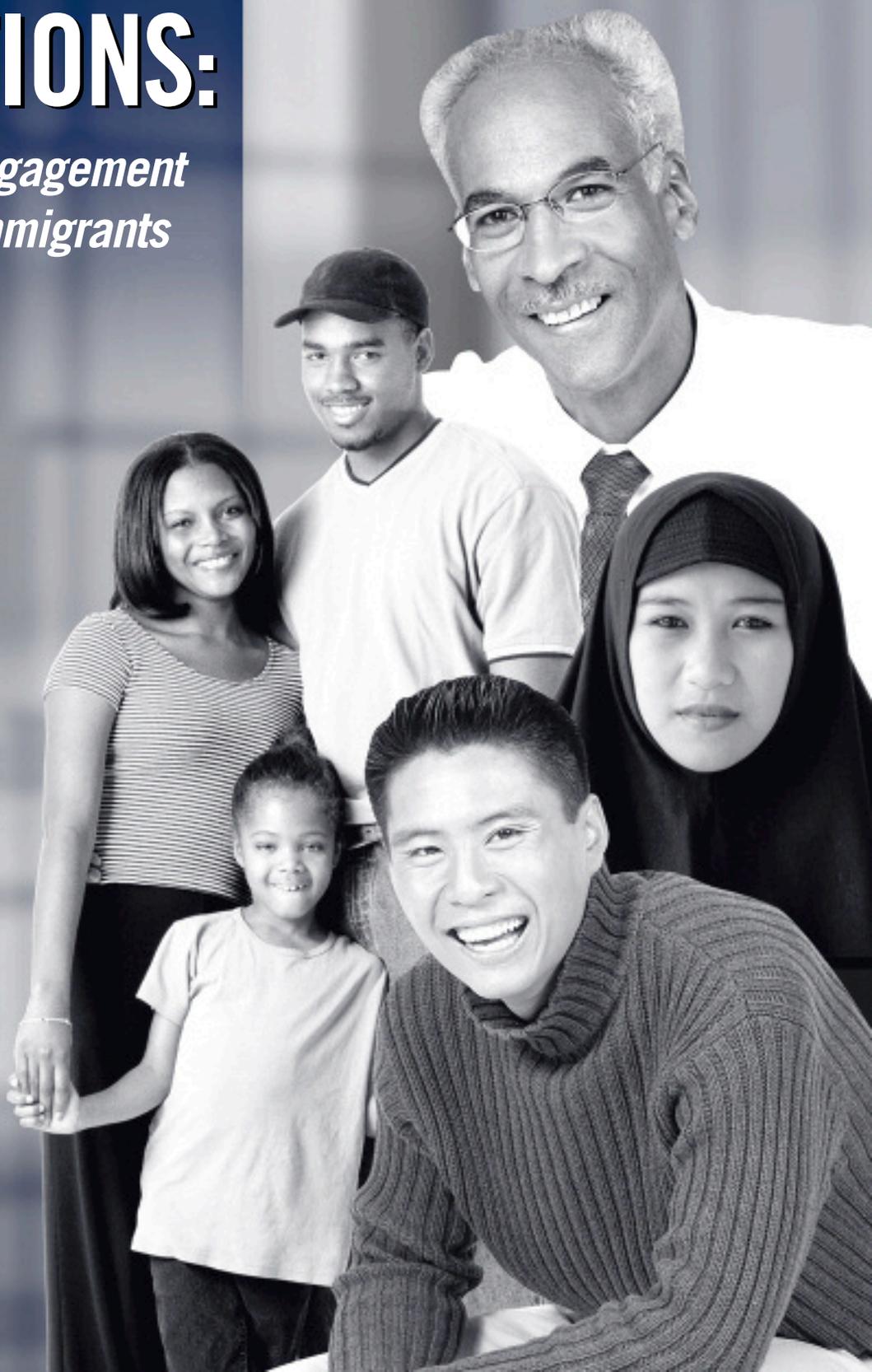


BY KATHERINE SCOTT  
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# MAKING CONNECTIONS:

*Social and Civic Engagement  
among Canadian Immigrants*



CANADIAN  
COUNCIL  
ON SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT

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Katherine Scott  
Vice President Research, Canadian Council on Social Development

## Canada

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Millions of people from more than 200 different cultural and ethnic backgrounds now reside in Canada's provinces, cities and communities. In 2001, about 18% of the population was born outside of Canada, and increasing numbers of immigrants are settling in Canada's major urban centres.

But how are immigrants to Canada faring? Are they engaged in the social, economic, and political activities of their cultural communities – and the broader community at large? Do they volunteer? Vote? Donate to charities? Join groups? Do they follow current affairs? In other words, how are they doing with respect to social inclusion?

This report tries to answer those questions by examining different measures of social and civic engagement among the immigrant population and flagging areas of concern. In the report, social and civic engagement is broadly defined as “the active connections between people that foster mutual respect and facilitate cooperative action.”

The immigrant population in Canada is not one homogeneous group. Immigrant experiences are as varied as their ethnic, religious, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Indeed, what social or civic engagement means to an individual depends in large part on their past experiences and cultural practices. Recognizing that, the report examines broad patterns of social and civic engagement among immigrants by looking at the different ways in which they participate in Canadian society and whether factors such as age, gender, education level, employment status, household income, and length of time in Canada influence their participation levels.

Specifically, the following measures were used to gauge social and civic participation: rates of volunteering and donating, memberships in nonprofit and charitable community groups, voting rates, frequency of following the news and current affairs, and rates and methods of informal giving. Each of these measures is discussed in relation to the immigrant and Canadian-born populations, and some of the key findings are highlighted below.

This report uses data from two primary sources: the 2000 *National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating* (NSGVP) and the 2003 *General Social Survey* (GSS). These two surveys, while not always directly comparable, yield sufficient information to indicate trends and patterns in the behaviours of the immigrant and Canadian-born populations. Data from the 2001 Census are also used to enhance the findings.

This report was a joint effort between the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) and the Centre for Applied Social Research at Carleton University. It was made possible with the financial support of the Citizenship Participation Directorate at the Department of Canadian Heritage. Authors Katherine Scott of the CCSD, and Kevin Selbee and Paul Reed of Carleton University collaborated to generate *Making Connections*.

## Immigrants as Volunteers

- Both the 2000 NSGVP and the 2003 GSS revealed that, on average, almost 30% of immigrants volunteered for nonprofit or charitable organizations, about 5% fewer than among the Canadian-born.

- The longer immigrants have lived in Canada, the more likely they are to volunteer at levels comparable to or greater than the Canadian-born population. Rates were lower among more recent immigrants, reflecting their primary concerns of finding housing and employment, and providing economically for their families. For immigrants who did not volunteer, lack of time was cited as the greatest deterrent.
- A clear pattern emerged between volunteer rates, and level of education and household income: the higher the level of education and income, the greater the participation rate in volunteer activities, but the fewer hours volunteered. This pattern was similar among Canadian-born respondents, but on average, Canadian-born residents had slightly higher volunteer rates and they volunteered for slightly more hours.
- Immigrants volunteered for the same reasons as Canadian-born respondents – to support a cause which they had been affected by or in which they believed. Immigrants also volunteered in order to be able to apply their skills and experiences, to better understand Canadian workplaces, and to improve their language skills. They were more likely than the Canadian-born to volunteer in order to fulfill a religious obligation.
- Immigrants were more likely to say that they had not been personally asked to volunteer or did not know how to become involved.
- Immigrants were more likely to volunteer with religious groups or organizations and less likely to volunteer with social service organizations than their Canadian-born counterparts.
- On average, immigrant women were more likely than men to volunteer, but immigrant men volunteered more hours than women. The presence of young children reduced the number of hours volunteered.
- Immigrants aged 55 to 64 were the most likely to volunteer, whereas for the Canadian-born population, the highest volunteer rates were among those aged 35 to 54.

## Immigrants as Donors

- According to data in the NSGVP and GSS, the majority of both immigrants and the Canadian-born made financial and in-kind donations to nonprofit organizations, particularly health-related and religious groups. Immigrants gave larger donations, on average, than the Canadian-born population, and their level of giving rose in direct proportion to their length of time in Canada.
- Immigrants were more likely to donate to religious organizations than their Canadian-born counterparts: roughly 60% of immigrant charitable giving was to religious institutions, compared to 46% among Canadian-born respondents.
- Immigrants with a religious affiliation were more likely than those with no religious affiliation to give to both religious institutions and other charitable causes.
- Immigrants made donations for the same reasons as the Canadian-born, primarily compassion for those in need and a cause in which they believed. Again, immigrants were more likely to cite fulfilling religious obligations as a motivation for their charitable giving.
- Economic constraints constituted the biggest barrier to charitable giving for both immigrants and Canadian-born respondents. Those who did not give said they were saving to meet their own needs.

## Immigrants as Group Members

- In 2003, over half of Canada's immigrants said they belonged to organizations, groups or community-based clubs. Their membership rates increased along with their length of residence in Canada. Immigrants over age 55 years were more likely than their Canadian-born counterparts to be members of community organizations and groups.

- Like the Canadian-born population, immigrants tended to meet people of similar age, education and income as members of groups, and the majority were involved with people of the same ethnic background. Unlike Canadian-born residents, however, about 25% of immigrants said they joined groups in which about half the other members were visibly different from them and spoke a different mother tongue.
- Immigrants were most likely to join work-related groups such as unions and professional associations. They were also more likely to be members of sports, cultural or recreational groups and religious organizations.
- For both immigrants and the Canadian-born population, participation in community groups was strongly associated with education: the higher the education level, the more likely they were to participate in a group.

### Immigrants as Voters

- According to the 2000 NSGVP, almost 65% of immigrants and 75% of Canadian-born respondents said they had voted in a recent federal, provincial or municipal election. This pattern was confirmed by findings in the 2003 GSS.
- First-generation immigrants were more preoccupied with getting settled in Canada. In fact, immigrants cannot vote until they become Canadian citizens, which usually takes at least three years. Length of residence therefore significantly increased the likelihood of voting, and most immigrants took their franchise rights seriously, particularly immigrant seniors.
- Higher household incomes and higher education levels generally increased the likelihood of voting among immigrants. The exception to this trend was that those with a university degree were less likely to vote than those with a college education – a phenomenon that requires further study.

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### Immigrants as Consumers of Current Affairs

- Both surveys found that immigrants had a higher level of interest in news and current affairs than their Canadian-born counterparts. Over 70% of immigrants followed the news daily, compared to about 65% of the Canadian-born population.
- Immigrants' consumption of news increased roughly with their level of education, a pattern also found among Canadian-born respondents.
- Over 90% of immigrant seniors followed the news and current affairs daily.

### Immigrants as Informal Givers

- In 2000, about 90% of immigrants made informal donations to others. The longer immigrants had lived in Canada, the more likely they were to engage in informal giving, from donating to a food bank to providing direct financial support to others, especially relatives.
- Over 70% of immigrants provided informal care or assistance to others. Those who had resided in Canada for six to 15 years provided the most informal care (79%), including such activities as shopping or driving for others, and caring for the sick and elderly.

## Looking Ahead

People come together to pursue common interests and forge social bonds through community organizations. Many factors shape these actions, including economic conditions, demographics, government policies, societal attitudes, and community values.

Together, the NSGVP and GSS paint a portrait which helps us better understand the social and civic activities of immigrants in Canada. And in these data we find that immigrants tend to be very involved in social and civic life, and to make significant contributions to Canada. They give generously of their time and money to the voluntary sector. They are interested and active citizens, engaged in current affairs and in helping others in their community.

Not surprisingly, recent immigrants are more heavily involved in adjusting to their new homeland, but the desire to contribute is there. Significant economic barriers tend to restrict their ability to contribute either time or money to community activities. Lower rates of participation among recent immigrants also suggest that additional community supports may be required to enable them to be more fully engaged in Canadian society.

Established immigrants tend to have much higher participation rates on all measures, suggesting that social and civic engagement grows with the length of residency. Faith-based organizations, and cultural and religious festivals play an important role for many immigrants, serving as a focal point and basis on which to build both community identity and social resources.

The findings in this report are necessarily broad, and some results require further examination. There is a great deal still to be done to strengthen the social and economic connections that underlie individual and community well-being. This report is but a first step, setting the stage for further research to explore specific aspects of the contributory and participatory behaviour of immigrants in their communities. Understanding the context in which immigrants take part in social and civic activities can help create the conditions necessary for a more dynamic and inclusive society.



# INTRODUCTION

People from all over the world and from varied cultural and ethnic backgrounds now reside in Canada. The portrait is diverse and varies from province to province, city to city, and from community to community. The proportion of people born outside of Canada has grown steadily over the last 70 years. In 2001, about 5.4 million Canadians – 18.4% of the total population – were born outside of the country. Of this group, 1.8 million arrived between 1991 and 2001. Only Australia has a larger immigrant population than Canada.

While Canada has always been a country of immigrants, policy changes in the early 1960s widened the source countries to include developing nations. Fifty years ago, most immigrants to Canada came from Europe. Now newcomers arrive from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Central and South America. More than 200 ethnic groups were noted in the 2001 Census. As a result of recent immigration, visible minorities now account for one-eighth (13.4%) of the total population.

Canada's growing diversity raises important questions. Not the least of these concern the well-being of newcomers and their relationship to Canadian society. An emerging public policy question concerns the process of immigrant settlement, in light of the struggles immigrants are having trying to establish themselves in the labour market and within public life more generally.<sup>1</sup> The federal government actively promotes the participation of all Canadians in the social and economic life of their communities. The question is: Are immigrants to Canada actively engaged in their communities? And do Canadian communities extend opportunities for immigrants to participate in meaningful ways?

Economic inclusion is certainly important, but so too is social inclusion.<sup>2</sup> The ways in which we associate with others, and on what terms, have assumed centre stage with widespread interest in concepts like civic and social engagement – broadly defined as the active connections among people that foster mutual trust and facilitate cooperative action. And while there is considerable debate about specific definitions and methods to measure these concepts,<sup>3</sup> social and civic engagement are now recognized as being central to individual and community well-being.<sup>4, 5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ratna Omidvar and Ted Richmond. "Immigrant settlement and social inclusion in Canada," in *Perspectives on Social Inclusion*. Toronto: Laidlaw Foundation, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> [www.ccsd.ca/events/inclusion/index.htm](http://www.ccsd.ca/events/inclusion/index.htm)

<sup>3</sup> See Policy Research Initiative. *Expert Workshop on the Measurement of Social Capital for Public Policy, Synthesis Report*, June 2004. [www.policyresearch.gc.ca/doclib/R4\\_Social%20Cap\\_E.pdf](http://www.policyresearch.gc.ca/doclib/R4_Social%20Cap_E.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> James Frideres identifies three benefits that result from civic participation: material benefits (i.e., access to employment opportunities, skill development, language acquisition); solidarity benefits that derive from social interactions (i.e., friendship, personal satisfaction); and purposive benefits that derive from the suprapersonal goals of the organization (i.e., bettering the community, fulfilling religious obligations, helping out). These different benefits have been linked to both individual and community well-being. See Frideres, "Civic Participation, Awareness, Knowledge and Skills," from the Second National Metropolis Conference on Immigrants and Civic Participation: Contemporary Policy and Research Issues, Montreal, November 1997.

<sup>5</sup> See also M. Woolcock. "The place of social capital in understanding social and economic outcomes," in *Isuma* 2, 1:41-51.

This paper looks at the different ways in which immigrants contribute to other people in their community and to Canadian society more broadly. We look specifically at measures such as charitable donations, membership in community organizations, volunteering, and voting. Drawing on the *National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating* (NSVGP), we examine whether there are distinctive patterns of social and civic engagement among Canadian immigrants.

There are a number of important caveats to keep in mind. The most important is that immigrants are not a homogeneous group. The sheer diversity of Canada's immigrant population, described in Appendices 1 and 2, is reflected in their varied ethnic, religious, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds. And while they may be "immigrants" here in Canada, their experiences of migration and settlement are varied and distinct. (The Appendices are available for download at [www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2006/makingconnections/](http://www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2006/makingconnections/).)

It is also important to remember that immigrants may have very different understandings of social and civic engagement.<sup>6</sup> For example, the concept of volunteering is not common across cultures. To people who have lived under repressive regimes, volunteering may be viewed with suspicion and fear. For others, associating with community members by shaking hands or making eye contact may be discouraged. For some people, volunteering is identified as an activity of the economically privileged. As well, the issue of unpaid work may be problematic for some, particularly those who cannot find paid employment and may resent being asked to volunteer in order to qualify for social support.

