

A PROFILE OF COMMUNITY SPORT VOLUNTEERS



FINAL REPORT

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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.

Introduction

This report presents a profile of community sport volunteers. It describes who volunteers in community sport, what they do, why they volunteer, why they do not volunteer more, and their satisfaction with volunteering in this area. Issues that challenge community sport volunteers, and the organizations for which they provide a service, are also addressed. The report and volunteer profile can be used as a tool to develop (better) volunteer programs to effectively recruit, position, develop, recognize and retain these most valuable resources in community – the volunteers.

The community sport volunteer is defined here as an individual who carries out unpaid activities on behalf of a non-profit amateur sport club or organization. The focus is at the community level, where sport is organized through non-profit clubs, organizations, and leagues; for example, Brampton Minor Baseball, the Thunder Bay Gymnastics Association, and the Ottawa Curling Club. Community sport volunteers are involved in a myriad of activities, including the organization and administration of these clubs and leagues, coaching, officiating, and other support roles. This report does not examine the profile of volunteers involved in major community sport events, such as the Jeux du Canada Games or Ontario Soccer Championships. However, the community sport volunteers described in this report may also be involved in these events.

The profile of community sport volunteers was developed from several sources. The primary source was the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (NSGVP) 2000.¹ The NSGVP provides a snapshot of volunteering during one 12-month period. The NSGVP classifies the organizations in which Canadians volunteer according to 12 categories. The category of arts/culture/recreation organizations comprises three major sub-groups: culture and arts organizations (including performing arts, historical and literary societies, museums, and zoos); recreation organizations (including recreation, social and service clubs); and sport organizations (including amateur sport and physical fitness). Data on Canadians who indicated that they volunteer for at least one sport organization were extracted from the NSGVP results and analyzed for this report.

The data on sport volunteers includes community sport volunteers, as well as those who are involved at regional, provincial and national levels. It is reasonable to assume that the majority of those volunteers are involved in community sport. Of further note, sample size concerns do not permit the extraction of sport volunteer data on a provincial basis. However, data from other sources strongly suggest there is little variation among sport volunteers, across Canada and across developed countries (e.g., Canada, United States, United Kingdom, Australia).

This document appears to be the first report focusing on sport volunteers. Previous reports considered sport and recreation volunteers (e.g., Abbey-Livingstone, 1989; Rhyne, 1995), or arts, culture and recreation volunteers (including sport) as a group (e.g., Lasby & McIver, 2004). There is merit in distinguishing sport volunteers. They comprise a

substantial proportion of all volunteers and, taken together, the data and reports indicate that they have a unique profile in terms of who they are and what they do.

The data on Canadian sport volunteers extracted from the NSGVP 2000 are supplemented by a review of research literature generated from an extensive search of the SPORTDiscus sport science database². The search focused on research pertaining to sport volunteerism. Research based on the broader group of sport and recreation volunteers rounds out the literature in this report, where appropriate. A full list of references is included at the end of the report. Various reports generated from the NSGVP 1997 and 2000 were identified from www.givingandvolunteering.ca.

¹ The NSGVP was conducted by Statistics Canada in late 2000 with a representative sample of 14,724 Canadians aged 15 years and older. The sample was limited to one respondent per household. Respondents were asked to refer to their volunteer experience in the previous 12-month period. Data collected through the NSGVP include volunteer demographics, type and degree of involvement, reasons for being involved, and barriers to volunteering more. Population estimates are derived from the sample. For more information about the NSGVP, visit www.givingandvolunteering.ca.

² SPORTDiscus is the most comprehensive index of sport-related publications in the world. It is compiled and indexed by the Sport Information Resource Centre (SIRC, Canada).

Volunteering in sport

As a preface to the profile of community sport volunteers, it is useful to review the context for volunteering in sport.

Sport organizations

A recently released report reveals that sport and recreation organizations comprise 21% or 33,649 of all nonprofit and voluntary organizations in Canada; the highest percentage of any sector (Hall et al., 2004). Furthermore, 71% or almost 24,000 of these sports and recreation organizations serve local communities. In Ontario, sport and recreation organizations constitute the second highest percentage of voluntary organizations (16% or 7,400), behind religious organizations (23%).

Sport volunteers

Who runs these organizations? Who organizes, supervises, fundraises, and supports in a number of ways the programs, competitions, leagues and other opportunities these organizations provide? From the NSGVP 2000, it is estimated that 1.17 million Canadians volunteer in organized sport. This represents 5% of the Canadian population (or 1 in 20 Canadians) and 18% of all Canadian volunteers.³ Each sport volunteer contributes an average of 143 hours/year to sport alone or a total of 167 million hours. This equates to 87,140 full-time positions working in sport every year.⁴

It is further estimated that 380,000 Ontarians volunteer in organized sport.⁵ This represents 4% of the Ontario population (or 1 in 25 Ontarians), and 16% of all Ontario volunteers.

Issues in sport volunteering

The rate of volunteering in 2000 actually represents a 4% decrease in the proportion of Canadians who volunteer, from 31% in 1997 to 27% in 2000 (Hall et al., 1998, 2001a). Ontario experienced the largest decline, with a 7% decrease from 32% of the adult population volunteering in 1997, to 25% in 2000. The proportion of contributions by Canadian volunteers to arts/culture/recreation organizations remained the same from 1997 to 2000 (23%). From that we can estimate that the rate of Canadian volunteers involved in arts/culture/recreation organizations (including sport) also dropped approximately 4% from 1997 to 2000. An even greater decline in the rate of volunteering in arts/culture/recreation organizations may be expected from 1997 to 2000 in Ontario. However, there was no change in the proportion of volunteer contributions to these organizations, which means sport volunteers did not necessarily move to a different type of volunteer organization.⁶

The relatively fewer volunteers in 2000 did, however, give more time to their organizations. There was a 9% increase in the average number of hours contributed by each Canadian volunteer in general, from 149 hours/year in 1997 to 162 hours/year in 2000. There was no change in the proportion of volunteer hours contributed to arts/culture/recreation

organizations, therefore we can estimate that there was a 9% increase in the hours contributed to these types of organizations, which include community sport clubs. Ontario volunteers in general realized a 13% increase in the average number of hours each contributed, from 146 hours/year in 1997 to 165 hours/year in 2000. Again, we can estimate that there was a corresponding percentage increase in the average number of hours contributed to organized sport in Ontario.

Together, these data mean there are fewer volunteers doing more work. This observation is corroborated in the community sport setting by the volunteers themselves. Research and anecdotal evidence indicate that one of the greatest concerns to all sport volunteers is too few volunteers for the work to be done (Gratton et al., 1997; Hall et al., 2004; Taylor et al., 2003). Volunteers have to take on multiple roles, which can be a deterrent to becoming involved, and staying involved. One of the key challenges reportedly facing community sport organizations is getting and keeping enough good volunteers, particularly in organizational and leadership roles (e.g., Coleman, 2001; Hall et al., 2003; Hammond, 2001; Larsen et al., 1992).

³ Estimates are based on 6.5 million Canadian volunteers involved in formal organizations (27% of Canadians) (Hall et al., 2001a).

⁴ Based on a full-time position equivalent to 40 hours/week for 48 weeks (Hall et al., 2001a).

⁵ Estimate based on 20% of Ontario volunteer contributions in arts/culture/recreation organizations (contribution measured as one volunteer in one organization), vs. 23% of Canadian volunteer contributions (Hall et al., 2001a), and 18% of Canadian volunteers involved in organized sport; thus estimated that 16% of Ontarians volunteer in organized sport.

⁶ Since 1987, sport volunteers continue to represent about two-thirds of sport and recreation volunteers (Abbey-Livingstone, 1989; NSGVP 2000).

Who volunteers in sport

The profile of community sport volunteers begins with a description of who volunteers. The focus is on a demographic profile of sport volunteers, including a breakdown by sex, age, education, marital status, dependents living at home, labour force status, and household income.

We can compare the profile of sport volunteers with the profile of all Canadian volunteers in general, and the Canadian population, based on data from the NSGVP 2000 reported in *Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians* (Hall et al., 2001a). The breakdown of all volunteers and the Canadian population by each demographic variable permits us to see whether sport volunteers are similar or different than volunteers in general and than the population as a whole. Some comparisons are also possible with data from the National Survey of Volunteers (1987) (Abbey-Livingstone, 1989), where sport and recreation organizations were considered as a distinct category. Changes in a few demographic variables over a 13-year span can be considered.

The NSGVP 2000 also asked volunteers to describe whether they had any experiences in their youth that are believed to predict volunteering in adulthood. The experiences of sport volunteers and volunteers in general can be compared.

Finally, a description of who volunteers enables the development of a profile of the “typical” sport volunteer. As well, a more specific description of volunteer coaches and volunteer executives (board/committee members) is provided.

Sex. A substantially greater proportion of sport volunteers are men (64%) than women (36%) (see Figure 1). This differs from volunteers in general, of whom a slightly greater proportion are women (54%) than men (46%). It also contrasts the population in general, where men and women comprise almost equal proportions of the population (49% and 51%, respectively). Taken together, the data indicate that men are substantially over-represented, or women are substantially underrepresented, as sport volunteers. This ratio has been fairly consistent since 1987 (Abbey-Livingstone, 1989).

Age. Sport volunteers are younger (41% are 35-44 years) than volunteers in general (42% are 45+ years) and the general population (44% are 45+ years) (see Figure 2). The average age of sport volunteers is 38 years. A relatively small proportion of sport volunteers are between the ages of 25 and 34 years, and there is a substantial drop off among sport volunteers aged 45 years and older (although the decline may be less dramatic if further sub-groups are considered). Most sport volunteers are in quite a limited age bracket, and this likely coincides with their involvement primarily because they have a child or children involved (see “How sport volunteers become involved”, and “Why sport volunteers are involved”). Individuals aged 35-44 years are more likely to have children of an age to be involved in organized sports and therefore find themselves volunteering. In contrast, 25-34 year olds are likely getting started with careers and/or families, and those 45 years and older likely have children who may have moved out of organized sport; as a result, they may be less likely to be involved as community sport volunteers.

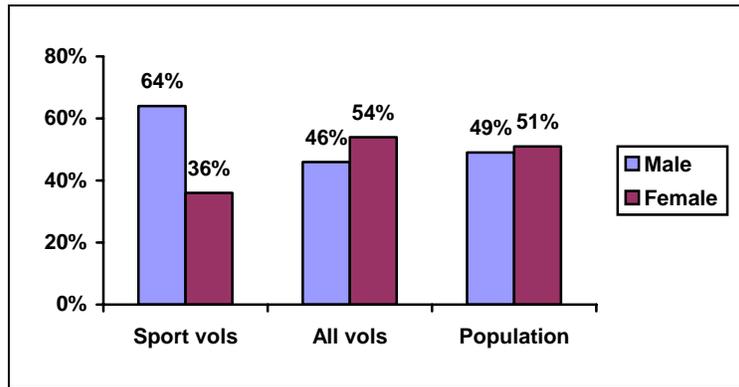


Figure 1. Sport volunteers, all volunteers and Canadian population, by sex

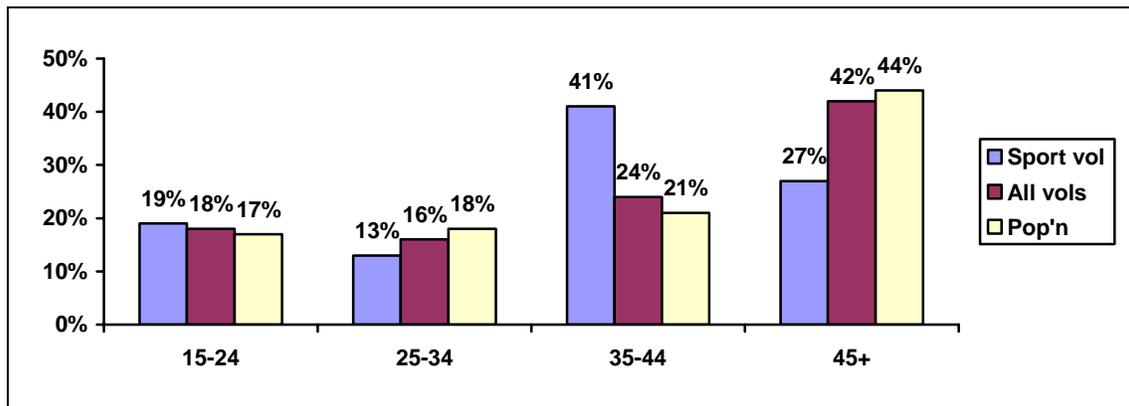


Figure 2. Sport volunteers, all volunteers and Canadian population, by age

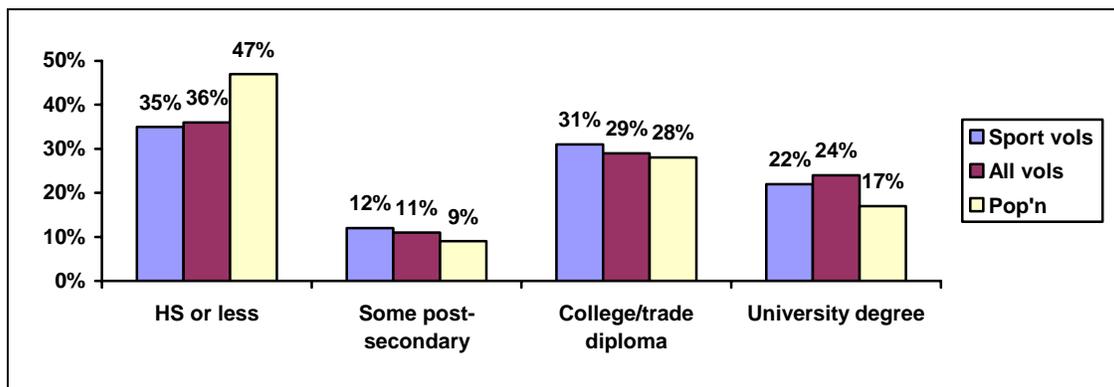


Figure 3. Sport volunteers, all volunteers and Canadian population, by education

Education. Sport volunteers are similar to all other volunteers in terms of education (see Figure 3). Just over 1/3 of sport volunteers (35%) and all volunteers (36%) have completed high school or less. Over half of sport volunteers (53%) and all volunteers (53%) have a college or university diploma. In this regard, individuals with a high school education or less are under-represented, while those with a diploma or degree are slightly over-represented, as volunteers in Canada.

