

What Donors Are Saying

April 2026



Today's Conversation

What We Wanted to Know

Our Approach

Highlights of What We Learned

What the Data is Telling Us



The background consists of a dense, overlapping collage of colorful sticky notes in shades of teal, purple, yellow, and green. Each sticky note features a large, black, hand-drawn question mark. The text is centered on the left side of the image.

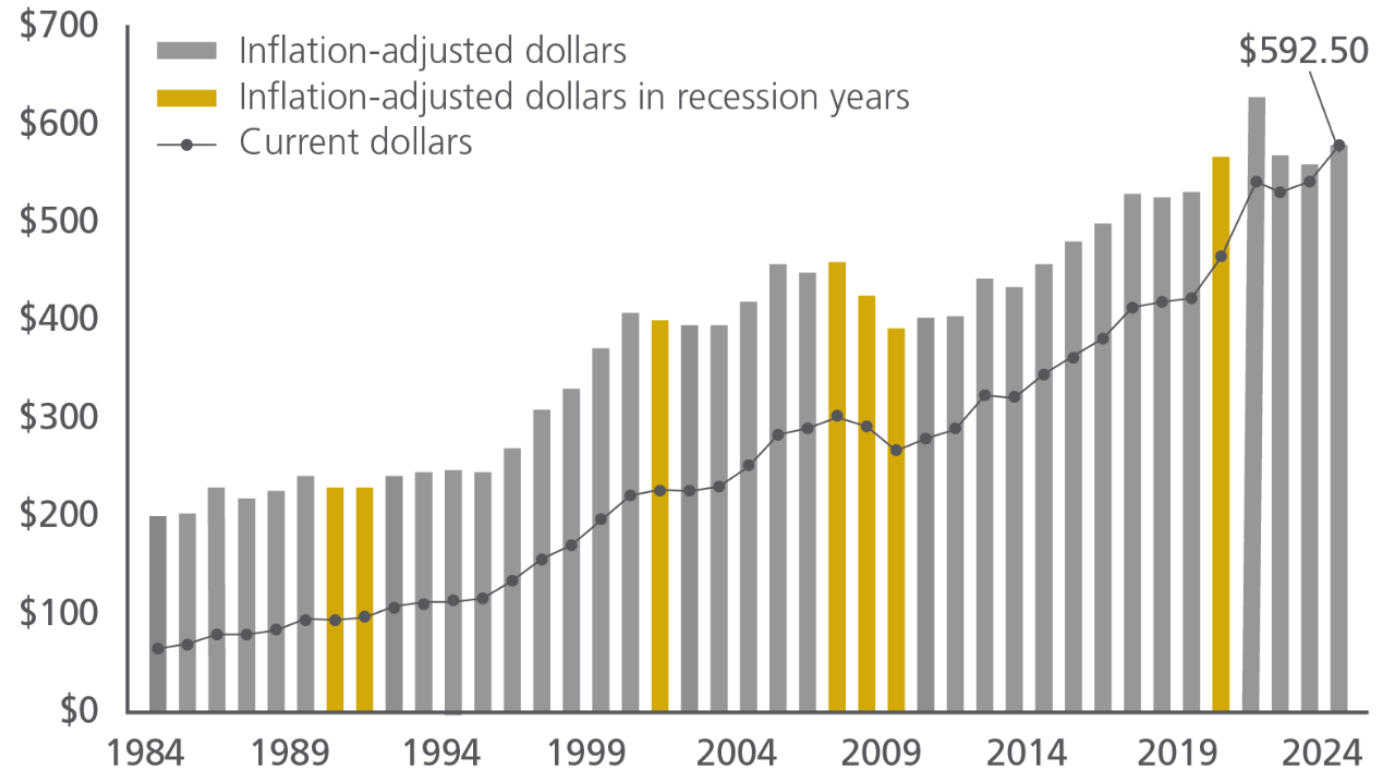
What We Wanted to Know

Historically, Donors Are Reliably Generous

Charitable giving in the United States has generally **increased** (or stayed flat).

Total giving, 1984–2024

(in billions of dollars)



