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How We Give Now: **Conversations Across the United States**



Research Conducted for The Generosity Commission

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Table of Contents



01 Executive Summary	2
02 Introduction	4
03 Methods	6
04 Findings	8
05 Frequency and Analysis of Giving Categories	16
06 Topics of Debate	31
07 Challenges Identified	33
08 Conclusion	35
09 Appendices	38
Bibliography	60
Endnotes	62

01

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Executive Summary

People in the United States do not often talk about how they give, though their charitable giving ranks high when compared to other countries. Parents often model giving to their children by “showing,” not talking. Friends don’t discuss their giving, nor do family members. In the months between June and November 2019 we conducted 33 “How We Give Now” conversations with 338 participants, which generated 2,277 responses of how people give to make the world a better place. Across these conversations, participants mentioned how unusual it was to talk about their giving.

There's a paradox here. People are generous with their time and money. They give to charities, politics, friends, families, and strangers. They help when asked. They buy products that are branded to support a certain cause or nonprofit. So, even while there is active participation, including in ways that signal generosity, it's unusual for people to talk about their giving.

The "How We Give Now" project sought to improve our understanding of the different ways that people in the U.S. give their time, money, and other resources. The primary source of data are the findings from 33 facilitated group discussions, held in 15 states and the District of Columbia, that focused on surfacing the "how" of people's giving and not the what, why, or to whom. Our hypothesis was that individuals give in more ways than even they understand. Our aspiration was to identify the range of individual ways of giving, as well as how people mix those mechanisms, to inform future research focused on understanding people's motivations or aspirations for their actions.

Anticipating the novelty of these conversations, we strove for anonymity in participation as a means of building trust among participants and among participants and the research team. We worked with local host organizations and individuals, and the research team did not collect participants' names or contact information. Participants could opt in to share demographic data (age, gender identity, racial identity). These methodological decisions limit the conclusions that can be drawn from this data. We made the decision to trade detailed demographic data for trusted participation. The conclusions do not allow for consideration of giving behaviors by different demographic groups, for example.

The data confirm our original hypothesis—people in the United States give time, money, material goods, comfort, and knowledge in many ways. Their behaviors reach far beyond the kinds of activities that are officially counted or incentivized in the US, like tax-exempt donations to charitable organizations, contributions to political candidates or groups, or volunteering time to faith or community organizations. In a country where giving is normatively associated with donating to charity, fewer than 20% of participant responses about how they take action to make the world a better place mentioned giving money. Participants seldom mentioned tax codes in reference to their giving, but instead discussed giving locally, civic engagement, and myriad informal giving acts, including sharing kindness and connecting others—and they spoke of these acts often and with excitement.

This research was conducted by Lucy Bernholz, Ph.D., Matilda Nickell, Brigitte Pawliw-Fry, Jeffrey Rodriguez, and Heather Noelle Robinson. This report was written by Lucy Bernholz and Brigitte Pawliw-Fry. Laura Seaman, Sebastian Martinez Hickey, and Heather Noelle Robinson provided logistical and research support.

02

Introduction

Charitable giving in the United States is carefully tracked and numerous longitudinal data sets exist.¹ Similarly, individual contributions to political causes, particularly financial donations, are tracked and reported. Volunteering time to community, faith, and nonprofit groups is also well documented. Aggregate data are compiled on cause-marketing spending, in-kind donations, impact investing, and crowdfunding activities. Data and research on these activities, however, tend to be tracked in isolation—by different types of research organizations, using different data sources, and with different purposes in mind.

This isolated approach has led to an overall understanding of how we participate in our civic and community lives that can be robust within domains (charitable, political, or volunteering). But the approach lacks understanding of how individuals mix and match these behaviors and what the sum of these independent actions might be. Drawing a richer, more complicated picture of the ways people take action in their communities was a key goal of this research.

Our hypothesis was that individuals give their time, money, material resources, support, and information in many ways, only some of which are counted either by official measures or by individuals themselves. Before we can understand the dynamics, preferences, motivations, or interactions between these behaviors we need to know what the range of behaviors includes. Mapping these different behaviors—the “how’s” of people’s giving—is an important precursor to research on the dynamics between how people give or on the changes within any of the ways people give. This research is particularly important now, as trend data on charitable giving begin to show unfamiliar patterns.ⁱⁱ

The “How We Give Now” project draws on several studies. The Urban Institute has brought together aggregate numbers of different types of giving behavior.ⁱⁱⁱ Analyses of Giving USA annual trend data by Patrick Rooney and others suggest that a “missing middle” has developed among US households that make charitable gifts and that an increasing percentage of all charitable giving in the United States comes from the wealthy.^{iv} Meanwhile, reports of aggregate giving on crowdfunding platforms are growing, as are tallies of individual contributions to political candidates,

campaigns, and social welfare nonprofits.^v The aggregate total of support on both crowdfunding platforms and for political groups is large, but the average gift sizes are quite small, suggesting these behaviors are widespread across the population.^{vi}

03

Methods

The research is based on insights from 33 facilitated focus groups; 27 of these were held in person and five were conducted via video in a webinar format. Almost every group involved people we did not previously know and with whom we would only meet once. We aimed to create a comfortable atmosphere and allowed participants full control over the information they shared with us; no names were recorded and no comments were attributed to individuals. Researchers returned the “maps” (sticky notes of individual actions, clustered into categories by the groups of participants) to the host organization digitally and participants were compensated with \$20 gift cards.

We sought to oversample certain demographic groups in these conversations. In our desire to protect participants' privacy we did not collect granular demographic data, but we did prioritize outreach to communities of color, Native Americans, low-income, and rural communities. Based on incomplete demographic data, which does not account for income information, our sample was 68% female and 73% white. The locations of the conversations were 36% rural, 18% suburban, and 45% urban.

Our outreach efforts centered around finding people who acted as “social glue” in their communities—people who are trusted across a range of diverse networks. Research assistants used a variety of online resources (LinkedIn, MeetUp, and directories of nonprofits, giving circles, and political groups), introductions from advisory committee members and the Digital Civil Society Lab, alumni and peer networks, and Indigenous community development organizations to identify a short list of potential hosts in each location. The starting point for outreach was largely philanthropic, which means the sample is slanted towards philanthropic groups (groups listed in Appendix F).

We used a standardized invitation and host template, phone calls, and email to coordinate the focus groups. Whenever possible we sought to partner with a host who was interested in including a diverse group of people and not only their “usual participants.” In several situations we identified host partners with great interest but conflicts in timing or location. We returned to these contacts later in the study period and organized virtual meetings so their communities could participate.

Individuals or organizations would host the meetings, most of which were held at libraries

or community centers. Hosts included staff and active members of libraries, churches, book groups, giving circles, nonprofit organizations, community foundations, leadership training groups, and young professional groups. These hosts conducted local outreach, using the participant invitation templates or Eventbrite pages research assistants had drafted. Participants shared their contact information only with the local host, not with the Stanford team. In the case that the host opted in to use an Eventbrite page, researchers had access to participant emails prior to session, but deleted those details after the focus group.

Once on site, each meeting ran between one and two hours. The smallest group to participate included two people; the largest included twenty-four. Each meeting involved introductions, a mapping exercise, clustering of the ideas, and discussion (see Appendix B: Facilitation Guide). Discussion questions included: “What do you see on your map?” “Is there anything here that surprises you?” “Now that we’ve talked for an hour, are there any other giving practices and activities that were shaped by your upbringing that you want to add?” At the end of the focus group, researchers showed participants the Urban Institute’s “2018 Update On Track to Greater Giving” diagram, which aggregates trends on monetary giving in the United States (see Appendix G: Diagram), and asked how their giving behavior compared to the diagram.

Researchers took notes during the session and recorded high-level insights, which make up the qualitative data of this study. These materials were tested locally and revised before being used in communities. Participants were given the opportunity to opt in to share basic demographic data (Appendix C: Demographic Data).

104

Findings

"Giving is a million ways."

