

Millennials and Giving: Finances, lack of confidence prevent many young people from donating to charity

Most under 35 view sharing or liking posts on social media as at least 'fairly meaningful' support

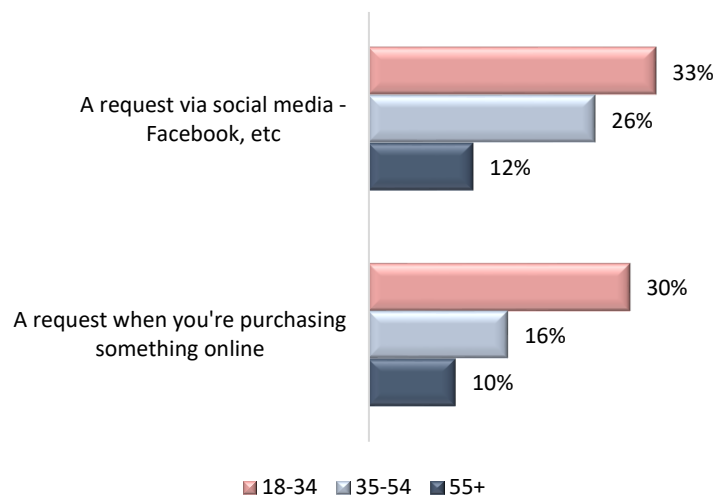
December 6, 2017 – Anyone who spends time on the internet is familiar with the accusation: the millennial generation is on a rampage, killing everything from [the golf industry](#), to [diamonds](#), to [the idea of a 9-to-5 workday](#).

This generation's apparently insatiable bloodlust has spawned meta-headlines: Listicles of "[28 things millennials are killing in cold blood](#)," or "[70 things millennials have killed](#)."

But are Canada's millennials poised to "kill" their country's charitable instinct? A new report from the Angus Reid Institute and [CHIMP: Charitable Impact Foundation](#) – the third in a [four-part series](#) – provides a nuanced answer to that mostly tongue-in-cheek question about Canada's next generation of donors.

On one hand, Canadians under 35 are less likely to donate to charity than other generations, and generally donate less money when they do give. On the other, millennials are more trusting of charitable organizations than their elders, and most say they would give more under the right circumstances – if they had more money, could find the right cause, or simply felt more confident about giving in general.

Percentage who have donated to charity in response to each type of request in the last two years:



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.

More Key Findings:

- Younger Canadians tend to be heavier users of social media than older ones, and younger users are more inclined to like or share posts about charity than older users
- A small majority of Canadian social media users (54%) say liking a post or using a hashtag in support of a cause has either a "very" (9%) or "fairly meaningful" (45%) impact on the cause in question

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- Millennials are more likely than any other age group to donate money in response to requests received on social media (33% have, compared to 26% or fewer in other age groups) or while shopping online (30%, compared to 16% or fewer)
- While they are less inclined to donate, those under age 35 are more likely than older respondents to have volunteered for each of the 11 types of causes canvassed in this study
- Half of Canadian millennials (49%) agree with the statement, "With all the requests and life so busy, I feel like I don't have enough control over what I'm doing with charitable donations"
- While those under 35 are less likely to feel confident about their charitable giving, they are more likely to say "charitable organizations can be trusted with the money people donate to them" (54% agree with this statement)

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Part 1 – Social media and 'slacktivism'

Younger users more apt to like or share posts about charity

The proliferation of social media over the last decade has had [complicated implications](#) for charitable behaviour in Canada and around the world. Generating awareness of a cause has arguably never been easier, but translating that awareness into engagement remains a challenge – particularly if would-be donors allow their clicks to take the place of material support.

These types of activities – liking or sharing a post or using a hashtag for a specific cause on social media – are sometimes pejoratively referred to as "slacktivism," a portmanteau of "slacker" and "activism."

[Critics argue](#) that posting about a cause on social media allows the poster to feel as though they've made a difference, when they haven't actually offered any material support. The implication of this criticism is that the act of posting or liking something about a cause ends up taking the place of donating or volunteering in support of that cause.

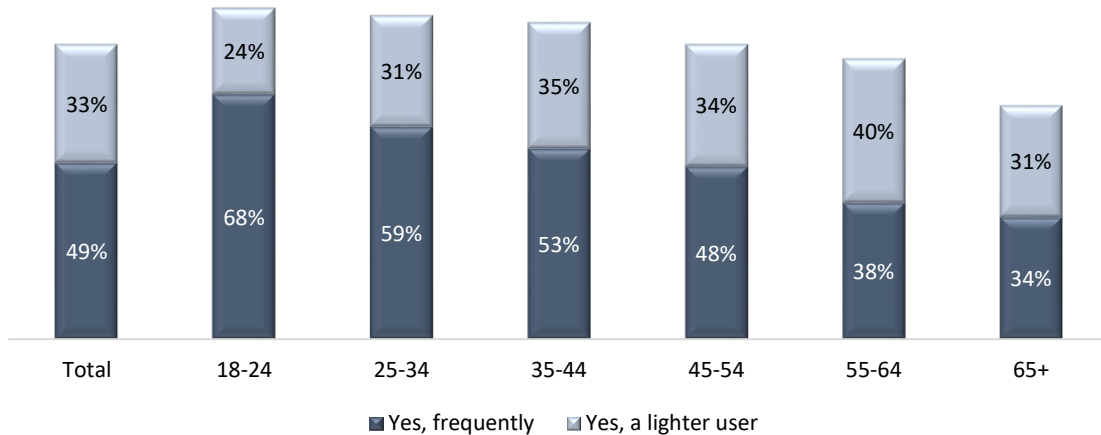
As [past Angus Reid Institute polling](#) has found, more than eight-in-ten Canadians are on social media, and usage rises to roughly nine-in-ten among millennials. Those under age 35 are also more likely than other age groups to describe themselves as frequent social media users:

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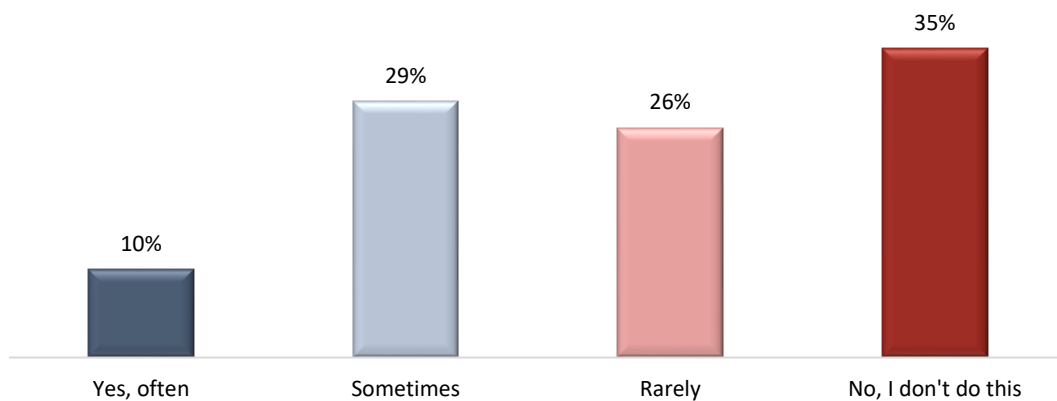
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Are you on social media?



So, how frequently do Canadian social media users interact with charitable causes and organizations on their preferred platform? Nearly two-thirds (65%) say they like or share posts or use hashtags in support of charity at least “rarely,” but only one-in-ten (10%) say they do so “often,” as seen in the following graph:

As a social media user, do you do any of these things to support charitable causes (like or share posts, use a hashtag, etc.)? (Question asked of social media users, N=1687)



Perhaps predictably, given their higher overall usage of social media, younger respondents are more likely than older ones to say they engage in these behaviours “often” or “sometimes.”

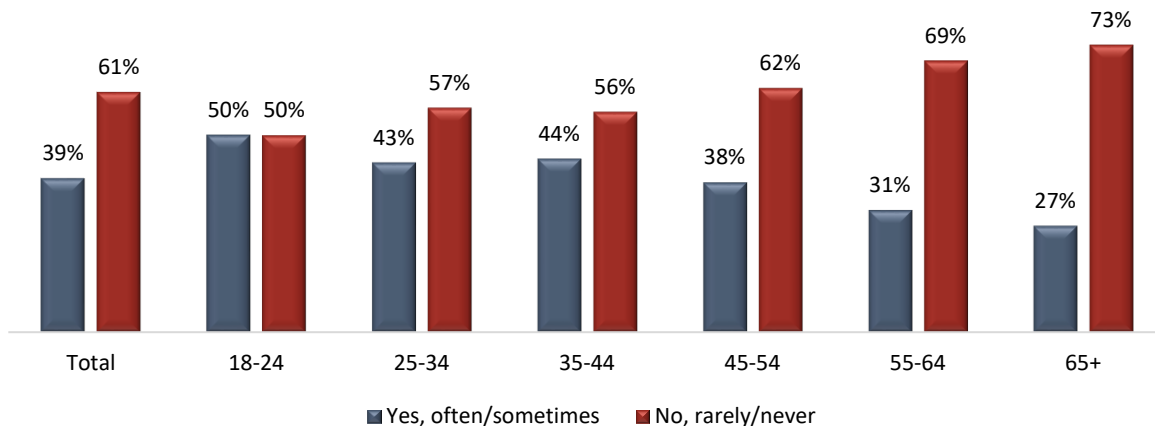
Fully half (50%) of those ages 18-24 say they are engaged in these behaviours. Those over age 25 are less likely to engage with posts about charitable causes, with those ages 55 and older especially so:

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As a social media user, do you do any of these things to support charitable causes (like or share posts, use a hashtag, etc.)?
(Question asked of social media users, N=1687)



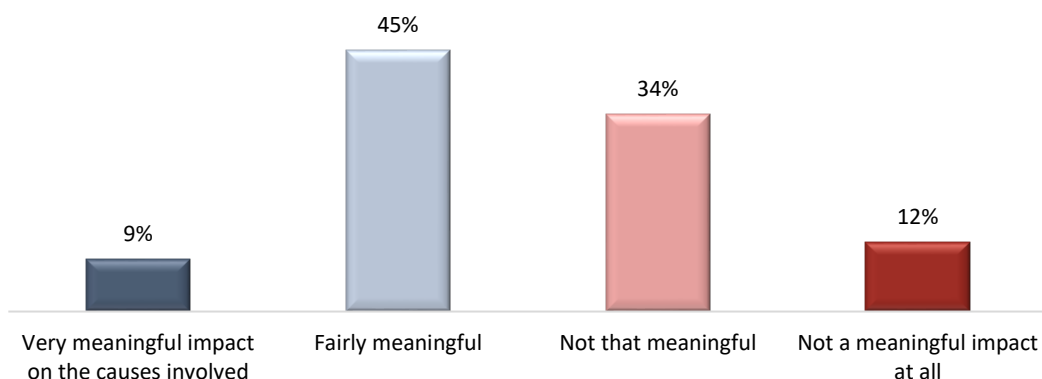
Is this support meaningful?

Does this kind of support – tweeting about a favourite cause, liking a charity's post on Facebook, or engaging on other platforms – have a significant impact on the charitable organization in question?

The answer to this question surely varies depending on the action taken, the charity it supported, and whether it was accompanied by a monetary donation.

Asked a broad question about whether these activities have a meaningful impact on the charitable causes involved, a small majority of users (54%) say yes, though fewer than one-in-ten (9%) say the effect is "very meaningful."

