

Classy

Why America Gives 2019: How current events, technology, and seasonality impact donor plans



Table of Contents

Letter From Classy CEO and Co-Founder	3
Giving Tuesday Awareness Rises, Opportunity Remains	5
American Generosity Overcomes Negative Headlines	9
Americans Stay Loyal to Their Causes	13
Motivations to Give Hold True	16
Peer Pressure Plays a Role	20
Younger Generations Put Trust in Tech	22
Impact of Tax Law Changes Is Mild So Far	24
Politics' Influence Heats Up	27
A Promising Forecast for Nonprofits	29



Letter From Classy CEO and Co-Founder

Donate



We used our survey as a means to show nonprofits what matters to their potential donors, how they prefer to donate, which causes inspire them, and much more."

- SCOT CHISHOLM

Why Did We Perform This Survey?

Last year, Classy launched our first [Why America Gives](#) report with one goal in mind: to help nonprofit organizations better understand their prospective donor pool heading into the year-end giving season. What our data revealed informed more than just holiday-related charitable giving—it uncovered insights around motivations, behavior, and generosity that were applicable year-round.

This year, to again assist the nonprofit industry by providing valuable insights in setting up fundraising campaigns, we used our survey as a means to show nonprofits what matters to their potential donors, how they prefer to donate, which causes inspire them, and much more. We also measured any significant changes from last year when it came to Americans' propensity to give. We found that even in another year full of political, environmental, and social news, the motivations for giving and sectors people feel need the most support remain consistent.

We're encouraged to see that most people plan to give either more or the same amount to charity compared with last year, and we're hopeful this continues to remain the trend year after year as we write this report. After all, [recent studies](#) have shown more Americans give to charity than vote—evidence that giving is one of the cornerstones of our country.

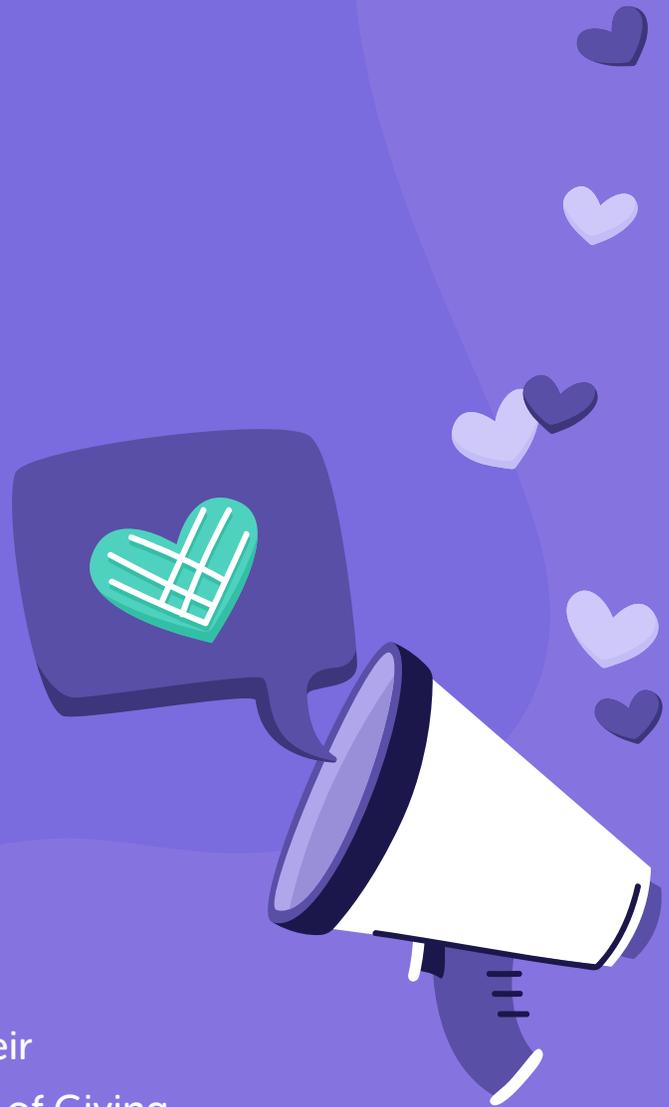
As one of the leading online and mobile fundraising platforms that serves only nonprofit organizations, Classy remains committed to analyzing this “giving culture” in a way that provides the sector with the data it needs to identify and engage donors who can help them further their missions.

We hope you find the data as interesting as we did.



