

# THE GIVING ENVIRONMENT:

## Understanding How Donors Make Giving Decisions

### Focus Group Research on US Donor Participation

## KEY FINDINGS

- Donors intend to keep their giving rate consistent in the coming years and give selectively to organizations and causes.
  - Being aware of an issue or the needs of an individual or organization strongly shaped giving decisions and motivated people to give in response to crises or perceived needs.
  - Recent events such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the movements for racial equity and justice evoked an increased desire in donors to have a greater and long-term impact on issues through strategic giving choices.
  - Donors expressed a greater desire for nonprofit organizations to communicate the impact of programs and services and to be informed in more engaging and personal ways.
  - Personal connections and a previous relationship with nonprofit organizations was an important driver of charitable giving.
  - More influential factors that shaped donors' giving decisions, in comparison to social identities, were personal values and previous experience with an issue.
- While donors did not describe a clear decrease in their individual giving, a lack of perceived awareness and donor education of nonprofit organization's programs and issues were reported as being responsible for lower rates of giving.
  - Participants described adjusting to new expectations, including accepting payments digitally and changing the way they engage donors. They noted that it was important to create more engaging content, for example by including images and videos to increase engagement.
  - While there were some reports of a decrease in giving, fundraisers did express concern about the sustainability of the recent increase in contributions to their organizations, believing this pattern to be temporary.
  - Donors described a range of patterns in public perceptions of nonprofits. Overall, participants were confident that philanthropic organizations they support would be able to make an impact with their donations.



**16** FOCUS GROUPS WERE CONDUCTED

with participants distributed by demographics

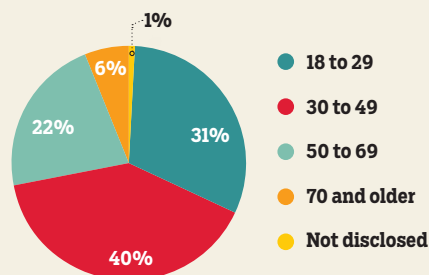
These focus groups were conducted between May and November 2021.

**83** PARTICIPANTS IN TOTAL

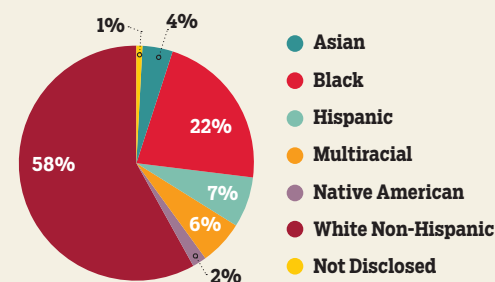
Our participants were recruited through their relationship with a nonprofit organization. Due to this, they were generally familiar with philanthropy and had previously participated in a range of giving experiences.

Our focus groups were not representative of a large donor population, as this research focused on understanding the giving behavior of diverse individuals from various communities.

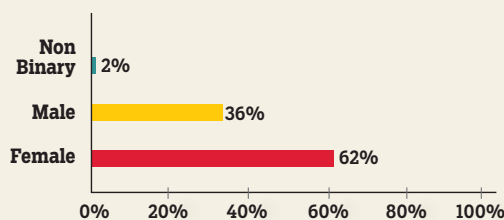
### AGE GROUP



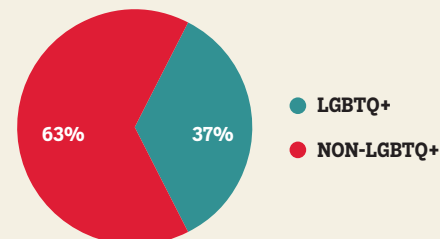
### RACE/ETHNICITY



### GENDER IDENTITY



### SEXUAL ORIENTATION



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The second in a series of reports on  
*The Giving Environment*