



BC Retired Teachers' Association

The Volunteer Work of Retired Educators: Social and economic contributions to communities in British Columbia

**A report from
British Columbia Retired Teachers' Association (BCRTA)**

Prepared by
the *ad hoc* committee investigating volunteerism by members of the BCRTA:
JoAnn Lauber, Howard Spence, Dale Lauber, Judy de Vries, Sheila Pither, and Cliff Boldt

September 2011



Publisher: British Columbia Retired Teachers' Association
Suite 100, 550 West 6th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V5Z 4P2

ISBN: 978-0-9680963-1-4

Acknowledgments

The BCRTA is grateful to Charlie Naylor, Anne Field, and Sharon Taylor of BCTF Research for their assistance in the development and posting of the survey instrument, the technological tallying of the survey results, and for their guidance in the production of this report.

The BCRTA acknowledges with thanks the assistance of the BCRTA Branch Presidents in apprising their members of the online Volunteerism Survey.

The BCRTA extends special thanks to the *ad hoc* committee who investigated volunteerism by BCRTA members. The committee members who assisted in creating the survey instrument, analyzing the data, and writing and revising the report are Cliff Boldt, Judy de Vries, Dale Lauber, JoAnn Lauber (Chair), Sheila Pither, and Howard Spence.

Table of contents

Acknowledgments		Page i
Section 1	Introduction	Page 1
Section 2	Demographics	Page 2
Section 3	What volunteers contribute: Volunteering focus and volunteer hours	Page 6
Section 4	With whom retired teachers volunteer and in which activities they are engaged	Page 14
Section 5	Responses from retirees who do not volunteer now, or have not volunteered in the last 12 months	Page 18
Section 6	Summary of findings	Page 21
Section 7	Discussion	Page 22
References		Page 27
Appendices	Appendix A: Letter and link to survey on RTA website	Page 28
	Appendix B: Letter to Branch Presidents	Page 29
	Appendix C: Survey instrument	Page 30

Table of figures

Figure 1	Respondents by zone	Page 2
Figure 2	Age distribution	Page 3
Figure 3	Gender of survey respondents compared to BCRTA members and all retired teachers in BC	Page 4
Figure 4	Length of retiree residence in the community	Page 4
Figure 5	Number of volunteers in each focus area	Page 6
Figure 6	Total volunteer hours per month in each focus area	Page 9
Figure 7	Average monthly hours per person in each focus area	Page 10
Figure 8	Average volunteer hours per month, gender comparison	Page 12
Figure 9	Average monthly volunteer hours, by zone	Page 12
Figure 10	With whom do retired teachers volunteer?	Page 14
Figure 11	Which activities are retired teachers engaged in?	Page 15
Figure 12	Not currently volunteering	Page 18
Figure 13	Statements regarding not volunteering	Page 19

Section 1: Introduction

“As a retired educator, it is wonderful to have the time to give back to the community.¹ There is tremendous gratification in giving time to help others. It has been one of the most enjoyable outcomes of retirement.” So writes a retired teacher of British Columbia (BC) about the value of volunteering. Another observes, “Retired teachers are significant in the leadership and organization skills in our town in almost every area.”

These comments are two of many responses to a survey conducted through March and April 2011 to learn about the volunteer activities of retired teachers. How involved are they in volunteering? How are they contributing to the communities in which they live?

The survey sought to answer these questions by identifying the nature, scope, and extent of voluntary work done by retired educators in British Columbia. The survey instrument originated with the British Columbia Retired Teachers’ Association (BCRTA), and was reviewed and refined by staff in the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation Research Department. Perseus software was used to develop and deliver the survey. During March and April of 2011, the survey was posted on the BCRTA website,² and members were encouraged to respond online. Print copies were also available from BCRTA Branch Presidents and the BCRTA Provincial Office. BCRTA members were informed in various ways of the existence of the survey:

- the BCRTA newsmagazine *Postscript*,
- the BCRTA website,
- personal contact with BCRTA Branch Presidents by letter, e-mail, and phone,
- branch newsletters, e-mail notices, telephone trees, and social events,
- visits to branches by officers of the Association,
- zone meetings.

Of 14,751 BCRTA members,³ 1,071 responded to the survey. Their responses were anonymous. The number of replies was deemed excellent by survey standards and statistically valid. After data cleaning to eliminate duplicates, 1,036 responses were tabulated and analyzed.

Section 2: Demographics

The graphs in Section 2: Demographics illustrate the residence area, age, and gender of the respondents.

¹ The terms *retired teachers* and *retired educators* are used interchangeably throughout this publication to refer to the population targeted by this survey, the members of the British Columbia Retired Teachers’ Association (BCRTA). These include retired teachers, administrators, associated professionals, and post-secondary educators.

² www.berta.ca/

³ “Membership Stats as of April 30, 2011”: *Postscript* Summer, 2011: 9.

Where survey respondents reside

Figure 1, below, shows that every area of the province was represented in the responses. Survey respondents in the “Other” category include those in the BCRTA distant and remote areas network and those who did not identify their branches.

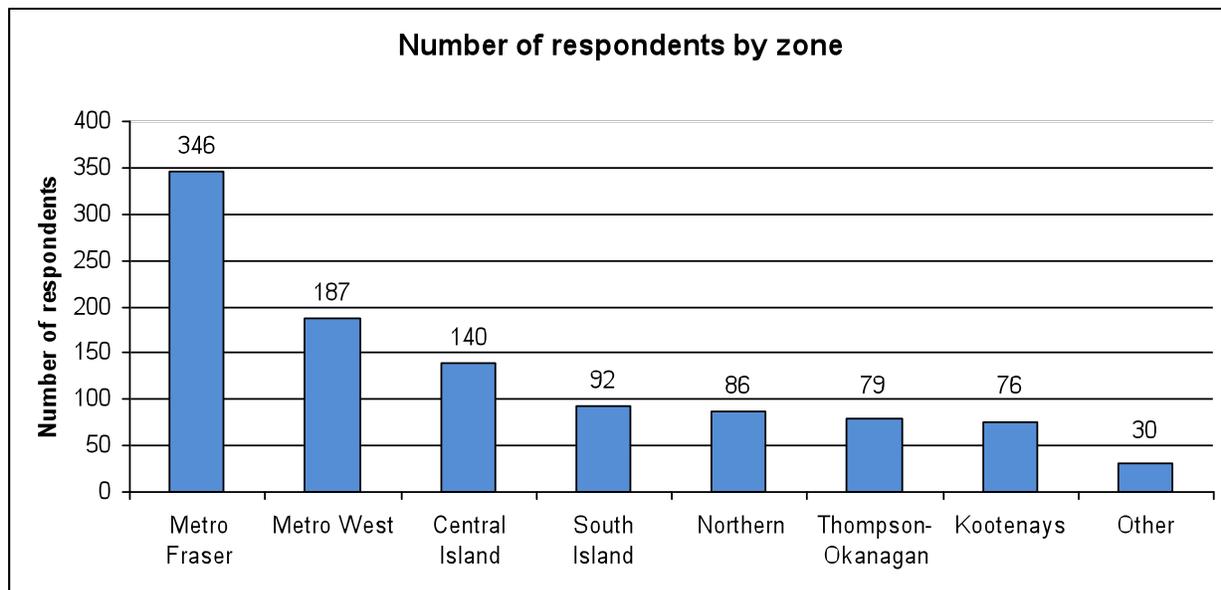


Figure 1: Respondents by zone

Zones	Communities included
Metro Fraser	Abbotsford, Chilliwack, Coquitlam, Delta, Langley, Mission, Princeton, Ridge Meadows, Surrey
Metro West	Burnaby, New Westminster, North Shore, Richmond, Sea-to-Sky, Sunshine Coast, Vancouver
Central Island	Alberni, Campbell River, Comox Valley, Parksville–Qualicum, Powell River, Vancouver Island North
South Island	Cowichan Valley, Gulf Islands, Lower Vancouver Island, Nanaimo–Ladysmith, Post-Secondary Educators
Northern	Bulkley Valley, Cariboo-Chilcotin, Kitimat, North Coast, Peace River North, Peace River South, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Quesnel
Thompson–Okanagan	Central Okanagan, Kamloops, Nicola Valley, Shuswap and District, South Okanagan, Vernon
Kootenays	Boundary Area, Columbia Valley, Cranbrook, Creston, Elk Valley, Kimberley, Kootenay–Columbia, Kootenay Lake West

Age distribution of respondents

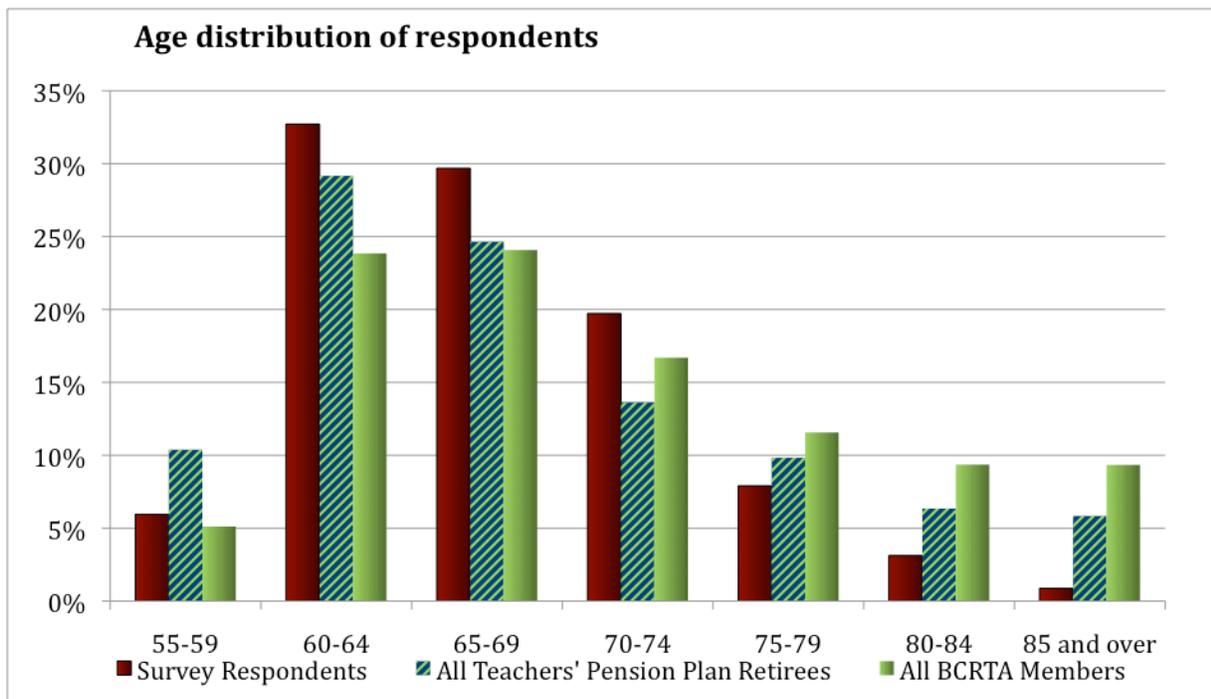


Figure 2: Age distribution

The age distribution of respondents (Figure 2) resembles that of the Teachers' Pension Plan (TPP) retirees⁴ and that of the members of the BCRTA. Over half of the respondents are in the 60–69 age groups.

