Black Friday and Charity: Are retailers really helping out or just cashing in?

Two-in-three Canadians say they’ve made a point-of-sale donation of $1 or $2 in the last year

November 24, 2017 – As shoppers across North America line up outside big box stores before daybreak, crouch over laptops, and swarm their local malls this week, it’s not only retailers hoping for a Black Friday bonanza.

Charities that benefit from point-of-sale partnerships also hope to see buyers in droves, donating everything from a portion of their purchase, to rewards points, to a dollar or two at the cash register.

But while fully two-thirds of Canadians say they engage in these kinds of charitable donations, they are mixed about the efficacy of this type of giving.

The first installment of a four-part study from the Angus Reid Institute and CHIMP: Charitable Impact Foundation reveals more Canadians have responded to a request for a dollar or two at a cash register in the last two years than have donated in response to any other type of appeal, and most have participated in other corporate-sponsored fundraising events as well.

This first wave of public opinion research shows that while Canadians generally feel positively about this kind of giving, they also express significant skepticism about the motives of the businesses involved.

More Key Findings:

- Two-thirds of Canadians (66%) have donated a dollar or two to charity at a cash register in the last two years, more than report responding to any other type of charitable appeal in the same time period

METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from November 3 – 10, 2017, among a representative randomized sample of 2,072 Canadian adults who are members of the Angus Reid Forum. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was conducted in partnership with CHIMP: Charitable Impact Foundation and paid for jointly by CHIMP and ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.
• Most Canadians (55%) say corporate-sponsored charitable events have a “fairly meaningful” impact on the causes involved, but relatively few say their impact is “very meaningful” (17% do).

• Canadians can be sorted into four groups based on their charitable behaviour: The Non-Donors (14% of the total population) who give almost nothing, the Casual Donors (31%) who give slightly more, the Prompted Donors (34%) whose giving is considerable – but mostly happens in response to specific requests – and the Super Donors (21%) who give large amounts in a variety of situations.

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**Part 1: The intersection of business and charity**

**Point-of-sale donations most common by far**

As the holiday shopping season begins in earnest, so too does the holiday giving season. These two concepts – shopping and charity – have long been associated with the “most wonderful time of the year.” The gift-giving and merriment of Christmas and Hanukkah – coming as they do during the year’s darkest and coldest months – naturally lend themselves to concern for those less fortunate than oneself.

Over the years, shopping and giving have become linked more directly, and in more sophisticated ways. In addition to the classic Salvation Army Santa Claus ringing a bell outside the grocery store, businesses now often ask their customers to add a dollar or two for charity to their purchase at the cash register. Still other corporate-sponsored fundraisers fully integrate the shopping and giving experiences, asking consumers only to go about their normal routine on a specific day, when – they’re told – the business they visit will donate a portion of its revenues to a good cause.

This increasing integration of commerce and corporate benevolence is canvassed in this ARI-CHIMP survey, which asked Canadians to consider a variety of common types of charitable appeal and indicate whether they had personally made a contribution in response to each type over the last two years.

Appeals considered included the traditional – such as mailed requests for monetary donations – and new-school – such as requests received on social media.
Of the 11 modes of appeal canvassed in total, only two elicited a donation from more than half of all Canadians in the last two years: A request from a friend or family member, and a request for a $1 or $2 donation during a retail transaction. As seen in the following graph, the uptake of these two appeals far outpaces the others.

The prevalence of cash-register donations comes into clearer relief when looking at the frequency with which Canadians report donating in this way. Fully one-in-five (21%) have done this more than five times in the last two years. Only one-in-20 (5%) have donated this frequently in response to a friend or family member’s request:

**Percentage of Canadians who have responded to each type of charitable request at least once in the last two years:**

- A request for a $1 or $2 donation at the cash register: 66%
- A request made by a friend or family member: 56%
- A charitable request you received in the mail: 38%
- A request from a door to door fundraising campaign: 37%
- A request made at your place of work: 36%
- A request from something your child is involved in (at school or sports etc): 35%
- A request made at a church or place of worship: 31%
- A request via social media - Facebook, etc: 23%
- A tv appeal for a charitable cause: 21%
- A request when you’re purchasing something online: 18%
- A telephone request for donations: 16%
Past studies have found people's household incomes to be highly correlated with the amount they donate to charity. Those who have more money tend to give away more money – though they don't necessarily give away larger proportions of their total income than people in poorer cohorts.

This data largely follows this pattern, with Canadians from higher-income households generally more likely than those from lower-income ones to donate to charitable causes.

