

HUMAN SERVICES: WHO GIVES?

A report of the Colorado Generosity Project

Introduction

In *Understanding Giving: Beliefs & Behaviors of Colorado's Donors*, we explored what, how, and why Coloradans give. The report was based on a wealth of research, most of which was conducted by Colorado Nonprofit Association in 2011 through a phone survey and focus groups around the state. While our research revealed some fascinating trends, it also confirmed long-standing beliefs about giving and fundraising. For instance, it comes as no surprise that donors' reasons for giving are as diverse as the donors themselves. This series of articles has explored how attitudes, beliefs, and mechanisms for giving vary among people of different age groups, income levels, gender, and political affiliation.

Our phone survey included the question: "During the past twelve months, which of the following did you or anyone in your household make a donation to?" The list of 14 options that followed included types of organizations such as religion-related, arts and culture, health or medical, animal-related, disaster or emergency relief, and "any social cause to help people with basic necessities of life" – what we generally think of as human services. In this article, we'll take an in-depth look at the *people who support human services organizations*: how they view nonprofits, how they connect with organizations, and what inspires them to give.

Coloradans who support human services agencies make up 57% of our survey responses. Support is highest in northern Colorado, where human services donors made up 68% of our respondents; the lowest rates were in southern Colorado (54%) and the metro Denver area (55%).

Human services donors tend to have higher incomes, with 32% reporting household income of more than \$100,000. Just 17% of non-donors* reported the same income level.

**Note: throughout this article, the term "non-donors" is used to refer to those who did not report donating to human service organizations in the past 12 months. The majority of these respondents are, in fact, donors; 84% report making donations in the past 12 months.*

Report Sponsor



For More Information

Visit www.ColoradoNonprofits.org/Understanding-Giving for the full report, *Understanding Giving: Beliefs & Behaviors of Colorado's Donors*. You'll also find supplemental data, regional reports, and a schedule of our upcoming trainings.

Colorado Generosity Project Sponsors



HUMAN SERVICES: WHO GIVES?

A report of the Colorado Generosity Project

Beliefs about Nonprofits

To human services supporters, *economic and political realities have made nonprofits more urgently needed in recent years*. 90% agree that “the need for charitable organizations is greater now than five years ago” (58% strongly and 32% somewhat agree), and 91% agree that “as state government's budget shrinks, charities are needed to provide more services.”

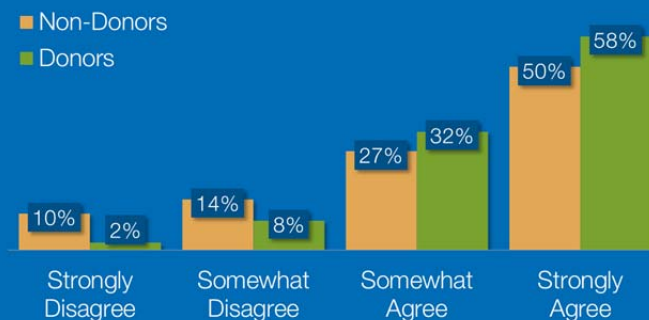
Some beliefs, such as “every person should support charitable causes in some way,” produced surprisingly small differences of opinion. (88% of human services donors, and 82% of others, agree.)

Donors and non-donors also agree that “charitable organizations play an important role speaking out on important issues” (87% and 89%, respectively) and “most charities are honest and ethical in their use of donations” (77% and 75%).

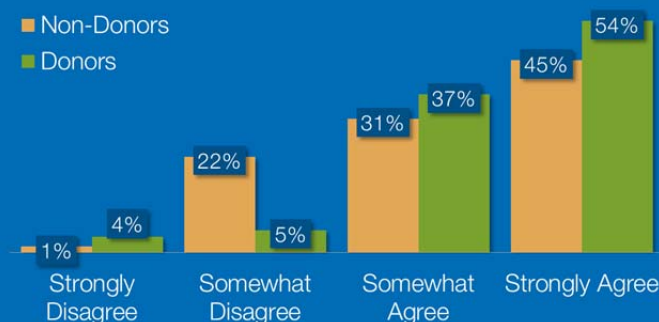
Once again, when we asked about important reasons for giving, we find that human services donors are more driven than others by the sense that people – and the nonprofits that serve them – especially need support in the current economy. 91% of donors, and only 67% of non-donors, say “because charities need support in the current economy” is an important reason. (*Graph on page 3.*)

Donors who support human services are *values-based givers*. They believe that nonprofits are critical to strong communities, so it's little surprise that they give because “it's the right thing to do.” They're particularly interested in supporting nonprofits they trust (99%), that support causes they believe in (99%), and that provide a clear understanding of how donations will be used (95%).

