



# Understanding Donors' Motivations

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# Executive Summary

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The intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for charitable giving can vary from donor to donor. Nevertheless, understanding donor motivations can lead to fundraising strategies that more effectively target and retain donors (Sargeant & Woodliffe, 2007). To this end, we explore donors' self-reported motivations for giving, looking particularly at variations by region of the country, levels of household income and donors' educational level.

In this study, we utilize data from the Knowledge Networks (KN) *2007 Charity Survey* (n=10,000). The *Charity Survey* asked respondents to report their charitable gifts for 2006, and to identify statements that correspond with their motivations for giving. The survey was conducted using a nationwide online panel that is representative of the entire U.S. population. In this report, we categorized the data into seven regions across the U.S.: Northeast, Great Lakes, Midwest/Plains, South Atlantic, South, Mountain, and Pacific.

## Overall Findings

When looking only at regional variations in motivations (without controlling for other factors) we found differences in the selection of motivations for giving by region. However, after controlling for other factors such as age, race, and marital status, only income and education were statistically significant predictors of the probability of selecting a particular motivation. This means that the regional differences found before controls actually reflect different population traits within a region, especially income and education level.

## Key Findings by Motivation

### *Providing for People's Basic Needs and Helping the Poor Help Themselves as a Motivation*

- Providing for the poor's "basic needs" such as food and shelter was the most frequently reported motivation for giving for every region except the Midwest (Plains states).
- Donors in the Great Lakes were significantly more likely to select "basic needs" than were those living in other regions.
- Helping the "poor help themselves" was the second most frequently cited motivation by donors from the South, South Atlantic, and Great Lakes. The South had the highest percentage of donors who reported this factor as a motivation.
- Before looking at other factors associated with giving, people who selected "basic needs" as their most important motivation for giving tended to give a lower average amount to charity than did donors who selected other motivations. This is particularly true of those living in the Northeast and Mountain regions of the U.S.

### ***Income differences***

- Higher income donors, those with annual income greater than \$100,000, were significantly less likely to report “basic needs” or helping the “poor help themselves” as a motivation for giving, even after controlling for other factors such as age, education, and marital status.
- Lower income donors, those with an annual income less than \$50,000, were more likely to report “basic needs” and helping the “poor help themselves” as a motivation for their giving.

### ***Educational level differences***

- Providing for the poor’s “basic needs” and helping the “poor help themselves” were the most frequently reported motivations by donors with a high school education or less, 49 percent and 43 percent, respectively.
- Donors with at least some college education were significantly less likely than those without any college experience to select “basic needs” and “poor help themselves” as a motivation for giving, even after controlling for other factors such as age, race, marital status, and household annual income.

### ***Make Community Better***

- Being motivated to “make community better” was the third most frequently reported motivation for giving. It was particularly important in the Midwest (42.4 percent).

### ***Income differences***

- Higher income donors (38.8 percent) were more likely than lower income donors (34.2 percent) to report “make community better” as an important motivation for giving, a statistically significant difference.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Educational level differences***

- Donors with college degrees (41.4 percent) were significantly more likely than other donors to select “make community better” as a motivation for giving.

### ***Concerns for Equity***

- Concerns about “equity,” in other words, a feeling that those with more should help those with less, was the fifth top motivation for giving cited.
- When donors in the Northeast and Midwest reported “for equity” as their top motivation for giving, they gave more, on average, to charity (\$1,637 & \$1,944, respectively),

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<sup>1</sup> A statistically significant difference means that the difference between groups is unlikely to have occurred by chance, but it does not represent the size of the difference. A difference between groups can be statistically significant even if it is small.

compared to the average amounts donors in the same regions gave when they chose other motivations.

### *Income differences*

- Middle-income donors, those with an annual income between \$50,000 and \$100,000, gave large average amounts to charity (\$1,929) when they reported concerns “for equity” as their top motivation for giving.
- Higher income donors were more likely to cite “for equity” as a motivation for their giving than lower income donors (34.1 percent versus 26.6 percent), a statistically significant difference.

### *Educational level differences*

- Donors with college degrees or above were significantly more likely to report a concern about “for equity” than those without college education, after controlling for other factors.

### *Make World Better*

- Consistent across all regions, donors motivated by “making the world a better place to live” gave a larger average amount to charity than did those who reported “basic needs” as a motivation for their giving.

### *Income differences*

- Concern for “making the world a better place to live” was the second most cited motivation for giving by higher income donors (36.5 percent).
- Middle-income donors (37.5 percent) were more likely than those at other income levels to report this need as a motivation for giving, a statistically significant difference.

### *Educational level differences*

- When examining the single most important motivation, “making the world better a better place to live” was the top motivation for donors with at least some college education, and also ranked as the second most frequent motivation among those without college education.
- Donors with postgraduate education were significantly more likely than those with high school education or less to cite being motivated by “making the world better a better place to live,” even after controlling for other factors.

### *Building Ties across Community and Diversity*

- Giving for “diversity” reasons and to build “ties across the community” were the least frequently cited motivations for giving.
- Often, when people reported these as their top motivation for giving, they had lower average giving amounts to charity. For example, lower-income donors gave \$675, on average, and higher income donors gave \$2,715, on average, when citing “diversity” as a motivation. Still, there are some exceptions.
  - When people in the South reported building “ties across the community” as their most important motivation for giving, they gave an average of \$2,611 to charity, their second largest average amount given.
  - When people in the Great Lakes reported “diversity” as their top motivation for giving, they also gave a large amount (\$1,514), on average, compared to the average amount donors in the same region gave when they chose other motivational factors as the most important one.
  - When lower income donors selected “ties across communities,” rather than diversity, as a motivation for their giving, they gave \$1,182 on average, their second largest average amount donated.
  - When donors with a high school education or less cited being motivated by “ties across communities,” they gave an average total of \$1,345 to charity. This is an infrequent motivation, yet in this educational group, people who selected it gave far more, on average, than people identifying other motivations for giving.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

- This report suggests that the regional differences observed in practice reflect income and educational level differences, rather than different attitudes about giving based on region of residence.
- When approaching people with an income of less than \$100,000, or those with high school education or less, emphasize how your organization helps people meet their basic needs or helps people help themselves.
- When approaching prospective donors with income of \$100,000 or more, or those with a college degree or above:
  - Emphasize how their gift helps them help those with less (for equity). This theme of responsibility to help others was especially noticeable in the Northeast and the Midwest. Also donors who held this as a motivation for giving gave more on average.
  - Demonstrate how your organization can “help make the world a better place” or, if more appropriate, help make the community better. These are reasons more often expressed by higher-income or more educated households.

# Introduction

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Researchers have produced a large body of work examining how Americans make charitable contributions to nonprofit organizations since de Tocqueville first explored the American approach to social welfare provision in *Democracy in America* (Andreoni, Brown, & Rischall, 2001; Havens, O’Herlihy, & Schervish, 2006; Mesch, Rooney, Steinberg, & Benton, 2006; O’Neil, 2001; Steinberg & Wilhelm, 2003). According to the Center on Philanthropy Panel Study (COPPS), 72 percent of U.S. households donated an average of \$2,047 to nonprofit organizations in 2004. Individuals make up the bulk of all philanthropy in America, giving approximately \$229.28 billion in 2008, according to *Giving USA 2009*. From previous studies, we know that whether or not people give and how much they give vary by demographics and socioeconomic factors such as gender, age, education, religiosity, income, wealth, volunteering, and others (Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, 2009; Havens et al., 2006; Mesch et al., 2006; Andreoni et al., 2001; Independent Sector, 2001; Gittel & Tebaldi, 1998).

Although economists, psychologists, sociologists, and other researchers have identified many motivations for giving, including a variety of predictors, such as tax implications, altruism, and others, the models and theories of the motives for donating have proven insufficient (Vesterlund, 2006; Van Slyke & Brooks, 2005; Burnett & Wood, 1988).

Particularly, researchers have rarely explored the differences in motivations for giving by region, even though the research generally indicates people in the Western states who give contribute a larger share of their income than do donors from other U.S. regions (Gittel & Tebaldi, 2006; Anft & Lipman, 2003; Schneider, 1996). In addition, a few have suggested that households are discouraged from charitable giving when they are short of money or time (Sargeant & Woodliffe, 2007; Riecken, Babakus, & Yavas, 1995; Steffey & Jones, 1988), but the findings vary.

More recently, researchers have looked at motivations for giving by higher income households (Schervish & Havens 2001, Bank of America Study of High Net Worth Philanthropy 2008), but these studies concentrate solely on high net worth households, those with incomes of greater than \$200,000 or assets in excess of \$1,000,000, as opposed to contrasting motivational patterns across the income or wealth spectrum.

Motivations for giving are complex, often resulting from a mix of both intrinsic and extrinsic concerns. Understanding a variety of motivations for giving is important because understanding people’s motivations leads to fundraising strategies that are more efficient at targeting and retaining donors (Sargeant & Woodliffe, 2007). By understanding factors involved in motivating diverse groups of potential donors, including regions of the country, income and educational levels, fundraisers can more effectively tailor their messaging for specific target groups.

This paper utilizes data from the Knowledge Networks’ *2007 Charity Survey*, which includes information on what people reported as motivations for charitable giving, and allows a comparison to be made of the differences in these motivations for giving by region, income and education in the U.S. This dataset also allows cross-tabulations using chi-square statistical testing

between groups to be tabulated. Regression analyses are conducted in order to understand the predictors for donor motivation by region, by income level, and by educational level.

In the following sections, we first review the background literature on the topic of motivations for giving and then discuss the methodology of the paper. Within the findings section we first explore donors' motivations overall, then by region of the country, and finally by income and education. All data tables are included in the Appendix.

# Literature Review

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## Regional Differences in Charitable Giving and Helping Behaviors

Prior literature has confirmed that there are differences in charitable giving levels by region (Havens & Schervish, 2007, 2005; Anft & Lipman, 2003; Wolpert, 1995). Wolpert (1995) states, “place and context matter in donor behavior. Places themselves have distinctive and enduring cultures of giving, differences in levels of need and distress, patterns of taste and demand for nonprofit and public sector services, and an idiosyncratic evolution of nonprofit institutions” (Wolpert, 1995: 11). By examining data from the 1970s and 1980s collected from United Way and other fundraising campaigns in the 85 largest metropolitan areas (located in 36 states), Wolpert found that generosity varies significantly by different regions in both level and the targeting of charitable donations.

