

THE BLACK DONORS PROJECT

Survey Findings Summary Report

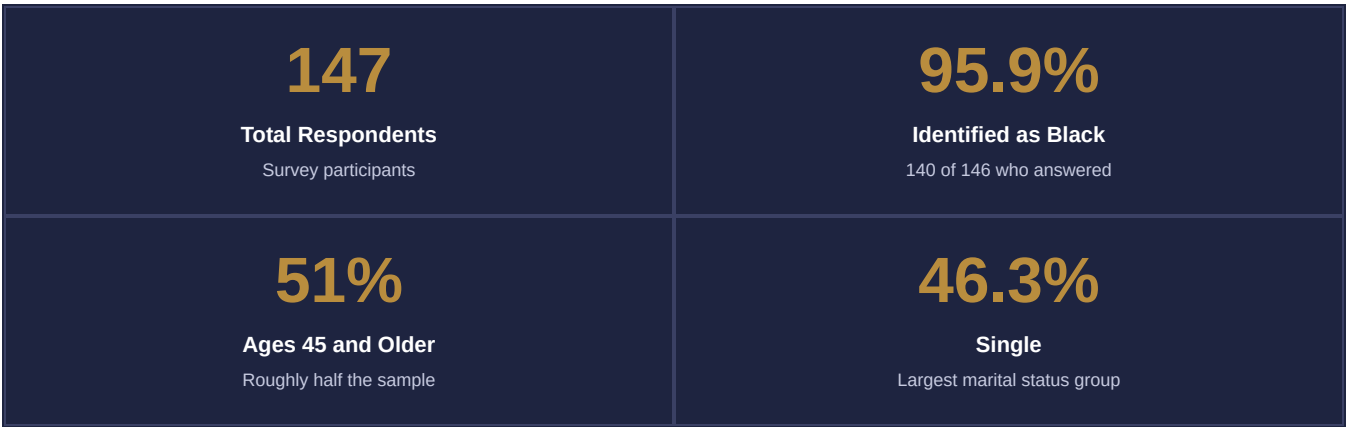
Respondents: 147 survey participants

Focus: Philanthropic giving to the arts and arts organizations

Purpose: To understand the attitudes, behaviors, and motivations of Black arts donors

This report presents findings from a survey conducted by The Black Donors Project. Percentages are based on 147 total respondents unless a different base is stated for a specific question. Where a question allowed more than one answer, percentages sum above 100%. Where respondents skipped a question, the base for that item is the number who answered, and that base is noted.

1. Respondent Profile



Age Distribution

The largest age groups were 45–54 (28.6%) and 35–44 (23.8%), followed by 25–34 (20.4%). Respondents aged 45 and older made up roughly 51% of the sample. Younger donors aged 17–34 represented approximately 25% combined, suggesting an opportunity to cultivate the next generation of Black arts philanthropists.

Marital Status

Single respondents formed the largest group at 46.3%, ahead of Married at 32.0%, Partnered at 12.2%, Divorced at 8.2%, and Widowed at 1.4%.

Income & Education

The income distribution skewed higher than a typical arts-donor sample. The two largest tiers were \$150,000 and above (24.5%) and \$100,000–\$149,999 (21.8%). Bachelor's, Master's, and Professional degree holders together made up 72.1% of respondents, reflecting a highly educated donor base. The largest single education group was the Master's degree (36.7%). Full-time employment was the largest work category at 48.3%, followed by self-employment at 32.0%.

Gender Identity

Respondents could select more than one set. 55.8% used she/her/hers pronouns, 36.7% he/him/his, 10.2% they/them/theirs, and 2.0% identified as non-binary — reflecting a gender-diverse donor community.

Age Distribution (detail)

Age	Respondents	%
45 – 54	42	28.6%
35 – 44	35	23.8%
25 – 34	30	20.4%
55 – 64	20	13.6%
65+	13	8.8%
17 – 24	7	4.8%

2. Giving Behaviors & Amounts

Finding	Data	Context / Implication
Annual giving amount	\$100–\$500	34.0% of donors fall in this range — the single largest giving tier
Organizations supported	1 to 3 per year	56.4% give to three or fewer organizations; 23.8% give to four or more
Preferred giving channel	Nonprofit website	61.2% prefer to give directly through an organization's website
Describes giving as...	Giving Back (48.3%)	34.7% say 'a donation'; 16.3% say 'philanthropy'
Top prompt to give	Friend request (59.9%)	A request from a friend is the single most cited giving trigger

The committed major-gift segment is substantial: 19.7% give more than \$1,000 annually and 15.0% give \$500–\$1,000 — a segment worth dedicated stewardship. At the lower end, 10.9% give \$20–\$49 and 14.3% give \$50–\$99, indicating room to upgrade mid-level donors. Payment apps such as Cash App and Venmo are the second most preferred giving channel at 34.0%.

