VOLUNTEER

UNDERSTANDING VOLUNTEERISM
IN CANADA

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Social Connection and Health

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Understanding Volunteerism in Canada

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BACKGROUND

Volunteering provides important services and benefits to Canadian society, including health promotion, reduced health care costs, and supplements to workforce shortages. In 2018, a total of 24 million Canadians spent 5 billion hours volunteering — providing the equivalent of 2.5 million full-time jobs worth of economic value to their communities (Hahmann, 2021). Growing evidence suggests that in addition to benefitting their communities, volunteers themselves derive numerous health and well-being benefits from their helping behaviours (Burr et al., 2021). However, despite the known benefits to volunteering for both the individual and the community, 67% of Canadian non-profits struggled to recruit new volunteers in 2022, and 51% struggled to retain existing volunteers (Statistics Canada, 2022b). In response to declining volunteer resources, 17% of these organizations had to cancel their services and another 35% had to reduce the scope of the services they provide (Statistics Canada, 2022a). The resulting service gaps are detrimental to community resilience and leave our communities more vulnerable to future shocks. To begin to address declining volunteering rates, we need to better understand what type of work volunteers are engaged in, what motivates them, and what barriers and challenges they face when considering engaging in voluntary work.

OBJECTIVES

This project aims to understand the motivations and barriers Canadians face regarding volunteering. We analyzed data from the 2021 and 2022 waves of the Canadian Social Connection Survey (CSCS) and conducted six focus groups with a subset of survey respondents in order to address our key objectives:

1. Report types and characteristics of volunteer work done by Canadians during the pandemic.
2. Report motivations for engaging in volunteer work during the pandemic.
3. Identify potential barriers (e.g., disability, COVID-19-related safety concerns) associated with volunteer engagement.
4. Assess trajectories of volunteering and helping behaviours over the course of the pandemic.
5. Assess how Objectives 1-4 differ across key sociodemographic groups (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, income, geography, etc.; incorporated throughout Objectives 1-4).

METHODS

Sampling and Data Collection

The present study leverages data from the 2021 and 2022 waves of the Canadian Social Connection Survey, which was conducted among people living in Canada, aged 16 years or older, during the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada (2021 and 2022). The Canadian Social Connection Survey is a serial cross-sectional study with a longitudinal sub-cohort. The present study leverages the 2021 data (for analyses assessing trajectories over time) and the 2022 cross-sectional data in which a subset of participants (those who reported volunteering) answered a subgroup of questions containing specific information on volunteering (e.g., motivations to volunteer, types of volunteer work, etc.). Participants were recruited through paid advertisements in French and English on social media websites. After seeing advertisements, participants were screened for eligibility (i.e., residence in Canada, 16+ years or older), and provided informed consent. The survey could be completed in French or English. The Canadian Social Connection Survey core questionnaire included assessments of a range of social, behavioural, mental health, and social health factors, as well as information about participant's demographic characteristics.

Participants were excluded if they did not report volunteering (N = 1,711) resulting in a final sample of 1,251 analyzed participants. Ethics approval for this study was provided by the Simon Fraser University and University of Victoria Research Ethics Boards (Ethics Protocol Number 21-0115). This study was exempt from additional review by the Institutional Review Board at the University of British Columbia because data were publicly available and de-identified.

Our focus groups, which constituted the second half of our study, were conducted with a subset of the Canadian Social Connection Survey respondents that gave permission to be contacted for follow-up studies base on their participation in the CSCS survey. Participants were invited to complete a screening survey ([Appendix Text 1](#)). Only individuals who had indicated they had prior volunteering experience were considered for the focus groups. Purposeful sampling was used to invite participants from demographic groups that are less represented in research, including: individuals living on low incomes, individuals with disabilities, individuals living in rural environments, and individuals from minoritized cultural backgrounds. For each of these demographic groups, participants were able to indicate whether they wanted to be considered for the session focused on one or more of these identities. All individuals who indicated they had prior volunteering experience were considered for the final two groups that were open to all volunteers. All groups were age- and gender-balanced where possible. Ethics approval for this study was provided by the Institutional Review Board at the University of British Columbia (REB Number: H23-00936).

We then conducted 60 to 90-minute focus group interviews to gain further insights into the experiences of volunteers (their motivations, barriers to engaging in volunteering, suggestions for volunteer organizations, etc.) These focus groups were conducted online and audio-recorded and

transcribed via Zoom. Focus group participants were selected from CSCS survey respondents who gave permission to be re-contacted and were screened to include participants of different ages, gender identities, socioeconomic backgrounds, cultural backgrounds, disability status, and geographic locations (e.g., rural vs. urban). In total, we conducted six focus groups between September 11th, 2023, and October 24th, 2023. We held one group each for people with disabilities ($n = 7$), people living in rural areas ($n = 4$), people living on low income ($n = 7$), people from racialized backgrounds ($n = 7$), and we held two groups that were open to individuals from any background (total $n = 12$). Groups were balanced across age and gender identity where possible. In total, 37 volunteers shared their motivations, barriers, and suggestions around volunteering.

Measures

Participants reported motivations for engaging in different kinds of volunteer work in the Canadian Social Connection Survey, including protective (reducing negative feelings), values (expressing one's altruistic values), career (opportunities for career growth), social (fostering social connection), understanding (learning and practicing skills), and enhancement (self-development) motivations.

Part 1: Canadian Social Connection Survey Data

- **Demographics**. Participants reported on several demographic variables, including their age, gender, income, employment status, ethnicity, and urbanicity.
- **Volunteering Tasks**. Participants were asked to indicate which of 19 volunteering tasks they had been involved in, including: fundraising, food preparation, administrative work, and visiting people. For the full list of 19 items, please see Appendix Text 2.
- **Relationship to Co-Volunteers**. Participants were asked to indicate who they volunteered with, including: friends, family, strangers, acquaintances, or individuals from multiple generations (Appendix Text 3).
- **Volunteer Modality**. Participants indicated whether they volunteered in-person or virtually (Appendix Text 3).
- **Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI)**. The Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) is a tool that measures six volunteer motivations: values, understanding, social, career, protective, and enhancement (Clary et al., 1998; Appendix Text 4). The *values* motivation captures individuals altruistic desire to help others and included questions such as "I feel compassion toward people in need." The *understanding* motivation captures individuals' motivation to gain new skills or maintain existing skills and includes questions such as "I can explore my own strengths." The *social* motivation captures motivations that are centered around gaining new social ties or improving existing ties and includes questions such as "people I'm close to want me to volunteer." The *career* motivation captures motivations that are focused on career

or academic advancement and includes questions such as "volunteering experience will look good on my resume." The *protective* motivation captures motivations that are focused on protecting oneself from negative feelings and includes questions such as "doing volunteer work relieves me of some of the guilt over being more fortunate than others." The *enhancement* motivation captures motivations focused on self-development and includes questions such as "volunteering makes me feel better about myself."

- **Helping.** Participants were asked, "In the past three months, how often have you helped a neighbor or friend with a task or chore (e.g., yard work, moving)?"
- **Greeting.** Participants were asked, "In the past three months, how often have you greeted a neighbour or acquaintance (e.g., by saying hello or good morning)?"
- **Checking In**. Participants were asked, "In the past three months, how often have you sent a text/private message to someone just to check in?"
- **Personality**. Personality was assessed with the Ten Item Personality Measure (TIPI). The TIPI measures the Big-Five personality dimensions (i.e., openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and emotional stability; Gosling et al., 2003).

Part 2: Focus Groups

Screening Survey

Individuals who completed the 2021 or 2022 Canadian Social Connection Survey and gave permission to be contacted for future studies were invited to complete a screening survey to participate in a focus group as part of our study.

While the Canadian Social Connection survey was administered in French and English, the focus group screening survey was only offered in English as this is the language in which the focus groups were conducted. The survey gathered sociodemographic information, including questions pertaining to participants age, gender (woman, man, non-binary, and a self-report option), and the province in which they reside (Appendix Text 1).

Additionally, to ensure we were able to hear from groups that are less represented in past research on volunteering, we included specific questions that allowed individuals to self-identify as belonging to one of the following groups: people living with disabilities, people living on a low income, people from minoritized cultural backgrounds, and people living in a rural community. Individuals were allowed to indicate if they would be willing to participate in a focus group specific to these identities, and all eligible participants were considered for the final two groups regardless of their membership in these groups.

Participants also answered questions on their past volunteering experiences, including: how long and how often they volunteered; whether they were currently volunteering; and if they are not currently volunteering, how long it had been since they last volunteered with an organization (Appendix Text 1).

Focus Group Discussions

Six focus groups were conducted, and these were centered around the core research goals of understanding: 1) what motivates volunteers, 2) what barriers they face, and 3) how these barriers could be lessened or removed. The questions asked during these sessions were developed by the research team to uncover these motivations, barriers, and supports that are most important to volunteers. Participants were asked *"what were the most important factors in your considerations to start volunteering?," "what aspects have encouraged you to continue?," "what are the biggest challenges you have faced as a volunteer?," what kind of changes, supports, or training would be helpful to overcome this barrier?," "can you think of any strategies that organizations you've been involved with were already doing that made volunteering more accessible for you?," "what would you do to make it easier for volunteers to get involved," and "what aspects of volunteering have you enjoyed the most?"* Additionally, for the 4 focus groups with target demographic groups, an additional question was considered that asked them to share their suggestions for how organizations could make volunteering more accessible to them and other members of their group identity.

Follow-Up Surveys.

Focus group participants were given 24 hours post-session to fill out an optional Qualtrics survey with an open-ended textbox that allowed them to share anything they did not have a chance to share during the session.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Objective 1: Report types and characteristics of volunteer work done by Canadians during the pandemic

Method and analytical approach

We summarized data from the Canadian Social Connection survey to identify the types of volunteer work engaged in during the pandemic. We summarized our participants demographic information (Table 1), the percentage of volunteers who participated in various types of activities (e.g., fundraising, personal care; Table 2), who volunteers worked with (e.g., friends, strangers; Table 3), and whether volunteering was done in-person or virtually (Table 4).

Analytical findings

Table 1: Demographic Information

Participant Characteristics	N (%)
Age (range: 16-90)	
Young Adults [16-29]	487 (38.9%)
Middle Adults [30-59]	471 (37.6%)
Older Adults [60+]	293 (23.4%)
Gender	
Men	325 (32.6%)
Women	640 (64.3%)
Non-Binary	31 (3.1%)
Ethnicity	
White	742 (74.4%)
Other	258 (25.6%)
Income	
<$5,000-$29,999	262 (28.1%)
$30,000-$49.999	200 (21.4%)
$50,000-$99,999	235 (25.3%)
$100,000-$200,000+	236 (25.3%)
Urbanicity	
Rural	17 (6.8%)
Urban	233 (93.2%)

Table 2: Percentage of Volunteers by Type of Activity

Volunteer Activity	%
Working directly with clients	46.6%
Event planning	41.1%
Administrative or clerical work	38.5%
Fundraising	37.2%
Giving advice/information	36.9%
Mentoring/training/counselling	30.6%
Visiting people	22.9%
Providing transport	19.9%
Food preparation/soup kitchen	17.9%
Other	17.9%
Cleaning services	17.1%
Religious/church-related activities	16.5%
Yard work or other outdoor physical labour	15.8%
Physical labour	15.7%
COVID-related	14.9%
Health-related	13.4%
Personal care	13.0%
Maintenance work	12.1%
Call centre	5.9%

Table 3: Percentage of Volunteers by Relationship to Co-Volunteers

Relationship to Co-Volunteers	%
Friends	44.0%
Strangers	37.5%
Intergenerational	36.2%
Family	34.8%
Acquaintances	32.3%
Alone	26.9%

Table 4: Percentage of Volunteers by Volunteering Modality

Volunteering Modality	%
In-Person	67%
Virtual	32%

Summary

Volunteers in our sample were predominantly women, White, and lived in urban environments. They were relatively balanced across income quartiles. During the pandemic, volunteers were more likely to volunteer directly with people in need and for events while they were less likely to be engaged with maintenance work or with telephone work. Volunteers were more likely to be working alongside their friends as compared to strangers, family, acquaintances, intergenerationally, or by themselves. Roughly two-thirds of volunteers participated in in-person volunteering activities.

Objective 2: Report motivations for engaging in volunteer work during the pandemic

Method and analytical approach

To understand what motivates Canadian volunteers, we first analyzed data from the Canadian Social Connection Survey (See: Sampling and Data Collection for more details on the sampling procedure). Participants completed the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) and reported on their motivations for volunteering across all 6 categories (*values, understanding, social, career, protective,* and *enhancement*. VFI scores have a possible range of 1 (not at all important/accurate) to 7 (extremely important/accurate), with higher values indicating a type of motivation is more important.

