

Volunteerism in Canada

SCOUT CANADA NATIONAL CONFERENCE
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BÉNÉVOLES
CANADA

Volunteer Canada



Vision – Involved Canadians build strong and connected communities to create a vibrant Canada.



Mission – Volunteer Canada provides national leadership and expertise on volunteerism to increase the participation, quality and diversity of volunteer experiences.

We work
with...



Volunteer Centres



Volunteers



Non-profit Organizations



Governments



Business



Educational Institutions

What we do

- 1. Provide leadership and expertise on volunteerism**
 - Research, knowledge products and standards of practice
 - Inform public policy (e.g. Special Senate Committee Report on the Charitable Sector)
- 2. Promote and facilitate volunteer engagement**
 - National Volunteer Week (April 19-25, 2020)
 - Pan-Canadian Youth Opportunities Platform (youth.volunteer.ca)
- 3. Convene, connect and collaborate with all sectors**
 - 1000+ member organizations
 - Volunteer Centre Council
 - Corporate Community Engagement Council

Volunteering in Canada



44% of Canadians 15 years and older volunteer



12.7 million Canadian volunteer



On average, they each give 154 hours per year

Volunteer Rates, Hours and Numbers

	2004	2007	2010	2013
Volunteer Rate (percentage)	45	46	47	44
Average annual volunteer hours	168	166	156	154
Number of volunteers (million)	11.8	12.5	13.3	12.7

Statistics Canada, General Social Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2013
Canada Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2004, 2007, 2010

Volunteer Rate (%) By Age

	2004	2007	2010	2013
Age				
15-19	65	65	66	66
20-24	43	47	48	42
25-34	42	40	46	42
35-44	51	52	54	48
45-54	47	48	45	45
55-64	42	40	41	41
65-74	39	40	40	38
75 and over	23	29	31	27

Statistics Canada, General Social Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2013
Canada Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2004, 2007, 2010

Volunteer Hours

- Youth (15 to 19 years) are more engaged with 66% volunteering an average of 110 hours per year.
- While the volunteer rate decreases with age, older adults (55 and over) continue to contribute the most (39%) of all hours.
- Consistent with previous years, over half of all volunteer hours are given by 10% of volunteers.
- Most of these volunteers, volunteer on a daily or weekly basis, giving 372 hours or more annually.
- Combined, the top 25% of volunteers give 77% of all volunteer hours.

Episodic and Informal Volunteering

- 37% of Canadian volunteer activities are episodic, meaning occurring one to four times a year.
- Episodic volunteers give an average of 36 hours per year.
- 82% of Canadians volunteer informally, meaning helping people directly, without the involvement of an organization or group.
- The informal volunteer rate is highest (91%) among young Canadians aged 15-19 and decreases with age.

Employer Supported Volunteering

- Employer-supported volunteering (ESV) is any activity undertaken by an employer to encourage and support the volunteering of their employees in the community.
- Two-thirds of the 12.7 million Canadians who volunteered in 2013 were employed part-time or full-time. 55% of these individuals, constituting 4.7 million volunteers, indicated that they had received some sort of formal employer support. This included:
 - changing hours or reducing workload
 - allowing use of facilities or equipment to carry out volunteer tasks
 - providing recognition or a letter of thanks
 - offering paid time off

Recruitment – Those Who Volunteer

- Almost half of volunteers actively sought out their volunteer opportunities.
- The next most common way volunteers got involved was through simply being asked to volunteer.
- 6% of Canadian volunteers got involved by responding to an online ad, and 8% to a poster or newspaper ad.
- 26% of Canadians aged 35 and under looked for volunteer positions over the Internet.

Recruitment – Those Who Don't

- Two-thirds of Canadians who don't volunteer don't get involved due to lack of time.
- 62% feel they aren't in a position to make a long-term commitment.
- 51% report not getting involved because no one asked.
- 27% report not getting involved because they did not know how to become involved.
- There is clearly an opportunity to better promote how to volunteer.

