
VOLUNTEERING

INDICATOR TYPE: Helping, Social

DOMAIN: Learning

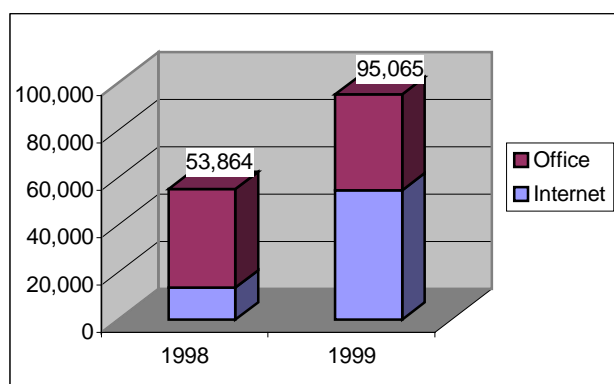
DESCRIPTION

Many individuals support charities and community organizations by volunteering their time, energy and abilities. Volunteering can take many forms, such as serving as a board member, coaching children, canvassing, organizing events, and serving meals and delivering food to the needy. Number of volunteers is a useful indicator for measuring civic participation. It represents the willingness of locals to volunteer their time and labour, free of charge, to help others.

TRENDS

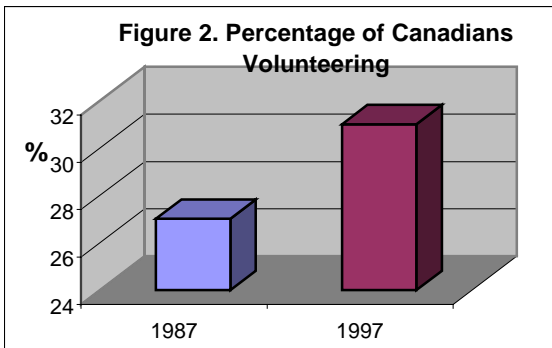
Data available from the Volunteer Centre of Toronto reveals that interest in volunteering among residents of the city of Toronto is on the rise. Between 1998 and 1999, the number of individuals who contacted the Volunteer Centre to inquire about volunteering rose from 53,864 to 95,085, an increase of over 75% (Figure 1). Although most of this increase was due to improved access via the Centre's new web site, it still represents a significant rise in volunteer interest.

**Figure 1. Number of Volunteers by Contact Medium
Volunteer Centre of Toronto**

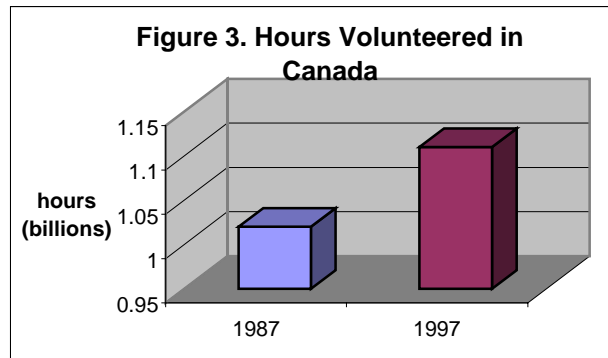


Source: Volunteer Centre of Toronto; Toronto Office.

This pattern is consistent with the national volunteering trend for the last decade and a half. The number of Canadian volunteers grew by 14% between 1987 and 1997 (Figure 2), and Canadians contributed 9% more volunteer hours in 1997 than they did in 1987 (Figure 3)¹. Recent government cutbacks have created a demand for volunteers and this is, at least, partially responsible for the recent surge in number of volunteers.



Source: Canadian Centre for Philanthropy. (1997) Volunteering Trends in Canada 1987-1997.



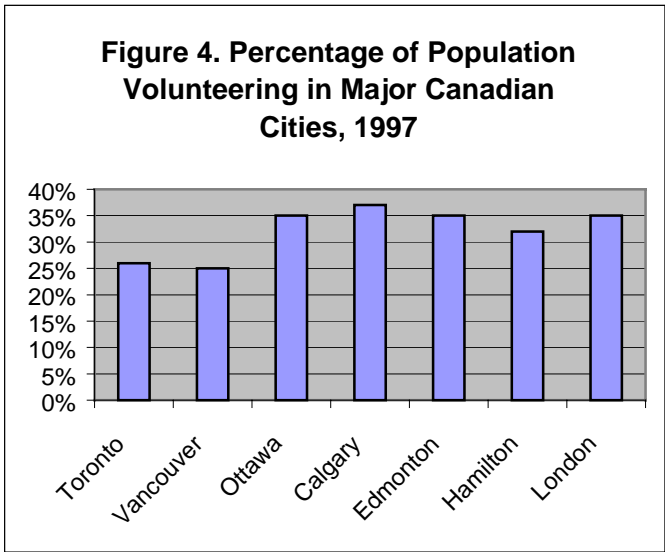
Source: Canadian Centre for Philanthropy. (1997) Volunteering Trends in Canada 1987-1997.

While the number of volunteers in Toronto is growing, a study conducted by the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy (CCP) (1997) three years ago revealed that Toronto falls below both the national and provincial volunteer percentages. In 1997, 32% of Ontarians, and 31% of Canadians aged 15 and over volunteered for charitable or nonprofit organization, whereas only 26% of people living in Toronto volunteered².

