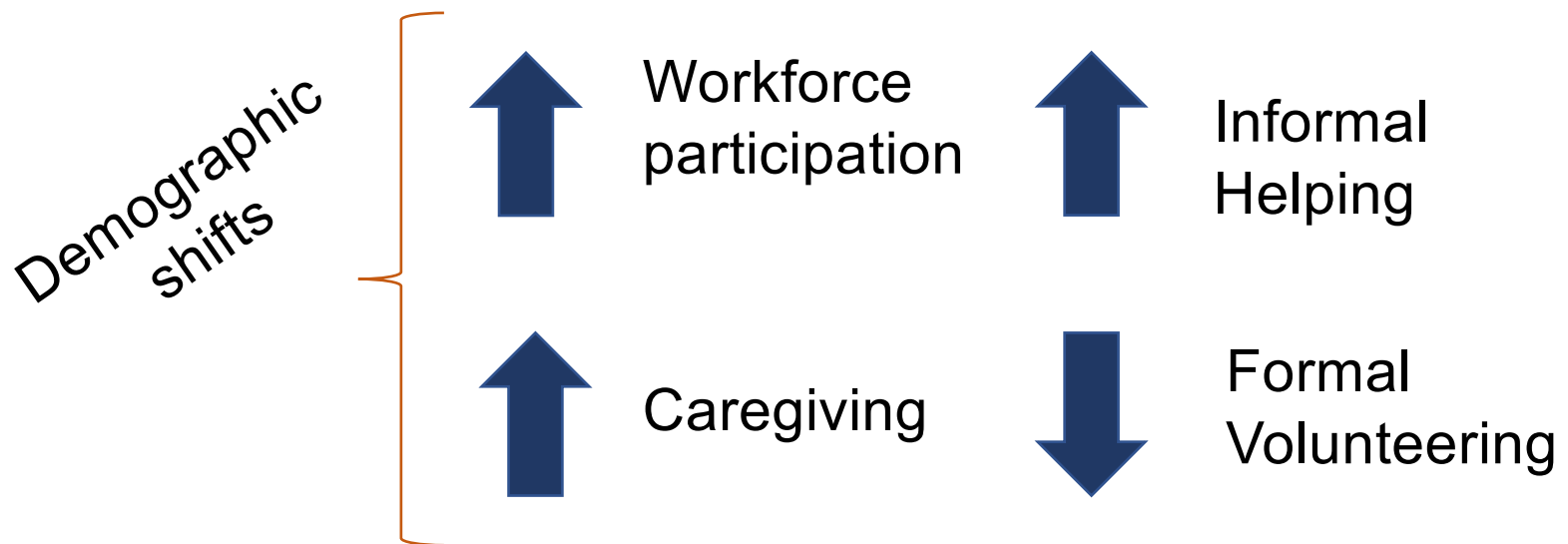




# The Balancing Act: Examining How Older Adult Volunteers Juggle Multiple Roles

Jennifer A. Crittenden, Ph.D.

*"This material is based upon work funded by the Office of Research and Evaluation at the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and Senior Corps under Grant No. 17REHME001 through the National Service and Civic Engagement research grant competition. Opinion or points of view expressed in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position of, or a position that is endorsed by, CNCS or Senior Corps."*



