

State *Of the* State Survey

*Helping Others:
A Profile of Michigan
Volunteers*

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Helping Others: A Profile of Michigan Volunteers

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BACKGROUND

Thousands of Michiganians volunteer every year in charitable organizations across our state. These include religious organizations, social service agencies, the United Way, youth and children's organizations such as Scouts and 4-H, and educational organizations. Volunteers have a direct impact on our schools, our neighborhoods, and our economy, providing a variety of services. But who are these individuals? Do they differ from other citizens? Are they older; are they more educated; do they have a certain religious affiliation? Volunteers may come from both genders and all races and income groups.

The purpose of this briefing paper is to identify those Michiganians who do volunteer. In addition, this paper describes the main reasons why individuals say they do not volunteer and examines the relationship between contributing time and contributing money to charitable organizations.

THE SURVEY

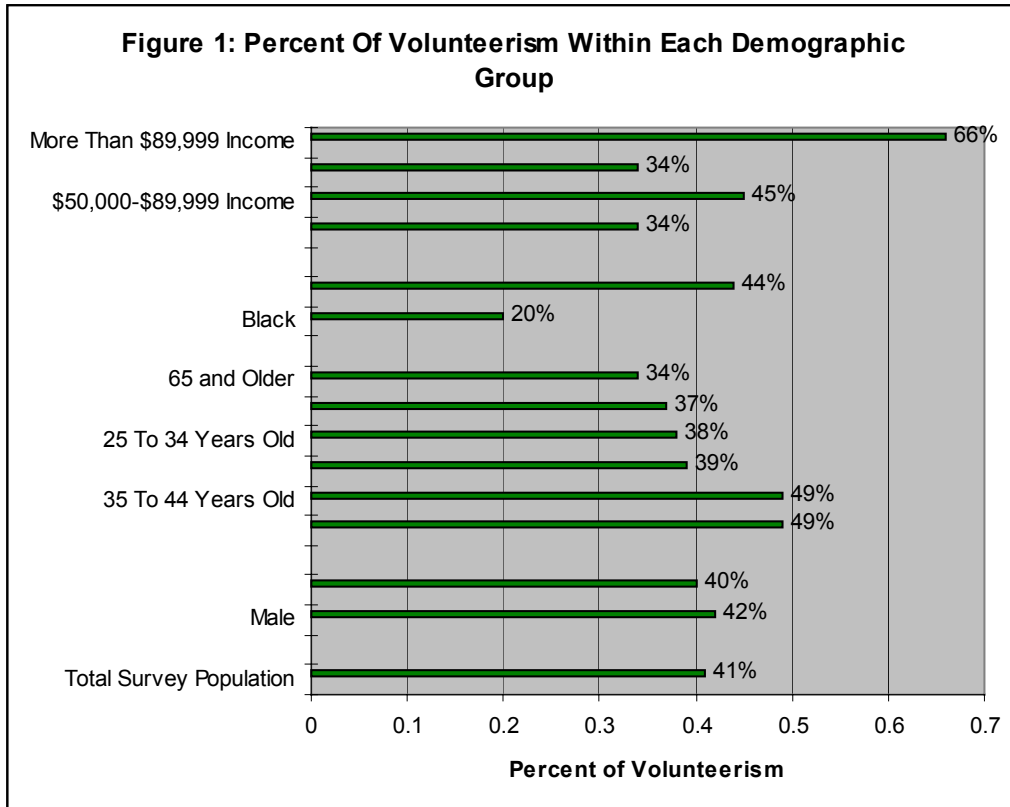
A telephone survey of 975 adult residents in the state of Michigan was conducted by Michigan State University's Institute for Public Policy and Social Research between February 18 and April 7, 1997. It was the tenth quarterly MSU State of the State Survey (SOSS). It focused on government performance, community needs and MSU Extension, charity and nonprofits, and assisted suicide. The overall sampling error is " 3.1%.