3. Arts Disciplines Supported

Respondents donated across all five arts disciplines tracked in the survey. Visual Arts led, with Dance and Music tied close behind:

Arts Discipline	% Donated	# of Respondents
Visual Arts	38.8%	57
Dance	36.7%	54
Music	36.7%	54
Theater	32.0%	47
Literary Arts	20.4%	30
All disciplines	20.4%	30

20.4% of respondents donated across all five disciplines — a cross-disciplinary giving pattern that suggests many donors hold a broad commitment to Black arts and culture rather than a single niche.

4. Engagement Beyond Donating

Donors are highly engaged across multiple forms of arts participation and support:

- 71.4% are regular ticket buyers and audience members
- 55.1% actively amplify arts organizations via social media reposts
- 36.1% volunteer their time in addition to giving financially
- 34.7% collect or purchase visual art
- 25.9% engage in all of the above

Art purchasing is also notable: 70.1% reported purchasing visual art, and of those purchasers, 46.6% consider themselves art collectors (48 of 103) — indicating a meaningful collector community within this donor pool.

5. What Motivates Giving Decisions

Survey respondents rated a series of organizational factors on a 1–5 importance scale. The following reflect the percentage who selected '5 – Most Important':

Finding	Data	Context / Implication
Community Impact	78.9%	The highest-rated factor — mission and community outcomes drive giving above all else
Racial makeup of the organization	65.3%	Diversity of leadership and staff carries significant weight in giving decisions
Organization is Black-led	57.1%	A majority strongly prefer to fund Black-led organizations
Has a DEI statement	55.8%	A majority place high importance on formal equity commitments
Organization's mission	52.4%	Mission alignment is a core giving requirement for over half of respondents

6. Research & Due Diligence Practices

What donors review before giving

- Website: 76.9% — the primary research destination for most donors
- Social media: 63.3% — used nearly as frequently as the organization's own website
- 990 tax filing: 15.6% — a meaningful segment performs financial due diligence
- Charity evaluation sites: 10.2%
- Audited financials: 6.8%

Do donors review equity statements?

40.8% of respondents reported reviewing an organization's equity statement before donating, while 59.2% do not — equity review is an active practice for a meaningful minority of this donor pool.

What donors expect in return

- Nothing — 33.3% expect no formal acknowledgment
- A 501(c)(3) tax receipt letter — 32.0%
- A thank-you note — 31.3%
- Recognition on a donor list — 15.0%
- All of the above — 14.3%
- Member benefits / merchandise / discounts — 8.2%

The relatively high proportion of donors who expect nothing underscores a values-driven, mission-aligned giving culture. However, a tax receipt and a personal thank-you remain important baseline stewardship practices.

7. Platforms, Outreach & Referral Sources

How respondents heard about The Black Donors Project

Word of mouth dominated referrals: 54.4% heard about the project through a friend. A text message was the next most common channel at 10.2%, followed by Instagram at 9.5%. This signals that peer networks and community trust are the most powerful referral channels for this audience.

Philanthropic platforms used in the past three years

- Giving Tuesday: 52%
- Crowdfunding (GoFundMe, Indiegogo, Kickstarter): 39.5%
- Black Philanthropy Month: 30%
- A Giving Circle: 8.2%
- GivingGap.org: 6.1%
- All of the above: 3.4%
- None of the above: 23.1%

Giving Tuesday and crowdfunding platforms are the most commonly used formal mechanisms. Black Philanthropy Month participation (30%) highlights responsiveness to culturally specific giving campaigns. The 23.1% who have engaged no platform represent an untapped digital fundraising audience.

8. Key Takeaways & Recommendations

- 01** Community impact is the top driver of giving. Organizations must clearly communicate their community outcomes — above programs alone — in donor outreach.
- 02** Black leadership and racial makeup matter. A majority of respondents strongly prioritize Black-led organizations, and two-thirds consider racial makeup important. Representation is a philanthropic criterion.
- 03** Friends are the most powerful fundraisers. With 59.9% citing a friend request as the primary prompt to give and 54.4% hearing about this project through a friend, peer-to-peer fundraising is essential.
- 04** Donors do their homework. Website (76.9%) and social media (63.3%) are critical touchpoints — organizations must ensure these reflect current, compelling, and equity-centered content.
- 05** Digital-first giving is the standard. 61.2% prefer to give via nonprofit websites; a seamless, mobile-friendly online donation experience is foundational. Payment apps are a strong secondary channel at 34.0%.
- 06** Stewardship is more important than recognition. Donors primarily want a thank-you and a tax receipt — rather than elaborate perks. Authentic gratitude drives loyalty.
- 07** A committed major-gift segment exists. With 19.7% giving over \$1,000 and 15.0% giving \$500–\$1,000 annually, this group is worth dedicated stewardship.
- 08** Mid-level donors are an investment opportunity. With many donors giving \$20–\$499 and most supporting three or fewer organizations, structured upgrade pathways — recurring giving, giving circles — can grow both depth and breadth.

About The Black Donors Project

The Black Donors Project is dedicated to advancing Black philanthropy in the arts. This survey represents an important step in understanding and amplifying the philanthropic traditions, values, and potential of Black arts donors across the United States.

For inquiries or to learn more, contact The Black Donors Project:

Email: info@theblackdonorsproject.org

Website: www.theblackdonorsproject.org