

# American Express Charitable Gift Survey

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A report from



with assistance from  
Hart Philanthropic Services Group/[tedhart.com](http://tedhart.com)  
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## Executive Summary

The American Express Charitable Gift Survey is the first nationally representative study to address two “Frequently Asked Questions” in the charity world: 1) How much do people give at any one time to types of charitable recipients? and 2) Do online and offline donations differ in size? The study also asked people about why they give online or why they don’t. By collecting information about gift amount—not total giving, as prior studies have done—this research demonstrates the importance of relatively small contributions. The results of this research are surprising and contradict some “conventional wisdom” about charitable giving.

We asked a random sample of Americans in the last two weeks of September 2007 about their most recent gift. Unlike prior studies of giving, this research seeks to ascertain how much people give at any one time to different types of charities and the methods they use (Internet or not, and whether by cash, check, or credit card).

This study examined more than 900 online and offline gifts. Overall, the average gift amount is \$172.

When looking at the online amount (\$165) compared to the offline amount (\$174), there is no statistically significant difference.

About two-thirds (65 percent) of Americans in this study gave to charity in the past year, and 6 percent gave online. This means one in every 10 donors gives online.

The median charitable donation, whether online or not, is \$50. Two-thirds of donations were \$100 or less.

These averages take into account all gifts, except outliers,<sup>1</sup> including donations to churches or other houses of worship. Just under one-quarter (22.9 percent) of the most recent donations went to religious organizations. These religious gifts averaged \$284, and the median gift amount was \$75. There are too few online religious gifts to draw conclusions when comparing online and offline religious giving amounts using statistical procedures.

When considering only secular (non-religious) giving, online and offline secular gift amounts are not different when using statistical tests. The median gift size for secular gifts is \$50.

- The secular gift average is \$138, with online and offline averaged together.
- The secular offline gift average is \$137.
- The secular online gift average is \$144.

The large number of gifts less than \$100 demonstrates clearly that nonprofit organizations rely on many low dollar donations to fund their vital work.

<sup>1</sup> Twelve gifts were excluded as outliers. We defined an outlier as a gift amount that is three or more standard deviations from the mean. A separate outlier analysis is in Appendix 1. Of the outlier gifts, eight were to religious organizations. All outliers were \$7,000 or more (up to \$49,000).

Fifty percent of online donors are aged 35 to 54. One-tenth of donors in this age group make online gifts, but that 10 percent come from an age range of people who are more likely to be donors (68 percent) when compared with people younger than 35 years old (45 percent of whom give to charity). Though the younger group is somewhat more likely to use the Internet in their giving (15 percent said they do), the fact that a relatively low share give to charity explains why they are not the largest number of online donors.

Convenience or speed is the top reason for giving online (64 percent of online donors). Not having a computer is the top reason for NOT giving online (24 percent of offline-only donors). The next most-frequent reasons show that charities' online presence is important for whether or not donors of all ages and all income groups give online.

Among those who contributed online, one in five (20 percent) said the primary reason for the online gift related to the charity's own online initiative. Donors in this group received an appeal from the charity with a link or easily found an online giving option.

Regardless of income, the single largest reason—after not having a computer—that people offered when asked why they did not give online is being unaware of online contribution options. More than one quarter (28 percent) of offline-only donors said that they did not give online because they couldn't find an online giving site; they didn't know they could make a gift online, or they didn't think of giving online.

Looking at gift mechanisms used, offline-only donors who contributed using a credit card made larger gifts (averaging \$297) than online donors giving by credit card (an average of \$267). Offline-only donors using check or cash had average gifts of \$197 and \$160, respectively. Differences are not statistically significant. The median amounts were all \$50.

Nearly 6 in 10 donors said they gave about the same during the holidays as during the rest of the year. However, among all donors, on average, 24 percent of donated dollars are given between Thanksgiving and New Year's. The most frequent reason for giving more is the emotion/spirit of the season (38 percent of those who give more). The next most common reason is an appeal made by a charity (30 percent of those who give more).

24 percent of total dollars given in a year are estimated to be contributed in a six-week period, or about twice as much as one would expect if all donations were evenly spaced during the year.

This survey reached 1,300 households in a nationally representative sample and contacted another 205 to obtain responses from 300 online donor households (an oversample of online donors). Donors were asked about their most recent charitable gift, and online donors were asked about their most recent online gift. Responses were weighted to match U.S. Census Bureau data about population distribution (race, age, income, and region of residence) to ensure that the results are nationally representative. With the weights applied, the total sample (including oversample) is 1,428 usable responses, and there are 996 donor households. American Express sponsored the research. Innovative Research Group fielded the telephone survey; the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University did the analysis and wrote the report; and Hart Philanthropic Services Group/tedhart.com managed the project.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In September 2007, the American Express Charitable Gift Survey of households sought to identify amounts, recipient types, and methods of making charitable contributions. In addition to asking about the most recent gift, the survey asked households about online and offline giving, typical gift amounts for their charitable donations, and whether or not they give more during the holiday season than at other times of the year. This study fills major gaps in the knowledge of how households contribute and provides useful benchmark findings of importance to nonprofit organization managers, donors, and financial advisors working with nonprofit organizations.

### **Background**

The American Express Charitable Gift Survey examines how much Americans contribute at any one time in a single gift transaction. This study uses a nationally representative telephone survey with an oversample of online donors, and asks how much donors are giving online and offline so that baseline data to track fundraising success can be generated. It also presents a picture of the gift “market” by examining what donors do, how they make their contributions, and what percentages are contributing to specific types of charities.

Nonprofit organizations track average gift size as one measure of fundraising effectiveness, yet the only available benchmark is typically their own organization’s historical performance. There are only a few national studies that situated gift sizes into a broader context. It is this context that the American Express Charitable Gift Survey seeks to provide, by looking at the other side of the fundraising experience information about: how much the donors contributed most recently; the size of a “typical gift;” and a view of fundraising occurring at one time by all types of charities.

A 1982 report summarized average gift information from 125 participating health, welfare, and educational institutions.<sup>2</sup> That study, part of the Average Gift Size Project of INDEPENDENT SECTOR, found that 40 percent of the number of gifts received were less than \$100 (equivalent to \$253 in 2007 terms). This suggests that 25 years ago, 60 percent of the number of gifts received came from contributions of \$250 or more (in today’s dollars). That analysis studied the funding going to particular charities, rather than looking at how donors make their contributions. The American Express Charitable Gift Survey examines donors and how they make their gifts.

The primary contemporary analysis of charitable gift size is released quarterly by Target Analysis Group and relates to direct-mail/direct-response fundraising results from participating charities (about 70 organizations, as of March 2007). While this information is presented by type of recipient, it applies only to one fundraising method and cannot be generalized to all fundraising techniques.

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<sup>2</sup> W. Levis and A. New, Report on the Average Gift Size Study, *Philanthropy Monthly*, June 1982, found at [http://nccsdataweb.urban.org/PubApps/levis/gift\\_s.html](http://nccsdataweb.urban.org/PubApps/levis/gift_s.html). See Table 1 for the gift size table (which also includes cost of fundraising information).

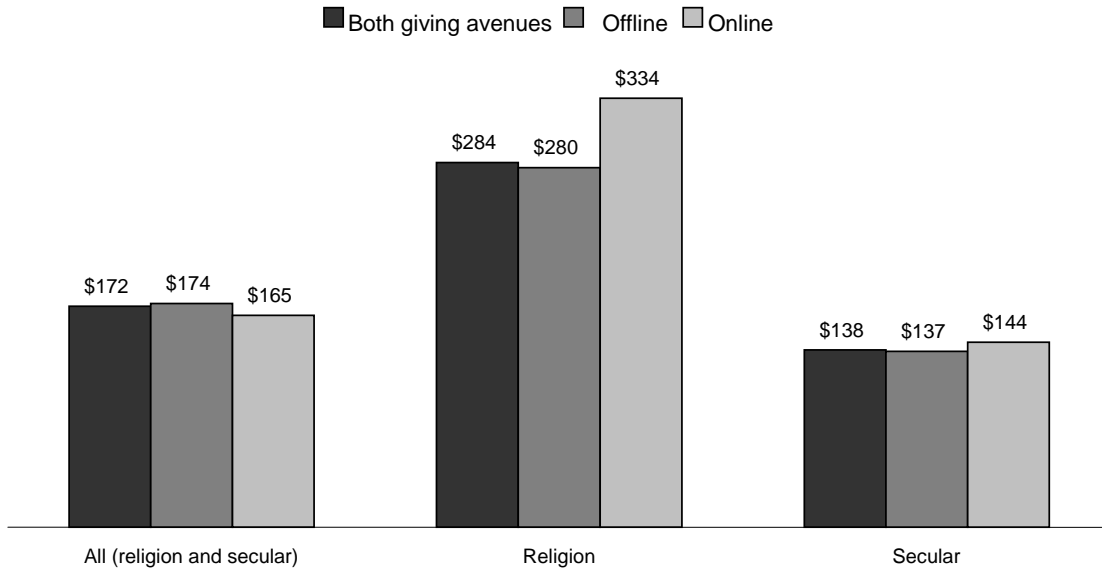
**GIFT SIZE: MOST GIFTS ARE RELATIVELY SMALL**

The American Express Charitable Gift Survey examines all gifts reported by donors and includes all types of recipients reported by donors. Most contributions are less than \$100, no matter the type of recipient or method of donation.

**Average Gift Size is \$172**

The American Express Charitable Gift Survey collected data about a total of 948 gifts (weighted result including outliers and excluding donor households that did not report a specific gift amount). Taking all gifts together (and excluding 12 gifts that were outliers), the average gift size is \$172. The median gift amount is \$50 for all giving and for both online and offline secular giving. Gifts to religion had a median of \$75. Figure 1 summarizes average gift size for all giving, religion gifts, and secular gifts. The table following the figure also shows the median gift amounts.

