

## HALTON VOLUNTARY SECTOR HUMAN SERVICES LABOUR FORCE STUDY

### Preliminary Survey Findings (2)

#### Human Resources: Volunteer Base in Halton Nonprofit Human Services Sector

Community Development Halton (CDH) has conducted a survey of human services agencies in the nonprofit sector in conjunction with the Regional Chairman's Joint Roundtable on the Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector. The data collection period for the survey has just ended but some of the preliminary findings relevant to the work and focus of the Regional Chairman's Roundtable are reported here. Preliminary Survey Findings (1) (Community Dispatch, Vol. 10, No. 8) released earlier provided a profile of the employee base of in the survey respondents in Halton's nonprofit human services. This offers a first overview of the volunteer base in the Halton nonprofit human services as reported by survey respondents.

It was anticipated that agencies responding to the survey may not have as specific and precise information on their volunteer involvement as they would for their employees. Only 20 (29%) respondents report that they keep a volunteer database with detailed demographic information on their volunteers. This is indicated by the number of agencies that did not provide detailed information on their volunteer base (12 out of the total 81 agency respondents)

Given the higher probability of recorded information on volunteer numbers and characteristics, therefore, agencies were asked to provide their best estimates on numbers of volunteers for many questions, if they did not have the exact information.

#### Total Numbers of Volunteers

Altogether 70 of the 81 survey respondents reported their total number of volunteers. The estimated total is 6,730 volunteers among the responding agencies, which account for about one-third of the nonprofit human services organizations serving Halton Region.

Table 1 indicates the breakdown of agency response by number of volunteers. Most of the survey respondents (67.1%) have a total number of volunteers in the 10 to 99 range. The greatest proportion of volunteers by far, however, are in eight (8) larger agencies with more than 200 volunteers each amounting to 62.4% of the total reported number of volunteers by the survey respondents. The average number of volunteers using these figures would be 96. But, given the high number of agencies with volunteer numbers in the lower ranges, the more appropriate figure to reflect the volunteer base more accurately would be the median, which is 35 total volunteers, half the agency respondents reporting more than 35 total volunteers and half reporting less.

**Table 1**  
**Agency Survey Respondents**  
**by Size of Volunteer Participants**

Size of Agency Volunteer Base	Agency Respondents		Total Volunteers	
	No.	%	No.	%
None	2	2.8	0	0.0
1 to 9	7	10.0	45	0.1
10 to 24	19	27.1	282	4.2
25 to 99	28	40.0	1,360	20.2
100 to 199	6	8.6	844	12.5
200+	8	11.4	4,199	62.4
TOTALS	70	99.9	6,730	100.0

Table 2 shows that over 36.0% of respondents report an increase in numbers of volunteers and 44.9% report significantly increased volunteer hours in the last five years, although only about 50 respondents answered these questions because of their accidental omission from the electronic survey form. Volunteer numbers and volunteer hours stayed about the same for 56.0% and 49.0% respondent agencies respectively.

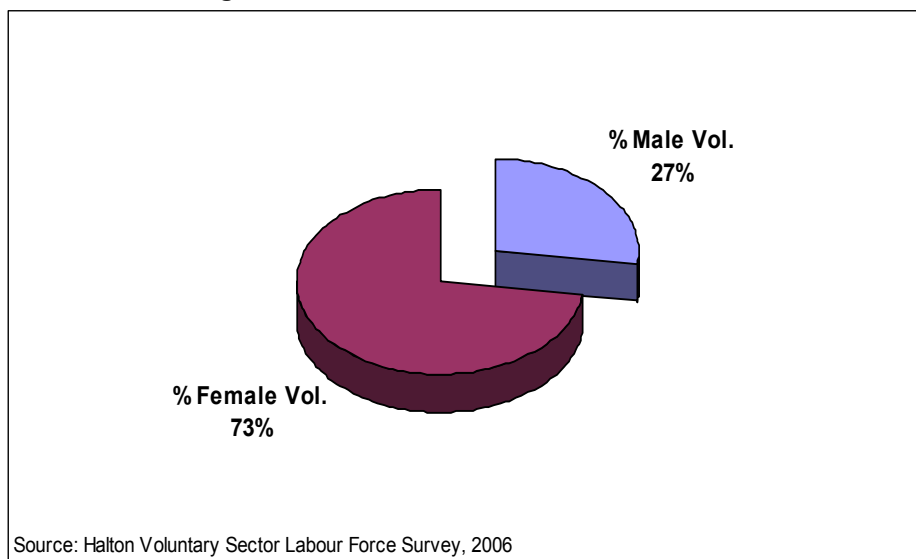
**Table 2**  
**Change in Volunteer Numbers and Volunteer Hours in Last Five Years**

