

Charitable giving by Canadians

by Martin Turcotte

[[Full article in PDF](#)]

Introduction

What you should know about this study

Donations totalled about \$10.6 billion in 2010

Women slightly more likely to give than men

Charitable giving, income and education

Religiously active donors make donations averaging \$1,004

Donations tend to increase with age

People who do volunteer work donate more

Donors in Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan give more

The top donors contribute 83% of total donations

Religious organizations receive 40% of the total value of annual donations

Women are more inclined than men to give to organizations in the health sector

Religiously active people contribute 71% of amounts donated to religious organizations

Top donors provided 92% of the amounts garnered by religious organizations

One-third of Canadians donate in response to canvassing at a shopping centre or on the street

Religious obligations less often cited as reason for giving

Saskatchewan donors more likely to plan to claim a tax credit

Little change in the main reasons for not giving more

Summary

Introduction

Every year, millions of people donate money to charitable and non-profit organizations. By contributing financially to organizations and groups that support causes dear to their heart, donors want to contribute to the well-being of their fellow citizens or advance principles and values that they believe in. In recognition of the difference these donations can make in the community, governments provide income tax credits to encourage giving by taxpayers or match the amount donated by individuals in certain cases.

Sources of funding for charitable and non-profit organizations vary significantly according to the particular sector, each receiving greater or lesser levels of support in the form of government subsidies and grants, corporate donations, foundation grants, etc. Despite this diversity, almost all organizations count on individual donations to fulfil their mission and achieve their objectives. In that regard, gaining a better understanding of donors and their motivations can help organizations to make informed decisions.

This article looks at different aspects of charitable giving by Canadians in 2010. First, it provides information about donors and donations, comparing them with those in 2007. It also profiles the types of organizations that received the largest amounts of donations, distinguishing between religious and other types of organizations. People who give to religious organizations differ in some respects from those who give to non-religious ones.

The last section looks at what motivates people to donate and the reasons they cite for not giving more, including things that may have bothered them when they were approached. This information is important to many non-profit organizations that aim to improve their practices in such a way that donors have confidence in them and continue

to give.

All the data presented in this article are drawn from the Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (CSGVP). Respondents were asked to report the amount of money they had given to charitable and non-profit organizations—and which ones. Not all donations reported to the CSGVP are eligible for a tax receipt and thus these data are not directly comparable to data collected from income tax returns. For more information on these data and for definitions of the different concepts used in this article, see "[What you should know about this study.](#)"



[Top of Page](#)

What you should know about this study

This study is based on data from the Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (CSGVP), which was conducted on a sample of persons aged 15 and over, totalling 15,482 respondents in 2010 and 21,827 respondents in 2007.

Classification of organizations

Respondents were asked to provide the names of the organizations to which they had made donations during the year. Based on survey results from previous years, it was possible to classify a large number of organizations according to their purpose and main activity (since some are active in several fields). For organizations that were not classified, respondents were asked to specify what the organization did. The international classification of non-profit organizations was used to divide organizations into 15 main activity groups:

Arts and culture: This category includes organizations and activities in general and specialized fields of arts and culture, including media and communications; visual arts, architecture, ceramic art; performing arts; historical, literary and humanistic societies; museums; and zoos and aquariums.

Sports and recreation: This category includes organizations and activities related to amateur sports (including fitness and wellness centers) and recreation and social clubs.

Education and research: This category includes organizations and activities administering, providing, promoting, conducting, supporting and servicing education and research. This includes: (1) primary and secondary education organizations; (2) organizations involved in other types of education (that is, adult/continuing education and vocational/technical schools); and (3) organizations involved in research (that is, medical research, science and technology, and social sciences).

Universities and colleges: This category includes organizations and activities related to higher learning. This includes universities, business management schools, law schools and medical schools.

Health: This category includes organizations that engage primarily in outpatient health-related activities and health support services. This includes: mental health treatment and crisis intervention and other health services (that is, public health and wellness education, outpatient health treatment, rehabilitative medical services, and emergency medical services).

Hospitals: This category includes hospitals, nursing homes, psychiatric hospitals and activities related to rehabilitation such as in-patient health care and rehabilitative therapy.

