

Faith and Charity

Investigating the interplay
between religion and modern
charitable actions in the UK

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Introduction

The purpose of this white paper study is to provide an update on the relationship and interconnections between faith and charity within UK communities.

The UK is broadly viewed as a highly secular society, with 53% of the British public describing themselves as having 'no religion' according to a survey by British Social Attitudes, 2018. For various cultural and historical reasons, Britain is nevertheless a highly diverse country encompassing many different ethnicities, nationalities and religions. In recent decades, the influx of religious diversity has reshaped the makeup of many communities, particularly in city regions, setting in motion wider societal trends that link faith, charity and community in the UK.

Attitudes towards charitable causes are strongly felt in Britain, especially given the sharpening of the cost-of-living crisis in the country - a major concern for many of our respondents who are exceptionally worried about the economic impact on their own finances, regardless of any professed faith.

This research investigates the country's modern perceptions of charity, as well as shedding an important light on the interplay between claimed religious belief and charitable donation, both now and in the future.

It also highlights just how divorced many charitable organisations have become from being recognised as overtly faith-based, and whether this identity can be a key motivator for donations from believers - regardless of their religion.

Foreword from Human Appeal's CEO

The poet Alexander Pope said it best: "In faith and hope the world will disagree, but all mankind's concern is charity".

In recent times, international UK charities have had to weather unprecedented global headwinds such as COVID and now inflation on a scale that threatens increased food poverty and the ability of so many to cover their cost of living.

With dramatic cuts in international aid also occurring on a widespread basis, the importance of individual donors to charitable organisations has never been so critical, when it comes to their abilities to meet demand for aid, no matter their chosen cause.

Charities often find themselves being torn in two directions, mobilising on their own home fronts to help deal with increasing issues like food poverty, while also dealing with the millions of people facing hunger, drought or starvation due to ongoing emergencies exacerbated by war and conflict abroad in Europe, Africa and Asia.

It is at this critical moment that charities in general, and faith-based organisations, can play a key role to mobilise resources for the vulnerable, powered by donors whose unwavering passion is to envisage a just and caring world free from poverty and suffering.

Human Appeal is itself faith-based but not faith specific and has been actively saving lives for over 31 years in the UK and globally. We have no political agenda and are here for every human being without discrimination.

This is the driving intention behind this research - to understand in greater detail current attitudes to charity, and to explore the links between religiosity and charitable giving in modern Britain. As the country faces challenges both at home and abroad, it is comforting to see through our findings that Alexander Pope's statement still rings very true, and that around the UK, communities from a range of backgrounds remain dedicated to helping those less fortunate, in acts that transcend faith.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which reads "Moh. Ashmawey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Dr. Mohamed Ashmawey

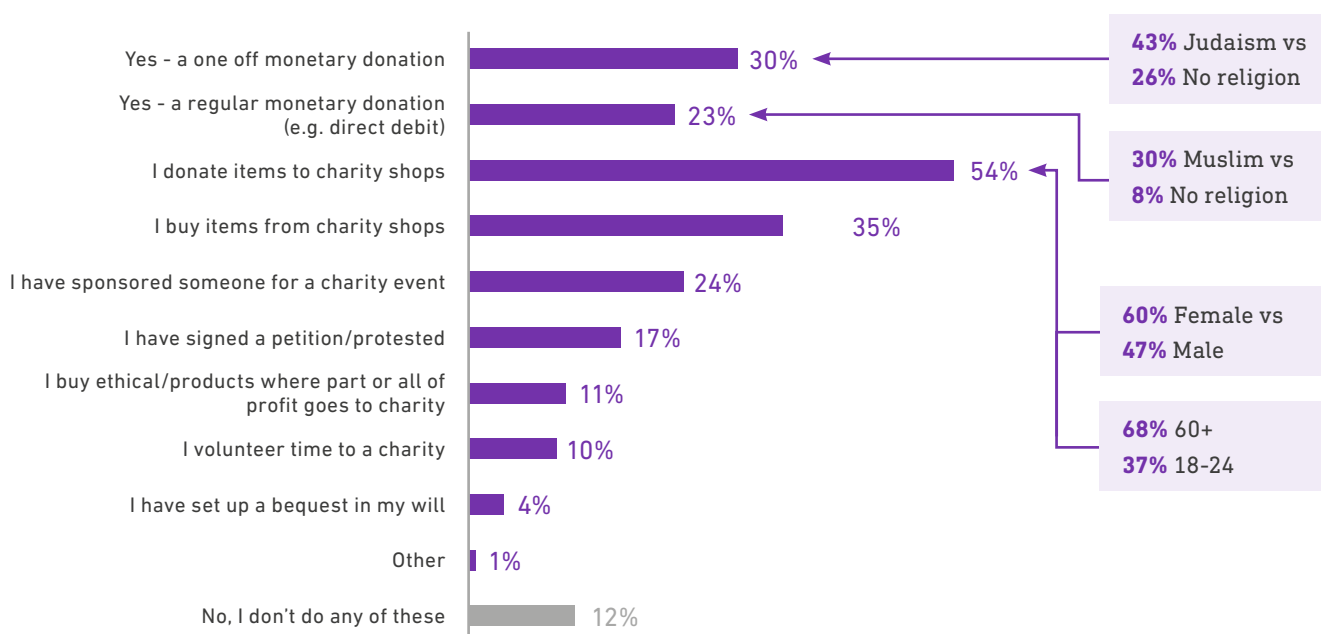
CEO
Human Appeal

Modern acts of UK charity

Before looking at the relationship between faith and charitable support, the research first investigated more general, current trends within charitable giving throughout the UK.

For example, how people choose to donate to a cause. Support for organisations can take many forms, varying from signing petitions to regular financial aid.

Fig. 1: Q -Are you a charity donor (i.e. give a significant amount or monthly amount to at least one organisation), or do you contribute to charity in any other ways?



When it comes to regional variations, the most charitable area for regular monthly donations is Scotland with 31% of respondents giving on a regular basis, followed by Northern Ireland at 29% and the North West of England (27%). After London (£25.73), residents in the South West proved the most generous when it came to the mean one-off donation amount, with a mean donation of £25.16, followed by Scotland at £22.21. When it comes to regular donations, those in the North East give the most, with a mean donation of £26.38, followed by the East Midlands at £23.18 and Greater London £22.37.

Fig 2: Q - How frequently do you engage in the following charitable actions?

There is a high frequency around the UK for various forms of charitable support too, with higher weekly instances of volunteering time and purchasing charity products ahead of monthly donations, which is by far the most common form of support across the UK likely due to the ease and automation of making regular direct debit payments.

