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# Giving and Volunteering in Alberta

Results from the National Survey of  
Giving, Volunteering and Participating

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Canadian Centre for Philanthropy

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**Liane Greenberg, MA**  
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*We would like to acknowledge the support provided by  
the Wild Rose Foundation for the preparation and  
production of this report.*

Reprinted May 2001

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ISBN: 0-921295-46-4

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## Introduction

Albertans are actively involved in supporting one another and their communities — by donating funds and goods to charitable and nonprofit organizations, and by volunteering — according to findings from the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (NSGVP). Nine out of every ten Albertans made a donation by approaching organizations on their own initiative; in response to requests from organizations; by depositing spare change in cash boxes; by leaving bequests to a charity; or by giving clothing, household goods, and food to charity. Four out of every ten Albertans volunteered either formally, with an organization, for activities such as canvassing, organizing events, and delivering food to the needy; or informally, on their own, in activities such as babysitting, doing yard work, and driving someone to an appointment. Despite the extent of giving and volunteering by Albertans, statistical information regarding this involvement realm has been lacking until now.

The National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (NSGVP) was undertaken to better understand how Canadians support individuals and communities, either on their own or through involvement with charitable and nonprofit organizations. The NSGVP is a joint project of the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, Canadian Heritage, Health Canada, Human Resources Development Canada, the Kahanoff Foundation's Non-Profit Sector Research Initiative, Statistics Canada and Volunteer Canada. The survey was carried out by Statistics Canada during a three-week period in late November and

early December of 1997 and asked respondents — aged 15 and older — about their giving, volunteering and participating during the one-year period between November 1, 1996 and October 31, 1997.

Government cutbacks at all levels have put pressure on the nonprofit sector to provide a mechanism by which social services can be delivered less expensively. To accomplish this, charities must continue to attract the support of the public. A better understanding of trends in giving and volunteering, therefore, is critical. Information from the NSGVP can help voluntary organizations develop their fundraising and volunteer recruitment strategies by highlighting which segments of the population are more likely to give and volunteer, which are least likely to get involved, and what stops individuals from giving and volunteering. More generally, information from the NSGVP is useful for government and public institutions as they develop and manage social policies.

This report examines findings pertaining to the nature of giving and volunteering in Alberta. Whenever possible, these findings are discussed in terms of their relevance for developing fundraising and volunteer recruitment strategies. Some of the topics covered are: profiles of Alberta donors and volunteers, the kinds of support Albertans give, types of organizations supported, motivations and barriers for giving and volunteering, and connections between different forms of involvement.

## Charitable Giving in Alberta

Charitable giving — in all its forms — allows nonprofit organizations to offer programs and services that are essential to the well-being of individuals, and provides a mechanism through which people can express their ideals and values. The charitable contributions made by Albertans range from financial contributions to donations of food, clothing, and household goods. Albertans provide further support by purchasing products sold by charitable and nonprofit organizations and by participating in

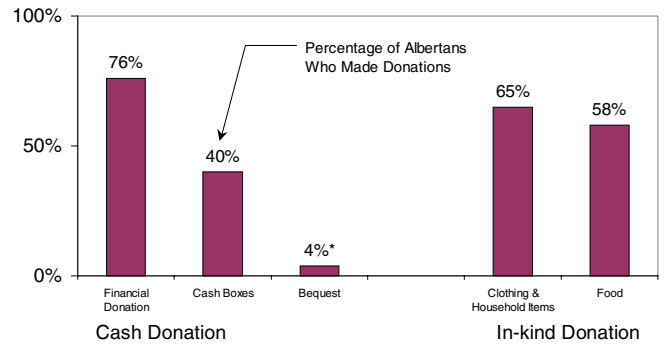
charitable gaming. The National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating sheds light on many aspects of giving, including the extent of support provided by donors; the characteristics of Alberta donors — including personal and economic characteristics and the role of religion; the organizations Albertans supported; how they made their financial donations; and the reasons they made or did not make financial donations.

## The Support that Albertans Provide

Approximately 1.9 million Albertans, or 85% of the province's population aged 15 and older, made financial or in-kind donations to charitable and nonprofit organizations between November 1, 1996 and October 31, 1997. Financial donations took three forms (Figure 1): 76% (1.6 million) made direct financial donations, either in response to an appeal or by approaching organizations on their own initiative; 40% deposited spare change in cash-boxes, usually beside a cash register in a retail outlet; and 4% reported leaving a bequest to a charitable, religious or spiritual organization. Financial support amounted to nearly \$565 million, of which 98% (\$556 million) came from direct financial donations. The remaining 2% (\$9 million) came from deposits of spare change in cash boxes. In-kind donations were also common: 65% of Albertans donated clothing or household goods; 58% donated food to a charitable organization such as a food bank.

The analyses presented in the remainder of this chapter will focus on direct financial donations (excluding deposits of spare change) and the donors who made them. Although Albertans were slightly less likely than the typical Canadian to make direct donations (76% vs. 78%), their

**Figure 1: Percentage of Albertans Who Made Donations to Charitable and Non-Profit Organizations by Type of Donation, Alberta Population Aged 15 and Older, 1997**



\* Sample size limitations effect the reliability of these estimates

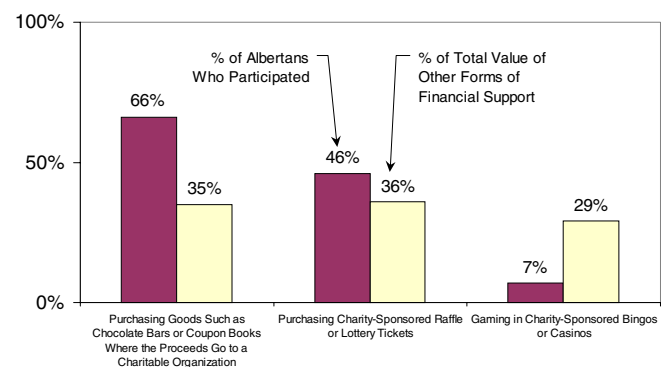
average annual donation was larger than that of Canadians in all other provinces and 41% larger than the average Canadian donation (\$338 vs. \$239). (For provincial variations in giving and volunteering, please see fact sheet #1, Charitable Giving in Canada and fact sheet #2, Volunteering in Canada).

## Other Forms of Financial Support to Charitable and Nonprofit Organizations

Direct financial donations are not the only means of support for charitable and nonprofit organizations: Albertans also provided indirect support by purchasing goods or raffle tickets, and participating in charity-sponsored gaming.

Figure 2 shows that between November 1, 1996 and October 31, 1997, two-thirds (66%) of Albertans purchased goods such as chocolate bars, apples, poppies, flowers or coupon books, with at least part of the proceeds going to charity; 46% purchased charity-sponsored raffle or lottery tickets (excluding government-sponsored lotteries such as Lotto 6/49), and 7% participated in gaming activities, such as charity-sponsored bingos or casinos. Alberta's charities and nonprofit organizations received a total of more than \$136 million from these

**Figure 2: Participation in, and Distribution of Other Forms of Financial Support to Charitable and NonProfit Organizations, Albertans Aged 15 and Older, 1997**



activities during the survey year. Of this amount, approximately \$49 million came from purchases of charity-sponsored raffle or lottery tickets, \$47 million from purchases of goods, and \$40 million came from charitable gaming.

This indirect financial support equals approximately one-quarter of direct financial support, or one out of every five dollars Albertans contributed to charity. It is

important to note, however, that only a portion of the revenues from selling goods or running gaming activities actually goes to support the charity — the remainder covers the cost of producing these goods or organizing these events. Consequently, the total effective financial support to charitable and nonprofit organizations in Alberta is estimated at greater than \$565 million, but less than \$701 million (\$565 million in direct financial giving, plus \$136 million in indirect financial support).

## Who are Alberta's Donors?

### Personal and Economic Characteristics of Alberta Donors

The nearly two million Albertans 15 years or older who made donations to charitable and nonprofit organizations came from varying backgrounds, and had varying occupations and lifestyles. Integral to developing an effective fundraising strategy is understanding who tends to give and how much they typically give. It is also helpful to compare the demographic composition of Albertan donors to that of the province's population as a whole to determine which segments of the population are over or under-represented. Charities can use this information to develop strategies to attract more support from those who have already demonstrated an interest in charitable giving, and to attract those who may have the capacity to make a donation, but who have not yet made a commitment to giving.

Table 1 (columns 1 and 2) provides a detailed profile of donors in Alberta. A comparison of the profile of these donors to that of Alberta's population as a whole shows that Alberta donors were generally representative of the province's population. Certain segments of the Alberta population, however, were slightly over-represented in the donor population. These were individuals who were 35 to 54 years-old, female, married, had a post-secondary diploma, were employed, had a household income over \$40,000, were religiously-affiliated, or who considered themselves to be "very religious."

Under-represented in the donor population were those who were 15 to 24 years old, male, single, had less than a high school education, a household income of less than \$40,000, or those with no religious affiliation.

### Who is Most Likely to Donate?

Knowing which segments of the population are most and least likely to donate can be helpful to charities developing a fundraising strategy. Not only would charitable organizations want to continue to target individuals in demographic segments with the highest donor rates, but they may also want to adapt their fundraising strategies to attract groups that, as a whole, tend to donate at a lower rate. Table 1 (columns 3, 4, and 5) shows the donor rates of each demographic segment of the Alberta population, with their corresponding average annual donation. Also included is the percent of the total value of Alberta donations accounted for by each segment.

- The proportion of Albertans who made donations to charitable organizations generally increased with age, until age 55, and then dropped off slightly.
- The average annual donation also increased with age, until age 64, when it began to decline.
- Women were more likely to donate than men, but men made larger average annual donations.
- Married Albertans — including those in common-law unions — were more likely to be donors than were those who were single, separated or divorced, or widowed. Separated or divorced individuals, however, made larger average donations.

