



The Nonprofit's Guide to Engaging Gen Z

A go-to resource combining Classy's annual donor sentiment data and Pursuant and GivingDNA's generational giving analysis





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Why Gen Z, Why Now?

Gen Z Is Passionate About Giving Back

Gen Z donors are ready to make a difference in the communities around them, which is why they seek out relationships with causes bigger than themselves. This generation doesn't want to sit back and passively donate to charity. Gen Z is inclined to get involved on deeper levels and take action to improve the world.

Each of Gen Z's developmental years met more advanced online interactions that exposed them to more challenges and causes in need of support than any previous generation. At the same time, Gen Z takes the time to find organizations that share their values and stories of impact, creating a feeling of connection that propels them to take action.

The time is now to capture the attention of Gen Z donors. Even more importantly, it's the time to keep their attention on your organization as this passionate group establishes who they will be (and who they will support) as mature philanthropists and leaders. We've paired the data from Classy's [Why America Gives](#) donor sentiment report and a generational giving analysis by [Pursuant](#) + [GivingDNA](#) to show you exactly how to do that in today's landscape.

Gen Z Donations Will Shape Future Philanthropy



2.4x

Between 2021 and 2022, Gen Z and Millennials were **2.4x as likely** as [Baby Boomers and Gen X](#) to give at levels that far exceeded the previous year.

Gen Z's intended annual donation totals were lower than other generations. However, Gen Z's increase in donations from 2021 to 2022, and their intention to continue to increase charitable giving as they become more established, highlights the giving potential of this generation. While Baby Boomers give higher total donation amounts annually, they pulled back on donations in 2022 compared to previous years. These reliable traditional donors may be hitting their giving ceiling.

Baby Boomers are also the most likely to have a pessimistic view of the economy, while Gen Z remains the most optimistic. Looking ahead to the future of philanthropy means fostering relationships with Gen Z donors and tapping into their generous mindsets. Doing so helps nonprofits build a community these donors can't help but support.

The Baby Boomer generation will pass dollar estimates in the trillions¹ down to younger generations within their families over the next two decades. The impending great wealth transfer and expansive methods of earning income will soon meet Gen Z's fiery energy to take action. That powerful combination will show us the most significant philanthropic potential we've seen in years.



TL;DR

- Now is the time to engage Gen Z donors ahead of the great wealth transfer
- Gen Z's intent to give more will balance out the Baby Boomer giving ceiling
- Gen Z looks for causes in which they can become an active participant

¹ Forbes, Why Brands Need to Prepare for the Great Wealth Transfer

So, Who Is Gen Z, Really?

The Technical Definition

Generation Z* entered the scene after Millennials, with the largest population in American history (27%). Gen Z encompasses anyone born between 1997 and 2012. Now that we've covered the basics, it's time to see why this generation has so much to offer.

The data throughout this guide reflects a population of Gen Z who are at least 18 years of age.*

A Deeper Look

Gen Z is the most diverse generation and will be majority non-white by 2026, according to GivingDNA's generational giving analysis data. Currently, **22% have at least one immigrant parent**, and the generation has the largest populations of **African Americans (15%)** and **Hispanic individuals (23%)**.

