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**THE GIVING  
ENVIRONMENT**

GIVING  
TRENDS BY  
RACE AND  
ETHNICITY

NOVEMBER 2023



**IUPUI**

LILLY FAMILY SCHOOL OF PHILANTHROPY



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

### **Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy**

The Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy is dedicated to improving philanthropy to improve the world by training and empowering students and professionals to be innovators and leaders who create positive and lasting change. The school offers a comprehensive approach to philanthropy through its academic, research and international programs, and through The Fund Raising School, Lake Institute on Faith & Giving, Mays Family Institute on Diverse Philanthropy, and Women's Philanthropy Institute. Learn more at <https://philanthropy.iupui.edu/>.

### **The Mays Family Institute on Diverse Philanthropy**

The Mays Family Institute on Diverse Philanthropy fosters a greater understanding of the ways in which underrepresented people are both inspired and informed donors by providing knowledge, education, and training. The Institute seeks to understand the perceptions, practices, experiences, and needs of the individuals and institutions that operationalize philanthropy in historically underrepresented communities and develop programming and services to engage philanthropic practitioners, scholars, and the public at large in conversations and activities to advance this field.

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# INTRODUCTION

**“E Pluribus Unum”** means “Out of Many, One.” This motto was engraved into the United States of America’s founding seal in 1776. It symbolizes the unity of a nation, embracing its diversity of traditions and experiences. This phrase also aligns with the principles of philanthropy, highlighting how the public good is collectively strengthened by many manifestations of giving across diverse communities. Americans of all racial and ethnic backgrounds have demonstrated generosity throughout the centuries, including charitable donations, mutual aid, private transfers, volunteerism, and informal acts of kindness.

Although U.S. households continue to practice generosity, there has been a steady decline in the percentage of households that give to charity since the Great Recession of 2008 (Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2021). Given significant shifts in U.S. demographics, including growing racial and ethnic diversity and an increase in income inequality, it is important to examine how giving rates are changing by racial and ethnic group. Economic downturns and wealth disparities have disproportionately impacted communities of color. As the United States grapples with fostering a more inclusive and equitable society in response to these trends, philanthropy is witnessing substantial transformations as well.

This report aims to expand prior research on the decline of donors in the U.S. by focusing on long-term trends among communities of color. By examining data spanning two decades, the study explores the influence of wealth, income, and trust on giving patterns within communities of color. The main findings of this report come from analyzing the Philanthropy Panel Study (PPS), a longitudinal panel study that surveys households biannually on giving behaviors. The PPS provides information about the long-term giving behaviors among donors and non-donors across racial and ethnic groups. Another data source used for this study is the General Social Survey (GSS). GSS data provides explanatory insights about trust, supplementing the main findings of this report. GSS is a cross-sectional survey focused on people’s general social behaviors and opinions.

Despite its vital role in American economic and social life, philanthropy across diverse communities has not been extensively studied. This lack of in-depth research becomes especially significant amid the uncertainties brought by the post-pandemic economy and the rise of social movements advocating for social and economic equity. To shed light on this important issue, the insights provided in this report offer a valuable opportunity. By analyzing long-term giving rates among different racial and ethnic groups, we can gain a deeper understanding of historical and current giving patterns among communities of color.



## **This analysis allows us to address two overarching questions:**

- 1. How do long-term giving rates vary across different racial and ethnic groups?**
- 2. How do economic factors, demographics, religious participation and affiliation, and trust help explain giving rates among different racial and ethnic groups?**

The report aims to provide an in-depth analysis of overall giving rates and amounts among racial and ethnic groups. We first explore general patterns of charitable giving for both secular and religious causes. Additionally, we apply specific attention to the trends observed among donors.

Building upon these initial findings, we analyze giving factors that may underlie the observed trends, including permanent income, private transfers, and trust. This deeper exploration allows us to uncover potential drivers of charitable contributions and understand how socioeconomic and interpersonal factors may impact philanthropic behavior.

The report also presents with implications of these findings for nonprofit practitioners and scholars. The insights gained from this research can empower organizations to develop engagement and fundraising initiatives that align with the values and preferences of diverse communities, leading to a more impactful and meaningful philanthropic approach.

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## BACKGROUND

Generosity is central to American values. Throughout the centuries, Americans of all racial and ethnic backgrounds have demonstrated generosity—traditions and practices that vary between groups and individuals. For example, giving and receiving between American Indians predates the nation-state, and many American Indians emphasize mutual responsibility and interconnectedness between persons and generations (Berry & Adamson, 2000). Similarly, giving and receiving among Black Americans has its roots in West Africa, where pre-colonial traditions of community and sharing were deeply engrained. Despite enduring the harsh realities of family separation and the brutalities of slavery, these values have persisted and continue to shape the way Black Americans engage in philanthropy (Muhammad, 2021).

Americans give formally and informally. Informal giving includes mutual aid, private transfers, volunteerism, and acts of kindness. Mutual aid represents a form of solidarity-based support, which has been a longstanding form of philanthropic tradition in diverse communities. Private transfers involve direct individual giving to non-household individuals without involving a non-profit intermediary. Formal giving refers to donations made to nonprofit organizations.

While generosity continues to be expressed throughout society, there has been an overall decline in the percentage of U.S. households that give to charity. Between 2000 to 2008, two-thirds of Americans were actively involved in charitable giving. In 2018, this figure reached a record low, with less than half of all households making charitable contributions. The turning point came with the 2008 Great Recession, after which the giving rate has decreased in each subsequent year (Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2019).



Potential explanations for shifting trends in charitable giving include economic and financial conditions, levels of religious participation, alterations in interpersonal and institutional trust, and changes in societal norms and values. Further, the United States is undergoing noticeable demographic shifts, including racial and ethnic diversity and growing income inequality (LeRoux & Feeney, 2014). The wealth divide disproportionately impacts communities of color (Conley, 2009). Social movements to protest economic, gender, and racial inequities have also been gaining influence. As the environmental context shifts, investigating how the overall decline in donors may vary by race and ethnicity can provide insights about whether, how, and why specific trends persist. Even when the need is greatest, giving or the perceived ability to give, is also impacted by economic predictions (Meer et al., 2016). Since racial and ethnic communities may be more adversely affected during economic downturns, (Elsby et al., 2010) it is crucial to understand how giving across communities of color might also be affected.

As the United States becomes increasingly ethnically and racially diverse (ESRI Data Development, 2022), understanding the impacts on communities of color is also important. Before 1875, the United States had an open-door immigration policy, but afterward, the implementation of legal exclusions restricted the entry of specific categories of persons. The 1943 repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the 1965 Hart-Celler Act are turning points in U.S. history. Chinese nationals were permitted to immigrate, and quotas based on racial and national origin were subsequently eliminated, permitting new migrants from previously restricted regions, including sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>1</sup> Following these legal changes, patterns of U.S. immigration have shifted, with Asian Americans categorically increasing at the highest rate (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). More recently, the Hispanic American<sup>2</sup> population has grown to be the second largest in the country, accounting for 19 percent of the total U.S. population (Cary & Lopez, 2022).

Research about communities of color reveals that philanthropy is often rooted in faith and religious orientation, as well as values of kinship, empowerment, and social safety nets (Freeman, 2020). During the pandemic, for example, the Navajo Nation expanded its social safety net through trust-based collaborative efforts to support access to clean water, while establishing parameters to maintain respect for the leadership and values of the Nation.

Among specific communities, family, kinship, caretaking, self-help, and religion are often central to philanthropy (Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2021). U.S. Muslims and beyond, for example, often engage in philanthropy as a divine calling and pillar of faith, whereas Hinduism emphasizes self-disinterest alongside the intention and manner of giving a gift (Mittermaier, 2019).

Research about religious participation and attendance has been linked with varying degrees of prosocial behaviors (Gruber & Hungerman, 2015). Religious affiliation is also linked with distinctive giving patterns. For example, some research suggests that when compared to the

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<sup>1</sup> Not all forms of exclusionary criteria have been eliminated from immigration laws. Further, ongoing and recent immigration and refugee admission policies and practices continue to impact the entry of persons from certain nationalities and backgrounds. Bolter, J. (2022, Jan. 6). *Immigration has been a defining, often contentious, element throughout U.S. history*. Migration Policy Institute. Available at <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/immigration-shaped-united-states-history>

<sup>2</sup> We have used the term 'Hispanic American' as per the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) that defines 'Hispanic American' as "Spanish, Hispanic Americans, or Latino. That is, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and/or other Spanish."

general population, some faith traditions are less likely than the rest of the population to give monetary donations, including to the church (Starks & Smith, 2013). Recent research on U.S. Muslims suggests that they may have broader conceptualizations of philanthropy, beyond monetary giving (Siddiqui et al., 2022).

Further, the emergence of new giving channels, like crowdfunding and social media, have attracted donors of color (Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2021). Overall, diverse donors primarily rely on giving through personal connections, directly to others, and through giving vehicles such as online platforms and giving circles (Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2021).

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## KEY FINDINGS

*The Giving Environment: Giving Trends by Race and Ethnicity* report augments previous research about declining donors in the United States by utilizing the Philanthropy Panel Study (PPS) and the General Social Survey (GSS) datasets. Key findings from our analysis are shared below:

- 1. Giving rates decreased among all racial and ethnic groups, but the timing and extent of the decline varied.**

Although Americans of all racial and ethnic backgrounds have demonstrated generosity throughout history, our analysis notes a decline in giving rates across all racial and ethnic groups. Notably, we observe differences in the timing of these shifts among the ethnic and racial groups included in this study. The percentage of American households that gave to religious congregations and secular causes also declined across all groups, with a greater variation in giving to secular causes.

While it is true that overall giving rates declined, the actual picture is more nuanced. Age, education, gender, marital status, income, and wealth all play important roles in determining the giving rate, which refers to the proportion of households engaged in making charitable contributions. Race and ethnicity also influence giving patterns.

The study reveals an overall decline in giving rate to both secular causes and religious congregations across racial and ethnic groups. However, the decline in giving to religious congregations appears to be greater. From 2000 to 2018, all groups experienced declines in religious giving rates, ranging from 15 to 25 percentage points. In regression analysis, when accounting for other factors, White Americans<sup>3</sup> displayed higher giving rates than non-White Americans, except for Asian Americans in some years. Hispanic Americans were less likely to give to congregations than "all other racial groups" (see details in footnote 7 in the Methods section on page 13). There were no statistical differences observed among the remaining racial groups.

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<sup>3</sup> Not including Hispanic Americans.



Furthermore, amidst the overall decline in giving rate, there are some upward trends to consider. For instance, except for White Americans, the other racial and ethnic groups in this study increased secular giving as a proportion of their income between 2000 and 2018.

## **2. Economic and non-economic factors contribute to the decline in giving rate.**

The decline in overall giving rates can be attributed, in part, to changes in the economic landscape, including income and wealth shocks associated with the Great Recession. In the post-recession era, American households experienced a turning point in the economy, characterized by rising rates of income and wealth inequality (Kochhar & Cilluffo, 2017). The effects of the economic downturn were not felt uniformly across racial and ethnic groups. From 2008 to 2018, giving rates among Hispanic American and Asian American households declined by 23 and 21 percentage points, respectively. Giving rates among Black American, White American, and American Indian households declined by 14, 13, and 7 percentage points, respectively.

Apart from economic factors, the impact of political and social movements and changes in religious affiliation also contribute to the decline in giving rates. Looking ahead, as the United States continues to face economic uncertainties and growing concerns for social justice, these factors are likely to shape future trends of generosity within communities of color.

Recent social movements support a broader definition of philanthropy that extends beyond formal giving. Previous research indicates that donors from all racial and ethnic backgrounds engage in informal giving, with a notable emphasis of long-standing traditions within communities of color (Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2021). This perspective of philanthropy appreciates actions such as volunteering time, advocacy, and private transfers. Private transfers, or in other words, giving to non-household members, have fluctuated but generally declined between 2008 and 2018 among all racial and ethnic groups except American Indians. Despite maintaining some of the lowest levels of permanent household income between 2008 and 2018, American Indian engagement with private transfers has remained stable.

Another explanation for the decline in donors points to a gradual decrease in interpersonal trust over time among all the other racial and ethnic groups in this study to varying degrees. Interpersonal trust is associated with higher levels of civic engagement, political participation, and social capital. Additionally, trust in institutions, such as religious charitable organizations, differs among racial and ethnic groups, potentially influencing their giving behavior (Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2023).

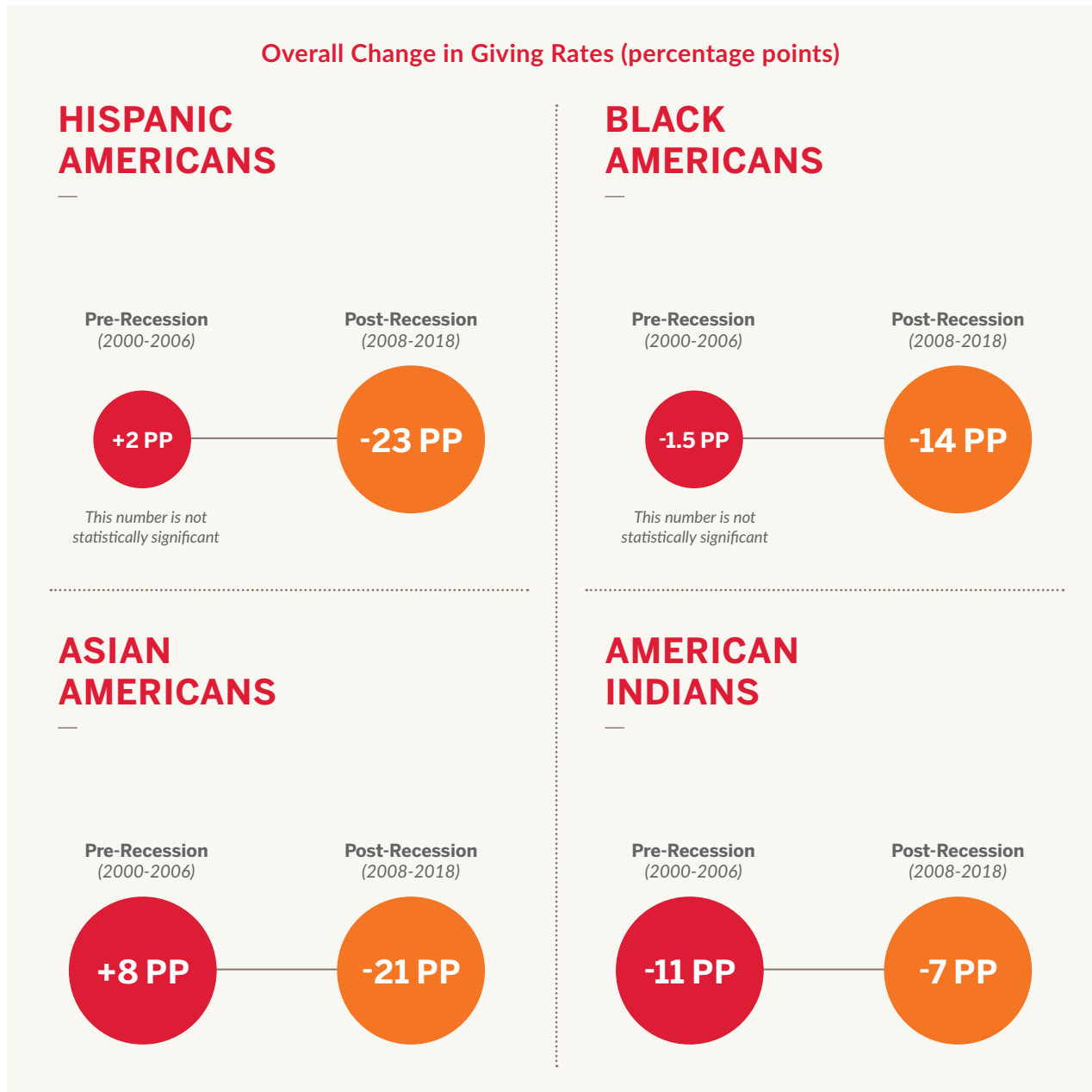
## **3. Giving patterns vary across racial and ethnic groups.**

Giving patterns exhibit variations across racial and ethnic groups, reflecting the diverse cultural, social, and economic context within each community.



