

## ABSTRACT

*Studies have shown that volunteers are more willing to financially support the non-profit for which they volunteer than are members of the public at large. This article examines the relationship of volunteer motivations to volunteer behaviors such as the donation of time, degree of involvement, and donation of money to non-profits using the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI). Additional implications for strategies to enhance fund raising from volunteers are also presented.*

# The Relationship Between Volunteer Motivations and Behavior in Non-Profit Organizations

Dwight W. Mihalicz, M.B.A., and Swee C. Goh, Ph.D.

A recent study by the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy (1993) indicates that 71 percent of Canadians over age 18 said they had performed volunteer work for a charitable or non-profit organization in their lifetime. The donated time and financial support provided to charitable organizations are enormous. Based on recent statistical data, the value of volunteer time in Canadian dollars is estimated to be worth \$12 billion; financial donations total about \$5.2 billion from both individual and corporate sources.

Because of the size of the non-profit sector, there has been a great deal of interest in understanding why people volunteer, how much time they give, how much money they donate, and why they are drawn to this particular form of altruism (Ancans, 1992; Haggberg, 1992). However, very little is understood about the relationships between and among various types of volunteer activities.

For example, are volunteers who give their time different from volunteers who donate money? Should they be treated as different constituencies in non-profit organizations? Are volunteers the best source of donations or would an appeal for a do-

nation from them result in a negative response? Are differences in attitude and motivation between service delivery volunteers and those more involved with the governance of the non-profit organization significant? Are their attitudes or underlying motivations different?

Previous studies have shown that volunteers who are committed to an organization are more likely to support it financially (O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986). In addition, non-profits that have a dynamic and committed volunteer base are more likely to be financially stable than those that do not (Knocke, 1981).

The purpose of this article is to explore volunteer motivations (Clary, Snyder and Ridge, 1992) and their relationship to the donation of time, money and degree of involvement in non-profit organizations. Implications for fund-raising and the management of volunteers based on the results of the study also will be discussed.

## VOLUNTEER MOTIVATIONS

Clary, Snyder and Ridge (1992) have provided a summary of previous research undertaken by them (Clary and Snyder, 1991) and others related to understanding

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*Dwight W. Mihalicz, M.B.A., is currently a special projects advisor to the president of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Geneva, Switzerland. He has worked as a project manager for the Canadian Red Cross Association in Ottawa and as a volunteer for the organization in various capacities in Canada. He holds an M.B.A. from the Faculty of Administration, University of Ottawa in Canada. Swee C. Goh, Ph.D., is an associate professor of organizational behavior in the Faculty of Administration, University of Ottawa. His current areas of research include the understanding of volunteer commitment and behavior, and the effective management of volunteers. He holds an M.B.A. and Ph.D. from the Faculty of Management, University of Toronto in Canada.*

and measuring volunteer motivations. From a staffing perspective they argue that there is a need to evaluate the underlying motivational factors that lead one to volunteer because understanding motivations improves recruitment, placement, and retention of volunteers. Clary, Snyder and Ridge developed a measure called the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI). The VFI measures six dimensions of volunteer motivation defined as follows:

- Social (SOCMOT) — Volunteering in order to satisfy a social function such as to fulfill a need to behave in socially desired ways;
- Value (VALMOT) — Volunteering to allow for acting on deeply held beliefs, such as the importance of helping others;
- Career (CARMOT) — Volunteering to develop skills, to open up job opportunities, or for contacts to assist in career development;
- Understanding (UNDMOT) — Volunteering to satisfy a desire to understand those one serves, the organization for which one volunteers, or oneself;
- Protective (PROMOT) — Volunteering to escape from feeling lonely, or for the relief of unpleasant feelings such as guilt; and
- Esteem (ESTMOT) — Volunteering to enhance self-esteem by feeling needed and important.

The VFI developed by Clary, Snyder and Ridge to measure the six volunteer motivations has been shown to have strong content validity, is stable over time through test-retest research, and also is reliable as indicated by the reported high internal consistency coefficients. In addition, the solid research behind the VFI has a strong conceptual base in the understanding of volunteerism. To develop the VFI, 1,000 volunteers from a broad spectrum of volunteer organizations were asked to complete it. They ranged from hospice, crisis, disaster and prison workers to those who teach, fund raise, organize and perform governance and other activities.

