
Encouraging Volunteering Among Ontario Youth

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BÉNÉVOLES
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Introduction

Approximately 511,000 Ontario youth aged 15 to 24, or 35% of the Ontario youth population, volunteered for charitable and nonprofit organizations in 1997, according to findings from the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (NSGVP). This represents a two-and-a-half-fold increase since 1987, when only 14% of Ontario youth volunteered. In 1997, Ontario youth contributed a total of just over 75 million volunteer hours, or the equivalent of more than 39,000 full-time jobs. The average volunteer contributed 147 hours – the highest for youth volunteers among all provinces.

Youth volunteers undertake a variety of activities that are of benefit to charitable and nonprofit organizations, including canvassing, campaigning or fundraising; organizing or supervising events; and serving meals and delivering food to the needy. Ontario youth also gain from their volunteer experiences. Volunteering gives young people a chance to improve their job prospects, develop skills, make contacts, and discover their own abilities as they contribute to their communities. Despite the many potential benefits of volunteering, however, systematic knowledge about volunteering among Ontario youth has, until recently, been lacking. This information is essential for developing volunteer recruitment and management programs and for encouraging volunteering among Ontario youth. The purpose of this report is to provide this much-needed information.

The National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (NSGVP) was undertaken to better understand how Canadians support individuals and communities, either on their own or through their involvement with charitable and nonprofit organizations. The NSGVP is a joint project of: the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, Volunteer Canada, Canadian Heritage, Statistics Canada, Health Canada, Human Resources Development Canada, and the Kahanoff Foundation's Nonprofit Sector Research Initiative. Carried out by Statistics Canada in late November and early December of 1997 as an adjunct to the Labour Force Survey, the NSGVP interviewed 18,301 Canadians aged 15 and over, including 2,389 Canadians aged 15 to 24, about their giving, volunteering and participating over the previous 1-year period (i.e., between November 1, 1996 and October 31, 1997).

Findings from the NSGVP show that the volunteer participation rate¹ among Canadian youth has increased more than it has for any other age group, nearly doubling from 18% to 33%. Yet the amount of time Canadian youth spent in volunteer activities in 1997 is low compared with that of other age groups, and has decreased by almost one-third since 1987. As will be shown, some of these trends hold for Ontario youth.

A better understanding of volunteering among Ontario youth is particularly important in light of recent developments in Ontario education. A new policy introduced by Ontario's Ministry of Education in September 1999 mandates all Ontario high school students to perform 40 hours of community service in order to graduate. Although "mandated volunteerism" may be considered a contradiction in terms, this new policy provides the opportunity for many community organizations in Ontario to recruit thousands of prospective volunteers and has the potential to introduce young people throughout the province to the value of community service. More generally, the study of demographic factors, particularly age, is important in predicting future trends, informing public policy, and planning programs. This is as true for the voluntary sector in Ontario as it is for the public and private sectors. Knowledge about volunteering trends among Ontario youth, for example, will assist in developing future policies and programs related to youth volunteering.

This report examines a variety of aspects of volunteering among Ontario youth, including: volunteer activities; volunteering as a way to enhance job possibilities; how volunteers become involved; types of organizations supported through volunteering; motivations for volunteering; barriers to volunteering; and benefits of volunteering. Findings are discussed in terms of their relevance for developing volunteer recruitment and management programs and for encouraging volunteering among Ontario youth. Although the focus is on Ontario youth aged 15 to 24, where appropriate, comparisons are made between subgroups of Ontario youth (15- to 19-year-olds vs. 20- to 24-year-olds), between findings for Ontario youth and Ontario overall, between 1997 and 1987 findings, and between Ontario findings and national findings.²

Volunteering Among Ontario Youth

The 1997 NSGVP revealed that approximately 511,000 Ontario youth aged 15 to 24 volunteered their time and skills to charitable and nonprofit groups between November 1, 1996 and October 31, 1997 (see Table 1). This is more than double the number of Ontario youth who volunteered in 1987 (approximately 209,000).¹ In 1997, 35% of Ontario youth volunteered, two-and-a-half times more than the 1987 participation rate of 14%. This dramatic increase is even greater than that for Canadian youth as a whole. In 1997, 33% of Canadian youth were volunteers, compared to only 18% in 1987.

Ontario youth volunteers contributed a total of just over 75 million hours of their time during the 12-month period prior to the survey – the equivalent of over 39,000 full-time year-round jobs (assuming 40 hours per week for 48 weeks). On average, Ontario youth contributed 147 hours of volunteer time, substantially more than the average of 125 hours for Canadian youth as a whole.¹

The average number of volunteer hours does not give a true picture of the distribution of volunteers' time commitment, however. Included in the average are individuals who volunteered for relatively few hours during the year as well as those who volunteered for many hours. If we divide Ontario youth volunteers into five groups (i.e., those in the top 5% of volunteers, the next 20%, the next 25%, and so on), a truer picture emerges.

Figure 1 shows that a small group of Ontario youth volunteers contributed a substantial amount of volunteer time, demonstrating that “much comes from the few.”² The top 5% of Ontario youth volunteers contributed 576 hours or more, which accounted for 39% of all volunteer hours. The next 20% contributed between 146 and 575 volunteer hours, or 38% of all volunteer hours. If we combine these two groups, we can see that the top 25% of Ontario youth volunteers accounted for three-quarters (76%) of all volunteer hours. A similar trend has been observed for Ontario volunteers as a whole.

Figure 1: Percentage of Volunteers and Hours volunteered by Number of Hours Volunteered, Ontario Volunteers aged 15–24, 1997

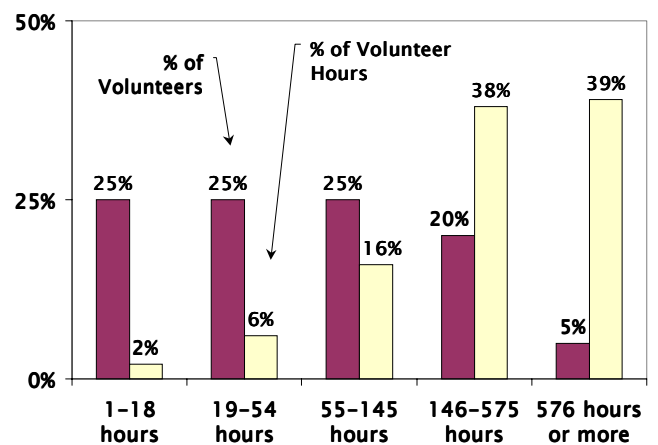


Table 1. Rate of Volunteering and Number of Hours Volunteered, Ontario Youth aged 15–24, 1987 and 1997

Rate of Volunteering	1997 NSGVP	1987 VAS
Total Ontario youth population	1,473,232	1,480,700
Total volunteers	511,055	209,350
Volunteer participation rate	35%	14%
Hours Volunteered		
Total hours volunteered	75,111,173	n/a
Full-time year-round job equivalence	39,120	n/a
Average hours volunteered per year	147	n/a

A Profile of Ontario Youth Volunteers

Personal and Economic Characteristics

Ontario youth volunteers come from a variety of lifestyles and sociodemographic groups. While it is important to know more about youth who volunteer, it is also helpful to know more about those who do not volunteer. Understanding more about those who volunteer may help with further recruitment. Those who already volunteer may be the easiest to recruit for further volunteer activity. These groups may also be the most likely to continue to volunteer even in the absence of governmental mandates, such as the new policy on community service introduced by the Ontario Ministry of Education. Knowing which segments of the Ontario youth volunteer at a lower rate can help organizations target these groups or intensify recruitment campaigns aimed at them.

Table 2 compares the volunteer participation rates and average hours volunteered of different age groups in Ontario. It shows, for example, that Ontario youth aged 15 to 19 are substantially more likely to volunteer than those aged 20 to 24 (39% vs. 30%). On average, the younger subgroup also tends to contribute slightly more volunteer hours than the older subgroup (150 vs. 143 hours). Table 2 also shows that, compared to other age groups, the likelihood of volunteering is higher for those aged 15 to 24, 35 to 44 and 45 to 54, and that, among non-youth, the average annual hours contributed by volunteers generally rises with age.

The findings for Ontario generally mirror the national pattern of volunteering among different age groups in Canada. There is one noteworthy exception, however: while the average number of hours contributed by Ontario youth (147) is very close to the average for all volunteers in Ontario (146), the average number of volunteer hours contributed by Canadian youth (125) is substantially lower than the Canadian average (149).

Table 3 shows the volunteer participation rates and average number of volunteer hours contributed by different sociodemographic groups of Ontario youth. It shows, for example, that females within the Ontario youth population were slightly more likely than males to

Table 2. Volunteer Participation Rates and Average Hours Volunteered by Age, Ontario Population, 1997

Age	Volunteer Participation Rate	Average Hours Volunteered Annually
15-24	35%	147
15-19	39%	150
20-24	30%	143
25-34	26%	123
35-44	37%	144
45-54	36%	148
55-64	32%	147
65+	26%	178
Total	32%	146

volunteer (36% vs. 33%). Males, however, volunteered substantially more hours, on average, than females (183 vs. 112). These patterns reflect those for Ontario and Canada as a whole.

