



THE VOLUNTEER SPIRIT IN CANADA:

MOTIVATIONS AND BARRIERS

David Lasby



Canadian Centre for Philanthropy™
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VOLUNTEER
BÉNÉVOLES
CANADA

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For more information about the 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, including full text of the highlights report, *Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians*, please visit www.givingandvolunteering.ca.

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I About the NSGVP

The National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (NSGVP) provides the most comprehensive look at the contributions of Canadians to one another and their communities ever undertaken in Canada.

The NSGVP asks Canadians a series of questions about how they give money and other resources to individuals and to charitable and nonprofit organizations; volunteer time to charitable and voluntary organizations and directly to individuals; and participate in organizations by becoming members. First conducted in 1997 as a special survey by Statistics Canada, the NSGVP was repeated in 2000 as part of the federal government's Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI). The 2000 survey was conducted by Statistics Canada as a supplement to the Labour Force Survey (LFS). The 2000 NSGVP is based on a representative sample of 14,724 Canadians aged 15 and older who were asked about their giving and volunteering for a one-year period from October 1, 1999 to September 30, 2000.

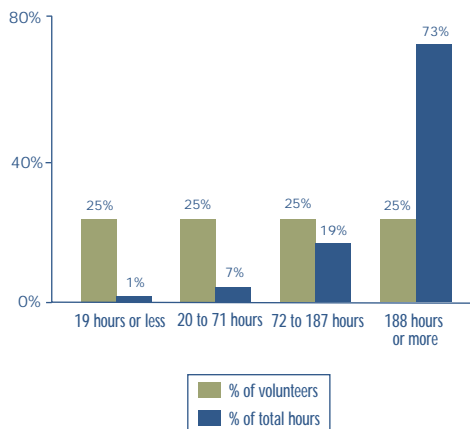
A renamed and redesigned Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (CSGVP) will be conducted every three years beginning in 2004. Although Statistics Canada will continue to conduct the CSGVP, it will be a stand-alone survey that is independent of the Labour Force Survey. Following national consultations with voluntary sector organizations, federal and provincial agencies, and the academic research community, the CSGVP content was modified. The new survey instrument was tested and will go into the field in the fall of 2004.

For more information on the NSGVP and CSGVP, please continue to visit www.givingandvolunteering.ca.

Introduction

More than one quarter (27%) of Canadians aged 15 and over volunteered for a charitable or nonprofit organization during 2000, according to the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (NSGVP). These volunteers contributed an average of 162 hours each, for a total of 1.05 billion hours. This is equivalent to approximately 549,000 full-time year-round jobs and makes Canada's volunteer force larger than the total labour force of most provinces. However, much continues to come from the few. As was the case with the 1997 NSGVP, the lion's share of all volunteer hours were contributed by a minority of volunteers. Almost three quarters (73%) of all volunteer hours came from the 25% of volunteers who contributed 188 hours or more (see Figure 1). This concentration of support is even more startling when viewed in terms of the general population. The vast majority (73%) of volunteer hours were contributed by only 7% of Canadians aged 15 and over.

Figure 1. Much comes from the few



This report draws on data from the 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, which surveyed 14,724 Canadians aged 15 and older about their charitable giving and volunteering over a one-year period. It presents a snapshot of Canada's volunteers, highlighting the personal and economic characteristics of Canadians who were most likely to participate in volunteer activities. It then examines volunteers' motivations for getting involved, and the barriers that prevent volunteers from giving more time and non-volunteers from contributing at all. It then explores the relationship between early life experiences and volunteering in later life. The report concludes by suggesting what these findings may mean for charitable and nonprofit organizations that rely on volunteer effort.

Readers should note that this report presents findings on Canadian volunteers as a whole. Readers seeking information about volunteering in one or more of Canada's provinces are directed to www.givingandvolunteering.ca, which houses a series of provincial fact sheets on volunteering, as well as a downloadable version of *Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians: Highlights from the 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating*. Readers will also find on this Web site *Understanding Canadian Volunteers: Using the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating to Build Your Volunteer Program*, a manual that provides some guidance in applying NSGVP data to the volunteer programs of charitable and nonprofit organizations.

Who are Canada's volunteers? What personal and economic factors (e.g., age, level of education, household income, religious affiliation) are associated with higher rates of volunteering? What motivated more than one quarter of Canadians to volunteer their time? What prevented nearly three quarters of Canadians from doing likewise? What do these findings mean for Canadians charitable and nonprofit organizations that hope to attract and retain volunteers?



The personal and economic characteristics of volunteers

Before examining why some Canadians volunteer and others don't, it would be useful to have a picture of Canada's volunteers. Who are they? What distinguishes them from non-volunteers? Which Canadians are more likely to volunteer and to give the most time? This section of the report presents findings on the personal and economic characteristics of Canadian volunteers.

Age. Canadians in some life stages were more likely to volunteer and to contribute more hours than were others.

For example, Canadians who were in the earliest stages of adult life (15 to 24) or in middle to late middle age (35 to 64) were more likely to volunteer than were those in other life stages (i.e., 25 to 34, and 65 and older; see Table 1). Canadians aged 35 to 54 were most likely to volunteer (30% volunteered), followed by those aged 15 to 24 (29%), and 55 to 64 (28%). Those who were at the age when people typically start families (25 to 34) were less likely to volunteer (24%). Canadians of retirement age or older (65+) were the least likely to volunteer (18%).

