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Overview of the study

This study uses the 2023 Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating to examine volunteering patterns among racialized populations in Canada. Specifically, it looks at volunteering rates and hours, the characteristics of racialized volunteers, the sectors benefiting from volunteering, the types of volunteer activities, and the motivations for and barriers to volunteering.

- In 2023, 70% of racialized Canadians volunteered their time in the last 12 months, dedicating an annual average of 145 hours per person.
- Informal forms of volunteering, namely helping people directly or engaging in activities that improve the community, were more common than formalized arrangements through an organization (64% versus 29%).
- The profile of racialized volunteers was similar to the overall pattern in volunteering—volunteers tended to be younger and to have higher levels of education and income.
- Racialized individuals born in Canada (79%) were more likely than racialized immigrants (67%) to volunteer. Rates of volunteering for Canadian-born racialized individuals were also higher than those of their non-racialized, non-Indigenous counterparts born in Canada (74%) and outside Canada (70%).
- The higher rate of volunteering among Canadian-born racialized individuals was seen across all racialized groups. For example, among South Asians — who had one of the highest volunteering rates — 82% of people born in Canada volunteered in the past 12 months, compared to 69% of South Asian immigrants.
- A desire to help the community was the top volunteering motivation given by both racialized and non-racialized, non-Indigenous volunteers. However, racialized volunteers were more likely to report that they gave their time to explore their strengths, grow their network and improve job opportunities.
- While racialized and non-racialized, non-Indigenous individuals reported a lack of time as the top barrier to volunteering, it was more often cited by racialized Canadians.

Introduction

Canada's rich ethnic and cultural diversity is growing, with an increasing proportion of the population belonging to a racialized group.[1] This diversity helps shape all spheres of Canadian life. Previous research has highlighted the contributions of various population groups in the labour market,[2] sports and recreation,[3] civic and political engagement,[4] and other aspects of Canadian life. However, until now, little was known about the contributions of racialized Canadians to the volunteer sector—a sector with significant social and economic impacts at the individual and community levels.

For the first time, the Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating (SGVP) collected information about population groups, allowing for an examination of national patterns in volunteering among racialized populations. Racialized populations are incredibly diverse, encompassing Black, South Asian, Chinese, Filipino, Arab, Latin American, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese individuals, among others. Each group brings distinct experiences that can intersect with other sociodemographic characteristics to influence volunteer engagement.

This study offers a first look at volunteer rates and hours among racialized groups, examining the characteristics of racialized volunteers, the sectors benefiting from volunteering, the types of volunteer activities, and the motivations for and barriers to volunteering. The article is divided into three sections. The first section presents overall results for volunteering, followed by a deeper look at two forms of volunteering: (1) formal volunteering and (2) informal volunteering.

As volunteers play an important role in fostering community well-being and are central to the success and sustainability of volunteer-run activities, establishing the volunteering patterns among diverse groups can have significant implications for the volunteer sector. Some possible implications include tailoring volunteer recruitment and retention initiatives for inclusivity; facilitating the design of equity-centered volunteering programs; promoting diverse volunteer representation to better serve communities; and enhancing existing volunteer activities by leveraging the skills, talents and experiences of Canadians from diverse backgrounds.

Seven in 10 racialized Canadians volunteered in the last 12 months

In 2023, 70% of racialized Canadians volunteered their time in the last 12 months, either formally—on behalf of a charitable or non-profit organization—or informally, by helping people directly or by improving the community. Altogether, their volunteering contributions totalled 936 million hours, or an average of 145 hours per person throughout the year (Table 1). This time was dedicated to a variety of activities and supported a diverse range of causes.

Table 1
Volunteer rate and average number of volunteer hours among racialized populations, 2023

		95% confidence interval		
	Proportion	Lower limit	Upper limit	Average number of volunteer hours (annually)
Types of volunteering	percent			number
Total	**70**	**69**	**72**	**145**
Formal volunteering	29	28	30	90
Informal volunteering	64	63	66	118

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2023.

As with volunteering patterns overall, racialized Canadians most often volunteered directly, such as by helping people living outside their household, including extended family members, neighbours and strangers, and improving their community. In 2023, 64% of racialized Canadians reported providing direct help to others. This rate of informal volunteering was twice that for more formal volunteering (29%).

In some cases, racialized volunteers engaged in informal and formal activities, rather than exclusively volunteering informally or formally. In 2023, one-third (33%) of racialized volunteers gave their time directly to people and their community, in addition to volunteering on behalf of an organization.

Volunteering rates higher among racialized people born in Canada than racialized immigrants

Among racialized Canadians, the profile of volunteers mirrors overall volunteering patterns, with the likelihood of volunteering across different population characteristics being similar to that of the non-racialized, non-Indigenous population. For instance, being younger has been a consistent predictor of volunteering, and data from 2023 confirm that this is also the case among racialized Canadians. Specifically, 81% of racialized teens and young adults aged 15 to 24 volunteered their time, either formally or informally (Table 2). Among racialized adults, this dropped to 74% among those aged 35 to 44 and continued to decline with increasing age, with the lowest rates among people aged 75 years and older (43%).

