

# *Beverly Foundation*

**Fact Sheet Series**

**Vol. 1 (7)**

## **Volunteer Drivers**

### **Highlights**

- **Volunteering to Drive**  
Introduces volunteer driving and provides a profile of 714 volunteer drivers
- **What Volunteer Drivers Do**  
Describes what volunteer drivers do, where they go, how they get there, and the challenges they face in providing transportation to older adults
- **When They Drive**  
Details data on how long they volunteer to drive and the time they spend as drivers
- **What They Give And Get**  
Describes the roles they play and the satisfaction they receive
- **A Volunteer Driver Brief**  
Introduces the link to a full report on volunteer drivers in America

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**For More Information Visit  
[www.beverlyfoundation.org](http://www.beverlyfoundation.org)**



**Beverly Foundation  
Pasadena, CA**

### **A Great American Pastime**

Although volunteerism is not a critical piece of the cultural fabric in many countries, it is valued in the United States and is a way of life for many Americans. It also contributes significantly to the economy of the country. According to a 2001 Report by the Independent Sector, in 2000, 44% or 83.9 million American adults volunteered for a total of 15.5 billion hours at a value of \$239.2 billion. At that time, a volunteer hour was valued \$15.40. In 2007 it was \$19.51.\*

#### **Top 4 Volunteer Activities**

- (1) **fundraise or sell items to raise money - 28.8%**
- (2) **collect, prepare, distribute, or serve food - 25.2%**
- (3) **engage in general labor - 22.0%**
- (4) **tutor or teach - 20.9%**

Adults in America volunteer an average of 24 hours per month for a wide range of activities. Volunteers most often are involved in their local communities, and quite often within their neighborhoods. Thus, a person's attachment and commitment to the neighborhood or community can impact on the willingness of people to volunteer for causes that support other neighbors and the community at large.

### **Volunteering to Drive**

Volunteering to drive a family member, neighbor, friend or even a stranger is a community-service activity that tends to fall in the broad category of general labor. While volunteering to drive often is an act of altruism, in many communities, organizations make it possible for people who drive to contribute their time and driving skills to older adults who require help to get where they need to go. In 2004 and 2005, the Beverly Foundation surveyed 714 volunteer drivers, all of whom provided transportation to older adults. Their responses provided considerable information on the background, experience, and attitude of volunteer drivers in America.

*\*Data from the Independent Sector, see [www.independentsector.org](http://www.independentsector.org)*

## **Volunteer Drivers: Who They Are\***

The accompanying chart provides a profile of the volunteer drivers surveyed by the Beverly Foundation and discussed in this fact sheet. As the chart indicates, they have considerable experience in life and in driving. However, the chart does not tell the whole story. While the majority are age 65+, a large number (23%) could be called boomers (age 56-64). While the majority graduated college, the vast majority (91%) graduated high school or engaged in higher educational opportunities. While the majority indicated a household income of \$30,000 or more; a large number (19%) indicated a household income of \$75,000 or more. And, while the majority had driven 50 plus years, more than 80% had driven 40 years or more.

### **Profile of Volunteer Drivers**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>
under age 65 <b>37%</b>	Married <b>68%</b>
age 65+ <b>63%</b>	Widowed <b>18%</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Household Income</b>
female <b>51%</b>	Below \$30,000 <b>36%</b>
male <b>49%</b>	\$30,000 to \$60,000 <b>36%</b>
<b>Education</b>	<b>Driving a Car</b>
graduated high school <b>40%</b>	\$60,000 + <b>28%</b>
graduated college <b>51%</b>	50+ years <b>54%</b>

\* N=714

While the majority had driven 50 plus years, more than 80% had driven 40 years or more.

### **Why They Drive**

A key word analysis of an open-ended survey question indicates that people volunteer to drive for many of the same service purposes that they volunteer to do other activities (in response to a need, to help others, and to give back). However, their responses also indicate personal reasons for volunteer driving such as being tired of being bored, because they have time on their hands, and other reasons associated with being retired from the work force. An enjoyment of driving, the desire to remain active, and a need to do something meaningful also were identified. Other responses to the multiple selection question are provided in the accompanying chart. They reinforce the notion that volunteer driving is more about doing something for others than for personal gain. Interestingly, only 12% of those responding to the survey associated their volunteer driving with “a sense of duty”.

### **Reasons for Driving**

<b>To help others</b>	<b>89%</b>
<b>To do something meaningful</b>	<b>73%</b>
<b>To give back</b>	<b>52%</b>
<b>To stay active</b>	<b>29%</b>
<b>Because I was asked</b>	<b>20%</b>

Volunteer drivers provide transportation for neighbors, friends, or complete strangers. In addition to driving, some also participate in the activities of a

### **What They Do**

#### **Assistance and Support**

<b>Door-to-door 93%</b>	<b>Stay with Rider 77%</b>
<b>Hand-to-hand 89%</b>	<b>Door-thru-door 67%</b>

transportation program by recruiting other drivers, becoming members of the board, and providing caregiver services. When driving older adults, quite often their most important role is to provide physical assistance. As the accompanying chart indicates, a very

high percentage of respondents to the survey provide assistance through the door and at the destination, while an even higher percent provide important physical assistance to and from the vehicle. The assistance provided by volunteer drivers is often the very reason for the existence of volunteer driver programs. Why? Because public and paratransit services, and taxi and private services generally cannot make these types of labor intensive, time consuming assistance available.

\* The survey was undertaken in conjunction with the Beverly Foundation's annual STAR Search. STAR Search was initiated in 2000 to identify and document STPs (Supplemental Transportation Programs for seniors) in America. In 2004 and 2005, STPs that responded to the survey were invited to include surveys of Volunteer Drivers.

