



# Volunteering Lens of COVID-19: Fall Survey Highlights

December 2020

# New research on volunteer engagement impacts

- Volunteer Canada, in collaboration with the Volunteer Management Professionals of Canada and spinktank, surveyed non-profit organizations and volunteers in October 2020.
- Survey gathered views from organizations and volunteers. (408 organizations, 279 volunteers)
- Surveys were conducted online via an open link. Volunteer Canada sent the link to its members and also requested its partners to share the link with their member organizations.
- Online fieldwork took place between October 8 – 25, 2020.
- Throughout the report totals may not add to 100% due to rounding or because the question is a multi-select question, where respondents were permitted to choose more than one response.
- Follow up to earlier surveys in Spring 2020.



Volunteer Management  
PROFESSIONALS OF CANADA



# Volunteering Lens of COVID-19

How has COVID-19 impacted volunteering?

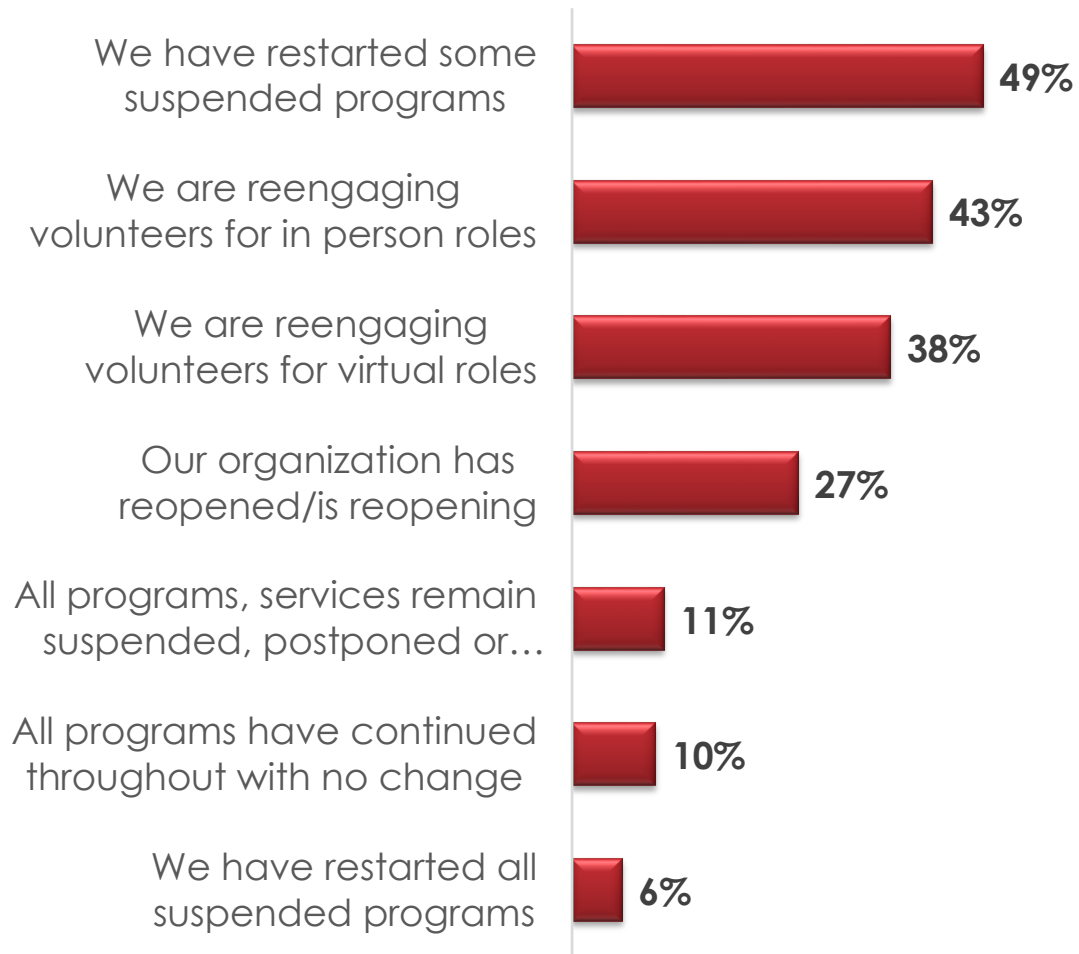
1. Assessment, adaptation and innovation
2. Engagement, isolation and re-engagement
3. Infrastructure and capacity for volunteer engagement
4. Support and leadership for the road ahead

