



OLDER CANADIANS ARE VOLUNTEERS AND CHARITABLE DONORS

In contrast to the current belief that the growing population of older adults (aged 65 and older) is an economic burden on society, older Canadians in fact make considerable economic and social contributions to society¹. Community well-being is enhanced through older adults' active participation in volunteer work and charitable donations.

Older adults spend an average of 223 hours annually volunteering

More than one-third (36%) of Canadian older adults are volunteers with formal voluntary organizations, devoting on average 223 hours per year or the equivalent of at least 5½ weeks of full-time work volunteering². The picture is similar in Alberta: more than 40% of older adults volunteer, devoting on average 216 hours annually³. These figures do not include those who provide unpaid help on their own rather than working through a group or organization.

While the likelihood of volunteering tends to decrease with age, the number of hours volunteered tends to increase⁴. In fact, those aged 65-74 spend the most time volunteering among Canadians aged 15 and older. Canadian older adults also are more likely than younger adults to be “top volunteers” (the top 25% of volunteers who contribute the most hours). Older adults generally have more time to devote to volunteer work, and they have higher levels of involvement than younger adults, which make them more likely to be top volunteers².

Older adults' volunteer contributions are valued at \$5 billion per year

The value of older adults' volunteer contributions is tremendous. In market terms, the economic value of older adults' volunteer contributions amount to more than \$5 billion annually⁵.

Older adults tend to concentrate their volunteer activities in several key areas. Older adults give more hours on average to religious and social service organizations and hospitals than younger volunteers. They also spend considerable time doing administrative work, providing health care and support, and canvassing⁴. For example, some volunteer as unpaid board or committee members; some canvas, fundraise or lobby for charities and other non-profit organizations; and some support others by tutoring or mentoring local children in daycares and schools, preparing and delivering food to shut-ins, and even preparing tax returns^{6,7}.

The majority of older adults volunteer because they value the importance of contributing to their community. Others volunteer because they want to spend time with their friends, meet new people and build their social networks, or use their skills and experiences productively⁴. While older adults' volunteerism benefits their communities, they also benefit from improved health, quality of life and well-being^{8,9}.

Older adults donate an average of \$2,000 annually

Older adults not only contribute to their community through volunteering, they also make significant charitable donations. Older adults are more likely than younger adults to donate. One in four (25%) charitable donors are aged 65 and older, donating on average \$2,000 per year. In Alberta, nearly one in five (19%) charitable donors is aged 65 and older, but the average annual donation of \$3,200 is higher than the national average. The amount of donations made by both Canadian and Albertan older adults is increasing¹⁰. Among Canadian older adults, 89% of native-born and 90% of foreign-born are charitable donors. The longer these foreign-born older adults have lived in Canada, the more likely they are to donate¹¹.

The likelihood of being a “top donor” (the top 25% of donors who give the largest amounts), increases with age. Nearly one-third (31%) of top donors are 65 and older. While the 65 and older top donor group comprise only 5% of the total population, they donate 20% of the total value of all donations received¹².

Donating is one way that older adults give back to their communities. They make charitable donations because they feel compassion for those they are helping, they have been personally affected by an organization, they feel they owe something to the community, or because they want to fulfill religious obligations¹³.

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