

BUILDING BLOCKS

FOR BOOMER VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT





Acknowledgements

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WRITTEN BY

Melanie Hientz, Training and National Dialogue Officer, Volunteer Canada and
Paula Speevak Sladowski, Director, Applied Research & Public Policy Volunteer Canada

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EDITORIAL REVIEW

Ruth MacKenzie, President and CEO, Volunteer Canada

LAYOUT & DESIGN

Lenny Kuiper, LKDesign.ca

TRANSLATION

Roxane Delisle

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THAT INTERESTS YOU**





Building Blocks for Boomer Volunteer Engagement

Motivations to volunteer and the types of volunteer opportunities that Canadians seek evolve throughout one's lifecycle.¹ Volunteering may be influenced by personal circumstances, and often reflects family traditions and historical context. The baby boomer generation comprises people from such a broad range of ages, stages, and individual experiences.

After the devastating loss of life and prolonged separation of families, during World War II, Canadian shores welcomed back soldiers and prepared to absorb refugees. With couples reunited and the drive to start anew, Canada's baby boom began in 1946. What better way to reaffirm life and hope for a better future than to bring new babies into the world! This backdrop for the baby boom shaped a generation that some describe as being overachieving, social activists, and occupying a sense of entitlement to all life has to offer.

The civil rights and women's movements had broad reaching impact on social norms and family structures. Baby boomers saw more women in the paid workforce, had children later (if at all), and did not necessarily feel the need to be married. These changes also contributed to the eventual decline of the baby boom in 1964 as more women entered the paid workforce, and the birth control pill became prominent in Canada.

