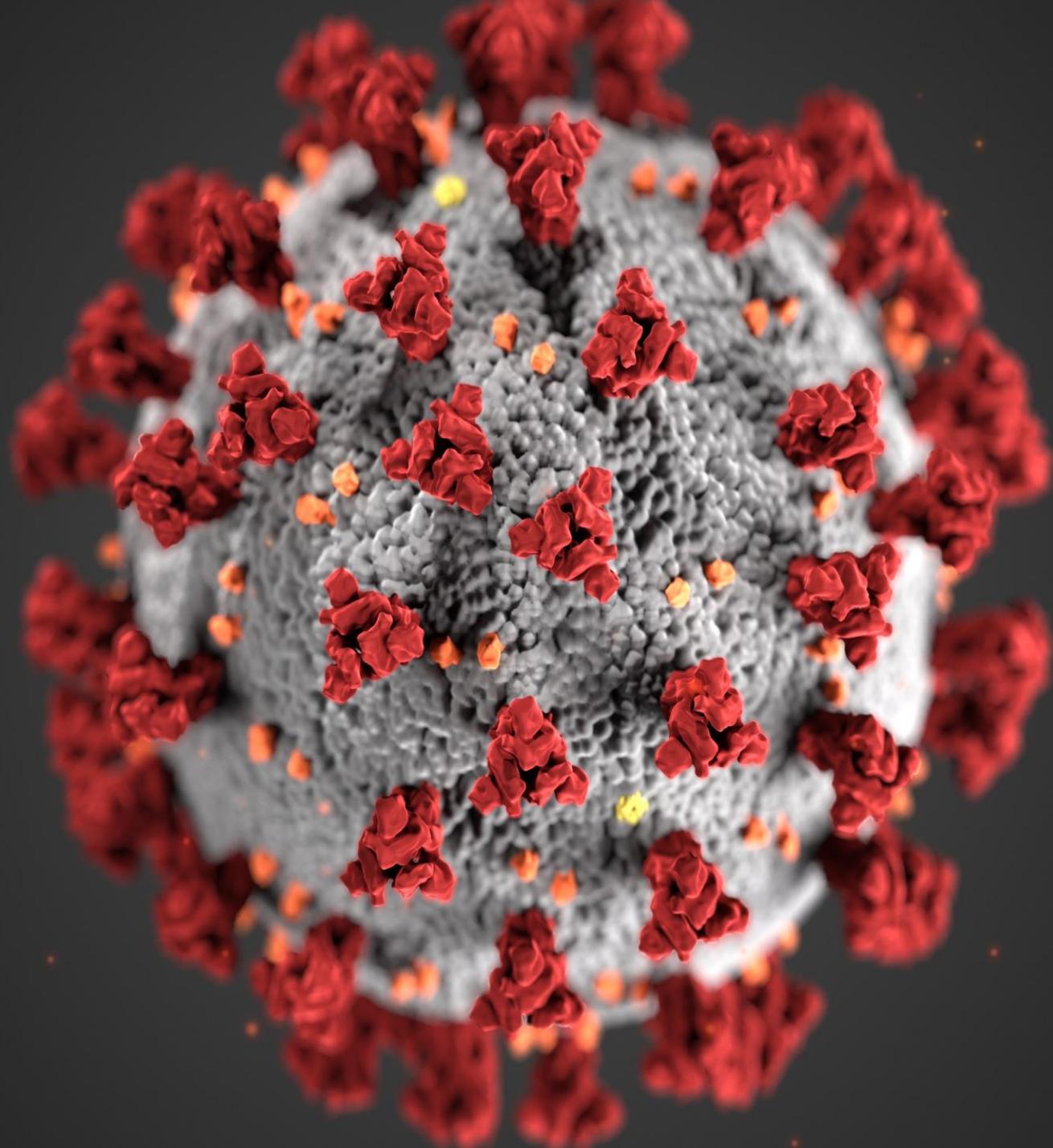


Covid-19 Impact On The Volunteer And Donor Activity Of Religious Canadians

Results of the National Survey
July 2020



Introduction

In March of 2020, Canada shut down.

Due to worldwide concerns over the spread of Covid-19, international borders were closed to travel, restaurants and businesses were shuttered, schools and daycare facilities locked their doors, and all Canadians working in non-essential services were urged to stay home.

The impact of Covid-19 on Canadians and Canadian society has been pervasive.

Tragically, many Canadians have lost their lives. Many more have been unable to be present with and grieve for their loved ones. Its devastation has touched the physical, mental, spiritual, relational and economic well-being of countless Canadians.

Among the perceived impacts of Covid-19, has been a decline in the volunteer and donor activity of religious Canadians.

In order to explore this question, we invited religious Canadians from across the country to tell us how Covid-19 was affecting their volunteer and donor activity in three areas of involvement:

- Local Congregations
- Religious Charities
- Secular Charities

The survey was conducted between June 19th and July 20th, 2020. More than 600 Canadians took part.



Introduction

This final report provides an overview of what the survey revealed. It shows that:

1. Despite the challenges Covid-19 presents, religious Canadians* are meeting them head on.
2. 20% of respondents who were employed in 2019 have had their employment affected.
3. 49% of those whose employment has been affected have accessed federal or provincial income supports.
4. Some religious Canadians are attending worship more often as a result of Covid-19. Others are attending less.
5. More than half of those who volunteered with local congregations in 2019 report that their volunteer activity in local congregations has decreased or stopped altogether, while 27% report having increased their congregational volunteer activity.
6. More than one-quarter of respondents who donated in 2019 increased their financial contributions to local congregations and religious charities, while only 15% reported reducing their level of giving in these areas.
7. Secular charities appear to have been hit harder than religious organizations by the challenges faced by religious Canadians with due to Covid-19 with 68% of those who volunteered with secular charities in 2019 reporting a decrease or pause in their volunteer activity.

- Religious Canadians refers to those who self-identify as belonging to a specific religious tradition and which may or may not involve regular attendance at a service of worship. Participants were asked, “What religious tradition, if any, do you most closely identify with?”



Study Partners

Organizations

- Anglican Church of Canada
- Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec
- Faith in the City (Toronto)
- The Canadian Council of Christian Charities
- The Canadian Council of Churches
- The Halo Canada Project / Sphaera Research
- The Flourishing Congregations Institute at Ambrose University
- The Toronto United Church Council
- WayBase

Researchers

- Mike Wood Daly (DMin) – Halo Canada Project, Sphaera Research
- Joel Thiessen (PhD) - Flourishing Congregations Institute, Ambrose University
- James Watson (PhD) – The Salvation Army



Survey Results

Who took part in this survey?

There are currently more than 22,000 religious congregations registered with the Canada Revenue Agency's Charities Directorate.

Invitations were sent directly to more than 14,000 congregations. Invitations were also extended through various religious and denominational networks.

The survey was conducted between June 19th and July 20th, 2020.

615 Canadians completed the survey.



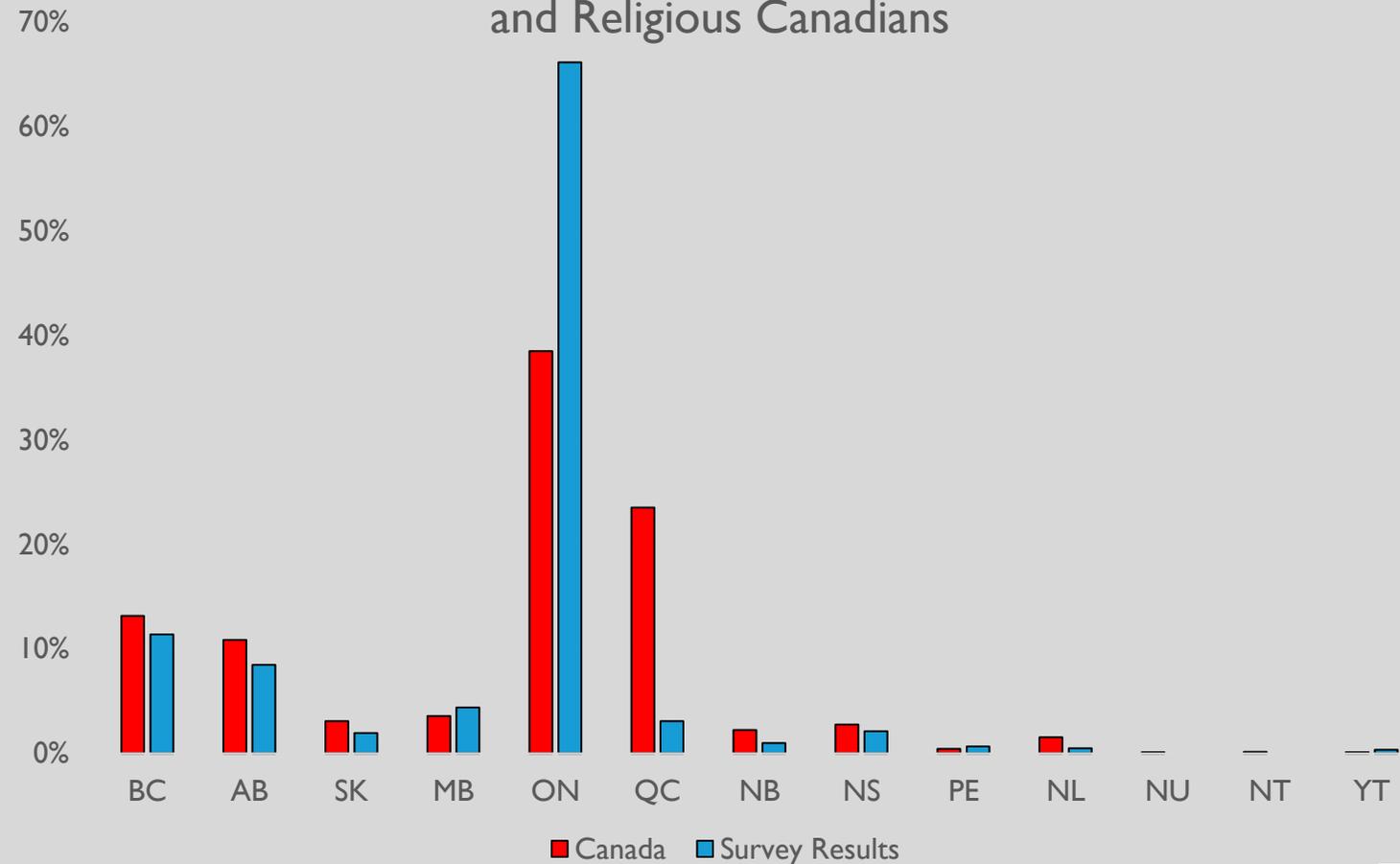
Provincial Distribution

Most provinces and territories were proportionally represented based on the provincial numbers of religious Canadians from the 2011 National Household Survey.

