

RECOGNIZING VOLUNTEERING IN 2017

SUMMARY REPORT



**VOLUNTEER
BÉNÉVOLES**
C A N A D A



Funded by:  **Investors
Group**

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FOREWORD

Recognizing volunteers continues to be an important dimension of volunteer engagement as we find meaningful ways to show appreciation for the efforts of volunteers and to raise public awareness about the contributions volunteers make to communities. Culminating each year with our National Volunteer Week (NVW) campaign, Volunteer Canada and Investors Group have been working together for the past 15 years to gain insights and to develop tools that support and recognize the full spectrum of volunteer engagement in Canada. Beyond our quest to stay current around recognizing volunteers, a more fundamental question has emerged: How do we recognize volunteering?

The [*2013 Volunteer Recognition Study*](#)¹ illuminated a gap between how volunteers want to be recognized and the volunteer recognition activities in organizations. We learned that many volunteers prefer a personal expression of thanks throughout the year, rather than an annual volunteer appreciation reception. We also heard that some volunteers are more motivated by knowing the impact of their time than by receiving a certificate or gift of appreciation. Finally, we heard that younger volunteers want the skills they have demonstrated or acquired through volunteering to be recognized to support their educational or career paths. Overlaying these findings was the broader notion that every individual has a unique style and preference for how they want to be recognized. From this study, we developed the [*Volunteer Recognition Tool*](#) to help organizations better match their volunteer recognition strategies to the preferences of volunteers.

In parallel to our focus on volunteer recognition, we have been revisiting the very definition of volunteering and how it is manifested in communities. In June 2011, The Governor General, His Excellency the Right Honorable David Johnston, kicked off a round table discussion on the future of volunteering. When asked "[*What Do You Want the World of Volunteering to Look Like in 2017?*](#)"², participants called upon us to broaden the definition of volunteering, to include informal volunteering and the emerging organic movements. Some suggested that we find a new word altogether, such as citizen engagement or community involvement, however, the consensus was

¹ Volunteer Canada, "2013 Volunteer Recognition Study." (2013), <https://volunteer.ca/content/2013-volunteer-recognition-study>

² University of Ottawa & Volunteer Canada, "What do you want the World of volunteering to look like in 2017: Highlights of the Governor General's Round Table on volunteerism." (2011), <https://volunteer.ca/content/world-volunteering-2017-and-beyond>

that we must direct our energies toward better understanding and promoting a broader spectrum of volunteer engagement.

Volunteer Canada and Investors Group carried out the following study – *How Do We Recognize Volunteers in 2017?* – with this aim in mind. Here, we are not using the term “recognize” to mean “give thanks,” but more literally to signify the identification of someone as volunteering through the wide array of forms and manifestations this can take. We looked to our counterparts around the world, IPSOS Public Affairs conducted a public opinion poll of Canadians, and we researched a range of theories and practices around the changing nature and conceptualization of volunteering. This report highlights our findings and analyzes them through the lens of Individual Social Responsibility (ISR) with the aim of equipping organizations, individuals, government agencies and businesses with knowledge so that we can find new ways to support, promote, and celebrate the myriad of ways Canadians put their values into action.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Volunteer Canada would like to acknowledge Investors Group for their leadership and commitment to strengthening volunteering through recognition and raising awareness of the contributions volunteers make in communities. We are enormously appreciative of their steadfast support in developing knowledge and providing innovative volunteer recognition tools to those engaging volunteers.

We are tremendously grateful to our research partners, IPSOS Public Affairs, for conducting the public opinion poll and participating in the research design. By extension, we appreciate all those who participated in the survey and shared important perspectives.

Thank you to members of the Network of National Volunteer Centres, convened by the International Association for Volunteer Effort, for the great conversations at our leadership forum in November 2016. In particular, we wish to thank Dr. Cees van de Bos for a thought-provoking presentation on how to use volunteer management infrastructure to support civil society.

A special note of appreciation to the team at Statistics Canada (specifically the project team for the *General Social Survey: Giving, volunteering and participating*) for your willingness to respond to public feedback around capturing a broader spectrum of helping activities and plan to incorporate a new module on informal volunteering into the 2018 survey.

Leigha McCarroll
Paula Speevak

Volunteer Canada

INTRODUCTION

When Statistics Canada released the findings of the *General Social Survey: Giving, volunteering and participating* (2013), alarm bells sounded in some quarters as we witnessed a drop from 47% of Canadians aged 15 and over volunteering in 2010 to 44% in 2013. Was this a minor blip or the beginning of a concerning downward trend? Have Canadians become less giving or are we simply giving time in new and different ways?