The volunteer participation rate for Ontario youth tends to rise with education and income, a trend consistent with that for both Ontario and Canada as a whole. In particular, the volunteer participation rate of Ontario youth with a university education (62%) is substantially higher than that of other groups. However, although the average number of volunteer hours contributed by Ontario youth tends to increase with income, the same pattern is not found for education. In fact, the average number of hours contributed by Ontario youth with a university education (104) is substantially lower than it is for other groups. In contrast, the highest number of volunteer hours, on average, is contributed by Ontario youth who are high school graduates (178). A similar trend is found for Ontario, though not for Canada, as a whole.¹

Volunteering patterns among Ontario youth vary according to labour force status. Ontario youth who are employed part-time are the most likely to volunteer (41%), while those who are employed full-time are the least likely

to volunteer (28%). Ontario youth who are employed part-time also tend to contribute, on average, a relatively large number of volunteer hours (141). However, the largest average number of hours was contributed by Ontario youth who are not in the labour force (204). Similar trends are found for Ontario and Canada as a whole, and suggest the possible influence of time constraints on volunteer behaviour.

Provincial Variations

Volunteer activity among Canadian youth varies greatly across provinces and regions. Figure 2 shows the youth volunteer participation rates for each Canadian province. The highest participation rates tend to be found in the Prairie region (particularly in Manitoba and Saskatchewan) and the Atlantic region (especially in Nova Scotia). The lowest volunteer participation rate was found among Quebec youth (26%), with the rate for British Columbia youth (28%) not far behind. As mentioned earlier, the volunteer rate for Ontario youth (35%) was slightly above the national rate (33%). These results are very similar to provincial variations for all age groups taken together.

Table 4 displays the volunteer participation rates of 15- to 19-year-olds and 20- to 24-year-olds in 1997 and 1987 for each province. These rates have increased for both the older and younger subgroups in each province. In many cases, they have nearly doubled.

Table 4 also shows that for most provinces, the volunteer participation rate for 15- to 19-year-olds tends to be higher than that for 20- to 24-year-olds, often by a considerable margin. This is true for both 1997 and 1987. The only exceptions to this general pattern were in Prince Edward Island, where the rate for the older subgroup (in 1997) was higher than that for the younger subgroup (45% vs. 33%), and in Quebec, where the rate for both subgroups (in 1997) was the same (26%).

Table 3. Volunteer Participation Rates and Average Hours Volunteered, Ontario Youth aged 15–24, 1997.

Demographic Characteristic	Volunteer Participation Rate	Average Hours Volunteered
Sex		
Male	33%	183
Female	36%	112
Education		
Less than Secondary	30%	145
Grade 11-13 Graduate	38%	178
Some Post-Secondary	38%	133
Post-Secondary Certificate/Diploma	35%	148
University Degree	62%	104
Labour Force Status		
Employed	35%	117
Full-time	28%	76
Part-time	41%	141
Unemployed	34%	79
Not in the Labour Force	34%	204
Household Income		
Less than \$20,000	35%	118
\$20,000 - \$39,999	30%	103
\$40,000 - \$59,999	32%	113
\$60,000 - \$79,999	34%	212
\$80,000 or more	42%	193

Figure 2: Percentage of Population Volunteering, Canada and provinces, Canadians aged 15–24, 1997.

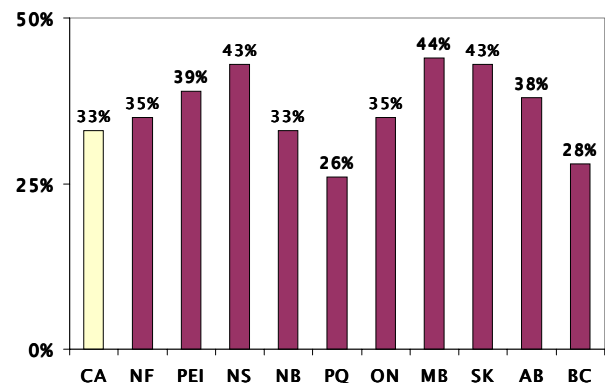


Table 4. Volunteer Participation Rates by Province, Canadian Youth aged 15–19 and 20–24, 1987 and 1997.

Province	Aged 15–19		Aged 20–24	
	1997	1987	1997	1987
Newfoundland	38%	18%	31%	16%
Prince Edward Island	33%	19%	45%	21%
Nova Scotia	47%	27%	39%	23%
New Brunswick	43%	30%	23%	21%
Quebec	26%	17%	26%	12%
Ontario	39%	16%	30%	13%
Manitoba	54%	34%	34%	20%
Saskatchewan	51%	24%	34%	22%
Alberta	43%	32%	33%	24%
British Columbia	35%	23%	21%	17%
Canada	37%	20%	29%	15%

Figure 3 shows the average number of hours contributed by youth volunteers in each province in 1997. The highest average number of volunteer hours was contributed by Ontario youth (147). This is substantially higher than the national average for youth (125). In contrast, the lowest average number of hours was contributed by Saskatchewan youth (86).

Table 5 displays the averages for subgroups of youth volunteers for each province. In contrast to the findings concerning volunteer participation rates, the average number of hours contributed by 20- to 24-year-olds in 7 out of 10 provinces *exceeded* that contributed by 15- to 19-year-olds. The only exceptions were New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and Ontario. Overall, these findings show that, although 15- to 19-year-olds are more likely than 20- to 24-year-olds to volunteer in most provinces, the older subgroup tends to contribute, on average, a greater number of volunteer hours.

In interpreting provincial variations, it should be noted that these arise from a complex set of factors. Volunteer rates for youth have increased over time in most provinces

Figure 3: Average Number of Hours Volunteered by Province, Canadian Youth Aged 15–24, 1997.

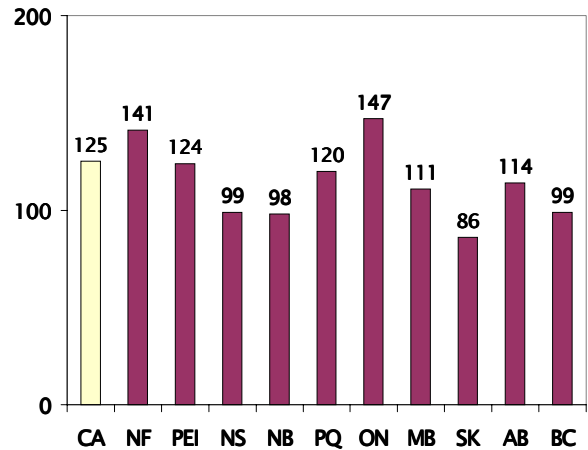


Table 5: Average Number of Hours Volunteered by Province, Canadian Youth Aged 15–19 and 20–24, 1997

Province	15-19	20-24
Newfoundland	128	158
Prince Edward Island	78	160
Nova Scotia	89	111
New Brunswick	107	82
Quebec	80	162
Ontario	150	143
Manitoba	104	123
Saskatchewan	90	80
Alberta	97	138
British Columbia	98	101
Canada	115	137

and vary across provinces, in part because some provinces offer credit courses for volunteering activities. Similarly, the new Ontario Ministry of Education policy mandating community service for high school students should lead to further increases in the volunteer participation rates of Ontario youth, particularly 15- to 19-year-olds, as they are the most likely to be affected by this policy.¹

A Way to Enhance Job Possibilities?

Many Canadian youth consider volunteering a stepping stone to paid employment. Results from the NSGVP show that this is certainly true of Ontario youth, who believe that volunteer activity can help them move into the workforce and acquire job-related skills and experience.

Figure 4 shows that roughly one-quarter (24%) of Ontario youth indicated that volunteer activities improved their job possibilities. This is a much higher proportion than for Ontarians aged 25 to 44 or 45 to 64. Unemployed youth appear to value volunteer activity even more. Figure 5 shows that two-thirds (66%) of unemployed Ontario youth believed that volunteer efforts would increase their chances of finding a job.

Figure 4: Percentage of Ontario Volunteers Who Indicated that their Volunteering helped to Obtain Employment by Age, 1997

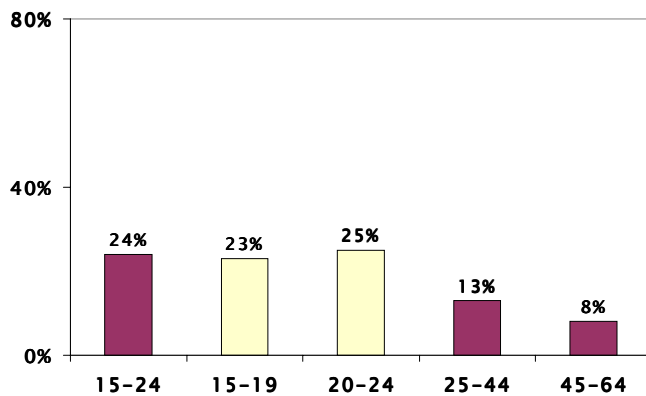
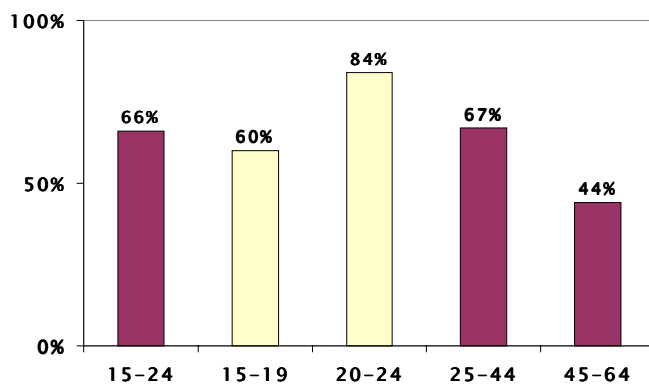