Researched and written by



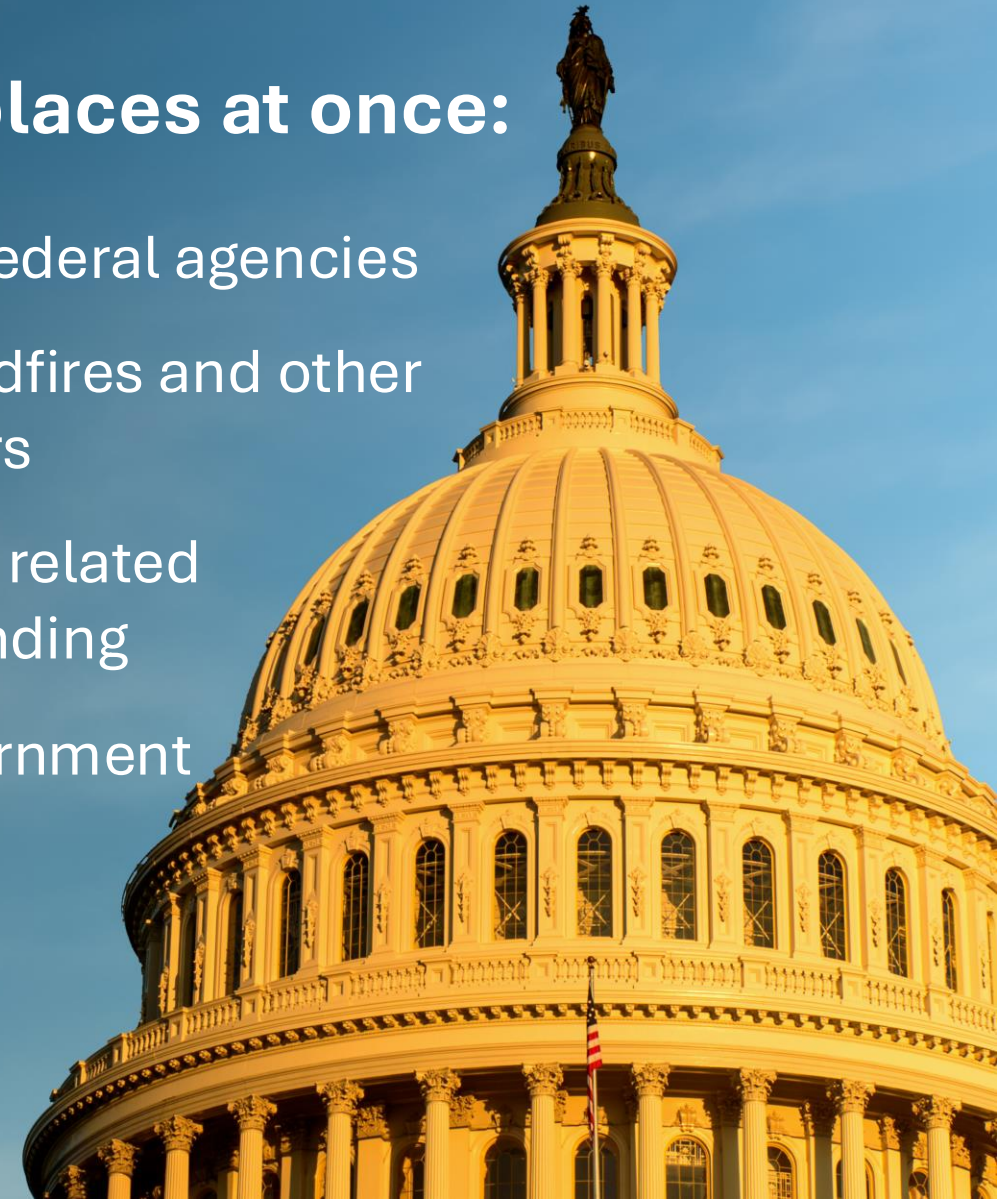
LILLY FAMILY SCHOOL OF PHILANTHROPY
INDIANA UNIVERSITY



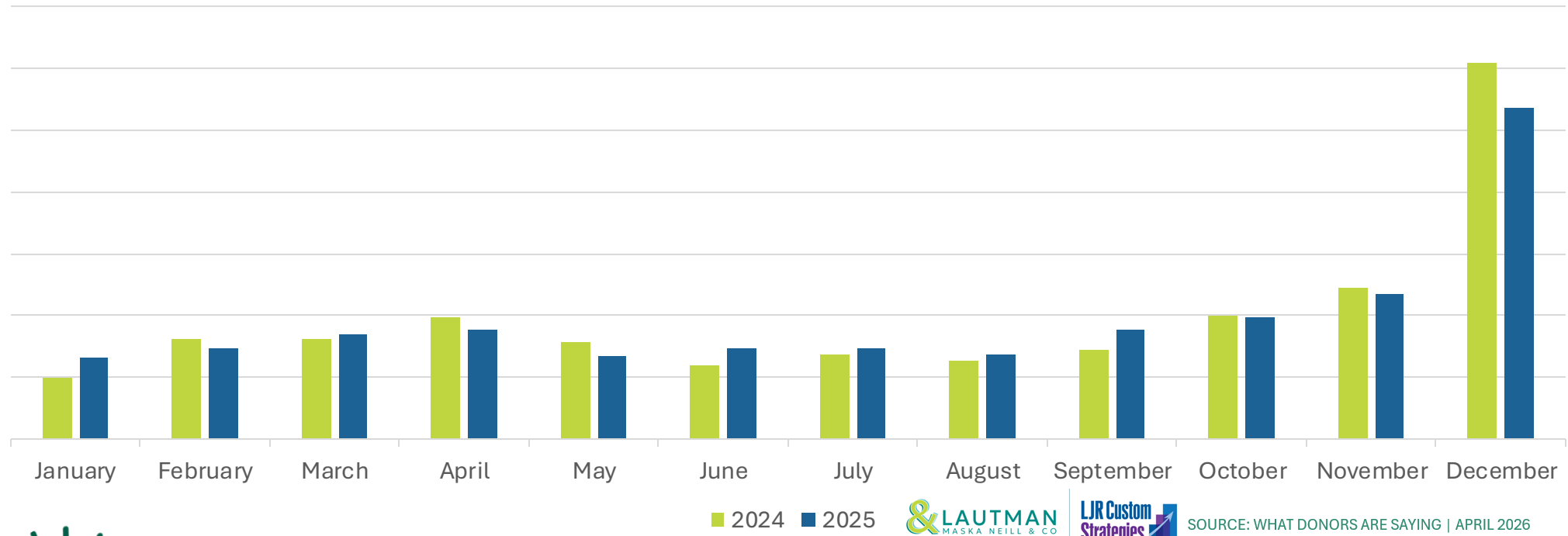
But 2025 Felt Different

Uncertainty was coming from multiple places at once:

- Tariffs being introduced, rolled back, and introduced again
- Higher consumer prices
- Cuts to Medicare and Medicaid
- Big funding reductions and changes to food assistance programs
- Gutting of foreign aid
- Downsizing of federal agencies
- Devastating wildfires and other natural disasters
- Changes to DEI related policies and funding
- Prolonged government shutdown



What 2025 Looked Like for Our Clients

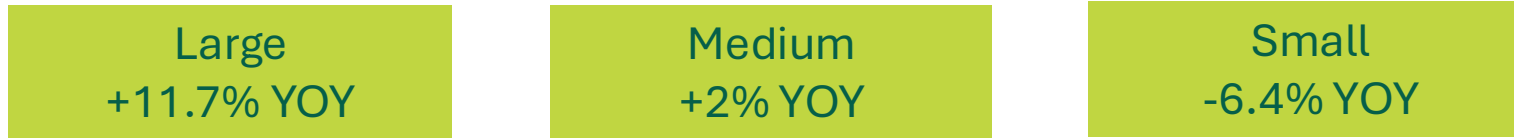


On average, Lautman clients finished the year FLAT with 2024 revenue.



And Industry-wide 2025 Trends...

YOY Revenue by Organization Size*



Larger nonprofits typically have more touchpoints with their clients – making it easier for them to recoup from a downturn that impacts giving.

YOY revenue by Giving Level*



A clear split between donor levels – with higher dollar donors buoyed by growing S&P in 2025 gave more than lower dollar donors who felt the pinch of rising costs.