The sample was designed to provide representative information for respondents from major regions of the state: Detroit City, Southeast Michigan (excluding Detroit), Southwest Michigan, Central Michigan (West and East), northern Lower Michigan, and the Upper Peninsula. (*See attached information sheet for a list of the counties included in each region.*) The data reported here are weighted to make the results representative of the adult population of Michigan.

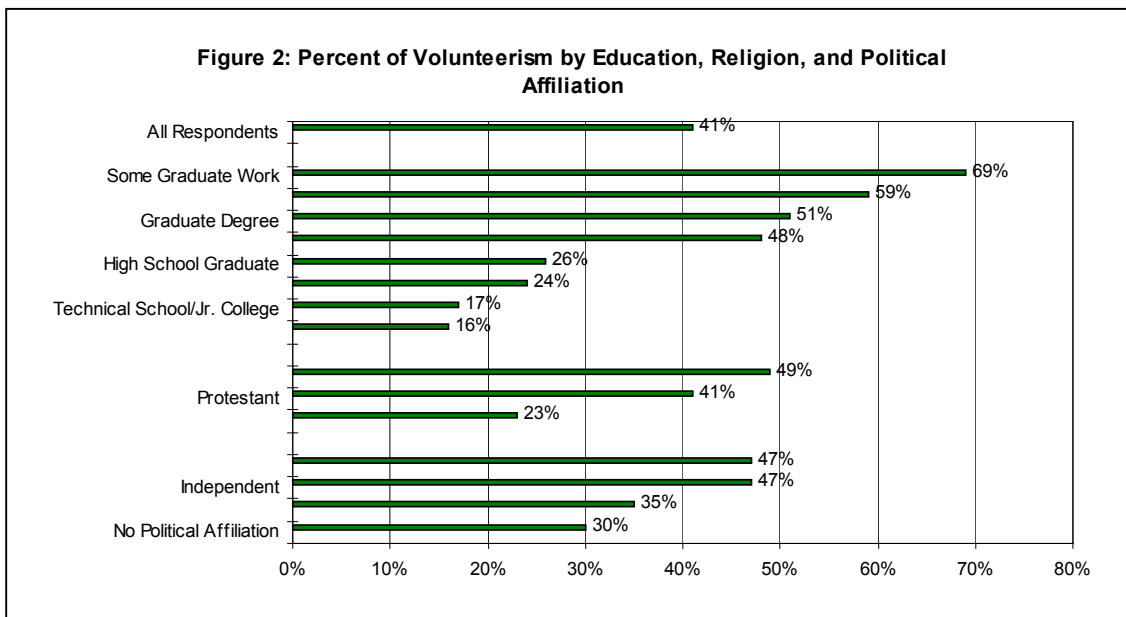
KEY FINDINGS

Who Volunteers?

