

10. Community Involvement

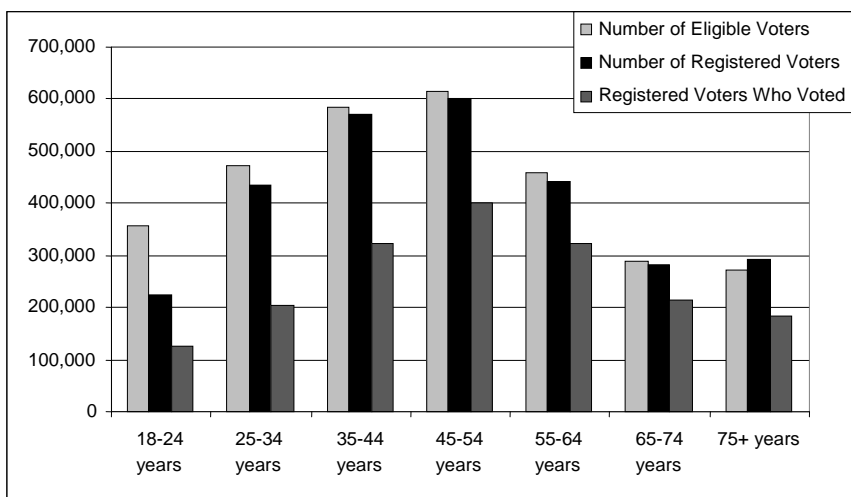
Community involvement looks at the number or percentage of residents who vote, and at how citizens support charitable and nonprofit organizations. Few organizations keep detailed track of their volunteers, or the hours volunteered. Nor is there an easy way to measure charitable donations for the whole Valley. There are, however, statistics for all of BC that can be extrapolated to our community for rough estimates. We've included local information whenever possible.



10.1 Voting

In the 2005 general provincial election, Comox Valley had 69.8%²⁴⁷ voter participation increased by 1.7% from 2001.²⁴⁸ In contrast, only 58.2% of eligible voters in BC voted: an increase of 2.8% from 2001.²⁴⁹ Voting turnout for 2009 in the dropped to 58.77%.²⁵⁰ Figure 42 below shows the relationship between age and voting.

Figure : Percentage of Eligible Voters that Voted in the 2005 General Election



Source: Elections BC and BC Stats. Voter Participation by Age Group – May 17, 2005 Provincial General Election.

Although municipal elections provide a way for residents to participate in decision-making within their community, the level of voter turnout remains lower than the 1999

²⁴⁷ Elections BC. Comox Valley Electoral District Final Results and Registered Voters per Electoral District.

²⁴⁸ Elections BC. CMX – Comox Valley Voter Participation Counts – May 16, 2001.

²⁴⁹ Elections BC and BC Stats. BC Voter Participation: 1983 to 2005.

²⁵⁰ Elections BC, Voting Turnout, 2009 General Election.

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rate. Comox voter turnout increased in 2009 to 42.63% over the 2005 rate of 39.7%, but is still lower than the 45% in 1999. Courtenay voter turnout was 31.75% in 2008, 24.3% in 2005, and 43% in 1999. Cumberland usually has the highest voter participation rate, but it too has decreased to 52.68%, down from 58.3% in 2005, and 61% in 1999.²⁵¹



10.2 Charitable Donations

According to the 2007 *Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating*, 79% of BC residents aged 15 and over gave donations to charitable and nonprofit organizations, an increase of 2% since 2004.²⁵² Total annual donations were \$1,462.6 million.²⁵³

The average annual donation in BC was \$506, an increase over the 2004 average of \$467. The median annual donation was \$125, meaning that half the donors gave more than \$125, and half gave less.²⁵⁴

“The top 25% of donors – those who gave \$364 or more – tended to be older, to have higher household incomes and to possess higher levels of formal education. Those who are employed, widowed, or attend religious services on a weekly basis, also tended to be in the top group of donors.”²⁵⁵

Collectively, organizations in BC had total annual revenues of \$11 billion. When hospitals, universities and colleges were excluded, that figure was \$9 billion. Again, excluding hospitals, universities and colleges, organizations received 46% of their revenues from the government, 34% from earned income, 16% from gifts and donations, and 5% from other sources.²⁵⁶

²⁵¹ Civic Info BC, Local Government Election Reporting System 2008.

²⁵² Minister of Industry, 2009, *Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians: Highlights from the Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating*, p.28. Catalogue no. 71-542-X.