Marital. A slightly greater proportion of sport volunteers are married or in a common-law relationship (73%) than volunteers in general (65%) or the population as a whole (62%) (see Figure 4). Likewise, a slightly smaller proportion are single, widowed, separated or divorced (27%) than volunteers in general (35%) and the population as a whole (38%).

Dependents. No comparisons are available, however 62% of sport volunteers have dependents under the age of 18 living at home.

Labour force. A substantially greater percentage of sport volunteers are involved in the labour force (84%) than volunteers in general (67%) and the population as a whole (63%) (see Figure 5). In other words, individuals who are active in the labour force are over-represented as sport volunteers. This may, at least in part, be a function of the average age of sport volunteers. Notably, 82% of those sport volunteers are employed full-time (30 or more hours/week). In addition to their volunteer commitments, sport volunteers are already very busy with full-time jobs.

Household income. Most sport volunteers come from a higher household income bracket than volunteers in general and the population as a whole (see Figure 6). For example, 43% of sport volunteers report a household income of \$60,000-99,000, compared to 31% of general volunteers and 25% of the population in this bracket. This is likely a function of the greater percentage of sport volunteers in the labour force, however it may reflect barriers to lower income volunteers. The average household income of sport volunteers is \$73,100.

Early life experiences. The NSGVP 2000 asked respondents about early life experiences in grade school or high school that are thought to be related to volunteering later in life. A substantially greater percentage of sport volunteers than volunteers in general had many early life experiences that may have set them up for volunteering in adulthood (Figure 7): (1) they participated in an organized team sport (86% vs. 66%), (2) saw a role model help others (66% vs. 53%), (3) were helped by others (64% vs. 50%), (4) had a parent(s) that did volunteer work (63% vs. 40%), (5) belonged to a youth group (63% vs. 49%), and (5) did volunteer work themselves (61% vs. 45%). The data suggest that sport volunteers are predisposed to volunteering based on early life experiences. It also suggests that individuals without these experiences are less likely to be involved as sport volunteers. Perhaps there are barriers to being a sport volunteer if one has not had these types of experiences in their youth. Research also consistently notes that sport volunteers tend to have previous volunteer experience (Henderson & Silverberg, 2002). While this means sport organizations tend to get experienced volunteers, some individuals may feel that previous experience is a requirement for volunteering in sport, and are thus deterred from

getting involved. Instead, sport may be an excellent starting point for these individuals, especially through their children.

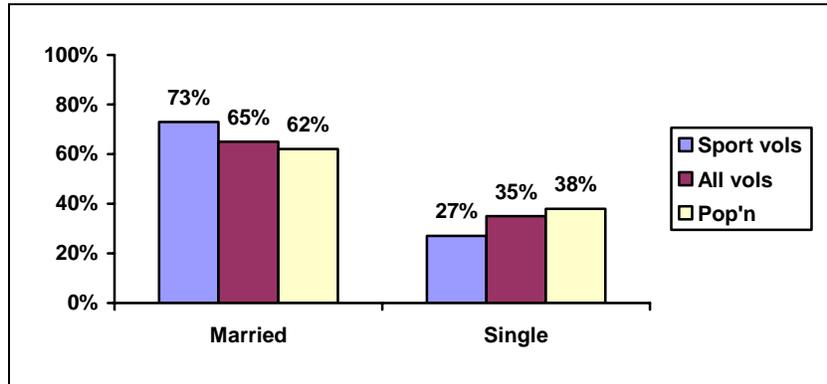


Figure 4. Sport volunteers, all volunteers and Canadian population, by marital status

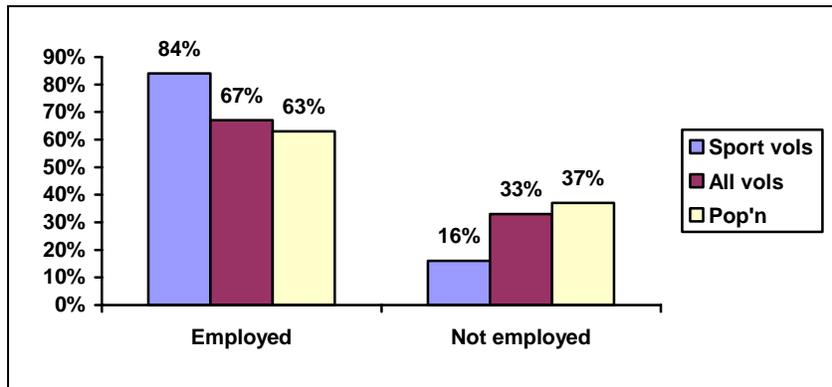


Figure 5. Sport volunteers, all volunteers and Canadian population, by labour force status

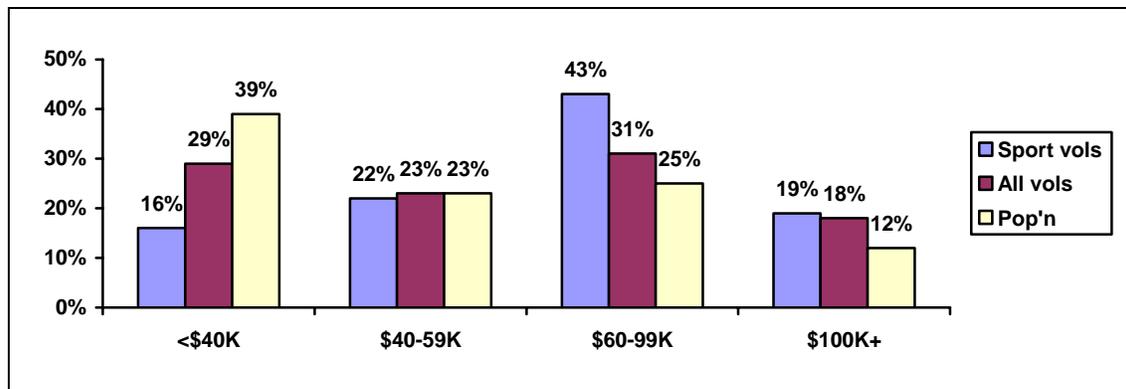


Figure 6. Sport volunteers, all volunteers and Canadian population, by household income

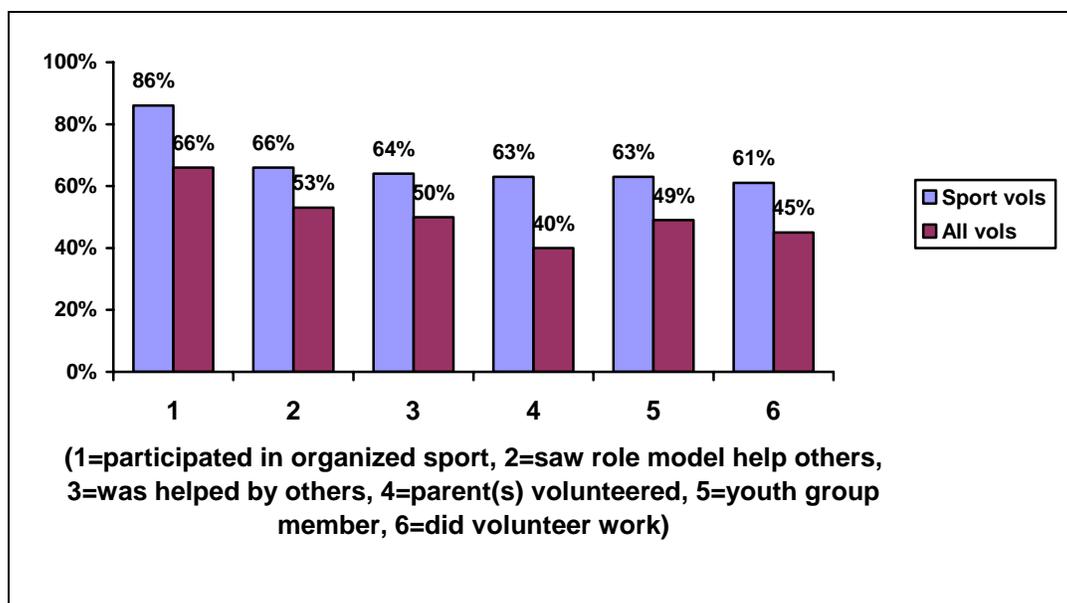


Figure 7. Sport volunteers and all volunteers, by early life experiences

Characteristic	Coach	Executive
Sex		
Male	73%	61%
Female	27%	39%
Age		
15-24 years	20%	11%
25-34 years	13%	13%
35-44 years	41%	44%
45+ years	26%	33%
Education		
HS or less	33%	25%
Some post-secondary	13%	11%
College/trade diploma	29%	37%
University degree	25%	28%
Marital status		
Married/common-law	73%	80%
Single/widowed/divorced/separated	27%	20%
Dependents		
Yes	63%	66%
No	37%	34%
Labour force		
Employed	86%	87%
Not employed	17%	13%
Household income		
< \$40,000	13%	12%
\$40,000-59,000	20%	24%
\$60,000-99,000	44%	45%
> \$100,000	23%	19%

Table 1. Profile of the volunteer coach, and volunteer executive (involved in committee/board activities)

The “typical” community sport volunteer. The demographic data allow us to describe the “typical” community sport volunteer. This individual is most likely male, 35-44 years of age, with a college or university diploma, married with dependents at home, employed full-time, and with a household income of \$60,000-99,000. In his youth, he likely participated in organized team sports, saw a role model (perhaps a coach) helping others, was helped by others, had a parent(s) who volunteered (perhaps in sport), belonged to a youth group of some sort, and had done some volunteer work himself. This profile is corroborated by related research on sport volunteerism, as well as by national survey studies of sport volunteers in other countries (specifically the United Kingdom and Australia).

The demographic profile describes who are most likely, although not exclusively, involved as community sport volunteers. It also, by default, describes who are less, and least, likely involved as community sport volunteers. This group of individuals includes women, younger (under 35 years) but especially older (over 45 years) individuals who are particularly underrepresented as sport volunteers, those with less than a college or university diploma, individuals not active in the labour force, those from lower income brackets (especially under \$40,000), and those without any number of early life experiences that may have set them up for volunteering as an adult. These profiles have implications for recruiting and retaining individuals who are most likely to be involved in sport volunteering, but also for identifying, recruiting and retaining those who may not be aware of opportunities, who may not have been asked to be involved, or who may face barriers to being and staying involved.

The volunteer coach. From the NSGVP 2000 and the research literature it is possible to develop a profile of the sport coach. Sixty percent of sport volunteers are involved in teaching or coaching.⁷ Of those, 73% are male and 27% are female (see Table 1), which indicates an even greater under-representation of women in this particular volunteer role. Nevertheless, this appears to represent a shift in the gender profile of the volunteer coach since 1987, when at least 82% of coaches were men and only 18% were women (Abbey-Livingstone, 1989). The breakdown of coaches by age parallels sport volunteers in general; most coaches are 35-44 years of age (41%). Most coaches, like sport volunteers in general, are married or in a common-law relationship (73%), have dependents under the age of 18 years at home (63%), have a post-secondary diploma or degree (54%), are employed (86%), and have a household income of \$60,000-99,000 (44%). Again, the coach stands out from other sport volunteers in that this volunteer is even more likely to be male.

The volunteer executive. It is also possible to describe the profile of the individual who is involved in the board or committee work for the community sport organization (although this person may also volunteer as a coach). Forty-six percent of sport volunteers have a role on the board or a committee of their sport organization. Of those, 61% are male and 39% are female (see Table 1). While there is a gender-imbalance in this role as well, women are slightly over-represented in this role among sport volunteers (36% of sport volunteers are female). Volunteer executives are slightly older than coaches and sport volunteers in general; while most are 35-44 years (44%), a substantial proportion are 45 years and older (33%). They are also better educated than coaches and sport volunteers in

general; 65% of volunteer executives have a post-secondary diploma or degree, compared to coaches (54%) and sport volunteers in general (53%). A slightly greater proportion of volunteer executives are married/common-law (80%) and have dependents (66%). These committee and board members are similar to their coaching and other sport volunteer counterparts with regard to employment status (87% in the labour force), and household income (45% are \$60,000-99,000). As a further note, research indicates that sport volunteer executives involved at the regional level and higher tend to be older (majority are 45+ years), better educated, and more likely to be retired than their counterparts in community sport (Coleman, 2001; Cuskelly et al., 1999).

⁷ A similar percentage of Ontario volunteers are involved in formal coaching in sport organizations, based on extrapolations from reports by Abbey-Livingstone (1989) and the Sport Alliance of Ontario (2000). This corresponds to 702,000 active coaches in Canada and 150,000 active coaches in Ontario. Further, the demographic profile of the typical coach corresponds with information about Ontario coaches reported in the Sport Alliance of Ontario (2000) report on *Community Coaching in Ontario*.

What sport volunteers do

The profile of community sport volunteers next considers what these volunteers do, including how many organizations they are involved with, how long they have been involved, and how many hours they contribute.

Extent of involvement. Sport volunteers are typically involved in more organizations than other volunteers in general (see Figure 8). Almost two-thirds (62%) of sport volunteers are involved in two or more organizations (both sport and non-sport), while most volunteers in general (59%) are involved in only one organization. Not surprisingly, as noted below, sport volunteers contribute more total hours on average than other volunteers.

