

Volunteering and Older Adults

Final Report
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Prepared by Volunteer Canada

Suzanne L. Cook, PhD and Paula Speevak Sladowski

Research Team: Alison Light, Sarah Bennett, and Melanie Hientz

**Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
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Highlights

1. There are close to 15 million older adults in Canada: more than 5 million seniors age 65 and over and close to 10 million baby boomers (45 – 64 years old). Together, they make up 43% of the population.
2. Baby boomers and senior adults contributed more than 1 billion volunteer hours in 2010. Older adults have a lower volunteer rate than younger age-groups; however, they contribute, on average, more hours per year. This is likely due to health and mobility issues that increase with age, while availability tends to increase with age, due to fewer work and family responsibilities.
3. Among those 45 to 64 years of age and those age 65 to 75 years of age, females tend to volunteer more and to contribute more average hours per year than males. However, over the age of 75, males were more likely to volunteer than females and males also volunteered more average hours per year.
4. Baby boomers tend to volunteer to supervise events, serve on boards and committees, or participate in fund raising, while seniors are more likely to volunteer to provide support to individuals through counselling and giving advice and to provide support to health care services. Adults age 45 and over tend to volunteer within sports and recreation, social services, education and research and religious non-profit organizations. Involvement with education and research drops quickly with advancing age, while seniors' contribution to other types of organizations remains relatively stable.
5. Baby boomers tend to seek meaningful volunteer activities and have consistently high rates of volunteering. They are loyal volunteers who have time and flexible schedules, making them highly valued as volunteers; however, they also have high expectations for their volunteer experiences at organizations. In addition to a desire to contribute to the community, seniors are motivated to meet new people and volunteer with friends, whereas baby boomers are more often motivated to use or develop skills.
6. Volunteering provides health benefits to older adults. It offers them significant physical, emotional and cognitive or brain health benefits. It also enhances social support, social inclusion and civic engagement.
7. Senior adults may experience challenges and barriers to volunteering related to transportation and scheduling issues and out-of-pocket expenses.
8. Boomers, shadow boomers and seniors will increasingly be interested in having a strong voice in political and social issues. Programs to educate and support individuals in citizen advocacy and civic participation will become increasingly important.
9. Volunteers bring both social and economic benefits to non-profit organizations through their volunteer work.
10. Key strategies for engaging older adults include those that promote well-being during times of transition, such as retirement planning and condo volunteering, as well as strategies that promote personal development and learning, such as skills-based volunteering, voluntourism and citizen science.
11. Public policy and programs aimed at promoting volunteering among older adults and strengthening the capacity of organizations to involve older adults within a broader spectrum of engagement will be critical for the future of citizen engagement and volunteering in Canada.

Foreword and Acknowledgements

The objective of this research is to assist the Community Development and Partnership Directorate (CDPD) of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) in deepening its knowledge base regarding issues related to baby boomer and senior citizen volunteering.

Volunteer Canada was contracted by the Community Development and Partnership Directorate (CDPD) of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) to carry out a comprehensive review of existing research on the nature and scope of baby boomer and senior citizen volunteering, including trends, characteristics, and motivations. Delving into the experiences of these older adult volunteers, the research explored the barriers and challenges, as well as the social and health-related benefits of volunteering.

The directorate identified the following 11 research questions, outlined in their Statement of Work, that are addressed in this report:

1. What are the demographic and socio-economic profiles of baby boomers and senior citizens who volunteer, including the following cohorts?
 - Shadow boomers (45-54)
 - Baby boomers (55-64)
 - Younger Seniors (65-74)
 - Older Seniors (75+)
2. What are the social and economic outcomes of formal volunteering among senior citizens?
3. How do senior citizens become aware of formal volunteering and how do they access formal volunteering opportunities?
4. Are there differences in volunteering rates among populations of baby boomers and senior citizens, between urban centres and smaller communities, and between females and males? What are the differences and the possible reasons for them?
5. What is the profile of not-for-profit (NFP) organizations where baby boomers and senior citizens volunteer?
6. How are not-for-profit (NFP) organizations adapting to Canada's changing demographics and how are they engaging senior citizens?
7. What are the best practices, tools and resources for engaging senior volunteers?
8. What are the challenges in attracting and retaining senior citizens who volunteer?
9. How can communities leverage opportunities with local businesses to support volunteering among older adults?
10. What supports do not-for-profit (NFP) organizations need to better attract and involve populations of senior citizens in volunteer activities?
11. What is the value of the benefits that senior citizens who volunteer bring

Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Methodology	7
Section 1	A Profile of Older Adults Volunteering in Canada.....	8
Section 2	Community Impact of Older Adults Volunteering.....	23
Section 3	Benefits of Volunteering for Older Adults.....	27
Section 4	Challenges and Barriers.....	32
Section 5	Strategies to Engaging Older Adult Volunteers.....	36
Section 6	Older Adult Volunteer Programs.....	43
Section 7	Conclusion and Highlights.....	47
Section 8	References.....	50
Appendix A	Attached	



Introduction

Canadian seniors collectively volunteered more than 372 million hours in 2010 alone
(Statistics Canada, CSGVP 2010)

Many of today's older adults are the founders of non-profit organizations and social movements that have played a fundamental role in shaping Canadian society and establishing essential community services. Organizations rely heavily on older adult volunteers to provide continuity and leadership.¹ Close to 15 million Canadians are over the age of 45 and comprise 43% of the population². These shadow boomers (ages 45-54), baby boomers (ages 55-64), and senior adults (over the age of 65) contribute more hours to non-profit organizations in the community than any other age group. Seniors (65+) contributed 372 million hours of volunteering in 2010 alone. Yet, the world of volunteering has evolved significantly, over the past decade, influenced by changing demographics, globalization, advances in technology, shifts in public policy, and the myriad of social issues associated with economic trends.³ How will organizations continue to meaningfully engage senior citizens today and in the future? How can public policy and programs facilitate and strengthen opportunities for older adult volunteering?

About 13.3 million Canadians⁴ of all ages contribute their time to help people, causes, and organizations that they care about. While volunteering has continued to grow, there have been significant shifts in the way people want to be engaged. Today, people tend to lead more structured lives, and are more autonomous, mobile, computer literate, and results-oriented.⁵ The types of volunteer roles Canadians seek evolve during their lifetime with changing priorities and circumstances.⁶ Volunteers bring their personal talents and interests, professional skills, and education to help respond to needs in their community and many turn to volunteering to launch into new directions completely.⁷

People are looking for a range of options where they can see the value and impact of their contribution in their community. More people are interested in group volunteering, short-term assignments, as well as virtual volunteering, and view volunteering as a way of transferring or gaining skills.⁸ Micro-volunteering opportunities are considered effective strategies as a first step towards promoting active citizenship. While many organizations have adapted their

¹ Volunteer Canada & Manulife Financial (2010). Bridging the Gap: Enriching the Volunteer Experience to Build a Better Future for our Communities, Ottawa, available at www.volunteer.ca

² Statistics Canada (2011). Census, Canadian population distribution by age.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Statistics Canada (2012). The 2010 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering, and Participating 2010, Ottawa.

⁵ Speevak-Sladowski & Anna Maranta (2010). [Skills-Based Volunteering Discussion Paper](#), Volunteer Canada.

⁶ Volunteer Canada & Manulife Financial (2011). [Transitions, Milestones, and Legacies: A Retirement Planning Module on Volunteering](#).

⁷ Cook, S. L. (2011). Redirection: Volunteering as an Extension of Career during Retirement. Paper presented at the 30th annual conference of the Canadian Association on Gerontology (CAG), Ottawa, Canada.

⁸ Volunteer Canada & Manulife Financial (2010). Bridging the Gap: Enriching the Volunteer Experience to Build a Better Future for our Communities, Ottawa, available at www.volunteer.ca

volunteer engagement strategies in response to the current trends in volunteering, many others are stuck in more traditional structures and approaches that are creating barriers for not only for today's seniors but for the generation coming up.

In addition to the invaluable contributions that older adult volunteers make in communities, the act of volunteering also makes an invaluable contribution to their health and wellbeing. Volunteering helps seniors stay active and connected to their communities, helps maintain social contacts, and promotes a sense of value and self-worth.⁹ While there are age-related factors, such as health status and stage of life, that influence our volunteering patterns, there are also historical and lifestyle features that are unique to each generation.

There has been considerable attention paid to the potential impact of aging baby boomers both in terms of projected demands on community services and the availability of an enormous talent pool. Understanding the characteristics of today's seniors and baby boomers will help organizations better engage the current and emerging generation of seniors and help policy makers develop programs and policies that more strategically respond to both the needs and the assets of older adults.

This report is divided into eight main sections:

- 1. A profile of Older Adult Volunteers in Canada**
- 2. The Community Impact of Older Adults Volunteering**
- 3. The Benefits of Volunteering for Older Adults**
- 4. Challenges and Barriers**
- 5. Strategies for Engaging Older Adults**
- 6. Older Adult Volunteer Programs from Around the World**
- 7. Conclusion and Highlights**
- 8. References**

⁹Narushima, M. (2005). 'Payback time': Community volunteering among older adults as a transformative mechanism. *Aging & Society*, 25, 567-584; Narushima, M. (2004). A gaggle of raging grannies: The empowerment of older Canadian women through social activism. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 23, 23-42.; National Seniors Council 2010. Report of the National Seniors Council on Volunteering Among Seniors and Positive and Active Aging, Ottawa, Government of Canada; Role of Psychological and Social Resources in Different Age Groups." *Social Science and Medicine* 56:259-69.; Warburton, J. (2006). Volunteering in later life: Is it good for your health? *Voluntary Action*, 8, 3-15.

Methodology

A mixed methodology was used to explore the key themes of this research, in order to address the questions in the statement of work. The table below indicates the methodology and key data sources that were accessed for each key theme.

Key Theme	Methodology
Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile of baby boomers, shadow-boomers, younger seniors, and older seniors who volunteer	Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (2000, 2004, 2007, and 2010) was used to create profiles for these age-cohorts, including the personal characteristics related to volunteer rates, average hours, preferred organizations, types of volunteering, and motivations. Census 2011 data was used to provide relative comparisons regarding the population distribution of each age-cohort to provide provincial/territorial comparisons. A literature review provided additional information about the characteristics of each group.
Challenges Attracting and Retaining Senior Volunteers	Ten Key Informant Interviews with sector practitioners as well as academics were carried out between May and August of 2012. The online survey of 584 organizations, that was carried out as part of a research initiative with Manulife Financial, provided trends and capacity issues related to volunteer engagement generally. The Literature Review also provided information about challenges and barriers to attracting and retaining senior volunteers.
How Organizations are Adapting to the Changing Landscape of Volunteering	Information was gathered through the online survey, literature review, and key informant interviews.
Innovative Practices, Models, and Tools for Engaging Senior Volunteers	An inventory of 70 senior volunteering programs from around the world was gathered through the Literature review. Key Informant Interviews shed light on practices, tools, and models. The Online survey identified additional tools and strategies.
Awareness and Access to Volunteer Opportunities	Volunteer Centres were asked for their data on seniors searching for volunteer opportunities.
Organic and Informal Volunteer Engagement	Round Table Discussion.
The Impact of Collaboration and New Organizational Models on Volunteer Motivation	A focus group was held in June of 2012 with nine leaders from umbrella organizations and networks. Additional information was gathered through the literature review with a focus on amalgamation, mergers, and founder's syndrome.
Skills-Based Volunteering and Retirement Planning	Organizational capacity to engage in skills-based volunteering and to link volunteer recruitment to retirement planning was gathered through the online survey and through the Key Informant Interviews.
Corporate Community Investment and Seniors	Information from research on Corporate Community Investment and seniors was gathered through the online survey and the research carried out by the Conference Board of Canada.

Section 1

A Profile of Older Adult Volunteers in Canada

According to the 2010 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, seniors (adults over the age of 65) volunteered an average of 223 hours per year, higher than any other age group. The volunteer rate (36.5%) for seniors is lower than the rate for all Canadians (47%), over the age of 15. Comparing the three age groups, shadow boomers (45-54 years of age), baby boomers (55-64 years of age), and seniors (65 years of age and older), indicates that the volunteer rate decreases with age, while the average of number of hours increases with age (see Table 1). However, by separating younger seniors (65-74) and older seniors (75+), there is a distinction evident with 40% of younger seniors volunteering an average of 235 hours each year, while 31% of older seniors volunteer an average of 198 hours each year. This is likely explained by the limitations that may be created from the health and mobility issues that increase with age, while availability tends to increase with age, due to fewer work and family responsibilities.

Table 1 - Older Adults Volunteer Rates and Average Number of Hours Per Year

	All Canadians	45-54	55-64	65+	65-74	75+
Volunteer rate (percentage)	47	45.4	40.8	36.5	40	31
Average hours per year	156	167	201	223	235	198
Total hours (millions)	2,068.0	409.4	349.0	372.8		

Source: Statistics Canada, 2010 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, released March 2012

In contrast, baby boomers, who were between the ages of 45 and 54 (in 2010), had a volunteer rate of 45.4% and volunteered an average of 167 hours. Those who were between 55 and 64 had a volunteer rate of 40.8% and contributed an average of 201 hours. This is explained by stage of life factors such as whether or not there were children present in the home, and what their employment status was at the time.¹⁰ The question of whether or not baby boomers are the answer to the future of volunteering has captured the imagination of researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners alike.¹¹

Examining the volunteer rate over time with each successive survey conducted between 2000 and 2007 demonstrates that the volunteer rate of those over the age of 65 has increased, while the average number of hours has gradually decreased. The increased volunteer rate and lower number of hours might be explained by growing interest and support for volunteering within society. As illustrated in Table 2 below, in 2010, this progression levelled off. Does this reflect the beginning of a transition from the assumptions previously made about senior citizens to a new reality as baby boomers age?

¹¹ Graff, L. (2007). Boom or Bust? Will Baby boomers Save Us? 2007. www.lindagraff.ca

Table 2 - Volunteer Rates and Average Number of Hours Per Year Comparing Those Over the Age of 65 to the General Population between 2000 and 2010¹²

Year	Volunteer Rate (%)		Average Number of Volunteer Hours Per Year	
	All Canadians Over 15 years old	Canadians 65 years and older	All Canadians Over 15 years old	Canadians 65 years and older
2000	26%	18%	162	270
2004	45%	31%	168	240
2007	46%	36%	166	220
2010	47%	36.5%	156	223

Source: Statistics Canada, Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, (2000, 2004, 2007, 2010)

Demographics – Older Adults in Canada

As a backdrop to the development of a profile of older adult volunteers in Canada, it is helpful to explore the demographical shifts that are taking place in the country, and throughout the world. In 2011, there were close to 5 million Canadians, or 14.8% of the population, over the age of 65. While this figure is an increase from the 2006 Census (13.7%), Canada actually has the lowest proportion of seniors among the G8 countries.¹³

Nevertheless, the population is and continues to age in communities across Canada. Population projections estimate that the proportion of seniors will rise to 16% in 2016¹⁴ and then to as much as 25% by 2036.¹⁵ These demographic changes demonstrate how the ‘face’ of communities is changing (see page 23).