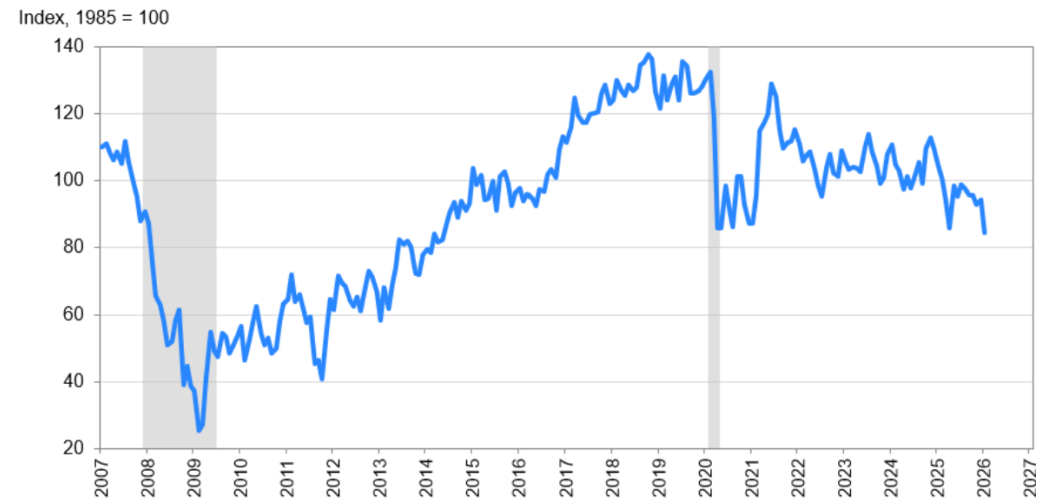
Functioning in a Challenging Economic Climate

The S&P 500 index in 2025



Stock market up (despite recent volatility) – Benefiting higher dollar donors and those who give with assets

Consumer Confidence Index®



*Shaded areas represent periods of recession.
Sources: The Conference Board, NBER
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Consumer confidence down – Impacting lower dollar donors, younger donors, donors giving with current dollars

Entering Into 2026...

We wanted to know what donors were thinking
Our solution was simple – **ASK THEM**





Our Approach

Powered By Partnership



+



Jennifer Johnson, Principal
ljrcustomstrategies.com





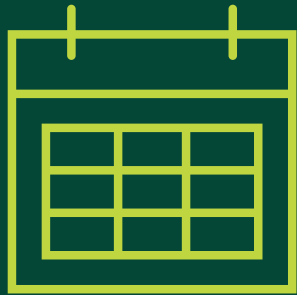
Our Method – Who Was Called

Survey of representative sample of donors to six charitable organizations in the United States.

Sectors represented:

- Advocacy
- International relief
- Environmental conservation
- Health/research
- Human services
- Faith-based giving





Our Method – How and When

Calls were made via landline and cell phone.

Donors were simply told they were being called for a “survey about charitable giving.” They were NOT given the name of the nonprofit whose list they were on.



**Calling was conducted
February 3-9, 2026.**



BUT: the Elephant in the Room

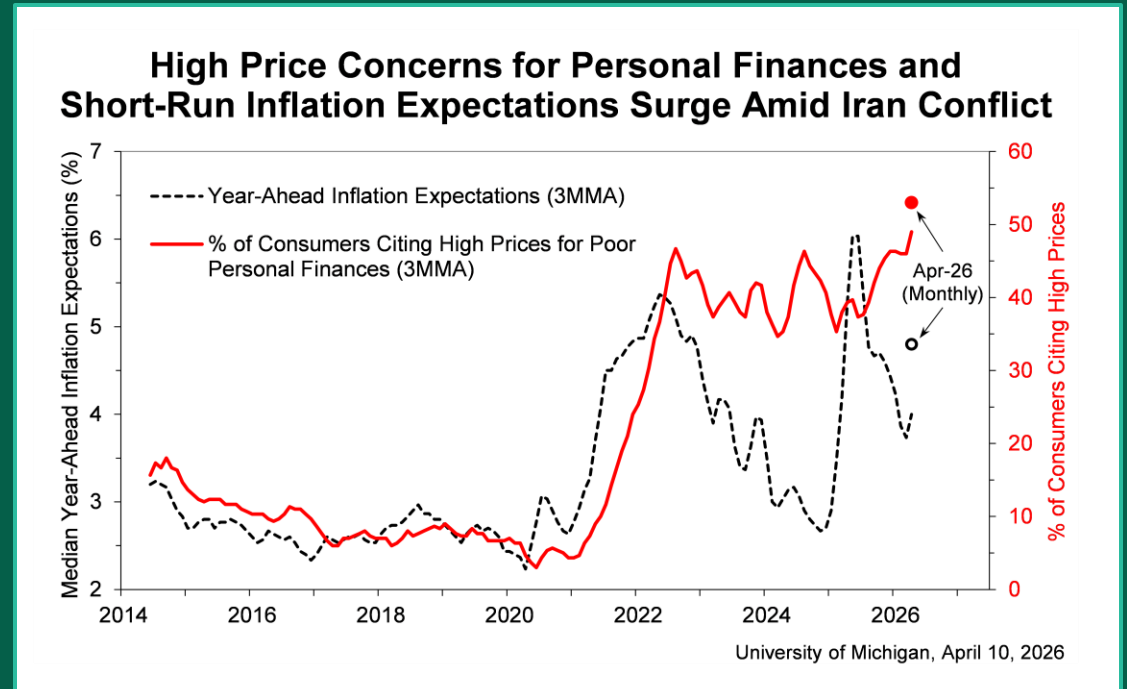
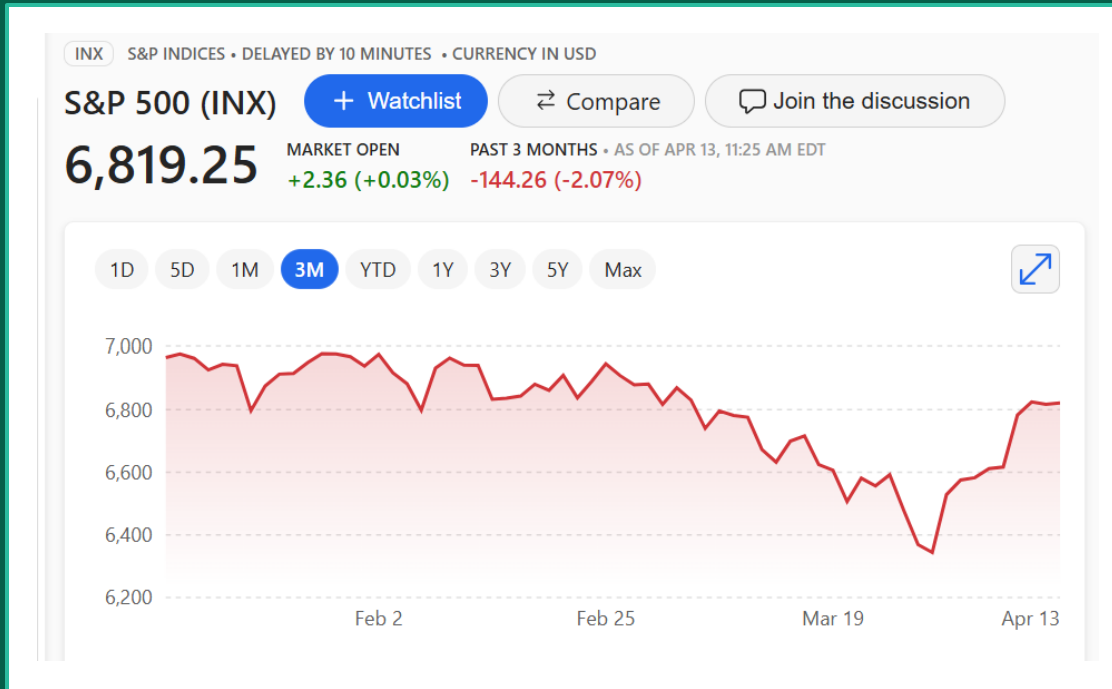


A lot happened immediately after the early February calling. War broke out late February – creating anxiety, distraction and upheaval in the economy.

