
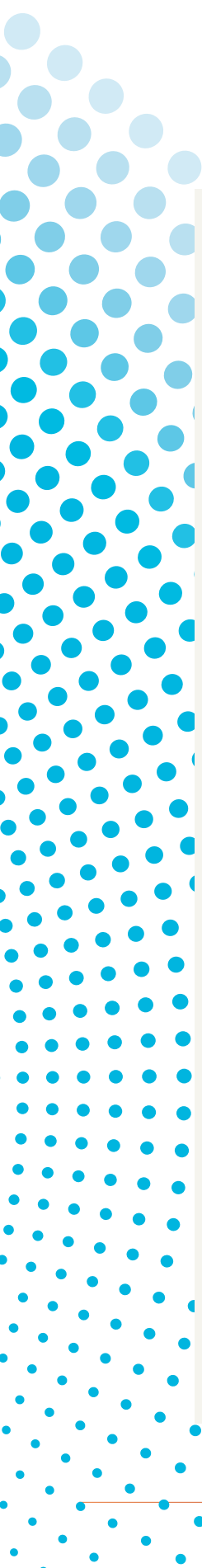




Give.org **2026** Donor Trust Report

Trends in Donor Trust and Perspectives

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Trends in Donor Trust and Perspectives

Our 2026 Donor Trust Report provides a nine-year view of public trust in charities and includes generational perspectives related to the giving decision. The report is based on an electronic survey commissioned by BBB®'s Give.org (also known as BBB Wise Giving Alliance or BBB WGA) in December 2025, drawing responses from more than 1,500 adults across the United States, as well as comparable surveys conducted annually since 2017. By tracking consistent questions across time, our Donor Trust Report aims to identify both short-term fluctuations and longer-term patterns in trust, giving preferences, and engagement.

When it comes to charity trust, we explore whether people see trust as a prerequisite for giving, examine levels of trust across 13 different charity categories, and compare trust in charities with trust in business, media, and government. The findings show that trust remains a fundamental condition for charitable giving. However, a substantial gap persists between the importance donors place on trust and the level of trust they report. This “charity trust gap” highlights an ongoing opportunity for organizations to strengthen donor confidence.

Responses also show that trust varies across generations. Older participants are more likely to view trust as a prerequisite for donating, while younger generations tend to report higher levels of trust across charity categories. These differences suggest that both expectations and perceptions of trust are shaped by age and experience.



Findings At-A-Glance

Trust remains a fundamental condition for charitable giving.

- A substantial gap persists between the importance donors place on trust and the level of trust they report
- Trust varies across generations
- Donors continue to prioritize tangible ways to make a difference



Beyond trust, the survey examines the signals and behaviors that shape giving decisions. It tracks how openness to charitable solicitation has changed over the past nine years, explores perceptions of the most effective ways to make a difference, identifies preferred donation channels, and explores the types of information donors find most influential when deciding whether to give.

Overall, donors continue to prioritize tangible ways to make a difference, such as donating items, time, and money, while increasingly relying on digital channels and online research to inform their decisions. Together, these findings point to a charitable sector grounded in traditional forms of giving but operating within a shifting landscape. As that landscape evolves, the need to build and sustain trust remains constant.

Key Results

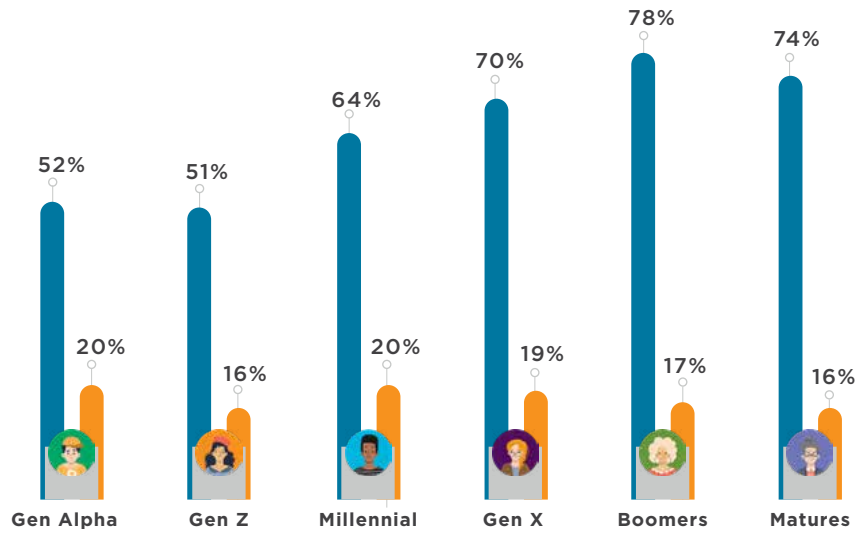
Charity Trust Gap

There is significant opportunity to build trust in charities.

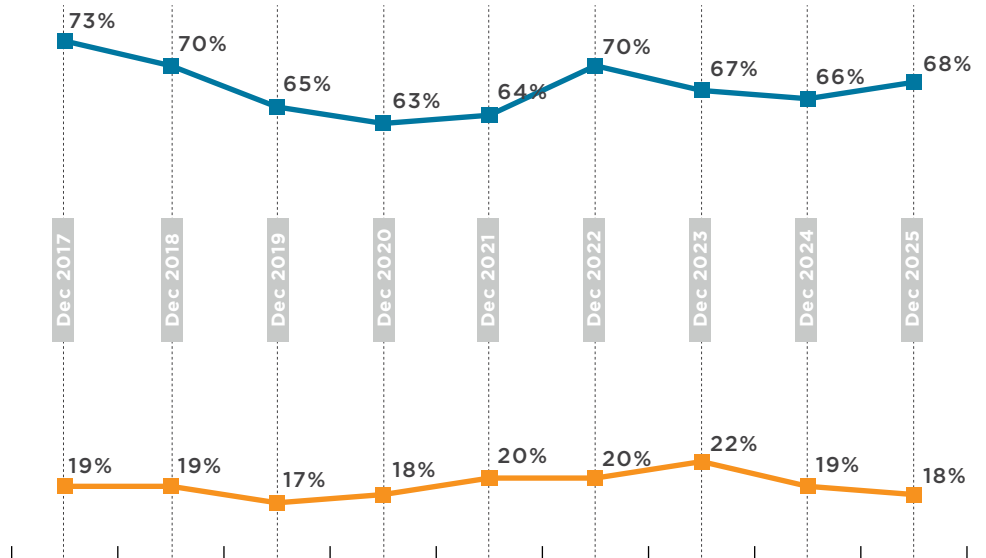
While 67.7% of survey participants say it is essential (9 or 10 out of 10) to trust a charity before donating, only 18.3% report having high trust in charities.



Notably, older participants place greater importance on trusting a charity before donating.



At the same time, overall high trust levels have remained relatively stable between December 2017 and December 2025, with a modest increase between 2021 and 2023.

