

Charitable giving stable while recession ebbs

by [Mary Beth Marklein](#) in the [April 19, 2011](#) issue

Charities are seeing improvements in fund-raising, with fewer charities recording declines in 2010 compared with 2009, according to a recent report. But a larger percentage of organizations said they brought in about the same amount of revenue both years, says the March 22 report by the Nonprofit Research Collaborative, a coalition of six organizations that focus on philanthropy.

Just over half (52 percent) said they met fund-raising goals, about the same (53 percent) as in a similar 2009 survey conducted by the Association of Fundraising Professionals, a member of the collaborative.

"While many organizations stopped the bleeding, giving simply didn't rebound like we thought it might, especially given the economic growth we saw in the last quarter of the year," said Paulette Maehara, CEO of the fund-raising association.

The findings are based on responses from 1,616 charities to an online survey conducted in February. Among the specifics:

- About 67 percent said they raised more money (43 percent) or the same amount (24 percent) in 2010 as they did in 2009. That's up from 54 percent in 2009. But it's well below the "boom years" from 2005 to 2007, when as many as 69 percent of organizations reported receiving more than the previous year.
- Giving was consistent across all types of charities, including arts, education, health and religion. International organizations were most likely to report growth in giving, but the survey notes that the pool of respondents was small, "so it is very difficult to use this result to generalize."
- No single type of fund-raising was most effective, but groups that have ramped up opportunities for online giving are seeing a payoff. Nearly 75 percent of the groups reported online fund-raising. Among organizations that offered such opportunities, 58 percent saw an increase in giving.

The report notes that online giving is still a relatively small source of revenue; a survey released in February by collaborative member Blackbaud Inc. found that, at most, online giving accounts for less than 10 percent of total contributions received.

"It does take some time for organizations to make the investment in online fund-raising and to learn how best to integrate that" into their fund-raising strategy, says Una Osili, director of research at the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, a collaborative member.

Some charitable groups are turning to even more electronic ways to make contributions. The American Red Cross, for example, raised \$32 million in donations via text messages after the 7.0-magnitude earthquake struck Haiti last year.

"It takes less time to click," Red Cross spokesman Roger Lowe said. "You feel like you've made a difference immediately." —*USA Today*/RNS