

# RED & BLUE . . . GIVING GREEN

## GENEROSITY AND POLITICAL AFFILIATION IN COLORADO

*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.

Based on that research, we've released several articles taking a deeper look at how generosity varies among men and women, among different age groups, and among people of different income levels. In this article, we'll explore generosity and political affiliation. This analysis revealed some remarkably wide gaps between Democrats and Republicans, as well as some surprising similarities.

*The phone survey asked respondents what political party most closely matched their views; options included Republican, Democrat, Constitution/American Constitution, Green, Libertarian, Tea Party, unaffiliated/independent, and other. This article focuses specifically on our findings for phone survey respondents who identified as Democrat or Republican.*

### Report Sponsor



### Colorado Generosity Project Sponsors



### For More Information

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



### Donations: by the Numbers

Other studies have found, fairly consistently, that Republicans donate more to charity than Democrats. While our research does not attempt to answer the question “who gives more?” we did find that Republicans reported higher total annual donations than Democrats. Of the people we surveyed, 40% of registered Republicans and just 29% of Democrats **had donated \$1,000 or more in the past year.**

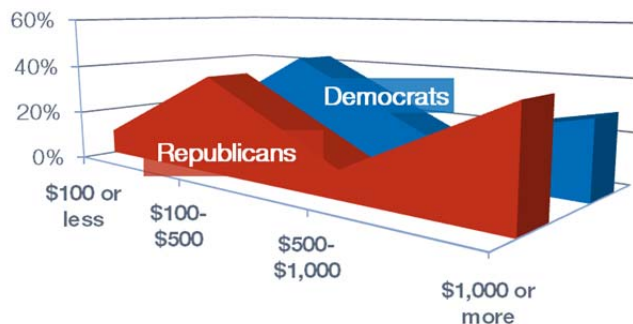
Interestingly, when we asked about the value of a respondent’s *most recent donation*, we find the opposite effect: Democrats (20%) were more than twice as likely as Republicans (9%) to report that **their most recent donation was \$500 or more.**

We also found that, in general, **Democrats support more organizations.** 30% of Democrats, compared with 14% of Republicans, say they supported 10 or more different nonprofits in the past year.

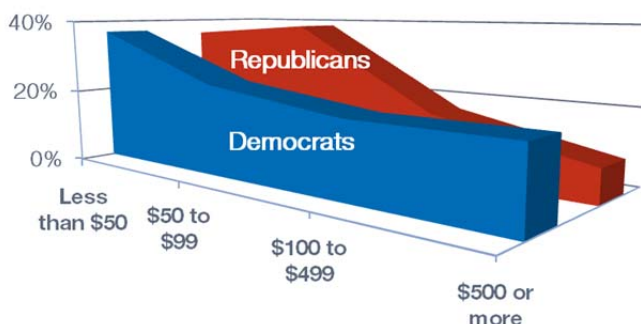
There seems to be a contradiction here: how can it be that Democrats make larger one-time gifts, and support more different nonprofits, but Republicans donate more overall? Unfortunately, our research doesn’t offer any additional insight, but one possible explanation is that Republicans are more likely to make regular or repeated gifts, such as monthly contributions, to a specific set of nonprofits throughout the year.

We found a remarkable 17% difference when we asked respondents what would have happened if they had not made their most recent donation – specifically, whether that donation would have gone to another organization instead (or whether they’d have made no donation at all). 72% of Democrats, and just 55% of Republicans, said their **most recent donation would have gone to another organization instead.** This suggests a higher level of loyalty among Republicans to the specific nonprofits they support.

Total Donations in 12 Months

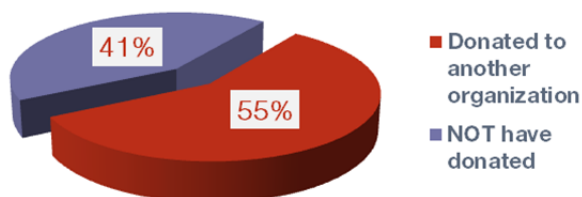


Value of Most Recent Donation



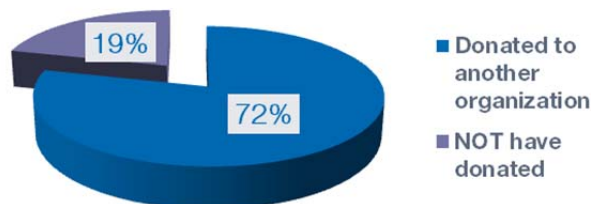
#### Republicans

If you had not made your most recent donation, would you have...?



