BLACKBAUD INSTITUTE

# Charitable Support Across Generations in the UK and Ireland

SUPPORTING HABITS AND PREFERENCES OF GEN Z, MILLENNIALS, GEN X, AND BOOMERS

# Contents

## Introduction

Supporters are the backbone of nonprofit organisations, charities, and causes—whether they are passionate advocates, dedicated volunteers, or the generous donors who sustain fundraising efforts. Understanding what drives these individuals to support causes is essential, especially in today's environment.

The ongoing cost of living crisis; the recent surges in racial and social justice movements; rising climate concerns; and increasing threats to wellbeing—such as escalating political instability, armed conflicts, and global health crises—have transformed the nonprofit landscape. These challenges have also reshaped how supporters engage with causes, their motivations, and their expectations.

In these tumultuous times, it is crucial to connect with supporters on a deeper level. Nonprofits must tap into their passions, understand motivations, and nurture their involvement with empathy and gratitude. Each generation brings unique perspectives and values to the table. By recognising and embracing these generational differences, nonprofit organisations can inspire new supporters to join their causes and strengthen the bonds with those who already support them.

To understand the current trends, drivers, and preferences of nonprofit supporters across generations, this report by the Blackbaud Institute does a deep dive into the charitable habits of Gen Z adults, Millennials, Gen X, and Boomers. Findings from this report highlight key differences across generations, helping fundraisers identify how to engage and connect with supporters and prospects from each age group.

## Methodology

An online survey of 1,015 participants was conducted in the United Kingdom (79% of data) and Ireland (21%) to gain a better understanding into the attitudes, values, and behaviours related to nonprofit support across different generations.

**The age groups included were:**

**17%**
Gen Z
1997-2010

**37%**
Millennials
1981 - 1996

**34%**
Gen X
1965–1980

**12%**
Boomers
1946–1964
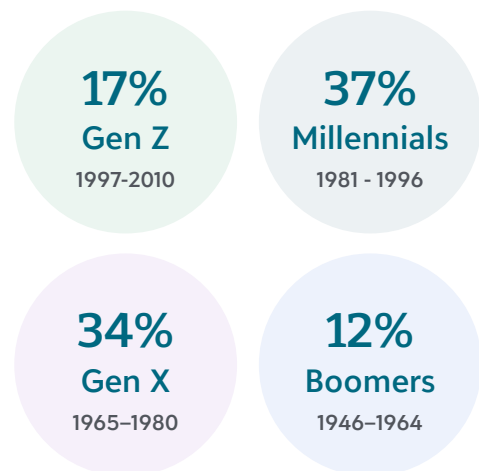
The survey was fielded between 13th and 24th June 2024. Individuals were invited to participate using an established industry sampling partner. Quotas were set to ensure data is nationally representative for the researched age groups. Data is self-reported, not transactional.

Unless otherwise stated, all survey data was gathered from participants in the United Kingdom or Ireland.

Research was conducted in partnership with Nepa, a global research company, and it was adapted from a 2023 Blackbaud Institute survey of Gen Z philanthropic behaviours (*Gen Z at the Table: A Next Generation of Giving Special Report*). In addition to researching local charitable habits, sister research was conducted in Australia and New Zealand, as well as Canada.

# Key Findings

A survey of 1,015 participants from different generations indicate interesting differences in attitudes, behaviours, and motivations when it comes to nonprofit support and charitable giving. A few key findings include:

**1** Monetary donations to charitable organisations are perceived as the most impactful way to make a difference across generations, but Gen Z also views volunteering and advocacy efforts as particularly impactful.

**2** Health, children, and animal causes receive the highest levels of support across generations, and most individuals only support two or three causes.

**3** Important factors for supporting charities are based on trust; belief in the mission and cause; and feeling that support will help those in need right now. Respect of personal information and privacy is also a key consideration for younger generations.

**4** 68% of participants say they research causes—mainly through their website, social media channels, or charity review sites—before deciding to support. Reputation, impact, mission, and efficiency are the primary areas people consider when conducting research. Efficiently delivering for the cause is a notable focal point for Boomers, in particular.

**5** A thank you email and information on how your support makes a difference are the best forms of acknowledgement. The younger generations want more recognition after their support—whether via email, on social media, or as part of an annual publication. Boomers find 'thank you' messages less important.

**6** While lack of money or time are given the top reason for not supporting nonprofits, many non-supporters also highlight lack of trust in nonprofits or uncertainty around the impact of their support.

# Part 1: Current Levels of Giving

Current engagement levels are high, and most participants have supported nonprofits, charities or causes in some way in the last 12 months. The type of charity support varies across generations, revealing a glimpse into important trends and preferences.

Participants' answers to questions regarding their recent support defined the different supporter types, categorising individuals as donors, volunteers, advocates, promoters, or non-supporters. Participants can be part of one or more supporter groups unless they are a non-supporter.

68% of Generation Z participants—or Gen Zers—are donors, followed by volunteers (50%). A further 38% act as promoters, and 33% advocate actively for the charities they support. At 78%, Millennials show an even greater propensity towards donating, and 50% of Millennials identify as volunteers. They are, however, less active promoters (34%) and advocates (30%). Generation X stands out with the highest percentage of donors, at 79%—but only 31% are volunteers. This generation also shows lower engagement in promoting causes. Most Boomers contribute as donors (77%), as only 26% identify as volunteers and 25% engage as promoters. At 33%, they are, however, keen advocates.

## Charitable Support Per Supporter Group

| Gen Z | Millennials | Gen X | Boomers |
|---|---|---|---|
| **68%** Donor | **78%** Donor | **79%** Donor | **77%** Donor |
| **50%** Volunteer | **52%** Volunteer | **31%** Volunteer | **26%** Volunteer |
| **38%** Promoter | **34%** Promoter | **28%** Promoter | **25%** Promoter |
| **33%** Advocate | **30%** Advocate | **31%** Advocate | **33%** Advocate |

**Donors** give funds or goods to causes or individuals

**Volunteers** dedicate time helping organisations

**Promoters** spread the word about causes

**Advocates** actively influence or rally for causes or policies

When asked about the most effective way to make an impact, many respondents agree that financial contributions hold significant power. Each generation considers donations as a key method to influence positive change.

Gen Zers also find volunteering an important avenue to make a difference, and they are much more likely to find advocacy actions impactful way to support causes they care about. The popularity of volunteering is more evident in younger generations and goes down with age—only 11% of Boomers highlighting it as the best way they can make a difference. In turn, Boomers find word-of-mouth and advocacy actions more impactful.

## How do you feel you can make the biggest difference on the issues and causes that are important to you?

| | All Generations: UK & Ireland | Gen Z | Millennials | Gen X | Boomers |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Donating money to nonprofit or charitable organisation/s | **25%** | 26% | 25% | 25% | 20% |
| Volunteering your time | **18%** | 22% | 19% | 16% | 11% |
| Donating goods and services | 12% | 10% | 12% | 12% | 11% |
| Spreading the word and telling others | 11% | 8% | 10% | 12% | **14%** |
| Donating money directly to individuals, communities, or others impacted ("mutual aid") | 9% | 11% | 13% | 6% | **3%** |
| Participating in advocacy actions (e.g., signing petitions, writing letters, demonstrating) | 9% | **16%** | 7% | 7% | **12%** |
| Encouraging others to donate | 3% | 2% | 2% | 3% | 4% |

**From Participants: Why Do You Support Causes in This Way?**

**Donating**

"[Donating] gives fund to people who have the means to do something useful about it"

– Millennial respondent

"They [nonprofits] would have the expertise in this area to ensure things get done"

– Gen X respondent

"I don't have spare cash, but I have time and clothes donate"

– Boomer respondent

**Volunteering**

"[Volunteering] because you can help first hand, when donating money, you don't know where it goes and or how much of it goes to the actual cause"

– Gen Z respondent

"Can't afford to give money, but I can give time to help others"

