

2025

# State of the sector annual report

# Introduction

Welcome to the fifth edition of our annual report on the state of the charity sector, which outlines key fundraising trends seen in 2024 and how these compare with recent history.

Many of the views in the report focus on the past five years – from the start of 2020 to the end of 2024. So much has changed in that time. 2020 was a year of change, where most activity came to an abrupt halt as we began to lock down during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. This global upheaval has certainly been felt in the world of charity giving. Its effects, coupled with the more recent cost-of-living crisis, continue to pose challenges for the charity fundraising sector. But the sector is nothing if not resilient, as we've begun to see in the past few years especially, and so, we arrive at this year's report.

The report will – as usual – look at trends in income, recruitment and supporter engagement, and include deeper investigation into important measures such as lifetime value (LTV), cross-sell and retention. It'll also look at changes in average gifts and changes in the types of supporters recruited, to get a deeper understanding of why those higher-level income and recruitment trends may have changed.

The information in this report has been collated from our InsightHub benchmarking reports, composed of raw CRM data from a range of charities across the sector. This data is transformed and standardised to allow us to aggregate fundraising KPIs up to sector level, and depict the overall health and status within charities. Understanding the trends in this report will enable you to see how your own results compare and evaluate the success of your own programme throughout the rest of 2025.

We hope these benchmarks will help you:

- Contextualise and understand your own fundraising performance
- Make better informed decisions
- See how your products and channels compare against real market data
- Spot trends in the sector you may not have been aware of, or suspected were happening but couldn't back up
- Quantify your results against the rest of the sector

The report provides a snapshot of some of the most interesting data and trends we saw across 2024. The full set of benchmarks are available to any Wood for Trees customer using our InsightHub reporting portal. Please get in touch if you'd like to find out more.

Thank you for accessing this report and we wish you happy further fundraising in 2025 and beyond.

*Please note – our state of the sector reports are created using benchmarked data from supporters subscribing to the InsightHub platform. Charities included within the benchmark may change over time.*



# Executive summary

## Key takeaways

## Key questions or things to consider

1

Fundraising in the charity sector is resilient – every year since 2020 overall income has steadily risen, with 2024 showing a 7% increase on income levels seen in 2023.

This is cause for celebration for all the hard work and dedication shown by those working in charity – you’re making amazing things happen! Now could be the time to review your personal goals and organisational targets; are these being met/exceeded? Are you tracking and measuring the right things? Are your systems set up to enable straightforward tracking of your KPIs?

2

Legacy giving remains key for the sector; income was 10% higher in 2024 than it was in 2023.

This is big news for those working in legacy teams and could be a sign that the ‘great wealth transfer’ is starting to begin. Is your organisation prepared for this and is it ready to steward supporters through their journeys, with leaving gifts in their wills? We recommend thinking about your strategy for appealing to the next generation of legacy givers and using data on current givers to inform your tactics.

3

Gifts made by cash recruits in their first year of giving remain strong but income in subsequent years from this group are declining.

How is your organisation attempting to keep this group engaged with your mission and donating? Are they receiving the right messages, at the right time?

4

27% of 2024 recruits were successfully cross-sold on to a second product within 12 months of being recruited. Trading recruits show a slightly better cross-sell rate than other products, although the differences are subtle.

Cross-sell is talked about a lot lately but rates of successful cross-sells have always remained fairly modest. We pose the question; when is cross-sell appropriate for your organisation? We always recommend investigating the data to understand whether cross-sell actually brings in more income for your charity or whether certain products subsume others and donors’ income is just redistributed across your organisation, rather than increasing overall fundraising?

5

Supporter profiles have shifted back to the traditional older, wealthier demographic.

With the economic challenges faced by many, this finding is to be expected. Having a mix of supporter types across your donor base offers some security to your fundraising. Certain products/offerings will naturally appeal more to certain demographics than others. Do you have a good understanding of who your products appeal to? Additional geodemographic data (like Sonar used in this report) can enhance your data and bring supporter profiles to life.

The charity fundraising sector is nothing but resilient. The overall active file size grew by 4% in 2024 due to the hard work of those working in the sector striving to retain existing supporters, with modest levels of recruitment. These findings challenge those stated in the [Charities Aid Foundation UK Giving Report 2025](#), which found fewer people than ever are giving to charity.

2024 saw a 7% increase in income (including legacies) compared to 2023, continuing the sure but steady increase in income since 2020. The importance of this cannot be overstated particularly when taking into account all that's happened over the past five years; the COVID pandemic, cost-of-living crisis, ongoing wars, natural disasters (such as the flooding in Pakistan and the earthquakes in Myanmar) and recent global political unrest. The last of which adding more challenges in particular for the international charities, which operate across countries having to navigate their way through this challenging and changing landscape. Yet, the ability for the charity sector to remain strong in the face of such challenges is a testament to everything we, as a sector, strive for.

Much of this growth in income has come from legators, community fundraisers and regular givers. Legacy giving grew by 10% compared to income seen the previous year, which could potentially be seen as the first signs of the large transfer of wealth predicted to impact the charity sector greatly over the next 20 years.

Community fundraising income has grown considerably since 2020, with 2021 being the year eventers could begin again to fully engage with community fundraising and challenge events. Whilst average gifts have fluctuated over recent years for this income stream, the volume of supporters taking part and sponsoring others has seen this to be a lucrative avenue for fundraising.

Regular givers are often regarded as the silent heroes of the charity world. Income from this dedicated group has grown every year from 2020, as has the size of their average gift. Regular gifts now make up almost 40% of charity donations across the sector, with the increase in new recruits helping keep this figure strong.



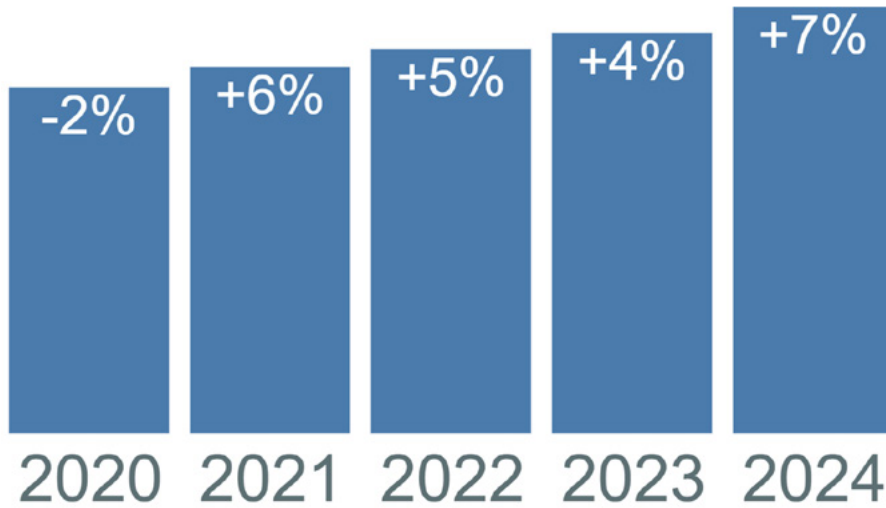




PART 1

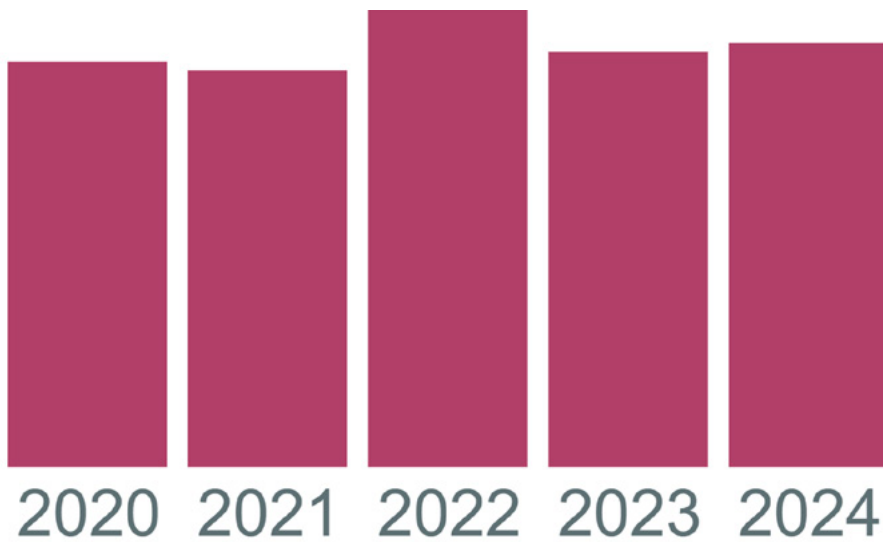
# Income

## Income – Five-year review including legacy giving (excluding Gift Aid)



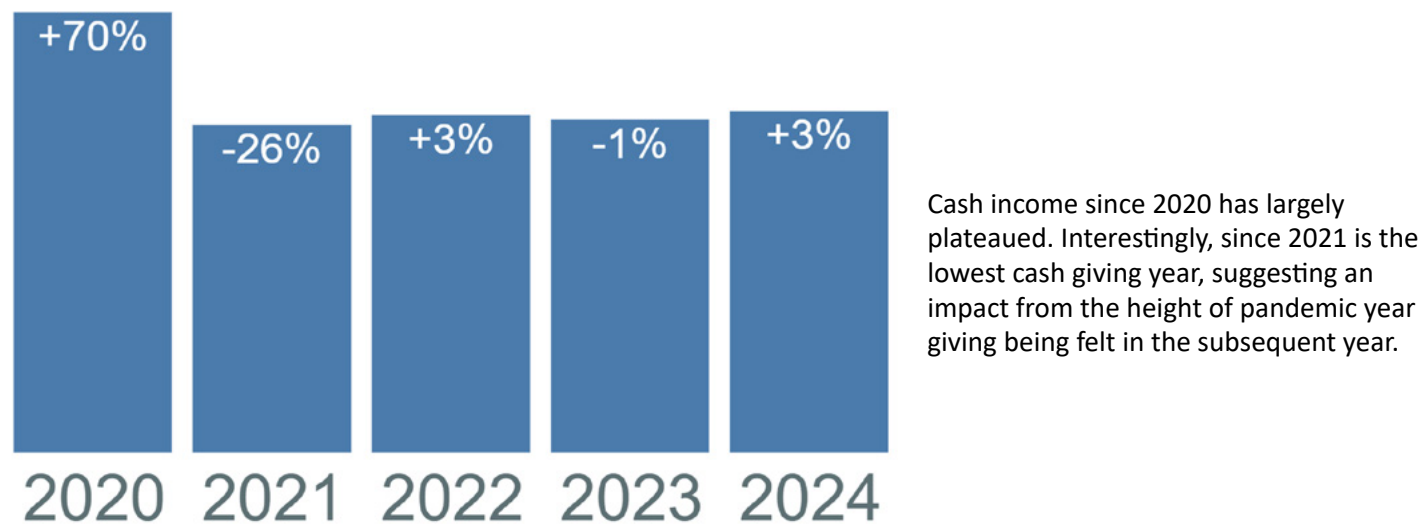
Overall, income continues to rise – with a 7% increase compared to 2023.

## Income – Overall average gift value (excluding Gift Aid)

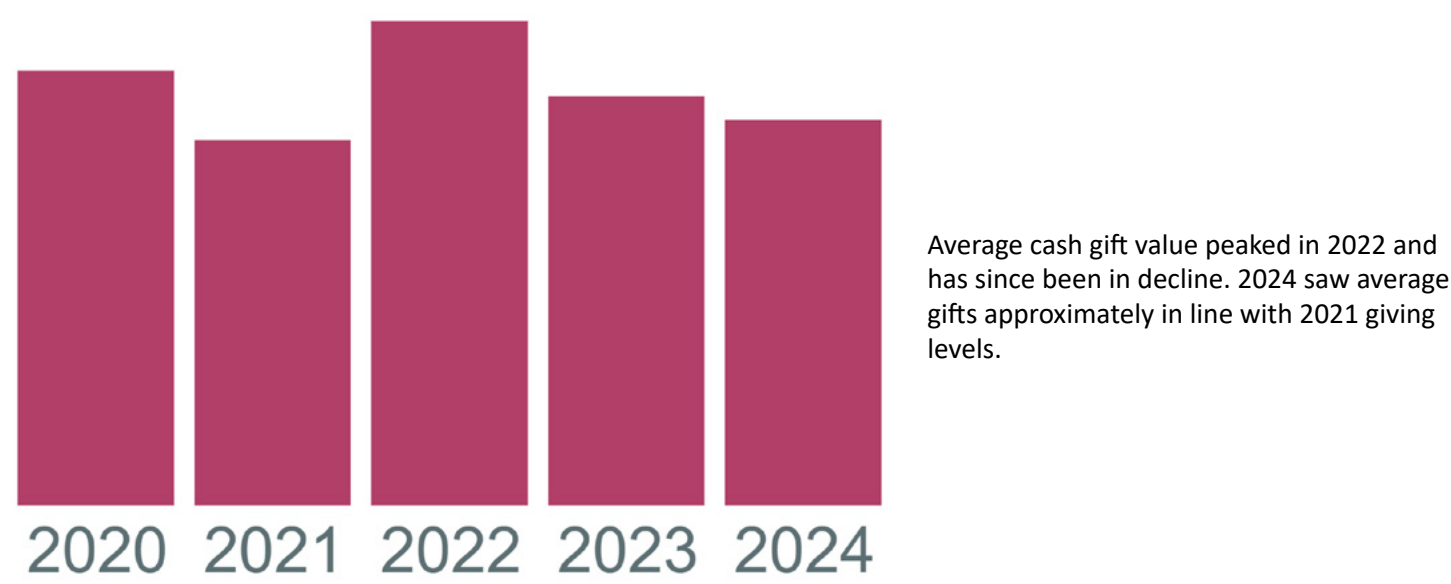


Overall average gift values have slightly increased from the decline we saw in the past few years and are now in line with 2020 average gifts.

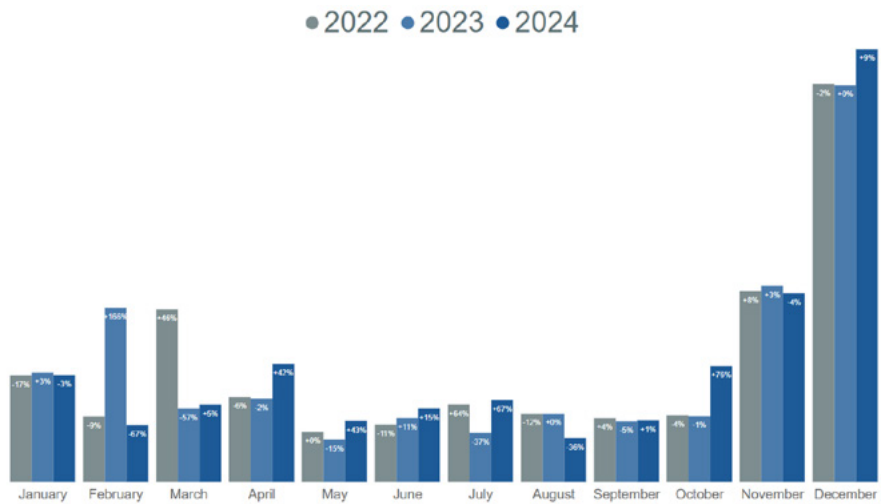
Five-year income – One-off (cash donations, excluding Gift Aid)



Average gift value – One-off (cash donations, excluding Gift Aid)

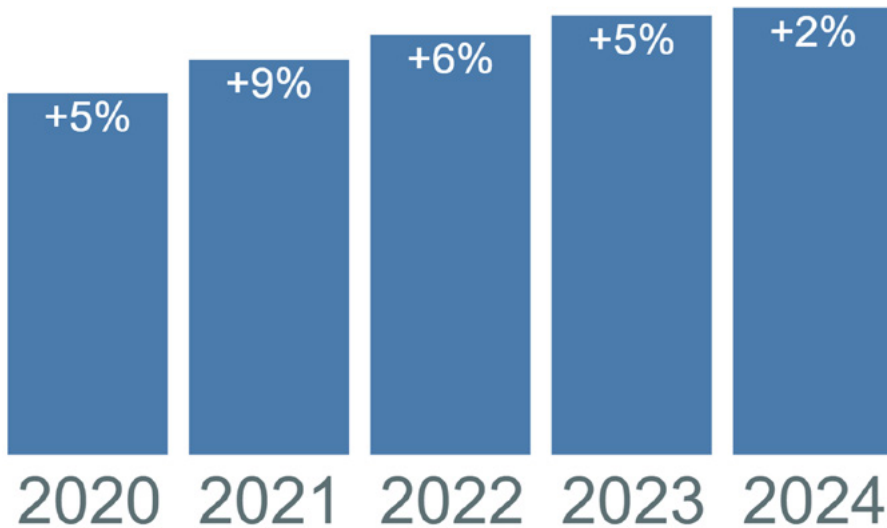


## Cash income benchmark – 2024 monthly comparison with 2022 and 2023 (excluding Gift Aid)



Cash income followed a similar seasonal trend to previous years. The 'spring spike' was seen a little later in 2024, with a peak in April, rather than the previously earlier months of February and March (linked to fundraising campaigns for the war in Ukraine).

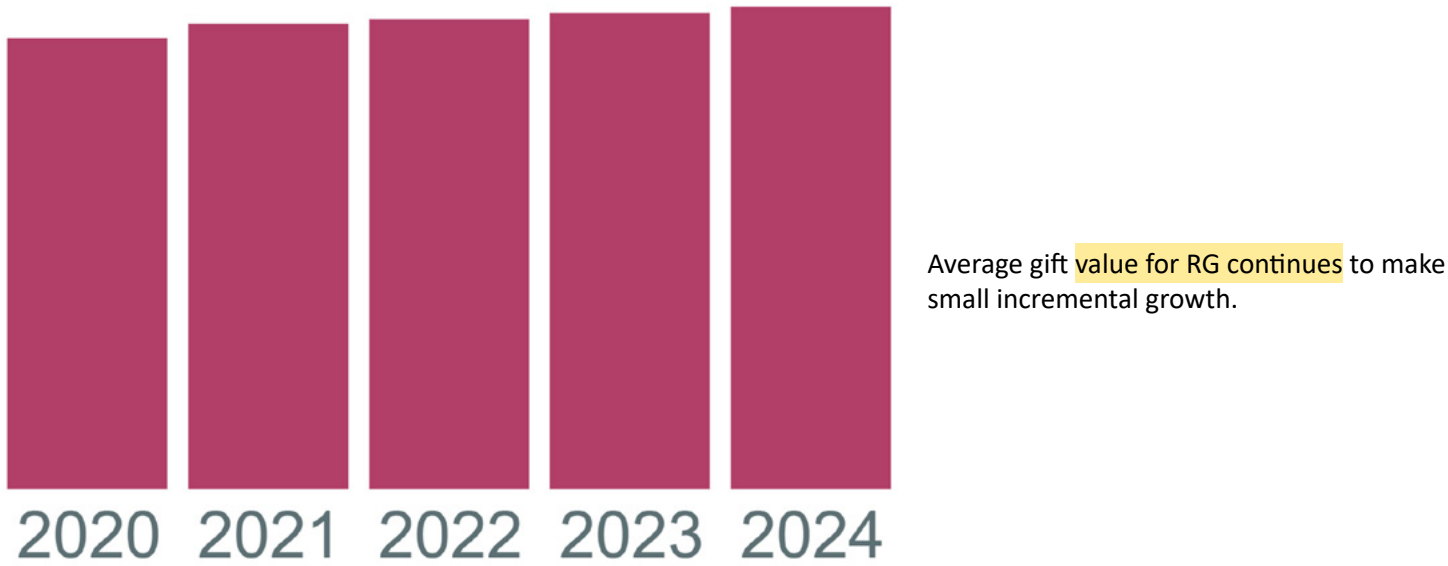
## Five-year income – RG (excluding Gift Aid)



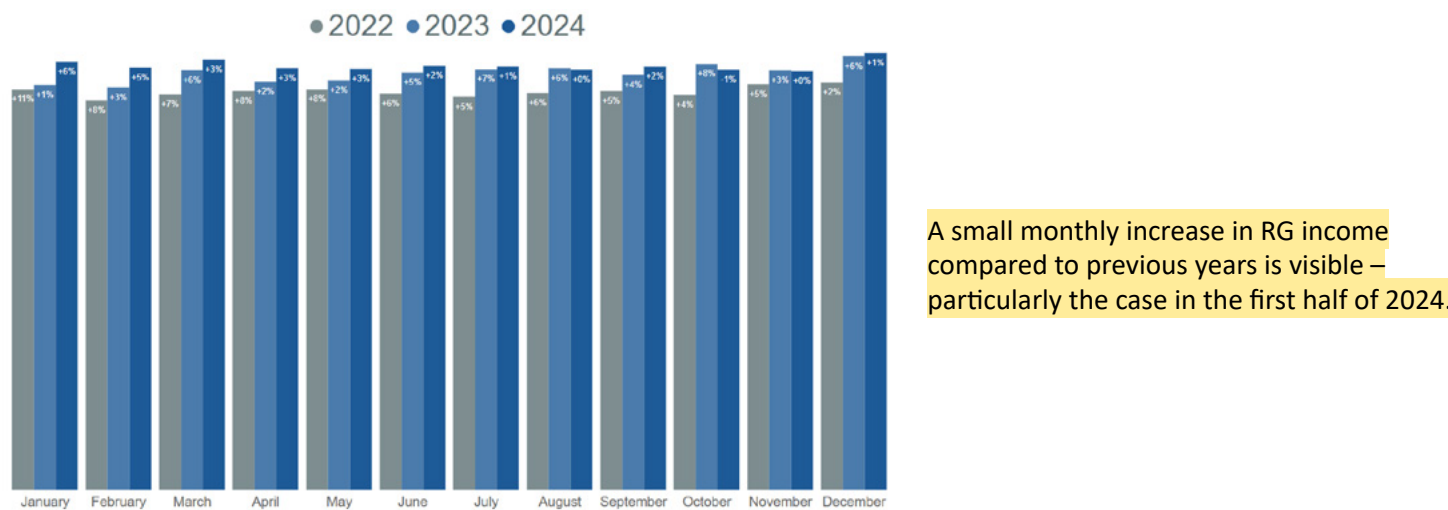
Regular giving (RG) income remains strong and grew an additional 2% from that seen in 2023.



