



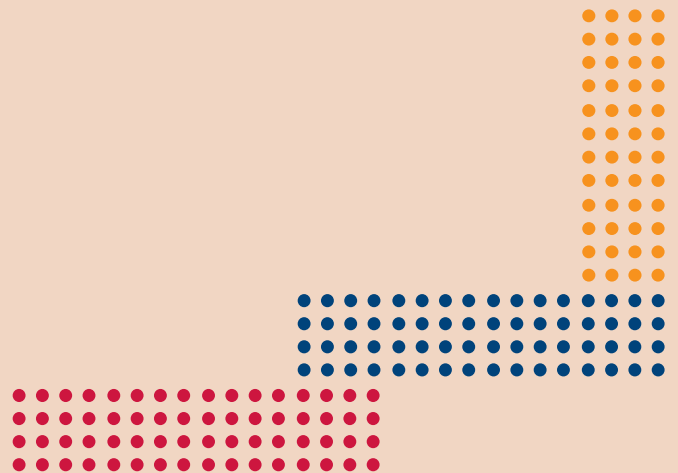
Give.org Donor Trust Report 2022

# Five-Year Review of Trust and Giving Attitudes



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# FIVE-YEAR REVIEW OF TRUST AND GIVING ATTITUDES

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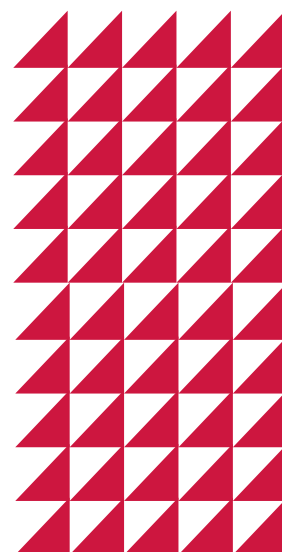
The 2022 Donor Trust Report marks BBB®'s Give.org (also known as BBB Wise Giving Alliance) fifth year tracking public attitudes about charity trust and giving. Every December (since December 2017) we survey more than 2,100 adults across the United States, and another 1,100 adults in Canada, to explore how the public feels, thinks, and intends to act around charity trust and generosity.<sup>1</sup>

**In 5 years of donor trust surveys, we consistently find that there is ample space to build trust** in the sector, with most participants expressing that it is essential to trust a charity before giving, but only 17-20% (depending on the year) reporting a high level of trust in charities. We know charities play a role in shaping the way donors feel toward the sector; and our surveys consistently remind us that reaching a diverse set of donors requires a deliberate strategy to connect with their preferences, language, and culture. Since 2017, we have also explored certain special topics — including disaster relief; COVID-19; sexual harassment; charity impact; and diversity, equity, and inclusion — to help us identify opportunities to build trust or protect trust from being eroded. For example, we found that transparency and specificity in disaster relief appeals can help build trust; while red flags around sexual harassment or diversity, equity, and inclusion can fracture it. As stated in *Most Trusted Brands' 2022 Trust in Nonprofits* special report, “High levels of trust put [nonprofits] in the position of needing to constantly defend their reputation. Nonprofits must take an active and consistent approach to maintain trust, while simultaneously avoiding actions that might endanger trust — not just for themselves, but for an entire sector’s reputation.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> BBB's Give.org has conducted a Donor Trust Survey annually since December 2017. The survey includes a set of core questions intended to measure the health of public trust in the charitable sector and to identify shifts across time. Each year, the survey also includes a set of questions on special topics of interest. The first Give.org Donor Trust Report, *The Give.org Donor Trust Report: An In-Depth Look into the State of Public Trust in the Charitable Sector*, was released in 2018. Since then, special topics have included disaster relief, sexual harassment, COVID-19, and charity impact.

<sup>2</sup> Bye, C., *Most Trusted Brands 2022 Special Report: Trust in Nonprofits*, Morning Consult, 2022. Available at: [https://go.morningconsult.com/rs/850-TAA-511/images/Most\\_Trusted\\_Brands\\_2022\\_Nonprofits.pdf](https://go.morningconsult.com/rs/850-TAA-511/images/Most_Trusted_Brands_2022_Nonprofits.pdf)



**With growing concern about how eroding public trust might harm publicly soliciting charities<sup>3</sup>, we hope our unique approach and 5-year retrospective will add to the conversation about trust in charities and public openness to solicitation. Our report explores how self-reported high trust in charities – and for different charity categories – changed (or not) between December 2017 and December 2021.** It is worth noting that, in assessing trust for charities, BBB’s Give.org focuses on “high trust” indicators – the portion of respondents who rate their trust as a 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale. This approach is based on the idea that a 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale captures the most loyal and enthusiastic constituents. This group is likely harder to sway than the average participant. BBB’s Give.org believes these donors are more likely to engage with, contribute to, and promote charities.

**In the 2022 Give.org Donor Trust Report, we offer: (1) a 5-year review of public trust in the charitable sector, highlighting charity types that have experienced noteworthy shifts; (2) a snapshot of perceived trust signals and giving preferences as reported by survey participants; and (3) a deeper dive into how participants who report being open to charity solicitation differ from the broader sample.**

BBB’s Give.org believes greater trust in charities translates to higher public engagement and confidence in giving. With that in mind, our Donor Trust Surveys track donor beliefs, feelings, and behavioral intentions related to charity trust and generosity. In this report, we reference data gathered through the December 2021, 2020, 2019, 2018, and 2017 Donor Trust Surveys,<sup>4</sup> each with more than 2,100 adult respondents in the United States (and 1,100 additional and separate Canadian respondents in 2021, 2020, and 2019). In some cases, we also reference a special survey conducted in March 2020 and the related *Give.org Special Report: COVID-19 and the Charitable Sector*.

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<sup>3</sup> The 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer – themed around The Cycle of Distrust — revealed that government and media feed division and misinformation, while NGOs and businesses are pressured to take on societal problems beyond their abilities (Ries, T., et al. *2022 Edelman Trust Barometer Global Report*. Chicago: Edelman. 2022). The report also shows a widening trust gap across income levels, and growing distrust for leaders and outsiders. One silver lining for the charitable sector, however, is that NGOs are the institution category most identified as a “unifying force” in society and, along with business, best positioned to act as a stabilizing force. In an editorial published by *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, Greg Berman calls for leaders to confront declining trust in nonprofits, pointing out signs that the nonprofit trust “halo” is fading and calling for “healthy” self-reflection, recruitment of an ideologically diverse work force, and support for small and community-based organizations (Berman, G., “Leaders Must Confront Declining Trust in the Nonprofit World.” *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, August 2, 2022).

<sup>4</sup> Results from the survey conducted in December 2021 are first released in this report. Results from the December 2020, 2019, 2018, and 2017 surveys may have also been published in former Give.org Donor Trust Reports.

# SUMMARY OF RESULTS

## » Public trust in charities between 2017 and 2021

- **There is ample space to build trust** in the sector, with 63.9% of respondents rating the importance of trusting a charity before giving as 9 or 10 (Essential) on a 10-point scale, and only 20.4% of respondents saying they highly trust charities.
- Between December 2017 and December 2020, the portion of participants that highly trust charities held relatively steady (16.8% to 18.5%). While not a large departure, **the portion of participants that highly trust charities reached a high of 20.4% in December 2021.**
- **Our results suggest that reliance on trust as a giving prerequisite has eroded in the past 5 years**, with the portion of respondents who rate the importance of trusting a charity before giving decreasing steadily from 73.0% in December 2017 to 63.0% in December 2020, and stagnating at 63.9% in December 2021. **Still, the importance of trusting a charity before giving is most highly rated among people in the higher giving brackets**, with 79.6% of respondents who donated more than \$5,000 annually rating the importance of trusting before giving as “essential.”
- Respondents were asked to assess their trust for 13 different charity categories. **The portion of respondents that “highly trusts” each charity types increased for 12 out of 13 categories between December 2020 and December 2021.** The exception was environmental organizations, which dropped moderately (0.4%) and had the least portion of respondents (16.0%) expressing high trust levels.
- Six charity categories experienced more than a 4-point shift in high trust between December 2017 and December 2021: veteran’s, religious, civil rights and community action, police and firefighter, international relief, and environmental organizations. **After 4 years (2017–2020) of steady decline, the portion of participants that highly trust religious organizations (28.8%) and veteran’s organizations (27.0%) increased more than 4 points between December 2020 and December 2021 alone.**

- **When asked to assess trust for charities as compared to other institutions, charities are consistently favored over other institutions, including organized religion, banks, business, media, and government.** For example, In December 2021, 77.1% trusted charities more than government and 67.5% trusted charities more than business.
- When asked to assess trust for small charities as compared to large charities, participants are more likely to trust small charities (58.0%) than large ones (42.0%). However, that preference was more marked before 2020, with 62.0% expressing more trust for small charities than large ones.

## » Trust Signals and Giving Preferences

- **In an open-ended question, participants identified what makes them trust a charity. Top-of-mind reasons included, by order of frequency, charity finances, charity reputation, honesty and transparency,** research and credentials, cause loyalty, relationship built with the organization, impact, and social influence.
- **When presented with scenarios that might deter participants from donating, most respondents (57.7%) focused on a financial concern.** 32.8% said they would be most discouraged when a high portion of every dollar is spent on fundraising and management; and 24.9% would be most discouraged when they are not sure what the charity will do with money.
  - **Younger generations are more likely to say they will not donate if they are not sure what the charity will do with the money (37.8% of Gen Zers, as compared to 15.2% of Matures);** or when a charity does not share clear recent accomplishments (23.2% of Gen Zers as compared to 9.3% of Matures). On the other hand, **older generations are more likely to be discouraged when a high portion of every dollar is spent on fundraising and management activities (50.6% of Matures, as compared to 26.0% of Gen Zers),** or when charity executives have high salaries (23.0% of Matures, as compared to 6.5% of Gen Zers).
- **When asked what most signals that a charity is trustworthy, the top factors in December 2021 were (1) accomplishments shared by the organization, (2) third-party evaluation by an independent organization, (3) name recognition, (4) financial ratios, and (5) passion and sincerity in the appeal.** Top signals of trust have held quite stable since December 2017, with the exception of 2020, when accomplishments shared by the organization temporarily dropped significantly – making trust signals such as third-party evaluations, name recognition, and opinions expressed by family and friends relatively more important.
  - Accomplishments shared by the organization was the most frequently chosen trust signal across generations. However, **older generations are relatively more likely to respond to third-party monitors,** with 41.2% of Matures and 24.8% of Gen Zers choosing monitors

as a top signal of trust. **On the other hand, younger generations are relatively more likely to report responding to passion and sincerity, as well as appealing stories.** For example, 39.9% of Gen Zers report passion and sincerity in the appeal are a trust signal of trust, as compared to only 14.4% of Matures.

- When considering alternative channels used to donate during the past year (including mailed appeals, charity websites, fundraising events, and 10 other options), the portion of participants who reported not contributing through any channels decreased for the first time since 2018, from 24.9% in December 2020 to 17.9% in December 2021. The portion of participants who reported responding to a mailed, phone, email, and social media appeal was higher than the self-reported response percentage during the previous 4 or 5 years.
- Respondents were asked to identify the top three most impactful ways to make a difference (with choices including donating money to a charity, donating items, volunteering time, contributing to donor-advised funds, raising awareness, raising money through a network, supporting a business, and giving to family and friends). When thinking about making a difference, participants most frequently choose donating items (49.3%), donating money to a charity (41.3%), volunteering time (38.0%), and giving to an individual in need directly (27.2%).
  - Older generations are relatively more likely to choose monetary donations (55.3% among Matures; 31.3% among Gen Zers) and giving to individuals in need directly donations (33.5% among Matures; 17.3% among Gen Zers) as one of their most impactful forms of giving. Younger generations are relatively more likely to pick volunteering (29.2% among Matures; 42.4% among Gen Zers), attending fundraising events (5.8% among Matures; 16.4% among Gen Zers), and raising awareness (3.5% among Matures; 22.3% among Gen Zers) and money (7.0% among Matures; 22.3% among Gen Zers) through their network.

## » What Participants Who Are Open to Solicitation Say

- **Among all respondents, 38.0% express that they are open to solicitation - with 17.0% saying they want charities to approach them more and 21.0% saying they might be willing to give more if approached. This is the highest openness to solicitation observed in the past 5 years,** up 5.2 points between December 2027 and December 2021 and 5.0 between December 2020 and December 2021 alone.
- **Participants who report being open to solicitation (wanting to be approached by charities or being willing to give more if approached) are:**
  - **More likely to say that they prefer donating to a charity serving the needs of their ethnic community.** For example, among participants who would like charities to approach them more, 71.8% prefer donating to a charity serving the needs of their ethnic community. By

comparison, among respondents who do not want to be approached more by charities, only 26.1% say the same.

- **More likely to be African Americans or Hispanic** than the general sample. For example, among participants who would like charities to approach them more, 22.6% are African American and 15.3% are Hispanic/Latino. By comparison, among respondents who do not want to be approached more by charities, 9.3% are African American and 7.6% are Hispanic/Latino.
- **More likely to be younger respondents.** For example, among participants who would like charities to approach them more, 50.4% are Millennials. By comparison, among respondents who do not want to be approached more by charities, only 13.6% are Millennials.
- **Based on self-reported contributions, more likely to report annual contributions above \$1,000.** For example, among participants who would like charities to approach them more, 15.7% report giving between \$1,001 and \$5,000 and 10.0% report giving more than \$5,000. By comparison, among respondents who do not want to be approached more by charities, 13.5% report giving between \$1,001 and \$5,000 and 6.7% report giving more than \$5,000.
- **Relatively more likely to report giving to environmental, educational, youth development, international relief, arts and culture, and civil rights and community action organizations. They are also relatively less likely to report giving to religious, veterans, and police and firefighter organizations.** For example, among participants who would like charities to approach them more, 39.0% report giving to environmental organizations and 11.1% report giving to religious organizations. By comparison, among respondents who do not want to be approached more by charities, 10.5% report giving to environmental organizations and 28.8% report giving to religious organizations.
- **More likely to highly trust charities.** For example, among participants who would like charities to approach them more, 45.5% report highly trusting charities. By comparison, among respondents who do not want to be approached more by charities, only 11.8% say the same.
- **Less likely to cite high executive compensation as a scenario that would detract from their willingness to contribute; and more likely to say the lack of clear recent accomplishments would discourage their donation.** For example, among participants who would like charities to approach them more, 12.2% say high executive compensation would discourage them from donating. By comparison, among respondents who do not want to be approached more by charities, 22.5% say the same.

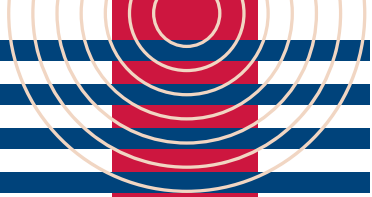




- **Relatively more likely to say that, in the future, they hope to raise money and awareness for a cause through their network and to attend a charitable event.** For example, among participants who would like charities to approach them more, 24.7% would like to increase fundraising through a cause through their network. By comparison, among respondents who do not want to be approached more by charities, 5.5% say the same. **Overall, participants who are open to solicitation are still most likely to want to increase their monetary, time, and items contributions compared to other forms of giving.**
- **Relatively more likely to consider the solicitation's passion and sincerity, as well as appealing stories, as top signals of charity trust.** For example, among participants who would like charities to approach them more, 38.5% consider passion and sincerity in the appeal a top signal of trust. By comparison, among respondents who do not want to be approached more by charities, 19.1% say the same. **Overall, participants who are open to solicitation are still most likely to respond to accomplishments shared by the organization.**

## » Canadian Donor Trust

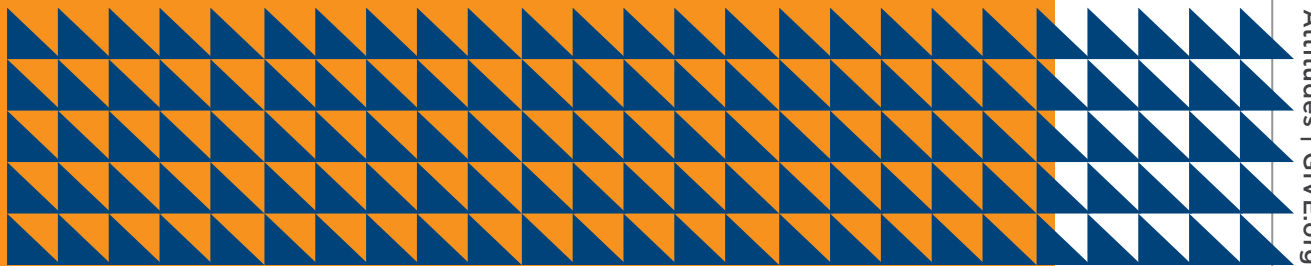
- There is ample space to build trust for charities in Canada, with 60.3% of respondents rating the importance of trusting a charity before giving as 9 or 10 (Essential) on a 10-point scale, and only 14.4% of respondents highly trusting charities.
- As compared to U.S. participants – with 20.4% highly trusting charities – fewer Canadians (14.4%) express a high level of trust in charities. Still, the portion of Canadians that highly trust charities increased moderately between December 2019 (11.7%) and December 2021 (14.4%).
- The most trusted charity types in Canada are health organizations (with 22.8% of respondents expressing high trust) and not-for-profit hospitals (with 19.7% of respondents expressing high trust). Compared to their U.S. counterparts, Canadians place relatively low trust in religious and veterans organizations.
- When asked to identify factors that most signal charity trustworthiness, the most popular answers among Canadians were (1) accomplishments shared by the organization, (2) name recognition, and (3) third-party evaluation by an independent organization. These factors track very closely with factors identified by U.S. respondents.



