

# Institute for Philanthropy

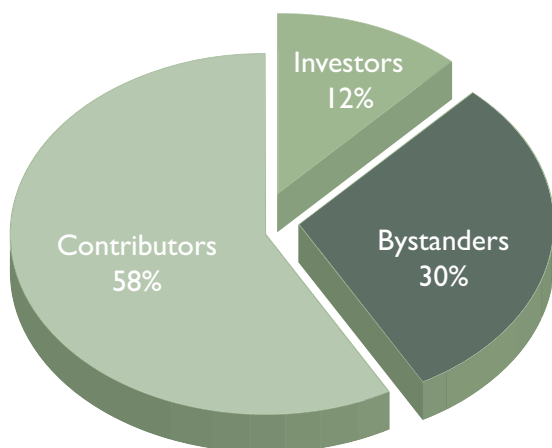
## Who are the givers?

### Briefing paper on British social attitudes to charitable giving

Each year the British Social Attitudes Survey provides an intriguing insight into our society. The Institute for Philanthropy has commissioned questions, as part of this survey, on aspects of charitable giving. This paper examines people's charitable behaviour and how it relates to various population groups and the attitudes that they hold.

When a rich philanthropist donates a large sum of money to a charity, the news coverage invariably includes a profile of the philanthropist and explains why he or she is donating the money to that particular charity. However, every day people throughout Britain give smaller, but often quite significant sums of money to charities by dropping coins in a tin, writing a cheque or signing up for a direct debit scheme. Who are these people and what sorts of attitudes do they hold? Just as importantly, who are the people that do not give to charity and how do their social attitudes differ?

This brief sheds some light on these questions by drawing on recent data from the British Social Attitudes (BSA) Survey.



The BSA data found that nearly a third of the population (30%) are essentially non-givers; these are people who report giving less than £5 to charity per year, most of whom give nothing! We term these people **bystanders** as they are often aware of need but make no contribution to meeting it.

The majority of respondents (58%) are casual givers who we term **contributors**. These are people who give between £5 and £120 to charity per year. They are likely to give infrequently; nearly two-thirds give less often than once a month. They are also far more likely to give donations when

asked than to give by direct debit; only a quarter of them give to charity by this regular and usually tax-efficient method.

The last group of givers are committed givers who give £120 or more to charity per year and who we term **investors**. Almost one in eight of the population is in this category, and nearly a quarter of them give over £500 to charity per year. In contrast to the casual givers, they give frequently with over three-quarters giving at least once a month, and over a quarter giving once a week or more. Whilst they are more likely than casual givers to donate via direct debits, over 40% do not. As planned givers are more likely to be aware of the availability and importance of signing up for tax relief on gifts, this suggests there is a significant amount of charitable tax relief going unclaimed.

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

A comparison of various population groups and their giving habits reveals that certain groups are more likely to contain the people we describe as investors. These committed givers are often:

- Those **over 35 years of age**
- Those who are **higher-educated**
- Those who **adhere to a religion** and **attend church**
- Those with an **income over £56k per annum**
- Those who **identify with a main political party**
- Those who **read a daily broadsheet newspaper**

A common characteristic of investors is a higher level of awareness, gained through age, education and interest in politics and current affairs. Converting bystanders into contributors and upgrading contributors into investors may therefore depend to a large extent on raising general awareness of the presence and causes of need and the opportunities that exist to help meet that need through providing charitable support.

### Attitudes and Values

A comparison of the attitudes and values of the investors, contributors and bystanders reveals broad similarities in opinion. There are, however, a few trends in differing attitudes between the three groups. A summary of points includes:

- A majority in all groups believe that **domestic social concerns**, such as homelessness, should be funded mainly or entirely by government.
- In contrast, most respondents believe that **international social issues** should be addressed by both government and charities, with the most support for this view coming from investors. Bystanders, as the term suggests, largely expect charities to take most of the responsibility for these causes, in spite of not digging into their own pockets to aid this process.
- Over half of all respondents believe that **business should support charity**, with the most support for this view coming from investors.
- Investors are somewhat more likely than other groups to believe that there is quite a lot of **poverty in Britain today**, and they are more likely than bystanders or contributors to ascribe poverty to social injustice.
- Nearly half of committed givers express having a quite a lot or a great deal of **interest in politics**, while less than a third of casual givers, and under a fifth of non-givers, share this interest.

