Blackbaud Institute Spotlight:

What Can We Expect from GivingTuesday in an Election Year?

This GivingTuesday comes on the heels of the recent U.S. election. A groundswell of donor support has emerged this year across the political spectrum, with record breaking campaign donations. Small-dollar political donors have played a major role, with over 160M gifts of less than or equal to $100 made by individuals (Federal Election Commission). What will this outpouring of support for political campaigns mean for end-of-year fundraising for nonprofit organizations, and how can fundraisers tap into the generosity of donors this GivingTuesday and beyond?

Giving In Election Years

In 2012, the Blackbaud Institute sought to answer the question, "does competition from political fundraising affect donor giving to nonprofits?" We found that the political donors tracked by the Federal Election Commission gave 0.9% more to nonprofit organizations in the 2012 election year than they had in the year prior. This trend has held in the intervening years, with a recent GivingPulse survey revealing 57% of people who report giving to political campaigns also supported two or more charitable organizations, compared to just 28% of the rest of the population (GivingTuesday, October 2024).

Simultaneously, the Blackbaud Institute Index reported a 1.7% increase in overall giving in 2012, compared to 2011.

This trend continued in 2016, with an increase in giving of 1% YOY. The 2020 election year also saw an increase in giving (2% YOY) but—as we know—2020 saw the confluence of so many historical events that it's difficult to understand if that increase in giving was correlated with it being an election year or not.

While many years of Blackbaud Institute data suggest that philanthropic giving does not dip in major election years, as 2024 draws to a close, the question for many nonprofits is: does donor fatigue disproportionally impact year-end giving during election years when election day sits in the heart of year-end giving season?

Year-End Giving in Election Years

End-of-year traditionally sees the greatest influx of donations—over 35% of all giving in 2023 occurred in the final three months of the year, with a marked uptick from October to November across most subsectors *(Blackbaud Charitable Index).* For the last two election cycles, if we compare the percentage of giving that occurred in the last three months of the year to the year prior and the year that followed, it doesn't appear that end-of-year giving suffered. In the case of 2020, the percentage of gifts was skewed even further towards year-end.

Total Giving Distribution in Year-End
(October – December)

33.4% 2015	**33.2%** **2016**	**34.3%** 2017
32.8% 2019	**35.7%** **2020**	**36.7%** 2021

While indexed data is unavailable for 2011, **2012 saw 34% of total giving in year-end** and 2013 saw 33.6% of total giving between October and December. This is in line with the trends of the last decade.
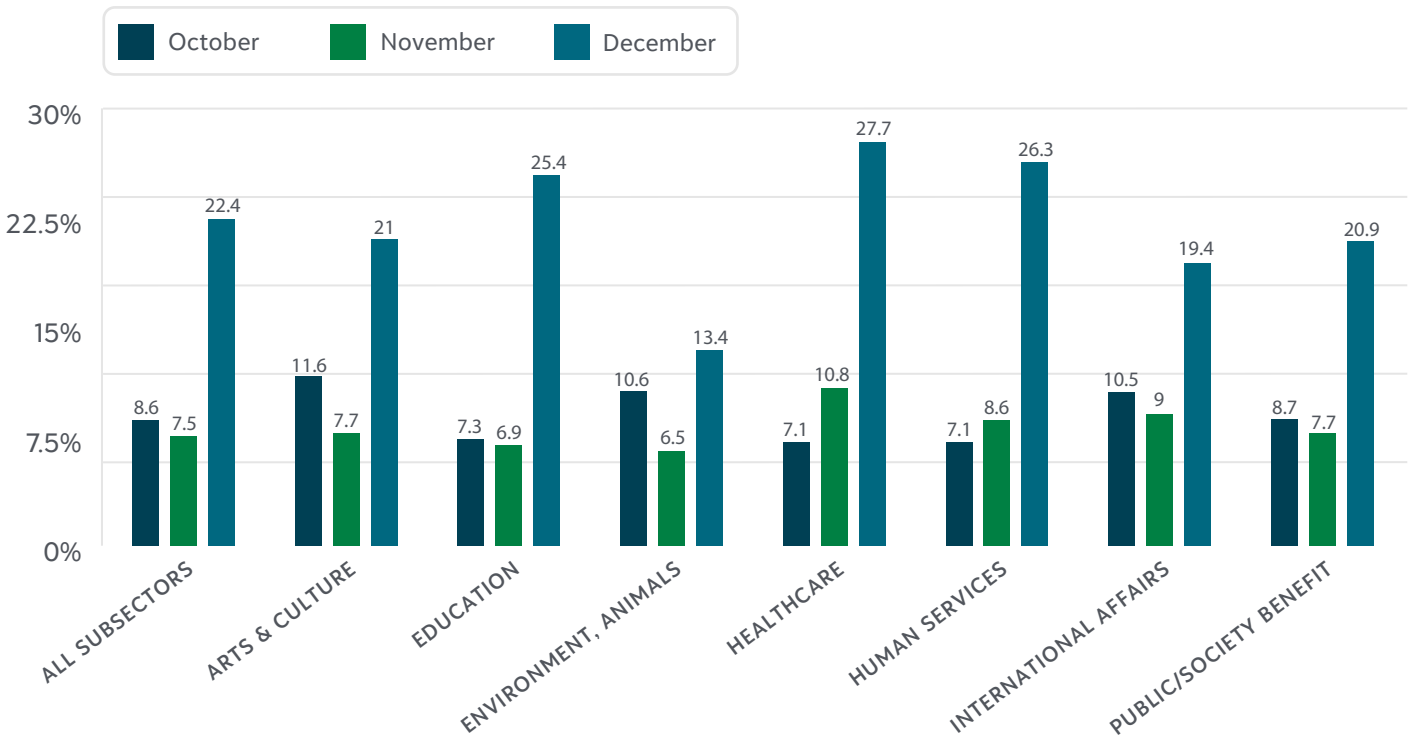
What Does This Mean for this GivingTuesday?