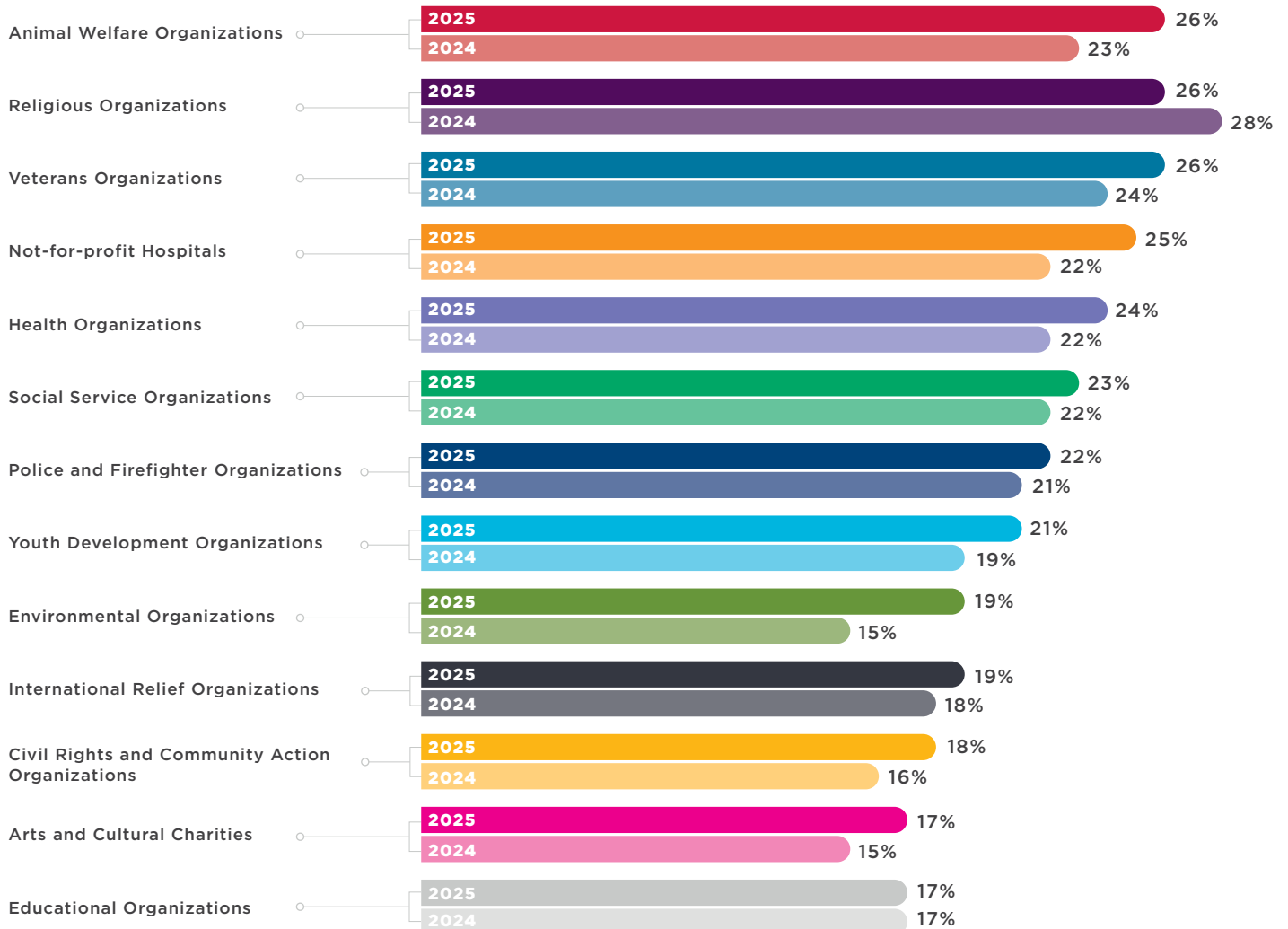


Key Results

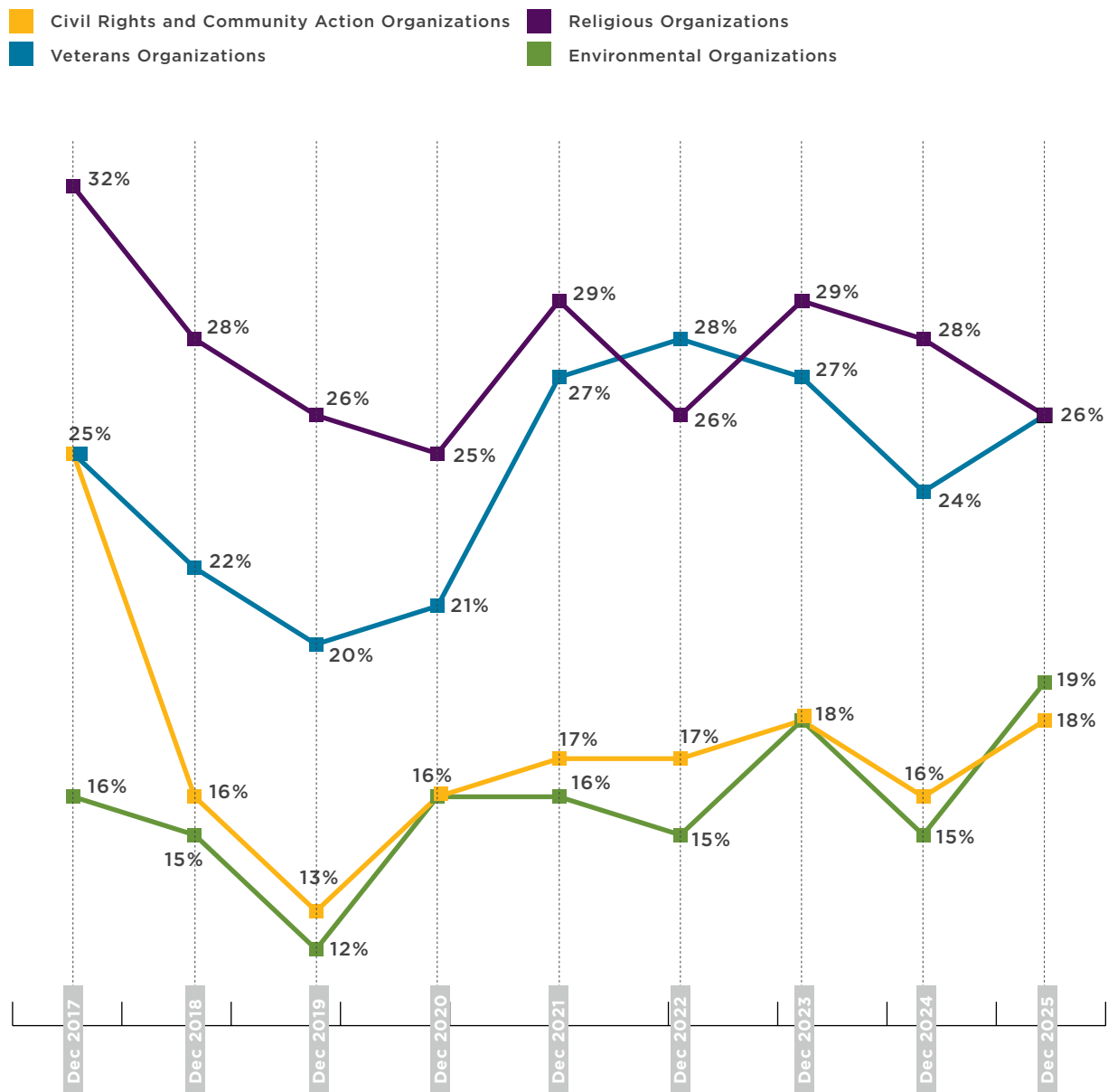
Trust Across 13 Charity Categories

Respondents evaluated their level of trust across 13 charity categories.