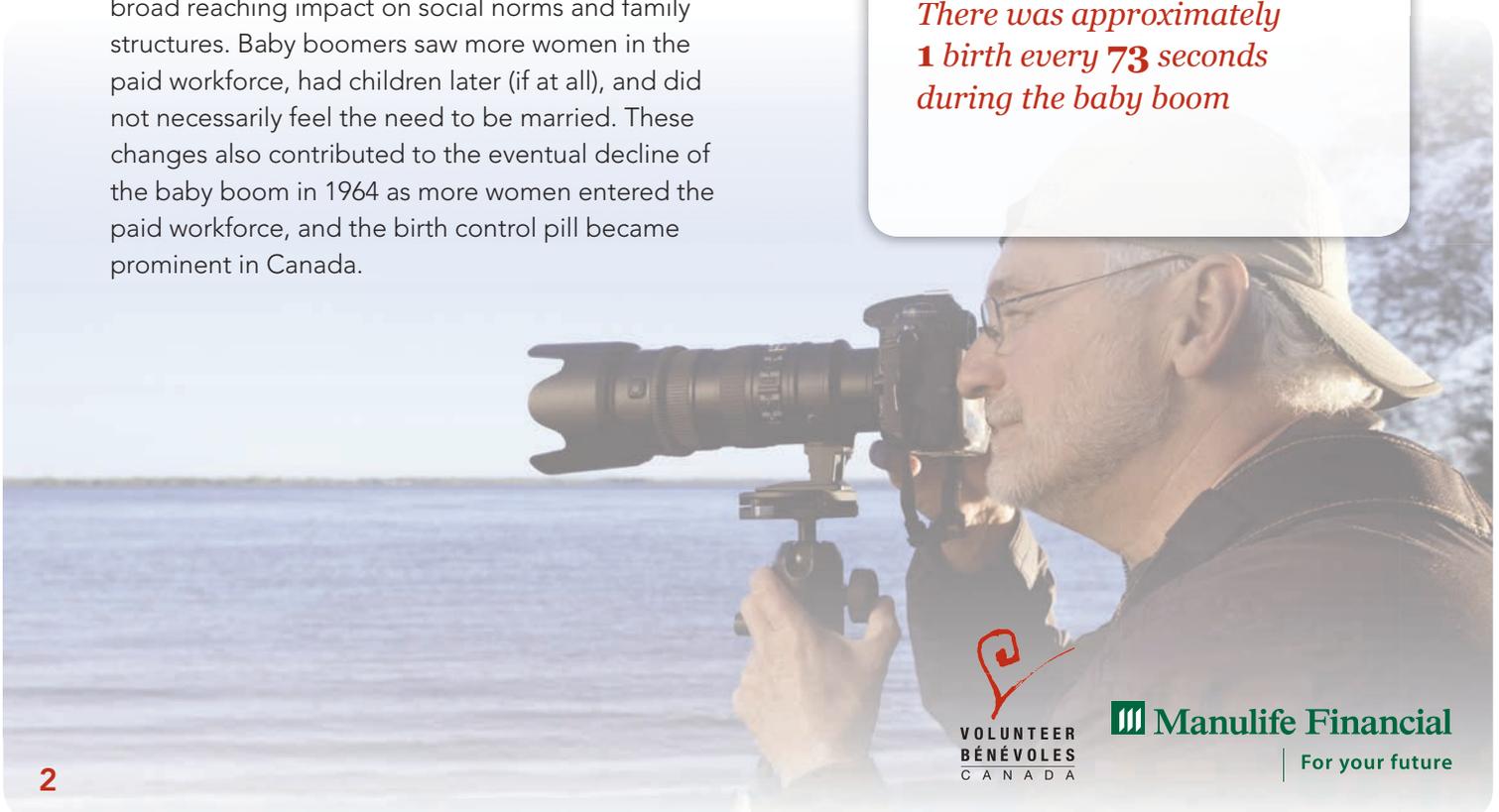
THE BABY BOOM STATISTICS

*Baby boomers are considered to be those born between **1946-1964**, and they account for close to one-third of Canada's population.*

*During **1946-1964**, there were a total of **7,735,986** births in Canada*

*The peak birth rate was in **1947** at **28.9** per **1000**, comparatively the estimate for **2011** is **10.28**.*

*There was approximately **1** birth every **73** seconds during the baby boom*





Who are baby boomers?

The baby boomer generation spans an 18-year period and invariably, baby boomers can best be described as a diverse and complex group. They are characterized as having multiple mosaics, between ethnicity, family, religion, morality and life style preferences.

While being a diverse group, baby boomers may also share certain characteristics as a result of their life circumstances growing up in the 50's and 60's, in such a comparatively large demographic group. Boomers transformed their social and political

environments through their active civic engagement, vast social networks and individuality. Many people in this demographic influenced and structured their work environments and as a result demonstrate a strong desire for input in decision making processes. Choices made by boomers are no longer based on tradition, loyalty or duty as was often the case with their predecessors. Instead, the worth and significance to the individual is often what drives decision-making.

BABY BOOMER CHARACTERISTICS

Ethno – culturally diverse – There is great diversity amongst baby boomers, many of whom are foreign born. Statscan estimates that by 2031, roughly one in every three people in the labour force could be foreign born.²

Technologically confident – The large majority of baby boomers use the Internet. In 2009, approximately 78% of boomers used the Internet; 88% for email, 68% to browse weather, read, travel, info and arrangements and 57% for retirement planning.³ A large number of baby boomers have also noted that they would like to see more volunteer opportunities available virtually, to be fulfilled online.⁴

Avid consumers – Baby boomers are driving many new consumption trends. Canadians 50+ are the largest market for a number of industries, including travel, real estate, health and beauty, automotive,

home renovation and financial services. Yet, many boomers still encounter financial challenges, with more than half of boomers with homes still paying off their mortgages.

Sandwich generation – Boomers have increased care-giving responsibilities for their children, grandchildren and parents. (64% of boomers with children still have at least one child living in the house; three-fifths of boomers continue to give financial support to their kids over 18). Among boomers with parents who are still alive, one quarter have one or more parents that need their assistance on a regular basis.⁵

Volunteerism à la carte – Baby boomers are very selective and particular in how they will dedicate their time. Often boomers will want to shape their own volunteer opportunities.

²The Globe and Mail, Retiring boomers slowing labour force growth: Statscan. August 17, 2011.

³Statistics Canada. Online activities of Canadian boomers and senior. August 6, 2009. Catalogue no. 11-008-X.

⁴Volunteer Canada (2010). Bridging the Gap – Enriching the Volunteer Experience to Build a Better Future for Our Communities. Full Report, <http://volunteer.ca/files/BTG-Final.pdf>

⁵Hoffman, A. Mirror, mirror. Globe and Mail, June 24, 2006. Available at: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/archives/article831403.ece>



Who are baby boomers? *cont'd*

GENERATIONAL COMPARISONS

WORLD WAR II **(1940-1945)**

World War II kick-started the economy in the 1940's as well as the fertility rate.