To better understand what this means for GivingTuesday, we focus specifically on online giving, the channel through which the majority of GivingTuesday donations are made. If we dive deeper into the trends in online giving for each subsector in the last three election cycles, it becomes clear that policy-based giving may influence year-end giving during election years, but it is not the only driving force. Comparing the year-end performance of each subsector to the distribution of GivingTuesday funds, we can find a clear correlation. Those organizations that perform best in online giving at year-end are also more likely to see outsized success on GivingTuesday.

2012 Election Year

- 38.5% of all online giving across subsectors occurred in the last three months of the year

- The subsectors that saw the highest percentage of their online gifts at year end included: Healthcare (46%), Human Services (42%), and Arts and Culture (40%).

- Grouped together as one subsector, Medical Research and Healthcare organizations not only saw the highest percentage of online gifts in 2012 but also the largest share of GivingTuesday dollars (8% for Healthcare and 33% for Medical Research). This was followed by Human Services at 23%.

## 2012 Online Giving Distribution by Month by Sector

Legend: October, November, December

Subsector	October	November	December
ALL SUBSECTORS	8.6	7.5	22.4
ARTS & CULTURE	11.6	7.7	21
EDUCATION	7.3	6.9	25.4
ENVIRONMENT, ANIMALS	10.6	6.5	13.4
HEALTHCARE	7.1	10.8	27.7
HUMAN SERVICES	7.1	8.6	26.3
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS	10.5	9	19.4
PUBLIC/SOCIETY BENEFIT	8.7	7.7	20.9

Subsectors with Highest Percentage of Online Gifts at Year End:

46% HEALTHCARE

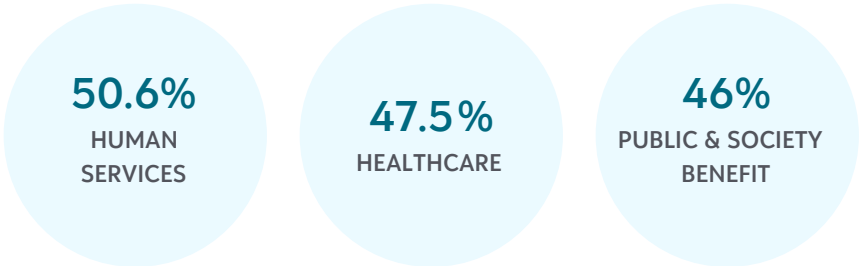**42%** HUMAN SERVICES

40% ARTS & CULTURE

2016 Election Year

- 39% of all online giving across subsectors occurred in the last three months of the year
- The subsectors that saw the highest percentage of their online gifts at year end included: Human Services (50.6%), Healthcare (47.5%), and Public and Society Benefit (46%).
- Human Services and Healthcare were also in the top three subsectors benefiting from GivingTuesday. Human Services received 21% of GivingTuesday donations and Healthcare received 18%. Animal Welfare also appeared in the top three with 19% of the share.

## 2016 Online Giving Distribution by Month by Sector

	October	November	December
ALL SUBSECTORS	7.9	9.7	21.8
ARTS & CULTURE	7.3	8.9	20.7
ENVIRONMENT, ANIMALS	5.4	11	28.7
FAITH-BASED	8.5	8.3	23.9
HEALTHCARE	7.3	12.5	27.7
HIGHER EDUCATION	6.7	9.7	24.2
HUMAN SERVICES	7.1	12.7	30.8
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS	8.3	9.9	26.4
K-12 EDUCATION	6.7	7.8	16.6
MEDICAL RESEARCH	11.1	4.8	7.3
PUBLIC/SOCIETY BENEFIT	6.1	15.8	24.2

Subsectors with Highest Percentage of Online Gifts at Year End:

50.6%
HUMAN SERVICES

**47.5%**
HEALTHCARE

46%
PUBLIC & SOCIETY BENEFIT
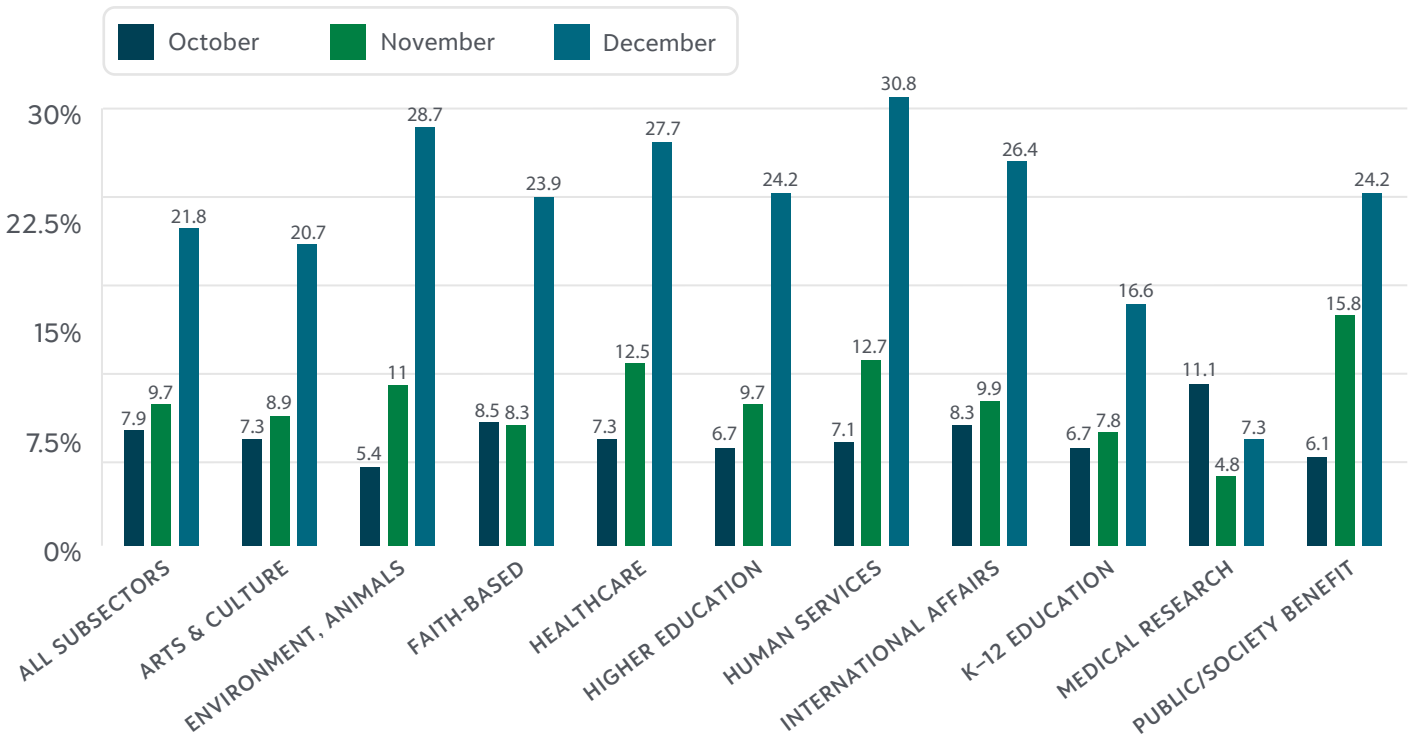
2020 Election Year