## Where They Go

Volunteer drivers say their most frequent trips are related to medical services. And, while some only provide transportation to non-emergency medical services, others take their passengers grocery shopping, to the pharmacy, to the library, to the bank, to visit a friend, to volunteer activities, to church, and even to the barber shop and hairdresser. In rural areas, they are especially dedicated, as each trip may require many miles of driving and many hours of waiting. What is important is that volunteer drivers make it possible for older adults to travel to a variety of life sustaining and life enriching destinations, and quite often such destination travel is only possible because of the assistance and support they provide.



While some volunteer drivers use program owned vehicles, the majority drive their own vehicles. Potential liability and the need for insurance coverage for the driver, the passenger, and the automobile often are a point of discussion for prospective volunteer drivers. While programs that field volunteer drivers generally purchase an umbrella policy to provide coverage in the event of property damage or bodily injury, the volunteer driver's automobile insurance policy generally is the first line of coverage. And, although some people express concern that the automobile insurance rates will increase when people volunteer to drive, insurance is based on miles driven and not on who is riding in the automobile.

## How They Get There

**When They Drive** As the accompanying chart indicates, their availability to provide rides is much greater in the daytime and during the weekdays than in the evenings and on weekends. The fact that such a low percentage of the respondents drive in the evenings and on weekends may imply that older adults who are dependent on volunteer drivers for their transportation could find it difficult to participate in evening and weekend activities. And, although many of those surveyed drive for interfaith groups, the accompanying chart indicates that only a small percent provide transportation in evenings and weekends. According to program administrators, providing Sunday transportation services often is not necessary because churches generally provide transportation to older adults in their congregations.

<b>Daytime</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>Saturdays</b>	<b>37%</b>
<b>Weekdays</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>Sundays</b>	<b>27%</b>
<b>Evenings</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>24/7</b>	<b>10%</b>

### Volunteer Driver Challenges Mean on 1-5 Scale

#### Driving/Helping People With...

- incontinence (3.3)**
- dementia (3.2)**
- cognitive limitations (2.6)**
- assistive devices (2.1)**
- heavy loads (2.0)**
- limited visual acuity (1.9)**
- through the door assistance (1.6)**

## Challenges They Face

To identify volunteer driver challenges in providing transportation to older adults, the survey asked respondents to rate seven specific challenges from 1 (least difficult) to 5 (most difficult). The accompanying chart indicates their top ratings for the seven challenges. The results suggest that none of the challenges appear to be viewed as severe. In addition to their ratings, the drivers also identified other challenges in providing transportation services. Included were passenger aggressiveness, mental health challenges, language barriers, hearing limitations, hygiene problems, helping people use wheelchairs, not getting enough personal information, and passengers who need

help beyond transportation. Like their rated challenges, none of the challenges they identified appeared to be severe enough to refuse to transport an older passenger.

## How Long They Drive

The vast majority of respondents to the survey (86%) reported their age as 56 or more which suggests that people who volunteer to drive tend to do so in their middle and later years. While there is little evidence why they are difficult to recruit (other than that driving someone can be difficult), there is evidence that their length of service is substantial. For example, only 13% of the survey respondents had volunteered to drive for less than 1 year, while 33% had volunteered for 1-3 years, 24% had volunteered for 4-6 years, and 30% had volunteered for 7 or more years.

**“Volunteer Drivers are the hardest volunteers to recruit, but once you’ve got them, you’ve got them.”**

Not only do they continue for many years, volunteer drivers contribute considerable time. For example, when asked their time commitment per week, 55% said they committed 1-5 hours, 19% 6-10 hours, 10% 11-20 hours, and 6% more than 20 hours a week. 10% indicated they committed less than 1 hour per week, were on call, or contributed on a weekly or monthly basis.

## Time They Spend

## Roles They Play

The chart below indicates the senior needs, volunteer driver roles, and examples of volunteer driver programs that enable volunteer drivers to meet older adult transportation needs.

<b>Illustrative Needs, Roles and Programs</b>		
<b>Senior Needs</b>	<b>Volunteer Driver Roles</b>	<b>Volunteer Driver Programs</b>
getting to church	driving on weekends	Macomb Co. Interfaith Caregivers - Warren, MI
paying for transportation	helping raise funds	Bedford Ride - Bedford, VA
help with wheelchairs	wheelchair assistance	COAST - Colfax, WA
getting to another city	driving long distances	YCCAC Volunteer Driver Program - Sanford, ME
help at residence	going through the door	West Austin Caregivers - Austin, TX
help at destination	staying at the destination	Neighbor to Neighbor - Prescott, AZ

The reason volunteer drivers continue their involvement for long periods of time, and

## What They Get

### Greatest Satisfaction

- Helping people (89%)
- Feeling Needed (89%)
- Getting to Know Riders (60%)
- Donating Time Rather Than Money (39%)
- Appreciation and Recognition (21%)

contribute so many hours may be related to the satisfaction they receive. The areas of satisfaction in the chart below were identified in volunteer driver responses to a list of 14 areas of satisfaction. Interestingly, they are similar to what volunteers in general identify as satisfiers. The areas of satisfaction that volunteer drivers seldom identified were related to personal habits and logistics such as having a regular

schedule, being able to drive personal vehicle, getting out of the house, passengers being on time, and learning new driving skills.

For a more complete review of volunteers and volunteer drivers see:

***Volunteer Drivers: The Hope of the Future—A Brief Available Fall, 2008***