#### Democrats

If you had not made your most recent donation, would you have...?



### Donations: How They Happen

We studied a range of *giving prompts* – various factors or events that inspire people to make donations – and asked respondents whether they’d made a gift in response to these giving prompts over the past year. While we did find some key differences between Democrats and Republicans, three prompts emerged as the most popular, regardless of political affiliation.

Top 3 Giving Prompts: Democrats

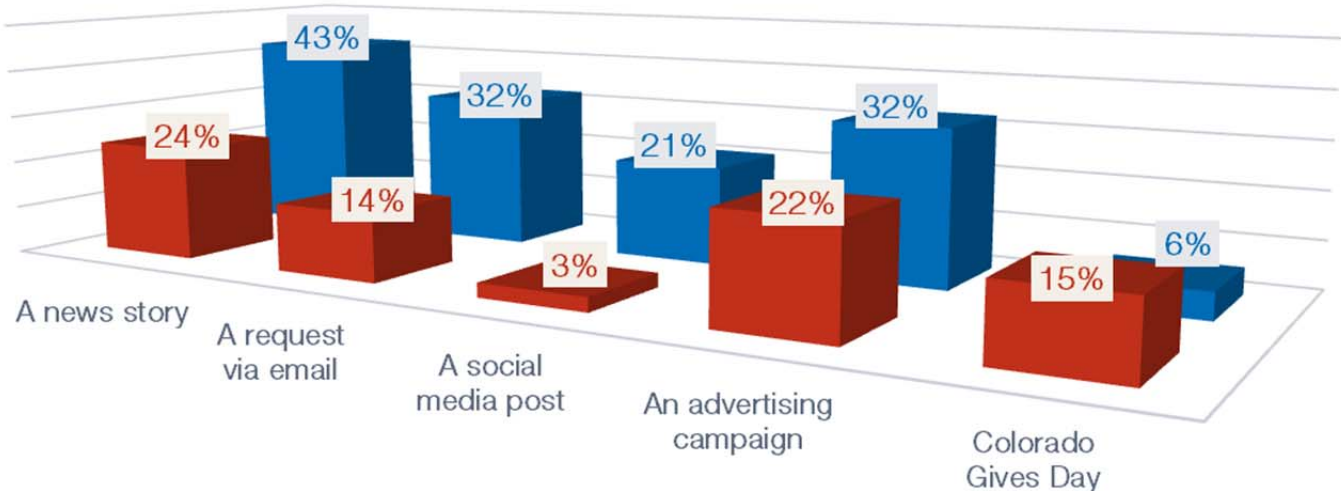


Top 3 Giving Prompts: Republicans



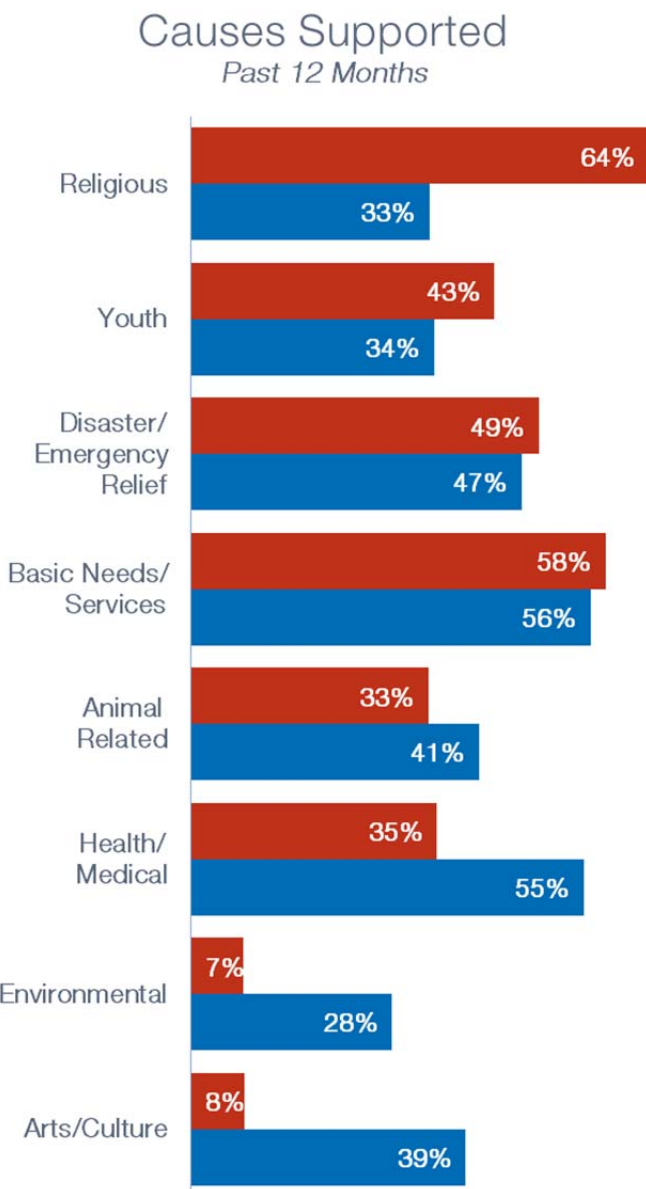
### Giving Prompts: Key Differences

*In the past 12 months, have you given as a result of...?*