**Figure 1: Mean gift size**  
**All gifts, religion gifts, and secular gifts**  
**by online, offline, and both giving avenues together**



**Data table for Figure 1**  
**Mean and median gift amounts by type of gift**

	All		Religion		Secular	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
Both	\$172	\$50	\$284	\$75	\$138	\$50
Online	\$165	\$50	\$334	\$50	\$144	\$50
Offline	\$174	\$50	\$280	\$75	\$137	\$50

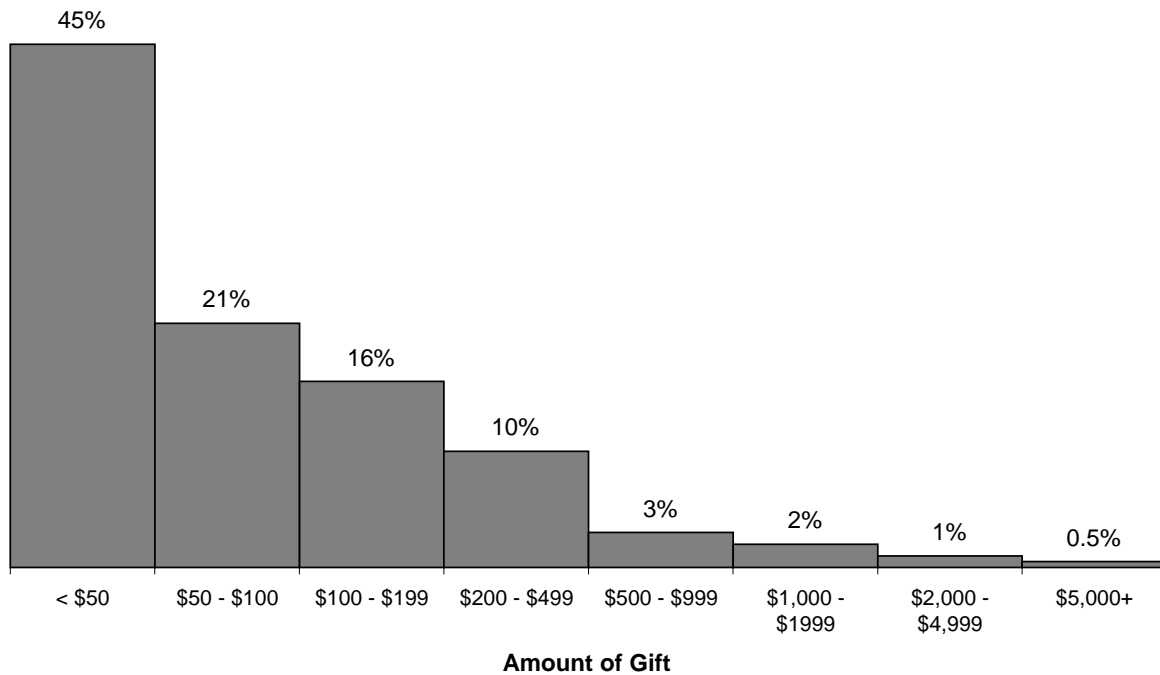
Online religion donations are shown, but the number of donations is fewer than 30. No firm conclusions can be drawn comparing online religion giving to any other type of donation.

There is no statistically significant difference between online and offline giving for All and Secular gifts. Analysis cannot be done for religion because there are too few online religion gifts to use in statistical comparison.

## Most Gifts are Less Than \$100

Giving, both online and offline, is very likely to be in small amounts. Two-thirds (66 percent) of the gift amounts in this study were below \$100, and 45 percent were below \$50. These findings are based on the gifts reported by a representative sample of households, but these gifts will not be a complete sample of all giving in the United States because it includes only the most recent gifts from those households. Some households may make larger (or smaller) gifts at other times of the year that could shift this distribution. Figure 2 summarizes the gift sizes found in this study.

**Figure 2: Percentage of gifts by gift amount**



**Data table for Figure 2**

### Percentage of gifts by gift amount

Gift size	Percentage of gifts in this study	Percentage of gifts not including outliers	Percentage of all dollars in this study	Percentage of dollars not including outliers
< \$50	43%	44%	3%	5%
\$ 50 - \$ 99	21%	21%	4%	6%
\$100 - \$199	16%	16%	5%	9%
\$200 - \$499	11%	11%	9%	15%
\$500 - \$999	4%	4%	7%	12%
\$1,000 - \$1,999	2%	2%	7%	12%
\$2,000 - \$4,999	2%	2%	14%	26%
\$5,000+	<1%	<1%	8%	13%
Outliers, > \$7,000	1%		44%	--
Total*	100%	100%	100%	100%

\* Total may not equal 100.0 percent due to rounding.

Of the number of gifts, two-thirds (66 percent) are below \$100. These gifts accounted for 7 percent of the dollars (when the outlier-size gifts are included in the dollar total) or one-tenth

(11 percent) of the dollars excluding the dozen gifts of \$7,000 or more. This distribution of gifts most likely reflects “annual giving” for operations, and the outliers are likely to be major donations for special purposes, such as a capital campaign.

Donors of less than \$100 at a time often give more than one gift in a year to the same organization, especially their churches. Research has shown that nonprofit organizations with successful long-term fundraising programs may receive relatively small amounts at any one time.<sup>3</sup> For the nonprofit charity, the fundraising cycle emphasizes attracting donors, who often make small gifts and then give again, perhaps over many years, as the charity demonstrates effective work and good stewardship. As long ago as 1992, research confirmed the practical experiences of nonprofit organization managers: donors who start giving to an organization frequently continue to give, and often increase gift amounts over time.<sup>4</sup>

### **Average Gift Amount Varies by Type of Recipient**

All gifts in this survey averaged \$172, or about 8 percent of the estimated average total household contribution of \$2,065 for a year.<sup>5</sup> Prior research has shown that in the United States, when totaling annual donations, more than half of household charitable giving is directed to religion, and about 45 percent of households make at least one gift to religion during a year. The annual household total giving to religion by donors who give to religion is \$1,887.<sup>6</sup>

In this study, nearly 23 percent of the most recent gifts were gifts to churches and for other religious purposes (media ministries, Bible translation societies, and missionary work). These donations averaged \$284, which is nearly \$150 more than the average gift to other causes.

Nationally, 55 percent of households contribute in a year to secular causes, and the average secular contribution in a year is \$940 by donors who give to secular causes.<sup>7</sup> In this study, all secular gifts (non-religious activities, even if faith-based) averaged \$138. Secular charities include the following:

- Arts and cultural organizations.
- Educational institutions (including public or parochial schools).
- Organizations engaged in work to preserve the environment or to care for animals.
- Health care and health research charities.

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<sup>3</sup> A. Sargeant and E. Jay, *Building Donor Loyalty: The Fundraiser's Guide to Increasing Lifetime Value*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass), 2004.

<sup>4</sup> W. Lindahl and C. Winship, Models for annual and major gift fundraising, *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, Co. 3, No. 1, Fall 1992, pages 43 and following.

<sup>5</sup> Center on Philanthropy Panel Study 2005 waves. Soon to be available at [www.philanthropy.iupui.edu](http://www.philanthropy.iupui.edu).

<sup>6</sup> Center on Philanthropy Panel Study, 2001, 2003, and 2005 waves. 2001 and 2003 are available at [www.philanthropy.iupui.edu](http://www.philanthropy.iupui.edu). The mean amount donated is from the 2005 wave and is forthcoming (late 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

- Human services organizations ranging from those that help promote positive youth development (e.g., Scouts, Junior Achievement) and nonprofit housing for seniors to food banks and homeless shelters.
- International aid agencies.
- Charities working to improve the lives of veterans, public-safety officers (firefighters and police officers), or unionized workers. These are a portion of the category called “public-society benefit” by the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS).
- Combined purpose funds, such as United Way, Jewish federations, Combined Federal campaign, and other entities that collect donations and allocate them to many different types of recipient charities working in our communities. These are also in “public-society benefit” in the NCCS categories. The combined fund gifts are separated here in part because the study occurred just after the launch of United Way campaigns in September 2007. The total national participation in such campaigns is a question of interest to scholars and others.

Giving by type of secular recipient varied in average gift amount and in the percentage of donors who contributed recently to that cause. After religion, which received the largest share of donations (22.9 percent), the next four groups most likely to receive gifts are as follows:

- Health organizations, with one in five donors (20 percent) making their most recent contribution to a charity focused on health care. These donations were often an organization raising funds for the prevention, cure, or treatment of a specific disease or disorder. The average gift size is \$102, and the median is \$50.
- Human service charities received an average of \$167 per gift (median of \$50) from 12 percent of the donors.
- Charities in the “public-society benefit” subsector (police associations, veterans' service groups, volunteer fire departments and others) received just under 11 percent of the gifts reported by donors in this study, and the average gift was \$59. The median gift amount, at \$25, was the lowest of the median values in this study.
- Combined purpose funds received just under 6 percent of the donations. The average gift was \$143 and the median was \$50.

Table 1 summarizes the mean and median amounts contributed by type of recipient organization.