Social services: This category includes organizations and institutions providing human and social services to a community or target population. Three subgroups are included: (1) social services (including organizations

providing services for children, youth, families, the handicapped and seniors, and self-help and other personal social services); (2) emergency and relief; and (3) income support and maintenance.

Environment: This category includes organizations promoting and providing services in environmental conservation, pollution control and prevention, environmental education and health, and animal protection. Two subgroups are included: environment and animal protection.

Development and housing: This category includes organizations promoting programs and providing services to help improve communities and promote the economic and social well-being of society. Three subgroups are included: (1) economic, social and community development (including community and neighbourhood organizations); (2) housing; and (3) employment and training.

Law, advocacy and politics: This category includes organizations and groups that work to protect and promote civil and other rights, advocate for social and political interests of general or special constituencies, offer legal services, and promote public safety. Three subgroups are included: (1) civic and advocacy organizations; (2) law and legal services; and (3) political organizations.

Grant-making, fundraising and voluntarism promotion: This category includes philanthropic organizations and organizations promoting charity and charitable activities including grant-making foundations, organizations promoting and supporting voluntarism, and fundraising organizations.

International: This category includes organizations promoting cultural understanding between peoples of various countries and historical backgrounds, as well as those providing emergency relief and promoting development and welfare abroad.

Religion: This category includes organizations promoting religious beliefs and administering religious services and rituals (for example, churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, shrines, seminaries, monasteries and similar religious institutions), in addition to related organizations and auxiliaries of such organizations.

Business and professional associations, unions: This category includes organizations promoting, regulating and safeguarding business, professional and labour interests.

Groups not elsewhere classified

Definitions

Average annual donation

This is the average amount donated by donors to charitable and other non-profit organizations during the 12-month reference period preceding the survey. It is not the average over the entire population.

Donors

These are people who made at least one financial donation to a charitable or other non-profit organization in the 12-month reference period preceding the survey. This definition excludes people who donated loose change in coin collection boxes located beside cash registers at store check-outs, in malls at Christmas, at entrances to stores, etc.

Financial donation

A financial donation is money given to a charitable or other non-profit organization during the 12-month reference period preceding the survey. Money given to the same organization, on multiple occasions, through the same solicitation method, is considered only one donation. For example, all money donated to a particular religious institution through a collection at the place of worship, over the 12 month period preceding the survey, would be considered a single donation.

In order to compare the amounts donated in 2010 to those donated in 2007, the amounts for 2007 were adjusted using the Consumer Price Index to account for inflation.

Top donors

Top donors are defined as the 25% of donors who contributed the most money.



Top of Page

Donations totalled about \$10.6 billion in 2010

In 2010, the total amount of financial donations that individuals made to charitable or non-profit organizations stood at \$10.6 billion, about the same amount as in 2007¹ ([Table 1](#)).


Table 1 Donors and donations, population aged 15 and over, 2007 and 2010

The average annual amount per donor was \$446 in 2010, while the median amount was \$123. A median amount means that half of donors gave less than this amount and the other half gave more.²

In addition to financial donations, many people gave clothing, toys or household items to charitable or non-profit organizations (79%) and others gave food (62%) ([Chart 1](#)). Overall, almost all Canadians aged 15 and over (94%) gave goods or food, or made a financial donation.


Chart 1 Percentage of people giving to charitable and non-profit organizations, by type of donation, population aged 15 and over, 2007 and 2010

There are many reasons why some people give more than others: level of awareness that a need exists, feeling that one is able to make a difference, relative cost of the donation as a proportion of disposable income, strength of altruistic or pro-social values, desire for social recognition, psychological benefits related to giving, being solicited and how this is done.³ Studies have shown that in addition to benefiting the community, the act of giving could increase the psychological wellbeing, self-esteem or social status and reputation of donors themselves.⁴

The factors that motivate giving obviously do not influence everyone in the same way. Nevertheless, they shed light on why some sub-groups of the population are more likely than others to make donations to charitable or non-profit organizations, and why it is often these same sub-groups that are inclined to give larger amounts.



