2025

Give.org Donor Trust Special Report

Privacy and Security

Give.org

BBB. BBB WISE GIVING ALLIANCE

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Introduction: Privacy and Security

Concerns about data privacy and security have become increasingly prominent over the past decade, as more aspects of our lives move online, and reports of data breaches regularly make headlines. At the same time, charities increasingly rely on digital platforms for donations and outreach.

As charities strive to foster trust and build stronger relationships with donors, understanding public attitudes around data privacy and security—and addressing these proactively—is critical. **In this *Give.org Donor Trust Special Report*, we explore (1) the importance of adequate data protection to potential donors; (2) preferences and concerns regarding donor privacy and security in the giving process; and (3) public attitudes toward privacy policies, cookie preferences, the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in donor prospecting, and social media.**

The National Conference of State Legislatures estimates that at least 25 states have laws addressing data security. These laws often require organizations that handle personal information to "implement and maintain reasonable security procedures and practices... and to protect the personal information from unauthorized access, destruction, use, modification, or disclosure."[1] State regulations may also outline the steps charities must

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[1] A summary of privacy and security laws by state is offered by the National Conference of State Legislators at: https://www.ncsl.org/technology-and-communication/data-security-laws-private-sector

take in the event of a data breach or theft. Still, cybersecurity remains a critical concern for both organizations and the public. According to the Pew Research Center, Americans are uneasy about their personal data: "Roughly one-quarter of Americans (26%) say someone has put fraudulent charges on their debit or credit card in the last 12 months [and] 11% have had their email or social media accounts taken over without permission… Roughly four-in-ten Americans (42%) say they are very worried about companies selling their information to others without them knowing or people stealing their identity or personal information (38%)."[2] This growing unease about data protection extends to the charitable sector. As noted in an article by The Chronicle of Philanthropy, *"Why Fundraisers Need to Double Down on Data Security,"* security should be a top priority for fundraisers. As stated by T. Clay Buck, a fundraising consultant, for the article, "If we are going to honor and respect our donors, data privacy and security must be at the forefront of our conversations, given the world we live in today."[3]

Our results reveal that data protection is a key accountability concern for potential donors, influencing their willingness to engage with a charity they have not supported before. Moreover, if donor data is compromised or mishandled, they may choose to discontinue support.

In this report, we use data gathered through the December 2024 Donor Trust Survey, with more than 2,200 adult respondents in the United States and 1,100 additional Canadian respondents. BBB®'s Give.org[4] believes higher 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.[5]

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[2] Pew Research Center, "How Americans View Data Privacy," October 2023. Available at: https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2023/10/18/how-americans-view-data-privacy/
[3] Haynes, E. (2023). "Why Fundraisers Need to Double Down on Data Security." *The Chronicle of Philanthropy,* July 11, 2023.
[4] Also known as BBB Wise Giving Alliance or BBB WGA.
[5] 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. Special topics have included disaster relief; sexual harassment; COVID-19; charity impact; and now diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Summary of Results

The BBB Wise Giving Alliance (BBB WGA) commissioned an electronic survey of more than 2,200 adults across the United States and more than 1,100 adults in Canada. Below are our key findings.

Importance of Adequate Protection of Donor Information

- 44.9% of participants consider the protection of donor information to be highly important in their giving process, ranking third among key accountability factors, behind how the charity spends its money (61.1%) and whether the charity's appeals are truthful, accurate, and not misleading (57.9%).

- Overall, participants are more likely to trust charities over businesses to keep their information private and secure, with 48.1% trusting charities more and 23.0% trusting businesses more.

Donor Privacy Attitudes

- Only 6.5% say they are "not at all concerned" about a charity sharing their information. When asked to imagine contributing to a charity they have not supported before, most participants (62.0%) say they are "very concerned" (26.8%) or "somewhat concerned" (35.2%) that the charity might share their name, address, email, or phone number outside the organization.
  - While older generations[6] are more likely to express concern, across generations, most participants say they are very concerned or somewhat concerned that a charity might share their information outside the organization. For example, 26.8% of Gen Zers are very concerned, and another 32.5% are somewhat concerned, that the charity might share their information.

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[6] Generational ranges are below. For more details, see Methodology section.

Generation	Year Born	Age (in 2023)
Generation Z (18 and older)	1998 to 2004	18 to 26
Millennial Generation	1981 to 1997	27 to 43
Generation X	1965 to 1980	44 to 59
Baby Boomers	1946 to 1964	60 to 78
Matures	1928 to 1945	79 and above

- When asked to rate the importance of a charity not sharing different types of personal information without explicit consent, participants place the greatest importance on personal financial information (65.7%).

- More than 1 in 3 participants (35.5%) report that they have asked a charity not to share their name or other personal information outside of the organization.
  - Younger participants are more likely to say they have asked a charity not to share their personal information, with 46.1% of Gen Zers as compared to 29.0% of Matures.

- Overall, two-thirds of participants (66.4%) rate the importance of charities making it easy for them to inform the organization when they do not want their personal information shared as 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale.
  - Older generations are more likely to consider it highly important for charities to make it easy for donors to request that their information not be shared outside the organization. For example, 84.9% of Matures, as compared to 48.2% of Gen Zers, say it is highly important that they can easily inform the charity not to share their information.

- When asked to imagine wanting to prevent a charity from sharing their information, participants prefer to inform the charity by checking a box on a return card (32.8%), completing a form on the charity's website (27.6%), or sending an email (16.2%).
  - Older participants are most likely to prefer checking a box on a return card, with 48.4% of Matures as compared to 27.1% of Gen Zers. Younger participants are relatively more likely to prefer sending an email to the charity, with 26.4% of Gen Zers as compared to 8.6% of Matures.

Donor Data Security Attitudes

- Just over half (56.1%) of survey respondents say they understand the meaning of "data security."

- When individuals who report understanding the meaning of "data security" are asked to consider possible definitions, they are divided on how best to describe the term. 52.2% say "data security" is best defined as "protecting information from unauthorized access, use, or disclosure," while 31.1% say "not sharing information with other organizations," and 11.1% say "making sure information is transferred during a transaction."
  - The lack of clarity around the term "data security" held across generations, with less than 3 out of 5 in each generation reporting they understand the term.
  - The divide in how to best define "data security" was most pronounced among Gen Zers, with 34.3% defining it as "protecting information from unauthorized access, use, or disclosure," 32.2% saying "not sharing information with other organizations," and 24.5% choosing "ensuring information is securely transferred during a transaction."

- When asked to imagine contributing to a charity they have not supported in the past, most participants (68.8%) report being "very concerned" (30.6%) or "somewhat concerned" (38.3%) that their information may be hacked or stolen.
  - Across generations, most participants—ranging from 73.0% of Gen Xers to 65.4% of Gen Zers—say they are either very concerned or somewhat concerned that the information they provide while contributing to a charity they have not supported before may be hacked or stolen.

- When asked to imagine that a charity they personally support appears in the news for being hacked and having data stolen, most participants (79.8%) would stop (27.8%) or hold off (52.0%) on future giving.
  - Across generations, most participants—ranging from 83.5% of Boomers to 77.4% of Matures—say they would hold or stop contributions to a charity they support upon learning that the charity has been hacked.

- Among those who would stop or hold giving to a charity after learning it has been hacked, the following actions would inspire most confidence in giving again: receiving a message from the charity about new data security improvements (28.5%), the charity updating its privacy policy online to reflect enhanced security measures (24.5%), and third-party verification that the data is secure (22.1%).
  - After a charity has been hacked, Matures are most confident to give again based on third-party verification (29.0%). Gen Zers are most likely to give again once the charity updates its privacy policy (23.6%) or sends a message informing them about new data security improvements (21.8%).

- When contributing to a charity they have not supported before, participants report feeling most confident that their information will be secure when they see a padlock symbol[7] on the charity's donation page (23.7%), based on the charity's reputation (16.9%), or when the charity's website appears highly professional (16.6%).
  - Matures, Boomers, and Gen Xers are most confident that their information will be secure when they see a lock symbol on the charity's donation page—ranging from 33.3% of Matures to 25.6% of Gen Xers. Gen Zers (28.9%) and Millennials (22.4%) are most confident when the charity's website is very professional.

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[7] A padlock symbol on a charity donation page indicates the use of encryption technology to secure data transmitted between the browser and the charity's server. This padlock signifies that an SSL certificate has been obtained through a paid or free Certificate Authority (CA), which verifies domain ownership and issues the certificate. CAs offer different levels of validation but do not assess the intent or trustworthiness of the domain owner. This survey did not examine the public's understanding or perceptions of what the padlock symbol represents.

Privacy Policy and Cookie Preferences

- More than 1 in 4 participants (26.8%) report reviewing a privacy policy on a charity website in the past year.
  - Older generations are least likely to report reviewing a charity's privacy policy, with only 17.2% of Matures reporting they did so during the past year.

- When asked to imagine visiting a charity's privacy policy, approximately two-thirds of participants consider each of the following components to be highly important: (a) outlining the security measures the charity has in place to protect personal information, (b) specifying what information is collected, (c) explaining how the charity uses the collected information, (d) detailing how to inform the charity if a user does not want their information shared, and (e) providing instructions on how to contact the charity to review the personal information collected.
  - Older participants are more likely to attribute high importance to each of the privacy policy components. For example, 87.5% of Matures consider it highly important that a charity's privacy policy details how to inform the charity if a user does not want their information shared, as compared to 64.5% of Gen Xers or 40.2% of Gen Zers.

- Websites can use cookies to record information about a user's visit, customize advertisement and appeals, and store targeting data on the user's device. When it comes to charities' use of cookies, only 30.0% say they don't mind charities automatically using cookies without explicit permission, while 47.3% prefer to opt in.
  - The portion of people who prefer opting-in over opting-out is similar across generations. For example, 33.2% of Gen Zers, as compared to 26.9% of Matures, say they prefer opting out.

AI and Social Media

- Charities can use AI to identify potential supporters based on their online behaviors and preferences, and to personalize a solicitation approach accordingly. When asked to imagine that a charity uses AI to find them as potential supporters, only 21.7% of participants say their reaction is positive.
  - Younger generations are more likely to report a positive reaction to a charity using AI to find them, with 40.7% of Gen Zers compared to 8.9% of Boomers reporting a positive reaction.

- When asked to imagine that a charity uses AI to identify the participant as a potential donor, 44.3% say they would be less likely to contribute.
  - Younger participants are less likely to be discouraged from contributing when a charity uses AI to find them, with 27.9% of Gen Zers as compared to 68.8% of Matures reporting that they would be less likely to contribute to the charity.

- Social media can be an important communication and solicitation tool for charities. When considering connecting with a charity on social media, most participants (73.2%) say they are either "very concerned" (38.6%) or "somewhat concerned" (34.7%) about the charity gathering their information or intruding into their profile.
  - Younger participants are less likely to be "very concerned" about charities using their information or intruding into their profile in a social media platform, with 31.8% of Gen Zers compared to 66.7% of Matures expressing such a concern.

Canadian Results

- As with U.S. participants, protection of donor information is a top priority for Canadians during the giving process. Among Canadian participants, 47.6% (compared to 44.9% of U.S. participants) consider the protection of donor information to be highly important in their giving process, ranking third among key accountability factors, behind how the charity spends its money (63.2% among Canadians and 61.1% among U.S. participants) and whether the charity's appeals are truthful, accurate, and not misleading (56.7% among Canadians and 57.9% among U.S. participants).

- Both U.S. and Canadian participants report being "very concerned" (24.5% of Canadians and 26.8% of U.S. participants) or "somewhat concerned" (38.4% of Canadians and 35.2% of U.S. participants) that the charity may share their information outside the organization.

- Half (50.0%) of Canadian survey respondents say they understand the meaning of "data security." Compared to their U.S. counterparts, Canadians are less split about the meaning of "data security." 56.8% say "data security" is best defined as "protecting information from unauthorized access, use, or disclosure," while 28.9% say "not sharing information with other organizations," and 8.2 % say "making sure information is transferred during a transaction."

- Both U.S. and Canadian participants report being "very concerned" (25.8% of Canadians and 30.6% of U.S. participants) or "somewhat concerned" (44.3% of Canadians and 38.3% of U.S. participants) that their information may be hacked or stolen when contributing to a charity they have not previously donated to.

- When asked to imagine that a charity they personally support has been hacked, participants in the United States and Canada agree that they would stop or hold on future giving. 52.7% of Canadians would hold off on donating until they are satisfied that the issue is resolved, and another 28.8% would no longer donate to the charity.

- When it comes to charity use of cookies, only 25.7% of Canadians, as compared to 30.0% of U.S. participants, say they don't mind charities automatically using cookies without explicit permission.

- When asked to imagine that a charity uses AI to find them as potential supporters, both U.S. and Canadian participants are skeptical. Only 19.2% of Canadians and only 21.7% of U.S. participants say their reaction is positive.

- When considering connecting with a charity on social media, most Canadian participants (74.5%) express concern about the charity gathering their information or intruding into their profile. Specifically, 38.0% are "very concerned," and 36.5% are "somewhat concerned" that the charity might gather their information or intrude on their profile. These concerns align closely with those of U.S. respondents, where 38.6% are "very concerned," and 34.7% are "somewhat concerned."

In addition to producing evaluative reports on charities, BBB's Give.org tracks donor beliefs, feelings, and behavioral intentions related to charity trust and generosity through annual donor surveys. These surveys are the foundation of Give.org Donor Trust Reports.

Importance of Adequate Protection of Donor Information

45% percent of participants consider the protection of donor information to be highly important in their giving process, ranking third among key accountability factors.