While the drop in the volunteer rate can be partially explained by an aging population (volunteer rate decreases with age), or by increased family caregiving demands due to significant cuts in home support services, there is also a growing sense that there is a fundamental shift happening in the volunteer landscape. Could a decrease in formal volunteering indicate an increase in informal volunteering?³

As Trina Isakson notes, "[...] individuals are becoming more aware of new ways to apply consumerism, technology, investments, and business practices to advance social good. As a result, people are both demanding and innovating new ways to use time and money."⁴ While 12.7 million Canadians volunteer an average of 154 hours per year through non-profit organizations, charities, and public institutions⁵, Canadians are doing great things outside of these formal structures. Isakson points out that social media and technology have influenced interactions between Canadians and community organizations, positing that "Volunteers are increasingly demanding short-term, episodic, skilled roles."⁶ She outlines four key areas where individuals choose to advance social good outside of formal volunteering activities: consumerism; technology and data; investing; and business owner practices, noting that these are all valid forms of advancing social good.⁷ Individuals are mounting public awareness and social advocacy campaigns, raising funds through digital channels, organizing events, and mobilizing people around issues that matter to

³ A recent working group of Canadian volunteer centres including Volunteer Alberta and Kelowna Community Resources developed definitions for informal and formal volunteering. Per their definition, formal volunteering takes place as part of a nonprofit organization's activities, like signing up to be a dog walker or sports coach, sitting on a board of directors, or taking on a specific role to help a nonprofit achieve its mission. Informal volunteering is those actions that directly or indirectly benefit people outside the family or household. Canadians are known for helping our neighbors, random acts of kindness like shoveling a sidewalk or buying someone's coffee in the line up behind us. We organize community activities, like BBQs or litter clean-ups, and even take actions at home to support important causes, like recycling for the sake of our environment. More information can be found here: <https://volunteer150for150.ca/definition-of-volunteering/>

⁴ Trina Isakson, "Beyond Giving and Participating: How and why individuals are exploring new ways to advance social good." (2013), <http://www.ncfacanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Beyond-giving-and-volunteering-full-report.pdf>

⁵ Martin Turcotte, "Volunteering and charitable giving in Canada." *Statistics Canada*, (2015), <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-652-x/89-652-x2015001-eng.htm>

⁶ Trina Isakson, "Beyond Giving and Participating: How and why individuals are exploring new ways to advance social good." (2013), <http://www.ncfacanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Beyond-giving-and-volunteering-full-report.pdf>

⁷ *ibid.*

them. Others are crowd sourcing funds to pay for funerals, attend school, start a new business, produce something they have invented, participate in a peace mission, or retrofit a van to make it accessible. Canadians are making informed decisions about their consumption habits based on a company's corporate responsibility practices and are making lifestyle changes to reflect their social and environmental concerns.

This shift signals that as the nature of volunteering and engaging in community is evolving and expanding, our conceptualization and recognition of the term must adapt. The notion of Individual Social Responsibility, or ISR, presents a broad and clear lens through which to conceptualize all forms of volunteering and engagement in an inclusive and robust way.

This study aims to better understand what kinds of activities people consider to be volunteering, how people are currently engaged in communities, and how we can recognize a broader definition of volunteering through the notion of ISR that reflects a full spectrum of engagement. Building on a brief definition of ISR, the report is organized into three key sections. Section I explores global trends in defining volunteering and giving, Section II provides a summary of the public opinion poll conducted by IPSOS Public Affairs, and Section III offers concluding thoughts as a springboard for future action.

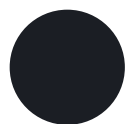
WHAT IS ISR?

In their 2009 working paper, *Individual and Corporate Social Responsibility*, Roland Bénabou and Jean Tirole explore the notion of ISR, noting that “Many people give to charities, invest in socially responsible funds, consume green products, supply their blood, or give their time and sometimes even their life for good causes,”⁸ and that these actions are driven by diverse and complex motivations. Author and trainer Stuart Emmett expands upon this, defining ISR as “the continuing commitment to behave ethically and contribute to people’s development while improving the quality of life of other individuals, groups, teams as well as society at large.”⁹ Each individual’s unique set of motivations and the behaviour driven by these motivations forms their own personal brand of ISR. ISR, then, encompasses all forms of engagement for social good, ranging from formal volunteering through organizational structures to the new actions described by Isakson. The applications of approaching the recognition of volunteering through ISR are far-reaching and exciting. An understanding of ISR can help organizations better understand the diverse and interdependent motivations driving engagement habits and to adapt their organizational structures to the changing volunteer landscape. It can help businesses to strengthen their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs in ways that foster meaningful and inclusive engagement of their employees in the community and in the workplace. Most

⁸ Roland Bénabou & Jean Tirole, “Individual and Corporate Social Responsibility,” *IZA - Institute of Labour Economics*, (2009), <https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/36339/1/616675305.pdf>

⁹ Stuart Emmett, “Individual Social Responsibility.” *PASA*, (2017), <http://procurementandsupply.com/2017/02/individual-social-responsibility/>

importantly, it continues to position formal volunteering as an essential part of community wellbeing while validating the actions of individuals across the wider spectrum of ISR. An understanding of ISR demonstrates that each action, formal or informal, virtual or on-site, monetary or in-kind, has the potential for social good.