THE BABY BOOM **(1946-1964)**

Canada was the largest baby boom amongst western countries, partially as a result of couples reuniting after the war in a robust post-war economy, and also as a result of high immigration levels to Canada.

THE BABY BUST **(1965-1979)**

- Generation X (1960-1966)
- Bust Generation (1967-1979)

The introduction of the birth control pill and rising participation of women in the labour market led to a decline in births- the baby bust. The baby bust, sometimes divided into two cohorts, 'Generation X' born during 1960-1966 (the later end of the Baby Boom) and the 'Bust Generation' born during 1967 and 1979.⁶

THE BABY BOOM ECHO **(1980-1995)**

- Generation Y (1982-1997)
- Millennials (1980-2001)
- Generation Z (1995-2011)

The baby boomers produced their own echo as they began having children. Generation Y and Millennials are both considered cohorts of the baby boom echo generation. Some estimates, suggest that today's Generation Y will hold an average of 25 jobs in their lifetime.⁷ Generation Z is also referenced as an additional cohort from the Echo. They are sometimes characterized as the "net-geners," an ode to their technologically savvy inclination.⁸

These are the children of the baby bust generation, and they are much smaller in numbers. A number of these children were growing up during an economic recession. The unemployment rate amongst youth ages 15 to 24 in 2009 was 15.9%, the highest it had been in 11 years.⁹



⁶ Foot, D. (1996). Boom Bust & Echo. Macfarlane Walter & Ross, Toronto.

⁷ BC Council for Families (2011). Generation Y: Challenging Employers to Provide Balance.

⁸ Grail Research. (2010). Consumers of Tomorrow: Insights and Observations about Generation X.

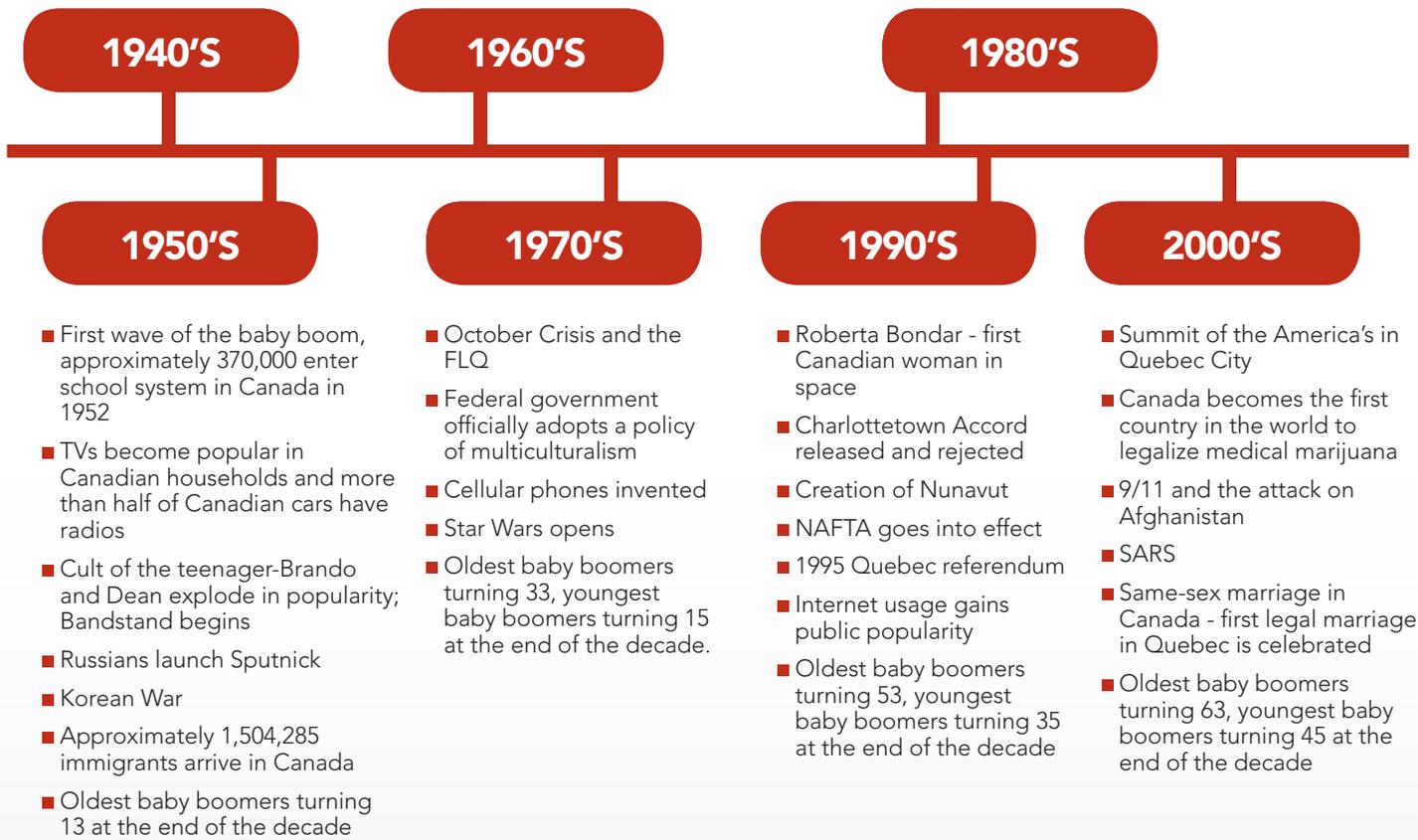
⁹ CBC News Canada. (July 2009) Youth employment highest in 11 years: StatsCan.