#1 How the charity spends its money
61%

#2 Whether the charity's appeals are truthful, accurate, and not misleading
58%

#3 Whether the charity adequately protects donor information
45%

#4 Whether the charity's website includes information about their programs, finances, and governance
45%

#5 Whether the charity measures and communicates its achievements
40%

#6 Whether a charity's board is providing adequate oversight over the staff and operations
34%

#7 How the charity's policies and procedures address diversity, equity, and inclusion
34%
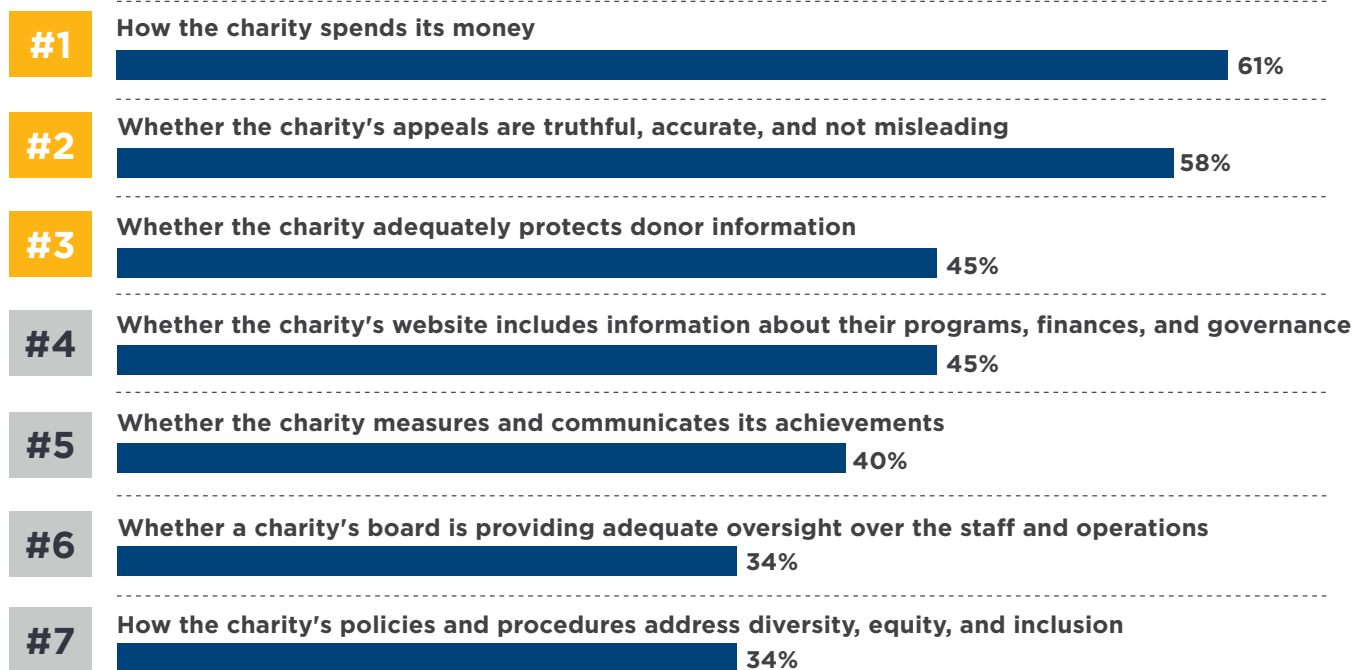
■ Portion of participants rating importance as 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale

Overall, comparing business to charities, participants are more likely to trust charities to keep their information private and secure:

29% Not sure

Trust charities more than businesses to keep information private and secure

23% Trust businesses more than charity to keep information private and secure

48%
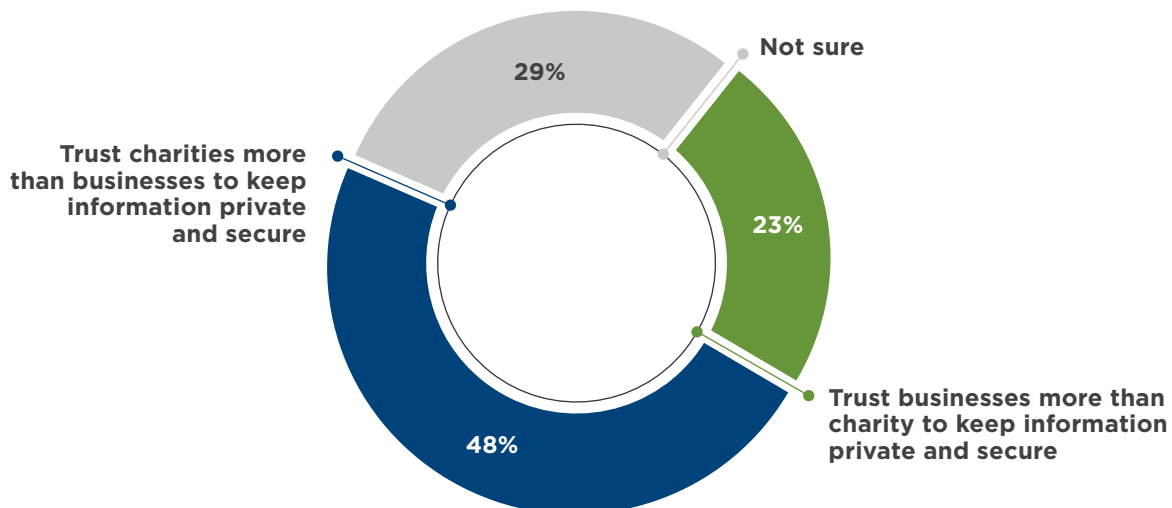
Donor Privacy Attitudes

When asked to imagine contributing to a charity they have not supported in the past, participants are likely to report being "very concerned" or "somewhat concerned" that the charity may share their name, address, email, or phone number outside the organization.

27% Very concerned	35% Somewhat concerned	24% Not too concerned	7% Not at all concerned	7% Don't know

While older generations are more likely to express concern, across generations, most participants say they are very concerned or somewhat concerned that a charity may share their information outside the organization.
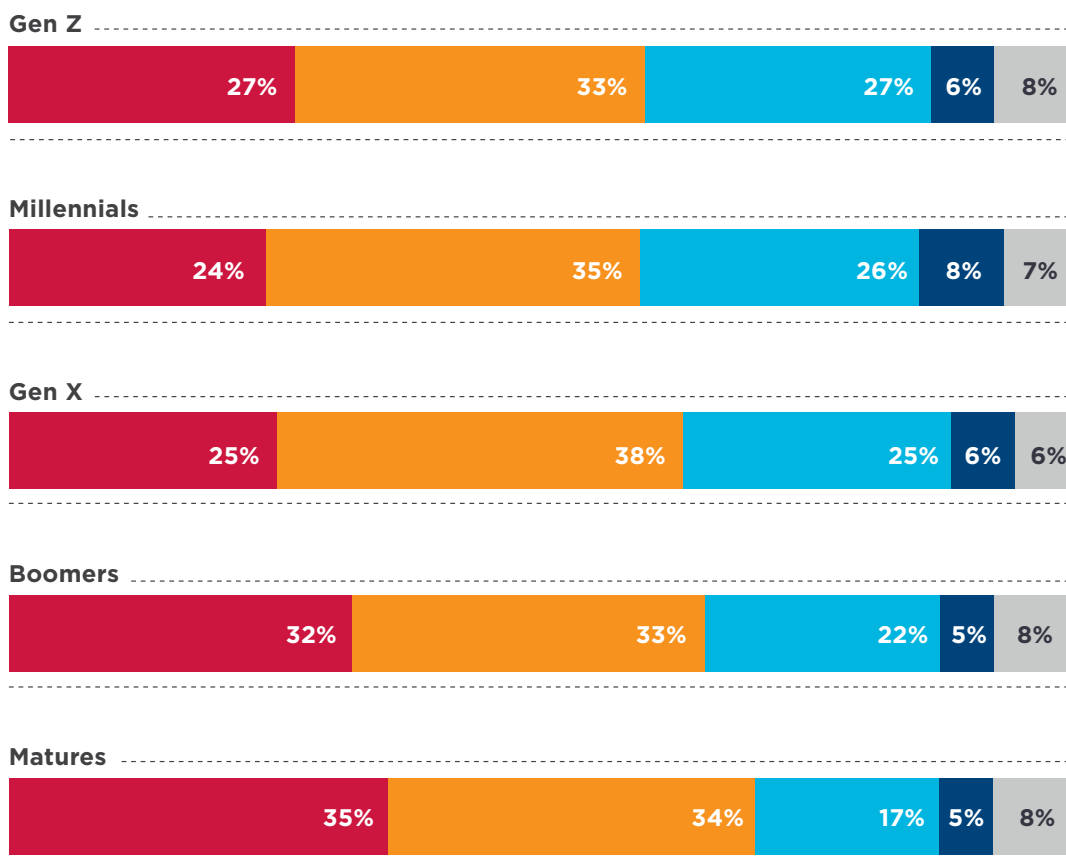
Gen Z

27%	33%	27%	6%	8%

Millennials

24%	35%	26%	8%	7%

Gen X

25%	38%	25%	6%	6%

Boomers

32%	33%	22%	5%	8%

Matures

35%	34%	17%	5%	8%

■ Very concerned ■ Somewhat concerned ■ Not too concerned ■ Not at all concerned ■ Don't know

When asked to rate the importance of a charity not sharing different types of personal information without explicit consent, participants place the greatest importance on the following:

Personal financial information

66%

Email address

60%

Physical address

60%

Health-related information, when applicable

57%

Data about the amounts and frequency of donations

52%

Name

45%

Communications with charity representatives regarding program participation

44%
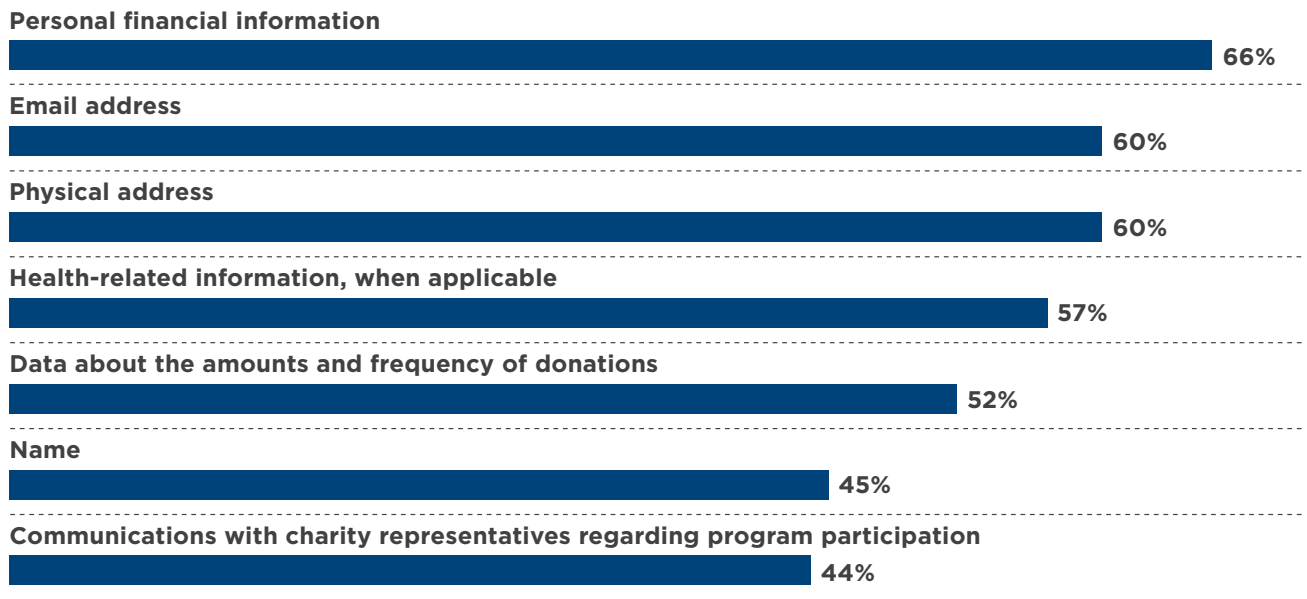
■ **Portion of participants rating importance as 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale**

Older participants are more likely to say it is highly important that the charity does not share their information.

Personal financial information
- 83%
- 76%
- 67%
- 61%
- 47%

Email address
- 75%
- 65%
- 51%
- 45%
- 37%

Physical address
- 76%
- 70%
- 59%
- 55%
- 46%

Health-related information, when applicable
- 72%
- 65%
- 56%
- 54%
- 41%

Data about the amounts and frequency of donations
- 69%
- 66%
- 52%
- 44%
- 33%

Name
- 66%
- 57%
- 44%
- 38%
- 31%

Communications with charity representatives regarding program participation
- 57%
- 54%
- 42%
- 40%
- 35%

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

More than 1 in 3 participants report that they have asked a charity not to share their name or other personal information outside of the organization:

Have not asked a charity not to share their personal information
46%

Have asked a charity not to share their personal information
36%

Not sure
19%

Younger participants are more likely to say they have asked a charity not to share their name or other personal information.

Gen Z
| 46% | 37% | 17% |

Millennials
| 36% | 45% | 18% |

Gen X
| 35% | 47% | 18% |

Boomers
| 32% | 50% | 19% |

Matures
| 29% | 44% | 27% |

Have asked a charity not to share their personal information ■ Have not asked a charity not to share their personal information ■ Not sure

Overall, two-thirds of participants rate the importance of charities making it easy for them to inform the organization when they do not want their personal information shared as 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale.

3%
Importance of 1 to 2

30%
Importance of 3 to 8

66%
Importance of 9 to 10

Older generations are more likely to consider it highly important for charities to make it easy for donors to request that their information not be shared outside the organization.

85%
79%
68%
59%
48%

■ **Matures**
■ **Boomers**
■ **Gen X**
■ **Millennials**
■ **Gen Z**
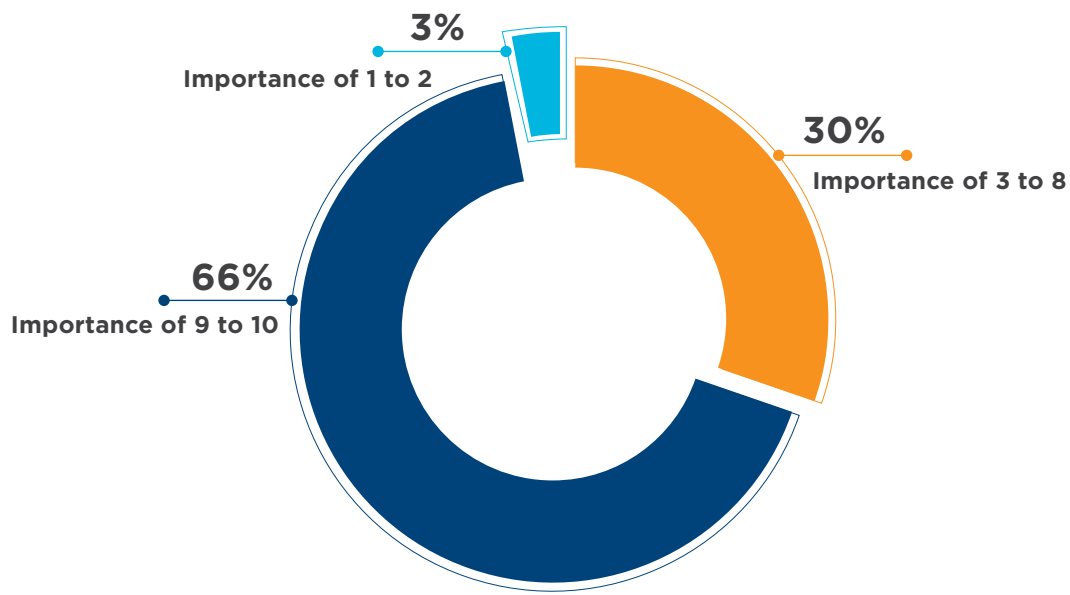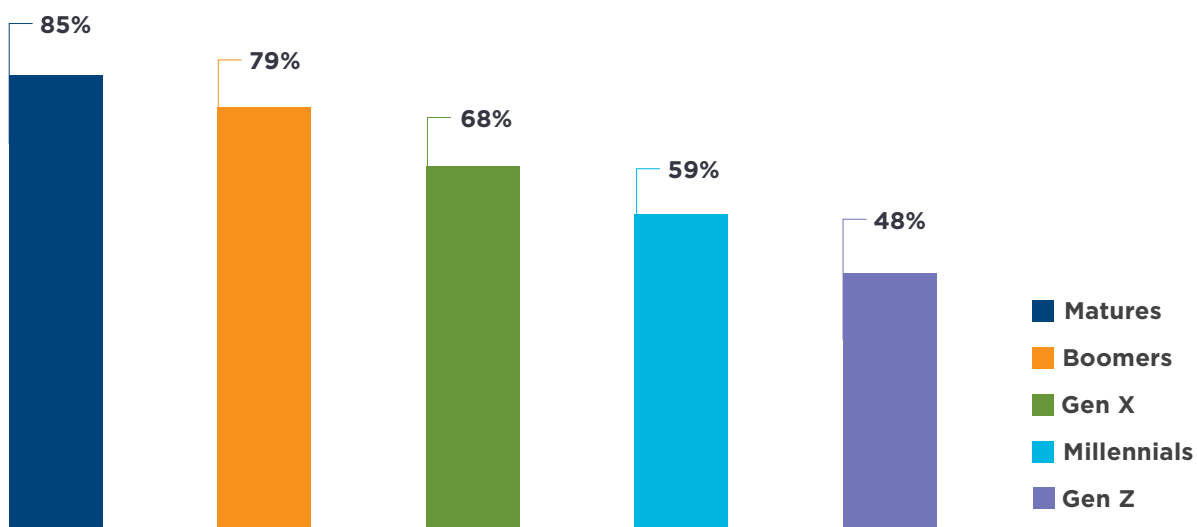
Rate the importance of charities making it easy for donors to inform them when they do not want their personal information shared as 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale.

