Trust in Nonprofits and Philanthropy

Strengths and Challenges in a Time of Division
Independent Sector is the only national membership organization that brings together the whole of the charitable sector – nonprofits, philanthropy, and corporate giving programs – to strengthen civil society and ensure all people in the United States thrive.

We believe that a healthy, equitable, and trusted nonprofit sector is essential to achieving a nation in which all people are thriving in a flourishing democracy and robust civil society. Therefore, it is critical that we regularly assess public trust in nonprofits and philanthropy. This report shares our latest findings.

We would like to thank Edelman Data and Intelligence for their ongoing partnership in the development of this report.
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Introduction
Public trust is the currency of the nonprofit sector.

Without the public’s trust, everything we do to advance our collective missions becomes harder, if not impossible.

Trust is what makes it possible for us to partner with local communities to do the hard work of systemic change. Our trusted voices as advocates for our missions help drive policy change. Our trusted status makes us an essential partner to government and industry. Trust is vital in the recruitment of volunteers and in the sector’s work to bridge across difference in a divided America. And, without trust, raising the resources we need to do our work becomes infinitely harder.

For each of the last five years, Independent Sector has partnered with Edelman Data and Intelligence to survey the American public, exploring the nuances of trust in American nonprofit and philanthropic organizations. These are the largest nationally representative surveys of their kind, surveying over 3,000 adults. We also conduct online focus groups to provide richer context for our findings. Given the outsized importance of trust to our sector, it is imperative to regularly assess the status of trust so, ultimately, we can fashion the policy and practice changes needed to build this critical asset.
QUALITATIVE ONLINE DISCUSSION BOARDS

Three (3) online qualitative discussion boards to gain deeper insights and add texture to the 2024 Trust survey findings.

Two discussion boards were focused on nonprofit organizations, and the other was focused on philanthropy. The total between the three boards was seventy-two (72) participants.

All boards included a mix of participants by US region, gender, age, race, education, income level, and reported personal financial outlook to ensure a range of perspectives. The nonprofit boards were separated by political party ID (one group of Democrats/Democrat leaners and one of Republicans/Republican leaners).

Boards were conducted April 15 to 17, 2024.

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Quantitative Online Survey

Edelman Data & Intelligence (DXI) fielded a 20-minute online survey among U.S. adults ages 18+.

Results were weighted to ensure comparability to prior waves, and to be nationally representative across race, income, educational attainment, gender, age, region and urbanicity.

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Research Methodology

n = 3,000
Sample Size

+/- 2%
Margin of Error

March 21 – April 7, 2024
Timing
01. After four years of decline, trust in nonprofits has rebounded by 5 points to 57%.

02. Trust in philanthropy remains steady at 33%, lower than trust in nonprofits.

03. Americans trust nonprofits to reduce national divisions more than they trust corporations, government, or media.

04. Americans have less trust in nonprofits to advocate for public policies and conduct nonpartisan voter engagement.

05. There are clear pathways for nonprofits to increase public trust in the sector.
After four years of decline, trust in nonprofits rebounded in 2024.

Trust in other sectors – like government, business, and media – continues to decline, leaving nonprofits the most trusted sector in this survey. Trust in philanthropy remains lower than trust in nonprofits, and trust in private foundations and high-net-worth individuals remains much lower than in 2020, the first year for which we have data.
Three-quarters of Americans are worried about the direction of the country, and 94% are worried about growing division and a lack of national unity.

Many Americans believe nonprofits can reduce national divisions and positively impact the most important issues facing the country.

High inflation and other pocketbook/quality of life issues are top public concerns

- 58% of respondents are worried about inflation/the rising cost of living
- 38% of respondents are worried about crime
- 37% of respondents are worried about jobs/the economy and immigration

There is trust in the nonprofit sector to make a positive difference towards various issues compared to other major institutions

- 45% of respondents believe that nonprofits are making things better
- 80% of respondents have confidence in nonprofits to make a positive difference on homelessness
- 76% of respondents have confidence in nonprofits to make a positive difference on poverty
While overall trust in nonprofits has recovered, the American public is less trusting when asked about nonprofits engaging in public policy advocacy and nonpartisan voter engagement.