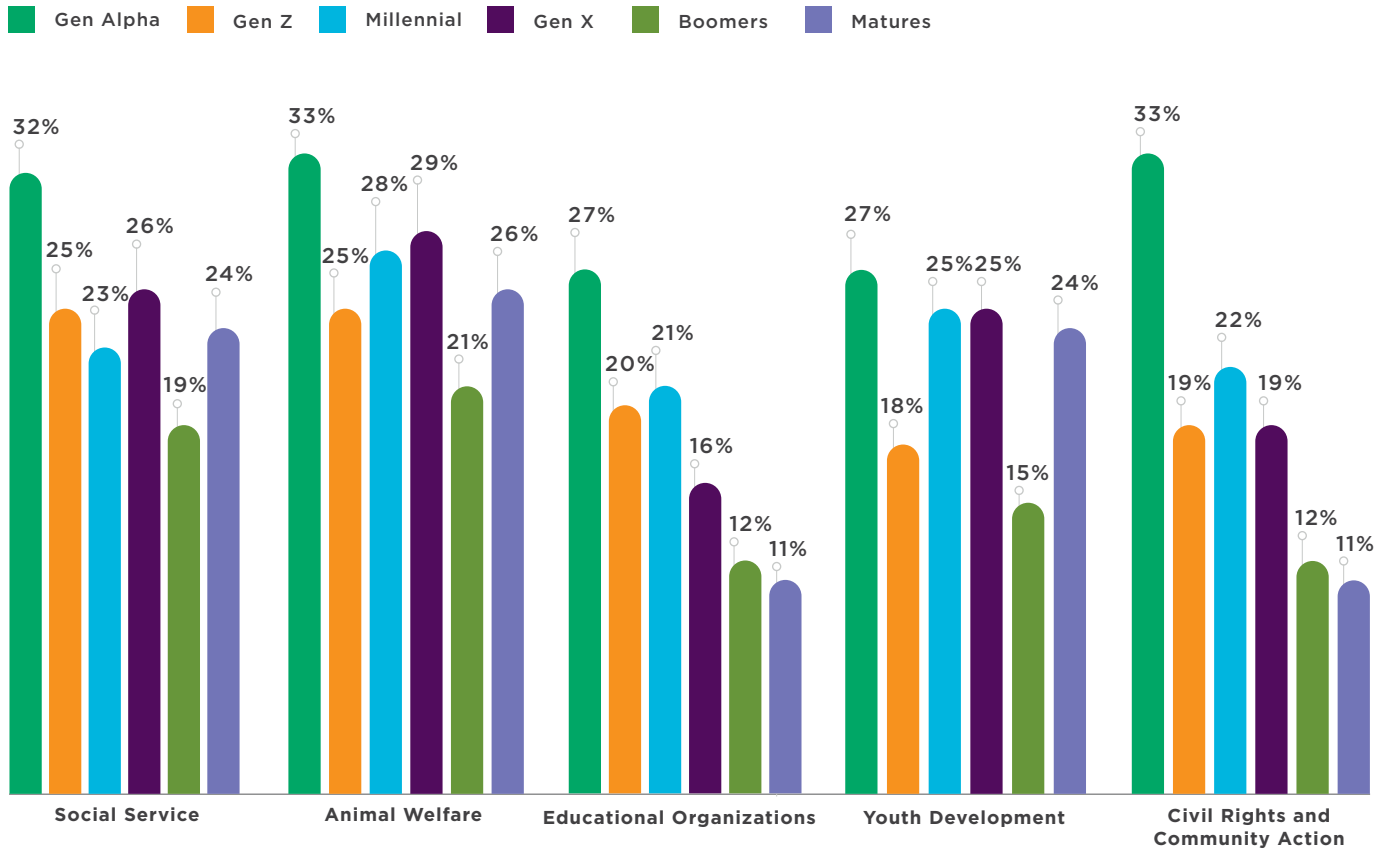
The share reporting “high trust” increased in 12 of the 13 categories between December 2024 and December 2025, with the largest gains among environmental and animal welfare organizations.



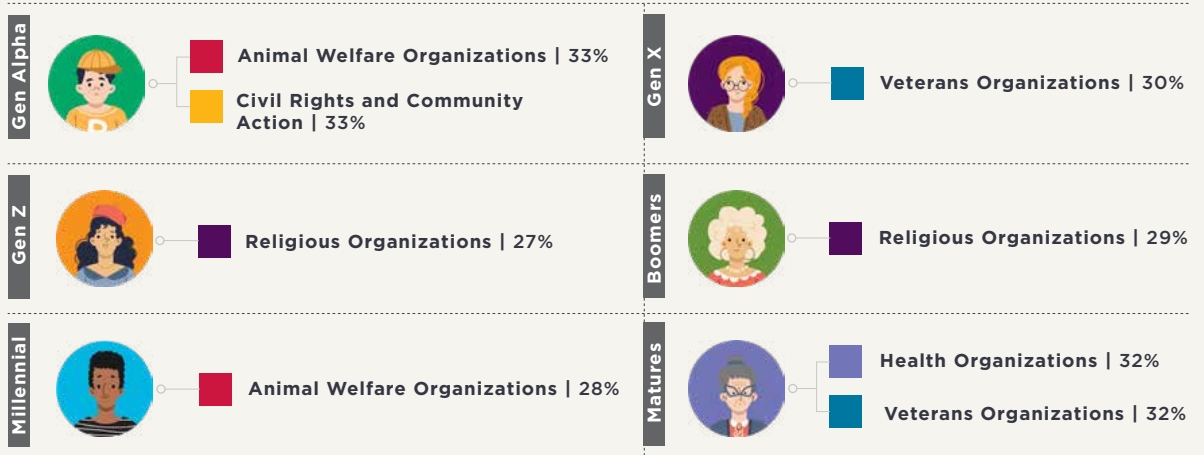
While recent changes were broadly positive, longer-term trends reveal greater variation. Between December 2017 and December 2025, four categories experienced fluctuations of at least seven percentage points: civil rights and community action, veterans, religious, and environmental organizations.



High-trust levels vary by generation, with younger cohorts generally reporting higher trust overall but favoring different types of organizations than older generations. The widest generational gaps appear in:



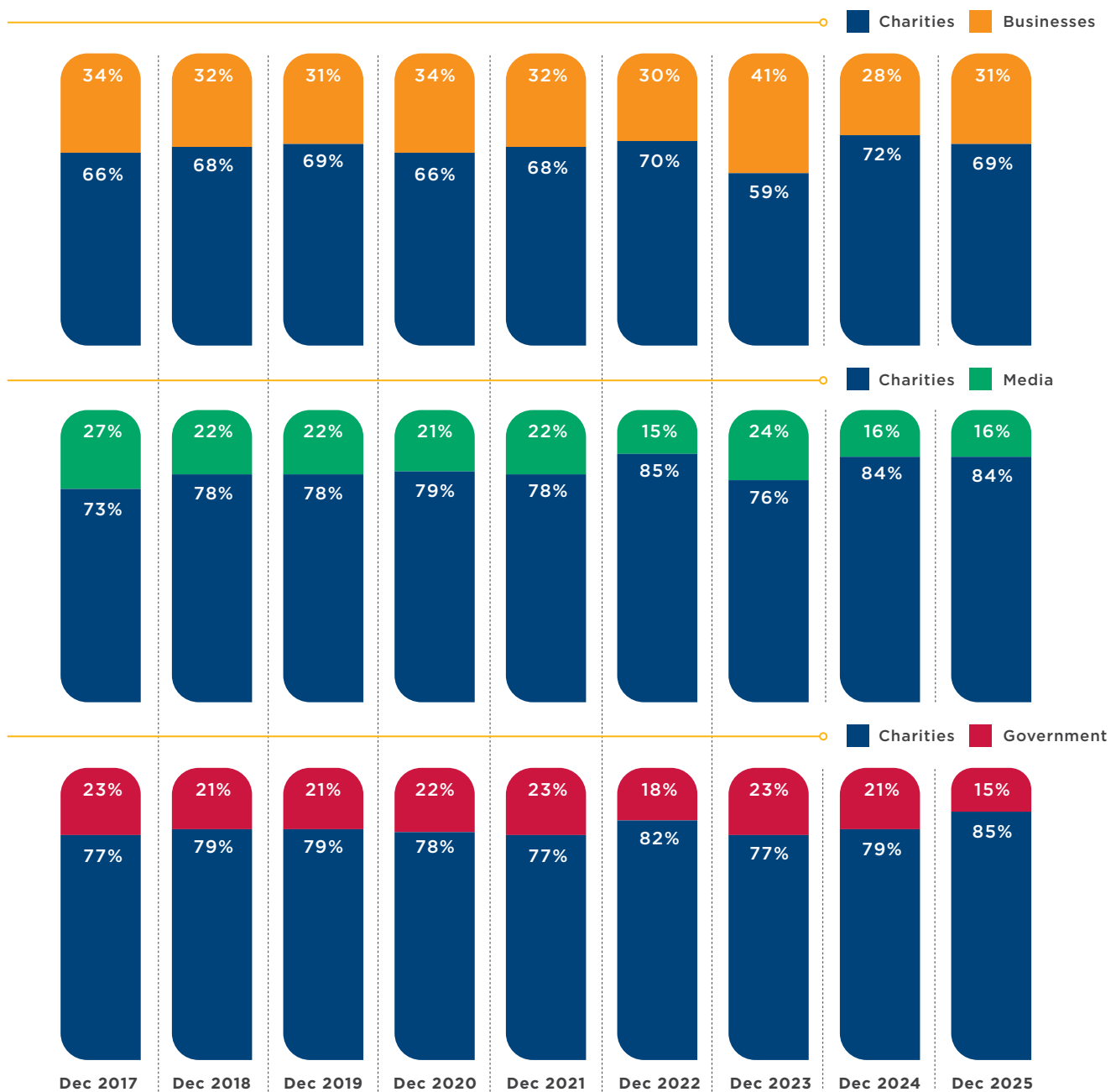
Most trusted charity category for each generation



Key Results

Trust for Charity as Compared to Business, Media, and Government

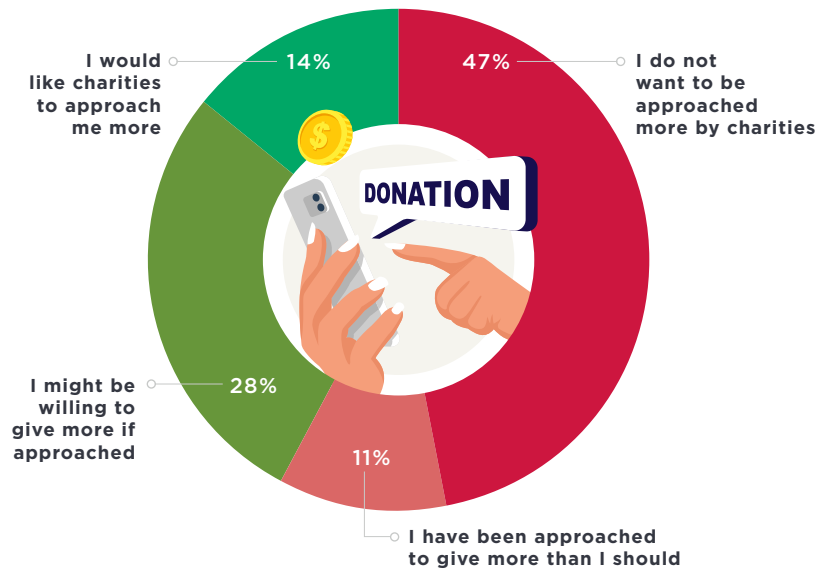
When asked to assess trust for charities as compared to business, media, and government, charities are consistently chosen as more trustworthy.



