

Charitable living and the new retirement

**| How donors plan for and engage
in charitable giving in retirement**



Contents

3 Introduction

4 Executive summary

5 Key findings

5 Giving: Pre- and post-retirement

- 5 Giving today
- 5 Motivations
- 6 Significance
- 6 Decision-making
- 7 Spotlight: Committed givers

8 Planning for retirement and giving

- 8 Tapering out of the workforce
- 9 Financial planning and charitable giving
- 9 Working with a professional to realize charitable goals
- 10 Charitable gifts and reducing tax obligations

11 Volunteerism: Pre- and post-retirement

- 11 Who volunteers and why
- 13 Where they volunteer
- 13 Volunteers and giving

14 Conclusion

15 Takeaways

- 15 For advisors
- 15 For nonprofits
- 16 For pre-retirees
- 16 For retirees
- 16 For employers

17 Appendix

21 Methodology

21 About Fidelity Charitable



Introduction

Today's retirees are entering their golden years with enthusiasm and ambitious bucket lists. **With high expectations, they're ready to fully embrace life through active social engagements, giving back, and volunteering.** As they embark on a third act that could last over 20 years, these Americans are changing their attitudes toward retirement, with a clear desire to remain active.

According to Kiplinger's "Year of 65," 4 million Baby Boomers are reaching this pivotal age in 2024, making them the largest demographic to do so in one year in U.S. history. With prospects of greater longevity than the generations before them, Baby Boomers are leaning into society's focus on mental and physical wellness.

With so much speculation around this age group, Fidelity Charitable® has been working to better understand their unique needs and how they view charitable giving during and after this pivotal time in life. To gain deeper insights, Fidelity Charitable® commissioned a study to better understand how charitably inclined older Americans are thinking about the transition to retirement and how their expectations of the "new retirement" are realized once they enter this long-awaited phase of life. We surveyed more than 2,500 people, ages 50-80 who share in or make giving decisions in households that donate \$500 or more per year to charities. We asked pre-retirees and retirees how they plan for and participate in charitable activities.

It's essential to meet pre-retirees and retirees where they are and show them the impact they can make as they transition from traditional work roles, increase their volunteerism, and enter their third act. **By introducing them to various strategic ways to give, we can help their charitable dollars go further and ensure they achieve their goal of *doing well while doing good* into their golden years.**

Executive summary

Most pre-retiree and retiree givers (ages 50-80) are committed to giving and avidly supporting their favorite causes.

- Of the donors we surveyed, over half of pre-retirees (56%) and retirees (59%) gave \$1,000 or more—and 17% of all donors gave \$5,000 or more—to IRS-qualified charities in 2023.
 - More than three-quarters of these pre-retirees and retirees (78%) say that charitable giving plays a significant or pretty important role in their lives.
 - Almost one-quarter of pre-retirees and retirees (24%) say charitable giving is much more important than other financial priorities. These committed givers are financially savvy, likely to plan for the financial aspect of giving more, and more likely to volunteer longer hours with more organizations.
-

While many older donors rely on advisors for financial planning, only half of retirees discuss charitable giving as part of their plan. There is significant potential to expand these donors' knowledge of tax-advantaged charitable giving strategies.

- About two-thirds of pre-retirees (69%) and retirees (65%) work with an advisor (financial advisor, certified public accountant, or attorney).
 - While most pre-retirees and retirees are familiar with at least one vehicle or method used to support charities financially, 21% are unaware of any. Six in 10 (61%) pre-retirees and 51% of retirees report ever having a conversation with a professional advisor about charitable planning or giving.
 - While just 2 in 10 current retirees (21%) of current retirees reported cutting back on work before fully retiring, 60% of pre-retirees plan to taper down their work hours as they transition into retirement.
-

Retirees are actively giving back through volunteerism, often dedicating significant time and experiencing meaningful benefits, while pre-retirees show even stronger intentions to volunteer, potentially suggesting a positive generational trend for the future of philanthropy.

- In the last year, over two-thirds of pre-retirees (71%) and over half of retirees (55%) volunteered.
- Retirees who volunteer are committed to their causes. Of those who volunteer, nearly 1 in 4 (27%) report doing so for 13 hours or more each month.
- Retirees are more likely to donate as a first step to volunteering; pre-retirees volunteer or donate first in nearly equal measure.
- While volunteer participation declines with age, from 73% for those ages 50-59 compared to 61% for those ages 60-69 and 54% for ages 70-80, volunteering is reported to help the mind and body. Nearly 9 in 10 retired respondents who currently volunteer agree that volunteering is a way to remain active (88%) and connected (91%).

