



# **Volunteering Counts: Formal and informal contributions of Canadians in 2018**

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# Today's presenters

**Paula Speevak**

President & CEO, Volunteer Canada

**Presenters:**

**Patric Fournier-Savard**

Statistics Canada

**Valérie du Plessis**

Statistics Canada

**Tara Hahmann**

Statistics Canada

# Volunteer Canada

## ***Our Vision***

Involved Canadians. Resilient communities.  
A vibrant Canada.

## ***Our Mission***

To provide national leadership and expertise on volunteering to enhance the participation, quality, and diversity of volunteer experiences to build strong and connected communities

We work with more than 200 volunteer centres, businesses, educational institutions, government departments, and volunteers



# Volunteering counts: Formal and informal contributions of Canadians in 2018

Tara Hahmann

Statistics Canada



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#### Insights on Canadian Society

#### **Volunteering counts: Formal and informal contributions of Canadians in 2018**

by Tara Hahmann

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Canada

## Context

- Today I will present on data from the General Social Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating (GSS GVP).
  - At Statistics Canada data collection on volunteering began in 1997.
  - For this cycle, data collection took place between September 4 and December 28, 2018.
  - The target population included all persons 15 years of age and older living in the ten provinces (excluding full-time residents of institutions).
  - The 2018 GSS GVP offered an Internet option to survey respondents for the first time to reduce the demands on time. It is, therefore, not appropriate to compare results from this cycle with that of previous cycles.
- These data are pre-COVID-19, but provide important baseline information.
- The findings from this study can shape how the volunteer sector responds to ongoing restrictions and the re-opening of the economy, including approaches to age-specific recruitment, retention and re-entry campaigns.



NEW!

## New information

- This is the first cycle of the General Social Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating where information can be reported on:
  1. The distinction between hours of informal and formal volunteering.
  2. Informal volunteering distinguished by direct help and community improvement; that is helping people directly and involvement to improve the community, on one's own, and through activities not on behalf of a group or an organization.
  3. The question on mandatory volunteering in the context of formal volunteering was extended to all volunteer hours. In 2013, the question on mandatory hours was only asked of organizations where the respondent volunteered the most hours; in 2018, it was asked in reference to all volunteer hours.
  4. Number of volunteering hours supported by employers.
  5. International definition of volunteering, which excludes activities that are mandatory/required or supported by an employer and direct help given to relatives living outside the household. Furthermore, the International definition only includes volunteer activities of at least one hour.

## Volunteering

- Volunteerism is the participation in purposeful helping activities without monetary compensation. It can involve a variety of activities, taking place occasionally over the course of a year, or a more consistent and sustained commitment, such as a weekly commitment to a specific cause.
- Volunteering benefits groups, persons or the community, and can either be mediated by organizations (formal volunteering), or be direct help without the involvement of an organization or group (informal volunteering).





## Generational focus

### Generations

Generations are groups of people who experience the same significant societal events, or similar cultural experiences, within a time period. There is no agreed upon name and designated age range for this, but, for the purpose of this article, the following specifications are used with corresponding generational proportions in 2018 provided:

- **iGen** (also referred as Generation Z): Born between 1996 and 2012 (15 to 22 years of age at the time of the survey) – 11%. Canadians younger than 15 are not included in the survey.
- **Millennials**: Born between 1981 and 1995 (23 to 37 years of age) – 25%
- **Gen X**: Born between 1966 and 1980 (38 to 52 years of age) – 23%
- **Baby Boomers**: Born between 1946 and 1965 (53 to 72 years of age) – 30%
- **Matures**: Born between 1918 and 1945 (73 to 100 years of age) – 10%

Analysis comparing generations should be interpreted with caution. This is because it is not known how a generation would have behaved, or will behave, when it reaches the same age group as the generation it is compared to. For example, it is not known how Millennials will behave when they reach the Baby Boomers' age cohort, nor how the Baby Boomers behaved when they were the age of Millennials.