²⁵³ Ibid, p.88.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

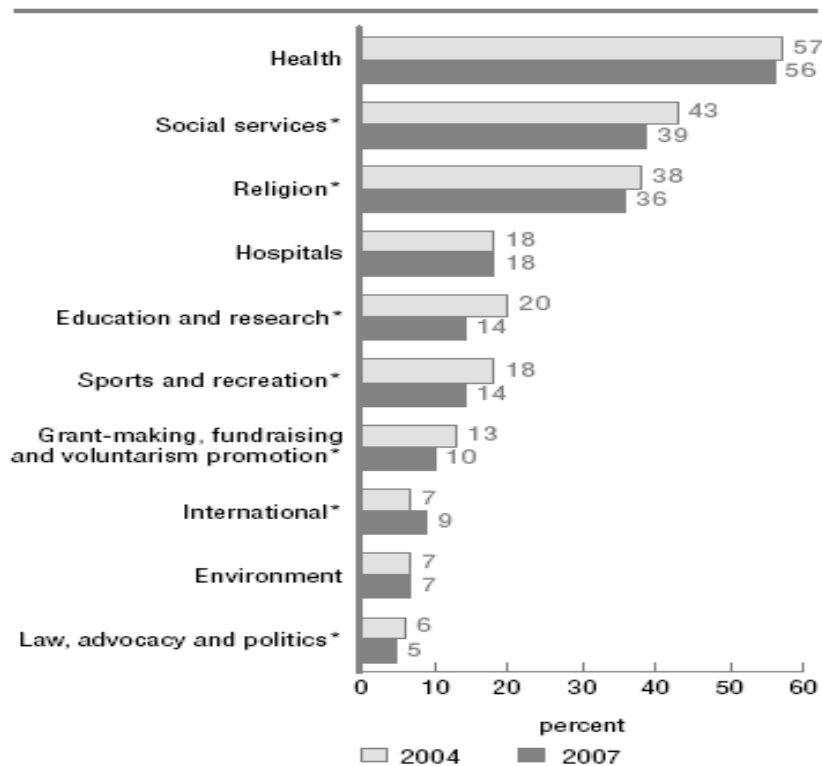
²⁵⁵ Statistics Canada, The Daily, June 8, 2009, p.2. Catalogue 11-001-XIE.

²⁵⁶ Imagine Canada, The Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector in British Columbia, p.1.

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Below, in Figure 42, donation rates are divided into organization types, with health, social services, and religious organizations being the clear favourites in Canada.

Figure : Donor rate, by selected organization type, population aged 15 and older, Canada, 2004 and 2007



* Represents a statistically significant difference ($\alpha=0.05$) between 2004 and 2007.

Notes: Some types of organizations are excluded due to the reliability of the estimates. The complete classification system is described in Appendix 1, *Glossary of terms*.

Source: Statistics Canada, *Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2004 and 2007*.

Source: Minister of Industry, 2009, *Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians: Highlights from the Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating*, p.16, Chart 1.4.

The affect of the recent recession on charitable donations has organizations worried. A recent study by Ipsos Reid, a market research company, said that people used to give to an average of six charities a year, but now they give only to four. More people are basing their donations on how much they make (44% versus 33% in 2002). Fewer people are leaving gifts in their wills; about half of what it was seven years ago.²⁵⁷

Other notable changes: people prefer “arms-length appeals through mainstream media” (70 %). Telephone solicitations at home were seen as intrusive and the least acceptable

²⁵⁷ Recession, Donor Fatigue Hammer B.C. Charities, Grania Litwin, Times Colonist, May 6, 2009.

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method. Personalized letters, dinner benefits and special events are still acceptable. However, on a positive note, the company noted that online donations have soared from six to 32 per cent.²⁵⁸

10.3 Volunteerism

Just under half of Canadians volunteered with charities and nonprofit organizations in 2007. Contributions encompass a range of tasks including: “serving on boards and committees, canvassing for funds, providing counselling services or making friendly visits to seniors, delivering food, helping build facilities, serving as volunteer drivers, helping to protect the environment and wildlife, advocating for social causes and coaching children and youth.”²⁵⁹ The average number of volunteer hours in British Columbia was 172 hours, a decrease of 14% from 199 hours in 2004.²⁶⁰ The volunteer rate in BC is 46.6%.²⁶¹

“Now, more than ever, the federal government needs to recognize volunteerism as part of the social and economic infrastructure of this country. To do so requires shedding the common perception that volunteerism just happens, when in fact promoting, recruiting, training, engaging and recognizing the efforts of volunteers requires support and expertise that is often unrecognized or overlooked and definitely under-resourced. An investment in volunteerism will ensure that the efforts and skills of Canada’s volunteers will be invested right back into our communities. And this will also help our government with its goals, such as creating an efficient healthcare and education system, environmentally sustainable communities, safe neighbourhoods, and providing skills training for Canadians.”²⁶²

– Ruth MacKenzie, President of Volunteer Canada.

²⁵⁸ Recession, Donor Fatigue Hammer B.C. Charities, Grania Litwin, Times Colonist, May 6, 2009.

²⁵⁹ Minister of Industry, 2009, *Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians: Highlights from the Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating*, p.35. Catalogue no. 71-542-X.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.p35-36.

²⁶¹ Ibid, p.69.

²⁶² Volunteer Canada 08/09 Annual Report, p.6. Available at http://volunteer.ca/en/about/aboutVolCan/annual_reports.

