

ABSTRACT

The National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (NSGVP) is the most comprehensive survey of charitable giving, volunteering and participation in Canada. It records how Canadians 1) give money and other resources to individuals and to charitable and non-profit organizations, 2) volunteer time to charitable and non-profit organizations, and 3) participate in organizations and civic life. The NSGVP was developed through a partnership of federal government departments and voluntary sector organizations.

Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians: Highlights from the 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating

Statistics Canada

INTRODUCTION

Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians tallies the results of the 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (NSGVP) to provide a 'snapshot' of voluntary and civic action in Canada.

THE RESULTS

Compared with the 1997 NSGVP, the results of the 2000 survey present a picture of increasing financial contributions on the part of Canadians and a decline in the number who devote discretionary time to volunteer activities. The survey also shows that those who do volunteer are volunteering more time.

In 2000, almost 8 in 10 Canadians aged 15 and older (78%) donated funds to support the work of charitable and non-profit organizations, the same as in 1997. More than one in four (27%) Canadians volunteered their time, down from 31% in 1997. This represents a drop of roughly one million people since the last survey.

However, Canadian donors and volunteers boosted their contributions to charitable causes during this period. Giving climbed by 11% for a total of almost \$5 billion while total hours contributed by volunteers rose to 1.1 billion, an increase of 5% from the 1997 level.

Although most Canadians gave money or time to help their fellow citizens in 2000,

some gave much more than others. A small number of highly engaged people provided the bulk of support in the country. Fewer than 1 in 10 Canadians contributed 46% of the total dollar value of all donations and 40% of all volunteer hours. The voluntary sector continues to depend heavily on these core supporters.

GIVING IN 2000

The likelihood of making a charitable donation and the amount donated are influenced by a variety of factors, including the financial capacity to give, values and attitudes related to giving, and opportunities to give. Charitable giving tends to vary across the population with age, sex, education and income. The full report, *Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians*, documents these variations in detail. Here are some examples:

- Religiosity—or level of religious commitment—is associated with a heightened incidence of charitable giving and larger donations, both to religious organizations and to other types of charitable and non-profit organizations.
- The top quarter of donors accounted for 82% of the total donations.
- Although donors with higher household incomes made larger donations, they tended to give a smaller percentage of their pre-tax household income.

What has changed since 1997?

- The total dollar value of donations increased since 1997, largely because of a combination of population growth and an increase in the size of the annual average donation—\$259 in 2000, up by 8% from 1997.
- Donors made fewer donations overall, but made larger individual donations.
- Residents of Prince Edward Island and Manitoba increased their average annual donations by over 25%.
- Although Canadians with a university degree continued to give the most—\$480 per year, on average—their rate of donating declined from 90% to 84%.
- Religious organizations received the largest portion of the total value of donations. They were given \$2.4 billion, or 49% of the total value of donations, virtually unchanged from the 51% donated to these groups in 1997. The percentage of Canadians making donations to religious organizations declined from 35% in 1997 to 32% in 2000.
- Health organizations received the highest number of individual donations (41%) followed by social service organizations (20%) and religious organizations (14%).
- The most common ways people made donations were by giving to door-to-door canvassers (15%), responding to requests through the mail (15%), and sponsoring someone in an event such as a walkathon (15%). In 2000, donors made 20% fewer gifts in response to door-to-door canvassing.
- More donors had concerns about charitable fundraising in 2000. Slightly less than half said they didn't give more money to charitable and non-profit organizations because they didn't like the way requests were made (compared with 41% in 1997) and 46% said they didn't think the money would be used efficiently (compared with 40% in 1997).
- Almost half of all donors (49%) said they would contribute more if they could get a better tax credit, up from 37% in 1997.

VOLUNTEERING IN 2000

Canadians who volunteer their time, energy and talents to charitable and non-profit organizations play an important role in improving their communities and the lives of others:

- Just over 6.5 million people, or 27% of Canadians 15 and older, volunteered their time and skills to a charitable or non-profit organization.
- The total number of hours volunteered was just over one billion.
- Volunteers contributed 162 hours over the year, on average.
- Seven percent of all Canadians gave 73% of all volunteer hours.

What has changed since 1997?

- With fewer Canadians volunteering, the total number of hours volunteered fell by 5%.
- In almost every province, the volunteering rate declined while the average hours volunteered increased.
- One of the greatest declines in volunteer participation was among those who had a university degree (from 48% to 39%).
- The volunteer time contributed in 2000 equalled 549,000 full-time year-round jobs—29,000 fewer than in 1997.
- Higher levels of household income increased the likelihood of volunteering. Only 17% of people with household incomes under \$20,000 volunteered, compared with 39% of those with incomes of \$100,000 or more. However, volunteers with the lowest levels of household income gave the most time.
- Although Canadians who attended weekly religious services were much more likely to volunteer than those who did not, the volunteer rate among this group has fallen from 46% to 41% since 1997.
- More than one half of volunteers (57%) helped to organize or supervise events for an organization and about 4 in 10 served on a board or committee. Forty percent took part in canvassing, campaigning or fundraising.

- Almost all volunteers said the reason they volunteered was to help a cause they believe in. About 8 out of 10 volunteers wanted to put their skills and experience to use. Over two-thirds said they had been personally affected by the cause supported by the organization.
- Younger volunteers were more likely than other age groups to volunteer because their friends volunteered or to improve their job opportunities or explore their own strengths.
- Lack of time was the reason given most frequently by volunteers for not volunteering more (76%) and by non-volunteers for not volunteering at all (69%). The next most frequently given reason was being unwilling to make a year-round commitment (34% of volunteers, 46% of non-volunteers).
- The percentage of volunteers who said they didn't volunteer more because they contributed money instead of time rose to 24% from 19%. This reason was given even more frequently by those who did not volunteer at all—38% compared with 33% in 1997.
- The 2000 NSGVP asked Canadians about mandatory community service for the first time. Over 7% of those who volunteered said they were required to do so by their school, their employer or the government.
- Employer support for volunteering seems to be on the upswing. In 2000, more employed volunteers (27%) said their employer let them modify their work hours in order to volunteer, and more said they had received recognition from their employer for their volunteer work (22%).

PARTICIPATING IN 2000

Not only do Canadians contribute volunteer time and make charitable donations, they also support each other and their communities by joining nonprofit groups and organizations, participating in their activities, keeping informed about news and current affairs, and expressing their political preferences through voting:

- Just over half of all Canadians belonged to at least one organization or group, such as a community association, service club or union. This was the same as in 1997.
- People who participated in organizations were much more likely to give and to volunteer than were those who did not.

What has changed since 1997?

- Participation fell among Canadians with a university degree and among those with household incomes of \$100,000 or more, paralleling declines in volunteering among these groups.
- More than one in every five Canadians belonged to a work-related organization such as a union or professional association, up slightly from 1997.

CARING AND INVOLVED CANADIANS

Canadians give, volunteer and participate to support and connect with individuals, groups and communities. While most Canadians make some contribution of time or money over the course of a year, some give much more than others. And those who provide one kind of support, such as charitable giving, are also more likely to provide other kinds of support, such as volunteering. What emerges from the 2000 NSGVP is a portrait of a society in which most citizens contribute modest, although important, levels of support, but which also depends heavily on the contributions of a small core of particularly engaged citizens.