

Donor Stability: Do the Exact Same Donors Give Every Year?
Using the COPPS data set to examine donor dynamics over time

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Abstract

We have observed that in annual surveys of households, approximately two-thirds of American households report being donors to charities in the prior year. We anticipate that many of them are the same donors year to year. However, until the Center on Philanthropy Panel Study (COPPS) data were available from the exact same households from several years, this hypothesis was unable to be tested. In this paper, we describe the characteristics of “repeat donors” (give in two of the three years surveyed) vs. “occasional donors” (give in one of the three survey years) vs. “persistent donors” (give in all three years). We also examine which factors explain whether or not a household is likely to be a donor in all three years available for analysis. Finally, we investigate which factors are associated with donors becoming non-donors during each of the timeframes studied. These are important to understand from a practitioner and research perspective.