Even so, the data gathered still shows what donors consider when making their gifts.



What a Difference a Few Weeks Makes...



Even more people feeling they are in a difficult financial situation now than before the War in Iran broke out.

What We Heard



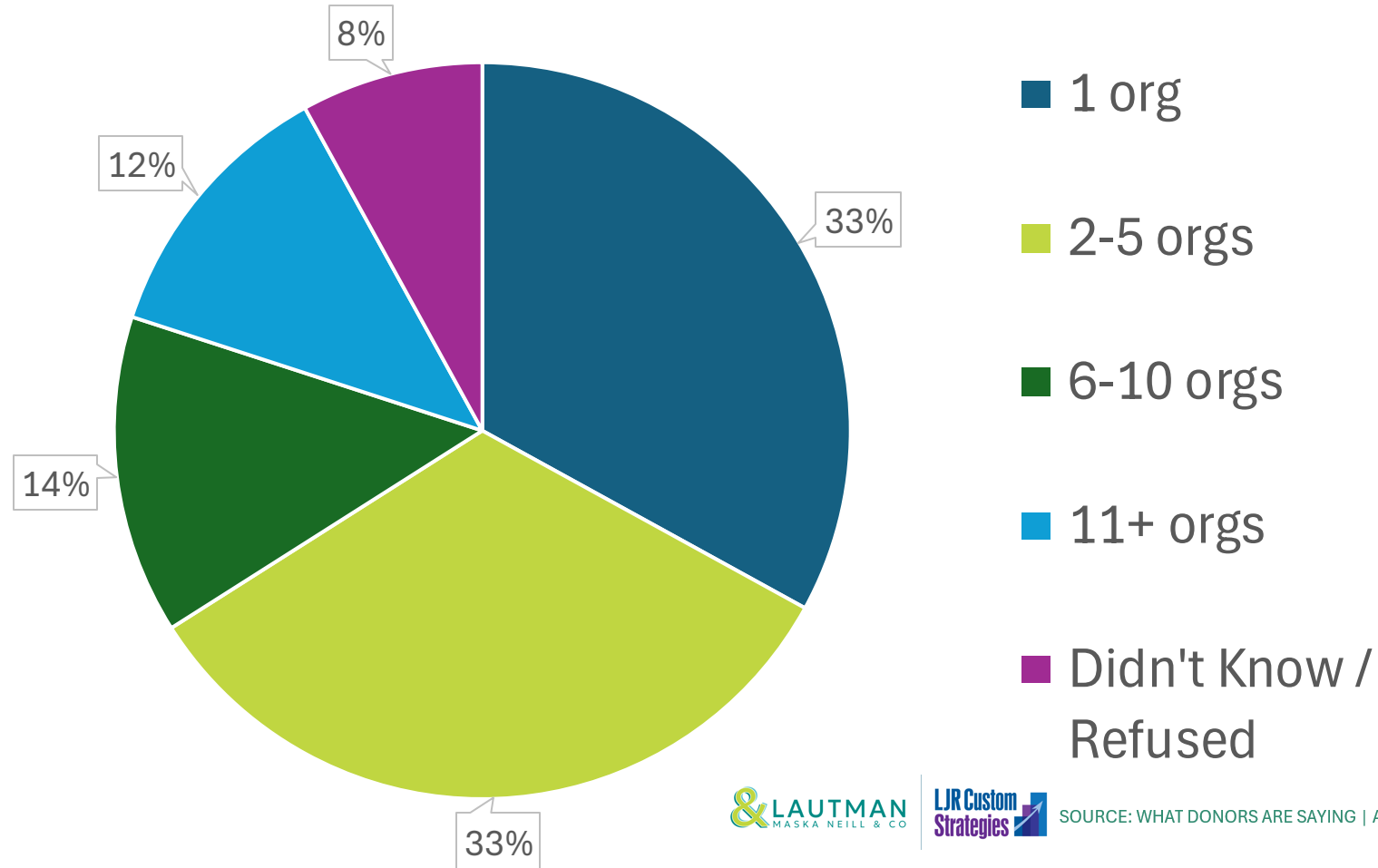
Which Issue(s) Concerns You the Most?*

Hunger / Food Insecurity	48%
Health Care	45%
Poverty / Economics	27%
Crime	18%
Education	14%
Immigration	8%
Environmental / Climate Change	5%
War / Armed Conflict	4%
Other	4%
Didn't Know / Refused	6%

