A Portrait of RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS in Canada

Imagine Canada

Give. Volunteer. Engage.
Donner. S'engager. Agir.

Executive Summary

The 2003 *National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations* (**NSNVO**) is the first comprehensive survey of Canada's nonprofit sector. It provides key data about nonprofit organizations including: their numbers; geographic distribution; areas of activity; the populations they serve; the extent to which they provide public benefits; the financial and human resources on which they rely; and problems they report in their capacity to fulfill their missions.

Undertaken by a consortium of nine organizations, the **NSNVO** was led by the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy (now Imagine Canada). Participating organizations included l'Alliance de recherche universités-communautés en économie sociale, Université du Québec à Montréal; Canada West Foundation; Canadian Council on Social Development; Capacity Development Network, University of Victoria; Community Services Council, Newfoundland and Labrador; School of Policy Studies, Queen's University; the Voluntary and Non-profit Sector Organization of Manitoba; and Statistics Canada. It was based on a representative sample of approximately 13,000 nonprofit organizations.

To be included in the survey, organizations had to be: non-governmental; non-profit distributing; self-governing; voluntary; and formally incorporated or registered. Organizations meeting these criteria were asked about their activities over the 12 month period prior to the survey.

The 2000 *National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating* (**NSGVP**) provides a comprehensive look at the contributions that Canadians make to one another and their communities. Respondents were asked a series of questions about: how they give money and other resources to individuals and to charitable and nonprofit organizations; volunteer time to nonprofit organizations and directly to individuals; and participate in groups, organizations, and associations by becoming members.

www.givingandvolunteering.ca

www.imaginecanada.ca

www.nonprofitscan.ca

www.kdc-cdc.ca

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The Results

Religious organizations serve the people in their communities by providing not only a place to worship, but also a place to receive many services and participate in rituals that enhance the lives of Canadians. Using data from the 2000 *National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating* (**NSGVP**) and the 2003 *National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations* (**NSNVO**), this report provides a portrait of the many Religious organizations in Canada, their donors, their volunteers, and the challenges they face as they work to fulfill their missions.

According to the **NSNVO**, there are approximately 31,000 Religious organizations in Canada, accounting for 19% of the country's estimated 161,000 nonprofit organizations. Collectively, these organizations report $6.8* billion in annual revenues 6%* of total sector revenues - and a total membership of over 20 million people and 30,660* organizations.

The nonprofit sector is divided into several sub-sectors based on the activities of organizations. In Canada, Sports and Recreation is the largest sub-sector, with 21% of organizations. Religious organizations form the second-largest sub-sector, with 19%, followed by Social Services (12%). However, Religious organizations account for just 6% of total sector revenues.

The prevalence of Religious organizations varies considerably by geographic region. They are most prevalent in Atlantic Canada, where they represent 27% of the region's nonprofit organizations. They are least prevalent in Quebec, where they represent just 11% of organizations.

Quick Facts:

Characteristics Of Religious Organizations

- There are 31,000 Religious organizations in Canada.
- These organizations benefit from 1.3 million volunteers.
- Religious organizations employ 109,000* paid staff.
- 35% of organizations have no paid staff, and are run solely by volunteers.

Religious organizations have been in operation longer than other types of nonprofit organizations. In fact, more than half (51%) have existed for more than 40 years. Compared to other nonprofit organizations, Religious organizations tend to be moderately sized — 38% report annual revenues between $100,000 and $999,000. The vast majority (94%) are registered charities. Charitable status allows organizations to issue tax receipts for donations and to access foundation funding; therefore, only a few Religious organizations cannot issue tax receipts to donors or access funding from community, family, or government foundations.

*Variation within the sample of Religious organizations is high, which might affect the reliability of estimates.

