

# Who Really Gives?

## Partisanship and Charitable Giving in the United States

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### Abstract

Voluntary contributions from individuals are the lifeblood of nonprofit organizations, which in turn fund a large portion of social services in the United States. Given this reliance donor generosity, it is important to understand who contributes, and to where. In this paper, we argue against the conventional wisdom that political conservatives are inherently more generous toward private charities than liberals. At the individual level, the large bivariate relationship between giving and conservatism vanishes after adjusting for differences in income and religiosity. At the state level, we find no evidence of a relationship between charitable giving and Republican presidential voteshare. Finally, we show that any remaining differences in giving are an artifact of Republicans' greater propensity to give to religious causes, particularly their own church. Taken together, our results counter the notion that political conservatives compensate for their opposition to governmental intervention by supporting private charities.

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# Introduction

Service provision by government is seen as the heart of political conflict. Yet many social services in the U.S. are provided not by government, but by one of over 1.5 million tax-exempt organizations known as nonprofits (National Center for Charitable Statistics 2011). Most of these nonprofits are dependent on the generosity of private individuals. In 2008 alone, individual contributions to nonprofits totaled \$238 billion. In substantive terms, giving by private individuals made up 75% of total contributions to nonprofits, 75% of nonprofit revenues, and over 2.2% of Gross Domestic Product (Giving USA 2009).

With so many organizations and their beneficiaries dependent upon individual generosity, it is important to understand which types of individuals make these contributions. In this paper, we examine the claim that political conservatism is a key driver of donations to nonprofits, providing one of the first systematic analyses of this question. We first ask whether individuals of different political ideologies are more or less generous than others. Similar to previous work, we find a large bivariate relationship between political conservatism and donation amounts. We then demonstrate that these results are driven by a failure to adjust for other differences between liberals and conservatives, namely greater wealth and church attendance in the latter group. Once we make these adjustments, we find no statistical association between conservatism and charitable donations.

Even with these adjustments, however, we still find substantively greater giving by conservatives in a handful of specifications. Thus, we next ask whether these remaining differences can be explained by differences in the types of recipient organization, as opposed to overall levels of giving. Consistent with this interpretation, we find some evidence that conservatives give more to religious organizations, especially their own church, and liberals give more to secular charities. Finally, we replicate our main results using state-level data. States that voted for George W. Bush in 2004 are no more generous than those that voted for John Kerry; yet when we disaggregate total giving into religious and secular, we find significant partisan differences.

Our paper contributes to the current literature in political science, as well as to the public debate. First, we contribute original research on an important but understudied segment of the social sector and the economy. Although we are by no means the first to examine the links between politics and the nonprofit sector (see, for example, Lipsky and Smith 1989), we are among the first to systematically examine how political attitudes affect contributions. Second, our paper informs a topic that has been of considerable debate in the popular press, as we describe in more detail below. Rather than supporting the view that one political camp has the upper hand when it comes to generosity, our results paint a picture of Americans as universally generous in their giving to most causes.

## “Who Really Cares?” Revisited

In a democracy, how the poor and vulnerable are cared for is assumed to be a function of public opinion (Brooks and Manza 2006). As such, a large literature in American and comparative politics has examined the factors influencing support for social spending (e.g., Cook and Barrett 1992; Jacoby 2000). However, as Faricy and Ellis (2013) note, the vast majority of this literature focuses on support for direct spending by the federal government. While there is a nascent literature on support for indirect spending through tax expenditures (Mettler 2011; Haselswerdt and Bartels 2012; Faricy and Ellis 2013), our focus is on support for *private* social spending via nonprofits.

A priori, we might expect that political conservatives are indeed more supportive of this type of spending. As a whole, Americans are largely supportive of spending on the poor in the abstract. Yet conservatives are more likely to embrace the principle of individualism (Feldman and Zaller 1992), and are less supportive of direct social spending in practice (Jacoby 1994). Consistent with these expectations, both Faricy and Ellis (2013) and Haselswerdt and Bartels (2012) find that conservatives are more likely to support spending when it is framed as a tax expenditure as opposed to a federal grant, and that this "framing effect"

is greater for conservatives than for liberals. Thus, conservatives, who dislike government but do wish to help the poor, may be more likely to support private and indirect social welfare spending over direct public spending.

In addition to these expectations from existing literature, the idea that conservatives are more generous toward charity has wide currency in the popular press. For example, in 2012 the Chronicle of Philanthropy released a report titled “How America Gives.” The report gave prominence to a section titled “America’s Giving Divide,” which purported to show how different areas of the country donate more or less to charities. Among the report’s key findings was the claim that Republican-leaning states are more generous: “The eight states whose residents gave the biggest share of discretionary income to charity voted for John McCain in the last presidential contest while the seven lowest-ranking states supported Barack Obama” (Chronicle of Philanthropy 2012). Yet the most well-known articulation of this idea is Arthur Brooks’ 2006 book, *Who Really Cares?* Using data from both the individual and state level, Brooks argues that conservatives give more to charitable causes, contrary to stereotypes of liberals caring more for the poor.

These findings spawned a large volume of media commentary. For example, New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof (2008) published a column titled “Bleeding Heart Tightwads,” which took liberals to task for their supposed “stinginess.” Citing Brooks’ analysis, Kristof wrote: “Liberals show tremendous compassion in pushing for generous government spending to help the neediest people at home and abroad. Yet when it comes to individual contributions to charitable causes, liberals are cheapskates.”

While there was much debate about these findings in the press and on political blogs, we are unaware of any attempt to replicate the basic results of Brooks’ analysis. In addition, we are unaware of any systematic consideration of the statistical issues involved with estimating the relationship between conservatism and giving to charity. In the following section, we consider these issues in detail, before proceeding to a replication of Brooks’ results.

## Conservatism, or Something Else?

The hypothesis that conservatism is intrinsically related to greater charitable giving is intuitive, yet testing this hypothesis faces some key challenges. For one, there exist few national surveys that ask both about charitable giving and political beliefs. More importantly, political conservatism may be correlated with other important determinants of giving. Conservatives tend to be wealthier than liberals (Gelman et al. 2008; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006), and charitable giving, like any consumption good, will rise with income (Keynes 1936; Ansolabehere, de Figueiredo, and Snyder 2003, 118). Conservatives are also much more religious than liberals (Green 2007), and religiosity has been argued to be a key driver of giving as well (Brooks 2006). Thus, to properly attribute differences in giving to differences in political beliefs, any comparison of donations between conservatives and liberals needs to account for these other differences.

These two issues – a lack of good survey data and confounding between conservatism and other factors – are sometimes related. For example, the most thorough study of the relationship between giving and political attitudes is that conducted by Brooks (2006), who draws on data from the 2000 Social Capital Benchmark Survey (SCCBS). As mentioned previously, Brooks finds a positive relationship between conservatism and donation amounts. Yet Brooks argues that adjusting for income differences is unnecessary, because liberals in the SCCBS actually earn *more* than conservatives:

In 2000, households [in the SCCBS] headed by a conservative gave, on average, 30 percent more money to charity than households headed by a liberal (\$1,600 to \$1,277). This discrepancy is not simply an artifact of income difference; on the contrary, liberal families earned an average of 6 percent more per year than conservative families... (21-22)

This greater wealth by liberals runs counter to the conventional wisdom, and also contradicts data from nationally representative samples. For example, in the 2000 American

National Election Study (ANES), conservative families took home approximately 10 percent more than liberal families, roughly \$50,400 to \$45,700 in nominal dollars. Similarly, in the 1998 General Social Survey (GSS), conservative families earned significantly more than their liberal counterparts, roughly \$46,200 vs. \$38,600 in nominal dollars.