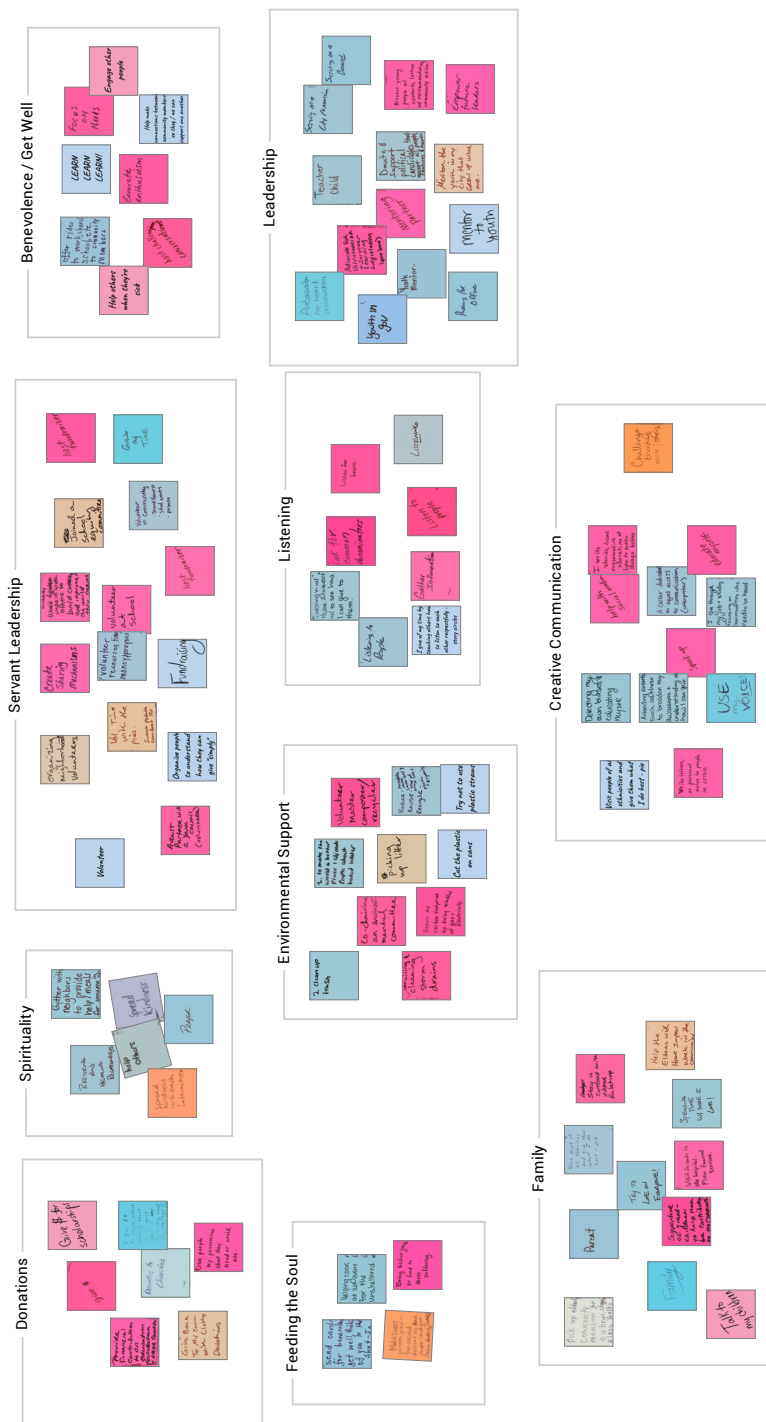
This quote from one participant sums up our findings across the 33 conversations. People give in many ways. While there was variation across these groups by geography, age, and ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds, our research yielded two consistent findings. First, the maps of behaviors in every conversation demonstrate the numerous ways people give of themselves and their resources. Not only did they contribute time and money, they mentored young people, participated in giving circles, and were stewards of local economies and devoted family members. Participants noted in almost every workshop that they give in far more ways than they realized.

The research brought forward a robust discussion of the interactions between giving domains and the informal, often overlooked ways participants put their resources (time, money, talent) to use. These domains included sharing kindness, creating connections, and choosing to give locally. The giving maps identify differing language communities use to discuss their giving, which are documented most prominently in the categories participants used to label their domains of giving.

The Golden Valley, Minnesota “Giving Landscape” (see below) is an example of what these conversations produced.¹ Participants collectively categorized their individual responses. The groups developed their own categories, which informed the categories used afterwards by researchers. The group from the Golden Valley workshop created ten distinct categories of giving mechanisms. They were “Creative Communications,” “Family,” “Feeding the Soul,” “Environmental Support,” “Listening,” “Leadership,” “Donations,” “Spirituality,” “Servant Leadership,” and “Benevolence/Get Well.”

1. All of which were then made available on the [Philanthropy and Civil Society website](#).

Golden Valley, Minnesota



The categories chosen by the group in Rapid City, South Dakota (see below) further indicate the diverse terminology used to giving. The group in Rapid City created five groups, the largest of which was “Family Support.” The four remaining categories were “Services/Skills/Expertise,” “Money Donations,” “Advocacy,” and “In Kind/Food.” They included far more in the “Family Support” group than the group in Minnesota, for example, including such responses as “I host events for local families,” “I give shoes, backpacks and jackets every year,” and “Employ poverty-level people, support them with daycare,” together.

A Giving Landscape of: Rapid City, South Dakota

Number of Participants: 7



The second consistent finding was that people in every community discussed—sometimes at length—the novelty of this conversation. Talking about giving was an unusual practice for people in every group. The novelty extended beyond the workshop itself and people noted how infrequently they talk about their giving with anyone, including family and friends. Participants mentioned learning to give by watching one’s parents or members in the community, which they noted were cases of learning by example, not by being told.

Part of this discomfort around giving conversations came from the generational differences between participants and their parents. Across the country, people shared similar stories of learning about their parents’ generosity only after their deaths. By sorting through old tax documents or seeing people come in droves to their parents’ funerals to express gratitude, these participants learned how generous their parents had been across the course of their lives, something never spoken of or even modeled growing up.

Participants ranged in age from late teens to mid-eighties. Participants in their 30s and 40s more frequently discussed how they model and teach giving to their children as an intentional practice.^{vii} This teaching included involving children in making family donation decisions, and bringing them to community cleanups or to different churches across their community. One participant mentioned how they had set up three piggy banks for their child: one for saving, one for spending, and one for giving. For this participant, the piggybank exercise taught the ethics of philanthropy and showed that philanthropy could be both small-scale and a daily practice.

While the question posed by researchers framed giving in terms of individual contributions (“How do you give to make

the world a better place?”), participants eagerly discussed collective giving. Inspired by its possibilities, they cited community consensus building and maximizing individual contributions as some potential outcomes. Most often, people mentioned the popular model of formalized giving circles (GCs), such as **The Giving Project**, **Transforming Power Fund**, **Impact 100**, or **100 + Women Who Care**. Participants saw opportunities for multigenerational and nonjudgmental discussions beneficial in the giving circle model. Participants also mentioned informal models of collective giving, such as a local wait staff pooling 10 percent of their tips once a week to give to a colleague in need.

While people saw giving circles as nonjudgmental, consensus-building spaces, many participants expressed concern about the political divisiveness in their community and the difficulty of setting collective priorities. People agreed with the sentiment expressed in one conversation that there is “no place safe from politics.” This rationale may enrich the story of why identity-specific giving circles are growing, making up 60% of all giving circles.^{viii}

Participants often noted the outsized generosity of their particular region. They speculated that total volunteer hours in their state would be higher than other states. “This region stands out as a compassionate region,” one participant said, calling it “a heart issue, not a money issue.” This phenomenon is widely documented, termed the “above-average heuristic” in psychology. These claims of outsize generosity are similar to such claims as “Congress is terrible, but not my representative”^{ix} or “public schools are terrible, except one where my kid goes.”^x

The widespread focus on the exceptional generosity of local areas also showed up

in where participants chose to invest their resources. Participants expressed deep concern with and investment in their local communities across all giving mechanisms. Participants' engagements with national or international giving was marginal. It was largely done through donating money, sending remittances, or contributing in-kind items. The remaining categories of giving mechanisms, such as volunteering time, creating connections, participating in religious practices, sharing kindness, or environmental choices focused on local communities. Inhibiting factors of national or international giving is in part logistical, but those logistical concerns were often undergirded by an impassioned embrace of local causes.

We heard three common explanations for the focus on local giving. These are ripe for further exploration, but we include them here as the focus on "local" may also be linked to the choices people make in how they give. First, participants often expressed their desire to see the immediate impact of their funds. Giving locally meant they could observe the tangible impacts their resources delivered. Second, participants also identified, especially in smaller communities, the absence of philanthropy in their region and felt that if they did not themselves contribute locally, their community would suffer. This reasoning also shows up in how participants engaged with purchasing choices. Participants bought locally for diverse reasons, including participants' dedication to building economically sustainable communities, supporting the businesses of friends or family members, or the lack of alternatives. Some noted the declining corporate investment in their communities and limited employee culture of giving, which further motivated them to give locally.

The final reason for participants to engage locally was a distrust or skepticism in national or international nonprofits. People felt their contributions were too meager to matter internationally and that it was harder to vet the work of the organization at a distance. Participants expressed uncertainty with the operating practices of those nonprofits (concerns such as CEOs being overpaid, or high administrative costs). One participant noted that they would much rather take "a check down to the fire department or Red Cross than give to the national organization." People in the nonprofit and formalized giving sectors, such as community foundations and giving circles, debated at length the challenge of administrative costs.

Another common theme across the groups was the relationship between having received support and giving to others. In these cases, participants described the experience of having little and receiving support from their friends, communities, families or social services. Being on the receiving end of support, they said, allowed them to be a better donor.

Almost every focus group, when viewing the Urban Institute's "On Track to Greater Giving" diagram, which aggregates data on various trends in giving, remarked on the size of the remittance category. The diagram cites World Bank research on remittance giving as a form of giving to watch for potential growth, at \$148.5 billion dollars in 2017, up more than ten billion dollars from the previous year.^{xi} This led various participants to discuss the relative prosperity in the US, noting the degree to which communities could send money back to their home countries or families. Participants also challenged remittance as a category of giving, and some argued it should be considered survival or family obligation. Groups largely comprised of recent immigrants, younger people, and

low-income folks were not surprised by the size of remittances in the US. They described being proximal to remittance giving, seeing it either in their immediate networks or larger community.

The complete database of giving activities discussed can be found on the lab's website at: <https://pacscenter.stanford.edu/how-we-give-now-philanthropy-by-the-rest-of-us/>.