Thus, different groups of immigrants can have very different understandings of civic and social engagement. As well, there can be structural or cultural barriers to participation. By focussing on individual characteristics and behaviour, studies such as this can obscure important collective dimensions of the immigrant experience. The report does, however, provide a starting point to explore the civic and social

participation of immigrants, and it sets the stage for future research at the community level with the diverse groups of immigrants now making their home in Canada.

We hope this study will be useful for communities and policy-makers. Certainly there has been interest in and concern about the immigrant settlement process and the difficulties they are experiencing breaking into the Canadian labour market. Are new immigrants being socially excluded as well? How can our programs and policies better facilitate the health and well-being of new Canadians? To answer these questions, information about their social and civic engagement will be needed.

It is also important to try to understand the motivations of immigrants and the barriers they face in their efforts to forge new economic, social, and political connections in Canada. Immigrants are clear about their desire to contribute to their communities, apply their knowledge, and glean experience in Canada. Community-based organizations – both those that work in ethno-cultural communities and "mainstream" groups – have a direct interest in understanding the context within which giving and volunteering occurs, so that they can better serve and represent the diverse ethno-cultural groups. Indeed, all Canadians have a stake in understanding these issues as the face of Canada continues to evolve.

## This Report

In this report, we examine the different dimensions of social and civic engagement by drawing on two surveys that explore contributory behaviour. Specifically, we look at formal giving to charitable and nonprofit organizations, volunteering, membership in community groups, patterns of voting, and levels of interest in current affairs. Throughout, we examine similarities and differences in these patterns of engagement between recent and more established immigrants, and we identify key factors that appear to influence the decision to volunteer and make donations. To paint a more comprehensive picture, we also examine patterns of direct personal giving and informal help.

<sup>6</sup> Beth de Long. *The Meaning of Volunteering: Examining the meaning of volunteering to new Canadians*. London: Pillar Voluntary Sector Network, March 2005.

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## The Changing Face of Canada

- Canadian immigrants are a heterogeneous group. Europe and the United States were once the primary source countries of new immigrants to Canada. Today, they are more likely to come from Asia and the Middle East.
- Immigrants are settling in Canada's largest cities. The majority of immigrants between 1991 and 2001 settled in Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal.
- Immigrants tend to be younger. Many arrive as children and young adults under the age of 40.
- Immigrants are more likely to be married. They are also more likely to have children living at home.
- While six of 10 immigrants speak a non-official language, over 90% have knowledge of English and/or French.
- Immigrants report a religious affiliation in the same proportions as Canadian-born residents. The largest number identify themselves as Roman Catholic. Almost one-quarter report "other" religious affiliations, such as Christian Orthodox, Muslim, and Hindu.
- Immigrants are highly educated. About half have a college diploma or university degree.
- According to Census data, immigrants aged 15 and older have somewhat lower rates of employment than Canadian-born residents, and a larger proportion are not engaged in the labour market. Immigrants surveyed in the NSGVP, however, were as likely as Canadian-born respondents to be employed and they were more likely to hold full-time jobs.
- A significant number of immigrants aged 15 and older are trained professionals and work in managerial or senior administrative positions. Like their Canadian-born counterparts, the largest group are employed in "other white-collar" occupations.
- On average, immigrants have slightly lower incomes than Canadian-born residents. According to the 2001 Census, they are more likely to experience low income. This is particularly so for recent immigrants. Immigrants surveyed for the NSGVP had a similar income profile as Canadian-born respondents.

We present information on immigrants and Canadian-born respondents for 2000 and 2003. By including data about the patterns of giving and volunteering among people born in Canada we are not suggesting that these patterns should serve as benchmarks for “successful” integration. Peter Li makes the important point that there is no one understanding of the process of integration, and certainly no ideal standard for an active citizenry.<sup>7</sup> Rather, we present this information to help identify the distinctive patterns of giving, volunteering and participating among immigrants to Canada, and how these patterns are changing over time.

## The 2000 NSGVP and 2003 GSS

Data in this report are based on two surveys: the 2000 *National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating* (NSGVP) and the 2003 *General Social Survey* (GSS).

The 2000 NSGVP contains the most detailed information on contributory behaviour. Consequently, this report draws primarily on these data. Where possible, we have also included estimates based on data in the 2003 GSS. While these two data sets are not directly comparable, they help assess general trends in contributory behaviour within the immigrant and Canadian-born populations. Additional information from the 2003 NSGVP will be available in the coming months.

In the NSGVP, two questions were asked to establish the immigration status of respondents. Survey participants were asked which country they were born in, and secondly, whether they were or had ever been a landed immigrant. In 2000, 14.1% of the approximately 15,000 people surveyed were identified as

immigrants. This is lower than the estimate of 18.4% produced by the 2001 Census. It appears that the 2000 NSGVP under-represents immigrants to some degree, perhaps due to the high non-response rate on the question of country of birth. About 6% of respondents in the survey would not, or could not, answer this question. And while the survey does not provide information that would help identify the origins of these individuals, it is reasonable to assume that this group includes many immigrants. If even half the non-responses were immigrants, the proportion of immigrants found in the NSGVP sample would be in line with the Census figure.<sup>8</sup>

The 2003 GSS used similar questions to determine immigration status. Based on a survey of 25,000 people, 20.5% were identified as immigrants. This estimate is higher than the 2001 Census figure, but within an acceptable margin of error.

It is also important to note that the reference populations for the Census and for surveys like the NSGVP and GSS are not identical. Census data apply to all Canadians, while the survey data exclude the northern territories, individuals on Indian reserves, in institutions, and in the military. How these differences impact the survey estimates of the immigrant population is unknown, but it is entirely possible for survey estimates to differ from Census figures to some degree.

Additional information about the 2000 *National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating* (NSGVP), the 2003 *General Social Survey* (GSS), and the 2001 *Census* is provided on the CCSD’s website at [www.ccsd.ca/research/2006/makingconnections/](http://www.ccsd.ca/research/2006/makingconnections/).

<sup>7</sup> Peter Li. “Literature Review on Immigration: Sociological Perspectives,” Paper prepared for Strategic Policy, Planning and Research and Metropolis Project, Citizenship and Immigration, May 1996.

<sup>8</sup> Although the NSGVP under-represents immigrants, the under-count is not systematic. Since the non-response is random across the immigrant group, comparisons of characteristics within the group or with the Canadian-born population are still accurate. Indeed, comparisons with 2001 Census data for a number of immigrant traits suggest that the 2000 NSGVP is an accurate representation of the immigrant population in Canada. And while there are some areas where the NSGVP tends to over- or underestimate immigrant characteristics to some extent, the divergences from Census data are not large and will not have much effect on information pertaining to the social and civic engagement of Canadian immigrants.



# VOLUNTEERING AMONG IMMIGRANTS

Volunteers play an important role in communities across the country, giving of their time and energies to individuals and community groups.<sup>9</sup> This section looks at the contributions of immigrants to Canada – who they are, where they direct their time, the reasons they give for volunteering, and the reasons they give for not volunteering.

## Volunteering: How many? How often?

Volunteering is on the rise after declining levels in the late 1990s.<sup>10</sup> In 2003, 29% of immigrants<sup>11</sup> volunteered for nonprofit or charitable organizations, according to the General Social Survey (GSS). This represents an increase from 2000, when 21% of immigrants surveyed in the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (NSGVP) said they volunteered. Among Canadian-born respondents,<sup>12</sup> roughly one-third (35%) volunteered, up from 29% reported in the 2000 NSGVP.

In 2000, established immigrants were more likely than more recent immigrants to be volunteers: 25% of those who had lived in Canada for 26 years or

more volunteered, compared to 15% of immigrants who had lived in Canada for less than six years. This is not surprising. Other studies have found that it takes a number of years before immigrants begin to volunteer.<sup>13</sup> New immigrants are busy taking care of basic necessities such as finding shelter, employment, and health care.<sup>14</sup> The process of settlement takes time. While many new immigrants turn to ethnic and immigrant organizations for settlement services and social support, their rate of participation and volunteering tends to be lower compared to other immigrants who have lived in Canada for many years.

Evidence from the GSS suggests that the rate of volunteering among immigrants is increasing, particularly among recent immigrants. In 2003, the gap between recent and established immigrants had closed considerably. According to the GSS, 27% of recent immigrants (living in Canada less than six years) reported donating their time to nonprofit or charitable organizations; the rate was 30% among established immigrants. It seems that larger numbers of recent immigrants are forging connections with their communities through volunteering, despite barriers such as high levels of economic insecurity.

<sup>9</sup> This report draws on two surveys to explore the contributory behaviour of immigrants: the 2000 *National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating* and the 2003 *General Social Survey*. The most detailed information is found in the 2000 NSGVP; where possible, we have also included estimates based on data available in the GSS. (Additional information from the 2003 NSGVP will be available in the coming months.)

<sup>10</sup> According to the NSGVP, 31% of the population volunteered in 1997, an estimated 7.5 million Canadians. See *Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians: Highlights of the 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, Catalogue No. 71-542-XPE, August 2001: 11.

<sup>11</sup> In this report, immigrants have been defined as those who were born in another country and have been or are currently a landed immigrant.

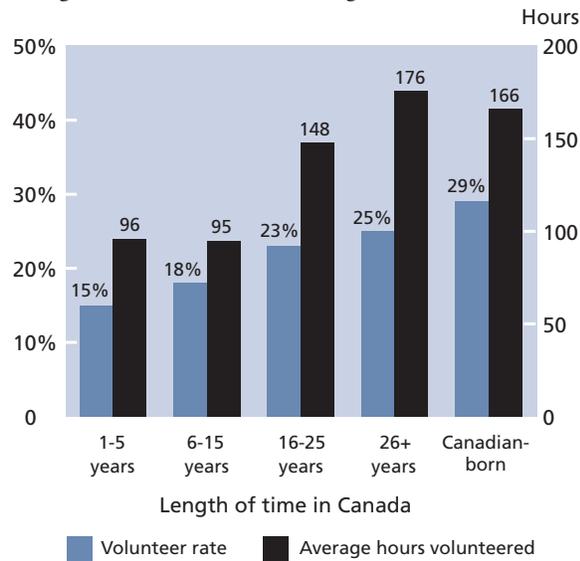
<sup>12</sup> In this report, Canadian-born includes those born in Canada and a very small group of “resident aliens.” Resident aliens are residents who were born in another country but have not applied for landed immigrant status. This group includes diplomats, foreign students, and the like.

<sup>13</sup> Shahin Daya and Beth de Long. *A New Canadian's First Decade of Volunteering: Examining Ways to Involve New Canadians in Community Organizations*. London: Pillar Voluntary Sector Network, 2004.

<sup>14</sup> See Martin Papillon. *Immigration, Diversity and Social Inclusion in Canadian Cities*. CPRN Discussion Paper, No. F27. December 2004.

### Volunteer rate and average hours volunteered, by length of time in Canada, 2000

Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older



Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

Immigrants volunteered a total of 98.8 million hours in 2000 – the equivalent of over 50,000 full-time jobs.<sup>15</sup> This represents almost 10% of the over one billion hours that all Canadians volunteered that year. The average number of hours donated by immigrant volunteers was 144, less than the Canadian-born average of 166 hours.<sup>16</sup>

Established immigrants give extensively of their time to nonprofit and charitable organizations – an average of 176 hours in 2000. Among more recent immigrants, the average was predictably lower: those who had lived in Canada for less than 15 years volunteered an average of just under 100 hours.<sup>17</sup>

### Where do immigrants volunteer?

Immigrants volunteered their time to a range of different charitable and nonprofit organizations, in a pattern somewhat different than that of Canadian-born volunteers. In 2000, immigrants gave more hours, on average, to the following

### Volunteer rate and average hours volunteered by type of organization, 2000

Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older

	Immigrants		Canadian-born	
	% who volunteered	Average hours	% who volunteered	Average hours
Culture, sports and recreation	23	144	37	140
Education and research	16	95	21	92
Health	18	75	20	88
Social services	21	69	32	128
Environment	*	*	5	109
Development and housing	9	141	8	104
Law, advocacy and politics	10	96	5	128
Philanthropic intermediaries and voluntarism	*	*	3	62
International	*	*	1	135
Religion	30	139	21	124
Business and professional associations, unions	*	*	4	103
Other	*	*	2	127

\* Results suppressed due to small sample size.

Note: Respondents could select up to three organizations.

Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

<sup>15</sup> Full-job equivalents are based on a 40-hour week, 48 weeks per year.

<sup>16</sup> These figures are based on the contributions of volunteers only, rather than the population as a whole. The average contribution of all immigrants in 2000 was 31 hours per year, compared to 47 hours among Canadian-born. Comparable data on average hours were not available in the General Social Survey.

<sup>17</sup> Roughly two-thirds of immigrants who volunteered did so with one organization; by contrast, Canadian-born volunteers were slightly more likely to donate their time to more than one organization.

types of organizations: culture, sports and recreation; development and housing; religion; and education and research. They volunteered less time to social service organizations – 69 hours per year, on average, compared to 128 hours among Canadian-born volunteers.

## Patterns in Volunteering

### *Does volunteering vary by region?*

In 2000, immigrants living in the Prairies were the most likely to volunteer (29%), followed by immigrants in British Columbia (23%) and Ontario (21%).<sup>18</sup> However, there was no difference in the average number of hours contributed: in Ontario, the Prairies and B.C., immigrants in 2000 volunteered an average of 144 hours.

The increase in volunteer rates between 2000 and 2003 was evident across the country. According to the 2003 GSS, the highest rate of volunteering among immigrants was in Atlantic Canada (35%), followed by those in the Prairies (34%) and British Columbia (30%). Among Canadian-born respondents, the volunteer rate was highest in the Prairies (42%) and B.C. (41%). Just over one-quarter of Ontario immigrants (28%) and 24% of immigrants in Quebec volunteered their time in 2003. Indeed, in Quebec, the volunteer rate was about the same for both immigrants and non-immigrants.<sup>19</sup>

### *Does volunteering vary by personal characteristics?*

Many factors influence whether an individual volunteers or not. Among the most important are their economic circumstances and their beliefs about volunteering. It is important to look at volunteering within this broader context. Does a person have secure employment? Do they have established support networks? Are they already providing care for family members or other friends? Do communities or ethno-cultural groups have structures that facilitate volunteering?

In the following sections, we look at a range of socio-demographic characteristics including age, gender, marital status, employment, education, and income. Our goal is to provide an overview of these key characteristics to help illustrate the varied and distinctive ways in which Canadian immigrants support each other and contribute to society.

**Gender:** Women were slightly more likely than men to volunteer, regardless of whether they were Canadian-born or immigrants. In 2000, immigrant women had a volunteer rate of 23%, compared to 19% among immigrant men. In terms of hours, however, immigrant men volunteered more time on average than immigrant women: 152 and 137 hours respectively.

### Volunteer rate and average hours volunteered, by region, 2000

Immigrants and Canada-born aged 15 and older

	Immigrants		Canadian-born	
	Volunteer rate (%)	Average hours	Volunteer rate (%)	Average hours
Atlantic	*	*	32	195
Quebec	*	*	20	162
Ontario	21	144	28	173
Prairies	29	144	41	142
BC	23	143	29	176
Average	21	144	29	166

\* Results suppressed due to small sample size.

Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

<sup>18</sup> In the NSGVP, the sample size for immigrants in the Atlantic region and in Quebec was small, so results for these regions have been suppressed.

<sup>19</sup> Regional estimates for Atlantic Canada and Quebec are available from the General Social Survey (GSS) because of its larger sample size.

By 2003, the volunteer rate was higher among both male and female immigrants: 27% of men and 30% of women reported being volunteers that year.

**Age:** The age profile of immigrant volunteers is somewhat different than that of Canadian-born volunteers. Volunteering tends to be more common among older working-age immigrants (55 to 64 years); in 2000, 28% of immigrants in this age group volunteered. Among Canadian-born respondents, those aged 35 to 54 reported the highest rates of volunteering (32%).

According to the 2000 NSGVP, the largest difference was among young people aged 15 to 24: Canadian-born youth were almost twice as likely to volunteer as immigrant youth (31% compared to 18%).

While immigrants aged 65 and older had lower volunteer rates than other immigrants, the seniors who did volunteer contributed three times as many hours. Immigrant youth aged 15 to 24 volunteered, on average, 88 hours, whereas immigrant seniors volunteered an average of 247 hours.