Retired educators of all ages are involved in volunteering. Fewer respondents are in the 55–59 age bracket and the following comments may explain this. The retirees in this age group may be seizing the opportunity to travel while in the “youth” of their retirement, while others are “taking a breath” after a career in teaching or attending to other demands of life that they were unable to address while working. “I have been retired for 3 years and am cleaning out my own files. I hope to do more community volunteering in the future. I would like to help adults learn to read,” writes one survey respondent of this retiree age group.

Others, attesting to the fact that retired educators are found to be volunteering at all ages, wrote of the duration of a volunteer commitment: “Taking on a major role in one organization for the past 20 years has provided a focus and purpose in my life during retirement,” and “Since retirement...in my case, 24 years included working in Kenya as a volunteer several times, selecting and providing scholarships for very needy and high-performing students whose families are unable to cover school fees for secondary education.” A respondent elaborates on the 85-and-over age category: “My mom is my role model and also a retired teacher. At 85, I doubt she will fill out the survey, but she volunteers at the community archives in [our town] 12

⁴ “Teachers' Pension Plan retirees” refers to all contributors and beneficiaries currently receiving a pension.

hours a month and gives four to five hours a month to her church. She also co-ordinates and peels vegetables for the Interior Provincial Exhibition for three full days each September.”

Gender of survey respondents compared to BCRTA members and all retired teachers in BC

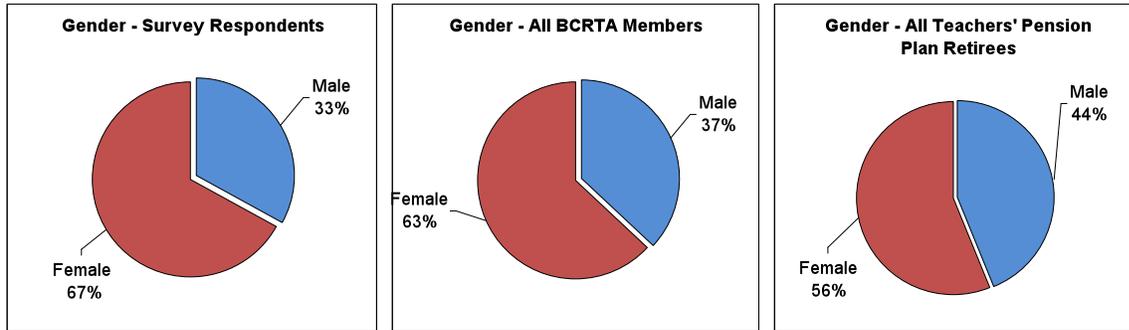


Figure 3: Gender of survey respondents compared to BCRTA members and all retired teachers in BC

Of the respondents, 67 % (681) were female, and 33% (329) were male. The female/male ratio response is similar to that of the BCRTA membership: 63% female and 37% male. The gender proportion of all BC retired educators is 56% female and 44% male.⁵ Twenty-six of the respondents did not indicate gender. The distribution of respondents by age and gender approximates that of BCRTA members and also of the entire provincial population of retired educators.

⁵ Actuarial Report on British Columbia Teachers' Pension Plan: Related to Valuation as at December 31, 2008. Vancouver, British Columbia. September, 2009:55.

Length of retiree residence in the community

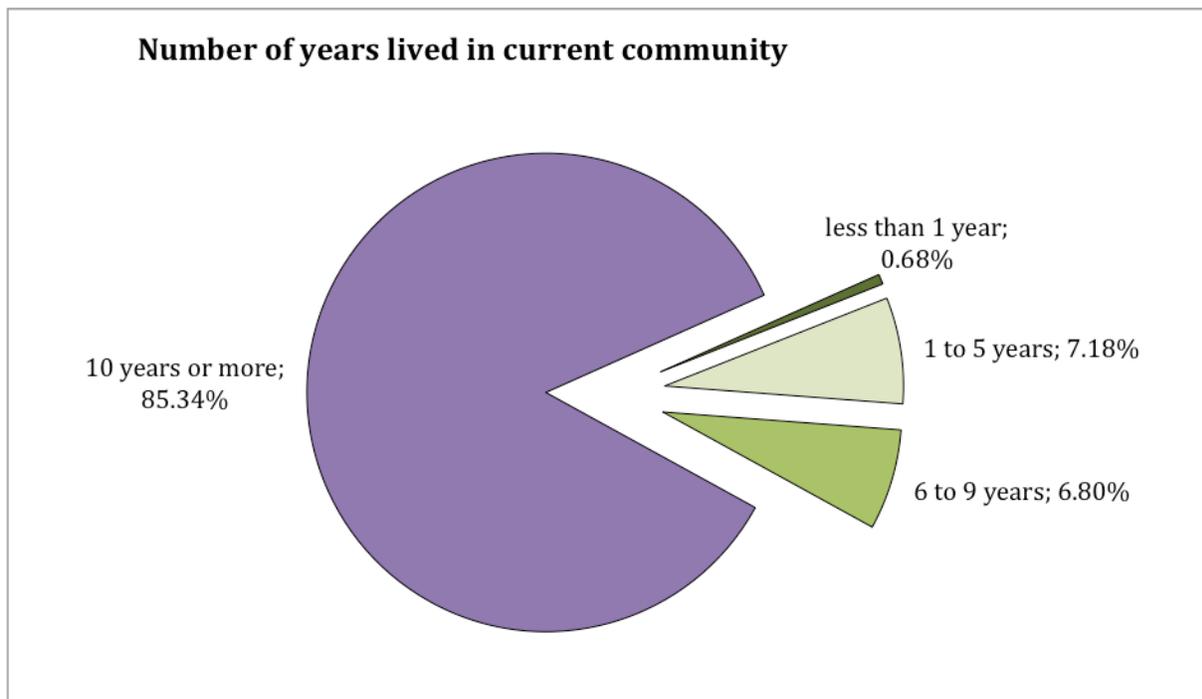


Figure 4: Length of retiree residence in the community

Eighty-five per cent of all respondents indicated that they had lived in their communities for more than 10 years. While some other studies found that “young seniors (aged 65–74) who have lived in their communities for less than one year are most likely to volunteer,”⁶ the survey result for BC retired educator volunteers shows that a large percentage have indeed lived in the same area for a long time, indicating a considerable level of stability and continued participation in the same community. Clearly, over the time of their working lives, teachers build lasting connections to their communities and they maintain that attachment in retirement. As one respondent states, “My husband and I are both retired and chose to remain in the small village we worked in and raised our family.” Another says, “I enjoy volunteering in my community. It has been good to me, and this is my way of giving back and hopefully keeping our town a great place to live.” Respondents typically commented, “Volunteering is giving back to my community, and building the community for others who follow.”

Approximately 15% of the respondents indicated they had lived in the community for fewer than 10 years. One such person commented on a volunteer role in a new area of residence, “Becoming involved in my community helps me know the community better and makes the community stronger.”

⁶ *Volunteerism Among Seniors – a Presentation for the National Seniors’ Council* by Liz Rootham, Director General, Community Development and Partnerships Directorate, HRSDC and Catherine Drew, Director, Seniors Policy, HRSDC March 19, 2009.

Section 3: What volunteers contribute: Volunteering focus and volunteer hours

For the purposes of this survey, volunteering was defined as “providing a service, without pay, to anyone not living in the same household, or to the community or environment; and providing this service either directly, on one’s own, or indirectly, through a group or organization.”

Respondents were asked to report their volunteerism on the basis of number of hours of volunteering per month in the previous 12 months. They were asked also to report on single-event volunteer activities that occurred on a “one-off” basis, referring specifically to activities they may have volunteered in during the year as different from those they were engaged in on a regular basis and which could be reported in hours per month.

In several places the survey invited written comments about experiences and perspectives on volunteering. This resulted in qualitative data of 1,282 comments, which supplemented quantitative data in the survey.

Volunteer focus

The respondents to the survey were asked to classify their volunteering according to 17 distinct focus areas. As respondents may have volunteered in more than one area, the total number of categorized volunteering engagements exceeded the number of respondents to the survey. In fact, data analysis indicates that the 1,036 respondents reported a total of 2,834 volunteer engagements in the 17 areas, averaging almost 3 distinct areas of volunteering for each respondent.

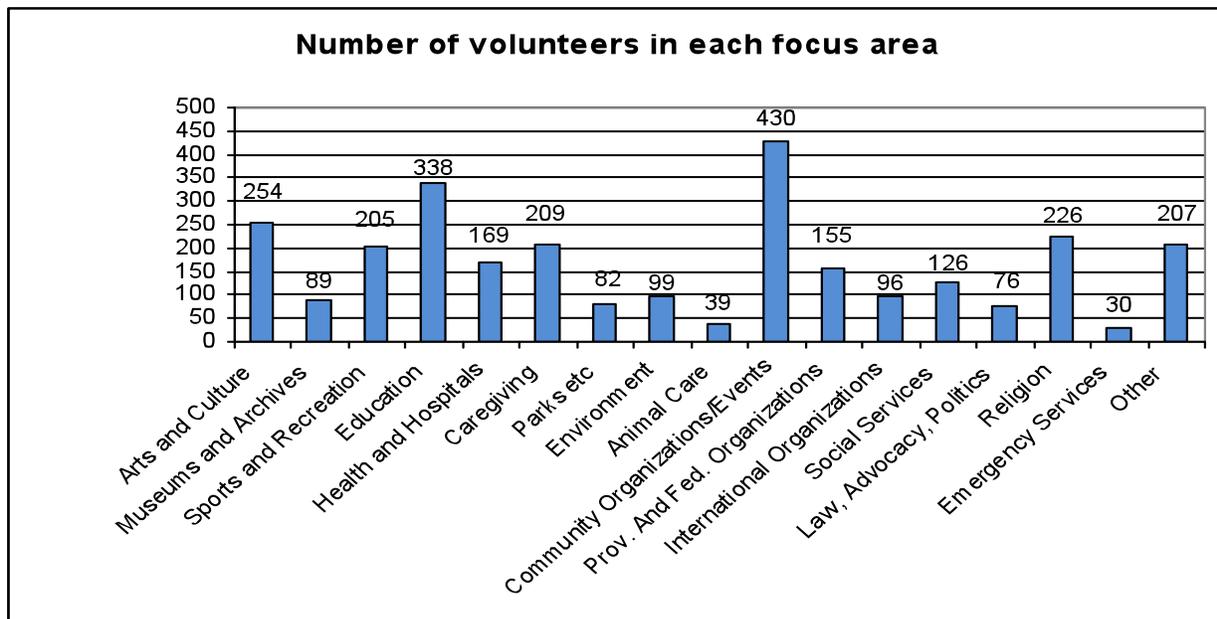


Figure 5: Number of volunteers in each focus area

The category with the largest number of volunteers is Community Organizations/Events, with 430 respondents indicating involvement in this category. One respondent states, “As retired educators, we...should do all we can to help others that are less fortunate. Throughout our careers we served the community and we should continue to do so in retirement.” A further 251 respondents indicated that they volunteer in provincial, federal, and international organizations, making a total of 681 volunteers in the 3 categories describing work related to organizations. This makes supporting organizations and directing events the most likely focus of volunteering, demonstrating clearly the active participation of retired teachers in social and civic affairs.