The ability to measure the multi-motivational nature of volunteering through the use of the VFI gives rise to a number of interesting possibilities not postulated by Clary, Snyder and Ridge. For example, motivation may be a key factor in helping professionals in non-profit organizations to better understand how to approach their constituents. If it is possible to classify members of a volunteer work force according to their dominant motivations, it may be possible to administer programs in such a way that volunteers can maximize their satisfaction while at the same time contributing more time and money to the non-profit. This approach may be useful in a number of ways, but two in particular are explored in this article.

First, it would be interesting to know if particular motivations predispose one to financially support a non-profit. If this is the case, a non-profit could determine the primary motivations of its volunteers: those whose motivations are more closely aligned with those of financial contributors will be more likely to respond positively to a request for financial support. If the non-profit understands the motivations of its volunteers, it becomes possible to design appropriate financial appeals for them. An added benefit is that volunteers whose motivations make them unlikely to contribute financially are not needlessly demotivated or "turned off."

Some volunteers may not want to support the organization financially; their needs are met through the time they give to the organization. As a result, a request for a financial contribution from them may result in a negative reaction. In other cases, the volunteers' esteem for the organization, and their motivational profiles, find fulfillment when given an opportunity to support the non-profit financially, or particular aspects of it (Gronbjerg, 1991). In either case, an understanding of volunteer motivation can help in developing appeals either to encourage giving from those more predisposed, or at least not to stimulate a negative reaction from those unwilling to give at that time.

The second major area of interest concerns maximizing volunteer involvement through the amount of time given, and number of different activities undertaken by them (Nachman, 1990). For instance, if Red Cross water safety volunteers exhibit many of the same motivational characteristics as Red Cross first aid volunteers, it may be possible to encourage water safety volunteers also to become first aid instructors, or vice versa. This can be good for the organization by increasing the available work force, and giving more opportunities to volunteers to meet their needs (Isley, 1990; Keyton, Wilson and Geiger, 1990).

The purpose of this study was to explore how motivation, as measured by the VFI, can help those who work in non-profit organizations predict volunteer behaviors, specifically the donation of time, degree of involvement, and donation of money. The following were the research questions asked:

*Research Question #1:*

Can volunteer motivation, as measured by the VFI, be used to predict a predisposition to donate funds to the charity for which s/he volunteers or to non-profits in general?

*Research Question #2 :*

Can volunteer motivation, as measured by the VFI, be used to predict the degree (measured by the amount of time donated, and involvement in a number of different activities) to which volunteers give time and the degree of their involvement in the organization?

## METHOD

### *Subjects and Procedures*

The subjects in this study were governance and service delivery volunteers selected from four non-profit organizations in Canada. A total of 487 surveys were distributed. A total of 245 completed surveys were returned for a slightly higher than 50 percent return rate. Each non-profit was asked to distribute the survey to a sampling of its members from across the coun-

try. Three weeks after distribution, a reminder letter was mailed to the volunteers.

The 245 surveys returned were combined for analytical purposes. Overall returns from each non-profit did not vary significantly; however, a larger proportion were from the first two because of the larger sampling size. The four participating non-profits were:

- Canadian Red Cross Society (159 surveys distributed);
- Canadian Diabetes Society (150 surveys distributed);
- Canadian Girl Guides (105 surveys distributed); and,
- Canadian AIDS Society (73 surveys distributed).

The survey developed to measure the key variables in the study was pre-tested with a small group of volunteers and persons employed in the non-profit sector before it was finalized.

### *Measures*

A survey was designed to measure the variables in the research questions developed for this study. Respondents were asked to rate their agreement or disagreement with statements using a 7-point Likert-type scale. They were also questioned on a number of other statements for which "yes" or "no" choices had to be made. (See Appendix.)

Through the survey, information was gathered on their volunteer activities or involvement as defined in the study, personal data, and history of donations to charitable organizations. Each of these measures is described below. In addition, subjects also were asked to complete the VFI.

### *Volunteer Motivations*

The VFI, developed by Clary, Snyder and Ridge (1992), was used to measure the six dimensions of volunteer motivation: Social (SOCMOT), Value (VALMOT), Career (CARMOT), Understanding (UNDMOT), Protective (PROMOT), and Esteem (ESTMOT). Each of these six dimensions was treated as a separate independent

variable in the study. These, then, were the independent variables for research questions #1 and #2.

