



## Subjective Well-Being Study

30 September 2013

The Subjective Well-Being Study is done for the first time by NVPC and Professor David Chan, Lee Kuan Yew Fellow, Professor of Psychology and Director of the Behavioural Sciences Institute at Singapore Management University (SMU). This study is part of NVPC's [Individual Giving Survey 2012](#).

# Overview

Subjective Well-Being (SWB), measured using a previously validated 10-item composite index, refers to the extent to which individuals are satisfied and happy with their lives.

Theories and previous research suggest that giving and SWB are likely to have reciprocal positive effects on each other. Although it is not possible to clearly establish causal direction in a survey, we would expect individuals' giving behaviour (volunteering & donating) to be positively associated with their levels of SWB if the two are causally related.

This is the first large-scale national study in Singapore to establish a positive association between giving behaviour and SWB. The pattern of findings remained after controlling for income status.

In addition, this is the first national study that examined the relationship between givers' intention to give in future and their perceptions of and experience with Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs).

# Definitions

- **Givers:** Individuals who had volunteered and/or donated money in the past 12 months
- **Non-givers:** Individuals who had neither volunteered<sup>^</sup> nor donated money in the past 12 months
- **Volunteering**
  - Activities done out of your own free will without expecting financial payment to help others outside your household, family or relatives
  - May be formal through organisations (e.g. charities) or informal without going through any organisation
  - Excludes compulsory community work such as Community Involvement Programme (CIP) in schools (except where it exceeded the compulsory hours) and Corrective Work Order (CWO)
- **Donating**
  - Giving of money out of your own free will to help others outside your household, family or relatives
  - May be giving of money to organisations (e.g. charities) or giving of money directly to others (e.g. neighbours) without going through any organisation
  - Excludes compulsory payment of money such as paying fines or taxes

<sup>^</sup> In this report, non-volunteers refer to individuals who did not volunteer in the past 12 months and individuals who had never volunteered before.

# Executive Summary

- People who Give
  - Givers (who had volunteered and/or donated money in the past 12 months) tend to have higher levels of Subjective Well-Being (SWB) (more satisfied and happy with their lives) than non-givers (who had neither volunteered nor donated money in the past 12 months).
- How Frequently People Give
  - Regular givers (who gave at least once a month) tend to have higher levels of SWB than occasional givers.
- How Much People Give
  - People who gave more (volunteer hours or donation amount) tend to have higher levels of SWB than people who gave less.

# Executive Summary (continued)

- Belief in NPOs & Intent to Give
  - Givers who agreed that most NPOs manage their volunteers or use the donated funds properly were more likely to give (volunteer or donate) in future. This relationship remained true even after taking into account the givers' level of SWB.
- Experience with NPOs & Intent to Give
  - Givers with high satisfaction with their experience with the NPOs they volunteered in or donated to were more likely to give (volunteer or donate) in future. This relationship remained true even after taking into account the givers' level of SWB.

# Practical Implications

- Giving & Subjective Well-Being (SWB)
  - This is the first national study in Singapore that found a positive correlation between giving (volunteering or donating) and SWB.
  - The findings for this study are consistent with research from elsewhere which showed that giving and well-being can influence each other. Happy people are more likely to give, but people who give also tend to become happier. This is consistent with our findings that givers are more likely than non-givers to be satisfied and happy with their lives.
  - This positive relationship is not dependent on the socio-economic status of the givers and non-givers.

# Practical Implications (continued)

- Giving & Subjective Well-Being (SWB)
  - *Why Giving may increase SWB:* The act of giving not only benefits the recipient but also leads to positive outcomes for the giver. When we give, we derive a sense of personal meaning from helping others. We also become more grateful for our own life conditions as we appreciate the situation of those who are less fortunate. The outcomes can also be indirect. For example, when helping others, our interactions with the recipients and other givers produce positive social relationships and give us a sense of community.
  - *Implications:* Efforts that enhance individuals' subjective well-being are likely to increase their tendency to give. Conversely, efforts that promote giving are likely to have a positive influence on the givers' well-being. Therefore, encouraging giving and increasing subjective well-being will lead to a positive spiral in Singapore society, and it benefits both givers and recipients in many ways.

# Practical Implications (continued)

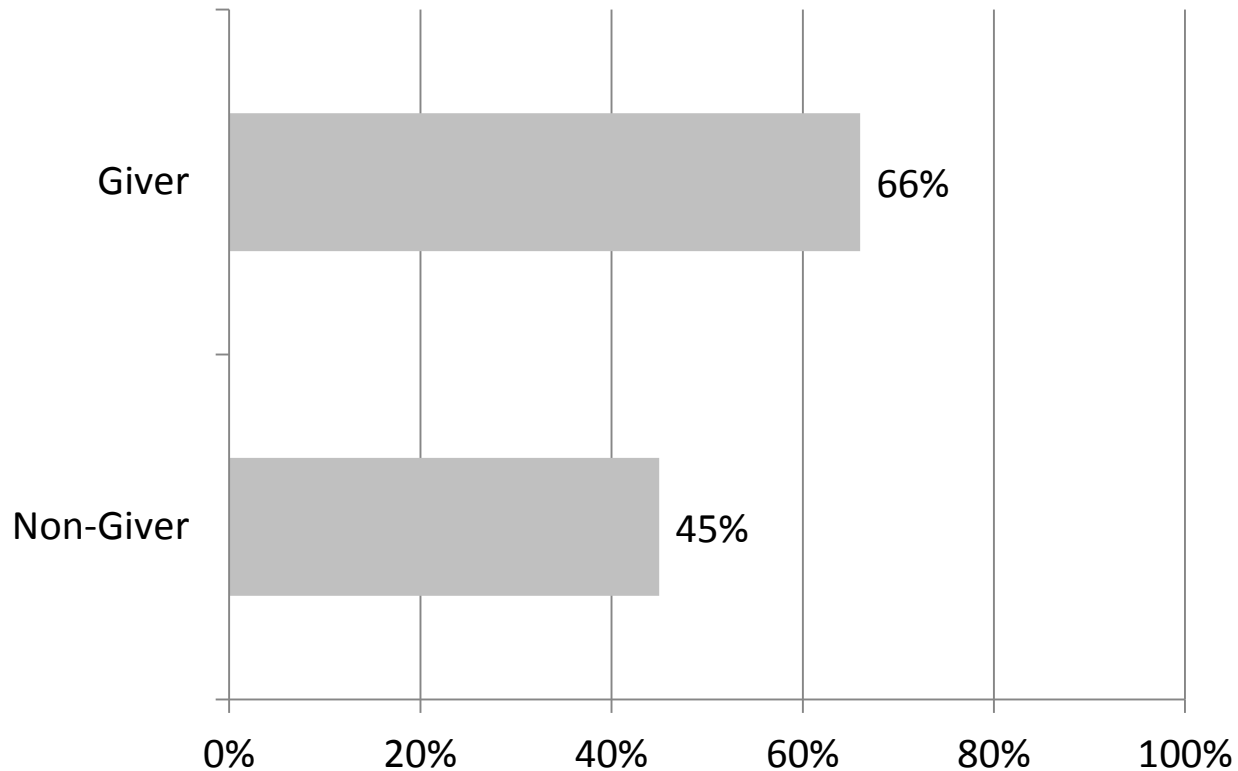
- NPOs' Influence on Intent to Give
  - Be it in volunteering or donating, it is important that NPOs manage volunteers and donors effectively. NPOs play an important role to spur future giving and should engage their givers better to develop a positive giving experience. Doing that increases the likelihood for volunteers and donors to continue giving.



