



Photos by Kendall Reeves

# The Power of Women's Giving

Women are more likely than men to give to virtually all types of charities.

**W**hether your cause is clean water for African villages or improving your neighborhood schools, women are a philanthropic force.

Women are significantly more likely than men to give to almost every type of charitable cause and are equally likely to support the rest, according to the newest report from *Women Give 2010*, a study by the Women's Philanthropy Institute (WPI) at the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University.

"This report reinforces the philanthropic power of women," says Debra Mesch, WPI director. "It confirms that gender matters in philanthropy and that fundraisers and nonprofits really have to pay attention to women."

## Gender Matters

*Causes Women Support*, the second report to come out of *Women Give 2010*, examines the likelihood of giving across 11 areas of charity by single-headed households to provide a clearer picture of giving by gender. Using data from the *Center on Philanthropy Panel Study*, a biennial survey that tracks the giving of the same 9,150 U.S. households over time, *Causes Women Support* controls for

factors such as income, wealth, education, age, race, number of children, and employment status.

The first report from *Women Give 2010*, released in October, showed that when other factors are equal, women across virtually all income levels are more likely to give and give more than men.

"Women give differently than men. Knowing these patterns can help fundraisers customize strategies for engaging donors in their causes," Mesch says. "It also helps women donors see where other women are giving."

Mesch found that women's likelihood of giving exceeded men's in 8 of the 11 charitable causes: religious institutions, organizations that help the needy, health care and medical research, education, youth and family services, community, international, and combined purposes, which includes organizations such as United Way, Catholic Charities, and community foundations. Women and men were equally likely to give to environmental nonprofits, arts and cultural organizations, and causes identified as "other."

## Giving at Home and Abroad

The study also looked at the areas of greatest difference in likelihood of giving by gender. Although charity is likely to start at home, women's philanthropy is not confined by borders.

Women are 55 percent more likely to give to international causes than men. Other charitable sectors that women are significantly more likely to support include community organizations (51 percent more likely), religion (42 percent), health care

(38 percent), youth and family services (32 percent), and education (31 percent).

“Women connect with the altruistic, empathetic, caring side of philanthropy,” Mesch says. “They want to help their neighbors improve their communities and make the world a better place.”

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### Percentage by which women are more likely to give to different types of charities



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## The Language of Giving

“Women see themselves as part of a global community,” Mesch adds. “This is a huge growth area for women’s giving.”

Gail Freeman, founder and CEO of Freeman Philanthropic Services, agrees. As an executive recruiter, Freeman has worked with nonprofit leaders and global nonprofits worldwide, most recently in Brazil. There she and her senior consultant, Flavio Dos Santos Furtado, met with large foundations and other nonprofit organizations.

“We’ve seen women change philanthropy here at home,” Freeman says. “Women also shape philanthropy in Brazil, largely directing their gifts to causes that support families and children. Brazilian women are thought leaders who are helping transform that country philanthropically.”

To succeed at global philanthropy, she cautions, nonprofits have to be creative.

“One thing I’ve learned, wherever I’ve talked with nonprofit leaders—China, Russia, France, or Brazil—you have to embrace that culture of philanthropy,” she says. That means approaching donors on their terms, in their language, and putting their motivations at the core of the philanthropic message.

That is true for engaging women philanthropists everywhere, Mesch says. More likely to give and more likely to give more, women are an integral part of the culture of philanthropy. Fundraisers and nonprofit professionals will have to speak women’s philanthropic language if they want women to participate in their causes.

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