Beyond age, other similarities in the likelihood of volunteering between racialized and non-racialized, non-Indigenous people were noted. Racialized Canadians, like their non-racialized, non-Indigenous counterparts, were more likely to volunteer when they had a higher household income and educational attainment. Meanwhile, gender and disability played no significant role in the likelihood of volunteering among racialized Canadians—again, mirroring trends for non-racialized, non-Indigenous people.

One important predictor of volunteering is being born in Canada, as observed among both racialized and non-racialized, non-Indigenous people. This factor could be considered more relevant in the context of volunteering among racialized people, as three-quarters (75%) of racialized Canadians were born outside Canada.[5] For example, while racialized Canadians (70%) appear to have lower rates of volunteering than their non-racialized, non-Indigenous counterparts (74%), this difference reflects patterns in place of birth.

Table 2
Rates of volunteering among racialized and non-racialized, non-Indigenous populations, by sociodemographic characteristics, 2023

	Racialized populations			Non-racialized, non-Indigenous populations		
		95% confidence interval			95% confidence interval	
Characteristics	Proportion	Lower limit	Upper limit	Proportion	Lower limit	Upper limit
	percent					
Total	**70**	**69**	**72**	**74**	**73**	**75**
Gender						
Men+	72	70	74	74	72	75
Women+ (ref.)	69	67	71	74	73	75
Age						
15 to 24 years (ref.)	81	77	85	81	78	84
25 to 34 years	75	72	78	76	74	79
35 to 44 years	74*	71	77	77	74	80
45 to 54 years	67*	64	71	77	74	79
55 to 64 years	63*	59	67	76*	74	78
65 to 74 years	58*	53	62	70*	67	72
75 years and older	43*	37	49	57*	54	60
Immigrant status						
Born outside Canada	67*	66	69	70*	67	73
Recent immigrant (landed in the last five years)	66*	56	76	F	F	F
Established immigrant (landed more than five years earlier)	67*	66	69	70	67	73
Born in Canada (ref.)	79	76	82	74	73	75
Disability status						
Disability	70	67	72	73	71	74
No disability (ref.)	71	69	72	75	73	76
2SLGBTQ+						
Yes	78*	73	84	86*	82	89
No (ref.)	71	69	73	73	72	74
Education						
Less than high school (ref.)	62*	58	67	57	54	60
High school	68*	65	71	71*	69	73
Some postsecondary	68*	65	71	74*	73	76
University	76	74	78	86*	85	88
Employment						
Employed (ref.)	74	72	76	78	76	79
Not employed	78	74	83	84*	79	88
Not in the labour force	60*	58	63	67*	65	68
Personal income						
Lowest quintile (ref.)	72	69	75	76	73	79
Second quintile	66	62	69	67*	64	69
Third quintile	65	62	69	69*	67	71
Fourth quintile	71	67	74	76	74	78
Highest quintile	79*	76	81	81*	79	82
Presence of children younger than 18 years in the household						
Yes	72	70	75	79*	76	81
No (ref.)	69	67	71	72	71	73

F too unreliable to be published

* significantly different from reference category (ref.) ($p < 0.05$)

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2023.

The Canadian-born racialized population had the highest volunteering rate, at 79%, which was above the rate recorded for the non-racialized, non-Indigenous population born in Canada (74%). Among racialized immigrants (67%) and non-racialized, non-Indigenous immigrants (70%), volunteering was less prevalent, likely reflecting the unique social integration disadvantages facing immigrants, such as official language proficiency and smaller social networks. These findings highlight the importance

of examining the intersection of racialized groups and immigration in volunteering—not only for its overall prevalence or likelihood, but also in terms of volunteering patterns, that is, where, how and why people choose to volunteer.

Volunteering rates differ somewhat across population groups

In Canada, the racialized population is diverse.[6] However, the three largest racialized groups—South Asian, Chinese and Black people—together account for 16% of the total population.[7] To allow for greater data disaggregation and to better understand the diverse experiences of racialized populations, the SGVP oversampled these racialized population groups.

Results from the 2023 SGVP suggest that volunteering varied across specific racialized groups. Volunteering rates among South Asian people (72%) and Black people (74%) were higher than those recorded for the Chinese population (68%) and other racialized Canadians (69%). However, these overall rates mask important differences between Canadian-born and immigrant populations within these groups.

Notably, immigrants belonging to these racialized groups were less likely than their Canadian-born counterparts to volunteer, similar to overall patterns for the racialized and non-racialized, non-Indigenous populations. Across different population groups, volunteering rates among Canadian-born racialized Canadians were equal to or higher than those for the overall Canadian-born non-racialized, non-Indigenous population (74%) (Table 3).

