

Volunteer Motivations and Barriers: Comparing Kings County and Glace Bay, Nova Scotia

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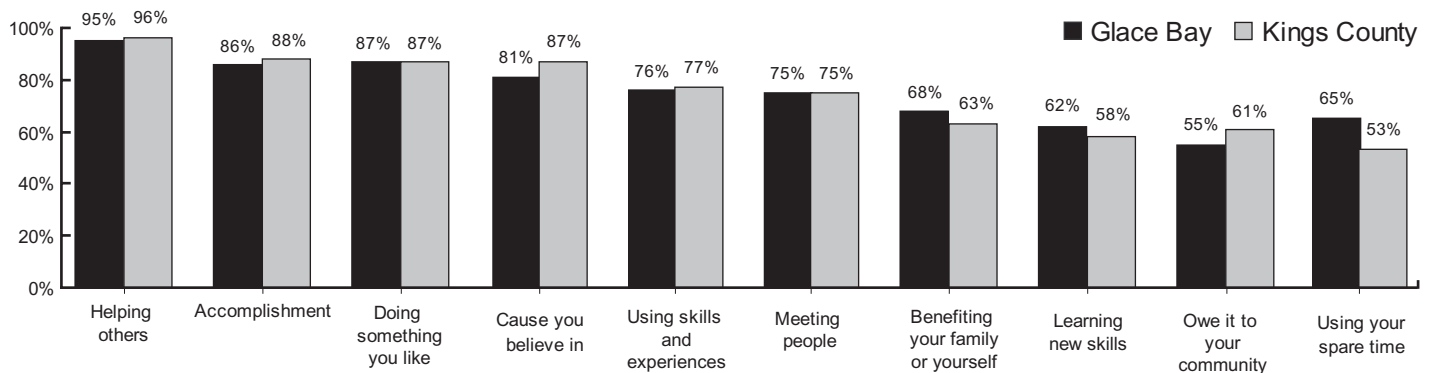
More than 3,500 resident residents of two communities in Nova Scotia – Glace Bay and Kings County – were surveyed in 2001 about their volunteer activities and attitudes to volunteering. The survey was done as part of the Community Genuine Progress Index.¹ Findings from this research show that residents of Kings County, an economically prosperous region in Nova Scotia, and Glace Bay, an area that recently experienced an economic downturn, volunteer at a rate that is higher than the national average. Whereas 27% of all Canadians aged 15 and older volunteered in 2000, 28% of Glace Bay residents and 50% of Kings County residents volunteered formally through a charitable or nonprofit organization. This fact sheet focuses on the personal motivations of volunteers and the barriers to volunteering reported by non-volunteers in these two communities.

Volunteer motivations

The majority of Kings County and Glace Bay volunteers reported that volunteering was an important and satisfying experience. When asked “Of all the things you did in the past year, how important were your volunteer activities to you?” 91% of Glace Bay residents and 89% of Kings County residents replied that volunteering was important or very important. Ninety-three percent of Glace Bay residents and 94% of Kings County residents reported that “overall, the volunteer experience was very or somewhat satisfying.”

The top ten motivations for volunteering differed very little between the two communities. A desire to help others, a sense of accomplishment, a desire to do something enjoyable, and belief in a cause were important motivations for more than 80% of volunteers in both communities across all age groups