Top of Page

Women slightly more likely to give than men

In 2010, as in 2007, women were more likely than men to have made at least one financial donation (86% of women compared with 82% of men) ([Table 2](#)). This difference, which has been observed in other countries, might be explained by the fact that women, on average, have stronger pro-social values.⁵ However, as regards the average and median annual donations, there was no statistically significant difference between men and women in either 2010 or 2007 ([Table 2](#)).


Table 2 Donor rate, average and median annual donations, by personal and economic characteristics, population aged 15 and over, 2007 and 2010


Top of Page

Charitable giving, income and education

According to results of earlier studies, being employed, having a university degree and belonging to a higher-income household increase both the probability of making donations and the amounts given.⁶ Thus, in 2010, people whose annual household income was \$120,000 or more donated an average amount of \$744, compared with \$427 for those whose income was between \$80,000 and \$99,999.

Having greater financial resources makes it possible to make larger donations. Because donations to charitable organizations are tax deductible and the tax system is progressive, the real cost of donations to registered charities diminishes as income level rises. Studies have shown that people with higher incomes are more often approached for donations, which also increases their opportunities to donate and the social pressure to do so.⁷

There were also significant differences based on donors' education levels. In 2010, 77% of people whose highest level of education was a high school diploma had made a financial donation and their average donation was \$373. In comparison, 91% of those with a university degree had given and their average donation was \$715 (**Table 2**).

On average, university graduates have higher incomes, enabling them to make larger donations. Beyond income, people with a higher education level have other social characteristics and attitudes that have been found to be associated with larger donations. Among these are a greater tendency to trust others generally, and hence a higher degree of social trust,⁸ and more extensive and diversified social networks, which contribute to increased solicitations.⁹



[Top of Page](#)

Religiously active donors make donations averaging \$1,004

People who are more religiously active (i.e. those who attend religious meetings or services at least once a week) are more inclined to donate and, on average, they make larger donations. In 2010, 93% of them had given money to one or more charitable or non-profit organizations, and their average annual donation was \$1,004. In comparison, 83% of donors who attended less often or not at all had donated, and their average annual donation was \$313.

Studies have shown that people with strong religious convictions also often have stronger pro-social and altruistic values, which motivate them to give more of their time and money to others.¹⁰ Also, because they are integrated into networks of congregational members, they would appear to be solicited more often and to feel more social pressure to give and to meet the group's standards.¹¹ This being said, there are many reasons that might explain the gap between religious people who practice regularly and those who are less active,¹² and these reasons may have different effects depending on religious affiliation.¹³



[Top of Page](#)

Donations tend to increase with age

In 2010, as in previous years, people aged 15 to 24 (73%) and 25 to 34 (80%) were, on average, less likely to donate. Among people in the over-35 age groups, donor rates varied little, in the range of 88% (**Table 2**).

The average and median amounts of annual giving tend to increase with age. For example, people aged 75 and over had made average annual donations of \$725, compared with \$431 for those aged 35 to 44 and \$143 for those aged 15 to 24. The respective median amounts for these three age groups were \$231 for people aged 75 and over, \$127 for 35- to 44-year-olds and \$30 for 15- to 24-year-olds (**Table 2**).



Table 3 Percentage of people who are top donors and distribution of top donors, by personal and economic characteristics, population aged 15 and over, 2010

Not only do older people give more, but they are also more likely to be religiously active. In 2010, 32% of people aged 75 and over and 27% of those between 65 and 74 years of age were religiously active, compared with 13% of those between 35 and 44 years of age.

Moreover, when looking solely at religiously active people, there are no appreciable differences in the average amounts given by different age groups. Religiously active people aged 75 and over donated an average of \$1,178 in 2010, an amount very similar to that given by all other age groups (except 15- to 24-year-olds, who gave a smaller amount). The fact that baby boomers are less religious than their parents might, in the medium term, have a negative effect on the amounts they will donate as seniors.¹⁴

Some research findings suggest that seniors give more because they may become more aware of the needs of people outside their family circle when their own childrens' financial situations stabilize.¹⁵ Even though some seniors may have precarious financial situations, especially women living alone,¹⁶ many seniors are mortgage-free and have no dependents, which may enable them to make larger donations.