05

Frequency and Analysis of Giving Categories

Below are the codes for giving behaviours, followed by a discussion organized by the descending frequency of each behavior.

The authors of this report developed a code for 22 distinct giving categories, derived from analyzing the participants' responses.

Researchers collected a total of 2,277 responses from participants. Frequency is calculated by the share of responses attributed to the categories; a greater share of the total responses means the giving mechanism is ranked higher.

Comments are paraphrased from discussants and observations made by the research team.

■ **Donating money**

- a. **Political:** monetary donations given to political entities.
- b. **Charitable:** monetary donations given to charitable entities, including scholarships.
- c. **Religious:** monetary donations given through a religious entity, for example tithing through church.

■ **Donating in-kind:** donations of goods (not monetary); for example books, clothes, food, data (such as market research), or non-cash asset donations.

■ **Volunteering time:** participating in an activity that requires giving time. For this definition volunteering is strictly charitable.

■ **Donating bodily resources:** this includes being an organ donor or donating blood.

■ **Participating in religious practices:** any form of religious participation (excluding monetary donation), such as prayer, singing in a church choir, or teaching religious classes.

■ **Career:** career choices, including working for the nonprofit sector or in public service, or choosing particular activities at work to give.

■ **Environmental choices:** changing behavior or adding new activities to minimize impact on environment.

a. **Gardening/land protection:** this includes planting trees, working towards biodiversity, and growing one's own food.

b. **Reducing waste/energy consumption:** includes such activities as driving energy-efficient cars, turning off the lights, or conserving water.

c. **Recycling/reusing/composting**

d. **Dietary choices:** dietary choices which are environmentally conscious, such as eating less meat, eating locally, or being vegetarian.

■ **Purchasing choices**

a. **Buying locally:** buying from local businesses, farmers markets, or companies.

b. **Choosing ethical businesses:** making purchasing choices which consider the company and its impact (and that the buyer believes are ethical). This includes purchasing Girl Scout cookies.

c. **Point of sale:** at checkout, consumers donate money to the cause selected by the retailer.

d. **Buying art/supporting artists**

■ **Caring for self:** investing resources and time into one's own wellness, such as going to yoga or taking time off from work.

■ **Sharing kindness:** participating in activities which promote kindness to others, such as smiling at strangers, listening to others, driving well, or compassion. This often involves being a steward of relationships with friends or neighbors.

■ **Engaging civically:**

a. **Participating in democracy:** actively engaging in the democratic process, for example by voting, canvassing, or serving as an elected official.

b. **Engaging in neighborhood activities:** actively engaging in community organizations; this includes conducting community cleanup and attending community-based events.

- **Advocating:** campaigning to bring social or political change, including using one's voice and position to support causes or individuals.
- **Mentoring others:** providing mentorship for others, such as at work, school, or with family. Another word for this could be "modeling." An example that fits into this is coaching youth sports.
- **Creating connections:** connecting people to each other or to other resources in order to help them.
- **Leading:** using experience or expertise to lead others, such as chairing or serving on boards, or directing volunteers. This includes organizing events.
- **Educating others:** providing information or serving in an educational role that is not a career choice or mentoring.
- **Engaging in social media:** engagement in social media through "likes" or "shares." This does not include donating through social media.
- **Engaging in familial roles:** participating in family roles such as raising children or caring for elderly relatives.
 - a. **Remittance giving:** sending money to family members.
 - b. **Fostering someone in need:** in this giving behavior, the giver "takes in" a person in need, such as a child or family member, beyond the scope of one act of service, including donating meals, funds, and shelter to the person (alternative word for it: hosting). This definition excludes the fostering of animals.
- **Learning:** this includes such activities as reading, researching, or traveling, often with learning as the goal to make more informed choices in the world.
- **Creating art:** this category involves both volunteering time and resources, as well as caring for one's self. For example, donating art to an art show, participating in a mural project, or singing in a choir.
- **Cooking:** distinct from in-kind donation, this involves cooking as the central mechanism of giving.
- **Giving circle/promoting philanthropy:** this category includes the active investment and/or promotion of formalized philanthropy, such as attending fundraisers, participating in giving circles, and recruiting others to become philanthropists.

Frequency of Responses: (Most to Least) n=2,277

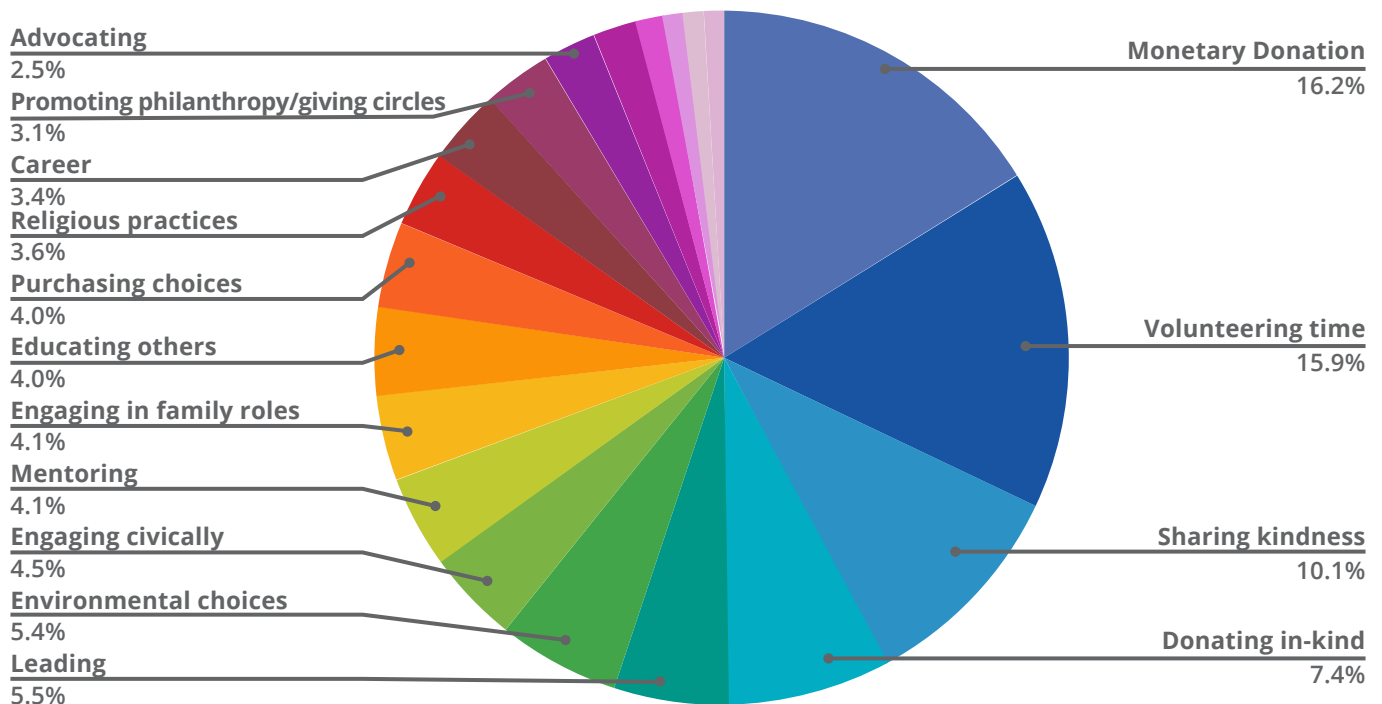
CATEGORY	NUMBER OF MENTIONS	% FREQUENCY
Donating money	365	16%
Volunteering time	358	16%
Sharing kindness	228	10%
Donating in-kind	167	7%
Leading	123	5%
Environmental choices	122	5%
Engaging civically	102	4%
Mentoring others	93	4%
Engaging in family roles	93	4%
Educating others	91	4%
Purchasing choices	89	4%
Religious practices	80	4%
Career	76	3%
Promoting philanthropy/giving circles	70	3%
Advocating	56	2%
Creating connections	46	2%
Learning	29	1%
Cooking	23	1%
Engaging in social media	18	1%
Creating art	11	0.5%
Donating bodily resources	7	0.3%
Caring for self	5	0.2%
TOTAL	2277	100%

Findings, Ranked by Frequency

“How do I give to make
the world a better place?”

At the beginning of the focus group, researchers asked participants to answer the question “How do I give to make the world a better place?” and gave them three minutes to brainstorm and write down responses. Researchers specified to participants that the project aimed to learn how people chose to give. This study coded those responses according to the giving categories and then ranked those responses by frequency. This section is organized by descending frequency of giving mechanisms. The sections include high-level insights collected from participant discussions on giving.

Frequency of Participant Responses



1. DONATING MONEY

Giving money, tied with volunteering, was the most frequently mentioned giving mechanism. Of the total written responses generated in 33 workshops, fewer than one-fifth mentioned giving money. Not all responses mentioned the recipient of that money; 30% of the responses went unspecified. Of the responses that specifically mentioned the recipient as charitable, 55% referred to a 501(c)(3) organization. Responses featured a minor amount of political and religious giving; 2.5% of responses were political in nature, and 9.9% were religious in nature.

