

Snapshot on

# Giving & Volunteering

in Michigan

Highlights from a 2008 survey of Michigan Residents

# Introduction

The nonprofit sector in Michigan is comprised of approximately 47,000 organizations, including more than 31,000 charities whose work spans every issue of concern to Michigan residents, ranging from education to health, human services to the arts, economic development to the environment. The nonprofit community provides many services that act as a safety net during a recession and is an important economic engine in tough times, collectively providing approximately 440,000 jobs in Michigan while generating an additional 161,000 jobs as a result of the sector's spending.

Giving and volunteering are vital components of the ability of charities to successfully serve Michigan residents. Charities are seeing the demand for their services grow, leading them to rely even more heavily on individual giving and volunteering.

\*Nationally, individuals contributed \$306.39 billion to charities in 2007 (Giving USA 2008). Charities could not operate without the support of individuals. Critical to an individual's decision to support a charity is their perception of the sector as a whole.

This past year has been a difficult time for charities, with 50 percent reporting decreases in revenue (individual giving, foundations, government and corporate support) and 70 percent reporting increases in demand. Although the rates of giving have remained the same, it should be noted that many charities are reporting that the size of donations has decreased (Michigan Nonprofits Struggle with Economic Downturn, MNA/GVSU 2008).

The following are the results of a survey conducted in 2009 to better understand Michigan residents' 2008 charitable giving and volunteering and their perception of charities.

In Spring 2009, 1,001 Michigan residents were asked about their experiences with charitable giving and volunteering during the previous year.

The survey continues a tradition of asking Michigan residents about their relationship with the state's nonprofit sector. The survey was conducted by the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research at Michigan State University between January and March of 2009 as part of the quarterly State of the State Survey (SOSS) series.

## Giving in Michigan

A survey of Michigan residents found that almost nine out of ten people (87.3%) had made a contribution to charity in the previous year. The percentage of women giving decreased from last year to 86.6%, making men (88.0%) slightly more likely to donate.

Although rates of giving are similar to the past four years, many charities are reporting that the size of donations has decreased.

Giving varies by age, with the age groups most likely to make a contribution being 60-64 years (96.2%),

50-59 years (93.5%), 40-49 years (89.1%), 65+ (86.1%) and 30-39 years (86.1%). Giving rates for younger people are high, with more than four out of five making contributions.

Giving rates varied across the state, from southwest Michigan (76.8%) and Detroit (77.6%) to west central Michigan (89.5%), the Northern Lower Peninsula (91.1%), and the Upper Peninsula (93.5%).

## Executive Summary

Findings from the survey include:

- Almost nine out of ten people (87.3%) made a contribution to charity in the previous year\*.
- Nearly 50 percent of the adult population volunteered in 2008. Women (55.1%) were more likely to volunteer than men (42.8%). These results demonstrate a growing gap between the volunteer rates of men and women.
- Nearly 95% of respondents said the need for charities is greater today than in the past.
- Nine out of ten Michigan residents believe that charities should retain their tax exemptions.

## Volunteering in Michigan

Volunteering continues to be an important element in the lives of Michigan residents, with rates in this survey showing that 49.2% of the adult population volunteered in 2008. Women (55.1%) were more likely to volunteer than men (42.8%). These results demonstrate a growing gap between the volunteer rates of men and women.

When asked about their level of volunteering compared to the previous year, more than a quarter of respondents (29.6%) said they plan to volunteer more in the coming year; 61.1% said they are planning to maintain the same level of volunteering as last year; and 9.3% said they were planning to volunteer less.

The most common reason for volunteering less was being too busy (49.2%), followed by health reasons (29.4%) and financial reasons (6.8%).