Ontario was strongly over-represented (66% vs. 39%) and Quebec was strongly under-represented (3% vs. 24%).

While the survey was available in French, we suspect awareness and distribution was less than optimal in Quebec.

Provincial Distribution of Respondents and Religious Canadians



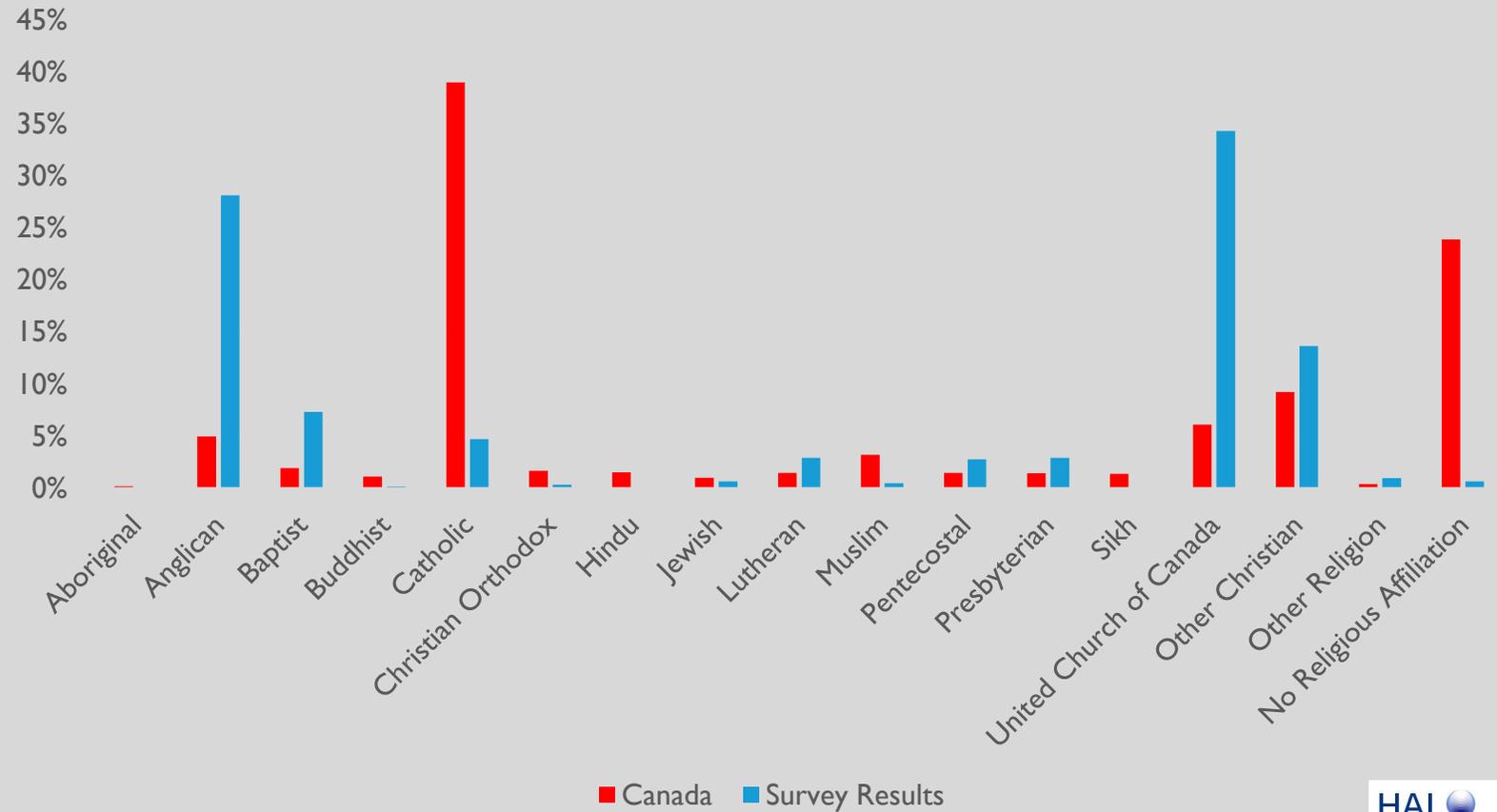
Religious Affiliation

This survey was directed at Religious Canadians and not intended to capture the impact of Covid-19 on the 24% of Canadians who claim no religious affiliation.

Catholics are significantly under-represented in this survey. This reflects, in part, the low number of respondents from Quebec, where the Catholic church has a stronger presence than anywhere else in Canada.

Anglicans and United Church members are over-represented. We suspect this is due, in part, to the strong assistance provided by these denominations in distributing the survey.

Religious Affiliation of Respondents Relative to the Canadian Population

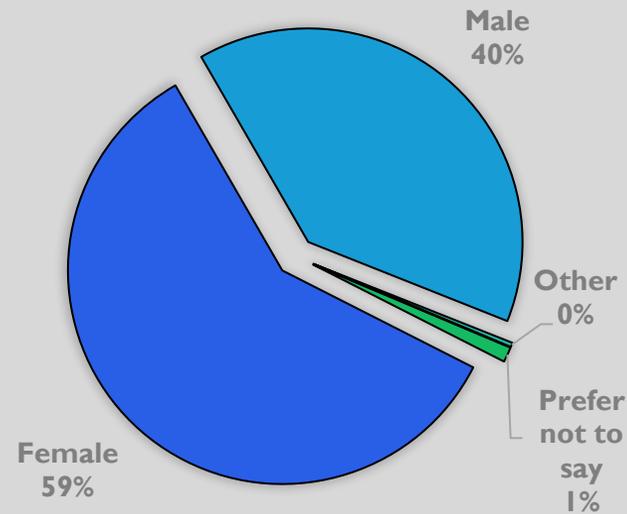


Age and Gender

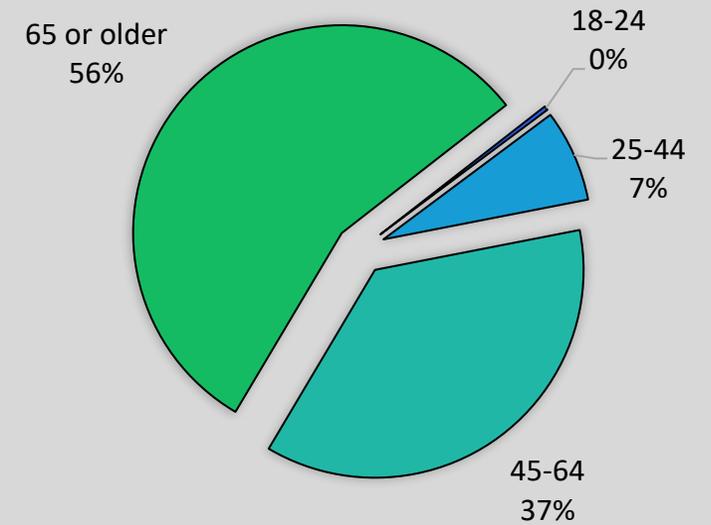
The majority of respondents were female (59%).

56% of respondents were 65 years of age or older.

GENDER



AGE



Impact of Covid-19 on Employment

2019 Employment Status

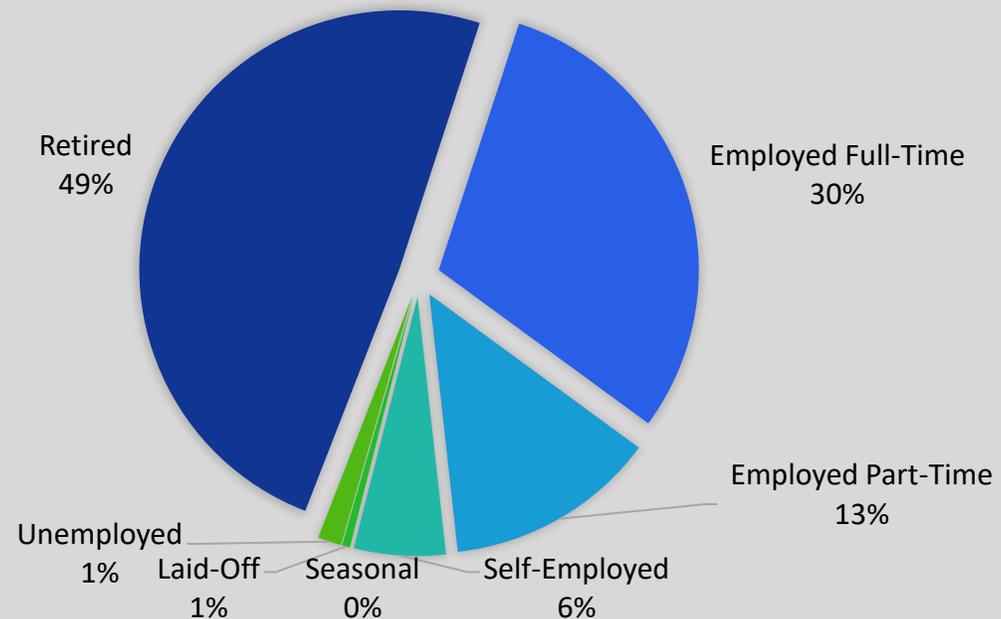
Almost half of the survey respondents were retired.

30% were employed full-time

13% were employed part-time

6% were self-employed

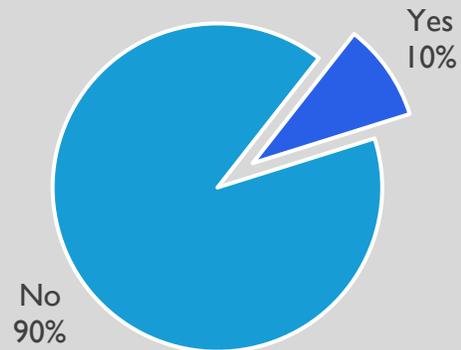
2019 EMPLOYMENT STATUS



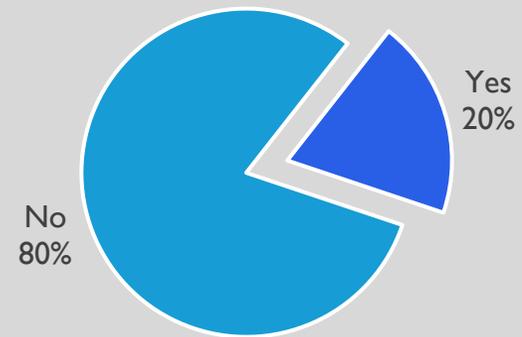
Covid Impacts on Employment

Approximately 20% of religious Canadians who responded and were employed in 2019 have had their employment status affected.