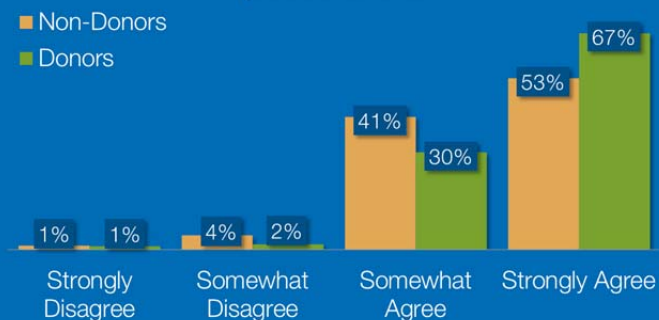
The need for charitable organizations is greater now than five years ago



As state government's budget shrinks, charities are needed to provide more services



Charitable organizations play a major role in making our communities better places to live



HUMAN SERVICES: WHO GIVES?

A report of the Colorado Generosity Project

In Their Own Words

We asked survey participants about their most recent donation: which organization it went to, how they selected that organization, and what prompted them to make a donation at that time. Here's what they said:

"I think they do a good job here in this community. I looked for a good place for my money where it will be put to good use."

- Care & Share Food Bank donor

"They do good work in the community. They help people that don't have anywhere else to turn."

- Family Tree donor

"I come home to a hot meal every day, and I think others should too."

- Denver Rescue Mission donor

"I don't have any questions or issues with the credibility of the organization."

- Habitat for Humanity donor

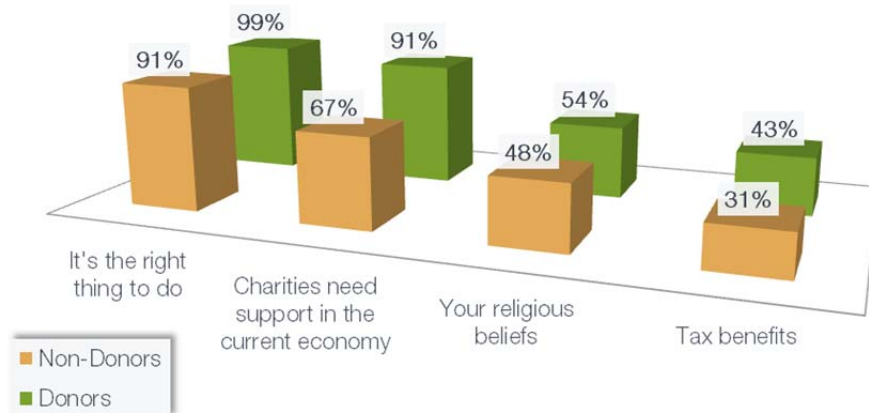
"I trust the organization and I am sure the money will be spent correctly."

- Salvation Army donor

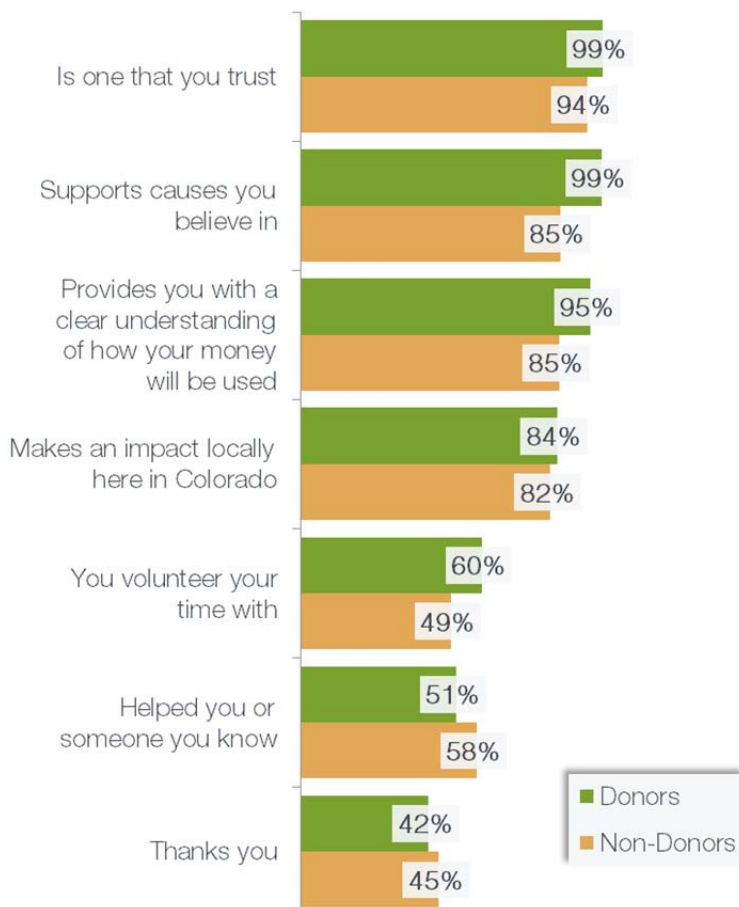
"It was the right thing to do."