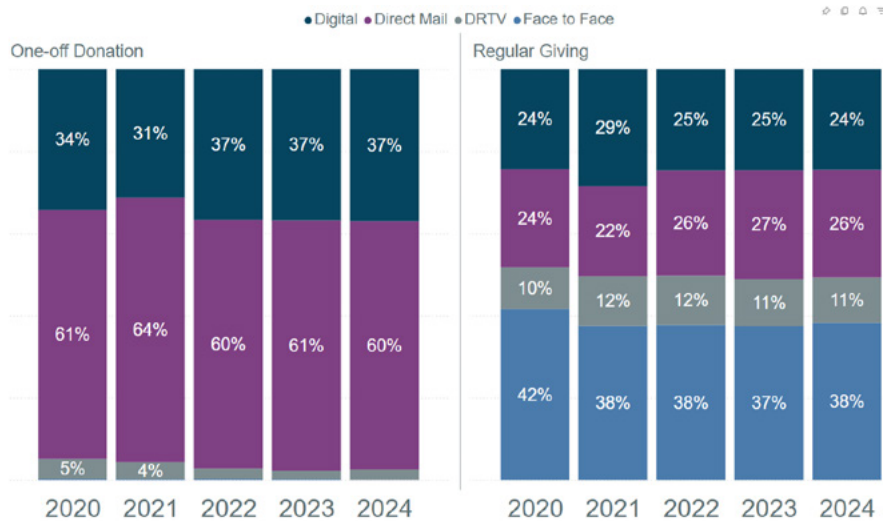
## Average gift value – RG (excluding Gift Aid)



## Regular income benchmark – 2024 monthly comparison with 2022 and 2023

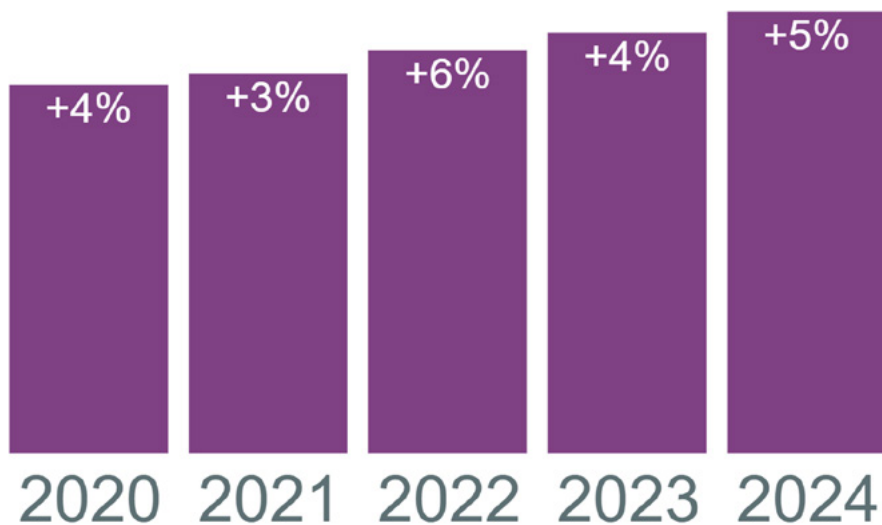


## What has driven income for these key products?



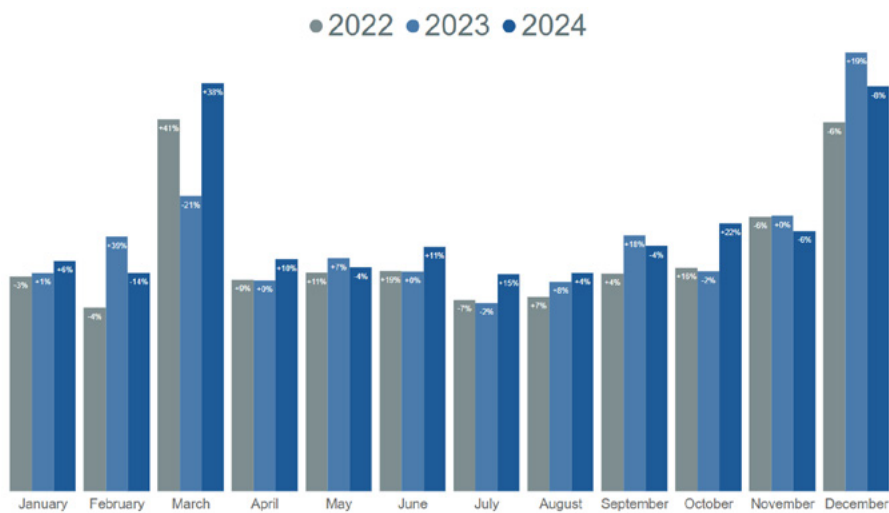
The above chart shows the breakdown of channel for gifts made (not original recruitment channel of donors). For one-off donations, direct mail and digital channels continue to dominate. RG shows a greater mix of face-to-face, digital, direct mail and DRTV; proportions have remained consistent for the past few years.

## Five-year review – Income (excluding legacy gifts and Gift Aid)



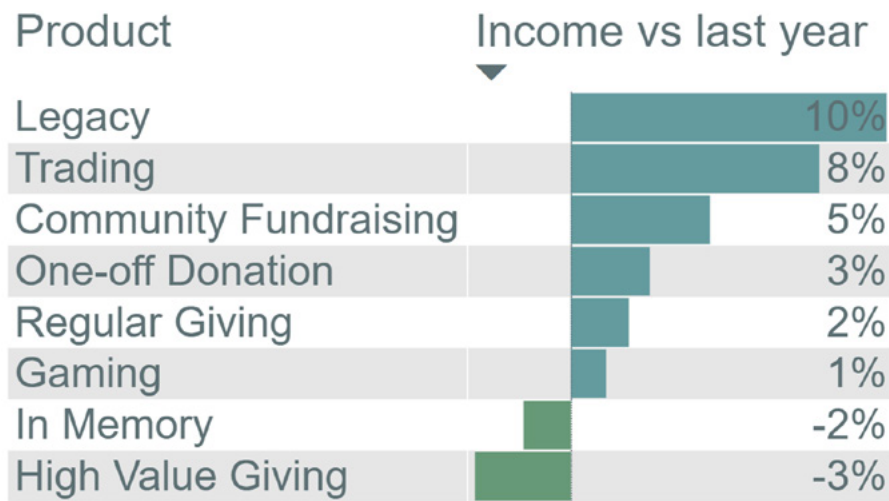
Excluding legacy gifts, income again grew compared with the previous year. While this doesn't account for costs incurred in raising funds, it shows charities are continuing to increase the values they bring in from supporters.

# Non-legacy income benchmark – 2024 monthly comparison with 2022 and 2023 (excluding Gift Aid)



2024 income was generally at similar levels compared to 2023, however, December saw an 8% drop. The March 2024 giving spike is mostly attributed to the Gaza/Palestine conflict appeal.

## Income trend matrix

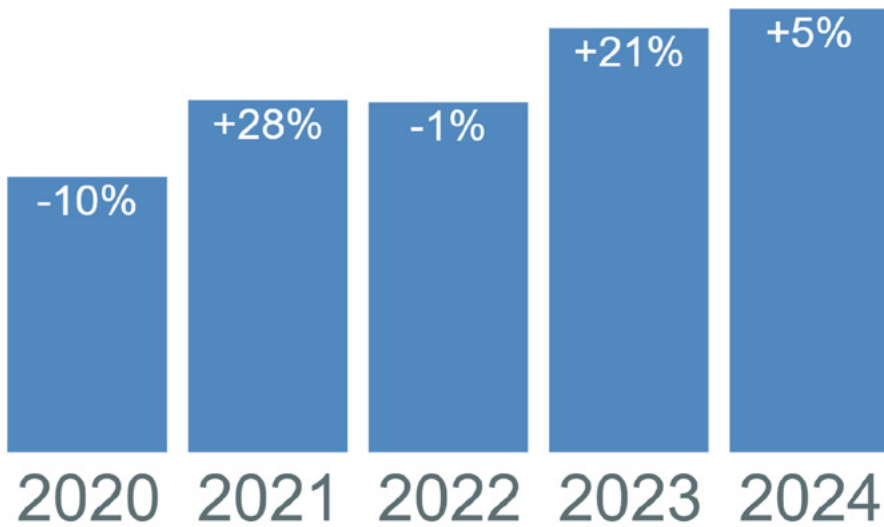


Compared to 2023, 2024 saw a 10% increase in legacy giving and 8% increase in trading. Conversely, in memory and high value giving saw slight decreases in income.



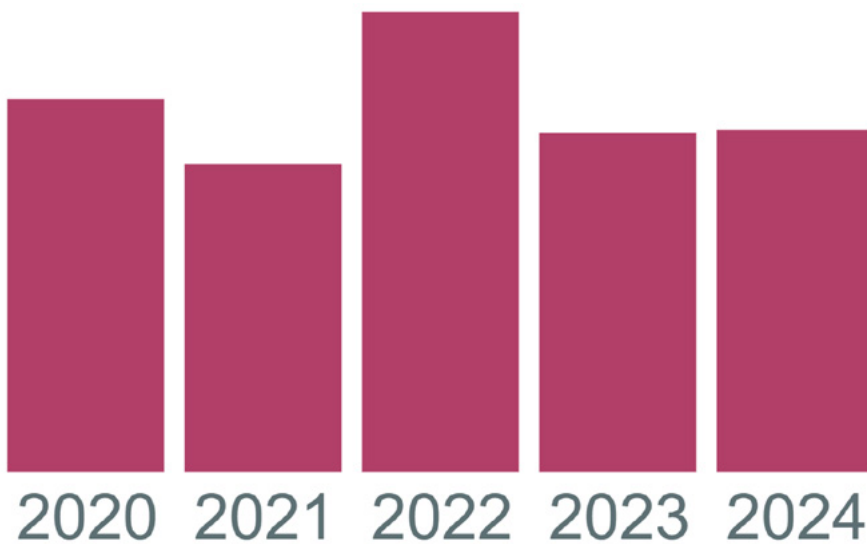
## Income per product

### Five-year income – Community fundraising (excluding Gift Aid)



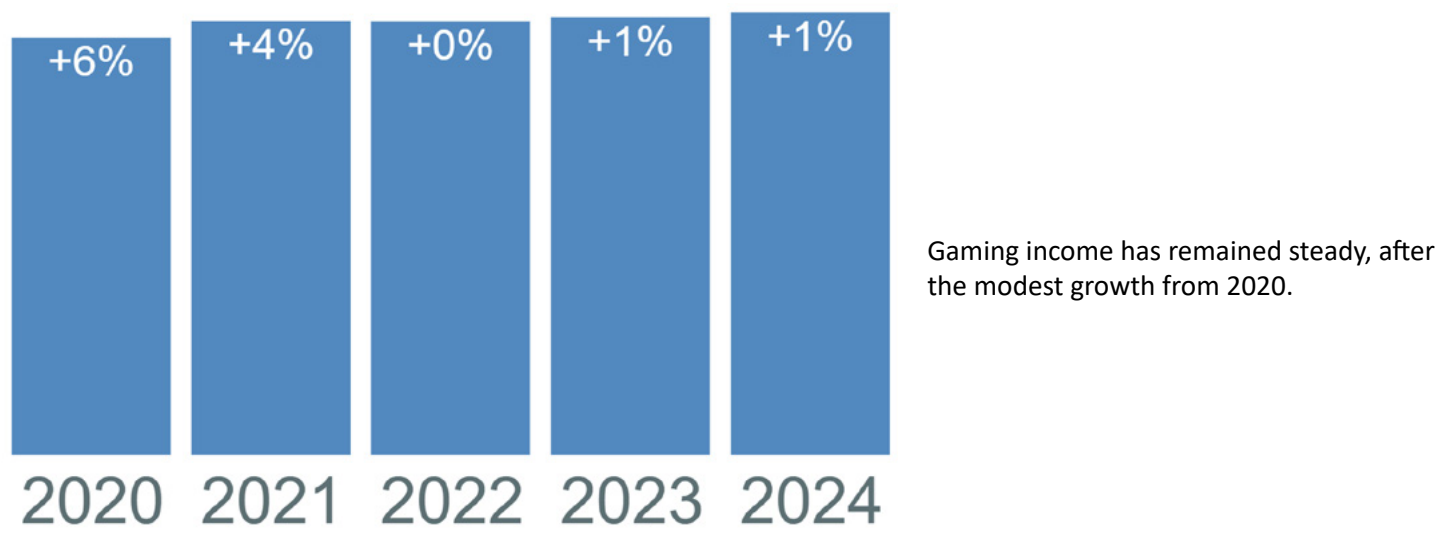
Community fundraising continues to grow and appears to be an increasingly attractive proposition to supporters. Income grew by 5% compared to 2023, which was less than the 21% growth seen from 2022 to 2023.

### Average gift value – Community fundraising (excluding Gift Aid)

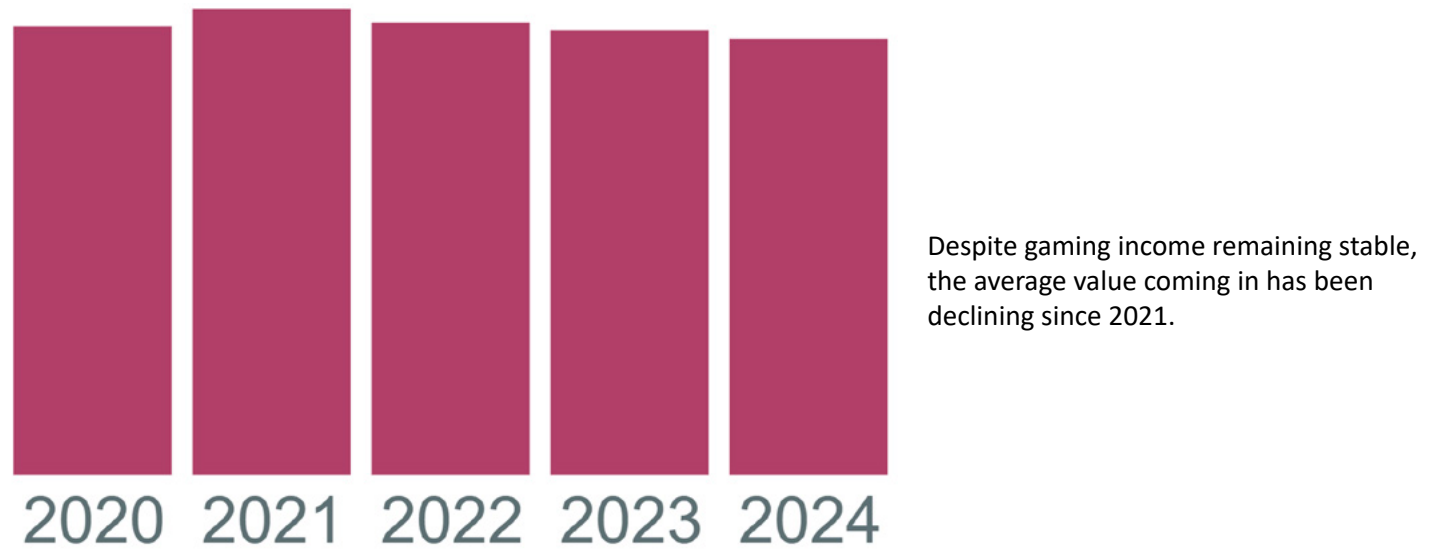


Although overall income has increased, average gift value has remained in line with last year, which was slightly lower than 2022.

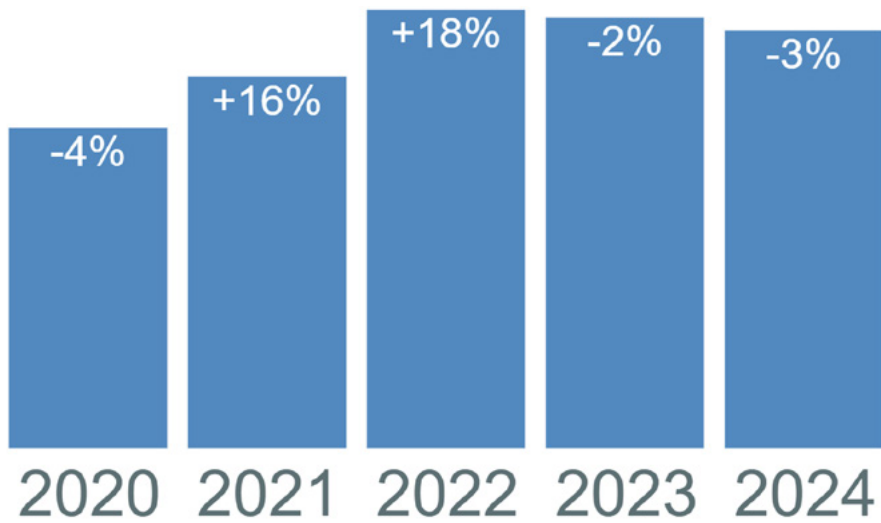
Five-year income – Gaming (excluding Gift Aid)



Average gift value – Gaming (excluding Gift Aid)

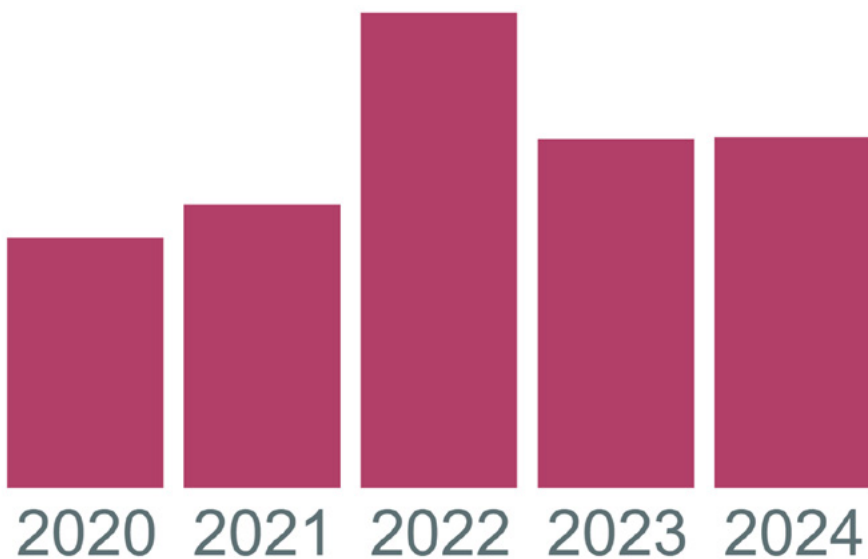


### Five-year income – High value giving (excluding Gift Aid)



High value giving peaked in 2022 and has since seen a slight decline.

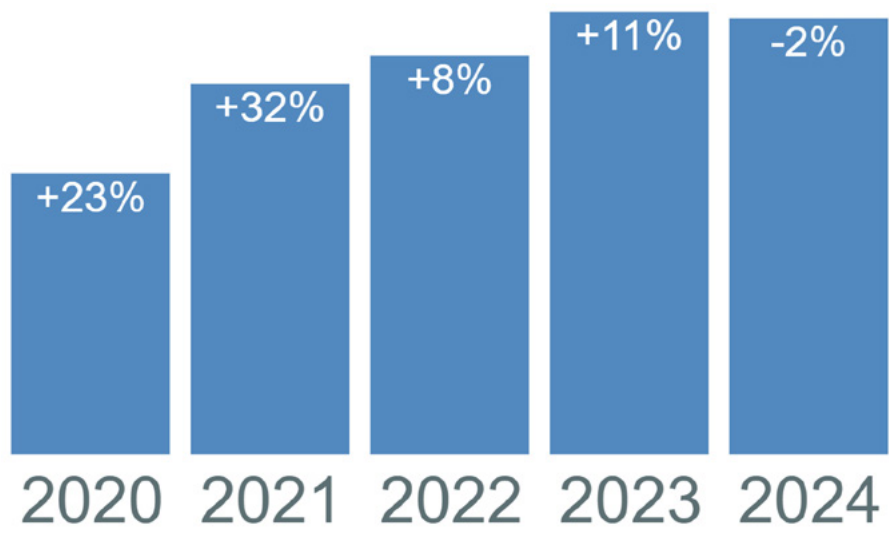
### Average gift value – High value giving (excluding Gift Aid)



High value giving income has been in slight steady decline since 2022, yet average gift value sees a much steeper drop between 2022 and subsequent years. This combination of factors suggest that more donors are giving, although they're giving at a lower value than seen before 2023.

