

For immediate release
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Compassion and trust drive Canadian donations while strongly held scepticism limits giving

A new poll commissioned by Innovative Research Group (INNOVATIVE) shows that a strong commitment to helping the less fortunate and a general trust in others distinguishes Canadians who donate over \$500 dollars a year compared to those who give less. Personal enjoyment and gaining public esteem are not key drivers of giving.

While a third of Canadians feel giving to charity allows government to avoid responsibilities and that we wouldn't need charity if the government did its job, those views do not impact donations. However, the intensity of scepticism about where charitable dollars go may be limiting both the number of donors and the amount they give.

Canadians who care and trust more give more

True to stereotype, Canadians are trusting and compassionate, and the more trusting and compassionate you are, the more likely you are to give more.

While a majority of donors and non-donors agree that "it's important for people to find ways to help others less fortunate than themselves", donors who gave \$500 or more are more likely to strongly agree (64%) than those who gave less (49%) or nothing at all (32%).

People who donate more money are more trusting of people than those who give less. While on average just over half (55%) of Canadians say "most people can be trusted", two thirds (70%) of large donors agreed with that statement while only one quarter (26%) felt that "you can't be too careful in dealing with people."

Among those donating less than \$500 in the last year, there was an even split between those who said most people can be trusted (50%) and those who disagreed (46%). Individuals making no charitable donations were less trusting in general, with over half (54%) expressing distrust for others and only one third (35%) saying they generally trust the people around them.

Larger donors (46%) also stand out as being more likely to agree than average (31%) that "It's an important part of my religion to give to charity".

Feelings of obligation (I feel this community has been good to me and I owe something back) and duty (I feel a duty to provide financial support to key institutions and causes in my community) are also strongly correlated with giving but do not enjoy the same intensity as compassion and trust.

Conflict between role of charity and government has limited impact on giving

A minority of Canadians felt that if government was doing its job, there would be no reason for charities to exist. One third (34%) of respondents agreed that “we wouldn’t need charity if the government properly addressed society’s problems,” and a third (33%) agreed that “giving to charity allows the government to avoid its responsibilities.”

While there is little difference in this view among non-donors and small donors, Canadians who give large donations to charity (\$500 or more per year) overwhelmingly disagree. Six-in-ten (62%) do not agree that charities exist only to solve problems ignored by government. Over half (55%) also disagree that giving to charity allows government to avoid its responsibilities.

Efficient use of donor dollars important

Canadians are concerned about where their contributions are going. Seven-in-ten (72%) Canadians either agreed or strongly agreed that “a lot of money raised for charities ends up going to administrative costs and not the intended recipients.”

Yet again, the most charitable Canadians were also the most trusting of charitable organizations. Only one quarter (23%) of large donors strongly agreed that “a lot of money raised for charities ends up going to administrative costs and not the intended recipients.”

Among individuals making no financial donation in the past twelve months, almost a majority (45%) strongly agreed that their donations – had they made one – would have gone to administrative costs rather than intended recipients.

An INNOVATIVE approach to understanding giving

In order to determine a model to predict future giving, INNOVATIVE conducted an in-depth study looking at Canadians’ philanthropic behaviour. Using the framework provided by our *Dynamic Model of Opinion Formation and Change*, INNOVATIVE asked Canadians a series of questions to determine their general likelihood to give, past giving history, the impact donors’ perception of the organization plays in giving, and what roles they believe the public and private sector should play in funding charitable initiatives. This release highlights the impact of general attitudes on overall giving. Further topics will follow.

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About this Study

This release includes the results from an online survey. The total sample included n=1,759 in Canada.

Data was collected between November 17 and November 24, 2011, through INNOVATIVE's proprietary research panel, Canada 20/20. Panel members have been recruited by a variety of methods to be broadly representative of the population at large. INNOVATIVE provides each panellist with a unique URL via an email invitation so that only invited panel members are able to complete the survey. Panel members can only complete a particular survey once.

Using the latest available Statistics Canada Census data, the results of the study have been weighted according to age, gender and region to ensure a sample representative of the entire adult population. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

An unweighted probability sample of 1,759 would have an estimated margin of error of ± 2.34 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.