

TALKING ABOUT CHARITIES 2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Talking About Charities 2013 explores the current state of public opinion about charities and issues that affect charities. It is based on a telephone survey of almost 4,000 Canadian adults conducted in 2013. Based on a sample of this size, survey results at the national level are considered accurate within $\pm 1.6\%$, 19 times out of 20.

This is the fifth edition of *Talking About Charities*. The Muttart Foundation previously commissioned surveys in 2000, 2004, 2006 and 2008.

In general, the results of the 2013 survey indicate that Canadians' opinions and attitudes about charities are both stable and positive. A significant majority of Canadians believe that charities are important and trustworthy.

Compared to previous surveys, the trust in certain types of charities – including environmental organizations, churches and other places of worship and international charities – has declined. There have also been negative changes in the extent to which Canadians believe charities are adequately explaining how they use donations, or whether charities only ask for money when they really need it.

The study also shows a general decline in the trust Canadians have in other societal institutions.

The following are some of the highlights of *Talking About Charities 2013*:

- Four-fifths of Canadians (79%) trust charities, a number that has remained relatively constant over the last 13 years.
- Trust in various types of charities differs significantly, ranging from a high of 86% for hospitals and 82% for those that focus on children to a low of 50% for international aid charities and 41% for religious organizations other than churches and places of worship.
- Among other societal institutions, only small business (81%) has a higher level of trust, while governments are trusted by fewer than half of Canadians, and major corporations by only 41% of Canadians.
- Trust in charities is highest amongst younger Canadians: 79% of those between 18 and 24 years of age and 77% of those between 25 and 34 years of age say they have some or a lot of trust in charities.

- Trust in charity leaders has decreased and softened. Only 17% of Canadians trust charity leaders a lot, a decrease of 10 percentage points since the 2000 study. In total, 71% of Canadians in 2013 say they have some or a lot of trust in charity leaders, compared to 77% in 2000 and 80% in 2004.
- Again, however, trust in all kinds of leaders, other than doctors and nurses, has decreased over the span of 13 years, and notably since the last survey was conducted in 2008. These decreases are particularly noticeable for religious leaders (down 14 percentage points to 63%), lawyers (down 10 percentage points to 62%), federal politicians (down eight percentage points to 33%) and provincial politicians (down nine percentage points to 36%).

In other issues canvassed by the survey:

- Charities are considered important by 93% of the population and 88% of Canadians believe charities generally improve our quality of life.
- While about two-thirds of Canadians believe charities understand their needs better than government, and are better at meeting those needs, the percentage of Canadians holding those views has declined about seven percentage points over the last five years.
- The percentage of Canadians who believe that charities are generally honest about how they use donations is still high at 70%, but has decreased from the 84% who felt that way in 2000. Similarly, only about one-third of Canadians (34%) believe charities only ask for money when they really need it, compared to 47% of Canadians who felt that way in 2000.
- Canadians continue to give charities low ratings for the degree to which they report on how donations are used, the impact of programs and charities' fundraising costs.
- Canadians remain supportive of charities engaging in business activities. Almost nine in 10 (86%) think running a business is a good way for a charity to raise money it can't obtain from other sources, while eight in 10 (79%) think charities should be able to earn money through any type of business activity as long as the proceeds go to the cause. Almost two-thirds of Canadians (64%) say that charities should not be taxed on business earnings as long as those earnings are used to support the cause, although that number represents a decrease from 71% who felt that way in 2006.