

The Politics of Giving

Produced by [one&All](#) Giving Sciences

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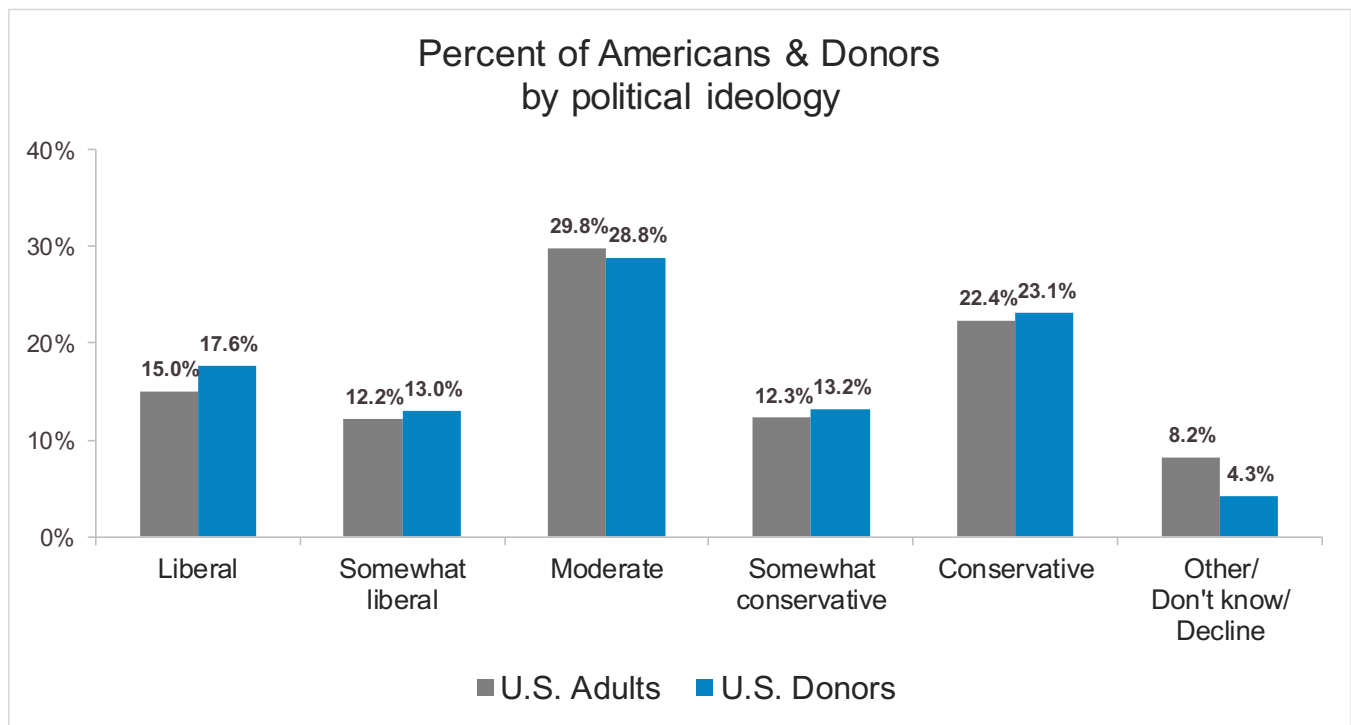
The Politics of Giving

The 2020 presidential election is in full swing, and provides the backdrop for our continued analysis of the politics of charitable giving. Our political leaning naturally impacts the types of charitable causes we support, but also how we show up to support those organizations. There are some surprising differences, and some reassuring similarities between those that lean left, right, or stand with the 30% of moderates in the center.

Political Leaning in America

Using a five-point scale to assess political ideology, the majority of Americans self-identify as “moderate.” The distribution has a conservative skew, with more people right of center than left. In the U.S., there is a strong, linear relationship between political leaning and age; conservatism increases with age. The average age of a self-identified “moderate” is 46.3, which is the average age of American adults 18+. Those on the left are younger than average, and those on the right are older than average.

This distribution is very consistent over time, and very little difference exists between donors and the general U.S. population. The miscellaneous “Other/don’t know/decline” category once again skews very young, with those in their late teens not quite tethered to the terms or their meaning.