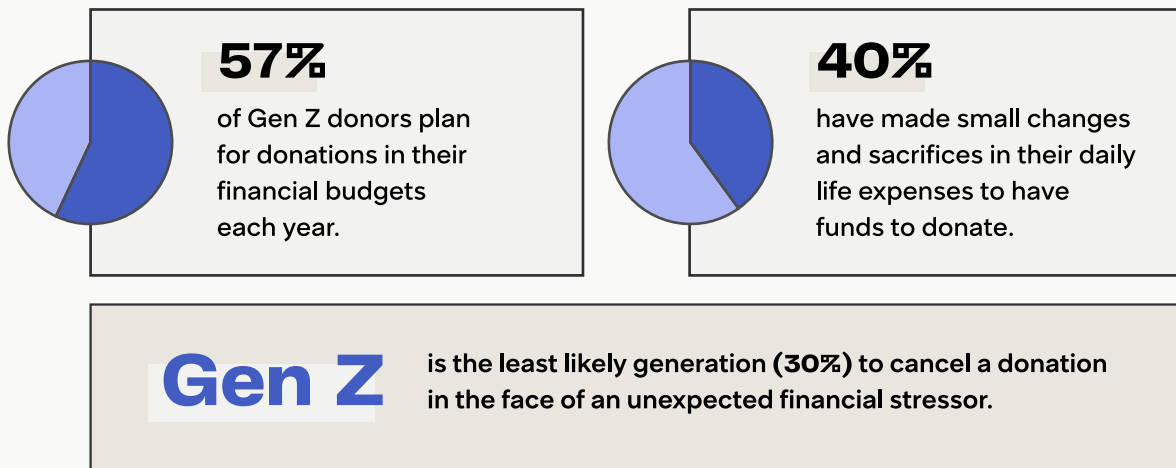


Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging, both in terms of how the organization supports this externally and internally, will become increasingly important as Gen Z determines which organizations they support. Think about external and internal representation in organization communications.

Alyssa Boger, SVP, Client Strategy at Pursuant

Spending and Donation Behaviors

Pursuant's Generational Giving Analysis found that Baby Boomers are the generation most likely to spend under \$25K annually, followed by Gen Z. While Baby Boomers are reaching their giving ceiling as they enter retirement, Gen Z's spending will increase as they enter the workplace. Moreover, Gen Z already prioritizes charitable behavior within their current financial budgets.



TL;DR

- Gen Z is the largest generation in U.S. history, born between 1997 and 2012
- They're the most diverse generation, which influences charitable behavior
- Gen Z prioritizes charitable giving with higher income years ahead

What Matters to This Passionate Generation?

Gen Z Holds Values Close to the Heart

Social media and instant updates on the opportunities to support causes worldwide have shaped Gen Z's values. Because of their constant exposure to news and social updates for most of their adolescence and adult lives, building meaningful relationships based on trust and results matters more than ever.

Top Values of Gen Z donors:

1. Authenticity
2. Transparency
3. Political leanings



Authentic and genuine communication is very important to Gen Z. Especially on social media, consider less produced videos and content that offer a real glimpse into the lives of staff and beneficiaries. Where applicable, infuse humor or reality into your communications.

Alyssa Boger, SVP, Client Strategy at Pursuant

How Values Translate to Giving Behaviors

Donor Loyalty

Gen Z has not yet built the type of loyal relationships with nonprofits that their older counterparts are known for. Gen Z will take time to build similar relationships as they identify organizations that align with their values.

When they do, they're likely to stick around for a while, allowing nonprofits to build relationships early.

53%

of Gen Z donors are likely to repeat a donation for a cause they feel passionate about

38%

of Gen Z donors have given to the same cause or organization at least 3 times in the past 5 years

Vetting causes

Impact matters to any donor, but our Gen Z supporters want to find an organization or cause that sparks their passion and allows them to be part of the solution.

Gen Z donors shared that they are most likely to repeat a donation when they feel passionate about a cause. It sounds simple, but it's how your nonprofit can pull in this audience—focus on your organization's values that align with Gen Z's passion.

Motivation for giving

When we look at why Gen Z donors are so connected to philanthropy, we find that these charitable values are passed down from prior generations. Gen Z is most likely to say they grew up watching their parents give back.

Gen Z's top motivations for giving:

1. They just feel it's the right thing to do
2. To help a cause they care about
3. They are personally passionate about the cause



TL;DR

- Gen Z looks for trust, authenticity, and transparency to build relationships
- The potential to be loyal donors is high once their passion meets a cause
- Charity is engrained in Gen Z's upbringing and personal values

How Does Gen Z Connect to Giving Opportunities?

Gen Z Prefers Multiple Touchpoints to Learn About Giving Back

Pursuant's generational giving analysis explored the top channels Gen Z uses to engage and build connections, some of which might surprise you. It's no secret that Gen Z enjoys using online media, but the traditional methods of communication aren't going anywhere fast.