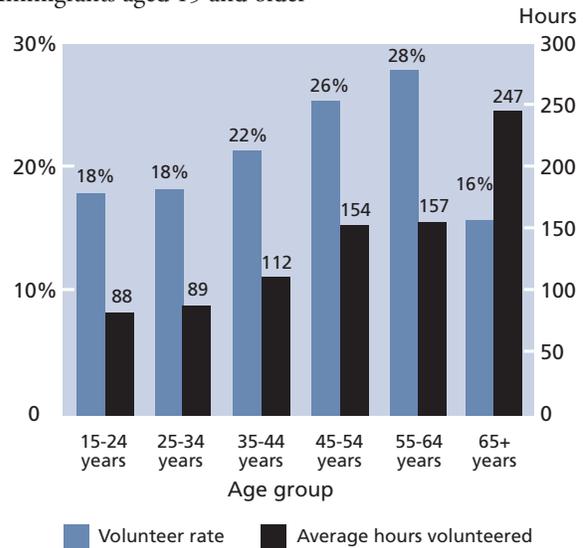
Many more young people – both immigrant and Canadian-born – are volunteering. The increase was particularly notable among immigrant youth. Nearly four in 10 (39%) Canadian-born youth aged 15 to 24 and over one-third (35%) of immigrant youth volunteered in 2003.<sup>20</sup>

There was also a significant rise in the proportion of seniors volunteering. One in three Canadian-born seniors and just under one-quarter of immigrant seniors (24%) contributed their time to voluntary causes in 2003.<sup>21</sup>

**Marital Status and Children:** Marital status did not have a great impact on the likelihood of immigrants volunteering. In 2000, married immigrants were slightly more likely to volunteer (22%) than those who were separated, divorced or widowed (21%) and

### Volunteer rate and average hours volunteered, by age group, 2000

Immigrants aged 15 and older



Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

those who were single (18%). Among those who did volunteer, immigrants who were separated, divorced or widowed contributed the most hours on average (168 hours), compared with those who were married (149 hours) and those who were single (89 hours).

According to the GSS, 29% of immigrants who were married and 30% of those who were single volunteered for nonprofit or charitable organizations in 2003. Among those who were separated, divorced or widowed, 26% volunteered.

According to the 2000 NSGVP, having children did not significantly affect the likelihood of immigrants volunteering.<sup>22</sup> The presence of children did, however, reduce the average number of hours volunteered, particularly for those with children under age five.

<sup>20</sup> It is important to keep in mind that in some provinces, many secondary schools require youth to perform community service in order to graduate. However, it is difficult to determine the impact of these provisions on rates of volunteering.

<sup>21</sup> According to the GSS, volunteering rates among immigrants in 2003 were: 35% for those aged 15-24; 23% (25-34 years); 28% (35-44 years); 32% (45-54 years); 31% (55-64 years); and 24% for those aged 65+.

<sup>22</sup> The presence of older children appeared to have a greater impact on Canadian-born respondents. The rate of volunteering among Canadian-born with children aged five to 24 was 36%, compared to 26% among those without children in this age group.

Immigrant volunteers with young children (aged 0 to 5) donated an average of 129 hours per year, compared to 146 hours per year contributed by those who did not have young children. In 2000, immigrant volunteers with older children (aged 5 to 24) gave an average of 140 hours, compared to 147 hours for those without children in this age group.

By 2003, differences in the volunteer rates between immigrants with children and those without children were more pronounced. Those with young children under age five were less likely to volunteer than those without young children. Conversely, those with children aged 5 to 24 were more likely to volunteer than those without children in this age group.<sup>23</sup>

**Religion:** The religious affiliation of immigrants appears to have a strong influence on volunteering. Those who identified themselves as Protestant were the most likely to volunteer (42%) and, as we will see later, the most likely to make charitable donations. The next largest group of immigrant volunteers reported no religious affiliation (24%). One of six immigrants (17%) affiliated with religious faiths such as Islam or Hinduism volunteered, while 13% of Roman Catholic immigrants contributed their time to charitable and nonprofit activities.

Protestant immigrant volunteers also contributed the highest average hours (171 hours), followed by those of other faiths (147 hours), those who had no religious affiliation (128 hours), and Catholic immigrants (120 hours).

The proportion of Protestant immigrant volunteers in 2003 was somewhat less (at 37%), according to the GSS, in part reflecting their shrinking share of the immigrant population. Immigrants who reported Roman Catholic and other faiths, however, reported higher levels of volunteering in 2003 (26% and 25% respectively).

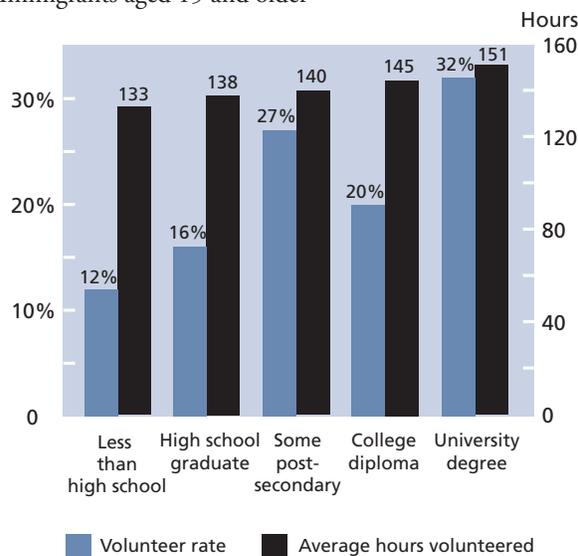
### *Does volunteering vary by education or economic characteristics?*

**Education:** Volunteering tends to increase with educational attainment among Canadian immigrants, and it is also associated with a higher level of volunteer activity. In 2000, immigrants with less than a high school education volunteered an average of 133 hours, compared with an average of 151 hours among those with a university degree.

This association between higher levels of education and higher levels of volunteering was still evident in 2003. However, the largest increases in volunteering rates were among immigrants with less than a high school education and those with some post-secondary education or a college diploma. The smallest increase in volunteer rates was among those with a university degree.<sup>24</sup> Among Canadian-born volunteers, the proportional increase was roughly the same across all educational groups.

### **Volunteer rate and average hours volunteered, by level of education, 2000**

Immigrants aged 15 and older



Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving and Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

<sup>23</sup> According to the 2003 GSS, the volunteer rate among immigrants with young children was 23%, compared to 30% among those without young children. Thirty-two per cent of parents with children aged five to 24 volunteered, compared to 26% of those without children in this age group.

<sup>24</sup> According to the 2003 GSS, volunteer rates among immigrants were: 21% for those with less than a high school education; 21% (high school graduates); 35% (some post-secondary education); 28% (college diploma); and 34% for those with a university degree.

## Volunteer rate and average hours volunteered, by household income, 2000

Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older

Household income	Immigrants		Canadian-born	
	Volunteer rate (%)	Average hours	Volunteer rate (%)	Average hours
Less than \$20,000	15	148	18	217
\$20,000 to \$39,999	17	166	22	184
\$40,000 to \$59,999	18	159	28	163
\$60,000 to \$79,999	23	143	33	159
\$80,000+	32	122	40	145
Average	21	144	29	166

Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

**Employment Status:** In both 2000 and 2003, the volunteer rate was highest among immigrants working part-time, compared to those working full-time and those with no employment.<sup>25</sup> However, immigrants who were not engaged in paid employment contributed the highest average number of hours (172 hours) to charitable and nonprofit organizations. Immigrants who worked full-time contributed an average of 132 hours in 2000, and those working part-time contributed 118 hours. The same pattern was evident in 2003.<sup>26</sup>

**Occupation:** Professionals tended to have the highest rates of volunteering among immigrants in all occupational groups. They also had the second highest average volunteer hours in both 2000 and 2003.<sup>27</sup> Those who did not specify an occupation volunteered the most hours on average (188 hours).<sup>28</sup> The largest increase in volunteering rates between 2000 and 2003 was among managers and administrators.

**Household Income:** Levels of volunteering generally rise with income. The rate of volunteering among immigrants in low-income households was 15% in 2000, compared with a rate of 32% among those in households with incomes over \$80,000 per year.<sup>29</sup> In 2003, the comparable figures were 26% and 35%. However, immigrants in households with the highest incomes volunteered, on average, the lowest number of hours. Those with household incomes between \$20,000 and \$39,999 contributed the highest average number of hours (166 hours). And the largest increases in volunteering were among immigrants with household incomes of less than \$60,000 per year.

<sup>25</sup> Those with no employment included individuals who were unemployed and those who were “not in the labour force,” including seniors, full-time caregivers, etc.

<sup>26</sup> According to the 2003 GSS, volunteer rates among immigrants were: 28% for those working full-time; 43% (part-time); and 26% for those not in the labour force/ unemployed.

<sup>27</sup> According to the 2003 GSS, volunteer rates among immigrants were: 38% among professionals; 40% (managers and administrators); 32% (other white-collar); 16% (blue-collar); and 26% among those who indicated no occupation.

<sup>28</sup> The category “no occupation” likely includes students, individuals who were unemployed, retired people, and those not engaged in the paid labour force. It also includes individuals who did not state an occupation and those who simply choose not to reveal their occupation to interviewers. “Other white-collar” workers include positions such as supervisors, senior clerical workers, and sales or service personnel. It is the most common occupational designation among immigrants.

<sup>29</sup> According to the 2003 GSS, volunteering increases with household income: 26% among those with household income less than \$20,000; 27% (\$20-\$39,999); 30% (\$40-\$59,999); 31% (\$60-\$79,999); and 35% among those with annual household income of \$80,000+.

## Why do immigrants volunteer?

People volunteer for a variety of reasons. They may wish to contribute to their communities, acquire new skills, gain job experience, make new friends, or advance a particular cause. Volunteering also helps create bridges between diverse groups.

Overall, immigrants were motivated to volunteer by the same kinds of things that motivated Canadian-born volunteers – in particular, the feeling of personal connection to a cause or organization. According to the 2000 NSGVP, the overwhelming majority of both immigrant and Canadian-born volunteers said the reason they did so was to “help a cause” they believe in (93% and 95% respectively). Two-thirds of immigrants (67%) said they volunteered because they were “personally affected by the cause.” This was particularly important among established immigrants – three-quarters of immigrants who had lived in Canada for 26 years or more cited that statement, compared to 41% of recent immigrants.

The desire for personal development and training was also an important factor. Three-quarters of immigrants (76%) said they volunteered because they wanted to “use [their] skills and experiences” to improve their English or French, for example, or gain a better understanding of Canadian workplaces.

This was particularly important for recent immigrants, with 84% agreeing with the statement. Over half (54%) volunteered because they wanted to “explore [their] own strengths.”

One marked difference in the motivations of immigrants and Canadian-born respondents was with regard to religious observation. A larger proportion of immigrant volunteers said they did so “to fulfill [their] religious obligations” – 35% compared to 25% among Canadian-born volunteers. This is consistent with the finding that many more immigrants than Canadian-born volunteer for and make financial contributions to religious organizations.

Volunteering also provides a way to establish and maintain social connections with friends, neighbours, and community members. Over one-quarter of volunteers (28%) said they volunteered “because [their] friends volunteer.” This was particularly so among immigrants who had lived in Canada for a number of years. In a survey of new immigrants undertaken in London, Ontario, nearly two-thirds said they volunteered in order to meet people – both those from their own ethnocultural or religious backgrounds as well as other Canadians.<sup>30</sup>

For 17% of immigrant volunteers, it was a way to “improve job opportunities,” a lower rate than among Canadian-born volunteers (24%). This reason

## Reasons given for volunteering, 2000

Immigrant and Canadian-born volunteers aged 15 and older

	Immigrants (%)	Canadian-born (%)
Helping cause in which you believe	93	95
Use your skills and experiences	76	82
Personally affected by cause organization supports	67	69
Explore your own strengths	54	58
Fulfill your religious obligations	35	25
Because your friends volunteer	28	30
Improve your job opportunities	17	24
Required to volunteer by school	*	8

\* Results suppressed due to small sample size.

Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

<sup>30</sup> Shahin Daya and Beth de Long. *A New Canadian's First Decade of Volunteering: Examining Ways to Involve New Canadians in Community Organizations*. London: Pillar Voluntary Sector Network, November 2004, p. 18.

was particularly important for recent immigrants – a group which generally has a lower volunteer rate. Fully 38% of immigrants who had lived in Canada for less than five years agreed with that statement, compared to 11% among those who had lived here for more than 26 years.

### What are the barriers to volunteering?

What prevents immigrants from working with community organizations? Do recent immigrants face particular barriers? These are critical questions to consider as we examine community engagement among immigrants.

According to the 2000 NSGVP, time represented a key concern with regard to volunteering, particularly for immigrants. Three-quarters of non-volunteers (74%) said they did not volunteer because they “do not have any extra time.” Just under half (45%) said they didn’t feel able “to make year-round commitments.” This was a particular concern among immigrants who had lived in Canada for 16 to 25 years.

Time was also a concern among new immigrants.<sup>31</sup> In today’s difficult economic climate, many new immigrants struggle to provide their families with the basic necessities. As a result, many feel they don’t have a great deal of time to volunteer. As well, many new immigrants work at several jobs in order to save money to bring other family members to Canada. The exclusive focus for many immigrants is on paid employment.

This issue is directly tied to the prevalence of poverty among newcomers to Canada. Economic disadvantage works to isolate new immigrants, the group which would arguably benefit most from connections to a social network and community-based service providers.<sup>32</sup>

Immigrants – and particularly those who had lived in Canada for more than 25 years – were more likely than Canadian-born respondents to say that they gave “money instead of time” (42% compared with 38%).

Another barrier to volunteering was a lack of knowledge about volunteer opportunities. A significant percentage of immigrants said they did not volunteer because they had not personally been asked (42%) or they did not know how to become involved (33%).

### Barriers to volunteering, 2000

Immigrants and Canadian-born non-volunteers aged 15 and older

	Immigrants (%)	Canadian-born (%)
Do not have any extra time	74	69
Unwilling to make year-round commitment	45	47
Give money instead of time	42	38
No one you know has personally asked you	42	36
Do not know how to become involved	33	18
Have no interest	26	24
Feel you have already made contribution to volunteering	22	21
Have health problems or physically unable	22	24
Financial cost of volunteering	21	19
Concerned that you could be sued, etc.	11	7
Dissatisfied with previous volunteer experiences	10	8

Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 22

<sup>32</sup> See Felicitas Katepa Mupondwa, et al. “Analysis and Dissemination of the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating Results.” Study prepared for the Department of Canadian Heritage, August 2003.

These issues were of greater concern to recent immigrants and they are important to note for any nonprofit organizations seeking connections with new immigrant communities. Language may certainly be a barrier in this regard.

Just over one-quarter (26%) of immigrants said they had no interest in volunteering, and 22% believed they had already made their contribution. Lack of interest in volunteering may be linked to negative perceptions or past experiences in their countries of origin. As well, discrimination remains an issue.<sup>33</sup> Making space for new immigrants, providing a venue for their talents and experiences, and embracing cultural and language differences are other important considerations for nonprofit and charitable organizations in their efforts to create bridges with immigrant communities.

One in five immigrants (22%) cited health issues as the reason they didn't volunteer, while 21% noted the financial costs of volunteering, such as costs for transportation and child care. The latter reason was of particular concern among immigrants who had lived in Canada for 16 to 25 years.

### **What are the barriers for established volunteers?**

The reasons given by immigrant and Canadian-born volunteers about why they did not increase their volunteer time were similar. For both groups, the main reason was a lack of time. Eight of 10 immigrant volunteers reported this as a major constraint. Again, recent immigrants were the most likely to cite difficulties in finding the time to increase their volunteer commitment.

Just over one-third (36%) were unwilling to make a year-round commitment and 30% felt they had already made their volunteer contribution. Recent immigrant volunteers were the least likely to say they had “no interest” in volunteering more. This group was, however, more likely than established immigrants and Canadian-born respondents to say they did not volunteer even more because no one had personally asked (24%) or because they didn't know how to become involved (29%).<sup>34</sup>

### **What are the benefits of volunteering?**

There were a number of reasons why people choose to volunteer their time, including acquiring and developing personal skills. Gaining experience is particularly important, and significant numbers of immigrant volunteers cited the value of skill development, mainly related to getting into the Canadian labour market.

According to the 2000 NSGVP, a majority of immigrants said volunteering provided them with increased interpersonal skills (79%), communication skills (67%), substantive knowledge (64%), and managerial skills (58%). Recent immigrants, in particular, identified building substantive knowledge and enhancing managerial skills as two key benefits they received from volunteering.

One-third of immigrant volunteers (30%) – somewhat less than the proportion of Canadian-born volunteers (39%) – said volunteering had improved their ability to perform their job through the acquisition of new skills. Similarly, 33% said volunteering had helped their chances of success in their current job. In addition, 16% said volunteering had helped them to obtain employment – two percentage points higher than among Canadian-born volunteers.