Employment Status Affected
(Total Respondents)



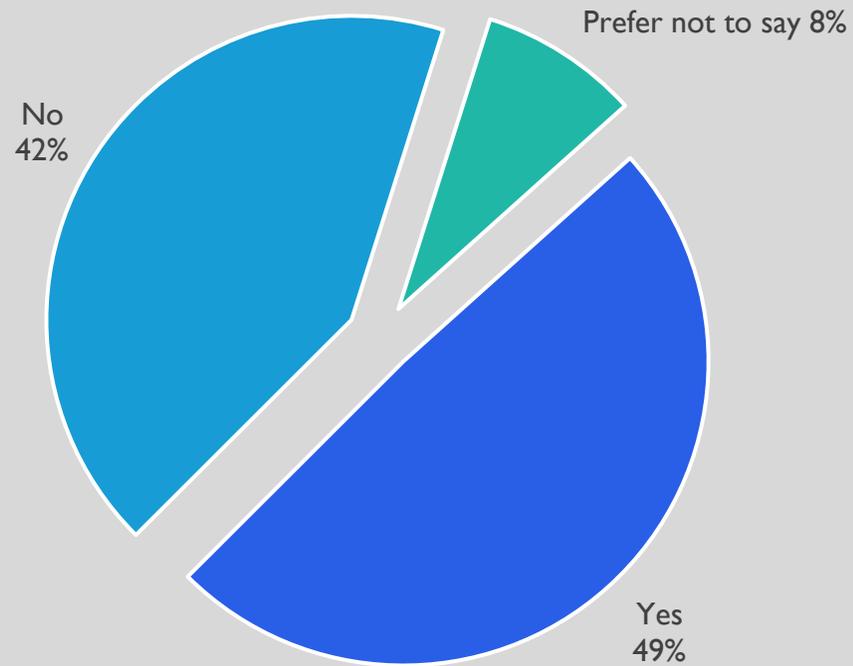
Employment Status Affected
(Employed Respondents)



Access to Income Supports

At least 49% of those whose employment status has been affected have accessed government income supports.

Access to Income Supports



Impact of Covid-19 on Worship Attendance

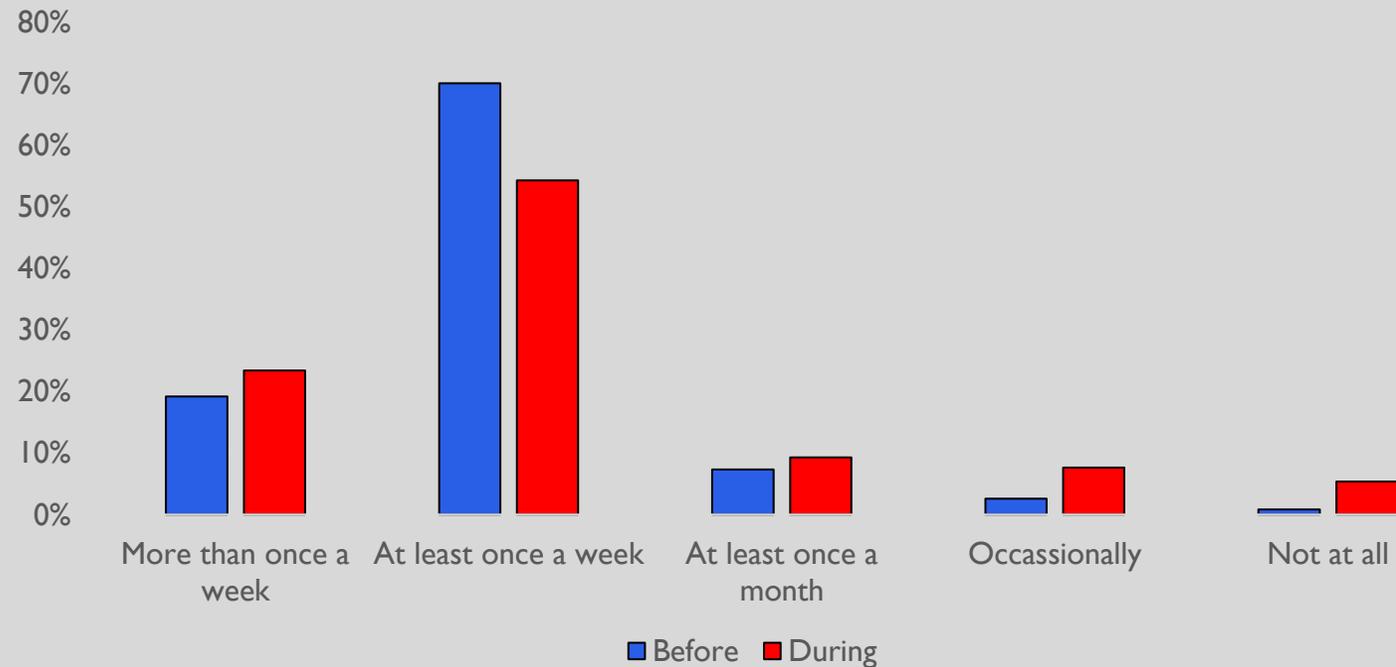
Participation in Worship

Prior to Covid-19, 11% of respondents attended worship less than once a week or not at all.

During Covid-19 that figure rose to 22%.

The survey also found that the number of those who attended worship more than once a week rose by 4%.

Attendance at worship
Before and During Covid-19



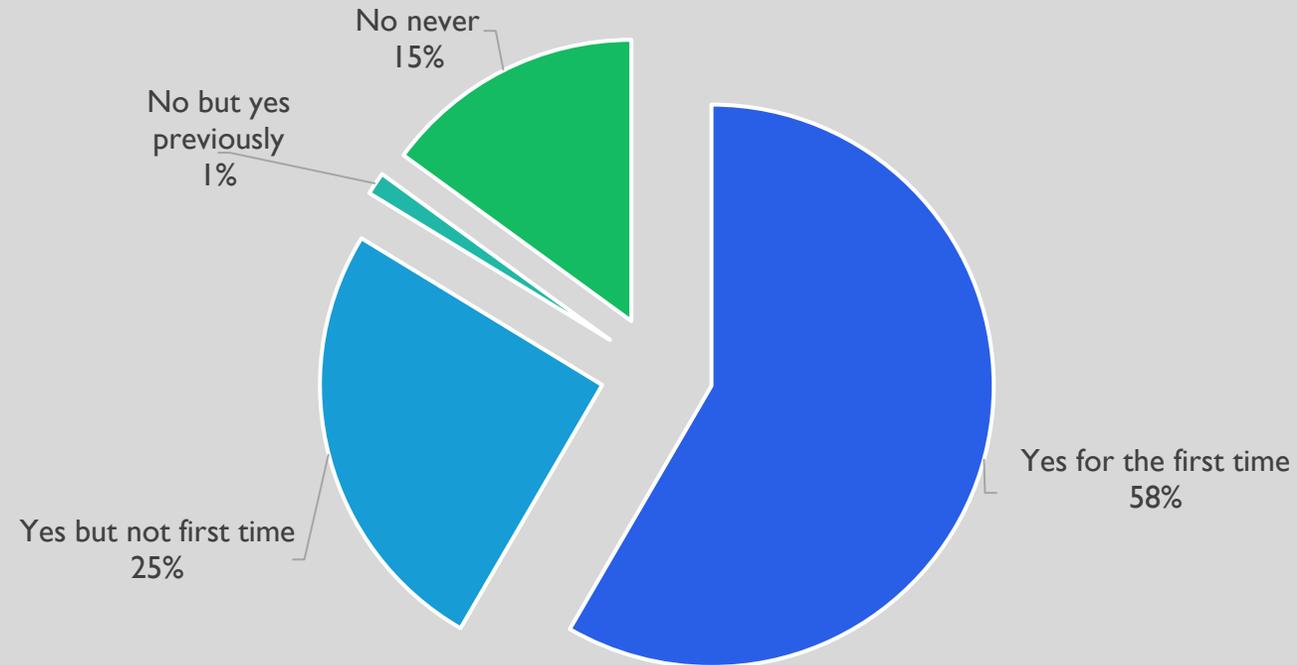
Virtual Worship

As a result of Covid-19, all Canadian places of worship were required to shut their doors.

Many congregations responded to this by establishing or relying on existing virtual worship formats.

58% of survey respondents attended a virtual worship service for the first time during the pandemic pause.

Virtual Attendance at Worship



Impact of Covid-19 on Volunteer Activity

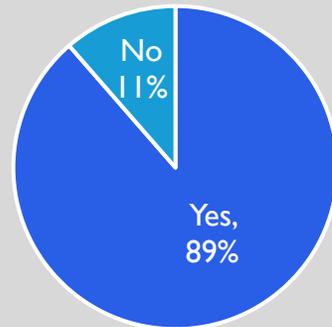
2019 Volunteer Activity

Individual congregations benefited most from the volunteer activity of survey respondents.

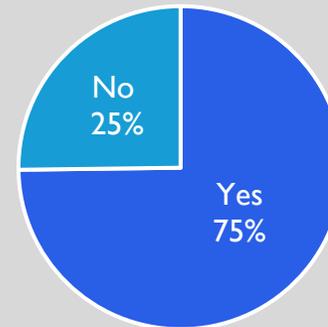
89% of respondents reported that they volunteered for a religious congregation in 2019.

Religious Canadians also factor significantly in the volunteer activity of other organizations. 75% of respondents reported volunteer time with religious charities and 51% with secular charities.