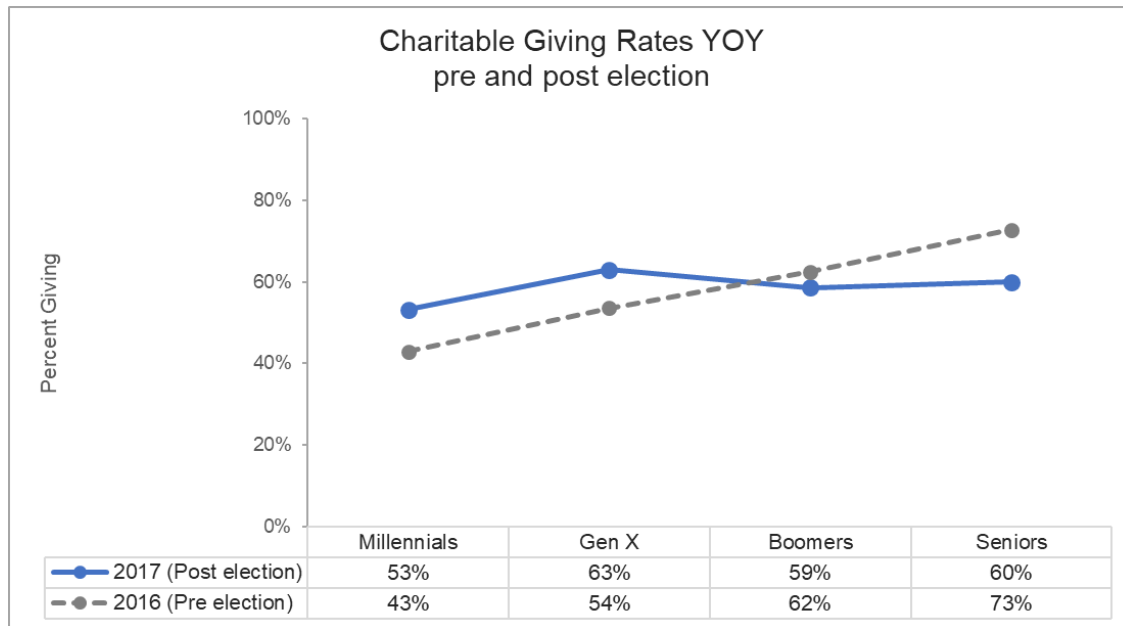
Source: One & All's DonorGraphics 2020. Base: U.S. adults, N=2,510, 55% of which give charitably.

Things That Go Bump

Sometimes, timing is everything. This 2020 research wave squeaked out before the bottom fell out with the corona pandemic. Great news for a tracking study. We did, however, see some swings in giving and volunteering, similar to the period immediately following the 2016 presidential election. The “Trump

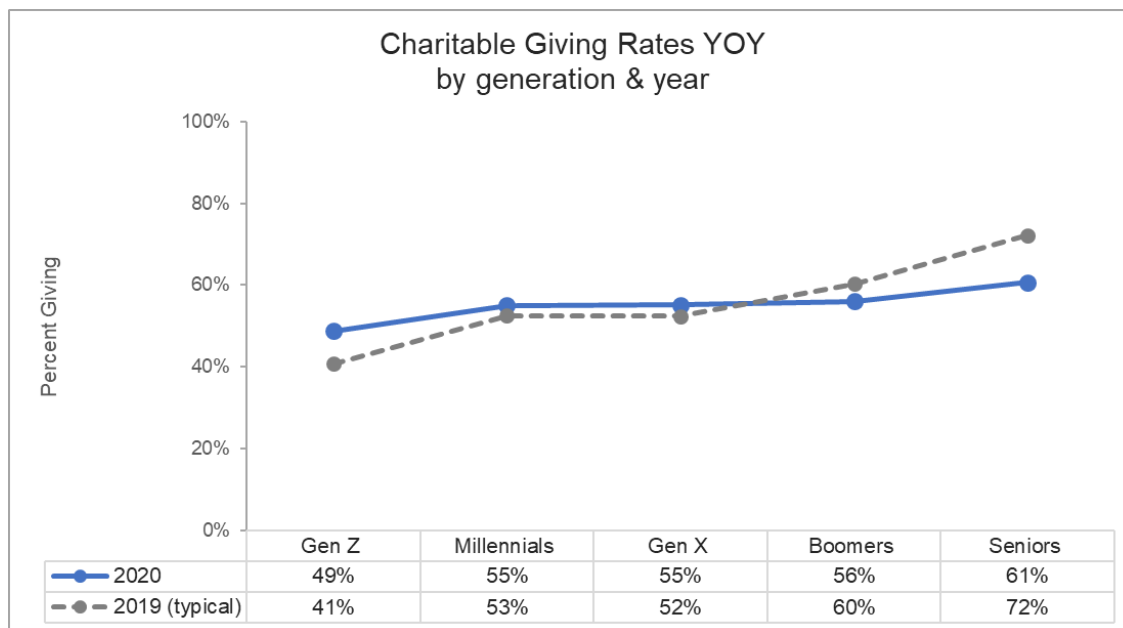


bump” for charitable giving meant more younger Americans engaged in charitable behaviors, supporting social justice and environmental organizations amongst others. Older generations – historically the most active segment of charitable giving and volunteering – were less likely to give charitably or volunteer during this time. This flattened the traditionally older-skewing curve of giving.



