



2026 Canadian Report Gift in Wills

An analysis of 10,942 Wills revealing charitable giving patterns and trends among Canadians



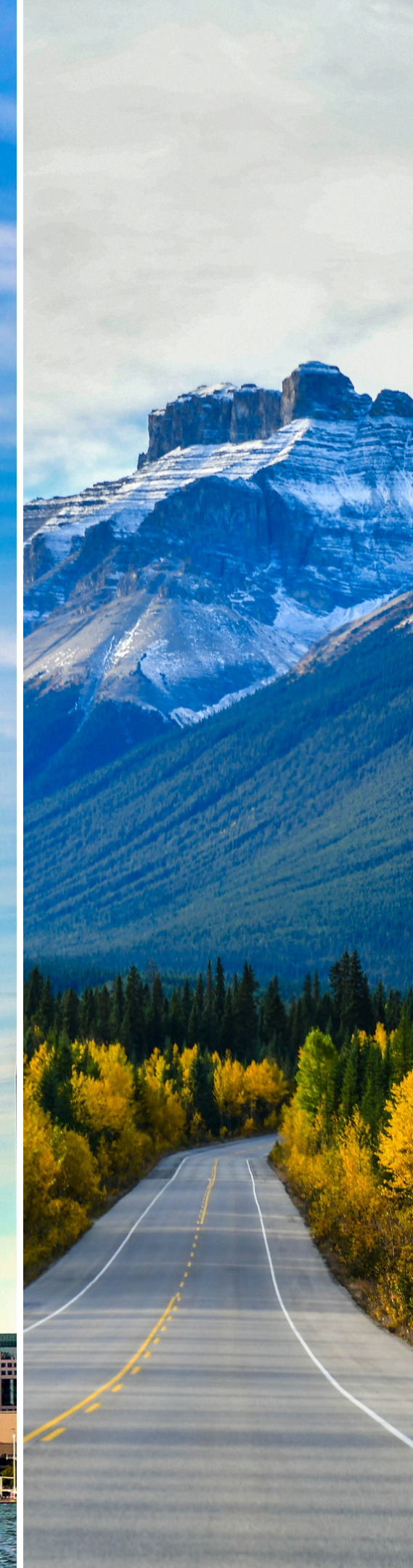
LegalWills

Gifts in Wills

Gifts in Wills, or bequests, are asset transfers individuals specify in their Last Will and Testament, taking effect after their death.

To understand Canadians' gifting preferences, we analysed data from 10,942 Wills in our database, with no personally identifiable information.

This study reveals the most common bequests among Canadian testators, offering insights into their priorities and values regarding their legacies.



The Method

The provided dataset contained 18,642 rows. Data was cleaned to extract monetary values from bequest types. Duplicate cases, and cases where charities were not listed or could not be identified were removed. Further filtering was performed to provide a working dataset of 18,308 rows from Wills across all provinces and territories in Canada.

CHARITIES WERE ALLOCATED VIA AUTOMATION AND MANUAL CURATION TO THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES:



