

Many Donors Giving Smaller Charitable Contributions to Fewer Organizations

Most donors favor restricted gifts

ROCHESTER, N.Y. – March 17, 2009 – *The Harris Poll*® examined the behaviors and attitudes of people who give money or time to charitable organizations or advocate for them, and how their behavior has changed as a result of the economy. Almost half (45%) of these people report that their giving and their volunteering have not changed, but many people are giving to fewer organizations (24%) or giving smaller amounts (31%). In addition, six percent are not making any donations and seven percent are volunteering less. The only positive finding is that nine percent report volunteering more of their time because of the economic downturn.

These are the results of a nationwide *Donor Pulse* survey of 2049 engaged adults (those who volunteered for or donated to a nonprofit or charitable organization or who had implemented one of eight advocacy behaviors) who were surveyed by Harris Interactive® online between December 28, 2008 and January 5, 2009.

Other interesting findings of this survey include:

- People who give to health care organizations are somewhat more likely to give smaller amounts (38% vs. 31%) and to give to fewer organizations (29% vs. 24%).
- Most people (60%) who give time or money to charity prefer, if given the choice, to give gifts to organizations that specify exactly how donations are used. Only 25% prefer to give unrestricted gifts that organizations are free to use as they see best.

Use of Social Media

This Harris Poll also asked several questions about the use of social media, such as YouTube and MySpace. A small but growing number (31% this year compared to 23% last year) of adults involved with charities think it extremely or very important “for non-

profit and charitable organizations to use social media to communicate with their supporters.” However, currently only six percent of these people say they currently keep up with charities through social media.

Many people want to hear not only from senior staff in these organizations but also from junior staff and non-staff. In particular, they want to hear from those who provide the services they deliver as well as those who benefit from those services.

Many of the (small number) of people currently using social media to learn about charitable organizations have taken action as a result. Half (54%) have talked to a friend or family member, 41% made a contribution to the organization, 34% made a contribution to a cause the organization supports, 31% volunteered and 30% attended a sponsored event.

So What?

It is no surprise that so many people feel the need to cut back on their giving to charities, but it is worth noting that almost half of those who give time or money have not cut back.

This Harris Poll highlights the growing importance of social media in communicating information about charities and, for those who use it, in stimulating giving and volunteering.

**TABLE 1
CHANGES IN CHARITABLE BEHAVIOR**

“In which of the following ways, if any, have you changed your charitable behavior as a result of the current state of the economy?”

Base: Engaged Adults*

	Aug 2008	Jan 2009
	%	%
Give smaller amounts	28	31
Give to fewer organizations	25	24
Volunteer more	11	9
Volunteer less	13	7
Not made any donations	7	6
Give to different types of organizations	7	5
Give larger amounts	7	5
Give to more organizations	6	4
Not changed	42	45

*Engaged adults are the 78% of U.S. adults 18+ who have donated to or volunteered for a nonprofit organization or charity or have performed 1 of 8 advocacy behaviors

**TABLE 2
CHANGE IN CHARITABLE BEHAVIOR – HEALTHCARE DONORS**

“In which of the following ways, if any, have you changed your charitable behavior as a result of the current state of the economy?”

Base: Engaged Adults

	Total (2009)	Healthcare Donors*
	%	%
Give smaller amounts	31	38
Give to fewer organizations	24	29
Volunteer more	9	8
Volunteer less	7	7
Not made any donations	6	6
Give to different types of organizations	5	8
Give larger amounts	5	7
Give to more organizations	4	6
Not changed	45	42

*Healthcare donors are those who have made a financial contribution to a hospital or other health and healthcare organization in the past year.

**TABLE 3
UNRESTRICTED VS. RESTRICTED GIFTS**

“Please evaluate the opinions described below of two individuals, Smith and Jones, about donations to nonprofit and charitable organizations, and select the one that comes closest to your own:

Smith thinks..Nonprofit and charitable organizations can be most effective at carrying out their missions if they are free to decide for themselves how to allocate the funds they receive through donations, therefore I prefer to give general gifts to these organizations

Jones thinks..It is important that I know exactly how donations are used by nonprofit and charitable organizations and that they go to the programs I care about most, therefore I prefer to designate the gifts I give to these organizations.”

Base: Qualified Donors*

	Total (2009)	Healthcare Donors
	%	%
TOTAL Like Smith (unrestricted funding)	25	29
Exactly like Smith	4	3
Somewhat like Smith	22	26
Neither like Smith or Jones	14	8
TOTAL Like Jones (restricted funding)	60	63
Somewhat like Jones	43	42
Exactly like Jones	18	20

*Qualified donors are those who have made a financial contribution to a nonprofit organization, including charities, schools, churches, hospitals, museums, etc. in the past year.

**TABLE 5
IMPORTANCE OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA**

“How important would you say it is for nonprofit and charitable organizations to use social media to communicate with their supporters?”*

Base: Engaged Adults

	Jan 2008	Jan 2009
	%	%
Extremely important	7	10
Very important	16	21
Important	29	33
Somewhat important	38	30
Not at all important	10	7

*The questionnaire included a link defining social networking sites that mentioned, as examples, Myspace.com, Facebook.com, and Classmates.com.

TABLE 6
INTEREST IN KEEPING UP THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

“How interested would you be in keeping up with nonprofit or charitable organizations that you care about through social media?”

Base: Engaged adults

	Jan 2008	Jan 2009
	%	%
Already do	6	6
Very interested	3	9
Somewhat interested	27	38
Interested	12	19
Not at all interested	52	28

TABLE 7
WHO THEY WANT TO HEAR FROM VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

“Who at nonprofits and charitable organizations are you most interested in hearing from via social media?”

Base: Interested in Keeping up with Nonprofits via Social Media

	Total	Already Uses Social Media to keep up with Nonprofits
STAFF		
Senior staff	49%	65%
Junior staff	54%	61%
Non-staff	68%	71%
FUNCTION		
Communications	17%	27%
Fundraising	16%	27%
Activism/Organizing	22%	39%
Direct service	50%	55%
Beneficiaries	50%	51%

TABLE 8
ACTION TAKEN AS A RESULT OF NON-PROFIT SOCIAL MEDIA

“Have you done any of the following as a result of something you read in a nonprofit or charitable organization’s blog, RSS feed, or on a social networking site?”

Base: Already Uses Social Media to keep up with Nonprofits

	Total
	%
Talked to friend or family member	54
Made financial contribution to the organization	41
Made financial contribution to a cause the organization supports	34
Volunteered for the organization	31
Attend an event sponsored by the organization	30
Contacted an elected representative	25
Contacted a media outlet to express opinion	14
Other	3
None	20

Methodology

This Harris Poll® was conducted online within the United States between December 28, 2008 and January 5, 2009 among 2049 adults (aged 18 and over) who have volunteered for or donated to a nonprofit or charitable organization or have performed at least one of eight advocacy behaviors.

For data on changes in charitable behavior figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the general population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents’ propensity to be online.

For data on use of social media, figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the online population.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words “margin of error” as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed

to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

J#30020D
Q3055, Q3050, Q3000, Q3005, Q3010, Q3015

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Harris Interactive Inc. 2/09