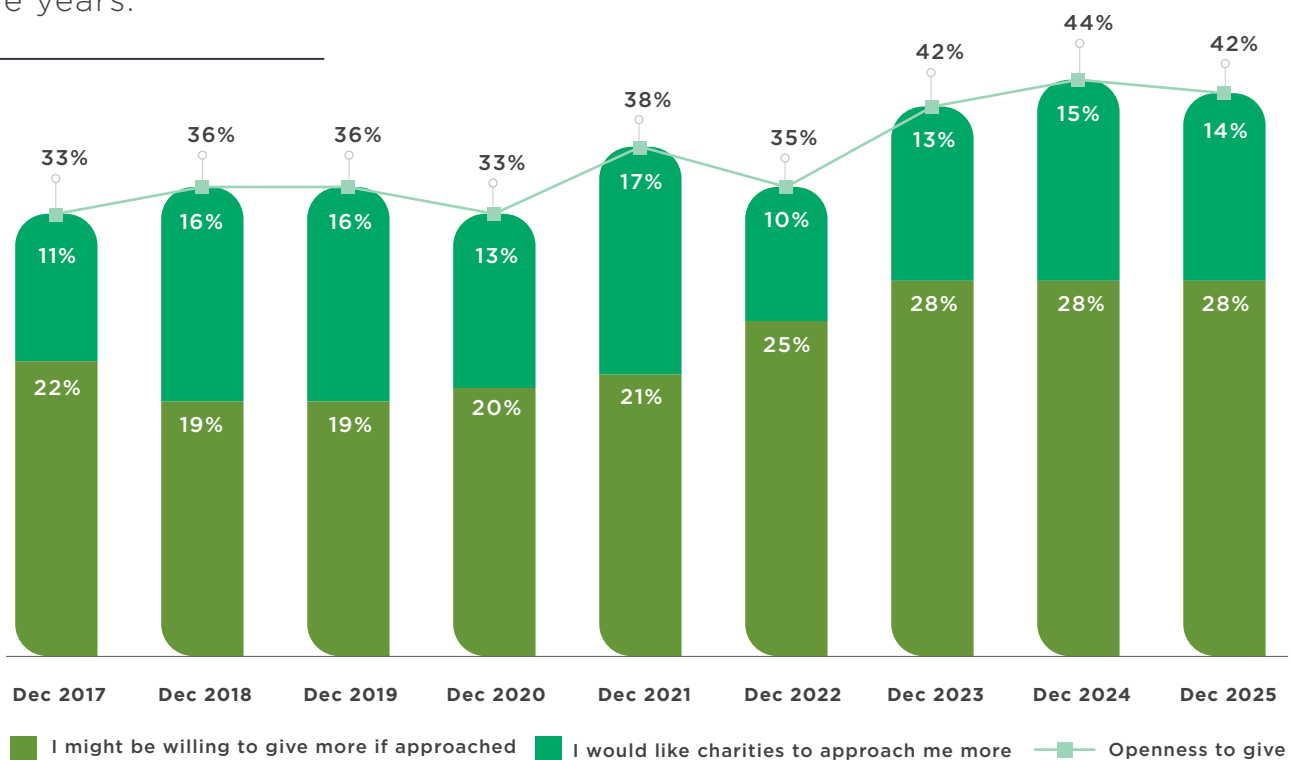
Key Results

Openness to Solicitation

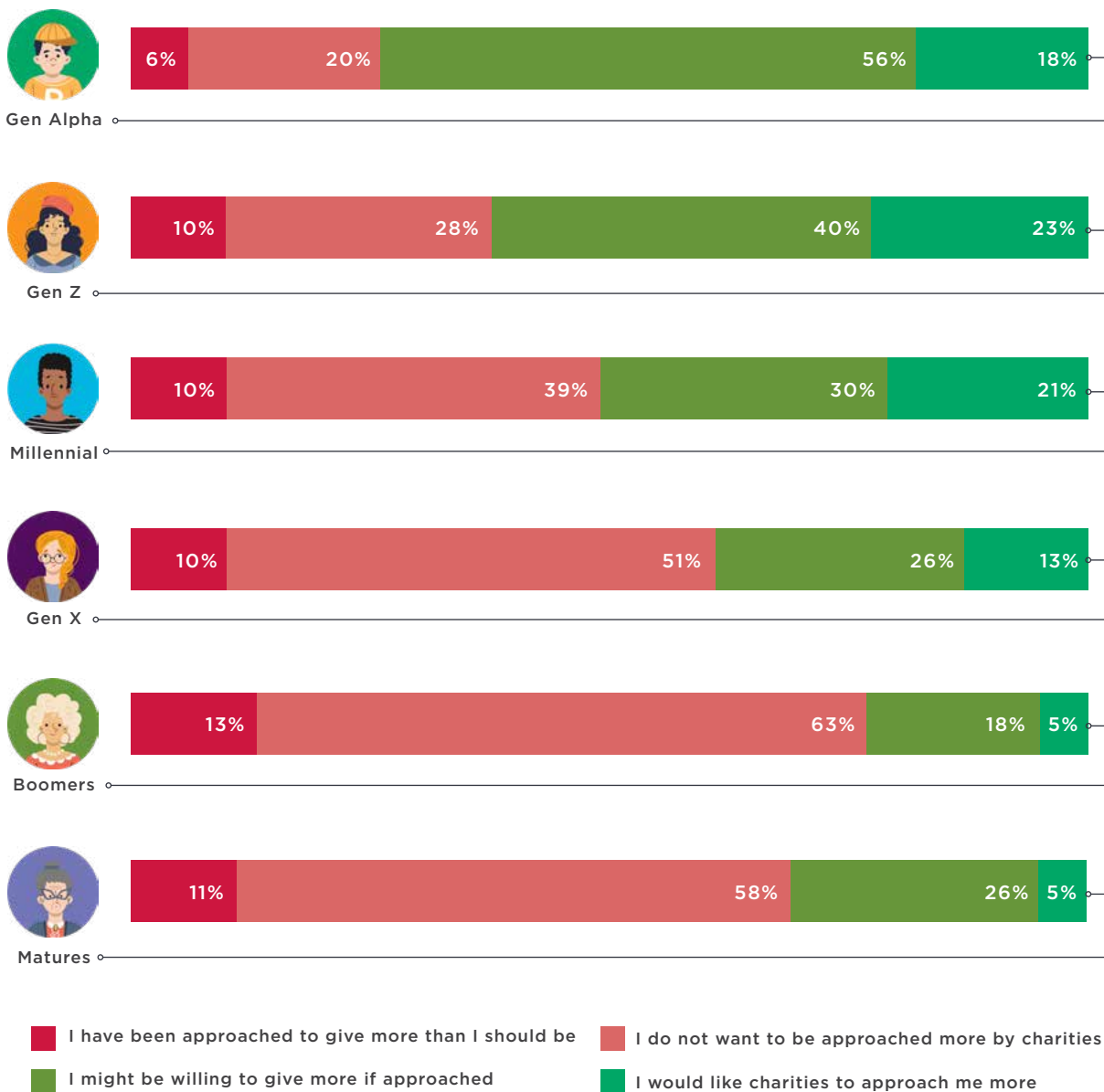
In December 2025, 42.1% of respondents expressed openness to being approached by charities. This includes 27.9% who say they might be willing to give more if approached and 14.1% who would like charities to approach them more.



Openness to solicitation remains relatively high, ranking second only to December 2024 over the past nine years.



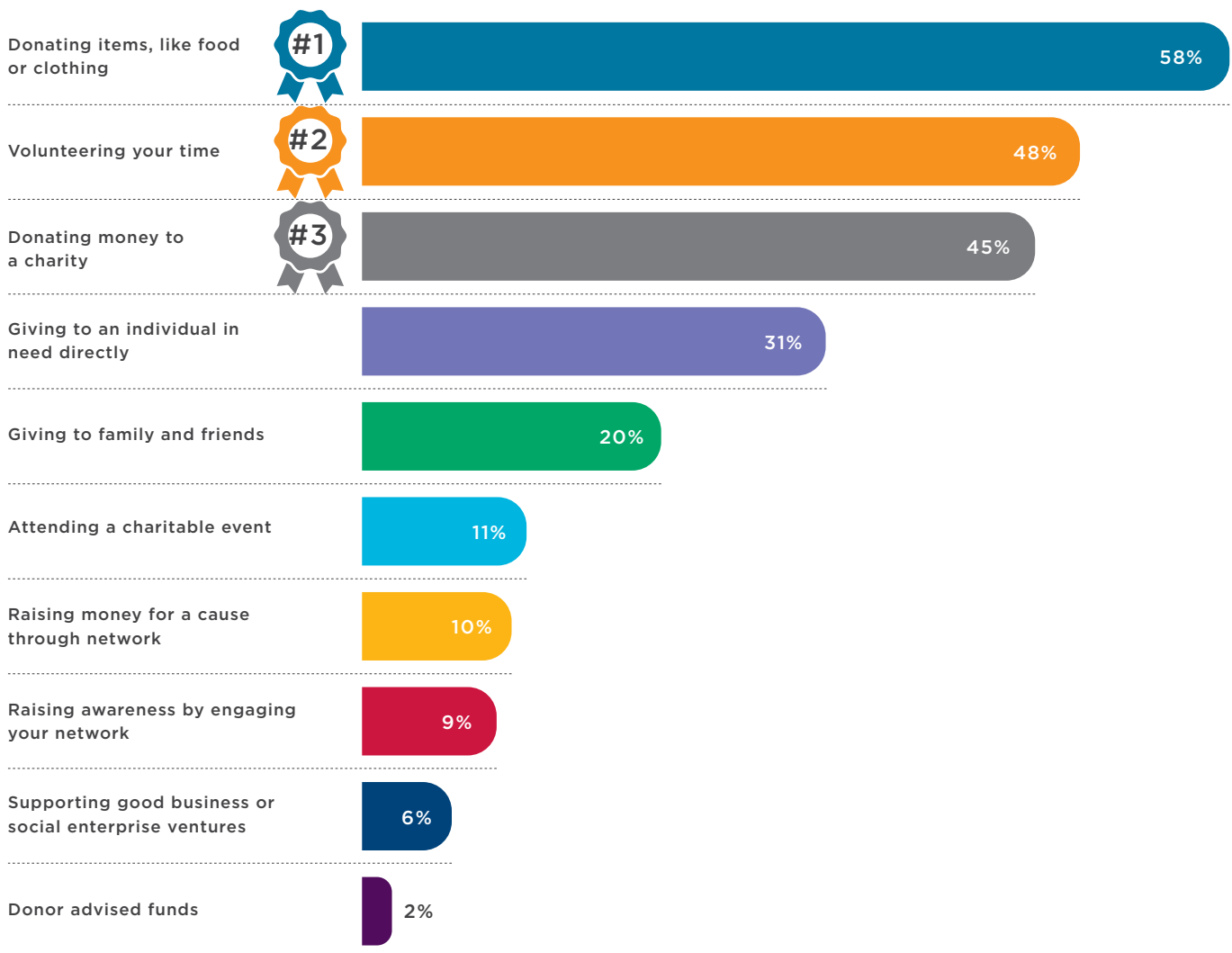
Younger generations say they are substantially more open to being approached, while older participants are more likely to say they are approached to give more than they should be.



