

Recruitment and Retention of Volunteers



The involvement of volunteers is a defining aspect of the nonprofit and voluntary sector. According to the 2003 National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations (NSNVO), almost all of Canada's estimated 161,000 nonprofit and voluntary organizations involve volunteers in some way. Collectively, organizations report a combined volunteer complement of just over 19 million.¹ Approximately one million of these volunteers serve on boards of directors. The rest are engaged in non-board activities such as program delivery and fundraising.

The NSNVO asked organizations about the challenges they face recruiting board members and the types of non-board volunteers they need. It also asked if they had problems retaining volunteers.

Over half of organizations reported problems recruiting board members (56%) and non-board volunteers (57%). In both cases, 13% of organizations said that the problem is serious. Just under half (49%) of organizations reported problems retaining volunteers; 9% said that the problem is serious.

the types of volunteers they need is a problem, while at least 59% of organizations with 10 or more volunteers said it is a problem. Similarly, 48% of organizations with one to nine volunteers said that obtaining board members is a problem, compared to at least 58% of organizations with 10 or more volunteers. Organizations with one to nine volunteers are more likely to report difficulty obtaining board members than difficulty obtaining non-board volunteers. The reverse is true among larger organizations.

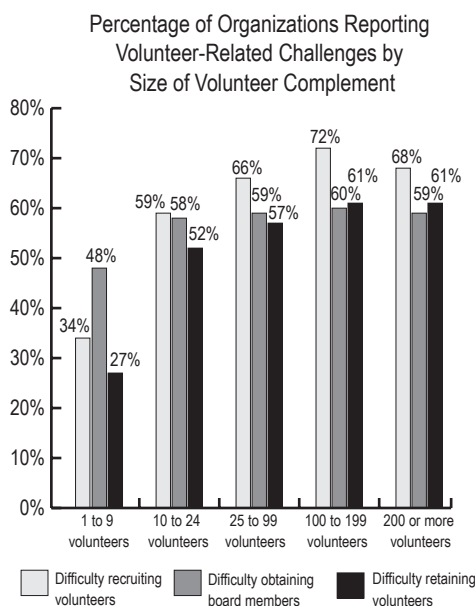
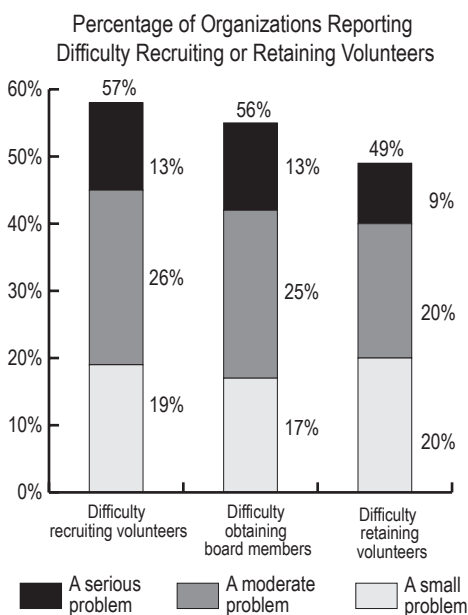
Size of Volunteer Complement

In general, challenges relating to volunteer recruitment and retention increase as the number of volunteers involved in an organization increases. The largest difference, however, is between organizations with fewer than 10 volunteers and those with 10 or more. For example, 34% of organizations with one to nine volunteers said that recruiting

Revenue Size

Organizations with annual revenues between \$30,000 and \$499,999 are the most likely to report problems with volunteer recruitment and retention. At least 61% of these organizations report problems recruiting non-board volunteers, at least 59% report problems obtaining board members, and at least 52% report problems retaining volunteers.

Among larger organizations (those with annual revenues of \$500,000 or more), the likelihood of having difficulty obtaining board members decreases as revenues increase. However, the likelihood of having difficulty retaining volunteers *increases* as revenues increase.



Note: Percentages may not add to totals due to rounding.

¹ Because people may volunteer with more than one organization, the number of volunteers that organizations engage exceeds the number of volunteers in the population.

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It is important to note that, although volunteer recruitment issues rank very highly among organizations generally, among the largest organizations they are secondary to paid staff recruitment issues. For example, 66% of organizations with revenues of \$10 million or more report difficulty recruiting the type of paid staff they need (data not shown). In contrast, only 54% report difficulty recruiting non-board volunteers and 42% report difficulty obtaining board members.

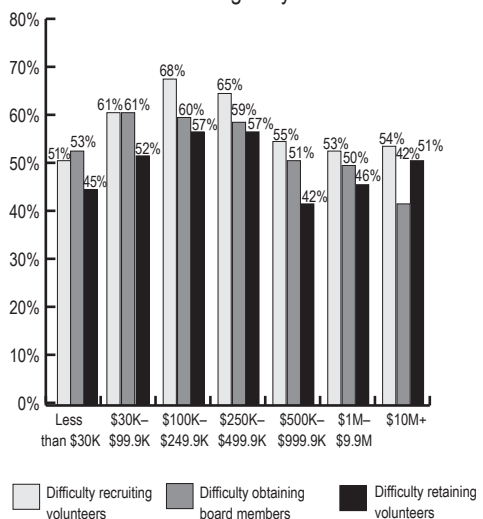
Activity Area

Organizations operating in the areas of Law, Advocacy and Politics and Health are most likely to report difficulty recruiting the type of volunteers they need (74% and 71% respectively). These organizations are also most likely to report difficulty obtaining board members (70% and 67%, respectively). Organizations working in the area of Development and Housing are the least

likely to report difficulty recruiting the type of volunteers they need. In most activity areas, volunteer recruitment is a more common problem than board recruitment. There are a few exceptions, however, including Development and Housing (58% of organizations report problems recruiting board members and 42% report problems recruiting non-board volunteers); Hospitals, Universities and Colleges (60% vs. 52%); and Environment (59% vs. 52%).

Percentage of Organizations Reporting Volunteer-Related Challenges by Activity Area

Percentage of Organizations Reporting Volunteer-Related Challenges by Revenue Size



The National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations (NSNVO) was conducted by a consortium of organizations consisting of Imagine Canada (formerly the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy), l'Alliance de recherche universités-communautés en économie sociale à l'Université du Québec à Montréal, the Canada West Foundation, the Canadian Council on Social Development, the Capacity Development Network at the University of Victoria, the Community Services Council of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Voluntary and Non-profit Sector Organization of Manitoba, Queen's University School of Policy Studies, and Statistics Canada.

A summary of the survey findings may be found in *Cornerstones of Community: Highlights of the National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations*, available at www.nonprofitscan.ca.



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