**Table 1: Profile of Alberta's Population, Profile of Alberta's Donors, Donor Rate, Average Annual Donation, and % of Total Value of Donations**

	Profile of Alberta's Population	Profile of Alberta's Donors	Donor Rate	Average Donation	% of Total Value of Donations
<b>Total</b>			<b>75%</b>	<b>\$338</b>	<b>100%</b>
<i>Age</i>					
15-24	18%	14%	58%	\$133	6%
25-34	21%	21%	77%	\$208	13%
35-44	23%	26%	83%	\$395	30%
45-54	16%	18%	84%	\$407	21%
55-64	10%	9%	71%	\$600	16%
65 and Older	12%	13%	78%	\$375	14%
<i>Sex</i>					
Male	50%	47%	72%	\$364	51%
Female	50%	53%	79%	\$314	49%
<i>Marital Status</i>					
Married and Common Law	62%	67%	82%	\$392	78%
Single, Never Married	27%	22%	62%	\$148	10%
Widowed	5%*	5%*	68%	\$357*	5%*
Separated or Divorced	6%*	6%*	78%	\$412*	7%*
<i>Education</i>					
Less than High School	26%	22%	63%	\$234	15%
High School Diploma	20%	19%	71%	\$266	15%
Some Post-Secondary	8%	9%	78%	\$379	10%
Post-Secondary Diploma/Certificate	30%	34%	86%	\$313	32%
University Degree	15%	16%	83%	\$590	28%
<i>Labour Force Status</i>					
Employed	70%	73%	78%	\$373	80%
Full-time	55%	57%	79%	\$363	62%
Part-time	15%	15%	75%	\$410	19%
Unemployed	4%*	3%*	60%	\$73*	1%*
Not in the Labour Force	26%	24%	70%	\$268	19%
<i>Household Income</i>					
Less than \$20,000	19%	15%	60%	\$208	9%
\$20,000 - \$39,999	26%	22%	65%	\$324	21%
\$40,000 - \$59,999	27%	29%	82%	\$324	28%
\$60,000 - \$79,999	16%	18%	85%	\$313	17%
\$80,000 or more	13%	16%	93%	\$528	25%
<i>Presence of Children</i>					
Aged 5 and Under: yes	15%	16%	83%	\$301	14%
no	85%	84%	74%	\$344	86%
Aged 6 to 12: yes	17%	18%	79%	\$396	21%
no	83%	82%	75%	\$325	79%
Aged 13 to 17: yes	13%	14%	83%	\$465	19%
no	87%	86%	74%	\$317	81%
Aged 18 and Older: yes	10%	12%	90%	\$602	22%
no	90%	88%	74%	\$301	79%
<i>Religious Affiliation</i>					
No Religious Affiliation	40%	32%	60%	\$127	12%
Affiliated	57%	65%	86%	\$444	86%
<i>Religious Attendance**</i>					
Non-Weekly Attender	67%	66%	85%	\$212	32%
Weekly Attender	33%	34%	89%	\$896	68%
<i>Intensity of Religious Feeling</i>					
Does not Feel Very Religious	82%	80%	73%	\$230	54%
Feels Very Religious	14%	17%	91%	\$857	44%

\* Sample size limitations effect the reliability of these estimates

\*\* Only Survey respondents who were affiliated with a place of worship were asked about their religious attendance

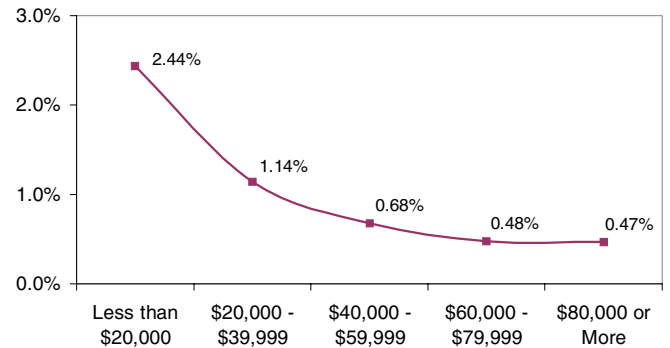


- The likelihood of making donations and the average annual donation generally increased with the level of education and household income.
- Employed Albertans were more likely to be donors and to make larger donations than those who were unemployed or not in the labour force.<sup>1</sup>
- Albertans who had children were more likely to make donations than those without children; except for Albertans with pre-schoolers (i.e., under the age of 5), donors with children also made larger donations than those with no children.

Although Alberta donors with higher household incomes made larger average annual donations, they did not contribute a greater percentage of their income than did

less affluent Albertans. In fact, the reverse was true. Figure 3 shows that when annual donations are expressed as a percentage of pre-tax household income, donors in lower household income categories contributed a larger proportion of their income than did those in higher income groups.

**Figure 3: Percentage of Household Income Spent on Financial Donations by Level of Household Income, Alberta Donors Aged 15 and Older, 1997**



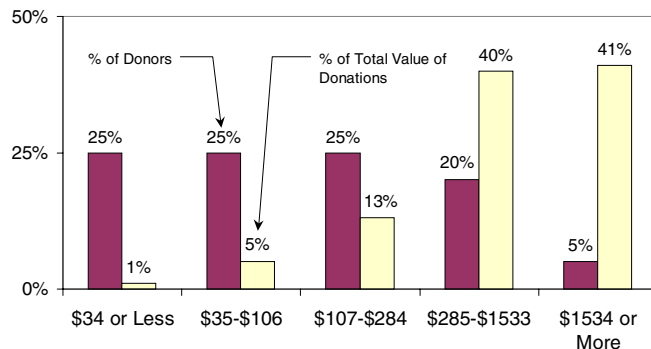
## Who Gives the Most?

The average donation of \$338 does not give a true picture of the donation patterns of Albertans. Included in the average are those who gave a relatively small amount during the year, as well as those who gave a substantial amount. If we divide donors into five groups (those in the top 5% of donors, the next 20%, the next 25%, and so on), a much clearer picture emerges.

Figure 4 reveals that the bulk of charitable donations came from a small percentage of the Alberta population: The

top 5% — those who donated \$1534 or more annually — accounted for 41% of the total value of all donations made in Alberta. The next 20% gave between \$285 and \$1533 each, and accounted for 40% of the total. If we combine these two groups, we can see that 25% of donors in Alberta accounted for 81% of the total value of all donations. The remaining three-quarters of the province's donors — who gave \$284 or less — accounted for only 19% of all financial donations.

**Figure 4: Distribution of Total Value of Donations by Size of Annual Donation, Alberta Donors Aged 15 and Older, 1997**



## Who are Alberta's Top Donors: Personal and Economic Factors

Because a relatively small proportion of Alberta's donors (25%) accounted for 81% of the total value of donations, it is worthwhile to see what personal and economic characteristics set these donors apart.

Table 2 shows that a larger proportion of the top 25% of donors — compared to the rest of Alberta's donor population — were older (over the age of 35), married, university graduates, had household incomes of more than \$80,000, and had children over the age of 18.

**Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of the Top 25% of Alberta's Donors and the Rest of Alberta's Donors (75%), Alberta Population Aged 15 and Older, 1997**

	<b>Top 25% of Alberta Donors (\$285 or More)</b>	<b>Rest of Alberta's Donors (75%) (\$1 - \$284)</b>
<b>Annual Amount Donated</b>		
<i>Age</i>		
15-24	---	17%
25-34	13%*	24%
35-44	29%	24%
45-54	21%*	17%
55-64	13%*	8%*
65+	19%*	10%
<i>Sex</i>		
Male	47%	48%
Female	53%	52%
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Married	75%	65%
Single, Never Married	11%	26%
Widow/Widower	---	4%*
Separated/Divorced	---	6%*
<i>Education</i>		
Less than High School	15%*	24%
High School Diploma	18%*	19%
Some Post-Secondary	---	9%
Post-Secondary Certificate/Diploma	34%	34%
University Degree	26%	13%
<i>Labour Force Status</i>		
Employed	75%	72%
Full-time	58%	57%
Part-time	17%*	15%
Unemployed	---	4%*
Not in the Labour Force	25%	24%
<i>Household Income</i>		
Less than \$20,000	---	16%
\$20,000-\$39,999	22%	22%
\$40,000-\$59,999	23%	31%
\$60,000-\$79,999	17%*	18%
\$80,000 and over	27%	12%
<i>Presence of Children</i>		
no	87%	83%
Aged 6 to 12: yes	21%*	17%
no	79%	83%
Aged 13 to 17: yes	17%*	13%
no	83%	87%
Aged 18 and Older: yes	19%*	10%
no	81%	90%
<i>Religious Affiliation</i>		
No Religious Affiliation	12%*	38%
Affiliated	85%	59%
<i>Religious Attendance**</i>		
Non-Weekly Attender	40%	79%
Weekly Attender	60%	21%
<i>Intensity of Religious Feeling</i>		
Does not Feel Very Religious	63%	86%
Feels Very Religious	38%	11%

\*Sample size limitations effect the reliability of these estimates

---Amount too small to be expressed

\*\* Only Survey respondents who were affiliated with a place of worship were asked about their religious attendance

# The Role of Religion

## Donor Rates and Average Annual Donations

The world's major religions encourage philanthropy — the giving of time and money to the community. Religious factors — affiliation, attendance at a place of worship, and intensity of religious feeling — are important to consider, therefore, when attempting to understand the charitable giving patterns of Albertans.

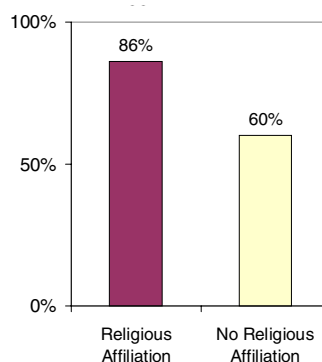
Albertans who were affiliated with a community of worship, regardless of their religion, were much more likely to be donors than were those with no such affiliation (Figure 5a). Affiliated donors made larger annual donations, on average, than non-affiliates (Figure 5b). This same trend was observed for both attendance at a place of worship and intensity of religious feeling. Weekly attenders were more likely to give, and to give more, than non-weekly attenders (Figures 6a, 6b); donors who described themselves as "very religious" were more likely to give, and to give more, than those who did not describe themselves in this way (Figures 7a, 7b).

## Giving to Religious and Non-Religious Organizations

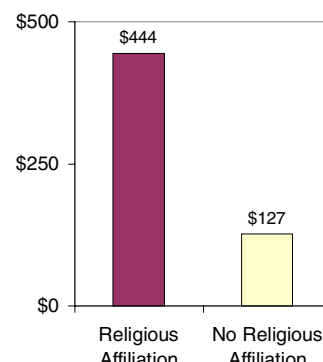
One might assume that religiously active individuals donated primarily within the religious domain. Findings from the NSGVP demonstrate that this was not the case.

