

## **DETERMINANTS OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: A COMPARISON OF THE MOTIVATING FACTORS OF INDIVIDUAL DONORS IN GENERATIONS X, Y, Z**

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**Purpose:** The purpose of this article is to analyse and compare the motivations that influence decisions to support charitable collections among representatives of Generations X, Y and Z in Polish reality. The study aims to identify the key factors determining involvement in charitable activities and to identify differences in attitudes towards philanthropy between the different age groups.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The study was conducted using a survey questionnaire aimed at people involved in charitable activities. Data analysis was carried out using descriptive statistics methods, which allowed the results to be evaluated and significant differences to be identified between the different age groups.

**Findings:** The results indicate that, despite some Generational differences, factors such as an inner conviction of the need to help, a sense of fulfilment from helping and a willingness to support specific people are central to all the groups studied. Differences appear in those having a very high, high, medium and low impact. Full agreement is also found in factors having a negligible influence on respondents' decisions.

**Research limitations/implications:** The sample is purposive, making it impossible to generalise conclusions to the whole population. In the case of Generation Z, the number of respondents is smaller than in Generations X and Y which may limit a fuller understanding of their perspectives.

**Originality/value:** The article provides unique insights into the factors that have a key influence on the decision to support charitable collections among representatives of Generations X, Y and Z and the differences in their motivations to participate in charitable collections. The motivators that distinguish each generation can be useful for NGOs that want to reach different age groups with their message.

**Keywords:** Non-governmental organizations, Non-profit organizations, Fundraising, Individual donors, Generation X, Generation Y, Generation Z.

**Category of the paper:** Research paper.

## Introduction

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) work to improve the quality of social life by pooling and redistributing resources and providing services (Sargeant, 1999). Critical to the success of their operation are ensuring the financial sustainability of the organisation and the ability to successfully raise funds for projects (Doherty, Murray, 2007; Ferreira et al., 2017; Marciszewska et al., 2024). These organisations face the challenges of limited resources and the constant search for funding for activities with increasing competition for funding in the non-profit market (Ilyas et al., 2020; Robson, Hart, 2021; Schmitz, 2019; Suri, 2009). Support from individual donors is one source of funding for nonprofit organisations that has become increasingly important in recent years (Bekkers, Wiepking, 2011; Srnka et al., 2003). In a crowded marketplace, organisations need to understand the motivations of donors in order to effectively receive and maintain their support (Sneddon et al., 2020). The simultaneous increase in the number of people in need and the popularity of charitable collections leads to the fact that organisations wishing to end their activities successfully need to differentiate themselves from other activities (Ilyas et al., 2020; Robson, Hart, 2021; Schmitz, 2019). In order to convince a donor to give to a particular charity, it is worth asking questions about what motivates people to participate in fundraising and what factors are critical to their decision to donate.

There are publications in the fundraising literature that examine individual donors' motivations and preferences by gender (Woods et al., 2023), income (Neumayr, Handy, 2019), demographics (Robson, Hart, 2021), and values (Sneddon et al., 2020). Generational variation in attitudes towards philanthropy is also one of the issues currently being addressed in the literature. Research on motivations for charitable giving focuses on understanding what factors influence different generations' decisions to give (Florenthal et al., 2020; Florenthal, Awad, 2021; Gorczyca, Hartman, 2017; Konstantinou, Jones, 2022). Authors of fundraising articles emphasise the need to tailor NGO messages to different age groups (Kolhede, Gomez-Arias, 2022). Research in this area is also becoming increasingly important, especially in the context of the rapid development of new technologies and social media, which are changing the way charities reach potential donors (Bhati, McDonnell, 2020). Research shows that Generation X needs a sense of purpose in taking action and is positively collaborative (Lesniewska, Stosik, 2015). Generation Y, according to researchers, can access information quickly, wants to participate in community building, prefers fast communication, and has a need to surround themselves with electronics. For millennials, the internet is a source of knowledge, entertainment and building social relationships (Lesniewska, Stosik, 2015). Other researchers emphasise that the most important thing for Generation Y is social recognition. Attitude and trust in the charity are also important (Graça, Zwick, 2021). Generation Z wants to feel connected to charities and the causes they support but prefers online communication to personal contact and is more likely

to support charities recommended by peers. In addition, it does not want to follow fashion blindly because it cares about the long-term effect of its actions. Social media plays an important role in how Generation X representatives perceive charitable actions and express their commitment. (Konstantinou, Jones, 2022). Generation Z treats the internet as a natural and everyday part of life (Hysa, 2016).