The following are excerpts from the highlights reported by Statistics Canada, following the analysis of the 2011 Census, that relate to older adults:

- “In 2011, there were 5,825 centenarians in Canada, up 25.7% since 2006. This was the second most rapidly growing age group among all age groups after those aged 60 to 64.
- In 2011, the working-age population (those aged 15 to 64) represented 68.5% of the Canadian population. This proportion was higher than in any other G8 country, except Russia.
- Among the working-age population, 42.4% were in the age group 45 to 64, a record high proportion. Almost all people aged 45 to 64 in 2011 were baby boomers.
- In 2011, census data showed for the first time that there were more people aged 55 to 64, typically the age group where people leave the labour force, than aged 15 to 24, typically the age group where people enter it.
- In 2011, the proportion of seniors was the highest in the Atlantic Provinces, Quebec and British Columbia.
- In 2011, all census metropolitan areas located west of Ontario had a proportion of people aged 65 and over below the national average of 14.8%, except for Kelowna and Victoria, both in British Columbia.
- Nearly one in five people was aged 65 and over in Peterborough and Trois-Rivières; in Calgary, this proportion was lower than one in 10 people.

¹² The methodology was changed in the 2004 survey. Readers need to make comparisons with caution.

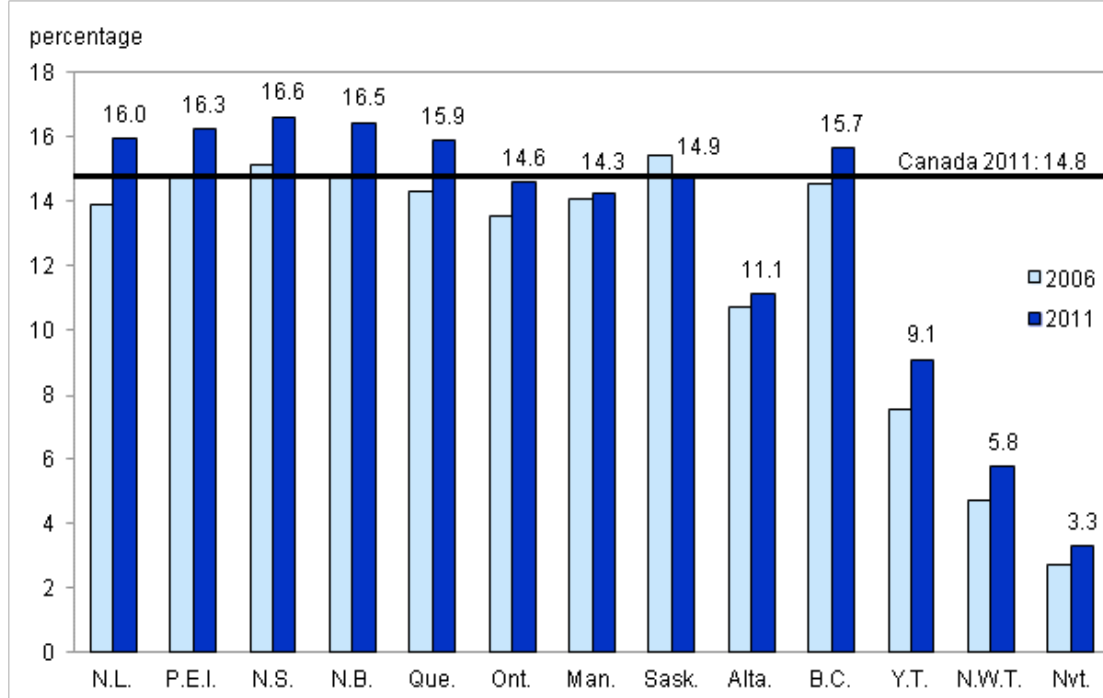
¹³ Statistics Canada (2011). Census data, Highlights <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-311-x/98-311-x2011001-eng.cfm#a1>

¹⁴ Statistics Canada (2007). A Portrait of Seniors 2006 in Canada (Catalogue no. 89-519-XIE). Ottawa, Canada: Minister of Industry. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-519-x/89-519-x2006001-eng.pdf>

¹⁵ Statistics Canada (2012). The Canadian Population in 2011: Age and Sex, 2011 Census. Catalogue No. 98-311-X2011001. Ottawa: Minister of Industry.

- Most census metropolitan areas with proportions of seniors lower than the Canadian average (such as Calgary, Halifax and St. John's) also had higher-than-average proportions of people aged between 15 and 64.
- Seven of the 10 municipalities with the highest proportion of seniors were in British Columbia."¹⁶
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Figure 1 - Proportion (in percentage) of the population aged 65 and over, Canada, provinces and territories



Source: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 2006 and 2011.

Provincial/Territorial Differences

As Figure 1 indicates, there are large differences in the proportion of seniors as a percentage of the population in the provinces and territories across the country. There are many factors that can contribute to the differences between the provinces and territories, such as the social structure, rural-urban mix, geographic size, population density, and the nature of the public services available. It may also be interesting to compare the demographics across jurisdictions. What is the relationship between a high percentage of the population being over the age of 65, the volunteer rate, and the average number of hours volunteered per year? In most jurisdictions, seniors are doing anywhere from a bit more to much more than their share of the total volunteer hours: in British Columbia, a similar proportion of seniors were surveyed (16.9%) yet they contributed more than 22% of the total volunteer hours in the province. In Alberta, seniors over 65 constituted only 12.4% of the sample and they contributed 16.6% of the total volunteer hours (see Table 3a). Overall, across the country, 16% of Canadians in the CSGVP sample were over 65, yet they contributed 18% of the total volunteer hours.

Comparisons can also be made with proportion of seniors and average number of volunteer hours across the provinces in Table 3a. In 2010, Nova Scotia had the highest average number of volunteer hours per year (207), and according to the 2011 Census, they also had the highest proportion of their population over the age of 65 (16.6%). On the other end of the spectrum, Alberta has only 11.1% of their population over the age of 65 and their average number of volunteer hours contributed each year is 140, one of the lowest. Conversely, provinces and territories with high percentages of youth are likely to have higher volunteer rates. As Canadian demographics shift and the population continues to age,

¹⁶ Ibid.

additional comparisons can be made between the senior population and other age cohorts and these possible trends can be further examined in future surveys. Provinces and territories may be too large a geographical unit to make any meaningful conclusions; however, the table below demonstrates the possible trend between population distributions and average number of volunteer hours.

Table 3a - Volunteer Rate, Average Hours, and Percentage of Seniors by Province and Territory

	Volunteer Hours	Average Hours	Total Hours (In millions)	Volunteer Rate for 65 and older	65+ Average annual volunteer hours	65+ Population Distribution in CSVGP survey	% of Volunteer Hours done by seniors	% of the population over 65 In 2006	% of the population over 65 In 2011
Canada	47	156	2,068	36.5	223	16.2	18.0	13.7	14.8
Newfoundland/Labrador	52.1	155	34.9	39.4	206	17.1	17.2	13.9	16
Prince Edward Island	55.7	157	10.4	44.9	197	17.2	17.4		16.5
Nova Scotia	53.8	207	88.3	39.9	233	18.0	15.0	14.8	16.6
New Brunswick	48.7	154	47.9	34.7	188	17.5	15.2	15.1	16.5
Quebec	36.7	128	310	24.9	207	17.5	19.2	14.7	15.9
Ontario	47.7	164	857	38.6	222	16.0	17.4	13.5	14.6
Manitoba	52.9	141	74	39.1	184	16.0	15.4	14.0	14.3
Saskatchewan	58.2	143	69.5	51.3	126	16.9	13.2	15.4	14.9
Alberta	54.7	140	228.4	49.6	206	12.4	16.6	10.7	11.1
British Columbia	49.8	178	342.4	38.9	301	16.9	22.4	14.5	15.7
Yukon	48.9	131	1.7	39.2	154	13.1	12.3	7.5	9.1
Northwest Territories	36.5	173	2.0	F	F	8.2	F	4.7	5.8
Nunavut	41.2	152	1.3	F	F	F	F	2.7	3.3

Source: Statistics Canada, Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participation 2010, 2006 Census, 2011

F= Too unreliable to be published

When examining any possible trends in cities across Canada, there are some mixed results. Calgary, Halifax, and St. John's had a lower percentage of seniors than the national average. While average number of volunteer hours per year was lower than that national average in Calgary and St. John's, it was still higher in Halifax. In Kelowna, British Columbia, the proportion of seniors, volunteer rate, and total number of hours is higher than the national average (see Table 3b). Comparing proportion of seniors, proportion of youth, volunteer rates, and average number of volunteer hours needs to be explored in more depth, in order to better understand the trends and relationships.

Table 3b - Volunteer Rates and Average Hours in Specific Municipalities

	Volunteer Rate	Average Number of volunteer hours per year
St. John's	54	149
Halifax	52	218
Calgary	55	126
Kelowna	53	248
Victoria	52	163

Gender Differences:

In terms of gender differences in volunteer rates and average number of volunteer hours, there are some interesting variations among the age groups. With baby boomers and shadow boomers, females are slightly more likely to volunteer than males. In addition, females volunteer, on average, more hours each year. When examining all the older age groups together, males over the age of 65 were more likely to volunteer than their female counterparts. Females, between 65-74, were slightly more likely to volunteer and they volunteered more hours each year, whereas this is reversed in those over the age of 75, where males (36.6%) are significantly more likely to volunteer than females (26.6%). Males also volunteered an average of 214 hours in the year as compared with 182 hours volunteered by females in this age group. This surprising difference is not easily explained and future research should examine it.

According to the 2011 Census, overall, women outnumbered men in all provinces and men outnumbered women in all territories. While there is a higher percent of women, there is a 10-point higher volunteer rate in males (36.3%) over 75, as compared with females (26.6%). This may be because there may be a larger percent of health and mobility issues amongst the numbers of females still living. The prime time for volunteer engagement for both men and women is between 65 and 74 years old where more than 40% volunteer and contribute more than 230 hours per year, and where older adults may have optimal conditions in terms of health and availability.

Table 4a - Volunteer Rate by Selected Age Groups

	45 – 54 Years	55 - 64	Over 65	65-74 years	75 years and over
All Volunteers	45.4	40.8	36.5	40.3	30.5
Males	43.6	39.7	38.8	40.1	36.3
Females	47.1	41.9	34.6	40.4	26.6

Table 4b - Average Number of Hours Volunteered in the past Year by Selected Age Groups

	45 – 54 Years	55 - 64	Over 65	65-74 years	75 years and over
All volunteers	167	201	223	235	198
Males	139	182	223	226	214
Females	193	217	223	243	182

Awareness of Volunteer Opportunities

The majority (78%) of baby boomer, employer-supported volunteers indicated that they find it easy to find a volunteer opportunity that is personally satisfying, in an online survey of volunteers, conducted in 2010.¹⁷ 'Word of mouth or recruited by a friend' continues to be the primary method of recruitment, reported by 30% of respondents in all age groups. Current shadow boomers and baby boomers do not appear to have difficulty finding opportunities when they are interested in volunteering, given that many have been engaged through their work places, families, or social networks.

Older Adult Use of Social Media for Volunteer Work

Older adults are increasingly accessing information and communicating with friends and family online. A Harris/Decima survey conducted for the Canadian Press in 2011 found that 68% of those over the age of 50 were also using social

¹⁷ Volunteer Canada, Manulife Financial. (2010). *Bridging the Gap: Enriching the Volunteer Experience to Build a Better Future for our Communities*.

media. Social media has been identified as a key tool for inclusion of marginalized populations, including newcomers and isolated elderly.¹⁸

Use of electronic communication is particularly important for those leadership volunteers serving on boards and committees, where intranets and other online platforms are being used to organize meeting logistics, to share documents, and to carry out discussions. Several organizations have revised their bylaws, over the past decade, in order to allow for governance practices to be carried out in virtual environments.

While there are a growing number of older adults who are using the Internet for a range of things, there are some groups of seniors who are less connected. “Research affirms that poverty, low levels of education, low computer literacy and lack of family support act as barriers to the uptake of online communication by seniors. Concerns about privacy are high among seniors; only 27 per cent are unconcerned about the issue.”¹⁹ This digit divide can be amplified if a person does not have proficiency in the language of business of the organization. In summary, organizations are achieving results by embracing the use online tools and social media; however, multiple formats for all communication will continue to be important for organizations engaging older volunteers.

Comparing Baby Boomers and Senior Adults Volunteers

The total number of baby boomers living in Canada in 2011 was 9.6 million or 3 out of every 10 Canadians

(Statistics Canada, 2011 Census)

There were a total of 7,735,986 baby boomers born in Canada between 1946 and 1964, some of whom are now becoming senior citizens. In addition to the baby boom, there was also significant immigration during these years.

Baby boomers have distinctly different patterns of volunteer engagement. When the 2010 CSGVP survey data was collected, the oldest baby boomers were just about to turn 65 years of age during the following year. The three age groups of older adults over the age of 45 in the 2010 survey, therefore included people from two very different generations, in terms of attitudes, lifestyle, health status, and expected life span. For example, an American study conducted in 2001 by the Corporation for National Senior Corps, reported that 60% of boomers say they want to feel needed and valued and 53% want/need to be intellectually challenged.²⁰

Below, baby boomers shared their experiences and aspirations for volunteering in community focus groups held in each of the five Canadian regions, and organizations shared their perspectives on engaging baby boomers through an organizational snapshot.

“Baby boomers are a large and distinct demographic group. While their interests may be diverse, they tend to have more formal education than the current cohort of seniors and prefer flexible, episodic volunteering opportunities that use their professional skills, have identifiable outcomes, and are personally meaningful and challenging.” (National Seniors Council, 2010. Pg. 30-31).

¹⁸ Taylor, A. (2011). Social Media as a Tool for Inclusion, Prepared by Stiles Associates for Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

¹⁹ Ibid, 25.

²⁰ Wilson, Laura B. and Jack Steele. (2001). Marketing Volunteer Opportunities to Baby boomers: A Blue Print, Corporation for National Service Senior Corps, U.S.A.

Compared to other age groups, baby boomers demonstrate: ²¹

- **Impressive overall participation rates** – consistently among the highest
- **Meaningful engagement** – Boomers look for purpose in their volunteer activities
- **Available time and flexibility** – Boomers have more time and relatively flexible schedules compared to other groups
- **Expectation of organization** – Boomers want organizations to be efficient and effective in their management of volunteers and staff
- **Loyalty** – Boomers indicated they are willing to stay at an organization for many years as long as they are treated well

Given the importance of generational factors and the significant differences between those senior adults under 75 years old and those over the age of 75, it may also be useful to discuss younger and older seniors, as opposed to viewing senior citizens as one homogenous group.²² In the same way, it may be useful to discuss older (born between 1946 and 1954) and younger baby boomers (born between 1955 and 1965).

Volunteering may be influenced by a number of factors including “personal circumstances, family traditions, historical context, and stage in life, personality, values, life experience, skills, interests, and what we care about.”²³ From a psychosocial perspective that focuses on transition and lifestyle, the diagram below illustrates the breadth of the places that baby boomers find themselves in terms of work, family and partnerships.²⁴



²¹ Speevak, P., & Hientz, M. (2011). *Building Blocks for Engaging Baby-Boomer Volunteers*, Volunteer Canada & Manulife Financial. Pg. 2

²² National Seniors Council. (2010). Report of the National Seniors Council on Volunteering Among Seniors and Positive and Active Aging, Ottawa, Government of Canada.

²³ Speevak, P., & Hientz, M. (2011). *Building Blocks for Engaging Baby-Boomer Volunteers*, Volunteer Canada & Manulife Financial.

²⁴ Ibid.

The Triple-Decker Sandwich Generation

A number of public policy shifts are directly impacting the lifestyles of aging baby boomers, in terms of pension reform, healthcare, and home support. Increasingly, baby boomers are finding themselves involved in care giving.