# Givers had higher levels of subjective well-being than non-givers

66% of givers had high levels of subjective well-being compared to 45% of non-givers

**Chart #1. Giving & Subjective Well-Being (SWB):  
Proportion of Respondents with High Levels of SWB**

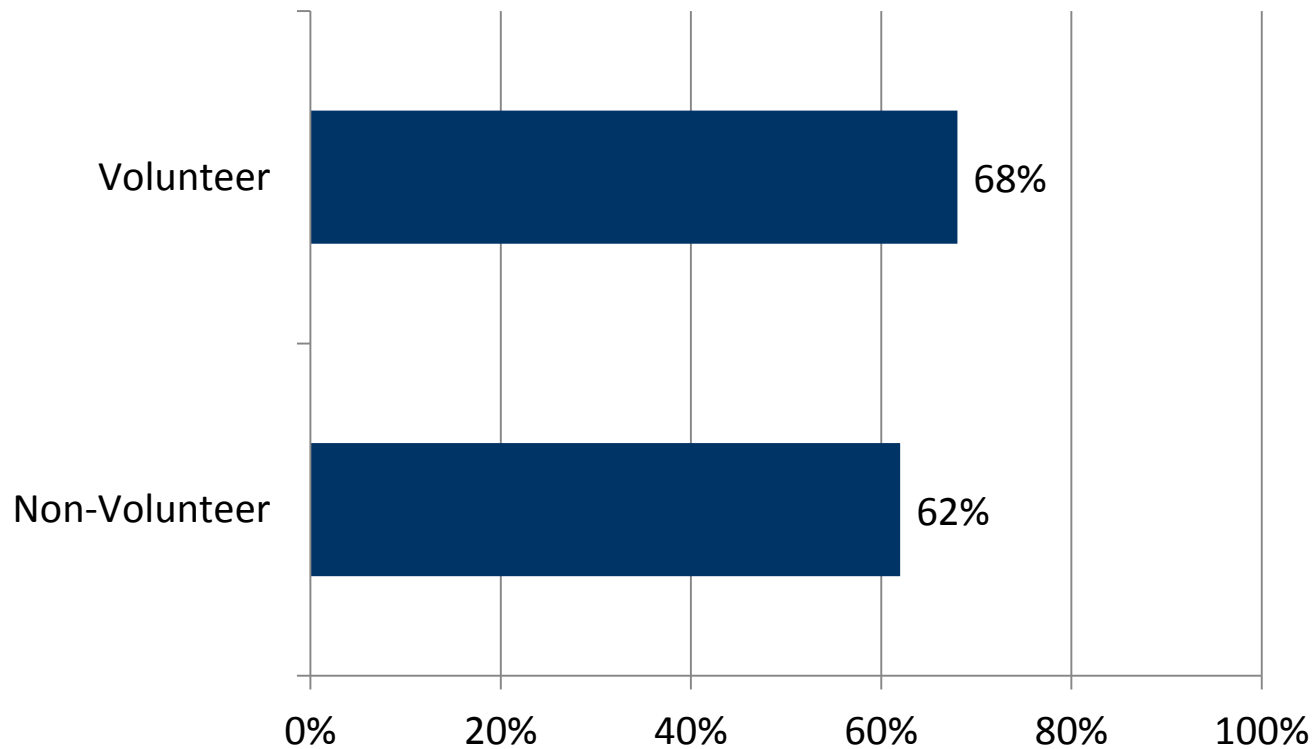


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# Volunteers had higher levels of subjective well-being than non-volunteers

68% of volunteers had high levels of subjective well-being compared to 62% of non-volunteers

