

The Benefits of Volunteering

Nonprofit and voluntary organizations, individuals, and society as a whole benefit from the activities of volunteers. Volunteers themselves also benefit from their volunteer activities, according to the 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (NSGVP).¹

Top benefits of volunteering

More than three quarters (79%) of volunteers said that their volunteer activities helped them with their interpersonal skills, such as understanding people better, motivating others, and dealing with difficult situations.

Just over two thirds (68%) of volunteers said that volunteering helped them to develop better communication skills. Sixty three percent reported increased knowledge about issues related to their volunteering.

The effects of volunteering more

The percentage of volunteers who reported gaining specific skills as a result of volunteering increased steadily with the number of hours they contributed. For example, over three quarters (78%) of volunteers who contributed 188 or more hours during 2000 reported gaining communication skills, compared to just over half (52%) of those who contributed 19 hours or less. Similar, but less pronounced, patterns are seen with other skills.

Job skills as a motivation to volunteer

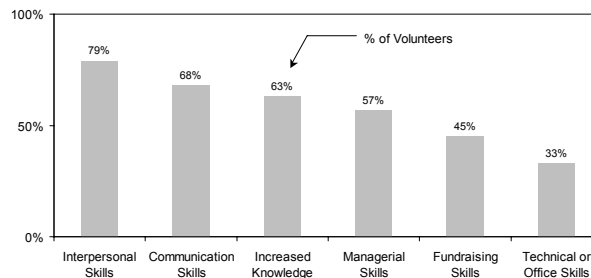
Volunteering is often seen as an opportunity to acquire job-related skills and improve job opportunities. Almost one quarter (23%) of volunteers said that they volunteered for this reason.

The desire to improve job opportunities is a much more common motivation for volunteering among younger and unemployed volunteers than it is among other volunteers. Over half (55%) of volunteers aged 15 to 24 said that they volunteered to improve their job opportunities. This dropped to 27% among those aged 25 to 34. Forty-two percent* of unemployed volunteers gave this reason for volunteering, compared to only 22% of volunteers who were employed or not in the labour force.

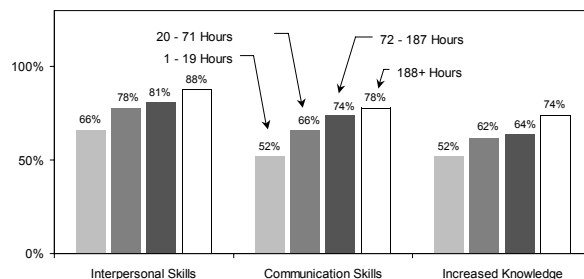
¹ NSGVP estimates are based on reports of charitable giving and volunteering over a one-year period by Canadians aged 15 and older.

* Sample size limitations affect the reliability of this estimate.

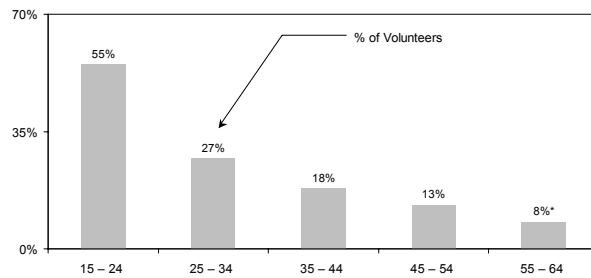
Percentage Who Reported Gaining Skills from Volunteer Activities



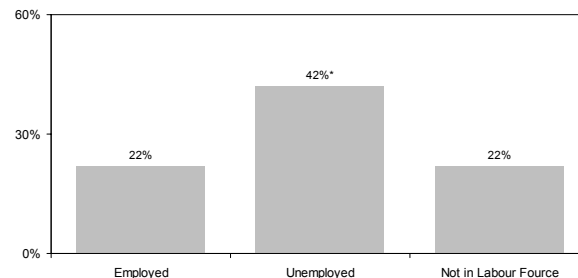
Percentage Who Reported Gaining Skills by Average Number of Hours Volunteered



Volunteered to Improve Job Opportunities, by Age



Volunteered to Improve Job Opportunities, by Employment Status



Volunteering and employment-related benefits

Generally, the same groups that are most likely to volunteer to improve their job prospects are also more likely to say that volunteering increased their skills and improved their job prospects.

For example, volunteers aged 15 to 24 were more likely than older volunteers to report gaining increased communication skills (82%) and interpersonal skills (77%) from their volunteer activities. However, those aged 55 to 64 were more likely than other volunteers to report gaining knowledge from their volunteer activities.

Unemployed volunteers were more likely than other volunteers to report gaining communication skills. Three quarters (75%) of unemployed volunteers reported gaining communication skills, compared to 68% of employed volunteers and 66% of volunteers who were not in the labour force. Similar, but less pronounced, patterns were seen with other skills.

Just under half (49%) of employed volunteers aged 15 to 24 said their volunteer activities gave them new skills that they could apply directly to their job. Additionally, almost one quarter (24%) of volunteers aged 15 to 24 said that their volunteer activities had helped them in the past to obtain employment.

Perhaps the most compelling finding regarding the effectiveness of volunteer activity in helping people to obtain employment is that 28% of unemployed volunteers (and 16% of employed volunteers) said that their volunteering had helped them obtain a job in the past and 62% of unemployed volunteers believed that it would help them to find a job in the future.

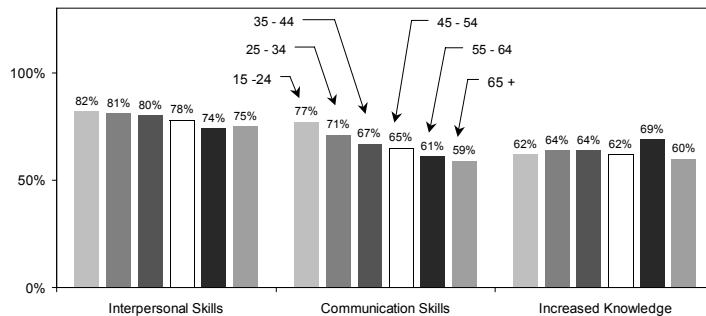
For more information on the 1997 and 2000 National Survey for Giving, Volunteering and Participating, including full text of the highlight report, *Caring Canadians*, *Involved Canadians*, please visit www.givingandvolunteering.ca.

We would like to acknowledge the support of our funder, Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), for the production of this fact sheet.

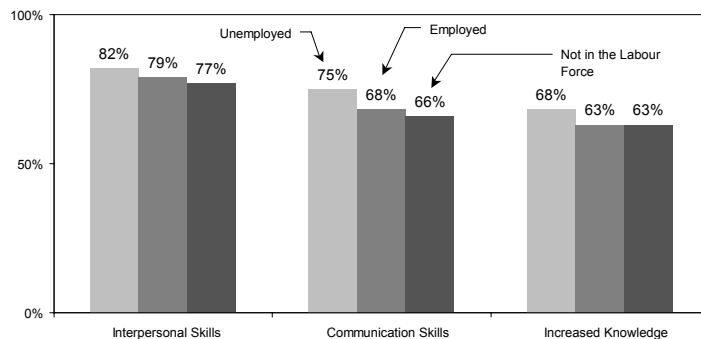
© 2004, Canadian Centre for Philanthropy

Canadian Centre for Philanthropy Research Program
425 University Ave., Suite 700
Toronto, ON M5G 1T6
tel. 416.597.2293
fax. 416.597.2294

Percentage who Report Gaining Skills, by Age



Percentage Who Report Gaining Skills, by Employment Status



Job-Related Benefits, by Age