Figure 5: Percentage of Unemployed Ontario Volunteers Who Indicated that they Volunteer to help their chances of finding a job by Age, 1997



Unemployed Ontario youth volunteers contributed 79 volunteer hours per year.¹ When this group is broken down into subgroups of younger and older youth, however, a large difference is observed: 15- to 19-year-olds contributed 40 hours on average, while 20- to 24-year-olds contributed 209 hours on average. Regardless of employment status, more than 1 of every 2 Ontario youth volunteers aged 15 to 24 stated that they contributed their time in order to improve their employment opportunities, compared with only 1 in 5 25- to 44-year-olds and about 1 in 10 45- to 64-year-olds (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Percentage of Unemployed Ontario Volunteers Who Indicated that they Volunteer to improve their Employment Opportunities by Age, 1997

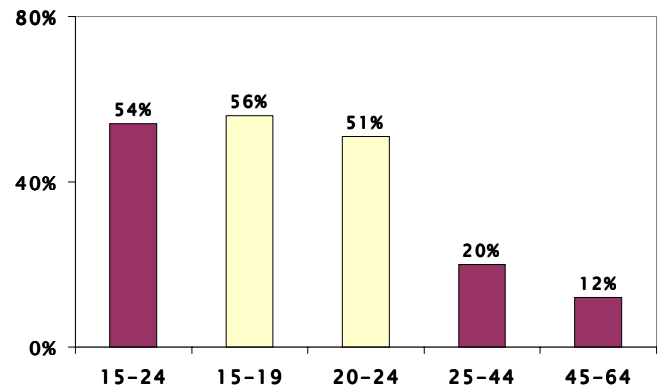
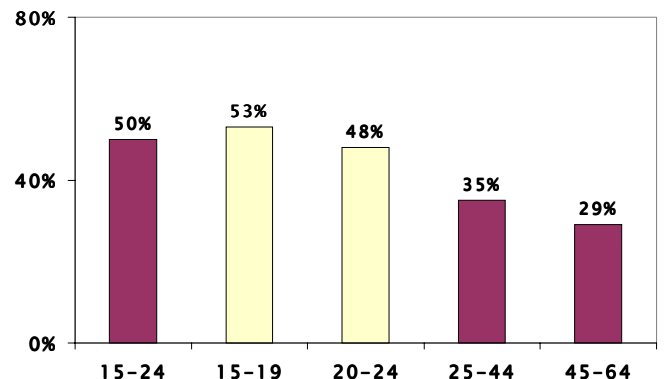


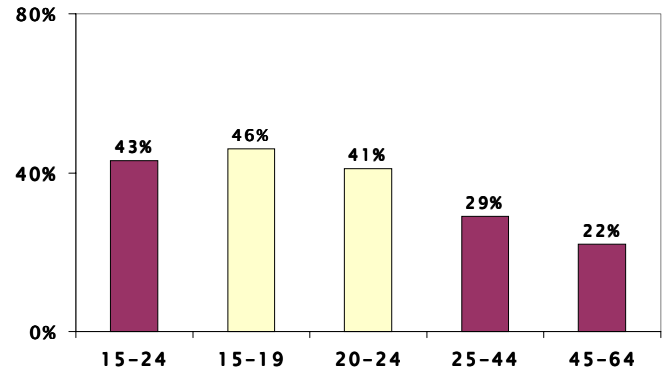
Figure 7: Percentage of Employed Ontario Volunteers Who Indicated that Volunteering has Given Them New Skills that Can Apply Directly to their Job by Age, 1997



Volunteering is also believed to help one acquire new, job-related skills, and this is particularly true of youth. As part of the NSGVP, employed youth volunteers were asked about the relationship between their volunteer activities and their employment. One in every two employed Ontario youth volunteers believed that their volunteer activities had given them new skills that they could apply directly to their paid jobs (see figure 7) or businesses. In addition, 43% thought that volunteering had increased their chances of success in their paid jobs or businesses (see figure 8). This belief was more common among youth than among older age groups.

Figure 4 through 8 shows the percentage of Ontario volunteers, by subgroup, who stated that their volunteering enhanced their job possibilities. In most cases, 15- to 19-year-olds were slightly more likely than their older counterparts to state that volunteering improved their job prospects. However, 20- to 24-year-olds were substantially more likely than the younger

Figure 8: Percentage of Employed Ontario Volunteers Who Indicated that Volunteering Helped Increase Chances of Success in a Paid Job by Age, 1997



group (and other age groups) to believe that their volunteering efforts would increase their chances of finding a job. This older subgroup was also more likely than other age groups to report that their volunteering had helped them to obtain employment.

Employer Support for Employees' Volunteer Activities

The NSGVP data revealed that 53% of all Ontario youth volunteers were employed and that some of these volunteers received support from their employers for their volunteer activities. Figure 9 through 12 show that for Ontario youth, this support most frequently took the form of receiving approval to modify their hours of work in order to take part in volunteer activities; this was reported by 29% of employed Ontario youth volunteers (figure 12). In addition, one-quarter stated

that they received authorization to take leave or time off from work to engage in volunteer activities (figure 11). Other forms of support included receiving approval to use the facilities and equipment of the business for volunteer activities (reported by 22% of employed Ontario youth volunteers)(figure 10), and receiving recognition, such as a letter of thanks for their volunteer efforts (reported by 19% of employed Ontario youth volunteers)(figure 9).

Figure 9: Percentage of Youth Volunteers Indicating that Employer Provided Support for Employee Volunteer Activities With Recognition or Letter of Thanks by Age, 1997

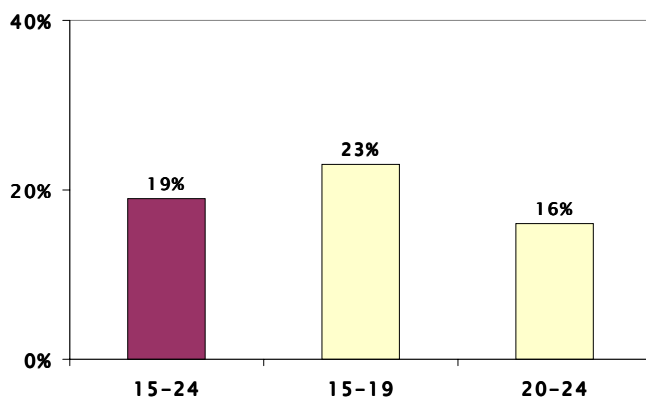


Figure 10: Percentage of Employed Youth Volunteers Indicating that Employer Provided Support for Employee Volunteer Activities With Approval to Use Work Facilities or Equipment by Age, 1997

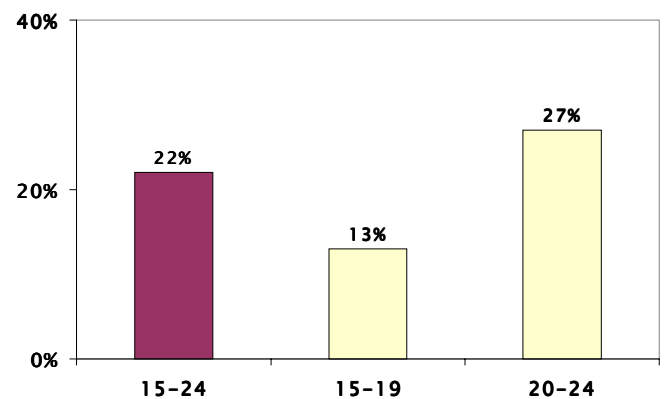


Figure 9 through 12 also shows the breakdown of employer support for volunteer activities for younger and older subgroups of employed Ontario youth volunteers. The general pattern of support for each subgroup is similar to that for employed Ontario youth volunteers as a whole, with one exception. The 15- to 19-year-old subgroup was more likely to receive recognition by an employer, for example, in the form of a letter of thanks, than were 20- to 24-year-olds (23% vs. 16%, respectively). However, 20- to 24-year-olds were far more likely to report that they received approval to use the facilities and equipment of the business for their volunteer activities (reported by 27% of this

group). This older subgroup of youth were also more likely than their younger counterparts to report that they received authorization to take leave or time off from work in order to engage in volunteer activities (28% vs. 20%).

Although not large, this level of employer support is similar to that for the volunteer activities of employed Canadian youth volunteers as a whole. As reported in *Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians*, employer support for the volunteer activities of Canadian youth tends to be higher than that for the volunteer activities of other age groups of employed Canadian volunteers.