Many respondents have low trust in the ability of nonprofits to avoid partisan politics or to assist in writing or revising laws and regulations.

- **24%** of respondents trust that nonprofits will avoid partisan politics
- **26%** of respondents trust nonprofits to assist in the writing or revision of laws and regulations
- **30%** of respondents trust nonprofits in providing factual, unbiased information about political candidates and policy issues
There are clear pathways for nonprofits to increase trust.

Four-fifths of Americans who volunteer say their experience made them view nonprofits more favorably, and a majority of Americans say their trust in a nonprofit would increase if it committed to “third party” standards for ethical operations and good governance practices.

62% of respondents would trust an organization more if it passed a course or certification for ethics in its operations.

61% of respondents would increase their trust if the organization committed to a set of guidelines and ethical principles for its operations.

79% of respondents said their previous volunteering experience made their views of nonprofit organizations more favorable.
From Data to Action

While the core purpose of this report is to share the data collected in our annual survey, the findings raise critical questions for how the charitable sector can best leverage the public trust it already holds, while also taking concrete actions to increase trust where it is needed:

Where and how can nonprofits be most effective in addressing the polarization and repairing divides that are so prevalent in American life?

How do we better equip nonprofit leaders to advocate in ways that advance their missions while also building, not eroding, public trust?

How do we contemporize our understanding of what good governance and ethical conduct by nonprofits looks like in an operating environment that is rapidly shifting?
Trust in Nonprofits and Philanthropy

Trust Metrics
Nonprofit trust rebounded in 2024 while philanthropy trust held steady.

High trust in nonprofit organizations increased by 5 percentage points wave-over-wave.
Trust Across Nonprofit Subsectors

Based on overall trust on a 9-point scale:

“How much do you trust X to do what is right?”

**KEY FINDINGS**

**Trust continued to remain high in human services, animals and wildlife, health, and youth development nonprofits.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHANGE IN YEAR-OVER-YEAR HIGH TRUST</th>
<th>+4</th>
<th>+2</th>
<th>+1</th>
<th>=</th>
<th>+1</th>
<th>=</th>
<th>+2</th>
<th>+1</th>
<th>+3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Trust (7-9)</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral/Don’t Know (5-6)</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>38%</td>
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<td>Low Trust (1-4)</td>
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<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q15: How much do you trust the following types of nonprofit organizations to do what is right? Total Base size n=3,000
Trust in private foundations increased in 2024, while trust in corporate philanthropy and high net worth individuals dipped.

**Trust Capital Across Philanthropy Subsectors**

Based on overall trust on a 9-point scale:

“How much do you trust X to do what is right?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>2023</th>
<th>2024</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Trust (7-9)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Philanthropy</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Foundations</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Net Worth Individuals</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral/Don’t Know (5-6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Philanthropy</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Foundations</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Net Worth Individuals</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td>31%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While trust in nonprofits increased, trust decreased across most other major entities.

Significant dips in trust can be seen among almost all societal institutions, most notably through local community connections and small businesses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Change in Year-Over-Year High Trust</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nonprofits</td>
<td>+5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The military*</td>
<td>-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small businesses</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private foundations</td>
<td>-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People in your local community</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law enforcement*</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate philanthropy</td>
<td>-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High net worth individuals</td>
<td>-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Democratic Party*</td>
<td>-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local government</td>
<td>-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The courts*</td>
<td>-6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q12. How much do you trust nonprofit organizations to do what is right? Base Size n=3,000, Q18: How much do you trust corporate foundations to do what is right? Base Size: n=1,004, Q22: How much do you trust private foundations to do what is right? Base Size: n=1,010, Q26: How much do you trust high net worth individuals engaged in philanthropy to do what is right? Base Size: n=986, Q30: How much do you trust the following institutions to do what is right? Base Size n=3,000

* Indicates new response option added in 2024
Private foundations and high net worth individuals have significant trust drops from 2020.

Looking back at the last presidential election year, trust in nonprofits and corporate philanthropy holds relatively steady.