## Background: Benefits of Volunteering

Health

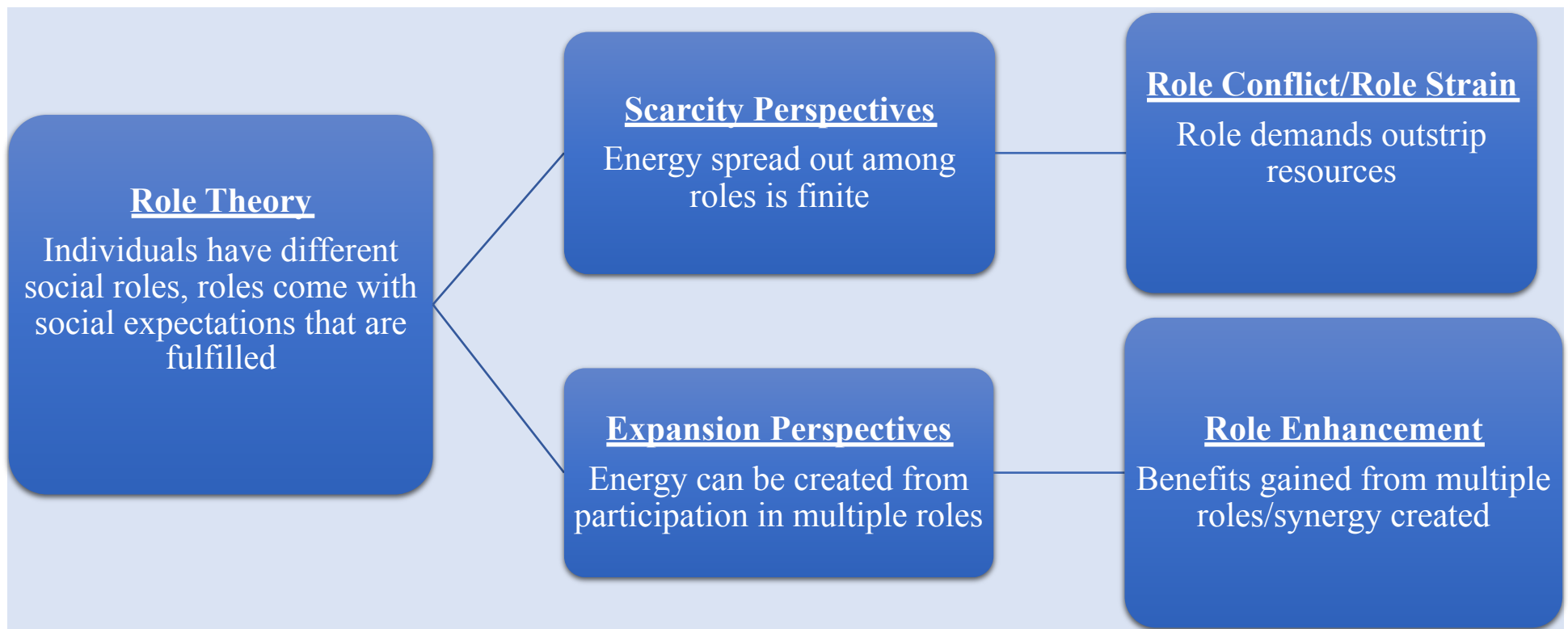
Mental  
Health

Life  
Satisfaction

Health  
Behaviors

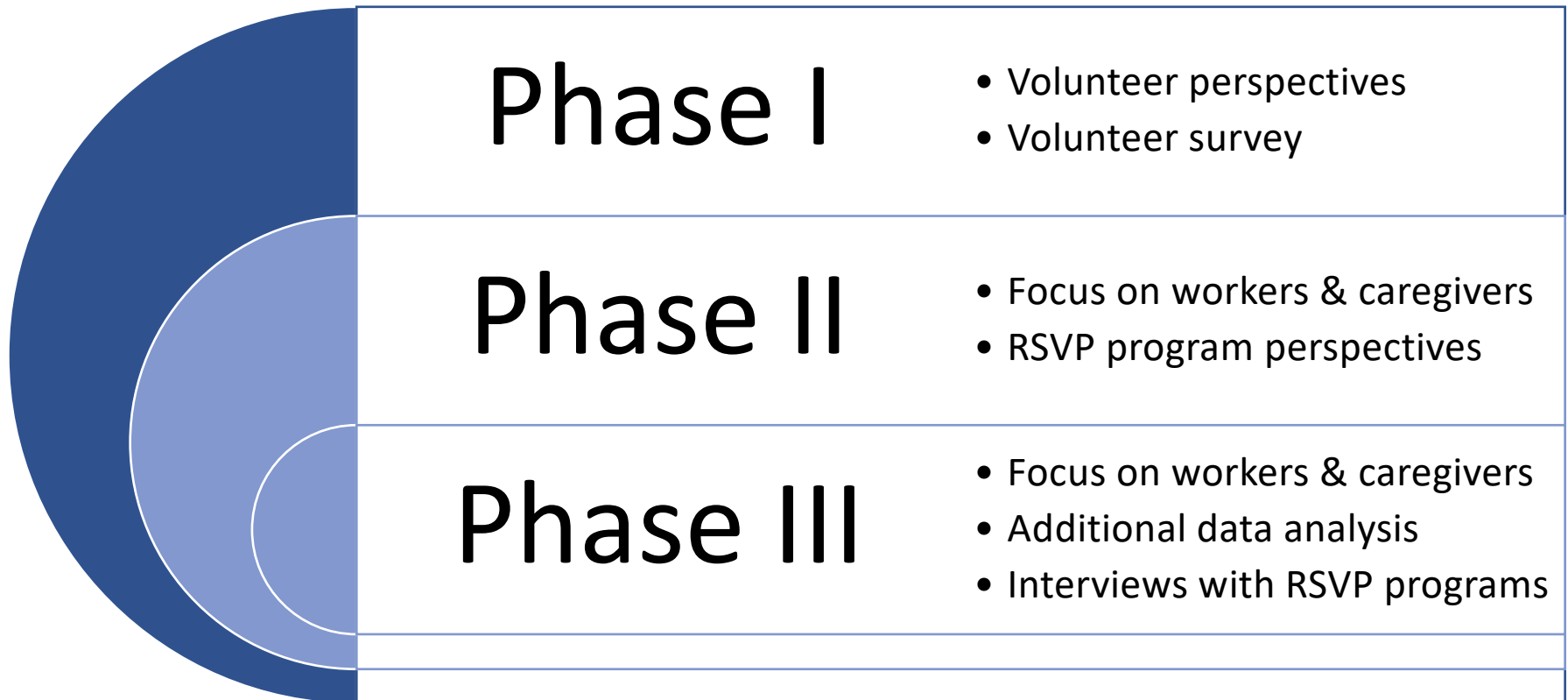
Longevity

## Conceptual Framework





## Research Phases



## Research Questions

### **Research Questions:**

- 1) Does role conflict predict satisfaction with, participation in, and/or intention to leave the volunteer role?
- 2) What are the compensatory strategies used by older adults to navigate role conflict and what benefits do older adults accrue in their volunteer roles that could effectively counterbalance role conflict?

Sample



Adults 55+

Current  
RSVP  
volunteer

6,796 surveys  
distributed  
nationwide

## Defining Roles

### Worker

- 1 or more hours per month working for pay

### Caregivers

- 1 or more hours helping a friend or relative age 18 or older who has trouble taking care of themselves due to physical or mental illness, disability, or other reason

### Non-RSVP Volunteering

- 1 or more hours of unpaid help to others outside of RSVP

## Predictor Variables

Role Conflict  
(WAFCS)

Role Load  
(Total)

Role Load  
(Hours)

## Control Variables

### Demographics

- Age
- Gender
- Race
- Marital Status
- Income
- Education

Health and  
Well-being  
(PROMIS)

## Outcome Variables

### **Volunteer Satisfaction**

Brief Index of  
Affective Job  
Satisfaction  
(BIAJS)

Intent to  
Remain

Volunteer  
Participation  
(RSVP  
Hrs/Month)

## Analysis Approach

Descriptive Stats

Pearson Correlations

Hierarchical Multiple  
Regression

Mann-Whitney U & T-Testing

Inductive Content Analysis  
(open-ended ?s)



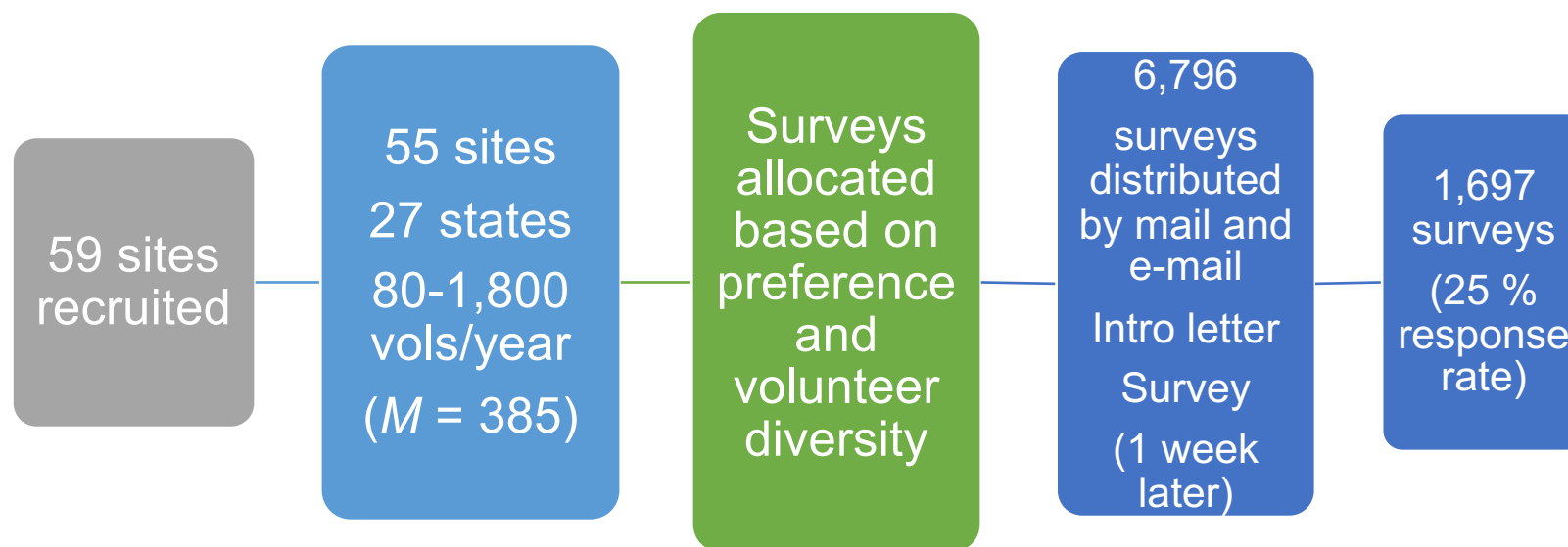
1<sup>st</sup> Entry:  
Predictor(s)  
alone