Table 1. Volunteering by personal and economic characteristics

	Volunteer rate	Average hours	% Population	% Volunteers	% Top volunteers	% Total volunteer hours
Age						
15 - 24 years	29%	130	17%	18%	14%	15%
25 - 34 years	24%	131	18%	16%	12%	13%
35 - 44 years	30%	153	21%	24%	24%	23%
45 - 54 years	30%	158	18%	20%	21%	20%
55 - 64 years	28%	181	11%	12%	13%	13%
65+ yrs	18%	269	15%	10%	16%	17%
Sex						
Male	25%	170	49%	46%	48%	49%
Female	28%	155	51%	54%	52%	51%
Marital status						
Married/Common law	28%	165	62%	65%	68%	67%
Single/Never married	26%	136	26%	25%	21%	21%
Widow/Widower	17%	253	5%	3%	5%	5%
Separated/Divorced	25%	181	7%	6%	6%	7%
Education level						
Less than high school	19%	154	27%	19%	16%	18%
High school diploma	23%	150	20%	17%	15%	15%
Some post-secondary	33%	173	9%	11%	12%	12%
Post-secondary diploma	28%	165	28%	29%	30%	30%
University degree	39%	166	17%	24%	27%	25%
Labour force status						
Employed	28%	147	63%	67%	61%	61%
Full-time (>30 hrs/week)	27%	145	50%	51%	46%	46%
Part-time (<30 hrs/week)	33%	155	12%	16%	15%	15%
Unemployed	25%	175	4%	4%	4%	4%
Not in labour force	24%	193	33%	30%	35%	35%
Religious affiliation						
Affiliated	28%	168	74%	76%	77%	78%
No affiliation	26%	149	26%	24%	23%	22%
Religious attendance						
Weekly attender	41%	202	19%	28%	35%	35%
Not a weekly attender	24%	149	81%	72%	65%	65%
Religiosity						
Very religious	37%	200	11%	15%	19%	19%
Not very religious	26%	156	89%	85%	81%	81%
Household income						
< \$20,000	17%	207	13%	8%	10%	10%
\$20,000-\$39,999	21%	179	26%	21%	21%	23%
\$40,000-\$59,999	26%	162	23%	23%	23%	23%
\$60,000-\$99,999	32%	145	25%	31%	28%	27%
\$100,000 or more	39%	150	12%	18%	17%	16%

Although the percentage of Canadians who volunteered declined after age 54, the average number of hours contributed increased steadily with age, from a low of 130 hours annually for volunteers aged 15 to 24, to a high of 269 hours for those aged 65 and older.

Canadians in some age groups contributed a disproportionately small percentage of total volunteer hours, given their representation in the Canadian population, while others contributed a disproportionately large percentage. For example, Canadians aged 25 to 34 made up 18% of the Canadian population and 16% of volunteers, but contributed only 13% of the total hours volunteered. Conversely, those aged 65 and older made up 15% of the population and 10% of volunteers, but contributed 17% of all volunteer hours.

Sex. Women were more likely to volunteer than were men (28% vs. 25%; see Table 1), but male volunteers contributed more hours, on average (170 hours for men vs. 155 for women). In terms of total volunteer hours, however, the contribution of women and men appears to be equal. Women represented 51% of the Canadian population and contributed 51% of all volunteer hours; men represented 49% of the Canadian population and contributed 49% of all volunteer hours. However, men were somewhat more likely to be top volunteers; they accounted for 46% of volunteers, but 48% of top volunteers.

Marital status. Canadians who were married or in common-law relationships were more likely to volunteer than were those who were single, divorced, or widowed. Twenty-eight percent of married Canadians volunteered, compared to only 17% of those who were widowed (see Table 1). Those who were single and had never been married, or were divorced fell between these two extremes (26% and 25%, respectively).

Although those who were widowed were least likely to volunteer, these volunteers contributed by far the largest number of hours, on average (253). Volunteers who were divorced contributed more hours, on average (181), than did those who were married (165) or single (136).

Canadians who were married were more likely than those who were single, divorced or widowed, to be top volunteers. This group represents 62% of the population and 65% of volunteers, but 68% of top volunteers.

Education. Generally speaking, Canadians with higher levels of formal education were more likely to volunteer than were those with lower levels, but there were some important deviations from this pattern. University graduates were the most likely to volunteer (39% volunteered), followed by those with some post-secondary education (33%; see Table 1). Those who had completed some high school were the least likely to volunteer (19%), somewhat behind those who possessed a high school diploma (23%). However, those who had completed a post-secondary diploma were less likely to volunteer (28%) than were those with only some post-secondary education.

Volunteers who had completed only some post-secondary education contributed the largest number of hours, on average (173), followed by those with a university degree (166) or a post-secondary diploma (165). Those with a high school diploma or less volunteered somewhat fewer hours, on average (150 hours and 154 hours respectively).

Canadians in some education groups contributed a disproportionately small percentage of total volunteer hours, given their representation in the Canadian population, while others contributed a disproportionately large percentage. For example, those with less than a high school diploma made up 27% of the population and 19% of volunteers, but contributed 18% of total volunteer hours; and those who graduated from high school made up 20% of the population and 17% of volunteers, but contributed 15% of total volunteer hours. On the other hand, Canadians with a university degree represented 17% of the population and 24% of volunteers, but contributed 25% of total volunteer hours.

Labour force status. The likelihood of volunteering varied significantly with labour force status. Canadians who were employed, particularly on a part-time basis, were more likely to volunteer than were those who were unemployed or not in the labour force.¹ One third (33%) of those employed part-time volunteered, compared to 27% of those who were employed full-time, 25% of those who were unemployed, and 24% of those who were not in the labour force (see Table 1).

Perhaps not surprisingly, the amount of time that people devoted to volunteering increased as the time spent in employment decreased. Those who were not in the labour force volunteered the most hours, on average (193), followed by those who were unemployed (175). Those who were

¹ “Not in the labour force” refers to Canadians over the age of 15 who were not working and not actively seeking work. It includes people who are retired, full-time homemakers, full-time students, etc. It does not include those who are unemployed, i.e., not working but available for and actively seeking employment. Full-time employment refers to employment for 30 or more hours per week.

employed part-time volunteered more hours, on average (155), than did those who were employed full-time (145).

Canadians who were not in the labour force and those who were employed part-time contributed a disproportionately large percentage of total volunteer hours, given their representation in the Canadian population, while those who were employed full-time contributed a disproportionately small percentage.

Those who are employed part-time made up 12% of the population and 16% of volunteers and contributed 15% of total volunteer hours; those who were not in the labour force made up 33% of the population and 30% of volunteers, but accounted for 35% of top volunteers and of total volunteer hours. Conversely, those who were employed full-time constituted 50% of the population and 51% of volunteers, but contributed 46% of total volunteer hours.

Religious affinity. The NSGVP uses three measures of religious affinity: affiliation with an established religious tradition or place of worship, frequency of attendance at religious services, and self-identified degree of religiosity. All three of these measures suggest that those who are more religious are more likely to volunteer. For example, more than four in ten (41%) of those who attended weekly religious services volunteered, compared to only 24% of those who did not attend weekly services (see Table 1). Similarly, those who identified themselves as very religious were significantly more likely to volunteer than those who identified themselves as not very religious (37% vs. 26%). Those who are affiliated with a religious tradition of some kind were somewhat more likely to volunteer than were those with no religious affiliation (28% vs. 26%).