- Religiously affiliated donors were more likely to make financial contributions to non-religious organizations (90%) than they were to religious organizations (59%). In fact, these donors accounted for nearly three-quarters (72%) of the value of donations made to non-religious organizations. Of all Albertans who donated to non-religious organizations, 64% had a religious affiliation.
- Donors who attended a place of worship weekly were somewhat more likely to make donations to religious organizations (92%) than they were to non-religious organizations. It is important to note, however, that the overwhelming majority of weekly attenders did, in fact, contribute to non-

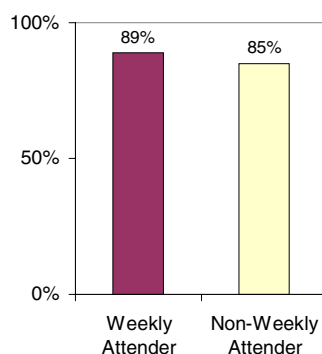
**Figure 5a:** Donor Rate According to Religious Affiliation



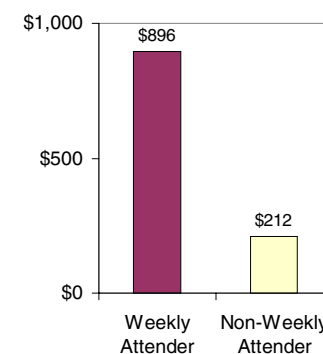
**Figure 5b:** Average Donation According to Religious Affiliation



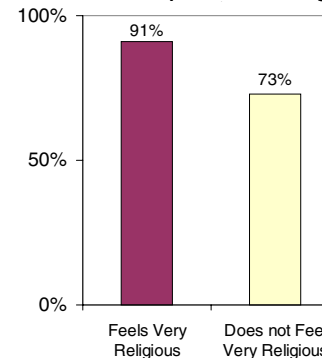
**Figure 6a:** Donor Rate According to Attendance at a Place of Worship



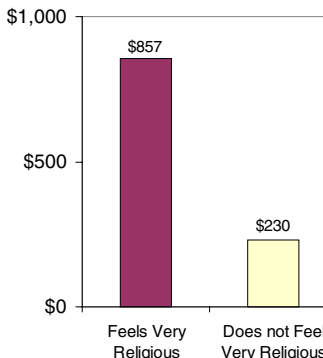
**Figure 6b:** Average Donation According to Attendance at a Place of Worship



**Figure 7a:** Donor Rate According to Intensity of Religious Feeling



**Figure 7b:** Average Donation According to Intensity of Religious Feeling



religious organizations (83%). Weekly attenders accounted for 36% of the value of donations made to non-religious organizations. Of all Albertans who donated to non-religious organizations, 20% were weekly attenders.

- Individuals who described themselves as "very religious" gave to non-religious organizations at a higher rate than they did to religious organizations (89% vs. 81%, respectively). These donors accounted for 21% of the value of donations made to non-religious organizations. Of all Albertans who donated to non-religious organizations, 17% described themselves as "very religious."

Clearly, the notion that religiously involved individuals — those who claim a religious affiliation, attend a place of worship, or describe themselves as "very religious" — donate primarily within the religious domain is mistaken. Findings from the NSGVP demonstrate that, for the most part, these individuals are just as likely, if not more likely, to make financial contributions to non-religious organizations.

## The Organizations Supported by Albertans

During the period covered by the NSGVP, Albertans supported a wide variety of nonprofit and charitable organizations such as food banks, research institutions, and centres that offer rehabilitative services. Table 3 shows the distribution of both the value and number of all donations according to the type of organization to which each donation was made.<sup>2</sup>

Religious organizations received the largest percentage of the total value of donations made in Alberta. Health organizations were the second largest beneficiary, followed by social service organizations. However, the percentage of the total dollar value did not necessarily correspond to the percentage of the total number of donations that went to each type of organization. For example, while religious organizations received nearly two-thirds of the total value of all donations (61%), these donations accounted for only 14% of the total number of donations made in Alberta. In contrast, health organizations received the

## Who are Alberta's Top Donors: Religious Factors

We have already discussed the personal and economic characteristics that set the top 25% of Alberta's donors apart from the remaining donor population. Now we will examine the religious characteristics of these donor groups. The differences in religious involvement of the top 25% of donors, compared with that of the remaining donor population are striking.

Table 2 shows that a much larger proportion of the top 25% of donors had a religious affiliation, attended a place of worship weekly, and described themselves as "very religious". The majority (85%) of the top 25% of donors had an affiliation with a place of worship. This dropped to 59% for the remaining donor population. The differences in attendance at religious services were even more marked. Three out of every 5 of the top 25% of Albertan donors attended a place of worship weekly, compared to only one out of five of the remaining donor population. Finally, 38% of the top 25% of donors described themselves as "very religious," compared to only 11% of the remaining donor population.

highest number of individual donations (39%), but this accounted for only 11% of the total value of donations.

**Table 3:** Distribution of Total Value of Donations and Total Number of Donations by Type of Organization, Alberta Population Aged 15 and Older, 1997

Organization Type	Distribution of Total Value of Donations (556 Million)	Distribution of Total Number of Donations (7 Million)
Religion	61%	14%
Health	11%	39%
Social Services	10%	20%
Philanthropy and Voluntarism	4%	4%
Education and Research	3%	7%
Culture and Recreation	3%	6%
International	3%	2%
Environment	1%	3%
Other*	4%	5%

\* "Other" category includes the following organizations: development and housing; law, advocacy, and politics; business and professional associations; and other organizations not elsewhere classified.

This incongruity is explained by the fact that average annual donations to religious organizations were much larger than those made to health organizations (\$472 and \$54, respectively).

The majority of donors did not restrict their donations to only one type of organization, but supported a number of different types of charitable organizations (Figure 8). Less than one-third (28%) of Albertan donors limited their donations to only one type of organization, while nearly three-quarters (72%) donated to two or more different types of organizations. Of these, 26% supported two organization types, 24% supported three, and 22% supported 4 or more.

## Financial Support Given Directly to Individuals

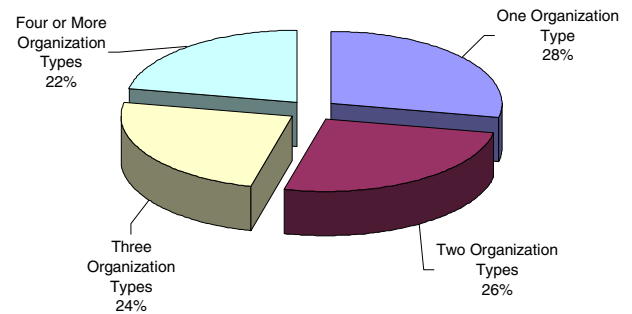
In addition to formal giving — that is, giving through a charitable organization — there are a number of ways in which Albertans donated money directly to individuals (Figure 9): Thirty-one percent of Albertans aged 15 and older gave money (excluding loans) to relatives who did not live with them; 18% gave money directly to the homeless; and 10% gave directly to others living outside their household.

## How Albertans Made Financial Donations

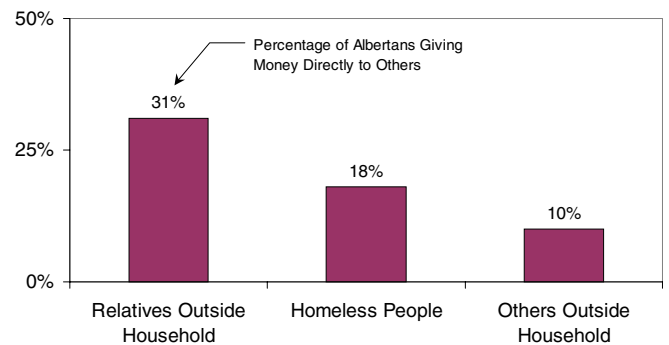
Charitable and nonprofit organizations use a variety of methods to appeal for financial support, and Albertans responded differently to each. Figure 10 shows the percentage of the total value of all donations made and the percentage of the total number of donations made in response to the various solicitation methods.

Donating through a place of worship accounted for more than half of the total value of all donations (55%), while donations in response to a mail request accounted for only 9%. Figure 10 demonstrates that the amount of money raised by a particular fundraising method was not necessarily related to the frequency with which people responded to that method. For example, door-to-door canvassing accounted for only 5% of the total value of donations, but these donations represent the most frequent way that Albertans made donations (accounting for 24% of the total number of donations). In other words, some methods of charitable giving, such as responses to door-

**Figure 8:** Distribution of Donors by Number of Organization Types Supported, Alberta Donors Aged 15 and Older, 1997

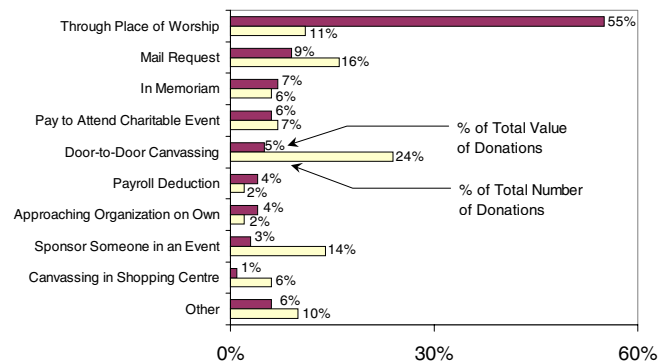


**Figure 9:** Percentage of Albertans Aged 15 and Older Who Gave Money Directly to Others, Not Through an Organization, 1997



to-door canvassing and mail requests, are used more frequently, while others generate more funds.

**Figure 10:** Methods of Making Donations as a Percentage of the Total Value of Donations and Percentage of the Total Number of Donations, Alberta Donors Aged 15 and Older, 1997



\* The "Other" category includes donations made in response to being asked by someone at work, telephone requests, TV/radio requests, and other.

## How Albertans Decided to Give: Planned versus Spontaneous Giving

Albertans are approached frequently by nonprofit organizations seeking financial support. When did donors make decisions about which organizations to support and how much to contribute? Were their decisions planned or spontaneous? Findings from the NSGVP show that the majority of Alberta donors did not plan their giving. Those who did make decisions about their charitable donations before being asked, however, gave more than those who contributed spontaneously.

Table 4 reveals that only 23% of donors in Alberta decided in advance how much money they would donate to charitable and nonprofit organizations, but that their donations accounted for 38% of the total value of donations. More than one-quarter of donors (28%) decided in advance which organization(s) they would support — accounting for over one-third (41%) of the total value of donations. More than half of Alberta's donors (55%) decided to give only when asked by the

organization — and gave less than those who had planned their giving (37%). Fifty percent of Alberta's donors gave to certain organizations on a regular basis, accounting for 69% of the total value of donations. In contrast, the remaining 50% of individuals who varied the organizations that they supported accounted for only 31% of the total value of donations in Alberta.

These statistics have considerable implications for the fundraising activities of charitable and nonprofit organizations. Compared to the more than half of Alberta's donors who made their decisions spontaneously when faced with a request for donations, loyal donors who gave regularly to the same organizations tended, on average, to make larger donations. This suggests that Alberta's charitable organizations may have some success in approaching new donors for financial contributions, but that there is much to gain by fostering ongoing relationships with loyal donors.

**Table 4:** Percent of Total Value of Donations and Percent of Donors by Characteristics Measuring the Spontaneity of Making Financial Donations, Alberta Donors Aged 15 and Older, 1997

	% of Total Value of Donations	% of Donors
<b>Decided in advance total amount of money to donate</b>		
Yes	38%	23%
No	62%	77%
<b>Decided in advance which organizations to donate to</b>		
Yes	41%	28%
No, decided when asked by organization	37%	55%
Both	22%	17%
<b>Donated to certain organizations on a regular basis</b>		
Yes	69%	50%
No, varied the organizations to which donations were made	31%	50%

## Why Albertans Made Financial Donations

Albertans have a variety of reasons for giving, and for not giving or for not giving more, according to findings from the Survey. Understanding what inspires and what hinders financial support can help voluntary organizations incorporate donor and non-donor concerns into their fundraising endeavors, and ultimately build and strengthen their donor bases.