2<sup>nd</sup> Entry:  
Predictor(s) &  
Control  
Variables



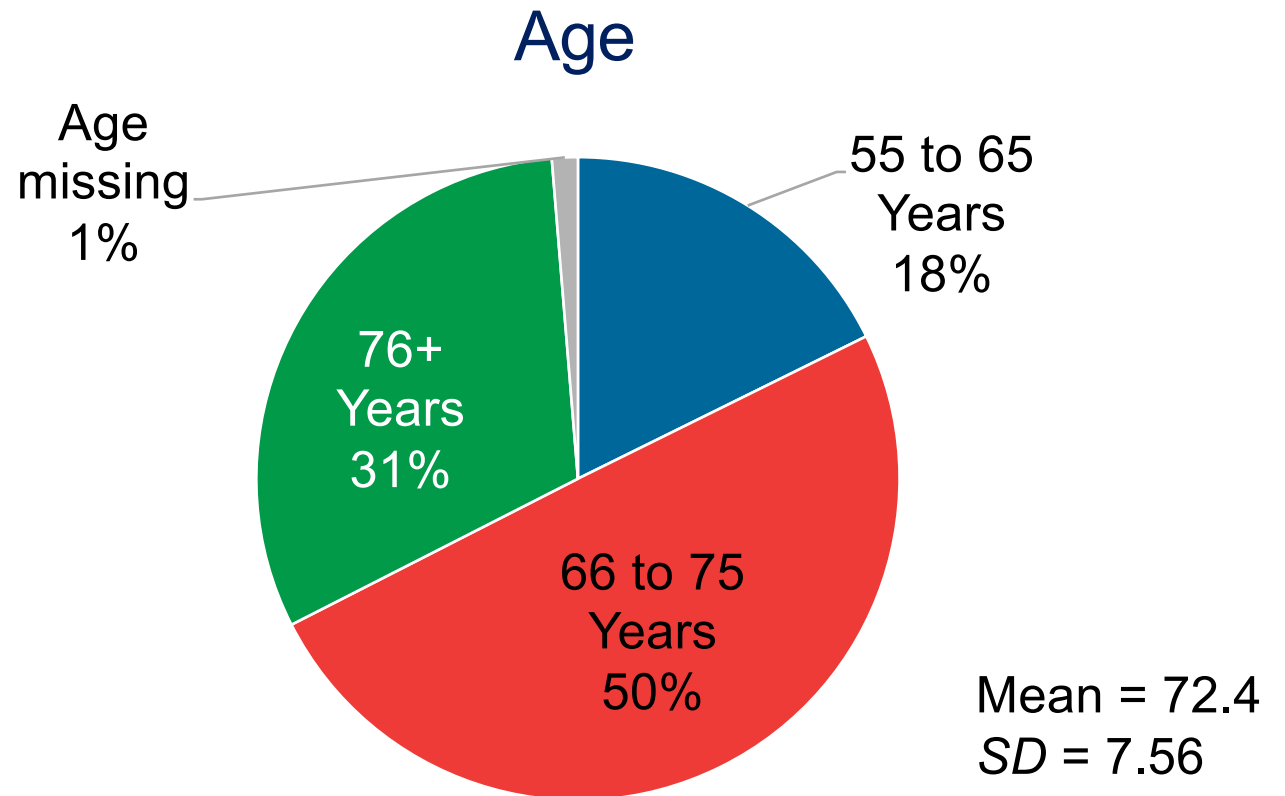
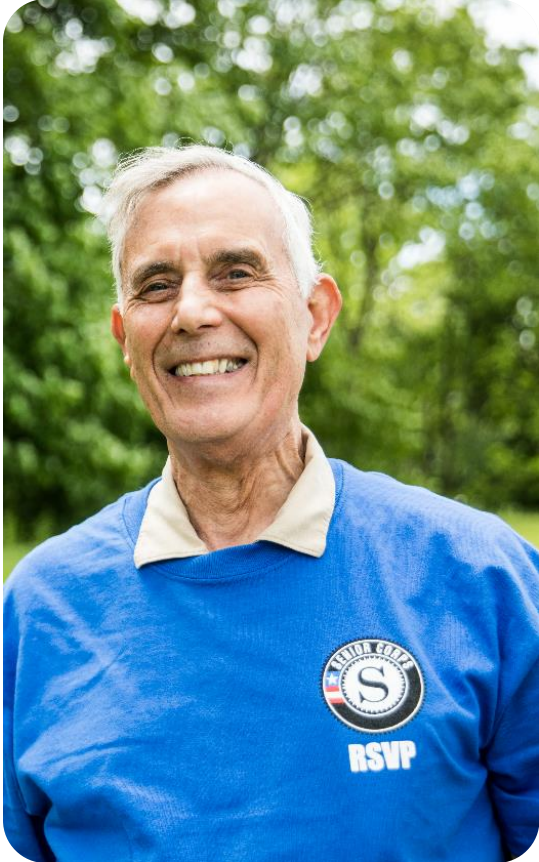
# **Phase I Volunteer Survey Results**

