

Highlights of *Spotlight on Canadians: Results from the General Social Survey – Volunteering in Canada, 2004 to 2013* published by Statistics Canada
Prepared for Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council Member Organizations

Understanding trends in volunteerism can help non-profit organizations recruit and retain volunteers. Statistics Canada recently released information on volunteerism in Canada *Spotlight on Canadians: Results from the General Social Survey – Volunteering in Canada, 2004 to 2013* which outlines data such as motivations to volunteer, characteristics of volunteers such as age and education level, time commitment and types of duties performed.

ESCC has prepared this summary of highlights that may be relevant for our member organizations. Review the [article](#) for full details.

Education and income

Volunteering is more common among those with higher levels of education and household income, however they may not necessarily be the ones who contribute the most volunteer hours.

Labour force participation

Volunteering is highest among those employed and those looking for work. Canadians not in the labour force, such as retirees and stay-at-home parents, are the least likely to volunteer although they contribute more hours on average.

Age

The rate of volunteering was highest among teens and lowest for Canadians aged 75 years and older.

Time commitment

The average annual hours volunteered were highest among older volunteers and lowest among adolescent and middle-aged volunteers.

Gender

Women are more likely to volunteer. Men more often lacked interest and awareness in volunteer activities. Men were also more likely than women to report that no one asked.

Motivation for volunteering

The vast majority of volunteers said they wanted to contribute to the well-being of their community. Other common reasons included the desire to use their skills and experience, because they were personally affected by the cause, and to improve their own sense of well-being.

For teens, the high rate of volunteering may be due to ‘mandatory’ volunteering - one in five volunteers aged 15 to 19 reported that they volunteered because they were required to do so, either by their school or some other way. Almost half of volunteers under 35 were motivated by possible job prospects.

Benefits of volunteering

The most commonly reported benefits were positive impact on overall wellbeing and health, improved skills and knowledge, and expanded work experience.

Duties

Volunteers most often organized events and helped with fundraising. Sitting on a committee or board dropped in frequency but was still the third most common activity. Drops were also seen in driving services, providing health care or support, and maintenance or repair. The greatest decrease was recorded in canvassing-related activities.

Recruitment

Word of mouth is the most common way volunteers learn about an opportunity, followed closely by attending a meeting or activity. Less commonly reported was responding to an advertisement on a poster or in a newspaper, through the Internet or some other way.