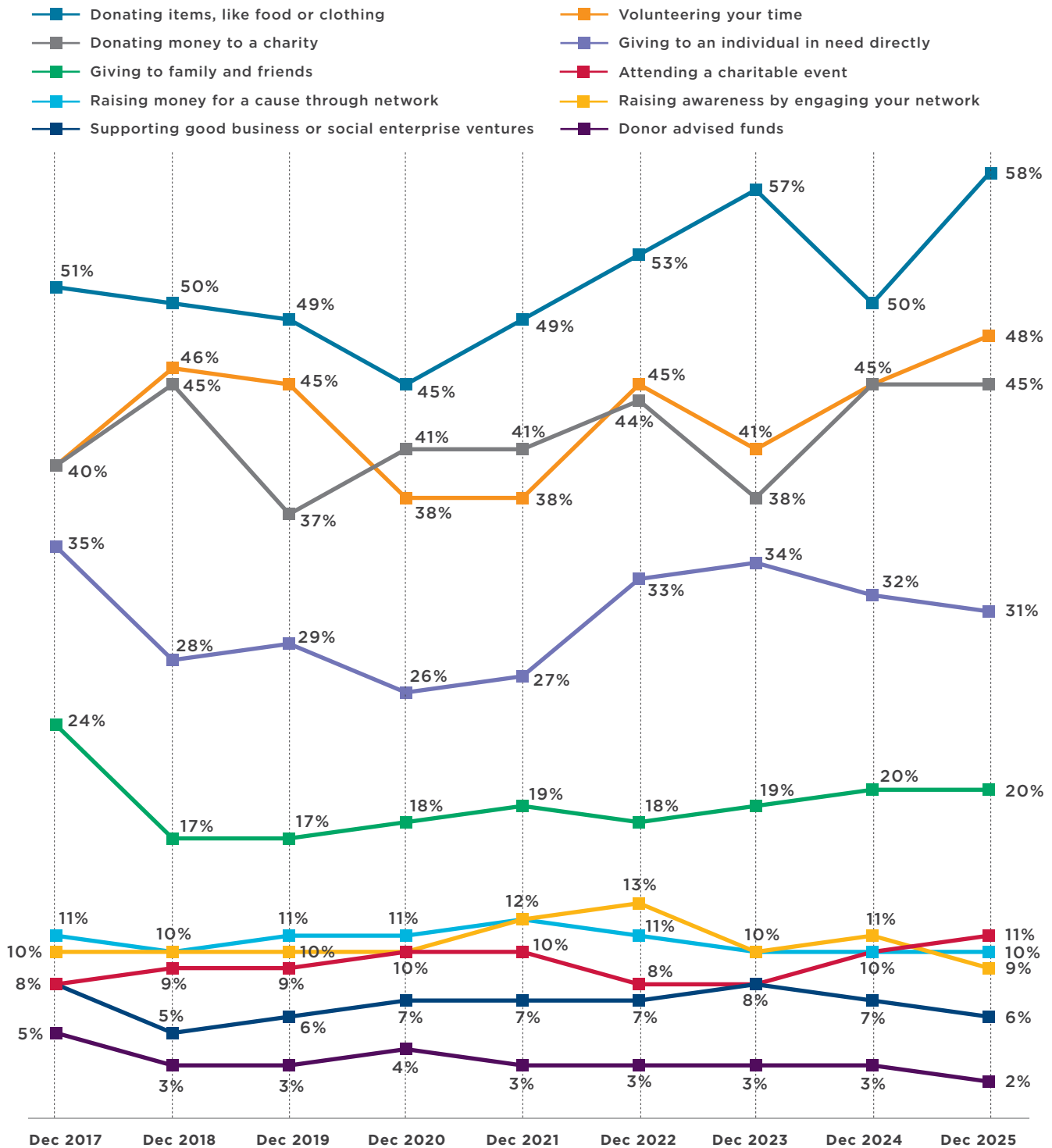
Key Results

Perceived Impact of Different Ways to Making a Difference

Respondents were asked to identify the top three most impactful ways to make a difference. Donations of items, time, and money are the top-three selections.



Perceptions of the most impactful ways to make a difference have remained relatively stable over the past nine years, with donating items, volunteering time, and giving money consistently ranking at the top. At the same time, actions such as raising money through one’s network, raising awareness, or supporting social enterprises are consistently viewed as less impactful.



Perceptions of the most impactful ways to make a difference vary by generation. Younger participants are relatively more likely to point to donating items or raising awareness, while older generations (particularly Matures) place greater emphasis on donating money to charity.