Religious attendance associated with greater levels of volunteering

Historically, regular attendance at religious services or events has been associated with increased levels of volunteerism,[8] and this pattern was also observed for the racialized population. In 2023, 76% of racialized people who attended religious services in the previous year volunteered, compared with 64% of those who did not. The heightened likelihood of volunteering was true for racialized people born in Canada and those born outside the country. Volunteering hours did not vary by religious attendance. This contrasts with patterns seen for non-racialized, non-Indigenous volunteers, where the number of volunteer hours was higher among those who attended religious services.

Table 3
Rates of volunteering, by population group, 2023

Population group	Proportion	95% confidence interval	
		Lower limit	Upper limit
	percent		
Total, racialized	**70***	**69**	**72**
Born in Canada	79*	76	82
Immigrant	67*	66	69
South Asian	**72**	**70**	**74**
Born in Canada	82*	77	87
Immigrant	69*	66	71
Chinese	**68***	**66**	**71**
Born in Canada	78	71	84
Immigrant	65*	63	67
Black	**74**	**72**	**76**
Born in Canada	79	75	84
Immigrant	72	70	74
Other	**69***	**66**	**72**
Born in Canada	79	73	85
Immigrant	66*	62	69
Total, non-racialized, non-Indigenous (ref.)	**74**	**73**	**75**
Born in Canada	74	73	75
Immigrant	70	67	73

* significantly different from reference category (ref.) ($p < 0.05$)

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2023.

Formal volunteering

Most racialized volunteers gave their time on an ongoing basis to organizations and groups

Volunteering through organizations and groups is often structured and can involve a one-time commitment, such as helping at an event, or an ongoing commitment, such as regularly stocking shelves at a food bank—both of which are considered formal volunteering. Overall, 29% of racialized people volunteered formally—36% of Canadian-born racialized people and 27% of racialized immigrants.

Most often, formal volunteers had a recurring schedule. Specifically, 28% of racialized volunteers gave their time on a weekly basis, 21% volunteered monthly, and a smaller proportion (6%) did so daily. The remaining 46% of volunteers carried out their activities on an episodic basis, from one to four times per year. The frequency of formal volunteering among racialized volunteers mirrors overall patterns, with no differences observed between Canadian-born and immigrant racialized volunteers.

Similar to overall volunteering patterns, the two measures of volunteering intensity—the frequency of volunteering and the number of volunteering hours—go hand in hand among racialized volunteers. Daily volunteers in this group logged the highest average number of hours per year, at 407 hours, or about 8 hours per week. This compares with an average of 156 hours per year among weekly volunteers, 67 hours among monthly volunteers, and 13 hours among those who volunteered once or twice per year.

Overall, racialized volunteers dedicated an average of 90 hours per year to an organization or group, with Canadian-born and immigrant racialized volunteers reporting similar levels of formal volunteering.

Religious and social services were the most common sectors receiving help from racialized volunteers

While the charitable and non-profit organizations benefiting from the dedication of volunteers are varied, racialized Canadians most often volunteered in two sectors: religious organizations and social services (Table 4). One-quarter (25%) of racialized volunteers gave their time to religious organizations. This is similar to the proportion (24%) of those who provided support to social services, which include organizations providing services for families, emergency and relief, and income support. The next most common sectors were education and research (15%), sports and recreation (12%), and development and housing (8%).

The level of volunteering was greatest, by far, among racialized volunteers in the religious sector, with the total number of volunteering hours surpassing that in all other sectors. Specifically, racialized volunteers devoted 65 million hours to the religious sector, around double the total number of hours of any other sector (Table 4). This contrasts with patterns for non-racialized, non-Indigenous volunteers, for whom the total hours dedicated to the religious sector did not significantly differ from those of the other sectors.

Racialized volunteers' greater involvement in the religious sector was largely driven by immigrant racialized volunteers (28%), who were more likely than Canadian-born racialized volunteers (19%) to volunteer for this sector. Other differences included the greater likelihood of Canadian-born racialized volunteers to dedicate their time to the education and research sector (23% versus 11% of immigrant racialized volunteers) and their greater involvement in the sports and recreation sector (17% versus 10%).

Table 4
Formal volunteering among racialized volunteers, by sector, 2023

	Formal volunteering				
		95% confidence interval			
Sector	Proportion	Lower limit	Upper limit	Total hours (millions)	Average hours (annually)
	percent			number	
Religion	25	23	27	65	96
Social services	24	22	26	33	52
Education and research	15	13	17	23	59
Sports and recreation	12	11	14	21	64
Development and housing	8	7	9	10	45
Health	7	6	8	13	70[E]
Universities and colleges	6	5	7	9	55
Hospitals	5	4	6	9	63[E]
Arts and culture	5	4	6	9	73[E]
Law, advocacy and politics	5	4	6	8	67[E]
Environment	3	3	4	3	33[E]
Grant-making, fundraising and volunteer promotion	3	2	4	3	37[E]
International	3	2	3	4	64[E]
Business and professional associations and unions	2	1	3	4	75[E]