Scot Chisholm, Classy CEO + Co-Founder

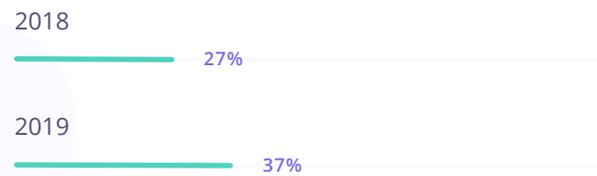
Giving Tuesday Awareness Rises, Opportunity Remains



Younger generations outpace their older counterparts in knowledge of Giving Tuesday, with exactly half of Gen Z having heard of the day.

For-profit corporations spent more than \$6 billion in advertising to consumers in support of Cyber Monday and Black Friday in 2018. Nonprofits, generally working with much more limited marketing budgets, are unsurprisingly contending with a lag in awareness between these consumer-oriented holidays and Giving Tuesday. Despite these limited marketing funds in the nonprofit world, general consumer awareness of Giving Tuesday has risen.

Percentage of U.S. consumers who said they are familiar with Giving Tuesday or had at least heard of it:



Even with just 27% of U.S. consumers saying they were familiar with Giving Tuesday in 2018, an estimated \$380 million was raised online in the U.S.¹ With Giving Tuesday awareness on the rise, nonprofit organizations should feel confident leveraging the Giving Tuesday branding and hashtag to promote their own fundraising campaigns to see even more funds raised.

Recent analysis of nonprofit fundraising on Classy's platform revealed that campaigns with "Giving Tuesday" in their campaign name raised on average three times more on Giving Tuesday than campaigns that did not.

More men (63%) said they gave than women (41%). Men (39%) were also more likely than women (35%) to have heard of Giving Tuesday. Among those surveyed who indicated that they had heard of Giving Tuesday, 53% said they donated to a Giving Tuesday campaign in 2018.

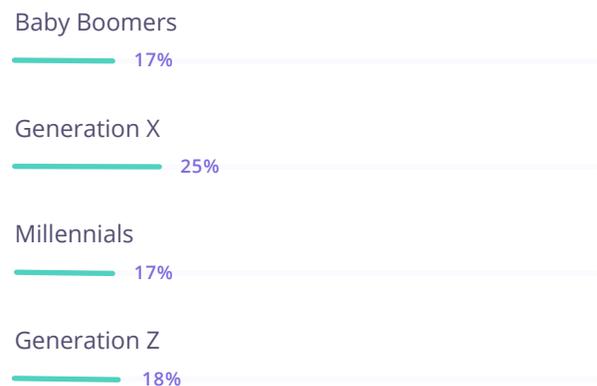
¹ Giving Tuesday, "In Just Seven Years, Global Movement Has Become A New Annual Ritual Around Giving."
<https://www.givingtuesday.org/blog/2018/11/givingtuesday-2018-surpasses-billion-dollars-online-donations-its-inception-most>

Younger generations outpace their older counterparts in knowledge of Giving Tuesday, with exactly half of Gen Z (ages 18 to 22) having heard of the day. This compares with 39% of millennials (ages 23 to 38), 38% of Gen X (ages 39 to 54), and 33% of baby boomers (ages 55 to 73).

It should come as no surprise that younger generations have higher awareness of the occasion. The event began in 2012, when teams at 92nd Street Y and the United Nations Foundation created the annual event to counter the consumerism of Black Friday and Cyber Monday. It was also branded #GivingTuesday with a hashtag, since the reach of social media was a driving force behind turning the local event into an international day of giving. The event is now the second-largest giving day of the year, only overshadowed by December 31.

Respondents who say they plan to participate in Giving Tuesday 2019

broken down by generation:



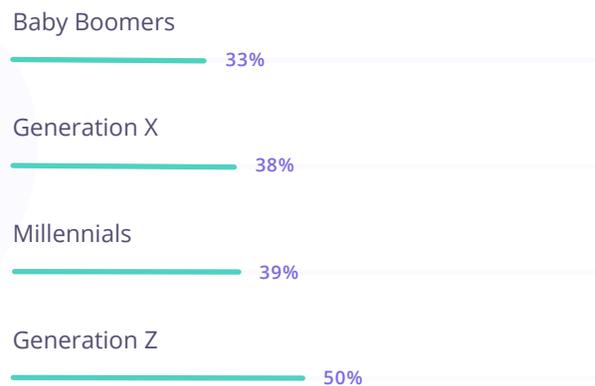
Though awareness is higher among the younger generations, Gen Xers said they are most likely to participate in Giving Tuesday (25%) versus their other generational counterparts. However, because the millennial and Gen Z cohorts make up nearly 50% of the U.S. population compared to Gen X at 20%, the younger groups shouldn't be ignored by nonprofit organizations, especially given their familiarity and aptitude with technology.