ANIMAL



ENVIRONMENT



INTERNATIONAL AID



ARTS



SPECIAL INTEREST



POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS



COMMUNITY



HEALTH



RELIGIOUS



EDUCATION

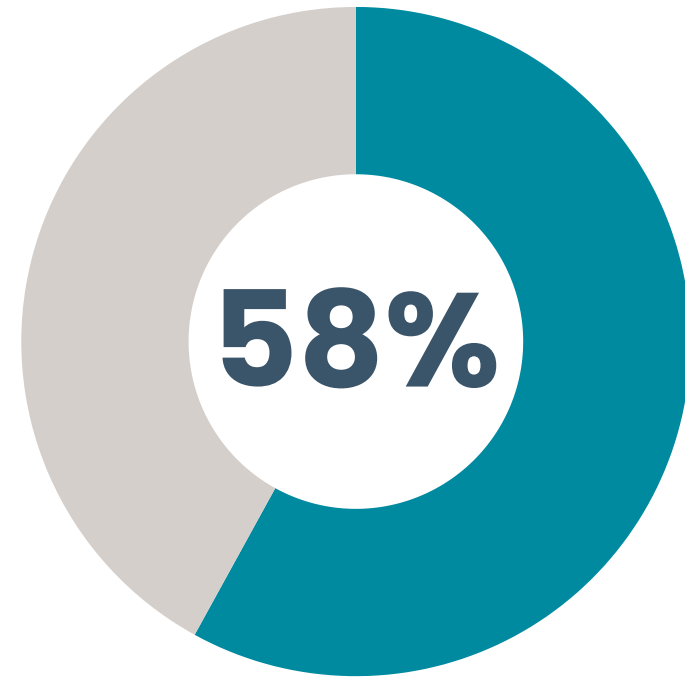


HOSPITAL FOUNDATIONS

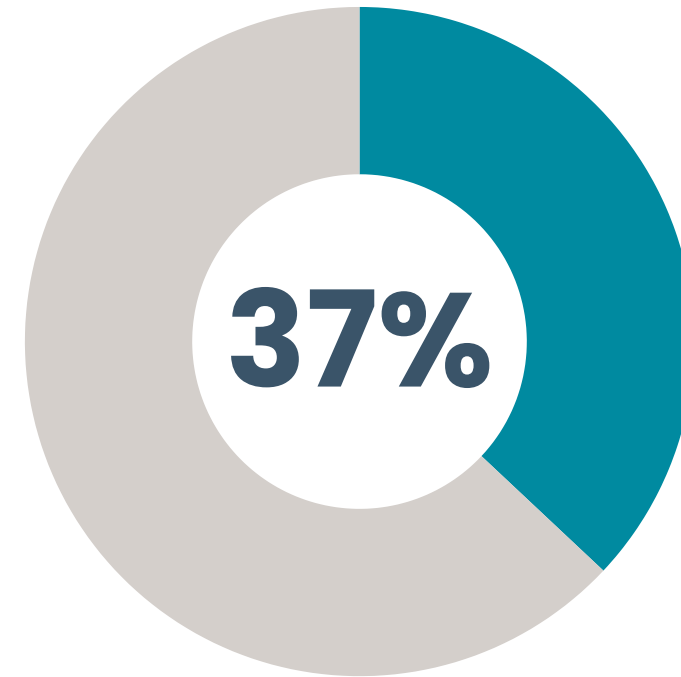


Data Overview

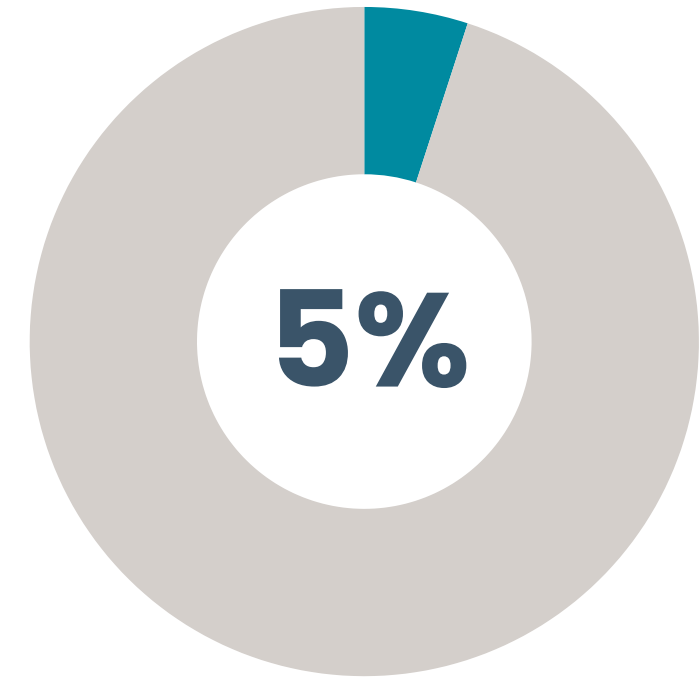
10,942
Wills written



of bequests were of a specific monetary value



of bequests were a percentage of the estate



of bequests detailed a specific asset

\$15,187
mean bequest left behind

\$44,982
mean residual gift value

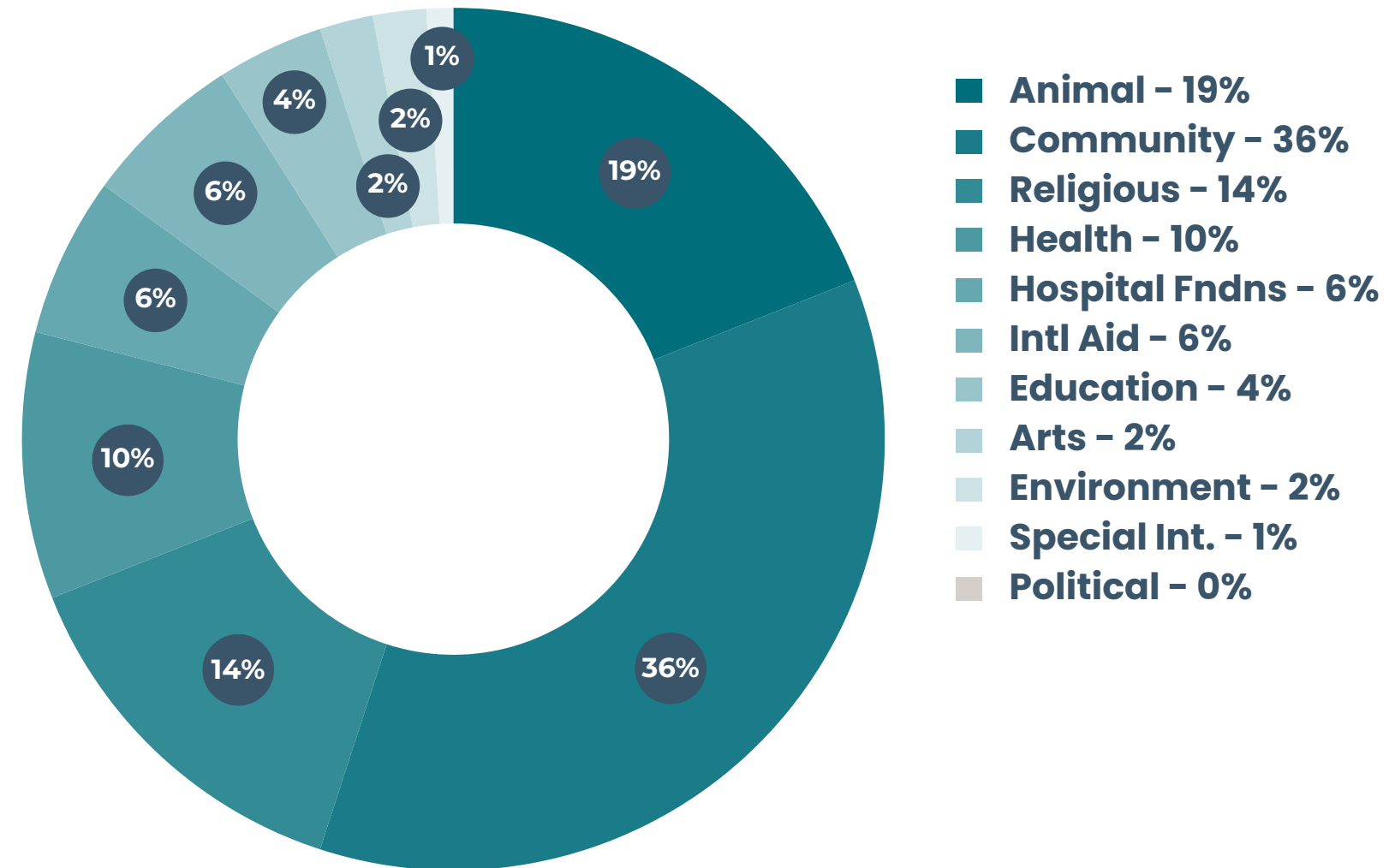
\$504.9
million CAD requested

3,611
Wills feature more than one bequest

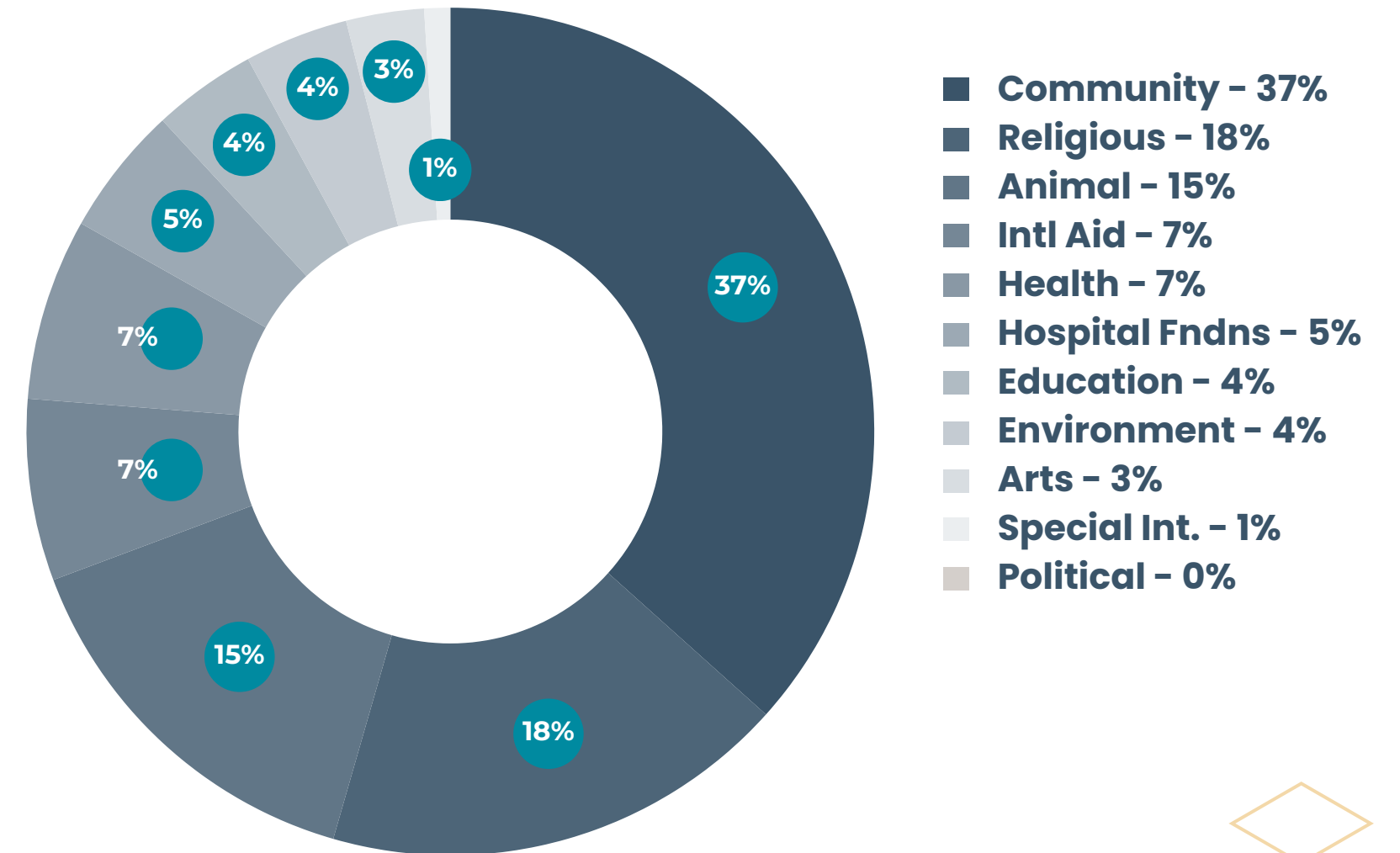
50
Wills feature more than ten bequests

Sector Breakdown

MONETARY GIFTS



RESIDUAL GIFTS



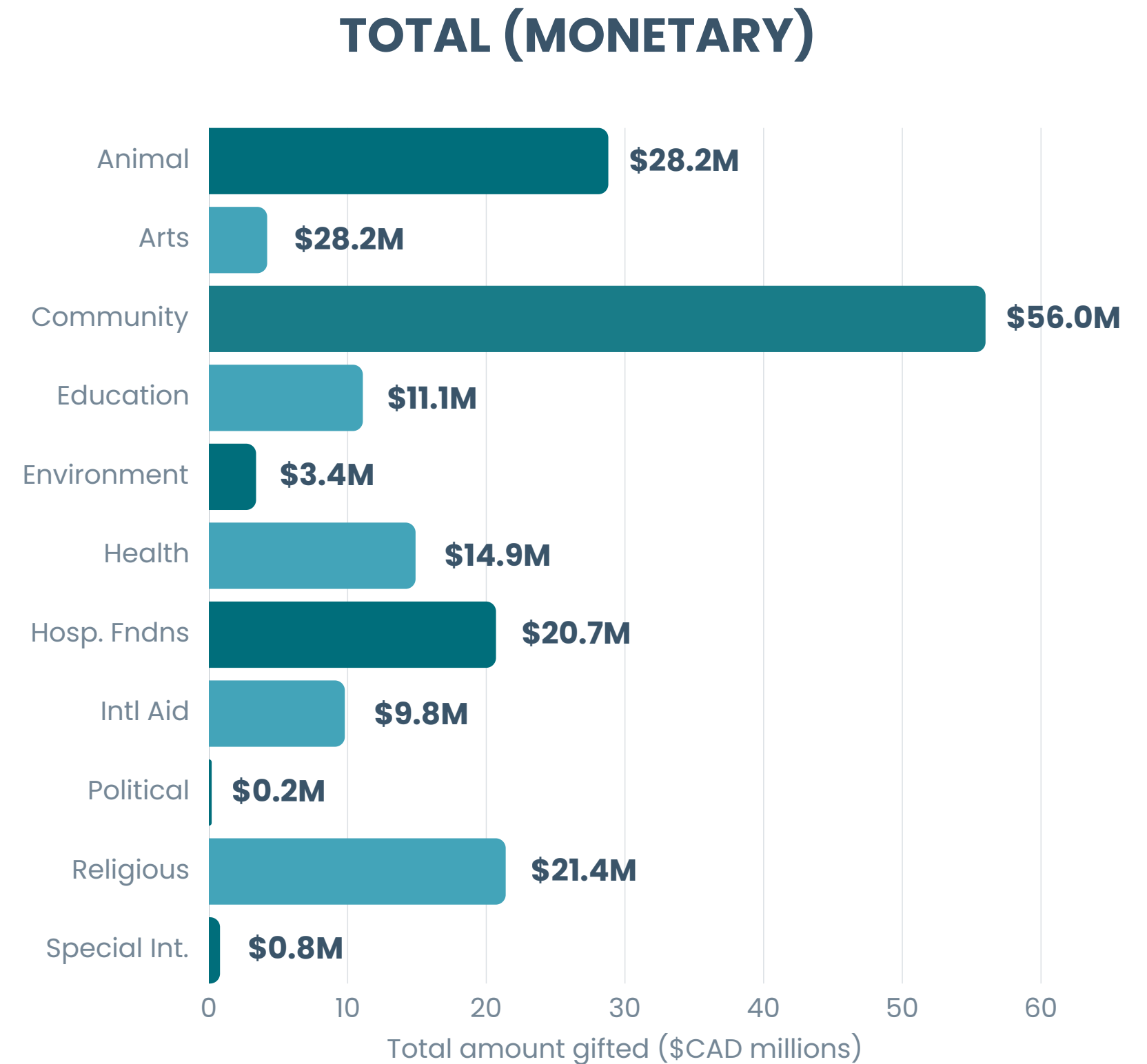