Figure 11: Percentage of Employed Youth Volunteers Indicating that Employer Provided Support for Employee Volunteer Activities by Providing Authorization to take Leave or Time Off by Age, 1997

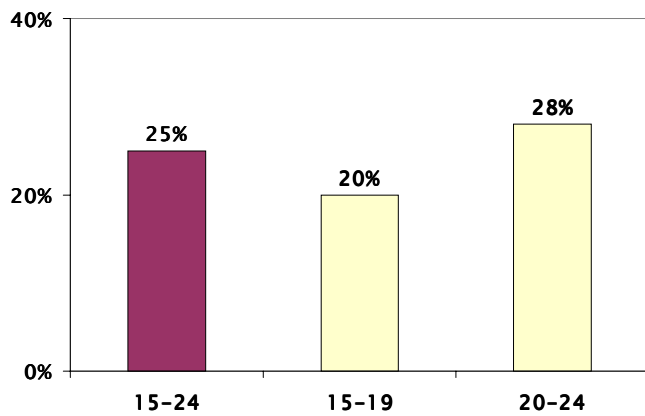
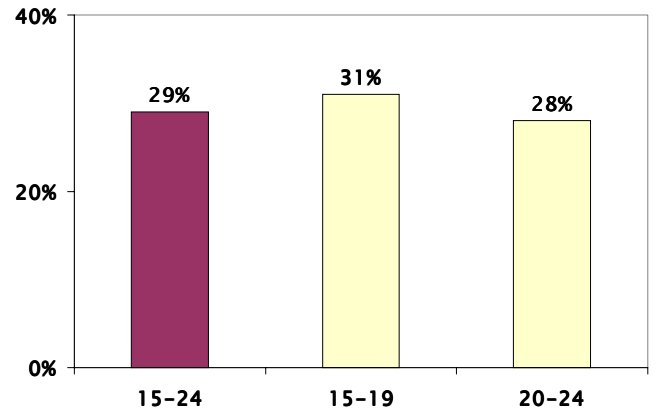


Figure 12: Percentage of Employed Youth Volunteers Indicating that Employer Provided Support for Employee Volunteer Activities With Approval to Modify Work Hours by Age, 1997



The Role of Religion

Philanthropy in its various forms is encouraged in all major religions. It comes as no surprise, then, that Canadians with strong religious ties volunteer at rates higher than the rest of the population. Findings from the NSGVP show that this is also true of Ontario youth. As shown in Figure 13, Ontario youth who indicated that they had a religious affiliation volunteered at a rate higher than that of those with no religious affiliation (38% vs. 28%). Those who attended religious services at least once a week were substantially more likely to volunteer than those who did not attend services weekly (55% vs. 33%)(figure 14). Similarly, those who consider themselves to be “very religious” were much more likely to volunteer than those who did not describe themselves as such (50% vs. 34%).

Figure 13: Percentage of the Population Volunteering and Average Hours Volunteered by Religious Affiliation, Ontarians aged 15–24, 1997

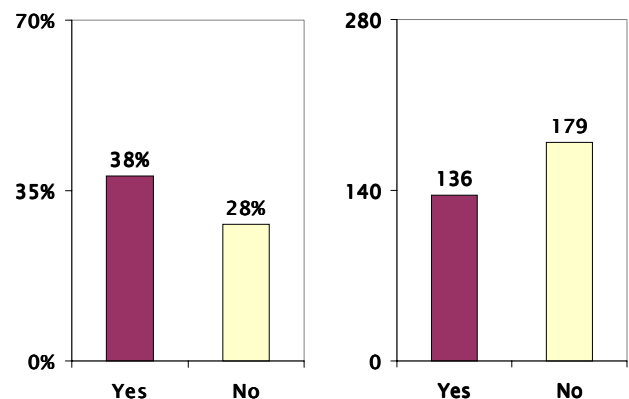
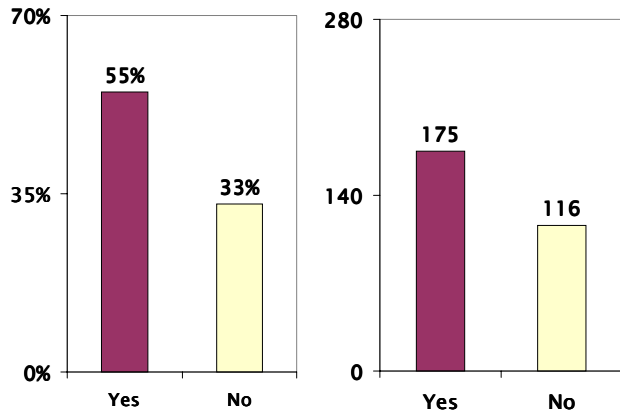
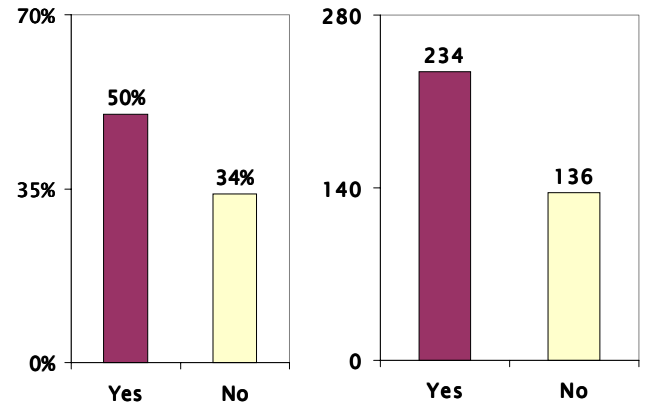


Figure 14: Volunteer Participation Rates of Individuals with Particular Early Life Experiences, Ontario Population, 1997



Ontario youth volunteers with strong religious ties also generally contributed more volunteer hours. Those volunteers who indicated that they had a religious affiliation contributed less time to volunteering, on average, than those without an affiliation (136 vs. 179 hours, respectively). However, volunteers who attended religious services on a weekly basis gave, on average, 175 hours of their time over the 12-month reference period, compared to 116 hours contributed by volunteers who did not attend services weekly. Similarly, those who considered themselves to be “very religious” contributed substantially more hours than those who did not describe themselves in this way (234 vs. 136 hours, respectively).

Figure 15: Percentage of Population Volunteering and Average Hours Volunteered by “Considered Themselves Very Religious”, Ontario Volunteers Aged 15–24, 1997

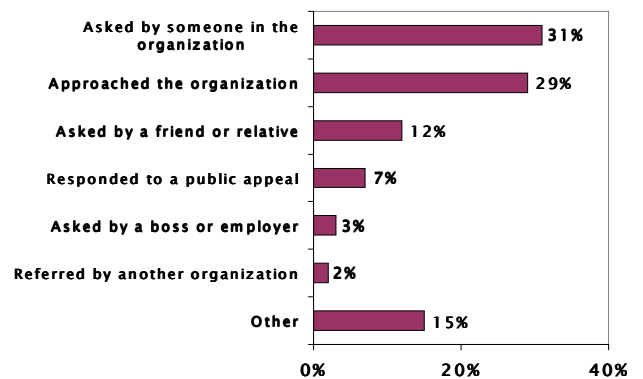


Although there appears to be a connection between religion and volunteering, most volunteer activities carried out by Ontario youth are not focused on religious organizations. Results from the NSGVP indicate that only 16% of Ontario youth volunteers engaged in volunteer activities for religious organizations. The time given to these organizations accounted for only 18% of the total number of volunteer hours and only 11% of the total number of volunteer events¹ contributed by this group. A similar pattern holds for Ontario as a whole and for Canadian volunteers in general.

How Ontario Youth Volunteers Become Involved

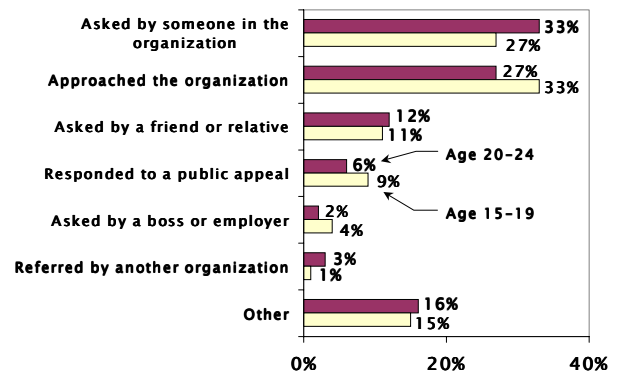
Figure 16 shows how youth came to volunteering. Slightly more youth were asked by someone in the organization (31% of all volunteer activities) than approached the organization themselves (29% of all volunteer activities). A relatively small proportion of volunteer activities began as a result of being asked by a friend or relative outside the volunteer organization, responding to a public appeal, being asked by a boss or employer, or being referred by another volunteer organization. Similar patterns were found for subgroups of Ontario youth volunteers, except that the largest proportion of volunteer activities engaged in by 20- to 24-year-olds began as a result of approaching the organization themselves. (see figure 17)

Figure 16: How Volunteers Become involved in Volunteer Activities, Ontario Volunteers Aged 15–24, 1997



Volunteer activities in Ontario and Canada as a whole are also most frequently initiated through asking. However, for most populations, the proportion of volunteer activities were initiated through asking is about 10% higher than it is for Ontario youth. While 31% of the volunteer activities of Ontario youth were initiated by asking, 42% of volunteer activities in Ontario as a whole and 44% in Canada as a whole were initiated in this way. Although asking is the most important means of initiating volunteer activity overall, it appears to be less used, in absolute terms, among Ontario youth.