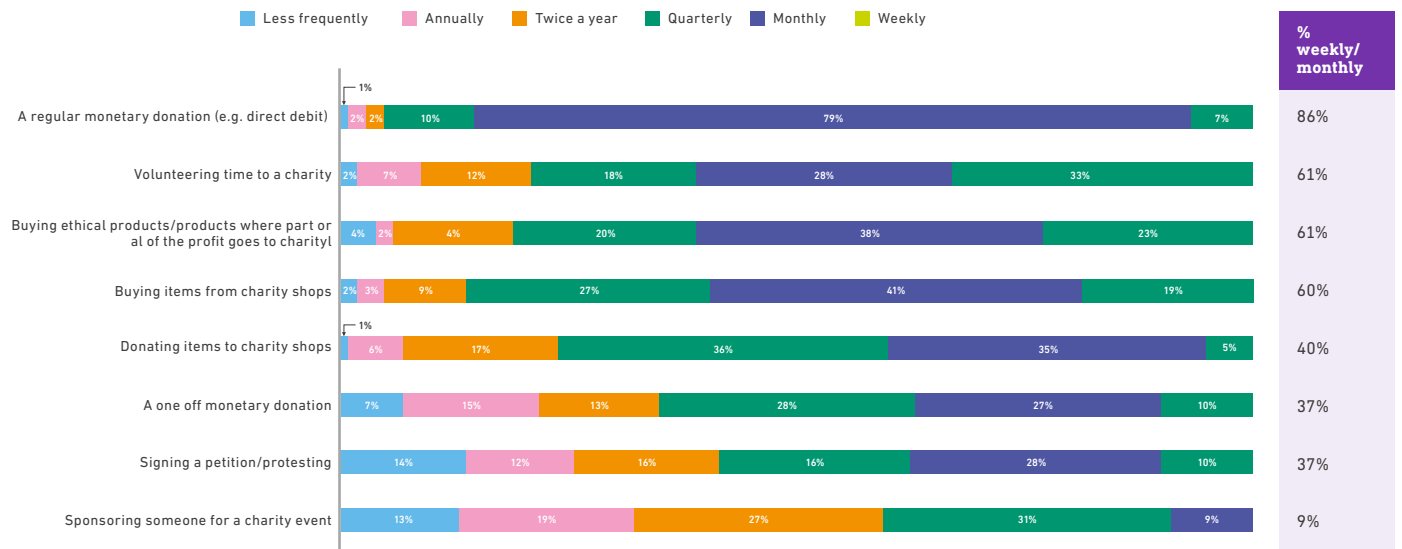
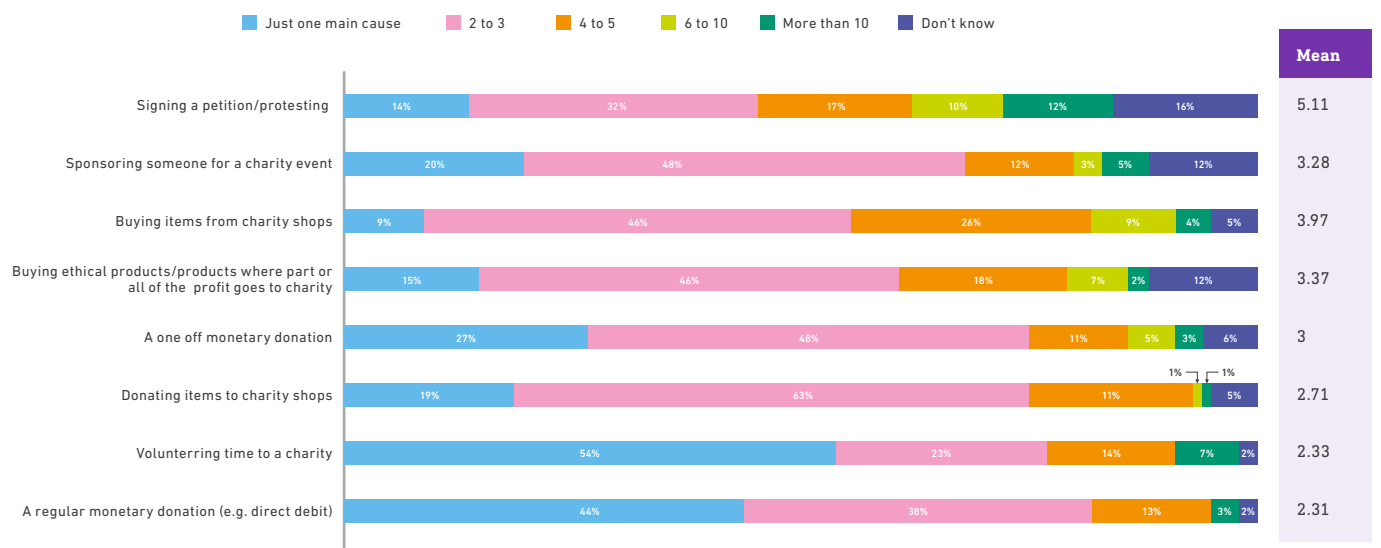


Fig3: Q - How many charities do you support, and through which method?

Most UK residents support between two and five different charities with one-off monetary donations, while there are greater variances for sponsoring charity events (where the choice of entity is not in the donor's hands) and charity shops (which will be influenced by locations nearby as well as the cause supported by the charity).



For that ongoing, direct debit support, most people will only select just one single charity, or between 2-3 causes at a maximum.

Fig 4: Q - Rank, by personal preference, the charitable organisations and their causes below, which you would be most likely to support on issue alone?

The most common choice of cause is medical wellbeing, a factor which is clearly influenced by personal experience as the biggest motivator for charity selection. It was the most commonly supported charity type for those in the North West, Yorkshire, West Midlands and East of England, South East, and South West. In Greater London the most popular choice was poverty relief, while Wales picked animal welfare most frequently and children and family support

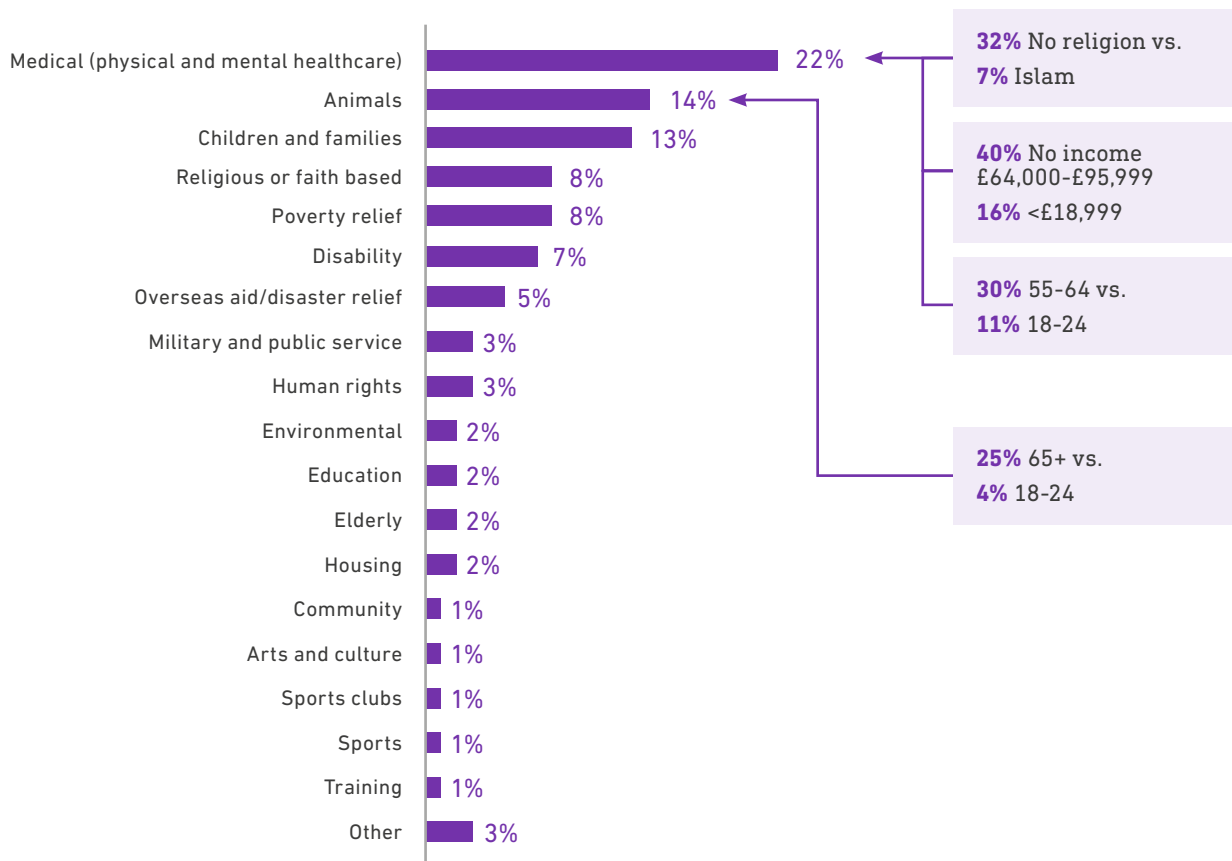
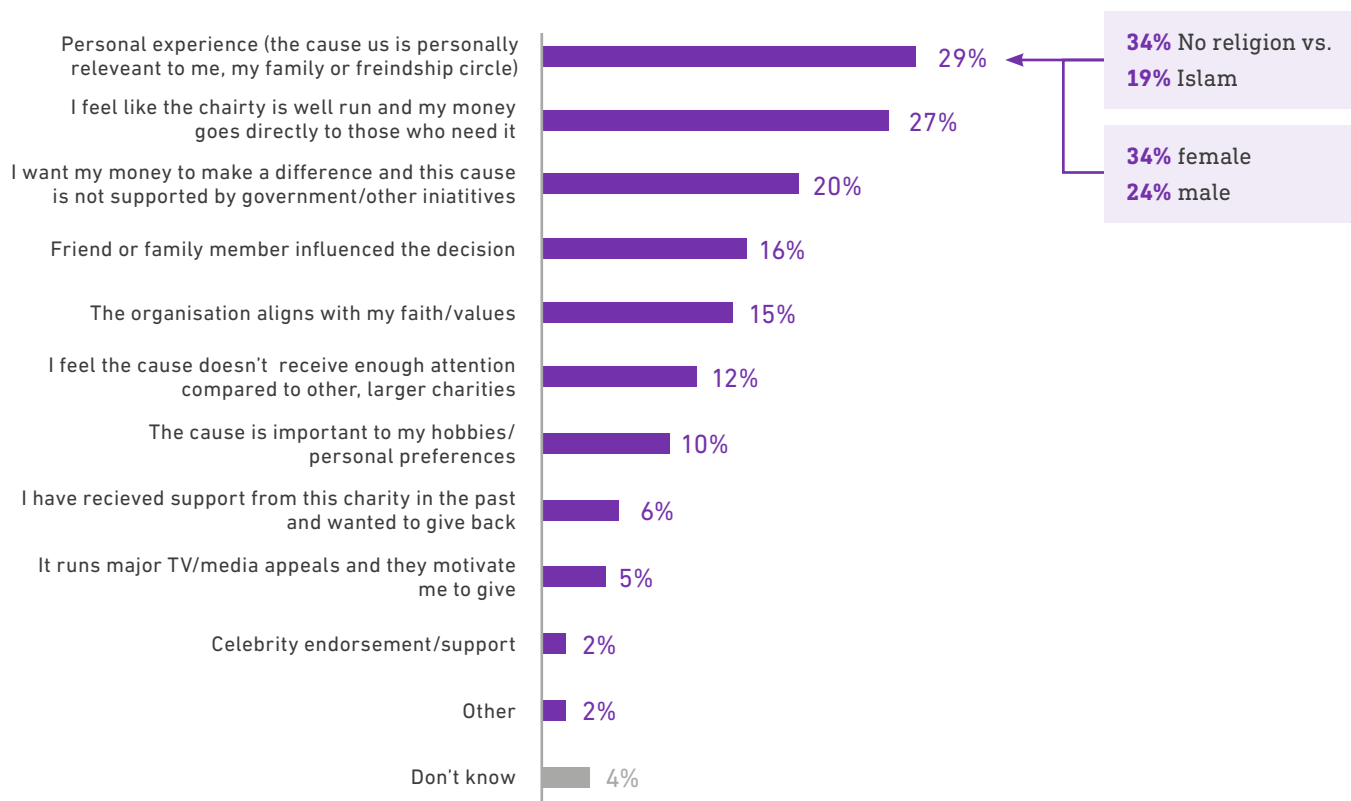