Volunteers who were more religious also volunteered more hours, on average, than those who were not. Those who attended weekly religious services contributed far more hours, on average, than did those who attended services less frequently or did not attend services at all (202 hours vs. 149 hours). Similarly, those who identified themselves as very religious contributed more hours than did those who did not identify themselves in this way (200 vs. 156), and those who were affiliated with a religious tradition contributed more hours than did those with no affiliation (168 vs. 149).

More religious Canadians contributed a disproportionately large percentage of total volunteer hours. Canadians who attended religious services weekly made up slightly less than one fifth (19%) of the Canadian population and 28% of volunteers, but accounted for more than one third (35%) of top volunteers and of total volunteer hours. Similarly, Canadians who identified themselves as very religious represented 11% of the population and 15% of volunteers, but accounted for 19% of top volunteers and of total volunteer hours.

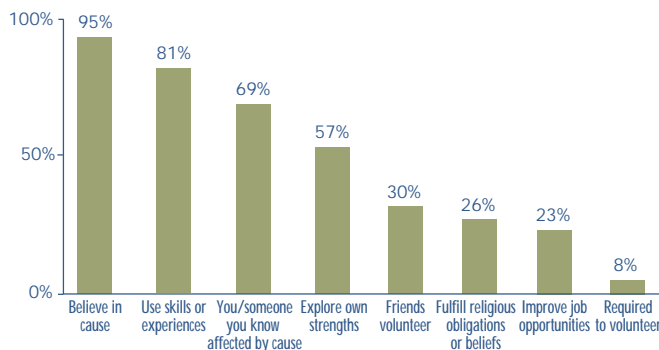
Household income. Canadians with higher household incomes were more likely to volunteer and to contribute more hours on average than were those with lower household incomes. Those with annual household incomes of \$100,000 or more were the most likely to volunteer (39% volunteered; see Table 1), while fewer than half as many of those with annual household incomes of less than \$20,000 (17%) volunteered. However, volunteers with lower household incomes tended to volunteer more hours, on average, than did those with higher household incomes. Volunteers with annual household incomes of less than \$20,000 volunteered the most volunteer hours (207), while those with household incomes of \$60,000 to \$99,999 volunteered the fewest (145), followed closely by those with household incomes of \$100,000 or more (150).

Canadians with the lower household incomes contributed a disproportionately small percentage of total volunteer hours, while those with higher household incomes contributed a disproportionately large percentage. Those with annual household incomes of less than \$20,000 made up 13% of the Canadian population, but contributed 10% of the total hours volunteered. Conversely, those with household incomes of \$100,000 or more made up 12% of the population, but accounted for 16% of volunteer hours.

IV Motivations for volunteering

The NSGVP asked volunteers whether any of eight potential factors motivated them to volunteer (see Figure 2). The motivation cited most commonly (by 95% of volunteers) was a belief in the cause supported by the organization for which respondents volunteered. The majority of volunteers also said that they volunteered because they wanted to use their skills and experiences (81%), were personally affected, or knew someone who was personally affected, by the cause the organization supports (69%), or wanted to explore their own strengths (57%). Somewhat fewer volunteers got involved because their friends volunteered (30%), in order to fulfill religious obligations or beliefs (26%), or to improve their job opportunities (23%). A small percentage (8%) were required to volunteer by their school or employer, or as part of the terms of a community service order.

Figure 2. Motivations for volunteering, all volunteers



65 and older cited this motivation). This is perhaps unsurprising, given that older people tend to be more religious than younger people.

Both the youngest and the oldest volunteers were more likely than those between these two extremes to say that they volunteered because their friends volunteered (42% of volunteers aged 15 to 24; 34% of volunteers 65 and older). Conversely, these groups were the least likely to say that they volunteered because they or someone that they know was directly affected by the cause the organization supports (59% of volunteers aged 15 to 24; 65% of volunteers 65 and older).

Sex. Female volunteers were more likely to cite almost all motivations for volunteering than were their male counterparts, with one exception: men were more likely to volunteered because their friends volunteered (33% of male volunteers vs. 28% of female volunteers; see Table 2).

Marital Status. Much of the variation in the pattern of responses according to marital status seems to be at least partially related to age, rather than marital status *per se*. For example, volunteers who were widowed, who tend to be older on average, were significantly more likely to cite religious obligations or beliefs as a reason for volunteering (45% cited this reason) than were volunteers who were single and never married (21%; see Table 2). Similarly, single and never married volunteers, who tend to be younger on average, were more likely than those with any other marital status to say that they volunteered to improve their job opportunities (46%) and to explore their strengths (68%).

Education. The motivations for volunteering remained fairly consistent across education groups, with the exception of volunteers with less than a high school diploma. These volunteers were significantly more likely than other volunteers to say that they volunteered because their friends volunteered (44%), or because they wished to improve job opportunities (37%). They were also more likely to say that they were required to volunteer (13%; see Table 2).

Labour force status. Labour force status appears to be linked to some volunteer motivations. For example, volunteers who were unemployed or employed part-time were more likely than

Motivations for volunteering and the personal and economic characteristics of volunteers

The motivations of volunteers varied, sometimes dramatically, according to their personal and economic characteristics, such as age, education, and household income.

Age. Volunteers aged 15 to 24 were far more likely than those 25 and older to volunteer in order to improve their job opportunities (55% of young volunteers cited this reason for volunteering; see Table 2) and to explore their strengths (71% of young volunteers). Volunteers aged 65 and older were more likely than their younger counterparts to volunteer in order to fulfill religious obligations or beliefs (50% of volunteers aged

those who were employed full-time or not in the labour force to volunteer in order to improve their job opportunities (42%* of unemployed volunteers and 34% of those employed part-time; see Table 2), to explore their strengths (70% and 64%, respectively), and to use their skills and experiences (86% of both groups). Volunteers who were not in the labour force were significantly more

likely to be motivated by religious obligations or beliefs (36%). This finding is likely linked to the fact that older volunteers are more likely to be out of the labour force. Volunteers, who were not in the labour force and those who were employed part-time, were also slightly more likely to volunteer for social reasons, i.e., because their friends volunteered (33% of those not in the labour force