**Chart #2. Volunteering & Subjective Well-Being (SWB):  
Proportion of Respondents with High Levels of SWB**

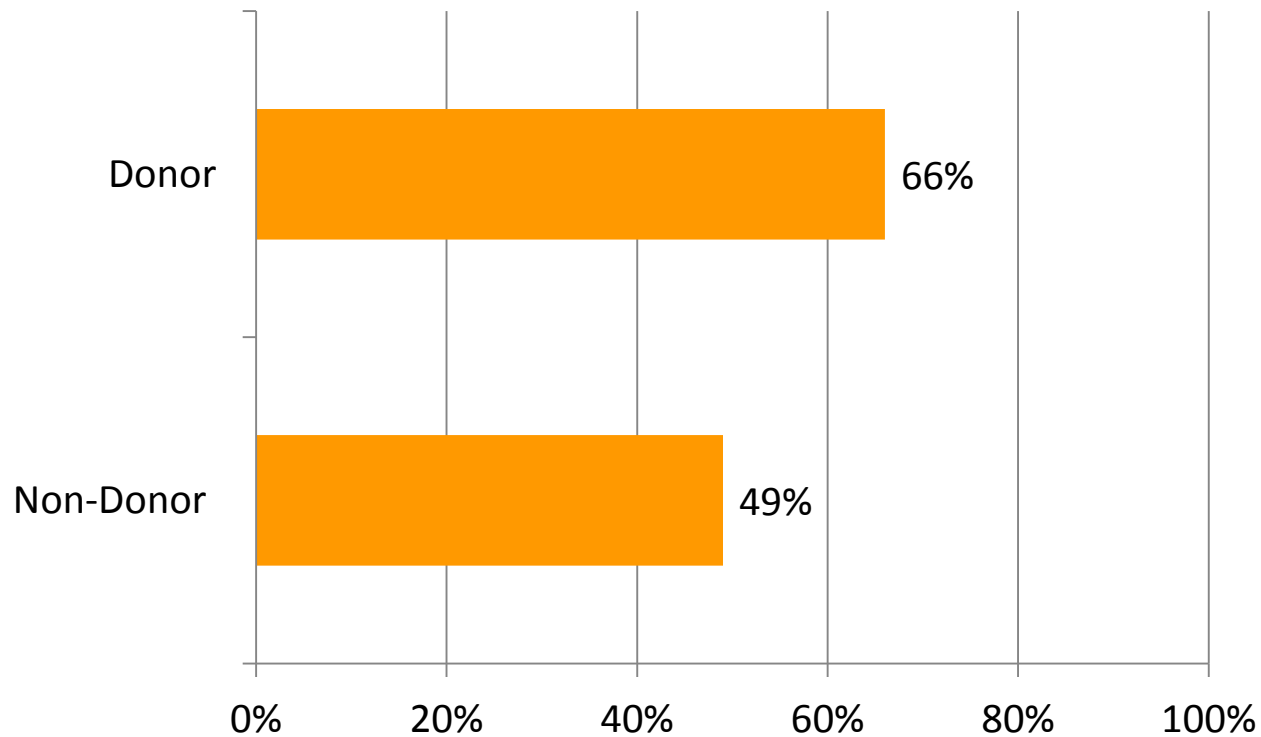


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# Donors had higher levels of subjective well-being than non-donors

66% of donors had high levels of subjective well-being compared to 49% of non-donors

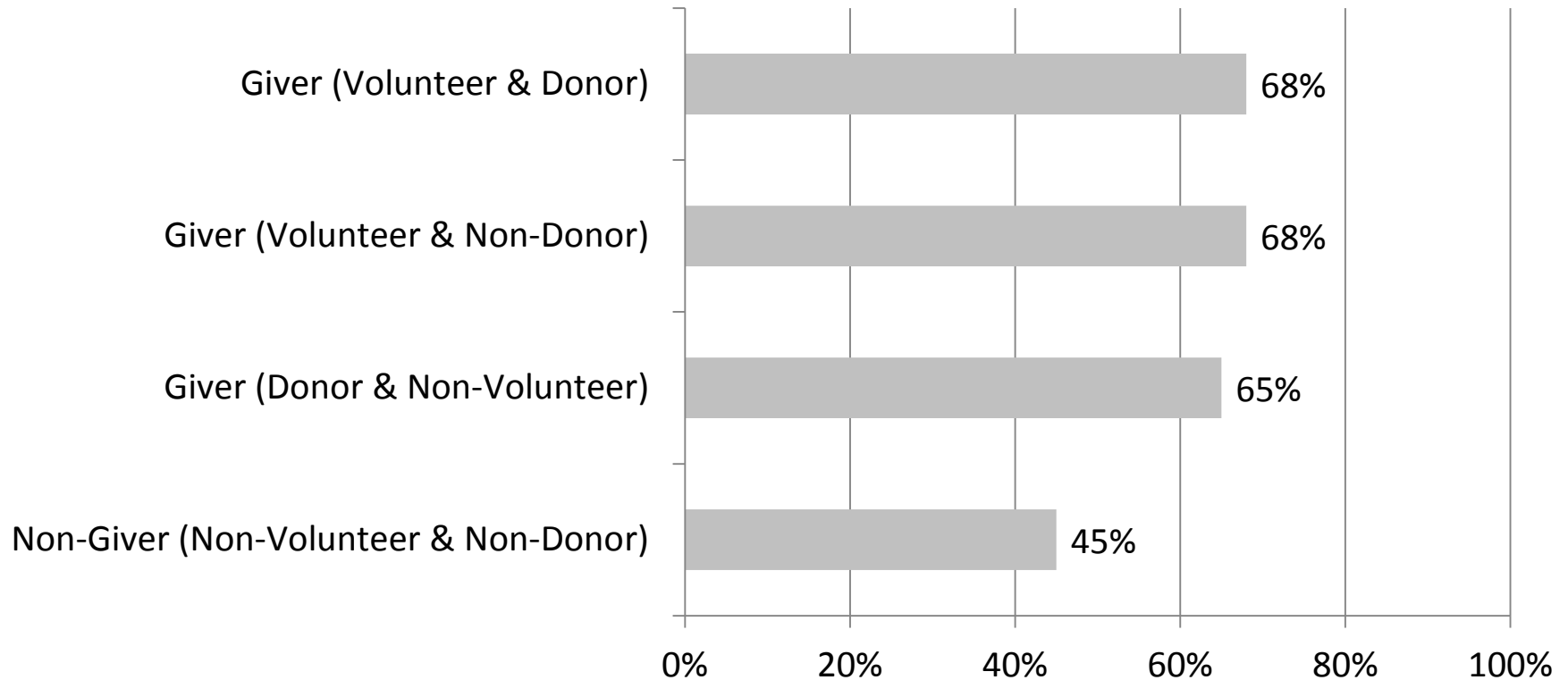
**Chart #3. Donating & Subjective Well-Being (SWB):  
Proportion of Respondents with High Levels of SWB**



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# Whether givers volunteered, donated or both, they had higher levels of subjective well-being than non-givers

