Keeping it close to home

Older African American/Black adults value giving back to their communities in a variety of ways

African American/Black adults ages 50 and older are giving back in a variety of ways. From volunteering multiple hours per week to making regular donations, this population is passionate about supporting their religious and local communities and plan to do more in the future.

Volunteers within the African American/Black community are very dedicated.

Almost one-half (47%) of older African American/Black adults who are 50+ years old volunteered in the past 12 months, most often with their church (56%). In the past month, one-quarter (25%) spent ten or more hours volunteering and, in the past year, nearly two in five (37%) volunteered monthly or more frequently.

A new study looks at volunteerism and charitable giving in the 50+ African American/Black community.
Some people could not volunteer regularly, often because of time constraints caused by work (20%) or family obligations (20%) or difficulty finding opportunities that fit their availability (17%), but even these people volunteered three or four times (25%) in the past year or helped with a one-off activity (21%).

Roughly one-half (48%) of those in the African American/Black community ages 50 and older are likely to volunteer in the next year.

### Average hours volunteering in the past month (n=234)

- None: 15%
- Less than 2 hours: 15%
- 2 hours: 11%
- 3 to 9 hours: 34%
- 10+ hours: 25%

### Frequency of volunteering in the last 12 months (n=234)

- One off activity: 21%
- Once in the last year: 5%
- Twice in the last year: 12%
- 3-4 times in the last year: 25%
- Monthly: 21%
- Weekly: 17%
When donating time and money, the African American/Black community prefer to do so locally and in their communities.

More than one-half (53%) of this community prefers to support local charities over global ones. Three in five (60%) want to see, firsthand, the visible impact of their efforts, and even more (69%) want to help their own neighborhood and community. In the past year, many have helped a person in need (35%), an elderly person (29%), the homeless or hungry (23%), children or teenagers (19%), or a disabled person (17%). They often help out on their own, when they see the need. When asked about the level of influence they can have on their community’s problems, however, a majority believe they would have much more influence working with others (64%) instead of on their own (40%).

More than two-thirds (69%) of African American/Black adults over the age of 50 agree society would suffer without volunteers.

Genuine altruism drives the 50+ African American/Black community to help.

This community believes that helping people in need is vital. In fact, many recognize that they are driven to help to make a difference (55%) and to give hope or inspiration to those in need (52%). Nearly as many give back because they feel a personal responsibility to help those in need (49%), to help a cause they personally believe in (47%), or to do something they are passionate about (45%). They also recognize the importance of philanthropic giving. In the past year, seven in ten (70%) donated money or goods, most often to a religious organization (54%), some of which do so annually or monthly (22%) or because someone asked them to (20%).

Recipients of help over the past year (n=332)

- Person in need: 35%
- Elderly person: 29%
- Homeless or hungry: 23%
- Children/Teenagers: 19%
- Disabled Person: 17%
Implications

This community is very generous with both time and money. Of those currently volunteering, nearly as many are able to dedicate time each week as are able to participate once a quarter or once a year. Organizations that need help should tailor their volunteer opportunities with this in mind, providing ways for people who are available at different times to participate. And with the overwhelming majority making charitable contributions, a large portion of whom attribute these donations to having been asked by someone, organizations should recognize the importance of a focus on personal or in-person interactions.

African American/Black adults are also community-minded when it comes to volunteering. Local and community-based organizations are best positioned to engage them in formal volunteering opportunities.

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