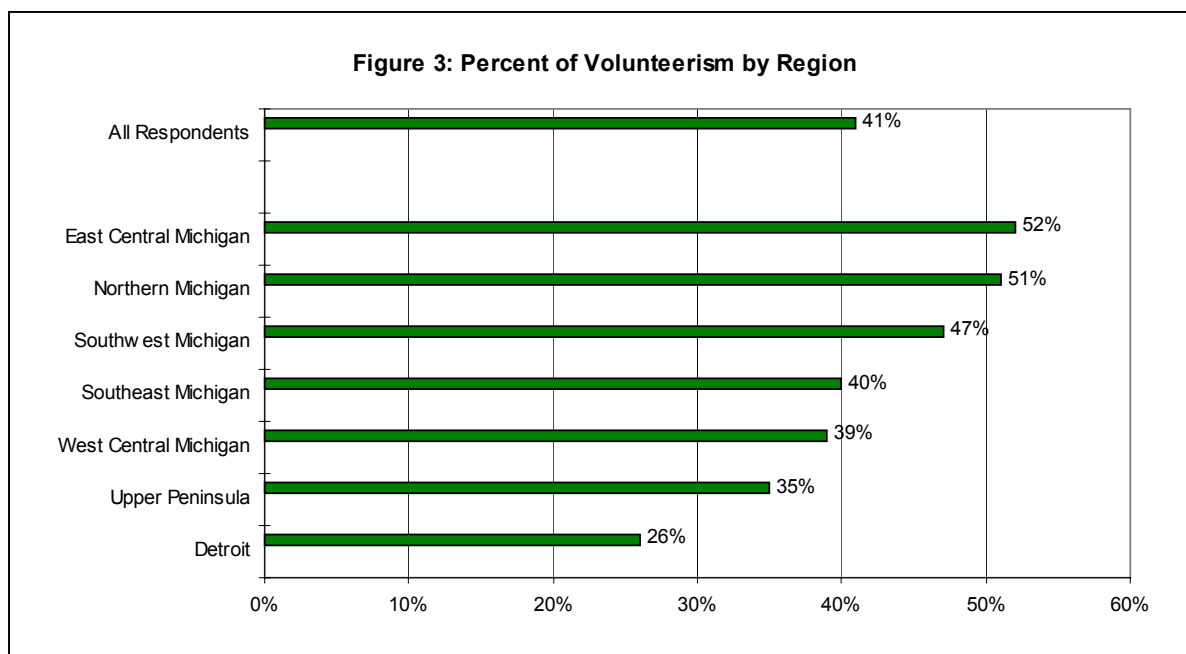
- **Approximately two in five Michiganians volunteer.** As Figure 1 shows, 41% of those surveyed volunteered during the past year. (Question 1 — *exact question wording is given below.*) Figures 1 and 2 provide details on key demographics. Volunteerism apparently bears little or no relationship to some of these characteristics. Men (42%) and women (40%) are about equally likely to volunteer. There is an age-related pattern in the percentage who volunteer: the youngest and oldest age groups volunteer proportionately least often and those in the 35-54 age groups have the highest proportion of volunteers (49%). Figure 1 shows breakdowns by age group.
- **Whites volunteer proportionately more than African Americans (44% compared to 20%); volunteerism increases with household income level and with educational attainment.** Figure 1 provides data by race and by income. Almost two-thirds of people with an annual household income of \$90,000 or more volunteer, while only one-third of those with a household income below \$50,000 donated some of their time to a charitable organization in the past year.



Generally, as level of education increases, so does the proportion of people who volunteer. There are two exceptions. Those with a graduate degree (the highest level of educational attainment) are less likely to volunteer than those with some graduate work or a college degree. People with a technical school or junior college degree volunteer only about as much as people who have completed just tenth grade or less. (See Figure 2.)



