

THE BLACK DONORS PROJECT

Survey Findings Summary Report

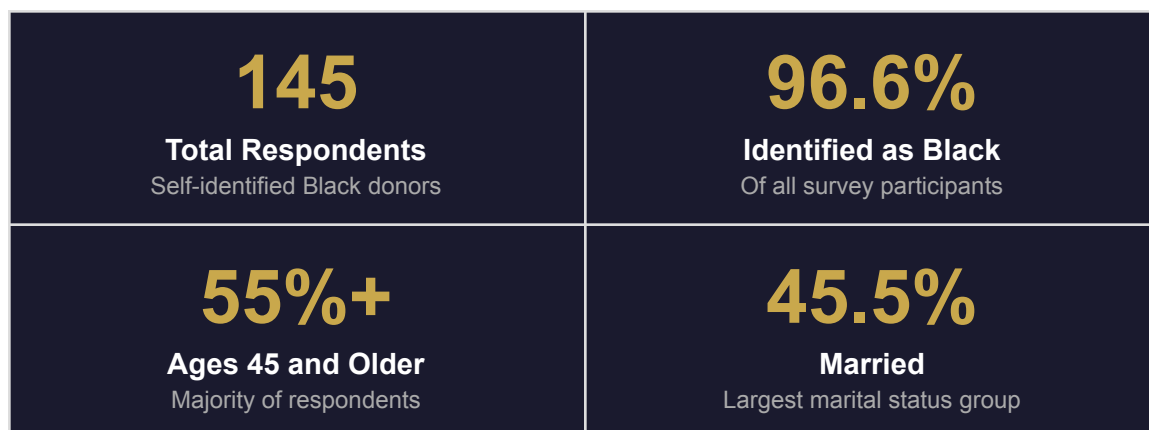
Respondents: 145 self-identified Black donors

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. All percentages are based on 145 responses unless otherwise noted.

1. Respondent Profile



Age Distribution

The survey skewed toward older donors, with the largest groups being 55–64 (22.8%) and 45–54 (20.7%). Younger donors aged 17–34 represented approximately 22.8% combined, suggesting an opportunity to cultivate the next generation of Black arts philanthropists.

Income & Education

The income distribution was broad, with 24.8% earning \$50,000–\$74,999 and 21.4% earning \$75,000–\$99,999. Over 63% of respondents held a bachelor's degree or higher, reflecting a highly educated donor base. The largest employment group was full-time employed (48.3%).

Gender Identity

55.2% of respondents used she/her/hers pronouns, 37.2% he/him/his, 9.7% they/them/theirs, and 2.1% identified as non-binary — reflecting a gender-diverse donor community.

2. Giving Behaviors & Amounts

Finding	Data	Context / Implication
Annual giving amount	\$100–\$500	33.8% of donors fall in this range — the single largest giving tier
Organizations supported	4–5 per year	55.2% donate to 4 or more nonprofit arts organizations annually
Preferred giving channel	Nonprofit website	61.4% prefer to give directly through an organization's website
Describes giving as...	A Donation (49%)	49% use this term; 35.2% say 'giving back'; 15.9% say 'philanthropy'
Top prompt to give	Friend request (60%)	A solicitation from a friend is the single most cited giving trigger

A meaningful 14.5% of respondents give \$500–\$1,000 annually, and 5.5% contribute over \$1,000 — a committed major gift segment worth stewarding. At the lower end, 20% give \$20–\$49 and 11% give \$50–\$99, indicating significant room to upgrade mid-level donors.

3. Arts Disciplines Supported

Respondents donated across all five arts disciplines tracked in the survey. Visual Arts and Dance tied as the top disciplines:

Arts Discipline	% Donated	# of Respondents
Visual Arts	38.6%	56
Dance	37.2%	54
Music	37.2%	54
Theater	32.4%	47
Literary Arts	20.7%	30
All disciplines	20.7%	30

20.7% 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% are regular ticket buyers and audience members
- 55.2% actively amplify arts organizations via social media reposts
- 35.9% volunteer their time in addition to giving financially
- 33.8% collect or purchase visual art
- 25.5% engage in all of the above

Visual art purchasing is also notable: 29.7% reported purchasing visual art, and of those, 66.9% consider themselves art collectors — indicating a robust 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	78.6%	The highest-rated factor — mission and community outcomes drive giving above all else
Would NOT give if accused of discrimination	77.2%	Ethical accountability is non-negotiable for the vast majority of respondents
Racial makeup of the organization	65.5%	Diversity of leadership and staff carries significant weight in giving decisions
Organization is Black-led	57.9%	More than half strongly prefer to fund Black-led organizations
Has a DEI statement	55.9%	The 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

These findings affirm that Black donors are principled philanthropists who actively assess organizational values, leadership representation, and community relevance before giving.

6. Research & Due Diligence Practices

What donors review before giving

- Website: 76.6% — the primary research destination for most donors
- Social media: 63.4% — used nearly as frequently as the organization's own website
- 990 tax filing: 15.9% — a meaningful segment performs financial due diligence
- Charity evaluation sites: 10.3%
- Audited financials: 6.9%

Do donors review equity statements?

58.6% of respondents reported reviewing an organization's equity statement before donating — reinforcing that DEI commitments are not symbolic but are an active part of many donors' evaluation processes.

What donors expect in return

- Nothing — 33.1% expect no formal acknowledgment
- A thank-you note — 31.7%
- A 501(c)(3) tax receipt letter — 31.7%
- Recognition on a donor list — 15.2%
- Member benefits / merchandise / discounts — 8.3%
- All of the above — 14.5%

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: 54.5% heard about the project through a friend. Instagram was the next most common channel at approximately 9.7%, followed by text messages and Telfar.TV. This signals that peer networks and community trust are the most powerful fundraising channels for this audience.

Philanthropic platforms used in the past three years

- Giving Tuesday: 52.4%
- Crowdfunding / GoFundMe: 40%
- Black Philanthropy Month: 30.3%
- A Giving Circle: 8.3%
- GivingGap.org: 6.2%
- All of the above: 3.4%
- None of the above: 22.8%

Giving Tuesday and crowdfunding platforms are the most commonly used formal mechanisms. Black Philanthropy Month participation (30.3%) highlights responsiveness to culturally specific giving campaigns. The 22.8% who have not engaged any 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 — not just their programs — in donor outreach.
02	Black leadership and racial makeup matter. More than half 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 60% citing a friend request as the primary prompt to give and 54.5% hearing about this project through a friend, peer-to-peer fundraising is essential.
04	Donors do their homework. Website (76.6%) and social media (63.4%) are critical touchpoints — organizations must ensure these reflect current, compelling, and equity-centered content.
05	Ethical accountability is non-negotiable. 77.2% would not support an organization accused of discrimination. A single incident can permanently damage donor relationships.
06	Digital-first giving is the standard. 61.4% prefer to give via nonprofit websites; a seamless, mobile-friendly online donation experience is foundational.
07	Stewardship is more important than recognition. Donors primarily want a thank-you and a tax receipt — not elaborate perks. Authentic gratitude drives loyalty.
08	Younger and mid-level donors are an investment opportunity. With many donors giving \$20–\$499, structured upgrade pathways — recurring giving, giving circles — can significantly grow the donor base.

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:

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