Table 2. Motivations for volunteering and the personal and economic characteristics of volunteers

	Believe in cause	You/someone know affected by cause	Friends volunteer	Improve job opportunities	Fulfill religious obligations or benefits	Explore own strengths	Use skills or experiences	Required to volunteer
Age								
15 - 24 years	90%	59%	42%	55%	19%	71%	86%	18%
25 - 34 years	93%	66%	29%	27%	22%	63%	81%	6%
35 - 44 years	95%	74%	25%	18%	24%	55%	81%	7%
45 - 54 years	97%	75%	27%	13%	25%	53%	78%	6%
55 - 64 years	97%	69%	27%	8%	32%	50%	79%	3%
65+ yrs	98%	65%	34%	6%	50%	46%	78%	2%
Sex								
Male	94%	67%	33%	21%	23%	52%	81%	6%
Female	95%	70%	28%	24%	30%	62%	81%	9%
Marital status								
Married/Common law	96%	72%	27%	15%	28%	54%	80%	5%
Single/Never married	91%	60%	39%	46%	21%	68%	85%	15%
Widow/Widower	96%	69%	38%	6%	45%	55%	80%	3%
Separated/Divorced	96%	71%	24%	17%	22%	55%	80%	5%
Education level								
Less than high school	93%	65%	44%	37%	31%	61%	80%	13%
High school diploma	95%	73%	29%	21%	25%	56%	78%	8%
Some post-secondary	95%	68%	33%	29%	20%	63%	83%	7%
Post-secondary diploma	96%	69%	26%	17%	26%	56%	81%	5%
University degree	96%	69%	25%	17%	28%	54%	83%	6%
Labour force status								
Employed	95%	70%	29%	22%	23%	57%	81%	7%
Full-time (>30 hrs/week)	96%	71%	28%	18%	22%	55%	80%	7%
Part-time (<30 hrs/week)	91%	67%	33%	34%	26%	64%	86%	10%
Unemployed	95%	63%	29%	42%*	17%	70%	86%	9%
Not in labour force	95%	67%	33%	22%	36%	56%	79%	8%
Religious affiliation								
Affiliated	96%	70%	30%	21%	33%	58%	81%	7%
No affiliation	92%	65%	30%	29%	6%	55%	80%	10%
Religious attendance								
Weekly attender	97%	73%	27%	16%	60%	61%	82%	6%
Not a weekly attender	94%	68%	32%	26%	14%	56%	81%	8%
Religiosity								
Very religious	98%	76%	25%	18%	60%	63%	81%	8%
Not very religious	94%	68%	31%	24%	20%	57%	81%	7%
Household income								
< \$20,000	95%	70%	33%	33%	32%	68%	81%	8%
\$20,000-\$39,999	96%	69%	33%	21%	31%	57%	79%	8%
\$40,000-\$59,999	95%	68%	29%	22%	29%	60%	82%	8%
\$60,000-\$99,999	95%	70%	29%	22%	22%	55%	80%	7%
\$100,000 or more	93%	68%	30%	22%	23%	55%	83%	8%

*Sample size limitations affect the reliability of this estimate.

or employed part-time, vs. 28-29% of those employed full-time or unemployed).

Religious affinity. All three measures of religiosity indicate that those with a greater religious affinity were much more likely to volunteer to fulfill religious beliefs or obligations (e.g., 33% of those with a religious affiliation cited this reason vs. 6% of those with no affiliation; see Table 2). Indeed, volunteers with significant religious affinities were more likely to cite most motivations to volunteering. The most noticeable exceptions to this pattern were decreased tendencies to volunteer in order to improve job opportunities, and because their friends volunteered.

Household Income. The motivations of volunteers did not vary dramatically according to household income. However, volunteers with annual household incomes of less than \$20,000 were noticeably more likely than were other volunteers to say that they volunteered in order to improve their job opportunities (33%; see Table 2) and to explore their strengths (68%). Volunteers with higher household incomes were less likely than those in other income groups to say that they volunteered in order to fulfill religious obligations or beliefs (23% of volunteers with annual household incomes of \$100,000 or more; 22% of those with incomes between \$60,000 and \$99,999).

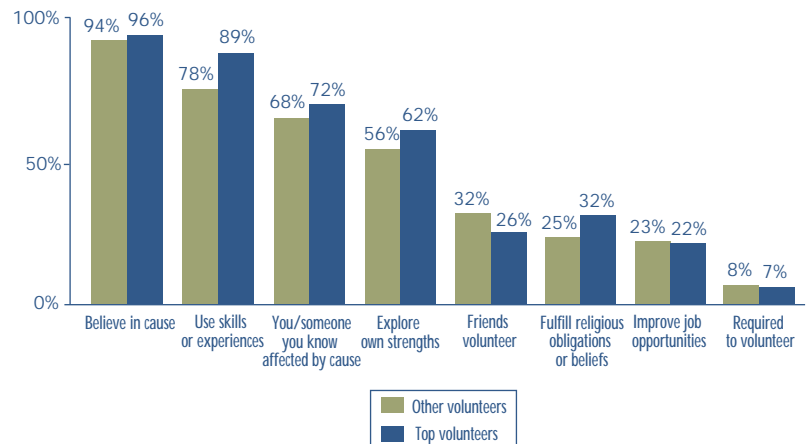
Motivations for volunteering and level of support

Top volunteers (i.e., volunteers who contributed 188 hours or more annually) were more likely than other volunteers to cite certain motivations. Similarly, volunteers who cited certain motivations were more likely to contribute more volunteer hours than were volunteers with no specific motivation.

Top volunteers were more likely than were other volunteers to say that they volunteered in order to use their skills and experiences (89% of top volunteers vs. 78% of other volunteers; see Figure 3), to fulfill religious obligations of beliefs (32% vs. 25%), and to explore their own strengths (62% vs. 56%). Top volunteers were less likely to say that they volunteered because their friends volunteered (26% top volunteers vs. 32% other volunteers), to improve their job opportunities (22% vs. 23%), OR because they were required to volunteer (7% vs. 8%).

It is worth noting that the motivations cited least commonly by top volunteers are those that are more commonly cited by younger volunteers, which appears to reinforce the role of age in volunteering.