To better understand differences in motivations for volunteering, we conducted a latent profile analysis (LPA) that grouped volunteers into classes or "types" of volunteers based on their VFI scores, demographic information (i.e., age, gender, ethnicity, income, employment status [i.e. employed or unemployed], and the Big Five personality traits [i.e., openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and emotional stability]. We evaluated the models with three fit indices as follows: Adjusted information criterion (AIC), Bayesian information criterion (BIC), and adjusted Bayesian information criterion (aBIC). For each fit statistic, a lower value suggests a better fit (Nylund et al., 2007). Our best-fit model identified 6 volunteer profiles, which are summarized below.

To explore how volunteers' motivations differ across demographic groups (Objective 5), we conducted a series of ANOVAs. We looked at the association between the following demographic factors and their relationship with the VFI: age (i.e., young adults [16-25], middle adults [30-59] and older adults [60+]), gender (i.e., men, women, non-binary), ethnicity (i.e., White, non-White), income (quartiles), and urbanicity (i.e., rural, urban). For these comparisons, the sample was restricted to CSCS survey respondents who indicated they had volunteered. For each motivation, we ran a series of one-way ANOVAs to consider differences within each demographic group.

Next, we ran these analyses again with the inclusion of the five demographic factors as covariates (i.e., age, gender, ethnicity income, and urbanicity). All *p*-values are FDR Benjamini-Hochberg adjusted to account for multiple testing.

All quantitative analyses were conducted in R (https://www.R-project.org/).

Finally, we conducted six focus groups with Canadian volunteers in which we invited them to discuss their motivations for volunteering.

Results

Descriptives

Overall, the *values* motivation was the motivation with the highest mean score (mean = 4.92) indicating that on average, volunteers are more strongly motivated by altruistic values. The *understanding* (mean = 4.47) and *enhancement* (mean = 4.18) motivations were also moderately motivating. The *protective* (mean = 3.79), *social* (mean = 3.63), and *career* (mean = 3.34) motivations were rated as less important motivations overall; see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Volunteer Motivations
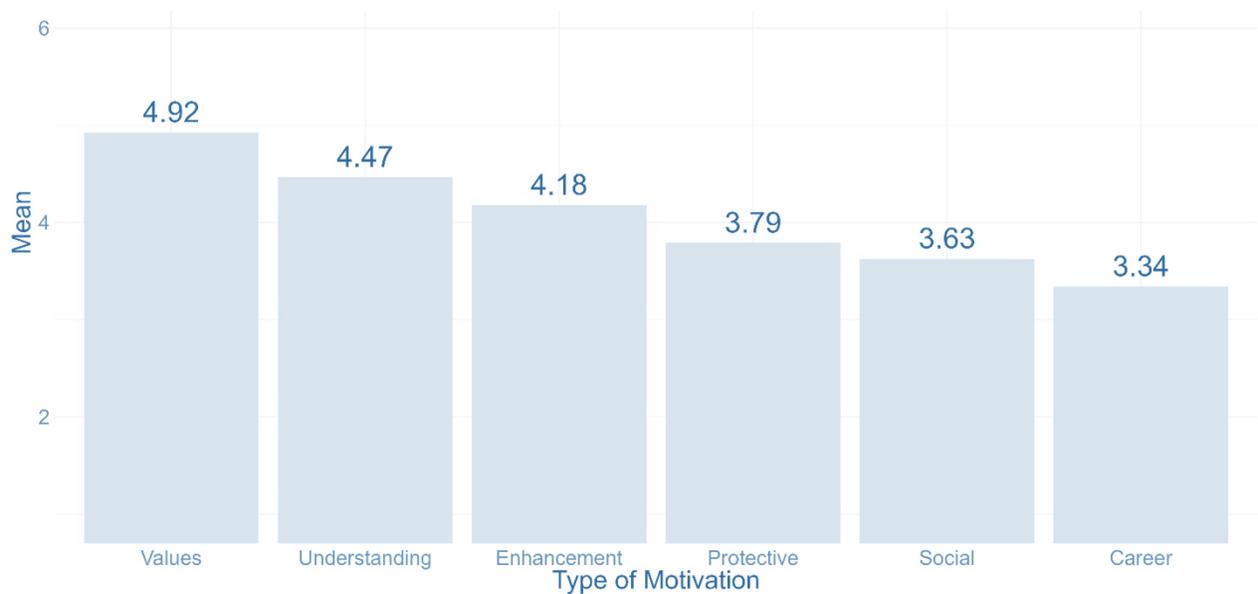
Latent Class Analysis of Motivations

Class 1: Motivated by Growth and Values

Our first group of volunteers was primarily motivated by growth (e.g., understanding and enhancement motivations) and values. They are predominantly women and older (Mean age = 55) as compared to other groups. They were the least likely to be employed and rated the *career* motivation especially low.

Class 2: Diverse Motivations

Our second group of volunteers was characterized by having diverse motivations. On average, this group rated all motivations high relative to other groups. They were the most gender- and ethnically- diverse of our volunteer types. This group had a mean age of 39.

Class 3: Primarily Values Motivated

Our third group of volunteers was characterized as being highly motivated by values. They found most of the motivations assessed to be much lower than the other groups. This group was predominantly women with the highest mean age (Mean age = 58) of all groups. Nearly three quarters of these volunteers were employed.

Class 4: Primarily Career Motivated

Our fourth group of volunteers was characterized by being highly career motivated. This group found that opportunities for career growth were important to their decision to volunteer, while all other motivations were rated as average. This group was the most likely to be from racialized backgrounds and they were the most likely to be employed. They were also the youngest group (Mean age = 35).

Class 5: Motivations Other than Values and Growth

Our fifth group of volunteers reported scores below average on motivations representing values and growth. The motivations of career, social, and protective were around the average. This group had a lower average income compared to other groups and was the group most likely to be men. They were relatively young (Mean age = 36).

Class 6: Motivations not Captured in our Study

Our sixth and final volunteer type found were below the mean on all motivations. It is possible that their motivations were not captured by our measure of volunteer motivations. This group had a mean age of 50, was low-income relative to other groups, and 56% of this volunteer group was employed.

Motivation: Values

When looking at the *values* motivation, one-way ANOVAs showed significant differences for age, gender, ethnicity, income, and urbanicity (Figures 2-3). Volunteering to express one's altruistic values appears to become more important with increasing age. Women and non-binary individuals were more motivated by the *values* motivation than were men. Individuals who identified as White were more likely to volunteer for *values* than were non-White individuals and those in the highest income quartile were more likely to rate the *values* motivation as more important than those in the bottom two quartiles. Individuals living in rural environments volunteered more for the *values* motivation than did individuals in more urban settings. When adjusting for covariates, few associations remained. The oldest group rated values *more* highly than the youngest age group age, women scored higher on *values* as compared to men, and those in the highest income quartile rated the *values* motivation higher than the lowest income quartile.

Figure 2. Values motivation (without covariates)
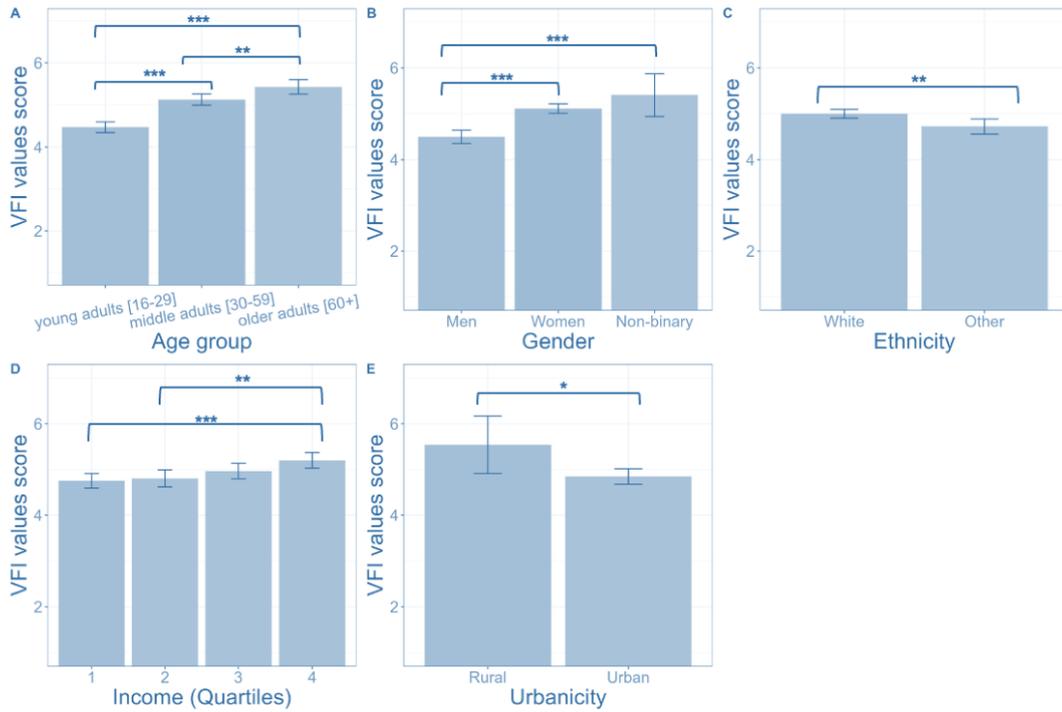
Figure 3. Values motivation (with covariates)
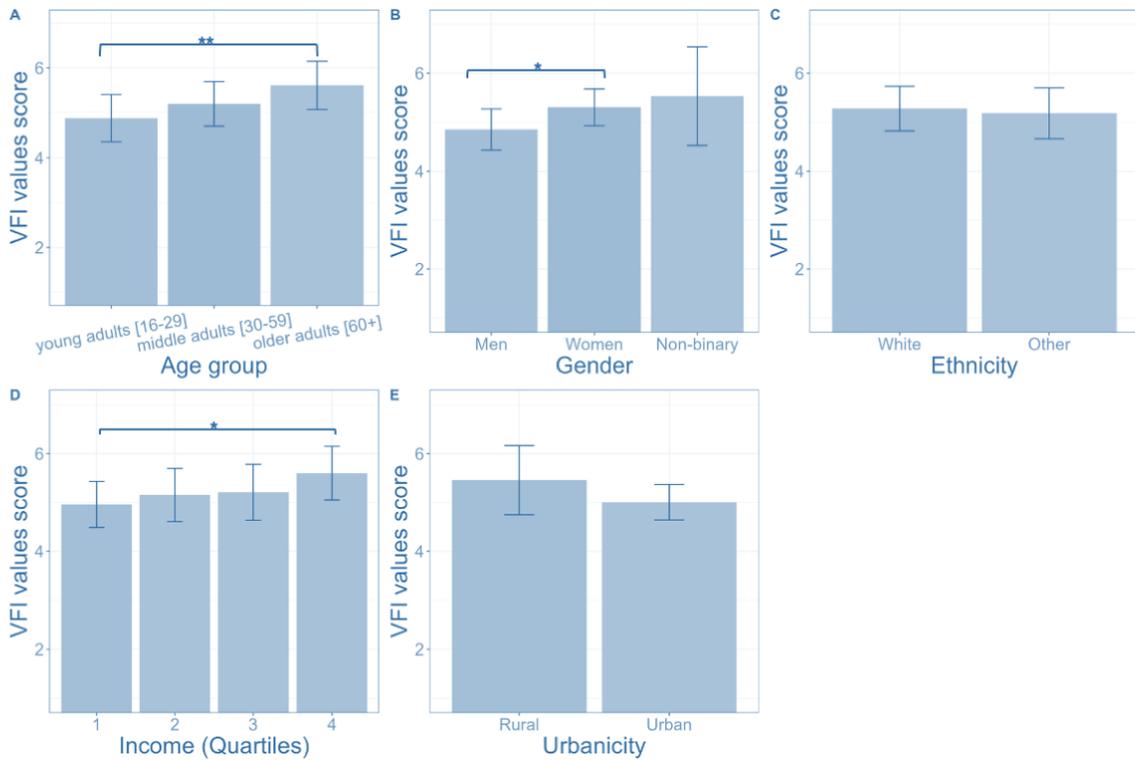
Motivation: Understanding

When looking at the *understanding* motivation, one-way ANOVAs showed that women scored higher on *understanding* as a motivation than men. There was little evidence for other group differences. In the analysis with covariates, this finding did not hold.