That the SCCBS differs from other national samples in this manner could be due to a difference in how political ideology is measured, a difference in sampling strategy, or a combination of the two. In Table 1 we explore these differences, reporting the question wording for political ideology, the sampling strategy, and the bivariate correlation between income and ideology for the 2000 SCCBS, the 2000 ANES, and the 1998 GSS.<sup>1</sup> On all three counts, the SCCBS appears unorthodox. For example, while the SCCBS asks respondents about both their political and social outlook, the GSS and ANES simply ask respondents to identify whether their political views are liberal or conservative. It is possible that the distinct wording in the SCCBS compels economic liberals to identify as social conservatives, and many economic conservatives to identify as social liberals; because social liberals tend to be wealthier, this would explain why liberals in the SCCBS are wealthier relative to the other national surveys.

Additionally, the sampling strategies vary across the surveys. Averages from the SCCBS may differ because the survey does not draw on a nationally representative sample. And finally, the SCCBS – as noted above – has a negative correlation between income and ideology, which is scaled such that lower numbers indicate more liberal responses. The bivariate correlation is -0.04 in the SCCBS; that is, conservatives tend to have lower household earnings than liberals. We find the reverse in both the ANES and GSS: in both surveys, income and conservatism are positively correlated, at 0.07 and 0.10, respectively. While we cannot say with certainty which of these differences could lead to liberals earning more in the SCCBS, these discrepancies persuade us to try replicating these findings using an additional data source.

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<sup>1</sup>We present the results from the 1998 GSS because we use these data in additional analyses. The same substantive result appears when comparing ideology and income in the 2000 GSS.

# Conservatism and Total Giving

Following previous work, we use regression to estimate the relationship between donations and political conservatism, measuring giving as the sum of contributions to both religious and secular causes. Question wordings for these measures are available in the Supporting Information. Because responses to these questions are right-skewed, we take the natural log of giving, plus one to account for the large number of respondents who give nothing. We measure conservatism using both the ideology measures described in Table 1, as well as a measure of party identification. Partisanship is a more robust measure of political views than ideology (Converse 1964) and a consistent predictor of real-world behavior, such as vote choice and economic perceptions (Bartels 2002; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2004; Gerber and Huber 2009, 2010). We use both the 2000 SCCBS and the 1998 GSS, but only the latter survey includes a measure of party identification. We present results using linear regressions in the main body of the paper, but alternative estimation strategies give similar results.<sup>2</sup>

In Panel A of Table 2 we present the results of five different model specifications using the SCCBS data. Here, the coefficient on *Conservative* represents the difference in giving between liberals and conservatives (we also include an indicator for moderates in the regression, but omit the estimate for presentational purposes). The first column presents the bivariate relationship between ideology and giving. The results look similar to Brooks' (2006) main argument: conservatives donate significantly more than liberals (0.565, SE=0.046). This effect is large and appears to be precisely estimated, but is not substantively informative on its own, because we have logged the outcome variable. While coefficients in a model with a logged dependent variable may usually be interpreted as a percent change in the outcome for a small change in the predictor, this approximation only holds with small changes in

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<sup>2</sup>In the online Supporting Information, we show that our findings are substantively unchanged when using a Tobit model estimated using Maximum Likelihood; when using entropy balancing, a non-parametric data pre-processing technique that is similar to matching (Hainmueller 2012; see also Ho et al. 2007); and using linear regressions where we trim the sample at the 99th percentile of donations, in order to test whether results are sensitive to outliers.

the independent variable, and is therefore inappropriate for indicator variables that switch from zero to one (Kennedy 1981). We therefore compute the “percentage difference” using Kennedy’s (1981) unbiased estimator, and present this quantity in the footer of Table 2, Panel A.<sup>3</sup> In this simple bivariate relationship, conservatives give 76% more dollars to charity than liberals, a result that is actually more than twice as large as Brooks’ reported estimate of a 30% difference (Brooks 2006, 21-22).

In the second column, we adjust for household income. Again conservatives appear to give significantly more than liberals ( $B=0.62$ ,  $SE=0.04$ ); the substantive effect is actually ten percentage points larger, at 86%, than in the bivariate regression. In the latter three specifications, however, this large difference disappears. In the third column, we control only for church attendance. When accounting for religious activity, the sign on the conservative variable actually flips: conservatives donate about 11% *less* than liberals, once differences in church attendance are taken into account. In the fourth column we include both household income and church attendance. Here there is no statistical difference between conservatives and liberals in terms of giving ( $B=-0.03$ ,  $SE=0.04$ ), and the substantive effect has shrunk to -3%. Finally, in the fifth column we present results controlling for income, church attendance, and other demographic controls that may be related both to ideology and charitable giving, including gender, marital status, race, region of residence, family size, age, and education. Again, there is no difference between liberals and conservatives in their generosity, either in a statistically or substantively meaningful sense. Taken together, the results indicate that once we control for observable demographic characteristics, there is no statistical difference in charitable giving between liberals and conservatives. In particular, simply adjusting for differences in church attendance between conservatives and liberals annihilates any conservative advantage in giving.

In panel B of Table 2 we present results from similar specifications using the 1998 GSS. In 1998, the GSS asked three questions about charitable contributions in the past year: amount

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<sup>3</sup>We perform the computation using the SELDUM package in Stata (Ries 2011).



donated to one's religious congregation, amount donated to other religious organizations, and amount donated to non-religious charities. As with the SCCBS, we summed the donation questions to create a measure of total donations and took the natural log plus one in order to generate our dependent variable. In the first two model specifications, we again find a large and precisely estimated relationship between conservatism and charitable giving. Without any controls, the coefficient on conservative is 0.96 (SE=0.22), which translates into a massive percentage increase of 156%. Notably, and contrary to the SCCBS, adjusting for income in the second column cuts the relationship in half: the coefficient is now 0.57 (SE=0.20), and the percentage difference is 74%.

Again, however, this apparently strong relationship does not hold up to the inclusion of church attendance and additional demographic measures. The final three models all produce results that are not statistically different from zero. And in substantive terms, the final two specifications yield percentage differences of -8 and -13, respectively, which are (in addition to being in the wrong direction) orders of magnitude smaller than the simple bivariate relationship in the first column. Moreover, we do not even find evidence of the results trending in the expected direction, as the *Conservative* coefficient in the full model is negative. Thus, across both datasets, the same findings appear: while there is strong evidence that conservatives, on the whole, are more charitable than liberals, this finding disappears after adjusting for other differences between conservatives and liberals. Moreover, the relationship between ideology and giving goes away after adjusting only for income and church attendance (column 4); the additional demographic covariates added in the final column do not change the findings.