– Millennial respondent

"It [volunteering] supports my local community"

– Boomer respondent

**Promoting**

"It [promoting causes] is the best way to make a change is to get others onboard"

– Boomer respondent

"Word of mouth can travel far these days with social media"

– Gen Z respondent

"[Promotion] gets the ball rolling in terms of spreading awareness"

– Millennial respondent

**Advocating**

"Petitions can get government attention"

– Boomer respondent

"It [advocacy] is about influencing policy"

– Millennial respondent

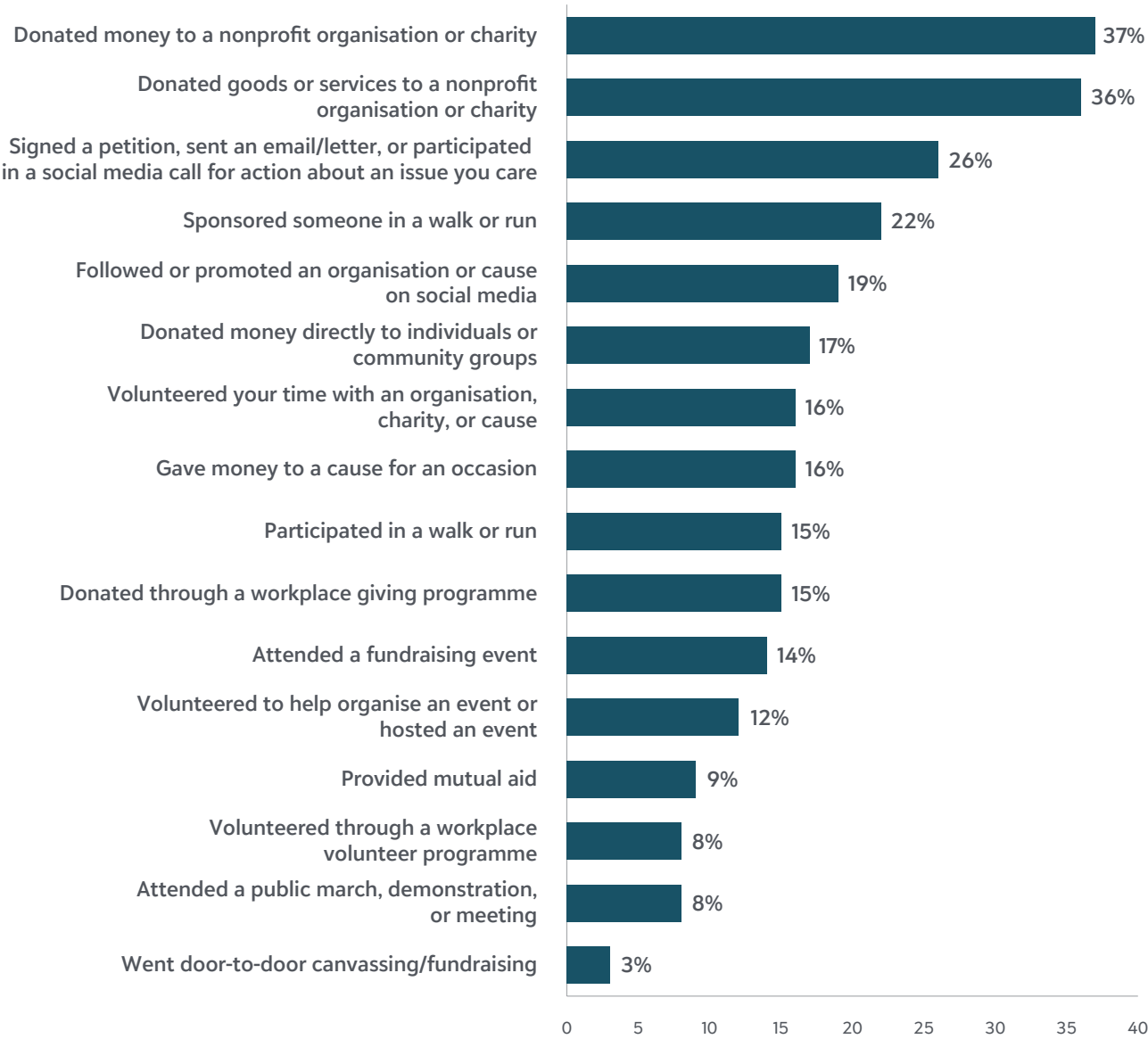"It's a peaceful way of showing disapproval on a situation and raises awareness"

– Gen X respondent

In the last 12 months, most participants shared that they primarily supported organisations or causes through direct donations—including money (37%), and goods or services (36%). This comes as a little surprise as most individuals across age groups reported donations as the best way to make an impact.

*Advocacy activities such as signing a petition or sending an email (26%), sponsoring someone else on a walk or run (22%), and following or promoting an organisation on social media (19%) are also popular ways to support nonprofits.*

## In the last 12 months, in which of the following ways have you supported nonprofit organisations, charities, and/or causes?

*Top methods of support include donations (money, good or services), advocacy actions, sponsorship, and social media promotion.*

| Method | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Donated money to a nonprofit organisation or charity | 37% |
| Donated goods or services to a nonprofit organisation or charity | 36% |
| Signed a petition, sent an email/letter, or participated in a social media call for action about an issue you care | 26% |
| Sponsored someone in a walk or run | 22% |
| Followed or promoted an organisation or cause on social media | 19% |
| Donated money directly to individuals or community groups | 17% |
| Volunteered your time with an organisation, charity, or cause | 16% |
| Gave money to a cause for an occasion | 16% |
| Participated in a walk or run | 15% |
| Donated through a workplace giving programme | 15% |
| Attended a fundraising event | 14% |
| Volunteered to help organise an event or hosted an event | 12% |
| Provided mutual aid | 9% |
| Volunteered through a workplace volunteer programme | 8% |
| Attended a public march, demonstration, or meeting | 8% |
| Went door-to-door canvassing/fundraising | 3% |

While direct donations were a common way to support causes across all generations, there are some key differences between these age groups. While all generations support charitable causes most likely through donations, Gen Zers also engage through volunteering.

Despite showing some interest in volunteering, it's evident that the older generations are much more likely to focus on donations—either money or goods and services. These supporting patterns seem relatively intuitive. The older generations, who are typically more financially established, give the most. In turn, younger generations may have more time than money to support, and they show more support through other channels than donations. Millennials are the only age group to rank social media following or promotion within the top 5 ways of supporting nonprofits.



## Types of Support Per Generation

| Top 5 | Gen Z | Millennials | Gen X | Boomers |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Donated money to a nonprofit organisation (36%) | Donated goods or services to a nonprofit organisation (36%) | Donated money to a nonprofit organisation (40%) | Donated goods or services to a nonprofit organisation (48%) |
| 2 | Donated goods or services to a nonprofit organisation (25%) | Donated money to a nonprofit organisation (35%) | Donated goods or services to a nonprofit organisation (37%) | Donated money to a nonprofit organisation (39%) |
| 3 | Participated in advocacy actions (e.g., signing a petition) (24%) | Participated in advocacy actions (e.g., signing a petition) (26%) | Participated in advocacy actions (e.g., signing a petition) (27%) | Participated in advocacy actions (e.g., signing a petition) (31%) |
| 4 | Volunteered your time (23%) | Sponsored someone in a walk/run or similar activity (23%) | Sponsored someone in a walk/run or similar activity (25%) | Sponsored someone in a walk/run or similar activity (24%) |
| 5 | Donated money directly to individuals or community groups (22%) | Followed or promoted an organisation in social media (20%) | Donated money directly to individuals or community groups (17%) | Volunteered your time (16%) |

## Volunteering

In the last 12 months, the youngest generation has been the most active volunteers with 23% sharing they have volunteered their time with an organisation or cause. A further 16% have volunteered to help organise or host an event, and 4% went door-to-door canvassing. 16% of both Millennials and Boomers have supported causes through volunteering, but just 12% of Gen Xers say the same. Gen Xers do, however, show higher interest in organising or hosting events than Boomers do.