When asked to imagine that they want to prevent a charity from sharing their information, participants say they prefer to inform the charity as follows:

32%

Checking a box on a return card in a mailed appeal

28%

Filling out a form on the charity's website

16%

Sending an email to the charity

14%

Not sure

10%

Calling the charity

DO NOT SHARE MY INFORMATION

Older participants are most likely to prefer checking a box on a return card in a mailed appeal. Younger participants are relatively more likely to prefer sending an email to the charity.

	Filling out a form on the charity's website	Checking a box on a return card in a mailed appeal	Sending email to the charity	Calling the charity	Not sure
Matures	26%	48%	9%	6%	11%
Boomers	27%	35%	11%	12%	15%
Gen X	30%	33%	14%	9%	14%
Millennials	28%	29%	18%	10%	15%
Gen Z	25%	27%	26%	10%	11%

■ Matures ■ Boomers ■ Gen X ■ Millennials ■ Gen Z
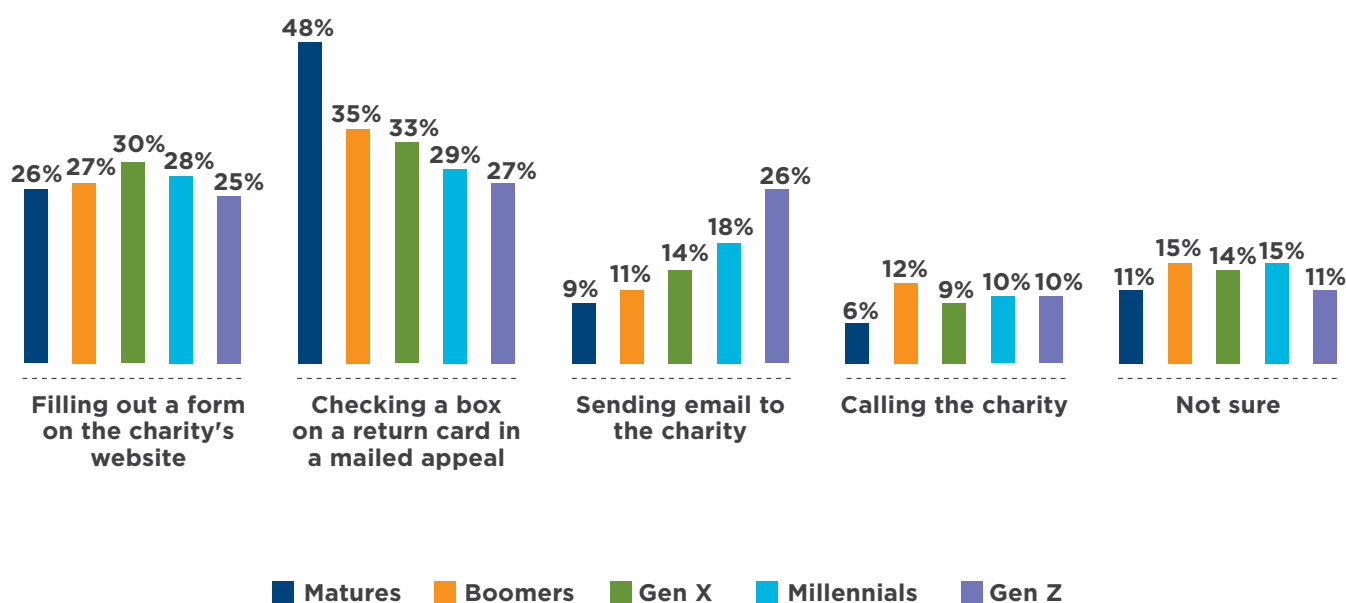
Donor Data Security Attitudes

Just over half of survey respondents say they understand the meaning of "data security."

Not sure

21%

No

23%

56%

Yes
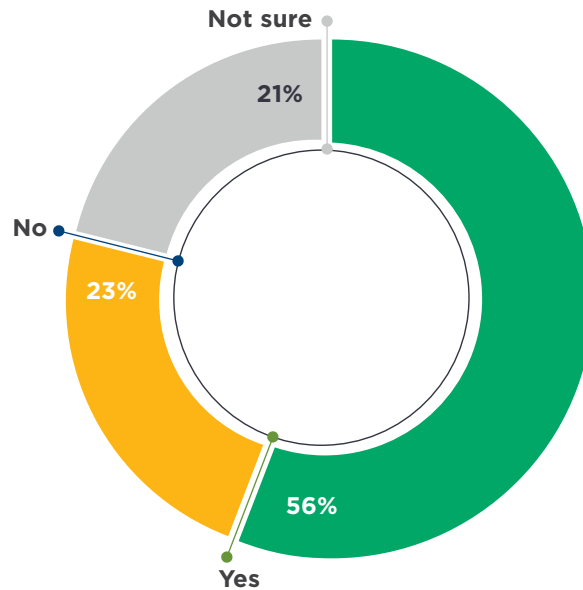
When people who report knowing the meaning of "data security" are asked to consider possible definitions, they are split about how to best describe the term.

52%
Protecting my information from unauthorized access, use, or disclosure

31%
Not sharing my information with other organizations

11%
Making sure my information is transferred during a transaction

5%
Not having unauthorized access to information on my devices

1%
Don't know

The lack of clarity around the term "data security" held across generations, with less than 3 out of 5 in each generation reporting that they understand the term.
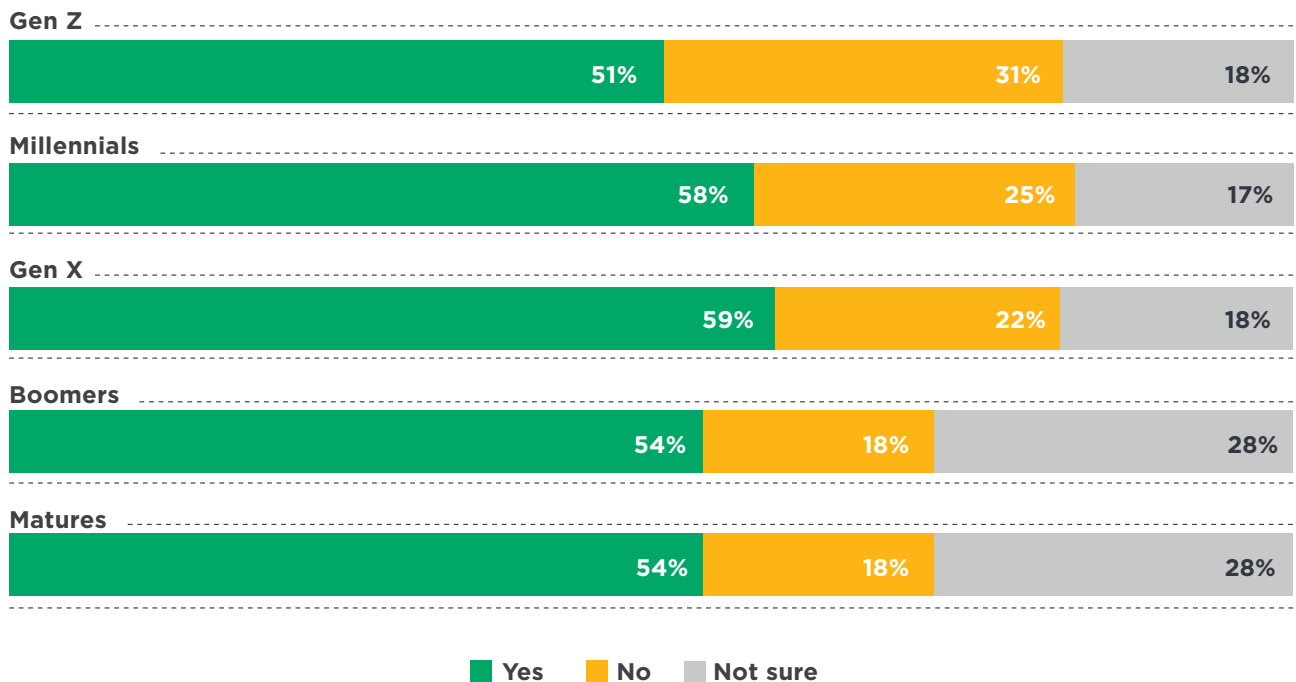
Gen Z

51%	31%	18%

Millennials

58%	25%	17%

Gen X

59%	22%	18%

Boomers

54%	18%	28%

Matures

54%	18%	28%

■ Yes   ■ No   ■ Not sure

The divide in how to best define "data security" was most pronounced among Gen Zers.

Gen Z

34%	32%	25%	6%	3%

Millennials

47%	30%	18%	4%	1%

Gen X

57%	30%	7%	5%	1%

Boomers

62%	30%	3%	4%	1%

Matures

46%	42%		8%	2% / 2%

■ **Protecting my information from unauthorized access, use, or disclosure**   ■ **Not sharing my information with other organizations**   ■ **Making sure my information is transferred during a transaction**

■ **Not having unauthorized access to information on my devices**   ■ **Don't know**

When asked to imagine contributing to a charity they have not supported in the past, most participants report being "very concerned" or "somewhat concerned" that their information may be hacked or stolen.

38%
Somewhat concerned

21%
Not too concerned

31%
Very concerned

4%
Not at all concerned

6%
Don't Know

Across generations, most participants say they are either very concerned or somewhat concerned that the information they provide while contributing to a charity they have not supported before may be hacked or stolen.

Very concerned
- Matures: 29%
- Boomers: 35%
- Gen X: 29%
- Millennials: 28%
- Gen Z: 31%

Somewhat concerned
- Matures: 38%
- Boomers: 37%
- Gen X: 44%
- Millennials: 36%
- Gen Z: 35%

Not too concerned
- Matures: 22%
- Boomers: 16%
- Gen X: 19%
- Millennials: 24%
- Gen Z: 26%

Not at all concerned
- Matures: 0%
- Boomers: 3%
- Gen X: 4%
- Millennials: 6%
- Gen Z: 4%

Don't know
- Matures: 12%
- Boomers: 8%
- Gen X: 4%
- Millennials: 6%
- Gen Z: 5%

Legend: Matures | Boomers | Gen X | Millennials | Gen Z

When asked to imagine that a charity they personally support appears in the news for being hacked and having data stolen, most participants would stop or hold off on future giving.

52% "I would hold off on donating until I am satisfied that the issue is resolved.

28% I would no longer donate to that charity.

11% I would likely continue to support them.

9% Not sure
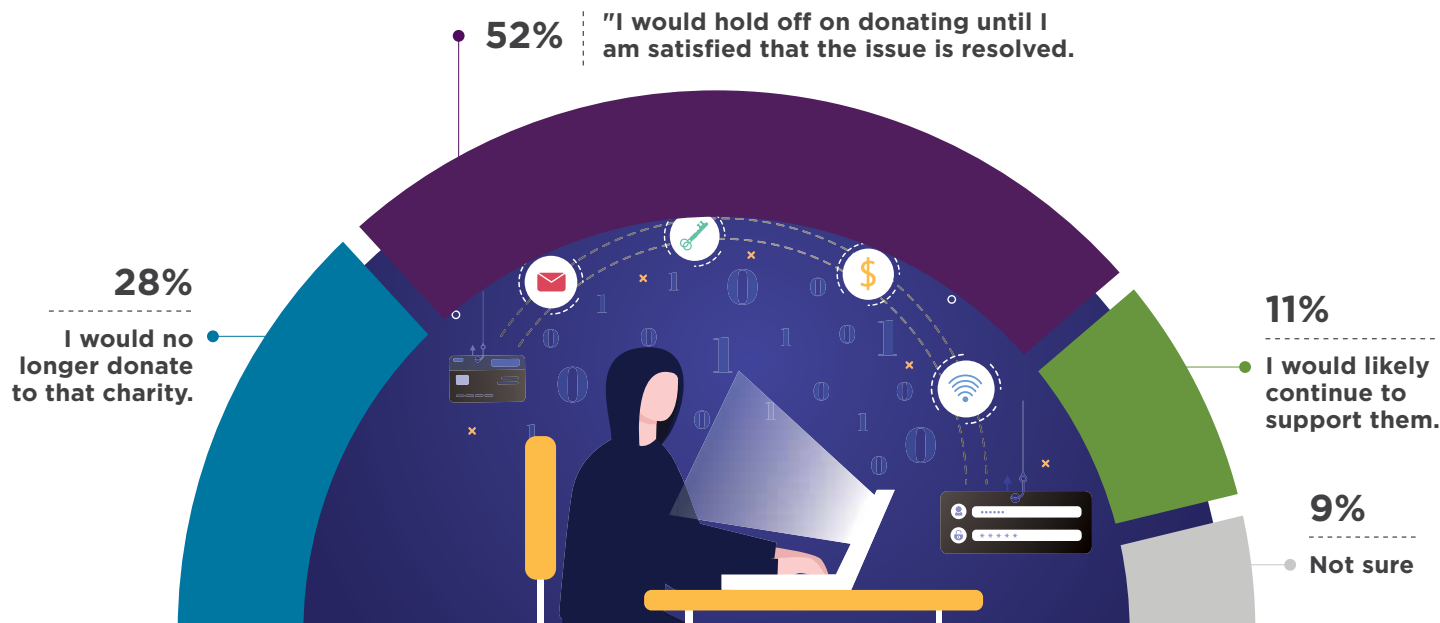
Across generations, most participants say they would hold or stop contributions to a charity they support upon learning that the charity has been hacked.

