

CALGARY FOOD BANK

Volunteer Report 2025



By Lauren Drogos

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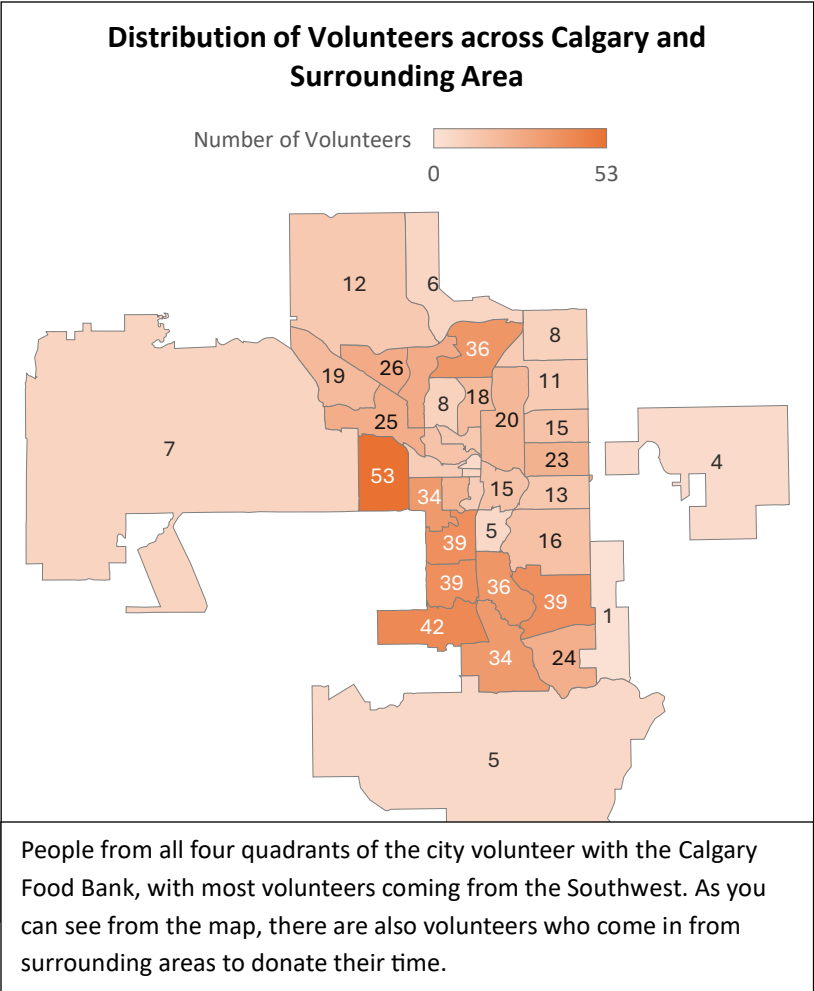
Are you one of the thousands of volunteers who supported the Calgary Food Bank in 2025? Have you ever stopped to think about the reasons you volunteer and the impact you are having in the community?

When talking about volunteering, we often focus on the numbers. We look at metrics like; in the past year volunteers contributed 242 shifts per day to the Calgary Food Bank operations. Or that volunteers are vital to the ability of the Calgary Food Bank to provide up to 800 food hampers per day. These facts are important, but don't quite convey the magic of hundreds of volunteers and staff working towards our mission to make food accessible to everyone in our city.

To kick off the 2026 United Nations (UN) International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development, we did a deep dive into understanding the volunteer workforce at the Calgary Food Bank. A total of 752 volunteers responded to a survey about their motivations and experiences. This survey response rate of 35% provides 99% confidence, with an expected 5% margin of error in our results.

Volunteers from all walks of life

In the fiscal year 2024/25, volunteers donated almost 200,000 hours to the Calgary Food Bank. Over the past two years, the Calgary Food Bank has seen an approximately 100% increase in demand. To meet this demand, we have actively increased our capacity by increasing the number of volunteers working per shift and at the new Downtown Neoma Branch. This new branch is expected to increase our capacity for hamper distribution by another 20-25%. The dedicated volunteer workforce has stepped up to meet this increase-- most of



the volunteers at the Calgary Food Bank (49.7%) commit to a weekly volunteer shift. In fact, most of the respondents (87.1%) volunteer at the Calgary Food Bank more than once per month. Most volunteers (52.4%) are between the ages of 55 and 75, ranging between 12 and 89.

Just over 75% of the volunteer force has been with the Calgary Food Bank for less than 5 years. An additional 7% of volunteers have donated their time for over 15 years. The ease of volunteering was often cited as a reason for sticking with their volunteer hours, with one respondent saying “...I like how clear your shifts are and how easy it is to sign up and manage shifts online, that works for my lifestyle, and it makes it easier for me to volunteer because of that flexibility.” This aligns with previous research on volunteerism, which finds that volunteers who can easily link their motivations to volunteer with their volunteer activities are more likely to continue volunteering and find greater satisfaction with their volunteer work¹.