While generalizing and comparison must be done with caution, Table 5 summarizes some common characteristics about senior and baby boomer volunteers that have been identified in numerous studies.²⁵

“The term “sandwich generation” was coined in the seventies, referring to those caught between the needs of their children and parents. A more fitting metaphor for today’s baby boomers might be a **triple-decker sandwich generation, using whole-grain bread**. They are often providing care to their aging parents, helping adult children through work transitions and family re-grouping and helping to care for grandchildren. They find themselves balancing the multiple demands of these three generations while they watch their fibre intake, support their partners, and are still active in the workforce.” (Speevak Sladowski, Paula, 2011)

Table 5 - Characteristics of Senior Volunteers as compared to Baby Boomer Volunteers (Composite from several studies)²⁶

Characteristics of Today’s Senior Volunteers	Characteristics of Today’s Baby Boomer Volunteers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Today’s seniors volunteer more hours per year than other age groups • Senior volunteers are loyal to the organizations and causes they believe in • Seniors’ primary reason for volunteering is to contribute to the community • The second motivator for volunteering is for social reasons • Some seniors may have barriers to volunteering that need to be addressed such as mobility or health issues • Many have increased caregiving responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baby boomers comprised 29% of the Canadian population in 2011 • Baby boomers have multiple family demands • Some baby boomers want to use their work skills in volunteering while others want something different • Many expect more structured, results-oriented volunteer involvement • Baby boomers are looking to integrate their charitable giving and volunteering • Long-term commitments are not generally appealing to baby boomers • Many have increased caregiving responsibilities

Rural Canadians

About 6.8 million people live in rural communities in Canada, or less than 20% of the population, in contrast to 1851, when 90% of Canadians lived in rural communities. With the out-migration of youth and young families moving closer to urban centres for higher education, work and better access to services, the average age of rural dwellers continues to increase. First Nations and aboriginal peoples comprise about 10% of rural populations.²⁷

In contrast to this trend, there are still some individuals and families moving into rural communities, in Canada and around the world. In 2007, Volunteering Australia and the National Volunteer Skills Centre produced a guide on rural and remote volunteering, where they documented the following reasons why city dwellers were moving to rural and remote areas:

²⁵ Volunteer Canada, Manulife Financial. (2010). Bridging the Gap: Enriching the Volunteer Experience to Build a Stronger Future for our Communities; National Seniors Council. (2010). *Report of the National Seniors Council on Volunteering Among Seniors and Positive and Active Aging*, Ottawa, Government of Canada; BRAVO Project, (2012).

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Community Information Database. <http://www.cid-bdc.ca/rural-facts?page=4>. Accessed October 2012.

- Room for new enterprise
- Lower housing costs
- Better environment to bring up children
- People are attracted to a great “sense of community”
- More active involvement at a grass-roots level²⁸

There has been an interest among researchers and practitioners in understanding the differences between urban and rural volunteers. In 1994, the Canadian Journal of Volunteer Resource Management dedicated its fall issue to this topic.²⁹ Many of the articles discussed the trend to more informal volunteering in rural communities and the fact that the more structured volunteer resources management practices could be a turn off for rural volunteers. The issue of screening, in particular, was seen to be most sensitive because of the close-knit families and high level of familiarity among residents.

One of the journal contributors, Chuck Lamers, who served as Rural Community Advisory for the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, cited Peter T. Faid’s study on Rural Volunteers, which found that there were, in fact, few differences at the time between urban and rural volunteers, in terms of volunteer rate, average hours, and reasons for volunteering.

“The notable differences were that more urban volunteers had obtained high school or university degrees (82%) than rural volunteers (77%) and that more rural volunteers considered themselves very or somewhat religious (79%) than urban volunteers (61%). Rural volunteers ranked religious organizations as their top choice for volunteering, while more urban volunteers selected education and youth as their top priority.”³⁰

The Role of Senior Volunteers in Sustaining Rural Communities

A 2008 study carried out in Nova Scotia, highlighted the unique motivations of rural senior volunteers. In contrast to non-profit organizations in urban settings, where both paid staff and volunteers carry out the mission, most organizations in rural communities tend to be all-volunteer run. “Passing on culture, language, and history to the next generation as well as to visitors to the local area is one of the six key ways in which senior volunteers view themselves as sustaining the life in rural communities.”³¹

Public policy has addressed one aspect of rural volunteering. In the 2011 Federal Budget, volunteer fire fighters, largely in rural communities, were able to claim a \$3,000 tax credit if the following conditions were met: “(1) you were a volunteer fire fighter during the year and (2) you completed at least 200 hours of eligible volunteer firefighting services with one or more fire departments in the year.”³²

Very little data is publically available through the Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating because the sample size is too small in most rural communities and releasing the data could constitute a breach of confidentiality.

²⁸ Volunteering Australia. (2007). Subject Guide: Rural and Remote Volunteering: A Great Way to Strengthen Communities. www.volunteeringaustralia.org.

²⁹ Back issues of The Canadian Journal of Volunteer Resource Management can be accessed at www.cjvrm.org.

³⁰ Lamers, Chuck. (1994). Volunteers: Urban vs. Rural, Canadian Journal of Volunteer Resources Management, Autumn Issue, Volume 3.4, pg 4.

³¹ Gordon, Jane and Brenda Hattie. (2008). The Role of Senior Volunteers in Sustaining Rural Communities, The Nova Scotia Centre on Aging, Mount St. Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia www.msvu.ca/nsca.

³² www.cra-arc.gc.ca/firefighter/ New tax credit for volunteer fire fighters passed in 2011 Federal budget.

However, if you combine the fact that there are a disproportionate number of seniors living in rural communities and that seniors are volunteering more hours each year, then it stands to reason that those who volunteer in rural communities volunteer many hours. This is demonstrated in many areas of Nova Scotia and British Columbia where there are large rural areas, a high proportion of seniors and a high average number of volunteer hours each year.

The barriers and challenges experienced by senior volunteers, identified in Section 4 of this report, are likely to be even more pronounced in rural communities, where there are few social services, little public transportation and homes are more physically isolated from each other. This is an issue that requires further exploration and research in order to understand the extent of the issue and to identify successful strategies for addressing it.

Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (2010)

Special Tabulation

Tables 6 to 14 provide comparisons around volunteering patterns of Shadow Boomers (age 45-54), Baby Boomers (ages 55-64), and Senior Adults (ages 65 and over).³³ A brief description of the statistics can be found below each table. Data from these tables have also been used throughout this report.

Table 6 - Participation Rate by Type of Volunteer Activity, Volunteers Aged 45 and Older, Canada, 2010

	45-54 years	55-64 years	65 years and over
	%	%	%
Organizing or supervising events	46	46	37
Fundraising	46	41	34
Sitting on a committee or board	39	42	42
Teaching, educating or mentoring	33	30	21
Counselling or providing advice	32	33	27
Collecting, serving or delivering food	27	29	26
Office work	27	27	25
Driving	24	20	16
Providing health care or support	19	23	25
Coaching, refereeing or officiating	20	11	6
Maintenance or repair	18	19	16
Conservation or environmental protection	19	20	14
Canvassing	13	14	12
Other activities	14	17	18
First-aid, fire-fighting or search and rescue	8	5	2 ^E

E: Use with caution.

F: Too unreliable to be published.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2010

The top four types of activities for older adults (over 45 years of age) were organizing/supervising events, fundraising, sitting on committees or boards, and teaching/mentoring (see Table 6). The volunteer rates for these activities decreased with age. However, in the area of providing health care and support, the rate of participation increased with age. When we compare the kinds of volunteering that seniors, over the age of 65 engage in, between the 2007 and 2010 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteer and Participating, we see that older adults more likely to serve on boards and committees and are motivated to contribute their professional skills. During that same period, the organizational snapshot conducted in the summer of 2010 revealed that, while the non-profit volunteer base is getting younger, their

³³ Statistics Canada. (2012). Special Tabulation of the 2010 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, prepared May 2012.

leadership volunteers are older.³⁴ In fact, 38% of organizations also indicated that most of their leadership volunteers were baby boomers.³⁵

Table 7 - Volunteers Rate by Selected Organization Type, Population Aged 45 and Older, Canada, 2010

	45-54 years	55-64 years	65 years and over
	%	%	%
Sports and recreation	13	9	9
Social services	11	10	9
Education and research	10	4	2
Religion	9	11	13
Health	6	7	5
Development and housing	5	4	5
Arts and culture	3	3	3
Law, advocacy and politics	2 ^E	2	2 ^E
Environment	3	4	2
Hospitals	2 ^E	3	3
Business and professional associations and unions	1 ^E	1 ^E	F
Universities and colleges	1 ^E	1 ^E	F
Grant-making fundraising and voluntarism promotion	3	2	2 ^E
International	1 ^E	1 ^E	1 ^E
Not elsewhere classified	1 ^E	1 ^E	F

E: Use with caution.

F: Too unreliable to be published.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2010

As Table 7 indicates, the top four organizational types for older adults (45 and older) were sports and recreation, social services, education and research, and religion. The most common type of organization for people aged 55-64 years old and 65 years and over is religion, while sports and recreation is the most common for people aged 45-54 years old. There is a slight decrease in participation, as the age group gets older. Within education and research organizations, there is a more marked decrease in participation with increasing age. However, there is a slight increase in participation within religious organizations as individuals' age.

Table 8 - Percentage of Total Volunteer Hours by Selected Organization Type, Population Aged 45 and Older, Canada, 2010

	45-54 years	55-64 years	65 years and over
	%	%	%
Sports and recreation	25	17 ^E	17
Social services	14	19 ^E	19
Education and research	10	5 ^E	2 ^E
Religion	16 ^E	22	18
Health	5 ^E	5 ^E	5 ^E
Development and housing	7 ^E	4	8
Arts and culture	4 ^E	4 ^E	6 ^E
Law, advocacy and politics	F	3 ^E	5 ^E
Environment	2 ^E	F	F
Hospitals	F	3 ^E	5 ^E
Business and professional associations and unions	1 ^E	2 ^E	F
Universities and colleges	F	1 ^E	F

³⁴ Manulife Financial and Volunteer Canada. (2010). Bridging the Gap: Enriching the Volunteer Experience for a Better Future for our Communities, www.volunteer.ca/study.

³⁵ Volunteer Canada. (2012). preliminary results from the pan-Canadian online survey of 600 organizations

Grant-making fundraising and voluntarism promotion	2 ^E	3 ^E	3 ^E
International	F	F	F
Not elsewhere classified	1 ^E	F	F

E: Use with caution.

F: Too unreliable to be published.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2010

As with the volunteer rate, the top four organizational types where people contributed most of their volunteer hours were sports and recreation, social services, education and research, and religion. Table 8 also indicates that people aged 45-54 years old contributed the most hours for sports and recreation, whereas people aged 55 years and over contributed the most hours towards religion.

Table 9 - Motivations for Volunteering, Volunteers Aged 45 and Older, Canada, 2010

	45-54 years	55-64 years	65 years and over
	%	%	%
To make a contribution to the community	94	96	95
To use skills and experiences	77	80	82
Personally affected by the cause the organization supports	66	63	59
To explore one's own strengths	44	44	39
To network with or meet people	44	46	57
Friends volunteer	44	45	53
To fulfill religious obligations or beliefs	21	26	35
To improve job opportunities	13	7	3 ^F

E: Use with caution.

F: Too unreliable to be published.

1. Volunteers were asked about their motivations for volunteering for the organization to which they contributed the most hours.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2010

The highest motivational factors for volunteering by older adults (over the age of 45) were to make a contribution to the community (95%), followed by making use of skills and experiences (close to 80%), and having been personally affected by the cause (63%). Volunteering to improve job opportunities was identified as being the least incentive to volunteer for older adults across all age groups. Those over the age of 65 were more likely to report that networking and meeting people was a motivation compared those between 45 and 64 years of age, as Table 9 indicates.

Table 10 - Skills Acquired through Volunteering, Percentage of Volunteers Aged 45 and Older, Canada, 2010

	45-54 years	55-64 years	65 years and over
	%	%	%
Interpersonal skills	65	59	54
Communication skills	42	35	28
Organizational skills	37	30	21
Increased knowledge	32	34	31
Fundraising skills	31	23	16
Technical or office skills	25	20	15
Other skills	4	4	4 ^E

E: Use with caution.

F: Too unreliable to be published.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2010

Interpersonal skills, followed by communication skills, were cited as being acquired most frequently through volunteering, as a whole and in each individual age group. People aged 45-54 were more likely to report on the acquisition of skills through volunteering than those over the age of 65 (see Table 10).

Table 11 - Reasons for Not Volunteering More, Volunteers Aged 45 and Older, Canada, 2010

	45-54 years	55-64 years	65 years and over
	%	%	%
Did not have the time	79	66	52
Unable to make a long-term commitment	55	51	52
Gave enough time already	46	48	57
No one asked	27	26	23
Gave money instead of time	34	32	36
Had no interest	16	18	21
Health problems or physically unable	14	23	36
Did not know how to become involved	9	10	9
Financial cost of volunteering	12	10	9
Dissatisfied with a previous experience	7	7	12

E: Use with caution.

F: Too unreliable to be published.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2010

When asked why older adults did not volunteer more hours, those over the age of 65 were more likely to say that they have given enough time already, whereas those between 45 and 64 were more likely to say that they did not have enough time. As Table 11 indicates, the reporting of having health problems or being physically unable to volunteer as a reason increases with age.

Table 12 - Reasons for Not Volunteering, Non-Volunteers Aged 45 and Older, Canada, 2010

	45-54 years	55-64 years	65 years and over
	%	%	%
Did not have the time	71	59	42
Unable to make a long-term commitment	66	61	56
Gave enough time already	16	18	30
No one asked	40	36	31
Gave money instead of time	57	56	60
Had no interest	25	27	25
Health problems or physically unable	27	32	53
Did not know how to become involved	19	13	12
Financial cost of volunteering	16	16	15
Dissatisfied with a previous experience	6	6	8

E: Use with caution.

F: Too unreliable to be published.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2010

The most common reason for not volunteering by non-volunteers aged 45-54 is not having enough time, whereas for those between the ages of 55-64 indicated they were unable to make long-term commitments, and people aged 65 and over indicated that they gave money instead. Overall, as Table 12 indicates, not having enough time or being unable to make a long-term commitment were the most common answers between all three age groups and being dissatisfied with a previous experience and the financial cost of volunteering were the least.

Table 13 - Volunteer Rate, by Economic Characteristics, Population Aged 45 and Older, Canada, 2010

	45-54 years	55-64 years	65 years and over
	%	%	%
Education²			
Less Than High School	25	19	23
Graduated from high school	37	38	38
Some postsecondary	47	41	44
Postsecondary diploma	46	42	43
University degree	59	57	55
Labour force status²			
Employed	49	45	44
Unemployed	F	31 ^E	F
Not in the labour force	36	38	40
Household income			
Less than \$20,000	31	19	26
\$20,000 to \$39,999	34	33	29
\$40,000 to \$59,999	39	40	41
\$60,000 to \$79,999	41	40	56
\$80,000 to \$99,999	46	51	50
\$100,000 or more	55	51	46
Presence of children in household³			
No children in household	38	41	37
Pre-school aged children only	F	F	F
Both pre-school and school aged children	59	F	F
School aged children only	56	41	F

E: Use with caution.

F: Too unreliable to be published.

1. Estimates of average and median annual volunteer hours are calculated for volunteers only.

2. Respondents who did not provide this information are excluded from calculations.

3. Pre-school aged is defined as ages 0 to 5, while school aged is defined as ages 6 to 17. Both pre-school and school aged children indicates the presence in the household of at least one child from each age range (i.e., at least one child aged 0 to 5 and at least one child aged 6 to 17).

