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Gift Planning Stats

5 Fundraising Stats on Major Gifts of Assets: 2.3%, 60%, 77%, 50X, and 6X. [1]

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1. **2.3%** of household wealth is held in cash and checkable accounts; stop ignoring the other **97.7%.**
2. **60%** of the largest gifts to colleges included no cash.
3. **77%** sustained increase in giving after estate commitment.
4. **50X** greater likelihood of making asset gifts among legacy society members.
5. **6X** faster growth in long-term contributions with asset-based fundraising.

1 2.3% of household wealth is held in cash and checking accounts; stop ignoring the other 97.7%.

Asking for Cash from Disposable Income Is a Small Ask from a Fiercely Competitive Environment
Only **2.3%** of household wealth is held in cash or checking accounts. Yet, most fundraising strategies fight fiercely over that tiny slice of wealth. The remaining **97.7%** resides elsewhere: in real estate, stocks, bonds, business interests, and retirement accounts. That is the ocean where transformational gifts originate because that is where wealth is held.

Two Different Conversations Create Two Different Outcomes
Discussions about cash typically focus on disposable income. However, due to the impact of inflation over the past five years, many people feel that their disposable income is limited because of rising costs. Conversations centered around disposable income tend to be small, cautious, and short-term. In contrast, discussions about assets focus on wealth, which makes donors feel more generous, expansive, and full of possibilities.

Generosity expands to match the psychological reference point. When people are reminded of their wealth, they actually feel wealthier—and they tend to give more.

2 60% of the largest gifts to colleges included no cash.

What the Biggest Gifts Actually Look Like [2]
A national study of the largest gifts to colleges found that:

- **60%** contained no cash at all.
- 66% funded endowments.
- 41% were allocated to capital projects.
- Only 13% supported unrestricted current use.

These substantial gifts came primarily from older donors, with 61% being age 72 or older. This is not accidental, as this is where most assets are concentrated.

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3 77% sustained increase in giving after estate commitment.

Transformational Giving Starts in the Estate Plan [3]

When someone adds a charity to their will for the first time, their annual giving increases by **77%**—and remains elevated for at least eight years. Why? Because their wealth becomes "donation-possible" for the first time. They start to think like philanthropists rather than merely managing income.

4 50X greater likelihood of making asset gifts among legacy society members.

Legacy donors are **50 times** more likely to make an asset gift. Joining the legacy society is just the beginning of deeper generosity from wealth held in assets. This is why it is important to help individuals complete a comprehensive estate plan, as doing so encourages future AND current gifts of assets.

5 6X faster growth in long-term contributions with asset-based fundraising.

The Long-Term Growth Signal [4]

A five-year study of over one million nonprofit tax returns found one predictor of long-term growth: nonprofits that market, discuss, ask for and accept asset gifts grow **six times faster** than those relying solely on cash. Organizations that embrace asset-based giving consistently widen the gap every year, averaging more than 65% total donation growth over a five year trajectory compared to the 11% growth from organizations only raising cash gifts.

Your Advantage

You don't need to be a financial planner. You simply need to open the door to the right conversation. Share stories, illuminate options, and present ideas donors might not hear anywhere else. Those development professionals who engage in asset wealth discussions will be the ones who significantly increase the total donation revenue for their organizations. You are the expert on your mission and the missing voice in the donor's wealth conversation. That's what it means to be a philanthropic advisor.

The Invitation

If your organization seeks larger, more meaningful, and durable gifts, the path is surprisingly clear:

- Discuss assets, not just cash.
- Engage with older donors, not just peers.
- Focus on specific outcomes, not just general support.
- Establish a legacy society and treat it as a starting point.

1. For greater insight to vast research conducted by Dr. James and his teams, please visit encouragegenerosity.com
2. CASE Study url: https://www.case.org/system/files/media/file/CASEStudyofPrincipalGifts_finalrevised6.21.22_2.pdf
3. James, R. N., III. (2020). The emerging potential of longitudinal empirical research in estate planning: Examples from charitable bequests. UC Davis Law Review, 53, 2397-2431.
4. Full research article: Nonprofit Management & Leadership, 29(2), 159-179.

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