Direction of Change	Number of Volunteers		No. of Volunteer Hours	
	No. of Respondents	% of Respondents	No. of Respondents	% of Respondents
Significantly Increased	18	36.0	22	44.9
Stayed About the Same	28	56.0	24	49.0
Significantly Decreased	4	8.0	3	6.1
TOTAL	50	100.0	49	100.0

**Gender Profile**

Similar to paid employees, the gender breakdown for volunteers reported by agency respondents is heavily weighted towards women. Figure 1 shows that the volunteer base in nonprofit human services is about 73% women and 27% men. As an important note, one agency indicates a gender identity of “transsexual” among its volunteer base, which was not offered as a choice in the survey but was recorded as noted for both employees and volunteers.

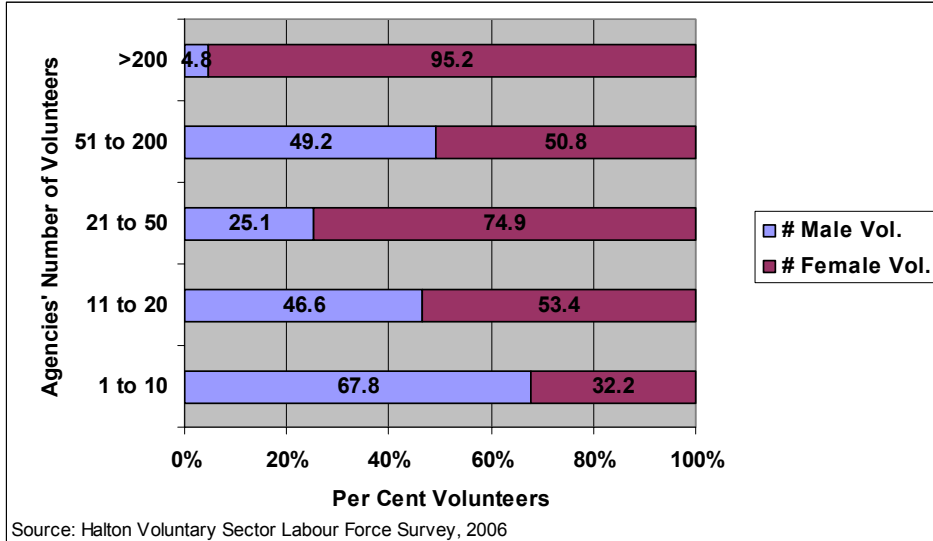
**Figure 1 - Gender Breakdown of Volunteers**



Investigating the agency response more closely, it appears that the distribution of men and women varies somewhat by the size of the volunteer base. Figure 2 shows a higher proportion of men are involved in smaller agencies, especially those with up to ten volunteers (67.8%). Male involvement is still relatively strong among agency volunteer bases from 11 to 20 (46.6%). The level of male involvement falls off in the 21 to 50 volunteer range but recovers to almost equal female participation in the 51 to 200 range (49.2%).

The proportion of women volunteers is strong in smaller agencies with between 11 and 50 volunteers (53.4%) and equal to male participation in medium and larger agencies with 51 to 200 volunteers (50.8%). For agencies with more than 200 volunteers, women make up nineteen out of twenty volunteers in the survey responding agencies (95.2%).

**Figure 2 - Volunteer Gender Breakdown by Size of Agencies' Volunteer Base**



**Age Profile**

Figure 3 shows that across all respondents almost half (48%) of the volunteer base is made up equally of people 46 to 64 years of age (24%) and people 65 years and older (24%). The next largest age group is volunteers in the 31 to 45 year category (22%) followed by volunteers 18 years and younger (16%) and people 19 to 30 years old (14%).

There are some interesting differences among the age groups, however. Youth (77.3%) and seniors (64.0%) are much more highly involved in agencies with larger volunteer bases of 100 or more. In fact, out of the 28 agencies reporting having youth volunteers, three of them account for the 669 youth volunteers that make up the 77.3% response and four of the 40 agencies reporting senior involvement engage 844 of the 65+ years old volunteers. Volunteers in the age groups between 19 and 64 years old show a bit more balance across agencies with small, medium and larger volunteer bases, especially those in the 31 to 45 and 46 to 64 year age groups.