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Organizations in BC reported a volunteer complement of 1.5 million, who collectively contributed 114 million hours of volunteer time, an equivalent of approximately 60,000 full-time jobs. They also report a total membership of 14 million, meaning that the average British Columbian is a member of three organizations.²⁶³

In 2004, Valleylinks launched a new community volunteer centre, Volunteer Comox Valley (VCV). The centre supports volunteers and voluntary sector organizations in the Valley by providing community information resources, services and programs. Member organizations can post their volunteer opportunities at VCV where people can access and connect with agencies in need of their skills and talents. In addition, volunteers can meet with staff and receive support in finding a compatible volunteer opportunity.

VCV supports 184 member organizations within the voluntary sector. An annual membership fee of \$36 helps support programs and services including: Volunteer Referral Program, no cost Police Record Checks (PRC), promotion of members' special events, fundraisers, services, programs and volunteer needs. VCV also holds annual volunteer recognition events and provides professional development opportunities.

Administration of police record checks is a service unique to the Valley. In their first year of operation, VCV processed 700 police record checks. They now process 2,000 to 2,500 checks annually.²⁶⁴

Staff professionals are dedicated to excellence in the voluntary sector and participate in ongoing professional development through the Council for Certification in Volunteer Administration. A toolkit for voluntary sector organizations is being developed to provide an easy-to-use guide that will encourage formalizing of volunteer programs and using "best" practices in managing volunteer resources.²⁶⁵ Visit <http://www.valleylinks.net>.

10.4 Non-Profit Organisations

There were over 161,000 registered charities and nonprofit organizations in Canada in 2003, the most current year for which data are available. About 20,000 are in BC, accounting for about 13% of the Canadian total.²⁶⁶

²⁶³ Imagine Canada, The Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector in British Columbia, p.1.

²⁶⁴ Conversations with Adda Vallevand, Volunteer Coordinator, and Bev Moquin, Executive Director,. Valleylinks, May 2009.

²⁶⁵ Conversations with Adda Vallevand, Volunteer Coordinator, and Bev Moquin, Executive Director,. Valleylinks, May 2009.

²⁶⁶ Imagine Canada, The Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector in British Columbia, p.1.

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The most common types of charitable and nonprofit organizations in BC were religious organizations accounting for 19% of all organizations, followed by Sports and Recreation (17%), Arts and Culture (10%), and Social Services organizations (9%). Although hospitals, universities and colleges represent only 1% of the organizations, they account for almost a fifth (18%) of total revenues.²⁶⁷

A survey of nonprofits and voluntary organizations reported the following key findings²⁶⁸:

- Canada's nonprofit and voluntary sector is the 2nd largest in the world after the Netherlands.
- 2 million people are employed by these organizations, representing 11.1% of the economically active population.
- The sector represents \$79.1 billion or 7.8% of the GDP (larger than the automotive or manufacturing industries).

The majority of BC-based organizations (60%) are completely volunteer run, having no paid staff. They have about 1.5 million volunteers, of which 168,000 are board members and 1.3 million are non-board volunteers.²⁶⁹

Subsectors most dependent on government funding were health (77%), education and research (66%), and social services (59%). Subsectors receiving most of their income from donations and grants were religion (67%), international aid (61%), and environment (44%).²⁷⁰

In BC, smaller organizations engaged the most volunteers, especially those in the environment, religion, and sports and recreation. For example, environment organizations make up 4% of the sector in BC, but, have 19% of the volunteers. "This discrepancy is far larger than any observed in other parts of Canada."²⁷¹

British Columbia's nonprofit and voluntary organizations employed 147,000 people and, even though 23% of them worked in the Hospitals, Universities and Colleges sub-sector, the remainder still made up a workforce larger than the total employment in the

²⁶⁷ Imagine Canada, The Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector in British Columbia, p.1.

²⁶⁸ Imagine Canada web site, Charities & Nonprofit Organizations.

²⁶⁹ Imagine Canada, The Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector in British Columbia, p.2.

²⁷⁰ Vic Murray, The Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector in British Columbia: Regional Highlights from the National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations, 2006, p.vi.

²⁷¹ Ibid, p.vii.

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forestry, fishing, and mining, oil and gas extraction industries combined.^{NB} However, 42% of that workforce was parttime and 36% worked in temporary positions. Levels of paid staff remained the same between 2001 and 2003 for 63% of British Columbia's organizations; 30% reported an increase and 7% reported a decrease. These percentage distributions were quite similar to the national numbers. (Source: see footnote 271.)

NB: Figures in the survey and those from Statistics Canada are not strictly comparable because of differences in data collection methods.

The groups most served by nonprofit and voluntary organizations were the general public (46%), children and youth (25%), and the elderly (15%).²⁷² The top ten largest charities in BC,²⁷³ based on their 2006 revenues, were:

Vancouver Foundation	The Terry Fox Foundation
BC Children's Hospital Foundation	Rick Hansen Foundation
BC Cancer Foundation	Canadian Cancer Society
Power to Change	Victoria Foundation
Hope International Development Agency	Heart & Stroke Foundation

²⁷² Vic Murray, *The Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector in British Columbia: Regional Highlights from the National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations, 2006*, p.v.

²⁷³ BC's Ten Largest Charities, Chad Skelton, *Vancouver Sun*, April 5, 2008.