- When presented with scenarios that might deter participants from donating, Canadian and U.S. respondents again track very closely. Most Canadian respondents (57.7%) focused on a financial concern, with 32.7% saying they would be most discouraged when a high portion of every dollar is spent on fundraising and management and 22.9% saying they would be most discouraged if they are not sure what the charity will do with money. Canadians placed greater importance on executive compensation than their U.S. counterparts, with 21.6% of Canadians, as compared to 17.9% of Americans, reporting that high compensation would discourage them from donating.
- Among Canadian respondents, 27.3% express being open to charity solicitation - with 8.6% identifying a desire to be approached more by charities and 18.7% saying they might be willing to give more if approached. Compared to the U.S. sample, where 38% express being open to solicitation, Canadians express lower openness to solicitation.



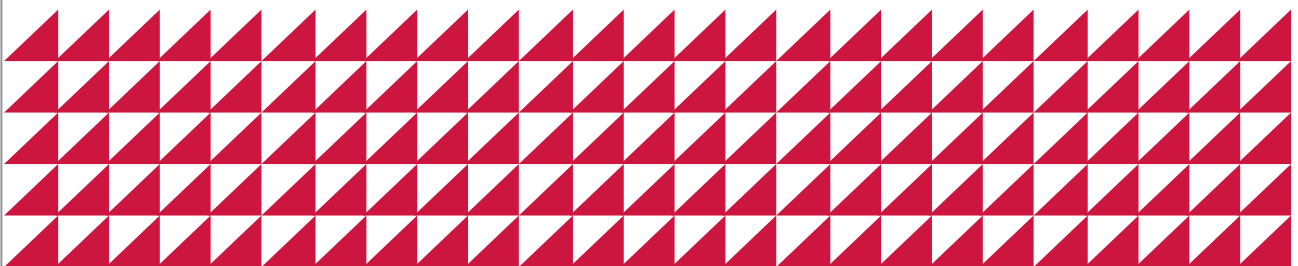
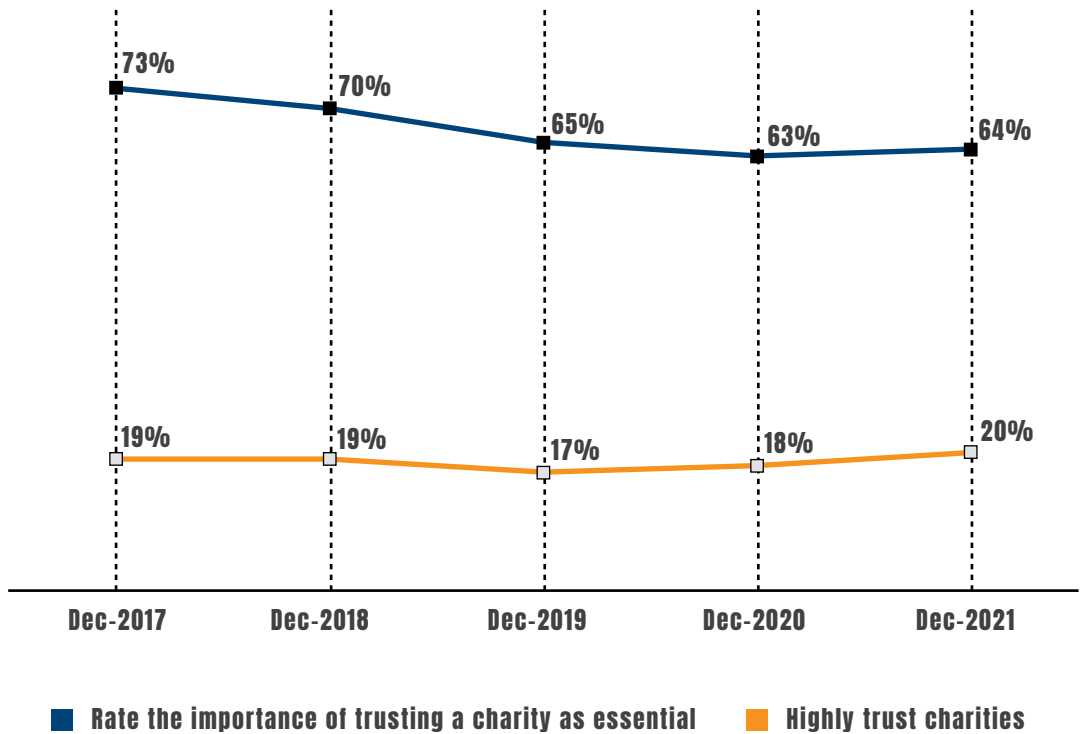
# PUBLIC TRUST IN CHARITIES BETWEEN 2017 AND 2021



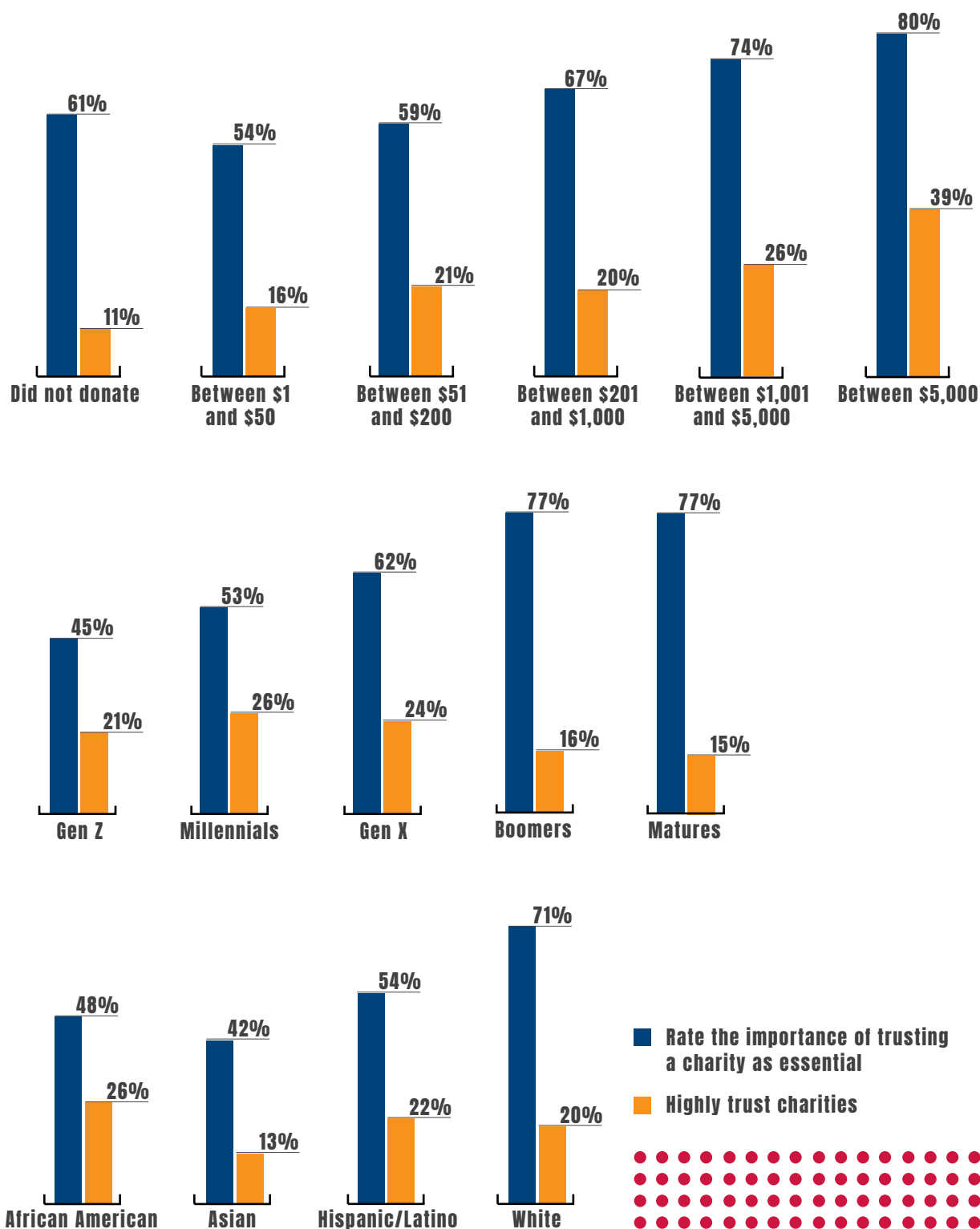
There is ample space to build trust in charities.



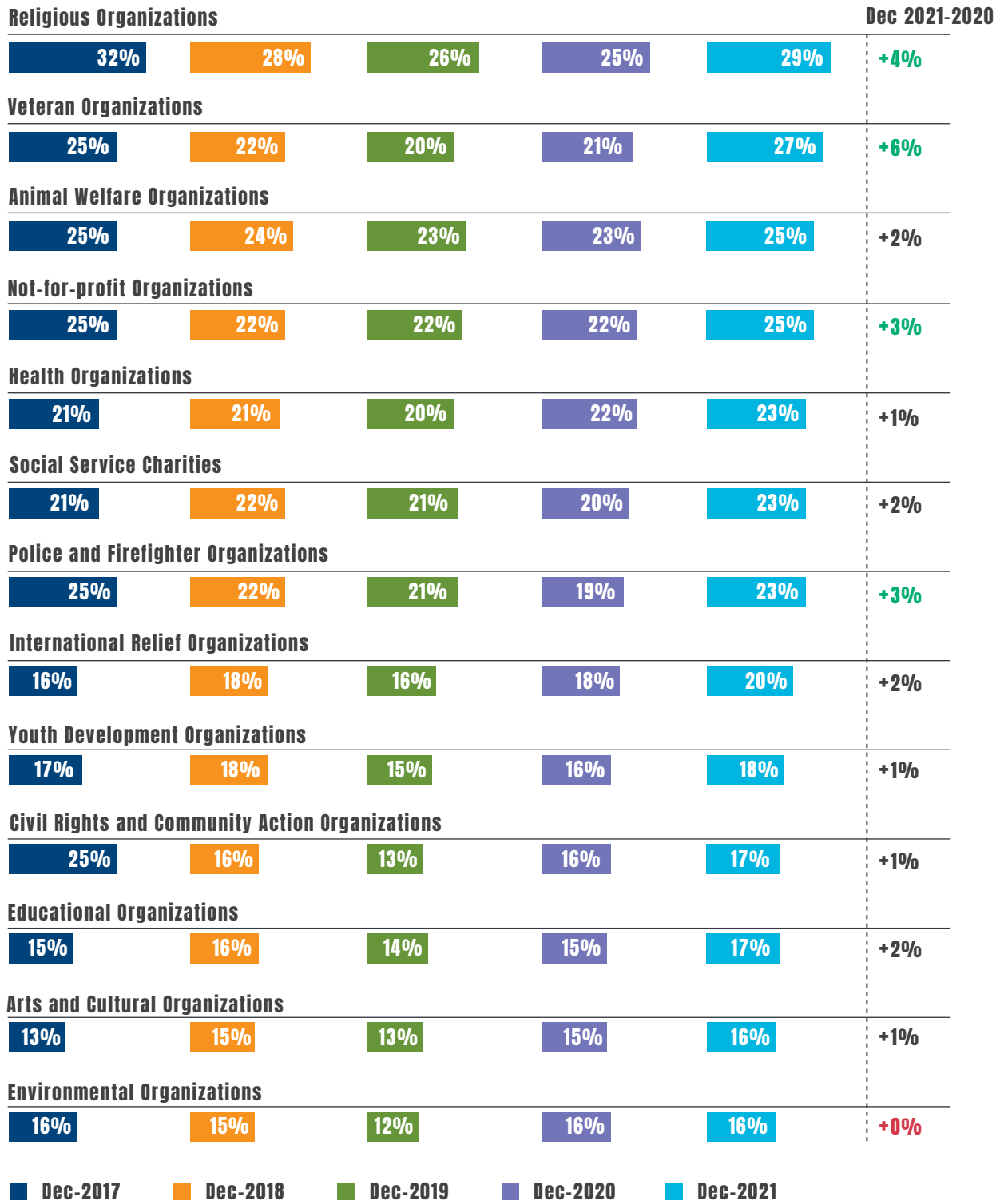
Between 2017 and 2021, self-reported reliance on trust as a giving indicator fell. On the other hand, the portion of participants that highly trust charities has been relatively steady, reaching a high of 1 in 5 in 2021.



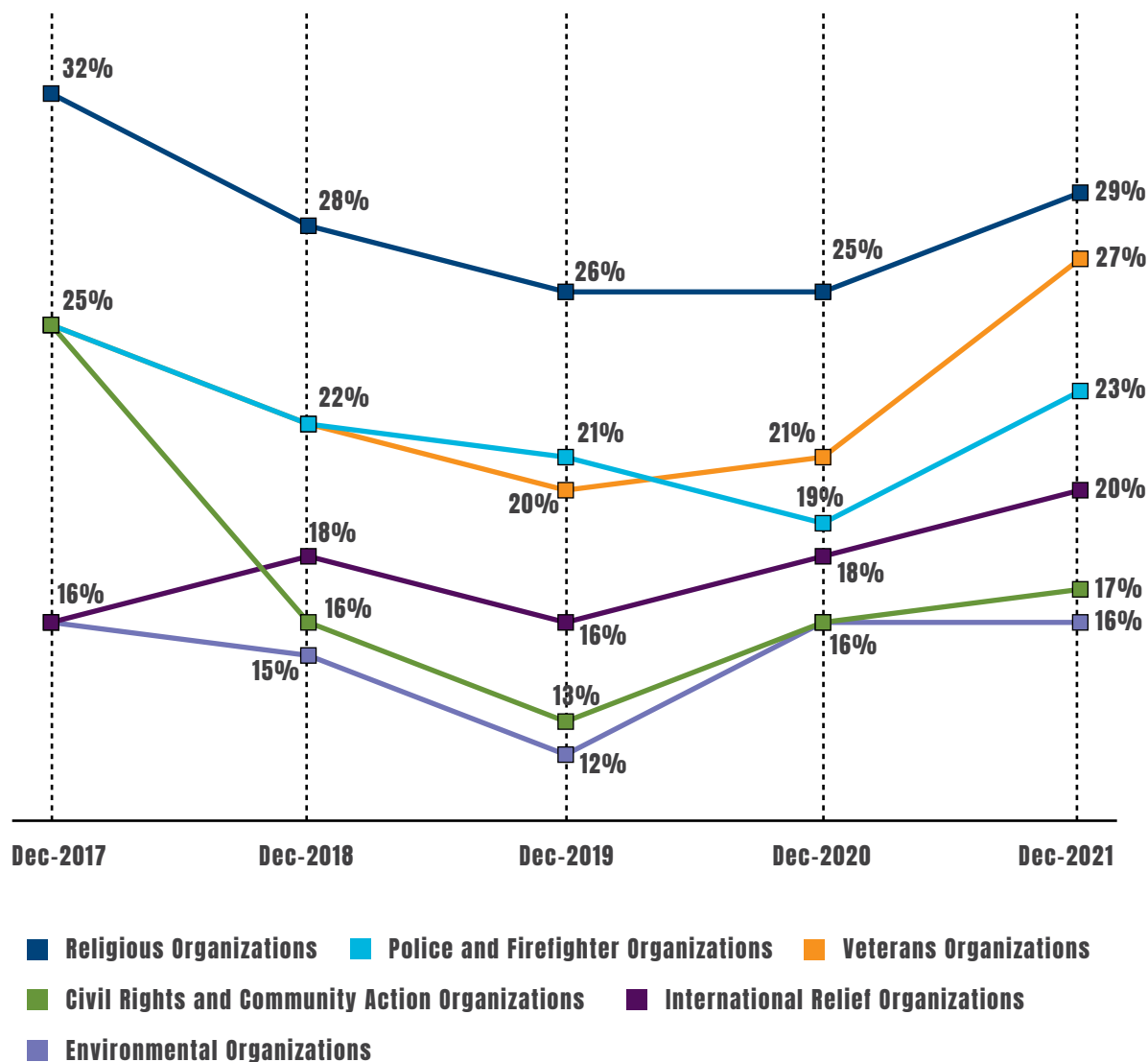
The importance of trusting a charity before giving is most highly rated among those in higher giving brackets, older generations, and white participants.