Q12. How much do you trust nonprofit organizations to do what is right? Base Size n=3,000, Q18: How much do you trust corporate foundations to do what is right? Base Size: n=1,004, Q22: How much do you trust private foundations to do what is right? Base Size: n=1010, Q26: How much do you trust high net worth individuals engaged in philanthropy to do what is right? Base Size: n=986, Q30: How much do you trust the following institutions to do what is right? Base Size n=3,000

**KEY FINDINGS**

**TRUST METRICS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHANGE FROM 2020</th>
<th>HIGH TRUST</th>
<th>-2</th>
<th>-17</th>
<th>-2</th>
<th>-15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Trust (7-9)</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>37%</td>
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<td>31%</td>
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<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Trust (1-4)</td>
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<td>22%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Current Issues & Divisions
Americans are worried about the future of the country, with concerns focusing on pocketbook and quality of life issues.

74%

Are worried about the future direction of the United States

Q29: Thinking about the next 12 months, how do you feel about the direction of the United States? Base sizes: General Population (n=3000)

Q31: Out of the following issues facing our country, which are you most concerned about? Please rank your top five issues from the list, with “1” being the issue you are most concerned about.

TOP AREAS OF CONCERN - % Selected in Top 5

- Inflation / rising cost of living: 58%
- Crime: 38%
- Jobs / the economy in general: 37%
- Immigration: 37%
- Healthcare: 36%
- Homelessness: 31%
- Housing availability / affordability: 31%
- Gun rights / gun safety: 28%
- Poverty: 26%
- Climate change / the environment: 25%
- Abortion: 25%
- Protecting our democracy: 25%
- Federal debt and deficit: 23%
- Integrity of our elections: 18%
- Education: 17%
- Race relations / racism: 17%
- Civil rights: 14%
- Foreign policy: 13%
Economic uncertainty is not just a nation-wide concern, but also one that hits close to the individual.

Female, 42, Republican

These prices these days are so high that it affects how I feed my family, how I get to work daily, my housing, etc. It’s becoming quite expensive to just live life!! The things I listed above, they are necessary because it is how I get by!!! We have to combat this inflation because the struggle is real especially for the middle class and below!"

Male, 29, Democrat

I believe the United States has a huge growing debt issue that doesn’t seem like it’s slowing down anytime soon. Doesn’t seem to be a real plan to get ahead of it. I believe it will take a combination of raising taxes and government spending cuts.”

Male, 28, Republican

Economic issues are always relevant...The United States is an incredibly wealthy nation, but the government spending has been out of control for quite some time. Something needs to be done to reverse the trend of growing debt.”

Male, 49, Democrat

Housing prices have greatly exceeded salaries and even rents have become unaffordable.”

Male, 22, Democrat

Inflation has been a common issue through my entire life and it just seems ridiculous that prices vastly increase compared to people’s wages.”

Male, 24, Republican

Prices continue to rise and companies are not keeping up with the market on how they pay their employees. Our dollars are losing value by the day and it is a major concern.”

Quotes are sourced from the April 2024 Qualitative Board discussion
Worry is high about societal division and a lack of national unity; while big business, government, and media are seen as worsening the divide, nonprofits are seen as part of the solution.

94%
Are worried about growing divisions and a lack of national unity

Q35. Many people say the United States is more divided today than at any point since the Civil War. How worried are you about growing divisions and a lack of national unity? Base size: General Population (n=3000)

Q36. Thinking about the divisions in America today, do you believe the following institutions are generally making things better or worse? Base size: General Population (n=3000)

### PERCEIVED IMPACT OF INSTITUTIONS ON NATIONAL DIVISIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Making Things Better</th>
<th>No Impact</th>
<th>Making Things Worse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nonprofit organizations</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large businesses/corporations</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal government</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News media</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shown: % Selected Net: Somewhat/Much Better; No Impact; Net: Somewhat/Much Worse
Regardless of the November election outcome, respondents believe the divide will continue to worsen.

**Male, 24, Republican**

The United States today seems to be more worried about arguing their sides than they are about coming together and working to improve our country as a whole. Especially with an election year coming up, I am afraid we are going to see a mass divide and neighbors turning against neighbors.”

