



# A B C N E W S L E T T E R

CURRENT EVENTS AND TRENDS IN BLOOD SERVICES

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## The “1 Percenters” We All Love

*The following article is a contribution from [Dave Leitch](#), Principal at [Branch Consulting & Analytics](#). He is also a self-proclaimed numbers geek who loves a good graph.*

I'm going to let you in on a little secret—hardly anyone really wants to donate blood. Despite the fact that this noble act takes place about 35,000 times every day across the country, almost all blood donations are given by people who would probably rather be doing something, almost anything, else. Notwithstanding this internal struggle to not donate, millions of generous people still do give blood year after year—over 13 million donations annually—and we are grateful that so many of them do.

### Who Gives?

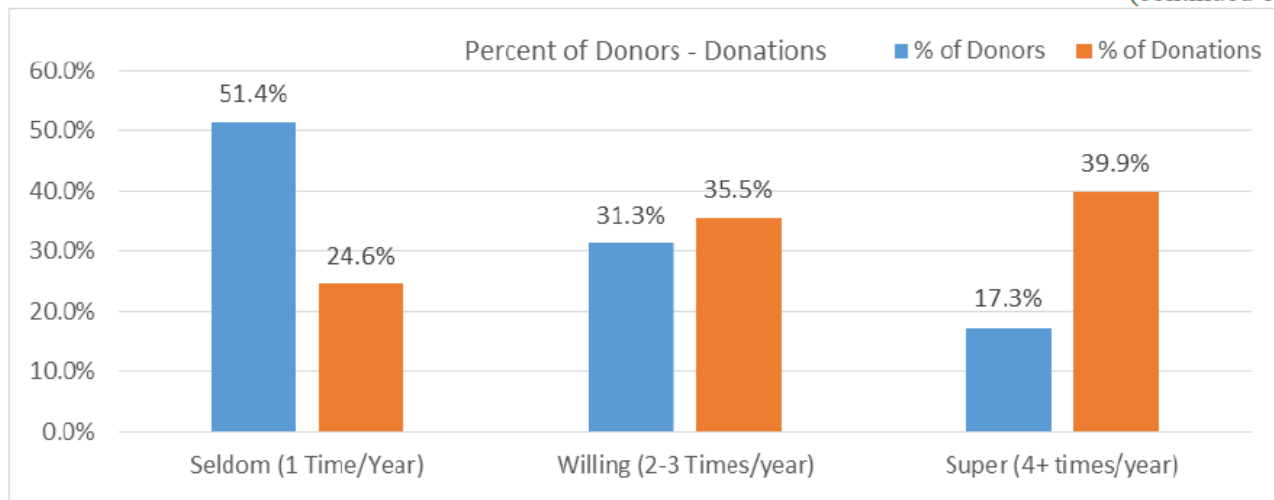
About 6 percent of the entire United States population gives blood each year. Only 38 percent of the population is eligible to give blood, so that leaves about 32 percent of the population that currently *could* give blood, but who choose *not* to donate.

An eligible donor can give up to six times per year and based upon blood donor base analysis research, conducted by [Branch](#), an average whole blood donor gives blood anywhere from 1.5 times to up to 2.1 times per year. But there is something interesting about the “top tier” of regular donors.

Essentially there is a special group of people who are “Super Donors.” They love to donate blood, and they donate far more than twice a year—averaging four or more times per year and accounting for **40 percent or more** of all donations in any specific region.

Now if we measure this group as a percentage of people who give blood (6 percent) we come up with a small, remarkable number: **1 percent of the population supplies the country with 40 percent of its blood supply.**

We, at Branch Consulting, took a deeper look at these Super Donors, using demographic consumer data from a third-party, and we found the average super donor is 48 years old, versus 43 for all donors, with 36 percent of them making an income of \$100,000 or more, versus 33 percent of all donors, and are generally home-owners, 79 percent versus 75 percent of all donors. None of this Super Donor data showed a true distinction from the other donors' data. So why are some donors more willing to donate more than others? [Branch](#) found one simple, common factor: Time. No one has enough time to do everything they *want* to do, let alone everything they *need* to do, so blood donation? It always falls last on the list of priorities.



### The “1 Percenters” We All Love (continued from page 3)

The 32 percent of people who are eligible and have not yet (and may never) donate fall into three main categories:

- Never Donated – These people could have anxiety about the process, squeamishness about needles, stories from others, or have personal or religious beliefs against donating;
- Unlikely to Donate – People who may choose to donate at some point, but it will take a major event to motivate them, e.g. a family emergency or catastrophic event; and
- Have Not Been Asked to Donate – These people will donate if asked, and if the opportunity presents itself at the right time. Might explain why more than 85 percent of all first-time blood donations occur at blood drives.

### **Donor Motivation**

What keywords and phrases motivate donors most to give blood? What are their attitudes about incentives and giveaways? [Branch](#) asked these questions and then cross-compared these responses with annual donor activity, and with donation-by-generation (Boomer, GenX and Millennial.) What we found was no difference in motivation across any of these factors. Essentially, *a donor is a donor is a donor*. The super donors are internally driven. Keywords, phrases and incentives/giveaways, except for a small percentage of donors, do not have a meaningful impact on the average super donor’s, or any regular donor’s, motivation to participate. Yet, donors at each level of giving have the potential to increase their participation and ‘step up’ to the next level.

### **Changing Behavior**

While blood supplies are fairly stable on a day-to-day basis, shortages do occur. Most blood centers send out a broad plea to donors and the media that “action is needed *now*,” resulting in a large outpouring of donations, followed by another lull—rinse and repeat. Changing this cycle requires a stronger, more analytically-driven management, and understanding, of the donor base. There is a subset within each donor group that can be engaged, persuaded, and motivated to move into a higher level of giving. Data and analytics play a key role in identifying, then targeting, this subset of donors who have the highest probability of increasing their frequency of donation. ‘Stepping up’ even a small percentage—10 to 15 percent—of the right donors in the Seldom and Willing groups will allow blood centers to stay ahead of shortages.

To successfully navigate our current and changing environment, it is incumbent upon blood centers, non-profits, and companies struggling to reach their goals to ask the questions: “Are we looking at this data closely enough, and understanding it?” “Are we listening to our customers?” “Are we reaching that subset of donors/clients who are ready to go to the next level?” and, “Are we ready to change?” ♦