Source: Statistics Canada, Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2010

In all three age groups, it is evident in Table 13 that there is a positive correlation between higher education and the rate of volunteerism. People who are employed volunteer more often than people who are unemployed. The higher one's household income is, the higher the rate of volunteerism.

Table 14 - Average and Median Volunteer Hours, by Economic Characteristics, Population Aged 45 and Older, Canada, 2010

	45-54 years		55-64 years		65 years and over	
	Average Hours ¹	Median	Average Hours ¹	Median	Average Hours ¹	Median
Education²						
Less Than High School	88 ^E	25	149 ^E	54 ^E	195	F
Graduated from high school	177	54	233 ^E	F	189	83
Some postsecondary	171 ^E	50	332 ^E	F	280	F
Postsecondary diploma	158	60	165	78	226	100
University degree	166	72	203	100	260	111 ^E
Labour force status²						
Employed	160	60	166	72	218 ^E	60
Unemployed	F	F	96 ^E	F	F	F
Not in the labour force	182 ^E	53	261	104 ^E	239	100
Household income						
Less than \$20,000	306 ^E	80 ^E	166 ^E	F	195	99 ^E
\$20,000 to \$39,999	192 ^E	48	192	76 ^E	224	100
\$40,000 to \$59,999	160 ^E	F	196	76 ^E	204	100
\$60,000 to \$79,999	145	59 ^E	187 ^E	75 ^E	263 ^E	104 ^E
\$80,000 to \$99,999	161	60	222 ^E	80 ^E	173	F
\$100,000 or more	164	64 ^E	209	84	287 ^E	85 ^E
Presence of children in household³						
No children	167	60	205	78	225	100
Pre-school aged children only	F	F	F	F	F	F
Both pre-school and school aged children	F	F	F	F	F	F
School aged children only	169	60	147	99 ^E	F	F

E: Use with caution.

F: Too unreliable to be published.

1. Estimates of average and median annual volunteer hours are calculated for volunteers only.

2. Respondents who did not provide this information are excluded from calculations.

3. Pre-school aged is defined as ages 0 to 5, while school aged is defined as ages 6 to 17. Both pre-school and school aged children indicates the presence in the household of at least one child from each age range (i.e., at least one child aged 0 to 5 and at least one child aged 6 to 17).

Source: Statistics Canada, Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2010

The level of education does not influence the number of hours volunteered, although those with less than high school education tend to volunteer fewer hours than those more educated. Table 14 also demonstrates that the average number of hours increases with age. People aged 45-54 years old with a household income of less than \$20,000 tend to volunteer more and people aged 54-65 years of age volunteer more with a household income of \$80,000-99,999. People aged 65 years and older have the highest average number of hours volunteering. Senior adults aged 65 and over have the highest average hours of volunteering with no children in the household.

Section 2

The Community Impact of Older Adult Volunteering

Ensuring Older Adults have a Voice in Decision-Making

Between 2006 and 2011, the senior population, age 65 and over, experienced a 14.1% increase to reach nearly 5 million individuals.³⁶ During the same period, there was a 25.7% increase in the number of centenarians and similar dramatic increases are expected among nonagenarians.³⁷ In metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas of the country, the proportion of seniors is increasing. Rural areas are aging more rapidly than large urban areas, and certain areas are experiencing more dramatic changes. For example, in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia; Peterborough, Ontario; Trois-Rivières, Quebec and Nanaimo, British Columbia, almost 20% of the population is age 65 and over (19.3%, 19.4%, 19.4% and 19.2%, respectively).³⁸ Even more noticeable, in the census agglomeration of Elliot Lake, Ontario, 35.1% of the population are senior-aged, almost twice the national average. British Columbia continues to age faster than the rest of Canada: The proportion of seniors is the highest in the census agglomerations of Qualicum Beach (47.2%), Parksville (38.6%), Sidney (36.9%) Creston (33.1%) and White Rock (29.4%), British Columbia.³⁹ (See Tables 15 and 16)

Table 15 - The 10 Census Agglomerations with the Highest Proportions (in percentage) of the Population Aged 65 and Over, Canada, 2011

Rank	Census agglomeration	Province	65 and over Percentage
1	Parksville	British Columbia	38.6
2	Elliot Lake	Ontario	35.1
3	Cobourg	Ontario	26.5
4	Penticton	British Columbia	25.8
5	Tillsonburg	Ontario	25.1
6	Thetford Mines	Quebec	24.7
7	Salmon Arm	British Columbia	24.0
8	Shawinigan	Quebec	23.3
9	Powell River	British Columbia	22.8
9	Collingwood	Ontario	22.8

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2011.

Table 16 - The 10 Municipalities (census subdivisions) with a Population of 5,000 or More With the Highest proportions (in percentage) of the Population Aged 65 and Over, Canada, 2011

Rank	Municipality	Name of CMA or CA (province)	65 and over percentage
1	Qualicum Beach	Parksville (B.C.)	47.2
2	Parksville	Parksville (B.C.)	37.1
3	Sidney	Victoria (B.C.)	36.9
4	Elliot Lake	Elliot Lake (Ont.)	35.1
5	Creston	Outside of CMAs and CAs (B.C.)	33.1

³⁶ Statistics Canada 2011 Census. (2011). www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/index-eng.cfm www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/index-eng.cfm

³⁷ Statistics Canada. (2007). A Portrait of Seniors 2006 in Canada (Catalogue no. 89-519-XIE). Ottawa, Canada: Minister of Industry. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-519-x/89-519-x2006001-eng.pdf>

³⁸ Statistics Canada 2011 Census. (2011). www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/fogs-spg/Index-eng.cfm?LANG=Eng

³⁹ Statistics Canada 2011 Census. (2011). www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-311-x/2011001/tbl/tbl3-eng.cfm; www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-311-x/2011001/tbl/tbl5-eng.cfm

6	Gimli	Outside of CMAs and CAs (Man.)	31.1
7	Nanaimo G	Parksville (B.C.)	30.9
8	Nanaimo E	Outside of CMAs and CAs (B.C.)	30.2
9	White Rock	Vancouver (B.C.)	29.4
10	Wasaga Beach	Outside of CMAs and CAs (Ont.)	29.1

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2011.

Facilitating Civic Engagement

The trend of population aging is expected to continue and this will make issues of aging increasingly more important over time. While individuals of all ages need a voice in decision-making, population aging makes senior representation and involvement critical. This representation will better assist communities as they respond to changing conditions and demands that occur within a dynamic environment over time.

Seniors are key members of the community. To ensure the vitality of our communities, we need to support and encourage active citizenship or citizen participation. With this comes the responsibility of ensuring that seniors continue to be engaged and involved in local decision making. This means more than inviting seniors to sit on boards of directors. It also involves citizen engagement education so that seniors can hold real power to influence and shape their communities and meet needs more effectively. For example, the Citizen’s Academy in Ottawa is embarking on a pilot project to educate and empower citizens.⁴⁰

In addition, AARP has developed a citizen advocacy program that offers seniors education on the issues and guidance on effective lobbying and advocacy.⁴¹ As the population continues to age, more communities will recognize the need to maintain senior involvement and support senior’s voices. More communities, like Portage La Prairie in Manitoba, Sherbrooke in Quebec and Halton Region in Ontario, will embark on a process to become age-friendly and consider how seniors can participate, have a voice and thrive.⁴² These are inspiring local initiatives.

There is great need to keep citizens informed and included in community consultation and decision-making processes. Ideally, education for active citizenship should be intergenerational so that all ages are encouraged to participate as active citizens.

Build Stronger Communities through Volunteering and Civic Engagement

Older adults bring a unique perspective. They have rich experiences from their paid work and community involvement. Older adults may want to remain engaged and active in their communities. They want a variety of ways to participate and stay involved. As it relates to seniors, there is a need to increase awareness of opportunities and community needs and to facilitate opportunities for engagement. A community that is inclusive of seniors means that seniors are welcomed by businesses and non-profit organizations alike. Seniors are respected, not patronized, and the wealth of knowledge and experience that they have to offer is valued.

Communities are stronger through volunteering and civic engagement. Social bonds are formed when individuals work together and share stories and experiences. Volunteering provides the opportunity to work jointly on programs and projects while achieving mutual goals and objectives. Close ties between members in the community build social

⁴⁰ Citizens Academy. citizensacademy.ca/theacademy/. Accessed October, 2012.

⁴¹ AARP. www.aarp.org/politics-society/advocacy/. Accessed October 2012.

⁴² Halton Region. <http://webap.halton.ca/news/mediashow.cfm?MediaID=2011-05-03-03-58-16.>; www.vadaquebec.ca; Univeristy of Manitoba. www.umanitoba.ca/centres/aging/media/Portage_la_Prairie_A-F_report.pdf;

cohesion through trust and mutual respect. These elements mean that volunteering contributes to social capital and stimulates new opportunities within the community⁴³. Community involvement is linked to greater wellbeing and happiness.

Like other adults, and as reported in AARP's Civic Involvement Survey (1997), boomers say that helping others and making the community a better place are the primary reasons for volunteering. Boomers are slightly more likely to mention "being with people I enjoy" which comes in third, and "sharing my ideas with people" which is the fourth frequently mentioned motivation. Older persons are more likely to mention that volunteering is a "duty as a citizen," which is ranked fifth in both groups. In a related response, older persons are seven points more likely than boomers to say they "didn't want to say no" (17 percent vs. 10 percent). The biggest difference between the two cohorts is the degree to which "religious commitment" is cited as a motivator, with 42 percent of older persons but only 31 percent of boomers citing this rationale.

We need to provide support, encouragement and resources to older adults so they can build and maintain community. Older adults can be 'difference makers' when they volunteer in purposeful and meaningful ways.

Social and Economic Impact of Older Adults Volunteering

Measuring the social and economic impact of volunteering is complex and there is no consensus among academics, policy-makers, or sector leaders as to how to calculate the value of the time invested in the community. The 2012 Edition of the [Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement](#) articulates the following values of volunteer engagement:

- Volunteer involvement is fundamental to a healthy and democratic society in Canada;
- Volunteer involvement is vital for strong, inclusive, and resilient communities;
- Volunteer involvement builds the capacity of organizations;
- Volunteer involvement is personal - it promotes a sense of belonging and general wellbeing and provides opportunities for individual engagement according to personal preferences and motivations
- Volunteering is about building relationships – it connects people to the causes they care about and allows community outcomes and personal goals to be met within a spectrum of engagement.⁴⁴

There is no consensus on how we measure the benefits to Canadian society, communities, organizations, and individuals; however, there have been tools developed to capture some of these desired values. The most common form of calculating the economic value of volunteer time is using a wage replacement model. For example, if we select a mean wage of \$15 per hour, we could calculate that in 2010, senior adults (over the age of 65) had contributed a total of 372 million hours with a value of 5.5 billion dollars.⁴⁵

The contribution of volunteers worldwide is significant: "Nearly 1 billion people throughout the world volunteer their time, through public, non-profit, or for-profit organizations, or directly for friends or neighbours, in a typical year, making 'Volunteerland,' if it were a country, the second most populous country in the world, behind only China."⁴⁶ However, there are many philosophical and practical issues associated with these types of calculations. "To those who

⁴³ Lin, N. & Erickson, B. (2008). *Social Capital: An International Research Program*. ISBN-13: 9780199234387

⁴⁴ Volunteer Canada. (2012). [The Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement](#), released in April 2012, based on the original code developed for the International Year of Volunteers 2001.

⁴⁵ Quarter, Jack, Laurie Mook and Betty Jane Robertson. (2009). *What Counts: Social Accounting for Non-profits and Co-operatives*.

⁴⁶ Salamon, Lester, S. Wojciech Sokolowski, and Megan A. Haddock. (2011). *Measuring the Economic Value of Volunteering Globally: Concepts, Estimates, and a Roadmap to the Future*, *Annals of Public and Co-operative Economics*, Volume 83, No. 3, September 2011, Johns Hopkins University.

support volunteerism and who work in the voluntary sector, the entire enterprise of “monetizing” volunteering poses challenges. Many would argue that the essential value of the act of volunteering is far greater than any monetary value we might attach to volunteer time and effort.”⁴⁷

How do we measure the benefits to volunteers themselves? In a 2003 study, to measure the impact of a community-based program that places volunteers in the classroom,⁴⁸ volunteers identified a number of both concrete and intangible benefits of their volunteering.

“Benefits included an enhanced sense of self worth that is derived from doing work that is valued and that makes a difference in the life of a young learner. This benefit was most frequently experienced by, but was not limited to, senior adult volunteers.”⁴⁹ The report further described the benefits of the program to the community in that it “facilitated the relationships among the schools, community, governments, and business, fostering great social cohesions.”⁵⁰ These multi-sector linkages contribute to building resilient communities in that, in addition to the connections made for the specific program, they build familiarity and trust to deal with issues that may arise in the future.

Community Literacy of Ontario has carried out similar research in this area for more than 10 years and measures the value of volunteering from a variety of angles.⁵¹ Their research indicates that 58% of literacy volunteers in the province are over 50 years of age. In Table 17, below, they have used the National Occupational Classification system to identify occupations that are similar to the various volunteer roles within the literacy agencies. From there, they can assign an average hourly wage, based on the current market value. Given that older baby boomers are more likely to volunteer on boards and committees, fundraising, or organizing special events, the higher hourly wage could be used to calculate the value of the service they provide.

Table 17 - Volunteer Categories and Estimated Time as Reported by Agencies⁵²

Task Category	Average hourly wage
Tutoring and preparation (NOC 4216)	\$14.34
Board Work (NOC 0014)	\$25.86
Office support (NOC 1441)	\$14.87
Communications and Special Events (NOC 5124)	\$21.85
Computer support (NOC 2282)	\$17.05

In addition to measuring the economic value of the services provided by volunteer tutors, Community Literacy of Ontario found that close to half of the volunteers incurred out of pocket expenses such as mileage, learning resources, and supplies and that, of those, 85% were not reimbursed.⁵³ This adds to the economic value that volunteers bring to an organization and a community but there are many more benefits that volunteers bring. “These contributions include credibility, diversity, respect, and connections to the local community”.⁵⁴ In Section 3, the health and social benefits of volunteering for older adults will be described in detail; however, more research needs to be done to measure the value

⁴⁷ Wisener, R. (2009). Attaching Economic Value to Volunteer Contributions: A Discussion Paper (Draft), Volunteer Canada, Ottawa.

⁴⁸ Carleton Centre for Voluntary Sector Research and Development (2004), Community Partners in Education: Measuring the Impact of OCRI's Volunteers in Ottawa, Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation (OCRI).

⁴⁹ Ibid, 3.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 4.

⁵¹ Community Literacy of Ontario. (2009). Literacy Volunteers: Value Added.

⁵² Ibid, accessed in September 2012 <http://www.nald.ca/literacyvolunteers/economicv.htm>

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

of the preventative nature of volunteering. In order to understand the full impact of older adults volunteering, a social return on investment⁵⁵ model would be useful in order to address the following questions:

- What social services were *not* required because of the improved social wellbeing and health of older adults who volunteered?
- What health services, including medical appointments, medications, and hospital stays were *not* required because of the improved physical wellbeing that volunteering contributed?
- What social and environmental issues were *avoided* because of the interventions of older adult volunteers?
- How many people did *not* require further support from schools, youth protection, addictions treatment, and the justice system, because of the volunteering by older adults?