[E] use with caution

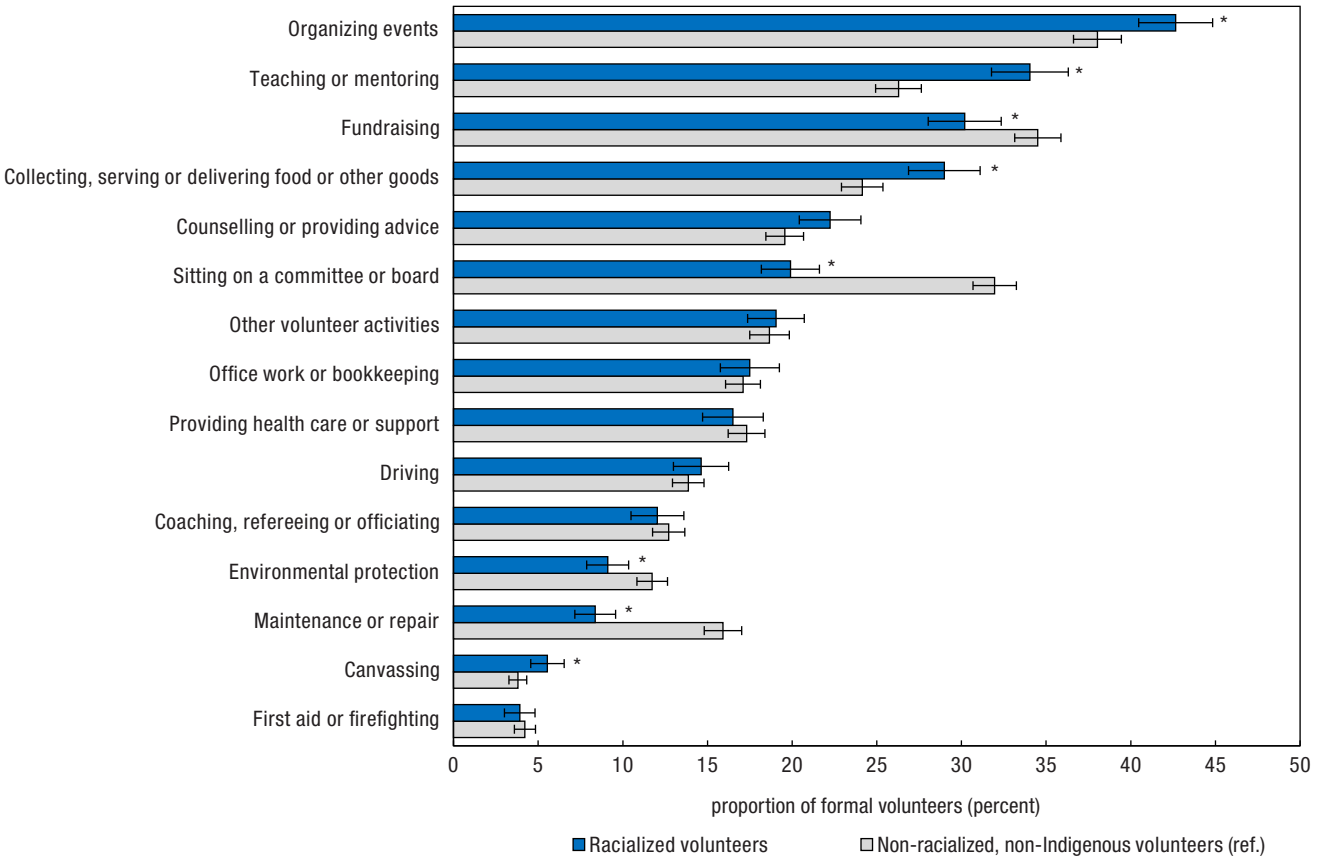
Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2023.

Racialized volunteers less likely to sit on volunteer boards and committees

The specific activities and tasks carried out on behalf of organizations and groups vary widely, though racialized volunteers were, by far, most likely to help put on events, with 43% organizing, coordinating or supervising events (Chart 1). While this was higher than the share of non-racialized, non-Indigenous volunteers (38%), organizing events was still the top formal volunteer activity across all groups. This included Canadian-born and immigrant racialized volunteers and Canadian-born and immigrant non-racialized, non-Indigenous volunteers.

However, the most striking finding in the context of volunteering among racialized Canadians may be their lower likelihood of sitting on a board or committee (20%), compared with their non-racialized, non-Indigenous counterparts (32%). This possible underrepresentation of racialized Canadians on volunteer decision-making boards has been identified as an important equity gap in volunteerism.[9] Some other notable differences were observed. Teaching and mentoring activities were more common among racialized volunteers (34%) than among non-racialized, non-Indigenous volunteers (26%), while maintenance and repair work was twice as common among non-racialized, non-Indigenous volunteers (16%) than among their racialized counterparts (8%).