Gen Z

| 30% | 49% | 14% | 7% |

Millennials

| 24% | 51% | 15% | 9% |

Gen X

| 27% | 55% | 9% | 10% |

Boomers

| 31% | 52% | 8% | 9% |

Matures

| 26% | 52% | 12% | 11% |

- I would no longer donate to that charity
- I would hold off on donating until I am satisfied that the issue is resolved
- I would likely continue to support them
- Not sure
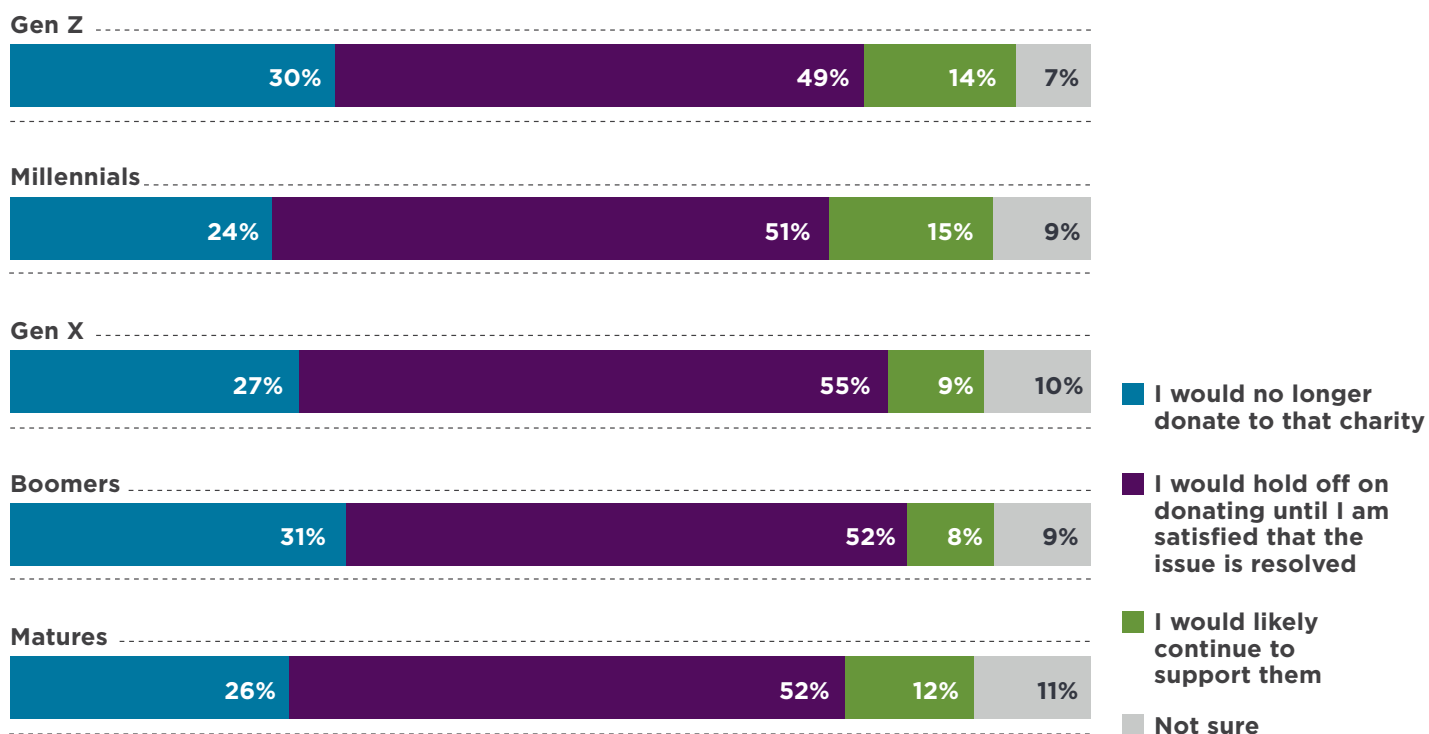
Among those who would stop or hold giving to a charity after learning it has been hacked, the following actions would inspire confidence in giving again:

The charity sends you a message informing you of new data security improvements.
28%

The charity updates its privacy policy online describing improved security measures.
25%

Verification from a third party that data is secure
22%

Not sure 10%

There is no action the charity could take to give me confidence to give again.
9%

After prudent time, I would feel safe to give again.
6%

After a charity has been hacked, Matures are most confident to give again based on third-party verification. Gen Zers are most likely to give again once the charity updates its privacy policy or sends a message informing them about new data security improvements.
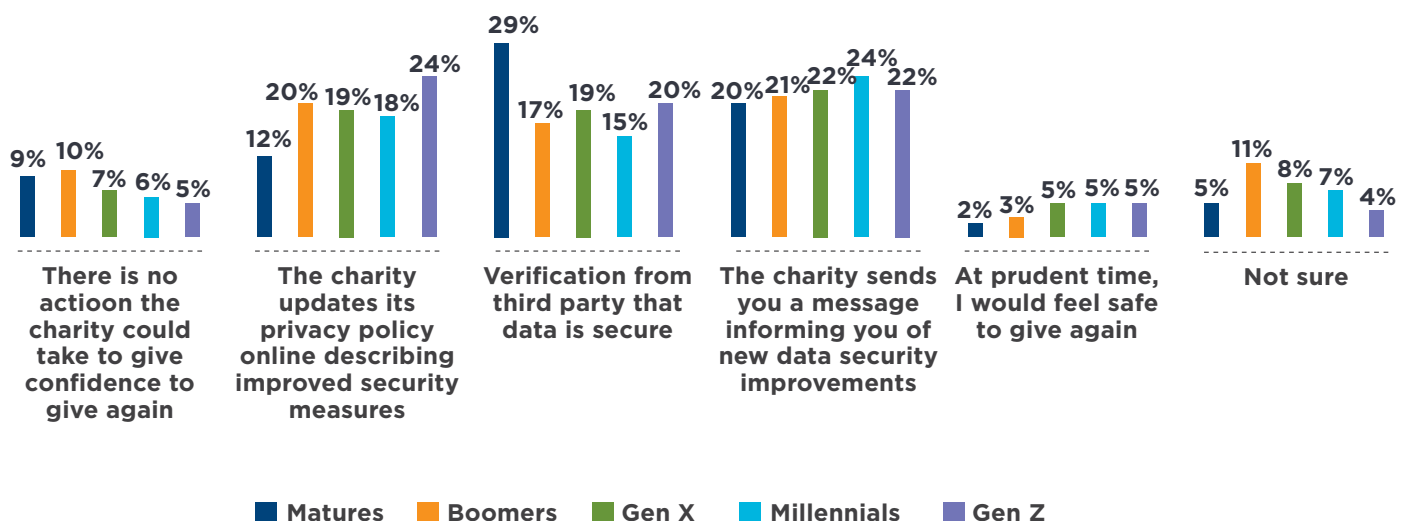
	There is no actioon the charity could take to give confidence to give again	The charity updates its privacy policy online describing improved security measures	Verification from third party that data is secure	The charity sends you a message informing you of new data security improvements	At prudent time, I would feel safe to give again	Not sure
Matures	9%	12%	29%	20%	2%	5%
Boomers	10%	20%	17%	21%	3%	11%
Gen X	7%	19%	19%	22%	5%	8%
Millennials	6%	18%	15%	24%	5%	7%
Gen Z	5%	24%	20%	22%	5%	4%

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

When contributing to a charity they have not supported before, participants report feeling most confident that their information will be secure based on:
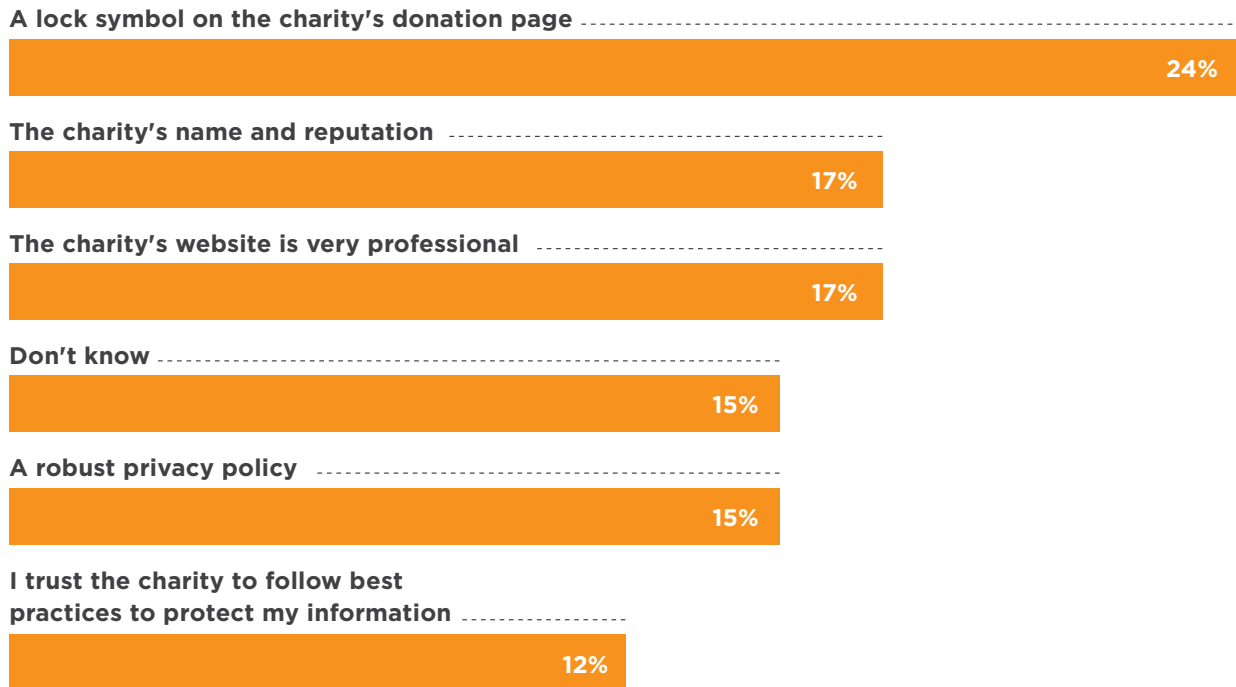
A lock symbol on the charity's donation page
24%

The charity's name and reputation
17%

The charity's website is very professional
17%

Don't know
15%

A robust privacy policy
15%

I trust the charity to follow best practices to protect my information
12%

Matures, Boomers, and Gen Xers are most confident that their information will be secure when they see a lock symbol on the charity's donation page. Gen Zers and Millennials are most confident when the charity's website is very professional.

	Matures	Boomers	Gen X	Millennials	Gen Z
I trust the charity to follow best practices to protect my information	18%	15%	11%	10%	10%
A robust privacy policy	6%	15%	18%	15%	13%
The charity's website is very professional	11%	9%	12%	22%	29%
The charity's name and reputation	12%	14%	17%	19%	18%
A lock symbol on the charity's donation page	33%	26%	26%	19%	24%
Don't know	19%	20%	16%	14%	7%
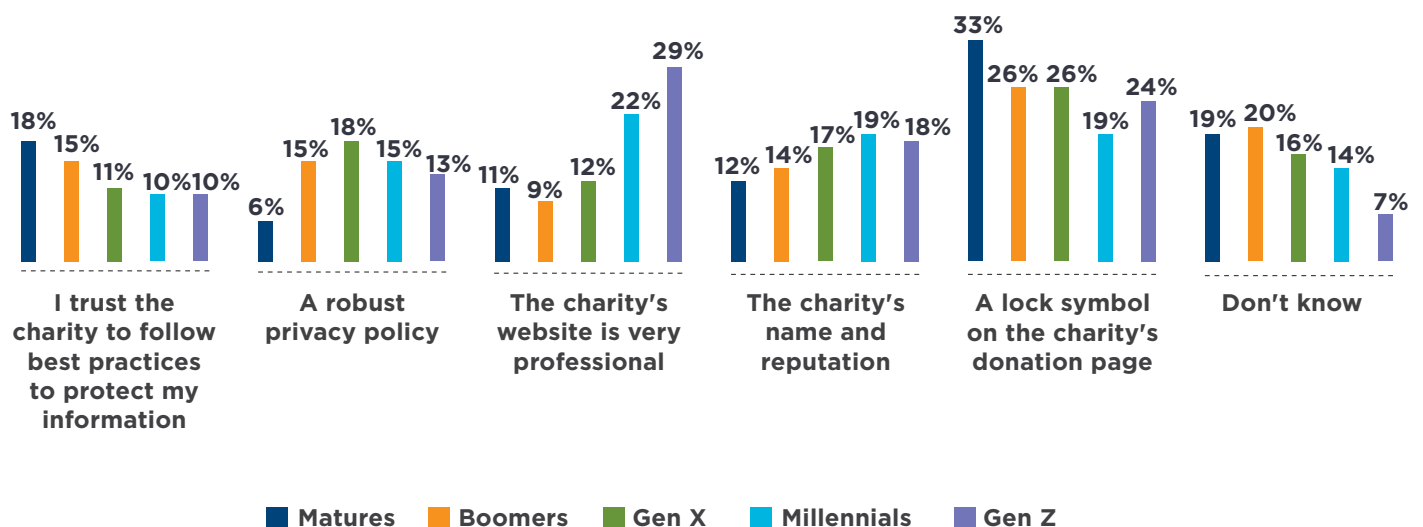
Privacy Policy and Cookie Preferences