- Inside Out Youth Services donor

Important Reasons for Giving



It is important to support an organization that...



What Prompts Giving?

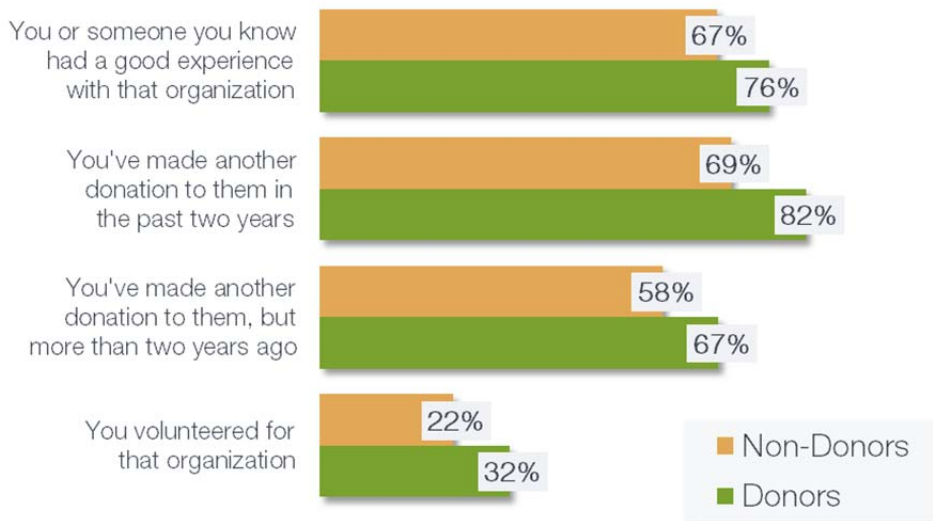
We've looked at the values and beliefs that support giving from the human services donor's perspective, but what factors prompt a human services supporter to actually make a donation?

We approached this question in two different ways. First, we asked people about their most recent donation, and the interactions they'd previously had with that organization; next, we asked whether they'd made any donations in the past 12 months in response to various prompts.

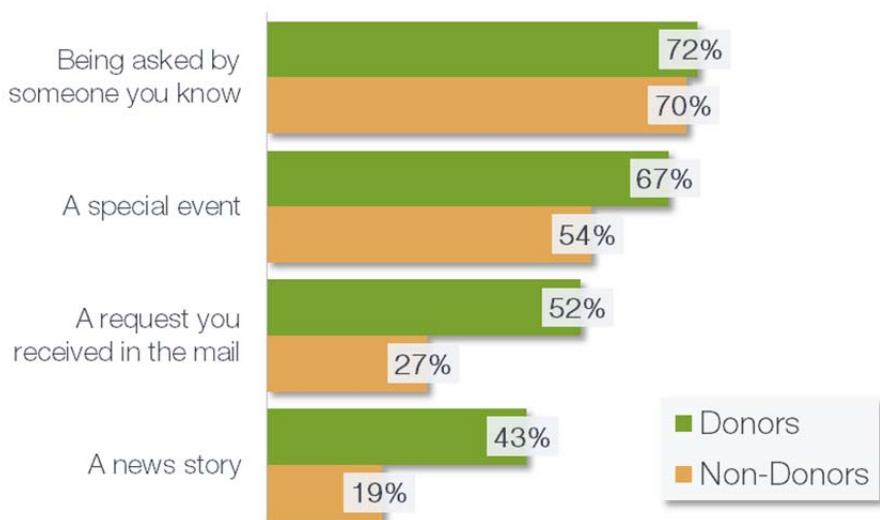
Human services donors give to nonprofits they have relationships with

– nonprofits they've donated to, volunteered for, or have another personal connection with. And while they're significantly more likely than others to give as part of a special event (13% margin), in response to a mail solicitation (25% margin), or as a result of a news story they've seen or heard (24% margin), they most often report having donated after being asked by someone they know.

Before making your most recent donation...



In the past 12 months, have you made a donation as a result of..?



HUMAN SERVICES: WHO GIVES?