EXAMPLES OF CHARITABLE RECIPIENTS INCLUDE:

Payroll deductions for local community causes

Giving on Giving Tuesday

Monetary donations at cashier station

Few participants mentioned taxes when discussing their monetary giving. Those involved in traditional or higher-income sites of philanthropy—such as being part of a community foundation or an impact investing group—more frequently mentioned donor-advised funds (DAF), tax code changes, and the maximization of funds for efficacy.^{xiii} Those groups were increasingly pursuing DAFs and felt that as laws change, giving changes. This emphasis was absent from the majority of groups.

Corporate giving was largely absent from discussions. Besides mentions of payroll deductions as part of monetary giving, discussions of giving through work were minimal. Some noted the presence of corporations involved in giving in their community, though they did not discuss being

involved in it. Some noted the loss of a “United Way” mode of giving, i.e. sending the same amount of money each month to the same one or two charities, which had been a point of entry into giving for some participants.

While giving money to religious organizations was only a tenth of total monetary giving, it was a source of robust discussion. Some participants noted that because tithing is an assumed obligation, church giving did not show up on their giving landscape as expected. For some communities, religious contributions were the norm. For example, one community noted how the church was involved in all sectors of giving, save the political. The church, participants noted, was involved in running the farmers market and food bank, among various services.

The level of church involvement in giving varied widely across communities. Participants also speculated that it also varied widely *within* communities—remarking that a conversation in another part of town would be more religious.

EXAMPLES OF RELIGIOUS DONATIONS INCLUDE:

Financially to my church

Donate money to Christian orphanage in New Zealand

Share some humanity

Participants in their 20s and 30s expressed disillusionment with religious institutions and how they had shifted “their tithing away” from church contributions. This disillusionment came from multiple factors. Some expressed discontent at the political changes in the church; others questioned its efficacy. Some desired alternative models of church giving, such as the ability to give 10% of time versus 10% of income. People said they felt pressured by the church to contribute money.

Across the workshops, participants mentioned learning to give from faith traditions, even if they no longer actively participated in religious communities. This learning often was addressed in terms of a generational break between the participant and their parents. People mentioned how their parents only gave to the church, whereas they now gave only to secular organizations. One participant, for example, mentioned that while they had grown up in a family that only supported the church, they now do the opposite and give to nonprofits that support inner-city children. While this could be perceived as a break, it is a reuse of older giving practices, which supports sustained monetary donation. People even used the word “tithing” to express their approach to secular monetary giving, describing how they used the 10% traditional percentage as a guide for their giving. Even as the category of “no religious affiliation” is growing, giving for many participants in our research continues to be informed by religious practices.^{xiii}

POLITICAL DONATIONS MENTIONED:

Donate to political candidate that I believe in

Give to those canvassing on the street

Recognize + contribute funds to social justice organizations

A nominal amount of this category—2.5%—was described as giving money to political organizations. This number is smaller than the 5.8% reported by MasterCard Center in 2016.^{xiv} Participants were told they did not need to specify the cause, which mitigates mentions of political giving. However, the low number of reported political giving also reflects political divisiveness expressed across various communities. Participants remarked on the absence of politics or civic life reflected on their giving landscape. The reason for

this absence, they argued, was not owing to a lack of investment in those sectors, but a desire on the group’s part to “keep the peace” and maintain decorum in the discussion. Participants felt there was “no place safe” for political conversations. People in smaller towns felt this caused them to participate in giving but not talk about the things they believe in.

Political involvement or political monetary giving, further, were not unanimously seen as giving or philanthropy. Some felt that higher-income people “monopolized” political giving, as they felt higher donors contributed the most. There was no consensus on where politics fit on the giving maps. When viewing the Urban Institute’s “On Track to Greater Giving” diagram, people remarked that political giving was much lower than they expected. Despite the nominal contributions to political organizations reflected on the giving landscape, groups across the country felt that political and civic engagement were growing, especially among people in their 20s and 30s.

2. VOLUNTEERING TIME

EXAMPLES OF VOLUNTEERING:

Volunteer time with Knights of Columbus

I ran a 4k to raise funds for a native research institution

Helping restore people’s houses by cleaning, sorting through things, or throwing things away

Volunteering, defined in the research as using time in a strictly charitable sense, tied with giving money as the most frequently mentioned giving mechanism. When participants described volunteering at their faith institution, such as teaching Sunday school, this was reflected as engaging in

religious practices and thus was excluded from the volunteering category.

Participants often remarked that they gave their money differently than their parents. They said they chose to participate in volunteering due to their parents' modeling and teaching. One said that their volunteering paralleled their parent's almost exactly, especially when transitioning from having children and being active in their activities, to having grown children, and engaging in their own activities.

Older groups often remarked on the difficulty of recruiting younger people to join organizations. They brainstormed how to accommodate greater numbers of volunteers, including pressuring corporate culture to accommodate volunteer hours, or holding meetings during lunch hours rather than at dinner time when parents are too busy to join.

3. SHARING KINDNESS

EXAMPLES OF SHARING KINDNESS:

I listen to survivor stories

Buying a friend coffee when they are having a bad day

Drove a friend to addiction treatment across the state

The category "sharing kindness" is defined as participating in activities that promote kindness to others, such as smiling at strangers, listening, driving well or showing compassion. This often involves being a steward of relationships with friends or neighbors. The frequency with which responses fit within this category documents the informal, interpersonal way participants give their resources to make the world

a better place—outside of traditional nonprofit networks.

The third-largest mechanism of giving, sharing kindness, at 9.9% of total giving, points to an often-overlooked category of the American giving landscape and how the mechanisms of individual giving behaviors build towards a sum effect of small-scale philanthropy. Sharing kindness includes the use of personal funds and time, as well as expertise, mentorship, and emotional energy. This category also intersects with being an attentive neighbor, friend, and community member.

Groups with high participation of Spanish-speaking immigrants and Native Americans noted that giving time and money to community members was "expected" of people in their communities. Those contributions were neither optional nor seen as going "above and beyond." These communities often expressed how those demands on their time made it a challenge to meet the needs of the community and expressed feelings of guilt and exhaustion.

4. DONATING IN-KIND

EXAMPLES OF DONATING IN-KIND:

Donating backpacks

Providing a home base for artists and dancers

I give CVS cards to people struggling with homelessness

Food was as a prominent subcategory of in-kind donations, and in-kind donations were more prominent in relation to church giving. In discussions, in-kind donations were sometimes seen as more emotionally fulfilling for the giver, as they could witness the immediate impact of those resources. From a high-level understanding of income

information, participants on the higher end of income levels were less focused on in-kind donations.

5. CREATING CONNECTIONS

EXAMPLES OF CREATING CONNECTIONS:

Build community! Meals meetings

Networking with people who share concerns

Know resources that help families with housing/food/basic needs

Creating connections was a crucial mechanism for how participants give to make the world a better place. We defined this category as connecting people to each other or to other resources in order to help them. These connections were often social in nature and determined by one's immediate geography. Other research has termed this connective philanthropy as "bridging" and "bonding" philanthropic capital.^{xv} *Women Give 2019* described that "[b]onding capital takes place *within* groups, compared to bridging capital that takes place *between* groups."^{xvi} We observed both of these actions: participants described connecting people in their networks to each other, and others described using their knowledge of resources, such as social services, to "bridge" philanthropic capital to people outside their networks. These two functions evenly divided among responses.

Participants accrued philanthropic capital both formally and informally. Formal philanthropic capital showed up in having access to professional networks or legal training. Informal philanthropic capital showed up in helping friends or family navigate resources or linking seniors with children in need.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL CHOICES

EXAMPLES OF ENVIRONMENTAL CHOICES:

Walking/riding a bike instead of driving

I use "imperfect produce"

Pick up litter

People often noted surprise at the number of responses that described environmental choices. Giving "environmentally" involves different actions. It can combine time and money, such as choosing public transit over driving, buying local produce, or using less plastic. Smaller, more rural communities were especially surprised to see environmental giving appear so frequently on their giving maps. Those mentions often described local efforts, such as picking up litter, conserving water, or reusing goods.

Of the 5.4% of responses that discussed environmental actions, the most common were recycling/composting, followed by active efforts to lower energy consumption, participating in gardening, and making different dietary choices. The frequency of participants considering the environment in their giving reflects broader trends in giving; for example, giving to environment and animals has grown for five years in a row, reaching an all-time high in 2018.^{xvii}

7. LEADING

EXAMPLES OF LEADING OTHERS:

Serving on library board

Set up build day for Habitat for Humanity

Organizing new institutions

Our research described leading as using experience or expertise to lead others, such as chairing or serving on boards, or directing volunteers, which included organizing events. Leadership was a prominent domain for our participants, but that prominence is likely skewed by the high representation of groups with a leadership component of their organization (for example, an emerging leaders program, a young professionals association, or a giving circle).

8. EDUCATING OTHERS

EXAMPLES OF EDUCATING OTHERS:

Teach knitting to vet students

I share information about mental health to destigmatize disorders that can't be "seen"

Writing to organize ideas and messages

The category of educating others described giving by providing information or serving in an educational role that is not a career choice or mentoring. For some communities, in particular majority African American groups, education was a major domain for making the world a better place. Participants spoke about teaching social and moral responsibility to their own children or to young people, teaching literacy, building a free community library, or telling their stories.