Fig 5: Q - Thinking of the charity you support most greatly, what primarily inspired your choice of cause?



Personal relevance or experience of the cause behind a charity is by far the biggest influencing factor when it comes to support.

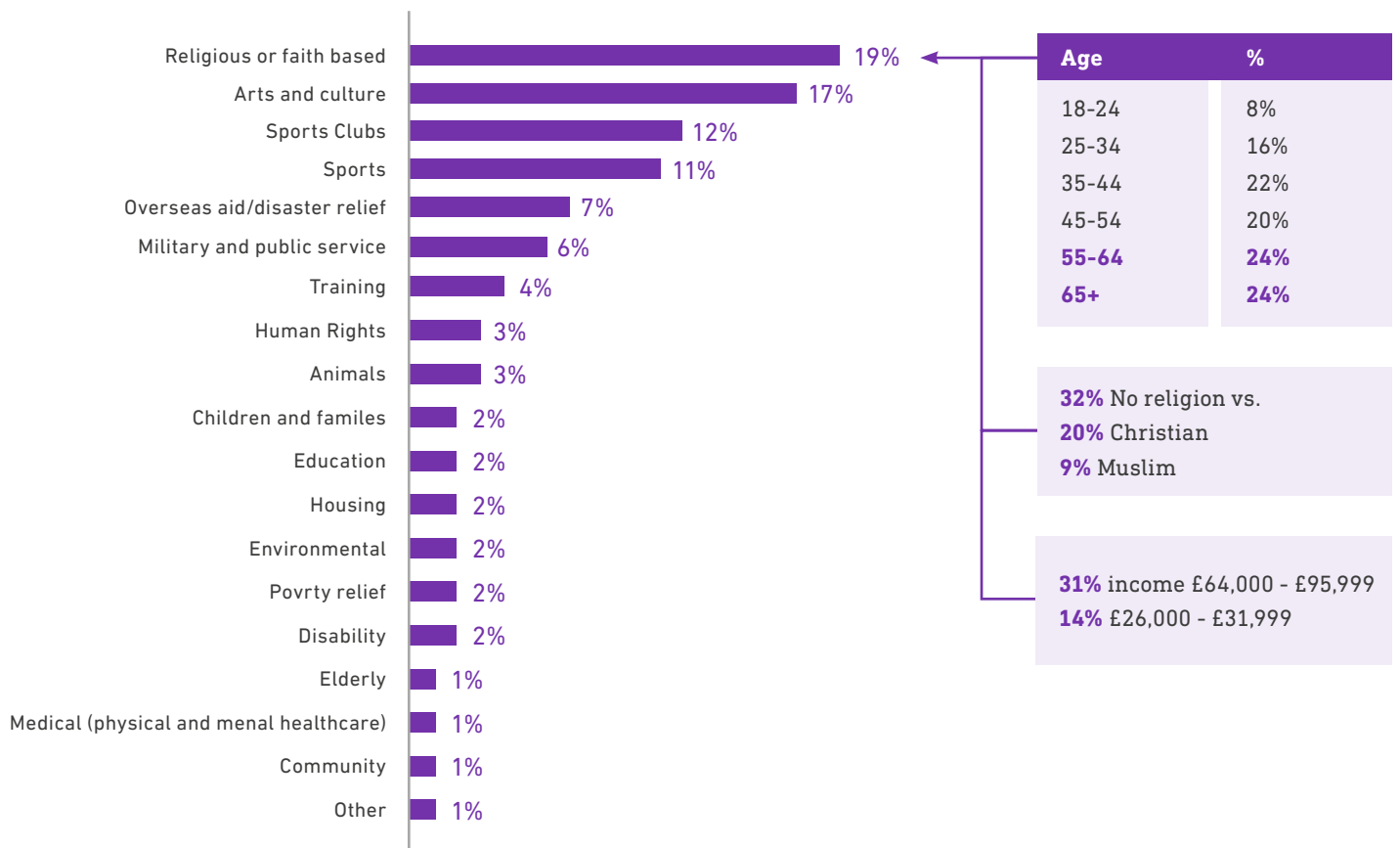
On a regional basis, the top two reasons for support around the country were personal experience or feeling that the charity was well run - excluding Wales, the only region to pick 'I want my money to make a difference and government/ other initiatives do not support it enough' as their major motivation.

Over a quarter of respondents had been recipients/beneficiaries of a charity initiative previously, underlining the strength of connection which can be made when an organisation makes a tangible personal difference in someone's life. By far the most likely region to have been recipients of charitable initiatives was Greater London, followed by Yorkshire.

Looking specifically at faith-based charities, well over half of respondents currently support organisations or causes with a religious message. They are proving less appealing to those who do not ascribe to a particular belief structure.

When asked about types of charity people would be least likely to support, faith-based organisations were the top choice - and the likelihood of giving to these organisations declines with both increasing age and higher income levels. However, it is interesting to note here that younger demographics see more value in faith-based charities.