Figure 4. Understanding motivation (without covariates)
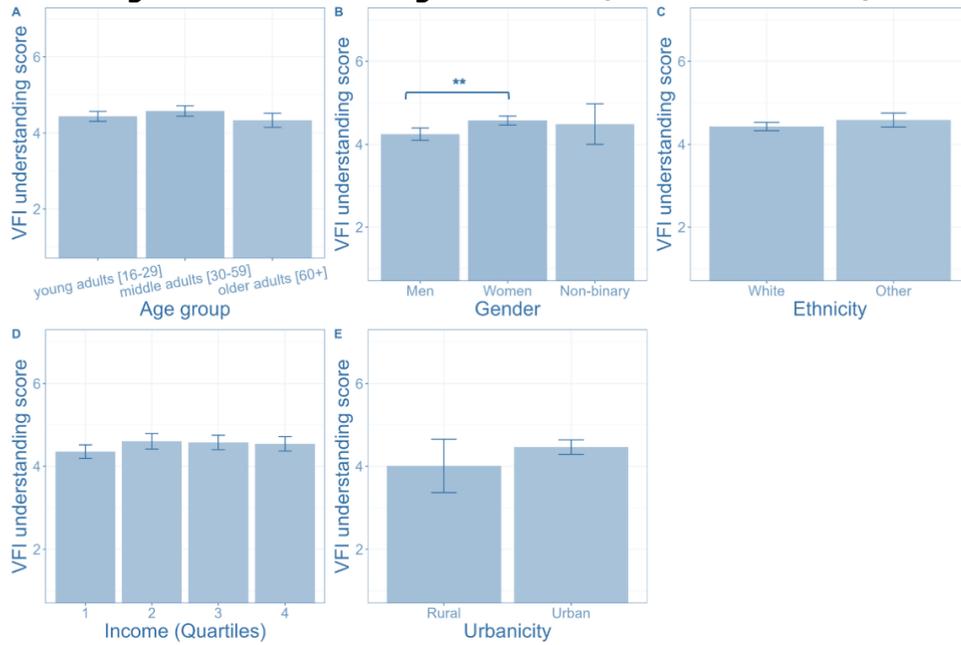
Figure 5. Understanding motivation (with covariates)
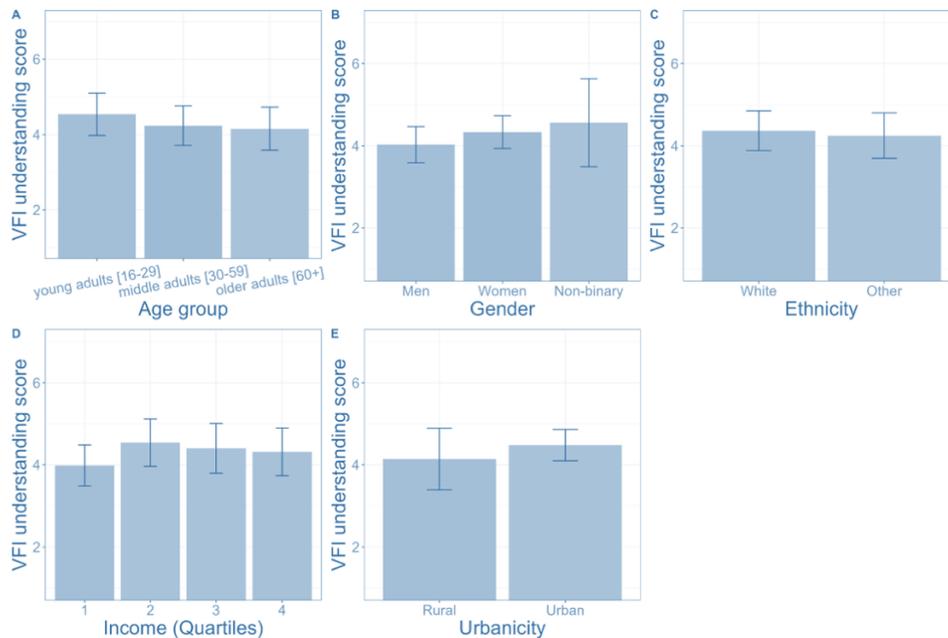
Motivation: Social

Results from one-way ANOVAs suggest that the *social* motivation decreases with age, with younger adults scoring higher than both middle-aged and older adults, and middle-aged adults scoring higher than older adults. Women scored lower than men and non-binary individuals. Those living in urban environments rated this motivation higher as compared to those in rural settings. There was little evidence of other between group differences. When including covariates in the analysis, there were no meaningful group differences.

Figure 6. Social motivation (without covariates)
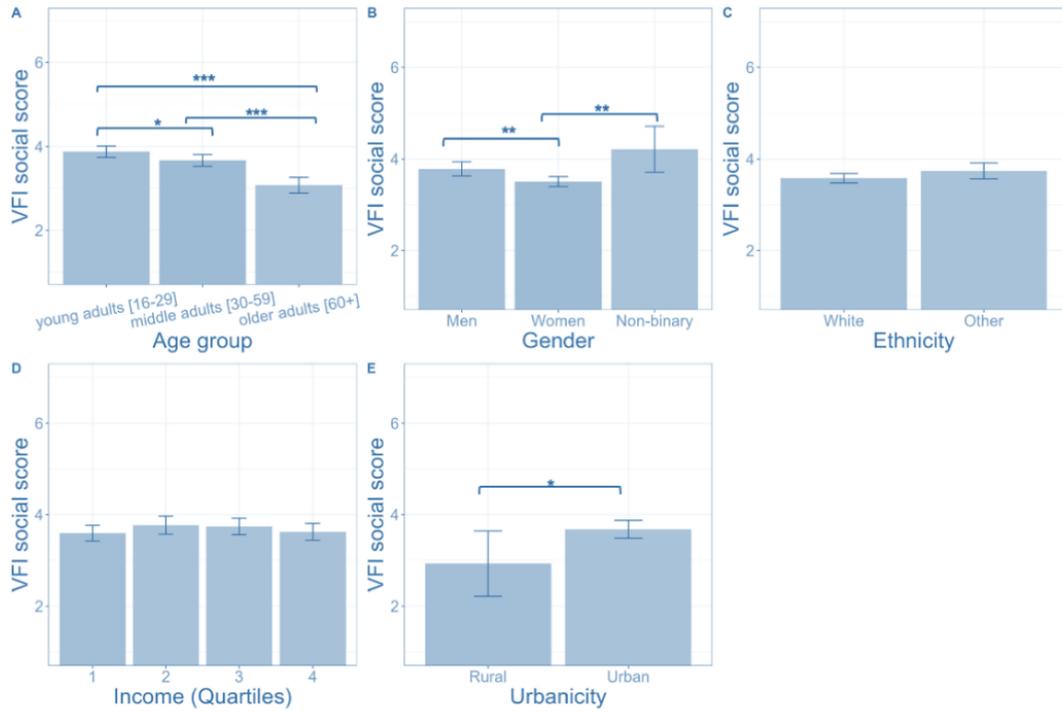
Figure 7. *Social* motivation (with covariates)
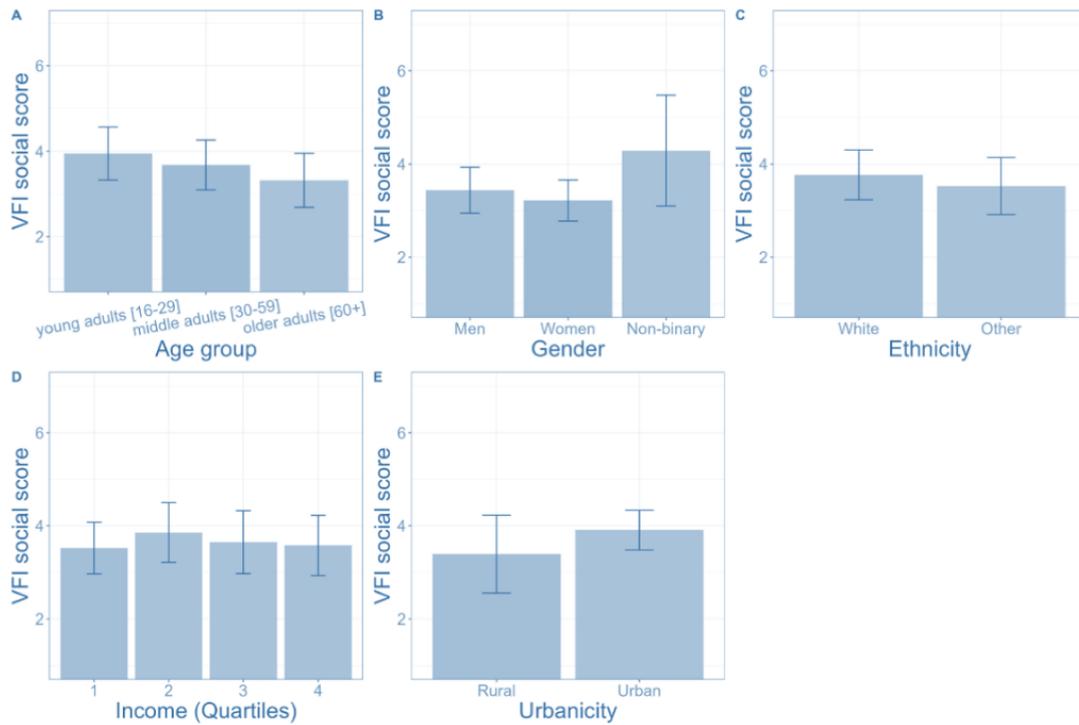
Motivation: Career

One-way ANOVAs found that the *career* motivation appears to decrease with age. Younger adults rated *career* motivations higher as compared to middle-aged adults and older adults. Middle-aged adults rated this motivation higher than older adults. Men scored higher on this motivation than did women, and non-White individuals rated this motivation higher than did individuals who identified as White. When looking at income, individuals in the second income quartile rated it higher than individuals in the third- and fourth- income quartiles. Individuals living in urban areas rated this motivation higher than did individuals living in rural areas. When adjusting for covariates, we found the same between group differences for age on the *career* motivation, while there was little evidence of other associations.

Figure 8. Career motivation (without covariates)
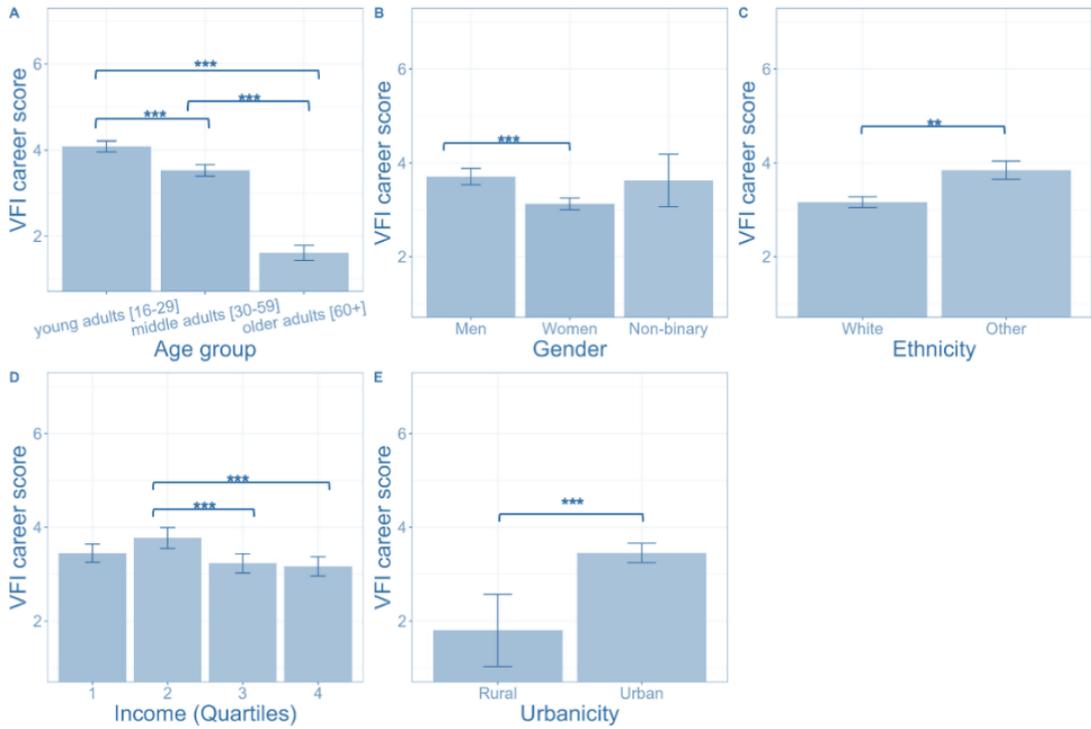
Figure 9. Career motivation (with covariates)
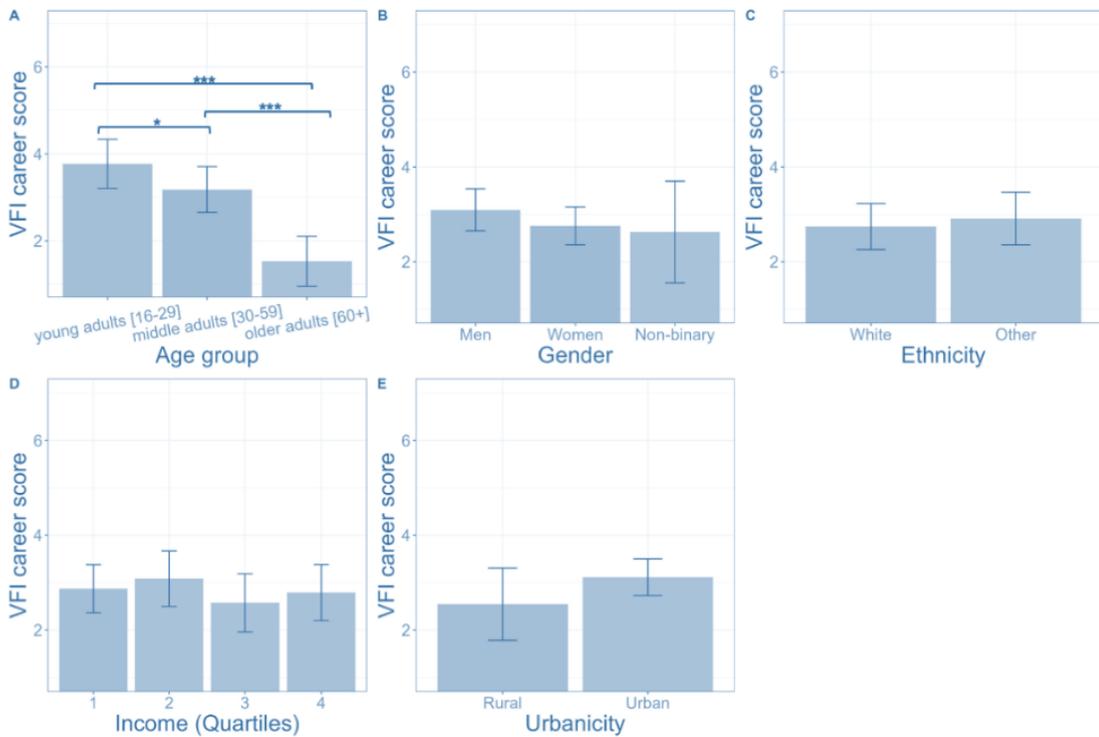
Motivation: Protective

