



# A Snapshot of Community Participation in BC



## Foreword

Welcome to our 2019 *Vital Signs* report. This research is part of a national effort among community foundations in Canada to shine a light on the issues that matter to the communities we serve. For Vancouver Foundation, this marks the sixth time we've conducted this study into trends affecting quality of life. It's one of the ways we strive to live up to our commitment to being community inspired across British Columbia. Whether we're conducting research, powering community conversations, or connecting with local residents — listening to communities, and working to better understand the issues they face, is essential to our mission.

In this year's report, we've conducted a deep examination of community participation. When people are locally involved and have opportunities to influence and improve where they live, communities are stronger and more resilient. We hope this report will serve as a barometer for British Columbia that reveals who is participating in community, who isn't, and what's holding people back from doing more.

Our findings in this report are inspiring. We're encouraged to see that most British Columbians are engaged and believe they have a role to play in making a difference. But we've also found that people are facing barriers to doing more, such as lack of time or work obligations. Even more worrisome, too many are feeling unwelcome in their communities. This is an important area for action we must all commit to address.

At Vancouver Foundation, we see through the work we do each day the potential of individuals to accomplish great things. Inspired by this research, we're committed to doing our part to give people, organizations, and communities the support they need to encourage even more participation. By coming together in a spirit of partnership and collaboration, all communities can thrive.

Kevin McCort  
President & CEO, Vancouver Foundation

## Introduction

Communities are stronger when people feel empowered and engaged to contribute meaningfully. Over the last decade, Vancouver Foundation has dedicated research to dive deeper into this idea in order to explore what issues impact BC residents, how they feel about their communities, and to what extent they feel connected and engaged.

Given today's political climate, urgent concerns around climate change, and social movements like #MeToo, we wanted to further explore how British Columbians are making a difference in their communities. Are people participating less in their community or just differently? Who's most active and in what ways? What motivates or limits them from doing more?

In July 2019, we surveyed 7,980 British Columbians to learn more about the state of community participation across the province. We asked them to share their experiences in philanthropy, volunteering, civic engagement, and online life. Through community consultations, we felt these four areas of inquiry captured the different ways people contribute and participate in community. And within each area, we not only explored more traditional ways of participation like volunteering or donating, but also wanted to broaden our scope to explore other types of activities that may fall in the peripheries such as social media engagement, mentorship, and activism.

The goal for this report is to delve deeper into the various ways people are contributing to their communities and explore differences between generations. We hope this report will inspire you to learn more about what British Columbians are currently doing and where there's potential to do more.

### What generations did we look at in this report?

Generations are cohorts of people born around the same time period that exhibit similar characteristics. There is no consensus on names and age ranges for each generation but for the purpose of this report, below is the breakdown we used.

**iGen**\*: 18 to 24 years old

**Millennials**: 25 to 38 years old

**Gen X**: 39 to 54 years old

**Baby Boomers**: 55 to 73 years old

**Matures**: 74+ years old

\*The age range for iGen typically begins younger but this survey only asked those who were aged 18+.

Note that results may not add up to 100% due to rounding and 'prefer not to say' responses. Please see page 38 for more on methodology.

# KEY FINDINGS

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## 1.

### **British Columbians are actively contributing to their communities in a range of ways.**

People are actively involved in communities by participating in a range of ways they believe make a positive impact. Many of the contributions may seem small, such as making choices about products that align with personal values or wearing a ribbon in support of a cause, but they're done with a belief in making a difference. In some cases, people may even be contributing more than they think. When we take into account engagement through social media and the workplace, the ways people participate in community broaden even more.

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## 2.

### **Many people, regardless of age, feel there are barriers preventing them from doing more.**

Many people experience barriers such as work or school obligations, finances, and health issues that prevent them from doing more in their community but some barriers are experienced more than others depending on stage in life. Lack of time is a common barrier to participation for all generations. Not knowing how to get more involved was also prevalent, especially amongst iGen, Millennials, and Matures who are experiencing this slightly more so than others. Lastly, the youngest and oldest generations share similar challenges of not knowing how they can do more in community.

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## 3.

### **Most British Columbians feel welcome in their community and believe in their capacity to contribute to positive change.**

Most British Columbians feel welcome and many have a desire to be more involved in making their communities a better place to live. They're motivated by a belief in giving back and more than 90% believe they can have at least some impact in making their communities better. The ways they participate and contribute in their communities ultimately reflect a strong belief that individual actions can make a difference.

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KEY FINDING **1.**

**British Columbians are actively contributing to their communities in a range of ways.**

The health and vitality of communities depend on how actively involved its members are and our findings show there's good news:

Overall, British Columbians are active in their communities.

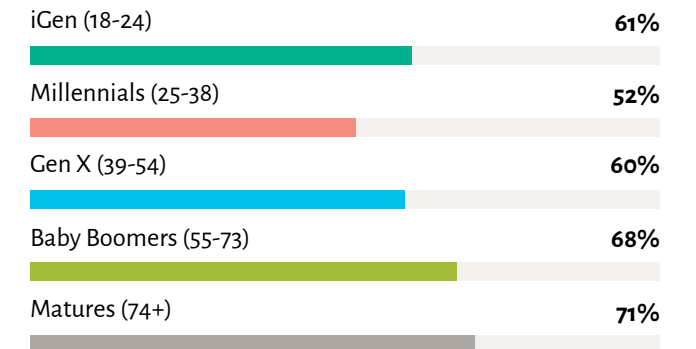
**The majority of British Columbians are volunteering their time to a cause or charity.**

In the past year, 62% of British Columbians engaged in volunteering activities or any activities where they are giving their time to an organization, community, or cause. This was also viewed by all generations as the most effective way to make a difference to causes and charities.

People are motivated to volunteer by a belief in giving back, which was cited across all generations as the top reason (40%) for volunteering, followed by connection to a cause (19%) and connection to an organization (17%). As well, the youngest generation, who are just entering the workforce, were most likely to cite career development/networking (17% versus 6% overall) and skill development (11% versus 3% overall) as motivators for volunteering.

Figure 1:  
**VOLUNTEERISM IN THE PAST YEAR**

**62%** engaged in volunteering activities



Total respondents: 7,980 | Q. C8) In the past year, have you engaged in any volunteering activities, or any activities where you are giving your time to an organization, community, or cause?

