

# A ROADMAP TO **MEET THE MOMENT**

Co-Creating a National  
Volunteer Action Strategy  
for Canada

# CONTENTS

## **Executive Summary • 4**

### **1. Introduction • 6**

- a) Background and Context • 6
- b) The Case for a National Volunteer Action Strategy • 8
- c) About this Roadmap • 9

### **2. The State of Volunteering and Participation in Canada • 10**

- a) Setting the Scene: Canada's Volunteer Ecosystem in Numbers • 10
- b) Beyond the Numbers: Emerging Themes and Impacts • 15
- c) Volunteering Infrastructure: Gaps, Assets, and Opportunities • 32

### **3. Strategy Development: Insights and Considerations • 39**

- a) Lessons Learned from Other Jurisdictions • 39
- b) Key Considerations • 45

### **4. The Way Forward • 48**

- a) Cultivating a Network • 48
- b) Planning • 51
- c) Impact • 52
- d) Next Steps • 54



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Canada's longstanding tradition of volunteerism plays a vital role in upholding our social support system and building community resilience.

**V**olunteerism is also a powerful vehicle for helping us address critical social, economic, health, and environmental issues.

However, recent trends signal a crisis in volunteering and participation, marked by declining volunteer rates and increasing demands on organizations that provide essential services. Overlaying this crisis, we are seeing a growing loneliness epidemic and eroding social cohesion, both of which undermine the health and resilience of our communities. The magnitude of these has brought into sharp relief the need for a collective effort to build better infrastructure to support our communities.

Against this backdrop, we must solidify volunteering and participation as foundational building blocks of a strong, inclusive, and resilient future. A National Volunteer Action Strategy will help us do this. It will serve as an anchor and a compass for a movement to build belonging and inclusion by optimizing and futureproofing volunteering so that everyone in Canada can participate and benefit.

**Volunteer Canada, along with a growing network of stakeholders, is laying the foundation to develop this Strategy.**

**As part of this effort, Volunteer Canada (with generous support from the Lawson Foundation and Canada Life) led a research and consultation process to explore the feasibility and interest in a National Volunteer Action Strategy.** This Roadmap is the culmination of this process. The following pages outline a series of key themes that emerged through research and discussion (including the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, demographic shifts, the cost-of-living crisis, eroding social connections, equity concerns, technological advancements, evolving conceptions of volunteering, and emergency management needs) along with important considerations, recommendations, and a proposed path forward for Strategy development and implementation.



# 📍 INTRODUCTION

## A. BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Historically, Canada has boasted a robust and resilient volunteer spirit.

Canada's social support system and the volunteer landscape are closely intertwined: the nonprofit and charitable sector is responsible for delivering a broad range of essential services, and, with 58% of charitable organizations having no paid staff,<sup>1</sup> volunteers play an integral role. In addition to upholding these direct forms of support, volunteering forges stronger, more resilient communities<sup>2</sup> and promotes a sense of meaning and belonging<sup>3</sup>. To name just a few of the many benefits to those who volunteer, volunteering empowers youth to act on their values and passions, provides job-seekers with experience, enhances the integration of newcomers, amplifies students' learning, helps parents returning to the workforce to refresh their skills, engages employees in the workplace, and improves brain health in older adults. In this way, volunteering touches multiple facets of society, yielding benefits for individuals who volunteer, organizations, communities, and the entire planet.\*

But volunteerism does not exist in a vacuum; just as it helps us adapt to changing circumstances, changing circumstances can also affect, and even challenge, the volunteer landscape. While COVID-19 placed new strains on the system, many issues challenging the volunteer landscape pre-date the pandemic.

“[...] Volunteering fits into the wellbeing cycle of communities. Either because volunteering leads to wellbeing for volunteers, or because when people feel well, they are more likely to get involved. Increasing wellbeing – through volunteering or other means – is good for individuals and the communities they are part of.”

Source: [What Works Wellbeing, 2020](#)

\* See the **Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement (2017)**, developed by Volunteer Canada, for more about the value of volunteering.

In 2019, a **Special Senate Committee on Canada's charitable sector** identified many of these long-standing issues and urged the federal government to "implement a national volunteer strategy to encourage volunteerism by all Canadians in their communities, recognizing that the needs of northern, rural and urban communities are unique."<sup>4</sup> Volunteer Canada was identified as a potential leader of this effort. Shortly after the Committee issued the report, COVID-19 hit, and priorities shifted.

Today, signals are increasing that volunteering and participation are no longer a given – and are indeed in crisis. We are in the midst of a loneliness epidemic,<sup>5</sup> and the negative effects are building<sup>6</sup> – we are less healthy, less happy, more distrustful of one another and our institutions, and ultimately less resilient. The high cost of living is causing major stress and hardship, with growing deprivation spurring increased demand on the organizations that provide so many of the essential services that make up our already-frail social safety net. There is a clear need to scale up our collective response to these crises, but with volunteer rates in steep decline, many nonprofit and charitable organizations don't have the support or infrastructure to operate at the required scale.

“We continue to hear that our current social safety net is complex, difficult to access, inefficient, outdated, inadequate and stigmatizing. Navigating this fragmented and complicated maze can be traumatizing for people who have already been made most marginal in society.”

**Source: National Advisory Council on Poverty (2023)**

**Against this backdrop, we must revisit the Committee's recommendation and chart a bold new vision that solidifies volunteering as a foundational component of building a strong, inclusive, and resilient future.**

## B. THE CASE FOR A NATIONAL VOLUNTEER ACTION STRATEGY

While excellent examples of public policy that protects, supports, and facilitates volunteering exist in municipalities, provinces, and territories, we lack an integrated, consistent, and cohesive approach at the national level. A National Volunteer Action Strategy will serve as an anchor and a compass for increasing volunteerism and participation in Canada.

**Developing a National Volunteer Action Strategy** is a generational opportunity for a comprehensive and coordinated effort to:

1

**Address the volunteering and participation crisis:** A Strategy will clearly define the problem and inspire solutions, participation and engagement frameworks, and pathways. It will also illuminate barriers to participation (and how they appear across contexts, places, and demographics) and shore up support through policy, investments, and organizational service design.

---

2

**Increase belonging and inclusion to address broader challenges related to democratic and civic erosion:** A Strategy will position and promote volunteering as a way to combat social isolation. It will guide us in modernizing how we integrate fairness and justice in volunteering and participation to break down barriers and increase accessible and inclusive experiences.

---

3

**Create opportunities to address complex challenges and support future generations:** A Strategy will help set the stage and forecast where and how volunteers might be needed in the future, including tactics for directing volunteer efforts toward combating poverty, inequity, climate change, and better responding to emergencies.



## C. ABOUT THIS ROADMAP

**W**ith generous support from the Lawson Foundation, Volunteer Canada led a research and consultative process to assess feasibility and gauge interest in a National Volunteer Action Strategy.

Throughout 2023, we gathered insights from various sources, including an online survey of Volunteer Canada's membership, 1-1 consultations with over 30 sector leaders from the philanthropic, nonprofit, and corporate sectors, and seven roundtables from Victoria to St. John's. We also conducted a literature review of existing research and evidence on volunteering (including volunteer characteristics, motivations, and barriers) and a jurisdictional scan of volunteering frameworks and strategies developed by other countries, including Australia, Nigeria, Scotland, Ireland, and the United Kingdom.

As part of this research and learning, Volunteer Canada received generous support from the Canada Life Foundation to examine leadership and advisory structures that advance and share information about volunteerism, both across the provinces and diverse sub-sectors. Their contribution helped:

- **Identify structures and mechanisms** to increase capacity for eliciting and elevating organizing patterns and local gaps or needs; and
- **Identify strategies and frameworks** for building on local activity to inform and develop a fuller picture of activity from coast to coast to coast.

This Roadmap is the culmination of this consultative process. It serves to summarize insights from the consultations and offer guidance in building the foundation for a National Volunteer Action Strategy, including considerations, recommendations, and an operational plan for its development. The Roadmap identifies a series of key themes that emerged over the consultative process as forces shaping the volunteer landscape today, including the COVID-19 pandemic, Canada's shifting demographic makeup, cost-of-living and workforce dynamics, eroding social connections and trust, equity concerns, technology, changing conceptions of volunteering, and crisis management and response.

# 📍 THE STATE OF VOLUNTEERING AND PARTICIPATION IN CANADA

## A. SETTING THE SCENE: CANADA'S VOLUNTEER ECOSYSTEM IN NUMBERS

**H**istorically, formal volunteer rates among Canadians aged 15 and older have remained relatively steady, ranging from 41%-47% between 2004-2018 for formal volunteering,<sup>7</sup> and typically around double the formal rate for informal volunteering (ranging from 74% to 83% between 2004-2018).<sup>8</sup>

The 2018 General Social Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participation (GSS-GVP) provides a snapshot of volunteerism before the pandemic, reinforcing several historical demographic trends:<sup>9</sup>



# CANADA'S VOLUNTEERS: A SNAPSHOT FROM 2018

---

## HOW MANY PEOPLE VOLUNTEER?

- In 2018, over **24 million** (about 8 in 10) Canadians aged 15 and over volunteered (formally and informally), dedicating around 5 billion hours (equivalent to over 2.5 million full-time jobs) to their efforts.
- **12.7 million** Canadians aged 15 years and older (41%) volunteered formally, devoting over 1.6 billion hours to these commitments.
- Almost **23 million** people aged 15 years and older (74%) engaged in informal volunteering, devoting over 3.4 billion hours to these commitments

---

## WHO VOLUNTEERS?

- In keeping with previous years, the likelihood of volunteering generally decreased with age, although the oldest generations contributed the most volunteer hours.
- **Gen Z (43%)** engaged the most in formal and informal volunteering and constituted the smallest proportion of non-volunteers (13%) compared to older generations. Matures comprised a more significant proportion of non-volunteers (36%), followed by Baby Boomers (23%).
- **Women** were more likely than men to participate in formal volunteering (44% versus 38%), but this gender difference was only significant for Millennials and Baby Boomers.
- **Baby Boomers (31%)** and **Matures (40%)** were more likely than Gen Z (18%) to be top volunteers (the 25% of volunteers who provide the most hours). **Those not in the labour force (33%)** were more likely than the employed (21%) to be top volunteers.

---

## WHERE AND HOW DO PEOPLE VOLUNTEER?

- Volunteer hours were highest among **hospitals (111 hours), religious organizations (110 hours), sports and recreation (105 hours), and arts and culture (104 hours)**, and lowest for organizations working in **education and research (51 hours); grant-making, fundraising, and volunteer promotion (52 hours); and health-related services**, such as crisis intervention services, outpatient clinics, and rehabilitation services (58 hours).
- The **most common formal volunteer activities** were organizing, supervising, or coordinating events (18%), helping with fundraising (16%), sitting on a committee or board (13%), teaching, educating or mentoring (12%), collecting, serving or delivering food (11%), and providing counselling or advice (10%).
- **71% of people volunteered informally** to help others directly, while 28% did so to improve the community directly.
- The **most common forms of informal volunteering** were helping with housework, home maintenance, and outdoor work (49%), shopping for someone or driving or accompanying someone to the store or an appointment (39%), providing someone with health-related or personal care (39%), helping someone with paperwork tasks (22%), and helping someone with unpaid teaching, coaching, tutoring or assisting with reading (11%).
- Among the Canadians who had **access to an employer-supported volunteering program or policy (34%)**, over half (53%) participated in employer-supported volunteering in the preceding year.