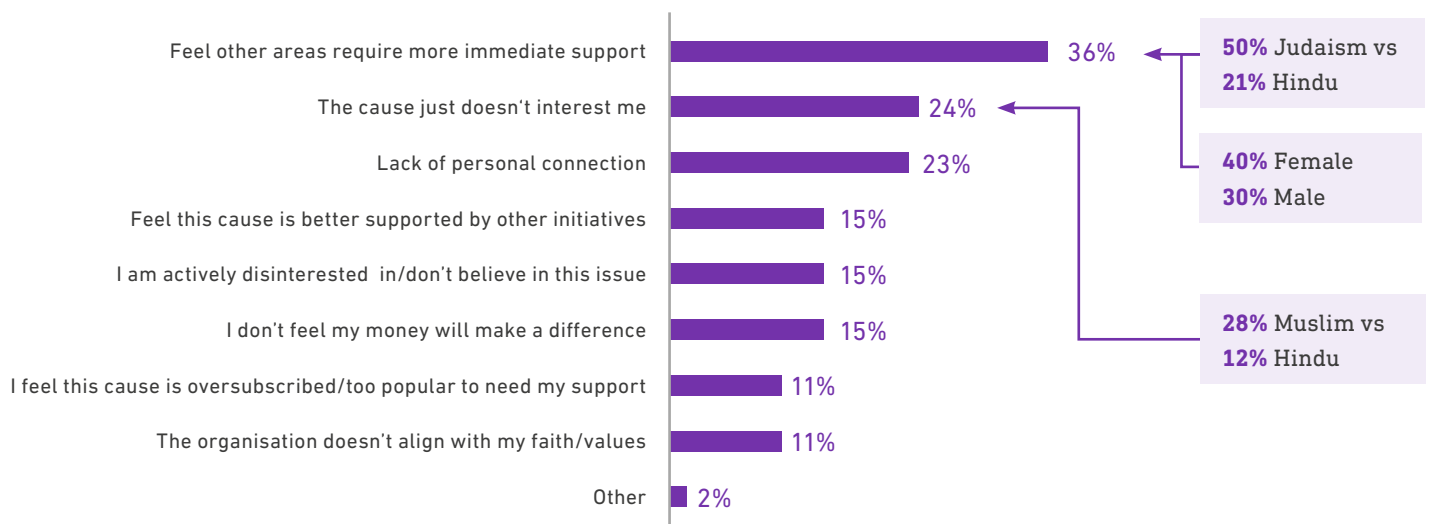
Fig 6: Q - Rank, by personal preference, the charitable organisations and their causes below, by which you would be least likely to support based on cause alone?



Faith-based charities also held less relevance for communities the further north travelled in the country. They proved the least popular charity choice among those in the North East (23%), Yorkshire (23%) and Scotland (23%). The South West (31%) also saw less appeal in expressly faith-based organisations.

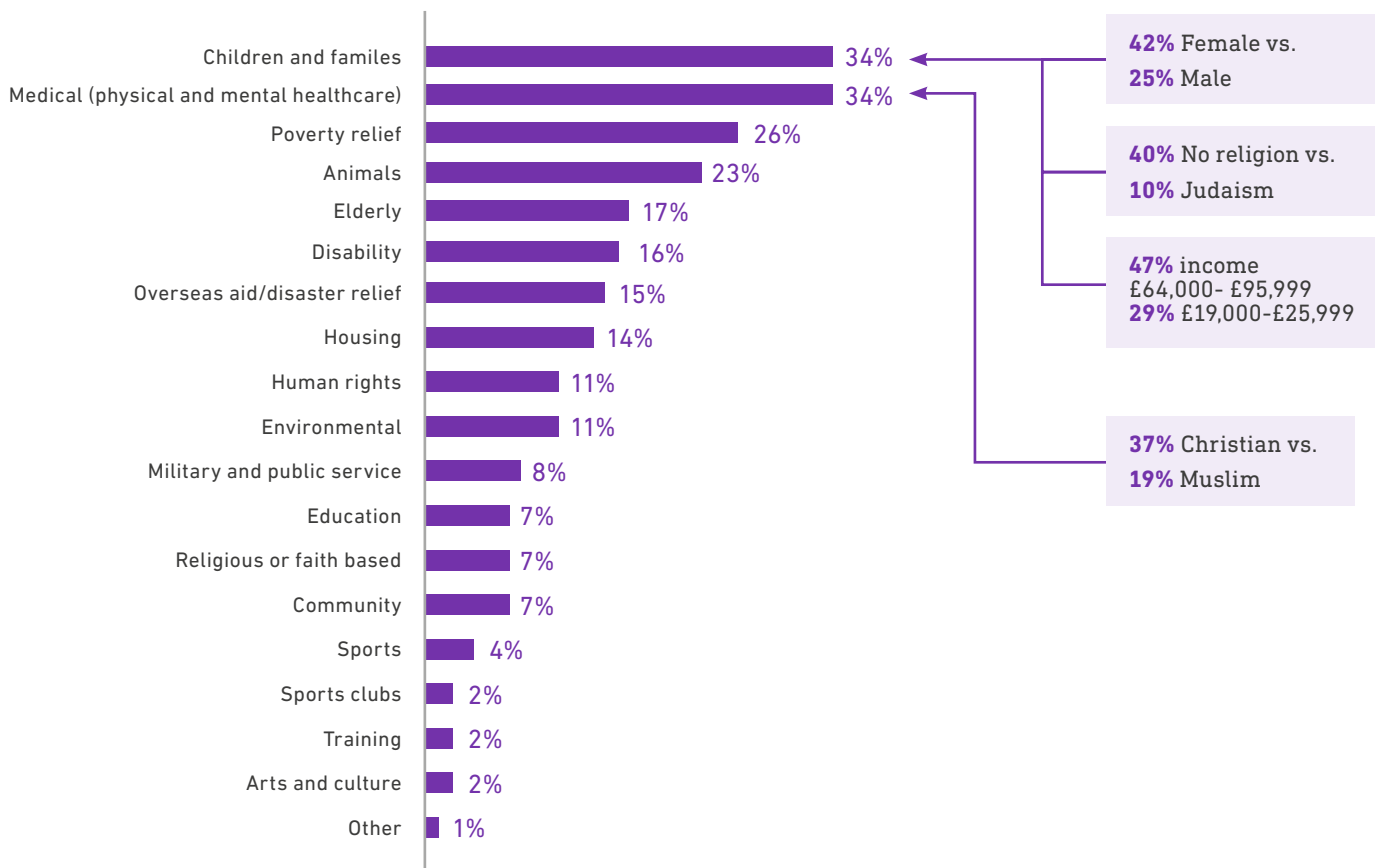
Fig 7 : Q - Based on that ranking of unlikely causes, what is the greatest influencing factor for your choice?

Over a third (36%) say they are least likely to donate to certain causes because other areas require more immediate supports. This increases to 50% for those who follow Judaism.



Influence of the current climate

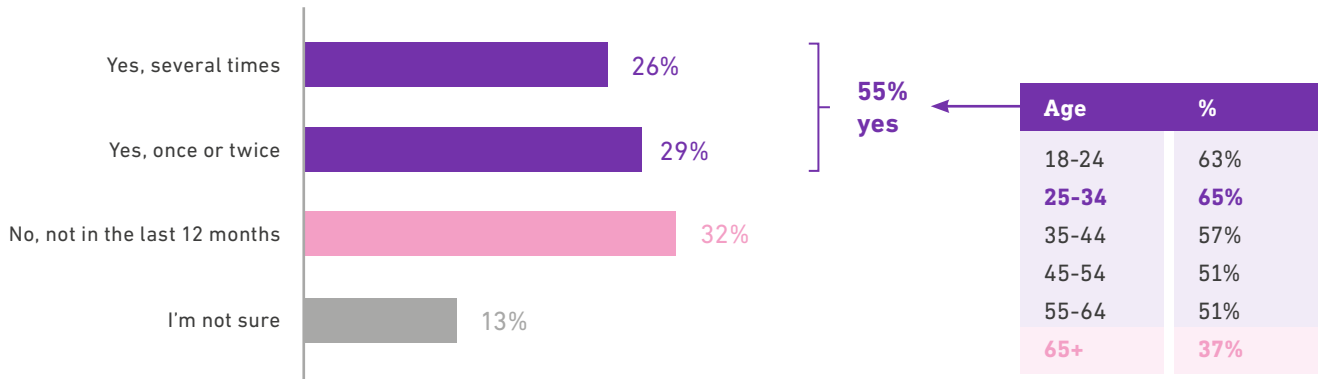
Fig 8 : Q – Rank charitable causes, based on how urgently you think they need support at the current time?



Perceptions of increasing need and support required throughout the UK during 2022 seem to align to the cost of living increase. Families, those suffering from health conditions, and levels of poverty are front of mind when it comes to perceived demand for charitable support around the UK.

Fig 9 : Q - Have you seen/experienced the work of charity organisations at work in your local community within the last 12 months?