## Recruitment



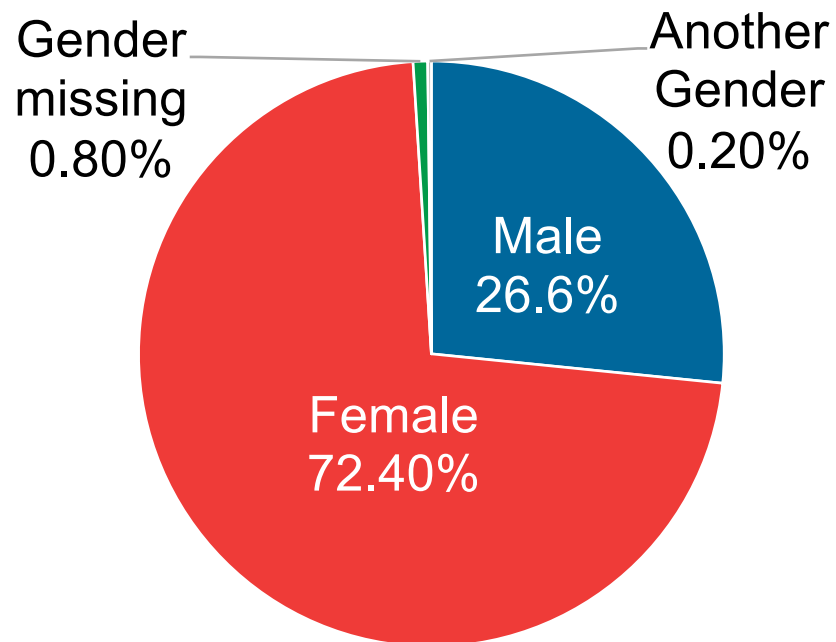
**National Association  
of RSVP Directors**



