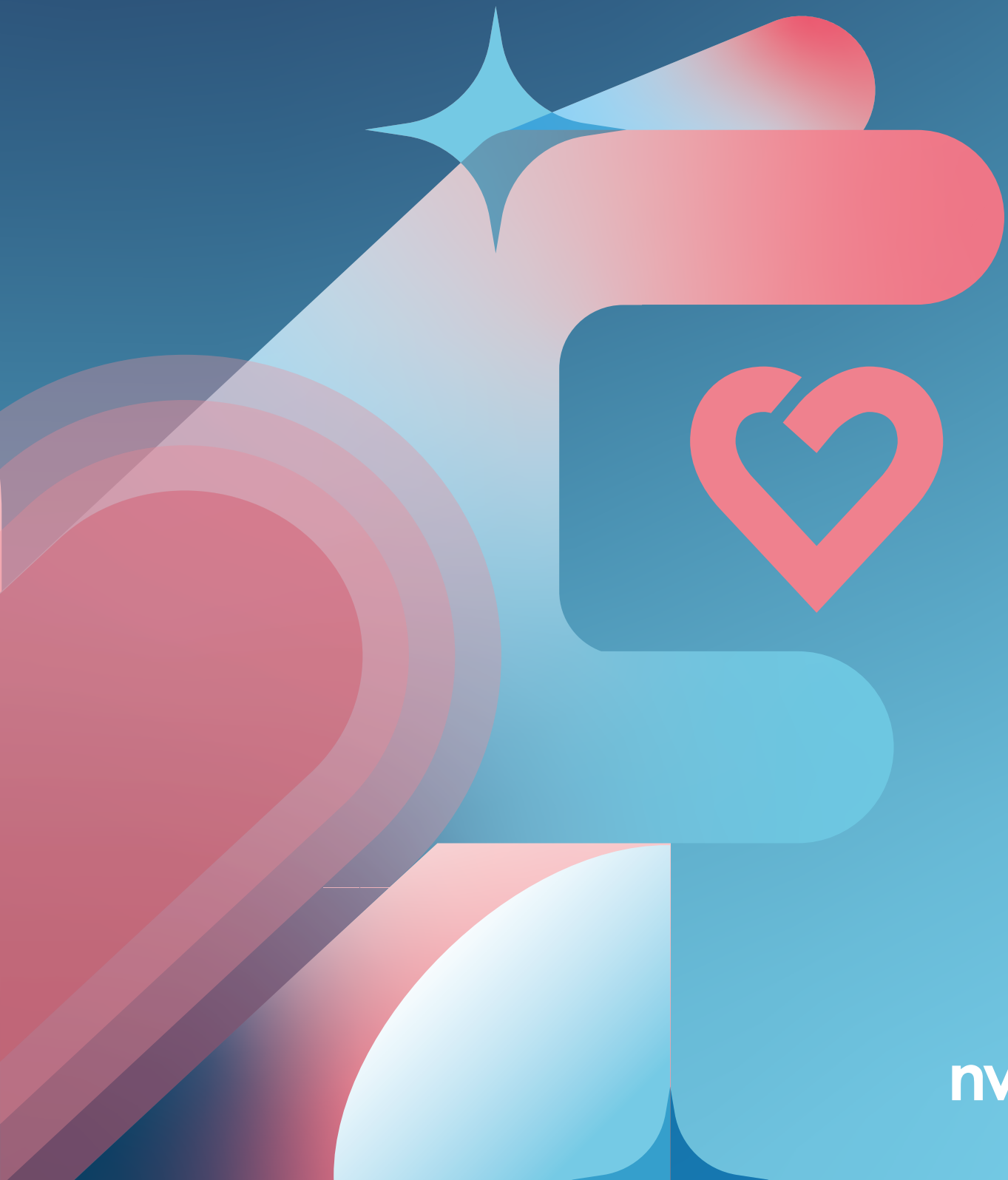


National Giving Study 2025



About the National Giving Study 2025

NVPC's National Giving Study has been conducted every two to three years since 2000, examining volunteering and donation across Singapore.

For many years, conversations about giving have been anchored in numbers—how many people volunteered, how much was donated, and how often people gave. These figures matter. They offer a clear and comparable snapshot of participation. Yet, giving takes many forms. It can be expressed through one's Time, Talent, Treasure, Ties, and Testimony, and may be channelled through both formal avenues and everyday acts of care. Focusing solely on volunteering and charitable donation risks overlooking quieter forms of giving that are equally vital to social cohesion, such as the mutual aid and support exchanged within personal networks and daily encounters. By focusing almost exclusively on counts and totals, we risk overlooking a more fundamental question: *what does giving actually do*—not only for society, but for the individuals who give?

Against the backdrop of a renewed emphasis on refreshing our social compact, the **National Giving Study 2025** marks a deliberate shift in perspective. NGS 2025 recognises the small, often commonplace acts of support—whether shared within families, between friends, or extended to one's community—as integral to the broader landscape of giving within which volunteering and donation sit. Rather than treating volunteerism and donation solely as measurable indicators, the study also reconsiders them as lived experiences worthy of examination. It moves beyond the familiar question of "how much" to ask a more consequential one: how might volunteering and donation relate to people's daily lives and social relationships, and what might these connections mean for wider society?

While the study continues to document patterns of volunteering and donation (i.e., whether volunteerism occurs online or offline, and whether donations are monetary or in-kind), NGS 2025 goes further to examine the potential associations between volunteerism and donation, with individuals' social relationships, including their personal networks and the diversity of these networks. It explores what might enable participation (e.g., role models of giving, peer influence, social support, interest and engagement in social issues) as well as what might hinder it (e.g., limiting beliefs and competing demands on time). In doing so, it recognises that participation is shaped by broader circumstances and constraints as much as goodwill or individual inclination. By understanding these dynamics, the study seeks to identify how conditions that support meaningful engagement in volunteerism and donation can be strengthened.

Through examining both the patterns and lived experiences of volunteerism and donation, alongside recognising everyday mutual aid and support, NGS 2025 aims to illuminate the role of giving in contemporary Singapore life, both for those who give and for the society it inevitably shapes.

About NVPC

NVPC is the national agency dedicated to growing a culture of volunteerism and philanthropy in Singapore. By engaging individuals, organisations, communities and leaders across the people, private and public sectors, we seek to create a more caring, inclusive, and compassionate society.

Together, we envision Singapore as a City of Good, where **everyone** can give **every day** and **everywhere** (3Es) contributing their **time, talent, treasure, ties**, and **testimony** (5Ts).

In the area of research, NVPC continues to expand and deepen our understanding of how giving evolves in Singapore.

Learn more at nvpc.org.sg

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Executive Summary

Singapore's Giving Landscape: A Strong Foundation with Opportunities Ahead

The National Giving Study 2025 reveals a society where generosity is widespread. About three in four people in Singapore have engaged in acts of giving at some point, and 68% did so in the past year—everyday acts of mutual aid, volunteering, or donating to causes.

Participation in structured forms therefore provides only one part of a larger story: over one in five volunteered in the past year, while nearly half made donations. Much of Singapore's generosity flows through informal, relational channels rather than organised structures—reflecting how care is practised here, embedded in personal networks and everyday exchanges.

What Enables and Constrains Participation

The study found that participation is shaped by more than goodwill alone:

- Role models and peer influence encourage engagement—early exposure lays foundations, while close social networks reinforce participation
- Supportive environments matter—domestic help from personal networks and workplace support can enable participation in volunteering
- Perceptions affect decisions—beliefs about financial resources and skills requirements may discourage participation while time-related beliefs shape volunteering patterns
- Time pressures shape participation patterns—work, childcare, and caregiving demands affect whether and when people volunteer
- Online engagement relates differently to offline action—staying informed encourages participation, while frequent online expression may reflect forms of giving expressed differently from volunteering or donation

Volunteers also tend to have more diverse social networks across different backgrounds, suggesting that volunteerism and social connectedness go hand in hand.

The Path Forward

People in Singapore are not indifferent—the willingness to help is already present. The challenge lies in creating pathways for these existing values to find structured expression through: leveraging social networks, supporting role-modelling, strengthening supportive environments, designing for flexibility, countering misperceptions, and building bridges from online awareness to offline action.

The goal is not to replace informal giving, but to expand the options available, **enabling people to express care in multiple ways**. Singapore's giving landscape reveals a quiet strength—a foundation for more vibrant civic life built not from scratch, but by enabling existing generosity to flow from where it is most available, to where it is most needed.



Study Overview

Methodology

A New Approach to Examining the Giving Landscape

Measuring Giving Behaviours

Historically, the National Giving Study has focused primarily on measuring volunteerism and charitable donation. This emphasis has shaped how giving is measured, with greater attention on activities that fall within these established categories. In the **National Giving Study (NGS) 2025**, this starting point is expanded by first asking respondents about their general giving behaviours before examining the different forms of giving.

Respondents were asked whether they had engaged in acts of giving and who these acts were directed towards, including family, friends, strangers, the environment, or animals. Giving was captured in both action-based and material forms, including activities undertaken to help others, as well as the giving away of personal material goods such as money or belongings. By beginning with reported behaviours rather than predefined categories, this approach recognises that giving can take place outside organised settings and may not always meet the criteria used to classify activities strictly as volunteerism or donation.

This broader measurement allows the study to capture behaviours intended to help others or contribute to society that are embedded in daily life, alongside more structured and coordinated forms of giving. In doing so, NGS 2025 widens the lens of observation and provides a more comprehensive perspective of how people support one another through a multiplicity of giving behaviours.



Measuring Volunteering and Donation

Past iterations of the National Giving Study measured volunteerism and donation using a **definition-led approach**. This method presented respondents with definitions of what constitutes volunteerism or donation before they reported their behaviours. While it provided a shared reference point, the approach relied heavily on **individual interpretation**. Variations in respondents' understanding of the definitions meant that reported behaviours were shaped as much by perception as by actual activity. This introduces a degree of subjectivity, reflecting individual interpretations of the definitions. Differences in how volunteerism and donation are defined in the literature and in practice further complicate attempts at comparison across contexts.

The 2025 edition of the **National Giving Study** adopts a **criteria-led approach** to measuring volunteerism and donation behaviours. Rather than defining these terms upfront, respondents were asked to describe their own behaviours over the past 12 months. These behaviours were then assessed against a set of pre-specified criteria, such as whether it was directed beyond kin or close friends (e.g., to strangers, the environment, or animals), whether it was undertaken voluntarily rather than under coercion, and whether it was uncompensated in substantive terms.

By focusing on **actual reported behaviours** rather than respondents' interpretations of definitions, the criteria-led approach offers a perspective that is **less dependent on subjective understanding**. While some degree of subjectivity remains in self-reported data, the criteria-led approach supports a more structured way of identifying volunteerism and donation behaviours, supporting the examination of patterns in participation, as well as the broader circumstances shaping engagement. With this revised approach, NGS 2025 aims to present a more inclusive view of giving—one that reflects the behaviours people in Singapore engage in. This approach also aligns with international statistical guidance on measuring volunteer work.

For a detailed discussion of the methodological changes in NGS 2025, see *Technical Notes: An Evolving Understanding of Giving and Advancing the Measurement of Volunteerism and Donation*.

Methods

Quantitative Survey

The final sample comprises 3,699 respondents aged 15 and over, drawn from the general population of people residing in Singapore. It includes Singapore Citizens, Permanent Residents, and pass holders, including those on Employment, Dependent, Student, Work Permit, and S Passes, while excluding those on Social Visit Pass, foreign domestic helpers, and foreign construction workers. The sampling frame was derived using proportionate stratified random sampling by dwelling type from the Department of Statistics' National Database on Dwellings in Singapore. Minimum fieldwork quotas for age, gender, and ethnicity were implemented to ensure sufficient population subgroup sample sizes.

Data collection was conducted between July and October 2025. Households were approached through door-to-door visits, and surveys were primarily self-administered using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI). Respondents completed the questionnaire on a tablet under the supervision of trained fieldwork personnel, with showcards provided where needed.

Data Analysis

Post-survey weights were applied during data analysis to account for population proportions, ensuring that the final sample is representative of the general population of Singapore in terms of age, gender, and ethnicity.

Linear, logistic and multinomial logistic regression analyses were conducted to examine factors associated with volunteerism and donation, and how participation relates to other factors. Sequence analysis revealed different volunteerism and donation participation patterns over the year. Incomplete responses were excluded from the analyses.

Three aspects of volunteerism and donation behaviours were examined:

- **Status:** whether respondents had never participated, previously participated, or currently participating in volunteerism and donation
 - Never [reference category]
 - Former
 - Current
- **Participation Patterns:** how respondents engaged in volunteerism and donation over the year
 - *Volunteerism:* Barely Engaged [reference category], Occasional (lower frequency) Volunteers, Seasonal Volunteers, Occasional (higher frequency) Volunteers, Consistent Volunteers
 - *Donation:* Barely Engaged [reference category], Occasional Donors, Consistent Donors
- **Intensity:** how much people gave through volunteerism and donation
 - *Volunteerism:* Total time spent on volunteerism in the past 12 months (hours)
 - *Donation:* Total amount donated in the past 12 months (SG\$)

All reported results were statistically significant at the 0.05 level ($p \leq 0.05$). All models controlled for age, gender, ethnicity, educational backgrounds, marital status, religion, and dwelling types.