**Table 1: Average and median gift amounts by type of recipient organization  
Most recent gifts, September 2007**

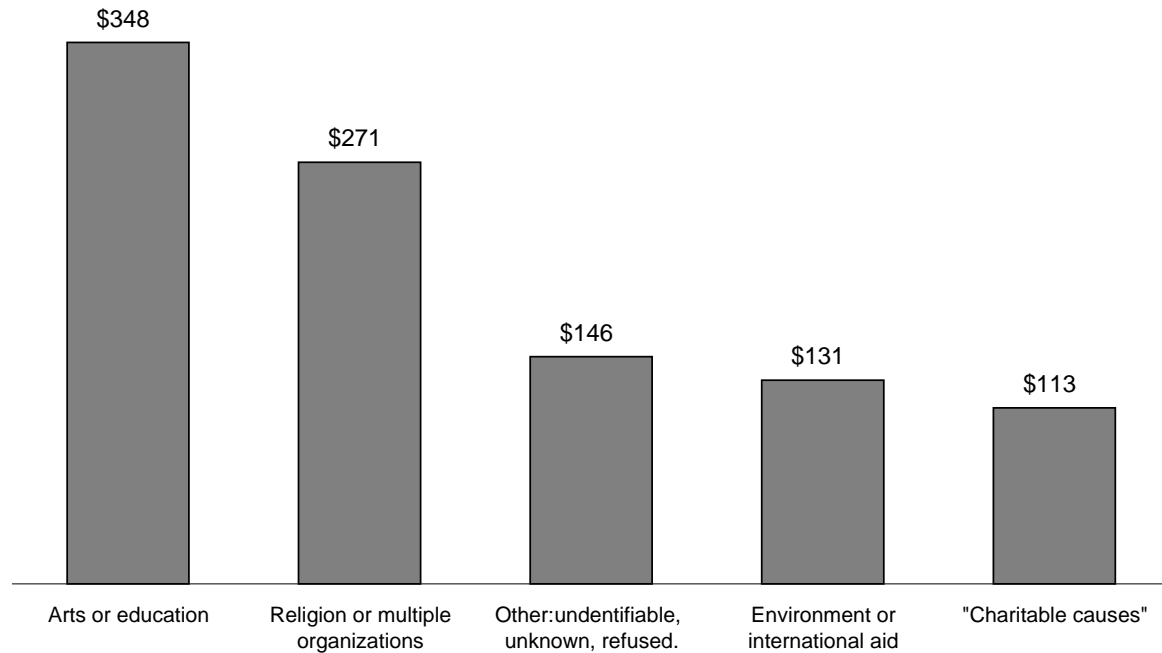
	Count	Percent of gifts	Mean	Median
Religion, ministry, missionary society	217	22.9	\$284	\$75
<b>SECULAR GIVING</b>				
Health	193	20.4	\$102	\$50
Human services	113	11.9	\$167	\$50
Other: illegible reply, donor didn't know/refused	114	12.0	\$143	\$50
Public-Society Benefit (public safety, veterans)	101	10.7	\$59	\$25
Combined purpose: United Way, Combined Federal Campaign, Jewish Federation, Community Chest, etc.	54	5.7	\$140	\$52
International aid or relief	44	4.6	\$167	\$50
Donor provided the name of different types of organizations when asked about last gift, usually included religion and something else	34	3.6	\$189	\$25
Environment or animal-related cause	31	3.3	\$81	\$30
Educational institution, pre-school through university	26	2.7	\$375	\$51
Arts, culture, or humanities (inc. public broadcast)	21	2.2	\$313	\$135
<b>Total secular</b>	<b>731</b>	<b>77.1</b>	<b>\$138</b>	<b>\$50</b>
<b>TOTAL religion and secular</b>	<b>948</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>\$172</b>	<b>\$50</b>

Several of these types of recipients had too few donations to analyze statistically. To boost analytical power, we combined groups that might be considered similar. We considered subsectors when the mean gift size was close and when prior research at the Center on Philanthropy has shown that donors who give to one of the groups are likely to give to the other cause(s) in the cluster (based on prior work done for the Center on Philanthropy Panel Study). The larger clusters group the following together:

- Religion and people who reported giving to religion and at least one other type of organization because we could not separate the amounts for each. It made sense to put these 34 multiple-organization gifts into religion because religion is a) the most frequent and b) the largest gift amount, on average.
- Arts and education.
- “Charitable causes,” which clusters human services, health, public-society benefit, and combined funds.
- Environment/animals and international affairs.

Figure 3 shows the mean gift amounts by type of recipient, combining all gifts reported (online and offline).

**Figure 3: Mean gift by type of recipient**



**Data table for Figure 3  
Mean gift amounts by clustered type of recipient**

	Total	n =
Arts or education	\$348	47
"Charitable causes:" combined fund, health, human services, or public safety/veterans	\$113	461
Religion or multiple types of organizations (religion usually one of those) Note: Multiple organization gifts are lower, which is why this is less than the religion-only average of \$284	\$271	251
Environment or international aid	\$131	76
Other: illegible reply, unknown, refused	\$146	113
Total gifts analyzed	\$172	948

When we compare the size of the average gift by type of recipient:

- There is no statistically significant difference in the size of the average gift to arts or education (\$348) when compared with the average gift to religion (\$271). This is because there is a wide range in the size of the individual gifts to arts, education, and religion, and a comparatively small number of gifts to arts and education. With a

larger number of arts/education gifts, it is very likely that the difference found here would reach statistical significance.

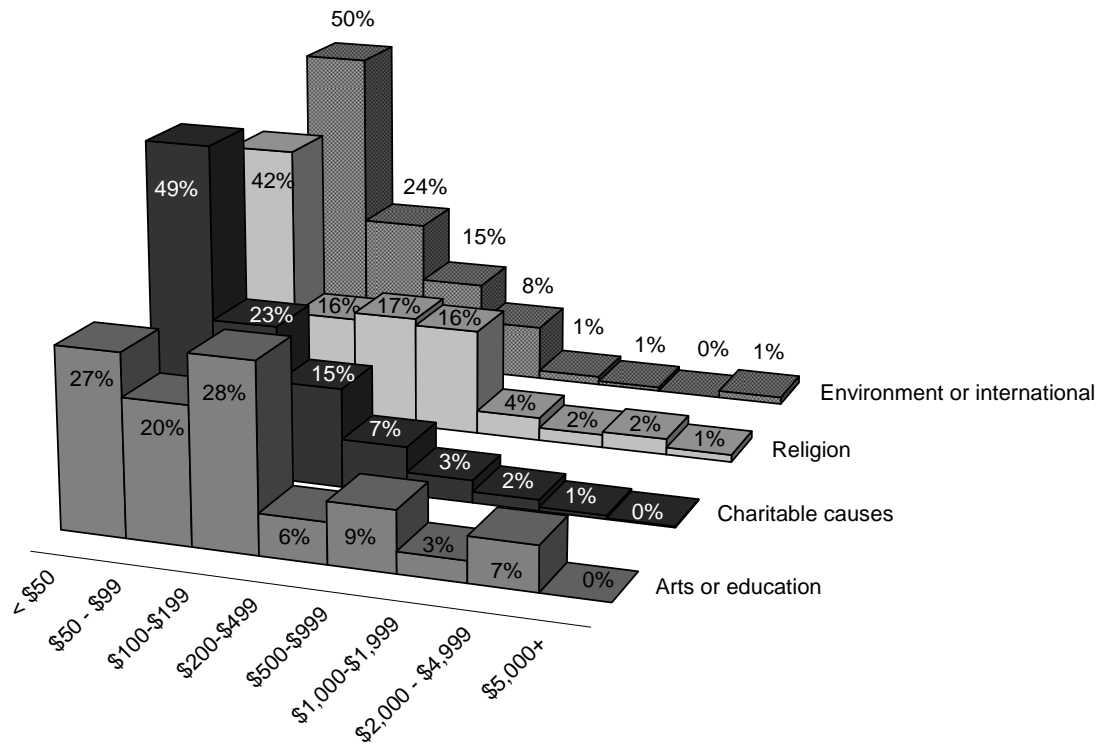
- The average arts or education gift (\$348) is larger than the average gift to “charitable causes” (\$113). (p=.038.) A “p-value” less than 0.05 indicates statistical significance and that if the study were repeated 100 times, the difference would again be found in 95 of them.
- The other two named secular cause clusters—“charitable causes” and environment/international—are not different from one another using statistical analysis.

The cluster of “other” includes those that could not be interpreted or assigned to a subsector, or the respondent didn’t give an organization name. The average gift of \$146 to other causes is higher, with statistical significance, than the average gift to “charitable causes,” but not higher than the average gift to environment/international.

**Distribution of Gift Sizes by Type of Recipient Varies Little**

The distribution of gifts by type of recipient varies slightly by type of recipient, with the most important difference being between gifts to arts or education and all other types of recipients, as shown in Figure 4. Gifts to most causes are very likely to be below \$100 (only arts or education gifts were more likely to be between \$50 and \$200 than below \$50). Arts or education gifts were also more likely than those of other subsectors to be more than \$500.

**Figure 4: Distribution of gift sizes by type of recipient**



**Data table for Figure 4**  
**Distribution of gift sizes by type of recipient**

	Arts or education	Charitable causes	Religion or multiple causes	Environment or international affairs
< \$50	27%	49%	42%	50%
\$50 - \$99	20%	23%	16%	24%
\$100-\$199	28%	15%	17%	15%
\$200-\$499	6%	7%	16%	8%
\$500-\$999	9%	3%	4%	1%
\$1,000-\$1,999	3%	2%	2%	1%
\$2,000 - \$4,999	7%	1%	2%	0%
\$5,000+	0%	0%	1%	1%

## TYPICAL GIFTS EXCEED MOST RECENT GIFTS

In addition to asking people about their most recent gift, we asked about the size of their typical gift. Most people reported that their most recent gift was typical of gifts throughout the year. This was true for online gifts (76 percent said the recent gift was similar to a typical gift) and for offline gifts (78 percent said the recent gift was typical).

Among people who reported a different typical gift size, the number of donors who reported a recent gift amount above their typical gift size roughly equaled the number who reported a smaller recent gift than the typical gift size. Not all respondents answered these questions. Table 2 shows the percentages reporting their online and offline typical gift sizes as smaller, the same, or larger than the recent gift amount in this survey.

**Table 2: Percentage reporting typical gift amount compared with actual gift amount**

Typical is	Donation type	
	Online	Offline
Smaller	10	11
Same	76	78
Larger	14	11
Total %	100	100
	n=194	n = 712

Online donors in this table providing information about their typical online gift size and about their most recent online gift includes respondents in the online oversample. With the oversample, online donors are 13 percent of the total number surveyed. Also including the oversample of online donors, the offline donors providing information about their typical gift size and about their most recent offline gift are 50 percent of all of those surveyed.