[Top of Page](#)

People who do volunteer work donate more

It is well-known that giving, volunteering and helping others are all strongly associated: people who participate in one of these activities are also more likely to participate in another. In addition to having stronger pro-social values, people who do volunteer work are more likely to be solicited for a donation in the course of their activities and to experience social pressure (especially if this pressure comes from people they know well).¹⁷ Thus, in 2010, among people who had performed 60 or more hours of volunteer work in the previous year, 91% made donations, giving an average of \$784 (**Table 2**). In comparison, 79% of those who had not volunteered during the year had made donations, averaging \$288.



[Top of Page](#)

Donors in Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan give more

In 2010, residents of Newfoundland and Labrador and Prince Edward Island were among the most likely to have made one or more donations to charitable or non-profit organizations (92% and 91% respectively) (**Table 4**). Conversely, residents of the Northwest Territories (60%) and Nunavut (59%) had the lowest likelihood of making donations.



Table 4 Donor rate and percentage of population who are top donors, by province or territory, population aged 15 and over, 2007 and 2010

In 2010, the average amounts donated were highest in three provinces: Alberta (\$562), Saskatchewan (\$544) and British Columbia (\$543) (**Chart 2**). Alberta and Saskatchewan also had the highest proportion of their populations belonging to the top donors group (**Table 4**). Conversely, the lowest average amounts were recorded in Quebec (\$208) and Newfoundland and Labrador (\$331).



Chart 2 Average and median annual donations, by province or territory, donors aged 15 and over, 2010

On average, Quebec residents donate smaller amounts than residents of other regions. This finding was mentioned in previous studies¹⁸ and confirmed through other data sources.¹⁹ The practice of giving to charitable organizations arises from a process of socialization and is influenced by a person's social and cultural environment. For example, a European study found that social norms encouraging charitable donations were stronger in Protestant countries and regions and that Catholics living in communities where they were strongly in the majority were less likely to make charitable donations.²⁰

At the national level, similar proportions of francophones and anglophones had made donations²¹. However, anglophones gave significantly larger average amounts than francophones, \$523 versus \$184 ([Table 2](#)).



[Top of Page](#)

The top donors contribute 83% of total donations

Donors can be categorized by the amount that they gave during the year. The top donors are considered to be those who belong to the upper quartile, that is, the 25% who donated the largest amount during a given year. In 2010, the top donors are those who gave at least \$358.

While top donors constitute only one-quarter of all donors, the cumulative amount of their donations comprised 83% of the total amount collected by all charitable and non-profit organizations. An examination of the decile (10%) of people who made the largest donations shows that this group alone contributed 63% of all donations ([Chart 3](#)). This sizable contribution of the top donors was practically unchanged from 2007.



[Chart 3 Distribution of donors and of total annual donations, by size of donation, donors aged 15 and over, 2010](#)

The people who were more likely to belong to the top donor category had mostly the same characteristics as those who tended to make the largest donations. They included people aged 75 and over (32% of whom were top donors in 2010), widowers and widows (32%), university graduates (33%) and people whose household income was \$120,000 or more (33%) ([Table 3](#)). Also, top donors were proportionally more numerous in the provinces where the highest average amounts were given.



[Top of Page](#)

Religious organizations receive 40% of the total value of annual donations

As in the United States and some European countries,²² religious organizations receive the largest share of the total value of donations. Of the \$10.6 billion given by Canadians in 2010, \$4.26 billion was given to religious organizations. This constituted 40% of the total value of donations, down from the 46% recorded in 2007 ([Table 5](#)).



[Table 5 Donor rate and total amounts donated, by type of charitable or non-profit organization, population aged 15 and over, 2007 and 2010](#)

Of donations to non-religious organizations, the most common are donations to organizations in the health sector (excluding hospitals). In 2010, those organizations garnered \$1.59 billion or 15% of all donations. Canadians also gave \$615 million to hospitals (6% of the total amount donated).