NGS 2025 Insights



01

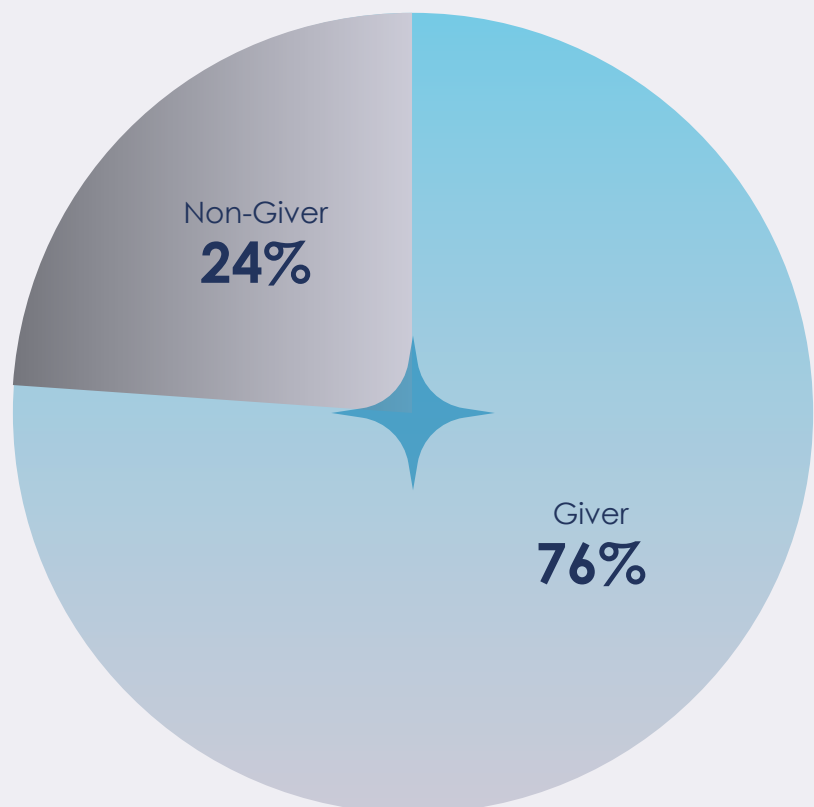
The Giving Landscape in Singapore

Overview

Giving behaviours were found to be widespread across Singapore. When asked whether they had engaged in acts of giving—either through activities undertaken to help others or by giving money or personal belongings for the benefit of others or society—about three in four respondents reported having ever given in some form. In 2025, 68% of the respondents reported having given in the past 12 months, suggesting that giving is not merely a recalled or historical behaviour but an active and ongoing practice for the majority of givers in Singapore.

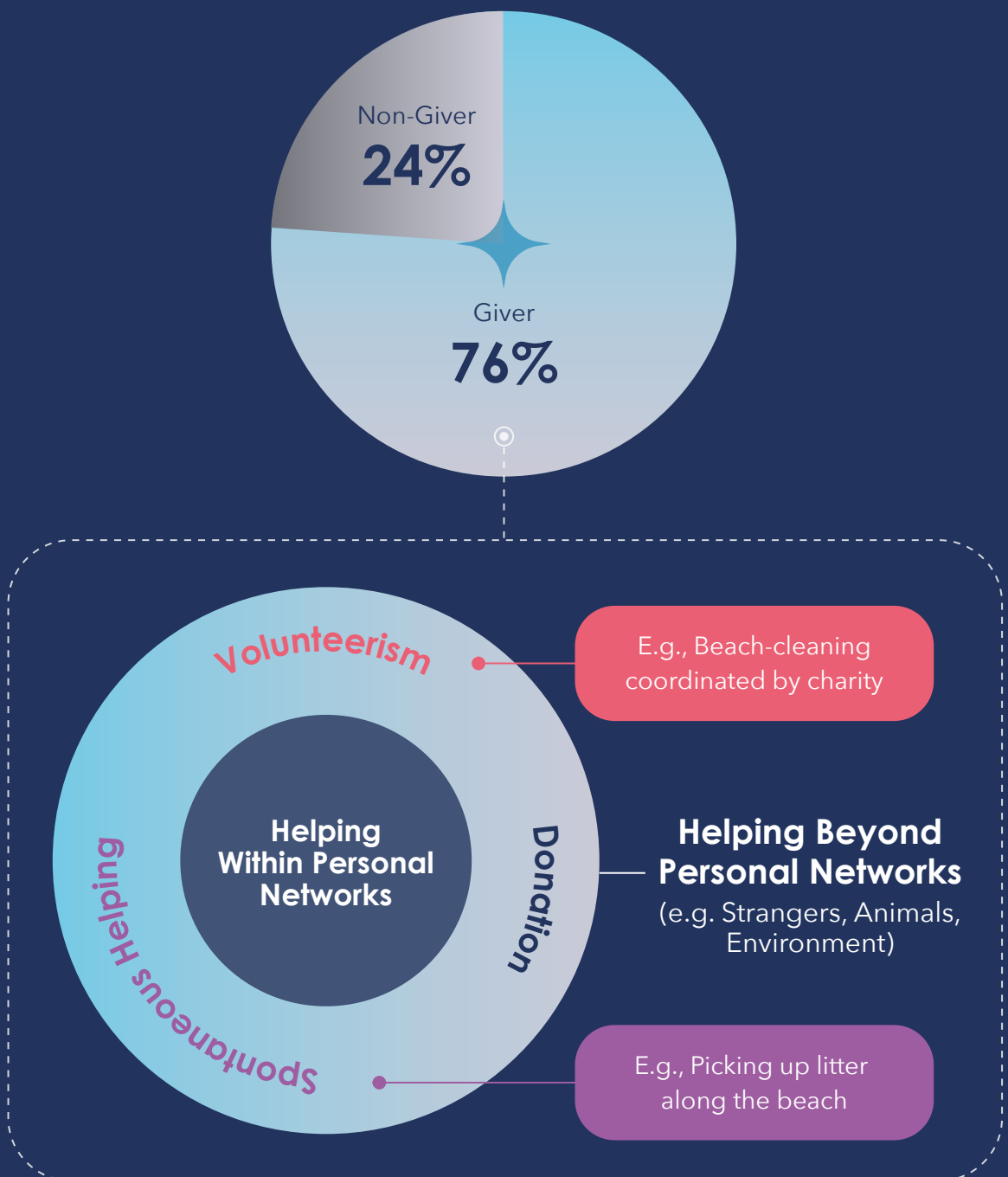
Recipients of these acts of giving spanned personal networks, such as friends and relatives, and strangers, suggesting that giving as practised in everyday life occurs across the full spectrum of social relationships—from those closest to us, to the broader community beyond. Among those who gave to strangers, a majority did so through charitable donation, while a substantial proportion did so through volunteerism, reflecting the more structured forms through which giving to those outside one’s immediate social circle tends to be expressed.

The prevalence of such behaviours highlights the significance of giving as a social practice, with implications that extend beyond individual acts of generosity. In a society that values collective wellbeing and a strong social compact, individuals’ readiness to give—whether through time, resources, or acts of care directed at those near and far—reflects and reinforces the relational bonds that underpin a We-First approach to community life.



1.1 The Many Forms of Giving

When asked to describe what they did to help others or contribute to society, respondents painted a portrait of giving that unfolds across a wide spectrum of contexts and relationships. Their accounts reveal that giving takes shape in ways both quiet and visible, intimate and public.



For many, giving begins in the everyday—in small gestures woven into the rhythms of daily life. Such **mutual aid** rarely announces itself, yet it forms a thread of care that runs through ordinary encounters—on public transport, in housing estates, at hawker centres, and in moments when someone simply needs a hand.

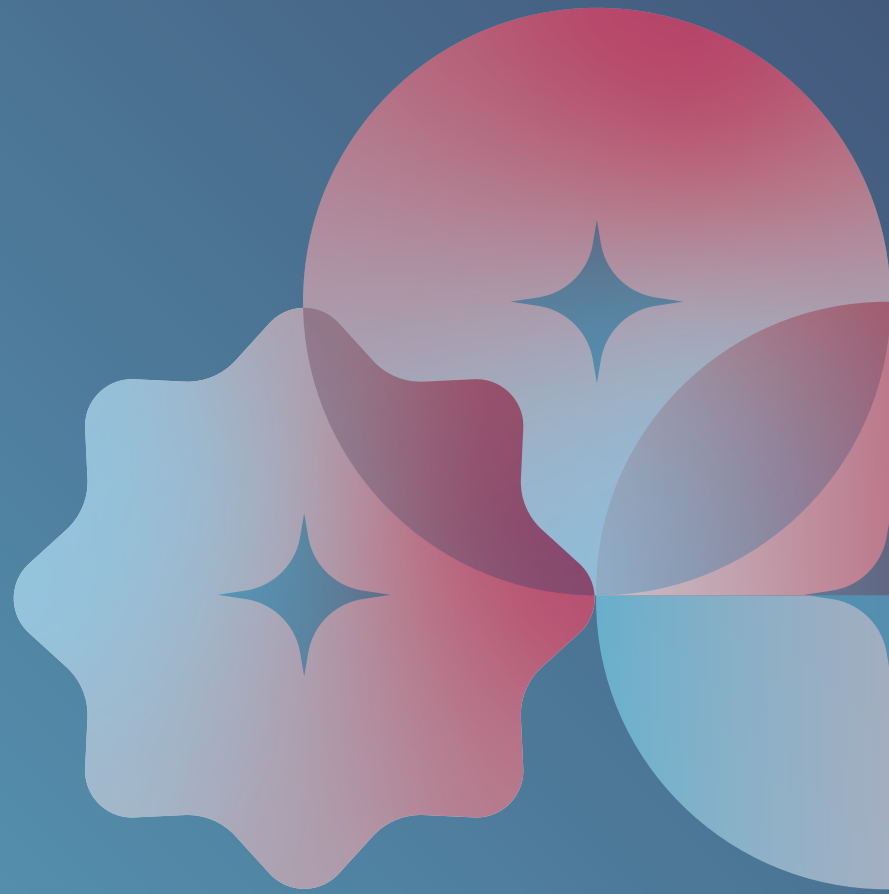
Such acts extend to strangers as much as to those we know. Respondents described helping someone who collapsed on the MRT, lifting a stroller onto a bus when a parent struggled at the entrance, picking up litter during walks along the beach, or caring for community cats in their neighbourhood. These moments of responsiveness—to unfamiliar faces, the environment, or animals in our midst—reflect a form of giving rooted not in prior relationship, but in shared presence: the recognition that help is needed and can be offered, however briefly.

Giving also takes place within closer circles. Friends and relatives were supported through practical help and a listening ear, particularly during difficult periods. Neighbours benefitted from small interventions—parcels collected, plants watered, conflicts mediated—that eased the burdens of daily living. In these moments, giving appears less as a formal decision, and more as a responsive presence.

Yet giving also takes more structured forms. Respondents described offering their time and effort through **volunteering** programmes—visiting elderly who live alone, tutoring students, packing and distributing meals to those unable to leave their homes, or participating in beach cleanups and environmental initiatives. Others reported contributing through **donations**, whether one-off gifts or monthly commitments to causes they care about, channeling resources toward organisations working on issues ranging from animal welfare to healthcare to youth development. These forms of giving tend to be directed outward, toward strangers and the wider community, often facilitated by institutions and organisations that provide the infrastructure for such participation.

The line between informal acts and structured contribution is not always clear-cut, and the same activity can take different forms depending on context. Picking up litter during walks along the beach or in neighbourhood green spaces is an act of care for the environment; coordinated through an environmental organisation, it becomes structured volunteerism. Helping someone carry groceries or assisting an elderly person across the road are spontaneous acts of helping strangers, while organising activities for elderly residents at a community centre reflects coordinated civic participation. What distinguishes these more structured forms is not necessarily greater commitment or care, but rather certain features: they are directed towards those outside one's immediate circle of family and friends, voluntary acts freely chosen rather than undertaken out of obligation or external pressure, and carried out as part of an organised effort.

Giving, in this sense, exists along a continuum—from spontaneous gestures born of immediate encounters to commitments channelled through coordinated effort. Both everyday acts of helping and structured forms of giving are essential to social life, though the latter—volunteerism and charitable donation—are more readily observed and documented in terms of coordination and scale, connecting individual goodwill to collective effort and directing support toward those beyond one's immediate circle.



02

By the Numbers— Volunteerism and Donation in Singapore

Overview

Examining volunteering and donation behaviours provides insight into how people in Singapore channel their goodwill into coordinated action. While everyday acts of helping often arise spontaneously, volunteerism and donation reflect structured forms of intentional giving, directed towards causes and communities beyond one's immediate circle.

