

A PROFILE OF COMMUNITY SPORT VOLUNTEERS



Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

The focus of this report is community sport volunteers, who carry out unpaid activities on behalf of non-profit amateur sport clubs or organizations. The profile presented in this report describes who volunteers in sport, what they do, why they volunteer, why they do not volunteer more, and their satisfaction with volunteering in this area. A number of issues related to community sport volunteers are also addressed. The profile was developed primarily from data extracted from the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (2000). It is supplemented by information from related research studies and reports.

It is estimated that 1.17 million Canadians volunteer in organized sport, representing 5% of the Canadian population and 18% of all Canadian volunteers. It is further estimated that 380,000 Ontarians volunteer in organized sport, representing 4% of the Ontario population and 16% of all Ontario volunteers.

Who volunteers in sport

The “typical” community sport volunteer is male, 35-44 years of age, a college or university graduate, married with dependents at home, employed full-time, with a household income of \$60,000-99,000. This demographic profile describes who is most likely, although not exclusively, involved as a community sport volunteer. It also highlights who is less likely to be involved (e.g., women, younger and older individuals, those not in the labour force), thus representing a pool of potential volunteers.

The typical coach is even more likely to be male, but otherwise does not differ from the typical sport volunteer. The typical volunteer executive is also likely male, although female sport volunteers are over-represented in this role. The volunteer executive is slightly older than the coach and than sport volunteers in general, and tends to be better-educated. He also is more likely than other sport volunteers to be married and have dependents at home.

In comparison to volunteers in general, sport volunteers are more likely to be male, younger, married, employed, and from a higher income bracket.

What sport volunteers do

Sport volunteers each contribute an average of 143 hours/year to sport alone, or a total of 167 million hours. Men contribute substantially more volunteer hours to sport on average than women, and older volunteers (35 years and older) contribute up to twice as many hours to sport on average than younger volunteers.

The majority of sport volunteers are involved with more than one voluntary organization (both sport and non-sport), while the majority of volunteers in general are involved in only one organization. Female sport volunteers are more likely than males to be involved in several organizations.

Most sport volunteers are involved in organizing and supervising activities and events, and teaching or coaching. Substantially fewer volunteers in general are involved in these types of activities. The next most common activity for sport volunteers is board or committee work, followed by fundraising. Most sport volunteers take on multiple roles. Men tend to be involved in organizing activities and coaching, and to a lesser degree in committee/board work. Women tend to be involved in organizing activities, fundraising, and committee/board work, and to a lesser degree in coaching. Older volunteers tend to be involved in more activities than younger volunteers.

How sport volunteers become involved

Sport volunteers tend to become involved through their children. This is unique to sport volunteers, as most volunteers in general become involved because someone asked them. Male and female sport volunteers do not differ in becoming involved because their children are involved, however younger sport volunteers (15-34 years) are more likely to become involved because someone in the organization asked them.

Why sport volunteers are involved

As with volunteers in general, most sport volunteers are motivated to volunteer to support a cause in which they believe, use their skills to help, because someone they know is affected by the organization, and to explore their own strengths. However, using one's skills and because someone they know is affected by the organization are important motives to a greater proportion of sport volunteers than volunteers in general.

There are few variations by sex, however older volunteers (35 years and older) tend to be attracted to sport volunteering to help a cause, use their skills, and because someone close to them is personally affected, while younger volunteers tend to be motivated by those same things and also to explore their own strengths, improve their job opportunities, and because their friends volunteer.

A model of motives for volunteering in sport identifies helping a cause as a core motive, while primary motives are personal needs and interests (such as fun, use skills, child involved) and secondary motives are social interaction and personal development.

Why sport volunteers are not more involved

The main reason sport volunteers, and volunteers in general, are not involved more is because they have no extra time. Other barriers to increased involvement are that volunteers feel they already contribute enough, and they are unwilling to volunteer year round. Women are more likely than men to feel they have no extra time, and older volunteers are more likely than younger volunteers to feel they have already done enough.

A model of barriers to volunteering in sport distinguishes personal barriers, such as time, work, family and lack of skills, and organizational barriers, such as increasing demands on volunteers and a poorly-run organization. The sport organization can work to alleviate the barriers it creates, but must work with volunteers to help them negotiate their personal barriers so that they may be involved (more).

Sport volunteer satisfaction

Research suggests sport volunteers are very satisfied, and would continue to volunteer or volunteer again. Most satisfying is the opportunity to use one's skills and experience, and obtaining new skills and experiences, through volunteer work that is enjoyable and worthwhile. Most dissatisfying to sport volunteers is working for a poorly-run organization, followed by boredom or lack of challenge/interest in the volunteer role, too much time required, unable to cope with what asked to do, and efforts are not appreciated.

Volunteer coaches are most satisfied by helping people they know and seeing skill improvement among their athletes. Coaches are particularly dissatisfied when athletes do not try their best, and when parents are not involved in their children's sport. The increasing bureaucracy of sport is also troubling for coaches. Volunteer executives are most satisfied by committee goal achievement and task accomplishment. Most dissatisfying is when people do not follow through on assigned tasks and a lack of volunteers to do the work.

Issues and observations

A number of issues and observations that are relevant to community sport volunteering were identified:

- Volunteering is considered a leisure activity and so, by definition, it must be relaxing, refreshing and/or rejuvenating, meet one's social and/or intellectual needs, provide an opportunity to exercise, and/or provide an opportunity to learn or display competence and mastery.
 - Volunteerism is an exchange between the organization and the volunteer. The needs of both must be met for the relationship to be satisfying and effective, and maintained.
 - There are "serious" and "casual" volunteers in sport. The profiles and contributions of each must be recognized.
 - Certain groups of individuals are under-represented in sport volunteering, including women and new Canadians.
 - Trends and attitudes towards volunteering in general explain some of the challenges to recruiting and retaining volunteers in sport.
 - There are several things we do not know about sport volunteers, including why individuals with a connection to sport do not volunteer, the motives of casual vs. serious volunteers, sport volunteer attitudes and further behaviour, and stress and burnout among sport volunteers.
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