**Figure 3 – Age Breakdown of Volunteers**

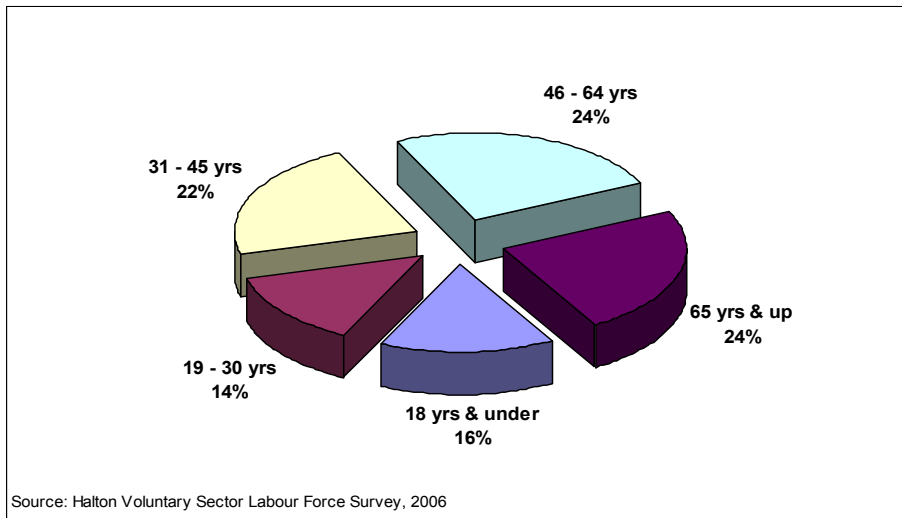
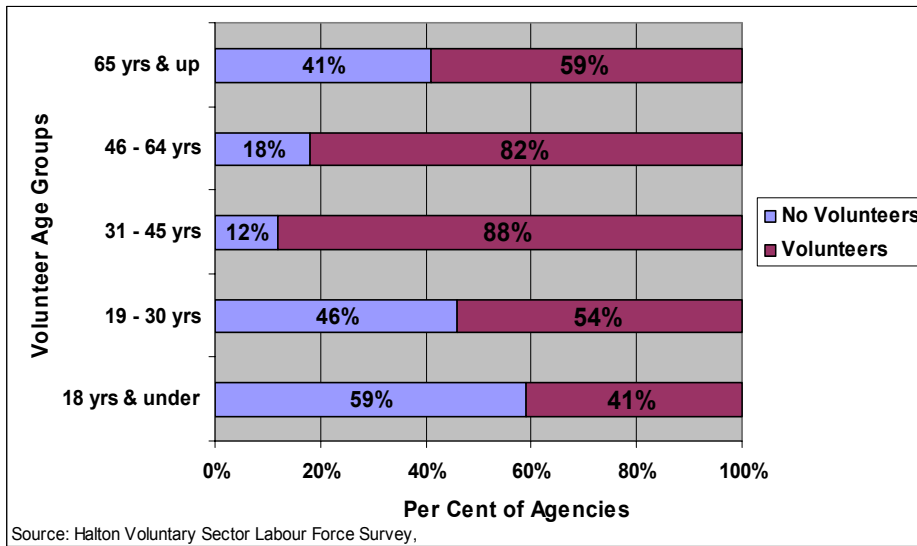