That said, appeals at the register seem to be something of a great equalizer. Canadians of all income cohorts are roughly equally likely to have responded to a request for a dollar or two at the till in the last two years, as seen in the graph that follows.

This finding is almost certainly attributable to the low barrier for entry in making a donation at the point of sale. The number of Canadians who have responded to an appeal from a friend or family member in the last two years, by contrast, varies dramatically by income:

**Percentage of Canadians who have responded to each type of charitable request at least once in the last two years:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Income</th>
<th>A request made by a friend or family member</th>
<th>A request for a $1 or $2 donation at the cash register</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;$50,000</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 - $99,999</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 - $149,999</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000+</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Retail as charity: A meaningful approach?

The prevalence of cash-register donations mirrors the rise in recent years of another type of retail-oriented charitable activity: namely “shop for a cause” or “dine out for a cause” programs.

These events are advertised as a way for customers to support charity simply by shopping at their favourite stores or dining at their favourite restaurants. The business in question promises to donate a portion of the day’s revenues to a specific cause, and consumers are not asked to do anything other than make purchases as they normally would – though, of course, implied in this relationship is the notion that the more one buys, the more one is contributing to the charity in question.

Most Canadians (54%) say they participate in these sorts of events at least “sometimes,” and more than seven-in-ten (72%) feel that this approach has at least a “fairly meaningful” impact on the charitable organizations involved.

That said, it’s notable that only a relatively small portion of this total (17% overall) says such activities are “very meaningful,” as seen in the following graph:

Household income doesn’t seem to have much bearing on how Canadians feel about this sort of retail-as-charity approach to supporting causes, but gender does.

Women are substantially more likely than men to say they participate in corporate-sponsored fundraising events. Six-in-ten (60%) say they do so at least sometimes, while fewer than half (48%) of men say the same. This finding holds true across generations, as seen in the following graph.
Some of this can be attributed to the fact that women continue to account for the majority of shopping trips within North American families.

Women are also marginally more likely than men to say such events are either very or fairly meaningful. While two-thirds of men (67%) say this, more than three-quarters (76%) of women do (see comprehensive tables for greater detail).

**Most skeptical of corporate motivations for giving**

While the majority of Canadians see value in corporate-sponsored charity events, they also express significant reservations about the practice:

Asked whether they agree or disagree with several statements about businesses that get involved in these types of fundraising efforts, full majorities of Canadians agree with each one.

This includes three-quarters (75%) who agree that businesses hosting these events are “genuinely trying to help out” and two-thirds (68%) who agree with the somewhat contradictory notion that these businesses are “only looking for good PR.”

Majorities across age and gender lines agree with each statement, as seen in the table that follows.

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For each of these statements please say whether you agree or disagree. “Total Agree” shown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genuinely trying to help out that cause as part of the community</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving consumers like me a nice and convenient opportunity to support a good cause</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only looking for good PR</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using consumers’ donations, not their own, to take credit for supporting causes</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Really just marketing and trying to attract consumers’ dollars any way possible</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not upfront and honest about how much - or little - money is actually going to charity</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is older respondents who are most trusting of the motivations businesses may have for hosting these types of fundraisers. Among those ages 55 and older, agreement that companies are “genuinely trying to help out” rises to fully eight-in-ten (81%). Older women, especially, are more likely to agree, while men under age 35 are more skeptical (though most still agree with this statement, see comprehensive tables).

Age-related findings will be discussed in greater detail in the third installment of this ARI-CHIMP partnership, to be released in early December.

So, what to make of Canadians’ contradictory views on corporate-sponsored charity?

On one hand, there is a clear appetite for it. Most Canadians say they participate in retail-as-charity events, find them meaningful, and appreciate the opportunity they provide.

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On the other hand, most remain skeptical of the motivations businesses have for raising funds for charity in this manner. They see a lack of transparency in the process, and suspect that corporations are actually taking credit for their customers’ generosity.

Many Canadians hold these two competing perspectives simultaneously, viewing “shop for a cause” events as an easy and worthwhile opportunity to contribute to charity, even if they feel somewhat uncomfortable about the motivations of the businesses organizing such opportunities.

Canadians who feel this way likely don’t see corporate-sponsored giving as a substitute for more traditional avenues of charitable support, however. Fully three-quarters of respondents (75%) disagree with the statement “If big companies and rich people are giving big dollars, there’s no real need for my small donations.”

