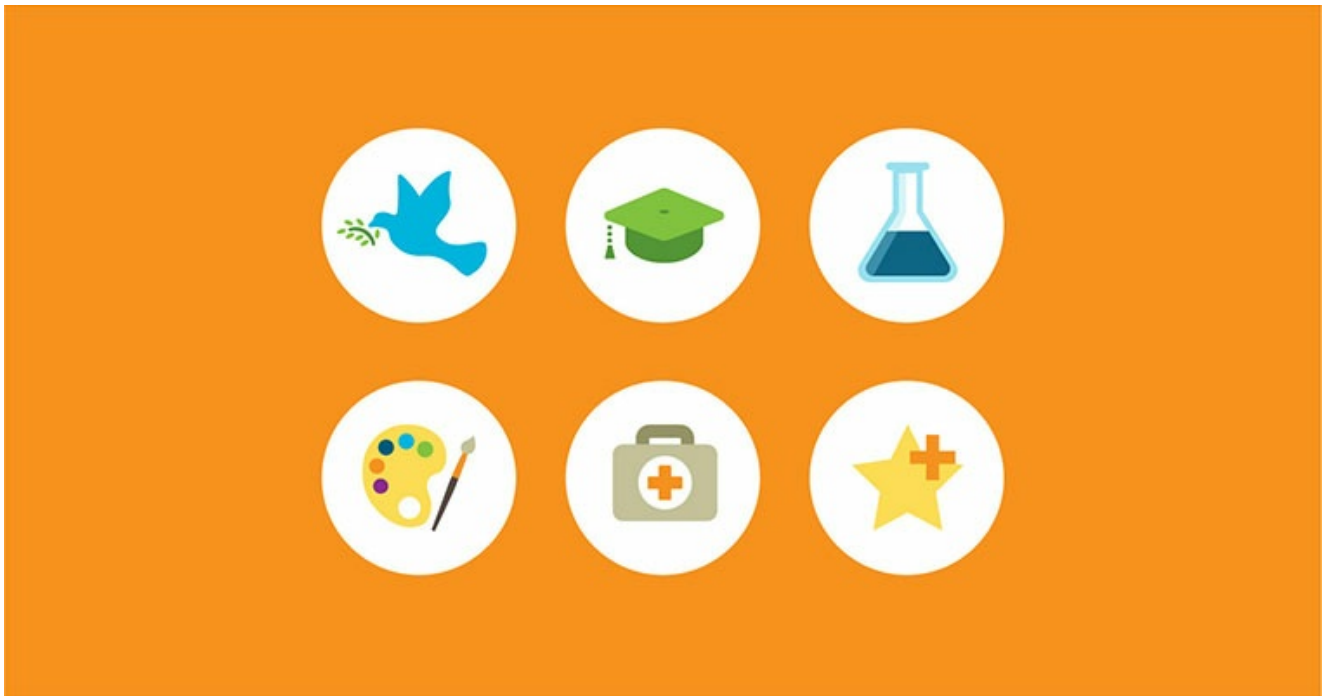


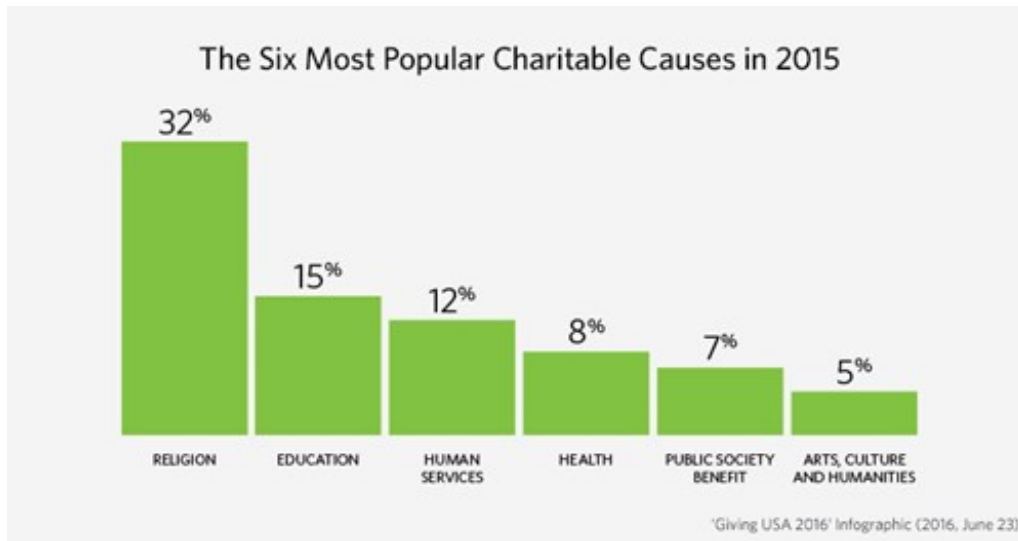
# Top six most popular charitable causes