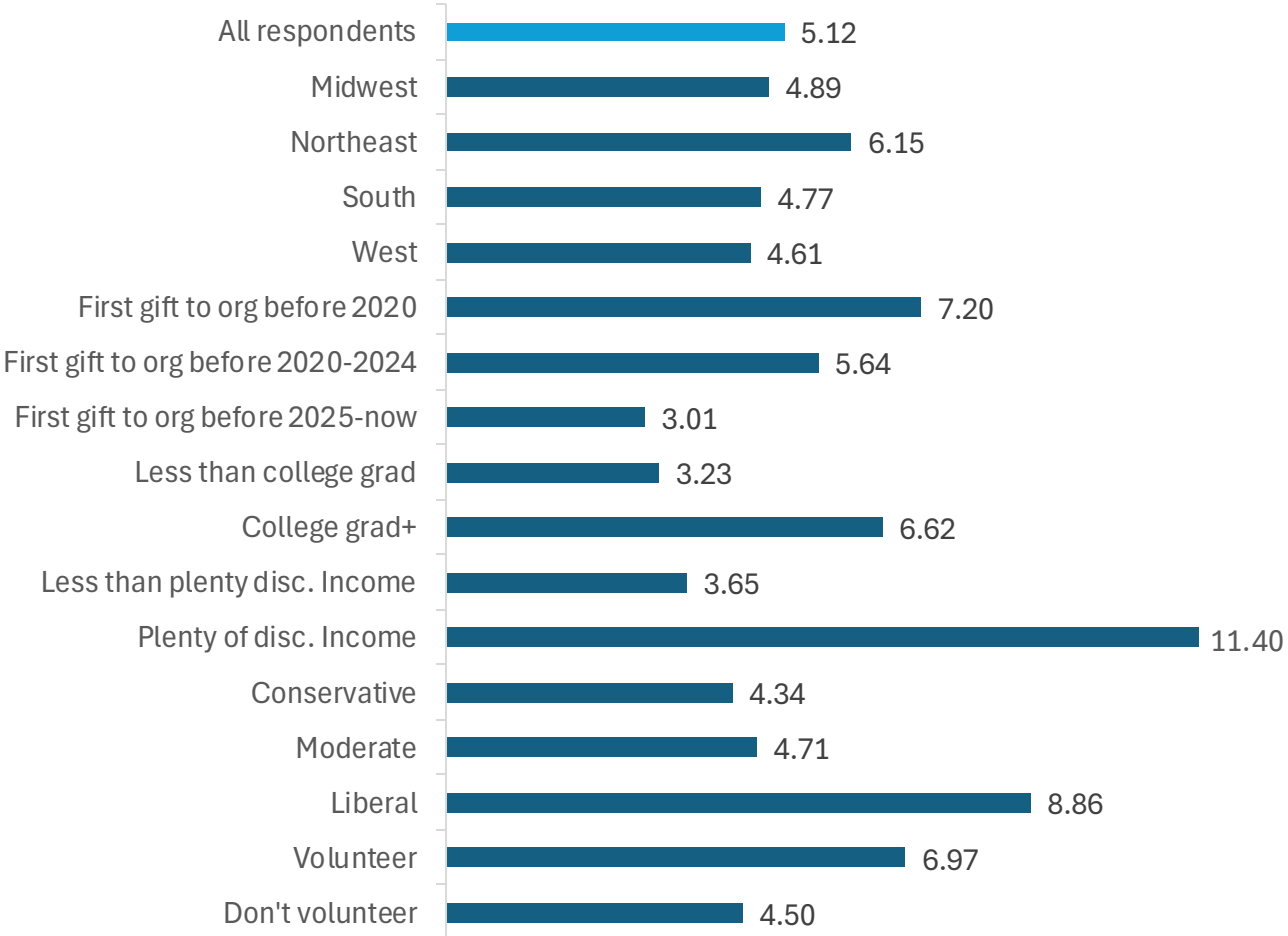


**Top 3 answers related to
cost of living and difficulty
making ends meet**

Using Your Best Estimate, How Many Organizations Did You Support in 2025?



Factors Impacting Number of Groups Supported

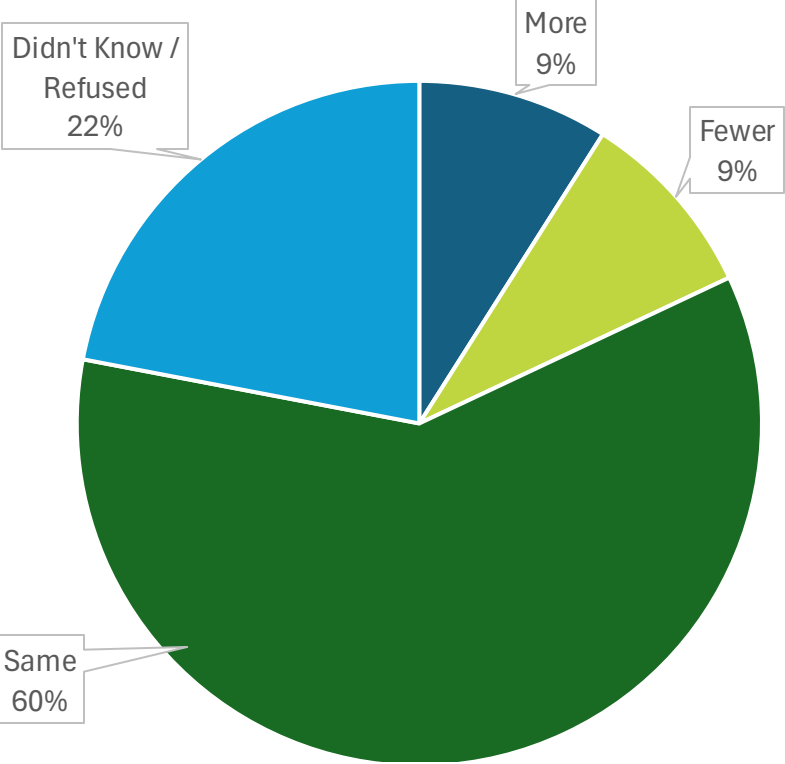


On average, donors reported supporting 5.12 orgs in 2025.

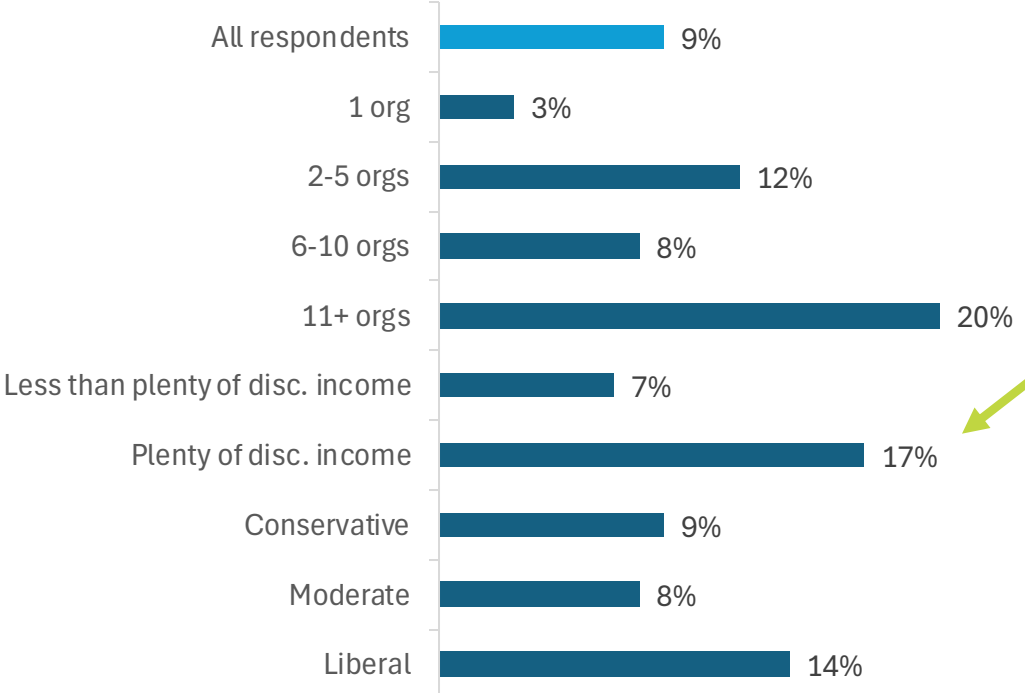
Having “plenty of discretionary income” is the biggest factor in terms of number of organizations supported.