## Formal Volunteering

- 12.7 million Canadians engaged in formal volunteering.
- 41% of Canadians dedicated 1.6 billion hours.
- Formal volunteering decreased with age although hours volunteered were highest among the oldest generations.
  - The older generations were more likely to be top volunteers.
- Mandatory unpaid work, expressed as a percentage of total formal volunteer hours, was highest among iGens, but still made up a fairly small portion of the total formal hours contributed by iGens (10<sup>E</sup>%).

***Activities conducted without pay on behalf of a group or organization, at least once in the 12 months preceding the survey***

**Table 2**

**Formal volunteer rates and hours, among the population aged 15 and older, by generation, 2018**

	iGen (ref.)	Millennials	Gen X	Baby Boomers	Matures	
	Born 1996 and up	Born 1981 to 1995	Born 1966 to 1980	Born 1946 to 1965	Born 1918 to 1945	Total
<b>Participation in formal volunteering activities</b>						
Total population (thousands)	3,424	7,764	7,159	9,348	3,148	30,843
Number of volunteers (thousands)	1,773	3,139	3,162	3,608	996	12,678
Volunteer rate (percent)	52	40*	44*	39*	32*	41
<b>Hours volunteered</b>						
Total hours volunteered (millions)	146	360*	378*	552*	221*	1,657
Full-time year-round job equivalents <sup>1</sup> (jobs)	76,115	187,535	197,025	287,451	115,114	863,240
Average hours volunteered per year (hours)	82	115*	120*	153*	222*	131

\* significantly different from reference group (ref.) (p < 0.05)

1. Assuming 40 hours of work per week for 48 weeks.

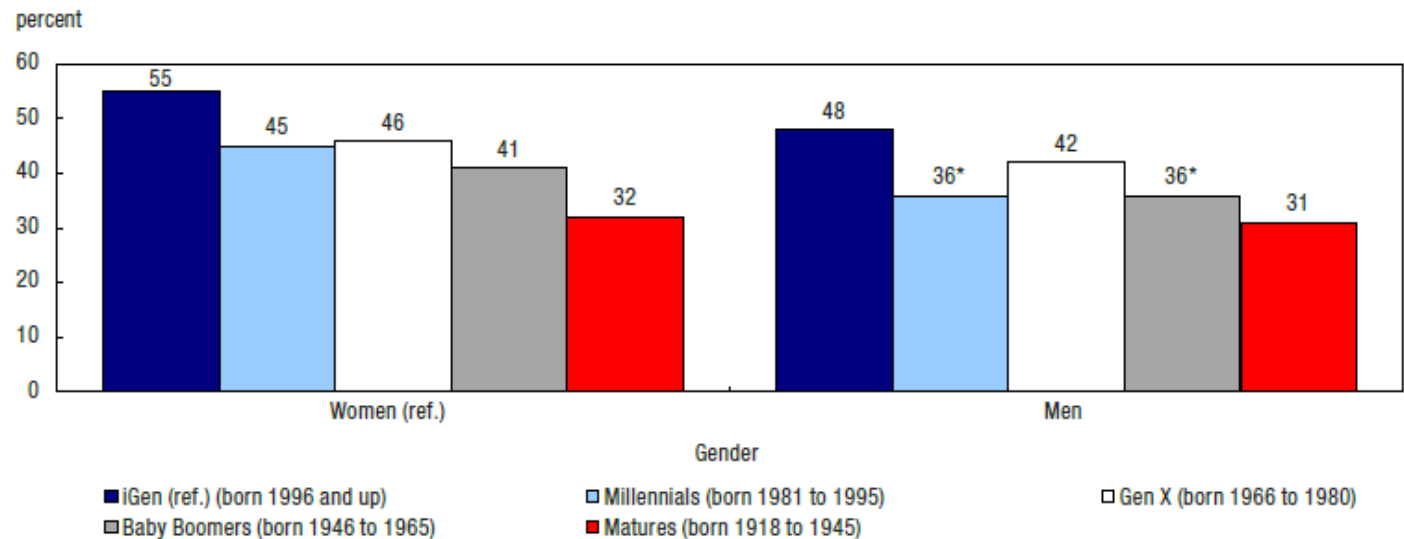
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, Giving, Volunteering, and Participating, 2018.