#### *Volunteer Work Activity and Involvement*

A number of volunteer work activities were measured. Questions to measure these outcome variables were uniquely developed for this study. They measure the degree and extent of volunteer activity and involvement that benefit the mission of the organization such as the number of volunteer hours worked, money donated, number of different types of volunteer jobs undertaken, and the type of volunteer job such as teaching, delivering services, organizing and governance activities. These measures were considered as dependent variables for research question #1.

#### *Donations to Charity*

Two types of donations from volunteers were measured: giving to non-profits in general and giving to the charity where they volunteer. The questions measure the volunteer's reported range of donation in Canadian dollars. It was not within the parameter of this study to measure actual contributions. In fact, contribution levels are not always attributable by organizations to particular volunteers. Where they are attributable, confidentiality would make access very difficult. These measures were considered dependent variables for research question #2.

### RESULTS

Reported data analysis in this study was carried out with a statistical program called Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). A personal computer based system of this package, Version 5.0, was used. The results of the statistical analyses are shown in tables in the relevant sections that follow. Where required, detailed analysis and documentation of specific findings will be found in a note in the tables.

Analysis of the data began with an examination of the reliability of the motivational scales (see Note in Table I). The results show that the scale is reliable in measuring

the volunteer motivation dimensions.

**TABLE I**

**Reliability of VFI Scale (n = 245)**

Volunteer Motivations (VFI)	Cronbach's $\alpha$
1. Social (SOCMOT—5 questions)	0.77
2. Values (VALMOT—5 questions)	0.75
3. Career (CARMOT—5 questions)	0.93
4. Understanding (UNDMOT—5 questions)	0.75
5. Protective (PROMOT—5 questions)	0.78
6. Esteem (ESTMOT—5 questions)	0.85

Cronbach's  $\alpha$  — a measure of the internal consistency of the VFI scale.

n — number of surveys on which the analysis is based.

Note: This analysis was based on data obtained from 245 returned surveys. These results show that the questions or statements making up each of the VFI scales are well suited to represent each of the volunteer motivations. These internal consistency coefficients are comparable to those reported by Clary, Snyder and Ridge (1992) of about .80 or higher.

Table II shows the correlation among the six volunteer motivation measures (see Note in Table II). The purpose of this analysis is to evaluate the validity of the VFI in measuring the volunteer motivations as separate dimensions. For example, Understanding and Value motivations for volunteering may be perceived to be similar in nature as may be equally true for Protective and Esteem motivations. However, all the remaining correlations are low, indicating that we can assume they are measuring, to some extent, very different volunteer motivations. Based on these results, there is some evidence of the validity of the VFI as measuring separate volunteer motivation dimensions.

#### *Volunteer Motivations and Donations to Charity*

Research question #1 examines whether volunteer motivations can predict a predisposition to donate funds to charitable organizations. A correlation analysis was carried out to determine the relationship between volunteer motivations and dona-

**TABLE II**  
**Correlation Coefficients (r) of Motivation Variables (n = 245)**

Volunteer Motivations (VFI)	1. SOCMOT	2. VALMOT	3. CARMOT	4. UNDMOT	5. ESTMOT
1. Social (SOCMOT)	(-)				
2. Value (VALMOT)	.11*				
3. Career (CARMOT)	.24***	.11*			
4. Understanding (UNDMOT)	.24***	.58***	.43***		
5. Protective (PROMOT)	.36***	.31***	.44***	.52***	.66***
6. Esteem (ESTMOT)	.36***	.27***	.42***	.58***	

significance level of correlation coefficient:

\*\*\* p < .001

\*p < .05

r — correlation coefficient

n — number of surveys on which analysis is based.

Notes: 1. The correlation coefficients show the degree of relationship between each of these measures. This analysis is to determine to what extent the VFI is measuring separate dimensions as indicated by Clary, Snyder and Ridge (1992). If they are separate dimensions, then the overall correlation between the dimensions should be low, less than .50. Blank space (-) in Table II indicates that no interpretation of the correlation is necessary as it is 1.00.