## OVERALL GIVING ACROSS RACIAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS

Before the recession, the most substantial decline in overall giving rates was observed in American Indian households, decreasing by 11 percentage points. However, following the recession, this decline lessened to 7 percentage points, signifying the smallest decrease among racial and ethnic groups. In contrast, prior to the recession, Asian American overall giving rates demonstrated a notable rise of 8 percentage points, which represented the highest increase across all groups. After the recession, Asian Americans encountered a substantial decline of 21 percentage points in overall giving rates, constituting the most significant reduction across all groups, except for Hispanic Americans who experienced a 23 percentage point decrease.



## RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR CAUSE GIVING RATES (2000-2018)

Household giving rates to religious congregations remained relatively stable for most racial and ethnic groups before the recession, and declined steadily after the recession. Giving rates to secular causes also saw a decline among all groups after the recession.

### Religious and Secular Causes Giving Rates between 2000-2018 in Percentage Points (PP)

#### HISPANIC AMERICANS

Religious Giving  
(2000-2018)

-18 PP

Secular Giving  
(2000-2018)

-11 PP

#### BLACK AMERICANS

Religious Giving  
(2000-2018)

-17 PP

Secular Giving  
(2000-2018)

-11 PP

#### ASIAN AMERICANS

Religious Giving  
(2000-2018)

-17 PP

Secular Giving  
(2000-2018)

-6 PP

#### AMERICAN INDIANS

Religious Giving  
(2000-2018)

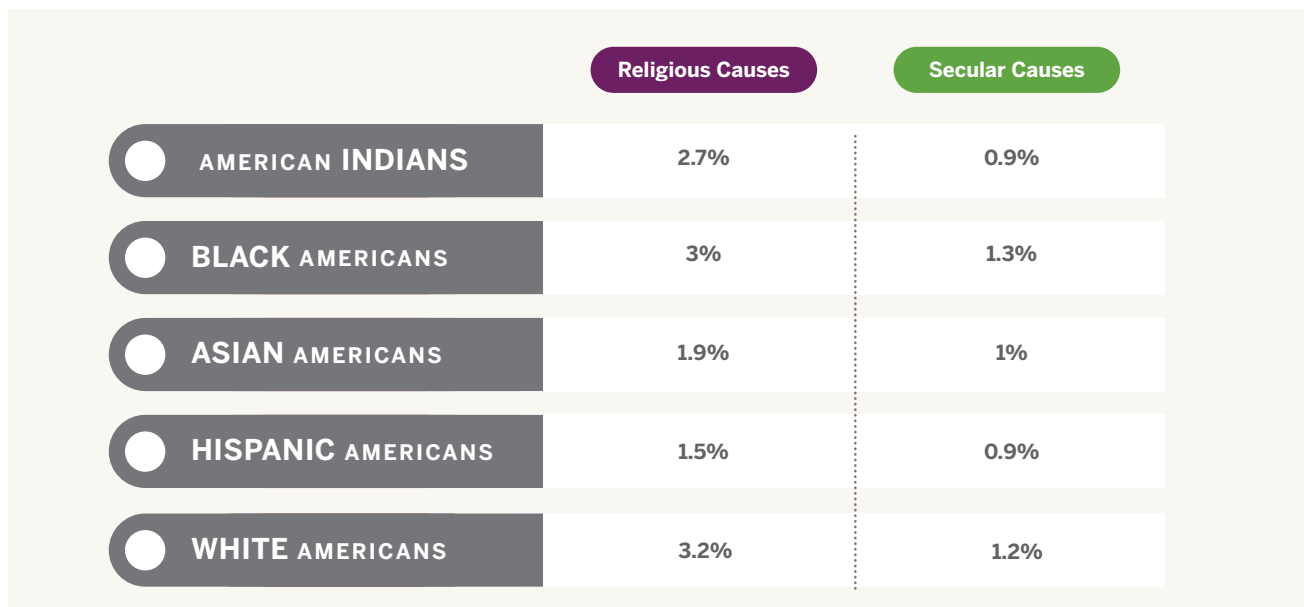
-25 PP

Secular Giving  
(2000-2018)

-24 PP

## GIVING AS A PERCENTAGE OF INCOME (2018)

Black Americans donated a higher percentage of their income to religious congregations and secular causes in 2018 than all other racial groups, except for White Americans.



## METHODS

### DATASETS

#### Philanthropy Panel Study (PPS)

The main findings of this report are based on the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy's Philanthropy Panel Study (PPS). PPS is the generosity module of the longitudinal panel study of the University of Michigan's Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID). PSID was launched in 1968 and is the longest-running longitudinal survey among U.S. households. It offers a nationally representative sample for the U.S. general population, initially including more than 18,000 individuals and 5,000 households. In 1997, samples were updated to reflect the changes in immigrant demographics. More specifically, two major changes were made: 1) the core sample was reduced, and 2) a refresher sample totaling 511 households was introduced to better reflect post-1968 immigration demographics. With acknowledgment of the changing immigration demographics in terms of size and composition, PSID undertook a major project to refresh the 2017 immigrant sample.<sup>4</sup> The main goal of these multiple changes was to provide a nationally representative sample; these changes did not oversample for any one specific subgroup. PSID data is publicly available to all researchers.

<sup>4</sup> Additional details about the 2017 refresher sample can be found at <http://paa2019.populationassociation.org/uploads/193864>



The PPS, a submodule of the PSID, dates back to 2000. The study follows the same households over time, which allows researchers to examine changes in giving behavior within individuals, households, and families. Therefore, young adults who had newly started their own families are included in the PPS study, and it also allows for families to be linked across generations. The PPS also records information about donors' racial and ethnic backgrounds. Participants answer biennial surveys during odd years about giving behaviors from the previous even year. For example, the 2003 wave of PPS focused on charitable giving in 2002. In each wave, the PPS asks respondents various questions regarding charitable giving. Questions include whether they donated to charitable and nonprofit organizations in the previous year, how much they donated, and to which causes they donated. Donations include money, assets, property, or other goods; political contributions are excluded.

Charitable organizations include both religious congregations and secular organizations. Religious congregations include places of worship and other organizations specifically focused on religious or spiritual development. In this report, giving to religious congregations is referred to as religious giving. The core mission of secular organizations is to help communities and people in need, provide healthcare, education, youth services, arts, and culture, improve communities, provide international aid, preserve the environment, or engage in social advocacy. While many religious congregations also provide these resources, their primary mission is a religious one. Giving to secular organizations is referred to as secular giving that does not have religious affiliations.

This study examines charitable giving trends between 2000 and 2018, analyzing the change in overall giving rates and amounts over time by race and ethnicity. It also explores the changes in religious and secular giving by race and ethnicity from 2000 to 2018.

## **General Social Survey (GSS)**

We turn to the General Social Survey (GSS) to understand trust and its implications for giving trends. GSS is a cross-sectional survey focused on people's general social behaviors and opinions. Data on giving is gathered in two different ways. There are four waves that ask about giving incidence (2002, 2004, 2012, and 2014), two of which (2012 and 2014) ask about giving amounts. Each wave includes approximately 2,000 to 3,000 respondents.

A key strength of the GSS is that it includes general attitudinal questions, including a wide array of questions about people's opinions on various social trends, political thoughts, values, and beliefs. These variables can provide useful measures of the role of beliefs and attitudes and their relationship to giving patterns.

The GSS has limited information on income and wealth. In addition, the GSS questions on giving are different from questions included in other surveys. Whereas other surveys ask about whether individuals give or not, the GSS only asks about frequency of giving.

## Regression Analysis

We also conducted regression analysis, which allows us to investigate how race and ethnicity are associated with giving rate and giving amount, while holding income, wealth, education, and other household characteristics constant. In all regression models, we controlled for age, marital status, education levels, employment status, religious affiliation, health status, permanent family income,<sup>5</sup> and wealth, as well as state and year dummy variables. All our models used pooled ordinary least squares with standard errors clustered at the individual level.<sup>6</sup> In all regressions, we include Black Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, American Indians and White Non-Hispanic Americans. The remaining racial/ethnic groups are classified as “all other racial groups”<sup>7</sup> and are used as the reference group.

<sup>5</sup> We define permanent income as average family income in the past three available waves of PPS data. This provides a more accurate measure of family economic status.

<sup>6</sup> Probit and Tobit models are also conducted for binary and continuous outcome variables respectively, and the marginal effects are comparable with ordinary least squares (OLS) regression results.

<sup>7</sup> “All other racial group” category refers to those who are not identified as White Americans, Black Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, and American Indians. This category includes people who are mixed race, and also those with missing information.



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# RESULTS

## TRENDS ON BLACK PHILANTHROPY AND THE ROLE OF RELIGION

*Written by Dr. Stephanie Boddie, Associate Professor of Church and Community Ministries, Baylor University*

The generous roots of Black philanthropy have grown deep in the soil of adversity and social necessities. Religion has played a significant role in nurturing the traditions of Black philanthropy during the slavery era, the Jim Crow era, and the Civil Rights movement to the present. In many ways, Black religion has operated independently from dominant structures and garnered major support from the Black community. Hence, Black-led and Black-owned congregations have been the primary institutions for philanthropic work since the eighteenth century (Carson, 1993; Gates, 2021; Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990). Black congregations have served as a type of “community foundation” able to receive donations to meet a wide range of community needs (Franklin, 2005; p. 5; Joseph, 1991, p. 5). This practice of philanthropy at the intersection of religion reflects a response to God to share one’s resources (Bagby, 2022; Boddie & Thirupathy, 2005). Richard Allen, the founder of the first African Methodist Episcopal church in 1794, lived the gospel of giving and insisted his followers also give as a Christian duty toward family, friend, or foe (Dickerson, 2020; Freeman, 2020; Newman, 2008). Lesser-known Black American philanthropist Bridget “Bidly” Mason, a midwife, entrepreneur, and founder of First African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Los Angeles, also supported efforts to feed the homeless, care for the sick, and provide for orphans (Ashley, Macon, and Jiles, 2021). African American Muslim Imam Wali Akram’s philanthropic vision spawned investment clubs to help those economically disenfranchised to gain the economic power to start businesses (Bagby, 2022). The tradition of Black philanthropy through which members of congregations pool resources

and resist injustices and oppression, promotes giving as relief, improvement, social reform, civic engagement, and repair (Bagby, 2022; Boddie, 2022; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Lynn & Wisely, 2006).

As one of the first to document Black church philanthropy at the beginning of the twentieth century, Du Bois (1903) found that Baptist churches were supporting some 980 schools and 18 academies and colleges. The AME Church raised over \$1 million to support twenty-two institutions providing post-elementary education. Giving by Black Americans continues to be linked to religion (Barnes, 2013). According to the Pew Research Center, Black households continue to be more religious than other U.S. households (Mohamed, Cox, Diamant, & Gecewicz, 2021). Overall, Black households give 25 percent more of their income than White American households (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2013). Despite the structural barriers to building wealth and the persistent racial wealth gap (McKay, 2022; Derenoncourt, Kim, Moritz, & Schularick, 2022), Black households also give a greater share of their wealth than White American households (Ashley & James, 2018). Most notably, during the pandemic, Black households (50 percent) were more likely to give to religious organizations than Hispanic (41 percent), White American (38 percent), and Asian households (30 percent) (Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2021). Such patterns of Black giving have resulted in initiatives like the Alfred Street Church’s Tithe-the-Tithe Initiative, which has donated millions to non-profits (Blair, 2020), Deliverance Evangelistic Church of Philadelphia partnering with Dr. Ala Sanford to house her Center for Health Equity (Donyea, 2021), and the National Black Muslim COVID Coalition (Owens, 2020). Black congregations have not been immune to shrinking, and Black giving has decreased in this generation compared to past generations (Mohamed, Cox, Diamant, and Gecewicz, 2021; Stephens, 2023). However, Black giving remains strong (Ashley & James, 2018), particularly religious giving.



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## PART 1: GIVING TRENDS (2000–2018)

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**In this section, we present an analysis of overall giving patterns, with a specific emphasis on long-term giving rate trends across different racial and ethnic groups. The study explores general patterns, including giving rate and giving amount, religious giving, and secular giving.**

### Descriptive Statistics

Other than racial and ethnic backgrounds, several demographic and economic factors are linked closely with charitable giving. We begin by summarizing the household and demographic characteristics associated with giving patterns.

Factors associated with higher giving rates and amounts include giving to religious and secular causes, age, education, marital status, wealth, ability, employment, and self-reported health. For example, an education level of high school or above is linked to increased giving rate, including giving to religious congregations and secular causes. Some of these factors, however, were less closely associated with private transfers. For private transfers, the number of children, gender, marital status, and retirement status are positively associated with higher giving rates and higher amounts of private transfers. Income and wealth were linked with higher rates of giving to both charitable organizations and private transfers.