**Chart #4. Giving & Subjective Well-Being (SWB):  
Proportion of Respondents with High Levels of SWB**

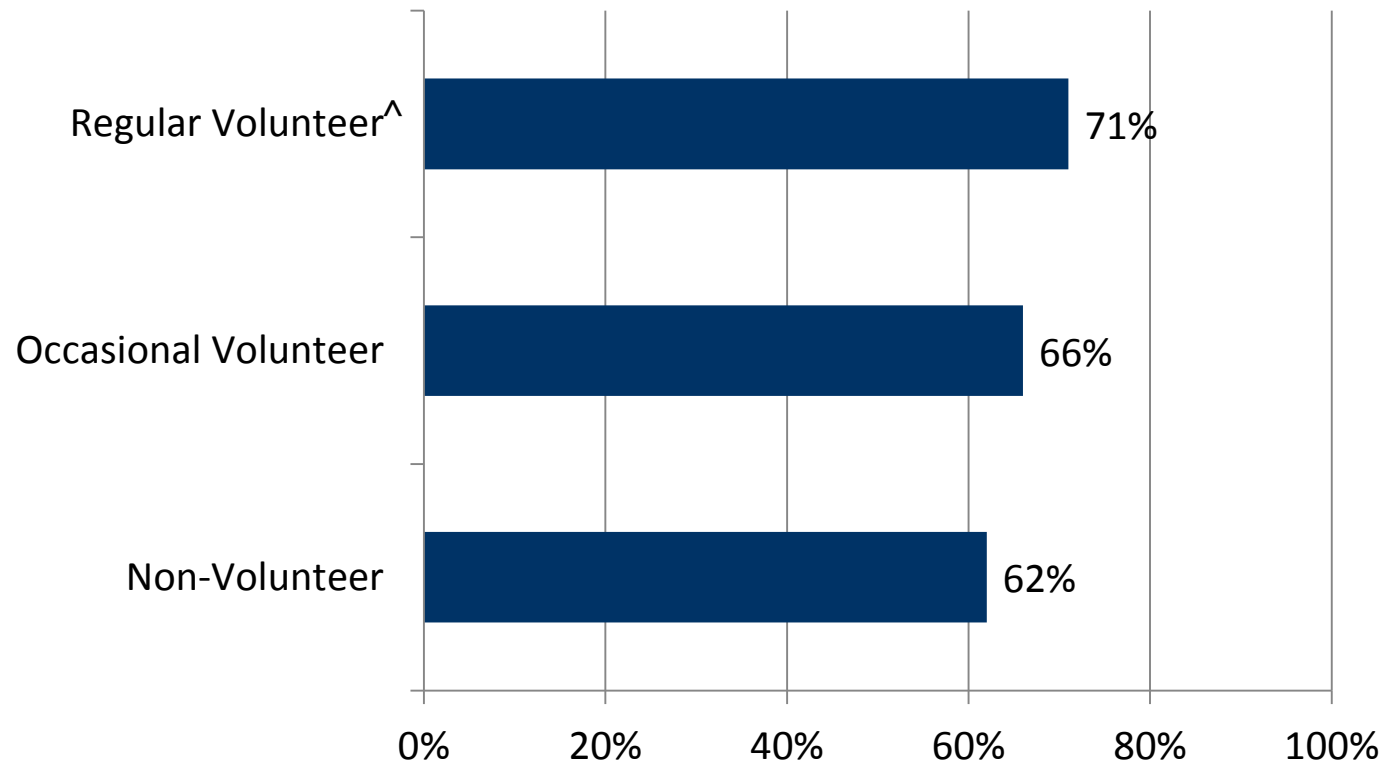


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# Regular volunteers had higher levels of subjective well-being than occasional volunteers

71% of regular volunteers had high levels of subjective well-being compared to 66% of occasional volunteers

**Chart #5. Frequency of Volunteering & Subjective Well-Being (SWB):  
Proportion of Respondents with High Levels of SWB**

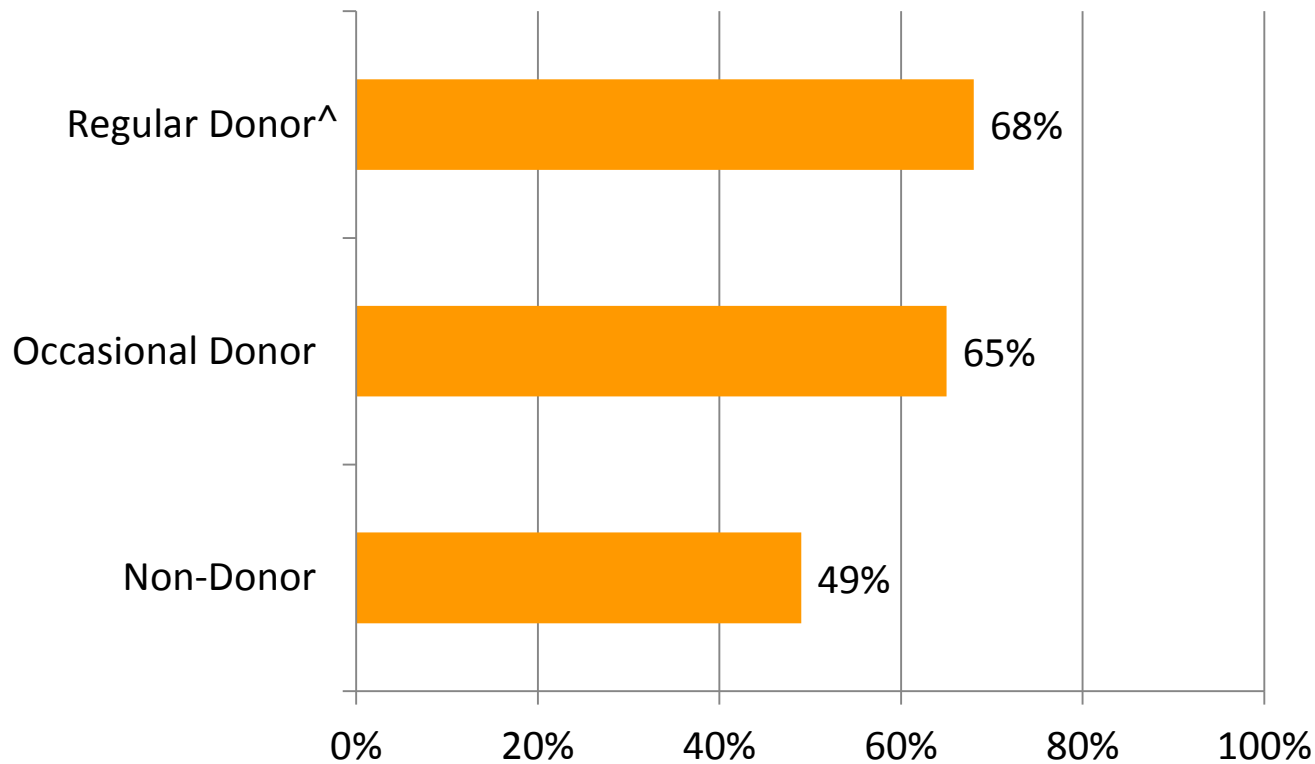


<sup>^</sup> Regular volunteers refer to volunteers who had volunteered at least once a month in the past 12 months.