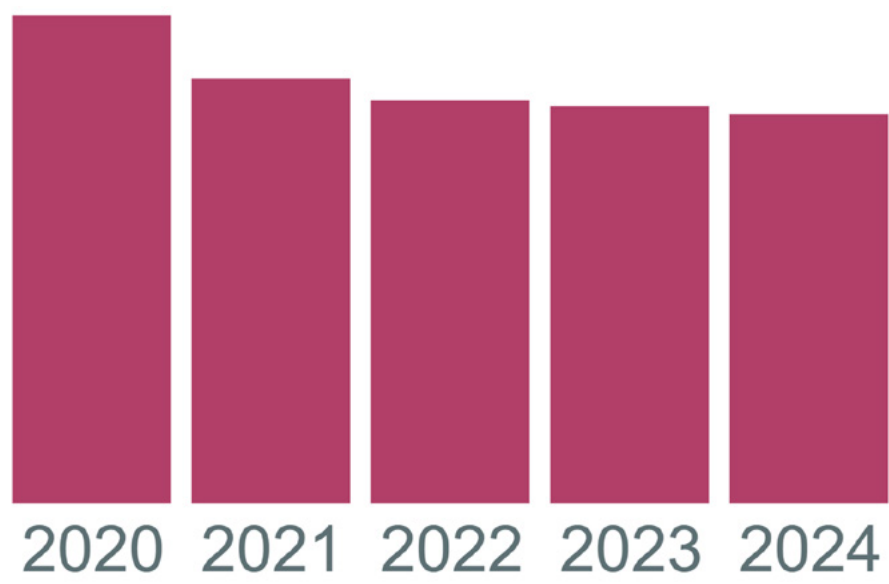


Five-year income – In memory (excluding Gift Aid)



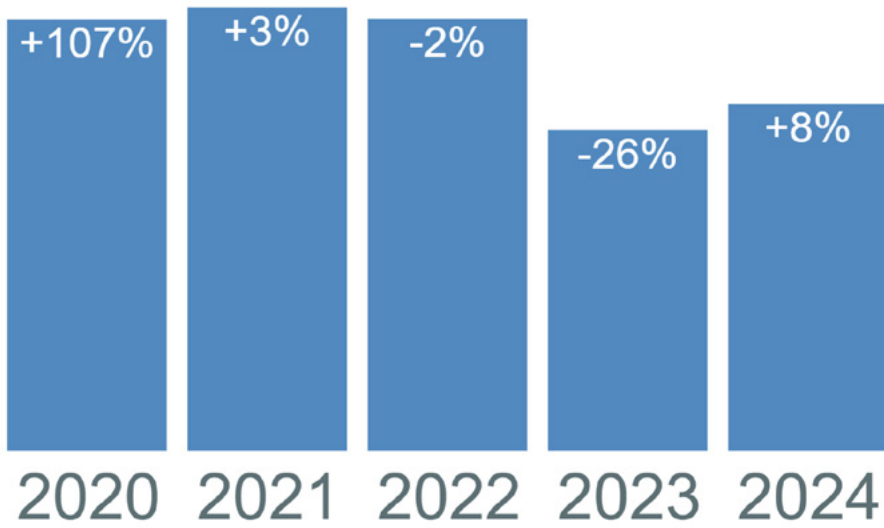
In memory income has previously been steadily increasing, although saw a slight drop in 2024.

Average gift value – In memory (excluding Gift Aid)



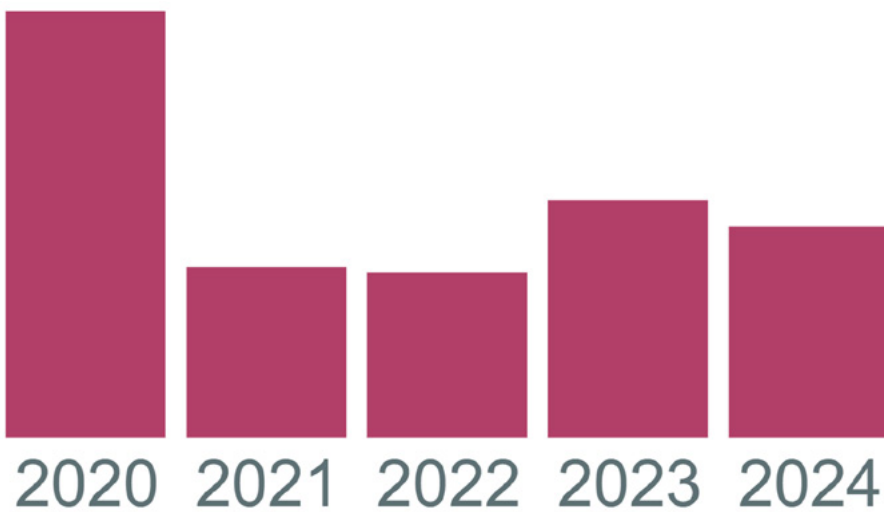
Average gifts to in memory products are in decline and have dropped each year since 2020. Could this reflect the increased emphasis in alternative ways to remain connected to a deceased loved one, such as in memory walks?

### Five-year income – Trading (excluding Gift Aid)



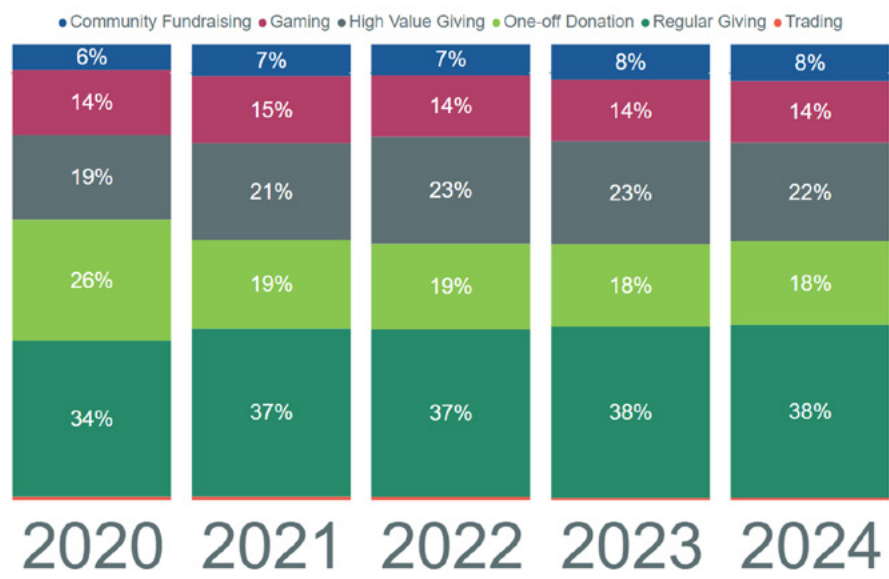
Trading income peaked in 2021 and has been reasonably volatile since. 2024 saw an 8% increase from 2023, which was a particularly poor year for this income stream.

### Average gift value – Trading (excluding Gift Aid)



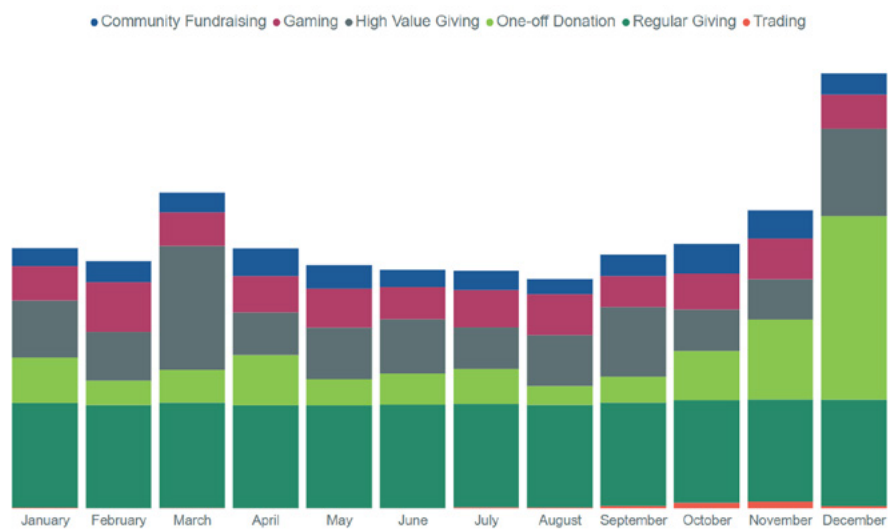
Although trading average gift has picked up in the last two years, it's still a big drop from what it was back in 2020 during the year of the pandemic.

## Five-year income proportional product



This chart shows the breakdown of product for gifts made (not original recruitment product of donors). Proportions of income from key products have remained steady over the past five years; RG remains the biggest income stream. Although relatively small, income from community fundraising is growing.

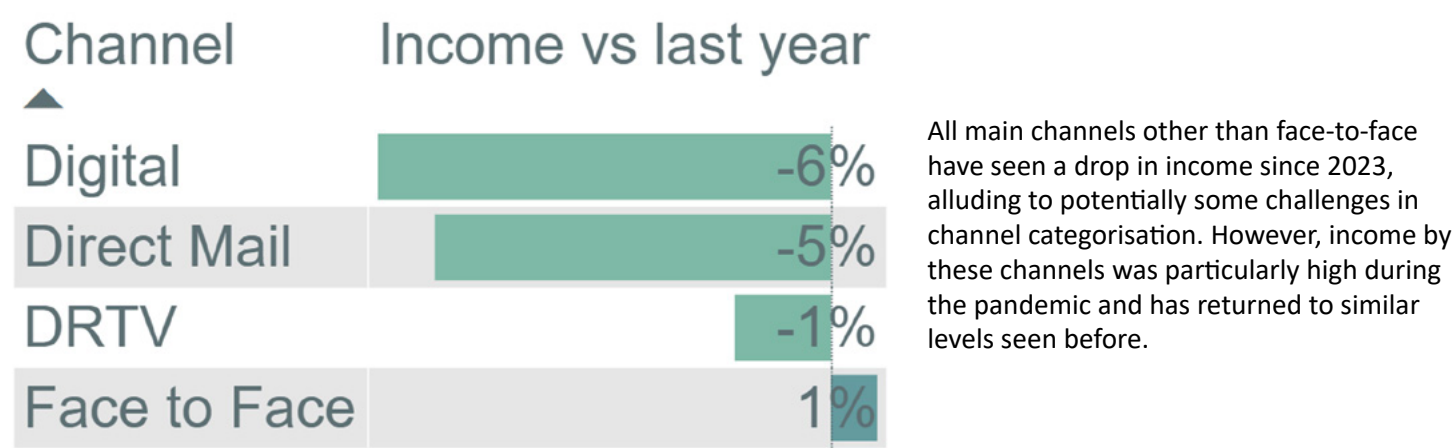
## 2024 – Monthly breakdown by product



Income in the second half of the year made up for a steady but unremarkable beginning to the year in 2024. The reliability and consistency in RG income cannot be understated. Cash income from October to December was particularly high.

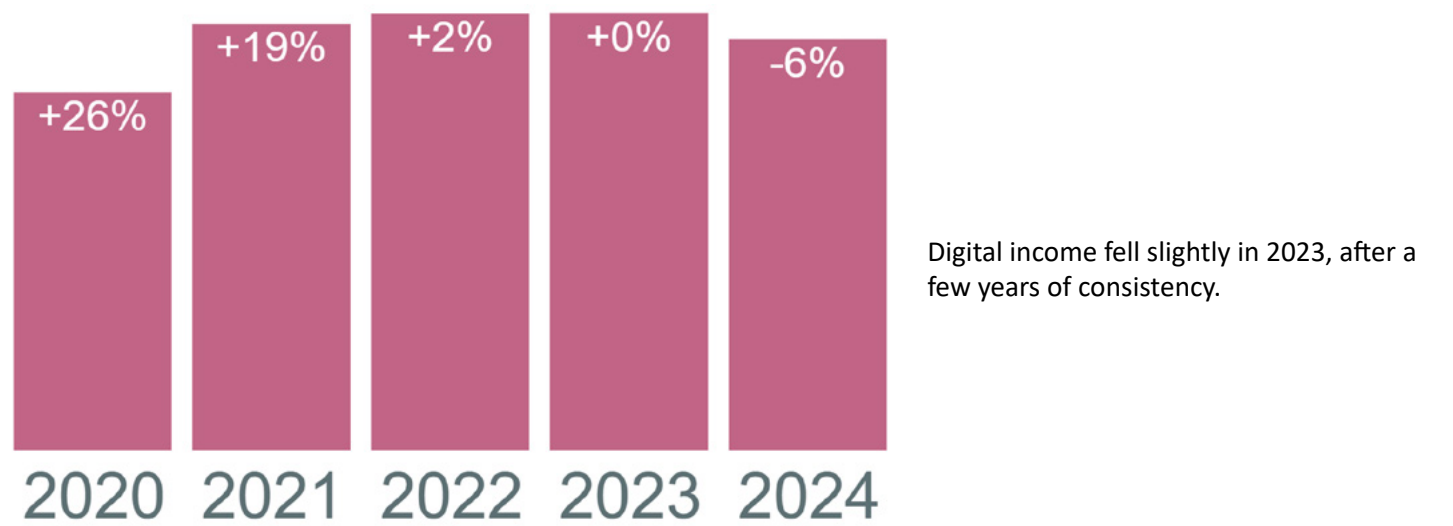


## Income trend matrix – Channel (top four channels, where categorised)

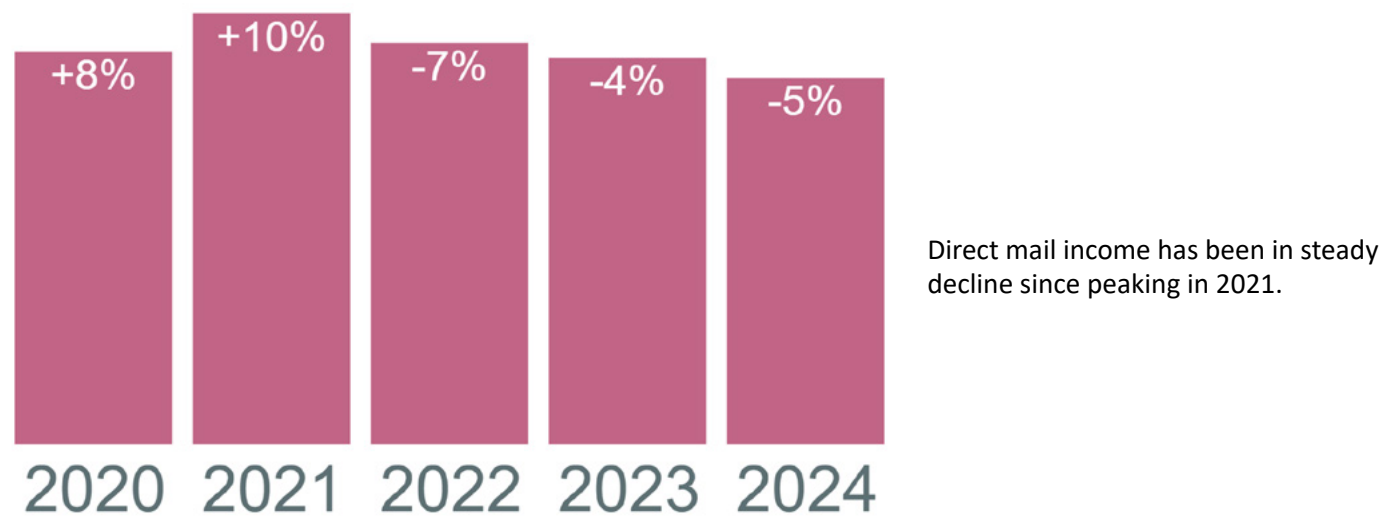


## Income per channel

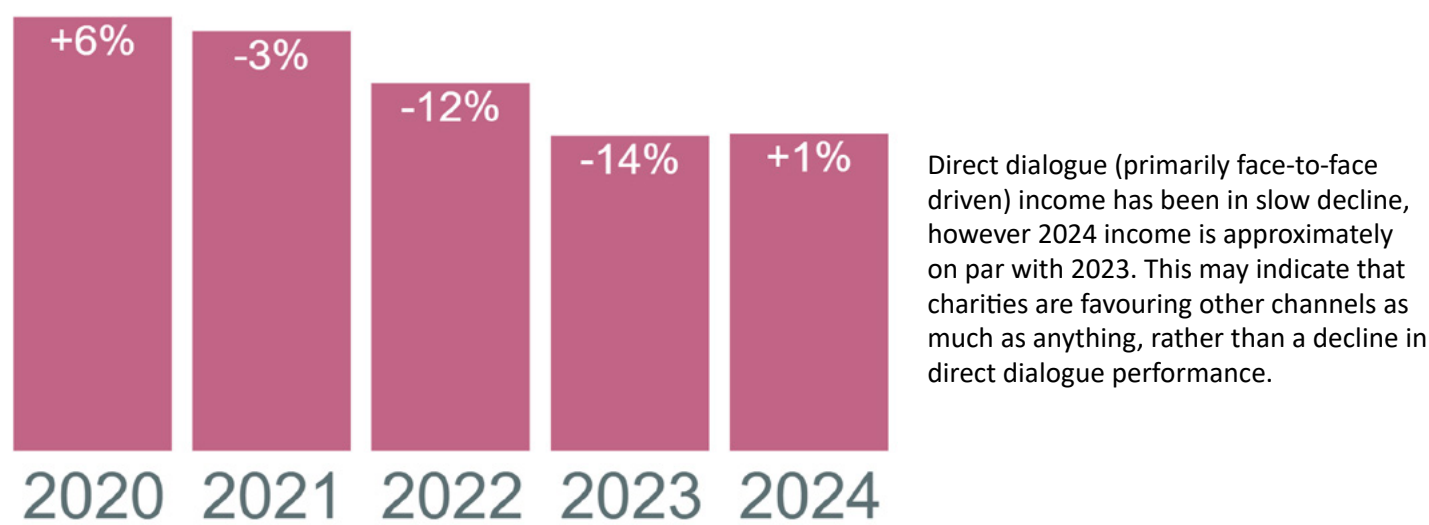
### Income five-year – Digital channel (excluding Gift Aid)



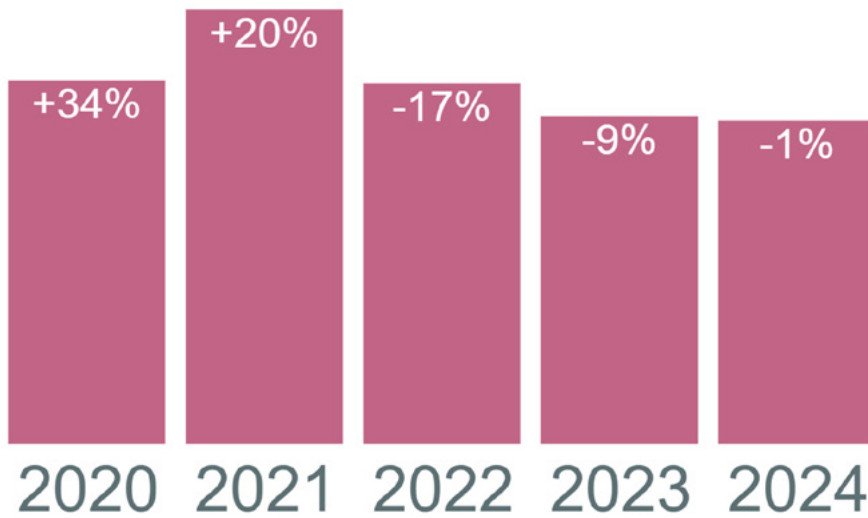
Income five-year – Direct mail (excluding Gift Aid)



Income five-year – Direct dialogue (excluding Gift Aid)

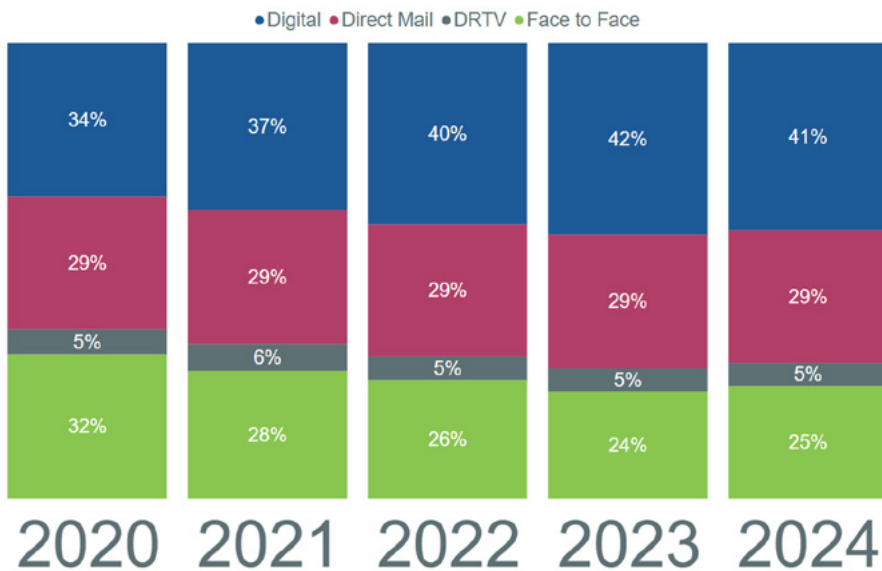


## Income five-year – Direct response TV (excluding Gift Aid)



Income from DRTV remains at similar levels to that seen in 2023, which has dropped fairly significantly from its peak in 2021.

