

# From care to contribution: Winning young donors

Insights into how younger generations donate, what they care about, and what makes a donation offer feel worth choosing.

Germany market study

**SIMON  
KUCHER**  
Unlocking better growth

for

unicef   
for every child





# Global pro bono partnership

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Simon-Kucher supports charities and purpose-led organizations in translating donor insight into value propositions that work – from donation journeys and product design to next-generation contribution and partnership models.

UNICEF Germany works to raise awareness of the needs of children and to encourage people to donate. Founded in 1953 as an association, the German Committee for UNICEF is now one of the most important pillars supporting the United Nations Children’s Fund’s work worldwide.

This study was conducted as part of a pro bono project for UNICEF Germany within the context of Simon-Kucher’s global partnership with UNICEF, with the aim of exploring what inspires and mobilizes the next generation of supporters.

At a time when the future of giving is evolving, understanding what keeps charitable causes relevant is essential. The goal is to help accelerate action that drives meaningful impact for children, and other charitable causes across Germany and worldwide.

# Why Germany, why now?

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Germany: Europe's precedent for the future of giving

Germany is one of Europe's most important donation markets, and often a preview for new giving behaviors.

The shift we see is not about whether young people care. It is about how they act on that care. Donation is moving closer to everyday routines, digital spaces, and moments that feel immediate.

For charities and partners, this is a relevance question. As older donor cohorts gradually shrink, the next generations have to feel seen, understood, and invited in ways that fit their lives.

**Young donors are active.**  
**The giving experience is what is changing.**

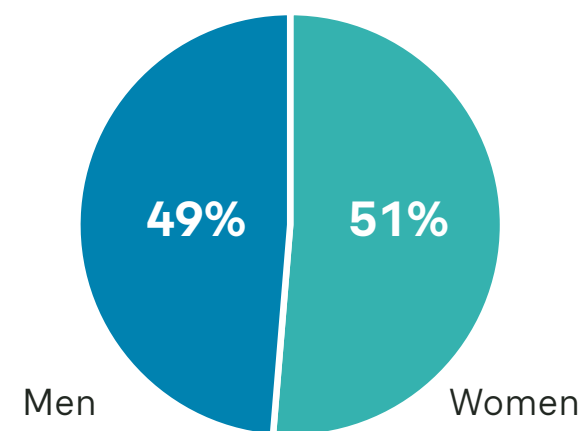


# Who we spoke to and how

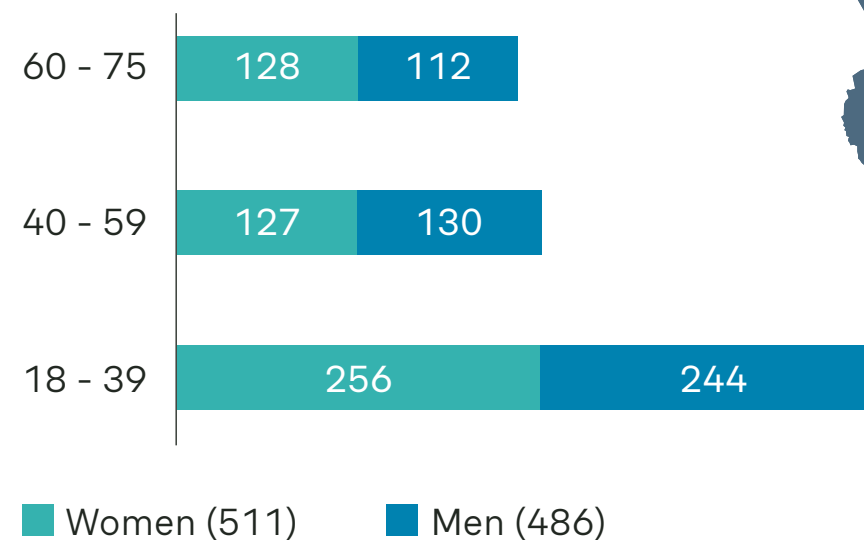
A quick survey snapshot: This report is based on a Germany-wide online survey conducted in collaboration with [Appinio](#)

We focused on young people aged 18–39 and included a control group aged 40–75 to understand what is truly youth-specific versus general donor behavior.