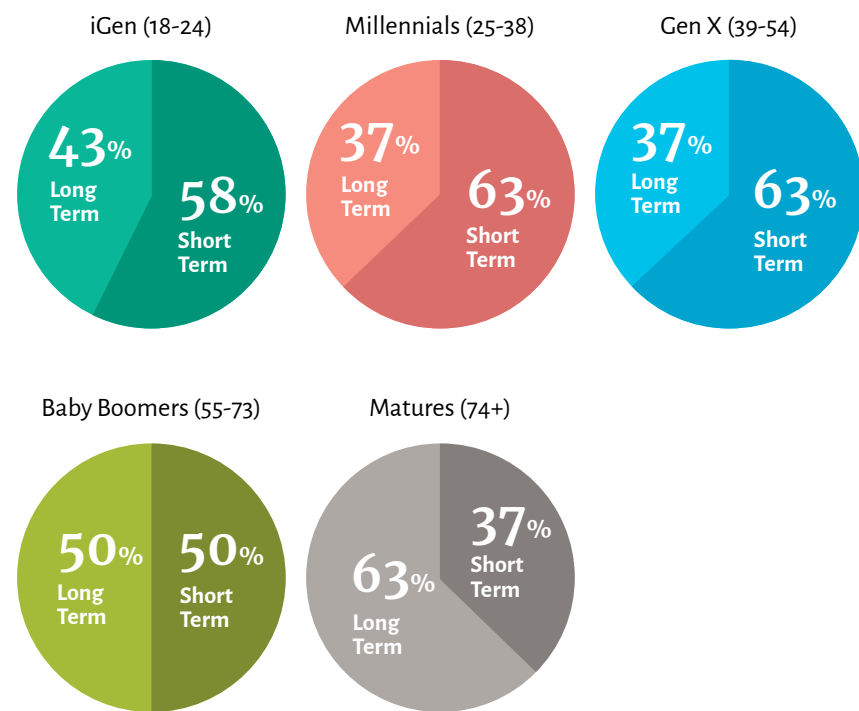
“Since moving to Canada, volunteering has made a huge impact on my life. In 2016, I founded the Surrey Youth Soccer Tournament to bring different cultures together through the universal language of sports. It’s allowed me to explore my passion for youth engagement and community building and put my ideas into action. I’m proud of who I’ve become: A boy facing civil war to now a young man who strives to make a positive impact on his community.”

– Dacious, iGen (18-24)

Younger generations prefer one-time or short-term, episodic volunteering opportunities versus ongoing, long-term commitments. Baby Boomers are split between the two options and Matures overwhelmingly prefer ongoing opportunities.

Figure 2:

**PREFERENCE FOR TYPE OF VOLUNTEERING COMMITMENT**



Total volunteering: 6,757 | Q. C11) When volunteering, do you prefer one-time/short-term volunteering or ongoing commitments with consistent activities?



**All generations are finding ways to financially support causes or charities.**

On average, BC residents reported making just over three different types of financial contributions to support a cause in the past year, with older generations having done so in a slightly greater number than younger ones. Arguably, it may be that older

generations tend to have more disposable income for charitable giving while younger generations are navigating the demands of school, careers, or parenting young children. But remarkably, 89% of all respondents reported making some form of financial contribution to support a cause – a noteworthy and promising indication that British Columbians are actively giving.

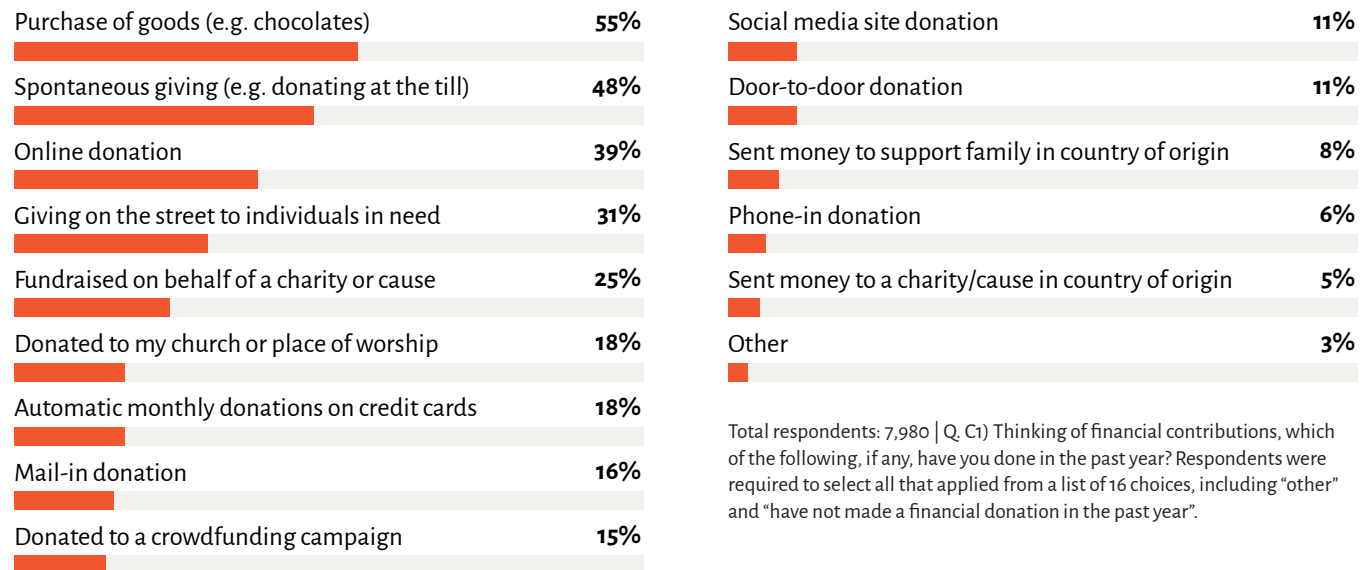
In addition to donations, people are also finding different ways to financially support causes or charities they care about.



**89%**  
**of British Columbians made a financial contribution to support a cause**

Figure 3:

**HOW PEOPLE ARE MAKING CHARITABLE FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS**



Total respondents: 7,980 | Q. C1) Thinking of financial contributions, which of the following, if any, have you done in the past year? Respondents were required to select all that applied from a list of 16 choices, including "other" and "have not made a financial donation in the past year".

With technological innovations and disruptions, we're also seeing a growing momentum of different ways of giving across different generations.

While all generations are giving online, we were surprised to see a significant percentage of Matures reported to be doing this, which was only marginally behind mail-in donations (48%). This challenges a common assumption that this demographic aren't as active online as younger generations and suggests online platforms for charitable giving are an effective way to engage this group.