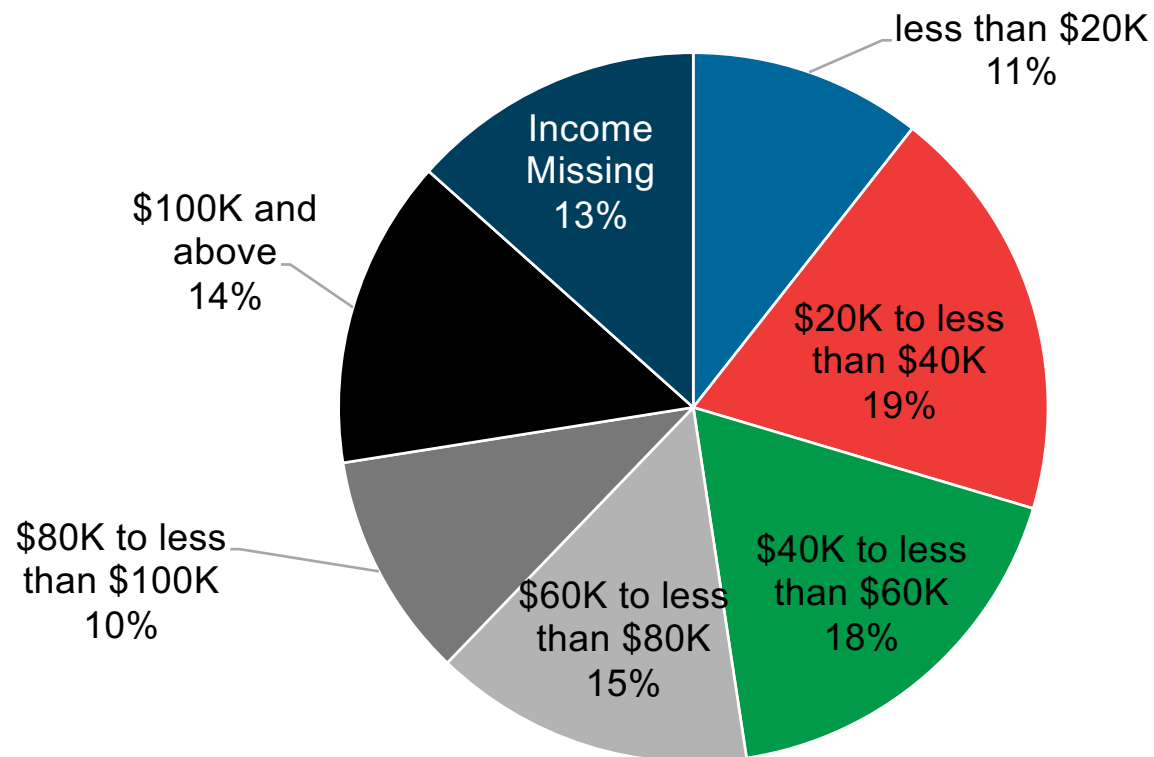




## Gender

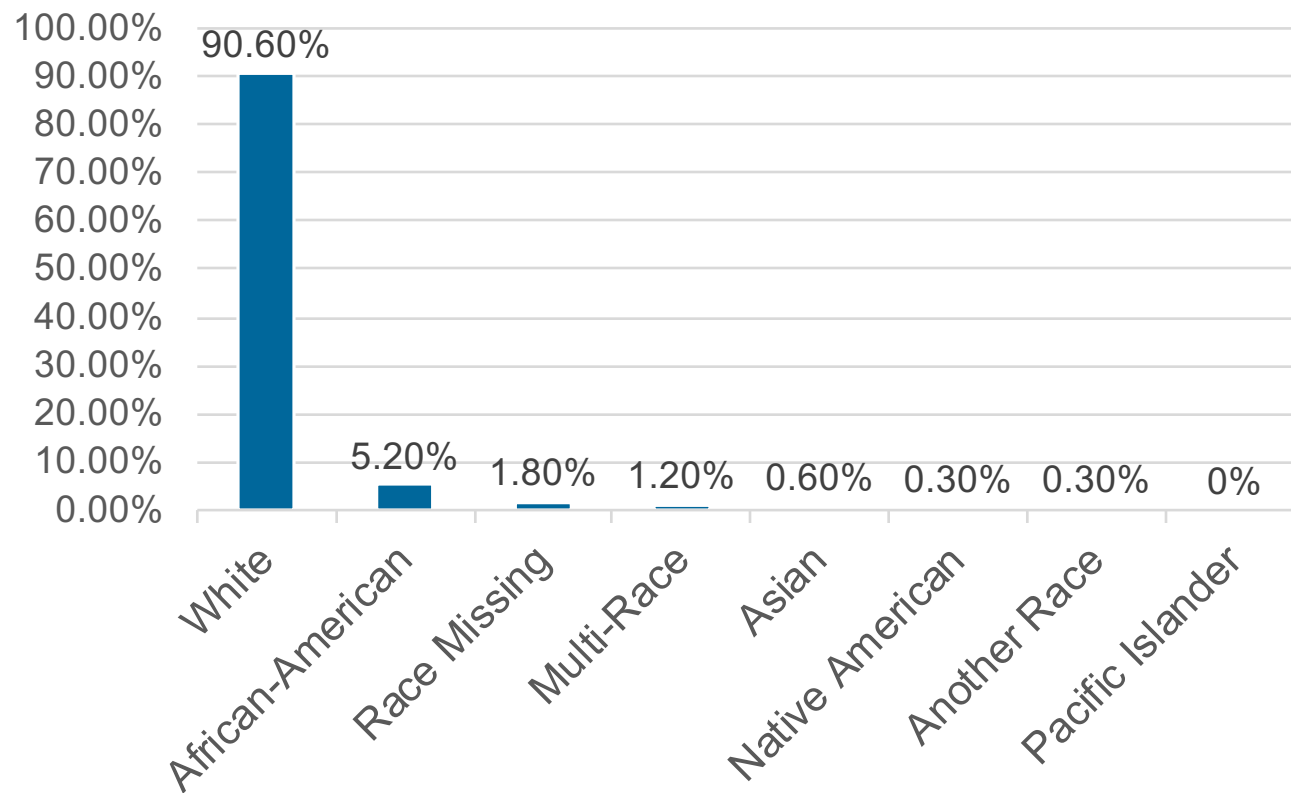


## Household Income





## Race



## Role Load and Intensity

**Average hours in formal volunteering (RSVP)**

**22.6 hours/month**



M = 53.17 hours/month



M = 42 hours/month



M = 19.41 hours/month

## Conflict Differences

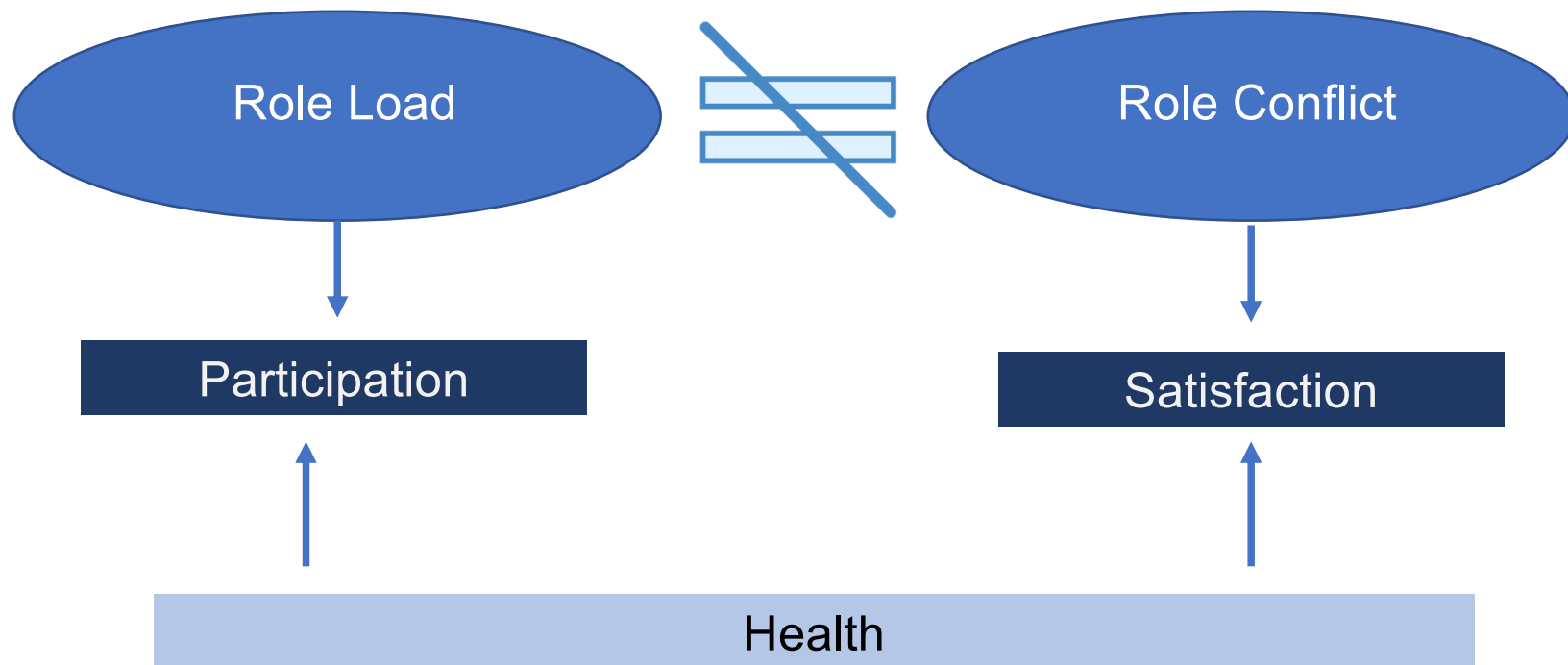
### Role Conflict

#### **For those who had additional roles:**

Average conflict score: 7.49 (SD=5.05)     Range from 5-35 (35 poss. Points)

- There are sig. differences in conflict scores between caregivers and non-caregivers
- There are sig. differences between workers and non-workers with regard to conflict scores





## Role Enhancement Questions (Qual)

“In what ways has your volunteer work through RSVP helped you in your caregiving?”

## Role Enhancement: Skills & Techniques



Communication  
Social Skills  
Organization  
Time  
Management



Fundraising  
Exercise  
Instruction  
Tax Prep



Care  
Approaches  
Meal  
Preparation

## Role Enhancement: Skills & Techniques

*My duties at our senior nutrition site is [sic] to help serve meds and read the menu and nutrition facts. This helps me to be a better caregiver by serving healthy meals. #603 (caregiver)*

## Role Enhancement: New Information & Resources

*I am aware of community resources to share with others in need. #675 (informal volunteer)*

*I get to talk to others who do caregiving and get ideas on how to do things more efficiently. #546 (caregiver)*

## Role Enhancement: New Roles & Opportunities

*I volunteer with a digitizing project in records preservation. Through this project, I became involved with another non-profit history preservation project. This has led to volunteering with a veteran's group in a lawn care project for the nonprofit. One led to another, and that led to another, so to speak.  
#8484 (informal volunteer)*

## Role Enhancement: New Roles & Opportunities

*The training I received from RSVP as a group exercise instructor in [Name of exercise program redacted] qualified me in my paid job as an exercise instructor, and Life Coach for the pre-diabetes program at the YMCA. #8887 (worker)*