## GIVING BEHAVIOUR OF POPULATION GROUPS

Table 1 illustrates how respondents in various demographic groups fall into the three giving categories. For example, of the respondents aged over 55, 16% are investors. By examining this table we can ascertain which groups have a higher or lower propensity to give than others.

Respondents over 35 years of age are higher givers than those aged under 35; a considerable 40% of 18-34 year olds are bystanders, as opposed to only around a quarter of those aged 35 or over. Furthermore, the percentage of investors amongst 35-55 year olds is more than double that of 18-34 year olds and continues to increase with age. However, of people under 35 years of age, those who already own their property are less likely to be bystanders (35%) than those who live in rented or rent-free accommodation (46%). Furthermore, ownership of a house is a significant factor for the over 35s; of respondents aged between 35 and 55, those who own their property are four times more likely (16%) to be investors than those who do not (4%).

Both age and home-ownership are shown to be significant factors regarding an individual's giving behaviour. This could simply reflect the higher levels of income and financial stability that over 35s and home-owners are assumed to have.

The figures show very little variation between men and women in terms of giving habits. This is perhaps due to respondents reporting the giving behaviour of their households, as their philanthropic decisions may be taken as a family unit. Whilst a very small percentage of respondents who left school at sixteen are now investors, over half are at least contributors. Those who were higher-educated are more than twice as likely to be investors as those who left school at sixteen.

The data supports the known correlation between religious practice and giving, with non-religious people appearing very unlikely to be investors. There is also a clear trend between regularity of church attendance and likelihood of being an investor. Of those who attend church 'regularly', 31% are investors whilst 16% of 'occasional' church-goers are investors. The group of respondents who virtually never attend church are half as likely to be investors (6%) as the general population.

Furthermore, respondents of a non-Christian faith' report very high giving habits (1 in 3 are investors – as opposed to a 1 in 8 population average). It is worth noting, though, that this group only constitutes 6% of the surveyed population so further research is needed to elucidate this finding.

Unsurprisingly, the table shows a very strong relationship between giving behaviour and income, with the wealthiest respondents most likely to be investors. However, it is interesting to note that respondents in the £20k – £32k bracket are just as likely to be investors as their wealthier counterparts in the £32k – £56k bracket (both 14%). This is perhaps testament to recent funding drives such as the government- and charity sector- funded Giving Campaign of the past three years, and the increased activity of face-to-face fundraisers, both of which have helped introduce middle-income people to the practice of regular, committed giving.

**Table 1:**  
**The Giving Behaviour of Population Groups**

*Percentage of population group that falls into each giving category*

Population Group	Bystanders (%)	Contributors (%)	Investors (%)
<b>AGE</b>			
18-34	40	54	6
35-55	26	62	13
55+	26	58	16
<b>GENDER</b>			
Male	31	56	13
Female	29	60	11
<b>EDUCATION</b>			
Left school by 16 years old	35	57	8
Attained higher education	21	60	18
Still at college/university	43	50	7
<b>RELIGION</b>			
Christian	26	62	13
Non-Christian faith	19	45	36
Non-religious	36	56	8
<b>HOUSEHOLD INCOME/year</b>			
<£12k	47	48	4
£12k – £19,999	27	66	6
£20k – £31,999	23	63	14
£32k – £55,999	14	72	14
£56k+	7	57	36
<b>PARTY IDENTIFICATION</b>			
Conservative	18	66	16
Labour	31	58	11
Liberal Democrat	24	61	15
Other/None	47	47	6
<b>NEWSPAPER READERSHIP</b>			
Does not read paper	35	54	11
Reads a tabloid	30	61	9
Reads a broadsheet	7	61	32

The generosity of UK givers is evidenced in the finding that 72% of respondents in the £12k – £20k bracket give to charity, in spite of their income being below the national average.

Political affiliation also affects giving levels amongst respondents. Of those who support a minority political party or no party at all, almost half (47%) are bystanders; they are also far less likely to be investors than those who identify with one of the three main political parties. Out of those, Conservative supporters are most likely to be givers – more than 4 out of 5 are givers of some kind compared to 2 in 3 Labour supporters. The Liberal Democrats' followers are somewhere in between, with over three quarters being givers of some kind. This finding may be affected by Conservative supporters being older, wealthier and valuing individual philanthropy above publicly-funded welfare services.