In fact, Classy platform data from Giving Tuesday 2017 shows that the median age of a Giving Tuesday donor was 25-years-old—12 years younger than the median donor age on other days of the year.

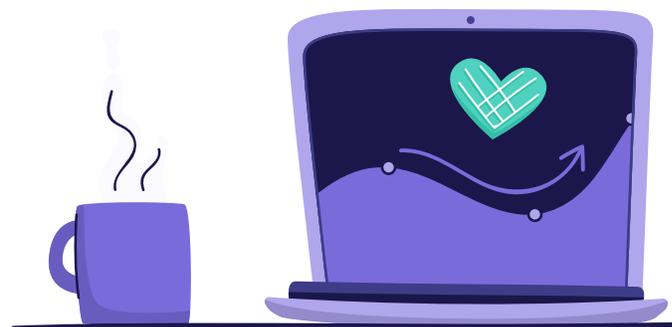
That being said, more Gen Xers (66%) who had heard of Giving Tuesday said they donated last year, surpassing the other generations.

Respondents who say they are familiar with Giving Tuesday

broken down by generation:



The increase in awareness is a positive sign for Giving Tuesday 2019, though we still have a large opportunity with 63% of consumers still unfamiliar with the annual event. The nonprofit industry can tap into this pool by boosting awareness of Giving Tuesday among both young and older generations, thereby attracting and engaging new donors.



American Generosity Overcomes Negative Headlines



More than one-third of respondents plan to donate more in 2019 than in 2018, and only 10% said they plan to give less.

Fears of recession, a trade war with China, and the uncertainty of a fast-approaching election year—things that normally cause Americans to reel in their spending—have not derailed potential American donors’ plans to open their wallets for Giving Tuesday 2019.

One in five Americans (20%) said they plan to participate in Giving Tuesday 2019. More than one-third (39%) of respondents plan to donate more in 2019 than in 2018, and only 10% said they plan to give less. Half of Americans (50%) plan to donate the same amount as 2018.

These metrics remain relatively consistent with survey results from 2018, which should help mitigate any fears that 2019 giving will take a dive, especially given the year-over-year growth of Giving Tuesday the past several years. Given the growth in awareness from last year, it will be interesting to see if participation actually outpaces what survey respondents report.



In fact, those who intend to participate in Giving Tuesday this year plan on giving larger gifts. Survey results show that gifts of \$100 or less may trend downward while gifts over \$100 trend upward for Giving Tuesday 2019.

Of those who plan to donate this upcoming Giving Tuesday, 44% are donating gifts of at least \$100 or more compared to 36% who stated the same in 2018.

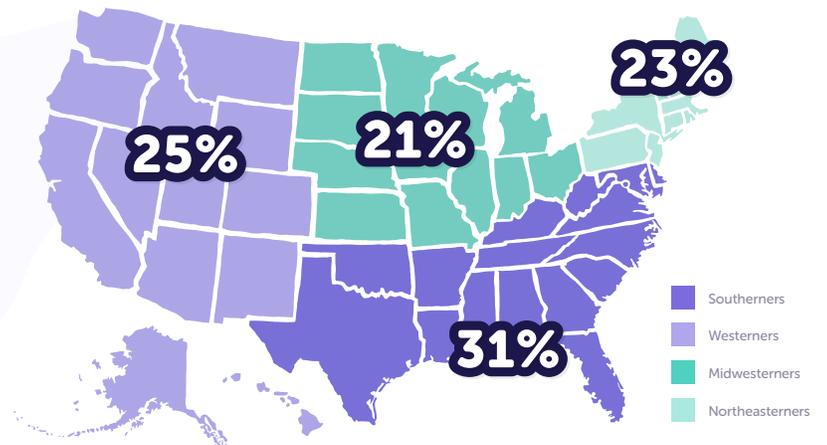
Anticipated Giving Tuesday Donation Amount

	2018		2019
\$1 - \$10	15%	↓	8%
\$11 - \$20	13%	↓	11%
\$21 - \$50	16%	↓	13%
\$51 - \$100	20%	↓	19%
\$101 - \$300	14%	↑	15%
\$301 - \$500	7%	↑	10%
\$501 - \$1,000	4%	↑	8%
\$1,001 - \$2,500	4%	=	4%
\$2,501 - \$5,000	2%	↑	4%
\$5,000 +	4%	=	4%



While nonprofits across the nation host Giving Tuesday fundraising campaigns, intended participation is higher in certain regions of the country. Of respondents who say they plan to participate in Giving Tuesday, the highest concentration of individuals reside in the Southern region.

