

UNDERSTANDING GIVING: MEN, WOMEN, AND CHARITY

A report of the Colorado Generosity Project

Introduction

In *Understanding Giving: Beliefs & Behaviors of Colorado's Donors*, we explored what, how, and why Coloradans give. The report was based on a wealth of research, most of which was conducted by Colorado Nonprofit Association in 2011 through a phone survey and focus groups around the state.

In this article, we'll look more deeply at what our research taught us about differences between men and women in perceptions of nonprofits and attitudes about giving.

Note: the research behind *Understanding Giving* includes a significant amount of data about donations – how much people give, how often, how many charities they support, and so on. The survey asked participants about the donations made by their *households*, rather than attempting to focus specifically on individual giving decisions. Therefore, this article does not include our findings about actual donations analyzed by gender. Instead, we've examined differences and similarities among men and women in the many factors we studied related to beliefs, reasons for giving (and not giving), and the types of interactions and messages that inspire people to give.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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



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Perceptions and Beliefs

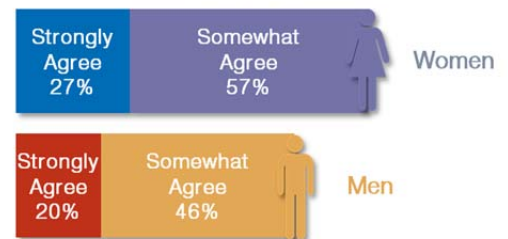
When asked about their general beliefs, women were more likely than men to agree with every positive statement about charities. They agree that “everyone should support charities in some way” (89% of women agreed with this statement, whereas only 81% of men agreed) and “the need for charities is greater now than five years ago” (84% of women and 78% of men).

By far, the largest difference in beliefs was with the statement: “most charities are honest and ethical in their use of donations.” 85% of women, but only 67% of men, agree.

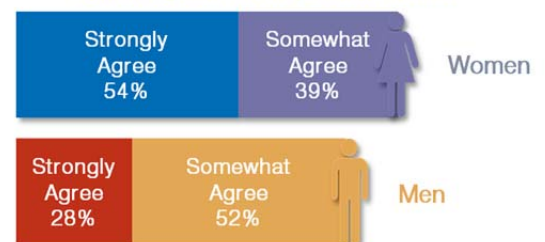
We also found some significant differences when we asked participants whether “charitable organizations play an important role in speaking out on important issues” (94% of women and 81% of men agree) and “as the state government’s budget shrinks, charities are needed to provide more services” (90% of women and 77% of men).

Men and women are nearly unanimous that “charitable organizations play a major role in making our communities better places to live,” with 97% of women and 95% of men agreeing.

Most charities are honest and ethical in their use of donations



Charitable organizations play an important role in speaking out on important issues



Reasons for Donating

We asked participants about their overall reasons for making donations – why they give. Both men and women cite “because it’s the right thing to do” as by far the most important reason they give; women place only slightly more importance on this factor. (It was ranked as important by 98% of women, compared with 94% of men.)

Women are much more likely than men to say they give because of religious beliefs (58% and 44%, respectively) and “because charities need support in the current economy” (87% and 75%, respectively).



Of the reasons we studied, one emerged as the least popular overall, but also the one favored most heavily by men compared with women: “because there are tax benefits to giving.” 44% of men, and just 33% of women, agree that this is an important reason to donate. (Interestingly, when we asked participants whether they itemize on their tax returns, we found that 1% of men and 9% of women are unsure.)

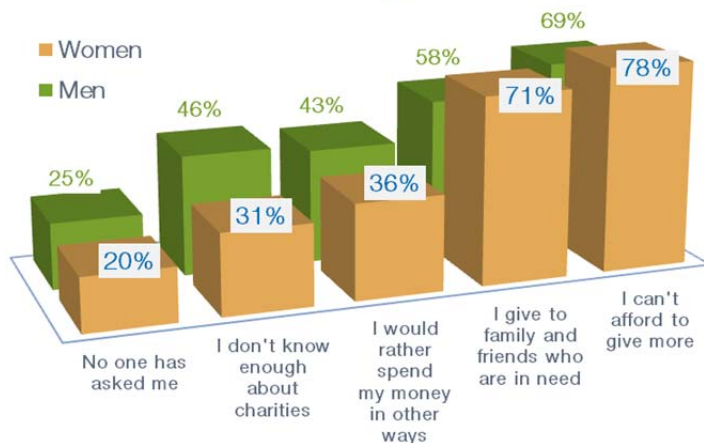
We found that men were slightly more likely than women to cite “because you received

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assistance yourself at some point and want to give back” as an important reason (42% of men, compared with 40% of women). The idea of giving back, however, seems to be a stronger motivator for women; 28% of women, and only 18% of men, say this factor is “very important.”

