



Why Germans Don't Donate: The Five Faces of Non-Donors

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This study explores why Germans don't donate, identifying five distinct non-donor clusters based on attitudes and financial ability. This is relevant for people working in philanthropy because it reveals targeted strategies to recruit new donors effectively. What are the main reasons Germans don't donate, and can distinct non-donor clusters be identified for targeted recruitment?

This study reveals that non-donors in Germany are not a homogeneous group but fall into five distinct clusters based on attitudes and financial ability. Convincible and indifferent non-donors show the most potential for recruitment, while categorical and unsolicited non-donors are unlikely to donate. Tailored strategies are essential for effective nonprofit outreach and donor acquisition.

[#NonDonors](#) [#DonorRecruitment](#) [#FundraisingStrategy](#) [#PhilanthropyResearch](#)
[#DonorSegmentation](#)

Background

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Context



- **Non-donors are often overlooked, but they represent a large and diverse group.** For years, fundraising efforts have focused mainly on existing or lapsed donors, assuming non-donors are a uniform, hard-to-reach bloc. However, ignoring this segment means missing out on potential supporters who may simply need the right approach. Understanding why people don't donate—and recognizing that their reasons vary widely—could unlock new opportunities for nonprofits to expand their donor base.
- **Financial constraints are a major barrier, but not the only one.** Many assume that people don't donate simply because they can't afford to. However, it is also the distrust in how organizations use donations, dislike of direct appeals, and even personal objections (e.g., believing the government should handle social issues) that play significant roles. Addressing these concerns requires more—it means building trust.
- **One-size-fits-all fundraising strategies often fail with non-donors.** Traditional fundraising tactics, like mass appeals or generic campaigns, rarely resonate with non-donors, who may feel disconnected or even distant by such approaches. Identifying distinct groups based on attitudes, financial capacity, and past behavior will help nonprofits to craft personalized messages and strategies.
- **Negative attitudes toward donating can be changed with the right approach.** Some non-donors actively oppose donating, while others are simply indifferent or unaware of opportunities to give.



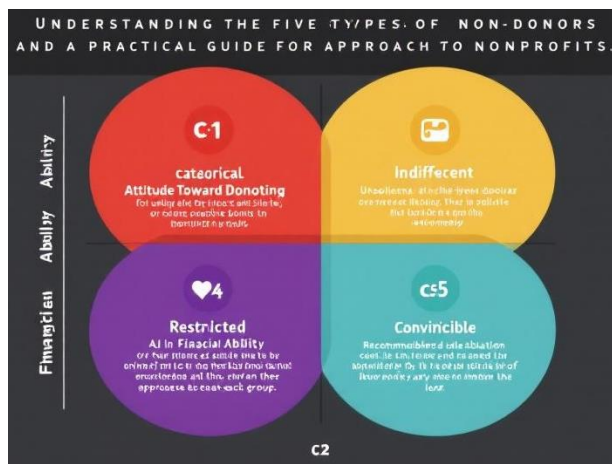
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Take aways & Learnings



- Non-donors are diverse, but their segmentation unlocks potential: **The study reveals five distinct clusters of non-donors in Germany, each with unique attitudes and financial situations. Convincible and indifferent non-donors are the most promising for recruitment, while categorical and unsolicited non-donors are unlikely to engage.** This insight helps nonprofits focus resources effectively by tailoring strategies to high-potential groups rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach.
- Financial barriers and attitudes both shape giving behavior: While 41% of non-donors earn less than €1,500/month, distrust in how donations are used and negative attitudes toward fundraising are equally critical barriers. **Nonprofits must address both financial constraints and skepticism, for example, by fostering transparency and crafting appeals that resonate with each cluster's values and concerns.**
- Prioritize convincible non-donors for high-impact recruitment: The group of younger, educated, and open to future donations offers the highest conversion potential. They respond well to digital engagement, such as social media campaigns. **Nonprofits should design targeted, value-driven campaigns that emphasize impact and align with their interests to maximize recruitment success.**
- Engage indifferent non-donors thoughtfully; avoid low-potential groups: **Though financially capable, indifferent non-donors lack motivation and require trust-building and low-pressure engagement, like webinars or exclusive events. Meanwhile, categorical and unsolicited non-donors, who show strong resistance to donating, should not be a priority for resource allocation.** Instead, monitor these groups over time for any shifts in behavior while focusing efforts where potential is highest.



ERNOP Research Notes provide easy-to-read, practice-oriented summaries of academic articles on philanthropy and are written by practitioner experts. This ERNOP Research Note 13/2026 is published in June 2026 and has been written by Eva Sebbane, Philanthropic Partnerships Expert. More information can be found at www.ernop.eu.



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