### Motivations

Donors in Alberta were asked about the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with six different reasons for giving to charitable organizations. Figure 11 demonstrates that most donors agreed that their giving was motivated by wanting to help a cause in which they personally believed (95%) and by compassion towards people in need (93%).

About three-quarters of Alberta's donors (73%) reported being personally affected — or knowing someone who was affected — by the cause they supported, and two-thirds gave because they felt they owed something to their community (66%). Somewhat fewer donors were motivated by a need to fulfil religious obligations or beliefs (34%) and a small minority (15%) stated that they donated in order to obtain a credit on their income taxes.

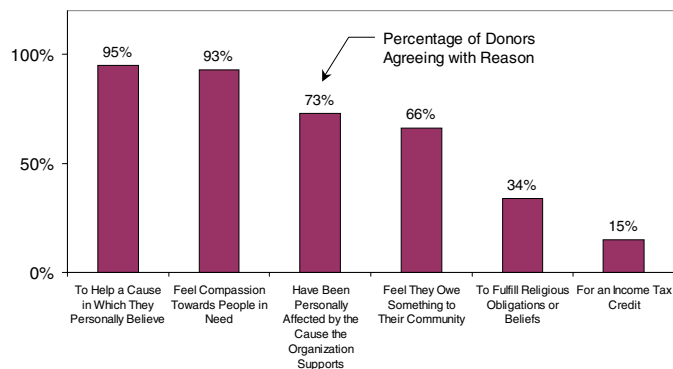
Most Albertans' charitable giving, it would seem, was motivated by some sort of altruism.

### Barriers

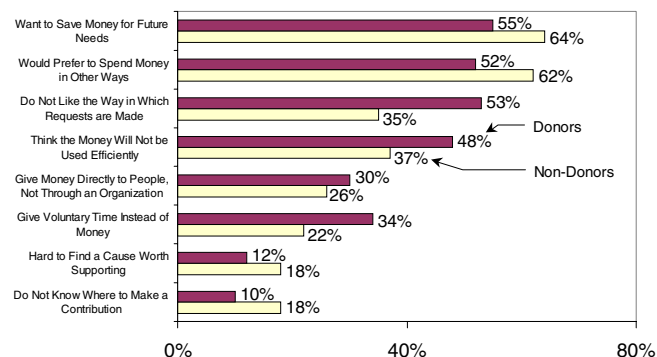
What reasons do non-donors have for not giving to charitable organizations? What keeps donors from giving more? Donors were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a number of possible reasons for their not donating more, while non-donors were asked about possible reasons for not donating at all (Figure 12).

The two most frequently reported barriers to giving, cited by both donors and non-donors, were wanting to save money for future needs (55% and 64% respectively) and preferring to spend money in other ways (52% and 62% respectively). This suggests that appeals for donations should be sensitive to these concerns and should provide

**Figure 11: Reasons for Making Financial Donations to Charitable and Nonprofit Organizations, Alberta Donors Aged 15 and Older, 1997**



**Figure 12: Reasons for Not Making More Financial Donations or Not Making Financial Donations by Donor Status, Albertans Aged 15 and Older, 1997**



potential donors with a case for support that is compelling enough to capture some of their discretionary dollars. Less common barriers included giving money directly to people (30% of donors, 26% of non-donors), giving volunteer time instead of money (34% of donors, 22% of non-donors), difficulty in finding a cause worth supporting (12% of donors, 18% of non-donors), and not knowing where to make a contribution (10% of donors, 18% of non-donors).

While charities can attempt to overcome some of these barriers by presenting compelling cases for support, a few of them hinge on individuals' financial circumstances and

may, therefore, be beyond the control of charitable organizations. Two barriers cited by respondents to the NSGVP can, however, be addressed by all charitable and nonprofit organizations. These relate to how requests are made, and individuals' perceptions of how funds are used.

More than half of all donors (and 35% of non-donors) said that they did not like the way they were asked for donations. Furthermore, donors who had this concern gave less, on average, than those who did not have this concern (\$309 and \$371 respectively). This suggests that fundraisers should take some care in developing the content of their request. Those who are being asked for support for the first time may need different information than those who are being asked for continued support. Similarly, some methods of solicitation work better for

new donors, while others are better suited for renewing donors. If requests are not made appropriately, non-donors and donors alike can become turned off and choose to not donate or not donate more.

Forty-eight percent of donors (and 37% of non-donors) did not think their donations would be used effectively by charities. This is consistent with previous research that demonstrated that approximately 40% of Canadians think charities spend too much money on operating and administration costs. Moreover, donors who expressed this concern made smaller average donations than those who did not (\$313 and \$362, respectively). These findings suggest that organizations should examine how they communicate what past donations have accomplished and how new donations will be used.

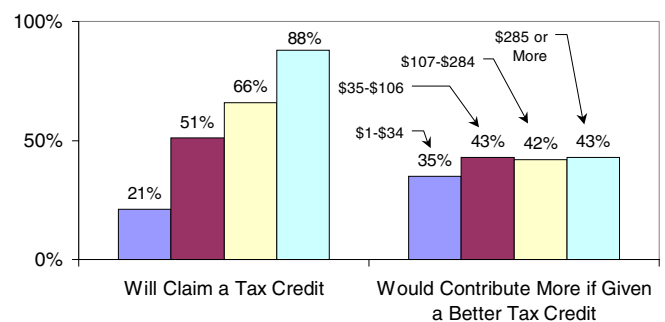
## The Role of Tax Credits

As a measure by government to encourage charitable giving, Canadians are eligible to receive income tax credits for their charitable donations. Such an incentive appears to be of particular interest to those who make large donations. In Figure 13, Albertan donors are grouped into four equal-sized categories based on their average donations — each of these categories represents 25% of the donor population. Overall, more than half (57%) of all donors in Alberta indicated that they or someone else in their household would be claiming a tax credit. This varied from a high of 88% of the top 25% of donors (i.e., those who gave \$285 or more) to 51% of those whose annual average donations were between \$35 and \$106, and to 21% for those who donated \$34 or less.

When Alberta donors were asked if they would increase their donations if government offered a better tax credit, 41% agreed that they would. This increased only slightly

with larger average annual donations: 43% of the top 25% of donors agreed they would give more, compared to 35% of donors who gave \$34 or less (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Percentage of Donors Who Are Claiming a Tax Credit and Who Would Contribute More if Given a Better Tax Credit, by Amount of Annual Donations, Alberta Donors Aged 15 and Older, 1997



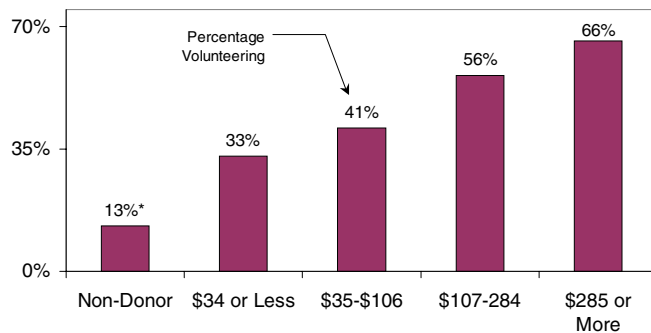


# The Links between Charitable Giving and Other Forms of Supportive Behaviour

Albertans support one another and their communities not only through making financial contributions, but also by becoming involved in a broad spectrum of activities including volunteering (Figure 14), helping others directly (e.g., helping others write letters or cook; Figure 15), giving money to others directly (Figure 16), and being a member, or participating in community organizations (Figure 17). One of the insights provided by the survey is the evidence

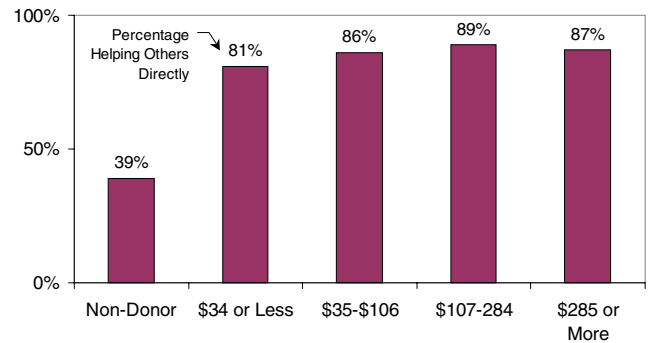
of linkages among these activities. Figures 14 through 17 show that, with the exception of giving directly to others, Alberta donors were much more likely than non-donors to be volunteers, to help others directly, and to participate in community organizations. In addition, the likelihood of involvement in these supportive behaviours generally increased with higher average annual donations.

**Figure 14:** Percentage of Albertans Aged 15 and Older Engaged in Volunteering by Amount of Yearly Charitable Donations, 1997

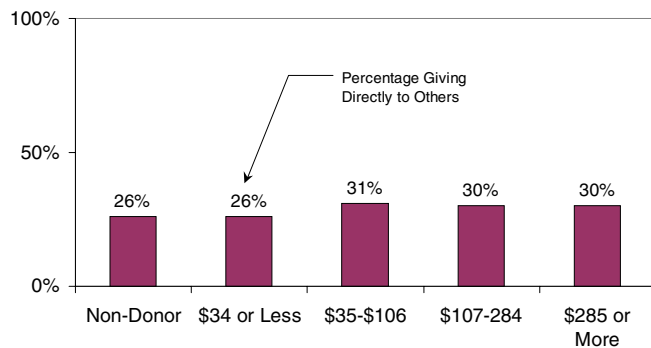


\* Sample size limitations effect the reliability of these estimates.

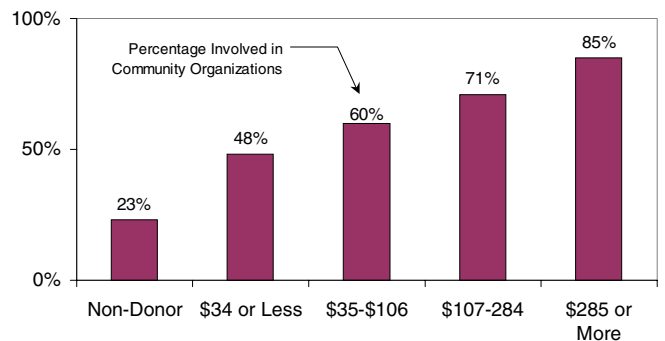
**Figure 15:** Percentage of Albertans Aged 15 and Older Engaged in Helping Others Directly by Amount of Yearly Charitable Donations, 1997



**Figure 16:** Percentage of Albertans Aged 15 and Older Giving Directly to Others by Amount of Yearly Charitable Donations, 1997



**Figure 17:** Percentage of Albertans Aged 15 and Older Involved in Community Organizations by Amount of Yearly Charitable Donations, 1997



## Volunteering

Many Albertans support charities and community organizations by volunteering their time, energy and abilities. Their volunteering can take many forms — serving as board members, coaching children and youth, serving meals and delivering food to the needy. Volunteering benefits a wide variety of organizations — and volunteers themselves. The National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating sheds light on

many aspects of volunteering, including the personal and economic characteristics of Alberta volunteers; how and why volunteers become involved (and why some individuals do not volunteer); the types of organizations supported by volunteers; the benefits of volunteering; and the links between formal volunteering and other forms of supportive behaviour.