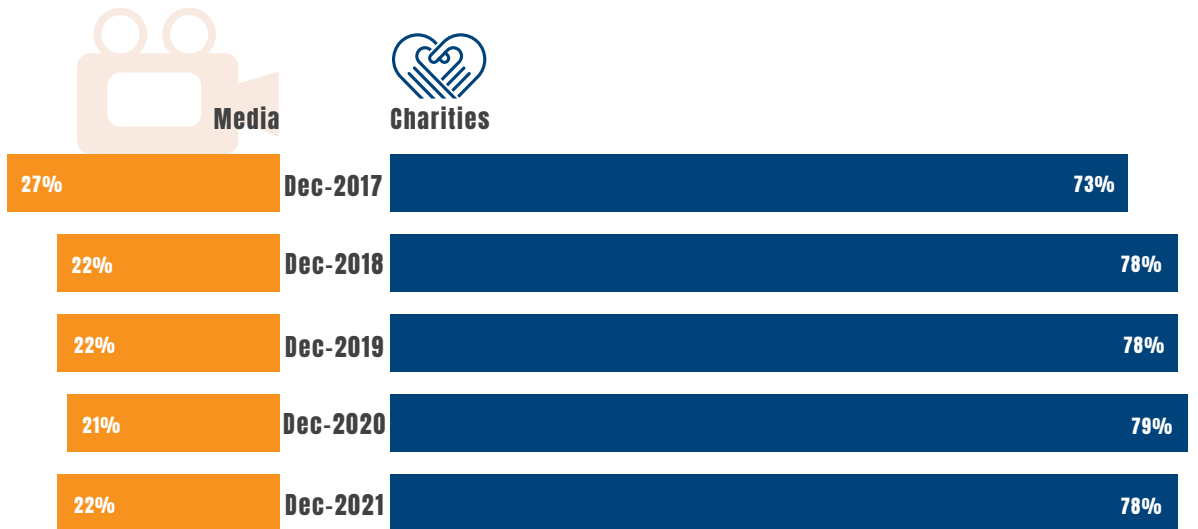
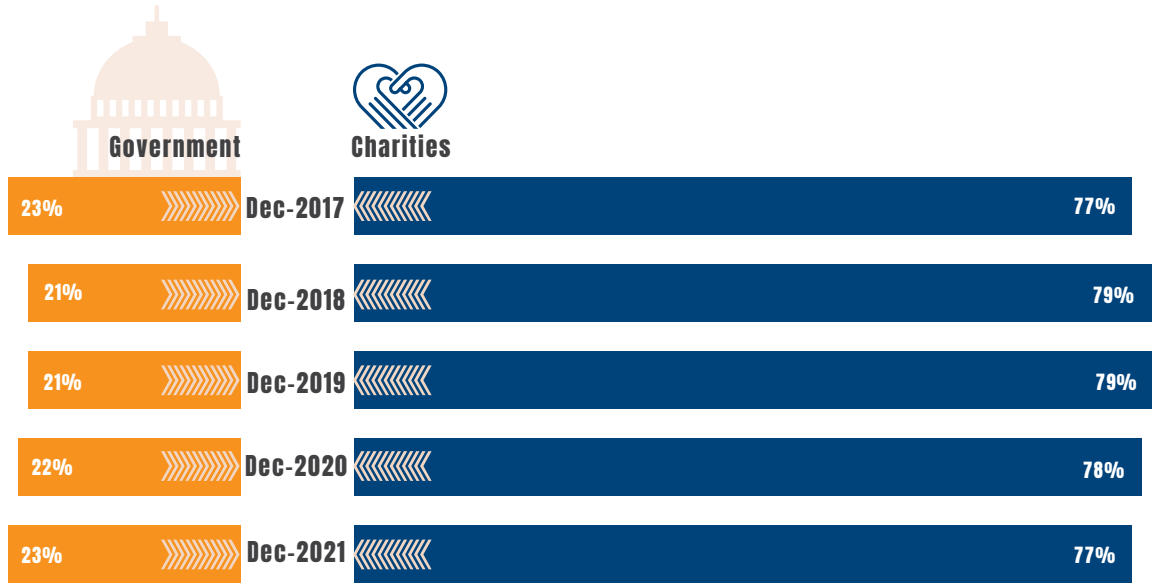
Respondents were asked to assess their trust across 13 different charity categories. The portion of respondents that “highly trusts” each charity type increased in 12 of the 13 categories, with the exception being environmental organizations.



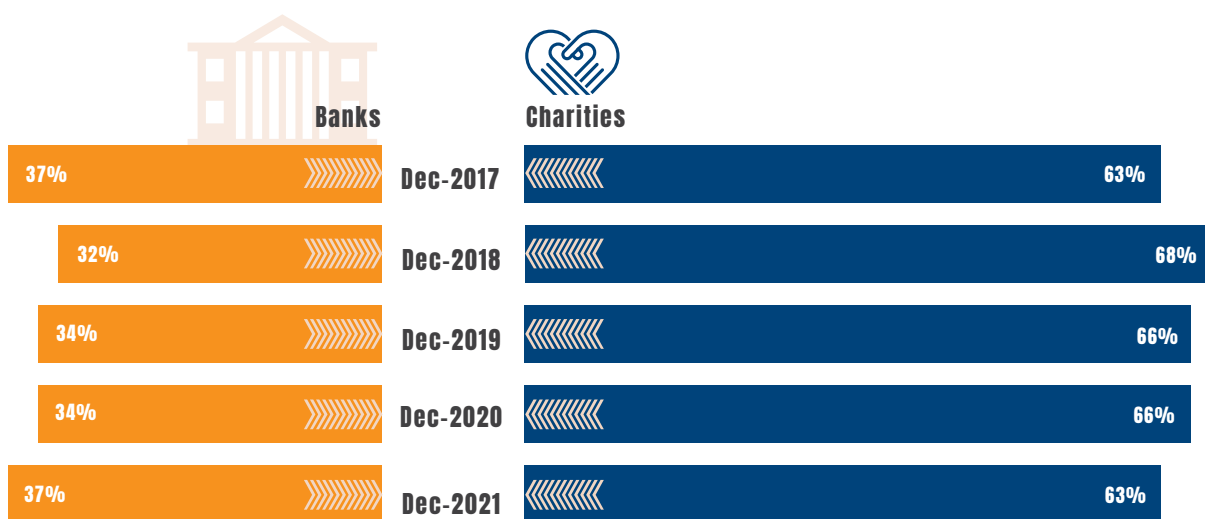
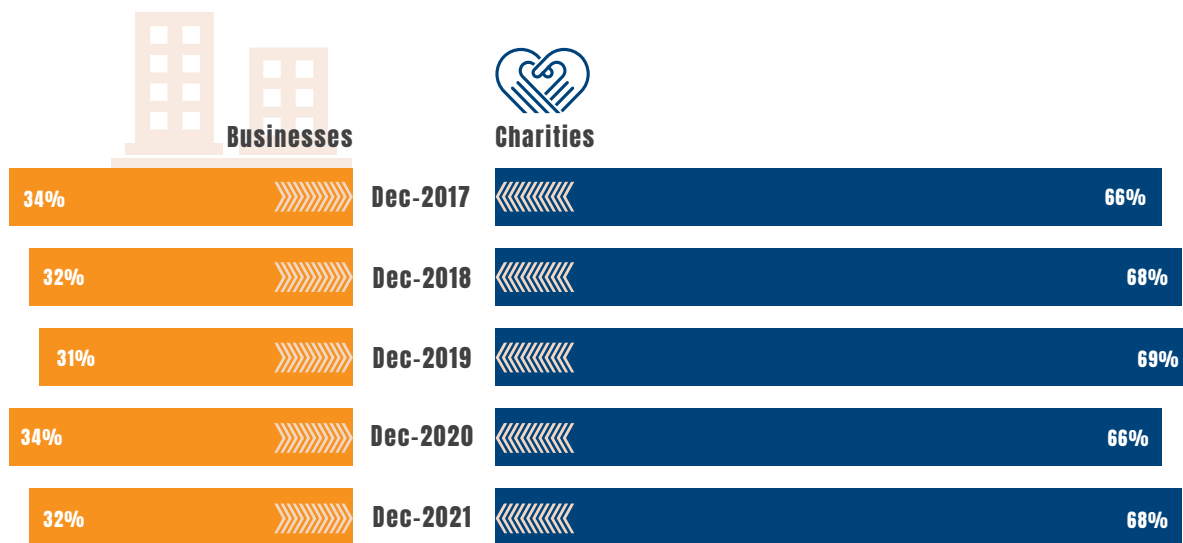
The portion of respondents that highly trust religious organizations and veteran's organizations increased meaningfully between December 2020 and December 2021, after 4 years of decline. The other charity categories with significant shifts in high trust (of 4 points or more) between December 2017 and December 2021 are civil rights and community action, police and firefighter, international relief, and environmental organizations.



When asked to assess trust for charities as compared to other institutions, **charities have remained more trusted than other institutions**, including organized religion, banks, business, media, and government:









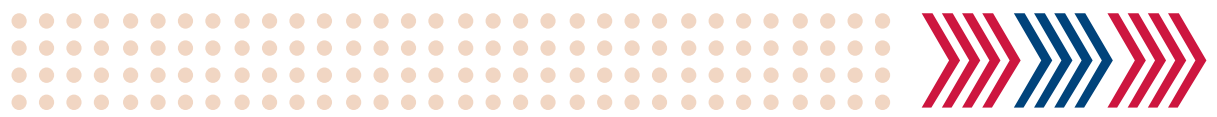
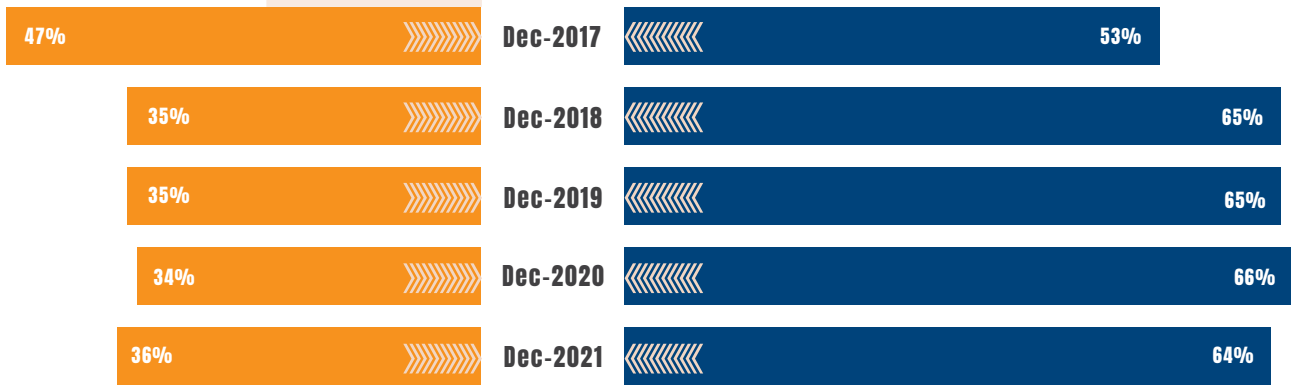
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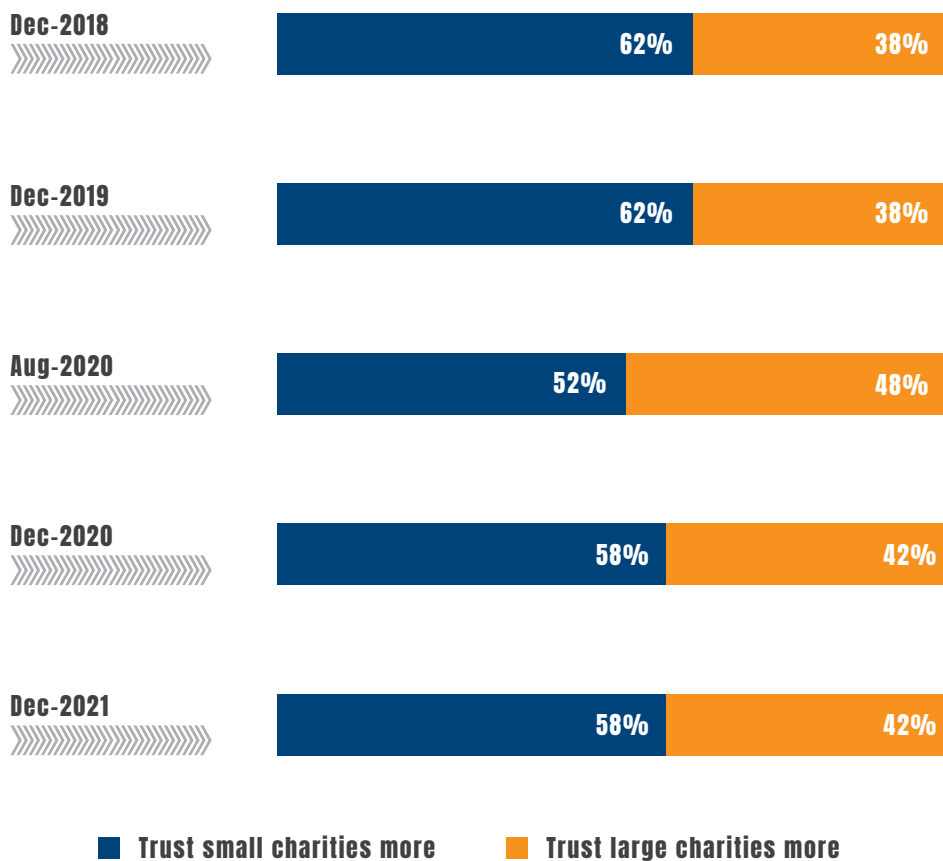
Organized Religions



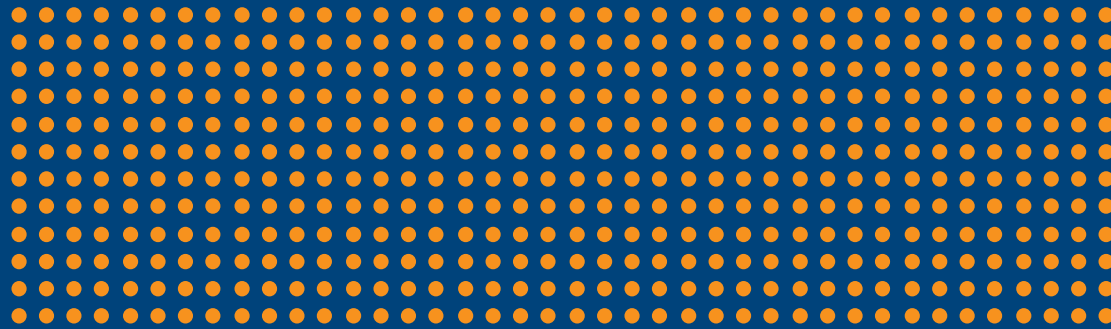
Charities



When asked to assess trust for small charities as compared to large charities, participants are more likely to trust small charities than large ones. However, that preference was more marked before 2020:



# TRUST SIGNALS AND GIVING PREFERENCES



In an open-ended question, participants identified what makes them trust a charity. Top-of-mind reasons included the following:

## 01 CHARITY FINANCES | 21%

11%

Financial ratios & leadership compensation

<b>"Very little goes towards 'administrative costs'"</b>	<b>"Amount they keep for advertisements"</b>
<b>"Not being used to enrich the operators"</b>	<b>"CEO does not make a boatload of money"</b>
<b>"They show low administrative costs and reasonably paid executives"</b>	<b>"More given to the charities, less given to leaders"</b>
<b>"Most if not all spent on the needy and not administration"</b>	<b>"Their administrative costs are very low so that my contribution does the most good"</b>
<b>"At least 85% of my donation goes to the purpose for which it is requested and not more than 15% goes for administration"</b>	<b>"Most donated money goes to the cause in question and that can be demonstrated clearly by the charity"</b>

10%

Clarity about where money goes

<b>"Knowing donations will be used wisely"</b>	<b>"Knowing where the money goes"</b>
<b>"To know exactly where my money/ time/objects go towards"</b>	<b>"That I see they are putting the money I give to use"</b>
<b>"They outline where the donations are going"</b>	<b>"I know they are using donations responsibly"</b>
<b>"They are open about how the money is used"</b>	<b>"They are up front as to how your money will be spent if you donate to them"</b>
<b>"How they use the money I give them"</b>	<b>"They are putting the money to good use"</b>

## 02 REPUTATION BUILT OVER TIME | 18%

“Have been around for years and no bad rumors”

“Reputation and longevity”	“Years of service”
“Track record”	“Well known to everyone”
“Been in business for a long time”	“Their record”

## 03 HONESTY & TRANSPARENCY | 13%

“They are transparent about what they do and how they spend their money”

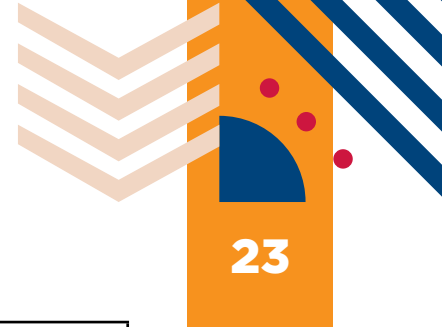
“Full disclosure”	“Telling the truth”
“They do what they say”	“Knowing that they are honest and aboveboard”
“Absolute openness”	“They are open about their work”

## 04 RESEARCH, RATINGS & CREDENTIALS | 12%

“A high overall score from an independent group that monitors charities across a number of important metrics is essential”

“Positive independent reviews by watchdog operations”	“Reports by independent parties”
“Looking them up on the internet’s various sites to check on them”	“They need to be reliable and have good reviews”
“Recommended by a trusted source”	“The organizations they are accredited by”





## 05 CAUSE LOYALTY | 9%

<p><b>“Children’s illnesses or animals makes me donate”</b></p>	<p>“I have so much respect for veterans and I will pay”</p>	<p>“It depends completely on which charity. I trust my church”</p>
	<p>“The ones that are helping kids in the hospital”</p>	<p>“Because animals cannot speak for themselves”</p>
	<p>“They advocate for a position I support”</p>	<p>“Catholic religion-based charities are USUALLY honest, and have minimal administrative fees”</p>

## 06 RELATIONSHIP OR EXPERIENCE WITH CHARITY | 7%

<p><b>“Charities we have personally given time with”</b></p>	<p>“That I know them well”</p>	<p>“It’s something that I’ve been a part of”</p>
	<p>“The friendly people working for them”</p>	<p>“They feel more personally connected”</p>
	<p>“I know them personally such as my alma mater or church”</p>	<p>“I know a beneficiary of their work”</p>

## 07 ACCOMPLISHMENTS OR IMPACT | 7%

<p><b>“Their results must be quantifiable”</b></p>	<p>“Proven results”</p>	<p>“Their effectiveness in their programs”</p>
	<p>“The accomplishments”</p>	<p>“When I see the results of what they accomplishes”</p>
	<p>“Doing good and showing the result”</p>	<p>“Showing the impact they actually have”</p>

## 08 INTUITION & “JE NE SAI QUOI” | 5%

<p><b>“I believe in them doing the right thing”</b></p>	<p>“My gut feeling”</p>	<p>“Hope”</p>
	<p>“Personal feelings”</p>	<p>“My opinion”</p>
	<p>“How they carry themselves”</p>	

## 09 SOCIAL INFLUENCE OR CELEBRITY | 3%

<p>“When they give you social media platforms and show giving the money where they say it will go”</p>	“Info from friends”	“Word of mouth”
	“Knowing others who have donated, who feel safe about it”	“The amount of people who give money to them”
	“Talking to my family or friends”	“They have a vast array of supporters”