9. ENGAGING CIVICALLY

Civic engagement was a robust category in discussion and it showed up in the giving maps as a decisive method through which participants chose to give. This research divided civic engagement into two categories: participating in democracy, and engaging in neighborhood activities. The former is defined

as actively engaging in the democratic process, for example voting, canvassing, or serving as an elected official; the latter is defined as actively engaging in community organizations—this includes actively engaging with neighbors or conducting community cleanups.

EXAMPLES OF ENGAGING CIVICALLY:

I write to the local paper

Working on local campaigns

Attend meetings that support causes in my community

There was an almost even split between these two kinds of civic engagement. Participants disagreed on whether civic engagement was a definable part of philanthropy or outside its scope. Older generations viewed it as an obligatory norm of their citizenship. These older groups also expressed a serious distrust in the capabilities of the government to improve local conditions. Some mentioned feeling greater confidence in charity and/or private solutions than in public ones.

For some groups, military service was a big part of civic duty; however, in most groups, the military went unmentioned. Civic action on the local level was more pronounced in smaller communities. They described showing up to various meetings, and interacting with their state representatives, which for them was not necessarily giving.

Across the country, participants observed a renewed civic or political engagement or "activist" citizenship, especially from younger citizens. Some felt political giving was rising after the 2016 election. This increased political or civic involvement was based on giving time more than financial contributions. They described sharing expertise, connections, and

encouraging other people to participate. This documented engagement was often voiced alongside participants' desire for political change at local and state levels. This reflects broader changes in the way millennials are giving, for example, believing "more strongly in their own power than in nonprofits' to create change."^{xviii}

On the neighborhood level, some communities where high rates of cancer and health problems exist noted how helping neighbors was growing, including in flooded communities. There is a distinction between personal and organizational giving. Helping neighbors factored hugely into this category; such means of helping neighbors included making connections with them, mowing lawns, contributing to carpooling, and hosting events. The organizational route included administering a homeowner's association, joining local organizations, reading local news, having a library card, and swimming at the community pool.

10. ENGAGING IN FAMILY ROLES

EXAMPLES OF ENGAGING FAMILY ROLES:

Supporting aging parents + grandparents

Being a dad

I house homeless relatives and case manage them

Participants were often surprised to consider family as part of giving to make the world a better place. This category was defined as participating in family roles; for example, raising children or caring for elderly relatives. Definitions of family giving varied across groups. Some communities saw family as encompassing their immediate community. For example, one majority-Native American

group included neighborhood, cultural, and charitable activities in the category of "family," while other groups saw family relegated to raising children.

11. MENTORING OTHERS

EXAMPLES OF MENTORING:

Helping students who are first generation and low income

Coaching & mentoring coworkers

Volunteer as coach for son's soccer team

Our research defined mentoring providing mentorship for others, such as at work, school, or with family. Participants often spoke about the importance of mentorship; no insights into mentoring were particularly notable.

12. RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

EXAMPLES OF RELIGIOUS PRACTICES:

Pray

Usher at church

My monthly construction projects through church

Religious practices were described in our research as any form of religious participation (excluding monetary giving), such as prayer, singing in a church choir, or teaching religious classes. As with the tithing example, participants often used their religious practices to determine their giving outside their faith. Older groups often expressed concern at the diminished interest in churches in their communities, often noting that churches can be a catalyst for giving. Churches

were also seen as a means of connecting with one's community, and participants felt that diminished investment in churches could lead to disconnection and loss of community more broadly.

13. PURCHASING CHOICES

EXAMPLES OF PURCHASING CHOICES:

Shop at farmers market

I purchase items that benefit charities

Supporting local arts and artists

Of the people who listed purchasing choices as a mechanism for expressing their values, most referred to buying locally and choosing ethical businesses. Few (less than 2%) called out point-of-sale (PoS) purchases. This is in contrast to Engage for Good's findings that PoS donations rose by 4.5% from 2014 to 2016, even as retail continued to slump.^{xix}

The desire to support local businesses came from multiple factors, including participants' dedication to building economically sustainable communities, supporting the businesses of friends or family members, or the lack of alternatives in smaller areas. Participants often mentioned supporting their friends' and family's businesses. For example, one participant mentioned: "If people we know open restaurants locally, we go out of our way (literally) to support and go."

There were few mentions of point-of-sale donations. Participants did discuss PoS donations after they were shown the "Greater Giving" diagram. There was little consensus on this giving mechanism. Some regarded it as an easy way to give, which they saw as reactive than proactive. Others were deeply

suspicious of PoS donation, viewed it as manipulative, and deliberately avoided it.

14. CAREER

EXAMPLES OF CAREER:

I am a teacher

Community health nurse

Ensuring my employees are paid fairly

Career did not feature as a prominent giving mechanism in our research. In most workshops, career choice was seldom mentioned in the initial giving landscape; during the discussion, groups disagreed on whether work was a form of giving. In these groups, when career did show up, it was documented in additive features at work, such as mentoring a younger colleague or encouraging colleagues in the workplace to give more, rather than the core function of the job. However, some communities discussed career as the central mechanism through which they gave. Nonprofit staff, for example, were clear that their career choices reflected their desires to make the world a better place. Those who worked in "giving" careers also described their efforts to protect their emotional resources and time, as they often felt overtaxed in those domains.

In some marginalized communities, hiring people from the community was a key local strategy. They discussed the economic power of hiring people who had been overlooked by previous employers; employing people, they said, had the power to multiply its impact as the income was expanded far beyond the hired individual and into their family and community.

15. PROMOTING PHILANTHROPY/GIVING CIRCLES

EXAMPLES OF PROMOTING PHILANTHROPY/GIVING CIRCLES:

Last year, guided an effort to assemble and donate 200+ homeless kits to shelters, people on the street

I belong to 100 Women Who Care

Create sharing mechanisms

Participants were informally or formally engaged in promoting philanthropy, either in attending fundraisers, teaching philanthropy, participating in giving circles, running races for charities, art raffles, or providing scholarships. This category also sits at a nexus of other giving mechanisms. For example, participants made use of a variety of resources to promote philanthropy, such as their networks, time, money, or other material resources.

16. ADVOCATING

EXAMPLES OF ADVOCATING:

Speaking on causes I believe in

Social activism

I help circulate petitions for local causes

This category combines a variety of giving mechanisms and overlaps with several categories, including civic engagement and leading. Advocacy included a wide array of actions intended to bring about social or political change. These actions included phone banking, attending protests, raising awareness, and being an ally. Advocacy is both personal and organizational, and those

strains often overlap. Younger participants, particularly those in their late teens, 20s, and 30s, were more interested in direct action.

17. LEARNING

“Before we judge young people, we need to listen to them.”

EXAMPLES OF LEARNING:

Unlearning patterns of white supremacy and patriarchy

I educate myself on current issues that affect me and/or my community

Listening to elders tell stories and share wisdom

Participants often recognized learning as important on several levels: learning helped them become better citizens, better friends, and better philanthropists. Learning came from formal places, such as seeking a higher degree, reading specialized books, or attending trainings; it also emerged informally, where participants adopted an “open” mindset or listened nonjudgmentally. Listening was often seen as a crucial first step towards helping other people; participants listened to people’s needs first, rather than deciding the solution and fixing problems without context or input. Learning as a philanthropist also involved a “trial and error” process.

Informal learning also came from being in proximity to people different than oneself. Working as a schoolteacher, one participant said, taught them to see the challenges of underserved communities and prompted them to become far more active in giving.

18. COOKING

EXAMPLES OF COOKING:

Smoke meat

Make sweet potato pies—the sacred dessert of black people, and gift them during crisis

Cooking for bereavements

Cooking was not universally shared as a central mechanism for giving—it mattered much more for some communities in particular, such as faith-based organizations. Participants often discussed their feeling that food brings communities together. Participants described cooking for their families, friends, neighbors, or strangers. It included cooking for a homeless shelter, cooking for bereavements, and baking pies for communities to bring them together. Across conversations, “feeding” the community was described expansively as a verb to gesture at material, spiritual, and cultural needs.

19. ENGAGING IN SOCIAL MEDIA

EXAMPLES OF ENGAGING IN SOCIAL MEDIA:

Facebook groups (active) organizing

Speak about my beliefs on social media

Share nonprofit giving opportunities on social media

Mention of online crowdfunding was often met with skepticism or distrust. The distrust of crowdfunding social media requests was more pronounced in rural areas; participants felt like they needed to know the person who is making a request for contributions. In smaller communities, the asks often

occurred offline, and newer trends took longer to reach the area, they said. When they used online platforms, they did so to give locally. However, social media or online philanthropy was also seen as a useful tool to further benefit others.

20. CREATING ART

EXAMPLES OF CREATING ART:

Sing in a community chorus

Make glass beads for sick children

Contributing my art to silent auctions

Creating art did emerge enough to be considered as a category of analysis, and it combines various giving behaviors: in-kind donations, time, and expertise.

21. DONATING BODILY RESOURCES

EXAMPLES OF DONATING BODILY RESOURCES:

Donate blood

Blood donor, organ donor

Cancer study

People often gave blood but didn’t necessarily call it out as a form of giving. Few participants mentioned being an organ donor.

22. CARING FOR SELF

EXAMPLES OF CARING FOR SELF:

I meditate

I recognize when actions can be damaging to my mental health

Investing in my own practice and research in order to share

As evidenced by the fact it is the least mentioned giving exercise, participants largely did not regard care for themselves as giving.

