



Parenting and Philanthropy

Growing the Next Generation of Givers

“They grow up so fast.” What parent hasn’t marveled at how quickly their child has jumped from walking to running through life? Those formative years are pivotal to a person’s development and sense of self and how they interact with and contribute to our ever-connected, complex world.

Despite a steady birth rate decline in the United States for the past few years,¹ in 2022, 40% of American families lived with their own children under age 18 in the household.² During this time together, many parents may feel a sense of responsibility to raise caring, thoughtful members of society.

This study aims to look at the practice of giving back as one of the ways to introduce core values, like kindness, empathy, and generosity. Modeled by parents and instilled at a young age, these values can be a strong foundation for social success—and lay the groundwork for children to carry on the practice and build a legacy of giving.

¹ Vital Statistics Rapid Release: Births: Provisional Data for 2022, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

² America’s Families and Living Arrangements, 2022, United States Census Bureau.

Summary

As people become parents, philanthropy becomes a higher priority. More than two-thirds (69%) of parents give, and over half of these givers (54%) say that parenting increased the priority of giving in their lives. Six in 10 (60%) of these parents who give identify as committed givers who have participated in one of many giving activities within the last year and who say that giving is a significant or pretty important part of their lives.

Having children changes how parents view giving back, with nearly half (47%) supporting very different or fairly different types of organizations than they did prior to becoming parents, including a greater focus on causes related to their children's education and activities. Sixty-two percent of parents who give also talk to their kids about giving, either through planned or spontaneous conversation—and actively engage them in planning, giving, and volunteering. And all parents, especially those who give, expressed interest in passing down the values of kindness, empathy, and generosity.

The giving activity of parents directly translates into greater participation in giving activities among their children

Of the parents who give, more than three-quarters (81%) of their children have participated in giving activities within the last year, meaning these children were more likely to volunteer, give directly, or purchase products to donate. While almost three-quarters (70%) participated in these activities with other family members, nearly half (48%) did so independently.

For the purpose of this study:

Parents: Americans with children under age 18 living at home

Nonparents: Americans under age 65 without children under age 18 living at home

Givers: Parents or nonparents who have participated in a range of giving activities within the past year: financial donations to nonprofits or individuals, donations of products or goods to nonprofits or individuals, or volunteering



Key Findings

1 Having children influences how parents give and the importance of philanthropy in their lives.



69%
of parents give

More likely to volunteer, make financial donations, and regularly participate in year-end giving.

54%

say parenting increased the priority of giving in their lives

11%

say parenting decreased the priority of giving in their lives

Parents and nonparents are about equally likely to give (69% vs. 63%), but, perhaps because of proximity or exposure to more giving opportunities through their children’s school and social life, parents participate in charitable activities (giving, volunteering, and donating products) more frequently than adults without children: 40% of parents engage in giving very or fairly often, compared to 24% of nonparents. While only 26% of parents have increased the amount of their donations since becoming parents, 41% say they give financial donations more frequently.

60% of the parents who give identify as committed givers (compared with 44% of nonparents), reporting they have participated in one of many giving activities within the last year and say that giving is an important part of their lives.

Certain groups are more likely to describe themselves as committed givers:

65%

Generation Z + Millennial givers

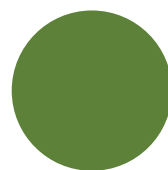
83%

Black givers

64%

parents of children in elementary school (ages 5-11)

Parents engage in giving in many ways:



62%
Say they've made a financial gift to nonprofits



21%
Say this is their most preferred way to give



39%
Prefer giving money or goods directly to individuals in need

27%
Say they have volunteered in the last year

24%
Say this is their preferred form of giving

31% of parents who give have increased the frequency of their volunteering since having children

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Having children influences the way parents view charitable causes.

Since becoming parents, nearly half are supporting more and different types of organizations than they were prior to having children. For example, the study indicates that parents are more likely than nonparents to make donations to educational (29% vs. 14%) and religious institutions (33% vs. 26%). Most say that becoming a parent was influential in driving those changes, such as by getting involved in causes and organizations through their child's school.



47%

of parents support more organizations than they did before having children



72%

of parents say they support very/fairly different causes since having children



82%

of parents say having children was very/fairly influential in this change



3 Many parents actively converse with their kids about giving and model philanthropic behavior in the hope of passing down their values.

The dinner table may bring more than a daily classroom roundup: Six in 10 parents talk to their kids about philanthropy and actively engage them in planning, giving, and volunteering.



