

How Donor-Advised Fund Holders Think About Gifts

By Alex Daniels

Nearly a third of people who have donor-advised funds — which allow them to set aside money for philanthropy, get a tax benefit, and later decide which charities to support — say opening the accounts has helped them plan their giving further in advance, according to a new survey of more than 1,000 donors with accounts at Fidelity Charitable. The study offers a rare glimpse into the way donor-advised-fund holders think about their philanthropy. Some takeaways:



Deciding Early

Most donors think ahead of time about which charities to support

78% say they have "a good sense" of where they want their gifts to go

But fewer decide at the start of the year how much to give

53% say they usually know in advance each year the amount they'll donate

28% say they reserve some money each year for unanticipated charitable needs



Planning Ahead

Women spend more time than men on philanthropy

71% of women spend an average of 5 hours or more a month on giving activities

61% of men report the same

Most donors' overall giving philosophy remains a work in progress

22% have crafted a charitable mission statement

But women are more likely than men to have a charitable mission statement

27% of women vs. 19% of men



Advice From Others

For most donors, philanthropic choices are shared

42% share charitable decisions equally with someone else

40% make decisions with some input from others

18% make all decisions solo



Preferences in Giving

Donors prefer to support charities' short-term needs rather than long-term ones, such as an endowment or a capital campaign

36% prefer to give to short-term needs

22% want to support long-term goals

However, men are more likely than women to support a charity's long-term needs

24% of men vs. 17% of women



Leaving a Legacy

Most donor-advised-fund account holders have included or will include money to charity in their will

39% of all donors have established a bequest or other planned gift

19% expect to do so in the next 5 years

32% have no plans to do so

10% don't know if they will

Women are more likely than men to have established a planned gift

47% of women vs. 36% of men