# Challenges facing organizations

- Staff providing services with fewer volunteers
- Difficulty finding time to develop new role descriptions and transition existing volunteer roles to virtual roles
- Too many volunteer applications for positions available
- Not enough staff to support volunteer engagement
- Difficulty finding time to plan, recruit and train volunteers while providing services
- Difficulty accessing technology for volunteers in virtual roles
- Difficulty providing training and supports for volunteers to work remotely
- Not enough volunteers to deliver programs and services

Q. To what degree is your organization experiencing the following challenges? (June –October 2020) (Scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means not at all and 5 means to a great degree)





Changes to organization's programs, services, activities since June 2020

# Changes to volunteering-organization perspective

	March-June	June-Oct
Re-engaged volunteers	16%	49%
Have developed/are developing new volunteer roles	29%	45%
Transitioned some roles to virtual /remote delivery	44%	34%
Redeployed existing volunteers to new roles	28%	31%
Reduced number of volunteer roles	49%	28%
Increased emphasis on existing virtual /remote volunteer roles	23%	24%
Expanded due to increased demand	14%	12%
Suspended all volunteer engagement until further notice	40%	4%

# Changes to volunteering – Volunteer perspective

	March- June	June- October
I continue to volunteer in the same role with same organization	29%	63%
I am volunteering in a new or adapted role with the same organization	17%	45%
I am volunteering with new organization	8%	12%
I am helping out in my neighbourhood or with a grassroots group	7%	17%

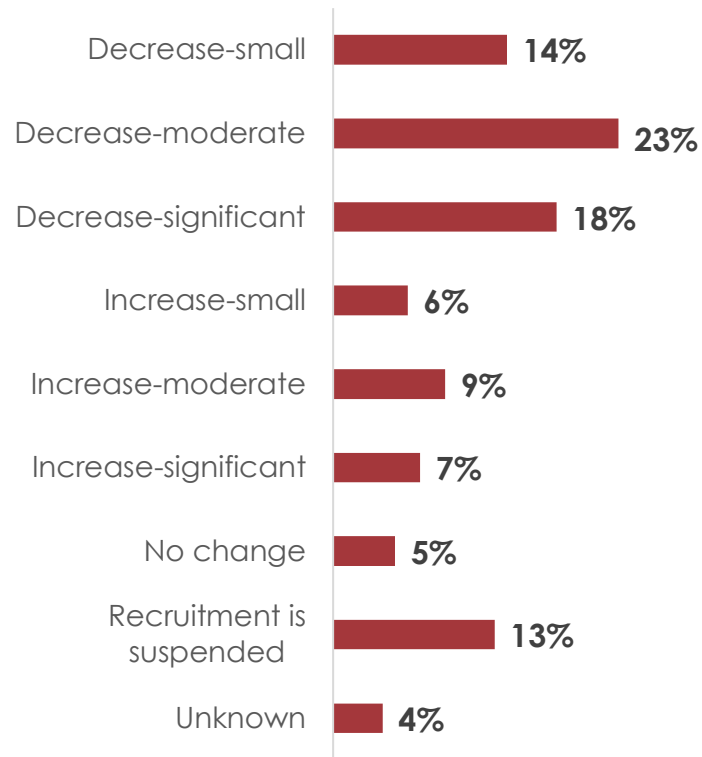
# Factors affecting ability to volunteer

	Active volunteers	Inactive volunteers
I am comfortable using technology to volunteer	57%	24%
I have more flexibility in my schedule	56%	19%
I have access to technology	50%	27%
I have more time available to volunteer now	42%	24%
I am over the age of 65	26%	41%
I have 'online fatigue' (too much time online)	21%	21%
I am living with someone over age 65	14%	25%
My health concerns	9%	25%
I am living with someone with health concerns	8%	17%
I have less time to volunteer now	8%	9%