Sex. Slightly more male than female sport volunteers are involved in only one organization (40% vs. 35%) and slightly more female than male sport volunteers are involved in two or more organizations (65% vs. 61%) (see Figure 9). Notably, a substantially greater proportion of women than men are involved in three or more organizations.

Age. A larger proportion of younger (15-34 years⁸) than older (35+ years) sport volunteers are involved in only one organization (48% vs. 33%) (see Figure 10). A larger proportion of older than younger volunteers are involved in two or more organizations (67% vs. 52%).

Hours of involvement. Each sport volunteer contributes, on average, 189 hours/year to the various organizations with which he or she volunteers. This is slightly higher than the overall average of 162 hours/year for all types of volunteers. More specifically, sport volunteers contribute, on average, 143 hours/year to their primary volunteer organization.⁹

Sex. On average, male sport volunteers contribute substantially more hours than their female counterparts overall (198 vs. 171 hours/year). Male sport volunteers also contribute substantially more hours than their female counterparts in sport alone (163 vs. 107 hours/year) (see Figure 11). This may reflect the greater proportion of men in coaching. Men contribute 73% of the hours volunteered in sport, while women contribute 27%. Overall, the data indicate that women sport volunteers contribute relatively fewer hours in more organizations than men; that is, their involvement is more dispersed.

Age. Hours contributed is directly associated with age. Older sport volunteers contribute substantially more hours/year than their younger counterparts overall (those 35+ years contribute over 200 hours/year, those under 35 years contribute around 130 hours/year). Older sport volunteers also contribute up to twice as many hours as younger volunteers in sport in particular (those 35+ years volunteer over 160 hours/year, those under 35 years volunteers between 80 and 90 hours/year) (see Figure 12). Volunteers aged 35-44 years contribute the greatest percentage of total volunteer hours in sport (47%), followed by older volunteers (45+ years, 34%) (see Figure 13). These figures parallel the proportion of these age groups as sport volunteers.

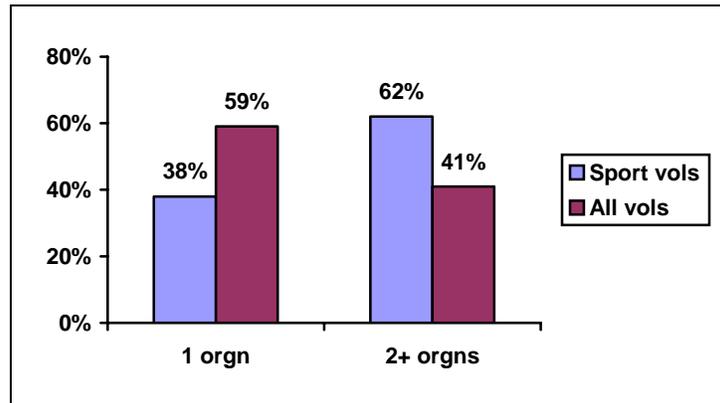


Figure 8. Extent of volunteer involvement

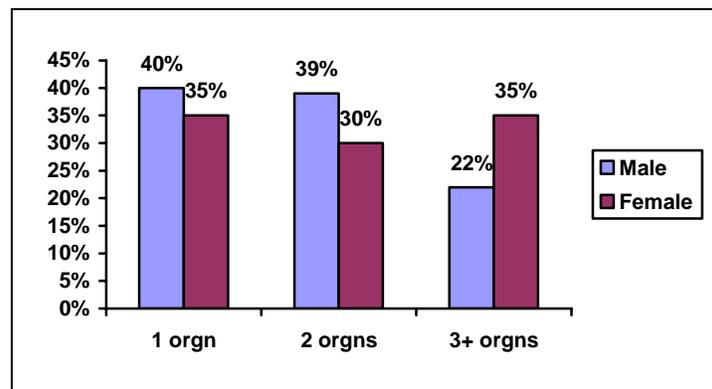


Figure 9. Extent of sport volunteer involvement, by sex

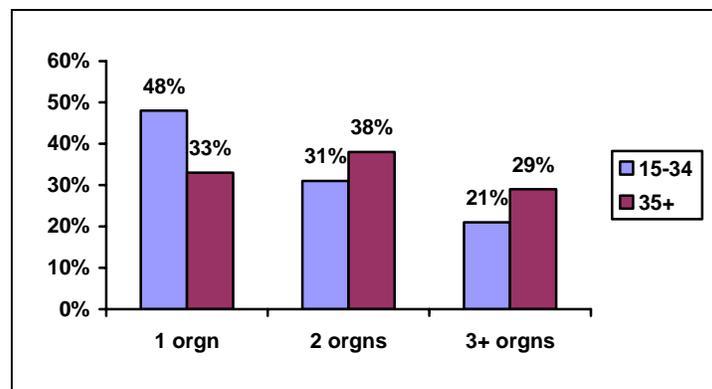


Figure 10. Extent of sport volunteer involvement, by age

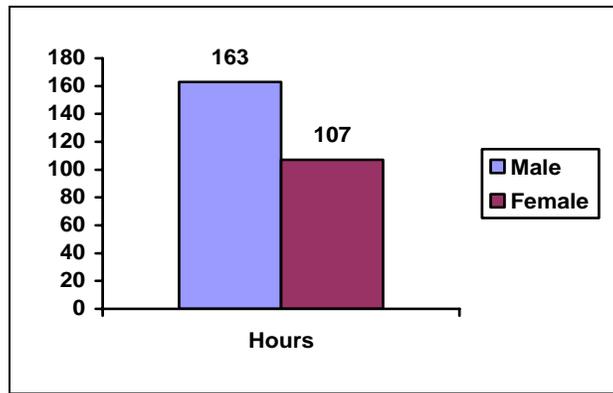


Figure 11. Average annual volunteer hours in sport, by sex

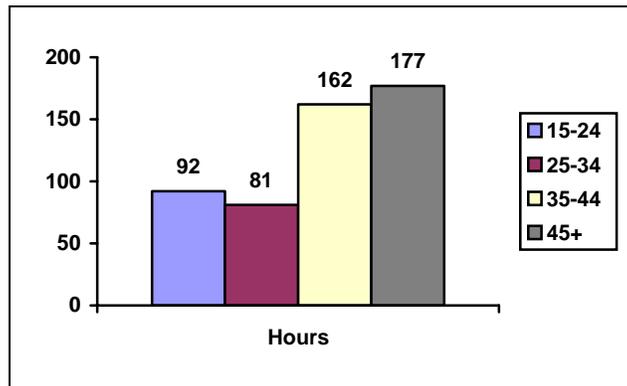


Figure 12. Average annual volunteer hours in sport, by age

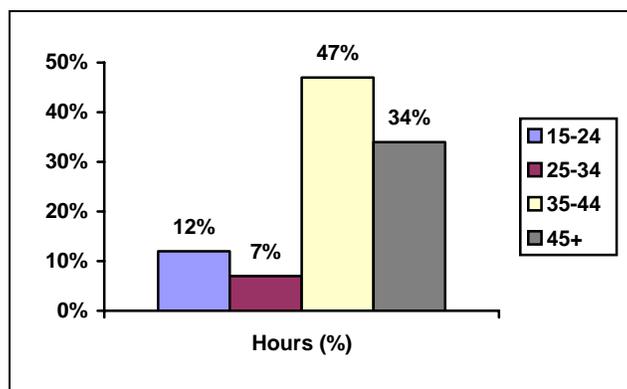


Figure 13. Total hours volunteered in sport, by age

Length of involvement. Sport volunteers have been involved with their primary organization⁹, on average, between 3 and 5 years. Forty-three percent have been with the organization less than three years, and 57% have been with their organization 3 or more years. There are no variations by sex of the sport volunteer (see Figure 14).

Age. As may be expected, younger sport volunteers have been involved for a shorter time (75% of 15-24 year olds and 59% of 25-34 year olds are involved less than 3 years) than older volunteers (65% of 35-44 year olds and 75% of 45+ year olds are involved 3+ years) (see Figure 15).

Activities. Most sport volunteers are involved in organizing and supervising activities or events (71%) and teaching/coaching (60%) (see Figure 16). Just less than half are involved on a committee or board (46%) and in fundraising activities (45%). Most sport volunteers take on multiple roles in their organization including, in addition to these activities, administrative work (32%), driving (27%), and other activities (16%). Similar percentages of Canadian volunteers are involved in committees (41%) and fundraising activities (40%), however fewer are involved in supervising activities and events (57%) and teaching or coaching (27%).

Sex. There are notable variations in sport volunteers' activities, by sex (see Figure 17). The data allow us to determine the proportion of male and female sport volunteers involved in each activity, and thereby describe and compare profiles of male sport volunteers and female sport volunteers. Men and women are equally likely to organize and supervise activities and events (71% vs. 72%), however men are much more likely to be coaching than women (69% vs. 44%). Nevertheless, this represents about a four-fold increase in the percentage of women involved in coaching since 1987 (Abbey-Livingstone, 1989). Women are more likely to be involved in fundraising than men (55% vs. 39%) and slightly more likely to be on a committee or board (50% vs. 44%). The latter also represents an increase in the percentage of women in these leadership activities since 1987. Overall, male sport volunteers tend to be involved in organizing activities and coaching, and to a lesser degree in committee/board work. Female sport volunteers tend to be involved in organizing activities, fundraising, and committee/board work, and to a lesser degree in coaching. Within sport organizations, women's volunteer contributions tend to be more dispersed than men's (i.e., they contribute fewer hours across more activities).

Age. There are a few variations in sport volunteers' activities by age (see Figure 18). Older volunteers (73-76% of those 35+ years) are more likely to be involved in organizing activities than younger volunteers (65% of those less than 35 years). Another notable, but perhaps not surprising, contrast is that older volunteers (55% of those 45+ years, and 49% of those 35-44 years) are more likely to be involved in committee/board work than younger volunteers (26% of those 15-24 years). There appears to be a direct relationship between age and number of volunteer activities. Overall, sport volunteers aged 45 years and older tend to be involved in organizing/supervising activities, coaching, committee/board work, fundraising, administrative work for the organization, and driving. Sport volunteers aged 35-44 years tend to be involved in organizing activities, coaching, committee/board work, fundraising, and administrative work. Younger sport volunteers,

aged 25-34 years are involved in fewer activities, specifically organizing, coaching, and committee work. Finally, the youngest group of sport volunteers are involved in the fewest number of activities, specifically organizing and coaching, although a notable proportion are also involved in fundraising (this likely coincides with their primary role as a coach).

⁸ In some cases it was necessary to collapse age groups because of small sample sizes and restrictions on use of the NSGVP 2000 data.

⁹ Data on hours contributed in sport and length of involvement in sport refer to the first (or primary) sport organization described by the volunteer in the NSGVP (volunteers were asked to describe their involvement in each of up to three organizations). Thus, the average and total number of hours contributed to sport organizations may actually be underrepresented, if a volunteer was involved in more than one sport organization.