Based on the 2003 Center on Philanthropy Panel Study (COPPS), a module of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) data, Havens and Schervish (2007) reported that the overall giving participation rate in New England was the highest at 84.6 percent. The giving participation rates in East North Central (Great Lakes states from Ohio west to Wisconsin) and West South Central (Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas) were the lowest at 63.8 percent and 65.8 percent, respectively.

- When looking at the average amount of total giving, residents of the West North Central region (Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota) gave the most, \$1,544 on average, to charity, followed by those living in the Pacific region. Residents of the Middle Atlantic (New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania) and East North Central regions gave the lowest on average, \$1,009 and \$1,034, respectively.
- In terms of the average percentage of income donated, residents living in the Mountain region gave nearly 4 percent of their income to charity, whereas those living in New England and the Middle Atlantic gave 1.8 percent and 1.7 percent of their income, respectively. Furthermore, among all nine Census divisions across the country, New England is the only region where residents gave more to secular causes than to religious causes, in terms of both the average amount given and the percentage of income given.

Previous studies have also examined the regional differences in helping behaviors. By examining a cross sample of 36 small, medium, and large cities across the U.S., Levine and colleagues (1994) studied six types of helping behaviors, including picking up a dropped pen, offering help to a person with a hurt leg, giving a person change for a quarter, helping a blind person cross the street, forwarding a lost letter, and United Way contributions. They found that the South ranked the highest overall in helping behaviors, followed by the Midwest (which combines the Great Lakes states and the Plains states), while the Northeast and the West ranked the lowest. However, in a recent study Levine et al. (2008) reexamined three of the six helping measures (including dropped pen, hurt leg, and asking for change) by using recent data from a sample of 24 small, medium, and large cities across the U.S. They found no significant regional differences in helping behaviors across these cities.

Moreover, charitable giving was found to be more likely in individualistic states, where core cultural values of individualism are more prevalent, such as self-actualization, individual achievement, and personal autonomy (Kimmelmeier, Jambor, & Letner, 2006). This suggests a positive relationship between individualism and level of charitable giving. Kimmelmeier et al. found that the effect of cultural individualism on giving tended to be larger for causes that were compatible with core values of individualism (such as arts and culture, education, youth development, and work-related causes). The effect was smaller for those causes that did not incorporate individualist values and concerns (such as religious, environment, health, human services, public/society benefit, and international causes).

In addition, by analyzing data from the *Midlife in the United States Survey*, Plaut, Markus, and Lachman (2002) investigated two measures of social responsibility for different regions, including civic obligation and a self-rating of respondents' contributions to others' welfare and well-being. In terms of contributions to others' well-being, the East South Central region (Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee) scored the highest, followed by the Mountain region, while the West North Central region (seven plains states from Minnesota south to Missouri and from North Dakota south to Kansas) scored the lowest on this measure.

In summary, earlier research has found differences by region in the amounts given and for some types of "helping behaviors" that might signal motivations or attitudes toward generosity. However, these studies did not necessarily take into account differences within households that could account for the differences found within regions. For example, much work has shown that charitable giving is associated with frequency of religious attendance, education level, income level, and other factors.

### **Differences in Motivating Factors for Charitable Giving by Region**

Every region has a unique cultural heritage and tradition, contributing variations in people's attitudes, values, and beliefs (Guagnano & Markee, 1995). Previous studies have examined regional differences in these factors, some of which are also associated with motivations for charitable giving. There is a noticeable gap, however, in the literature on the regional differences in motivations for charitable giving.

Smith (2006) found that differences in altruism and empathy by region existed, but they were scattered and modest in size. He found that the South Atlantic region tended to rank higher on altruistic love, behavior, and values as well as empathy than other regions.

A higher level of general trust is associated with more confidence in charitable organizations and charitable giving. By examining the 1992 and 1996 editions of the *American National Election Study* as well as the 1996 edition of the *Giving and Volunteering Survey* conducted by *Independent Sector*, Uslander (1999) found that people holding generally higher levels of social trust were more likely to donate to charity and especially to donate their time. Similarly, Bekkers and Bowman (2008) examined data from Giving in the Netherlands Panel Study (GINPS) longitudinal panel data from the Netherlands, and concluded that generalized social trust and altruistic values were key determinants of confidence in charitable organizations and volunteering. People who are more trusting and believe in altruistic values are more likely to have confidence in charitable organizations and to start volunteering. To the extent that levels of general social trust vary by region, charitable giving might also vary.

Prior studies suggested that people in southern states might have lower levels of general social trust because they are more “collectivist” than other regions. Collectivism, contrary to individualism, is regarded as “a social pattern of closely linked individuals who define themselves as interdependent members of a collective” (such as family or coworkers) (Vandello & Cohen, 1999: 279). Collectivism leads to a lower level of trust in people outside the collective and a lower level of helping behaviors aimed at those not part of the collective. Vandello and Cohen found the Deep South (such as Georgia and Tennessee) was significantly more collectivist than the Midwest/Plains region and Great Lakes states (such as Michigan, Indiana, and Illinois), and the Northeast. In contrast, the Mountain, West, and Midwest/Great Plains regions were significantly more individualist than all other regions.

### **Differences in Motivating Factors for Charitable Giving by Income**

There is little prior research on the differences in motivations for charitable giving by income. Based on data from the English National Opera, a registered arts charity in the UK, Buraschi and Cornelli (2002) found that the income level of donors seemed to affect the relative importance of two motivations for their charitable giving. These motivations were to fund a public good (i.e. to support the production of new operas) and to have access to a private good (i.e. to obtain fringe benefits). Those with high incomes were more likely to donate for the public good motive, whereas those with low incomes were more likely to donate to obtain fringe benefits, i.e. obtaining the access to a private good, due to the constraint of their budget. The *2008 Bank of America Study of High Net Worth Philanthropy* also found high-net worth households were more likely to self-report more altruistic motivations for giving, while obtaining public recognition and benefits (e.g., tickets, gifts) were rated very low.

Several studies examined the income differences by a few factors related to motivations, such as altruism, trust, and responsibility. The degree of altruism varies by income level. Andreoni’s study (1990) suggests that people become less altruistic as income rises from 0 to \$100,000, and then get more altruistic as income increases above \$100,000 (adjusted to pre-1976 dollars).

# Hypotheses Tested

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Based on the research studies to date, this report tests the following assumptions:

1. Motivations for giving to charity vary by region.
  - People from southern states are more likely to focus on “collectivist” values and motivations such as helping those most like one’s self, or helping groups to which one belongs (e.g., a congregation). So, Southerners may give less often from a desire to help strangers than others, on average. Although some studies show that Southerners give more dollars, on average, they typically give at a high level to religion which may indicate regional differences in their motivations for giving.
  - People from “individualistic” states (Midwest/Great Plains, Mountain, and Western states) are more likely to emphasize giving for reasons related to personal or individual interests. They may be less likely, perhaps, to “give to help the poor” or “give to provide others an opportunity you had.”
  
2. Motivations for giving to charity vary by income.
  - Higher income people (with an annual income of over \$100,000) frame motivations for giving in terms of altruism and benefiting society at large. In this study, higher income donors may be more likely to report motivations for giving such as “improve my community,” and “address problems in the world”.
  - Lower income people (with an annual income of below \$50,000) frame motivations for giving in terms that provide a context for giving despite budget constraints. Their motivations may be more focused towards helping those in dire need or receiving direct benefits from giving.

# Methodology

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## Data

The information on motivations for giving was examined using data collected in the *2007 Charity Survey* conducted by Knowledge Networks.

- *Charity Survey* by Knowledge Networks (KN)
  - Knowledge Networks conducted a *Charity Survey*, fielding it in 2007.
  - The *Charity Survey* asked respondents to report their charitable gifts for 2006, including information about motivations for giving.
  - The survey was conducted using a nationwide online panel that is representative of the entire U.S. population. Panel members answer, on average, three surveys a month and are familiar with the survey methods. Households without Internet access receive equipment allowing them to access surveys using their television. These steps ensure the representativeness of the panel.
  - For any one survey fielded to the Knowledge Networks panel members, there is a high response rate, 65 to 75 percent, which provides high-quality results.
  - The total number of respondents in the *Charity Survey* was 10,003.

We categorized the Knowledge Networks data into seven regions across the U.S.:

- Northeast Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont
- Great Lakes Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin
- Midwest/Plains Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota
- South Atlantic Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia
- South Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas
- Mountain Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming
- Pacific Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington

These follow the regional definitions of the U.S. Census Bureau with the exception of the Northeast, which combined two U.S. Census regions: New England and Mid-Atlantic; and the South, which combines two U.S. Census regions: East South Central and West South Central.

The *Charity Survey* asked respondents to identify statements that correspond with their motivations for giving. It first asked each respondent to report which three of the 13 statements were most important to them in their goals for charitable giving. Then from those three, the respondents selected ONE that was the most important to them in deciding to whom and how much to give to charity. Statements were presented in a random order to each participant. Table 1 details the motivation questions asked in the *Charity Survey*.

**Table 1**  
**The Motivation Questions in Knowledge Networks**

| Key words of Motivation    | Survey question: Which THREE of the following are most important to you in deciding to whom and how much to give. |
|----------------------------|---|
| Basic needs                | Providing for basic needs of the poor   |
| Poor help themselves       | Giving the poor a way to help themselves  |
| Same opportunity           | Giving others the opportunity that you had  |
| For equity                 | Feeling that those who have more should help those with less  |
| Problems in world          | Need to address fundamental problems in our world   |
| Services govt. can't/won't | Need to provide services the govt. can't or won't   |
| Make community better      | Desire to make my community a better place to live  |
| Support friends & family   | Supporting positive efforts of friends, colleagues, or family   |
| Make world better          | Desire to make the world a better place to live   |
| Own decision about money   | Make decisions on where my money goes, rather than letting the govt. decide                                       |
| Diversity                  | Ensuring a place for people's differences in ideals, beliefs, and cultures  |
| Ties across communities    | Interest in building ties across communities  |
| Other                      | Other reason  |

Then respondents were asked, “Which of these would you say is the single most important reason you give what you do?”