SECTION I: GLOBAL TRENDS IN DEFINING VOLUNTEERING AND GIVING

The question of how we define volunteering and the growing recognition of the widening spectrum of citizen engagement and organization is prominent on the international scene.

In the UK, the yearly *Community Life Survey* explores the following four dimensions¹⁰:

- **(Regular) formal volunteering:** Giving unpaid help (at least once a month) through groups, clubs or organizations to benefit other people or the environment
- **(Regular) informal volunteering:** Giving unpaid help (at least once a month) as an individual to people who are not relatives
- **Social action:** Giving unpaid help to support a community event, campaign or project
- **Charitable donation:** Donating money to charitable causes

According to the *Community Life Survey*, informal volunteering has increased over time, and is actually more prevalent than formal volunteering, “with over a third of people (36%) regularly helping out neighbours and friends on a more casual basis.”¹¹

In the Netherlands, there has been a significant research around the changing nature of volunteering and community life. Several studies have examined the patterns of those who are active as individuals, those who are involved through their schools, youth groups, service clubs, businesses, or political parties, as well as those who contribute in less formal ways. Dr. Cees van den Bos of the Volunteer Center Arnhem (the Netherlands) outlines the myriad ways that different cultures conceptualize volunteering and points out Wuthnow’s claim that in the United States, civic participation has shifted, and “that traditional, long-term memberships in hierarchical

¹⁰ [The Community Life Survey](#) is a Cabinet Office survey tracking trends and developments across topics related to encouraging social action and empowering communities. This report includes data and analysis from the 2012-13 Community Life Survey, for which a representative sample of 6,915 adults in England were interviewed between August 2012 and April 2013.

¹¹ TNS BMRB, “Giving of time and money: Findings from the 2012-13 Community Life Survey,” *Cabinet Office*, (2013),

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/314432/2012-2013-giving-time-and-money-report.pdf

organizations are being replaced by experiments with 'looser, more sporadic, ad hoc connections.'¹²

This phenomenon is also observable in the Netherlands, and Dr. van den Bos points out the new vocabulary and manifestations of the shifting understanding of volunteering, including terms such as voluntary worker, volunteer, active citizenship, civic engagement, social inclusion, social service, community service, informal volunteering and corporate social responsibility. He began to focus his research on the interplay between formal, or what he dubs the "systems world", and informal volunteering, or the "life world." These distinct concepts are outlined in Figure 1. The systems world refers to the formal structures within non-profit organizations and public institutions that engage volunteers formally (such as a literacy organization that recruits volunteer tutors to work with students). The life world refers to those circumstances that inspire people to help one another or to self-organize to take action (such as a group of neighbours who take turns cooking for someone recovering from surgery). His research asks whether the volunteer management infrastructure (the systems world) that we have created can be used to support civil society at-large (the life world).

Figure 1: The Systems World vs the Life World¹³









SYSTEM WORLD	LIFE WORLD
Instrumental	Expressive
Formal/ <i>top down</i>	Informal/ <i>bottom up</i>
Outcome: predictable	Outcome: unpredictable
Doing for (altruism)	Doing with (reciprocity, campaigning)
Specific	General
Searching for volunteers for jobs	Searching for jobs for volunteers
Professionals select volunteers	Volunteers select professionals
Ownership: organization/board	Ownership: members/citizens/residents
Exclusive	Inclusive
Competencies	Assets/common interests/proximity
Bridging capital	Bonding capital
Professional: recruits/coordinates	Professional: empowers/facilitates

¹² Cees van den Bos, "Using Volunteering Infrastructure to Build Civil Society" *Erasmus University Rotterdam*, (2016), <http://www.csvnet.it/component/phocadownload/category/29-volontariato-in-europa?download=322:using-volunteering-infrastructure-to-build-civil-society>

¹³ Adapted from a presentation from Dr. Cees van den Bos at IAVE Mexico, (2016).