### CHANGES IN HOUSEHOLD GIVING RATE

We use PPS and GSS data from 2000 to 2018 to evaluate overall giving rates among different racial and ethnic households. These findings include donor and non-donor households. Giving data is available in PPS from 2000 to 2018 in even years and in GSS in the years 2002, 2004, 2012 and 2014. We find an overall decline with variations between years and among groups (Figures 1 and 2). These variations are more pronounced in the PPS data.

We first discuss trends before the 2008 Great Recession. Before the recession, giving rates by Black American and American Indian households declined, giving rates among Asian American and Hispanic American households increased, while giving rates among White American households remained steady. Of note, Asian American households experienced an 11 percentage point increase in giving rate between 2000 and 2002, the largest increase of all groups during the entire examined period.

We next examine household giving rate in the years immediately prior to and after the recession. Giving rates among Asian Americans, Black Americans, and American Indians remained fairly constant. Hispanic Americans and White Americans, on the other hand, saw an increase in giving rates. Prior research suggests that some households may have increased their giving in response to needs during the Great Recession (Chappell, B., 2014).

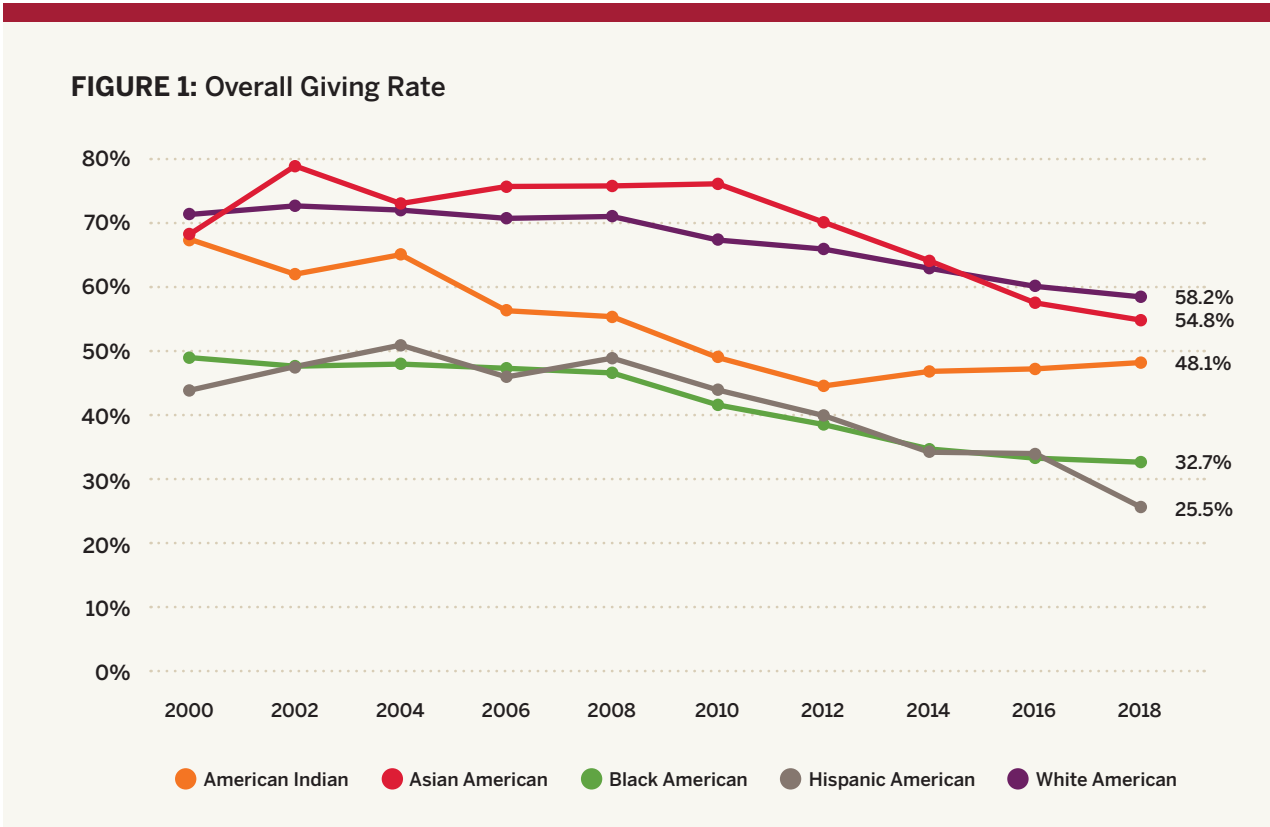
From 2008 to the 2018, giving rates across almost all racial and ethnic households declined in each year measured, although at different rates. During this period, giving rates among Hispanic American households and Asian American households declined by 23 and 21 percentage points,



respectively, while giving rates among Black American, White American, and American Indian households declined by 14, 13, and 7 percentage points, respectively. With economic recovery, there was more stability in giving rates for some racial and ethnic groups.

The GSS data also demonstrates an overall decline in giving rates across all racial and ethnic households. The GSS is a cross-sectional survey examining the public's general social behaviors and opinions. Four waves of GSS Data (2002, 2004, 2012, and 2014) asked about individuals' giving behaviors. Figure 2 shows that from 2004 to 2012, the overall giving rate declined for all racial and ethnic groups.

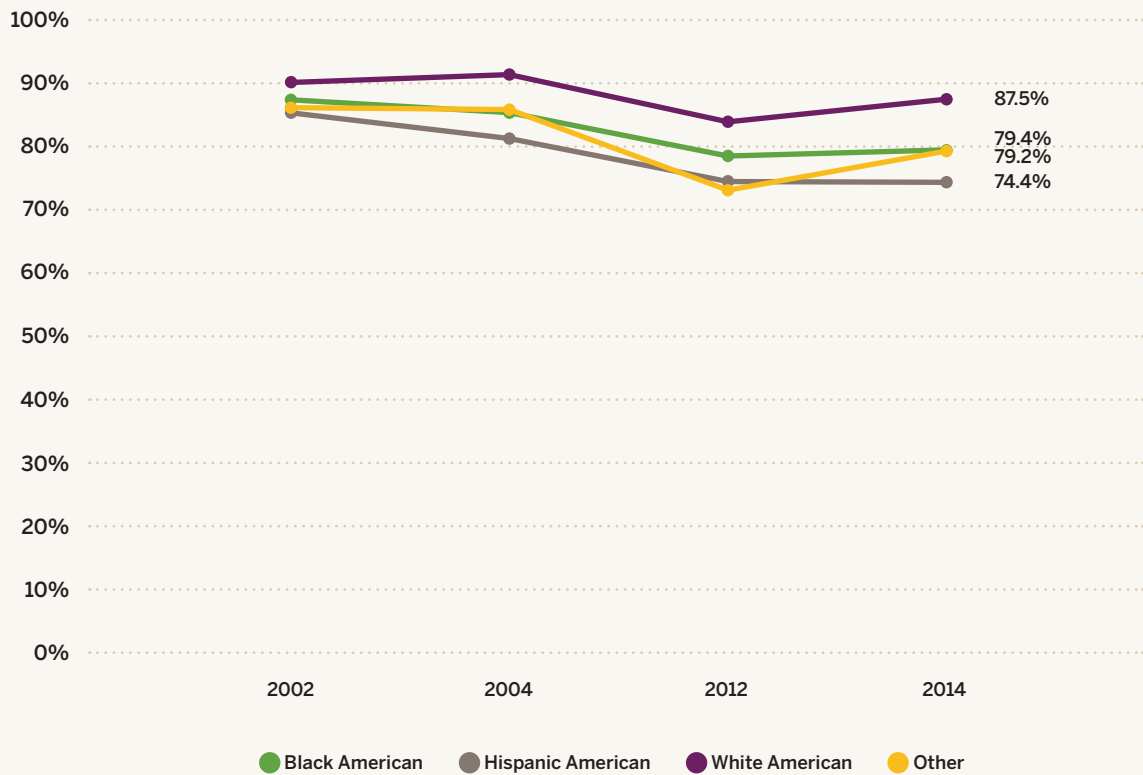
In regression analysis, when holding other factors constant, compared with "all other racial groups" (see details in footnote 7 on page 13), White Americans were more likely to give before the recession and Hispanic Americans were less likely to give after the recession. Both of these findings were only statistically significant at the 10 percent level. The results are consistent with descriptive summary statistics shown in Figure 1, although the gaps were much narrower in regression analysis. For example, the giving rate for Hispanic Americans was roughly 20 percentage points lower than the giving rate among White Americans, whereas the difference is 9 percentage points when controlling for other factors in regression analysis.



Data Source: Philanthropy Panel Study, Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy



**FIGURE 2: Overall Giving Rate**



Data Source: General Social Survey, NORC at the University of Chicago

## CHANGES IN HOUSEHOLD GIVING TO RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS AND SECULAR CAUSES

After exploring the overall giving rates, our research shifts its focus toward comparing religious and secular giving across racial and ethnic groups. Earlier research indicates that charitable donations to religious congregations have witnessed a more substantial decline over the past few decades compared to other sectors. Despite this decline, religious congregations continue to receive the largest share of charitable donations (Giving USA Foundation, 2023). In this section, we review giving trends specific to racial and ethnic groups. By undertaking this analysis, we seek to gain insights into how religious giving and secular giving are evolving in communities of color.



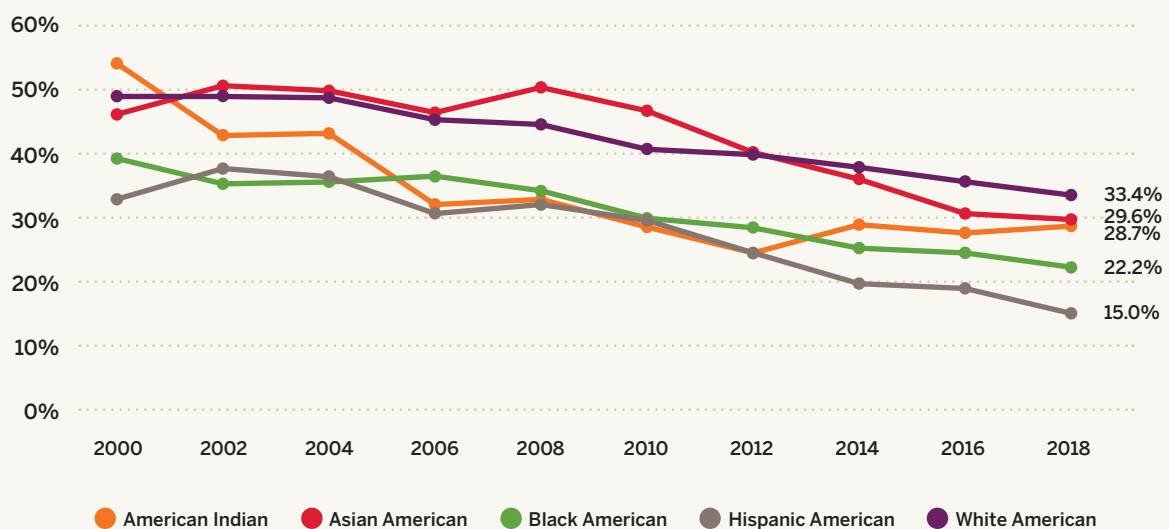
## Giving Rates to Religious Congregations

Religious values are a well-recognized motivation for giving (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011). Many religious traditions prescribe and engage in rich traditions of giving, including Christian tithing, Buddhist almsgiving, Islamic zakat and sadaqa, and Jewish tzedakah (Ilchman et al., 1998). At the same time, there is an observable rise in individuals not affiliated with a religion (Smith, 2021). In prior research comparing giving to secular and religious causes, giving rates to both causes were down with a sharper decline for giving to religious congregations (Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2021).

We use PPS data to evaluate the incidence of household giving to religious congregations among different racial and ethnic groups over two decades. Overall, we see a decline in household giving rates to religious congregations across all groups, similar to findings in previous studies (Figure 3). Before the recession, the giving rates for most racial and ethnic groups remained relatively stable. After the recession, giving rates steadily declined. In this study, we observed giving rate declines between 15 and 25 percentage points for all groups between 2000 and 2018. For example, Hispanic American households had a decrease of 18 percentage points.

In regression analysis, holding other factors constant, Hispanic Americans were less likely to give to congregations than "all other racial groups" (see details in footnote 7 on page 13), both before and after the Great Recession. There were no statistical differences among other racial groups.