2. The Understanding and Value dimensions are correlated at .58 with a significance level of p<.001. The Protective and Esteem dimensions also correlate highly with each other at .66, significant at p<.001. The Protective and Esteem dimensions also correlate highly with the Understanding measure. All other correlations, for example between Social and Career dimensions, while significant, are below .50, which is considered low. This shows that some of the volunteer motivation dimensions may be measuring similar underlying constructs.

tions of money to non-profits generally. This was a composite measure in which the responses of subjects to the range of money donated to each listed non-profit organization (for example, their churches) and to the non-profit in which they volunteer were added and a mean value calculated. These results are shown in Table III.

The results show a significant negative correlation between Career, Esteem and Protective motivation in donations to charitable organizations. Volunteers who are higher in Career and Esteem motivations seem less likely to donate money. This is a very interesting finding, as it indicates that volunteers who are motivated to volunteer for reasons such as enhancing their careers or enhancing their own self images, are less likely to donate money to the non-profit. This makes sense from an intuitive perspective.

The new dimension is that the VFI can be used to determine which volunteers, or types of volunteers, are motivated by Career or Esteem reasons. If a non-profit's

**TABLE III**  
**Correlation Analysis Related to Research Question #1 (n = 245)**

Volunteer Motivations (VFI)	Donation to Charity
1. Social (SOCMOT)	.06
2. Value (VALMOT)	.07
3. Career (CARMOT)	-.25***
4. Understanding (UNDMOT)	-.08
5. Protective (PROMOT)	-.11*
6. Esteem (ESTMOT)	-.27***

significance level of correlation coefficient:

\*\*\* p < .001

\* p < .05

n — number of surveys on which analysis is based.

volunteer work force is high in these motivations, fund raising from them will be more difficult. However, the non-profit has the option of structuring its fund raising campaigns and reward systems to appeal to these motivations. For example, an appeal based on the altruistic purposes of the non-profit is less likely to be successful than one based on the recognition that the

contributor will receive something in return for the donation. The results and additional information can be found in a Note in Table IV.

As shown in Table IV, Esteem is the strongest predictor of donations with Social, Career, and Value motivations each adding significant additional prediction power. Both Esteem and Career motivations are negatively weighted, while Social and Value motivations have a positive weight. This confirms the earlier correlation results of the negative impact of Esteem and Career motivations on donations to non-profits.

However, it shows also that volunteers who are high on Social and Value motivations are more likely to donate to non-profits. This again makes sense intuitively, but the results are not very strong. However, the regression analysis controls for the degree of correlation between the motivation dimensions. Protective and Understanding motivations are not shown in the table as they did not add any additional significant prediction power in the analysis.

### *Motivation and Volunteer Work Activity and Involvement*

Research question #2 focuses on whether motivations can predict the degree to which volunteers will give their time and the degree of their involvement in the organization. The analysis on degree of involvement and contribution of time helps us to understand not only how much a person volunteers, but the number of activities for which s/he volunteers. Motivation is a much stronger factor here and is also of interest from the perspective of encouraging volunteers to be involved in more than one kind of volunteer job activity in the non-profit. The results of the analysis are shown in Table V.

Results of the correlation analysis show that volunteers with stronger Understanding and Value motivations tend to donate more time and participate in a greater variety of job activities within the non-profit. The degree-of-involvement variable measures the number of different ways in which a volunteer is involved in the organization, including participation

**TABLE IV**  
**Step-Wise Regression Analysis Related to Research Question #1**

Sequence entered	Independent Variables: Volunteer Motivations (VFI)	Dependent Variable: Donation to Charity (n = 245)	
		$\Delta R^2$	$R^2$
Step 1 (ESTMOT)	Esteem Motivation (neg.)		0.28
Step 2 (SOCMOT)	Social Motivation (pos.)	0.04**	0.32
Step 3 (CARMOT)	Career Motivation (neg.)	0.04**	0.36
Step 4 (VALMOT)	Value Motivation (pos.)	0.02*	0.38

significance level of change in regression coefficient values:

\*\* p < .01

\* p < .05

n — number of surveys on which analysis is based.

$R^2$  — multiple correlation coefficient; correlation between more than one independent variable and the dependent variable.

$\Delta R^2$  — incremental change in value of multiple correlation coefficient at each step of the regression analysis.