**Part 2: A closer look at charitable giving in Canada**

**Four segments of the population by charitable behaviour**

Canadians can be divided into four groups in terms of their charitable behaviour: The Non-Donors, The Casual Donors, The Prompted Donors, and The Super Donors. For a detailed explanation of how the Angus Reid Institute arrived at these groups, see “notes on methodology” at the end of this report.

**Four segments of the population when it comes to charitable giving:**

The **Non-Donors** are just that: People for whom donating money is simply not something they do. At most, members of this group donate less than $100 dollars and support just one charitable cause in a typical year. The vast majority of this group is even less charitably active. Seven-in-ten (71%) report not donating any money at all. The Non-Donors represent roughly 14 per cent of the total population, the smallest of the four groups.

Slightly more active in their charitable activities are the **Casual Donors** (31% of the population). Members of this group spread their money around, with most donating to at least two different charities each year, but none of them report donating more than $250 annually.
The other two groups – the Promoted Donors (34% of the population) and the Super Donors (21%) – are each significantly more likely than Casual and Non-Donors to support a variety of charities and to spend more than $250 per year.

The thing that separates these two more-giving segments from each other is their commitment to charitable behaviours. The Super Donors are more likely than the Promoted Donors to give to every specific cause canvassed in this survey, and they're more likely to say they gave of their own volition, rather than in response to a request from an organization (though plenty of them give reactively as well). The Promoted Donors, as their name implies, tend to give in response to a specific request at least as often as they take their own charitable initiative. Many of them have specific causes or modes of appeal that regularly prompt them to give.

In addition to the charitable behaviours that define them, these four cohorts each have distinct demographic and attitudinal profiles, which will be described later in this report.

**The segments on retail giving**

True to their name, the Super Donors are more likely than any other group to have given in response to every type of charitable appeal canvassed in this survey. They donate not only when it's easy – as in the case of a cash register appeal – but also when there are more steps involved.

Indeed, the Super Donors are the only cohort that is more likely – albeit only slightly so – to have given in response to an appeal from friends or family in the last two years than to have dropped a dollar or two in a jar at the till:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Non-Donors</th>
<th>Casual Donors</th>
<th>Prompted Donors</th>
<th>Super Donors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A request for a $1 or $2 donation at the cash register</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A request made by a friend or family member</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of their participation in “shop for a cause” or “dine for a cause” events, Non-Donors live up to their name. One-in-four participate in such events at least sometimes, compared to at least 49 per cent in every other group:
Non-Donors are also more skeptical that such events have a meaningful impact.

Some 55 per cent of Non-Donors say this style of fundraising is “very” or “fairly meaningful,” with only one-in-ten (10%) choosing “very meaningful. Among the Super Donors, the total saying at least “fairly meaningful” rises to eight-in-ten, and fully one-quarter say these events are “very meaningful,” as seen in the following graph:

**Overall, how meaningful do you think this approach is in terms of the impact it has on the charitable causes involved?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Non-Donors</th>
<th>Casual Donors</th>
<th>Prompted Donors</th>
<th>Super Donors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Very meaningful impact on the charities involved</strong></td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fairly meaningful</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yes/Sometimes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not really/No, don't participate</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Interestingly, though the Non-Donors are less likely to participate in these types of events and less likely to find them meaningful, they’re not particularly different from the other three segments when it comes to their attitudes toward such fundraisers.

Overall agreement with the six statements is fairly consistent across the four groups (see behaviour tables for greater detail). It’s worth noting, however, that those saying they “agree strongly” with each statement do so in larger numbers for the negative ones than the positive ones.

This difference is partly driven by the Non-Donors, who are much more likely than members of other groups to strongly agree with negative statements about corporations, and much less likely to strongly agree with positive statements. The following table shows strong agreement with each statement across the four groups:

| For each of these statements please say whether you agree or disagree. (Those saying “agree strongly” shown) Overall, when businesses get involved in these types of charitable activities, they are: |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Genuinely trying to help out that cause as part of the community | 15% | 9% | 12% | 17% | 22% |
| Giving consumers like me a nice and convenient opportunity to support a good cause | 13% | 8% | 12% | 14% | 15% |
| Only looking for good PR | 21% | 29% | 23% | 18% | 18% |
| Using consumers' donations, not their own, to take credit for supporting causes | 23% | 23% | 24% | 22% | 23% |
| Really just marketing and trying to attract consumers' dollars any way possible | 17% | 26% | 17% | 13% | 15% |
| Not upfront and honest about how much - or little - money is actually going to charity | 20% | 23% | 21% | 18% | 19% |

Demographic profiles of the segments

Canadians of all incomes can be found in all four segments, but there is a higher concentration of lower-income respondents in the Non-Donors category, and a larger proportion of high-income respondents among the Prompted and Super Donors.
Nearly half of the Non-Donors (48%) come from households earning less than $50,000 per year, while only one-in-ten of this cohort (10%) report household incomes of $100,000 or more.