<sup>33</sup> Daya and de Long, p. 35.

<sup>34</sup> By contrast, recent immigrants who were non-volunteers were more likely to report no interest in volunteering. This suggests that once immigrants start to volunteer they are quickly engaged, but they need support to sustain and increase their participation – as do all volunteers.

Generally, both immigrant and Canadian-born volunteers derive the same sorts of benefits from volunteer activities, not least of which is the opportunity to develop connections with community members and enhance their employment opportunities. According to a report by Volunteer Victoria,

“a volunteer job can be the first step; the social contact helps to rebuild self-esteem. The feeling of making a contribution is an important aspect of the connection. [The people we work with] want to be active. To feel as though they are contributing goes a long way to easing the isolation.”<sup>35</sup>

## Summary

- The rate of volunteering has increased among both immigrants and Canadian-born citizens. In 2003, 29% of immigrants volunteered with a charitable or nonprofit organization.
- Immigrants are most likely to volunteer for cultural, sports and recreational groups; development and housing organizations; and religious organizations.
- Rates of volunteering are highest among working-age adults. Seniors who volunteer give extensively of their time. Between 2000 and 2003, the largest increase in volunteer rates was among young immigrants aged 15 to 24.
- The overwhelming majority of immigrants volunteer in order to help a cause. Most immigrants see volunteering as a way to develop and use their talents and expertise.
- Immigrants are more likely than Canadian-born to see volunteering as a way to help secure employment.
- Lack of time is the biggest barrier to volunteering, particularly among immigrants who have lived in Canada for less than 16 years. Interest in volunteering is high, but immigrants are more likely to cite not being personally asked and not knowing how to become involved as barriers to their participation.

<sup>35</sup> Wendy Barbulak. “Connecting volunteers with your community: A research project for Volunteer Victoria,” Volunteer Victoria, 2003. Cited in Daya and de Long, p. 20.



# GIVING AMONG IMMIGRANTS

The vast majority of Canadians make charitable gifts, either directly to individuals or to organizations working to improve the quality of life in their communities. This is certainly true of immigrants to Canada. This section looks at the patterns of giving among immigrants, the extent of their charitable giving, the amounts donated, and the profile of those donors. We also examine the reasons for and barriers to charitable giving.

## Providing Financial Support: How many? How much?

The majority of Canadians make donations to charitable and non-profit organizations, either financial gifts or in-kind contributions. In 2000, 82% of Canadian immigrants made such contributions. Indeed, immigrants were slightly more likely than Canadian-born residents (80%) to make a donation.<sup>36</sup>

Established immigrants had higher rates of giving. Six of 10 immigrants (60%) who had lived in Canada for less than six years made a donation to an organization or cause in 2000, compared to nine of 10 (91%) established immigrants.

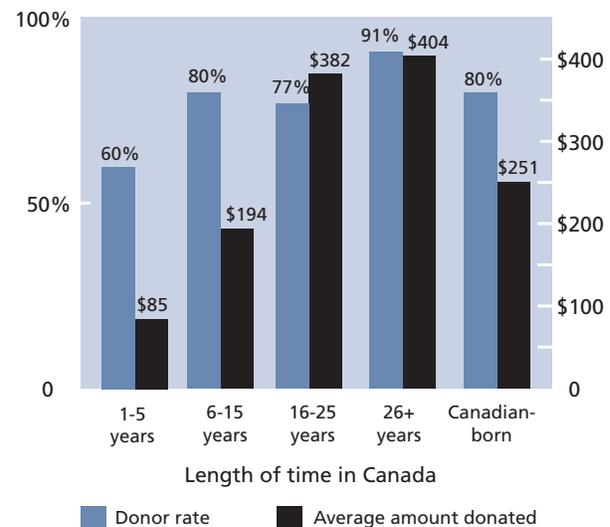
Immigrants were also more likely than Canadian-born residents to give larger donations. In 2000, immigrants made average annual donations of \$311, compared to \$251 by Canadian-born residents.<sup>37</sup> More established immigrants made larger average donations than recent immigrants. In 2000, new immigrants contributed an average of \$85 to

charitable and nonprofit organizations, while those who had lived in Canada for 26 years or more contributed an average of \$404.

According to the NSGVP, immigrants accounted for 17% of total charitable contributions in 2000 – a larger share than their proportion of the population (14%). In total, immigrants gave \$822 million.<sup>38</sup> Established immigrants contributed 58% of all monies donated by immigrants.

## Donor rate and average donation, by length of time in Canada, 2000

Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older



Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving and Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

<sup>36</sup> The 2003 General Social Survey provides some information on donations to charitable and nonprofit organizations. However, analysis has shown that the GSS under-represents the number of donors. For this reason, those data were not used in this report.

<sup>37</sup> These figures are based on the responses of actual donors. The average donations for all immigrant and Canadian-born respondents were \$254 and \$200 respectively.

<sup>38</sup> The total amount that Canadian-born respondents reported giving was \$3.9 billion.

## Where does this financial support go?

Immigrants to Canada give generously to many different charitable and nonprofit organizations, and they tend to direct their contributions to the same types of organizations as do Canadian-born respondents. For example, health charities were the first choice for charitable dollars from both groups of donors in 2000 – 62% of immigrants and 70% of Canadian-born residents gave to health-focussed organizations such as the Canadian Cancer Society.

Immigrants were much more likely than Canadian-born residents to contribute to religious organizations. Half of all immigrants surveyed gave money to churches, mosques, temples, and other types of faith groups. By comparison, 40% of Canadian-born made donations to religious organizations. Immigrants were slightly more likely to donate to international causes.

Religious institutions and health organizations were the largest beneficiaries of charitable giving among Canadian immigrants, receiving 61% and 17% respectively of total donations. Social services were the third largest beneficiaries, receiving 8% of total donations.

Annual donations to religious organizations tend to be larger than donations to other organizations. Immigrants gave an average of \$378 to religious organizations in 2000, whereas Canadian-born respondents contributed an average of \$292. Donations to international groups were also higher among immigrants: an average of \$152 compared to \$135 from Canadian-born respondents. Immigrants also donated generously to health organizations and to law, advocacy and political organizations.

### Donor rate and average donation, by type of organization, 2000

Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older

	Immigrants		Canadian-born	
	% who donated	Average donation	% who donated	Average donation
Health	62	\$88	70	\$73
Religion	50	\$378	40	\$292
Social services	45	\$54	49	\$54
Education and research	23	\$37	24	\$33
Philanthropic intermediaries and voluntarism	16	\$73	19	\$108
Culture, sports and recreation	12	\$41	18	\$52
International	8	\$152	6	\$135
Environment	6	\$51	7	\$78
Law, advocacy and politics	5	\$69	5	\$53
Other	3	\$31	3	\$91
Development and housing	*	*	2	\$51
Business and professional associations, unions	*	*	<1	\$192

\* Results suppressed due to small sample size.

Note: Respondents could select more than one type of organization.

Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

## Distribution of total donations, by type of organization, 2000

Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older

	Immigrants (%)	Canadian-born (%)
Religion	61	46
Health	17	20
Social services	8	11
International	4	3
Philanthropic intermediaries and voluntarism	4	8
Education/research	3	3
Culture/recreation	2	4
Law, advocacy and politics	1	1
Environment	1	2
Other	0	1
Development and housing	0	0
Business and professional associations, unions	0	0
Total	100	100

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

## Patterns of Giving

Patterns of giving – like all aspects of community engagement – tend to vary between different regions and among different groups of people. And given the heterogeneity of the immigrant population in Canada, there is certainly a great deal of variation within this group as well. Below, we highlight some of the similarities and differences in giving, touching on those factors known to influence the decision to donate.

### *Does giving vary by region or city of residence?*

Rates of giving among immigrants were highest in the Prairies (88%), in British Columbia (84%), and in Ontario (82%).<sup>39</sup> In this regard, the pattern of giving was quite similar to that of Canadian-born respondents.

Most immigrants live in cities and Canada's three largest cities in particular. Are there differences in rates of giving among immigrants in Canada's largest Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs)? Immigrants in

Winnipeg had the highest rate (92%) in 2000, followed by those in Vancouver (88%), and Ottawa (86%). The lowest rate of giving was among immigrants in Montreal, where 68% made financial contributions to nonprofit and charitable organizations that year.

In Vancouver, there were notable differences in the donor rate between the immigrant and Canadian-born communities. In 2000, 88% of immigrants in Vancouver made financial contributions, as did 73% of Canadian-born residents.

The patterns of donations were quite similar to the patterns of giving.<sup>40</sup> In 2000, immigrants living in the Prairies made larger average donations than the national average of all immigrants – \$484 compared to \$311.<sup>41</sup> Average donations among immigrants were lower in British Columbia and Quebec than the national immigrant average, but still larger than the average donations of their Canadian-born counterparts.

<sup>39</sup> Figures for the Atlantic region in the NSGVP were too small to report.

<sup>40</sup> All average donations presented in this report are based on the responses of donors only.

<sup>41</sup> Figures for the Atlantic region were again too small to report.

## Donor rate and average donation, by select CMAs, 2000

Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older

Select CMAs	Immigrants		Canadian-born	
	% who donated	Average donation	% who donated	Average donation
Halifax	*	*	82	\$228
Montreal	68	\$96	73	\$135
Ottawa	86	\$247	84	\$476
Toronto/ Golden Horseshoe	81	\$314	74	\$344
Winnipeg	92	\$360	84	\$370
Calgary/ Edmonton	84	\$628	86	\$317
Vancouver	88	\$286	73	\$262
Elsewhere	84	\$310	82	\$226
Average	82	\$311	79	\$251

\* Results suppressed due to small sample size.

Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

The highest average donations among immigrants in 2000 were from those living in Calgary/ Edmonton (\$628), Winnipeg (\$360), and Greater Toronto (\$314). By contrast, Canadian-born respondents living in Ottawa (\$476) and Winnipeg (\$370) made the highest average donations in 2000.

### *Does giving vary by personal characteristics?*

**Gender:** According to the 2000 NSGVP, there were slight differences in the patterns of giving between men and women. Women – both immigrant and Canadian-born – were more likely than men to donate: 85% of immigrant women and 82% of Canadian-born women made donations in 2000, compared to 78% of immigrant men and 77% of Canadian-born men. However, average annual donations among immigrant men were slightly higher than those of women – \$317 compared to \$306.

**Age:** Overall, older Canadians were more likely than younger Canadians to donate to an organization. Generally, the rate of giving and the amount donated rises with age, then drops off slightly among seniors when annual incomes tend to decline. Among immigrants surveyed for the NSGVP, the highest rate of

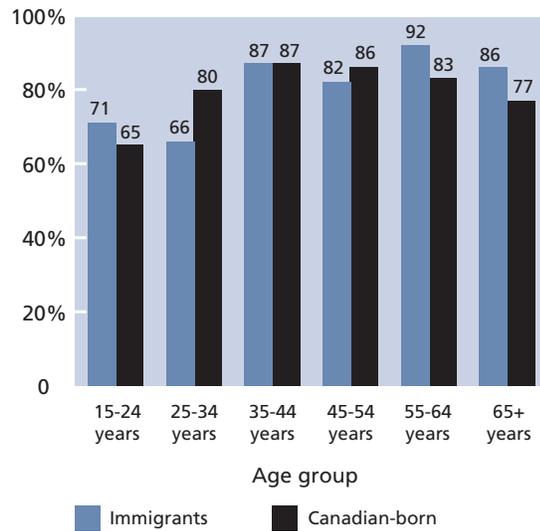
giving was among those aged 55 to 64. The rate among this group was 10 percentage points greater than the rate among immigrants aged 45 to 54, and five percentage points higher than among those aged 35 to 44. Over two-thirds of young immigrants aged 15 to 24 made financial contributions in 2000, a proportion slightly higher than among those aged 25 to 34.

The likelihood of making a financial contribution was higher among immigrants who had come to Canada at a young age. Among those who had immigrated when they were under age 20, 84% made a financial contribution to a nonprofit or charitable organization in 2000, compared to 69% among those who came to Canada as seniors over age 60.

With the exception of young people, average annual donations from immigrants were higher than those of Canadian-born respondents. Among immigrants, the average amount donated rose steeply with age, peaking at \$372 for those aged 45 to 54 (individuals in their top earning years). While a larger proportion of young people 15 to 24 years made contributions, the average amount donated was predictably much higher from those aged 25 to 34.

## Donor rate, by age group, 2000

Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older



Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving and Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

**Marital Status and Children:** Married immigrants were more likely to make financial donations (86%) than those who had never married (66%) and those who were separated, divorced or widowed (78%). The same trend was true among Canadian-born respondents. And immigrant parents with children over age six were much more likely to make donations than parents with young children (89% compared to 75%) and those without children.

Among Canadian-born respondents, the largest average donations were made by people who were separated, divorced or widowed. That was not the case among immigrants, however. On average, married immigrants contributed \$340 in 2000; those who were separated, divorced or widowed contributed \$266, and single immigrants contributed \$177.

**Religion:** Religious affiliation appears to play an important role in the decision to make financial contributions, volunteer, or to engage in community activities more generally. Those with a religious affiliation were more likely than those without such affiliation to make contributions to both religious organizations and to other charitable causes. They were also more likely to make larger contributions than those who had no religious affiliation.

That was certainly true among Canadian immigrants. Immigrants who identified themselves as Protestant, Roman Catholic, or “other” were much more likely to make contributions than those who had no religious affiliation – 96%, 83% and 78%, respectively, compared to 71%. Rates of giving and average annual donations were much higher among Protestants than among adherents to other faiths.

### *Does giving vary by education and economic characteristics?*

**Education:** Studies have shown a connection between rates of contributory behaviour and levels of education. Data from the 2000 NSGVP indicate that individuals with higher levels of education were more likely to give than those with lower levels of education – among both immigrants and Canadian-born. In 2000, three-quarters of immigrants who had less than a high school education (77%) made financial contributions, almost 10 percentage points higher than their Canadian-born counterparts. Eight of 10 immigrants with a high school education, some post-secondary, or a college diploma made contributions in 2000, while 88% of those with a university degree made donations.

Within the immigrant community, educational attainment also had an impact on the amount donated, but the differences in contributions between education levels were relatively small compared to their Canadian-born counterparts. There was a \$364 difference between donations from Canadian-born respondents with less than a high school education and those with a university degree. By contrast, the difference between these two groups of immigrants was only \$161. Immigrants with lower levels of education tended to make higher annual donations, on average, than Canadian-born respondents, while immigrants with higher levels of education tended to contribute less than their Canadian-born counterparts.

**Employment Status:** Among immigrants surveyed for the 2000 NSGVP, there was not a great deal of difference in the rates of giving between those with paid employment and those without. By contrast, Canadian-born full-time workers were more likely to donate than part-time workers or those without employment.

**Occupation:** Canadian-born respondents who identified themselves as professionals were more likely to make financial contributions than Canadian-born donors in other occupations. Among immigrants, managers or administrators were the most likely to donate (94%) by a wide margin over other occupational groups. “Other white-collar” immigrant workers – including supervisors, senior clerical workers, and sales and service personnel – were the least likely to contribute (75%).

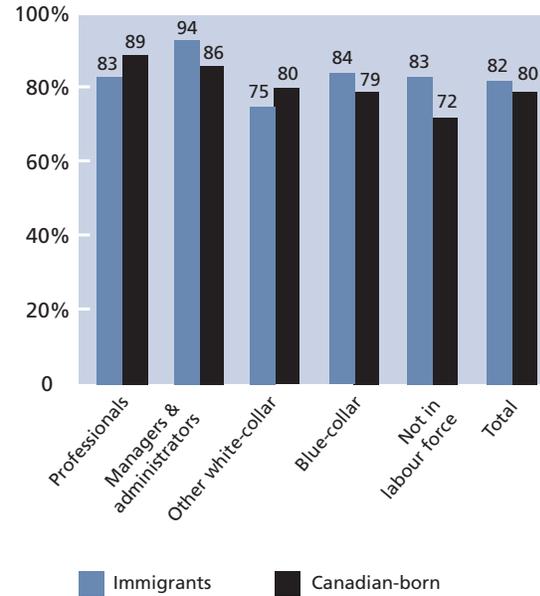
Among immigrants, managers made the highest average donations (\$505), while blue-collar workers made the lowest (\$195).

**Household Income:** Higher income was also associated with higher levels of giving and higher average donations. In 2000, the proportion of immigrants who made donations ranged from 68% among those with household incomes under \$20,000, to 93% among those with household incomes over \$80,000 per year.