- Community charities receive the largest share of both monetary and residual bequests.
- Animal charities remain the #2 category for monetary gifts (18.6%).
- Religious organizations rank #2 for residual gifts (17.7%).
- Political organizations account for less than 1% across all gift types.



Combined Gifts

- > Community charities received the largest share of monetary bequests, totalling \$56M, followed by Animal (\$28.2M) and Religious (\$21.4M).
- > When considering gifts within each charity sector, the average monetary gift was greatest for Hospital Foundations (\$30,799), followed by Education (\$23,394).
- > Community, Animal and Religious charities benefit from larger numbers of smaller donations.
- > Political organizations received the least monetary bequests at \$181,501.

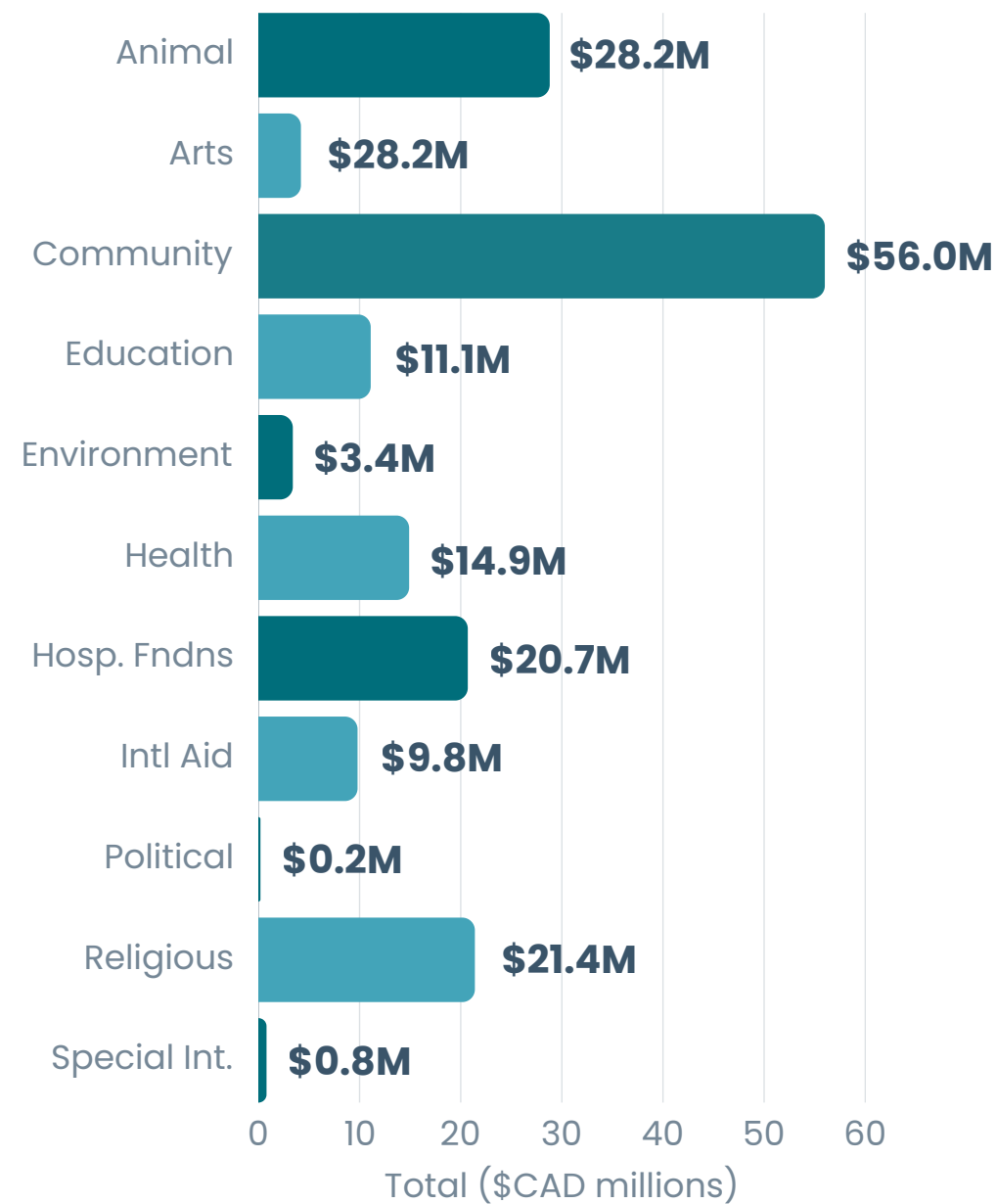
** only includes gifts of specific financial value – excludes residual gifts and specific assets*