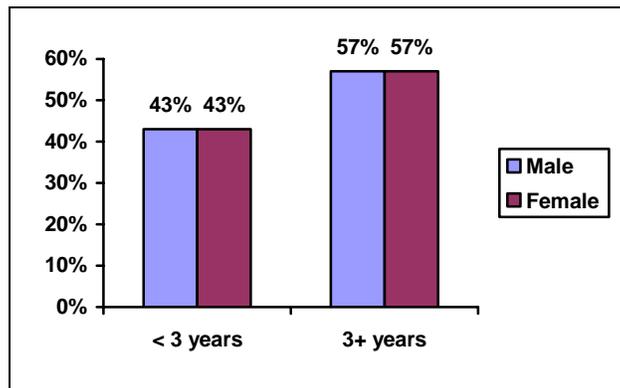


Figure 14. Years volunteering in sport organization, by sex

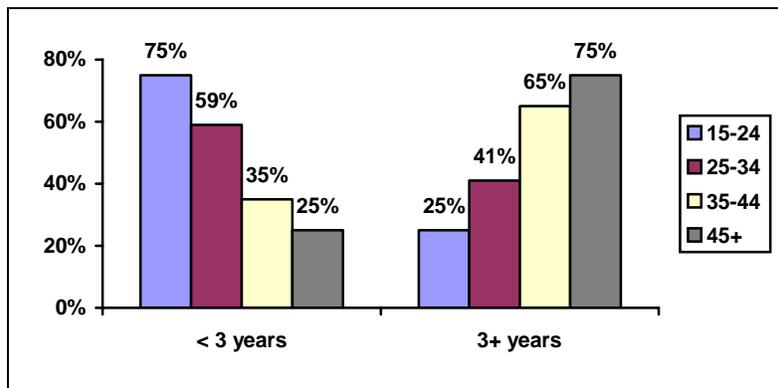


Figure 15. Years volunteering in sport organization, by age

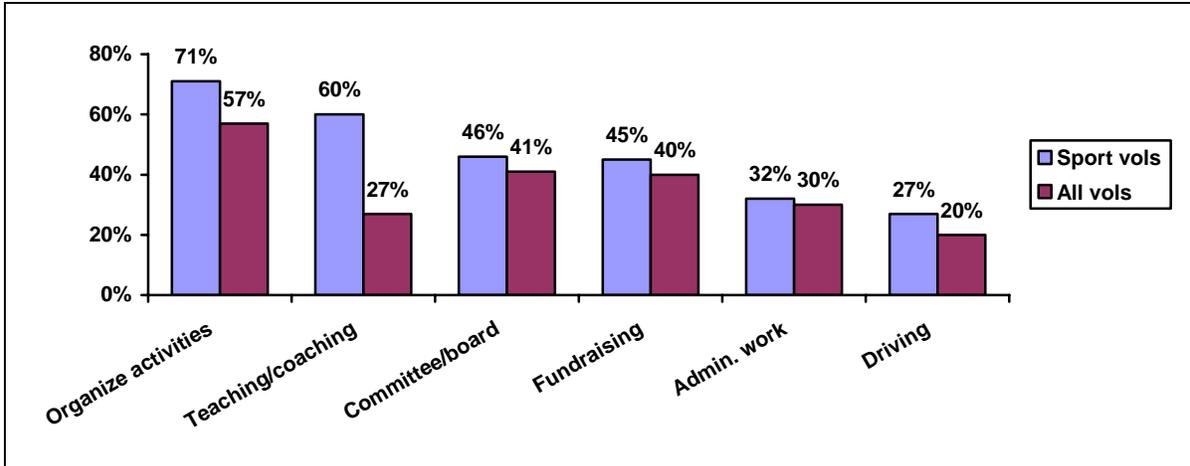


Figure 16. Involvement in volunteer activities

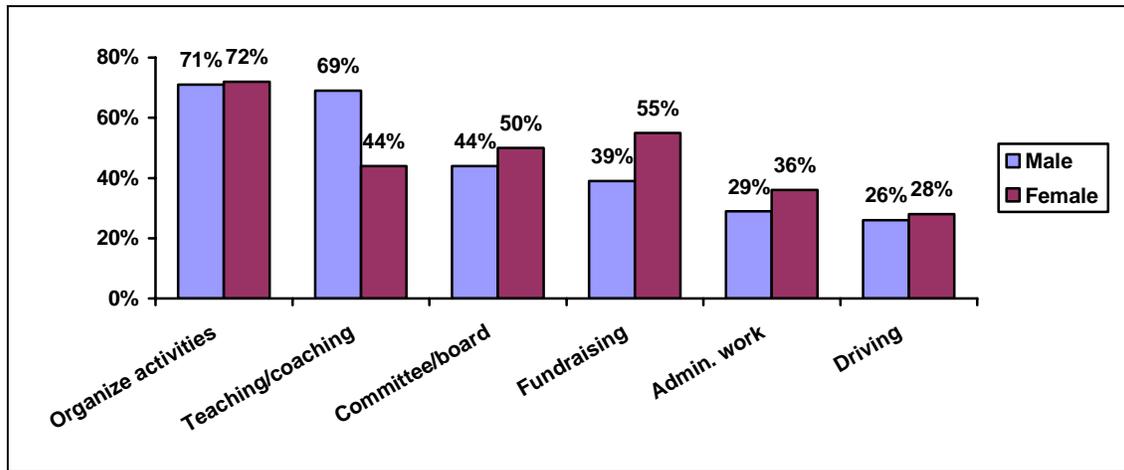


Figure 17. Sport volunteer involvement in activities, by sex

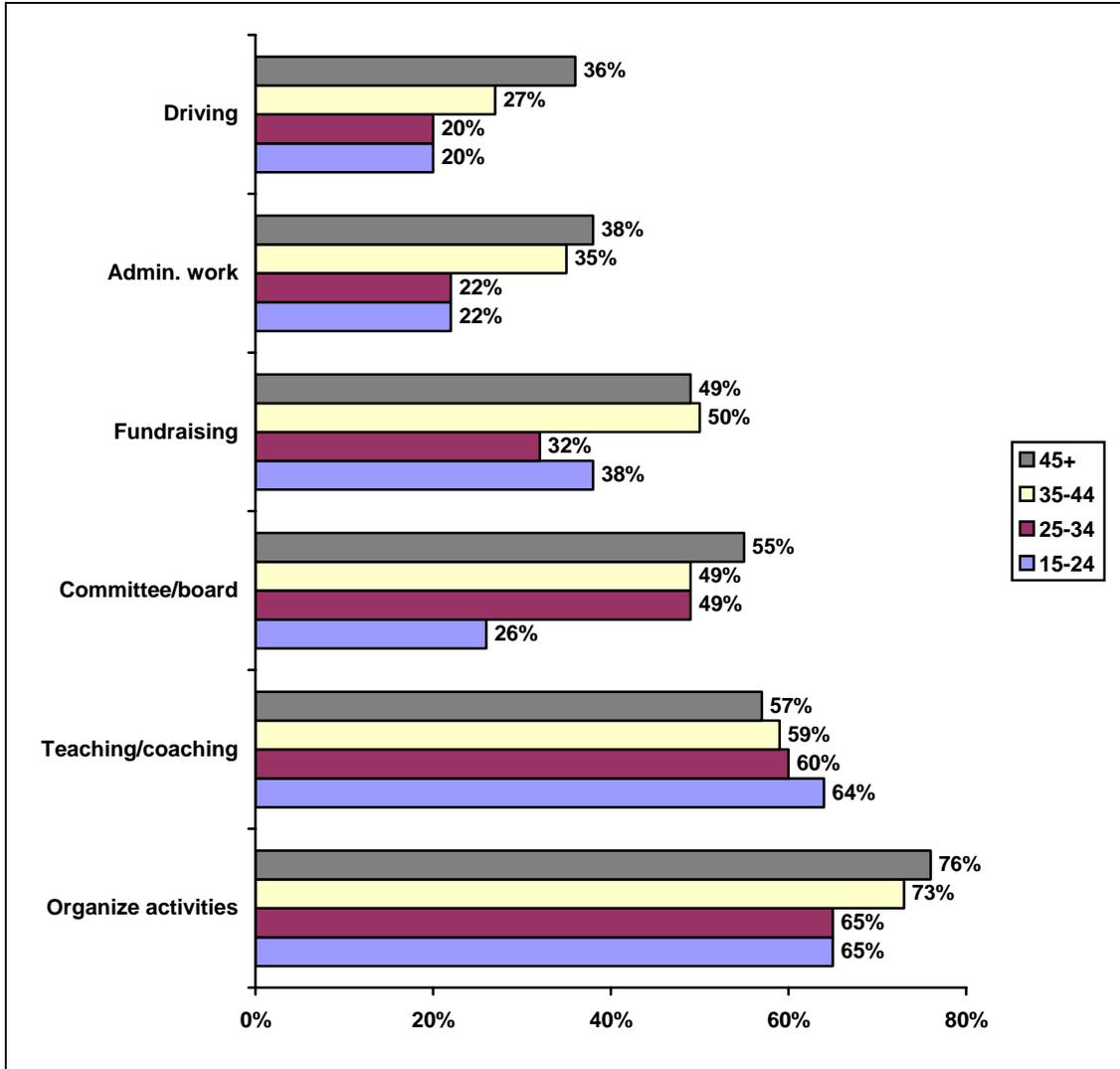


Figure 18. Sport volunteer involvement in activities, by age

How sport volunteers become involved

The NSGVVP 2000 asked volunteers how they first became involved in volunteering. Most sport volunteers first became involved because their children were involved in the sport (40%) (see Figure 19). One-fifth (21%) indicated they first became involved because someone in the organization asked them, and 13% became involved as a volunteer because they were a member of the organization. The remaining 26% of sport volunteers became involved a number of different ways (e.g., they approached the organization to volunteer, a friend outside the organization asked them to volunteer, they were nominated to a position, their employer asked them to volunteer, or in response to a public appeal for volunteers).

In contrast, most Canadian volunteers in general first became involved because someone in the organization asked them (30%). Substantially fewer volunteers in general became involved in volunteering through their children (12%). Notably, 16% approached the organization themselves.

Men and women sport volunteers did not generally differ with regard to how they primarily became involved (both 40% through their children) (see Figure 20). However, there were some variations by age (see Figure 21). Younger volunteers (15-34 years) were more likely to become involved because someone in the organization asked them (30%), whereas older volunteers (35+ years) were more likely involved through their children (51%).

Although it is widely recognized that a large percentage of sport volunteers have children, and become involved through their children, one study revealed that only 12% of children participating in community sport clubs had a parent(s) involved! (De Knop et al., 1999). There is still a large pool of potential volunteer parents out there.

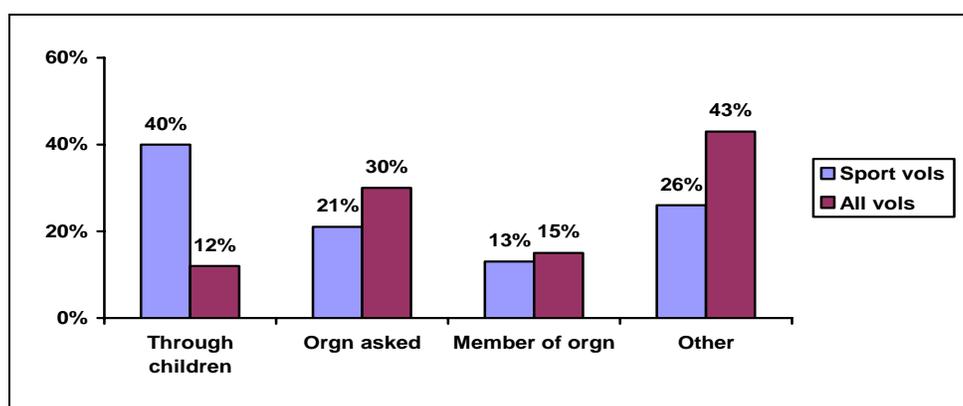


Figure 19. How volunteers become involved

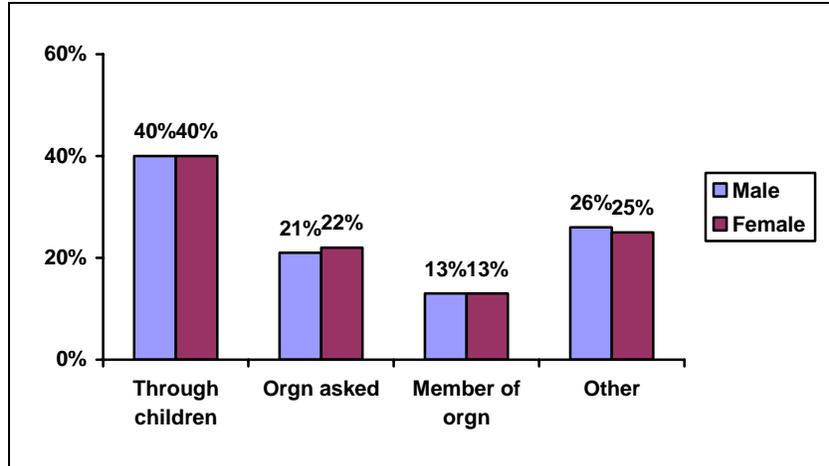


Figure 20. How sport volunteers become involved, by sex

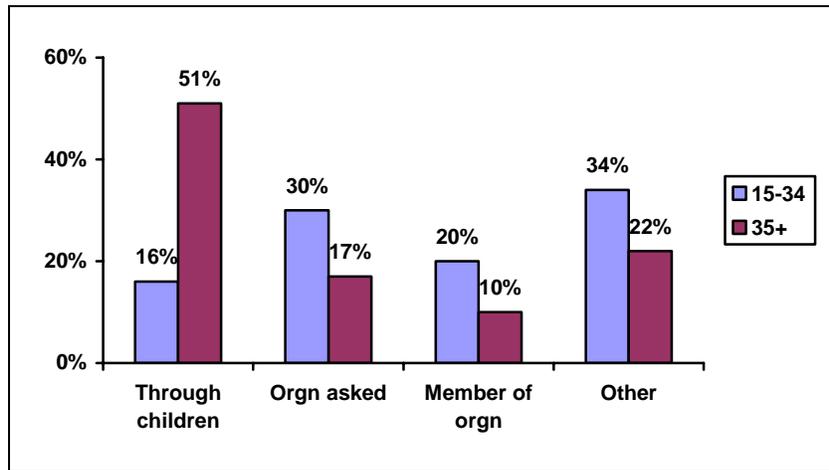


Figure 21. How sport volunteers become involved, by age

Why sport volunteers are involved

The NSGVP 2000 asked volunteers whether any number of potential reasons motivated them to volunteer. The findings, and related research, indicate that sport volunteers have multiple motives, that vary by demographics, and by volunteer role.

According to the NSGVP data, almost all sport volunteers and all volunteers in general are involved to help a cause in which they believe (94%) (see Figure 22). Slightly more sport volunteers than general volunteers, but a large percentage of both, are also involved to use their skills and experiences to help the organization's cause (87% vs. 81%). Slightly more sport volunteers than general volunteers are involved because someone they know is personally affected by the organization or its activities (76% vs. 69%), such as a child or an adult partner. Similar, but relatively smaller, percentages of sport and general volunteers are also involved to explore their own strengths (57%) and because they have friends who volunteer (30%).

Sex. The most notable difference in motives for volunteering between men and women sport volunteers is that a slightly larger percentage of women are involved because someone they know is personally affected by the organization (81% vs. 73%) (see Figure 23). This coincides with the notion that, for women, the lines become blurred between volunteering in support of children's activities and family child care (Varpalotai, 1992). Most men and women are involved to support a cause in which they believe, to use their skills and experiences, because someone they know is personally affected by the organization, and to explore their own strengths. A greater proportion of female than male sport volunteers, but relatively small proportions of both groups, is involved to improve their job opportunities (31% vs. 20%).

Age. Several variations in motives/reasons were noted among sport volunteers of different ages (see Figure 24). A slightly greater proportion of sport volunteers under 45 years than over 45 years are involved to use their skills and experiences (88% vs. 82%, respectively). Being involved because someone close to them is personally affected was less of a factor for younger volunteers (15-34) than older volunteers (35-44 and 45+) (72% vs. 76% and 81%, respectively). Volunteering in sport to explore one's strengths was inversely related to age; it was a motive for a substantial percentage of the youngest volunteers (15-24, 77%) and was less of a factor for volunteers with increasing age (25-34, 62%; 35-44, 55%; 45+ 43%). Finally, getting involved because one's friends volunteer or to improve one's job opportunities was important to more younger (15-34 years) than older (35+) sport volunteers.