### Analysis Methods

Chi-squared statistical analysis was used to test for differences between groups in addition to Probit regression analysis. Probit regressions allowed for testing of the hypothesis that region and income were important characteristics when understanding differences in donor motivation. Our Probit regression models tested region, income, and education on the probability of being motivated by each of the top five motivations from the Knowledge Network dataset, while controlling for other human and social capital variables such as demographics, socioeconomic status, and religiosity. Marginal effects and standard errors from our five Probit regression models are presented in the Appendix Table A4.

### Limitations of Data

Some of the findings provide significant insight into differences in donors’ motivations for giving by region of the U.S., by income level, and by educational level; however, the limitations of this study may affect the estimation of these differences.

Like many attempts to study motivations, this study relies on self-reporting by donors. Several considerations would seem to raise doubt about the reliability of self-reporting, for donor motivations in particular. For example, respondents may misinterpret the question or the respondent may be unaware of his or her subconscious motivations for giving.

Further, motivations questions were asked of all charitable giving, but respondents may have different motivations depending on the particular gift. For example, they may be religiously motivated to give to their church, but seek to make their community better when they give to the United Way.

Another limitation is that the study only examines certain donor motivations provided in the survey question. Not all possible motivations for giving were in the Knowledge Networks' *2007 Charity Survey*. For instance, giving back to society or being asked to give by a friend could be motivating factors for giving as well. In recent years, some theoretical and empirical work about motivations for giving has emerged, and the KN *Charity Survey* did not incorporate these models.

# Overall Motivations

## Overall Ranking of Donor Motivations

The overall ranking of donor motivations is examined first. Table 2 shows the motivations for giving reported by donors in the survey. Key findings include:

- Providing for “basic needs” of the poor (i.e., food & shelter) was a motivation for giving by 43 percent of respondents, ranking the highest among all motivations given.
- 36.7 percent of respondents reported being motivated to donate to charity by the desire to help the “poor help themselves” and to “make the community better,” while 35.4 percent of respondents were motivated to “make the world better.”
- “For equity” (having a responsibility to help those with less) was the fifth highest ranked motivation for giving (27.9 percent).

**Table 2**  
**Reported Motivations for Charitable Giving**

| Motivations  | Percentage of Respondents |
|--|---------------------------|
| Basic needs  | 43.0                      |
| Poor help themselves                                   | 36.7                      |
| Make community better                                  | 36.7                      |
| Make world better                                      | 35.4                      |
| For equity<br>(responsibility to help those with less) | 27.9                      |
| Own decision about money                               | 25.3                      |
| Services govt. can't/won't                             | 23.4                      |
| Solve problems in world                                | 17.5                      |
| Same opportunity                                       | 16.4                      |
| Support friends & family                               | 13.8                      |
| Diversity  | 6.0                       |
| Ties across communities                                | 4.6                       |
| Other  | 2.3                       |

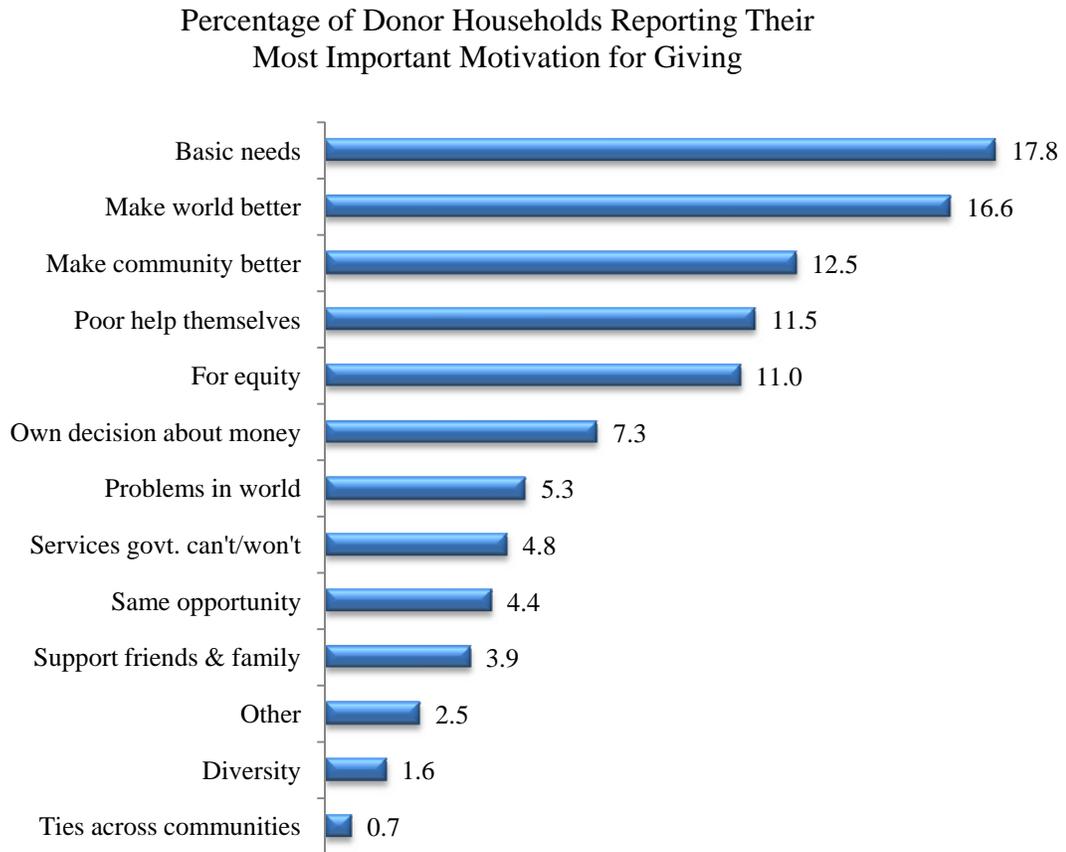
Source: Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, using data from Knowledge Networks

## Most Important Motivation for Giving

Figure 1 shows the percentage of donors who selected each of the motivational factors as their single most important motivation for giving. Among the findings:

- Providing for “basic needs” of the poor and to “make the world better” were the top two most important motivations for giving (17.8 and 16.6 percent, respectively).
- An interest in “building ties across the community” and in “diversity” were the two least-cited reasons for giving, reported by only 0.7 and 1.6 percent, respectively.

**Figure 1**



Source: Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, using data from Knowledge Networks

# Motivational Differences by Region

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## Key Findings

- Providing for the poor’s “basic needs” is the motivational factor that was most frequently cited by donors in every region, except for those from the Midwest, who more often said they gave in order to “make their community better”.
- People living in the Great Lakes were significantly more likely to report giving for “basic needs” than those in other regions.
- Helping the “poor help themselves” was the second most frequently cited motivation by donors from the South, South Atlantic, and Great Lakes. The South had the highest percentage of donors who chose this factor as a motivation.
- “Make world better” was the second most important motivation for donors living in the Northeast, Midwest, and the Pacific regions, while donors in the Mountain region referenced “make community better” as the second.
- When donors in the Northeast and the Midwest selected “equity” as their most important motivation for giving, they gave large amounts to charity on average (\$1,637 and \$1,944, respectively).
- People from the South gave the most on average when they reported being motivated by “other” factors, which they reported as religious beliefs most often in the text they entered (average total giving of \$5,947).

However

- After controlling for other variables, such as the donors’ income, age, and education level, there were no statistically significant differences in donors’ motivations for giving by region of the country.

## Providing for “Basic Needs” Was the Most Frequently Cited Motivation by Donors from Most Regions of the U.S.

The *Charity Survey* first asked each respondent to identify which three of the 13 statements were most important to them in their goals for charitable giving. Table 3 shows the four most frequently cited motivations for giving among donors in the survey. Providing for “basic needs” of the poor was the most frequently cited motivation by donors from all regions except those in the Midwest. Approximately 46 percent of donors living in the Great Lakes reported “basic needs” as a motivational factor for their giving, which is significantly higher than the percentage in other regions who selected this motivational statement.

“Helping the poor help themselves” was the second most frequently cited motivation by donors from the South, South Atlantic, and Great Lakes. Nearly 41 percent of those living in the South chose this factor as a motivation for their giving, which is significantly higher than the percentage in all other regions.

“Make world better” was the second most important motivation for donors living in the Northeast, Midwest, and the Pacific regions. Nearly 39 percent of those from the Midwest cited

this motivation as a factor for their giving, which is significantly higher than the percentage in other regions. Donors in the Mountain region also referenced “make world better” as the third most frequently cited motivation.

**Table 3**  
**Top Four Motivations for Giving by Region**

| Regions        | Basic Needs | Poor Help Themselves | Make World Better | Make Community Better |
|----------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Northeast      | 42.3 (1)    | 34.6 (4)             | 36.5 (2)          | 35.7 (3)              |
| Great Lakes    | 46.1 (1) ** | 35.7 (2)             | 32.2 (4) --       | 35.3 (3)              |
| Midwest        | 38.3 (3) -- | 32.6 (4) --          | 38.9 (2) **       | 42.4 (1)              |
| South Atlantic | 42.1 (1)    | 38.1 (2)             | 34.7 (4)          | 36.6 (3)              |
| South          | 45.9 (1)    | 40.5 (2) **          | 34.4 (4)          | 37.3 (3)              |
| Mountain       | 42.3 (1)    | 34.6 (4)             | 35.8 (3)          | 39.0 (2)              |
| Pacific        | 41.1 (1)    | 37.4 (3)             | 37.8 (2)          | 35.3 (4)              |
| <b>Overall</b> | 43.0        | 36.7                 | 35.4              | 36.7                  |

Source: The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, using data from Knowledge Networks

Notes: Numbers in parentheses represent the ranking based on the percentage of donors who chose this factor as one of the three most important motivations within the respective region. Please see methodology for the definition of each region.

Based on results from Chi-square tests.