The second largest volunteering category is Education. Many retired teachers have acquired skills and expertise that lead them to focus their volunteering in areas of familiarity and experience. One retired teacher, for example, says “I give many hours of time volunteering to teach ESL and I enjoy it immensely,” while another states, “I write a literacy program for a pastor/teacher to use in Punjab, Pakistan among the untouchables who have no opportunity for literacy.”

The issue of education-related volunteering

Volunteers in the K-12 public education sector may raise some issues of concern. On the one hand, retired teachers collectively have a wealth of expertise, knowledge, and experience in education, and on the other hand, have no desire to replace potential paid workers with volunteer activity. One survey respondent stated, “I would not be comfortable volunteering in a capacity that had once been a paying job,” and another, “I...have ambivalent feelings about [volunteering], as a paid para-professional should be doing this work.”

Yet about 55% (575) of all respondents indicated that they volunteer with young children and adolescents. Since the survey in several places included qualitative data, it was possible through analysis to determine the nature of the retired educator-child/adolescent contact. Of the written 1,282 comments, only eight specifically mentioned working with students in classroom-related situations: three retired educators worked as helpers in a classroom, another one as an art teacher assistant, one with pre-schoolers (possibly in a classroom situation), and three in special programs: “Roots of Empathy”,⁷ “Kids Space”,⁸ and “One-to-One Literacy”.⁹ The remaining 1,274 comments made by volunteers who worked with children and adolescents indicated that they did so in ways that do not take the jobs of others: school-related arts events, coaching and helping with sports days, field trips, science fairs, ESL support, food banks and Christmas hampers, services to churches, school social events, essay adjudication, building homes and providing humanitarian and educational support to children abroad, acting as docents at museums and galleries, spearheading environmental initiatives, and—the one most often cited—supporting children and grandchildren.

⁷ Roots of Empathy, www.rootsofempathy.org/.

⁸ Kids Space, www.surreylibraries.ca.

⁹ Frontier College, www.frontiercollege.ca/english/literacy/vancouver.html.

This report thus concludes that in the focus area of Education, retired educators do not volunteer in ways that replace paid workers.

Other volunteer focus areas: Range and extent

The lowest number of retired teacher volunteers focus on Parks, Emergency Services, and Animal Care. Although fewer volunteers tend to devote their time to these areas, they are no less passionate about their work. One commenter captures the spirit of their commitment to their causes: “I am a guerrilla gardener...I ‘work’ under and around the north side of the Burrard Bridge...The neighbours love us because we have turned derelict property into gardens...As a by-product we have created an informal neighbourhood centre where people stop to chat, ask questions, leave plants, donate money and say ‘thank you’...A retired man who [is] homeless is one of our allies and helpers.”

When the specific areas of focus in the survey are combined with the list of those mentioned in the category “Other”, the focus of volunteering among retired educators may be described as diverse. More than 200 respondents claimed that they were engaged in focus areas different from the categories they could choose from in the survey. Of those hundreds of engagements referred to in “Other”, many mentioned a focus diversity including the following:

- work on strata councils,
- support for social and senior housing and food banks,
- work in hospices,
- canvassing and fundraising for charities,
- day care for grandchildren,
- assistance to neighbours, friends, and acquaintances in need.

While retired educators generally give their time to the focus areas listed in the survey, many others give their hours to pursuits that may be described as “different”:

- delivering bread donations from bakeries to the Dugout in the Downtown Eastside,
- blogging for a community board,
- providing Amateur Radio emergency communications through direct involvement with the District 69 Emergency Communications Team and training new “hams”,
- preserving surplus Fraser Valley and Okanagan farm produce through The Gleaners to donate to international relief agencies,
- building homes in Mexico,
- working with orphans in Africa,
- expediting water development projects in Rio Azul, Guatemala.

Respondents often described the extent of their involvement. Examples included building on a lifetime total of 164 blood donations, continuing 30 years of prison visitation, donating 720 hours of work annually to the Trans-Canada Trail and BC Wildlife, organizing the Annual Trail Ride, and “volunteering at the RCMP [local] Community Policing office and facilitating the St. John Ambulance Dog Therapy program for the last 12 years.” A service by one retired educator

volunteer entails planning, shopping, prepping, and then cooking and serving close to 40 meals in a women’s shelter one day every week.

How many hours do retired teachers work in volunteer activities?

The survey collected data on the amount of time volunteered in each focus area. Retired educators were asked to indicate the number of hours volunteered per month during the previous year.

Volunteer hours in survey focus areas

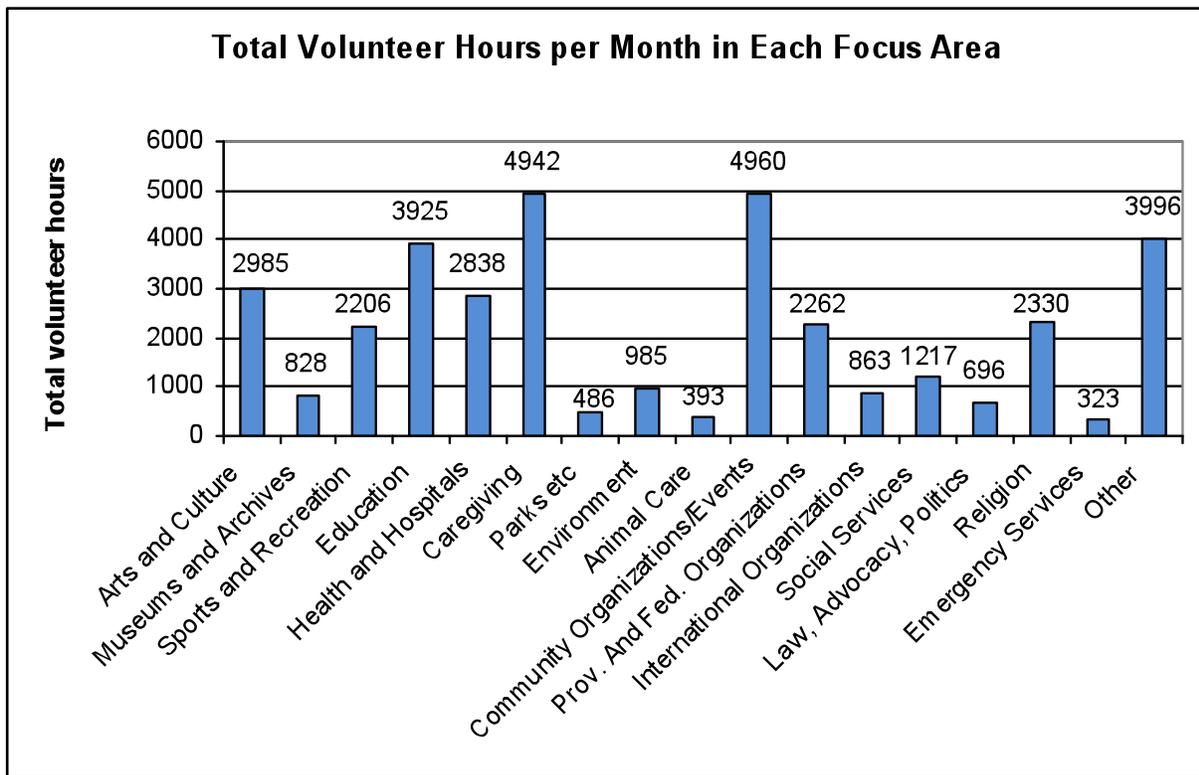


Figure 6: Total volunteer hours per month in each focus area

Figure 6, above, does not include the number of hours devoted to “one-off” activities, but shows the number of hours volunteers donated in the survey categories. In these, retired teacher volunteers gave the greatest amount of time (approximately 5,000 hours) to the categories of Caregiving and Community Organizations/Events.

“In my experience,” writes one volunteer in support of this finding, “retired teachers are highly valued as volunteers by organizations because of the skills developed over a teaching career—planning, organizing, implementing plans, and working well with others—and are often actively recruited.”

Average volunteer hours per month

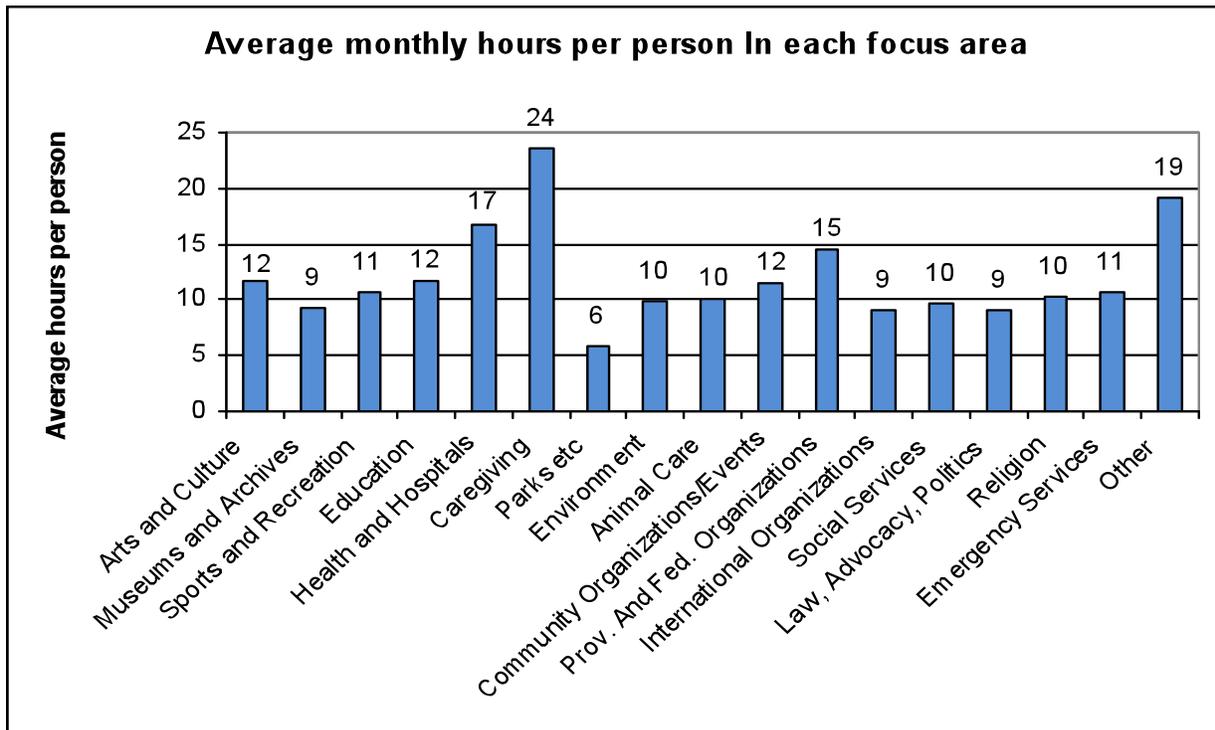


Figure 7: Average monthly hours per person in each focus area

With the exception of Caregiving, Parks, and Other, the low variation in the average number of hours per month in each focus area is remarkable. For the most part, retiree volunteers are consistently providing similar average amounts of volunteer time in all of the categories in which they participate—about 10 hours (see Figure 7).

