



# A SURVEY ABOUT **GENEROSITY IN CANADA**

*“This research is both robust and clear... It is essential for our sector leadership organizations, and Ottawa policymakers, to act on these implications for the well-being of our communities.”*

John Hallward

Our 2<sup>nd</sup> research study on this topic

**GIV3** and **SECTOR3** INSIGHTS

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# Executive Summary:

## A Survey About Generosity in Canada (February 2025)

### Key Insights

#### 1. The decline in generosity is real and requires remedial solutions.

- a) The well-measured trends in giving money to charity (as per T3010 filings and T1 Tax Returns) are a fair indication of the real decline in generosity because this giving of money to charities comprises 73+% of all financial giving to any/all recipients (pg.15).
- b) Moreover, generosity is not shifting from financial donations to less-reported forms of behaviour, such as crowdfunding, giving directly to individuals in need, or volunteering. - Those who do not donate money to charities are simply less generous (pg.17)

2. While most Canadians hold positive philanthropic sentiments (88%), believe that giving is easy (90%), trust charities (81%), and encounter frequent reminders to give (83%), **50% still agree that they could afford to be more generous** (pages 21-26).

3. The reasons for the decline in giving are **largely due to weaker convictions**. Specifically:

- a) Some individuals are feeling greater economic pressures. (However, even so, stronger convictions can overcome the monetary trade-off as we see among religious Canadians with lower income.) (pages 22, and 29-32)
- b) The decline of religiosity, a decrease in community connectedness, and the aging of the Baby Boomer generation are diminishing the intensity of generosity** (pages 36-45). These sociological shifts are contributing to:
  - i. A weakening of the motivations for giving (i.e. a reduced sense of obligation to support charities – see pages 38, 49),
  - ii. A lack of awareness of social norms related to giving (pages 51-55),
  - iii. Less mentoring for the next generation of Canadians (pg. 43),
  - iv. Weaker social interactions that typically foster generosity (pg. 64)
  - v. A decline in pro-social values, particularly among younger adults (pg.68)

4. These issues stem from **people's values and attitudes, not negative perceptions of charities** (pgs 29-32). While charities can always strengthen their trust and fundraising practices, it is unfair to place the blame for the decline in generosity solely on them.

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#### Main Implications:

1. Owing to the important role the charity sector plays in our communities; the implications are clear: **We need to pursue remedial initiatives to reverse the real declines in generosity.**
2. *The decline in generosity rests with people. In turn, remedial solutions must focus on Canadians.*
  - a) **We need to strengthen the intensity of motivations towards generosity, with a ‘conscious obligation’ to be generous.** This can be achieved by: Enhancing the social norm for generosity; Promoting prosocial values; Increasing publicity; Mentoring; Building community engagement; And leveraging insights from behavioral science.
  - b) **A public campaign** akin to ParticipACTION (for greater generosity) appears to be the necessary solution to fill the void created by the decay of religiosity and passing of Boomers.
    - a) We need to focus on the values, social norms, and ‘conscious obligations’ to be generous. These are waning.
    - b) This is more than just increasing tax incentives which do not correlate with greater giving (pg. 80).
  - c) We need to **explore ways to incent ANY AND ALL forms of greater prosocial behaviours (beyond just money to registered charities)** since all forms of behaviour improve our communities and help those in need.
3. Additionally, there is an opportunity to guide charities in improving their fundraising strategies.
  - a) Key characteristics for charities to leverage include **the optimization of solicitation frequency, leveraging urgency to act, and leveraging personal/emotional narratives relevant to the donor.** (pages 82-84)
    - Fundraising is about the donor and not the charity. - Donors wish to make a difference.
  - b) Since giving is mostly dependent on trust, the narrative about effective altruism, impact measurement, operating efficiencies, etc., are mostly relevant to only a small sub-segment of donors. **Making ‘knowledge’ more important brings a risk of making giving more complex than donors care for, less emotionally engaging, and possibly intimidating.**