Location of respondents who plan to participate in Giving Tuesday 2019



Perception of Peers' Generosity Dips

While the survey data showed a significant number of respondents said they plan to give more in 2019, Americans also perceive that their peers have become less generous in their support of causes and nonprofits.

In 2018, 49% of respondents felt Americans had become more generous, 21% of respondents indicated Americans had become less generous, and 31% felt generosity remained the same.

However, in 2019, only 36% said they believe Americans are more generous, 28% of respondents believe Americans are less generous, and 36% said generosity remained the same.

One hypothesis to explain this shift could be the frequently discussed impact of tax code changes on Americans' giving habits, with extensive media coverage insinuating that these changes would negatively impact the nonprofit industry.

Americans Stay Loyal to Their Causes

Of those who participated in Giving Tuesday in 2018, 90% plan to give to the same causes or nonprofits for Giving Tuesday in 2019.



The past year saw major natural disasters, huge public policy shifts, and significant human rights violations. These issues not only dominate the headlines and political debates, but are powerful events that moved Americans to donate.

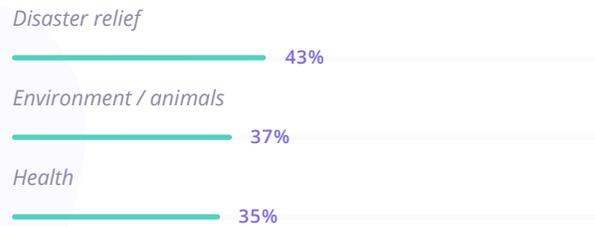
Americans' top causes to support on Giving Tuesday are disaster relief, health, and environmental and animal issues—and in nearly the same numbers as 2018.



The top three causes to which respondents are most likely to donate:



2018



2019



In comparing the generations, all age groups with the exception of Gen Z ranked disaster relief as the cause to which they were most likely to donate. Gen Z, meanwhile, selected health causes.

Despite embracing disaster relief as the top giving cause, only 20% indicated they have already made a donation in 2019 to assist in rescue and/or rebuilding efforts, even with the destruction of Hurricane Dorian, the worst natural

disaster to ever strike the Bahamas.

Nonprofits involved in disaster relief, health, and environmental/animal causes might capture the public's interest, but they need to continue focusing on fundamental engagement strategies in order to turn Americans' goodwill for their causes into actual donations.

No matter the cause, American donors stay loyal. Of those who say they participated in Giving Tuesday in 2018, 90% plan to give to the same causes or nonprofits for Giving Tuesday in 2019.

Nonprofits would be wise to embrace Giving Tuesday as a way to gain donors and turn their loyalty into recurring donations. In fact, data already shows that Giving Tuesday donors can provide value for a nonprofit organization beyond this initial contribution. Those whose first interaction with an organization was on Giving Tuesday **became recurring donors** more quickly than those whose first interactions were outside of Giving Tuesday.



Motivations to Give Hold True



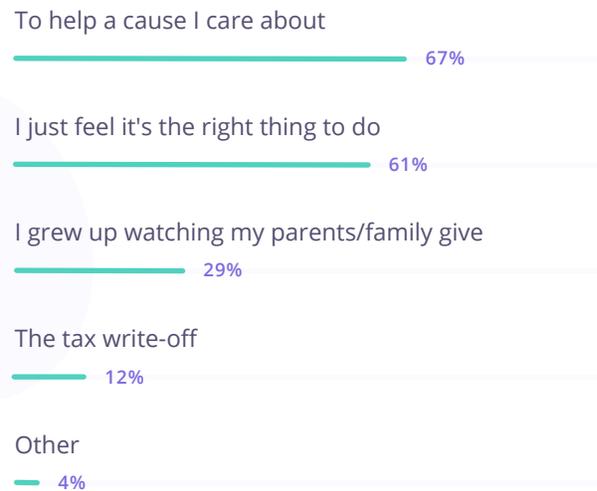
Personal financial gain isn't the top priority for the majority of Americans.

While there are countless worthy causes for Americans to adopt, their motivations remain steadfast.