The issue of caregiving

The highest number of hours of volunteering per person per month, far greater than for any other category, is in Caregiving. However, referring to Figure 5, we observe that this category does not have the greatest number of volunteers. This latter number is partly due to the definition of volunteer work for the purpose of this survey, and it is worth reviewing that definition here. For this survey, volunteer work was defined, in part, as “providing a service, without pay, to anyone not living in the same household.” Respondents were thus asked to give information regarding their caregiving in somewhat limited situations that excluded caregiving accorded to individuals living in their homes. Comments appended by respondents indicate that many took this limitation to extend to all caregiving administered in the home, and numerous respondents stated that many hours in addition to those cited on the survey are devoted to caregiving. Thus, the number of respondents identified in this survey who are involved in caregiving is likely conservative.

One respondent wrote, “I did not include the approximately 30+ hours assisting my family with children’s sports/arts activities...Nor did I include the many hours taking care of a 92-year-old mother living ‘independently’ in an apartment. However, I feel that these activities form a great

part of the retirees' life these days, and I do think they are an important part of the fabric of our society.”

Respondents often described their situations of caring simultaneously for elderly parents or other relatives, and grandchildren. One respondent of the “sandwich generation”¹⁰ commented, “I really enjoy the volunteering I do. I would like to do more but am caring for an aging mother and am involved in some daycare of my grandchild.”

Another volunteer commented, “Caregiving can take over one’s life because it can’t be done on a regularly-scheduled basis. The nature of it is that you’re on call each and every day, 24/7, and must be able to drop everything to attend to issues that arise.” The necessity for such extensive volunteer work in the area of caregiving may be a reflection of the lack of services available, the cost of these services, or the reduction in service levels for providing care within the home.

The average number of hours devoted to caregiving—those that were reported in the quantitative data of the survey as well as those described in the hundreds of additional comments—indicate that the contribution by retired teachers to BC communities in the form of caregiving assistance done constitutes a huge social and financial benefit to our health care and child care systems. Some questions arise: Should our provincial and federal governments do more to recognize the essential caregiving role played by volunteers by increasing funding and services for caregiving? Should formal recognition be made of the volunteer work, perhaps by extending income tax deductions for expenses related to caregiving volunteer work?

Single-event volunteer activities

Survey respondents were also asked to report volunteer activities that occurred on a “one-off” basis. Of the 1,036 respondents, 570 indicated that in the past 12 months, they had engaged in one or more activities that occurred as a single event rather than on a regular basis, such as the following:

- canvassing or fundraising for a charity or society such as the Cancer Society or Kidney Foundation,
- supporting a single arts or athletic event such as the Festival of Written Arts, the Terry Fox Run, and Skate Canada,
- organizing and expediting elections,
- supporting environmental initiatives such as Rivers Day and “Seedy Saturday”.¹¹

The survey respondents in this category (570 respondents) dedicated 20,699 hours to these single events, averaging just over 36 hours a year by each respondent.

¹⁰ Coined by Dorothy Miller in 1981, the term “sandwich generation” refers to a generation that is simultaneously caring for parents and children.

¹¹ James Bay Market, www.jamesbaymarket.com/seedysaturday/seedysaturday.htm.

Volunteer hours by gender

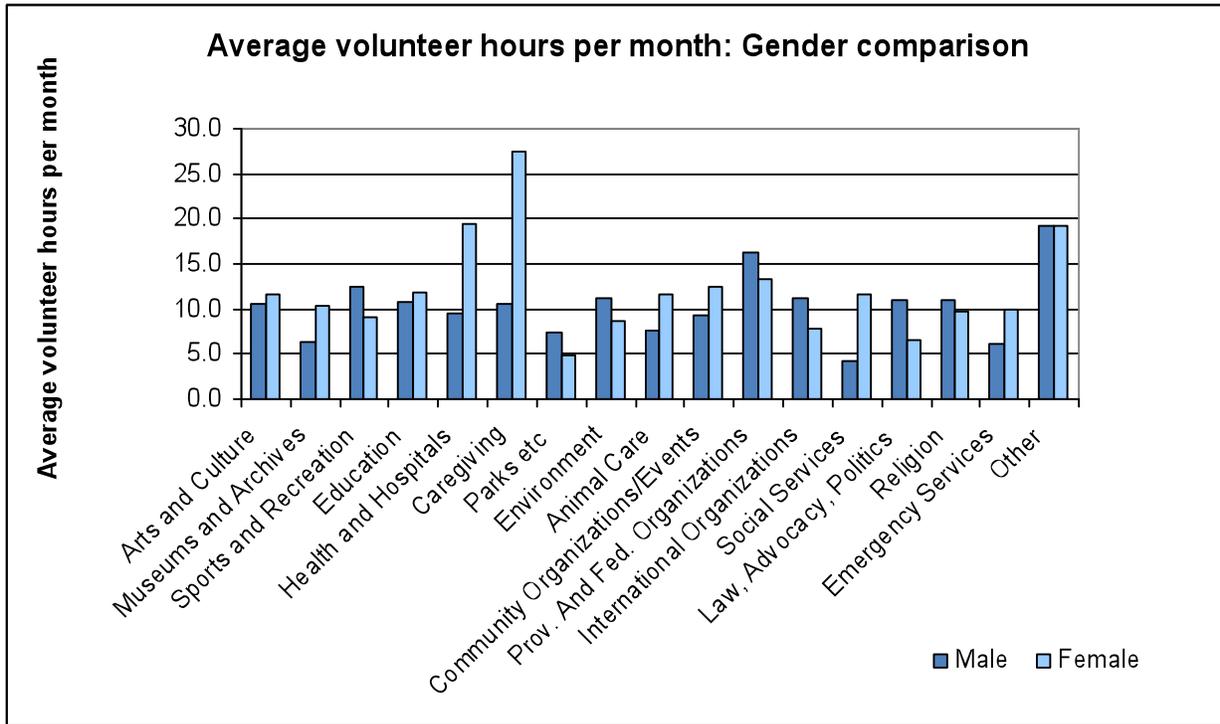


Figure 8: Average volunteer hours per month, gender comparison

Figure 8 shows the gender differences in volunteering. The most significant differences were in the areas of Health, Caregiving, and Social Services, in which women were more involved than men. Male respondents were more likely than female respondents to volunteer in Sports; Provincial and Federal Organizations; and Law, Advocacy, and Politics.

Geographical spread of volunteering

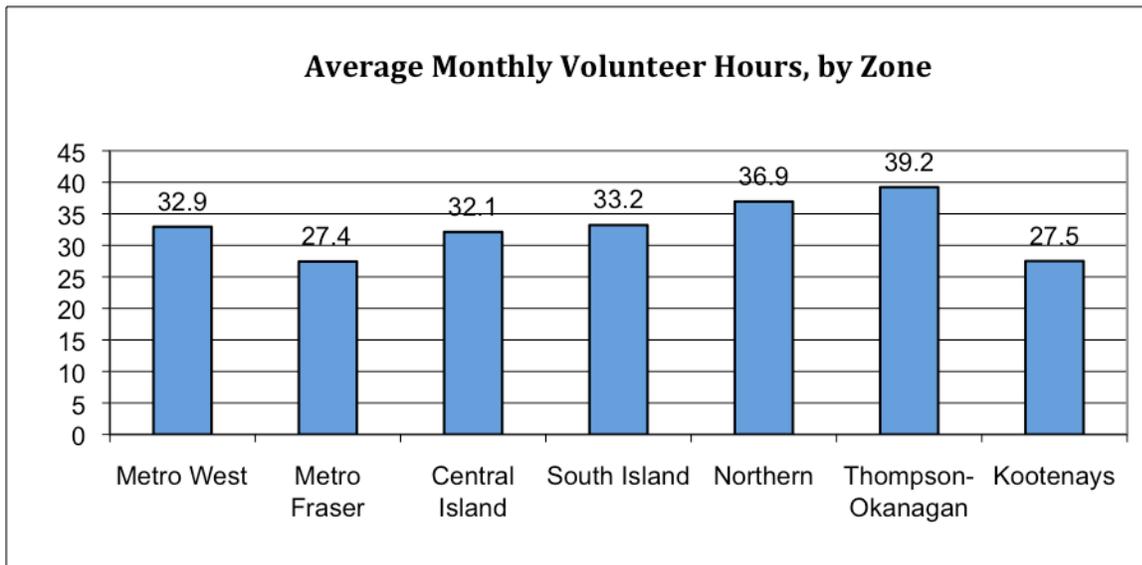


Figure 9: Average monthly volunteer hours, by zone

Figure 9 shows that retired teachers volunteer in all BCRTA branch zones across the province. On the whole, they volunteer an average of 25 to 39 hours per month. As expected, the spread between zones is not large: all zones report a significantly high number of volunteer hours per month.

Time dedicated to volunteering

The entire survey sample of BC retired teachers indicated that they volunteer a total of just over 32,000 hours each month. For the surveyed population, the average amount of volunteer time per respondent is 31 hours per month.

According to the *2007 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (CSGVP)*, Canadian volunteers who gave 171 hours or more annually were described as “top volunteers.”¹² In terms of hours per month, “top volunteers.” according to CSGVP, would donate an equivalent of 14.25 hours. It is interesting to note that in contrast, the BC retired teacher respondents in this survey averaged more than twice that amount per month—31 hours—making them outstandingly dedicated volunteers.

¹² Hall, Michael, David Lasby, Glen Gumulka, and Catherine Tryon, *Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians: Highlights from the 2007 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering, and Participating*. Statistics Canada. Ottawa: Minister of Industry, 2009.

Section 4: With whom retired teachers volunteer and in which activities they are engaged

BCRTA volunteers work with more than a single age group and with people of all ages. Approximately 60% of those who responded work with pre-retirement adults, and another 60% assist peers. About a third of all retired educators work with young children and a quarter of them work with adolescents. Most of the volunteer activities of retired educators are people-focused. Typically, respondents explained that they “do day care... My wife and I volunteer to do this to help our kids. Since January, 2011, we look after our grandkids approximately 400 hours a month.” One wrote of working with teens: “I recently started volunteering for adolescents because of a request from our local Society of Organized Services for volunteers to speak to a social group I belong to.” Another described chairing a district scholarship committee, thus assisting youth as they embark on post-secondary study and careers; and many respondents wrote of helping friends who were ill and elderly neighbours who needed services involving driving and shopping as well as companionship.