# Regular donors had slightly higher levels of subjective well-being than occasional donors

68% of regular donors had high levels of subjective well-being compared to 65% of occasional donors

**Chart #6. Frequency of Donating & Subjective Well-Being (SWB):  
Proportion of Respondents with High Levels of SWB**

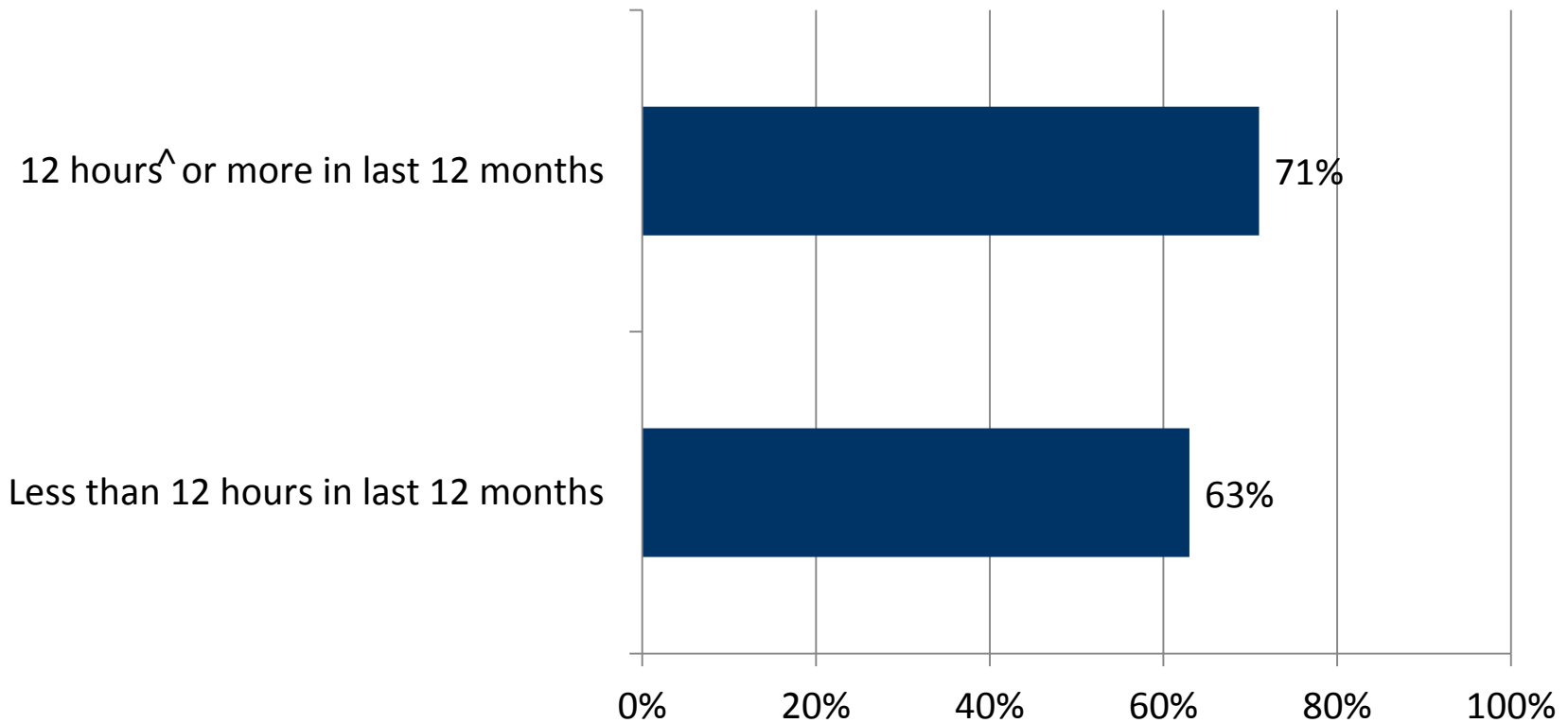


<sup>^</sup> Regular donors refer to donors who had donated at least once a month in the past 12 months.

# Volunteers who served more hours had higher levels of subjective well-being than volunteers who served less

71% of volunteers who served 12 hours or more had high levels of subjective well-being compared to 63% of volunteers who served less

**Chart #7. Volunteer Hours & Subjective Well-Being (SWB):  
Proportion of Volunteers with High Levels of SWB**



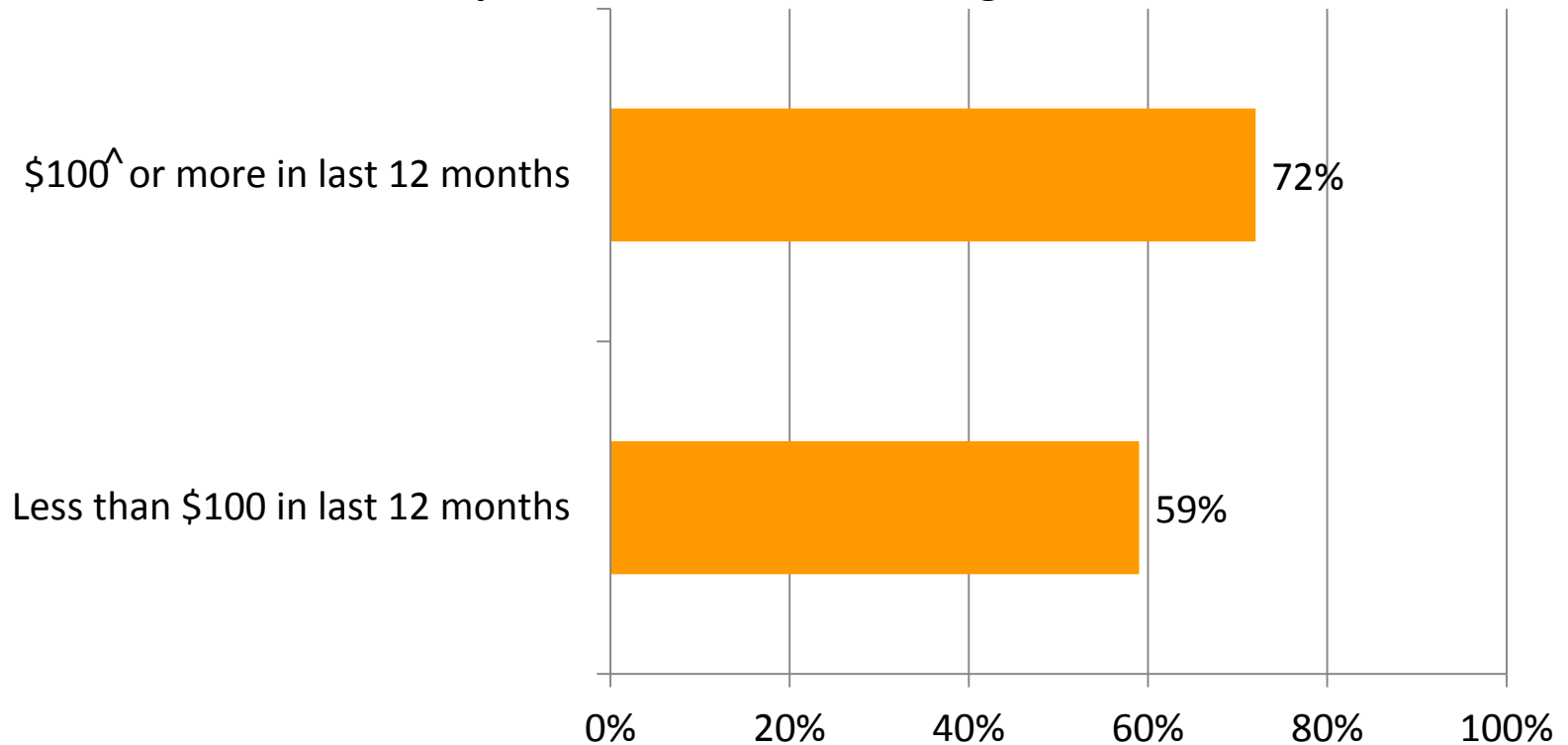
<sup>^</sup> The median number of hours volunteered in the last 12 months is 12.