Do You Expect to Support More Groups in 2026?



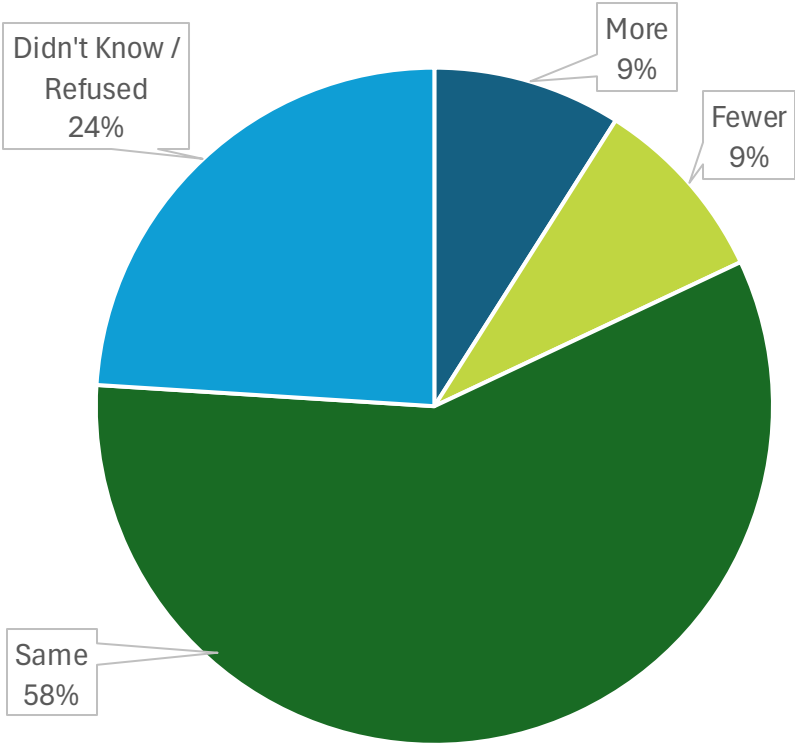
Breakdown of the 9% who Expect to Support More Organizations:



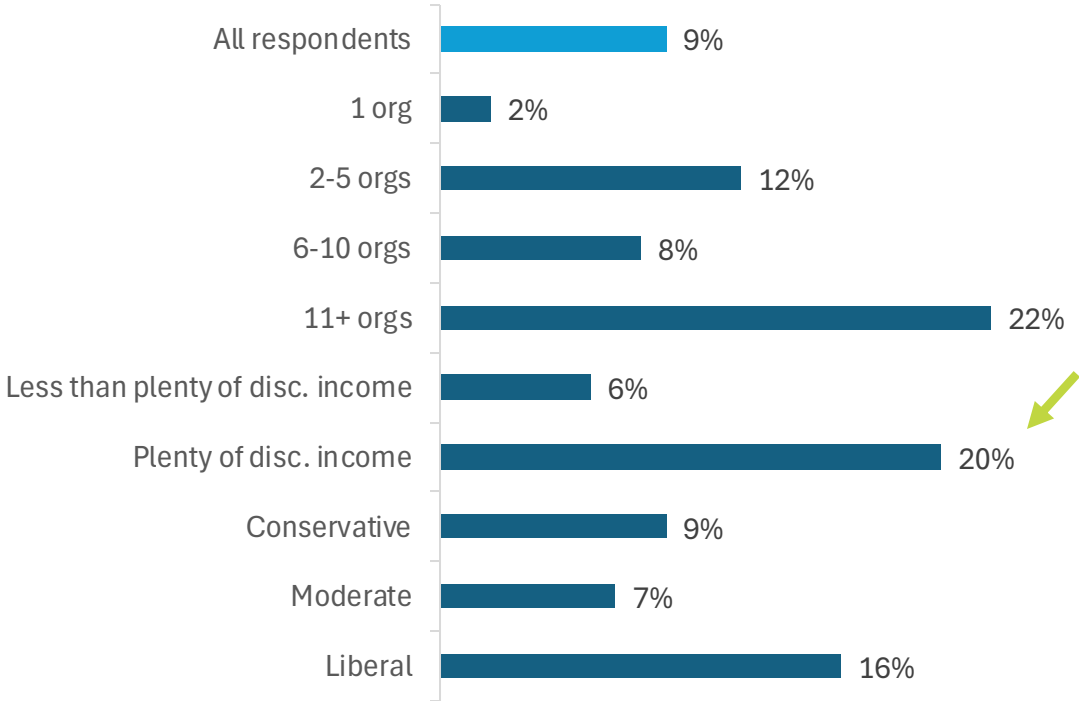
Having discretionary income main driver of donors intending to increase the number of orgs they support

& LAUTMAN MASKA NEILL & CO | **LJR Custom Strategies** | SOURCE: WHAT DONORS ARE SAYING | APRIL 2026

Do You Expect to Give More Money in 2026?



Breakdown of the 9% who Expect to Give More Money in 2026:



Having discretionary income main driver of donors intending to give more money in 2026

Main Reasons for Cutting Back on Giving*

Can't afford to give as much	48%
Economic uncertainty	28%
Priorities have changed	10%
Doesn't have the impact it used to	6%
Changes to tax incentives	6%
Political Environment	6%
Feel less connected to orgs I support	4%
Trust in orgs has declined	2%
Didn't Know / Refused	2%

