

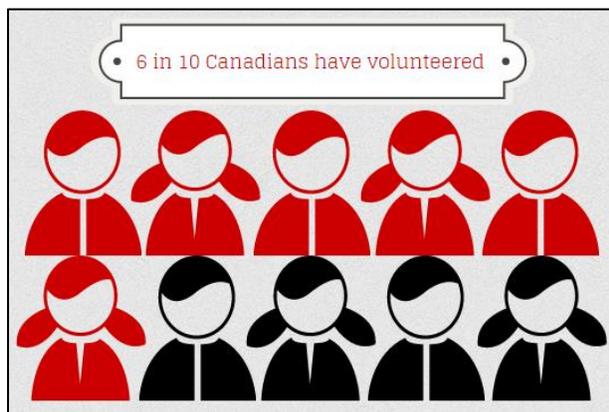
## The Canadian volunteer landscape

Earlier this year, Statistics Canada released the latest data on giving, volunteering and participating in Canada. Canadians continued to be generous by volunteering an average of 154 hours per year, or close to 2 billion hours in total. However, 12.7 million Canadians (44%) volunteered in 2013 compared to 13.3 million (47%) in 2010.

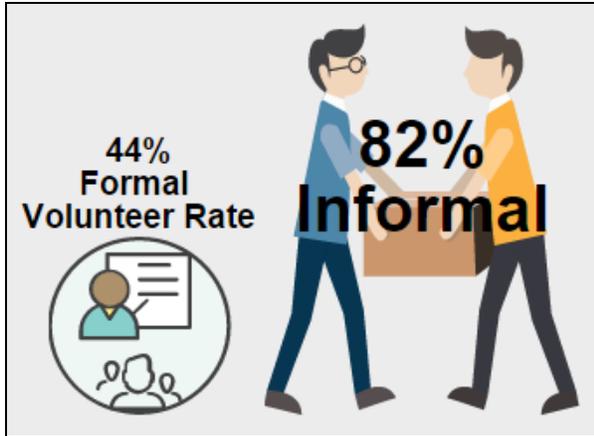
Thanks to Statistics Canada's [Volunteer in Canada, 2004 to 2013](#) report, we can now take a closer look at the patterns and trends in the Canadian volunteer landscape. This information can help charitable and non-profit organizations with their volunteer recruitment, engagement and retention strategies.

### The big picture

Despite a slight decrease in the volunteer rate, 17 million Canadians have volunteered at some point in their lives – that's 59% of Canadians aged 15 and older.

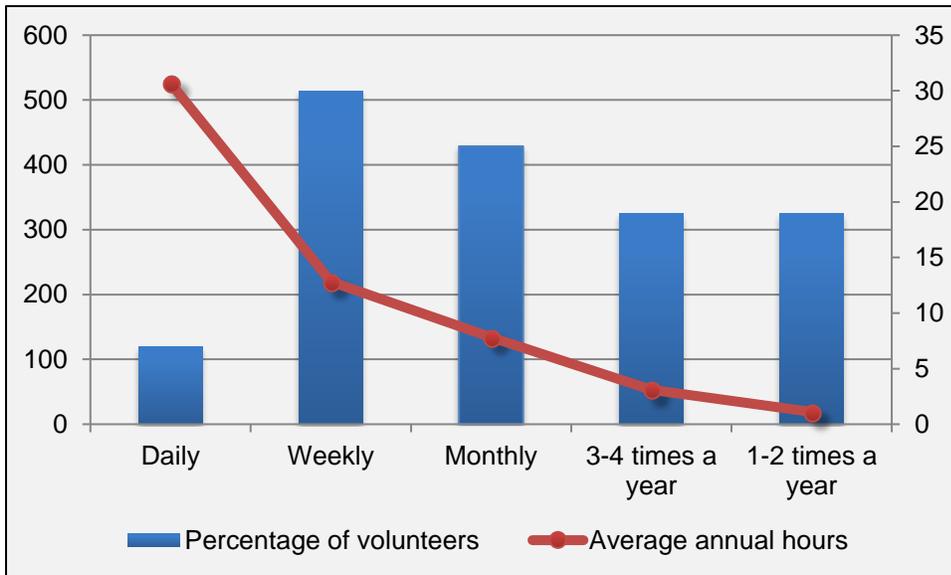


Additionally, 82% of Canadians volunteer informally, meaning helping people directly, without the involvement of an organization or group. This is almost double the formal volunteer rate! The most common types of informal help are housework, home maintenance, health-related or personal care, shopping and driving someone to a store or appointment. The informal volunteer rate is highest (91%) among young Canadians aged 15-19 and decreases with age, with just over half of Canadians aged 75 and older volunteering informally.