Painting the Landscape

Mapping these patterns reveals who participates, how often, and in what ways. Descriptive data on prevalence, participation patterns, types of engagement, intensity, and cause areas help us understand the current state of volunteerism and donation in Singapore. This snapshot provides a foundation for appreciating the collective impact of these efforts and for civic organisations to plan programmes, mobilise support, and build infrastructure that enables participation.

Why Numbers Alone Are Not Enough

While these numbers paint a picture of *what* is happening, they cannot explain *why*. Prevalence figures tell us how many people participate, but not what enabled participation or prevented others from engaging. Understanding the landscape is essential, but the conditions that shape it matter just as much.

This chapter focuses on describing the participation landscape; a later chapter turns to the factors that potentially enable or hinder participation—moving from observation to action by strengthening the conditions that allow more people to participate.

What This Chapter Reports

This chapter provides an overview of volunteerism and donation in Singapore in the past 12 months:

- **Prevalence:** How many people engaged in volunteerism and donation?
- **Patterns:** What were the patterns of volunteerism and donation?
- **Types:** How did people volunteer and where? What forms of donation were made?
- **Intensity:** How much time was spent volunteering and what amount of money was donated?
- **Cause Areas:** Which causes did volunteers and donors support?

2.1 Prevalence of Engagement

How many people engaged in volunteerism and donation in the past 12 months?

In 2025, just over 1 in 5 people engaged in volunteerism in Singapore (21%), while nearly half of the population (45%) contributed through monetary and in-kind donations over the past 12 months.

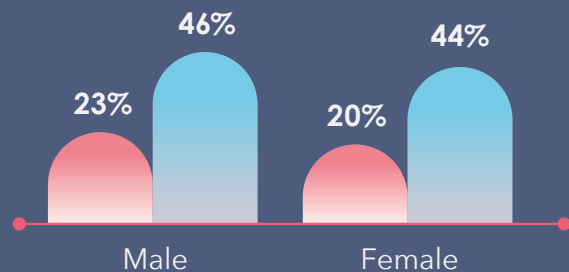
Volunteer participation showed no statistically significant differences by gender—23% males and 20% females volunteered—suggesting broadly similar engagement across genders. Donation followed a comparable pattern—46% males and 44% females donated, with no statistically significant gender differences observed.

Differences in volunteerism were observed across age groups. Seniors were notably less likely to have volunteered, with only 10% participating compared to the younger age groups—Youths (20%), Adults (28%), and Pre-Seniors (24%). Donation also varied by age, though the pattern differed. Adults (53%) and Pre-Seniors (48%) had the highest rate of participation, while Youths (41%) and Seniors (40%) showed lower rates in the past year.

Volunteerism and Donation Rate in 2025

By Gender

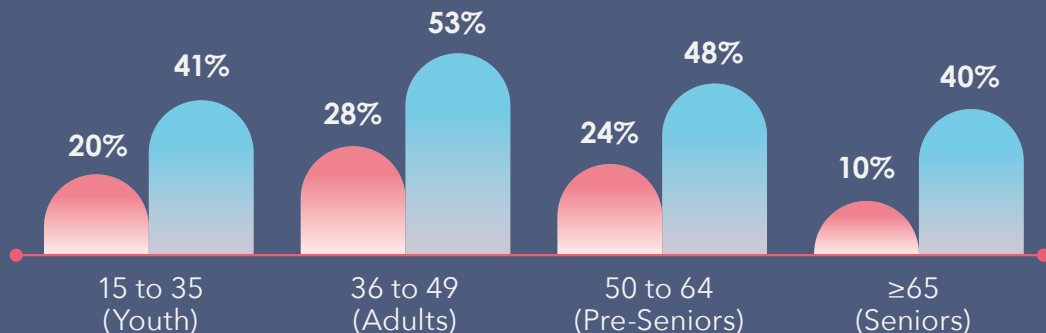
● Current Volunteers
● Current Donors



Volunteerism and Donation Rate in 2025

By Age Group

● Current Volunteers ● Current Donors



2.2 Patterns of Engagement

What were the patterns of volunteerism and donation over the past 12 months?

Key

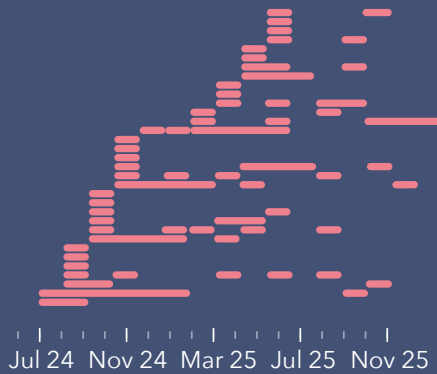
- Volunteer Activity
- No Activity

Note: Results from sequence analysis of volunteering activities over time.

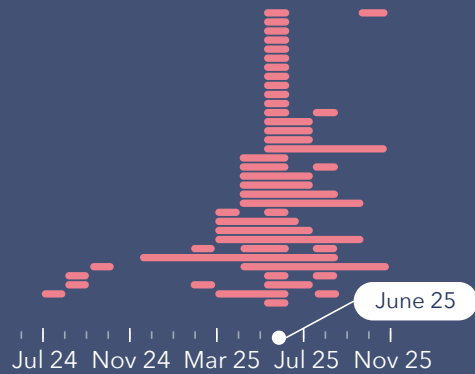
Barely Engaged
n=3242



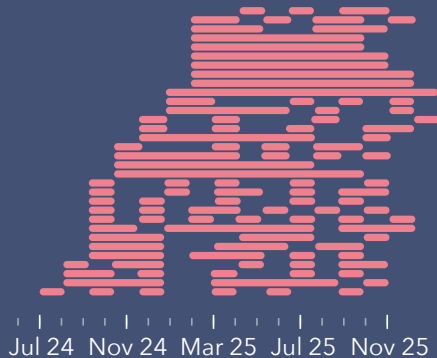
Occasional Volunteers (Low Frequency) n=243



Seasonal Volunteers
n=100



Occasional Volunteers (High Frequency) n=58



Consistent Volunteers
n=56



For a detailed description of the analytical approach, see Technical Notes: *Sequence Analysis of Volunteerism and Donation Participation Patterns*.

Volunteerism

Patterns of Volunteer Participation Over Time

Examining patterns of volunteer participation over time provides deeper insight into how individuals engage in organised giving. Rather than fitting participation into fixed time-based categories such as “once every six months” or “once every week,” the study mapped participation organically across the year, capturing both the frequency and consistency of engagement.

From these observed patterns, respondents were grouped into distinct participation profiles:

- **Barely Engaged:** Participation that is absent or very sparse, with little sustained activity across the year
- **Occasional (Low Frequency) Volunteers:** Scattered participation at irregular intervals
- **Seasonal Volunteers:** Seasonal participation concentrated around specific periods
- **Occasional (High Frequency) Volunteers:** Periods of relatively active engagement, though not sustained throughout the year
- **Consistent Volunteers:** Frequent and steady participation maintained across time

These profiles reveal that volunteer participation is not uniform. Individuals do not fall neatly into simple time-based categories such as “once a month” or “once a week.” Instead, participation varies in both frequency and consistency, raising the question: what distinguishes those who volunteer consistently from those who participate occasionally or seasonally?

Who Volunteers, and How Consistently?

To address this, the study examined the demographic characteristics of respondents across the five participation profiles. Several patterns emerged, suggesting that volunteer participation is shaped not only by individual circumstances, but also by the social contexts and commitments that structure people’s lives.

Shared Social Connections and Consistent Engagement

Respondents with stronger shared social connections—such as those who are married—were more likely to have volunteered frequently and consistently. This suggests that close social bonds can support more regular and sustained participation, with family life offering one such example—whether through shared activities undertaken together, or the encouragement and continuity that familiar ties provide. The presence of close social bonds may provide both motivation and opportunity for more regular engagement, reinforcing volunteerism as a collective rather than purely individual practice.

Seasonal Participation Among Students

Students, by contrast, tended to have volunteered occasionally or seasonally, with participation often concentrated around specific periods such as the mid-year school break. This pattern likely reflects the constraints and rhythms of academic life, where opportunities to volunteer are shaped by term schedules and the availability of time outside of academic commitments. For this group, volunteerism appears responsive to the temporal structure of their education, rather than sustained throughout the year.

Faith and Consistent Participation

Respondents who identified with a religion were more likely to volunteer frequently and consistently. This may reflect the role of faith-based practices, values, or community structures in encouraging regular acts of service. Religious institutions often provide both the infrastructure for organised volunteerism and the normative framework that supports sustained participation, suggesting that for some, giving is closely intertwined with spiritual life and communal belonging.

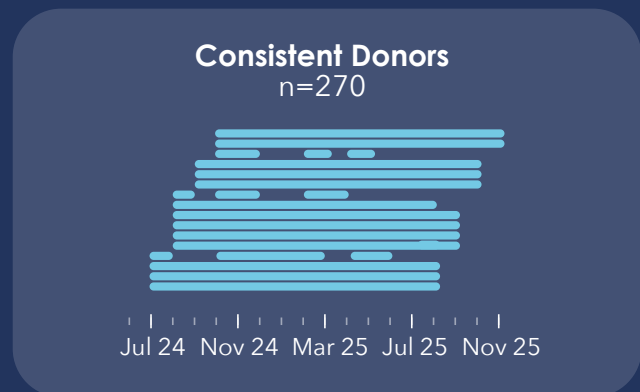
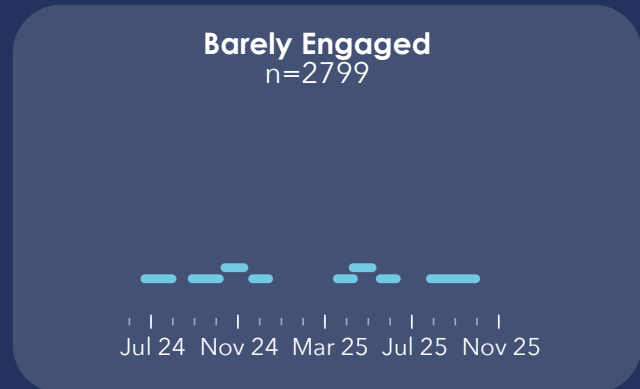
Taken together, these findings indicate that volunteer participation is not solely a matter of individual inclination but is shaped by broader social ties, normative commitments, and how time is structured in everyday life. Those embedded in family networks or faith communities may find more consistent pathways to engagement, while those whose lives are structured by other demands—such as students navigating academic calendars—participate in ways that align with the temporal contours of their circumstances.

Donation

Key

- Donation Activity
- No Activity

Note: Results from sequence analysis of donation activities over time.



Patterns of Donation Over Time

Examining patterns of donation over time reveals participation that, while similarly varied, follows somewhat more distinct trajectories than volunteering. From these observed patterns, respondents were grouped into distinct donor profiles:

- **Barely Engaged:** Donation activity that is absent or extremely sparse, with little to no sustained giving across the year
- **Occasional Donors:** Scattered donation activity at irregular intervals, with periods of giving interspersed with periods of inactivity
- **Consistent Donors:** Frequent and steady donation activity maintained throughout the year

These profiles reveal that donation participation, while similarly not uniform, is comparatively less varied than volunteering participation. Donors tend to fall into more distinct patterns—either giving consistently throughout the year, giving occasionally when circumstances or appeals arise, or giving very little at all. Unlike volunteering, which exhibits a wider range of seasonal and frequency-based patterns, donation participation appears more binary in its consistency, suggesting that once established, donation habits may be more stable and less influenced by temporal fluctuations.

Who Donates, and How Consistently?

To understand who falls into each donation pattern, the study examined the demographic characteristics of respondents across the three donor profiles. The findings suggest that donation participation is shaped particularly by financial capacity and religious affiliation.

Financial Resources and Consistent Giving

Respondents who were financially better-resourced were more likely to donate frequently and consistently. This pattern highlights the role of economic capacity in enabling sustained giving—those with greater financial means may find it easier to commit to regular donations, potentially through automated monthly contributions or repeated responses to appeals. For this group, donation appears less constrained by immediate financial circumstances and more integrated into routine financial practices.

Faith and Donation Consistency

As with volunteering, respondents who identified with a religion were more likely to donate consistently compared to those without religious affiliation. Conversely, donation was notably infrequent among those with no religion. This suggests that faith-based norms, practices, or institutional structures may play a significant role in encouraging regular charitable donation. Religious communities often emphasise tithing, charity, or acts of generosity, providing both the normative framework and practical channels that support consistent donation.

Taken together, these findings indicate that donation participation is shaped by both material capacity and normative commitments. Those with greater financial resources and those embedded in faith communities are more likely to give consistently, while others may donate occasionally in response to particular causes or circumstances, or not at all. Unlike volunteering, where patterns reflect temporal rhythms and social ties, donation appears more directly linked to economic means and religious values.

