AUSTRALIAN TECH GIVING REPORT

2025

Acknowledgements

About the collaborators

StartGiving is a not-for-profit organisation inspiring a new culture of giving in the Australian innovation community. Founded and funded by Daniel Petre AO, it's on a mission to make giving by successful Australian tech founders the norm and the expectation.

Led by Professor Paul Flatau, the Centre for Social Impact UWA (CSI UWA) provides transformative education, informative and best practice research, and public engagement, to equip, inspire and mobilise changemakers.

Suggested citation

Appreciation

Interviewees

Anonymous

Anonymous

Anonymous

Andrew Barnes

Craig Davis

Toan Doan

Ian Gardiner

Derek Gerrard

Kylie Gerrard

Leigh Jasper

Steve King

Mai Le

Rachael Neumann

Niki Scevak

Ben Sze

Dimitry Tran

Harvey Tran

Hugh Williams

Anthony Woods

Key insights

Tech givers set to dominate Australian philanthropy

In just a few years, tech founders' contribution to major philanthropy has grown from **1% to 21%** of total grants made by Australia's top 50 givers.

Australia's tech community 2x more likely to give than the average Aussie

67.8% of survey respondents (weighted) said they donate their money, compared to **27.5%** of Australian taxpayers.

An untapped $25b philanthropy potential

Australia's top 30 tech-rich individuals easily have the potential to donate well over $25 billion. If unlocked, it could radically reshape our social and environmental landscape.

Who are tech givers, and why do they give?

As self-made entrepreneurs with community-oriented mindsets, tech givers were often shaped by early volunteering experiences. They recognise luck's role in their success and view wealth as a responsibility rather than entitlement.

When do founders give?

Early-stage founders typically volunteer or donate ad hoc until liquidity events catalyse structured philanthropy. These financial milestones often occur while founders are younger than traditional wealth creators, delivering both the means and opportunity to focus on giving. Tech givers emphasise addressing societal challenges now, rather than waiting until they are older.

What are the barriers to giving?

Australia's underdeveloped philanthropic culture favours giving privately, with "tall poppy syndrome" discouraging open discussions about wealth and philanthropy. Despite challenges like media scrutiny and perceptions that social issues are government responsibilities, many founders recognise that sharing stories about their giving is important and will build a healthier philanthropic culture.

Key insights (cont.)

How do tech givers give?

Tech givers apply entrepreneurial principles to philanthropy, embracing experimentation with optimism. They tackle pressing global issues by backing talented individuals and teams rather than specific projects, reflecting venture capital principles. Founders like to apply their business acumen and natural problem-solving skills to social challenges, while collaborating with experts on the ground to maximise their impact.

How tech giving differs from traditional philanthropy

"Structured giving" represents consistent, proactive philanthropy rather than specific legal structures. Tech founders establish foundations primarily to manage windfall income and create "forcing mechanisms" for giving commitments. Many tech donors prioritise creating measurable impact through their giving over family legacy, tax benefits, or personal recognition. Compared to the general population, tech givers show significantly higher interest in environmental causes, human rights and reconciliation initiatives and more trust in not-for-profit effectiveness.

Future giving intentions

Over half **(57.7%)** of Australian Tech Giving Survey respondents expect to increase giving next year, with about one-fifth planning to establish foundations. Many aspire to build "a culture of generosity" through long-term partnerships addressing the root causes rather than the symptoms of disadvantage.

What's the opportunity?

We estimate that the 30 wealthiest people in tech have the capacity to contribute $25 billion to philanthropy. A collaborative culture that includes openly sharing learnings and stories can help extend the movement beyond ultra-wealthy founders and create a supportive environment for new philanthropists. Tech givers' innovative practices backing people over projects, providing unrestricted multi-year grants, and empowering nonprofit leadership could transform not just how much is given in Australia, but also how it's distributed.

Introduction

> **"**
>
> *It just feels like the natural thing to do. It's not a challenge for us. We both feel fortunate and have more than we need. So why not help others who don't have enough?*
>
> Anon

> **"**
>
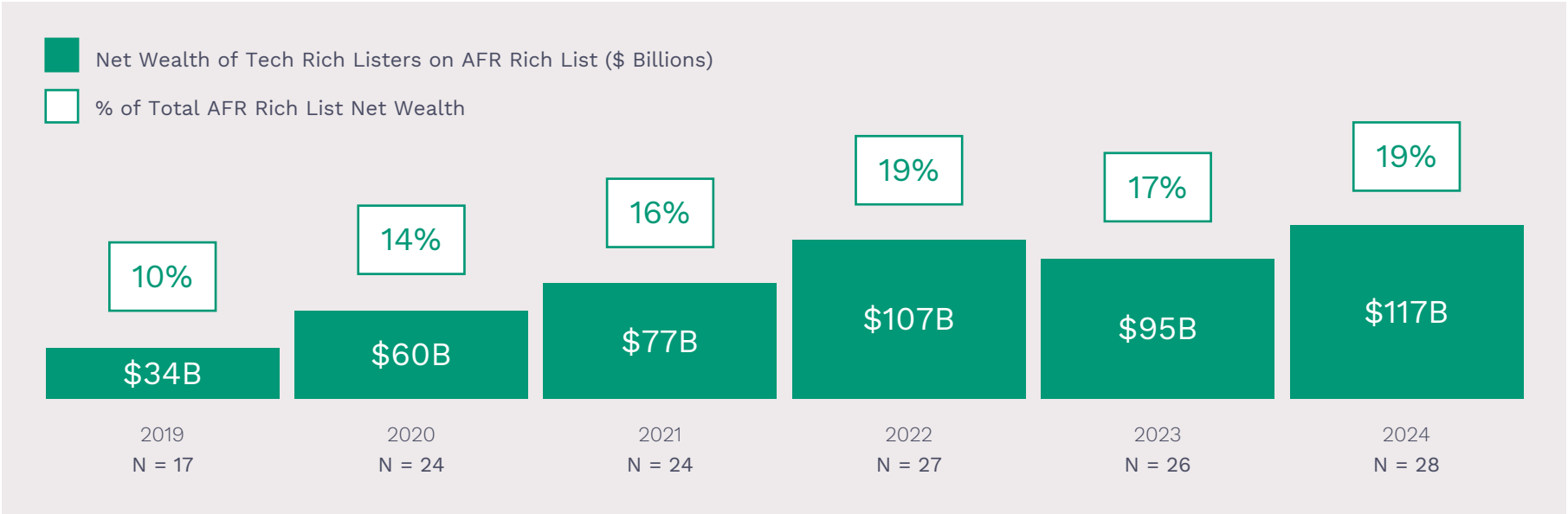> *For me, doing well and doing good is something that goes hand in hand.*
>
> Dimitry Tran

In 2020-2021, the Australian tech sector contributed $167 billion per annum to the economy, had grown 80% in five years, and was equivalent to Australia's third largest industry, behind mining and banking.

By 2030, the tech sector is predicted to contribute $250 billion annually to the Australian GDP (Australian Trade and Investment Commission, 2023).

Australia is also home to around 20,000 tech startups, with this number increasing. Furthermore, as of 2022, 21 Australian tech startups reached "unicorn status", meaning they have a valuation of over US$1 billion and are not listed on the stock market (Australian Trade and Investment Commission, 2023). In 2024, **28 people** in tech made the Australian Financial Review (AFR) Rich List, a compilation of Australia's richest 200 individuals (AFR, 2024b).

These tech fortunes came to **$116.7 billion, or 19%** of the total Rich List wealth, almost doubling from just **10%** in 2019.*

The tech sector's presence is even more significant in the AFR's Young Rich List, which reports the 100 richest Australians aged 40 and under. In 2023, 31 of the Young Rich listers made their money in the tech sector (AFR, 2023). That number has stayed consistent into the 2024 Young Rich List, featuring eight tech founders in the top 10 (AFR, 2024c).

- ■ Net Wealth of Tech Rich Listers on AFR Rich List ($ Billions)
- ☐ % of Total AFR Rich List Net Wealth