[tiaacharitable.org/blog/finding-a-charity/top-six-most-popular-charitable-causes](http://tiaacharitable.org/blog/finding-a-charity/top-six-most-popular-charitable-causes)



There's a whole world of worthy causes out there. So it can be hard to narrow down your options to create or revise a smart giving strategy that's right for you. This guide of the six most popular charitable causes should get you started. And, what better time to check them out than during the holiday season when charitable giving is at its peak?

According to the *2016 Annual Report on Philanthropy by Giving USA*, which details American giving by approximately 53 million households, over a million estates and 16 million corporations, the six most popular charitable causes are religion, education, human services, health, public society benefit, and arts, culture and humanities. Together these categories account for almost 80% of all charitable donations (about \$295 billion) to more than 1.1 million IRS-registered charities and 300,000 religious organizations.



## Religious Charities

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With almost 77% of Americans affiliated with a religious group, according to a [recent study by the Pew Research Center](#), it isn't surprising religion is the most common cause in America, accounting for 32% of all giving, the majority of which comes from people giving to their local place of worship.

Religious charities include those that support and promote various faiths, as well as those that produce and distribute religious programming and literature.

[Explore religious charities with our charity search](#)

## Education Charities

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Education is the second most common cause in America, accounting for 15% of all charitable donations. Education charities make learning possible from pre-school to graduate school and beyond. They provide funding to make educational institutions more effective and learning accessible to students of many diverse backgrounds. The focus of education charities includes:

- Early Childhood Education
- Adult Education
- Youth Education
- Special Education
- Scholarship and Financial Aid
- Education Policy and Reform

[Explore education charities with our charity search](#)

## Human Services Charities

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The third most popular cause, garnering 12% of charitable donations, is human services charities. These charities feed the hungry, shelter the homeless and provide and care for the young and elderly. The focus of human services is wide-ranging and includes services that promote volunteerism to social services that address the needs of the disadvantaged, disabled and underemployed. The services provided by human services charities include:

- Children and Family Services
- Youth Development Services
- Shelter and Homeless Services
- Food Banks, Food Pantries and Food Distribution
- Crisis Services

[Explore human services charities with our charity search](#)

## Health Charities

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Health charities, the fourth most popular cause with 8% of charitable donations, provide funding to cure diseases, treat and support the sick and disabled and seek improvements in medical treatments, diseases and disabilities. They also promote public understanding and awareness of particular health risks. There are many well-known health charities, such as the American Heart Association.

[Explore health charities with our charity search](#)

## Public Society Benefit Charities

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As the fifth most popular cause with 7% of all charitable giving, public society benefit charities include those that advance both economic and social issues impacting America today. This charity type may not be fifth for long — it is the fastest-growing charitable cause in our list.

Public society benefit charities educate the public and influence policy regarding healthcare, employment rights, taxation, climate, justice and other civic ventures like voter education, civil liberties and consumer rights. They advance the knowledge and understanding of areas such as energy efficiency, environmental and trade policies and agricultural sustainability.

[Explore public society benefit charities with our charity search](#)

## Arts, Culture and Humanities Charities

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Rounding out the six most popular causes with 5% of charitable giving is arts, culture and humanities charities. These charities provide funding to promote and preserve artistic and cultural heritage.

These charities support libraries, historical societies, landmark preservation, museums, performing arts, media/communications and public broadcasting.

[Explore arts, culture and humanities charities with our charity search](#)

While popularity doesn't make a charity more effective or more worthy of support, understanding their popularity can help you compare and review your own giving. If one of these popular causes speaks to you, maybe you should consider making them a part of your charitable giving strategy.