## Role Enhancement: Networking/Connecting

*The organization I volunteer for with RSVP interacts with other volunteer organizations that I am a member of also. The cross-fertilization of being in all of these organizations helps all of the leaders know what the other organizations are doing, where they can work together on things, and share ideas that come up in one organization and are also useful in others.  
#9147 (informal volunteer)*



## Role Enhancement: Respite

*For the short time I am volunteering at RSVP, it is like a vacation from my caregiving. I am able to put my worries on hold... #8013 (caregiver)*



## Indirect Benefits

Socialization

Personal Growth

Greater Perspective

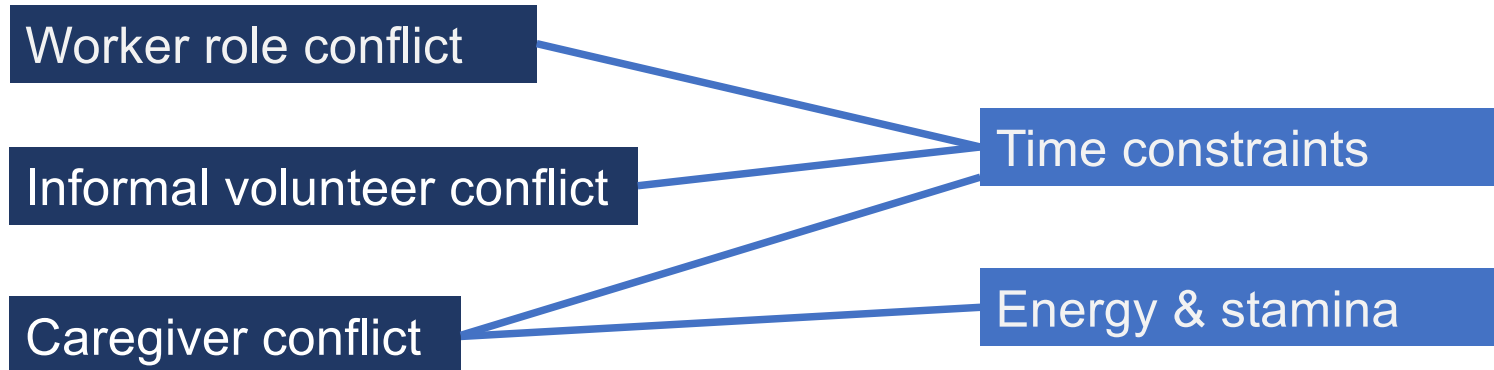
Positive Emotional Benefits

Staying Active/Busy

Physical/Cognitive Benefits



## Sources of Conflict: Roles



## Role Conflict Examples

*I give my time to volunteering only when [I'm] not working, so it is limited. #515 (informal volunteer & worker)*

*The reason I'd be a better RSVP worker without caregiving is simply because I'd have a little more time to volunteer. #8689 (caregiver)*

## Health Barriers

*I wish I didn't have physical limitations so I could be more available to give more of myself. #8778 (open response comment)*

*Physical limitations prevent me from doing more volunteer work. Until 6 months ago, I also volunteered once a week at our no-kill cat shelter, animal protection association. Because of back pain, I can no longer do this, but I really loved it. #661 (open-response comment)*

# Managing Conflict

## Caregivers

- Respite
- Taking care recipient along

## Workers

- Vol. during off-work hours

## Both

- Flexible scheduling/accommodations
- Time management skills
- Break from volunteering
- Meaningful volunteer work

## Role Conflict

- Time devoted across roles
- Connected with satisfaction
- Related to time and health

## Enhancement

- Direct benefits
- Indirect benefits
- Workers & Caregivers are key

## Implications

Encouraging older adults to participate in volunteer work in addition to other life role responsibilities through:

### **Recruitment:**

- Articulating role-related benefits
- New recruitment avenues: employers, caregiver organizations, other civic organizations

### **Retention:**

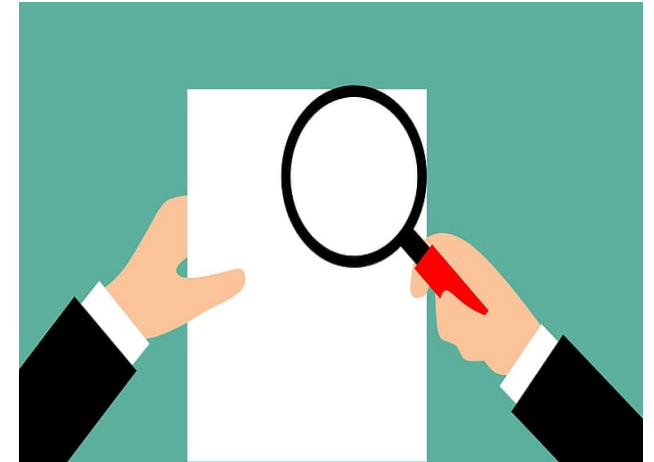
- Volunteer job flexibility/scheduling
- Volunteer assignment matches that will create role-related benefits
- Support volunteer health



# **Phase II RSVP Program Survey Results**

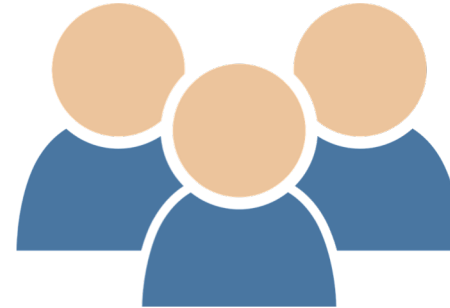
## Phase II Research Questions

- What role enhancement strategies have older adult volunteers employed to combat role conflict?
- What strategies have RSVP programs employed to assist older volunteers in managing role conflict?
- Based on study findings from Phase I, what recommendations do RSVP program directors have for addressing role conflict within older adult volunteering?