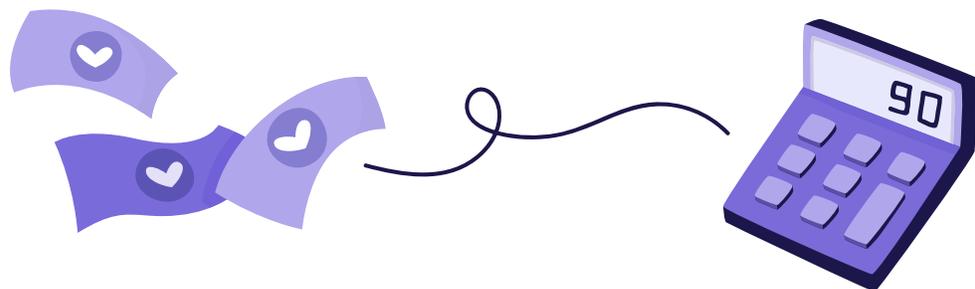
In 2019, 67% said their primary motivations for giving are to help a cause they care about, compared with 72% who said the same in 2018.

What are your primary motivations for giving?

Select all that apply.

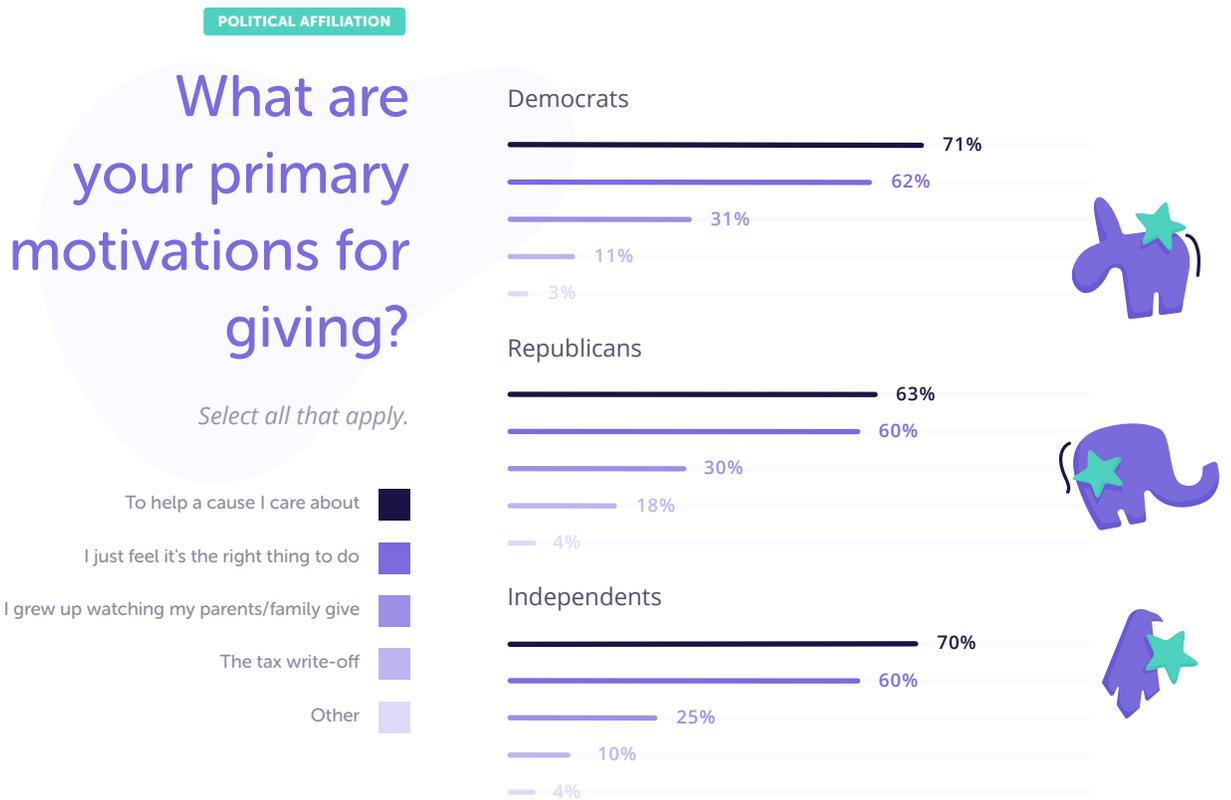


Some nonprofit professionals may find it surprising that tax write-offs don't rank higher in respondents' motivations. In fact, survey data shows that tax motivation ranked last, regardless of age, gender, geography, or household income. This indicates that personal financial gain isn't the top priority for the majority of Americans, and that giving may be deeply personal.