**FIGURE 3: Religious Giving Rate**

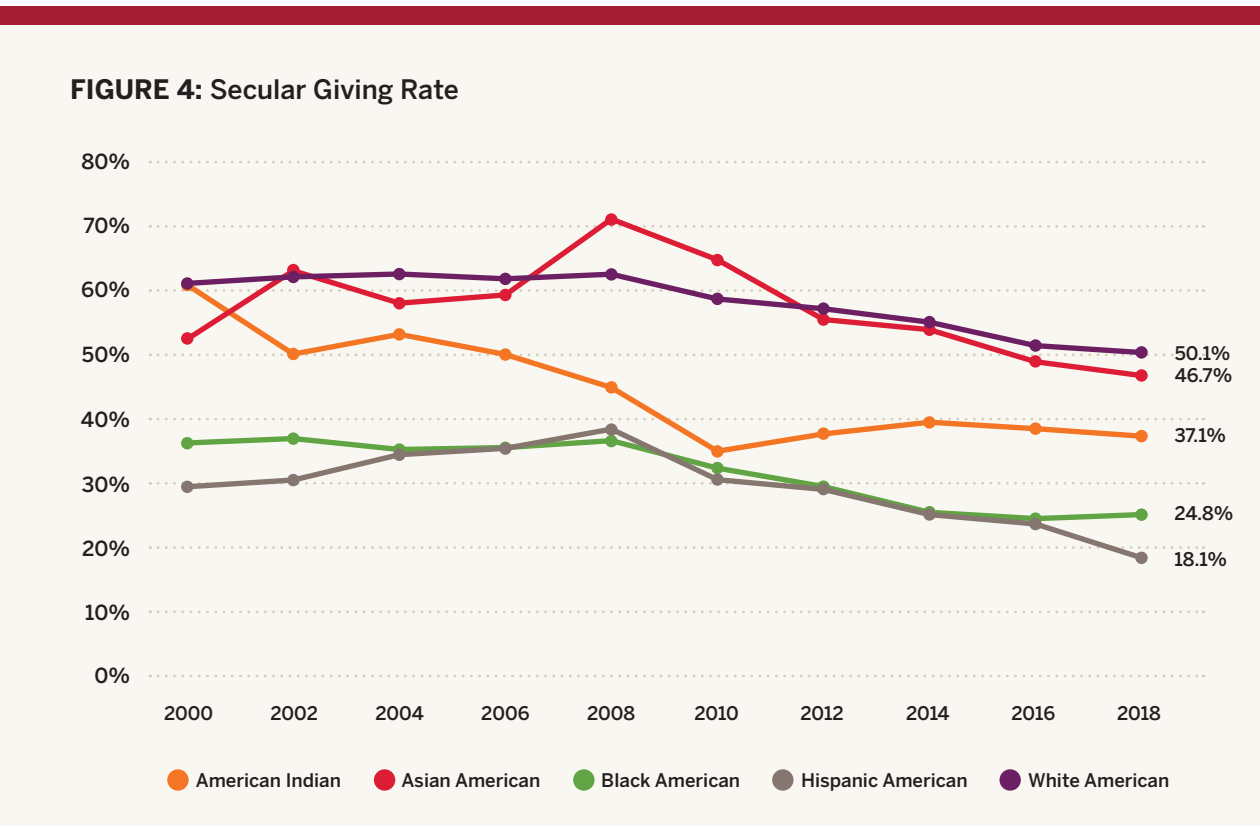


Data Source: Philanthropy Panel Study, Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy

## Giving Rates to Secular Causes

We use PPS data to evaluate secular giving rates among different racial and ethnic households between 2000 and 2018. Overall, we observe secular giving rates also declined during this period for all groups (Figure 4). Until 2008, secular giving rates grew or remained steady among all groups apart from American Indians. From 2008 to 2018, secular giving rates declined among all groups at varying degrees. Giving to secular causes by Asian American households decreased 6 percentage points from 2000 to 2018, making it the smallest total decline of all racial and ethnic groups. During the same time period, secular cause giving rates for American Indian and Black American households declined 24 and 11 percentage points, respectively.

In regression analysis, the gaps were smaller compared with those in raw statistics. The decline in giving rates to secular causes is relatively less severe compared to the decline observed in religious giving.



Data Source: Philanthropy Panel Study, Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy



## CHANGES IN AVERAGE GIVING AMOUNTS

Utilizing PPS data, our research next focuses on average giving amounts to charitable organizations from 2000 to 2018.

### Overall Giving Amounts

To provide insight into giving amount trends, we use PPS data to understand how giving fluctuated among donors only (Figure A2). Excluding non-donors from the analysis helps reduce the effect of zero-dollar donations.

In contrast to a consistent and sharp decline observed when we include non-donors (Figure A1), a different picture emerges when we focus on donors only. Among donors, most racial groups donated a similar or slightly lesser amount of money in 2018 compared with 2000, except for Asian Americans who gave 34 percentage points less.

To compare giving amounts among racial and ethnic groups, we use regression analysis. We control for factors described on page 13 and use “all other racial groups” as the reference group (see details in footnote 7 on page 13). Holding other factors constant, Hispanic Americans gave significantly less than “all other racial groups”, both before and after the recession (Table 2). Asian Americans gave significantly less than “all other racial groups” too but only before the recession. White Americans, Black Americans and American Indians did not give significantly differently than each other either before or after the recession.

### Giving Amounts to Religious Congregations

We next focus on giving patterns to religious congregations among donors only, excluding non-donors from the analysis. Using PPS data on giving to religious congregations, we find more subtle distinctions in giving (Figure A4). There are no statistical differences in giving amounts to congregations in 2018 compared to 2000 for White Americans, American Indians and Black Americans. Asian Americans and Hispanic Americans, on the other hand, gave significantly less in 2018 compared to 2000.

In regression analysis on giving amounts to religious congregations, holding other factors constant, Hispanic Americans gave significantly less than “all other racial groups”, but only after recession. Black Americans, on the other hand, gave significantly more than “all other racial groups” before the recession. There are no statistically significant difference in giving amounts to congregations among Asian Americans, White Americans and American Indians (Table 4). This trend might be partially explained by the central role of religious congregations as spaces for solidarity and movement work amongst Black Americans (Mohamed et al., 2021). Understanding the giving patterns within this demographic necessitates considering broader contextual factors, such as immigration status and religious affiliation, which also play a role in shaping donations to religious congregations. About a third of Hispanic Americans identify as immigrants and the majority of Hispanic Americans identify as Catholic. Research suggests that Catholics are less likely to donate than other Christian denominations (Funk & Martinez, 2014).

## Giving Amounts to Secular Causes

We turn toward PPS data to understand how secular giving fluctuated among donors only (Figure A6). Overall, there is no significant decline in giving amounts to secular causes between 2000 and 2018 for all racial groups. However, it is worth noting that Asian Americans gave significantly more in 2012, primarily driven by a single major donor.

In regression analysis on giving amounts to secular purposes (Table 6), we found that both Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans gave significantly less than “all other racial groups” (see details in footnote 7 on page 13) before the recession.



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## PART 2: UNDERSTANDING GIVING TRENDS (2000 – 2018)

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**In this section, we explore factors that may influence the giving trends observed in Part 1. More specifically, our focus is towards exploring the associations between giving patterns and three key variables: permanent income, private transfers, and interpersonal and institutional trust.**

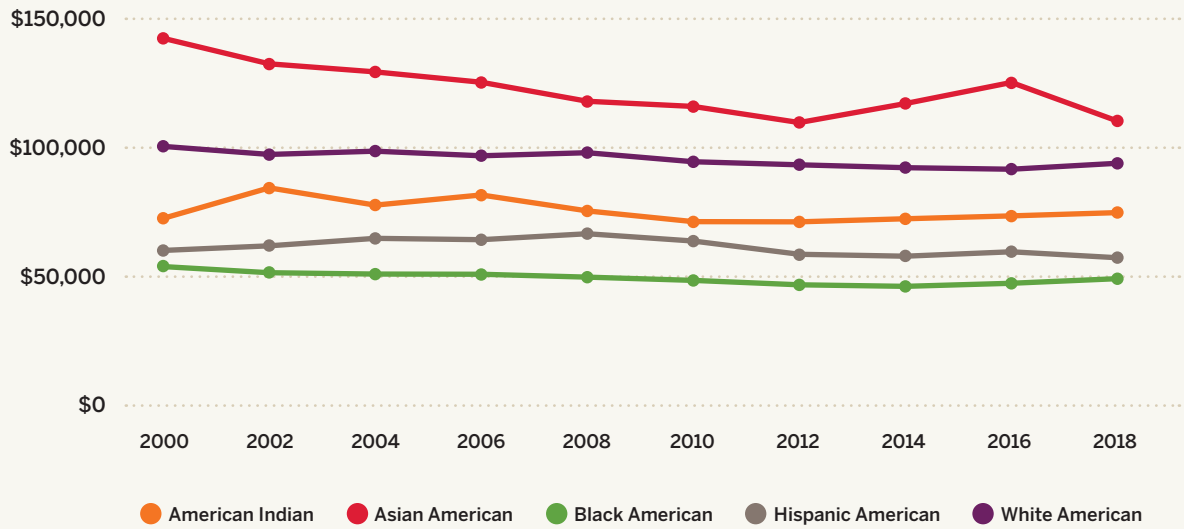
### Income and Giving Amounts

Previous research has shown that giving amounts are directly correlated with donor income levels (Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2019). Using PPS data, we examine the relationship between donor income levels and racial and ethnic groups (Figure 5). We use permanent income in this analysis because it is less influenced by economic and life cycle shocks.

Asian Americans have the highest average income between 2000 and 2018, followed by White Americans. However, despite having one of the lowest average household incomes, Black Americans gave a higher percentage of their income to charity than Asian Americans and Hispanic Americans in most of the years between 2000 and 2018. Between these years, Black Americans donated 3 to 4 percent of their income to charity on average.

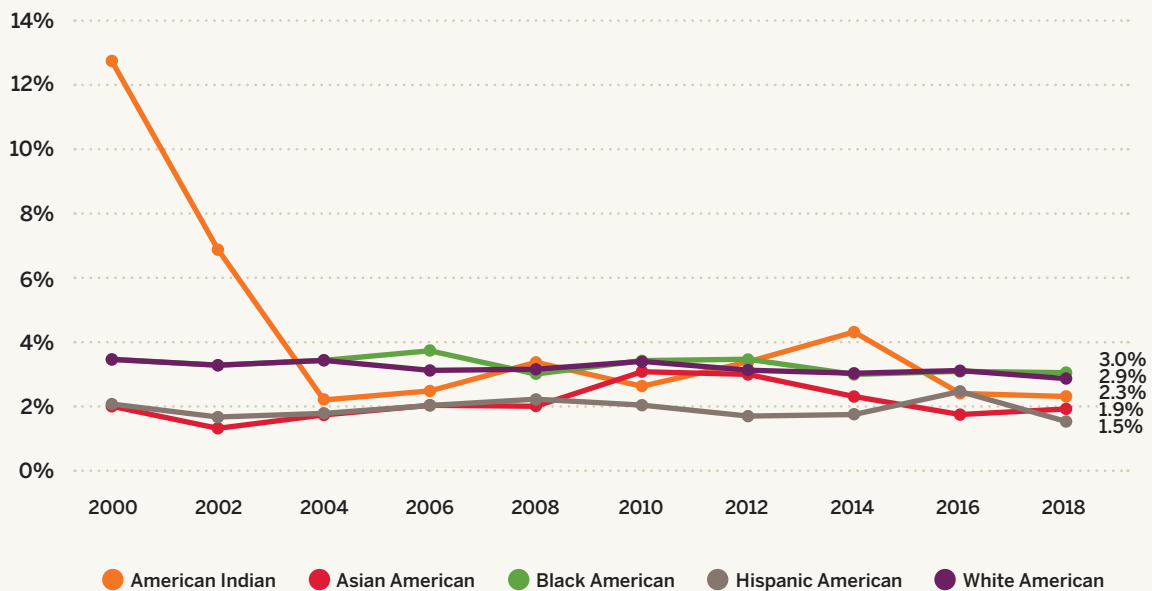


**FIGURE 5: . Permanent Income by Race/Ethnicity**



Data Source: Philanthropy Panel Study, Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy

**FIGURE 6: Overall Giving as A Percentage of Income by Race/Ethnicity**

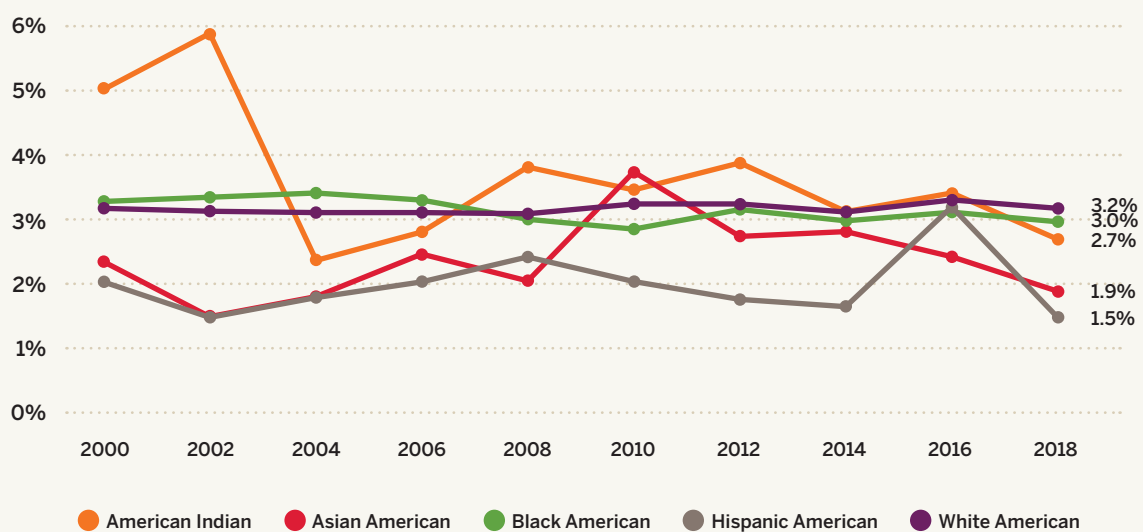


Data Source: Philanthropy Panel Study, Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy  
 Note: Overall giving as a percentage of income from American Indians had a large decline from 2000 to 2004 due to one big outlier and its very small sample size.

We next compare overall giving as a percentage of income for religious and secular causes to determine whether this analysis might provide further distinction. Race and ethnic backgrounds were not found to be significantly associated with giving to religious congregations either prior to or after the recession. We find that giving as a percentage of income to religious congregations declined across all racial and ethnic groups in the last two decades, with the exception of White Americans whose giving remained constant (Figure 7). After the recession, race and ethnicity were less closely associated with changes in giving to religious congregations as a percentage of income.

The trends in secular giving exhibited a contrast when compared to the trends for religious giving. Individuals spent a higher percentage of income on religious congregations than secular causes (Figure 8). For example, in 2000, Black Americans gave about 3.3 percent of their income to religious congregations compared to 1.1 percent to secular causes. Asian Americans gave 2.3 percent of their income to religious congregations and 0.57 percent to secular causes.