Chart 1
Types of formal volunteer activities among racialized and non-racialized, non-Indigenous volunteers, 2023



* significantly different from reference category (ref.) (p<0.05)
Note: Error bars represent the 95% confidence interval of the estimates.
Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2023.

Four in 10 racialized volunteers joined their family or friends to volunteer

Volunteering through a group or an organization can help people form new social connections, widening their social networks in terms of number and diversity (e.g., age, racialized group and lived experiences). At the same time, people can choose to volunteer with their existing network of family or friends, preferring to volunteer together rather than on their own.

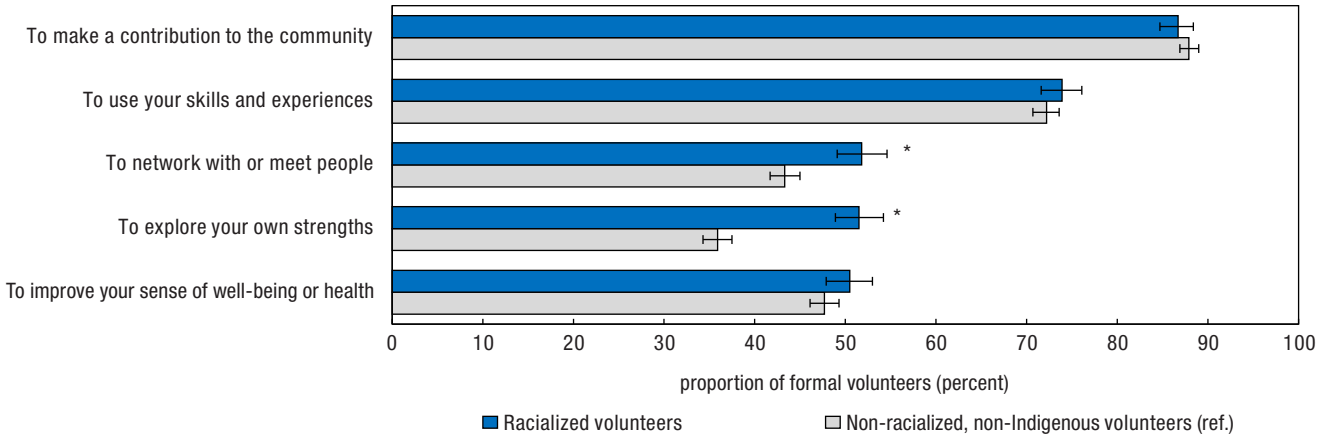
Overall, 46% of racialized volunteers joined their family and friends in dedicating their time, energy and skills to formal volunteering, with the remaining 54% opting to volunteer on their own. In contrast, non-racialized, non-Indigenous volunteers most often volunteered with family and friends (57%), rather than on their own (43%). Among racialized and non-racialized, non-Indigenous volunteers, there was no difference between those born in and those born outside Canada.

Making a difference is a leading reason for volunteering

When asked about the reasons for volunteering,[10] contributing to the community and using one's skills and experiences were the top reasons given by racialized volunteers and their non-racialized, non-Indigenous peers (Chart 2).

However, some differences were observed across groups. For instance, racialized volunteers (52%) were significantly more likely

Chart 2
Top five reasons for formal volunteering among racialized and non-racialized, non-Indigenous volunteers, 2023



* significantly different from reference category (ref.) (p<0.05)
Note: Error bars represent the 95% confidence interval of the estimates.
Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2023.

than non-racialized, non-Indigenous volunteers (36%) to report that they volunteered to explore their own strengths.

In addition, relationship building and professional growth were more likely to be reported by racialized Canadians, compared with non-racialized, non-Indigenous individuals. Around one-half (52%) of racialized individuals indicated that networking with or meeting people was an important reason for why they volunteered, compared with 43% of non-racialized, non-Indigenous individuals. There was no difference by place of birth (Canada or outside Canada). Racialized volunteers (35%) were also more likely to say they volunteered to improve their job opportunities, compared with their non-racialized, non-Indigenous counterparts (20%). The difference in job-related motivation was greater among Canadian-born racialized individuals (48%), compared with racialized immigrants (28%).

In keeping with higher volunteering rates within the religious sector, spiritual or religious motivations were of particular importance for immigrant racialized volunteers. Specifically, racialized immigrants (42%) were significantly more likely to say they volunteered for spiritual or other beliefs, compared with Canadian-born racialized volunteers (22%) and their Canadian-born non-racialized, non-Indigenous peers (19%).