The *protective* motivation appears to decrease with age, with younger adults rating this motivation higher than middle-aged adults and older adults, and middle-aged adults rating it higher than older adults. When considering income, individuals in the second income quartile rated this motivation higher than did individuals in the first-, third-, and fourth- income quartiles. Individuals living in urban areas rated it higher than individuals living in rural areas. When including covariates, younger adults rated this motivation higher than both middle-aged and older adults, though the group difference between middle-aged adults and older adults no longer remained. The finding for urbanicity remained (e.g., individuals in urban environments rated this motivation higher than those in rural areas).

Figure 10. Protective motivation (without covariates)
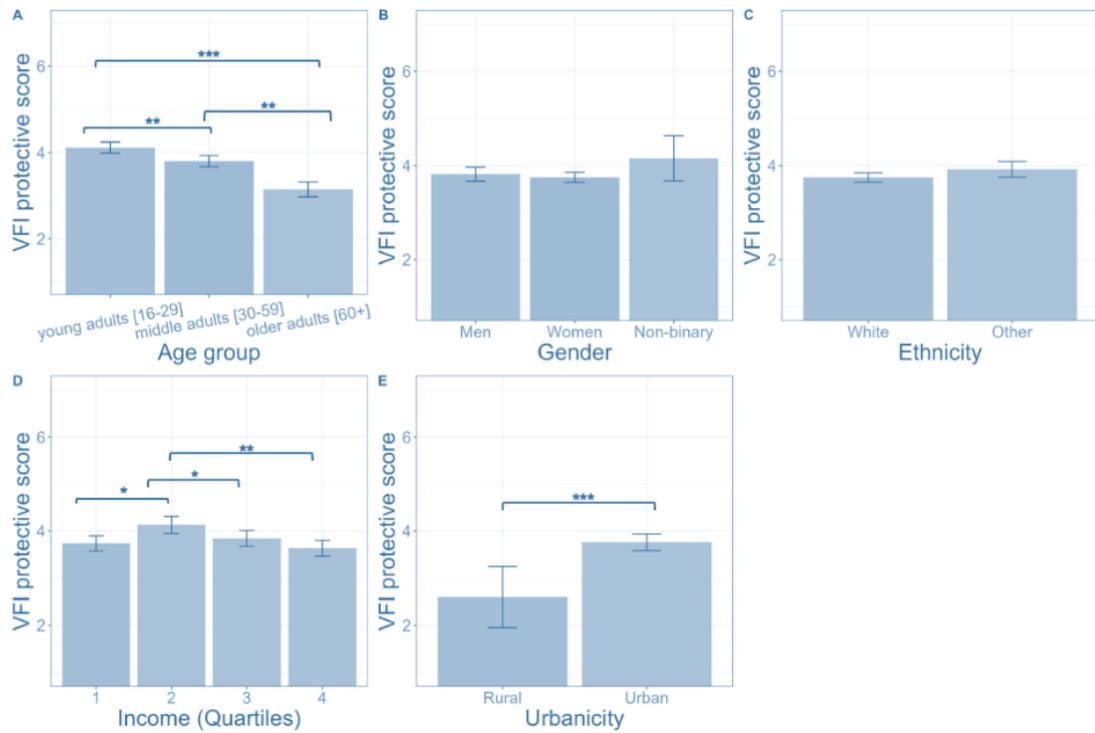
Figure 11. Protective motivation (with covariates)
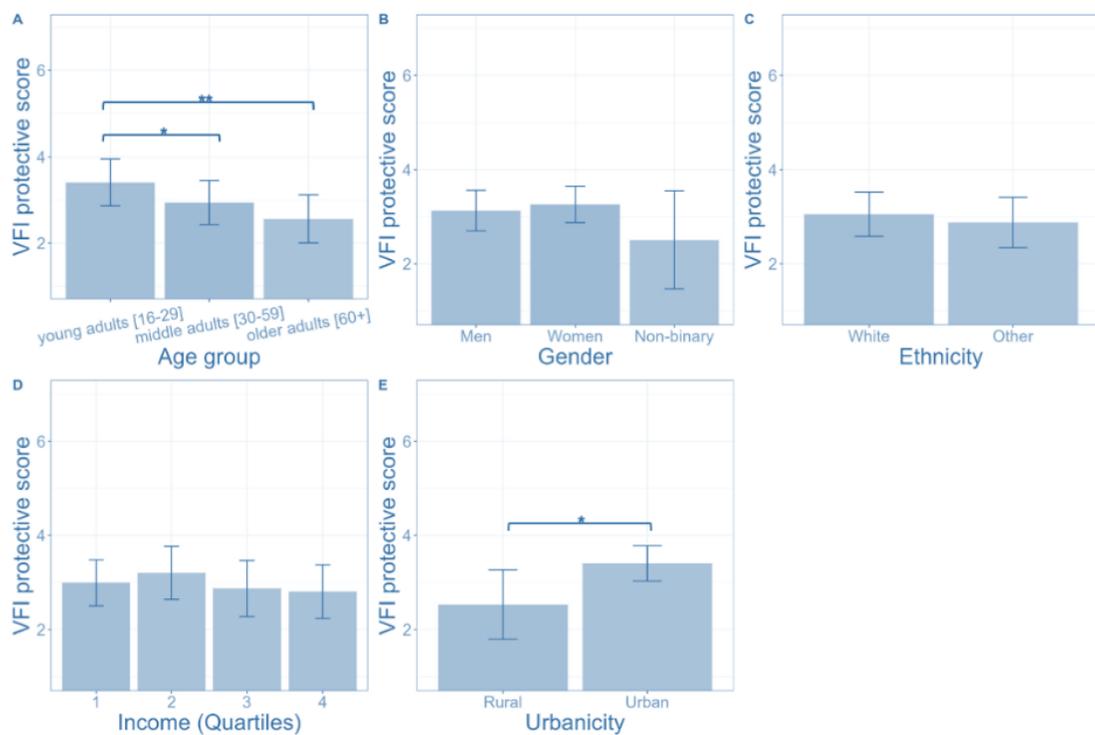
Motivation: Enhancement

For the *enhancement* motivation, young adults rated this motivation higher than older adults, and middle-aged adults rated it higher than did older adults. Individuals in the second income quartile rated it higher than individuals in the fourth income quartile and individuals living in urban environments rated it higher than those in rural settings. When including covariates, the *enhancement* motivation was still higher for those in urban environments than for those living in rural environments.

Figure 12. *Enhancement* motivation (without covariates)
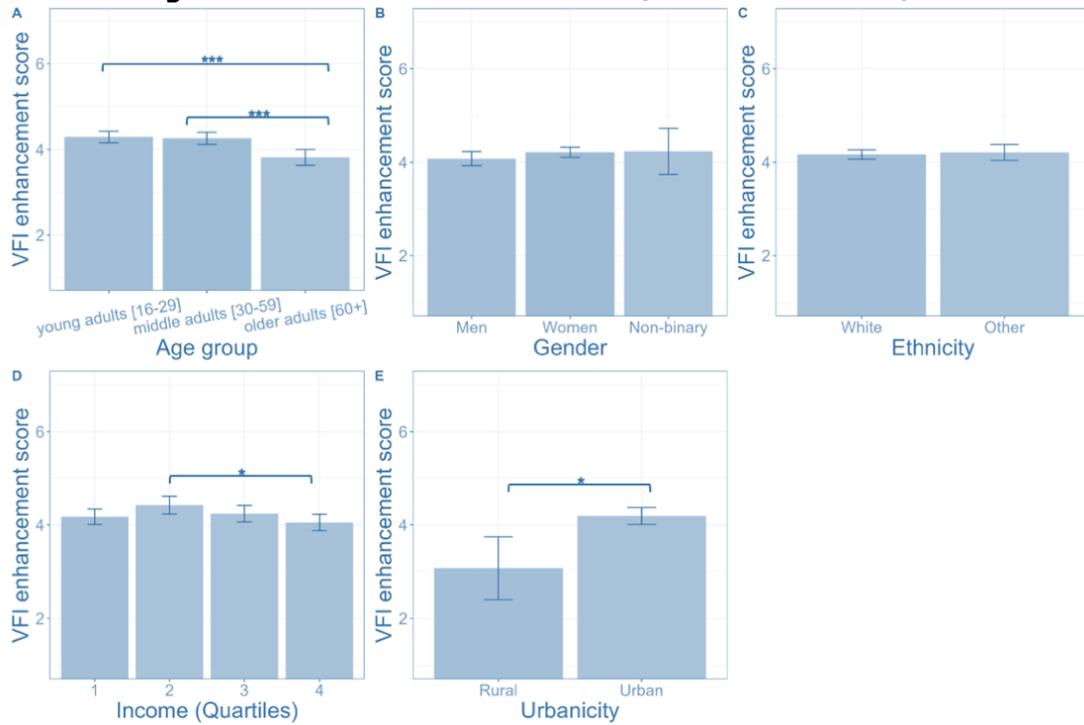
Figure 13. Enhancement motivation (with covariates)
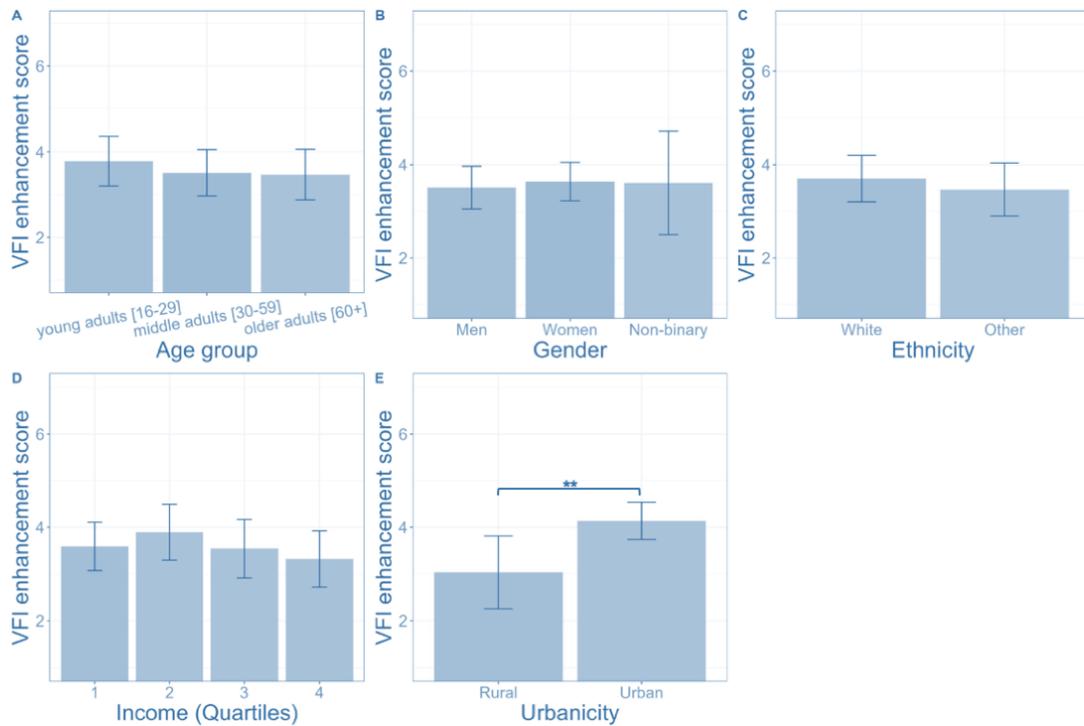
Focus Groups

Volunteers shared a plethora of motivating factors in their decision to start or continue volunteering. Many of these motivations are centered around social connection. For instance, one volunteer shared that "two-thirds of the people [they] know are through volunteering." Other volunteers shared that volunteering allowed them to meet new people, gave them a reason to get out of the house, and fostered a sense of community. Other motivations include giving back to others; career advancement; exploring new roles and interests; and personal enjoyment. Final results for these data analyses will be disseminated in a scientific publication.[1]

Summary & Implications

In the overall sample, values, understanding, and enhancement motivations were reported as more important, as compared to protective, social, and career motivations. Motivations for volunteering tend to differ by certain demographic characteristics. With further research, these findings can help volunteer organizations to increase volunteerism by targeting their recruitment based on volunteer motivations.