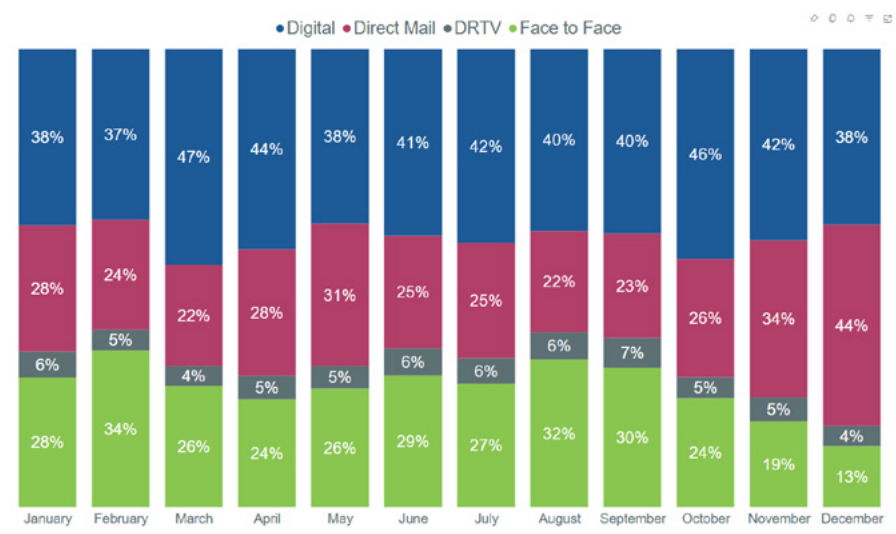
## Five-year income – Proportional by key channels



Digital and direct mail combined are playing an increasingly significant role in annual income composition, while face-to-face income has been slightly dropping year-on-year.



## 2024 – Monthly breakdown by channel



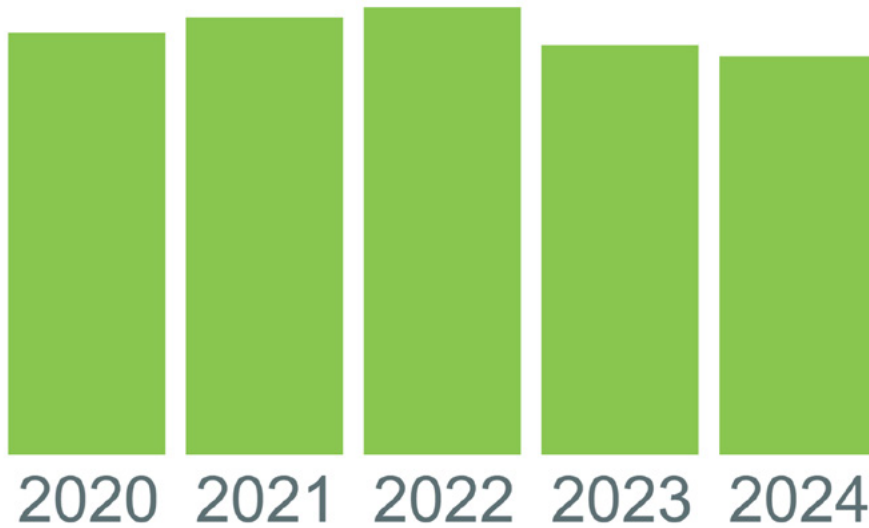
Income breakdown by channel fluctuates across the year, with digital channels peaking in March and October 2024 – direct mail peaking in May and December; and face-to-face peaking in February and declining as winter drew in.



PART 2

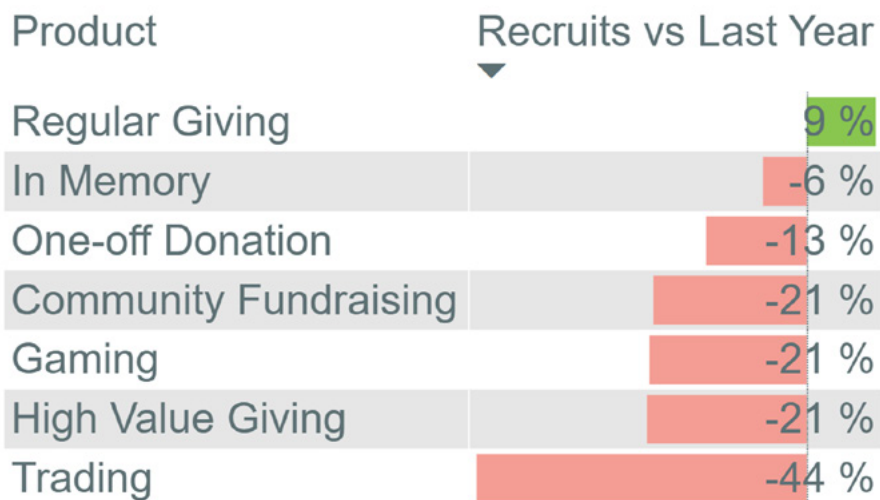
# Supporters

## Recruitment – Past five years



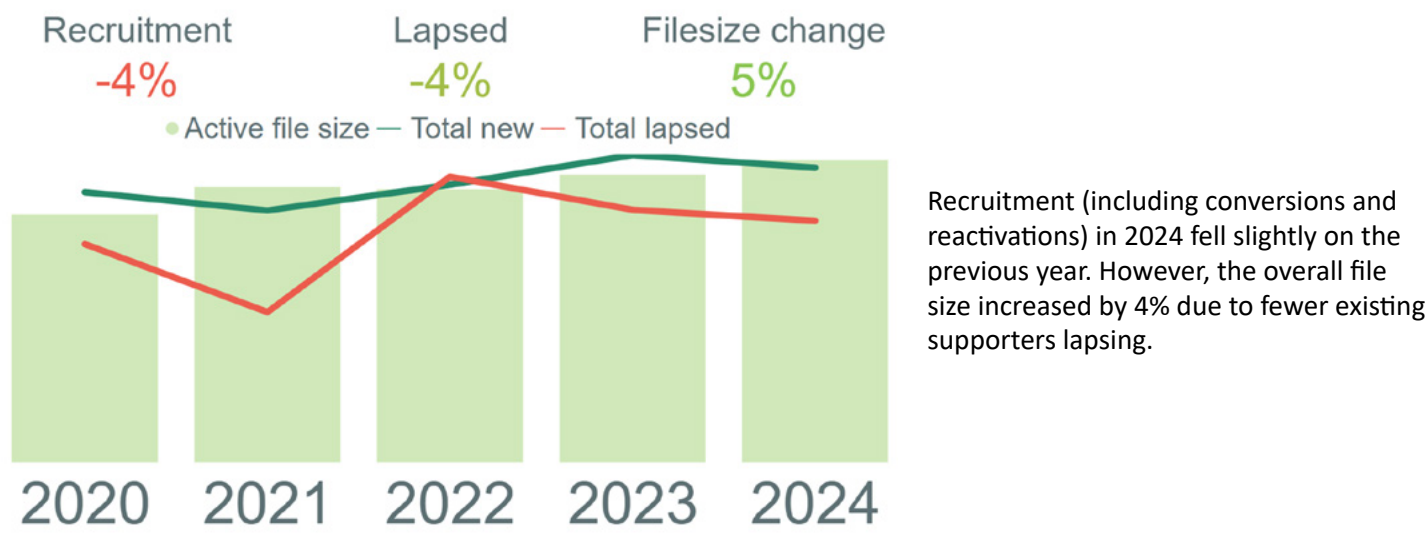
Overall, recruitment volumes (excluding reactivations and conversions) have been in decline since 2022 and are now below levels seen in 2020. This is also reflected in the latest [Charities Aid Foundation UK Giving Report 2025](#), which also identified a drop in charity donor volumes.

## Recruitment matrix per product



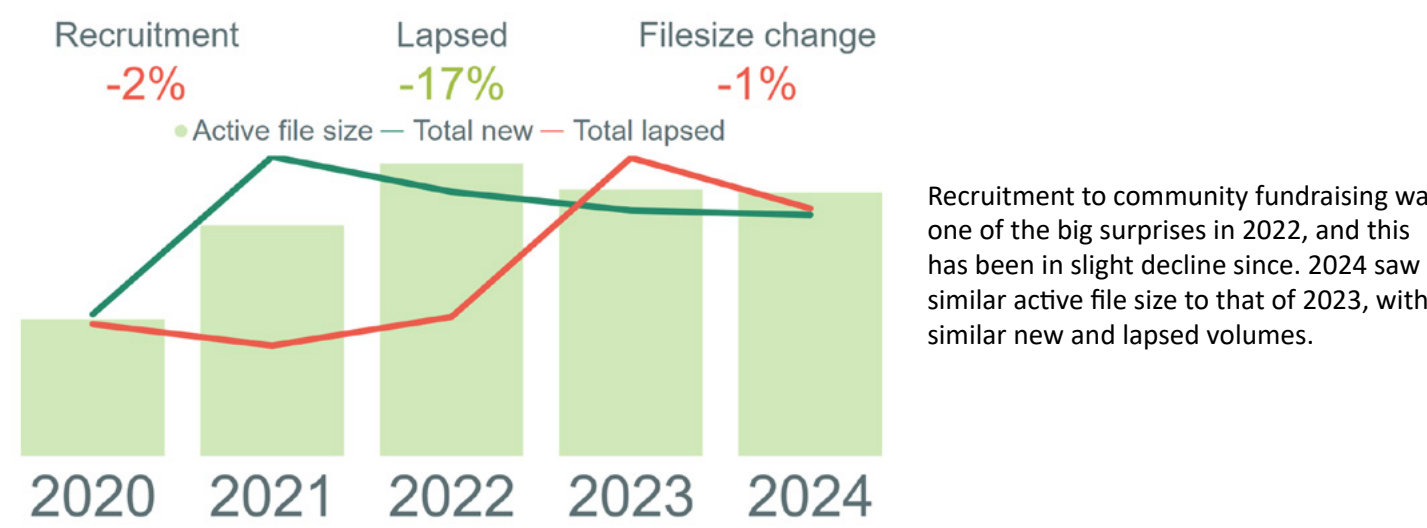
RG is the only product to have seen growth in recruitment compared to 2023. Trading has seen the largest percentage drop of recruits, with high value giving, gaming and community fundraising also showing significant drops in recruits.

## Supporter churn – Past five years (overall)



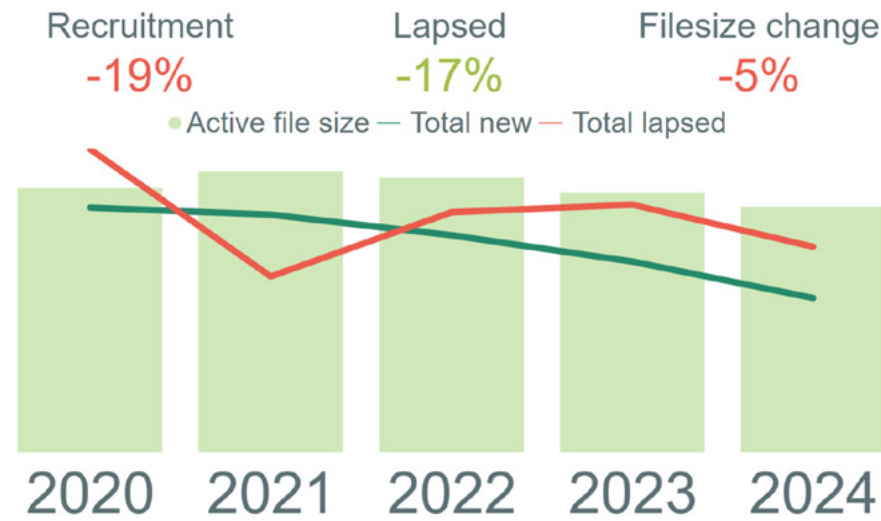
## Product recruitment trends

### Supporter churn – Community fundraising



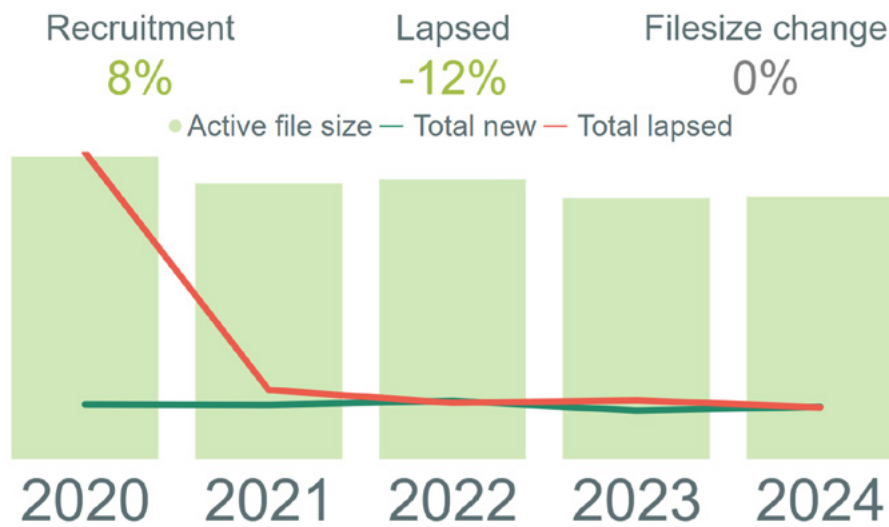


### Supporter churn – Gaming



Gaming has followed a similar trend to recent years, with recruitment dropping and lapsing supporters continuing to chip away at the active file size. Since 2022, the number of supporters lapsing is consistently higher than the volume of new gamers being brought in.

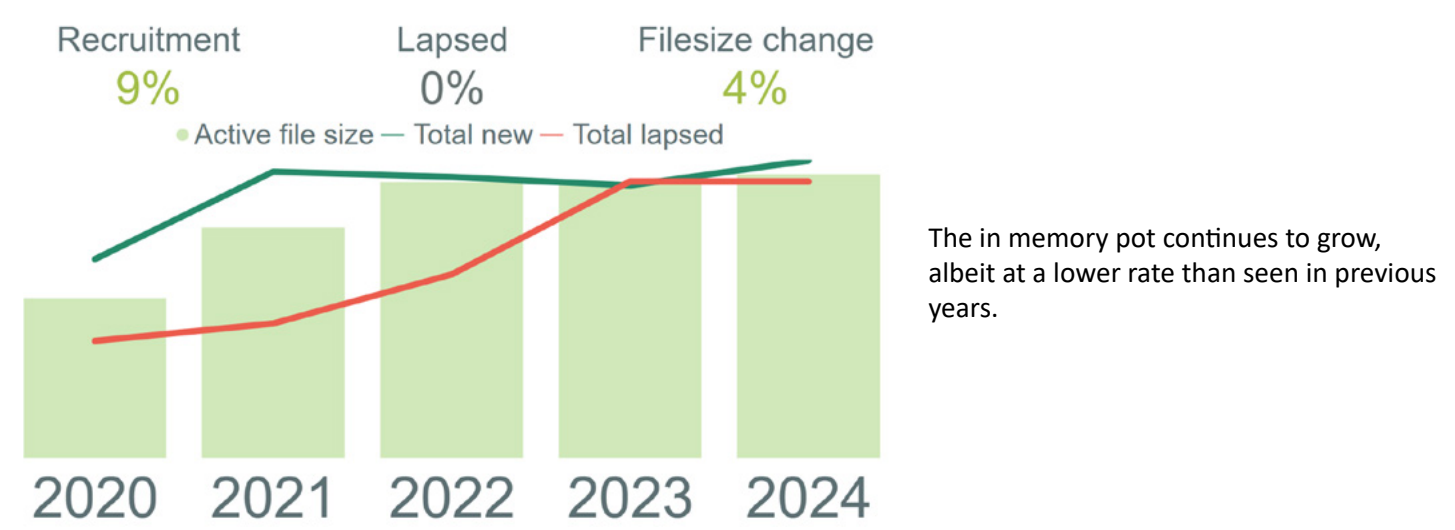
### Supporter churn – High value giving



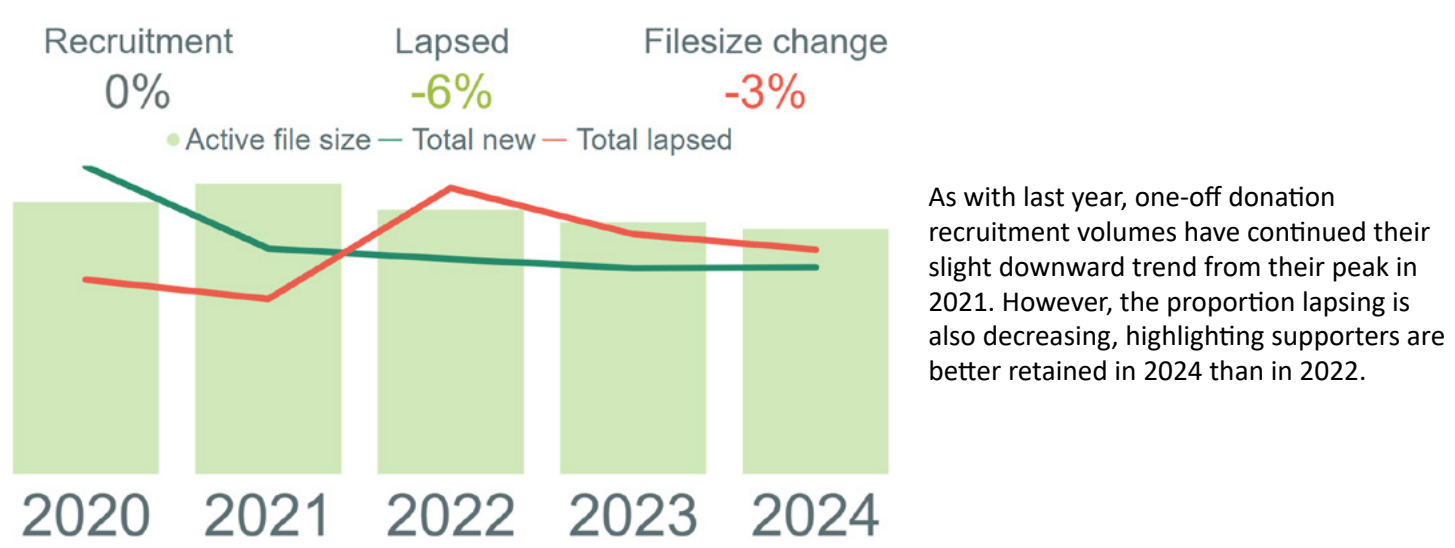
Note the fall in active file size between 2019-2020 is largely due to one organisation shifting its recruitment away from corporate donations. High value file sizes are often small and subject to wild fluctuations in size. The small increase in recruitment in 2023 is balanced with the level of attrition in 2024, leading to a 0% change in the active file size.



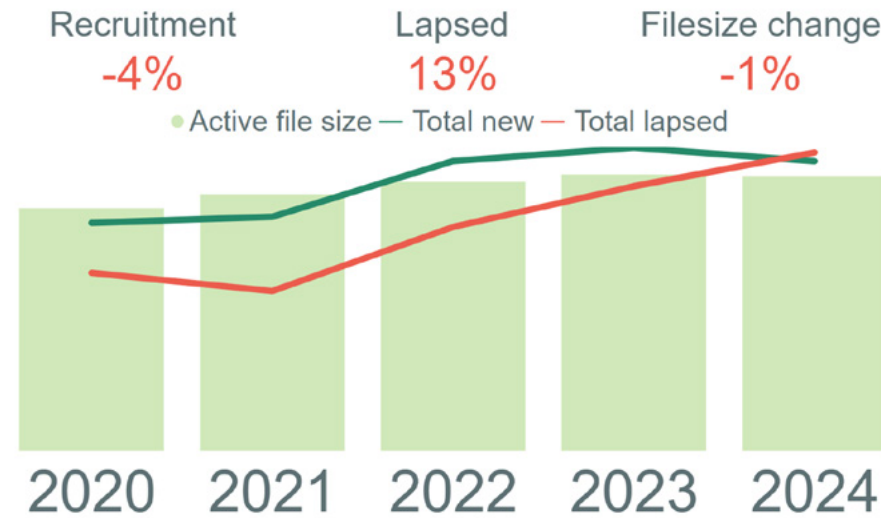
Supporter churn – In memory



Supporter churn – One-off donations

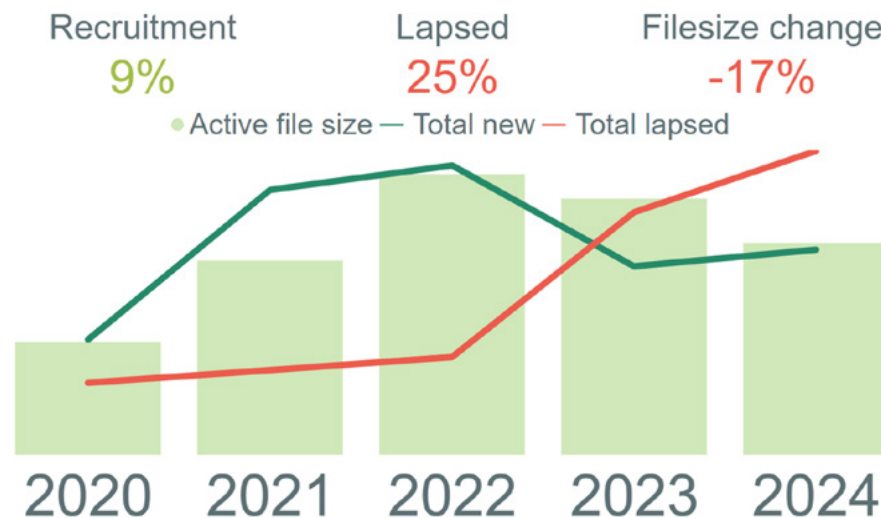


### Supporter churn – RG



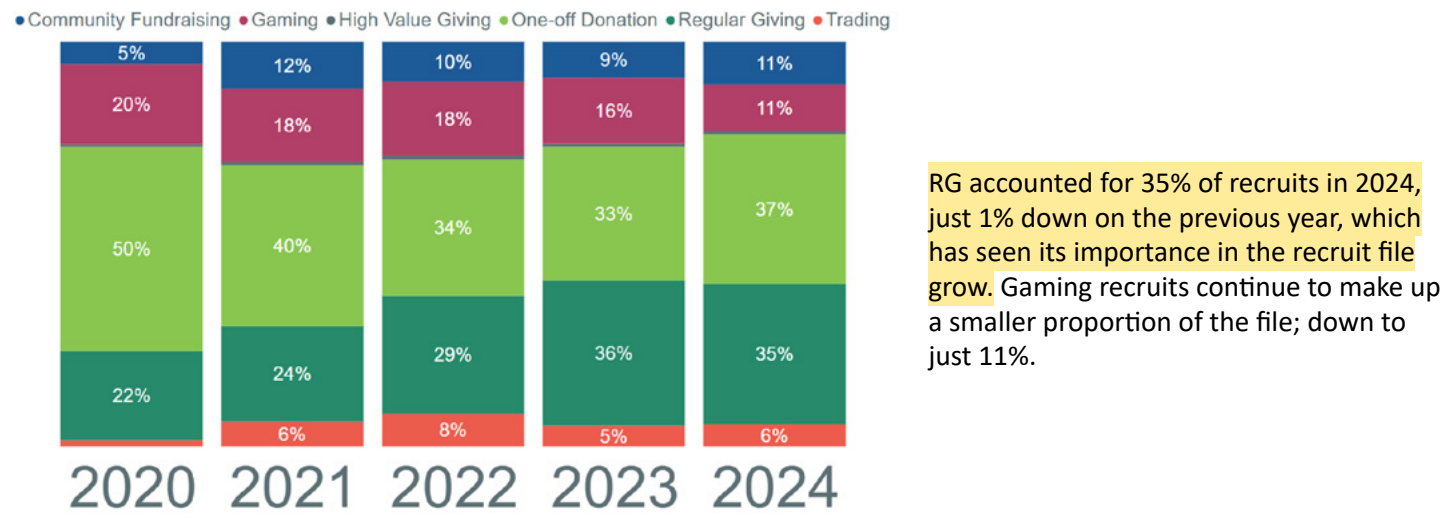
The overall RG file has been growing due to higher volumes of recruits than lapsed. However, 2024 saw the 'new' and 'lapsed' volumes almost on par, leading to a levelling of active supporter volumes.

