

DONORS WHO RESEARCH

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.

As part of the survey, participants were asked a series of questions about the most recent donation they'd made, including whether they'd done any formal research before donating. In this article, we'll look at the 37% of respondents who said they'd researched before making that donation. We'll explore the trends we find when we compare them with others, and look at the sources of information they used to conduct their research.

Report Sponsor



Colorado Generosity Project Sponsors

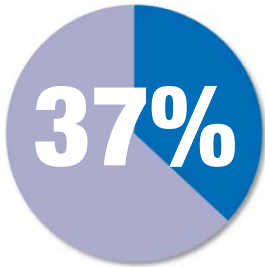


For More Information

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.

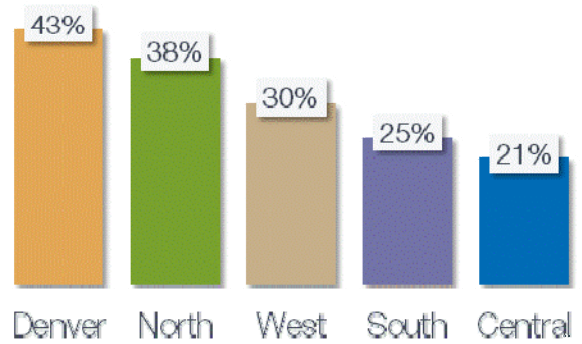


Who Are Researchers?

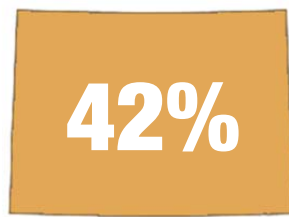


Among all donors we surveyed, 37 percent reported having done formal research before making their most recent donation.

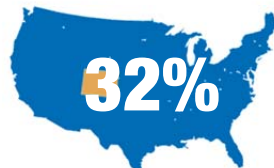
Donors in Denver and northern Colorado were substantially more likely to report having done research, while donors in southern and central Colorado were least likely.



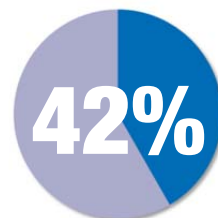
Donors Who Research *By Income Level*



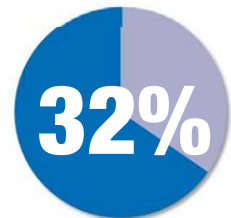
of Colorado natives conducted research



of Colorado non-natives conducted research



of college graduates conducted research

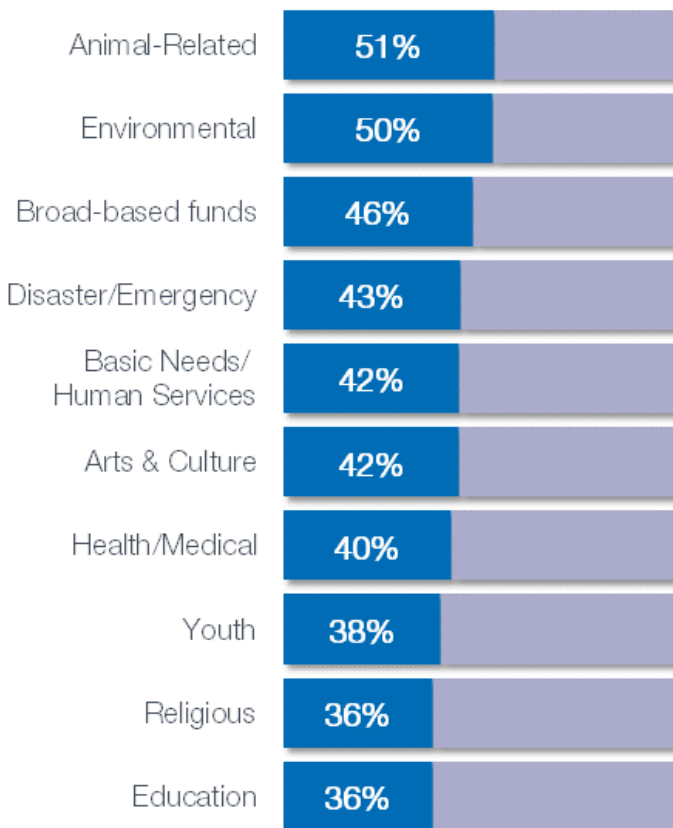
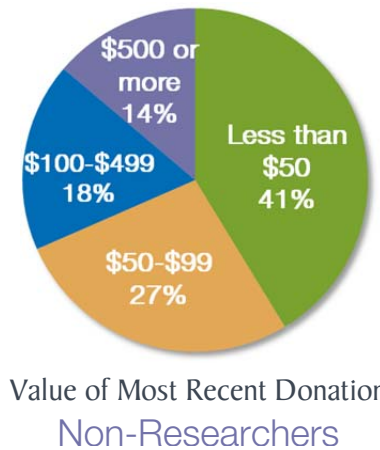
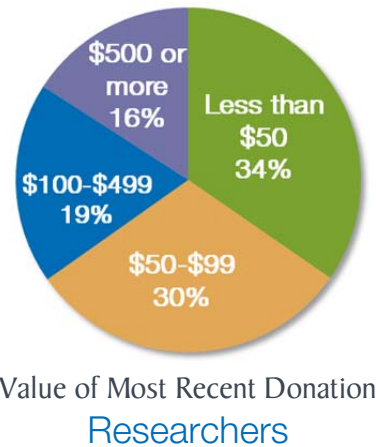