Important Reasons for Not Contributing More



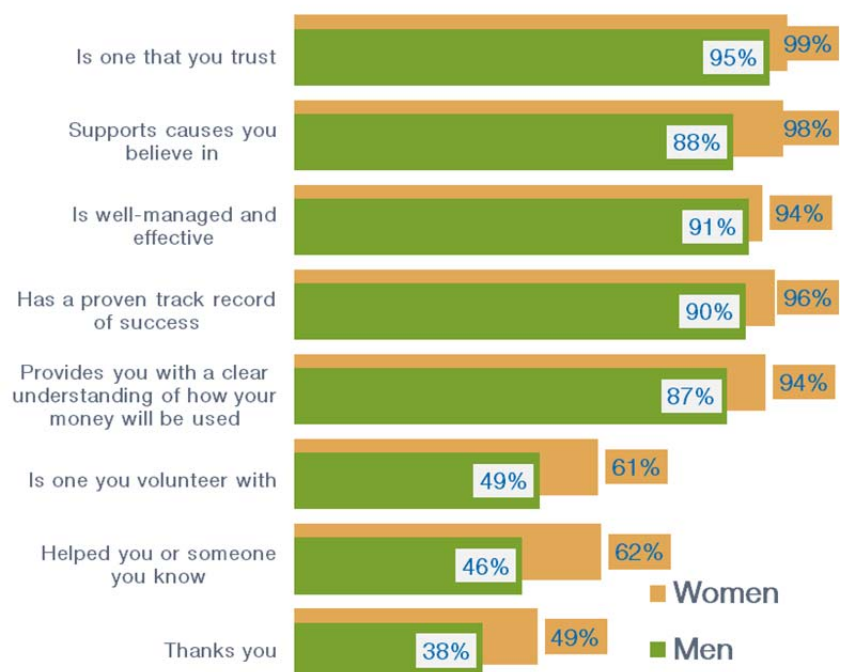
When asked about reasons they don't give more, both men and women agree that “I can't afford to give more” is the most important reason, although women are significantly more likely than men (78% vs. 69%) to say it's an important factor. “I give to family and friends who are in need” is another important factor for all participants, but particularly among women; 71%, compared with 58% of men, agreed.

Several reasons for not donating more were cited more often by men than by women. Men are just slightly more likely to agree that “no one has asked me to give” is a factor (25% of men vs. 20% of women), and they more often agreed that “I would rather spend my money in other ways” (43% vs. 36%). Most significantly, men say they don't give more because they “don't know enough about charities.” (46% of men, and just 31% of women, agreed.)

Deciding to Give

In this study, we looked at several different elements of the donor's process of choosing an organization to support. When asked about which general factors are important to them in deciding where to give, “the organization is one that I trust” was most often ranked as important by both men (95%) and women (99%). “The organization supports causes I believe in” emerged as the second most important factor among women (98%) and the fourth most important among men (88%). Three other factors emerged as the most important among both men and women: that the organization is well-managed and effective, has a proven track record of success, and provides a clear understanding of how money will be used. It's interesting to note that each of these factors relates to effectiveness and transparency.

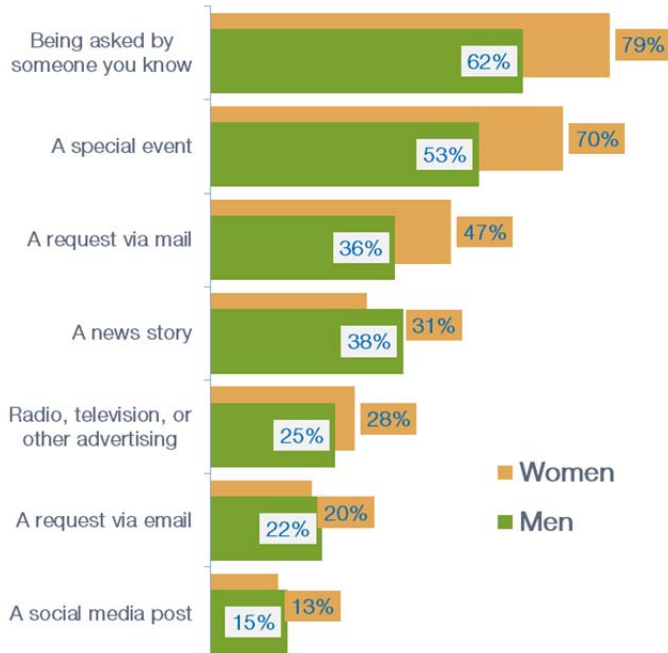
When choosing an organization to support, it is important that the organization...