KEY FINDINGS

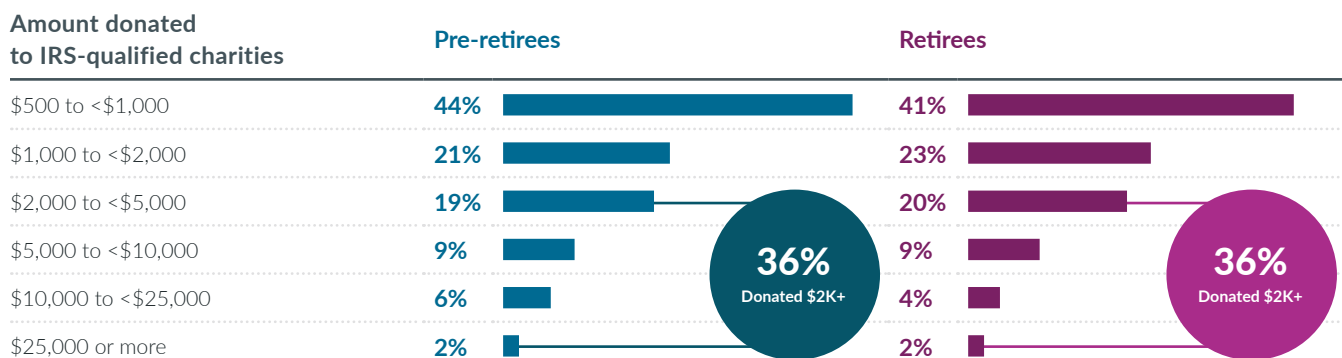
Giving: Pre- and post-retirement

Overall, most pre-retiree and retiree givers (ages 50-80) are committed to giving and avidly support their favorite causes.

More than three-quarters say that philanthropy plays a significant or pretty important role in their lives. Many pre-retirees believe their charitable habits will increase in retirement—with making a difference and giving back to their community or faith seen as the most notable drivers.

Giving today

Over half of the pre-retirees and retirees surveyed gave \$1,000 or more to IRS-qualified charities in 2023, with pre-retirees and retirees giving in similar amounts.

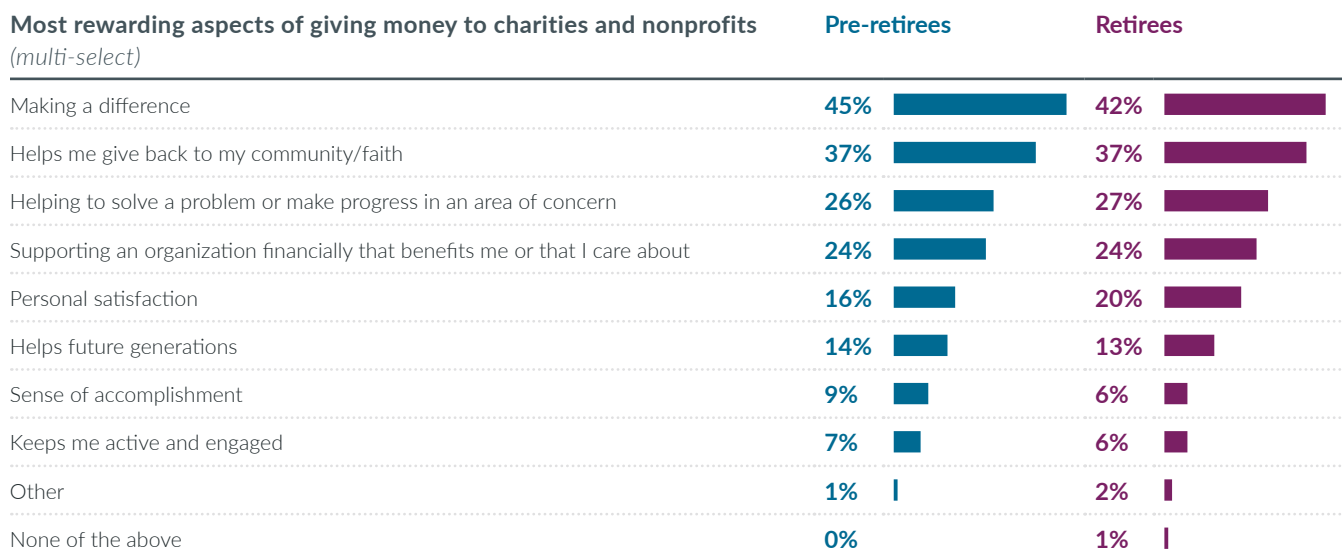


The numbers have been rounded.

[See full data in the appendix.](#)

Motivations

Pre-retirees and retirees have similar motivations for giving: Making a difference and giving back to their community or faith are aspects of financial giving that both find most rewarding.

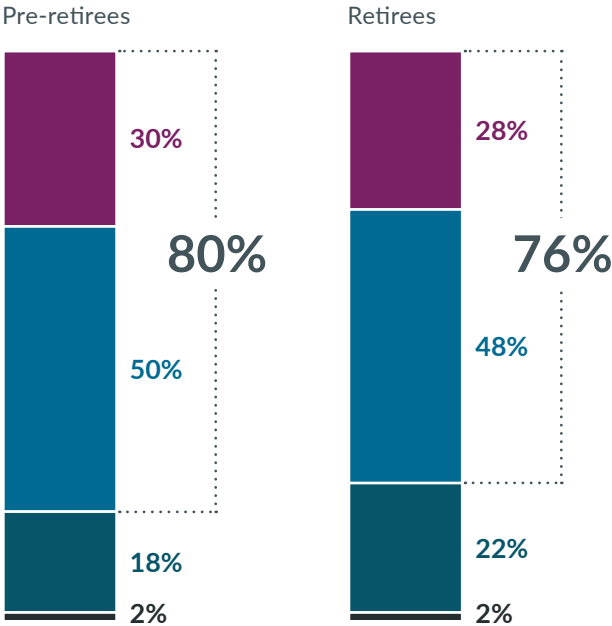


[See full data in the appendix.](#)

Significance

Giving plays a slightly more important role to pre-retirees than retirees, though more than three-quarters of both say it plays a significant role.