A report of the Colorado Generosity Project

Reaching the Human Services Donor

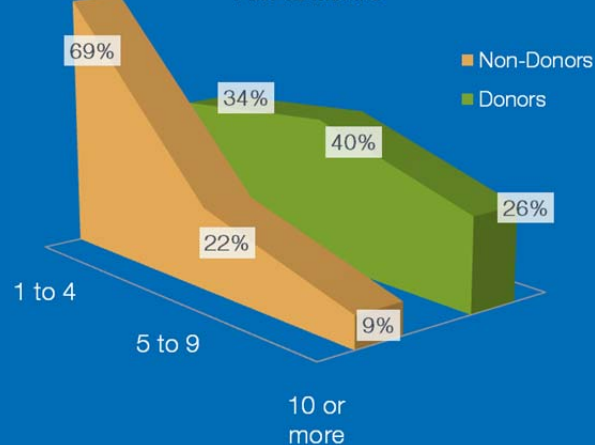
Compared to other Coloradans, human services donors give to significantly more nonprofits; 26% said they'd supported ten or more different organizations over the past 12 months. When we asked them about their reasons for not donating more, 54% agreed that "I already support too many" is an important factor for them.



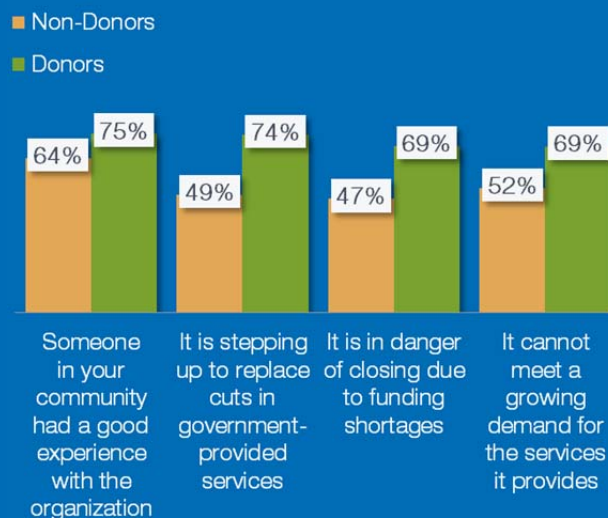
How can nonprofits appeal to people who are already such active givers? When we asked survey respondents about different situations and messages, we found – once again – that **human services donors want to fulfill unmet needs and solve problems**. They would be more likely to donate to an organization upon hearing that it can't meet a growing demand for its services (69%) or that it's in danger of closing (also 69%). And 74% would be more likely to donate to an organization that is "stepping up to replace cuts in government-provided services," a much more controversial idea among non-donors.

More importantly, this question showed us that human services donors respond more favorably to situations and messages in general; a nonprofit's most effective strategy is to simply share its challenges and needs. Human services supporters know that nonprofits do important work. They value trustworthiness, clear communication, and a strong nonprofit-donor relationship. For them, giving is more than writing a check. When they donate, they are joining with nonprofits in true partnerships, working to make our communities better places to live.

Number of Nonprofits Supported Past 12 Months



Would you be more likely to donate to an organization if you heard that..?



About the Colorado Generosity Project

In 2007, the Colorado Nonprofit Association launched the Colorado Generosity Project, an initiative aimed at building expertise within and awareness of the state's charitable sector, with the ultimate goal of increasing Coloradans' generosity. The Generosity Project seeks to increase the rate and total amount of giving to Colorado's nonprofits by: conducting research about giving trends in Colorado; helping nonprofits fundraise more effectively through technical assistance and training; and teaching the public about the value of giving to charitable organizations.

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements



SE2 is a Colorado-based mass communications firm focused on public issues, policy and social marketing. They offer a full range of advertising and public relations services to nonprofits and issue-driven organizations, helping them tell their story and identify key messages that move their audiences to action.



Corona Insights serves as a think tank for our customers needing to make decisions on a wide variety of topics. We help our customers uncover the right answers to the questions most important to them. Then we guide them on how the answers can inform their decisions and plans. To learn more about our research and consulting services for nonprofits, government, and business, please visit CoronaInsights.com.

About Us

Colorado Nonprofit Association leads, serves and strengthens Colorado nonprofit organizations. We are a statewide nonprofit membership coalition connecting nonprofits of all sizes, missions and geographic locations.

We lead the nonprofit sector in influencing public policy and public opinion.

We serve our members by providing tools for communication, networking and administration.

We strengthen the nonprofit community through trainings, issue discussions, and public advocacy about the importance of the nonprofit sector.