## Formal volunteering

- Overall, women were more likely than men to participate in formal volunteering (44% vs 38%).
- Significant differences only found between Millennials and Baby Boomers.

Chart 1

Formal volunteer rate, by generation within gender, among the population aged 15 and over, 2018



\* significantly different from reference group (ref.) ( $p < 0.05$ )

**Note:** The category of gender diverse was included in the calculation but not displayed in the chart due to low data quality.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, Giving, Volunteering, and Participating 2018.

## Formal volunteering: Motivations

- Improving job opportunities was cited as a top reason for volunteering among iGens, at 38% although less common among Gen Xs (16%), Baby Boomers (9%), and Matures (1%).
- A lower proportion of iGens (15%) reported skill use as an important reason for volunteering, compared to Millennials (25%), Gen X (23%), and Baby Boomers (29%).
- Contributing to the well-being of the community was named as a leading motivation among about a quarter of volunteers, with the notable exception of iGen volunteers, where 13% mentioned this as reason for volunteering.
- iGen volunteers were less likely (13%) than other generations (Millennials at 29% and Gen at 21% and Baby Boomers at 28%) to say that a desire to support a political, environmental or social cause led them to volunteer.
- Roughly one in three Baby Boomers cited religious or spiritual obligations as a motivating factor in volunteering.





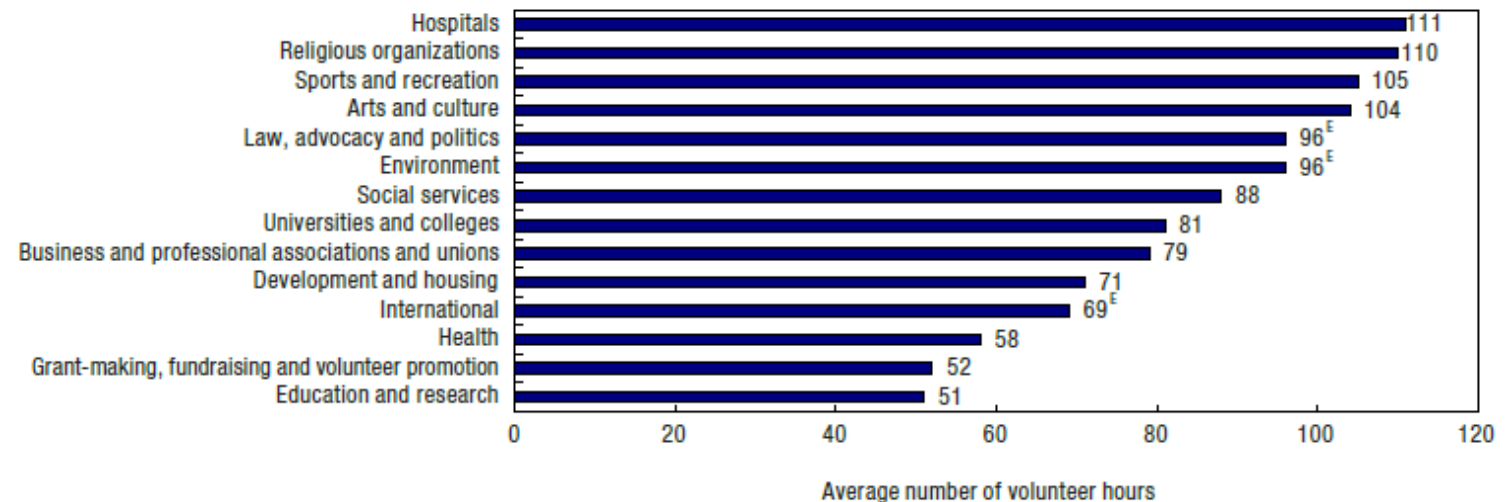
## Formal Volunteering: Organization types

- The average number of volunteer hours were highest among hospitals (111 hours), religious organizations (110 hours), sports and recreation (105 hours), and arts and culture (104 hours).
- Formal volunteers gave about half as many hours to the four sectors receiving the fewest number of volunteer hours: education and research (51 hours); grant-making, fundraising and volunteer promotion (52 hours); and health-related services, such as crisis intervention services, outpatient clinics, and rehabilitation services (58 hours).