In Panel C we present results from the same analysis for partisans. Similar to the above, the coefficient on *Republican* compares donations between Republicans and Democrats. In this case, the results are less clear cut. Similar to the models looking at ideology, the bivariate relationship indicates that Republicans give much more than Democrats (B=1.12, SE=0.19), a percentage difference of 201%. While the magnitude of the effect decreases

once we control for income and then church attendance in the second and third columns, Republicans still give 85% and 110% more than Democrats, respectively. In the fourth model where we control for both income and church attendance, Republicans donate approximately 34% more than Democrats. Although the giving gap between Republicans and Democrats shrinks substantially, we continue to find a significant difference. While the substantive difference between Democrats and Republicans in the final model is similar to the previous model that controls only for income and church attendance, the result is not statistically significant. Thus, using partisanship instead of ideology provides suggestive evidence that right-wing attitudes are associated with charitable giving. In the next section, we explore the reasons behind this apparent gap in more detail.

## Comparing Religious vs. Secular Giving

In the previous section we showed that liberals are no more or less generous than conservatives once we adjust for differences in church attendance and income, but the results were less conclusive when comparing Democrats and Republicans. In this section, we try to better understand any political differences in giving that do exist by examining *where* partisans choose to donate. Up until now, we have followed the existing literature and combined religious and secular donations. But there are reasons to distinguish between different types of giving. Conservatives and Republicans are more religious than liberals and Democrats (Green 2007), which means that any apparent difference in total giving may be a function of greater religious giving. Differences in total giving could also mask differences in giving to secular organizations as well: perhaps liberals and Democrats give just as much, but choose to give more to secular nonprofits as opposed to religious organizations. Because liberals and conservatives have different tastes across a variety of activities and behaviors (Green 2007; Spitzer 1995; Vavreck 2012), it is reasonable to test whether these distinct tastes apply to preferences in donations as well.

Both the SCCBS and GSS ask about religious and secular giving separately, which allows us to disentangle how people choose to donate their money. We do this using regressions similar to those estimated earlier, and the results are presented in Table 3. As above, the dependent variables are the logged amount of donations plus one. Every model in Table 3 includes the full set of covariates that appear in the final column of Table 2. The first column of Table 3, Panel A presents the SCCBS results for donations made exclusively to religious charities. Even including income, church attendance, and demographic control variables, conservatives donate 53% more to religious charities than liberals (0.43, SE=0.04). The relationship reverses itself, however, when looking at giving to secular charities. In the second column of the Panel A, we find that conservatives donate about 28% *less* to secular charities than conservatives (-0.33, SE=0.045). The overall null result that we find in the SCCBS data is driven by conservatives donating more in one arena and less in another.

In the latter four columns of Panel A, we use data from the GSS to compare types of donations based on both ideology and partisanship. When we look again at ideology in a new dataset, we find suggestive, but weaker evidence of giving preferences. While conservatives give about 24% more to religious organizations (B=0.23, SE=0.17) and 25% less to secular organizations than liberals (B=-0.28, SE=1.83), in neither model are these differences statistically different from zero. However, the trending of the results are consistent with the stark results found in the SCCBS.

The final two columns disaggregate giving for partisans. Here, Republicans donate 43% more to religious charities compared to Democrats (B=0.37, SE=0.15); however, there does not appear to be a difference in secular giving between partisans. The substantively large partisan gap we found in Table 2, therefore, occurs because Republicans donate 43% more to religious organizations.

An additional advantage of the GSS is that we can further disaggregate religious giving. The GSS asks about giving both to one's congregation and to other religious causes beyond one's place of worship. While the totals of the two questions are summed to look

at religious giving in Panel A, we separate the two religious giving questions in Panel B. While there are no differences between conservatives and liberals in either congregational or other religious giving (columns one and two), the third and fourth columns of Panel B show that Republicans donate 45% more to their own congregation ( $B=0.35$ ,  $SE=0.14$ ), but there is basically no difference, only 3%, in donations to other religious organizations ( $B=0.04$ ,  $SE=0.16$ ). The earlier finding that Republicans donate more than Democrats is not only driven by Republicans donating more to religious organizations, but more specifically to their own religious congregation. While we lack the data to disaggregate religious giving this way in the SCCBS, the collection plate is a likely explanation for any general trend of Republicans donating more than Democrats.

## Are Red States More Generous?

We have shown there is little evidence that conservatives give more to charity than liberals, after adjusting for other differences between these two groups. Further, we found that any suggestive evidence of greater conservative giving is driven by greater giving to a particular type of organization, namely one's own religious congregation. In this section we test whether these results hold at the state level. As we wrote previously, an issue with testing the claim that conservatives give more is a lack of survey data where both giving and political attitudes are asked. One way that existing researchers have dealt with this issue is by aggregating survey data to the state level, and then examining the relationship between these state giving aggregates and a measure of state ideology, such as the proportion of presidential votes going to Republicans. Existing studies that adopt this approach have concluded that "red states" are more generous than "blue states." As discussed above, the Chronicle of Philanthropy reported that Republican leaning states donate more to charity than their Democratic counterparts. Similarly, Brooks (2006) writes that states that gave more votes to President George W. Bush in 2004 also gave more to charity in 2003:

Among the states in which 60 percent or more voted for Bush, the average portion of income donated to charity was 3.5 percent. For states giving Mr. Bush less than 40 percent of the vote, the average was 1.9 percent (Brooks 2006, 24).

The problem with such comparisons is that they examine only the extremes, rather than the entire range of the data; in the case of Brooks, the comparison is between only ten “red states” and four “blue states,” one of which is actually the District of Columbia (Brooks 2006, 24 note 15). In contrast, the conventional way to analyze these data would be to present a scatter plot of state giving against state Republican vote share, and to see how giving changes as Republican voteshare changes.

In this section we perform such an analysis, relating state giving in 2003 to Bush voteshare in 2004. Similar to Brooks, we used the Personal Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) to generate state-level donation aggregations as a percent of income. As the exact measure of “percent of income given to charity” is not reported in the original analysis, we used two measures of charitable giving, described below. We report our results using both measures for transparency, even though they both yield substantively similar results. We also drop the District of Columbia, as is convention in studies of elections, as it is overwhelmingly Democratic (90% for Kerry in 2004). Our presidential voteshare data come from Leip (2012).

In Panel A of Figure 1 we plot the relationship between giving and voteshare using our first measure of giving, the amount of income the respondent reported deducting from federal taxes for charitable purposes, divided by the respondent’s total income.<sup>4</sup> In Panel B we use the second measure of giving: the sum of reported donations to a variety of charitable categories, divided by the respondent’s total income.<sup>5</sup> In both graphs we plot the measures of charitable giving against Bush voteshare in 2004, labeling each data point with state abbreviations to ease interpretation. We also show coefficients, standard errors, and t-statistics from the relevant bivariate regressions below each panel in the figure.

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<sup>4</sup>In both measures, we dropped any observations outside of the 0-1 interval on this measure, i.e. those with negative income or claiming to deduct more than 100%.

<sup>5</sup>The PSID asks about donations to the following types of organization: religious, needy, health, education, youth, cultural, community, environment, international/peace, “combined purpose funds”, and “other.”

