

Volunteerism



Noteworthy:

- In 1961, volunteerism accounted for over 58 million hours of unpaid work in Alberta. By 2003, that number had risen to more than 165 million hours.
- In 2003, the volunteer sector was worth the equivalent of 86,255 full-time jobs. That is an increase of 55,701 equivalent full-time jobs from 1961 to 2003.
- While total volunteer hours in Alberta increased by 182% from 1961 to 2003, hours per capita (for the population 15 years of age and over in Alberta) declined by 4%.
- Albertans aged 35 to 54 are the most likely to volunteer; 40% of those in this age group volunteered in Alberta in 1997.
- The volunteer rate for youths aged 15 to 24 almost doubled—from 18% in 1987 to 33% in 1997—while the rate for all other age groups remained stable.
- According to a 1997 study, although men tend to contribute, on average, more hours per year than women (151 hours vs. 142 hours), women however, are more likely than men to volunteer (46% vs. 35%). Women also contributed the majority of total volunteer hours (55%).

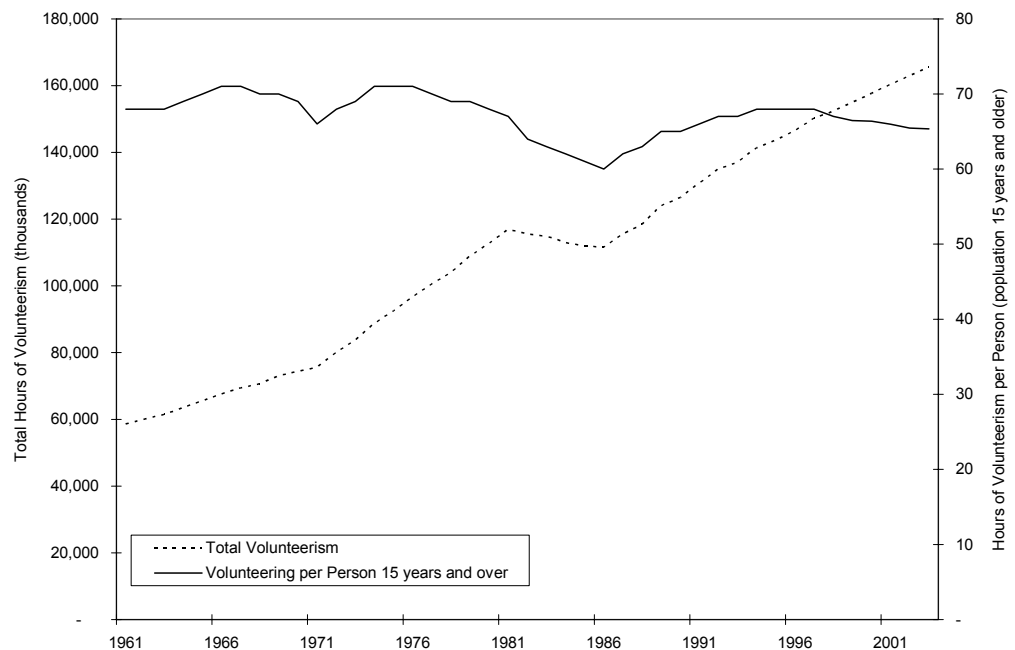
Volunteerism in Alberta: How Much?

In 1961, volunteerism accounted for over 58 million hours of unpaid work in Alberta. By 2003, that number is estimated at 165 million hours. This means that in 2003, the volunteer sector was worth the equivalent of 86,255 full-time jobs—an increase of 55,701 equivalent full-time jobs from 1961 to 2003. However, while total volunteer hours

in Alberta continue to rise substantially, hours per capita (for the population 15 years of age and over in Alberta) have remained relatively stable. Specifically, while total volunteer hours in Alberta increased by 182% from 1961 to 2003, hours per capita declined by 4% over the same time period. Albertans aged 35 to 54 are the most likely to

volunteer. This same group contributes the greatest percentage of total volunteer hours, and accounts for the largest percentage of volunteers. The average volunteer is employed full time and has a university degree. Nearly 40% of Albertans volunteer. This number is higher than the national average of 27%.