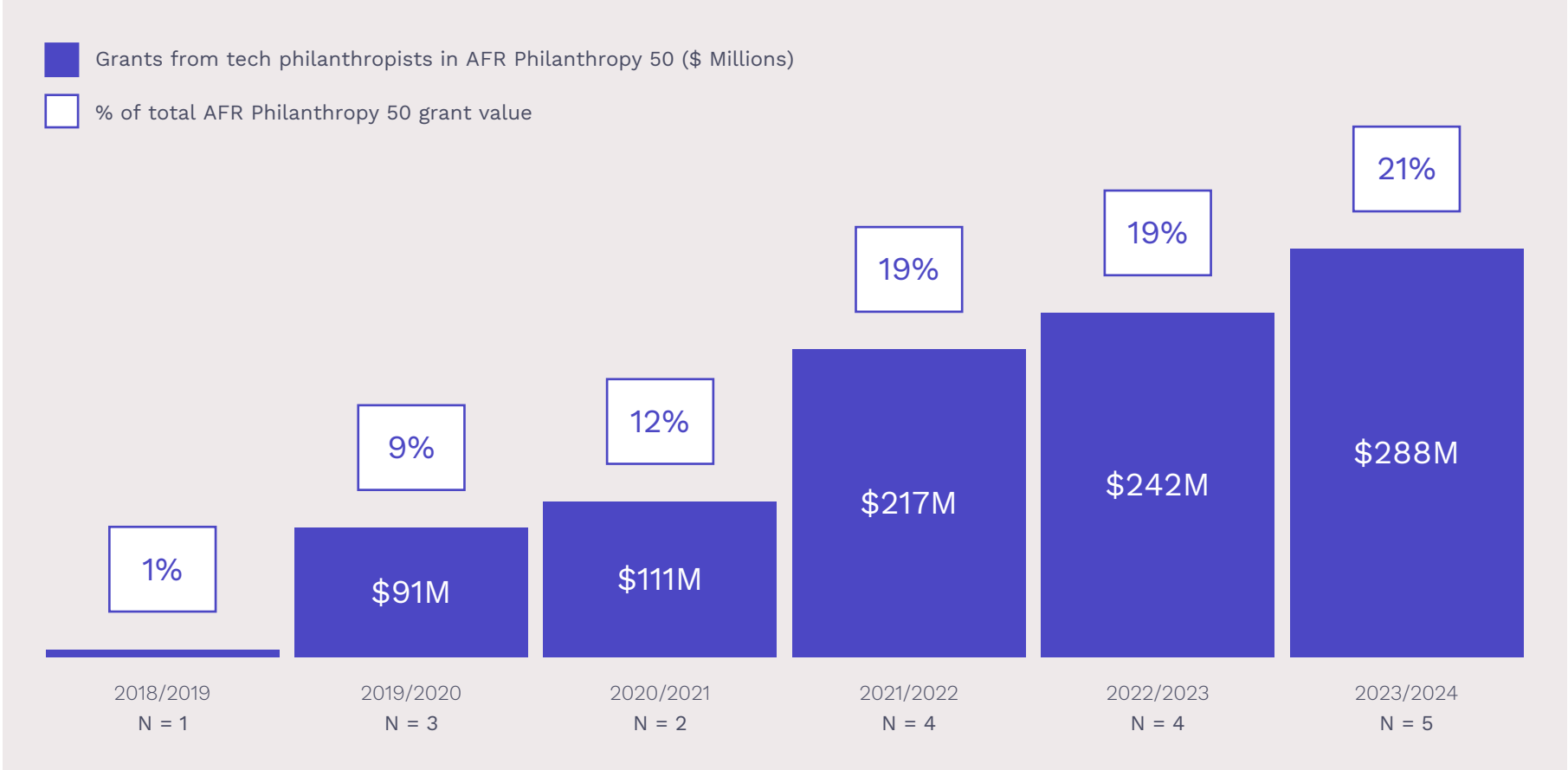|					
10%	14%	16%	19%	17%	19%
$34B	$60B	$77B	$107B	$95B	$117B
2019 N = 17	2020 N = 24	2021 N = 24	2022 N = 27	2023 N = 26	2024 N = 28

*Our calculations for tech sector Rich List wealth statistics differ from those reported by the AFR due to our inclusion of a broader and distinct group of Rich Listers; we have applied a different approach in defining what categorises a "tech founder". Gaming, crypto and fintech have been considered part of the tech sector in our methodology.

Considering how this wealth might translate to charitable giving, only one tech giver (Steve Killelea's The Charitable Foundation) was featured on the 2018/2019 Philanthropy 50 List (Coates, 2020); this has increased to five in the 2023/2024 list (AFR, 2025).

Furthermore, grants from these five tech givers alone (Yajilarra Trust, Susan McKinnon Foundation, Mel Perkins and Cliff Obrecht via the Canva Foundation, Boundless Earth, and the 4am and Wedgetail Foundations) account for **20.9%** of giving from the top 50 philanthropists in the country.

The rise in tech founders' wealth seen here over the last six years is slated to grow. And as donations from tech givers have increased from 1% of total grants made by Australia's top givers over this period to just over one-fifth today, the future for Australia's burgeoning tech giving culture also looks bright.

■ Grants from tech philanthropists in AFR Philanthropy 50 ($ Millions)

□ % of total AFR Philanthropy 50 grant value

	2018/2019 N = 1	2019/2020 N = 3	2020/2021 N = 2	2021/2022 N = 4	2022/2023 N = 4	2023/2024 N = 5
% of total	1%	9%	12%	19%	19%	21%
Grants ($M)		$91M	$111M	$217M	$242M	$288M

Robin Khuda's gift of $100m to the University of Sydney to fund STEM education for girls adds to the optimism, as does Scott Farquhar stepping down as Atlassian Co-CEO to increase his focus on philanthropy through the Skip Foundation.

Add to this Melanie Perkins and Cliff Obrecht's pledge to give **95%** of their $13 billion Canva fortune to charity, Cameron Adams and Lisa Miller's decision to direct the majority of their wealth to environmental conservation and biodiversity restoration through their Fund and Foundation, Wedgetail, and Mike Cannon-Brookes' $1.5 billion commitment to climate projects, a third of which will be through his charitable entity Boundless Earth.

This positive assessment is further supported by looking at the US, which has a more mature philanthropic culture and tech sector. Of the US$33.4 billion donated by the USA's 50 biggest donors in 2021, about **75%** were people who accumulated their wealth from tech (The Economist, 2023). Forbes' latest 2025 release on *America's Most Generous Philanthropists* featured six tech founders in the nation's top 25 givers.

Giving by tech founders accounts for **US$67 billion, or 28%,** of the total lifetime giving (US$241 billion) of America's top 25 givers (Forbes, 2025).

| 28% | US$241 billion Total lifetime giving |

US$67 billion

In their very makeup, tech founders seem better wired for giving than wealthy people in the traditional economy. As we show in this report, founders often exhibit a different relationship to money than many people with inherited wealth and demonstrate an increasing interest in creating positive societal and environmental change through high-impact entrepreneurial giving.

This tide could reverse the current stagnation in Australia's giving, which lags behind those of other Western countries; donations by Australians are estimated to make up **0.81%** of gross domestic product (GDP), compared to **2.1%** in the US and **1.84%** in NZ (Flatau et al., 2022). Indeed, the average Australian high-net-worth individual allocates less than 1% to charity.

As giving in the tech sector is understudied in Australia, this report aims to develop a benchmark. Given StartGiving's mission, the report focusses on personal giving by tech founders and executives. While not explored here, we note that many tech companies are also corporate givers and active participants in initiatives like Pledge 1%, donating their company equity, staff time, product, and profit for community benefit.

Working in collaboration with the Centre for Social Impact at the University of Western Australia (CSI UWA), our study reveals how and why founders give, unpacks the opportunities and challenges tech givers face and provides actionable insights for other founders who may want to start their giving journey.

Australia's growing tech sector has clear, untapped potential for more and greater giving, driven by a new generation of self-made tech founders.

Impact-driven, comfortable with risk, people-oriented, and highly collaborative, tech givers' contemporary giving styles could revolutionise what it means to be a philanthropist in Australia.

We hope this report will inspire and encourage more tech founders who have the means to start giving now.

Daniel Petre AO
Founder & Chair, StartGiving

Antonia Ruffell
CEO, StartGiving

Prof Paul Flatau
Director, CSI UWA

Who are tech givers, and why do they give?

There are a handful of prominent tech founders in Australia whose personal giving is well known; however, they're the exception. The overall state of tech giving in terms of size, form, and impact is poorly understood.

In 2023, The Economist (2023) boldly declared that "a tide of tech money is transforming charity" in the USA and that the new tech philanthropists "are often young, impatient with process and detail, and keen to make a difference in a hurry".

Would our research uncover similar insights for Australian tech givers?

Self-made

Our interviewee cohort all give and are, by and large, self-made entrepreneurs from families of modest means. Most did not grow up being exposed to wealth management and were unfamiliar with philanthropic structures when they experienced a windfall capital event like the sale of their business.

> "
>
> *We didn't have a lot of resources, but my parents were of a giving mindset, they were generous in the ways that they could.*
>
> **Anon**

Community-oriented

They spoke of families who emphasised the importance of "giving back". Every interviewee either volunteered at a younger age or witnessed their parents volunteering in the community. Participants noted giving earlier rather than later in life habituates them to a life-long practice of giving. Furthermore, it allows people to discover social issues they are passionate about.

> "
>
> *From young adulthood, I always tried to contribute in social ways, which at that time was mostly volunteering.*
>
> **Craig Davis**

> "
>
> *There were lots of opportunities at school to give back. I was very lucky that my school had opportunities available for that.*
>
> **Ben Sze**

For some, religious giving or tithing influenced their early thinking.

> "
>
> *…my view is giving should be regular, not pushed back to a future date, and partly this commitment comes out of my Christian faith…we've been fortunate and able to put a third [of our wealth] into charitable giving…*
>
> **Leigh Jasper**

Global perspective

Many interviewees described personal experiences witnessing socioeconomic inequality overseas or in Australia, which heavily impacted their giving. Their global perspectives highlighted a sense of privilege, which in turn motivated their personal giving.

> *Having grown up in Vietnam, migrated to Australia, and now working in the US, I've seen firsthand the stark contrasts in quality of life, healthcare, and opportunity. Those experiences instilled in me a deep responsibility to give back—and to help bridge those gaps.*
>
> **Dimitry Tran**
>
> *One catalyst that was pretty important for us was making impact trips to various developing countries. Realising how fortunate we are motivated us to think strategically about how we can make a difference.*
>
> **Derek Gerrard**

Equitable mindset

Overall, they did not question the need for giving and its importance in a fair and equitable society. One founder came up with "enoughness" as a concept to help reconcile what they needed and what they could do with their excess funds.

> *We sold our business about 10 years ago, which brought a new level of wealth into our world. We felt that our life, from a resource point, had all that it needed so we were living in a place of "enoughness".*
>
> *Given we had enough the question became what are we meant to do with our excess?*
>
> **Kylie Gerrard**

Relationship to wealth

Crucially, founders shared a different relationship with money than wealthy people in the traditional economy or those with inherited fortunes. Many expressed a feeling of deep discomfort, even guilt, for the wealth they had amassed compared to their siblings or friends, who had also worked just as hard. Unprompted, nearly every interviewee mentioned how important luck was in how they had made their fortune, acknowledging that their success was partly due to their hard work and being in the right place at the right time. A sense of gratitude for their fortunate position played into their need to give back to the community.