Figure 4- Agencies with No Volunteers by Age Groups

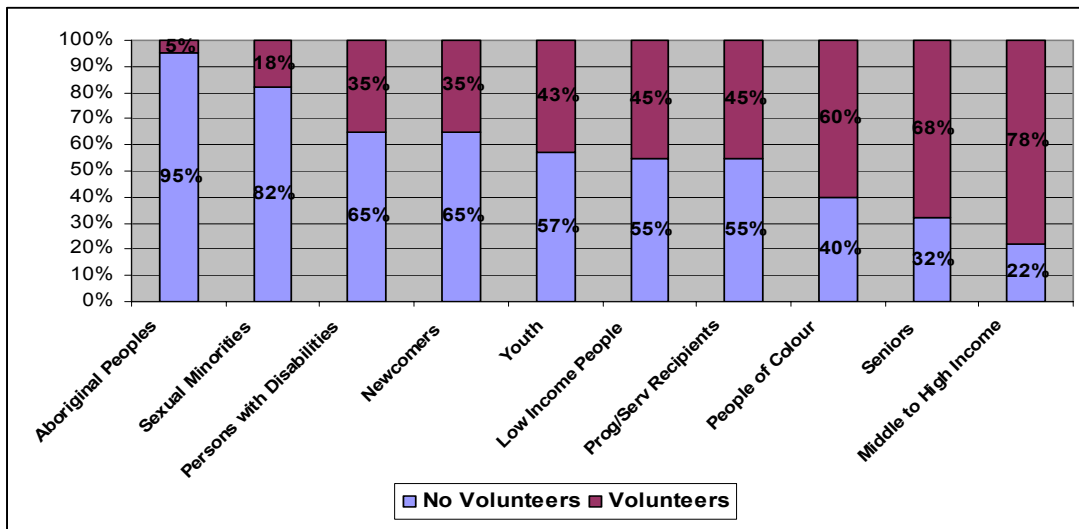


The proportion of agencies reporting no participation of certain age groups in their volunteer corps is of some interest. Figure 4 indicates that agencies with no youth (59%) and early adult (46%) volunteers are the two lead groups in this regard. A much smaller proportion of agencies lack volunteers in their middle adult (12%) and late adult (18%) years. Although seniors have high volunteer numbers, they appear not to be as evenly distributed across the agency base, as 41% of agencies say they have no volunteers 65 years and older.

**Diversity Profile**

Agency respondents were asked to identify the number of people from diverse community populations included in their volunteer bases. Figure 5 shows the response across ten population groups.

Figure 5 - Diversity Profile of Agency Volunteers



Several observations can be made about these results:

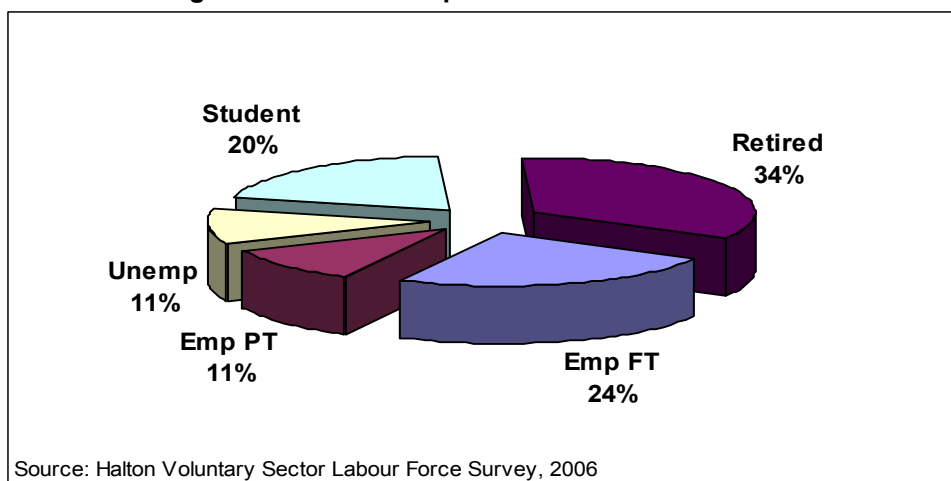
- a) Seniors and middle to high income people have higher numbers primarily because they are more frequently part of the volunteer base of agencies (involved in 45 and 49 agencies respectively). Seniors have more volunteer participation than other groups with larger volunteer bases. Middle to high income people are active across the range from small to

- large agencies in more than three-quarters of respondents (78%).
- b) People of colour have a good presence across the agency respondent group, being engaged by almost 60% of the reporting agencies, although they tend to be primarily involved in smaller numbers (the 1 to 10 range) in these agencies.
- c) Persons with disabilities are reflected in almost a third of the agency respondents, but at very low numbers (Total of 97 volunteers with disabilities in 23 agencies).
- d) Clearly, agencies indicate that they do not highly reflect people from sexual minority groups or the Aboriginal community in their volunteer bases, neither in total numbers nor in presence in many agencies.

### Relationship of Agency Volunteer Base to the Workforce

Figure 6 shows how agencies responded to a survey question about how their volunteers are related to the workforce. Retirement (34%) and full-time employment (24%) are the lead workforce statuses for agencies' volunteers in agencies with smaller as well as larger total volunteer numbers. There is not much difference by full-time or part-time employment in participation in different size agencies. Unemployed people are much more highly engaged as volunteers in agencies with volunteer bases under 100.