Beginning with Panel A, the relationship between the percent of income deducted for charity and vote choice is relatively flat. The point estimate of 0.008 suggests that if we were to compare the most Blue state to the most Red state, giving would be about eight tenths of a percentage higher in the most Red state. However, the standard error of 0.010 is larger than the point estimate, which means we fail to reject the null hypothesis that the actual difference is zero. While the slope of the line is larger using the second measure of giving (Panel B), the relationship is not statistically different from zero ( $B=0.018$ ,  $SE=0.016$ ). However, if we were to follow past analyses and compare the three most liberal states to the ten most conservative states, we would (erroneously) conclude that there is such a relationship.

The PSID data can also help adjudicate between different types of giving at the state level. In 2003, the PSID asked about giving to eleven types of charitable organizations, including religious organizations and a host of non-religious categories such as education, youth, and culture. This allows us to test whether Red and Blue states give more, as a percentage of income, to different types of organizations. In Panel C of Figure 1, we plot the average donations to secular organizations (i.e., the sum of donations to all types of organization except religious) against Bush voteshare. Here the relationship is more convincingly negative: moving from the most Blue state to the most Red State yields a decrease in the amount of income donated to secular charities by 1.4% ( $SE=0.006$ ). In Panel D of Figure 1 we plot the analogous relationship for donations to religious organizations; in contrast to the previous plot (and just as we would expect given the micro-level evidence shown above) the regression line is positively sloped. When we move from the most Blue to the most Red state, the percent of income donated to religious charities increases by 2.8% ( $SE=0.013$ ).

We present the full results of these bivariate regressions in the Supporting Information, as well as four additional model specifications. First, we dropped Utah as an observation as it is an extreme observation on both the independent and dependent variables, most likely due to its status as home to many Mormons who are asked to tithe in order to remain

in good standing in the church.<sup>6</sup> Then we estimate a specification where the standard error is calculated by iteratively dropping each state and re-estimating the regression; this is known as the “jackknife” procedure, and protects against any particular state (large or small) skewing the results (Achen 1982). We also tried to account for the fact that our outcome measure is an estimate based on individual survey responses. First, we estimated a regression where we weight each observation (each state) by the number of individuals in the state in the PSID in that year. We also estimated a hierarchical linear model that models each state average as a weighted average of the national average and the average for each state (Gelman 2006). Regardless of which specification, the basic pattern of results holds: there is no statistical difference in total giving between red and blue states. Rather, the only differences are that red states give less to secular organizations and more to religious organizations.

## Conclusion

Individuals play a key role in maintaining the financial health of nonprofit organizations. Understanding what individual attitudes predict giving is therefore important both for the vitality of nonprofits and the welfare state as a whole. Previous research and media commentary have popularized the notion that conservatives give more to charitable causes than liberals; however, the importance of this question requires careful, corroborated analyses. In this paper, we show that the association between conservatism and generosity is a function of conservatives being wealthier and more religious than liberals. Further, any conservative advantage in giving that remains after adjusting for confounders is driven by a greater propensity by conservatives to donate to religious causes, especially their own congregation.

Practically speaking, our results have implications both for nonprofit organizations and our broader understanding of the “private” welfare state. For nonprofits, our findings can

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<sup>6</sup>According to former President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: “Our major source of revenue is the ancient law of the tithe. Our people are expected to pay 10 percent of their income to move forward the work of the Church” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints 2012).

be informative for targeting solicitations. Although previous research indicates that conservatism is a reliable proxy for identifying potential donors or donor communities, our results suggest that organizations would be better off simply targeting wealthier donors, regardless of political beliefs. Regarding the study of the welfare state, our results call into question an emerging literature that suggests conservatives compensate for their opposition to direct spending by supporting indirect, private spending, such as tax expenditures (Faricy and Ellis 2013).

While our research increases our knowledge about the relationships that exist between politics and charitable giving, there are open questions for future work. One is whether the political environment affects trends in giving, and not simply levels. A substantial literature in political behavior suggests that Democrats and Republicans feel more optimistic about the economy when their party controls the White House (Bartels 2002). More recently, Gerber and Huber (2009; 2010) presented evidence that these biased perceptions translate into real economic behaviors, such as higher spending by Democrats (Republicans) following a Democratic (Republican) presidential victory. Rather than only considering static political differences in giving, additional work should test whether partisans' generosity similarly ebbs and flows in response to the political environment.



# Tables

Table 1: Comparison of ideology wording, sampling procedure, and income-ideology relationship in three national surveys.

Survey	Question Wording	Sampling Procedure	Corr(Income, Ideology)
SCCBS (2000)	“Thinking politically and socially, how would you describe your own general outlook—as being very conservative, moderately conservative middle-of-the-road, moderately liberal, or very liberal?”	The sample is drawn from 41 communities across 29 states. The 41 sponsoring organizations determined what specific areas to sample, how many interviews to conduct, and if specific areas or ethnic groups would be oversampled. In most cases, the survey area was one county or a cluster of contiguous counties (Roper Center, Social Capital Benchmark Survey, 2000).	-0.04
ANES (2000)	“We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. Here is a 7-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven’t you thought much about this?”	Some respondents were selected by area probability sampling and were interviewed face-to-face. Other respondents were selected by Random Digit Dialing (RDD) and were interviewed over the phone (ANES 2000 Time Series Study Introduction Codebook).	0.07
GSS (1998)	“We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. I’m going to show you a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal—point 1—to extremely conservative—point 7. Where would you place yourself?”	The sample is a multi-stage area probability sample to the block or segment level. At the block level, quota sampling is used based on sex, age, and employment status. Respondents were interviewed face-to-face (General Social Survey Appendix A: Sample Design and Weighting).	0.10

Table 2: Who really gives? A comparison of the SCCBS and the GSS.

(A) Total giving and ideology in the 2000 SCCBS.					
	Giving	Giving	Giving	Giving	Giving
Conservative	0.565*** (0.046)	0.623*** (0.042)	-0.111* (0.044)	-0.031 (0.040)	-0.015 (0.040)
Income	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Church attendance	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other demographics	No	No	No	No	Yes
Sample size	19,194	19,194	19,194	19,194	19,194
R-squared	0.01	0.16	0.19	0.32	0.35
Percentage difference	76	86	-11	-3	-2
95% Confidence interval	60, 91	71, 102	-18, -3	-11, 4	-9, 6
(B) Total giving and ideology in the 1998 GSS.					
	Giving	Giving	Giving	Giving	Giving
Conservative	0.963*** (0.217)	0.574** (0.200)	0.317 (0.187)	-0.065 (0.170)	-0.120 (0.172)
Income	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Church attendance	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other demographics	No	No	No	No	Yes
Sample size	1,049	1,049	1,049	1,049	1,049
R-squared	0.02	0.19	0.33	0.47	0.48
Percentage difference	156	74	35	-8	-13
95% Confidence interval	48, 263	6, 141	-14, 84	-38, 23	-42, 17
(C) Total giving and party in the 1998 GSS.					
	Giving	Giving	Giving	Giving	Giving
Republican	1.118*** (0.187)	0.632*** (0.177)	0.756*** (0.158)	0.300* (0.148)	0.216 (0.151)
Income	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Church attendance	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other demographics	No	No	No	No	Yes
Sample size	1,049	1,049	1,049	1,049	1,049
R-squared	0.05	0.20	0.35	0.47	0.49
Percentage difference	201	85	110	34	23
95% Confidence interval	91, 310	21, 149	46, 175	-5, 72	-14, 59

Notes: The dependent variable is the natural log of charitable contributions, plus one. The coefficients are OLS estimates. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. “Other demographics” includes: gender, marital status, family size, age, education, race, and region. The omitted category for ideology and partisanship is liberal and Democrat, respectively. Dummy variables for moderate ideology and political independents are also included in the models, but suppressed from the results. \* =  $p < 0.05$  \*\* =  $p < 0.01$  \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$

Table 3: Comparing religious and secular giving.