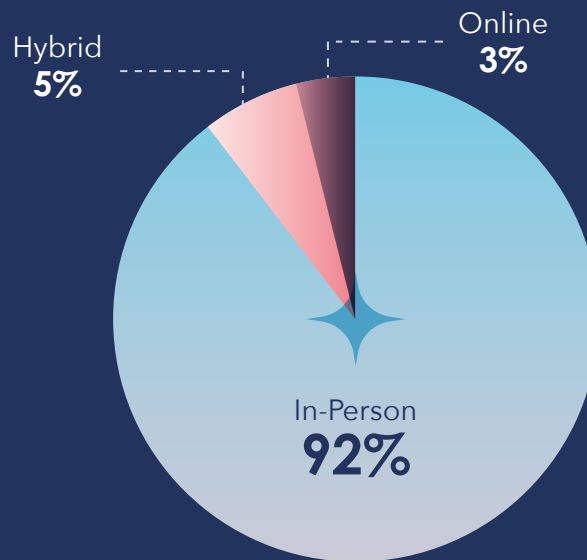


2.3 Types of Engagement

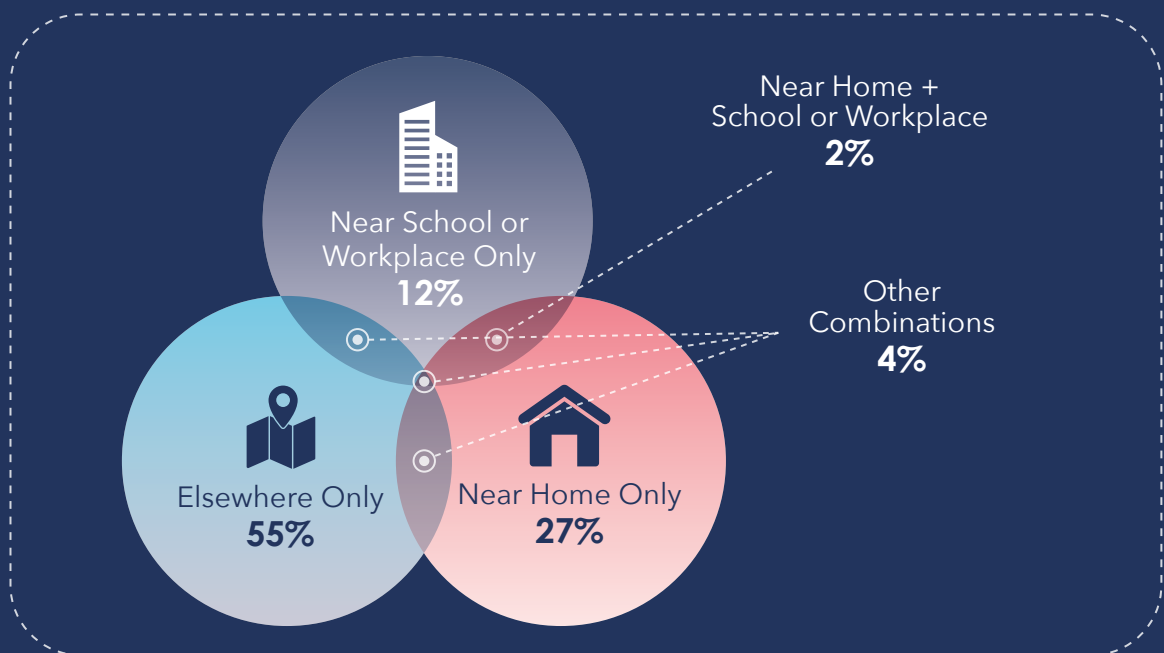
How did people volunteer and where in the past 12 months?
What did people donate in the past 12 months?

Volunteerism

A. Mode and Location of Volunteerism



Mode of Volunteerism in 2025



Location of In-Person Volunteerism in 2025

Among those who volunteered in the past year, the vast majority (92%) did so in person, indicating a high prevalence of face-to-face engagement. In comparison, 3% reported volunteering virtually, while 5% said they had done both in-person and virtual volunteering over the past year.

Of those who volunteered in person, more than a quarter (27%) did so near their residence, 12% indicated that they volunteered near their workplace or educational institution, and 2% reported volunteering at both locations. Over half of them (55%) stated that they volunteered elsewhere, while 4% mentioned volunteering at multiple locations.

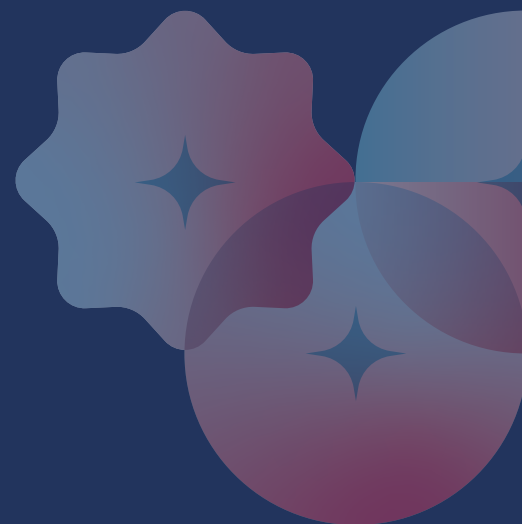
Proximity and Volunteerism

The concentration of volunteering near home suggests that, for some, giving back begins within one's own neighbourhood or immediate community. Proximity may reduce logistical barriers and strengthen connections to the places where volunteers live, turning volunteerism into an extension of everyday life within familiar surroundings. Volunteering near the office or school, though less common, similarly reflects the role of routine environments in shaping opportunities for engagement—workplaces and educational institutions may offer structured programmes or encourage participation through existing social networks.

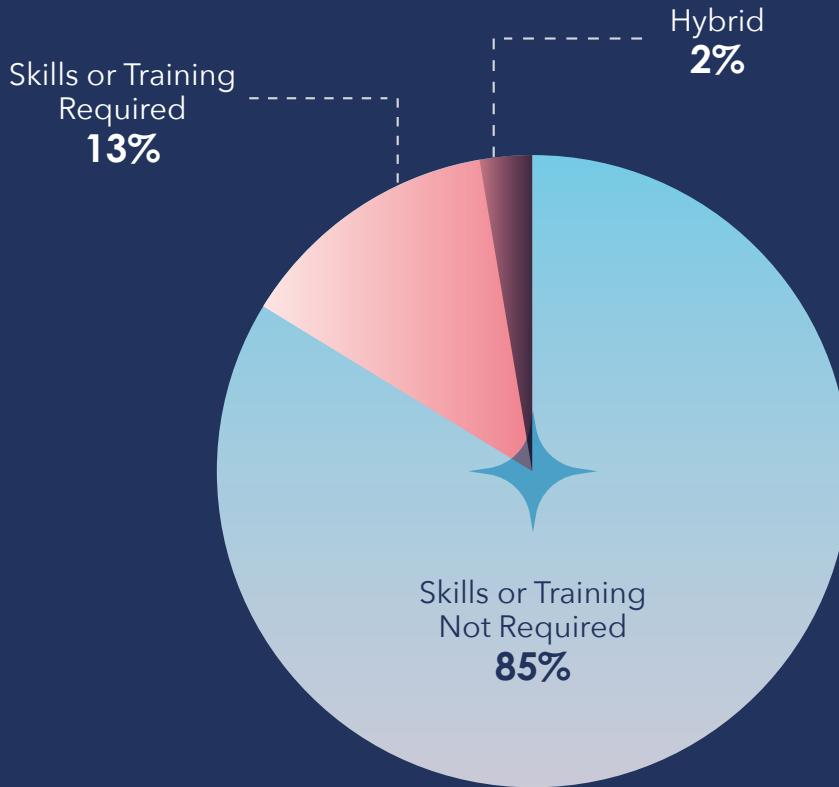
At the same time, the majority of volunteers engage beyond these immediate zones, travelling further afield to contribute. This may reflect the nature of certain volunteer roles—such as nature conservation, hospital visits, or events that require specific locations—or indicate a deliberate choice to direct effort towards causes and communities beyond one's own. For these volunteers, participation extends beyond the immediately familiar, connecting them with strangers and broader civic structures.

The Persistence of In-Person Volunteerism

This pattern suggests that volunteerism remains a largely relational and community-based activity, where direct interaction and physical presence are central to the experience. While virtual opportunities exist, they appear to play a more complementary role rather than replacing in-person forms of service. The physical act of showing up—whether nearby or further away—continues to define how most people engage in organised giving.



B. Skills and Training Requirements



Skilled Volunteerism in 2025

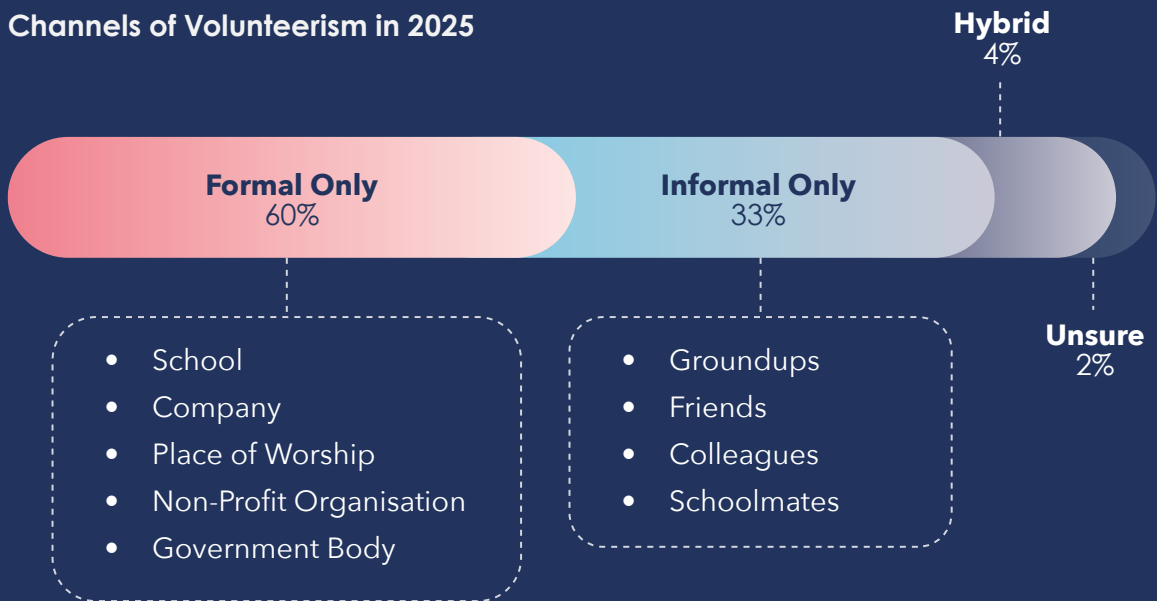
Regarding the skills required for participation, 13% of the respondents reported taking part in activities that required formal training (i.e., beyond basic pre-activity briefing) or specific skills. The majority (85%) engaged in activities that did not require such prerequisites, while 2% reported having done both.

This distribution reflects the types of volunteer activities respondents reported participating in. While some roles involve specialised skills or additional preparation, most do not. Volunteering thus appears broadly accessible in practice, with many volunteers engaging in activities that do not require prior training or expertise.



C. Avenues of Volunteerism

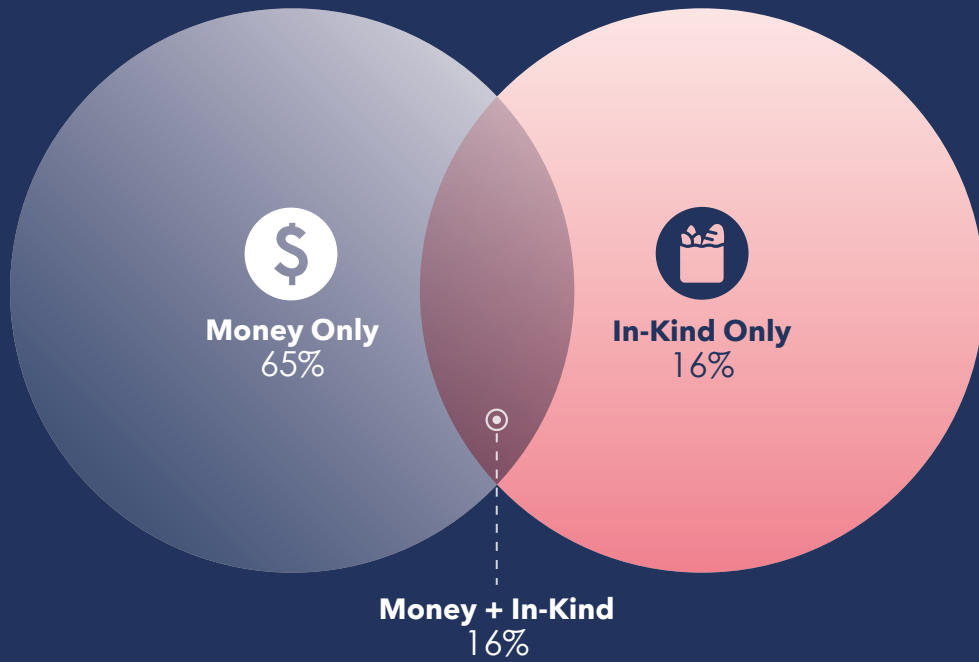
Channels of Volunteerism in 2025



In the past year, three in five volunteers (60%) engaged through formal channels, including schools, companies, non-profit organisations, and government agencies. 33% volunteered via informal avenues, such as through groundups, friends, other people, or by organising volunteering activities themselves. A minority (4%) participated through both formal and informal means.