21 Surveys Returned



Average of 438 volunteers (SD = 197.84)  
Range: 85-900 volunteers



Average of 73  
program sites  
SD = 56.83  
Range: 8 to 211 sites

## Supporting Caregivers



## Inclusion of Care Recipient

*“...one of our volunteers takes her husband with her to a food distribution. He sits there in a wheelchair and watches while she works. She says they both enjoy getting out.”*

Program #21

“We allow for flexibility, and depending on the volunteer opportunity, we allow for volunteers to bring their loved one with them and find a way for them to participate as well. For example, the volunteer might be assembling packages for veterans and the loved one would be helping by tracking names and holding items until needed.” Program #1

## Expressing Care & Empathy

*“As volunteer coordinator, I maintain contact via occasional emails and phone calls to let the volunteer know they are thought of by our organization during their time of caregiving. Thinking of you cards and notes are sent to the caregiving volunteer, likewise the person the volunteer is caring for, as appropriate.”*

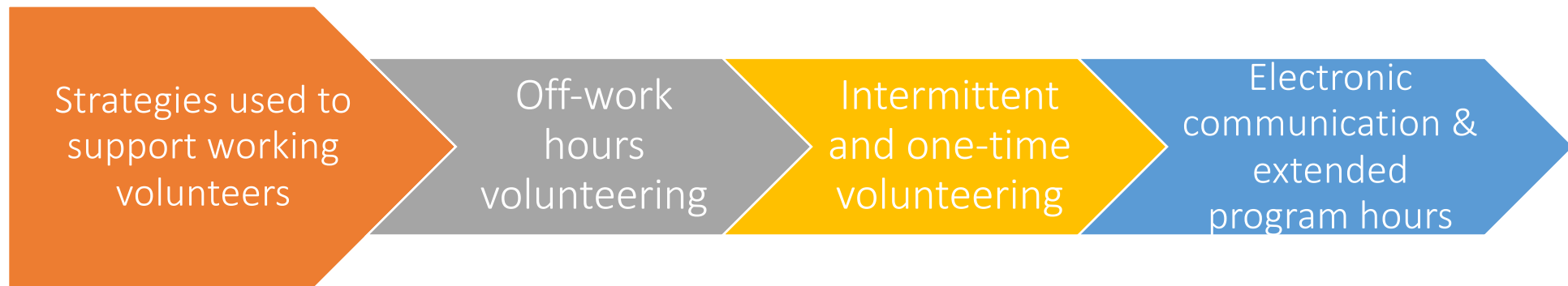
*Program #4*

## Referrals and Resources and Supports

*“We provide a volunteer caring companion for respite care. We offer caregiving support groups at our agency.” Program #12*

*“...being sure to listen to their needs and situation and to provide referrals for services that they might need in the community, such as caregiver respite.” Program #22*

## Supporting Workers





## Off-Work Hours

*“We offer projects after working hours or on weekends that are family friendly to encourage all ages to attend. This allows for participants with various abilities to be active no matter what physical or mental limitations they may have.” Program #3*

*“We also have a list of outside agencies that need volunteers on evenings and weekends. Most of these volunteer stations are listed in 'other community priorities'. They give volunteers working full-time a chance to volunteer.”  
Program #10*

## Intermittent and One-Time Volunteering

*“For example, one man who is working and volunteering has one special project he does each year. He is active a few times a year, but his main focus is this one project.”*

*Program #1*

*“We offer special event opportunities that still meet a community need, such as monthly fresh produce distributions to people in need. However, volunteers can sign up to serve at one or multiple distributions.*

*This allows for much flexibility to the volunteer.”*

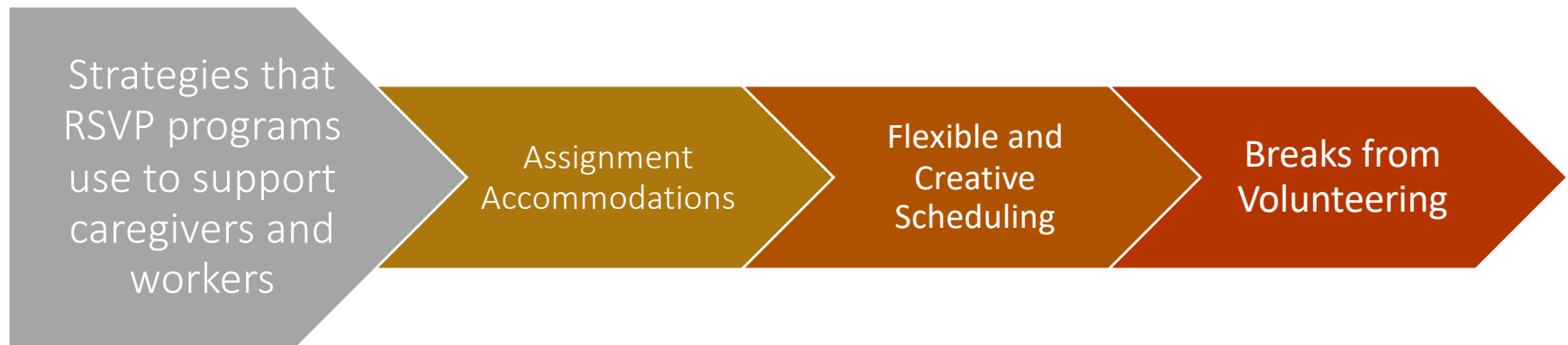
*Program #19*

## Electronic Communications & Extended Hours

*“We communicate by email to mitigate the problem of not being able to reach folks during our office hours.” Program #11*

*“For example, we run a Tax Counseling for the Elderly program and provide the training on Saturdays...” Program #26*

## Overlapping Strategies for Both Caregivers & Workers





# Big Picture Takeaways

Roles & Health Matter

Volunteering Accrues Benefits Across  
Roles

Volunteers & Programs Can Work  
Together To Manage Role Conflict

For Programs, Empathy and Flexibility  
are Critical Approaches

**Q & A**

## Phase III-Currently Underway

---

Additional Data Analysis  
RSVP Program Interviews



## Research Questions

- Who are the caregiver volunteers within the RSVP population?
- Who are the working volunteers within the RSVP population?
- What other activities are competing for their time?
- Overall, how satisfied are they with their volunteer experience?
- What comments have they provided about their RSVP experience that will help us to better recruit and retain them as volunteers?
- What are some models for how RSVP programs are successfully recruiting, supporting, and retaining caregiver and worker volunteers?

## **What are some models for how RSVP programs are successfully recruiting, supporting, and retaining caregiver and worker volunteers?**



Currently conducting interviews with RSVP Programs!

Contact: [jennifer.crittenden@maine.edu](mailto:jennifer.crittenden@maine.edu) to participate

# mainecenteronaging.umaine.edu/older-adult-volunteer-study/

## JUGGLING MULTIPLE ROLES: AN EXAMINATION OF ROLE CONFLICT AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO OLDER ADULT VOLUNTEER SATISFACTION AND RETENTION

By  
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B.A. University of Maine, 2003  
M.S.W. University of Maine, 2005

A Dissertation  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
(Interdisciplinary in Gerontology)

The Graduate School  
The University of Maine  
May 2019

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CENTER ON AGING

### Juggling Multiple Roles: An Examination of Role Conflict and Its Relationship to Older Adult Volunteer Satisfaction and Retention

BRIEF REPORT  
Center on Aging, University of Maine

Jennifer Crittenden, Ph.D. | Sandra S. Butler, Ph.D. | Nicholas Silver, B.A. |  
Abbie Hartford, B.A. | Rachel Coleman, M.P.P., M.A.