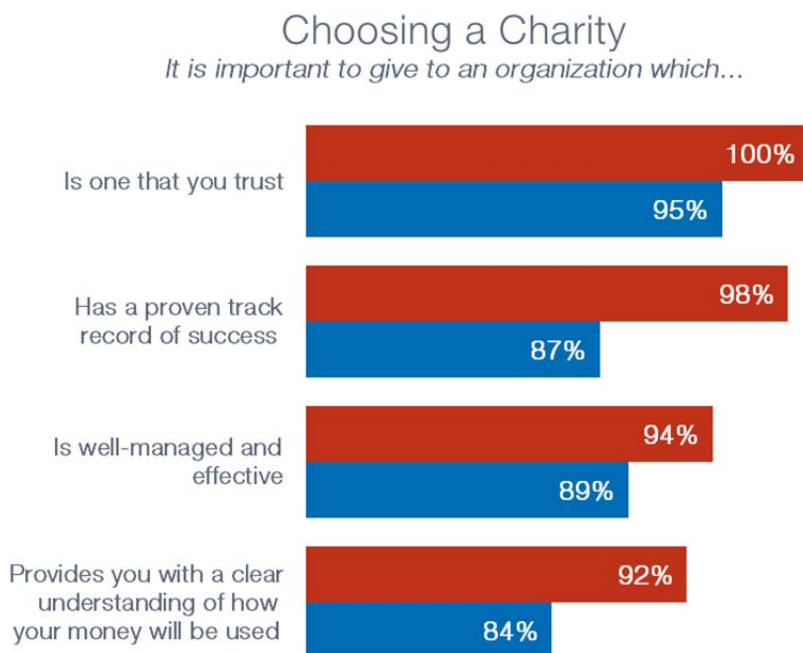
### Donations: Where They Go

Of all the topics we asked about in this survey, the questions about *types of causes supported* generated some of the largest differences between Democrats and Republicans. **While Republicans' support of religious organizations** (by a 31% margin in our research) is a well-known trend, we were surprised to see a similar margin in **Democrats' support of arts and culture organizations** (also by 31%). The differences between Democrats and Republicans are minor – less than this study's margin of error – in support of **disaster and emergency relief**, as well as **charities that support basic needs and services**.