Overall, how meaningful do you think doing this is in terms of the impact it has on charitable causes involved?
(Question asked of social media users, N=1687)



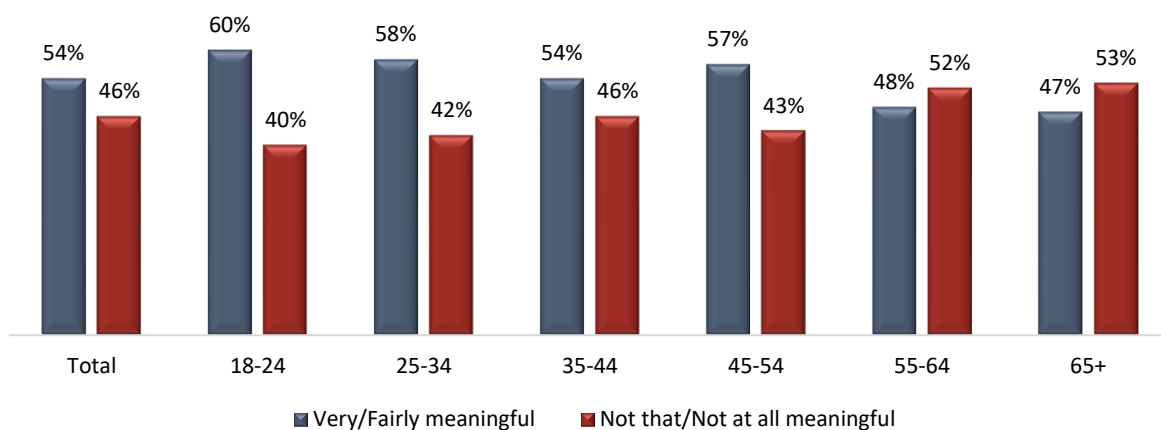
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Notably, the younger users who are more likely to engage in these behaviours are also more likely to view them as meaningful ways to help, though all age groups under age 55 are more likely to say liking or sharing posts about charity has a “very” or “fairly meaningful” impact than a non-meaningful one, as seen in the graph that follows.

Overall, how meaningful do you think doing this is in terms of the impact it has on the charitable causes involved?
(Question asked of social media users, N=1687)



Young people more likely to give in response to online requests

While a majority of Canadian social media users say these arguably “slacktivist” activities are meaningful, it’s worth noting that this survey also finds a significant number of Canadians who report donating to charity in response to a request they received on social media.

Almost one-in-four (23%) say they have given money in this way, and among the young people most likely to be tweeting and Facebooking their support for charity, the percentage who have given in response to a social media request rises to one-in-three (33%).

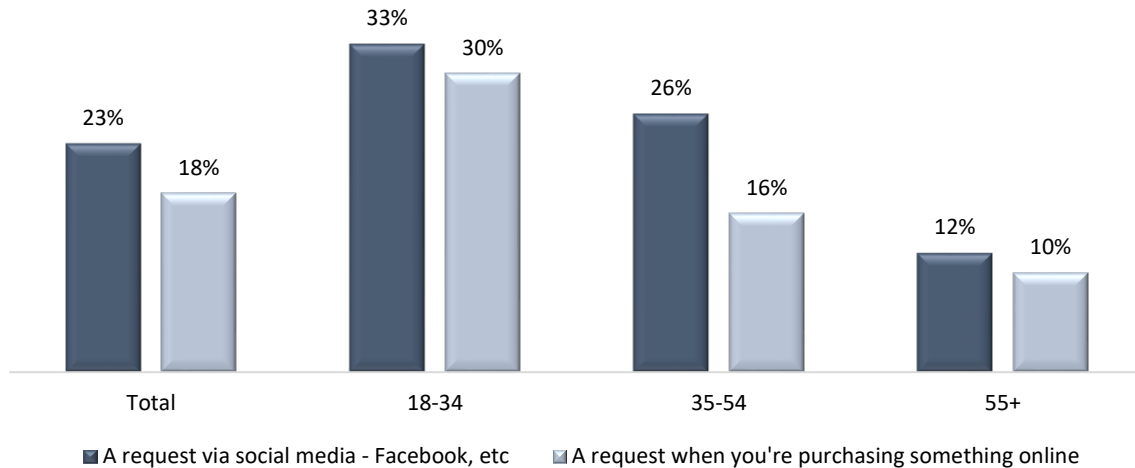
Similarly, those under age 35 are considerably more likely to say they have given money to charity when prompted to do so while shopping online:

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Percentage of Canadians who have donated to charity in response to each type of request in the last two years:



These are the only two modes of appeal for which younger people are significantly more likely than older people to have responded in the last two years ([see comprehensive tables for greater detail](#)).

So, while some might describe the support Canadians provide to charities online as slacktivism, it's clear that not all of it is. Perhaps more importantly, the higher prevalence of both genuinely charitable and arguably slacktivist behaviour among younger people suggests that these activities are here to stay. Charities will continue receiving support through hashtags, likes, and shares, but they will likely see growing monetary benefits to their social media presences, as well.

Part 2 – Millennials and charity

Less likely to give, more likely to volunteer

Previous installments of this ARI-CHIMP partnership have highlighted the 11 types of causes asked about in this survey, and differences in the type of support each receives. There are also notable differences in support for each area by age.

Related – The Giving Gap: What stops Canadians from donating more to charitable organizations?

Younger Canadians are less likely than other age groups to have donated to most of the causes canvassed, but more likely to have volunteered for each of them. Their overall rate of participation (either donated or volunteered) in each area tends to be roughly on par with other age groups ([see comprehensive tables](#)).

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Percentage in each age group who have donated to ("Don.") and volunteered for ("Vol.") each cause in the last two years.								
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (2072)		Age					
			18-34 (580)		35-54 (684)		55+ (746)	
	Don.	Vol.	Don.	Vol.	Don.	Vol.	Don.	Vol.
Health and disease research, treatment or prevention	52%	8%	37%	12%	54%	7%	64%	6%
Poverty relief	43%	12%	37%	18%	40%	9%	53%	11%
International aid	29%	3%	29%	5%	27%	3%	32%	1%
Animal welfare/ humane society	28%	8%	27%	11%	29%	8%	29%	4%
Religious, church or faith group	25%	14%	23%	18%	23%	10%	29%	13%
Educational charities promoting children's or adult educational efforts	19%	9%	18%	12%	21%	7%	18%	7%
Mental health and addiction	18%	7%	16%	11%	19%	5%	19%	4%
Environmental issues, pollution, land use	14%	9%	14%	14%	13%	6%	15%	6%
Arts and culture	13%	8%	13%	11%	13%	6%	14%	6%
Your own cultural and/or ethnic community	12%	10%	14%	15%	11%	7%	11%	9%
Human rights such as racism, women's rights, democracy	12%	5%	14%	6%	10%	6%	13%	4%

The higher rate of volunteerism among younger people [fits a pattern](#) reported by Statistics Canada, which found in 2013 that Canadians ages 15 – 19 were most likely to volunteer.