How charitable giving fits their life



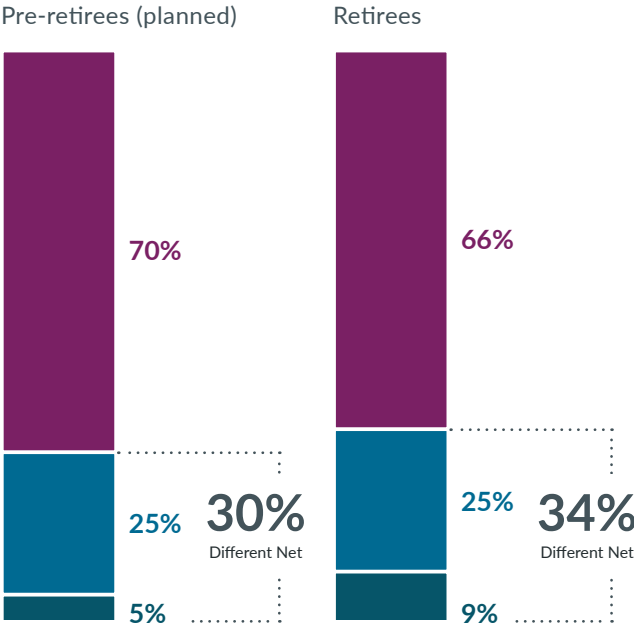
- Significant part
- Pretty important part
- Plays a small role
- Not a critical part

See full data in the appendix.

Decision-making

Seven in 10 pre-retirees expect to give to mainly the same organizations once retired, and many retirees report doing so.

Charities supported in retirement



























- Mainly the same organizations as before retiring
- A few different organizations compared to before retiring
- Mainly give to different organizations after retiring

See full data in the appendix.



Spotlight: Committed givers

Almost one-quarter of surveyed donors (24%) are “committed givers” who say charitable giving is much more important than other financial priorities. Among these committed givers, more than half (55%) say charitable giving is a significant part of their lives, compared to 21% of less committed givers. While their assets are fewer, this younger, more diverse group is more financially savvy and potentially more eager to lean into charitable behavior.

What distinguishes them	Committed givers	Less committed givers
Who they are		
In their 50s	40% 	33% 
Still working	48% 	44% 
Black	19% 	12% 
Hispanic	16% 	12% 
Have less than \$1 million in assets	88% 	82% 
Give \$1,000 or more annually	68% 	55% 
Volunteerism		
Volunteered in the past 12 months	72% 	61% 
Of those who volunteer, volunteered 20 hours or more per month	15% 	10% 
Of those who volunteer, supported three organizations or more in the last 12 months	32% 	20% 
Attitudes about work		
Of those who are working, work because they enjoy it	50% 	43% 
Pre-retirees who would like to formally cut back on work before retiring, i.e., phasing into or tapering down their work prior to retirement	41% 	29% 
Approaches toward charitable planning		
Believe it is important to receive tax deductions for charitable gifts	62% 	53% 

[See full data in the appendix.](#)

Planning for retirement and giving

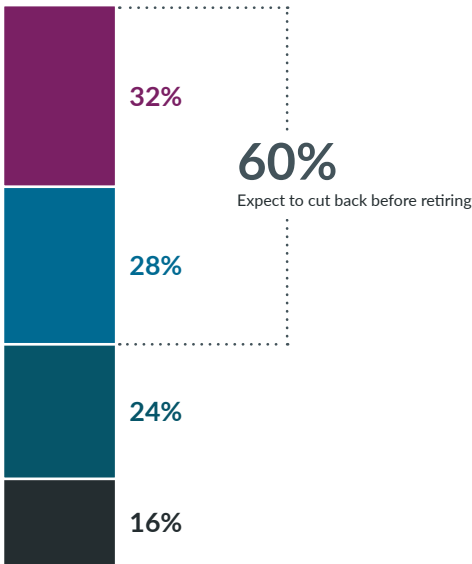
Similar to the desire to stay active through volunteerism, many pre-retirees plan to gradually reduce their work hours rather than retiring outright, allowing them to stay engaged and fulfilled. While most older donors rely on financial advisors when planning for retirement, **there is still ample room for discussions about strategic or tax-advantaged methods for charitable giving.**

Tapering out of the workforce

While only 2 in 10 retirees report that they tapered off or phased out from the workforce, 6 in 10 pre-retirees expect to cut back on work before retiring. This could indicate a new era in which pre-retirees are approaching retirement with a more active mindset.