# Impact of COVID-19 on Volunteering

Changes in volunteer interest/availability/contact



Reasons for decline in volunteers	since mid-March	June-Oct
Organizational decision not to engage volunteers during this time	52%	16%
Government direction not to engage volunteers during this time	24%	6%
Program, service or event suspended or postponed and no other role available for volunteer	59%	30%
Volunteers not able to engage through virtual volunteering	49%	37%
Volunteer decision not to volunteer because of age, individual health concerns, safety concerns or other	71%	57%
Unsure	6%	3%

Impact of decline on ability to deliver programs/services

1 – No impact at all	12%
2	12%
3	21%
4	13%
5-Great deal of impact	10%

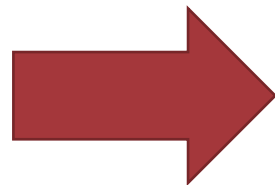
From organization survey

# How Virtual Volunteering has impacted organizations

BENEFITS		CHALLENGES/LIMITATIONS	
Flexibility for volunteers and participants	<b>69%</b>	Some programs/roles not suitable for virtual delivery	<b>78%</b>
Improved technology skills for staff and volunteers	<b>58%</b>	Reduced volunteer to volunteer connections	<b>65%</b>
Brought new volunteers to the organization	<b>41%</b>	'Online fatigue'	<b>64%</b>
Reduced office or physical space	<b>40%</b>	Lack of access to and comfort with technology	<b>61%</b>
Broader access to volunteers: no geographic limitations for volunteers	<b>36%</b>	Time required to adapt all aspects of roles	<b>44%</b>
Operational cost-savings	<b>36%</b>	Difficulty obtaining PRC/VSC for some roles	<b>14%</b>

# A Shift to Virtual Volunteering

56%



Organizations currently offering virtual volunteering roles

30%

Organizations unable to offer/adapt to virtual volunteering roles

16%

Unsure

Of the nonprofits that offer virtual volunteering roles:

	Mar-June	June-Oct
Volunteer roles previously virtual	<b>12%</b>	<b>9%</b>
Currently	<b>52%</b>	<b>50%</b>
Anticipate	<b>51%</b>	<b>48%</b>

# A Shift to Virtual Volunteering

*The push to virtual; the pull of in person*

## Organizations

- 56% of organizations now offer some virtual volunteering roles
- **For roles adapted to virtual**, organizations anticipate almost 50% reverting to in person when possible
- **For new virtual roles**, 50% to remain virtual, 30% moving to in person