One likely explanation for this ARI finding is that the youngest age groups canvassed in this survey are either currently students or only a few years removed from their educational experiences. Many high schools and university programs require their students to perform community service to graduate, and many students who aren't subject to such requirements do volunteer work to improve their resumes.

Looking at the data by finer age categories provides considerable evidence for this hypothesis. As seen in the following table, those under age 25 tend to be more likely than older members of the millennial generation to have volunteered for each cause in the last two years.

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Percentage in each age group who have volunteered for each cause in the last two years:							
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (2072)	Age					
		18-24 (228)	25-34 (352)	35-44 (332)	45-54 (352)	55-64 (352)	65+ (394)
Health and disease research, treatment or prevention	8%	18%	8%	7%	7%	6%	7%
Poverty relief	12%	26%	12%	8%	10%	13%	9%
International aid	3%	7%	3%	3%	2%	2%	1%
Animal welfare/ humane society	8%	17%	7%	7%	8%	6%	3%
Religious, church or faith group	14%	23%	14%	12%	10%	10%	15%
Educational charities promoting children's or adult educational efforts	9%	19%	8%	8%	5%	8%	5%
Mental health and addiction	7%	14%	9%	5%	6%	6%	3%
Environmental issues, pollution, land use	9%	21%	9%	7%	5%	6%	7%
Arts and culture	8%	17%	7%	6%	6%	7%	5%
Your own cultural and/or ethnic community	10%	20%	11%	9%	6%	8%	9%
Human rights such as racism, women's rights, democracy	5%	9%	5%	6%	6%	6%	2%

Millennials' lower propensity to donate money to charity is also reflected in their self-assessments of their giving.

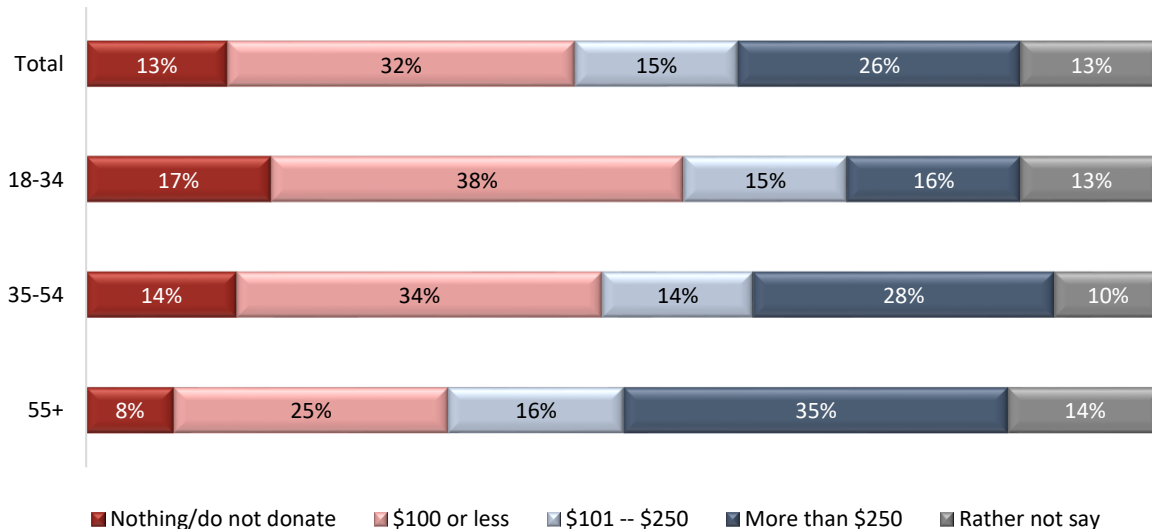
Asked to assess their overall charitable activities, they're slightly more likely than other age groups to say they don't give money to any charities (or to say they "can't remember"), and they're slightly more likely to have given an amount below \$100:

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Approximately how much money in total do you donate to charity in a single year?



As first mentioned in [part one](#) of this ARI-CHIMP partnership, Canadians can be divided into four categories when it comes to their charitable behaviours: **Non-Donors** (14% of the overall population), **Casual Donors** (31%), **Prompted Donors** (34%), and **Super Donors** (21%).

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

Members of the first two groups – the Non-Donors and the Casual Donors – give less often and in smaller amounts than those in the latter two groups. Non-Donors do not give to any of the 11 types of causes canvassed, and give less than \$100 to charity in a year, overall. Casual Donors are slightly more active, with most members supporting at least two of the 11 causes, but all of them giving less than \$250 to charity in total.

The other two groups – the Prompted Donors and the Super Donors – are significantly more charitable. They spread their donations around, with most supporting several different causes annually and donating more than \$250 in total. The difference between the two is the Super Donors' propensity to provide ongoing support, and to give in a more deliberate way, acting on their own initiative in addition to reacting to requests from specific charities. Prompted Donors do not tend to take this initiative with their giving.

As might be expected based on the findings discussed to this point, younger Canadians are more likely than older ones to find themselves in the Non-Donors and Casual Donors categories, as seen in the graph that follows.