Contrary to the assumption that many Boomers have more time to dedicate to volunteering, engagement in volunteering shows a steady decrease with age.

| How are participants volunteering? | Gen Z | Millennials | Gen X | Boomers |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Volunteered their time with an organisation, charity, or cause | 23% | 16% | 12% | 16% |
| Volunteered to help organise an event or hosted an event | 16% | 13% | 10% | 6% |

"Blackbaud's discovery that the most active group of volunteers in the past year is the younger generation aligns with a trend we're observing in the UK. Gen Z is highly driven to create positive change and feels empowered to support causes they are passionate about.

However, organisations face the challenge of meeting the expectations and accessibility needs of younger volunteers, such as on-demand services or activities coordinated through an app. Modernising volunteer programmes can help to bridge this gap, ensuring a seamless experience regardless of the device they use, whether desktop or mobile app. We see utilisation of AI for content creation to promote an organisation's mission—and the implementation of automation for personalised communication or recognition for donors—as being key to meeting the needs of Gen Z volunteers."

**Cameron Buckley, Chief Revenue Officer, Rosterfy**

## Workplace Giving and Volunteering

When looking into recent support with a focus on workplace-inspired engagement, Gen Zers are most likely to volunteer through workplace volunteer programmes (12%), followed closely by Millennials (11%). Interestingly, the youngest generation is most active despite more Millennials (70%) sharing that they are in full-time employment compared to Gen Zers (55%). Boomers are less likely to still be part of the workforce, and naturally exhibit less preference for workplace volunteering.

20% of Millennials, however, said they have donated through a workplace giving programme in the last 12 months—in comparison to 15% of Gen Zers, 12% of Gen Xers or 4% of Boomers—further indicating that their preferred support method is through donations rather than volunteering.

Despite these differences in preferred support methods, these younger generations place higher importance on workplace programmes in general. Among currently employed participants, 68% of Gen Zers and 60% of Millennials shared that employee giving programmes are "extremely important" or "pretty important." 42% of Gen Xers and 33% of Boomers said the same. Despite showing lower levels of employee volunteering, Millennials and Boomers find these employee volunteer programmes more valuable than giving programmes. 68% of Gen Z, 62% Millennials, 39% of Gen Xers and 38% of Boomers said workplace-based volunteering opportunities are extremely or pretty important to them.

| Recent Supporter Activity: Employee Programmes | Gen Z | Millennials | Gen X | Boomers |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Volunteered through a workplace volunteer programme | 12% | 11% | 7% | 2% |
| Donated through a workplace giving programme | 15% | 20% | 12% | 4% |
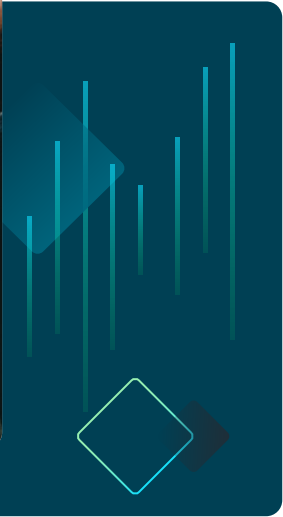
## Levels of Support

Most participants in each generation have supported two charities in the last full financial year. Gen Z supporters are the only generation to say they support over 20 or 30 charitable causes—but this is unusual even for the younger supporters.

Gen Z donors are also the only donor group most likely to donate to three charities rather than two, while Gen X volunteers are the only age group most likely to volunteer at more than two organisations. Advocates and promoters, however, often support three causes.

| Typical Number of Organisations Supported | Total | Gen Z | Millennials | Gen X | Boomers |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Donor | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Volunteer | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Advocate | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| Promoter | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 |

## Typical Total Donation Amount in the Last 12 Months

**Gen Z**
**50**
EUROS/POUNDS

**Millennial**
**50 or 100**
EUROS/POUNDS

**Gen X**
**50 or 100**
EUROS/POUNDS

**Boomers**
**100 or 200**
EUROS/POUNDS

## Organisations Supported

When exploring the causes participants tend to support, they are especially interested in healthcare and children's wellbeing. A large portion of respondents also contribute to charities focusing on animal welfare, social care services, and environmental causes.

*Participants predominantly support causes related to healthcare, animal protection and children's wellbeing*

## Types of Organisations Supported

| Donor | Advocate | Volunteer | Promoter |
|---|---|---|---|
| 43% Health charities | 41% Health charities | 40% Health charities | 42% Health charities |
| 36% Children's charities | 36% Animal welfare | 37% Children's charities | 38% Children's charities |
| 30% Animal welfare | 33% Children's charities | 26% Animal welfare | 36% Social service organisations |
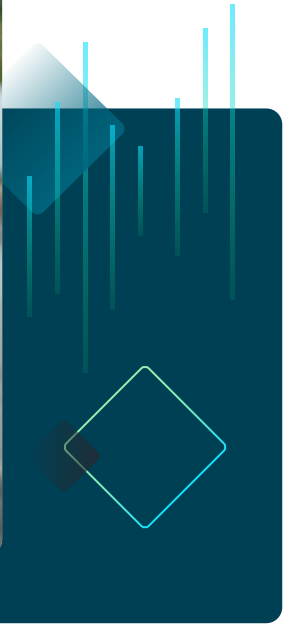
## Which of the following best describes the types of nonprofit organisations, charities, and/or causes you have supported in the last 12 months?

| Category | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Health charities | 39% |
| Children's charities | 34% |
| Animal rescue, animal shelters, or other animal protection organisations | 29% |
| Social service organisations | 23% |
| Environmental, conservation, or wildlife organisations | 21% |
| Organisations that help the sick or elderly | 19% |
| Emergency relief efforts | 18% |
| Human rights and international development organisations | 16% |
| Youth development | 12% |
| Immigrants and/or refugee rights | 11% |
| Organisations that fight hate, prejudice, and inequality | 11% |
| Victims of crime or abuse | 11% |
| Fire, police, and emergency rescue organisations | 9% |
| Faith-based | 9% |
| Advocacy organisations | 8% |
| Formal education | 8% |
| Organisations that support military troops and/or veterans | 8% |
| Election campaigns | 7% |
| Arts or art-related organisations or institutions | 6% |

While health, children and animal welfare causes are cited as the most popular causes to each age group, other focus area differ somewhat from generation to generation. For example, participating Gen Z (18%) and Millennials (12%) have showed more support immigrant and/or refugee rights than Gen X (9%) or Boomers (8%). Younger generations are also more likely to support causes related to arts, formal education and youth development, victims of crime or abuse, emergency rescue services, and election campaigns.

At 49%, Boomers place the most significant support focus on health charities—whether they are donors, volunteers, advocates, or promoters. They are also more likely to support military troops or veterans, and organisations that help the sick or elderly than the younger generations.