of non-graduates conducted research

What They Give

Surprisingly, whether or not a donor conducts research seems to have little to do with the value of the donation they're making. We see donations of \$100 or more from 35% of researchers and 32% of non-researchers.

We did find *somewhat* higher total annual contributions among donors who performed research. While total donations of \$1,000 or more were reported among 34% of researchers and 33% of non-researchers, total donations of \$501 to \$1,000 were reported among 26% of researchers and just 13% of others.



Donors to animal-related and environmental causes seem to be the most active researchers; among these supporters, about half said they'd researched their most recent donation.

Supporters of youth-related, religious, and educational organizations were least likely to report conducting research.

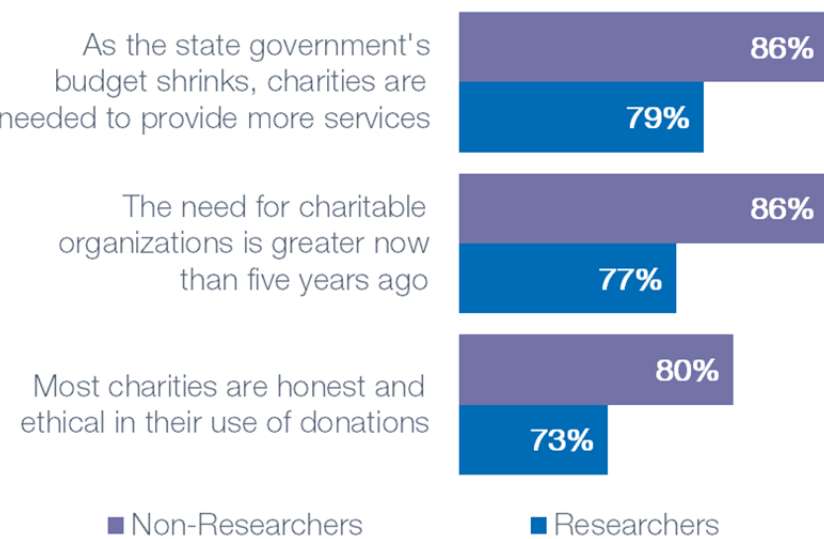
Note: While this report defines "researchers" and "non-researchers" by their responses to a question about a donor's most recent gift, donors to particular causes are identified by the responses they gave when asked which types of causes they'd donated to over the past year. For this cause-related data, the most accurate conclusions available are that *people who donate to a specific cause tend to be people who researched one specific donation* (or who didn't).