(A) Disaggregating total giving into religious and secular.

	SCCBS		GSS			
	Religious	Secular	Religious	Secular	Religious	Secular
Conservative	0.425*** (0.043)	-0.330*** (0.045)	0.229 (0.165)	-0.275 (0.183)		
Republican					0.371* (0.145)	-0.071 (0.167)
Income	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Church attendance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sample size	19,194	19,194	1,049	1,049	1,049	1,049
R-squared	0.50	0.23	0.60	0.31	0.60	0.31
Percentage difference	53	-28	24	-25	43	-8
95% Confidence interval	40, 66	-35, -22	-16, 64	-52, 1	3, 84	-38, 22

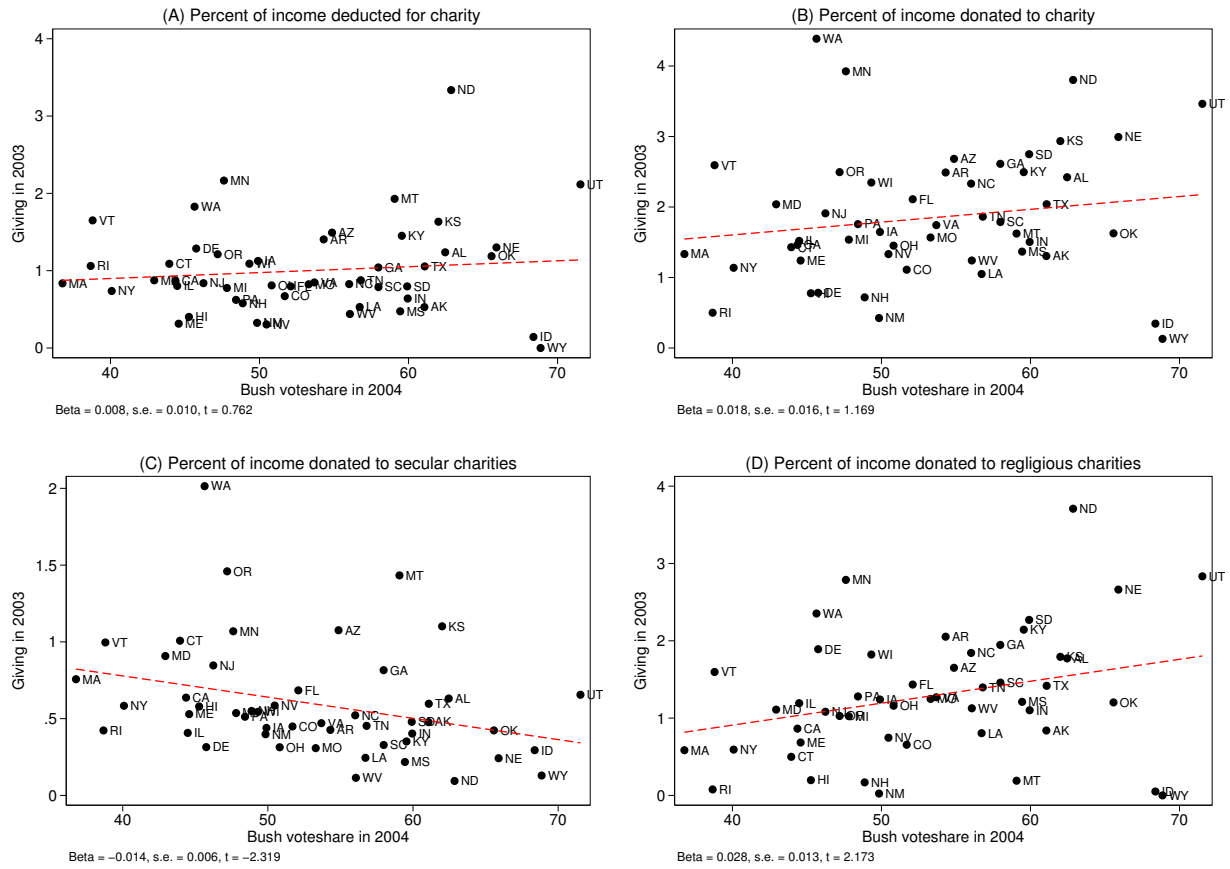
(B) Disaggregating religious giving into congregational and other.

	GSS			
	Congregation	Other	Congregation	Other
Conservative	0.169 (0.155)	0.114 (0.180)		
Republican			0.379** (0.139)	0.042 (0.163)
Income	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Church attendance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sample size	1,049	1,049	1,049	1,049
R-squared	0.64	0.19	0.64	0.19
Percentage difference	17	10	45	3
95% Confidence interval	-18, 52	-28, 49	5, 84	-30, 36

Notes: The dependent variables in Panel A are the natural log of charitable contributions to religious causes, plus one and the natural log of charitable contributions to secular causes, plus one. The dependent variables in Panel B are the natural log of charitable contributions to one's religious congregation, plus one and the natural log of charitable contributions to religious causes (excluding one's own congregation), plus one. The coefficients are OLS estimates. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. "Other demographics" includes: gender, marital status, family size, age, education, race, and region. The omitted category for ideology and partisanship is liberal and Democrat, respectively. Dummy variables for moderate ideology and political independents are also included in the models, but suppressed from the results. \* =  $p < 0.05$  \*\* =  $p < 0.01$  \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$

# Figures

Figure 1: State-level relationship between 2003 giving and 2004 Bush voteshare.



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# Supporting Information

NB: The authors will make this document available on the web conditional upon publication.

It is not intended for inclusion in a published article.

## **Robustness tests for individual-level results**

### **Using Tobit to account for the mass point (“censoring”) at zero**

The first test we perform is to estimate the relationships in Tables 2 and 3 using a Tobit estimator. This estimator is often used to account for censoring, and in our case we can treat the large number of zeroes on the giving variables – those who report donating nothing – as censored. (Plots of our dependent variables are included below in this document). The estimates using Tobit regression are substantively the same as the Ordinary Least Squares estimates in the main text.

Table A1: Replication of Table 2 using Tobit regression.