The literature indicates that there are differences between generations in terms of motivation and ways of engaging in charitable activities. As such, further research into generational differences can provide valuable information that will allow charities to better adapt their strategies to meet changing donor expectations. Understanding the motivations of donors is also key to successful charitable campaigns, particularly in the context of generational diversity. Generations X, Y and Z differ not only in terms of age, but also in terms of values, lifestyles, and the ways in which they respond to various external stimuli, such as marketing campaigns or social media advertising. Each of these social groups may have a different approach to philanthropy and different reasons for engaging in charitable activities. Research into these differences can provide valuable information to better understand how to effectively engage different age groups in social giving.

The aim of this paper is to analyse and compare the motivations that influence decisions to support charitable collections among representatives of Generations X, Y and Z. The study aims to identify the key factors that determine involvement in charitable giving and to identify differences in attitudes to philanthropy between different age groups.

## Methods

The aim of the research conducted was to understand the motivations that influence decisions to support charitable collections among representatives of Generations X, Y and Z in Polish reality. The study aims to identify the key factors determining involvement in charitable giving and to identify differences in attitudes to philanthropy between different age groups.

The study was carried out using a survey questionnaire, developed by the author of the article, which was addressed to individual donors actively supporting the activities of NGOs in online communities as well as in public collections carried out in traditional ways. A total of 305 correctly filled in questionnaires were received which met the selection criterion that the respondent was active as a donor in online and/or traditional fundraising for an NGO.

The questions included in the questionnaire allowed the evaluation of the phenomena studied and the relationships between them. The analysis of the research results refers to selected parts of the questionnaire:

- Metrics (6 questions, 6 variables).
- Specific questions (22 questions, 22 variables).

In analysing the results obtained, the author focused on descriptive statistics, with particular emphasis on interpreting the percentage frequency of responses and comparing the results among selected groups of respondents. The objectives of the present research are:

1. Identify factors that have a key impact on decisions to support charitable collections among representatives of Generations X, Y and Z in Polish reality.
2. Identify differences in motivations to participate in charitable collections between Generations X, Y and Z in Polish reality.

The following research questions were posed in relation to the research objectives:

1. What factors have a key influence on the decision to support charitable collections among representatives of Generations X, Y and Z in Polish reality?
2. Are there differences in motivations to participate in charitable collections between Generations X, Y and Z in Polish reality?

The study is characterised by certain limitations that affect the extent to which the results obtained can be generalised. Despite the limitations, the study carried out provides valuable preliminary information that can serve as a starting point for further, more in-depth analyses. The results obtained allow potential directions for future research to be formulated.

## Results

The study analysed the responses of 305 respondents from three generational groups (Rogozinska-Pawelczyk et al., 2019):

- Generation X - people born between 1965 and 1979.
- Generation Y - people born between 1980 and 1994.
- Generation Z - people born from 1995 onwards.

Due to the discrepancy in the literature regarding the age range of people belonging to a particular generation, this study adopts an approach (Rogozinska-Pawelczyk et al., 2019) that is in line with the economic, political and social conditions of the respondents of the present study (Cichorzewska et al., 2020; Wątroba, 2022).

Table 1 shows the characteristics of the respondents by generational group (Generation X, Generation Y, Generation Z) and various variables such as gender, education, subjective assessment of control over charitable spending, gross monthly income, gross monthly amount donated to charity, number of initiatives supported. This analysis allows for a better understanding of the structure of the research sample.