---

## WHY DO PEOPLE VOLUNTEER?

- The **top motivations** to volunteer differed across generations;
  - **Improving job opportunities** was a leading reason for volunteering among Gen Z (38%) and less so for Gen X (16%), Baby Boomers (9%), and Matures (1%).
  - Gen Z volunteers were less likely (13%) than other generations (Millennials at 29%, Gen X at 21%, Baby Boomers at 28%) to say that a **desire to support a political, environmental or social cause** led them to volunteer.
- Around ¼ of volunteers named **contributing to the well-being of the community as a leading motivation** for volunteering (with the notable exception of Gen Z; only 13% cited this as their top motivation).
- Around one in three Baby Boomers **cited religious or spiritual obligations** as a motivating factor in volunteering.

---

These numbers show only part of the picture – many critical gaps exist. For example, we do not have a clear sense of how volunteering rates vary across population groups, such as Indigenous peoples and newcomers, or other indicators of ethnocultural diversity (e.g., visible minority status). Furthermore, we do not have comprehensive data on volunteering trends at the local level (e.g., urban/rural, municipal, or postal code-based). Without these data, we cannot establish clear patterns of

how people across sociodemographic groups and specific locales volunteer and experience volunteering.

What we do know is that the COVID-19 pandemic shook many once-steady trends in volunteering and participation – majorly disrupting volunteer management practices and volunteer experiences and, more broadly, drastically changing living circumstances and increasing social isolation.

Volunteer rates have dropped significantly, and while we do not yet have a comprehensive national picture of the magnitude of the decline,\* the 2018 GSS-GVP offers clues as to the influence of the pandemic on volunteer demographics. For example, the cadre of top volunteers – Matures and Baby Boomers – were also among those most vulnerable to COVID-19, and disruptions and transitions in the workplace and in schooling significantly changed how different groups got involved in their community.

Regional and community data also paint an alarming picture. For example, research from United Way Greater Toronto revealed that the volunteer rate in the region had dropped by around 15% compared to four years ago.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, in Saskatchewan, participation rates in 2022 had dropped by 35% since 2017.<sup>11</sup>

Across Canada, organizations that engage volunteers are feeling the strain; in November 2022, 65% of nonprofit organizations and 50% of businesses that recruit volunteers reported a shortage of volunteers.<sup>12</sup>

According to a 2022 survey of Canadian registered charities from the Charity Insights Canada Project

(CICP), 59% of respondents indicated that the pandemic changed how they engaged volunteers, and 57% reported difficulty recruiting volunteers.<sup>13</sup> Statistics Canada's 2022 Report on Business Conditions revealed that 42% of organizations reported that volunteers could not commit long-term, and 1/4 reported volunteer burnout and stress.<sup>14</sup>



**“News headlines have recognized the positive contributions of volunteers, from providing medical care to grocery shopping for vulnerable neighbours. But why does it take a global health pandemic to recognize the importance of volunteers in improving our world?”**

**Source: [UN Volunteers](#)**

\* Data collection for Statistics Canada's 2023 Survey on Giving, Volunteering, and Participating is currently underway.

All of this is happening while the demand for services steadily increases. Imagine Canada reported that in 2021, 48% of organizations indicated increased demand for services, and 36% reported a lack of capacity to meet that demand. According to Statistics Canada's 2022 Report on Business Conditions, 33% of organizations report that the volunteer shortage has forced them to reduce their programs, and 17% have cancelled programs and services outright.<sup>15</sup>

**As Imagine Canada cautions, "This means that some who need supports aren't able to access them. In the context of rising demand, this gap in service delivery is especially dire."<sup>16</sup>**

The shortage has also exacerbated pre-existing labour challenges,<sup>17</sup> with 28% of organizations reporting that staff are working more hours to take on work normally done by volunteers and 21% reporting that the volunteer shortage is leading to employee burnout.<sup>18</sup>

## B. BEYOND THE NUMBERS: EMERGING THEMES AND IMPACTS

**B**efore the pandemic, the volunteer landscape was already challenged by many barriers to participation and a deficit in organizational infrastructure to address the challenge while supporting participation at scale. For example, the persistent issue of the inconsistent application of volunteer screening standards and a lack of cross-jurisdictional infrastructure to support accessible, affordable, and timely vulnerable sector checks, continues to impact the safety and quality of volunteer matching processes across the sector. As another example, many prospective volunteers have been systematically prevented from participating due to a variety of socioeconomic factors and inequitable organizational practices.

The following pages outline several prominent historical and emerging trends shaping the volunteer landscape and a series of key questions emerging from the consultative process. We envision a National Volunteer Action Strategy helping us to collectively address these and other questions that emerge in the future.

# ONGOING IMPACTS OF COVID-19

**T**hroughout our consultations, we heard that organizations are feeling the strain of the volunteer shortage and continue to struggle to bring volunteers back post-pandemic. Frontline organizations like food banks, community centres, and shelters were especially hard hit by low volunteer numbers. Many corporations with employer-supported volunteering programs were forced to halt their in-person programs and encountered increased levels of online fatigue amongst their staff.<sup>19</sup>

At the same time, the urgency of the pandemic galvanized many to contribute and reinforced the value of volunteering. Informal volunteering increased throughout the pandemic, along with new types of opportunities to engage, such as helping at a vaccination clinic, delivering food for immunocompromised and older adult neighbours, or contact tracing.\* As many organizations began to offer or expand virtual volunteer opportunities, digital tools took on a prominent role in how communities responded to the crisis and managed volunteer response.

In many ways, the pandemic spurred new relationships and models of participating and supporting volunteering. For younger generations, while learning disruptions likely led to a decrease in formal volunteering rates, the pandemic opened the door for new opportunities to get involved in more informal ways.<sup>20</sup> For example, as the pandemic restricted in-person opportunities, young people increased online engagement in global movements for climate action and social justice.<sup>21</sup>

\* An example of a new form of participation that emerged during COVID-19 is CareMongering, a community-led social movement focused on ensuring access to basic necessities, services, and resources for community members. This movement has since proliferated across the country and the world – growing to 191 groups in Canada. See [here](#) for more.





## ? KEY QUESTIONS

How might we **better understand and leverage** promising volunteering and participation practices that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in the face of future crises?

**Demographic shifts:** Canada's demographics are shifting. The population is growing, reaching a record high of 40 million in 2023. In 2022 alone, the population rose by 1,050,110 people, and Statistics Canada projects that if this rate stays constant, the population could double by 2049.<sup>22</sup>

The population is increasingly diverse, with over 450 ethnic or cultural origins reported in the 2021 Census.<sup>23</sup> As Canada looks toward a 2025 goal of offering 500,000 people permanent residence,<sup>24</sup> Statistics Canada projects that in 2041, half of the population will comprise newcomers and their Canadian-born children.<sup>25</sup> The racialized population in Canada is growing – jumping 130% between 2001 and 2021 (with the projected proportion of people belonging to a racialized group higher among youth.)<sup>26</sup> The Indigenous population increased by 9.4% between 2016 and 2021; according to the 2021 Census, Indigenous peoples accounted for 5% of the country's total population.<sup>27</sup>

The population is also ageing rapidly – by 2035, Canada will be a super-aged country (meaning that ¼ of Canadians will be older than 65).<sup>28</sup> The consequences of a rapidly ageing population for the workforce as well as health and social systems (e.g., decreasing ratio of working-age people-to-older-adults, increasing costs of income support, increasing healthcare spending<sup>29</sup>), will also extend to patterns of volunteerism across the country. Before the pandemic, older adults were typically the most committed volunteers, but they were also the first to reduce involvement during the pandemic for health and safety reasons. As the need to find solutions that enable healthy ageing grows, supporting volunteering among older adults offers a buffer against social isolation and loneliness. This will require better equipping communities and organizations that serve older adults with resources and tools to engage volunteers in purpose-fit programming and services.

As Canada's population changes, volunteerism and community participation are becoming more diverse, as are the motivators behind why and how people engage. We need to understand better how sociodemographic factors are changing the meaning and context of volunteering and participation to offer opportunities that reflect the identity and motivations of people who want to volunteer.

## ? KEY QUESTIONS

As Canada's population changes, how are the **meaning and context** of volunteering and participation also evolving? **What role** might volunteering and participation play in helping Canada's social systems evolve to meet the needs of its changing population?

### **Workforce and Decent Work:**

Across Canada, rising inflation and labour shortages are just some of the challenges facing the workforce.<sup>30</sup> Many of these challenges are amplified in the nonprofit and charitable sector; in 2021, 82% of charities reported losing revenue (at an average loss of 45.5%).<sup>31</sup> In a time of increasing demands on the sector to serve those most impacted by rising costs,<sup>32</sup> the fiscal crunch is impeding organizational capacity to compensate employees fairly and to engage and manage volunteers.

According to the Ontario Nonprofit Network (ONN), a combination of external trends (e.g., the pandemic, inflation, the shifting role of work, and limited care infrastructure to offload unpaid care work in the home) and internal factors (e.g., ongoing systemic racism, the sector's frontline role in service provision, stagnant funding, and growing demand for services) has resulted in "a rapidly intensifying human resource crisis in nonprofits where workers are leaving the sector in droves and staff vacancies have reached a breaking point."<sup>33</sup>

In our consultations, we heard of the high prevalence of burnout across the nonprofit workforce, which is validated by a 2021 study conducted by Mental Health Research Canada that revealed notably high rates in health and patient care (53%), education and childcare (38%), and first responders (36%).<sup>34</sup>

For many nonprofit organizations, the volunteer shortage saw 28% of organizations reporting that staff worked more hours to take on work normally done by volunteers and 21% reporting that the volunteer shortage led to employee burnout.<sup>35</sup> As the pandemic spurred many people to re-evaluate their priorities related to work,<sup>36</sup> many organizations saw their employees' and volunteers' attitudes

“Volunteering will be at the frontline in society’s response – not just in helping with advice and guidance on financial issues and running food banks, but also in helping with wider societal health and wellbeing issues exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis.”

Source: [Volunteer Scotland](#) and [British Red Cross](#)

toward volunteering shift. In situations of burnout, we heard that volunteering is often the first commitment to go. Conversely, across the corporate sector, pressures from the growing contingent of younger employees seeking more from their employer in terms of commitments to social responsibility (including Employer-Supported Volunteering programs) are spurring many companies to look for creative solutions to facilitate the engagement of their workforce in the community.<sup>37</sup>

The disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic affected household incomes, government transfers, and wages<sup>38</sup> and the impacts are growing. Canadians are simultaneously experiencing the fastest rent increase in over 40 years,<sup>39</sup> and many are struggling to put food on the table.<sup>40</sup>

**The crisis has laid bare the ways that discrimination and racism create and perpetuate poverty, leading Canada’s National Advisory Council to call on us to shift our post-pandemic focus from “building back better” to “building back fairer.”<sup>41</sup>**

The growing cost-of-living crisis is affecting volunteering, too. Drops in disposable income mean that many are seeking new sources of income, which impacts their ability and willingness to volunteer.<sup>42</sup>

In the nonprofit and charitable sector, wage parity is a persistent issue,<sup>43, 44</sup> and calls for better compensation are mounting.<sup>45, 46</sup> In a sector that relies so heavily on volunteers, there are also concerns about volunteer labour displacing nonprofit jobs in times of fiscal strain, as well as questions related to the ethics of having paid staff and unpaid volunteers doing similar work.<sup>47</sup> Similar questions are emerging around how to recognize volunteer time, given that sometimes, the distinction between volunteering and employment is unclear.<sup>48</sup> While many organizations are moving toward integrated human resources practices that apply to both paid employees and volunteers, the complex set of municipal, provincial/territorial, and federal social policies and legislation governing the decisions and actions of organizations and volunteers are inconsistent in terms of their application to volunteers, which leaves much up to interpretation.<sup>49</sup> ONN emphasizes that a lack of integrated federal legislative and

regulatory frameworks for managing and supporting volunteers is an issue, as it leaves employees and volunteers at increased risk of exploitation.<sup>50</sup>

Furthermore, for young people and newcomers facing limited labour market opportunities, volunteering is often positioned as a way to build skills and professional networks. Yet, many cannot afford to offer free labour. Youth experiencing poverty face significant barriers and “often find themselves seeking stability rather than being able to thrive.”<sup>51</sup> As the ONN notes, “The result is that young people from more affluent families end up taking the volunteer and internship positions, compounding the nonprofit sector’s lack of diversity.”<sup>52</sup>

**Given the role that material circumstances play in one’s ability to volunteer, we need to address the socioeconomic barriers that prevent many (especially youth and newcomers) from engaging.**

## ? KEY QUESTIONS

How might we **revitalize the spirit of volunteering** while avoiding the exploitation of unpaid labour and upholding decent work in the nonprofit and charitable sector? How might we ensure that **volunteers are protected** and can benefit from physical and mental health support?