\* and - denote statistical significance across regions for the frequency of the motivational statement:

\*P<0.05, \*\*P<0.01, \*\*\*P<0.001, for more likely to select the motivation than people in other regions were.

-- P<.01, less likely to select the motivation, compared with people in other regions.

### Donors in the Midwest Are Concerned with Community Needs

Donors from the Midwest/Plains states were noticeably different from those living in other regions. They were significantly less likely than donors in all other regions to report being motivated by “basic needs” and by helping the “poor help themselves” (p<0.01). Instead, “making the community better” was ranked number one in this region, though the percentage was not significantly higher from that of other regions where it ranked lower.

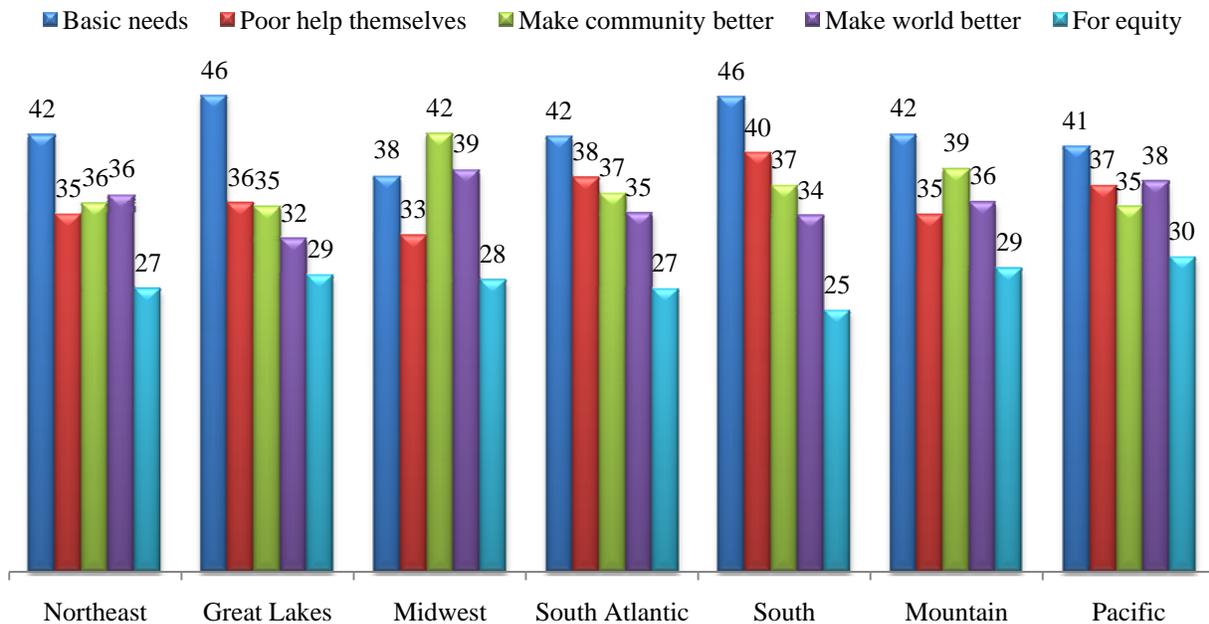
### Similar Motivational Patterns Are Found across Regions

Figure 2 graphs the percentage of respondents reporting their top three motivations for giving (see Appendix Table A1 for all motivations). Most regions follow the same motivational pattern. There were a few exceptions, however. “Making the community better,” and “making the world better” were the top two motivational factors for donors living in the Midwest (42 and 39 percent respectively), higher than any other region.

For donors from the Great Lakes, South Atlantic, and the South regions, their emphases on helping the “poor help themselves,” “make the community better,” and “make world better” steadily decreased following their emphasis on “basic needs.”

**Figure 2**

**Top Five Motivations for Giving, by Region  
Donors Selected Three of Their Most Important**



Source: The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, using data from Knowledge Networks

**The Single Most Important Motivation for Donors Differs Only Slightly by Region**

Respondents in the *Charity Survey* selected just one motivation from their top three as the single most important motivational factor when making charitable donations. When looking at the single most important motivation, the order of the regions differs compared with the rankings based on three motivations. Table 3 above shows the regional rankings when donors selected three motivations, and Table 4 shows the regions ranked by the single most important motivation. Responses differed slightly by region; however these differences disappear after controlling for other factors such as donors’ income, age, and education level. See Appendix Table A4 for the full regression results.

As Figure 1 shows, “basic needs” (17.8 percent) followed by “make world better” (16.6 percent) ranked first and second as the most important motivations for giving. When analyzed by region, we find only a few differences (see Table 4 below). Namely:

- The most important motivation for donors located in the Great Lakes, Midwest, South Atlantic, and South regions was “basic needs.”
- The most important motivation for donors in the Northeast, Mountain, and Pacific regions was “make world better.”
- People in the Great Lakes were significantly more likely to report being motivated by “basic needs” than those in other regions (p<0.001).

- Donors from the Pacific region were significantly more likely to report being motivated by “problems in world” than those in other regions (p<0.001).

**Table 4**  
**Percentage of Donors Reporting Single Most Important Motivation by Region**  
 Each person could pick one; columns may not total 100 due to rounding

| Motivation                 | North-east  | Great Lakes     | Mid-west    | South Atlantic | South       | Mountain | Pacific         |
|----------------------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|----------|-----------------|
| Basic needs                | 17.1<br>(2) | 22.0<br>(1) *** | 17.6<br>(1) | 16.4 (1)       | 20.3<br>(1) | 15.4 (2) | 14.8 (2)<br>--- |
| Poor help themselves       | 9.5         | 11.7            | 10.5        | 12.1           | 12.4<br>(3) | 11.6     | 12.1 (3)        |
| Same opportunity           | 5.0         | 4.1             | 4.2         | 4.7            | 3.6         | 4.9      | 4.4             |
| For equity                 | 11.7        | 10.5            | 11.6        | 10.5           | 9.9         | 11.9     | 12.1 (3)        |
| Solve problems in world    | 5.4         | 3.7---          | 4.0         | 5.0            | 5.6         | 5.0      | 8.0***          |
| Services govt. can't/won't | 5.0         | 4.6             | 5.5         | 4.9            | 5.2         | 3.8      | 4.6             |
| Make community better      | 13.9<br>(3) | 12.2<br>(3)     | 13.6<br>(3) | 12.5 (3)       | 11.5        | 12.5 (3) | 11.8            |
| Support friends & family   | 4.3         | 4.2             | 3.8         | 3.8            | 3.3         | 4.3      | 3.5             |
| Make world better          | 17.4<br>(1) | 14.6<br>(2)     | 17.2<br>(2) | 15.8 (2)       | 18.2<br>(2) | 16.3 (1) | 17.3 (1)        |
| Own decision about money   | 6.6         | 8.0             | 6.2         | 9.0            | 5.1         | 8.5      | 7.2             |
| Diversity                  | 1.2         | 1.7             | 2.5         | 2.0            | 1.6         | 1.6      | 1.3             |
| Ties across communities^   | 0.7         | 0.4             | 0.5         | 0.9            | 0.7         | 1.0      | 0.8             |
| Other                      | 2.3         | 2.5             | 3.0         | 2.6            | 2.6         | 3.3      | 2.2             |

Source: The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, using data from Knowledge Networks

Notes: Numbers in parentheses represent the top three ranking based on the percentage of donors within the respective region who chose this factor as the single most important motivation. Please see methodology for the definition of each region.

\*Denotes statistical significance with value higher than for other regions: \*P<0.05, \*\*P<0.01, \*\*\*P<0.001.

- Denotes statistical significance with value lower than for other regions: -P<0.05, --P<0.01, ---P<0.001.

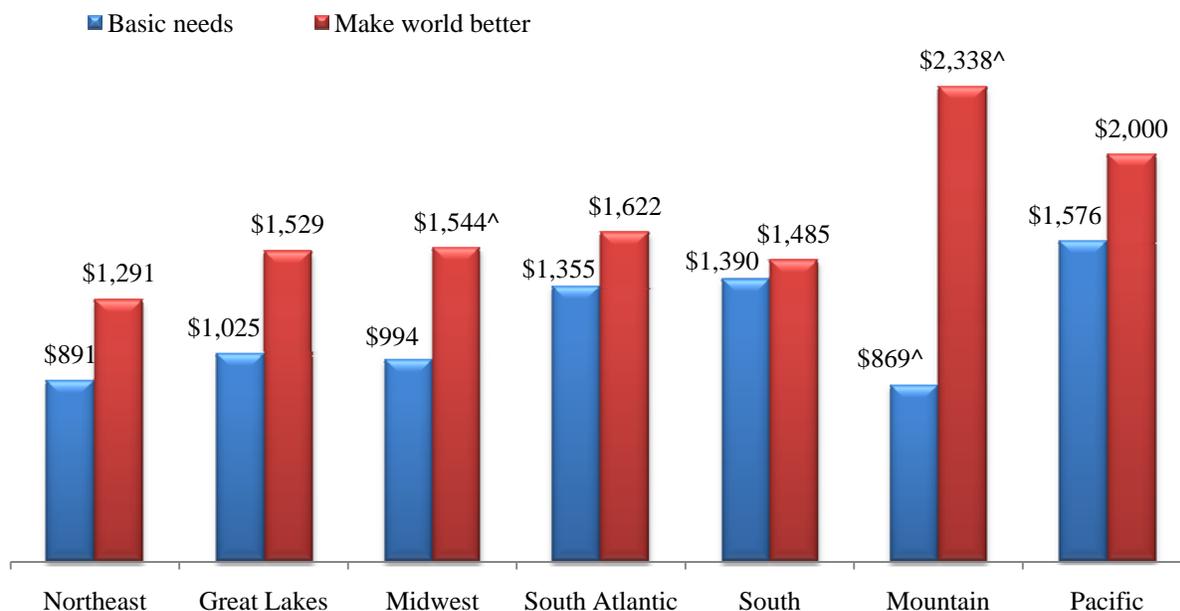
^ Fewer than 50 respondents. Finding is not likely to be replicated in future studies if the same questions are asked.