Chart 2

Average annual volunteer hours, by organization type, among formal volunteers aged 15 and over, 2018

Organization type



<sup>E</sup> use with caution

**Note:** Categories are not mutually exclusive.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, Giving, Volunteering, and Participating, 2018.

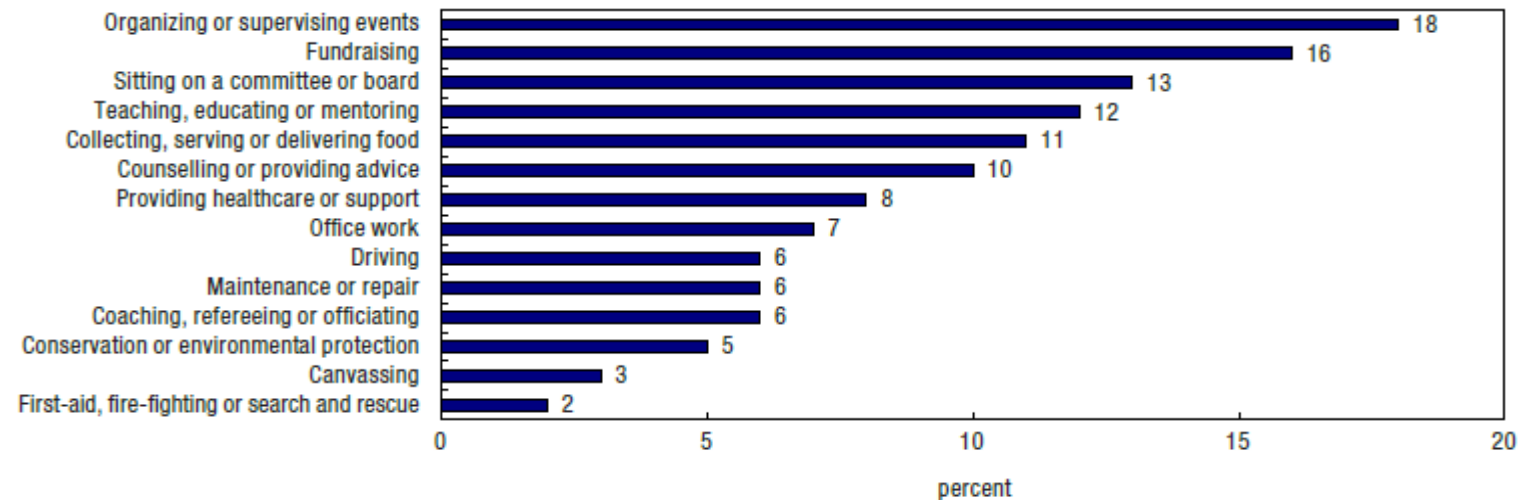
## Formal volunteering: Activity types

- Organizing or supervising events were the most commonly reported formal volunteer activity
  - iGens were more likely to participate in this activity type as well as teaching, educating or mentoring
- Baby Boomers were more likely to sit in a committee or board as well as to provide driving services.

**Chart 3**

Participation in formal volunteering, by volunteer activity type, among the population aged 15 and over, 2018

Activity type



**Note:** Categories are not mutually exclusive.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2018.



## Informal volunteering

- 23 million Canadians engaged in informal volunteering.
- 74% of Canadians dedicated 3.4 billion hours.
- Few generational differences although iGen had a higher informal volunteer rate than Baby Boomers and Matures.
- The older generations dedicated more hours to informal volunteer work.
- 62% of all hours given to help others directly went to tasks for relatives outside the household.