Source: One & All's DonorGraphics studies of U.S. adults, 2016 – 2017.

Charitable giving then settled back to pre-election norms for a few years, followed by another, smaller, aftershock early 2020. This “giving bounce” seems similar to the first 100 days of the administration change, and may be influenced by the current divided political climate.

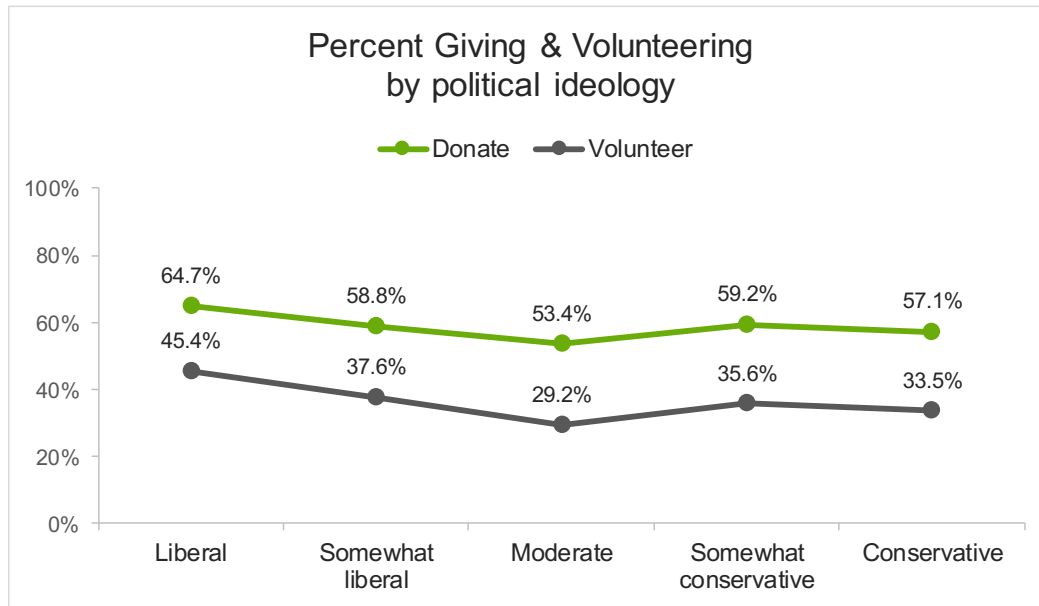


Source: One & All's DonorGraphics studies of U.S. adults, 2019 – 2020.