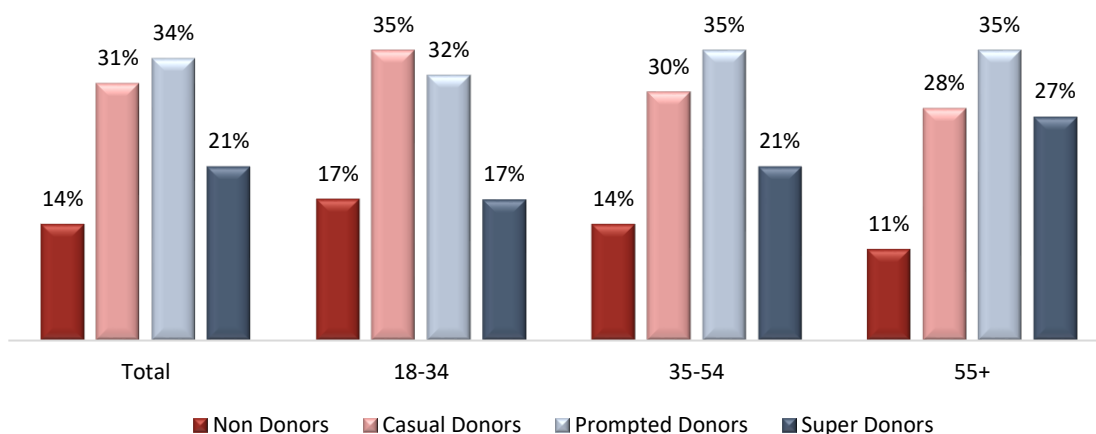
Note that members of each age group end up in each segment, but Prompted and Super Donors are over-represented among those over 35:

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The four segments in each age group:



Do teenagers differ from older millennials?

In addition to adult millennials – those ages 18-34 – this survey included a special sample of more than 100 younger respondents, ages 16-17.

Members of this cohort offer responses quite similar to those of the adult millennials surveyed, especially those in the 18-24 age group. That said, there are some areas where these teenagers distinguish themselves from other Canadian young people.

Perhaps unsurprisingly - given that the vast majority of people in this age group are likely to still be in high school and living with parents or other legal guardians - Canadian teens are less likely than those in other age groups to have made a monetary donation to each of the 11 types of causes canvassed ([see comprehensive tables](#)).

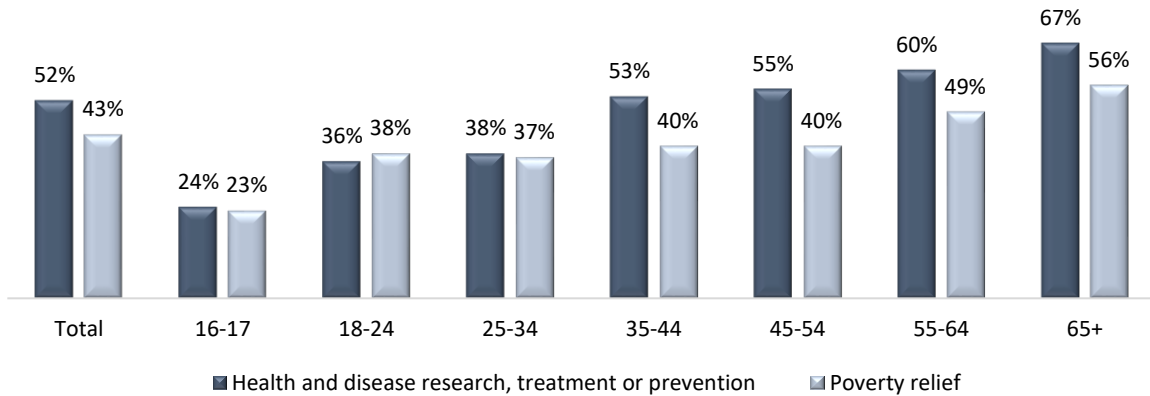
This difference is especially notable on the two most popular areas for donation: health and disease research and poverty relief. While teens are more likely to give to these two types of causes than any of the others, fewer than one-in-four do so, compared to significantly larger numbers among adults – especially older adults:

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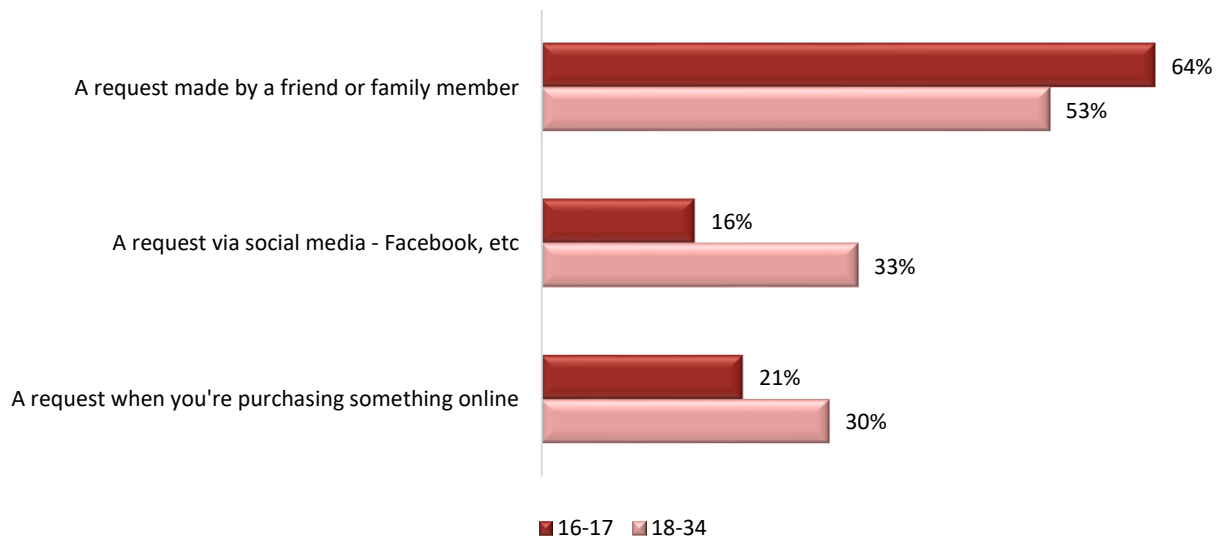
Percentage who have donated to each type of cause in the last two years:



The fact that teenagers are less likely to donate money to even the most widely supported causes is likely a product of their relative lack of income. Though they have fewer expenses than adults living on their own, teens also tend to work part time, if at all.