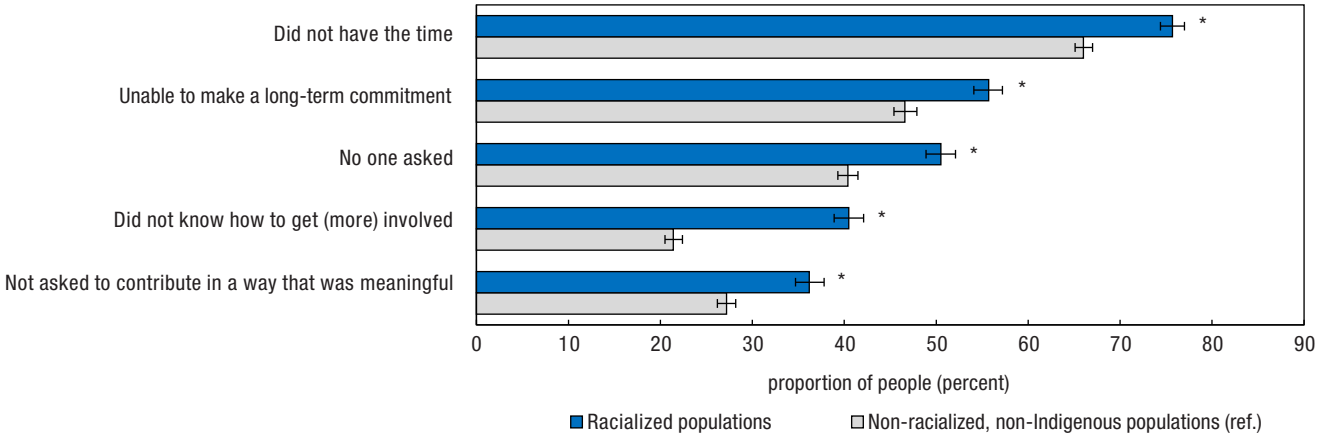
Canadian-born racialized individuals are more likely to face barriers to formal volunteering

Despite the well-documented social, psychological and economic benefits of volunteering,[11] many Canadians face barriers to participation in formal volunteer activities. Understanding these obstacles—ranging from practical constraints, such as a lack of time, to personal circumstances and other systemic barriers—is crucial not only for increasing volunteer participation but also for ensuring that opportunities to contribute to society are accessible and inclusive for all Canadians.

The 2023 SGVP explored barriers to formal volunteering. Volunteers were asked why they did not volunteer more in the 12 months preceding the survey,[12] while non-volunteers were asked why they did not volunteer at all.

Overall, racialized Canadians (93%) were as likely to report at least one barrier to formal volunteering as their non-racialized, non-Indigenous peers (92%). However, when racialized groups and immigration were explored further, Canadian-born racialized individuals (95%) were slightly more likely to report at least one barrier to formal volunteering than racialized immigrants (92%); Canadian-born non-racialized, non-Indigenous people (92%); and non-racialized immigrants (91%). This higher likelihood of facing barriers among Canadian-born racialized people was exclusively seen among

Chart 3
Top five barriers to formal volunteering among racialized and non-racialized, non-Indigenous populations, 2023



* significantly different from reference category (ref.) (p<0.05)
Note: Error bars represent the 95% confidence interval of the estimates.
Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2023.

Chinese and Black populations, as no other differences were observed across other population groups.

Time constraints emerged as the most frequently reported barrier to formal volunteering among racialized and non-racialized, non-Indigenous Canadians. The two leading challenges reported by all Canadians were not having the time and being unable to make a long-term commitment (Chart 3).

While time-related barriers were commonly reported by racialized and non-racialized, non-Indigenous people, these barriers were more often cited by racialized Canadians. Three-quarters (76%) of racialized Canadians indicated that they did not have enough time to volunteer at all or to increase their current level of volunteering. In comparison, 66% of their non-racialized, non-Indigenous counterparts reported the same. In addition, racialized individuals born in Canada (82%) were significantly more likely than racialized immigrants (74%) to report a lack of time as a barrier.

Not having enough time to volunteer often meant an inability to make a long-term commitment to formalized volunteering activities. Again, this was more often reported by racialized (56%) than non-racialized, non-Indigenous (47%) Canadians.

In addition to time and commitment concerns, racialized Canadians faced greater challenges with barriers related to knowledge, access and information. For instance, 41% of racialized Canadians said they did not know how to get involved, nearly double the proportion of non-racialized, non-Indigenous individuals (21%). This was most acutely felt by racialized immigrants, 42% of whom reported not knowing how to get involved in formal volunteer activities, compared with 36% of Canadian-born racialized individuals.

Except for health problems and a lack of interest, all other barriers to formal volunteering, including financial cost, were more often reported by racialized populations than non-racialized, non-Indigenous populations.

Informal volunteering

Racialized individuals born in Canada most likely to provide direct help or to engage in activities that improve the community

Other types of volunteering can be as important as formal organization-based volunteering, including directly helping neighbours, family and friends living outside one's household and engaging in activities that improve the community, such as maintaining a public space (for more information on informal volunteering, see Data sources, methods and definitions).

Overall, 64% of racialized individuals informally volunteered, though rates were higher among those born in Canada. Specifically, 73% of Canadian-born racialized individuals volunteered informally, higher than the proportion of racialized immigrants (62%) and above the rates for the non-racialized, non-Indigenous population (69% of Canadian-born individuals and 64% of immigrants).

On average, racialized Canadians dedicated 115 hours to helping people or their community directly, with no significant differences across racialized groups.