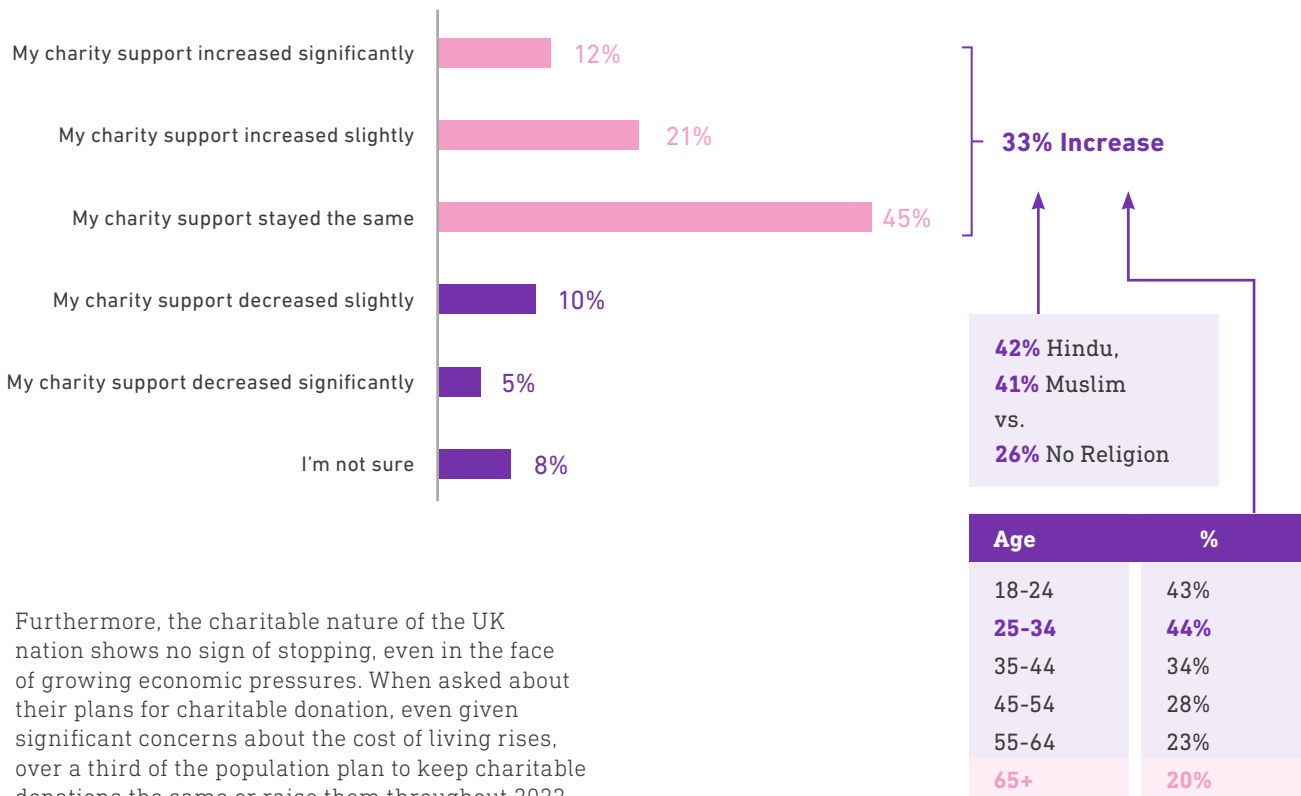
Acts of charity have also been very visible in recent years. Younger generations are especially aware of charity works in the community in the current time, but all demographics have become more aware of greater charity works in their local communities, in recent times.



On a regional basis, charitable acts were most visible within the last 12 months in the East of England (63%), followed by the North East (62%) and Greater London (61%).

The nation is also acutely aware of how charities have risen in prominence during the Covid-19 outbreak, and widely acknowledged their role in assisting the vulnerable by increasing or maintaining their charitable donations during that time.

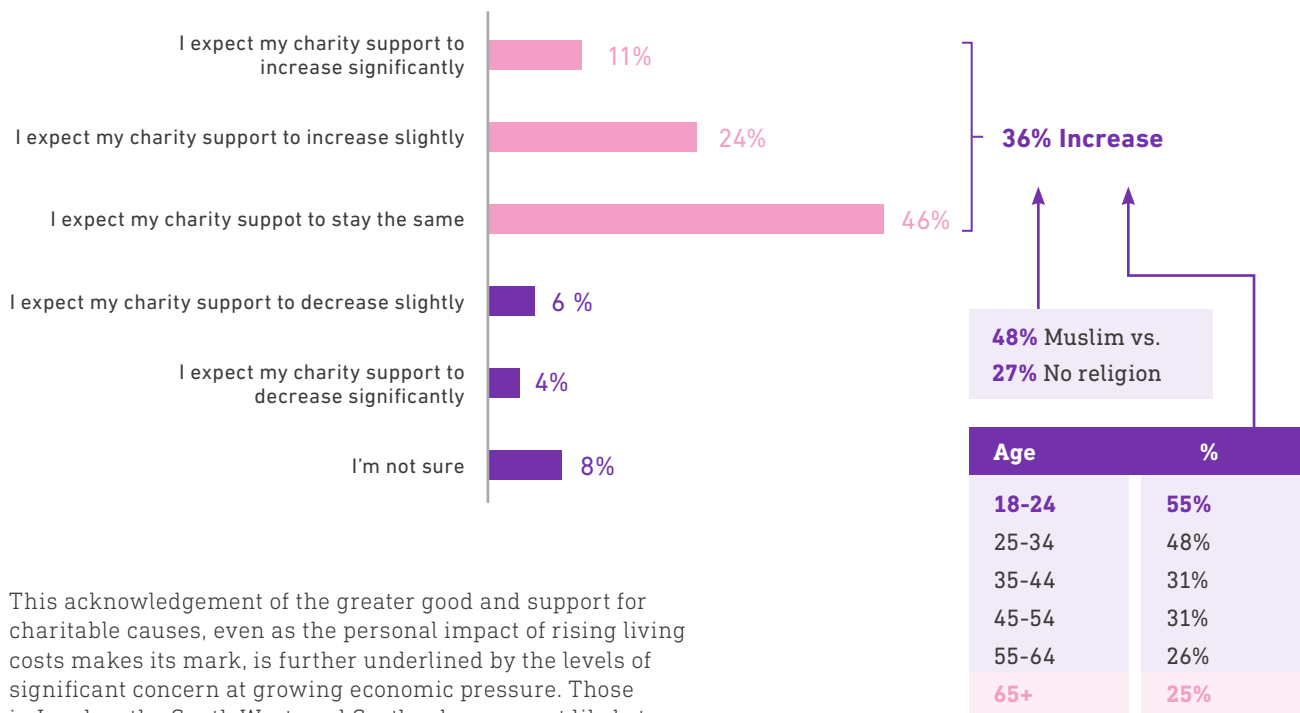
Fig 10 : Q - Thinking back to March 2020 onwards, did your charitable contributions increase or decrease as a result of the pandemic?



Furthermore, the charitable nature of the UK nation shows no sign of stopping, even in the face of growing economic pressures. When asked about their plans for charitable donation, even given significant concerns about the cost of living rises, over a third of the population plan to keep charitable donations the same or raise them throughout 2022.

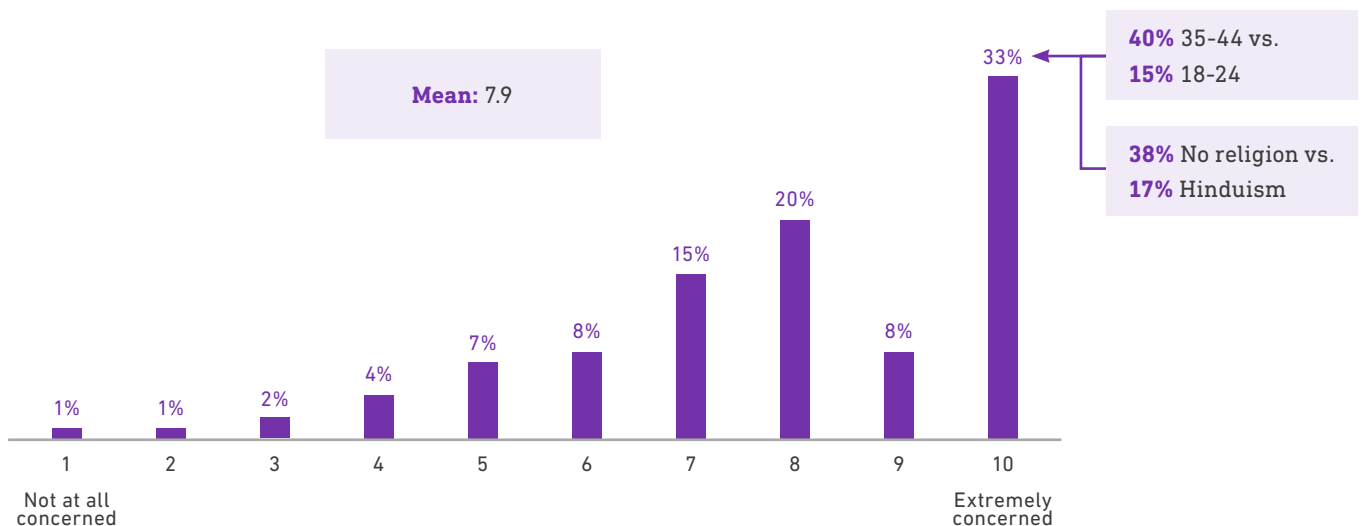
Fig 11 : Q - How do you expect your levels of charity support to change in 2022 compared to 2021?