**Figure 6 – Relationship of Volunteers to Workforce**



The survey also explored another indirect relationship of the responding agencies' volunteers to the workforce, specifically Ontario Works' clients in the Community Participation Program, secondary school community involvement time, co-op program and university/college student placements. The survey also asked about the use of community service order volunteers. It is important to note that there is some debate whether these are properly termed "volunteers", since participants are under mandatory conditions (e.g. community service as part of court ordered judgment) or program requirements (e.g. minimum time with an agency in the field to qualify for a course credit). Still, participants in these programs become another element of the human resource base for non-profit agencies and it is interesting to know what proportion of agencies use support from these sources.

**Table 3  
Use of Government Program Participants & Placement Students  
by Agency Survey Respondents**

Source of Program Participants	Agency Respondents	
	No. Agencies	% of Responding Agencies
School Community Involvement	52	75.4
College/University Student Placements	50	73.5
Co-op program Students	37	53.6
Community Service Court Orders	18	26.1
Ontario Works Community Part.	17	24.3

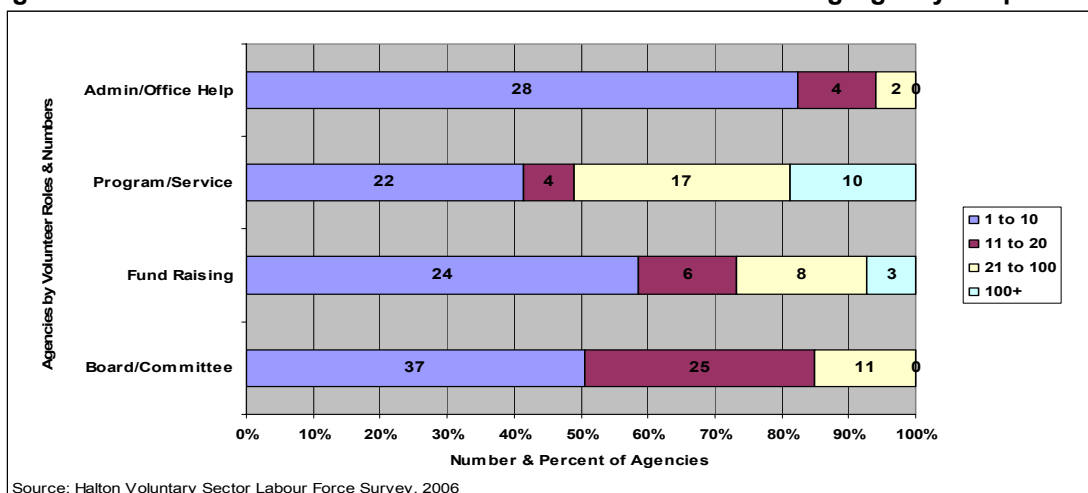
Table 3 shows that agencies more frequently use “volunteer” participants from the secondary school community involvement and post-secondary school student placement programs. Just over half responding to this question use co-op program students and about a quarter of responding agencies use “volunteers” on community service court orders and in the Ontario Works Community Participation Program.

### Volunteer Roles

Survey respondents indicated the degree of volunteer involvement in different roles with their agencies. Figure 7 shows the number and percentage of agencies reporting volunteer participation at four levels (i.e. numbers of volunteers) in the following roles: Board/Committee Members, Fund Raising, Program/Service/Front-line Workers, Administrative/Office Helpers. Board/Committee volunteer work is naturally higher at the lower ranges of 1 to 20 volunteers in responding agencies. Agencies also have volunteer Administrative/Office Help primarily at the lower range of up to ten volunteers.

There is a little more balance across the number ranges for agencies with Program/Service volunteers. Just under 50% of agency respondents to this question indicate that 1 to 20 volunteers participate in front-line helping roles; about another 30% are active in the range of 21 to 100, and just over 20% of agencies have more than 100 volunteers active in Program/Service roles. In terms of Fund Raising volunteer roles, 22 agencies show volunteer activity at the range of 1 to 10 people and another 16 have Fund Raising volunteers in ranges from 11 to 100.

**Figure 7 – Level of Volunteer Involvement in Different Roles Among Agency Respondents**



### Volunteer Supports

Only 19 agency respondents report having a staff position designated for coordination, supervision or management of volunteers, which is just over a quarter (28.7%) of agencies replying to the question. Of those 19 agencies eleven indicate the volunteer coordinator/manager position is full-time and nine that it is part-time. Fifteen (15) additional agencies report that there are “several staff” in their organizations that provide support to volunteers, combining in time for an average of 1.5 Full-Time Equivalent staff position.



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