> *I sold my business for a lot of money, and I felt almost guilt for the amount of money that it was. I mean, I worked hard, obviously, but it wasn't commensurate with the amount of work I did...there's people who work a lot harder than I do. So, I felt it was a duty of mine to give back to the community.*
>
> **Anon**

> *I feel very lucky. There's obviously a huge amount of work that goes into building a successful business, but it was also a high amount of luck. I feel as though I want to share that luck. Like, why should I keep that all for myself?*
>
> **Anthony Woods**

They also appreciated the opportunities afforded to them by living in Australia, both in terms of education and support systems. Several interviewees also highlighted the need to protect their children from the dangers of having too much money.

In addition, founders did not establish their startup with the goal of becoming wealthy. While they acknowledged the potential for financial success, wealth accumulation was secondary to problem-solving and innovating.

> "
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> *The goal of a startup is about building a great product or solving a really challenging problem. Then the financial success just kind of happens.*
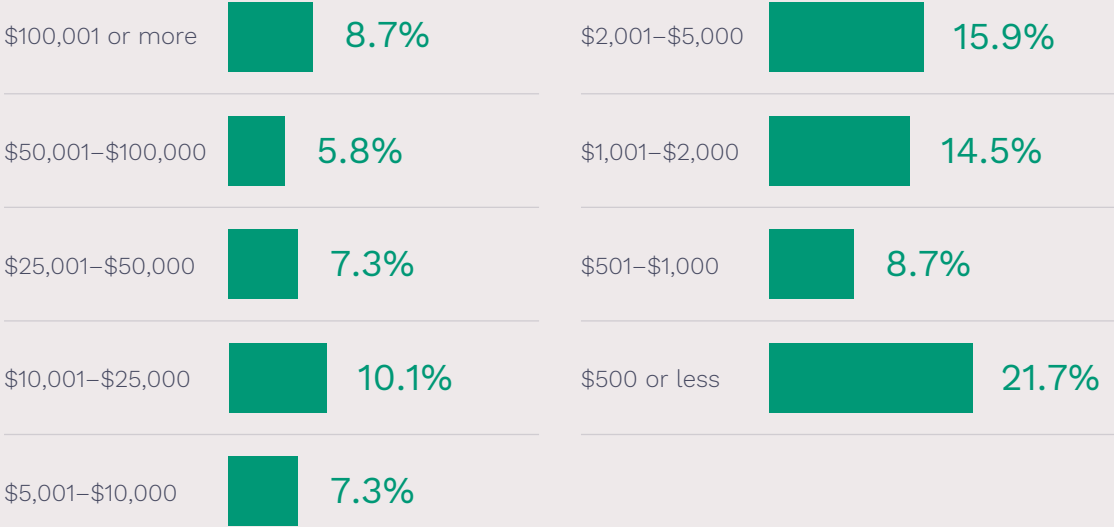>
> **Anthony Woods**

Tech community 2x more likely to give

67.8%
(weighted)
Give

96.3% of the Australian Tech Giving Survey and **62.9%** of Startup Muster respondents **(67.8% weighted)** said they donated, compared to only **27.5%** of Australian taxpayers reporting making a charitable donation in the 2021-22 financial year (ATO, 2024a).

85% of Australian Tech Giving Survey respondents volunteered in the last financial year, while **87.5%** donated money in the last financial year.

Amount donated in the last financial year (N=69)

$100,001 or more	8.7%
$50,001–$100,000	5.8%
$25,001–$50,000	7.3%
$10,001–$25,000	10.1%
$5,001–$10,000	7.3%
$2,001–$5,000	15.9%
$1,001–$2,000	14.5%
$501–$1,000	8.7%
$500 or less	21.7%

Of those who give, **84.4% of Australian Tech Giving Survey respondents** said they had allocated a percentage of their income to philanthropic giving.

The most popular amounts were:

1% of income (22.1%)	**5%** of income (10.4%)	**10%** of income (9.1%)
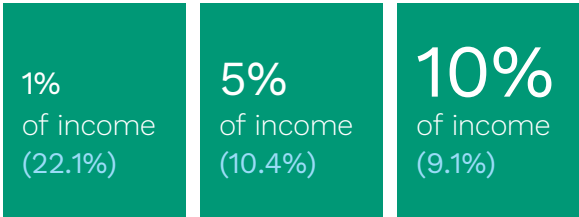
> "
>
> *There's as much in it for me as for others--great people to meet, new ideas to hear and a sense of satisfaction in contributing to something that matters.*
>
> **Anonymous survey response**

Why do you give?

Australian Tech Giving Survey (N=76)

Stacked bar values (each row):

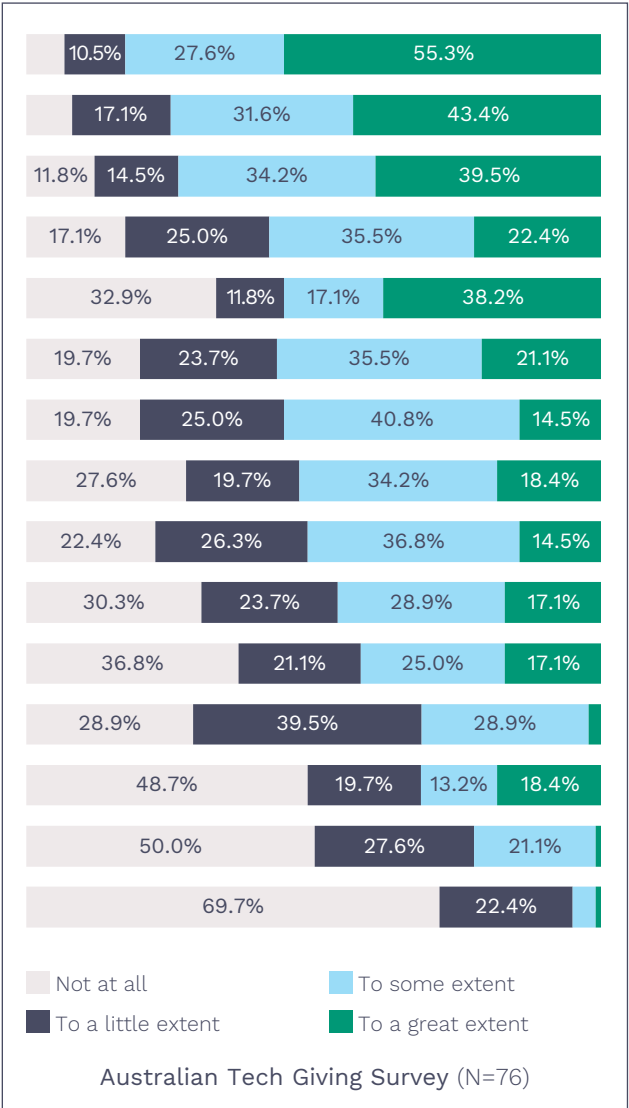| Not at all	To a little extent	To some extent	To a great extent
10.5%		27.6%	55.3%
	17.1%	31.6%	43.4%
11.8%	14.5%	34.2%	39.5%
17.1%	25.0%	35.5%	22.4%
32.9%	11.8%	17.1%	38.2%
19.7%	23.7%	35.5%	21.1%
19.7%	25.0%	40.8%	14.5%
27.6%	19.7%	34.2%	18.4%
22.4%	26.3%	36.8%	14.5%
30.3%	23.7%	28.9%	17.1%
36.8%	21.1%	25.0%	17.1%
28.9%	39.5%	28.9%	
48.7%	19.7%	13.2%	18.4%
50.0%	27.6%	21.1%	
69.7%	22.4%		

Legend:
- Not at all
- To a little extent
- To some extent
- To a great extent
- Startup Muster (N=276)
- Giving Australia* (N=26-28)

Rankings (Startup Muster = purple circle; Giving Australia* = grey circle):

Startup Muster	Giving Australia*	Reason
1	1	Make a difference
3		Feel fortunate
2	2	To give back
5	3	Personal satisfaction
4	4	Philosophy/religion
6	10	Address issues close to me
8	12	Spontaneously in response to need
8	7	Support same cause
11	6	Know someone in organisation
7	5	Set example
12	9	On the board
15	11	When I am asked
10	8	Family values
12		Tax
14	13	Honour another

This figure displays results from three data sets (Australian Tech Giving Survey N = 76, Startup Muster N = 276, and Giving Australia* N = 26-28). The reasons that Australian Tech Giving Survey respondents provided to the question "Why do you give?" are listed in descending order by the mean extent to which the reason applies. For the purposes of comparison, the ranked responses (e.g., 1 = top reason) from the Startup Muster (purple circle) and Giving Australia* (light grey circle) samples are presented.

We asked Australian Tech Giving Survey respondents who indicated they were "givers" (N = 76) the extent to which the reasons in this figure explained why they give. The top five reasons were: because they believe their giving can make a difference (1), because they feel fortunate (2), to give back to the community (3), because they get personal satisfaction from giving (4), and because of their philosophical/religious beliefs (5).

These reasons were similar to the top five reasons for giving among those who give in the Startup Muster sample (N = 276), although the order differed slightly (see rankings indicated in purple).

Further, the top reasons for giving were comparable to those of Giving Australia's philanthropist survey (Baker et al., 2017), except for "because of my desire to set an example", which was ranked much lower by the respondents in the tech samples (see rankings indicated in grey). This data point reinforces interviewee conversations with founders who favoured focusing on creating impact and actively shirked praise or plaudits for their philanthropy, preferring instead to spotlight their philanthropic partners' work and its impact.