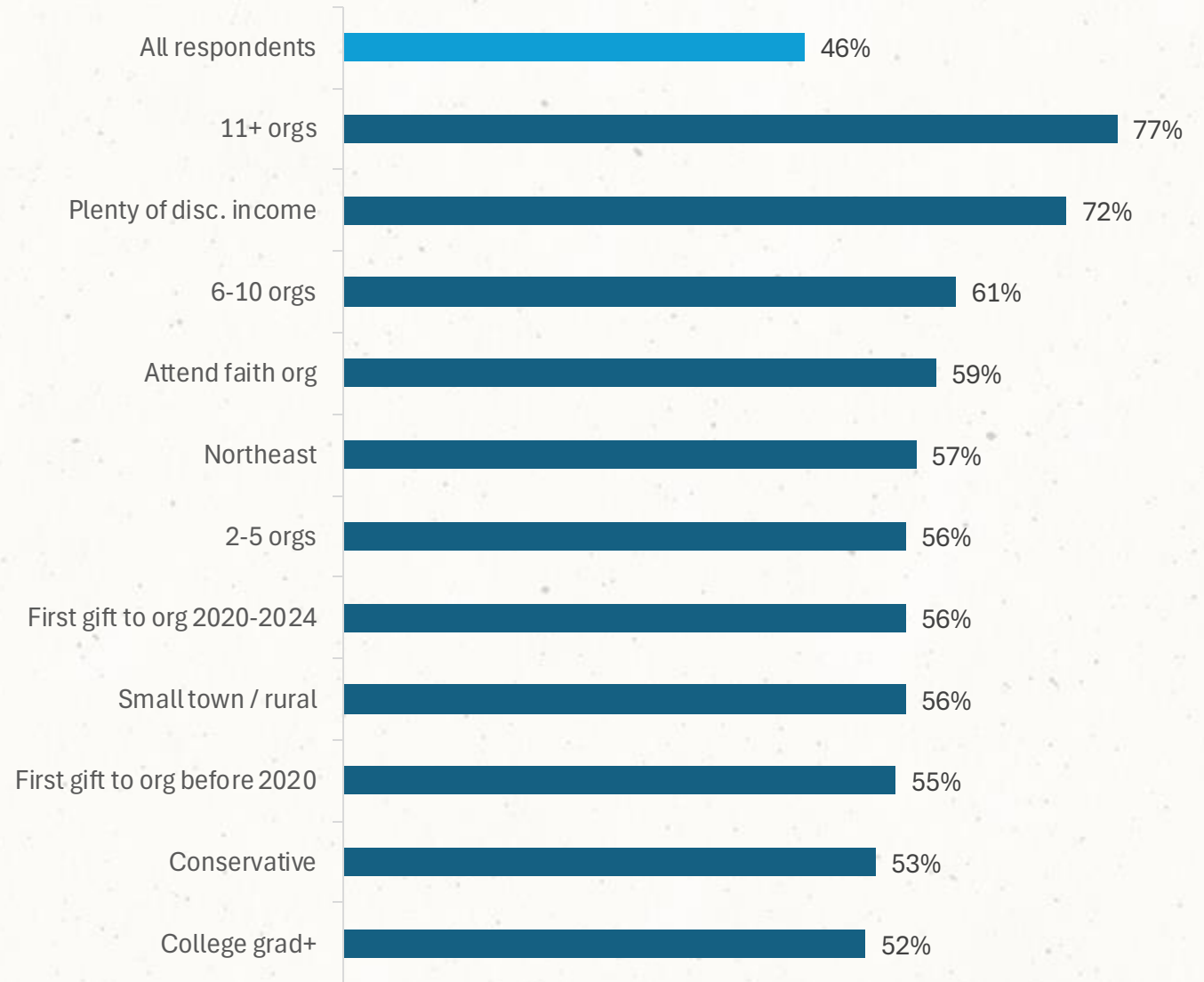


People are cutting back because of economic reasons – NOT because they've lost faith in nonprofits

*Multiple response accepted. Totals are more than 100%
Asked only of respondents who expected to give to fewer organizations, less money, or both.

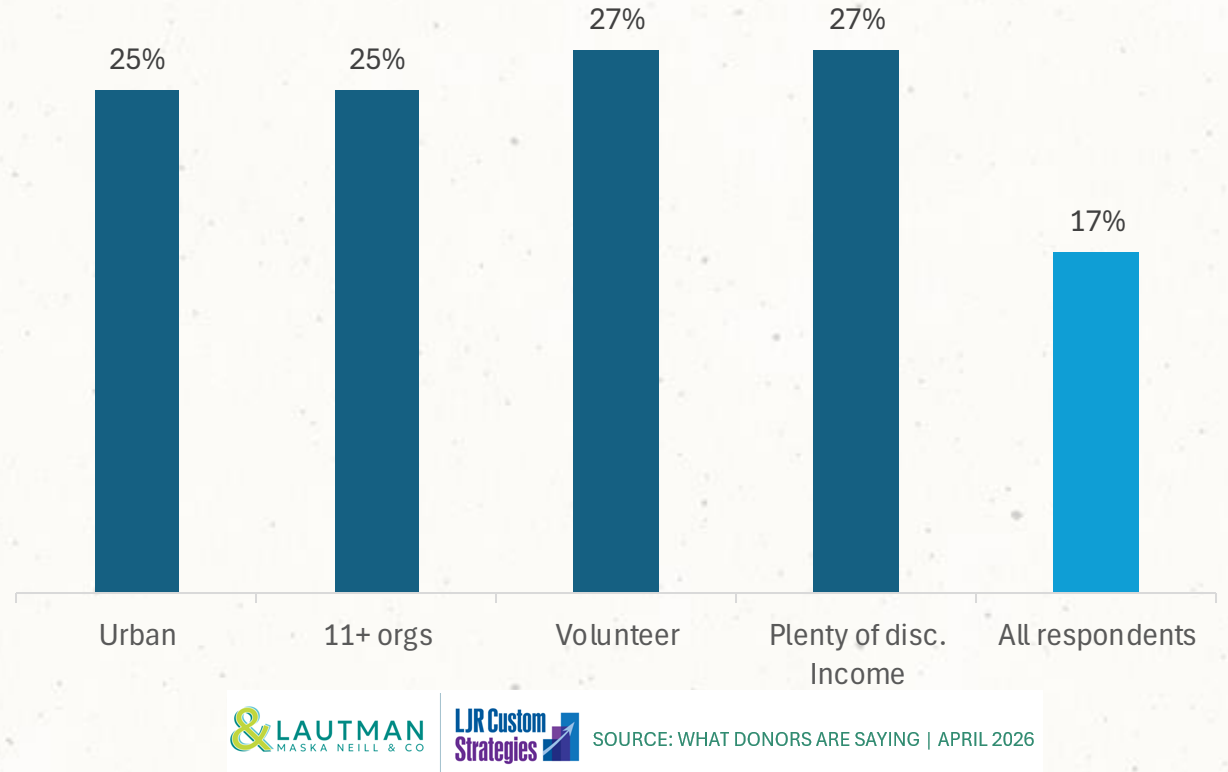
Volunteers are Very Valuable

And they tend to already be **generous** with their time and money



The Looming Elections

A closer look at donors most likely to “strongly agree” they plan to donate to a political candidate this year



Only 17% of all respondents expressed a strong intention to support a political candidate this year.