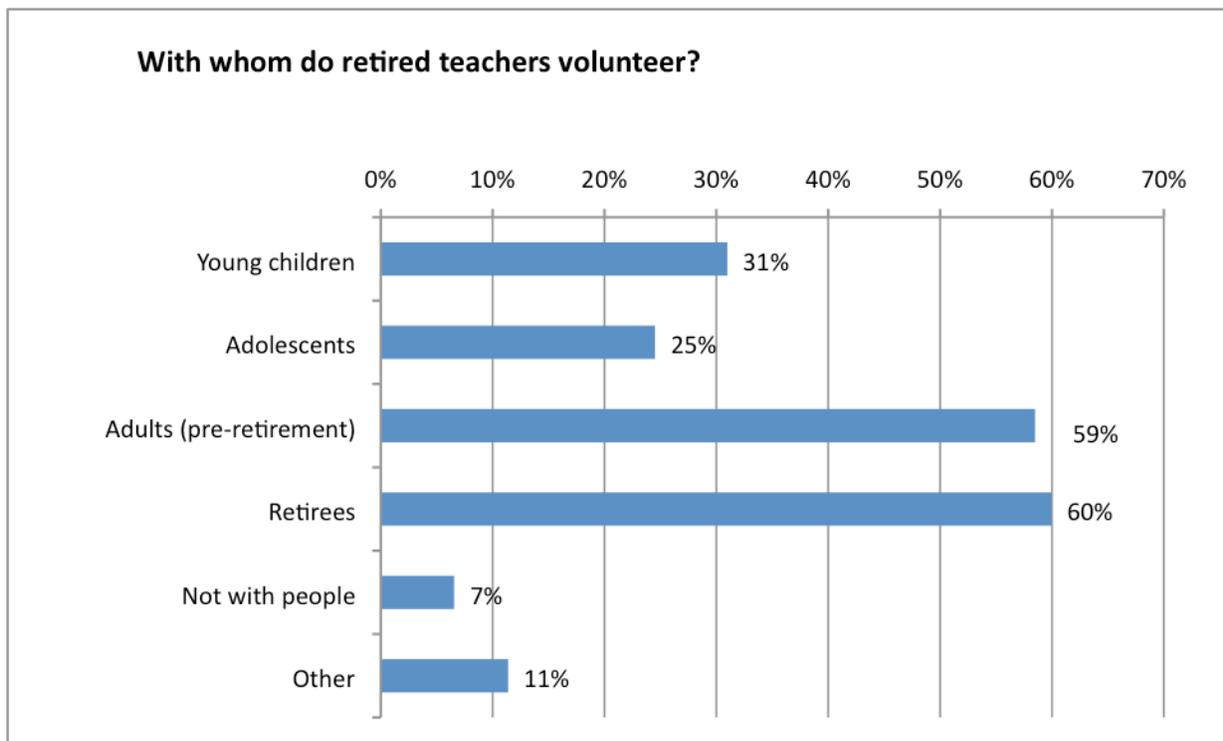


Figure 10: With whom do retired teachers volunteer?

Sixty-eight respondents (7%) indicated that they volunteered in areas not associated with people, while 118 volunteers chose the category “Other”. An analysis of the 118 comments made in the “Other” category, however, indicates that 48 of them do indeed work directly with people of all ages: 31 respondents work with special groups such as seniors in care facilities, the homeless, those in hospices, tourists, immigrants, women in need, medical students, veterans, and people

with specific medical conditions such as cancer and arthritis. Sixteen of the respondents choosing the “Other” category work in leadership roles, serving on boards of directors or as community organization officers, while three specified caring for family members. Six of the 118 “Other” indicated that they worked for political parties or archived historical materials. Other respondents (13) raise funds and make items such as quilts for charity; they support libraries, thrift, and gift stores; provide items for food banks; and do clerical work for others including letter-writing and tax-form completion. Eleven work in various capacities for the congregations of their churches, eight work with animals, three keep community gardens, and one person cleans Red Cross equipment.

Considering that many of these descriptions must be interpreted as working with people, and taking into account that some of the respondents reported more than one activity, it was determined that of those 118 in the “Other” category, only 31 do not work directly with people, telling us again that retired educators are largely people-focused in their choice of volunteer activities. One respondent speaks of the satisfaction of working with other people using personal and acquired teaching skills: “I enjoy working as part of a team, speaking to large or small groups, and meeting the public. Always the teacher, I guess!”

Which activities are retired teacher volunteers engaged in?

Volunteer activity	# of respondents	% of all respondents
Sitting as a board or committee member	555	53.57%
Organizing or supervising events	500	48.26%
Educating	393	37.93%
Canvassing, campaigning, fundraising	290	27.99%
Office, administrative work	274	26.45%
Personal support/companionship to other individuals or families	265	25.58%
Advocating for others	196	18.92%
Driving people or goods	174	18.82%
Advising	163	16.80%
Reading/literacy support	154	15.73%
Collecting, serving, delivering food	138	14.86%
Consulting	118	13.32%
Research and cataloguing	111	11.39%
Influencing public opinion, lobbying	109	10.71%
Gardening	99	10.52%
Coaching	92	9.56%
Physical work other than gardening, building maintenance/repair, or housework	56	8.88%
Building maintenance/repair	52	5.41%
Caring for animals	44	5.02%
Housework	33	4.25%
Other (write-in responses)	195	3.19%

Figure 11: Which activities are retired teachers engaged in?

Respondents were not restricted in the number of activity areas they could report. Therefore, in the specified areas of the survey, the 1,036 respondents indicated that they volunteer in activity areas amounting to 3,816 engagements. As well, an analysis of respondent comments indicates that another 195 work in areas other than those designated on the survey. Therefore, many retired educators are multi-engaged during their volunteering hours, doing a wide range of activities, not only one volunteer activity, but as many as four different kinds of activities, totalling 4,011 different volunteer endeavours by 1,036 respondents.

Of the areas specified, 3,017 of the volunteer engagements relate to areas requiring the specialized skills retired educators acquired and utilized during their working lives: leading, organizing, educating, advocating, administering, consulting, and advising. Approximately 50% of retired respondents volunteer in the two top volunteer areas (see Figure 11)—sitting as a board or committee member and organizing or supervising events; these activities require leadership and organizational skills. If this community leadership is extrapolated to the 30,000 retired educators residing in all areas of BC, the implications are significant. How would our communities fare without the roles played by retired educator volunteers? The following comments capture this sentiment:

- “Without volunteers, certain important aspects of our community would cease to exist altogether.”
- “I have noticed that retired teachers are extremely active as volunteers. I am constantly running into retired teachers/administrators who are volunteering in the areas where I also volunteer. I think one of my regular places... would cease to run without us.”
- “The backbone of their communities,” senior volunteers are “an integral part of the community and have so much to offer.”
- “They work as role models and provide a valuable service to society.”
- “Volunteers get things done.”
- “A radiologist commented that if all the volunteers did not show up on one day, that the hospitals would grind to a halt.”
- The “efforts of volunteers shape the society in which we live.”

And probably nowhere is the contribution more significant than in the area of caregiving. In some cases, volunteers acted as caregivers within the definition used for volunteer activities¹³ and in other cases, referenced caregiving outside of the definition—most often offering care in their own home to partners/family. While 25% of the survey respondents stated that, as volunteer activities, they provide personal support/companionship to other individuals or families, many other respondents in their comments indicated that they provide care, although they did not classify those services as volunteerism.

In fact, respondents would commonly claim that they “[did] not volunteer” when in reality they were doing such things as “voluntary babysitting for single mom, visiting patients in nursing

¹³ “providing a service, without pay, to anyone not living in the same household, or to the community or environment; and providing this service either directly, on one’s own, or indirectly, through a group or organization.” (page 7)

home every week, hospital visits, home visits for those grieving loved ones.” Comments such as the following were not uncommon: “I help my own parents (partly why I cannot volunteer due to doctor’s appointments for my mom), help my children (babysitting grandchildren), and care for my spouse.” Thus, caregiving, in all of its forms, is a major focus of retired teachers, and constitutes a significant economic and social contribution by retired educators to the communities in which they reside. “Without volunteers on [our] island, a lot of groups and individuals would go without entertainment, general care, and nurturing,” writes one person, reflecting the prevailing message of the elaborating comments made on the survey.

Section 5: Responses from retirees who do not volunteer now, or have not volunteered in the last 12 months

Retired educators who do not volunteer

The survey found that approximately 15% of retired educators (154 respondents) had not volunteered in the previous 12 months. About 6% (61 respondents) used to volunteer but no longer do so, while 6.08% (63 respondents) do not volunteer at the moment although they intend to in the future.

Of the 1,036 retired teachers who completed the survey, only 30 have not volunteered and do not intend to do so. This means that 1,006 respondents are volunteering, used to volunteer, or intend to volunteer in the future. This statistic emphasizes the remarkable contribution of our members to communities in BC.

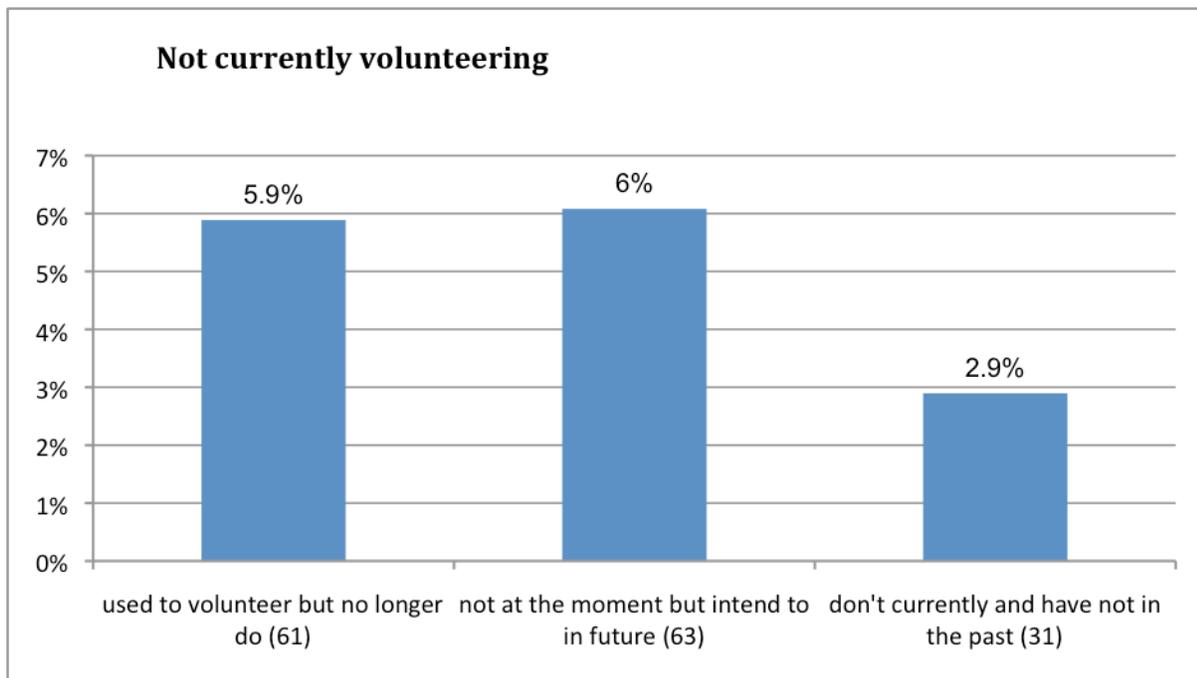


Figure 12: Not currently volunteering

Why retired teachers do not volunteer

The survey asked those who had not volunteered in the last 12 months to indicate the reason or reasons why they did not volunteer. No respondents disagreed with the concept of volunteering. Of the 1,036 survey respondents, 154 non-volunteering participants gave a number of reasons for not volunteering: they said they were pursuing their own interests, giving money instead of time, or were unable to find the time to volunteer. Some indicated that health, mobility, and transportation difficulties prevented their volunteering. Many respondents who stated that commitments preventing them from volunteering cited activities that in themselves,

according to the parameters of this survey, fell into the realm of “volunteer activities”: “My time for volunteering has been limited in the past year due to the failing health of my parents.” And “I am mentoring and shepherding several elderly long-time friends, i.e., appointments, grocery shopping, and outings.”