Beliefs & Values

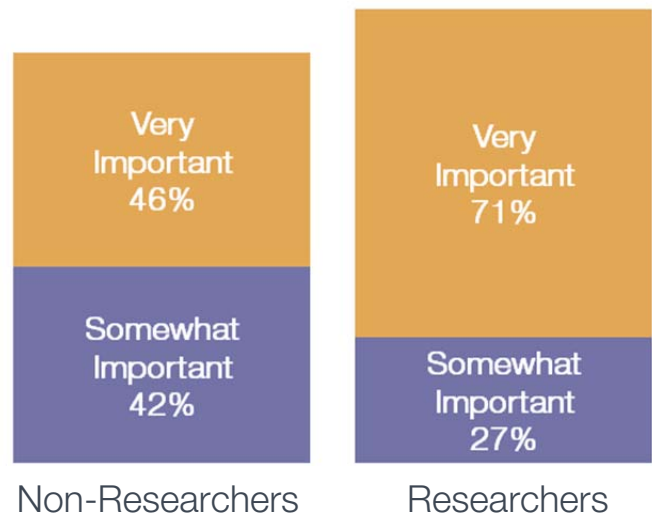
Researchers and non-researchers agree that, when choosing an organization to support, it's important that "the organization provides you with a clear understanding of how your money will be used." (Overall, 98% of researchers and 89% of non-researchers said this was an important factor.) However, that gap widens significantly when we look at *how important* they said this factor was: 71% of researchers, and just 46% of non-researchers, said it was very important to them.

We found a similar result when we asked how important it is that "the organization is one that you trust." 99% of both groups said this is an important factor for them, but 97% of researchers and 81% of non-researchers identified it as very important.

It's not surprising that researchers were less likely, by a 7% margin, to agree that "most charities are honest and ethical in their use of donations." (Among some, this belief is presumably the very reason they're conducting research before giving.) It is interesting, however, that researchers were also less likely to agree that nonprofits provide important services in lieu of government-provided services, or that charitable organizations were needed more than they were five years ago.



The organization provides you with a clear understanding of how your money will be used



How They Research

The survey asked respondents: "Did you do any formal research about that organization before making that donation?" Participants who said they'd done research were then asked what sources of information they used.

Among donors who had conducted research, the sources of information mentioned most often were:

- Online resources
- The nonprofit itself
- Personal experience

67% used the internet

40% performed an internet search

31% used the nonprofit's website

4% used a third-party rating or reporting site
(Guidestar, Charity Navigator, Secretary of State, etc.)

"I used a friend's personal knowledge, and also looked it up online. I think I went to the organization's website."

"I used the school website and whatever else came up on Google."

"I looked at their website directly."

"Internet, specifically the Salvation Army website. I look at the lists of what part goes to work and what goes to people in need."

"On the web. General search about complaints about charity."

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"I read their statements and looked at their budgets and am familiar with the percentage they spend on administrative costs versus the services they provide."

"I met with a woman at the United Way and I got a newsletter."

"They send me letters all the time, and I review the information they enclose."

"We went down to the mission and saw what they were doing. They feed a lot of people and they have many programs to help people."

43% used materials produced by the nonprofit (including the nonprofit's website) and/or talking with the nonprofit's staff or other official representatives

25% said at least some of their research was based on personal experience

17% said their research included personal recommendations (usually

12% used their own experience with the nonprofit

"My husband is a member so I just asked him."

"I spoke to friends who have volunteered there."

"I asked around at my church."

"Some of their literature and also word of mouth from people I respect."

"It was recommended from friends and I checked it out through acquaintances."

"We are involved with the organization."

"I've been a volunteer for them."

"We're on the board so we know all about it."

"I worked for the local chapter so I had personal knowledge."

"I helped organize that charity."

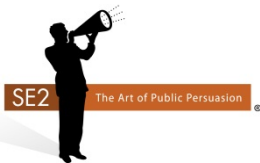
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About the Colorado Generosity Project

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



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.



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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.