**Male, 28, Republican**

I think the political climate over the past 10-15 years has caused great division in this country. With the upcoming election appearing to be a repeat of the last election, it’s hard to imagine an outcome that does not lead to even greater division.”

**Female, 41, Democrat**

I am worried about the future as far as how we will move forward when so much of the political landscape is about preventing the other side from getting what they want and not focusing on what the people need.”

**Male, 63, Democrat**

I am somewhat concerned because of the ways the government is handling crisis in the United States. They are pushing their own party’s agendas over the best interests of the country.”

**Male, 55, Republican**

Common ground has disappeared. What one side stands for, the other opposes on almost every policy or event that occurs.”

**Male, 25, Republican**

There’s a great divide in this country along party lines and neither group wants to come together to discuss a solution and find ways to bridge the gap.”

Quotes are sourced from the April 2024 Qualitative Board discussion
On the pocketbook and quality of life issues the public cares most about, confidence is highest in nonprofits to make a difference.

Confidence substantially outpaces the other three major institutions on all issues except for the economy overall, where business is close behind.

Q2: You mentioned you are concerned about ___. How confident are you that the following institutions can make a positive difference on this issue? Base size: General Population (n=3000)
Nonprofits also lead in confidence to address the most divisive and politically polarized societal issues.

### CONFIDENCE IN INSTITUTIONS TO MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE ON ISSUES

Shown: % Selected Net: Moderately/Very/Extremely Confident

- **Civil rights**: 80% (Nonprofits), 60% (Business), 59% (Government), 59% (Media)
- **Race relations**: 73% (Nonprofits), 63% (Business), 56% (Government), 55% (Media)
- **Climate change**: 72% (Nonprofits), 58% (Business), 60% (Government), 51% (Media)
- **Protecting democracy**: 70% (Nonprofits), 50% (Business), 56% (Government), 39% (Media)
- **Crime**: 57% (Nonprofits), 47% (Business), 57% (Government), 45% (Media)

Q32: You mentioned you are concerned about ___. How confident are you that the following institutions can make a positive difference on this issue?

Base size: General Population (n=3000)
Americans look to nonprofits as their last hope after seeing no positive impact from government or big business on the issues they care about.

94% of respondents are worried about the current societal divide in the U.S. and their future outlooks are not optimistic. The institutions that normally make impacts in their issues of top concern (with inflation / rising cost of living currently number one) like the federal government and big businesses / corporations have not been able to make change, resulting in double digit drops in trust this year.

When looking to solutions to bridge this divide, nonprofits are the institution respondents trust the most to make a change (45% of respondents believe nonprofits are making things better). And with the sustained impacts of their work that respondents see and believe in to help those in need, nonprofits are one of the few societal institutions that many believe can still give them the hope they need for a better future.

Q31: Out of the following issues facing our country, which are you most concerned about? Please rank your top five issues from the list, with “1” being the issue you are most concerned about. Base size: General Population (n=3000)

Q35. Many people say the United States is more divided today than at any point since the Civil War. How worried are you about growing divisions and a lack of national unity? Base size: General Population (n=3000)

Q36. Thinking about the divisions in America today, do you believe the following institutions are generally making things better or worse? Base size: General Population (n=3000)

Quotes are sourced from the April 2024 Qualitative Board discussion.
Trust in nonprofits softens considerably when it comes to advocacy-related actions.

A plurality (41%) do not trust nonprofits to avoid partisan politics.
There is substantial skepticism of election-related nonprofit activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>High Trust</th>
<th>Neutral/Don’t Know</th>
<th>Low Trust</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide people with information to help them vote</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicly advocate for policy issues</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet with government officials about the work the nonprofit organization is doing</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct nonpartisan voter registration drives</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help ensure elections are conducted freely and fairly</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fact-check claims made by political candidates</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide factual, unbiased information about political candidates and policy issues</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assist in the writing or revision of laws and regulations</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gen Z respondents are significantly less likely to trust nonprofits to provide factual, unbiased information about candidates and issues (40% low trust) compared to Boomers (33%) and Silent Generation (25%).