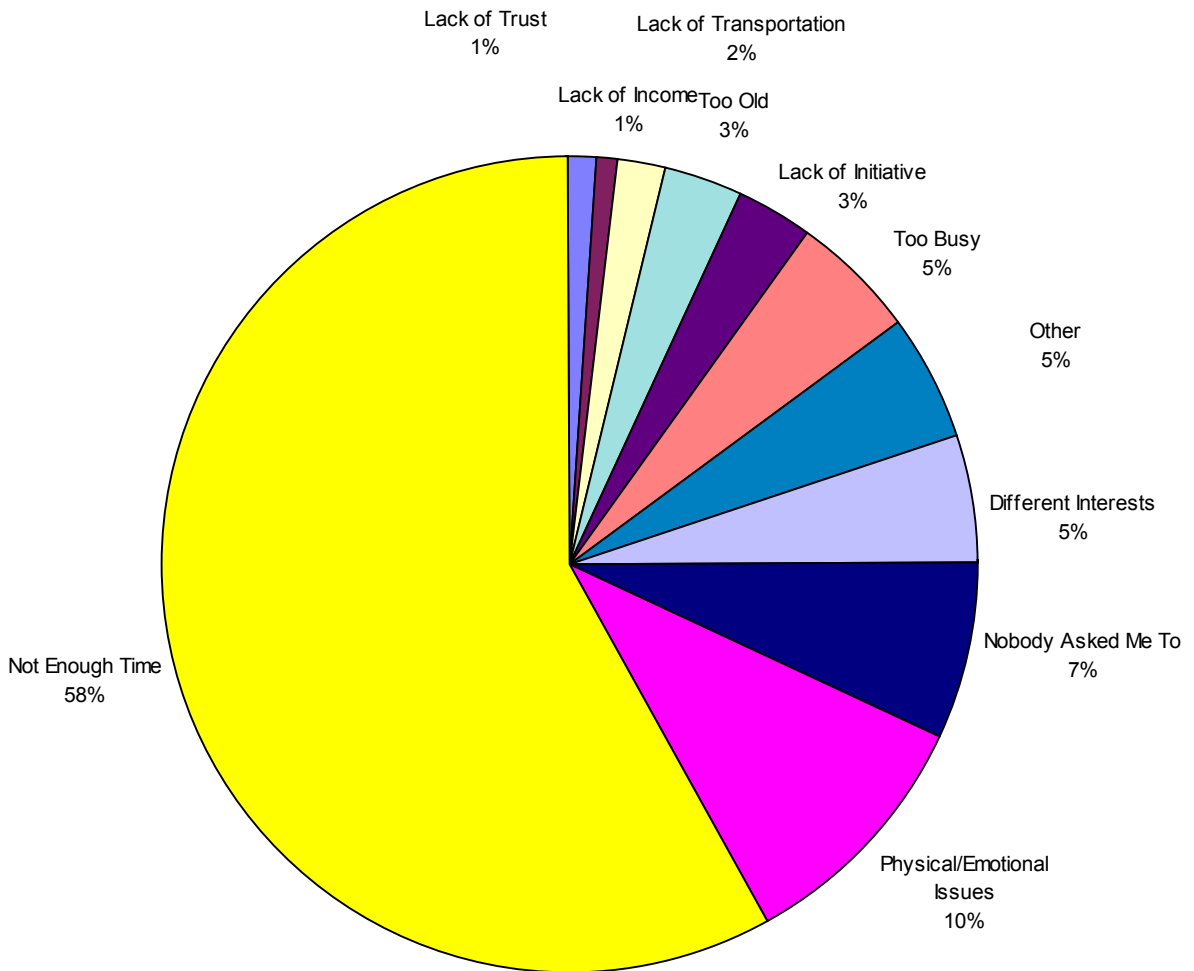
- **Republicans (47%) and political independents (47%) volunteer more than Democrats (35%), who volunteer more than those with no political affiliation (30%). Catholics volunteer the most (49%) and those with no religious affiliation the least (23%).** Figure 2 illustrates the proportions of people with various religious and political identifications who volunteer.
- **Over half of all East Central Michigan and Northern Michigan residents volunteer, while only a quarter of Detroit residents volunteer.** The Upper Peninsula (35%) has the second lowest rate of volunteerism. (See Figure 3 for all regional rates.)



Why don't more people volunteer?

- **“Not enough time” is the main reason that three out of five people say they do not volunteer for any charitable organization.** As shown in Figure 4, 58% of those who did not volunteer during the past year say they lack the time. Physical or emotional disabilities is the second most frequent explanation (10%). Surprisingly, almost 7% say they were not asked to volunteer in an organization. Finally, approximately 1% say they do not trust these organizations and thus do not volunteer. (Q. 2)

Figure 4: Main Reason Why People Say They Do Not Volunteer



Do people who give money give time as well?

- **Most people (80%) who financially support a charitable organization also donate time to it as volunteers during the year. (Q. 3)**

SURVEY QUESTIONS

NOTE: The full wording of questions for the items discussed in this briefing paper is given below. The order of questions conforms to the order of the results above.

- Q. 1. During the past year, did you volunteer for any charitable organization?
- Q. 2. What is the main reason you did not volunteer for any charitable organization?
- Q. 3. During the past year, did you volunteer for any charitable organization that you had also financially supported?