62%

of parents who give discuss philanthropy with their children

- 50% are spontaneous conversations
- 14% are planned conversations



Parents who give are more likely to report that their children also give:

81%

of parents who give say their children have participated in giving activities within the last year



3.1 the number of giving activities committed givers say their children do

85%

of parents who give say their family has something they would describe as a giving tradition



73% say they have more than one giving tradition

For parents, philanthropy is tied to values: All parents, regardless of their giving status, hope positive values are instilled in their child through giving and volunteering activities, and parents with children who give are most likely to say they hope engaging in these activities passes on kindness (47%), generosity (35%), and empathy (30%).



47%

kindness



35%








generosity
















30%

empathy

Parents who discussed giving with their children

Overall	62%	
Discussed generosity, kindness, and sharing with others	34%	
Discussed why people donate money and volunteer	23%	
Made a conscious effort to discuss issues, community needs, and/or causes	20%	
Set aside part of an allowance or monetary gift to give to others or donate to charity	12%	
Chose a specific organization or cause to support together as a family	12%	
Created or discussed a plan for what organizations to support or how much to give	7%	

How parents participated in giving activities with their children

Performed a random act of kindness	42%	
Participated in a walk, race, dance, or other event/activity benefiting charity	20%	
Gave or volunteered in honor or in memory of someone	16%	
Raised money to donate to an organization or cause	16%	
Participated in a day of service	15%	
Participated in a fundraiser for an individual or a nonprofit (includes making donations to a crowdfunding platform, a social media fundraiser, and other types of community-based fundraisers)	15%	
Gave or volunteered through an event at a family member's workplace	13%	
Had a regular or recurring volunteer commitment	12%	
Donated money through a family member's workplace benefits	10%	
Advocated on behalf of a cause or raised awareness of a social issue	10%	
Contributed to a dedicated financial account for charitable giving	8%	
Organized a fundraiser for an individual or nonprofit	6%	
Participated in a service activity while traveling	5%	

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... and it's working. Values passed down are creating a legacy of family giving.

While still under age 18, children of parents who give are most likely to:



59% volunteer



51% purchase products to donate



58% give directly



43% make financial donations to nonprofits

While 70% performed these activities with other family members, nearly half did so independently: 48% of parents who give say their children completed a giving activity on their own; children participating on their own were most likely to volunteer (27%) or give directly to individuals (24%). Unsurprisingly, older children are more likely to complete activities independently, with almost half ages 14-17 participating in some giving activity on their own. However, 30% of parents who give with children ages 0-5 report having a child or children who performed a giving activity on their own.

5 Ways to Start a Family Giving Tradition

Gathering the family together provides the perfect opportunity to embrace your shared values and start a new tradition of giving:

1. Share your giving stories and commit to action together.
2. Create a charity "registry" or sign-up sheet for family members to buy and bring an item from a favorite nonprofit's wish list—if possible, arrange a time to deliver the items together.
3. Complete an in-home service project, such as packaging care kits for cancer patients.
4. Volunteer as a group—and gather afterward to discuss the experience.
5. Give together by choosing a cause or charity for your family to support as one.

Tip: Setting up a family donor-advised fund or dedicated account to provide support for charities can help provide structure for a strong family giving tradition throughout the year.

Conclusion

As the findings in this report demonstrate, becoming a parent may be one of life's biggest inflection points, changing how people engage with the world, and sparking significant questions of family and self, such as: **What are my values? How do I pass them on to my children? What does the idea of a "legacy" really mean?**

We know that legacy is emergent and iterative. It can begin at home, and parents have influence over how it is defined for the next generation. It's our hope that the sector will begin to embrace legacy as a formative effort—one that is done with intentionality, and that is ever-evolving, borne of values, and reflects the needs of the family as well as the end beneficiaries.³

When it comes to parenting, charitable giving can play an integral part and act as a catalyst for instilling kindness, empathy, and the value of philanthropy in the next generation.

³ *Legacy in Family Philanthropy: A Modern Framework, 2021.*

Methodology

This report is based on a September 2023 study examining giving behaviors among parents and children and how becoming a parent changes the attitudes of givers. The study was conducted among 1,004 parents and 465 nonparents by Big Village Insights, an independent research firm. For the purpose of this study, parents were defined as Americans with children under age 18 living at home; nonparents were defined as Americans under age 65 who do not have children under age 18 living at home. The research specifically explored the attitudes of givers, including 691 parents and 293 nonparents. For the purpose of this study, givers were defined as anyone, parent or nonparent, who had participated in a range of giving activities within the past year: financial donations to nonprofits or individuals, donations of products or goods to nonprofits or individuals, or volunteering. The margin of error among the total parent and nonparent samples are 3% and 4%, respectively; the sub-sample margin of errors will vary.



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