Low-income respondents are significantly less likely to trust nonprofits to conduct nonpartisan voter registration drives (44% low trust) compared to mid (32%) and high-income respondents (30%).

Black respondents are significantly more likely to trust nonprofits to assist in the writing or revision of laws and regulations (34% high trust) compared to White respondents (25% high trust).
Respondents believe nonprofit organizations and philanthropic foundations becoming engaged in politics is disingenuous to their stated purpose and mission.

Male, 55, Republican

I only see [nonprofits] operating within the framework of civil rights and civic issues as the culprits in this battle. They have stoked issues that divide us, which is all driven by money and power.”

Female, 32, Democrat

Nonprofits, especially national ones, are working to keep a problem (around) enough to keep their jobs. I think the country is divided because of greed and capitalism. We are so busy just trying to survive that big business, nonprofits and government can take advantage of all of us”

Female, 56, Republican

I believe their giving is more politically related... they give money to groups but with a stipulation of using the money for the donors’ own agenda or interests which can be a detriment to our society.”

Male, 43, Democrat

Being that these foundations have massive amounts of financial resources and can influence political parties, there is a lack of trust here. Political influence may allow limited ethical guidelines around operations or accountability to the leaders of these foundations.”

Female, 42, Republican

I don’t trust nonprofits to conduct any sort of nonpartisan voter registration. I don’t trust it because in today’s climate, it seems that everyone takes sides regardless of how much they might claim to not take sides.”

Male, 48, Republican

Given the divisiveness of our politics, lax election laws in many jurisdictions, and the winner take all game of elections, my trust in “nonpartisan” voter registration efforts on NP is pretty low. There’s incentive to do everything possible for your “tribe” and that opens the door for malfeasance.”

Quotes are sourced from the April 2024 Qualitative Board discussion.
Building Trust
Committing to a set of organizational guidelines or ethical principals can build trust in nonprofits.

Q16. How would hearing that a nonprofit organization took the following actions impact your trust in it? Base Size: General Population (n=3000)

Quotes are sourced from the April 2024 Qualitative Board discussion

Female, 46, Democrat
To increase trust, financial transparency is a must but most importantly I want to 'see' your work. I want to see the nonprofit doing the work they claim to do.”

Male, 54, Republican
A nonprofit adhering to guidelines in ethics for its operations would impact my trust tremendously."

Female, 58, Democrat
Greater financial transparency would make me more likely to contribute to or think positively of this organization.”

PASSED A COURSE OR CERTIFICATION FOR ETHICS IN ITS OPERATIONS
Shown: % Selected

62%  

COMMITTED TO A SET OF GUIDELINES AND ETHICAL PRINCIPLES FOR ITS OPERATIONS
Shown: % Selected

61%
First-hand experience with nonprofit organizations can also increase trust. Volunteering experiences create more favorable views of nonprofits.

Nearly 3 in 4 respondents have volunteered with a nonprofit within the last few years, with over 34% volunteering within the last month.

79% Of respondents said their previous volunteering experiences made their views of nonprofit organizations more favorable

88% Of respondents who have volunteered said they would do it again

45% Of respondents chose to volunteer because they wanted to give back to their community

Quotes are sourced from the April 2024 Qualitative Board discussion

Male, 28, Republican

I most recently volunteered with Habitat for Humanity. We were building a house for a family in need. It was a very cool experience because I was able to actually see the progress being made and could easily understand how my actions were helping the family in need. I felt more strongly about the nonprofit than I did prior to volunteering because I better understood their work and mission."

Male, 27, Democrat

I had a rewarding and fulfilling experience, I felt a sense of purpose and joy in knowing that I am making positive impact on the lives of others. It impacted my opinion of the organization positively."
Appendix: Additional Data
trying to have a positive impact on society and being good at what they do score especially high for nonprofits, resulting in the perceived impact nonprofits can have on issues that currently divide the U.S.

nonprofits score higher than various philanthropic entities across all trust pillars
There is little consistency between most-used media sources and most-trusted media sources.