> "We don't back projects. What we do at core is invest in organisations. It's like business investing. You want to find a team that is aligned, have missions or goals that we can understand, that measure their progress and learn, and have the capacity to do more. We want to back that team to do more."
>
> Anon

*Author comparisons made with Giving Australia 2016 - Philanthropy and Philanthropists data (Scaife, 2019) accessed via the Australian Data Archive.

When do founders give?

In the early stages of building a startup, founders typically have limited cash, as their wealth exists mainly on paper, so volunteering and giving ad hoc are popular. Signing their company up to organisations like Pledge 1% (pledging 1% of company equity, staff time, product and profit for community benefit) allowed some founders to do corporate good before they had gained meaningful levels of personal wealth.

Others chose to move some of their personal equity in their company to a foundation ahead of any major liquidity event. However, for many, a liquidity event (exits, secondary transactions, etc.) triggered them to engage in proactive, structured philanthropy for the first time.

Of the **37.5%** of Australian Tech Giving Survey respondents who had experienced a liquidity event, **36.7%** had donated some of the proceeds to charity, **33.3%** hadn't yet donated but intended to, **20%** had never thought about it, and **10%** had no intention of donating.

> *Sometimes something isn't valuable and then boom, suddenly money falls. And it's democratising. It's redistributing wealth, right? It's not just intergenerational. I think it's really cool that people have access to these assets. The downside is they might not have a culture or history or a habit of giving; they need to learn a whole new trick.*
>
> *The benefit of the tech sector for giving is money falls out of the sky sometimes. And the downside is it might fall into the hands of people who have no mindset around this.*
>
> **Rachael Neumann**

On average, respondents who had donated some of the proceeds, donated **22.2%,** and those who had not yet donated, intended to donate **17.5%** of the proceeds.

Of those who still held equity in their company, **44.2%** had intentions to donate some of the proceeds to charity, **23.3%** were undecided, **25.6%** had never considered it, and **7%** had no intention to donate. On average, those with intentions, intended to donate **16.5%** of the proceeds.

Liquidity as a catalyst for proactive giving

Liquidity events are often life-changing financial experiences and are characteristic of the startup sector.

The unpredictability of these events makes planning for future wealth or philanthropic giving difficult, especially when the founder is deep in the business of building their company.

> *I think giving relies on those liquidity events and whether the company gets sold or goes public. As soon as those moments happen, then people start to be able to do it in earnest.*
>
> **Niki Scevak**

However, once a significant liquidity event arises it often happens when a founder is younger than wealth creators in the traditional economy and coincides with them stepping back from an all-consuming executive role, allowing them greater time and capacity to focus on giving.

It's 10 times better [as opposed to giving later]. Firstly, people need help now. Secondly, selfishly, I can enjoy seeing the benefits. Why would I wait?

Craig Davis

Unless I can do something that's going to make an impact, I don't really tend to do it. So, I don't know that I would have gotten into it earlier, but now that I can actually have an impact, I'm well and truly all in on that.

Anon

We spent the latter half of my professional career in the US. In the Bay Area, most successful people we knew donated money to causes they cared about and we did the same. Since moving back to Australia, we've focused even more on philanthropy. Our whole family spends time volunteering and we set up a foundation to scale our philanthropy. It wasn't a difficult conversation to decide to increase our giving -- it just made sense and the conversation lasted less than half an hour. We are motivated to contribute to causes that are important to us in our lifetimes.

Hugh Williams

There was a business transaction, and we had a decision to make. Suddenly, this notional money became actual cash. We sat down with a spreadsheet, and worked out what do we need to live on? How do we look after our aging parents and educate our kids and maintain our house? We could give our time, like not have to work for money, and then what would it cost us to live for the rest of our lives? It was a glorified budgeting process, trying to look out 30 years or more.

We worked backwards and decided we really needed less than 10% of this amount of money to live on. So, we put that aside and put the balance, more than 90%, in a charitable structure and began to give it away.

Anon

What are the barriers to giving?

Giving culture

Australia's lack of a "culture of philanthropy" is a significant barrier to charitable giving. Unlike the US, where philanthropy is celebrated and expected, Australia's cultural norms favour giving privately and quietly.

> **"** *In the US, not just within the tech sector, the social contract is set quite early that giving is something that people do.*
>
> **Andrew Barnes**

Australia's giving culture is also influenced by our egalitarian values and the pervasiveness of "tall-poppy syndrome", where high achievers or those who stand out in society are "cut down" (Phillips et al., 2021). Interviewees feared being judged for their financial success if they had open conversations about their giving.

> **"** *You need more examples of personal giving. It needs to become more of the norm rather than the exception.*
>
> **Anon**

However, a positive shift in giving culture has been observed, particularly in the startup community, as there is more acceptance of financial success and less prevalence of tall poppy syndrome. Cultural familiarity with giving can be encouraged and fostered by simply talking and sharing giving stories within networks.

> **"** *It's a difficult conversation, because there's this envy or jealousy thing anytime somebody's a bit rich or successful, so we don't talk about these things because that's the risk.*
>
> *In the startup community, it's more OK to be financially successful. We can create better conversations around that.*
>
> **Craig Davis**

Importance of getting started early

When beginning their giving journey, interviewees shared that the process of searching for causes to give to was "trial-and-error", and "scattergun", indicating an initial lack of clarity and direction that gradually became clearer as giving continued. However, a lack of knowledge does not entirely stop them from getting started on their giving journey.

> **"** *Trial and error is definitely a very useful mechanism of discovery. You only really find out after doing something.*
>
> **Niki Scevak**

Another participant described giving as a "skill into itself" and said that becoming good at impactful giving requires "decades" of repeated practice. Therefore, one would want to start giving at a younger age instead of waiting until one is older.

> I would call our approach as a bit scattergun for about the first eight years. It was not at all strategic and very much just causes and people we met in life that were doing good things that we felt we wanted to support.

Anon

> Giving is a skill similar to investing. To become a great investor, you need to practice it every day for decades and with that path, you have a chance of making a big impact, versus waiting to the end of your life and then start giving, where you'd have less skill in giving it and knowing what's a good donation, and where money is wasted.

Niki Scevak

Taxes vs philanthropy

Additionally, given our robust welfare system, Australians often perceive social issues as the government's responsibility. In contrast, the US has a weaker social safety net, prompting high-net-worth individuals to contribute more to public services (Ruffell, 2024).

> I think that a culture of giving would be a wonderful societal shift where we don't view it simply as a role for government to support general social causes. It's also a personal responsibility.

Andrew Barnes

> Once we paid our taxes, my view is you go well beyond that, and give generously on top. It's not just the government's job to help people, it's a job for all of us to lean in, and take responsibility to help others.

Leigh Jasper

Bad press

The fear of negative media coverage was identified as a barrier to sharing positive stories of personal giving. Founders who give solely to make a positive impact may not believe it's worth the attention and risk to publicise their philanthropy to raise awareness.

> *There's this no-win situation where whatever you do is going to be torn down and misconstrued. It feels like a dangerous jungle to be publicising everything versus just going and doing it and seeing the impact.*
>
> *I don't want my name on a building, but I'm not keeping it a secret either.*
>
> **Niki Scevak**

Good to talk

Despite the possible caveats of publicising personal giving, it's important to have individuals who are willing to raise awareness of philanthropy to develop a better Australian giving culture. Ultimately, we should focus on celebrating the positive impact and successes more.

> *I think the concept of talking about philanthropy can be uncomfortable for donors who prefer to give quietly.*
>
> *There's a concern that being known for giving might attract unwanted attention. Whether that's true or not, we need courageous individuals to lead by example and champion this cause.*
>
> **Ian Gardiner**

How do tech givers give?

Fail fast, learn faster

Some tech founders are attracted to the data-driven philanthropic practice of the "effective altruism" movement, favouring evidence to inform impact-driven giving (Beasley & Cheney, 2022). Others have a higher tolerance for risk in philanthropy, being familiar with a "fail fast, learn faster" approach, making them more open to new, unproven solutions. Avid learners, they lean heavily into experimentation with positivity and optimism when they start giving and are not afraid of not knowing all the answers initially.

> "
>
> *I mean, we've had a lot of failures, there's no doubt.*
>
> **Anon**

> "
>
> *An important aspect of how we think about solving these problems that I like to bring from my experience from building a tech company is that focus on the difference between the perfect solution and good enough. We just need good enough. If we try and make everything perfect, we'll never achieve it, we'll never get there. But if we just aim for those constant incremental improvements, we just want to make sure that we're moving in the right direction. That's the thing that matters most.*
>
> **Anthony Woods**

> "
>
> *A big challenge is just educating myself and being aware of what's out there, understanding what good work people are doing that could benefit from support and giving. I think we're probably too early in the journey to know all the potholes and challenges ahead, so I'm naively optimistic at this point in time.*
>
> **Andrew Barnes**

Giving with urgency

They feel fortunate for their wealth and are sensitive to issues of inequity and inequality. They are keen to tackle the world's most pressing problems, with their focus extending beyond traditional areas such as social welfare, health, and education to solving systemic issues, including climate change and human rights.

> "
>
> *One of the areas we work in is climate change. And that's because it's such a meta issue that affects everything else. If we don't get that right, it will particularly affect those with less resources. It's a justice issue apart from anything else. It's existential and it's urgent.*
>
> **Anon**

Backing people and teams

Interviewees strongly preferred backing people over projects, reflecting the angel investing/VC principle that capable individuals with the right mindset drive success. While they have preferred issue areas, they prioritise strong leadership, well-run organisations, talented teams, and good governance, often leaning in to support their work to build scale.

> *I like to support people who are doing something nice and targeted, which probably comes from my startup and business background.*
>
> **Craig Davis**

> *We've tried to approach philanthropy by saying we want to find excellent people aligned to our goals that we can back to do what they're already doing at higher scale. We don't want to be going in with project-based work where we define the goals.*
>
> **Anon**

> *I want to take more of the VC approach of finding great people and investing in them. It's the people that make the difference, rather than trying to find the perfect program.*
>
> **Anthony Woods**

Problem solvers

Many interviewees felt that founders are natural problem solvers, transferring this passion in their work, to solving social issues.