These figures indicate that volunteerism has been embedded within institutions such as schools and corporations in Singapore, potentially enabling greater access, and ultimately, reducing barriers to entry. At the same time, the substantial informal participation over the past year suggests a diversification of volunteerism beyond established organisations, with many choosing to contribute through autonomous, peer-led initiatives.

Donation



Donations took several forms, reflecting the different ways people chose to contribute. The majority of donors (65%) made financial contributions, whether through one-off donations in response to crises and appeals—such as giving money to individuals on the street, participating in online fundraising campaigns, or donating to humanitarian and natural disaster efforts abroad—regular monthly commitments to causes of personal significance, or donations to religious organisations. A further 16% made in-kind contributions, such as clothing, food and beverages, household items, books, and other materials. Another 16% reported giving both money and in-kind support over the course of the year, suggesting that many donors diversified how they contributed depending on the causes they supported or the needs they encountered. The remaining 3% combined monetary and in-kind donations with other forms of giving.

These patterns highlight the diversity of resources individuals offer. Giving extended beyond financial contributions to include goods and material support, underscoring the multiple ways people choose to contribute to society. The prevalence of combined giving—where individuals contribute through more than one form—suggests that, for many donors, supporting others is not confined to a single method but adapts to the opportunities and circumstances they encounter throughout the year.

2.4 Intensity of Giving

How much time was spent volunteering and how much money was donated in the past 12 months?

Volunteerism in 2025



3 Times in 2025
Median



7 Hours
in Total in 2025
Median

Donation in 2025



4 Times in 2025
Median



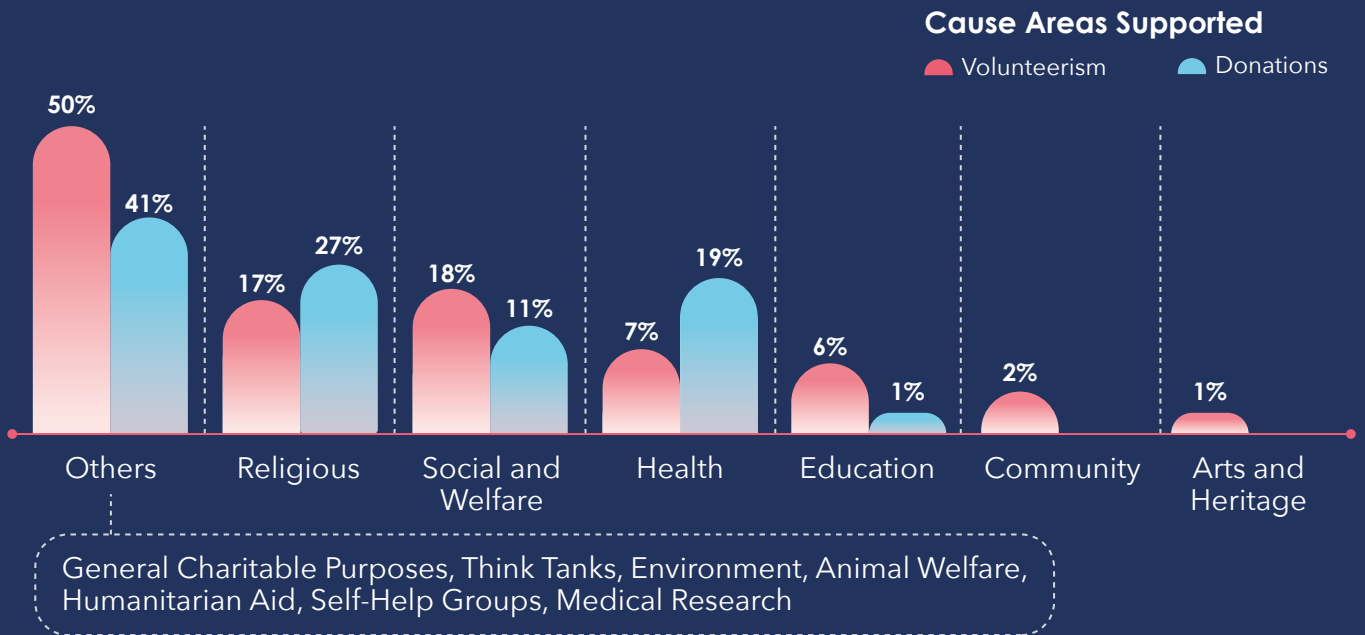
SGD 120
in Total in 2025
Median

Respondents reported having volunteered a median of three times over the past year. Donations were made slightly more frequently, with a median of four instances in the past 12 months. In terms of total contributions, volunteers gave a median of seven hours across the year. Among those who donated money, the median total amount contributed was SGD 120.

Using the median (i.e., the middle value when all responses are arranged from lowest to highest) helps provide a clearer picture of typical participation. It reduces the influence of unusually high contributions and reflects what a “typical” volunteer or donor gave over the year. These figures offer a snapshot of how giving is practised by most people, rather than the most active or generous few.

2.5 Cause Areas

Which causes did volunteers and donors support in the past 12 months?



Volunteers and donors in Singapore contributed to a wide range of causes in the past year, though participation concentrated in some sectors more than the others. A notable portion of participation was in the “Others” sector (over 40%), which includes diverse causes such as general charitable purposes, think tanks, environment, animal welfare, humanitarian aid, self-help groups, and medical research.¹

Among volunteers, the largest proportion engaged in social welfare causes (17.6%), followed closely by religious causes (16.9%). Some volunteered for health (7.4%) and education (6.1%) causes, while a smaller proportion volunteered in arts and heritage, community events, and sports.

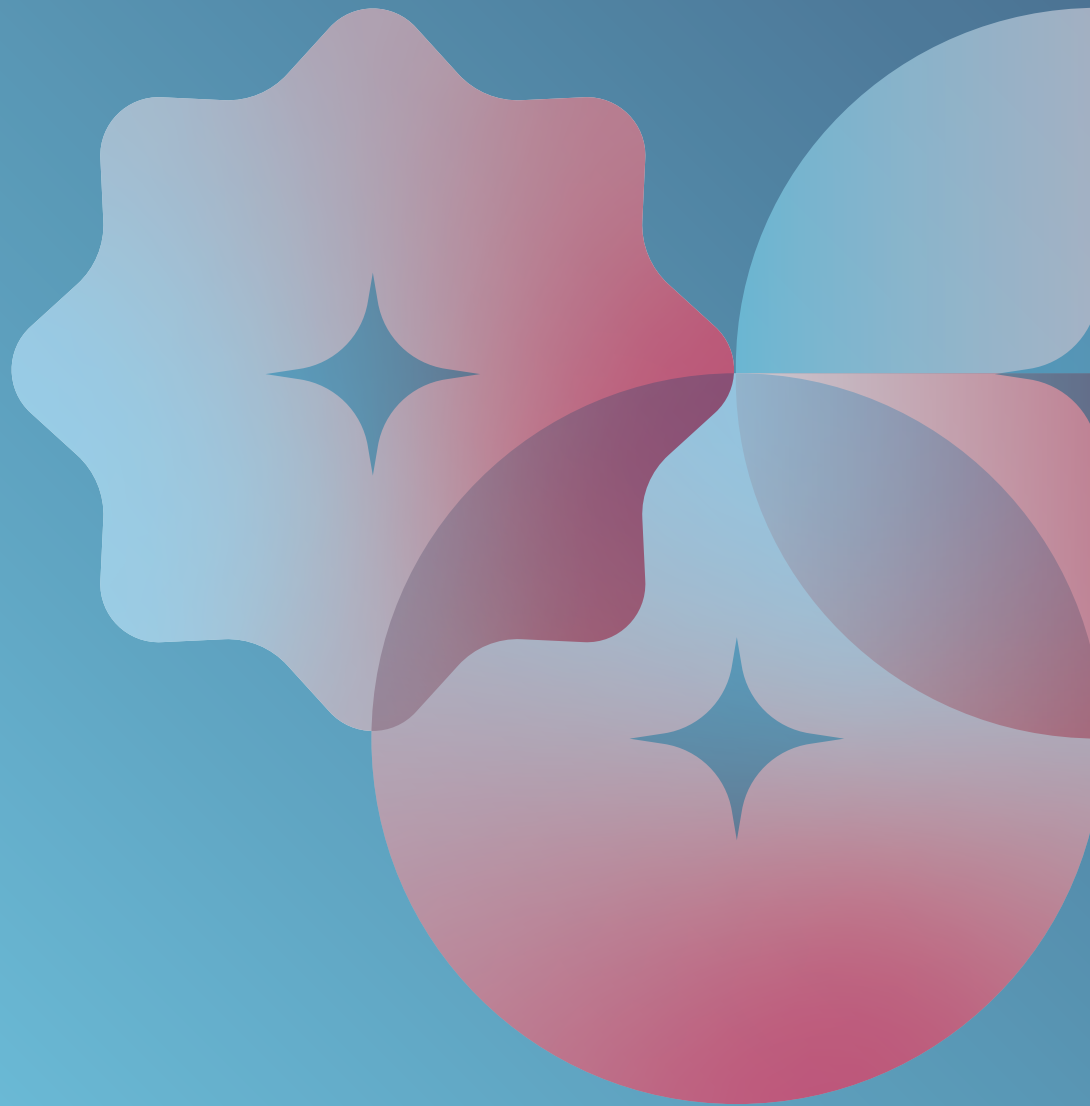
Among donors, over a quarter contributed to religious causes (26.9%), followed by health (19.1%) and social welfare (11.0%) causes. A smaller proportion contributed to education, as well as arts and heritage causes.

The patterns suggest that volunteers and donors gravitate towards social welfare, religious, and health causes, which form core areas of organised giving. At the same time, a substantial portion of participation spans across a wide array of other causes, from humanitarian to self-help initiatives, reflecting the varied ways people choose to contribute.

¹ The “Others” category draws primarily from the “Primary Sector” classification and its sub-classifications from the [Charity Portal](#). Additional causes in this category were identified from survey data based on the organisations or groups that respondents volunteered for or donated to.

03

Beyond the Numbers— Enabling Volunteerism and Donation in Singapore



Overview

Understanding What Enables and Constrains Participation

Prevalence, frequency, type, and quantity remain essential indicators of volunteerism and donation. Yet focusing solely on numbers risks overlooking the fact that giving is also a social practice, shaped by people's relationships, identities, resources, and wellbeing.

Participation is rarely driven by goodwill alone. Across the literature, both volunteerism and donation are shaped by what people can realistically mobilise: time, money, skills, health, and access to supportive networks. Donation, in particular, is consistently linked to financial capacity, trust, and perceived effectiveness, alongside values (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011; NVPC, 2023). Volunteering similarly depends on having discretionary time, confidence, and pathways into opportunities (Wilson & Musick, 1997), varying with individuals' life rhythms. Importantly, constraints can be both subjective as well as objective: when people doubt their ability to contribute meaningfully or feel unsure how to begin, intention may not translate into action (Bandura, 1977).

In view of these realities, this chapter examines the conditions that enable or hinder engagement—so that efforts to strengthen civic participation can address the factors that matter most.

What Participation May Build

Giving can be meaningful for those who give, not just those who receive help. Research suggests that volunteering is associated with better wellbeing and some positive health outcomes, while donation-like behaviour may also produce modest gains in happiness (Aknin et al., 2020; Andreoni, 1990; Dunn et al., 2008, 2014; Jenkinson et al., 2013; Nichol et al., 2023).

Volunteerism is also consistently associated with higher levels of social capital, including stronger social support, greater community connectedness, and broader and more diverse social networks (Nichol et al. 2023; Jenkinson et al. 2013), while voluntary associations are widely treated as settings through which trust, norms, and networks are generated (Son, 2025). Although causal evidence remains limited and much of this literature is cross-sectional, longitudinal analyses point to plausible bidirectional links between volunteering and social cohesion (Davies et al., 2024).²

If participation in donation and volunteerism matters for both individual wellbeing and the broader social fabric, then understanding who is able to participate, and what prevents others from doing so, becomes a matter of inclusivity and equity, not just effectiveness in service provision.

² Social cohesion is an umbrella term used for various dimensions such as trust in other people and institutions, willingness to help others, a sense of belonging or identity, and social participation.

What This Chapter Examines

This chapter examines factors linked to participation. **Social networks and social capital** are examined in relation to volunteering, exploring patterns consistent with the hypothesis that volunteering may contribute to developing broader social networks and higher social capital (Cheng & Chan, 2018; Chua et al., 2020). **Role models and peer influence** indicate social embeddedness and exposure to normative cues (Wilson & Musick, 1997; Shang & Croson, 2009).³ **Supportive environments** and **time commitments** capture enabling conditions and opportunity costs that shape participation. **Limiting beliefs** represent perceived constraints that may raise the threshold for action. Finally, **social media engagement** is treated as an information channel that may mobilise participation or, in some contexts, provide a low-cost substitute for deeper involvement.