About 1 in 4 participants (27%) report reviewing a privacy policy on a charity website in the past year.
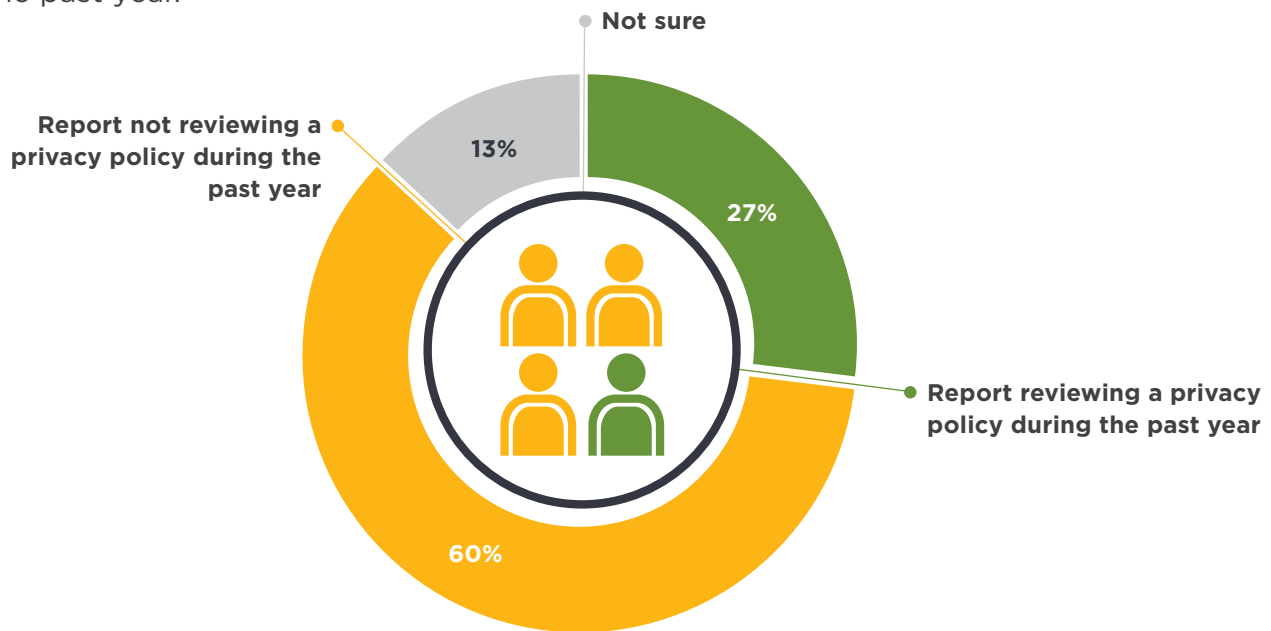
Not sure — 13%

Report not reviewing a privacy policy during the past year — 60%

Report reviewing a privacy policy during the past year — 27%

Older generations are least likely to report reviewing a charity's privacy policy.

Gen Z
| 44% | 43% | 13% |

Millennials
| 32% | 57% | 11% |

Gen X
| 23% | 63% | 14% |

Boomers
| 19% | 67% | 14% |

Matures
| 17% | 67% | 16% |

■ Report reviewing a privacy policy during the past year   ■ Report not reviewing a privacy policy during the past year   ■ Not sure
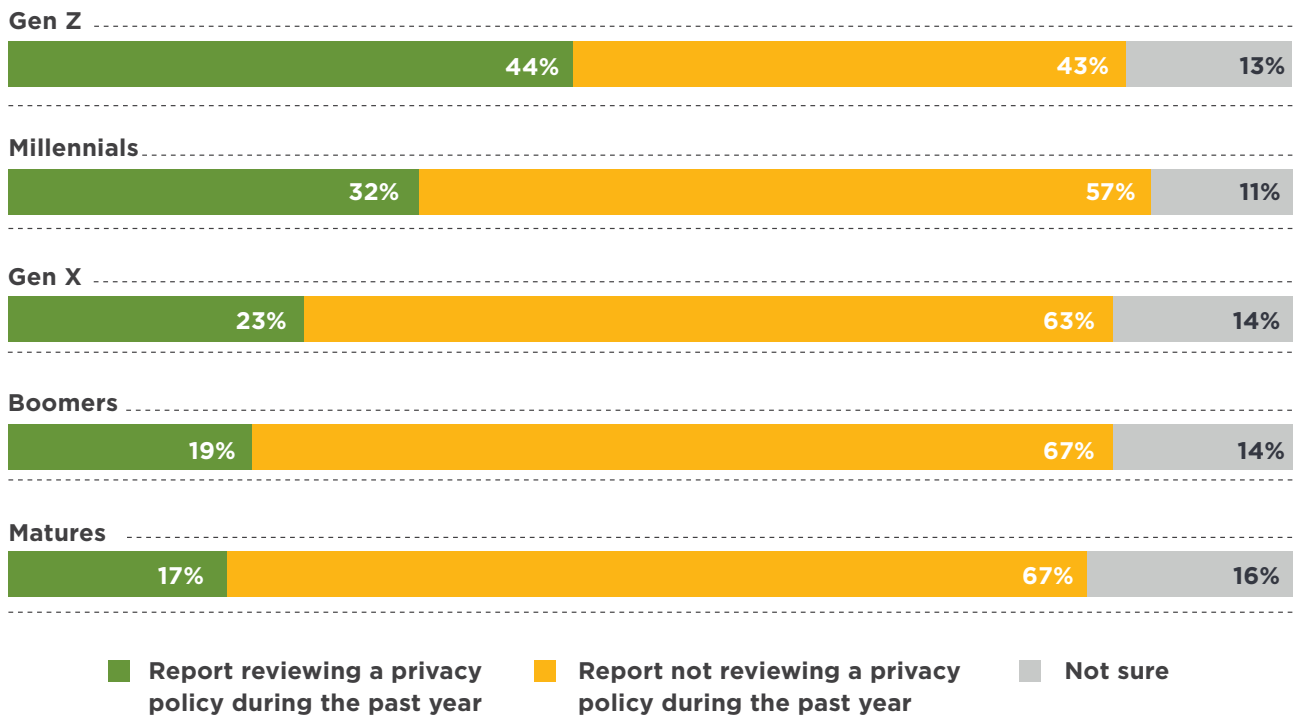
When asked to imagine visiting a charity's privacy policy, approximately two-thirds of participants consider the following components to be highly important:

69%	68%	66%	66%	65%
What security measures the charity has in place to protect personal information	How the charity uses any information collected about you	What information the charity is collecting	How to inform the charity if you do not want your information to be shared outside the organization	How to contact the charity to review personal information collected

Older participants are more likely to attribute high importance to each of the privacy policy components.

What security measures the charity has in place to protect personal information
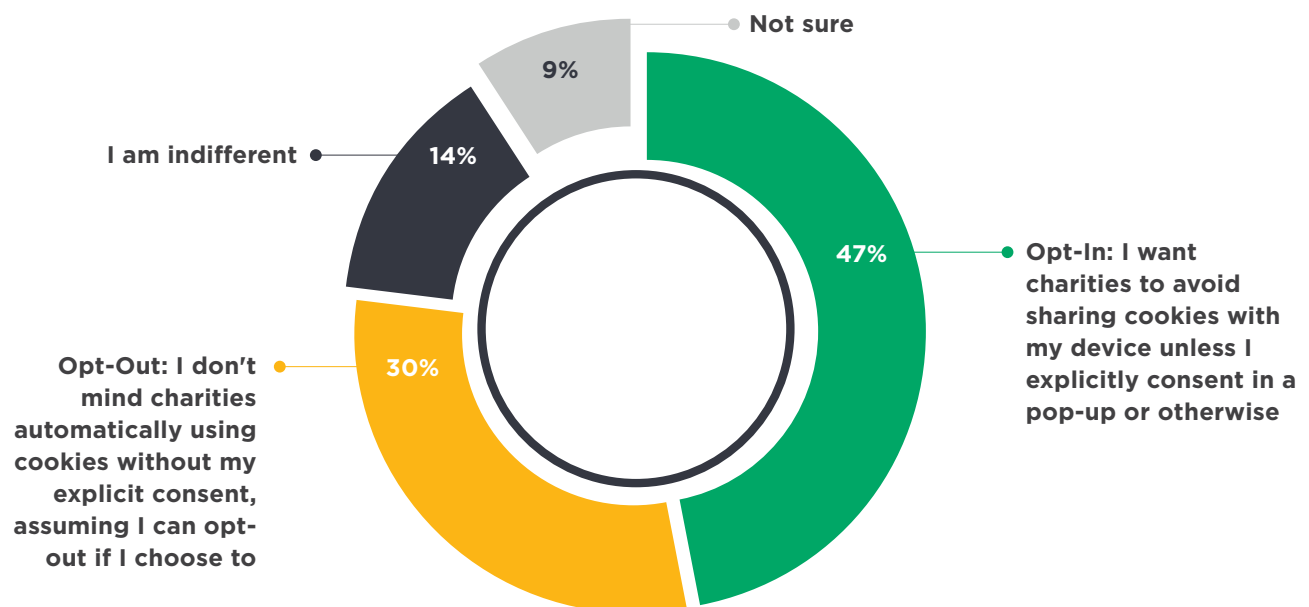- Matures: 81%
- Boomers: 78%
- Gen X: 69%
- Millennials: 61%
- Gen Z: 48%

How the charity uses any information collected about you
- Matures: 75%
- Boomers: 84%
- Gen X: 70%
- Millennials: 62%
- Gen Z: 46%

What information the charity is collecting
- Matures: 75%
- Boomers: 79%
- Gen X: 61%
- Millennials: 65%
- Gen Z: 43%

How to inform the charity if you do not want your information to be shared outside the organization
- Matures: 88%
- Boomers: 83%
- Gen X: 65%
- Millennials: 63%
- Gen Z: 40%

How to contact the charity to review personal information collected
- Matures: 88%
- Boomers: 85%
- Gen X: 70%
- Millennials: 61%
- Gen Z: 51%

Legend: ■ Matures ■ Boomers ■ Gen X ■ Millennials ■ Gen Z

Websites can use cookies to record information about a user's visit, customize advertisement and appeals, and store targeting data on the user's device. When it comes to charity use of cookies, only 30% say they don't mind charities automatically using cookies without explicit permission, while 47% prefer to opt in.

The portion of people who prefer opting in over opting out is similar across generations.

	Opt-In	Opt-Out	I am indifferent	Not sure
Gen Z	47%	33%	11%	9%
Millennials	47%	29%	16%	8%
Gen X	46%	31%	15%	8%
Boomers	48%	29%	14%	9%
Matures	55%	27%	6%	12%

■ Opt-In: I want charities to avoid sharing cookies with my device unless I explicitly consent in a pop-up or otherwise

■ Opt-Out: I don't mind charities automatically using cookies without my explicit consent, assuming I can opt-out if I choose to