Boomer Timeline in Canada

- WWII- 45,383 Canadian military personnel died
- Approximately 425,614 immigrants arrive in Canada in the 1940's
- Soldiers come home after WWII, baby boom begins in 1946
- Between 1946-1964 there were a total of 7,735,986 births in Canada
- 145,000 new jobs created for Canadians under the age of twenty-five between 1964-1967
- Birth control pill introduced in Canada. Increasing number of women pursuing higher education, childbirth postponed, baby boom comes to an end mid 60's.
- Rise of social movements- protests against the Vietnam War, Aboriginal poverty, women's liberation, campus politics
- Quebec's Quiet Revolution
- 1967 International and Universal Exposition (Expo 67) in Montreal
- Woodstock
- Oldest baby boomers turning 23, youngest baby boomers turning 5 at the end of the decade
- Terry Fox and the Marathon of Hope
- Severe recession in the economy
- Meech Lake Accord and Canada-US Free Trade Agreement come into effect
- Berlin Wall falls in 1989
- Oldest baby boomers turning 43, youngest baby boomers turning 25 at the end of the decade.



BABY BOOMERS	AGE IN...			
Cohort	Born in	1996	2006	2011
First Wave	1946-1955	41-50	51-60	56-65
Second Wave	1956-1964	32-40	42-50	47-55



Boomer Statistics

FACTS

62% of baby boomers have held down two jobs at the same time¹⁰

The majority of baby boomers are employees (76%) and work full time (81%)¹¹

25% of baby boomers have one or more parents that need their assistance on a regular basis¹²

47% of baby boomers indicate that their primary personal concern is that they "never seem to have enough time"¹³

60% of baby boomers have gone to see a movie alone¹⁴

The number one "want" described by baby boomers was 'Freedom'¹⁵

60% of the baby boomer population indicate they were financially self supporting by the age of 20¹⁶

25% of the baby boomer population has considered running for political office¹⁷

Approximately 78% of baby boomers use the Internet, with 88% using it to communicate through email¹⁸

IMPLICATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS

WELL-MANAGED AND TIME EFFICIENT

Baby boomers are multi-taskers, and often juggle between varying responsibilities. Many boomers are continuing to work beyond retirement age, while also taking care of their parents, their children or grandchildren. Time is a challenge, so much so, that almost half of boomers indicate it as a primary personal concern.

Boomers expect that organizations will be well managed and will be efficient in the use of their time as a volunteer.

INDEPENDENT VOLUNTEER TASKS

Baby boomers can be an independent bunch, relationship values are important to baby boomers, but so is freedom and autonomy.

Baby boomers are often comfortable working autonomously on tasks. Keep this in mind when designing opportunities for this group.

SKILLS-BASED VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

As well as being an independent bunch, baby boomers can also be very self-sufficient.

Consider skills-based opportunities for boomers, as many often excel in planning and management capacities.

LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Boomers don't shy away from leadership positions, and while many prefer to be in the backstage there are a number who also like to be in the forefront.

Organizations may want to consider options for boomer volunteers to sit on boards and be involved in the visible marketing of organizations services.

ONLINE VISIBILITY

Baby boomers are no amateurs as it relates to technology. Many are very confident with using the Internet on a day-to-day basis.

Organizations can benefit from establishing virtual volunteer opportunities as well as ensuring that the recruitment of volunteer opportunities is available online.

¹⁰About US-Boomer+ Edition, Harris Decima 2009

¹¹Statistics Canada. Online activities of Canadian boomers and senior. August 6, 2009. Catalogue no. 11-008-X.

¹²Hoffman, A. *Mirror, mirror*. Globe and Mail, June 24, 2006. Available at: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/archives/article831403.ece>

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴About US-Boomer+ Edition, Harris Decima 2009.

¹⁵Bibby, R. (2006). *The Boomer Factor: What Canada's most famous generation is leaving behind*. Toronto: Bastian Books.

¹⁶About US-Boomer+ Edition, Harris Decima 2009

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Statistics Canada. Online activities of Canadian boomers and senior. August 6, 2009. Catalogue no. 11-008-X.



Engaging Baby Boomers: considering life circumstances

The baby boomer generation runs the gamut of points in their life cycle and life circumstances, with respect to work, family, and partnerships, all of which have an influence on their interests, availability, and personal goals for volunteering. Life stage also specifically influences volunteerism, as is demonstrated by the overwhelming majority of former volunteers indicating that ‘age/health’ and ‘children growing up’ as reasons for why they are not currently volunteering.¹⁹

The baby boomer generation gave rise to DINKS (Double Income No Kids), Yuppies (Young Urban Professionals), blended families, and the sandwich generation (caught in between caring for aging parents and adolescent children). Children of boomers are staying at home longer and coming

back home in between work, travel, school, and relationships. With shifts in the economy, boomers have had buy-out packages that have enabled them to retire early, start home-based consulting businesses, or go into second careers.

Effectively engaging baby boomers requires careful consideration of the life circumstances of each volunteer. Taking the time to listen to the interests and motivations of a potential volunteer can serve to benefit an organization in designing a meaningful assignment that also meets the needs of the organization. There is significant range and variation in experiences of baby boomers that can have implications in their ability and/ or motivation to volunteer.

CLICK each of the life circumstances listed below (working, parenting and partnerships) to explore options and strategies for effective baby boomer engagement.

ENGAGING BABY BOOMERS IN VOLUNTEERING: CONSIDERING LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES

WORKING

MID-CAREER

PEAK

SECOND CAREER

EARLY RETIREMENT

RETIREMENT

FAMILY

PARENTING

EMPTY NESTERS

ADULT CHILDREN RETURNING HOME

CARING FOR GRANDCHILDREN

CARING FOR AGING PARENTS

PARTNERSHIP

40 YEAR PARTNERSHIP

NOT IN A RELATIONSHIP

NEW RELATIONSHIP

CARING FOR A PARTNER WITH HEALTH ISSUES

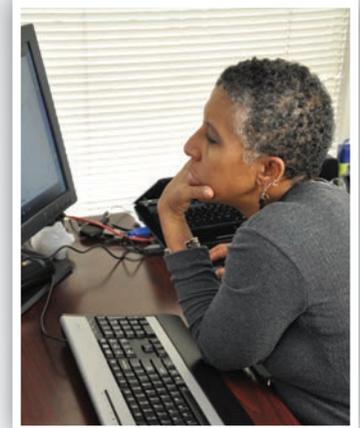
ADJUSTING TO DEATH OR DIVORCE OF A PARTNER



WORKING

MID-CAREER/ PEAK / SECOND CAREER

Engaging baby boomers who are in their mid or peak career stages of life can sometimes be challenging, as they may have less available time to volunteer. As a result, organizations may wish to explore different scheduling opportunities as well as types of volunteering.



Type of volunteer opportunity:

- **EMPLOYER-SUPPORTED VOLUNTEERING (ESV):** ESV has opened up opportunities for employees to volunteer, with support or encouragement from their employers. The levels of support may differ from workplace to workplace, and employers can support volunteering by allowing staff time off for volunteering or providing in-kind support to community causes. Building pre-retirement awareness around volunteering and incorporating volunteerism into retirement planning seminars can help introduce the concept of volunteering as a fulfilling future opportunity for boomers.