## Volunteering in Alberta

Approximately 40% of Albertans volunteered their time and skills to groups and organizations between November 1, 1996 and October 31, 1997. Albertans were more likely than other Canadians to volunteer (40% versus 31.4%) and had the second highest volunteer rate (tied with Manitoba) of all the provinces in Canada. Albertans who volunteered contributed a total of 128 million hours, or

the equivalent of more than 67,000 full-time year-round jobs (assuming 40 hours per week for 48 weeks). On average, Alberta volunteers contributed 146 hours of their time during the year covered by the Survey. Although they were more likely to volunteer than the average Canadian, they contributed slightly less of their time (146 hours vs. 149 hours, respectively).

## Who are Alberta's Volunteers?

### Personal and Economic Characteristics of Alberta's Volunteers

Alberta's volunteers came from a variety of socio-demographic backgrounds and had a variety of lifestyles, according to the survey. Table 5 (columns 1 and 2) provides a detailed profile of volunteers in Alberta. A comparison of the demographic make-up of these volunteers to that of Alberta's population as a whole shows that Albertan volunteers were generally representative of the province's population. Some segments of the Alberta population, however, were over-represented in the volunteer population. These were 35 to 54 year-olds, females, those who were married, who had at least some post-secondary education, who were employed part-time, with household incomes over \$60,000 and children over the age of 5, or those who had a religious affiliation, attended a place of worship weekly, or who described themselves as "very religious."

Under-represented segments of the Alberta population were those aged 65 and older, males, those who were single, with less than a high school education, who were not in the labour force, with household incomes less than \$40,000, or those with no religious affiliation, who did not attend a place of worship weekly, or who did not describe themselves as "very religious."

### Who is Most Likely to Volunteer?

Findings from the Survey indicate that both the likelihood of Albertans volunteering and the amount of volunteering they do varied with personal and economic characteristics such as age, sex, marital status, level of education, labour force status, and household income. It is useful to examine patterns of volunteering across these demographics. This information may be helpful in volunteer recruitment, in that those who already volunteer may be the easiest to recruit for further volunteer activity, while those groups

**Table 5: Profile of Alberta's Population, Profile of Alberta's Volunteers, Volunteer Rate, Average Number of Volunteer Hours, and % of Total Number of Volunteer Hours**

	Profile of Alberta's population	Profile of Alberta's volunteers	Volunteer Rate (%)	Average Number of Volunteer Hours	% of Total Number of Volunteer Hours
<b>Total</b>			<b>40%</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>100%</b>
<i>Age</i>					
15-24	18%	17%	38%	114	14%
25-34	21%	19%	38%	113	15%
35-44	23%	28%	48%	141	26%
45-54	16%	19%	48%	185	24%
55-64	10%	9%*	38%*	169*	11%*
65 and over	12%	7%*	25%*	200*	10%*
<i>Sex</i>					
Male	50%	43%	35%	151	45%
Female	50%	57%	46%	142	55%
<i>Marital Status</i>					
Married and Common Law	62%	67%	44%	154	71%
Single, Never Married	27%	23%	34%	111	18%
Widowed	5%*	---	32%*	---	---
Separated or Divorced	6%*	6%*	41%*	135*	5%*
<i>Education</i>					
Less than High School	26%	19%	29%	123	16%
High School Diploma	20%	19%	37%	118	15%
Some Post-Secondary	8%	11%	52%	171	13%
Post-Secondary Diploma	30%	31%	41%	148	31%
University Degree	15%	20%	55%	178	25%
<i>Labour Force Status</i>					
Employed	70%	73%	42%	142	70%
Full-time	55%	54%	40%	142	52%
Part-time	15%	19%	49%	141	18%
Unemployed	4%*	---	43%*	---	---
Not in the Labour Force	26%	23%	36%	171	27%
<i>Household Income</i>					
Less than \$20,000	19%	14%	31%	133	13%
\$20,000 - \$39,999	26%	22%	34%	159	24%
\$40,000 - \$59,999	27%	26%	39%	133	24%
\$60,000 - \$79,999	16%	19%	48%	147	19%
\$80,000 or more	13%	19%	59%	159	21%
<i>Presence of Children</i>					
Aged 5 and Under: yes	15%	15%	41%	121	12%
no	85%	85%	40%	151	88%
Aged 6 to 12: yes	17%	25%	57%	144	24%
no	83%	75%	37%	147	76%
Aged 13 to 17: yes	13%	17%	53%	174	20%
no	87%	83%	38%	141	80%
Aged 18 and Older: yes	10%	13%	51%	250	21%
no	90%	87%	39%	132	79%
<i>Religious Affiliation **</i>					
No Religious Affiliation	40%	31%	31%	113	24%
Affiliated	57%	67%	47%	162	74%
<i>Religious Attendance**</i>					
Non-Weekly Attender	67%	59%	41%	135	49%
Weekly Attender	33%	42%	60%	200	51%
<i>Intensity of Religious Feeling</i>					
Does not Feel Very Religious	82%	78%	38%	131	71%
Feels Very Religious	14%	20%	58%	206	29%

\* Sample size limitations effect the reliability of these estimates

\*\* Only Survey respondents who were affiliated with a place of worship were asked about their religious attendance

that volunteer at lower rates may require specially targeted or intensified recruitment campaigns.

Table 5 (columns 3, 4, and 5) shows the volunteer rates of each demographic group, with their corresponding average number of volunteer hours. It also shows the percent of the total number of volunteer hours in Alberta accounted for by each segment.

- Albertans aged 35 to 54 were more likely to volunteer than those in other age groups. The average number of hours volunteered increased steadily until the age of 54, dropped off slightly, and then peaked at 200 hours for volunteers 65 and older.

- Women were more likely to volunteer than men; male volunteers, however, spent more time volunteering than their female counterparts.
- Married Albertans were more likely to volunteer and contributed more hours than those who were single.
- Both the volunteer participation rate and the average number of volunteer hours contributed tended to rise with levels of education and household income, with one exception. Those with *some* post-secondary education volunteered at a higher rate and contributed more hours than those with a post-secondary diploma.
- Albertans who were employed, particularly those who were employed part-time, were more likely to volunteer than those not in the labour force. Although Albertans not in the labour force were less likely to volunteer, those who did, contributed more hours than employed Albertans.
- Albertans with children were more likely to volunteer than those without. Volunteers who had children under the age of 13 contributed fewer hours than those who did not; however, volunteers with children 13 and over contributed more volunteer hours, on average.

## Who Volunteers the Most?

The average number of volunteer hours contributed by Albertans (146 hours) does not give a complete picture of the pattern of volunteers' time commitment. Included in the average are those who volunteered for relatively few hours during the year, as well as those who volunteered for many hours. If we divide volunteers into five groups (i.e., those in the top 5% of volunteers, the next 20%, the next 25%, and so on), a truer picture emerges.

Figure 18 reveals that most volunteer hours came from a small percentage of the province's volunteers. The top 5% of volunteers contributed 537 or more hours each,

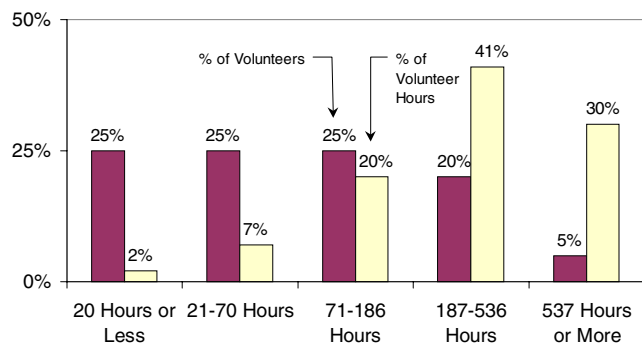
which accounted for nearly one-third of all volunteer hours (30%). The next 20% contributed between 187 and 536 hours each, or 41% of all volunteer hours. If we combine these two groups, we can see that 25% of Alberta's volunteers accounted for 71% of the total number of volunteer hours. The remaining three-quarters of Alberta's volunteers accounted for only 29% of the total.

## Who are Alberta's Top Volunteers: Personal and Economic Factors

Because a relatively small proportion of volunteers accounted for a markedly disproportionate number of volunteer hours, it is useful to investigate whether this group can be distinguished in terms of their personal and economic characteristics from the rest of Alberta's volunteers.

Table 6 shows that a larger proportion of the top 25% of volunteers — compared to the rest of Alberta's volunteer population — were between the ages of 45 and 54, university educated, not in the labour force, had household incomes between \$40,000 and \$80,000, and had children between the ages of 13 and 17.

Figure 18: Distribution of Total Volunteer Hours by Number of Hours Volunteered, Albertan Volunteers Aged 15 and Older, 1997



**Table 6:** Demographic Characteristics of the Top 25% of Alberta's Volunteers and the Rest of Alberta's Volunteers (75%), Alberta Population Aged 15 and Older, 1997

	<b>Top 25% of Alberta Volunteers (187 Hours or More)</b>	<b>Rest of Alberta's Volunteers (75%) (1-186 Hours)</b>
<b>Annual Hours Volunteered</b>		
<i>Age</i>		
15-24	---	18%
25-34	---	22%
35-44	26%*	28%
45-54	23%*	17%
55-64	---	9%
65+	---	---
<i>Sex</i>		
Male	45%	43%
Female	55%	57%
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Married	69%	66%
Single, Never Married	---	25%
Widow/Widower	---	---
Separated/Divorced	---	---
<i>Education</i>		
Less than High School	---	20%
High School Diploma	---	20%
Some Post-Secondary	---	11%*
Post-Secondary Certificate/Diploma	30%*	32%
University Degree	25%*	18%
<i>Labour Force Status</i>		
Employed	69%	73%
Full-time	52%	54%
Part-time	---	19%
Unemployed	---	---
Not in the Labour Force	29%*	22%
<i>Household Income</i>		
Less than \$20,000	---	15%
\$20,000-\$39,999	18%*	23%
\$40,000-\$59,999	29%*	26%
\$60,000-\$79,999	21%*	18%
\$80,000 and over	19%*	19%
<i>Presence of Children</i>		
no	89%	84%
Aged 6 to 12: yes	26%*	24%
no	74%	76%
Aged 13 to 17: yes	21%*	15%
no	79%	85%
Aged 18 and Older: yes	---	10%*
no	80%	90%
<i>Religious Affiliation **</i>		
No Religious Affiliation	*21%	34%
Affiliated	77%	64%
<i>Religious Attendance**</i>		
Non-Weekly Attender	48%	63%
Weekly Attender	52%	38%
<i>Intensity of Religious Feeling</i>		
Does not Feel Very Religious	68%	81%
Feels Very Religious	32%*	17%

\*Sample size limitations effect the reliability of these estimates

---Amount too small to be expressed

\*\* Only Survey respondents who were affiliated with a place of worship were asked about their religious attenda

# The Role of Religion

## Volunteer Rates and Average Number of Hours Volunteered

Philanthropy, whether in the form of giving or volunteering, is encouraged in all major religions. It is not surprising, then, that the volunteering of Albertans varied with their religious practices — specifically, their affiliation with a community of worship, the frequency with which they attended religious services, and the degree to which they considered themselves to be "very religious."