Volunteers want to participate in meaningful work. While the social motivation may appear to have been of lower importance than other motivations based on participants' ratings, this could be because people were more likely to be involved in roles where they worked with their existing social connections (e.g., 44% of participants volunteered with friends). Organizations may consider highlighting opportunities to volunteer with friends and family members.

"Volunteers want to participate in meaningful work."

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[1] We are currently conducting qualitative analyses on the focus group data but have included preliminary findings and general trends that emerged during discussions.

Objective 3: Identify potential barriers (e.g., disability, COVID-19-related safety concerns) associated with volunteer engagement

We conducted six focus groups in which participants shared the barriers they faced when volunteering. See: Sampling and Data Collection for more information on the groups. Participants were asked "What are the biggest challenges you have faced as a volunteer?" Furthermore, for our four focus groups focused on underrepresented groups, individuals were asked an additional question: "Is there anything you would like volunteer organizations to know about how they could make volunteering more accessible for other [group identity] members?" All groups were asked an additional question, "What kind of changes, supports, or training would be helpful to overcome this barrier?" Final results for these data analyses will be disseminated in a scientific publication.[2] A preliminary introduction of our findings on barriers to engaging in volunteer work is included here.

Findings

Some findings appeared across groups, while others were specific to certain sociodemographic groups.

General findings

- **Interpersonal conflicts** within organizations. Much like positive social relationships were motivating factors for volunteers, volunteers repeatedly mentioned that negative interpersonal relationships made it difficult to continue in their roles.
- **Feeling burnt out.** Volunteers expressed feeling guilty when needing to take a step back. When there were no processes in place for volunteers to take time off or have their shifts or responsibilities covered, they reported feeling unsupported and burned out.
- **Difficulty accessing volunteer location.** Volunteers mentioned that many volunteer settings were difficult to access on public transport. For volunteers who do drive, the rising cost of parking was mentioned as a barrier.
- **Costs.** The incidental costs of volunteering were brought up frequently by volunteers. Unexpected costs related to volunteering included financial costs (e.g., bus tickets, parking, training costs, background checks, other materials), time costs (e.g., time spent preparing for community art or fitness classes), mental health costs (e.g., feelings of burnout), and even social costs (e.g., taking home the stress of some volunteer roles home to one's family).

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[2] We are currently conducting qualitative analyses on the focus group data but have included preliminary findings and general trends that emerged during discussions.

- **Lack of training.** Volunteers often felt their training was inadequate to successfully perform some of their roles. Additionally, some volunteers referenced feelings of unpreparedness for the emotional tolls that can come with volunteering, such as when volunteering in hospice or end-of-life care settings.
- **Not feeling appreciated**. Many of the volunteers in our focus groups reported not feeling appreciated by the organizations. Some reported a sense of thanklessness for their contributions to the organization, or a general lack of respect and acknowledgment for their efforts which made it less motivating to continue.

Table 5. Findings specific to sociodemographic groups

Group	Important Points
Racial and ethnic minorities	- Lack of racial and cultural diversity within organizations. - Volunteers mentioned that even in organizations that promote diversity as a value, diversity is often lost higher up in the organization's hierarchy. - Volunteers from racialized backgrounds felt less inclined to volunteer in organizations that were not diverse throughout the organization's hierarchy. - Some volunteers also reported a lack of cultural awareness within organizations, especially around holiday times.
People living with disabilities	- Lack of building accessibility, such as the type of handles used on doors and the location of washrooms. - Organizations were not always transparent about the accessibility of their location, such as mentioning it is accessible via transit, but the transit stop is a challenging walking distance, or the bus runs infrequently. - Many also mentioned COVID-19 related barriers such as a lack of safety regulations (e.g., mask requirements), which are a greater concern for those with chronic illness and/or who are immunocompromised.
People living in rural areas	- Volunteers mentioned that finding volunteer opportunities could be challenging. - Many reported few listings online, and they did not know where in their communities to look for opportunities.
People living on low income	- For volunteers who were underemployed, their need to secure gainful employment inhibited their ability to volunteer. - Some volunteers looked to volunteering as a pathway to securing employment but were often met with barriers, e.g., some organizations had rules barring paid staff from discussing their paid roles with volunteers, creating a divide between paid and unpaid individuals working in the same organization.

Summary & Implications

The study employed six focus groups to explore the challenges faced by volunteers, with additional focus on underrepresented groups. General findings revealed common barriers, including interpersonal conflicts within organizations, volunteer burnout due to lack of support systems, difficulty accessing volunteer locations, various costs associated with volunteering, inadequate training, and a lack of appreciation by organizations. Specific sociodemographic findings indicated that racial and ethnic minorities experienced challenges related to the lack of diversity and cultural awareness in organizations. Individuals with disabilities faced issues such as building accessibility and COVID-19-related concerns. Volunteers in rural areas struggled to find opportunities, while those on low incomes encountered barriers to volunteering due to underemployment and organizational restrictions. The preliminary findings underscore the need for organizations to address these diverse challenges in order to enhance volunteer engagement.
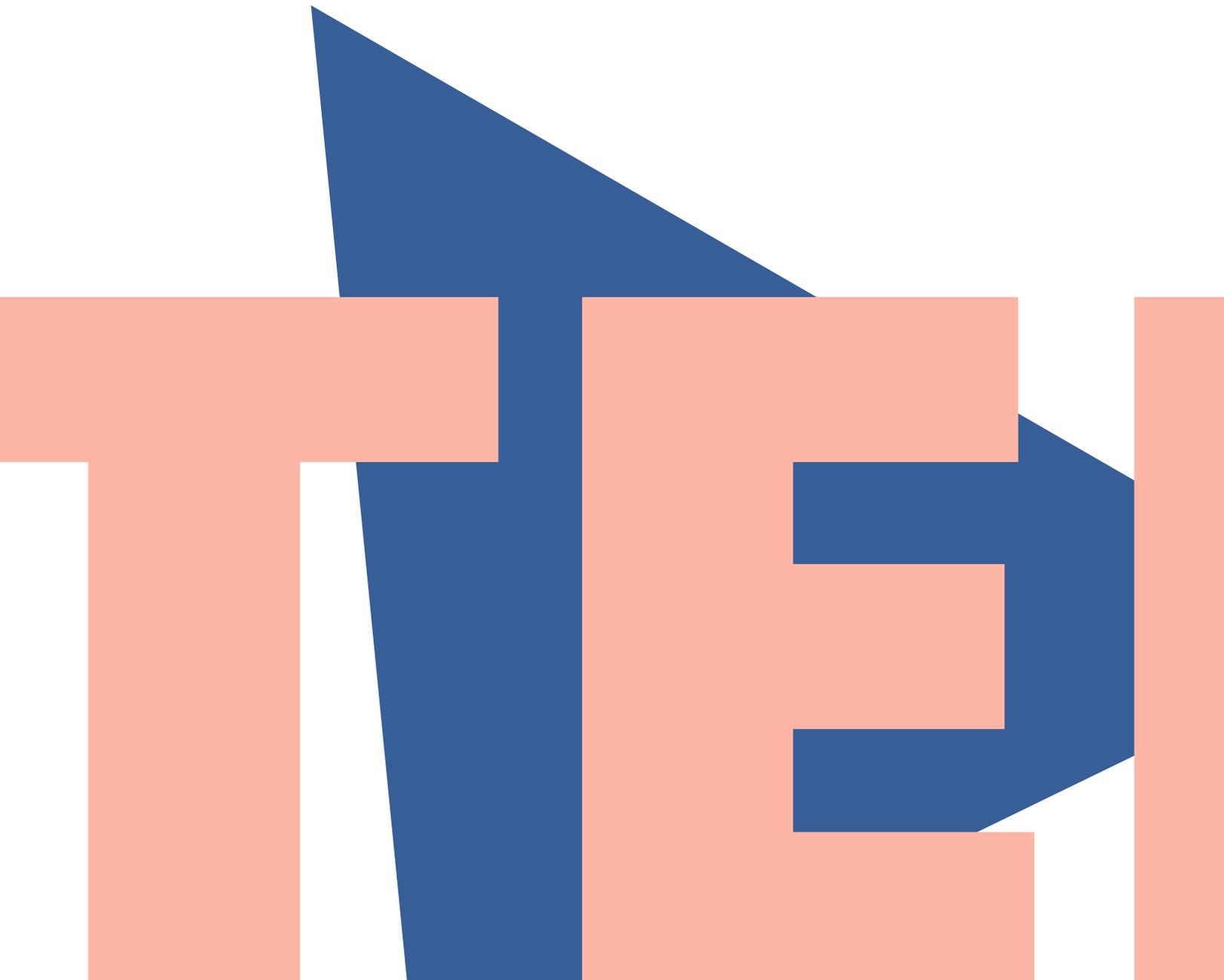
Objective 4: Assess trajectories of volunteering and helping behaviours over the course of the pandemic

Method and analytical approach – Part 1

We used longitudinal data from the 2021 and 2022 waves of the Canadian Social Connection Survey (longitudinal subcohort) to assess changes in four prosocial behaviours (volunteering, helping, checking in, and greeting in separate models) over the course of the pandemic. First, we conducted an analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine the impact of the variable time on each of the four aforementioned prosocial behaviours. The model included a fixed effect for time and treated participant ID as a random factor. All analyses were conducted in R (https://www.R-project.org/).

Results – Part 1

Volunteering

There was a significant effect of time on volunteering (ANOVA, $F(1, 406) = 5.92$, $p = .02$), such that frequency of volunteering was significantly higher in 2022 than 2021.
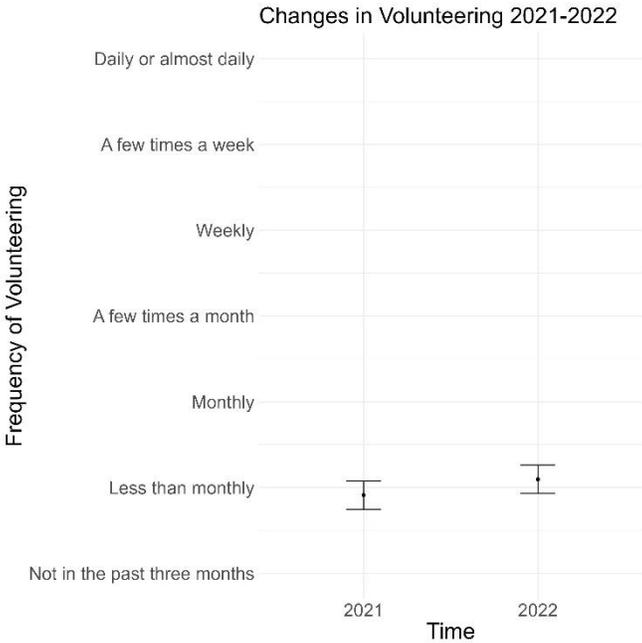
Helping

There was a marginally significant effect of time on helping (ANOVA, $F(1, 406) = 3.68$, $p = .06$), such that frequency of helping was significantly higher in 2022 than 2021.