⁵⁵ Social Return on Investment Network UK (2008). An approach to understanding and managing the impacts of a project, organization or policy. It is based on important impacts that stakeholders identify and puts financial value on outcomes that do not have values.

Section 3

Benefits of Volunteering for Older Adults

Health and Social Benefits of Volunteering

Volunteering is a rewarding activity for older adults. It enhances wellbeing and contributes to an active lifestyle.⁵⁶ The benefits of volunteering, generally, and for senior adults in particular, have been a topic of interest for more than 20 years, in Canada and around the world. Volunteering is an important choice of leisure activity because it benefits the community, the non-profit organization and the volunteer. Volunteering is healthy for individuals.

Volunteering:

- **Improves physical functioning,**
- **Enhances emotional health,**
- **Provides particular social advantages and**
- **Is good for brain health.**

Research shows that there are significant health benefits to be gained from volunteering. These benefits include enhanced physical, emotional or psychological and brain or cognitive health as well as a number of social advantages. Each of these benefits will be explained below.

Physical Health Benefits

Research has consistently found that physical health benefits are associated with volunteering. These findings indicate that volunteers report better physical health when compared to non-volunteers.⁵⁷ This may or may not coincide with actual differences

in reported health conditions. For example, using longitudinal data, Lum and Lightfoot (2005)⁵⁸ found that while volunteering did not impact the number of health conditions diagnosed by physicians in the sample of individuals age 70 plus, it was associated with better self-reported health and physical functioning and lower mortality. These findings are great news because other research indicates that retirement tends to decrease the level of physical activity needed for a healthy lifestyle, so older adults need to find ways to be more active.⁵⁹ Volunteering is a good choice.

Psychological Health Benefits

The phrase “Helper’s high” was popularized by Dr. Allan Luks, who has been studying the health benefits of volunteering for more than 30 years. One of the earliest studies on the topic, conducted by Cornell University, found that, after following close to 500 volunteers for 30 years, only 36% had had a major illness during this time, as compared to 52% of those who had not volunteered.⁶⁰ This has been linked to the release of endorphins that commonly occurs when a person has a sense of being of value to another and this chemical change in the body has a calming effect, contributing to a positive outlook.

⁵⁶ Chambre, S. M. (1987). *Good deeds in old age: Volunteerism by the new leisure class*. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books; Cook, S. L. (2011). An exploration of learning through volunteering during retirement. *International Journal of Volunteer Administration*, 28, 9-19.; National Seniors Council (2010). *Report of the National Seniors Council on volunteering among seniors and positive and active aging*. Ottawa, Canada: Human Resources and Skills Development.

⁵⁷ Oman, D., Thoresen, C. E., & McMahon, K. (1999). Volunteerism and mortality among the community-dwelling elderly. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 4, 301-316.; Post, S. G. (2005). Altruism, happiness, and health: it’s good to be good. *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 12, 66-77.

⁵⁸ Lum, T. Y. & Lightfoot, E. (2005). The effects of volunteering on the physical and mental health of older people. *Research on Aging*, 27, 31-55.

⁵⁹ Berger, U., Der, G. Mutrie, N. & Hannah, M. K. (2005). The impact of retirement on physical activity, *Ageing & Society*, 25, 181-195.

⁶⁰ Luks, A. & Payne, P. (2001). *The Healing Power of Doing Good*, iUniverse, U.S.A.

Mary Ann Murphy, Professor of Sociology and Social Work at the University of British Columbia, at the Okanagan Valley Campus, addresses the issue of isolation of seniors through her research, teaching, and community involvement. “Social isolation may contribute to depression, grief, stress, anxiety, alcohol and medication misuse, a failure to seek help when it’s needed, and an extremely high elder suicide rate -- particularly among older men”.⁶¹ She has found that volunteering can be one of the most empowering activities as it focuses on the strengths that one has to offer as opposed to needs.

In fact, volunteers report lower rates of stress, anxiety and depression and this translates into better psychological health.⁶² Research also demonstrates that volunteering provides a more defined sense of purpose and meaning, enhances quality of life and life satisfaction and is associated with higher levels of self-esteem as well as lower reports of loneliness and isolation.⁶³ All of these emotional benefits may further advantage volunteers by helping them feel more social and connected as well as making them more attractive and desirable as social companions and friends.

Brain and Cognitive Health Benefits

Recent research indicates that volunteering is a good way to keep your brain sharp, active and healthy⁶⁴. Volunteering can help older adults stimulate their brains as they learn skills and gain new knowledge.⁶⁵ Furthermore, a growing body of research indicates regular leisure and work-related activity that is cognitively, physically, and socially stimulating is actually good for overall brain health.⁶⁶ Volunteering is a leisure activity that provides stimulation in all of these areas.

This has the potential to improve health outcomes in older adults.⁶⁷ As findings suggest that stimulation in two or more of these areas are more protective of brain health, more complex leisure pursuits such as challenging volunteer roles may best protect health.⁶⁸ Based on this research, volunteer roles that require physical activity, engage your brain and provide social interaction are especially good for you because multiple area stimulation appears to reduce the risk of dementia and promote brain health.

The brain is involved in feeling as well as thinking, and this means that finding meaning and purposeful activity is particularly important.⁶⁹ This can be accomplished through volunteering by finding roles that are personally meaningful. Matching and placing volunteers in the best role for each individual is worth the effort.

⁶¹ Murphy, Mary Anne, presenting at the Kelowna Community Resources Centre on November 28, 2011.

⁶² Kim, J. & Pai, M. (2010). Volunteering and trajectories of depression, *Journal of Aging & Health*, 22, 84-105.; Lum, T. Y. & Lightfoot, E. (2005). The effects of volunteering on the physical and mental health of older people. *Research on Aging*, 27, 31-55.

⁶³ Lum & Lightfoot (2005); Lum, T. Y. & Lightfoot, E. (2005). The effects of volunteering on the physical and mental health of older people. *Research on Aging*, 27, 31-55.; Musick, M. & J. Wilson. (2003). “Volunteering and Depression: The Role of Psychological and Social Resources in Different Age Groups.” *Social Science and Medicine* 56:259-69.; Warburton, J. (2006). Volunteering in later life: Is it good for your health? *Voluntary Action*, 8, 3-15.

⁶⁴ Fried, L., Carlson, M. C., Freedman, M., Frick, K. D., Glass, T. A., Hill, J., . . . Zeger, S. et al. (2004). A social model for health promotion for an aging population: Initial evidence on the Experience Corps model. *Journal of Urban Health*, 81, 64-78.

⁶⁵ Cook, S. L. (2011). An exploration of learning through volunteering during retirement. *International Journal of Volunteer Administration*, 28, 9-19.

⁶⁶ Fried, L., Carlson, M. C., Freedman, M., Frick, K. D., Glass, T. A., Hill, J., . . . Zeger, S. et al. (2004). A social model for health promotion for an aging population: Initial evidence on the Experience Corps model. *Journal of Urban Health*, 81, 64-78.; Karp, A., Paillard-Borg, S., Wang, H. X., Silverstein, M., Winblad, B., & Fratiglioni, L. (2006). Mental, physical, and social components in leisure activities equally contribute to decrease dementia risk. *Dementia and Geriatric Cognitive Disorders*, 21, 65-73.; Kröger, E., Andel, R., Lindsay, J., Benounissa, Z., Verreault, R., & Laurin, D. (2008). Is complexity of work associated with risk of dementia? *The Canadian study of health and aging. American Journal of Epidemiology*, 167, 820-830.; Schooler, C., & Mulatu, M. S. (2001). The reciprocal effects of leisure time activities and intellectual functioning in older people: A longitudinal analysis. *Psychology and Aging*, 16, 466-482.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Whitehouse, P. (2010). Taking Brain Health to a Deeper and Broader Level. *Neurological Institute Journal*, Spring 2010, 17-22.

Social Health Benefits

Individuals can meet people and develop new social relationships through volunteering.⁷⁰ This helps them to expand their social network and enhances their connection to the community and the resources within their community. An increase in social contact may provide enhanced emotional and instrumental support during times of crisis, illness or stress and increase quality of life.⁷¹ This can also assist with decreasing or delaying the onset of illness or death.

While research indicates that volunteering connects individuals to their community and helps to expand their social network, there are other social benefits. First, cognitive, social, and emotional health, are all inter-related. As mentioned previously, emotional wellbeing is related to social connection and cognitive stimulation within social environments where other people are involved enhances brain health. Activating the brain in social situations where you are helping other people also contributes to emotional health and wellbeing.⁷²

Second, socially active individuals who volunteer can also be engaged in civil society, working toward change and a more just society. Civic engagement benefits individuals, the community and society as a whole. For individuals, it helps them develop and maintain a social, collective identity, contributes to social inclusion and to feelings of empowerment.⁷³ It helps older adults stay connected to others in society including those from other generations – potentially, individuals of various ages, both older and younger than they are. Thus, it encourages intergenerational inclusion and interaction as well as civic engagement.

The health benefits of volunteering add up to a myriad of reasons to continue volunteering or to add volunteering to your life.

Volunteering encourages healthy aging. It is a great way to stay active and engaged. The incredible cognitive, physical, psychological or emotional and social benefits of volunteering are compelling reasons to volunteer or maintain volunteer involvement. If these advantages were not sufficient to encourage volunteering, there are also skill and career development benefits.

Skill and Career Development Benefits

Volunteering provides skill and career development benefits for older adults because many underlying volunteer motivations are based on skills and therefore are related to occupation and career. Retirement does not equate with complete withdrawal from paid work⁷⁴. Many older adults choose part-time work, second careers or occasional work for pay. It is important to recognize that skill and career development also extends beyond paid work into volunteer work.

Recent economic realities mean that seniors are entering second careers at the same time that they are engaged in volunteer work and they can use their skills and experience within both spheres. Older adults often face barriers and ageism within the workplace as they age and this can be considered a 'grey ceiling' that they encounter. By finding ways to maintain their skills and expertise, older adults feel good about themselves. This contributes to their health and

⁷⁰ Misener, K., Doherty, A., & Hamm-Kerwin, S. (2010). Learning from the experiences of older adult volunteers: A serious leisure perspective. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 2, 267-290.; Musick, M. & Wilson J. (2003). Volunteering and Depression: The Role of Psychological and Social Resources in Different Age Groups. *Social Science and Medicine* 56:259-69.; Rook, K. S. & Sorkin, D. H. (2003). Fostering social ties through a volunteer role: Implications for older-adults' psychological health. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 57, 313-337.

⁷¹ Onyx, J. & Warburton, J. (2003). Volunteering and health among older people: a review. *Australasian Journal on Ageing*, 22, 65-69.

⁷² Whitehouse, P. (2010). Taking Brain Health to a Deeper and Broader Level. *Neurological Institute Journal*, Spring 2010, 17-22.

⁷³ Narushima, M. (2005). 'Payback time': Community volunteering among older adults as a transformative mechanism. *Ageing & Society*, 25, 567-584.

⁷⁴ McDonald, L. & Donahue, P. (2011). Retirement lost?, *Canadian Journal on Aging*, 30, 401-422.

wellbeing. Being able to make a contribution to others and feeling useful are both huge psychological boosts to self-esteem and self-worth. Using skills and experience is a good way to make a significant contribution to the community and to society in general.

Many underlying volunteer motivations are skill and career development related and experience-based.

While seniors are less likely to mention that they volunteer to improve their job prospects, giving back to the community, using skills and experience, exploring individual strengths, being personally affected by the cause and improving job opportunities are all related to skill and career development and using one's experiences to make a difference. As Table 9 on page 19 shows, the vast majority of older adults volunteer because of underlying motivations that are based on skill and career development. Fewer older adults volunteer to improve job opportunities; however, this may change as more individuals age 45 and over remain in or re-enter the workforce.

As Tables 6 and 7 indicate (see pages 17 and 18), older adults are doing important work in non-profit organizations. The skills and experience that older adults use in their volunteer activities vary with the organizations and types of activities that they are involved with. For example, shadow boomers (age 45 to 55 years in 2010) often volunteer within education and research-based organizations. A lot of Shadow Boomers teach, educate or mentor and offer counselling and advise to others. Many others provide other forms of direct service to others by serving food, providing health care support or coaching sports teams. Baby Boomers and seniors who volunteer tend to sit on a non-profit or charitable board or committee.

Overall, older adults want to do volunteer work that makes them feel useful and needed. They want to use their skills and abilities, their talents and gifts and their wisdom and experience to do something meaningful. It is important that society better supports and enables them to find fulfilling volunteer roles.

Skills Learned

We need to support older adults who are seeking learning experiences through volunteering.

Older adults are interested in learning new things; they want to continue learning. They are able to find avenues and opportunities for learning through their volunteer work.⁷⁵ As Table 10 on page 19 indicates, many older adults are able to continue learning interpersonal and communication skills. They also learn organizational and fundraising skills and increase their knowledge about specific subjects such as health or the environment. Encouraging and stimulating new learning and the acquisition of knowledge is important to individuals, no matter what age.⁷⁶ Innovative ways of supporting learning among older adults are necessary in our aging society.

Meaningful Occupation

Volunteer activities help older adults to continue to contribute to society in an unpaid work role and be active and engaged in the community. Volunteering provides structure and adds defined meaning and purpose to life when work and family roles and demands are lessening in the lives of older adults.

⁷⁵ Cook, S. L. (2011). An exploration of learning through volunteering during retirement. *International Journal of Volunteer Administration*, 28, 9-19.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

In some cases, volunteering consists of regular, highly engaged involvement where individuals acquire or use certain skills, knowledge and experience.⁷⁷ Many older adults take their volunteer commitments very seriously and invest a lot of time, effort and energy in these pursuits. This form of volunteering can be viewed as ‘serious leisure’, ‘career volunteering’ or ‘career redirection’.⁷⁸ These terms indicate that while this volunteering is voluntary, it is undertaken with great commitment and dedication. In addition, within these perspectives, volunteering is recognized as a complex activity where individuals find fulfillment, meaning and personal identity. Volunteering is a meaningful occupation that provides direction as well as purpose and passion, just like the fulfillment that comes from meaningful paid work.

Summary of Benefits of Volunteering for Older Adults

Dr. Elaine Gallagher, Director of the Centre on Aging at the University of Victoria shared her views on the value of seniors’ volunteering, at the Special Senate Committee on Aging hearing in April 2010: “Some want to make a contribution to their communities. Others want to use their skills and knowledge, to learn new things, to develop new skills, to be intellectually stimulated, or to feel good or needed.”⁷⁹

In summary, volunteering provides many health benefits to older adults. It offers them significant physical, emotional and cognitive or brain health benefits. It also enhances social support, social inclusion and civic engagement. Older adults are engaged in their community and it is important that they are seen, and see themselves, as contributing, valued and active members in their community.⁸⁰ Volunteering keeps older adults active and engaged; positive activity is key for healthy aging.

For many older adults, volunteering is based on skill and career development motivations. Using their skills and experience in volunteer activities is good for self-esteem and self-worth and for encouraging feelings of usefulness. Older adults do not just want to use their skills; they also want to learn something new. Finally, volunteering can provide new life meaning, purpose and identity. For these individuals, volunteering is ‘serious leisure’, ‘career volunteering’ or ‘career redirection’.

Volunteering makes an important contribution to the community and is an important part of individual, active and healthy aging for older adults. Society needs to support and promote volunteering through innovative programs and policies.