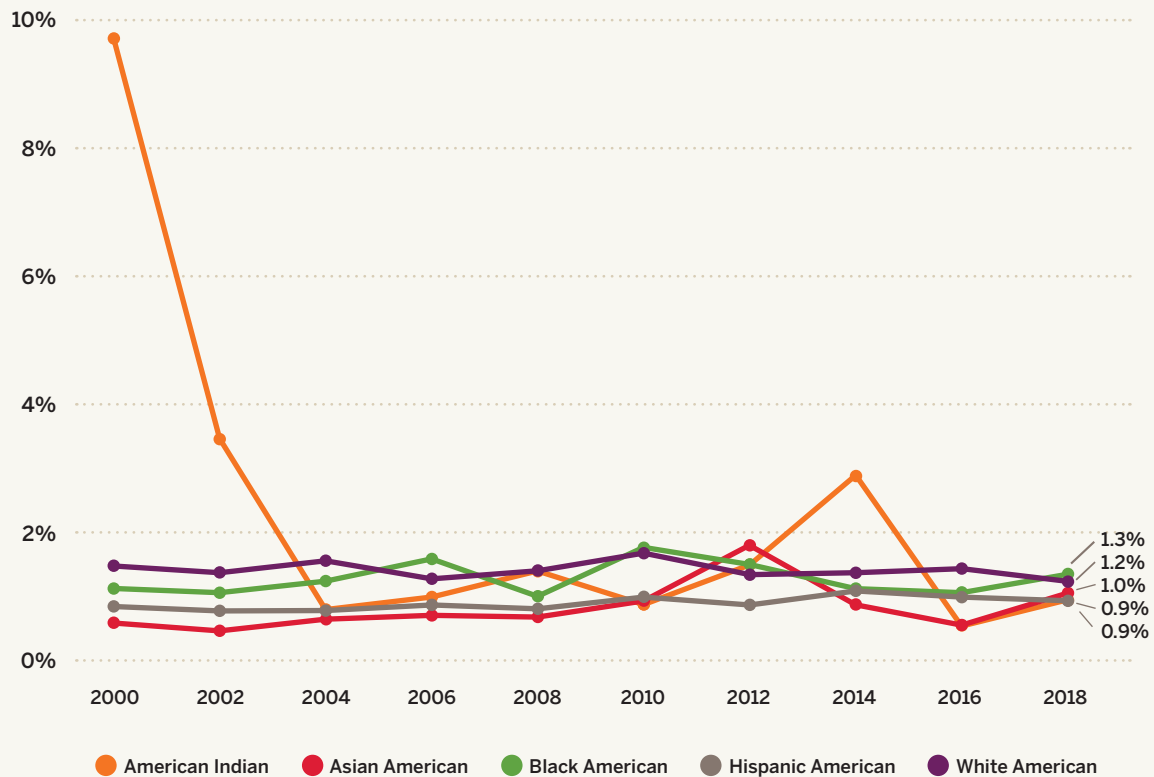
**FIGURE 7: Religious Giving as A Percentage of Income by Race/Ethnicity**



Data Source: Philanthropy Panel Study, Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy



**FIGURE 8: Secular Giving as A Percentage of Income by Race/Ethnicity**



Data Source: Philanthropy Panel Study, Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy  
 Note: Secular giving as a percentage of income from American Indians had a large decline from 2000 to 2004 due to one big outlier and its very small sample size.

### Private Transfers

Prior research indicates that communities of color often have broader conceptualizations of philanthropy that go beyond formal giving (Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2021). Thus, we next turn to private transfers as a possible explanation for the overall decline in formal giving across racial and ethnic groups.

Giving by private transfer fluctuated between 2000 and 2018 among all racial and ethnic groups, but generally declined after the recession except for American Indians.



Recent studies on private transfers and mutual aid suggest that racial and ethnic backgrounds may provide important contexts for certain informal ways of giving. On average, Black American, American Indian, and Hispanic American groups have maintained the lowest levels of permanent household income between 2000 and 2018 (Figure A7), which is a crucial point to consider when examining the significance of private transfers to these groups (Schreiner Wertz, 2022). Wealth inequality among racial groups primarily stems from variations in assets, rather than differences in debts. As the economy rebounded from the recession, the gains in financial markets were unevenly shared among American households (Addo & Darity, 2021).

The persistent difficulty for communities of color in building wealth over generations remains a key obstacle to their economic progress. For instance, the racial wealth gap between Black American and White American households is the largest of the economic disparities with a White-to-Black per capita wealth ratio of 6 to 1. This gap has shown strong stability over the last several decades, with no sign of further convergence (Derenoncourt et al., 2023). Familial wealth transfers continue to contribute significantly to sustaining racial wealth inequality. A higher proportion of White American households are expected to receive wealth from their parents and grandparents. (Addo & Darity, 2021). Thus, future studies might help better explain the relationships between wealth, household income, racial and ethnic groups, and various forms of informal giving.

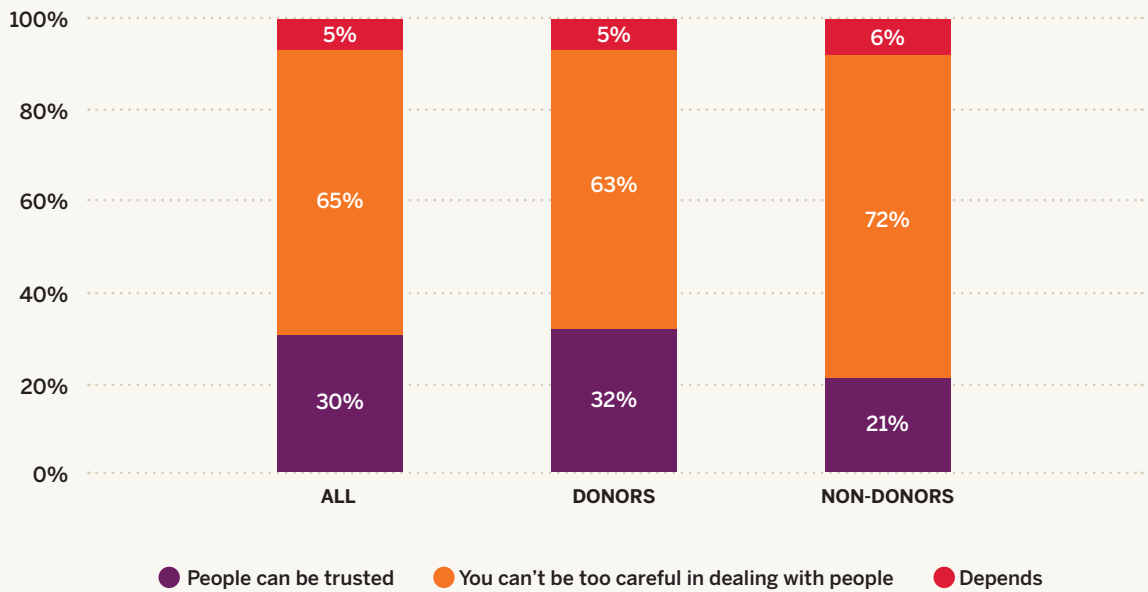
### **Interpersonal Trust, Institutional Trust, and Giving**

Prior research has indicated that interpersonal trust may have implications for giving (Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2021). It has also been closely correlated with civic engagement, political participation, and social capital (Clark & Eisenstein, 2013). Interpersonal trust is generally defined as a person believing that other people can be trusted. In this report, we explore how interpersonal trust is associated with giving trends among different racial and ethnic groups. The GSS data show that donors are more likely to trust other people compared to non-donors—21 percent of non-donors believe that others can be trusted, and 32 percent of donors believe that others can be trusted (Figure 9). Using GSS data, we observe that individual trust level had been gradually going down across all racial and ethnic groups except Black Americans to varying degrees (Figure 10). When observed together, the declines in interpersonal trust could be another reason for the decline of giving rates and amounts.

Trust in institutions could also be a factor in influencing giving across racial and ethnic groups. For instance, White Americans exhibit a significantly higher level of trust in religious charitable organizations compared to Hispanic individuals. Black Americans also show a significantly higher likelihood of expressing confidence that the nonprofit sector is on the right track when compared to White Americans (Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2023).

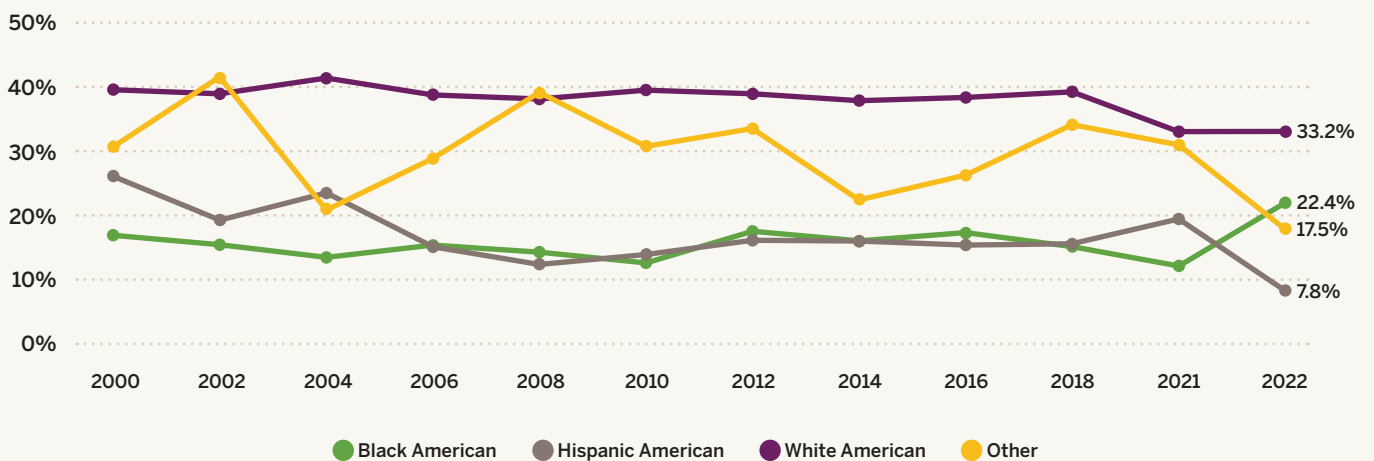


**FIGURE 9: Interpersonal Trust Among Donors and Non-Donors, 2014**



Data Source: General Social Survey, NORC at the University of Chicago

**FIGURE 10: Percentage of Individuals Who Agreed that People Can Be Trusted by Race**



Data Source: General Social Survey, NORC at the University of Chicago

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# FUTURE DIRECTIONS



## CASE STUDY #1

### TRIBAL NATIONS: THE STEWARDS OF THE PLANET

*“Conservation is not just about safeguarding land. It’s about prioritizing people, especially those who hold the traditional knowledge on how to combat our climate and biodiversity crisis, and recognizing that they can chart a path forward.”*

— **ERIK STEGMAN**

Chief Executive Officer, Native Americans in Philanthropy

With support from Biodiversity Funders Group (BFG) and 15 leading funders, Native Americans in Philanthropy (NAP) has launched a Tribal Nations Conservation Pledge and Funding Collaborative, calling on the philanthropic sector to make large investments in biodiversity and conservation projects led by Tribal Nations. The Collaborative provides a forum to strategize, share knowledge and educational resources, and participate in a funding mechanism to quickly move capital to Tribal Nations.

This is an unprecedented and timely opportunity. It is exceptional because philanthropic support for conservation efforts led by Tribal Nations has been largely non-existent or approached through a colonial lens (Native Americans in Philanthropy, 2023). It is timely because the 30x30 global movement that intends to stop some of the worst effects of climate change and biodiversity loss is currently underway.

The United States’ efforts to meet the movement’s goals will be futile without prioritizing Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship. Tribal Nations across the country oversee 95 million acres of land, which is home to some critically important wildlife habitats, resilient landscapes, and irreplaceable cultural assets in the North American continent. Indigenous peoples have a deep connection to the continent’s ecosystems and possess invaluable

intergenerational knowledge about the environment, which is imperative to advance climate action.

Philanthropic institutions can join this effort in one of two ways: 1) Taking the Tribal Nations Conservation Pledge by designating an amount of funding or a percentage of programmatic spending for Tribal-led conservation efforts; or 2) Donating to the fund (Native Americans in Philanthropy, 2023)

The leading funders that have already joined the pledge and committed to supporting Tribal-led conservation are: The Alaska Conservation Foundation, The Christensen Fund, The Decolonizing Wealth Project, The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, The Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, The Grousemont Foundation, The JM Kaplan Fund, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, The Resources Legacy Fund, Re:wild, The Walton Family Foundation, The Water Foundation, The Wilburforce Foundation, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and The Wyss Foundation (Native Americans in Philanthropy, 2023).

Funders who have either taken the pledge or donated will also be able to participate in a Tribal Conservation Learning Circle, led by the Biodiversity Funders Group, the Native Americans in Philanthropy, and the Christensen Fund as a reward for their financial commitments. Through the learning circle, the organizers aim to convene a learning series centered on engaging tribal and philanthropic leaders around emerging issues and opportunities.

Tribal communities have received very limited philanthropic support despite being at the forefront of the climate and biodiversity crises. This collaboration not only acknowledges that these communities are stewards of the planet, but also represents a shift in philanthropic support for Tribal-led solutions in conservation work (Sutherland, 2023).



The main findings of this report come from analyzing the Philanthropy Panel Study (PPS), the philanthropy module of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID). The PPS provides longitudinal data from a nationally representative sample of more than 9,000 households. It also includes data about racial and ethnic groups. Our analysis shows that philanthropic giving had been declining across all racial and ethnic groups since 2000 and more rapidly after the 2008 recession. Each racial and ethnic group exhibited variable patterns of giving behavior before 2008. For instance, Black Americans had consistent increases in giving amounts to religious congregations and secular causes. Similarly, the giving rates among Asian Americans and Hispanic Americans increased during the same period. Again, the decline of charitable giving—participation and amounts—coincides with economic shifts.

The demographic data, however, is limited in a few ways. First, racial and ethnic categories include Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, American Indians, Black Americans, and White Americans. While these categories provide an opportunity to compare against the same national census categories, the findings may be incomplete because of the level of heterogeneity within each group. For example, Asian Americans include households with backgrounds from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India as well as South Korea, Thailand, and China. Similarly, White American includes households with origins from Australia, North Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. Thus, there may be significant findings within each of the broader categories. Next, multi-racial households, sexual orientation, immigration status, and intersectional identities are not included in the demographic data but may be linked with distinctive giving patterns.

Future research can account for these limitations alongside potential factors that may be influencing these long-term trends. One likely factor in the decline in giving participation is the 2008 recession, which had an adverse impact on the nonprofit sector (Indiana Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2019). With income and economic shocks like the recession, households may have had less certainty about income to allocate to donations. Furthermore, the recession quickened the downward mobility of many who identified as middle class. In addition to an overall decline in income, the wealth gap widened between racial groups (Kochhar et al., 2016).

Another potential factor influencing giving rate and amount might be political movements that have taken place since 2000. Many social movements have emerged in response to social, economic, and political unrest. Major events include the Occupy Wall Street movement to protest economic inequality, the rise of Black Lives Matter in the wake of police violence and the wrongful killings of African Americans, and the MeToo movement for gender equality.