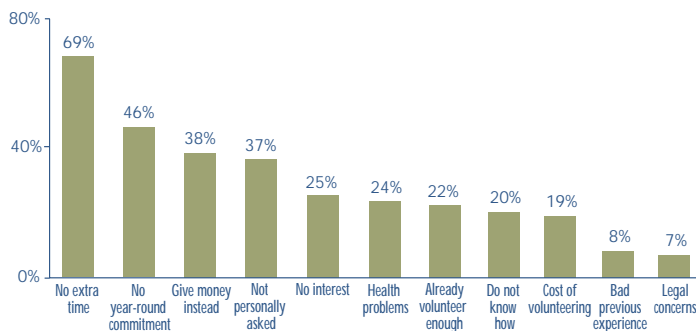
Figure 3. Motivations for volunteering, top volunteers vs. other volunteers



V Barriers to volunteering

The NSGVP asked non-volunteers if any of 11 potential barriers prevented them from volunteering. By far the most commonly cited barriers were those related to time. More than two thirds (69%; see Figure 4) of non-volunteers said that they lacked the extra time to volunteer and nearly one half (46%) said that they were unwilling to make a year-round commitment. Other significant barriers were giving money rather than volunteering (38%) and not having been personally asked to volunteer (37%). About one quarter of non-volunteers said that they had no interest in volunteering (25%), had health concerns or were physically unable to volunteer (24%), or felt that they had already made a sufficient contribution to volunteering (22%). Slightly fewer said that they did not know how to become involved (20%) or that they were deterred by the costs associated with volunteering (19%).

Figure 4. Barriers to volunteering at all, all non-volunteers



Barriers to volunteering and the personal and economic characteristics of volunteers

The importance of some of the barriers to volunteering varied according to the personal and economic characteristics of non-volunteers, such as age, education, and household income.²

Age. Some barriers to volunteering were more likely to be cited by older non-volunteers. For instance, Canadians aged 65 and over were significantly more likely than those in other age groups to say that they did not volunteer

because of disability or ill health (58%; see Table 3) or because they had already made a sufficient contribution to volunteering (43%). Those aged 65 and older were also somewhat more likely to say that they did not volunteer because they gave money instead of time (45%) or because they had no interest (28%).

Other barriers were more likely to be cited by younger non-volunteers. For example, younger Canadians were far more likely than their older counterparts to say that they did not have the time to volunteer (76% of those aged 15 to 24; 80% of those aged 25 to 34; 39% of those aged 65 and over) or had not been personally asked to volunteer (49% of those aged 15 to 24; 43% of those aged 25 to 34; 27% of those aged 65 and over).

Sex. With just two exceptions, men were more likely than women to cite every potential barrier to volunteering. Women were more likely to say that health problems or physical disabilities prevented them from volunteering (28% of women vs. 19% of men) and that they did not have any time to devote to volunteering (70% of women vs. 69% of men). Men were significantly more likely say that they had no interest in volunteering (28% of men vs. 21% of women; see Table 3) or that they were unwilling to make a year-round commitment (51% vs. 42%).

Education. The relative importance of some barriers to volunteering varied according to level of education. This may be, in part, attributable to other factors. For example, those with less education were more likely to mention health concerns or physical disabilities as a barrier to volunteering (34% of those with less than a high school education cited this barrier vs. 13% of those with a university degree; see Table 3) and less likely than those with more formal education to say that they did not have extra time to volunteer (59% vs. 71% or more for those with higher levels of education). This may be at least partially attributable to the fact that older Canadians tend to have lower levels of education. Those with more education were also less likely than those with less than high school to cite the

² This section discusses the relationship between barriers and the personal and economic characteristics of non-volunteers because only a minority (27%) of Canadians volunteered.

financial costs associated with volunteering as a barrier (10% of those with a university degree vs. 21% of those with less than a high school education). This may be at least partially attributable to the fact that Canadians with higher levels of education tend to have higher household incomes.

Labour force status. The importance of some barriers to volunteering varied significantly according to Canadians' labour force status. It is perhaps no surprise that Canadians who were employed, particularly on a full-time basis, were more likely than those who were unemployed or not in the labour force to say that they did not volunteer because they had no time (81% of those who were employed cited this barrier, compared to approximately half of those who were unemployed or not in the labour force; see Table 3) or because they were unwilling to make a year-round commitment (49% of those who were

employed vs. approximately four in ten of those who were unemployed or not in the labour force).

Canadians who were not in the labour force were more likely than others to say that they did not volunteer because of ill health or disability (46%). This may be because many of those who are not in the labour force are retired or medically unable to seek employment. Perhaps not surprisingly, those who were unemployed were significantly less likely to say that they gave money instead of volunteering (23%) and significantly more likely (33%) to cite the costs associated with volunteering as a barrier.

Those who were unemployed were also more likely to say that they did not volunteer because they had not been personally asked (51% of unemployed non-volunteers vs. 39% of employed non-volunteers and 31% of those not in the labour

Table 3. Barriers to volunteering more and the personal and economic characteristics of volunteers