**Table 1.**  
*Results of respondents' answers - section: metrics*

Variable	Types of variable	Results for selected groups of respondents			
		The entire study group (n = 305)	Generation X (n = 116)	Generation Y (n = 164)	Generation Z (n = 25)
1. Gender	Female	277	105	150	22
	Male	28	11	14	3
2. Education	Higher	226	93	123	10
	Secondary	68	21	35	12
	Vocational or primary education	11	2	6	3
3. Control over charitable spending	I do not control how much I donate to charity, my contributions are spontaneous	270	101	147	22
	I regularly donate a ring-fenced amount to charity. I do not exceed the ring-fenced amount	35	15	17	3
4. Monthly income (PLN)	2501-4000	108	39	64	5
	below 2500	87	24	45	18
	4001-6000	69	52	32	2
	above 6000	41	18	23	0
5. Average monthly donations to charity (PLN)	51-300	194	82	98	14
	below 50	48	10	29	9
	301-600	39	15	22	2
	above 600	24	9	15	0
6. Number of activities supported at the same time	between 2 and 3	144	61	75	8
	more than 3	105	38	58	9
	only one	56	17	31	8

Source: Own elaboration.

The survey involved 305 respondents, who were divided into three generational groups. Generation Y was the most represented, with 164 people belonging to it, accounting for more than half of all respondents (54%). Generation X comprised 116 people, or 38% of the sample. The smallest group was Generation Z, represented by 25 people, which accounted for 8% of all survey participants. This distribution indicates a diverse representation of respondents in terms of their affiliation with a particular generation and an opportunity to identify more precisely the factors that have a key influence on decisions to support charitable collections and the differences in their perception among representatives of Generations X, Y, Z. The vast majority of the group surveyed were women (277 respondents). Each generation was dominated by women: in Generation X there were 105 women (91%), in Generation Y, 150 women (91%), and in Generation Z, 22 women (88%). The majority of respondents had a university education (226 respondents). In Generation X, there were 93 (80%) and in Generation Y there were 123 (75%). In the case of Generation Z, 10 people (40%) had tertiary education, while 12 (48%) people had secondary education, a relatively high percentage compared to other age groups. The smallest number of respondents had basic vocational or primary education (11 people in the entire study group). The majority of respondents (270 people) declare that their charitable contributions are spontaneous, suggesting a lack of strict control over the spending allocated to charity. This tendency is evident across all generations, with spontaneous contributions declared by 101 people from Generation X, 147 from Generation Y and 22 from Generation Z. Regular control over the amounts donated to charity is declared by only 35 people. The largest

number of respondents (108 people, 35%) earn between PLN 2501 and 4000 per month, with the largest number of people in this income category being in Generation Y (64 people), followed by Generation X (39 people). Income below PLN 2,500 is held by 87 people (29%), including as many as 18 from Generation Z, suggesting that the younger generation has lower incomes. Income between 4001 and 6000 was declared by 69 people, with the highest number of respondents from Generation X (52 people) and the lowest from Generation Z (2 people). Income above PLN 6000 is declared by the least numerous group (41 people). Furthermore, none of the people in Generation Z have the highest level of income. Most respondents (194 people, 64%) donate an amount between PLN 50 and 300 per month to charity. This tendency persists across all generations, with the highest number of people donating an amount in this range being in Generation Y (98 people). Amounts below PLN 50 are contributed by 48 people (16%). Amounts between PLN 301 and 600 were declared by 39 people. Donations of more than PLN 600 are relatively rare (24 people in the entire surveyed group), with not a single respondent from Generation Z declaring to donate such an amount. Among the respondents, people supporting 2 to 3 charitable activities at the same time dominate (144 people, 47%), especially in Generation Y (75 people) and X (61 people). Support for more than three activities at the same time is declared by 105 people (34%), with a predominance of Generation Y (58 people, 35%). In contrast, support for only one initiative is less popular (56 people, 18%).

A detailed analysis of the collected data provides a more comprehensive picture of the structure of the respondent group. Analysis of the data by generation enables a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study, taking into account potential differences in the factors influencing motivations for supporting charitable collections among people in different age categories.

Table 2 shows the average ratings of respondents from the different generations on their assessment of the factors determining their involvement in charitable activities. The results allow a comparison of the perspectives of Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z representatives.

**Table 2.**

*Average scores of factors determining involvement in charitable activities for selected groups of respondents*

Type of impact	Variable	Average scores for selected groups of respondents			
		The entire study group (n = 305)	Generation X (n = 116)	Generation Y (n = 164)	Generation Z (n = 25)
Key impact	I have an inner conviction to help others	4,76	4,67	4,82	4,84
	I feel fulfilled by helping I get pleasure from helping others.	4,66	4,62	4,69	4,64
	I want to help a particular person	4,58	4,63	4,55	4,60
Very high impact	I help spontaneously	4,41	4,45	4,41	4,28
	The purpose of the collection is important/close to my heart	4,25	4,20	4,27	4,36

Cont. table 2.