Of those not currently volunteering, some felt that they had “done their bit,” while less than 1% of the respondents offered a range of reasons: they were not interested, felt they didn’t have an opportunity, had not been asked, were concerned about liability, or could not afford to volunteer. Typical comments here included, “People need to use their own vehicles...I have heard that some people in our area will only volunteer one day a week due to the cost of gasoline,” and “Health concerns and the cost of travel from a rural district restricts my volunteer time.”

Statements regarding not volunteering	# of respondents	% of all respondents
I am pursuing my own interests.	78	7.53%
I give money instead of time.	57	5.50%
I’m unwilling to make the time commitment.	42	4.05%
Health problems prevent me from doing so.	33	3.19%
I have already made my contribution. (“I’ve done my bit.”)	25	2.41%
No one has asked me to volunteer.	21	2.03%
My ability to travel is restricted.	15	1.45%
I have limited mobility.	14	1.35%
I’m not interested.	8	0.77%
There are few opportunities where I live.	6	0.58%
I have concerns about liability.	5	0.48%
The costs involved are prohibitive.	3	0.29%
I am opposed to the concept of volunteering.	0	
Other (write-in responses)	45	4.34%

Figure 13: Statements regarding not volunteering

Of the 45 “Other” write-in responses, six indicated that they were working and did not have time to volunteer, and 15 said that they were not volunteering because they were helping others; they did not consider this help to be volunteering even though help of this nature was defined by the survey as volunteer activity. For example, “We have a 96-year-old father living with us, so I am occupied with caregiving; I also have younger grandchildren so help them when I can.” One respondent not volunteering at this time said, “I’m just getting used to retirement and resting right now. I intend to get involved when I feel the time is right.” Another stated, “Some of us lack more time to volunteer but are able to contribute financially to projects and causes, to people and places, to educational and social concerns in the community and beyond.”

“Before I became responsible for raising our 10-year-old granddaughter, I volunteered as an advocate for affordable housing and for services for those with mental illness. Life has changed and so have my family responsibilities, resulting in increased dedication to the welfare of my grandchild and also in more household expenses.”

It may thus be concluded that most retired educators are actively engaged in their communities and that their dedication to this engagement is based on their desire to help meet the needs of citizens in their societies. A spirit of compassionate care and willingness to give pervades the comments of the survey respondents: “I had a stroke last year which severely reduced my ability to assist as a volunteer. However, I’m ready to begin again and should be active sometime in the next few weeks,” writes one retired educator. The commitment of the volunteers to serving their communities, to give time and support to others, is evident in their written remarks and is often considered by them to be simply a natural humanitarian response to the needs perceived. One respondent, describing personal involvement in several volunteering activities related to caregiving, declared, “This all sounds very noble of me, but there are lots of other retirees who do the same things and probably don’t consider it to be volunteering.” The commitment of retired educators to their volunteer activities is strong, and the extent of it undoubtedly has a considerable impact on the fabric of society in communities throughout British Columbia.

“Volunteering is wonderful, keeps us young, keeps brain cells dancing, and makes us realize just how many skills have been attained throughout a teaching career. Volunteering not only fills the hours but provides an opportunity to serve others in a meaningful way, to make community stronger, to give back to society the benefit we get from living in a democratic country.”

Section 6: Summary of findings

Of the 1,036 respondents to the survey, very few were currently not volunteering. In fact, thousands of retired teachers in BCRTA branch zones throughout the province are active in volunteering in communities where typically, for more than 10 years, they have lived their lives and built connections.

According to the findings, more than 50% of the volunteers were in the age groups of 60–64 and 65–69, but the spirit of giving and involvement was found to prevail among BCRTA members even past the age of 85.

Retired educators in BC individually devote an average of 31 hours monthly to volunteer work. They do this in multiple endeavours in a broad range of community and people-centred activities. With a major focus on organizations or events, caregiving, education, arts and culture, and health and hospitals, retired teachers are involved in providing important social and human services to communities. As they engage in their volunteer activities, they touch the lives of people in all age groups from children to the elderly. Typically, BC retired teachers engage in activities that use the skills of their working days: leading, organizing, advocating, supporting, and coaching.

Male retired educators tend to give slightly more of their time than do female retired educators to sports and recreation and to organizations at both the federal and provincial levels, while female respondents give much more time than their male counterparts to caregiving and health and social services. Both men and women donate approximately equal amounts of time to arts and culture, education, international organizations, environment, and religion.

Very few retired educators are not volunteering, and of those, none are philosophically against the concept of volunteering. While it was expected that because of the age of the retired teacher population, non-volunteers would have cited health-related reasons as barriers to volunteering, in fact, the reasons most often were pursuing own interests, having difficulty finding time, and preferring to give money rather than time.

Retired educators contribute in diverse and significant ways to the well-being and sustainability of the communities of our province. During their lives as educators, BC teachers were devoted to their charges—the school children in their communities; perhaps it is not surprising that their altruistic and compassionate spirit of involvement and caring carries on to become their passionate preoccupation in retirement.

Section 7: Discussion

The 2007 *Canadian Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating* found that Canadians each contributed an average of 166 volunteer hours annually.¹⁴ In contrast, BC retired educators each contribute an average of 31 volunteer hours monthly, or 372 hours annually—well over double the amount of time contributed by the average Canadian citizen. This statistic makes the retired teachers of BC outstanding volunteers. What does this mean for the province of BC, for its society, its communities?

The 1,036 respondents of this survey constitute slightly over 7% of the total BCRTA membership.¹⁵ If extrapolated to the entire BCRTA membership of 14,751 and calculated at only a minimum wage of \$10 per hour, the contribution of BCRTA volunteers is valued at over \$4.6 million per month, \$55 million annually. Further, the Teachers' Pension Plan reports that 29,821 retirees were receiving pension benefits as of December 31, 2010.¹⁶ Assuming that this entire retired educator group contributes volunteer hours at the same rate as BCRTA members, the replacement work value of retired educators volunteering in the province would be very close to \$111 million annually. This is a phenomenal contribution by retired educators to the welfare of BC communities.

Caregiving assistance by retired educators as a focus of volunteering alone constitutes a huge financial and social benefit to our health care and child care systems. The need for volunteering in this critical area may reflect the gap in services due to government cutbacks. One respondent writes of the support typically given by retired educators to help keep senior parents and friends living in their own homes, saving the costs of providing provincial care centres: "My mom can stay in her home only because I'm close by to help her." Another writes, "I spend a huge amount of time each month providing support for two elderly family members. Part of the reason this support is needed is the cutting of intermediate care levels; so many seniors in BC need family assistance because they cannot afford private care in the increasingly privately-owned care facilities."

Another survey respondent stated: "[I am] philosophically opposed to the concept of retirees becoming unpaid workers so the government can balance its budget and/or pay huge bonuses to crown corporations." Therein lies the dilemma for retired teacher volunteers. While wishing to enhance the life of their communities, retired educators are faced with the question of whether their volunteer work is replacing that which should rightfully be done by paid employees in services that ought to be provided by the federal and provincial governments or the local communities in which they live.

¹⁴ Hall, Michael, David Lasby, Glen Gumulka, and Catherine Tryon. *Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians: Highlights from the 2007 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering, and Participating*. Statistics Canada. Ottawa: Minister of Industry, 2009.

¹⁵ "Membership Stats as of April 30, 2011." *Postscript* Summer, 2011:9.

¹⁶ Teachers' Pension Plan, *Annual Report for 2010*, Teachers' Pension Plan Website: http://www.pensionsbc.ca/portal/page/portal/annual_reports/teachers_annual_reports/tpp_annual_report_2010, accessed August 2011.

There is much motivation for retired teachers to give of their time and their skills. First, there is a desire on their part to give back to their society. Also, volunteerism has been linked to positive health benefits: according to the Canadian Community of Health Survey of 2008, “Close to two-thirds of those who felt a very strong or somewhat strong sense of community belonging reported excellent or very good health.”¹⁷ Furthermore, in 2008, Dr. David Butler-Jones, Chief Public Health officer, Public Health Agency of Canada, stated, “It is no coincidence that those who volunteer, who give of themselves and who take an active part in their community end up, on average, healthier and happier.” Comments of the survey respondents typically supported those of Butler-Jones: “I have volunteered ever since retirement. This has been and continues to be a most positive experience of giving back to the community, keeping my mind active. I believe it also affects my feeling of well-being and overall health in a positive way.”

Volunteering offers not only the potential for better health, but also opportunities for social interaction, personal, mental, and spiritual development, and a chance to make a difference, to support a cause. As one respondent to the survey states, “Volunteering is a wonderful way to be involved in mankind...I come into contact with many different people and feel I am making a difference.” Another says, “Volunteering continues to be a rewarding experience for me. The payback is not financial but it fills the soul with satisfaction.” Further, “I find that I get more out of volunteering than what I put into the jobs I take part in.” Thus, volunteering benefits not only the person or group receiving the help, but also the helper.

With the benefits obviously going both ways—not only to the volunteer but also to service recipients, communities, the province and country—the question of promoting volunteering must be addressed. Indeed, many survey respondents described the satisfaction derived from their volunteering activities: “The richness gained by the volunteer is greater than the richness gained by society.” Several mentioned the joys of “being appreciated and respected,” of supporting and belonging to the community, of “feeling useful, needed, and part of a bigger entity,” of “being fulfilled,” and “giving back.” However, in their enthusiasm to give back, volunteers must be cognizant of the type of volunteer work they are engaging in: Is it taking the place of work that should be done by paid workers? If so, then taking on work such as this could hurt potential workers by preventing them from obtaining employment.