⁷⁷ Cook, S. L. (2011). Redirection: Volunteering as an Extension of Career during Retirement. Paper presented at the 30th annual conference of the Canadian Association on Gerontology (CAG), Ottawa, Canada.; Cook, S. L. (2011) An exploration of learning through volunteering during retirement. *International Journal of Volunteer Administration*, 28, 9-19.; Stebbins, R. A. (1982). Serious leisure: A conceptual statement. *Pacific Sociological Review*, 25, 251-272.

⁷⁸ Bendle, L. & Patterson, I. (2008). Serious leisure, career volunteers and the organization of arts events in a regional Australian city. *International Journal of Event Management Research*, 4, 1-11.; Cook, S. L. (2011). Redirection: Volunteering as an Extension of Career during Retirement. Paper presented at the 30th annual conference of the Canadian Association on Gerontology (CAG), Ottawa, Canada.; Misener, K., Doherty, A., & Hamm-Kerwin, S. (2010). Learning from the experiences of older adult volunteers: A serious leisure perspective. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 2, 267-290. Stebbins, R. A. (2005). Inclination to participant in organized serious leisure: An exploration of the role of costs, rewards, and lifestyle. *Leisure/Loisir*, 29, 183-201.; Stebbins, R. A. (1996). Volunteering: A serious leisure perspective. *Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 25, 211-224.

⁷⁹ National Seniors Council. (2010). Report of the Special Senate Committee on Aging, Government of Canada, Ottawa, page 132.

⁸⁰ National Seniors Council. (2010). Report of the National Seniors Council on volunteering among seniors and positive and active aging. Ottawa, Canada: Human Resources and Skills Development.

Section 4

Challenges and Barriers

Challenges and Barriers for Older Adults Volunteering

As organizations develop new and innovative strategies to meaningfully engage the current and emerging generation of senior volunteers, attention needs to be paid to the potential challenges and barriers to inclusive participation.⁸¹ The key challenges and barriers that have arisen in the literature are⁸²:

- A. Location**
- B. Transportation**
- C. Scheduling**
- D. Length of commitment required**
- E. Caregiving, attendant care, and respite care costs**
- F. Language and culture**
- G. Changing physical abilities**
- H. Comfort with technology**
- I. Access to information about volunteering**
- J. Negative experiences in the past**

A. Location – With more emphasis on neighbourhood development and locally driven solutions, more people are interested in volunteering close to home to have a direct impact on their environment; therefore, proximity to home or work is a factor. After the amalgamation of cities and public agencies, many smaller organizations have followed this trend and finding a volunteer opportunity close by can be a challenge.

Safety and security are also important considerations. In order to save on rent, many organizations have moved their facilities to isolated or industrial areas and these can be less

comfortable for older adults, especially if they are volunteering and attending meetings in the evenings. While most jurisdictions have legislation requiring public services to be located in physically accessible buildings, this is still not consistent in all provinces and territories. These challenges of location can create a barrier for older adults or anyone with mobility issues.

B. Transportation – Some form of transportation to volunteer activities is required. Lack of access to transportation in terms of availability, costs, physical accessibility and parking can also be a challenge or barrier, whether it is public transportation, adapted transportation, or personal transportation. For those older adults who are no longer driving a car but have not yet adapted to alternate transportation modes, this can be both a practical and emotional challenge, as it may relate to notions of independence. These factors can create a barrier to participation.

C. Scheduling – Many older adults require a flexible schedule to accommodate travel, health issues, medical appointments, and other seasonable circumstances.

D. Length of Commitment - Current trends in volunteering are indicating that baby boomers are seeking shorter-term volunteer assignments.

⁸¹ Poetker, J. (2009). *Tapping the Power of Boomers as Senior Volunteers*.

⁸² Volunteering Australia. National Volunteer Skills Centre. *Subject Guide Involving Baby boomers as Volunteers – Take a Closer Look*. Australia: 2007 and Volunteering as a Productive Aging Activity: Incentives and Barriers to Volunteering by Australian Seniors

E. Care Giving Responsibilities – Many baby boomers and seniors are the primary care giver to parents, partners or grandchildren. The availability and costs of care giving or respite care can be a barrier to participation.

F. Language and Culture – Some organizations have systemic barriers to participation in terms of language and culture. People want to feel welcome, comfortable, and informed in a non-profit organization.

G. Changing Abilities – As abilities change, there may be the need for accommodation in terms of the location as well as the volunteer position or assignment. It is not always comfortable to ask for these accommodations whether one is a long-time volunteer or just now considering getting involved.

H. Comfort with Technology – Depending upon a person’s work experience and comfort with technology, new technology that is used to sign in or to carry out the volunteer assignment may be intimidating.

I. Access to Information about Volunteering – Some individuals may lack awareness about volunteer opportunities in the community. Many older adults, particularly if there has been a recent change in employment status, residence, or household make-up, find it difficult to find a volunteer opportunity that suits their new circumstances.

J. Negative Volunteer Experiences in the Past. – A telephone survey of more than 1000 households revealed that 68% of people had a negative volunteer experience in the past. When asked more about what made these experiences negative, people identified politics, lack of organization, and lack of appreciation as the top three reasons.

Challenges for Organizations in Attracting and Retaining Older Adult Volunteers

Organizations are reporting that they are not finding it difficult to recruit older adults as volunteers. In an organizational snapshot survey conducted in 2012, 91% of organizations said that it was easy or very easy to attract baby boomers and 82% said it was easy or very easy to attract senior adults (over 65 years of age). The challenges identified through follow-up round table discussions with voluntary sector leaders identified the following key challenges:

Seasonal availability – many travel to warmer climates during winter months or visit children out of town for extended periods

Higher demands on staff - many expect staff members to prepare background material or to provide administrative support for their work

Heavy Family Responsibilities – many are caregivers to partners, aging parents, children, and grandchildren

One Manager of Volunteer Resources who was interviewed for this report explained, “It is very useful to engage volunteers with professional skills and managerial backgrounds, but they tend to be high maintenance. You have to spend time developing sophisticated terms of reference for their work, provide background research when they are developing strategies, and provide the kind of support they were accustomed to when they had an executive assistant, during their career.” At the same time, older adults, particularly baby boomers, may perceive the organization to be disorganized or even disrespectful, when they are not able to provide the level of support they feel is required.

Though organizations say that they find it easy to attract older adult volunteers, few of them were able to articulate the strategies they have to retain volunteers. A volunteer who participated in a baby boomers focus group in June of 2010 gave the following advice to organizations:

“Organizations need to be careful about retention, making sure that volunteers do not feel like they are burnt out and taken advantage of.”⁸³ Of the 36% of organizations who reported having difficulty recruiting volunteers, more than half believed that it was because people were not available (52%), 14% said that they were challenged to find volunteers with the specific skills needed, and an additional 14% reported that they lacked adequate resources to engage in recruitment activities.⁸⁴ As with all groups of volunteers, ongoing contact and check-ins with volunteers will keep organizations in touch with how volunteers are feeling about their involvement and enable them to make the necessary adjustments to improve their experience. This could include:

- modifying the program,
- adjusting their schedule,
- switching assignments, or
- taking a break

The key strategies being recommended respond to the changing profile of older adult volunteers and the issues that have been identified by both older adults and organizations. Integrating a skills-based approach, in a more structured setting, with greater flexibility for short-term and seasonal assignments appears to be working best for organizations. Finding creative ways to combine volunteering with all the things that are important in the lives of older adults is critical. These strategies are expanded upon in section 4 and programs that have been specifically designed for older adults are described in section 5.

Amalgamation, Collaboration, and Mergers – the Impact on Older Adult Volunteers

In the turn of the millennium, the provinces of Nova Scotia, Quebec, and Ontario embarked on significant municipal restructuring that resulted in a number of cities being amalgamated⁸⁵. The domino effect was the amalgamation of school boards, hospitals, home-support organizations, and other service-providers. Larger multi-service agencies were created as co-ordinating bodies for dozens of smaller community support organizations. While many volunteers were happy to support their local organization, led by people they know and with whom they have built up trust, but when the organization becomes part of a larger structure, volunteers can feel lost in the bureaucracy and experience less direct connection to the decision-makers.

Today’s older adult volunteers were often the social pioneers who founded, supported and built many of today’s organizations. There are incredible benefits to having people who have made a lifetime commitment to an organization: you can always count on their loyalty through good times and bad; they are a source of the corporate history, and they provide a sense of continuity and stability and they have a long-standing commitment to the mission of the organization. There can also be challenges when organizations want to embark on significantly new directions such as exploring mergers, amalgamations, and other collaborative models⁸⁶ “The resistance may be related to strong emotional ties to existing organizations, a view of current programs as unique or sacred, ego and turf issues, or difficulty with change.”⁸⁷ This type of resistance, of course, is not limited to long-term volunteers.

⁸³ Volunteer Canada and Manulife Financial. (2010). Bridging the Gap: Enriching the Volunteer Experience for a Better Future for our Communities, www.volunteer.ca/study Full report, Section 3.3 Organizational Snapshot, page 196

⁸⁴ Volunteer Canada and Manulife Financial. (2010). Bridging the Gap: Enriching the Volunteer Experience to Build a Better Future for our Communities, www.volunteer.ca/study.

⁸⁵ Stantec Consulting Group. (2011). St John’s Amalgamation Review 2011.

⁸⁶ Ferronato, S. (2010). Merging for Impact, Resource Centre for Voluntary Organizations newsletter, Winter 2010, Volume 20, No. 3.

⁸⁷ RCVO Newsletter. (2010). Winter. Volume 20, No. 3, page 1

“Founder’s Syndrome—an unhealthy culture in which the organization’s founder stifles growth—can thwart managerial efforts to build organizational strength.”⁸⁸

Founders play a unique role in an organization and, as noted, their unwavering support is highly valuable; however, there are times when founders’ involvement can be detrimental. Within the organizational development literature, this has been coined “Founder’s Syndrome”.

⁸⁸ Shortall, J. (2007). Emerging Topics Paper Series #7: Strategies for Managers Working within Founder’s Syndrome Organizations, Edited by Drew Tulchin, Social Enterprise Associates www.socialenterprise.net, page 3.

Section 5

Strategies for Engaging Older Adult Volunteers

While it remains true that we cannot generalize about what shadow-boomers (45-54), baby boomers (55-64), younger seniors (65-74), and older seniors (75 years and older) are looking for in volunteering, there are two key overarching strategies that have particular relevance for engaging older adult volunteers. These strategies focus on transitions and personal development and learning as overarching goals. With the first strategy, the underlying objectives are to help older adults deal with the life transitions that they are facing and to promote their wellbeing. The second broad-based strategy focuses on personal growth and development. These two strategies also leverage the skills, wisdom, and experience of older adults, while engaging them according to their values, passions, and interests. Within each of these two larger strategies, there are a range of innovative ways to engage older adults in volunteering. These overarching strategies and a selection of various approaches to achieve them are described below.

1. Strategies that promote wellbeing during transitions

- A. Retirement planning
- B. Moving and Housing-Related
Condo-volunteering
- C. Short-term and seasonal assignments

2. Strategies that promote individual development and learning

- A. Skills-Based Volunteering
- B. Citizen Science
- C. Education and Research
- D. Employer-supported volunteering
- E. Intergenerational volunteering
- F. Food-related volunteering

1. Strategies for Transitions

Volunteering has been found to be a particularly healthy activity following a loss or during a significant life transition. Changes in employment, parenting, and partnerships can alter a person's interests and availability when it comes to volunteering but volunteering can also be enormously beneficial to help with a number of life-altering events.⁸⁹

“Whether your transition or retirement involves a change in your household, neighbourhood, health situation, employment status, or daily schedule, volunteering can provide meaning to your days. It can connect you to your community, help maintain, grow or develop new skills, facilitate your participation in the democratic process, and help you shape and preserve the society you want to live in for yourself and for generations to come.”⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Speevak Sladowski, P. & Hientz, M. (2011). [Transition, Milestones and Legacies: A Retirement Planning Module on Volunteering](#), Volunteer Canada and Manulife Financial, Ottawa.

⁹⁰ Ibid, Page 3.

While life transitions that can be stressful, they can become the springboard to very satisfying volunteer experiences. People are often motivated to volunteer because it can fill an emptiness that has been created by a loss.⁹¹ While older adults may volunteer to help out in their communities, staying connected to their communities through volunteering can provide them with an anchor during tumultuous times in their lives.

A. Retirement Planning

While there are many resources available to assist people with retirement planning, they typically focus on financial planning. This excerpt from *Transitions, Milestones, and Legacies: A Retirement Planning Module on Volunteering*, developed by Volunteer Canada and Manulife Financial, illustrates the range of interests and priorities during retirement but also demonstrates how volunteering can actually be integrated into these other important aspects of life:⁹²

“Financial Planning - Greater numbers of people are looking for ways to contribute to the community by giving both time and money to the causes they care about. For those who are considering charitable donations and bequests to non-profit organizations as part of their financial planning, what better way to really know an organization than through volunteering?...

Travel & Voluntouring - Combining volunteering and touring is a very appealing option for many people in transition or retirement. Many international development organizations offer opportunities to volunteer anywhere from two weeks to 2 years to work on projects such as mentoring small businesses, providing technical support for emerging industries, setting up schools, rebuilding housing, providing health and social services to refugees, staffing clinics, teaching English, as well as many other projects.

Recreation - Whether your pleasure is swimming, softball, playing chess, or riding horses, you can combine this with important volunteer roles in the community. Being a swimming buddy with someone with a physical disability, being a coach for a little league, playing chess with youth in a drop-in centre, or grooming ponies in a therapeutic riding program, your time will be very well spent....

Family Time - If your time with family is important to you, consider family volunteering. Helping with activities in a nursing home, sorting donations in a food bank, or making decorations for a special event around your kitchen table; there are many volunteer activities that can be done by people of all ages and abilities....

Life-Long Learning - Volunteering is a way to transfer skills⁹³ whether you want to contribute the skills you have gained or you wish to learn new skills, volunteering can help you prepare for a new career or feed your hunger for learning new things....” (p. 3-4)

B. Moving and Housing

If you are approaching a transition that includes moving, volunteering in your neighbourhood is a great way to get more connected to your new surroundings. Whether you are volunteering to serve on the social committee of your condo

⁹¹ Roza, Lonneke, Anke Becker, Eva van Baren, & Lucas Meijs. (2011). The Why of Older Adult Volunteers: Do Employment Loss of Spouse Influence the Motivations of Older Volunteers? *International Journal of Volunteer Administration*, Spring 2011 (available at www.ijova.org)

⁹² Speevak Sladowski, P. & Hientz, M. (2011). [Transition, Milestones and Legacies: A Retirement Planning Module on Volunteering](#), Volunteer Canada and Manulife Financial, Ottawa, page 3-4.

⁹³ Volunteer Canada. (2010). [Bridging the Gap – Enriching the Volunteer Experience to Build a Better Future for Our Communities](#). Research Summary Report.

association or housing co-operative, take a shift at the information booth at the community centre, or join a team of door-to-door canvassers, volunteering will help you meet your neighbours.

Condo-volunteering

The confluence of a number of factors leads us to explore the concept of condo-volunteering as it relates to older adults: the population is aging⁹⁴, the number of condominiums is growing dramatically, and 57% of condo owners are over the age of 50.⁹⁵ The governance and social structures within condominiums offer a range of volunteer opportunities to become more involved. Furthermore, condo-volunteering may respond to the barriers of volunteering that some older adults face, such as mobility and transportation.

Volunteer Canada defines condo-volunteering as:

“time given to improve to the quality of life for residents and their families and to provide oversight to condominium operations, through participation on a condominium board or committee, organizing activities, taking on special projects, or supporting ongoing social, safety, or environmental initiatives.”