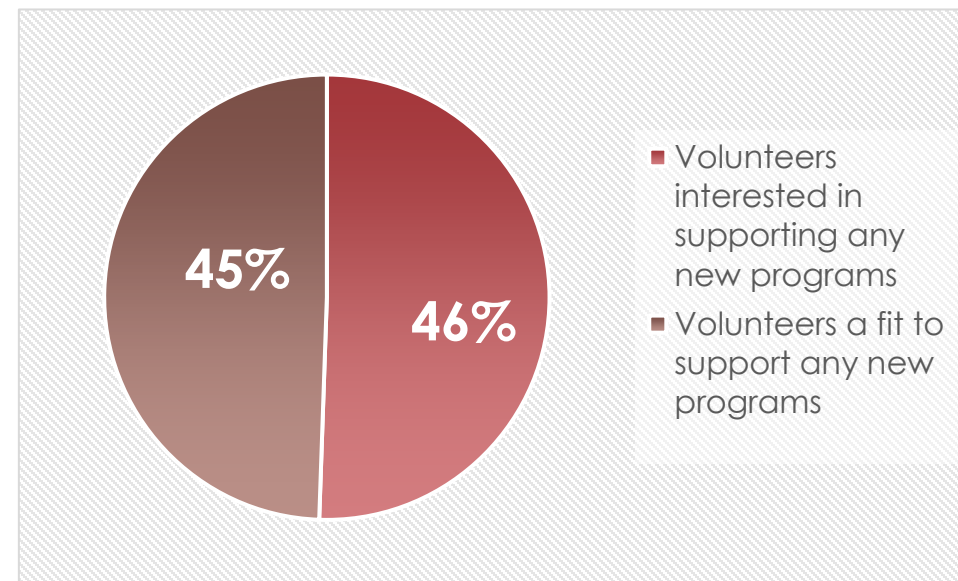
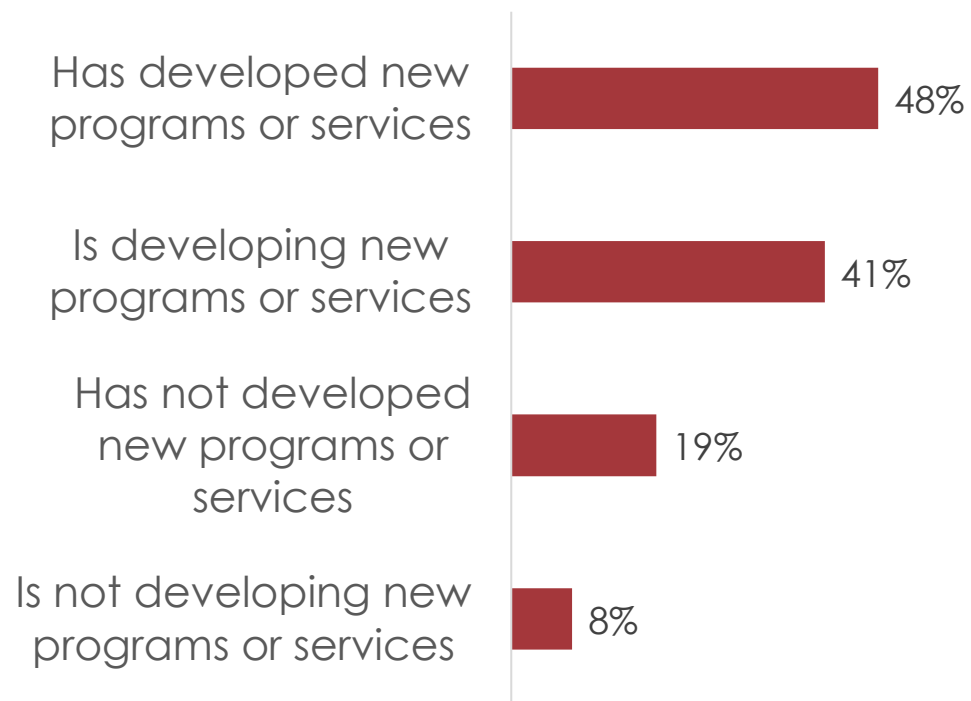
## Volunteers

- 19% active volunteers now volunteering remotely
- 37% volunteers are not able to volunteer in virtual roles (as reported by organizations)
- 87% inactive volunteers plan to return to volunteering

*How will organizations keep volunteers in virtual roles engaged and connected: to the organization and to each other?*

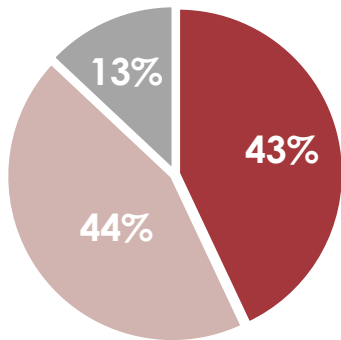
# Organization adaptations: new programs or services

## New programs or services



# Re-engaging Volunteers

## Volunteers: Plan to return to volunteering at previous organization



- Yes
- Yes, as long as I am comfortable that health and safety practices are in place
- I'm not sure
- No