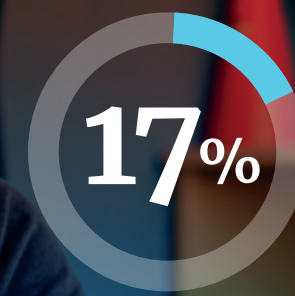
Crowdfunding is also a growing trend. Studies often indicate that this type of giving amongst younger generations is growing but our survey findings show an uptake amongst Gen X is slightly higher to what we see with iGen and Millennials (Blackbaud, 2013; 2018; Rideau Hall Foundation & Imagine Canada, 2018). With Gen X showing interest, it may signal a potential for crowdfunding to become an increased source of funding. But, as one report suggests, crowdfunding has its limits: Campaigns are typically for a sole purpose and don't provide unrestricted revenue, which is an important goal for many organizations in the charitable sector (Blackbaud, 2013).

Figure 4:

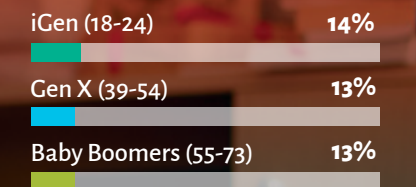
**GENERATIONAL TRENDS IN CHARITABLE GIVING**



**Matures (74+) made online donations**



**Gen X (39-54) donated to a crowdfunding campaign**



**Made social media site donations**

Total respondents: 7,980 | Q. C1) Thinking of financial contributions, which of the following, if any, have you done in the past year? Respondents were required to select all that applied from a list of 16 choices, including "other" and "have not made a financial donation in the past year".

As a board member of a local non-profit, I've participated in activities like a blanket exercise, a session on land acknowledgment, and most recently, a course on Truth and Reconciliation education to help guide how the organization can better support reconciliation. For me, it's been a process that has led to a deeper understanding of the Indigenous perspective, enriching the work we do to better serve all communities and has challenged me personally to reflect on my own perceptions, biases, and misinformation. I know the learning will continue.

– Cathy, Baby Boomer (55-73)

## About 1/2 of British Columbians have taken some form of action to support reconciliation.

Matures (42%) and Baby Boomers (42%) are the most likely to consume information to gain a better understanding of what reconciliation entails and Matures (6%) are the most likely to donate to an organization supporting reconciliation. Overall, iGen (59%) are the most likely generation to have taken some form of action.

That the youngest generation is showing an active interest and commitment to supporting reconciliation is a hopeful finding for the advancement of reconciliation. When young people are actively participating, studies show they are more likely to be informed and optimistic about reconciliation and the role they can play (Canadians for a New Partnership et al., 2016; Canadian Roots Exchange & the Mastercard Foundation, 2019).

While our findings are promising, true reconciliation demands 100% commitment and support. As long as the legacies of colonialism continue today, there is still more work to do in moving forward and revitalizing the relationships between Indigenous peoples and all Canadians based on truth, respect, and understanding.

Figure 5:

### ACTIONS TAKEN TO SUPPORT RECONCILIATION

36 %

Read, watched, or listened to information to gain an understanding of what reconciliation entails

26 %

Re-examined my own perceptions and attitudes and made a personal commitment to reconciliation

17 %

Attended an event to learn about lives/experiences of Indigenous peoples in my community

16 %

Spoken out against negative stereotypes and bias in reporting on Indigenous issues

8 %

Read the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action

4 %

Given money to an organization supporting reconciliation

3 %

Joined a reconciliation walk to raise awareness of reconciliation between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians

Total respondents: 7,980 | Q. D6) In the past year, have you taken any actions to support reconciliation? Respondents were required to select all that applied from a list of nine choices, including "other" and "I have not done any".

## 2/3 of British Columbians have participated in some form of activity to support a cause or issue.

Sixty-seven percent of respondents reported to have participated in some form of advocacy activity to support a cause or issue. We call these 'advocacy activities' because these are actions taken by individuals to help influence change on issues they care about.

Our findings suggest that each generation prefers different types of activities, which may indicate a perceived difference in the impact each type of activity can have or preferences on how to participate.

iGen are the most likely to wear a button/ribbon/bracelet to support a cause or issue (43%) and to attend a rally or protest (15%). Matures (46%) and Baby Boomers (43%) are most likely to have attended a meeting or open house on a community issue. Baby Boomers (36%) are also the most likely to boycott a product or company.

For those who have not taken part in any advocacy actions, 32% believe in taking action in other ways. This may suggest that it's not for lack of interest or commitment, but rather a difference in how they believe they can have a bigger impact.

## People are contributing to their community more than they think.

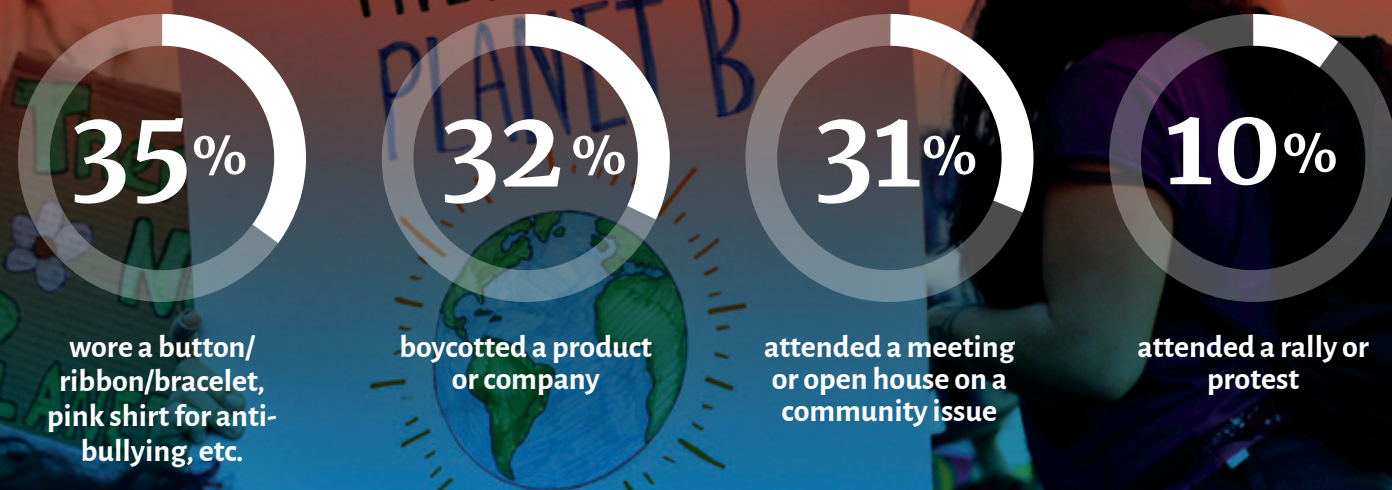
British Columbians underestimate how much of their time and money they're contributing to their community. The survey showed a significant difference between how much people perceive they volunteer or donate, versus the actual instances in which they have contributed in the last year.