High impact	I am persuaded by the description of the charity collection	3,97	4,03	3,96	3,80
	I want to support people/organisations from a specific group	3,94	3,88	3,98	4,04
	I will help someone, someone will help me in the future	3,77	3,56	3,87	4,08
	I saw an advert on social media/internet	3,72	3,59	3,75	4,16
	I can't say no when someone needs help	3,70	3,62	3,71	4,00
	The fundraising target concerns a person/organisation in my local area	3,55	3,79	3,38	3,48
Medium impact	I heard an advertisement in the media and made a spontaneous decision	3,47	3,39	3,51	3,56
	I help because others in my close environment (family, friends) are being helped	3,37	3,30	3,35	3,88
	I want to support a particular area (health, education, culture, ecology, etc.)	3,36	3,52	3,23	3,48
	I was persuaded by someone close to me/family	3,24	3,29	3,16	3,48
	I make new friends, feel I am using my free time appropriately	3,23	3,23	3,16	3,68
	I know the person/organisation for whom the funds are being collected	3,18	3,49	2,96	3,16
Low impact	I am driven by other reasons	2,97	2,88	2,99	3,24
	Helping out is a family tradition	2,89	3,18	2,71	2,64
	I can deduct the donation from my tax	2,60	2,82	2,35	3,16
	Once someone helped me, now I will help someone	2,56	2,80	2,34	2,84
Negligible impact	I help because a well-known person I follow on social media has donated to a particular collection	1,79	1,81	1,74	2,00

Source: Own elaboration.

For the whole group of respondents, as well as for the individual generational groups, the following variables are the most important in the assessment of the factors determining involvement in charitable activities:

- I have an inner conviction that it is important to help others (4.76).
- I feel fulfilled by helping. I feel pleasure from helping others (4.66).
- I want to help a particular person (4.58).
- I help spontaneously (4.41).
- The purpose of the collection is important to me/close to my heart (4.25).

Additionally, for Generation X, the variable is very influential:

- I am persuaded by the description of the charity collection (4.03).

In contrast, for Generation Z, the following variables have a very high impact:

- I saw an advertisement on social media/internet (4.16).
- I will help someone, in the future someone will help me (4.08).
- I want to support people/organisations from a specific group (4.04).
- I can't refuse when someone needs help (4.00).

The findings indicate that there is a clear consensus on the key factors influencing decisions to support charitable collections among representatives of Generations X, Y and Z. While all generations agreed on the key factors determining involvement in charitable giving, differences

emerge in those having a very high, high, medium and low impact. Full agreement also occurs in factors having a negligible impact on respondents' decisions. Results of this type represent an opportunity for NGOs to better understand donor motivations.

## Conclusion and discussion

The survey results show that there is a clear consensus on the key factors influencing the decision to support charitable collections among representatives of Generations X, Y and Z. All three generations unanimously rate the inner conviction to help others as the most important factor that motivates them to support fundraising events. The average values obtained for this factor in all groups are very high, with the highest score recorded among Generation Z respondents (4.84). Research presented by other researchers who only analysed Generation Y confirms that intrinsic motivation is moderately and positively related to attitudes towards helping others (Gorczyca & Hartman, 2017). The results presented in this article confirm that for Generations Z and X this factor is also crucial. In the present study, a sense of fulfilment and enjoyment in helping others was also rated as a key factor, with minimal differences between generations. The average values were 4.69 for Generation Y, 4.64 for Generation Z and 4.62 for Generation X. These results show that, irrespective of age, the sense of satisfaction associated with helping others is an important motivator to engage in charitable activities. Interestingly, the desire to help a specific person also scored high across all groups, suggesting that personalising help is important to respondents regardless of generation. The highest average score was obtained in Generation X (4.63).