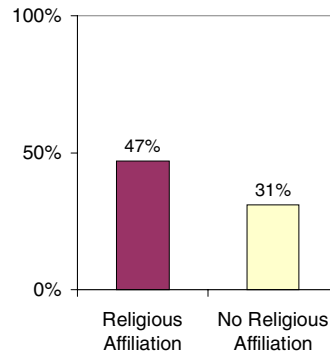
Albertans with a religious affiliation were more likely to volunteer (Figure 19a) — and volunteer more hours (Figure 19b) — than those with no such affiliation. This same trend can be observed for both attendance at a place of worship and feelings of religious intensity: weekly attenders were more likely to volunteer and to volunteer more than non-weekly attenders (Figures 20a, 20b); volunteers who described themselves as "very religious" were more likely to volunteer, and to volunteer more, than did those who did not describe themselves in this way (Figures 21a, 21b).

## Volunteering for Religious and Non-Religious Organizations

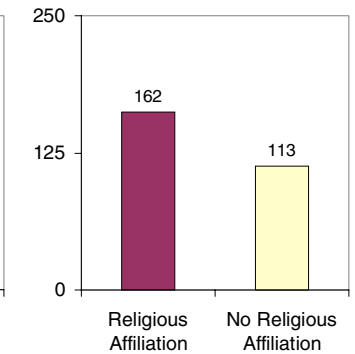
As with donating, one might assume that religiously active individuals spent their time volunteering primarily within the religious domain. In contrast, findings from the NSGVP demonstrated that this was not the case.

- Religiously-affiliated volunteers were more likely to volunteer for non-religious organizations (86%) than they were for religious organizations (34%). In fact, these volunteers accounted for 69% of volunteer hours for non-religious organizations. Of the Albertans who volunteered for non-religious organizations, 65% were religiously affiliated.
- Volunteers who attended religious services on a weekly basis were more likely to volunteer for non-religious organizations (71%) than they were for religious organizations (67%). Weekly attenders accounted for 34% of volunteer hours

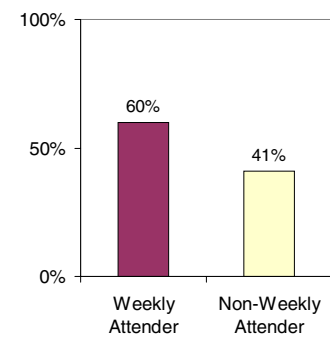
**Figure 19a:** Volunteer Participation Rate by Religious Affiliation



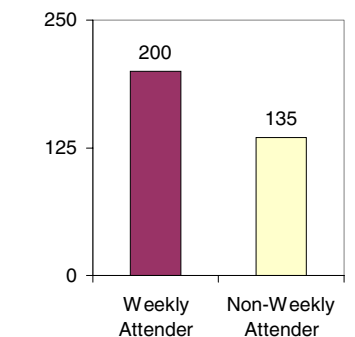
**Figure 19b:** Average Number of Hours Volunteered Annually by Religious Affiliation



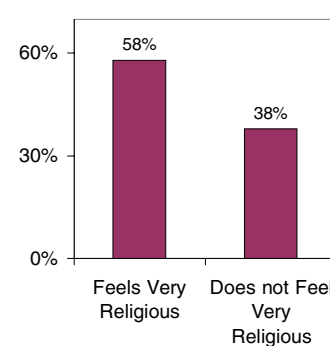
**Figure 20a:** Volunteer Participation Rate by Attendance at a Place of Worship



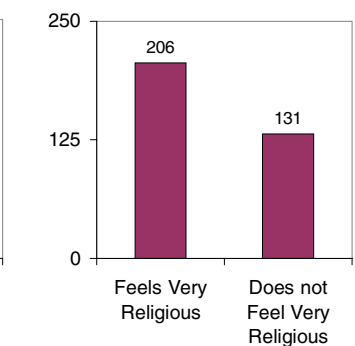
**Figure 20b:** Average Number of Hours Volunteered Annually by Attendance at a Place of Worship



**Figure 21a:** Volunteer Participation Rate According to Intensity of Religious Feeling



**Figure 21b:** Average Number of Hours Volunteered Annually According to Intensity of Religious Feeling



for non-religious organizations. Of the Albertans who volunteered for non-religious organizations, 22% were weekly attenders.

- Volunteers who described themselves as "very religious" were more likely to volunteer for non-religious organizations (76%) than for religious organizations (67%). These volunteers accounted for 16% of volunteer hours for non-religious organizations. Of the Albertans who volunteered for non-religious organizations, 17% described themselves as "very religious".

Although the likelihood of volunteering was associated with religious practices, it is important to note two things. First, most volunteer activities were not focused on religious organizations. Only 25% of volunteers engaged in volunteer activities for religious organizations (accounting for 15% of all volunteer events and 22% of the total number of all volunteer hours). Second, as with donating, the assumption that religiously active people primarily volunteer within the religious realm is incorrect. In fact, volunteers — religious affiliates, weekly attenders,

and those who described themselves as "very religious" — were more likely to volunteer for non-religious organizations than for religious organizations.

## Who are Alberta's Top Volunteers: Religious Factors

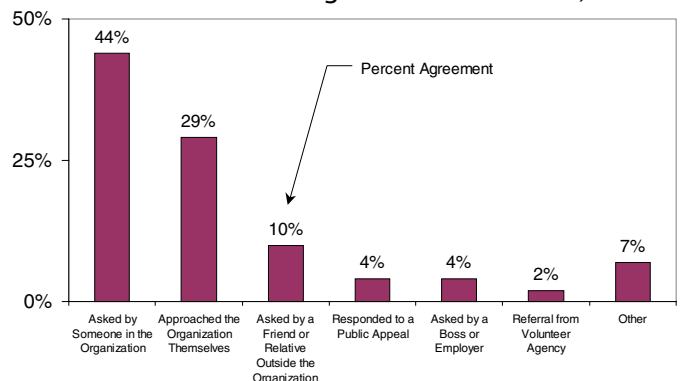
We have already discussed the personal and economic characteristics that set the top 25% of Alberta's volunteers apart from the remaining volunteer population. Now we will examine the religious characteristics of these volunteer groups. As with donating, the differences in religious involvement of the top 25% of volunteers, compared with the remaining volunteer population, are striking.

Table 6 shows that over three-quarters (77%) of the top 25% of volunteers had a religious affiliation, compared to 64% of the remaining 75% of volunteers. Furthermore, the top 25% of volunteers were more likely to attend religious services weekly, and to consider themselves "very religious", compared to the remaining volunteer population.

## How Volunteers Become Involved

Although individuals come to volunteering in many different ways, most volunteer activities were initiated because Albertans were asked by someone to become involved. Specifically, forty-four percent of Albertans' volunteer activities<sup>3</sup> began as a result of being approached by someone in an organization (Figure 22). Another 10% and 4% of activities began as a result of being asked by a friend or relative outside of the organization, and being asked by a boss or employer, respectively. Twenty-nine percent of activities were initiated by the individual approaching organizations on their own, while only 4% and 2% began in response to a public appeal, or through a referral by a voluntary organization, respectively. These figures suggest that Albertans respond to direct appeals for their time.

**Figure 22: How Volunteers Became Involved,\* Alberta Volunteers Aged 15 and Older, 1997**



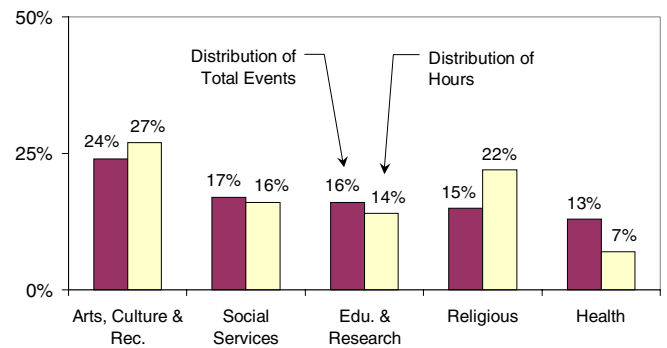
\* For each volunteer event reported (up to a maximum of three), volunteers were asked how they first became involved with the organization for which they volunteered.

## The Organizations that Volunteers Support

The charitable and voluntary sector is made up of a wide array of organizations, many of which rely on volunteers. Figure 23 shows that four types of organizations<sup>4</sup> attracted the bulk of volunteer hours (79%) and the bulk of volunteer events<sup>5</sup> (72%). These were arts, culture and recreation organizations (27% of all volunteer hours; 24% of all events), social service organizations (16% of all hours; 17% of all events), education and research organizations (14% of all hours; 16% of all events), and religious organizations (22% of all hours; 15% of all events).

Alberta volunteers tended to focus their activities on one or two organizations. More than half (51%) reported volunteering for only one organization, while 27% reported volunteering for two organizations. Only 10% were involved in 3 organizations; and 12% volunteered for four or more organizations.

**Figure 23:** Distribution of Total Volunteer Events and Total Volunteer Hours by Type of Organization, Alberta Volunteers Aged 15 and Older, 1997



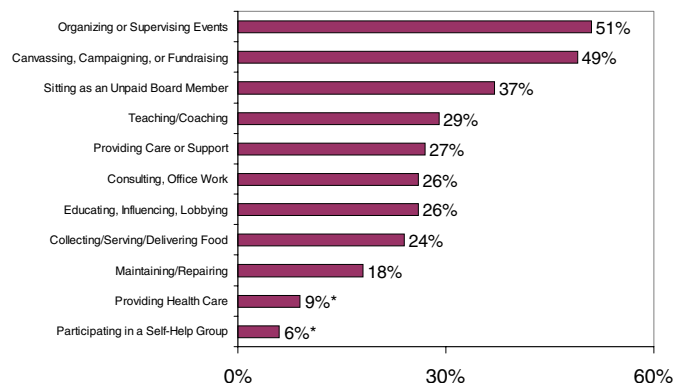
## What Alberta Volunteers Do

The scope of volunteer activities is broad. The activities in which volunteers participate are of benefit to individuals (e.g., delivering meals to the elderly), to charities that provide programs and services (e.g., serving on a charitable board of directors or on a charity's fundraising committee), and to society as a whole (e.g., improving the environment). Ultimately, all of these activities contribute to a civil society.