## Supported Organisations Per Generation

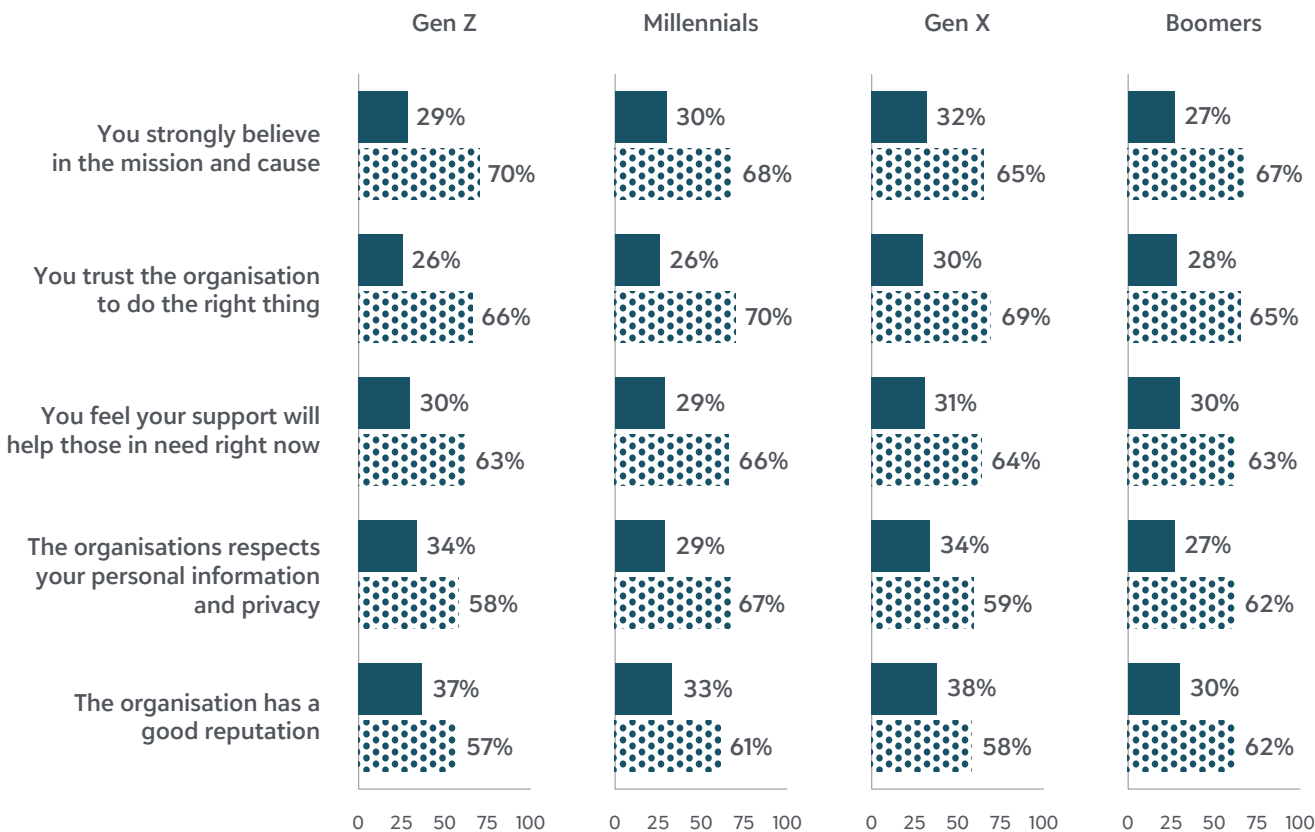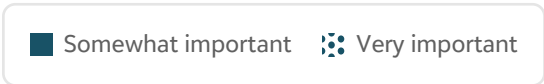| Top 10 | Gen Z | Millennials | Gen X | Boomers |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Health charities (32%) | Children's charities (42%) | Health charities (40%) | Health charities (49%) |
| 2 | Children's charities (30%) | Health charities (39%) | Animal protection organisation (34%) | Animal protection organisation (32%) |
| 3 | Animal protection organisation (23%) | Animal protection organisation (26%) | Children's charities (29%) | Charities helping the sick or elderly (27%) |
| 4 | Charities helping the sick or elderly (22%) | Social service organisation (24%) | Environmental organisations (24%) | Children's charities (25%) |
| 5 | Social service organisation (21%) | Environmental organisations (18%) | Social service organisation (22%) | Social service organisation (23%) |
| 6 | Environmental organisations (21%) | Charities helping the sick or elderly (16%) | Emergency relief (20%) | Environmental organisations (21%) |
| 7 | Emergency relief (18%) | Emergency relief (16%) | Charities helping the sick or elderly (17%) | Emergency relief (21%) |
| 8 | Youth development (18%) | Human rights (15%) | Human rights (15%) | Human rights (15%) |
| 9 | Immigrants and/or refugee rights (18%) | Victims of crime (14%) | Charities fighting prejudice and inequality (11%) | Military/veteran support (13%) |
| 10 | Human rights (18%) | Youth development (13%) | Faith-based (10%) | Immigrant and/or refugee rights (8%) |

# Part 2: Supporting Factors and Feelings

When supporting nonprofit organisations, important factors include trust in the organisation, believing in the mission and cause supported, feeling that the support will help those in need right now, respect of personal information and privacy, and good organisational reputation.

These factors rank high across the different generations. Gen Zers and Boomers tend to support causes if they strongly believe in the mission and cause. While this is also important to Millennials and Gen X supporters, both generations report that it is essential to trust the organisation to do the right thing.

Interestingly, Millennials are the only age group to rank supporter recognition highly, with 61% of participants in the age group saying that 'the organisation thanks its donors for their support' is very important, and a further 33% saying it is somewhat important.

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**Thinking about the nonprofit organisation, charity, or cause(s) you support, how important are each of the following?**

Legend: ■ Somewhat important    ⦂ Very important

|  | Gen Z | Millennials | Gen X | Boomers |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **You strongly believe in the mission and cause** — Somewhat important | 29% | 30% | 32% | 27% |
| Very important | 70% | 68% | 65% | 67% |
| **You trust the organisation to do the right thing** — Somewhat important | 26% | 26% | 30% | 28% |
| Very important | 66% | 70% | 69% | 65% |
| **You feel your support will help those in need right now** — Somewhat important | 30% | 29% | 31% | 30% |
| Very important | 63% | 66% | 64% | 63% |
| **The organisations respects your personal information and privacy** — Somewhat important | 34% | 29% | 34% | 27% |
| Very important | 58% | 67% | 59% | 62% |
| **The organisation has a good reputation** — Somewhat important | 37% | 33% | 38% | 30% |
| Very important | 57% | 61% | 58% | 62% |

**68%** *of participants said they are likely to actively research organisations before they become a supporter.*

This is especially important for Gen Z (79%) but declines with age: 73% of Millennials, 60% of Gen X, and 54% of Boomers say the same. Future research is needed to determine whether this reflects a cultural shift between generations, differing views on what constitutes 'research', or Boomers' perception that they are already familiar with nonprofit organisations without additional research. While these findings are helpful for engaging with current supporters and potential prospects, they could vary considerably in 10 or 20 years as Millennials and Gen Zers grow older.

Organisational websites, social media, and charity review sites are the most used sources for obtaining information, but preferences vary across different age groups. Boomers rely less on social media and word-of-mouth than the other generations, and they favour charity review sites. They are also likely to read annual reports for information or support nonprofit organisations based on personal contacts or recommendations. Gen X focuses on researching the cause through the organisation's website, but also gathers information from social media, charity review sites, or the news. Word-of-mouth plays a key role in gathering information.

Millennials prefer social media to research charitable causes, followed by exploring the organisation's website, charity review sites or hearing information through word-of-mouth. Gen Zers are also likely to use social media or the organisation's website to research nonprofits, and they trust word-of-mouth recommendations. They are less likely to follow the news to gain information.

**You said that you actively research how an organisation spends its money before you become a supporter. Where do you typically go to find that information?**

| | All Generations: UK & Ireland | Gen Z | Millennials | Gen X | Boomers |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Organisation's website | 48% | 39% | 46% | 50% | **67%** |
| Social media | 43% | **43%** | **47%** | **41%** | **28%** |
| Charity review site | 42% | 43% | 41% | 40% | 43% |
| Word-of-mouth | 35% | **38%** | 33% | 36% | 28% |
| Information in the news | 31% | 23% | 32% | **36%** | 33% |
| Annual report | 22% | 24% | 21% | 23% | 28% |
| Personal contacts or recommendations | 19% | 20% | 20% | 16% | 24% |
| Financial statements | 16% | 16% | 17% | 14% | 17% |

Reputation, impact, mission, and efficiency are the primary areas people consider when conducting research. Efficiency, in particular, is a notable focal point for Boomers who rank this as one of the key research focuses.