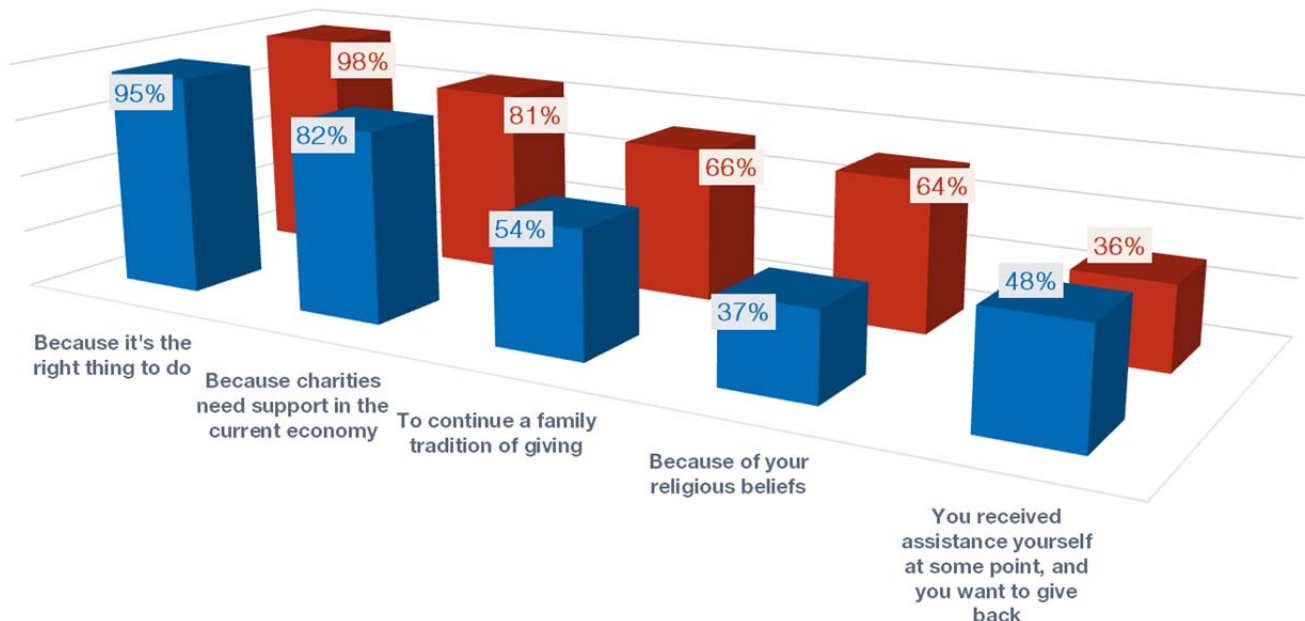


When making a gift, donors don't just choose a cause; they also choose a nonprofit which supports that cause. How people choose one nonprofit over another was one of the key issues we set out to investigate.

We asked people to rate the importance of ten different factors. For *nearly every factor we studied*, Republicans were more likely than Democrats to say it is an important factor in their decision. This suggests that Republicans are more careful in their choice of organizations to support – a finding which fits well with the conclusion (on page 2) that, once they make that choice, they tend toward a higher level of loyalty to the nonprofits they support.

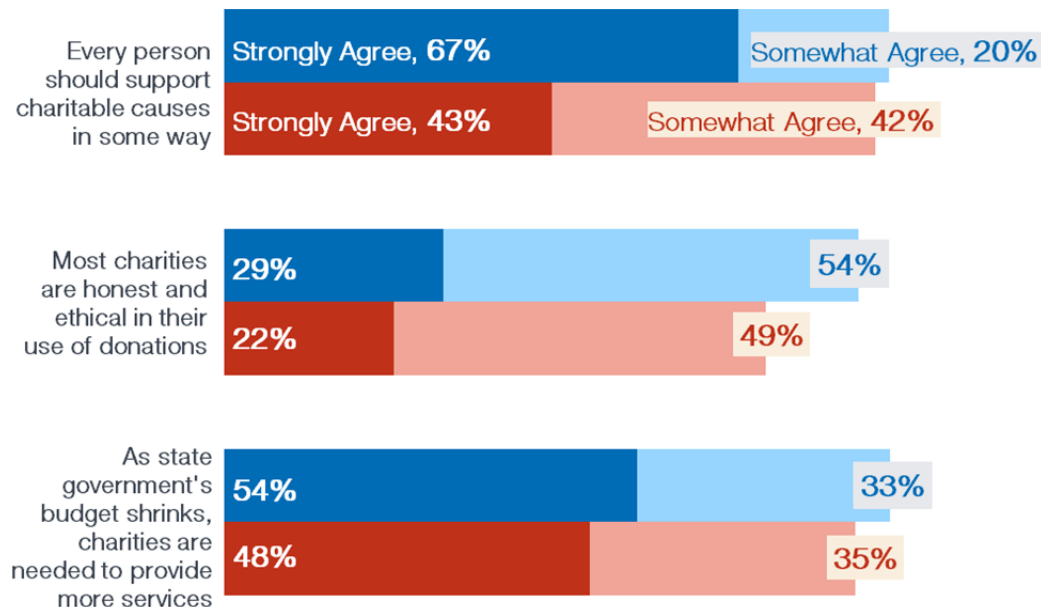


### Values: Why People Give



In our research, we investigated not only *how* people give, but *why* they give. When we looked at their responses and their political affiliation, we found some familiar results: although there are key differences between Democrats and Republicans on this question, there's a remarkable level of agreement on the most popular responses. Overwhelmingly, Democrats and Republicans agree that they give **"because it's the right thing to do"** and **"because charities need support in the current economy."**

Once again, Democrats and Republicans are nearly unanimous in some of their beliefs about nonprofits and charities in general; 85% of Republicans and 87% of Democrats agree that **"every person should support charitable causes in some way."**



A relatively small gap (just 9% overall) appears between Democrats and Republicans on the issue of whether **"most charities are honest and ethical in their use of donations,"** with Republicans (71%) more skeptical than Democrats (83%).