Most sport volunteers aged 35 years and older are attracted to volunteering to help a cause, use their skills, and because someone close to them is personally affected. Exploring one's strengths through volunteering was also a factor for over half of the sport volunteers aged 35-44 years. Most younger volunteers (15-34 years) also volunteer to help a cause, use their skills, and because someone they know is personally affected, but also to explore their strengths, to improve their job opportunities, and because their friends volunteer.

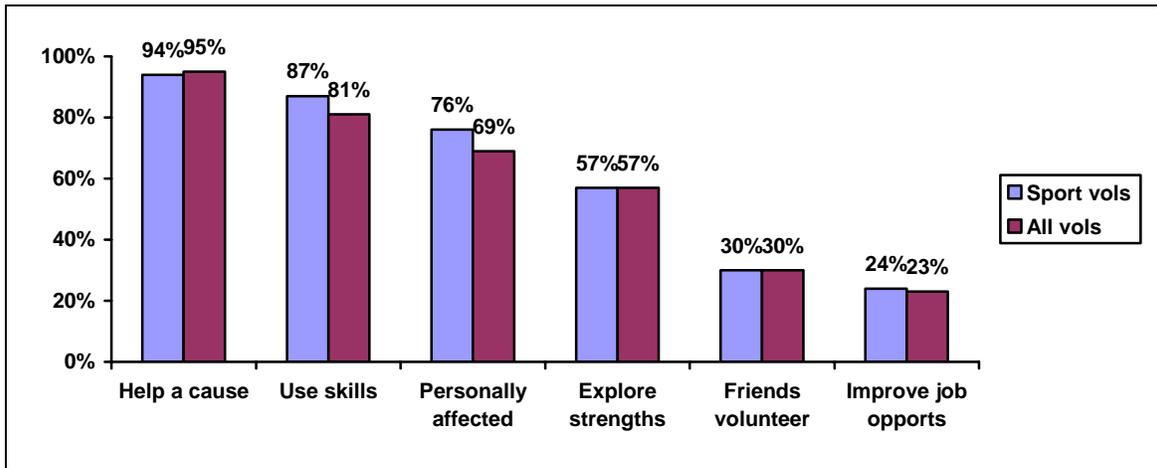


Figure 22. Why volunteers are involved

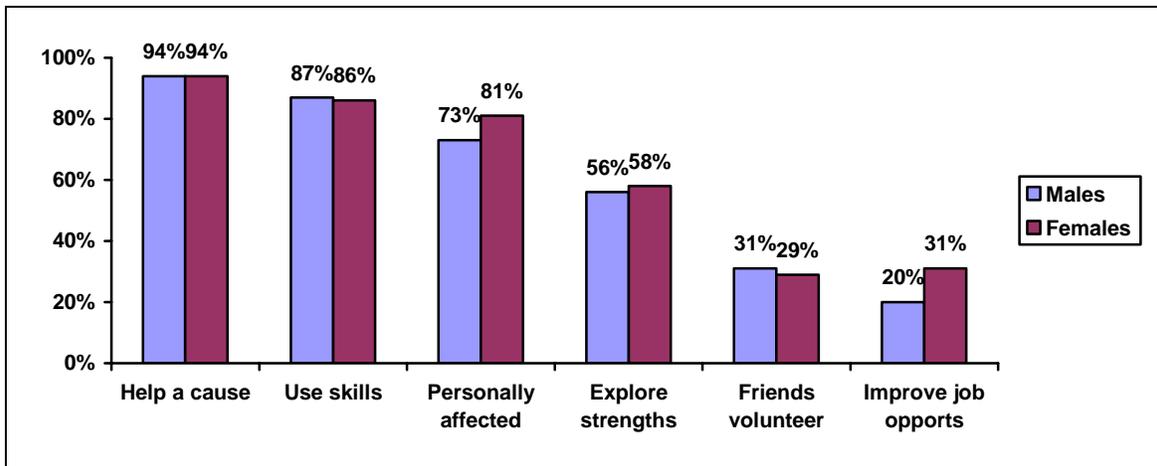


Figure 23. Why sport volunteers are involved, by sex

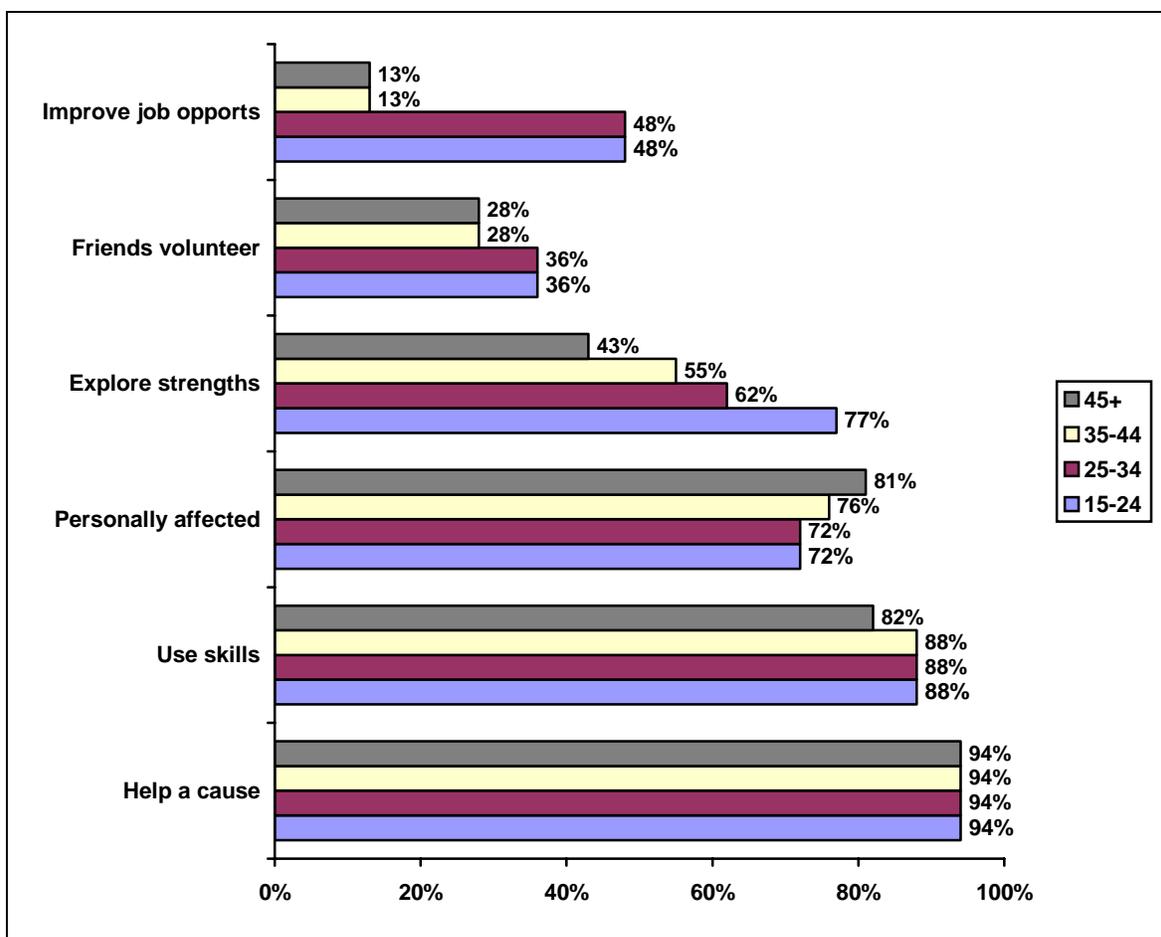


Figure 24. Why sport volunteers are involved, by age

A model of motives for volunteering in sport. The related research literature corroborates and elaborates on these profiles of sport volunteer motives.¹⁰ Beyond helping a cause (in this case sport), research indicates that the *primary motive* for sport volunteers is to satisfy their own needs and interests; for example, to have fun, an opportunity to stay in the sport, to help children, to make a difference, to use one's skills, and to enjoy a passion. Sport volunteers are also primarily involved because they have a child, children, or partner involved. These motives correspond with the relative importance of volunteering to use one's skills and because one is personally affected, as identified in the NSGVP 2000. Fun and personal enjoyment are important motives that were not measured in the NSGVP.

Developing one's skills is consistently a *secondary motive* for sport volunteers, as identified in the NSGVP 2000 with regard to exploring one's strengths. Volunteering for social interaction, such as meeting new people, building connections and making friends, was not measured in depth in the NSGVP 2000. However, it is also consistently a motive of secondary importance to sport volunteers in general, and typically more important to younger volunteers aged 15-24 years.

The research also indicates that sport volunteers are not inclined to volunteer out of a sense of obligation (i.e., feel that they should volunteer, or they are needed to volunteer). Instead, they are more motivated by the opportunity to help out with their own and other children (or others close to them who are personally affected, such as a spouse), and to be involved in sport. Sport volunteers may feel an obligation to be involved, but that is not enough to get them involved, or keep them involved. A review of the volunteer survey data and related research literature suggests that the key motives for volunteering in general, and volunteering for sport in particular, have not changed much over the past 20 years.

We can summarize the consistent research findings on sport volunteer motives in a graphic form that also allows us to consider variations among volunteers. Figure 25 identifies three levels of volunteer motives based on their relative importance. Obligation to volunteer is noted at the bottom as a reference point. The motives within each level are represented by

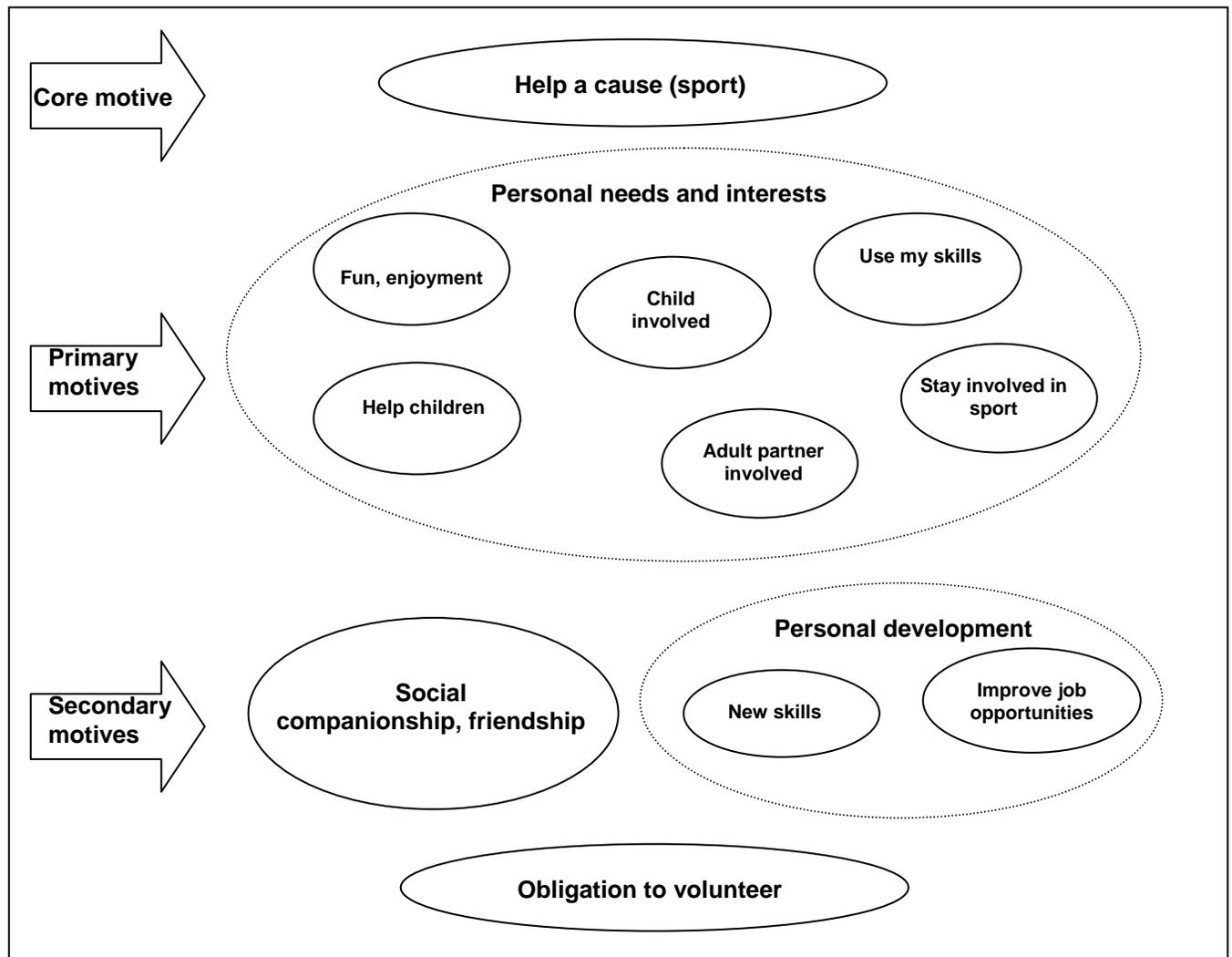


Figure 25. A model of motives for volunteering in sport

bubbles so that we may consider the variation among volunteers in the importance of particular motives at each level, in terms of certain bubbles rising to the top of that level. At the top level, volunteering in sport to “help a cause” may be considered a *core motive*, which is common (and most important) to all volunteers, and reflects the altruism in volunteering.

Next, *primary motives* for volunteering in sport are “personal needs and interests”. At this level we begin to see some variation among all volunteers, and among sport volunteers as well. For example, the NSGVP 2000 data indicates that volunteering in sport because someone close to you is personally affected was a factor for a slightly greater percentage of women than men (also Cuskelly & Harrington, 1997). Also, there was little if any variation among volunteers of different age groups with regard to this same motive, however we may expect that younger volunteers (at least those 15-24 years), and those at the older end of the age spectrum are involved because a friend or partner is affected rather than children.