**MEDIA USAGE**
Shown: % Selected

- Local TV news: 49%
- Cable TV news: 44%
- National broadcast TV news: 42%
- The internet (not including social media): 41%
- Social media: 40%
- Friends and family: 36%
- Local newspapers: 26%
- Radio: 25%
- National newspapers: 23%
- Podcasts: 19%
- News magazines: 15%

**MEDIA TRUST**
Shown: % Selected High Trust (7-9)

- Friends and family: 67%
- News magazines: 62%
- National newspapers: 60%
- Podcasts: 59%
- National broadcast TV news: 58%
- Cable TV news: 56%
- Local newspapers: 56%
- Local TV news: 55%
- Radio: 49%
- Social media: 39%
- The internet (not including social media): 37%

Q39: Which of the following sources do you regularly use for news and information about politics and current events?
Q41: How much do you trust the information about politics and current events you get from the sources you use?

Base size: General Population (n=3000)
Social media and the internet garner the lowest trust across media sources, but are still used regularly as a news source by four in ten respondents.

Q4: How much do you trust the information about politics and current events you get from the sources you use? 
Base size: General Population (n=3000)
Unaided awareness of nonprofit media outlets is low, but once prompted, two in five regularly get news from a nonprofit media outlet.

Q42. Most news outlets in the United States operate as businesses for profit. However, there are some that operate as nonprofits, with funding coming from donations from the public and grants from charitable foundations. To the best of your knowledge, do you regularly get news from any nonprofit media? Q43. PBS, NPR, the Associated Press, C-Span, Wikipedia, AARP, and National Geographic are all examples of nonprofit media outlets. Knowing this, do you regularly get news from any nonprofit media? Base sizes: General Population (n=3000)
While one in three respondents trust nonprofit media more than for-profit, one in three say they see no difference.

I trust nonprofit media more as they are not incentivized to create stories by donors.”

Male, 36, Democrat

I trust nonprofits more because they would give the truth with no influence, hopefully, which in turn would give the people listening their own ability to make unaltered opinions and suggestions.”

Male, 28, Republican

I’m skeptical about most sources of media nowadays. I have to consider the source and their funding to determine if I think it’s valid or biased information.”

Female, 41, Democrat

I don’t put much stock in nonprofit news outlets like NPR or the Associated Press. They are right up there with the CNNs and Fox News of the world in terms of emotional reporting instead of just sticking with the facts.”

Female, 42, Republican

Q44. Generally speaking, what kind of media do you trust more for information about politics and current events? Base size: General Population (n=3000) Quotes are sourced from the April 2024 Qualitative Board discussion.
Foundations associated with large corporations or high net worth individuals inspire more distrust.

The high-profile status of those corporations and individuals causes distrust because respondents believe them to be out of touch with the general public.

TRUST IN PHILANTHROPIC ENTITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Private foundations</th>
<th>Corporate philanthropy</th>
<th>High net worth individuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIGH TRUST</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEUTRAL/DON’T KNOW</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOW TRUST</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Female, 37, Independent

Sometimes I worry it’s only to make themselves (high net worth individuals engaged in philanthropy) look better and they do it just to save face."

Male, 37, Unsure

Corporations tend to do what is best for their own profit and don’t really care about the little guys.”

Female, 19, Other

These are major corporations. I would seriously have to be stupid to think their leaders cared about anything more than money.”

Female, 42, Independent

Something about the word ‘private’ makes me question it.”

Female, 29, Unsure

Money and fame tend to corrupt even the most well meaning of people.”

Q18: How much do you trust corporate foundations to do what is right? Base Size: n=1,004,
Q22: How much do you trust private foundations to do what is right? Base Size: n=1,010,
Q26: How much do you trust high net worth individuals engaged in philanthropy to do what is right? Base Size: n=986,
Q19B/23B/27B. Why do you not trust corporate philanthropy/private foundations/high net worth individuals to do what is right? Base Size: n=275, n=218, n=284
Overall respondents felt foundation messaging was clear and easy to understand. Specificity and transparency of finances was still desired.

A. “Foundations enable individuals, families, and corporations to donate more money to a wider variety of causes, particularly small, local charities.”