Ranking third among types of organizations receiving the largest cumulative amounts were organizations and institutions providing social services to a community or a target group (children, disabled people, low-income

households, etc.). In 2010, 11% of the total amount donated by Canadians aged 15 and over, or \$1.16 billion, was given to social services organizations. This was a 21% increase over the amount collected in 2007.

For the first time in 2010, CSGVP participants were asked whether they had made donations to assist the victims of a natural disaster, such as in Haiti or Chile. In 2010, 20% of people aged 15 and over had given money to assist victims of a natural disaster. The total amount reached \$571 million (an amount not included in the total amount of donations in order to maintain the historical comparability of the data).



[Top of Page](#)

Women are more inclined than men to give to organizations in the health sector

In general, women were more likely than men to donate to charitable and non-profit organizations (86% and 82% respectively). The largest differences are observed with respect to specific types of organizations. For example, in 2010, 57% of women had made at least one donation to a health organization, compared with 49% of men ([Table 6](#)). Women were also more likely than men to have given to organizations involved in social services and to hospitals.



[Table 6 Donor rate for different types of organizations, by sex and age group, population aged 15 and over, 2010](#)

Conversely, men were more inclined to donate to sports and recreation organizations and to those involved in grant-making, fundraising and volunteerism promotion.

Age also had an effect on the types of organizations that donors preferred to support. For example, 49% of people aged 75 and over made one or more donations to religious organizations, compared with 35% of people aged 35 to 44 ([Table 6](#)). Older seniors also had a relatively high propensity to make at least one donation to hospitals, with 25% of them having done so compared with 16% of people aged 35 to 44. It could be that seniors are more aware of the needs of hospitals than are younger people.

Conversely, people aged 75 and over were less inclined to give to education organizations (12% compared with 29% of those aged 35 to 44) or sports organizations (12% versus 17% of those aged 35 to 44).



[Top of Page](#)

Religiously active people contribute 71% of amounts donated to religious organizations

The financing of religious organizations is dependant first and foremost on the contributions of people who attend religious meetings or services at least once a week, that is, those who are religiously active. In 2010, about 1 in 6 people could be considered religiously active (16%). This proportion of the population had contributed 71% of the amounts given to religious organizations.

From the standpoint of average amounts, religiously active donors gave \$688 annually to religious organizations, compared with \$61 for those who were less religiously active or not active at all ([Chart 4](#)). Nevertheless, on average, religiously active people also gave more to non-religious organizations than did those not active or less active.



[Chart 4 Average donations to religious and non-religious organizations, by religious attendance, donors aged 15 and over, 2010](#)

Relative to their demographic importance, other groups in the population contributed a sizable share of all donations to religious organizations. This was the case, for example, with older seniors: whereas people aged 75 and over comprised only 6% of the population aged 15 and over in 2010, their donations comprised 12% of the total amount donated to religious organizations in 2010 ([Table 7](#)). This may be due to the fact that elderly people are more likely to attend religious meetings or services at least once a week.

 **Table 7 Distribution of donations to religious and non-religious organizations, by personal and economic characteristics, population aged 15 and over, 2010**

Conversely, francophones' financial contribution to religious organizations was low compared with their proportion within the population: while francophones constituted 22% of the population aged 15 and over, they contributed 5% of all amounts received by religious organizations.

The share of donations to religious organizations compared to the total value of donations varied considerably from one province to another. Among the provinces and territories, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador had the highest proportions of total donations made to religious organizations, at 52% and 51% respectively. By comparison, the corresponding proportion was 20% for Quebec ([Chart 5](#)).

 **Chart 5 Percentage of the total amount donated to religious organizations, by province or territory, donors aged 15 and over, 2010**

Two groups of donors contributed the most to non-religious organizations relative to other groups: those with a pre-tax household income exceeding \$120,000, and those with a university degree. In fact, university graduates, comprising 24% of the population, contributed 45% of the amounts received by non-religious organizations ([Table 7](#)). On average, they gave \$441 to non-religious organizations, compared with \$265 to religious organizations ([Chart 6](#)). For people without a university degree, the gap between the average donations to religious and non-religious organizations was smaller.