### **Social Connections and Trust:**

While the pandemic majorly disrupted our patterns of social connection, Canada was already facing a growing loneliness epidemic before COVID-19.<sup>53</sup> The GenWell Project's 2021 Canadian Social Connection Survey (CSCS) revealed while a significant proportion of Canadians are experiencing loneliness, much of which is attributable to the pandemic, between

6%-12% of Canadians experience long-term chronic loneliness that pre-dates the pandemic.<sup>54</sup>

Newcomers, people living on low incomes, and people with mental health issues are at higher risk for social isolation,<sup>55</sup> and for older adults, the impacts are even more pronounced. An estimated 30% of older adults in Canada are at risk of social isolation,<sup>56</sup> with this number expected to increase as the proportion of older adults multiplies in the coming years.<sup>57</sup>

“There is a group of people who are desperately lonely, disconnected, and unincluded. [...] Most people are excluded because of the system, and they feel that they don't have a role. [...] There is an opportunity to address that with volunteerism.”

**Source: President and CEO of a Canadian Philanthropic Foundation, in conversation with Volunteer Canada (2023)**

The implications of the loneliness epidemic are manifold. From a public health perspective, social connection is a fundamental social determinant of health and happiness, and the absence of these connections has a significant effect on health (mental and physical) and other areas, such as life satisfaction and self-esteem.<sup>58</sup>

Social isolation and loneliness are linked to increased risk for early mortality – both in terms of their association with poorer health behaviours like smoking and physical inactivity, as well as their demonstrated physical impacts such as higher blood pressure and weakened immune functioning.<sup>59</sup>

**Social connections also contribute to a sense of belonging, as well as deliver benefits such as comfort or support. In this way, social isolation and loneliness “erode the social capital that keeps society running productively.”<sup>60</sup>**

Globally, both interpersonal and institutional trust are in steep decline as polarization becomes more acute.<sup>61</sup> Trust in institutions like the government<sup>62</sup> and news media is flagging, as is trust in fellow Canadians.<sup>63</sup> Given that trust is vital for a strong democracy, as well as flourishing societies and individual, household, community, and national resilience, its decline is troubling.

The relationship between trust, rates of community participation, and social connection is clear: loneliness, disenfranchisement, and declining trust lead to decreased social connections and overall social cohesion while at the same time, “social connection is integral for building the trust needed to participate fully in society.”<sup>64</sup> As Policy Horizons Canada emphasizes, “As uncertainty clouds more of our vision of the future, a strong sense of social connection becomes key to societal resilience.”<sup>65</sup>

Volunteering and participation promote social connection and help combat loneliness across generations. Many healthcare professionals are beginning to prescribe volunteering for older adult patients,<sup>66</sup> and some financial planners are recommending volunteering to their retiree clients. Volunteering also fosters a sense of civic responsibility and engagement – both critical elements of a strong democracy.<sup>67</sup> For young people, this is particularly important; recent studies found that youth who were civically engaged during the pandemic reported higher well-being; “emphasizing the link between civic engagement and well-being could be an opportunity to revitalize participation in our democracy and shape a new generation of engaged citizens.”<sup>68</sup>

That said, a lack of social connection and trust can prevent people from participating at all in the first place, which presents a problem. Throughout our consultations, several participants emphasized the urgency of finding solutions to the loneliness epidemic, given its ripple effect across communities.



“People are looking at ways to be involved that suit their lifestyles and what they’re up to. There’s always benefit to understanding trends and changes in social behaviours, and for a society like ours that’s so dependent on the public benefit sector for so many things, a better understanding of this can only benefit.”

**Source: President and CEO of a Canadian philanthropic foundation, in conversation with Volunteer Canada (2023)**

## ? KEY QUESTIONS

How is the **changing nature of social connection** impacting volunteering and participation? **What role** can volunteering and participation play in revitalizing social connections and rebuilding trust?

**Equity Concerns:** Across Canada, equity-deserving groups across various intersections of identity face persistent inequalities and barriers, along with discrimination and violence, racism, colonialism, transphobia, sexism, and ableism. To highlight a few examples:

- 1/5 of racialized families are currently living in poverty, and 1/5 of racialized households live in inadequate housing or cannot access affordable housing at all. <sup>69</sup>
- Black Canadians and Indigenous peoples face persistent barriers to education, employment, and healthcare. <sup>70, 71</sup>

- According to the 2019 General Social Survey, 46% of Black people and 33% of Indigenous peoples aged 15 years and older reported experiencing at least one form of discrimination in the past five years, compared to 16% of the non-Indigenous, non-visible minority population. <sup>72</sup>
- Disabled Canadians face continued discrimination and are more likely to experience homelessness and live below the poverty line than Canadians without disabilities. <sup>73</sup>
- Newcomers, especially visible minority women, are more likely to be unemployed than non-immigrants, with many turning to volunteering in the hopes of boosting their employability. <sup>74</sup>

These systemic barriers extend to volunteering, as they dictate who has access to power and resources within communities. Many factors cause equity-deserving individuals to abandon volunteering or prevent them from engaging in the first place. Research shows that certain groups, such as the unemployed, those with chronic health conditions, and those from lower socioeconomic groups, have the most to gain from volunteering. Yet, many need help

accessing the benefits of volunteering due to significant structural, social, and economic barriers.<sup>75</sup>

We heard from organizations their persistent questions about how to engage specific demographics of volunteers more meaningfully and sustainably (e.g., older adults, youth, newcomers, Indigenous peoples, different cultural groups), which flow into a broader conversation about systemic inequities across the entire nonprofit and charitable sector.<sup>76</sup>



“It is important to recognize the disparities faced by racialized and marginalized people, and that members of oppressed groups require more care as a result of systemic inequalities.”

Source: [Mutual Aid Canada](#)



Furthermore, as we collectively engage in the learning, understanding, grieving, and growing process of Truth and Reconciliation, there is an imperative to identify how each of us can contribute to this process in a meaningful way. Making connections and building relationships with Indigenous peoples, organizations, and nations will be vital and will ensure that organizations and their staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge and understanding to effectively dismantle systems that perpetuate bias and discrimination against Indigenous peoples.<sup>77</sup>

## ? KEY QUESTIONS

How might we **consistently capture and mobilize data** and information on volunteering demographics to better understand who is missing? How might we better understand and **break down systemic barriers** to volunteering and participation? How might this understanding inform **broader social policy** in Canada? How might we **advance equity** and create more welcoming and meaningful spaces by co-creating volunteering opportunities with people who are underrepresented?

**Technology:** Technology has profoundly disrupted traditional service delivery models, significantly altering how charities and nonprofit organizations engage with volunteers and donors.<sup>78</sup> It offers opportunities for greater accessibility, coordination, and mobilization, with transformative potential not only for organizations that engage and manage volunteers but also as a new avenue for people to participate and contribute to causes that matter to them. We heard

that younger generations appear more inclined to participate in online formats, reflecting a broader societal shift.<sup>79</sup> Previously, mobilizing people physically to volunteer on short notice was more common, while online mobilization now seems more desirable and accessible.

The proliferation of platforms that support the recruitment and management of volunteers has introduced substantial efficiencies for both volunteers and organizations. These platforms

streamline administrative processes and improve access to technology, including digital literacy. This shift emphasizes the need for long-term strategic investment in technological enhancements, which holds the potential to reduce burdensome administrative requirements often associated with volunteering.

That said, while online formats create opportunities for some, others feel left behind. Canada's digital divide continues to prevent many – such as Indigenous populations and those living in rural and remote areas – from accessing the internet and building digital literacy.<sup>80</sup> Older adults have a lower rate of internet use than other age groups,<sup>81</sup> and we heard from some organizations that engage older adult volunteers that for many in this group, the sudden shift away from in-person volunteering left them feeling abandoned and facing a steep learning curve to develop the technological savvy to continue their volunteering engagement online.

**Similarly, despite the increased prevalence of technology, we heard that many organizations have low uptake capacity, partly due to broader issues related to limited access and funding for such technologies.<sup>82</sup>**



**“Participation nourishes the soul. [...] Everybody needs a sense of meaning in their life, [and] participation gets at that core need for meaning.”**

**Source: Chief Program Officer of a Canadian Philanthropic Foundation, in conversation with Volunteer Canada (2023)**

## ? KEY QUESTIONS

How has **technology changed the volunteer ecosystem?** How might the ecosystem better **adapt** to new and emerging technological realities? How might we leverage volunteering and participation to **bridge the digital divide?**

**Changing Conceptions of Volunteering:** Per UN Volunteers, “Volunteering is expanding and changing as quickly as our societies and economies. Across the globe, more people are volunteering in new ways than ever before.”<sup>83</sup> Although the volunteering ecosystem is continuously evolving, the common understanding of the term volunteering may need to catch up. The notion of Individual Social Responsibility (ISR) are increasing in popularity for its framing of how an individual’s unique set of motivations drive their engagement habits.<sup>84</sup>

A 2017 study conducted by Volunteer Canada, Investors Group, and Ipsos Research found that while the majority (87%) of Canadians agreed that Canada needs volunteers as society and the economy would suffer without them, respondents were divided on the activities that constitute volunteering, with 35% of Canadians reporting that they help out in the community but do not consider their engagement to be

volunteering, and four in ten agreeing that many people help out in the community but are not thought of as volunteers.<sup>85</sup>

In recognition of these evolving perceptions, Volunteer Canada began to promote a broader definition of volunteering comprising a wide spectrum of engagement that includes being informed about an issue, being supportive of a cause, actively participating, and taking a leadership role.\*

Despite efforts to broaden the definition, our recent consultations revealed that volunteering is increasingly seen as an antiquated or narrow term, signalling that there is work to do for the volunteer landscape to adapt to changing perceptions. We heard observations that as people move away from traditional institutional participation toward more informal models of engaging (e.g.,

\* See Appendix A – Spectrum of Volunteer Engagement in the **Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement (2017)**, developed by Volunteer Canada.

grassroots engagement and mutual aid), many who participate in the community still do not think of themselves as volunteers.

