

**2025 Volunteer Management Progress report - key takeaways**

Now in its eleventh year, this annual survey by VolunteerPro highlights persistent challenges in volunteer management - most notably the ongoing struggle to recruit and retain volunteers.

The effort to rebuild volunteer capacity in the wake of COVID-19 also continues. In this summary, we highlight the key issues raised in the report, alongside quotes from both volunteers and those in management roles, paid and unpaid.

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| **Location – 19 countries took part** | **Number of respondents – 1061 volunteer leaders engaged** | **% of 1061 respondents** |
| USA | 868 | 80.4 |
| Canada | 89 | 8.2 |
| **UK** | **74** | **6.9** |
| Australia | 24 | 2.2 |
| Other | 24 | 2.3 |

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| **Organisation type** | **%** |
| Non-profit | 78.7 |
| Government agency | 12.2 |
| Small business/corporation | 3.7 |
| Education | 1.6 |
| Church | 0.6 |

**Number of employees**

* 5.2% are volunteer led
* 16.8% have less than 10 employees
* 9.7% have 10 – 19 employees
* 16% have 20 – 49 employees

**Volunteer Coordinators’ experience**

* 11.4% less than 2 years’ experience
* 23.2% with 2 - 5 years

**Full-Time (85.3%) paid (92.8%) employees are the norm across all nations.**

* 21.4% with 6 - 10 years
* 13.9% with 11 - 15
* 30.1% with over 15 years

**Where they work**

* Volunteer Services Department that places volunteers inside an organisation (52.9%)
* Individual Program or Small Org (32.2%)
* Volunteer Centre that supports a network of organisations (4.5%)
* Central enterprise office that supports a network of local affiliates (3.3%)
* Corporate CSR Office that mobilizes employee volunteers (0.5%)
* Other (6.7%)

**Time spent devoted to volunteers**

* 22% spent 100% of their time
* 49% spent 76 – 99%

**Top challenges**

* **Volunteer Recruitment** (26.4%) – still the biggest challenge for all organisations, though slightly less prominent than last year. Many struggle to find enough volunteers, especially for traditional and ongoing roles. There is a push to attract specific groups - like younger people or more diverse communities - to build a more reliable and representative volunteer base.
* **Time Pressures** (18.2%) – volunteer managers, often working solo or with minimal support, report being overstretched. Balancing volunteer engagement with other responsibilities means strategic planning and volunteer communication often suffer.
* **Role Matching** (11.7%) – a re-emerging issue. Volunteers’ expectations, availability, and interests don’t always match the roles on offer. It's also difficult to recruit volunteers with the right skills or commitment for key or leadership roles.

* **Internal Support & Recognition** (9.6%) – gaining support from senior staff and colleagues remains a challenge. Many feel their volunteer programmes lack proper investment, strategic direction, or understanding across the wider organisation.
* **Retention** (9.4%) – keeping volunteers engaged is getting harder. There’s concern about younger volunteers and students not following through, and older volunteers stepping back due to changing priorities or health.

51.7% of organisations observed a rise in volunteer numbers. 10% experienced a decline in active volunteers, and one-third reported no change in their volunteer count.

**Insights and quotes from volunteers and volunteer managers**

**Recruitment Strategies and Outreach**

*“Single opportunity promotions - if there is more than one opportunity in an email, there tends to be less response than just highlighting one opportunity.”*

*“Some roles we don't need to do anything - we have more applicants than we can handle, and they just find us without us needing to do any outreach or active advertising. Other roles take a while, and we've found some (limited) success in using VolunteerMatch for those, as well as highlighting openings with our current volunteer pool via weekly newsletters.”*

*“Promoting the fact that one of our roles is flexible and can be dipped in and out of has resulted in more applications and conversions. These people have been engaged even if not volunteering which I think it is due to the understanding between us and them about the 'no pressure' option … Working with a partner organisation and including their volunteers, where they want to get involved. We accept that their volunteers have gone through the checks and processes necessary and take them on as soon as they express an interest.”*

*“For Day of Service activities, we have signage out by the road and have had several people stop by to help out after seeing the signs.”*

**Onboarding activities**

Volunteer onboarding typically involves structured training, background checks, and discussions about program needs. Organisations may also incorporate informal interviews, mentoring / buddying and basic tests.

* Standardised volunteer training or orientation program (80.9%)
* Volunteer certification tests (13.1%)
* Conversations with programs about their volunteer needs (64.6%)
* Volunteer matching interviews (56.3%)
* Volunteer background screening (67%)
* Appointed volunteer mentors or buddies (24.8%)

**While many organisations continue to struggle with volunteer recruitment, others reported a surplus of willing volunteers.** In open-ended comments, several volunteer leaders shared that they had more than enough volunteers to meet demand. Some also described creative strategies for redefining volunteer roles to better align with both organisational and community needs. However, many still face challenges in recruiting volunteers with the specific skills and experience required for certain roles.