Average annual donations were roughly three times larger among high-income households compared to low-income households. Among immigrants, however, the pattern of increases was uneven. In particular, there was a steep increase in the average amount donated between households with incomes under \$80,000 per year and those with incomes over \$80,000.

### Donor rate, by occupation, 2000

Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older



Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving and Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

### Reasons for donating to charitable and nonprofit causes

People choose to donate to charitable organizations for many different reasons. Certainly personal beliefs about giving play an important role. As well, knowledge about the work of charitable organizations, and personal experience with an issue, religious beliefs, and level of economic security are all significant factors in patterns of giving.

### Donor rate and average donation, by household income, 2000

Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older, donors only

Household income	Immigrants		Canadian-born	
	% who donated	Average donation	% who donated	Average donation
Less than \$20,000	68	\$172	62	\$137
\$20,000 to \$39,999	79	\$225	75	\$164
\$40,000 to \$59,999	80	\$260	81	\$184
\$60,000 to \$79,999	84	\$261	86	\$226
\$80,000+	93	\$500	89	\$448
Total	82	\$311	80	\$251

Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

The 2000 NSGVP provides some insights into this issue through a series of questions to both donors and non-donors. The overwhelming majority of both immigrant and Canadian-born donors said they made financial donations because of “compassion for other people in need” (94% of all immigrant donors). Similarly, 91% said they were motivated by the specific cause. Established immigrants were more likely than recent immigrants (those living in Canada for less than six years) to cite the cause of an organization as a motivating factor.

A significant proportion of immigrants – and established immigrants in particular – said they believed that they owed something to their community: 62% among immigrants overall and 69% among established immigrants. Immigrants were much more likely than Canadian-born respondents to say they made donations to charitable or nonprofit organizations in order to fulfill their religious obligations or beliefs (47% of immigrant donors, compared to 28% of Canadian-born donors). Given the high rates of religious affiliation among immigrants, this result is not surprising.

## Barriers to giving among non-donors

Immigrants and Canadian-born respondents cite the same types of issues as barriers to giving, and economic concerns figure prominently. Six of ten immigrants (60%) who did not donate to an organization said they were saving money for their own future needs; over half (54%) said they preferred to spend their money in other ways. Immigrants who had lived in Canada for 16 to 25 years were most likely to cite economic constraints as a barrier to giving. Given the higher rates of low income among recent immigrants, economic concerns may well be understated in this group.<sup>42</sup>

A significant proportion of immigrants who did not donate (41%) expressed concerns about how efficiently donations were used by organizations requesting funds, and 32% said they did not like the ways in which funding requests were made.

Almost four of 10 (37%) said they preferred to give money directly to people in need of assistance and thus, didn’t tend to make financial contributions to charitable or nonprofit organizations. This was particularly true among immigrants who had been in Canada for 6 to 15 years. One-quarter (26%) said they choose to volunteer instead; 45% of immigrants living in Canada for 16 to 25 years made this claim.

### Reasons given for donating, 2000

Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older

	Immigrants (%)	Canadian-born (%)
Compassion for people in need	93	94
Cause in which you believe	91	91
Owe your community	62	58
Know someone personally affected	61	70
Fulfill religious obligations	47	28
Credit on income tax	14	13

Note: Respondents could select more than one reason.

Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

<sup>42</sup> A significantly smaller proportion of recent immigrants than more established immigrants noted that “saving money for their own future needs” was a constraint to giving. Similarly, there was a large gap between the responses of recent immigrants and more established immigrants with regard to preferring to spend money in other ways: 31% of recent immigrants cited this as a barrier to giving, compared to 91% of immigrants who had lived in Canada for 16 to 25 years.

More immigrants than Canadian-born respondents said they didn't make financial contributions because they didn't know where to contribute (22% and 15% respectively) or they found it hard to find a worthy cause (25% compared to 21%). This finding points

to a potential disconnect between prospective donors within different immigrant communities and the charitable and nonprofit organizations working in those communities.

### Barriers to donating, 2000

Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older, non-donors only

	Immigrants (%)	Canadian-born (%)
Saving money for own future needs	60	60
Prefer to spend money in other ways	54	54
Think money will not be used efficiently	41	40
Give enough money directly to people	37	26
Dislike way requests made	32	30
Volunteer instead	26	24
Hard to find a worthy cause	25	21
Do not know where to contribute	22	15

Note: Respondents could select more than one barrier.

Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

## Summary

- Immigrants to Canada are generous donors.
- Age and religious affiliation are important factors in explaining the patterns of giving.
- Level of education also appears to influence giving, but not in predictable ways. While higher educational attainment is linked to higher rates of giving, the differences among those with different levels of education are not large.
- Health organizations are the first choice for charitable giving among immigrants. Religious organizations are the second: half of all immigrants surveyed made financial contributions to religious groups, a higher rate than among Canadian-born respondents.
- Immigrant and Canadian-born donors donate for similar reasons, notably compassion for other people in need. Immigrant donors are more likely to be motivated by religious obligations or beliefs.
- The number one barrier to giving among both immigrant and Canadian-born respondents who do not donate is the desire to save funds for future personal needs.



# GROUP MEMBERSHIP

A third way in which Canadians support others and their communities is by joining nonprofit and charitable organizations and participating in their work. In this section, we look at the prevalence of these kinds of activities among immigrants.

## How many immigrants join nonprofit and voluntary organizations?

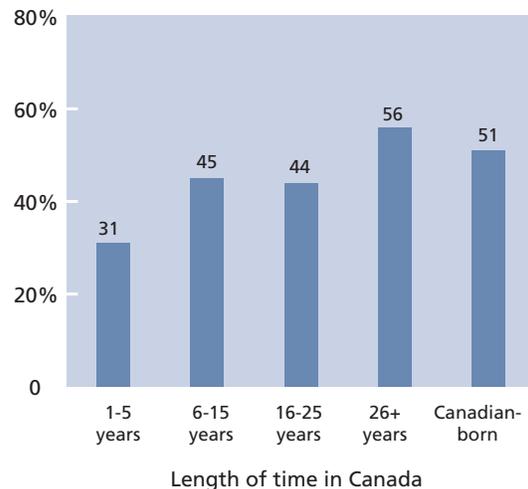
Immigrants were active in organizations and groups across the country.<sup>43</sup> In 2000, just under half of all immigrants (48%) were members of an organization, group, or club, including unions. (The rate among Canadian-born respondents was 51%.) In 2003, 56% of immigrants said they were a member of a group or association, signally a trend towards higher levels of community participation.

Over time, immigrants join organizations in greater numbers: 31% of recent immigrants (those living in Canada for less than six years) were members of voluntary organizations, compared with 56% of immigrants who had been in Canada for more than 26 years.<sup>44</sup> However, the 2003 GSS reveals that recent immigrants played a significant role in pushing up levels of community participation: while levels of participation were higher among more established immigrants, just under half of recent immigrants (46%) reported being a member of a group, a significant increase from 2000.

This general pattern is similar to findings from the 2002 *Ethnic Diversity Survey*. About one-third of immigrants who arrived in Canada in the 1990s said they had been members of or had taken part in the activities of at least one group. Among those who had arrived during the 1980s, the figure was 37%, and among those who arrived before 1981, the rate was 41%. The membership rate among second- and third-plus generation Canadians was 49% and 48% respectively.<sup>45</sup>

### Membership in organizations, by length of time in Canada, 2000

Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older



Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving and Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

<sup>43</sup> Respondents were asked whether or not they were a member or participant in eight different types of organizations, including a work-related organization such as a union or professional association; fraternal association or service club like the Knights of Columbus, the Legion, etc.; a political organization; a cultural, educational or hobby organization (such as a book club, theatre group, choir, etc.); a sports or recreation organization (cricket club, soccer, etc.); a religious-affiliated group (youth group with a church, temple, choir, etc.); a school group, neighbourhood, civic or community association (parent council, etc.); and other organization (like Guides, self-help groups, etc.).

<sup>44</sup> According to the 2003 GSS, the membership rate among recent immigrants was 46%; among immigrants who had lived in Canada for six to 15 years, it was 54%; among those living in Canada for 16 to 25 years, it was 56%; and 60% among those who had lived in Canada for over 26 years.

<sup>45</sup> Statistics Canada. *Ethnic Diversity Survey: Portrait of a multicultural society*, 2003. Catalogue No. 89-593-XIE: 13.

## Which kinds of organizations do they join?

Canadians overall join a variety of organizations. The most common are work-related groups, including professional associations and unions, and sports groups.<sup>46</sup> One of five Canadians (22%) were members of work-related organizations in 2000, while 19% were members of sports or recreational clubs. Immigrants were less likely than Canadian-born respondents to be members of work-related organizations (17% compared to 22%). That was also true

with regard to sports organizations: 12% of immigrants were members, compared to 19% of Canadian-born respondents.<sup>47</sup>

Immigrants were much more likely to be members of religiously affiliated groups: 19% compared to 12% of Canadian-born respondents. Membership in religious organizations was highest among established immigrants. In addition, 8% of immigrants were involved with a neighbourhood, community, or civic association, and 6% were involved with service clubs or fraternal organizations.<sup>48</sup>

### Ethnic and Immigrant Associations

According to the Ethnic Diversity Survey (EDS), rates of participation in ethnic or immigrant associations are highest among first-generation immigrants. In 2002, about 6% of first-generation immigrants participated in these types of associations, many of which offer settlement services. The membership rate was much lower among second-generation (2%) and third-generation immigrants (1%).<sup>49</sup>

### Membership by type of organization, 2000

Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older

Organization type	Immigrants (%)	Canadian-born (%)
Religious	19	12
Work-related (unions, professional assoc.)	17	22
Sports or recreation	12	19
Cultural, educational or hobby	9	10
Neighbourhood or community	8	10
Fraternal or service club	6	8
Political	3	4
Other	2	2

Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

<sup>46</sup> Membership in a union has been included in this definition of civic participation. Although a person doesn't necessarily choose to join a union, the presence of a union is a feature of employment in selected workplaces.

<sup>47</sup> The EDS also asked about membership in community groups. According to the EDS, 12% of first-generation immigrants were members of sport clubs or teams, 8% were members of hobby, arts, dance or cultural groups, 8% were members of religious-affiliated groups, roughly 6% were members of community organizations and ethnic/ immigrant associations, and about 3% were members of service clubs or other charitable organizations. Statistics Canada. *Ethnic Diversity Survey*, 2003: 14.

<sup>48</sup> The GSS used a different question to identify the types of groups people elected to join. According to the GSS, 21% of immigrants were members of unions or professional associations; 5% were members of political parties; 22% were members of sports or recreation clubs; 19% were members of cultural, educational or hobby groups; 22% were members of religious groups; 16% participated in school, neighbourhood or community groups; 5% joined service clubs or fraternal organizations; and 4% were members of other types of groups.

<sup>49</sup> Statistics Canada. *Ethnic Diversity Survey*, 2003: 14.

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## Who do immigrants meet through voluntary organizations?

In the 2003 General Social Survey, participants were asked about the people they met through voluntary organizations. There were some interesting similarities and differences between the responses given by immigrants and Canadian-born residents.

Immigrants said the people they met through groups – either as volunteers or members – tended to be in their same age group: roughly two-thirds (65%) said that all, most or about half of the people they met were around their age. The people they met also tended to have similar levels of education and family income: 77% had about the same level of education and 75% came from families with similar incomes. Canadian-born respondents also said they tended to associate with people of the same age, education, and income level.

Immigrants were somewhat less likely to join groups of the same gender: 14% of immigrants and 19% of Canadian-born respondents said they joined groups where all the members were either men or women. However, about half of each group of respondents said they met both men and women through the groups they joined.

Immigrants were more likely to be involved with groups where people were visibly different from their own ethnic group. For instance, one-quarter of immigrants (24%) were involved in ethno-specific community organizations; among Canadian-born respondents, one-third (32%) were involved with groups where no one was visibly different from others. Most respondents – both immigrant and Canadian-born – noted that they met “a few” people through their community activities who were visibly different from themselves. However, 23% of immigrants said they were involved in groups where “all” or “most” people were from different ethnocultural groups. Among Canadian-born respondents, the figure was 7%.

Similarly, immigrants were more likely to be involved in groups where other members did not speak the same mother tongue. One in five immigrants (19%), compared to 3% of Canadian-born respondents, said the people they met through groups did not speak their mother tongue. In turn, 40% of Canadian-born respondents said that all the people they met spoke their native language, compared to 20% among immigrants.

In summary, many immigrants are involved in organizations which bring together people from specific ethno-cultural groups and who speak the same mother tongue. At the same time, others are engaged in “cross-cultural” groups where all, most, or about half of the members are visibly different from their own ethnic group.

## Patterns of Group Membership

### *Does membership vary by region or city?*

Immigrants living in British Columbia had the highest rates of membership in organizations (58%), followed by immigrants in the Prairies (51%), and in Ontario (49%).<sup>50</sup> Among Canadian-born respondents, those in the Prairies and in British Columbia had the highest membership rates. In Québec, immigrants were significantly less likely to be members of organizations (at 22%), in comparison to Canadian-born respondents in Québec and immigrants elsewhere.

In 2003, immigrants living in the Atlantic region had the highest rate of membership in community groups and organizations. Overall, the general pattern of membership was the same as in 2000, but the rate among Quebec immigrants was 20 percentage points higher in 2003. Going across the country, 62% of immigrants living in Atlantic Canada were members of organizations, as were 48% of immigrants in Quebec, 55% of those living in Ontario, 59% of immigrants in the Prairies, and 60% of those living in British Columbia.

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<sup>50</sup> The sample size for immigrants in the Atlantic region was too small for analysis.

### Membership rate, by region, 2000

Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older

	Immigrants (%)	Canadian-born (%)
Atlantic	*	53
Quebec	22	42
Ontario	49	50
Prairies	51	61
BC	58	59
Canada	48	51

\* Results suppressed due to small sample size.

Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

In Canada's largest cities, immigrants living in Vancouver had the highest levels of membership participation (54%), followed by those living in Calgary/Edmonton (51%). There were notable differences in membership rates between immigrants and Canadian-born respondents in some cities. In Montréal and Winnipeg, for example, membership rates among immigrants were much lower than those of Canadian-born respondents. In Toronto and Vancouver, the rates of immigrants and Canadian-born were roughly the same. It is interesting to note that immigrants living outside the major urban centres had a higher membership rate (57%) than those living in the big cities.

#### *Does membership vary by personal characteristics?*

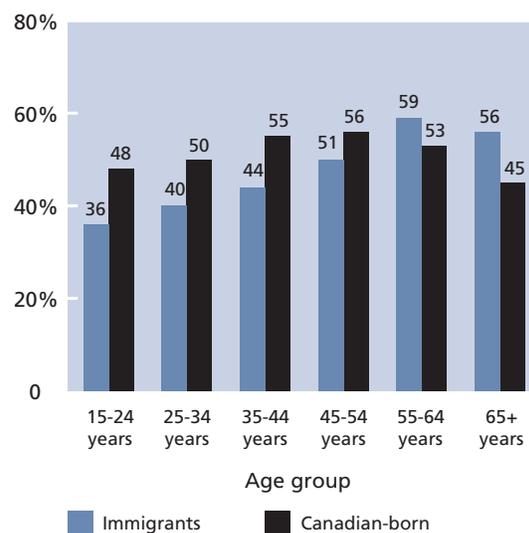
Below, we look at the distinctive patterns of community engagement among Canada's immigrants.

**Gender:** Among Canadian-born residents, men had higher membership participation rates than women. According to the NSGVP, however, no real differences were found between the membership rates of immigrant men and women. The 2003 GSS suggests that membership levels were higher among immigrant men than women: 58% compared to 53%.

**Age:** Overall among immigrants, the likelihood of joining an organization or group increased with age, then declined slightly as people reached age 65. Just over one-third (36%) of immigrant youth aged 15 to 24 were members of groups in 2000, compared to 59% of immigrants aged 55 to 64. Canadian-born respondents had generally higher rates of membership, with the exception of adults aged 55 to 64.<sup>51</sup>

### Membership rate, by age group, 2000

Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older



Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving and Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

<sup>51</sup> The 2003 GSS data showed relatively high rates of membership for Canadian-born respondents, with the highest rate among those aged 35-44 (67%). Membership rates for immigrant respondents were: 62% among youth; 48% among those aged 25-34; 57% among those aged 35-44; 59% among those aged 45-54; 61% among those aged 55-64; and 49% among those aged 65+.

By 2003, the membership rate among immigrant youth had risen considerably. That year, 62% of immigrants aged 15 to 24 said they were involved with community groups or organizations. In fact, their membership rate was as high as that of immigrants aged 55 to 64. This finding needs to be explored in further detail.