## 10 GOALS, STRATEGY, VISION | 1%

<p>“I have read their mission statement. Read about how their charity works”</p>	“I know what their long term goal is”	“Knowing their goals”
	“Clear mission and objectives”	“Their commitment”

## OTHER

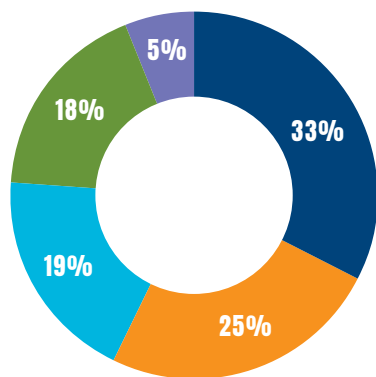
<p>“Innovative and relevant”</p>	“Grassroots work, not funded by one-percenters philanthropists”	“If they pay their staff a liveable wage”
	“Knowledge of investment”	“Media coverage”
	“They are local and support local communities”	“Great leadership”





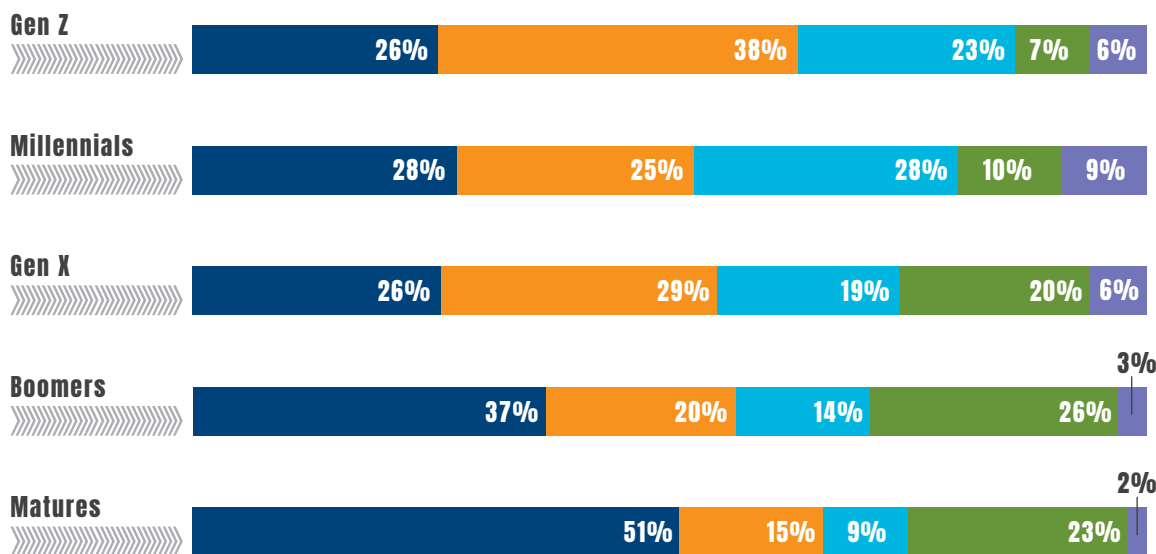


When presented with scenarios that might detract or discourage participants from donating, most participants chose a financial concern:



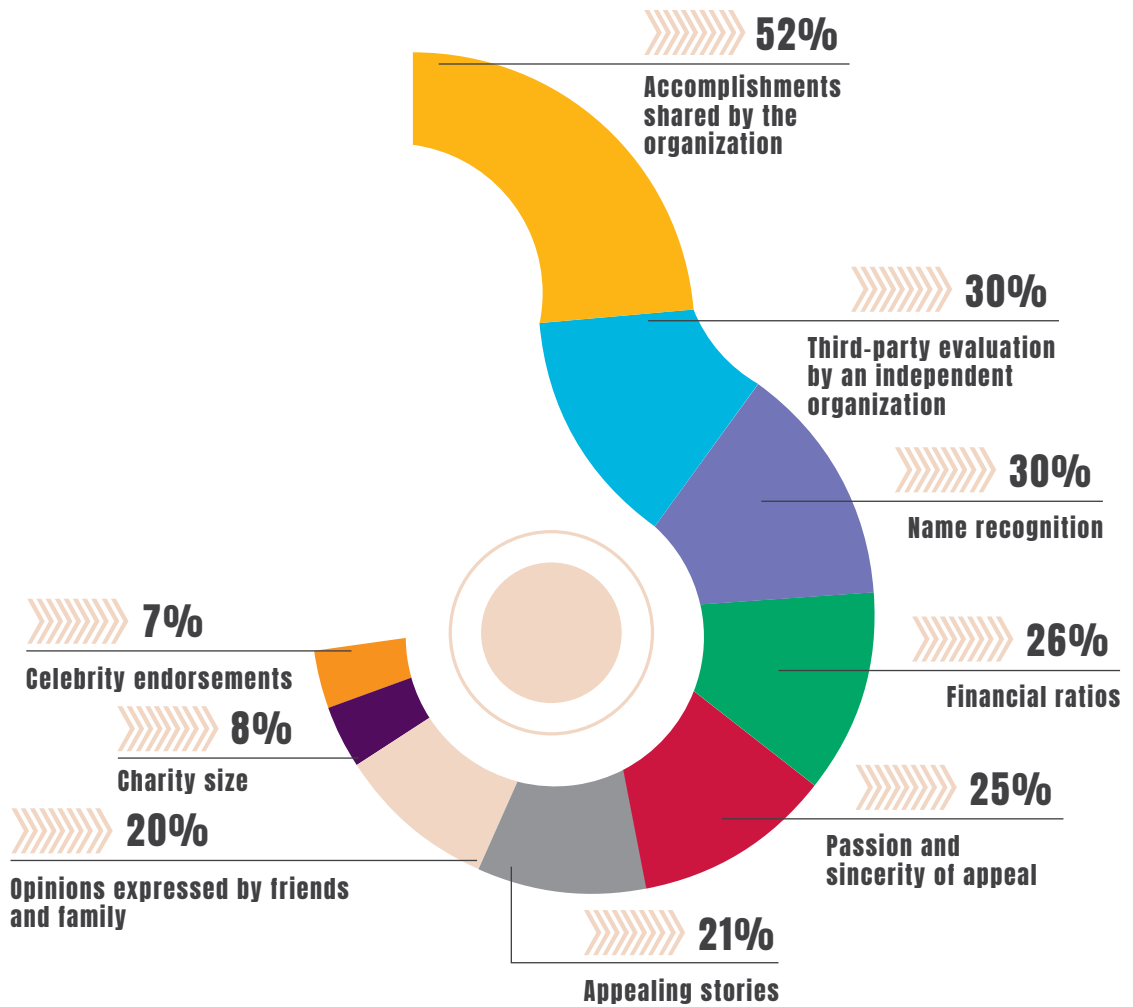
- A high portion of every dollar received last year was spent on fundraising and management expenses.
- You are not sure what the charity will do with the money you donate.
- The charity does not share clear recent accomplishments.
- Charity executives receive high salaries.
- The charity is holding large amount of money in reserves.

Younger generations are more likely to say they will not donate if they are not sure what the charity will do with the money or when a charity does not share clear recent accomplishments. On the other hand, older generations are more likely to be discouraged from donating when a high portion of every dollar is spent on fundraising or management activities or when charity executives have high salaries.

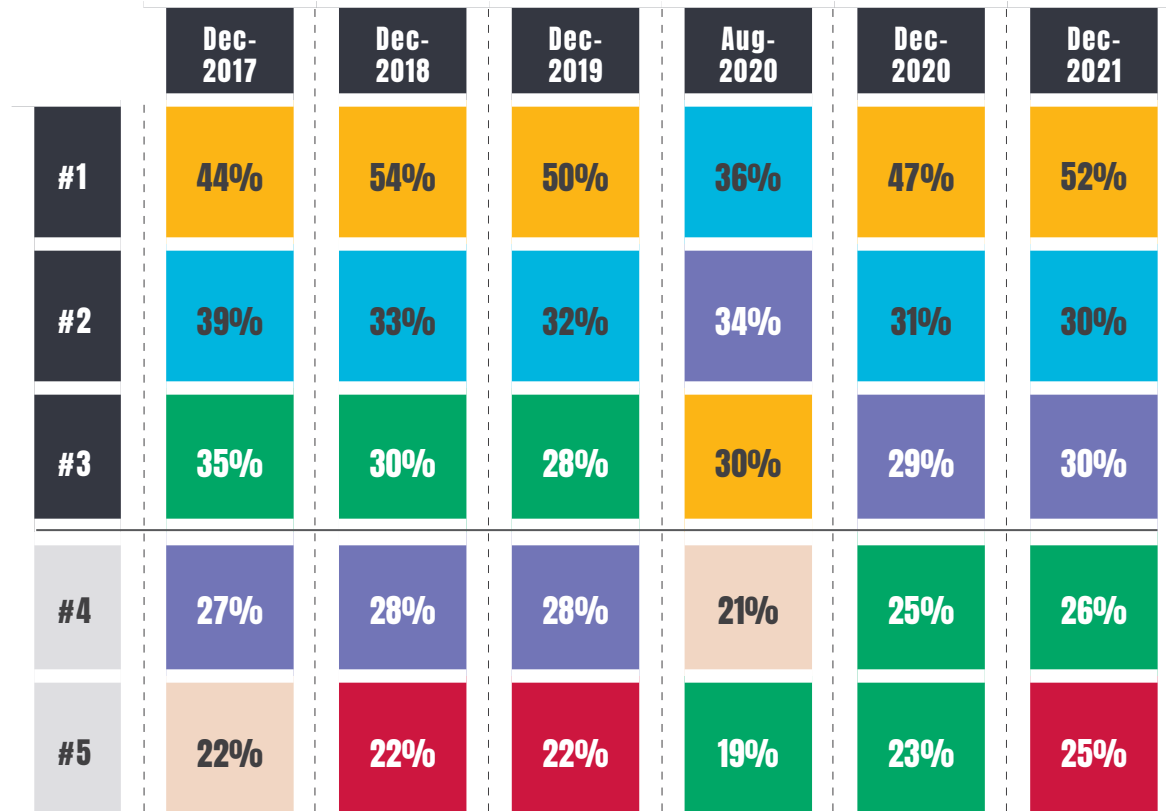


- A high portion of every dollar received last year was spent on fundraising and management expenses.
- You are not sure what the charity will do with the money you donate.
- The charity does not share clear recent accomplishments.
- Charity executives receive high salaries.
- The charity is holding large amount of money in reserves.

When asked to choose three factors that most signal that a charity is trustworthy, participants picked the following:



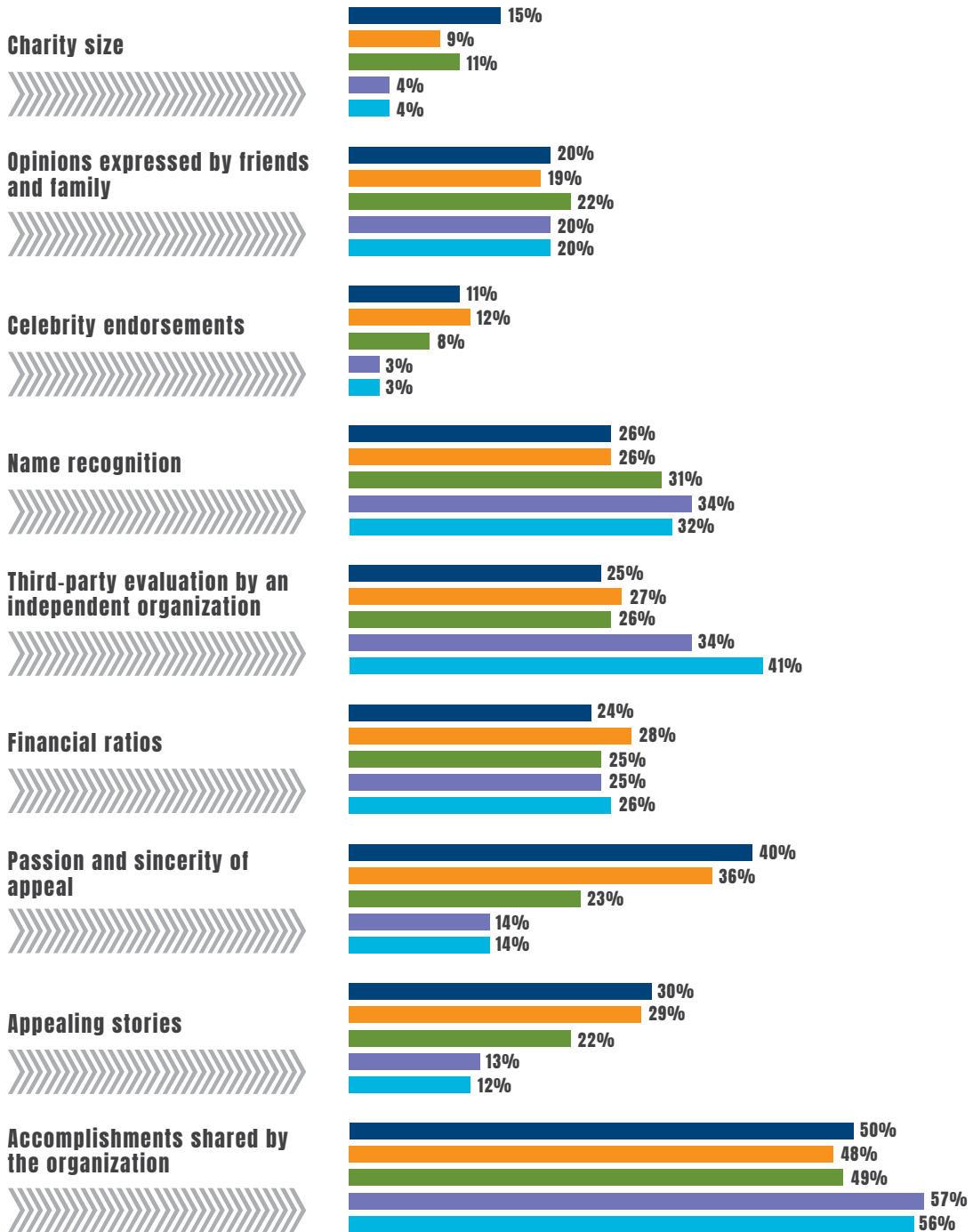
Top signals of trust have held quite stable since December 2017, with the exception of 2020, when accomplishments shared by the organization temporarily dropped significantly, making trust signals such as third-party evaluations, name recognition, and opinions expressed by family and friends relatively more important.



- Accomplishments shared by the organization
- Third-party evaluation by an independent organization
- Name recognition
- Financial ratios
- Opinions expressed by friends and family
- Passion and sincerity of appeal

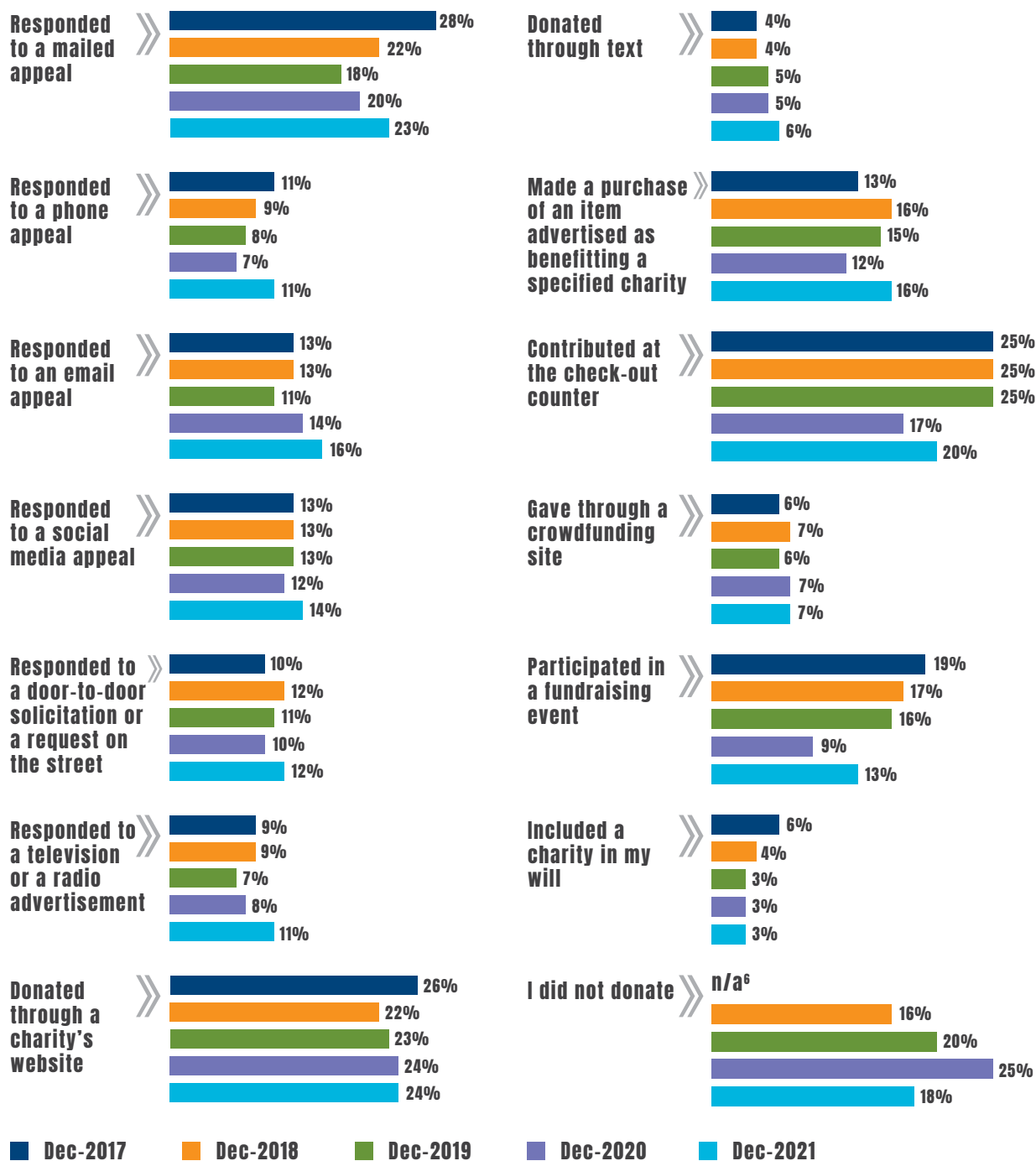


Different generations report reacting to different signals of trust. Older generations are relatively more likely to respond to third-party monitors, while younger generations are relatively more likely to report responding to passion and sincerity and appealing stories.