The analyses draw on survey responses at a single point in time. The results describe patterns and associations without making claims about cause and effect.

| | Status | Frequency | | | | | Quantity |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------|------------|-------------------|------------|-------------------------------|
| Volunteerism | Current Volunteers (Past 12 Months) | Barely Engaged | Occasional - Lower | Seasonal | Occasional-Higher | Consistent | Total Time Spent Volunteering |
| Donation | Current Donors (Past 12 Months) | Barely Engaged | | Occasional | Consistent | | Total Amount Donated |

Potential Drivers, Barriers and Outcomes Examined



Social Networks



Role Models and Peers



Social Support



Limiting Beliefs



Time Commitments



Social Media Engagement

Outcome

Drivers/Barriers

³ Apart from social and cultural capital in volunteering, this is also supported by social-information effects in donation experiments

3.1 Social Networks

Volunteers tended to interact with a wider mix of people in Singapore, giving them more diverse social networks and wider social connections overall

Volunteers tended to interact more frequently with people from different backgrounds—specifically housing types, education levels, ethnic backgrounds, and nationalities—reflecting higher levels of social mixing. They were also more likely to have social contacts across a wider range of occupations, including professional or leadership roles, suggesting broader connections that may provide access to useful information, advice, and opportunities.



Social mixing patterns were also correlated with how frequently people volunteered. Compared to the 'Barely Engaged', those who volunteered more frequently tended to interact with people across multiple different backgrounds, while those who volunteered less frequently (e.g., 'Occasional (lower frequency) Volunteers') were more likely to mix across fewer social dimensions. This suggests that more frequent volunteering is associated with broader and more multifaceted social exposure; while less frequent participation may still connect people beyond their immediate social circle, it does so in more limited contexts.

Additionally, individuals who volunteered more frequently and spent more hours volunteering tended to know people from more diverse occupations, including those in senior or professional positions. More frequent volunteering appears to be linked not only to more diverse social networks, but also to connections that may provide access to different kinds of resources and opportunities.

These patterns demonstrate that volunteerism and social connectedness tend to go together. Volunteering may create opportunities to meet people outside one's usual social environment, while those with broader networks may also be more likely to encounter volunteering opportunities. What is clear is that volunteers in Singapore tend to have more diverse social ties—across housing types, education levels, occupations, and ethnicity and nationality—which are markers of social cohesion and part of the broader social fabric.

Actionable Insights

Volunteerism can be framed not only as a way to contribute, but also as a platform for meaningful social connection across differences. Programmes that encourage repeated participation, cross-group interaction and collaboration among volunteers from diverse backgrounds may help strengthen both civic engagement and social cohesion.

Charities can explicitly position volunteering as a way to build diverse social connections beyond just "helping." Examples of such messaging include:

- "Meet someone you'd never cross paths with—volunteer."
- "Volunteering expands your world."
- "New people, new perspectives, new purpose."

Opportunities That Maximise Social Mixing Can Intentionally Be Designed:

- **Group Volunteers by Diverse Backgrounds, Not Just Skills** – Mix people from different housing types, education levels, age groups, and nationalities within teams rather than grouping by expertise alone
- **Rotate Volunteer Pairings Across Tasks** – Where possible, change team compositions across different volunteering sessions to increase exposure to different people
- **Create Structured Moments For Connection** – Build in time for volunteers to share their backgrounds, experiences, or perspectives before, during, or after activities
- **Offer Recurring Programmes** – Since more frequent volunteering is associated with broader networks, create pathways for those who volunteer infrequently to become more regular participants

Did You Know?

NVPC's giving.sg platform helps connect volunteers to opportunities across a wide range of causes, organisations, and communities throughout Singapore. By making it easier to discover volunteering activities beyond one's immediate neighbourhood or usual social circles, the platform creates conditions that support cross-group connections and enable volunteers to build diverse social networks—one of the key social capital benefits associated with active civic participation.



3.2 Role Models and Peers

People were more likely to volunteer or donate if their close social networks do so, and if they grew up seeing their parents do the same

The study found that both **family and peer role models matter**, appearing to shape *different dimensions of participation*.



People who grew up with parents who always volunteered or donated were more likely to volunteer and donate themselves. Compared to the 'Barely Engaged', those whose parents sometimes donated were also more likely to have donated occasionally in the past year (e.g., 'Occasional Donors'). This suggests that early exposure may normalise volunteerism and donation as part of everyday life, shaping participation in adulthood.

However, the effect of parental role modelling did not clearly extend to more intensive participation—that is, donating or volunteering more frequently. This suggests that while early examples of volunteerism or donation can establish a foundation, sustaining higher levels of engagement may require more than that.

Peer influence, by contrast, appeared to shape volunteerism and donation behaviours even more. Individuals whose close friends volunteered or donated were more likely to do so themselves, and to do so more frequently. Compared to the 'Barely Engaged', those with at least some friends who volunteered tended to volunteer more regularly (e.g., 'Seasonal Volunteers', 'Occasional (higher frequency) Volunteers'), while those with friends who donated were more likely to donate occasionally or consistently (e.g., 'Occasional Donors', 'Consistent Donors'). This pattern suggests that peer networks may play an active role in shaping not just whether people volunteer and donate, but how often and how consistently they do so.

Together, these findings point to distinct but complementary social influences. Parental role models appear to establish a foundation by normalising volunteerism and donation early in life, which is associated with individuals' participation later on. Peer networks seem to reinforce and intensify engagement, being associated with how frequently and consistently people engage in volunteerism and donation. Rather than replacing one another, these influences operate simultaneously, shaping both the likelihood of participation and the form it takes.

More broadly, these patterns suggest that the presence of role models—whether parents, peers, colleagues, or community members—may play a continuing role in reinforcing participation and shaping how actively people volunteer and donate throughout their lives. Similarly, the influence of close social networks may extend beyond friendships to encompass the norms and expectations embedded in other social circles, such as workplaces and community groups. Volunteerism and donation, in this sense, may not merely be an individual choice but a practice sustained and shaped by the social contexts in which people live. This underscores the importance of visible examples of giving across different life stages and social settings, not just within families, and highlights the role of social networks in making participation feel normal, valued, and within reach.

Actionable Insights

Since both family role models and peer networks have an effect on participation, initiatives to encourage volunteerism and donation can benefit from supporting visible role-modelling across different social contexts while also leveraging peer networks and shared activities that sustain engagement.

Strengthen Peer Influence Through Group-Based Participation:

- **Encourage Group-Based Volunteering** – Form duos or trios to create small social circles within volunteer programmes, where participation becomes a shared norm
- **Implement “Bring-a-Friend” Initiatives** – Increase retention by embedding volunteering within existing friendships
- **Partner With Existing Social Groups** – Working with existing interest groups, such as sport teams or hobby groups, to introduce volunteering as a collective activity, leveraging established peer networks
- **Organise Neighbourhood Volunteerism And Donation Initiatives** – Create hyper-local opportunities where neighbours can volunteer and donate together, embedding participation within existing residential networks
- **Host Social Events For Volunteers** – Organise casual gathering, such as end-of-activity celebrations, where volunteers can strengthen connections and invite friends, turning one-time participants into embedded members of a volunteering community

Support Role-Modelling:

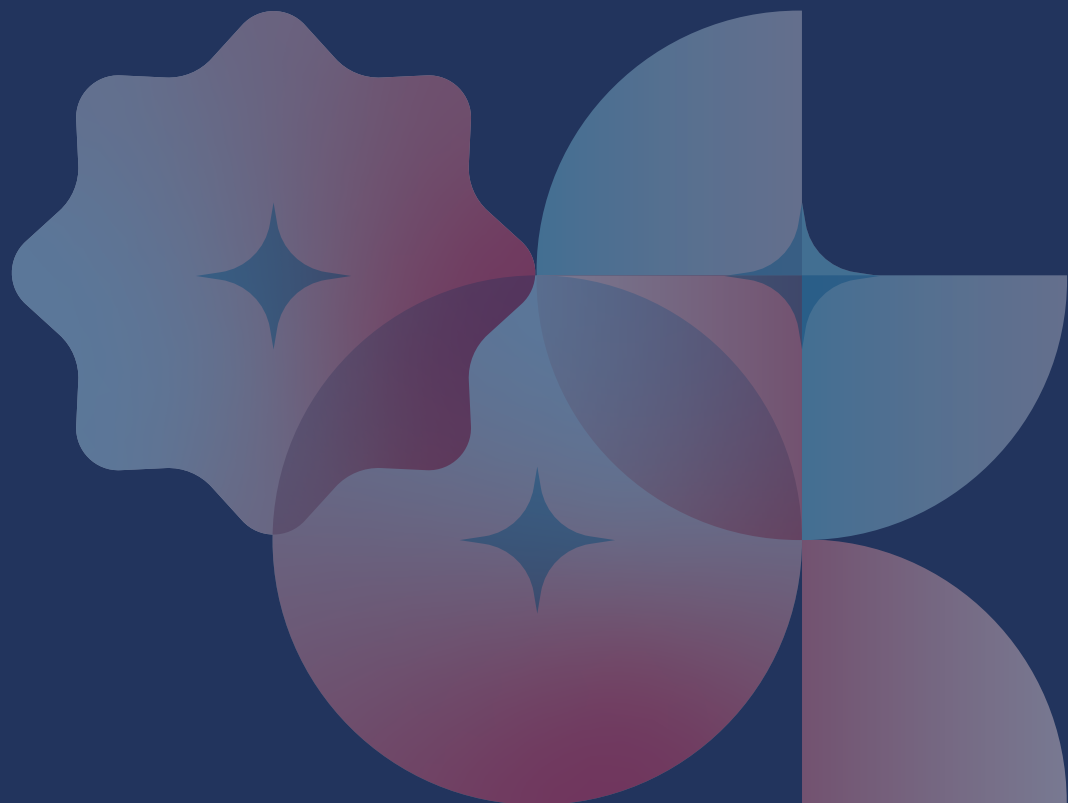
- **Organise “Family Giving Days”** – Create accessible activities where parents and children can volunteer together (e.g., community gardening, food packing), with pre-activity orientation to lower barriers to participation
- **Provide Child-Focused Recognition** – Give “thank you” materials addressed to children (e.g., “Your family helped others today!”) to reinforce early-childhood norm formation
- **Design Multi-Generational Programmes** – Allow multiple generations to participate together, creating shared experiences that normalise volunteerism and donation as part of family life

For School and Educational Institutions:

- **Integrate Service Learning Early** – Build volunteering into school curricula so that participation become normalised before adulthood, creating a foundation that peer networks can later reinforce
- **Facilitate Parent-Child Volunteering** – Create school-based family volunteering events that make participation easy and visible, strengthening both family role-modelling and peer influence among parents

For Employers:

- **Create Workplace “Giving Circles”** – Organise groups by interest or cause area, allowing employees to participate collectively around shared values
- **Recognise Employee Volunteers** – Celebrate those who volunteer, making giving visible within the workplace and establishing it as a valued norm
- **Facilitate Team-Based Opportunities** – Leverage existing workplace relationships to reinforce participation



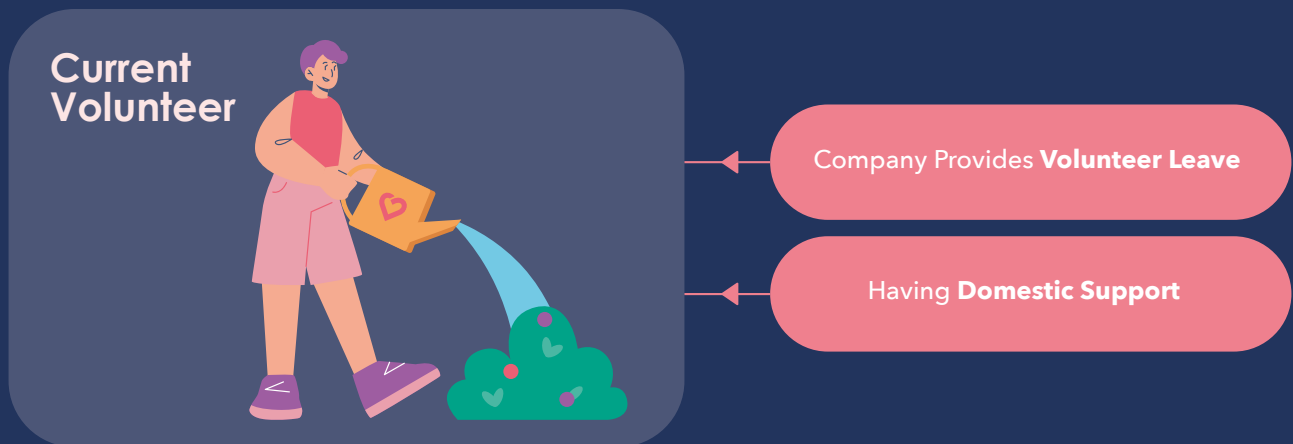
3.3 Social Support

Having social support was associated with greater involvement in volunteering

The study found that **both domestic support and workplace support** were associated with whether and how people volunteer, suggesting that supporting environments and resources play a role in shaping participation.