In the very high impact category, scores for factors such as spontaneous helping and the importance of the purpose of the collection to the donor differ slightly between generations. The results show that Generations X (4.45) and Y (4.41) rate spontaneity higher, while Generation Z shows more emotional involvement when the purpose of the collection is close to them (4.36). This finding is in line with research in which the authors show that Generation Z wants to feel personally connected to charities and the causes they support (Konstantinou, Jones, 2022). In addition, for Generation X, a convincing description of the charity collection is a very important factor (4.03). Generation Z, on the other hand, indicated that social media and online advertising have a very strong influence on their decisions regarding the choice of supported charitable activities (4.16), indicating that this group is more susceptible to campaigns conducted in digital communication channels. This is also confirmed by a study where the authors showed that social media for Generation Z is crucial as a driving channel for donations (Konstantinou & Jones, 2022). Generation Y rated social media and advertising as having a high impact on them (3.75). Generation X, according to this study, is less susceptible to such forms of media (3.59). Researchers who analysed data on Generation Y confirm that



non-profit organisations should use social networks to attract Generation Y to engage and donate monetarily (Florenthal, Awad, 2021). Furthermore, this is highlighted by the fact that NPOs are increasingly using social media to reach out to Generation Y for their donations (Florenthal et al., 2020).

Generation Z rates the support of individuals or organisations from specific groups higher than other generations (4.04). Generation Z is also strongly motivated by the belief that if they help someone, someone will help them in the future (4.08) compared to other generations. Generation Z also indicated that they are mostly unable to refuse when someone needs help (4.00). Generation Z places more importance on opportunities to make new friends and use their free time by participating in collections (3.68), which may reflect the greater social motivation of younger people.

There is a negligible impact across all generational groups in terms of support for charitable causes advertised on social media by celebrities. In all groups, this factor received the lowest values. These results indicate that although celebrities may promote collections, their real impact on their audience's decision to support is limited.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that there is a predominance of women in the surveyed groups (91% of female respondents in the entire survey group). With regard to education, the majority of respondents have a university degree. The research shows that Generation Y is the most involved in charitable activities, both in terms of the number of initiatives supported and the amounts donated, while Generation Z, although inclined to help, is active to a more limited extent due to its lower income.

## Summary

This article defines the key factors determining the involvement in charitable activities of respondents from Generations X, Y, Z in Polish reality and identifies differences in attitudes to philanthropy between different age groups. The results showed that the factors assessed by the respondents that were considered key were the same for all generational groups. The intrinsic belief that one should help others, the feeling of pleasure in helping and the desire to help a specific person are the universal factors linking the values and beliefs of the three generations surveyed. Full agreement is also found in the factor that respondents believe has a negligible impact on decisions to support charitable activities. Differences exist in the factors rated by respondents as having a very high, high, medium or low impact. These factors distinguish the different generations and can be useful for NGOs that want to reach different age groups with their message.

Generation X is very much influenced by the description of a charity collection, the importance of supporting a specific area, or that the person in need of support is from the local area. Less so, but still important, is the aspect of helping as a family tradition. Generation Y is more spontaneous in making decisions under the influence of information heard in the media, and it does not matter much to them whether they know the person or organisation they are helping. Generation Z stands out the most from the other generations. They value supporting specific groups and organisations, as reflected in the very high rating for this factor. For young people of this generation, the belief that helping others creates a certain reciprocity is very important - they hope that their charity will be reciprocated in the future. This is also the generation that has the greatest difficulty in refusing help when it is needed. Additionally, for Generation Z, the social aspects of being involved in charity are important. Participating in collections allows them not only to help others, but also to make new friends and use their free time in a constructive way. Generation Z is therefore strongly motivated towards pro-social activities, driven by both altruistic values and the need to create social bonds. Regardless of generational affiliation, respondents agree on a very high assessment of spontaneous aid and the importance of the purpose of the collection for the donor.

NGOs able to adapt their appeals to the different motivating factors of donors of Generations X, Y and Z can significantly contribute to the effectiveness of their activities. These findings provide an important point of reference for theorists as well as practitioners studying the motivation of donors from different generations. Despite the important findings, this study has some limitations that are worth taking into account when interpreting the results. The sample was purposive and the number of respondents, particularly of the Generation Z age group, was relatively low, which may have limited a fuller understanding of their perspectives. Despite these limitations, the results provide valuable insights into the key drivers of donors' charitable engagement and the differences in attitudes towards philanthropy between different age groups. This study can also provide a starting point for further, more detailed analyses.

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