Age at immigration appeared to have an impact. In 2000, the likelihood of joining organizations was highest – at 55% – among those who had come to Canada as adults (40 to 49 years of age). Among those who had immigrated as children or young adults, the membership participation rate was about 47%.

**Marital Status and Children:** Marital status had no significant impact on immigrants’ membership rates, although the rate was slightly higher among married immigrants. In 2000, 49% of married immigrants were members of community groups or organizations, compared to 46% of those who were single, and 44% of those who were separated, divorced or widowed. By 2003, the membership rate was slightly higher among unmarried immigrants (59%), compared to 56% among married individuals and 52% among those who were separated, divorced or widowed.

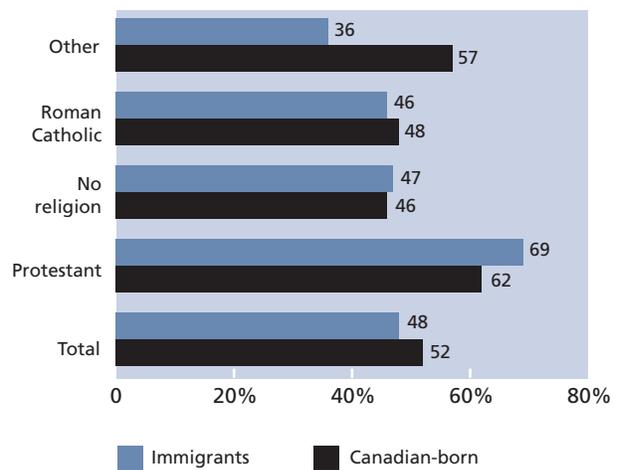
The presence of children was linked to lower rates of membership. Among immigrant parents of young children, 34% were members of groups or organizations, while that was true of 50% of immigrant parents who did not have young children. Among Canadian-born parents, there were no differences when they had young children, but they were more likely to participate in groups or organizations if they had older children.

According to the 2003 GSS, the gap in membership rates was not as large between immigrants with young children and those without. Again, immigrants with children aged 5 to 24 were more likely to be group members than those without children in this age group.<sup>52</sup>

**Religion:** There were very large differences in the membership rates between immigrants of the Protestant faith and those who identified no religion or another religion. In 2000, Protestant immigrants were much more likely to be members of nonprofit or community organizations, compared to Roman Catholic immigrants, followers of other religions, or those who had no religious affiliation. Those who followed other religions, including a significant proportion of new immigrants, were less likely to be members of or participate in voluntary organizations than their Canadian-born counterparts and other immigrants.

### Membership rate, by religious affiliation, 2000

Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older



Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving and Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

These differences in membership rates were not as evident in 2003. In particular, a larger proportion of immigrants identifying “other” religious faiths (48%) reported being members of groups or associations.<sup>53</sup>

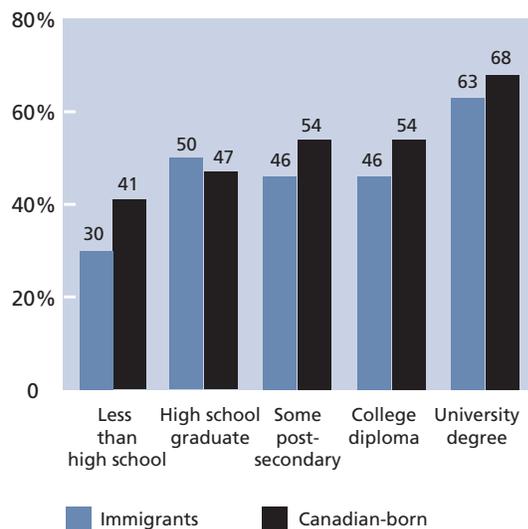
<sup>52</sup> Among immigrants, the membership rate was 50% for those with young children aged 0 to 4, and 57% for those with no children in this age group. Among immigrant parents with children aged five to 24, 58% were members of groups or organizations, compared to 54% of those without children of that age.

<sup>53</sup> The membership rate was 68% among immigrants who identified themselves as Protestants, 54% among those who were Roman Catholic, and 54% among those who did not identify a religious affiliation.

***Does membership vary by education or economic characteristics?***

**Education:** For all Canadians, education appears to be associated with membership rates. The range was most varied among immigrants: from 30% for those with less than a high school education, to 63% among those with a university degree.

**Membership rate, by level of education, 2000**  
Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older



Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving and Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

According to the GSS, this gap was slightly smaller by 2003. Membership rates among immigrants ranged from 43% for those with less than a high school education, 44% of those with a high school diploma, 57% for those with some post-secondary training or a college diploma, and 67% among immigrants with a university degree.

**Employment Status:** Working, either part-time or full-time, increased the likelihood of people being members of a voluntary organization, especially for Canadian-born residents. This was true in both 2000 and 2003. Among immigrants in 2000, half of those who were engaged in the paid labour force were members of an organization, including unions and professional associations. By 2003, 59% of immigrants who were working full-time and two-thirds of those working part-time were members of organizations or groups.

**Occupation:** Seven of 10 immigrant professionals were involved with voluntary organizations in 2000, making them by far the most likely occupational group in terms of membership participation. Immigrants in blue-collar occupations had a membership rate of 43%, and immigrants in other white-collar occupations had the lowest rate (40%).

In 2003, professionals again had the highest membership rate at 76%, followed by managers and administrators at 63%. Immigrants with no occupation had the lowest membership rate (46%). By 2003, the membership rate was much higher among other white-collar workers (58%), and 50% of immigrants in blue-collar occupations were members of community groups or organizations.

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**Household Income:** Again, there appears to be a definite association between household income and membership rates, both for immigrants and Canadian-born respondents. In both 2000 and 2003, as income rose, so too did membership rates. According to data in the 2000 NSGVP, the differences were quite substantial, ranging from 29% of

immigrants with incomes under \$20,000, to 61% among those with incomes over \$80,000. By 2003, overall membership rates were higher for all income groups, but the gap had narrowed: 45% of low-income immigrants were involved in organizations, compared to 71% of immigrants in households with incomes over \$80,000.

## Summary

- Just under half of Canada's immigrants are active in community organizations or groups.
- Immigrants are most likely to join work-related groups (including unions), sports cultural or recreational groups, or religious organizations/ congregations.
- A number of personal characteristics affect patterns of group membership, including the individual's religious affiliation, their educational attainment, employment status, occupation, and household income.



# CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Exercising one's right to vote and following developments in the news and current affairs are considered to be measures of civic participation and inclusion in society. In this section, we look at the prevalence of these activities among immigrants and detail the characteristics of those who take an active interest in political life.

## Voting

Voting is perhaps the most obvious outward sign of a person's interest in the civic life of their community. As a result, political scholars and practitioners have a great deal of interest in the political participation of Canadian immigrants.<sup>54</sup>

Numerous studies have looked at the prevalence of voting among immigrants, their patterns of partisan loyalty, their direct participation in elections, their involvement with political parties, and so forth. A key question underlying these inquiries is whether there are significant differences in political participation between Canadian-born and immigrants, and what is the role that ethnic identity and immigrant status plays in explaining patterns of political engagement.

While the evidence is mixed, studies reveal that many immigrants demonstrate a high interest in and knowledge of Canadian political affairs, particularly among "elites." And over time, disparities in political activity – as measured by such things as voting rates, attendance at political meetings, involvement with civic organizations, and familiarity with public affairs – diminish.<sup>55</sup>

Indeed, Chui, Curtis and Lambert found that political involvement tends to peak among second-generation immigrants with respect to almost all measures of political participation.<sup>56</sup> According to their study, first-generation immigrants tend to be more preoccupied with economic survival, affordable housing, language training, and settlement issues.

### *How many immigrants vote?*

According to the 2000 NSGVP, two-thirds of immigrants (64%) said they had voted in a recent federal, provincial, or municipal election.<sup>57</sup> By comparison, 76% of Canadian-born respondents said they had voted in a previous election. In 2003, this gap in voting rates was more pronounced. According to the 2003 GSS, 58% of immigrants had voted in a recent federal, provincial or municipal election, as had 80%

<sup>54</sup> For an excellent review of this literature, see Daiva Stasiulus, "Participation by Immigrants, Ethnocultural/ Visible Minorities in the Canadian Political Process," Second National Metropolis Conference on Immigrants and Civic Participation: Contemporary Policy and Research Issues, November 1997. [canada.metropolis.net/events/civic/dstasiulis\\_e.html](http://canada.metropolis.net/events/civic/dstasiulis_e.html)

<sup>55</sup> Jerome Black. "The practice of politics in two settings: Political transferability among recent immigrants to Canada," in *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 20, No. 4: 731-753, 1987; Jerome Black. "Ethnic minorities and mass politics in Canada: Some observations in the Toronto setting," in *International Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 3, Spring: 129-151, 1987; Carolle Simard. "Visible minorities and the Canadian political system," in Kathy Megyery, ed. *Ethno-cultural Groups and Visible Minorities in Canadian Politics: The Question of Access*, Vol. 7 of Research Studies, Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing. Toronto: Dundurn Press: 161-261, 1991.

<sup>56</sup> Tina Chui; James Curtis; and Ronald Lambert. "Immigrant background and political participation: Examining generational patterns," in *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 16, No. 4: 375-397, 1991.

<sup>57</sup> Respondents were asked whether they had voted in the last federal, provincial or local election. The figures above include anyone who indicated that they had voted in at least one election.

of Canadian-born respondents. The gap in voting rates between the two groups will be a key indicator to monitor going forward.

According to the 2000 NSGVP, 60% of immigrants and 77% of Canadian-born respondents had voted in the November federal election that year. In data from the 2003 GSS, slightly fewer immigrants (55%) and Canadian-born respondents (75%) reported voting in the 2000 election.<sup>58</sup>

### Voting rate, by length of time in Canada, 2000

Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older

Length of time in Canada	Voting rate (%)
1 to 5 years	*
6 to 15 years	55
16 to 25 years	72
26+ years	82
Canadian-born	77

\* Results suppressed due to small sample size.

Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

Other studies of political participation have revealed that the likelihood of voting increases the longer someone lives in Canada. While the sample size in the NSGVP was too small to allow reporting on the voting rate among new immigrants (those who had lived in Canada for less than six years), there were increases in the voting rates of those who had lived in Canada for six to 15 years (55%), 16 to 25 years (72%), and 26 years or more (82%).

In 2003, the impact of tenure in Canada was even more pronounced. The voting rate was 5% among immigrants who had lived in Canada for less than six years, 43% among those who had lived here for six to 15 years, 67% among those living here for 16 to 25 years, and 80% among those who had lived in Canada for more than 25 years.<sup>59,60</sup> It is important to keep in mind that only citizens of Canada are allowed to vote in Canadian elections, and immigrants must wait at least three years before applying for citizenship. The majority of immigrants take out citizenship when they are eligible to do so.

## Patterns of Voting

### *Do voting patterns vary by region or city?*

There were no appreciable differences in the voting rates among immigrants from different regions of Canada, according to the 2000 NSGVP.<sup>61</sup> About two-thirds of immigrants in the Atlantic region, Ontario, and Quebec – 67%, 66%, and 65% respectively – said they had voted in a recent election. Among immigrants in British Columbia, 62% had voted, as had 61% of those living in the Prairies.<sup>62</sup>

However, differences in voting rates were evident in 2003. Immigrants from the Atlantic region had the highest votes rates (65%), followed by those in Quebec (61%), Ontario (60%), and the Prairies (60%). Just over half of immigrants in British Columbia (52%) said they had voted, a notable difference from the 2000 NSGVP results.

<sup>58</sup> Survey findings on voting rates, which are self-reported, tend to be higher than actual rates of voter turnout. According to Elections Canada, 61.2% of eligible voters cast ballots in the November 2000 federal election. Fewer immigrants do vote, but the magnitude of the difference with Canadian-born respondents is difficult to determine based on this self-reported data. According to the 2002 *Ethnic Diversity Survey*, the voting rate is much higher among first-generation immigrants than was reported in the NSGVP and the GSS: eight of 10 first-generation immigrants reported voting in the last federal election.

<sup>59</sup> According to the 2002 EDS, close to 90% of established immigrants (arrived in Canada before 1961) voted in the 2000 federal election, compared to 53% of immigrants who came to Canada after 1991.

<sup>60</sup> In another study, Chui et al. found that political involvement tends to peak in the second generation with respect to all measures of political participation, including voting (Chui, Curtis and Lambert, 1991).

<sup>61</sup> In the NSGVP, the sample of immigrants surveyed from the Atlantic region was very small. As a result, estimates on voting were not available.

<sup>62</sup> Immigrants from Winnipeg voted in greater numbers (74%) than those living in other major Canadian cities, according to the 2000 NSGVP. Two-thirds of immigrants in the greater Toronto area (65%) said they had voted in a recent election, while the rate was only slightly less in Montreal (63%). Just over half of the immigrants in Vancouver (54%) and Calgary/Edmonton (53%) had voted in a recent election. The sample size of immigrants from Halifax and Ottawa was too small to generate reliable estimates.

### Voting rate, by region, 2000

Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older

	Immigrants (%)	Canadian-born (%)
Atlantic	67	80
Quebec	65	86
Ontario	66	73
Prairies	61	73
British Columbia	62	72
Canada	64	76

Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

### Do voting patterns vary by personal characteristics?

**Gender:** According to the 2000 NSGVP, there was a gap in voting rates between immigrant men and women: 67% of immigrant men said they had voted in a recent election, compared to 61% of women. There was no difference in the 2003 GSS data: 58% of immigrant men and women reported voting.

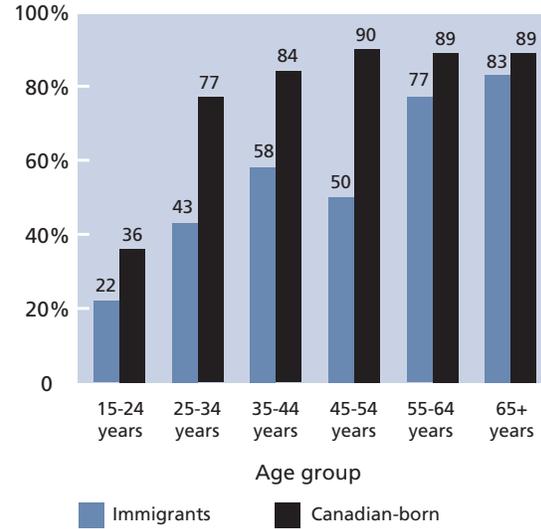
**Age:** As was found with duration of time in Canada, voting rates also increased with age. The highest voting rates were among immigrant seniors (83%). Rates among immigrant youth (22%) and young adults (43%) were very low in comparison to their Canadian-born peers (36% and 77% respectively). However, immigrants who came to Canada as young adults (aged 20 to 39) voted in greater numbers than those who had immigrated as older adults.

In 2003, the general pattern of voting by age was the same: older immigrants were much more likely to vote than younger ones. However, notably fewer young adults aged 25 to 34 and immigrants aged 35 to 44 reported voting in 2003 (32% and 53% respectively) compared to the 2000 NSGVP results.

Clearly, it is differences in the voting rates between immigrants and Canadian-born respondents that is of greatest concern, particularly because the immigrant population tends to be younger than the Canadian-born population. In 2003, the differences were again more pronounced, with 22% of immigrant youth

### Voting rate, by age group, 2000

Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older



Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving and Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

(15 to 24 years), 32% of young adults (25 to 34 years), and 53% of adults aged 35 to 44 reporting having voted in a recent election. Comparable rates among Canadian-born citizens were 48%, 71%, and 83% respectively.

**Marital Status:** Marital status had an impact on voting rates. About two-thirds of married immigrants (69%) and those who were separated, divorced or widowed (66%) said they had voted in a recent election, according to the 2000 NSGVP. Only 39% of single individuals said they had voted recently.

The pattern was slightly different in 2003, when 71% of immigrants who were separated, divorced or widowed had voted in a recent election, compared to 62% of married immigrants, and 37% of single individuals.

**Children:** According to the 2000 NSGVP, voting rates among immigrant parents with young children (under age five) were much lower than those with older children or those without children – 49% compared to 67%. Immigrant parents with older children (over age six) had higher rates of voting than

those with young children or those without children: 67% compared to 62%.<sup>63</sup> The same pattern was evident in the 2003 GSS, however there was little difference in the voting rates of immigrant parents with children aged 5 to 24 and those without children in this age group: 58% compared to 59%.<sup>64</sup>

**Religion:** Religious affiliation appears to be linked to higher rates of voting. In 2000, three-quarters of immigrants who identified themselves as Roman Catholic (76%) or Protestant (74%) voted in a recent election. The voting rate was lower among immigrants affiliated with other faiths (50%). This latter group includes a large number of new immigrants who tend to have lower rates of voting, as noted earlier.