When comparing the reported recent gifts and the typical gift amounts, the recent gift average of \$172 is less than the typical average of \$359. Note, though, that the median for all types of gifts is \$50. The “typical gift” is likely to include donations to religious organizations that, over the course of a year, exceed the amount given to secular causes. About 46 percent of households give to religion in a year; in this study, about 23 percent of donors reported that their most recent gift was made to religion. Table 3 summarizes the online, offline, and total recent and typical gift amounts.

**Table 3: Mean and median recent and typical gift amounts**

Some donors reported both online and offline gifts  
Outliers excluded, weighted

	Online gifts n = 196		Offline gifts n = 745		Total gifts N = 942	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
Recent gift amount	\$165	\$50	\$174	\$50	\$172	\$50
Typical gift amount	\$236	\$50	\$394	\$50	\$359	\$50

## **ONLINE GIVING: STILL ROOM TO GROW**

The American Express Charitable Gift Survey explores how many donors give online, why donors chose online giving, and who is utilizing online giving. Online giving has shown promise as an approach for attracting and retaining donors, yet this survey finds there are still many donors who do not use this giving option. There are some indications that there is room for growth, especially by promoting online giving among the 35- to 55-year-old age group.

### **Prior studies about online giving**

The Philanthropic Giving Index, which is released twice a year by the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, recently reported a steady increase in the success of Internet fundraising.<sup>8</sup> From a low below 10 percent of those surveyed in 2000, by summer 2007, nearly a quarter (22 percent) of charities report success with online giving. This growth in success can be explained in a number of ways: More people are giving online, the same number of people are giving online but making more gifts or making larger gifts online, more organizations are asking for donations online and getting small contributions (so that success means going from zero to something) without any fundamental change in donor behaviors, and perhaps other causes as well.

We can understand more about who gives online when we look at other uses of the Internet and other work done on this topic. In 2001, James Austin, a professor at Harvard University, wrote that by 2010, one-third of charitable giving would be online.<sup>9</sup> A July 2005 study of giving, which was conducted online, found that 14 percent of the 2,333 Americans contacted had contributed online in the prior 12 months. That 12-month period included the relief efforts after the Indian Ocean tsunami and may include donors who have not made an online gift recently.<sup>10</sup>

A study from 2001 found that 6 percent of consumers had ever given over the Internet.<sup>11</sup> A study funded by Pew Trusts in February–March 2007 found that 71 percent of American adults use the Internet.<sup>12</sup> In successive surveys, Pew has found that 71 percent of Internet users had gone online to buy a product (August 2006), 43 percent did at least some banking online (December 2005), and 18 percent had ever made a donation to charity online (in a survey conducted in September 2005, which may incorporate major disaster relief giving that occurred online). This implies that just under 13 percent of the adult population has ever used the Internet to make a gift as of Fall 2005. But it doesn't tell us how many people made gifts recently using the Internet.

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<sup>8</sup> Philanthropic Giving Index, Summer 2007, available through premium services, [www.philanthropy.iupui.edu](http://www.philanthropy.iupui.edu).

<sup>9</sup> J. Austin, The E-Philanthropy Revolution is Here to Stay, *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, March 8, 2001, [www.philanthropy.com](http://www.philanthropy.com).

<sup>10</sup> DonorTrends White Paper: Keep Your Postage Meter: The Status of Online Giving in America, October 2005, Craver, Mathews, Smith & Company, and primegroup.

<sup>11</sup> Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance, *Donor Expectations Survey*, cited in *Giving USA 2002*, page 69. Available at [www.giving.org](http://www.giving.org). This survey reached 2,003 American households. The study found that 54% of online donors said they gave about the same amount per gift online as offline; 32 percent said they gave gifts of lower amounts online than they did offline; and 12 percent said their online gift amounts were generally larger than offline gift amounts.

<sup>12</sup> The Pew Internet and American Life Project, "Internet Activities" at <http://www.pewInternet.org/>, viewed October 17, 2007.

### Online giving now

The American Express Charitable Gift Survey finds that one in ten donors gives online currently. Reasons for online giving are focused largely on convenience (64 percent of online donors). This is true for all ages of online donors and for all income levels of online donors. A second reason for online giving demonstrates that charities themselves have an important role to play. One-fifth of online donors (20 percent) said that they gave online in response to something the charity initiated—either an e-mail, a web site, or another way of letting the donor know about online giving. These findings and others from the American Express Charitable Gift Survey are discussed further in the sections that follow.

### Six percent give online; online gift amounts about the same as offline

The American Express Charitable Gift Survey finds that 5.9 percent of adults in the United States gave online in the past 12 months. On average, the online gift is about the same amount as offline gifts.

The most recent online gifts are slightly lower, on average, than the most recent offline gifts, but the difference is not statistically significant. Table 4 summarizes the findings about average gift size, when excluding outliers (12 gifts of \$7,000 or more, with 10 made offline and 2 made online).

**Table 4: Mean gift amount by gift mechanism, online or offline, and total**

	Online	Offline	Total
Total	\$165 n = 202	\$174 n = 746	\$172 n = 948
Secular	\$144 n = 179	\$137 n = 551	\$138 n = 731
Religion	\$334* n = 23	\$280 n = 194	\$284 n = 217

\* There are too few cases to analyze using statistical procedures.

When adding secular and religious sample sizes, the total n will not necessarily add up precisely because of weighting differences the online and offline giving

Looking at gifts reported as the most recent contributions is not the same as looking at online gifts to a particular appeal and comparing them with offline gifts in response to the same appeal. Instead, we looked at the most recent gifts made as of late September 2007 by 867 donors and compared the online gift amounts with the offline gift amounts. Of those donors, some gave information about both types of giving, so that there are 948 gifts in the file.

Even after clustering types of recipients, the only type of recipient that received enough gifts online and offline to compare the sizes using statistical procedures is the combined “Charitable causes” category. Table 5 shows the median gift amounts from online and offline donations type of recipient.

**Table 5: Mean gift amounts by type of recipient and by online and offline transactions**

	Total	n =	Online	n =	Offline	n =
Arts or education	\$348	47	\$334	19	\$356	28
“Charitable causes:” combined fund, health, human services, or public safety/veterans	\$113	461	\$101	99	\$116	362
Religion or multiple types of organizations (religion usually one of those)						
Note: Multiple organization gifts are lower, which is why this is less than the religion-only average of \$284	\$271	251	\$305	26	\$267	225
Environment or international	\$131	76	\$212	29	\$81	47
Other: unknown, refused, illegible reply	\$146	113	\$93	28	\$164	82
Total, gifts analyzed	\$172	948	\$165	202	\$174	746

The average online gift for a “charitable cause” is \$101, and the average offline gift for a “charitable” cause is \$116. These averages are not statistically significantly different ( $p = .564$ ). The medians, which are not on the table, are \$50 (online) and \$46 (offline).

Other types of recipients of online gifts had too few online donors in this dataset for statistical analysis to compare online and offline donation amounts with any certainty. In general, except for religion, these types of charities receive donations from a relatively small percentage of the total population. About 15 percent of households contribute to education, about 8 percent to organizations working on issues related to the environment or animals, and about 4 percent for international affairs.<sup>13</sup> Given that a small percentage of the population overall contributes to most types of charities at all during the year (except religion, to which about 45 percent of households give), it is not surprising to find a small percentage of the most recent gifts going to these causes.

### **Offline gifts larger from donors who gave online and offline**

A total of 102 respondents in the total sample ( $n = 1,505$ ) had given their most recent gift offline and were also asked about their most recent online gift. Among these donors, online gifts were, on average, \$116, and offline gifts averaged \$229. These results are not weighted. The median for both types of donations was \$50. The means are different with statistical significance ( $p < .01$ ). This includes gifts to religion and to secular causes.

Only 4 of the 102 donors made gifts online and offline for religious causes. Twenty-seven donors made a “mixed” combination of gifts, where one was to religion and the other was for a secular cause. Neither of these groups has enough respondents to analyze separately.

Offline donations are nearly twice as much as online donations from the same donors. 71 donors gave both online and offline to secular causes. The average online donation was \$122, and the average offline donation from the same donors was \$228. The median was \$50. The averages are different with statistical significance ( $p < .01$ ).

<sup>13</sup> Center on Philanthropy Panel Study, 2001, 2003, and 2005. All available at [www.philanthropy.iupui.edu](http://www.philanthropy.iupui.edu).