Financial Resources

The majority of revenues in this sub-sector are concentrated among a small percentage of large organizations, which is also the case in the nonprofit sector as a whole. The 3% of Religious organizations with annual revenues of $1 million or more account for almost half (48%) of all revenues in this sub-sector, and the 59% of organizations with revenues under $100,000 account for only 10% of revenues. It is important to note, however, that this distribution is considerably more even than it is throughout the nonprofit sector. In the entire sector, the 1% of organizations with annual revenues of $10 million or more account for 59% of all revenues, while the 63% of organizations with revenues less than $100,000 account for just 2% of all revenues.

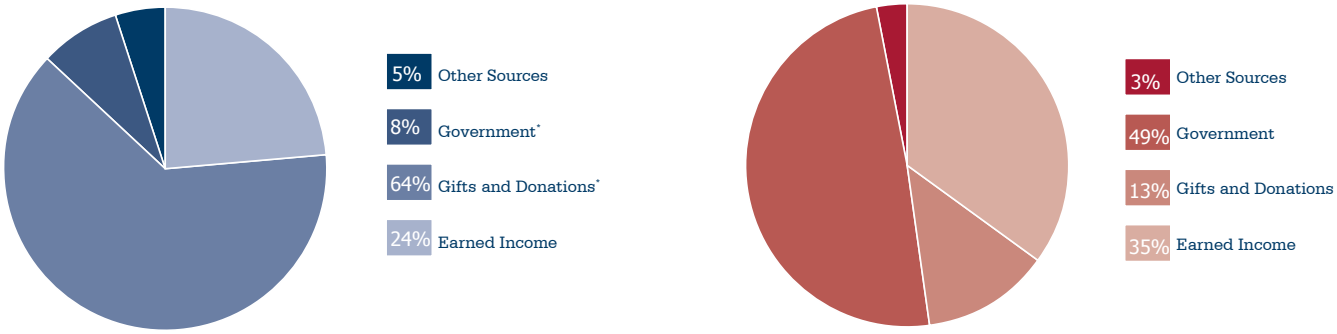
Religious organizations are less likely than other organizations to report any financial capacity problems. However, they depend heavily on gifts and donations. Nearly two-thirds (64%*) of revenues in this sub-sector come from donations from individuals, foundations, other nonprofits, and the corporate sector, but most of that money comes from individuals. The second most important source of revenues is earned income (24%). Religious organizations receive just 8%* of their revenues from government — far below the national average.

Quick Facts:

Financial Resources

- $6.8* billion in annual revenues.
- 38% of organizations have annual revenues of between $100,000 and $999,999.
- Donors give average annual donations of $310 - the largest of any other sub-sector.
- The majority of revenues to religious organizations comes from donations.
- Religious organizations receive 49% of the total value of donations made to all other nonprofits in Canada.

Sources of revenue: Religious organizations, 2003.



Religious Organizations

All Nonprofit Organizations

Who Donates To Religious Organizations?

Donors to Religious organizations tend to be 65 and older, female, married or in a common-law relationship, and have university degrees and household incomes of $100,000 or more. As one might expect, these donors are motivated by religious obligations and by a sense of commitment to their community.

The revenue profile of Religious organizations is distinct from all nonprofit organizations, which receive 49% of their revenues from

Strengths, Challenges, and Opportunities

Religious organizations are well-established institutions. The other key strengths of Religious organizations appear to be their local community focus, and the strength that they draw from their dedicated donors, volunteers, and staff. This sub-sector also reports fewer capacity challenges relative to other nonprofit organizations, and is less likely to report that their revenues have declined in the last three years.

Although Religious organizations rely heavily on a single source of revenue - donations from individuals - their second-highest source of revenue comes from earned income, which may allow greater flexibility than organizations reliant on government funding.

Religious organizations also face other challenges. Their group of core donors and volunteers is ageing, and levels of religious participation in Canada are declining.

Opportunities may exist for Religious organizations to expand their support base by attracting demographic groups that are currently under-represented among their core contributors (e.g., youth, men, people with lower household income). However, there may also be opportunities to increase donations of time and money provided by *existing* supporters. By attracting new and by further developing existing sources of financial and volunteer contributions, Religious organizations can strengthen their capacity to provide important services and programmes to communities across Canada.