.0%	89.8%				