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# Donors who gave higher donation amount had higher levels of subjective well-being than donors who gave less

72% of donors who gave \$100 or more had high levels of subjective well-being compared to 59% of donors who gave less

**Chart #8. Donation Amount & Subjective Well-Being (SWB):  
Proportion of Donors with High Levels of SWB**



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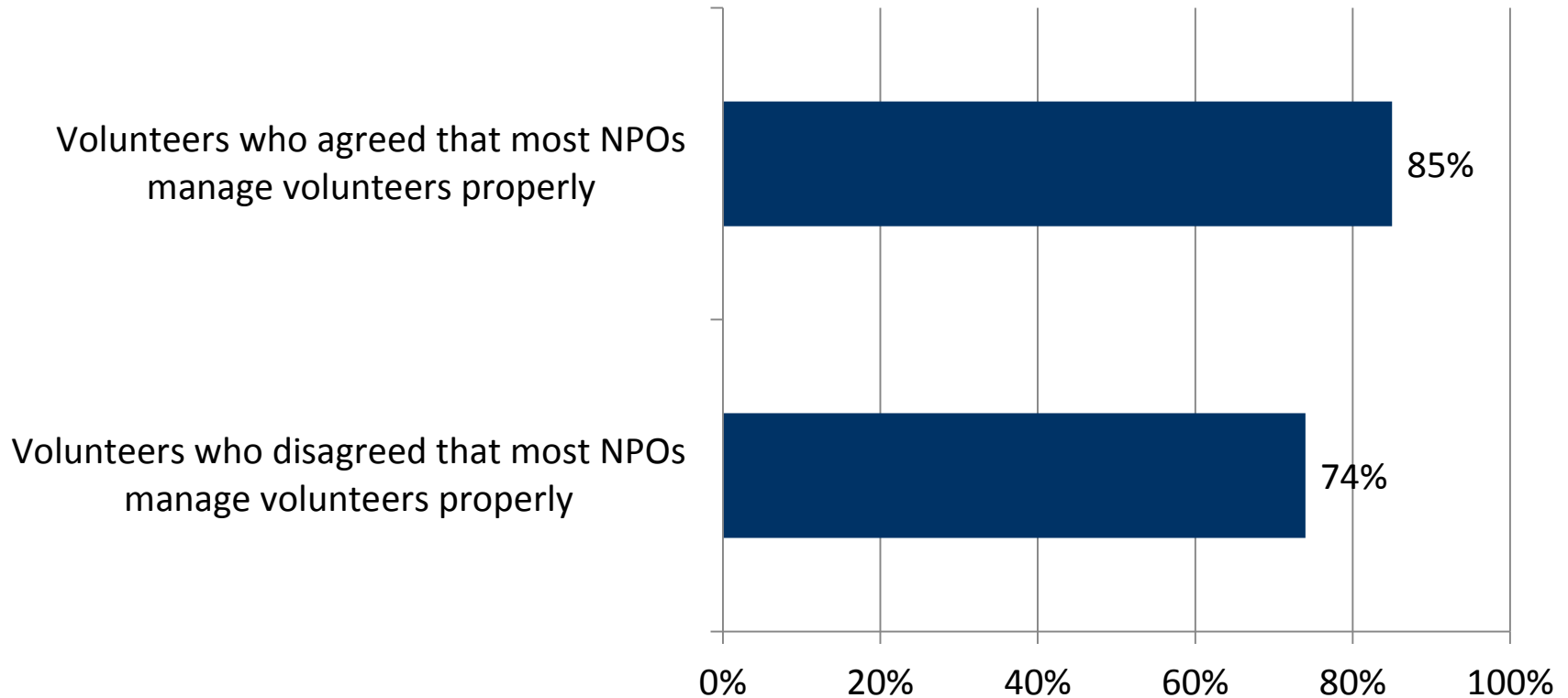
<sup>^</sup> The median amount donated to organisations in the last 12 months is \$100.



# Volunteers who agreed that most NPOs manage volunteers properly were more likely to volunteer in future

85% of volunteers who agreed compared to 74% of volunteers who disagreed were likely to volunteer in future

**Chart #9. Management of Volunteers & Intent to Volunteer:  
Proportion of Volunteers who Intend to Volunteer in Future**