06

Topics of Debate

Our research picks up on a number of potentially important divides—starting with disagreements on the definition of giving itself. This project aimed to identify different ways people use their resources to make the world a better place. Participants engaged in lengthy discussions on what constitutes giving versus what constitutes obligation or survival.

Issues including paying taxes, voting, raising children, sending remittances, and career choices were divisive for defining giving in the discussions. Some participants identified categories in the “Greater Giving” diagram as unrelated to philanthropy. The remittance category, for example, which totaled \$148.6 billion in 2017, was sometimes characterized as an act of survival or family obligation. However, remittances were an important act for those who sent them.

Online crowdfunding was disputed on similar grounds. Some participants perceived medical or personal fundraisers as potential scams that relied on sympathy and personal connections. Other participants saw online crowdfunding as a continuation of a deeply philanthropic practice, drawing parallels to fundraisers in church basements or people’s homes, that pooled community money for a person or group in need. Participants also debated whether voting and parenting counted as giving. Some saw the former as seen as a norm of citizenship; the latter, a responsibility created through a choice.

Further divides were pronounced in the kind of giving activities in which some communities are invested. One prominent example of this was military service. Communities with high levels of military service, in particular the Great Plains, described the act itself and used it as a sign of a giving community. Some participants also mentioned lessons learned growing up in military families as contributing to their giving methodology. However, in the majority of workshops, participants did not mention military service.

Another topic of debate was on the various economies which could enable more giving. Groups composed of people in their 20s and 30s in particular spoke of different economic models, such as the solidarity economy or the giving economy, in which a community

constructs a “time bank” that operates on the value of hours rather than money.^{xx} In this model, one hour of time equals one time credit, and people involved exchange services or learnings through their use and production of time credits. In this definition, the time bank operates as a giving circle without monetary buy-in and with the resources invested in its members.^{xxi} The participants used these alternative economies as a method to imagine life outside of capitalism. Younger engagement with alternative economic models also supports outside research on millennial giving, which shows that they treat their resources, including time and money, as having equivalent value.^{xxii}

Across the giving conversations, there was no consensus on the relative abundance or scarcity of resources in their immediate communities and the country more broadly. Participants noted desperate needs locally and how the group addressed them, such as through multiple food pantries, while noting the relative abundance of the country. Often, participants mentioned the increasing abundance in their own families, recalling stories of recent generations in their families without access to electricity, opportunities, or education. This sense is distilled into one participant’s comment: “There is no shortage of money in America.”^[3]

While this research was not designed to inquire into the question of “why we give now,” serious divides on this question did emerge from discussions and are an important avenue for further research. People expressed the feeling that “service was contagious,” while other people were motivated by their proximity to need. Some participants also described inciting experiences in adulthood that prompted them to give differently or to give at all. Such experiences included the loss of a job, a divorce, the 2008 recession, the election of a political figure, or the experience of caring for a sick relative or friend. These incidents were global, national or immediate, and gesture at the various intersecting interventions into people’s giving.

107

Challenges Identified

The research identifies broader challenges Americans face that might diminish giving in the future. Participants often voiced concerns about the increasingly insecure economic futures of people in their networks. They mentioned children with high student loan payments, housing and health care costs, and the difficulty of finding stable jobs.^{xxiii} With these economic considerations, they projected an increasing inability to make consistent monetary contributions to nonprofits.^{xxiv}

They described older models of giving, where a certain percentage of one's paycheck was sent monthly to two or three nonprofits, including to United Way or churches, as becoming out of reach for more people. Participants observed seeing "patchwork" approaches, with time and expertise increasingly valued.

Contributions to large, older nonprofits may also be diminished by the increasing diversity and abundance of specialized nonprofits. With greater access to information online, participants felt they had more options of where to give and were less dependent on federated programs such as United Way. Because of these changes, participants saw their own giving as more diffuse across different organizations, as compared to their parents.

08

Conclusion

People use a number of different mechanisms to make a difference in the world around them. In a country where giving is normatively associated with donating to charity, less than 16% of participant responses to how they give to make the world a better place mention giving money. Our research documented the wide variety of actions and mechanisms people use. This research makes it clear that people in the US take many actions and use many tools, some of which are well tracked and others less so. Recent trends in charitable giving—based on data about financial donations—are important but are not capturing the full picture.

While financial contributions to charitable organizations were the most frequently mentioned, tied with volunteering, it is not possible to tell how much of that is because this is both the sanctioned and normative definition of “giving” in the United States. It is notable that while the financial contributions were the most frequent act, they constituted only one in five of all responses.

There is room for significant research on how people give. We need research that can disentangle motivations and mechanisms, research that might assign value to different actions, and ways to better understand the dynamic relationships between mechanisms and choices made at the individual level. Additional research that would better articulate the choices made by specific demographic or socioeconomic groups would also be helpful. Here are several additional areas for research.

First, people take lots of different actions, some of which are considered “giving,” where others might be categorized as political, caring, neighborliness, or civic engagement. These categories are neither stable nor universal. They vary across cultures, regions, and age groups. Financial gifts to tax-exempt nonprofits are the most common feature on people’s giving landscapes. But it is not clear from these conversations which way the causal relationship goes: Is it the biggest because financial giving is the most important or is it the biggest because it is what everyone agrees is giving? The normative role of charitable gifts to tax-exempt nonprofits creates its own energy—people know that this is sanctioned behavior and thus forgo debate.

Second, these conversations highlight the need to understand individual behaviors in relationship to each other, not as standalone activities. Every participant identified

several mechanisms they used. Next-stage research could seek to understand who uses what when, how people divide their financial resources and time across different mechanisms, and whether or not they see their choices as complements or substitutes.

Third, the growth in employment in nonprofits is often reported on as a positive characteristic about the sector. However, these conversations reveal some potential downsides to this growth in employment, from the perspective of overall charitable giving. More research is needed to understand if people employed in the sector give less money than others, and, if so, why. These conversations hint at this possibility—especially with regard to point-of-sale donations and cause marketing. There are other possible reasons that nonprofit employees might give less money or time than others; there’s an interesting relationship to examine if they do, and if overall sector employment is growing.

Fourth, our conversations identified the role that sharing information plays in the choices people make in areas such as social media advocacy, mentoring, network assistance, finding organizations, and support. These conversations did not examine how people think about the role of digital tools, beyond a general disinclination toward crowdfunding except as used by people the participants already knew. There are a number of questions to be asked about how digital tools or environments factor into people’s choices of ways to give.

The range of giving mechanisms—and the discussions of what counts as giving—that these groups identified raise important questions not only for researchers but also for policymakers. For the last 100 years, the United States has generally turned to

the tax code as the policy mechanism for incentivizing giving and participation. With few exceptions, the tax code was not mentioned by conversational participants and, judging from their responses, has little to no influence on the choices they make.

The wide range of activities identified in this research—from mutual aid to consumer and career choices, from political activism, advocacy, and online information sharing—open up numerous additional policy domains for consideration. If the policy aspiration is to catalyze or reward generosity or participation, these findings should encourage consideration of policies on employment, local environmental stewardship as a pathway to climate change action, educational supports, elder care and childcare, the cost of foreign money transfer, and telecommunications access.

Finally, these conversations proved useful on a meta level, as they generated repeated comments on how unusual it was to discuss one's giving. Do we not talk about our giving? Why? With whom do we discuss our giving? How does the “virtue signaling” or “greenwashing” of certain kinds of purchasing—in which you literally wear your values on your sleeve (or type of shoes or branded hat, etc.) square with a cultural hesitancy to discuss giving? Do some groups of people discuss giving more than others? Does discussing it change how (or how much) people give? These questions arise from our conversations but cannot be answered by them. There is room to learn much more.

The 33 giving landscapes document the various linguistic frameworks communities used to discuss giving, most prominent in the community created categories used to describe their actions. Many people discussed

how rare it was to discuss their giving but had rich practices and language they drew upon to discuss it. This research points us to a great opportunity to talk more about giving, and an opportunity to investigate how linguistic variation on giving could inhibit research in giving and philanthropy.

To provide one model to continue these discussions, we drafted the “How We Give Now DIY Conversation Guide,” complete with tips and tricks to facilitate a community discussion.

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Appendices

APPENDIX

A

DIY Guide

HOW WE GIVE NOW:

Philanthropy By the Rest of Us

A DIY Conversation Guide



Stanford PACS

Center on Philanthropy
and Civil Society

Digital Civil Society Lab

The ‘How We Give Now’ (HWGN) conversations engage individuals and groups in a reflective discussion, asking them about how they give to make the world a better place. This DIY guide will show you how to organize and lead your own conversation, and discover what giving looks like in your community.

From these DIY conversations, participants can build richer connections within and outside of their usual networks, collaborate on shared issues, and propose ideas to build a more giving community. HWGN conversations are not designed to judge how participants are giving, or compare how much they give. Rather, they are designed to explore the expansive ways individuals use private resources for public good. Giving behavior could include baking for the school bake sale, raising children to be engaged citizens, voting or sending remittances to family members. This definition is kept intentionally broad so participants can deliberate on what giving means to them and their community.