The data regarding newspaper readership shows that people who read broadsheets are far more likely to be investors than those who read tabloids or nothing at all. Almost a third of broadsheet readers are investors and only 7% are bystanders.<sup>2</sup> This finding may also be affected by external factors. For example, broadsheet readers may be mainly the higher-educated and wealthier respondents, and therefore inherently more likely to be committed givers.

## ATTITUDES OF NON-GIVERS AND GIVERS

Although bystanders, contributors and investors differ quite markedly in their charitable behaviour, their attitudes and values are often quite similar. At times, however, there are some noteworthy differences in opinion. Investors and bystanders tend to be farthest apart from each other in their attitudes. A summary of responses to questions concerning social attitudes are provided in Table 2.

On the funding of social issues, the population as a whole tends to differentiate between domestic and international social issues; the former is more often perceived as the responsibility of government, while the latter is more often perceived as a shared responsibility of government and charity.

On domestic social issues traditionally addressed by the state, such as homelessness and British children in need, the vast majority of all respondents agree that funding for these issues should come mainly or entirely from government. However, a higher percentage of investors recognise a role for charities in sharing the burden of addressing domestic social concerns. About a third of investors believe that funding for these issues should be shared equally between government and charities, compared to just over a fifth of non-givers.

Views on the funding of international social concerns, are somewhat different, with generally less overall enthusiasm for funding mainly by the state. A majority in each group believes that funding of international social issues should be shared equally between government and charities. As with domestic social issues, though, investors are somewhat more likely to support a sharing of responsibilities between government and charity on these issues. In contrast to their views on domestic social issues, non-givers are more likely to suggest that international concerns should be entirely or mainly funded by charities. Interestingly, in spite of expecting charities to attend to these issues, the bystanders (as they are aptly called) do not actually support charity themselves.

The views on poverty amongst givers and non-givers probably best reveals how these groups are broadly similar in their attitudes, but differ on some noteworthy details. Most respondents in each group believe there is quite a lot of poverty in Britain today and a majority in each group believe that poverty is an inevitable part of modern life. However, the differences between the groups on these issues may help indicate why they differ in their behaviour towards charities. Investors are somewhat more likely to believe that there is quite a lot of poverty in Britain today, and they are more likely than bystanders or contributors to ascribe poverty to injustice in our society. In contrast, non-givers are more likely to ascribe poverty to laziness or lack of will power.

While investors may be somewhat more concerned about economic injustice than contributors and bystanders, their attitudes suggest they largely support major British institutions. All three groups express positive levels of pride in the economic achievement, democracy, and social security system of Britain, but investors tend to express greater pride and bystanders somewhat less pride in Britain's democracy and social security system. Despite the support of investors for the social security system, this group is also the most worried that the welfare state discourages individuals from helping each other. This suggests that investors approve of our

**Table 2:**  
**Attitudes of Givers and Non-Givers**

(Percent of total population holding the particular attitude in brackets)

**Bystanders Contributors Investors**

**Attitudes (%) (%) (%)**

### FUNDING DOMESTIC SOCIAL ISSUES:

(% responding that money for the following causes should come from charities or government)

#### Housing of homeless in Britain

Mainly or entirely government (74)	75	74	70
Shared equally (24)	20	24	30
Mainly or entirely charities (2)	5	2	0

#### Helping British children in need

Mainly or entirely government (70)	73	70	63
Shared equally (27)	23	28	33
Mainly or entirely charities (3)	4	3	4

### FUNDING INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES:

(% responding that money for the following causes should come from charities or government)

#### Giving food aid to starving people in poor countries...

Mainly or entirely government (25)	24	23	35
Shared equally (45)	39	46	47
Mainly or entirely charities (31)	37	31	18

#### Helping children in need throughout the world...

Mainly or entirely government (21)	22	19	25
Shared equally (48)	39	51	55
Mainly or entirely charities (31)	39	30	19

### VIEWS ON POVERTY

Percent reporting that there is quite a lot of poverty in Britain (57)	54	58	61
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#### Why are there people in need? (% reporting the following)...