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#### Introduction

The face of older adult volunteering has been changing over time requiring volunteer programs to innovate and respond to the new realities of the "retirement years." This shift has surfaced new questions to be explored that will help the nonprofit sector anticipate and respond accordingly. In the spring of 2018 a multi-phase study, funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service, was launched to examine: 1) the relationship between holding multiple roles (such as caregiving, working for pay, and informal volunteering) and older adult volunteering outcomes; 2) the benefits that older adults gain from volunteering; and 3) the strategies used by both volunteers and volunteer programs to help older adults juggle increasingly "full plates" of activities. The study yielded valuable information about how older adults and their volunteer programs are able to avoid and address role conflict. Findings from this study provide implications for volunteer program practices that can be applied to help recruit and sustain older adults as volunteers.

This report provides a brief summary of the key findings from this study on older adults and their volunteering. A full technical dissertation report for the Phase I volunteer survey can be [found online](#).

Either report is also available by request from the study PI, Dr. Jennifer Crittenden at [jennifer.crittenden@umaine.edu](mailto:jennifer.crittenden@umaine.edu).

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Organizational and Older Adult Volunteer Perspectives on  
Role Conflict Management Strategies  
Jennifer A. Crittenden, PhD, Sandra S. Butler, PhD  
University of Maine




**Most Common Role Conflict Management Strategies**

- Communicating with family and friends
- Communicating with volunteer program
- Communicating with employer
- Communicating with volunteer program
- Communicating with volunteer program

**Most Common Role Conflict Management Strategies by Age Group**

- 65-74
- 75+

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Vying for Time: How Programs Engage and Support a Busy  
Cadre of Baby Boomer and Older Adult Volunteers  
Jennifer A. Crittenden, PhD, Sandra S. Butler, PhD  
University of Maine



**Programs that most often engage and support a busy cadre of baby boomer and older adult volunteers**

- Community-based organizations
- Nonprofit organizations
- Government organizations
- For-profit organizations
- Academic organizations

**Programs that most often engage and support a busy cadre of baby boomer and older adult volunteers by age group**

- 65-74
- 75+

# mainecenteronaging.umaine.edu/older-adult-volunteer-study/



## Getting the most out of your volunteer experience

### Tips for caregivers

Are you an older adult who is juggling life's demands and trying to find time for yourself? Volunteering is a great way to support your health and well-being while making a difference in your community.

Volunteering has been linked to a number of positive outcomes for older adults such as good health and mental health, social connections, and a sense of purpose. However, for many older adults, especially caregivers, finding the time and energy to volunteer can be a challenge.

A recent study was carried out with older adult volunteers and volunteer managers across the country to understand how busy older adults can successfully manage their multiple commitments. Based on that survey, as many as 35% of current volunteers are also caregivers, meaning they are caring for someone 18 or older who is unable to care for themselves.

Here's what we learned about volunteering from other caregivers:

#### Benefits of volunteering

Caregivers reported that volunteering:

- Gave them new skills and techniques to improve the care they provide to their loved one.
- Provided them with new "ideas" or "advice" gained from other volunteers or service recipients that enhanced their own caregiving.
- Gave them the opportunity to learn about program and resources, like Medicare, insurance, and financial and aging services, that could support them as caregivers or support their care recipient.
- Provided an opportunity to make new friends and socialize.
- Provided a valuable and temporary reprieve from caregiving responsibilities.



## Getting the most out of your volunteer experience

### Tips for older workers

Are you an older adult who is juggling life's demands and trying to find time for yourself? Volunteering is a great way to support your health and well-being while making a difference in your community.

Volunteering has been linked to a number of positive outcomes for older adults such as good health and mental health, social connections, and a sense of purpose. However, for many older adults, especially those who are employed, finding the time to volunteer can be a challenge.

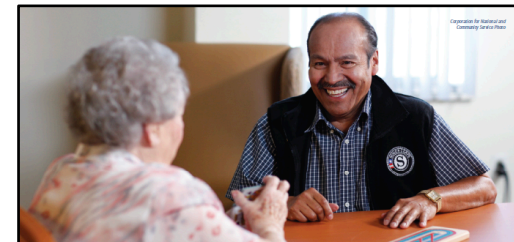
A recent study was carried out with older adult volunteers and volunteer managers across the country to understand how busy older adults can successfully manage their multiple commitments. Based on that survey, as many as one out of every seven current volunteers are also working for pay in addition to their volunteer work.

Here's what we learned about volunteering from other older workers:

#### Benefits of volunteering

Older workers reported that volunteering:

- Gave them new skills and knowledge that they can use in their paid employment.
- Provided them with information on different programs, services, and resources that could be used in their paid role.
- Helped them to connect with new employment opportunities.
- Provided an opportunity to meet new people and build a network that helped them in their paid work.
- Provided a valuable opportunity for stress relief.



## Supporting older workers and caregivers

### Tips for volunteer managers

Volunteering has been linked to a number of positive outcomes for older adults such as good health and mental health, social connections, and a sense of purpose. However, older adults are increasingly giving their time to paid work, caregiving, and other important endeavors. For many older adults, especially those who are employed and those who are caring for loved ones, finding the time to volunteer can be a challenge. Volunteer programs can encourage older adults to volunteer by offering flexible and appealing program options for these two groups.

A recent study was carried out with older adult volunteers and volunteer managers across the country to understand how busy older adults can successfully manage their multiple commitments. Based on that survey, as many as one out of every seven older adult volunteers are working for pay in addition to their volunteer work. As many as a third of older adult volunteers are also serving as a caregiver to a loved one.

#### Benefits of volunteering

Both older workers and caregivers reported that volunteering provided benefits to their different roles. In particular, volunteering:

- Gave them new skills and knowledge that they can use in their paid employment or caregiving.
- Provided them with information on different programs, services, and resources that could be tapped in their paid or caregiving roles.
- Provided an opportunity to meet new people and build a network that helped them in their paid work or caregiving.
- Provided a valuable opportunity for stress relief or respite.

## Acknowledgements



Advisor: Dr. Sandra Butler, UMaine School of Social Work

Graduate Assistants: Leah Kravette ('19 MSW), Abbie Hartford, Nicholas Silver, and Rachel Coleman