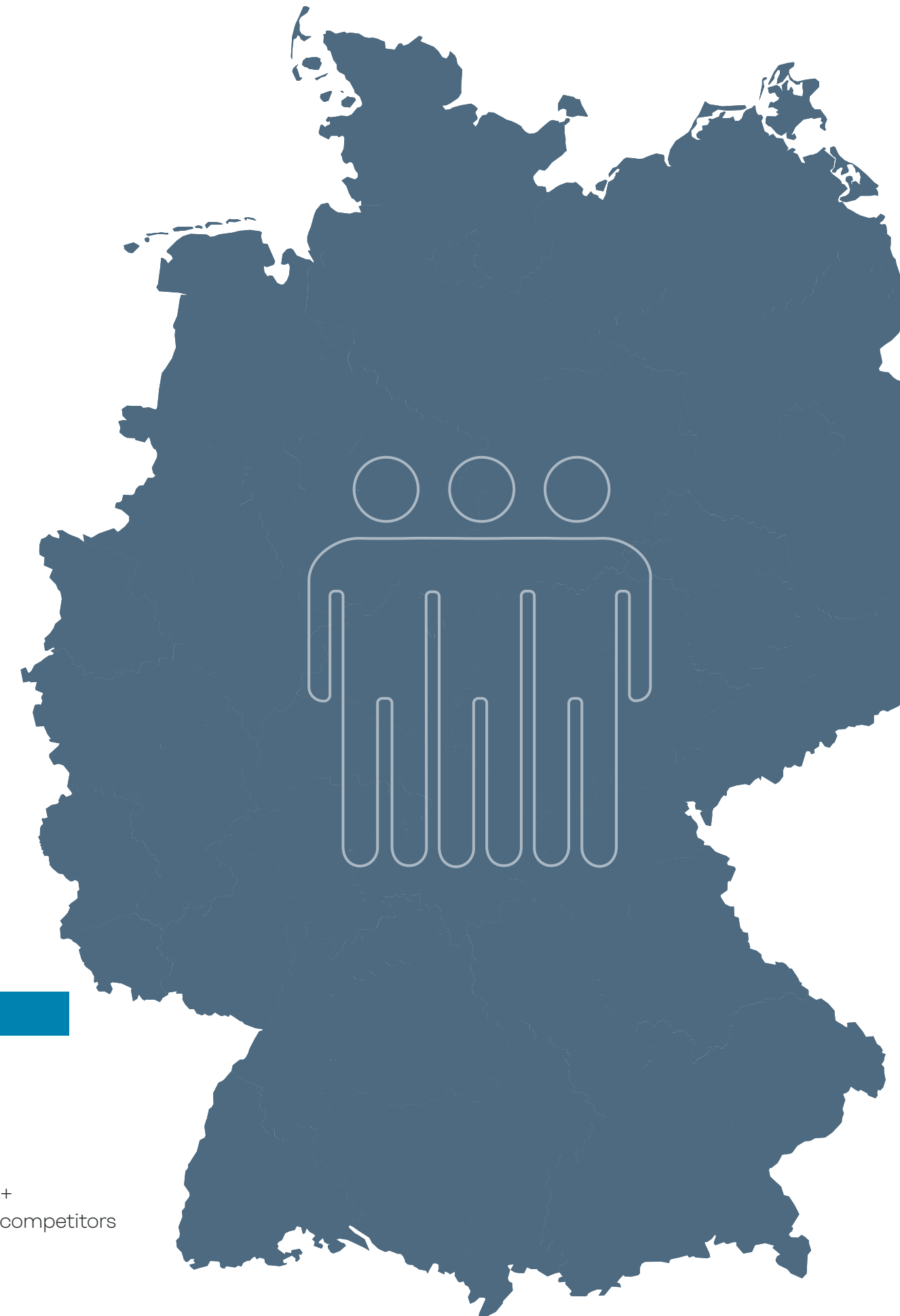
The sample includes only people who are open to charitable engagement, with 52% reporting recent giving behavior.