	Already volunteer enough	No extra time	Health problems	Not personally asked	Do not know how	Cost of volunteering	Legal concerns	No interest	Give money instead	No year-round commitment	Bad previous experience
Age											
15 - 24 years	11%	76%	15%	49%	29%	20%	6%	24%	24%	24%	11%
25 - 34 years	11%	80%	9%	43%	22%	19%	8%	21%	37%	47%	7%
35 - 44 years	17%	78%	15%	33%	18%	19%	7%	21%	40%	50%	7%
45 - 54 years	27%	72%	22%	34%	17%	18%	7%	27%	41%	48%	8%
55 - 64 years	27%	64%	35%	31%	16%	19%	8%	27%	40%	43%	8%
65+ yrs	43%	39%	58%	27%	15%	17%	6%	28%	45%	41%	8%
Sex											
Male	23%	69%	19%	39%	21%	20%	9%	28%	39%	51%	9%
Female	21%	70%	28%	34%	18%	17%	5%	21%	37%	42%	7%
Marital status											
Married/Common law	23%	73%	22%	35%	18%	17%	7%	25%	42%	47%	7%
Single/Never married	16%	70%	18%	45%	25%	20%	8%	25%	30%	47%	10%
Widow/Widower	43%	33%	58%	24%	18%	21%	9%	25%	42%	40%	7%
Separated/Divorced	18%	64%	33%	28%	13%	24%	6%	22%	31%	44%	5%
Education level											
Less than high school	26%	59%	34%	33%	22%	21%	7%	28%	33%	39%	8%
High school diploma	21%	74%	24%	38%	20%	21%	10%	25%	39%	46%	7%
Some post-secondary	13%	75%	20%	45%	26%	20%	7%	21%	35%	47%	10%
Post-secondary diploma	20%	75%	20%	37%	17%	19%	7%	23%	42%	52%	8%
University degree	22%	71%	13%	35%	16%	10%	4%	22%	38%	50%	8%
Labour force status											
Employed	18%	81%	12%	39%	19%	17%	7%	24%	40%	49%	8%
Full-time(>30 hrs/week)	18%	82%	11%	38%	18%	16%	7%	24%	41%	50%	7%
Part-time(<30 hrs/week)	20%	75%	18%	40%	21%	20%	5%	20%	32%	46%	10%
Unemployed	10%	50%	18%	51%	37%	33%	6%	24%	23%	42%	5%
Not in labour force	29%	51%	46%	31%	20%	20%	8%	26%	36%	41%	9%
Religious affiliation											
Affiliated	23%	69%	26%	36%	21%	19%	7%	25%	40%	46%	8%
No affiliation	17%	71%	18%	39%	17%	19%	7%	24%	34%	47%	9%
Religious attendance											
Weekly attender	30%	64%	33%	35%	24%	18%	11%	21%	42%	43%	7%
Not a weekly attender	20%	71%	22%	37%	20%	19%	7%	25%	38%	48%	8%
Religiosity											
Very religious	34%	64%	34%	30%	22%	20%	11%	18%	39%	40%	10%
Not very religious	20%	70%	22%	38%	20%	19%	7%	25%	39%	48%	8%
Household income											
< \$20,000	29%	51%	42%	34%	22%	30%	10%	25%	28%	39%	9%
\$20,000-\$39,999	23%	64%	32%	36%	22%	22%	6%	27%	34%	44%	8%
\$40,000-\$59,999	19%	73%	20%	38%	21%	16%	8%	27%	40%	51%	7%
\$60,000-\$99,999	18%	78%	13%	37%	18%	14%	7%	21%	42%	49%	9%
\$100,000 or more	24%	81%	11%	36%	12%	10%	5%	22%	45%	44%	6%

force) or because they did not know how to get involved (37% vs. 19% of employed non-volunteers and 20% of those who are not in the labour force).

Religious affinity. Religious non-volunteers were less likely than their less religious counterparts to say that they did not volunteer because they had no extra time, were not interested in volunteering, or were unwilling to make a year-round commitment (see Table 3). They were more likely to say that they did not volunteer because they had already made a sufficient contribution to volunteering or had health problems or were physically unable to volunteer. These findings are likely related to the fact that religious Canadians are likely to be older than less religious Canadians.

Household income. The relative importance of some barriers to volunteering appears to be directly related to the availability of discretionary funds. For example, non-volunteers with higher household incomes were less likely than were those with lower household incomes to say that they did not volunteer because of the costs associated with volunteering (10% of those with annual household incomes of \$100,000 or more cited this barrier, compared to 30% of those with incomes of less than \$20,000; see Table 3) and more likely to say that they gave money instead of volunteering (45% vs. 28%).

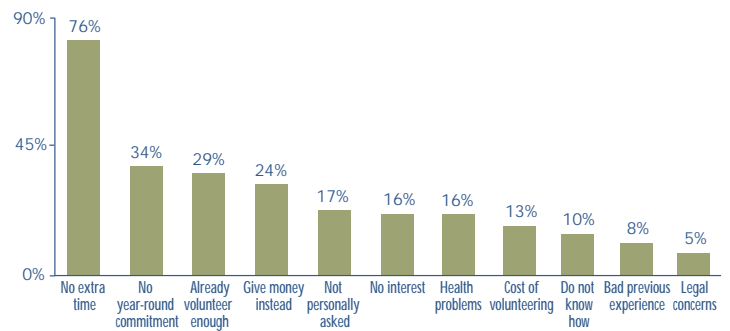
Other variations relating to household income may be linked to other personal characteristics. For example, those with higher household incomes were also more likely to say that they did not volunteer because they did not have extra time (81% of those with incomes of \$100,000 or more vs. 51% of those with incomes of less than \$20,000). This may be related to their employment status (i.e., higher earners are more likely to be employed full-time). Similarly, those with higher household incomes were less likely to say that they did not volunteer because of ill health or disability (11% of those with household incomes of \$100,000 or more vs. 42% of those with incomes of less than \$20,000). This is perhaps not surprising, given the well-known link between poor health and lower incomes.

Barriers to volunteering more

The NSGVP asked volunteers whether any of the same 11 potential barriers kept them from volunteering more time. By far the most commonly cited barrier to volunteering more was having no extra time (cited by 76% of volunteers; see Figure 5). A second significant barrier, cited by more than one third (34%) of volunteers, was also time-related: unwillingness to make a year-round commit-

ment. Other barriers to volunteering more were having already made a sufficient contribution to volunteering (29%) and giving money instead of volunteering (24%). Fewer volunteers said that they did not volunteer more because they had not been asked (17%), had no interest (16%), had health concerns or were physically unable (16%), or were concerned about the costs of volunteering (13%). One in ten volunteers or fewer did not volunteer more because they did not know how (10%), had had a bad previous experience with volunteering (8%), or were concerned that they could be sued because of their volunteer activities (5%).

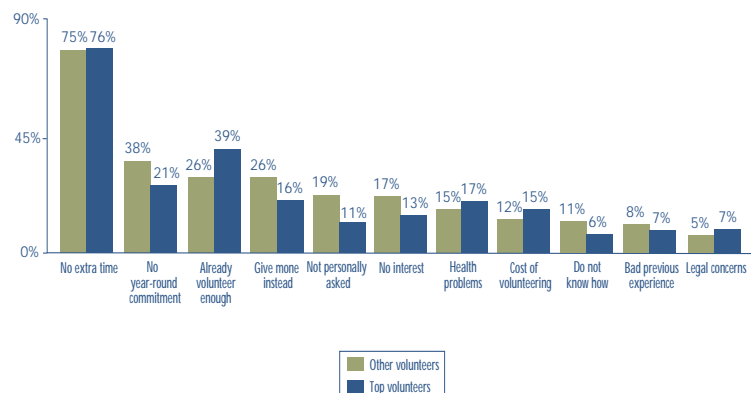
Figure 5. Barriers to volunteering more, all volunteers



Barriers to volunteering more and level of support

Top volunteers (i.e., volunteers who contributed 188 hours or more annually) were less likely than other volunteers to say that they did not volunteer more because they were unwilling to make a year-round commitment (21% of top volunteers vs. 38% of other volunteers; see Figure 6), gave money instead of volunteering more (16% vs. 26%), or had not been personally asked to volunteer more (11% vs. 19%). However, top volunteers were more likely than were other volunteers to say that they thought they had already made a sufficient contribution to volunteering (39% of top volunteers vs. 26% of other volunteers). This is perhaps understandable, given the large proportion of total volunteer hours that come from top volunteers.