Individuals who received unpaid domestic support from their own social networks—such as help with childcare, caregiving, or household tasks, from family members, relatives, friends, or neighbours—were more likely to volunteer. Compared to the ‘Barely Engaged’, those with such support tended to volunteer more frequently (e.g., ‘Seasonal Volunteers’, ‘Occasional (lower frequency) Volunteers’). This suggests that when people have assistance with daily responsibilities, they may find it easier to engage in time-bound volunteer activities.

Workplace support showed a similar pattern. Employees whose organisations provided volunteer leave were more likely to volunteer. Compared to the ‘Barely Engage’, they tended to volunteer more frequently (e.g., ‘Seasonal Volunteers’, ‘Occasional (lower frequency) Volunteers’). This indicates that formal support within workplaces may reduce barriers to participation or create additional opportunities to engage.



Taken together, these findings highlight the role of supportive environments in shaping participation. Domestic support appears to ease the practical demands of daily life, while workplace support provides formal recognition and time for volunteering. The presence of support—whether from personal networks or institutional structures—is linked to whether and how regularly people volunteer, emphasising that volunteering is not only an individual choice but also a practice enabled or constrained by the resources and environments in which people live.

Actionable Insights

Since both domestic support from personal networks and formal workplace support are associated with volunteering participation, efforts to increase engagement can focus on strengthening these supportive environments and making the support itself more visible and accessible.

Strengthening and Acknowledging Social Support:

- **Create Support-Inclusive Communications** – In volunteer recruitment materials, explicitly mention that activities are designed to accommodate people with domestic responsibilities (e.g., childrearing responsibilities) or acknowledge that “we know you’re balancing a lot—bring your child along!”
- **Frame Volunteering as a Shared Household Contribution** – Use messaging that acknowledges the role of family support (e.g., “When one gives, the whole family supports Singapore”) to normalise the idea that volunteering is enabled by others and encourage mutual support within families, making it easier for individuals to participate in volunteer activities
- **Facilitate Mutual Aid For Volunteers in Communities** – Create informal support networks, such as neighbourhood “Giving Buddies” programmes where community members help each other with small tasks (e.g., childcare, errands) when someone is volunteering, making participation more feasible for those with caregiving or household responsibilities
- **Recognise Community Enablers** – Publicly acknowledge family members, friends, and neighbours who support volunteers, reinforcing the idea that volunteerism is a community effort



For Employers:

- **Introduce Micro-Volunteering Options** – Provide half-day volunteer leave or bite-sized volunteering opportunities (e.g., volunteering together with co-workers during lunchtime) for employees who cannot commit full days
- **Recognise Enablers, Not Just Volunteers** – Acknowledge and celebrate the colleagues, managers, or teams who support employees in taking time to volunteer, making support visible and valued within workplace culture
- **Partner With Charities** – Work directly with charities to align volunteering opportunities with their volunteer leave policies, making it easier for employees to utilise available support

Did You Know?

Through NVPC's Company of Good community, businesses can access resources and platforms to strengthen employee volunteerism. Initiatives like Project V and State of Play connect companies with community partners to build meaningful collaborations—making it easier for employees to give back. Visit thecompanyofgood.sg to learn more.



3.4 Limiting Beliefs

The belief that volunteerism requires specific skillsets or financial resources can discourage participation

Perceptions about the requirements for volunteering—whether related to money, skills, or time—were associated with patterns of participation, even though these perceptions may not always reflect the actual demands of volunteering.

Perceived Financial Cost

Individuals who believed that volunteering required spending money were less likely to do so. This perception also appeared to deter volunteering at moderate frequencies (e.g. ‘Seasonal Volunteers’, ‘Occasional (lower & higher frequencies) Volunteers’), though it showed little association with frequent volunteering (‘Consistent Volunteers’). This suggests that for people who volunteer frequently, other considerations may matter more than concerns about financial costs.



Perceived Skill Requirements

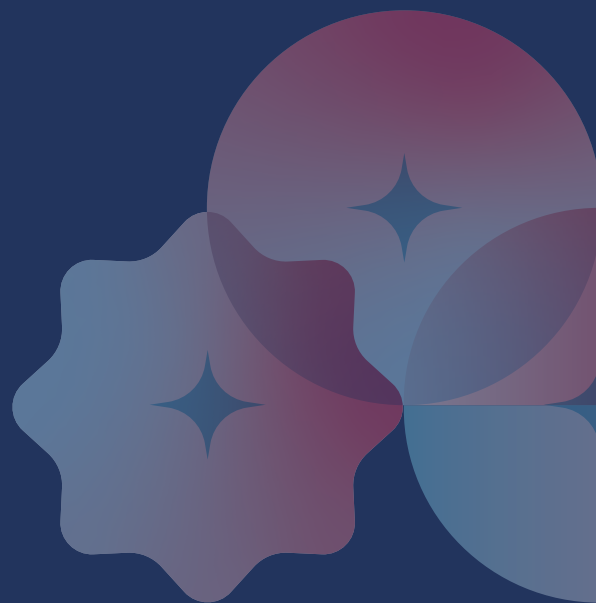
Individuals who believed that volunteering required specialised skills were less likely to have volunteered. As with perceptions about financial costs, this perception also appeared to deter volunteering at moderate frequencies, but showed limited association with frequent volunteering.

Perceived Time Requirements

Unlike perceptions about money or skills, the belief that volunteering required time did not appear to significantly reduce overall participation. However, those who perceived volunteerism as time-intensive were more likely to engage in seasonal volunteering ('Seasonal Volunteers'), suggesting that when individuals believed volunteerism demands substantial time, they may prefer short-term, concentrated commitments during periods of free time rather than ongoing involvement.

Taken together, these findings highlight the role of perceptions in shaping participation. Beliefs about financial cost and skill requirements appeared to deter volunteering at moderate frequencies, while beliefs about time requirements seemed to shape the pattern of engagement. Frequent volunteerism, however, showed limited association with these perceptions, suggesting that other factors may matter more in shaping participation than concerns about such requirements.

While these associations are consistent, they do not establish causality. It is possible that people who rarely volunteer retain these beliefs precisely because they have fewer opportunities to test them against reality, while those who volunteer more regularly develop a clearer understanding of what participation actually requires. Nonetheless, the consistency of these associations suggests that perceptions—whether they reflect reality or not—are linked to how people engage with volunteering. The presence of limiting beliefs appears associated with whether and how regularly people volunteer, highlighting that participation is not only shaped by individual inclination but also by how people interpret what volunteering requires and whether it feels feasible within perceived constraints.



Actionable Insights

Since perceptions about cost, skills, and time are linked to how people engage with volunteering—even when those perceptions may not reflect actual requirements—efforts to widen participation can focus on addressing these beliefs through clearer communication and more accessible programme design.

Communicating and Designing Volunteering Activities:

- **Make Low-Barrier Opportunities Visible** – Prominently feature volunteer roles that require no financial contribution, no specialised skills, and minimal time commitments. Use messaging like “No experience needed,” or “Just 2 hours can make a difference”
- **Provide Cost Transparency Upfront** – Clearly state whether activities are fully covered (e.g., transport, meals, materials) to eliminate uncertainty about hidden expenses. Where costs exist, offer subsidies or alternatives
- **Design Progressive Pathways** – Create tiered opportunities (e.g., beginner, intermediate, skilled) so that people can start with simple tasks and build confidence before taking on more complex roles. This helps newcomers overcome skill-related hesitations
- **Showcase Diverse Time Commitments** – Offer both short-term, concentrated opportunities (e.g., weekend projects, seasonal campaigns) and ongoing flexible options (e.g., micro-volunteering, drop-in sessions) to accommodate different perceptions about time availability
- **Use Testimonials to Counter Misperceptions** – Share stories from volunteers who initially had concerns about cost, skills, or time but found participation easier than expected. Real experiences can help reshape beliefs more effectively than generic messaging
- **Simplify Onboarding** – Reduce registration complexity, provide clear role descriptions, and offer orientation or buddy systems to help newcomers feel confident from the start

For Employers:

- **Communicate Flexibility Clearly** – When offering volunteer leave, emphasise that employees can use it for short commitments (e.g., half-days, lunchtime activities) to address time concerns, and clarify that company-supported activities are fully covered to eliminate cost worries

3.5 Time Commitments

Balancing work, caregiving, and household duties had an effect on how people volunteered

The study found that time spent on daily responsibilities was associated with whether and how people volunteer, suggesting that time demands and competing commitments play a role in shaping participation.

Individuals who spent more time on work, childcare, and caregiving were less likely to volunteer overall. This pattern suggests that practical time pressures may limit how feasible volunteering feels for many, particularly when discretionary hours are scarce and other commitments take priority.

Among those who volunteered, those who had higher time demands for daily responsibilities were more likely to have engaged in seasonal volunteering ('Seasonal Volunteers'), suggesting that when time is constrained, people may prefer formats that fit around temporary windows of availability rather than requiring consistent involvement.

Student commitments, by contrast, showed no clear association with participation or volunteer frequency in these analyses. This suggests that the influence of other factors—such as peer networks or institutional expectations—may matter more than time commitments in shaping students' volunteering participation.

Current Volunteer



Spent More Time on Work, Childcare, and Caregiving

Current Volunteer

Seasonal

Those who had higher time demands for daily responsibilities were more likely to engage in seasonal volunteering ('Seasonal Volunteers').



Spent More Time on Work, Childcare, and Caregiving

Taken together, these findings point to the role of time availability in shaping participation in volunteerism. When work, childcare, and caregiving demands are heavy, individuals are less likely to volunteer overall. However, among those who do participate, these pressures are associated with seasonal rather than ongoing engagement. This suggests that constrained time shapes when and how people give—favouring short-term, concentrated commitments during periods of greater availability over regular, sustained involvement. Participation appears to depend not just on personal choice, but also the extent to which people’s available time enables or limits their engagement.

Actionable Insights

Since time spent on work, childcare, and caregiving is associated with whether and how people volunteer, efforts to widen participation can focus on designing opportunities that accommodate variable schedules and recognise the ebb and flow of people’s responsibilities.

Design For Flexibility:

- **Offer Seasonal or Project-Based Opportunities** – Create concentrated volunteering periods (e.g., mid-year campaigns, school holiday projects, weekend drives) that allow people to contribute intensively during windows of availability without requiring ongoing commitment
- **Design Flexible, Shorter-Duration Roles** – Provide options like 2-hour shifts, drop-in sessions, or micro-volunteering tasks that can fit around unpredictable schedules
- **Frame One-Off or Periodic Participation As Valued** – Use messaging that normalises episodic engagement (e.g., “Join us whenever you can,” “Every visit counts”) to reduce pressure for consistent involvement and acknowledge that people’s capacity to give fluctuates with their circumstances
- **Create At-Home Activity Kits** – Develop activities that people can complete independently when time allows, such as letter-writing for isolated elderly, assembling care packages, or crafting items for community programmes
- **Design Pathways That Accommodate Life’s Fluctuations** – Build volunteer programmes that welcome people back after breaks, allow for variable participation intensity, and recognise that someone who volunteers seasonally may do so consistently over years even if not week-to-week
- **Coordinate With Existing Schedules** – Align volunteering opportunities with known periods of availability, such as school holidays, public holidays, or year-end breaks when caregiving or work demands may temporarily ease

3.6 Social Media Engagement

Engagement with information online was associated with different patterns of volunteerism and donation

The study found contrasting relationships between different forms of online engagement with volunteerism and donation behaviours: staying informed about current affairs or neighbourhood issues was associated with a higher likelihood of volunteering and donation, while actively posting or commenting on such issues was associated with a lower likelihood of these behaviours.

Compared to the 'Barely Engaged', those who consumed such information a few times per week or more were more likely to donate occasionally ('Occasional Donors'). This suggests that staying informed may expose people to needs, stories, and opportunities that resonate with them, or that individuals inclined to donate occasionally also tend to keep up with community issues.



By contrast, individuals who frequently posted or commented on these issues online were less likely to volunteer or donate frequently. This pattern could reflect several dynamics: online expression may itself be a form of civic engagement—advocating for causes, raising awareness, or offering testimony—which may manifest differently as volunteering or donation. Alternatively, individuals who face constraints on participation in offline volunteerism may nonetheless remain engaged through online channels.

Taken together, these patterns indicate that different forms of online engagement relate to offline engagement in volunteerism and donation in different ways. People who stay informed are more likely to volunteer and donate, while those who engage frequently in expressive online activity are less likely to participate, and do so less often. This highlights that online civic behaviours are diverse and do not directly mirror offline participation—consuming information and expressing views online may serve different purposes and appeal to people with varying capacities or preferences for offline engagement.