Beyond the numbers

When asking the volunteer workforce at the Calgary Food Bank what drives their desire to volunteer, a selfless spirit of altruism connected the motivations of many. The most common reason to volunteer was a desire to give back, combined with a feeling of responsibility to nurture or steward the community. Other motivations focused on personal values, finding well-being, and strengthening skills.

In the survey, we asked the open-ended question, “In your own words, tell us why you chose to volunteer at the Calgary Food Bank.” We also administered the Revised-Personal Functions of Volunteerism Scale (R-PFVS), a validated scale that looks at six motivation factors for why people volunteer, including prosocial competence,

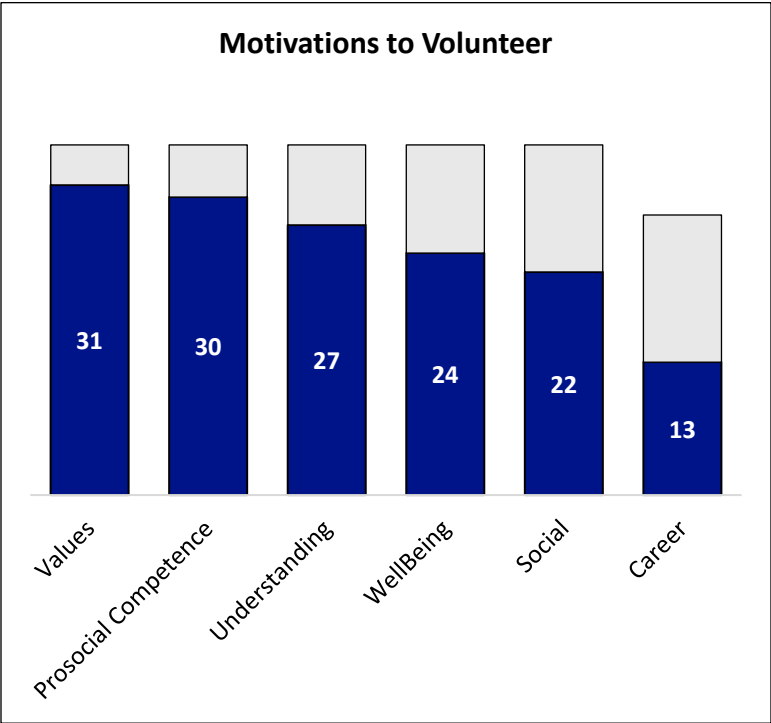
My primary motivation stems from my current experience as a refugee claimant in Canada... I chose the Calgary Food Bank specifically because my own family receives hampers, and I deeply value the incredible support we get. When you are on the receiving end of human kindness and support, you truly feel its power, and I wanted to give back to the organization that is so important to my community and my family. Volunteering here also helps me integrate. It allows me to improve my English, make new connections, and contribute to my own personal growth, as even small contributions can help others. I am committed to doing my best work for the Food Bank.

¹ Agostinho, D. and Paço, A. (2012), Analysis of the motivations, generativity and demographics of the food bank volunteer. *Int. J. Nonprofit Volunt. Sect. Mark.*, 17: 249-261. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nvsm.1427>

values, career, social, understanding and well-being. We slightly revised the tool to better reflect the volunteers at the Calgary Food Bank. All factors have a potential range of 0-35, except for Career which has a range of 1-28. The responses to the open-ended question were also analyzed using the same six factors:

- Values: The person is volunteering to act on values important to themselves, such as addressing food insecurity or reciprocity.
- Prosocial Competence: The person sees volunteering as a civic responsibility or means of “giving back” to the community.
- Understanding: The volunteer is seeking to learn more about the world or community and/or exercise skills they do not often use.
- Well-Being: The person is volunteering because of the positive emotion or psychological growth experienced through volunteering.
- Social: Volunteering allows the person to strengthen their social relationships or social capital.
- Career: The person has the goal of gaining career-related experience through volunteering.

The top two categories the survey respondents endorsed as motivations for volunteering were Values and Prosocial Competence. Results from the open-ended question analyses showed a very similar pattern with Values and Prosocial Competence as the most frequently referenced motivations for volunteer work. Career was not a large motivational factor overall; however, when we looked at the data by age, those under the age of 35 were significantly more likely to have a higher score of Career as a motivator to their volunteer work.



Unsurprisingly, almost 50% of the volunteers said that they volunteer with another organization as well. Interestingly, those who did not volunteer outside of the Calgary Food Bank scored significantly higher on Well-Being, Career, and Understanding as motivators to their volunteer

work. Unfortunately, the sample size was not large enough to further break-down the data by more than one category (e.g. age, length of volunteering).

Volunteer Experience

In the past fiscal year, the Calgary Food Bank distributed 202,926 emergency food hampers. Volunteers are involved in every step of the process, from the first point of contact over the phone to arrange appointments through to the final stage of walking a cart full of groceries to a client's vehicle.