Cut or would cut back on work schedule before retiring

Pre-retirees

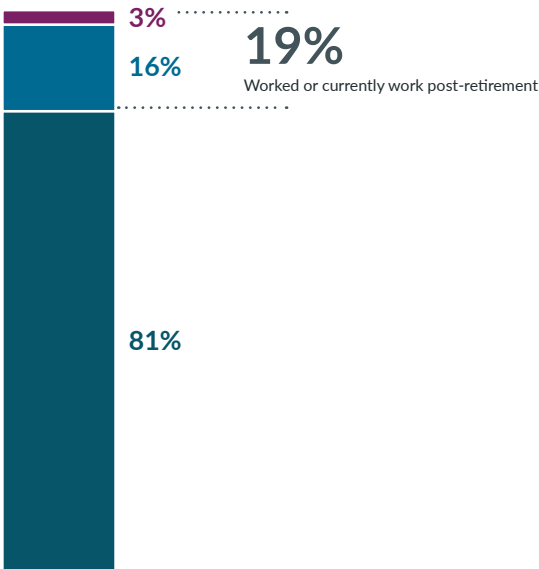


- Yes, did this or would like to formally
- Yes, did this or would like to informally
- No
- Not sure

[See full data in the appendix.](#)

Have ever retired and gone back to work in any capacity

Retirees



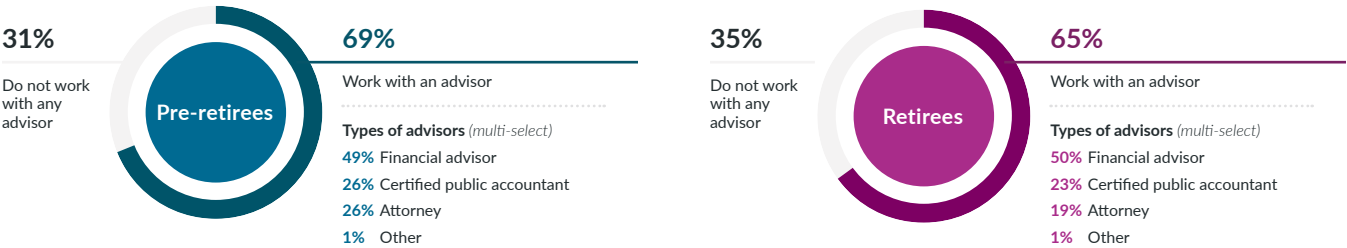
- Yes, currently working part time, consulting, etc.
- Yes, did work after retiring, but don't work now
- No

[See full data in the appendix.](#)

Financial planning and charitable giving

Incorporating an advisor into a holistic retirement plan is invaluable. While about two-thirds of pre-retirees (69%) and retirees (65%) work with an advisor, there is still significant opportunity for further education on strategic giving vehicles and methods, which can reduce taxes and maximize philanthropic impact.

Working with professional advisors

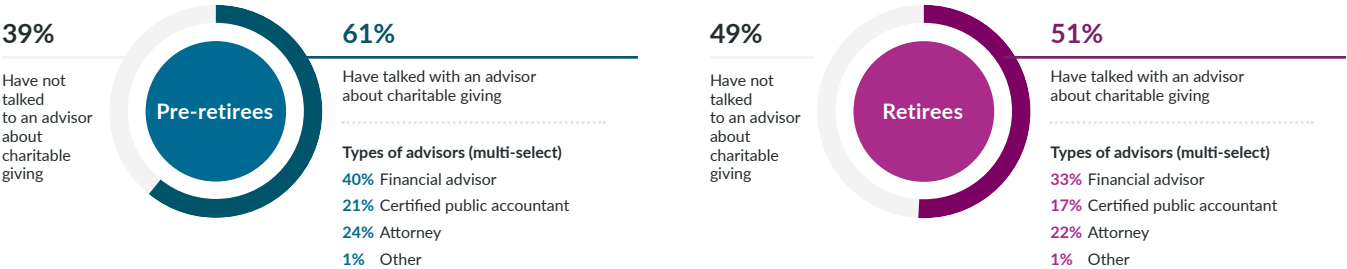


[See full data in the appendix.](#)

Working with a professional to realize charitable goals

A strong financial plan can help donors achieve their charitable goals in retirement. 6 in 10 of all pre-retirees and 51% of all retirees surveyed report ever having had a conversation with a professional advisor about charitable planning or giving.

Conversations with professional advisors about charitable planning or giving



[See full data in the appendix.](#)



Charitable gifts and reducing tax obligations

Nearly two-thirds of pre-retiree donors (64%) consider tax deductions important for charitable giving, compared to fewer than half (46%) of their retiree counterparts.

Importance of receiving tax deductions for charitable giving *Said it was very/somewhat important*



Even with donors recognizing the importance of tax benefits, there is ample room for conversation about giving vehicles and methods with pre-retirees and retirees alike. While a majority of older donors are aware of at least one method that can be used to support charities financially, 1 in 5 are unaware of any.