Note: This regression analysis controls for the relative impact of each of the independent variables on the dependent variable being analysed. It also determines the relative importance of the volunteer motivations (independent variables) to the amount of money donated to non-profit organizations (dependent variable). The first variable entered into the regression analysis (step 1) was Esteem motivation, followed by Social motivation (step 2), Career motivation (step 3) and, lastly, Value motivation (step 4). The order indicates the relative influence of each volunteer motivation dimension in predicting the extent of donations to non-profits.

**TABLE V**  
**Correlation Analysis Related to Research Question #2 (n = 245)**

Volunteer Motivations (VFI)	Degree of involvement	Contribution of time
1. Social (SOCMOT)	.03	-.07
2. Value (VALMOT)	.11*	.12*
3. Career (CARMOT)	.04	.00
4. Understanding (UNDMOT)	.19***	.10
5. Protective (PROMOT)	.02	.02
6. Esteem (ESTMOT)	.06	-.07

significance level of correlation coefficient:

\*\*\* p < .001

\*p < .05

n — number of surveys on which analysis is based.

Note: We developed an Altruistic motivation variable by combining the Value and Understanding motivation variables. The results show a positive relationship between the Altruistic variable and the degree of involvement and contribution of time. This combined variable is the best predictor for both time donated (.18\*\*\*) and degree of involvement (.13\*), and is therefore useful when considering these issues. Essentially, this variable captures those volunteers who are high in both Value and Understanding motivations.

in policy-making bodies. Understanding motivation is the best predictor for degree of involvement, while Value motivation is the best predictor for contribution of time. See note in Table V for additional information on an Altruistic motivation, a combination of the Understanding and Value motivation variables.

## DISCUSSION

The VFI, as developed by Clary, Snyder and Ridge (1992) has been argued to be useful for understanding and managing the recruitment and retention of volunteers. The analysis in this paper demonstrates that there may be other uses for the VFI that can assist non-profit organizations to better understand their volunteers. That is, do varying volunteer motivations have an impact on behaviors such as the propensity to donate money, willingness to donate time, and wish to participate in more than one type of activity with the non-profit?

Despite the supportive results for both research questions, it should be noted that there is a limitation to these findings. The data are based on self-report measures, and the sample is limited to only four organizations. However, these findings are

interesting enough that further work should be undertaken within one non-profit to test the potential value of using the VFI to predict behavior. As indicated earlier, the analysis was developed from a sample of volunteers in four non-profits. The real utility of the VFI rests in the analysis of various volunteer activities within one non-profit to understand the motivational similarities within each of these activities. For instance, if two groups of volunteers from two different types of activity are high in Career motivation then there is every possibility that cross-recruitment is possible. In any event, the appeal for their time must be based in their motivation, as shown by Clary, Snyder and Ridge (1992).

An equally interesting possible application of the VFI is for a non-profit to understand the underlying motivations of their volunteers for fund raising purposes. If it can determine the primary motivations of its various types of volunteers, fund raising campaigns can be targeted to increase donations while at the same time minimizing donor dissatisfaction with the appeal.

Campaigns to those volunteers who are high in Esteem motivation, for instance,

should stress the recognition they will receive for their contribution. Those groups high in Career motivation are more likely to respond to recognition they can display in their place of work or to incentives that stress networking. Persons high in Understanding or Value motivations are more likely to respond positively to appeals that stress the benefits to the recipients of service.

This approach has two very direct and positive benefits to the non-profit. The first is that campaigns that are targeted in this way may well result in a greater response rate. By showing potential donors how their contributions can make a difference in terms of what is important to them, they are more likely to respond positively.

Secondly, the non-profit can reduce the potential negative results of its fund raising campaigns to volunteers. By appealing to the appropriate volunteer motivation, there is much less likelihood of "turning off" the donor. If the volunteer is motivated primarily by Esteem motivations, and an appeal is made based on Altruism, some volunteers may feel that they are being unfairly asked for money when they already give their time. Similarly, these volunteers if asked for money in an appeal that stresses an incentive of some kind, will likely be upset since they will perceive it as decreasing the funds that could be used to benefit service recipients.

It would be interesting to further explore the potential use of the VFI for cross-recruitment within a non-profit. Cross-recruitment does not necessarily apply only to different types of service volunteer activity. Finding motivated volunteers to participate on charitable boards and advisory committees is an ongoing challenge. By understanding the relationship between motivations and degree of involvement in a charity, it is possible to identify groups of volunteers who will have a higher inclination to volunteer and succeed at this type of activity.

