



Nonprofit Sector

Building a Knowledge Base

Publicly Available Data Resources on the Nonprofit Sector in Canada

An Inventory of Data and Information on the Nonprofit Sector

An inventory of data and information pertaining to the nonprofit sector in Canada has been prepared to assist the research community and to help identify information needs.

The Nonprofit Sector and Its Organization

The criteria used by Revenue Canada in granting charitable status have significantly shaped the definition of the nonprofit sector. Beyond human services organizations, the sector is normally considered to include religious groups, hospitals, universities, culture, arts and heritage organizations—many of which are charities—but not to include most political or advocacy groups or co-operatives.

While unregistered charitable organizations are part of the sector, little is known about them. Many of these are grassroots or informal groups with specific missions.

A principal source of information on the overall shape of the sector is the database of tax returns of registered charities maintained by the Charities Division of the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency. As of 1993, the Agency also requires large non-charitable nonprofits to file an annual return; only 5,000 had filed as of 1996. The total number of organizations in this category are believed to be almost as numerous as registered charities, which number nearly 80,000.

Statistics Canada, with financial assistance from the Kahanoff Foundation, is developing a body of knowledge on the nonprofit sector in Canada through its **Nonprofit Sector Knowledge Base Project**. These findings will be of particular interest to those researching the voluntary sector or working in nonprofit organizations.

This brief report provides an overview of an inventory of publicly available data on the nonprofit sector prepared by Paul Reed and Valerie Howe. The authors can be reached at (613) 951-8217 or <reedpau@statcan.ca> for additional details from the study.

Another source of data on nonprofit organizations that are registered charities is the List of Canadian Registered Charities maintained by the Charities Division of the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency. In addition to lists of charities and listings by subject area and geographical area, it is possible to order custom tables of aggregate data on the revenues and expenditures of charities, as well as on the number of staff and total remuneration.

Little is known about unregistered charitable organizations in Canada.

In addition, Statistics Canada surveys and publishes statistics on two types of nonprofit organizations, namely hospitals and universities.

Data on Volunteering

Statistics Canada's 1997 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, together with the 1987 Survey of Voluntary Activity, greatly increased the scope of national, representative information on Canadians who volunteer. These surveys make it possible to compare the characteristics of volunteering in 1997 with those that existed a decade earlier, and to trace the connections between giving, volunteering and participating on a national scale.

Data on volunteer behaviour has also been generated in a number of Statistics Canada's General Social Surveys (GSS). The content of these annual surveys is rotated in cycles, with selected topics such as victimization, friends and family, or time use, being repeated every five years. This allows selected social dynamics to be tracked over time. For example, a survey on time use was conducted in 1986, 1992 and 1998. This made it possible to compare measures of time spent volunteering over the three points and to chart how it is affected by time pressures and family dynamics.

General Social Surveys conducted in 1989, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1996, and 1998 asked about unpaid work and informal caregiving. While these surveys provide some detail on the type of help provided to others, they generally do not indicate whether that help is provided to family members or non-members. As the first survey to focus on help and social support, the 1996 GSS provides a particularly rich set of information on informal caregiving and social support within social networks. This survey does distinguish between help given inside or outside the household.

The World Values Surveys (1981 and 1990) provide a unique opportunity to compare volunteering in Canada to that in other countries.

Data on Charitable Giving

Annual data from tax returns of individuals is a primary source of information on national patterns of charitable giving. Canadians can deduct donations to registered charities from their taxable income if they submit receipts. Therefore, these data are only for donations that have been made to registered charities for which receipts have been given, retained and submitted. Still, they compare well with other sources of information on donations, such as those from the National Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating and aggregate donations data provided by the Charities Division.

Revenue Canada produces standard tables (available from their Web site at <<http://www.cra-adrc.gc.ca>>) showing the total number of donations and the total dollar amount of allowed donations for all taxfilers as well as for all those who claimed a deduction. It also

Background

One of the first initiatives undertaken by the Nonprofit Sector Knowledge Base Project was to compile an inventory that would provide a picture of existing data resources on the nonprofit sector in Canada and serve as a guide for locating and using these publicly available data resources.

To compile this inventory, several hundred organizations and individuals were contacted through a systematic search process. These included:

- federal and provincial government departments with responsibility for the nonprofit sector;
- for-profit opinion research and polling organizations;
- large voluntary and charitable organizations;
- university survey research centres and social science data archive centres;
- university departments;
- social planning councils;
- recognized researchers in the voluntary sector; and
- Web sites of potential data-holding organizations in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom.

In all, 33 surveys conducted between 1980 and 1998 were identified that were either exclusively concerned with some aspect of the nonprofit sector or that contained questions on specific features. Of the 33 surveys, only 14 contained publicly available data that could be used for secondary analysis. Eleven of these were conducted by Statistics Canada, two were done by Revenue Canada, and one, the World Values Survey, was produced by a consortium of academic researchers. The 14 data files are described in the accompanying table.

It was surprising how little information was publicly available on the charitable and voluntary component of the nonprofit sector. This may have been because no single organization possessed the funds, skills, experience, vision and understanding required to generate, analyse, and disseminate data, or because there was a general lack of awareness that data and information are a strategic common resource. Most organizations and individuals in the nonprofit sector saw themselves as consumers of data and information, and felt little sense of obligation to actively support their production, distribution, or archival stewardship.

indicates the number and dollar amount of donations for different age groups, income groups and provinces. From this source, Statistics Canada creates two data files. The Charitable Donors data file allows researchers to purchase custom tables by geographic areas as small as postal codes and postal walks and to calculate average donations for different types of donors.