Consultation participants pointed to mutual aid – a “form of organizing that involves sustaining cooperation and solidarity between networks, neighbours, and communities”<sup>86</sup> – as a force not yet well understood in the broader volunteer landscape. While mutual aid boasts a longstanding tradition in many communities, the proliferation of this type of engagement to cultivate support systems over the COVID-19 pandemic sparked a renewed interest in the model. Often led by communities experiencing marginalization, mutual aid activities prioritize solidarity and fill important gaps in the system for those left behind by formal institutions.<sup>87</sup>

While UN Volunteers includes mutual aid in its 2020 list of volunteer categories, we heard that many view mutual aid and volunteering as distinct, as the term “volunteering” is not seen to encompass concepts of active citizenship, solidarity, reciprocity, community care, or the idea of a social contract.

For younger generations in particular, the term “volunteer” is resonating less and less. For some, the term can feel diluted given the many cultural contexts in which young people participate. Further, it is not seen to capture the full breadth of the myriad ways young people contribute their time to causes that matter to them.<sup>88</sup> Young people tend to see more informal, grassroots involvement as more “accessible,” “flexible,” and “less encumbered by rules,” making it easier to see the impact of their service.<sup>89, 90</sup> In contrast, young people “don’t often feel welcomed into institutional experiences, nor do they feel they will be able to see any results of their own individual actions.”<sup>91</sup>

“[We need to] tap into people’s sensitive sensibilities and best instincts of doing the right thing for themselves and their communities. [...] The idea of living in a just society and in a community that is desirable is the role of everyone. [...] Part of that is to feel that that each and every one of us has a role to play.”

**Source: President and CEO of a Canadian Philanthropic Foundation, in conversation with Volunteer Canada (2023)**

In essence, the traditional definition of volunteering only partially reflects contemporary participation patterns and the ways people put their values into action, which might preclude prospective volunteers, especially those from younger generations and those from different cultural groups, from engaging formally with organizations. There is a need to understand these dynamics better and to revitalize how we define and understand volunteering and participation to more holistically reflect the ways individuals wish to give time

to the issues that matter to them. Also worth exploring are avenues to support and amplify models like mutual aid without co-opting movements or perpetuating harmful power imbalances.

**Ultimately, we need to find new ways to restore, grow, and celebrate a culture of volunteering – one that is based on reciprocity, generosity, inclusion, and empathy.**

## ? KEY QUESTIONS

How might we meaningfully capture and recognize the myriad activities that have **previously been overlooked** in traditional conceptions of volunteering? How might we **broaden our conceptions** of volunteering and participation to include the full breadth of activities? What conceptions of volunteering and participation will be relevant to **building inclusive, resilient, and healthy communities?**

**Responding to Current and Future Crises:** Tackling the most pressing issues of our time – such as poverty, injustice, and climate change – will require bold actions from a wide range of people and communities.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer an ambitious framework to guide these actions, and volunteerism is a powerful channel for people to get involved.

From a practical perspective, volunteers can provide technical support, enhance capacity, transfer skills and expertise, broker engagement, and bring the voices of equity-deserving communities into the conversation.<sup>92</sup> More broadly, volunteerism can contribute to cultivating the social cohesion and sustained collective commitment necessary to tackle complex issues.

Addressing the impacts of climate change will require a significant volunteer effort encompassing both mitigation strategies and emergency or disaster response – primarily since evidence is pointing to climate change as this century’s defining public health issue. Climate change acts as a “threat multiplier,” amplifying current challenges and highlighting the vulnerabilities of communities and critical systems to these hazards.<sup>93</sup> The complexity, scale and unequal distribution of climate change impacts on health are significant in Canada,<sup>94</sup> and as we brace for an increased occurrence of extreme heat events, increases in heavy precipitation, an increase in wildfire frequency and duration due to drought conditions, and the expansion of zoonotic diseases such as Lyme disease,<sup>95</sup>

certain populations will be at higher risk by virtue of their location (e.g., people living in Northern communities) or the demographic group they belong to (e.g., children, disabled persons, pregnant people, older adults, those with pre-existing health conditions, or those with low incomes).<sup>96</sup>

That said, many communities and populations on the front lines of climate change have been, and continue to be, active drivers of change, demonstrating significant adaptive capacity and resilience despite unequal distribution of resources and power. We need to learn from and uplift these movements.

**“Volunteerism lets people and communities participate in their own growth. Through volunteering, citizens build their resilience, enhance their knowledge base and gain a sense of responsibility for their own community. Social cohesion and trust is strengthened through individual and collective volunteer action, leading to sustainable outcomes for people, by people.”**

**Source: [UN Volunteers \(2020\)](#)**

Canada has adopted the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, which states:

Disaster risk reduction requires an all-of-society engagement and partnership. It also requires empowerment and inclusive, accessible and non-discriminatory participation, paying particular attention to people disproportionately affected by disasters, especially the poorest. A gender, age, disability and cultural perspective should be integrated in all policies and practices, and women and youth leadership should be promoted. In this context, special attention should be paid to the improvement of organized voluntary work of citizens.<sup>97</sup>

There is a role for a National Volunteer Action Strategy here. Such a Strategy could pave the way for a “service regime” dedicated to bolstering Canada’s emergency management systems, increasing surge capacity,\* and mobilizing volunteers in the mitigation of climate risk and public health crises. On the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers Alalouf-Hall and Grant-Poitras note: “Thinking about the changes that have taken place in the practice of volunteer activity [...] amounts to thinking about how a core part of our social fabric reinvents itself in times of crisis and about issues of community and regional resilience.”<sup>98</sup>

Investing in capacity, capability, and flexibility to incorporate the needs of volunteers with the current and future needs of communities will help to address challenges in an intersectional way and build a foundation of resilience in the face of climate-related risks and other unforeseen crises.

“In a context of rising disaster frequency, intensity and cost, there is recognition of the operational and economic value of trained volunteers in responding to emergencies and fostering community resilience.”

Source: [Canadian Red Cross \(2016\)](#)

\* Per Bonnet et al. (2007), surge capacity is the “[...] ability of a healthcare facility or system to expand its operations to safely treat an abnormally large influx of patients in response to an incident.” In Canada, numerous volunteer groups actively engage in disaster relief efforts based on pre-set plans and roles. **A significant challenge** in this system is managing spontaneous volunteers who arrive ready to assist during emergencies. Their lack of prior affiliation with the disaster response system can lead to underutilization and additional challenges for professional responders. Failing to effectively integrate these volunteers could result in missed opportunities and potentially negatively impact service delivery during health emergencies.

# C. VOLUNTEERING INFRASTRUCTURE: GAPS, ASSETS, AND OPPORTUNITIES

## ? KEY QUESTIONS

How might we harness the power of volunteering and participation to help **address our most pressing challenges**? What might a **next-generation vision** of volunteering look like?

Throughout the consultative process for this Roadmap, participants emphasized the need for fit-for-purpose infrastructure – including specific systems, research and data, resources, policy, and capacities – that will shore up an enabling environment for volunteering to flourish. The list below outlines several infrastructure gaps, assets, and opportunities that emerged from the consultative process.

**This is not an exhaustive list – part of the Strategy development process will comprise a more robust gap analysis – but it offers a helpful starting place to identify priority areas.**







AREA	GAPS	ASSETS	OPPORTUNITIES
<p><b>FUNDING</b></p>	<p>Lack of <b>sustainable, flexible, unrestricted core funding</b> to support organizations in addressing capacity issues and plan effectively for the future.</p> <p>Low investment in <b>addressing capacity issues in volunteer management</b> and developing and upholding comprehensive <b>volunteering support infrastructure</b>.</p>	<p><b>A strong community, private, and corporate philanthropic sector</b> that is already engaged on many of the issues connected to the strategy.</p>	<p><b>Make strategic investments in volunteering</b> (in funding and contribution agreements) that account for the costs associated with volunteer engagement and management.</p>



AREA	GAPS	ASSETS	OPPORTUNITIES
<p><b>CAPACITY</b></p>	<p>Lack of resources and capacity to <b>engage and manage volunteers sustainably</b>, especially with respect to safeguards such as screening; linked to lack of recognition of volunteer management profession).</p> <p>Lack of resources to <b>communicate and engage in cross-sectoral dialogue</b> on the value of volunteering.</p> <p>Lack of capacity to <b>implement robust governance practices</b>, especially for smaller, volunteer-run organizations.</p> <p>Lack of resources and capacity to <b>reach and engage prospective volunteers</b> via technology and digital avenues.</p>	<p>Existing standards of practice (e.g., <b>Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement; Screening Handbook; Canadian Code for Employer-Supported Volunteering</b>)</p> <p><b>Umbrella/backbone organizations and their networks</b> (e.g., <b>Imagine Canada; Volunteer Canada; Community Foundations of Canada; Philanthropic Foundations Canada</b>)</p> <p><b>Volunteer Centres</b> and their networks</p> <p><b>Provincial/territorial/local nonprofit/community sector networks</b></p> <p><b>Volunteer management networks and associations</b> (e.g., Provincial and municipal administrators of volunteer resources)</p>	<p><b>Recognize and resource the volunteer management profession</b> (including support, professional development pathways, streamlining administrative needs).</p>

AREA	GAPS	ASSETS	OPPORTUNITIES
<b>RESEARCH</b>	<p><b>Historical lack of comprehensive data on the nonprofit and charitable sector</b>, such as critical human resources data and macroeconomic sector data.</p> <p><b>Gap in comprehensive, frequent, and detailed data and analyses for specific breakdowns in volunteer trends</b> (e.g., annual levels of volunteering; detailed demographic trends across ethnocultural groups; prevalence and nature of emerging forms of participation; impact of volunteering across intersectional identity factors; breakdowns by religious denomination/faith; generational trends in volunteerism; technology and volunteerism; rural vs urban volunteering).</p>	<p><b>Existing research initiatives</b> (e.g., <a href="#">Carleton University's Charity Insights Canada Project</a>; <a href="#">Imagine Canada research</a>, <a href="#">Statistics Canada's Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating</a>)</p> <p><b>Existing publications</b> (e.g., <a href="#">The Philanthropist</a>; <a href="#">The Canadian Journal of Nonprofit and Social Economy Research</a>; <a href="#">Vital Signs reports</a>)</p>	<p><b>Advance knowledge and understanding of volunteering</b>; coordinate funding for research and knowledge mobilization to connect research to policy and practice.</p> <p><b>Conduct more frequent and detailed empirical research on volunteering</b> to explore areas such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The different ways people participate in and experience volunteering according to their life course, personal and social context, and/or intersecting identity factors</li> <li>▪ The impacts of volunteering (on individuals, communities, and on a broader socioeconomic scale), especially as it pertains to wellbeing and social connection, and how these impacts differ depending on the type of volunteering (e.g., informal vs. formal)</li> <li>▪ The barriers and enablers to volunteering, especially for youth, older adults, and newcomers</li> <li>▪ The organizational contexts that enable meaningful volunteer experiences</li> <li>▪ The relationship between employer-supported volunteering and community outcomes.</li> </ul>



AREA	GAPS	ASSETS	OPPORTUNITIES
<p><b>SYSTEMS &amp; FRAMEWORKS</b></p>	<p><b>Lack of consistency in application of screening standards</b> across Canada; leading to fragmentation and inconsistency in terms of rules, regulations, processes, and costs.</p> <p><b>Lack of legislative framework for managing and supporting volunteers,</b> including the protection, inclusion, and recognition of volunteers providing essential services (see paragraph "The Policy Environment" below for more on this).</p> <p><b>Lack of national advisory structure</b> on volunteering to guide and inform policymaking.</p>	<p>Progress and initiatives across provinces/territories/municipalities that can serve to guide and inform a national effort</p>	<p><b>Coordinate, standardize, and resource screening processes;</b> alleviating the financial and administrative burden associated with screening and enhancing the capacity of organizations working with vulnerable populations to engage volunteers while reducing incidence of harm.</p> <p><b>Establish enabling regulatory guidance and protections for volunteers,</b> especially as pertains to the distinction between employees and volunteers and the treatment and rights and responsibilities of volunteers.</p> <p><b>Explore accessible models for volunteer insurance.</b></p> <p><b>Establish a national structure</b> (e.g., technical resource committee) to share insights, data, and stories and to inform public policy.</p>

The Policy Environment: There are some excellent examples of public policy that protects, supports, and facilitates volunteering in some municipalities, provinces, and territories. For example, Quebec's Government Strategy for Volunteer Action, developed in partnership with the Government of Quebec and the Réseau De L'Action Bénévole Du Québec (RABQ), articulated the province's vision for supporting the promotion of volunteerism and developing the next generation of volunteers. In Alberta, the Freedom to Care Act empowers nonprofit organizations and their volunteers by providing them with more support to address their communities' needs by making it easier for organizations to navigate exemptions to their organizations within the government's regulatory environment and by providing individual volunteers with liability protections.