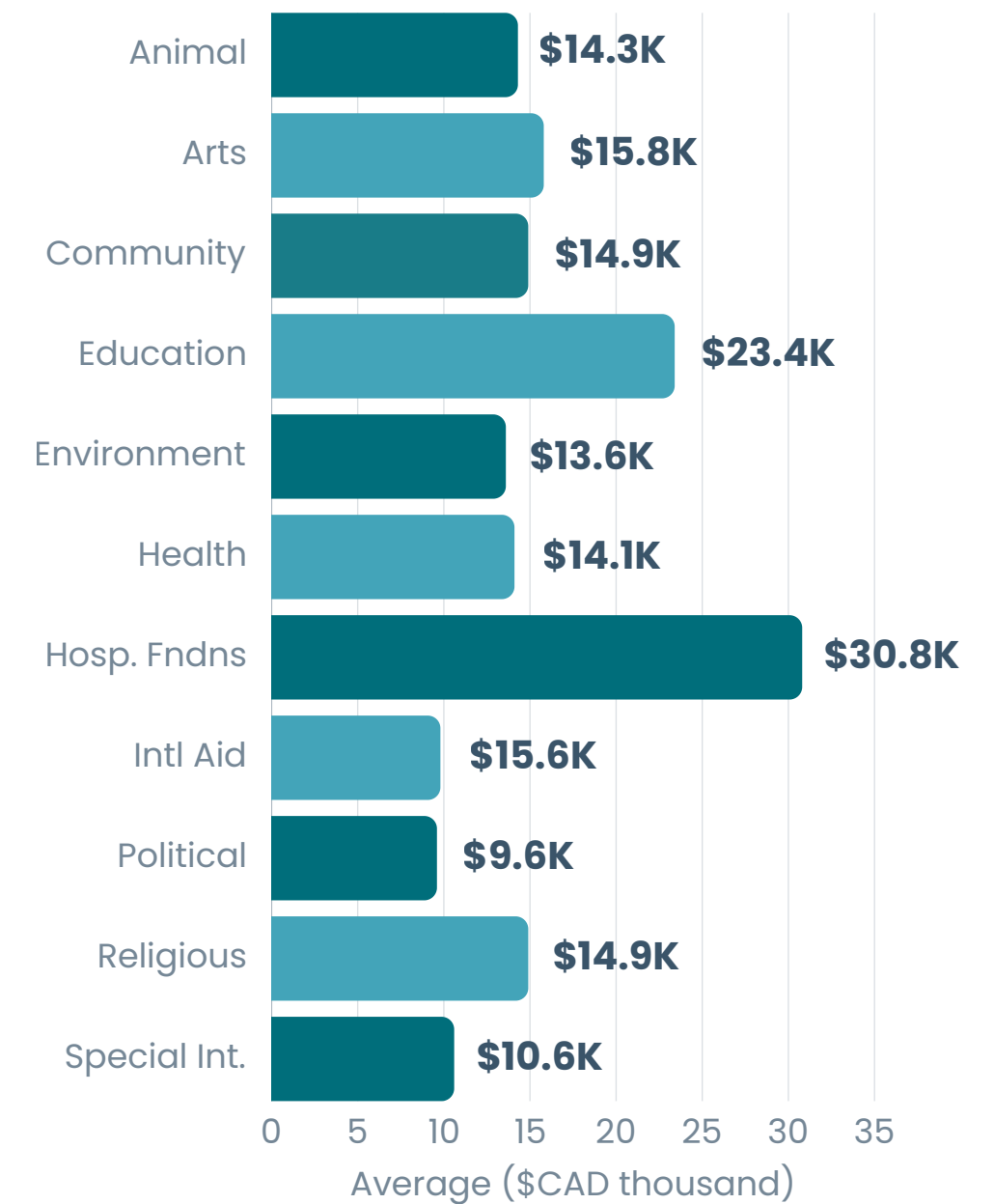
Monetary Gifts

- > Community charities received the largest total monetary bequests (\$56M), followed by Animal (\$28.2M) and Religious (\$21.4M).
- > Hospital Foundations attract the highest average monetary gift at \$30,799 – reflecting large individual donations to children's hospitals.
- > Political organizations received the least at \$181,501 – less than 0.2% of all monetary giving.
- > Animal and Community charities benefit from high bequest volume; Hospital Foundations and Education from high average gift size.

TOTAL AMOUNT GIFTED



AVERAGE GIFT

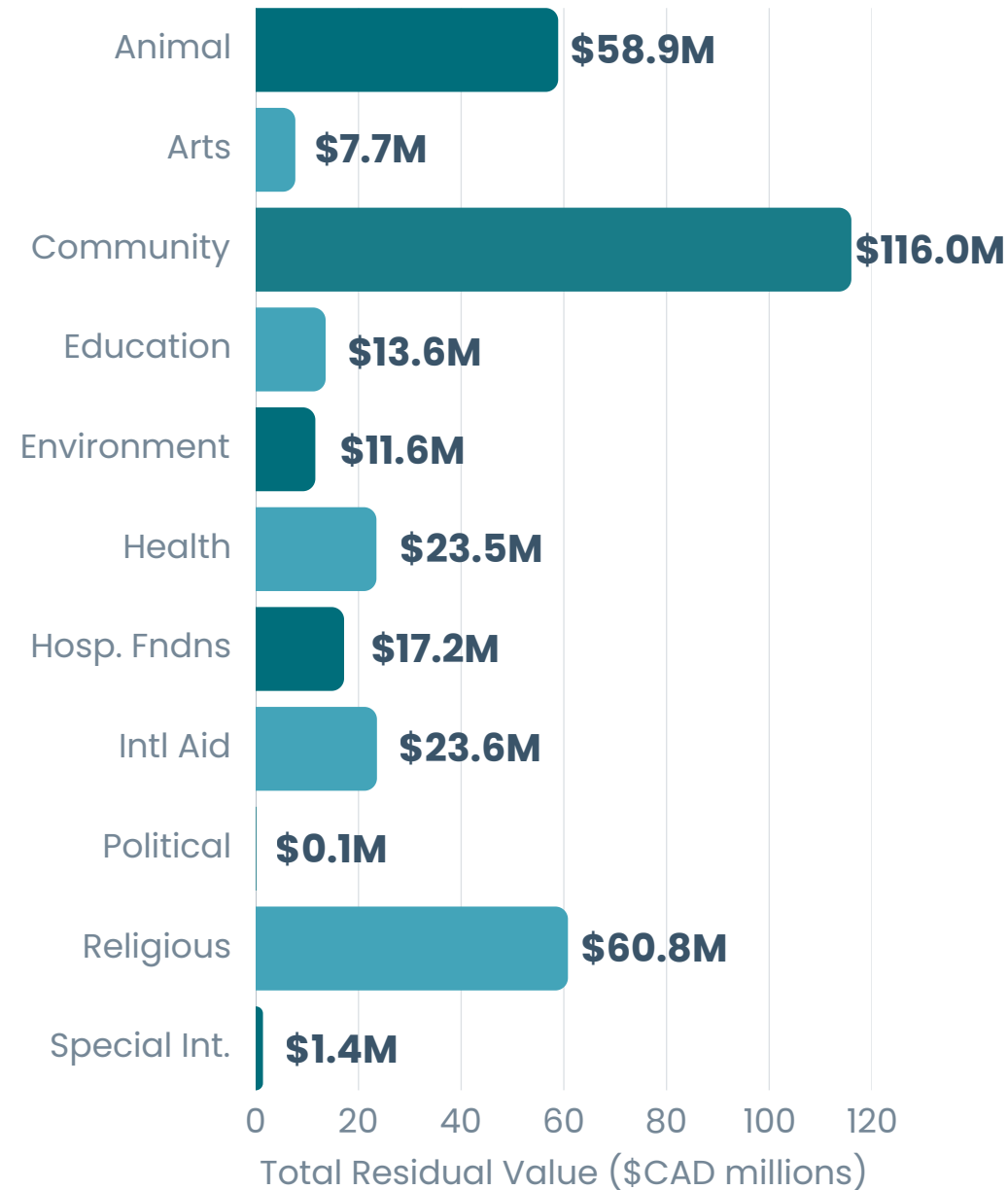


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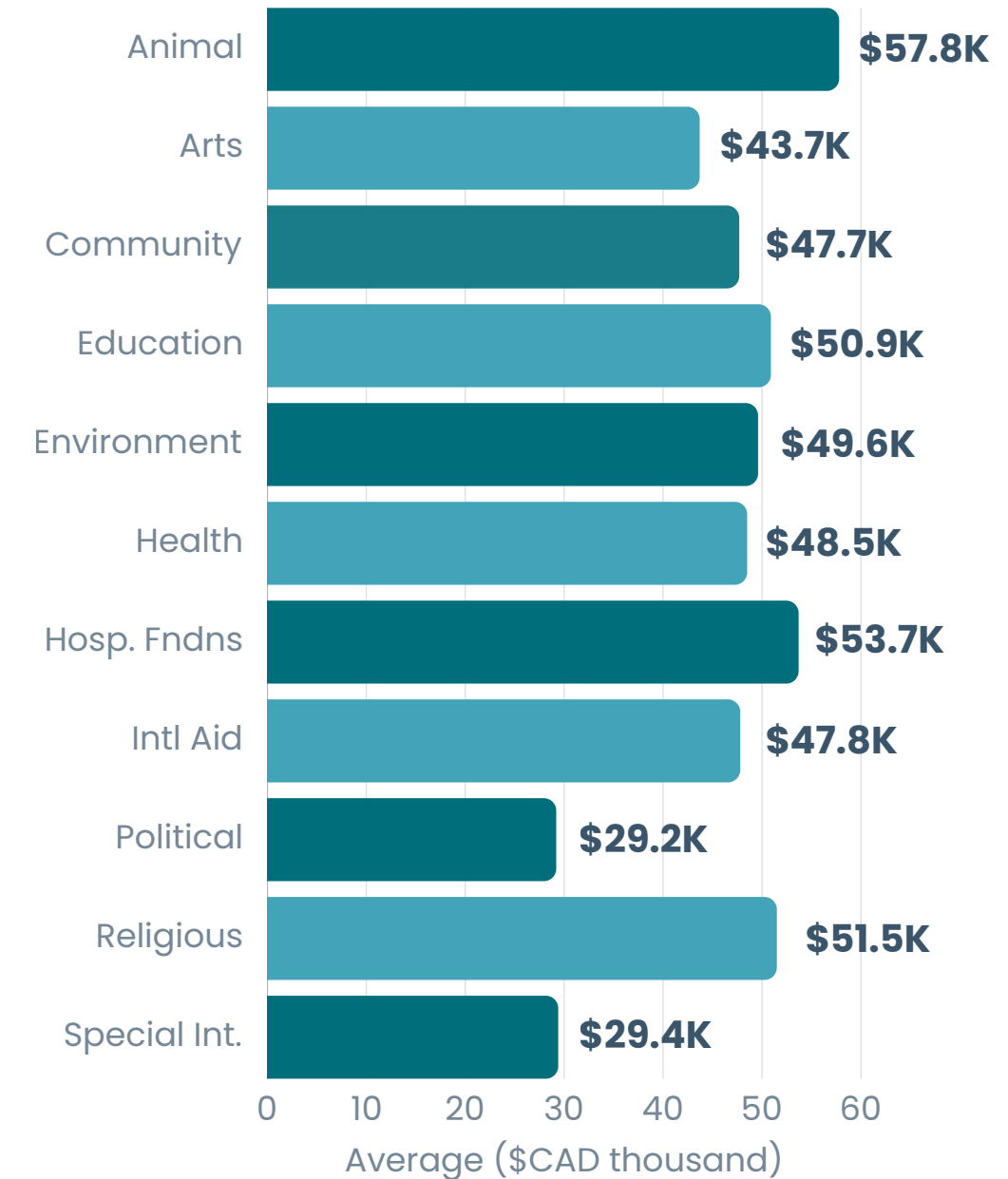
Residual Gifts

- > Community charities received the largest residual bequests totalling \$116M, followed by Religious (\$60.8M) and Animal (\$58.9M).
- > Animal organizations attract the highest average residual gift – donors who love animals tend to leave a substantial share of their estate.
- > Political organizations received the least residual gifts at \$87,500.
- > The average size of residual estate gifted across all charity sectors is approximately 14%.