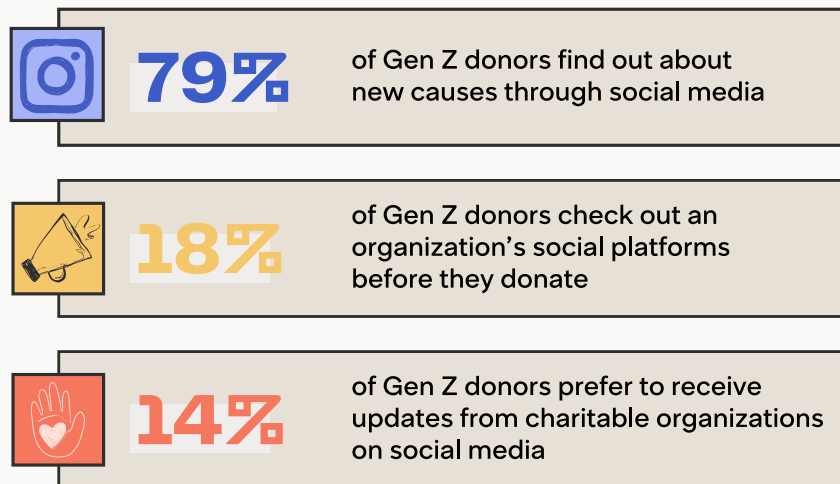
Given the onslaught of digital communications consumed by Gen Z, direct mail will stand out as a communication vehicle. While Gen Z won't likely send back a gift through a direct mail, including a QR code, a short link to a landing page, and homepage banners that align to campaign communication will drive online giving in this generation's native channel.

Alyssa Boger, SVP, Client Strategy at Pursuant

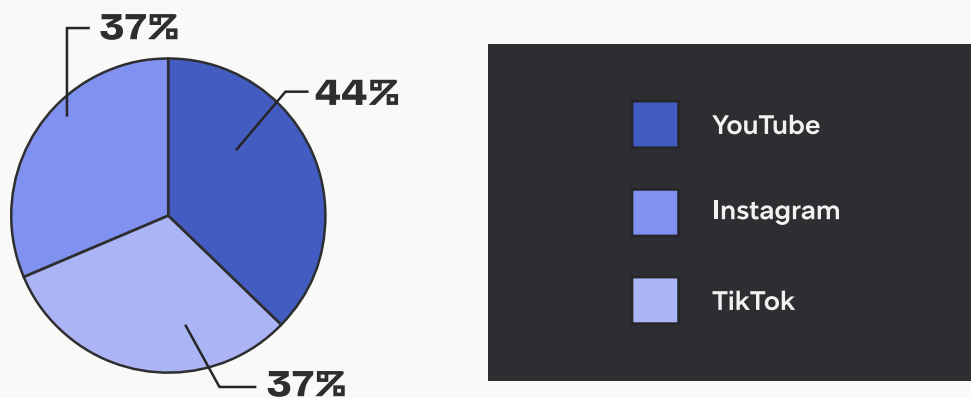
Top Influences on Donation Decisions

Social media

Influence and social media go hand in hand today. The social platforms play a role in the donor journey Gen Z takes from the first time they hear about your nonprofit to the moment they decide to come back and donate. Classy's donor sentiment data shares a glimpse into Gen Z's path to donate.



The top 3 social media platforms used by Gen Z to discover new causes are:





Ensure social media platforms like Instagram include a story and a highlight about your organization with facts, endorsements, and beneficiaries. Consider addressing trust head-on with this key information, followed up with clear impact and testimonials from local influencers to speak on your behalf.

Alyssa Boger, SVP, Client Strategy at Pursuant

Influencers and celebrities

We also see that **40% of Gen Z donors** are leaning on influencers and celebrities to learn about new causes, which might be one of the most differentiating factors between them and other generations.

Forge partnerships with influential accounts across all channels, especially those that focus on video and pull in our Gen Z audience with raw and honest conversations. Showcase impact in creative, authentic ways that resonate more than highly-produced content on a web page or ad.





Consider spokespeople who can promote giving opportunities on the organization's behalf. These don't have to be celebrities in the typical sense but rather social media influencers who align with your brand and overlap with your donor profile and interests.

Alyssa Boger, SVP, Client Strategy at Pursuant

Friends and family

The top way all donors learn about new causes is through friends and family.