- 39.5% of all online giving across subsectors occurred in the last three months of the year

- The subsectors that saw the highest percentage of their online gifts at year end included: Higher Education (43%), Human Services (43%), Healthcare (47.5%), and Environmental (40%).

- While subsector breakdowns are unavailable for 2020's GivingTuesday distribution, it should be noted that 2020 saw a remarkable spike in GivingTuesday donations, correlating with the overall rise in generosity that year.

2020 Online Giving Distribution by Month by Sector

Legend: October, November, December

Sector	October	November	December
ALL SUBSECTORS	7.2	8.2	24.1
ANIMAL WELFARE	6.6	7.8	23.7
ARTS & CULTURE	7.6	7.2	19
ENVIRONMENT	7.6	8	24.7
FAITH-BASED	6.6	8.4	20.8
HEALTHCARE	7.1	7.7	24.9
HIGHER EDUCATION	8	7.7	27.4
HUMAN SERVICES	4.7	9.7	28.8
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS	6.6	8.5	24.8
K-12 EDUCATION	8.3	8.2	23.3
MEDICAL RESEARCH	12.4	5.3	13.3
PUBLIC/SOCIETY BENEFIT	8.2	9	21.4

Subsectors with Highest Percentage of Online Gifts at Year End:

47.5%
HEALTHCARE

43%
HUMAN SERVICES

43%
HIGHER EDUCATION

47.5%
ENVIRONMENTAL
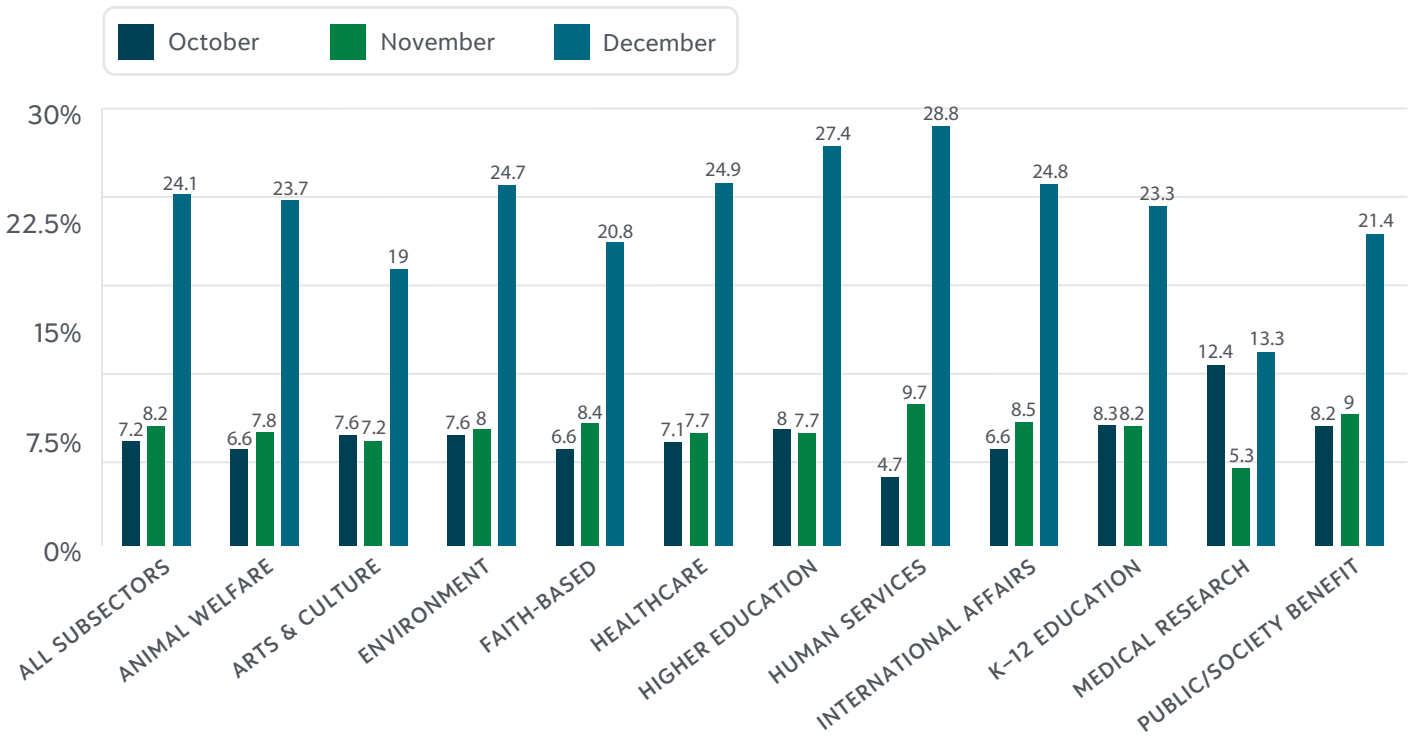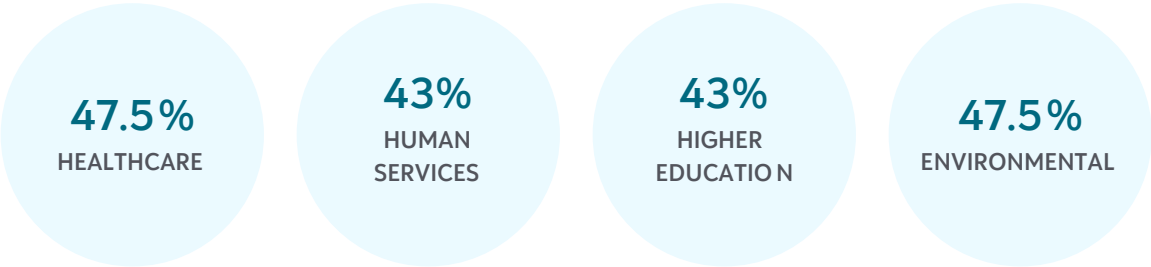
Conclusion:

There does not appear to be a drop in year-end generosity during election years, with donors still focusing a higher percentage of their giving at year-end to the causes they care about. Ultimately, we find that those subsectors and organizations that harness the full capabilities of online fundraising see success across the board in year-end giving.