■ I am indifferent

■ Not sure
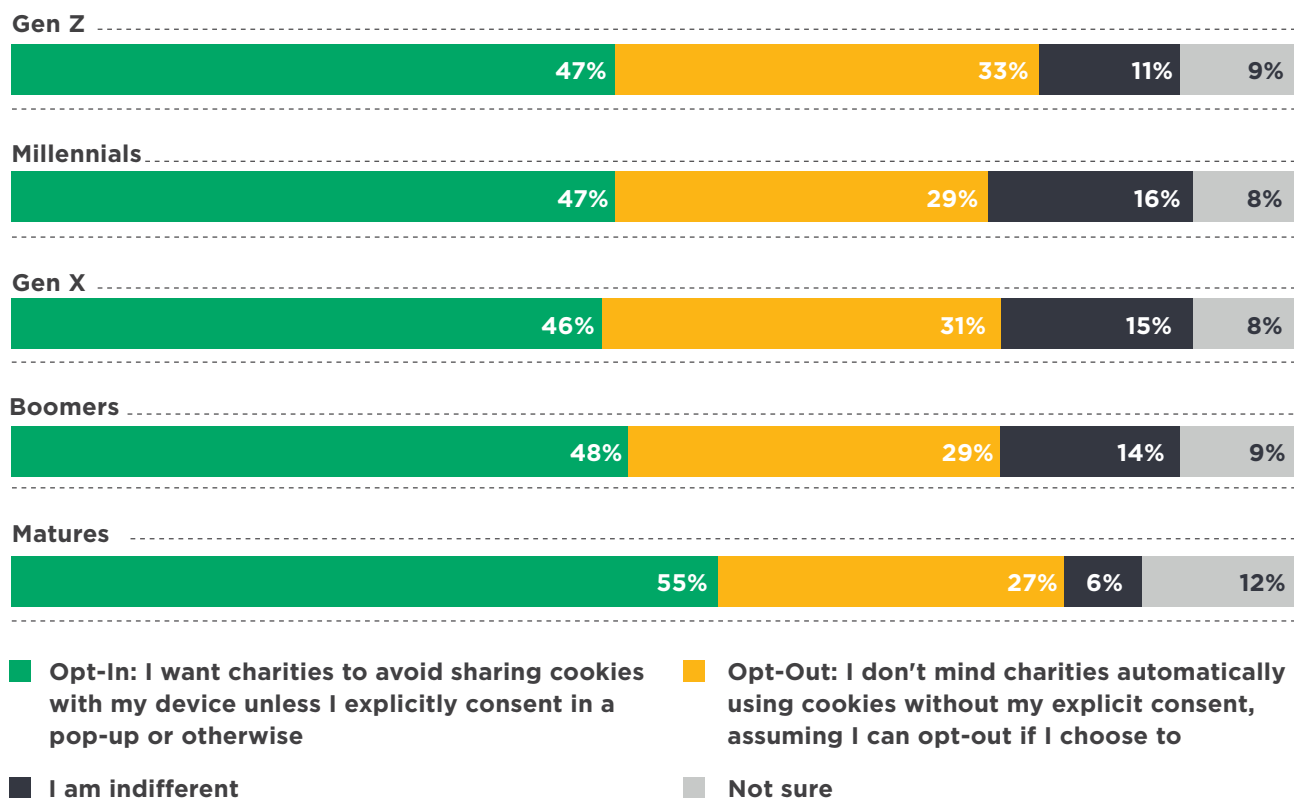
AI and Social Media

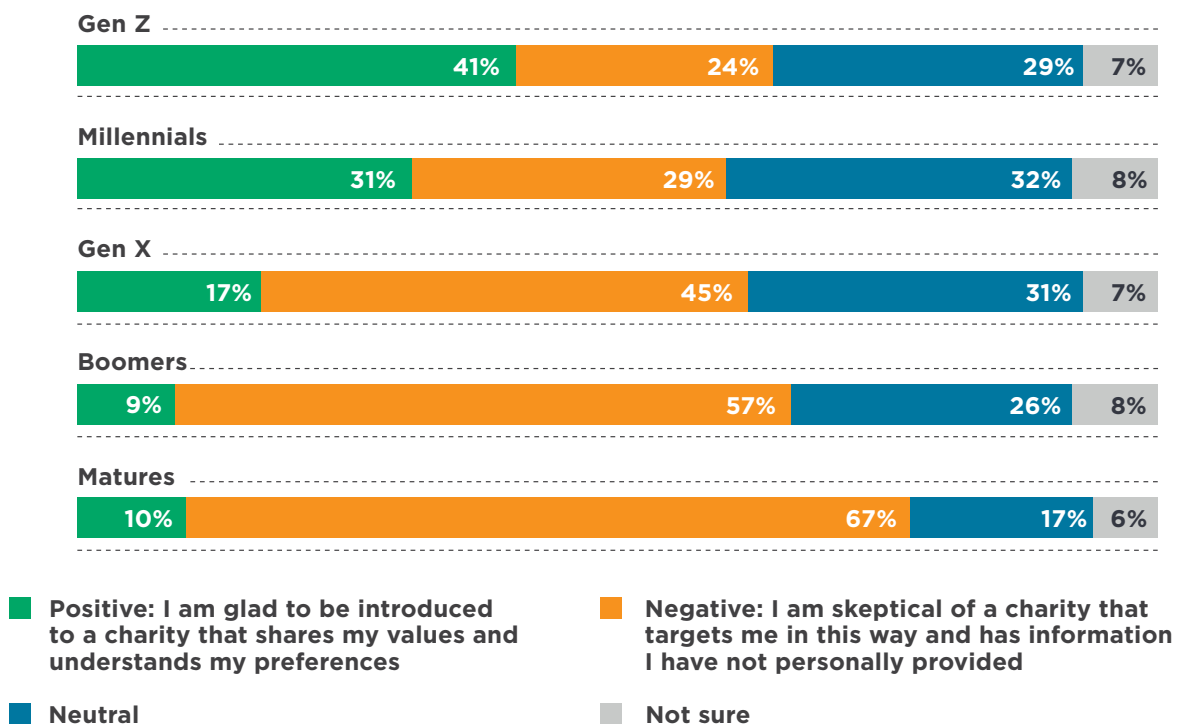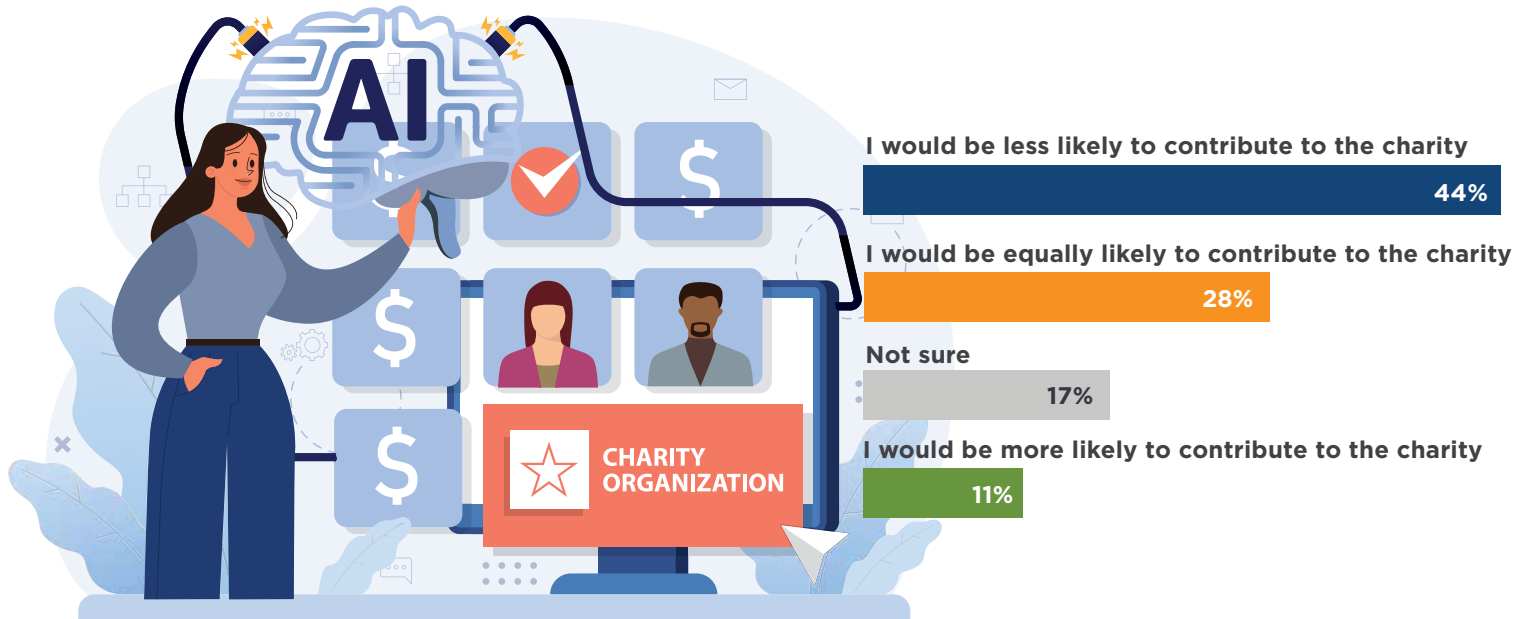Charities can use AI to identify potential supporters based on their online behaviors and preferences, and to personalize a solicitation approach accordingly. When asked to imagine that a charity uses AI to find them as potential supporters, participants say their reaction is:
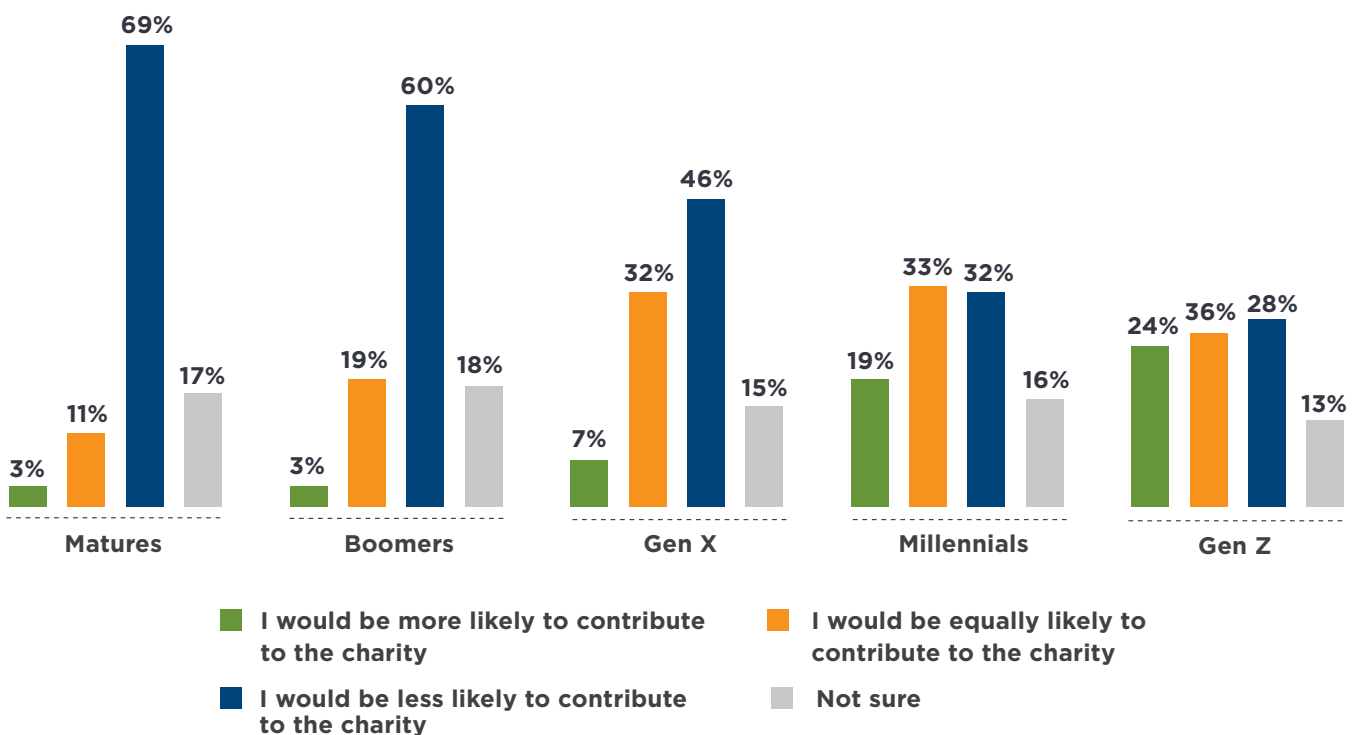
Not sure — 8%

22% — **Positive: I am glad to be introduced to a charity that shares my values and understands my preferences**

Neutral — 29%

41% — **Negative: I am skeptical of a charity that targets me in this way and has information I have not personally provided**

Younger generations are more likely to report a positive reaction to a charity using AI to find them.

Gen Z
41%	24%	29%	7%

Millennials
31%	29%	32%	8%

Gen X
17%	45%	31%	7%

Boomers
9%	57%	26%	8%

Matures
10%	67%	17%	6%

- **Positive: I am glad to be introduced to a charity that shares my values and understands my preferences**
- **Negative: I am skeptical of a charity that targets me in this way and has information I have not personally provided**
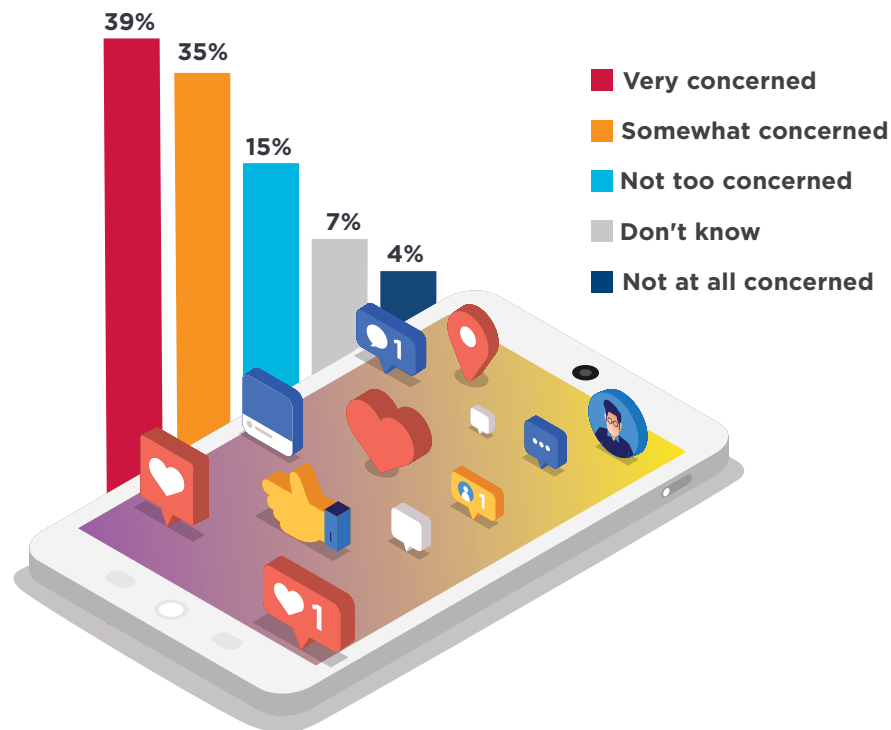- **Neutral**
- **Not sure**

When asked to imagine a charity uses AI to identify the participant as a potential donor, 44% say they would be less likely to contribute.
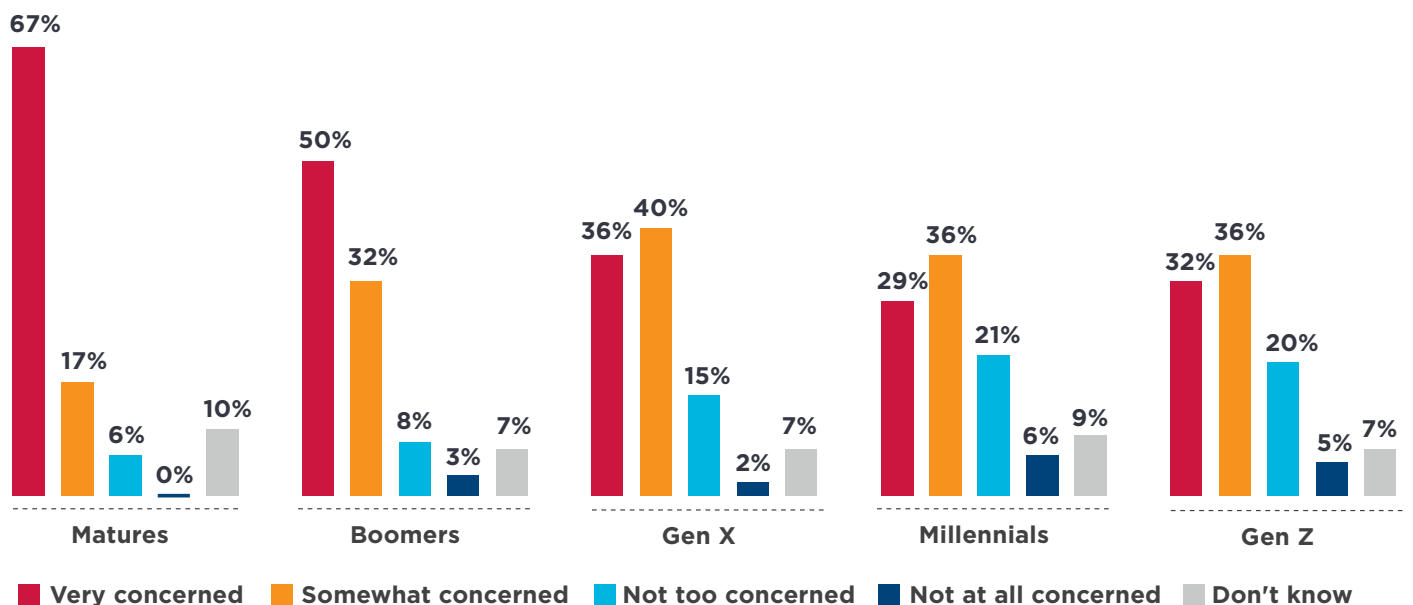

I would be less likely to contribute to the charity
44%

I would be equally likely to contribute to the charity
28%

Not sure
17%

I would be more likely to contribute to the charity
11%

Younger participants are less likely to be discouraged from contributing when a charity uses AI to find them.

	Matures	Boomers	Gen X	Millennials	Gen Z
I would be more likely to contribute to the charity	3%	3%	7%	19%	24%
I would be equally likely to contribute to the charity	11%	19%	32%	33%	36%
I would be less likely to contribute to the charity	69%	60%	46%	32%	28%
Not sure	17%	18%	15%	16%	13%

■ I would be more likely to contribute to the charity
■ I would be equally likely to contribute to the charity
■ I would be less likely to contribute to the charity
■ Not sure

Social media can be an important communication and solicitation tool for charities. When considering connecting with a charity on social media, most participants say they are "very concerned" or "somewhat concerned" about the charity gathering their information or intruding into their profile.