Awareness of vehicles or methods that can be used to support charities financially *Multiple responses accepted*

	Total	Pre-retirees	Retirees
Bequests, such as leaving money to charity in a will	54%	50%	58%
Naming a charity as the beneficiary of retirement or life insurance	47%	44%	50%
Charitable gift annuity or trust	43%	43%	42%
Donating appreciated assets	32%	35%	30%
Qualified charitable distribution	26%	26%	26%
Donor-advised funds or donor-directed funds	22%	24%	20%
None of the above	21%	19%	23%

[See full data in the appendix.](#)

High-net-worth donors

Among pre-retirees and retirees with \$1 million or more in assets, awareness of certain charitable giving vehicles and methods is higher. However, only a minority of high-net-worth donors know about methods such as donating stock.

	Assets \$1M+
Bequests, such as leaving money to charity in a will	64%
Naming a charity as the beneficiary of retirement or life insurance	55%
Charitable gift annuity or trust	51%
Donating appreciated assets	47%
Qualified charitable distribution	39%
Donor-advised funds	35%
None of the above	14%

[See full data in the appendix.](#)



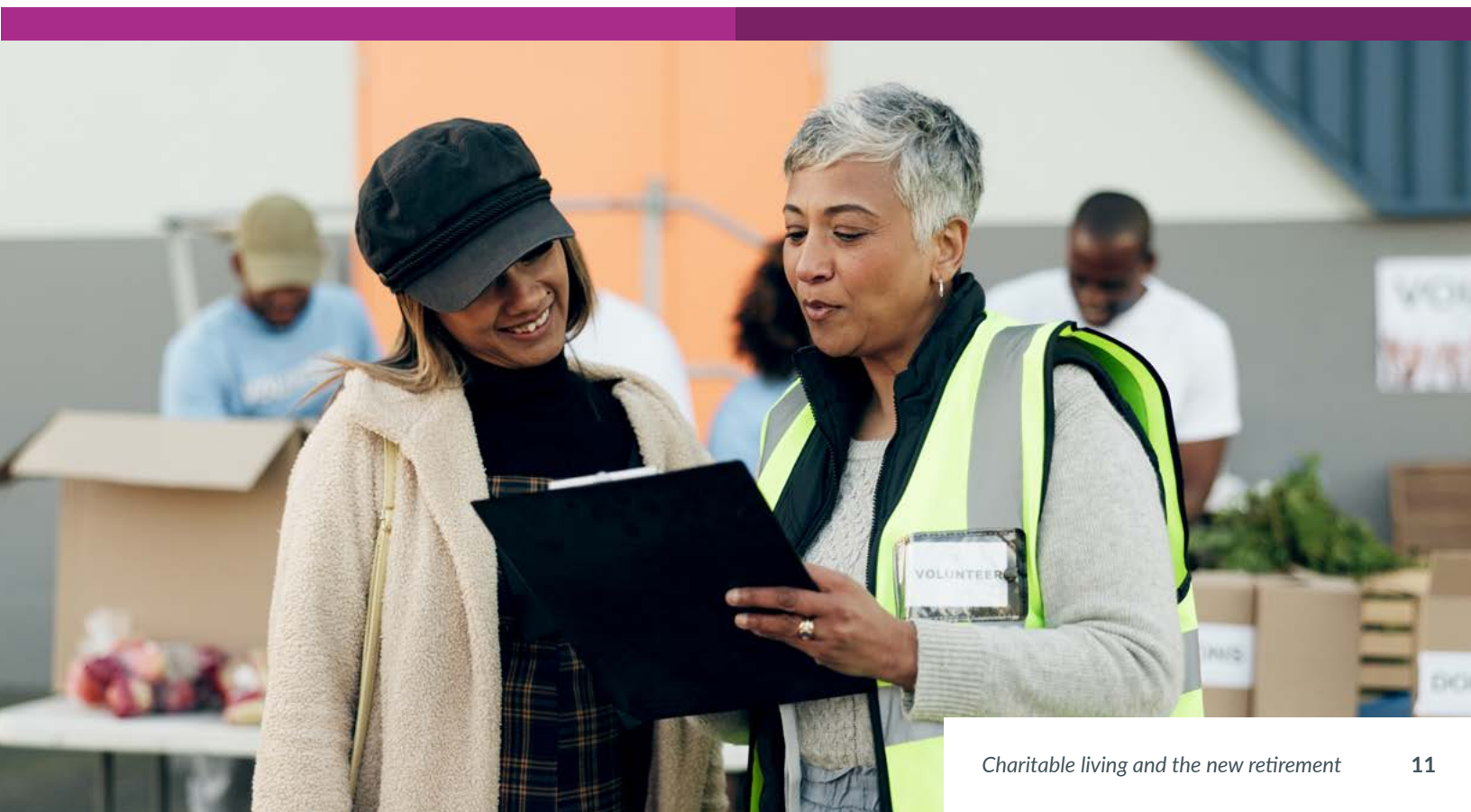
Volunteerism: Pre- and post-retirement

Retirees are giving back and volunteering in strong numbers, often dedicating significant time to causes they care deeply about, which brings them mental and physical health benefits and a sense of connection to the community. Interestingly, **pre-retirees are even more engaged in volunteerism, which may indicate that this trend could grow as they transition into retirement.** This generational shift bodes well for the future of philanthropy, as nearly all volunteers also contribute financially to some of the organizations they support.