In many ways, the federal environment is also attuned – both directly and indirectly – to volunteering. For example, there are several relevant linkages between **Employment and Social Development Canada's (ESDC) core responsibilities** (as outlined in ESDC's 2023-2024 Departmental Plan) and volunteering. As the department supports Canadians as they and the country recover from the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic,

ensuring that volunteering is facilitated, recognized, and promoted will be essential. Furthermore, as the labour market requires higher levels and a greater range of skills, it will be essential to provide opportunities to develop new skill sets through volunteering. Similarly, as Health Canada (HC) confronts the public health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the growing loneliness epidemic and rapidly ageing population, ensuring that volunteering is facilitated, recognized, and promoted will be essential. Given that so many volunteers are on the front lines supporting healthcare service provision in communities across Canada, there are several relevant linkages between the volunteering and the department's core responsibilities of Health Care Systems and Health Protection and Promotion (as outlined in **HC's 2023-2024 Departmental Plan**).

**Despite these and many other linkages, we lack a vehicle for sharing and integrating priorities to create a more consistent and cohesive policy approach to volunteering in Canada.**

There is an opportunity to put forth supportive, protective, and enabling public policy that addresses issues such as screening volunteers in positions of trust with vulnerable populations; protecting, including, and recognizing volunteers providing essential services; recognizing and investing in the infrastructure required to manage volunteers safely and effectively; and recognizing and supporting informal volunteering and grassroots movements.

Increasing the representation of volunteering in the development and practical application of public policy will be essential in building a more enabling environment for volunteering and participation to flourish. Not only will an increased focus on volunteering bring widespread benefits to people living in Canada, but it will also be integral in supporting several Government of Canada departments in achieving many of the intended results outlined in their respective departmental plans.



# STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT: INSIGHTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

## A. LESSONS LEARNED FROM OTHER JURISDICTIONS

Several countries across the world, including Australia, Nigeria, Scotland, Ireland, and the Kingdom, have advanced policies, strategies, and investments to strengthen their volunteering culture and practice.

Each of these initiatives shares several similarities in the strategy development process, namely, highly consultative and collaborative multi-stakeholder approaches and guidance or oversight from an advisory or steering body. Notably, the below initiatives were either led (in part or entirely) by at least one government department from each respective country or in close collaboration with the government. In addition, each of the below initiatives committed to a specific timeframe for action, with most setting out a 10-year vision.

Highlights from an in-depth analysis include:

## SCOTLAND

### DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE

**Volunteering for All – Our National Framework:** The objectives of the Framework are to set out clearly and in one place a coherent and compelling narrative for volunteering; define the key outcomes desired for volunteering in Scotland over the next ten years; identify the key data and evidence that will inform, indicate and drive performance at a national and local level; and enable informed debate and decision about the optimal combination of programs, investments and interventions.

**Volunteer Action Plan:** The Scottish Government developed the Volunteering Action Plan to build upon the National Framework, with specific goals to increase volunteering participation, widen access to volunteering, and supporting community-based, 'place-making' activities.

### KEY CONTRIBUTORS

This Framework was developed by the Scottish Government jointly with partners from the volunteer and community sector, local government and NHS, with academics and social researchers, and with volunteers.

### DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

The development of the National Framework was overseen by an External Reference Group, which was responsible for providing leadership and facilitating collaboration across a range of partners and sectors, advising the Scottish Government on priorities, challenges, and actions, and championing the role of volunteering in delivering the Scottish Government's Purpose and National Outcomes. The development process included literature review, the establishment of a National Youth Volunteering Improvement Project, which tasked 25 young volunteers from across Scotland with exploring volunteering practice and experience and making recommendations for action, and a series of roundtables and workshop discussions with key strategic and delivery partners. The development of Scotland's Volunteer Action Plan was guided by a Human Learning Systems (HLS) approach to public management. This approach recognizes that volunteering is complex, and its outcomes are determined by inter-relationships within a system.





## IRELAND

### DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE

**National Volunteering Strategy 2021-2025:** The purpose of Ireland's National Volunteering Strategy is to recognise, promote and grow the unique value and contribution volunteers make to Irish society. The Strategy forms part of a trio of policies to support a range of organisations who provide services to communities and sets a direction for government policy in relation to volunteers and the voluntary sectors.

### KEY CONTRIBUTORS

The Strategy was prepared and is implemented by Ireland's Department of Rural and Community Development, in collaboration with other relevant Government Departments, State agencies and sectoral stakeholders.

### DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

Responses to a Call for Input (CFI) issued by the Department in 2018 indicated a strong need for a new volunteering strategy. The Department convened a National Advisory Group to inform the new strategy. The Department then undertook a public consultation to further inform the draft strategy.



## UNITED KINGDOM

### DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE

**The Vision for Volunteering:** The Vision for Volunteering is a movement to create a diverse, innovative, ambitious, equitable and person-centred future for volunteering. The Vision for Volunteering sets out a view of what volunteering needs to look like, and how this will make volunteers feel about their roles, by 2032. The Vision is oriented around five themes: awareness and appreciation; power, equity and inclusion, collaboration, and experimentation.

### KEY CONTRIBUTORS

The Vision for Volunteering is led by the following partners: National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA), the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), Volunteering Matters, and the Association of Volunteer Managers.

### DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

The project was led by the four partners and guided by a steering group and a working group. The partners ran a series of consultations – comprising workshops across seven strands (climate emergency; employment and skills, health and wellbeing, healthy ageing, resilient communities, sports and physical activity, and young people leading change), interviews, and written submissions to gather perspectives and fill research gaps. The partners and the working group then mapped out how volunteering is changing using the Three Horizons model.



# AUSTRALIA

## DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE

**National Strategy for Volunteering:** The National Strategy for Volunteering (2023–2033) is a ten-year blueprint for a reimagined future for volunteering in Australia. It is the first National Strategy for Volunteering in a decade, providing a strategic framework for enabling safe, supported, and sustainable volunteering. The purpose of the National Strategy for Volunteering is to guide the actions needed to achieve a better future for volunteering. It sets out the desired outcomes for volunteering in Australia over the next ten years. It provides a clear and compelling case, underpinned by robust data and evidence, for targeted and sufficient investment in volunteering and celebration of the role it plays in creating thriving communities.

## KEY CONTRIBUTORS

The National Strategy for Volunteering was funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services, led by Volunteering Australia, and co-designed by the entire volunteering ecosystem in Australia.

## DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

Australia's National Strategy for Volunteering was developed through the following year-long co-design process:

- Stage 1 (Establishment): Formation of Council to provide oversight and strategic guidance; appointment of four working groups (Corporate Volunteering, Volunteer Management, Volunteering Policy, and Volunteering Research).
- Stage 2 (Visioning): Facilitation of participatory design workshops.
- Stage 3 (Build): Facilitation of seven iterative workshops; distillation of insights into a Draft Framework for the National Strategy for Volunteering.
- Stage 4 (Test and Refine): Publication of Draft Framework, collection of feedback from stakeholders.



## NIGERIA

### DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE

**National Policy on Inclusive Volunteerism:** The National Policy on Inclusive Volunteerism and Plan of Action for Nigeria aims to strengthen Nigeria's communities by promoting and fostering opportunities for citizens to volunteer their ideas, talents, and skills towards sustainable development. The Policy envisages that within the next five years, volunteerism would be encouraged, supported, recognized, and inculcated as a way of life by all Nigerians. It provides policy and strategic guidelines for different stakeholders: government, business sector, not-for-profit sector and the broader volunteering sector.

### KEY CONTRIBUTORS

The initial Draft National Policy on Volunteerism was developed by a joint action of the Nigerian National Volunteer Service (NNVS) and United Nations Volunteers (UNV) in December 2007. The Federal Executive Council approved the Policy and Plan on December 9, 2020.

### DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

An online survey was launched to get public input into the Policy and confirm the preparedness of Government institutions and key actors in the private and third sectors of the economy in the Policy Review and Implementation Processes. The document was further revised, and then the contributors facilitated a national stakeholders' policy review and validation workshop to finalize and validate the Revised Policy and Plan of Action.



## B. BEYOND THE NUMBERS: EMERGING THEMES AND IMPACTS

### DEFINING THE PROBLEM AND COMMITTING TO ACTION

**T**hroughout our consultations, participants emphasized that a National Volunteer Action Strategy must first clearly define the problem that we are trying to address. That means gathering a robust evidence base demonstrating the scale of the crisis in volunteering and participation and its impacts. Next, the Strategy should go beyond merely stating the problem to articulating a concrete vision for change that we are trying to achieve.

Participants also shared that while the Strategy should be aspirational, it must identify a specific timeframe and be accompanied by a realistic and feasible plan. We need to ask:

- **What actions and supports are required** to achieve our desired vision? From whom?
- **How will we know** that the Strategy is working?

Linking the development and implementation of the Strategy to the SDGs could be a helpful way to align our national actions with global efforts to address social, environmental, and economic challenges.

**This alignment will help stakeholders prioritize activities that have a positive impact on multiple dimensions of sustainability and will ensure that the Strategy is in line with broader societal goals.**

# COLLABORATIVE AND INCLUSIVE APPROACH

**M**eeting the urgency and complexity of this moment will require a highly collaborative and emergent approach that centers relationships and catalyzes collective action. As one consultation participant emphasized, the time is now for a dynamic conversation amongst Canadians about our aspirations to help each other have better lives.

Although volunteering is closely linked to the nonprofit and charitable sector, there is not one aspect of community that volunteers do not touch. To that end, the success and sustainability of the National Volunteer Action Strategy will largely depend on the strength and depth of a multi-stakeholder, networked approach in its development and implementation. Building trust and enhancing the legitimacy of the Strategy will require ongoing dialogue, communication, and the active participation of stakeholders across the volunteer ecosystem. This will be instrumental in building an inclusive and comprehensive strategy that recognizes the diversity of needs and aspirations and is relevant across contexts and experiences.

Participants also underscored the need for an approach grounded in equity, inclusion, and intersectionality, and guided by the Calls to Action presented by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. This will be key to better understanding and dismantling power structures and identifying barriers to equity, recognizing that where there is most need might have the least amount of infrastructure to support. Ensuring that equity-deserving communities, such as Indigenous communities and Black Canadians as well as newcomers, youth, older adults, and Francophones have a voice in the development and implementation of the Strategy is essential.

**There is also an imperative to ensure the Strategy is embedded in and informed by local context, with local champions to spread the message.**

# GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT

**I**n 2019, the Special Senate Committee on Canada's Charitable Sector identified several key issues facing the sector: the people working and volunteering in the sector, funding for the sector, the rules governing the sector, and the need for a "home" within the federal government for the sector. The Committee called for a broader effort to modernize the charitable sector and urged the federal government to "implement a national volunteer strategy to encourage volunteerism by all Canadians in their communities, recognizing that the needs of northern, rural and urban communities are unique."

