

Key Findings about Young Volunteers

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Knowledge Development
Canada Volunteerism Initiative

Développement des connaissances
Initiative canadienne sur le bénévolat

Young people (age 15-34) have a significant rate of volunteering with community groups (33% - 40% in Newfoundland and Labrador, according to the *National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating*)¹, but indications are that they expect different forms of engagement and have different motivations than do older Canadians. They support causes they believe in and tend to use volunteering to enhance employment opportunities by learning job related skills.^{2,3} The Community Services Council explored these issues in rural Newfoundland.

Previous studies tell us that many non-volunteers are willing to become involved with voluntary groups, but may be unaware of the range of volunteer opportunities in their community, have never been asked, have concerns about associated expenses, think they don't have the right skills, or feel unwelcome.⁴ Research has also shown that positive community service experiences early in life tend to lead to continuing involvement and to increased leadership roles. If organizations can effectively recruit young people, they will be cultivating a climate of civic participation and responsibility.⁵

This fact sheet is based on interviews, discussions and surveys, that included 117 nonprofit community groups, 79 young volunteers, and 21 non-volunteers.

¹ Hall, M., McKeown, L., & Roberts, K. (2001). *Caring Canadians, involved Canadians: Highlights from the 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada. www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/71-542-XIE/71-542-XIE00001.pdf.

² Barnard, R., Campbell, D. A. and Smith, S. *Citizen Re:Generation: Understanding Active Citizen Engagement Among Canada's Information Age Generations* (Toronto: D-Code, 2003): <http://www.d-code.com/pdfs/CitizenReGen2003.pdf>.

³ McClintock, N. *Understanding Canadian Volunteers* (Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, 2004): http://www.givingandvolunteering.ca/pdf/reports/Understanding_Volunteers.pdf.

⁴ *Volunteering in Newfoundland and Labrador* (Community Services Council Newfoundland and Labrador, 2003): <http://www.enVision.ca/pdf/FactSheetJan2004.pdf>.

⁵ Locke, F., Rowe, P. and Oliver, R. *The Impact of Participation in the Community Service Component of the Student Work and Service Program (SWASP) on Students' Continuing Involvement in the Voluntary, Community-Based Sector* (Community Services Council Newfoundland and Labrador, 2004): <http://www.envision.ca/pdf/cscpub/SwaspResearchPaper2004.pdf>.

Of participating organizations, 76% had some young volunteers and 38% had young board members. Almost all groups wanted more young volunteers and to have them in more responsible positions.

Why Do Young People Volunteer?

Young people volunteer because it feels good.

- It's satisfying to help others, give back to the community, help the cause, make a difference, fill a need, be involved.
- It's fun to work with the target group, meet people, socialize, and participate in events.
- It's beneficial to the volunteer: they learn, develop skills, get experience, build their résumé, gain confidence, get recognition, share skills and ideas.
- It's something to do: get out of the house, a change from work and studies.

Why Do Young People Not Volunteer?

The most common reasons for not volunteering were:

- time constraints, other responsibilities
- lack of awareness of organizations, opportunities, community need, and benefits
- not being asked
- not interested
- lack confidence or interpersonal skills
- not feeling respected or welcomed
- not given responsibility
- peer pressure, not cool
- transportation issues
- generation gap

What Might Motivate Non-volunteers?

When asked what might motivate them to volunteer, the 21 young non-volunteers said:

- a cause or activity of interest
- feeling they could make a difference and see results / benefits to community or self
- being asked
- greater awareness of opportunities

What Are Young People Doing?

Young volunteers have a wide variety of interests, but the most popular types of groups for volunteering are:

- organizations for children / youth / family
- education / school
- health organizations
- recreation and sports (often with children)

The most common activities young people get involved with are events, including fundraising; various day-to-day activities; coaching, tutoring, or supervising; and serving on boards or executive committees. Desirable attributes of groups and activities are that they relate to personal interests and hobbies; clearly benefit the community; are fun, social, active opportunities; offer training or are career-related; and youth can see the results of their volunteer activity.

How to Attract More Young People

Only 56% of groups in our study had volunteer job descriptions, and only 66% offered orientation and training. We suggest that organizations develop and promote specific volunteer positions and make sure new volunteers receive clear direction and appropriate supervision.

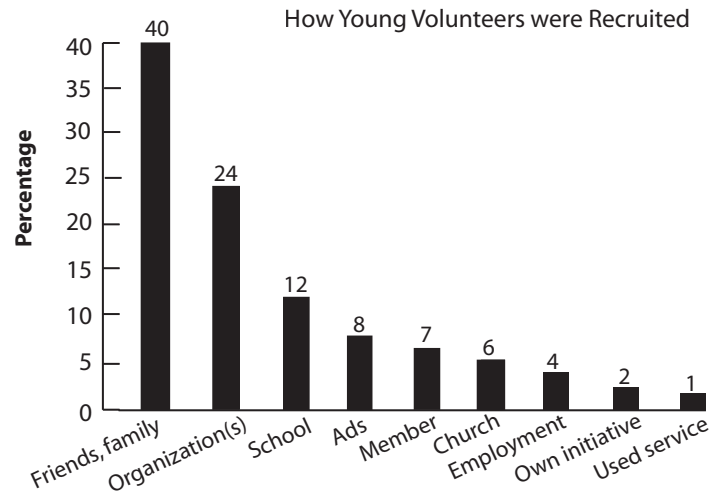
Time constraints and life responsibilities are key factors that stop people from being involved. Most groups say young people are more interested in short-term opportunities than in long-term commitments. The message here is to develop and promote a full range of positions and find a hook to pull young people in. Incentives, appropriate responsibility, respect, recognition, training, skills development, career-relatedness, and age-specific activities are seen as ways to attract more young people.

Influence of Friends and Family

Most volunteers found out about volunteer opportunities from friends and family. Of 82 young volunteers and former volunteers, 76% said their parents had volunteered and 92% said their friends had. Peer pressure as a reason NOT to volunteer is also an issue, as is the lack of role models. Friends and family can have both positive and negative impacts.

Recruitment Strategies

Word of mouth was seen as the best method of recruitment and advertising the least successful. The graph shows how young volunteers got involved in volunteer opportunities.



Community Collaboration

Collaborative promotion of volunteer opportunities is a potential strategy to build the base of volunteers and new leaders. Shared regional resources, such as a facilitator or trainer, would enable a coordinated approach to some of the issues community groups have in common.

Additional findings from our project can be found in three other fact sheets and a report published as part of this series, *Engaging Young Volunteers in Rural Newfoundland*:

- *Engaging Young Volunteers in Rural Newfoundland (Overview)*;
- *A Community Profile*;
- *Be a Volunteer! Tips for Youth*; and
- *Engaging Young Volunteers (Aged 15 - 34) in Rural Newfoundland (Report)*.

More information and resources for voluntary organizations and anyone interested in the voluntary nonprofit sector can be found at www.enVision.ca and www.voluntarygateway.ca