“Social” and “personal development” motives constitute secondary motives for sport volunteering. We can expect some variation among volunteers with regard to the relative importance of motives at this level. For example, personal development through new skills and experiences is typically a stronger motive for sport volunteers than social reasons. Further, learning new skills is a particularly prominent motive for younger volunteers, as is volunteering to improve job opportunities. Although sport volunteer data is not available, related research indicates that personal development motives are minimal for senior volunteers (Cohen-Mansfield, 1989). Volunteering for social reasons is also more prominent for younger than older volunteers. These examples suggest that this level of motives, as illustrated here, is especially meaningful for younger volunteers, and this distinction must be recognized by organizations that want to recruit and retain these individuals.

The model is also useful for profiling the motives of volunteer coaches and sport executives.

The coach. Research indicates that volunteer coaches are primarily motivated to meet their own needs and interests, such as personal enjoyment, staying involved in sport, and using their skills and experiences, but particularly to work with and help kids. There appear to be few variations among coaches in their motives for being involved. However, being involved because their children are involved becomes less of a factor as coaches are involved over the years, and as they move up through the coaching ranks (Hansen & Gauthier, 1988). It is also less important to coaches with formal coaching education (Sport Alliance of Ontario, 2000). Instead, giving something back to sport becomes a more prominent motive as coaches are involved longer and at higher levels. As with other sport volunteers, a sense of obligation is not an incentive to coach.

The executive. Research indicates that sport volunteers involved in committee or board work are particularly motivated by the opportunity to satisfy their personal needs and interests related to using their skills and experiences to make a difference, rather than

because their children are involved. Like sport volunteers in general, those in executive roles are involved because they *want* to be, not because they feel they *have* to be.

Shifting motives. Research indicates that volunteers' motives alter over time, as they are involved in an organization. Several studies, in both the sport and recreation settings, indicate that social interaction becomes a relatively more important (although still not the most important) reason for volunteering over time (e.g., Eley & Kirk, 2003; Nichols & King, 1998), likely as volunteers make friends and connections and want to stay involved for those relationships and opportunities. As well, some personal interests (e.g., opportunity to stay in sport, make a difference in the organization) become secondary to the collective good of the organization (make a difference *through* the organization) (Nichols & King, 1998). In other words, sport volunteers tend to get involved for themselves, and tend to stay involved for the organization. This likely happens as volunteers come to identify with, and feel a part of, the organization. This feeling increases the likelihood of volunteers staying with the organization.

¹⁰ The following citations were used to further refine the profile of sport volunteer motives: Arai (1996), Cohen-Mansfield (1989), Coleman (2001), Cuskelly & Harrington (1997), Cuskelly et al (1999), Dorsch et al (2002a), Eley & Kirk (2003), Gratton et al. (1997), Larsen et al. (1992), Malenfant (1987), Nichols & King (1998), Rhyne (1995), Shibli et al. (1999), Silvestri (1991), and Taylor et al. (2003).

Why sport volunteers are not more involved

This section examines why sport volunteers and volunteers in general are not more involved, as well as why people do not volunteer at all, and why they discontinue volunteering.

The NSGVP 2000 asked volunteers why they do not volunteer more. The barriers to increased involvement in volunteering are similar for sport volunteers and volunteers in general (see Figure 26). The main barrier is the lack of extra time (82% and 76%, respectively). One-third of sport and general volunteers also indicated they do not volunteer more because they feel they have already contributed enough (33% and 29%, respectively), and they do not want to make a year round commitment (30% and 34%, respectively). One-fifth of sport and general volunteers indicated that they give money instead of extra time (20% and 24%, respectively). The difference between sport volunteers and volunteers in general regarding the lack of extra time may be due to the greater average contribution of each sport volunteer; that is, sport volunteers are involved in more organizations and contribute more hours than volunteers in general (see “What do they do”). It may also reflect the fact that sport volunteers are more likely than volunteers in general to be employed and, given their age (majority are 35-44 years), may be more likely to have dependent children at home. Although a breakdown of sport volunteers is not available, it is notable that the most substantial change in reasons for not volunteering more among Canadian volunteers in general was an increase in the percentage who said they give money instead of time (5% increase from 1997 to 2000; Hall et al., 2001a).

The NSGVP 2000 also asked Canadians who do not volunteer (at least in the 12-month period captured by the survey), why they are not involved. This data is presented in Figure 26, and permits a comparison with the barriers faced by sport volunteers and volunteers in general. Key barriers to the involvement of non-volunteers are no extra time (69%), unwilling to make a year round commitment (46%), they give money instead of time (38%), and they have not been personally asked to volunteer (37%; a 5% increase from 1997). Unwillingness to make a year round commitment, giving money instead of time, and not being personally asked are factors for a substantially greater proportion of non-volunteers than volunteers, and highlight an important distinction between these groups.

Sex. One difference in the barriers felt by men and women sport volunteers is apparent (see Figure 27). Notably more women than men feel they cannot contribute more to volunteering because they do not have extra time (87% vs. 79%).

Age. Only slight variations in barriers to increased volunteering were noted among sport volunteers of different ages (see Figure 28). In particular, younger volunteers (15-34 years) are less likely to feel that they have already done enough (25% vs. 37%), which is heartening. However, a greater, albeit limited, proportion of those younger volunteers indicated that they do not volunteer more because they have not been personally asked to do more (22%) compared to their older counterparts (13%). Although relatively few sport volunteers indicated this as a barrier to being more involved, it does have important

implications for the need to ask, particularly younger volunteers, if they would be willing to be more involved in a particular organization or in an additional organization.

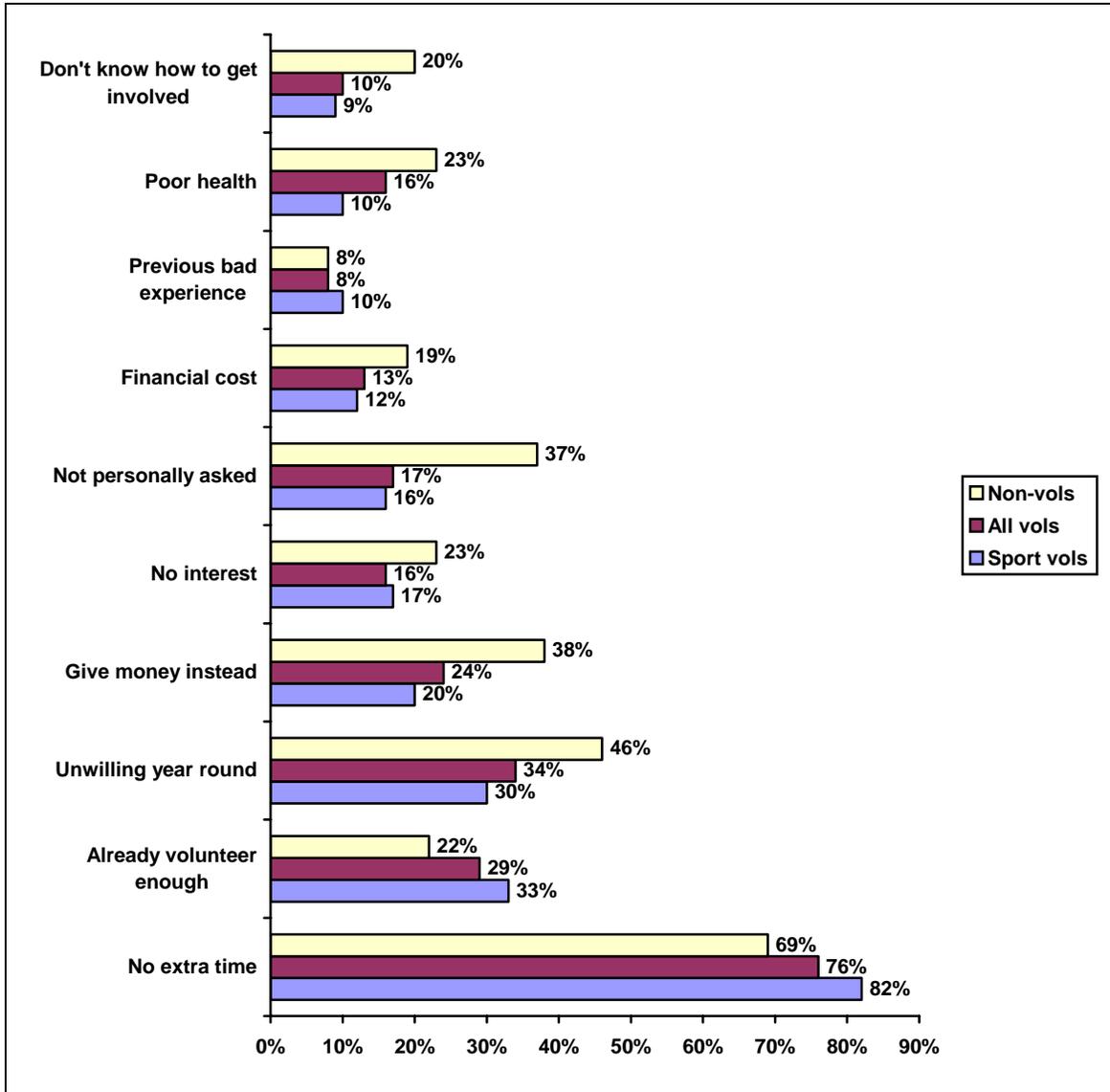


Figure 26. Barriers to volunteering, or volunteering more

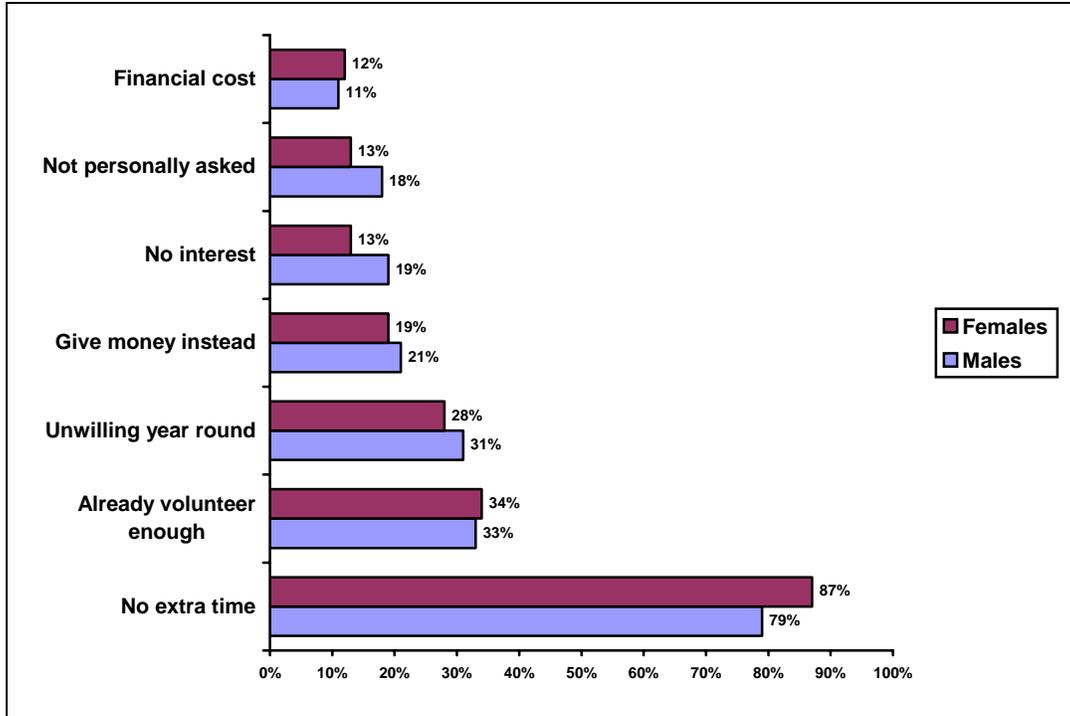


Figure 27. Why sport volunteers are not more involved, by sex

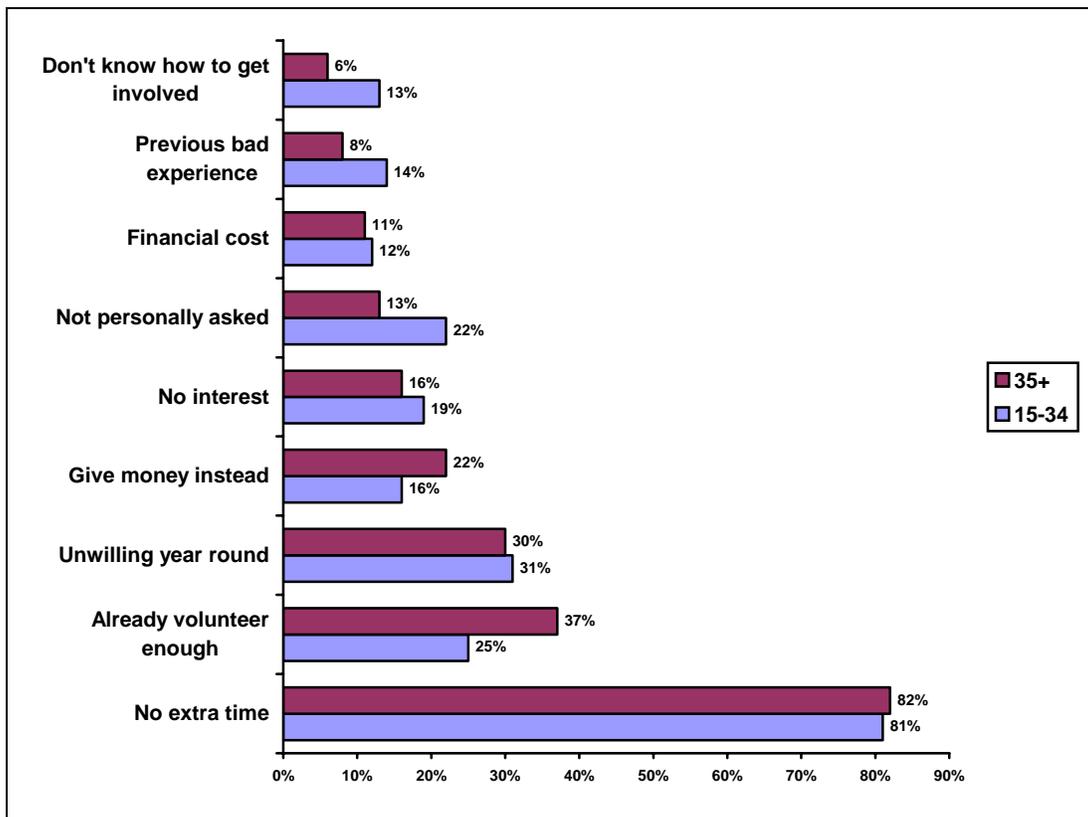


Figure 28. Why sport volunteers are not more involved, by age

A model of barriers to volunteering in sport. There is limited research literature on constraints to volunteering in sport, yet what is available corresponds with and elaborates on the barriers identified in the NSGVP 2000.¹¹ The literature distinguishes personal and organizational barriers to volunteering in sport. (The focus of the NSGVP 2000 was personal barriers.) Personal and organizational barriers reflect difficulties that “may arise either from the volunteer’s personal circumstances or from problems encountered in the course of the volunteer work” (Rhyne, 1995, p. 22). There are implications for what sport organizations can do to address these respective barriers. Figure 29 provides a graphic representation of these barriers, again with the notion that the relative importance of the barriers may vary among volunteers, and between volunteers and non-volunteers.