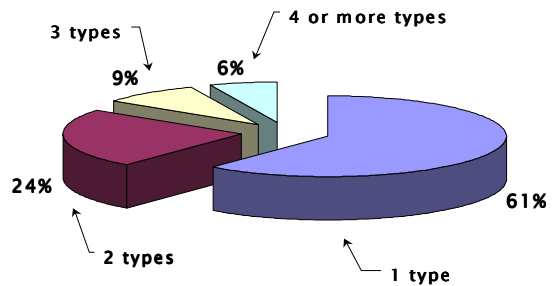
Figure 17: How Volunteers Become Involved in Volunteer Activities, Ontario Volunteers Aged 15-19 and 20-24, 1997



The Organizations Supported by Ontario Youth Volunteers

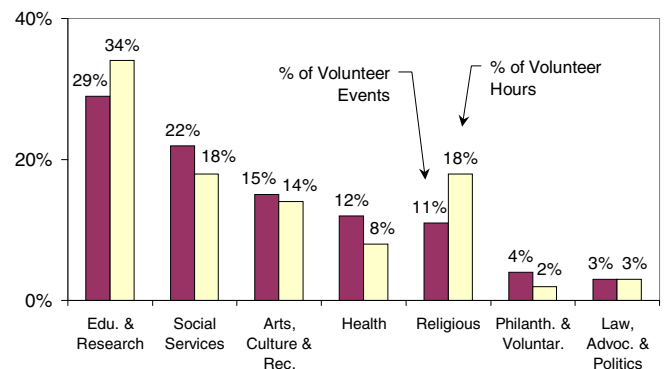
Results from the NSGVP show that the majority (61%) of Ontario youth volunteers reported volunteering for one organization only (see figure 18). One-quarter volunteered for two organizations, 9% volunteered for three organizations, and only 6% volunteered for four organizations or more. These results are similar to those for Ontario and Canadian volunteers as a whole.

Figure 18: Distribution of Volunteers by number of Types of Organizations Supported, Ontario Volunteers Aged 15-24, 1997



Ontario youth volunteers contributed to a variety of types of organizations.¹ Figure 19 shows, however, that five types of organizations accounted for the bulk of all volunteer events (89%) and volunteer hours (91%) engaged in by Ontario youth. These included education and research organizations (29% of all events, 34% of all hours), social services organizations (22% of all events, 18% of all hours), arts, culture and recreation organizations (15% of all events, 14% of all hours), health organizations (12% of all events, 8% of all hours), and religious organizations (11% of all events, 18% of all hours).

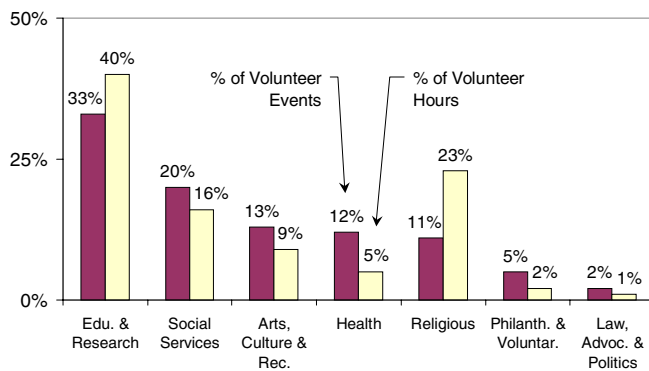
Figure 19: Percentage of Total Volunteer Events and Total Volunteer Hours Contributed by Type of Organization, Ontario Volunteers Aged 15-24



Figures 20 and 21 show the distribution of total volunteer events and total volunteer hours by type of organization for Ontario youth volunteers by age subgroup. The general patterns for these subgroups are similar to the pattern for Ontario youth volunteers as a whole. In each case, the same five types of organizations account for the bulk of all volunteer events and volunteer hours.

However, there were some variations. For example, among 15- to 19-year-olds, about forty percent of all volunteer hours went to education and research organizations, while among 20- to 24-year-olds, less than one-third of volunteer hours went to this type of organization. The younger subgroup also contributed a greater proportion of their volunteer hours to religious organizations (23%) than did 20- to 24-year-olds (10%). In contrast, 20- to 24-year-olds contributed a greater percentage of total volunteer hours and volunteer events to arts, culture and recreation organizations, and a slightly higher percentage of total volunteer hours and volunteer

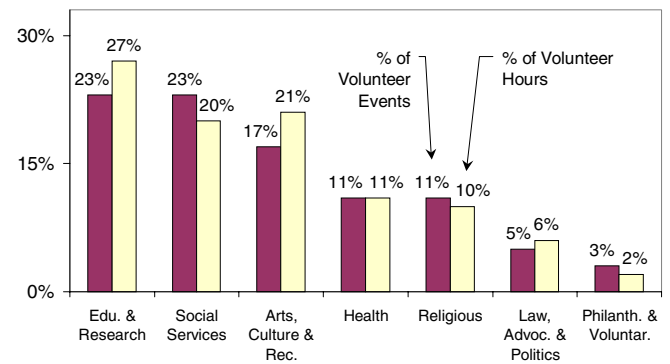
Figure 20: Percentage of Total Volunteer Events and Total Volunteer Hours Contributed by Type of Organization, Ontario Volunteers Aged 15–19



events to social services organizations.

Do Ontario youth volunteers support the same types of organizations that Ontario volunteers in general do? On the whole, they do. The top five types of organizations accounting for the bulk of all volunteer events and all volunteer hours contributed by Ontario volunteers as a whole were: arts, culture and recreation organizations; social services organizations; religious organizations; education and research organizations; and health organizations. However, education and research organizations tended to rank higher, in terms of both volunteer events and volunteer hours, among youth volunteers, than among volunteers in general.

Figure 21: Percentage of Total Volunteer Events and Total Volunteer Hours Contributed by Type of Organization, Ontario Volunteers Aged 20–24

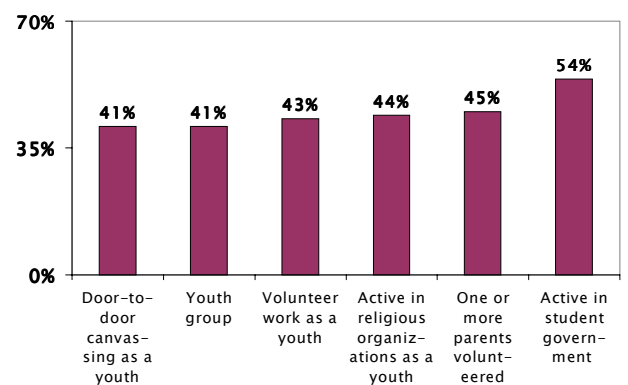


The Connection Between Early Life Experiences and Volunteering

Findings described in *Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians* suggest that the early life experiences of Canadians are connected to the likelihood of volunteering in their adult years. This is equally true of those in Ontario (see figure 14). While 32% of all Ontarians volunteered, those over age 25 who had specific life experiences during their youth volunteered at a substantially higher rate: 54% for those who were active in student government; 45% for those whose parents were volunteers; 44% for those who were active in religious organizations; 43% for those who did some kind of volunteer work as a youth; 41% for those who belonged to a youth group; and 41% for those who did door-to-door canvassing in their youth. These findings show how, for many Ontarians, an interest in volunteering developed during one's youth is likely to be maintained in adulthood. This suggests the importance of providing positive early volunteering experiences for

youth, as these experiences may lead to continued volunteering in the adult years.

Figure 22: Volunteer Participation Rates of Individuals with Particular Early Life Experiences, Ontario Adults Aged 25 and Over, 1997



What Ontario Youth Volunteers Do

Ontario youth volunteers are engaged in a diverse range of activities. However, Figure 23 shows that some activities are more commonly performed than others. Almost half (47%) of all Ontario youth volunteers reported that they helped to organize or supervise activities or events for an organization. Other common activities included canvassing, campaigning or fundraising (42%), teaching or coaching for an organization (31%), serving as an unpaid member of a board or committee (29%), and collecting, serving, or delivering food (26%). Between 16% and 23% of Ontario youth volunteers reported providing information or helping to educate others; providing care or support as a volunteer through an organization; protecting the environment or wildlife; and performing consulting, executive, office or administrative work.

Figure 23: Activities in Which Ontario Youth Volunteers Aged 15–24 Engage, 1997

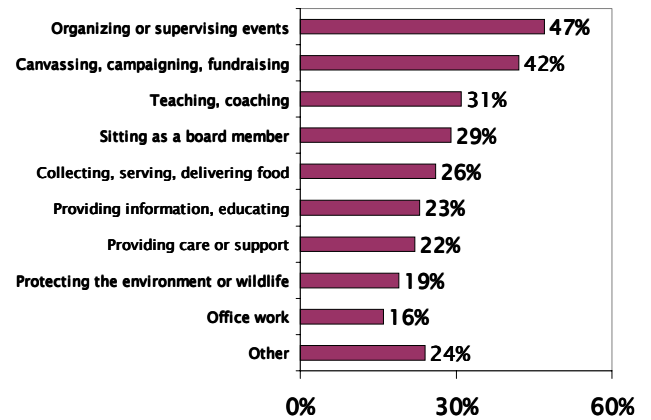
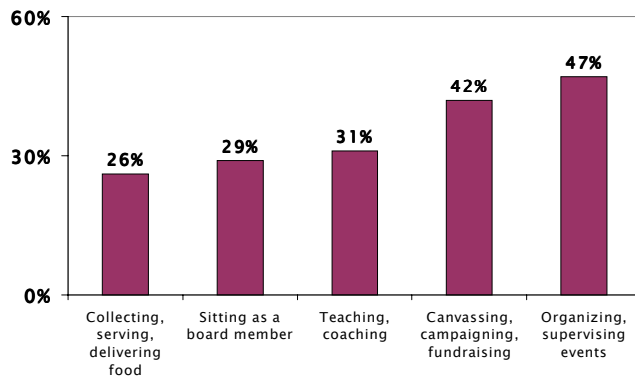
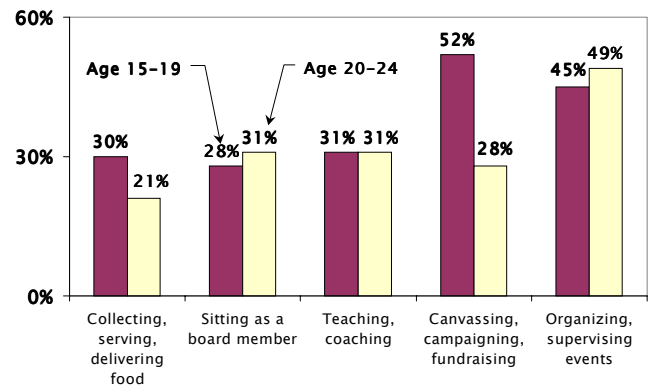