### Supporter churn – Trading

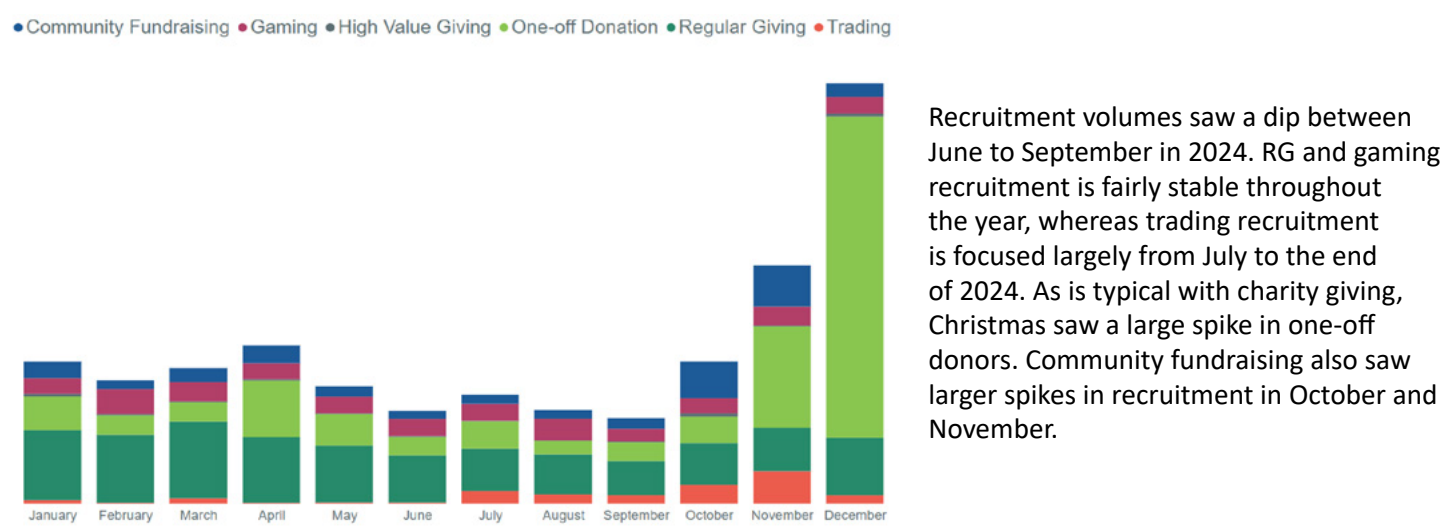


Trading has seen another drop in active file size, due to recruitment volumes falling for the third consecutive year. A high lapse rate in 2024 coupled with a lower recruitment rate has brought the active file size to levels seen in 2021.

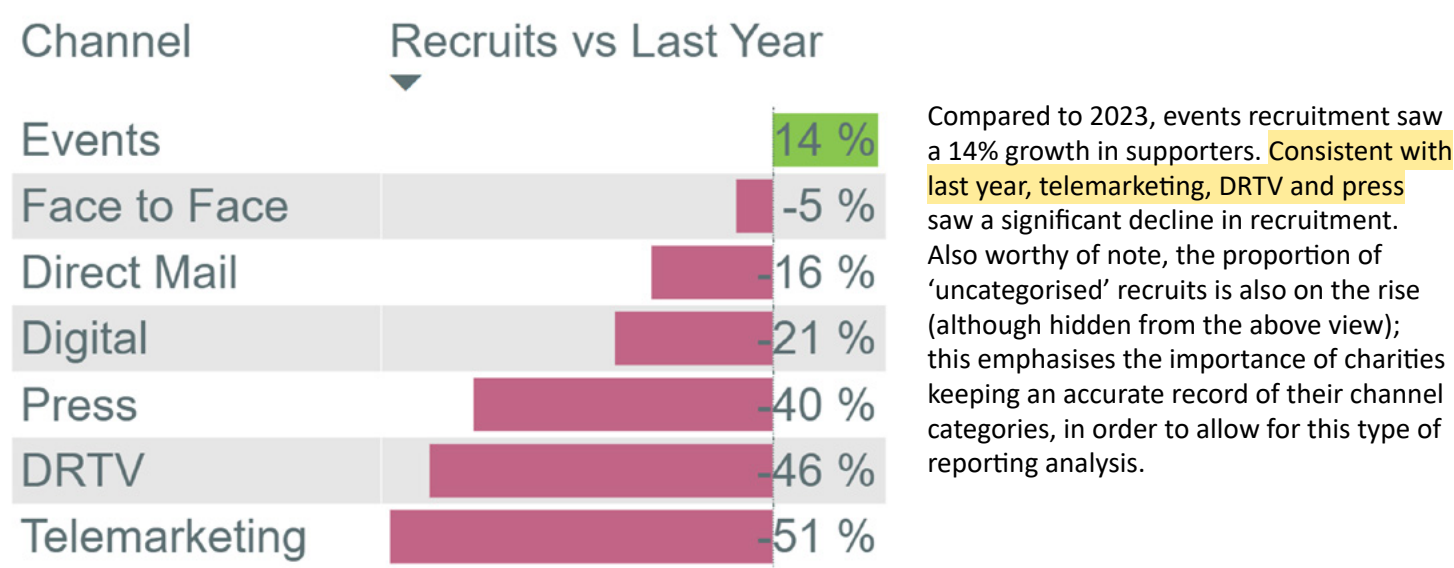
## Five-year recruitment per product – Proportional view



## 2024 monthly recruitment volumes by product

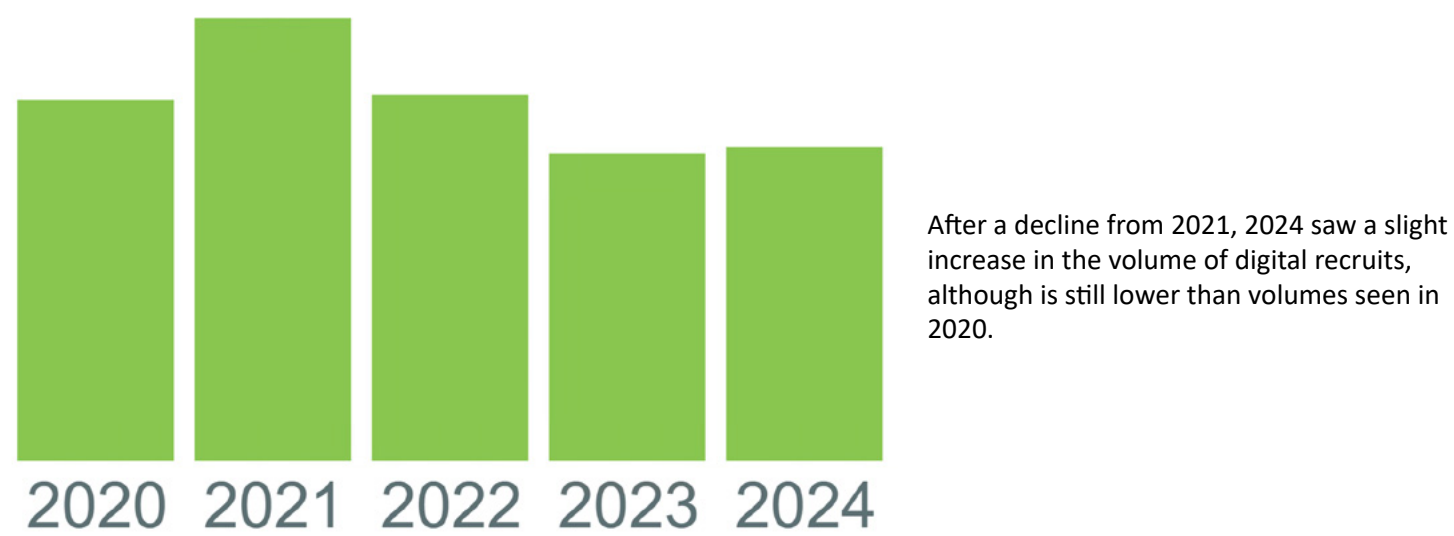


## Recruitment channel – Year-on-year (where categorised)

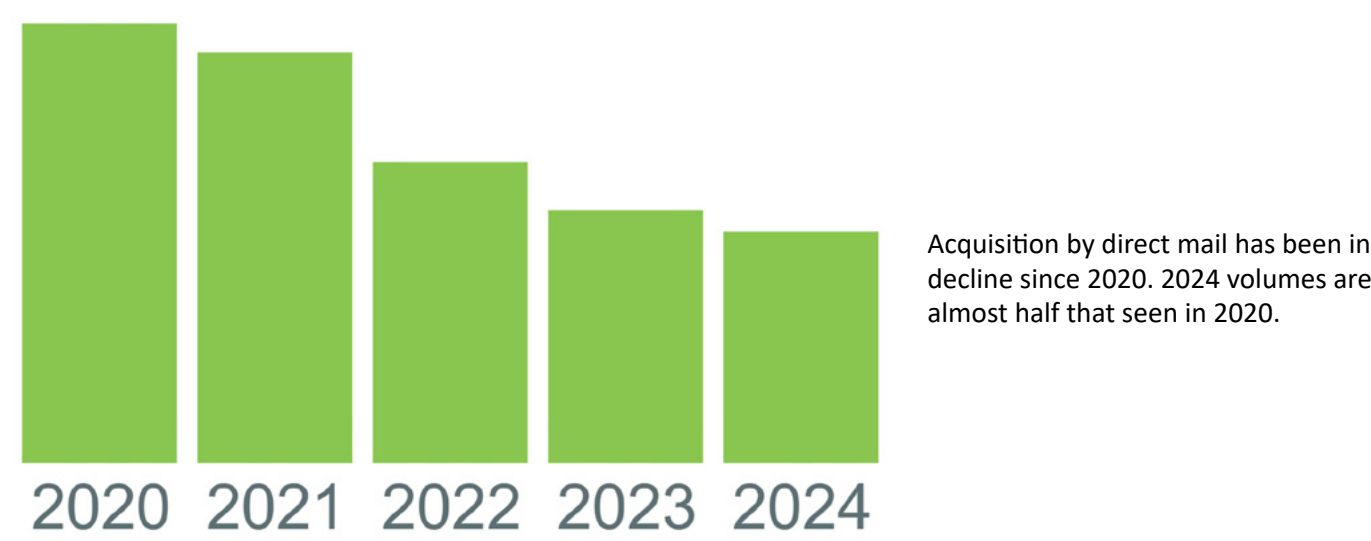


## Channel recruitment trends

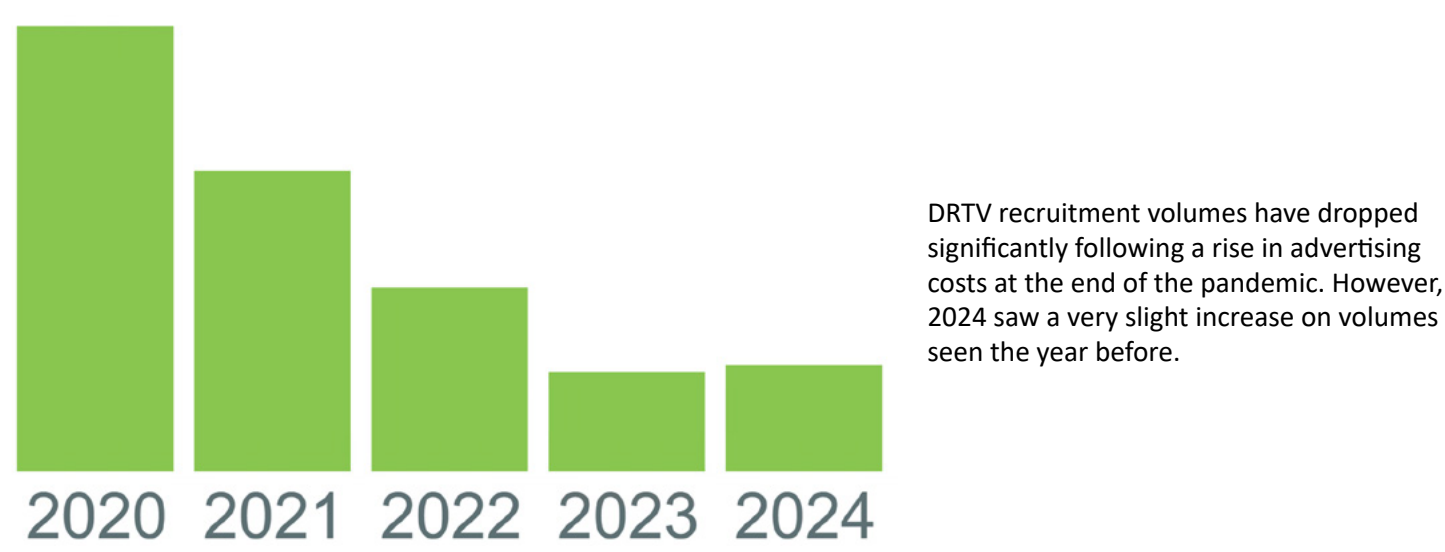
### Digital recruitment



Direct mail recruitment

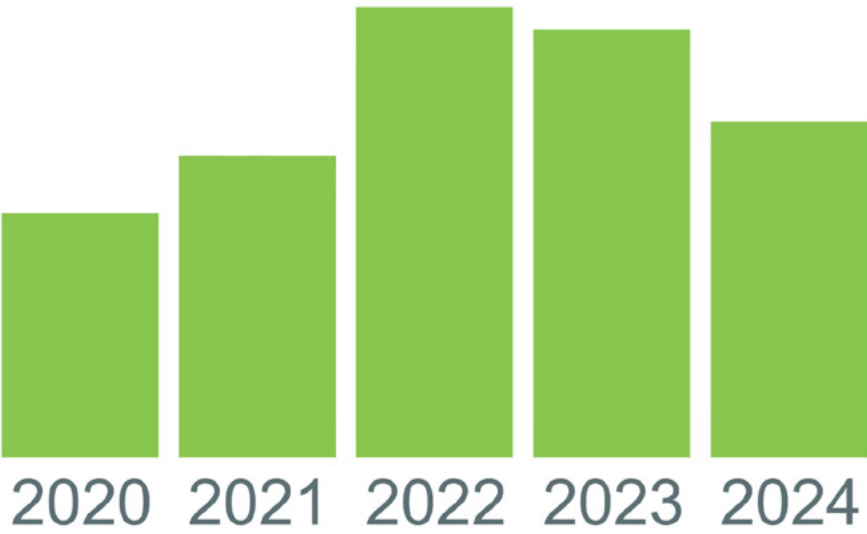


DRTV recruitment



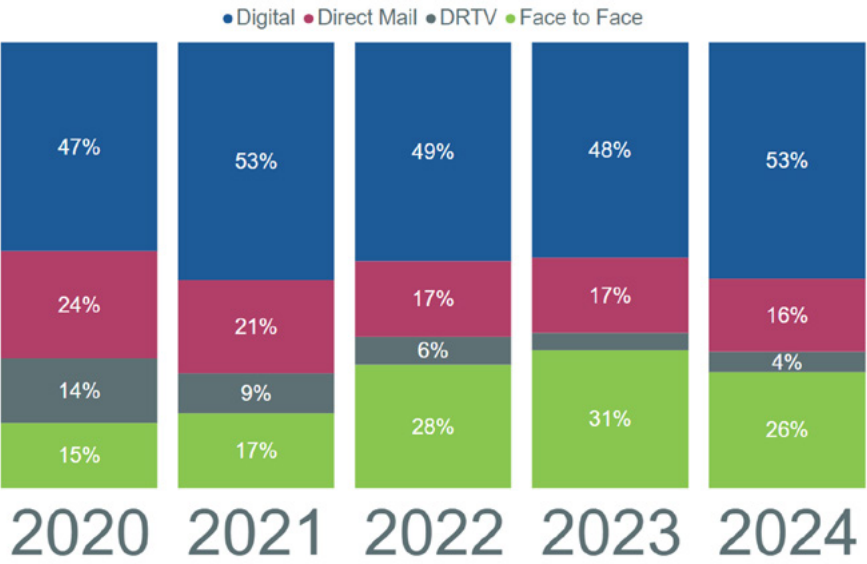


Face-to-face recruitment



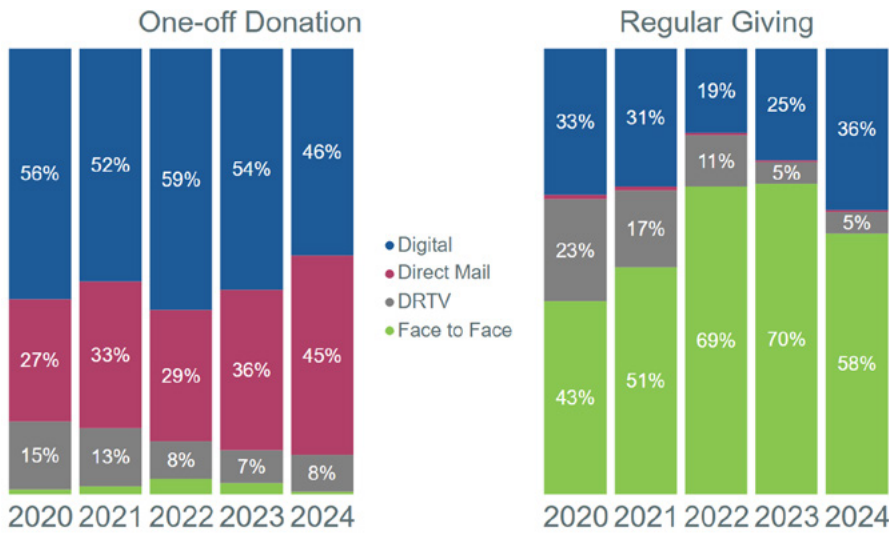
Face-to-face recruitment has been growing until its peak in 2022, yet has seen a gentle decline since. 2024 continues this downwards trend.

Five-year proportional channel splits (four main channels only, where categorised)



In 2024, digital channels accounted for over half of all new recruits; a 5% increase from 2023. Face-to-face recruitment saw a 5% decline from 2023. Proportions of direct mail and DRTV recruits remain similar to the previous year.

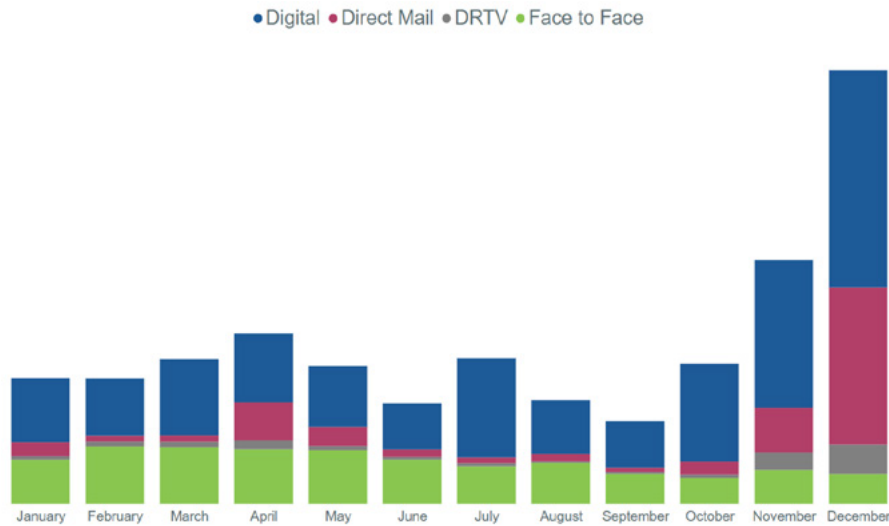
## Proportional split – Cash vs RG channels



As is typical, recruitment channel proportions by one-off and regular givers continue to remain very distinctive. One-off donors continue to be attracted by direct mail and digital channels, with a higher proportion from direct mail and digital compared to last year. DRTV volumes are in decline.