**Recruitment tactics**

* Word of mouth/referrals (88.2%)

**Facebook - 92.4%**

**• Instagram - 63.4%**

**• LinkedIn - 43.2%**

**• YouTube - 12.6%**

**• Twitter/X - 15.3%**

**• TikTok - 6.4%**

**• Pinterest - 0.8%**

**• Other - 3.7%**

* Social media (83.3%)
* Websites (73.9%)
* Events & fairs (71.3%)
* Newsletters (54.5%)
* Presentations (54.2%)
* Podcasts (3.4%)
* Free offer (4%)
* Automated email (4.1%)
* Surveys or quizzes (7.2%)
* Promotions or launches (11.4%)
* TV interviews/radio (11.7%)
* Search engine optimisation (14.3%)
* Paid advertising (14.5%)
* Videos (18.3%)
* Print media (20.4%)
* Info sessions (29.4%)
* Testimonials / endorsements (33.4%)
* **There are strong correlations between resourcing and support and positive recruitment outcomes** – specifically, we found that the higher percentage of time devoted to volunteer management by leaders of volunteers and higher ratings of support from the organisation were related to higher volunteer capacity and greater progress toward recruitment goals.
* **Recruitment continues to be a top challenge** in the survey’s open-ended comments, and organisations reported a Moderate level of volunteer capacity. This may be because organisations now need more volunteers than before, there has been increased competition for volunteer talent, or a mix of both.
* 61.7% updated their volunteer recruitment information on their website at least 6 months. 32.5% between 1 and 6 months ago. 29.2% less than a month ago.
* **Nearly one in four (24.1%) have no budget for volunteer recruitment**. Another one in four (24.8%) don’t know if they have a budget for volunteer recruitment efforts.
* There was no clear correlation between the level of volunteer budget and the organisation size. The strongest correlation was between volunteer recruitment budgets and how leaders of volunteers rated their level of support, with more budget, the higher the rating of support.

**Insights and quotes from volunteers and volunteer managers**

**Recruitment, Retention, and Onboarding Challenges**

*“Volunteer expectations are the biggest hurdle right now. Post pandemic people are traveling all the time and are busier than ever before, so they often jump in without realizing the commitment involved. We have had to be flexible with our own expectations to try and accommodate a larger swath of people. We also have a lot of folks trying to come on without the skills needed to work with our current population. We attempt to set expectations right from the orientation but until people get in for training, I don't think they understand what is involved.”*

*“Few prospective volunteers in our community - lower income area; military spouses and retirees who might have volunteered in years past now need paying jobs. Most of those who do volunteer regularly on a specific weekday do not stay for full four-hour shift; are clear about availability for two or three hours only.”*

*“The biggest volunteer management challenge is developing creative ways to recruit and engage new volunteers. I do not have the capacity to add more to the Volunteer Team, but at the same time need to keep the volunteer pool replenished if any current volunteers do not return to the program. How do I keep new volunteers engaged by the time the next training approaches?”*

*“I have been in this role since June 2023 and have felt very discouraged with the results. I get an interested person and then communicate with them and either they just stop communicating or the application process/requirements are too much to complete, and they never complete them.”*

*“Many of our volunteers have been volunteering with us for decades. Now we are discovering a greater need to train staff on how to manage older seniors and those who are possibly living with dementia. Our volunteer base will increasingly get older and there will be a need to recruit multiple volunteers to replace one long term volunteer. Most new volunteers do not give as many hours as those who have been here for a long time.”*

*“Have had more turnover in the past 2-3 years than in the last 20 years. Salary was the issue in all but one case. Very frustrating to invest so much time training to lose them to a better paying position within the org or to another agency/business. Most of them had been with our department for over 10 years but the current economic crisis made the need to move on a necessity.”*

*“Nothing has been successful. We have been paying staff to fill volunteer roles. Our volunteer program has not been successful because there has never been a coordinator hired before to be dedicated to the position.”*

* **Level of organisational support positively correlated with effectiveness - the more support, the more effective.**
* Leaders of volunteers – many of whom are a ‘**department of one’** – are feeling the pressure of managing multiple priorities in a practice that has only become more complex and multi-faceted.
* **Lack of time was mentioned as a top challenge**, second only to volunteer recruitment. Highest percentage in the 10-year history of this survey. Many leaders of volunteers mentioned splitting time between volunteer management and other responsibilities and noted that volunteer engagement takes a back seat when push comes to shove.
* **Nearly three-quarters of organisations participate in year ‘round recruitment**. For ‘departments of one’ this makes it difficult to fit in other tasks related to volunteer program administration if they are focused on recruiting all the time. We also found a correlation between recruitment cadence and success on reaching goals – in general, organisations with open recruitment models were less likely to rate their volunteer recruitment success as high. 6.3% had campaigns and 23.5% had a variable approach.
* **There is a tremendous amount of opportunity to implement digital marketing strategies** to attract volunteers that most organisations are not currently taking advantage of.