Expanding Definition of Volunteering

- While 12.7 million Canadians volunteer through organizations, we know that this does not reflect the whole picture of the generosity of Canadians.
- Individuals are mounting public awareness and social advocacy campaigns, raising funds through digital channels, organizing events, and mobilizing people around issues that matter to them.
- Others are crowd sourcing funds to pay for funerals, attend school, start a new business, produce something they have invented, participate in a peace mission, or retrofit a van to make it accessible.
- Canadians are making informed decisions about their consumption habits based on a company's corporate social responsibility practices and are making lifestyle changes to reflect their social and environmental concerns.

Reflections

- Informal volunteering has always existed
- Most community organizations were founded by individuals who were informal volunteers
- Formal and formal volunteering have been functioning side by side and will continue to do so
- What's different now: change in people's habits and expectations, aided by developments in technology and communications

Micro and Digital Volunteering

- Digital and micro volunteering are becoming more prominent
- Canadians are looking for new ways to contribute to causes and issues they care about, in short bursts of time, on their own schedule, and in convenient, low commitment ways.
- Both community organizations and volunteers benefit from this new form of volunteering, however, a need for formal, longer-term volunteering remains.
- Given the changing demographics and high levels of volunteer engagement among youth, it is important to understand how youth in particular are embracing and growing the micro and digital volunteering space.

Enriching the Volunteer Experience

- In 2010, we began hearing about a new issue - a growing gap between what volunteers look for and the opportunities organizations offer.
- Unlike earlier surveys that emphasized overall participation rates, this new research captured what Canadians want in their volunteer experiences, their issues in finding satisfying volunteer roles, and what organizations can do to enhance their volunteer base, achieve their missions and ultimately build stronger communities.
- Our methodology included a literature review of over 200 documents, a general population phone survey of 1,016 Canadian households, a survey of 551 volunteers, 18 focus groups with 236 participants in both urban and rural settings, and an online survey of 208 non-profit and voluntary organizations. All primary research was conducted in Canada.

Gaps

- Many people are looking for group activities BUT few organizations have the capacity to offer them
- Many people come with professional skills BUT many professionals are looking for volunteer tasks that involve something different from their work life
- Organizations are expected to clearly define the roles and boundaries of volunteers BUT many volunteers want the flexibility to initiate what they have to offer
- Many organizations still want long-term commitment BUT many more volunteers are looking for shorter-term opportunities
- Many organizations focus on what they need BUT besides helping others, many volunteers come with their own goals to be met

Bridging the Gaps

- Build meaningful relationships with volunteers to better understand where volunteers are in their lifecycle, their goals and skills.
- Human resources should include volunteers. Some policies and benefits apply equally to volunteers and paid staff.
- Volunteers of all ages have multiple demands. These include work, school and family. Organizations benefit from being flexible and accommodating.
- Organizations should be sensitive to gender, culture, language and age. A welcoming and inclusive environment attracts volunteers.
- While many organizations use technology and social media, volunteers want to find more information online.

Gaps - Volunteer Recognition

- Top two ways volunteers want to be recognized
 - 80% stated that they would like to be recognized or thanked by the organization they volunteer for by hearing about how their work has made a difference.
 - Close to 70% stated they would like to be recognized by being thanked in person on an ongoing, informal basis.
- Least preferred ways volunteers want to be recognized
 - Banquets, formal gatherings, and public acknowledgment in newspapers, radio or television.
 - Interestingly, these methods are common forms of recognition for many organizations, with 60% citing banquets and formal gatherings and 50% using public acknowledgement as part of their recognition strategies.

Conclusions

The optimal formula to engage volunteers strikes a balance between:

- Designing specific, set roles and being open to volunteers determining the scope of what they can offer;
- Being well organized but not too bureaucratic; and
- Matching skills to the needs of the organization but not assuming that everyone wants to use the skills related to their profession, trade, or education.

Thank you!

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