When they do give, teens tend to do so in response to requests that come from their personal lives – from friends or family. In contrast to older millennials, 16- and 17-year-olds are among the Canadians least likely to give in response to requests received online – either via social media or when making an online purchase:

Percentage who have donated to charity in response to each type of request in the last two years:



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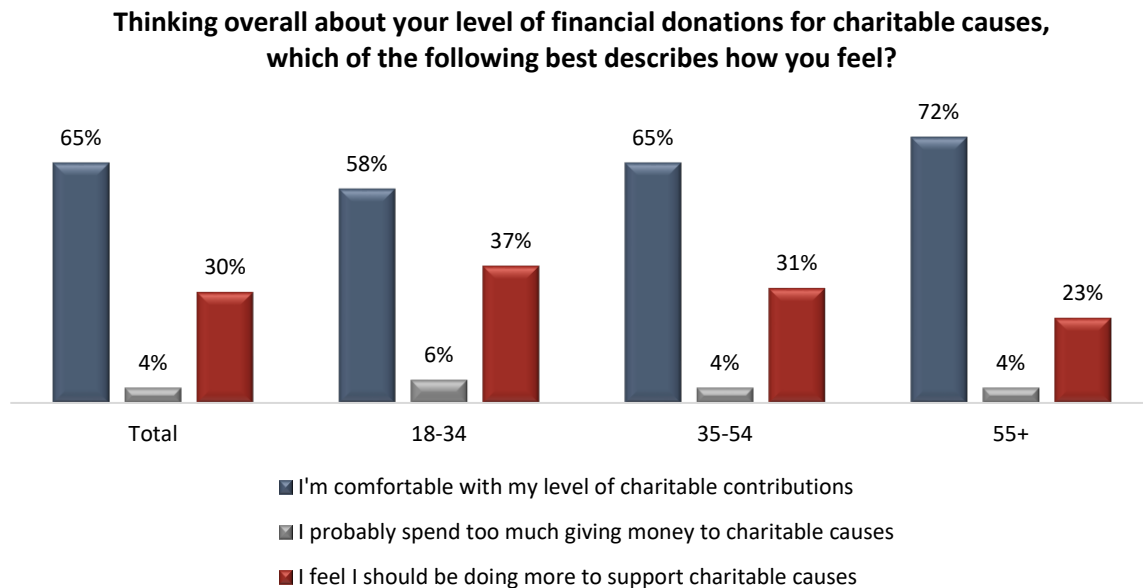
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Finances hold many back

Why do Canadians under age 35 donate less money to charity than their elders? They offer a variety of reasons, but financial concerns are arguably the most prominent.

Some six-in-ten millennials (58%) say they are comfortable with the amount they donate to charity, but a sizeable minority (37%) believe they should be doing more, as seen in the following graph:



Respondents who said they should be doing more to support charitable causes were asked a follow-up question about impediments to their giving. Millennials who would like to be giving more are especially likely to say financial limitations are “the whole reason” why they aren’t already doing so.

Only 6 per cent of millennials who say they should be giving more believe that financial reasons are “not an issue.”

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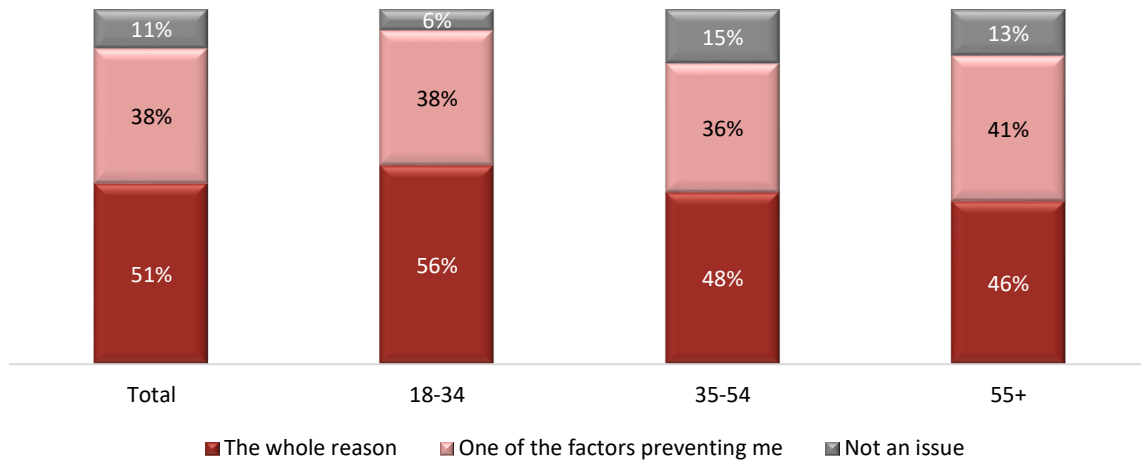
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How important are each of the following in preventing you from doing more to support charitable causes?

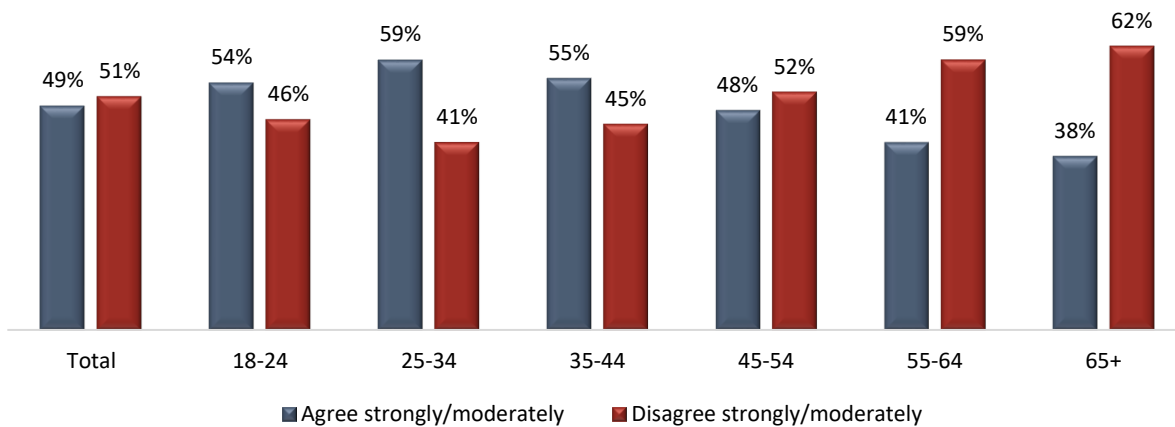
("Financial means - I just don't have the money" shown)

Question asked of those who feel they should be donating more, N=623



In a similar vein, younger respondents are considerably more likely to agree with statement "I can barely make ends meet – never mind giving money to charitable causes." Majorities of all age groups under 45 agree with this statement, while those 45 and older mostly disagree:

"I can barely make ends meet - never mind giving money to charitable causes"



That said, while money matters may be the top concern for many millennials, they are far from the only thing preventing members of that generation from giving more to charity.