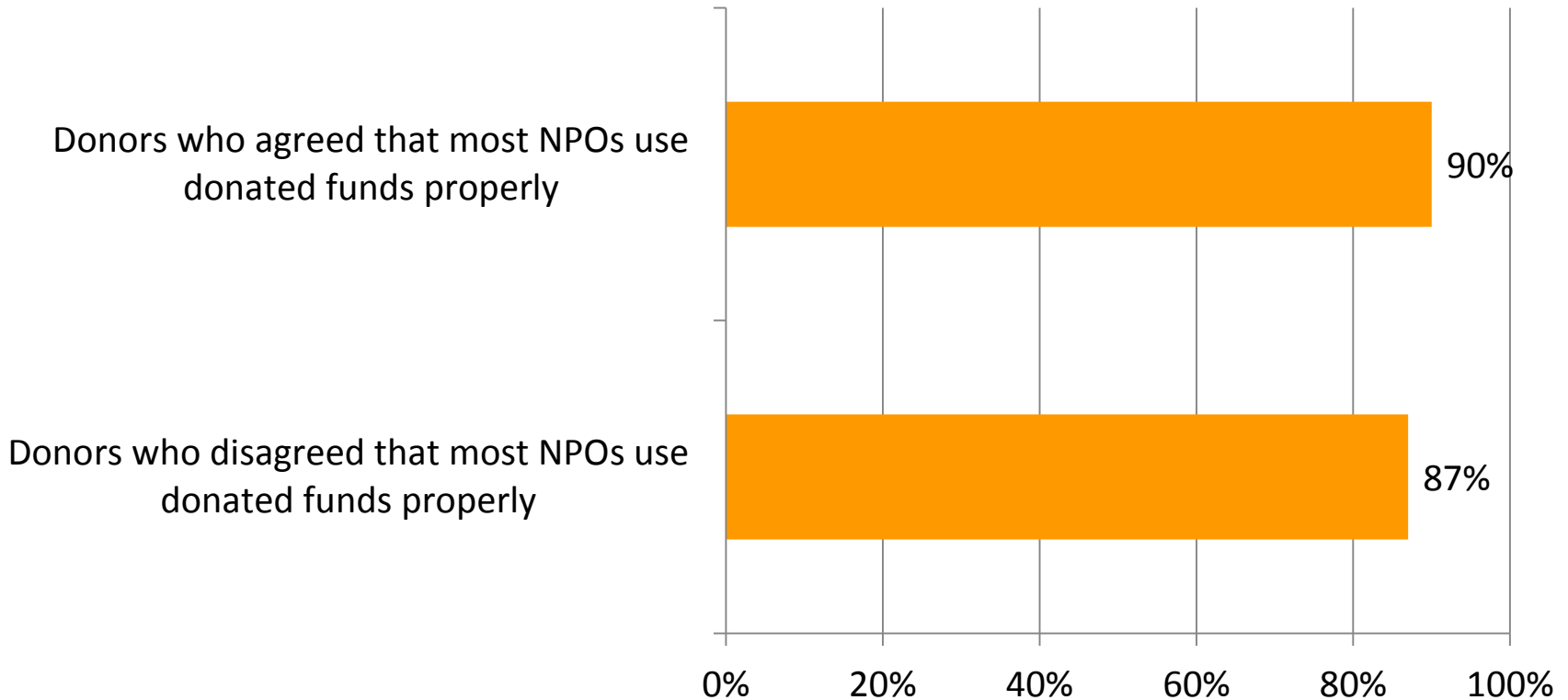
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This relationship remained true even after taking into account the volunteers' level of subjective well-being.

# Donors who agreed that most NPOs use donated funds properly were slightly more likely to donate in future

90% of donors who agreed compared to 87% of donors who disagreed were likely to donate in future

**Chart #10. Use of Donated Funds & Intent to Donate:  
Proportion of Donors who Intend to Donate in Future**



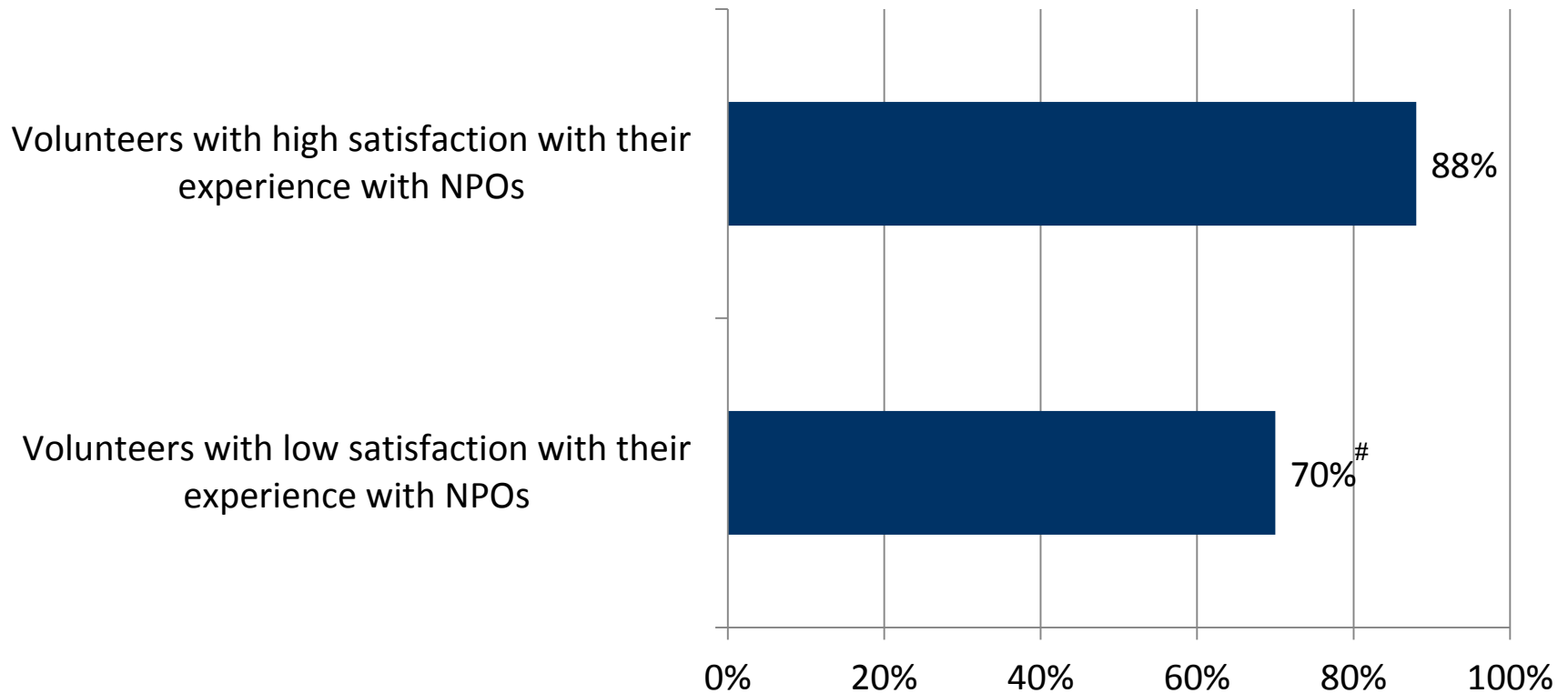
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This relationship remained true even after taking into account the donors' level of subjective well-being.