It is important that the Government of Canada revisit these recommendations and commit to engaging and strategically investing in developing and implementing a National Volunteer Action Strategy. Throughout Volunteer Canada's consultations, participants underscored the critical role that government must play in co-creating the Strategy and setting the tone for a national conversation around volunteering and participation. Participants emphasized that the Strategy will require government champions (including public servants and political leaders), and should be all-partisan. Importantly, we heard that the Strategy should prioritize the identification of policy areas where the representation of volunteering can be incorporated or amplified (especially as it pertains to initiatives focused on specific demographic groups, such as older adults, youth, newcomers, and ethnocultural groups).

**Furthermore, the development and implementation process should also engage political leaders across provincial, territorial, and municipal jurisdictions.**



# 📍 THE WAY FORWARD

## A. CULTIVATING A NETWORK

**V**olunteer Canada has already begun raising awareness and galvanizing stakeholder participation in this effort. In addition to consulting with over 100 leaders across the nonprofit and corporate sectors, we have connected with Members of Parliament, including members of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA) and the Standing Committee on Finance (FINA).

The input and participation of Volunteer Canada's membership and with volunteer centres across Canada will be instrumental in informing a networked approach to building the National Action Strategy. To date, Volunteer Canada has gathered member insights related to their interest and perspectives on a National Action Strategy via an online survey, shared frequent updates with the membership as the project has progressed, and invited members to share ideas and related updates from their work on an ongoing basis.

**As the project progresses, Volunteer Canada envisions playing a facilitative role that provides backbone support to amplify a collective effort that co-owns the development of the strategy as well as its implementation.**





# GOVERNANCE AND GUIDANCE

**T**he next steps in this effort will be to solidify a governance structure to guide decision-making and accountability and ensure all stakeholders have a voice in the strategy development process. To this end, Volunteer Canada has begun the process of establishing a National Advisory Council, a guiding body of 10-12 leaders from diverse backgrounds and contexts across Canada. The Council will be responsible for:

- Providing strategic advice, critical feedback, and recommendations to Volunteer Canada on the content of the National Volunteer Action Strategy;
- Building momentum and support for a National Action Strategy by advocating for its adoption, facilitating strategic introductions, and supporting with fundraising; and
- Raising the visibility and profile of the need and benefits of a National Volunteer Action Strategy.

In addition to the National Advisory Council, Volunteer Canada will establish a Technical Resource Committee comprised of leaders with cross-jurisdictional (provincial/territorial, municipal, local) insights on volunteerism and participation. While this Committee will operate beyond the development of the National Volunteer Action Strategy, it will serve as a channel for important discussions related to policy, infrastructure, research, and tools throughout strategy development.

**By harnessing the insights of this Committee, we will ensure that the development and implementation of the National Volunteer Action Strategy are guided by a deep understanding of current and future issues, challenges, and opportunities as they emerge in the volunteer landscape.**

## LINKING TO OTHER INITIATIVES

**V**olunteering touches every aspect of our communities, so it will be necessary to identify and further cultivate linkages to initiatives engaged in a wide range of issue areas throughout the strategy development process. As a backbone organization, and especially one that is in service to other domains, Volunteer Canada is dedicated to aligning the National Volunteer Action Strategy to broader sector initiatives. For example, Volunteer Canada supports the work led by Imagine Canada to advocate for greater support and resources for the charitable sector.

**At Imagine Canada's "Day on the Hill" in October 2023, Volunteer Canada actively collaborated in advocating for a more equitable workforce strategy for the nonprofit and charitable sector, including specific strategies for supporting volunteerism and volunteer-to-career pathways.**

Additional collaborations include participating in initiatives complementary to this work to cultivate relationships and build awareness of dynamics related to volunteering, such as the National Institute on Aging's Expert Consultation on Social Isolation and Loneliness. Aligning with initiatives such as Canada's Poverty Reduction Strategy, which highlights the need to significantly improve and expand access to the benefits and services that comprise our social safety net, alongside other equity-enabling efforts, will also be important.



# B. PLANNING

While the detailed operational plan and timelines for the development of the National Volunteer Action Strategy will be solidified in consultation with partners, the following high-level plan offers a preliminary guide:

YEAR	TIMELINE	PHASE
1	2023 - 2024	<b>Discovery and Visioning:</b> This phase will be focused on consultations and building an evidence base to inform the development of the Strategy (e.g., research and analysis into the pathways and barriers to participation and demographic and place-based pathways to participation), as well as participatory visioning exercises with the National Advisory Committee and other stakeholders to articulate the overall vision for the future of volunteering that will serve as the foundation for the National Action Strategy. We will also launch the National Advisory Committee.
	2024	<b>Design and Development:</b> This phase will be focused on designing and developing the comprehensive National Strategy. It will involve distilling the insights from the previous phase, facilitating a series of co-creation workshops focused on strategy development; drafting the strategy and sharing draft iterations with a variety of stakeholder groups for feedback and refinement; developing an accompanying communications strategy and campaign, and developing a comprehensive implementation plan and robust Monitoring and Evaluation framework to assess the success of the Strategy.
2	2025	<b>Delivery and Implementation:</b> This phase will be focused on launching the National Action Strategy – underpinned by the communications strategy and campaign - and in implementing the strategy across Canada through a series of tactical actions and initiatives.
3	2026	<b>Monitoring, Evaluation, and Consolidation:</b> Following its first year of implementation, we will assess actions and initiatives implemented in keeping with the specified Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. This exercise will inform the development of a longer-term action plan for the Strategy.

To help us meet the moment and properly address the crisis in volunteering and participation, Volunteer Canada is launching a \$1M Participation 2030 Campaign. Monies raised will support:

- Government relations, outreach, and policy development
- Coordination and planning to address barriers and pathways to participation (by demographic and geography)
- Extensive community consultation across the country
- Landscape reviews, benchmarking, polling, and research
- Communication and outreach
- Project coordination and network-building

## C. IMPACT

**A**t this stage, we envision the Strategy as a 10-year blueprint that will set the stage for a virtuous loop: support more people to volunteer (leading to better individual and collective health outcomes) and, in so doing, organizations will more fully deliver on their missions and our collective well-being. In this way, Canadians will be helping themselves, each other, and our communities and institutions.

**While the time horizon and intended impacts of the Strategy will become increasingly specific through consultation, the following table depicts the high-level collective impact we envision:**



# NATIONAL VOLUNTEER ACTION STRATEGY (2025 - 2035)

**ULTIMATE GOAL: BUILD BELONGING AND INCLUSION BY OPTIMIZING AND FUTUREPROOFING VOLUNTEERING SO THAT EVERYONE IN CANADA CAN PARTICIPATE AND BENEFIT.**

<b>IMPACTS</b>	<b>SOCIETAL</b>	<p><b>Sustained Community and Social Wellbeing and Resilience::</b> Maximizing the benefits of volunteering will lead to a healthier, more active population that is skilled and willing and able to contribute to pressing issues across Canada. The National Action Strategy will be aimed at cultivating more inclusive, connected, empowered, safe, and resilient communities through a collective commitment to participation and volunteering.</p>
	<b>STRUCTURAL</b>	<p><b>Enhanced Volunteering and Participation Infrastructure:</b> The National Action Strategy will build a comprehensive infrastructure that shores up policy and continuous investments to ensure that volunteering is represented and recognized across government portfolios, and that organizations that engage volunteers are supported in all aspects of volunteer recruitment, retention, and management. This includes enabling infrastructure to build capacity and understanding such as research and data collection, technology, and resources, as well as sustainable resourcing for volunteer management.</p>
	<b>EXPERIENTIAL</b>	<p><b>Increased Accessibility and Inclusivity of the Volunteer Experience:</b> Addressing the decline in volunteer rates will require us to look beyond the numbers at the factors that prevent people from volunteering, as well as deepening our understanding of different expressions and interpretations of volunteering. The National Action Strategy will lay the foundation for increasing the accessibility and inclusivity of the volunteer experience to ensure that everyone can contribute safely and meaningfully to causes that matter to them, has equal access to the benefits of volunteering, and is recognized and celebrated for their contributions.</p>

As Strategy development progresses, we will co-create robust impact measurement scaffolding, including a monitoring process to track actions and activities and an evaluation framework to assess progress and impact. This approach will be grounded in reflexiveness, with an eye toward building the evaluative capacity of stakeholders, illuminating

where adjustments are required, and prioritizing continuous learning and storytelling. Given that the success of the Strategy depends on the actions of many stakeholders operating in a complex system, the evaluation approach should be clear, applicable across contexts, and feasible.

## D. NEXT STEPS

**T**his Roadmap charts a way forward for working together to bring a bold new vision for volunteering and participation to life. We have a generational opportunity to build belonging and inclusion by optimizing and futureproofing volunteering so that everyone in Canada can participate and benefit.

**As Volunteer Canada and a growing network of stakeholders embark on the process to co-create a National Volunteer Action Strategy, we invite more people to join us on the journey. Here are a few ways to get involved:**

- To find out more about participating in the Strategy development process, contact Dr. Megan Conway, President and CEO of Volunteer Canada at **mconway@volunteer.ca**
- For tools and resources related to the National Volunteer Action Strategy, visit **volunteerstrategy.ca**.
- To receive updates on the National Volunteer Action Strategy and Volunteer Canada's work, subscribe to Volunteer Canada's newsletter **here**.



# ENDNOTES

1. CanadaHelps. (2023) The Giving Report. CanadaHelps. <https://www.canada-helps.org/en/the-giving-report/>
2. Wu, H. (2011). The Social Impact of Volunteerism. Points of Light Institute. [https://scholar.google.ca/scholar\\_url?url=https://www.academia.edu/download/54542955/social\\_impact\\_of\\_volunteerism\\_pdf.pdf&hl=en&sa=X-&ei=Dfa3ZLbFE8SlmAHggJXQCA&scisig=ABFr3xOCPRkp8NXKTfwGw-FZsuyh&oi=scholar](https://scholar.google.ca/scholar_url?url=https://www.academia.edu/download/54542955/social_impact_of_volunteerism_pdf.pdf&hl=en&sa=X-&ei=Dfa3ZLbFE8SlmAHggJXQCA&scisig=ABFr3xOCPRkp8NXKTfwGw-FZsuyh&oi=scholar)
3. Walker, V. (2020). Breaking Out of Loneliness by Volunteering. Psychology Today. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/400-friends-who-can-i-call/202002/breaking-out-loneliness-volunteering>
4. Special Senate Committee on the Charitable Sector. (2019). Catalyst for Change: A Roadmap to a Stronger Charitable Sector. Senate of Canada. [https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/421/CSSB/Reports/CSSB\\_Report\\_Final\\_e.pdf](https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/421/CSSB/Reports/CSSB_Report_Final_e.pdf)
5. Nava, A. (2023). A Kingdom of One: The Great Loneliness Pandemic and What (Not) to do About It. C2C Journal. <https://c2cjournal.ca/2023/01/a-kingdom-of-one-the-great-loneliness-pandemic-and-what-not-to-do-about-it/>
6. Dangerfield, K. (2023). The loneliness epidemic: How social isolation can damage our minds and bodies. Global News. <https://globalnews.ca/news/9684469/loneliness-crisis-canada-covid/>
7. Hahmann, T. (2021). Volunteering counts: Formal and informal contributions of Canadians in 2018. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2021001/article/00002-eng.htm>
8. Sinha, M. (2015). Volunteering in Canada, 2004 to 2013. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-652-x/89-652-x2015003-eng.htm>
9. Hahmann, T. (2021). Volunteering counts: Formal and informal contributions of Canadians in 2018. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2021001/article/00002-eng.htm>
10. Rodney, Y. (2023). Volunteerism: In crisis or at a crossroads? The Philanthropist. <https://thephilanthropist.ca/2023/03/volunteerism-in-crisis-or-at-a-crossroads/>