Elections do not occur in a vacuum—natural disasters, pandemics, and global and local conflicts may take precedent. The needs of a donor's community can cut through the noise of election giving. As we look to this GivingTuesday and the 2024 end-of-year giving season, we can find parallels in the kinds of causes that may see the greatest influx of giving.

- **The missions of healthcare, human services, and public and society benefit organizations will be top of mind for an engaged donor population on both sides of the aisle,** as civil rights, immigration, reproductive rights, and abortion remained driving factors in the 2024 election, as they also were in the 2016 election. The subsectors that saw the highest percentage of their online gifts at year end in 2016 included: Human Services (50.6%), Healthcare (47.5%), and Public and Society Benefit (46%). Human Services and Healthcare were also in the top three subsectors benefiting from GivingTuesday that year.

- **Human Services and Environmental organizations will also see donations at year-end increase in response to Hurricane Helene and other natural disasters.** In 2012, giving remained relatively flat until the impact of Superstorm Sandy, which drove a marked increase in year-end giving for Human Services organizations sending aid to the impacted regions. With the recent devastation of Hurricane Helene front of mind for donors, those organizations providing ongoing aid in the Southeastern US may see a higher distribution in giving at year-end giving compared to other subsectors. The wildfires in Canada and Maui in the summer of 2023 led to an increase in gifts to Environmental organizations. While it's too early to

see if this trend persisted following Hurricane Helene, Environmental organizations may continue to see increased donations at year end in response to natural disasters.