## Age & Gender



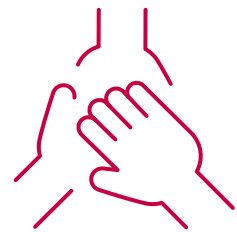
Online survey | Germany | N=997 | Focus group: 18–39 +  
Control Group: 40–75 | Benchmarking assessment: 16 competitors



# What we set out to understand

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Questions that guided the study



**What drives giving behavior among younger generations?**



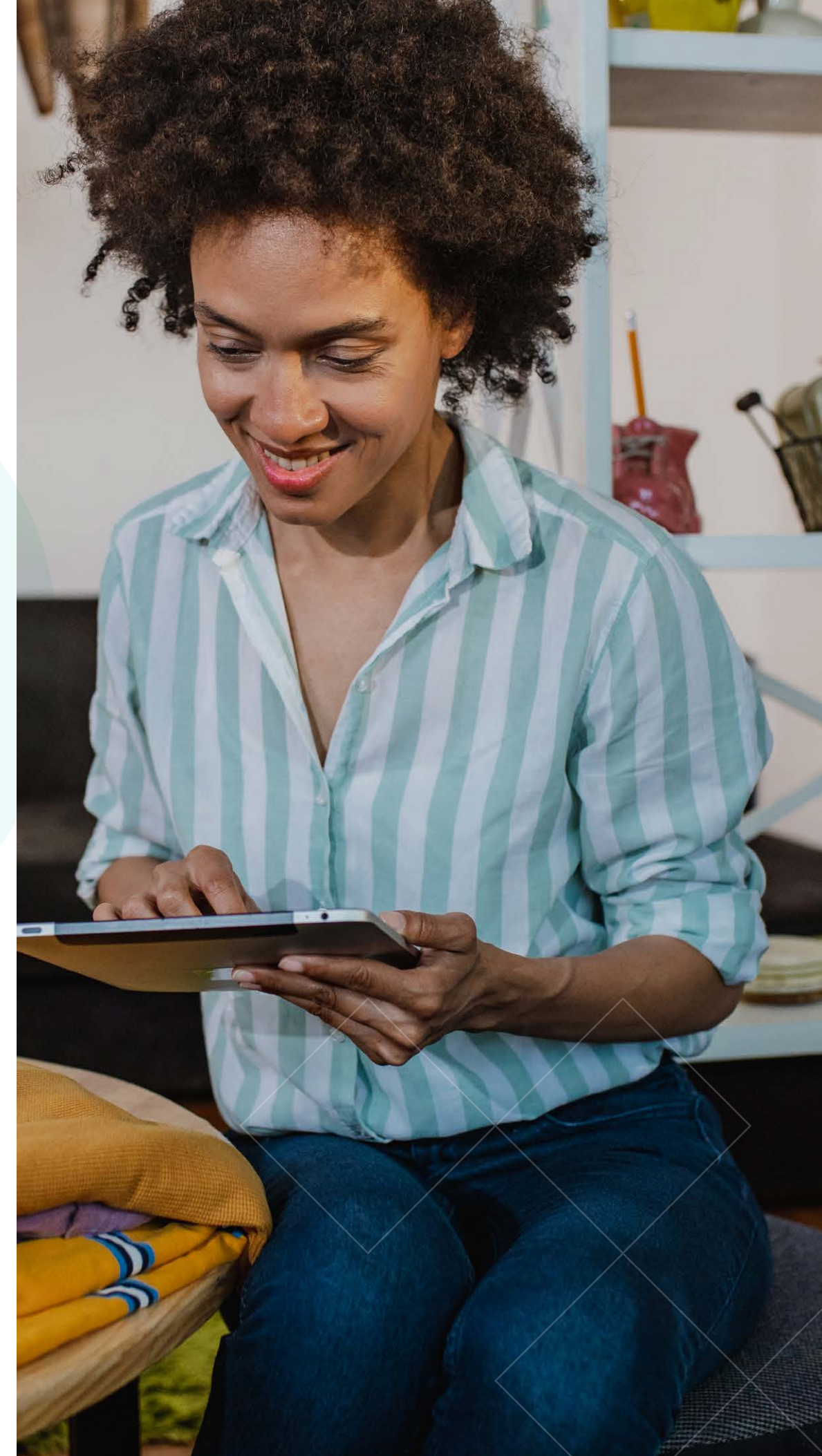
**Do charitable brands replace classic monetary donations, or complement them?**



**How are charities, platforms, and brands perceived today?**



**What can the sector learn from best-in-class donation models?**





The study highlights what we at UNICEF are already seeing: Young people want to engage, including in support of children, but on their own terms. They donate where they're already active, in everyday digital moments, through platforms that fit seamlessly into their lives. Earning their loyalty will depend on thoughtful and relevant design of messages and the giving experience.