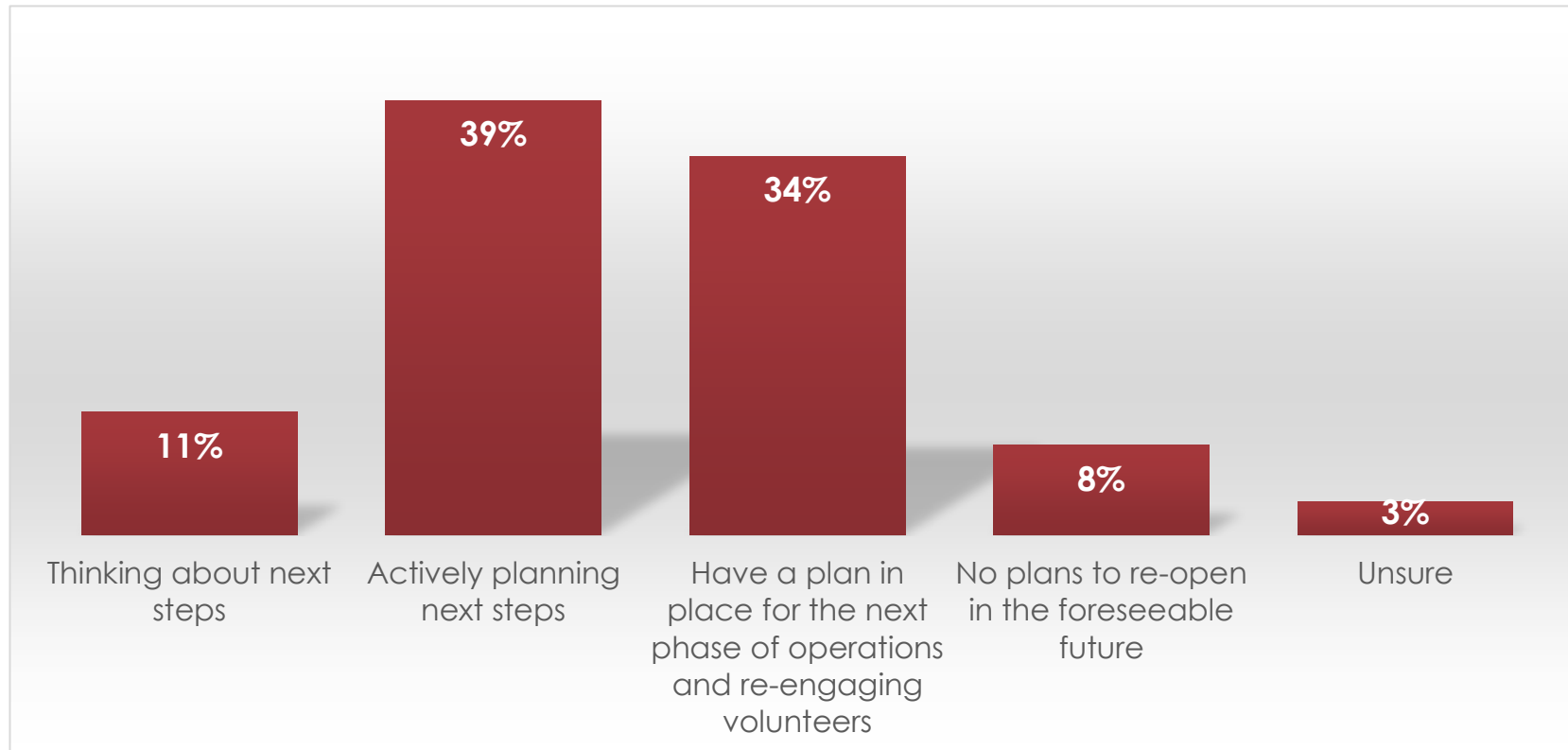
## Will volunteers return to same roles

Yes, for the most part	43%
Some, as several roles/programs/events have changed or closed	31%
Not for the most part, we have had to revamp most roles/programs/events	10%
Still unknown at this time	16%

## Any training for returning volunteers

Yes, for those with changes to roles/programs/events	26%
Yes, for all volunteers	46%
Undecided/unknown	19%
No training /retraining offered or required	9%

# At what phase is your organization in operational planning?



# Critical issues facing organizations

(next 6-12 months)

- Health and safety of staff, volunteers and clients (69%)
- Determining if adaptations to programs, services or delivery will be maintained or changed (59%)
- 'COVID fatigue' (staff and volunteers) (59%)
- Planning to re-engage volunteers (52%)
- Keeping previous volunteers engaged (49%)
- Planning for a next wave of the pandemic (42%)
- Supporting mental health and wellness of staff, volunteers and clients (38%)





# What organizations anticipate volunteering could look like post-COVID

- New and/or adapted programs and roles
- Volunteers with more technology ability needed
- Fewer volunteers
- Volunteers with different skills needed
- Same number of volunteers
- More volunteers
- Not enough volunteer engagement staff to support volunteers



Volunteer Management  
PROFESSIONALS OF CANADA



# Infrastructure and capacity for Volunteer Engagement

For Leaders of  
Volunteers  
(LoVs):