Changes in Helping 2021-2022
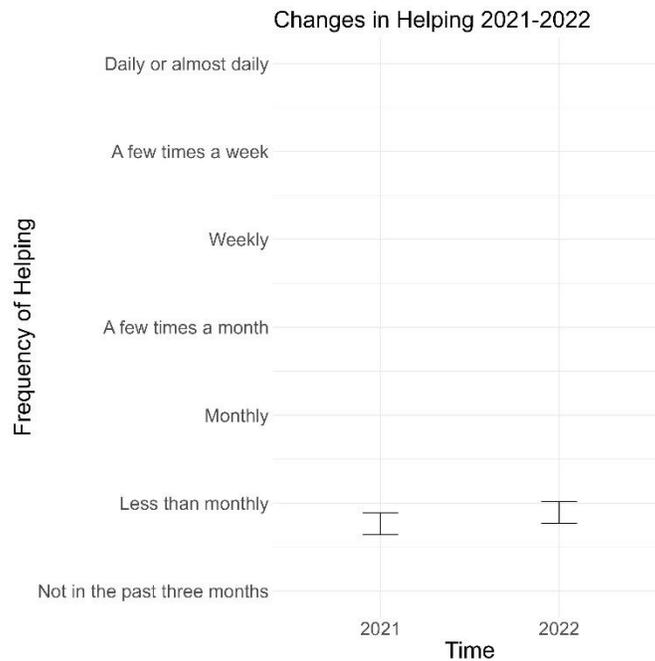
Checking in

There was not a significant effect of time on checking in (ANOVA, $F(1, 406) = 1.93$, $p = .17$), such that frequency of checking in did not change significantly between 2021 and 2022.

Changes in Checking In 2021-2022
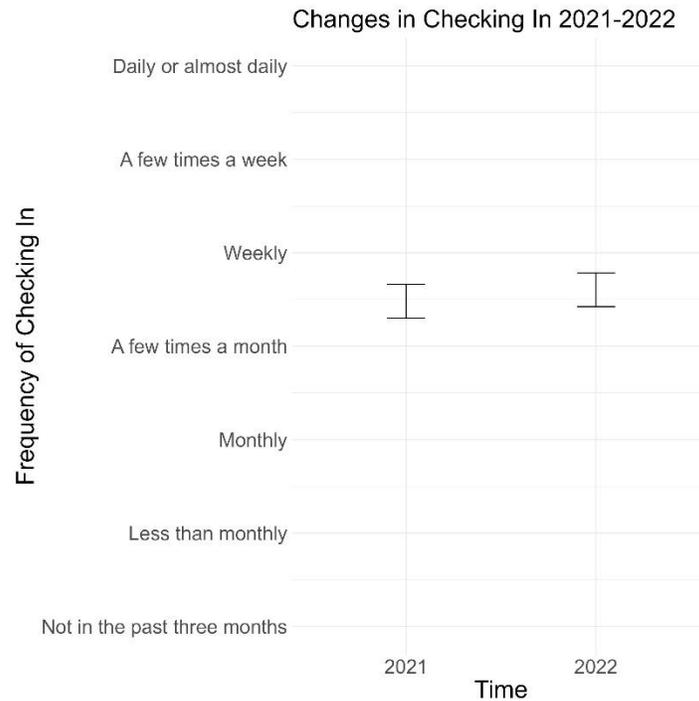
Greeting

There was a significant effect of time on checking in (ANOVA, $F(1, 406) = 11.92$, $p < .001$), such that frequency of greeting was significantly higher in 2022 than 2021.
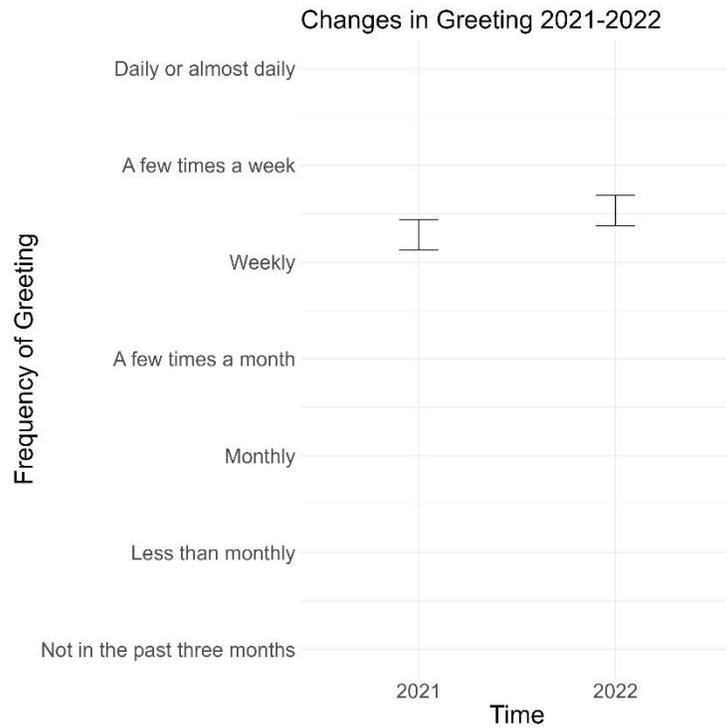
GREETING

Method and analytical approach – Part 2

Next, in longitudinal multilevel models, we examined the frequency of volunteering, helping, greeting, and checking in over time adjusting for age, gender, ethnicity, and income. The models incorporated a random intercept for each individual.

Results – Part 2

Volunteering

Time was positively associated with frequency of volunteering (β = 0.18, *SE* = 0.08, $t(406)$ = 2.43, p = .02), such that the frequency of volunteering was significantly higher in 2022 than 2021.

Helping

Time was marginally positively associated with frequency of helping others (β = 0.13, *SE* = 0.07, $t(406)$ = 1.92, p = .06), such that there was a marginally significant increase in frequency of helping over time.

Checking in

Time was not significantly associated with frequency of checking in (β = 0.13, *SE* = 0.09, $t(406)$ = 1.39, p = .17).

Greeting

Lastly, time was positively associated with frequency of greeting others (β = 0.25, *SE* = 0.07, $t(406)$ = 3.45, p < .001), such that the frequency of greeting others was significantly higher in 2022 than in 2021.

Summary & Implications

Prosocial behaviours, including volunteering, helping, checking in with others, and greeting a neighbour or acquaintance, generally appeared to increase between 2021 and 2022. Volunteering and greeting showed significant increases between 2021 and 2022. Increases in greeting neighbours and acquaintances may be due to increased comfort being around others as the pandemic progressed, while checking in on others may not have increased, perhaps because these behaviours could already be done virtually when physical distancing restrictions were more stringent. Helping showed marginally significant increases, suggesting an increase in comfort/ability to help others as the pandemic progressed. Increases in volunteering in 2022 suggest that infrastructure for reestablishing volunteer opportunities post pandemic may be important for promoting volunteerism and keeping up with sufficient provision of volunteer opportunities.

KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION

The above findings from Objectives 1-3 and 5 were presented at the 2023 Canadian Human Connection Conference in October 2023 in Toronto in a presentation titled, "Characterizing Volunteerism in Canada: Motivators, Barriers, and Guidelines for Increased Accessibility" (see Appendix 6 - Human Connection Conference 2023 slides) as part of a symposium on prosocial behaviours and health. Public health officers, Canadian non-profits, and other researchers were in attendance for this presentation.

On December 8, 2023, we hosted an online dissemination of our findings and discussion of results with 7 community organizations and other stakeholders (see Appendix 7– Community discussion slides). Volunteer leaders from Community Volunteer Connections, Big Brothers of Greater Vancouver, North Shore Community Resources, Langley Volunteer Bureau, the Canadian Red Cross, Volunteer Canada, and the United Way British Columbia joined us to provide their insights. Based on the combined input of volunteers in focus groups and the discussion with volunteer organizations, we have created a set of recommendations and opportunities for volunteer and government organizations (see separate document titled, "What It Takes: Key Strategies for Optimizing Volunteer Participation").

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APPENDICES

Appendix text 1: Screening survey

[PAGE 1] Introduction

Thank you for your interest in participating in a focus group as part of this project, titled Characterizing Volunteerism in Canada: Motivators, Barriers, and Guidelines for Increased Accessibility.

The focus group portion of the study will be focused on people's experiences with volunteering, the barriers they have faced, and suggestions for improving accessibility. We are interested in hearing from all Canadians. To ensure representation, we will also be targeting specific demographic groups that are underrepresented in current research. We will be creating several focus groups for people with different identities, including those identifying as 1) ethnic/racial minorities, 2) low-income individuals, 3) people with disabilities, 4) people living in rural environments, and 5) a final group representing all Canadians broadly.

We acknowledge the importance of intersectionality and that some participants will have multiple identities, and therefore offer the option to choose which group you would like to take part in.

In creating our focus groups, we are using quota-based sampling of respondents to ensure representativity and diversity across our target demographics. When possible, study coordinators will randomly select potential respondents that meet our target demographics. By completing and submitting this form, you are consenting to provide this information to the study team for the purpose of screening and recruitment only.

If you are not invited to participate in the focus group, your information will be deleted. If you do not consent to providing this information or do not wish to provide personal information, we understand that this study may not be the right fit for you. You may exit the form at any point without completing it and your data will be destroyed. If you are interested in participating, please complete this survey within the next week.

[PAGE 2] Eligibility

1. Do you live in Canada?*
   a. Yes
   b. No
2. Do you have a device (e.g., laptop, phone, tablet) that is able to connect to Zoom, with audio and video capabilities?*
   a. Yes
   b. No

[If NO to any question: Ineligible]

3. Have you ever volunteered? For the purposes of this study, we consider volunteering anything done within the context of a formal organization or group. Under this definition, volunteering does NOT include helping family and friends or performing personal acts of kindness.*
   a. Yes
   b. No

[If NO to this question: Ineligible]

4. What organization(s) or group(s) did you volunteer for? (e.g., "the Red Cross", "a local library") _____
5. How long were you involved in that group (or those groups)? Please specify the number of weeks/months/years (this can be a rough estimate). _____
6. On average, how many hours a week did you volunteer with this group (or each of these groups)? Any information about the frequency of your volunteering experiences is helpful. _____
7. Are you currently volunteering? If not, about how long has it been since you last volunteered (please specify the number of weeks/months/years)? _____

[PAGE 3] Demographic screening

8. Full name (format: First Last):* _____
9. Email address:* _____
10. Phone number (format: area code-phone number, example: 604-123-4567):* _____
11. Can you be reached at this number during regular daytime hours? If no, please indicate general hours you anticipate being available for a short screening call over the coming weeks.
    a. Yes, I am available at this number during regular daytime hours.
    b. No, I am not available at this number during regular daytime hours. Please call me during one of these times instead: _____
12. In which province do you currently reside?*
    a. [SELECT PROVINCE FROM DROP DOWN LIST]
13. How old are you (in years)?
    a. [ENTER NUMERIC VALUE]
14. How do you identify, in terms of gender?
    a. Woman
    b. Man
    c. Non-binary (e.g., agender, genderqueer, genderfluid)
    d. None of the above, I identity as: [ENTER TEXT]
    e. Prefer not to answer
15. Do you belong to any of the following groups? (Check all that apply)*
    a. People with chronic health problems or disabilities (e.g., living with any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning,

communication or sensory impairments—or a functional limitation—whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society)

b. People of colour (e.g., Black, Indigenous, Asian, or other racialized minority)
c. People with mental health challenges
d. People living on low income
e. Resident of a rural community
f. None of the above
g. Prefer not to answer

[IF: SELECT ANY OPTION BESDIES f/g IN Q15:]

16. We are interested in hearing about the experiences of communities that are underrepresented in research. Would you be interested in joining a focus group to discuss your experiences with volunteering as a member of any of the communities you identified? (If you select "No", you will still be eligible to participate).*
    a. Yes
    b. Maybe
    c. No

[IF: SELECT "No" IN Q16: GENERAL GROUP]

[IF: SELECT MORE THAN ONE IN Q15]

17. You have indicated that you identify with more than one of our targeted groups and are interesting in participating. Please select the group you are most interested in participating in.
    a. People with chronic health problems or disabilities and/or people with mental health challenges
    b. People of colour (e.g., Black, Indigenous, Asian, or other racialized minority)
    c. People living on low income
    d. Resident of a rural community

[RACE & ETHNICITY]

18. Which of the following best describes your race or ethnicity? Select all that apply.
    a. Indigenous
    b. African, Caribbean, or Black
    c. Arab
    d. Chinese
    e. Filipino
    f. Japanese
    g. Korean
    h. Latin American
    i. South Asian (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, etc.)