Figure 24: Activities in Which Ontario Youth Volunteers Aged 15–24 Engage, 1997



These findings are generally consistent with those for Ontario volunteers and for Canadian youth overall. However, Ontario youth volunteers are relatively less likely than Ontario volunteers in general to sit as board members (29% vs. 38%), and to do consulting, executive, office or administrative work (16% vs. 28%).

Figure 25: Activities in Which Ontario Youth Volunteers Aged 15–19 and 20–24 Engage, 1997



undertaken by both the younger (15- to 19-year-olds) and older (20- to 24-year-olds) subgroups are similar to those for youth as a whole. However, there are some differences. The most common activity engaged in by 15- to 19-year-olds is canvassing, campaigning, and fundraising (52%). In contrast, 20- to 24-year-olds are substantially less likely to be involved in this activity (28%).

Figure 24 and 25 show that the types of activities

Other Ways of Helping People

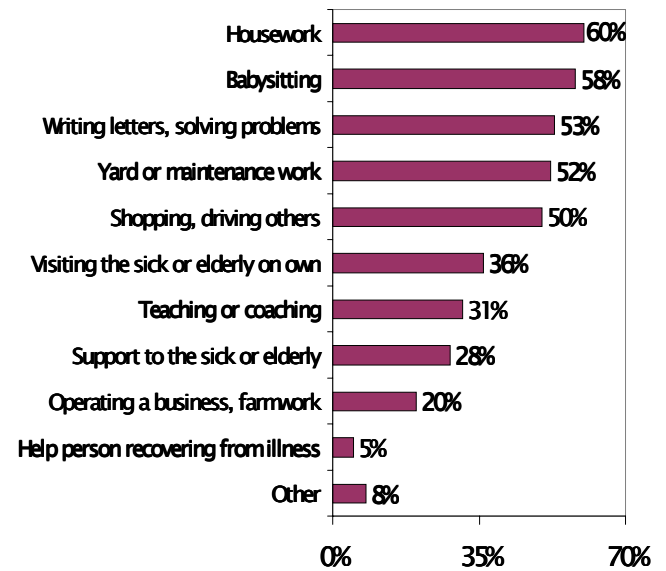
In addition to helping people through formal organizations, many Ontario youth support others in more informal ways. The NSGVP asked people about a variety of ways in which they provided help directly to individuals outside their household, not through an organization.

Almost 8 out of 10 (77%) Ontario youths engaged in this type of informal helping; 57% provided this help to relatives not living with them and 81% provided this help to people other than relatives.

As Figure 26 shows, the five most common informal helping activities, engaged in by at least 50% of Ontario youth, included housework (60%); unpaid babysitting (58%); helping others to write letters, solve problems, find information or fill out forms (53%); yard or maintenance work (52%); and helping someone with shopping or driving someone to appointments or stores (50%).

Although the general pattern of informal helping activities is similar, Ontario youth are more likely than Ontarians as a whole to perform the most common activities mentioned above. For example, Ontario youth are more likely than Ontarians in general to do housework (60% vs. 33%), to babysit without pay (58% vs. 41%), or to do yard work (52% vs. 33%). Ontario youth are also generally more likely than Ontarians overall to do less common activities, such as teaching or coaching (31% vs. 15%). In general, it appears that Ontario youth are more involved in informal helping than Ontarians overall.

Figure 26: Types of Activities Done Directly for Others, Not for an Organization, Ontarians Aged 15–24 Who Help People Directly, 1997



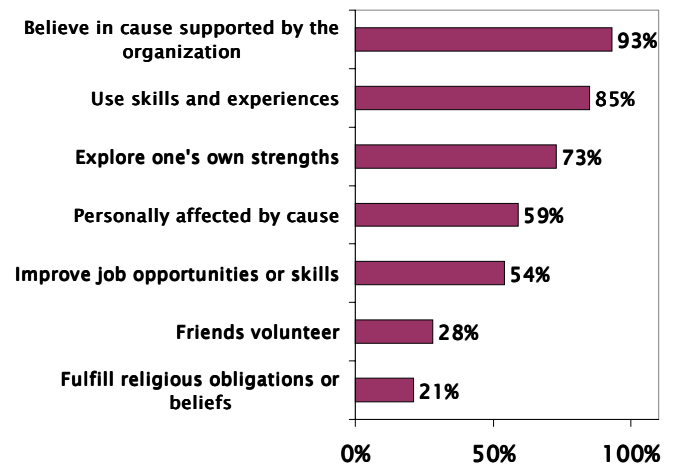
The Reasons for Volunteering Among Ontario Youth

Understanding what motivates Ontario youth to volunteer can provide valuable insights to organizations seeking their support, to volunteer recruiters and managers of volunteers, and to anyone interested in encouraging volunteering among Ontario youth. The NSGVP asked a number of questions that shed some light on why Ontario youth decide to volunteer, or not to volunteer, for charitable and nonprofit organizations.

Motivations

Volunteers were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with seven different reasons for volunteering. Figure 27 and 28 shows the percentage of Ontario youth (including the younger and older subgroups) who agreed with each of these reasons. Almost all Ontario youth agreed that the reason they volunteered was to help a cause in which they personally believe (93%). A large majority volunteered in order to use their skills and experiences (over 80% of all youth) or to explore their own strengths (over 70% of all youth). One-half to two-thirds volunteered because they have been personally affected (or know someone who has been personally affected) by the cause the organization supports, or because they wished to improve their job opportunities. Relatively few Ontario

Figure 27: Percentage of Volunteers Agreeing with Statements of Reasons for Volunteering, Ontario Volunteers Aged 15–24, 1997



youth volunteered because their friends did so, or volunteered in order to fulfill religious obligations or beliefs.

Compared to Ontarians overall, Ontario youth were substantially more likely to volunteer in order to improve their job opportunities (54% vs. 22%) or explore their own strengths (73% vs. 56%), but were less likely to

volunteer because they have been personally affected by a cause (59% vs. 68%) or in order to fulfill religious obligations or beliefs (21% vs. 31%). Overall, the findings for Ontario youth are similar to those for Canadian youth.

Barriers

The NSGVP presented a list of 10 possible reasons for not giving more time as a volunteer or for not volunteering at all. Figure 29 shows the percentage of Ontario youth volunteers and non-volunteers who agreed with each reason. By a substantial margin, not having extra time was the barrier most frequently reported by both volunteers and non-volunteers. Over three-quarters of both groups of Ontario youth agreed that lack of time was a major factor.

Other common barriers included being unwilling to make a year-round commitment, and not being personally asked. The prevalence of the latter is particularly noteworthy: 43% of non-volunteers and 26% of volunteers agreed that not being personally asked was a factor in their not volunteering, or their not volunteering more. These percentages are substantially higher than those for Ontario as a whole (18% of volunteers, 35% of non-volunteers).

A relatively large proportion of Ontario youth agreed that they did not volunteer (or did not volunteer more) because they did not know how to become involved (31% of non-volunteers, 20% of volunteers). Once again, these percentages are substantially higher than those for Ontario as a whole (9% of volunteers, 18% of non-volunteers). Less common impediments to volunteering (or not volunteering more) among Ontario youth included the financial cost of volunteering, a feeling that they had already made a contribution, health problems, and concern about being sued or taken to court as a result of volunteering. Overall, the findings for Ontario youth are similar to those for Canadian youth.

Figure 29 also shows that, although non-volunteers are generally more likely than volunteers to report barriers to volunteering (particularly the most common barriers), the overall pattern for Ontario youth volunteers and non-volunteers is generally similar. Time is perceived as the biggest impediment, while a substantial proportion of Ontario youth agree that not being personally asked is a reason for not volunteering (or not volunteering more). Many Ontario youth are also unwilling to make a year-round commitment, or do not know how to become involved.