> *I believe that's what founders have, this passion and curiosity about a particular problem that they want to solve. And I think that applies to a social issue.*
>
> **Ben Sze**

However, it is important to learn from and support existing experts and workers in the social impact space.

> *Being a tech entrepreneur doesn't make you expert in the problems of the world. You'd be wise to take the time to listen and learn from those who are working in the space every day.*
>
> **Anon**

Giving earlier

Starting giving early is generally acknowledged as important for building knowledge, with learning compounding over time. However, the shift from reactive to proactive giving typically happens after a liquidity event, when founders gain both resources and the capacity to plan. The shift can be sudden, forcing them to learn quickly and adopt a new approach almost overnight.

> *If we're able to encourage and start that familiarity with giving from a much, much earlier stage, then it becomes more of a natural topic.*
>
> **Andrew Barnes**

> *The idea of giving early matters because, as founders, we're wired to take action. That urgency—the drive to make things happen—is strongest early on. If you channel it into giving while you still have the energy and focus, you're not only able to make a real, lasting difference—you're also in a better position to see it through.*
>
> **Dimitry Tran**

Giving as a team sport

Spouses, too, play an integral role in many respondents' philanthropic decision-making, making the practice a joint effort.

> *Both my wife and I have always supported organisations where we can throughout our lives, but it's small donations, which all add up when everybody's contributing. But once we were in a position where we had excess funds that we didn't know what to do with it just made sense for us to go and focus on having a much bigger impact, to support organisations in a bigger way.*
>
> **Anthony Woods**

How tech giving differs from traditional philanthropy

Early indications show differences in how and to whom people from the tech sector and the general population give.

Structured giving

For Australian founders, "structured giving" is understood less as being about the structure itself (e.g. private or public ancillary funds) and more about the act of proactive, consistent philanthropy. Key drivers for setting up a PAF (private ancillary fund) or sub-fund in a public ancillary fund include managing windfall income by putting aside funds for distribution over time and acting as a "forcing mechanism" to lock in a commitment to giving. Traditional motivations for setting up a PAF, such as family involvement, legacy-building and tax effectiveness, are less prominent among tech founders.

> "
>
> *A third of…our assets have been donated into a PAF. This locks in our giving and we can then donate out of the PAF to various charities over time.*
>
> Leigh Jasper
>
> *I liked setting up the PAF because it is that great forcing function of having to take giving seriously. We have to prioritise this in our life and put some effort into it. It makes giving an important part of our lives that we must deal with.*
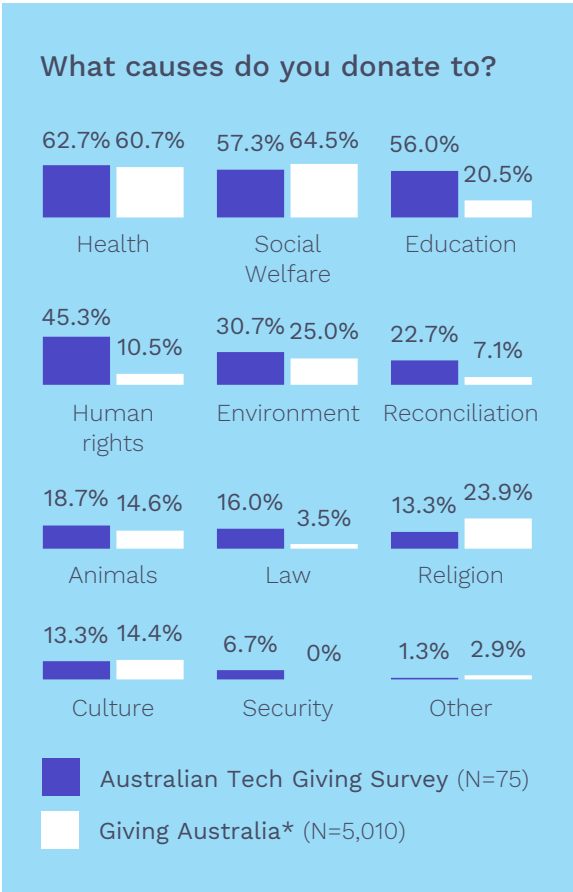>
> Anthony Woods

Where tech givers donate

The most common causes supported by the Australian Tech Giving Survey respondents were advancing health **(62.7%)**, advancing social or public welfare **(57.3%)**, advancing education **(56.0%)**, promoting or protecting human rights **(45.3%)**, and advancing the natural environment **(30.7%)**. These results broadly align with the cause areas supported by interview subjects.
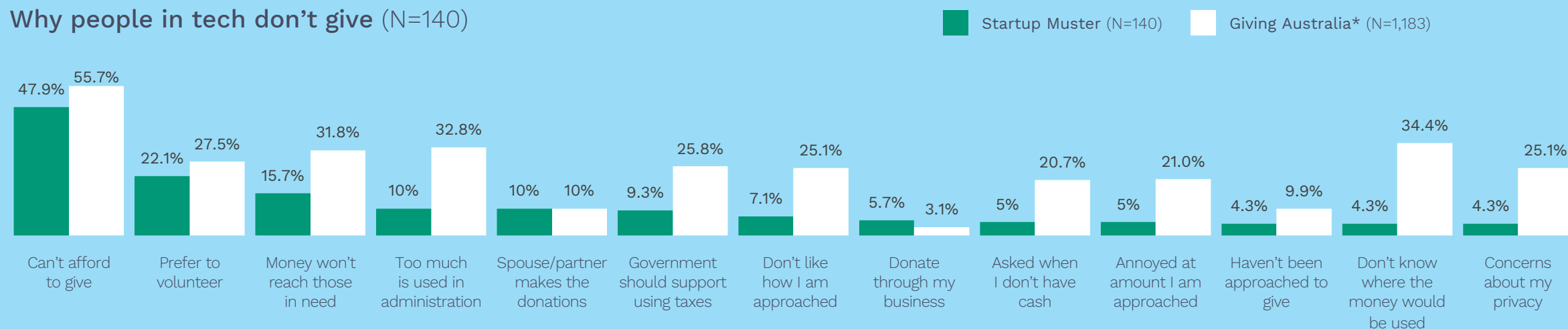
Compared to the general population sample (i.e., the Giving Australia* Individuals survey), similar proportions of respondents supported health and social welfare charities. However, greater proportions of the tech sample supported the environment and charities promoting reconciliation, mutual respect and tolerance between groups of individuals in Australia, than the general population. Further, charities advancing religion were supported by a greater proportion of the general population sample than the tech sample.

*Author comparisons made with Giving Australia 2016 Individual Giving and Volunteering data (Scaife et al., 2019) accessed via the Australian Data Archive.

Australian Tech Giving Survey respondents were asked what causes they donate money to based on the charity subtypes specified in the Charities Act 2013 (Cth) as used by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC).

What causes do you donate to?

62.7% 60.7%	57.3% 64.5%	56.0% 20.5%
Health	Social Welfare	Education
45.3% 10.5%	30.7% 25.0%	22.7% 7.1%
Human rights	Environment	Reconciliation
18.7% 14.6%	16.0% 3.5%	13.3% 23.9%
Animals	Law	Religion
13.3% 14.4%	6.7% 0%	1.3% 2.9%
Culture	Security	Other

■ Australian Tech Giving Survey (N=75)

□ Giving Australia* (N=5,010)

Why people in tech don't give (N=140)

Startup Muster (N=140)   Giving Australia* (N=1,183)

Reason	Startup Muster	Giving Australia*
Can't afford to give	47.9%	55.7%
Prefer to volunteer	22.1%	27.5%
Money won't reach those in need	15.7%	31.8%
Too much is used in administration	10%	32.8%
Spouse/partner makes the donations	10%	10%
Government should support using taxes	9.3%	25.8%
Don't like how I am approached	7.1%	25.1%
Donate through my business	5.7%	3.1%
Asked when I don't have cash	5%	20.7%
Annoyed at amount I am approached	5%	21.0%
Haven't been approached to give	4.3%	9.9%
Don't know where the money would be used	4.3%	34.4%
Concerns about my privacy	4.3%	25.1%

As too few (N = 3) respondents to the Australian Tech Giving Survey reported that they do not give, only responses from the non-givers (N =140) in the Startup Muster survey are presented here. The most common reason for Startup Muster respondents saying they do not give was because they could not afford to (47.9%). This was followed by preferring to volunteer time over money (22.1%), not believing the money would reach those in need (15.7%), believing too much of every dollar is used in administration (10.0%), and that their partner makes the donations (10.0%).