11. Saskatchewan Nonprofit Partnership, Inshgtrix Research Inc. (2022). Volunteerism in Saskatchewan and the Impacts of COVID-19. Saskatchewan Nonprofit Partnership. [https://www.sasknonprofit.ca/uploads/1/0/5/2/105211035/volunteerism\\_in\\_saskatchewan\\_december2022.pdf](https://www.sasknonprofit.ca/uploads/1/0/5/2/105211035/volunteerism_in_saskatchewan_december2022.pdf)
12. Statistics Canada. (2022). Volunteers and challenges businesses face in volunteer recruitment and retention, fourth quarter of 2022. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3310061701>
13. CICP-PCPOB. (2023). Weekly Report (No. 1.2.7). Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership, Carleton University. <https://carletonu.yul1.qualtrics.com/reports/RC/public/Y2FybGV0b251LTYzZGE4YWw4NTljZGY3MDAyMwYwMjNjYi1VUI85enhKcHR6aDB1N3ZjYTE=>
14. Statistics Canada. (2022). Canadian Survey on Business Conditions, fourth quarter 2022. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221125/dq221125b-cansim-eng.htm>
15. Statistics Canada. (2022). Canadian Survey on Business Conditions, fourth quarter 2022. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221125/dq221125b-cansim-eng.htm>
16. Jensen, E. (2023). What trends will impact charities and nonprofits in the first quarter of 2023? Imagine Canada. <https://www.imaginecanada.ca/en/360/What-trends-will-impact-charities-and-nonprofits-in-the-first-quarter-of-2023>
17. Jensen, E. (2023). What trends will impact charities and nonprofits in the first quarter of 2023? Imagine Canada. <https://www.imaginecanada.ca/en/360/What-trends-will-impact-charities-and-nonprofits-in-the-first-quarter-of-2023>
18. Statistics Canada. (2022). Canadian Survey on Business Conditions, fourth quarter 2022. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221125/dq221125b-cansim-eng.htm>
19. Foster, L., Allen, K., Krol, M. (2022). Corporate Volunteering for a Post-Pandemic World. International Association for Volunteer Effort. [https://www.iave.org/iavewp/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/FULL-REPORT\\_Corporate-Volunteering-for-the-Post-Pandemic-World.pdf](https://www.iave.org/iavewp/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/FULL-REPORT_Corporate-Volunteering-for-the-Post-Pandemic-World.pdf)
20. Hahmann, T. (2021). Volunteering Counts: Formal and informal contributions of Canadians in 2018 (Insights on Canadian Society). Statistics Canada.

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2021001/article/00002-eng.htm>

21. Delhon, S., Grant, A., Pavlounis, D. (2022). Learning Loss as Civic Loss: Addressing the Generational Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Youth Democratic Engagement. Samara Centre for Democracy and the Rideau Hall Foundation. [https://rhf-frh.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/LLCL\\_RHF\\_report\\_EN\\_fnl.pdf](https://rhf-frh.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/LLCL_RHF_report_EN_fnl.pdf)
22. Statistics Canada. (2023). Backgrounder: Canada's population reaches 40 million. Statistics Canada. [https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/about/smr09/smr09\\_140](https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/about/smr09/smr09_140)
23. Statistics Canada. (2022). The Canadian census: A rich portrait of the country's religious and ethnocultural diversity. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221026/dq221026b-eng.htm>
24. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. (2022). 2022 Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/annual-report-parliament-immigration-2022.html>
25. Statistics Canada. (2022). Canada in 2041: A larger, more diverse population with greater differences between regions. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220908/dq220908a-eng.htm>
26. Hou, F., Schimmelle, C., Stick, M. (2023). Changing demographics of racialized people in Canada. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/36-28-0001/2023008/article/00001-eng.htm>
27. Statistics Canada. (2023). Backgrounder: Canada's population reaches 40 million. Statistics Canada. [https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/about/smr09/smr09\\_140](https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/about/smr09/smr09_140)
28. Mihailidis, A., Muscedere, J. (2023). Population ageing is one of our most urgent challenges. The Toronto Star. [https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/population-aging-is-one-of-our-most-urgent-challenges/article\\_1e51f25e-f9cd-5bff-b22f-082960933984.html](https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/population-aging-is-one-of-our-most-urgent-challenges/article_1e51f25e-f9cd-5bff-b22f-082960933984.html)
29. Hallman, S., LeVasseur, S., Bérard-Chagnon, J., Martel, L. (2022). A portrait of Canada's growing population aged 85 and older from the 2021 Census. Statistics Canada. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/98-200-X/2021004/98-200-X2021004-eng.cfm>
30. Canaj, K., Sood, S., Johnston, C. (2023). Analysis on labour challenges in

Canada, second quarter of 2023. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-621-m/11-621-m2023009-eng.htm>

31. Lasby, D., Barr, C. (2021). Sector Monitor: The uneven impact of the pandemic on Canadian charities. Imagine Canada. <https://www.imaginecanada.ca/en/Uneven-impact-of-the-pandemic-on-Canadian-charities>
32. Lasby, D., Barr, C. (2021). Sector Monitor: The uneven impact of the pandemic on Canadian charities. Imagine Canada. <https://www.imaginecanada.ca/en/Uneven-impact-of-the-pandemic-on-Canadian-charities>
33. Ontario Nonprofit Network. (n.d.) The Nonprofit HR Crisis. The Ontario Nonprofit Network. <https://theonnc.ca/nonprofit-hr-crisis/>
34. Canada Life. (2022). New research shows more than a third of all Canadians reporting burnout. Canada Life. <https://www.canadalife.com/about-us/news-highlights/news/new-research-shows-more-than-a-third-of-all-canadians-reporting-burnout.html>
35. Statistics Canada. (2022). Canadian Survey on Business Conditions, fourth quarter 2022. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221125/dq221125b-cansim-eng.htm>
36. Rodney, Y. (2023). The future of non-profit work and workers post-pandemic. The Philanthropist. <https://thephilanthropist.ca/2023/01/the-future-of-non-profit-work-and-workers-post-pandemic/>
37. Volunteer Canada, Volunteer Ireland. (2020). Effects of the Pandemic on Employee Community Engagement. Volunteer Canada, Volunteer Ireland. [https://volunteer.ca/AdminEdit.php?ListType=Material\\_Download2](https://volunteer.ca/AdminEdit.php?ListType=Material_Download2)
38. National Advisory Council on Poverty. (2023). Blueprint for Transformation: The 2023 Report of the National Advisory Council on Poverty. Employment and Social Development Canada. [https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/esdc-edsc/documents/programs/poverty-reduction/national-advisory-council/reports/2023-annual/NACP\\_2023-Report-EN%20Final.pdf](https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/esdc-edsc/documents/programs/poverty-reduction/national-advisory-council/reports/2023-annual/NACP_2023-Report-EN%20Final.pdf)
39. Armstrong, P. (2023). Inflation is cooling. The cost of living crisis is not. CBC News. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/armstrong-inflation-cpi-bank-of-canada-1.7000464>
40. O'Neill, N. (2023). More Canadian households struggling to put food on the table due to high cost of living: report. CTV News. <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/more-canadian-households-struggling-to-put-food-on-the-table-due-to-high-cost-of-living-report-1.6616564>

41. National Advisory Council on Poverty. (2023). Blueprint for Transformation: The 2023 Report of the National Advisory Council on Poverty. Employment and Social Development Canada. [https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/esdc-edsc/documents/programs/poverty-reduction/national-advisory-council/reports/2023-annual/NACP\\_2023-Report-EN%20Final.pdf](https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/esdc-edsc/documents/programs/poverty-reduction/national-advisory-council/reports/2023-annual/NACP_2023-Report-EN%20Final.pdf)
42. Volunteer Scotland. (2022). Testing our Resilience: The impact of the cost of living crisis on volunteering and volunteers. Volunteer Scotland. <https://www.volunteerscotland.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Testing-our-Resilience-The-impact-of-the-cost-of-living-crisis-on-volunteering-and-volunteers.pdf>
43. Jensen, E. (2022). Diversity is our Strength: Improving Working Conditions in Canadian Nonprofits. Imagine Canada. <https://www.imaginecanada.ca/sites/default/files/2022-10/diversity-is-our-strength.pdf>
44. Quoi Media. (2022). Canadians deserve high-quality care, but non-profit hiring crisis is standing in the way. Prince Albert Daily Herald. <https://paherald.sk.ca/canadians-deserve-high-quality-care-but-non-profit-hiring-crisis-is-standing-in-the-way/>
45. Rodney, Y. (2023). The future of non-profit work and workers post-pandemic. The Philanthropist. <https://thephilanthropist.ca/2023/01/the-future-of-non-profit-work-and-workers-post-pandemic/>
46. Jensen, E. (2022). Diversity is our Strength: Improving Working Conditions in Canadian Nonprofits. Imagine Canada. <https://www.imaginecanada.ca/sites/default/files/2022-10/diversity-is-our-strength.pdf>
47. The Ontario Nonprofit Network. (2022). Volunteers and Decent Work: What's the connection? The Ontario Nonprofit Network. <https://theonnn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Volunteers-and-Decent-Work-Whats-the-Connection.pdf>
48. The Ontario Nonprofit Network. (2022). Volunteers and Decent Work: What's the connection? The Ontario Nonprofit Network. <https://theonnn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Volunteers-and-Decent-Work-Whats-the-Connection.pdf>
49. Volunteer Canada. (2012). The Screening Handbook. Volunteer Canada, Public Safety Canada. [https://volunteer.ca/vdemo/IssuesAndPublicPolicy\\_DOCS/2012-screening-handbook.pdf](https://volunteer.ca/vdemo/IssuesAndPublicPolicy_DOCS/2012-screening-handbook.pdf)
50. The Ontario Nonprofit Network. (2022). Volunteers and Decent Work: What's the connection? The Ontario Nonprofit Network. <https://theonnn.ca/wp-con>

tent/uploads/2022/03/Volunteers-and-Decent-Work-Whats-the-Connection.pdf

51. National Advisory Council on Poverty. (2023). Blueprint for Transformation: The 2023 Report of the National Advisory Council on Poverty. Employment and Social Development Canada. [https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/esdc-edsc/documents/programs/poverty-reduction/national-advisory-council/reports/2023-annual/NACP\\_2023-Report-EN%20Final.pdf](https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/esdc-edsc/documents/programs/poverty-reduction/national-advisory-council/reports/2023-annual/NACP_2023-Report-EN%20Final.pdf)
52. The Ontario Nonprofit Network. (2022). Volunteers and Decent Work: What's the connection? The Ontario Nonprofit Network. <https://theonn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Volunteers-and-Decent-Work-Whats-the-Connection.pdf>
53. Dangerfield, K. (2023). The loneliness epidemic: How social isolation can damage our minds and bodies. Global News. <https://globalnews.ca/news/9684469/loneliness-crisis-canada-covid/>
54. Card, K. (2021). Social Connection in Canada: Preliminary Results from the 2021 Canadian Social Connection Survey. GenWell Project. [https://genwell-project.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Social-Connection-in-Canada\\_Release-1.pdf](https://genwell-project.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Social-Connection-in-Canada_Release-1.pdf)
55. Alliance for Healthier Communities. (2020). Social Prescribing During the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic. Alliance for Healthier Communities. [https://issuu.com/aohc\\_acso/docs/rxcommunity\\_final\\_report\\_mar2020\\_fullweb](https://issuu.com/aohc_acso/docs/rxcommunity_final_report_mar2020_fullweb)
56. F/P/T Working Group on Social Isolation and Social Innovation. (2016). Social isolation of seniors - Volume 1: Understanding the issue and finding solutions. Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/partners/seniors-forum/social-isolation-toolkit-vol1.html>
57. National Institute on Ageing. (2022). Understanding Social Isolation and Loneliness Among Older Canadians and How to Address It. National Institute on Ageing, Toronto Metropolitan University. <https://static1.square-space.com/static/5c2fa7b03917eed9b5a436d8/t/637628e674654241f5624512/1668688106493/Social+Isolation+Report+-+FINAL2.pdf>
58. Card, K. (2021). Social Connection in Canada: Preliminary Results from the 2021 Canadian Social Connection Survey. GenWell Project. [https://genwell-project.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Social-Connection-in-Canada\\_Release-1.pdf](https://genwell-project.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Social-Connection-in-Canada_Release-1.pdf)