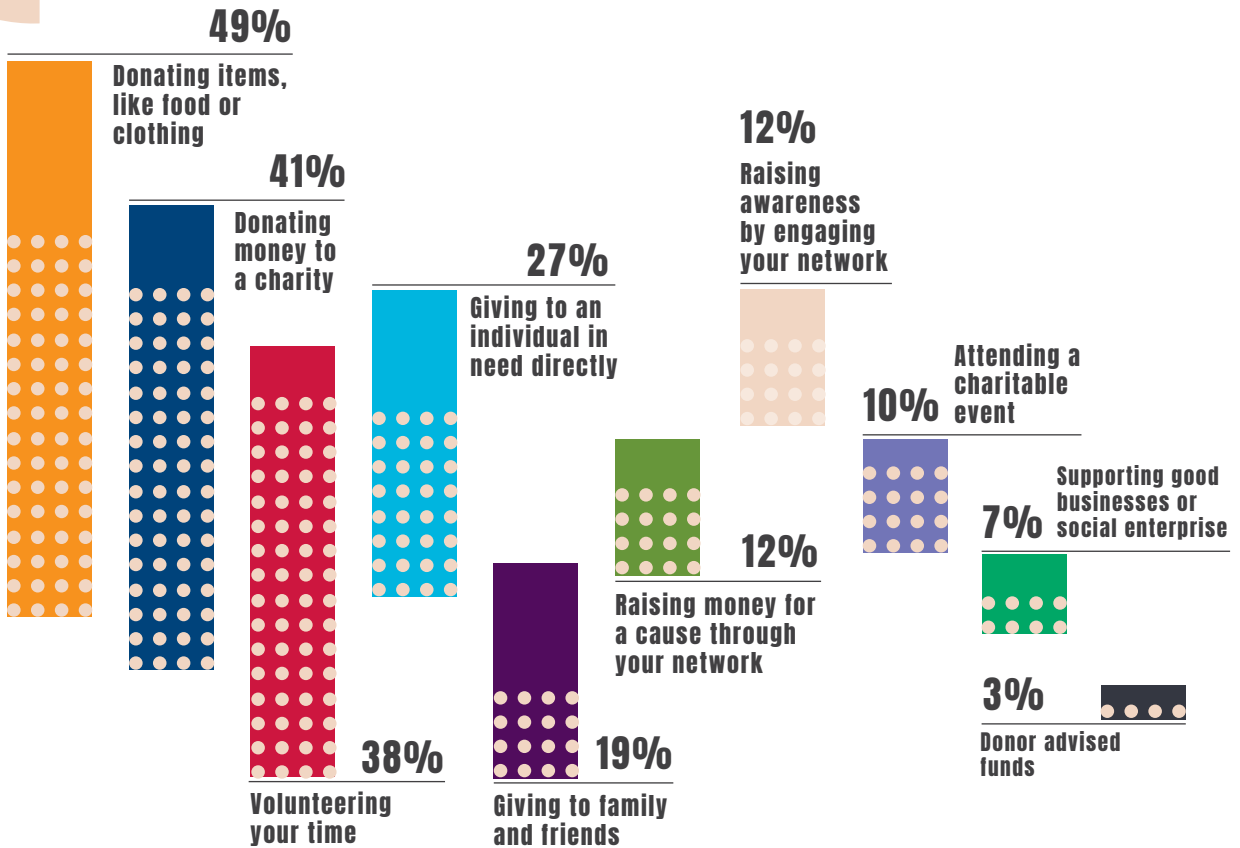
■ Gen Z ■ Millennials ■ Gen X ■ Boomers ■ Matures

When considering alternative donation channels used during the past year, the portion of participants that report not contributing through any channels decreased for the first time since 2018. The portion of participants who report responding to a mailed, phone, email, and social media appeal was higher than in the previous 4 or 5 years.

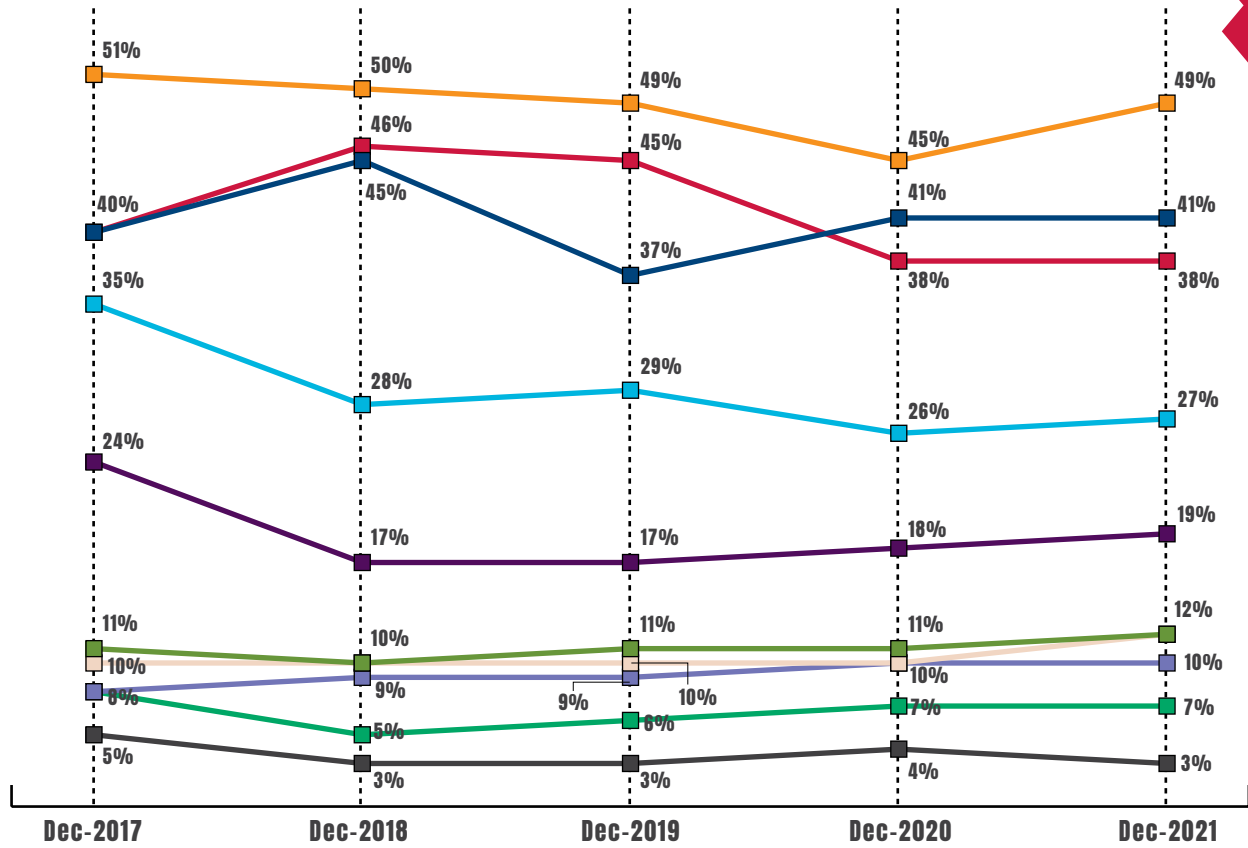


<sup>6</sup> The option to specify that the participant did not donate through any of the 13 different channels was not available within this question in the first version of the survey.

Respondents were asked to identify the top three most impactful ways to make a difference. Below are their choices:



This ranking has held relatively stable since 2017:

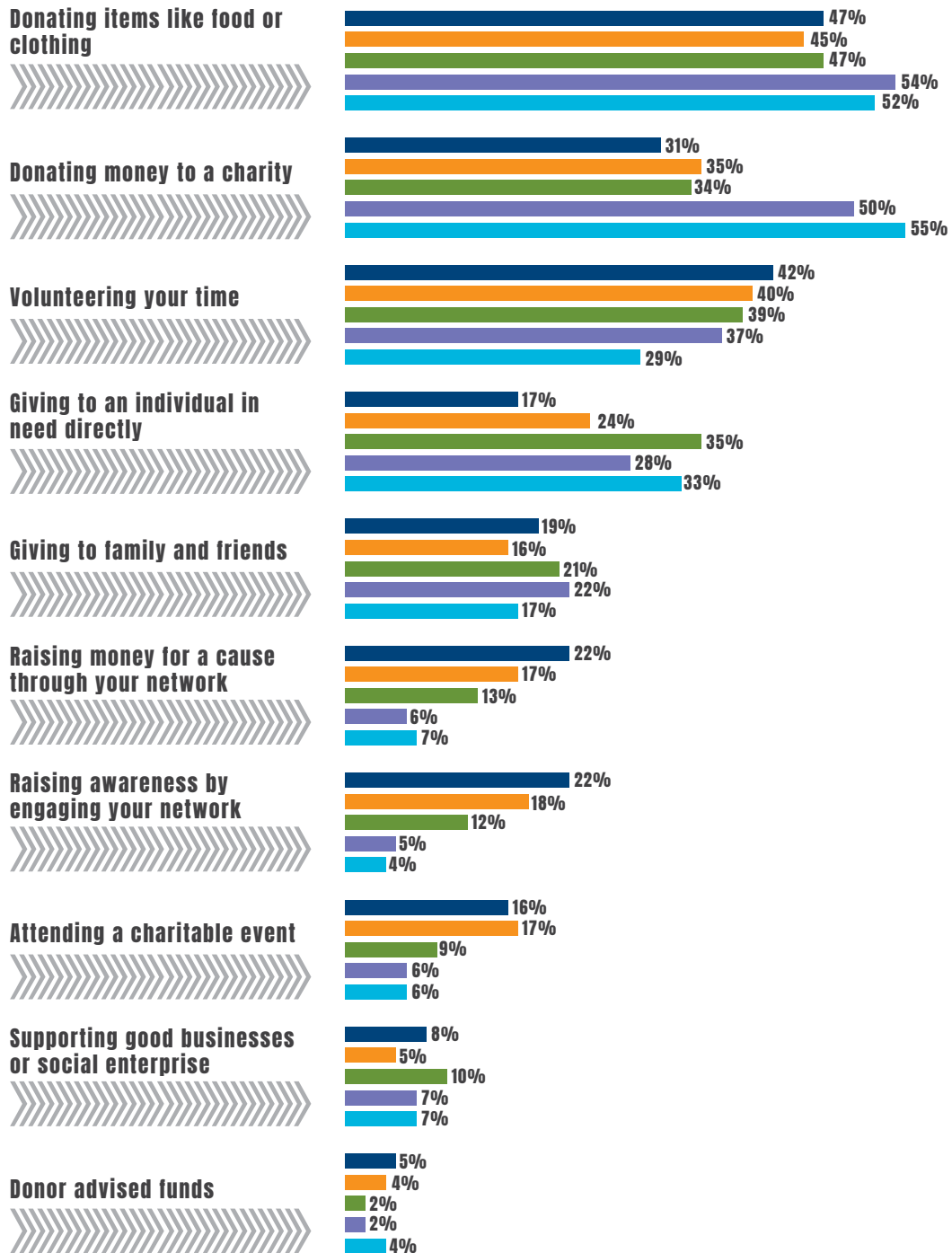


- Donating items like food or clothing
- Volunteering your time
- Giving to family and friends
- Raising awareness by engaging your network
- Supporting good businesses or social enterprise
- Donating money to a charity
- Giving to an individual in need directly
- Raising money for a cause through your network
- Attending a charitable event
- Donor advised funds





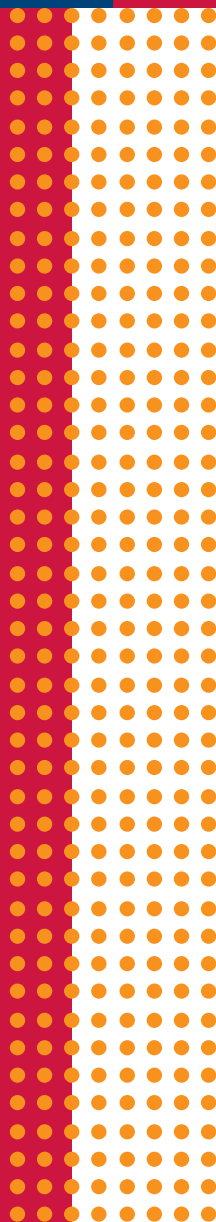
Older generations are relatively more likely to choose monetary donations, and giving to individuals in need directly, as one of their most impactful forms of giving. Younger generations are relatively more likely to pick volunteering, attending fundraising events, and raising awareness and money through their network.



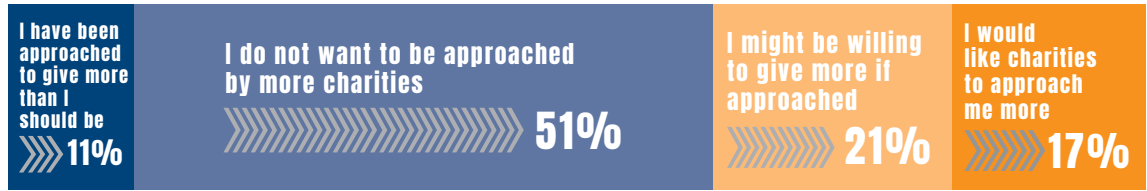
■ Gen Z ■ Millennials ■ Gen X ■ Boomers ■ Matures



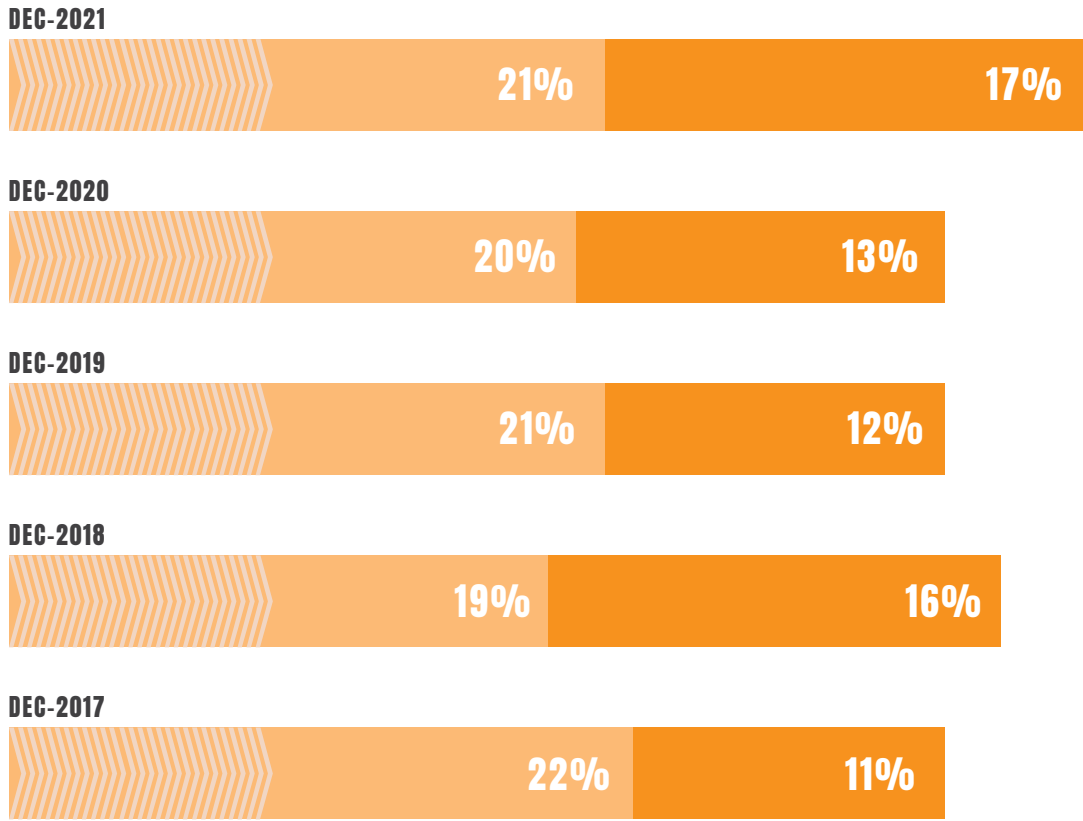
# WHAT PARTICIPANTS WHO ARE OPEN TO SOLICITATION SAY



Among all respondents, 38% express being open to solicitation, with 17% identifying a desire to be approached more by charities and 21% saying they might be willing to give more if approached.



This is the highest openness to solicitation observed in the past 5 years.