(A) Total giving and ideology in the 2000 SCCBS.					
	Giving	Giving	Giving	Giving	Giving
Conservative	0.583*** (0.054)	0.656*** (0.050)	-0.152** (0.052)	-0.058 (0.048)	-0.021 (0.048)
Income	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Church attendance	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other demographics	No	No	No	No	Yes
Sample size	20,215	20,215	20,215	20,215	20,215
Log likelihood	-48,068	-46,656	-46,444	-44,893	-44,476
(B) Total giving and ideology in the 1998 GSS.					
	Giving	Giving	Giving	Giving	Giving
Conservative	0.885*** (0.266)	0.438 (0.246)	0.114 (0.231)	-0.313 (0.210)	-0.307 (0.213)
Income	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Church attendance	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other demographics	No	No	No	No	Yes
Sample size	1,168	1,168	1,168	1,168	1,168
Log likelihood	-2,722	-2,630	-2,551	-2,441	-2,435
(C) Total giving and party in the 1998 GSS.					
	Giving	Giving	Giving	Giving	Giving
Republican	1.210*** (0.231)	0.656** (0.217)	0.784*** (0.200)	0.261 (0.186)	0.144 (0.194)
Income	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Church attendance	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other demographics	No	No	No	No	Yes
Sample size	1,134	1,134	1,134	1,134	1,134
Log likelihood	-2,632	-2,550	-2,471	-2,371	-2,368

Notes: Coefficients are tobit estimates. The dependent variable and model specifications are the same as Table 2. \* =  $p < 0.05$  \*\* =  $p < 0.01$  \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$

Table A2: Replication of Table 3 using Tobit regression.

(A) Disaggregating total giving into religious and secular.

	SCCBS		GSS			
	Religious	Secular	Religious	Secular	Religious	Secular
Conservative	0.593*** (0.061)	-0.440*** (0.062)	0.356 (0.251)	-0.452 (0.295)		
Republican					0.524* (0.215)	-0.199 (0.263)
Income	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Church attendance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sample size	19,194	19,194	1,049	1,049	1,049	1,049
Log likelihood	-38,523	-41,506	-1,864	-1,971	-1,861	-1,971

(B) Disaggregating religious giving into congregational and other.

	GSS			
	Congregation	Other	Congregation	Other
Conservative	0.290 (0.255)	0.378 (0.580)		
Republican			0.581** (0.223)	0.093 (0.503)
Income	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Church attendance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sample size	1,068	1,068	1,068	1,068
Log likelihood	-1,715	-1,301	-1,712	-1,300

Notes: Coefficients are tobit estimates. The dependent variables and model specifications are the same as Table 3. \* =  $p < 0.05$  \*\* =  $p < 0.01$  \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$

## **Data pre-processing to account for model dependence**

The OLS and Tobit estimates still may incorrectly characterize an “apples to apples” comparison if we fail to enter the variables into the model in the appropriate manner. Matching estimators are often proposed as a way to pre-process data to make comparisons between two otherwise different groups (in our case, liberals/Democrats and conservatives/Republicans) (Ho et al. 2007). While there are many matching-type estimators available, here we use the entropy reweighting scheme proposed by Hainmueller (2012). This method pre-processes the data by constructing probability weights that achieve balance on key statistical moments (means, variances, and skewness).

We show balance plots before and after this pre-processing in Figure A1. In these figures, "Tr" refers to conservatives/Republicans and "Co" refers to liberals/Democrats. As expected, there are many differences between these two groups on observable characteristics. In Tables A3 and A4 we re-estimate the results in Tables 2 and 3 in the text using the pre-processed data. The only notable difference is that total giving in the SCCBS (panel (A) of Table A3) is marginally higher for conservatives; however, Table A4 again supports our interpretation that any difference in total giving is driven by different giving patterns.

Figure A1: Covariate balance before and after entropy reweighting.

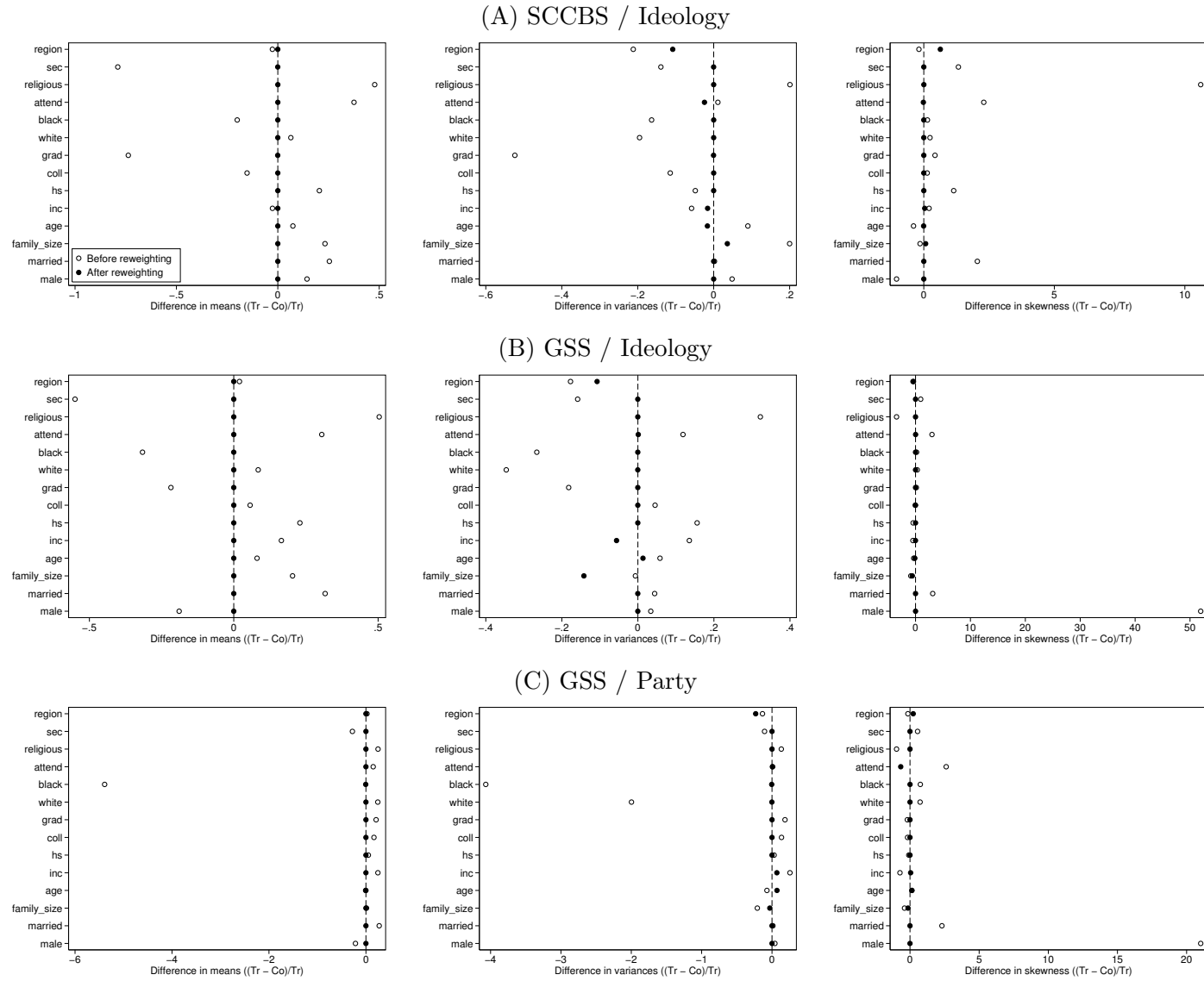


Table A3: Replication of Table 2 using entropy reweighting.