Further, movements for environmental justice such as the Standing Rock Sioux and the Dakota Pipeline protests might have also influenced giving rate and amount. The call for environmental justice comes from the need for everyone—regardless of race, color, national origin, or income—to have the right to the same environmental protections and benefits, as well as meaningful involvement in the policies that shape their communities (Skelton & Miller, 2023). This has not always been the case, as environmental injustices are molded by the same patterns of racism and inequality that have historically existed in the United States (Skelton & Miller, 2023).

Historic environmental injustices have led to a decline in institutional trust leading to the need for environmental solutions centered on the people who are most impacted by the ongoing environmental and climate crises (*for further details, refer to Case Study #1 Tribal Nations: The Stewards of the Planet*).

While the data within this report predates the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise in racial justice movements, datasets that do include this timeframe may want to consider the environmental context within which the trends are analyzed.

Finally, an important factor to consider is that interpersonal trust is in decline (Clark & Eisenstein, 2013). This decline in trust must be explored in conjunction with the diminishing giving rate. To illustrate, according to the GSS data, the level of trust individuals have in one another has been on the decline across all racial and ethnic groups since 2000. How are interpersonal and institutional trust associated with forms of giving? Future research on these relationships can help in understanding and linking the relationship between trust and giving. Qualitative inquiry can also help provide an in-depth understanding of the potential causes of the decline by race and ethnicity and help improve future survey questions that reflect how trust is perceived and impacts giving.



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# IMPLICATIONS



## CASE STUDY #2

### GIVING CIRCLES: BY THE COMMUNITY, FOR THE COMMUNITY

*“I grew up thinking philanthropists looked like the guy from the Monopoly box. Our philanthropy is done around a table, sharing food and stories.”*

— JON SCHILL, BMPP member

Giving circles (GCs) are a vehicle of philanthropy that brings individuals with shared values together to collectively discuss and decide where to make a pooled gift (Philanthropy Together, 2022). The prevalence of GCs has surged significantly, tripling in number between 2007 to 2016 (Bearman et al., 2017). Initiated often by donors, these circles are flexible, democratic, and do-it-yourself in structure (Bearman et al., 2017). In 2016, there were 1,087 independently managed and active GCs, along with 525 GC chapters that are associated with various GC networks and programs. The research conducted by Bearman et al. finds that survey respondent GCs, constituting approximately 37 percent of all known GCs, had given at least \$375.25 million since inception (Bearman et al., 2017).

Giving circle members tend to be everyday donors. Approximately 60 percent of GCs are formed around an identity. Women’s GCs remain the most common type and women continue to be the majority of participants in all GCs.

What makes GCs particularly appealing is their unique approaches and tools that enable a deeper engagement with specific causes or issues. Participants are often driven by a desire to have more strategic intent and proactive involvement.

The main motivation behind establishing GCs is to cultivate a culture of philanthropy within their communities, followed by the aspiration to attract new donors and achieve a more diversified and inclusive donor pool (Carboni et al., 2018).

### BMPP GIVING CIRCLE

Every year, members like Jon Schill of Bad Mo Pho Phamily (BMPP) Giving Circle enjoy a bowl of Pho, a Vietnamese soup dish, during “Pho the Good of All.” This event serves as an annual celebration of the grants they make together. Although BMPP is formally known as the Building More Purpose with Philanthropy, the members know it as Bad Mo Pho Phamily as a reflection of their light-hearted and multigenerational approach to giving.

In the 1990s, the Asian American/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP) published a study revealing that although the Asian American community was growing at more than 46 percent annually, less than one-half of one percent of organized philanthropy was being directed toward all communities of color collectively. In response, the first-ever AAPIP Giving Circle was established as part of its National Giving Circle Campaign in 2011.

Bo Thao-Urabe founded BMPP in Minnesota, drawing inspiration from the role that generosity has played in the Hmong immigrant community she grew up in. She recognizes that the spirit of generosity in her community manifests in ways distinct from other cultures in America. Currently, the BMPP Giving Circle includes Asian American families from Minnesota and Wisconsin. Together, they celebrate and learn about philanthropy and pool their financial resources to support innovative projects that advance justice and equity (BMPP, 2015).

BMPP, now a fund of the Minneapolis Foundation, focuses on family, including children by involving them in the review and discussion process of grant proposals. This GC meets around six times a year at a member's family home for a potluck to discuss grants. Each family commits at least \$1,000 annually.

Since 2013, BMPP has gifted almost \$200,000 to over 60 projects that advance social justice and strengthen Asian American communities in the Upper Midwest. Some of their recent grant recipients have been the LGBTQ+ Healing Retreat, India Association of Minnesota's South Asians Against Racial Injustice (SAARI) Initiative, and Reviving the Islamic Sisterhood of Empowerment.

BMPP's efforts vividly illustrate the positive influence of Giving Circles. GCs foster connectivity, a democratic approach to decision-making and frequently yield more effective, strategic solutions rooted in community perspective. BMPP exemplifies an AAPIP Giving Circle that has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to driving transformative change in their community (Minneapolis Foundation, 2019).

## LATINO GIVING CIRCLE NETWORK

*"There is no greater investment than the community."*

– **CHRIS TORRES**, Latino Giving Circle Network member

*"I just feel joy to be able to give back to people from my community and to be giving with my community."*

– **APRIL ALVAREZ**, Latino Giving Circle Network member

Latino Giving Circle Network members like April Alvarez and Chris Torres, come together under one roof every year to reflect on the collective impact they have had on their community. In collaboration with the Latino Community Foundation in San Francisco, the network was established in 2012 by 14 women who pooled their resources together to give back to the community.

The foundation is a statewide organization that has been empowering Latinos to unleash their civic and economic influence through grantmaking, capacity building, and providing nonprofit support. According to Adriana Salvidar, an employee at the foundation, Latino-based nonprofits receive less than 1.1 percent of all philanthropic funding in the United States (increasing to 1.3 percent in 2022) (Latino Community Foundation, 2020; Ramirez, 2022). This statistic underscores the significance of GCs as an essential vehicle of philanthropy.

The network started their journey by giving \$10,000 to organizations and now has expanded to a community of 22 giving circles with 500 members and \$2.4 million invested in Latino-led organizations in California. These circles include Latinos in Tech Giving Circle, LGBTQ Latinx Giving Circle, and Latinos in Healthcare Giving Circle. The network members have extended their impact beyond philanthropic dollars through participation in boards and commissions, educating neighbors about the census, running for office, advocating for equitable policies for Latino communities across the state, and serving as mentors within their networks.





### CASE STUDY #3

## THE POWER AND POTENTIAL OF BLACK PHILANTHROPY.

### A LOOK INTO THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE (NMAAHC)

*“There is nothing more powerful than a people, than a nation, steeped in its history. And there are few things as noble as honoring our ancestors by remembering.”*

– DR. LONNIE G. BUNCH III, Founding Director, NMAAHC

The National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC), colloquially known as the Blacksonian, is the sole national museum dedicated to documenting African American life, history, and culture. The museum was established in 2003, but it was not until 2016 that it finally opened its permanent home on the National Mall in D.C., following a century-long effort by multiple stakeholders who were predominantly Black.

Philanthropy has played an integral role in NMAAHC’s history. Between 2003 and 2020, the NMAAHC has raised approximately \$534 million and received over 36,000 artifacts. The source of these donations varies. While there has been substantial coverage on contributions from high-net-worth donors, everyday donors have contributed significantly, echoing the power of everyday people in philanthropy.

### THE JOURNEY TO ESTABLISH THE NMAAHC

But first, let’s reflect on the journey to establish the NMAAHC. The concept for the museum was

born in 1915, when a group of Civil War veterans proposed the idea of a dedicated institution to honor the achievements of African Americans. In 1929, President Herbert Hoover appointed civil rights activists, including Mary Church Terrell and Mary McLeod Bethune, to lead a commission focused on the idea. However, both Congressional support and private fundraising fell short. Proposals for a museum floated in Congress for the following decades with little to no support until the 1980s, when African American Representatives Mickey Leland, John Lewis, and J.C. Watts championed legislation for the institution.

Following President Bush’s enactment of the National Museum of African American History and Culture bill, the museum was established in 2003. However, a few challenges still remained. The initial location for the museum, situated near the Capitol Reflecting Pool, was controversial as various public, Congress, and advocacy group members felt that the Capitol Hill site was too prominent and made the National Mall appear crowded. Once the NMAAHC was decided to be built on the National Mall, nestled between the National Museum of American History and the Washington Monument, the estimated construction cost stood at \$500 million, necessitating a public-private partnership. While \$250 million would come through federal appropriations, equivalent private philanthropic dollars would need to be raised in advance. The major challenge was that the Smithsonian did not have a diverse donor base historically.

Taking on his role as the inaugural director of NMAAHC, Dr. Lonnie G. Bunch III embraced the challenge with determination. Dr. Bunch, in collaboration with a council of distinguished African American philanthropists and businesspeople, as well as a team of twenty-five development professionals, worked toward bringing the museum’s vision to life.



The team diligently put in long working hours, identifying prospective donors, building networks, and cultivating new relationships with Black legacy organizations such as fraternities, sororities, and churches. The development team included an exclusively African American group of frontline fundraisers who demonstrated sophisticated solicitation and stewardship strategies. These strategies included identifying connectors to garner support in each region and utilizing an expanded stewardship structure that was thoughtfully divided into tiers (Founding Donors: \$1M, Major Contributors: \$100K - \$999K, 2015 Society: \$25K - \$99K, Ambassadors: \$5K - \$24K and Charter Members: \$25+).

Prior to opening the museum, \$265 million was raised in private donations, including major gifts from Oprah Winfrey, Dick Parsons, Ken and Kathy Chenault, alongside esteemed institutions like Kellogg Foundation, Lilly Foundation, and American Express. Companies like Walmart and Boeing and faith-based groups, like Alfred Street Baptist Church of Alexandria, Virginia, were also among the founding donors. The team set up by Dr. Bunch also leveraged social currency by convincing renowned stakeholders such as Ann and Gordon Getty, Pauletta, and Denzel Washington to host high-level cultivation events.

The grand opening of the NMAAHC itself was designed to foster a sense of appreciation for the invaluable support of donors and to incentivize even more significant donations. For instance, founding donors of \$1 million or more received an exclusive invite to a reception at the White House and recognition in the *New York Times*. Major contributors received a ticket to a concert performed by music legends at the Kennedy Center, and \$5K+ and Charter Members received tickets to the Grand Opening ceremony, dinner, and reception.

Notably, the National Museum of African American History and Culture also hosted an event that garnered over \$50,000 in gifts (Barber, 2021). Dr. Bunch's team successfully raised a total of more than \$400 million to open the museum (Barber, 2021).

## EVERYDAY DONORS

These donors comprise 40 percent of the museum's donations, followed by corporations at 35 percent, then foundations at 22 percent, and other groups at 3 percent (Latham, 2021). The museum's small donors represent various races and ethnicities (Latham, 2021). Small donors come in the form of visitors and members as well. More than 200,000 people have become members by paying an annual fee that starts at \$25 (Latham, 2021).

Many individuals have demonstrated generosity toward the NMAAHC in different ways. Before its opening, the Smithsonian encouraged people to donate heirlooms. As mentioned before, to date, the NMAAHC has collected over 36,000 artifacts including pictures, clothing, furniture, and jewelry, which have been carefully documented and stored. Among these artifacts are also unique pieces like a collection of Broadway Playbills and theater programs of performances featuring Black artists, a jacket belonging to a Tuskegee airman, and a freedom paper enclosed in a tin box from the 1800s (Patterson, 2016; CBS News, 2016).

Generosity towards the museum has also been in the form of commitment, collaboration, and education. Faye M. Anderson, Director of All That Philly Jazz, exhibited her dedication by stopping by the museum even during its construction phase. Zaheer Ali, a Harvard- and Columbia-educated historian, collaborated with museum officials to feature NMAAHC works on Muslims of African



### CASE STUDY #3 (CONTINUED)

Descent for Sapelo Square, an online publication dedicated to the history, culture, and political life of Black Muslims in America (Latham, 2021). And, Diocelina Van Belle, assistant professor at Kordyak Elementary in Fontana, California, became a member of NMAAHC and participates in the district's African American Equity Action Team and its African American Parent Advisory Council in hopes of learning more about African American history despite being a Mexican native (Latham, 2021).

According to Amir Pasic, the Eugene R. Tempel Dean of the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, "Some of the museums that were built more than 30 or 40 years ago would have gotten more government funding" (McGlone, 2023). Hence, one of the lessons for other organizations with similar purposes to the NMAAHC is that it is integral to raise more private funds as government funding is not always guaranteed. Dean Pasic also points out that people like having their name

associated with the National Mall due to its historic significance, which makes private funding more probable than government funding.

The strategies implemented by Dr. Bunch's team and the Smithsonian to engage donors of diverse backgrounds turned the museum into a reality more than a century after the Civil War veterans' pioneering vision. A key lesson is that everyday donors or less affluent givers are an important piece of the philanthropic puzzle. It is crucial for organizations to diversify their funding bases and not depend on a few large funders.



The findings from this report emphasize the need for the philanthropic sector to revitalize engagement strategies and programmatic priorities, with the aim to captivate donors from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. While research demonstrates that individuals across all racial and ethnic groups contribute generously, it is important to acknowledge that philanthropy does not conform to a one-size-fits-all approach.

To tackle this challenge, nonprofits need to first invest in understanding the communities of color they intend to engage with. This involves gaining insights into the motivations, challenges, and enduring philanthropic practices within these communities.

Declining interpersonal and institutional trust may be a factor for donors of color in opting to establish collective networks, like giving circles such as the BMPP Giving Circle and the Latino Giving Circle Network (*for further details, refer to Case Study #2 Giving Circles: By the Community, For the Community*). These networks can serve as information hubs, volunteer sources, and avenues for fostering engagement. Hence, a pivotal strategy in appealing to diverse donors is involving communities of color in decision-making and offering transparency regarding initiatives and their broader influence.

The journey towards equity truly begins at home. Nonprofit leaders need to reevaluate the internal workings of their organizations, particularly in areas such as recruitment, employee retention, advancement, processes, and policies. For instance, the Urban Institute found that 16 percent of nonprofits that primarily served communities of color had boards composed entirely of White American members (Faulk et al., 2021). Leaders from communities of color should play a pivotal role in determining how funds are allocated and resources are consolidated. Transitioning from a top-down approach led by “experts” to a more inclusive notion of expertise, philanthropy can become more equitable. In this landscape, institutional philanthropy can gain valuable insights into the needs of communities—not only drawing from the unequal experiences of diverse individuals but also deriving wisdom from their extensive history of philanthropic engagement.