As we found in our 2012 study of giving in election years, generosity begets generosity. Recent findings from The Do Good Institute, commissioned by the Generosity Commission, prove that pro-social behaviors such as voting, volunteerism, donating, or even taking part in jury duty, tend to cluster.

PRO TIPS

✓ Pay close attention to the online donor journey this year-end, leveraging of the capabilities of segmented communications to clearly illustrate how your mission impacts the causes closest to your constituents' hearts.

✓ Don't be afraid to speak to the ways in which policy impacts your work in the years ahead to rally donors around your cause and encourage them to upgrade their support.

✓ Harness the power of peer-to-peer support. Politically engaged donors have dedicated their time to bringing their communities together ahead of the election. Provide clear pathways for your supporters to tap into these networks this GivingTuesday.

About the Blackbaud Philanthropic Dataset

The US index tracks giving data from 8,639 nonprofit organizations, totaling over $50 billion in fundraising revenue. The online fundraising findings are based on data from 4,024 nonprofit organizations and over $2.7 billion in online fundraising revenue. In addition to the US Index, we track giving data from Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia/New Zealand. For our Canadian Index, we analyze approximately 167 Canadian organizations, with over $180 million in giving. We track over £73 million from approximately 176 organizations in UK-based charitable giving. And, we track approximately $83 million from close to 64 organizations in Australian and New Zealand-based charitable giving.

Organizations are grouped into three size categories: total annual fundraising less than $1 million (small), total annual fundraising between $1 million and $10 million (medium), and total annual fundraising exceeding $10 million (large). It is based on recorded giving in each organization's fundraising system, reported fundraising in IRS Form 990 data, and matching completed through the National Center for Charitable Statistics.

To be included in the analysis, these organizations needed to have at least 27 months of complete giving data without gaps or missing information. Organizations that did not meet all the research criteria have been excluded. Organizations based outside of the United States have also been excluded from the US findings. We have not included the unfulfilled portion of pledge gifts or recurring gifts processed offline in our research. Giving USA® figures are used to weight the data to ensure that no individual organizations or subsectors are overrepresented in the analysis.
Each organization in The Blackbaud Institute Index is categorized by one of 12 subsectors using its National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities—or NTEE—code as reported on Form 990. These subsectors are Animal Welfare, Arts and Culture, Environment, Faith Communities, Healthcare, Higher Education, Human Services, International Affairs, K–12 Education, Medical Research, and Public and Society Benefit. If you are unsure which subsector your organization falls under, you may refer to your 990 to find your NTEE code. Visit the National Center for Charitable Statistics for a complete list of subsectors. The Index also includes giving to Foundations, but this data is not currently used to calculate giving trends to avoid the potential of double-counting revenue.

About Blackbaud

Blackbaud unleashes the potential of the people and organizations who change the world. As the leading software provider exclusively dedicated to powering social impact, Blackbaud expands what is possible across the nonprofit and education sectors, at companies committed to social responsibility, and for individual change makers. Built specifically for fundraising, nonprofit financial management, digital giving, grantmaking, corporate social responsibility and education management, Blackbaud's essential software accelerates impact through unmatched expertise and powerful data intelligence. Millions of people across more than 100 countries connect, give, learn, and engage through Blackbaud platforms.

About Blackbaud Institute

The Blackbaud Institute develops leading-edge research and convenes expert voices to equip the social impact community knowledge, insight, and confidence. The Blackbaud Institute draws from Blackbaud's data set, the most comprehensive in the social impact community. In addition, the Institute facilitates public research studies to drive original qualitative and quantitative insight. Our research agenda is grounded in a commitment to topics that social impact organizations can apply immediately to better understand, benchmark, and improve their essential business operations. We are guided by our commitment to the social impact sector to provide timely, transparent, and well-rounded research that is free to access. From how organizations run to how donors give, we're 100% focused on research and resources for this sector.