***Activities conducted without pay not on behalf of a group or organization, at least once in the 12 months preceding the survey***

**Table 3**

**Informal volunteer rates and hours by generation, among the population aged 15 and older, 2018**

	iGen (ref.) Born 1996 and up	Millennials Born 1981 to 1995	Gen X Born 1966 to 1980	Baby Boomers Born 1946 to 1965	Matures Born 1918 to 1945	Total
<b>Participation in informal volunteering activities</b>						
<b>Total population (thousands)</b>	3,424	7,764	7,159	9,348	3,148	30,843
Number of volunteers (thousands)	2,667	5,950	5,427	6,810	1,839	22,692
Volunteer rate (percent)	78	77	76	73*	58*	74
Total hours volunteered (millions)	265	718*	729*	1,342*	323	3,377
Full-time year-round job equivalents <sup>1</sup> (jobs)	138,176	373,866	379,725	699,174	168,116	1,759,056
Average hours volunteered per year (hours)	99	121	134	197*	176*	149
<b>Helping others directly</b>						
Number of volunteers (thousands)	2,574	5,736	5,169	6,566	1,727	21,771
Volunteer rate (percent)	75	74	72	70*	55*	71
Total hours volunteered (millions)	242 <sup>E</sup>	586*	648*	1,219*	294	2,990
Full-time year-round job equivalents <sup>1</sup> (jobs)	126,097 <sup>E</sup>	305,461	337,443	635,023	153,279	1,557,304
Average hours volunteered per year (hours)	94 <sup>E</sup>	102	125	186*	170*	137
<b>Improving the community directly</b>						
Number of volunteers (thousands)	1,032	2,408	2,044	2,462	696	8,642
Volunteer rate (percent)	30	31	29	26	22*	28
Total hours volunteered (millions)	23 <sup>E</sup>	131*	81*	123*	28	387
Full-time year-round job equivalents <sup>1</sup> (jobs)	12,079 <sup>E</sup>	68,405	42,281	64,150	14,837	201,752
Average hours volunteered per year (hours)	22 <sup>E</sup>	55*	40*	50*	41*	45

<sup>E</sup> use with caution

\* significantly different from reference group (ref.) ( $p < 0.05$ )

1. Assuming 40 hours of work per week for 48 weeks.

**Note:** "Helping others directly" and "Improving the community directly" are not mutually exclusive.

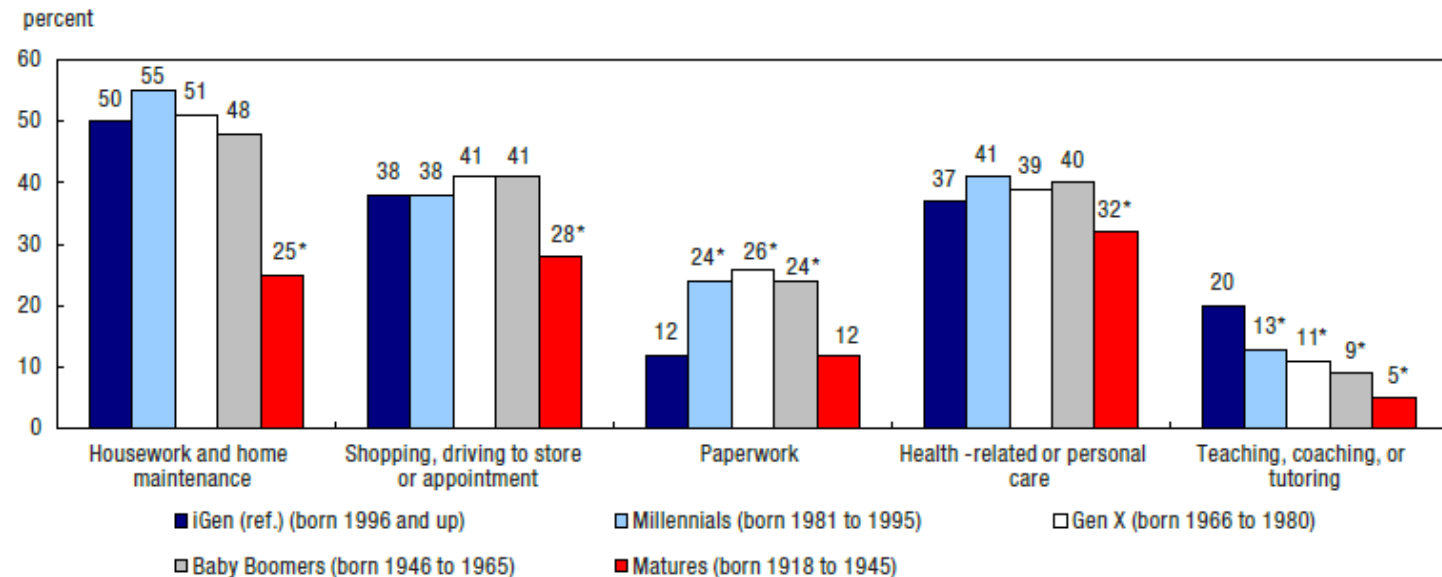
**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, Giving, Volunteering, and Participating, 2018.