Democrats, Republicans, and Independents share charitable motivations in the same order, but Republicans (18%) are far more likely than Democrats (11%) and Independents (10%) to cite tax write-offs as an impetus to give.

Below are the top motivations for giving, broken down by respondents' political affiliations:



Top charitable giving motivations also remain relatively consistent across generations. When it comes to reasons for giving, the oldest and younger donors are inclined to help causes they care about.

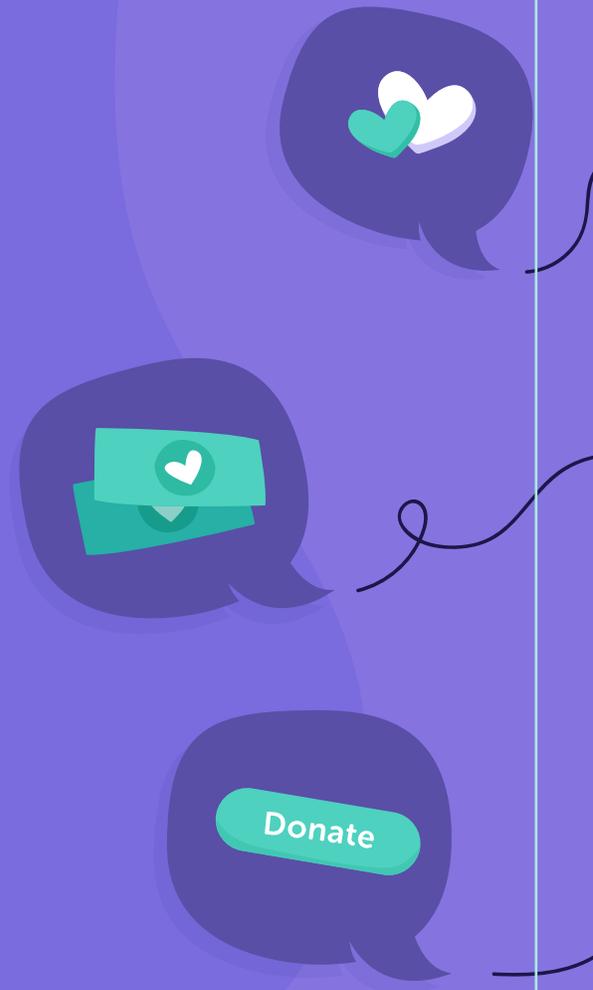
Of all the generations, Gen Z cares the least about giving for a tax write-off, while millennials care the most compared to other generations. Below are the top motivations for giving, broken down by generation:



As ever, it's clear that donors are motivated to give when they feel an emotional connection to a cause. Nonprofits that shape their marketing campaigns and content to build those connections—such as through powerful storytelling and visual mediums like video—continue to position themselves to see results.

Peer Pressure Plays a Role

One-third of respondents said they would be more inclined to donate if they were asked in front of other people.



Americans' reactions differ when asked to make charitable donations in front of other people.

While 67% said their primary motivations for giving are to help a cause they care about, 34% of all respondents said they would be more likely to give to a nonprofit or charity if they were asked to donate in front of other people. However, another 34% said they would not be more inclined to donate in the same situation.

Interestingly, men (43%) seem more inclined than women (39%) to donate if asked in front of others.

Republicans and Democrats see largely eye to eye on this, with 39% of Republicans and 37% of Democrats impacted by peer pressure.

Americans living in the western portion of the country are slightly more likely than others to admit they would be more likely to give to charity if asked in front of another person, coming in at 40%, compared with Northeasterners at 38%, Southerners at 31%, and Midwesterners at 30%.

Of all the generations, millennials (47%) and Gen Z (42%) said they would be most likely to donate to a nonprofit if asked in front of others. This compares to Gen X at 39% and baby boomers at 14%.

Though peer pressure isn't a top motivator for the majority of respondents, its influence shouldn't be taken for granted, and this phenomenon could be one driver of the explosive growth of peer-to-peer fundraising in recent years.

Younger Generations Put Trust in Tech

A significant way for nonprofits to win donors' trust is to offer a platform that makes it easier to give.



More than half of Americans (55%) find it easiest to make donations digitally, whether on a computer or smartphone. In addition to being the preferred method of making donations, a nonprofit's use of technology also impacts donors' trust in the organization.