TOTAL AMOUNT GIFTED



AVERAGE GIFT

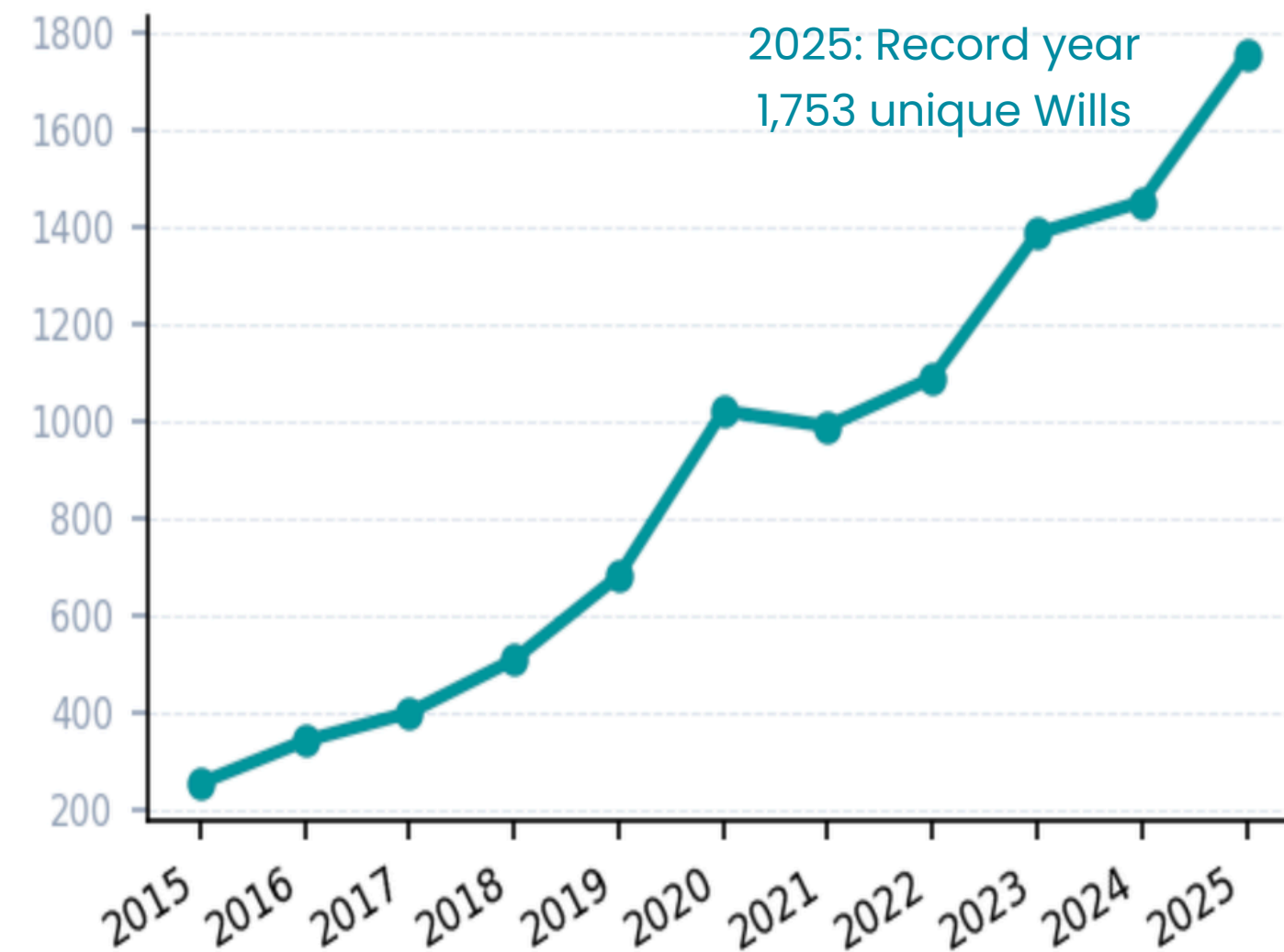


** only includes gifts of specific financial value – excludes residual gifts and specific assets*

Trends Over Time

- Charitable bequests in Wills have grown dramatically since 2014, with 2025 the strongest year on record.
- Unique Wills with charitable bequests grew from 337 in 2014 to 1,753 in 2025 – a 420% increase.
- The COVID-19 pandemic (2020) triggered a marked acceleration in Will-writing, reflected in bequest data.
- Average monetary gift rose from ~\$11K in 2023 to ~\$19K in 2024–2025, suggesting growing generosity.

ANNUAL WILLS WITH CHARITABLE BEQUESTS



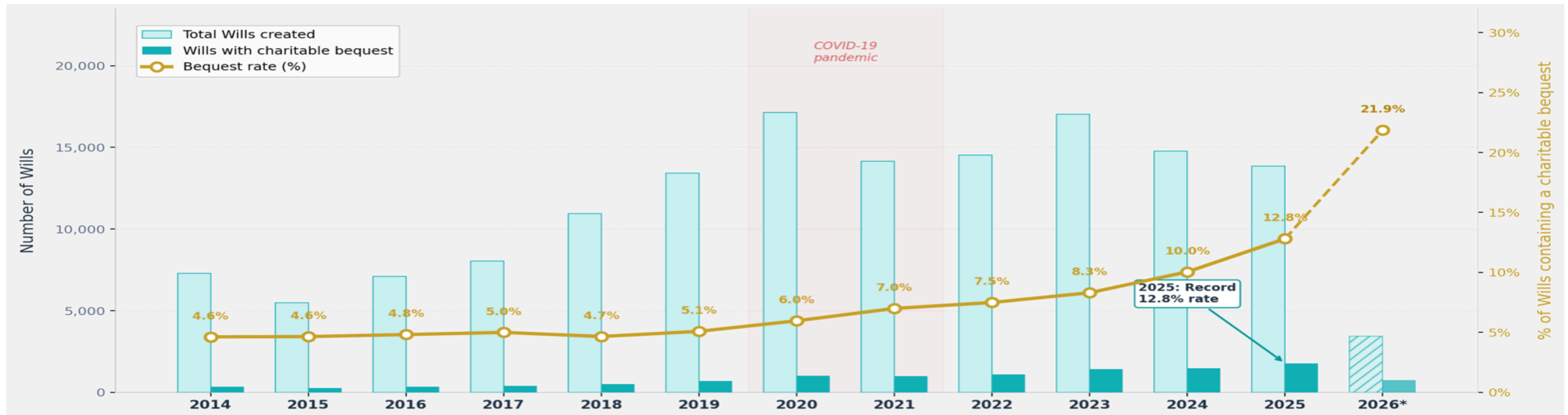
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Bequest Adoption Rate

LEGALWILLS – CHARITABLE BEQUEST ADOPTION RATE 2014–2026

The share of Wills including a charitable bequest has nearly tripled – from 4.6% (2014) to 12.8% (2025)



2026 data covers January-April only (partial year). Higher 2026 rate may reflect seasonal/selection effects.

Despite Will volume fluctuating year to year, the charitable bequest rate has climbed continuously – from 4.6% in 2014 to 12.8% in 2025. A genuine behavioural shift, not simply more Will-writing.