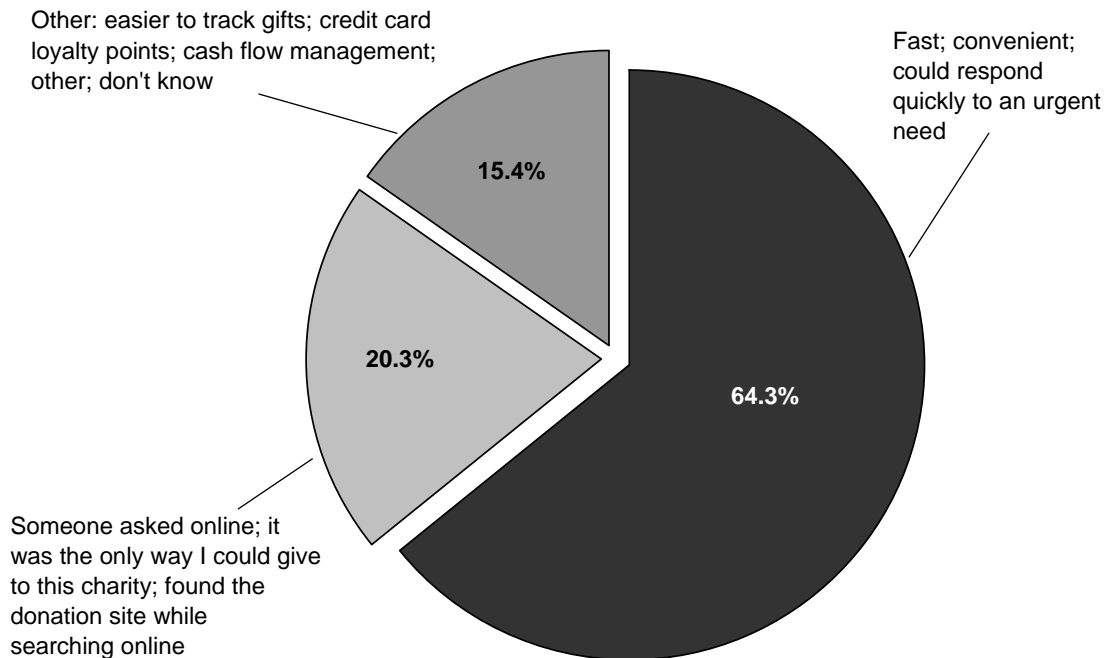
### Current online donors like convenience of online option

Online donors predominantly indicated that they value the convenience of giving online. People who do not now make donations online are likely not to have Internet access. There are offline-only donors who could give online but who haven't because they lack information about online giving.

The questions about motivations for giving online were open-ended, and responses were coded by interviewers into any one of 11 potential types of replies. There were 241 responses to the online motivations question. Figure 5 shows the frequency of the different motivations offered by online donors.

**Figure 5: Motivations cited for online donations**

n=241



Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of online donors gave a reason related to convenience or the speed of online giving. Nothing else came close as a reason for why people giving online.

One in five (20 percent) of respondents who gave online made a statement relating directly the initiative taken by charitable organizations to make online giving attractive and reliable. Answers in this group included:

- I got an e-mail from the charity with a link in it;
- I was looking online and found the charity there; and
- Online was the only way I found to give to this charity.

There are no statistically significant differences in the frequency of these types of responses (convenience/speed or charity initiative) by age or by income. Table 6 shows the percentage of respondents in each cluster, looking only at online donors, by age and income range.

**Table 6: Why donors give online, by income and age**

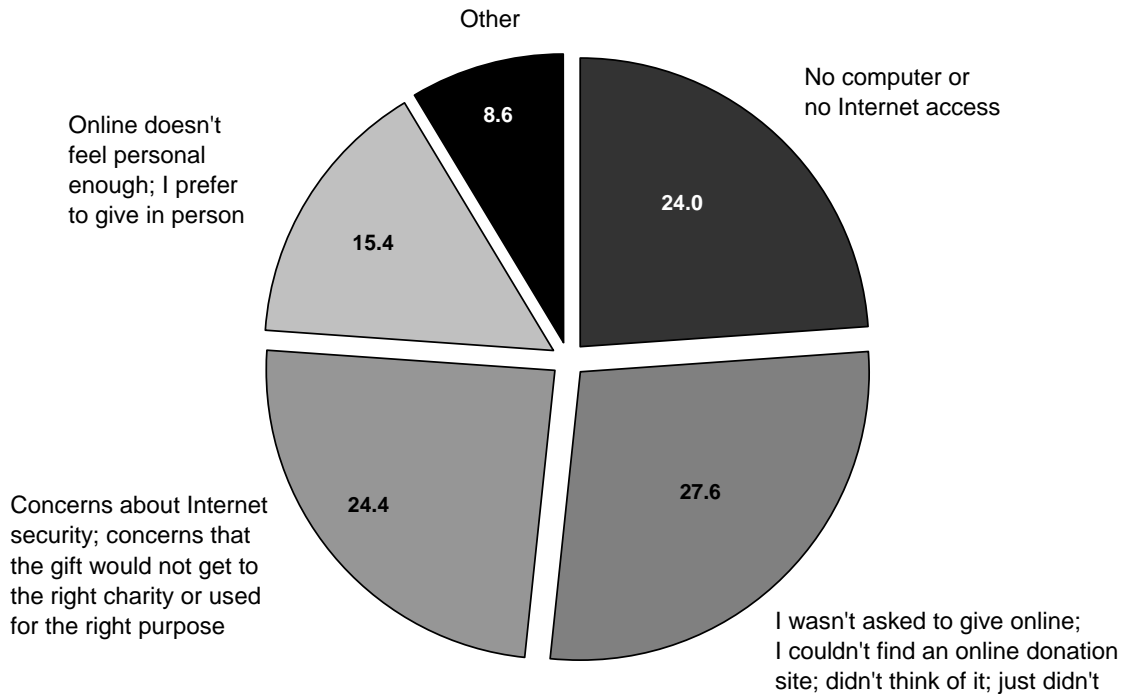
<b>Age range</b>	n =	Fast, convenient, could respond to urgent need quickly	Someone asked, only way I could give, was searching online and found site	Other: tracking purpose, credit card loyalty program, cash flow management, other, don't know
18 - 34	62	61.3%	29.0%	9.7%
35 - 54	121	66.1%	16.5%	17.4%
55+	49	63.3%	20.4%	16.3%
<i>Refused age</i> *	9	66.7%	11.1%	22.2%
All	241	64.3%	20.3%	15.4%
<b>Income range</b>				
Less than \$50,000	58	63.8%	24.1%	12.1%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	92	62.0%	17.4%	20.7%
\$100,000 or more	65	64.6%	23.1%	12.3%
<i>Refused income</i> *	26	73.1%	15.4%	11.5%
All	241	64.3%	20.3%	15.4%

\* Number of respondents too small to use for analysis of statistically significant differences

**Deterrents to giving online split between no Internet access, lack of information, and security concerns**

Donors who did not give online were asked an open-ended question about why they didn't give online. Interviewers coded those responses into 10 possible types of deterrents to giving online. The single most frequent response was not having a computer or Internet access. Security concerns followed that. There were 735 responses to these questions. Figure 6 shows the frequency of different types of responses.

**Figure 6: Deterrents to online giving**  
N = 735



No computer

Nearly one-quarter (24 percent) of respondents who gave an answer to the question about why they don't give online said they don't have a computer or Internet access. The frequency of this response increased with age: one-third (33 percent) of people over 55 said they did not give online because they don't have access to the Internet. It also increased as income was lower. Nearly one-third (32 percent) of people with income less than \$50,000 gave a reason related to no computer or Internet access.

Lack of knowledge about Internet giving options

Respondents offered concerns such as the following: I wasn't asked to give online; I didn't know I could give online; I couldn't find a way to give online; and I didn't think of giving online. For analysis purposes, these responses were grouped and accounted for 28 percent of the answers provided about why donors did not give online.

Security concerns

Internet security concerns were grouped with concerns about gift processing security—whether the gift would be received by the organization or directed to the right purpose. When collected together, all security concerns accounted for 24 percent of the people who gave a reason for not giving online.

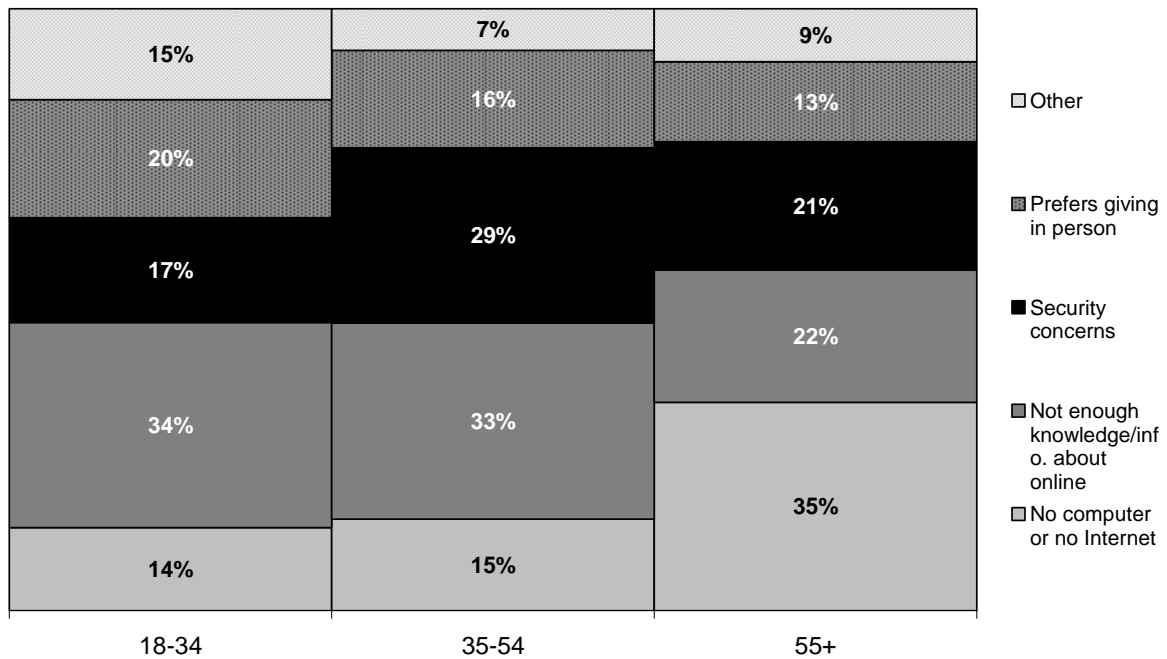
General concerns about Internet usage were the majority. One-fifth of all offline-only donors (20 percent) said they didn't give online from concerns about Internet security. Women, in

particular, were more likely (with significance) to be concerned about Internet security (22 percent, compared with 16 percent of men who were offline-only donors).