Actionable Insights

Since staying informed about social issues is associated with participation in volunteering and donation, while frequent online expression shows different patterns, efforts to strengthen connections between online engagement and offline participation can focus on creating pathways that meet people where they are.

Design Pathways from Online Engagement to Offline Participation:

- **Embed Action Opportunities Within Informational Content** – When sharing stories about community needs or social issues, include simple, low-barrier calls to action (e.g., “Volunteer for 2 hours this weekend,” “Donate \$5 now”) that allow people to act immediately on the awareness they have gained
- **Use Issue-Matching to Personalise Invitations** – Connect people’s information consumption patterns to relevant opportunities (e.g., “You read about food insecurity → volunteer at a food distribution this Saturday or donate \$3 to support meal programmes”)
- **Show Tangible, Collective Impact** – For those who stay informed by reading about community issues, demonstrate how small contributions create collective change (e.g., “Your \$3 joins 8,241 others to fund 1,000 meals—the issue you have been following is being addressed”) to show that staying informed can lead to meaningful participation
- **Create Micro-Commitment Options** – For those who actively post or comment online, offer ways to extend their advocacy into offline action without requiring major time or financial commitments (e.g., “You have been speaking up about this issue—join us for a 1-hour community discussion” or “Turn your post into action with a \$2 donation”)



04

Conclusions

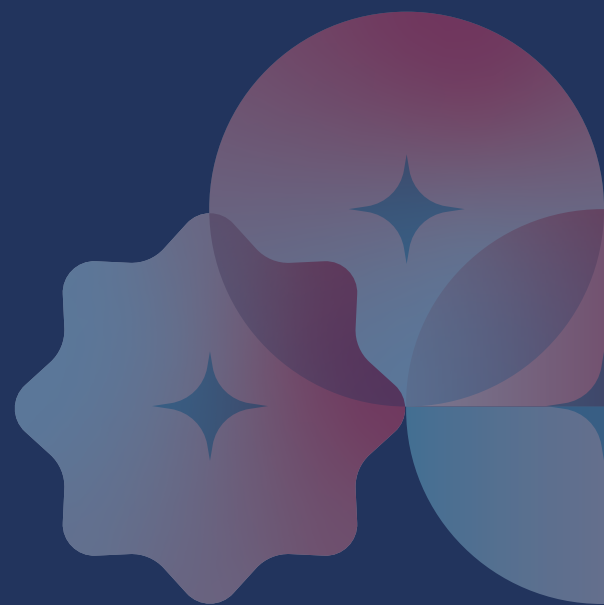
Looking Ahead: Nurturing Singapore's Culture of Giving

The National Giving Study 2025 has traced the contours of giving in Singapore—from spontaneous gestures in everyday encounters to coordinated commitments through voluntary organisations and charitable institutions. What emerges is **a portrait of a society where generosity is not rare, but common; not the exception, but woven into the ordinary rhythms of social life.**

About three in four people living in Singapore have engaged in acts of giving at some point, and 68% did so in the past year. These acts span the full spectrum of social relationships—from personal networks, daily encounters, to wider communities. Some held lift doors open for rushing neighbours. Some extended a helping hand to a stranger who had fallen. Others organised activities for elderly residents, tutored students, cared for animals in the community, helped colleagues move into their new homes, or picked up litter along the beach.

Participation in structured forms of giving therefore provides only one part of a larger story. While just over one in five had volunteered in the past year, and nearly half made monetary or in-kind donations, more telling is the pattern within Singapore itself—that much of Singapore's generosity may flow through informal, relational channels rather than organised structures. Moreover, even though these rates may appear to sit below global averages, such comparisons require caution given measurement differences (Charities Aid Foundation [CAF], 2025).⁴

This pattern reflects how care is practised and expressed in Singapore. Much of mutual aid remains embedded in personal networks and everyday exchanges, even as formal volunteerism and donation continue to play meaningful roles.



⁴ The World Giving Report 2025 reported that 64% of people globally donated in 2024 (including direct giving to people in need), while 26% volunteered.

What This Means for the Path Forward

This landscape offers both reassurance and guidance for strengthening Singapore's civic life.

The reassurance is clear: People in Singapore are not indifferent. The willingness to help and the impulse to contribute are already present. The challenge is not to instill absent values, but to provide pathways for existing values to find structured expression.

Understanding What Enables—and What Constrains

NGS 2025 examined conditions that enable or hinder participation in volunteerism or donation. The findings reveal that participation is rarely driven by goodwill alone—it is also shaped by practical realities and the environments in which people live.

- **Role Models and Peer Influence Encourage Engagement**—having role models while growing up lays the foundation for volunteerism and donation, while peer networks reinforce participation
- **Supportive Environments Matter**—domestic support from one's personal networks can encourage volunteering, as would a supportive workplace
- **Perceptions Affect Decisions**—beliefs about the financial and skills requirements for volunteering may discourage one from doing so, while time-related beliefs shape volunteering patterns
- **Time Pressures Shape Participation Patterns**—work, childcare, and caregiving demands affect *whether* and *when* people volunteer
- **Online Engagement Relates Differently to Offline Action**—staying informed encourages participation, while frequent online expression may reflect forms of giving expressed differently from volunteering and donation

Building on What We Know

The findings point to opportunities for strengthening participation:

- **Leverage social networks and frame volunteering as a platform for meaningful connection**
- **Support visible role-modelling across life stages**
- **Strengthen supportive environments to encourage participation**
- **Communicate clearly and counter misperceptions**
- **Design for flexibility and accessibility to participation**
- **Create pathways from online awareness to offline action**

Expanding, Not Replacing

Efforts to grow structured participation in giving should not come at the expense of everyday generosity. The person who helps a stranger carry groceries, the neighbour who collects parcels, the colleague who offers a listening ear—these acts sustain community life just as much as volunteerism and donation. The goal is to expand the repertoire, ensuring people have multiple ways to express care depending on their circumstances, capacities, and the needs they encounter.

A Culture Worth Building Upon

Singapore's giving landscape reveals quiet strength. **Not every act is visible. Not every contribution counted.** But together, they form a foundation upon which more vibrant civic life can be built—not from scratch, but by making it easier for existing care to flow where it is needed most.

Beyond the practical opportunities for widening participation, NGS 2025 also found that volunteers tend to have more diverse social networks—across housing types, education levels, occupations, ethnicities, and nationalities. More frequent volunteers connect with people across even more diverse backgrounds. While these patterns do not prove that volunteering creates broader networks, they suggest that **volunteerism and social connectedness tend to go hand in hand**, contributing to the markers of social cohesion that strengthen Singapore's social fabric.

The question is not whether Singaporeans will give—they already do. The question is whether systems, structures, and supports are in place to channel that generosity effectively, sustain it over time, and ensure those who wish to contribute can do so with ease and confidence.

This is the work ahead: **not to create generosity, but to enable it. Not to convince people to care, but to help them act on the care they already feel.** In a society that aspires to a strong social compact and a We-First orientation to community life, this work is neither optional nor impossible. It is simply the next step in a journey already underway.



Annex

Technical Notes

An Evolving Understanding of Giving

Previous iterations of the National Giving Study have centred on volunteering and charitable donation as the primary indicators of giving. NGS 2025 retains these as key measures, but situates them within a broader understanding of what giving encompasses. Contributing beyond one's immediate self-interest takes many forms—not only through organised structures, but also through the everyday acts of mutual aid and support exchanged within families, between friends, and across communities. Any account of giving that excludes these quieter forms is necessarily incomplete. This understanding finds resonance in the national conversation around building a We-First society (Ministry of Finance Singapore [MOF], 2026; Prime Minister's Office Singapore [PMO], 2025), which has similarly affirmed that everyday acts of helping sit alongside volunteering and donation as expressions of a caring and contributive society.

Volunteering and Donation as Part of a Wider Landscape

Focusing on volunteering and donation alone will not yield a full picture of the giving landscape. Both are particular expressions of a broader giving disposition—one that also manifests in everyday helping and mutual aid. Evidence from the CAF World Giving Report 2025 supports this (CAF, 2025): countries where everyday helping is most prevalent also report higher rates of volunteering and donation, suggesting these are part of a coherent disposition—often co-occurring—rather than separate phenomena. Rather than beginning with predefined categories, NGS 2025 therefore first asked respondents about their general giving behaviours before disaggregating these into more specific forms—better positioning the study to understand volunteering and donation within the fuller context of how and why people give.

Recognising Giving Across Circumstances

Broadening the scope of measurement also has implications for who is made visible in the data. Volunteering and donation can require resources—time, disposable income, and organisational access—that are unequally distributed. Prior NGS findings suggest that time pressure and financial constraints are consistent barriers to volunteerism and donation (NVPC, 2023, pp.57-59). Recognising a wider range of giving behaviours acknowledges that people can contribute in ways that reflect their circumstances, without assuming equal capacity to participate in more organised forms.

Advancing the Measurement of Volunteerism and Donation

The shift in how NGS 2025 measures volunteering and donation reflects a broader recognition—supported by international guidance and NVPC's research—that as giving behaviours and our understanding of them evolve, so too must the tools used to measure them.

International statistical guidance, including the ILO Manual on the Measurement of Volunteer Work, cautions against relying on terms such as "volunteering" to elicit accurate recall, noting that these terms are understood differently across contexts (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2011, pp 18-19). Instead, it recommends that surveys use behaviourally-worded questions and collect structured descriptors—such as the type of activity, hours contributed, and institutional context—so that classification is grounded in reported behaviour rather than respondents' personal interpretations.

Internal research conducted by NVPC prior to NGS 2025 examined how people in Singapore conceptualise and distinguish between donation, volunteering, and helping in everyday life. The findings pointed to two sources of interpretive variation: first, that the same behaviour may be experienced differently by different individuals—and therefore included or excluded from what they consider to "count" as the relevant behaviour; and second, that even where people agree on the label, the underlying experience may vary considerably in terms of agency, motivation, and personal ownership of the act. These findings align with the ILO's observations, and together point to the value of an approach that elicits behavioural recall first, before classification is applied.

A Criteria-Led Approach to Measurement

To address this, NGS 2025 adopts a criteria-led approach to measurement, situating volunteering and donation within the broader spectrum of socially oriented helping behaviours captured by the study.

Rather than presenting respondents with a definition to interpret and apply to their own behaviours, the redesigned questionnaire follows an activity-focused sequence. Respondents are first prompted to recall whether they engaged in any acts of helping others or contributing to society – without labels or definitions being introduced at this stage. For each reported activity, structured follow-up questions capture what was done, who was helped, and the conditions surrounding participation. Activities are subsequently classified as volunteering, donation, or other forms of helping during analysis, based on pre-specified operational criteria – shifting the cognitive burden of classification from the respondent to the research instrument.

The core classification criteria are that the activity was directed beyond one's personal network; that participation was voluntary and free from compulsion; and that it was uncompensated in substantive terms. These were selected for being conceptually central and comparatively unambiguous to report. Other features—such as whether participation was planned or self-initiated—were retained as contextual descriptors rather than inclusion conditions, as these were found to be prone to inconsistent interpretation across respondents.

This operationalisation prioritises reliability and transparency, while preserving continuity with earlier NGS measurement and alignment with international frameworks that similarly centre on voluntary, uncompensated contribution directed beyond one's personal network (International Association for Volunteer Effort [IAVE], 2025, p. 2; United Nations Volunteers [UNV], 2022, p. 16). NGS 2025 is therefore best understood as a calibrated transition – refining how longstanding boundaries are elicited and applied, rather than departing from them.

Sequence Analysis of Volunteerism and Donation Participation Patterns

Sequence Analysis and Cluster Solution

To examine patterns of volunteering/donation participation across the past 12 months, sequence analysis was applied to respondents' month-by-month activity profiles. Each respondent's volunteering activity was represented as a sequence of 12 states—one per calendar month—where each state recorded whether the respondent had volunteered/donated during that month. Pairwise dissimilarity between sequences was calculated using the Hamming distance, which is well suited to fixed-length sequences where temporal position is substantively meaningful.

Solutions ranging from two to seven clusters were evaluated against three criteria: (1) internal coherence, assessed by examining the average within-cluster dissimilarity; (2) external separation, assessed by comparing between-cluster dissimilarity; and (3) substantive interpretability, assessed by mapping cluster-mean monthly activity profiles. The selected solution produced substantively meaningful and clearly differentiated participation patterns that aligned well with theoretical expectations and empirical distributional checks.

Results Interpretation

Each cluster represents a distinct temporal pattern of volunteering across the 12-month period. Cluster membership indicates which participation trajectory a respondent most closely follows—not just the overall volume of activity alone, but the shape of engagement over time. For example, a cluster characterised by high activity in the first quarter followed by inactivity differs from one with the same total months volunteered but spread evenly across the year, even if both respondents volunteered the same number of months in total. The proportions reported in the main text reflect the share of the analytic sample assigned to each cluster. Within-cluster variation exists; the profiles described represent the modal pattern for each group.

For more information regarding the discussions and analyses in this report, please contact NVPC Knowledge & Insights at KnowledgeAndInsights@nvpc.org.sg.

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