Currently there is increasing pressure on Canadians to take on volunteer commitments and much interest in tapping the retired-person volunteer population as a rich source of experienced, skilled workers. Corporations sponsor or fund volunteer recruitment projects.¹⁸ Organizations, even hospitals, are conducting such projects as “Research about volunteering in older adults”, aiming not only to study the healthful effects of volunteerism on the volunteer but also to “devise incentives to encourage charitable organizations to recruit and retain volunteers.”¹⁹ The federal

¹⁷ Butler-Jones, Dr. David. *Chief Public Health Officer's Report on the State of Public Health in Canada 2008: Addressing Health Inequalities*. Statistics Canada. Health Reports. June 2008. www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/cphorsphc-respcacsp/2008/pdf/cpho-report-eng.pdf, accessed August 2011.

¹⁸ *Baby Boomers: Your New Volunteers. An Introductory Workbook: Rethinking your organization's approach to Baby Boomer volunteers*. Volunteer Canada 2009.

¹⁹ Lorine, John. “Altruistic Value” *Zoomer Magazine*. June 2011. 91–92

government actively supports volunteerism. Since 2000, three federal volunteer initiative programs, with a total budget of nearly \$150 million, have been established to encourage Canadians to participate as volunteers.²⁰ One of these, the “Voluntary Sector Strategy”, cites as one of its objectives, “funding innovation projects that include enhancing care-giving through informal volunteering.” There is concern that concentrated volunteer recruitment efforts might lead to using volunteers to address labour shortages and take pressure off health care budgets. If so, then we must be wary of volunteerism as a replacement for jobs and services that should be provided by the country and the province.²¹ One survey commenter echoes this concern: “We need to be a bit careful. Sometimes the more volunteers do, the less the government does. Government needs to remain responsible to citizens’ collective needs, by watching what is spent where and how, more diligently. This comes through active listening, and working together in a positive, responsive manner to attain the worthwhile goals of our provinces and country.”

The caution surrounding the volunteerism/paid-work issue can be applied to another volunteering problem receiving attention as the baby boomers retiree. Linda Graff and Paul Reed, in *Who cares?: The Graff-Reed conversations*, maintain that the volunteer picture in Canada is changing.²² Graff contends that there is a shift in the attitudes toward volunteering that will result in community life in Canada being fundamentally altered. The “civic generation” that grew up during the Great Depression and World War II and that was inculcated with the value of giving for the greater good of the community is disappearing. In its place, say Graff and Reed, is a new attitude emerging among volunteers, one that changes from a purely altruistic motivation to one that seeks “personal payoff or benefit.” This may signal a shift in volunteer focus and activity, a shift that may change the picture of volunteering in Canada. Moreover, Graff and Reed maintain that volunteerism is declining at an alarming rate—2% a year. While this may not seem alarming at the moment given the considerable corps of Canadian volunteers, it does mean that within 10 years, community volunteerism could drop by as much as 20%. Then, one wonders, who will do the caregiving, provide organizational leadership, work to protect the environment and wildlife, and take on the other hundreds of tasks and responsibilities now borne by volunteers?

To reverse this trend of a reduction in volunteering, Graff and Reed advise, volunteers must be appreciated and valued. In British Columbia, community leaders and municipalities, in order to recruit and retain volunteers, should lead the way in raising the awareness of the value of volunteering, and structure volunteering opportunities so that they meet the needs of volunteers as well as the needs of the organizations and communities in which volunteers offer their

²⁰ *Volunteerism among seniors—A presentation for the National Seniors’ Council* by Liz Rootham, Director General, Community Development and Partnerships Directorate, HRSDC, and Catherine Drew, Director, Seniors Policy, HRSDC. March 19, 2009.

²¹ Lorine, John. “Altruistic value,” *Zoomer Magazine*. June 2011. 9192.

²² Graff, Linda L. and Paul B. Reed. “Who Cares? Shifting Patterns of Community Participation.” *The Graff-Reed Conversations: A Way-of-Life Wake-Up Call for Canada’s Communities*. Canada Who Cares? Project. Dundas, Ontario. 2007. <http://www.canadawhocares.ca/>, accessed August 2011.

services. They should find creative ways to recognize community volunteers, to ensure that their volunteers feel they are productive and making a difference.

One survey volunteer writes, “I have been volunteering at the RCMP [location] Community Policing Office and facilitating the St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog program for the last twelve years. I was honoured to be the recipient of the order of St. John (Member) at Government House in Victoria last June. This investiture was the highlight of my volunteering.”

Provincial and federal governments also should do their part to reverse the discernible trend toward fewer Canadian volunteers. The province of BC could encourage volunteerism among retirees by such measures as promoting the implementation of the features of Age-Friendly Communities,²³ which would facilitate the mobility of senior volunteers. Some survey volunteers mentioned they would increase their volunteering if they could get to their volunteer destinations more easily. Ensuring that communities provide accessible public transportation and safe and hazard-free streets would address the retiree volunteers’ concerns of accessibility and safety.

Another way in which the province could recognize and increase the contribution of this volunteer population is by reducing or eliminating service fees that impact the income of seniors, thus enabling them financially to continue supporting and giving to their communities. As retired teacher survey respondents stated, “Volunteering costs a lot of money—membership fees, transportation, donations, gifts, as well as time involved.”

In spite of the cost, the desire of the retired volunteer to give back, to support the community, is strong. One writes, “I think I have an illness called ‘volunteerism’! There is so much to do and so little time.” To encourage and sustain this attitude among senior volunteers in British Columbia, government could consider reducing or eliminating service-fee obligations—for example, that of Medical Services Plan (MSP) premiums. Legislation to this end would not only address the problem of financial constraints in regard to volunteering, but also express appreciation to senior volunteers for the value of their contributions. It would provide them with financial resources enabling them to attend to their existing volunteer contributions and perhaps even to take on providing additional services. This would increase and thus strengthen the retired educator volunteer corps and encourage their philanthropic inclination: “I enjoy working with others. I have been helped in the past and consider it a pleasure to pass on that experience to others. I firmly believe that seniors have an enormous amount of experience in various areas and therefore, are an integral part of the community and have so much to offer; it is important that they act as role models.” Support by the provincial government would encourage the spirit of caring and social concern expressed in comments throughout this survey, and it would financially enable retirees to continue to contribute by reaching their volunteering sites.

As the federal government strives to promote volunteerism through its periodic surveys, initiative programs, and volunteer awards, other positive steps could be taken to encourage volunteerism. Survey participants had suggestions to this effect, typically writing, “Wouldn’t it be nice if at least community service for organization fees were tax deductible? And maybe

²³ What is an age-friendly community? <http://www.seniorsbc.ca/agefriendly/communities/intro.html>

transportation related to specific volunteer tasks?” Many, in fact, mentioned that volunteering would be more possible for them if they were supported with tax exemptions to cover the expenses associated with volunteering. Introducing tax relief similar to that accorded to political donations, for example, would encourage retirees in Canada to continue in their important work and send them a strong message of appreciation for the significant social and financial contributions they make to their communities and beyond.

As Liz Rootham and Catherine Drew of the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada observe, “Senior volunteers are crucial to the success of our communities. They tend to engage in administrative work, the organizing activities, sitting on committees and boards, and being involved in healthcare and fundraising.”²⁴ BCRTA member volunteers make a great difference throughout the province of BC, contributing positively to the development and evolution of their communities, providing financial, social, psychological, and emotional support to the communities in which they live. BCRTA members are continuing a long Canadian history and tradition of co-operative community-building. Working in their communities, province, and nation, retired educators add to the work of other volunteers throughout the country. They do their part to enrich and strengthen their communities and to contribute to the spirit of what it means to be Canadian.

With predictions of less volunteering in the future, actions to support volunteering are required now, and the retired teachers of BC therefore call for some relief in terms of tax from the federal government, and reduced service fees from the government of BC, for retirees who do or have volunteered.

Finally, the authors of this report wish to thank all those retired teacher volunteers from every region of this province who have shared their experiences and reflections. They show high levels of volunteer activity and make significant contributions to communities and to the economy of BC. Their work as volunteers makes our world a better place, and we hope that this report will enable informed discussion about retiree volunteering in British Columbia and encourage the municipal, provincial, and federal governments to consider what they might do to support the selfless work of volunteers.

²⁴ *Volunteerism among seniors—A presentation for the National Seniors’ Council* by Liz Rootham, Director General, Community Development and Partnerships Directorate, HRSDC and Catherine Drew, Director, Seniors Policy, HRSDC. March 19, 2009.

References

- Actuarial Report on British Columbia Teachers' Pension Plan: Related to Valuation as at December 31, 2008*. Vancouver, British Columbia. September 2009:5.
- Baby Boomers. Your New Volunteers. An Introductory Workbook: Rethinking your organization's approach to Baby Boomer volunteers*. Volunteer Canada. 2009.
- Butler-Jones, Dr. David. Statistics Canada. Health Reports. June 2008. *Chief Public Health Officer's Report on the State of Public Health in Canada 2008: Addressing Health Inequalities*. <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/cphorsphc-respcacsp/2008/pdf/cpho-report-eng.pdf> accessed August 2011.
- Graff, Linda L. and Paul B. Reed. "Who Cares? Shifting Patterns of Community Participation." *The Graff-Reed Conversations: A Way-of-Life Wake-Up Call for Canada's Communities*. Canada Who Cares? Project. Dundas, Ontario. 2007. <http://www.canadawhocares.ca/> accessed August 2011.
- Hall, Michael, David Lasby, Glen Gumulka, and Catherine Tryon. *Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians: Highlights from the 2007 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering, and Participating*. Statistics Canada. Ottawa: Minister of Industry. 2009.
- Jones, Frank, "Seniors who volunteer." *Perspectives on Labour and Income*. Statistics Canada. Catalogue no. 75-001-XPE: 11, 3 (Autumn 1999).
- Lorine, John. "Altruistic Value". *Zoomer Magazine*: June 2011: 91–92.
- "Membership Stats as of April 30, 2011." *Postscript*: Summer 2011: 9.
- Report of the National Seniors Council on Volunteering Among Seniors and Positive and Active Aging: May 2010*. Submitted to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, the Minister of Health, and the Minister of State (Seniors) http://www.seniorscouncil.gc.ca/eng/research_publications/volunteering.pdf accessed September 2011.
- Teachers' Pension Plan. *Annual Report for 2010*. Teachers' Pension Plan website: http://www.pensionsbc.ca/portal/page/portal/annual_reports/teachers_annual_reports/tp_p_annual_report_2010 accessed August 2011.
- Volunteer Connections: New strategies for involving older adults*. Volunteer Canada. Ottawa: Volunteer Canada, 2001. <http://volunteer.ca/files/OlderAdults-Eng.pdf> accessed October 2011.
- Volunteerism among seniors—A presentation for the National Seniors' Council* by Liz Rootham, Director General, Community Development and Partnerships Directorate, HRSDC and Catherine Drew, Director, Seniors Policy, HRSDC. March 19, 2009.
- World Health Organization. *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide*. Geneva: World Health Organization. 2007.

Appendix A: Letter and link to survey on RTA website for the months of March and April, 2011

Dear BCRTA Member,

We are conducting this survey on our members' volunteerism in order to collect evidence of our individual and collective contributions to BC society.