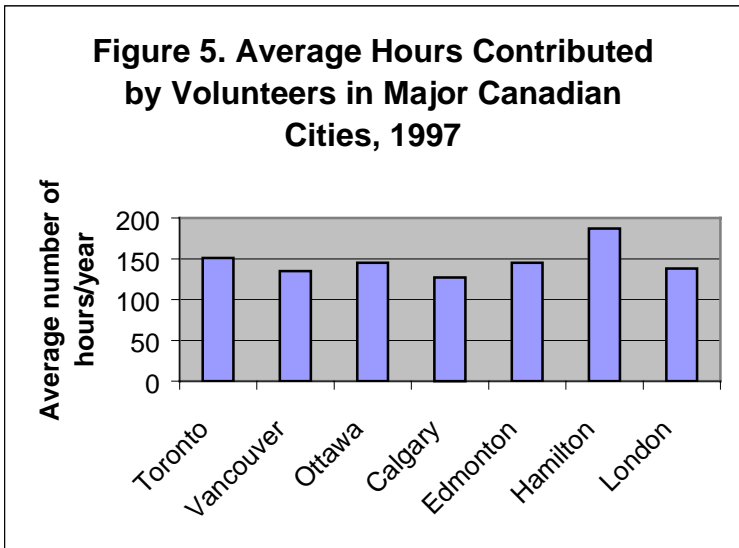
Toronto, the largest city in Canada, also does not fare well when compared to other major cities in Canada. A study of seven of Canada's 10 largest cities in 1997 found that Toronto and Vancouver have the lowest volunteer rates (Figure 4). However, using another indicator which measures the amount of time that individual volunteers contribute, Toronto fares better, placing second among the 10 most populous cities, with volunteers contributing 151 hours of their time per year, on average (Figure 5). This is slightly above the national average of 149 hours per year³.

TORONTO VOLUNTEERS

The CCP study reports a substantially higher percentage of volunteers in Toronto (26%) than that reported by VCT (4%). This is attributable to two main differences in the collected data. Firstly, VCT volunteer numbers do not account for all volunteers in Toronto, whereas the CPP report does. VCT only includes individuals who contact the Volunteer Centre of Toronto to find a placement. Obviously, there is a large group of people in Toronto who volunteer, but did not use VCT services to find a placement. Secondly, while both Volunteer Center of Toronto and the study conducted by Canadian Centre for Philanthropy define a volunteer as someone who volunteers for a charitable or non-profit organization, only the CCP study includes individuals who volunteer for religious organizations. In Canada, 21% of volunteers engage in volunteer activities for religious organizations - a fairly substantial percentage of all volunteers⁴.



Source: Canadian Centre for Philanthropy. (1997) The 1997 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating. Reports for Calgary, Edmonton, Ottawa-Carleton, Toronto, Vancouver, London and Hamilton.



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ACTION

In terms of percentage of volunteers, Toronto is below most cities in Ontario, the largest cities in Canada, and Ontario and Canada as a whole. Toronto, therefore, has plenty of opportunity to increase its share of volunteers. Organizations, like the VCT and the United Way, assist individuals looking for volunteer opportunities and therefore can play an important role in encouraging Torontonians to volunteer.

DIFFICULTIES

- To some extent the volunteer data obtained from the VCT is not the best measure. Firstly, the Volunteer Centre's data is based on the number of people who use their services. This means that their statistics include not only number of volunteers but also include people who use their services simply to gather information on volunteering and volunteer opportunities. Secondly, users are double counted if they use the organization's services more than once. Lastly, VCT statistics only include those who use their services. They, consequently, do not include all volunteers in the city of Toronto.
- Data on the percentage of volunteers living in Toronto is only available for 1997. The authors of this report, the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, are planning on completing the same study for the year 2000. It, however, will not be available until 2001.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

- It is likely that the number of individuals using VCT services and number of volunteers in Toronto will increase for 4 reasons:
 - 1) Ontario Works, a provincial work for welfare benefits program introduced in 1998, can require welfare recipients to complete an unpaid community service term.
 - 2) High-school students in the city of Toronto are required to complete 40 hours of community service.
 - 3) ESL instructors recommend that students volunteer to help improve their English. There has been a steady increase of 4% new ESL students in Toronto per year
 - 4) Government cutbacks have created a demand for volunteers.

¹ Canadian Centre for Philanthropy. (1997) The 1997 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating: Volunteering in Ontario. www.nsgvp.org.

² Canadian Centre for Philanthropy. (1997) The 1997 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating: Volunteering in Canada. www.nsgvp.org;
Canadian Centre for Philanthropy. (1997d) The 1997 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating: Volunteering in Ontario. www.nsgvp.org;
Canadian Centre for Philanthropy. (1997) The 1997 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating: Giving and Volunteering in Toronto. www.nsgvp.org.

³ Canadian Centre for Philanthropy. (1997) The 1997 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating: Giving and Volunteering in Calgary. www.nsgvp.org;
Canadian Centre for Philanthropy. (1997) The 1997 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating: Giving and Volunteering in Edmonton. www.nsgvp.org;
Canadian Centre for Philanthropy. (1997) The 1997 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating: Giving and Volunteering in Ottawa-Carleton. www.nsgvp.org;



Canadian Centre for Philanthropy. (1997g) The 1997 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating: Giving and Volunteering in Toronto. www.nsgvp.org;

Canadian Centre for Philanthropy. (1997h) The 1997 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating: Giving and Volunteering in Vancouver. www.nsgvp.org;

Canadian Centre for Philanthropy. (1997i) The 1997 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating: Giving and Volunteering in Hamilton. www.nsgvp.org;

Canadian Centre for Philanthropy. (1997j) The 1997 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating: Giving and Volunteering in London. www.nsgvp.org

⁴ Canadian Centre for Philanthropy. (1998) Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians.
Statistics Canada and Ministry of Industry.