Over the summer and fall of 2019, researchers from **Stanford’s Digital Civil Society Lab** (DCSL) held thirty-three of these conversations across the U.S., in states such as South Dakota, New Mexico and Alabama. These rich conversations brought forward important insights; we found that participants give in many ways, and that it was rare for them to discuss their giving. These insights will inform DCSL Director Lucy Bernholz’s upcoming book, ‘How We Give Now: Philanthropy By the Rest of Us,’ due out of MIT Press in 2021. This DIY Guide is one approach to continue this work.

To learn more about the project and compare your giving map to others from across the country, please visit the Stanford Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society website at pacscenter.stanford.edu.

Preparation

Design

Think about who you want to bring together for a conversation about giving - friends, colleagues, family members? People who already know each other? People with different backgrounds or viewpoints?

Who might make use of this conversation?

- A new team as a “get-to-know-you” exercise
- Employers seeking to learn how their giving-match benefits are working for employees
- Social groups, such as PTA or social clubs, looking to brainstorm new ways to give together
- Giving circles or impact investing groups looking to strategize greater community involvement

Plan

Choose a 90-minute time slot and find a venue. The ideal space should have:

- Enough tables and chairs for all participants, arranged in a circle or u-shape
- A sizeable surface to post sticky notes (ex: a white board, large table or a blank wall)
- Wheelchair accessible facilities and restrooms

Tip: Libraries and community centers make great gathering places! Hosting at home is great too.

Invite

When the time and location are confirmed, it's time to send out invitations - preferably a month in advance. Check out the sample invitation in the 'More Resources' section!

Set Up

Arrive early to the venue. Bring refreshments if you like, and set out the sticky notes and markers. Identify the surface where your group will post their sticky notes. Make sure the venue has enough space for participants to get up and move around the room during the activity. Write down the question, 'How do I give to make the world a better place?' somewhere visible, such as on a piece of paper on a white board.

Materials:

- 10-15 sticky notes for each participant
- One black or blue marker for each participant
- Butcher paper, white board, or other surface to post sticky notes

Facilitation Tips

- Make it fun! Bring candy or another small treat as a prize for the person who wrote the most responses in the sticky note exercise.
- Plan the ice breaker that will work best for your group; we've included other ideas in 'More Resources' at the end of this guide.
- Review the sample map attached in the 'More Resources' section to get a sense of how participants might cluster and organize the giving map.
- If you're gathering a larger group, split the group into two during the clustering exercise, asking each group to work together as a team to cluster their responses, and then to join together as a whole once they've completed clustering.

Tips for Creating A Welcoming Discussion Space:

- Introduce yourself with your gender pronouns; this provides space for other participants to share their pronouns.
- Ask participants to listen non-judgmentally and openly to everyone in the discussion.
- Highlight that this conversation is not about ranking or comparing other people's giving.

Discussion

“How Do I Give to Make the World a Better Place?”

Introduce Yourself and HWGN | 2 minutes

Hello my name is _____ and I first want to thank you for gathering together. Today, we are going to get to know each other a bit better, build a Giving Map, and then discuss our giving on an individual and community level.

This conversation is an opportunity to talk more about giving, a topic we typically don't discuss. To begin our discussion, we will first build a Giving Map, a map of sticky notes reflecting all the ways we give to make the world a better place. Our Giving Map will lead us into a discussion of our giving, and a chance to collaborate as a community on shared concerns. This is not a discussion meant to compare how much we give or to where, rather to bring out the various activities we engage in to make the world better.

[Refer to page 1 for information on the Stanford research project if you would like to include it in the introduction].

Break the Ice | 8-10 minutes

Let's get to know each other a bit better. We'll go around the room, stating our name and then two or three sentences about what brought us here today.

Describe | 2 minutes

Thanks for sharing! Now we are going to build our giving map. This is not a map of geographic space but a map of ideas. On each sticky note you will describe one way you give to make the world a better place. Clustering these sticky notes together will build our map.

Brainstorm | 5 minutes

The question that you are answering today is “How do I give to make the world a better place?” For example, I _____.

Some Examples of Giving Behavior:

- I give money monthly to public radio
- I give my time by canvassing for my representative
- I give goods by baking brownies for the school bake sale

You will have three minutes to answer this question. *[repeat the question if necessary]*.

The only rule here is that there is one idea per sticky note. This is important because it will help us build our map. When you are done writing all the ways that you give, please look up.

Are there any questions I can answer before we move on?

Cluster | 10-15 minutes

Now, we are going to put the sticky notes on the wall. As you notice other post-its with similar activities, cluster those notes together.

For example, if I wrote down “voting” and I see that someone else wrote down “canvassed for their local representative” I would place my post-it next to theirs because both refer to participating in our democratic process. We then might label those clustered post-its as ‘civic engagement’ on a new sticky note.

Other categories could include family, money, or leadership. We encourage you to talk through these categories as a group.

[Informally rotate people through, if they are not already doing so.]

Please make sure everyone gets a chance to contribute to the clustering.

Label | 5 minutes

Please determine what you would like to name your clusters as a group.

For example, one cluster might be “in-kind donations” and another might be “money.” These categories can be as broad or as specific as you want them to be.

[Take a moment to verbally summarize the clusters to the whole group - describe the categories and give a few examples of the sticky notes in that cluster.]

Discuss | 30-40 minutes

[Invite people back to their seats. Choose the discussion questions that suit your group best; we recommend starting with 1 and 2.]

1. What do you see on the board? Is there anything here that surprises you?
2. What challenges does this map identify?
3. How has your approach to giving money or time changed over the course of your life?
4. How could our community encourage more giving?

Add | 3-5 minutes

Now that we’ve talked for some time, are there any sticky notes you’d like to add to the board?

Reflect & Compare | *5-10 minutes*

Now that we've discussed community giving, let's reflect on any of our learnings from today.

1. Did you hear about a cause or organization you want to know more about?
2. Did the conversation change how you want to give your time, money, or resources in the future?
3. What are other conversations our community could benefit from?
4. Is there anything else you would like to discuss in the remaining time, or questions you have for each other going forward?

Wrap Up | *3 minutes*

Thank you so much for your thoughtfulness in the discussion today. I hope this conversation has given you a chance to reflect on giving in our community.

Though our conversation is over today, I invite you to learn more about the Stanford research project, or take a look at the maps from the other conversations at the Stanford Center for Philanthropy and Civil Society website. You are also welcome to host your own "How We Give Now" discussion. The DCSL Director Lucy Bernholz's upcoming book, 'How We Give Now: Philanthropy By the Rest of Us,' is due out of MIT Press in 2021, and will feature insights from the thirty-three original conversations.

More Resources

Sample Invitation

People show they care about their communities and the world around them in lots of ways. We volunteer our time, organize our neighbors, come together after disasters, invest in local businesses, vote, give money to nonprofits, shop in line with our values, run for office, subscribe to local newspapers, and donate our health information to help doctors find cures. Please join us on *[insert date, time, and location here]* for a community discussion on giving, where we will reflect on the ways we give to make the world a better place.

From these DIY conversations, participants can build richer connections within and outside of their usual networks, collaborate on shared issues, and propose ideas to build a more giving community. This conversation is not designed to judge how participants are giving, or compare how much they give. Rather, it is designed to explore the expansive ways individuals use private resources for public good. Giving behavior could include baking for the school bake sale, raising children to be engaged citizens, voting or sending remittances to family members.

These conversations started as part of a research initiative at the Stanford Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society. For information on the research project, visit the website here:

<https://pacscenter.stanford.edu/how-we-give-now-philanthropy-by-the-rest-of-us/>

Please RSVP to *[insert name and email here]*.

TIP

Personalize the invitation to describe why this conversation matters to you and what you hope your community will get out of it.

Other Ice Breaker Questions

- What is your favorite time of the day and why?
- What are you grateful for?
- What new talent or skill are you most eager to learn?
- What fads are you happy went out of style?
- What's your idea of a great party?
- Who was your favorite teacher in school?
- If you had one extra hour in the day, how would you use the extra time?

Sample Giving Map

A Giving Landscape of: Golden Valley, Minnesota

Number of Participants: 14



B

Facilitation Process

A. Introductions

Facilitators first introduced themselves, thanked the hosts, and explained the project by describing Dr. Lucy Bernholz's book and the Giving Institute's support of the project. Facilitators then asked the group to share their name and a recommendation of a podcast, TV show, movie, or book.

B. Mapping/Clustering

Once each participant had a chance to share, the facilitator began to explain the "Giving Map" exercise. After asking the participants to write down all the ways they give to make the world a better place, facilitators gave participants three minutes to write down their answers. When three minutes passed, the facilitator then asked the group to cluster their sticky notes on the wall, working in teams to organize their answers.

C. Discussing

Once the groups had clustered their answers, the facilitators invited the groups to share in a discussion, first explaining the data-collection

process. Facilitators asked the group about what they saw on the map, and if they saw anything that surprised them. Bringing in the Greater Giving 2018 research from the Urban Institute in Washington, DC, they gave the group time to read over the diagram and then reflect on how national trends showed up in their own map (the diagram is located in the appendix). With a final discussion on that topic, the facilitators concluded the session, inviting the group to stay in touch and join their podcast, thanked them for their time, and handed out the gift cards.

Introduction: 20 minutes

Exercise A: 20 minutes

First question: 10 minutes

Second question: 10 minutes

Third question: 10 minutes

UI diagram: 10 minutes

Conclusion: 5 minutes

Thank you notes were sent to all hosts. Facilitators cleaned up the sticky notes, took photos, and shared the digitized maps with the hosts.