When we asked respondents whether they had donated to a cause in the last year, 66% of respondents reported to have done so. Yet, when provided with a list of ways of making contributions, 89% reported to have made at least one in the same time frame.



Similarly, British Columbians are volunteering more than they think they do. When respondents were asked whether they volunteered to an organization in the last year, 49% said they had. When we expanded the question to include any activity where they had given their time to an organization or cause, the number increased to 62%.

Figure 6:  
ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES OVER THE PAST YEAR



Total respondents: 7,980 | Q. D1) In the past year, did you participate in any of the following activities to support a cause or issue? Respondents were required to select all that applied from a list of six choices, including "other" and "did not do any of the above".



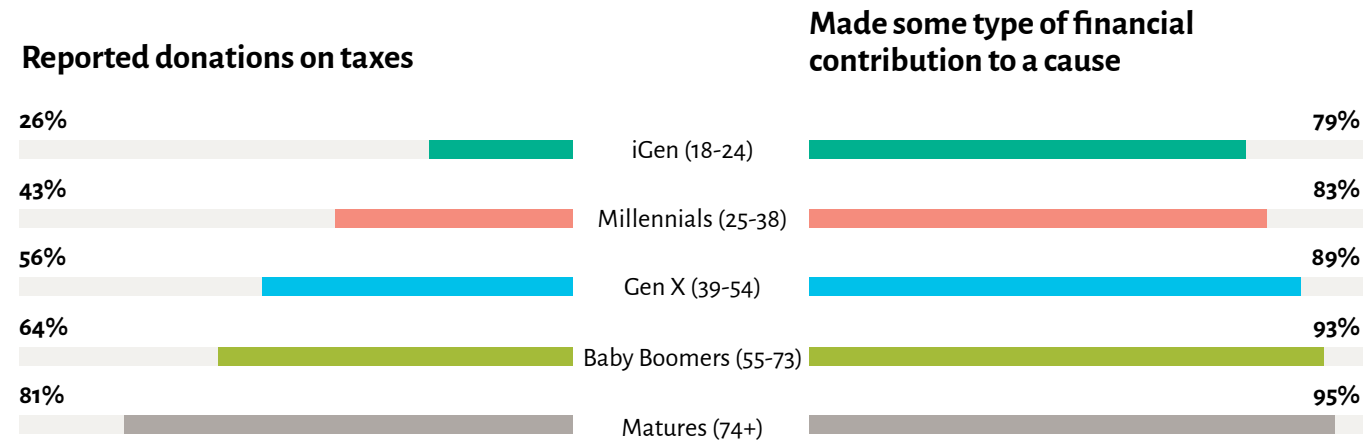
# Tax returns do not fully represent how, and how much, people are giving.

People are financially supporting causes and charities in a range of ways that are not all captured by tax return filings.

Not only are British Columbians not reporting all of their charitable donations, but overall, they're making

financial contributions significantly more than what they're reporting. And the two most popular ways people are giving to support a cause are activities that are not tax receiptable. This suggests a possible gap in understanding how much people are contributing financially to their community.

Figure 7:  
**COMPARING REPORTED TAXABLE DONATIONS VERSUS FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS**



Total that have made a donation in the past year: 7,202 | Q. C3) Did you report any of your donations on your last tax return filing?

Total respondents: 7,980 | Q. C1) Thinking of financial contributions, which of the following, if any, have you done in the past year? Respondents were required to select all that applied from a list of 16 choices, including "other" and "have not made a financial donation in the past year".

only **56%** reported their donation on their tax return

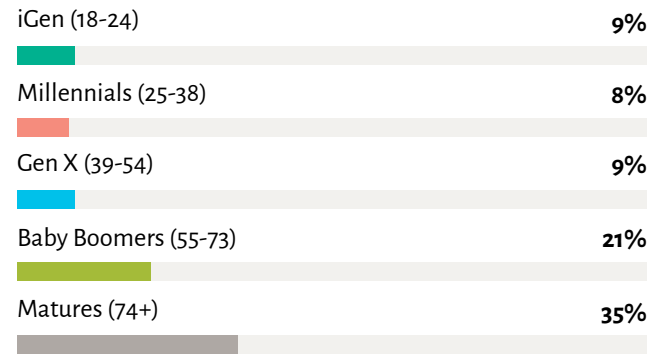
Total that have made a donation in the past year: 7,202 | Q. C3) Did you report any of your donations on your last tax return filing?

## British Columbians are more likely to give their time rather than money when it comes to local civic engagement.

When it comes to political donations, people are giving significantly less than towards non-political causes. Only 15% of all respondents made a financial donation to a political candidate, slate, or party in a recent election. Political donors donate at similar levels to provincial and federal politics but far less likely to donate to First Nations and local/municipal politics.

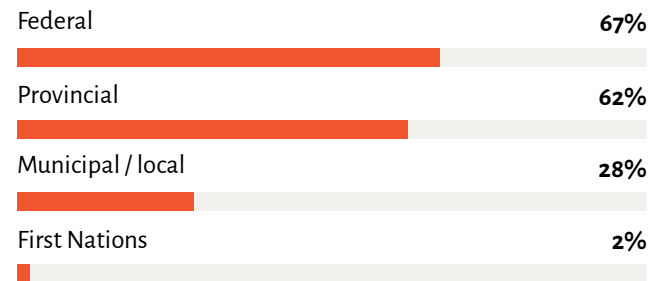
While British Columbians may be less likely to donate to local/municipal politics, 61% are participating in local government engagement processes such as completing a survey, providing feedback, or attending a public consultation and/or open house. Participation from each generation was reported higher than 50% – an indication that regardless of age, people are more inclined to participate in local civic engagement with their time, rather than money.