Personal barriers. Related research corroborates that lack of time is a core or fundamental barrier to volunteering, or volunteering more. Several studies have further examined factors that may contribute to the perceived lack of time; specifically, family, work, and/or other leisure responsibilities and commitments. Sport and recreation volunteers reported that work, followed closely by family responsibilities, are the greatest barriers to volunteering (more) in sport (Gratton et al., 1997; Nichols & King, 1998; Rhyne, 1995). These findings are not surprising, given the high percentage of sport volunteers employed full-time, and with dependent children at home. They represent personal barriers, and something that the sport organization cannot do much about, except try to work around them (e.g., flexible volunteer schedules, less complex tasks of shorter duration; McClintock, 2004). We may expect work responsibilities and family responsibilities to be less of a barrier to older (retired) volunteers, and we may expect family responsibilities to be less of a barrier to younger volunteers with no dependent children. It is helpful to understand what particular personal time constraints different volunteers face.

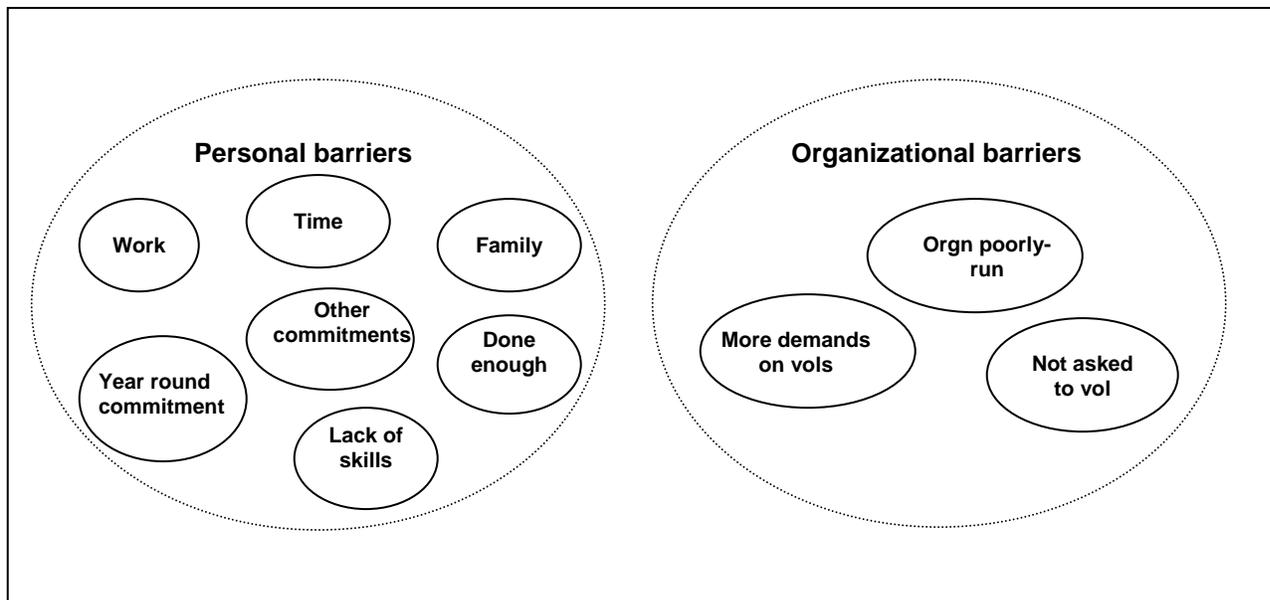


Figure 29. A model of barriers to volunteering in sport

Perceived lack of skills is another personal barrier, yet one that is felt by very few volunteers and non-volunteers. It is encouraging that people are not deterred from volunteering because they don't think they have the skills to do the tasks. There is, however, evidence that sport and recreation volunteers are discouraged by the magnitude of tasks (De Knop et al., 1999; Gratton et al., 1997; Nichols & King, 1998; Rhyne, 1995). This corresponds with fewer volunteers doing more of the work. Thus, it may not be so much that volunteers (or prospective volunteers) feel they lack the skills to do the job, but they lack the time and therefore ability to handle the assigned task. This is discussed below as an organizational barrier. Some research suggests perceived lack of skills may be more of a factor with regard to volunteer coaching (a role that requires a relatively high skill level in comparison to many other sport volunteer positions). One study reported that two-thirds of parents who were not coaching thought one had to be a former athlete to coach, and one-half thought one had to have competed at a high level (Wilson, 2003). Men in particular thought that coaches had been very successful athletes, and so this was a deterrent to getting involved. These findings correspond to some extent with the earlier observation that a large proportion of sport volunteers had early life experiences that may have set them up for volunteering in adulthood (see "Who volunteers"). Sport organizations can work to alter the perception of the skill level required for coaching, and/or make coaching preparation/education available and accessible for those who may feel they do not have the requisite skills. This is important because, although a large percentage of sport volunteers are involved in coaching, a recent study revealed that very few parents (only 14%) would consider coaching (Wilson, 2003).

Organizational barriers. Related research has also examined the importance of what may be termed organizational barriers (generally not measured by NSGVP 2000). Sport and recreation volunteers cited dissatisfaction with the way their organization is run as an important barrier to their (further) involvement (Rhyne, 1995). Other studies provide some elaboration on this barrier. For example, a study of community sport volunteer executives (i.e., those who are on committees or boards) revealed they are more committed to their organization if they perceive their committee to be functioning effectively (Cuskelly, 1995). An effective committee is considered to be one that deals with conflict, is open to the ideas and contributions of all members, and is open to constructive criticisms about how the committee is operating. Other research indicates that, while volunteers are not necessarily looking for material rewards, they highly value recognition that comes from the organization being open to and using their skills, experiences, and insights. An organization that does otherwise may be considered to be poorly-run.

Other organizational barriers to volunteering in sport pertain to the perceived increasing demands on volunteers. In one study, two-thirds of sport and recreation volunteers expressed concerns about increasing demands on volunteers (Rhyne, 1995). Increasing demands are a result of fewer volunteers, and the fact that community sport clubs are becoming increasingly sophisticated and complex in their operations. If they have not become more sophisticated, they are most certainly facing pressures from their members, sponsors, other community partners, and granting agencies to do so (Hall et al., 2003; Nichols & King, 1998; Sharpe, 2003). As noted earlier, this may be a deterrent to individuals, for example, who do not feel they have the time or ability to handle the

requirements of increasingly complex board, committee or administrative work (Hall et al., 2003; Hammond, 2001; De Knop et al., 1999).

A relatively small proportion of sport volunteers, and particularly those aged 15-34 years, indicated they do not volunteer more because they have not been asked. This is more notable when we consider that the largest proportion of younger volunteers became involved because someone from the organization asked, and over one-third of Canadians who do not volunteer at all said it was because they have never been asked (see “How do they become involved” and “Why do they become involved”). As well, 20% of non-volunteers indicated that they do not know how to get involved (Lasby, 2004). Sport organizations can do something about organizational barriers to volunteering, and volunteering more.

Why sport volunteers leave. There has been very limited research on reasons for no longer volunteering in sport. One study of former youth sport coaches sheds some light. Weiss and Sisley (1984) found that current and former coaches were very similar in their demographic profiles (consistent with the profile described in “Who volunteers”), their perceived coaching abilities, and what they hoped to accomplish as a coach. They also found that the top reason for leaving was because it was too time consuming, followed by a conflict with family responsibilities (wanted to spend more time with family), conflict with other leisure activities (wanted to do other things), conflict with work commitments, and son or daughter no longer involved (Weiss & Sisley, 1984). No gender differences in these reasons were reported. Several of these reasons for coaches leaving correspond with the most common barriers to volunteering, or volunteering more; namely, time and conflict with family, work and other leisure commitments. It is reasonable to assume that barriers to volunteering (more) are also reasons for leaving altogether. Also, discontinuing one’s involvement because their child is no longer involved corresponds with one of the primary motives for being involved in the first place. Once someone close to the volunteer is no longer personally affected, it may not be surprising that the volunteer ceases to stay involved. This also corresponds with the substantial drop off in volunteers beyond the age of 45 years, when one’s children may no longer be involved.

¹¹ The following citations were used to refine the profile of barriers to volunteering sport: Cuskelly (1995), De Knop et al. (1999), Gratton et al. (1997), Hall et al. (2003), Hammond (2001), Lasby (2004), Nichols & King (1998), Rhyne (1995), Sharpe (2003), Taylor et al. (2003), Weiss & Sisley (1984), and Wilson (2003).

Sport volunteer satisfaction and commitment

It is important to understand what motivates sport volunteers to be involved, but it is equally important to understand what is most and least satisfying about their experience. These attitudes have important implications for volunteer effort and retention.

There is limited research on sport volunteer satisfaction, however research-to-date indicates that the large majority of sport volunteers are satisfied with their experience, and would volunteer again (e.g., Abbey-Livingstone, 1989; Kent, 1989; Larsen et al., 1992; Rhyne, 1995). The most satisfying aspects for community sport volunteers are using their skills and experiences, and obtaining new skills and experiences, through volunteer work that is enjoyable and worthwhile (Malenfant, 1987; Rail, 1987; Rhyne, 1995). Over time, making a difference through what the committee or organization as a whole has accomplished is particularly satisfying. Social relationships are also an important source of satisfaction (Note. While social aspects is not a primary motive for becoming involved, it tends to become more important over time) (Malenfant, 1987). Most dissatisfying to sport volunteers is working for a poorly-run organization (Abbey-Livingstone, 1989; Malenfant, 1987; Gratton et al., 1997), followed by boredom or lack of challenge/interest in the volunteer role, too much time required, unable to cope with what asked to do (too difficult or requires too much time), and efforts are not appreciated (Wilson, 2003). In particular, sport volunteers are increasingly dissatisfied with the amount of time required (Gratton et al., 1997).

Satisfaction can lead to commitment, which is defined as an attachment to the organization and its goals. Both satisfaction and especially organizational commitment predict one's willingness to serve and intent to stay with the organization (e.g., Cuskelly et al., 2002/2003; Henderson & Silverberg, 2002; Silverberg et al., 2001). Not only should sport organizations be concerned about whether their volunteers are having a satisfying experience, they should also be concerned with whether their volunteers feel a sense of commitment to the organization. According to one study, volunteers' satisfaction with the organization's performance was the strongest predictor of commitment to the organization (Dorsch et al., 2002b). Another significant predictor of commitment was the volunteers' identification with the organization, which was most influenced by having a clear understanding of their role and what was expected (also Kent, 1989). Caicco (1991) found that an interesting, challenging and meaningful task was the strongest predictor of sport volunteer commitment.

The volunteer coach. Research indicates that coaches are most satisfied by providing benefits to people they know (i.e., the children they coach), and seeing skill improvement among their athletes (Silverberg et al., 2001; Silvestri, 1991). Particularly dissatisfying to coaches is when their players do not try their best (Silvestri, 1991). However, they are also dissatisfied by the lack of parental concern or involvement in children's sport, and the increasing bureaucracy of sport, even at the community level (Wilson, 2003).

The volunteer executive. Research indicates that sport executive volunteers are most satisfied by committee goal achievement and task accomplishment. Most dissatisfying to these volunteers is people who do not follow through on their assigned tasks (Dorsch et al., 2002b; Kent, 1989; Wilson, 2003), and the lack of volunteers to do the work (Abbey-Livingstone, 1989; Wilson, 2003). In other research, sport volunteer executives found that an effectively functioning committee – one that resolves conflict, and in which members can use their skills, provide input and express their concerns openly – is a significant predictor of commitment to the organization (Cuskelly, 1996; Cuskelly et al., 1998).

A preliminary model of satisfaction and commitment among sport volunteers. Figure 30 provides a graphic representation of the tentative relationships among volunteer experiences that contribute to satisfaction, commitment, and intent to stay with the organization. The model identifies certain experiences that have been shown to enhance (or detract from) volunteers' satisfaction with their organization, generate a sense of identification with their organization, and/or create of committee effectiveness. These positive attitudes have been shown to enhance the sport volunteers' commitment to his or her organization, which is a strong predictor of intent to remain volunteering with the organization.