Many condominium buildings are all-encompassing complexes with apartments, fitness centres, libraries, outdoor pools, community gardens, games room, and common space equipped with kitchen facilities and audiovisual equipment. Some mixed-use buildings also have commercial enterprises, such as convenience stores, post offices, and hair salons. Aside from monitoring budgets, hiring staff, and ensuring proper maintenance and repairs, condominium structures are also functioning as neighbourhood or community associations.

One of the selling points for these kinds of condominium buildings is that you have everything you need right at your doorstep. You can take a yoga class, have a morning swim, join a book club, have supper at the BBQ, do your needlework project by the pool, see a movie, and pick up milk, all without having to leave the property and without the costs associated with joining and registering for external programs and services. According to Anne Marie Bert,⁹⁶ there are four factors that make it possible to have a high level of engagement within a condominium: (1) Adequate facilities/common space; (2) Owner-occupied to tenant ratio; (3) Stability/longevity of residency; and (4) Degree of homogeneity among residents.

While there may be many advantages to volunteering within a condominium, there are also potential disadvantages. In addition, there is the possibility that, as people get more involved within their condominiums, they will lose their connections and contributions to the broader community.

“The downside of being a director on a condo board is that one becomes a volunteer in one’s place of residence rather than in an outside agency. As a result, animosities often arise. Directors’ lives can become unpleasant in condos that have a lot of problems. And directors can also make some residents’ lives very unpleasant, indeed.”⁹⁷ - Condominium Information Centre, York University

⁹⁴ Statistics Canada Census 2006, 2007.

⁹⁵ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2011). Canadian Housing Observer

⁹⁶ Anne Marie Bert manages an online information site for condominiums in Canada www.concoinformation.ca

⁹⁷ www.condoinformation.ca

C - Short-term and Seasonal Assignments

As noted in Section 4, (Challenges for Organizations), many older adults are seeking shorter-term or seasonal volunteer assignments because of increasing family care giving responsibilities, post-retirement paid contracts, travel, time spent with families in other communities, and ongoing arrangements to spend part of the year in warmer climates. For those older adults who have been long-term volunteers, there may be an interest in moving into a training position, where they can be involved in the initial orientation, provide short-term mentoring, or to serve as a replacement when regular volunteers become unavailable. Combining a skills-based approach with a defined time frame can help organizations access unique and specialized volunteers' skills-sets at a more strategic level in the organizations, inviting them to serve as executive coaches, facilitate planning sessions, review policies, or provide feedback on program proposals. Conferences, festivals and special events are also ideal for those seeking short-term or seasonal assignments.

2. Strategies for Personal Development and Learning

A - Skills-based Volunteering

Given the number of older adults who indicated an interest in using their skills and experiences for volunteering, skills-based volunteering is a promising approach. While many people also express an interest in doing something quite different from which they currently do or did during their work life, a skills-based approach can also be used to identify opportunities to expand horizons and develop new skills.

The Points of Light Foundation identifies skills-based volunteering as “service to non-profit organisations by individuals or groups that capitalises on personal talents or core business or professional skills, experience or education, often for the purpose of building organisational strength and increasing capacity.”⁹⁸

The diagram below illustrates the various lenses through which volunteers search for volunteer opportunities. This model recognizes that there are multiple considerations but that the *skills lens* (either to contribute skills or to develop new skills) is the focus. Given the characteristics of the emerging generation of seniors, this approach recognizes the large number of shadow-boomers and baby boomers that look to volunteering for both personal and professional development.



⁹⁸ (Adapted from [Points of Light Institute](#)).

B – Citizen Science

"Citizen Science involves people as volunteers who help scientists by collecting information about the environment."⁹⁹ Citizen Science is a growing movement around the world that engages citizens as volunteer field scientists to collect data for a range of ecological, conservation, and biodiversity studies. People report sightings of unusual bird species, count bugs, collect pebbles, and measure water levels. While this movement has existed, in some form, for centuries, it has really gained momentum in Canada over the past decade.

This type of volunteering may be ideal for adults who are interested in environmental issues, whether or not they have a scientific background. Volunteering to support scientific studies or ongoing ecological monitoring programs could be very appealing as they offer opportunities to participate as an individual or in groups. They are often seasonable in nature and may even be organized as a one-day event.

The Canadian Museum of Nature has ongoing nature watch programs that engage people, schools, corporations, and faith organizations in all regions, through their PlantWatch, IceWatch, and FrogWatch programs. In Canada, a number of organizations have come together, through Wildlife Habitat Canada, to form the Citizen Science Network.

Their members include:

- Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society <http://cpaws.org>
- The Council of Canadians Water Campaign <http://canadians.org/water/index.html>
- David Suzuki Foundation <http://david Suzuki.org>
- Earth Day Canada <http://earthday.ca>
- Friends of the Earth Canada <http://foecanada.org>
- Greenpeace Canada <http://www.greenpeace.org/canada/en>
- The Nature Conservancy <http://www.natureconservancy.ca>
- Pollution Probe <http://pollutionprobe.org>

Citizen Scientists, a separate organization, "is an entirely volunteer-driven, not-for-profit group that focuses on ecological monitoring, environmental training, and education, established in 2001". Their focus has been on stream health monitoring at various sites in the Rouge River watershed, near Toronto.

Citizen Science offers the following benefits:

- * An opportunity to contribute to environmental protection
- * Seasonal volunteer assignments
- * One-day events
- * Group or family volunteering opportunities
- * Integrating volunteering into a passion or hobby

C – Education and Research

Another recent trend in volunteering is involving older adults in science and research – collecting data, conducting literature reviews and being partners in participatory action research.¹⁰⁰ One such project is the BRAVO Project at the Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ www.nature.ca. Accessed August 2012

¹⁰⁰ Blair, T. & Minkler, M. Participatory action research with older adults: key principles in practice, *Gerontologist*. 2009, 49, 651-62.; Dewar, B. J. (2005). Beyond tokenistic involvement of older people in research – a framework for future development and understanding: Practice.

While there may be some challenges inherent in these research projects, there are multiple benefits for researchers and older adults alike. By conducting research, older adults engage in meaningful scientific work, gain research skills and are actively learning. They are contributing to society by participating in projects that generate new knowledge and their scientific involvement may lead to advocacy as they work towards change to address social and scientific problems and concerns.

D – Employer-Supported Volunteering

Several corporations support their employees' commitment to their volunteer activities. They encourage volunteer involvement through 'community days', often a day (or sometimes several days) per year where employees can give their time and energy to a non-profit organization in the community. There have been many benefits identified for businesses and workplaces.¹⁰² This can also be an opportunity for employees to recognize the rewards of volunteering and the potential it can offer for the transition into retirement. There is potential to position employer-supported volunteering into initiatives that help transition seniors into retirement. This could be an opportunity that would benefit non-profit organizations and those who are about to retire. It should be further explored.

Leverage Opportunities with Local Businesses

Financial institutions are keenly interested in raising their profile and connecting with older adults. Given that baby boomers now make up one third of the population, understanding their characteristics, motivations, and values, helps this industry develop financial products that speak to their spending patterns, including investments, estate planning, and charitable giving.¹⁰³ The focus on older adult consumers can be found in many industries including cosmetics, travel, home security, real estate, and clothing. This market segment priority can be leveraged to generate support of national and local businesses for seniors serving organizations. When it comes to businesses supporting volunteering among older adults, there are three main models:

Retired Employee Volunteer Programs - Workplaces that have alumni or retiree programs often incorporate volunteer opportunities into their programs through newsletters or access to volunteer opportunity databases

Retirement Planning Workshops that include volunteering – Public and private sector workplaces offer retirement planning workshops and support through their human resources departments and some include modules on volunteering

(Pre-Retirement) Employer-Supported Volunteering Programs - the year prior to retirement, employers may support an intensive placement in a non-profit organization to help employees make the transition to volunteering when they retire and to help the company or department with their success plan, as the employees' responsibilities are shifted to someone else

Two examples of retiree and employee supported volunteering are Bell Aliant (Bell Telephone employees) and the Elfun Society (General Electric Employees). "The Bell Aliant Pioneers are a dynamic network of volunteers who move those in

development – User involvement. *International Journal of Older People Nursing* in association with *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 14, 48-53.; Fudge, N., Wolfe, C. D. A., & McKevitt, C. (2007). Involving older people in health research. *Age and Ageing*, 36, 492-500.

¹⁰¹ BRAVO. (2012). research.baycrest.org/bravo

¹⁰² Deloitte. (2010). *Deloitte Volunteer Impact Survey – Executive Summary*, page 3

¹⁰³ BMO Retirement Institute. (2009) *The Evolution of Giving: From Charity to Philanthropy. BMO Retirement Institute Report*. BMO Financial Group.

need from adversity to achievement. They've been working together for a hundred years now, and the positive impact they've had on the lives of the people they serve is immeasurable. They're confident in their ability to continue making the world a better place, starting right in their own hometowns.”¹⁰⁴ “With volunteerism its focus, Elfun formed partnerships to enhance its community service efforts.”¹⁰⁵

A few unique associations of non-profit organizations have been created where organizations work together to promote the wellbeing of seniors, such as Older and Bolder in Ireland,¹⁰⁶ the Healthy Aging Partnership in Washington, D.C.¹⁰⁷ and The Successful Aging Councils in the U.S.¹⁰⁸ In addition, there is the potential for non-profit organizations and corporations to partner towards shared aims and objectives focused on the wellbeing of seniors.

E – Intergenerational Volunteering

Intergenerational opportunities for volunteering are becoming more popular. Non-profit organizations such as food banks often see intergenerational volunteering. In addition, an innovative school-based program, the Intergenerational Schools, uses an intergenerational approach to learning. Here, a large number of senior volunteers are involved in providing structured learning to students.¹⁰⁹

F – Food-Related Volunteering

Another innovative avenue for volunteering is within the broad food-industry. Canadians have a long history of supporting food banks. In recent years, individuals are increasingly giving their time to support the food industry. Canadians have a passion for food and they are offering volunteer support at Canadian wineries, organic farms and favourite restaurants. This is a trend in volunteering that extends beyond the non-profit sector into the private sector. It will be embraced by boomers and seniors who are excited and passionate about food issues.

In summary, strategies that assist seniors with transitions and encourage personal development and learning are innovative ways to engage older adults in volunteering. As this list indicates, seniors are engaging in community-based activities outside of traditional structures, programs and organizations. They are not only dealing with the transition to retirement and learning something new; they often appear to be pursuing their values, interests or passions through their participation in non-traditional volunteering. In some cases, seniors are able to integrate all of these needs through their volunteer choices.

These are all exciting strategies in volunteering aimed primarily at seniors. These strategies engage seniors and help them to make meaningful contributions to the community. These strategies promote senior wellbeing while assisting with life transition and promoting individual development and learning. With the growing interest in better supporting seniors as volunteers, we can expect to see more of these particular strategies in the future, as well as an increase in seniors volunteering to assist other seniors and more online volunteering.

¹⁰⁴ Bell Aliant. (2012). www.alliantpioneers.com

¹⁰⁵ Elfun. (2012). <http://www.memberconnections.com/olc/pub/GNL/cpages/about/history.jsp>

¹⁰⁶ Older and Bolder: Support Equality for Older People. www.olderandbolder.ie. (Ireland). Accessed September, 2012.

¹⁰⁷ Healthy Aging Partnership. www.4elders.org/. (U.S.A.). Accessed September, 2012.

¹⁰⁸ Healthy Aging Regional Collaborative: Initiative of the Health Foundation of South Florida. www.healthyagingsf.org/mission.aspx. (U.S.A.). Accessed September, 2012

¹⁰⁹ The Intergenerational Schools: A Community of Lifelog Learners. www.tisonline.org. (U.S.A.). Accessed September, 2012.

Section 6

Lessons from Older Adult Volunteer Programs from around the World



In Canada, individual's aged 55 to 64 had a volunteer rate of 41% in 2010 and seniors recorded a rate of 36%.¹¹⁰ The lower rate for seniors is partly due to the large number of people in this group who do not volunteer due to illness, mobility or other barriers. It is evident from these numbers that those who can volunteer, do. Seniors are passionate about causes and communities and want to contribute; society must meet these demands. While there are many volunteer programs for retirees and seniors, these programs are expanding greatly in order to attract these valued individuals with their essential skills.

We reviewed senior volunteer programs and have 64 in inventory from over 30 countries (See Appendix A). The program types fall into six categories:

1. **Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)**
2. **Voluntourism**
3. **Volunteer Exchanges**
4. **International Development Volunteering**
5. **Volunteer Centre Programs**
6. **Faith based**

Retired Senior Volunteer Program

The Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) began in 1965 on Staten Island, NY and has become one of the largest volunteer programs for seniors in the world, with chapters and programs around the globe. While conducting research on volunteer programs for seniors, it was noted that RSVP was the most predominant result for virtually every country searched.

Voluntourism

Voluntourism has become increasingly popular around the world as it allows seniors and retirees to share their skills and talents while also exploring a new culture. Voluntourism is known by various names, such as: Volunteer travel, volunteer vacations, or vacanteerism. It is travel which includes volunteering for a charitable cause and its popularity has grown in recent years.

Volunteer vacations take many different shapes and sizes. It could be something very hands-on such as tree planting or building a new school or a skills-based opportunity where one provides medical assistance or teaches children.

Volunteer Exchanges

Similar to Voluntourism are Volunteer Exchanges. For example, seVen (Senior Europeans Volunteer Exchange Network) is a pan-European network comprised of 29 organizations promoting senior volunteer exchanges. Established in 2007, the highly organized program includes non-profits, NGO's, local governments, educational institutions and various research centres. Whereas voluntourism groups work with various organizations and countries, seVen works within its network to exchange volunteers from one geographic area to another. It is still a young organization but is an example of how the world of volunteering is shifting in order to be more inclusive of retirees and seniors.

¹¹⁰ Statistics Canada. (2012). The 2010 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering, and Participating 2010, Ottawa

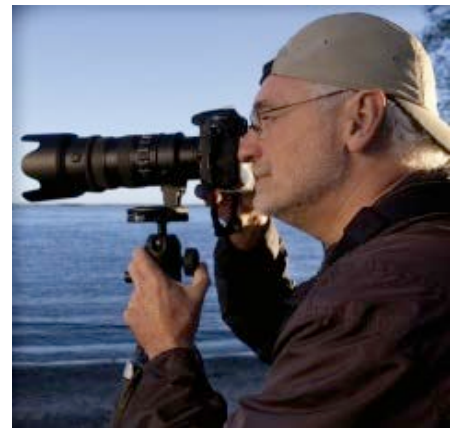
International Development Volunteering

Similar in concept to voluntourism is International Development Volunteering. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) notes that typically the program attracts individuals age 40 to 69 with a desire to be involved in cooperative activities in developing countries and use their extensive experience, especially their specialized knowledge and technological expertise.¹¹¹

JICA is a large-scale organization that offers a plethora of senior volunteer programs and “is advancing its activities around the pillars of a field-oriented approach, human security, and enhanced effectiveness, efficiency, and speed.”¹¹² Of all countries searched in English, Japan provided the most programs for retirees including seniors and the largest variety of opportunities; they offered hands-on volunteering as well as very specific skilled-based positions.