B. “Foundations serve as a fair platform to enable people to invest in organizations and the people closest to problems facing local communities.”

C. “Foundation investment in nonprofit programs ensure every member of a community can get the help he or she needs, not just those who are a member of the voting majority.”

D. “Foundation investments enable people and nonprofits closest to the problem in local communities to devise effective solutions, rather than relying on one-size-fits-all government programs.”

Quotes are sourced from the April 2024 Qualitative Board discussion.
While many agreed with parts of the opposition statement, the “elites” word choice was particularly polarizing.

“This is a pretty negative statement. Some charities run by ‘elites’ are likely tax write-offs and really aren’t being done out of the goodness of their heart. But some are.”

— Male, 24, Republican

This sentence seems very opinionated and comes from a distrustful / angry source. Yes, a lot of the foundations are run by elites, but that does not necessarily mean that they do not understand the every American. Whether they choose to acknowledge American opinions is a different story. The fact that they benefit from preferential tax treatment is true. They do influence public decisions, and occasionally cannot be voted out, but that does not necessarily have to discredit them.”

— Male, 35, Republican

I agree with [this] statement because I don’t have proof that these foundations are successful in their missions. I remain skeptical because of the negative press some foundations receive. Saying foundations ‘do not understand everyday Americans’ made me nod my head in agreement. I also nodded at the last statement about tax treatment because I suspect that’s why a lot of foundations are created.”

— Female, 46, Democrat

“Many foundations are run by elites that do not understand everyday Americans or their communities. They unfairly benefit from preferential tax treatment that allows them to influence public decisions even though they can’t be voted out of office.”

Quotes are sourced from the April 2024 Qualitative Board discussion.
Demographic Cuts: Nonprofit & Philanthropy Trust
Income & Education

Trust grew across all income and education groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDUCATION</th>
<th>HOUSEHOLD INCOME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than a Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>Less than $35,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Trust (7-9)</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral/Don't Know (5-6)</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Trust (1-4)</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bachelor's degree or more</th>
<th>$35,000 to less than $75,000</th>
<th>$75,000 or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Trust (7-9)</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral/Don't Know (5-6)</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Trust (1-4)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q2: How much do you trust nonprofit organizations to do what is right? Nonprofit
2020 Base Size n=3000, 2021 n=5000, 2022 n=3015, 2023 n=3000, 2024 n=3000

Lighter colors indicate 2020 - 2023
Darker colors indicate 2024
## Income & Education

### Key Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trust Level</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>2023</th>
<th>2024</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Less than a Bachelor’s degree or more</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Trust (7-9)</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral/Don’t Know (5-6)</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Trust (1-4)</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Income</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>2023</th>
<th>2024</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $35,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Trust (7-9)</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral/Don’t Know (5-6)</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Trust (1-4)</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| $35,000 to less than $75,000 |      |      |      |      |      |
| High Trust (7-9)             | 36%  | 31%  | 30%  | 30%  | 35%  |
| Neutral/Don’t Know (5-6)     | 45%  | 43%  | 48%  | 41%  | 43%  |
| Low Trust (1-4)              | 19%  | 26%  | 22%  | 28%  | 22%  |

| $75,000 or more               |      |      |      |      |      |
| High Trust (7-9)             | 43%  | 35%  | 45%  | 42%  | 41%  |
| Neutral/Don’t Know (5-6)     | 38%  | 41%  | 37%  | 36%  | 37%  |
| Low Trust (1-4)              | 19%  | 24%  | 18%  | 22%  | 22%  |

### Notes

- Q18/22: How much do you trust companies that engage in [corporate philanthropy/private foundations/high net worth individuals] to do what is right? Philanthropy Base size n=3000, 2021 n=3000, 2022 n=3015, 2023 n=3000, 2024 n=3000

---

**Independent Sector** Trust in Nonprofits and Philanthropy
Gender & Generation

Q12: How much do you trust nonprofit organizations to do what is right? Nonprofit 2020
Base Size n=3000, 2021 n=5000, 2022 n=3015, 2023 n=3000, 2024 n=3000