Impact, reputation, and efficiency are key research focus regardless of the supporter type. All supporter types are also most likely to explore the organisation's website before choosing to support the cause. Promoters conduct social media research more actively than donors, volunteers or advocates, and together with advocates, they are more likely to rely on information in the news.

## When you do your research, what kind of information are you looking for?

| Donors Say | Volunteers Say | Advocates Say | Promoters Say |
|---|---|---|---|
| **48%** Their general reputation | **50%** Their general reputation | **56%** More about their impact | **54%** More about their impact |
| **48%** More about their impact | **49%** More about their impact | **52%** Their general reputation | **53%** Their general reputation |
| **46%** Efficiency | **47%** More about their mission and services | **50%** Efficiency | **51%** Efficiency |
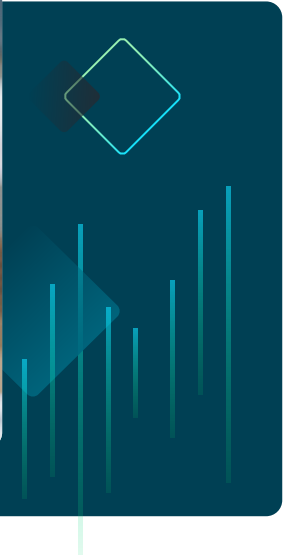
## Emotional Drivers of Giving

When considering emotional drivers for giving, hope is the most prevalent emotion across all generations, followed by duty and empowerment. When looking into charitable feelings per generation, younger participants are more likely to report feeling a sense of empowerment and happiness when supporting causes when compared to Gen Xers and Boomers. Gen Zers also report more negative feelings, like sadness, anxiety, and anger driving their support of causes, than the other generations.

These findings can help nonprofit organisations tailor their engagement strategies and messaging. Hope being the primary feeling associated with supporter activity, hope-filled content on organisation's websites, newsletters or social media is likely to work better for a mixed audience.

All supporter types also resonate with hope, duty, and empowerment. Volunteers also stated that happiness was a prominent feeling when they last supported a nonprofit or a cause.

**Think about the last time you supported a nonprofit organisation or cause, what feeling(s) did you have when you decided to donate?**

| | All Generations: UK & Ireland | Gen Z | Millennials | Gen X | Boomers |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Hope** – that things will get better | **51%** | 52% | 51% | 50% | 54% |
| **Duty** – a sense that you needed to do something | 33% | 34% | 33% | 33% | 33% |
| **Empowerment** – that you can make a difference | 31% | 37% | 36% | 26% | **25%** |
| **Happiness** – about how things were going | 30% | **39%** | **38%** | 18% | 23% |
| **Pride** – in the organisation or institution | 27% | 31% | 27% | 26% | 23% |
| **Sadness** – about something that happened | 16% | **18%** | 17% | 15% | 14% |
| **Anxiety** – about how things were going | 11% | **19%** | 11% | 9% | 6% |
| **Anger** – about something that had happened | 10% | **16%** | 9% | 11% | 4% |

While these feelings can have the power to encourage supporters to take action, different activities also 'trigger' a donation. Current world events or catastrophes trigger all generations, especially Gen Zers. Social media posts by nonprofit organisations also impact Gen Z, while Millennials are influenced by news and recommendations. Gen Xers tends to support their friends, family members, or colleagues taking part in fundraising events—Millennials also ranking this highly—sparking action for nonprofit engagement.

Boomers are least influenced by social media posts by nonprofits, but they also rank most triggers lower than the other generations, including news related to a cause or charity they care about and recommendations from friends or family members, despite saying that these are key sources of information when conducting research.

Direct contact and TV or radio advertising rank lowest amongst all age groups, giving nonprofit organisations further guidance on how best to strategize their engagement efforts.

## In the last 12 months, which of the following has 'triggered' you to donate to a charity or good cause?

| | All Generations: UK & Ireland | Gen Z | Millennials | Gen X | Boomers |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Current world events or catastrophes | 36% | **47%** | 36% | 32% | 37% |
| News related to a cause or charity I care about | 33% | 34% | **38%** | 31% | 26% |
| Friend / family / colleague recommendation | 31% | 34% | 39% | 28% | **15%** |
| Social media post by a nonprofit organization | 23% | **40%** | 28% | 17% | 9% |
| TV or radio advertising | 15% | 18% | 15% | 15% | 17% |
| Being contacted by a charity | 13% | 16% | 13% | 12% | 13% |
| Friend / family / colleague taking part in a fundraising event | **26%** | 17% | 26% | **32%** | 20% |

## Budgeted vs Spontaneous Giving

Despite 35% of Gen Zers having an idea of their giving budget and organisations to support, the youngest generation tends to be spontaneous supporters. This kind of spontaneous giving declines with age. In fact, while 42% of Gen Z engage spontaneously with causes and organisations, only 21% of Gen X and 16% of Boomers say this.

When looking into spontaneity per supporter type, donors are least likely to say their engagement is based on who asks them or pulls at their heartstrings (28%). Volunteers are most likely to say their support is spontaneous (34%), possibly influenced by available volunteering opportunities.

### Spontaneous Support Per Supporter Type
*Volunteers are most likely to say their support is spontaneous.*
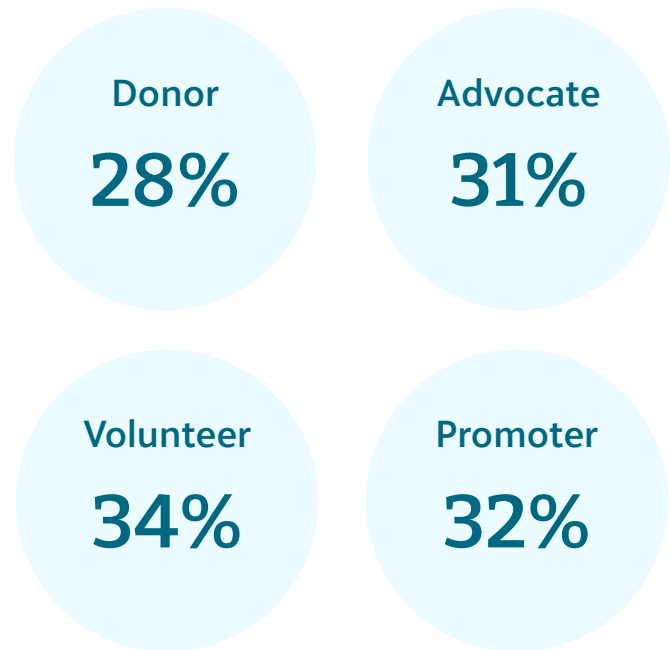
| Donor | Advocate |
|:---:|:---:|
| **28%** | **31%** |

| Volunteer | Promoter |
|:---:|:---:|
| **34%** | **32%** |

| When supporting a cause or organisation, do you tend to budget or give spontaneously? | Gen Z | Millennials | Gen X | Boomers |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I have an idea of how much I will budget for giving each year. | 35% | 27% | 19% | 17% |
| I have an idea of which organisations I will give to each year. | 35% | 30% | 27% | 35% |
| Most support is spontaneous and based on who asks me and/ or what pulls at my heartstrings. | 42% | 33% | 21% | 16% |

## Part 3: Supporter Preferences and Expectations

Donation method habits and preferences vary by generation: younger audiences have supported causes through fundraising events, while Boomers tend to support causes through donations at checkouts or purchases where a portion of proceeds go to a charitable cause.

Surprisingly, Gen Z are the generation most receptive to phone calls, email appeals, text messages and crowdfunding sites, while Boomers rank these options the lowest. The often more tech-savvy younger generations are also more likely to donate through Twitch streams, YouTube, and Facebook fundraisers than older generations, but the figures are low across all generations. Facebook fundraisers tend to more popular amongst female supporters.