Figure 28: Percentage of Volunteers Agreeing with Statements of Reasons for Volunteering, Ontario Volunteers Aged 15–19 and 20–24, 1997

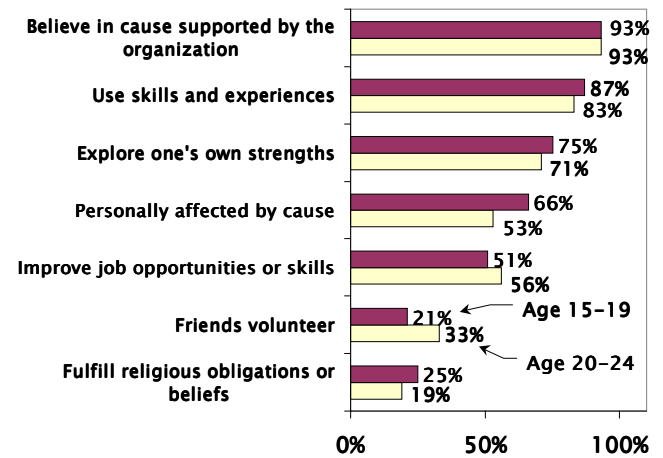
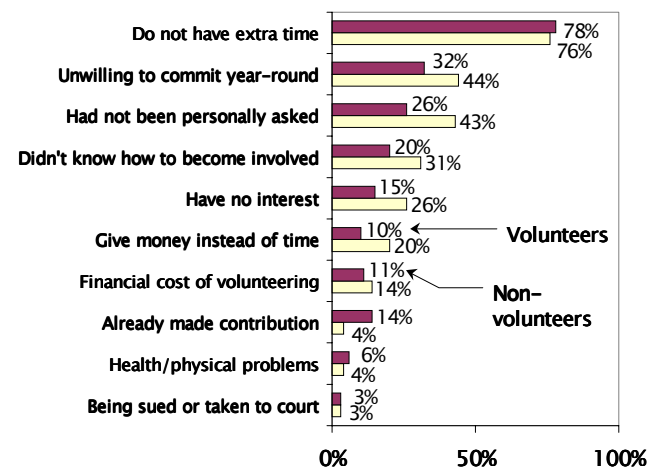


Figure 29: Reasons For Not Volunteering or For Not Volunteering More, Ontario Youth Aged 15–24, 1997



Such barriers, reported by both volunteers and non-volunteers, must be taken into account in developing programs or strategies for encouraging volunteer activity among Ontario youth. For example, volunteer recruiters should develop volunteer opportunities for youth that do not involve large amounts of time or year-long commitments (e.g., shorter, more task-oriented assignments). Volunteer recruiters should also be sure to *personally ask* youth to become involved, and to let them know *how* to become involved. Such strategies may encourage Ontario youth non-volunteers to become involved in volunteering and may encourage Ontario youth volunteers to give more time.²

The Benefits of Volunteering for Ontario Youth

Ontario youth volunteers readily agreed that volunteering provides them with personal benefits, as Figure 30 shows. More than 8 in 10 Ontario youth volunteers reported gaining such interpersonal skills as understanding people better, learning to motivate others, and learning how to deal with difficult situations. About three-quarters developed communication skills such as public speaking, writing, conducting meetings, and public relations. Approximately two-thirds increased their knowledge on such matters as health, women's issues, political issues, criminal justice, and the environment, or developed organizational and managerial skills. Overall, the patterns of benefits were similar for each group of

Ontario youth volunteers, though there were some variations. For example, 15- to 19-year-olds were relatively more likely (52%) than 20- to 24-year-olds (31%) to report fundraising skills as a benefit of volunteering (see figure 31). This finding is consistent with that reported earlier regarding volunteer activities: canvassing, campaigning and fundraising was the activity most frequently engaged in by 15- to 19-year-old Ontario youth volunteers.

Interestingly, findings from the NSGVP also showed that, compared to Ontario volunteers as a whole, Ontario youth volunteers were more likely to report receiving each benefit of volunteering – generally by about 10 percentage points.

Figure 30: Benefits of Volunteering, Ontario Volunteers Aged 15–24, 1997

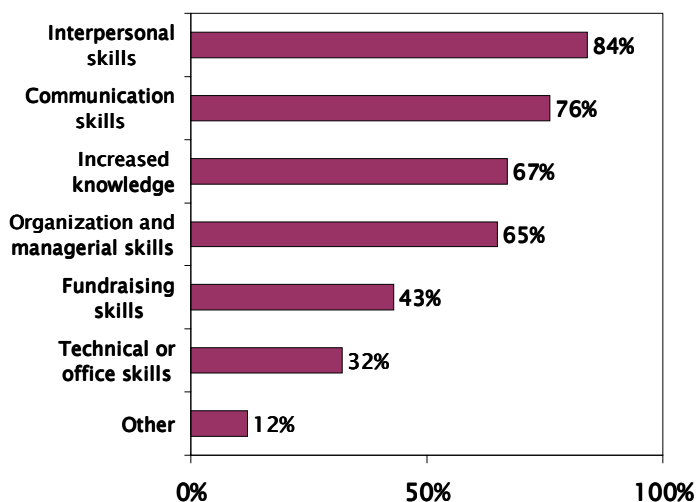
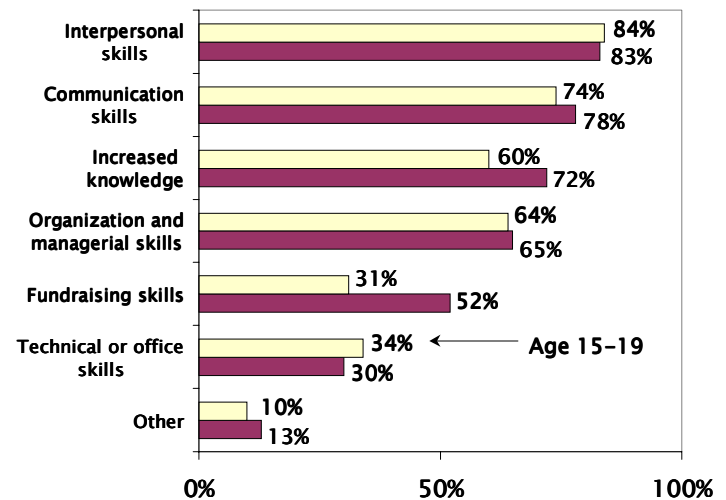


Figure 31: Benefits of Volunteering, Ontario Volunteers Aged 15–19 and 20–24, 1997

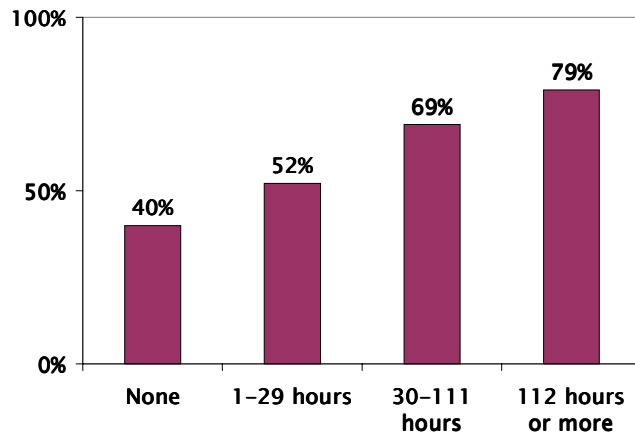
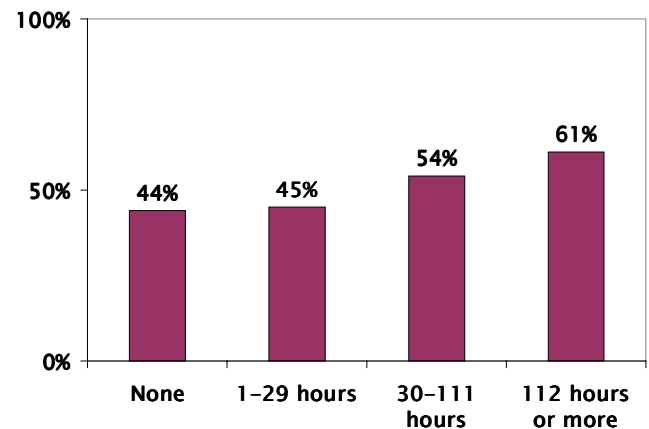
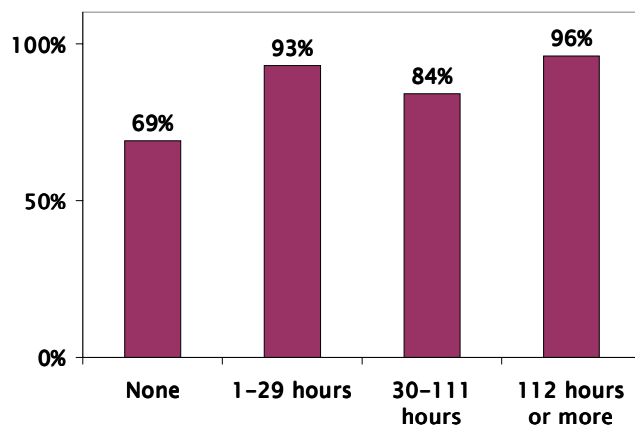
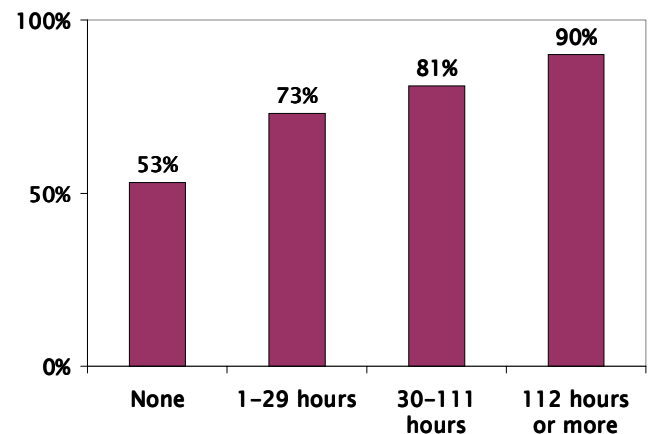


The Links Between Volunteering and Other Forms of Supportive Behaviour Among Ontario Youth

Results from the NSGVP demonstrate linkages among the many types of support that Canadians in general provide to one another and to their communities. In addition to formal volunteering, these types of support may take the form of charitable giving, helping others directly, giving money to others directly, and participating in community organizations. Figure 32 shows that such linkages of support are also found among Ontario youth. As is evident, Ontario youth

volunteers were more likely than non-volunteers to make charitable donations, to help others directly, to give money to others directly, and to participate in community organizations through their membership.