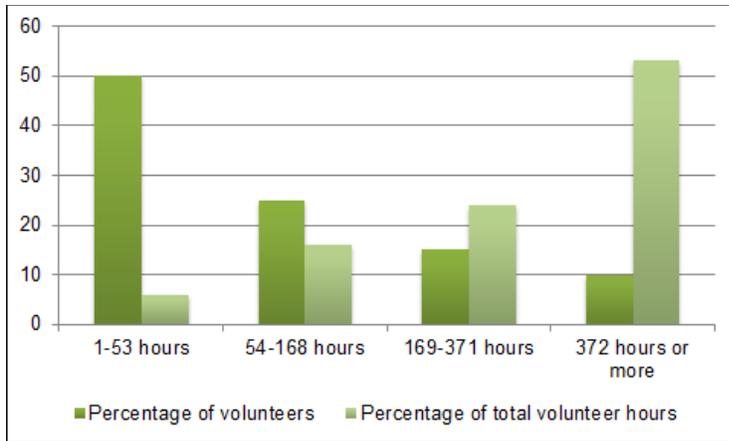


**Level of involvement**

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. On the contrary, the 7% of Canadians who volunteer on a daily basis contribute 526 hours per year.



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.



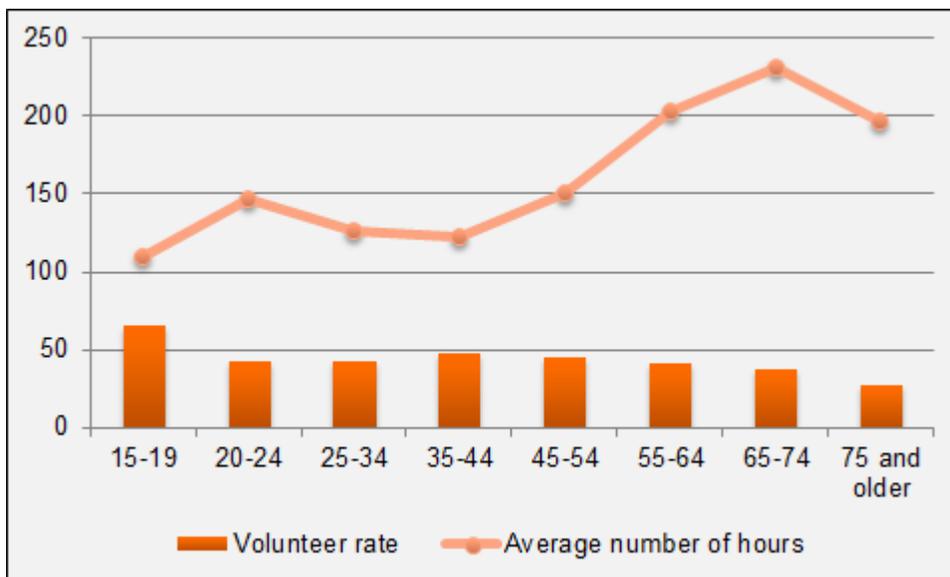
### Age

Canadians aged 15 to 19 have the highest volunteer rate, with 66% of youth volunteering. This could partially be attributed to community service requirements, as 20% of youth volunteer because they are required to go do. However, almost half of volunteers under 35 are motivated by possible job prospects, so volunteering can be seen as a way to hone skills and gain experience.

The volunteer rate drops through early adulthood, rebounding slightly with Canadians aged 35 to 44, likely due to parental volunteer roles in schools and after-school programs. 60% of Canadians with school-aged children volunteer, compared to 38% of those without.