4.6%

bequest rate
in 2014

12.8%

bequest rate
in 2025

2.8x

increase in
the bequest rate

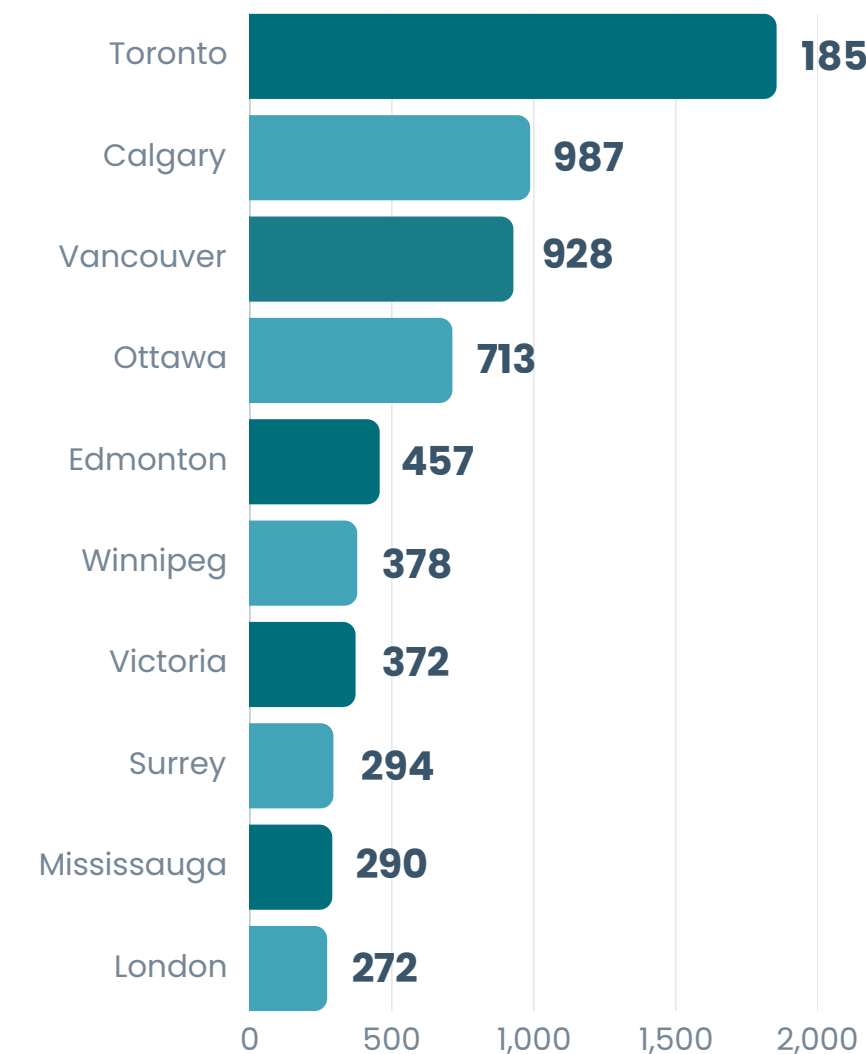
420%

growth in Wills
with bequests

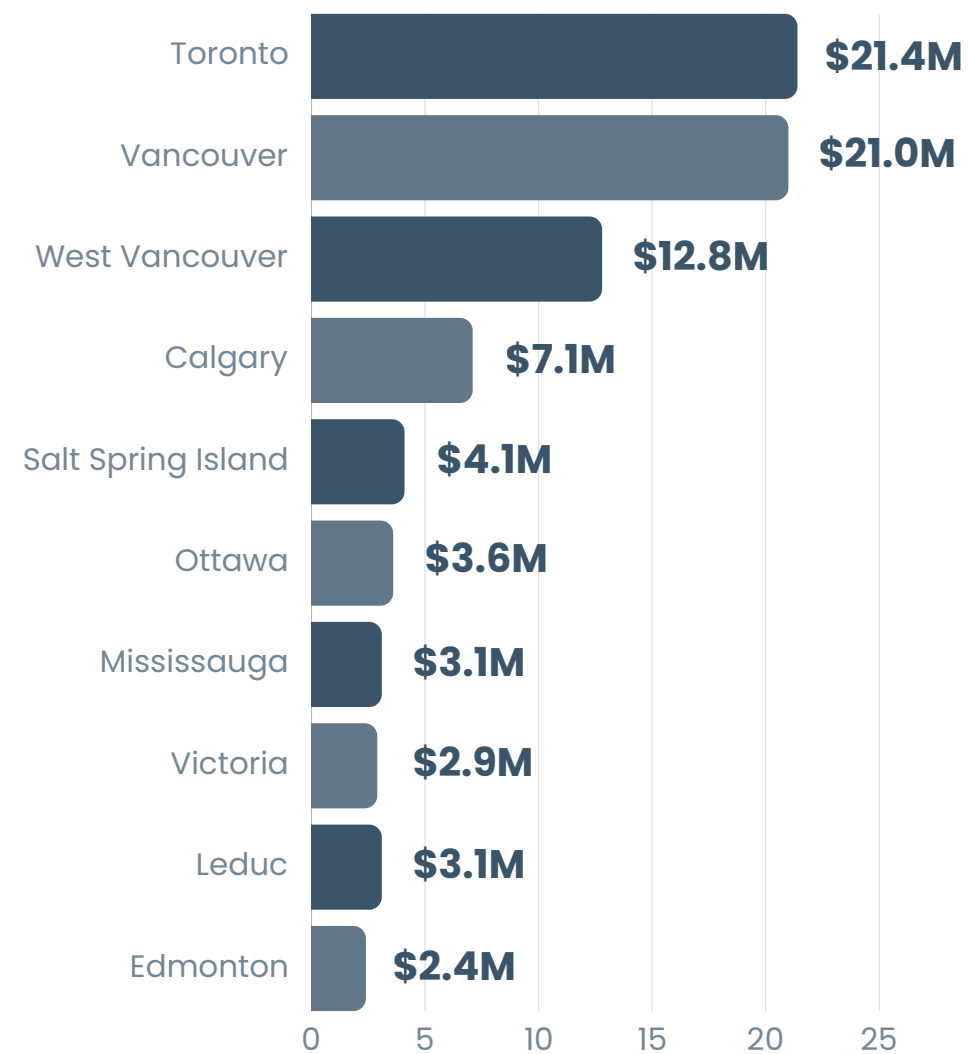
Location Breakdown

Toronto leads in philanthropic giving by total volume and number of charitable bequests. British Columbia as a whole has the highest average monetary bequest (\$23,944), driven by Vancouver's high-value donors. West Vancouver stands out with an extraordinary average of \$554,522 per bequest from 23 contributions.

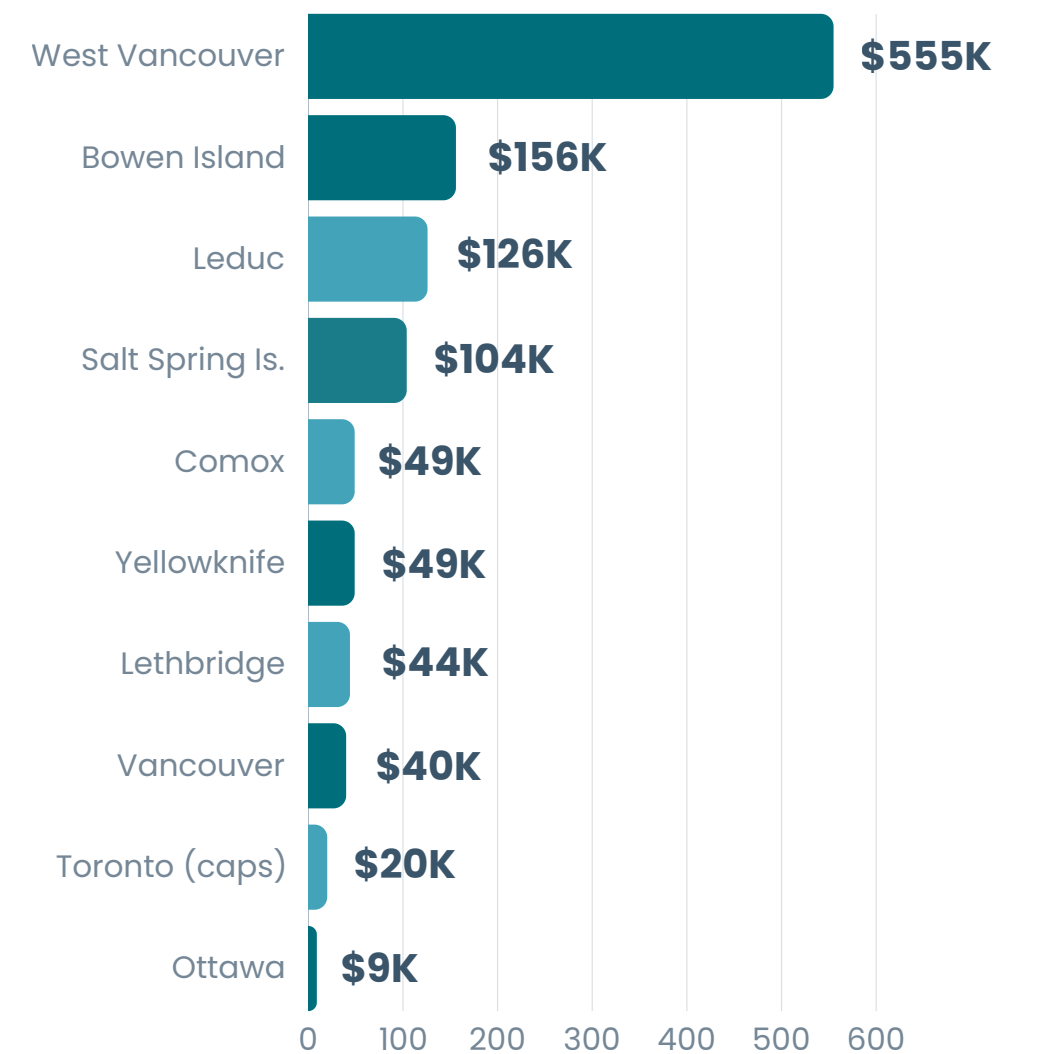
NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL BEQUESTS



TOTAL BEQUEST AMOUNT (\$CAD MILLIONS)



AVERAGE BEQUEST (\$CAD THOUSANDS)



* of locations with over 10 bequests

Province Breakdown

Ontario dominates in total bequest volume with 8,539 bequests. British Columbia leads in average monetary bequest size at \$23,944 – nearly double Ontario's \$13,195. Alberta ranks third in both volume and average. Saskatchewan shows high Religious giving (26% of its bequests), while BC has the highest proportion of Animal charity bequests (19.3%).

