



# Poll STATION

With Linda Banister

**W**hen the economy is growing at a fast pace, consumer confidence seems unshakable. It is during these times that spending often increases. New clothing or household goods are purchased while the old things are discarded. Many of these items get donated to charitable organizations that operate thrift stores. In this month's *Poll Station*, we asked people about donations to charitable or not-for-profit organizations. We also asked about purchases made at thrift stores.

## DO YOU EVER DONATE GOODS TO CHARITY THRIFT STORES?

To start, we asked respondents if they had ever donated "gently used" clothing or household goods to a charity or not-for-profit organization. An overwhelming 96 percent of respondents said they had, with more than two-thirds (69 percent) of respondents donating items because they wanted to help the less fortunate. A further 10 percent said donating was more convenient than selling the items themselves. Other reasons for donating included not needing an item anymore (six percent) and not wanting to throw something away (five percent).

## DO YOU EVER MAKE PURCHASES AT THRIFT STORES? WHY? WHY NOT?

Survey participants were then asked if they had ever purchased clothing or household goods at one of the many thrift stores operated by a charity or not-for-profit organization. More than half (57 percent) of respondents had made a purchase, while 43 percent had not. Interestingly, about two-thirds (64 percent) of women had purchased from a thrift store compared with 48 percent of men.

Fifty-four percent of the respondents who have purchased at a thrift store indicated it was primarily because of price. Nineteen percent said selection was their primary reason, while seven percent said they shopped at a thrift store looking for costume items. Convenience (five percent) and helping a charity (four percent) were other common reasons for purchasing at a thrift store.

Respondents who had not purchased from a thrift store were asked to indicate a reason. Their responses were varied, however, about one-quarter (23 percent) said that they had no need to shop at a thrift store. Other reasons cited included: a preference and the ability to buy new clothes (16 percent), and a lack of time (nine percent). Seven percent said they never think of it. Sixteen percent were unsure why they had not purchased something at a thrift shop.

## DOES/WOULD THE CHARITY'S MISSION AFFECT YOUR DECISION TO THRIFT SHOP?

All survey participants were then asked if they would shop at a thrift store more often if they were aware of (and supported) the organization's mission. Less than one-third (31 percent) said they would be more likely to shop there, while 53 percent said knowing the mission would not make a difference. Fourteen percent said they might shop more often at a thrift store if they knew and supported the organization's mission. Forty-three percent of women would shop there if they knew and supported the organization's mission compared with only 16 percent of men.

Finally, all respondents were asked what could be done to encourage them to patronize a thrift store more frequently. Forty-two percent said nothing would encourage them to shop more frequently at a thrift store. However, nine percent said better locations and accessibility would encourage them. Other responses included knowing and supporting the uses for the store's proceeds (nine percent), and the selection and quality of products (six percent). Four percent said they would shop more often at a thrift store if they became unemployed or lost a source of income. Twelve percent were unsure.

The Poll Station surveyed 100 City of Edmonton residents on the topic and, while the results of the research are not statistically reliable, they do provide a qualitative indication of what Edmontonians are thinking. ✓

*Linda Banister is a certified management consultant and the owner of Banister Research and Consulting Inc., a full service provider of market research and program evaluation services. Want a question included in the Edmontonians Poll? Contact Linda at 780.451.4444 or e-mail at lbanister@edmontonians.com. Visit [www.banister.ab.ca](http://www.banister.ab.ca).*