## Donors Motivated by Making the World Better Gave Larger Amounts to Charity

Figure 3 shows the average total amount given to charity based on the top two most important motivations by region. Even though most donors reported providing for “basic needs” of the poor as their most important motivation for giving, these donors gave a lower total amount, on average, to charity than did those who selected “make world better” as their most important motivational factor. The average amounts donated differ by region, but the pattern remains the same. This reflects differences in income rather than differences in region or motivation.

**Figure 3**

Average Total Giving by Donors Who Selected the Top Two Most Important Motivations For Giving by Region



Source: The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University using data from Knowledge Networks

Note: <sup>^</sup> Results are not statistically meaningful because the sample size was less than 100.

### Average Giving Amounts Differ by Motivation and Region

Table 5 shows the average donation amounts by the selection of motivations for giving by respondents and their region. The largest average giving amounts are associated with those donors who referenced “other” motivations, especially in the South (\$5,947 on average). “Other” usually meant religious beliefs. Other findings include:

- Donors in the **Northeast** gave the most, on average, to charity (\$1,637) when they selected “for equity” as a motivational factor. When they cited “to provide basic needs of the very poor” or “giving the poor a way to help themselves” as a motivational factor they gave, on average, a lower amount compared to the other regions.
- Donors in the **Great Lakes** region gave high average gift amounts to charity (\$1,514) when they selected “diversity” as a motivational factor for giving, but gave lower average gift amounts (\$1,049) when they selected “charities need to provide services govt. can’t/won’t.”
- Similar to donors in the Northeast, those in the **Midwest/Plains** gave a large donation, on average, when they were motivated by “equity” (\$1,944). However, Midwesterners gave the lowest donation amount when they reported “diversity” as a top motivational factor for giving (\$680).
- Donors in the **South Atlantic** gave the most, on average, when motivated by the “need to address fundamental problems in our world,” (\$2,579) and the least, on average, when motivated by trying to build “ties across communities,” (\$1,166).

- Donors from the **Pacific** region gave a large average donation to charity (\$2,384) when they selected “support family & friends” as a motivation for giving. Their smallest average gift (\$1,426) was when households cited “diversity.”

**Table 5**  
**Average Total Giving by Respondents’ Selection of Motivations for Giving, by Region**  
 Respondents selected up to three motivations

| Motivation                      | Northeast             | Great Lakes           | Midwest               | South Atlantic        | South                 | Mountain              | Pacific               |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Basic needs                     | \$1,142               | \$1,196               | \$1,357               | \$1,603               | \$1,633               | <b><i>\$1,334</i></b> | \$1,590               |
| Poor help themselves            | <b><i>\$1,070</i></b> | \$1,423               | \$1,329               | \$1,606               | \$1,457               | \$1,782               | \$1,938               |
| Same opportunity                | \$1,494               | \$1,399               | \$1,856               | \$1,757               | \$1,701               | \$1,351               | \$2,008               |
| For equity                      | <b><i>\$1,637</i></b> | \$1,476               | <b><i>\$1,944</i></b> | \$1,987               | \$2,246               | \$2,396               | \$1,794               |
| Solve problems in world         | \$1,459               | \$1,465               | \$1,525               | <b><i>\$2,579</i></b> | \$2,070               | \$1,770               | \$1,794               |
| Services govt. can't/won't      | \$1,221               | <b><i>\$1,049</i></b> | \$1,288               | \$1,673               | \$1,789               | <b><i>\$2,407</i></b> | \$1,770               |
| Make community better           | \$1,225               | \$1,358               | \$1,457               | \$2,093               | \$1,684               | \$1,530               | \$1,799               |
| Support friends & family        | \$1,208               | \$1,223               | \$999                 | \$1,628               | \$1,772               | \$1,580               | <b><i>\$2,384</i></b> |
| Make world better               | \$1,177               | \$1,430               | \$1,672               | \$1,810               | \$1,806               | \$2,100               | \$1,797               |
| Own decision about money        | \$1,097               | \$1,264               | \$1,476               | \$1,969               | \$2,088               | \$1,357               | \$2,071               |
| Diversity                       | \$1,238               | <b><i>\$1,514</i></b> | <b><i>\$680</i></b>   | \$1,552               | <b><i>\$1,286</i></b> | \$1,356               | <b><i>\$1,426</i></b> |
| Ties across communities         | \$1,141               | \$1,403               | \$1,904               | <b><i>\$1,166</i></b> | <b><i>\$2,611</i></b> | \$2,709^              | \$1,655               |
| Other*                          | \$2,577               | \$2,745               | \$2,749               | \$5,712               | \$5,947               | \$4,203^              | \$4,198               |
| <b>Total average for region</b> | \$1,255               | \$1,347               | \$1,495               | \$1,880               | \$1,852               | \$1,810               | \$1,850               |

Source: The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University using data from Knowledge Networks

Notes: \*Respondents were given the option to specify what they meant by other. Most wrote in for religious beliefs.

**Bold roman font** indicates the second highest average total giving for region, since the average amount of giving for “other” was the highest for all regions; **bold italic** indicates the lowest average for region.

^ Fewer than 30 respondents. Finding is not likely to be replicated in future studies if the same questions are asked.

# Motivational Differences by Income

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## Key Findings

- Higher income donors (income greater than \$100,000) were significantly more likely to select “making community better” as an important motivation for giving compared to lower income donors (income less than \$50,000).
- Higher income donors were significantly more likely to report that those with more should help those with less (for equity) than were lower income donors (70.6 percent and 66.7 percent, respectively).<sup>2</sup>
- When middle-income donors (income between \$50,000 and \$100,000) selected concerns “for equity” as their top motivation for giving, they gave a larger average amount to charity (\$1,929), only slightly less than “other” motivations, which were usually religious.
- Lower income donors were significantly more likely than higher or middle-income donors to report “basic needs” and “poor help themselves” as a motivation for giving.
- After controls for age, education, marital status, and other factors, higher income donors were still significantly less likely to report being motivated to give in order to provide for the poor’s “basic needs” and to help the “poor help themselves.”

## “Basic Needs” Was the Most Frequently Cited Motivation for Those with Income Less Than \$100,000

Approximately 41 percent of middle-income donors, those with annual income between \$50,000 and \$100,000, reported “basic needs” was a motivation for their giving whereas only 37 percent of higher income donors, those with annual income greater than \$100,000, reported this motivation (see Table 6). Further, results from the Probit regressions (see Appendix Table A4) found that higher income donors were significantly less likely than lower income donors to report being motivated by “basic needs,” even after controlling for other factors such as age, education, and marital status ( $p < 0.05$ ). Other findings include:

- Lower income donors, those with an annual income less than \$50,000, were significantly more likely than middle and higher income donors were to report being motivated to help the “poor help themselves,” even after controlling for other factors (see Appendix Table A4).

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<sup>2</sup> The graph for this finding is not presented.

- Conversely, higher and middle income donors were significantly more likely than lower income donors to report being motivated by “making the community better” and by “making the world better.” (see Table 6).

**Table 6**  
**Top Four Motivations for Giving by Income**

| Income range         | Basic Needs  | Poor Help Selves | Make World Better | Make Community Better |
|----------------------|--------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| <\$50,000            | 47.8 (1) *** | 40.9 (2) ***     | 33.3 (4) --       | 34.2 (3) ---          |
| \$50,000 - \$100,000 | 40.6 (1)     | 34.1 (4)         | 37.5 (3) **       | 38.9 (2) ***          |
| >\$100,000           | 36.5 (2) --- | 31.9 (5) ---     | 36.5 (2)          | 38.8 (1)              |
| <b>Overall</b>       | 43.0         | 36.7             | 35.4              | 36.7                  |

Source: The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University using data from Knowledge Networks

Notes: Numbers in parentheses represent the frequency rank within the respective income range.

\* Indicates higher probability, with significance, of selecting the motivation, \*P<0.05, \*\*P<0.01, \*\*\*P<0.001

- Indicates lower probability, with significance, - P <0.05; -- P<0.01, --- P<0.001

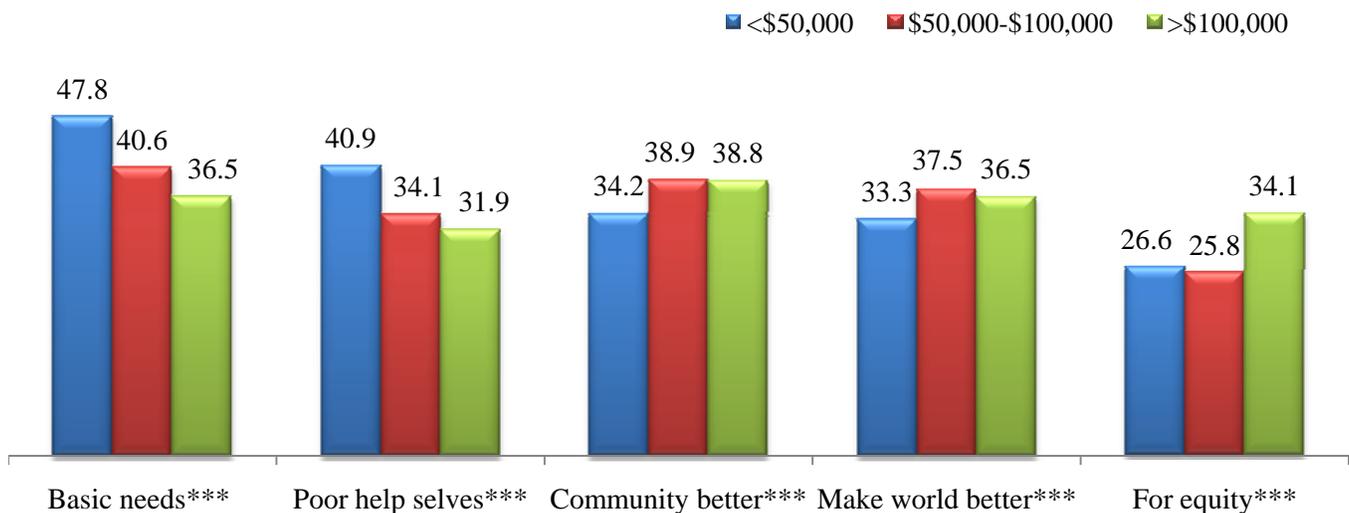
The motivations about providing for basic needs and helping the poor help themselves were seldom selected by the same respondents. Nor were the motivations for making the world better and making the community better selected by the same respondents. That is, while the wording may seem similar to readers of this report, those answering the survey most often picked either providing for basic needs or helping the poor help themselves, but not both. Similarly, survey respondents were most likely to select either making the world better or making the community better but not both.