8,539

Ontario bequests —
most of any province

\$23,944

Average BC bequest —
highest in Canada

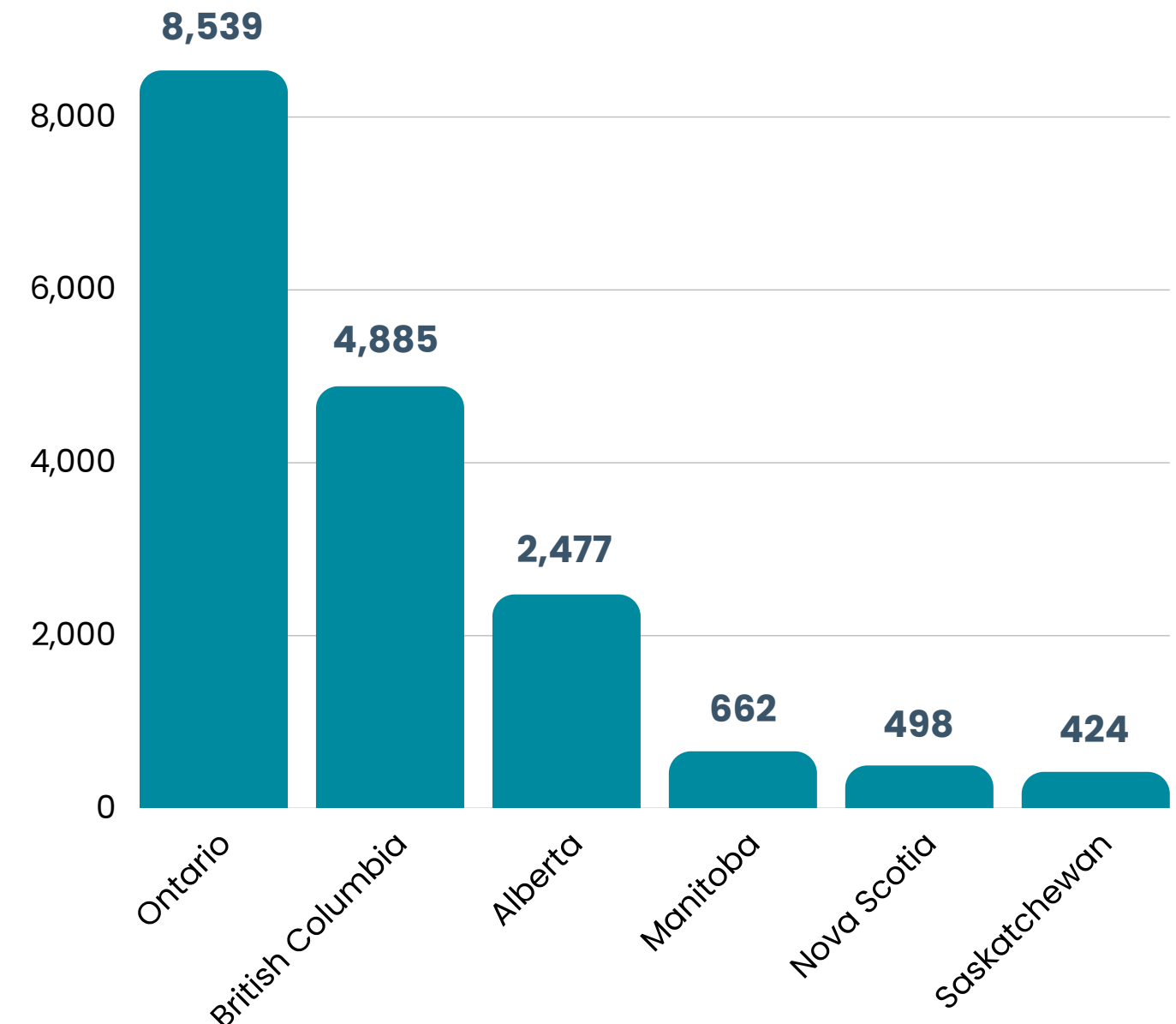
19.3%

BC bequests going to
Animal charities —
highest nationally

26%

Saskatchewan bequests
to Religious orgs —
highest nationally

BEQUESTS BY PROVINCE



Location Statistics

The only cities with

500+
BEQUESTS

Toronto
Vancouver
Calgary
Ottawa



Toronto has
at least

2X

as many
bequests

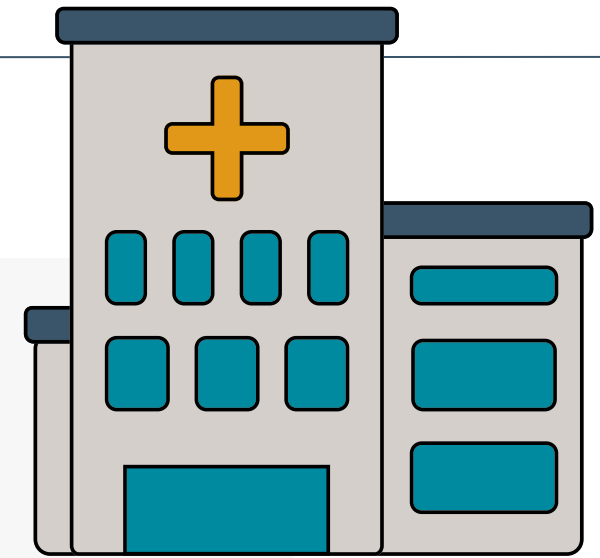
as any other
Canadian city



\$12M

The largest single
bequest amount

a gift to BC Children's Hospital
in West Vancouver



\$554M

Average bequest
in West Vancouver

the highest average of any
city in Canada



420%

Growth in unique
Wills with charitable
bequests from
2014 to 2025



Stand Out Canadian Cities

CITY	MOST POPULAR CHARITY	# BEQUESTS	LARGEST BEQUEST	# MONETARY	# RESIDUAL
Toronto	Canadian Cancer Society	1,855	\$12,000,000*	1,054	795
Ottawa	Ottawa Humane Society	713	\$350,000	415	291
Vancouver	BC SPCA	928	\$2,000,000	525	398
Edmonton	Edmonton Humane Society	457	\$1,000,000	266	190
Calgary	Canadian Cancer Society	987	\$1,000,000	527	453

* Specific asset with direct monetary value ** Includes Metropolitan area of each city



Animal

3,096 FEATURED WILLS

Animal charities featured in 3,096 unique Wills, accounting for 18.6% of all monetary gifts and 15.3% of all residual gifts — making it the second-most popular sector overall.

BC residents show the highest rate of animal charity giving at 19.3%, compared to 15.2% in Ontario.

SPCA/BC SPCA remains the most popular animal charity by bequest count.

** including residual amounts calculated as a percentage of average estate size (\$350,000)*

Smallest Gift	\$1
Largest Gift	\$2,000,000
Average Gift*	\$14,307
% Residual Gifts	33%
Smallest Residual Gift	\$3,500 (1%)
Largest Residual Gift	\$350,000 (100%)
Average Residual Gift	\$57,790 (16%)
Number of Unique Charities	2,500+
Most Popular Charities (Bequests)	SPCA/BC SPCA – 139 Toronto Humane Society – 57 Ottawa Humane Society – 56
Most Popular Charities (\$)	ASPCA – \$2,000,000 Greyhaven Exotic Bird Sanctuary – \$1,015,000 BC SPCA – \$1,348,610



Community

6,683 FEATURED WILLS

Community charities featured in 6,683 Wills and account for 35.5% of all monetary gifts – the largest sector by far. This growth from 18% in 2024 reflects Canadians' increasing focus on local and social service organizations.

The Salvation Army remains the most popular community charity by bequest count.

Specific assets gifted to community charities included artworks, clothing, furniture, and jewellery.