Resources:

- [Building the Bridge to Employer-Supported Volunteers - download the fact sheet](#)
- [Skills Plus Employer-supported volunteering tool](#)
- [Watch a video demonstration on YouTube of how to use the Skills Plus tool](#)
- [Volunteer Connections: The Benefits and Challenges of Employer-Supported Volunteering](#)
- [Making a business case for Employer Supported Volunteering](#)

Scheduling options:

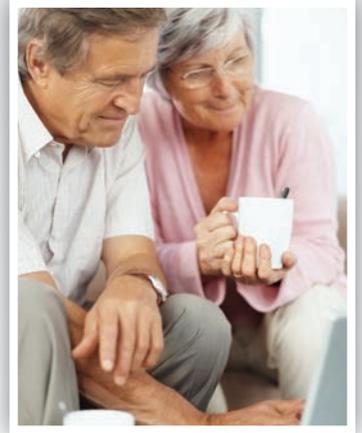
- **OCCASIONAL:** Baby boomers may wish to volunteer occasionally, over the holidays or during annual events at an organization. A boomer may prefer this option, because it enables them to volunteer consistently each year, but is not time intensive (in that they may only volunteer once a year).
- **ON-CALL:** This option may also be preferable for boomers that are juggling full-time or part-time work as well as other commitments and don't have the time to volunteer on an on-going basis. This option enables organizations to develop a roster of volunteers that can be called upon when regular volunteers are unavailable or when there is a need for increased support.
- **FLEXIBLE:** As baby boomers can be particular with how they contribute their time, they may wish to determine their own scheduling option. Whether it is every Sunday morning, or if they chose to volunteer 2 hours a week virtually, this option can be appealing for a busy boomer.



WORKING *cont'd*

EARLY RETIREMENT / RETIREMENT

Baby boomers that are retired may have a little more time on their hands – or may not! Either way, retired boomers sometimes have slightly more flexibility in terms of when they volunteer, as their work days are no longer spent at their workplace.



Type of Volunteer Opportunity

- **SKILL-BASED VOLUNTEERING (SBV):** SBV is an opportunity for organizations to engage volunteers that are looking to apply their professional skills in a volunteer assignment. The highest retention rates for baby boomers are with those who are matched to opportunities that require skills such as professional or management activities.

Resources:

- [Skills-Based Volunteering: A Discussion Paper](#)
- [Skills Plus Employer-supported volunteering tool](#)

Scheduling options:

- **SHORT TERM:** SBV assignments are most effective when established as short-term volunteer opportunities that offer flexibility in scheduling. Boomers may wish to design their own project and work independently on a task.





FAMILY

Parenting occupies a significant position in the lives of many Canadians. Some younger baby boomers are currently parenting their children, while others are adjusting to having an empty nest. Some families are finding themselves welcoming their adult children back into their home as their children are transitioning from schooling, traveling or relationships. Baby boomers may be enjoying the opportunity to care for their grandchildren as their own children work during the day. Also, ever increasingly, baby boomers are dedicating significant time to caring for aging parents. In each of these cases, there is one type of volunteering opportunity that can be promoted to support volunteerism amongst baby boomers – Family Volunteering.



Type of volunteer opportunity:

- **FAMILY VOLUNTEERING:** Family volunteering is increasingly becoming a volunteer form that is supported by Canadians as it serves to enable family members to spend time together, allows parents and grandparents to pass on values and can provide an opportunity for families to socialize together while supporting a cause or issue to which they feel passionate. Supporting family volunteering options for baby boomers is one way of making volunteerism accessible for Canadians in whichever family circumstance they may find themselves.

Resources:

- [Building the Bridge to Family Volunteers - download the fact sheet](#)
- [Building Blocks for Family Volunteering: Tools and Resources for Organizations](#)
- [Building Blocks for Family Volunteering: Key Resources for Families](#)
- [Watch a video demonstration on YouTube of how to use the Building Blocks tools](#)
- [Video: What does family volunteering look like?](#)

Scheduling options:

- **SEASONAL:** Seasonal volunteering can involve establishing a volunteering opportunity for baby boomers and their family members on a regular basis but for an intermediate period of time (for instance a family may volunteer every day for a week during a summer festival).
- **FLEXIBLE:** This scheduling option enables volunteers to contribute their time on a weekly or monthly schedule that remains consistent, but is flexible to a family's preference. It is important for organizations to work with baby boomer volunteers in determining a schedule that is suitable for them, but it is also essential for any volunteer assignment to be designed and scheduled in a way that remains beneficial for an organizations goals and objectives.