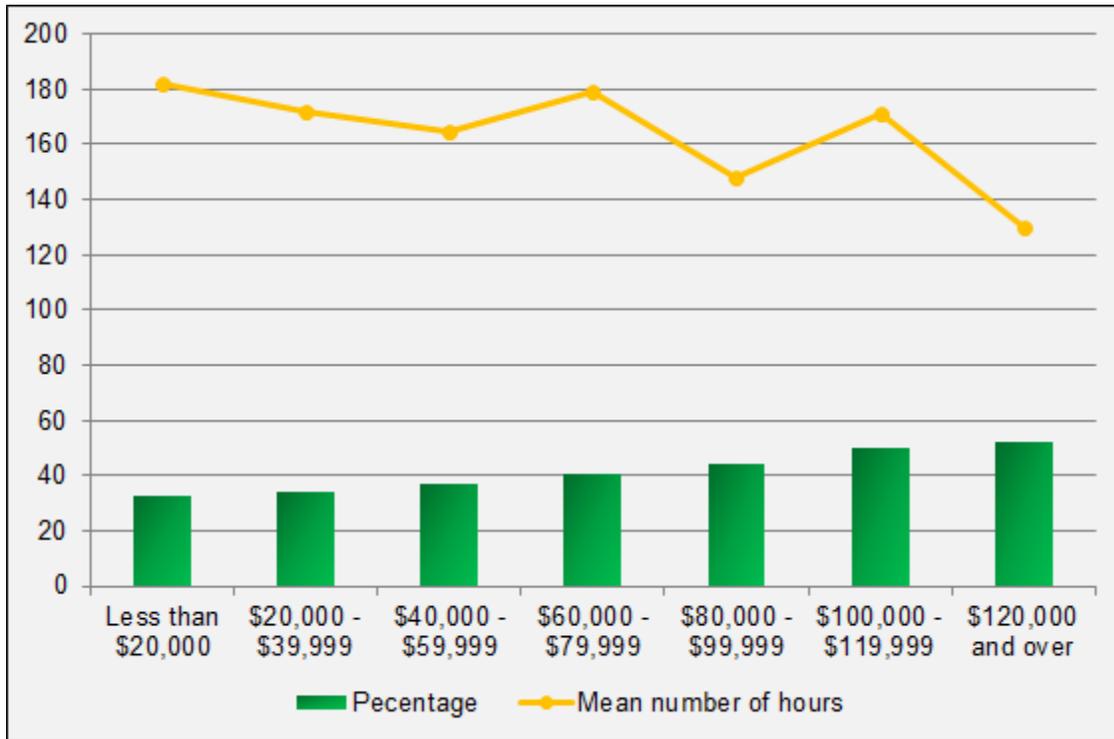
With Canadians over 45, the volunteer rate continues to drop, with 27% of Canadians aged 75 and older volunteering. 64% of Canadians in this age group cite the physical inability to participate in volunteer activities as a barrier to volunteering.

Interestingly, despite the lower volunteer rate among Canadian volunteers aged 65 to 74, they give the most hours annually, at 231 hours. Comparatively, youth give the least: 110 hours per year.



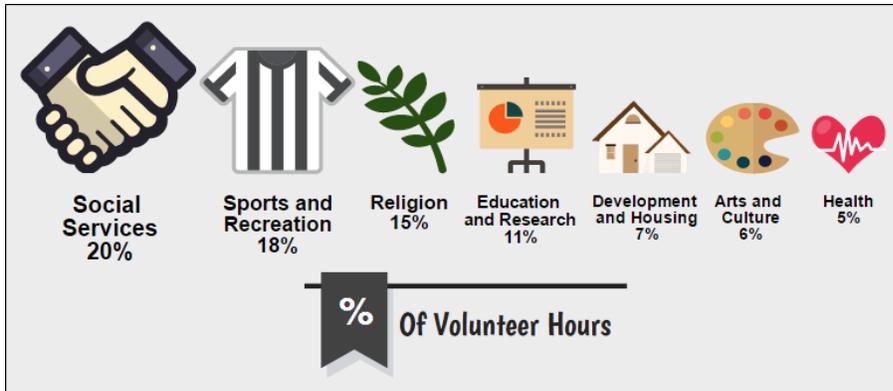
### Income

Although Canadians with a household income of \$120,000 and over have the highest volunteer rate of 52%, they give the lowest average number of hours per year: 130. On the contrary, while Canadians with household incomes of less than \$20,000 have the lowest volunteer rate, 33%, they give the highest average number of hours, 182.