Regular giver recruitment is much more impacted by face-to-face, although 12% fewer regular givers were recruited through this channel in 2024 than in 2023. Higher proportion recruited through digital. Could this suggest an increasing importance on website?

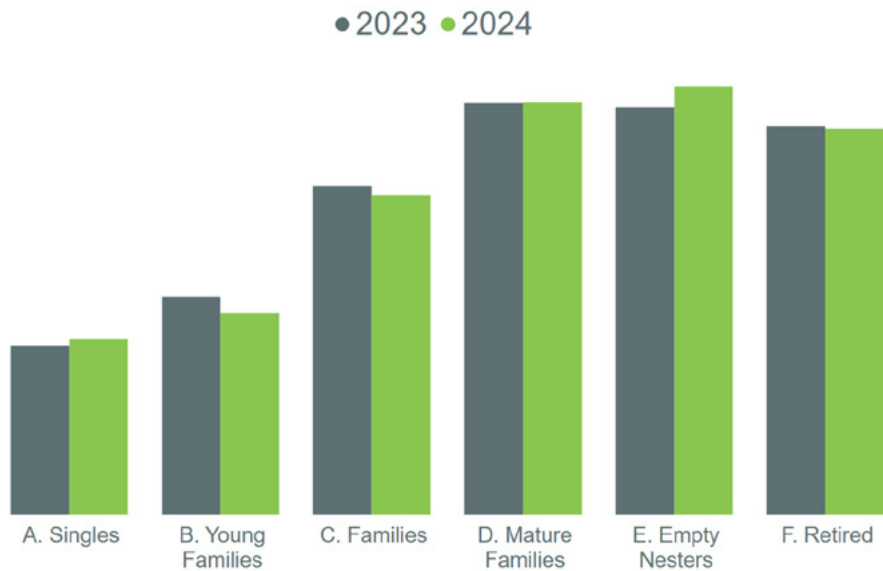
## 2024 monthly recruitment volumes by channel



Monthly recruitment volumes saw a slight dip during the summer months in 2024, due mainly to a drop in direct mail and digital channels. Face-to-face declines after summer, making way for the large spike in digital, direct mail and DRTV over Christmas.

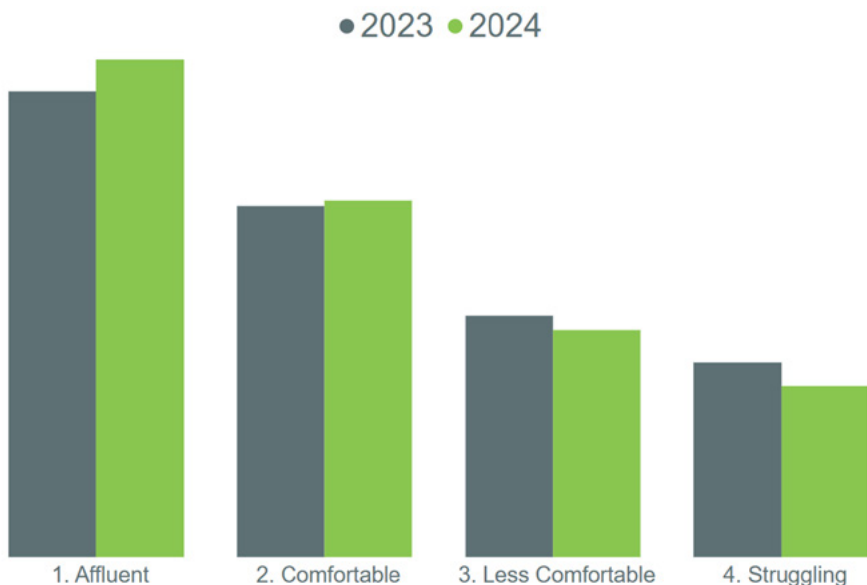
## Supporter profiles

### Life stage by recruitment year – Overall

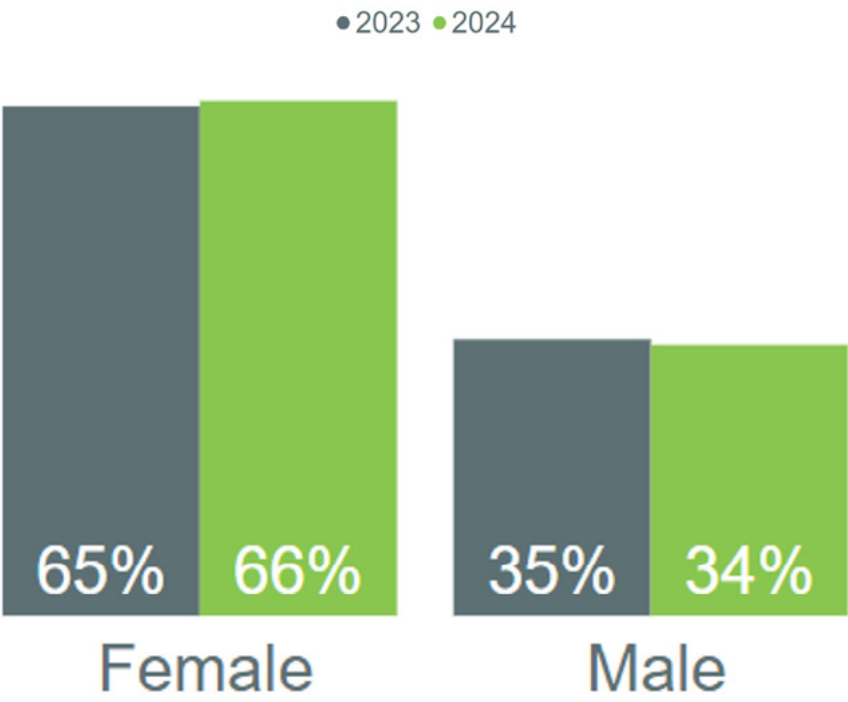


While the overall profile of 2024 recruits is familiar, we saw slight increases in the numbers of singles and empty nesters. Volumes of young families, families and retired individuals dropped slightly compared to 2023. Perhaps those families with dependants continue to feel the economic pinch more acutely.

### Affluence by recruitment year

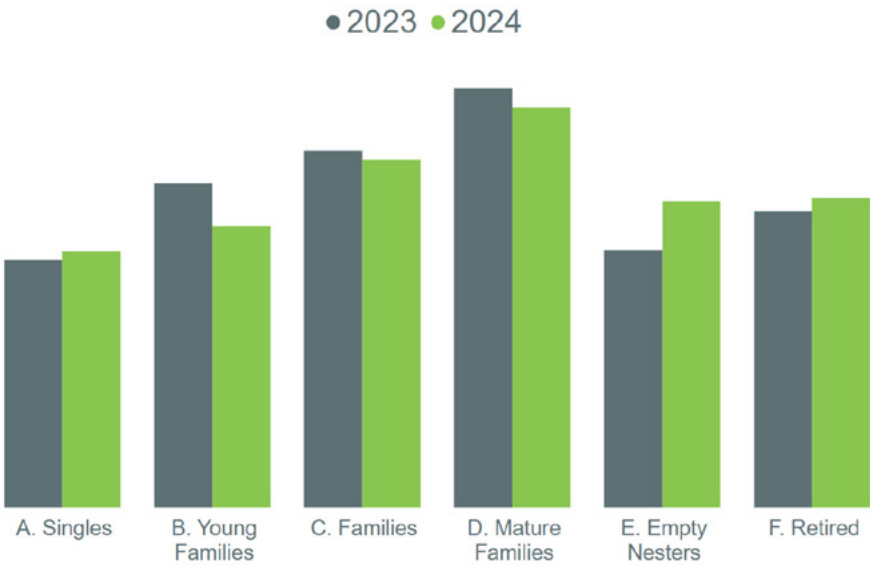


2024 saw the return to a more 'typical' affluence profile, with proportionally more affluent and comfortable supporters, and fewer less comfortable and struggling than seen in 2023. Adding further emphasis that those who are less financially well off are perhaps less able to financially support charities.

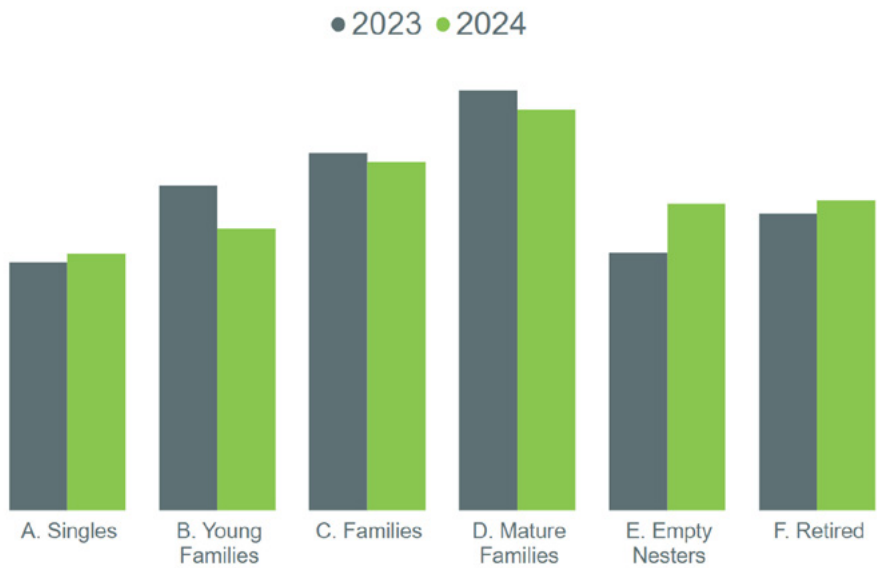


Proportions of males and females recruited in 2024 were very similar to the previous year.

RG demographics

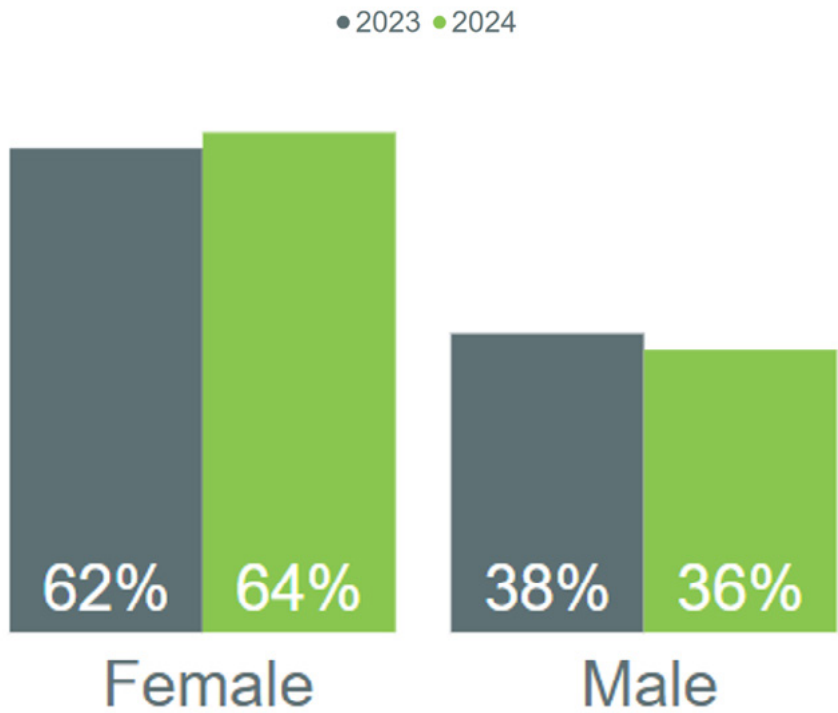


In 2024, RG recruitment attracted more supporters at the extremes of the life stage scale – singles, empty nesters, and retired individuals. Far fewer young families signed up to a regular gift, also potentially highlighting the reluctance for those with dependants to commit to a regular form of giving, as they may be feeling the pressure of other financial commitments in the current financial climate.



Similar to the overall supporter profile, the affluence shift for regular givers is once again showing an increase in recruits from the affluent group and fewer from the struggling group. This is consistent with the hypothesis that those in most financial hardship are perhaps less able to give to charity in the current financial climate, particularly when the ask is for a recurring gift.

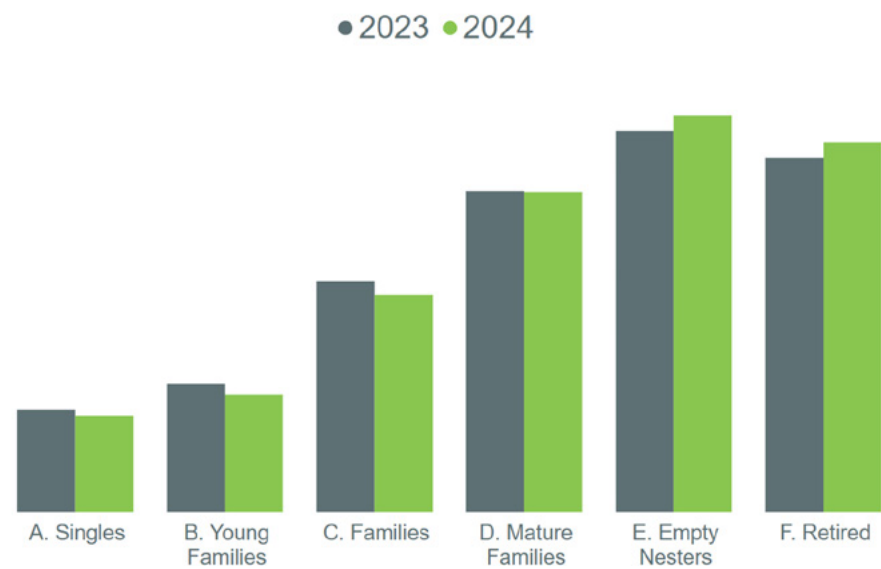
RG recruits – gender by recruitment year



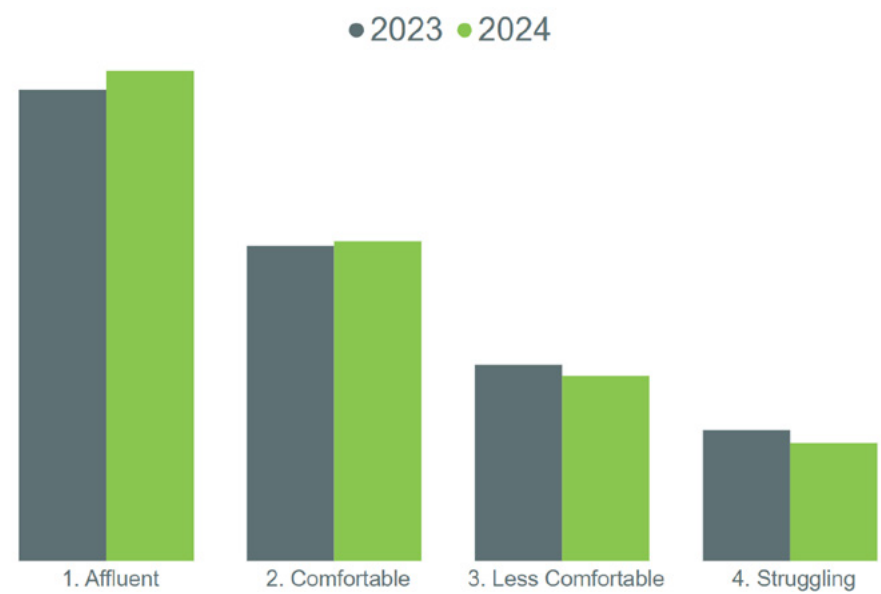
RG recruitment leaned more towards female recruits than males in 2024.



One-off donation demographics

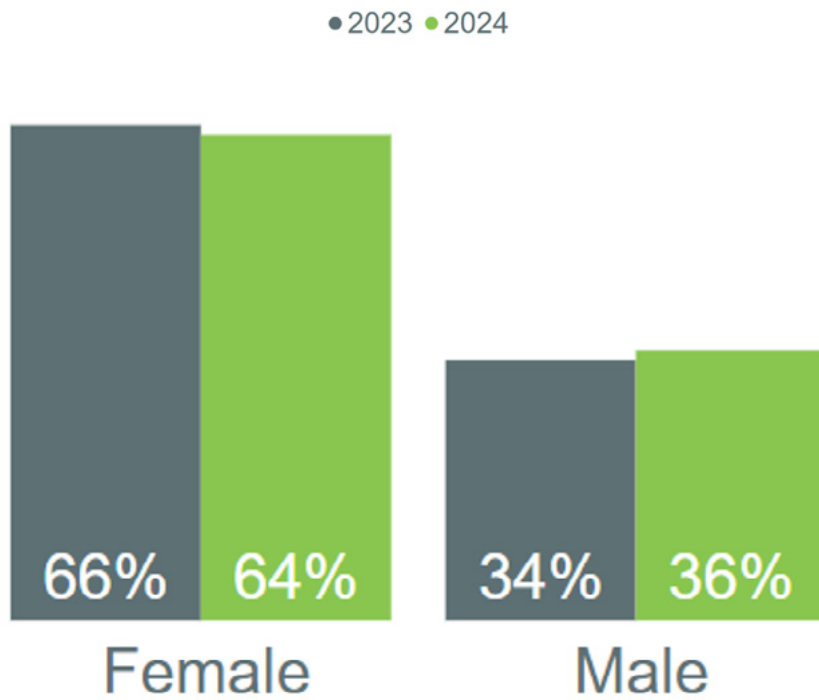


Similar to the picture painted by RG recruitment, one-off donation recruits were increasingly from retiree demographics in 2023, while volumes in younger groups dropped.



There was less change in the cash recruits wealth profile, compared with RG recruits, however there's still a noticeable increase in the affluent group, compared to those less comfortable and struggling.

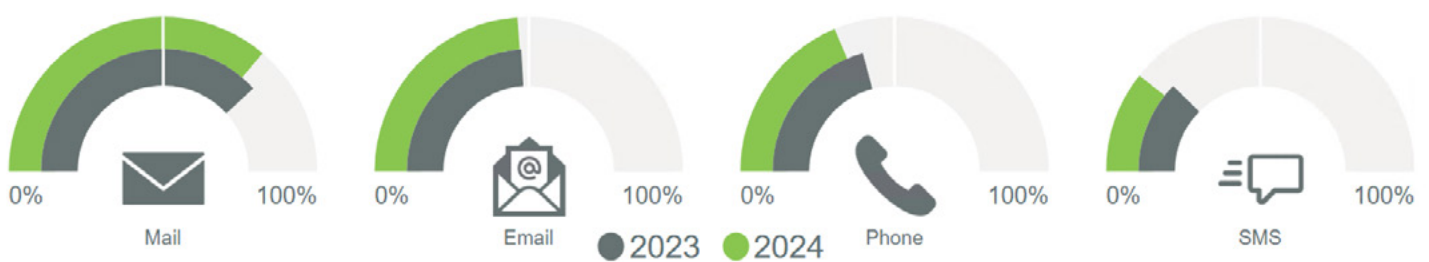
## One-off donation recruits – Gender by recruitment year



The gender profile of one-off donation recruits was very similar to the previous year, with only a slight increase in males recruited.

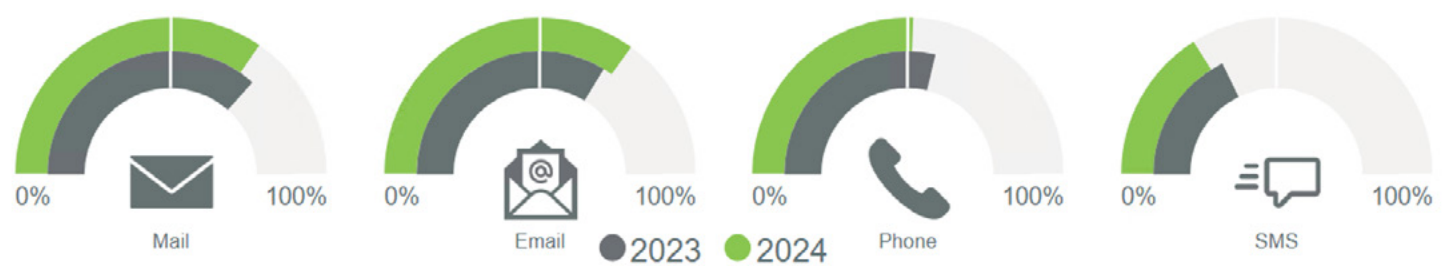
## Contactability

### Overall



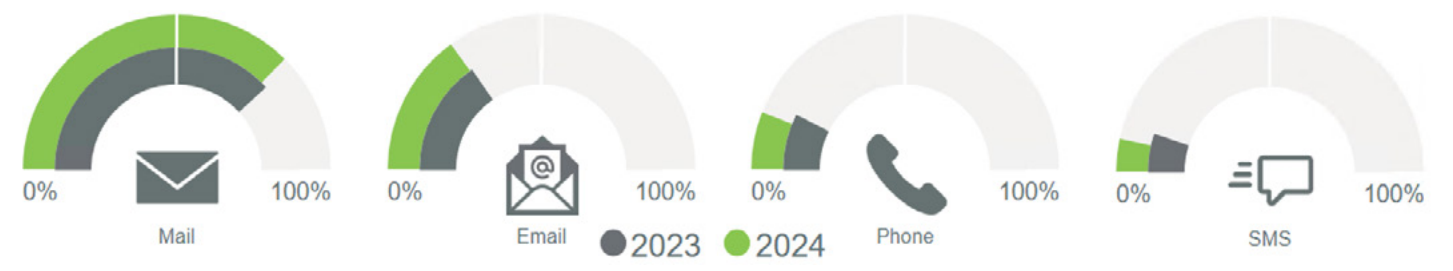
Overall, contactability is down on levels seen in 2023 for all channels, except email, which has remained stable at 48%. Mail contact permission fell from 76% in 2023, to 73% in 2024. Phone fell from 41% to 37% and SMS dropped slightly from 25% to 21%.