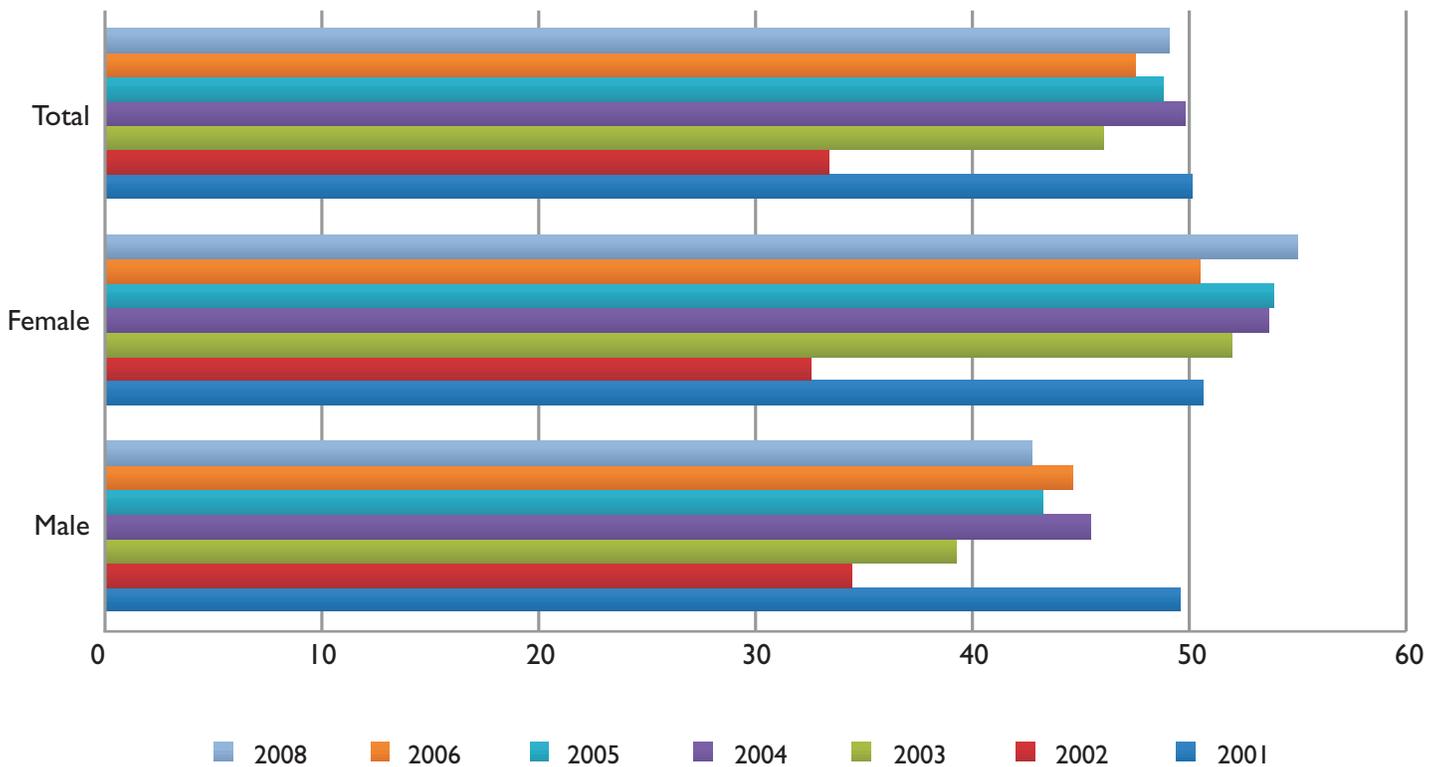
Volunteering changes during an individual's life.

Age groups with above average volunteering rates (the average rate being 49.2%) include 18-24 years (53.2%), 30-39 years (51.0%), 50-59 years (50.0%), 60-64 years (62.3%) and 65+ (49.7%). Lower rates of volunteering occur for age groups 25-29 (38.6%) and 40-49 (44.5%).

Volunteering rates increased with education, ranging from high school graduates (44.3%) to college graduates (52.4%), some post graduate education (60.0%), and those with a graduate degree (64.9%).

Volunteering rates across Michigan ranged from high levels in west central Michigan (54.2%), east central Michigan (52.9%) and in the Northern Lower Peninsula (52.6%), to lower rates in Detroit (41.4%).

Volunteering in Michigan 2001-2008, % Volunteering by Gender



## Trust in Michigan's Charities

Public perceptions are an important element of community trust for the charities that provide services. The survey asked a series of questions in order to understand how Michigan residents feel about their charitable organizations. Overall, the sector in Michigan is strongly supported and trusted, with charitable organizations seen as an important factor in individual well-being.