Housework and home maintenance were the most common forms of informal volunteering

When it comes to informal volunteering, directly helping others was much more common than engaging in activities to improve the community. In 2023, 62% of racialized Canadians directly helped friends, acquaintances, neighbours and family outside their own household, while 21% helped improve their community, for example, by maintaining a public space.

In addition, rates of direct help varied more than rates of community volunteering. Specifically, the Canadian-born racialized population (71%) was more likely than the immigrant racialized population (59%) to provide help to someone outside their household in the last 12 months (Table 5). Meanwhile, no significant differences in the likelihood of engaging in activities to improve the community were found between Canadian-born (23%) and immigrant (20%) racialized populations.

As for specific informal activities, helping with housework (such as preparing meals, cleaning and doing the laundry) and doing home maintenance and outdoor work topped the list (Table 6). About two-thirds (65%) of racialized volunteers said they assisted someone with these tasks, averaging about 1 hour per week, or 51 hours per year. In addition, 51% of racialized volunteers helped someone with shopping and transportation, whether it was driving to a store or an appointment, and 43% reported that they provided health-related support or personal care.

While these activities were the leading informal volunteering tasks for Canadian-born and immigrant volunteers, a couple of differences were observed. First, a greater share of Canadian-born racialized volunteers (47%) than immigrant racialized volunteers (42%) reported providing health-related care. Second, Canadian-born racialized volunteers (24%) were more likely than immigrant racialized volunteers (17%) to be involved in teaching, coaching and tutoring.

Table 5
Informal volunteer rates among racialized and non-racialized, non-Indigenous populations, 2023

	Racialized populations			Non-racialized, non-Indigenous populations (ref.)		
	Total	Born in Canada	Immigrant	Total	Born in Canada	Immigrant
	percent					
Total informal volunteering	**64***	**73**	**62†**	**68**	**69**	**64†**
Helping others directly	**62***	71	59†	**66**	66	61†
Improving the community directly	**21**	23	20	**21**	21	21

* significantly different from reference category (ref.) ($p < 0.05$)

† significantly different from the "born in Canada" category ($p < 0.05$)

Note: The categories "helping others directly" and "improving the community directly" are not mutually exclusive.

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2023.

Table 6
Types of informal volunteer activities among racialized and non-racialized, non-Indigenous informal volunteers, 2023

Type of informal activity	Total			Born in Canada			Immigrant		
		95% confidence interval			95% confidence interval			95% confidence interval	
	Proportion	Lower limit	Upper limit	Proportion	Lower limit	Upper limit	Proportion	Lower limit	Upper limit
	percent								
Racialized volunteers									
Directly helping others									
Housework or home maintenance	**65***	**63**	**67**	68	64	72	64	62	66
Shopping or driving to store or appointment	**51**	**49**	**53**	51	47	55	51	49	53
Performing administrative tasks	**32***	**30**	**33**	29	26	33	33	31	35
Health-related or personal care	**43***	**42**	**45**	47†	43	51	42	40	44
Teaching, coaching or tutoring	**19***	**18**	**20**	24†	20	27	17	16	19
Other activities	**10**	**9**	**11**	7	5	9	12	10	13
Improving the community									
Maintaining a park or another public space, planting trees, or repairing public facilities	**5***	**4**	**5**	4	3	5	5	4	6
Actively participating in public meetings where there was a discussion of community affairs	**8**	**7**	**9**	7	5	9	8	7	9
Disseminating information (online or elsewhere) to make others aware of an issue	**14**	**13**	**15**	18†	15	20	13	11	14
Coordinating a group or an event	**13***	**12**	**14**	11	9	14	14	13	15
Non-racialized, non-Indigenous volunteers (ref.)									
Directly helping others									
Housework or home maintenance	**69**	**68**	**70**	70	68	71	64	61	68
Shopping or driving to store or appointment	**48**	**47**	**50**	49	47	50	44	40	48
Performing administrative tasks	**26**	**25**	**27**	26	25	27	27	24	31
Health-related or personal care	**48**	**47**	**49**	48	47	49	45	41	48
Teaching, coaching or tutoring	**12**	**11**	**13**	11	11	12	14	11	17
Other activities	**11**	**11**	**12**	11	10	12	14	12	17
Improving the community									
Maintaining a park or another public space, planting trees, or repairing public facilities	**6**	**6**	**7**	6	6	7	6	4	7
Actively participating in public meetings where there was a discussion of community affairs	**9**	**8**	**10**	9	8	10	10	8	12
Disseminating information (online or elsewhere) to make others aware of an issue	**14**	**13**	**15**	14	13	15	14	11	16
Coordinating a group or an event	**8**	**7**	**9**	8	7	9	8	6	10

* significantly different from reference category (ref.) ($p < 0.05$)

† significantly different from immigrant volunteers ($p < 0.05$)

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2023.