When respondents were asked if they would definitely or likely have less trust in an organization if they can't donate easily online or via mobile devices, nearly all generations were in agreement. Baby boomers (15%) were least likely to report their trust would decrease based on this factor, but Gen X (38%), millennials (44%), and Gen Z (42%) were largely aligned and indicated they would have less trust in an organization if they can't donate easily online or through mobile devices—emphasizing the importance for nonprofits to provide a seamless online giving experience.

Nonprofits must build trust in order to convince Americans to donate. A significant way to do that is to offer a platform that makes it easier to give, especially as these younger generations make up a bigger proportion of the adult population.

Impact of Tax Law Changes Is Mild So Far

Nearly half of Americans said the amount they received on their 2019 tax return has no impact on how much they plan to donate this year.



Though nonprofits have fretted for nearly two years about the impact of the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, most consumers said the amount they received on their April 2019 tax return will not impact their plans to donate.

This may not be entirely altruistic. It could instead be because they're largely unaware of how the tax reforms impact their annual return.

Nearly half of Americans (43%) said the amount they received on their 2019 tax return has no impact on how much they plan to donate this year. However, only 32% were extremely to very knowledgeable about the tax law's impact, which could signify that they are not anticipating any change since they don't understand the implications of the tax law.

At the same time, more than half of consumers (52%) who are extremely to very knowledgeable about how tax reform has impacted their annual returns said they would decrease their contributions to nonprofits if they knew they'd receive less of a tax break.

Nonprofits that proactively segment their communications and target their asks based on donor behavior will best be able to deepen supporter relationships, and thus continue to remain top of mind despite policy changes or potential personal financial gain.

Men are more likely than women to say they are confident in their understanding of how tax reform has affected their annual tax returns:

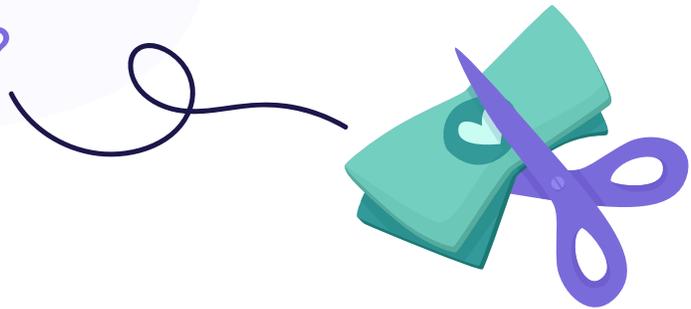
How knowledgeable are you of the impact that the tax cuts have had on your annual tax return?

42%

of men
say they are extremely to very knowledgeable

22%

of women
say they are extremely to very knowledgeable



Has the amount you received for your April 2019 tax return* impacted how much you plan to donate this year?

43%

of men
say yes, the amount they received during their April 2019 tax return will impact how much they plan to donate this year

27%

of women
say yes, the amount they received during their April 2019 tax return will impact how much they plan to donate this year

*2018 tax year

Politics' Influence Heats Up



46% of respondents said their political beliefs dictated who or what organizations receive their donations.

With the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election only a year away, respondents said their political beliefs dictate the organizations or causes that will receive their donations.

Do your political beliefs dictate who or what organizations receive your donations?

2018

Definitely or probably yes

39%

2019

Definitely or probably yes

46%

Respondents affiliated with a political party (52% of Republicans and 51% of Democrats) are also more likely than independents to say their political beliefs dictate who or what organizations receive their money.

Overall, respondents agree on the top three causes they are most likely to support or donate to—disaster relief, health, and environment/animals—with those who identified as Republicans reaching a tie to also prioritize giving to individuals raising money on behalf of nonprofits.