**In which of the following ways have you made a charitable donation in the past 12 months?**

|  | All Generations: UK & Ireland | Gen Z | Millennials | Gen X | Boomers |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fundraising event | 31% | **34%** | **36%** | **31%** | **17%** |
| Monthly giving programme | 29% | 31% | 29% | 29% | 31% |
| Organisation's website | 28% | 34% | 29% | 25% | 37% |
| Donation at checkout | 25% | 26% | 22% | 26% | **34%** |
| A purchase where a portion of proceeds goes to the organisations | 18% | 14% | 17% | 17% | **31%** |
| Workplace giving | 18% | 14% | 22% | 18% | 9% |
| Email appeal | 14% | **22%** | 13% | 13% | 7% |
| Text message/SMS | 13% | **18%** | 12% | 15% | 5% |
| Crowdfunding site | 13% | **19%** | 15% | 12% | 6% |
| Phone call | 9% | **23%** | 8% | 5% | 4% |

## Facebook Fundraisers

**6%**
Male

**12%**
Female

## Fundraising Events

**28%**
Male

**34%**
Female

In line with the previous findings, periodic donations are favoured as participants in all generations share that they prefer to support nonprofits when they feel like it. This figure drops significantly when it comes to planned monthly or quarterly instalments.

Further suggesting that convenience drives engagement, credit or debit card and cash are most common payment methods used across generations when making a donation. This is followed by digital wallet or payment apps—payment method especially used by the youngest generation.

Interestingly, the data indicates that as individuals age, their use of direct debits increases. While fewer participants claim to prefer direct debit over cash or card payments, direct debits are indicative of recurring donations. This information is valuable for organisations aiming to boost their recurring contributions. However, this strategy should be regularly assessed to determine if the tendency to set up direct debits is due to aging or a cultural trend among the current older generations.

## What payment form(s) did you use to make your donation(s)?

| | All Generations: UK & Ireland | Gen Z | Millennials | Gen X | Boomers |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Credit or debit card | **60%** | **71%** | 61% | 56% | 50% |
| Cash | **45%** | 42% | 46% | 43% | 48% |
| Digital wallet / payment app | 24% | 34% | 24% | 23% | 14% |
| Direct Debit | 15% | 5% | 9% | **21%** | **27%** |
| Cheque or money order | 5% | 11% | 6% | 2% | 2% |
| Cryptocurrency | 2% | 6% | 2% | 1% | 0% |

'Thank You's have been considered as the cornerstone of donor engagement—a way for nonprofit organisations to build a bond with supporters through showing appreciation. All generations prefer an email thanking them for their support. Participants also like to receive information on the impact of their support, and this is especially important for Millennials and Gen Zers.

Many Boomers and Gen X participants share that they don't need a thank you for their support. In turn, Millennials and Gen Zers are more likely than average to say that they appreciate recognition. This is especially true for Gen Z participants as only 1 in 10 participants say they don't need a thank you for their support. Millennials already highlighted this essential earlier in the report by ranking 'the organisation thanks its supporters' as the fifth most important aspect of charitable support.

Millennials are happy with a thank you email or letter, whereas many Gen Zers would like more visible recognition on social media, email newsletter, annual report or other publication.

## Which of the following are the most appealing ways a nonprofit organisation or cause can say "Thank You" for your support?

|  | All Generations: UK & Ireland | Gen Z | Millennials | Gen X | Boomers |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| An email thanking you for your support | **36%** | 36% | 36% | 37% | 37% |
| Information on how your support makes a difference | **34%** | 38% | 39% | 29% | 28% |
| A text message thanking you for your support | 25% | 25% | 25% | 27% | 18% |
| I don't need a thank you for my support | 24% | **7%** | **21%** | **30%** | **42%** |
| A letter thanking you for your support | 22% | 26% | 27% | 16% | 16% |
| Recognition on social media or email newsletter | 15% | **24%** | 17% | 12% | 6% |
| Recognition in an annual report or other publication | 14% | **25%** | 17% | 8% | 2% |
| Branded merchandise | 10% | 15% | 11% | 7% | 4% |

Each supporter group prefers email or text messages that share information on how the support has made a difference. Donors and advocates are less likely to want a 'thank you' for their engagement, whereas volunteers and promoters find this more valuable.

There are no significant differences to the previous findings of younger generations preferring recognition. For example, only 4% of Gen Z volunteers say they don't need recognition for their support—the figure going up to 28% for Boomers. The same is true for donors: younger generations are much keener to receive 'thank you' messages, whereas 27% of Gen X and 37% of Boomers say they don't need to be thanked for their donations.

At 27%, Gen X volunteers are least likely to find value in information on the impact of their support, while 38% of Gen Z, 43% of Millennial, and 50% of Boomer volunteers say this is important to them.

## Preferred Method of 'Thank You' Communication by Supporter Group

| Donors Say | Volunteers Say | Advocates Say | Promoters Say |
|---|---|---|---|
| **39%** An email message | **41%** An email message | **43%** An email message | **46%** Information on impact |
| **37%** Information on impact | **38%** Information on impact | **40%** Information on impact | **45%** An email message |
| **26%** A text message | **27%** A thank you letter | **28%** A text message | **28%** A text message |
| **21%** I don't need a 'thank you' | **14%** I don't need a 'thank you' | **22%** I don't need a 'thank you' | **13%** I don't need a 'thank you' |
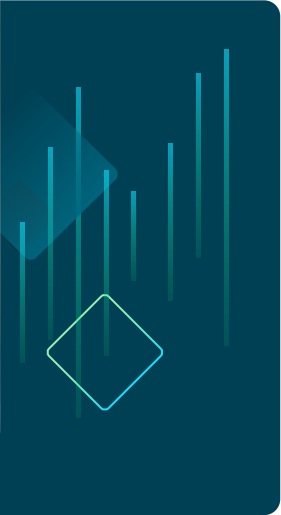
Despite the current economic challenges, a majority of donors across all generation groups plan to maintain the same level of giving or increase it. Younger generations demonstrate growing readiness to take up the mantle of giving while some Boomers are likely to decrease their current levels of giving.

Gen Zers especially show a notable inclination to increase their donations. In fact, with 42%, more Gen Zers aspire to increase their charitable support than maintain their current levels of support

(30%), highlighting a key opportunity for nonprofit organisations seeking to increase gift amounts or attract new supporters.

Boomers, in turn, are the generation most likely to decrease their recent giving amounts. However, as found previously, Boomers gave the most money in the last 12 months, with most participants saying they donated either 100 or 200 euros/pounds, in comparison to Gen Z where most supporters donated 50 euros/pounds.

**Due to personal or economic circumstances, donors sometimes need to make changes in their charitable giving. In the next 12 months, do you intend to...**

Legend:
- ■ Increase the overall amount of your charitable giving
- ■ Decrease the overall amount of your charitable giving
- ■ Amount of giving will remain the same
- ■ Not sure