### Volunteer activities

The most popular sectors where Canadians volunteer both in terms of the volunteer rate and percentage of volunteer hours are social services, sports and recreation, education and research, and religion, with 64% of all volunteer hours being devoted to them. The most popular volunteer activities among Canadians are organizing events and fundraising, with almost half of Canadians volunteering for both. However, fundraising only accounts for 9% of all volunteer hours. A third of Canadian volunteers sit on a committee or board.



### Recruitment

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. Interestingly, only 6% of Canadian volunteers got involved by responding to an online ad, and 8% to a poster or newspaper ad. Yet, 26% of Canadians aged 35 and under looked for volunteer positions over the Internet, indicating that recruiting youth online can be an effective avenue.

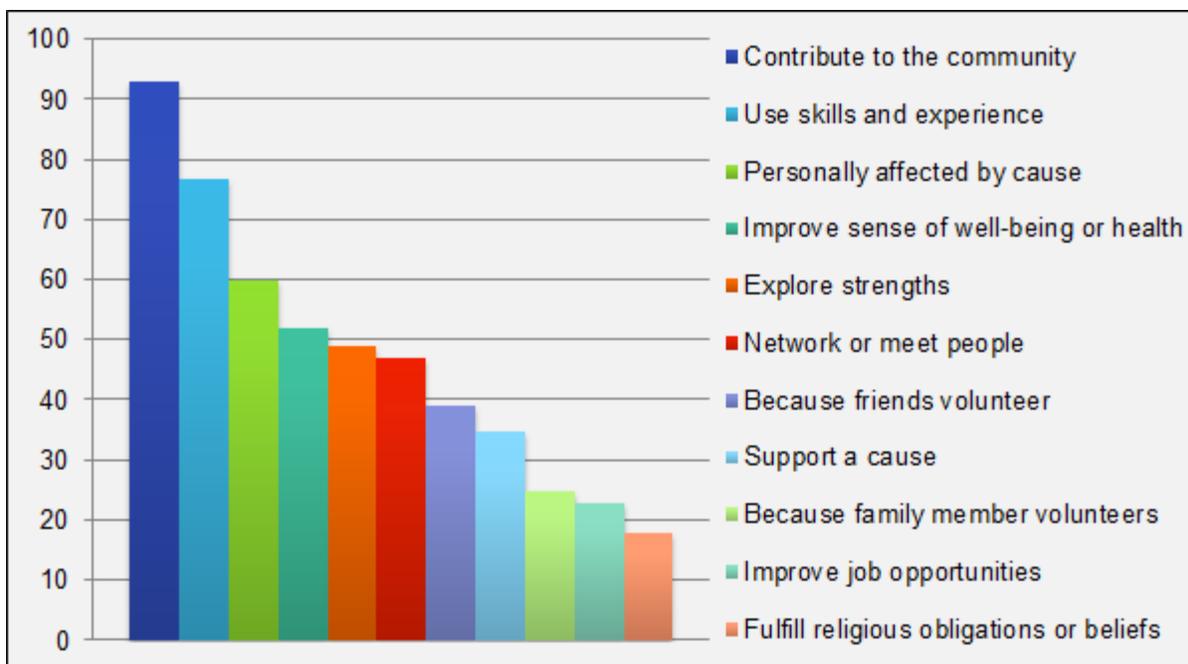


Two-thirds of Canadians who don't volunteer don't get involved due to lack of time. Similarly, 62% feel they aren't in a position to make a long-term commitment. Offering short-term, casual opportunities and micro-volunteering can be a great way to let potential volunteers test the waters of an organization. Still, with 51% not getting involved because no one asked and 27% because they did not know how to become involved, there is clearly an opportunity to better promote how to volunteer.



### Motivations

The single biggest reason that Canadians volunteer is to contribute to the community. Although 77% of volunteers want to use their skills and experience, only 23% volunteer to improve their job opportunities. About half of Canadian volunteers consider volunteering to be a great way to network or meet people.



In terms of specific skills gained through volunteering, 63% of volunteers feel that getting involved has improved their interpersonal skills. Improved communication skills and organizational or managerial skills are also noted by about two-fifths of volunteers. Canadian youth are more likely to gain skills through volunteering, so it is important to offer skills-based opportunities.

To learn more about effective volunteer engagement, Volunteer Canada recommends following the [Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement](#) and [Bridging the Gap](#).