**Donors over 55 most likely not to have Internet access; Donors under 55 lack knowledge of Internet giving**

There are age and income variations in the likelihood of selecting a response related to security concerns or to knowledge about Internet giving. Figure 7 shows the distribution by age of various reasons cited for not giving online. Table 7 shows the percentage of off line-only donors by type of reason they stated for not giving online, by age and by income range

**Figure 7: Reasons cited for not giving online, by age range**



**Table 7: Why not give online: Percentage of offline-only donors offering various reasons, by age and by income**

<b>Age</b>	<b>n =</b>	<b>No computer or no Internet access</b>	<b>Didn't know I could; Wasn't asked online; Didn't find online option; Didn't think of it; Just didn't</b>	<b>Concerns about Internet security and/or how gift would get to the right place or for the right purpose</b>
18 - 34	89	13.8%	34.1%	17.4%
35 - 54	305	15.2%	<b>32.6%</b>	29.1%
55+	328	<b>34.6%</b>	22.0%	21.3%
<i>Refused age</i>	13	38.5%	15.4%	30.8%
All	735	24.1%	27.6%	24.4%

<b>Income range</b>	<b>N =</b>	<b>No computer or no Internet access</b>	<b>Didn't know I could; Wasn't asked online; Didn't find online option; Didn't think of it; Just didn't</b>	<b>Concerns about Internet security and/or how gift would get to the right place or for the right purpose</b>
Less than \$50,000	330	<b>33.4%</b>	25.6%	20.6%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	229	15.0%	<b>33.5%</b>	27.0%
\$100,000 or more	74	4.0%	22.4%	33.0%
<i>Refused income</i>	102	29.4%	17.6%	31.4%
All	735	24.1%	27.6%	24.4%

<b>Age</b>	<b>n =</b>	<b>Not personal enough; Preference to give in person</b>	<b>Other: (confusing, time-consuming, give through payroll deduction, give in-kind, other unspecified)</b>
18 - 34	89	19.6%	15.1%
35 - 54	305	16.2%	6.9%
55+	328	13.3%	8.8%
<i>Refused age</i>	13	15.4%	0.0%
All	735	15.4%	8.6%

<b>Income range</b>	<b>n =</b>	<b>Not personal enough; Preference to give in person</b>	<b>Other: (confusing, time-consuming, give through payroll deduction, give in-kind, other unspecified)</b>
Less than \$50,000	330	12.4%	8.1%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	229	16.1%	8.5%
\$100,000 or more	74	25.4%	15.3%
<i>Refused income</i>	102	15.7%	5.9%
All	735	15.4%	8.6%

The cells that are shaded light grey are statistically significantly different from one another. The two cells shaded dark grey are statistically significantly different from one another. The higher value is in bold. *Italics mean cell size is too small to use in statistical analysis.*

### Characteristics of online donors

Not surprisingly, younger people are more likely than people over 55 to use the Internet for giving. Table 8 shows the percentage by age who give at all, the percentage of donors who make contributions online, and the percentage of all people in that age group who make donations online.

**Table 8: Percentage of respondents by age group who give at all and give online**

National sample only, weighted  
Excludes oversample of online donors

Age	Percentage who give	Percentage of donors making online gifts	Percentage of ALL in age group making online gift
18 - 34 (n = 239)	45	15	7
35 - 54 (n = 509)	68	10	7
55+ (n = 504)	72	6	4
Refused age (n = 31) *	52	19	14
Total (n = 1,282)	65	8.9	5.7

\* Too small for analysis, but shown here to yield totals

However, despite the fact that people under 35 are more likely to use the Internet to make gifts, the greatest share of Internet donors are between 35 and 54 years old. This is because a larger percentage of people in this age range give to charity using any means. Fifty percent of all online donors are in the 35-to-55 age group.

### Residents of the South less likely to give online

People living in the American South are less likely to give online than are people in other regions. This is likely because Internet use is less widespread in the South. Table 9 compares regional difference in the use of the Internet for giving and Internet access.

**Table 9: By Census region, Internet giving and Internet access**

Region	Percentage of donors who give online	Range of percentage in region with Internet access*
NORTHEAST	23	58 - 66
MIDWEST	21	55 - 59
SOUTH	15	48 - 64
WEST	25	60 - 68

\* Pew Center for Internet and American Life, 2003 report.

Note: The regions are divided differently in the Pew study. The range here includes the top value and the bottom value for the subregion in the Pew study that fits within the larger region used here. The Pew report shows Internet access in the South at 48 percent and in the Southeast at 57 percent. The South in the Pew study covers Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, and West Virginia. The Southeast covers Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The National Capital region in the Pew report, at 64 percent Internet use, contains Maryland, Virginia, and Delaware, plus the District of Columbia. If Delaware, Texas, and Oklahoma are added, the Pew South, Southeast, and National Capital regions corresponds to the Census Bureau's definition of South, which is what is used in this study.

Using a regression analysis process called a probit applied to all donors, we can evaluate the probability that a donor gives online, taking into account an array of potential determinants or factors likely to be associated with online giving. The factors selected to evaluate include income range; education level; region of residence; and racial/ethnic heritage. The factors that are important are:

- Being separated or divorced is strongly associated with a lower probability of giving online (a 127 percent decrease in the probability of giving online, compared with people with an unknown marital status) (p = .009).

- Living in the South is strongly associated with a lower probability of giving online (a 43 percent drop in the probability of giving online, when compared with people living in the West) ( $p = .002$ ).
- Age is negatively associated with giving online—with the probability of giving online decreasing by 2 percent as age increases by one year. ( $p = .000$ ).

Income, which is strongly predictive of giving at all, is not associated with the probability of giving online. Income of \$100,000 to \$200,000 approached significance for giving online ( $p = .052$ ). No other income range, including \$200,000 and above, approached significance in this analysis.

## **BENCHMARK GIFT AMOUNTS BY DONOR CHARACTERISTICS**

Nonprofit organizations frequently seek benchmark information to compare their fundraising success with that of other charities. That information can be by

- Type of gift (online or offline, for example);
- Type of fundraising initiative (annual fund drive; capital campaign; planned giving); or
- Donor traits (income, years of giving to the charity, man or woman, etc.).

The American Express Gift Survey provides some benchmark information about gifts, most of which are likely to be annual fund donations, by vehicle (online or offline), by gender, by income, and by age. This section presents this benchmark information.

### **Men and women's giving differs in amount but not in form or type**

There is very little difference in the percentage of men and of women giving online, and there is very little difference in types of charities they support. In the nationally representative data, when weighted, 10 percent of male donors and 9 percent of female donors reported making online donations in the past 12 months. With the available sample size, there is no statistically significant difference in these percentages.

Half (49 percent of men, 48 percent of women) of all donors reported that their most recent gift was to a charity clustered in this study into the "charitable cause" group: human services organization, combined fund like United Way, an association serving public safety officers or veterans, or a health charity.

To the extent there is a difference, women may be slightly more likely to support environment or international organizations (grouped together because of small size of each subsector alone) and men giving online might be somewhat more likely to support art or education (also grouped). The cell sizes here are too small to draw firm conclusions but may be illustrative:

- 9 percent of women donors made their most recent gift to environment/international (n = 51) compared with 4 percent of male online donors (n = 17).
- 4 percent of women donors made their most recent gift to art or education (n = 23) compared with 6 percent of male donors (n=17).

The number of donors in each of these groups is small so these findings cannot be tested for statistical significance and may not represent accurately the population of all donors.

Before controls for income, education, and other traits, men's average gifts (online, offline, and in general) are higher than women's average reported gifts. Table 10 shows the mean amounts for the most recent gifts (online and offline considered together), for the most recent online gifts and for the most recent gifts that were offline.

**Table 10: Donors only. Mean amount of most recent gift, by gender  
All gifts, religion and secular**

	Men n = 305	Women n = 564
Most recent (online or offline)	\$246	\$142
Most recent online	\$190	\$150
Offline gift	\$252	\$134

This analysis does not consider whether or not a respondent gives, only the average amount contributed by people who reported making a charitable gift in the prior 12 months. Men's most recent gifts are higher, on average, than women's, before taking into account income differences, education levels, and marital status, all of which are associated with giving ( $p < .01$ ).<sup>14</sup> Men give significantly more than women in offline giving (\$252 compared with \$134,  $p < .01$ ), but the differences in online giving amounts from men (\$190) and women (\$150) are not significantly different ( $p = .40$ ).

After controlling for income, education, and marital status, there are no statistically significant differences in the amounts contributed by men and women in their most recent donations. That is, the differences observed in Table 10 result from differences in income, not from the gender of the donor.

Table 10 includes gifts to all types of causes. Knowing that religion received nearly one-quarter of the most recent gifts, and that the average gift to religion, at \$284, exceeds that of most other gift averages, the analysis for secular giving can be helpful. Table 11 shows the mean gift amounts for men and women to secular causes (all secular causes combined) and splits the information into groups based on marital status and income.

**Table 11: Mean amount, secular gifts, donors only  
Most recent gift by income range, marital status  
and gender  
(online or offline)**

Marital Status	Income range	Men	Women
Married	< \$50,000	\$115*	\$64
	\$50,000 - \$100,000	\$253	\$147
	\$100,000 or more	\$309	\$303
Single	< \$50,000	\$73	\$63
	\$50,000 - \$100,000	\$140*	\$82*
	\$100,000 or more	\$132*	\$110*

\* There are fewer than 30 donors in the cell, so analysis is not useful.

There are no statistically significant differences between men and women by row where analysis is possible.

<sup>14</sup> Prior research shows that income, education, and marital status, married people give more than single people; people with college degrees give more than people who have not completed college; people with more income give higher amounts than those with less income). Rooney, Mesch and Steinberg, K., *Economics Letters*, February 2005; Wilhelm and Steinberg, R., *Patterns of Giving in COPPS*, 2001; Yoshioka, *Patterns of Giving in COPPS 2003*. All of these can be found or linked at [www.philanthropy.iupui.edu](http://www.philanthropy.iupui.edu).

