

The value of older people's donations

Working paper

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This paper outlines our approach to calculating the value of older people's donations for *Decision time*, the final report of the Commission on the Voluntary Sector & Ageing.

Our approach

- Establish the percentage of the older population who donate to charity.
- Establish the amount that the older population who donate give.
- Estimate the current total donations by the older age group.
- Use projected growth of the population to estimate how much more could be donated by the older population in 10 and 20 years time.

Data

To make our calculations we used NCVO/CAF's [UK Giving report 2012](#)¹, which uses data from 2011/12. We also used further data from this same survey which has not been published—thanks to NCVO for sharing this with us.

What proportion of older people give?

Here “giving” is defined as adults giving to a charity in a typical month.

% giving

| | |
|---------|-----|
| Overall | 55% |
| Male | 52% |
| Female | 58% |

% giving by age group and gender

| Age | Overall | Male | Female |
|--------|---------|------|--------|
| 16-24 | 44% | 48% | 41% |
| 25- 44 | 55% | 50% | 60% |
| 45-64 | 59% | 55% | 62% |
| 65+ | 59% | 55% | 62% |

Older people (aged 65+) give more than those aged 16-44, although the same as people in the 45-64 age group.

¹ NCVO/CAF (2012). *UK Giving 2012: An overview of charitable giving in the UK, 2011/12*. Available at: <https://www.cafonline.org/PDF/UKGiving2012Full.pdf>

How much do older people give now?

To give a sensible feel of what the typical person gives, medians are reported (as they reduce the impact of outliers who give a great deal which bias any average figures). These amounts are per donor per month.

Median amount donated

| | |
|---------|--------|
| Overall | £10.00 |
| Male | £10.00 |
| Female | £11.00 |

Median amount by age and gender

| Age | Male | Female |
|--------|--------|--------|
| 16-24 | £4.00 | £8.00 |
| 25- 44 | £11.00 | £10.00 |
| 45-64 | £10.00 | £15.00 |
| 65+ | £14.00 | £15.00 |

This data shows that the median amount given by older people is higher than for younger groups, although the difference between the 45-64 group and the 65+ is driven by the amount that men give.

To help us in our calculations we need to know the average amount given per person who donates. The data is as follows (only some of which is published in the UK Giving report 2012):

Mean amount donated

| | |
|---------|--------|
| Overall | £27.35 |
| Male | £26.15 |
| Female | £28.39 |

Mean amount by age and gender

| Age | Male | Female |
|--------|--------|--------|
| 16-24 | £8.55 | £12.62 |
| 25- 44 | £22.10 | £23.57 |
| 45-64 | £28.57 | £35.14 |
| 65+ | £41.28 | £32.27 |

Clearly the 65+ age group give the most—although note that this reflects a decrease in average amount given per female relative to the immediately younger age group, but a substantial rise in that of males over the younger group.

Using this data we can make an estimate of the average amount given per person who is 65 and over. We do not have the data for both genders together but to be conservative in our calculations (and as there are more women than men in the older age groups) we take a figure of **£35 per person** who gives.

Population and changes

The data used here is from the [ONS²](#) and is for England only.

(in thousands)

| Age | 2013 | 2023 | 2033 | 2013-2023 increase | % increase | 2013-2033 increase | % increase |
|-------------|-------|--------|--------|--------------------|------------|--------------------|------------|
| 60-74 | 7,955 | 8,990 | 10,322 | 1,035 | 13 | 2,361 | 23 |
| 65 and over | 9,303 | 11,320 | 14,061 | 2,017 | 22 | 4,578 | 51 |
| 75 and over | 4,285 | 5,781 | 7,312 | 1,496 | 35 | 3,027 | 71 |

Calculations

Using the figures that 59% of people aged 65+ give and that on average they give £35 per month:

In 2013, the value of donations from the over 65s was £2.31bn.³

9,303 million x 59% x £35 x 12

If we keep the proportions of those 65+ donating and the amount they donate constant, then:

In 2023, the value of donations from the over 65s would be £2.82bn—an increase of £0.51bn or 22%.

In 2033, the value of donations from the over 65s would be £3.49bn—an increase of £1.18bn or 51%.

Summary

These figures demonstrate the potential that the growing older population offers in terms of donations to charities. It also highlights what the charity sector will miss out on if it fails to adapt and prepare for the demographic changes ahead.

Of course this may also be an underestimate of what the charity sector could gain from donations from older people—donation rates and the amount donated could be higher than this and so the value could be even more.

The [Commission on the Voluntary Sector & Ageing](#) was established by [NPC](#) and [ILC-UK](#) in 2013 to consider future population trends and explore strategically how the charity sector can best prepare for and adapt to an ageing society over the next 20 years.

You can find out more about our work and download our final report at www.voluntarysectorageing.org. We welcome your thoughts and feedback, so get in touch via volsecageing@thinknpc.org or on Twitter [@VolSecAgeing](https://twitter.com/VolSecAgeing).

We are grateful for the support of our funders. The Commission has been funded in its first year by the National Lottery through the Big Lottery Fund and by Prudential.



² ONS (2013) *2012-Based National Population Projections*. Available at: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/npp/national-population-projections/2012-based-projections/rft-table-a1-4-principal-projection---england-summary.xls>

³ NB: total donations in 2011/12 were £9.3bn according to Giving 2012