By contrast, Giving Australia*'s individual (general population) survey found that the main reasons people did not give were that they couldn't afford it (55.7%), didn't know where the money would be used (34.4%), thought too much of every dollar was used in administration (32.8%), and believed the money wouldn't reach those who needed it (31.8%).
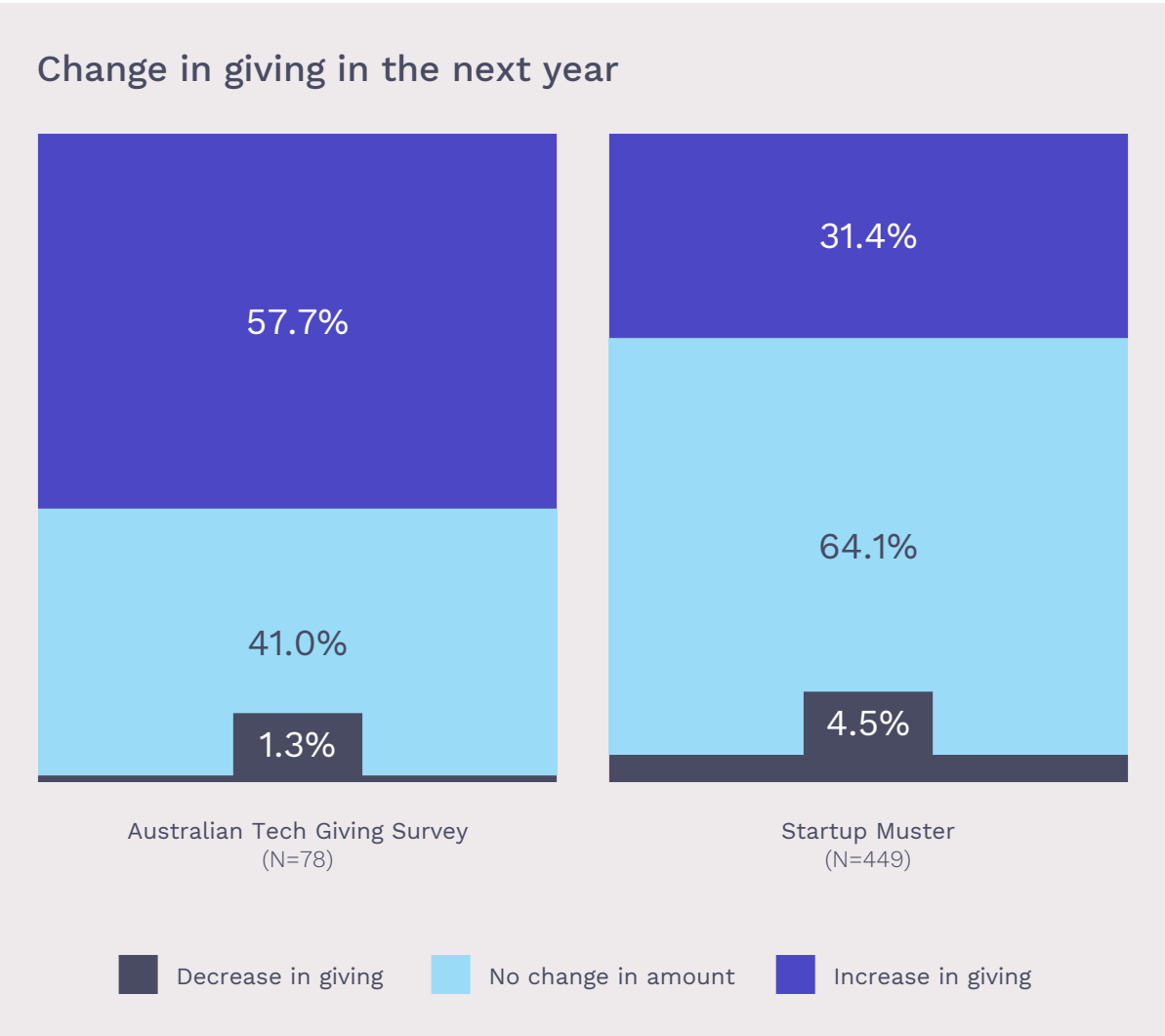
While many of these reasons are similar to those in the Startup Muster survey, the proportion of the sample that selected each reason is much lower than the general population sample, suggesting that those in the tech sector have more trust in not-for-profits and their use of donated funds.

*Author comparisons made with Giving Australia 2016 Individual Giving and Volunteering data (Scaife et al., 2019) accessed via the Australian Data Archive.

Future giving intentions

All the interviewees in our study are currently giving and have already or are soon to commit significant amounts of money to future giving. For a perspective from the broader tech sector, we also asked respondents to the Australian Tech Giving Survey (N=78) and Startup Muster (N=449) if they expected any changes to their giving in the next year.

Over half **(57.7%)** of Australian Tech Giving Survey respondents expected their giving to increase in the next year, compared to just under a third **(31.4%)** of the Startup Muster sample. Further, **9.0%** of the Australian Tech Giving Survey respondents reported they had intentions to change the causes they give to.

Change in giving in the next year

	Australian Tech Giving Survey (N=78)	Startup Muster (N=449)
Increase in giving	57.7%	31.4%
No change in amount	41.0%	64.1%
Decrease in giving	1.3%	4.5%

Legend: Decrease in giving · No change in amount · Increase in giving

I want my giving to go beyond just donations and contribute to building a culture of generosity and sustainability within communities and organisations. My ambition is to create systems that make it easier for individuals and companies to give back in meaningful ways, whether through time, resources, or skills. I also aim to focus more on long-term partnerships that address root causes rather than short-term fixes, creating lasting change. Ultimately, I hope my giving inspires others to take action and find their own path to making a positive impact.

Anonymous survey response

Setting up a charitable foundation

1/5 Intend to

About a fifth of the Australian Tech Giving Survey sample **(20.8%)** and the Startup Muster sample **(19.1%)** indicated that they intend to set up their own charitable foundation.

1/4 Undecided

Just under a quarter (**24.7%** and **22.1%** of Australian Tech Giving Survey and Startup Muster, respectively) were undecided.
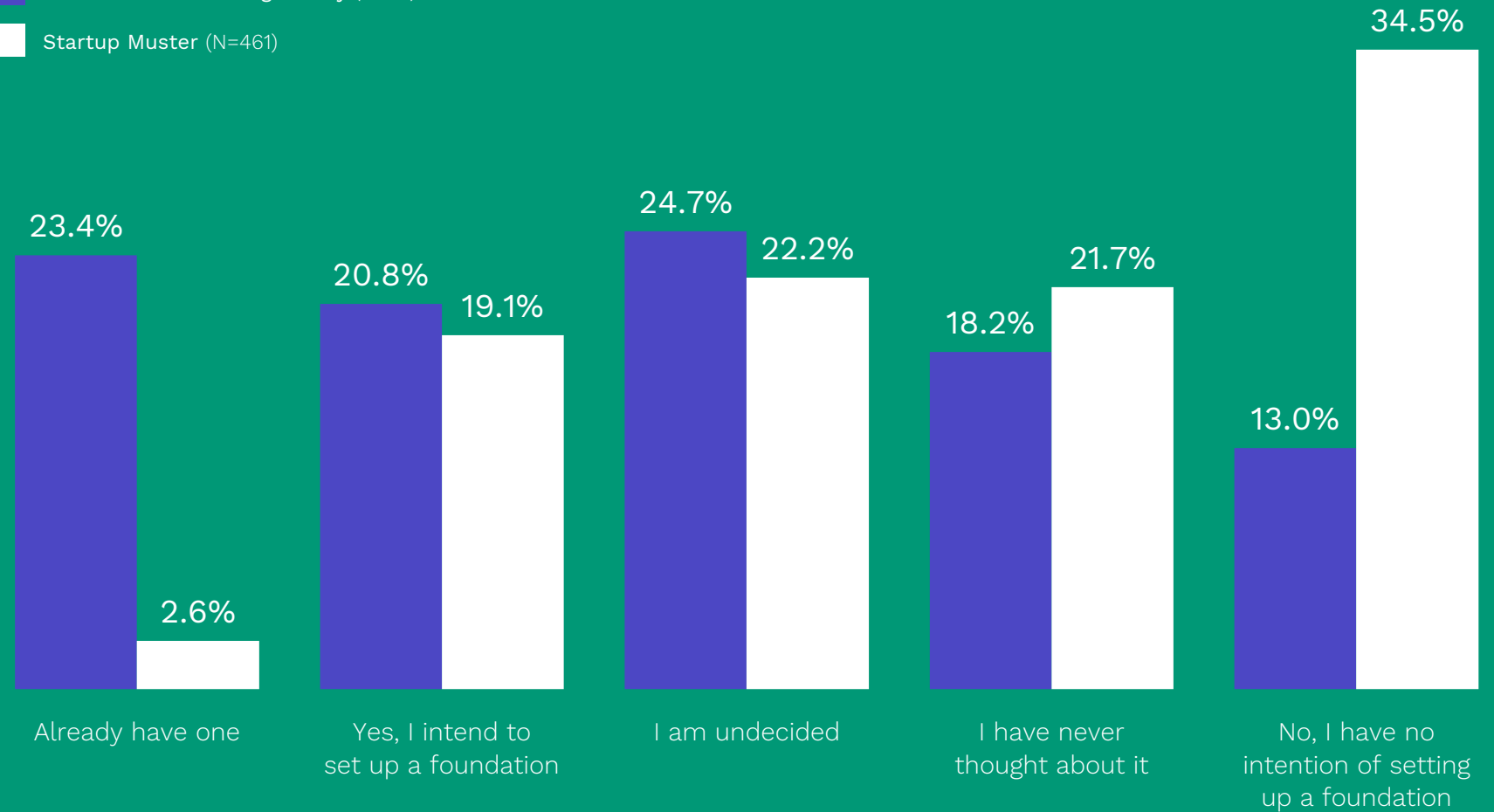
1/5 Never thought about it

About a fifth (**18.2%** and **21.7%** of Australian Tech Giving Survey and Startup Muster, respectively) had never thought about it.

Do you intend to set up your own charitable foundation in the future?

■ Australian Tech Giving Survey (N=77)
□ Startup Muster (N=461)

	Already have one	Yes, I intend to set up a foundation	I am undecided	I have never thought about it	No, I have no intention of setting up a foundation
Australian Tech Giving Survey	23.4%	20.8%	24.7%	18.2%	13.0%
Startup Muster	2.6%	19.1%	22.2%	21.7%	34.5%

What's the opportunity?

More tech givers, more giving earlier

Given the substantial personal wealth accumulating from tech, we hope that those with the means will commit meaningful funds to future charitable work now and start to distribute a portion of those funds to charity sooner.