(A) Total giving and ideology in the 2000 SCCBS.	
	Giving
Conservative	0.085* (0.041)
Sample size	13,645
R-squared	0.35
Percentage difference	9
(B) Total giving and ideology in the 1998 GSS.	
	Giving
Conservative	-0.046 (0.167)
Sample size	667
R-squared	0.47
Percentage difference	-6
(C) Total giving and party in the 1998 GSS.	
	Giving
Republican	0.184 (0.152)
Sample size	894
R-squared	0.48
Percentage difference	19

Notes: Coefficients are OLS estimates. The dependent variable and model specifications are the same as Table 2. \* =  $p < 0.05$  \*\* =  $p < 0.01$  \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$

Table A4: Replication of Table 3 using entropy reweighting.

(A) Disaggregating total giving into religious and secular.

	SCCBS		GSS			
	Religious	Secular	Religious	Secular	Religious	Secular
Conservative	0.429*** (0.045)	-0.280*** (0.051)	0.159 (0.141)	-0.072 (0.173)		
Republican					0.436** (0.152)	-0.021 (0.183)
Sample size	13,645	13,645	894	894	894	894
R-squared	0.47	0.23	0.63	0.31	0.62	0.29
Percentage difference	53	-25	16	-8	53	-4

(B) Disaggregating religious giving into congregational and other.

	GSS			
	Congregation	Other	Congregation	Other
Conservative	0.216 (0.158)	0.204 (0.217)		
Republican			0.397** (0.149)	0.001 (0.191)
Sample size	667	667	894	894
R-squared	0.64	0.19	0.67	0.21
Percentage difference	23	20	47	-2

Notes: Coefficients are OLS estimates. The dependent variable and model specifications are the same as Table 3. \* =  $p < 0.05$  \*\* =  $p < 0.01$  \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$

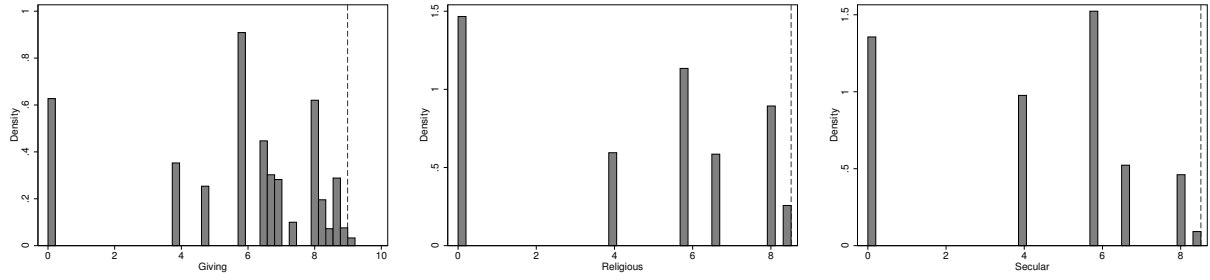


### **Trimming the outcome variables to account for outliers**

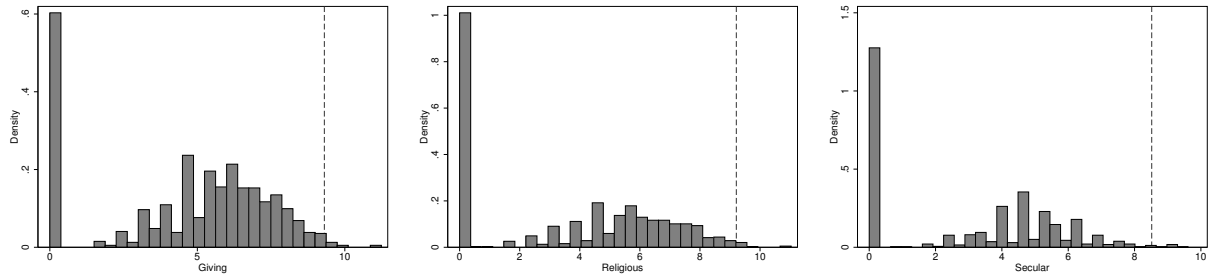
Next we show that our results are not an artifact of extreme outliers in the data. In particular, we may be worried that a few wealthy individuals giving a large amount of money could be skewing our results. In Figure A2 we plot our giving variables in our two data sets, with dashed lines indicating the 99th percentile in each distribution. In Tables A5 and A6 we re-estimate Tables 2 and 3 dropping any observations greater than these cutoffs. Again the results are substantively unchanged from those reported in the main text.

Figure A2

(A) SCCBS / Giving, Religious, and Secular



(B) GSS / Giving, Religious, and Secular



(C) GSS / Congregational and Other

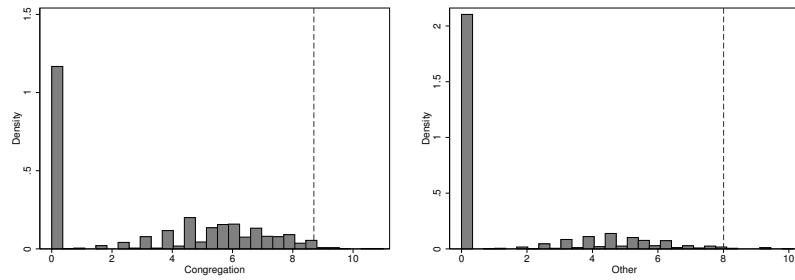


Table A5: Replication of Table 2 dropping outliers.

## (A) Total giving and ideology in the 2000 SCCBS.

	Giving	Giving	Giving	Giving	Giving
Conservative	0.566*** (0.046)	0.623*** (0.042)	-0.106* (0.044)	-0.029 (0.040)	-0.015 (0.040)
Income	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Church attendance	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other demographics	No	No	No	No	Yes
Sample size	19,055	19,055	19,055	19,055	19,055
R-squared	0.01	0.15	0.19	0.32	0.35
Percentage difference	76	86	-10	-3	-2

## (B) Total giving and ideology in the 1998 GSS.

	Giving	Giving	Giving	Giving	Giving
Conservative	0.888*** (0.215)	0.540** (0.201)	0.277 (0.187)	-0.078 (0.171)	-0.127 (0.173)
Income	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Church attendance	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other demographics	No	No	No	No	Yes
Sample size	1,039	1,039	1,039	1,039	1,039
R-squared	0.02	0.17	0.32	0.46	0.47
Percentage difference	137	68	30	-9	-13

## (C) Total giving and party in the 1998 GSS.

	Giving	Giving	Giving	Giving	Giving
Republican	1.069*** (0.186)	0.629*** (0.178)	0.731*** (0.158)	0.303* (0.149)	0.217 (0.153)
Income	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Church attendance	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other demographics	No	No	No	No	Yes
Sample size	1,039	1,039	1,039	1,039	1,039
R-squared	0.05	0.19	0.34	0.46	0.47
Percentage difference	186	85	105	34	23

Notes: Coefficients are OLS estimates. The dependent variable and model specifications are the same as Table 2. \* =  $p < 0.05$  \*\* =  $p < 0.01$  \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$

Table A6: Replication of Table 3 dropping outliers.

(A) Disaggregating total giving into religious and secular.

	SCCBS		GSS			
	Religious	Secular	Religious	Secular	Religious	Secular
Conservative	0.425*** (0.043)	-0.330*** (0.045)	0.213 (0.166)	-0.243 (0.182)		
Republican					0.364* (0.145)	-0.055 (0.167)
Income	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Church attendance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sample size	19,194	19,194	1,040	1,040	1,040	1,040
R-squared	0.50	0.23	0.59	0.29	0.59	0.29
Percentage difference	53	-28	22	-23	42	-7

(B) Disaggregating religious giving into congregational and other.