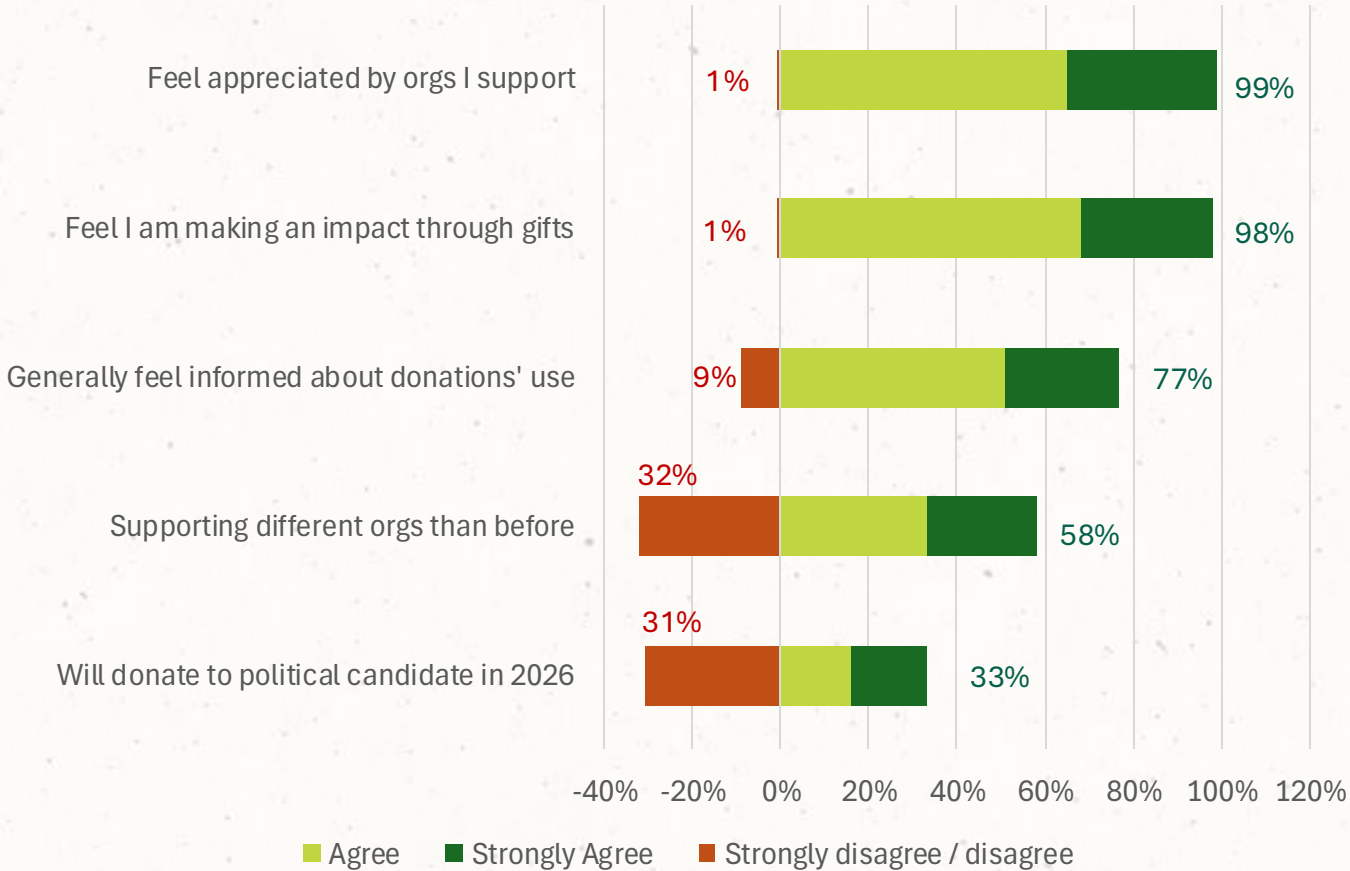
And those who are – identify as having plenty of discretionary income.



Great News!

Donors feel:

- Appreciated
- Impactful
- Informed



SOURCE: WHAT DONORS ARE SAYING | APRIL 2026



Please Tell Us One or Two Key Attributes a Nonprofit Needs to Have for You to Consider Supporting it?

98%

mentioned WHO a nonprofit serves

Sample responses:

- Feeding the hungry
- People living with diseases/medical needs
- Help people in need
- Churches
- Community
- Homelessness
- Farmers
- People with disabilities
- Children
- Areas impacted by disasters
- The elderly
- Veterans/military

Please Tell Us One or Two Key Attributes a Nonprofit Needs to Have for You to Consider Supporting it?

29%

mentioned the impact of the organization

Sample responses:

Use donations wisely

How they are run

Honesty & transparency

Reputation

Strategic



Which Do You Prefer to Support?



Which Statement Do You Agree With More?

66%

More important than ever to support advocacy groups that are working to create systems of change

25%

Given the stalemate in government right now, there is not much reason to support advocacy groups

Donors STILL believe in the power of advocacy!



Which are You More Likely to Support?

51%

Groups that have experienced federal funding cuts, in order to help fill the gap

45%

Groups that don't receive federal funding because they are set up to succeed regardless of cuts

Donors expressed interest in supporting BOTH types of organizations.



What the Data is Telling Us



Conclusions & Recommendations



The competition for charitable dollars is stiff.

- Most donors give to five or fewer charities, and 91% say they are unlikely to give to more organizations in the future.
- Further, many say they may give to different groups over time, meaning donor retention is not guaranteed.

Donors who may decrease their giving are doing so for purely financial reasons, not because of the organization.

Conclusions & Recommendations



Donors feel appreciated and impactful. **Keep communicating gratitude for support and sharing how those dollars are used.**

Donors want to hear more about the people an organization helps rather than how it is run. **Tell stories of those you serve to show impact.**

When possible, **share how the organization impacts donors' own communities.**



Conclusions & Recommendations

Volunteers are among the most generous and most likely to give. **Offer volunteer opportunities to further engage existing donors. Also – ask your volunteers to donate!**

Political giving is not terribly high among the respondents. Those who plan to give to a political candidate tend to be those who can afford it – meaning it likely won't decrease giving to nonprofits they care about.

Conclusions & Recommendations



Organizations in the Hunger and Health Care sectors have the easiest argument when asking for support. Groups that fight poverty and crime are also compelling.

Education and environmental organizations are a tougher sell, particularly if potential donors are deciding between supporting them or organizations that addresses hunger, health, poverty, or crime.

Donors are still willing to support advocacy work, despite the stalemate.



Conclusions & Recommendations

If a nonprofit has experienced federal funding cuts, talk about needing donors' support to help fill the gap.

If a nonprofit does not get federal funding, talk about how that the group is helping to meet the growing need that exists because of the funding cuts.

Questions & Answers

