

Giving Patterns

Nonprofit Donor Giving



Trends

Charitable giving continued its upward trend in 2016, as an estimated \$390 billion was given to charitable causes. For the third year in a row, total giving reached record levels. This increase and the overall size of charitable contributions is further testament to the integral role charities play in our society, a role which continues to grow.

How much do we give?

Total giving to charitable organizations was \$390.05 billion in 2016 (2.1% of GDP). This is an increase of 2.7% in current dollars and 1.4% in inflation-adjusted dollars from 2015 to present. Giving has increased in current dollars every year since 1976, with the exception of three years that saw declines: 1987, 2008 and 2009.

The average year-to-year change in total giving between 1976 and 2016 was an increase of \$8.96 billion (in current dollars), making the current-dollar change in total giving between 2015 and 2016 much larger than the 40-year average.

Who is giving? 2015 - 2016

| | | |
|--------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Individuals: | 72% of all giving | 3.9% increase |
| Bequests: | 8 % of all giving | 9.0% decrease |
| Foundations: | 15% of all giving | 3.5% increase |
| Corporations | 5% of all giving | 3.5% increase |

Most important to note is that historically donations from individuals account for over two-thirds of all donations. If you add in gifts from bequests, then the category accounts for nearly 80% of all giving. In other words, the donating public, not big foundations or corporations, is responsible for the vast majority of annual donations.

Where do the donations go?

Giving to Education charities was up 3.6% to \$59.77 billion (15% of all donations).

Donations to Human Services charities were up 4.0% to \$46.8 billion (12% of all donations)

Foundations saw an increase of 3.1% to \$40.56 billion (10% of all donations).

Health charities experienced an increase of 5.7% to \$33.14 billion (8% of all donations).

Public-Society Benefit charities saw an increase of 3.7% to \$29.89 billion (8% of all donations).

Giving to International charities increased by 5.8% to \$22.03 billion (6% of all donations).

Arts, Culture and Humanities saw an increase of 6.4% to \$18.21 billion (5% of all donations).

Charities that focus on the Environment/Animals saw an increase of 7.2% to \$11.05 billion (3% of all donations).

Largest Share of Charitable Donations

Historically, religious organizations have received the largest share of charitable donations. This remained true in 2016. With the 3.0% increase in donations this year, 32% of all donations, or \$122.94 billion, went to religious organizations. Much of these contributions can be attributed to people giving to their local place of worship.

Sources: All data is from *Giving USA 2017*, the Annual Report on Philanthropy and *Charity Navigator, 2017*.

“Community needs to be at the center of our thinking, no matter what results we are trying to achieve in the world.”

Above is a quote by [Peter Block and John McKnight](#), co-authors of *Building Communities From the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community’s Assets*.

REFERENCES

Giving USA, 2017. The Annual Report on Philanthropy. www.givingusa.org.

Charity Navigator, Your Guide to Intelligent Giving, www.charitynavigator.org.