Conclusion

Understanding volunteering patterns, along with the motivations for and barriers to volunteering among racialized Canadians may help the volunteer sector leverage the strengths and talents of Canadians from all backgrounds.

Results from the 2023 SGVP suggest that many racialized Canadians (around 7 in 10) volunteered in the 12 months preceding the survey, either through an organization or on their own. The profile of racialized volunteers was similar to the overall pattern observed—they tended to be younger and to have higher levels of education and income.

As with overall patterns, racialized individuals born in Canada were more likely to volunteer than racialized immigrants. This finding is particularly salient in the context of volunteering among racialized Canadians, given that three-quarters of racialized individuals were born outside Canada. Consequently, this study disentangled differences in volunteering patterns among Canadian-born and immigrant racialized populations to provide a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of volunteering.

In the case of formal volunteering, volunteering for the religious sector was more prevalent among

racialized immigrants than among Canadian-born racialized volunteers. Meanwhile, volunteering for the education sector was more prevalent among Canadian-born racialized volunteers. In addition, differences were observed in informal types of volunteering within the racialized volunteer population. A greater share of Canadian-born racialized volunteers than immigrant racialized volunteers provided some form of health-related care and teaching and coaching help.

As for barriers to volunteering, racialized Canadians—both immigrants and those born in Canada—face distinct challenges to volunteering for an organization or group, such as limited available time and gaps in knowledge and access to information. While these barriers can hinder participation, many see value in volunteering and are motivated by a strong sense of community and civic engagement and a desire to contribute their skills and experience and develop social and professional relationships. Volunteering can be seen as a way to give back to the community and as a pathway to an enhanced sense of belonging and empowerment within Canadian society.

Approaches to fostering volunteering may include building inclusive volunteer environments, partnering with ethnocultural organizations to bring awareness of volunteering opportunities, and developing effective outreach strategies that are culturally responsive and tailored to the needs and experiences of racialized immigrants and their Canadian-born peers.

Future research could explore how intersectional identities (e.g., belonging to a racialized group, gender, immigrant status) shape volunteering experiences, evaluate the long-term effects of volunteering on racialized individuals, and assess the outcomes of inclusive practices on volunteer retention and community well-being.

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Data sources, methods and definitions

Data sources

This study used data from the 2023 Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating (SGVP), which was administered from September 15, 2023, to March 30, 2024. The target population for the 2023 SGVP was individuals aged 15 years and older living in the 10 provinces of Canada, excluding full-time residents of institutions and residents of First Nations reserves.

More information on the SGVP is available on the Statistics Canada website: Surveys and statistical programs – Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating (SGVP).

Definitions

Formal volunteers: This refers to individuals aged 15 and older who carried out any activities without pay on behalf of a group or an organization at least once in the 12 months preceding the survey. This includes any unpaid help provided to schools, religious organizations, or sports or community associations, among others.

Informal volunteers

Direct help: This refers to help given by those aged 15 and older on their own, that is, not through a group or an organization, in the 12 months preceding the survey. It includes help given to friends, neighbours and relatives, but it excludes help given to a person living in one's household. This may include help with health-related or personal care, teaching or coaching, paperwork, shopping, driving, cooking, cleaning, or maintenance-related tasks.

Improving the community: Informal volunteering also includes help given, in the 12 months preceding the survey, by those aged 15 and older to improve the community directly through activities that are not on behalf of a group or an organization. Examples of such activities include maintaining a public space, participating in public meetings, producing or disseminating information to make others aware of an issue, organizing or coordinating a group or an event, helping to develop an economic or social project for the community, or contributing in another capacity.

Type of volunteering: This refers to the spectrum of total participation in volunteering activities among the types of volunteering (formal volunteering; informal volunteering; or a combination of formal and informal volunteering, i.e., overall volunteering).

Canadians: This refers to all people living in Canada, regardless of citizenship status.

Racialized population: The concept of "racialized population" or "racialized group" is derived directly from the concept of "visible minority" in the 2021 Census. The *Employment Equity Act* defines members of visible minorities as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour." This population consists mainly of the following groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese. Indigenous people are not included among the racialized population in the current analysis.

Immigrant: This refers to a person who is, or who has ever been, a landed immigrant or permanent resident. Such a person has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Immigrants who have obtained Canadian citizenship by naturalization are included in this group.

Notes

1. Statistics Canada, 2023 (Sept. 6).
2. Galarneau et al., 2023.
3. Statistics Canada, 2023 (Oct. 10).
4. Statistics Canada, 2022 (May 17).
5. This compares with the 10% of non-racialized, non-Indigenous people who were born outside Canada.
6. See Population group of person.
7. Statistics Canada, 2022 (Oct. 26).
8. Sinha, 2015.
9. See Imagine Canada, 2021.
10. Volunteers were asked questions about motivations if they reported four or more hours of formal volunteering.
11. Horsham et al., 2024; Sinha, 2015; and Appau and Churchill, 2019.
12. Volunteers who reported 325 hours or less of formal volunteering were asked about barriers to volunteering more.

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