Regular givers



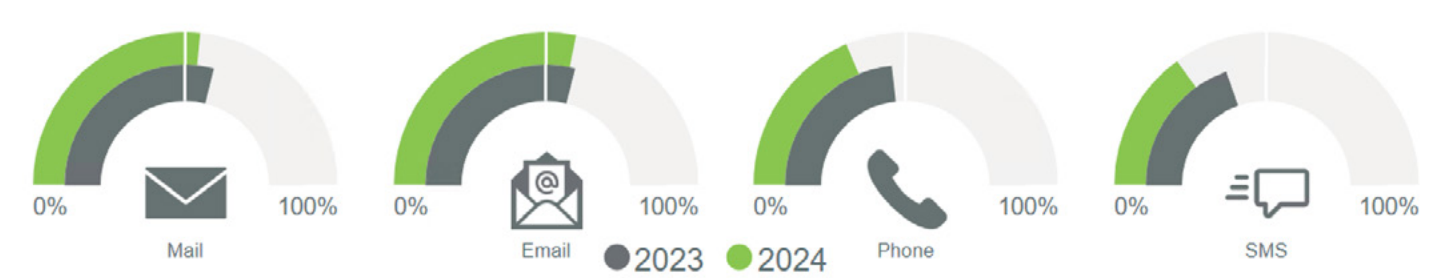
Postal and email contact permissions remain good for regular givers, with email now at 70%, compared to 67% in 2023. Phone permission has dropped from 57% to 51%, while SMS remains low.

One-off donors

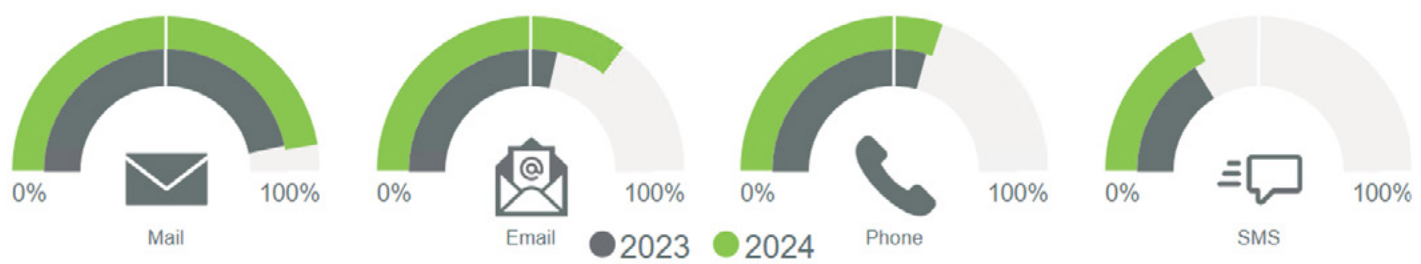


One-off donor mail permission remains strong, although slightly down on last year. Phone and SMS remains low, consistent with 2023.

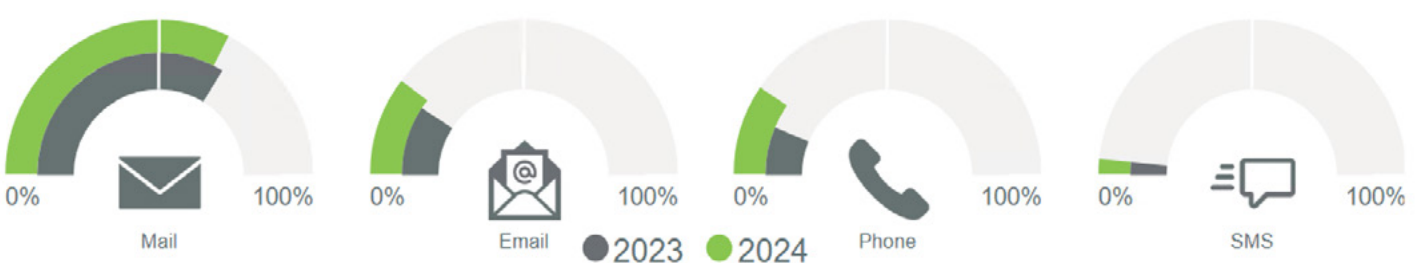
Community



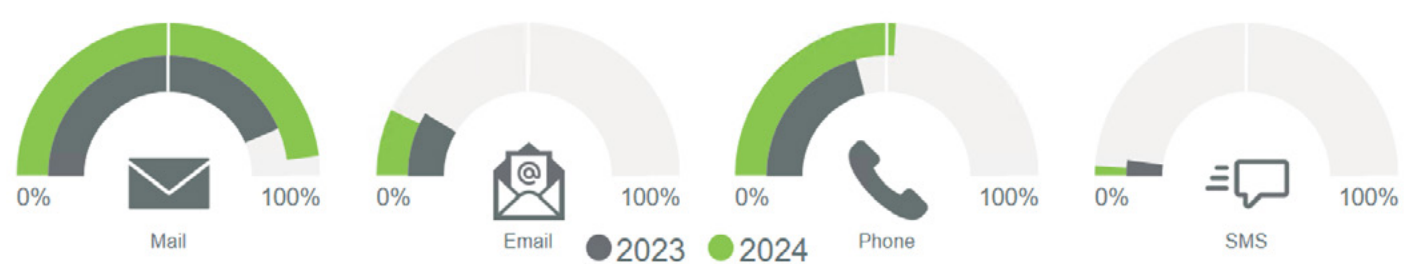
Gaming



High value giving



Trading



Gaming donors gave much higher consent to be contacted by all main channels in 2024 than the previous year. Mail consent remains strong for high value givers and trading donors.

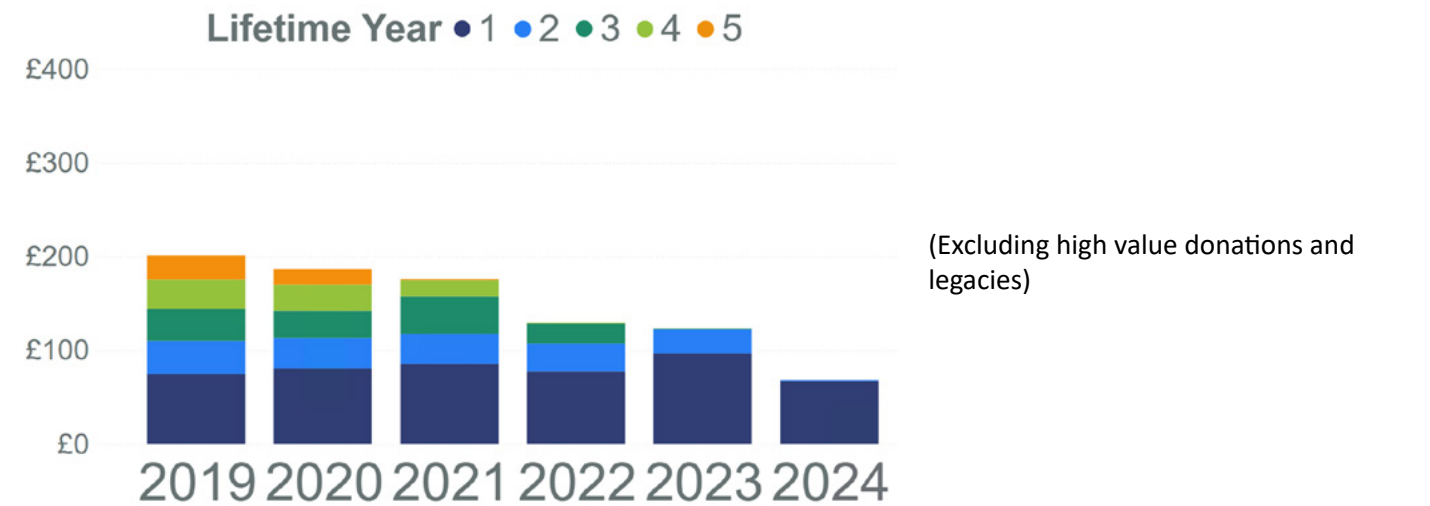
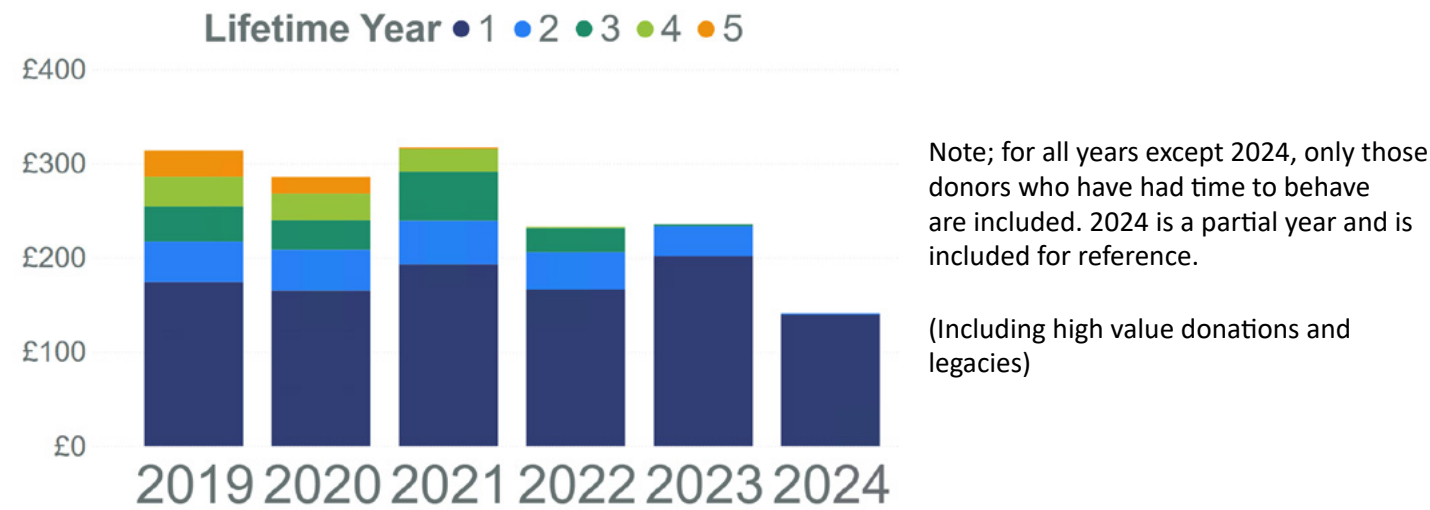


PART 3

# Engagement



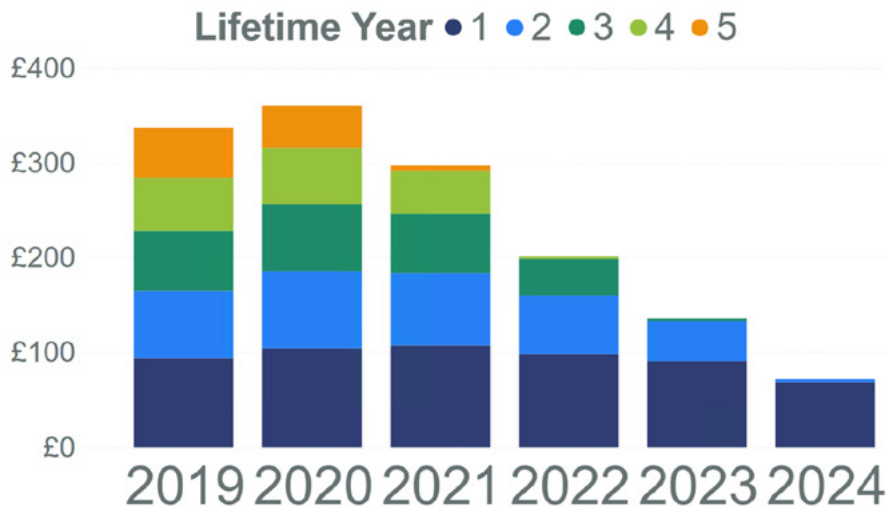
## LTV by year (all)



## Three-year value benchmarks per recruitment year:

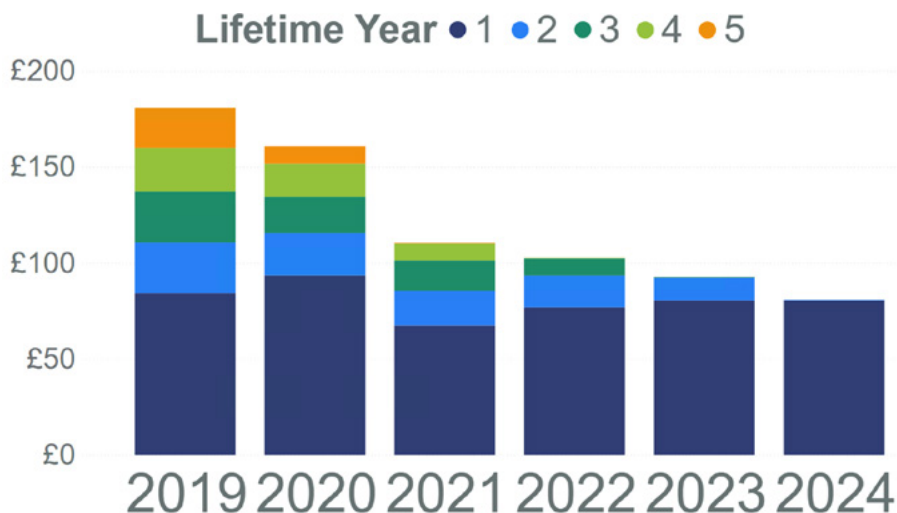
2019	2020	2021	
Inclusive*	Inclusive*	Inclusive*	* Inclusive/exclusive of legacy and high value giving
£256	£239	£292	
Exclusive*	Exclusive*	Exclusive*	Encouragingly, first-year value looks on course to increase for 2024 recruits, following on from the strong year one average gift from 2023 recruits.
£144	£143	£158	

## LTV – RG (excluding high value donations and legacies)



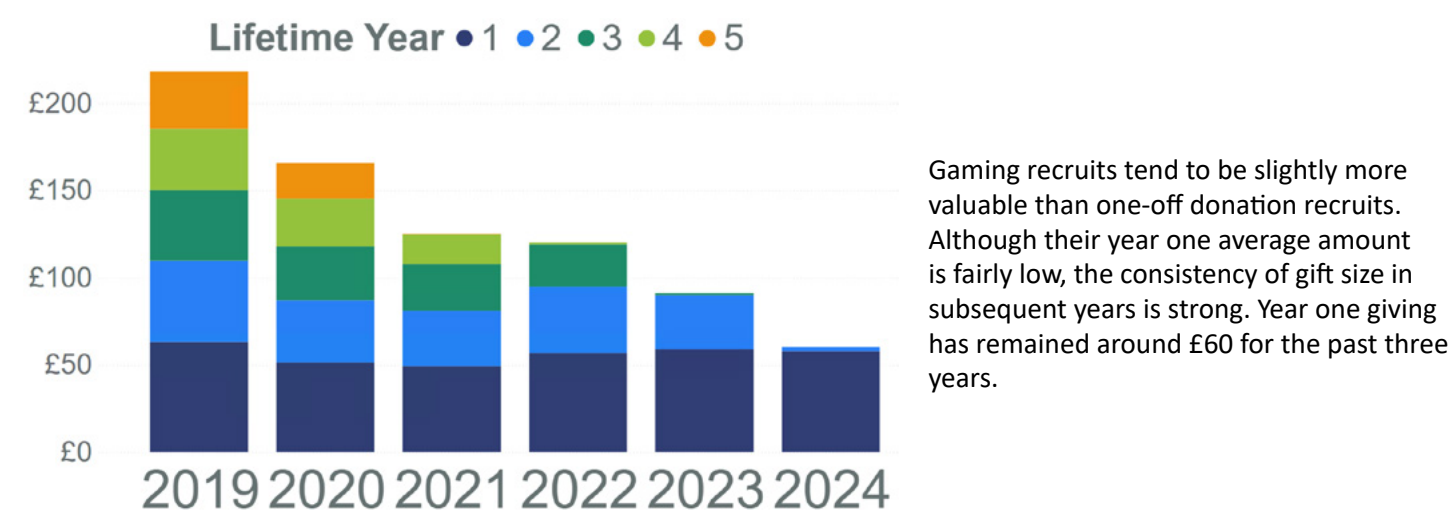
RG recruits achieve an average LTV of around £350 after five years. Although average gifts have remained largely stable over time, there's a slight trend of year one giving to be in slight decline from 2022 recruits onwards. This means careful selection of supporters for upgrade campaigns is paramount and stewarding supporters well to maximise retention is key. If not doing so already, charities could consider downgrade offers rather than losing supporters altogether.

## LTV – One-off donations (excluding high value donations and legacies)

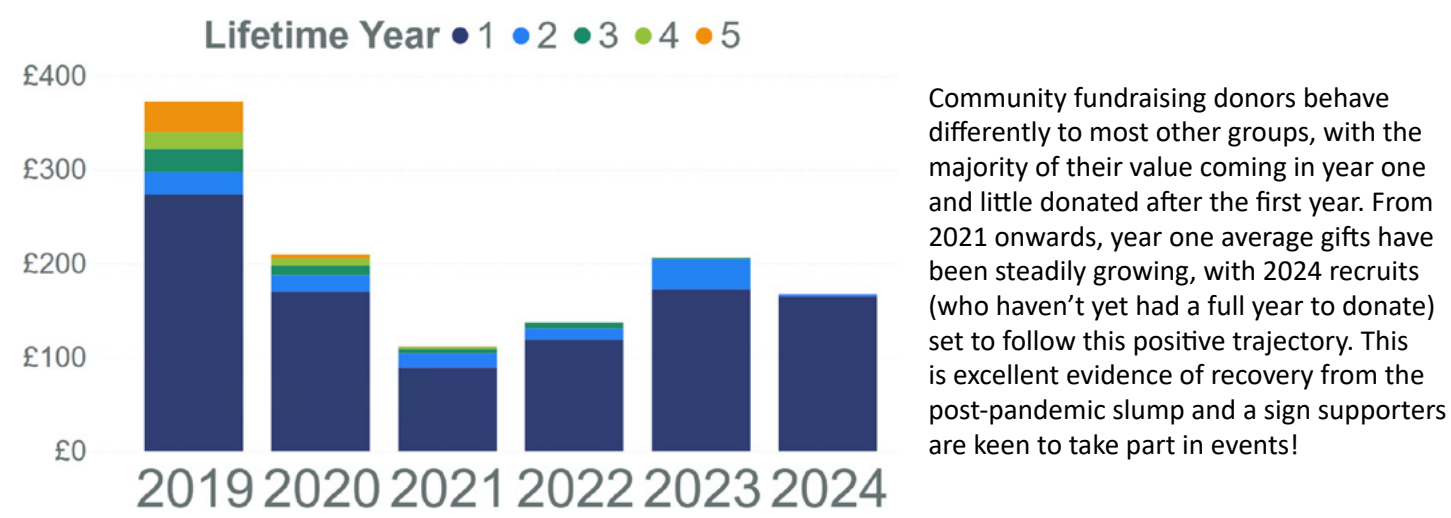


Five-year LTV for one-off donor recruits has seen a slight drop from 2021 onwards, perhaps a sign of the recent economic climate and the masses having less income to donate to charity. Year one income looks strong, however, for those recruited in the last few years – charities must now carefully consider how to keep these cash donors engaged and continuing to give into their second year.