Figure 8:  
**POLITICAL DONATIONS BY GENERATION**



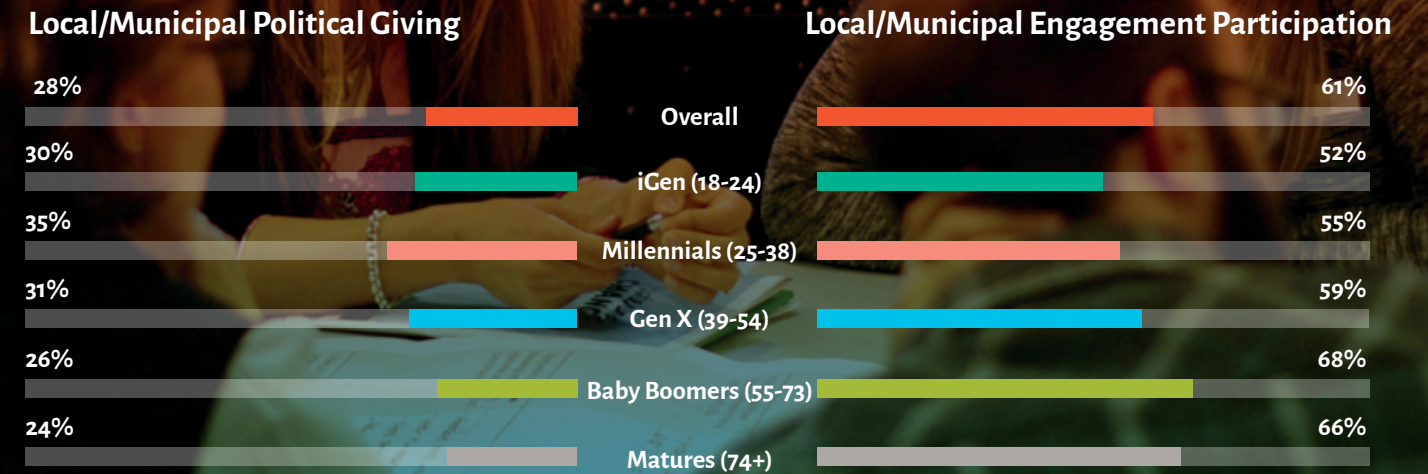
Total respondents: 7,980 | Q. C6a) Thinking back to recent elections, did you make a financial donation to a political candidate, slate, or party?

Figure 9:  
**POLITICAL DONATIONS BY LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT**



Total that made a financial donation to a political candidate, slate, or party in recent elections: 1,255 | Q. C6b) To what level of government did you make a financial contribution?

Figure 10:  
**LOCAL/MUNICIPAL POLITICAL DONATIONS VERSUS ENGAGEMENT PARTICIPATION**



Total that made a financial donation to a political candidate, slate, or party in recent elections: 1,255 | Q. C6b) To what level of government did you make a financial contribution?

Total respondents: 7,980 | Q. D4) Thinking specifically of your local/municipal government, which, if any, of the following public participation or engagement processes did you participate in the past year? Respondents were required to select all that applied from a list of six choices, including "other" and "did not do any of above".

“I’ve had many mentors, particularly other Indigenous women, who have supported my understanding of who I am and the unique gifts I have to offer, while building my strengths in those capacities. I’ve also had the privilege to walk alongside young people by witnessing their gifts and offering support while learning equally from them. Mentorship creates a network of support that I believe is one way we can create change.”

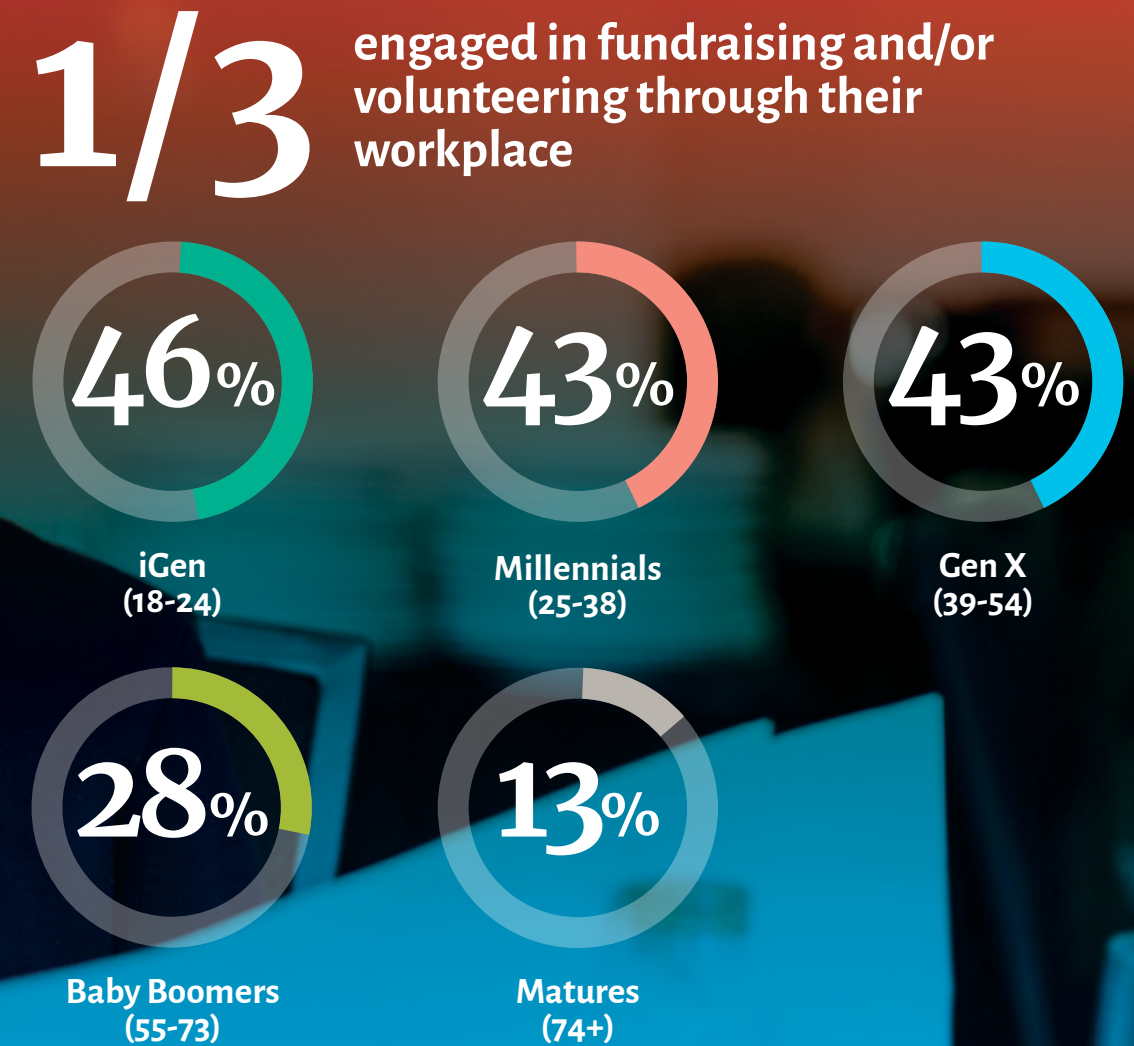
– Kiana, Millennial (25-38)

## For many, the workplace offers opportunities to contribute to community.

Approximately one-third (36%) of British Columbians are engaged in fundraising and/or volunteering through their workplace, which translates to approximately half of those who are employed outside of the home. Unsurprisingly, this is especially the case for younger generations who are more likely to be in the workforce.