In 2003, Roman Catholic immigrants again had comparatively high voting rates compared to immigrants of other faith groups: 65% compared to 61% among Protestant immigrants and 54% of immigrants from other religious groups.

### *Does voting vary by education or economic characteristics?*

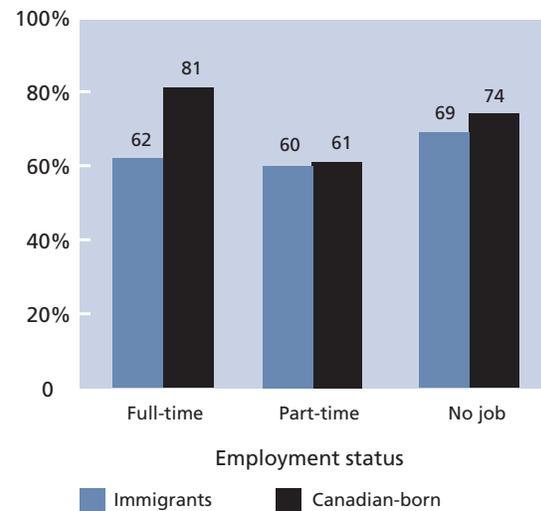
**Education:** Like many other indicators of community engagement, voting rates were linked to educational attainment. Among Canadian-born voters in 2000, there was a linear progression in voting rates from those with less than a high school education (62%) to those with a university degree (88%). Among immigrants, voting rates increased with education, but the highest rates were among those with a college diploma (71%). The voting rate among university graduates was eight percentage points less, at 63%.

In 2003, immigrants with a university degree were again less likely to vote than those with a college diploma (53% compared to 62%). They were also less likely than immigrants with a high school education and those who had not completed high school (65%) to have voted, according to data in the 2003 GSS. These findings bear further exploration.

**Employment Status:** In 2000, immigrants without employment had the highest voting rates (69%), compared to those with full-time (62%) or part-time employment (60%). The comparable figures for 2003 were 64%, 56%, and 52% respectively. One possible explanation for these results is that a sizeable proportion of immigrant seniors – with high voting rates – are included in the group categorized as “not in the labour force.”

**Occupation:** Voting rates did not vary significantly by occupational status. Indeed, immigrants who did not claim any particular occupation had the highest voting rates in both 2000 and 2003, followed by those who identified themselves as professionals or managers/ administrators.<sup>65</sup>

**Voting rate, by employment status, 2000**  
Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older



Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving and Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

<sup>63</sup> See Footnote 22.

<sup>64</sup> According to the 2003 GSS, 39% of immigrant parents with children under age five had voted in a recent election, compared to 61% of immigrants without children in this age group.

<sup>65</sup> Data from 2000 indicated the following voting rates: professionals: 67%; managers: 68%; other white-collar: 59%; blue-collar: 60%; no occupation: 69%. Figures for 2003 were: professionals: 59%; managers: 62%; other white-collar: 54%; blue-collar: 53%; no occupation: 64%.

### Voting rate, by household income, 2000

Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older

Household income	Immigrants (%)	Canadian-born (%)
Less than \$20,000	55	71
\$20,000 to \$39,999	65	75
\$40,000 to \$59,999	61	78
\$60,000 to \$79,999	60	76
\$80,000+	74	79

Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

**Household Income:** Household income is usually linked to political participation. Among Canadian-born respondents in 2000, the voting rate rose with household income: 71% of those with incomes under \$20,000 said they had voted in a recent election, compared to 79% of those with incomes over \$80,000 per year. Among immigrants, the pattern was similar for those at the top and bottom of the income ladder, but those with incomes between \$20,000 and \$39,999 had higher voting rates than those with incomes between \$40,000 and \$79,999. It is important to remember, however, that the incidence of voting among low-income immigrants – many of whom were recent immigrants – was significantly lower than the voting rate for low-income Canadian-born respondents (55% compared to 71%).

In 2003, there was a direct relationship between household income and voting rates. According to the GSS, 45% of immigrants with household incomes under \$20,000 had voted in a recent election, while 68% of those with incomes over \$80,000 did so.<sup>66</sup>

### Familiarity with News and Current Affairs

Taking an interest in news and current affairs is another measure of community engagement, for it reveals people’s desire for connections to the world and others around them, both in Canada and abroad. By following the Canadian news or news “from home” through mainstream and “ethnic” media, immigrants are able to sustain their connections to community. Along with other measures of participation in political and social life, following the news and current affairs helps facilitate social interactions, which research tells us is important to individual and community well-being.

Interest in news and current affairs – either international, national, regional or local – was very high among Canadian immigrants, even higher than among Canadian-born respondents. In 2000 and 2003, 73% of immigrants said they followed the news every day, compared to 70% of Canadian-born respondents. Level of interest was highest among established immigrants (those living in Canada for 26 years or more) at 81%, compared to 63% among recent immigrants.<sup>67</sup> Among Canadian-born respondents, just over two-thirds said they followed the news daily: 67% in 2000 and 68% in 2003.

<sup>66</sup> According to the 2003 GSS, the voting rate among immigrants with household incomes under \$20,000 was 45%; for those with incomes between \$20,000 and \$39,999: 57%; with incomes between \$40,000 and \$59,999: 60%; with incomes between \$60,000 and \$79,999: 65%; and with incomes over \$80,000: 68%.

<sup>67</sup> According to the 2003 GSS, 82% of established immigrants followed the news daily, compared to 60% of recent immigrants, 62% of those who had lived in Canada for six to 15 years, and 65% of those who had lived in Canada for 16 to 25 years.

## Patterns of Interest in Current Affairs

### *Does interest in current affairs vary by region?*

In 2000, interest in news and current affairs was highest among immigrants living in British Columbia: 82% of B.C. immigrants followed the news daily, compared to 66% of Canadian-born residents in B.C. Immigrants living in the Prairies, Ontario and Quebec all had lower rates.

According to the 2003 GSS, however, interest in news and current affairs was highest among immigrants from Atlantic Canada. Three-quarters of immigrants in that region (75%) followed the news daily, compared to 72% of those from Ontario, 71% from Quebec, 69% from the Prairies, and 66% from B.C. This notable change merits further exploration.

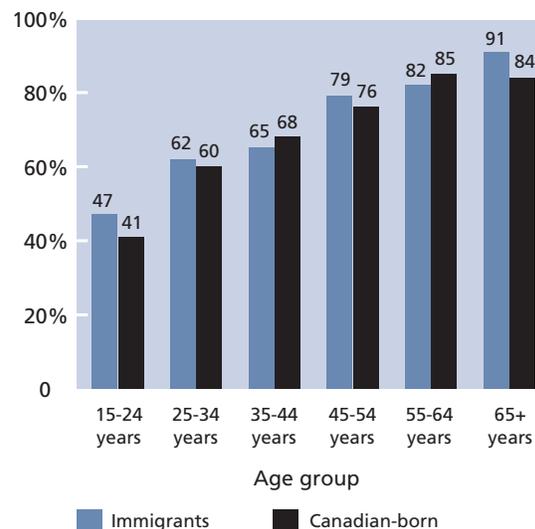
### *Does interest vary by personal characteristics?*

**Gender:** Immigrant men reported higher levels of interest in news and current affairs than did women – ten percentage points higher in 2000 and eight percentage points higher in 2003.<sup>68</sup> Gender differences were slightly larger in the immigrant community than among Canadian-born men and women.

**Age:** Older respondents – both immigrant and Canadian-born – were much more likely to follow the news daily. In 2000, 91% of immigrants over age 65 said they paid attention to the news daily – nine percentage points higher than among immigrants aged 55 to 64. Across the life course, immigrants were more likely than Canadian-born respondents follow current affairs daily, with the exception of those aged 35 to 44.<sup>69</sup> Interestingly, immigrants who came to Canada as children had lower rates of interest in following the news than those who had immigrated as seniors. Among immigrants who came to Canada as seniors, 94% said they followed current affairs daily.

## Follows news and current affairs daily, by age group, 2000

Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older



Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving and Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

**Marital Status:** People who had been married or were currently married reported significantly higher levels of interest in the news and current affairs than single people. Yet among immigrant respondents, those who were separated, divorced or widowed had higher rates than married immigrants in both 2000 and 2003.

**Religion:** Among immigrants, religious affiliation had little effect on the likelihood of following current affairs. In 2000, Protestant immigrants were only slightly more likely to follow the news daily than Roman Catholic immigrants, or those who followed other religions. This difference was more pronounced in 2003 (76%, 71%, and 67% respectively).

<sup>68</sup> According to the 2000 NSGVP, 78% of immigrant men and 68% of women followed the news daily. According to the 2003 GSS, 74% of immigrant men and 66% of women followed the news daily.

<sup>69</sup> According to the 2003 GSS: 38% of young immigrants (15 to 24 years) paid attention to the news daily, compared to 59% of those aged 24 to 35; 67% of those aged 35 to 44; 77% of those aged 45 to 54; 86% of those aged 55 to 64; and 87% of those aged 65+. There was little difference in these rates and those of their Canadian-born counterparts.

***Does interest vary by education or economic characteristics?***

**Education:** Among Canadian-born respondents, interest in the daily news increased directly with education levels. Within the immigrant community, however, there was no specific pattern. In 2000, levels of interest were highest among immigrants who had a university degree (87%) and among those with less than a high school education (74%). This latter group includes seniors who, as we have seen, had high levels of interest in news and current affairs.

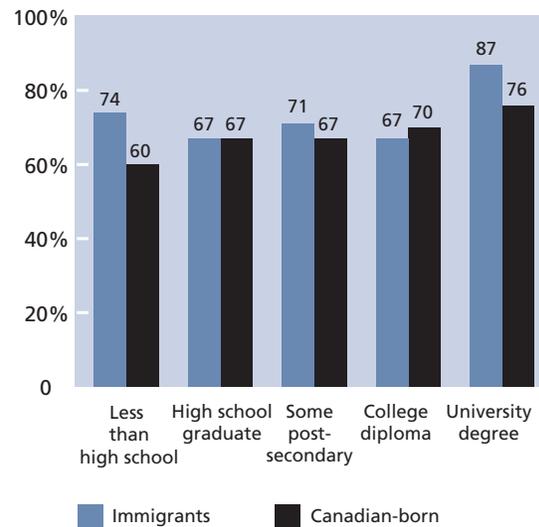
In 2003, the pattern was much more similar between immigrant and Canadian-born respondents. Interest was again higher among university graduates: 76% among immigrants and 78% among Canadian-born. However, among immigrants in 2003, the next highest levels of interest in news and current affairs were among those who had a college diploma or trade certificate, followed by high school graduates, and those with less than a high school education.<sup>70</sup>

These differences in results between the NSGVP and GSS are not trivial. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the estimates for immigrants are based on survey data, with its inherent variability. As such, differences in the levels of interest in public affairs among those with less than a high school education need to be viewed with caution.

**Employment Status:** There was a similar discrepancy in the two survey results regarding immigrants without paid employment. According to the 2000 NSGVP, immigrants who were not employed, including seniors, were the most likely to follow news and current affairs daily (82%), and those with full-time employment were the least likely (68%). According to the 2003 GSS, the level of interest was roughly equivalent between immigrants holding full-time jobs (71%) and those who were not employed (74%). Immigrants with part-time employment were the least likely to follow the news daily (57%) in 2003.

**Follows news and current affairs daily, by level of education, 2000**

Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older



Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving and Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

**Occupation:** There were significant differences using this indicator. In 2000, levels of interest in current affairs were highest among immigrants who did not report a current occupation. Professionals also reported high levels of interest. By contrast, immigrants in “other white-collar” jobs were the least likely to follow the news every day.

According to the 2003 GSS, levels of interest were highest among managers and administrators (82%), professionals (75%), and those claiming no specific occupation (74%).

**Household Income:** Household income was linked to higher levels of interest in news and current affairs, particularly among Canadian-born respondents. Among immigrants, 82% of those with annual household incomes over \$80,000 reported following the news daily in 2000. Differences among the other income groups were not large, with the exception of those with household incomes between \$40,000 and \$59,999, where 62% followed the news daily.

<sup>70</sup> According to the 2003 GSS, 65% of immigrants with less than a high school education paid attention to the news daily, as did 69% of high school graduates, 62% of those with some post-secondary training, 74% of college graduates, and 76% of those with a university degree.

**Follows news and current affairs daily, by household income, 2000**

Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older

Household income	Immigrants (%)	Canadian-born (%)
Less than \$20,000	75	63
\$20,000 to \$39,999	75	66
\$40,000 to \$59,999	62	67
\$60,000 to \$79,999	72	66
\$80,000+	82	72

Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

The 2003 GSS revealed a linear relationship between interest in public affairs and household incomes of immigrants: 64% of immigrants with annual household income under \$20,000 paid attention to public affairs on a daily basis, compared to 81% of those with incomes over \$80,000. There was little difference among Canadian-born respondents – a six percentage point spread.

It is worth noting that when we combined those who followed the news and current affairs several times a week with those who did so daily, the differences on many of these characteristics were not pronounced. Overall, levels of interest in news and current affairs were very high in the immigrant community.

**Summary**

- Two-thirds (64%) of immigrants reported voting in a recent election. The gap between Canadian-born and immigrant voters was even more pronounced in 2003.
- The voting rate is highest among seniors. Recent immigrants generally have very low voting rates.
- Immigrants are more likely than Canadian-born respondents to follow news and current affairs on a daily basis.
- Interest in news and current affairs is again highest among seniors.
- Interest is also high among those with higher levels of education. However, in the immigrant community, interest in public affairs is also high among those with less than a high school education, according to the 2000 NSGVP.



# INFORMAL HELP AND GIVING

Helping others can take many different forms, so it is important to consider both formal and informal ways of giving in order to get a more accurate picture of the ways in which Canadians are connected to and support their communities.

## Informal Giving

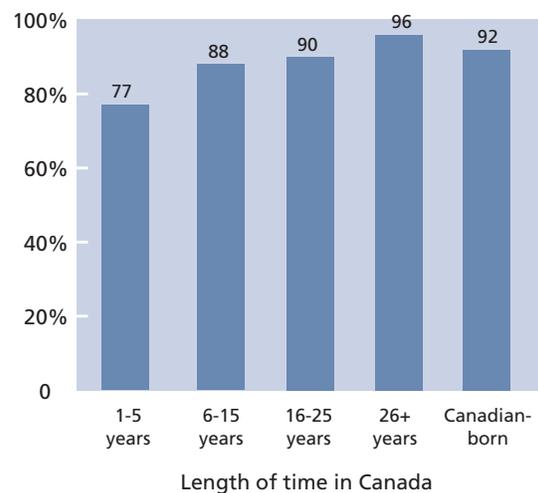
Canadians extend support to others in a variety of ways, not just through financial contributions to nonprofit and charitable organizations. For example, people contribute to fundraising efforts by buying raffle tickets, purchasing chocolate bars, and giving change to UNICEF at Halloween. They participate in charitable bingos and the like, donate clothing and other goods to groups or immigrant settlement agencies. They also give money directly to people. In fact, 37% of immigrants and 26% of Canadian-born respondents who did not make financial contributions said they didn't donate to charitable or nonprofit causes because they preferred to give money directly to those in need.

### *How many immigrants make informal donations?*

The overwhelming majority of Canadians made informal donations of one kind or another. Among immigrants, 90% said they provided financial support directly to individuals and in-kind donations to organizations. These rates of informal giving were higher than those for formal giving. Established immigrants were more likely than recent immigrants to make these types of informal contributions, likely reflecting their higher level of economic security.

### Informal giving, by length of time in Canada, 2000

Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older



Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving and Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

### *What types of donations?*

Making in-kind donations was the most common form of informal giving: 79% of immigrants gave clothing and household goods to organizations such as Neighbourhood Services. In addition, 76% purchased items such as Remembrance Day poppies, chocolate bars, or coupon books; 60% contributed to local food banks; and 44% purchased charity-sponsored raffle or lottery tickets.