## Changing Minds: Messages and Giving

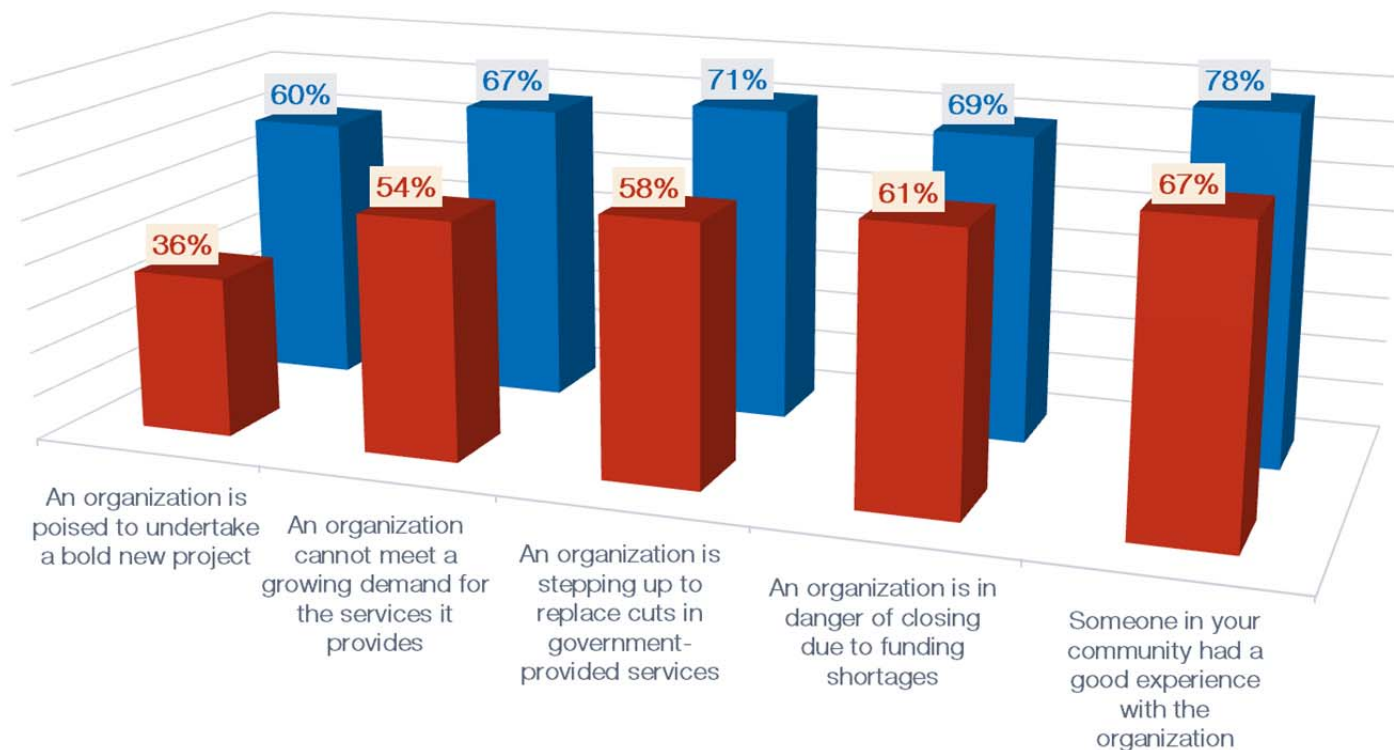
We've looked at what prompts people to make a donation, the types of causes they contribute to, the qualities they look for (such as trustworthiness or effectiveness), and the beliefs they hold about giving. Next we wanted to find out: what changes a potential supporter into a donor? What inspires someone to make a gift *right now*?

To answer this question, we gave survey participants several hypothetical messages, and asked them whether each situation would make them more or less likely to donate. Although these messages represent only a few situations a nonprofit may face, we hope the results can help organizations connect with people who are most likely to support their work. For instance, a nonprofit "poised to undertake a bold new project" may want to keep in mind that only 36% of Republicans respond positively to this situation – and another 34% of Republicans would actually be *less* likely to give.

Fortunately for nonprofits, the most popular message among both Democrats and Republicans is the one message here that any nonprofit can use, regardless of their situation: "you hear that someone in your community had a good experience with the organization." It's an important reminder for nonprofits that, to reach new supporters and build new relationships, our best ambassadors are our donors, our volunteers, and the people we serve.

### Events, Situations, and Messages

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



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### About the Colorado Generosity Project

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

### Acknowledgements



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



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### About Us

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

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

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

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