We hope that the results of the survey will be of benefit to all our members in the following ways:

- for use in lobbying on behalf of member interests and benefits;
- to recognize and celebrate our contribution to our communities; and
- to inspire the volunteer work of others.

We anticipate that it will take you about 10 minutes to complete this survey. Written comments in the space provided are welcome and will be analyzed and presented in the report.

All responses will be anonymous.

Your participation is very important to us. Please complete the survey by **April 30, 2011**.

The survey has been designed and formatted with the support of BCTF Research staff. When compiled and tabulated, the results will be reported in the media, in local community papers, in *Postscript* and *Teacher*, and on the BCRTA website. They will also be presented in September to the 2011 Annual General Meeting of the BCRTA.

Our plan is to share this survey instrument and to compare results with those of kindred organizations such as members of the Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of BC and the Canadian Association of Retired Teachers.

If you have any questions regarding this survey, please contact one of the following members of the "Volunteerism Survey" committee:

Cliff Boldt, [e-mail address, phone number]
Judy deVries, [e-mail address, phone number]
JoAnn Lauber, [e-mail address, phone number]
Sheila Pither, [e-mail address, phone number]

Yours sincerely,

Doug Edgar
President, BCRTA

JoAnn Lauber
for the "Volunteerism Survey" Committee

Appendix B: Letter to Branch Presidents

March 10, 2011

Dear [name of Branch President],

We are conducting a survey to get information on the range and extent of volunteering by BCRTA members. In order to obtain results of statistical validity, we would like as many of our members as possible to complete this survey.

The survey may be accessed on the BCRTA website: *bcrta.ca*. It is the first item on the home page. The survey will be online until the deadline: **April 30, 2011**.

Would you please use whatever means possible—newsletter, meeting, phone tree, e-mail, website, etc.—to inform your branch members of the existence of the survey and to encourage them to complete it. Please assure your members that the responses will be anonymous.

For the sake of tabulation and cost efficiency, and if at all possible, please have members respond to the survey on the website. This way of responding is preferable; however, answers may be submitted on a print copy. Copies of the survey may be printed off the website or may be requested from the BCRTA office.

If you choose to collect and send in completed surveys, perhaps collected at a meeting or somehow given to you by members, then please mail them to the BCRTA office:

British Columbia Retired Teachers' Association
Suite 100—550 West 6th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V5Z 4P2

Alternatively, people could mail in their own individual responses. The responses must be those of individuals, i.e., do not compile all of your print responses into one submission.

If you have questions, please direct them to a member of the Volunteerism Survey Committee:

Cliff Boldt, [e-mail address, phone number]
Judy deVries, [e-mail address, phone number]
JoAnn Lauber, [e-mail address, phone number]
Sheila Pither, [e-mail address, phone number]

We appeal to you for your assistance, and we thank you for action you may take to ensure extensive participation in this project.

Yours sincerely,

Doug Edgar, President
BCRTA

Appendix C: Survey instrument

BC Retired Teachers' Association survey:

Telling the stories of retired teachers' volunteer activities

For the purposes of this survey we have suggested the following definition of volunteering:

Volunteering: providing a service, without pay, to anyone not living in the same household, or to the community or environment; and providing this service either directly, on one's own, or indirectly, through a group or organization.

Section 1: Demographics

1a. Please indicate your BCRTA branch (listed in alphabetical order; choose one):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Abbotsford | <input type="radio"/> New Westminster |
| <input type="radio"/> Alberni | <input type="radio"/> Nicola Valley |
| <input type="radio"/> Boundary Area | <input type="radio"/> North Coast |
| <input type="radio"/> Burnaby | <input type="radio"/> North Shore |
| <input type="radio"/> Campbell River | <input type="radio"/> Parksville/Qualicum |
| <input type="radio"/> Cariboo Chilcotin | <input type="radio"/> Peace River North |
| <input type="radio"/> Central Okanagan | <input type="radio"/> Peace River South |
| <input type="radio"/> Chilliwack | <input type="radio"/> Powell River |
| <input type="radio"/> Comox Valley | <input type="radio"/> Prince George |
| <input type="radio"/> Coquitlam | <input type="radio"/> Prince Rupert |
| <input type="radio"/> Cowichan Valley | <input type="radio"/> Princeton |
| <input type="radio"/> Cranbrook | <input type="radio"/> Quesnel |
| <input type="radio"/> Creston | <input type="radio"/> Richmond |
| <input type="radio"/> Delta | <input type="radio"/> Ridge Meadows |
| <input type="radio"/> Elk Valley | <input type="radio"/> Shuswap & District |
| <input type="radio"/> Gulf Islands | <input type="radio"/> South Okanagan |
| <input type="radio"/> Sea To Sky | <input type="radio"/> Sunshine Coast |
| <input type="radio"/> Kamloops | <input type="radio"/> Surrey |
| <input type="radio"/> Kimberley | <input type="radio"/> Vancouver |
| <input type="radio"/> Kitimat | <input type="radio"/> Vernon |
| <input type="radio"/> Kootenay/Columbia | <input type="radio"/> Lower Vancouver Island |
| <input type="radio"/> Kootenay Lake West | <input type="radio"/> Post-Secondary Educators |
| <input type="radio"/> Langley | <input type="radio"/> Remote area network |
| <input type="radio"/> Mission | <input type="radio"/> Other |
| <input type="radio"/> Nanaimo/Ladysmith | <input type="radio"/> Don't know |

1b. If you are a member of a second BCRTA branch, please indicate here (choose one):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Abbotsford | <input type="radio"/> New Westminster |
| <input type="radio"/> Alberni | <input type="radio"/> Nanaimo/Ladysmith |
| <input type="radio"/> Boundary Area | <input type="radio"/> Nicola Valley |
| <input type="radio"/> Burnaby | <input type="radio"/> North Coast |
| <input type="radio"/> Campbell River | <input type="radio"/> North Shore |
| <input type="radio"/> Cariboo Chilcotin | <input type="radio"/> Parksville/Qualicum |
| <input type="radio"/> Central Okanagan | <input type="radio"/> Peace River North |
| <input type="radio"/> Chilliwack | <input type="radio"/> Peace River South |
| <input type="radio"/> Comox Valley | <input type="radio"/> Powell River |
| <input type="radio"/> Coquitlam | <input type="radio"/> Prince George |
| <input type="radio"/> Cowichan Valley | <input type="radio"/> Prince Rupert |
| <input type="radio"/> Cranbrook | <input type="radio"/> Princeton |
| <input type="radio"/> Creston | <input type="radio"/> Quesnel |
| <input type="radio"/> Delta | <input type="radio"/> Richmond |
| <input type="radio"/> Elk Valley | <input type="radio"/> Ridge Meadows |
| <input type="radio"/> Gulf Islands | <input type="radio"/> Shuswap & District |
| <input type="radio"/> Sea To Sky | <input type="radio"/> South Okanagan |
| <input type="radio"/> Kamloops | <input type="radio"/> Sunshine Coast |
| <input type="radio"/> Kimberley | <input type="radio"/> Surrey |
| <input type="radio"/> Kitimat | <input type="radio"/> Vancouver |
| <input type="radio"/> Kootenay/Columbia | <input type="radio"/> Vernon |
| <input type="radio"/> Kootenay Lake West | <input type="radio"/> Lower Vancouver Island |
| <input type="radio"/> Langley | <input type="radio"/> Post-Secondary Educators |
| <input type="radio"/> Mission | <input type="radio"/> Remote area network |

2. Community of residence:

3. How long have you lived in your current community?

- Less than 1 year
- 1 to 5 years
- 6 to 9 years
- 10 years or more

4. Gender:

- Female
- Male

5. Age:

- 55-59
- 60-64
- 65-69
- 70-74
- 75-79
- 80-84
- 85+

Your views on volunteering

If you do volunteer now, or have volunteered in the last 12 months, please proceed to question 6, in Section 2.

If you do not volunteer at this time, and if you have not volunteered in the past 12 months, please skip to question 10, in Section 3.

Section 2: Your volunteering focus and volunteer hours during the last 12 months

6. Following is a table with a list of areas of volunteering focus. Please select “yes” or “no” to indicate whether you have volunteered in each of the areas of focus in the last 12 months. Then, for each of the areas for which you select “yes”, please estimate the average number of hours per month that you have volunteered over the past 12 months, and enter that number in the right-hand column.

- If you volunteer in other areas which are not listed in the table, there is space in 6q and 6r to describe the other area and the average number of hours you volunteer per month.

- If you (also) volunteer in activities that happen once a year rather than on an ongoing/continuous basis, you can tell us about that in question 7a-c.

Area of volunteering focus	“I volunteer/have volunteered in this area in the last 12 months.”		Average volunteer hours per month in the last 12 months
	Yes	No	
a. Arts and culture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
b. Museums and archives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
c. Sports and recreation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
d. Education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
e. Health and hospitals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
f. Caregiving	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
g. Parks, public gardens, and nurseries	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
h. Environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
i. Animal care (e.g., SPCA)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
j. Community organizations and events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
k. Provincial and federal organizations and associations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
l. International organizations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
m. Social services (e.g., Meals on Wheels, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
n. Law, advocacy, and politics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
o. Religion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
p. “Emergency services” (search/rescue, victims’ services, first aid)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

If your volunteering is related to areas of focus not listed in the table above, please provide the details here:

6q. Other area of focus (i):

Description: _____
Average volunteer hours per month in the last 12 months: _____

6r. Other area of focus (ii):

Description: _____
Average volunteer hours per month in the last 12 months: _____

6s. Total number of volunteer hours per month: Please add up the number of volunteer hours indicated in 6 a-r, above, and enter the total here:

Total average volunteer hours per month: _____

If you volunteer with activities that occur on a “one-off” basis (e.g., a sports event, fund-raising, election-related work, etc.), please describe the activity, and indicate the number of hours that you have volunteered doing that activity in the past 12 months. If this does not apply to you, please continue at question 8.

7a. First “one-off” volunteer activity:

Describe activity: _____
Hours volunteered in the past 12 months: _____

7b. Second “one-off” volunteer activity:

Describe activity: _____
Hours volunteered in the past 12 months: _____

7c. Third “one-off” volunteer activity:

Describe activity: _____
Hours volunteered in the past 12 months: _____

8. With whom do you volunteer? (choose all that apply)

- Young children
- Adolescents
- Adults (pre-retirement)
- Retirees
- When I am volunteering I’m not working with other people
- Other. Please specify: _____

9. Following is a list of types of activity. What types of activity are you engaged in, within your volunteer area(s) of focus? (choose all that apply)

- Organizing or supervising events
- Sitting as a board or committee member
- Canvassing, campaigning, fundraising
- Reading/literacy support
- Consulting
- Office, administrative work
- Research and cataloguing
- Collecting, serving, delivering food
- Influencing public opinion, lobbying
- Educating
- Advocating for others
- Coaching
- Advising
- Personal support/companionship to other individuals or families
- Driving people or goods
- Caring for animals
- Gardening
- Building maintenance/repair
- Housework
- Physical work other than gardening, building maintenance/repair, or housework
- Other (please specify) _____

