

Shaping Tomorrow

A Study of Young Donors' Perspectives on Charitable Giving in Southwest Missouri

This document is a summary of research conducted by Habitat Communication & Culture in partnership with the Community Foundation of the Ozarks. The study investigated how Southwest Missouri residents perceive charitable giving, focusing on definitions, motivations, and preferred methods, with particular focus on the attitudes of respondents under the age of 40 compared to those 41 and older. The research program included a survey, focus groups, and interviews with regional nonprofit development professionals.

Understanding Donor Demographics

A key question driving this research was “Do younger audiences feel different than older generations when it comes to charitable giving, and if so, how?” The findings outlined in this report indicate yes, **audiences under 40 do have meaningfully different charitable giving perspectives and motivations.**

This audience defines charitable giving differently than their parents. Those under 40 largely reported being less religious and less conservative than their parents and grandparents, and this shift in ideology influences their charitable behavior. **These folks are more likely to give to organizations that address specific and local community needs, are more likely to donate their time and expertise as an act of serving others, and are less likely to give to religious entities.**

Nearly half of all participants believe their definition of charitable giving is different than their parents' definition.

● Making the World a Better Place

● Being Motivated by the Mission

● Fulfilling a Responsibility or Duty

Themes in response to “My primary motivation for giving is or has been...”



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Connecting With the Next Generation of Donors

Younger audiences are **less trusting of established nonprofit organizations**, and dedicate a larger share of their total giving directly to individuals or families.

The technologies that younger audiences have grown up with (including social media and online payment platforms) have fueled the sense that **donors can bypass established or “outdated” organizations, and can fund needs in their community directly.**







These audiences say in order to earn their trust, nonprofits should have a **strong visual identity or brand**, keep **websites updated and easy to navigate**, make **annual reports available for online viewing**, and **showcase staff and board leadership online.**

Aside from maintaining trust, organizations must also **make it easy to give.** Nearly half of all respondents have abandoned a giving behavior at least once because it was too difficult to use.

Trust and ease of giving are important, but perhaps nothing matters more than personal relationships. **People are most likely to give to organizations where they have a personal connection** - either to a staff member, a board member, or someone who has benefited from services. This was reinforced in focus group conversations, where younger research participants said things like **“In order to stick, an introduction to a new organization has to come from a trusted person in my life.”**

89% of respondents said it’s important for them to trust nonprofits will effectively use their funds before they decide to make a gift to that organization.

The Preferred Way to Give:

-  **18-22:** At an event
-  **23-30:** Online through a website
-  **31-40:** Online through a website
-  **41-50:** Online through a website
-  **51-60:** Online through a website
-  **61+:** Writing a check

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