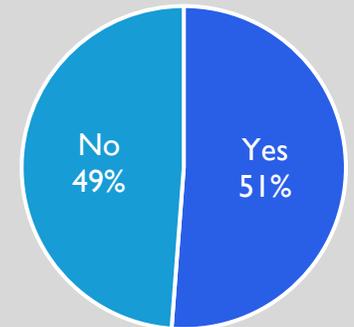
Congregations



Religious Charities



Secular Charities



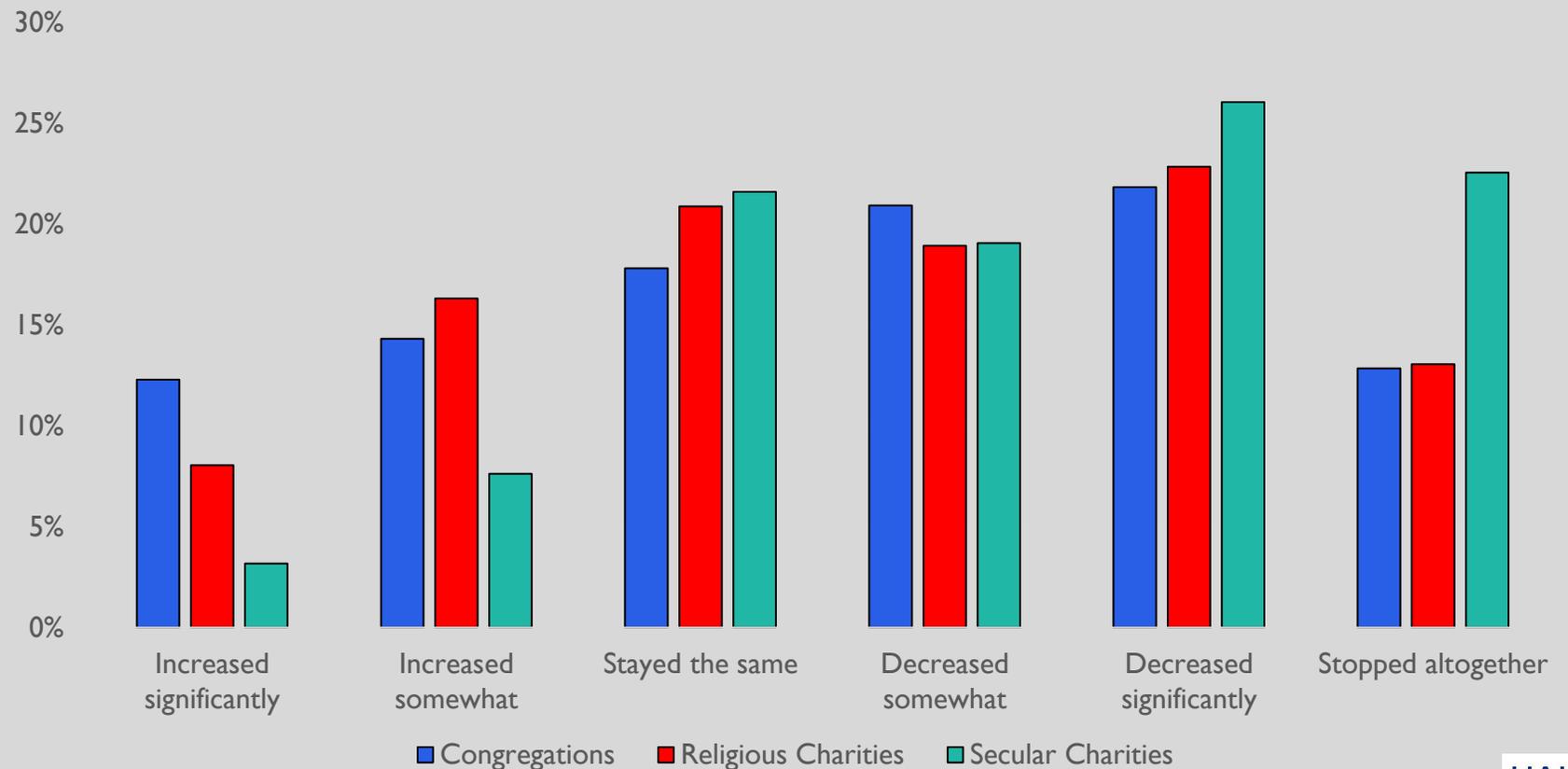
Impact on Volunteering

More respondents indicated that they had decreased their volunteer time significantly than for any other category.

Secular charities were most impacted by significant reductions in volunteer time.

More respondents increased their volunteer time significantly for congregations than for religious and secular charities.

Impact on Volunteering
For those who volunteered in 2019

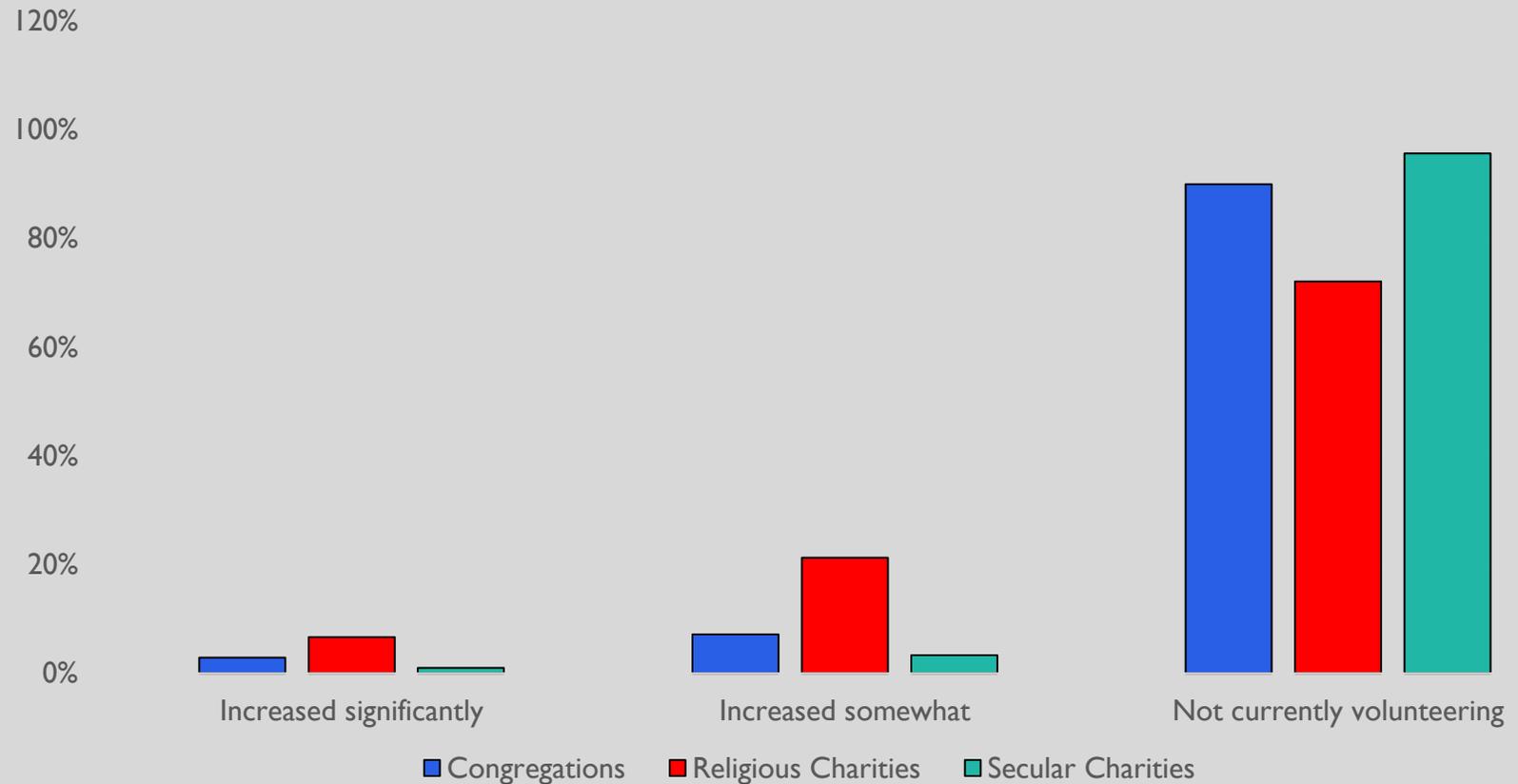


Impact on Volunteering

Even some who did not volunteer in 2019 showed a modest increase in volunteer activity during the Covid-19 shutdown.

This was most evident with religious charities with about 28% of those who did not volunteer in 2019 offering volunteer time during the Covid shutdown.

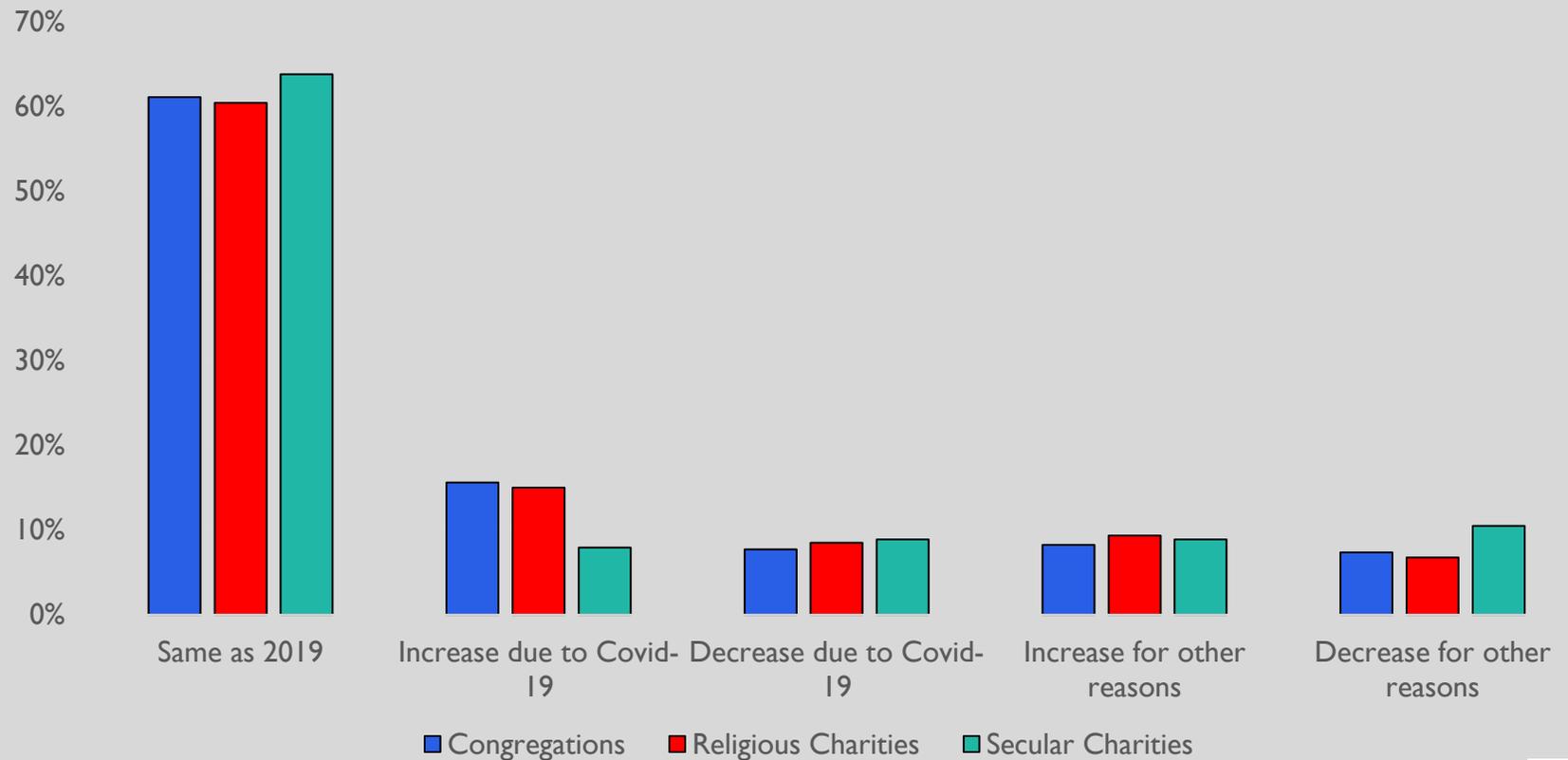
Impact on Volunteering
For those who did not volunteer in 2019



Impact on Volunteering

Of those respondents who expect their level of volunteer involvement to increase because of Covid-19, congregations and religious charities appear likely to benefit the most.