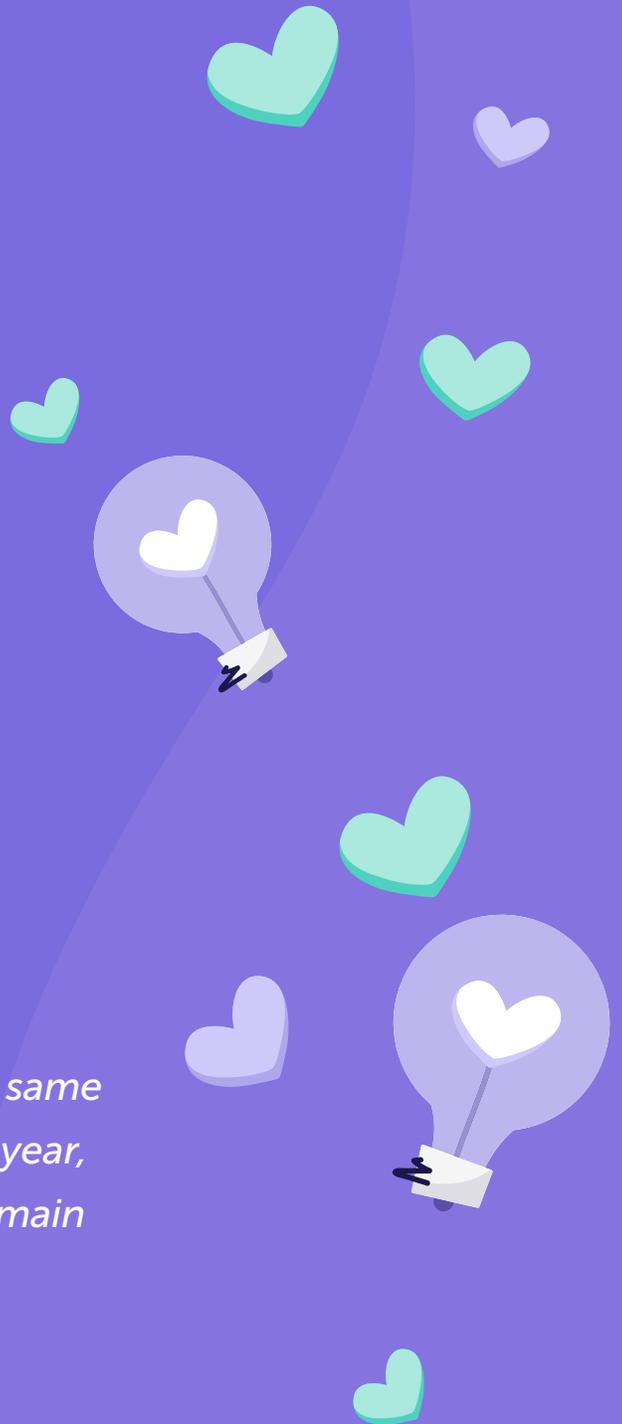
Nonprofits involved in politically-charged causes have the opportunity to gain new donors as the nation approaches the elections in 2020. Keeping a pulse on the news, as well as referring to popular candidates' platforms, can help these types of organizations determine when to adjust or amplify their marketing efforts for optimal impact.



A Promising Forecast for Nonprofits

“We’re encouraged to see that most people plan to give either more or the same amount to charity compared with last year, and we’re hopeful this continues to remain the trend year after year.”

- SCOT CHISHOLM



The noise around tax policy, donor apathy, and clicktivism have led to concern around end-of-year fundraising efforts in 2019. This skepticism regarding Americans' propensity to give may turn out to be largely unsubstantiated if donor sentiment is to be trusted. The results of this survey show that respondents don't plan on making notable changes to their spending habits this year.

Furthermore, a rising awareness of Giving Tuesday is a good sign for nonprofit organizations, and fundraisers should feel confident leveraging this movement to capture donors' hearts and minds, in addition to their dollars, to establish new relationships that can be fostered and transitioned into repeat or recurring donors.





Classy

The State of Modern Philanthropy 2019

TRENDS IN RETURN DONOR BEHAVIOR

For more data and insights on donor behavior and giving trends, check out Classy's recent report, *The State of Modern Philanthropy: Trends in Return Donor Behavior*.

[Download Now](#)

About Classy

Classy is a social enterprise that creates world-class online fundraising software for nonprofits, modernizing the giving experience to accelerate social impact around the world. Based in San Diego, CA, Classy is trusted by organizations of all sizes, from the fastest-growing nonprofits like Team Rubicon and The Trevor Project, to some of the world's largest social organizations, such as The Salvation Army, Robin Hood Foundation, and Shriners Hospitals for Children. Classy also hosts the Collaborative conference, a three-day immersive experience designed exclusively for nonprofit professionals and social impact leaders to learn, share, and get inspired. For more information, visit www.classy.org or follow Classy on Twitter [@Classy](https://twitter.com/Classy).

About the Data

Conducted in September 2019, this survey polled 1,000 individuals 18 years of age or older in the United States. The survey was fielded using the Qualtrics Insights Platform and the panel was sourced from Fulcrum by Lucid.

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