**37%** had their duties changed


**29%** have had their employment impacted\*

**24%** are concerned about job stability within the next 6 months

Organizations:

**17%** anticipate fewer volunteer engagement staff to support volunteers

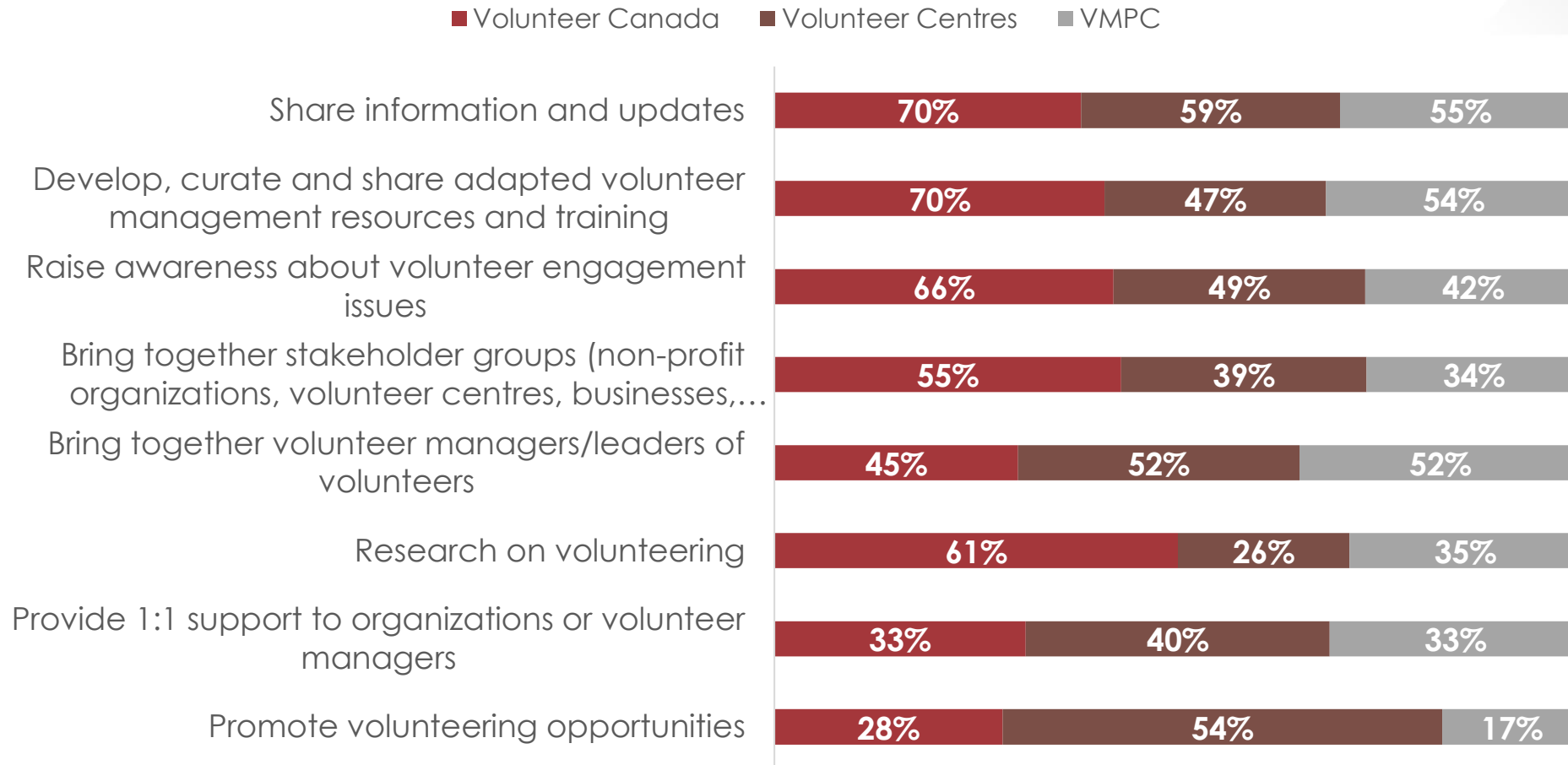
**63%** either don't, are unsure if they have a transition plan for volunteers not returning to the organization