Thorsten Peters, Head of Marketing and a member of the Executive Board at UNICEF Germany

# A simple framework to think about donation decisions

A donation is a decision, not a reflex

When someone donates, they move through a small set of questions, often in seconds. What matters most is not a single message. It is the full experience of clarity, impact, trust, and convenience.



This framework underpins how we interpret the survey results.

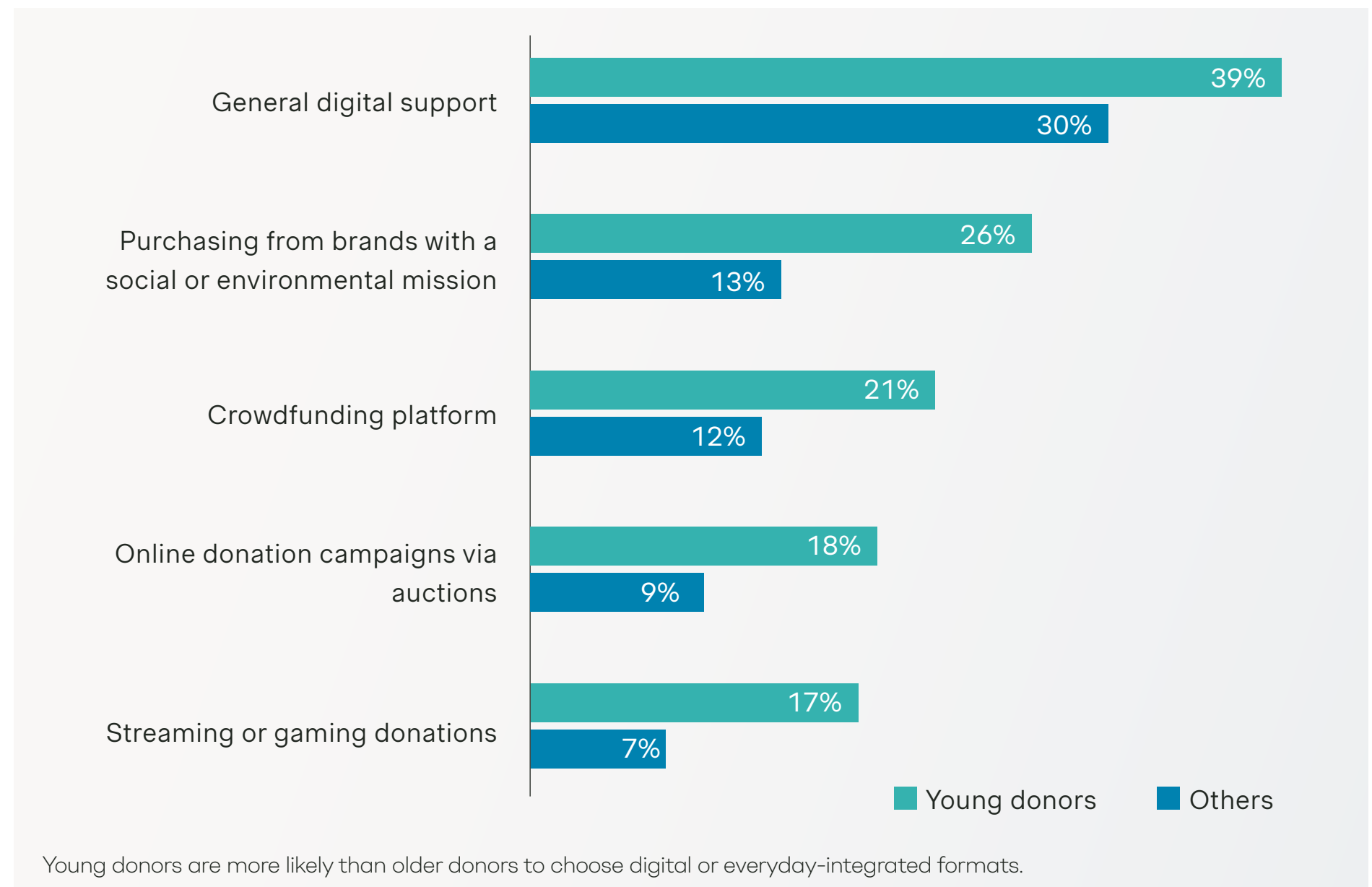
# How young donors give today

The act of giving is expanding beyond the classic donation moment

Young donors do give money. At the same time, they engage more than older donors in formats that feel integrated into daily life or leisure, especially digital channels and brand-linked giving.

This matters because these formats are not side behaviors. They are becoming normal entry points into doing good.

**Doing good is becoming part of daily routines.**



# Charitable brands: When buying becomes giving

Far from being a trend, charitable brands increasingly shape donation choices

Among younger participants, charitable brands are more likely to be chosen over direct monetary donations, indicating a substitution effect.

When people explain why, the language is practical and honest: it fits everyday life, requires little sacrifice, and feels like a win-win.

Charities need not be threatened by this. Instead, it is about focusing on the right channels. The question becomes how to show up credibly in moments where giving is already happening.