59. Holt-Lunstad, J., Smith, T. B., Baker, M., Harris, T., & Stephenson, D. (2015). Loneliness and Social Isolation as Risk Factors for Mortality: A Meta-Analytic Review. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 10(2), 227–237. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691614568352>
60. Policy Horizons Canada. (2023). Exploring Change in Social Connection. Government of Canada. <https://horizons.gc.ca/en/2023/02/22/exploring-change-in-social-connection/>
61. Edelman Trust Institute. (2023). 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer: Navigating a Polarized World. Edelman. <https://www.edelman.com/trust/2023/trust-barometer>
62. Monopoli, M. (2022). Millions of Canadians Lack Trust in Government and News Media. Abacus Data. <https://abacusdata.ca/trust-and-disinformation-in-canada/>
63. Ipsos. (2022). Only One-Third Of Canadians Believe Most People Can Be Trusted. Ipsos. <https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/news-polls/only-one-third-of-Canadians-believe-most-people-can-be-trusted>
64. Policy Horizons Canada. (2023). Exploring Change in Social Connection. Government of Canada. <https://horizons.gc.ca/en/2023/02/22/exploring-change-in-social-connection/>
65. Policy Horizons Canada. (2023). Exploring Change in Social Connection. Government of Canada. <https://horizons.gc.ca/en/2023/02/22/exploring-change-in-social-connection/>
66. Alliance for Healthier Communities. (2020). Social Prescribing During the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic. Alliance for Healthier Communities. [https://issuu.com/aohc\\_acso/docs/rxcommunity\\_final\\_report\\_mar2020\\_fullweb](https://issuu.com/aohc_acso/docs/rxcommunity_final_report_mar2020_fullweb)
67. Holwitt, P., Strohschneider, S., Zinke, R., Kaiser, S., Kranert, I., Linke, A., & Mahler, M. (2017). A study of motivational aspects initiating volunteerism in disaster management in Germany. *International Journal of Safety and Security Engineering*, 7(3), 294-302. <https://doi.org/10.2495/safe-v7-n3-294-302>
68. Delhon, S., Grant, A., Pavlounis, D. (2022). Learning Loss as Civic Loss: Addressing the Generational Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Youth Democratic Engagement. Samara Centre for Democracy and the Rideau Hall Foundation. [https://rhf-frh.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/LLCL\\_RHF\\_report\\_EN\\_fnl.pdf](https://rhf-frh.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/LLCL_RHF_report_EN_fnl.pdf)

69. Nakua, A. (2023). Racial disparities are barriers to progress that can't be ignored. Policy Options. <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/may-2023/racial-disparities-are-barriers-to-progress-that-cant-be-ignored/>
70. DasGupta, N., Shandal, V., Shadd, D., Segal, A. (2020). The Pervasive Reality of Anti-Black Racism in Canada. Boston Consulting Group. <https://www.bcg.com/en-ca/publications/2020/reality-of-anti-black-racism-in-canada>,
71. Nakua, A. (2023). Racial disparities are barriers to progress that can't be ignored. Policy Options. <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/may-2023/racial-disparities-are-barriers-to-progress-that-cant-be-ignored/>
72. Cotter, A. (2022). Experiences of discrimination among the Black and Indigenous populations in Canada, 2019. Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2022001/article/00002-eng.htm>
73. Laidley, J., Tabbara, M. (2022). Welfare in Canada, 2021. Maytree. [https://maytree.com/wp-content/uploads/Welfare\\_in\\_Canada\\_2021.pdf](https://maytree.com/wp-content/uploads/Welfare_in_Canada_2021.pdf)
74. Szeto, W. (2022). Immigrant project highlights unfairness in Canadian hiring practices, newcomers say. CBC News. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/professional-newcomer-women-canadian-experience-1.6387731>
75. Southby et al., "A Rapid Review of Barriers to Volunteering for Potentially Disadvantaged Groups and Implications for Health Inequalities," *Voluntas international journal of voluntary and nonprofit organizations* (2019). doi:10.1007/s11266-019-00119-2
76. Jensen, E. (2022). Diversity is our Strength: Improving Working Conditions in Canadian Nonprofits. Imagine Canada. <https://www.imaginecanada.ca/sites/default/files/2022-10/diversity-is-our-strength.pdf>
77. Volunteer Centre Council Truth and Reconciliation Working Group. (2020). Volunteer Centre Council. <https://www.volunteer.ca/vdemo/Truth%20and%20Reconciliation/Journey%20Towards%20Truth%20and%20Reconciliation%20-%20FINAL.pdf>
78. Cira. (n.d.). Digital capacity in Canada's not-for-profit sector. Cira. <https://www.cira.ca/en/resources/documents/state-of-internet/digital-capacity-canadas-not-profit-sector/#:~:text=Not%2Dfor%2Dprofits%20can%20take,understand%20their%20partners%20and%20donors>.
79. Naranjo-Zolotov, M., Oliveira, T., Casteleyn, S., & Irani, Z. (2019). Continuous

usage of e-participation: The role of the sense of virtual community. *Government Information Quarterly*, 36(3), 536–545. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2019.05.009>

80. Mullins, E. (2022). *Canada's Digital Divide and the Path to Digital Equity for All Ages*. Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness. <https://www.socialconnectedness.org/canadas-digital-divide-and-the-path-to-digital-equity-for-all-ages/>
81. Davidson, J., Schimmele, C. (2019). *Evolving Internet Use Among Canadian Seniors*. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2019015-eng.htm>
82. Edwards, C. (2022). *Voices of the Sector: Remarks from Canadian Charities and Nonprofits on Digital Innovation and Transformation*. Imagine Canada. <https://www.imaginecanada.ca/sites/default/files/Imagine-Canada-Voices-of-the-Sector.pdf>
83. Adam, O., Chapagain, J. (2020). *Why we must reimagine volunteering for the 2030 Agenda*. UN Volunteers. <https://www.unv.org/Success-stories/why-we-must-reimagine-volunteering-2030-agenda>
84. McCarroll, L., Speevak, P. (2017). *Recognizing Volunteering in 2017*. Volunteer Canada, Investors Group, Ipsos Research. [https://volunteer.ca/vdemo/engagingvolunteers\\_docs/RecognizingVolunteeringIn2017\\_VolunteerCanada.pdf](https://volunteer.ca/vdemo/engagingvolunteers_docs/RecognizingVolunteeringIn2017_VolunteerCanada.pdf)
85. McCarroll, L., Speevak, P. (2017). *Recognizing Volunteering in 2017*. Volunteer Canada, Investors Group, Ipsos Research. [https://volunteer.ca/vdemo/engagingvolunteers\\_docs/RecognizingVolunteeringIn2017\\_VolunteerCanada.pdf](https://volunteer.ca/vdemo/engagingvolunteers_docs/RecognizingVolunteeringIn2017_VolunteerCanada.pdf)
86. Mohamed, F. (2021). *Mutual aid in a post-pandemic world*. *This Magazine*. <https://this.org/2021/09/10/mutual-aid-in-a-post-pandemic-world/>
87. Mohamed, F. (2021). *Mutual aid in a post-pandemic world*. *This Magazine*. <https://this.org/2021/09/10/mutual-aid-in-a-post-pandemic-world/>
88. Dougherty, I., Clarke, A., Alam, M. (2018). *Are We Making a Difference? Understanding Leading Practices in Youth Volunteerism and Service*. Youth & Innovation Project. [https://uwaterloo.ca/youth-and-innovation/sites/default/files/uploads/files/youthinnovation-report\\_final\\_lr.pdf](https://uwaterloo.ca/youth-and-innovation/sites/default/files/uploads/files/youthinnovation-report_final_lr.pdf)
89. Bechard, M. (2022, November 23). *Understanding Youth and Child Civic Engagement In Canada*. Rideau Hall Foundation. <https://rhf-frh.ca/understand->



ing-youth-and-child-civic-engagement-in-canada/

90. Dougherty, I., Clarke, A., Alam, M. (2018). Are We Making a Difference? Understanding Leading Practices in Youth Volunteerism and Service. Youth & Innovation Project. [https://uwaterloo.ca/youth-and-innovation/sites/default/files/uploads/files/youthinnovation-report\\_final\\_lr.pdf](https://uwaterloo.ca/youth-and-innovation/sites/default/files/uploads/files/youthinnovation-report_final_lr.pdf)
91. Abacus Data, Rideau Hall Foundation. (2022). Executive Summary: Youth Engagement. [https://forum.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/RHF\\_Executive-Summary.En\\_v2.pdf](https://forum.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/RHF_Executive-Summary.En_v2.pdf)
92. United Nations Volunteers. (2020). Volunteerism and the Global Goals. United Nations Volunteers. <https://www.unv.org/volunteerism-and-global-goals>
93. Werrell, C., Femia, F. (2015). Climate Change as Threat Multiplier: Understanding the Broader Nature of the Risk. The Center for Climate and Security. [https://climateandsecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/climate-change-as-threat-multiplier\\_understanding-the-broader-nature-of-the-risk\\_briefer-252.pdf](https://climateandsecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/climate-change-as-threat-multiplier_understanding-the-broader-nature-of-the-risk_briefer-252.pdf)
94. Watts, N. et al. (2017). The Lancet Countdown on health and climate change: from 25 years of inaction to a global transformation for public health. 630. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(17\)32464-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(17)32464-9). (InPress)
95. Romero-Lankao, P. et al. (2014). North America. In: Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part B: Regional Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA, pp. 1439-1498.
96. Canadian Climate Institute. (2020). Inclusive Resilience. In: Ways to Measure Clean Growth. Canadian Climate Institute. <https://climateinstitute.ca/reports/clean-growth/9-inclusive-resilience/#:~:text=Overall%2C%20Canadians'%20exposure%20to%20extreme,%2C%20regions%2C%20and%20even%20neighbourhoods>.
97. United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. (2015). Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. United Nations – Headquarters. <https://www.undrr.org/publication/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030>
98. Alalouf-Hall, D., & Grant-Poitras, D. (2021). COVID-19 and the Restructuring of Collective Solidarity: The Case of Volunteer Activity in Québec. Canadian Journal of Nonprofit and Social Economy Research, 12, 31–45. <https://doi.org/10.29173/cjnser.2021v12nS1a407>

**volunteerstrategy.ca**