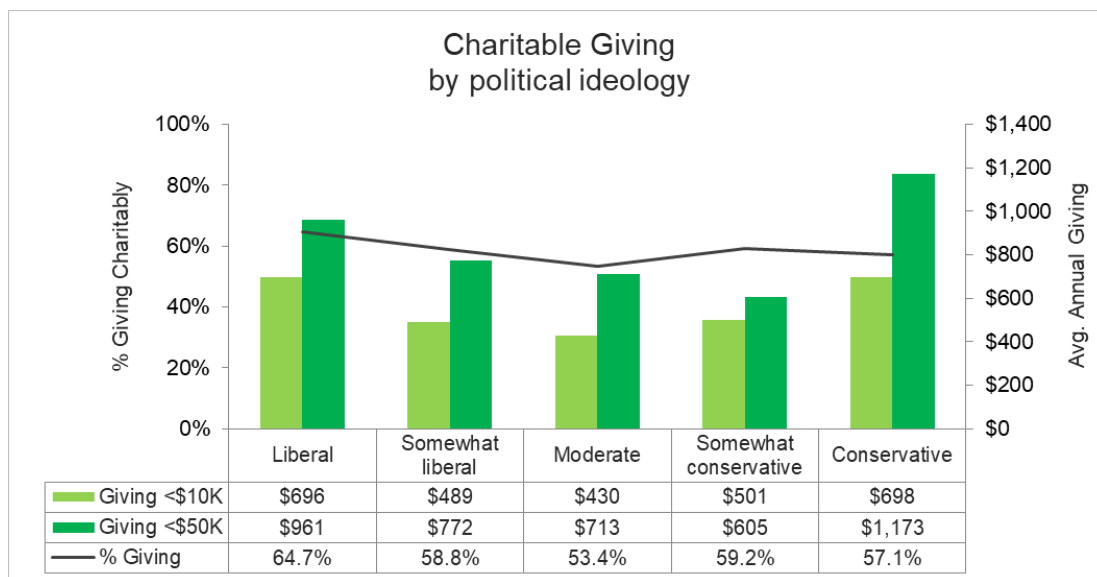
Charitable Giving & Volunteering

The distribution of charitable giving and volunteering by political ideology shows the relationship between the two. Moderates have the lowest rates of both, flanked by similar rates on either side of center. Liberals, however, have higher rates of giving and volunteering compared to conservatives.



Source: One & All's DonorGraphics 2020. Base: U.S. adults, N=2,510. Giving and volunteering exclude churches/houses of worship and political campaigns.

Last year, charitable giving increased with conservatism. This year, with the “Trump bounce,” more young and liberal donors gave. Once again, we see that the conservative group skewed higher when including major giving, as denoted by the darker green bars inclusive of gifts up to \$50K.



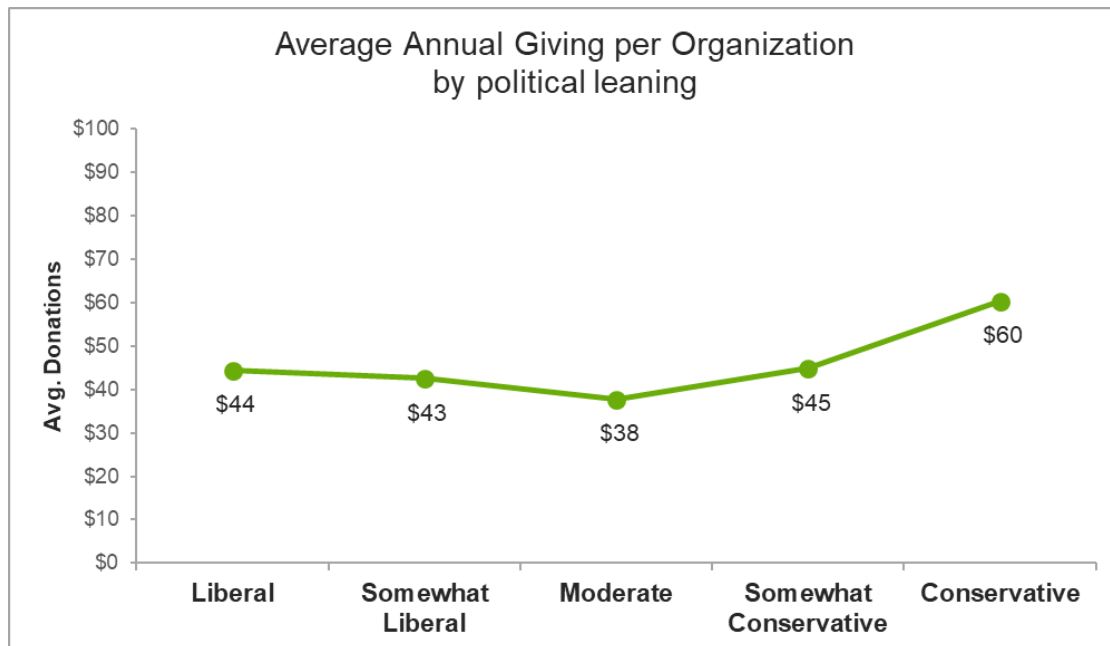
Source: One & All's DonorGraphics 2020. Base: U.S. adults, N=2,510. Self-reported giving excludes donations to churches/houses of worship and political campaigns.

Number of Organizations Supported

“Micro giving” is a growing trend, particularly amongst younger donors. Defined here as giving to over 30 organizations with smaller gift amounts, this category captures giving at point of sale (rounding up at checkout), social good products that donate a portion of their proceeds, or provide gifts in kind (Tom’s shoes, Bombas socks, Project RED, etc.), social fundraising (birthday campaigns, Go Fund Me), Amazon Smile, and many others.