# Volunteers with high satisfaction with their experience with the NPOs they volunteered in were more likely to volunteer in future

88% of volunteers with high satisfaction compared to 70% of volunteers with low satisfaction were likely to volunteer in future

**Chart #11. Satisfaction with NPOs & Intent to Volunteer in Future:  
Proportion of Volunteers who Intend to Volunteer in Future**



This relationship remained true even after taking into account the volunteers' level of subjective well-being.

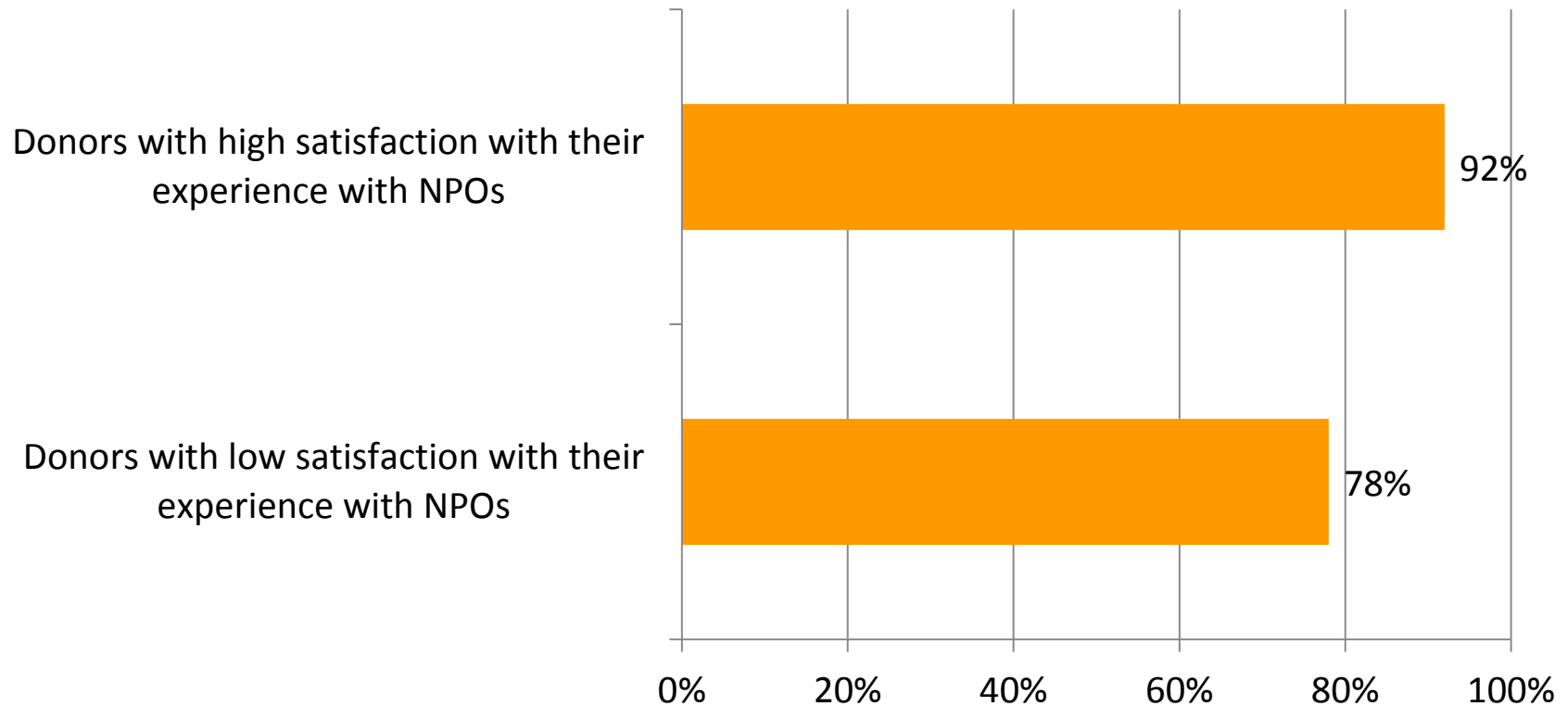
# represents sample size <30.

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# Donors with high satisfaction with their experience with the NPOs they donated to were more likely to donate in future

92% of donors with high satisfaction compared to 78% of donors with low satisfaction were likely to donate in future

**Chart #12. Satisfaction with NPOs & Intent to Donate in Future:  
Proportion of Donors who Intend to Donate in Future**



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This relationship remained true even after taking into account the donors' level of subjective well-being.

# Individual Giving Survey 2012 Research Design

- Sampling framework
  - List of 5,000 households from Department of Statistics
  - Sample households geographically spread and representative of house type
- Fieldwork: Jul to Sep 2012 (12 weeks)
- Respondents
  - Individuals aged 15 years & above who are Singapore residents (i.e. Singapore citizens and permanent residents) and non residents (excluding e.g. tourists)
  - Interviewed face to face at home
  - Interviews completed: 1,512
- Statistics
  - Weighting applied to sample data to arrive at national estimates
  - Margin of error at 95% confidence level: +/- 2.5%

# Demographic Profile of Respondents (Singapore Residents)

Sample distribution vs. national distribution

	Sample (Unweighted)	Resident population
<b>Residents only (Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents)</b>		
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	45%	49%
Female	55%	51%
<b>Ethnic group</b>		
Chinese	73%	76%
Malay	13%	13%
Indian	11%	9%
Others	3%	3%
<b>Age group</b>		
15 - 24 years	14%	16%
25 - 34 years	14%	17%
35 - 44 years	22%	20%
45 - 54 years	19%	20%
55 - 64 years	17%	15%
65 years and above	15%	12%
<b>Housing type</b>		
HDB 1 - 2 rooms	6%	5%
HDB 3 rooms	25%	20%
HDB 4 rooms	33%	32%
HDB 5 rooms / Exec / HUDC / Exec condo	22%	25%
Condo / Private apartment	12%	11%
Landed property	2%	6%
Others (e.g. shophouses)	*	1%

\* represents percentage below 1%.

Survey respondents include both residents and non-residents. The above table shows the distribution of resident sample.

Resident population distribution of gender, ethnic group and age group are as of June 2012 and housing type is as of 2011, derived from Population Trends 2012, Department of Statistics Singapore.

Reference: Department of Statistics Singapore (2012). *Population Trends 2012*. Retrieved 18 January 2013.