Very concerned — 39%
Somewhat concerned — 35%
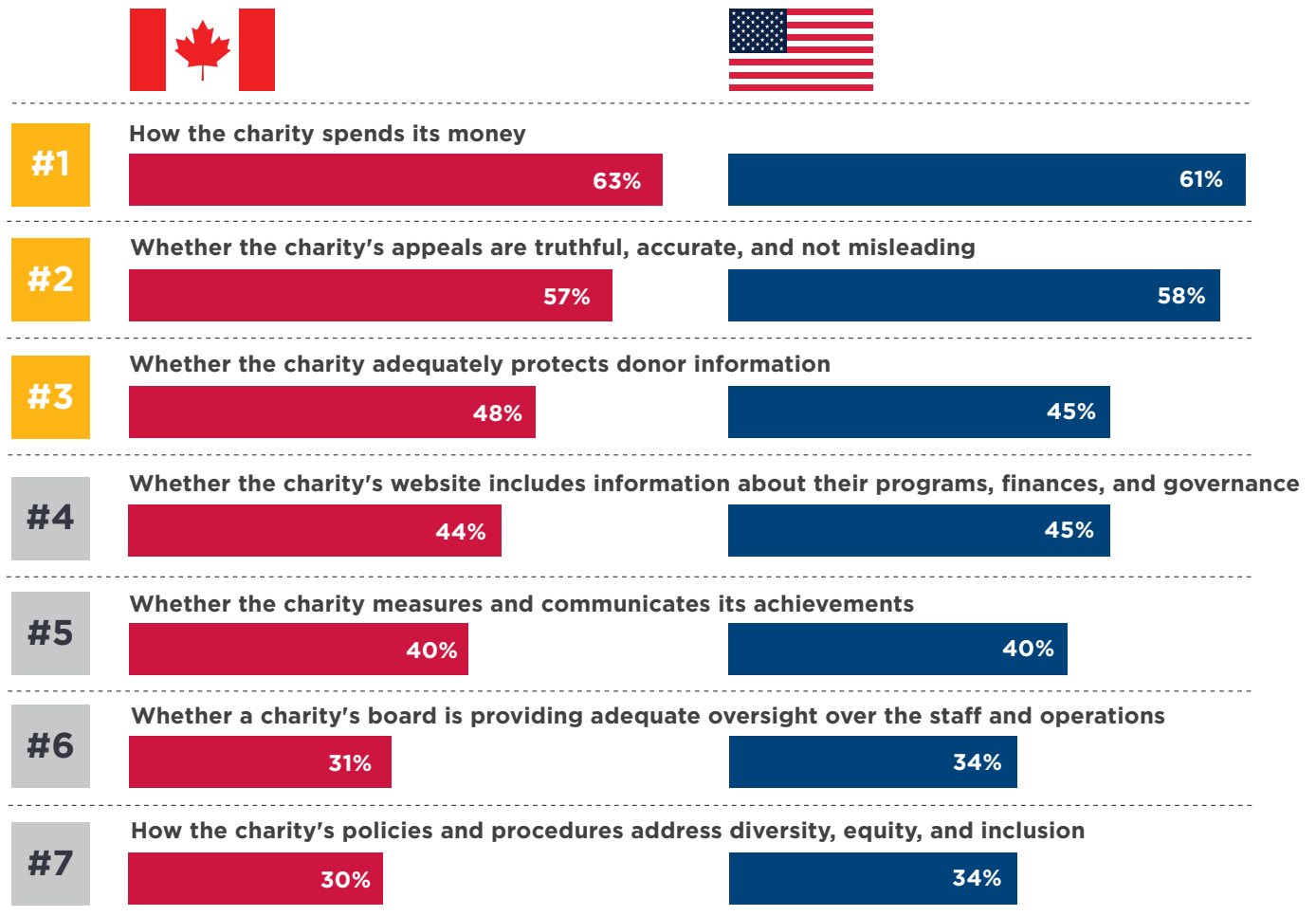Not too concerned — 15%
Don't know — 7%
Not at all concerned — 4%

Younger participants are less likely to be "very concerned" about charities using their information or intruding into their profile in a social media platform.

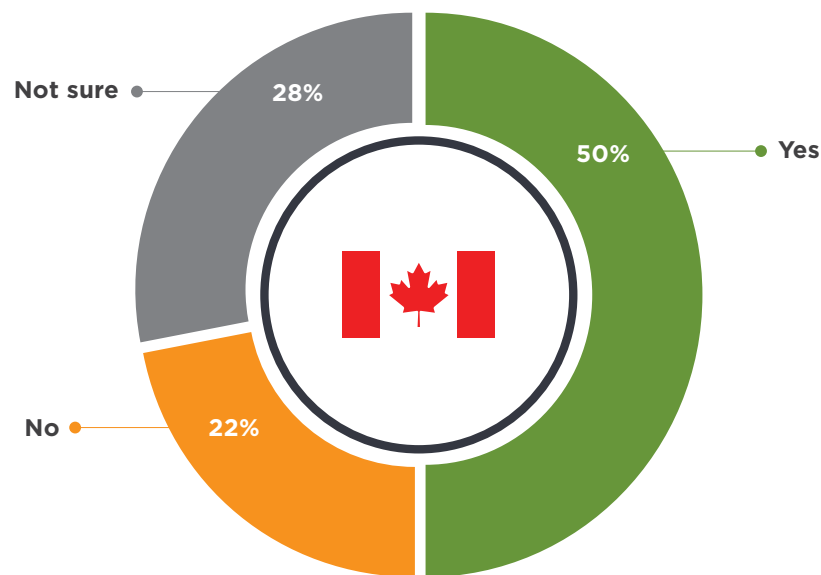|	Very concerned	Somewhat concerned	Not too concerned	Not at all concerned	Don't know
Matures	67%	17%	6%	0%	10%
Boomers	50%	32%	8%	3%	7%
Gen X	36%	40%	15%	2%	7%
Millennials	29%	36%	21%	6%	9%
Gen Z	32%	36%	20%	5%	7%

Canadian Results

As with U.S. participants, protection of donor information is a top priority for Canadians during the giving process.

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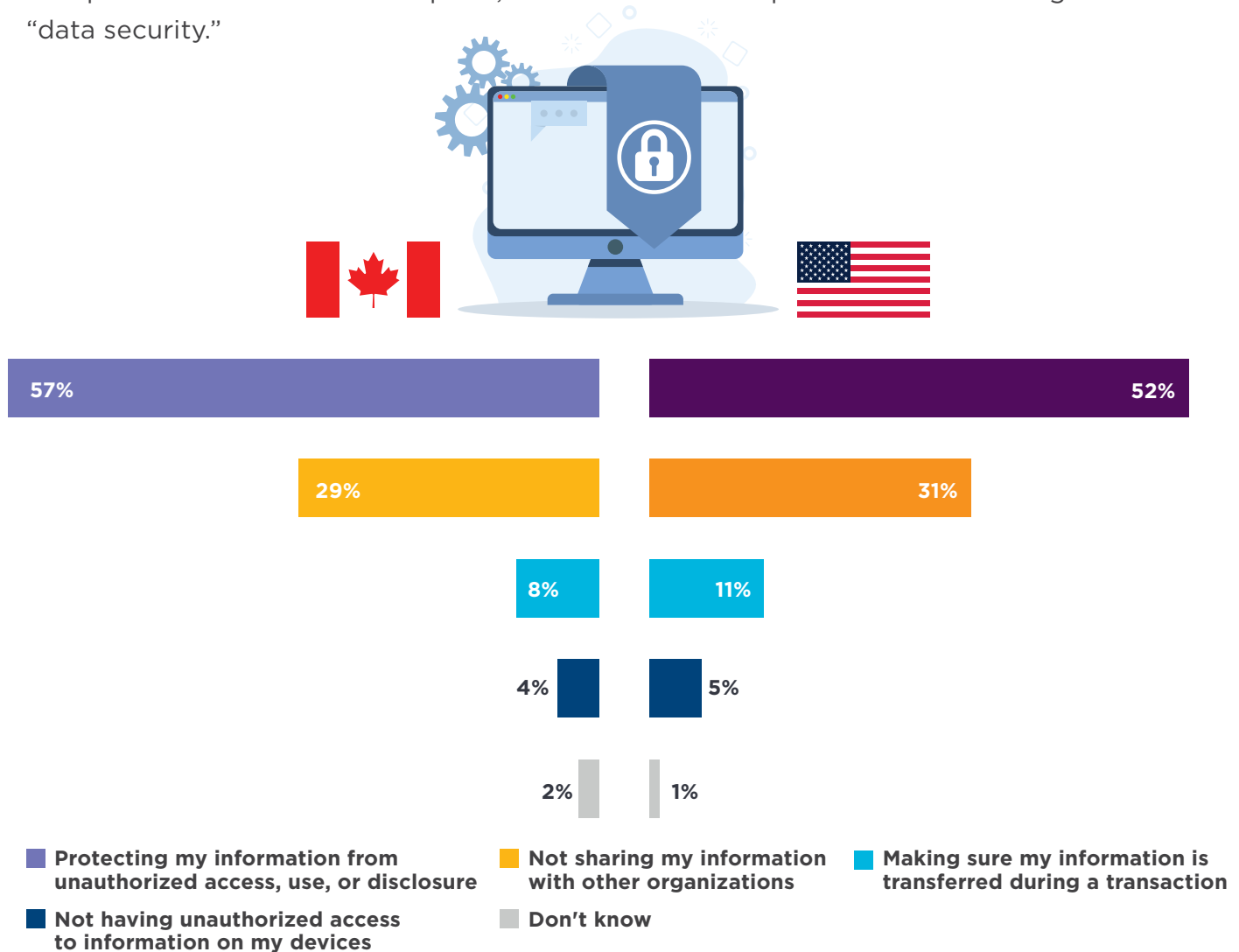|		Canada	USA
#1	How the charity spends its money	63%	61%
#2	Whether the charity's appeals are truthful, accurate, and not misleading	57%	58%
#3	Whether the charity adequately protects donor information	48%	45%
#4	Whether the charity's website includes information about their programs, finances, and governance	44%	45%
#5	Whether the charity measures and communicates its achievements	40%	40%
#6	Whether a charity's board is providing adequate oversight over the staff and operations	31%	34%
#7	How the charity's policies and procedures address diversity, equity, and inclusion	30%	34%

When asked to imagine contributing to a charity they have not supported in the past, Canadian participants are also likely to report being "very concerned" or "somewhat concerned" that the charity may share their information outside the organization.
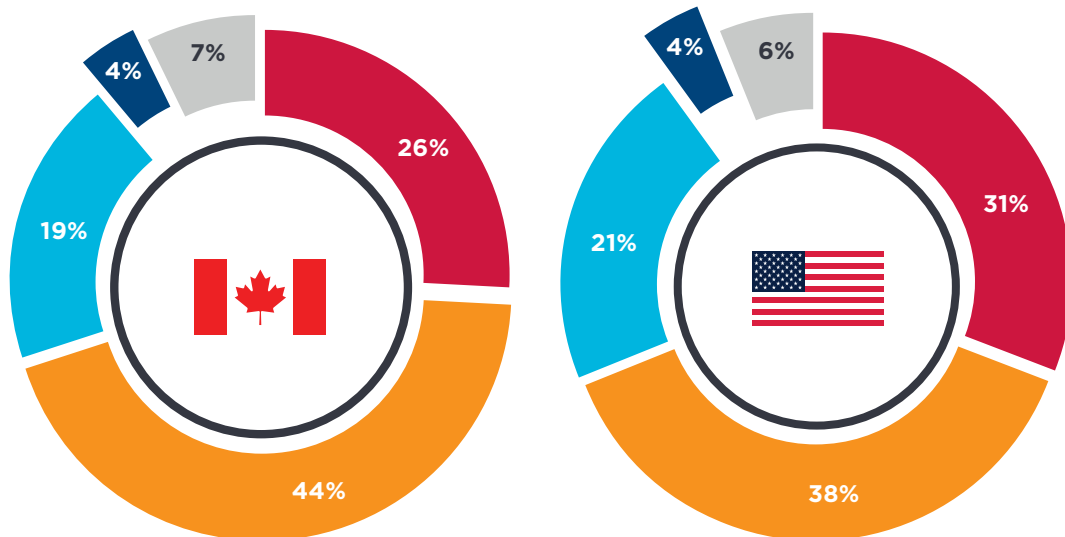
Very concerned	Somewhat concerned	Not too concerned	Not at all concerned	Don't know
25%	38%	25%	4%	8%

■ Very concerned ■ Somewhat concerned ■ Not too concerned ■ Not at all concerned ■ Don't know

Half of Canadian survey respondents say they understand the meaning of "data security."

- Not sure **28%**
- **50%** Yes
- No **22%**

Compared to their U.S. counterparts, Canadians are less split about the meaning of "data security."