## Equity Is More of a Concern for Higher Income Donors

While not in the top four motivations for all respondents, among higher income donors, the motivation that those with more should help those with less (for equity) ranked fourth and helping the poor help themselves ranked fifth (see Appendix Table A2). Higher income donors were significantly more likely to report being motivated by concerns “for equity” than were those with lower or middle incomes ( $p < 0.001$ ) (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4**

Top Five Motivations for Giving, by Income  
Donors Selected Three of Their Most Important



Source: The Center on Philanthropy using data from Knowledge Networks

Note: \* $P < 0.05$ , \*\* $P < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $P < 0.001$ , comparing percentages for each income group within motivation.

## The Single Most Important Motivation Varies among Donors at Different Income Levels

Table 7 lists the ranking of the single most important motivation reported by donors at different income levels. “Making the world better” was the only common factor among the top three. Similar to earlier findings, “basic needs” was more of a concern for low and middle income donors, while “making the community better” concerned middle and high income donors more.

Table 7 further confirms that “for equity” is more of a concern for higher income donors, ranking number two among all motivations given. Moreover, providing for the poor’s “basic needs” dropped out of the top three for this group of donors.

In addition, higher income donors were also significantly more likely than others to choose “solving problems in world” as a motivation; whereas lower income donors were also significantly more likely than others to report being motivated by the need to provide “services that the government cannot or will not.”

**Table 7**  
**Percentage of Donors Reporting Single Most Important Motivation by Income**  
 Each person could pick one; columns may not total 100 due to rounding

| Motivation                           | <\$50,000    | \$50,000 - \$100,000 | >\$100,000   |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|
| Basic needs                          | 21.5 (1) *** | 15.9 (2)             | 12.9 ---     |
| Poor help themselves                 | 13.1 (3) *** | 10.7                 | 8.9 ---      |
| Same opportunity                     | 4.1          | 4.7                  | 4.9          |
| For equity                           | 9.7 ---      | 10.0                 | 15.5 (2) *** |
| Problems in world                    | 3.7 ---      | 6.1                  | 7.6 ***      |
| Services govt. can't/won't           | 6.0 **       | 3.5 --               | 4.5          |
| Make community better                | 11.4 ---     | 13.3 (3)             | 13.9 (3) *** |
| Support friends & family             | 3.7          | 3.8                  | 4.4          |
| Make world better                    | 15.7 (2) --  | 18.5 (1) **          | 15.7 (1) --  |
| Own decision about money             | 7.3          | 8.0                  | 6.0          |
| Diversity                            | 1.1 -        | 2.1 *                | 2.0          |
| Ties across communities <sup>^</sup> | 0.8          | 0.6                  | 0.6          |
| Other                                | 2.0          | 2.9                  | 3.2          |

Source: The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, using data from Knowledge Networks

Notes: Numbers in parentheses represent the top three ranking based on the percentage of donors within the respective income level who chose this factor as the single most important motivation.

\*Denotes statistical significance with value higher than for other regions: \*P<0.05, \*\*P<0.01, \*\*\*P<0.001.

- Denotes statistical significance with value lower than for other regions: -P<0.05, --P<0.01, ---P<0.001.

<sup>^</sup> Fewer than 50 respondents. Finding is not likely to be replicated in future studies if the same questions are asked.

### Average Donation Amounts were Largest When “Other” Was Selected as a Motivational Factor for Giving

Average donation amounts differ by income and top motivation for giving (see Table 8). While the most frequently cited motivation for giving was to provide for the poor’s “basic needs” such as food and shelter, when people selected this motivation they gave a lower average amount than those reporting another motivating factor, including “ties across communities” or “for equity.” Other findings include:

- Consistent across all income levels, the largest average amount donated to charity was associated with those who selected “other” as their top motivation for giving. In prior analysis it was determined that “other” frequently meant religious beliefs.
- **Higher income** donors motivated by wanting to make their “own decisions about money” gave a large average amount of \$3,606 to charity, while higher income donors motivated to give for “diversity” reasons gave a lower average amount to charity (\$2,715).
- **Middle income** donors gave a large average amount (\$1,929) to charity when selecting concerns “for equity” as their motivation for giving and a lower average amount (\$1,110) when selecting “ties across community.”
- The second largest average amount donated to charity (\$1,182) by **lower income** donors was when these donors selected “ties across communities” as a motivation for their giving. The lowest average amount (\$675) was given when selecting “diversity” as a motivation for their giving.

**Table 8**  
**Average Total Giving by Respondents' Selection of Motivations for Giving, by Income**  
 Respondents selected up to three motivations

| Motivation                            | <\$50,000      | \$50,000 - \$100,000 | >\$100,000     |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------|
| Basic needs                           | \$811          | \$1,620              | \$2,796        |
| Poor help themselves                  | \$861          | \$1,604              | \$3,115        |
| Same opportunity                      | \$922          | \$1,709              | \$3,202        |
| For equity                            | \$907          | <b>\$1,929</b>       | \$3,447        |
| Problems in world                     | \$1,025        | \$1,732              | \$3,179        |
| Services govt. can't/won't            | \$819          | \$1,565              | \$3,330        |
| Make community better                 | \$843          | \$1,578              | \$3,177        |
| Support friends & family              | \$895          | \$1,458              | \$2,787        |
| Make world better                     | \$844          | \$1,694              | \$3,136        |
| Own decision about money              | \$800          | \$1,803              | <b>\$3,606</b> |
| Diversity                             | <b>\$675</b>   | \$1,314              | <b>\$2,715</b> |
| Ties across communities               | <b>\$1,182</b> | <b>\$1,110</b>       | \$3,197        |
| Other*                                | \$1,498        | \$5,239              | \$6,532        |
| <b>Total average for income level</b> | \$856          | \$1,718              | \$3,211        |

Source: The Center on Philanthropy using data from Knowledge Networks

Note: \* The "other" motivation that was most often specified by the respondent was "religious beliefs".

**Bold roman font** indicates the second highest value for income group, since the average amount of giving for "other" was the highest for all groups; **bold italic** indicates lowest.

# Motivational Differences by Education Level

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## Key Findings

- Overall, donors with more education are more concerned about “making world better” and “for equity,” but less concerned about “basic needs” or “poor help themselves.”
- Providing for the poor’s “basic needs” and helping the “poor help themselves” were the most frequently cited motivations by donors without college education (49 percent and 43 percent, respectively). They were significantly more likely than those with at least some college education to report being motivated by these two factors after controlling for other factors, such as the donors’ age, race, marital status and household annual income.
- Donors with postgraduate education were significantly more likely than those with high school education or less to select “making world better” and “for equity” as major motivations for giving, even after controlling for other factors.
- When examining the single most important motivation, “making world better” was the most important motivation for donors with at least some college education, and also ranked as the number two motivation among those without college education.
- The overall average amounts are positively associated with donors’ education level. Those with more education tended to give more on average than those with less education.

## “Basic Needs” and “Poor Help Themselves” Were the Most Frequently Reported Motivations for Donors with High School Education or Less

Nearly 50 percent of donors with high school degrees or less chose “basic needs” as a motivation for their giving; whereas around one-third of those with postgraduate degrees reported this factor as their motivation for giving (see Table 9). When examining “poor help themselves,” significantly more donors without college education reported being motivated by this factor than those with at least some college education (about 43 percent versus 34 percent or less).

The results from the Probit regressions (see Appendix Table A4) also show that donors with at least some college education were significantly less likely than those without to cite being motivated by “basic needs” and “poor help themselves,” after controlling for other factors such as age, race, marital status, or annual household income.

## Donors with Postgraduate Education Are More Concerned with Community or World Needs

“Making world better” and “making the community better” were the top two most often reported motivations among donors with postgraduate degrees. Approximately 41 percent of donors from this group cited “make world better” as their motivation for giving, while barely one-third of those with high school education or less said so.

Donors with college degrees were significantly more likely to choose “make the community better” as a motivational factor, compared to all other donors. Providing “basic needs” for the poor is also an important factor motivating donors with some college or with college degrees to donate.

**Table 9**  
**Top Four Motivations for Giving by Education Level**

| Education Level     | Basic Needs  | Poor Help Selves | Make World Better | Make Community Better |
|---------------------|--------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| High school or less | 49.0 (1) *** | 42.7 (2) ***     | 32.8 (4) ---      | 33.9 (3) ---          |
| Some college        | 40.5 (1)     | 34.2 (4)         | 36.1 (3)          | 38.1 (2)              |
| College degree      | 39.6 (2)     | 31.6 (5)         | 36.5 (3)          | 41.4 (1) ***          |
| Postgraduate degree | 33.2 (4) --- | 29.1 (5) ---     | 41.3 (1) ***      | 36.3 (2)              |
| <b>Overall</b>      | 43.0         | 36.7             | 35.4              | 36.7                  |

Source: The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University using data from Knowledge Networks

Notes: Numbers in parentheses represent the frequency rank within the respective education level.