36% expect their charity support to increase in 2022 compared to 2021. This is especially the case for younger individuals.



This acknowledgement of the greater good and support for charitable causes, even as the personal impact of rising living costs makes its mark, is further underlined by the levels of significant concern at growing economic pressure. Those in London, the South West, and Scotland were most likely to increase their charity donations in 2022, at 43%, 40% and 39% respectively.

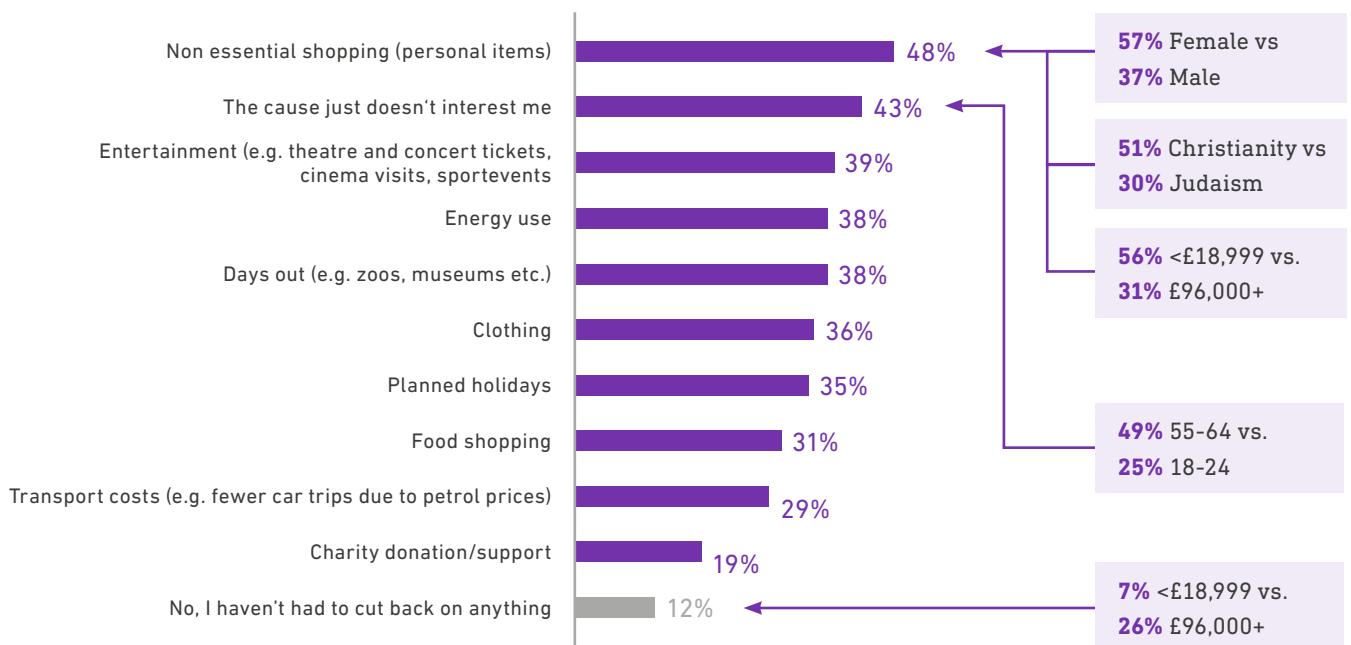
Fig 12 : Q - On a scale of 1-10, how concerned are you by the rising cost of living on a personal level?



Concerns are high country-wide about economic pressures, but the most concerned (highest numbers of those rating concerns 10 on the scale) were found to live in the East Midlands (45%) South East(41%) and South West (40%).

Fig 13 : Q -Have you personally had to cut back on any of the below this year as a result of economic pressure, inflation, or rising household outgoings?

Almost half (48%) have personally had to cut back on 'treats or takeaways' as a result of economic pressure, inflations or rising household outgoings. Only 12% have not had to cut back on anything.

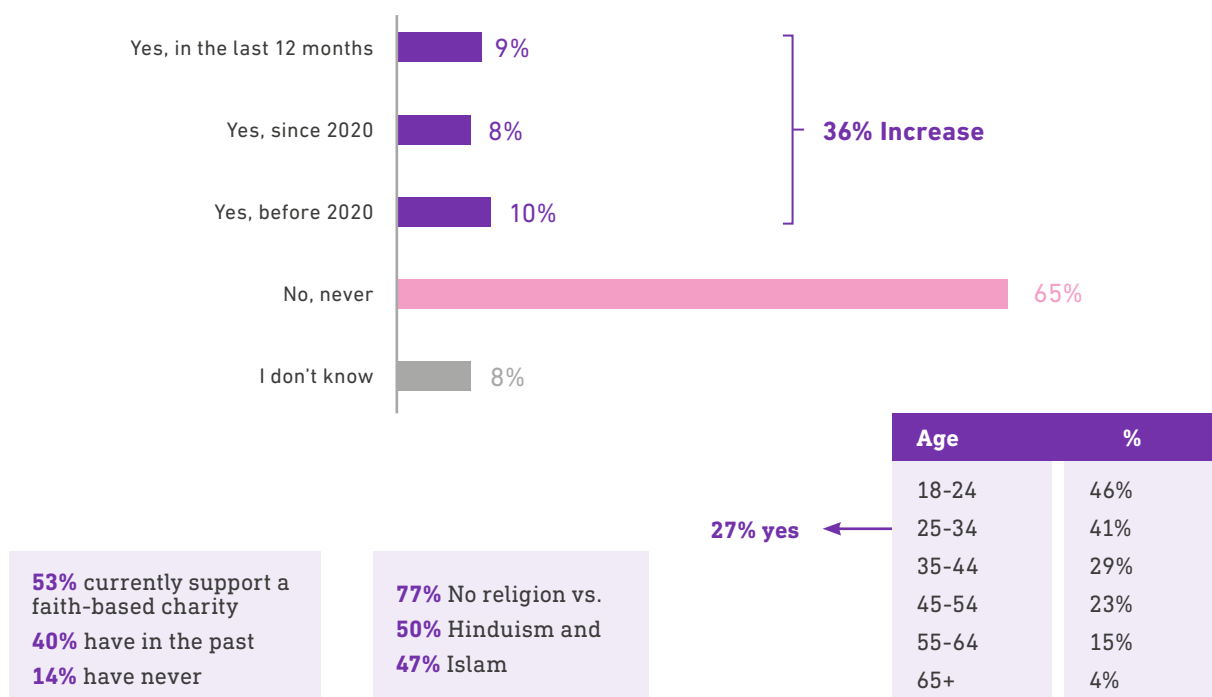


While many are looking at cutting back expenditure across the board, it is encouraging for charity that it is one of the last 'voluntary' expenditure types in line to be cut back.

How faith influences charity

While the earlier findings were about personal preferences towards charity and organisations' overarching causes, it is important to note well over half of all respondents had knowingly supported a faith-based organisation in the last two years.

Fig 14 : Q - Have you ever knowingly supported a 'faith-based' charity?



Interestingly, younger demographics report that they have supported a faith-based organisation, busting the perception that religious support and affiliation are closely associated with older, 'Baby Boomer' generations.

These findings are especially notable given widespread belief that the nation is a predominantly secular society. While the most recent UK Census results are not yet public, best estimates at the numbers of the population who consider themselves to be religious sits below 50%¹. Even if an organisation has its roots in a religious belief, those who don't necessarily ascribe to that belief can and will still support its activities, humanitarian or otherwise.