Volunteer Centre Programs

Volunteer Centres exist throughout Canada and around the world. While the definition of a volunteer centre can vary widely, their commonality is that they are defined as either physical or online spaces that provide volunteers and potential volunteers with information. Typically, a volunteer centre will have a searchable database for volunteers to peruse, or a volunteer coordinator to meet with and most will also offer programs that appeal to different groups (e.g. youth, families, schools, employers, etc.). While some volunteer centres researched offered programs labelled for seniors, (e.g. Flourish after 55 from Volunteer Arlington, Virginia, U.S.), they appear to be no different from basic matching tools used for any type of volunteer. Other volunteer centres (e.g. St. Louis, Missouri, U.S. and Cambodia), offer programs that match seniors with young children in order to improve health and wellbeing. While both programs have altruistic goals, neither seems to be something designed exclusively for seniors.



Volunteer Centres in Richmond BC, Nepal, Kenya, Lebanon and Romania are using skills-based volunteer programs to match seniors with community groups and organizations. All note that with boomers retiring, society and the work force is at risk of losing invaluable skills and that seniors are not only simply wanted as volunteers, but also needed. One may wonder why so many countries and organizations are keen to engage senior volunteers. The National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre in Singapore has the answer: seniors have the time, skills, interest, networks and desire to help those in need. Senior citizens, especially those who have retired, are likely to have more time to volunteer regularly. They are also likely to be available during office hours, unlike other types of volunteers who can generally contribute only after office hours or on weekends.

Faith Based

Religious organizations play the dominant role in community service and volunteering, both for the public in general and for boomers specifically. In the AARP Civic Involvement Study (1997), religious organizations were the most frequently cited beneficiary of volunteer efforts (33 percent), followed closely by school/education groups (32 percent). Youth

¹¹¹ The Japan International Cooperation Agency. (2012). <http://www.jica.go.jp/english/operations/schemes/citizen/volunteers.html>

¹¹² The Japan International Cooperation Agency. (2012). <http://www.jica.go.jp/english/about/index.html>

activities (17 percent), neighbourhood/community activities (16 percent), disease-related causes (14 percent), and health care (12 percent) rounded out the list.

In addition, in Canada religious based organizations are the most common location where for seniors to volunteer; 33 percent of seniors age 65 and over devote their volunteer time to faith based programs.¹¹³ Researching religion based senior volunteer programs did not yield a large number of results; there were some Christian, Jewish and Islamic programs found. Similarly to volunteer centre programs, there were a variety of program types: general matching, voluntourism, youth matching and a social circle. While all have the word “senior” in the program title, no program appears to be unique from those positioned for any other age group.



Other non-profits and organizations are also working to garner the attention of seniors by designing programs to pique their interests and apply their skills. REACH is a UK based program that helps voluntary organizations realize their mission statements through the use of senior volunteers’ skills. In Minneapolis MN, Women in Progress places retired professionals in organizations to assist with strategic planning. The businesses may be small scale or global in size. This allows for a wide variety of skills and knowledge to be applied by the volunteers.

Summary of Senior-Focused Programs Around the World

As boomers around the world retire and become seniors, the number of seniors who want to be engaged will grow. The AARP Staying Ahead of the Curve survey (2003) of workers age 45 plus found them strongly connected to their community, with half reporting a strong connection with their profession (50 percent), followed by religion (45 percent), coworkers (44 percent), hobbies (43 percent), neighbourhood (41 percent), age-related groups (39 percent), professional groups (18 percent), racial-ethnic groups (17 percent), and alumni groups (9 percent), which is a strong indication of what type of organizations these workers may volunteer for as they continue to age. The strong connection to their work could be an indication that these individuals will seek skills-based volunteer opportunities with the option for continued learning as they age.

Most boomers favourably predisposed to volunteering are already doing so. Boomers are less likely to volunteer out of a sense of duty or obligation than are older cohorts. Efforts to engage boomers in volunteer activities as they age would probably be most successful by focusing on maintaining the involvement of current boomer volunteers. While this report did not research volunteer programs around the globe targeted to baby boomers, appeals likely to succeed with this group would include those focusing on self-development, self-interest, and volunteering as a social, beneficial and enjoyable experience. The volunteer experience needs to be presented as an opportunity; one that is time efficient, community based, and familiar. Extending current involvement or using current organizations and activities as a bridge to others are strategies that have the greatest potential for success.

The aging of the baby boomers presents both opportunities and challenges with regard to maximizing their volunteer potential. The size of this generation, coupled with its already extensive volunteer activity, provides a “jump-start” to this process. The life stage of boomers contributes to a high incidence of current volunteering. Boomers are most likely to be volunteering with youth focused activities or activities associated with their place of worship. These activities are typically focused on their local community.

¹¹³ Statistics Canada. (2010). Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering, and Participating.

Boomers are likely to work longer than the generation that preceded them. While conventional wisdom suggests this would be a disincentive to volunteering, there is evidence to the contrary. Volunteering typically does not substitute for paid work among retirees; moreover, connections to the workplace contribute to a broader social network, increased economic security, and better access to health care. These conditions in turn contribute to a greater propensity to volunteer.

The attitudes that boomers hold towards retirement send mixed messages as well. Most boomers anticipate an active, enjoyable retirement, and these expectations are associated with an increased expectation of volunteering. On the other hand, boomers are noteworthy for their independence, self-reliance, and self-indulgence, factors not typically associated with a propensity to volunteer. The religious orientation and practices of boomers will also impact their volunteering decisions, given the centrality of religious volunteering across age groups and its enhanced importance in later life.

Boomers volunteer for a variety of reasons, but are less likely than the generation that preceded them into retirement to volunteer out of a sense of duty or obligation. They are more likely to volunteer as a result of social, self-development, self-esteem, or leisure-focused motivations. Episodic, familiar, community-based opportunities are also preferred. Appeals for volunteer commitment will need to approach boomers in this context.

Section 7

Conclusion

As of 2011, 43% of the Canada population were older adults (29% were baby boomers and 14.7% were senior adults).¹¹⁴ The 2010 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating demonstrates that at least a third of adults age 45 and over volunteer with non-profit organizations. Moreover, while their volunteer rates decline with increases in age, most likely due to health, mobility and caregiving issues, the average number of hours these volunteers contribute increases. These three age groups - shadow boomers (45-54 years of age), baby boomers (55-64 years of age), and seniors (65 years of age and older) - collectively contributed more than 1 billion hours in 2010 alone.¹¹⁵

There are some interesting gender and age differences when examining volunteer rates and average hours of volunteering. With boomers (aged 45 to 54 years) and shadow boomers (aged 55 to 64 years), females tend to volunteer more hours per year than males. For seniors between 65 and 75 years of age, females were slightly more likely to volunteer and they volunteered more hours per year; however, over the age of 75, males were more likely to volunteer than females and males also volunteered more average hours per year.

Rural volunteers consider themselves to be more religious than urban volunteers and they tend to volunteer more with religious organizations. They may also contribute large numbers of hours to the community; however, more research is needed on this unique group of volunteers. Baby boomers also have unique characteristics, motivations, and patterns of volunteering and, as they age, they are unlikely to volunteer in the same way as the current generation of senior adults.¹¹⁶ They place greater emphasis on contributing and developing skills through volunteering, tend to be more results-orientation, and are juggling multiple roles and interests. Longer life expectancies, later pension eligibility, increased demands on families to provide caregiving, and the growing number of older adults choosing to live in condominiums will all have an influence on how they will engage in their communities.

When examining where volunteering takes place in the community, adults age 45 and over often volunteer within sports and recreation, social services, education and research and religious non-profit organizations. Involvement with education and research decreases quickly with advancing age, while their contribution to these other organizational types remains relatively stable. In addition, older adults frequently engage in specific types of volunteer activities; they organize or supervise events, fundraise or sit on a board of directors.

Seniors reap many benefits from volunteering within the community. Numerous health and social benefits of volunteering have been identified; including better physical functioning, enhanced emotional wellbeing and strengthened mental capacity. There are also many social advantages; volunteering prevents isolation by helping individuals to meet new people and stay connected within the community. Research into the health benefits of volunteering continues as we learn more about this topic. Volunteering also provides learning and skill development and new experiences. Volunteering expands the horizons of older adults.

Older adults can also experience some barriers and challenges to volunteering, in terms of their changing physical requirements, scheduling, transportation, language and culture, comfort with technology, and expenses related to

¹¹⁴ Statistics Canada, 2011 Census. (2011). (Highlights of Population distribution by age and sex)

¹¹⁵ Statistics Canada. (2010). Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering, and Participating

¹¹⁶ Speevak Sladowski, P. (2010). Big Shoes to Fill.

volunteer involvement. The social and economic value of volunteering has been clearly demonstrated. Across the globe, important work continues in this area. Volunteers contribute enormously to the quality of life in communities and to society as a whole and at the same time, their quality of life is enhanced through volunteering.

Our aging population makes senior involvement imperative. Today, there are 9.6 million Baby Boomers. In addition, the proportion of seniors in Canada is 14.8% - almost 5 million individuals – and the Boomer population will make these numbers swell.¹¹⁷ It is estimated that the number of seniors will rise to 16% in 2016¹¹⁸ and then to as much as 25% by 2036.¹¹⁹ With this ‘greying’ of the population in communities across Canada, there are incredible opportunities that non-profit organizations, municipalities and other levels of government can embrace. Seniors represent great local strength and community potential. While our society is in the midst of these significant demographic changes, it is a critical time to develop policy initiatives to maintain older adult involvement in political and community affairs as well as providing support and encouragement for volunteering among older adults. In fact, demographic changes highlight the pressing need for innovative policies and programs that support and encourage volunteer and civic participation and ensure seniors continue to have a voice in the community.

Older volunteers have a wealth of skills, knowledge and experience to offer non-profit organizations in the community. Strategies recommended to effectively engage older adults as volunteers include skills-based volunteering, transitions-focused (e.g. integration into retirement planning), condo-volunteering, citizen science, and the broader area of research and education. These approaches can incorporate family volunteering, voluntourism, citizen scientists, and a range of opportunities within a spectrum of volunteer engagement. We anticipate that more senior-related volunteer strategies will emerge and expand, such as seniors helping seniors, intergenerational, education-related and online volunteering.

It is important to support the active engagement of seniors in society. Together with their rising numbers, their education, health and wealth and the social and economic support their volunteer work provides, they are a strong force within local communities and the broader society. They have wisdom to share and valuable contributions to make. Volunteers are citizens who participate in society to give back, make a difference and contribute to others. Society needs the knowledgeable and talented baby boomer and senior populations to continue contributing. In addition, as more research demonstrates the health and social benefits of volunteering, these individuals have much to gain personally from their involvement in the community.

While many organizations have developed programs and practices to accommodate the specific needs of older adult volunteers, many others have yet to direct their attention to this issue. Senior volunteering programs exist around the world and they tend to focus on exchanges, intergenerational activities, and opportunities to transfer skills. The examples of programs in this report can serve as an inspiration to communities, policy makers, non-profit organizations, volunteer managers and older adults themselves, as more must be done to engage and support older adult volunteers.

Volunteering has changed over the past decade through changing demographics, globalization, advances in technology, shifts in public policy, and the downturn in the economy.¹²⁰ Policy makers can promote volunteering among older adults

¹¹⁷ Statistics Canada. (2012). The Canadian Population in 2011: Age and Sex, 2011 Census. Catalogue No. 98-311-X2011001. Ottawa: Minister of Industry.

¹¹⁸ Statistics Canada. (2007). A Portrait of Seniors 2006 in Canada (Catalogue no. 89-519-XIE). Ottawa, Canada: Minister of Industry. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-519-x/89-519-x2006001-eng.pdf>.

¹¹⁹ Statistics Canada. (2012). The Canadian Population in 2011: Age and Sex, 2011 Census. Catalogue No. 98-311-X2011001. Ottawa: Minister of Industry.

¹²⁰ Volunteer Canada and Manulife Financial. (2010). [Bridging the Gap: Enriching the Volunteer Experience to Build a Better Future for our Communities](#), Ottawa.

as well as strengthen the capacity for volunteer-involving organizations to better respond to the unique characteristics of the current and emerging generation of senior volunteers. The key to moving the volunteer agenda forward is through the meaningful engagement of baby boomers and seniors in non-profits within communities across Canada using innovative strategies that promote wellbeing while assisting with life transition, by promoting individual development and learning, as well as through community-based programs that engage and stimulate seniors. With this research demonstrating the rationale and these strategies to better attract, place, engage and retain older adults as volunteers, we are leading the way for forward-thinking organizations and their communities to promote volunteering and support and manage volunteers in a changing society.

Highlights

1. There are close to 15 million older adults in Canada: more than 5 million seniors age 65 and over and close to 10 million baby boomers (45 – 64 years old). Together, they make up 43% of the population.
2. Baby boomers and senior adults contributed more than 1 billion volunteer hours in 2010. Older adults have a lower volunteer rate than younger age-groups; however, they contribute, on average, more hours per year. This is likely due to health and mobility issues that increase with age, while availability tends to increase with age, due to fewer work and family responsibilities.
3. Among those 45 to 64 years of age and those age 65 to 75 years of age, females tend to volunteer more and to contribute more average hours per year than males. However, over the age of 75, males were more likely to volunteer than females and males also volunteered more average hours per year.
4. Baby boomers tend to volunteer to supervise events, serve on boards and committees, or participate in fund raising, while seniors are more likely to volunteer to provide support to individuals through counselling and giving advice and to provide support to health care services. Adults age 45 and over tend to volunteer within sports and recreation, social services, education and research and religious non-profit organizations. Involvement with education and research drops quickly with advancing age, while seniors' contribution to other types of organizations remains relatively stable.
5. Baby boomers tend to seek meaningful volunteer activities and have consistently high rates of volunteering. They are loyal volunteers who have time and flexible schedules, making them highly valued as volunteers; however, they also have high expectations for their volunteer experiences at organizations. In addition to a desire to contribute to the community, seniors are motivated to meet new people and volunteer with friends, whereas baby boomers are more often motivated to use or develop skills.
6. Volunteering provides health benefits to older adults. It offers them significant physical, emotional and cognitive or brain health benefits. It also enhances social support, social inclusion and civic engagement.
7. Senior adults may experience challenges and barriers to volunteering related to transportation and scheduling issues and out-of-pocket expenses.
8. Boomers, shadow boomers and seniors will increasingly be interested in having a strong voice in political and social issues. Programs to educate and support individuals in citizen advocacy and civic participation will become increasingly important.
9. Volunteers bring both social and economic benefits to non-profit organizations through their volunteer work.
10. Key strategies for engaging older adults include those that promote well-being during times of transition, such as retirement planning and condo volunteering, as well as strategies that promote personal development and learning, such as skills-based volunteering, voluntourism and citizen science.

11. Public policy and programs aimed at promoting volunteering among older adults and strengthening the capacity of organizations to involve older adults within a broader spectrum of engagement will be critical for the future of citizen engagement and volunteering in Canada.

Section 8

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

Suzanne L. Cook is a gerontologist and researcher on volunteering and older adults and a speaker and consultant to organizations, associations and government on the implications of meaningful contribution for healthy aging and social policy. Her scholarly work examines lifelong learning and finding meaning, purpose and renewal through new roles and activities during the second half of life. Suzanne holds a doctorate in adult education and community development from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Her website is www.suzannecook.ca

Paula Speevak Sladowski is the Director of Programs, Policy, and Applied Research at Volunteer Canada, where she focuses on developing tools and resources that improve practice and policy in the areas of volunteer engagement and community resiliency. She has provided leadership for pan-Canadian research on trends in volunteering, the 2012 Edition of the Screening Handbook, and several guides for volunteer-involving organizations. Paula holds the McGill-McConnell Master of Management for National Voluntary Sector Leaders. Visit www.volunteer.ca www.benevoles.ca