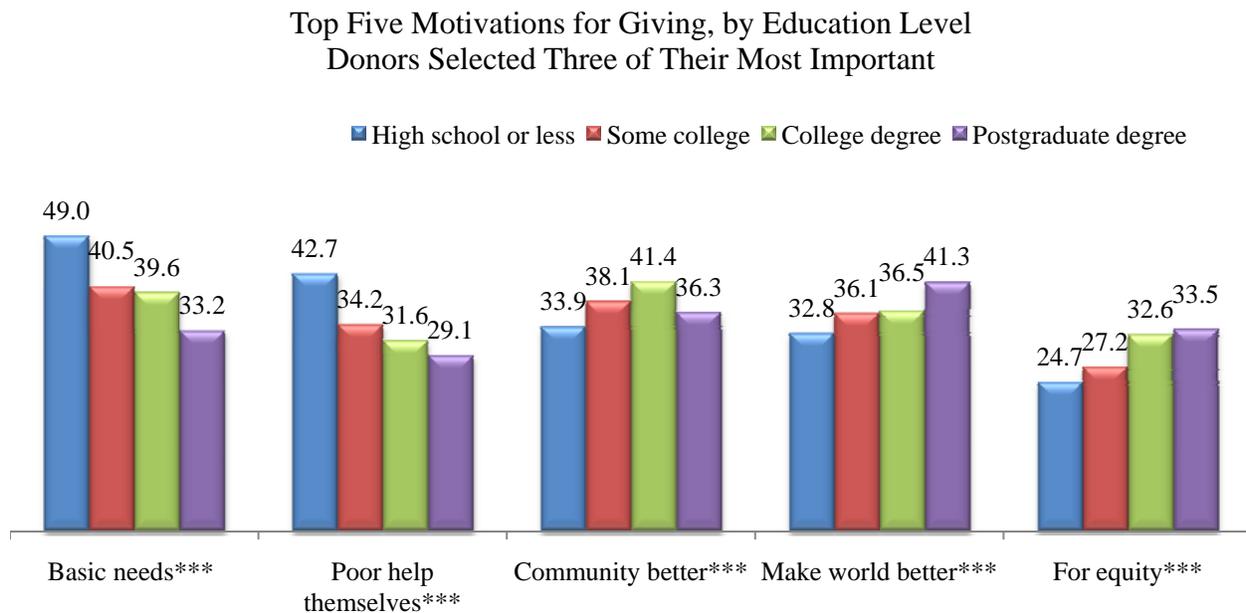
\* Indicates higher probability, with significance, of selecting the motivation, \*P<0.05, \*\*P<0.01, \*\*\*P<0.001

- Indicates lower probability, with significance, - P <0.05; -- P<0.01, --- P<0.001

## Four of Top Five Motivations Exhibited Clear Patterns across Education Levels

Figure 5 shows a clear pattern of motivational factors among donors with different educational levels. Overall, donors with more education were more likely to concern about “making world better” and “for equity,” but less likely to concern about “basic needs” or “poor help themselves.” The only exception is that slightly more donors with college degrees or with some college education chose “making the community better” than those with postgraduate education did. For “basic needs” and “poor help themselves,” the motivation patterns across education levels are very similar to those across income levels.

**Figure 5**



Source: The Center on Philanthropy using data from Knowledge Networks

Note: \*P<0.05, \*\*P<0.01, \*\*\*P<0.001, comparing percentages for each education level within motivation.

## “Making world better” was the Single Most Important Motivation for Donors with At Least Some College Education

When examining the single most important motivation, “making world better” was the top one motivation for donors with at least some college education, and also ranked as the number two motivation among those without college education (see Table 10). “Basic needs” and “poor help themselves” were still critical concerns for donors with high school education or less. Further, those with postgraduate education were significantly more likely to cite being motivated by “for equity” and “problems in world” than other donors.

**Table 10**  
**Percentage of Donors Reporting Single Most Important Motivation by Education Level**  
 Each person could pick one; columns may not total 100 due to rounding

| Motivation                 | High school or less | Some college | College degree | Postgraduate degree |
|----------------------------|---------------------|--------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Basic needs                | 22.8 (1) ***        | 15.6 (2)     | 14.9 (3)       | 9.9 ---             |
| Poor help themselves       | 14.2 (3) ***        | 11.0         | 8.0 ---        | 8.1                 |
| Same opportunity           | 3.4 -               | 5.4 *        | 4.8            | 5.2                 |
| For equity                 | 7.9 ---             | 11.3         | 13.9           | 17.2 (2) ***        |
| Problems in world          | 3.8 ---             | 4.5          | 7.2            | 10.0 ***            |
| Services govt. can't/won't | 5.5                 | 4.6          | 3.5            | 5.1                 |
| Make community better      | 11.4 -              | 12.7 (3)     | 15.4 (2) *     | 11.6 (3)            |
| Support friends & family   | 4.1                 | 3.8          | 3.4            | 3.7                 |
| Make world better          | 15.8 (2) -          | 17.3 (1)     | 16.1 (1)       | 19.1 (1) *          |
| Own decision about money   | 7.9                 | 8.3 ***      | 6.2            | 4.1 ---             |
| Diversity                  | 0.9 -               | 2.4 *        | 1.9            | 1.8                 |
| Ties across communities^   | 0.8                 | 0.6          | 0.7            | 0.6                 |
| Other                      | 1.6 --              | 2.6          | 4.1 **         | 3.5                 |

Source: The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, using data from Knowledge Networks

Notes: Numbers in parentheses represent the top three ranking based on the percentage of donors within the respective education level who chose this factor as the single most important motivation.

\*Denotes statistical significance with value higher than for other education levels: \*P<0.05, \*\*P<0.01, \*\*\*P<0.001.

- Denotes statistical significance with value lower than for other education levels: -P<0.05, --P<0.01, ---P<0.001.

^ Fewer than 50 respondents. Finding is not likely to be replicated in future studies if the same questions are asked.

## Overall Average Giving Amount Increases with Donors' Education Level

Table 11 shows the average donation amounts by education level and motivations for giving. The overall average amounts were positively associated with donors' education level. Those with more education tended to give more on average than those with less education. When donors reported "other" as a motivation for their giving, often meaning religious beliefs, they gave the largest average amounts. This is true for donors across all education levels. Other findings include:

- Like higher income donors, donors with postgraduate education gave a large average amount of \$3,963 to charity when they chose "own decisions about money" as a motivation for giving. They gave a lower average amount to charity when selecting "ties across communities" (\$2,439).
- Donors with some college education gave a large average amount (\$1,668) to charity when choosing "support friends & family" as a motivation for giving. Donors with college degrees gave the most, on average, (\$2,694) when motivated by concerns "for equity." Both these two groups of donors donated a lower average amount, \$1,004 and \$1,115 respectively, when reporting "diversity" as a motivation for giving.
- Donors with high school education or less gave high average gift amounts to charity (\$1,345) when motivated by building "ties across communities," though their top concern was found to be providing "basic needs" for the poor. They donated the lowest average amount (\$822) when they cited "supporting friends & family" as a motivation.

**Table 11**  
**Average Total Giving by Respondents' Selection of Motivations for Giving, by Education Level**  
 Respondents selected up to three motivations

| Motivation                               | High school or less | Some college          | College degree        | Postgraduate degree |
|--|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Basic needs                              | \$893               | \$1,540               | \$2,016               | \$2,729             |
| Poor help themselves                     | \$960               | \$1,513               | \$2,339               | \$2,881             |
| Same opportunity                         | \$1,079             | \$1,629               | \$1,911               | \$3,201             |
| For equity                               | \$959               | \$1,591               | <b>\$2,694</b>        | \$3,571             |
| Problems in world                        | \$1,114             | \$1,392               | \$2,261               | \$3,347             |
| Services govt. can't/won't               | \$1,035             | \$1,556               | \$2,108               | \$2,684             |
| Make community better                    | \$923               | \$1,563               | \$2,179               | \$3,081             |
| Support friends & family                 | <b>\$822</b>        | <b>\$1,668</b>        | \$2,072               | \$2,678             |
| Make world better                        | \$1,071             | \$1,454               | \$2,055               | \$3,052             |
| Own decision about money                 | \$1,032             | \$1,559               | \$2,453               | <b>\$3,963</b>      |
| Diversity                                | \$1,175             | <b><i>\$1,004</i></b> | <b><i>\$1,115</i></b> | \$2,969             |
| Ties across communities                  | <b>\$1,345</b>      | \$1,453               | \$1,849               | <b>\$2,439</b>      |
| Other*                                   | \$2,612             | \$3,890               | \$4,720               | \$6,613             |
| <b>Total average for education level</b> | \$1,017             | \$1,547               | \$2,227               | \$3,140             |

Source: The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University using data from Knowledge Networks

Notes: \*Respondents were given the option to specify what they meant by other. Most wrote in for religious beliefs.

**Bold roman font** indicates the second highest average total giving for each education level, since the average amount of giving for “other” was the highest for all education levels; ***bold italic*** indicates the lowest average for each education level.

# Conclusion and Implications

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In conclusion, this study does not show significant differences in donors' motivations for giving by region, refuting Hypothesis 1. After controlling for variables such as the donors' income, age, and education level, there were no statistically significant differences in donors' motivations for giving by region of the country.

However, findings do confirm significant differences in donor motivations based on income level, confirming Hypothesis 2. After controls for age, education, marital status, and other factors, higher income donors were significantly less likely to report being motivated to give in order to provide for the poor's "basic needs" and to help the "poor help themselves."

Other key findings regarding income include:

- Higher income donors were significantly more likely to report that those with more should help those with less (for equity) than were lower income donors (70.6 percent and 66.7 percent, respectively).
- Lower income donors were significantly more likely than higher or middle-income donors to report "basic needs" and "poor help themselves" as a motivation for giving.

This suggests that the regional motivational differences observed in practice reflect income or educational level differences. Implications from the study then lead fundraisers to engage potential donors using motivational language expressed more often by the donor's corresponding income group or their educational level.

For example, when approaching people with an income of less than \$100,000, or those with high school education or less:

- Emphasize how your organization helps people meet their basic needs or helps people help themselves.

When approaching prospective donors with income of \$100,000 or more, or those with college degrees or above:

- Emphasize how their gift helps them help those with less (for equity). This theme of responsibility to help others was especially noticeable in the Northeast and the Midwest. Also donors who held this as a motivation for giving gave more on average.
- Demonstrate how your organization can "help make the world a better place" or, if more appropriate, help make the community better.

This study finds few differences based on geography, yet fundraisers should strive to understand the community-specific culture of giving. A community can be defined by geography, shared

interests, religious traditions, or ethnic heritage. Whatever the definition, successful fundraising will be based on understanding the community members, why they give, and to what.