Another international example of a way to conceptualize and understand civic engagement more broadly is the Charities Aid Foundation's (CAF) *World Giving Index*, which ranks the generosity of people in 160 different countries. Gallup, an American research company, compiled data from a survey whereby they asked people if they had helped a stranger, donated money to a charity, or volunteered time to an organization. Interestingly, they did not ask people if they helped someone they *did* know (friend, family, neighbour) outside of an organization. Equally interesting is the notion that the conceptions and definitions of volunteering as they are known in the West differ widely from country to country, yet many countries without a Western conception are highly ranked on the Index. This trend highlights the importance of broadening the traditional definition to reflect more diverse understandings of civic generosity. In 2016, Canada ranked number 6 on the Index. The highest ranked countries (in order) are Myanmar, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and Sri Lanka. Figure 2 illustrates changes in ranks over the past 4 years.

Figure 2: World Giving Index, 2013-2016¹⁴

Country	2016 rank	2015 rank	2014 rank	2013 rank
 Myanmar	1	1	1	2
 United States	2	2	1	1
 New Zealand	4	3	5	2
 Canada	6	4	3	2
 Australia	3	5	6	7
 United Kingdom	8	6	7	6
 Netherlands	13	7	12	8
 Sri Lanka	5	8	9	10

While wide-reaching and diverse, these global conceptions of volunteering, giving, and civic engagement are perfectly aligned with the broader concept of ISR.

A NOTE ON THE LANGUAGE OF VOLUNTEERING IN CANADA

In Quebec, the language of helping others, making common cause, or taking on a role within an organization has been distinct from other regions of Canada. The term “entraide” recognizes that citizens are interdependent and that the primary source of help (“aide”) comes from among (“entre”) friends, neighbours, and family. “Autonomous community action” refers to the essential independence of community voices to improve the quality of life in communities and to reflect the experiences of often-marginalized people. The term “bénévole” is closest to the traditional concept of “volunteer,” and can be defined as working with an organization to provide service.

¹⁴ CAF, “CAF World Giving Index 2016.” (2016), <https://www.cafonline.org/about-us/publications/2016-publications/caf-world-giving-index-2016>



SECTION II: PUBLIC OPINION POLL

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

While there was mounting anecdotal evidence that the public perception of volunteering was changing, we wanted to have a better sense of what kinds of activities Canadians were including in their definition of volunteering. IPSOS Public Affairs conducted a public opinion poll with the following objectives:

- to examine public perceptions and attitudes regarding volunteering;
- to examine Canadians' perception of their own volunteer activities vs those of others in their local community; and
- to add insight to help Volunteer Canada better understand how to further develop a culture of volunteering in Canada and perhaps re-define what volunteering means to Canadians.

METHODOLOGY

An online survey of 1,200 Canadians aged 16 and over was conducted by Ipsos in March 2016 (see Appendix A for demographic details). Ipsos employed weighting to balance demographics to ensure that the composition of the sample reflects that of the adult population per Census data and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. According to Ipsos, credibility intervals correct for unbalanced samples and allow the researcher to generalize from a sample to a population.¹⁵ In this case, the online survey is accurate to within +/- 3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all Canadian adults been pooled. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population. For the demographic profiles of the participants, please see Appendix A.

KEY FINDINGS

Canadians engage in community in diverse ways, ranging from informal activities to more formal activities that have traditionally been associated with volunteering. One constant trend is that for Canadians, volunteering is ultimately about helping and giving. Three in ten Canadians have contributed their time in the last 12 months, while

¹⁵ Ipsos Public Affairs, "Credibility Intervals for Online Polling." (2012), https://ipsos-na.com/dl/pdf/research/public-affairs/IpsosPA_CredibilityIntervals.pdf

half have contributed money. In terms of public perceptions and attitudes, the majority (87%) agree that Canada needs volunteers as society and the economy would suffer without them, and that volunteering is a community activity that is easy to do. Canadians are divided in terms of the activities that constitute volunteering, with 35% of Canadians saying they help out in the community but do not consider their engagement to be volunteering, and four in ten agreeing that there are many people who help out in the community who are not thought of as volunteers.

Traditionally-recognized activities such as fundraising, participating in a community event, working at food banks and attending to seniors or persons with a disability are equated with volunteering for many Canadians, however more informal activities that Canadians engage in such as donating used clothing, shoveling a neighbour's walk, or avoiding using plastic water bottles are not widely seen as volunteering. 17 % of Canadians say they do not do any volunteering, while 35% say they do a lot to help friends and the community but they do not think of these activities as volunteering. When it comes to Canadian communities, 65% feel they have a responsibility to those who may need help in the community, but 71% agree that people are less connected to their communities than they were in previous generations. In terms of barriers to increased volunteer engagement, 57% of Canadians report opportunity (such as lack of time) as the main factor preventing them from volunteering more, while only 18% cited a lack of motivation as a reason for not volunteering.

PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES

Most Canadians view volunteering as vital to the societal and economic wellbeing of the country, with 87% affirming that without volunteering society would suffer, and 75% agreeing that the economy would suffer. A smaller majority agrees that the need for volunteers is driven by inadequate government services. In terms of what this volunteering looks like to Canadians, for 41%, it means helping (such as helping others, helping for free or helping the community), while for 25% it's about giving resources. Another 6% view volunteering as work (such as working to help others or working for free). Overall, 93% of Canadians associate volunteering with a charity as opposed to political work, and 92% view it as part of community as opposed to part of work. More Canadians associate volunteering with a specific cause or disease as opposed to something of a political nature. When it comes to the act and level of volunteering, six in ten Canadians say this changes depending on one's stage of life, while four in ten say people are either volunteers who engage throughout their life or not volunteers.

Interestingly, Canadians ranked helping family, random acts of kindness and improving one's community ahead of volunteering, which contrasts with the fact that 41% equate helping with volunteering. This highlights a disconnect in the way that Canadians define volunteering today, and this is evident in the activities that people consider to be volunteering.

ACTIVITIES

Canadians engage in community and society in a variety of ways, and three in ten Canadians say they have contributed their time over the past 12 months, while half have contributed money. 36% of Canadians claim they have spent time researching a particular social or political issue, 20% have written a comment or original ideas online regarding a social issue or political issue, and 12% have attended a public meeting, rally, speech or protest. When asked about activities that come to mind when they heard the word “volunteering”, 42% of Canadians cited general activities such as helping, fundraising, devoting time and spreading awareness for a cause, while an equal number of Canadians cited specific activities such as participating in a community event, working at food banks or serving at a soup kitchen. For 20% of Canadians, it involves activities for specific populations such as seniors, those with a disability and the homeless. Almost all (93%) Canadians feel that volunteering is a community activity, and 75% view it as an easy activity. Canadians are divided, however, on who volunteers and how much time it takes; with an almost even split between those who view it as an activity that a few do, versus an activity that many do, and between those who see it as taking a lot of time versus a little time. As for the groups engaging in volunteer activities, eight in ten Canadians think that the same small group does all the volunteering in their own community, and 6 in ten think that because it’s a small group, there are activities in the community that do not happen due to a lack of volunteers.

HOW CANADIANS SEE THEMSELVES

Despite considerable angst about the economy and the state of key social programs like healthcare, few Canadians consider themselves to be pessimists (over a third claim to be optimists while over half claim to be neither). A small number of Canadians (7%) say they volunteer often and for many causes and organizations, with a higher number (32%) saying they volunteer quite a bit but only for one or two organizations or volunteer infrequently. Almost half say they do a lot to help in the community or do their part in school-related or recreational activities that their family participates in but do not consider it volunteering. 17% of Canadians say they do not do any volunteering. It is evident that Canadians help in many ways, but there is a widespread consensus that informal engagement such as shoveling or cleaning a neighbour’s walk, bringing something to school or to the office for a food drive, or sharing content is not volunteering. For example, of the 75% of Canadians who have donated used clothing to a used clothing store, just under half would consider that volunteering. Furthermore, many of the activities that very few Canadians do are viewed as volunteering, such as reading to patients in a hospice, hospital or care facility (only 6% do, while 60% see it as volunteering) or serving on the board of directors of a non-profit organization (10% do, 47% consider volunteering).

In terms of motivations, 75% of Canadians are very willing to volunteer in times of crisis, even if they do not volunteer on a regular basis, and 68% would be more

motivated to choose an employer with a strong volunteer culture. A worrying trend is that most Canadians agree that they are increasingly being forced to volunteer as part of registering their children for community and sports activities. This trend merits close monitoring as it goes against the very nature of volunteering, which at its core connotes giving freely and willingly of time and/or resources, and could thus erode Canadians' willingness to volunteer.

Overall, Canadians want strong communities and want to be involved in their community. 82% believe that all Canadians have something to offer others, and 72% agree that communities thrive when people know each other. Most Canadians feel they have a personal responsibility to offer assistance to those who need help, and over half say they want to have a voice in shaping the community where they live. Despite this recognition of the role of communities in citizen engagement and connection, 71% think people are less connected to communities now than they were in previous generations.