This is no different for Gen Z, even if they are open to a broader online influence. There's still a great opportunity here to enter their inner circles through a strong sense of community that they want to be a part of. When you tell your story in a way that people can't help but share, you see the benefit of word-of-mouth cause awareness.

Coworkers

32% of Gen Z donors hear about new causes from coworkers.

Work is a support system in many ways. Increased remote work scenarios add more meaning to gathering as a team to support a cause. Today's businesses are also showcasing more charitable behavior to support employees who feel aligned to giving back, like Gen Z. It makes sense that 77% of consumers are more motivated to purchase from brands committed to improving the world.²

Consider corporate partnerships to expand your reach, donation match opportunities, and workplace giving programs. When you find corporations that share your values, you can become engrained in their ongoing corporate social responsibility initiatives.



TL;DR

- Gen Z gravitates toward online channels, but traditional channels aren't out of the picture
- They're doing research before and after their gift, especially on social media
- You can still enter their inner circle through friends, family, and coworkers.

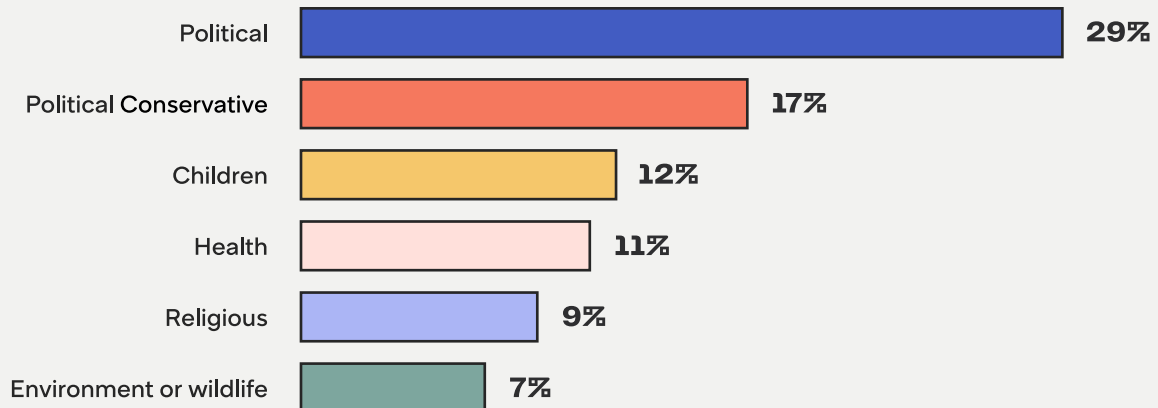


Which Causes Draw the Attention of Gen Z?

Giving Sector Preferences

Gen Z's values and giving motivators play into the charitable causes they gravitate toward. Pursuant's generational giving analysis revealed the top giving sectors this generation shows support for to understand what calls them to action.

Top giving sector preferences for Gen Z includes:



How Current Events Activate Gen Z

The appeal of timely giving

Classy's donor sentiment data explored the connection Gen Z donors have to giving in a moment of heightened need based on current events.

65%

of Gen Z donors gave to new causes in response to a **timely appeal**

Gen Z

donors are the most likely of all generations to **donate to a current event**

When you pair the exposure to real-time crises with Gen Z's passion to be part of the solution, it makes sense that they're activated by timely giving more than any other generation.



The top current events

<p>Gen Z donors were <u>most likely</u> to support:</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Racial justice2. Climate change3. Gun legislation4. Local political campaigns
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Consider aspects of your mission that might connect to current events or the news cycle. Develop a campaign around this theme that can be shelved until it becomes a news headline, allowing your organization to quickly ask for donations tied to relevant discourse.

Alyssa Boger, SVP, Client Strategy at Pursuant



TL;DR

- Gen Z is politically motivated, but gives across various sectors and causes
- Gen Z donors are the most likely generation to donate to a current event
- Nonprofits can connect their mission to timely events to active Gen Z

How Can You Make an Impact on Gen Z?

How Gen Z Wants to Engage With Nonprofits

Direct support

Gen Z donors enjoy supporting people directly through an individual's personal fundraising page or a platform like GoFundMe. After donating directly, many Gen Z seek out organizations for a related cause to continue supporting.