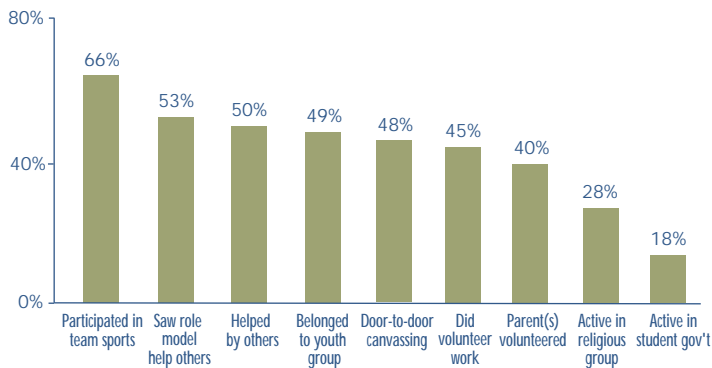
Figure 6. Barriers to volunteering more, top volunteers vs. other volunteers



Early life experiences and volunteering

In an attempt to identify predictors of donating and volunteering, the NSGVP asked respondents whether they had had any of a range of nine early life experiences that are thought to be related to giving and volunteering later in life. The most commonly cited early life experience was participation in an organized team sport (66% of respondents; see Figure 9), followed by seeing a role model help others in some way (53%). About half of respondents said that they had been helped in the past by others (50%), had been members of a youth group (49%), or had participated in door-to-door canvassing to raise money (48%). Relatively few respondents said that they had been active in a religious group (28%), or in student government (18%).

Figure 7. Early life experiences, all respondents

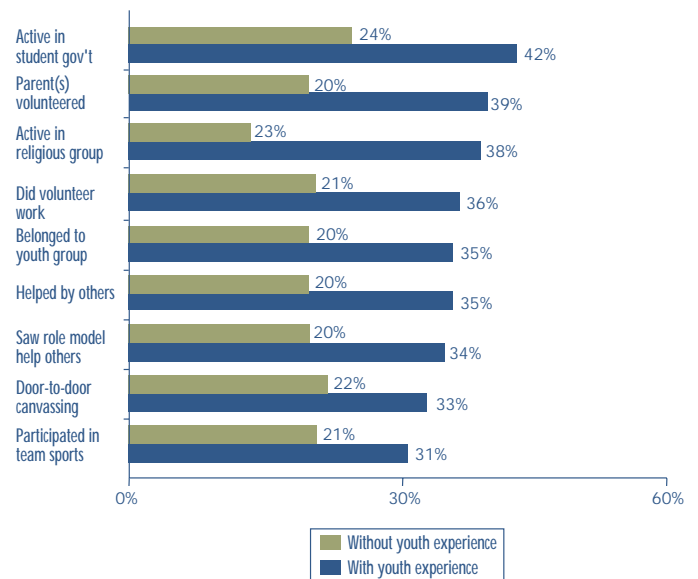


Early life experiences as a predictor of volunteering

Canadians who had had any of the early life experiences covered by the survey were more likely to volunteer than were those who had not. Those whose parent(s) had volunteered were more likely to volunteer (39% vs. 20% of those whose parents had not volunteered; see Figure 8). Similarly, those who had been active in student government were more likely to volunteer (42% vs. 24%), as were those who had been active in a religious group (38% vs. 23%), those who volunteered in their youth (36% vs. 21%), or those who belonged to a youth group (35% vs. 20%). Some youth experiences had less effect, including door-to-door canvassing (33% of those who had this experience when young volunteered later in life vs. 22% of those who had not had this experience) and participating in an organized sport (31% vs. 21%). It is interesting to note that there is a tendency for the less common early life experiences to have a greater effect on the likelihood of volun-

teering. For example, only 18% of respondents had been active in student government, but 42% of those who had had this experience volunteered later in life.

Figure 8. Volunteer rate, respondents with and without specific early life experiences



Early life experiences and their effect on motivations and barriers to volunteering

Some motivations for volunteering were more affected than others by the early life experiences covered in the NSGVP (see Table 4). Those who had had one of these experiences were more likely than those who had not to say that they volunteered because they or someone they knew was personally affected by the cause the organization supports, because they wanted to use their skills or experience, or because they wanted to explore their own strengths.

In comparison, the early life experiences covered in the survey had little impact on the likelihood of volunteering because your friends volunteer or to improve job opportunities. These motivations are, presumably, affected more by current circumstances. Some life experiences had a major impact on particular motivations. Most notable in this regard is the fact that those who were active in a religious organization when young were much more likely than those who were not to say that they volunteered to fulfill religious obligations.

Table 4. Early life experiences and motivations for volunteering

	Believe in cause	You/someone you know affected by cause	Friends volunteer	Improve job opportunities	Fulfill religious obligations or benefits	Explore own strengths	Use skills or experiences	Required to volunteer
Participated in organized team sports								
Yes	95%	71%	30%	24%	24%	58%	82%	8%
No	95%	64%	30%	20%	33%	55%	78%	6%
Belonged to a youth group								
Yes	95%	73%	28%	21%	29%	59%	83%	7%
No	94%	63%	33%	25%	21%	54%	78%	8%
Did some kind of volunteer work								
Yes	95%	71%	31%	26%	27%	60%	84%	9%
No	95%	66%	29%	19%	25%	54%	78%	5%
Personally saw someone you admired help others								
Yes	96%	73%	31%	22%	30%	61%	84%	7%
No	92%	61%	30%	24%	19%	52%	76%	8%
Went door-to-door to raise money								
Yes	95%	71%	30%	25%	24%	60%	83%	9%
No	95%	66%	30%	20%	29%	54%	78%	6%
Helped in past by others								
Yes	96%	73%	30%	24%	28%	61%	84%	9%
No	94%	63%	30%	20%	23%	51%	77%	6%
Active in student government								
Yes	95%	72%	30%	23%	26%	58%	85%	8%
No	95%	68%	30%	23%	26%	57%	79%	7%
Active in a religious organization								
Yes	96%	75%	28%	19%	41%	60%	82%	7%
No	94%	65%	32%	25%	17%	56%	80%	8%
One or both parents did volunteer work in community								
Yes	96%	72%	30%	23%	29%	59%	84%	8%
No	94%	65%	30%	22%	22%	56%	77%	8%

Overall, the early life experiences that had the largest positive impact on the range of motivations for volunteering covered by the survey were: seeing a role model helping others, being helped in the past by others, being active in a religious organization, doing some kind of volunteer work, and having one or both parents active in volunteering in the community.