BARRIERS AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Perhaps the disconnect mentioned above can be attributed to the fact that many Canadians cite a lack of physical or social opportunities (e.g. a lack of time and resources or family and friends not volunteering) as the main barrier to increased volunteering. 26% of Canadians cite the lack of physical or psychological capability (such as a lack of skills or knowledge of a worthwhile cause). It is important to note that only 18% of Canadians cited a lack of motivation as a barrier to increased volunteering. There are many resources for Canadians looking for opportunities or information around volunteering to leveraging the skills they *do* have for a cause, so there is a critical learning opportunity here that Volunteer Canada has identified. Volunteer centres are the local experts in recruiting volunteers, and those looking to volunteer can find opportunities through the centre closest to them¹⁶. Additionally, Canadians can engage in skills-based volunteering to bring their own skills and experience to a volunteer role and potentially learn new skills and aptitudes.¹⁷

Organizations can employ various strategies to help potential volunteers overcome these barriers, however the research shows that most Canadians do not have any ideas or suggestions to encourage volunteering, with two in ten citing advertising or asking for volunteers and 4% citing more free time or time off work or school as potential ways facilitate volunteering. When it comes to volunteering and the workplace specifically, 60% of Canadians agree that people would volunteer more if it was organized by their employer. Volunteer Canada has done extensive research on Employer-Supported Volunteering (ESV) which corroborates this trend.¹⁸ Volunteer Canada's research shows that ESV "provides the opportunity for

¹⁶ To consult Volunteer Canada's list of volunteer centres, please visit:

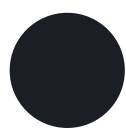
<https://volunteer.ca/volunteer-centres>

¹⁷ To learn more about skills-based volunteering, please visit: <https://volunteer.ca/sbv>

¹⁸ For more information on ESV, please visit: <https://volunteer.ca/esv>

employees to engage according to their values, personal preferences and motivations, and helps build pride in their workplace."¹⁹ In response to this, Volunteer Canada developed the *Canadian Code for Employer-Supported Volunteering* to provide guidance to workplaces to develop and enhance their ESV programs.

When it comes to the barrier of a lack of friends or family volunteering, 68% of Canadians agreed that people would volunteer more if they could do it as a family. Volunteer Canada has created tools and resources for families and organizations to facilitate family volunteering. According to Volunteer Canada's *Family Volunteering: A Discussion Paper*, "new and innovative positions and projects will need to be developed, as always meeting the needs of the organization and community while at the same time appealing to the unique characteristics of family volunteers."²⁰ Organizations can also engage groups of close friends or employees in order to overcome the barrier of a lack of social opportunity.²¹



SECTION II: CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND NEXT STEPS

There is momentum building globally to expand the definition of volunteering to include informal volunteering, organic movements, and the many ways that people put their values into action. Canadians continue to perceive volunteering as a vital part of communities, and while they engage in community in diverse ways, they do not necessarily consider informal activities to be volunteering. Canadians prioritize helping their family and friends, random acts of kindness, doing their part in activities and services that involve or benefit their family, and making a positive contribution in their community above volunteering, yet these activities all constitute "helping out," which is a term that 41% of Canadians associate with volunteering.

As the definition of volunteering expands, organizations are being called upon to make space for people and groups to make a difference in their communities in new ways. The Do-it-Yourself movement has transcended to the volunteering space. We first saw evidence of this in the 2010 report "[Bridging the Gap: Enriching the Volunteer Experience to Make a Better Future](#)," which revealed that organizations are expected to clearly define the roles and boundaries of the volunteers, however many volunteers want the flexibility to create their own opportunity or initiative.²² In response to this, Volunteer Canada began to promote a broader definition of

¹⁹ Volunteer Canada, "The Canadian Code for Employer-Supported Volunteering." (2015), <https://volunteer.ca/code-esv>

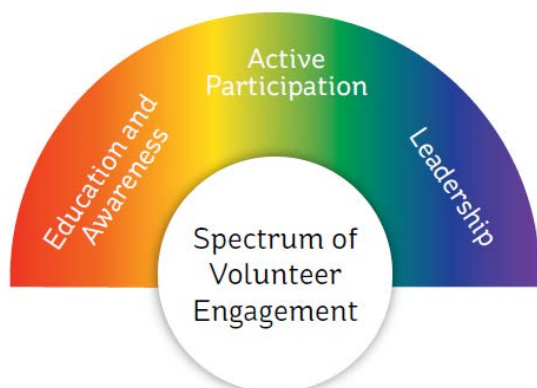
²⁰ Volunteer Canada, "Family Volunteering: A Discussion Paper." (2002), <https://volunteer.ca/content/family-volunteering-discussion-paper>

²¹ For more information on group volunteering, please visit: <https://volunteer.ca/groups>

²² Volunteer Canada, "Bridging the Gap: Enriching the Volunteer Experience to Build a Better Future." (2010), <https://volunteer.ca/content/bridging-gap-report>

volunteering that includes a wide spectrum of engagement. The spectrum (Figure 3) spans from being informed to assuming a leadership position.²³

Figure 3: The Spectrum of Engagement



The adoption of the concept of ISR builds on this spectrum, presenting an all-encompassing, global term with a flexible and inclusive framework through which we can understand civic contributions in infinite settings. Its flexibility lies in its inclusion of the diverse forms of volunteering – both formal and informal – and in its recognition of their essential contributions to building strong and connected communities.