The largest proportion of the volunteer respondents (43.0%)

worked primarily in Distribution at the Calgary Food Bank. This role covers all points building and delivering the Emergency Food Hampers at the main warehouse including building fresh produce or dairy allotments by family size, assembling, and delivering the food hampers. Checking Identification of clients (12.1%), Food Sorting (10.5%), and the Call Centre (10.2%) were the next largest groups of volunteers, making up over 75% of the survey respondents.

Just over three quarters of the Calgary Food Bank volunteers who responded to the survey said they were very or completely satisfied with their volunteer experience (77.5%), and almost as many said they expect to be satisfied with their volunteer role in 3 months' time (76.6). We looked at predictors of satisfaction with length of volunteer experience, and a higher Values motivation factor from the R-PFVS significantly predicted greater satisfaction.

Often it is assumed that volunteerism is voluntary in nature. We examined if our

“I chose to volunteer at the Calgary Food Bank because I care deeply about helping people in my community who are facing food insecurity. The Food Bank does important work supporting families in tough situations, and I wanted to be part of something meaningful. Volunteering there allows me to give back, learn new skills, and make a positive impact on others. It's rewarding to know that even a small contribution can make someone's day a little easier.”



volunteers were motivated by a requirement to complete community service hours, and only a small number (10.2%) indicated that was the case. Unexpectedly, those who were required to volunteer had Prosocial Competency, Values, Career, Well-Being, and Social factors which were significantly higher than those not required to volunteer. One comment revealed a possible explanation for this finding: “[I was volunteering] ... For my chief scout project, but I realized I was needed and that I could help so that’s why I keep going back.” Requirement may have initiated volunteering; however, other factors like a desire to give back to the community drives their motivation to continue.

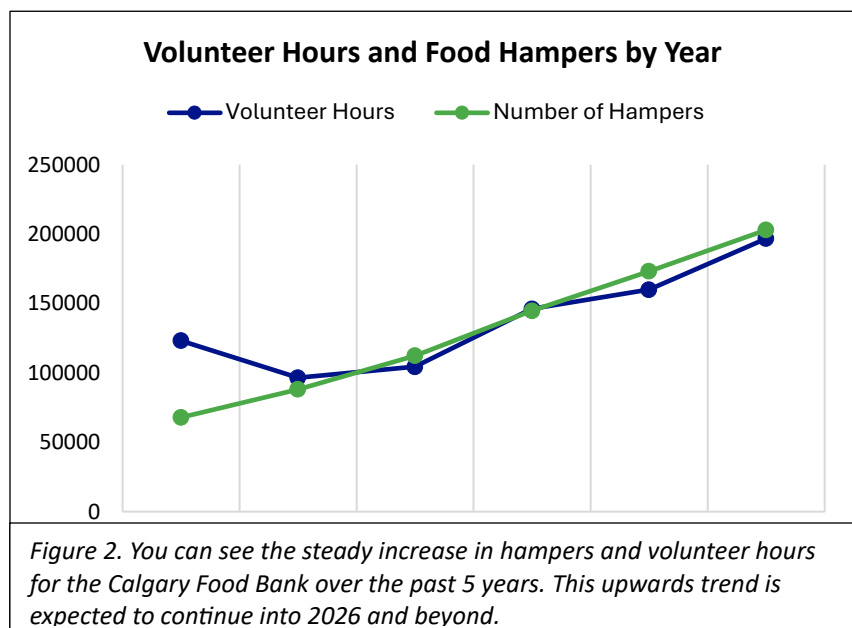
Each food hamper provided is a small victory for the community.

The efforts of our volunteers play a vital role in fulfilling the mission of the Calgary Food Bank. Time is one of the most valuable gifts which allows us to ensure that for every donated dollar 94 cents goes towards supporting the cause. The ripple effect of that time donation has a

“The number of people and organizations the CFB (Calgary Food Bank) helps on the daily is honestly mind-blowing. It warms my heart to witness the level of effort and commitment this organization does out.”

significant reach in the community as well. The research team at the Calgary Food Bank previously reported that for every dollar donated, \$9.84 was saved by Alberta taxpayers. These savings are realized in improved social, mental, and physical health for those receiving food support from the Calgary Food Bank.

Unfortunately, the number of people in Calgary experiencing food insecurity is rising, with around half a million Calgarians per year based on the most recent Statistics Canada estimates in 2023. Since 2020, food prices in Calgary have increased about 33% and the number of hampers provided by the Calgary Food Bank have increased 199%.



The data show that more working families in our city are struggling to keep up with the cost of living.

Over the past 5 years, volunteers at the Calgary Food Bank have impacted just under two million lives and built 721,411 hampers. Over that same time, volunteers have contributed over 710,000 hours to support their community. This is equivalent to just over **81 YEARS** of time donated to ensure food is accessible to those in Calgary. While these numbers are staggering, we know that we are only addressing about 20% of the food insecurity in Calgary. As an organization, we will keep partnering with the Calgary community of volunteers, donors and partners to support food security for everyone in our city.

Will you join us?

Participate in the International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development at the Calgary Food Bank and help us address food insecurity within your community. You will be part of millions working towards ending hunger, one of the top United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Find out how to [volunteer at the Calgary Food Bank](#).