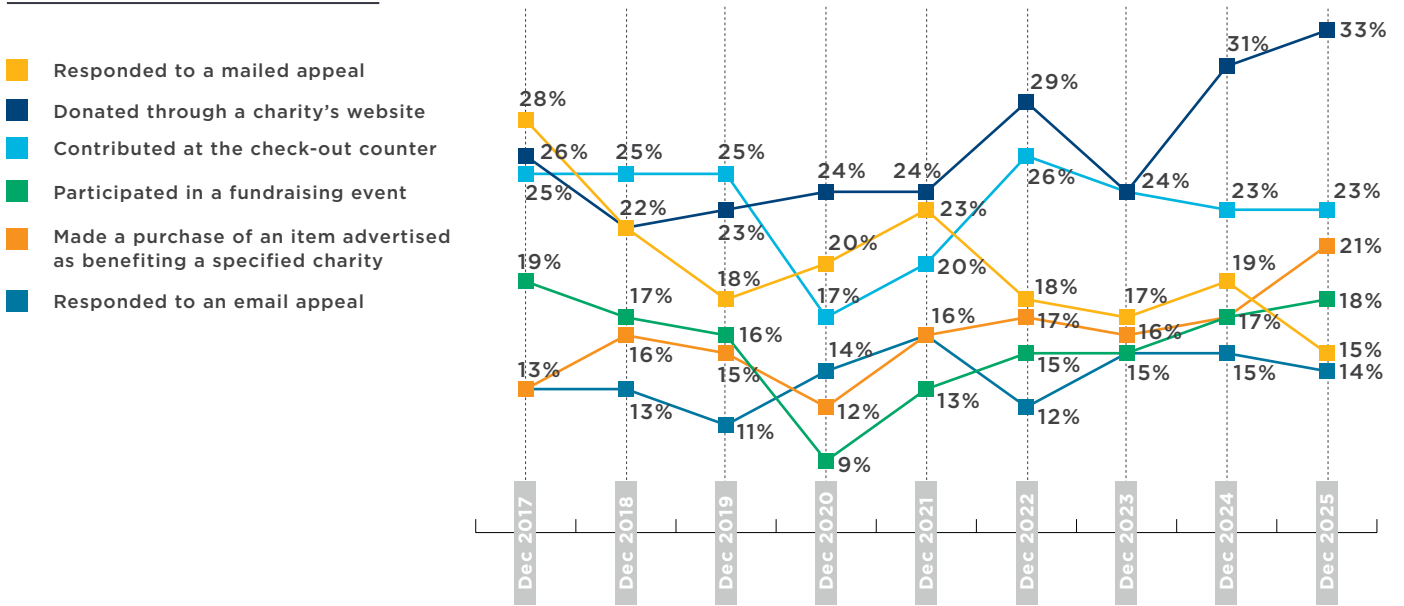
Key Results

Self-Reported Donation Channels

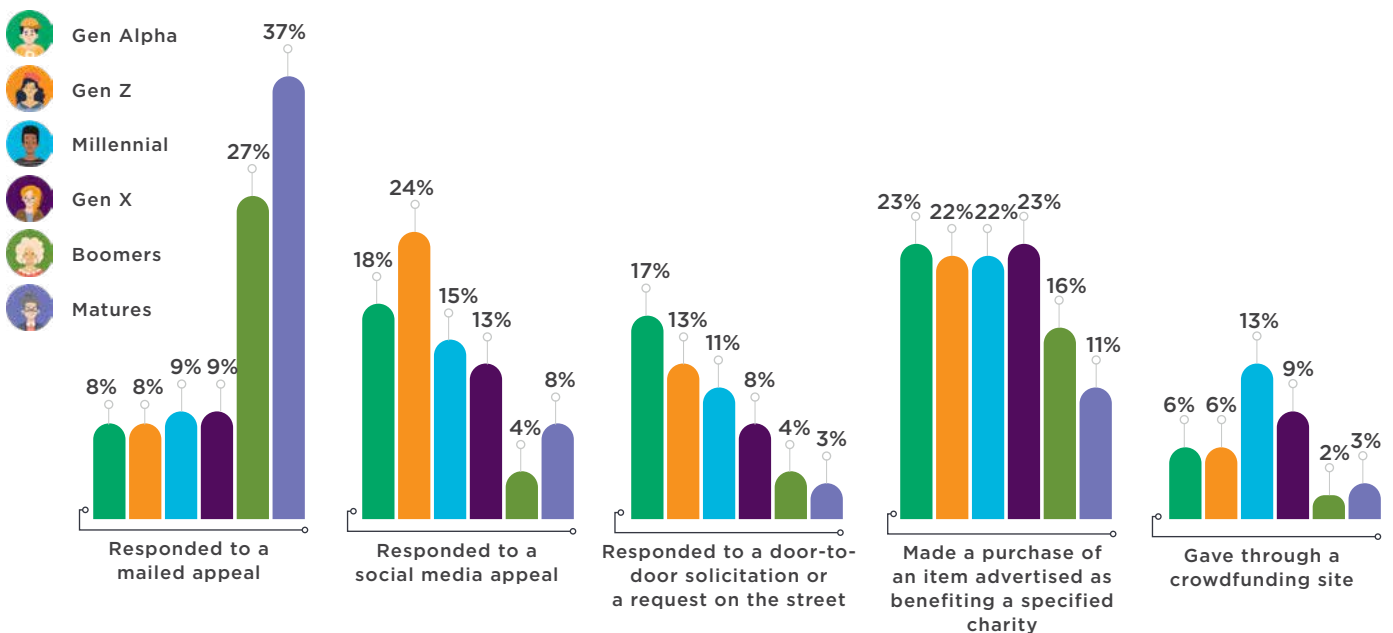
When considering alternative donation channels used in 2025, participants report giving through the following:



Over the past nine years, the share of participants reporting that they responded to a mailed appeal has declined, while donations made through a charity’s website and cause-related purchases have increased. Participation in fundraising events has also rebounded since the pandemic. The chart below highlights the channels with the most changes.



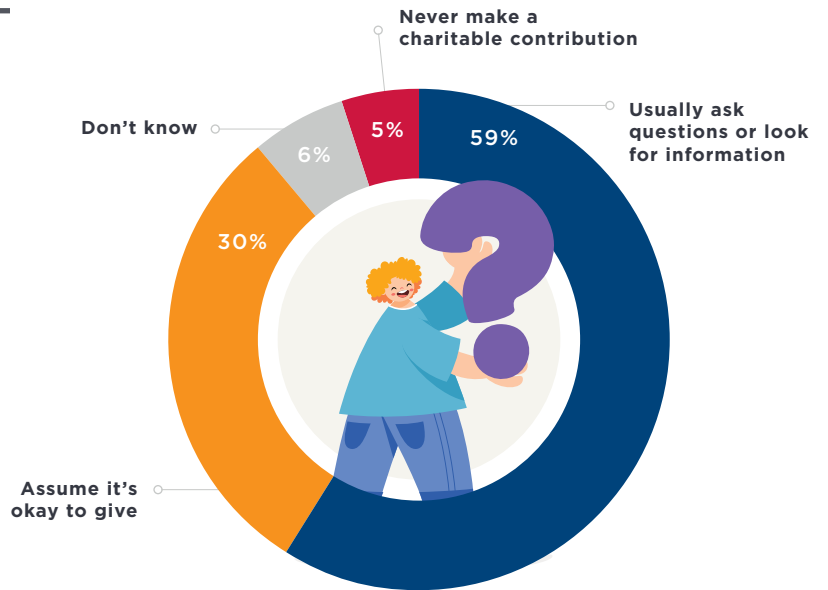
Donation channel preferences vary substantially by generation, with the widest gaps appearing in response to mailed appeals, social media appeals, and crowdfunding. Below are the donation channels with the widest generational differences in self-reported use:



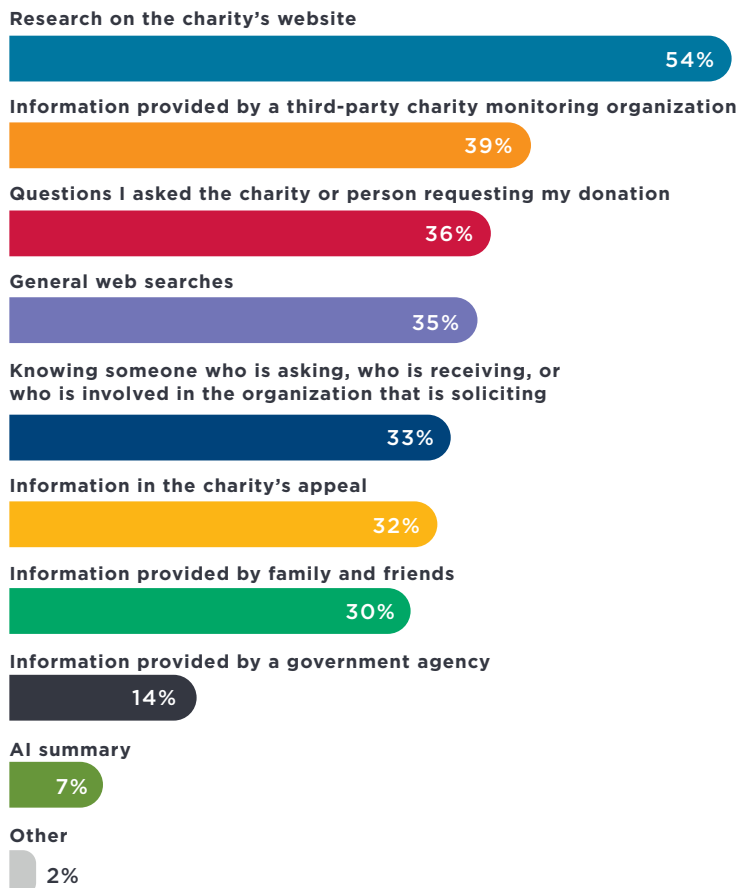
Key Results

Sources That Influence Giving Decisions







When thinking about giving to a charity, most participants (59%) say they usually ask questions or look for information before making a contribution. More than half (52%–63%) of each generation reports that they usually ask questions or look for information before giving.