Mentorship is another way people are contributing to their community through their field or place of work. Gen X (35%) are the most likely to mentor someone while the youngest generations, iGen (32%) and Millennials (29%), are the most likely to be mentored. These generations are newer to the workforce and are likely looking for expertise and guidance as they navigate the early years of their careers. Of all the generations, Millennials (18%) are the most likely to mentor and be mentored.

Figure 11:  
WORKPLACE FUNDRAISING AND/OR VOLUNTEERING



Total respondents: 7,980 | Q. C15) In the past year, did you participate in either of these activities through your workplace?



## Social media facilitates community participation.

Social media has undoubtedly impacted how people are participating in community. From staying in touch with family and friends to making donations, or finding events to keeping up with news, every age group is active on social media.

Two-thirds (66%) of British Columbians use social media for personal use on a daily basis, with half (51%) reporting to use it several times a day or more. On average, they use approximately three different types of social media platforms each month, with younger generations likely to use more. The most popular social media platforms are Facebook (85%), followed by YouTube (67%) and Instagram (51%).

But what are people doing on social media? How is it helping them participate in their communities? People seem to generally use social media for its intended purpose: to socialize. Keeping up with family and friends was reported as the top reason (73%) for using social media. But our findings also suggest people are using it to facilitate community participation. This includes activities like:

- **Staying up-to-date on news and events.** Respondents cited this as the second highest reason (52%) for using social media, with Matures (62%) and Baby Boomers (54%) more inclined to do so.
- **Following organizations or causes.** Overall, this was the fourth highest reason (17%) for using social media but was the most notable for Matures (22%) and Baby Boomers (21%).
- **Organizing and/or finding in-person community events or meet-ups.** One-third (37%) of respondents reported to do this, with iGen (45%) and Millennials (41%) the most likely.
- **Attending a political or social cause, event, rally, or protest that was publicized on social media.** Almost one quarter (24%) of respondents reported to have done this with very little variation across generations other than iGen (29%).
- **Raising awareness or advocating for an issue through posting or sharing content on social media.** Almost half (46%) reported to at least occasionally do this, without any significant generational differences. Interestingly, raising awareness or advocating for an issue in general was reported as the second highest form of support respondents believe makes the most difference.



KEY  
FINDING

2.

Many people, regardless of age, feel there are barriers preventing them from doing more.

## Each generation has different barriers to getting more involved in community.

While most British Columbians are participating and contributing to their communities, 45% of BC residents still want to be more involved but face barriers to doing more.

On average, work or school obligations (60%) were reported as the top barrier to participation while lack of time was reported by all generations as one of their top three barriers. Just over a quarter (27%) of all respondents reported that they simply don't know how to get more involved.

We also saw trends within each generation that reflect the unique pressures and circumstances that different stages of life can bring:

- **Work or school obligations** are barriers most likely experienced by iGen (77%), Gen X (69%), and Millennials (65%).
- **Family obligation** challenges are most acutely experienced by Gen X (47%).
- **Finances** are most likely identified as barriers for iGen (29%) and Millennials (23%).

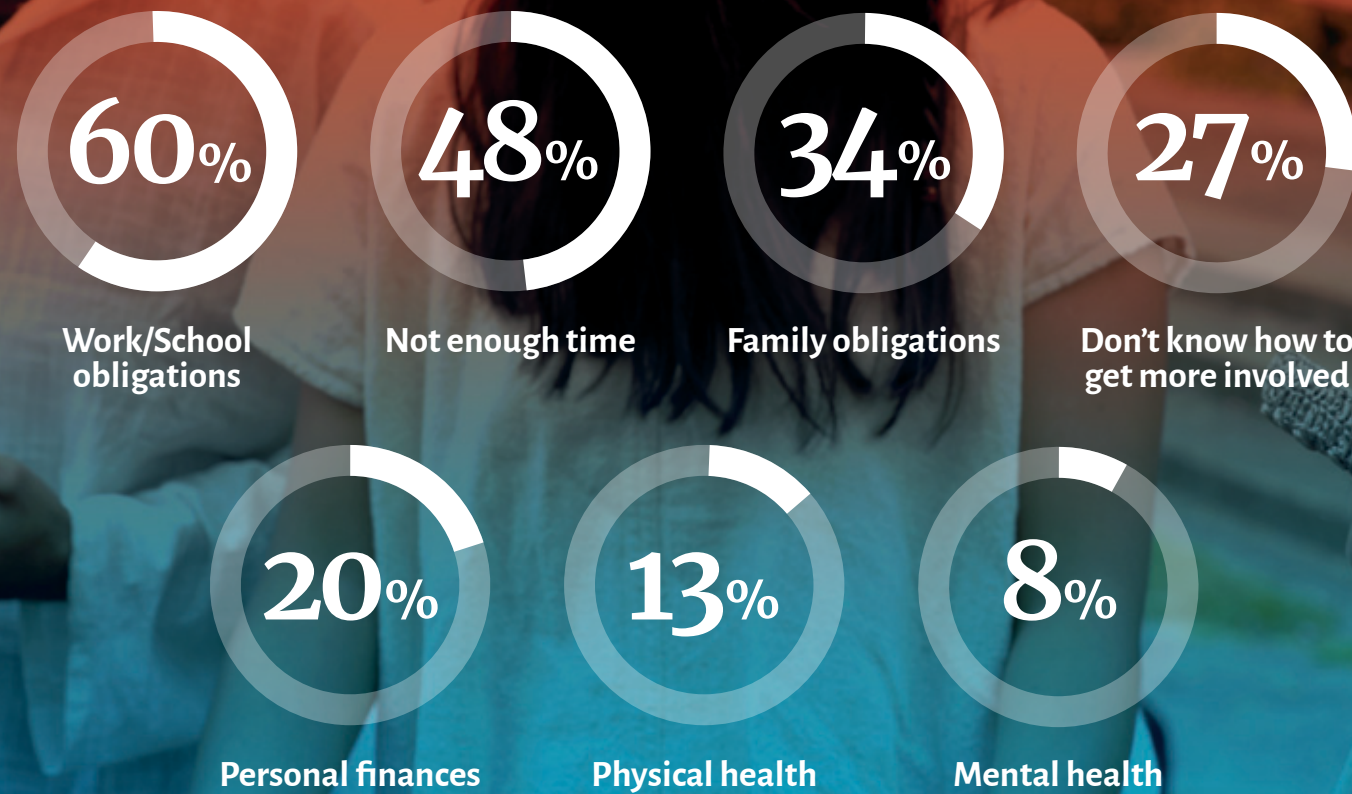
- **Health issues** are a more significant barrier for certain generations. iGen (16%) are the most likely of all to identify mental health issues while Matures (39%) and Baby Boomers (22%) identify physical health issues as barriers.