In most cases, there are too few respondents to analyze differences, but we can see that for moderate-income married men, an average gift of \$253 exceeds the gift from moderate income married women of \$147. However, the difference is not statistically significant with the number of respondents. It might be that with a larger sample the difference would be significant.

When income is above \$100,000, there is no difference in the average gift amount. Among single donors, both men and women, with income below \$50,000, there is no difference in the amount of the most recent secular gift. There is no difference in the amount of the most recent gift when comparing married and single women with incomes of \$50,000 or less.

### Benchmarks by Donor Age

In this study, offline donations, averaging \$210, from people aged 18 to 34 exceeded the online amount of \$69. Donations from people in the 35-to-54-year old range were nearly the same, at \$190 for online gifts and \$205 for offline contributions. Among donors aged 55 or more, the online donation average of \$229 exceeded the offline donation average of \$135. There is a low number of online donors in this age group (39 of more than 350 donors). It is likely that there is some systematic difference among online donors and offline donors in this age group that also explains the giving difference. For example, perhaps online donors are highly likely to be employed, and offline donors are more likely to be retired. Table 12 shows the most recent gift by age, and Table 13 shows mean “typical gift” by age.

**Table 12: Mean recent gift size by age**

Weighted, all gifts (including oversample of online donors, but excluding outliers)

	Online	n =	Offline	n =	
18 - 34	\$69	56	\$210	104	
35 - 54	\$190	105	\$205	317	
55+	\$229	39	\$135	314	
Refused age	\$88	2	\$60	10	
Subtotal, gifts analyzed	\$165	202	\$174	745	947
Don't know recent gift amt		37			
Outliers not included		2		10	
All donors		241		755	996

Note: This table shows all donors, including those who could not identify a gift amount and the gifts of \$7,000 or more that were otherwise excluded from analysis.

**Table 13: Mean "typical gift" size by age**

Weighted, all typical gifts

	Online	N =	Offline	n =
18 - 34	\$71	56	\$427	104
35 - 54	\$309	105	\$584	317
55+	\$286	39	\$190	314
Refused age	\$88	2	\$44	10
All gifts analyzed	\$235	202	\$393	745

### Benchmarks by Region

In the Northeast and the South, the average for the most recent online gift exceeds the average of the most recent offline gift. In the Midwest and the West, the offline gifts are larger. Given that there are 40 to 55 online donors in each region, the finding here may change with larger sample sizes. Tables 14 and 15 show mean recent gift and mean “typical gift” size by region.

**Table 14: Mean recent gift size by region**

Weighted, all gifts excluding outliers

	Online	n =	Offline	n =
NORTHEAST	<b>\$181</b>	43	\$131	137
MIDWEST	\$81	52	<b>\$163</b>	194
SOUTH	<b>\$257</b>	54	\$176	264
WEST	\$132	53	<b>\$226</b>	150
All gifts analyzed	\$165	202	\$174	746

In all regions, donors reported higher “typical gift” amounts for offline donations than for online donations.

**Table 15: Mean "typical gift" size by region**

Weighted, all typical gifts

Region	Online	n =	Offline	n =
NORTHEAST	\$116	43	\$218	137
MIDWEST	\$87	52	\$225	194
SOUTH	\$553	54	\$646	264
WEST	\$155	53	\$334	150
All gifts analyzed	\$235	202	\$393	746

### Benchmarks by donor income

Income is one of the strongest indicators that someone will be a donor (more income is associated with a greater probability of giving) and of the amount that someone will give (people with higher incomes give more than people with a lower income).<sup>15</sup> Offline and online giving in this survey also show this link between income and giving. It is also consistent that the average for the most recent offline gift exceeds the average for the most recent online gift in all income groups. Tables 16 and 17 show mean recent gift and mean “typical gift” size by donor income range.

<sup>15</sup> Center on Philanthropy Panel Study (2001 and later editions) and *Giving and Volunteering in the United States* (1988 and later editions), and other studies.

**Table 16: Mean recent gift size by income**

Weighted, all gifts excluding outliers

Income range	Online	n =	Offline	n =
<\$50,000	\$60	53	\$116	340
\$50,000 - \$100,000	\$150	80	\$236	242
\$100,000 +	\$291	58	\$273	90
No income amount	\$74	11	\$122	73
All gifts analyzed	\$165	202	\$174	746

Donors who provided information about their “typical gift” amount online or offline reported larger offline gifts.

**Table 17: Mean "typical gift" size by income**

Weighted, all gifts excluding outliers

Income range	Online	n =	Offline	N =
<\$50,000	\$60	53	\$389	340
\$50,000 - \$100,000	\$296	80	\$336	242
\$100,000 +	\$346	58	\$722	90
No income amount	\$89	11	\$175	73
All gifts analyzed	\$235	202	\$393	746

## TRANSACTION METHODS

This study asked donors about how they paid their gifts: credit card, debit card, in cash, by check, using electronic funds transfer (EFT), by other means such as payroll deduction gift-processing services such as Google Checkout or PayPal, or even gifts-in-kind. Online donors were asked to identify all the methods they used to pay their online contributions; and offline donors were asked how they most often make gifts.

Checks were most frequently used by 46 percent of donors making offline gifts. Credit cards were used by a total of 34 percent of donors, including offline-only donors (8 percent of payment methods), online donors who used a credit card and who also used other payment mechanisms (12 percent), and online donors who only used a credit card (13 percent). Cash was the most frequent form of gift for 13 percent of donors—and this was always offline-only donors. Other methods of payment were used by a total of 20 percent—including those who used a credit card and other means, and those who used only other means.

The survey did not ask how people made the most recent gift. However, we can analyze the size of the most recent gift according to the payment methods used at all. Table 18 shows that credit-card users, both online and offline, are more likely to make larger gifts than offline-only donors who pay by check or in cash. However, the differences between credit card and cash and between online and offline, given the sample size for each type of transaction method, do not reach levels of statistical significance.

**Table 18: Average size of most recent gift by type of payment method(s) for gifts**

	Mean	Median
Offline donor made gifts with credit card in past year	\$297	50
Online donor using credit card and other methods	\$267	50
Cash was most frequent form of gift	\$197	53
Check was most frequent form of gift	\$160	35
Online donor using credit card, no other methods	\$147	50
Other: Debit, EFT, payroll, etc.	\$122	50

Respondents who gave online were asked about all the different types of payment methods they used on the past 12 months. As expected, nearly all used a credit card at least some of the time. Table 19 summarizes the payment methods reported by online donors. Most online donors used a credit card for at least one donation and used other means for other donations.

**Table 19: Online payment methods**

Not weighted. Online giving n=300

Those providing data about payment=287

	Percentage using payment method
Credit card	90.8%
Debit card	24.2%
Electronic funds transfer	19.2%
Pay Pal	20.8%
Bill me later	0.8%
Google checkout	1.3%
Automated Clearing House (ACH)	1.7%
Other	20.0%
Don't know	5.4%

Respondents could select all that applied. Total will not be 100%

## **HOLIDAY SEASON SLIGHTLY MORE LIKELY TIME FOR GIVING**

Conventional wisdom holds that a large share of all charitable dollars arrives at year-end, whether because donors are motivated by tax considerations or because people respond to the spirit of the season. This study suggests that while there may be a small jump in giving at year-end, giving is a year-round activity for most donors.

- A surprising 57 percent of donors say they give about the same amount during the holiday season as they do the rest of the year.
- 14 percent say they give more during the holidays.
- 23 percent say they give less.

24 percent of the total dollars are estimated to be contributed in a six-week period, or about twice as much as one would expect if all donations were evenly spaced during the year.

Averaging the donors who give more, give less, and stay the same, donors think they give about 24 percent of their total giving during the holiday season (between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day). Nonetheless, just under one-quarter of the dollars are estimated as given in the last few weeks of the year, which leaves 75 percent of the dollars given in the first 11.5 months.

### **Holiday spirit cited by people do give more**

The most frequent reason mentioned for why those who give more during the holidays make the additional gifts was emotion/spirit of the season (38 percent). The next most common reason was in response to a holiday appeal made by a charity (30 percent). Just 10 percent said tax reasons (n=143).

### **Half of donors give to same charities at holidays as during rest of year**

People are about evenly divided in the types of charities to which they give more (when they give more) during the holiday season.

- Half (51 percent) said they give to charities they support throughout the year.
- Just slightly fewer (47 percent) said they give to charities they generally don't support at other times of the year.
- Others didn't know (2 percent) (n=143).

Age makes little difference in people’s holiday giving. Table 20 shows the percentage in each age group who identified that they give more, the same, or less during the holidays.

**Table 20: Holiday giving compared with giving the rest of year**

	Percentage selecting response					Total
	Age	18 - 34	35 - 54	55+	Refused	
Do you give:						
More		17	14	13	10	14
About the same		55	58	56	70	57
Less		25	25	25	20	25
Don't Know/Refused		3	3	6	0	4
		100	100	100	100	100

Those with incomes greater than \$100,000 per year report that they give less between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day (n=76). This group, however, gives more than other income groups overall, and more donate to charity than occurs in other income brackets.

There is no difference by gender in holiday giving. Table 21 shows the percentage of men and women who said they give more, the same, or less during the holidays.

**Table 21: Holiday giving, by gender**

	Men	Women
More	17%	13%
Same	54%	59%
Less	23%	23%
DK/Ref	6%	5%

No significant differences

While there are no statistically significant differences in the percentages of people who say they give more or less during the holidays when analyzed by income, it is interesting to note that nearly 3 in 10 people of higher income (\$100,000 and above) say they give less at the holidays. Table 22 summarizes the percentage of respondents by income who said they gave more, the same, or less at the holidays.