Full majorities of those under age 35 who would like to be giving more say concerns about the legitimacy (53%) and effectiveness (52%) of charitable organizations are among the factors preventing them from

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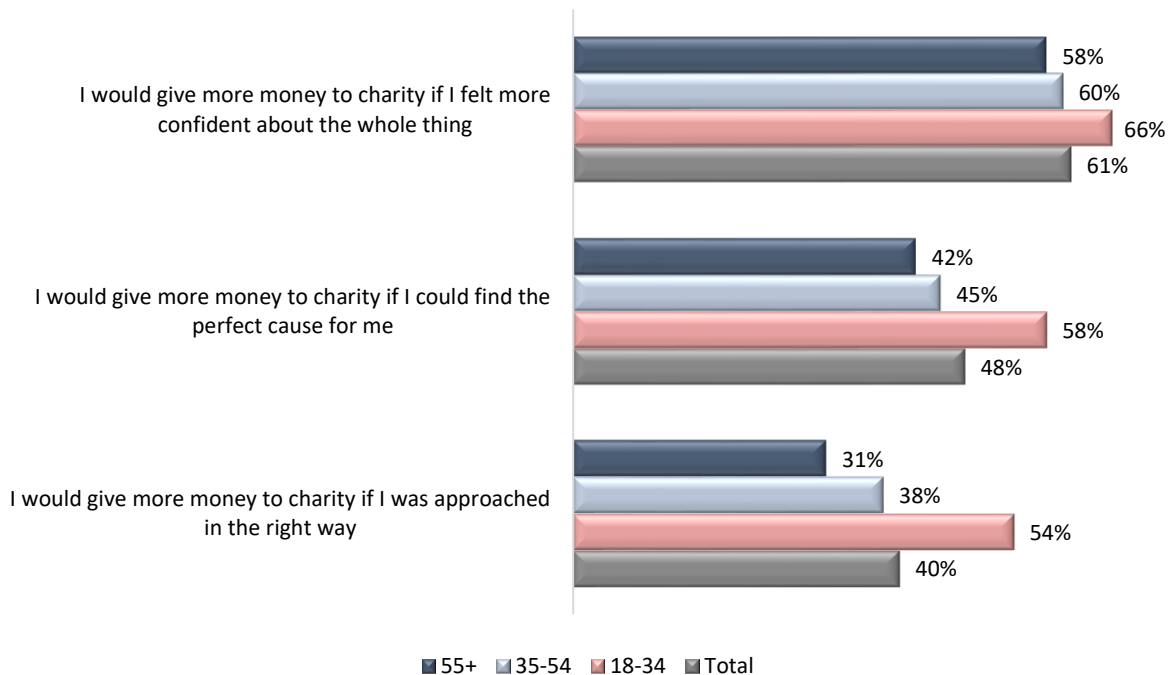
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increasing the amount they donate. Similarly, four-in-ten (40%) in this group say a lack of knowledge about charities is one of the factors preventing them from doing more ([see comprehensive tables](#)).

Even those millennials who are comfortable with their current level of giving express a willingness to donate more under the right conditions. More than half of those ages 16-34 agree with each of three statements beginning with “I would give more if.” This age group is more likely than others to agree with each statement, as seen in the following graph.

Percentage in each age group who agree with each statement:



These findings suggest that – though money woes are a major concern – many millennials also feel under-served by current charitable approaches.

To further investigate the relationship between these three statements, Angus Reid Institute researchers conducted a cluster analysis – a multivariate analytical technique that can uncover shared mindsets within a dataset. This analysis yielded a group of Canadians – representing 20 per cent of the total population – who are united by their outlook on the various attitudinal statements presented in this survey.

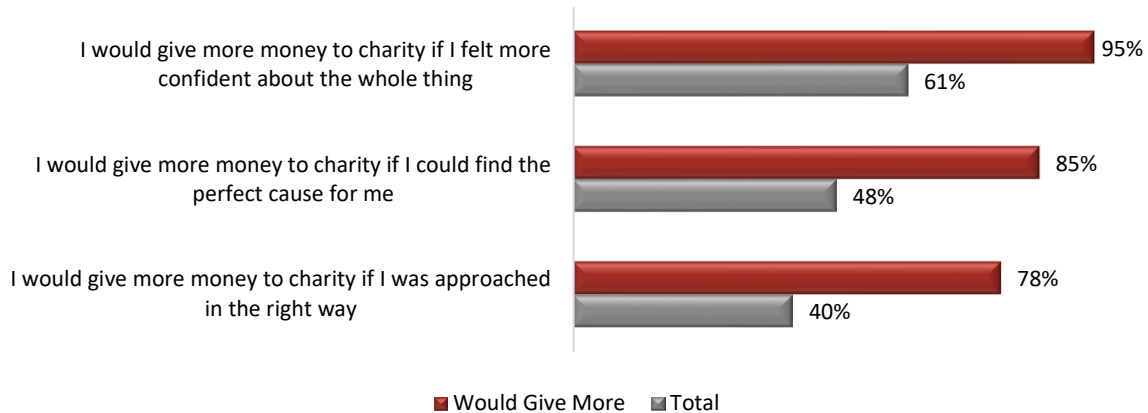
Members of this group – called “Would Give More” in the graph that follows – agree with each of the three statements at a rate of at least 78 per cent:

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Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Those saying "agree" shown)