45%  
of British  
Columbians  
want to be more  
involved in  
community.

Total respondents: 7,980 | Q. B3a)  
Would you like to be more involved in  
your community?

Figure 12:  
**BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION**



Total that would like to be more involved in their community: 3,364 | Q. B3b) What is preventing you from getting more involved in your community? Respondents were required to select up to three from a list of 13 options, including "other" and "don't know".

## The youngest and oldest generations share similar challenges of not knowing how to do more in community.

Matures are typically the most active in their communities while iGen, in some cases, are the least active, and yet they share similar barriers that contribute to an uncertainty on how they can do more in their communities.

Just over a quarter (27%) of respondents don't know how to get more involved, with the highest likelihood seen amongst iGen and Millennials (31% each), followed by Matures (25%). It may be that regardless of age, people are not aware of how to do more, unsure of what type of way they want to get involved, or uncertain of what they have to offer.

iGen expressed the highest desire to be more involved in their community (69%) but are the least likely to feel they have a voice in what happens in their community (50%). This could be for various reasons: They may feel they want to do more but unsure of how, or they may not feel empowered to get involved. Similarly, we noted that Matures were the generation most likely to identify feeling like they don't have anything to offer: 9% versus 4% overall.

However, we also found that both iGen (43%) and Matures (41%) were the most likely of all generations to self-identify as

activists (someone who behaves intentionally to influence political, community, or social change). This may possibly reflect a shared perspective on their role to influencing change.

*"I attended a rally at a neighbour's invitation on an environmental issue impacting the community I live in. This was my first protest and I went out of curiosity, but I also felt passionate about the cause and wanted my voice to be heard. The event showed me there are others who share the concerns I have, and it was inspiring to see what can happen when a community comes together."*

– Sharon, Mature (74+)



KEY FINDING

# 3.

Most British Columbians feel welcome in their community and believe in their capacity to contribute to positive change.

## Most people feel welcome and want to make their community a better place to live.

We're heartened to find that 85% of BC residents feel welcome in their communities.

People are motivated to contribute to their communities by a belief in giving back – it was the top overall reason cited for charitable giving (47%) and volunteering (40%). This suggests that people feel as though their communities have given them something valuable and

they feel an internalized sense of responsibility to offer something in return.

While we're hopeful in how welcome people feel and how that impacts community participation, this optimism is offset by the reality that there are still those who may not share the same experience, especially younger generations.



## British Columbians believe they can make a difference through individual actions.

“When we bought our home in 2002, we renovated it based on decisions around making the biggest environmental impact. On a smaller scale, as a family (including two teenagers) we made a decision NOT to use disposable water bottles and cups. I haven’t purchased a coffee in a disposable cup in over a decade. Every decision in every generation, whether small or large, can make a difference.”

– David, Gen X (39-54)

Sometimes the idea of creating big changes can seem daunting, seemingly too big for any one individual to tackle alone. But our findings suggest people generally believe in the individual’s capacity to influence change.

More than 90% of British Columbians believe they can have at least some impact in making their community a better place with over half (54%) believing they can have a big or moderate impact. And more than half (57%) of British Columbians also feel they have a voice in their community; that their efforts—even small in scale—can meaningfully contribute to making their communities better places to live.

The top three forms of support respondents feel make the most difference recognize the individual’s efforts to impact some type of change: Volunteering (33%), promoting a cause or raising awareness (22%), and lifestyle/consumer choice (19%). All three reflect the idea that everyone has something valuable to offer, whether it’s time, resources, or influence to be able to make a difference.

Older generations are more likely to identify volunteering and donating money as forms of support that make the most difference while younger generations are more likely to identify lifestyle/consumer choices. Interestingly, there was no significant generational difference when it comes to perceptions on promoting a cause/raising awareness as a valuable form of support.

**92%**  
believe they can have at least some impact in strengthening their community

Total respondents: 7,980 | Q. B1) How much impact do you believe you can have in making your community a better place to live?

Figure 14:  
FORM OF SUPPORT BELIEVED TO MAKE THE MOST DIFFERENCE



Total respondents: 7,980 | Q. C12) Which one of the following forms of support do you believe makes the most difference regarding causes and charities? Respondents were required to select one from a list of six choices.





## Conclusion

With today's headlines, it can be easy to develop a bleak outlook on our current state of affairs that may leave many of us wondering, "What difference can I possibly make?" Climate change is an increasingly urgent issue; we're seeing more political divisions within Canada and abroad; and notions of equity, diversity, and inclusion are being grappled with everyday.

The findings from this report suggest, despite everything, more than 90% of British Columbians believe they can make at least some difference and they're doing this in multiple ways. In the past year, 62%

have volunteered and 89% have financially supported causes or charities. We also noted 46% of Matures have made online donations, 59% of iGen have taken some action to support reconciliation, and 35% of Gen X mentor someone in their field or workplace.

We also found that every generation faces different challenges that prevent them from doing more. Lack of time was a common barrier across all generations. Younger generations experience work/school obligations, while Gen X most acutely face family obligations. Older generations are the most likely to

cite physical health issues. And just over a quarter of all respondents simply don't know how to get more involved.

We're hopeful for what our findings mean for British Columbians. As we confront the challenges of our time, the solutions to the problems are complex but we can all benefit from community participation. Our research findings reflect this: People believe in the individual's capacity to make their communities better. Unsurprisingly, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were created based on a recognition of what individual efforts can achieve. In particular, Goal #17 ("Partnership for the Goals") sees the roles partnerships between governments, the private sector, and civil society at all levels have in advancing the sustainable development agenda. While the objectives are global in scale, the SDGs are a reminder that ultimately, community participation is at the heart of tackling even some of our biggest issues.

We also want to balance this optimism with a recognition that there's still important work to do to ensure all British Columbians feel welcome and empowered to contribute to their communities. Too many are not feeling welcome in their communities, particularly amongst the youngest generations. As individuals, organizations, and sectors, there's an opportunity to work together to welcome those in communities who don't feel engaged and empower those who want to do more.