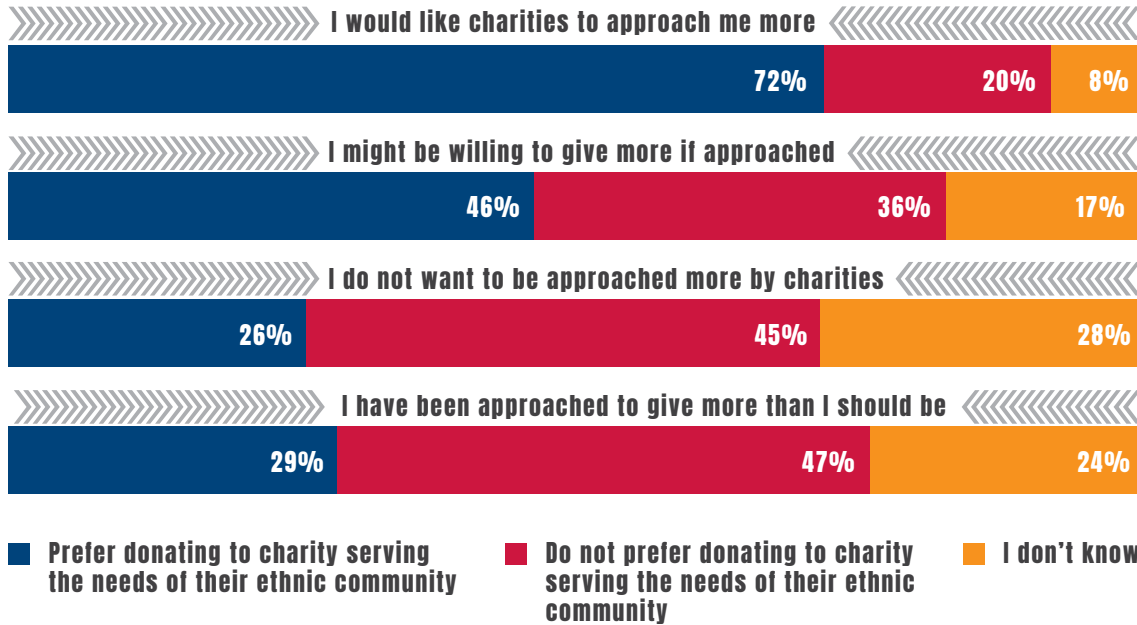


■ I might be willing to give more if approached
 ■ I would like charities to approach me more

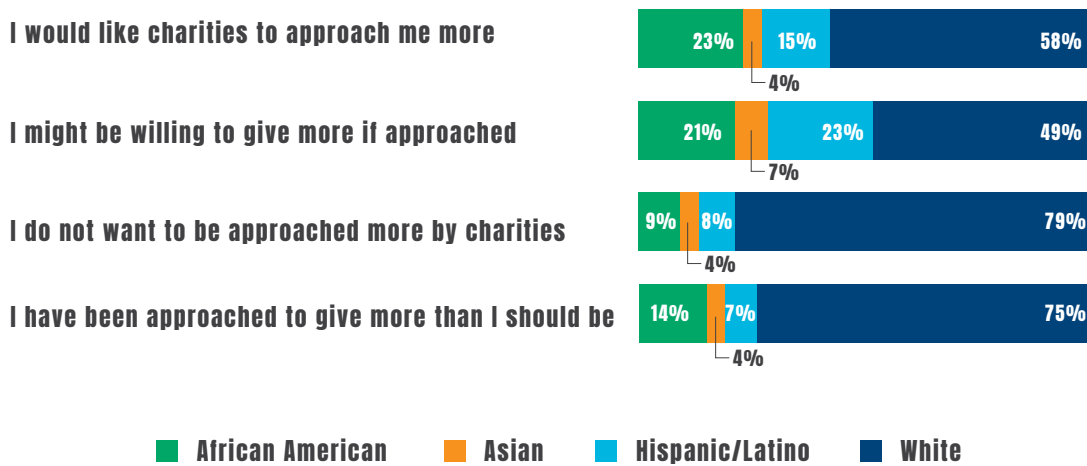


Participants who report being open to solicitation (wanting to be approached by charities or being willing to give more if approached) are:

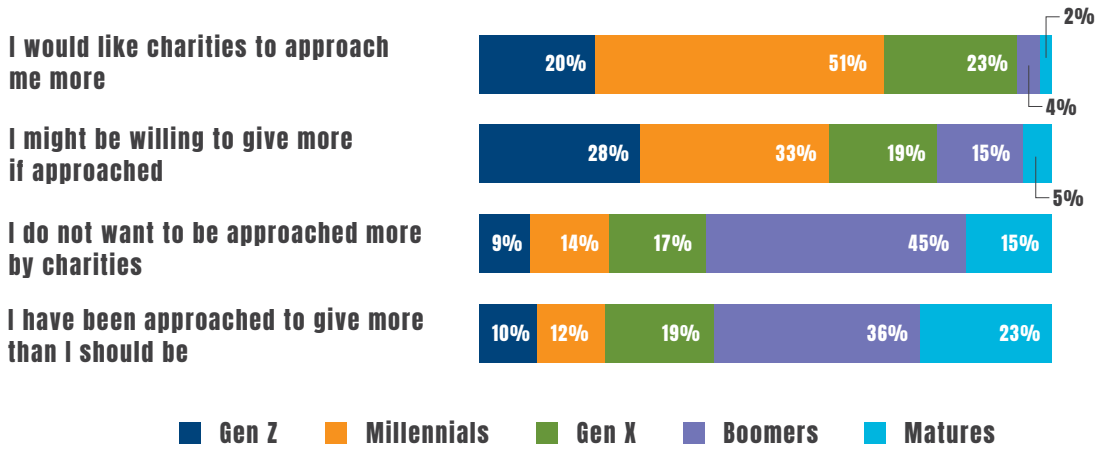
More likely to say that they prefer donating to a charity serving the needs of their ethnic community.



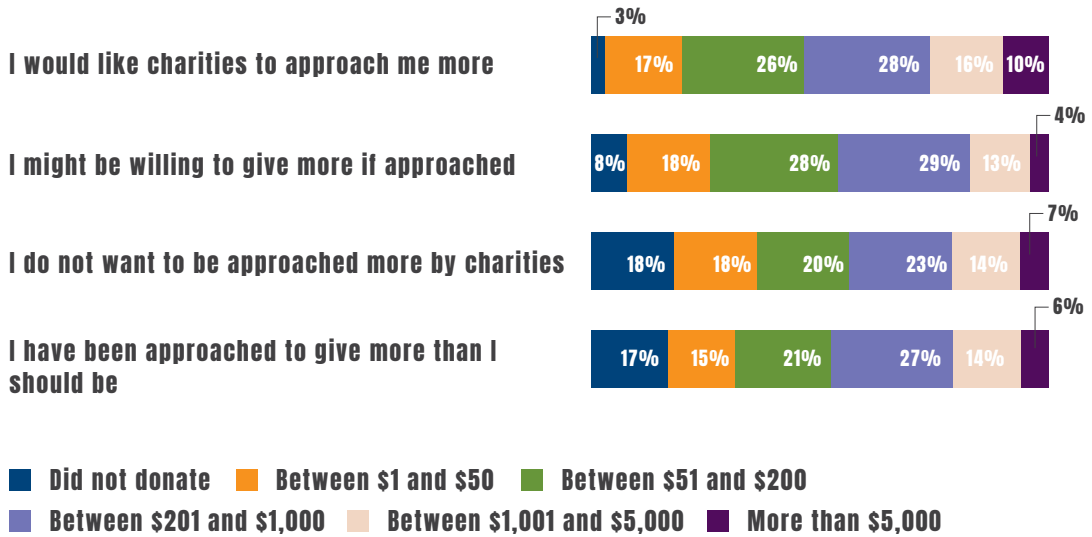
More likely to be African Americans or Hispanic than the general sample.



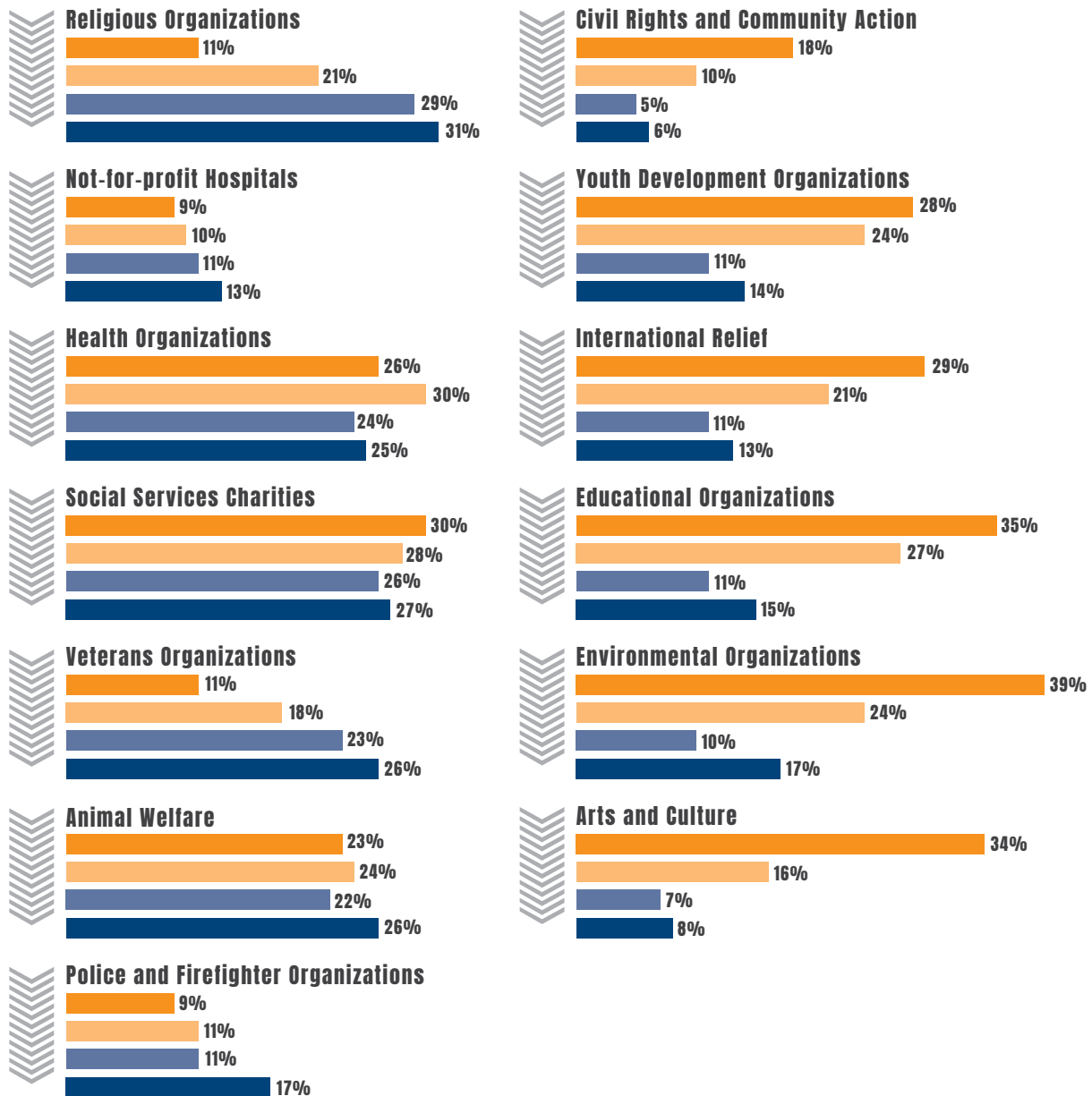
More likely to be younger respondents.



More likely to report annual contribution levels above \$1,000.



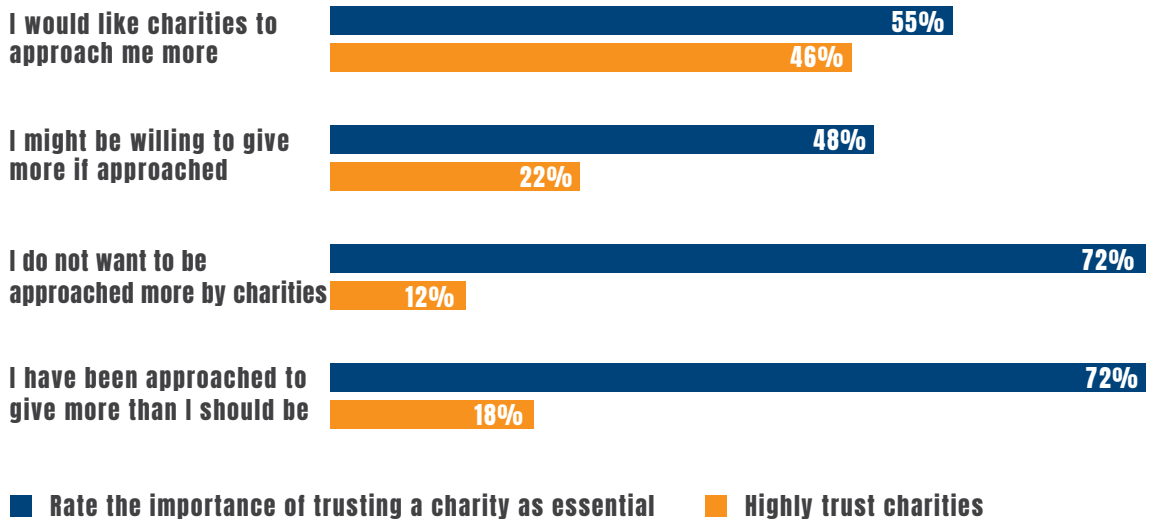
Participants who report being open to solicitation are relatively more likely to report giving to environmental, educational, youth development, international relief, arts and culture, and civil rights and community action organizations. They are relatively less likely to report giving to religious, veterans, and police and firefighter organizations.



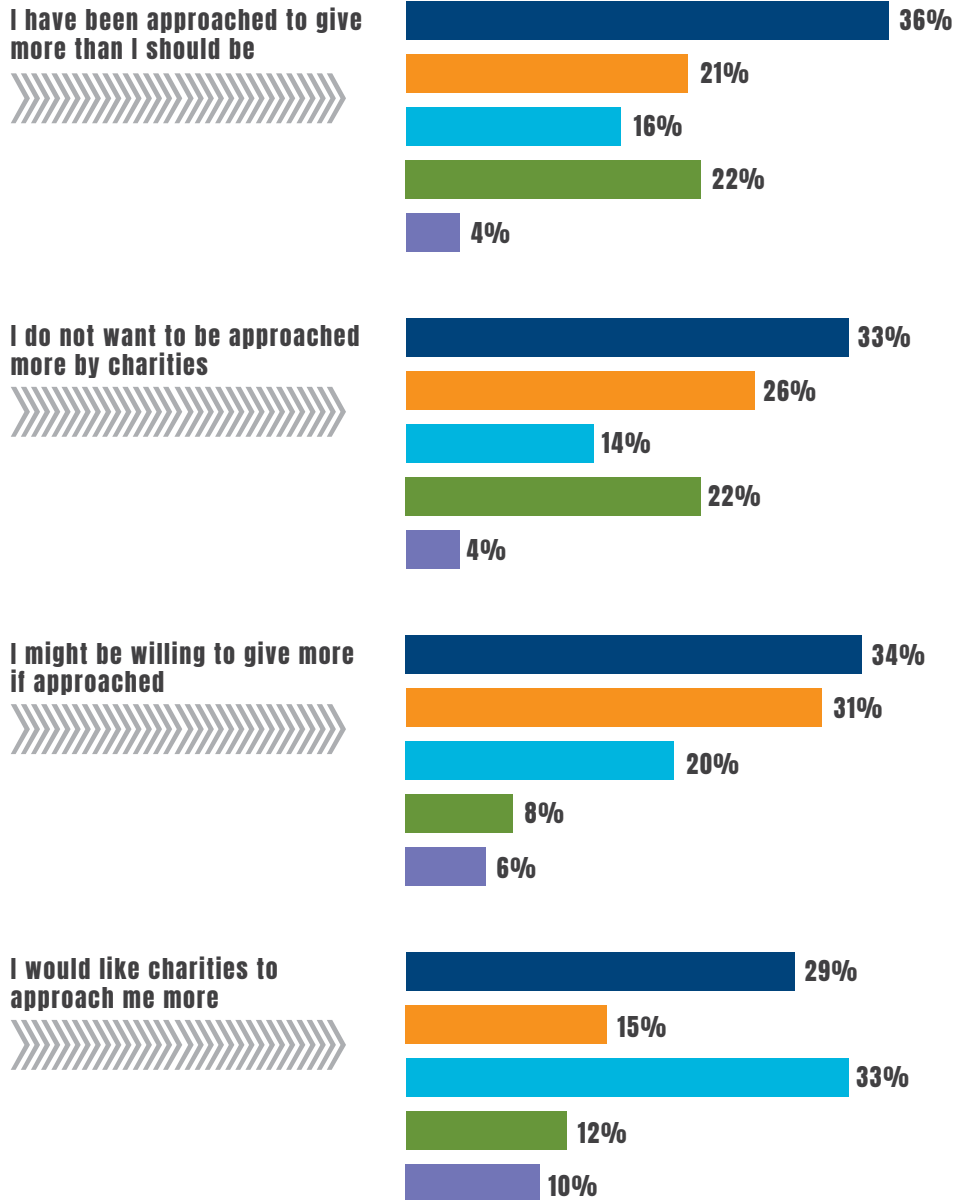
- I would like charities to approach me more
- I might be willing to give more if approached
- I do not want to be approached more by charities
- I have been approached to give more than I should be

Participants who report being open to solicitation are also:

More likely to highly trust charities, while less likely to rate trust as essential before giving.