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS AT A GLANCE:

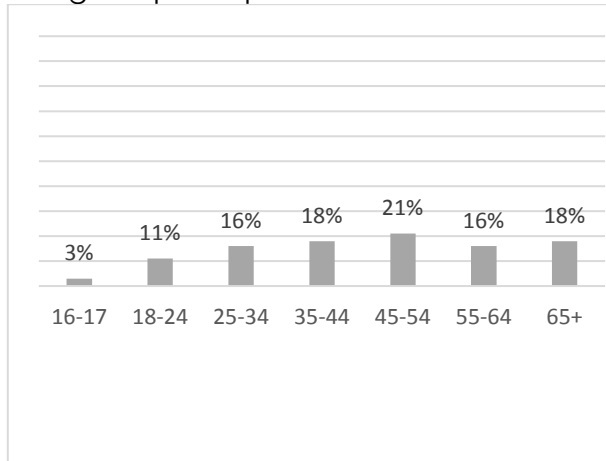
1. The definition of volunteering is expanding around the globe to include informal volunteering and organic movements.
2. Researchers are including informal volunteering in studies about volunteering (Statistics Canada plans to develop an informal volunteering module for the 2018 *General Social Survey: Giving, volunteering and participating*).
3. Informal volunteering appears to be increasing and may partly explain why formal volunteering rates have dropped.
4. Canadians identify a wide range of activities and decisions through which they express their values and contribute to community which include formal volunteering, informal volunteering, and ISR.
5. There may be opportunities to provide tools and other support to promote informal volunteering and ISR.
6. Volunteer recognition ought to include expressing appreciation and raising awareness about the contributions Canadians made through informal volunteering and ISR more broadly.

²³ See Volunteer Canada's page on the Spectrum of Volunteer Engagement here: <https://volunteer.ca/content/spectrum-volunteer-engagement>



APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHICS

a) Age of participants

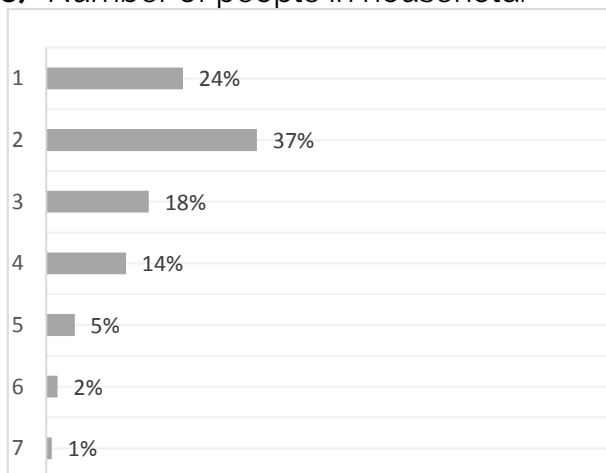


b) Gender: 51% female; 49% male

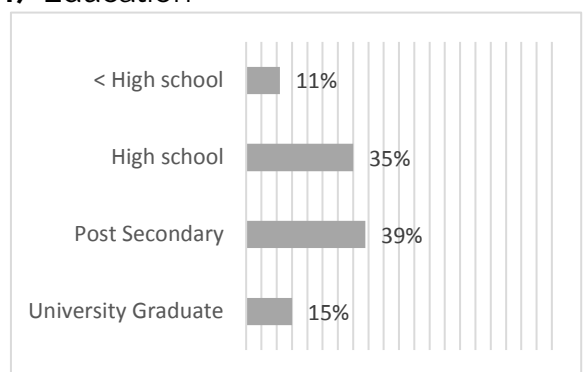
c) Presence of children in household: 25% children; 75% no children