PARTNERSHIP

Partnerships are another life circumstance that can have a lot of variety for boomers. Boomers may be in long term marriages, others may have chosen to be single, and still others may be finding themselves dating and looking for new relationships. A retired couple may wish to find a fun activity and try something new together. Or volunteering can be a way for single people to make new friends and partnerships. Volunteering has a very significant social aspect that draws a number of boomers. Interestingly, statistics suggest that those who are single (43%) are less likely to have volunteered in the past 12 months relative to those who are married/common-law (58%), widowed (58%) or separated/divorced (52%).²⁰ This may suggest an opportunity to showcase the social opportunities that can be derived from volunteering, to promote volunteerism amongst those who are single.



Type of volunteer opportunities:

- **WHAT'S YOUR VQ?:** The VQ is a volunteer quiz that will help people discover their volunteer type and match them to volunteer opportunities and organizations that suit their personalities, interests, skills and talents. This can also be used by an organization as an interactive method of identifying the type of volunteer interests a potential volunteer may have.

TAKE THE QUIZ ONLINE ► [HERE](#)

- **THE VOLUNTEER MATCHING TOOL:** This tool allows volunteers and volunteer-seeking organizations to create highly customized profiles and tailored searches in order to effectively bridge the gap between what volunteers are looking for in a meaningful volunteer experience and what organizations need in terms of volunteer assistance.

VISIT THE MATCHING TOOL ► [HERE](#)

- **EMPLOYER-SUPPORTED VOLUNTEERING, SKILLS-BASED VOLUNTEERING AND FAMILY VOLUNTEERING:** Each of these types of volunteering opportunities may be relevant to baby boomers depending on how they wish to volunteer.

ACCESS TOOL AND RESOURCES ► [HERE](#)



Key Recruitment Messages

RECRUITING BABY BOOMERS

Approximately 12% of Canadians account for 78% of all volunteer hours contributed to charities (CSGVP, 2007). The average hours volunteered is highest among senior Canadians, who are beginning to exit from their roles, thus making it both a crucial and necessary time to create meaningful volunteer opportunities for baby boomers.

Motivations for volunteering can be difficult to assess as they are complex, deeply personal and can change over time. Interests, personal goals, people served, culture, skills and geography can all serve to influence ones decision to volunteer.

Motivations for volunteering change with life circumstances.

- **WORK** The link between age and retirement is eroding, as the majority of people in their late 50's are still working. Meanwhile, large numbers are choosing a phased-in retirement plan.
- **PARENTING** Baby boomers are also increasingly finding themselves carrying for aging parents while also supporting their children.
- **PARTNERSHIPS** Some baby boomers are looking to volunteer with their partner during their retirement, while others may be adjusting to a recent divorce or loss and seeking an opportunity to make to relations.

In addition to life circumstances, generational differences are an important aspect for organizations to consider when recruiting baby boomers. The baby boomer generation spans 18 years and so methods to recruit this group would benefit from acknowledging this range. An organization may not use the same strategies to recruit 22 year olds as they would 40 year olds, and this is the same difference in age range that is seen between baby boomers.

DID YOU KNOW?

When it comes to recruiting volunteers, many individuals continue to be recruited through word of mouth, either from families, friends or colleagues.

The main reason described by those who have never volunteered, as the cause for their non involvement is because, 'they have never been asked to be a volunteer.'