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

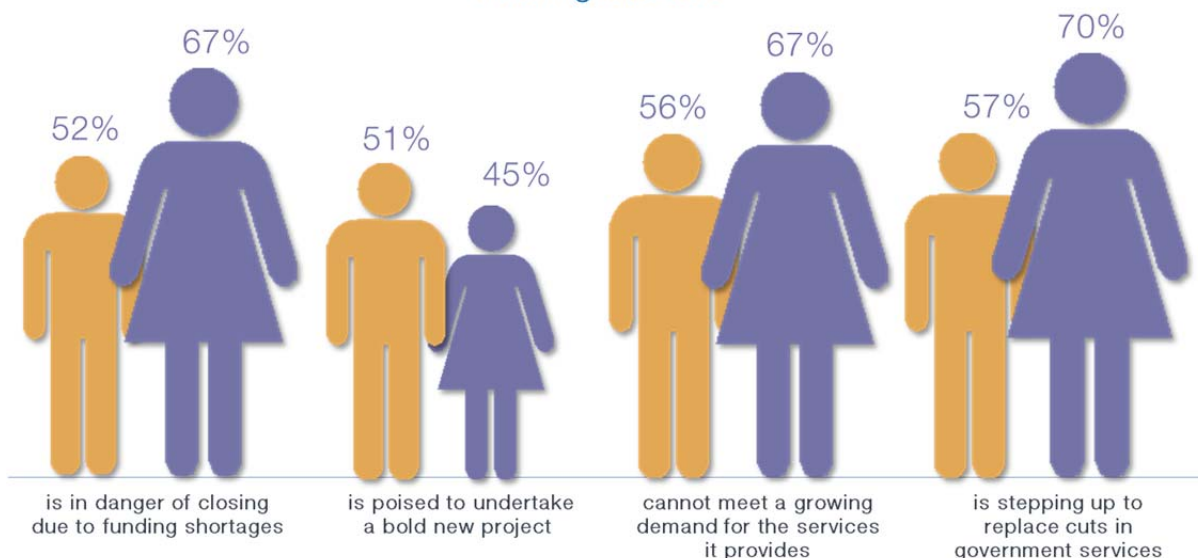


We also asked participants whether they had made a donation in the past 12 months as a result of prompts like mail or email solicitations, media or social media, and in-person requests. “Being asked by someone you know, such as family or friends” was the most popular, with 79% of women and 62% of men having made such a donation in the past year.

Women were more likely than men to make a donation in response to nearly every prompt we studied. The only notable exception was “a news story you heard or saw,” which had prompted donations from 38% of men and 31% of women. The two online prompts – “a request you received via email” and “a social media post” – were the least likely to inspire donations, but both marginally more popular among men.

Finally, we gave survey participants some general messages they might hear about a particular nonprofit, and asked them whether each one would make them more or less likely to support that organization. Continuing the theme we found throughout the survey, women responded more positively than men to nearly every message. The most striking difference arose with “you hear that an organization is in danger of closing due to funding shortages.” (67% of women said they’d be more likely to donate, compared with 52% of men.) “You hear that an organization is stepping up to replace cuts in government services” was also much more popular among women (70%) than men (57%). Men were more likely to say they’d give in response to just one message we studied: “you hear that an organization is poised to undertake a bold new project” (51%, compared with just 45% of women, said they would be more likely to give.)

Would you be more likely to support a particular organization upon hearing that it...



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Conclusion

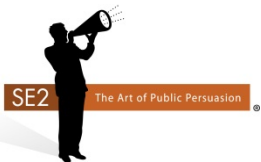
In our original report, *Understanding Giving: Beliefs & Behaviors of Colorado Donors*, we discussed the highly personal and emotional nature of giving. By learning more about donors – their individual perspectives, motivations, and lifestyles – we can tailor our messaging and outreach efforts, building a more personal conversation with each supporter.

About the Colorado Generosity Project

In 2007, the Colorado Nonprofit Association launched the Colorado Generosity Project, an initiative aimed at building expertise within and awareness of the state's charitable sector, with the ultimate goal of increasing Coloradans' generosity. Various data sets have shown that Colorado lags behind other states in terms of giving. When compared to other states, Coloradans have relatively high incomes but do not support nonprofits as strongly. The Generosity Project seeks to increase the rate and total amount of giving to Colorado's nonprofits by:

1. conducting research about giving trends in Colorado;
2. helping nonprofits fundraise more effectively through technical assistance and training; and
3. teaching the public about the value of giving to charitable organizations.

Acknowledgements



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



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About Us

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

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

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

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



Colorado
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Association

Serving nonprofits. Strengthening communities.