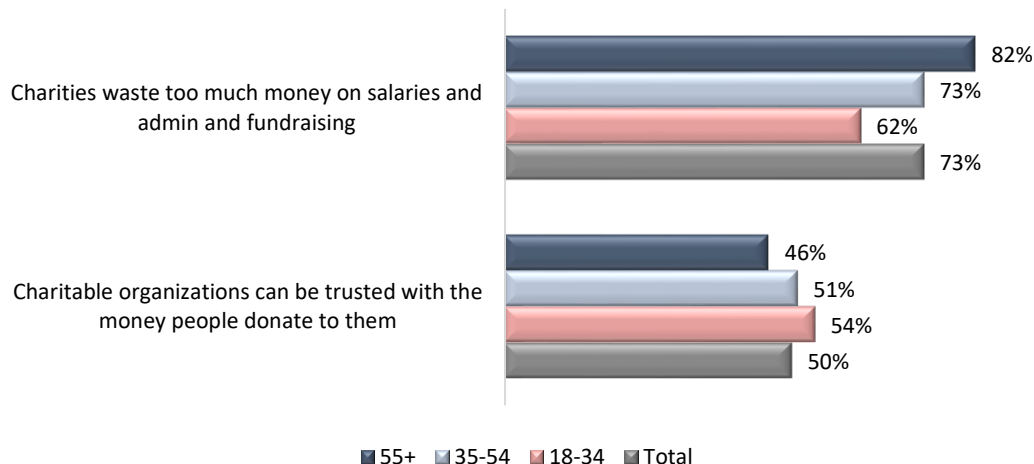


Though members of this “Would Give More” group skew younger, there are Canadians of all ages who find themselves united by this mindset. For greater detail on this segment of the population, see [part two](#) of this ARI-CHIMP project.

More trust in charities, less confidence in choices

Canadians under age 35 hold several attitudes about charity that distinguish them from their elders. In addition to their higher rate of agreement with statements about their willingness to give more to charity under specific circumstances, they're more likely to agree that “charitable organizations can be trusted with the money people donate to them,” and less likely to agree that “charities waste too much money on salaries and admin and fundraising.”

Percentage in each age group who agree with each statement:



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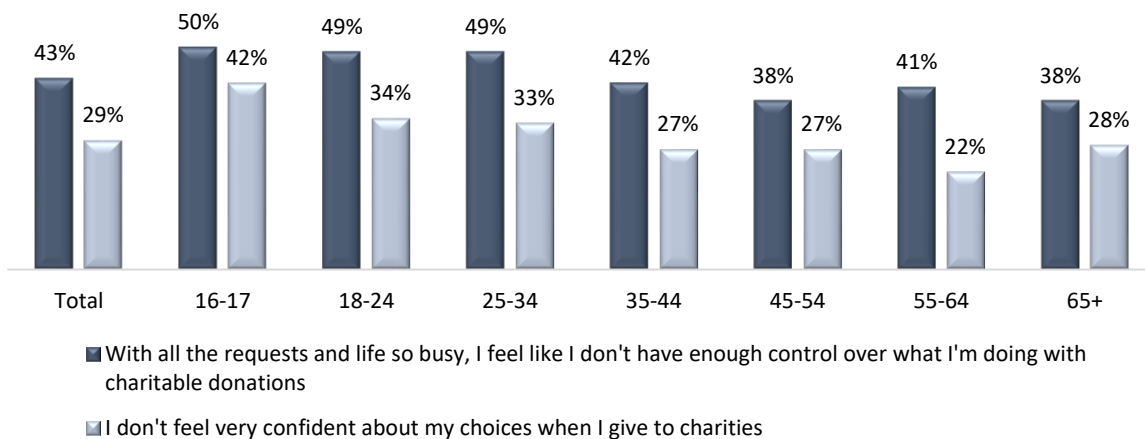
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These two findings suggest that younger Canadians have a more favourable view of charity as an industry, overall, than other age groups.

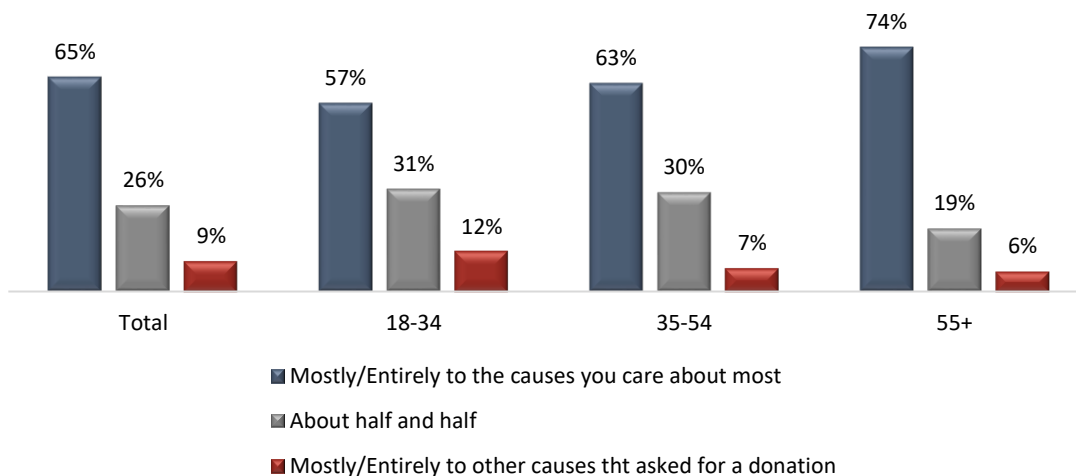
They are less likely to express confidence in their choices when donating, however, and more likely to say they feel a lack of control over their charitable contributions. On these two statements, teens express views similar to those of other millennials, as seen in the graph that follows.

Percentage who agree with each statement:



This lack of confidence and control can be seen reflected in millennials' self-assessments of their giving habits. Asked whether they felt their donations in the last year had ended up going to the causes they cared about most or to other causes that asked for a donation, younger Canadians are less likely than other age groups to choose the former:

Overall, would you say your donations ended up going ...



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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 gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).

For detailed results by the four behavioural segments, [click here](#).

The four behavioural segments by age:				
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (2072)	Age		
		18-34 (580)	35-54 (684)	55+ (746)
Non-Donors	14%	17%	14%	11%
Casual Donors	31%	35%	30%	28%
Prompted Donors	34%	32%	35%	35%
Super Donors	21%	17%	21%	27%

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