Regardless of the beneficiary, the range of volunteer activities is diverse. Albertans, however, engaged in some activities more frequently than others (see Figure 24). Half of Alberta's volunteers helped organize or supervise activities or events (51%). Other common activities were canvassing, campaigning, or fundraising (49%) and sitting as an unpaid board member (37%). Twenty-nine percent taught or coached for an organization. Another 27% provided care or support. Smaller numbers of Alberta volunteers reported doing consulting, executive, office or administrative work (26%); helping to educate, influence public opinion, or lobby others on behalf of an

organization (26%); collecting, serving, or delivering food (24%); maintaining or repairing building facilities for an organization (18%); providing health care through an organization (9%); or participating in a self-help group (6%).

**Figure 24:** Activities in Which Volunteers Engage, Alberta Volunteers Aged 15 and Older, 1997



\* Sample size limitations effect the reliability of these estimates.

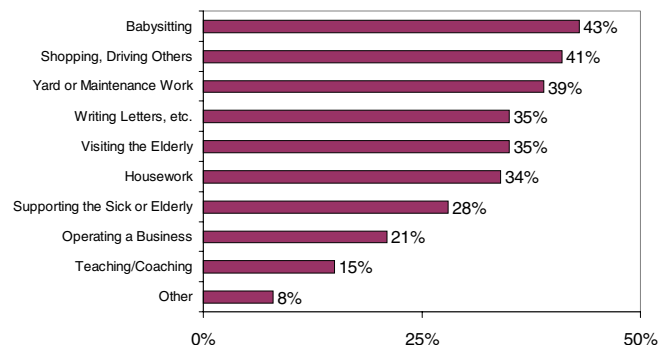


## Other Ways of Helping People

In addition to volunteering formally with a charitable or voluntary organization, Albertans helped others in more informal ways — without the involvement of organizations. This informal helping is a way for people to connect with individuals and participate in their communities.

Figure 25 shows the most common ways in which Albertans provided help directly to individuals outside of their homes. These include: babysitting for others without being paid (43% of Albertans), helping someone with shopping or driving someone to appointments or stores (41%), doing yard or maintenance work (39%), helping others write letters, solve problems, find information or fill out forms (35%), visiting the elderly (35%), and doing housework, such as cooking or cleaning (34%).

**Figure 25:** Types of Activities Done Directly for Others, Not for an Organization, Alberta Population Aged 15 and Older Who Help People Directly, 1997



## Volunteer Motivations and Barriers

Organizations that depend on volunteers have an interest in promoting volunteerism. In order to successfully recruit and retain volunteers, however, one must first understand exactly what inspires people to give their time, and what impedes their involvement.

### Motivations

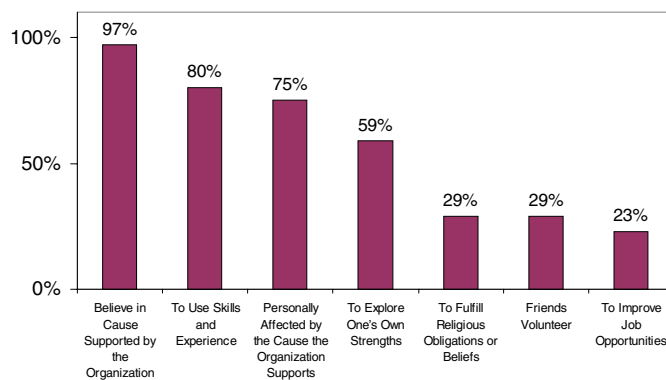
An individual volunteer may be motivated by one reason only, or by a variety of reasons. The NSGVP asked respondents to agree or disagree with seven different motivations. Figure 26 shows that nearly all of Alberta's volunteers (97%) were motivated by belief in the cause supported by the organization with which they were involved. Three quarters (75%) gave their time because they had been personally affected or knew someone who had been affected by the cause the organization supported.

Figure 26 also shows that eight out of ten volunteers (80%) became involved in order to use their skills and experiences, and more than half (59%) agreed that they volunteered in order to explore their own strengths. Close to one-third (29%) volunteered to fulfill religious

obligations or beliefs or volunteered because their friends did. Finally, nearly one-quarter (23%) identified improving their job opportunities as a motivation for volunteering.

Volunteer motivations varied with age. Younger volunteers in Alberta tended to volunteer for pragmatic reasons, such as to explore their own strengths, use their skills and experiences, and improve their job opportunities. Older

**Figure 26:** Reasons for Volunteering, Alberta Volunteers Aged 15 and Older, 1997



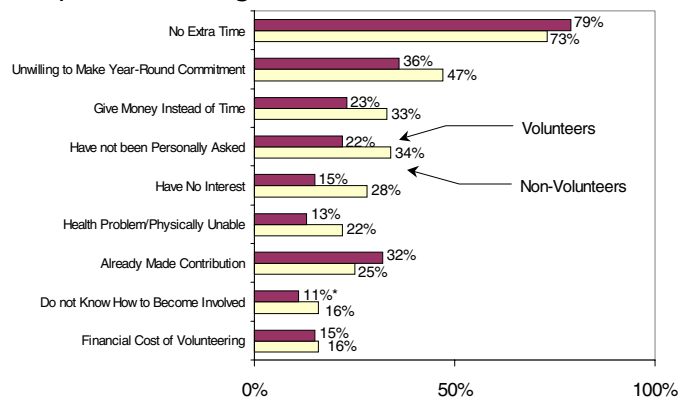
volunteers were more likely to volunteer activities to fulfill a religious obligation and because they had been personally affected or knew someone who had been affected by the cause the organization supported. This same trend occurred for Canada as a whole (see Fact Sheet #6-Motivations for Giving and Volunteering).

## Barriers

Just as there are a variety of reasons for people to volunteer, there are a number of barriers to their involvement. When volunteers were asked why they do not volunteer more time, over three-quarters (79%) reported lack of extra time as an obstacle (Figure 27). More than one-third of Alberta's volunteers (36%) were unwilling to make a year-round commitment; one in three felt they had already made their contribution as a volunteer (32%). Twenty-three percent said they made donations instead of volunteering more time. Another 22% did not volunteer more because they had not been personally asked. A smaller percentage of volunteers reported that they were physically unable to volunteer more (13%); were deterred by the financial costs of volunteering (15%); were not interested in volunteering more (15%); and they did not know how to become involved (11%).

When presented with the same list of barriers, 73% of Alberta's non-volunteers stated that they did not have the time to get involved. Almost half (47%) were unwilling to make a year-round commitment. Two other barriers

**Figure 27: Reasons for Not Volunteering More or Not Volunteering, Alberta Population Aged 15 and Older, 1997**



\* Sample size limitations effect the reliability of these estimates.

were identified by about one-third of non-volunteers: they gave money instead of time, and no one they knew had personally asked them. About one-quarter of non-volunteers reported that they felt they had already made their volunteer contribution (25%), or that they were physically unable to volunteer (22%). Just over one-quarter (28%) indicated that they had no interest in volunteering.

With the exception of 'already made their contribution as a volunteer' and 'lacking the necessary time,' a higher percentage of non-volunteers than volunteers agreed with each barrier. The largest differences between these two groups showed up in 'unwilling to make a year round commitment' (47% of non-volunteers versus 36% of volunteers), 'gave money instead of time' (33% versus 23%), 'have not been personally asked' (34% versus 22%) and 'have no interest' (28% versus 15%).

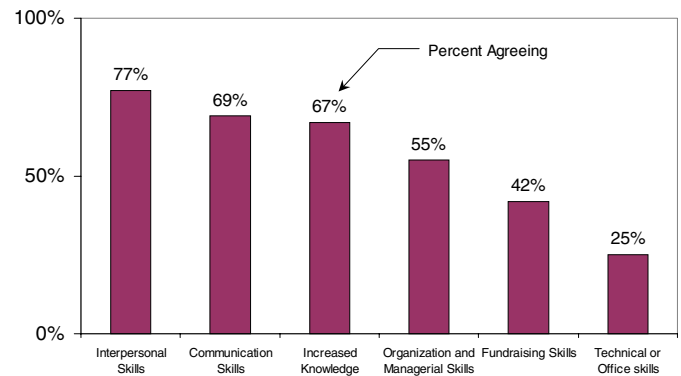
Some insight into barriers to volunteering can be important for volunteer recruitment strategies. First, findings from the survey show that time is a precious commodity. The most frequent barriers for both volunteers and non-volunteers were lack of time and unwillingness to make a year-round commitment. Voluntary organizations may want to consider restructuring their volunteer opportunities to address concerns about time. This could mean shorter or more task-oriented assignments, for example. Second, a substantial proportion of non-volunteers (34%) indicated that they did not volunteer because they had not been personally asked. At the same time, being asked by someone in an organization was the main way that people came to volunteering. Clearly, asking for volunteers is effective. Not asking — assuming that volunteers will come forward on their own accord or through some indirect route — may be less effective and result in untapped volunteer potential.

## The Benefits of Volunteering

Volunteering is of benefit not only for the organizations involved and the people they serve, but also the volunteers themselves. Volunteers derived personal benefits from their volunteer activities (Figure 28). Three-quarters reported gaining interpersonal skills, such as

understanding people better, learning how to motivate others and learning how to deal with difficult situations (77%). Over two-thirds (69%) indicated that through their volunteer activities, they developed communication skills in public speaking, writing, conducting meetings, and public relations. Sixty-seven percent increased their knowledge on issues concerning health, women, politics, criminal justice, and the environment. More than half of Alberta's volunteers reported that their volunteer activities provided them with organizational and managerial skills. By using this information and communicating the personal benefits of volunteering, organizations may have some success in recruiting individuals who are under-represented in volunteer activity.

Figure 28: Benefits of Volunteering, Alberta Volunteers Aged 15 and Older, 1997



## Employer Support for Employees' Volunteer Activities

Nearly three-quarters (73%) of Alberta volunteers were employed. Some of these volunteers received support for their volunteer activities from their employers. Employer support most commonly took the form of permitting employees to: use company facilities and equipment for their volunteer activities (27%); take time off work for volunteering (26%);

and change their hours of work to accommodate volunteering (25%). Men were more likely than women to get support for using facilities or equipment (28% versus 26%), taking time off (29% versus 23%) and for changing their work hours (26% versus 24%)<sup>6</sup>. Types of employer support also varied with the age of volunteers.