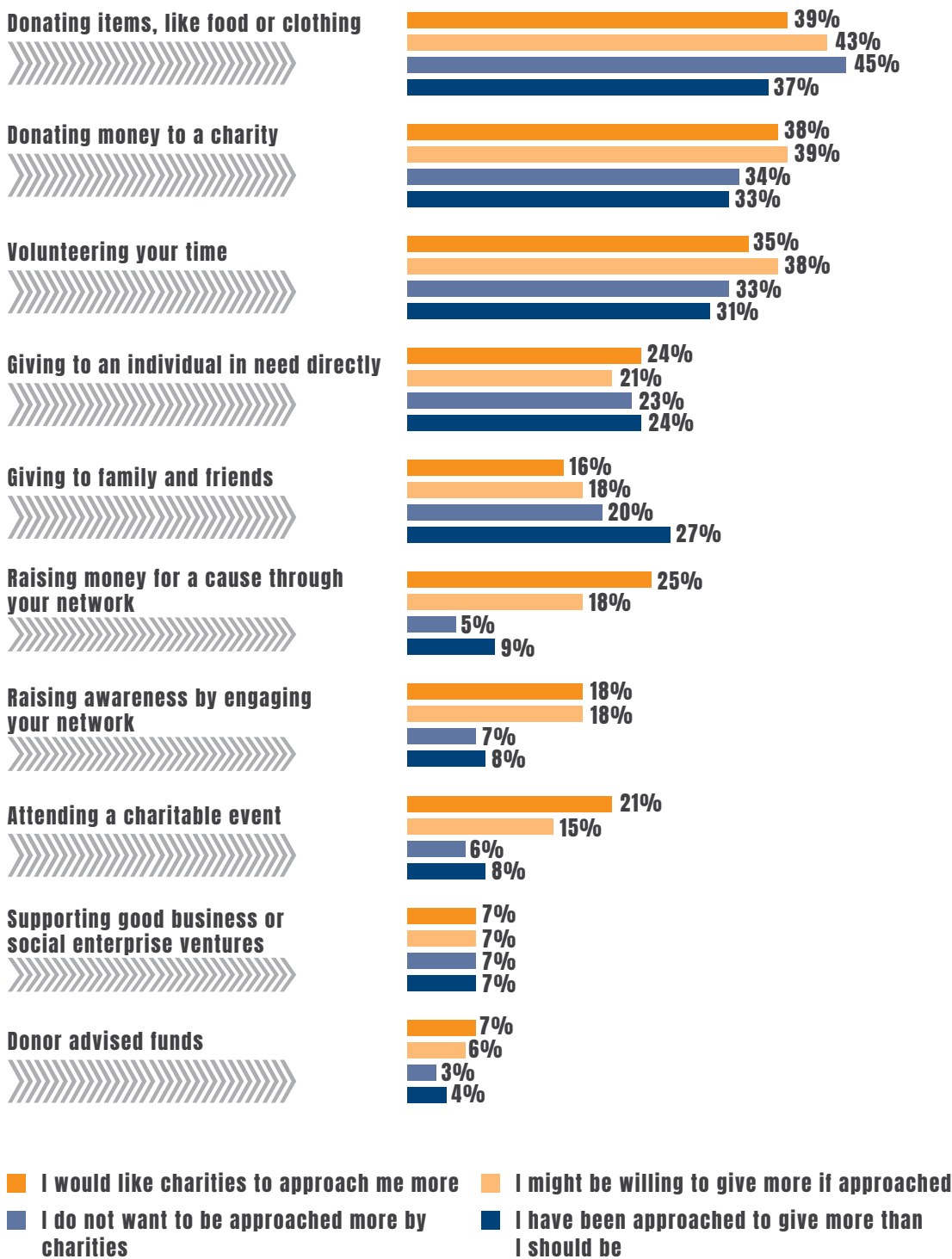


Participants who report being open to solicitation are less likely to cite high executive compensation as a scenario that would deter their donation; and more likely to say the lack of clear recent accomplishments would discourage their donation.



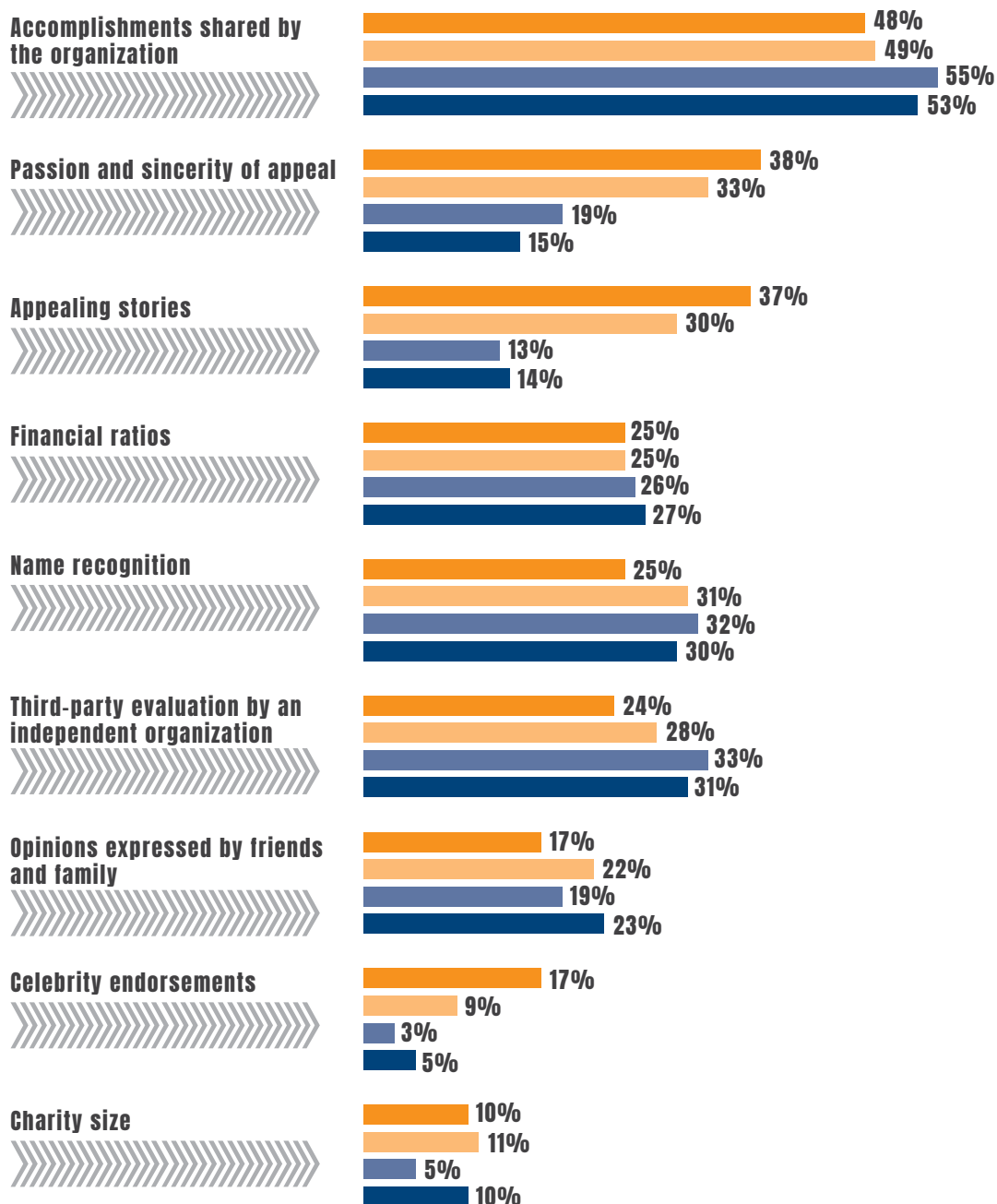
- - 
  -
- A high portion of every dollar received last year was spent on fundraising and management expenses.
  - You are not sure what the charity will do with the money you donate.
  - The charity does not share clear recent accomplishments.
  - Charity executives receive high salaries.
  - The charity is holding large amount of money in reserves.

Participants who report being open to solicitation are relatively more likely to say that, in the future, they hope to raise money and awareness for a cause through their network and to attend a charitable event. Overall, participants who are open to solicitation are still most likely to want to increase their monetary, time, and items contributions compared to other forms of giving.





Participants who report being open to solicitation are relatively more likely to consider passion and sincerity of the solicitation, as well as appealing stories, as top signals of charity trust. Overall, participants who are open to solicitation are most likely to respond to accomplishments shared by the organization.



- I would like charities to approach me more
- I might be willing to give more if approached
- I do not want to be approached more by charities
- I have been approached to give more than I should be



# CANADIAN DONOR TRUST

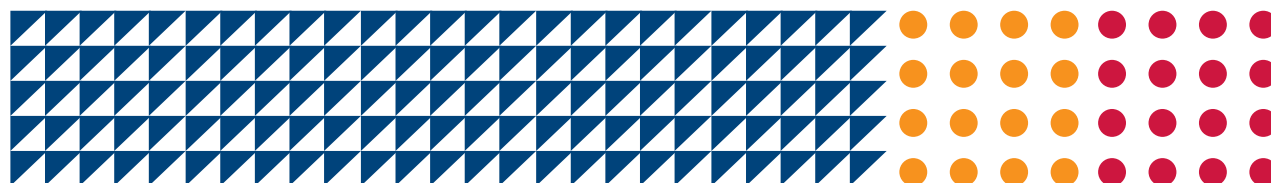
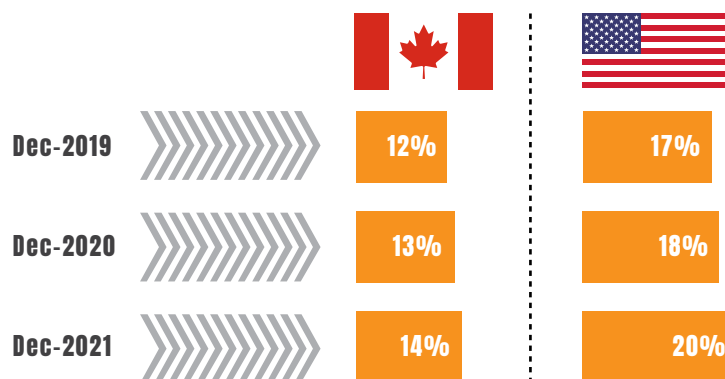


There is ample space to build trust for charities in Canada, with 60% of respondents saying it is essential to trust a charity before giving, but only 14% of respondents highly trusting charities.



■ Rate the importance of trusting a charity as essential ■ Highly trust charities

As compared to U.S. participants, fewer Canadians express a high level of trust in charities. Still, the portion of Canadians that highly trust charities increased moderately since December 2019.



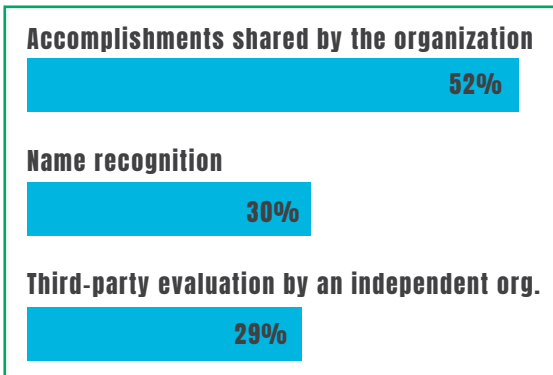


The most trusted charity categories in Canada since 2019 are health organizations and not-for-profit hospitals.

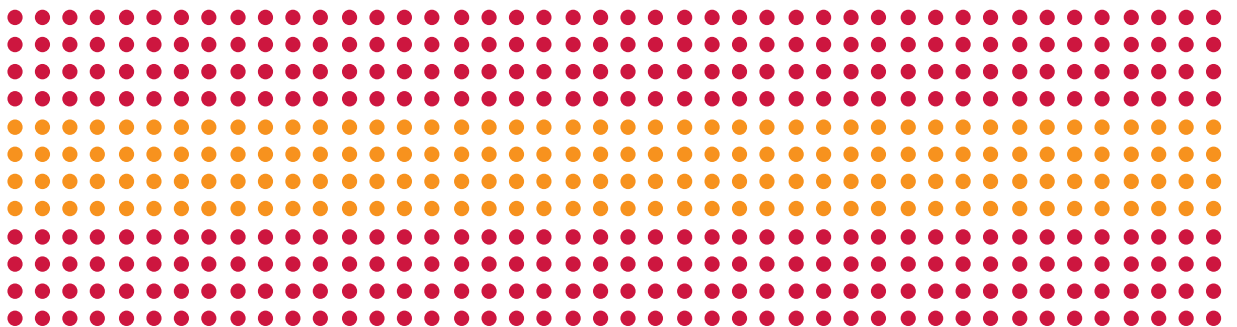
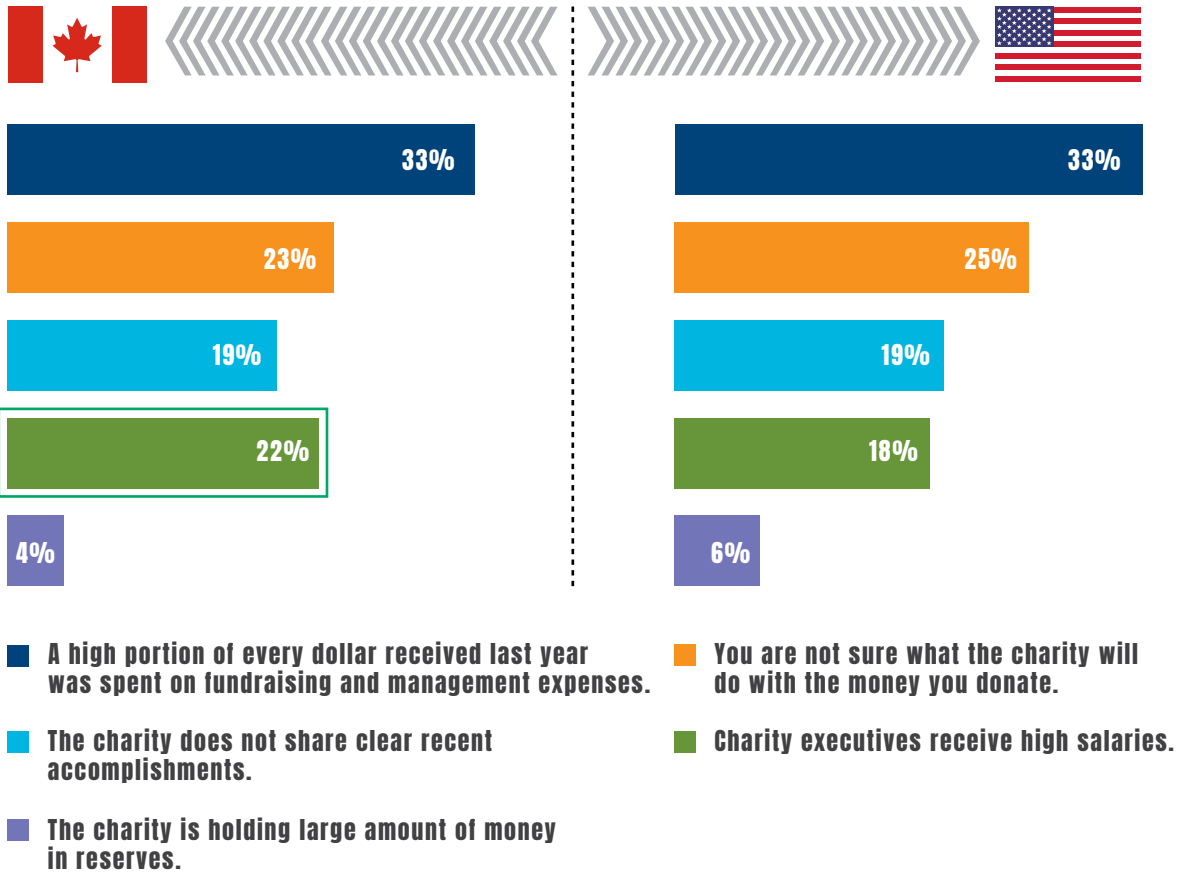
Dec-2019	Dec-2020	Dec-2021
<b>Not-for-Profit Hospitals</b> 21%	<b>Health Organizations</b> 23%	<b>Health Organizations</b> 23%
<b>Health Organizations</b> 19%	<b>Not-for-Profit Hospitals</b> 21%	<b>Not-for-Profit Hospitals</b> 20%
<b>Police &amp; Firefighter Organizations</b> 19%	<b>Animal Welfare Organizations</b> 20%	<b>Animal Welfare Organizations</b> 18%
<b>Social Services Charities</b> 19%	<b>Social Services Charities</b> 18%	<b>Veterans Organizations</b> 17%
<b>Veterans Organizations</b> 18%	<b>Police &amp; Firefighter Organizations</b> 17%	<b>Social Services Charities</b> 17%
<b>Animal Welfare Organizations</b> 17%	<b>Veterans Organizations</b> 17%	<b>Police &amp; Firefighter Organizations</b> 17%
<b>Religious Organizations</b> 16%	<b>Religious Organizations</b> 14%	<b>Religious Organizations</b> 15%
<b>Youth Development Organizations</b> 14%	<b>International Relief Organizations</b> 13%	<b>International Relief Organizations</b> 13%
<b>International Relief Organizations</b> 12%	<b>Youth Development Organizations</b> 12%	<b>Youth Development Organizations</b> 12%
<b>Environmental Organizations</b> 11%	<b>Environmental Organizations</b> 12%	<b>Environmental Organizations</b> 12%
<b>Civil Rights &amp; Community Organizations</b> 11%	<b>Educational Organizations</b> 11%	<b>Educational Organizations</b> 11%
<b>Educational Organizations</b> 10%	<b>Civil Rights &amp; Community Organizations</b> 11%	<b>Civil Rights &amp; Community Organizations</b> 10%
<b>Arts &amp; Culture Organizations</b> 9%	<b>Arts &amp; Culture Organizations</b> 10%	<b>Arts &amp; Culture Organizations</b> 9%

Compared to their U.S. counterparts, Canadians place relative low trust in religious and veterans organizations. On the other hand, they place relatively higher trust in health and environmental charities.