Who volunteers and why

A majority of donors ages 50-80 volunteer, with 71% of pre-retirees and 55% of retirees reporting doing so in the last 12 months.

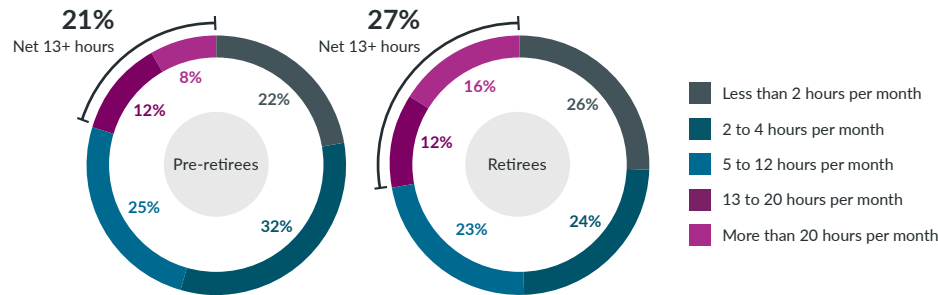
Volunteered in the last 12 months



While volunteer participation declines with age, from 73% for those ages 50-59, compared to 61% for those ages 60-69 and 54% for those ages 70-80, volunteering is reported to help the mind and body. Nearly 9 in 10 retired respondents who currently volunteer agree that volunteering is a way to remain active (88%) and connected (91%).

Retirees who volunteer are committed to their causes. Of those who volunteer, over 1 in 4 (27%) report doing so for 13 or more hours a month.

Average time spent volunteering for nonprofits or charities in the past 12 months
Among those who volunteered



The numbers have been rounded.
[See full data in the appendix.](#)

Both pre-retirees and retirees believe “giving back to my community” and “making a difference” are the most rewarding parts of volunteering; however, for retirees, “staying active” leapfrogs to third place over other reasons that are more important to pre-retirees.

Most rewarding aspects of volunteering
Among those who volunteer (multi-select)

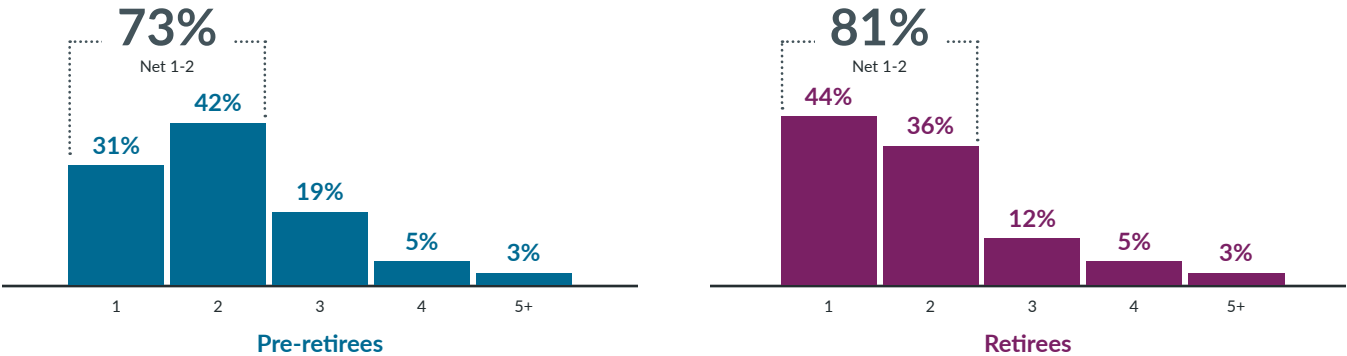
	Pre-retirees	Retirees
Making a difference	45%	36%
Helps me give back to my community/faith	43%	42%
Personal satisfaction	22%	22%
Supporting an organization with my time that benefits me or that I care about	20%	24%
Keeps me active and engaged	15%	28%
Sense of belonging/connecting with others	15%	18%
Helps future generations	15%	10%
Sense of accomplishment	13%	11%

[See full data in the appendix.](#)

Where they volunteer

Most pre-retirees and retirees who volunteer do so with one or two different organizations, with retirees more likely to limit their scope of support to one organization than pre-retirees.

Average number of different organizations volunteered with in the last 12 months
Among those who volunteered



The numbers have been rounded.
[See full data in the appendix](#)

Volunteers and giving

Nearly all volunteers also give financially to at least one of the organizations for which they volunteer.



Additionally, a majority of all retirees surveyed indicated they would be more likely to donate first and then get involved in volunteer work, compared with pre-retirees who volunteer or donate first in nearly equal measure.



The numbers have been rounded.
Support a nonprofit financially, then volunteer there
Volunteer at a nonprofit, then make a donation to the organization
Do not make donations to the organizations where they volunteer

[See full data in the appendix.](#)



Conclusion

One in 6 Americans today is age 65 or older, with more Baby Boomers entering retirement even earlier than anticipated. Their expectations of volunteering and giving are high, and their potential philanthropic impact is vast. Planning—and staying engaged throughout retirement—is key.

