

# Study: Volunteering in Canada, 2010

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In 2010, more than 13.3 million people—accounting for 47% of Canadians aged 15 and over—did volunteer work.

Overall, volunteers devoted almost 2.1 billion hours to their volunteer activities: a volume of work that is equivalent to just under 1.1 million full-time jobs.

A small proportion of these volunteers (10%) accounted for 53% of all hours given to non-profit and charitable organizations.

They dedicated a minimum of 390 hours to their volunteering activities on an annual basis, the equivalent of almost 10 weeks in a full-time job.

Another 15% of volunteers logged between 161 and 390 hours, corresponding to between 4 and almost 10 full-time weeks of unpaid work. They contributed 24% of the total hours devoted to volunteer work in 2010.

## Top volunteers more likely to be university graduates

The 25% of volunteers (or 12% of Canadians) who gave the most hours are defined as "top volunteers." They spent 161 hours or more on volunteer activities during the 12 months preceding the 2010 survey.

This amount of volunteer hours is the equivalent of at least four weeks of full-time work (based on a 40-hour week). All told, top volunteers accounted for 77% of the volunteer hours contributed in 2010.

University graduates were twice as likely to be top volunteers as people with less than a high school diploma. Parents with only school-aged children at home were twice as likely to be top volunteers as parents whose children were all under the age of six.

Religion plays an important role in volunteering. In 2010, 21% of people who went to religious services at least once a week were top volunteers. This was more than double the proportion of 10% among people who attended less frequently, including adults who did not attend at all.

In total, 65% of Canadians who attended religious services at least once a week volunteered, compared with 44% of those who did not attend weekly or at all. Volunteers who were frequent religious attendees dedicated about 40% more hours on average than other volunteers.

## Sports and recreation and social services sectors get the most support

In 2010, the bulk of volunteering in Canada was done for five types of non-profit and charitable organizations.

About 12% of people aged 15 and over did volunteer work for sports and recreational organizations, and 12% for social services organizations. About 10% devoted their time and energy to associations engaged in education and research, another 9% to religious organizations, and 6% to those supporting health issues.

On average, volunteers dedicated 120 hours to sports and recreation, 117 hours to the religious sector and 116 hours to social services.

## Most volunteers motivated by desire to contribute to community

The vast majority of volunteers are motivated by their desire to contribute to their community: 93% gave this reason in 2010.

Additionally, 78% wanted to make good use of their skills and experience, 59% said they had been personally affected by the cause the organization supported, and 48% volunteered because they had friends who were involved.



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Of people who had not formally volunteered in 2010, two-thirds cited a lack of time as the most common barrier.

Another 45% had not become involved because no one had asked them to. This suggests they might sign up to volunteer if they were approached.

**Note to readers**

*This release is based on the "Volunteering in Canada" article in the April 2012 edition of Canadian Social Trends, which presents information about the volunteer activities of Canadians during the 12-month period preceding the 2010 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating.*

*It discusses the rates of volunteering, the number of hours dedicated by Canadians and the types of organizations they support. It describes the key socioeconomic characteristics of volunteers in general, and profiles the "top volunteers," who contribute hundreds of hours to charitable organizations.*

*It also examines the types of volunteer activities Canadians engage in, how they become involved, their motivations for volunteering and the barriers preventing them from doing more volunteering.*

**Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 4430.**

The article "[Volunteering in Canada](#)" is now available in the April 2012 online issue of *Canadian Social Trends*, no. 93 (11-008-X, free), from the *Key resource* module of our website under *Publications*.

Also in this issue of *Canadian Social Trends* is the article "Charitable giving by Canadians." Using the 2010 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, this article compares information about donors and donations in 2010 and 2007. It profiles the types of organizations that received the largest amounts of donations and looks at motivations for donating and reasons for not giving more.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Statistics Canada's National Contact Centre (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 613-951-8116; [infostats@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:infostats@statcan.gc.ca)) or the Media Hotline (613-951-4636; [mediahotline@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:mediahotline@statcan.gc.ca)).