



# Where Do Men and Women Give?

## GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE MOTIVATIONS AND PURPOSES FOR CHARITABLE GIVING

All philanthropists – from the high school student volunteering at a local animal shelter to the multi-millionaire funding a large capital campaign – have their own reasons and motivations for giving, and for giving to particular causes. In the past, however, there has been little research on individual motivations for giving and the reasons donors give to certain causes.

**This study explores motivations and priorities for giving in greater detail to assess whether and how gender affects individual and household charitable giving.**

### KEY FINDINGS

#### How do men and women give differently to various charitable subsectors?

- Consistent with prior research, single women are more likely than single men to give, and give more to 10 out of 11 charitable subsectors – the exception being the neighborhoods/communities subsector.
- High net worth single women are more likely to give, and give more, to arts and the environment; high net worth single men are more likely to give, and give more, to combination organizations such as United Way.
- In the general population, married couples where the wife is the sole decision maker about charitable giving are more likely to give to youth and family, health, and international causes; where the husband is the sole decision maker, households are more likely to give to religion, education, and “other” causes.
- In the high net worth population, married couples where the wife is the sole decision maker about charitable giving are more likely to give to youth and family services and to religious causes; where the husband is the sole decision maker, households are less likely to give to basic needs organizations, and give lower amounts to these organizations.
- Single women spread out their giving more than single men; however, high net worth single women and men look very similar in terms of the concentration of their giving.

#### How do men and women prioritize key issues facing society?

- Across both the general and high net worth populations, single women are more likely to prioritize women’s rights than single men, and are less likely to prioritize the economy and veterans’ issues than single men.

- In general population married-couple households, when the husband is the sole decision maker, the couple is more likely to prioritize the arts. When the wife is the sole decision maker, the couple is more likely to prioritize animal welfare, and less likely to prioritize veterans’ affairs, compared to joint deciders.
- In high net worth married-couple households, when the husband is the sole decision maker, the couple is more likely to prioritize the economy as a key issue, and less likely to prioritize poverty, than joint-deciding households. When the wife is the sole decision maker, the couple is more likely to prioritize human rights.

#### How do *high net worth* men and women differ in their motivations for charitable giving?

- Single women are more likely than single men to cite their political or philosophical beliefs, and being on a board or volunteering for an organization, as motivations for giving.
- In couples, when the wife is the sole decision maker, the household is more likely to be motivated to give by spontaneously responding to a need, believing that their gift makes a difference, and because of their political and philosophical beliefs; these households are less likely to be motivated by religious beliefs than joint-deciders.
- In couples, when the husband is the sole decision maker, the household is less likely to be motivated to give by setting an example for future generations, religious beliefs, and the personal satisfaction of giving, compared to joint-deciders.
- For gifts from the Million Dollar List, individual women tend to mention “scholarship” and “student” more than men, reflecting a focus on the people their philanthropy can impact. Women are also the only donor type to have the term “unrestricted” appear in their top keywords for how their million-dollar gifts are described.



## METHODS

The information used in this study comes primarily from two surveys on charitable giving: a comprehensive national survey of charitable giving (the Philanthropy Panel Study) and a study that focuses on high net worth households (the Bank of America/U.S. Trust Studies of High Net Worth Philanthropy). The study also draws from a database of publicly available data on million dollar-plus charitable donations from U.S. donors (the Million Dollar List), which helps provide additional information on large gifts such as themes from gift announcements.

The study presents findings on both the general population (using Philanthropy Panel Study data) and high net worth households (using High Net Worth Philanthropy study data). All points under Key Finding 3 are based on the high net worth sample.

## SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPLICATIONS

This study shows that the types of organizations donors support tend to differ based on gender, although that effect is more significant in the general population than it is among high net worth households. Furthermore, philanthropists' stated motives for giving also tend to be different among women and men.

This study clarifies for fundraisers and others in the philanthropy sector that every donor is different. Individually-responsive fundraising that recognizes the many differences between donors households, including the ways in which the giving styles of men and women differ, is likely to garner more support.



Note: The full report, released September 2015, is available online at:  
<https://philanthropy.iupui.edu/GenderGiving>

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