Early life experiences had less impact on barriers to volunteering than they did on motivations for volunteering (see Table 5). Non-volunteers who had had one of the early life experiences covered by the survey were less likely to cite most of the potential barriers to volunteering. They were far less likely to say that they did not volunteer because they had no interest, because of ill health or disability, were concerned about the costs of volunteering, were concerned that they could be sued due to volunteer activities, or were dissatisfied with a previous volunteering experience. Conversely, non-volunteers who had had these early life experiences were generally more likely to say that they did not volunteer because they had already made a sufficient contribution to volunteering, did not have time to volunteer, had not personally been asked to volunteer, or gave money instead of volunteering.

Table 5. Early life experiences and barriers to volunteering at all

	Already volunteer enough	No extra time	Health problems	Not personally asked	Do not know how	Cost of volunteering	Legal concerns	No interest	Give money instead	No year-round commitment	Bad previous experience
Participated in organized team sports											
Yes	20%	73%	20%	39%	21%	19%	8%	23%	40%	49%	7%
No	25%	65%	31%	34%	20%	20%	7%	27%	37%	44%	10%
Belonged to a youth group											
Yes	22%	71%	22%	38%	20%	19%	8%	22%	43%	46%	8%
No	21%	69%	25%	36%	21%	20%	7%	27%	36%	47%	8%
Did some kind of volunteer work											
Yes	22%	72%	21%	40%	21%	17%	6%	22%	40%	45%	9%
No	22%	69%	26%	35%	20%	21%	8%	27%	38%	48%	8%
Personally saw someone you admired help others											
Yes	24%	71%	22%	38%	21%	19%	7%	21%	42%	48%	7%
No	20%	69%	25%	36%	20%	20%	8%	28%	36%	47%	9%
Went door-to-door to raise money											
Yes	18%	73%	19%	39%	19%	18%	6%	21%	38%	49%	7%
No	24%	68%	27%	36%	21%	21%	8%	27%	39%	45%	9%
Helped in past by others											
Yes	20%	71%	22%	39%	21%	18%	6%	21%	39%	46%	8%
No	23%	69%	25%	35%	20%	20%	8%	28%	38%	47%	9%
Active in student government											
Yes	24%	74%	20%	37%	20%	17%	6%	23%	42%	45%	7%
No	21%	69%	24%	37%	20%	20%	8%	25%	38%	47%	8%
Active in a religious organization											
Yes	30%	68%	28%	38%	21%	19%	6%	21%	44%	45%	7%
No	19%	71%	22%	37%	20%	19%	8%	26%	37%	48%	9%
One or both parents did volunteer work in community											
Yes	23%	73%	21%	37%	18%	17%	6%	21%	42%	46%	7%
No	21%	68%	25%	37%	21%	20%	8%	26%	37%	47%	9%

VII Conclusion

The reasons why Canadians volunteer and the barriers that prevent them from giving more time or from volunteering at all vary according to such factors as age, education, employment status, and income. Charitable and nonprofit organizations that rely on volunteer effort and that hope to encourage higher levels of volunteering can benefit from understanding these variations and giving some thought to their practical implications.

The top three reasons why people volunteer are: belief in the cause supported by the organization (95% of volunteers), a desire to use their skills and experiences (81%), and being personally affected or knowing someone who has been personally affected by the cause (69%). This suggests that successful recruitment efforts may be those that focus on communicating the mission of the organization and what it has accomplished through voluntary effort; clearly identify the skills that organizations are seeking in their volunteers; and start close to home, with those who have been touched by the organization and have some familiarity with its work.

Different volunteers have different needs and expectations. For example, volunteers aged 15-24 were more likely to say that they volunteered to explore their strengths (71%), to improve their job opportunities (55%), and because their friends volunteered (42%). Accommodating these differences can increase not only the pool of volunteers, but also the number of hours volunteered. Canadians who volunteered to improve their job opportunities or because their friends volunteered tended to give more time on average than those who did not volunteer for these reasons.

Time is the biggest barrier to volunteering. More than two thirds (69%) of non-volunteers said that lack of time prevented them from getting involved. Nearly half (46%) were unwilling to make a year-round commitment to volunteering. This jumped to 81% and 49% respectively for employed Canadians. Involving these individuals may require more short-term volunteer assignments, more flexible hours for volunteer assignments, and more employer involvement in and support for volunteering.

More than three quarters (76%) of current volunteers said that they had no time to volunteer more; nearly one-third (29%) felt that they had made a sufficient contribution to volunteering. This jumped to 39% among top volunteers who gave 188 hours annually.

Special efforts and accommodations may have to be made if certain groups are to be drawn into the volunteer experience. For example, nearly 6 in 10 Canadians (58%) aged 65 and older said that they did not volunteer because of ill-health or disability. One third (33%) of unemployed Canadians cited the costs associated with volunteering as a barrier.

Encouraging youth participation in activities such as team sports, youth groups, and student government, may pay dividends in the future. Canadians with these early life experiences were more likely to volunteer later in life.

It can be argued that volunteering demands a relatively high level of commitment from individuals. It is much easier to write a cheque to a charity or to sponsor a child in a charity event than it is to devote hours or even days of one's time to volunteering. Yet charitable and nonprofit organizations depend on volunteer effort. Understanding Canadians' behaviour and attitudes as they relate to volunteering may ultimately help organizations make the adjustments that will allow them to recruit and retain a strong volunteer corps.



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