(Bridging the Gap: Enriching the Volunteer Experience to Build a Better Future for Our Communities, Volunteer Canada 2010)



Key Recruitment Messages *cont'd*

ORGANIZATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Organizations will need to consider ways to ensure that their volunteer programs have open and accessible communication that is sensitive and supportive of cultural and linguistic knowledge.
- Technology is making it easier than ever from boomers to find volunteer opportunities. www.getvolunteering.ca, a website by Volunteer Canada and Manulife Financial is one example of a source that is enabling people to search for volunteer opportunities by identifying key interests and entering their postal code.
- Organizations can benefit from ensuring that opportunities are posted online. Organizations can also consider developing virtual volunteering opportunities and supporting meetings online through Skype or other technical vehicles.
- Organizations can benefit from acknowledging the competing options for baby boomers and the necessary requirement for significant promotion and marketing of opportunities.
- Organizations will want to take the time to get to know their volunteers better, including finding out what volunteers are looking to achieve by volunteering. Matching volunteers to assignments to which they are engaged, will serve to improve retention.
- There are a variety of ways organizations can support baby boomers. Skills-based volunteering opportunities are being sought by some baby boomers who are still working and interested in applying their professional skills in another capacity. Meanwhile family volunteering opportunities are often desirable to baby boomers who want to bring their children and grandchildren to volunteer together.

RECRUITING BABY BOOMERS

Multi-channel promotion- *Baby boomers now more than ever are finding information from varying sources, whether through word-of-mouth, direct mail, or through online sources. Acknowledging this in the ways that opportunities are packaged and advertised will ensure that baby boomers are effectively reached.*

Creative marketing- *In order to support the recruitment of baby boomers who have never volunteered, it will be necessary to highlight the benefits of volunteering and the opportunities available at a wide range of locations. Consider a presentation on volunteering at a retirement seminar or at association meetings. Make sure that marketing and communications material adequately represents and targets the diversity amidst the baby boomer generation*

Framing messages:
volunteerism as...

LEGACY	PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT
Adding years to your life, and life to your years	Applying skills and learning new ones
Health and well being	Designing a schedule that works for you
Commitment to a cause	Social networking
Making a difference	Building community



Is your organization ready to engage baby boomers?



	YES	NO
Do our recruitment strategies appropriately target the 50+ age group and acknowledge the diversity represented?		
Are we open to using multi-channel promotion of opportunities, including the marketing of volunteer assignments online- to a demographic that is increasingly technologically connected?		
Can we meaningfully engage baby boomers in the design of their volunteer assignment? i.e. is there an opportunity that serves the organizations needs while also supporting the objectives and scheduling desires of the volunteer?		
Can we match skills to the needs of the organization but not assume that everyone wants to use the skills related to their profession, trade, or education?		
Can we develop volunteer assignments that allow boomers to work independently and can we demonstrate the impact of the volunteer work to our boomer volunteers and community?		
Can we design short-term/seasonal and flexible volunteer positions?		
Can we be well organized but not too bureaucratic in our volunteer engagement?		



References and Resources

CHECK OUT OUR COMPANION RESOURCE

Transitions, Milestones, and Legacies: Volunteering and Retirement Planning

How does volunteering fit into retirement planning?

What kind of volunteering should I consider?

How do I find the right volunteering for me?

REPORTS & RESOURCES

Bridging the Gap: Enriching the Volunteer Experience to Build a Better Future for Our Communities

The Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement

Building Blocks for Family Volunteering – Tools and Resources for Organizations

Building the Bridge to Employer Supported Volunteers

Skills Plus –Bridging Volunteer Experience and Career Development

Reinventing Aging

A Matter of Design: Job design theory and application to the voluntary sector

Volunteer Connections: new strategies For involving older adults

Engaging 50+ Volunteers: A Resource guide for Agencies

50+ volunteering: Working for stronger communities

Boomers are ready for nonprofits: But are nonprofits ready for them?

Reinventing aging: Baby boomers and civic engagement

Tapping the Power of Boomers as Senior Volunteers

Transforming 50+ Volunteering – A Literature Review and Strategy

Engaging Retired Leaders as Volunteers

Baby Boomer and the New Age of Volunteerism

The evolution of giving: From charity to philanthropy

Baby Boomers – Your new volunteers

ARTICLES AND BOOKS

Speevak Sladowski, P. Big Shoes to Fill: How will the Next Generation of Canadian Seniors Want to Volunteer

Lapierre, D. Engaging “50+” Volunteers

Graff-Reed Conversations: A Way-of-Life Wake Up Call for Canada’s Communities

Retiring boomers slowing labour force growth: Statscan

Not so big Jobs and retirements: What workers (and retirees) Really want

Volunteering & Healthy Aging

Working Zoomers

Online activities of Canadian boomers and seniors. Canadian Social Trends, Statistics Canada

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