With the internet, specifically mobile devices, being the primary way the public gets its information, developing smart online marketing campaigns make sense. However, most organisations report using only a few common tactics. Most rely on word-of-mouth referrals (88%), social media (83%), volunteer posting websites (74%), and community events (71%), leaving a wide range of marketing tactics, media, and tools underutilised.

**Insights and quotes from volunteers and volunteer managers**

**Administrative and Capacity Limitations**

*“My biggest challenge is not having enough time to complete paperwork concerning volunteers … I don't have much time to enter information such as flu shots, background checks, and important documents into volunteers' electronic files. It seems like a losing battle. When I do have time at the computer, I am answering emails or writing recommendation letters for my volunteers.”*

*“Open house style sessions have been helpful on very busy peak days or during special events, we're very blessed with a wonderful group of solid Volunteers. These open house sessions give potential Volunteers a chance to get some information and reflect upon it, however, most of the time I have too many Volunteers and not enough work or Staff willing to work with them.”*

* **Volunteer recruitment results and benchmarks are unclear** as most organisations do not track their conversion rates or recruitment results by channel. Without a clear understanding of what’s working, organisations will struggle to strategically focus their time and energy on where it can generate the most impact.

**Most volunteer-involving organisations reported they did not track and review basic engagement metrics**. Only 27% reported tracking New Volunteer Conversion Rates; 39% reported tracking Annual Volunteer Retention Rates; and 15% reported tracking Seasonal Volunteer Retention Rates. Volunteer Event Participation Rates were more frequently tracked with 44% reporting tracking this metric.

**Insights and quotes from volunteers and volunteer managers**

**Communication, Coordination, and Organisational Support**

*“I work remotely, so I don't always hear information that would inform my activities. I have to seek out all the information all the time. No one automatically sends me requests. When I do go on campus, I learn more in 30 minutes than I do in a month. Also, sometimes people will bring people in to help, without having them complete the proper paperwork, or inform me that they are there.”*

*“It is difficult to do my job successfully when I am not allowed the time required for volunteer management. My organisation lacks the support of staff members who see the importance of my role. Often, when I request something from the staff, they are nonresponsive to my requests. Most of my time is spent doing other jobs around the office instead of working with my volunteers, recruiting, and being able to be out in the community. Most of my job is done after business hours, at home, for free!”*

*“Volunteers are the heart of our organisation but often a role I do off the side of my desk. I had to absorb the volunteer management role when a staff left. My ongoing communication and appreciation is spotty, and I always hope that each volunteer feels how much they are truly valued.”*

*“Organisational and staff buy-in and support for engaging volunteers in organisation's highest priority work - Signs that buy-in could be stronger include: limited investment in volunteer management systems; limited allocation of staff marketing time dedicated to volunteer recruitment and promotion; limited staff capacity to oversee volunteer engagement across organisation; limited volunteer engagement in most important organisational priorities.”*

*“Working with Executive members who have no experience working with volunteers. This impacts the strategic engagement of volunteers, and how well embedded volunteers are in our workforce. Volunteers are being treated as transactions, their experiences are not seen as a priority, there are many blockages to implementing effective systems and processes.”*

*“There is no technology to recruit, manage, retain volunteers.”*

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**Volunteer Engagement and Experience**

*“I have always found that running a good volunteer program is the best recruitment tool. If current volunteers have a good experience, they will tell others about that. If you aren't prepared, don't make good use of a volunteer's time or don't respond promptly, they will let others know that as well.”*

*“We have a number of roles where volunteers spend a significant amount of time with people in situations of social fragility, who are often challenging on multiple levels. This can lead to volunteer frustration and burnout, and we want to build a robust support structure so that all volunteers are cared for (and not just those who seek us out for conversation and support).”*

*“Many of those people who come one time with their company will come back and volunteer with us again.”*

*“Our current volunteers are contributing more hours/shift. We also have had success connecting with college professors and finding a fit with students' service hours/internships and our organisation's needs, finding that win-win for both sides.”*

*“VolunteerMatch has been very effective at drawing potential volunteers to our website & volunteer system. We also have an app for our organisation, and we have a pop-up for volunteer recruitment after a user has logged in and used our app a certain number of times. If they're already using our app, they're likely to want to be more involved in our cause.”*

  [**VolunteerPro - Expert Training for Volunteer Coordinators**](https://volpro.net/)

Link to original resource: [**Volunteer Management Progress Report - VolunteerPro**](https://volpro.net/volunteer-management-progress-report/)

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