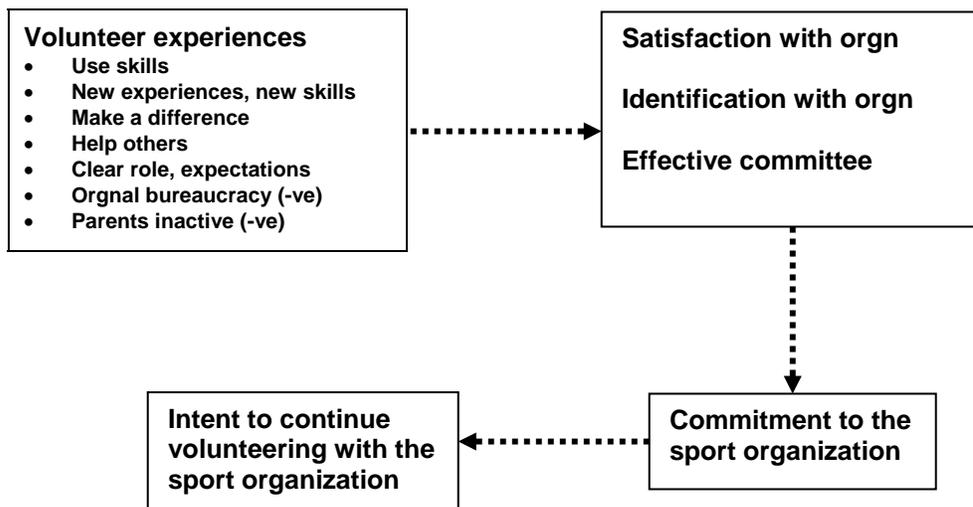


Figure 30. Preliminary model of the satisfaction and commitment of sport volunteers

Issues and observations

Several issues and observations pertaining to sport volunteerism were identified during the research literature review.

Volunteering as leisure. Volunteering is something done in one's leisure time. A leisure experience, and presumably one that is satisfying, may be described as relaxing, refreshing and rejuvenating, meeting one's social and/or intellectual needs, an opportunity to exercise, and an opportunity to learn or display competence and mastery (Stebbins, 1992). The primary motives identified in the NSGVP 2000 and the related research literature certainly support sport volunteerism as a leisure activity; volunteers are varyingly involved for fun, to use their skills, to learn new skills, and for socializing. There are two important implications from this. First, volunteerism must be recognized by the sport organization as a leisure activity; it is what people do in their leisure (non-work) time, that meets at least some of the above-noted criteria for a leisure experience and the individuals' specific motives for volunteering in sport. If the volunteer experience does not meet these criteria and motives, the volunteer will leave (or will not become involved in the first place). Second, sport volunteering is only one of a multitude of potential leisure activities. Individuals will decide among the variety of leisure experiences available to them, and volunteering in sport may be one of those choices. The decision to volunteer in sport depends on whether it is viewed as a viable leisure activity that can meet the individual's particular needs.

Volunteerism is an exchange. With personal interests as one of the top motives for volunteering (e.g., use one's skills, help others, child involved), sport volunteers have needs that they hope/expect to be met through their involvement in the sport organization. Sport volunteerism must be viewed as an exchange between the organization and the volunteer; the organization is looking for the volunteer to provide his or her time, effort, and skills, while the volunteer is looking for an opportunity to use those skills, to help others, to stay involved in sport, and likely to do something to benefit their own child (Hall et al., 2001b; Henderson, 1988; Labossiere & Gemmell, 1989; Pomerance, 1994; Shibli et al., 1999; Silverberg et al., 2000; Sutherland, 1992). When the volunteer experience does not allow for this – when the relationship is not a two-way street – the volunteer is likely to be less involved or leave altogether.

Serious vs. casual volunteering. The literature on volunteering in general distinguishes serious and casual volunteers (Stebbins, 1996). This distinction is likely relevant to volunteering in sport. Serious volunteering describes individuals who make a substantial commitment to a cause or organization, in terms of time and effort, and have a strong identity with the cause or organization (Nichols & King, 1999; Tedrick & Henderson, 1989). These individuals have also been referred to as “systematic” (Shibli et al., 1999), “core” (Arai, 1996), or “career” volunteers (Stebbins, 2000). Casual volunteering is defined by an individual's involvement in one-off, occasional or short-term activities (Tedrick & Henderson, 1989). The latter likely provide important, if somewhat limited, support to an organization. These individuals have also been referred to as “lend-a-hand”

(Tedrick & Henderson, 1989), “episodic” (McClintock, 2004), or “reliable” volunteers (Arai, 1996). There is merit in recognizing that these two different types of volunteers exist, and to consider their motives and expectations for volunteering. Unfortunately, there is limited research that describes the possibly unique profiles of these volunteers. Notably, Cuskelly and Harrington (1997) found that personal and social benefits are more important to serious than casual volunteers, and Arai (1996) found that core or serious volunteers experience these benefits to a greater extent than reliable or casual volunteers. However, perhaps casual volunteers desire and experience unique benefits that have not been explored. We may hypothesize, based on the profile of sport volunteers in general, that casual volunteers are particularly motivated to help because someone close to them is personally involved, and are less likely to be involved to use their skills or explore their strengths. Further, a sense of obligation may be relatively more important to these volunteers. Given volunteers’ and non-volunteers’ concerns about time, organizations may have to rely increasingly on casual volunteers. Research should examine, and sport organizations should consider, the nature and role of casual vs. serious volunteers.

Under-represented groups. As already noted in the section “Who volunteers in sport”, several groups of individuals are under-represented as sport volunteers. For example, women, younger (under 35) and older (over 45) individuals, people with less than a college or university diploma/degree, and those who are employed part-time or not in the labour force, comprise a smaller percentage of sport volunteers than they do the Canadian population as a whole. The under-representation of any group is an issue because that group represents an untapped source of volunteers, the sport organization is missing the advantage of a more diverse group of volunteers that may bring new ideas and energy, and the individuals who are not involved are missing an opportunity to contribute.

The under-representation of any group may reflect an organization’s narrow recruitment niche (e.g., Nichols & King, 1999). This seems likely in sport, given the high proportion of 35-44 year olds, men, parents, those with college/university degrees, and those employed full-time. To expand the volunteer pool, sport organizations need to expand their recruitment niche, with consideration of under-represented groups, and barriers to their involvement.

Women in sport volunteering. The under representation of women in sport volunteerism is of particular concern, because it means that there is a huge pool of potential volunteers that has not been tapped, and it means that a large proportion of women are not enjoying the benefits of contributing to their children’s sport activities. Presumably there are barriers to their involvement. Doherty and Varpalotai (2001) developed a multidimensional framework for considering the barriers to gender equity in sport and recreation. The framework argues that barriers to participation, including sport volunteerism, must be viewed from three overlapping perspectives: the individual, the organization, and the culture. At the individual level, the under representation of women in sport volunteerism may be explained by women’s lack of interest or qualifications to take part. These individual or personal barriers may be very real, but they are not the only constraints to volunteering in sport. We must also recognize that at the same time there may be barriers at the organization level, that constrain or deter women in particular from

being involved. For example, inflexible scheduling of volunteer activities that conflict with family responsibilities, skill requirements for coaches that prevent women who have not had the same sport opportunities from being involved, assigning women to coach recreational or developmental athletes and men to competitive or elite programs, or lack of encouragement for women to coach at all (e.g., Sport Alliance of Ontario, 2000; Whitson & MacIntosh, 1989). Finally, the culture of sport in general, and unique aspects of some sports in particular, present barriers to women's involvement. Sport continues to be primarily a male domain. Men are expected and encouraged to take on key decision making and coaching roles, because they are presumed to know more and know what is best for sport, for both boys and girls. Women are less likely to be accepted in sport leadership roles (e.g., Whitson & MacIntosh, 1989). Although there has been a lot of progress in breaking down the barriers to the involvement of girls and women in sport – including as volunteers – continued efforts must attend to remove barriers at the individual, organization *and* culture levels for meaningful change to occur.

New Canadians in sport volunteering. The potential influence of a changing ethno cultural population on volunteerism and the volunteer pool has been duly noted (Hall et al., 2001b; Labossiere & Gemmill, 1989). A report emanating from the NSGVP 2000 notes that immigrants to Canada are somewhat less likely to volunteer than Canadians in general (21% vs. 27%) (*The Giving and Volunteering of New Canadians*, 2004). They also contribute fewer hours (144 hours/year vs. 162 hours/year, respectively). The rate of volunteering among immigrants, and hours contributed, does tend to increase with the number of years in Canada. Immigrants contribute most of their time to religious organizations (28%, vs. 16% of all Canadians), followed by arts/culture/recreation organizations (20%, vs. 26% of all Canadians). They are slightly more likely than Canadians in general to volunteer because someone they know is personally affected (74% vs. 69%, respectively). A greater proportion of recent immigrants than Canadians in general report that they have not been asked to volunteer, they do not know how to become involved, and they are concerned about financial costs of volunteering. Jane Hennig, of the Volunteer Action Centre of Kitchener-Waterloo and Area, notes that new Canadians are not used to “the commonness of formal volunteering in our country”, although they may see volunteering as an opportunity to develop their English language skills, acclimatize to Canadian culture, and assist with the job search (personal communication, February 2005). Ms. Hennig also notes that voluntary organizations may be concerned about involving new Canadians because of potential language and cultural barriers (also Hall et al., 2001b). From what we know about new Canadians volunteering, we can consider several implications for sport volunteerism. In particular, the data indicate that immigrants share the same primary motives as sport volunteers, with a focus on volunteering because a family member is involved. As recent immigrants, or children of recent or established immigrants, become involved in organized sport, we can expect the parents to be particularly motivated to get involved. However, barriers to their involvement may include language and cultural constraints, being asked to be involved, and financial costs of volunteering.

Trends and attitudes towards volunteering. Some important societal trends and attitudes with regard to volunteering are worth noting. They provide some context for the profiles of

community sport volunteers reported here, and highlight some important considerations for sport organizations. There have been several explanations for the decline in Canadian volunteerism in general. It has been suggested that Canadians are more pressed for time because of work and family demands (Hall et al., 2001b; Hall et al., 2003). As well, younger Canadians may not feel as strong a need to use volunteering to help them in the job market (Hall et al., 2001b), and rural youth moving to urban centres for work affects the volunteer pool in non-urban areas (Labossiere & Gemmell, 1989). All age groups have an increasing number of alternative leisure activities to choose from (Nichols et al., 1998), and this is particularly notable for a healthier, older population (e.g., Cuskelly, 1995; Labossiere & Gemmell, 1989). Added to this is the notion that volunteerism may be valued less in our capitalist society because it *is* unpaid work (Nichols et al., 1998; Ralston et al., 2003) and, although volunteering is considered to be valuable to society (Hall et al., 2001b) it generally has a poor image (Abbey-Livingstone, 1989; Cuskelly et al., 1998).

A drop in the percentage of volunteers who were asked by an organization to get involved may explain a shift in recruitment strategies. Research suggests that organizations need to become more sophisticated in their recruitment practices to tap into a more diverse pool of potential volunteers (Hall et al., 2001b). Research also suggests that voluntary organizations, including sport, may not be capitalizing on their volunteer resources because they do not have the ability to effectively manage volunteerism (Hall et al., 2001b). Further to that, voluntary organizations are experiencing increased demand for professionalism and accountability, resulting in greater complexity and sophistication in the administration of the organization (Labossiere & Gemmell, 1989; Nichols & King, 1998; Nichols et al., 1998; Nichols et al., 2003; Sharpe, 2003). It appears that the reasons for volunteering have not changed much over time, but the nature of volunteering and the roles and expectations of volunteers have changed considerably.

What don't we know about community sport volunteers. Despite the fairly extensive data and research literature on sport volunteers, there may be as much that we *don't* know about community sport volunteers. These aspects are highlighted here, in order to recognize that the profile is incomplete, and to provide some direction for future research (cf. Henderson & Silverberg, 2002).

1. *Many individuals with connections to sport do not volunteer in sport.* Although many sport volunteers are parents, and are involved because of their children, most parents do not volunteer in sport. We have a good understanding of barriers to volunteering, and volunteering more; however, it is of interest to understand why parents with children involved in sport do not volunteer. It is also of interest to understand why former athletes do not volunteer, particularly when one of the primary motives of current volunteers is to stay connected with their sport and use their skills and experiences.
2. *Motives of casual vs. serious volunteers.* As noted earlier in this section, community sport is supported by volunteers who make a regular commitment to the organization and those who make a more sporadic contribution. It is important to develop more specific profiles of these types of volunteers, so that we may

understand who they are, and their motives and attitudes towards volunteering in sport. Sport organizations may have to increasingly work with casual volunteers who prefer a more flexible and less time-intensive commitment.

3. *Sport volunteer attitudes and behaviour.* The section “Sport volunteer satisfaction and commitment” presents a preliminary model of predictors and outcomes of sport volunteer satisfaction and commitment. This model needs to be expanded and substantiated so that we may understand the experiences of volunteers within their organization, and particularly what factors affect their effort (quantity and quality) and likelihood of staying in the organization.
4. *Sport volunteer stress and burnout.* Stress and burnout have been shown to contribute to attitudes and behaviour in many organizational settings. There is no apparent research on levels of stress and burnout among sport volunteers, nor consideration of the predictors and outcomes of stress and burnout. We may expect these to be important factors in the volunteer experience, given that sport volunteers tend to be involved in more organizations and contribute more hours than volunteers in general. On top of that, most sport volunteers work full-time and have dependent children at home. Given sport volunteers’ concerns and dissatisfaction with too few volunteers and a poorly run organization, time and conflicts with other commitments may be only a few of the potential sources of stress or burnout. It is critical to explore the incidence and impact of volunteer stress and burnout in the sport organization setting.

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