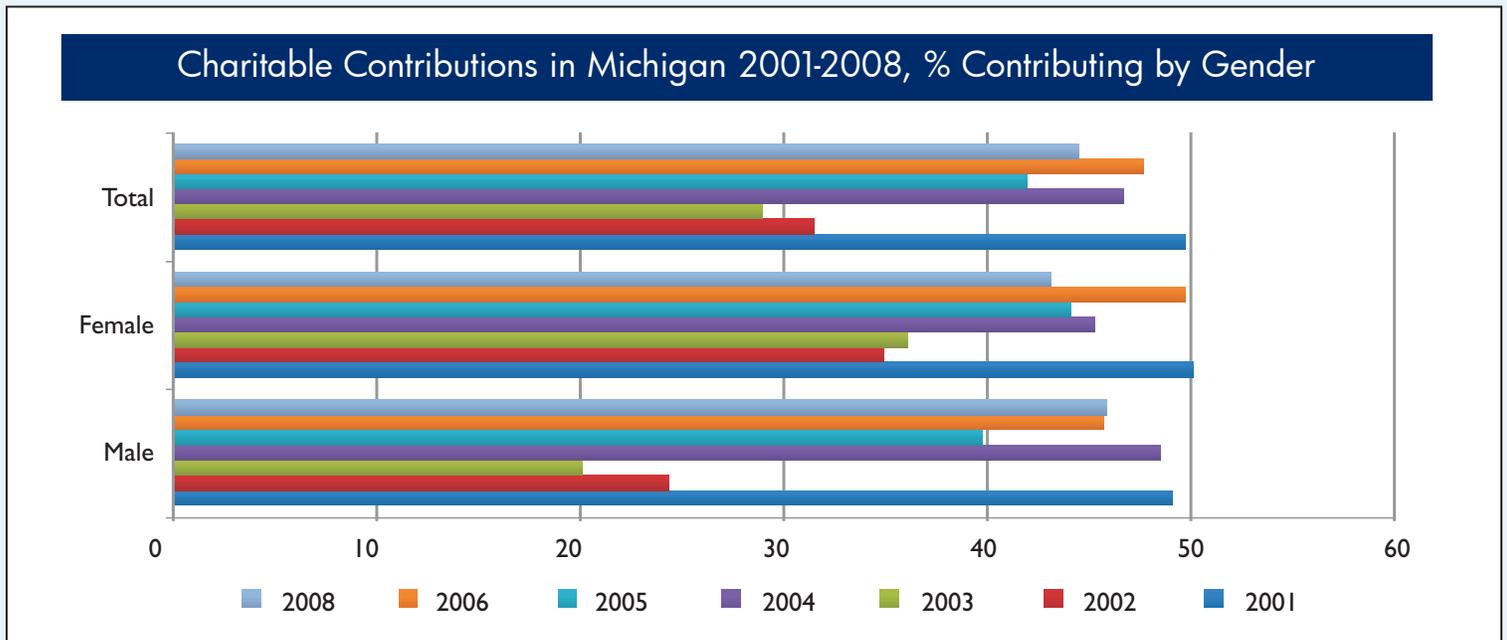
More than four out of five Michigan residents agree that charitable organizations are honest and ethical. Sentiment ranged from strongly agree (27.2%) and somewhat agree (56.9%) to somewhat disagree (11.1%) or strongly disagree (4.8%).

The need for charities today compared to the past is strongly felt, with almost 95% of respondents agreeing strongly (57.1%) or somewhat (37.6%) with this sentiment. Disagreement was noted as somewhat (4.3%) or strong (1.0%).

Charitable organizations are widely seen as being effective, with 74% of respondents agreeing strongly (22.7%) or somewhat (51.3%) that charities are more effective today than five years ago. About a quarter of respondents somewhat (18.4%) or strongly (7.6%) disagreed with the statement.

Charities are also seen as important to community quality of life, with over 87% of Michigan respondents agreeing strongly (45.6%) or somewhat (41.6%) that charities improve their communities, while there was some disagreement (8.3%) or strong disagreement (4.4%).

For the first time the survey asked respondents whether charitable organizations should be exempt from paying certain taxes. More than nine out of ten Michigan residents (91.5%) felt that charities should retain their tax exempt status. Less than 10% of people felt that charities should pay taxes.



For the most up-to-date information and research regarding the Michigan nonprofit community, visit the Michigan Nonprofit Association Web site at [www.mnaonline.org](http://www.mnaonline.org).

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