Anticipated Volunteer Involvement Following Covid-19 for those who volunteered in 2019

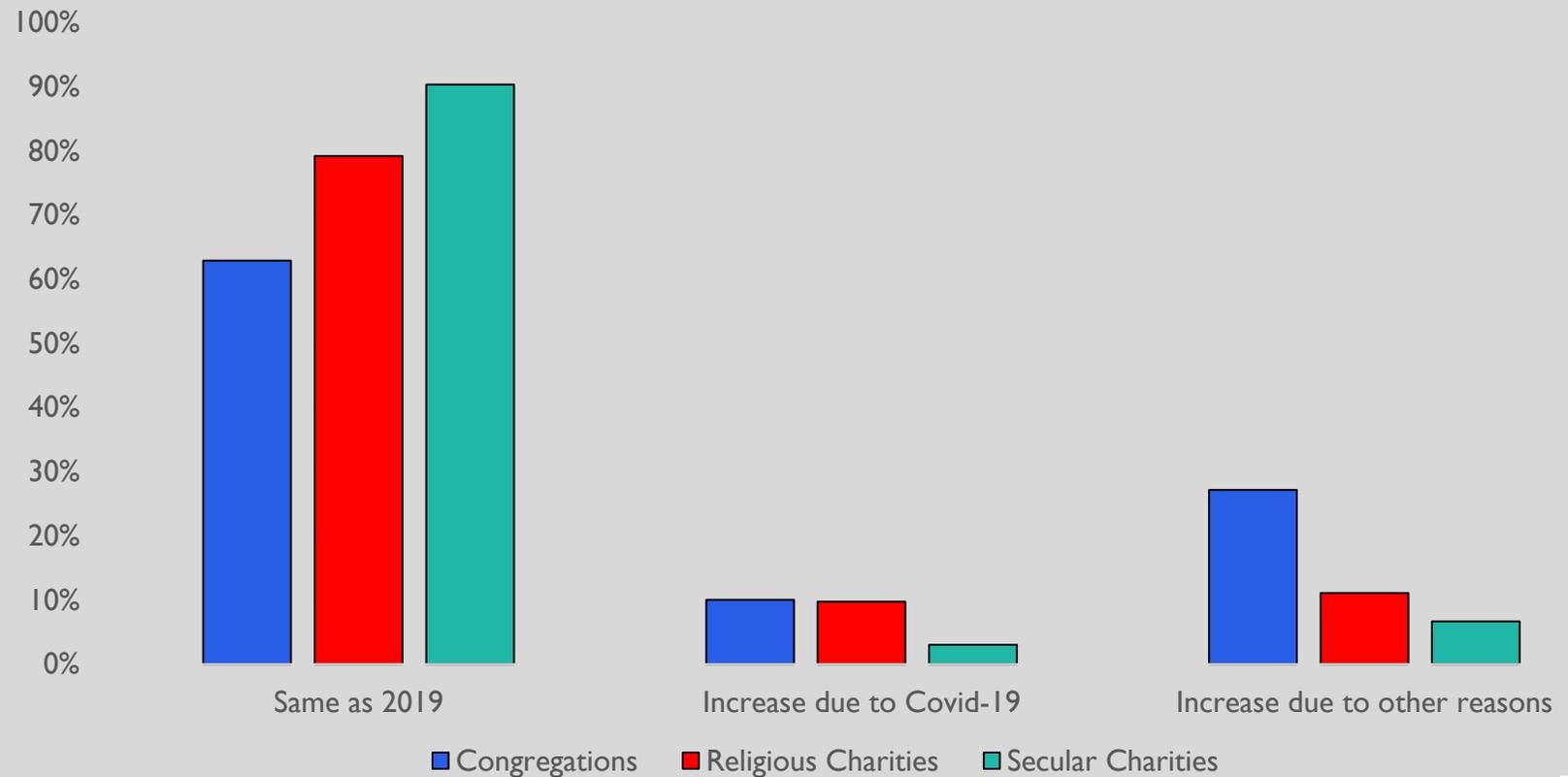


Impact on Volunteering

Local congregations stand to benefit most from respondents who did not volunteer in 2019 but plan to following the lifting of Covid restrictions.

Local congregations and religious charities also stand to benefit more than secular charities from other influencing factors.

Anticipated Volunteer Involvement
Following Covid-19 for those who did not volunteer in 2019

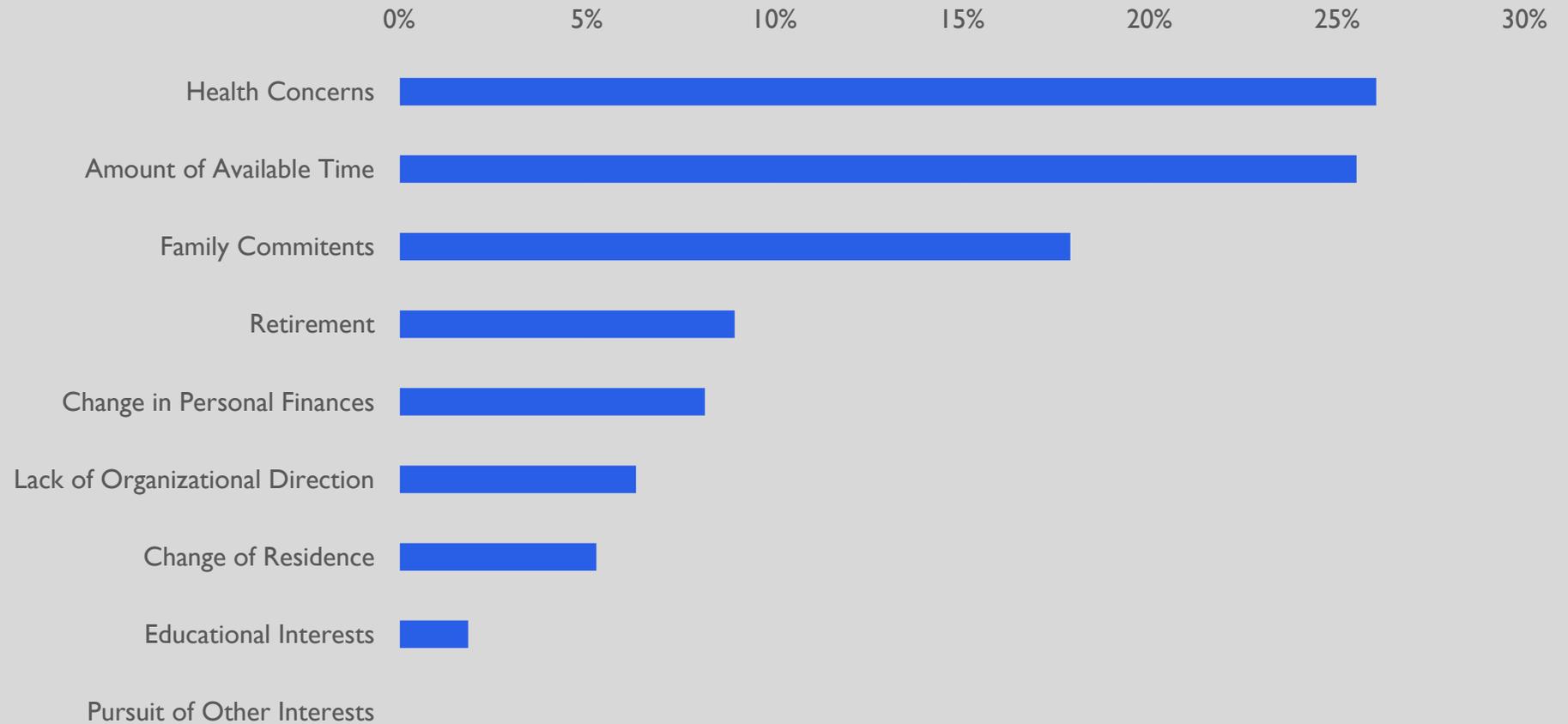


Impact on Volunteering

While Covid-19 appears to be having significant impact on the volunteer activity of religious Canadians, other factors are involved as well.

Health concerns top the list, being identified by 26% of respondents, followed closely by amount of available time (also about 26%), family commitments (18%) and retirement (9%)