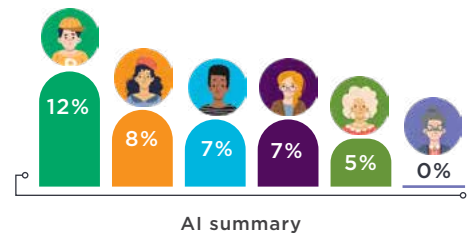
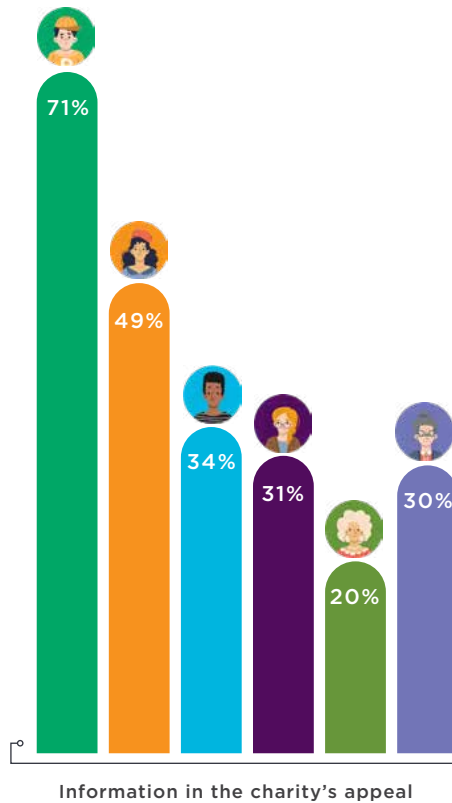
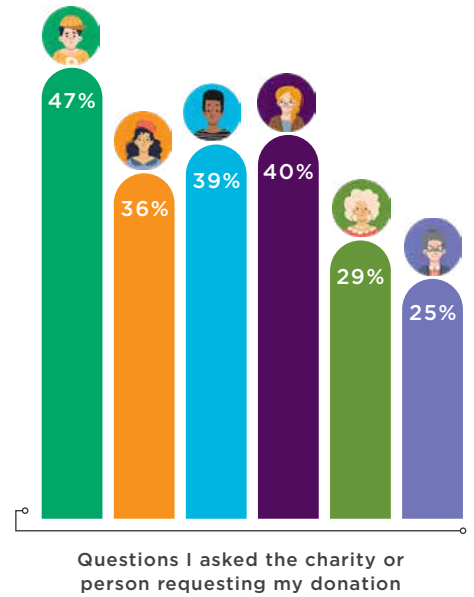
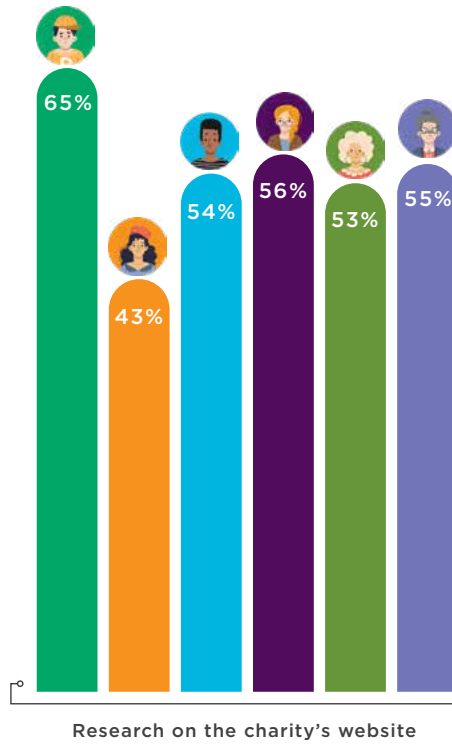


Among those who say they seek information before giving, participants report being most influenced by charities' websites and third-party evaluators, with personal outreach and general web searches also playing a meaningful role. As of the end of 2025, AI summaries were considered less influential during the giving process.



Younger generations tend to report greater influence from most information sources. The categories below show some of the most significant differences.

-  Gen Alpha
-  Gen Z
-  Millennial
-  Gen X
-  Boomers
-  Matures



Conclusion

BBB's Give.org celebrates the vital role charities play in society. Our 2026 Donor Trust Survey captures shifting preferences in the charitable landscape alongside an enduring need to build and sustain public trust.

Takeaways include

Trust remains steady overall, but varies by cause area.

Aggregate trust levels have not changed dramatically over the past nine years; however, differences by charity category are notable. Civil rights and community action, veterans, religious, and environmental organizations have each experienced fluctuations of at least seven points in "high trust," suggesting that broader public discourse and current events can influence perceptions of specific cause areas.



Generational differences signal opportunity.

Older donors tend to emphasize traditional trust signals and monetary giving, while younger donors show greater openness to solicitation, interest in both established and emerging ways to make a difference, and influence from multiple information sources. Survey participants report that responses to mailed appeals continue to decline, while online giving through charity websites has grown.¹ While online giving still accounts for only about 12% of overall contributions², these findings reflect a broader shift toward digital engagement and new pathways for donor connection. This trend presents a challenge for the sector, as online giving channels remain fragmented, but it is encouraging that donor interest and openness are increasing.

Trust signals are in demand.

A majority of donors report seeking information before giving, most often via charity websites and third-party evaluators. While not all donors may follow through on these intentions, the expressed desire to research demonstrates clear expectations for transparency and accountability. Notably, 2025 marks the first year AI summaries were included as a research option. According to survey participants, AI has so far been a relatively minor influence in the giving process.



The findings provide reason for optimism, as younger generations express trust in charities and a strong motivation to make a difference. Although overall participation rates among younger donors remain lower (and have declined compared to older generations at the same age)³, their openness and broader engagement preferences point to meaningful potential. Encouragingly, these findings suggest real opportunities for charities to strengthen relationships, deepen engagement, and build lasting trust with future donors.

¹ The survey is conducted online and may underrepresent donors who prefer physical solicitations. Because survey collection has been online since December 2017, the trend remains meaningful.

² Blackbaud Institute Shares Spotlight on 2023 Trends in Giving. Available at: <https://www.blackbaud.com/newsroom/article/blackbaud-institute-shares-spotlight-on-2023-trends-in-giving?>

³ IU Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, The Next Generation of Philanthropy. Available at: https://philanthropy.indianapolis.iu.edu/news-events/news/_news/2025/next-generation-donors-charitable-giving-interests-approaches.html

Methodology

We commissioned an electronic survey of more than 1,500 adults across the United States (see Table 1). The margin of error for the December 2025 survey of U.S. adults is ± 2.5 percentage points (at the 95% confidence level).

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 to illustrate differences in donor attitudes and gain understanding of the diversity of attitudes toward the sector. We use self-reported information as provided by survey takers.



**Table 1 —
Profile of Respondents in the United States**

By Age		By Gender	
18–34	29.2%	Female	51.0%
35–44	16.7%	Male	48.3%
45–54	15.9%	Nonbinary, Prefer not to answer, Other, and Transgender	0.7%
55–64	16.4%		
> 65	23.7%		
By Annual Household Income (in thousands)			
< 30			14.3%
30–59			28.3%
60–89			22.1%
90–119			14.4%
120–149			6.9%
150 and more			11.7%
Prefer not to answer			2.3%
By Region		By Ethnicity	
Northeast	17.1%	African American	15.3%
Midwest	20.4%	Asian	6.0%
South	38.7%	Hispanic/Latino	19.0%
West	23.6%	Native American or Alaska Native	0.7%
		Other	1.3%
		Pacific Islander	0.3%
		White	57.47%

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 2.



**Table 2 —
Generational ranges**

Generation	Year Born	Age (in 2024)
Generation Alpha (18 and older)	2005 to 2013	18 to 20
Generation Z	1998 to 2004	21 to 27
Millennial Generation	1981 to 1997	28 to 44
Generation X	1965 to 1980	45 to 60
Baby Boomers	1946 to 1964	61 to 79
Matures	1928 to 1945	80 and above

We recognize there are differences among people within each demographic category. By identifying differences in donor preferences and attitudes across these categories, we aim to find untapped opportunities that 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, 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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About BBB Wise Giving Alliance

BBB Wise Giving Alliance (BBB WGA, 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.