Moreover, consider forming partnerships with giving collectives, grassroots organizations, and neighborhood associations. Ultimately, the key factor lies in meaningful engagement. By cultivating relationships, organizations can build trust, which can lead to sustained support from diverse donors.

This is especially pertinent given the current global context where we are confronting complex challenges like economic downturns, wealth disparity, and racial inequality. Achieving success as an effective nonprofit practitioner demands a deep understanding of both past and current policy shifts and political movements. One noteworthy instance is the recent decision by the Supreme Court to invalidate affirmative action, a ruling with multifaceted implications, including the decrease in college enrollment of Black American, Hispanic American, and American Indian students (Meyer & Pita, 2023). This decision could potentially influence access to federal funding, nonprofit strategies for fostering workforce diversity, and the way philanthropic grants are directed towards the betterment of specific racial groups (Daniels, 2023).

It is crucial for organizations to not only understand, but also actively tackle the issues that matter most to donors. As illustrated in a prior study at the School, there is enduring commitment of high-net-worth Black American donors to addressing societal issues, even preceding the pandemic and the rise of social justice movements. The study concluded that 50 percent of high-net-worth Black American donors directed their contributions toward Black American-related causes. These donors prioritized matters close to their hearts, such as race relations (39.7 percent) and criminal justice (9.8 percent), at notably higher proportions compared to other racial groups. One historical example is the dedicated Black American philanthropists, businesspeople, and fundraisers who paved the way for the establishment of the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) or Blacksonian (*for further details, refer to the Case Study #3 NMAAHC: The Power and Potential of Black Philanthropy*).

The Great Recession caused a significant decline in American family wealth, exacerbating the existing wealth disparity between White Americans and other racial and ethnic groups. For instance, in 2016, the median wealth of White American households was ten times higher than that of Black households, marking a wider disparity than in 2007 (Kochhar & Cilluffo, 2017).



Charitable donations are closely linked with wealth rather than income sources. This means that gifts are often made from reserves of liquid assets, where the racial wealth gap is most pronounced (Conley, 2000). The average White American family holds over four times as much liquid savings as the average Black American family or Hispanic American family (Bhutta et al., 2020).

Recurring giving options, like subscription-based giving, are vital for donors, enabling them to integrate contributions into a household's monthly budget. Subscription-based giving is a type of recurring giving model that permits automatic donations (Osili et al., 2022).

When feasible, nonprofits can collaborate closely with donors to align their philanthropic contributions with their financial goals, which involves discussing the donor's goals, interests, and strategies for achieving the most meaningful influence through their financial portfolio. Consider planned giving as a method for donors to provide sustained support over time, potentially increasing not only their philanthropic impact but also their personal wealth.

Similar to the impact during the recession, the economic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic had a disproportionate effect on communities of color. As the U.S. reckons with lessons from the pandemic, it is essential to acknowledge how global economies have shifted.

Throughout the pandemic, workplaces and workers were pressured to adapt in various ways, including responding to lockdowns, CDC health guidelines, worker shortages, and supply chain constraints (Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, 2021). More than two years later, financial forecasts and rising inflation invite people to seriously consider the impacts of a potential economic downturn.

The devastation of the pandemic was further compounded by violence against Black Americans, Asian Americans, and other racial groups and the resulting increased awareness to racial and social justice issues. These events underscore the urgent need for societal transformation.

These movements led to a resurgence in the idea of mutual aid, reflecting the swift mobilization of individuals and communities to promptly identify local needs and often devise flexible, rapid solutions. For instance, in response to the tragic killings of numerous Black Americans, GoFundMe campaigns harnessed technological advancements to amplify informal giving as a response to urgent social justice needs. To promote a more inclusive and equitable philanthropic environment, it's crucial to extend our perspective beyond the traditional definition of philanthropy and embrace various informal giving approaches that have been long-standing in communities of color, such as mutual aid.

Donors representing a range of racial and ethnic backgrounds, particularly younger generations, are adopting technology-focused tools as a means to drive change. This includes channeling their contributions through platforms such as social media and crowdfunding. For nonprofits aiming to involve a diverse array of donors, leveraging social media and digital fundraising emerges as a powerful strategy for forging connections within this specific demographic.

The insights derived from this study can serve as a valuable cornerstone for designing initiatives and conducting research that resonates with the behaviors and values of diverse communities. This information can be leveraged to create initiatives that speak directly to the concerns and aspirations of donors from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. By doing so, the nonprofit sector can take significant steps towards becoming more inclusive and impactful, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose across a wider spectrum of society. **“E Pluribus Unum.”**

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## CONCLUSION

This report gives us the perspective over time and a look ahead to potential trajectories. As the U.S. economy begins to open back up, certain industries appear strong, but questions are asked about how a downturn might affect specific households. We add to this conversation by examining the implications for donors of color.

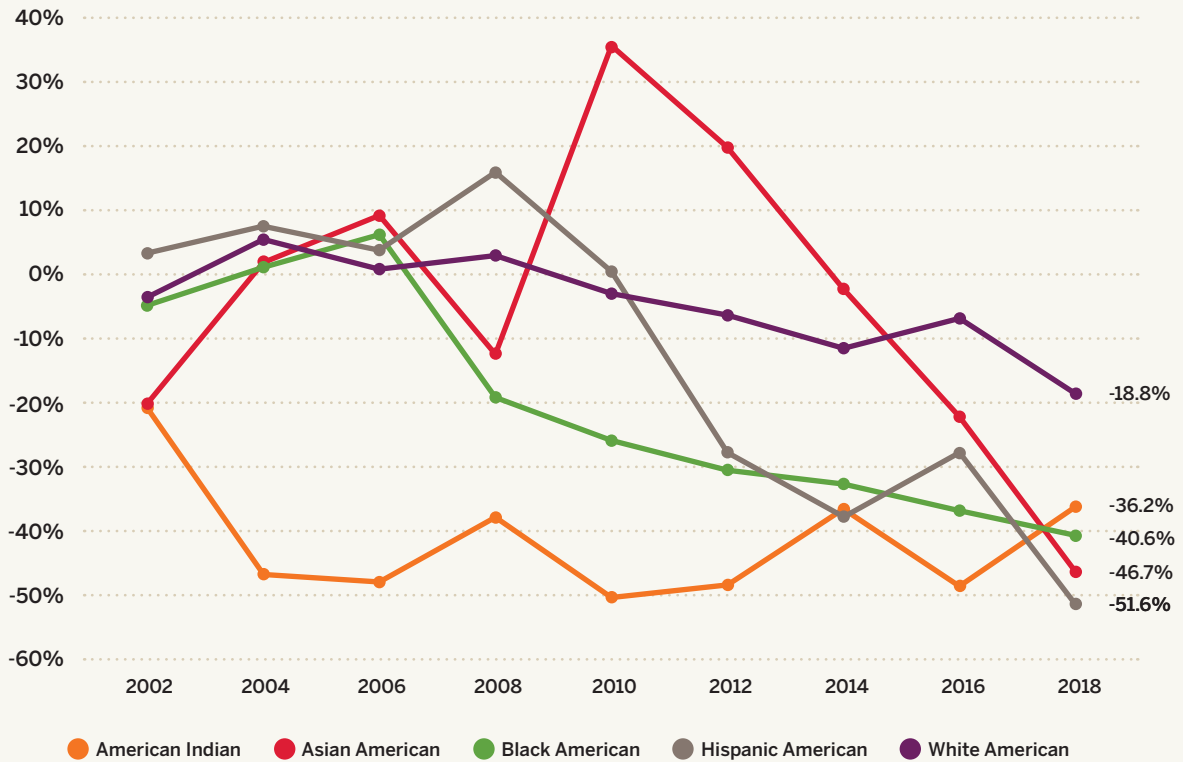
Across the business world, we have seen a trend to be more inclusive of people from different backgrounds with varying degrees of success. However, for the nonprofit sector, it is increasingly important to understand the giving patterns of each racial and ethnic group, given the troubling overall decline in donation rates.

This study traces how racial and ethnic groups exhibit different charitable giving behaviors. Understanding donors of color provides a more inclusive and specific approach to reaching or retaining donors, inclusive of more diverse stakeholders. In addition, the decline of giving rates in the past two decades aligns with the decline of trust in charitable organizations. Thus, longer-term strategies around trust-building should be considered. Ongoing community engagement is critical to authentically respond to and engage with communities of color. Ultimately, a continued understanding of philanthropic trends among communities of color—communities often hit the hardest in economic downturns—offers a way for nonprofits to continue to address barriers and build engagement with persons of different backgrounds and rich traditions of generosity.



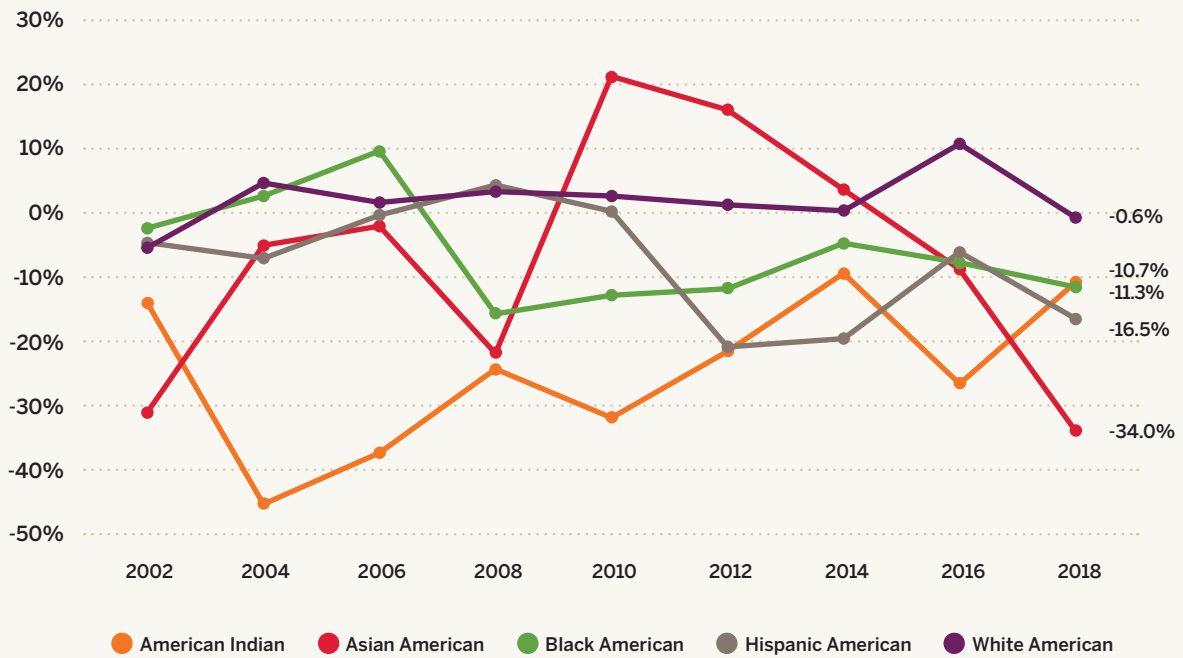
# APPENDIX

**FIGURE A1: Change in Average Amount of Overall Giving, Compared with Year 2000**



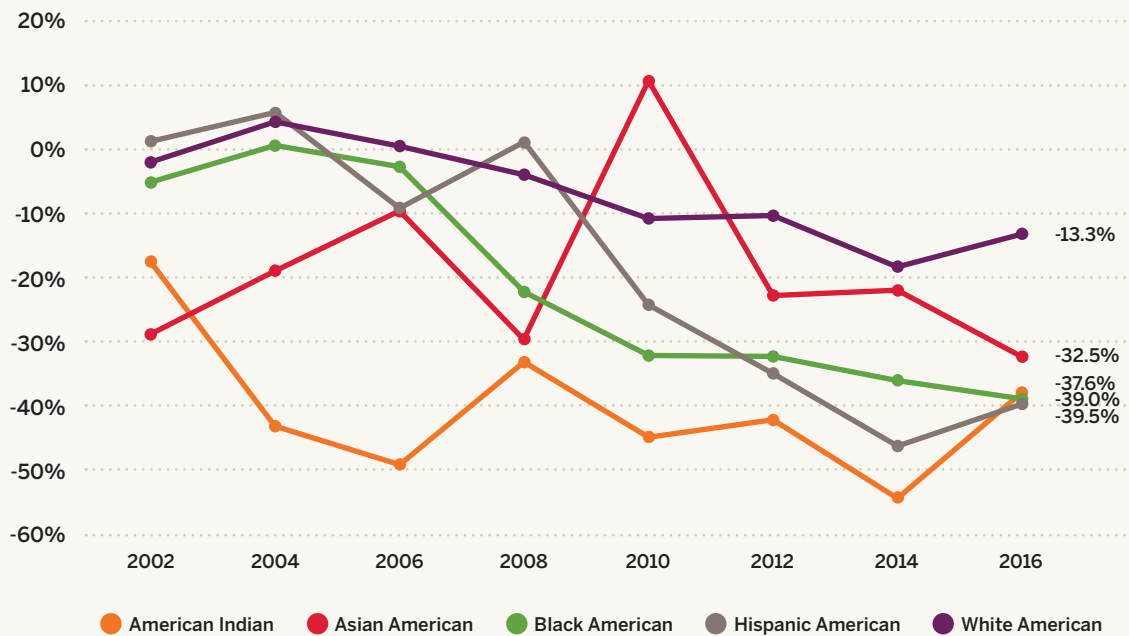
Data Source: Philanthropy Panel Study, Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy

**FIGURE A2: Change in Average Amount of Overall Giving—Donors only, Compared with Year 2000**



Data Source: Philanthropy Panel Study, Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy

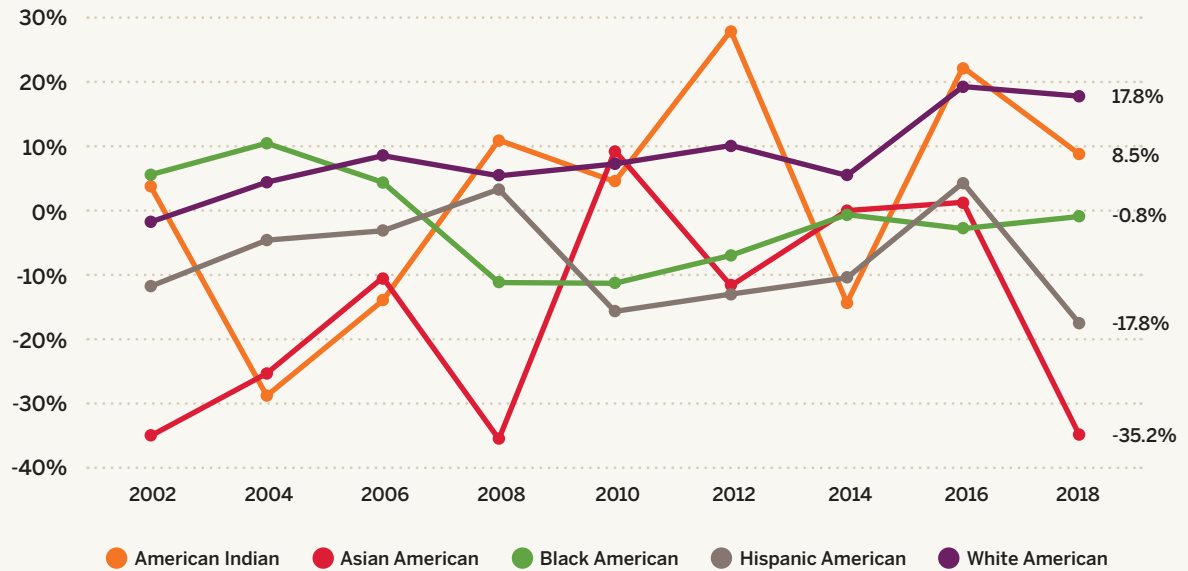
**FIGURE A3: Change in Average Amount of Religious Giving, Compared with Year 2000**



Data Source: Philanthropy Panel Study, Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy

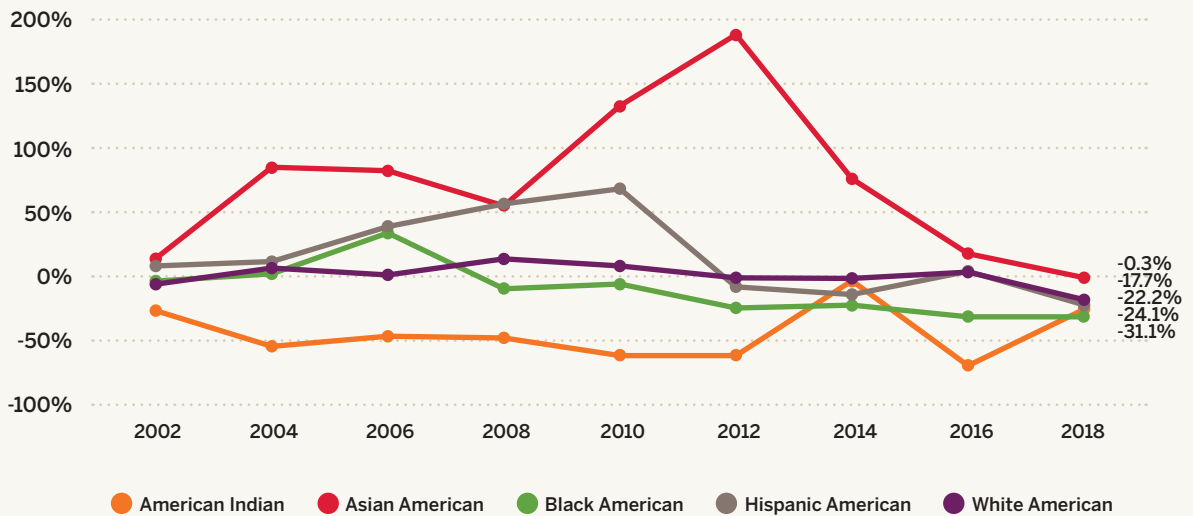


**FIGURE A4: Change in Average Amount of Religious Giving—Donors Only, Compared with Year 2000**



Data Source: Philanthropy Panel Study, Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy

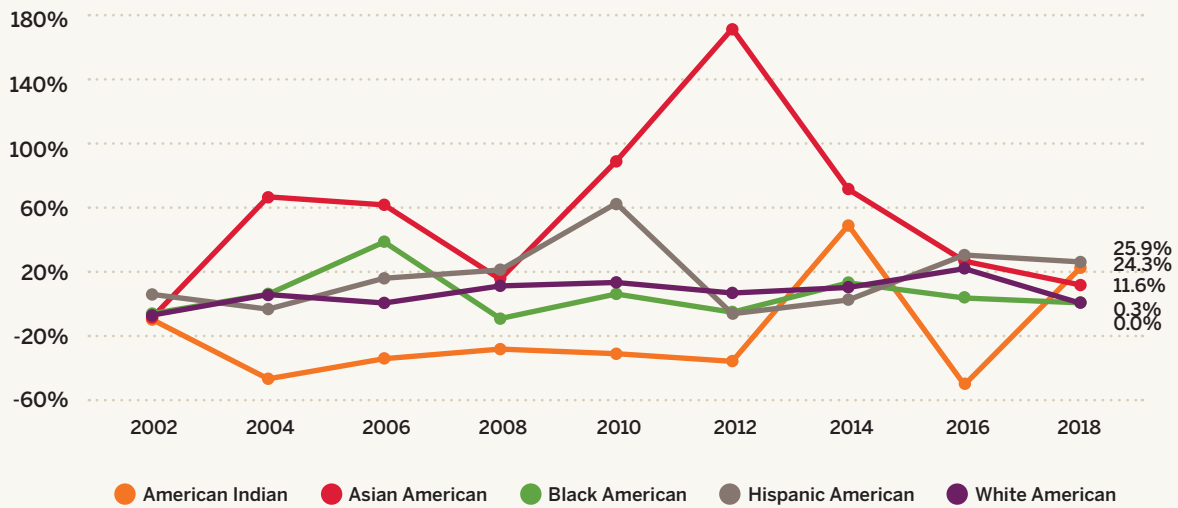
**FIGURE A5: Change in Average Amount of Secular Giving, Compared with Year 2000**



Data Source: Philanthropy Panel Study, Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy

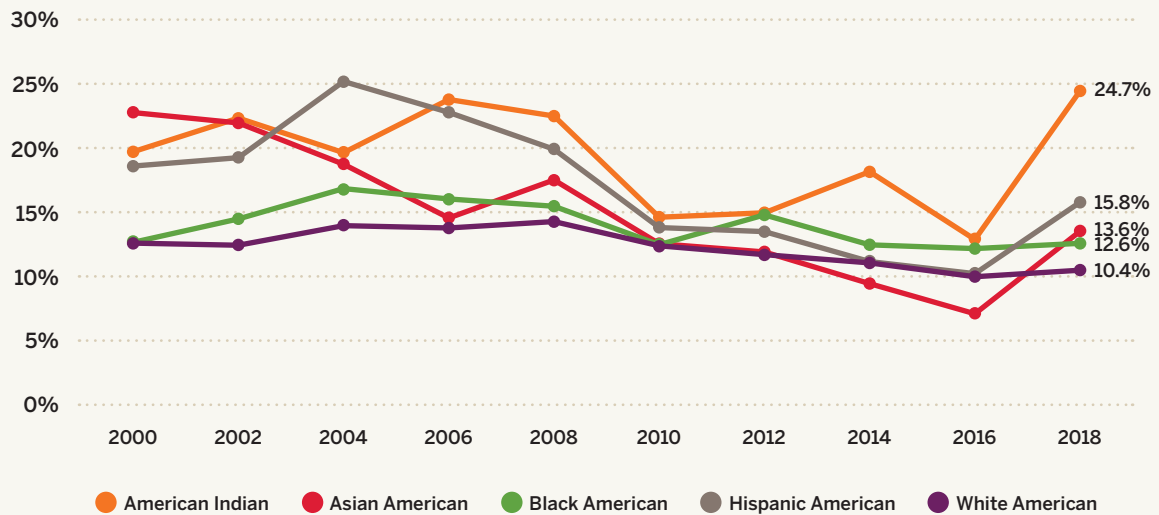


**FIGURE A6: Change in Average Amount of Secular Giving—Donors Only, Compared with Year 2000**



Data Source: Philanthropy Panel Study, Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy

**FIGURE A7: Percentage of Households Providing Support to Non-Household Members**



Data Source: Philanthropy Panel Study, Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy



**TABLE 1: Regression results on overall giving amounts**

	ALL SAMPLE	BEFORE RECESSION	AFTER RECESSION
<i>Race: Base is all other race</i>			
<b>Asian Americans</b>	-0.082 (0.203)	-0.089 (0.249)	-0.094 (0.247)
<b>Black Americans</b>	-0.026 (0.177)	0.098 (0.198)	-0.078 (0.209)
<b>Hispanic Americans, all</b>	-0.440** (0.177)	-0.433** (0.201)	-0.436** (0.209)
<b>American Indians</b>	0.060 (0.219)	0.118 (0.249)	0.049 (0.261)
<b>White Americans</b>	0.317* (0.169)	0.314* (0.184)	0.322 (0.201)

**TABLE 2: Regression results on overall giving amounts for donors**

	ALL SAMPLE	BEFORE RECESSION	AFTER RECESSION
<i>Race: Base is all other race</i>			
<b>Asian Americans</b>	-0.240* (0.122)	-0.293*** (0.113)	-0.206 (0.161)
<b>Black Americans</b>	0.145 (0.105)	0.176* (0.091)	0.128 (0.143)
<b>Hispanic Americans, all</b>	-0.280*** (0.104)	-0.354*** (0.096)	-0.232* (0.140)
<b>American Indians</b>	-0.079 (0.140)	-0.123 (0.147)	-0.056 (0.183)
<b>White Americans</b>	0.048 (0.096)	-0.030 (0.077)	0.095 (0.134)

<sup>8</sup> In all regressions, standard errors are clustered at the individual level; other controls include age, number of children, education indicators (less than high school, high school, some college, college or more; less than high school as reference group), gender, marital status indicators (single men, single women, cohabited, married; single women as reference group), employment indicators (employed, retired, disabled, unemployed; unemployed as reference group), dummy variable indicating no religious beliefs; dummy variables indicating good or excellent self-reported health status, log real permanent income and log real wealth including home value. \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

**TABLE 3: Regression results on religious giving amounts**

	ALL SAMPLE	BEFORE RECESSION	AFTER RECESSION
<i>Race: Base is all other race</i>			
<b>Asian Americans</b>	-0.355 (0.249)	-0.343 (0.371)	-0.369 (0.267)
<b>Black Americans</b>	-0.129 (0.169)	-0.157 (0.204)	-0.115 (0.197)
<b>Hispanic Americans, all</b>	-0.541*** (0.170)	-0.483** (0.210)	-0.558*** (0.198)
<b>American Indians</b>	-0.368* (0.223)	-0.329 (0.272)	-0.387 (0.261)
<b>White Americans</b>	-0.261 (0.159)	-0.371** (0.189)	-0.208 (0.189)

**TABLE 4: Regression results on religious giving amounts for donors**

	ALL SAMPLE	BEFORE RECESSION	AFTER RECESSION
<i>Race: Base is all other race</i>			
<b>Asian Americans</b>	-0.074 (0.160)	0.146 (0.153)	-0.193 (0.210)
<b>Black Americans</b>	0.291** (0.122)	0.439*** (0.111)	0.191 (0.162)
<b>Hispanic Americans, all</b>	-0.244** (0.123)	-0.175 (0.121)	-0.290* (0.160)
<b>American Indians</b>	-0.014 (0.173)	-0.033 (0.198)	0.001 (0.224)
<b>White Americans</b>	0.137 (0.111)	0.160 (0.098)	0.125 (0.149)



**TABLE 5: Regression results on secular giving amounts**

	ALL SAMPLE	BEFORE RECESSION	AFTER RECESSION
<i>Race: Base is all other race</i>			
<b>Asian Americans</b>	-0.238 (0.202)	-0.506** (0.257)	-0.136 (0.235)
<b>Black Americans</b>	-0.021 (0.160)	0.132 (0.176)	-0.082 (0.191)
<b>Hispanic Americans, all</b>	-0.367** (0.161)	-0.399** (0.178)	-0.355* (0.191)
<b>American Indians</b>	0.166 (0.196)	0.358 (0.223)	0.100 (0.233)
<b>White Americans</b>	0.430*** (0.155)	0.522*** (0.164)	0.397** (0.186)

**TABLE 6: Regression results on secular giving amounts for donors**

	ALL SAMPLE	BEFORE RECESSION	AFTER RECESSION
<i>Race: Base is all other race</i>			
<b>Asian Americans</b>	-0.326*** (0.113)	-0.399*** (0.116)	-0.278* (0.152)
<b>Black Americans</b>	-0.018 (0.101)	0.044 (0.106)	-0.039 (0.139)
<b>Hispanic Americans, all</b>	-0.175* (0.103)	-0.260** (0.111)	-0.118 (0.141)
<b>American Indians</b>	-0.075 (0.130)	-0.064 (0.177)	-0.083 (0.179)
<b>White Americans</b>	0.115 (0.092)	0.105 (0.091)	0.135 (0.130)

**TABLE 7: Regression results on private transfers among all racial and ethnic groups**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	<i>Private transfer: Incidence</i>			<i>Private transfer: Log amount</i>		
	<b>ALL SAMPLE</b>	<b>BEFORE RECESSION</b>	<b>AFTER RECESSION</b>	<b>ALL SAMPLE</b>	<b>BEFORE RECESSION</b>	<b>AFTER RECESSION</b>
<i>Race: Base is all other race</i>						
<b>Asian Americans</b>	-0.013 (0.022)	-0.010 (0.034)	-0.011 (0.026)	-0.043 (0.173)	-0.021 (0.261)	-0.033 (0.201)
<b>Black Americans</b>	0.031* (0.018)	0.023 (0.024)	0.035* (0.020)	0.271** (0.134)	0.239 (0.184)	0.282* (0.150)
<b>Hispanic Americans, all</b>	0.049*** (0.018)	0.063** (0.026)	0.044** (0.020)	0.342** (0.135)	0.454** (0.194)	0.303** (0.149)
<b>American Indians</b>	0.055** (0.026)	0.034 (0.036)	0.065** (0.030)	0.434** (0.206)	0.288 (0.270)	0.499** (0.239)
<b>White Americans</b>	-0.015 (0.017)	-0.031 (0.023)	-0.008 (0.019)	-0.062 (0.127)	-0.144 (0.174)	-0.024 (0.140)



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