Lighter colors indicate 2020 - 2023
Darker colors indicate 2024

Key Findings
Trust Metrics
Current Issues & Divisions
Nonprofit Civic Engagement
Building Trust
Appendix
Demographic Cuts
**Gender & Generation**

**Q18/2226. How much do you trust companies that engage in [corporate philanthropy/private foundations/high net worth individuals] to do what is right?**

**Philanthropy 2020 Base size n=3000, 2021 n=3000, 2022 n=3015, 2023 n=3000, 2024 n=3000**

**Lighter colors indicate 2020 - 2023**

**Darker colors indicate 2024**

**High Trust (7-9)**

**Neutral/Don’t Know (5-6)**

**Low Trust (1-4)**

**GENDER**

**GENERATION**

**Men**

**Women**

**Gen Z**

**Millennial**

**Gen X**

**Boomer**

**KEY FINDINGS**

**Trust Metrics**

**Current Issues & Divisions**

**Nonprofit Civic Engagement**

**Building Trust**

**Appendix**

**Demographic Cuts**

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Ethnicity

All racial groups reported increases in nonprofit trust this year.
Independent Sector
Trust in Nonprofits and Philanthropy

PHILANTHROPY

Q18/2226. How much do you trust companies that engage in [corporate philanthropy/private foundations/high net worth individuals] to do what is right?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Corporate Philanthropy</th>
<th>Private Foundations</th>
<th>High Net Worth Individuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2023</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2024</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ETHNICITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2023</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2024</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LIGHTER COLORS INDICATE 2020 - 2023
DARKER COLORS INDICATE 2024
Nonprofit trust grew among Republicans and Independents more than among Democrats.
Urbanicity & Party ID

**High Trust (7-9)**
- Urban: 40% (2020), 39% (2021), 39% (2022), 43% (2023), 38% (2024)
- Suburban: 38% (2020), 30% (2021), 33% (2022), 32% (2023), 32% (2024)
- Rural: 30% (2020), 33% (2021), 32% (2022), 32% (2023), 30% (2024)
- Rep: 41% (2020), 34% (2021), 29% (2022), 33% (2023), 29% (2024)
- Dem: 41% (2020), 40% (2021), 43% (2022), 43% (2023), 42% (2024)
- Ind: 41% (2020), 40% (2021), 42% (2022), 42% (2023), 42% (2024)

**Neutral/Don’t Know (5-6)**
- Urban: 38% (2020), 42% (2021), 42% (2022), 39% (2023), 40% (2024)
- Suburban: 43% (2020), 46% (2021), 46% (2022), 42% (2023), 42% (2024)
- Rural: 46% (2020), 46% (2021), 42% (2022), 42% (2023), 42% (2024)
- Rep: 39% (2020), 43% (2021), 44% (2022), 42% (2023), 42% (2024)
- Dem: 39% (2020), 43% (2021), 44% (2022), 42% (2023), 42% (2024)
- Ind: 39% (2020), 43% (2021), 44% (2022), 42% (2023), 42% (2024)

**Low Trust (1-4)**
- Urban: 22% (2020), 23% (2021), 17% (2022), 22% (2023), 22% (2024)
- Suburban: 19% (2020), 26% (2021), 21% (2022), 27% (2023), 26% (2024)
- Rural: 27% (2020), 33% (2021), 27% (2022), 32% (2023), 28% (2024)
- Rep: 20% (2020), 31% (2021), 23% (2022), 27% (2023), 25% (2024)
- Dem: 17% (2020), 20% (2021), 16% (2022), 19% (2023), 21% (2024)
- Ind: 22% (2020), 27% (2021), 24% (2022), 28% (2023), 29% (2024)

**High-education, high-income, and liberal Americans continue to report higher than average trust in nonprofit organizations.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Group</th>
<th>% Age Point Difference From Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College-educated</td>
<td>+10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household income $75k+</td>
<td>+7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal politics</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat voter</td>
<td>+5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennials</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENERAL POPULATION TRUST</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative politics</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen X</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic American</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than college education</td>
<td>-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household income &lt;$35k</td>
<td>-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apolitical / other politics</td>
<td>-11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>