When excluding the 6.7% of donors that are “micro givers,” the average/mean number of organizations supported is four across political leanings (and ages), same as last year. The median number of charitable organizations supported is three, including or excluding micro giving.

Liberal donors, more likely to be micro givers, give to more organizations compared to conservative donors. Therefore, the amount they give to each organization annually is lower, as they distribute their giving across more organizations.



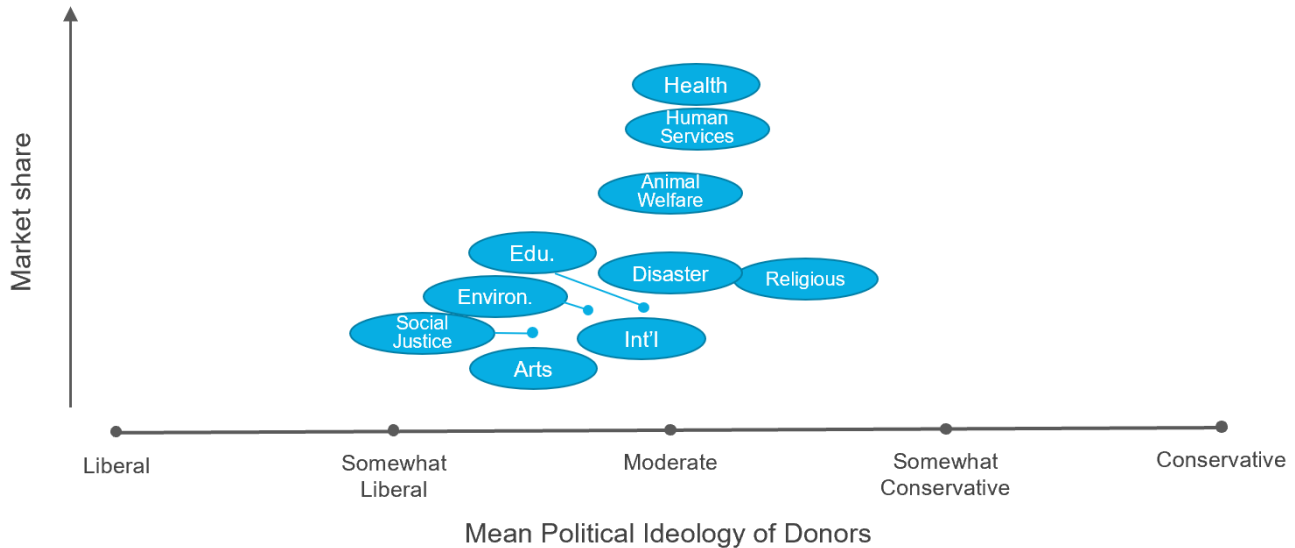
Source: One & All’s DonorGraphics 2020. Base: U.S. donors (adults who are 12-month active donors), n=1,387. Self-reported giving excludes donations to churches/houses of worship and political campaigns. Excludes donors giving \$10K+ (2.6% of all donors).

Types of Organizations Supported

Not surprisingly, supporters of different sectors vary in their political leaning. Animal welfare and disaster assistance organizations have widespread appeal across the political spectrum, with their donors averaging exactly “moderate.” Health and human services – the top two most supported organizations for Americans – are just barely right of center. Arts/culture/humanities and social justice organizations have the most liberal support.



Political Leaning of Donors by Sector



Source: One & All's DonorGraphics 2020. Base: U.S. donors (adults who are 12-month active donors), n=1,387. Religious-based excludes churches/houses of worship.

Come Together

In times of division, it can be uniting to look at our commonalities versus focusing on our differences. There are several areas which are similar, even across different political ideologies.

In terms of targeting donors and prospects:

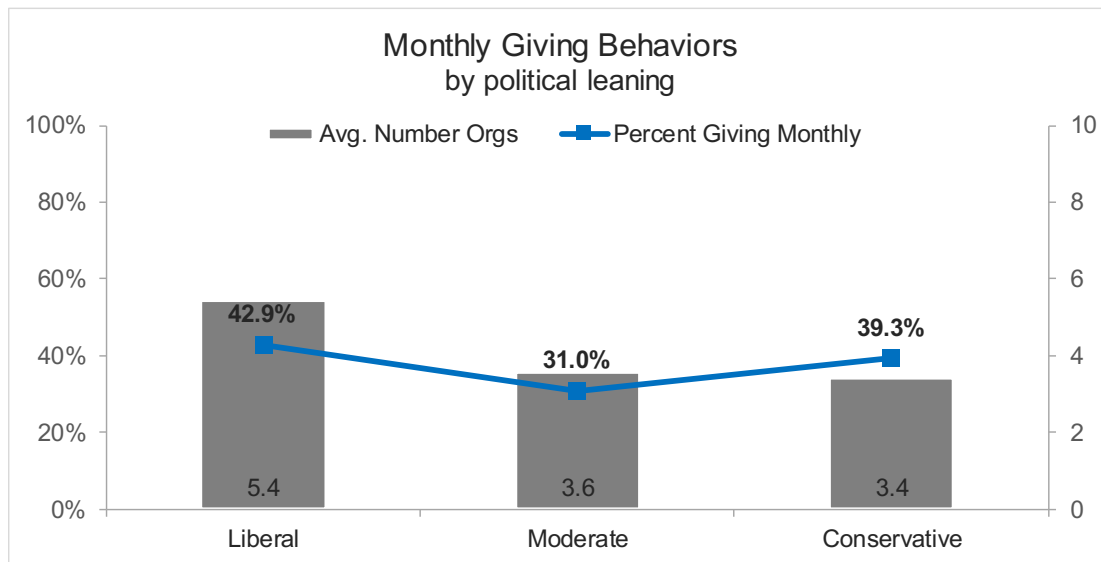
- Facebook is used at least a few times a month by 80-82% of all political leanings. (Twitter & Instagram skew younger, and are therefore more liberal.)
- YouTube is used at least a few times a month by 78% - 83% of all political leanings.
- Your website is still the primary source of information prior to a first gift, across all political ideologies. Sixty-four percent of all donors, with no differences by political leaning, check out the organization's website prior to a first gift.

Monthly Donors

A small but growing proportion of donors are seeing the benefits of monthly giving. Preference for giving monthly increased 21% year over year, though it's still just 6% of giving preference.

Thirty-seven percent of all donors report giving monthly to one or more charitable organizations; not a lot of difference by political leaning exists as seen in the blue line in the chart below.

Median number of organizations supported monthly is two for all groups; means (grey bars) are higher for liberal donors.



Source: One & All's DonorGraphics 2020. Base: U.S. donors (adults who are 12-month active donors), n=1,387. Categorical roll-up for liberal and conservative categories includes "somewhat" designations.

Implications

While this series is intended to be more insightful rather than prescriptive, understanding political leaning of your donor base (through surveys or data appends) can be enlightening, but it can also be a distraction. Giving by age is still more predictive of many charitable behaviors. That said, there are some insights for ensuring fundraising programs are reaching current and future supporters, even across political differences:

- The importance of your website cannot be overstressed, as an organization’s website is the primary spot 64% of donors go to research prior to giving a first gift. This is considerably higher than informational websites with statistics and reviews, which are visited by about 36% of prospective donors.
- Monthly giving is a modality that all political leanings and ages have warmed to, and one that provides the benefit of higher long-term value over time.
- The social media sites with the highest use, including Facebook and YouTube are tops for reach across political leanings.



About the Research

DonorGraphics is One & All's nationally representative study measuring online and offline behaviors and communication preferences among U.S. adults. It also provides a deep dive into the philanthropic attitudes & behaviors of the 55% of Americans who give charitably.

This ninth annual study was conducted online in February- early March 2020 using the Harris Poll research panel. Sample sizes were 2,510 U.S. adults ages 18+, representative of the general population, with 1,387 respondents identified as 12-month active donors of nonprofit organizations, excluding churches/houses of worship & political campaigns. The maximum margin of error for the study is +/- 2.0 & 2.6 percentage points for U.S. adults and active donors respectively, at the 95% level of confidence.

Generational views use Pew Research 2019 definitions due to Q1 2020 fielding, with the "silent" & "greatest" generations combined into a "senior" segment due to small sample size for the latter.

Liberal by Any Other Name

Last year, a teammate at One & All wondered whether there was any bias in using the term "liberal" versus "progressive" when inquiring about someone's political leaning. So this year, I conducted a random 50/50 split of the two terms to check for differences. Interestingly, there was a statistically higher proportion of "don't know/other/decline to answer" responses when the term "progressive" was used. This was seen across all age groups. The term "progressive" seems to be just that, and might be introducing a bit of ambiguity to survey research as far as a political leaning descriptor. This doesn't mean the terms are interchangeable, as some progressives will argue against. Rather, this means that for research on a very broad market we aim to reduce bias in communicating concepts, and will therefore use the more familiar term "liberal" as a descriptor on the political spectrum.