The Longitudinal Administrative Database is a complex longitudinal data file created by Statistics Canada that links selected data from tax returns to census data for the same individuals and households. It is possible to order data covering groups of donors that show their family, income and employment structure, or that can be used to track the effect of life events, such as divorce, on donating over time.

The Charitable Donors data file allows researchers to purchase custom tables for very small geographic areas.

Another important but little-used source of information on Canadian donors and their income, spending and lifestyle characteristics is Statistics Canada's Survey of Household Spending. This survey generates data on household expenditures in detail, as well as information on home tenure, sources of income, financial assets, and occupation. Contributions to charitable organizations (religious and other) and gifts given to non-household members are also measured. Custom tabulations or analyses can be ordered.

The 1997 National Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating provided significant background information on donors such as their motivations, early life experiences, and volunteer and participation activities, as well as information about their charitable giving.

Corporate Donations

Although the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency prepares a database of corporate donors based on claims for tax deductions, it does not publish data on this topic. It will, however, provide statistics to researchers on request, on a fee-for-service basis.

The table below lists 14 data files on the voluntary sector from which data or custom analyses can be obtained. All but one of these are government data sources. While information based on tax files may be available without charge or for minimal cost from the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, data from surveys or the manipulation of administrative records are available from Statistics Canada only on a cost-recovery basis.

Data from many of Statistics Canada's surveys are available to the university community free of charge under the aegis of the Data Liberation Initiative. The index for this Initiative is located at the University of Alberta, where requests for information can be posted to <capdu@majordomo.srv.ualberta.ca.>

Publicly Available Data Files*

Name of file	Content	Contact
General Social Survey – Education and Work, Cycle 4 (1989)	Includes a set of questions about respondents' involvement in charitable, service, and volunteer associations	Statistics Canada, Housing, Family and Social Statistics Division, Client Services and Dissemination, (613) 951-5979
General Social Survey – Family and Friends, Cycle 5 (1990)	Considerable information on informal helping, especially concerning the number of times people provided unpaid services to various family members or to church, school or other organizations	Statistics Canada, Housing, Family and Social Statistics Division, Client Services and Dissemination, (613) 951-5979
General Social Survey – Time Use, Cycle 7 (1992)	Contains information on time spent on various volunteer and informal helping activities	Statistics Canada, Housing, Family and Social Statistics Division, Client Services and Dissemination, (613) 951-5979
General Social Survey – Education, Work and Retirement, Cycle 9 (1994)	Contains two questions on volunteering	Statistics Canada, Housing, Family and Social Statistics Division, Client Services and Dissemination, (613) 951-5979
General Social Survey – Help and Social Support, Cycle 11 (1996)	A wealth of new information on the giving and receiving of informal caregiving and social support	Statistics Canada, Housing, Family and Social Statistics Division, Client Services and Dissemination, (613) 951-5979
General Social Survey – Time Use, Cycle 12 (1998)	Covers many similar questions on informal help as in Cycle 5 and asks questions about formal volunteering as well	Statistics Canada, Housing, Family and Social Statistics Division, Client Services and Dissemination, (613) 951-5979
National Population Health Survey - Cycle 1 (1994-95) and Cycle 2 (1996-97)	Major biennial survey of households and long-term residents of health care institutions. Includes questions about participation in voluntary associations and on religious attendance	Statistics Canada, Health Statistics Division, Client Custom Services Unit, (613) 951-1746
Survey of Volunteer Activity (1987)	The first major national survey of volunteers in Canada	Statistics Canada, Income Statistics Division, Services Dissemination Unit, (613) 951-7355 or (888) 297-7355
National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (1997)	A major national survey covering donating, volunteering, and participating, and the first to allow assessment of the linkages among the three behaviours	Statistics Canada, Income Statistics Division, Services Dissemination Unit, (613) 951-7355 or (888) 297-7355
Survey of Household Spending (annual; this survey was previously known as the Family Expenditure Survey)	Statistics on household expenditures made as gifts to non-household members, both inside and outside of Canada, and amounts donated to charitable organizations	Statistics Canada, Income Statistics Division, Services Dissemination Unit, (613) 951-7355 or (888) 297-7355
Charitable Donors (Annual)	A prime source of information on charitable donations. Annual statistics on the number of donors and the average dollar amount donated by age category, income category, gender and geographic area	Statistics Canada, Small Area and Administrative Data Division, (613) 951-9720
Longitudinal Administrative Database	A synthetic file created via linkage of records sampled from various government administrative databases since 1982 for individuals who file tax returns. Contains data on household characteristics, income and its sources, and charitable donations	Statistics Canada, Small Area and Administrative Data Division, (613) 951-9720
National Registry of Charities	Information on all Canadian registered charitable organizations that file T3010 tax returns annually	Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, Charities Division, (800) 267-2384
Tax Statistics on Individuals (Annual)	Based on T1 personal income tax returns submitted to Revenue Canada, this database provides statistics on the number of donations and total dollar amount of allowed donations for all taxpayers as well as for such subcategories as age, gender, province and territory, and income	Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, Statistics Division, (613) 957-7387
World Values Survey (1981-84, 1990-93)	In 1981 and 1990, adults in 22 and 43 countries respectively, representing almost 70% of the world's population, were asked if they had done any unpaid work for voluntary associations and which of a variety of factors motivated their participation	Neil Nevitte, Department of Political Science, University of Toronto, (416) 978-6298

* More detailed information on each of these files is contained in the full inventory document.

This is one of a series of brief reports describing the findings of the Nonprofit Sector Knowledge Base Project that can be found in both official languages on Statistics Canada's Web site <<http://www.statcan.ca>>. Contact M. Saumure at <saummar@statcan.ca> if you would like more information on this research or if you would like to receive notification by e-mail as these reports become available.