 **Chart 6 Average donations to religious and non-religious organizations, by level of education, donors aged 15 and over, 2010**



[Top of Page](#)

Top donors provided 92% of the amounts garnered by religious organizations

In addition to relying more heavily for funding on particular subgroups of the population, religious organizations are more dependent on large donors than their non-religious counterparts. As [Chart 7](#) shows, top donors contributed a larger share of the donations to religious organizations than to non-religious organizations. In 2010, top donors (those giving at least \$358) had provided 92% of the total amount donated to religious organizations ([Chart 7](#)). By comparison, top donors had contributed 76% of the total value of donations received by non-religious organizations.

 **Chart 7 Distribution of amounts donated to religious and non-religious organizations, by size of donation, donors aged 15 and over, 2010**



[Top of Page](#)

One-third of Canadians donate in response to canvassing at a shopping centre or on the street

For charitable organizations that organize fundraising campaigns, it is important to know in what ways donors make their donations. In the Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, respondents were asked whether they had made a donation in response to various types of requests: through the mail, via door-to-door canvassing, by telephone, at work and so forth.

In 2010, large proportions of Canadians made donations in response to canvassing at a shopping centre or on the street (32%) or by sponsoring someone (30%) (**Table 8**). Even though these two fundraising methods are widespread, they are not the ones that bring in the most money. Of the total amount of donations in 2010, only 3% had been collected through sponsoring activities and another 2% as a result of canvassing at a shopping centre or on the street.



Table 8 Donor rate and total amount of donations, by solicitation method or way of giving, population aged 15 and over, 2010

The fundraising method that raised the most money, in addition to being quite common, was collection at a church, synagogue, mosque or other place of worship. In 2010, 30% of people aged 15 and over had made such a donation. Overall, \$3.9 billion was given through collection at a place of worship in 2010, a much higher figure than for all other methods.

The way in which donors gave varied from one province to another (**Table 9**). For example, whereas 25% of Ontario donors made a donation in response to a request through the mail, this was the case for only 19% of Newfoundland and Labrador donors. Conversely, the latter donors were much more likely than their Ontario counterparts to have made a donation in response to door-to-door canvassing (55% and 26% respectively).



Table 9 Donor rate for different solicitation methods, by province or territory, population aged 15 and over, 2010

Newfoundland and Labrador and Quebec stood out from the other provinces by their donors' greater propensity to give in response to radio or television solicitation (19% and 15% respectively, compared with 5% in Ontario)



Top of Page

Religious obligations less often cited as reason for giving

Compared with 2007, there was little change in the reasons donors gave for making charitable gifts. Compassion toward people in need remained the reason given most often by donors (89%), followed by personally believing in the cause (85%) and wanting to "make a contribution to the community" (79%) (**Chart 8**).



Chart 8 Reasons for making financial donations, donors aged 15 and over, 2007 and 2010

The only change from 2007 with respect to reasons for giving concerned the desire to give in order to fulfill religious obligations or other beliefs. In 2010, this reason was considered important by 27% of donors, down from 32% in 2007 (**Chart 8**).



Top of Page

Saskatchewan donors more likely to plan to claim a tax credit

In 2010, the fact that governments give a tax credit was an important motivation to donate for 23% of donors. Nevertheless, 46% of donors intended to claim a tax credit for a donation made in the previous 12 months.

The likelihood that donors intended to claim a tax credit varied from one province to another. Donors in Nunavut (22%), Quebec (35%) and the Northwest Territories (37%) were the least likely to say that someone in their household would claim a tax credit (**Chart 9**). In comparison, the proportions were 56% for donors in Saskatchewan and 53% for those in Manitoba and Prince Edward Island.



Chart 9 Percentage of donors who planned to claim a tax credit, by province or territory, donors aged 15 and over, 2010



[Top of Page](#)

Little change in the main reasons for not giving more

Various factors may limit the financial donations people can make or wish to make during a given year. The CSGVP asked donors to say whether they agreed with one or more statements that explained why they had not given more.

In 2010, as in previous years, the reason for not giving more that donors most often cited was that "they could not afford to give more" (71%, the same proportion as in 2007). The second most often cited reason was that they were happy with what they had already given (**Chart 10**). The next most often cited reason was that they had given money directly to people in need rather than to organizations (39%).