Workshop Locations/ demographic Data

Total Workshops

33

Annapolis, Maryland

Atlanta, Georgia (2)

Athens, Georgia

Arlington, Virginia

Birmingham, Alabama (2)

Des Moines, Iowa

Detroit, Michigan

Golden Valley, Minnesota

Kearney, Nebraska

Lincoln, Nebraska

Los Altos, California

Oak Park, Michigan

Rapid City, South Dakota (6)

San Diego, California

Seattle, Washington

Spearfish, South Dakota

Sturgis, South Dakota

Toledo, Ohio

Troy, Michigan

Washington, District of Columbia (2)

Virtual Sessions

Spartanburg, South Carolina

Charlotte, North Carolina

Rocky Mount, North Carolina

Albuquerque, New Mexico (2)

Workshop Locations/ demographic Data (cont.)

Total Participants

224

Total of those who provided
demographic data

66%

of people provided
demographic data

Age

18-24 (14)

25-34 (32)

35-44 (40)

45-54 (48)

55-65 (43)

65+ (36)

Gender Identity

Male Identifying

69

Female Identifying

151

Other Identifying

1

Racial Identity

African American

24

Native American

7

Caucasian

165

Asian

6

Latin

14

Mixed

4



Participant Responses

Due to the size of the dataset collected, we are making this information available as a separate PDF document, which you can access at:

<https://pacscenter.stanford.edu/how-we-give-now-philanthropy-by-the-rest-of-us/>

If you would like a version of the dataset for analysis, please contact us using this form:

<https://pacscenter.stanford.edu/research/digital-civil-society-lab/contact-us/>



Blank Workshop Report

How We Give Now

Digital Civil Society Lab Research Project *Summer 2019*

Event Date, Time	
Facilitators	
Location (Region/City/State)	
Host Contact Name	
Host Contact Email	
# of Participants	
Language Used	
# of Gift Cards Distributed	
Organization	
Host Contact Phone	

QUOTE OF DAY

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SELF-IDENTIFIED DEMOGRAPHICS

Race	
Age	
Gender	

DISCUSSION NOTES

(Do not record personally identifying data)



Local Host Organizations

Alan Solano, Jessica Gromer, John T. *Vucuverich Foundation, Emerging Leaders Program*, Rapid City, South Dakota

Amy Whipple, *100 Women Who Care Troy*, Troy, Michigan

Amy Sazue, Bruce Long Fox, *Rural America Initiatives*, Rapid City, South Dakota

Ben Saylor, *Spearfish Community Foundation, Black Hills State University, Joy Center*, Spearfish, South Dakota

Cheryl Allie, *The Village Tutorial and Enrichment Program*, Atlanta, Georgia

Dane Olsen, *Self-Organized Book Club*, Los Altos, California

Julie Moore-Peterson, *Sturgis Public Library*, Sturgis, South Dakota

Julie Rizzo, *BBB Give.org*, Arlington, Virginia

Katy Kinnan, *Fountain Springs Church*, Rapid City, South Dakota

Kyla Martin, *Mid-Nebraska Action Partnership*, Kearney, Nebraska

Liz Hamburg, *Black Hills Community Foundation*, Rapid City, South Dakota

Margo Dalal, *Detroit Community Wealth Fund*, Detroit, Michigan

Marybelt Montoya, *Lakeside*, California

Melanie Bouyer, *Alabama Humanities Foundation*, Birmingham, Alabama

Michael Gale, *Global Giving*, Washington, D.C.

Paula J. Beugen, Rose McGee, *Sweet Potato Comfort Pie*, Golden Valley, Minnesota

Ryanne Ozanal, *Paypal*, Washington, D.C.

Local Host Organizations (cont.)

Sabrina Thornton, John Brothers, T. Rowe Price Foundation, Baltimore, Maryland

Sherry Clouser, *100 Women Who Care*, Athens, Georgia

Shiloh Francis, *Young Professionals Group, Chamber of Commerce*, Rapid City, South Dakota

Susan J. Hughes, *Dahl Arts Center, Rapid City Arts Council*, Rapid City, South Dakota

Tara, *100 Women Who Care*, Annapolis, Maryland

Ted Kessler, *Democratic National Party*, Lincoln, Nebraska

Vanessa Stein, Mike George, *Toledo Community Foundation*, Toledo, Ohio

Wendy Jarvis, *Hotel Indigo, Five Points*, Birmingham, Alabama

Wendy Miller Gamer, *Interfaith Leadership Council*, Oak Park, Michigan

Virtual

Ashley T. Whitt, *Spartanburg Community Foundation*, Spartanburg, South Carolina

Claire Goebel, Rocky Mount, North Carolina

Kira Luna, *Center for Nonprofit Excellence*, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Patricia Massey Hoke, *Women's Impact Fund*, Charlotte, North Carolina

Yvette Tovar, *All Faiths Children's Action Group*, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Organized Without Host

Capitol Hill Library, Seattle, Washington.

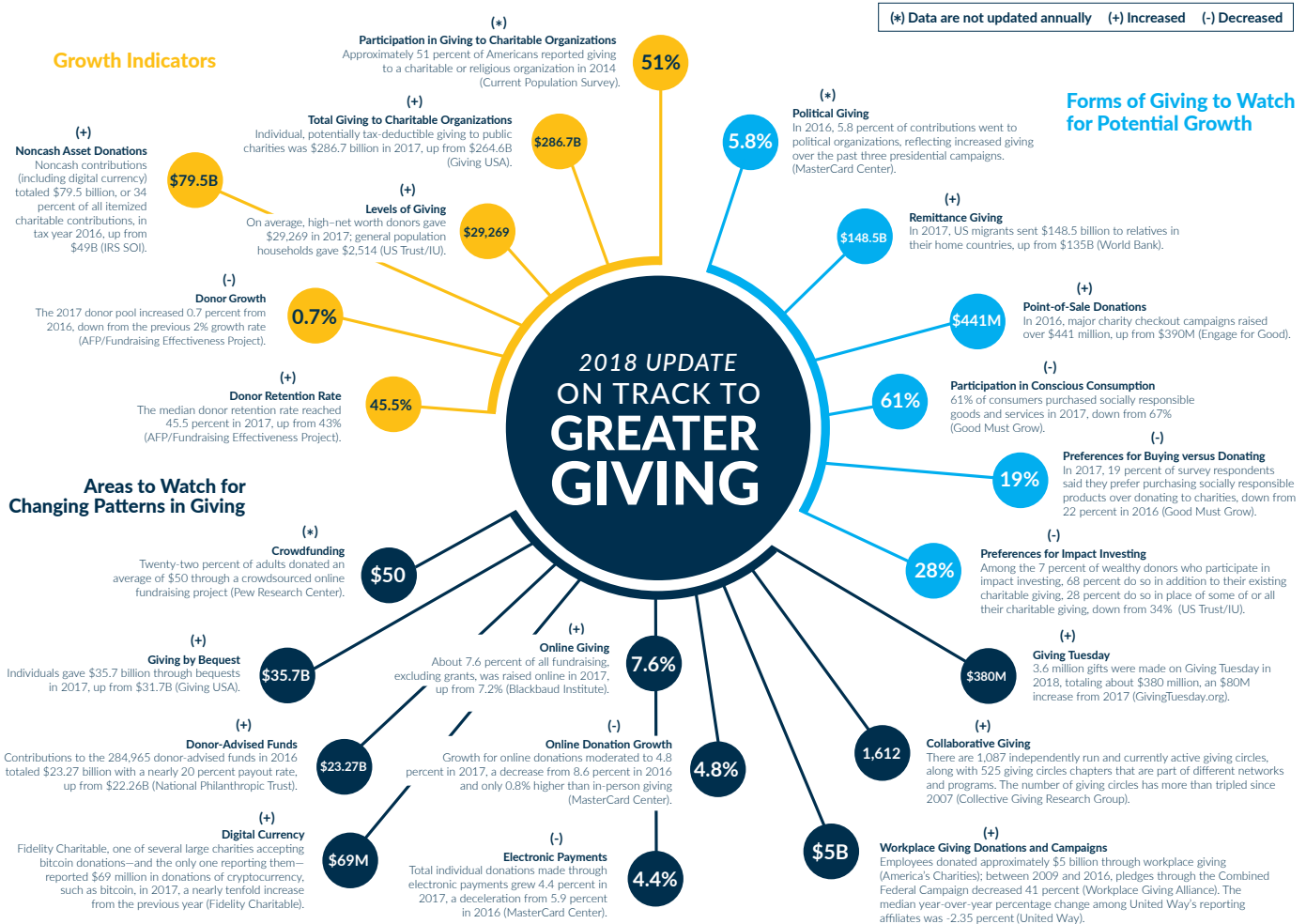
Midtown, Atlanta, Georgia

Polk County Steak Fry, Des Moines, Iowa



2018 UPDATE ON TRACK TO GREATER GIVING:

Urban Institute Diagram



This dashboard brings together selected core indicators to track some of the changing patterns in individual giving using the best data sources available.

This updated version shows both moderate and significant shifts and swings in the various charitable giving indicators since the original 2017 version. For details on the data sources see the 2017 On Track to Greater Giving dashboard at urban.org.



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