** including residual amounts calculated as a percentage of average estate size (\$350,000)*

Smallest Gift	\$1
Largest Gift	\$3,500,000
Average Gift*	\$14,910
% Residual Gifts	37%
Smallest Residual Gift	\$3,500 (1%)
Largest Residual Gift	\$350,000 (100%)
Average Residual Gift	\$47,660 (13%)
Number of Unique Charities	3,500+
Most Popular Charities (Bequests)	Salvation Army – 60 Covenant House – 27 Compassion Canada – 36
Most Popular Charities (\$)	John A McLennon Family Foundation – \$3,500,000 Salvation Army – \$1,000,000+ Covenant House Vancouver – \$1,137,000



Religious

2,751 FEATURED WILLS

Religious bodies featured in 2,751 unique Wills and account for 13.5% of all monetary gifts and 17.7% of residual gifts — ranking 3rd and 2nd respectively.

Saskatchewan has the highest proportion of religious bequests at 26%, compared to the national average of 15%.

The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Canada remains the most popular religious beneficiary.

** including residual amounts calculated as a percentage of average estate size (\$350,000)*

Smallest Gift	\$5
Largest Gift	\$1,000,000
Average Gift*	\$14,929
% Residual Gifts	43%
Smallest Residual Gift	\$3,500 (1%)
Largest Residual Gift	\$350,000 (100%)
Average Residual Gift	\$51,472 (14%)
Number of Unique Charities	2,200+
Most Popular Charities (Bequests)	Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society – 71 Islamic Relief Canada – 12 United Church congregations – various
Most Popular Charities (\$)	Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society – \$5M+ Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints – \$1,000,000 Parish of St. Aidan – \$700,000



1,598 FEATURED WILLS

Health charities featured in 1,598 unique Wills and account for 10% of all monetary gifts and 7.3% of residual gifts.

The Canadian Cancer Society remains the most popular health charity with 168 bequests – the single most-bequeathed charity in the entire dataset.

Doctors Without Borders ranks 2nd with 60 bequests, despite being categorised here as a health/international charity.

** including residual amounts calculated as a percentage of average estate size (\$350,000)*

Smallest Gift	\$2
Largest Gift	\$2,284,250
Average Gift*	\$14,147
% Residual Gifts	30%
Smallest Residual Gift	\$3,500 (1%)
Largest Residual Gift	\$700,000
Average Residual Gift	\$48,532 (14%)
Number of Unique Charities	1,200+
Most Popular Charities (Bequests)	Canadian Cancer Society – 168 Doctors Without Borders – 60 BC Cancer Foundation – 31
Most Popular Charities (\$)	Canadian Cancer Society – \$2,284,250 Doctors Without Borders – \$1,350,000 Seva Canada – \$750,000



Hospital Foundations

1,041 FEATURED WILLS

Hospital foundations featured in 1,041 unique Wills and account for 6.4% of monetary and 4.8% of residual gifts — but attract the highest average monetary gift (\$30,799).

BC Children's Hospital received the single largest bequest in the entire dataset: \$12 million from a West Vancouver donor — a landmark gift.

SickKids Hospital ranked second by bequest count after BC Children's Hospital.

** including residual amounts calculated as a percentage of average estate size (\$350,000)*

Smallest Gift	\$3
Largest Gift	\$12,000,000
Average Gift*	\$30,799
% Residual Gifts	31%
Smallest Residual Gift	\$3,500 (1%)
Largest Residual Gift	\$350,000 (100%)
Average Residual Gift	\$53,668 (15%)
Number of Unique Charities	600+
Most Popular Charities (Bequests)	BC Children's Hospital – 52 SickKids Hospital – 24 Canuck Place Children's Hospice – 8
Most Popular Charities (\$)	BC Children's Hospital – \$12,000,000 SickKids Hospital – \$300,000+ Oakville Trafalgar Memorial – \$1,000,004



International Aid

1,162 FEATURED WILLS

International Aid charities featured in 1,162 Wills, accounting for 5.9% of monetary gifts and 7.4% of residual gifts.

The Canadian Red Cross was the most popular international charity with 46 bequests, followed by Doctors Without Borders (60) and World Vision Canada (30).

A high 41% of international aid bequests are residual gifts — showing strong long-term commitment.

** including residual amounts calculated as a percentage of average estate size (\$350,000)*

Smallest Gift	\$2
Largest Gift	\$1,500,000
Average Gift*	\$15,590
% Residual Gifts	41%
Smallest Residual Gift	\$3,500 (1%)
Largest Residual Gift	\$350,000 (100%)
Average Residual Gift	\$47,832 (14%)
Number of Unique Charities	600+
Most Popular Charities (Bequests)	Canadian Red Cross – 46 Doctors Without Borders – 60 World Vision Canada – 30
Most Popular Charities (\$)	Sea Shepherds – \$1,500,000 Amnesty International – \$1,006,000 World Literacy Canada – \$1,000,000



Education

806 FEATURED WILLS

Education institutions featured in 806 unique Wills and account for 4.4% of monetary gifts – and attract the 2nd highest average monetary gift (\$23,394).

University bequests often involve significant named endowments. The dataset shows a wide geographic spread of educational giving, from UBC to Queen's University.

Indspire (Indigenous education) and First Nations University of Canada also featured.

** including residual amounts calculated as a percentage of average estate size (\$350,000)*

Smallest Gift	\$5
Largest Gift	\$2,500,000
Average Gift*	\$23,394
% Residual Gifts	33%
Smallest Residual Gift	\$3,500 (1%)
Largest Residual Gift	\$350,000 (100%)
Average Residual Gift	\$50,851 (14%)
Number of Unique Charities	700+
Most Popular Charities (Bequests)	Queen's University – various Indspire – various UBC / University of Toronto
Most Popular Charities (\$)	GANJI Foundation – \$2,500,000 Sambayan Educational Foundation – \$1,000,000 University bequests – various



Environment

506 FEATURED WILLS

Environmental charities featured in 506 Wills, accounting for 2.4% of monetary gifts and 3.5% of residual gifts. Environment has the highest residual gift rate at 42% – suggesting donors make long-term environmental commitments.

The Nature Conservancy of Canada was the most popular environmental charity with 62 bequests. Greenpeace Canada ranked second.

Notable: A log cabin was gifted to an environmental conservation charity.

** including residual amounts calculated as a percentage of average estate size (\$350,000)*

Smallest Gift	\$15
Largest Gift	\$500,000
Average Gift*	\$13,602
% Residual Gifts	42% (highest of all sectors)
Smallest Residual Gift	\$3,500 (1%)
Largest Residual Gift	\$350,000 (100%)
Average Residual Gift	\$49,621 (14%)
Number of Unique Charities	490+
Most Popular Charities (Bequests)	Nature Conservancy of Canada – 62 Greenpeace Canada – 14 David Suzuki Foundation – 12
Most Popular Charities (\$)	Nature Conservancy of Canada – \$1,500,000+ Greenpeace Canada – \$800,000+ Bruce Trail Conservancy – \$430,000

All Charities

TOP 10 (BEQUESTS)

TOP 10 (\$)

Canadian Cancer Society – 168

BC Children's Hospital – \$12,000,000

BC SPCA / SPCA – 139

GANJI Foundation – \$2,500,000

Nature Conservancy of Canada – 62

Canadian Cancer Society – \$2,284,250

Salvation Army – 60

ASPCA – \$2,000,000

Doctors Without Borders – 60

Sea Shepherds – \$1,500,000

Canadian Red Cross – 46

SPCA – \$1,348,610

Toronto Humane Society – 57

Covenant House Vancouver – \$1,137,000

Ottawa Humane Society – 56

Greyhaven Exotic Bird Sanctuary – \$1,015,000

World Vision Canada – 30

Amnesty International – \$1,006,000

Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society – 41

DeVries Family Foundation – \$1,000,000



Key Insights



GROWING GENEROSITY

Wills with charitable bequests increased 420% from 2014 to 2025. The average monetary gift rose to \$19,500 in 2024–2025, up from \$11,000 in 2023.



ANIMALS HOLD STRONG

Animal charities remain #2 by monetary gift count (18.6%). BC leads nationally in animal giving at 19.3% of all provincial bequests.



HOSPITALS ATTRACT BIG GIFTS

Hospital Foundations average \$30,799 per monetary bequest – the highest of any sector. A single \$12M gift to BC Children's Hospital stands as the largest in the dataset.



BC LEADS IN AVERAGE GIFT SIZE

British Columbia donors give the most per bequest at \$23,944 average – nearly double Ontario's \$13,195. West Vancouver has an extraordinary average of \$554,522.



PRAIRIE RELIGIOUS GIVING

Hospital Foundations average \$30,799 per monetary bequest – the highest of any sector. A single \$12M gift to BC Children's Hospital stands as the largest in the dataset.



ENVIRONMENT: LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

Environment charities have the highest residual gift rate (42%), suggesting donors make sustained, estate-level environmental commitments.



LegalWills

MAKING YOUR LEGACY LAST

How LegalWills Can Help You Make a Difference

At LegalWills, we make it easy for you to include bequests in your Will. By partnering with LegalWills, you can ensure your wishes are clearly outlined and legally protected, while also helping to support the causes you care about most.

Consider including a charity in your Will today, and make a difference for future generations.

Start planning with LegalWills today to turn your legacy into a powerful force for good.

[LegalWills.ca](https://www.LegalWills.ca)