Chart 10 Reasons for not making more financial donations, donors aged 15 and over, 2007 and 2010

Donors' perceptions of how organizations were using their money seemed less positive than in previous years. When asked in 2010 why they had not given more, 37% of donors said they agreed with the statement, "you did not think the money would be used efficiently", compared with 33% in 2007.

Men were more likely than women not to have given more because they believed their money would not be used efficiently (**Chart 11**). Moreover, this perception tended to increase with age. Among senior male donors, more than one-half said they had not given more because they believed their money would not be used efficiently. The peak was reached with men aged 75 and over, 56% of whom expressed this opinion, compared with 43% of women in the same age group.



Chart 11 Percentage of donors who did not give more because they thought their money would not be used efficiently, by age group and sex, donors aged 15 and over, 2010

Organisations requesting the financial support of Canadians are undoubtedly concerned with ensuring that people experience their fundraising approach in a positive light. In 2010, one-third of donors said they had not donated more because they did not like the way they had been asked to contribute (**Chart 10**). That proportion was practically unchanged from 2007.

People who did not like the way in which requests were made were asked to specify what they had not liked. As in previous years, the tone in which the request was made (rude, demanding, etc.) was the main source of irritation for donors who had not liked the solicitation methods used (47%, compared with 43% in 2007) (**Chart 12**).

Next came the frequency or volume of requests (29%), followed by multiple requests from the same organization (20%) and the time of day the request was made (14%).



Chart 12 Reasons for dissatisfaction, donors 15 and over who disliked the way in which requests were made, 2007 and 2010



Top of Page

Summary

In 2010, 84% of Canadians aged 15 and over, or just under 24 million people, reported making at least one financial donation to a charitable or non-profit organization. The donor rate was also 84% in 2007.

The total amount of donations was \$10.6 billion in 2010, practically unchanged from 2007. The average gift was \$446 in 2010, also the same as in 2007.

Donors who were religiously active—those who attended religious meetings or services at least once a week—had given an average of \$1,004 in 2010. In comparison, donors who were either not active or less active religiously had given an average of \$313. Donors likely to make the largest average donations included seniors, university graduates, people in higher-income households and those who did 60 or more hours of volunteer work per year.

As in previous years, top donors played an important role in the funding of charitable or non-profit organizations (top donors are those who belonged to the quartile of donors who gave the largest amounts, that is at least \$358 in 2010). More specifically, the 25% of donors who gave the largest amounts contributed 83% of the total amount of donations.

Religious organizations remained the biggest beneficiaries. In 2010, they collected the largest amount of financial donations, at \$4.26 billion. However, as a proportion of all donations made, the percentage of donations to religious organizations was down in 2010, at 40% from 46% in 2007. After religious organizations, those in the health sector (excluding hospitals) collected the largest amount in 2010, at \$1.59 billion.

The profile of donors who gave to religious organizations differed in several respects from that of donors who gave to non-religious organizations. In relative terms, seniors gave more to religious organizations. While people aged 75 and over comprised 6% of the population, they contributed 12% of the total amount of donations to religious organizations.

The reasons why people donate to organizations have remained relatively unchanged in recent years. One exception is that religious reasons were slightly less often cited in 2010 than in 2007.

With regard to the reasons why donors did not give more, there was an increase in the percentage of those who believed that their money would not be used efficiently. In 2010, 37% of donors expressed this viewpoint, compared with 33% in 2007.

Finally, almost all Canadians (94%) aged 15 and over gave material goods or food or made a financial donation in 2010.

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Notes

- All amounts for 2007 presented in this article have been adjusted to take account of inflation between 2007 and 2010.**
- The difference between the average (or mean) and the median is due to the fact that some donors**

who make relatively large donations pull the average upward.

3. For a thorough and recent review of the literature on the mechanisms and factors that influence charitable donations, see: Bekkers, René and Pamala Wiepking. 2010. "A literature review of empirical studies of philanthropy: eight mechanisms that drive charitable giving." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*. Vol. 40, no. 5.
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