Skills-based or  
pro bono  
support of most  
benefit to  
organizations

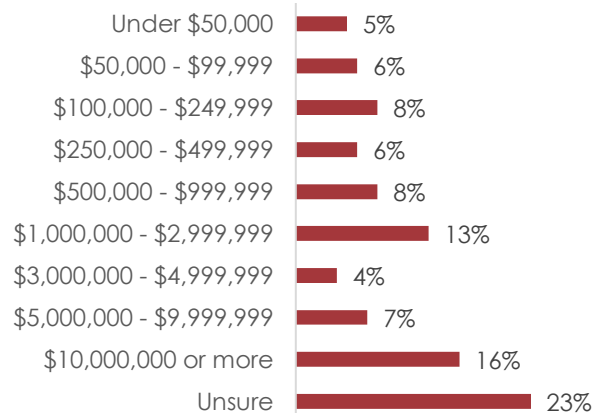
	<b>Top 2</b>
Fundraising and grant writing	31%
Technology (to support internal communications)	20%
Support for applying for government and other emergency programs	17%
Operations innovation	16%
Marketing and promotion	16%
Strategic planning	11%
Human resource management	8%
Social media	15%
Communications	13%
Unsure	16%

# Supporting organizations during COVID-19



# Respondent Organization Profile

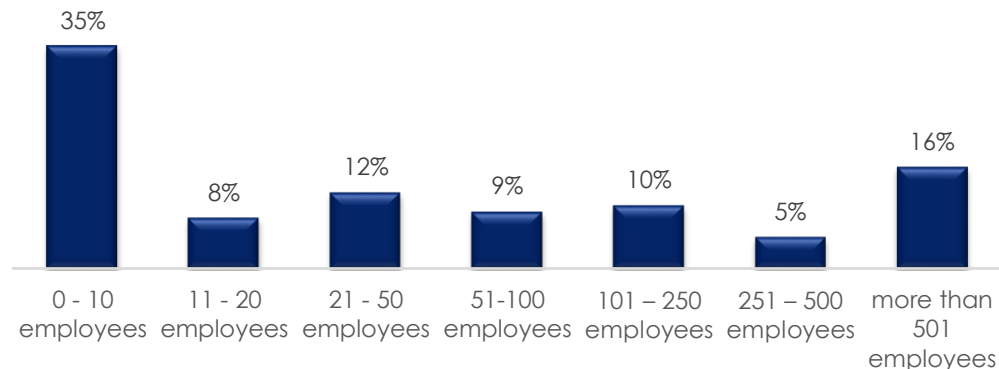
## Pre-COVID-19 Annual Operating Budget



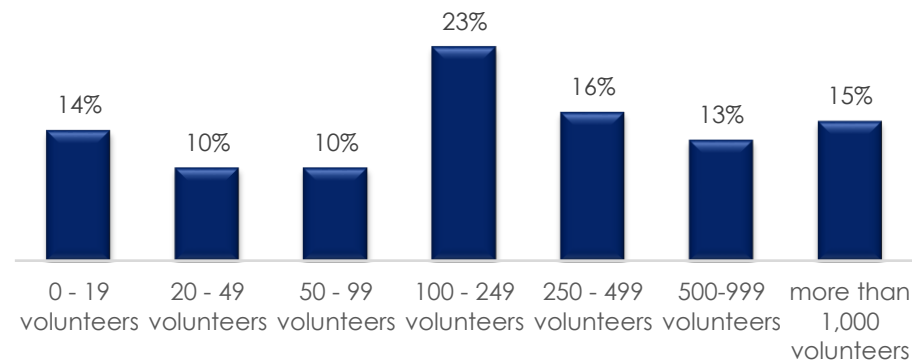
## Location

British Columbia	17%
Alberta	23%
Manitoba/Saskatchewan	5%
Ontario	36%
Quebec	15%
Atlantic Canada	5%
Territories	0%

## Number of Employees



## Number of Volunteers



# Stay Informed. Stay Connected



Become a Member  
[volunteer.ca/membership](http://volunteer.ca/membership)



Subscribe to Volunteer Vibe  
[blog.volunteer.ca](http://blog.volunteer.ca)

Follow us on Social Media @VolunteerCanada