The other three segments have slightly more even income distributions, as seen in the following graph:

The segments by household income:

Perhaps relatedly, given that educational attainment is strongly correlated with income, those with a high-school education or less are overrepresented among the Non-Donors group, while those with at least one university degree make up a disproportionately large portion of the Super Donors segment:

The segments by education:
The Super Donors also separate themselves from other groups in their age composition. While younger Canadians (those ages 18-34) are slightly overrepresented among the Non-Donors and Casual Donors groups, the Super Donors skew dramatically in the opposite direction. Nearly half of this most-engaged cohort (45%) is age 55 or older:

The segments by age:

Regionally, some segments are more common in certain areas. Quebec, for example, has a higher percentage of Non-Donors than any other region, and is the only province in which the Casual Donors — not the Prompted Donors — are the largest segment. Ontario and Atlantic Canada, meanwhile, have especially large populations of Super Donors, as seen in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>BC</th>
<th>AB</th>
<th>SK</th>
<th>MB</th>
<th>ON</th>
<th>QC</th>
<th>ATL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Donors</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual Donors</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prompted Donors</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Super Donors</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The segments’ overall attitudes toward charity

While each of these four groups is defined only by its members’ responses to questions about their giving behaviour, there are significant differences in each group's beliefs about charity as well.

Most notably, in addition to being largely non-participatory, the Non-Donors are deeply skeptical of charitable organizations overall. More than six-in-ten in this group disagree with the statement, “Charitable organizations can be trusted with the money people donate to them.” Among the Super Donors, an equivalent number agree with this view.

"Charitable organizations can be trusted with the money people donate to them"

Non-donors also feel more strongly than other segments of the population that governments should be “stepping up” to accomplish objectives currently left largely to charitable organizations, and less personally responsible for making the world a better place, as seen in the graph that follows:

Percentage who agree with each statement:

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Coming up next

The second installment of this Angus Reid Institute-CHIMP partnership will be released on Giving Tuesday. It canvasses “The Giving Gap” – the gulf between how much Canadians would like to give to charity and how much they actually give, as well as the reasons they see holding them back. This second report also provides a more-detailed look at Canadians’ giving habits – the causes they are most and least likely to support and their reasons for donating to charity.

Notes on methodology

To streamline the survey data regarding Canadians’ overall charitable giving, ARI researchers sorted respondents into four main donor types; in relative order of their respective involvement in charitable giving, these four groups are: Non-Donors, Casual Donors, Prompted Donors and Super Donors.

This analytical exercise first involved assigning an a priori definition to the two “goalpost” groups:

- **Non-Donors** includes those who indicated they provide financial support to none of the 11 different causes assessed early in the survey, later reported they gave to a maximum of a single charity in a typical year, and that their annual charitable donations total less than $100. A total of 14 per cent of those surveyed met these criteria for Non-Donor.

- **Super Donors**, meanwhile, reflect the opposite disposition. First, Super Donors supported three or more causes and provided “ongoing support” to at least two of those. They also had to qualify by responding positively and frequently to several of the 11 different modes of charitable appeal assessed in the core of the survey (whether traditional phone or mail campaigns to requests from one’s social circle or at church). Finally, the 21 per cent of Canadians we have qualified as Super Donors give a minimum of $100 to charity per year (the mean amount they give is much higher, well over $1,000).

Then, dealing with the roughly two-thirds of Canadians landing in between these two poles involved some further analysis of people’s reactions to different modes of charitable appeal.

- **The Prompted Donors** group includes the one-in-three (34%) Canadians who – while not so highly responsive that they qualify as Super Donors – do respond (at least twice in the past two years) to different types of charitable appeals. This approach identifies some sub-groups with more focused charitable responses.

- **Casual Donors** are the remaining one-third (31%) of the total population. These people exceed the thresholds set for Non-Donors – they give to more causes, in more ways, and to a higher dollar amount. But Casual Donors, by definition, also fall relatively short on these core giving thresholds and also do not distinguish themselves for having any of the focused approaches to charitable giving associated with the Prompted Donors.
The Angus Reid Institute (ARI) was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.

For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, click here.

For detailed results by the four behavioural segments, click here.

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