| | Increase | Decrease | Remain same | Not sure |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gen Z | 42% | 18% | 30% | 9% |
| Millennials | 33% | 18% | 38% | 11% |
| Gen X | 16% | 17% | 51% | 17% |
| Boomers | 9% | 21% | 57% | 13% |
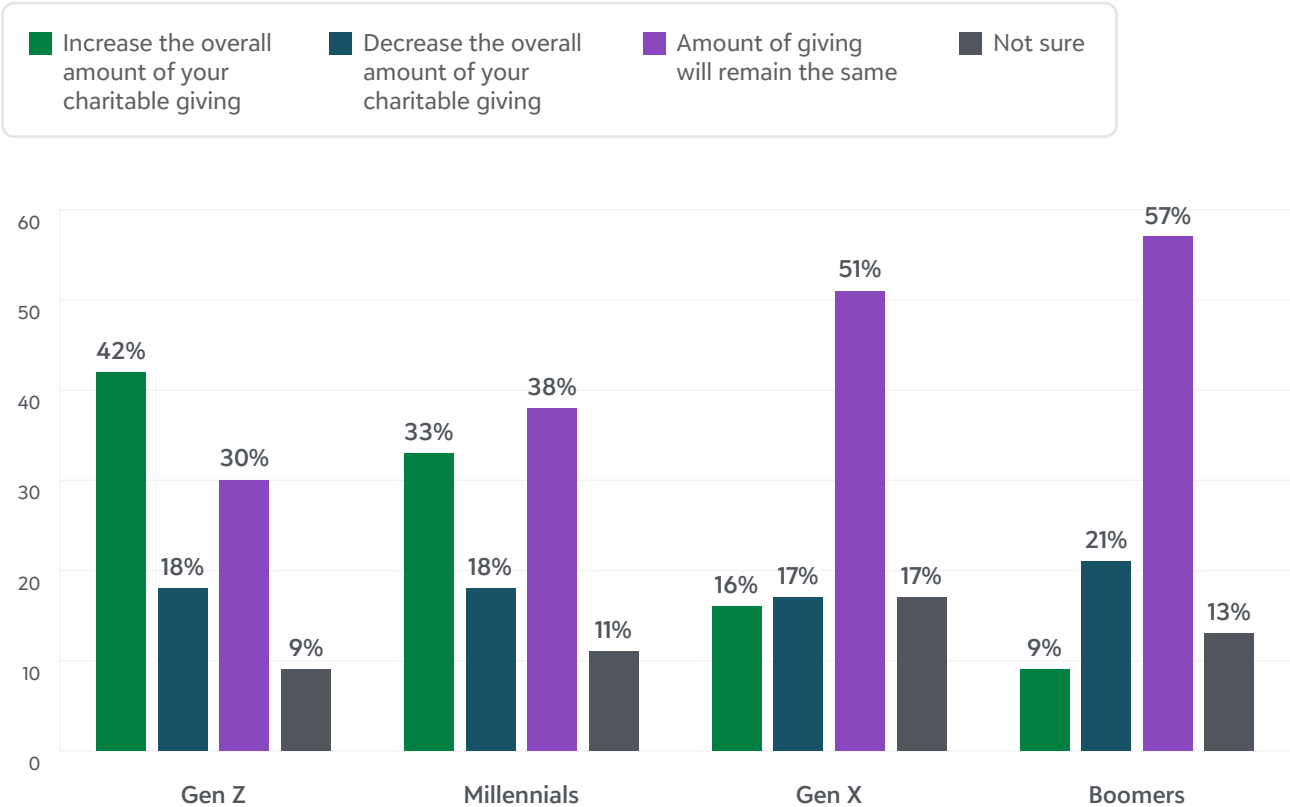
# Part 4: Non-Supporter Reasoning

Participants who have not supported any causes in the last 12 months reported a range of obstacles and challenges. Not having enough disposable income is the main barrier for supporting charities or nonprofit organisations. 70% of non-supporters say this describes them somewhat or perfectly.

"I have supported them [nonprofit organisations] in the past with donations and giving away old clothes. At the moment, because of the cost of living and other circumstances, I do not have the disposable income to donate to charity even though I have a great deal of respect for what they do"

## Non-Supporters

| **10%** | **8%** | **9%** | **13%** | **11%** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | Gen Z | Millennials | Gen X | Boomers |

## How well does each of the following describe why you have not supported these organisations?

**Legend:** Not sure/Not applicable | Doesn't describe | Describes somewhat | Describes perfectly

### I don't have much money to give
- Not sure/Not applicable: 17%
- Doesn't describe: 13%
- Describes somewhat: 21%
- Describes perfectly: 49%

### I don't trust nonprofit organisations
- Not sure/Not applicable: 29%
- Doesn't describe: 29%
- Describes somewhat: 30%
- Describes perfectly: 13%

### I cannot support all the organisations that ask for my support
- Not sure/Not applicable: 26%
- Doesn't describe: 8%
- Describes somewhat: 28%
- Describes perfectly: 38%

### This is not something I really think or care about
- Not sure/Not applicable: 30%
- Doesn't describe: 31%
- Describes somewhat: 27%
- Describes perfectly: 12%

### I don't have much time to give
- Not sure/Not applicable: 24%
- Doesn't describe: 17%
- Describes somewhat: 24%
- Describes perfectly: 35%

### I don't think my support will make a difference
- Not sure/Not applicable: 22%
- Doesn't describe: 31%
- Describes somewhat: 37%
- Describes perfectly: 10%

### I am unsure how my donation or gift will make a difference
- Not sure/Not applicable: 26%
- Doesn't describe: 23%
- Describes somewhat: 29%
- Describes perfectly: 22%

### Organisations don't appreciate small gifts/donations
- Not sure/Not applicable: 31%
- Doesn't describe: 37%
- Describes somewhat: 22%
- Describes perfectly: 9%

### I don't feel supportive of the cause or institution I was asked to donate to
- Not sure/Not applicable: 28%
- Doesn't describe: 26%
- Describes somewhat: 30%
- Describes perfectly: 17%

### I have already chosen a specific organisations that I want to support
- Not sure/Not applicable: 42%
- Doesn't describe: 33%
- Describes somewhat: 18%
- Describes perfectly: 7%

### Volunteering opportunities are too far away or at unsuitable times
- Not sure/Not applicable: 33%
- Doesn't describe: 24%
- Describes somewhat: 28%
- Describes perfectly: 15%

### I would support organisations and causes if I was asked
- Not sure/Not applicable: 33%
- Doesn't describe: 40%
- Describes somewhat: 20%
- Describes perfectly: 6%

### I don't think nonprofit organisations are effective
- Not sure/Not applicable: 35%
- Doesn't describe: 34%
- Describes somewhat: 18%
- Describes perfectly: 13%

### I would like to support organisations and causes I care about, but don't know how
- Not sure/Not applicable: 37%
- Doesn't describe: 38%
- Describes somewhat: 20%
- Describes perfectly: 5%

Lack of funds to dedicate to nonprofit causes is the top reasoning for non-support for Gen Z, Millennials, and Gen X—and lack of time is also a big barrier for each of these generations. Boomers, in turn, flag that they cannot support all the organisations or causes that ask for their support. As non-supporters are those who haven't supported causes in the past year, it is possible that these respondents have been active supporters before, but only have the means to support causes very infrequently. However, it's also possible that being inundated with numerous appeals has left them feeling overwhelmed and desensitised, making them less likely to contribute at all.

Uncertainty around how to support causes, and a belief that support won't make much of a difference are also key issues preventing individuals from supporting causes. Lack of trust in nonprofit organisations is evident across generations. 14% of Gen Z, 14% of Millennials, 9% of Gen X, and 20% of Boomers share that the statement 'I don't trust nonprofit organisations' describes them perfectly—with an additional 43% of Gen Z, 34% of Millennials, 30% of Gen X, and 7% of Boomers saying that this describes them somewhat.