## Reasons across donor groups for choosing social brands

1. Feels very sustainable and creates longer-lasting impact

70%

2. Fits effortlessly into daily routines and habits

48%

3. Offers a win-win of receiving value and doing good

33%

4. Provides higher trust compared to charities

28%

5. Supports responsible companies and reinforces good values

25%

“Easy to do, easy to justify, and it feels like it lasts.”





# What moves young donors

Causes shift by age, but action usually needs a trigger

**46%** of young donors lean more toward animal-related causes, while older donors lean more toward child-focused causes.

Donations are rarely random. For young donors, the decision is often activated by a moment: a crisis, a life event, a friend's appeal, or a call to action in their social feed. Older donors show more consistency and are more likely to donate without an explicit trigger, suggesting a stronger duty-driven pattern.



Crises are the most frequently cited trigger among young donors, even when crisis relief is not a top cause.

# What motivates donors

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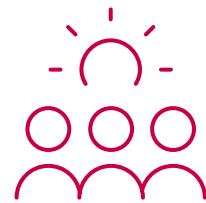
Motivation is emotional, but the follow-up need is factual

Across age groups, motivations differ in nuance, not in a single clean pattern. Still, young donors rate positive change statements more strongly, and are less driven by political or religious motives than older groups.

What comes through most clearly is this: Once a person is willing to help, they want to feel the help is real, impactful. That drives demand for concrete proof that the donation will:



**Reduce suffering**



**Create positive change**



**Feel confident  
the help works**



# What matters most in a donation offer

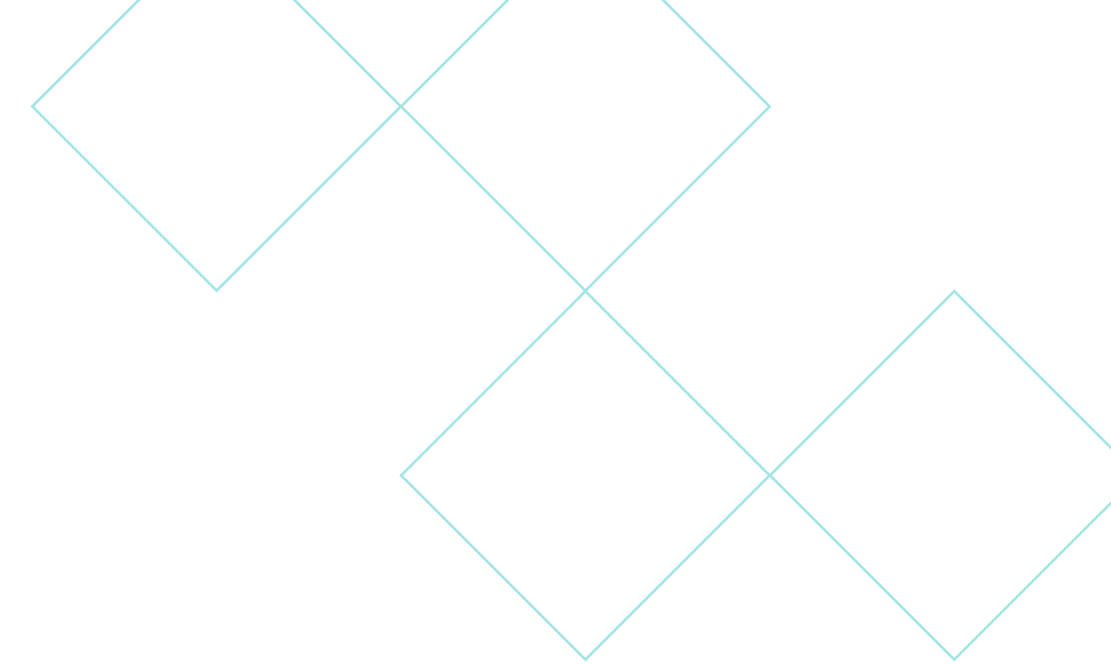
Young donors choose offers they can understand and trust quickly



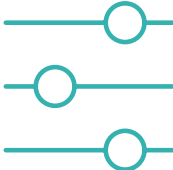
Across donors, the top decision factors cluster around three needs: transparency, impact visibility, and control over where money goes, with only slight differences between age groups.

This also shows up in communication preferences. **35%** of younger donors respond more to concrete results/outcomes, **34%** prefer detailed overview of planned measures, and **32%** look for honest insights into current challenges and progress.

Meanwhile, older donors place relatively higher importance on personal stories and on-the-ground hardship depictions.

**Clarity, convenience, and proof beat gimmicks.**



Factor		Statement
	<b>Transparency</b>	“I can clearly track which measures are supported by my donation (e.g. project milestones, use of funds).”
	<b>Impact visibility</b>	“The impact or outcome of the donation is clearly demonstrated (e.g. concrete results or before-and-after comparisons).”
	<b>Ability to control flow of donation</b>	“I can decide how my donation is used (e.g. location, cause, specific goods).”

Top drivers include transparency, impact visibility, control, and ease of giving.

# Where charities stand today

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Trust is strong. Expectations are rising faster.

Traditional charity organizations still benefit from strong awareness and solid conversion and retention patterns.

At the same time, the factors that matter most to young donors are hard to deliver consistently across the sector. This creates a familiar tension. People trust the mission, but still want clearer evidence, clearer choices, and clearer feedback.

**High-importance factors** are where the experience needs to be most convincing: **transparency, impact visibility, control.**



# What standout organizations do well

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Best-in-class charities make donations feel simple, tangible, and personal



Younger generations are not giving less, but they are moving beyond traditional donation models. To stay relevant, charities need to rethink giving as digital, situational, and embedded in everyday life.

Björn Dahmen, Senior Partner,  
Simon-Kucher

## Everyday integration

Donations embedded into checkout moments, entertainment, or daily routines



## Visible impact

Simple metrics, progress bars, and 'what your donation achieves' framing  
Clear cost-to-impact framing creates confidence fast



## Community participation

Challenges, goals, and shared progress that make giving feel collective  
Livestreaming tools turn giving into a shared moment



## Choice that feels real

Donors can select campaigns or purposes and feel agency

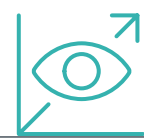


# From insight to action

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Four priorities that improve youth-fit without reinventing everything

1



## Make impact easy to see

Lead with outcomes, actions, and progress. Offer quick proof first, deeper context second.

2



## Offer meaningful control

Give choices that feel tangible: project selection, fund themes, or clear purpose modules.

3



## Build everyday entry points

Partnerships, micro-giving at checkout, and digital-native formats reduce friction and lower the barrier to start.

4



## Use a progress-oriented tone

Young donors respond to clear, positive outcome framing more than despair-led messaging.