## What are the SDGs?



Launched in 2015 by the United Nations, the SDGs are a set of 17 goals that offer a blueprint for achieving a vision for a more just, equitable, and sustainable world. Each goal identifies a different global challenge such as poverty or climate change and are integrated based on the idea that action in one area impacts another. Canada has joined 192 other countries to commit to achieving these goals at home and abroad.

For more information, visit:  
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>



# What Next?

## What are the next steps for Vancouver Foundation?

At Vancouver Foundation, we take seriously our commitment to listening to, learning from, and collaborating with communities across BC. This report gives us some important insight to help guide our work moving forward. Most importantly, we note that people are holding back from community participation because they feel unwelcome or unsure of how they can contribute. We commit to using our voice to continue championing communities where we can all feel like we belong. We also recognize that each age group experiences both different opportunities and different barriers to participation. Any kind of inequity can have a corrosive effect on community life, and we're determined to advance programs, partnerships, and policies that ensure everyone has the opportunity for meaningful participation.

Finally, we resolve to keep this conversation going. Shining a light on the challenges and opportunities facing communities across our province is important, and ensuring we build from what we've discovered to make real progress is the next natural step. As always, we will approach the work ahead by learning, sharing, and building partnerships with the people and organizations who share our commitment to building healthy, vibrant, and livable communities.

## What can you do?

So how can individuals, organizations, and communities inspire and empower British Columbians to do more? Everyone has a role to play to help support and strengthen how people are contributing to their communities. Based on the findings from this report, we offer the following suggestions for consideration:

### As organizations, develop specific strategies to better engage different generations to get more involved.

Our findings show many people want to do more in their communities, but a quarter of respondents don't know how to get more involved. We also believe there are emerging trends amongst different generations on how they want to contribute to community. We

recommend using the findings from this report to explore different ways to engage different age groups:

**For younger generations, offer mentorship and/or volunteering opportunities that integrate career or skill development or networking.** iGen and Millennials are in the earlier stages of their careers but experience school/work obligations as a significant barrier to participation. To address this, opportunities that allow them to not only participate in community, but also contribute to their career development can be a valuable way to get these generations more involved.

**For older generations, leverage online giving.** A common assumption is that younger generations are more likely to donate online but our findings show older generations are open to, or in some cases, actively doing so.

**Create volunteering opportunities that require different levels of commitment.** Younger generations prefer one-time or short-term volunteering, Matures prefer long-term opportunities, and Baby Boomers are split between the two.

**Identify and reduce the barriers that prevent your stakeholders from participating in community.** This includes ways to alleviate the pressures of time or obligations related to work, school, or family such as HR policies that allow for volunteering during work hours or family-friendly opportunities to participate in community.

**Create opportunities to invite all generations to a range of ways to learn and do more in support of reconciliation.** Just over half have done something in the last year to support reconciliation, leaving a lot of opportunities to further engage this group, as well as others who haven't yet participated in reconciliation efforts, to doing more.

**Leverage social media to connect and encourage participation.** All generations are active on social media with slight variations on what different generations are more likely to do:

- Older generations rely on social media to follow organizations or causes. Charities could leverage this to share news, trends, or volunteering opportunities.
- iGen and Millennials are most likely to organize or find in-person events or meetups. Charities can use social media to organize or invite attendees from these generations.
- Raising awareness or advocating for an issue was the second highest form of support that makes the most difference and almost half of all respondents report doing this on social media at least occasionally. Charities may want to consider developing social media campaigns that leverage this finding to promote their organization or causes.

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## As individuals, participate in community to create a sense of belonging.

One particular finding echoed in a lot of our research is that there are people in our communities who feel disconnected and have a desire for a sense of belonging. Community participation can be a way to welcome people into community and create deeper connections with one another.

It can be a deeply profound experience to participate in community alongside others who share a desire for change or offer new ways of thinking about the world. When people begin connecting with one another, discovering commonalities and differences, and working together towards a shared objective, the results can be promising.

We see this firsthand through programs like Neighbourhood Small Grants that invite people to find creative ways to bring their communities together like block parties and community gardens. We've also seen this happen through, On The Table, an initiative we launched that invites people to gather over food and talk about issues that matter to them. A simple call-to-action to gather and share has sparked connections even amongst strangers. There's great potential in thinking about community participation as a vehicle for creating a sense of belonging.



# About this Report

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## Methodology

The Vital Signs report summarizes the findings from an online survey of 7,980 BC residents. The survey was administered by Mustel Group between June 26 to July 9, 2019. The final sample was weighted to match census data based on gender, age, and region of residence.

Community foundations across BC (including Vancouver Foundation) promoted and shared the survey through websites, social media, and email. Approximately 70% of responses were collected by Mustel Group and 30% by community foundations. Respondents were able to complete the survey in English or Chinese. Results may not add up to 100% due to rounding and 'prefer not to say' responses.

If you'd like more information on the raw data or survey questions, please contact us at: [communications@vancouverfoundation.ca](mailto:communications@vancouverfoundation.ca).

## Acknowledgments

Vital Signs® is a community check-up conducted by community foundations across Canada that measures

the vitality of our communities and identifies significant trends in a range of areas critical to quality of life. Vital Signs is coordinated nationally by Community Foundations of Canada and with special thanks to the Toronto Foundation for developing and sharing the Vital Signs concept. The Vital Signs trademark is used with permission from Community Foundations of Canada. For more information visit: [www.vitalsignscanada.ca](http://www.vitalsignscanada.ca).

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**Mustel Group**, a team of collaborative experts delivering customized market research solutions in both the public and private sectors. This survey was made possible by their expertise in administering the survey and providing valuable guidance.

**Affinity Bridge**, a Vancouver-based creative digital agency who work with environmental organizations, social non-profits, co-operatives, and social good enterprises from British Columbia and around the world. They played a pivotal role in providing art direction, designing the report, and developing the website.

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## Find a Community Foundation Near You

Community foundations help guide volunteer efforts and financial support to where it will have the greatest impact. Connect with your local community foundation to learn more about the difference they're making and the best way to contribute to make your community a better place.

For more information, visit: [communityfoundations.ca](http://communityfoundations.ca)

# vancouver foundation

Vancouver Foundation is Community Inspired. We connect the generosity of donors with the energy, ideas, and time of people in the community to create healthy, vibrant, and livable communities across BC. Since 1943, our donors have created 1,800 endowment funds and together we have distributed more than \$1 billion to charities. From arts and culture to the environment, health and social development, education, medical research and more, we exist to make meaningful and lasting improvements to communities in BC.

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