It's time to meet these pre-retirees and retirees (and their younger counterparts) where they are. We must show them just how much of an impact they can make as they transition or taper off from their traditional workplace roles, increase their volunteerism, and enter their third act. We can expose them to the myriad vehicles that will help their charitable dollars go further. Putting a solid, proactive plan into effect can help them reach their goal *to do well while doing good* into their golden years.



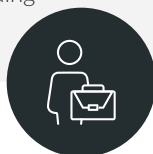


Takeaways

For advisors

Given the importance of charitable giving during pre- and post-retirement, advisors should be initiating conversations about how to integrate philanthropy into financial planning. With limited knowledge among donors—even those who are tax-conscious—about tax-smart giving vehicles and income planning, there is a major opportunity for advisors to discuss charitable strategies that align with retirement goals and can maximize impact.

- For clients who are already donors, add to their retirement and estate plans.
- Understand how the next generation of investors has different approaches to philanthropy, and work to incorporate their approaches into their retirement and estate plans.
- Educate clients on charitable giving vehicles, emphasizing their importance leading up to and during retirement.



For nonprofits

Consider creating targeted engagement strategies for retirees who are interested in increasing their volunteerism but may need encouragement or specific opportunities to take action.

- Build a plan for donors nearing retirement that leverages their skills as volunteers, keeps them engaged as they transition into retirement, and helps them meet their volunteerism and giving goals.
- Proactively plan for how to adjust and support donors in achieving their participation goals as they navigate changes in their lives.



For pre-retirees

Donors who are still employed should plan both for their own financial needs and their charitable giving to help reach their goals and smoothly transition to retirement. Giving back can be a fun and rewarding part of your next chapter, and smart financial planning can enable you to do more of it.

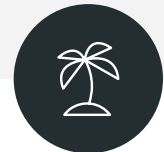
- Consider volunteering as a way to stay engaged while transitioning out of the workforce, and reach out to organizations you support to explore how you can get more involved, as time permits.
- Seek out education about how financial vehicles can help with charitable activities—learn how to integrate giving into your larger retirement strategy.



For retirees

Retirement is the perfect time to reassess your philanthropic approach, ensuring you stay active and engaged while maximizing your impact. By aligning your charitable efforts with your financial goals and leveraging your professional experience, you can make a difference throughout retirement.

- Use your professional experience to support the causes you care about by taking on leadership roles, mentoring, or offering specialized skills to nonprofits.
- Ensure your donations align with your current financial situation and long-term objectives, allowing you to maximize your impact while maintaining financial security.
- Include your charitable activities in a comprehensive retirement plan that considers income, tax implications, and overall financial health.



For employers

As more American donors retire, smart organizations should support their employees' financial and charitable educations.

- Engage with committed givers in their early 50s—pre-retirees in their prime working years—about ways to give back through work.
- Integrate strategies into your people management plan that can help employees reach their retirement and charitable goals.
- Recognize the trend of pre-retirees phasing out of the workforce, and assist them in developing a strategy that aligns with their commitments, while supporting the organization's leadership transition goals.
- Encourage employees nearing retirement to leverage their skills through volunteerism.



Appendix

Giving: Pre- and post-retirement

Amount donated to IRS-qualified charities in 2023	Pre-retirees (n=1,031)	Retirees (n=972)
\$500 to <\$1,000	44%	41%
\$1,000 to <\$2,000	21%	23%
\$2,000 to <\$5,000	19%	20%
\$5,000 to <\$10,000	9%	9%
\$10,000 to <\$25,000	6%	4%
\$25,000 or more	2%	2%

Most rewarding aspects of giving money to charities and nonprofits (multi-select)	Pre-retirees (n=1,031)	Retirees (n=972)
Making a difference	45%	42%
Helps me give back to my community/faith	37%	37%
Helping to solve a problem or make progress in an area of concern	26%	27%
Supporting an organization financially that benefits me or that I care about	24%	24%
Personal satisfaction	16%	20%
Helps future generations	14%	13%
Sense of accomplishment	9%	6%
Keeps me active and engaged	7%	6%
Other	1%	2%
None of the above	0%	1%

How charitable giving fits into their life	Pre-retirees (n=1,031)	Retirees (n=972)
Significant part	30%	28%
Pretty important part	50%	48%
Plays a small role	18%	22%
Not a critical part	2%	2%

Charities supported in retirement (planned)	Pre-retirees (n=1,031)	Retirees (n=972)
Mainly the same organizations as before retiring	70%	66%
A few different organizations compared to before retiring	25%	25%
Mainly give to different organizations after retiring	5%	9%

