

Religious giving studied

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A new report shows that American households that give money to both religious and secular charities are the backbone of American philanthropy and volunteering.

The joint study by Independent Sector and the National Council of Churches found that 60 percent of U.S. households give to religious causes, of which 85 percent also give to secular causes. Those same givers provide secular charities with three-fourths of their charitable support.

"This research clearly demonstrates that their giving to religion does not detract from giving to secular causes, but inspires them to give to all causes," said Sara E. Melendez, president and chief executive of Independent Sector.

The report comes almost a week after another survey by the American Association of Fund-raising Counsel Trust for Philanthropy found that Americans gave \$212 billion to charity in 2001, a drop of 2.3 percent from 2000 when adjusted for inflation.

Americans who give to both secular and religious charities give three times as much as those who give only to secular causes — an average of \$2,247 compared to \$623, respectively.

An estimated 60 percent of American households give to religious causes, and 27 percent give only to secular causes. Almost 12 percent give nothing to either type of charity.

The report showed that givers to religious causes are just as generous to secular causes as secular givers. The top five secular causes that receive money from religious givers are health, human services, youth development, education and arts and culture.