Figure 32 also shows that, in general, the likelihood of engaging in these supportive activities increases with the amount of volunteer time that Ontario youth contribute.

Figure 32: Percentage of Ontario Population Involved in Community Organizations by Number of Hours Volunteered, 1997**Figure 33:** Percentage of Ontario Population Giving Directly to Others, by Number of Hours Volunteered, 1997**Figure 34:** Percentage of Ontario Volunteers Aged 15-24 Involved in Helping Others by Number of Hours Volunteered, 1997**Figure 35:** Percentage of Ontario Volunteers Aged 15-24 Making Charitable Donations by Number of Hours Volunteered, 1997

Encouraging Volunteering Among Ontario Youth: What the NSGVP Tells Us

Findings from the 1997 NSGVP suggest lessons helpful to organizations and individuals responsible for recruiting and managing Ontario youth volunteers.

1. Ask, and ask again. More Ontario youth volunteers become involved because someone asks them than in any other way. Similarly, Ontario youth volunteers state that they do not give more time, and Ontario youth non-volunteers state that they do not volunteer at all, because no one has ever asked them.

2. Acknowledge that time is a precious commodity. Lack of time was the most common reason why Ontario youth do not volunteer more, or do not volunteer at all. Voluntary and nonprofit organizations should explore different ways to involve many Ontario youth, some of whom may not have a lot of time to give, but all of whom may make an important contribution.

3. Stress the benefits. For many volunteers, and particularly youth volunteers, volunteering can be a key

stepping stone to paid work. Volunteering can improve one's chances of finding a job, help one acquire job-related skills, and increase one's chances of success in paid jobs. Volunteering can also help youth develop interpersonal skills, communication skills, organizational skills, and managerial skills. These benefits should be highlighted in any volunteer recruitment program.

4. *Be aware of possible motivations and barriers.* Belief in a cause is a prime motivator of youth volunteers. But many youth also volunteer for more pragmatic reasons, such as to use their skills and experiences, to explore their own strengths, and to improve their job opportunities. The latter motivation, in particular, is key for youth volunteers in comparison to other volunteers.

Possible barriers to volunteering must also be kept in mind. As mentioned earlier, lack of time is seen as a major impediment for the majority of Ontario youth, whether volunteers or non-volunteers. Many Ontario youth are also unwilling to make a year-long commitment, or do not know how to become involved. Once again, volunteer recruiters should attempt to develop volunteer opportunities for youth that do require large investments of time or year-long commitments. Recruiters should also do their part to ensure that potential youth volunteers know *how* to become involved with their specific organization.

5. *Target particular groups.* As mentioned earlier, knowing which groups of Ontario youth are more (or less) likely to volunteer is central for organizations that depend on volunteers to carry out their programs and activities. Those Ontario youth who are most likely to

volunteer may be the easiest to recruit for volunteer support, but knowing which groups are least likely to volunteer may assist organizations to increase the recruitment of under-represented groups. For example, findings from the NSGVP show that, among Ontario youth:

- 15- to 19-year-olds are more likely to volunteer, and on average contribute more time, than 20- to 24-year-olds;
- females are slightly more likely to volunteer than males, but on average, males give more time;
- university graduates have the highest volunteer rate, but they tend to give less time than others;
- high-school graduates give, on average, the most volunteer time;
- those employed part-time are the most likely to volunteer, but the opposite is true of those employed full-time;
- on average, the largest number of volunteer hours is contributed by youth who are not in the labour force.

Volunteer recruiters should also keep in mind that younger and older subgroups of Ontario youth may differ in other important respects. For example, 15- to 19-year-olds are more often involved in canvassing, campaigning, and fundraising than are 20- to 24-year-olds, while 20- to 24-year-olds are more likely to volunteer to increase their chances of finding a job, and to become involved in volunteering as a result of approaching an organization, than are 15- to 19-year-olds.

Conclusion

Many Ontario youth engage in a wide array of volunteer activities to support their communities and the causes in which they believe, improve their job opportunities, develop skills, and make new contacts. Volunteering among Ontario youth has increased dramatically between 1987 and 1997, by two-and-a-half times, from 14% to 35%. More than 1 in 3 Ontario youth aged 15 to 24 volunteered in 1997, compared to just over 1 in 10 in 1987. With the implementation of the Ontario Ministry of Education's new policy, which requires 40 hours of community service as a prerequisite for the completion of high school, the rate of

volunteering among Ontario youth, particularly those aged 15 to 19, is expected to increase even further. Youth, therefore, represent an important volunteer recruitment opportunity for charitable and nonprofit organizations today, particularly in an era of government cutbacks and scarce resources. In addition, demographics are useful for identifying where volunteer resources may exist.

Some of the ways in which Ontario youth are distinctive, in terms of their volunteer experiences, are worth repeating. Ontario youth are more likely than other

age groups in Ontario to perceive volunteer activity as a way to enhance job possibilities. They are much more likely than Ontarians in general to volunteer in order to improve their job opportunities or to explore their own strengths, but are less likely to volunteer than others because they were personally affected by a cause or in order to fulfill religious obligations or beliefs. Although not having extra time was reported as the prime barrier to volunteering, compared to Ontarians in general, Ontario youth are more likely to report barriers such as not being personally *asked* to volunteer or not knowing *how* to become involved. On the other hand, Ontario youth volunteers were more likely than Ontario volunteers in general to report benefits from volunteering.

Findings from the NSGVP have helped to illuminate the extent and character of volunteering among Ontario

youth, and have suggested ways to encourage such activity. Yet, some questions remain. Of particular interest in the coming years will be to assess the impact of the new Ontario government policy regarding community service among high school students. How will such a policy affect the nature or experience of volunteering among Ontario youth? Will it affect motivations for volunteering? The average amount of time volunteered? The types of volunteer activities engaged in, or the types of organizations supported? The benefits of volunteering? Will the policy affect volunteering among older youth, or will it mostly impact the younger group of Ontario youth who are most directly involved? Finally, does the voluntary sector in Ontario have the capacity or resources to realize the potential that this new policy brings, to access new volunteers, and to turn young people on to the value of community service? These are some of the questions that await future investigation.

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Endnotes

1. The volunteer participation rate is defined as the percentage of the population that volunteered for a charitable or non-profit organization during the NSGVP reference year (i.e., between November 1, 1996 and October 31, 1997).
2. Throughout this text, comparisons to Ontario volunteers as a whole refer to findings reported in *Charitable Giving and Volunteering in Ontario*, by S. L. Bozzo and L. Greenberg, Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, 1999; comparisons to Canadian youth volunteers or Canadian volunteers as a whole refer to findings reported in *Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians: Highlights from the 1997 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating*, by M. H. Hall, T. Knighton, P. Reed, P. Bussière, D. McRae and P. Bowen, Ministry of Industry, 1998.
3. This number is based on data presented in Ross and Shillington (1989) from the 1987 Volunteer Activity Survey (VAS).
4. In 1997, the average number of volunteer hours contributed by Canadian youth aged 15 to 24 was nearly one-third (28%) lower than it was in 1987 (174). The average number of volunteer hours contributed by Ontario youth in 1987, however, is unavailable for comparison.
5. For a discussion, see Hall and Febraro (1999).
6. In Canada, university graduates and high school graduates both contributed, on average, 159 volunteer hours in 1997, the highest average among education categories.
7. Policies mandating volunteer activity among youth also exist in British Columbia and the Northwest Territories.
8. This number is substantially lower than that for unemployed *Canadian* youth volunteers aged 15 to 24 (100 hours per year).
9. Each organization reported by an individual constitutes one “volunteer event.” A volunteer event represents an involvement with an organization. It does not take into account the number of different activities performed, nor the frequency, timing or duration of volunteering in that organization.
10. NSGVP respondents were asked to provide information about the types of organizations for which they volunteered. These organizations were classified into 13 categories according to the types of activities in which they engage. For more details, see *Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians: Highlights from the 1997 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating*.
11. Although not shown, the patterns for subgroups of Ontario youth (those aged 15 to 19 and those aged 20 to 24) were very similar to the pattern for Ontario youth as a whole. For each subgroup of youth, time was the most prevalent barrier. Other commonly reported barriers (for both subgroups of youth, and for both volunteers and non-volunteers) included not being personally asked and not being willing to make a year-round commitment.

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