j. Southeast Asian (e.g., Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai, etc)
k. West Asian (e.g., Iranian, Afghan, etc)
l. White
m. None of the above, I identify as: [ENTER TEXT]
n. Prefer not to answer

[SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS]

19. Have you received any of the following degrees or certifications? (Check all that apply)
    a. High school diploma or high school equivalency certificate
    b. Certificate of Apprentice, Certificate of Qualification (Journeyperson's designation) or other trade certificate or diploma
    c. College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma
    d. University certificate or diploma below bachelor level
    e. Bachelor's degree (e.g., B.A., B.A. (Hons.), B.Sc., B.Ed., LL.B.)
    f. University certificate or diploma above bachelor's level
    g. Degree in medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, or optometry (M.D., D.D.S., D.M.D., D.V.M., O.D.)
    h. Master's degree (e.g., M.A., M.Sc., M.Ed., M.B.A.)
    i. Doctorate (e.g., Ph.D.)
    j. Prefer not to answer
20. What is your best estimate of your total household income received by all household members, from all sources, after taxes and deductions, during the year ending December 31, 2022?
    a. Under $5,000
    b. $5,000-$19,999
    c. $20,000-39,999
    d. $40,000-$59,999
    e. $60,000-$99,999
    f. $100,000 or more
    g. Don't know
    h. Prefer not to answer

[BUILT ENVIRONMENT]

21. Which of the following best describes the area you live in?
    a. Urban (cities centres, with high-density (lots of buildings close together))
    b. Suburban (just outside city centres, many single-family homes and apartment buildings, but not as dense as within the city)
    c. Rural (fewer houses and buildings, and lots of open or greenspace)
22. What is your primary mode of transportation during a typical week?
    a. Personal vehicle (single passenger)
    b. Carpool
    c. Rideshare (e.g., Uber) or Taxi

     d. Ferry
     e. Bus
     f. Bicycle

23. By public transit (e.g., bus, subway), approximately how long is your daily commute to school or work?
     a. 5-10 minutes
     b. 10-30 minutes
     c. 30-60 minutes
     d. 60-90 minutes
     e. Over 90 minutes
     f. Not sure
     g. Other: ___

24. By car, approximately how long is your daily commute to school or work?
     a. 5-10 minutes
     b. 10-30 minutes
     c. 30-60 minutes
     d. 60-90 minutes
     e. Over 90 minutes
     f. Not sure
     g. Other: ___

[PAGE 4] Scheduling

Schedule Information

This information will be used to assist in scheduling the sessions. After initial survey responses have been recorded, we will select a time and only contact participants who indicate they are available.

25. Please select your current time zone. This is for the purposes of scheduling you for a Zoom session in the next 4-8 weeks, so if you are currently traveling, please indicate the time zone in which you are normally based *
     a. Pacific Daylight Time (PDT)
     b. Mountain Daylight Time (MDT)
     c. Central Daylight Time (CDT)
     d. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT)
     e. Atlantic Daylight Time (ADT)
     f. Newfoundland Daylight Time (NDT)

26. Please select all times in your local time zone that you would likely be available for a 90 minute session taking place via Zoom within approximately the next 4-8 weeks. :

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

9am-11am	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11am-1pm	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
1pm-4pm	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

27. Do you have any other specific scheduling constraints or preferences that you would like to tell us about? (For example, you could tell us something like, "I am only free after 6:30 PM on weekdays"): _____

Thank you for indicating your availability! We will review responses and contact eligible participants by phone over the coming weeks. If you have any questions, please email us at focusgroup@psych.ubc.ca.

 Please push the forward arrow to finalize submission of your responses.

 [END QUESTIONS]

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey. Your response has been recorded.

Volunteering Items in the CSCS: 2022

When was the last time you volunteered in the community?

Response options: Earlier today (1) ... Not in the past three months (8)

Appendix text 2: Volunteering items - tasks

What types of tasks have you engaged in while volunteering?

- Administrative or clerical work
- Working directly with clients
- Fundraising
- Event planning
- Giving advice/information
- Mentoring/training/counselling
- Providing transport
- Visiting people
- Personal care
- Maintenance work
- Cleaning services
- Yard work or other outdoor physical labour (e.g., landscaping, maintaining forest trails)
- Health-related volunteering (e.g., working in a Clinic)
- Religious/church-related activities
- Covid-related volunteering (e.g., providing vaccinations)
- Call centre
- Physical labour
- Food preparation/soup kitchen
- Other

Appendix text 3: Volunteering items - other

Which of the following is true about your volunteer work? (Check all that apply)

- I volunteered in-person.
- I volunteered virtually/at-home.
- I volunteered with friends.
- I volunteered with family.
- I volunteered with strangers.
- I volunteered with acquaintances.
- I volunteered alone.
- I interacted with people of multiple generations.

Appendix text 4: Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI)

Please indicate how important or accurate each of the 30 possible reasons for volunteering were for you in doing volunteer work.

Response options: (1) Not at all important/accurate ... (7) Extremely important/accurate

Volunteering can help me to get my foot in the door at a place where I would like to work.

- My friends volunteer.
- I am concerned about those less fortunate than myself.
- People I'm close to want me to volunteer.
- Volunteering makes me feel important.
- People I know share an interest in community service.
- No matter how bad I've been feeling, volunteering helps me to forget about it.
- I am genuinely concerned about the particular group I am serving.
- By volunteering I feel less lonely.
- I can make new contacts that might help my business or career.
- Doing volunteer work relieves me of some of the guilt over being more fortunate than others.
- I can learn more about the cause for which I am working.
- Volunteering increases my self-esteem.
- Volunteering allows me to gain a new perspective on things.
- Volunteering allows me to explore different career options.
- I feel compassion toward people in need.
- Others with whom I am close place a high value on community service.
- Volunteering lets me learn things through direct, hands on experience.
- I feel it is important to help others.
- Volunteering helps me work through my own personal problems.
- Volunteering will help me to succeed in my chosen profession.
- I can do something for a cause that is important to me.
- Volunteering is an important activity to the people I know best.
- Volunteering is a good escape from my own trouble.
- I can learn how to deal with a variety of people.
- Volunteering makes me feel needed.
- Volunteering makes me feel better about myself.
- Volunteering will look good on my resumé.
- Volunteering is a way to make new friends.
- I can explore my own strengths.

Appendix text 5: Interview guide

Each focus group in this study will cover the same topics. However, to allow for organic conversation, the order and phrasing of these questions may differ between groups. This interview guide outlines the key questions we will discuss during the sessions and their expected order.

Welcome

Good [morning/afternoon/evening] everyone and welcome to our session. My name is [moderator name] and this is [assistant moderator/recorder name] and we are both researchers from the University of British Columbia. Thank you all for being here today.

Overview of topic

The reason we are having this focus group is to learn about your experiences with volunteering, including your motivations to volunteer and to learn about any barriers you may have faced engaging in volunteering. You all have been invited here today because you have valuable insights on volunteering in Canada. Your input today will help us inform community organizations on how they can make volunteering more accessible to improve volunteering experiences across Canada. We will be conducting several focus groups over the next few weeks to get a better understanding of the motivations and barriers facing Canadian volunteers.

Reconsent

As a reminder, your participation in today's session is entirely voluntary. In today's session, we will be asking you some questions about your experiences with volunteering. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to, and you can leave the session at any time with no penalty. If you have any concerns, please feel free to contact the research team.

[Assistant moderator] will be taking notes during this session and we will be recording today's session, but only the research team will have access to this recording. As a reminder, Zoom records both audio and video simultaneously and you should have your video on during this session. Once the session is transcribed, the recordings will be destroyed. Please help us keep everything in this discussion confidential by not discussing details outside of this group. You may be discussing sensitive issues, and we want everyone to feel comfortable sharing.

When writing our report, we may use direct quotes from this focus group, however any quotes used will not be linked to your identity in any way.

Does anyone have any questions at this point?

[pause]

[At this point, assistant moderator/recorder should make sure that people's names are displayed on Zoom which will help with transcription]

Ground rules

We are here to get your perspectives. There are no right or wrong answers.

Please listen respectfully to others while they share and don't interrupt each other, even if you don't agree.

I want to let everyone know that today we have a lot of questions to cover so I may have to move us along at some points. However, at the end of today's session, we will be sending an email with a follow-up survey that will allow you to share anything you didn't get a chance to say during today's session or anything you would like to add.

There may be some questions we discuss today that aren't relevant to you or your experiences. For example, if we ask about barriers to volunteering and you haven't faced any barriers, there is no obligation to answer that question. You can always ask for clarification as we go.

My role as a moderator today is to guide the discussion, but I want to hear from you. I won't be doing any of the sharing today. I will start us off with a question, and if you would like to share, please use the raise hand feature. When it is your turn to share, we would appreciate it if you could begin by stating your name. This will help [Assistant moderator] as they transcribe the discussion. As an example, if I wanted to respond to [Assistant moderators name] comment, I would say "I'm [moderator name] and I agree with [assistant moderators name] but I would like to add...".

Any questions before we begin?

[pause]

We will now start the recording.

[Assistant moderator will start the recording]

Ice-breaker

We are going to start off the session with an icebreaker and introductions. I'm going to call on each of you one at a time and I'm going to ask you to share your name and your preferred pronouns, and to give a sentence or two on your experience as a volunteer.

Questions

Exploration questions (our main study q's)

[Assistant moderator/recorder will add questions in the chat as they are asked.]

- Think back to your most recent volunteering experience. What were the most important factors in your considerations to start volunteering?
    - Follow-up: How did you hear about this opportunity?

- For those of you who are still volunteering, what aspects have encouraged you to continue?
- What are the biggest challenges you have faced as a volunteer?
- What kind of changes, supports, or training would be helpful to overcome this barrier?
- Can you think of any strategies that organizations you've been involved with were already doing that made volunteering more accessible for you?
- Let's say you had the opportunity to run a volunteer program. What would you do to make it easier for volunteers to get involved? Please feel free to share bold or novel ideas, even if you are unsure how they might be best implemented.
- Is there anything you would like volunteer organizations to know about how they could make volunteering accessible for other {group identity} members?
- What aspects of volunteering have you enjoyed the most?

Exit question

"Of all the things we discussed today, which is the most important to you?"

"Is there anything else you would like to share before we wrap up today's session?"

Session wrap-up

[The assistant moderator will give a summary of the main points discussed during the session]. This brings us to the end of our discussion today. Thank you so much everyone for participating today. We will be sending you a follow-up survey that will be available for the next 24 hours in case there is anything you did not get a chance to say during today's session.

You can expect to receive payment via etransfer through the email address that you provided us with within one week of today's session. The security question is [security question] and the password will be [password]. Should you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to [study email].

Appendix 6: Human Connection Conference 2023 slides

Volunteering benefits communities and individuals.

Volunteering & Health

Burr et al. (2021)

Volunteering & Health

Social activity & meaning

Cognitive and mental health

Strengthening social networks and support

Burr et al. (2021)

Yet volunteering is on the decline?

Statistics Canada, 2022

Yet volunteering is on the decline?

In 2022...

67%

of Canadian non-profits **struggled** to recruit new volunteers

Statistics Canada, 2022

Yet volunteering is on the decline?

In 2022...

67%

of Canadian non-profits **struggled** to recruit new volunteers

35%

had to **reduce** the scope of services they provide

Statistics Canada, 2022

18

Yet volunteering is on the decline?

In 2022...

67%

of Canadian non-profits **struggled** to recruit new volunteers

35%

had to **reduce** the scope of services they provide

17%

of these organizations had to **cancel** their services altogether

Statistics Canada, 2022

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Participants: 2022 Canadian Social Connection Survey (N = 1,251)

Participant Characteristics	No. (%)
Age (range: 16 – 90)	
Young adults [16-29]	487 (38.9%)
Middle adults [30-59]	471 (37.6)
Older adults [60+]	293 (23.4%)
Gender (N = 996)	
Men	325 (32.6%)
Women	640 (64.3%)
Non-binary	31 (3.1%)
Ethnicity (N = 1,006)	
White	748 (74.4%)
Other	258 (25.6%)

Participant Characteristics	No. (%)
Income (N = 933)	
<$5,000 - $29,999	262 (28.1%)
$30,000 - $49,999	200 (21.4%)
$50,000 - $99,999	235 (25.2%)
$100,000 - $200,000+	236 (25.3%)
Urban vs Rural (N = 250)	
Rural	17 (6.8%)
Urban	233 (93.2%)

The 2nd Annual Canadian Social Connection Survey — GENWELL PROJECT

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Motivations for volunteering differ across volunteers and
+ sociodemographic groups.