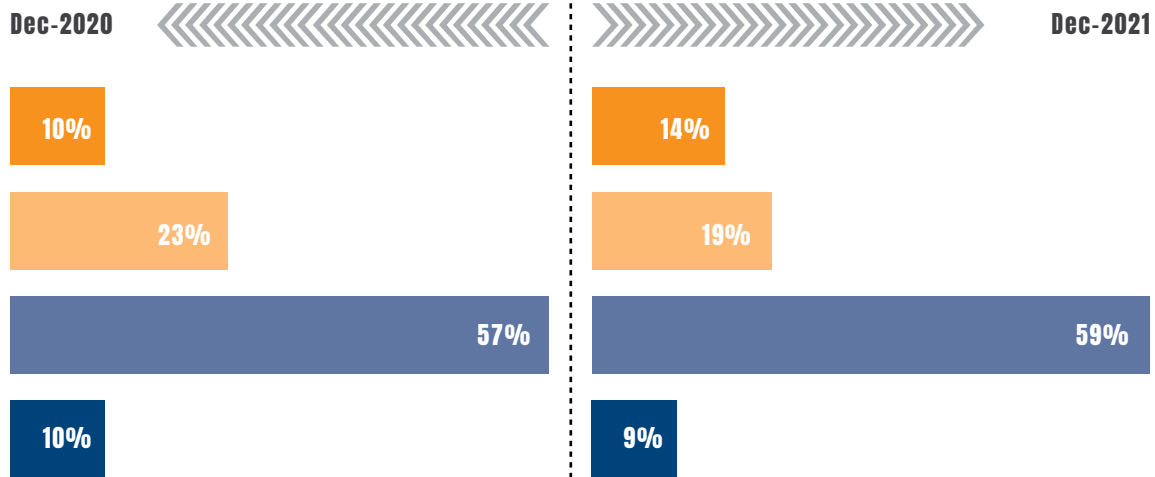
When asked to identify factors that most signal charity trustworthiness, the most popular answers among Canadians were (1) accomplishments shared by the organization, (2) name recognition, and (3) third-party evaluation by an independent organization. These factors track very closely with their American counterparts.



When presented with scenarios that might discourage participants from donating, Canadian and U.S. answers are similar overall, with Canadian respondents placing higher importance on executive compensation:



27% of Canadians express that they are open to solicitation – with 9% saying they would like charities to approach them more and 19% saying they might be willing to give more if approached.



- I would like charities to approach me more
- I might be willing to give more if approached
- I do not want to be approached more by charities
- I have been approached to give more than I should be

Compared to the U.S. sample, where 38% of respondents express an openness to solicitation (with 17% identifying a desire to be approached more by charities and 21% saying they might be willing to give more if approached), Canadians express lower openness to solicitation.





# CONCLUSION



**For charities, public trust is both an asset and a lifeline. As such, concerns about eroding public trust should not be taken lightly. If not faced, declining trust in institutions, low awareness of the sector among younger generations,<sup>7</sup> and shifting attitudes around giving could pose a threat to the well-being of the sector. Based on our 5-year retrospective of donor trust surveys, we offer the following high-level takeaways.**



**There are reasons to be optimistic: high trust for charities is holding strong and the donating public is open to solicitation.**

The portion of respondents that highly trust charities held steady between 2017 and 2020, then reached a high in December 2021, with one in five participants reporting high trust (9 or 10 on a 10-point scale) for charities. What is more, between December 2020 and December 2021 alone, 12 out of 13 charity categories in our survey experienced an increase in high trust. The highest rise in public trust was experienced by veterans organizations, with 27% of participants highly trusting the charity type in December 2021, as compared to 21% in December 2020. Only one charity category – environmental organizations – did not enjoy gains in high trust over the past year.<sup>8</sup>

Younger generations are less engaged with charities than their older counterparts, but our findings show that they are more likely to report a higher level of trust. For instance, 21% of Gen Zers say they highly trust charities, while only 15% of Matures say the same. While younger participants express different giving preferences, they also express high openness to solicitation.

The December 2021 survey showed the highest openness to solicitation we have observed to date, with 17% of respondents identifying a desire to be approached more by charities and another 21% saying they might be willing to give more if approached.

<sup>7</sup>For instance, “On average, the youngest generation of adults is less aware of the nonprofits tested. Lower awareness creates a major challenge for nonprofits as they consider engaging with Gen Zers, a generation already inundated with ads and marketing – and skeptical of them all.” Bye, C., *Most Trusted Brands 2022 Special Report: Trust in Nonprofits*, Morning Consult. 2022. Available at: [https://go.morningconsult.com/rs/850-TAA-511/images/Most\\_Trusted\\_Brands\\_2022\\_Nonprofits.pdf](https://go.morningconsult.com/rs/850-TAA-511/images/Most_Trusted_Brands_2022_Nonprofits.pdf)

<sup>8</sup>This finding is consistent with the *Most Trusted Brands 2022 Special Report: Trust in Nonprofits*, which found that in the United States, “people may be feeling the effects of climate change, but that isn’t translating into trust for environmental nonprofits... Environmental nonprofits are some of the worst-performing nonprofit brands in terms of trust. No environmental nonprofit falls into the top 50% of the Most Trusted Brands rankings. These nonprofits suffer from two major issues: 1) low awareness and 2) partisan divisions that depress the reputation of these nonprofits.” On the other hand, Giving USA 2022 found that, during 2021, contributions to environmental organizations and animal organizations (combined) rose 11% from 2020. While representing only 3% of total giving, that is the highest recorded to date for environmental and animal organizations. Environmental organizations are surely affected by broader attitudes about environmental challenges and present an interesting challenge for achieving wise and pluralistic support.



**People who are open to solicitation value information about services offered, community served, and recent accomplishments.**

People who report being open to solicitation (wanting to be approached by charities or being willing to give more if approached), tend to be younger and more ethnically diverse than the general sample - but they are no less likely to be donors. A whopping 72% say they prefer donating to a charity serving the needs of their ethnic community, implying that information about community served is highly valued by this group.<sup>9</sup>

People who report being open to solicitation are more likely to stop donating when a charity does not offer clear recent accomplishments and to care less about signals like executive compensation. For example, 12% of participants who would like charities to approach them more say high executive compensation would discourage them from donating. By comparison, among respondents who do not want to be approached by charities, 23% say the same.

People who are open to solicitation are more likely to report a high level of trust in charities overall. For example, 46% of participants who would like to be approached by charities say they highly trust charities, as compared to 11% of respondents who do not want to be approached. This suggests that it is up to charities to ignite engagement and not lose their trust.



**Financial accountability is top of mind for some potential donors - but financial accountability does not mean the same to everyone.**

In an open-ended question, participants identified what makes them trust a charity. One in five participants referred to charity finances, making this the top-of-mind reason to trust a charity. Approximately half of these responses were heavily focused on financial ratios and leadership compensation, conveying an expectation of lean operations and dislike for perceived or potential greed by charity officials. Others focused on understanding how their contributions would be spent more broadly. Outside of charity finances, top-of-mind reasons to trust a charity included reputation, honesty, research, or cause loyalty, but only a handful of participants referenced priorities like great leadership, innovation, or relevance. Similarly, when presented with scenarios that might deter participants from making a donation, most

<sup>9</sup> This is consistent with our recent findings in a special diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) donor trust report, which showed that most people would consider demographic information (such as race, age, and gender) about people served to be “very useful” (34%) or “somewhat useful” (30%) in their giving decision. Castro, E., Chng-Castor, A., Pessanha, R., Vazquez-D’Amico, E., & Weiner, B. (2022). *The Give.org Donor Trust Special Report: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion* (2022).

respondents (58%) focused on a financial concern, with 33% saying that they would be most discouraged when a high portion of every dollar is spent on fundraising and management; and 25% saying that they would be most discouraged if they are not sure what the charity will do with the money.

The distinction between the expectation for lean operations and the demand for information about how a donation will be used is important and affects how charities can effectively elicit trust and how the sector should approach public education around financial accountability.

For example, 38% of Gen Zers say they will not donate to a charity if they are not sure what the charity will do with their money, as compared to 15% of Matures. As charities strive to reach younger generations, appealing stories and passion in the appeal are effective tools; but clarity around how the charity will use their contribution is key to both gaining and keeping their trust. On the other hand, 51% of Matures (and 26% of Gen Zers) say they are discouraged from donating when a high portion of every dollar is spent on fundraising and management activities. For the health of the sector, this expectation cannot be ignored even though it must be approached in a balanced way.<sup>10</sup>

Fiscal frugality and conservative compensation are traits that some value in charities. This has been a consistent theme in 5 years of donor trust surveys (and in earlier surveys commissioned by the BBB Wise Giving Alliance).<sup>11</sup> However, when presented with an array of factors that might signal charity trustworthiness, financial ratios fall behind signals like name recognition, reputation, and third-party monitors (and not far from signals like passion and sincerity or opinions of friends and family), reflecting the public's understanding that multiple factors contribute to their trust in charities.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> BBB Standard for Charity Accountability 9 calls for charities to spend no more than 35% of related contributions on fundraising. Related contributions include donations, legacies, and other gifts received as a result of fundraising efforts.

<sup>11</sup> In 1993, 2001, and 2017.

<sup>12</sup> To determine whether a charity is accountable and trustworthy, the BBB Wise Giving Alliance (BBB WGA) uses 20 BBB Standards for Charity Accountability, based on charity governance, finances, fundraising practices, and results reporting.

In our view, the issues of executive compensation, administrative expenses, and fundraising expenses are complex and can objectively be decoupled. Moreover, excessive focus on low overhead spending can be misguided and arguably harmful to a charity's capacity for service and impact. Taking the issue too far may lead to unrealistic expectations.<sup>13</sup> In fact, we warn donors to be wary of appeals that claim that 100% of donations go to the cause, not only because the claim undermines the need for reasonable operating expenses, but also because the claim may be inaccurate or misleading.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Taylor, A., Harold, J., and Berger, K., "Overhead Myth Letter to the Nonprofits of America." *The Overhead Myth: Moving Toward an Overhead Solution*, 2014. Available at: [https://give.org/sf-images/default-source/default-album/overhead-myth-letter-one-page.jpg?sfvrsn=e19cb951\\_0](https://give.org/sf-images/default-source/default-album/overhead-myth-letter-one-page.jpg?sfvrsn=e19cb951_0)

<sup>14</sup> BBB Standard for Charity Accountability 15 calls for solicitations and informational materials, distributed by any means, to be accurate, truthful, and not misleading, both in whole and in part. If BBB WGA sees a claim suggesting that 100% of donations go toward program spending, the charity will only meet the standard if it includes a prominent and reasonable explanation about how its overhead expenses are covered.



# METHODOLOGY

**In this report, we reference data gathered through the December 2021, 2020, 2019, 2018, and 2017 Donor Trust Surveys, each with more than 2,100 adult respondents in the United States. Results from the survey conducted in December 2021 are first released in this report. Results from the December 2020, 2019, 2018, and 2017 surveys may have also been published in former Give.org Donor Trust Reports.**

**We commissioned an electronic survey of more than 2,100 adults across the United States and more than 1,000 adults across Canada during December 2020 (see Tables 1 and 2). The margin of error for the December 2020 survey in the United States is 2% (with 95% confidence level), and the margin of error for the December 2020 Canadian survey is 3% (with 95% confidence level).**



TABLE 1.  
PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

By Age	18-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	>65		
	31.37%	12.85%	12.44%	8.94%	34.41%		
By Gender	Female	Male	Non-binary	Transgender	Prefer not to answer	Other	
	51.63%	46.89%	0.51%	0.55%	0.23%	0.09%	
By Annual Household Income (in thousands)	<30	30-59	60-89	90-119	120-149	150 and more	Prefer not to answer
	20.22%	28.79%	17.92%	12.30%	5.48%	10.73%	4.56%
By Education	Graduate	Bachelor's	Associate's	High School	Prefer not to answer		
	18.06%	18.16%	21.76%	39.52%	2.50%		
By Ethnicity	African American	Asian	Hispanic /Latino	Native American/ Alaska Native	Other	Pacific Islander	White
	14.42%	4.47%	11.70%	0.64%	0.92%	0.14%	67.71%
By Religion Attendance	Never	Rarely	Frequently	Occasionally	Don't know	Prefer not to answer	
	26.44%	22.20%	27.96%	20.45%	1.29%	1.66%	
By Region	Northeast	Southeast	Southwest	Midwest	West		
	20.87%	24.37%	11.88%	24.27%	18.61%		



**TABLE 2.**  
**PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS IN CANADA**

By Age	18-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	>65		
	19.48%	14.89%	17.25%	21.51%	26.89%		
By Gender	Female	Male	Non-binary	Transgender	Prefer not to answer	Other	
	49.57%	49.97%	0.13%	0.07%	0.13%	0.13%	
By Annual Household Income (in thousands)	<30	30-59	60-89	90-119	120-149	150 and more	Prefer not to answer
	10.69%	28.66%	20.92%	15.67%	7.67%	9.97%	6.49%
By Education	Graduate	Bachelor's	Associate's	High School	Prefer not to answer		
	18.92%	10.87%	27.40%	38.96%	3.85%		
By Ethnicity	African American	Asian	Hispanic /Latino	Other	White		
	3.41%	16.39%	2.23%	7.67%	70.30%		
By Religion Attendance	Never	Rarely	Frequently	Occasionally	Don't know	Prefer not to answer	
	40.13%	24.13%	14.95%	18.03%	1.25%	1.51%	
By Region	British Columbia	Alberta	Saskatchewan & Manitoba	Ontario	Quebec		
	14.41%	11.16%	7.01%	36.02%	22.71%		
	Atlantic Canada	Northern Canada					
	7.27%	1.43%					

Through our survey, we seek to measure donor beliefs, feelings, and behavioral intentions toward charity trust and giving. Our report identifies some aggregate findings and explores the heterogeneity of donor perceptions. For instance, in this report we reference results based on age, race, and contribution level to illustrate differences in donor attitudes and gain understanding of the diversity of attitudes toward the sector.<sup>15</sup> We use the self-reported information as provided by survey takers.

While there is no single consistent date range for generational divides, the generational ranges used in this report mirror those used by the Pew Research Center and are shown in Table 3.



**TABLE 3.  
GENERATIONAL RANGES**

Generation	Generation Z (18 and older)	Millennial Generation	Generation X	Baby Boomers	Matures
Year Born	1998 to 2004	1981 to 1997	1965 to 1980	1946 to 1964	1928 to 1945
Age (in 2021)	18 to 23	24 to 39	40 to 55	56 to 74	75 to 92

Survey participants are asked to self-identify the race or ethnicity that best describes them, with options including African American, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Native American or Alaska Native, Pacific Islander, white, and other. The sample size for African American, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, and white allow us to report attitudes expressed by each of these categories. The sample size for Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, and others is not large enough to report with confidence. While census recommendations call for Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Native American/Inuit/Aleut to combine into one category (making up approximately 6% of the sample), these racial categories have not been combined to better reflect attitudes among Asian American survey participants.

In this report, we use the term “people of color” when a statement applies to the African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Asian American samples. We recognize there are other ethnic and racial minorities (such as Native American and Pacific Islanders) that should be included under the umbrella of “people of color,” but our sample size does not allow for proper analysis of these categories. We also recognize significant limitations with the term. For example,

<sup>15</sup> Our report joins other studies that have recognized untapped opportunities by the philanthropic community in engaging racial minorities and younger generations. For instance, the Giving USA Foundation and the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy at Indiana University highlight that younger generations differ from older people in the way they prefer electronic communication, express different values, and value experiences and voicing their opinions.



the Hispanic/Latino sample may include participants who might not be considered people of color, and that each group (and people within each group) has their own experience, attitudes, and norms when it comes to identification.

While the term Latinx can be used as a gender-neutral and pan-ethnic way to describe the Hispanic population in the United States (tracing their roots to Latin America and Spain), our report uses the term Hispanic/Latino for self-identification. This is in recognition that, according to a recent survey by the Pew Research Center, the majority (76%) of Hispanic/Latinos in the United States are not aware of the term and only 3% report using the term themselves.<sup>16</sup>

We recognize there are differences among people of the same race and generation. By identifying differences in donor preferences and attitudes across these categories, we aim to find untapped opportunities to support the sector's efforts to be in tune with the America of the present and future, strengthening the bond between donors and charities.

We know that survey responses reflect donor perceptions and are not an objective measure of the charitable sector's efforts. Still, understanding donor attitudes toward charities and giving can help identify areas of misinformation and ways to better serve donors, furthering trust in the sector and encouraging increased generosity.

To determine whether a charity is accountable and trustworthy, the BBB Wise Giving Alliance (BBB WGA) uses 20 BBB Standards for Charity Accountability, based on charity governance, finances, fundraising practices, and results reporting. BBB WGA produces reports on charities based on these standards, and the reports are available free of charge to the donating public on Give.org. This report aims, in part, to understand disconnects between self-reported triggers and concerted trust criteria. In addition, we hope to identify opportunities that can help the sector build collective trust and succeed in the future.

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*Diversity in Giving: The Changing Landscape of American Philanthropy* (a 2015 report by Blackbaud) found that white donors are overrepresented, and that donor values and habits differ by ethnic or racial groups. A study by The Chronicle of Philanthropy found that giving patterns vary by location and income level, with red states more generous than blue states and the middle class giving a larger portion of their income than the rich.

<sup>16</sup>Noe-Bustamante, L., Mora, L., and Hugo Lopez, M. (2020). "About One-in-Four U.S. Hispanics Have Heard of Latinx, but Just 3% Use It." Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2020/08/11/about-one-in-four-u-s-hispanics-have-heard-of-latinx-but-just-3-use-it/>.

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## ABOUT BBB WISE GIVING ALLIANCE

BBB Wise Giving Alliance (BBB's Give.org) is a standards-based charity evaluator that seeks to verify the trustworthiness of nationally soliciting charities by completing rigorous evaluations based on 20 holistic standards that address charity governance, results reporting, finances, fundraising, appeal accuracy, and other issues. National charity reports are produced by BBB's Give.org and local charity reports are produced by local Better Business Bureaus – all reports are available at Give.org.