We conservatively estimate the giving potential of the 30 wealthiest people in tech as well over $25 billion*, with approximately $19 billion of that already committed by a handful of this group. To understand their potential impact on Australian philanthropy, if these 30 people (many of whom have not made public commitments to philanthropy) had distributed **5%** of a small slice **(2.5 – 10%)** of their total fortunes to charity last year, they would have taken 23 spots on the 2025 Philanthropy 50 list.

Importantly though, this movement isn't just about the ultra-rich.

The challenge is to catalyse the hundreds of wealthy individuals in tech to start or scale their giving journey now, growing the number of people actively participating in philanthropy in a thoughtful, proactive way. With more secondary transactions and some anticipated IPOs in the offing, StartGiving is primed to support a rise in the number of founders and executives establishing philanthropic structures in the next 12 to 24 months.

*To arrive at this number, we combined the known charitable commitments of the tech givers on the Philanthropy 50 and Rich Lists. In addition, we made an allowance for the remaining founders on the Rich List with net wealth over $1 billion (to commit 10% of it to charity), and under $1 billion (to commit 2.5% to charity).

A stronger, collaborative culture of giving

We're seeing signs of a more open, cooperative practice of giving among tech founders. They appear open to fostering a stronger culture of giving by sharing their experiences and learning from their peers who are also engaged in philanthropy. They value case studies and real examples from other tech givers.

> "
> *By talking and sharing the things that they're doing, others naturally learn about giving as well. It's great that StartGiving and other organisations like them are creating the framework and materials to make it easier for people to start those journeys themselves.*
>
> **Andrew Barnes**

> "
> *My giving kind of ramped up and became more structured because I had a conversation on a bus on the way to an event with someone from StartGiving.*
>
> **Rachael Neumann**

Comfortable in the highly networked tech ecosystem, founders' openness to collaborating with peers creates an environment for shared learning and could help new tech givers become more confident philanthropists faster.

> *What can I give back that's not just the time and the energy? And how might I give back to other people who want to do the same, who don't know how?*
>
> *One of the biggest attitudes we need to change is being willing to say, "I don't know how to do this, but I want to learn" and other people stepping up to say, "I've done this. I didn't do it well, but here's what I know, here's what I've learned."*

Steve King

Shifting giving practices

Our research shows that founders display a different attitude to wealth than their peers in the traditional economy, which translates to the way they give their money away.

Entrepreneurial giving could help shift the power dynamics of philanthropy by backing people and teams over projects, providing substantial multi-year grants, favouring impact rather than personal acclaim, and empowering non-profit leaders with the resources and control to decide how their funding can best be used.

> *It's finding these passionate people who have a great set of skills and supporting them, rather than a specific program. We give them that flexibility to adapt and change as they go on their journey trying to solve problems.*

Anthony Woods

Tech founders' approach to philanthropy is often more flexible, focused on outcomes, and built on trust. Rather than funding specific projects with strict reporting requirements, entrepreneurial givers are more likely to back people and teams directly, offering larger, longer-term funding and giving charities the freedom to use it how they see fit. They're less interested in personal recognition, and more motivated by genuine impact.

This growing group of tech founders is building significant personal wealth and bringing a fresh mindset to giving. Many are choosing to give while still actively involved in their startup careers, rather than waiting until later in life. Their emphasis on effectiveness, collaboration, and making a real difference, rather than leaving a legacy, could help reshape Australian philanthropy, shifting not just how much money is given, but how it's gifted and what it achieves.

> *What I have probably learnt the most from giving is just how much so many people care about helping others and how when a group of smart, passionate, resourceful, and innovative people get together that they truly have the power to achieve remarkable transformational change in society to improve the standards of living for everyone.*
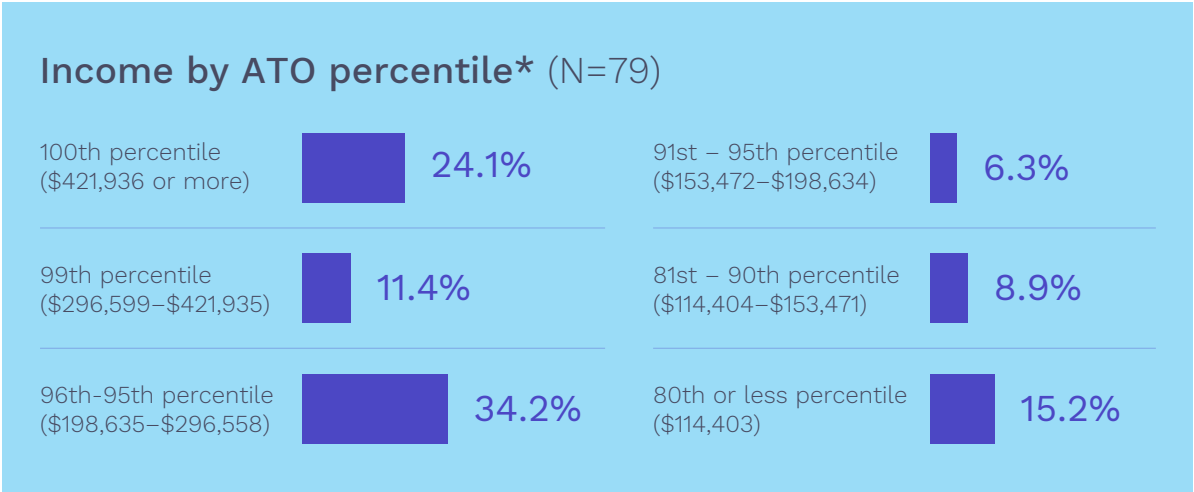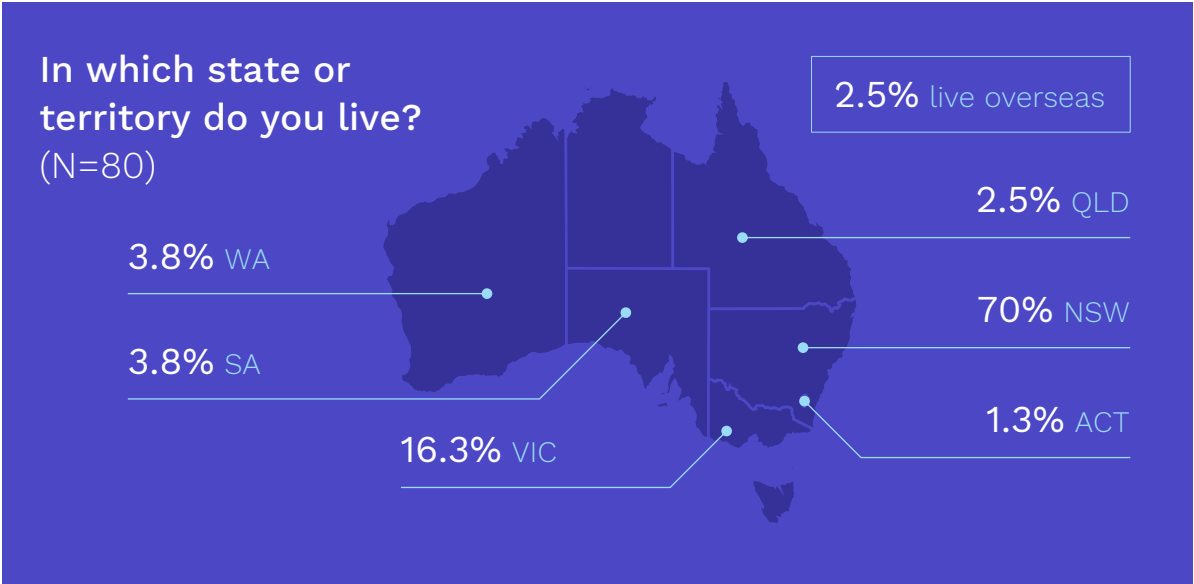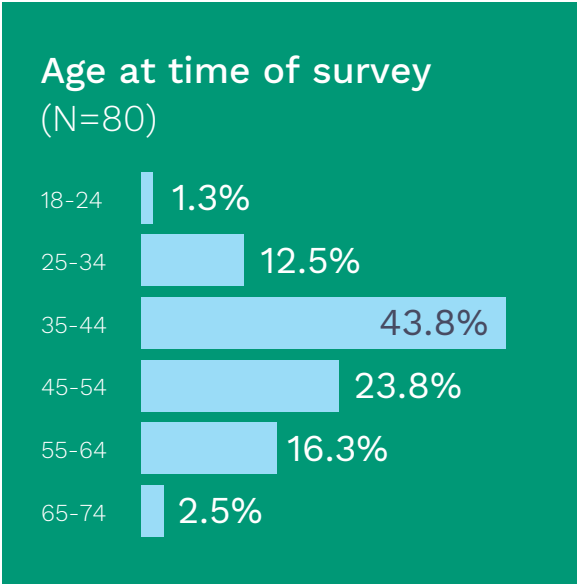
Anonymous survey response

Our methodology

To explore the state, significance, and potential of tech giving in Australia, CSI UWA, in collaboration with StartGiving, undertook primary research using interviews and surveys, complemented by desktop research and analysis.

We conducted a series of one-on-one interviews with 19 people (21% women, 79% men): nine tech founders, one founder's spouse (also a former tech executive), four investors and two executives from large tech companies. Some interviews took place with the founder and at least one other person associated with them.