Volunteerism in Alberta, 1961 to 2003



Source: Data from Statistics Canada, General Social Survey

So What?

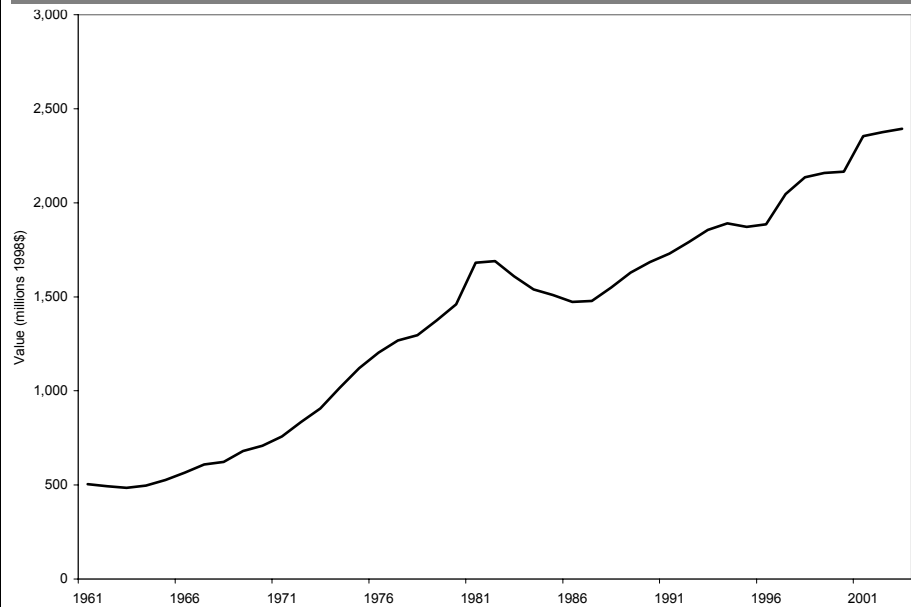
The Gross Domestic Product measures only economic transactions that take place in the market. In doing so, it fails to account for volunteerism. In 1961, volunteerism in Alberta was worth over \$503 million (1998\$). By 2003 that figure had increased to 2,393 million (1998 \$)—equal to 1.9% of provincial GDP. The figure at the upper right shows volunteerism and GDP in Alberta as indices. For the volunteerism index, 100 is set equal to the highest rate of volunteerism that occurred over the study period and change is measured from that year (the benchmark year). In this case, there were several years in which volunteerism was at its highest level (1966 and 1967 and 1974 through 1976). In these years, 71 hours per person (population 15 years and over) per year was devoted to volunteerism in Alberta. The same approach was taken to measure GDP as an index. As the figure indicates, while GDP has increased, volunteerism has remained relatively stable at a high level.

Because the GDP does not account for the value of volunteerism, any shift from the voluntary sector to the paid sector is measured as economic growth by the GDP. For example, if a person is volunteering their services to an organization and the organization subsequently hires them, the GDP will increase. Despite this increase, such a shift has not truly resulted in an increase in the total production of the economy; the same amount of work is being done but paid work has been substituted for unpaid work. Such shifts, from unpaid to paid work, are estimated to overstate GDP growth by up to 0.8 percentage points a year.

Alberta Volunteerism Index: Where are we today?



Big Bucks: The Value of Volunteerism in Alberta, 1961 to 2003



The estimated value of volunteerism in Alberta in 2003 was \$2.4 billion (1998\$). That is equal to 1.9% of 2003 GDP.

As an index, volunteerism in Alberta in 2003 ranked 92 on a scale of 0 to 100, where 100 is the highest rate of volunteerism from 1961 to 2003 (see figure above).