## Informal volunteering: Helping others directly

- iGen was more likely to help others by teaching, coaching or tutoring.
- Matures were less likely than other generations to help others directly with almost all tasks, such as housework, health-related or personal care, shopping, and teaching/coaching.
- Older generations gave the most hours of support, on average, to health-related or personal care activities.
- Matures dedicated the most average hours to teaching, coaching or tutoring at 74<sup>E</sup> hours, nearly four times higher than the average annual hours reported by iGens (20<sup>E</sup> hours).

Chart 4

Participation rate of helping others directly by generation, among the population aged 15 and over, 2018



\* significantly different from reference category (ref.) ( $p < 0.05$ )

Note: Categories are not mutually exclusive.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, Giving, Volunteering, and Participating 2018.

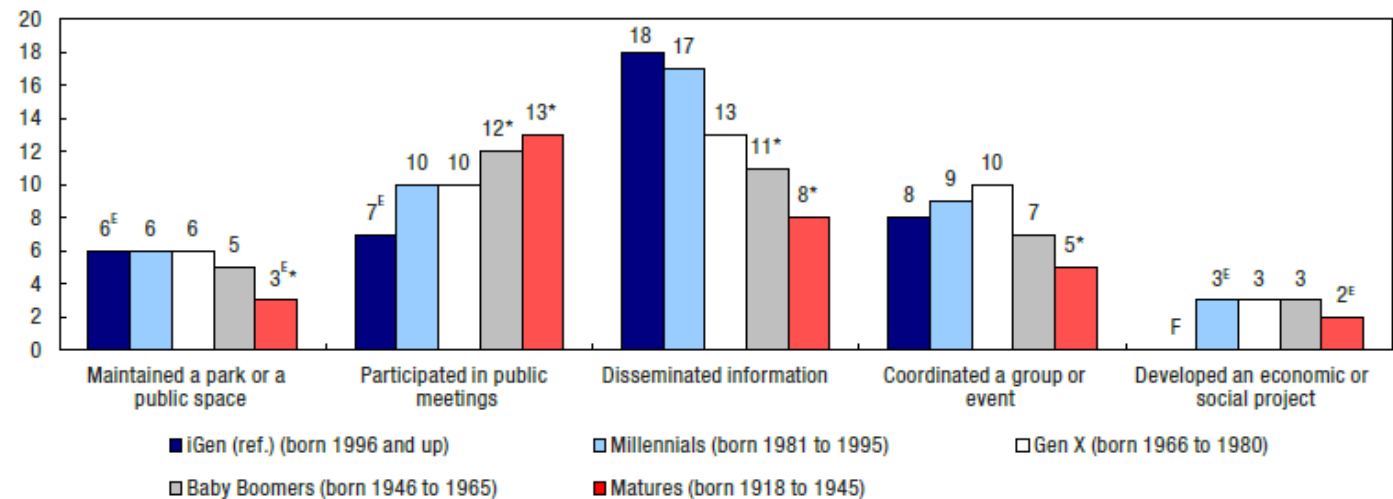
## Informal volunteering: Improving community directly

- The youngest generation was more likely to disseminate information than Baby Boomers and Matures.
- The older generation was more likely to participate in public meetings in which there was discussion of community affairs.
- Matures were less likely to maintain a park or public space or coordinate a group or event.
- There were no differences in hours contribute across generations.