Peer-to-peer fundraising

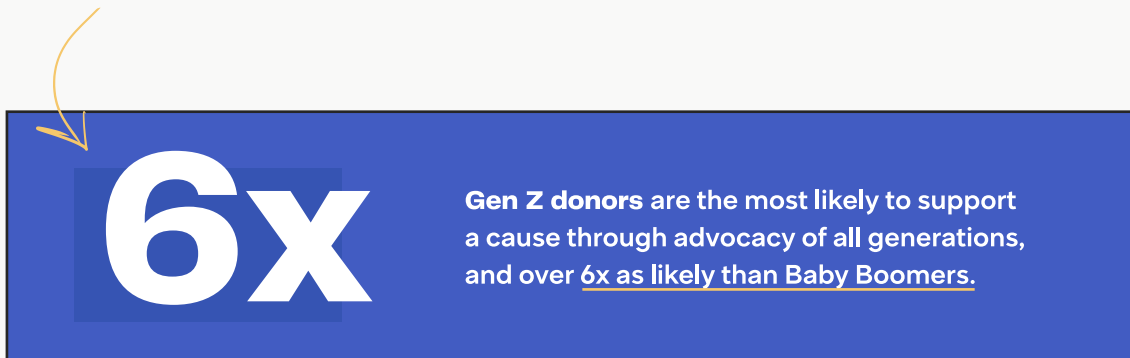
Play into the way Gen Z leans on coworkers, family, friends, and social media to learn about new causes. Peer-to-peer fundraising matches Gen Z's high propensity to give to people directly while offering them the creativity to promote your organization in the way they know their audience responds best to across all platforms.

73% of Gen Z donors who support an individual directly will research more about the cause and charitable organizations supporting it afterward

79% of Gen Z donors are likely to donate to a friend, coworker, or family member fundraising on behalf of a charitable organization

Advocacy

When you create the emotional appeal that draws on a young donor's heartstrings and ignites their desire to create change in this world, you're building advocates that can create a wave of support for your organization. Whether it be through word-of-mouth conversations or social media sharing, Gen Z is the group to pay attention to and offer your clear and compelling story of triumph for the communities you serve.



Consider testing more aggressive and direct advocacy language with Gen Z donors and prospects. This could include: join the fight, join the movement, turn words into action, be part of the change, etc.

Alyssa Boger, SVP, Client Strategy at Pursuant

Factors That Lead Gen Z to Abandon a Donation

Without a seamless checkout experience, Gen Z won't stay on your donation page long.

Here's what to explore to make your donation process Gen-Z friendly

- Offer embedded checkout options to keep donors on the page
- Create flexibility with several suggested donation amounts at checkout
- Affordable suggested donation amounts
- Give donors an option to have their employer match their donation
- Showcase an option to give smaller amounts over time with recurring gifts
- Highlight the way certain donation amounts equate to results and impact



TL;DR

- Gen Z is open to more than giving monetarily—lean on their advocacy
- Nonprofits can meet Gen Z's desire to move money easily on trusted platforms
- They'll ghost the donation without modern touches that simplify giving

Get Ready to Build Your Gen Z Donor Base

If you're ready to build or strengthen your Gen Z relationships, we have you covered. Everything in this guide will lead you to understand this cohort on a personal level and anticipate what their giving behaviors can mean for your unique fundraising portfolio. Whether you're looking to meet Gen Z donors where they expect tech to be with modern online fundraising tools, or need support to build your strategy up in a way that impresses them at every turn, we're here and ready to make it happen.



We're here to uplevel your fundraising

Nonprofits across sectors partner with Classy and Pursuant + GivingDNA to enhance and optimize their fundraising programs.

Modernize online fundraising with Classy

Classy is a giving platform that enables nonprofits to connect supporters with the causes they care about. We believe giving should be easy, so we created a solution for online fundraising that creates great experiences for supporters. Through technology, we empower nonprofits to unlock the generosity of their supporters and help them advance their missions.

Get hands-on support with Pursuant

As a fundraising and marketing agency, exclusively serving the nonprofit sector, we develop and deploy strategies to improve results. Grounded in analytics and powered by our GivingDNA donor engagement platform, we extend your impact by allowing more people to experience the joy of giving.