## The Connection Between Early Life Experiences and Volunteering

Compared with the volunteer rate for all Albertans (40%), the volunteer rate was substantially higher among people with specific life experiences during their youth: 55% for those who were active in student government; 52% for people who were active in religious organizations; 50% for those whose parents were volunteers; 47% among

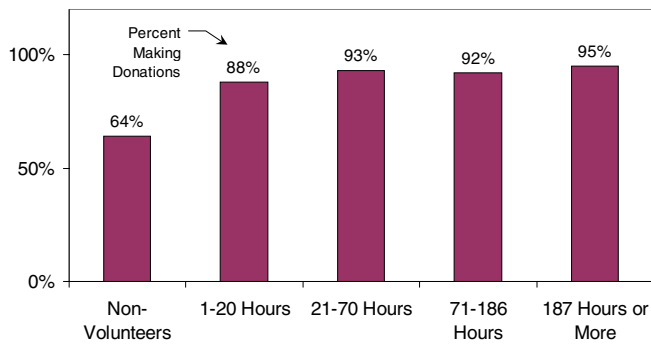
people who belonged to youth groups; 47% for those who did some kind of volunteer work; and 48% for those who canvassed door-to-door in their youth. These findings demonstrate how, for many, the roots of volunteering are put down early in life and how an interest in contributing as a youth is likely to be maintained in adulthood.

# The Links between Volunteering and Other Forms of Supportive Behaviour

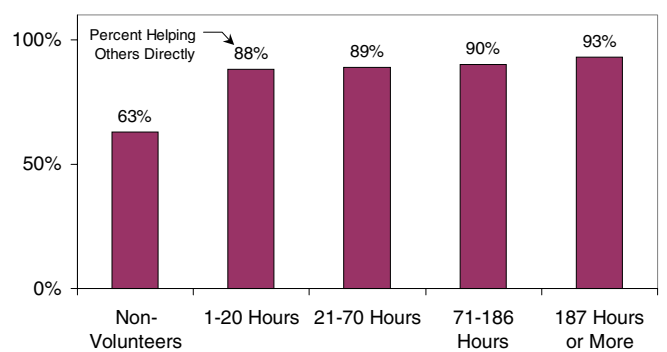
Figures 29 through 32 show that there is a relationship between volunteering and other forms of supportive behaviour (e.g., charitable giving, helping others directly, giving money to others directly, participating in community organizations). Specifically, Albertans who participated in formal volunteering were generally more

likely than non-volunteers to make charitable donations (Figure 29), to help others directly (Figure 30), and to participate in community organizations (Figure 32). Furthermore, the likelihood of engaging in these activities increased with the amount of time volunteered.

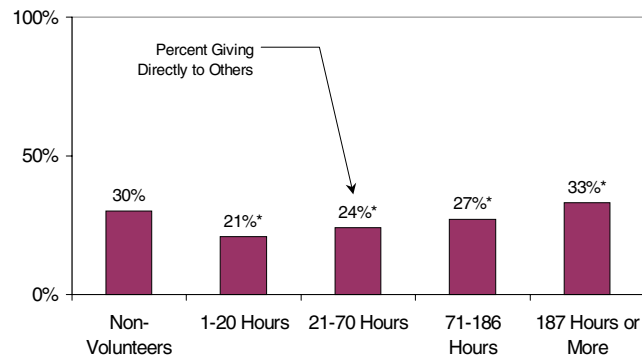
**Figure 29:** Percentage of Albertans Aged 15 and Older Making Charitable Donations by Amount of Time Volunteered, 1997



**Figure 30:** Percentage of Albertans Aged 15 and Older Engaged in Helping Others Directly by Amount of Time Volunteered, 1997

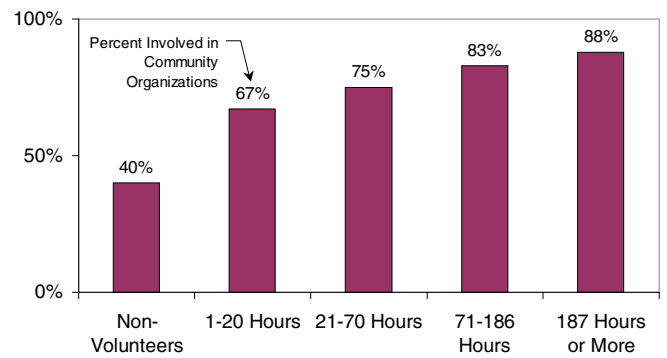


**Figure 31:** Percentage of Albertans aged 15 and Older Engaged in Giving Directly to Others by Amount of Time Volunteered, 1997



\* Sample size limitations effect the reliability of these estimates.

**Figure 32:** Percentage of Albertans Aged 15 and Older Involved in Community Organizations by Amount of Time Volunteered, 1997



## Conclusion

The National Survey of Giving, Volunteering, and Participating — although a preliminary investigation of the extent and character of Canadians' contributory behaviours — has many implications for the nonprofit sector. First, findings from the Survey help to illuminate the factors that motivate and sustain charitable giving; that increase and reinforce participation in volunteer activities; and that limit these two types of support. More importantly, these findings offer insights that can be useful to nonprofit and charitable organizations in their solicitation and recruitment of donors and volunteers in Alberta. Below are some of the major issues that emerged and how they can affect the ways in which charitable and nonprofit organizations operate in today's climate.

### Who to Target When Soliciting Donations or Recruiting Volunteers

By providing information on which segments of Alberta's population are more (or less) likely to donate or volunteer, the NSGVP can assist charitable organizations that rely on such donors and volunteers to carry out their programs and activities. First, those segments of the Alberta population that are already involved in donating and volunteering may be more responsive to further requests for support. Second, understanding which segments of Alberta's population donate and volunteer at lower rates can help organizations think about what specific measures they may need to take to target these groups for support or to intensify fundraising and recruitment campaigns aimed at them.

While the NSGVP data show that there is potential for Alberta's voluntary organizations to continue approaching new donors and volunteers, it also highlights the importance of loyal donors. First, survey findings show that loyal donors who gave regularly to the same organizations tended, on average, to make larger donations than those who varied the organizations they supported. This suggests that there is much to gain by fostering ongoing relationships with donors.

Second, the majority of charitable donations and volunteer hours came from relatively small proportions of Alberta's population. NSGVP findings indicate that the top 25%

of donors (those who made annual donations of at least \$285) and the top 25% of volunteers (those who volunteered 187 hours or more annually) accounted for 81% of the total value of donations and 71% of the total number of volunteer hours in Alberta, respectively. This concentration of support has important implications for charitable and non-profit organizations. The sector's dependence on a small percentage of the population for the bulk of support can be seen as an area of vulnerability for the voluntary sector: Any reduction in donations and volunteering among these Albertans could result in a substantial decline in the availability of two key resources — time and money — to the voluntary sector. These findings serve as a reminder for Alberta's nonprofit and charitable organizations to foster and sustain the relationships that they have with existing donors and volunteers.

### Removing Barriers to Giving and Volunteering

Findings from the NSGVP demonstrate that when it comes to soliciting donations and recruiting volunteers, the importance of asking cannot be emphasized enough.

#### Donating

On average, Alberta donors gave \$338 during the 12-month period covered by the Survey — 41% more than the average Canadian donor. The Survey suggests, however, that Albertans could be encouraged to be even more generous if certain barriers were removed.

More than half of Alberta's donors (55%) were spontaneous in their giving — that is, they made decisions in response to someone from a charitable organization asking for a donation. A substantial barrier to giving for both donors and non-donors, however, was dissatisfaction with the way the request was made (53% and 35%, respectively). This has considerable implications for fundraising activities: It is not sufficient for fundraisers to merely ask potential donors to make charitable donations; they must also be concerned with how they make their requests. Both non-donors and donors alike can become disillusioned — and therefore, choose to not donate or not donate more — if requests are not handled

in a way that responds to their preferences.

It should be of concern to fundraisers that a substantial proportion of Alberta's donors (48%) and non-donors (37%) questioned whether their donations would be used efficiently by charitable and nonprofit organizations. In light of this, charitable and nonprofit organizations might want to evaluate their current fundraising practices and examine how they communicate what past donations have accomplished and how new donations will be used.

## Volunteering

Forty-four percent of volunteer activities in Alberta began as a result of individuals being approached by someone in an organization. In fact, being asked by an organization represents the most common way that volunteers became involved. A major obstacle to Albertans not volunteering or not volunteering more, however, was that they "had not been personally asked." This demonstrates that charitable and nonprofit organizations should not rely on the individual to understand the need for volunteers and come forward on their own. Rather, organizations should ask — and ask again — when it comes to volunteer recruitment.

Although Alberta had the second highest volunteer rate in Canada, there is room for more participation. According to the Survey, the largest barrier to overcome is time: When volunteers were asked why they did not contribute more hours, more than three-quarters reported lack of extra time as an obstacle. Lack of time was also the most commonly cited barrier for non-volunteers. Another frequently mentioned barrier for both volunteers and non-volunteers was their unwillingness to make a year-round commitment. Voluntary organizations may want to consider restructuring their volunteer opportunities in order to involve Albertans who are under time constraints. Shorter, more task-oriented assignments may be attractive to time-crunched volunteers. Family volunteering opportunities that allow parents and children to spend meaningful time together may be attractive to volunteers

with children. Finally, the survey shows that about one-quarter of employed volunteers received employer support for their volunteer activities, in the form of permitting them to take time off work and change their hours of work. Encouraging more employer support may be one way to facilitate the involvement of more Albertans in volunteer activity.

Volunteers derive an array of personal benefits from their volunteer activities. Many report gaining interpersonal skills, such as understanding people better, to communication skills, managerial skills, and increased knowledge. Among certain segments of the population — youth and the unemployed, for example — volunteering can provide new skills or experience that can help them as they seek employment. Stressing the many benefits of volunteering may be helpful to nonprofit organizations that are looking for volunteers.

## The Links between Giving and Volunteering

On a broader plane, one of the insights provided by the Survey is the evidence of a link between charitable giving and volunteering, and an association between this behaviour and other forms of supportive behaviour, such as helping others directly, giving money to others directly, and being a member, or participant in community organizations. Donors were much more likely than non-donors to be involved in all of these supportive behaviours. The likelihood of their involvement generally increased with higher average annual donations. The same was true for volunteering; Albertans who participated in formal volunteering were more likely than non-volunteers to engage in other supportive behaviours and this likelihood generally increased as individuals' amount of volunteer time increased. The NSGVP further showed that individuals who engaged in these behaviours early in life were most likely to continue them later. Finding ways to foster the supportive behaviours of Albertans will be beneficial not only to charities and nonprofit organizations, but to the development of active citizens contributing to healthy communities.

## Endnotes

1. A person's labour force status can be employed (working), unemployed (looking for work), or not in the labour force (neither working nor looking for work).
2. Survey respondents were asked to provide information about the types of organizations to which they made donations. These organizations were classified into 13 categories.
3. For each volunteer event reported (up to a maximum of three), volunteers were asked how they first became involved with the organization for which they volunteered.
4. Survey respondents were asked to provide information about the type of organizations for which they volunteered. These organizations were classified into 13 categories according to the types of activities in which they engage.
5. In this report, each organization reported by an individual constitutes one "volunteer event". A volunteer event represents an involvement with an organization. It does not take into account the number of different activities performed nor the frequency, timing or duration of volunteering in that organization.
6. Sample size limitations effect the reliability of these estimates.

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