Other Factors Potentially Affecting Volunteer Involvement

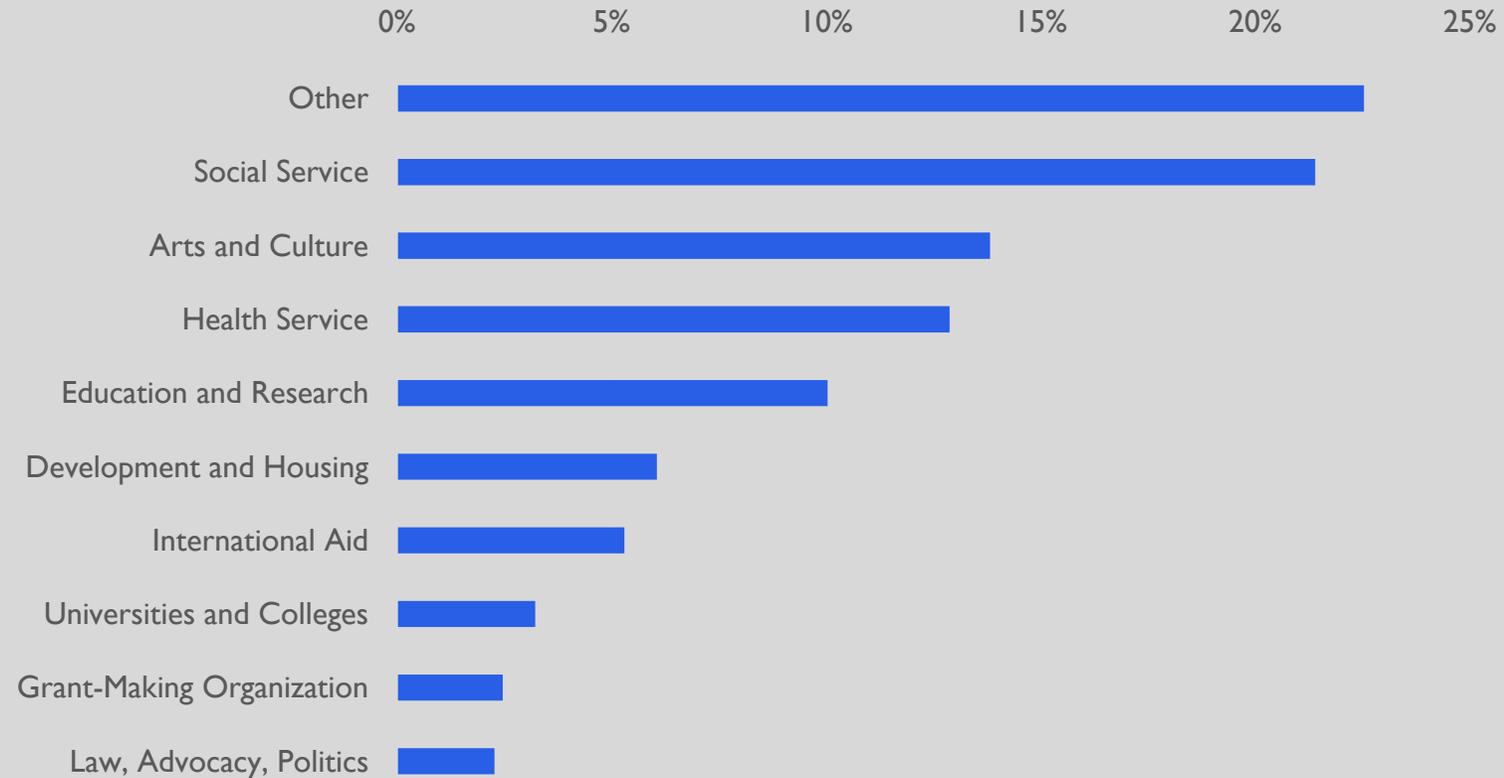


Impact on Volunteering

51% respondents who volunteered in 2019, volunteered for secular charities.

They most frequently volunteered for charities in the Social Service sector (21%), followed by Arts and Culture (14%) and Health Services (13%).

The Secular Volunteer Activity of Religious Canadians By Type



Volunteering and Age

To better understand the impact of Covid-19 on volunteer activity, it is important to review the volunteer activity of Canadians more generally as put forward in the 2011 and 2018 Canadian General Social Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating.

In our survey, those aged 65 and older make up 56% of survey respondents. But according to the 2011 National Household Survey, those aged 65 and older represent approximately only 22% of the Canadians who self-identify as being religious. Seniors then are significantly over-represented in our survey.

At the same time, Statistics Canada reports that volunteers aged 73 and older contribute the highest number of hours per year at 221 while those aged 53 to 72 come second at 153 hours per year. Both well above the national average of 130 for those aged 15 and older. If Baby Boomer and Matures tend to contribute more volunteer hours on average, perhaps it is not surprising that the average age of our respondents might be higher than otherwise expected.

Volunteer Hours by Generation for those aged 15 and older

| Born | After 1996 | 1981 – 1995 | 1966- 1980 | 1946- 1965 | 1918- 1945 | TOTAL |
|------------------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Total Population | 3,430,000 | 7,754,000 | 7,179,000 | 9,331,000 | 3,149,000 | 30,843,000 |
| Number of Volunteers | 1,800,000 | 3,137,000 | 3,156,000 | 3,596,000 | 1,001,000 | 12,691,000 |
| Volunteer Rate | 52% | 40% | 44% | 39% | 32% | 41% |
| Total hours volunteered (millions) | 148 | 351 | 376 | 550 | 221 | 1,647 |
| Full-time equivalents | 77,331 | 182,692 | 195,799 | 286,605 | 115,319 | 857,813 |
| Average hours volunteered per year | 82 | 112 | 119 | 153 | 221 | 130 |

Source: Statistics Canada 2018 GSS

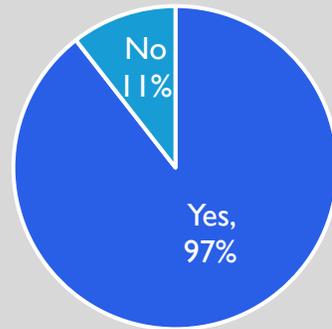
Impact of Covid-19 on Donor Activity

2019 Donor Activity

Like volunteer time, individual congregations benefit more from the donor activity of religious Canadians than religious and secular charities

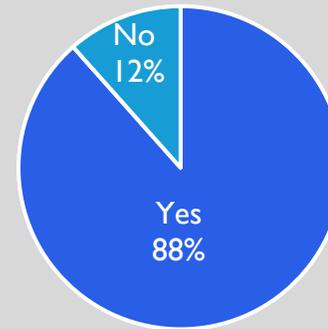
The survey revealed that respondents were more likely to donate to an organization in 2019 than they were to contribute volunteer time.

Congregations



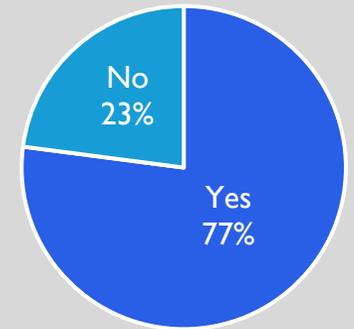
8% more than volunteers

Religious Charities



11% more than volunteers

Secular Charities



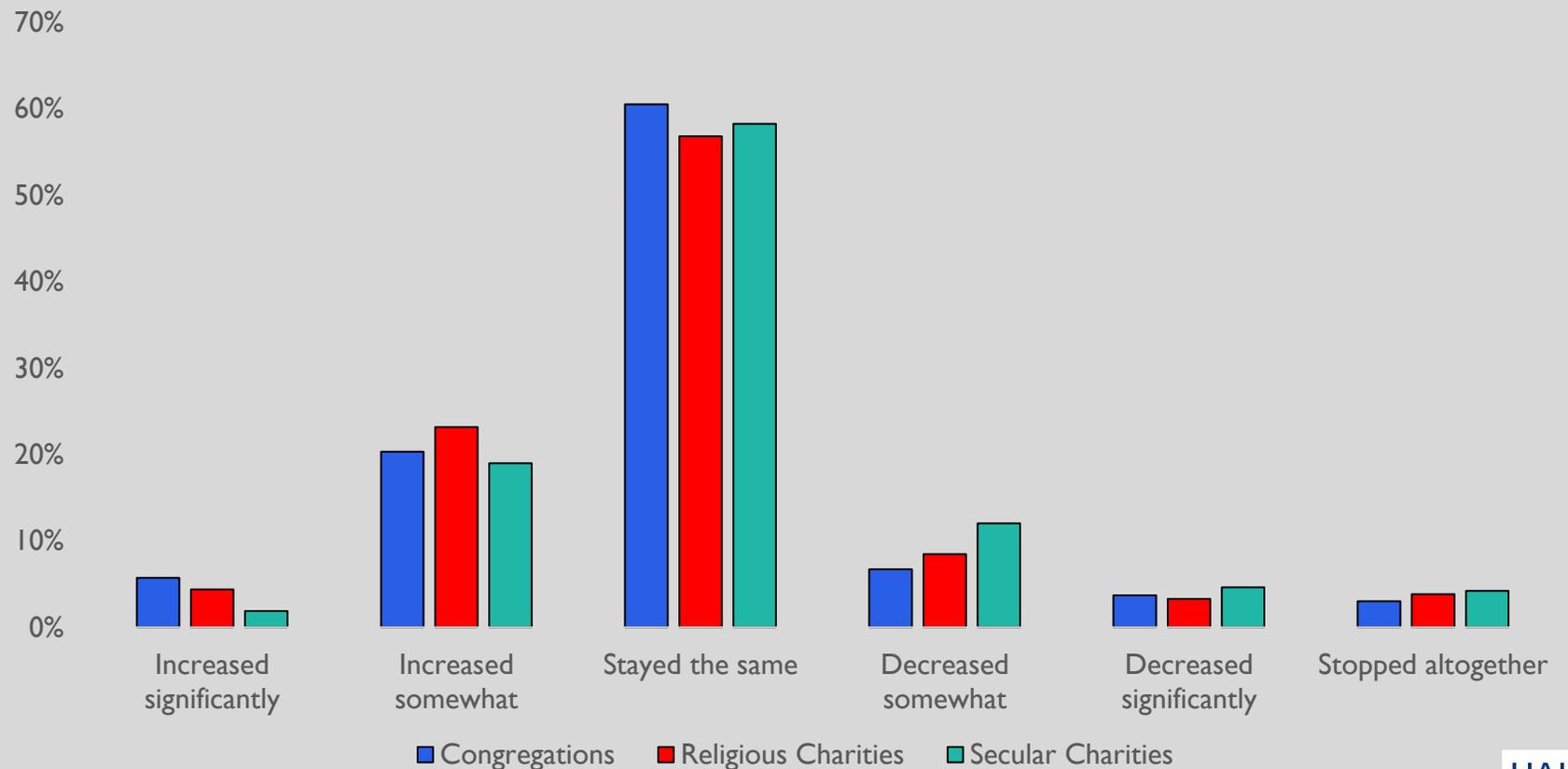
2% more than volunteers

Impact on Donor Activity

Where 2019 donors indicated an increase in giving during the pandemic pause, their contributions appear to have been directed more to religious charities (28%) than congregations (26%) and secular charities (21%).

Where there was a decrease in respondent giving, congregations appear to have been least affected and secular charities the most affected.