Top Ten Volunteer Motivations in Glace Bay and Kings County



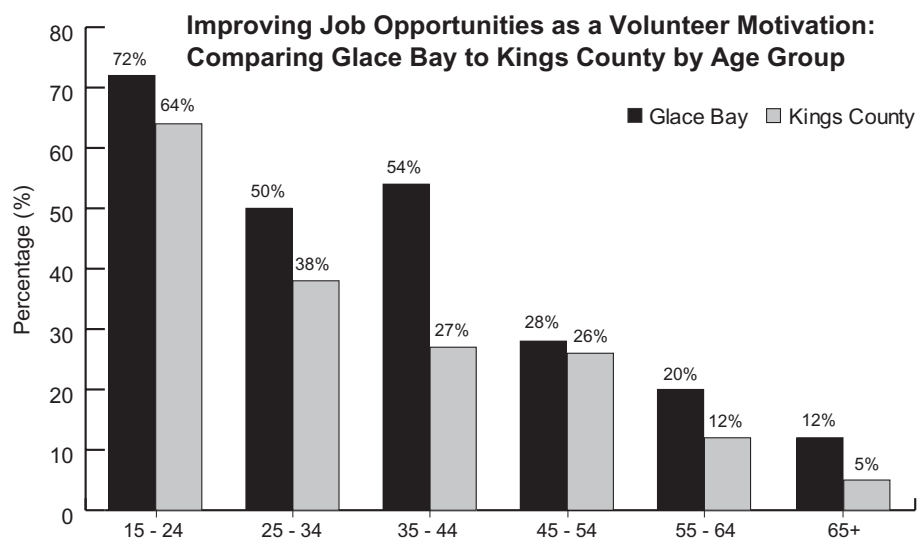
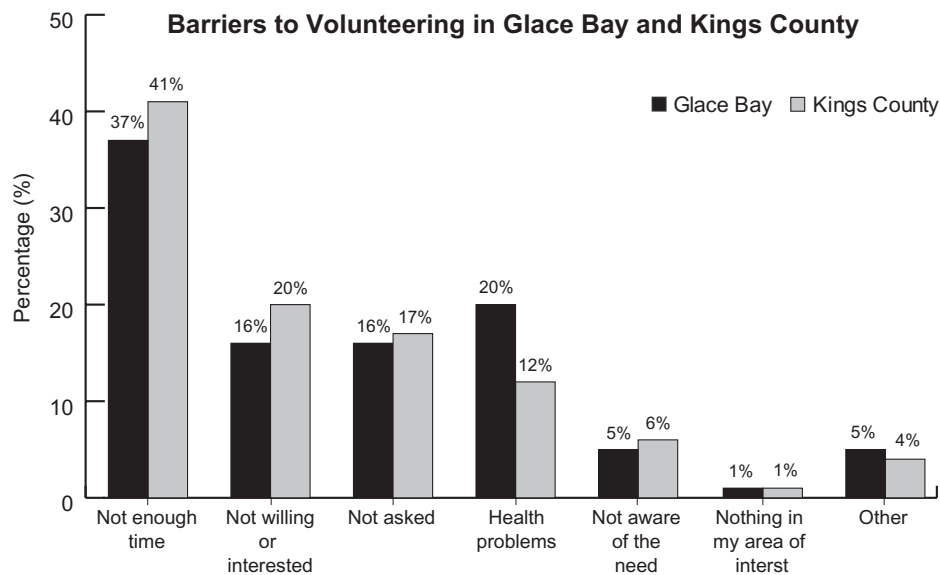
¹ The survey was supported by Statistics Canada and other groups such as the Cape Breton Regional Municipality, Cape Breton County Economic Development Agency, district health authorities, and community health boards.

Volunteer motivations change with age

Volunteering in order to improve job opportunities also varied according to age. This motivation was most important among youth (cited by 72% of youth in Glace Bay and 64% of youth in Kings County) and declined steadily with age. However, Glace Bay residents between the ages of 35 and 44 were twice as likely to cite this motivation than were their counterparts in Kings County. This may be a reflection of the depressed economy and higher unemployment rate in Glace Bay.

Barriers to volunteering

Lack of time was the most important barrier to volunteering in both communities, cited by 37% of non-volunteers in Glace Bay and 41% of non-volunteers in Kings County. This may reflect the demands imposed by work and/or family life and suggests that employer cooperation and volunteer opportunities that are family oriented and flexible may be needed to increase volunteer participation.



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