## Non-Supporter Reasoning Per Generation

| Top 10 | Gen Z | Millennials | Gen X | Boomers |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I don't have much money to give (68%) | I don't have much money to give (69%) | I don't have much money to give (77%) | I cannot support all nonprofits that ask for my support (54%) |
| 2 | I don't have much time to give (65%) | I don't have much time to give (68%) | I cannot support all nonprofits that ask for my support (73%) | I don't have much money to give (47%) |
| 3 | I am unsure how my support will make a difference (64%) | I cannot support all nonprofits that ask for my support (63%) | I don't have much time to give (59%) | I am unsure how my support will make a difference (40%) |
| 4 | I would like to support causes, but don't know how (64%) | I don't think my support will make a difference (49%) | I don't feel supportive of the cause I was asked to support (55%) | This is not something I really think or care about (40%) |
| 5 | I cannot support all nonprofits that ask for my support (62%) | I don't trust nonprofits (48%) | I am unsure how my support will make a difference (54%) | I don't think my support will make a difference (34%) |
| 6 | Volunteering opportunities are inconvenient (57%) | I am unsure how my support will make a difference (46%) | This is not something I really think or care about (52%) | Organisation don't appreciate small gifts/donations (34%) |
| 7 | I don't feel supportive of the cause I was asked to support (57%) | Volunteering opportunities are inconvenient (45%) | I don't think my support will make a difference (50%) | I don't have much time to give (33%) |
| 8 | I don't trust nonprofits (57%) | I don't feel supportive of the cause I was asked to support (40%) | Volunteering opportunities are inconvenient (43%) | I don't think nonprofits are effective (33%) |
| 9 | I don't think my support will make a difference (50%) | I would like to support causes, but don't know how (32%) | I don't trust nonprofits (39%) | I don't trust nonprofits (27%) |
| 10 | I would support causes if I was asked (42%) | I would support causes if I was asked (32%) | I don't think nonprofits are effective (34%) | I don't feel supportive of the causes I was asked to support (26%) |

# I Don't Trust Nonprofits

**20%**

Describes me
perfectly

MALE

**4%**

Describes me
perfectly

FEMALE

| Non-Supporter Reasoning by Region | The UK | Ireland |
|---|---|---|
| I'm unsure how my support will make a difference | **25%** Describes me perfectly | **6%** Describes me perfectly |
| I don't have much money to give | **52%** Describes me perfectly | **35%** Describes me perfectly |
| I cannot support all the organisations that ask for my support | **42%** Describes me perfectly | **18%** Describes me perfectly |

# Part 5: Recommendations

Nonprofits and charitable causes must adapt their engagement strategies to effectively communicate and build relationships with supporters across different generations. Recognising the unique preferences and behaviours of each age group is crucial in fostering engagement and encouraging sustained support. The following recommendations aim to provide actionable insights for nonprofits to connect meaningfully with their diverse supporter base, enhance transparency, streamline donation processes, and tailor their outreach efforts to attract a variety of supporters.

## Build Trust

Trust is a known issue in the nonprofit sector, and one of the key reasons non-supporters give for their disengagement—especially so for Millennials and Boomers. Similarly, your organisation's reputation, impact and efficiency are one of the main aspects supporters and prospects focus on when conducting research. Trust is also important to retain your existing donors. Most individuals only support two or three nonprofits or charitable causes, which makes recruiting new supporters often more difficult than retaining existing ones.

As such, establishing trust is vital. Consider how your organisation can create trust across your presence, whether individuals explore your website, scroll through your social media profile, or talk to your team at a fundraising event.

For many organisations, sharing detailed accounts on how donations are utilised, and the impact support can make on the cause, is a key element of trust-building. Consider your supporter demographics and what engenders trust among your supporters. Is it certifications? Quotes from trusted authorities? Transparent reporting on your impact?

Remember that people tend to trust other people. Consider how you can engage with promoters from each generation. These individuals can help you generate positive word-of-mouth marketing, which can be a powerful tool in building trust and loyalty.

## Make it Easy to Find Information and Support Your Cause

As the main avenue for research, your website is an important destination for supporters regardless of the generation or supporter type. Ensure that it makes the case for giving and provides useful and up-to-date information.

Most donors—especially Millennials—also agree that they are more likely to give to an organisation if it's easy to donate. As supporters appreciate convenience, make sure your donation process is as frictionless and convenient as possible. If your website is informative and compelling, and your donation process is easy, you can also cater to spontaneous giving.

Similarly, to attract volunteers, it is important to offer flexible and convenient volunteering options. The research indicates that 43% of potential volunteers are deterred as opportunities are too far away or scheduled at inconvenient times. Are there ways you can engage volunteers with your organisation virtually, or add flexibility to volunteering opportunities?

## Target Audiences Based on Your Needs

Different generations offer different kinds of support, and you should tailor your communication channels and support methods according to the preferences of the generation you wish to target.

For example, Gen Zers are the most active volunteers, and they are likely your best bet if you are looking for new volunteers. While also active donors, their typical giving amounts are lower than those of the other generations. Focus on social media and digital engagement strategies that resonate with Gen Zers. In turn, Millennials and Gen Xers are likely to support your cause through donations, and the oldest generations tend to give more regularly. However, keep in mind that Gen Z is the generation with the biggest aspiration to increase their charitable giving in the next 12 months, while Boomers are likely to decrease their giving. If you are aiming to grow your donor base or attract new supporters, you shouldn't forget about Gen Zers. In fact, if Gen Z follows the trend of other generations, their giving will grow over time. Establishing a relationship with them as volunteers now can benefit your organisations first through volunteering and later through donations as their giving potential grows.

Similarly, when organising a volunteering event, addressing a policy issue, or planning a capital appeal, it is essential to consider the generation and support type you aim to engage. Tailor your outreach and communication to align with the preferences and behaviours of your target demographic. Additionally, the data shows that all generations have a higher affinity to support healthcare organisations, and children and animal welfare causes. If you are, for example, an environmental organisation, you might want to prioritise appealing to Gen Xers whose affinity for environmental causes is higher. Or perhaps you work for immigrant and/or refugee rights causes, where targeting Gen Zers can be most effective. You may also want to consider how your organisation impacts these issues—even indirectly—to help make the connection with new donors. Nonprofit organisations that focus on other areas—like arts, military, emergency services, or crime prevention—seeking to engage new supporters could seek to show how their mission can impact health, children and animals in some way. Understanding generational habits and preferences can be pivotal if you are facing these kinds of specific firmographic challenges.

## Highlight Impact and Tailor Communications

Informing supporters about the tangible impact of their contributions can address concerns about the efficacy of donations. As such, you should illustrate the difference that support can make.

Gen Z values stories and detailed knowledge about an organisation's mission, while Millennials are more interested in facts and figures. Personal stories are also important for each generation, likely impacted by the general desire to understand how donations or support makes an impact.

Tailoring communication strategies to meet these preferences can boost engagement and participation. Focus on the channels where each generation is most active. For example, Gen Z or Millennials are more likely to explore your social media sites than Gen X or Boomers. Regardless of the generation you are trying to engage, reassure supporters that even the smallest of donations or support actions make a difference.

Also keep in mind the generational differences when drafting your messaging. Gen Z is somewhat different when it comes to charitable feelings, as they are the only generation also driven by 'sad' feelings. As a result, they are likely the only generation also receptive to messaging driving urgency, rather than messages of hope that typically focus on long-term goals.

## Show Appreciation

Expressing gratitude to supporters can foster a sense of belonging and loyalty, and this has made 'thank you' messages a key part of nonprofit engagement. Emails are the preferred method across generations, but make sure to keep them informative and relevant.

Interestingly, younger generations are much more likely to want recognition after their support than older generations, extending to recognition on social media or email newsletters or annual reports and publications. Keeping these generational differences in mind can help you to strengthen your existing relationships. For example, when drafting your annual report, consider highlighting your younger supporters. Or perhaps you could create a monthly supporter highlight post on social media—where the younger, more digitally savvy

generations go for research—to show that extra bit of appreciation. In turn, your older supporters are likely happy with a simple email recognition.

## Diversify Your Funding Options

Our latest *Status of UK Fundraising report* found that organisations with diverse funding streams are more likely to be growing in income as they are less vulnerable to external challenges. As such, relying on a variety of funding sources can make your nonprofit more resilient, while also providing increasing opportunities for spontaneous and convenient giving.

For example, while credit or debit card and cash are the most popular donation payment method across all generations, Gen Zers like digital wallets or payment apps. In turn, older generations have a higher propensity to set up direct debit payments. Enabling different donation methods means that you can cater to a variety of preferences.

Similarly, diversifying your donation options means that you can more effectively target different generations based on their preferences by tailoring your donation appeal. Fundraising events are important for Gen Zers, Millennials and Gen Xers, but you are unlikely to engage Boomers through events. Gen Z is also the generation most likely to respond to email or text appeals or phone calls. In turn, if you want to target the older generation, you should consider options for donating at a checkout or purchase opportunities where a portion of proceeds go to your organisation.

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