

# Volunteerism in rural Canada

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## Introduction

Many studies on the topic of volunteerism, most of them concerning the numerous benefits. However, there is less research on rural volunteerism. This research project will be analysing different aspects of volunteering in Renfrew County.

Our main goals are to:

- A. Learn about barriers and facilitators to volunteering in this rural area
- B. Learn how volunteers and potential volunteers would like to be apprised of volunteer opportunities in the area and finally
- C. Learn how organizations and municipalities can encourage and support volunteers.

This study is part of a larger study on volunteerism and knowledge mobilization. Engagement = Mobilizing Communities and Collaboration (E = MC<sup>2</sup>) is funded by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC formerly HRSDC). The first phase, 'Knowledge Creation,' started in late 2012, gathered information from statistical analyses of the Canadian Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, literature reviews and consultations.

The second phase 'Knowledge Adaptation and Integration' began in late 2013. We wished to share information from our analyses with partners so that they could use it to increase volunteerism.

Dr. Kristjansson is leading one of those community partnerships in Renfrew County, working with several community partners. These organizations in Renfrew County were interested in CSGVP results, BUT even more interested in gathering local data on volunteerism. They also wanted to know why a volunteer portal that they developed has not been well-used. Thus, the current survey was developed to help them. Data will also be used for broader research purposes, with their permission.

## Acknowledgments

I want to thank Elizabeth A. Kristjansson for this amazing opportunity and the amazing team behind her that bring so much to this project. I also would like to give a special thanks to all the community partners in Renfrew County who also contributed a great deal.  
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## Methods

### Materials

The survey development was led by Dr. Kristjansson who was assisted by two undergraduate students. Questions were based on the issues that were raised in a meeting with our community partners. Some questions are the same as questions in the CSGVP, in order that we may compare results from Renfrew County to national results. After an initial draft of the questionnaire was complete, it was refined through a series of consultations with partners.

The final questionnaire has 21 questions, including demographics, and is made for volunteers and non-volunteers to be able to complete questions relevant to their situation. Actual volunteers will complete up to 20 questions, they will be asked questions like: their activities, reasons why they volunteer, rewards that they would like for contributing their time and about volunteer portals. Non-volunteers will be asked up to 15 questions concerning barriers to volunteering, whether they informally volunteer and about volunteer portals.

The questionnaire was written using the online survey software Fluid Survey. It will be largely administered online but paper copies will be available at selected locations.

### Participants

All residents of Renfrew County aged 18 and up who speak English will be eligible.

### Procedure

Community partners will be responsible for recruitment. They will send an e-mail with recruitment posters to 132 organizations on the Community Connections website. The emails will also have the survey URL. They will then be asked to send it to their mailing lists and have paper copies of the survey available on their front counters. This will offer the chance for participants to either complete the survey online or on paper. All of those who complete the questionnaire are eligible to enter a draw.

Finally, posters and paper copies will also be placed at libraries and recreation centres.

The results will be represented using the statistical analysis program Spss focusing on descriptive statistics, more specifically linear logistic regression.

## Results

As the study is still ongoing we do not have any official results to present, but the literature reviews have provided us with input on the potential findings.

One article, for example, focused their research on the resources needed for volunteering and the different age cohorts (Tang, 2006). Results found that the older and younger age groups needed different resources to increase volunteer commitment. The older cohort leaned more towards human capital and social integration whereas the younger people sought spiritual and social supports (Tang, 2006). The study also gave way to the idea of creating strategies of recruitment based on the different cohorts as a facilitator to volunteering in organizations and municipalities.

Also numerous studies have discovered a positive correlation between social media and volunteerism (Farrow, & Yuan, 2011; Kim, & Lee, 2014). In fact, social media tends to create a social pressure through which people feel a greater obligation to give some of their time and volunteer (Kim, & Lee, 2014). The impact is even more noticeable when the social networking sites used are considered positive and popular by the general population (Kim, & Lee, 2014). It is also important to note that past volunteering experiences can influence the correlation between the two.

## Conclusions

To conclude, this study will help Renfrew County learn more about volunteerism and how to enhance it in the area. The results can also provide insight to other rural locations in Canada and the data can also be used for broader research purposes, such as comparison to a future study dedicated to testing strategies of recruitment based on different cohorts (Tang, 2006). Hopefully, the study will raise awareness to the residents of Renfrew County about the importance of volunteerism and encourage them to use the volunteer portal.

## Bibliography

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