



## **National study finds link between giving and happiness** **2 in 3 givers satisfied and happy with their lives**

**Singapore, 30 September 2013** – A national study has found that giving and well-being are strongly linked. This is the first time that research, using a nationally-representative sample, has shown that people in Singapore who volunteer or donate are more likely to be satisfied and happy with their lives.

The study found that among people who volunteered and/or donated, two-thirds (66%) were satisfied and happy with their lives, i.e., they had high levels of subjective well-being (SWB). In contrast, among non-givers, less than half (45%) had high SWB *[slide 9]*.

This comes timely with increasing discussion and importance placed on individual well-being and what it means to be happy.

### **Higher SWB among people who give more**

The study also found that:

- A higher proportion of those who served 12<sup>1</sup> or more volunteer hours in the last 12 months had high SWB compared to those who served less (71% vs 63%) *[slide 15]*.
- A higher proportion of those who gave \$100<sup>2</sup> or more in the last 12 months had high SWB compared to those who gave less (72% vs 59%) *[slide 16]*.
- The pattern of findings remained after taking income status into account.

This large-scale national study establishing a link between giving and happiness in Singapore is done for the first time by the National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre (NVPC) and Professor David Chan, Lee Kuan Yew Fellow, Professor of Psychology

---

<sup>1</sup> The median number of hours volunteered in the last 12 months is 12.

<sup>2</sup> The median amount donated to organisations in the last 12 months is \$100.

and Director of the Behavioural Sciences Institute at Singapore Management University (SMU). The study is part of NVPC's Individual Giving Survey 2012.

Explaining the findings, Professor Chan said: "The findings for this first national study in Singapore on giving and the giver's well-being 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 because the act of giving not only benefits the recipient but also leads to positive outcomes for the giver. When you give, you derive a sense of personal meaning from helping others. You also become more grateful for your own life conditions as you appreciate the situation of those who are less fortunate. The outcomes can also be indirect. For example, when helping others, your interactions with the recipients and other givers produce positive social relationships and a sense of community."

On implications for Singapore, Professor Chan said: "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."

### **Non-profits play an important role to spur giving**

This is also the first time the relationship between givers' intention to give in future and their experience with non-profit organisations (NPOs) was examined.

- For volunteers who have high satisfaction with their experience with the NPOs they volunteered in, 88% intend to volunteer in future, compared to 70% for volunteers with low satisfaction *[slide 19]*.
- For donors who have high satisfaction with their donor experience with the NPOs they gave to, 92% intend to donate in future, compared to 78% for donors with low satisfaction *[slide 20]*.

Said Mr. Laurence Lien, Chief Executive Officer of NVPC, "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."

### **Volunteer and donor management are important**

NVPC's Individual Giving Survey 2012 released earlier this year showed the volunteer-donor relationship to be closely linked. The study found that volunteers donated on average about twice the amount given by non-volunteers.

“This clearly shows that managing volunteers well is important,” said Kevin Lee, director of capacity building at NVPC. “Just as non-profit leaders invest in donor management, investments in volunteer management would also pay off.”

To help build up capabilities in volunteer and donor management, NVPC has released checklists and guides on how to work with volunteers and donors. These are available – free of charge – at [www.nvpc.org.sg/research](http://www.nvpc.org.sg/research)

Examples of best practices in volunteer and donor management are also freely available at [www.nvpc.org.sg/awards](http://www.nvpc.org.sg/awards).

### **Background to Individual Giving Survey 2012**

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. Like all surveys, this survey does not establish causal direction that giving causes subjective well-being or vice versa, but the research literature suggests that giving and SWB are likely to have reciprocal positive effects on each other.

Individual Giving Survey 2012, conducted by The Nielsen Company on behalf of NVPC, sought to gain insights on volunteerism and philanthropy in Singapore in a bid to encourage a caring and engaged community for all. It covered individuals aged 15 years old and above who are Singapore residents (Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents) and non-residents but excluded e.g. tourists. A total of 1,512 interviews were completed from July to September 2012.

Respondents were interviewed face to face about their giving behaviour in the last 12 months. Statistical weighting was applied to the sample data to arrive at national estimates. In the survey, volunteering was defined to exclude compulsory community work such as the Community Involvement Programme in schools (except where it exceeded the compulsory hours). The survey has been carried out once every two years since 2000.

### **About the National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre**

NVPC is the nation’s leading connector of volunteers and donors with the non-profit sector. We are an advocate of giving and we help people and organisations give well to causes they care about, so as to build engaged and compassionate communities for all in Singapore.

We do this by working with other non-profits, companies, and public sector bodies to facilitate and strengthen giving in Singapore, whether of time, money or in-kind. NVPC also develops capacity, leadership and professionalism in the sector through

**STRICTLY EMBARGOED TILL 30 SEPTEMBER 2013, 12 NOON**

training in various aspects of volunteerism and philanthropy, and conducts key research on the giving landscape in Singapore.

NVPC is an independent, not-for-profit organisation. Visit us at [www.nvpc.org.sg](http://www.nvpc.org.sg).

**About Professor David Chan**

Professor David Chan was the Consultant for this study on giving and SWB. He served as the Consultant on a pro-bono basis as a volunteer with the NVPC in his personal capacity. More information on Professor Chan can be found at <http://socsc.smu.edu.sg/directory/david-chan>.

**For further enquiries, please contact:**

Debbie Ng  
Marketing Communications, NVPC  
DID: 6550 9393  
Email: [debbieng@nvpc.org.sg](mailto:debbieng@nvpc.org.sg)

Tan Su San  
Marketing Communications, NVPC  
DID: 6550 9565  
Email: [susantan@nvpc.org.sg](mailto:susantan@nvpc.org.sg)