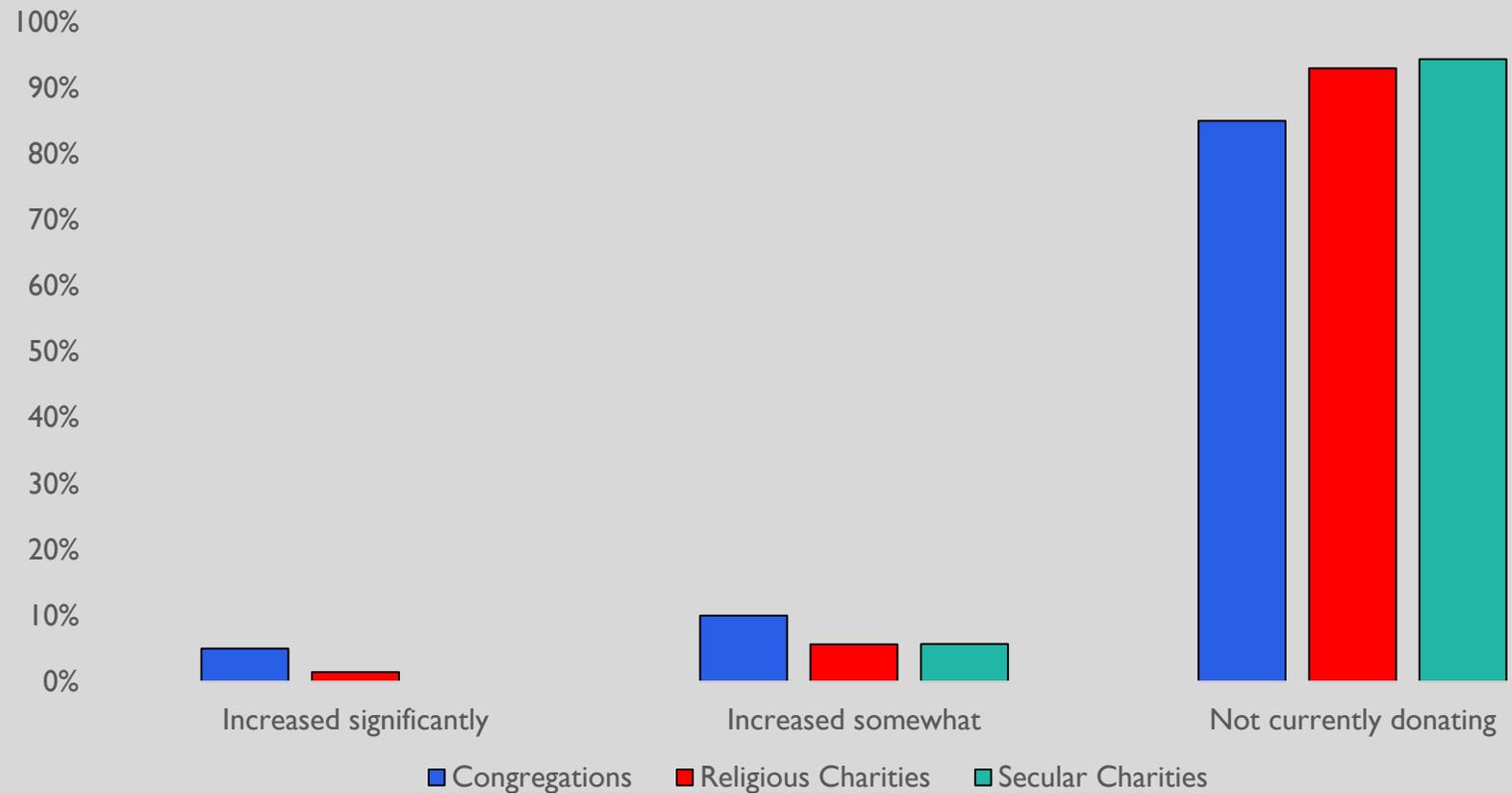
Impact on Donor Activity
For those who donated in 2019



Impact on Donor Activity

Where those who had not donated in 2019 chose to do so during the pandemic, local congregations received the greatest benefit.

Impact on Donor Activity
For those who did not donate financially in 2019

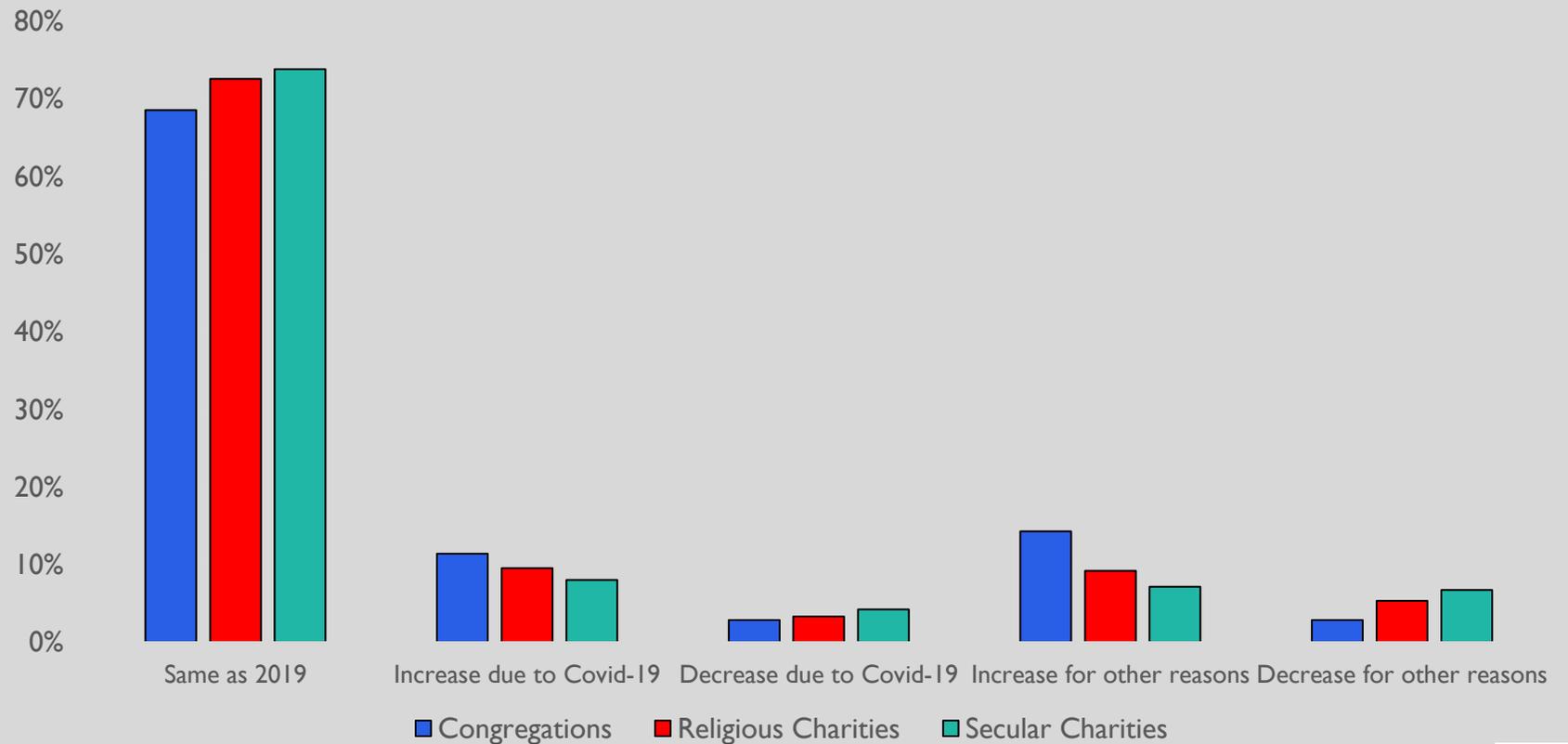


Impact on Donor Activity

Those who donated in 2019 appear more likely to increase their charitable giving to local congregations rather than religious or secular charities following the relaxation of Covid restrictions.

Similarly, secular charities are more likely to be challenged by a reduction in 2019 donor contributions following the relaxation of Covid restrictions.

Anticipated Donor Activity Following Covid-19 for those who donated in 2019

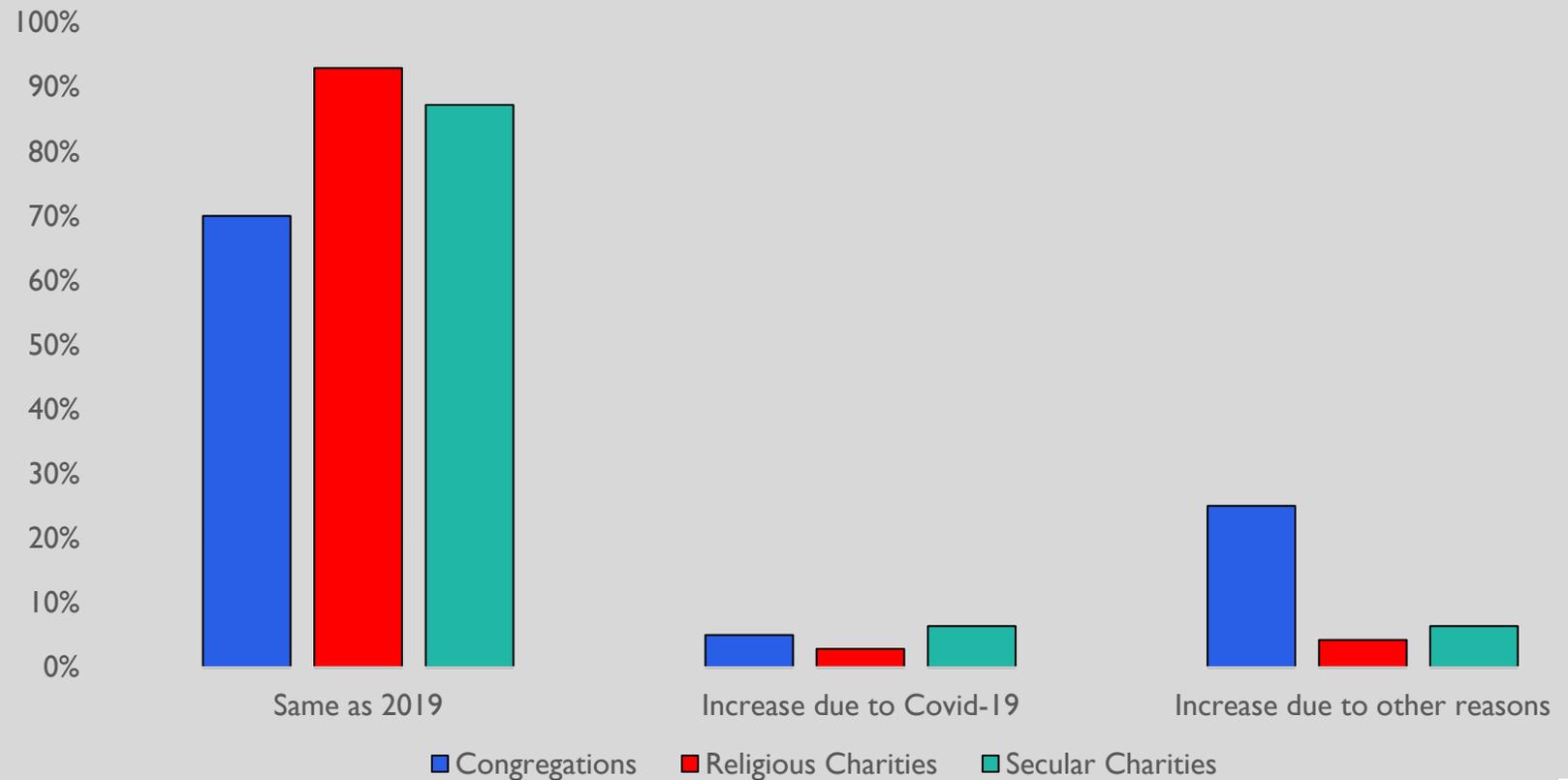


Impact on Donor Activity

Local congregations stand to benefit most from respondents who did not donate in 2019 but plan to following the lifting of Covid restrictions.

Other factors appear to play a more significant role for anticipated increases than Covid-19.