In addition, we invited founders and executives from tech companies and intermediaries of every growth stage across Australia to complete a survey. The Australian Tech Giving Survey was administered online in 2024. Questions were adapted from philanthropic research studies in Australia, including Baker et al., 2017; McGregor-Lowndes et al., 2017; Philanthropy Australia, 2022. A total of 80 people completed the survey (37.5% women, 62.5% men; mean age: 44.6).
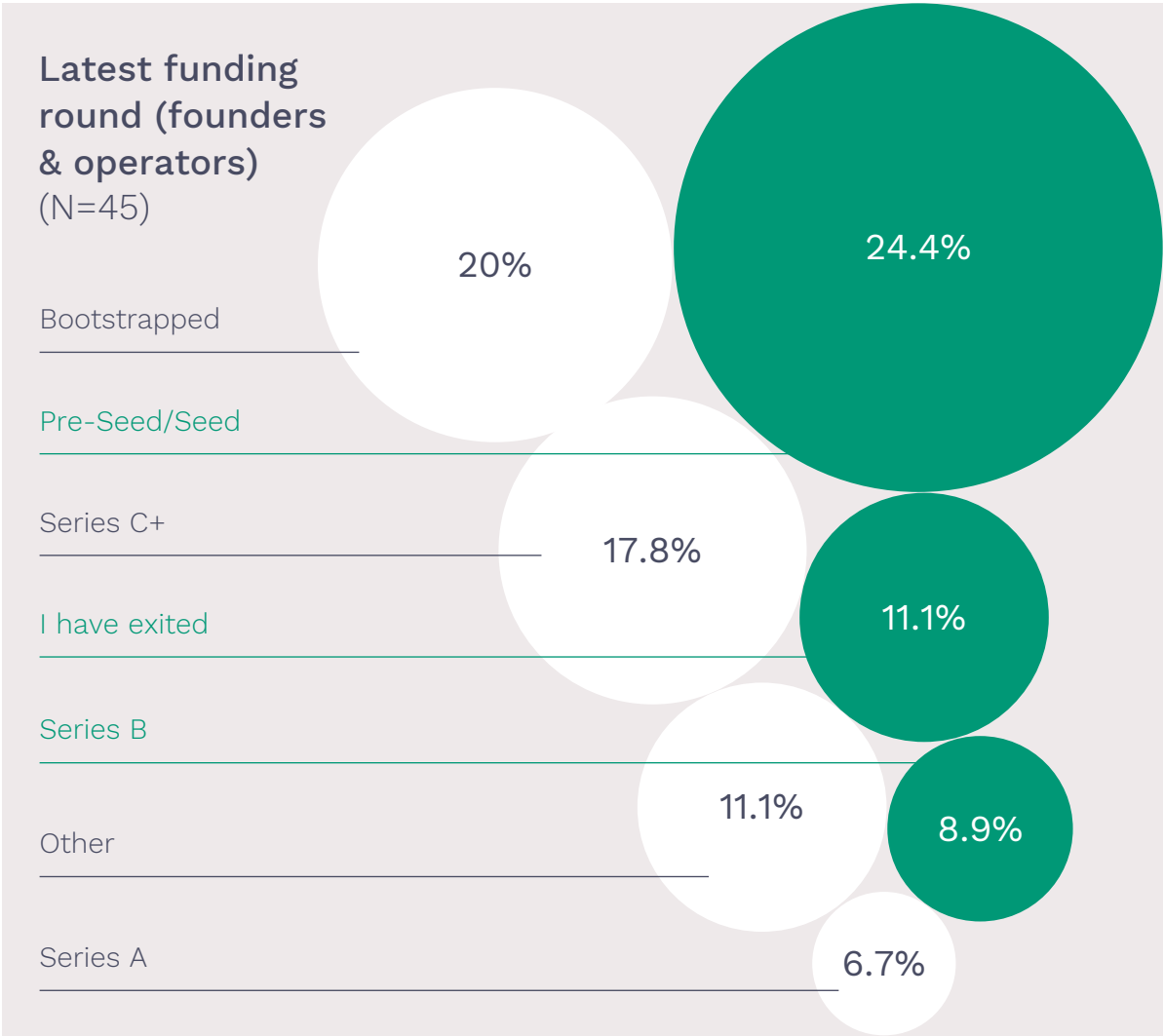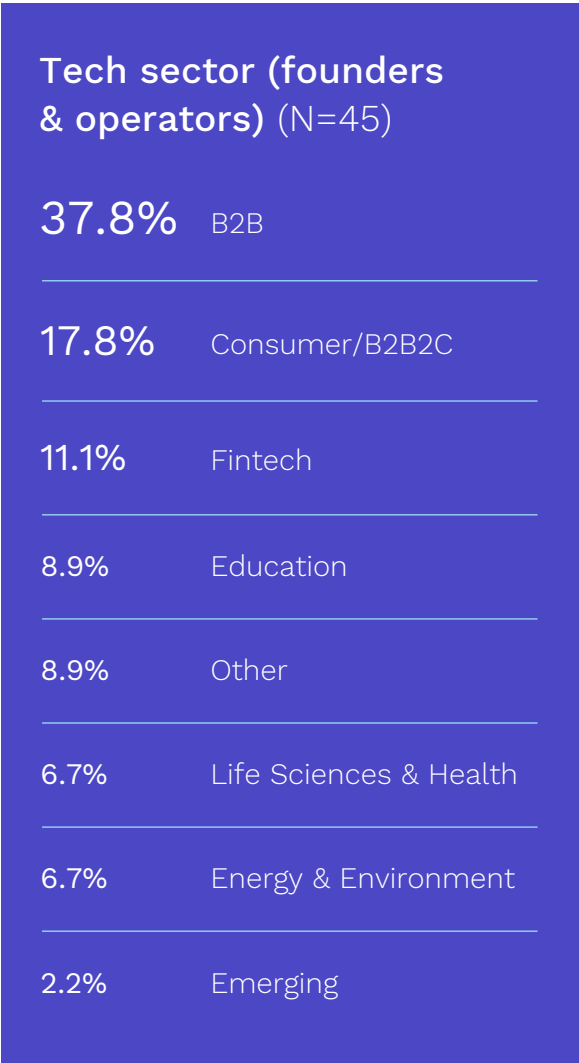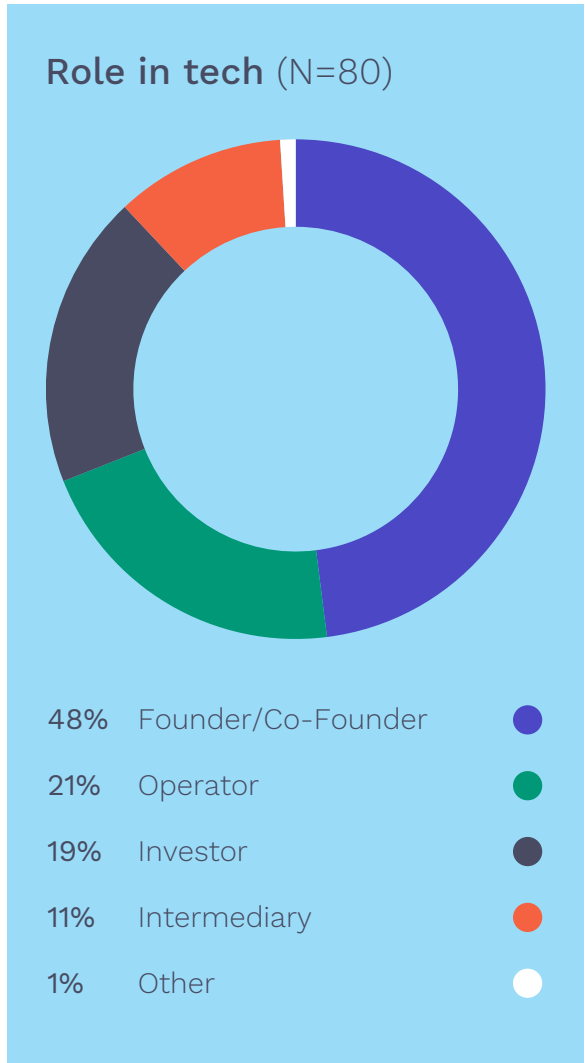
Approval to conduct this research was provided by UWA Human Ethics Ref: 2024/ET000390.

To supplement the research, we included several questions on personal giving in the Startup Muster survey (Startup Muster, 2024). 522 people (30.3% women, 68.4% men, 0.4% non-binary, 1.0% other) completed the giving questions in this survey (61.1% startups, 36.4% intermediaries, 2.5% both).

In which state or territory do you live? (N=80)

2.5% live overseas

3.8% WA

3.8% SA

2.5% QLD

70% NSW

1.3% ACT

16.3% VIC

Age at time of survey (N=80)

Age	%
18-24	1.3%
25-34	12.5%
35-44	43.8%
45-54	23.8%
55-64	16.3%
65-74	2.5%

Income by ATO percentile* (N=79)

Percentile	%
100th percentile ($421,936 or more)	24.1%
99th percentile ($296,599–$421,935)	11.4%
96th-95th percentile ($198,635–$296,558)	34.2%
91st – 95th percentile ($153,472–$198,634)	6.3%
81st – 90th percentile ($114,404–$153,471)	8.9%
80th or less percentile ($114,403)	15.2%

*Income categories based on ATO percentile distribution of taxable individuals for the 2021-22 financial year (ATO, 2024b).

Our methodology (cont.)
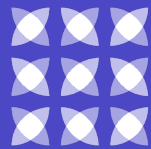
Role in tech (N=80)

48%	Founder/Co-Founder
21%	Operator
19%	Investor
11%	Intermediary
1%	Other

Tech sector (founders & operators) (N=45)

37.8%	B2B
17.8%	Consumer/B2B2C
11.1%	Fintech
8.9%	Education
8.9%	Other
6.7%	Life Sciences & Health
6.7%	Energy & Environment
2.2%	Emerging

Latest funding round (founders & operators) (N=45)

Bootstrapped — 20%

Pre-Seed/Seed — 24.4%

Series C+ — 17.8%

I have exited — 11.1%

Series B — 11.1%

Other — 8.9%

Series A — 6.7%

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