Canada	U.S.
57%	52%
29%	31%
8%	11%
4%	5%
2%	1%

- ▮ Protecting my information from unauthorized access, use, or disclosure
- ▮ Not sharing my information with other organizations
- ▮ Making sure my information is transferred during a transaction
- ▮ Not having unauthorized access to information on my devices
- ▮ Don't know

Both U.S. and Canadian participants report being "very concerned" or "somewhat concerned" that their information may be hacked or stolen when contributing to a charity they have not previously donated to.
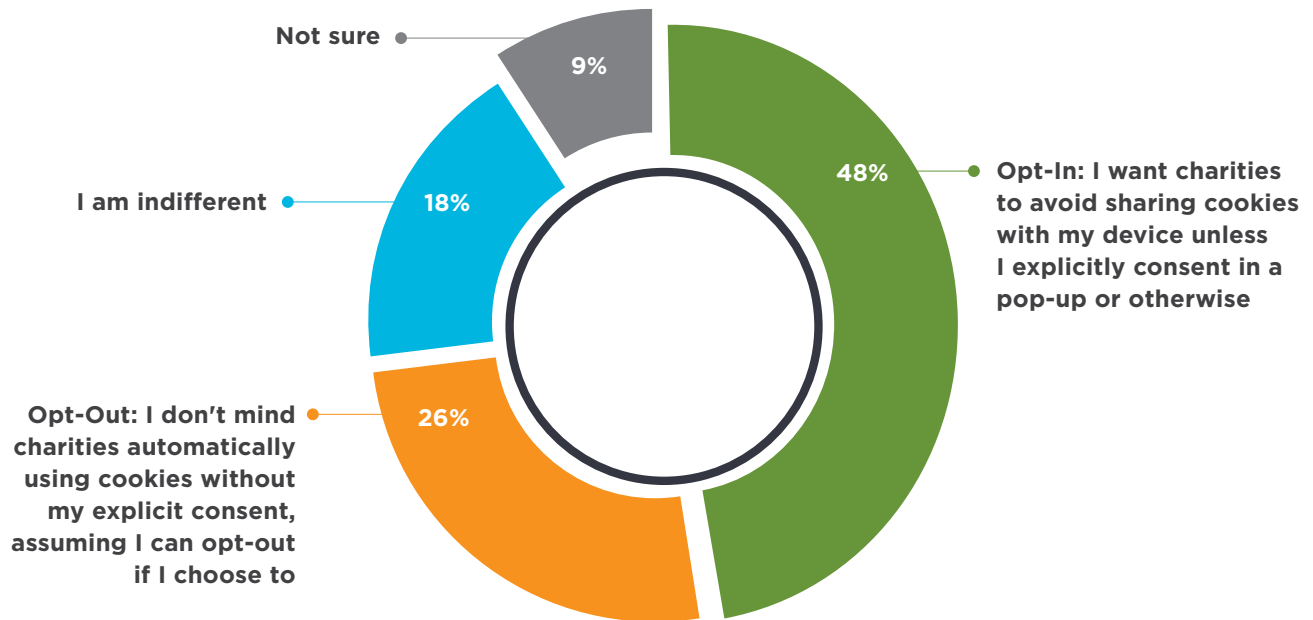

Canada: 26% Very concerned, 44% Somewhat concerned, 19% Not too concerned, 4% Not at all concerned, 7% Don't know
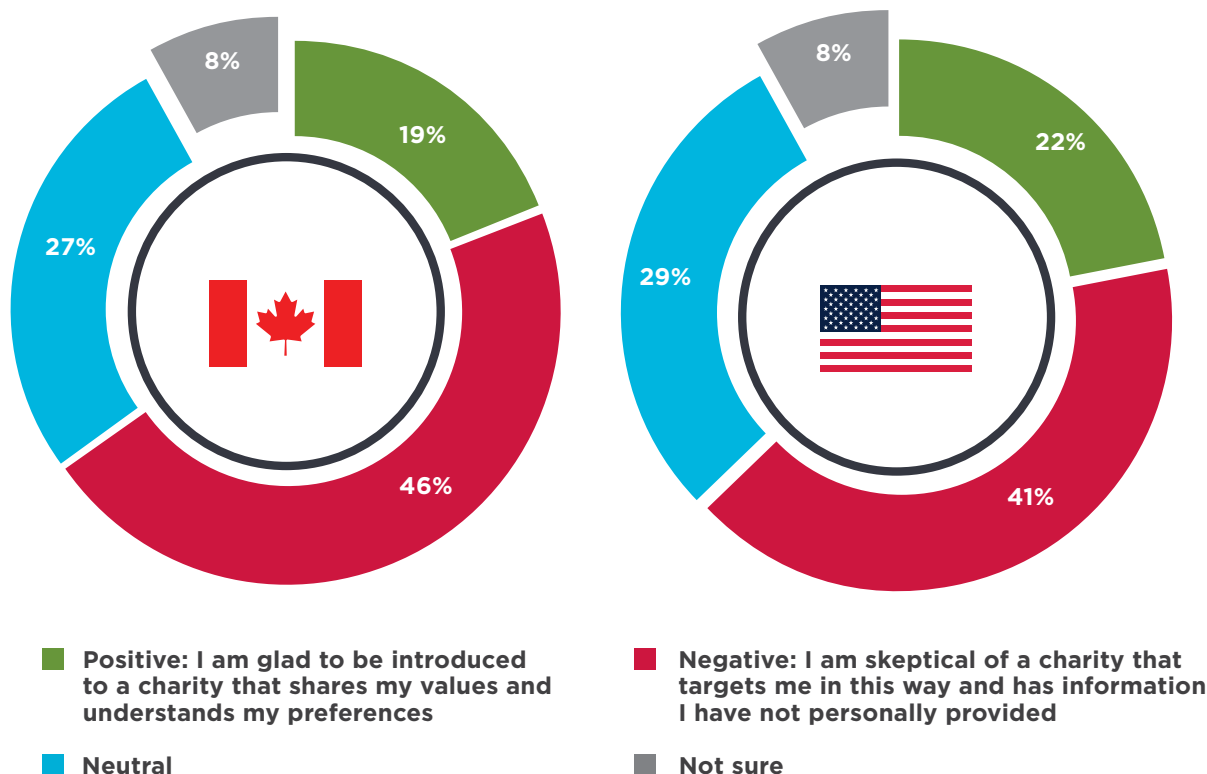
U.S.: 31% Very concerned, 38% Somewhat concerned, 21% Not too concerned, 4% Not at all concerned, 6% Don't know

- Very concerned
- Somewhat concerned
- Not too concerned
- Not at all concerned
- Don't know

When asked to imagine that a charity they personally support has been hacked, participants in the U.S. and Canada agree that they would stop or hold on future giving.

Canada:
- 53% I would no longer donate to that charity
- 29% I would hold off on donating until I am satisfied that the issue is resolved
- 10% I would likely continue to support them
- 8% Not sure

U.S.:
- 52% I would no longer donate to that charity
- 28% I would hold off on donating until I am satisfied that the issue is resolved
- 11% I would likely continue to support them
- 9% Not sure

When it comes to charity use of cookies, only 26% of Canadians, as compared to 30% of U.S. participants, say they don't mind charities automatically using cookies without explicit permission.

Not sure — 9%

I am indifferent — 18%

48% — Opt-In: I want charities to avoid sharing cookies with my device unless I explicitly consent in a pop-up or otherwise

Opt-Out: I don't mind charities automatically using cookies without my explicit consent, assuming I can opt-out if I choose to — 26%

When asked to imagine that a charity uses AI to find them as potential supporters, both U.S. and Canadian participants are skeptical.

Canada:
- 8% Not sure
- 19% Positive
- 27% Neutral
- 46% Negative

U.S.:
- 8% Not sure
- 22% Positive
- 29% Neutral
- 41% Negative

■ Positive: I am glad to be introduced to a charity that shares my values and understands my preferences

■ Negative: I am skeptical of a charity that targets me in this way and has information I have not personally provided

■ Neutral

■ Not sure

When considering connecting with a charity on social media, Canadian and U.S. participants are both "very concerned" or "somewhat concerned" about the charity gathering their information or intruding into their profile.

Very concerned

38%	39%

Somewhat concerned

37%	35%

Not too concerned

13%	15%

Don't know

9%	7%

Not at all concerned

3%	4%
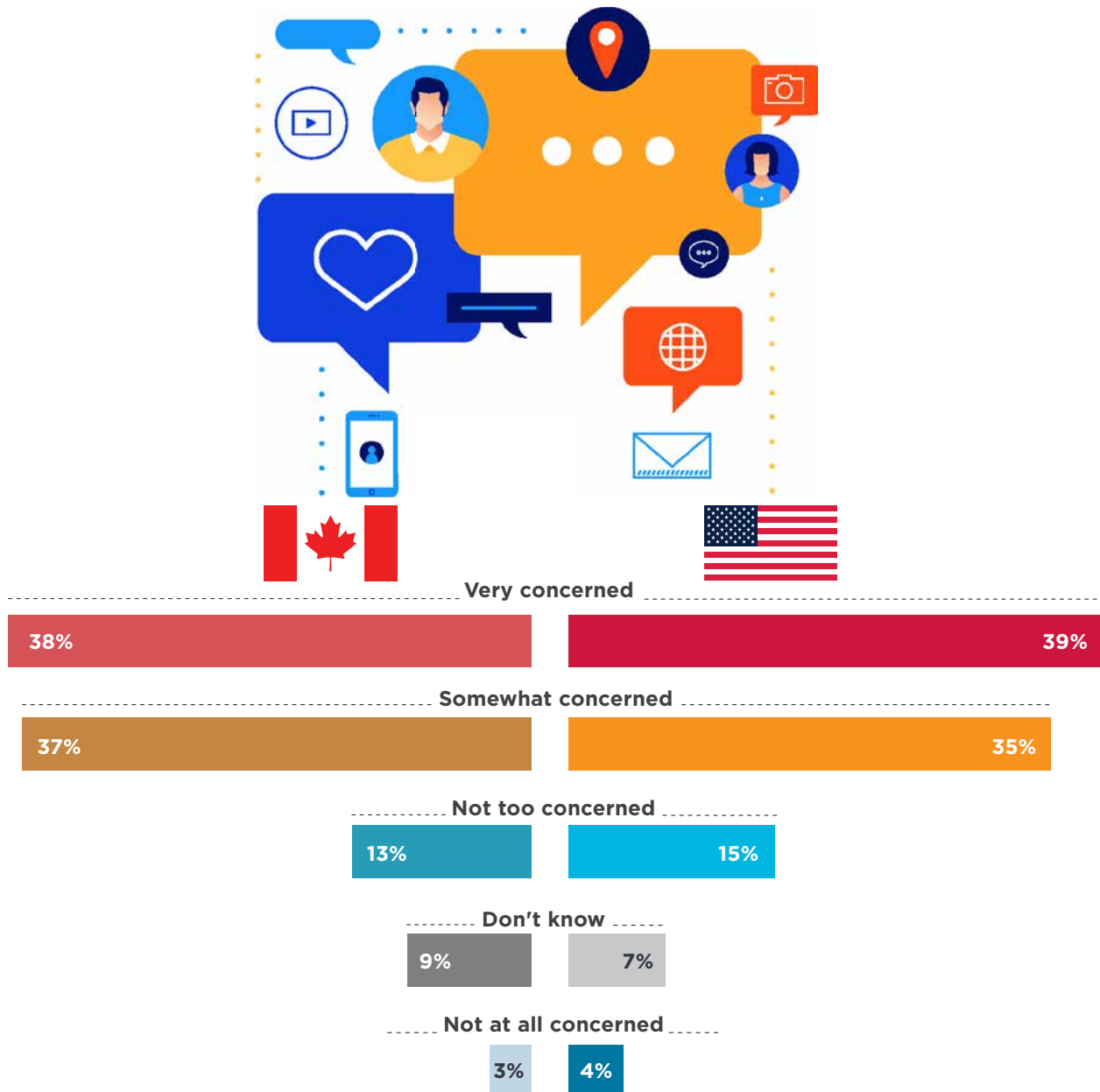
Conclusion

Charities rely on websites, donation platforms, social media, AI, and other targeting technologies. However, in today's environment, how a charity handles and protects donor and constituent information has become a top trust priority. Key takeaways include:

Prioritizing data protection and transparency

Donor information protection is highly valued. Participants across both the United States and Canada prioritize the protection of their donor information. This illustrates the need for charities to emphasize strong data protection practices to maintain donor trust.

Data breaches harm donor trust. In the event of a data breach, most participants (79.8%) would stop or reduce their donations to a charity. However, trust can be restored through visible actions such as updated security measures, improved privacy policies, and/or third-party verifications. Charities should be proactive in clearly articulating how they protect donor information.

Offering simple and effective opt-out options, and transparent cookie preferences

Most participants are concerned about their personal information being shared outside the charity and being kept secure. Charities need to balance targeting and personalization with transparency, encouraging potential donors to feel comfortable and informed about how their data is being used.

Participants are also wary of automatic cookie usage on charity websites, preferring to opt in rather than have cookies used without explicit permission. This shows that charities should implement clear, easy-to-understand cookie consent forms and give users control over their preferences to respect privacy.

Communicating privacy and security in AI outreach and social media

The use of AI to identify potential donors and of social media to develop connections, while important to charity engagement, can trigger significant concern. Our findings suggest that charities need to approach AI-driven donor outreach and social media connections with care. Clear disclosures about data usage (and the option for users to control how their data is used) can help prevent the alienation of potential donors. It is important to balance outreach and personalization with respect for privacy.

While charities increasingly depend on digital tools to connect with supporters and carry out their missions, they are not the driving force behind growing privacy and security concerns. Rather, these concerns reflect broader societal shifts in how personal data is collected, shared, and protected. Charities, like many other organizations, are navigating the evolving landscape and, in most cases, aim to be responsible and trustworthy stewards of donor information. As the public becomes more vigilant about data privacy, it's critical for charities to lead with transparency, prioritize data protection, and communicate clearly about how information is collected and used. Doing so advances donor trust and strengthens long-term relationships.

Methodology

We commissioned an electronic survey of more than 2,200 adults across the United States and more than 1,100 adults across Canada during December 2024 (see Tables 1 and 2). The margin of error for the December 2024 survey in the United States is 2% (with 95% confidence level), and the margin of error for the December 2024 Canadian survey is 3% (with 95% confidence level).

Table 1 — Profile of Respondents in the United States

By Age		By Gender		By Annual Household Income (in thousands)	
18–34	27.5%	Female	47.6%	< 30	11.8%
35–44	16.3%	Male	51.4%	30–59	21.7%
45–54	16.0%	Nonbinary, Prefer not to answer, Other, and Transgender	1.0%	60–89	19.1%
55–64	16.6%			90–119	14.9%
> 65	21.6 %			120–149	9.1%
				150 and more	20.6%
				Prefer not to answer	2.8%
By Region		**By Ethnicity**		**By Religion Attendance**	
Northeast	18.3%	African American	14.7%	Never	26.5%
Midwest	22.7%	Asian	3.3%	Rarely	23.0%
South	37.2%	Hispanic/Latino	16.9%	Frequently	27.7%
West	21.8%	Native American or Alaska Native	0.6%	Occasionally	20.8%
		Other	1.1%	Don't know	0.8%
		Pacific Islander	0.1%	Prefer not to answer	1.2%
		White	63.3%		

Table 2 — Profile of Respondents in Canada

By Age		By Gender		By Annual Household Income (in thousands)	
18–34	29.3%	Female	51.3%	< 30	8.2%
35–44	16.5%	Male	48.1%	30–59	22.1%
45–54	14.8%	Nonbinary, prefer not to answer, transgender, other	0.7%	60–89	21.3%
55–64	16.3%			90–119	17.7%
> 65	23.1%			120–149	9.8%
				150 and more	16.6%
				Prefer not to answer	4.4%

By Region		By Ethnicity		By Religion Attendance	
British Columbia	13.5%	African American	4.4%	Never	38.2%
Alberta	11.5%	Asian	16.2%	Rarely	27.0%
Saskatchewan and Manitoba	7.2%	Hispanic/Latino	1.0%	Frquently	15.5%
Ontario	39.0%	Other	2.4%	Occasionally	17.3%
Quebec	22.3%	White	75.3%	Don't know	0.8%
Atlantic Canada	6.0%			Prefer not to answer	1.1%
Northern Canada	0.5%				

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 and contribution level 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.

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	Year Born	Age (in 2024)
Generation Z (18 and older)	1998 to 2004	18 to 26
Millennial Generation	1981 to 1997	27 to 43
Generation X	1965 to 1980	44 to 59
Baby Boomers	1946 to 1964	60 to 78
Matures	1928 to 1945	79 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.