Anticipated Donor Activity
Following Covid-19 for those who did not donate financially in 2019

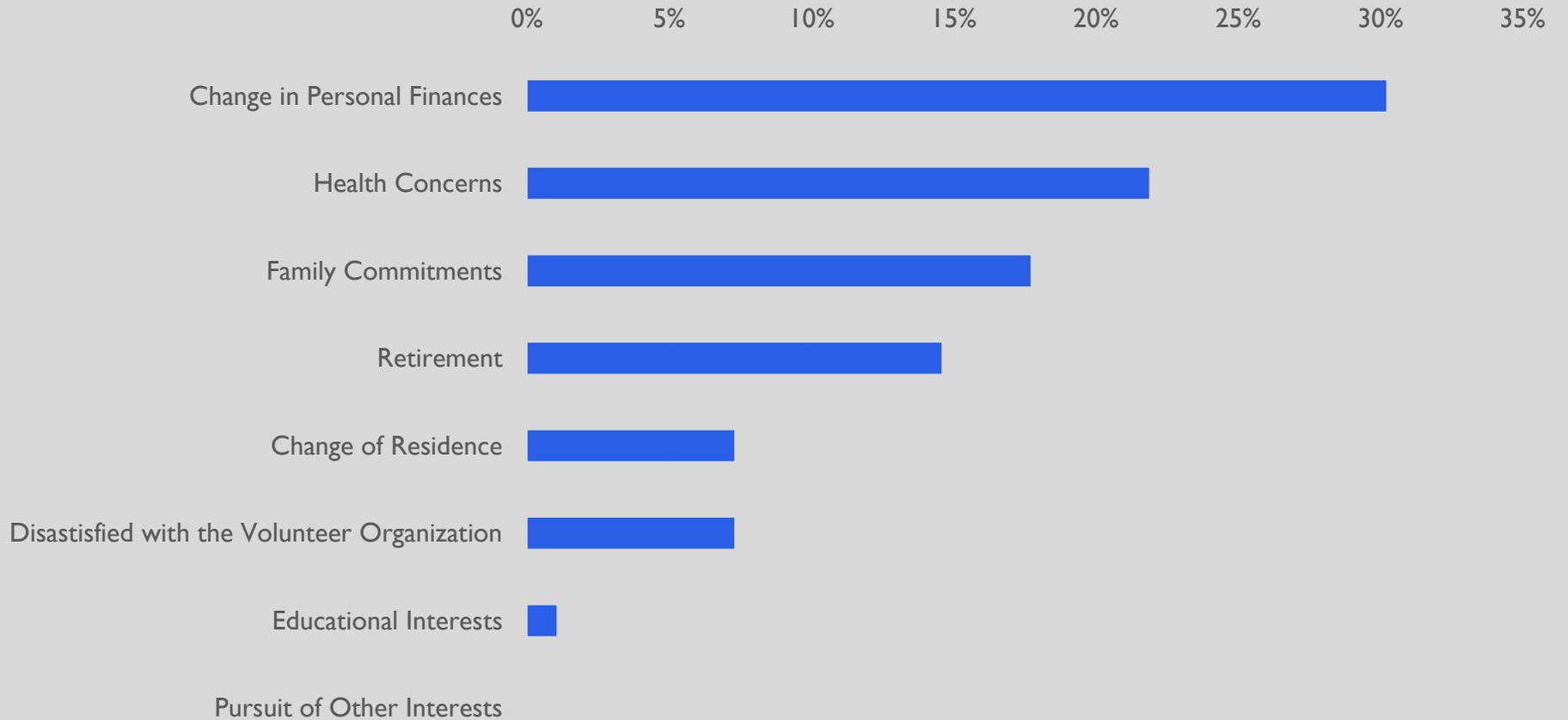


Impact on Donor Activity

In addition to Covid-19, a variety of outside factors are expected to impact the donor activity of survey respondents.

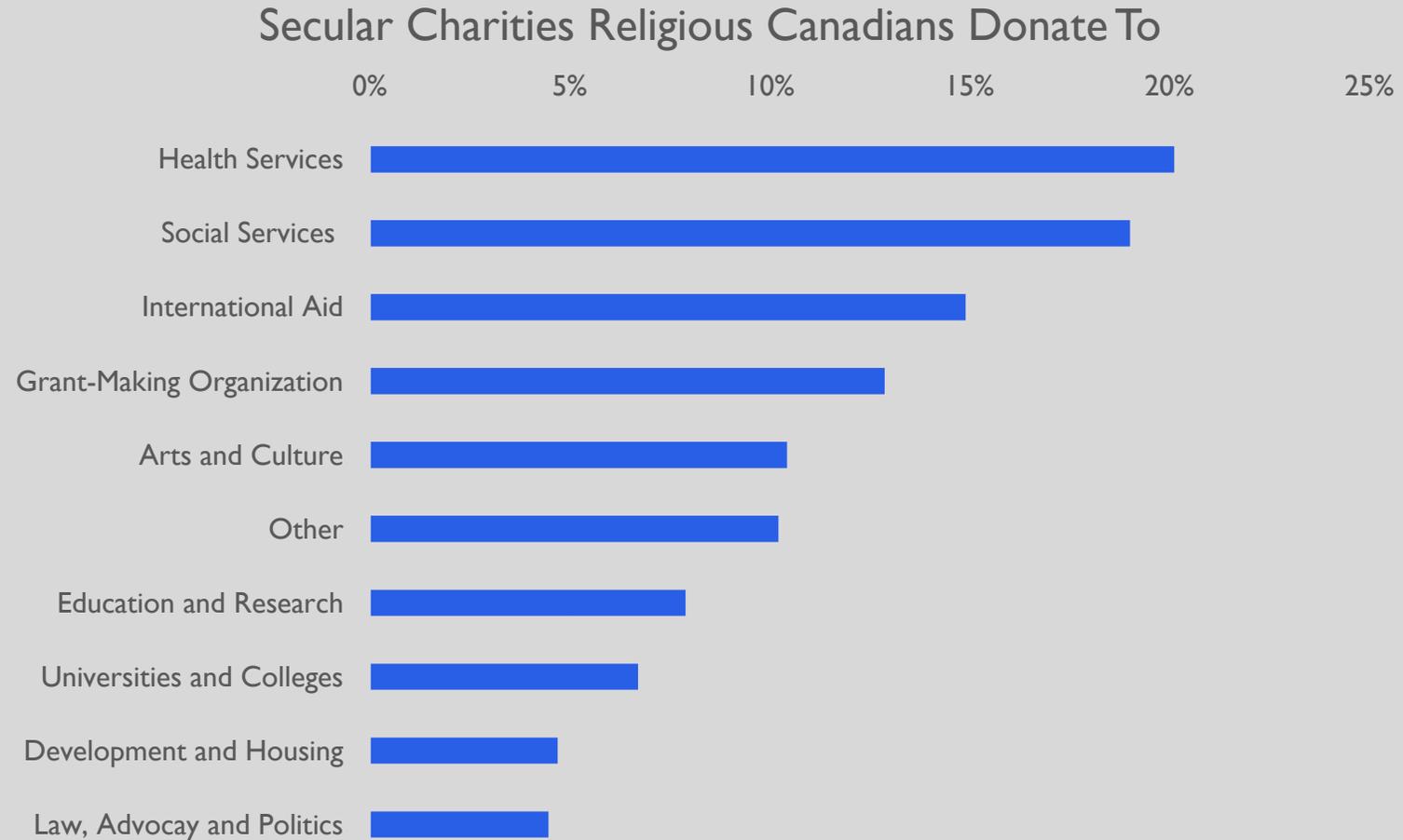
Changes in personal finances leads the way at 30%, followed by Health Concerns (22%) and Family Commitments (18%)

Other Factors Potentially Affecting Donor Involvement



Impact on Donor Activity

In the secular charitable sector, respondents were most likely to contribute to Health Services (20%), followed by Social Services (19%), International Aid (15%) and Grant-Making Organizations (13%).



Conclusions

Conclusions

As Canadians adapt to the new realities of re-opening our economy, while maintaining physical distancing measures, one question looms large: How long will this last?

Government and public health officials have suggested that this could remain our reality for several months, but have stayed away from offering anything more specific.

What is clear, is that the common good of all Canadians will depend greatly on the volunteer and donor capacity of religious Canadians. Traditionally, religious Canadians have volunteered and contributed financially at greater levels than non-religious Canadians. While many religious Canadians have had to limit their volunteer and donor activity due to Covid-19, many have been able to increase their contributions. Religious Canadians are responding despite the challenges.

During the pandemic their support appears to have been directed

more towards local congregations and religious charities than secular-based charities. It also appears that this trend will continue when Covid restrictions are relaxed even further.

This represents both a challenge and an opportunity for religious Canadians and the congregations they worship with. With secular charities limited in their capacity to respond, Canada will be relying on religious Canadians to offer creative and proactive strategies that address the needs of all Canadians; needs that have been newly created by Covid-19 and those that have always been present.

Our hope is that the information presented here will help religious Canadians not only to adapt to our society's new normal but to be active in creating a more just and equitable society for all Canadians.

For more information visit our website at [Halo Canada](#) or email us at [Halo Canada Project](#).

Additional Resources

Statistics Canada has recently published [Volunteering in Canada: Challenges and Opportunities during the Covid-19 pandemic](#) based on findings from the 2018 General Social Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating.

While based on figures from 2018, this study provides benchmarks important to better understanding our findings. For example, in 2018, Matures (40%) and Baby Boomers (32%) were more likely than iGen (19%) to be top volunteers, spending 132 hours or more on volunteer activities. With many baby boomers now struggling to keep businesses alive or working from home and, in some cases, caring for elderly parents, this group likely has less time for volunteering during the pandemic. At the same time Matures, who would normally be contributing the most formal volunteer hours, are among those at highest risk in the current COVID-19 context and in many cases, more likely to be self-isolating. In other words, those who were among the most dedicated unpaid workers in the charitable sector going into the pandemic are now among those most impacted by the current situation and themselves in need of support.

Imagine Canada, has also published [Charities and the Covid-19 Pandemic](#). This research emphasizes that the pandemic is significantly damaging the financial and human health of charitable organizations. They report that close to 25% of charity leaders believe they cannot operate at current levels for longer than 6 months. And yet, they are modifying existing programs, developing new ones and responding to respond to human need – all in dramatically changed working environments.

WayBase is an online platform that gathers, cleans and organizes the public data on over 30,000 Christian charities nationwide to support coordination, collaboration and reporting for the Christian sector. They recently published a study on the [Impact of Covid-19 on Canadian Christian Charities](#). In contrast to surveying religious Canadians, this survey focusses on the input of religious leaders, specifically from the Christian community. Their findings suggest that only 25% of churches have been able to maintain normal revenues, with 71% of churches reporting a drop in revenue.