d) Born in Canada: 85% yes; 15% no

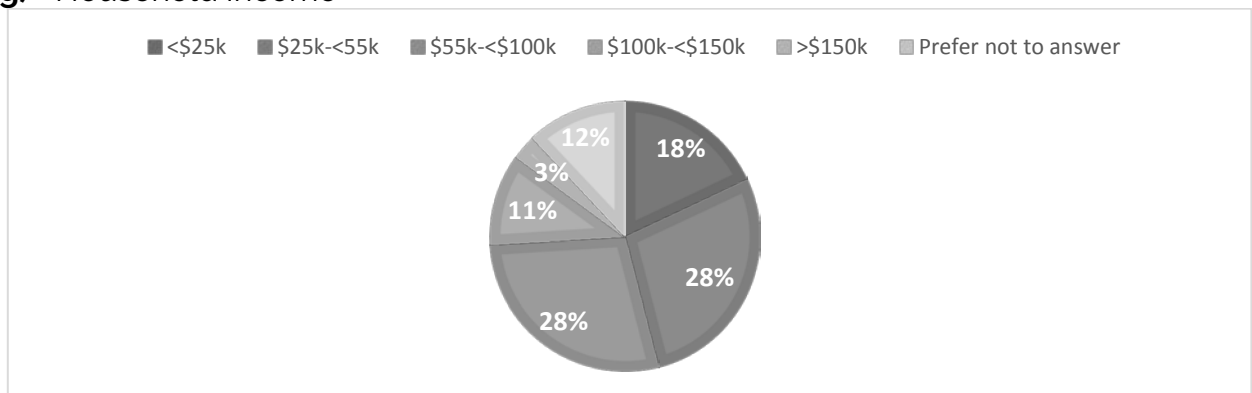
e) Number of people in household:



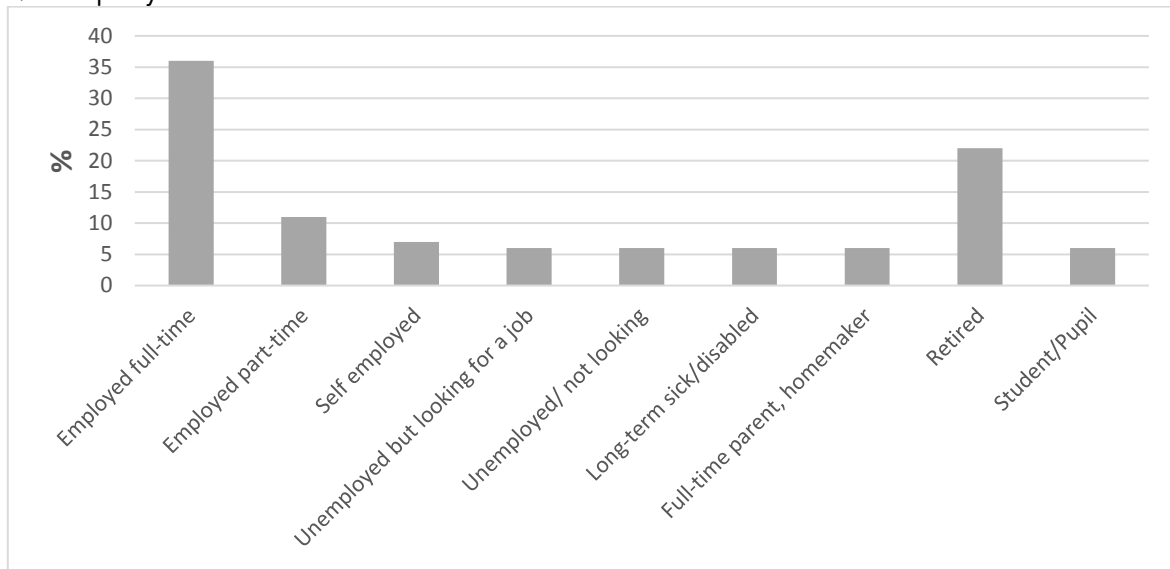
f) Education



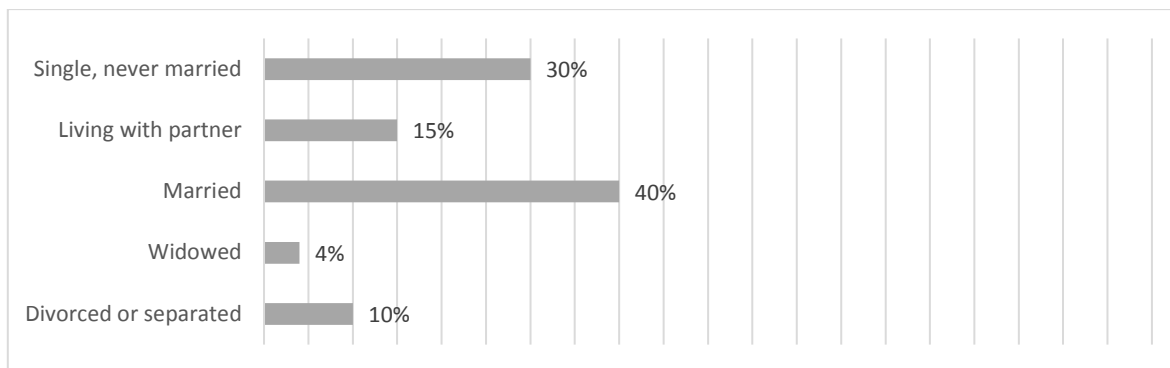
g) Household Income



h) Employment



i) Relationship Status



j) Region