Chart 5

Participation rate of those who improved the community directly by generation, among the population aged 15 and over, 2018

percent



\* significantly different from reference group (ref.) ( $p < 0.05$ )

<sup>E</sup> use with caution

F too unreliable to be published

Note: Categories are not mutually exclusive

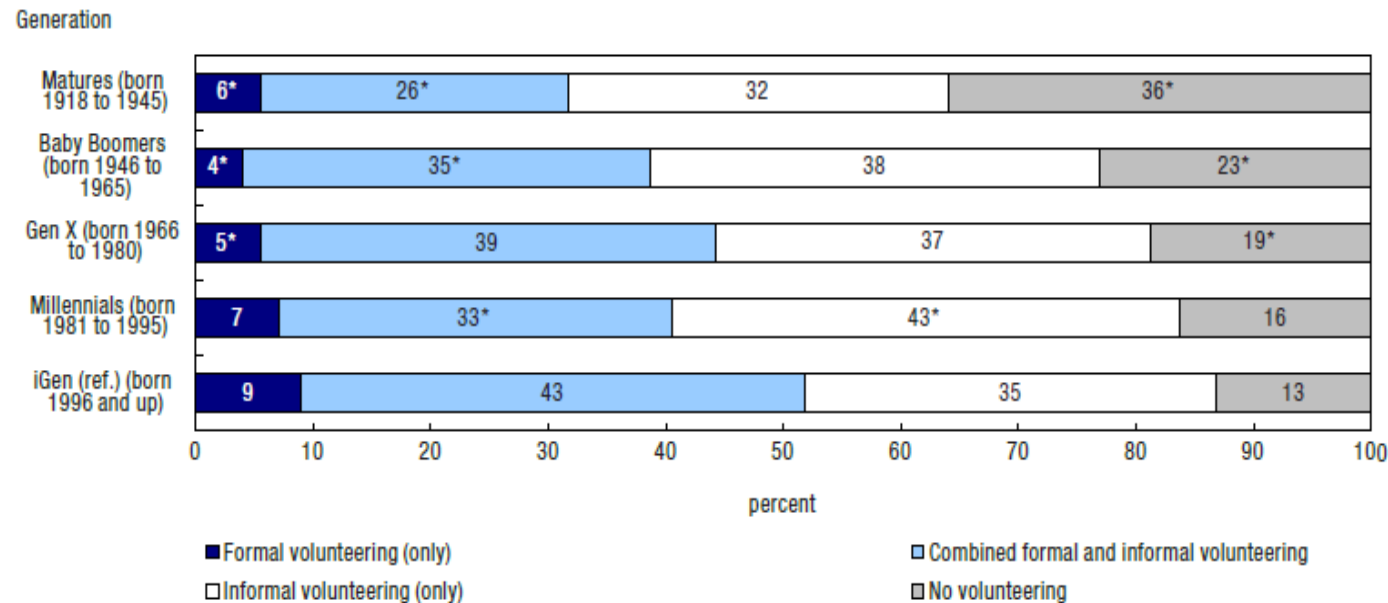
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2018.

## Total participation across volunteer types

- Canadians can participate in a variety of volunteering types – be it exclusively formal volunteering or informal volunteering, or blend of both.
  - For the first time, the GVP 2018 is able to classify volunteers into these mutually exclusive categories.
- The overall volunteering rate was 79% (24 million Canadians).
- The majority of Canadians volunteered informally exclusively (38%), followed by combined formal and informal (35%) and 6% of Canadians participated in formal volunteering exclusively.
- Overall volunteering tends to decrease from younger to older generations.

Chart 7

Distribution of volunteer type within each generation, among the population aged 15 and over, 2018



\* significantly different from reference group (ref.) ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2018.