## Types of informal giving, 2000

Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older

Types of informal giving	Immigrants (%)	Canadian-born (%)
Drop off clothing/goods to charitable shop	79	77
Buy goods such as chocolate bars, poppies, where profits go to charity	76	80
Contribute goods to food bank	60	63
Buy charity-sponsored raffle tickets	44	52
Contribute to boxes by cash registers	43	48
Give money to relatives who don't live with you, excluding loans	40	30
Give money to homeless, excluding loans	24	21
Make donation in will	8	4
Attend charitable bingos or casinos	7	9
Give money to other individuals not mentioned	11	8

Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

### *How many give money directly to others?*

A significant number of immigrants also provided direct financial support to other individuals. Four of 10 immigrants (40%) gave money to relatives living outside of their immediate households – a larger proportion than was reported among Canadian-born respondents. One-quarter (24%) gave money to homeless people, and 11% said they gave money to individuals such as friends or neighbours. On all of these measures, immigrants were more likely than Canadian-born respondents to make direct financial contributions. Length of time in Canada was not significant: both recent and established immigrants were equally likely to make informal donations to others.

## Helping Out

Of course, people also provide assistance directly to others. Indeed, while the notion of the volunteer is rooted in specific cultures, the idea of “helping out” is widely shared across most cultures. It is therefore important to also look at the informal ways in which people help out and care for each other, as a complement to their formal volunteer activities.

### *How many provide informal care or assistance?*

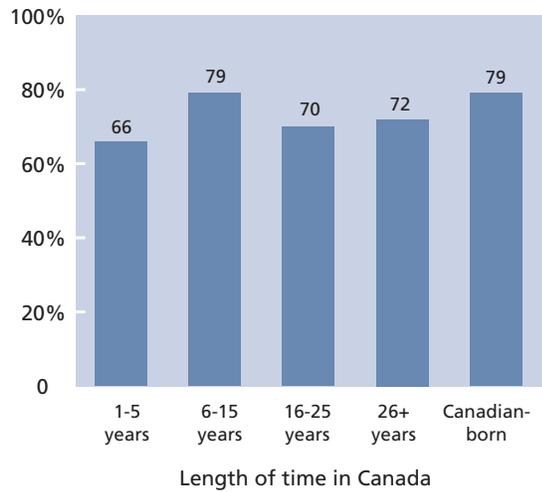
More people provide direct personal care and assistance than undertake formal volunteering. In 2000, a majority of Canadians were involved in informal helping. Among immigrants, 73% provided unpaid care and assistance to others, a somewhat smaller proportion than those providing informal financial assistance.<sup>71</sup> A larger proportion of Canadian-born respondents (79%) said they helped others on an informal basis.

Immigrants who had lived in Canada for six to 15 years were the most likely to report providing this kind of informal help (79%). The rate was lowest among recent immigrants (66%).

<sup>71</sup> These figures do not include care and assistance provided to members of the immediate household.

**Provides informal caregiving/ assistance, by length of time in Canada, 2000**

Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older



Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving and Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

**What types of assistance?**

Four of 10 immigrants (42%) who provided informal assistance to others did so by shopping for them or driving them to appointments; 38% helped with housework such as cooking and cleaning, while 32% helped with both work around the home and care for the sick or elderly. On all measures, a greater proportion of Canadian-born respondents provided informal care and support.<sup>72</sup>

A majority of immigrants (55%) provided informal help to relatives who did not live in their household, whereas 65% of Canadian-born respondents said they did so. A higher proportion of both immigrants and Canadian-born provided unpaid care and support to non-relatives (80% and 79% respectively). Immigrants who had lived in Canada for 26 years or more were the most likely to extend support to relatives (62%), while those who had lived in Canada for six to 15 years were the most likely to extend support to non-relatives (88%).

**Types of informal assistance, 2000**

Immigrants and Canadian-born aged 15 and older

Types of informal assistance	Immigrants (%)	Canadian-born (%)
Shopping or driving someone to appointments or stores	42	45
Housework	38	40
Yard or maintenance work	32	40
Providing care or support to the sick or elderly	32	33
Babysitting	31	42
Visiting elderly	29	37
Writing letters for someone, solving problems	29	30
Care for someone recovering from short-term illness	23	30
Teaching or coaching	15	16
Operating a business or farm work, outside your household	10	13
Other	14	18

Source: Calculations by the Canadian Council on Social Development using data from the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 2000.

<sup>72</sup> The patterns of informal care and assistance were similar in the GSS. Overall in 2003, a larger proportion of immigrants reported helping no one (30%), compared to 19% among Canadian-born.

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## Summary

- Nine of 10 immigrants make informal donations to others; eight of 10 make in-kind donations of goods.
- Immigrants, like Canadian-born respondents, are more likely to support relatives than to provide donations to others (such as to the homeless, neighbours, or friends).
- Three-quarters of immigrants provide help and care directly to others.
- The most common ways in which immigrants provide assistance to others are by shopping for them and driving relatives or friends to appointments, helping with housework, and providing care for the sick and elderly.



## CONCLUSION

The NSGVP and GSS present an in-depth picture of the social and civic engagement of Canadian immigrants. Data from these surveys indicate that immigrants are generous donors. They offer their time, skills, and commitment to nonprofit or charitable organizations in their communities, particularly to sports, cultural and recreational groups and to religious organizations. Indeed, data in the 2003 GSS reveal that rates of volunteering have increased among immigrants, particularly among immigrant youth.

Immigrants are much more likely to extend direct personal assistance to relatives and friends. They join voluntary organizations in about the same proportions as do Canadian-born respondents. Immigrants – and recent immigrants in particular – tend to have lower voting rates. At the same time, levels of interest in current affairs are very high in immigrant communities.

On all measures, the participation rates of established immigrants are much higher than those of more recent immigrants who are engaged in the immediate tasks of settling into their new communities.

Immigrants living in British Columbia and the Prairies have higher rates of giving, volunteering, and participating compared to immigrants living in other regions. Those in Atlantic Canada are also very active, according to the 2003 GSS. The one exception was in voting, where there were no appreciable differences in voting rates among immigrants in the different regions. In British Columbia, however, there was a significant drop in the voting rate of immigrants in 2003.

A number of factors appear to influence the decision of immigrants to engage in civic and social activities. Women generally have lower rates of participation, linked in part their having fewer economic resources or time to join community groups. Gender roles are also important in this regard.

Age is clearly a factor influencing civic engagement. Older immigrants are much more likely to donate, as are Canadian-born seniors. Volunteering and group membership is concentrated among the working-aged population. The 2003 GSS revealed a significant jump in youth volunteering. However, seniors were much more likely to vote and to follow the news and current events daily – in both 2000 and 2003.<sup>73</sup>

Other studies have highlighted the impact of religious affiliation on civic and social engagement. According to the NSGVP, religious affiliation appears to influence the contributory behaviour of immigrants, particularly with regard to formal giving and the likelihood of voting. In all instances, the membership participation rate among Protestants was higher in 2000 than among adherents to other faiths. It should be noted, however, that comparatively few immigrants are involved with Protestant churches.

Immigrants' education, occupation, and household income are all linked to their social and civic participation. Those with higher levels of education, those trained as professionals or managers, and those living in households with annual incomes over \$80,000 are more likely to make financial donations, volunteer for community organizations, and vote in elections.

<sup>73</sup> The large number of seniors surveyed in the NSGVP (18% of the sample) may be one reason behind these high figures.

It is interesting to note, however, that immigrants with less than a high school education are much more likely to make financial contributions than their Canadian-born counterparts. And voting rates and levels of interest in current affairs are high among immigrants who are not in the paid labour market and among those who do not identify a particular occupation. In 2003, for example, immigrants with less than a high school education were more likely to have voted in a recent election than immigrants with higher levels of education. Clearly, many older immigrants are actively engaged in their communities – following current affairs in Canada or in their countries of origin.

### ***Taking formal and informal helping into account***

Does the pattern of social and civic engagement change if we include both formal and informal giving and helping? On the question of giving, there was little difference between the contributions of immigrants and Canadian-born respondents – not surprising, given the high rates of donation reported for both groups. And more established immigrants had higher rates of total giving (formal and informal) compared to more recent immigrants.

Looking at the regions, the gap was not as pronounced when we consider both types of giving.<sup>74</sup> Combined giving – either formally or informally to individuals or charitable and nonprofit organizations – was very high across the country among immigrants (and Canadian-born respondents). The highest level (97%) was among immigrants in British Columbia.

There are differences between immigrants and Canadian-born respondents in the rates of volunteering and helping out. Taking informal care and assistance into account substantially increased the rate of helping among immigrants to 77% (compared to a rate of 81% among Canadian-born respondents). The rate of helping was highest among immigrants who had lived in Canada for six to 15 years.<sup>75</sup> Clearly, informal helping is a preferred means of supporting community members.

By region, the rates varied by 10 percentage points. In Quebec, 70% of immigrants were involved in volunteering and/or helping others, and in British Columbia and the Prairies, 81% of immigrants did so.<sup>76</sup>

### ***Motivations and Barriers***

People come together to pursue common interests and forge social bonds through community organizations. Many factors shape these actions, including economic conditions, demographics, government policies, and attitudes and values.

Clearly, economic factors are an important consideration. The significance of the economic barriers that new immigrants face cannot be overstated. Access to paid employment not only affects levels of discretionary income, it also affects the amount of time available to participate in community activities. Indeed, the scramble for paid income even has an impact on health more generally. Those who could benefit most from participation in social and civic activities are those who are often the most marginalized.

<sup>74</sup> These calculations are based on the 2000 NSGVP. The rates of “combined giving” among immigrants living in different regions were: Quebec: 83%; Ontario: 93%; Prairies: 96%; British Columbia: 97%. Among Canadian-born respondents, the figures were: Atlantic region: 92%; Quebec: 91%; Ontario: 93%; Prairies: 94%; British Columbia: 91%. The sample of immigrants living in the Atlantic region was too small to produce reliable estimates.

<sup>75</sup> In 2000, the rate of “combined helping” was 70% among recent immigrants, 83% among immigrants in Canada for six to 15 years, 74% among those living here for 16 to 25 years, and 76% among established immigrants (over 25 years).

<sup>76</sup> The rates of “combined helping” for immigrants living in different regions were: Quebec: 70%; Ontario: 76%; Prairies: 81%; British Columbia: 81%. Among Canadian-born respondents, the figures were: Atlantic region: 83%; Quebec: 80%; Ontario: 78%; Prairies: 89%; British Columbia: 84%. The sample of immigrants living in the Atlantic region was too small to produce reliable estimates.

Values are another important consideration. Whether someone decides to make a contribution or volunteer for a local organization hinges on their own beliefs and past experiences. The decision is also effected by the degree to which community organizations are respectful and accepting of diversity. Communicating the realities and benefits of volunteering, giving, and participating is critically important for many ethno-cultural groups that do not have experience with the Canadian setting.

The stock of community assets is also a consideration. Ottawa Mosaic recently completed an overview of the assets of the immigrant and visible minority communities in their area. They point out that successful engagement and community vitality are built on the assets that the immigrant communities bring to the table. Asset building needs to be acknowledged and supported in order to create opportunities for immigrants from various backgrounds to participate. They write:

“From the more long-standing communities to the more recently arrived, a pattern of asset building emerged. When immigrants of a particular background settle in Ottawa, they naturally look for one another and establish supports to help each other meet the basic needs of food and shelter and settlement. Over time, they form associations to preserve their own cultural traditions, language, music, arts, and spiritual practices. They build churches, mosques, synagogues or temples to create their own spaces for spiritual and caregiving activities in their traditional cultural ways. They begin to establish other structures to address family and economic issues, culture and language, care of vulnerable community members, culturally appropriate services and businesses, advocacy resources, etc. An infrastructure of formal and informal initiatives is developed. As they establish these assets, they pass on to new communities their experience and their support.”<sup>77</sup>

For many immigrants, community assets such as faith-based organizations and cultural and religious festivals play a pivotal role in all aspects of life, serving as a focal point for community identity and gathering, and creating the base on which to build social capital. Thus, the presence of community infrastructure is very important in facilitating the active participation of immigrant communities.

### ***Looking Forward***

Our findings raise as many questions as they answer. Of particular interest and concern are the comparatively low rates of volunteering and group membership among new immigrants. Are new immigrants to Canada getting the supports they need to be able to actively participate in the social and political life of our communities? Or are the economic challenges so acute that they effectively foreclose participation?

Are some ethno-cultural groups more successful in community building, that is, in forging connections with other members of their communities and others through community-based organizations, the media and the like? What supports might better enable different groups to foster and promote social connections among their members and enhance their feelings of belonging in Canada?

Are there distinct differences in the patterns of social engagement among immigrants? For instance, many immigrants – particularly newcomers – contribute both here in Canada and to communities in their countries of origin. Is there a relationship between giving in Canada and abroad? Does a strong association with a particular ethno-cultural group affect the process of building connections in Canada? Is there a link between following politics “at home” and knowledge of the Canadian scene?

Are volunteer opportunities successfully opening the door to paid employment for immigrants? This would appear to be true for some but not for many, as evident in the relatively small percentage who cited volunteering as a route to paid employment.

<sup>77</sup> Ottawa Mosaic *An Exploratory Overview of the Assets of Immigrant and Visible Minority Communities in Ottawa*. October 2004: 8.

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And what about the profile of immigrant volunteers? Are young people interested in giving back to their communities? This is, of course, a broader problem for all Canadian communities, where an aging core of volunteers and donors provide the lion's share of community work. What can we do to foster community engagement among young people? Are there new patterns of engagement that we need to consider?

The overwhelming majority of immigrants are strongly attached to Canada. Indeed, a greater proportion of immigrants – particularly those who arrived before 1980 – report being “strongly” or “somewhat strongly” attached to Canada (91% compared to 85% for Canadian-born respondents). About two-thirds of both immigrants and Canadian-born residents say they have a strong attachment to their communities.<sup>78</sup> Taken together, we see strong commitment to country and community reflected in the high levels of those who contribute their compassion and energies to their communities.

The contributions of immigrants add immeasurably to the well-being of our communities. Yet there is much still to be done to strengthen the base of social and economic connections which underlie individual and community well-being. Nonprofit and charitable organizations and governments have key roles to play in addressing these significant challenges. By fostering greater social and civic engagement among immigrants, we create the conditions for a more dynamic and inclusive society.

These challenges are critical as we consider the future of our communities and civic institutions, and the diverse peoples that make up Canada today.

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<sup>78</sup> Grant Schellenberg. “Perceptions of Canadians: A sense of belonging, confidence and trust,” in *Canadian Social Trends*, Winter 2004: 18.

The CCSD was very pleased to undertake this work on *Making Connections* as part of our focus on both cultural diversity and voluntary sector research.

Other CCSD work on related issues includes the following:

**Funding Matters: The Impact of Canada's New Funding Regime on Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations** (2003). The nonprofit and voluntary sector is very different today than it was a decade ago. Among the key trends transforming the funding landscape are the rising costs and growing constraints associated with external funding, and a lack of support for capacity development. *Funding Matters* explores the efforts of nonprofit and voluntary organizations to achieve greater financial security in this new environment. The full report and related materials can be found at [www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2003/fm/index.htm](http://www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2003/fm/index.htm).

**Funding Matters...for our communities:** In 2004/05, the CCSD supported community dialogues on funding issues to determine local challenges and document strategies for action. At these community dialogues, the CCSD provided workshop materials, including a list of recent tools, resources and research on financing issues in the sector. The project identified many examples of organizational and community innovation that are making positive changes at the community and regional levels. The final report is available at [www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2003/fm/p2report.pdf](http://www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2003/fm/p2report.pdf).

**Nowhere to Turn? Responding to Partner Violence Against Immigrant and Visible Minority Women** (2004). Immigrant and visible minority women in Canada who experience violence in their relationships can find themselves between a rock and a hard place. In addition to domestic abuse, they face challenges trying to deal with the social service systems and judicial structures that are supposed to help them. Using evidence from a literature review, analysis of relevant national data, and detailed observations from focus group discussions in cities across Canada, this report highlights the importance of social, cultural, and systemic barriers that hinder immigrant and visible minority women from seeking and obtaining the supports they need. The final report and related materials are available at [www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2004/nowhere/](http://www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2004/nowhere/).

**Social Welfare Policy Conference.** This bilingual national event is held every two years at different universities across Canada. Since 2003, the conferences have been organized under the aegis of the CCSD. Each Conference attracts about 300 participants, and through plenary panels, workshops, round tables, and paper presentations, they help build links between research and policy. In 2005, at the Fredericton campus of the University of New Brunswick, the conference provided an opportunity for scholars, analysts, policy-makers, and activists to share ideas about building equitable communities. The bilingual forum highlighted what works, what doesn't work, and what could work in this area. Participants came away with new ideas about how theories can be turned into responsive policies and programs. Plans for the 2007 Social Welfare Policy Conference are underway. Further information about these biennial conferences, as well as detailed information about the 2005 event can be found at [www.ccsd.ca/cswp/2005/](http://www.ccsd.ca/cswp/2005/).

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