1

Motivations for volunteering

Volunteer Functions Inventory

values - expressing one's altruistic values

protective - reducing negative feelings

career - opportunities for career growth

social - fostering social connection

understanding - learning and practicing skills

enhancement - self-development

24

Motivation of Volunteers - Volunteer Functions Inventory

1 – Not at all important/accurate
7 – Extremely important/accurate

25

Are there "types" of volunteers?

27

Type 1: Diverse motivations (n = 132)

- Average age: **39**

- **7%** non-binary [Most likely to be non-binary]

- **70%** employed

- **72**% White

- Lower income (Mean: **10**)

values - expressing one's altruistic values

protective - reducing negative feelings

career - opportunities for career growth

social - fostering social connection

understanding - learning and practicing skills

enhancement - self-development

28

Type 1: Diverse motivations (n = 132)

- Average age: **39**

- **7%** non-binary [Most likely to be non-binary]

- **70%** employed

- **72**% White

- Lower income (Mean: **10**)

values - expressing one's altruistic values

protective - reducing negative feelings

career - opportunities for career growth

social - fostering social connection

understanding - learning and practicing skills

enhancement - self-development

29

Type 2: Growth and values motivated (n = 169)

- Average age: **55** [relatively older]

- **88%** women [most likely to be women]

- **39%** employed [least likely to be employed]

- **90%** White

- Higher income (Mean: **12**)

values - expressing one's altruistic values

protective - reducing negative feelings

career - opportunities for career growth

social - fostering social connection

understanding - learning and practicing skills

enhancement - self-development

30

Type 2: Growth and values motivated (n = 169)

- Average age: **55** [relatively older]

- **88%** women [most likely to be women]

- **39%** employed [least likely to be employed]

- **90%** White

- Higher income (Mean: **12**)

🗨	**values -** expressing one's altruistic values
🧑‍🏫	**understanding** - learning and practicing skills
🧠	**enhancement** - self-development
⚠	**protective** - reducing negative feelings
✳	**social -** fostering social connection
💼	**career** - opportunities for career growth

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Type 3: Primarily values-motivated (n = 172)

- Average age: **58** [Oldest]

- **78%** women

- **72%** employed

- **74%** White

- Highest income (Mean: **13**)

values - expressing one's altruistic values

protective - reducing negative feelings

career - opportunities for career growth

social - fostering social connection

understanding - learning and practicing skills

enhancement - self-development

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Type 3: Primarily values-motivated (n = 172)

- Average age: **58** [Oldest]

- **78%** women

- **72%** employed

- **74%** White

- Highest income (Mean: **13**)

values - expressing one's altruistic values	
understanding - learning and practicing skills	
protective - reducing negative feelings	
career - opportunities for career growth	
social - fostering social connection	
enhancement - self-development	

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Type 4: Career motivated (n = 429)

- Average age: **35** [youngest]

- **61%** women

- **80%** employed [most likely to be employed]

- **65%** White [most likely to be non-White]

- Lower income (Mean: **11**)

	values - expressing one's altruistic values
	protective - reducing negative feelings
	career - opportunities for career growth
	social - fostering social connection
	understanding - learning and practicing skills
	enhancement - self-development

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Type 4: Career motivated (n = 429)

- Average age: **35** [youngest]

- **61%** women

- **80%** employed [most likely to be employed]

- **65%** White [most likely to be non-White]

- Lower income (Mean: **11**)

career - opportunities for career growth

values - expressing one's altruistic values

protective - reducing negative feelings

social - fostering social connection

understanding - learning and practicing skills

enhancement - self-development

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Type 5: Motivations other than values & growth (n = 249)

- Average age: **36** [young]

- **51% *men*** [most likely to be men]

- **72%** employed

- **74%** White

- Lower income (Mean: **10**)

values - expressing one's altruistic values

protective - reducing negative feelings

career - opportunities for career growth

social - fostering social connection

understanding - learning and practicing skills

enhancement - self-development

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Type 5: Motivations other than values & growth (n = 249)

- Average age: **36** [young]

- **51% *men*** [most likely to be men]

- **72%** employed

- **74%** White

- Lower income (Mean: **10**)

⚠️	**protective** - reducing negative feelings
💼	**career** - opportunities for career growth
⚛️	**social -** fostering social connection
🖥️	**values -** expressing one's altruistic values
📊	**understanding** - learning and practicing skills
🧠	**enhancement** - self-development

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Type 6: Motivations not captured in our study (n = 100)

- Average age: **50**

- **60%** women

- **56%** employed

- **75%** White

- Lower income (Mean: **10**)

values - expressing one's altruistic values

protective - reducing negative feelings

career - opportunities for career growth

social - fostering social connection

understanding - learning and practicing skills

enhancement - self-development

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Type 6: Motivations not captured in our study (n = 100)

- Average age: **50**

- **60%** women

- **56%** employed

- **75%** White

- Lower income (Mean: **10**)

💬	**values -** expressing one's altruistic values
⚠️	**protective** - reducing negative feelings
💼	**career** - opportunities for career growth
🔗	**social -** fostering social connection
📊	**understanding** - learning and practicing skills
🧠	**enhancement** - self-development

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Focus Group Progress

Complete:

Upcoming:

People living with disabilities	People living in rural areas	People living on low income
8 participants	*4 participants*	*6 participants*

Racial and ethnic minorities
~10 participants

General population
~20 participants

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Focus groups have revealed insights about both <u>motivations</u> for volunteering....

"Volunteering gets me up. I get to meet people. Like the isolation gets reduced.
I interact, I make friends, I contribute...Probably **2/3 of the people I know are through volunteering**."

"It's good for the spirit to feel like you're **joining your community**. I'm going to be living here and I want to be part of it"

"I come out of there feeling the endorphins just popping. Because I can see what I've done today. **I can see where I've helped.** I can see that it was useful. And then it just kind of **gives me a little more inner peace** with what I deal with day to day."

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...and the potential barriers.

"...what I experienced is that a lot of the groups were very resistant to change and very **resistant to adopt new members**. They were almost resentful when new people came into the group, and it caused people to maybe attend one or 2 meetings and then walk away. "

"I realize that volunteerism is supposed to be altruistic and [we're] not supposed to expect anything, but **it shouldn't put us back either**."

"I'm grateful that we're also open about **the cost of volunteering** because sometimes it makes me really self-conscious when I have to say no to things."

43
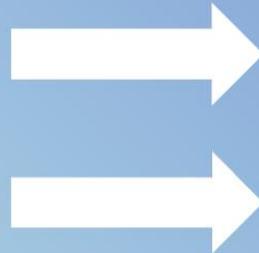
Appendix 7: Community discussion slides

Appendix 7 – Community Discussion Slides

Characterizing Volunteerism in Canada: Motivations, Barriers, and Recommendations

Julia Nakamura, MA
Marisa Nelson, BA
Sofie Jensen, BA
Pete Bombaci
Frances Chen, PhD
Kiffer Card, PhD

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Today's Agenda

💬	9:00-9:15	Introductions
📊	9:15-9:30	Presentation
👥	9:30-10:25	Facilitated Discussion
⏱️	10:25-10:30	Wrap-Up

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Introductions

Name, organization, and title

Volunteering benefits communities and individuals.

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Volunteering benefits communities and individuals.

Yet volunteering is on the decline?

5

Volunteering benefits communities and individuals.

Yet volunteering is on the decline?

What are motivations for and barriers to volunteering?

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What we heard

Focus Groups

Participants: 2022 Canadian Social Connection Survey (N = 37)

The 2nd Annual Canadian Social Connection Survey — GENWELL PROJECT

People living with disabilities	People living in rural areas	People living on low income	Racial and ethnic minorities	Open group
7 participants	*4 participants*	*7 participants*	*7 participants*	*12 participants*

8
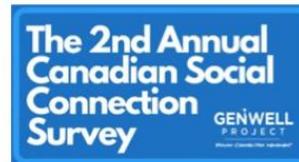
Key Themes

Theme #1: Social Connection

Motivations
- Feeling welcomed in initial interactions
- Camaraderie/good relationships with people in the organization
- Other people in the organization being helpful

Barriers
- Interpersonal conflict
- Online only opportunities

Suggestions
- Connect volunteers with each other

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Theme #2: Feeling valued

Motivations
- Feeling valued and respected
- Do people "have my back"?

Barriers
- Power dynamics, interpersonal relationships regarding paid vs unpaid staff in similar roles
- Not being treated like a real person!

Suggestions
- Quantifying value volunteers are bringing/more visible recognition
- Examples of recognition
  - luncheons for volunteers
  - Asking volunteers for their feedback: what went right for you and what could have gone better
  - "Thanks" in a newsletter or email
  - Partnering with local agencies to give things like a night out or a museum pass to volunteers

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Theme #3: Wanting to give

Motivations
- Lived experience with organization
- Supporting causes they care about
- Filling a need
- Desire to give back

Barriers
- Guilt when need to take a step back
- Feeling indebted
- No one else stepped in/burnout

Suggestions
- Giving people ability to see tangible impact
- Creating mechanisms to prevent burnout

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Theme #4: Self-enhancement

Motivations
- Career/networking
- Learning/interest
- Being physically active
- Getting outside of one's comfort zone

Suggestions
- Matching skills to tasks

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Theme #5: Convenience

Barriers

- Ease of access of location
- Meals (when volunteer training or meetings occur during meal times)
- Costly training/pre-requisites

Suggestions

- Remuneration (e.g., bus tickets/reimbursements)
- Remote opportunities
- Provide volunteers with information about public transit options (e.g., bus frequency, walking distance to building, and operating hours)
- Making it easier to find opportunities (e.g., job fairs, email list)
- Flexible time commitment considerations
- Disclose any costs clearly and from the beginning
- Organizations could leverage their partnerships (e.g., with taxi companies to donate rides for volunteers)

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Theme #6: Clarity in role

Barriers
- Few opportunities to transition to paid roles/volunteers not considered when paid positions open
- Limited trainings, feel unprepared
- Lack of continuity in services

Suggestions
- Clear tasks, expectations, responsibilities, manuals, roles
- Having someone to report to
- Communicating policies/procedures

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Theme #7: Safety/IDEA

Barriers

- Don't want to be the token POC (authentic diversity)!
- Lack of cultural/religious awareness, especially around holidays

Suggestions

- Inclusive values that are carried out: "walk your talk" (e.g., having POC in the organization)
- Having diversity higher up in the organization
- Accessibility embedded in the organization
- Sensitivity training for staff
- Accommodations for volunteers as needed
- Advertisements emphasizing any background is welcome

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Questions we have for you!

Engaging New Volunteers

What Volunteers Said:

Our fast-paced world necessitates that volunteers be intentional about where and how they spend their time.
A consistent theme we heard is that volunteers want to know what they are signing up for as early as possible in as much detail as possible - similar to a job description. They want to know how their work will contribute to the organization's overall goals so they can impact the causes they care about.

What we want to hear from you:

→ If you were asked to implement more detailed descriptions to provide clarity about volunteer roles, how would you do this?
→ What challenges do you anticipate, or what concerns do you have?

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Policies, Manuals, & Expectations

What Volunteers Said:

Volunteers have been letting us know that they really appreciate when organizations have their policies and expectations documented and easily accessible to them.

What we want to hear from you:

→ Does your organization have a manual or written code of conduct?
→ If not, have they considered implementing one?
→ When and how do volunteers access these materials?
→ Can you share any potential barriers or considerations that you think would be helpful for organizations who might be interested in creating this type of resource?
→ Can you help us brainstorm ways to make creating a policy manual easier for organizations who need help getting started?

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Flexibility & Scheduling

What Volunteers Said:

Volunteers are wearing many hats, and they are balancing many obligations. While they want to contribute their time, they are looking for roles that are flexible. This flexibility might look like:
- Using scheduling software
- Hybrid options (especially for meetings/administrative work)
- Scheduling meetings outside of meal times where possible
- Having a "back-up" roster
- Being able to take a shift off
- Flexibility on how many hours/week is expected

What we want to hear from you:

→ Have you implemented any of the above suggestions? What went well? What surprised you? What could go better?
→ What organizational constraints do you foresee in implementing some or all of these?
→ If you have used scheduling software, can you share your experience? (e.g., cost, ease of use, features that were helpful)
→ Anything else you think is important for us to know about regarding flexibility/scheduling

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EDI & Accessibility Training

What Volunteers Said:

Many volunteers brought up the importance of organizations prioritizing equity, diversity, and inclusion, as well as greater accessibility measures for those living with disabilities.

What we want to hear from you:

→ If you have implemented any changes in your organizations based on EDI and accessibility, have you had success?
→ What barriers or challenges have you encountered?
→ What kind of support would be helpful to you?

→ If you see this as an area of growth in your organization, what barriers or challenges do you anticipate?
→ What ideas do you have?