**Table 22: Holiday giving by income**

	< \$50,000	\$50,000 - \$100,000	\$100,000+	DK/Ref	Total
More	13.5%	14.6%	17.3%	13.2%	14.4%
Same	58.5%	57.6%	50.4%	61.2%	57.4%
Less	22.3%	23.5%	29.5%	19.4%	23.3%
DK/Ref	5.8%	4.3%	2.9%	6.3%	4.9%

No significant differences

People from the Northeast were more likely than people from other regions to say that they give more during the holiday period, as shown in Table 23. The percentages by region shown here are not statistically different from one another.

**Table 23: Holiday giving by region**

	Northeast	South	Midwest	West
More	19%	13%	15%	13%
Same	49%	60%	60%	58%
Less	24%	22%	22%	26%
DK/Ref	8%	5%	3%	3%
	100%	100%	100%	100%

No significant differences

Online donors are likely to report that they give more during the holiday season. One-fifth (20 percent) of online donors said that they give more during the holiday season than during the rest of the year, compared with 13 percent of offline donors. The difference between the two groups has statistical significance ( $p < .05$ ). The difference was consistent across age groups—roughly 20 percent of online donors 18–34, 35–54 and 55+ said they give more at holidays; and 11–17 percent of offline donors in those age groups reported giving more at holidays.

## Methods

This study was funded by American Express. The questions were selected jointly by the survey company, Innovative Research Group, the Center on Philanthropy, and Hart Philanthropic Services Group/tedhart.com, in response to the questions identified by American Express as of interest:

- The percentage of Americans who donate online vs. offline;
- Estimates of the average gift made overall and segmented by online vs. offline;
- Online and offline giving statistics by broad industry segment (arts, education, environment, etc.);
- A distribution of the average gift online vs. offline;
- Types of transaction methods used to process gifts;
- Motivations for giving online and giving overall;
- Impediments to giving online;
- Estimated online and offline giving by four identified geographic regions;
- Holiday giving; and
- The degree to which factors influence online giving levels of American households, including level of education, income, age, gender, marital status, and race/ethnicity.

Innovative Research Group, of Toronto Canada, fielded a 32-question survey using random-digit dialing in the United States from September 10 through October 1, 2007. In all, 1,505 households participated in the study. Of those, 1,300 were in a nationally representative sample, and 205 formed an oversample of online donors. There were a total of 300 online donors, combining the random sample respondents who reported giving online (85) and the oversample (205).

Innovative Research weighted responses using population distribution information from the U.S. Census Bureau. Characteristics used in weighting were age, income, race, and Census region (Northeast, South, West, and Midwest). The survey is available on request to the Center on Philanthropy.

The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University reviewed and analyzed the data and prepared this report. Outliers were identified as respondents giving more than three times the standard deviation from the mean (most recent gift, online gift, and offline gift outliers were determined separately—a gift that fit the outlier definition in any of those was treated as an outlier for all analyses).

Outliers were defined as donations that were standard deviations from mean. Analysis included descriptive statistics and regression analysis.

### **Some limitations to the data**

The research team is aware that up to 10 percent of U.S. households, many of them in the younger age cohort, do not have landline telephone numbers. The Random Digit Dialing procedure will systematically exclude people who use only a cell phone, as cell phones are not included in the exchanges for RDD. The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press concluded in May 2006 that for a political survey, including (or not) the cell phone—

only group changed results by “no more than one percentage point on any of nine key political questions.”<sup>16</sup>

All RDD studies have a natural response bias because there are people who do not participate in telephone surveys. To the extent that the people declining to participate cluster into specific demographic cohorts, those households will be underrepresented in the sample obtained. Weighting is one approach to bring the sample group into line with the population overall, which works for age, race, region of residence, gender, and other characteristics tracked by the Census Bureau. However, some types of underrepresented groups cannot be identified through weighting procedures. An example would be people who cannot be reached at their home telephone number because the adult(s) in the household work during calling hours (evenings and weekends).

### Data description

The survey reached 1,505 people, of whom 1,300 formed part of a nationally representative sample. These summary tables are for the national sample after weighting and do not include the 215-responder oversample of online donors.

In the random sample, 64 percent of respondents were women.

#### Gender

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid MALE	466	36.3	36.3	36.3
FEMALE	816	63.7	63.7	100.0
Total	1282	100.0	100.0	

The age distribution included approximately equal numbers of people aged 35 to 54 and aged 55 and above, and half that many between 18 and 34.

#### Age Categories

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 18 - 34	239	18.6	18.6	18.6
35 - 54	509	39.7	39.7	58.3
55+	503	39.2	39.2	97.6
Refused	31	2.4	2.4	100.0
Total	1282	100.0	100.0	

<sup>16</sup> The Cell Phone Challenge to Survey Research, Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, May 2006, <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=276>.

More than half of the respondents were married.

**How would you describe your marital status?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Married	658	51.3	52.7	52.7
	Living with a partner	19	1.5	1.5	54.2
	Single	273	21.3	21.8	76.1
	Divorced	144	11.2	11.5	87.6
	Separated	25	1.9	2.0	89.6
	Widowed	130	10.1	10.4	100.0
	Total	1249	97.4	100.0	
Missing	REFUSED	34	2.6		
Total		1282	100.0		

The racial distribution approximated that of the American population overall, although minorities (Hispanics, Blacks, Native Americans, and Asians) are all less represented in this study (even after weighting) than they are in the total population.

In the Census, respondents can identify Hispanics separately from other races. In this study, the interviewers stopped and asked once a respondent gave a “yes” answer for a racial identity question.

**Please tell me your race and/or ethnicity using one or more of the following categories.**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	92	7.2	7.4	7.4
	Biracial or Multiracial	14	1.1	1.1	8.6
	White	968	75.5	78.3	86.9
	Black	128	10.0	10.3	97.2
	American Indian or Alaska Native	3	.2	.2	97.4
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	2	.2	.2	97.6
	Asian	23	1.8	1.9	99.5
	Are you another race I have not mentioned (SPECIFY)	2	.1	.1	99.6
	Don't know	5	.4	.4	100.0
	Total	1236	96.4	100.0	
Missing	Refused to answer	46	3.6		
Total		1282	100.0		

**Comparison of this study and the 2000 Census  
Percentage of respondents by racial/ethnic identity**

	This study	Census, 2000
Hispanic/Latino	7.4	12.5
Bi- or multi-racial	1.1	2.4
White	78.3	75.1
Black	10.3	12.3
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.2	0.9
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.2	0.1
Asian	1.9	3.6
Another not mentioned	0.1	not tracked

This sample may over-represent people who attend worship services weekly or more often, when compared with the General Social Survey responses of 2004. In that study, weekly or nearly weekly attendance was reported by 24.2 percent; and more than once a week was reported by 8.6 percent. Combined, those make 32.8 percent that attended weekly or more often, compared with 41.7 percent respondents in this survey who attend weekly or more often.

**How often do you attend religious or worship services?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Never	201	15.7	15.7	15.7
Seldom, once a year or less	196	15.3	15.3	31.0
A few times a year	167	13.0	13.0	44.0
Once or twice a month	146	11.4	11.4	55.3
Once a week or more	534	41.7	41.7	97.0
Don't know	6	.4	.4	97.4
Refused to answer	33	2.6	2.6	100.0
Total	1282	100.0	100.0	

This sample may over-represent people with a college education, compared with the national population (26 percent of adults). Several researchers (Eleanor Brown, Mark Wilhelm, Rich Steinberg, and others) have found that college-educated people are more likely to be donors than are people with a high school diploma.

**What is the highest level of schooling that you have completed?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Public/Elementary (Grade 1 - 8)	52	4.1	4.2	4.2
	Graduated High School or G.E.D	334	26.0	26.6	30.8
	Vocational or technical training	68	5.3	5.4	36.2
	Some college or university	311	24.2	24.8	61.0
	Graduated college or university	290	22.6	23.1	84.1
	Post Graduate	199	15.5	15.9	100.0
	Total	1253	97.7	100.0	
Missing	REFUSED	30	2.3		
Total		1282	100.0		

## Appendix 1

### **Outlier analysis: how many, to what, how much, credit card or payment method**

Twelve gifts of \$7,000 met the criterion for being an outlier (three or more standard deviations from the mean gift amount). These gifts totaled \$158,000 and averaged \$13,167. They ranged from \$7,000 to \$49,000.

Of these gifts, six were to religion and averaged \$17,583. The total amount of those six gifts was \$105,000. Four of the six gifts to religion were from women. Two were from people aged 35 to 54, and four were from donors aged 55 or more. One gift to religion was from a donor who did not answer the question about age.

Half of the outlier gifts were to causes other than religion. One gift went to each of education, health, and a group focused on equal rights. Two gifts were reported by donors who listed more than one recipient organization (e.g., my church, March of Dimes, Relay for Life). It is not clear whether each group received the reported amount (\$10,000 in that one example) or if the \$10,000 was divided among all of the groups listed. One donor reported a gift amount but did not provide an organization name.

The six gifts that were not for religious purposes (including the gifts that include religion donation with secular donation) totaled \$52,500 and averaged \$8,750.

Nine of the donors of outlier gift amounts do not make donations online. Three do make online gifts. Two use credit cards to process those donations: one of those only uses a credit card and the other also uses electronic funds transfer. The third online donor whose most recent gift was an outlier amount uses only electronic funds transfer (EFT) for online giving.

Ten of the outlier gifts were offline donations. Five of these donors reported most frequently making their contributions by check. The other five did not provide an answer to that question.

Two online donations were outliers. Each was reported at \$10,000, and both were for the donor's church. One donor provided the name of the church, and with that and the zip code, we could confirm that a church with that name in that area does have an online giving feature at its website.

Donors of gifts treated as outliers were not included in any of the analyses in this report. They did report typical gift amounts slightly lower, on average, than their most recent gift. The average typical gift was \$10,188. The highest typical amount was \$49,000, and the lowest was \$200. All but four of the typical gift amounts were above \$7,000. Two of the four "typical amounts" that are below \$7,000 are typical for online giving.