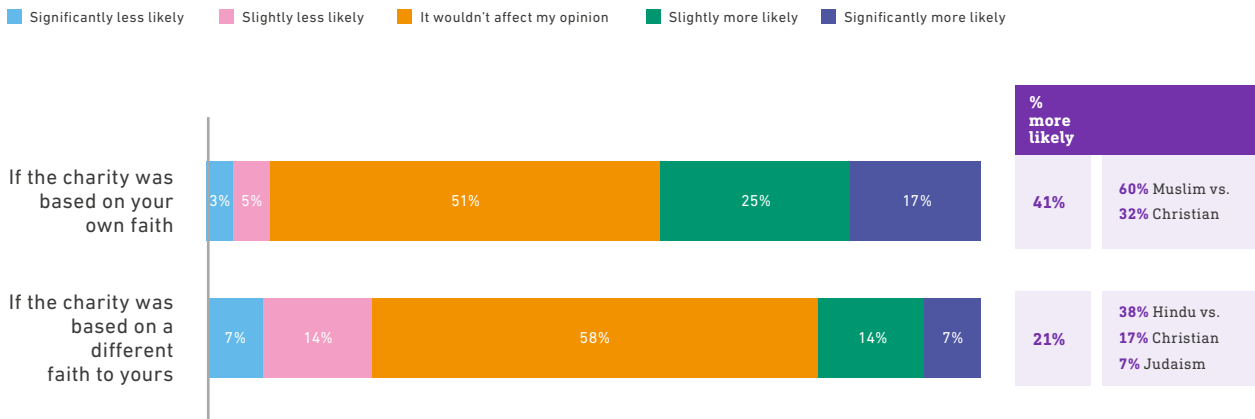
This makes an interesting distinction between supporting a faith, and supporting faith-inspired actions within the UK. The survey further investigated this with specific questions around support of charities which matched the respondent's belief structure, or alternatives. Two fifths of those who consider themselves religious would be more likely to support an organisation if it was rooted in their own faith, while a further one-in-five would support a charity active beyond their own stated faith.

This clearly shows that charitable acts transcend religious belief in the UK.

¹_bsa36_religion.pdf (natcen.ac.uk) - British Social Attitudes Survey, 2018

Fig 15: Q - Would a charity being expressly or overtly faith-based make you more or less likely to support it?

41% of religious respondents would be more likely to support a charity if it was based on their own faith, and 21% would be more likely to support a charity if it was based on a religion different from their own.



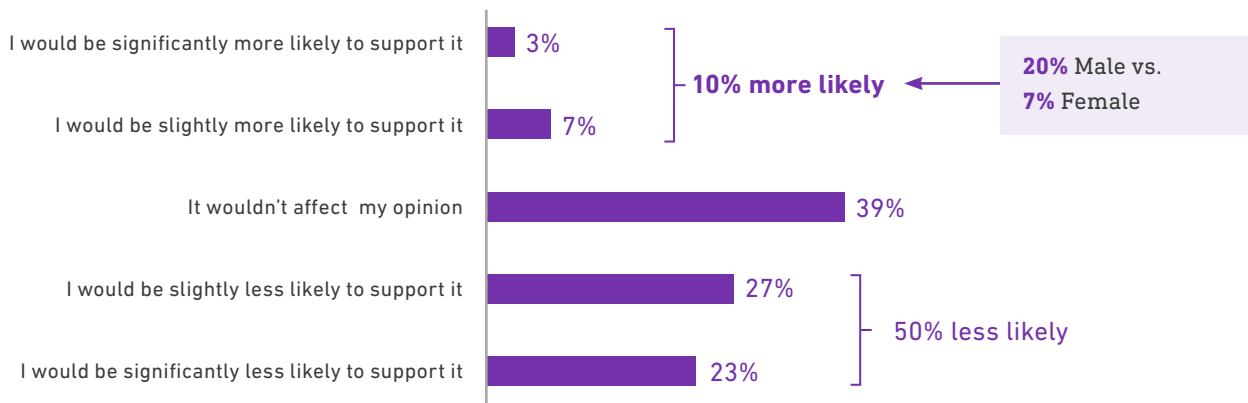
Those selecting 'faith-based identities would make them more likely to support an initiative' resided more commonly in Greater London (58%), Scotland (54%) and the North West (42%)

Overt religiosity in a charity's identity profile does impact selection among the non-religious - some 50%

of stated non-religious respondents overall claim they would be less likely to support a clearly faith-based organisation. However, these findings also clearly show that even among non-religious, significant numbers are willing to support faith-based institutions.

Fig 16: Would a charity being expressly or overtly faith-based make you more or less likely to support it?

1 in 10 non-religious respondents would be more likely to support a charity if it was overtly faith-based. However, 50% are less likely to support an overtly faith-based charity.

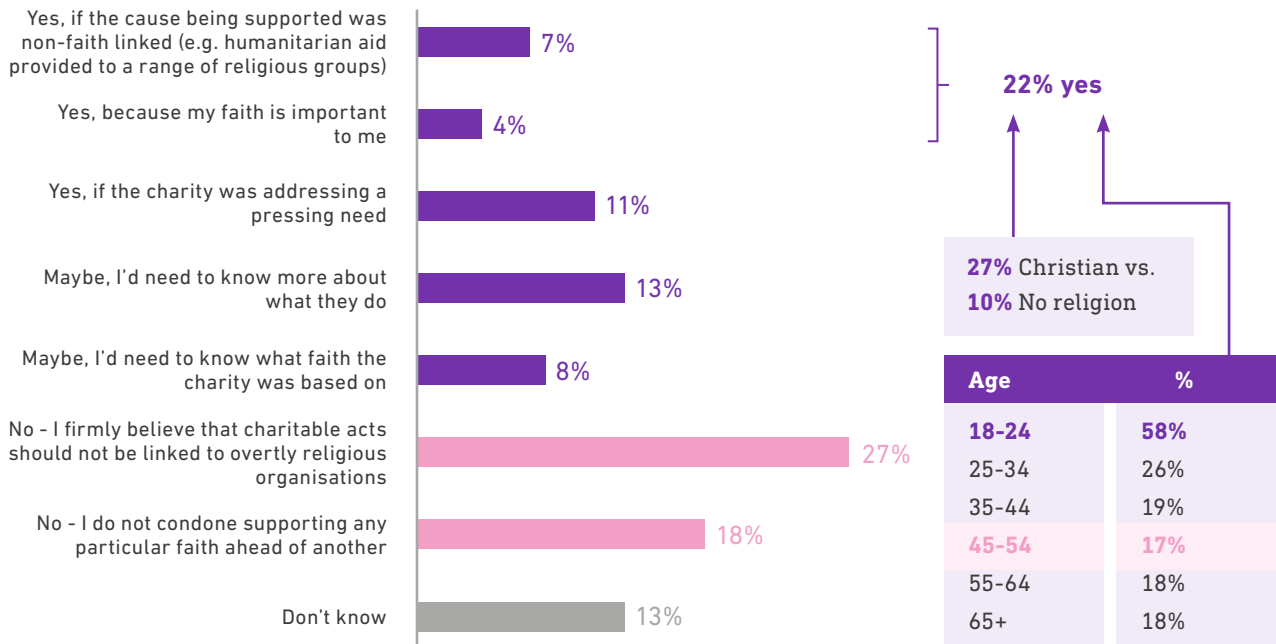


Furthermore, well over half of all survey respondents had previously supported a faith-based initiative, while almost one fifth didn't know if they had. This implies that when it comes to charitable giving, primary motivations around the UK are much more based on the need which the charity is addressing, rather than any stated religious identity.

Effectively, individual's belief structures are not necessarily the biggest drivers to making charitable acts. This survey also finds that almost one fifth of the country don't even make note of a charity's religious leanings or roots when donating.

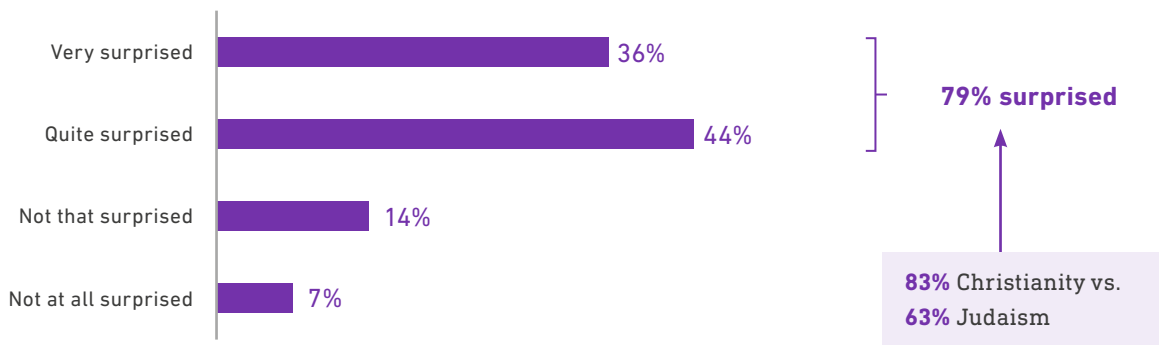
Fig 17 : Q - Would you consider supporting a faith based charity?