An inevitable part of modern life (36)	34	38	35
Laziness or lack of will power (28)	31	28	18
Because of injustice in our society (19)	18	16	30

### SOCIAL VALUES:

(% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the following statements)

The welfare state encourages people to stop helping each other (35)	33	36	41
Schools should teach children to obey authority (85)	84	87	79
For some crimes, the death penalty is the appropriate sentence (61)	66	62	46

### PRIDE IN BRITISH INSTITUTIONS:

(% reporting that they are very or somewhat proud of the following)

Way democracy works in Britain (69)	60	71	76
Britain's economic achievements (69)	69	70	68
Social security system in Britain (52)	50	51	57

### POLITICS

Percent with quite a lot or a great deal of interest in politics (28)	17	29	47
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### BUSINESS AND CHARITY

Percent agreeing large business should support charity (56)	50	55	73
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institutions and feel it is worthwhile making philanthropic investments to improve society. Investors also express the most interest in politics. In addition to being avid readers of the broadsheet newspapers, nearly half of these givers express

having quite a lot or a great deal of interest in politics, while less than a third of contributors, and a mere seventeen percent of bystanders share this interest.

Finally, despite their lack of personal action, bystanders are not entirely dismissive of charitable giving. There is widespread support from all respondents, including amongst non-givers, for the view that large business should support charity even if shareholders lose out. Still, investors are the most likely to agree with this opinion – nearly three quarters of them do so, and over a quarter of that group strongly agree with this view.

## CONCLUSION

The tables presented here include only a small portion of the available information from the BSA on the demographic characteristics and attitudes of givers and non-givers. For additional information please visit the Institute for Philanthropy website at [www.instituteforphilanthropy.org.uk/research.html](http://www.instituteforphilanthropy.org.uk/research.html)

While the data included in this brief sheds light on the behaviour and attitudes of individual Britons towards charities, it is only a first step. In addition to understanding how often and by what means individuals in the different groups give to charity, more data is needed on understanding the charitable behaviour of individuals. What types of charities are most popular for investors and contributors? What encourages individuals to give to particular charities? What concerns do people have that may prevent or restrict them from giving?

Answering these questions will require more surveys like the BSA, but also other techniques are needed. Charities might look to the private sector to see how businesses get to know their customers and respond to their preferences; focus group research, in-depth interviews, longitudinal tracking and detailed surveys of behaviour over time are all possibilities. Developing methods for raising awareness of needs, and charities' ability to meet needs if given sufficient support, would benefit from further attention. There also needs to be complimentary research to produce data on corporate and foundation giving, in order to understand the charitable behaviour of these sectors. Finally, further data is needed on charities themselves as the receivers of donations – the mechanism by which they receive funds, how often their strongest supporters provide donations, and the importance of individual donations to their income.

The Institute for Philanthropy is therefore working, with other interested groups and organisations, to increase the supply of credible, high-quality statistics that are necessary in order to fully understand and analyse charitable giving and philanthropy in Britain at the start of the 21st century.

## Findings

The findings presented in this brief are derived from the “B” wave of the 2003 British Social Attitudes (BSA) Survey. Conducted by the National Centre for Social Research, this survey gathered information on 1,133 individuals that are representative of Great Britain as a whole. Questions on charitable giving in survey were funded by the Institute for Philanthropy. Further information on the BSA is available at <http://www.natcen.ac.uk/>

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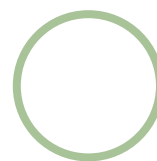
## About the Institute for Philanthropy

The Institute for Philanthropy is a non-profit making organisation. It was set up in 2000 to develop a greater understanding of philanthropy and its place in modern society, and ultimately to allow philanthropy to thrive by:

- promoting research into the incentives and barriers to giving
- devising improved methods for increasing giving
- ensuring that the maximum benefit reaches the ultimate cause.

The unique contribution of the Institute is to promote the profile and practice of all types and levels of philanthropy; it is independent of any particular cause.

Our vision is of a flourishing civil society where all good causes are adequately funded and where there is energy, enjoyment and achievement in co-operative philanthropic endeavour.



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<sup>1</sup> This includes a small number of respondents who report giving between £5 and £12 per year, but who also report giving less often than once per year.

<sup>2</sup> The Times and The Independent, recently made available in tabloid form, are included as broadsheets along with The Telegraph, The Guardian and the Financial Times.