

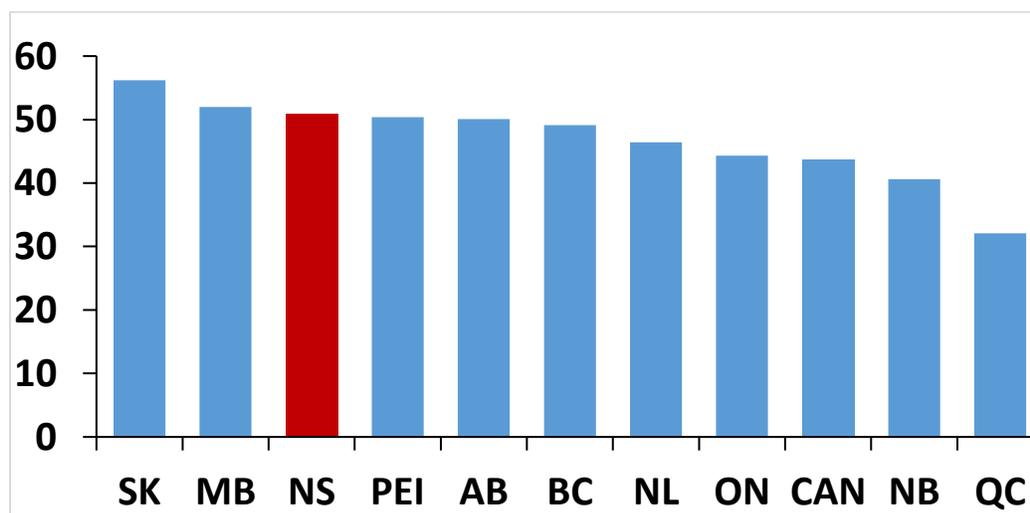
Volunteering in Nova Scotia and the impacts of COVID-19

In Nova Scotia, we have many reasons to cheer as we have one of the highest rates of volunteering in the country with about 51% of the population volunteering as of 2013, above the national rate of 44%ⁱ.

There were 61 million volunteer hours contributed to nonprofits in Nova Scotia in 2013 (note at the time of this study these were the most reason Statistics Canada Data available). This is the equivalent of 30,000 full-time jobs supporting the sector.

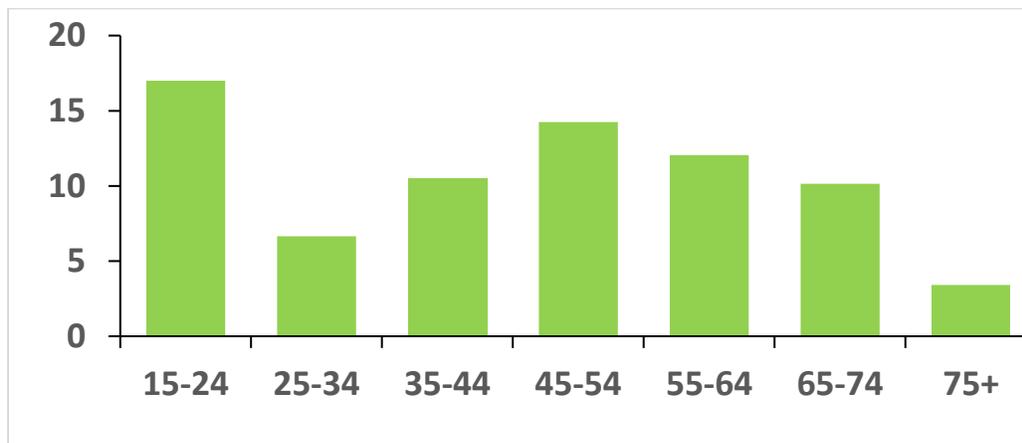
20,000 people are employed in the nonprofit sector in Nova Scotia, and volunteers contribute to the equivalent of another 30,000 full time positions.

Nova Scotia's Volunteer rate, 2013 (volunteers as a % of the population)



In fact volunteering accounts for 60% of the labour resources required for nonprofit activities. If volunteering for nonprofits was an industry its employment in Nova Scotia would be similar to the construction or manufacturing sectors.

Volunteer Hours by age group, Nova Scotia 2013 (millions)

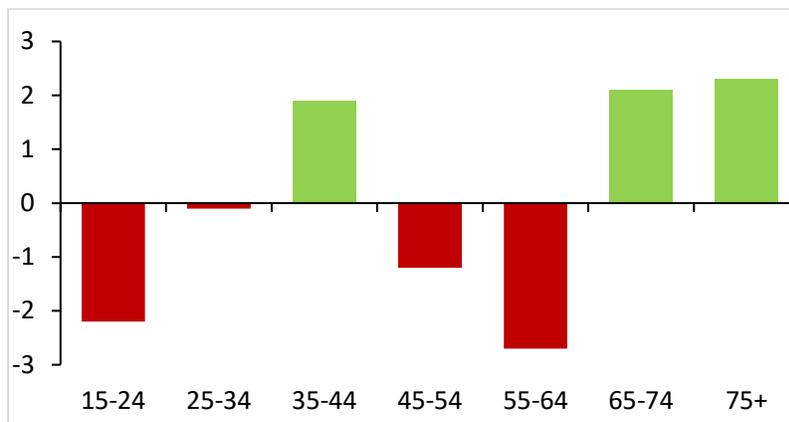


Before the arrival of COVID-19, the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council (APEC) predicted that volunteer hours would remain stable through to 2030 if volunteer rates stayed the same. This estimate is based on an understanding that seniors would be playing a much larger role in providing volunteer hours due to the aging population. The 65+ age group was predicted to see their hours of volunteering increase by 4.4 million over the next decade.

“The economic value of volunteer hours in the nonprofit sector in Nova Scotia is \$1.5 Billion – equivalent to 3.4% of the province’s GDP.”

Then the unexpected happened and with COVID-19 we have seen social distancing and a disproportionate risk for, and impact on, seniors. With no vaccine expected for 12 to 18 months, we expect seniors to stay away from volunteer positions that cannot be performed virtually.

Projected Change in Nova Scotia Volunteer Hours by Age Group, 2019-2030 (millions)



“With Covid-19 our volunteer base is gutted. We have no volunteers left and our one staff members has to do everything.”

In responses to a survey of the impact of COVID-19 on the sector in late March 2020, the Community Sector Council of Nova Scotiaⁱⁱ learned that on average nonprofits have lost 8.3 volunteers each. Of course, some organizations have lost far greater numbers and other had less reliance on volunteers to start. Many organizations are completely operated by volunteers. If there are 6,000 nonprofits in the province, we estimate a loss of 37,000 individuals volunteering due to the pandemic.

APEC estimated that if the volunteer rate were to fall to 46% from 51% this would be equivalent to losing over 3.2 million hours or 1,500 full-time equivalent employees. They concluded that if nonprofits cannot maintain volunteer hours they will have to rely more on paid staff, automate or reduce their services.

As we celebrate and appreciate our volunteers and their economic and social contributions to the province we are also called on to determine how to replace many of them during the full duration of the pandemic, how to help them contribute virtually and how to reintegrated them when they can return to the sector.

Without many of our volunteers, we will face an even bigger social and economic deficit as a province.

ⁱ <https://www.apec-econ.ca/publications/view/?publication.id=396>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.csc-ns.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/CSCNS-COVID-19-IMACT-REPORT.pdf>