



Statement

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Total giving grew 4.0 percent in 2011. The moderate overall increase in American charitable giving is encouraging in light of the continued uncertainty of the U.S. economic environment experienced last year. Notably, our estimates for *Giving USA* suggest that despite the struggles many individuals faced during the Great Recession and since its official end in the summer of 2010—asset declines, unemployment, foreclosures, and more—their philanthropic spirit continues to be strong. In 2011, giving by individuals increased 3.9 percent, and giving by bequest rose 12.2 percent.

While these results show that charitable giving can survive even during the most challenging economic circumstances, giving grew very slightly after adjusting for inflation. In these terms, total giving grew 0.9 percent, while giving by individuals increased 0.8 percent. This suggests that while Americans gave a greater amount in 2011, the value these dollars held for charities was on par with the dollars they received in 2010. This presents a real challenge for charities, many of which continue to provide services and programming at the same level or higher than in the past.

The Great Recession's impact on charitable giving should not be minimized. The average rate of growth in charitable giving in 2010 and 2011 is the second slowest of any two-year period following all recessions since 1971. The exception was the two-year period following the recession of 2001, which followed on the heels of the most significant attack on American soil since 1941.

Nevertheless, our estimates for charitable giving for 2011 reveal that Americans remain committed to the causes that are important to them. Giving by type of recipient organization was up (in current dollars) in eight of the ten types of charities that *Giving USA* analyzes each year. Giving to organizations that were particularly affected in the heart of the recession in 2008 held steady in 2011, including giving to those in the arts, education, and public-society benefit subsectors. Increases in giving to these types of organizations suggest that donors are increasingly willing to support causes beyond those that fulfill immediate needs. This is reflected in the more moderate increase in giving to human services in 2011, at 2.5 percent, compared with the increase of 9.7 percent realized in 2010.

The Center on Philanthropy projected last year that if giving continued to grow at the inflation-adjusted pace seen in 2010, it could take another five to six years for charitable giving to return to the pre-recession level reached in 2007. This year, we estimate that total giving would have to grow at a rate of 2.4 percent in inflation-adjusted terms for five years to return to approximately \$336 billion in total giving, as realized in 2007. If the economy continues at the slow pace seen in 2010 and 2011, it will take over a decade to reach pre-recession levels.

While the overall economic outlook does hold some uncertainties for U.S. charitable giving, what is certain is that each year the Center on Philanthropy is pleased to research and write the most comprehensive annual report on charitable giving on behalf of Giving USA Foundation. It is a privilege to share this important information with nonprofit professionals, donors, researchers, and the public to help improve the practice of philanthropy in order to improve the world.