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# Appendix of Tables

**Table A1**  
Motivations for Giving by Region

| Motivation                 | Northeast | Great Lakes | Midwest  | South Atlantic | South    | Mountain | Pacific  |
|----------------------------|-----------|-------------|----------|----------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Basic needs                | 42.3 (1)  | 46.1 (1)    | 38.3 (3) | 42.1 (1)       | 45.9 (1) | 42.3 (1) | 41.1 (1) |
| Poor help themselves       | 34.6 (4)  | 35.7 (2)    | 32.6 (4) | 38.1 (2)       | 40.5 (2) | 34.6 (4) | 37.4 (3) |
| Make community better      | 35.7 (3)  | 35.3 (3)    | 42.4 (1) | 36.6 (3)       | 37.3 (3) | 39.0 (2) | 35.3 (4) |
| Same opportunity           | 16.5      | 15.2        | 15.5     | 17.9           | 15.7     | 15.9     | 17.2     |
| For equity                 | 27.4      | 28.7        | 28.3     | 27.4           | 25.3     | 29.4     | 30.4     |
| Problems in world          | 18.0      | 15.6        | 16.5     | 18.2           | 15.5     | 17.9     | 20.2     |
| Services govt. can't/won't | 23.7      | 23.9        | 23.2     | 23.5           | 24.0     | 20.6     | 23.2     |
| Support friends & family   | 16.1      | 13.4        | 16.6     | 11.9           | 13.4     | 11.9     | 13.6     |
| Make world better          | 36.5 (2)  | 32.2 (4)    | 38.9 (2) | 34.7 (4)       | 34.4 (4) | 35.8 (3) | 37.8 (2) |
| Own decision about money   | 24.8      | 28.0        | 22.9     | 26.1           | 25.6     | 25.8     | 22.3     |
| Diversity                  | 5.3       | 6.1         | 7.2      | 6.3            | 5.4      | 7.8      | 5.6      |
| Ties across communities    | 5.7       | 3.8         | 4.2      | 5.3            | 3.8      | 4.8      | 4.2      |
| Other                      | 3.9       | 3.6         | 4.2      | 4.1            | 3.9      | 4.4      | 3.6      |

Source: The Center on Philanthropy using data from Knowledge Networks  
Note: Numbers in parentheses represent the frequency rank within the respective region.

**Table A2**  
Motivations for Giving by Income

| Motivations                | <\$50,000 | \$50,000-\$100,000 | >\$100,000 |
|----------------------------|-----------|--------------------|------------|
| Basic needs                | 47.8 (1)  | 40.6 (1)           | 36.5 (2)   |
| Poor help themselves       | 40.9 (2)  | 34.1 (4)           | 31.9 (5)   |
| Make community better      | 34.2 (3)  | 38.9 (2)           | 38.8 (1)   |
| Same opportunity           | 16.3      | 16.6               | 16.5       |
| For equity                 | 26.6      | 25.8               | 34.1 (4)   |
| Problems in world          | 13.3      | 20.2               | 22.0       |
| Services govt. can't/won't | 26.0      | 20.7               | 22.2       |

|                          |          |          |          |
|--------------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Support friends & family | 12.0     | 15.0     | 15.7     |
| Make world better        | 33.3 (4) | 37.5 (3) | 36.5 (2) |
| Own decision about money | 26.9     | 25.3     | 21.8     |
| Diversity                | 5.6      | 6.4      | 6.3      |
| Ties across communities  | 4.5      | 4.5      | 5.0      |
| Other                    | 3.2      | 4.3      | 4.7      |

Source: The Center on Philanthropy using data from Knowledge Networks

Note: Numbers in parentheses represent the frequency rank within the respective income range.

**Table A3**  
Motivations for Giving by Education Level

| Motivations                | High school or less | Some college | College degree | Postgraduate degree |
|----------------------------|---------------------|--------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Basic needs                | 49.0 (1)            | 40.5(1)      | 39.6(2)        | 33.2(4)             |
| Poor help themselves       | 42.7(2)             | 34.2(4)      | 31.6(5)        | 29.1(5)             |
| Make community better      | 33.9(3)             | 38.1(2)      | 41.4(1)        | 36.3(2)             |
| Same opportunity           | 15.6                | 17.3         | 15.8           | 18.1                |
| For equity                 | 24.7                | 27.2         | 32.6(4)        | 33.5(3)             |
| Problems in world          | 12.8                | 17.3         | 22.2           | 27.0                |
| Services govt. can't/won't | 25.6                | 22.6         | 19.2           | 24.0                |
| Support friends & family   | 12.5                | 14.2         | 16.2           | 13.6                |
| Make world better          | 32.8(4)             | 36.1(3)      | 36.5(3)        | 41.3(1)             |
| Own decision about money   | 29.1                | 25.6         | 20.2           | 18.5                |
| Diversity                  | 4.7                 | 7.3          | 6.3            | 6.8                 |
| Ties across communities    | 3.4                 | 6.2          | 4.9            | 4.5                 |
| Other                      | 2.6                 | 4.0          | 6.0            | 5.0                 |

Source: The Center on Philanthropy using data from Knowledge Networks

Note: Numbers in parentheses represent the frequency rank within the respective education level.

**Table A4: Probit Model: Probability of being motivated by Top 5 motivations**

| Independent Variables   |                      | Basic needs         | Poor help selves    | Community better   | World better      | For equity         |
|-------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Regions                 | Great Lakes          | 0.028<br>(.025)     | -0.003<br>(.024)    | -0.002<br>(.024)   | -0.041<br>(.023)  | 0.023<br>(.023)    |
|                         | Midwest              | -0.034<br>(.031)    | -0.024<br>(.031)    | 0.056<br>(.031)    | 0.020<br>(.032)   | 0.014<br>(.029)    |
|                         | South Atlantic       | -0.010<br>(.024)    | 0.027<br>(.024)     | 0.017<br>(.024)    | -0.017<br>(.024)  | -0.001<br>(.021)   |
|                         | South                | 0.030<br>(.026)     | 0.046<br>(.026)     | 0.022<br>(.025)    | -0.025<br>(.025)  | -0.020<br>(.023)   |
|                         | Mountain             | 0.001<br>(.034)     | -0.008<br>(.032)    | 0.036<br>(.034)    | -0.011<br>(.032)  | 0.018<br>(.031)    |
|                         | Pacific              | -0.013<br>(.026)    | 0.023<br>(.026)     | 0.008<br>(.025)    | 0.010<br>(.025)   | 0.028<br>(.024)    |
|                         | Metro                | 0.025<br>(.023)     | 0.003<br>(.023)     | -0.042<br>(.023)   | -0.018<br>(.023)  | 0.027<br>(.02)     |
| Annual Household Income | \$50,000 - \$100,000 | -0.024<br>(.02)     | -0.038*<br>(.019)   | 0.012<br>(.019)    | 0.017<br>(.019)   | -0.025<br>(.018)   |
|                         | >\$100,000           | -0.048*<br>(.021)   | -0.049*<br>(.020)   | 0.001<br>(.020)    | 0.000<br>(.021)   | 0.028<br>(.019)    |
| Family Size             | Number of Children   | 0.007<br>(.009)     | 0.008<br>(.009)     | 0.014<br>(.009)    | 0.011<br>(.009)   | 0.005<br>(.008)    |
| Age                     |                      | 0.004<br>(.003)     | 0.008**<br>(.003)   | -0.001<br>(.003)   | -0.006*<br>(.003) | -0.003<br>(.003)   |
| Age2                    | Age square           | 0.000<br>(0.000)    | 0.000*<br>(0.000)   | 0.000<br>(0.000)   | 0.000<br>(0.000)  | 0.000<br>(0.000)   |
| Gender                  | Male                 | -0.050***<br>(.016) | -0.027<br>(.015)    | 0.052***<br>(.015) | -0.017<br>(.015)  | -0.033*<br>(.014)  |
| Employment Status       | Employed             | -0.015<br>(.021)    | -0.022<br>(.020)    | 0.024<br>(.020)    | 0.010<br>(.020)   | 0.007<br>(.019)    |
|                         | Retired              | -0.066*<br>(.030)   | -0.002<br>(.030)    | 0.039<br>(.030)    | -0.006<br>(.031)  | -0.022<br>(.027)   |
| Marital Status          | Married              | -0.036*<br>(.017)   | 0.024<br>(.017)     | 0.047**<br>(.017)  | 0.009<br>(.017)   | 0.027<br>(.015)    |
| Race                    | Black                | 0.063*<br>(.028)    | 0.031<br>(.027)     | -0.031<br>(.026)   | -0.024<br>(.027)  | 0.006<br>(.026)    |
|                         | Hispanic             | 0.059*<br>(.028)    | 0.084**<br>(.028)   | -0.065**<br>(.025) | -0.032<br>(.027)  | -0.006<br>(.025)   |
|                         | Other race           | 0.053<br>(.039)     | 0.020<br>(.036)     | -0.089**<br>(.033) | 0.015<br>(.037)   | -0.048<br>(.032)   |
| Educational Level       | Some college         | -0.060**<br>(.020)  | -0.055**<br>(.019)  | 0.040*<br>(.02)    | 0.005<br>(.019)   | 0.019<br>(.019)    |
|                         | College degree       | -0.054*<br>(.021)   | -0.074***<br>(.020) | 0.071***<br>(.022) | 0.012<br>(.021)   | 0.070***<br>(.021) |
|                         | Graduate Degree      | -0.120***<br>(.024) | -0.102***<br>(.022) | 0.023<br>(.024)    | 0.069**<br>(.025) | 0.076**<br>(.024)  |
| Religious Attendance    | Frequent Attendance  | 0.005<br>(.019)     | 0.002<br>(.018)     | -0.038*<br>(.018)  | -0.007<br>(.018)  | 0.014<br>(.017)    |
|                         | Sometimes Attend     | 0.000<br>(.019)     | 0.006<br>(.019)     | 0.015<br>(.018)    | 0.010<br>(.019)   | -0.007<br>(.017)   |

Source: The Center on Philanthropy using data from Knowledge Networks

Notes: Marginal effects are estimated for Probit models.

Robust standard errors are in parenthesis, \*\*\*P<0.001, \*\*P<0.01, \* P<0.05.