According to this research, persons with Understanding motivations are most likely to be involved in a variety of different ways within the non-profit. To a lesser degree, volunteers with Value motivations are similarly disposed. The newly created Altruistic motivation is also a good predictor, with the added value that it also helps to identify volunteers who donate larger amounts of time (see Note on Table V).

The implementation of this approach in a non-profit is straightforward if the VFI is used for recruitment and retention purposes: Each volunteer completes the VFI when s/he joins the non-profit, and regularly thereafter. The case made by Clary, Snyder and Ridge (1992) is sufficiently strong that it would be a good strategy for any non-profit to consider on its own merits: Each volunteer can be individually categorized for the most effective type of appeal, whether for funds or recruitment for work in other areas within the non-profit. Based on this research, the VFI can be used by an organization to identify the various types of volunteers it has to better understand the motivations of each, and design its fund raising or recruitment campaigns accordingly.

For research purposes, the next logical step would be a field experiment test of this approach in a single non-profit. For fund raising purposes, based on the results of the VFI and using control groups, two or more types of campaigns could be sent to volunteers to determine the validity of the approach. In addition, as described, the VFI has possible potential applications in other areas of understanding and predicting volunteer behaviors. However, more field research is required to further test the utility of the VFI for such use.

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## APPENDIX

### A Summary of Questions Asked in the Volunteering In Canada Survey Using a 7-Point Likert Scale or "Yes" and "No" Choices

INSTRUCTIONS TO RESPONDENTS WERE AS FOLLOWS: The purpose of this survey is to gather information that will help us understand how volunteering works in Canadian charities. For this survey we are exploring formal volunteering that is done in organizations, and NOT volunteering more informally for neighbors or others. If you volunteer for more than one organization, think of only ONE organization, and answer these questions about that organization.

#### SURVEY QUESTIONS USING THE VOLUNTEER FUNCTIONS INVENTORY (VFI)

##### *Social*

My friends volunteer.  
People I am close to volunteer.  
People I know share an interest in community service.  
Others with whom I am close place a high value on community service.  
Volunteering is an important activity to people I know best.

##### *Value*

I am concerned about those less fortunate than myself.  
I am genuinely concerned about the particular group I am serving.  
I feel compassion toward people in need.  
I feel it is important to help others.  
I can do something for a cause that is important to me.

##### *Career*

Volunteering can help me get my foot in the door at a place where I would like to work.  
I can make new contacts that might help my business or career.  
Volunteering allows me to explore different career options.  
Volunteering will help me succeed in my chosen profession.  
Volunteering will look good on my resume.

##### *Understanding*

I can learn more about the cause for which I am working.  
Volunteering allows me to gain a new perspective on things.  
Volunteering lets me learn through direct hands-on experience.  
I can learn how to deal with a variety of people.  
I can explore my own strengths.

##### *Protective*

Doing volunteer work relieves me of some of the guilt over being more fortunate than others.  
Volunteering helps me work through my own personal problems.  
Volunteering is a good escape from my own troubles.  
No matter how bad I've been feeling, volunteering helps me to forget about it.  
By volunteering I feel less lonely.

##### *Esteem*

Volunteering makes me feel important.  
Volunteering increases my self-esteem.  
Volunteering makes me feel better about myself.  
Volunteering is a way to make new friends.  
Volunteering makes me feel needed.

#### VOLUNTEER WORK ACTIVITY AND INVOLVEMENT

What is the name of the organization for which you volunteer and are thinking of for this questionnaire?  
How did you first become a volunteer for this organization?  
How long have you been a volunteer for this organization?  
How many hours do you volunteer in an average month for this organization?  
In this organization have you always done the same volunteer job? (yes, no)  
If you have done more than one volunteer job with this organization, how many have you done?  
Check the categories below that describe the volunteer job you are now doing in this organization you are thinking of for this questionnaire.

#### DONATIONS TO CHARITY

Have you donated any of your belongings (not including money) to churches or charities in the past year?  
Have you donated blood in the past year? (yes, no)  
Do you make financial contributions to a church or charitable organization? (yes, no)  
Please check the category that best describes the total contributions you make to churches and charities in a full year.  
Do you make financial contributions to the organization you are thinking about for this survey? (yes, no)  
If you make financial contributions to this organization, please check the category that best describes the total contributions you make in a full year.