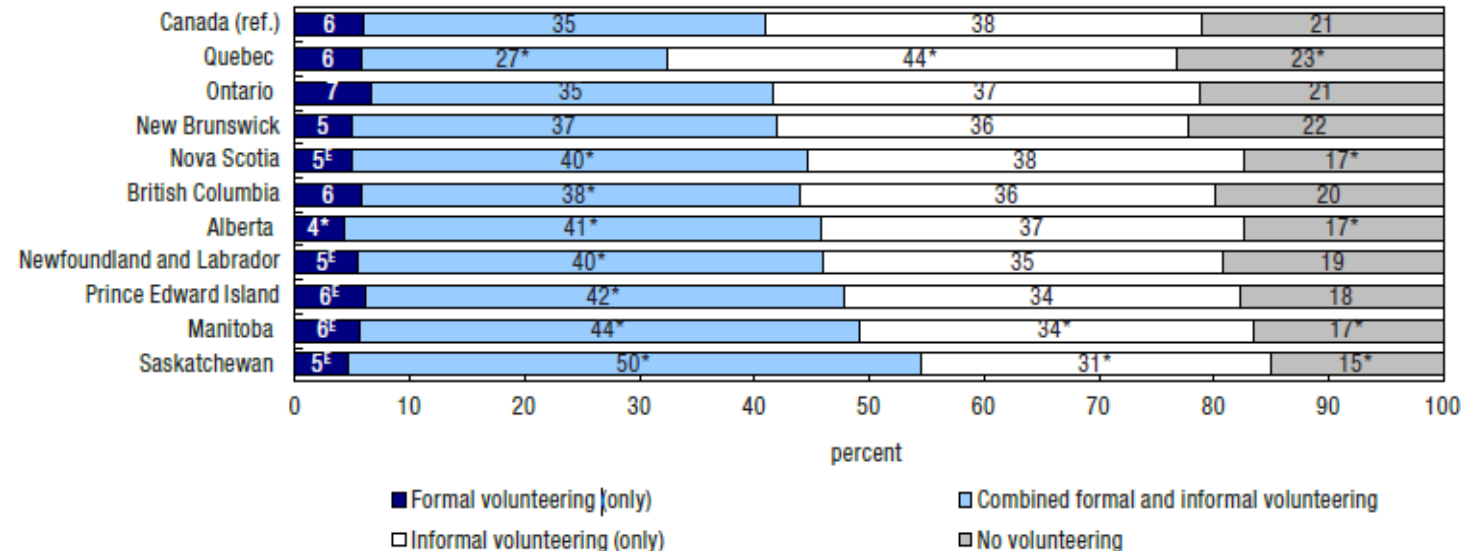
## Volunteer types across Canada

- The participation rate in formal volunteer activities was highest in Saskatchewan (55%) and lowest in Quebec (33%).
- Saskatchewan also had and higher rates of informal volunteering compared to Quebec (81% vs 71%).
- Quebec had the highest rate of informal volunteering exclusively (44%).
- Provinces like Quebec have similar rates of overall volunteering when examining volunteering participation across volunteer types.

Chart 8

Distribution of volunteer type within each province, among the population aged 15 and over, 2018

Province



\* significantly different from reference group (ref.) ( $p < 0.05$ )

<sup>E</sup> use with caution

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2018.



## Conclusion

- Using the 2018 GSS GVP we provided a generational focus, describing differences between the five generational cohorts with generally higher participation rates among the younger generations while older generations contributed more hours.
- Certain sectors found to receive the most hours of support such as hospitals, sports and recreation and arts and culture have and continue to experience reduced activities during the pandemic.
- This is the first time informal volunteering hours are reported, providing a picture of engagement across a spectrum of volunteering types.
  - Overall volunteering increased from older to younger generations.
  - Provincial differences narrowed when factoring overall volunteering.
- While these data pre-date the pandemic they provide a reference point that may help the volunteer sector following the pandemic.



# Thank You!

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2021001/article/00002-eng.htm>

# Break-out room discussions

1. Implications for engaging youth
2. Implications for Businesses with employee engagement programs
3. Implications for informal groups (neighbourhood FB...)
4. Implications for government departments
5. Implications for educational institutions
6. Implications for those offering training and education/ professional development to Managers of Volunteer Resources
7. Implications for Managers of Volunteer Resources
8. General discussion: What does this mean for the future of volunteering?
9. Implications for organizations serving vulnerable populations
10. How will the changing demographics (and the matures eventually retiring from formal volunteering) impact the future of volunteering
11. How do formal and informal volunteering feed into one another?

# More information...



**Data on Giving, Volunteering and Participating** on Volunteer Canada website

## Upcoming webinar:

# The Volunteering Lens of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

June 21, 2021 1-2 pm ET

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