Committed givers

What distinguishes them	Committed givers (n=475)	Less committed givers (n=1,528)
Who they are		
In their 50s	40%	33%
Still working	48%	44%
Black	19%	12%
Hispanic	16%	12%
Have less than \$1 million in assets	88%	82%
Give \$1,000 or more annually	68%	55%
Volunteerism		
Volunteered in the past 12 months	72%	61%
Of those who volunteer, volunteered 20 hours or more per month	15% (n=375)	10% (n=929)
Of those who volunteer, volunteered with three organizations or more in the last 12 months	32% (n=341)	20% (n=929)
Attitudes about work		
Of those who are working, work because they enjoy it	50% (n=250)	43% (n=736)
Pre-retirees who would like to formally cut back on work before retiring, i.e., phasing into or tapering down their work prior to retirement	41% (n=271)	29% (n=760)
Approaches toward charitable planning		
Believe it is important to receive tax deductions for charitable gifts	62%	53%

Planning for retirement and giving

Cut or would cut back on work schedule before retiring	Pre-retirees (n=1,031)
Yes, did this or would like to formally	32%
Yes, did this or would like to informally	28%
No	24%
Not sure	16%
Have ever retired and gone back to work in any capacity	Retirees (n=972)
Yes, currently working part time, consulting, etc.	3%
Yes, did work after retiring, but don't work now	16%
No	81%

Working with professional advisors	Pre-retirees (n=1,031)	Retirees (n=972)
Do not work with any advisor	31%	35%
Work with an advisor	69%	65%

Types of advisors (multi-select)

Financial advisor	49%	50%
Certified public accountant	26%	23%
Attorney	26%	19%
Other	1%	1%

Ever had a conversation with a professional advisor about charitable planning or giving

	Pre-retirees (n=1,031)	Retirees (n=972)
Have not talked to an advisor about charitable giving	39%	49%
Talked with an advisor about charitable giving	61%	51%

Type of professional for those who had a conversation with a professional advisor (multi-select)

Financial advisor	40%	33%
Certified public accountant	21%	17%
Attorney	24%	22%
Other	1%	1%

Importance of receiving tax deductions for charitable giving

	Pre-retirees (n=1,031)	Retirees (n=972)
Very/somewhat important	64%	46%

Awareness of vehicles or methods that can be used to support charities financially (multi-select)

	Total (n=2,003)	Pre-retirees (n=1,031)	Retirees (n=972)	High-net-worth donors (n=844)
Bequests, such as leaving money to charity in a will	54%	50%	58%	64%
Naming a charity as the beneficiary of retirement or life insurance	47%	44%	50%	55%
Charitable gift annuity or trust	43%	43%	42%	51%
Donating appreciated assets	32%	35%	30%	47%
Qualified charitable distribution	26%	26%	26%	39%
Donor-advised funds or donor-directed funds	22%	24%	20%	35%
None of the above	21%	19%	23%	14%

Volunteers: Pre- and post-retirement

Volunteer activity	Pre-retirees (n=1,031)	Retirees (n=972)
Volunteered in the last 12 months	71%	55%
Average time spent volunteering for nonprofits or charities in the past 12 months <i>(among those who volunteered)</i>		
	Pre-retirees (n=734)	Retirees (n=536)
Less than 2 hours per month	22%	26%
2 to 4 hours per month	32%	24%
5 to 12 hours per month	25%	23%
13 to 20 hours per month	12%	12%
More than 20 hours per month	8%	16%
Most rewarding aspects of volunteering <i>(among those who volunteered)</i> <i>(multi-select)</i>		
	Pre-retirees (n=734)	Retirees (n=536)
Making a difference	45%	36%
Helps me give back to my community/faith	43%	42%
Personal satisfaction	22%	22%
Supporting an organization with my time that benefits me or that I care about	20%	24%
Keeps me active and engaged	15%	28%
Sense of belonging/connecting with others	15%	18%
Helps future generations	15%	10%
Sense of accomplishment	13%	11%
Average number of different organizations volunteered with in the last 12 months <i>(among those who volunteered)</i>		
	Pre-retirees (n=734)	Retirees (n=536)
1	31%	44%
2	42%	36%
3	19%	12%
4	5%	5%
5+	3%	3%
Volunteering and giving financially		
	Pre-retirees (n=734)	Retirees (n=536)
Volunteers who also give financially to at least one of the organizations for which they volunteer	97%	93%
How older donors first engage		
	Pre-retirees (n=1,031)	Retirees (n=972)
Support a nonprofit financially, then volunteer there	45%	61%
Volunteer at a nonprofit, then make a donation to the organization	49%	31%
Do not make donations to the organizations where they volunteer	5%	7%

Methodology

This report is based on research conducted in March and April 2024 by Artemis Strategy Group, an independent research firm, on behalf of Fidelity Charitable. It surveyed 2,512 givers ages 50 to 80, including 844 givers with investable assets of at least \$1 million. To qualify, respondents must have contributed at least \$500 per year to charitable organizations and make household giving decisions. Throughout this report, numbers are rounded to the nearest whole number. See appendix for more detail.

About Fidelity Charitable

Fidelity Charitable is an independent public charity that has helped donors support more than 406,000 nonprofit organizations with \$84.5 billion in grants. Established in 1991, Fidelity Charitable launched the first national donor-advised fund program. The mission of the organization is to grow the American tradition of philanthropy by providing programs that make charitable giving accessible, simple, and effective.



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