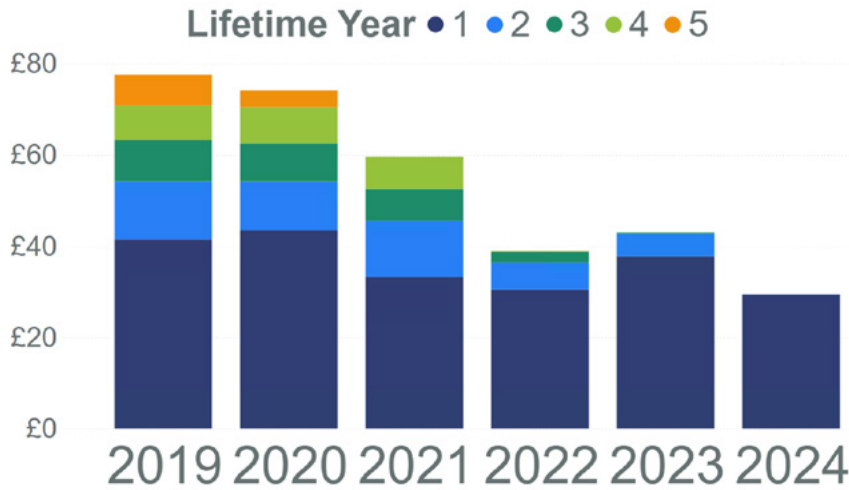
## LTV – Gaming (excluding high value donations and legacies)



## LTV – Community (excluding high value donations and legacies)

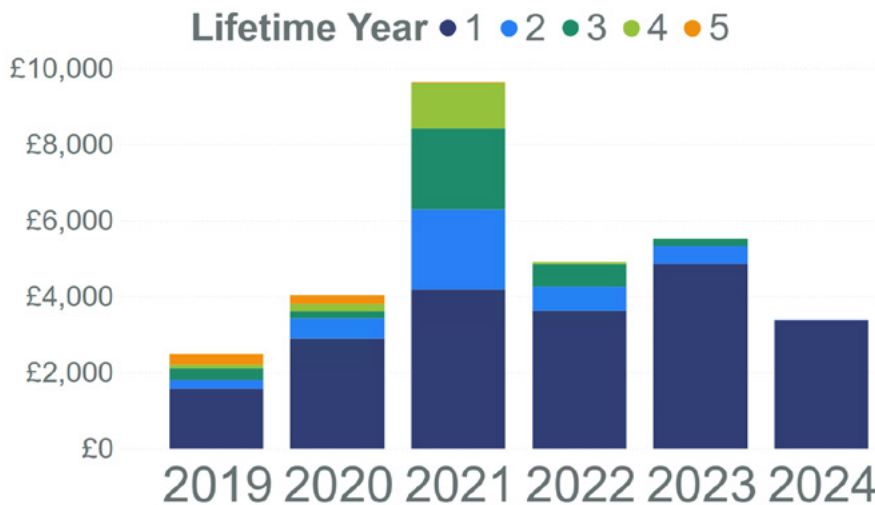


## LTV – Trading (excluding high value donations and legacies)



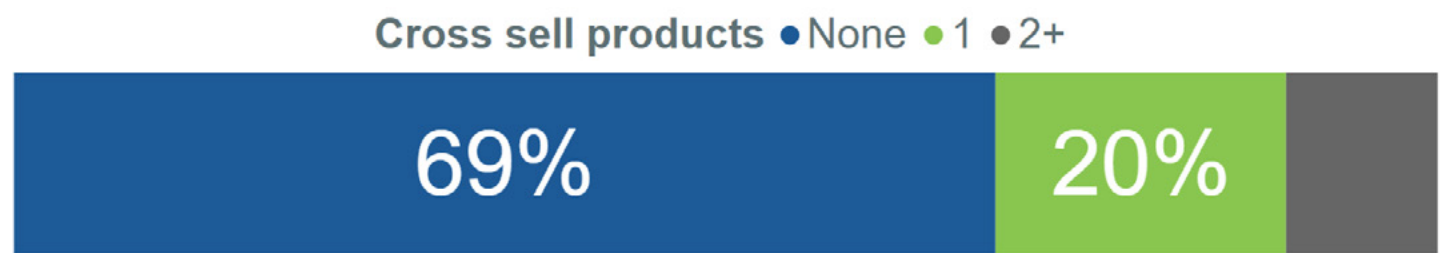
While trading LTV has been reasonably stable, it tends to be lower than most other groups and has shown a slight downward trend since 2021. Year one value is now around £30, with five-year value of just under £80.

## LTV – High value giving



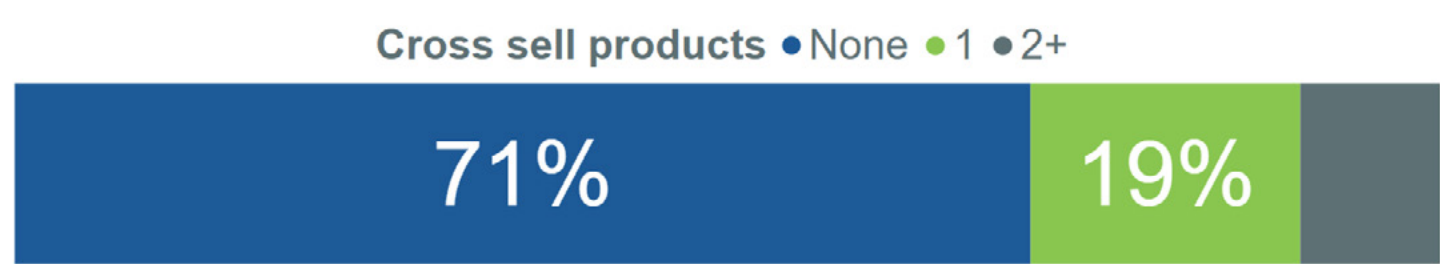
By their very nature, high value recruits tend to be worth significantly more than other types of donors. Average gifts have been seen to increase as philanthropists are better identified and stewarded. Year one value has increased so far for the most recent recruits, to almost £5,000 on average for 2023 recruits. 2024 recruit average amount is currently at £3,400.

## Cross-sell – Overall



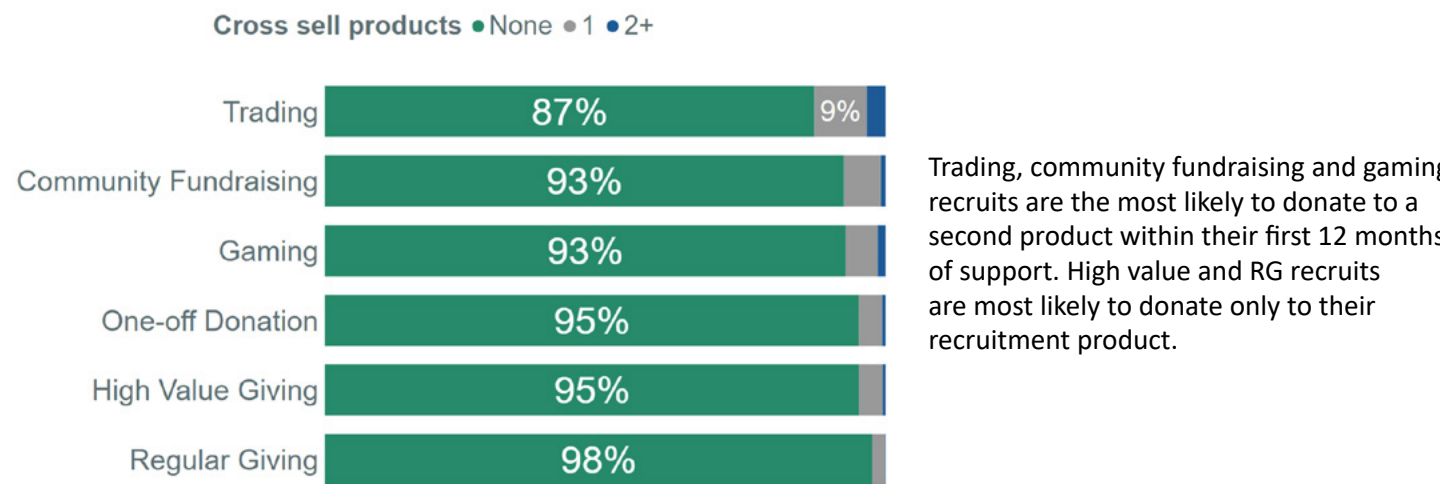
31% of supporters recruited from 2020 to 2024 have been cross-sold on to another product. 20% of those who’ve engaged with another product have only engaged with one other product.

## Cross-sell in first 12 months – Overall

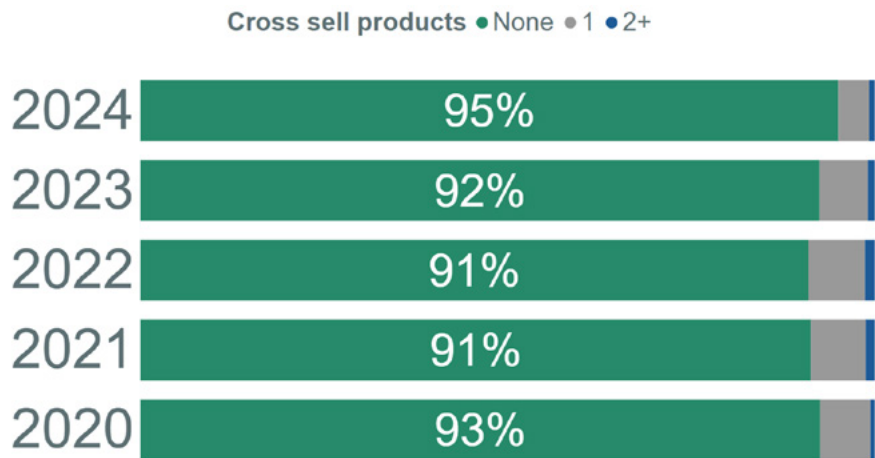


Of those recruited in 2024, 29% donated to a second product within 12 months of beginning to donate to their charity of choice.

## Cross-sell in first 12 months by recruitment product – Past five years

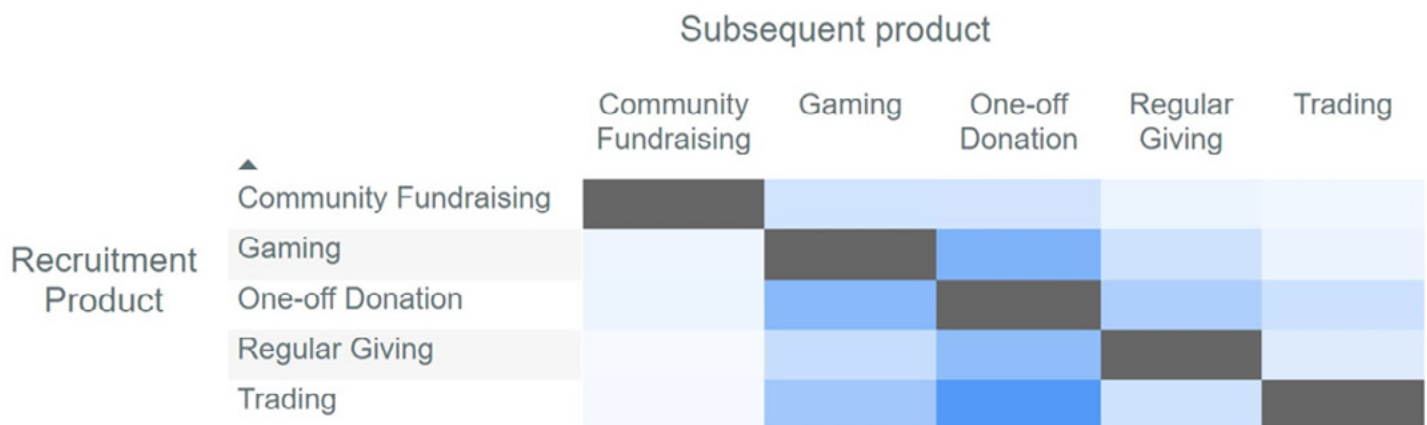


## Cross-sell percentages in first 12 months by recruitment year



While the data for 2024 recruits is not yet mature, cross-sell in the first 12 months has been dropping since 2021. 9% of 2021 recruits donated to a second product in their first year of support and this has dropped very slightly to 8% for 2023 recruits. The proportion of cross-sellers so far for 2023 recruits is just 5%, though many of these recruits will not yet have had a full year to behave.

## Most common journey – All time, main products only



This matrix shows cross-sell rates from recruitment product on to other products during donors' lifetimes. It includes all donors recruited from 2020-2024.

The most common journey using this year's data is from gaming to one-off donations. Other common patterns include RG to one-off donations. Trading also shows reasonable volumes to being cross-sold to gaming and one-off donations.

There's very little conversion to community fundraising or trading. Perhaps indicating these products aren't marketed toward existing supporters as much as others.

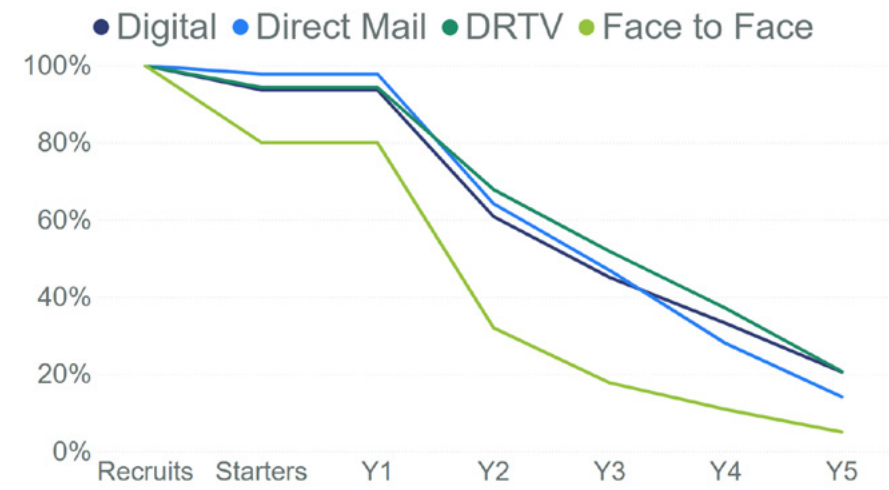


## RG retention – Overall



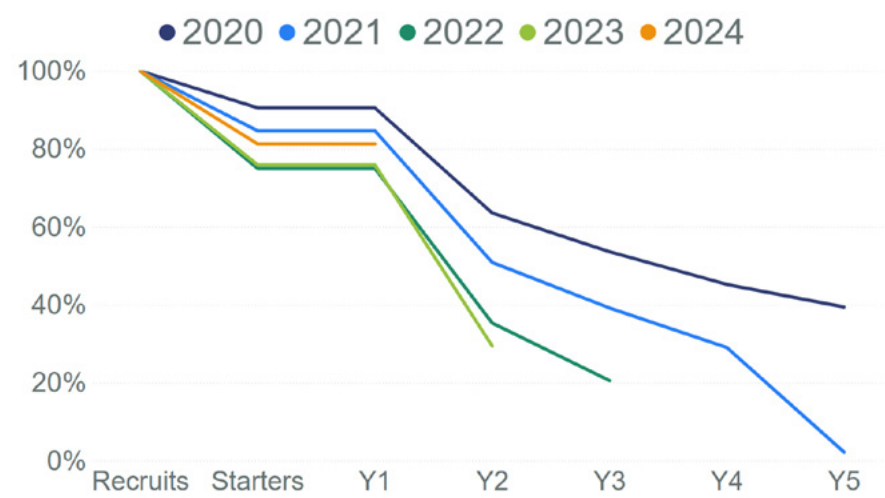
Early indications for 2024 recruits suggest that, so far, retention is in line with 2022 and 2023 recruits. Amid all the challenges and chaos facing the charity sector over the past few years, 2020 RG recruits are performing remarkably well – with 40% still giving. 2021 recruits show a slightly poorer retention rate, however, not all have had full time to reach their fifth year of giving.

## Key channel retention



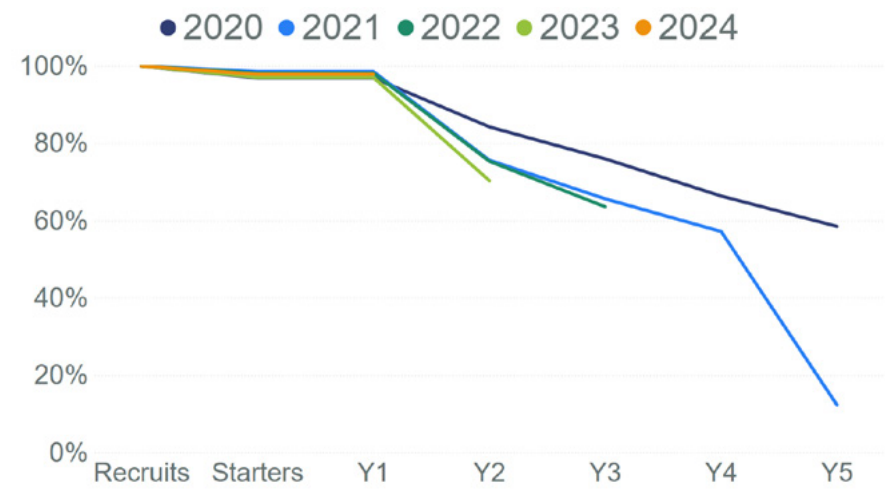
As seen in previous years, digital and direct mail, and DRTV recruits have tended to perform better than face-to-face recruits. Fewer face-to-face recruits start their regular gifts and fewer also make it to their fifth year of giving – just 13%, compared to 23% for direct mail, and 28% for digital and DRTV.

## Face-to-face retention



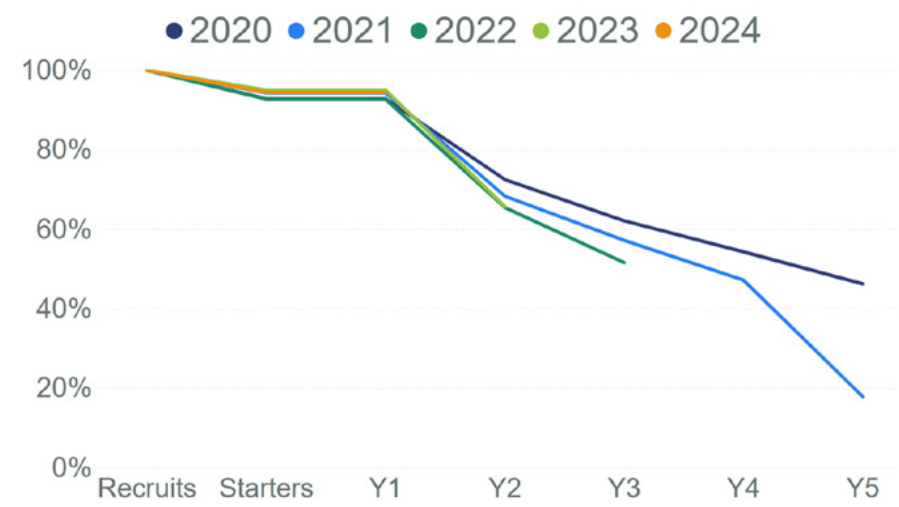
While 2020 recruits have performed particularly well, more recent face-to-face recruits have lapsed at an earlier rate. However, 2024 recruits show a better starter rate than seen in the previous few years.

## Direct mail retention



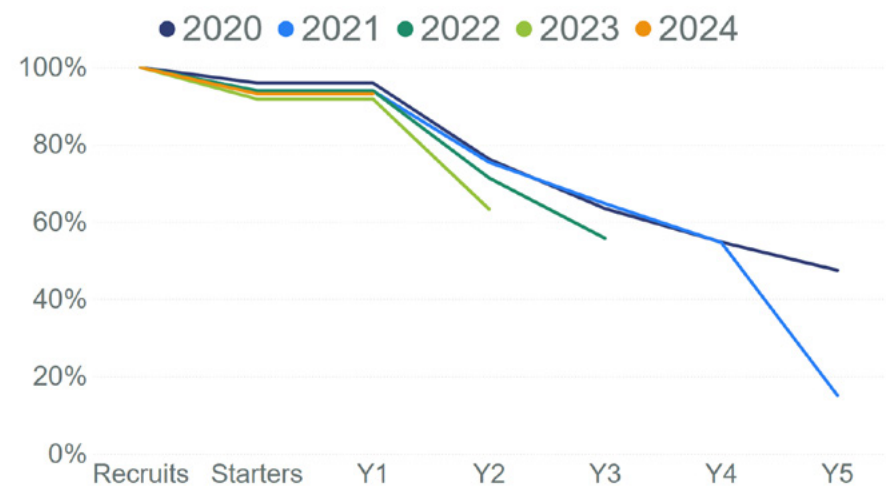
Direct mail performance remains strong, with an excellent starter and year one retention rate. Recent recruits are also following this pleasing pattern.

## Digital retention



Retention is also strong across digital recruits, with a good starter and year one completion rate. Fewer supporters reach the end of their second year of giving – this is a trend seen consistently over the past five years.

## DRTV retention



While historically, DRTV recruits have performed better than some other channels, recruitment is now falling, and RG completion rates by year two dropped each year. This poses a question to charities about how best to engage with these supporters to keep them giving to their regular gift and which is the best strategy to achieve this.



## Methodology

All findings in this report were taken directly from our InsightHub for charities reporting platform, utilising a blend of charitable organisations' data, representing a variety of causes and approaches to fundraising.

InsightHub is a live portal containing a suite of insightful fundraising reports, enabling users to constantly monitor and track performance across a range of measures and KPIs.

Data is sourced direct from the charity CRM and automatically run through the Wood for Trees Core Charity Data Model (CCDM) where it's processed and transformed to render accurate, repeatable and comparable insights through InsightHub. This process is repeated regularly, giving up-to-date reporting direct to your desktop.



### CRM

Upload your CRM data



### Core Charity Data Model

Categorise and aggregate data



### Insight

Reports, analysis and recommendations

As part of this process, we also anonymise and aggregate key metrics into our benchmarking datasets. All users are then able to compare the own performance against that of the industry as a whole. These benchmarks are updated monthly, enabling us to provide a regular monthly snapshot of the latest state of the sector, in addition to this annual report.



## Clearer insight, better decisions

On top of sector aggregation, the InsightHub benchmarking portal allows you to see your own KPIs and make direct comparisons of your performance against the whole sector.

If you'd like to be involved, or for more information on how we collect, transform, store and render your data, as well as our benchmarking aggregations, please get in touch.

## Get in touch



[getinfo@woodfortrees.net](mailto:getinfo@woodfortrees.net)



[salocin-group.com/wood-for-trees/](http://salocin-group.com/wood-for-trees/)



[+44 \(0\) 1225 480 480](tel:+44201225480480)