Over a fifth (22%) would consider supporting a faith-based charity. This is especially the case for younger individuals



The lack of religion as a primary motivator when it comes to charity choice in the general population is also shown by a lack of knowledge when it comes to how many faith-based charities there are in the country. When it comes to the numbers of faith-based charities in the UK, four fifths of respondents are surprised at their numbers.

Fig 18 : Q - 'There are over 49,000 UK faith-based charities.' What's your initial reaction to this number?



However, while many in the UK do not consider faith-based roots as a primary motivator for choice, they are highly regarded when it comes to the support they provide, especially becoming more important in the next few months, both domestically:

Fig 19: Q - Thinking of the pressures on modern UK communities, do you see the role of faith-based charities becoming more or less important in the coming months?

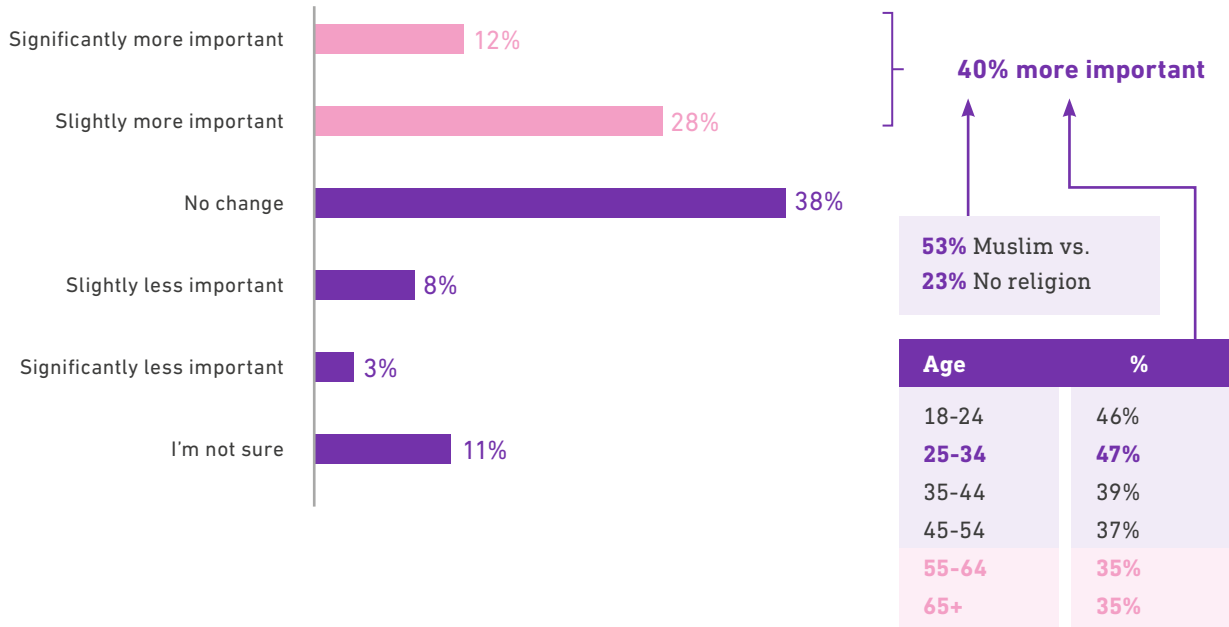
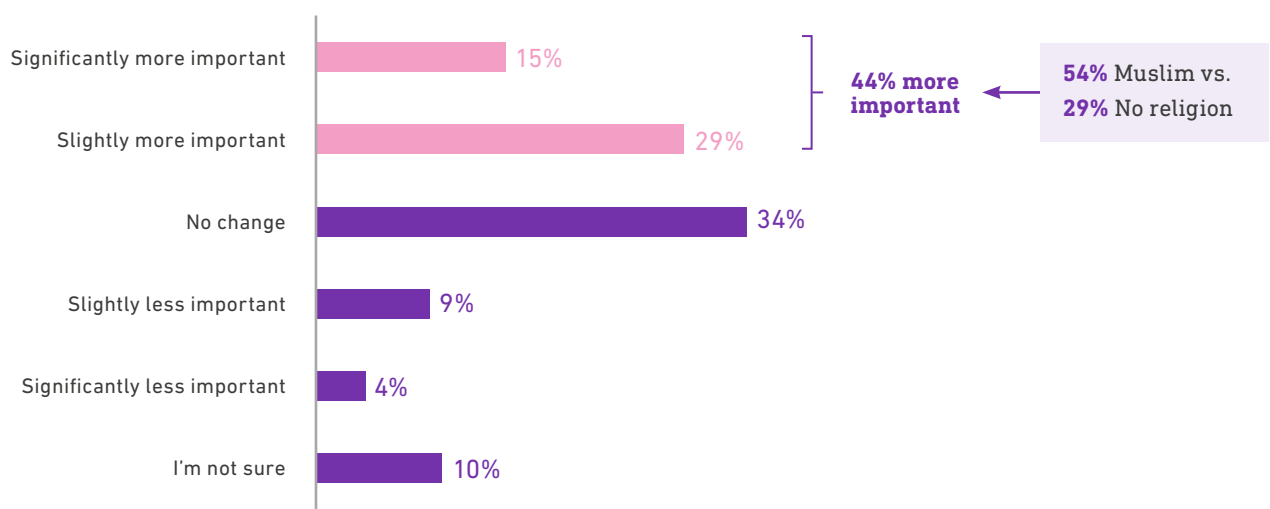


Fig 20: Q - Thinking of the pressures impacting the world, do you see the role of faith-based charities becoming more or less important in the coming months?



The Muslim community in Britain and its attitudes to charitable giving

Human Appeal as a charity is faith based but not faith specific. As Human Appeal's roots lay originally in the Muslim faith and this group are highly active in charitable giving, the organisation also sought to look at this demographic's attitudes towards charitable acts:

- Some 30% of Muslims felt most inspired to support a charity of their choice because they feel like the charity is well run and their money goes directly to those who need it.
- Over three-fifths (63%) of Muslims have seen or experienced the work of charity organisations at work in the local community within the last 12 months.
- Almost half (49%) were more aware of charitable work in their local community during Covid lockdowns.
- Over two-fifth (41%) increased their charitable contributions as a result of the pandemic and 48% expect their levels of charity support to increase again in 2022 compared with 2021.
- 60% of Muslims would be more likely to support a charity if it was based on their own faith.
- Muslims are most likely to donate money to children and families (20%) and poverty relief (19%).
- Over nine in ten (93%) of Muslims have had to cut back on something as a result of economic pressure, inflation, or rising household outgoings.
- Almost half (45%) Muslims have been the recipient of a charitable initiative compared with 21% of Christians.
- Muslims spend an average of £33.67 on their one-off charitable donations - over double the average donated amount of Christians who spend an average of £14.07 per donation.
- Awareness of charity identity is greater - four fifths (80%) of Muslims have knowingly supported a faith-based charity, compared with 41% of Christians and 48% of all respondents.
- When thinking about the pressures impacting the world, 54% of Muslims see the role of faith-based charities becoming more important in the coming months, compared with 40% of Hindus and 44% of all respondents.

Conclusion

This research not only shows just how important charity organisations have become to the nation in light of increasing living costs and the merciful action that they can take among communities in need, it also sheds important light on the complex relationship between charity and religious belief in a country which some see as becoming gradually more secular. Religious communities will support faith-based charities based on the good works and causes that they undertake, put another way, being faith based but not faith specific, charitable support can be motivated by the good that organisations deliver rather than other considerations. Likewise, the widespread lack of acknowledgment or even awareness of religious links to a charity's identity is a strong indicator that for many around the country, supporting those less fortunate is a matter which transcends religious belief or affiliation. It is much more an issue of personal experience and pressing or urgent need - something which Human Appeal has experienced firsthand in its activities both around the UK and in communities including Ukraine, Syria, Somalia, Afghanistan and Yemen. For charities, this means that the most important factor when seeking to grow their influence is personal connection with local communities. Being seen to be active especially in times of growing need can and will be acknowledged by those

around the UK. When it comes to what this research implies for the changing nature of communities around the UK, the overarching message is clear. No matter the creed or belief structure of individuals, the UK is a deeply charitable nation and one ultimately motivated to assist those in need, even as the cost of living profoundly impacts the greater proportion of the country.



humanappeal.org.uk