	GSS			
	Congregation	Other	Congregation	Other
Conservative	0.136 (0.156)	0.066 (0.177)		
Republican			0.369** (0.140)	0.001 (0.160)
Income	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Church attendance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sample size	1,039	1,042	1,039	1,042
R-squared	0.63	0.17	0.63	0.17
Percentage difference	13	5	43	-1

Notes: Coefficients are OLS estimates. The dependent variable and model specifications are the same as Table 3. \* =  $p < 0.05$  \*\* =  $p < 0.01$  \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$

## Robustness tests for state-level results.

In Table A7 we report regression estimates for the state-level relationships shown in Figure 1. We include the baseline specification plotted in that figure, as well as several additional specifications.

In the second column, we omit Utah from the sample. As discussed in the text, this state is home to a large number of Mormons who are obligated to give to charity as part of their faith.

In the third column, we re-estimate the baseline relationship (using all 50 states) using a “jackknife” procedure. This procedure calculates a standard error by performing 50 separate estimates, one with each data point removed. As with the specification dropping Utah, this specification helps reassure us that our results are not driven by any one particular state.

In the fourth column, we estimate a Weighted Least Squares estimate where each observation is weighted by the number of individuals in the PSID sample that was used to construct the mean in each state. This adjusts the estimator for the fact that there are differing numbers of individuals going into each state estimate.

In the fifth column, we estimate the state means using a Hierarchical Linear Model. Rather than a raw average, these estimates are weighted averages of the raw (“unpooled”) average and the average across all 50 states in the sample (“fully pooled”). This type of “partial pooling” estimator is discussed in Gelman (2006), and is simply an alternative way to adjust for the fact that there are different numbers of individuals going into different states’ estimates.

In none of these alternative specifications do the result change in any substantive way from those reported in the main text and plotted in Figure 1.

Table A7: Replication of Figure 1 using alternative specifications.

(A) Percent of income deducted for charity.					
	Baseline	Drop Utah	Jackknife	Weighted	HLM
Bush voteshare	0.008 (0.010)	0.002 (0.010)	0.008 (0.013)	0.006 (0.007)	0.002 (0.003)
Constant	0.594 (0.538)	0.881 (0.550)	0.594 (0.640)	0.618 (0.366)	0.847*** (0.135)
Sample size	50	49	50	50	50
R-squared	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01
(B) Percent of income donated to charity.					
	Baseline	Drop Utah	Jackknife	Weighted	HLM
Bush voteshare	0.018 (0.016)	0.010 (0.016)	0.018 (0.020)	0.022 (0.013)	0.008 (0.008)
Constant	0.878 (0.836)	1.256 (0.862)	0.878 (1.040)	0.758 (0.690)	1.516*** (0.404)
Sample size	50	49	50	50	50
R-squared	0.03	0.01	0.03	0.05	0.02
(C) Percent of income donated to secular charities.					
	Baseline	Drop Utah	Jackknife	Weighted	HLM
Bush voteshare	-0.014* (0.006)	-0.016* (0.006)	-0.014* (0.006)	-0.015* (0.006)	-0.006* (0.003)
Constant	1.332*** (0.321)	1.424*** (0.336)	1.332*** (0.309)	1.348*** (0.316)	0.947*** (0.170)
Sample size	50	49	50	50	50
R-squared	0.10	0.12	0.10	0.11	0.08
(D) Percent of income donated to religious charities.					
	Baseline	Drop Utah	Jackknife	Weighted	HLM
Bush voteshare	0.028* (0.013)	0.022 (0.014)	0.028 (0.017)	0.035*** (0.009)	0.014** (0.005)
Constant	-0.227 (0.703)	0.076 (0.727)	-0.227 (0.871)	-0.519 (0.476)	0.591* (0.278)
Sample size	50	49	50	50	50
R-squared	0.09	0.05	0.09	0.24	0.14

Notes: Coefficients are OLS estimates. \* =  $p < 0.05$  \*\* =  $p < 0.01$  \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$

## **Question Wordings and Variable Coding**

### **SCCBS donation questions**

People and families contribute money, property, or other assets for a wide variety of charitable purposes. During the past 12 months, approximately how much money did you and the other family members in your household contribute to...

All religious causes, including your local religious congregation. (IF NECESSARY: By contribution, I mean a voluntary contribution with no intention of making a profit or obtaining goods or services for yourself.)

(None, Less than \$100, \$100 to less than \$500, \$500 to less than \$1,000, \$1,000 to less than \$5,000, More than \$5,000, Don't know, Refused)

To all non-religious charities, organizations, or causes.

(None, Less than \$100, \$100 to less than \$500, \$500 to less than \$1,000, \$1,000 to less than \$5,000, More than \$5,000, Don't know, Refused)

### **SCCBS ideology question**

Thinking POLITICALLY AND SOCIALLY, how would you describe your own general outlet—as being very conservative, moderately conservative, middle-of-the-road, moderately liberal, or very liberal?

Coding Note: very conservative and moderately conservative are classified as conservative, middle-of-the-road is classified as moderate, and moderately liberal and very liberal are classified as liberal.

### **GSS donation questions**

During the last year, approximately how much money did you and the other family members

in your household contribute to each of the following:

To your local congregation? (open-ended numeric response)

To other religious organizations, programs, or causes? (amount recorded)

To non-religious charities, organizations, or causes? (amount recorded)

### **GSS ideology and partisanship questions**

We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. I'm going to show you a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal—point 1—to extremely conservative—point 7. Where would you place yourself on this scale?

Coding Note: Scores of 1, 2, and 3 on this scale are classified as liberal, scores of 4 are classified as moderate, and scores of 5, 6, and 7 are classified as conservative.

Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, Independent, or what?

If Republican or Democrat: Would you call yourself a strong (Republican/Democrat) or a not very strong (Republican/Democrat)?

If Independent or Other: Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic Party?

Coding Note: Partisans leaners are classified as partisans. Independents consist of respondents who do not consider themselves closer to either the Republican or Democratic Party.

### **PSID donation questions**

What was the total dollar value of all donations you and your family made in 2002 towards religious purposes? (amount recorded)

What was the total dollar value of all donations (you/you and your family) made in 2002 to



organizations that help people in need of basic necessities? (amount recorded)

What was the total dollar value of all donations (you/you and your family) made in 2002 towards health care or medical research organizations? (amount recorded)

What was the total dollar value of all donations (you/you and your family) made in 2002 towards educational purposes? (amount recorded)

What was the total dollar value of all donations (you/you and your family) made in 2002 towards youth and family services purposes? (amount recorded)

What was the total dollar value of all donations (you/you and your family) made in 2002 towards the arts, culture, or ethnic awareness? (amount recorded)

What was the total dollar value of all donations (you/you and your family) made in 2002 towards improving neighborhoods and communities? (amount recorded)

What was the total dollar value of all donations (you/you and your family) made in 2002 towards preserving the environment? (amount recorded)

What was the total dollar value of all donations (you/you and your family) made in 2002 towards providing international aid or promoting world peace? (amount recorded)

What was the total dollar value of all donations (you/you and your family) made in 2002 towards (this last/these last purposes)? (amount recorded)