The **goal** is not louder fundraising.  
It is a **better giving experience**.



# Closing

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A hopeful conclusion for the sector

The encouraging message is that younger donors are not disengaged. They are active, curious, and open to giving, especially when the path feels natural and the impact feels real.

For charities and partners, the opportunity is to meet them in the moments they already live in, then earn loyalty through transparency, proof, and thoughtful design.

Simon-Kucher supports charities and purpose-led organizations in translating donor insight into offerings that work, from donation journeys and product design to messaging, testing, and partnerships.

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# Your contacts at Simon-Kucher

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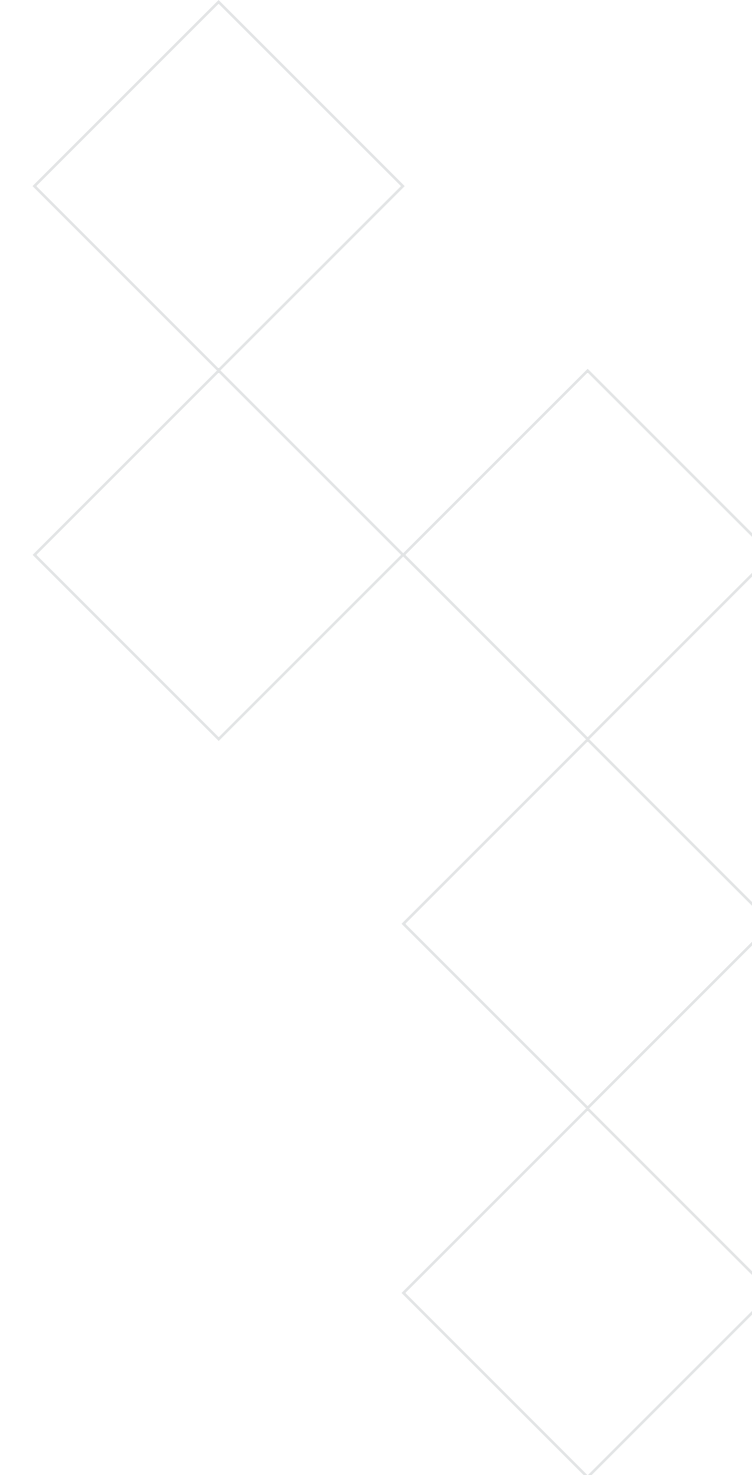
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