Why Youth Philanthropy Matters

The Sillerman Center's research on youth philanthropy outlines best practices and explores the ways these programs benefit young people, their communities, and the philanthropic sector.

Youth grantmaking programs help make the field of philanthropy more inclusive and equitable. They are an often overlooked, but extremely instructive model of participatory grantmaking and civic engagement in which young people are given power to make key decisions in support of their communities. Our research shows that young philanthropists develop leadership skills and a stronger sense of belonging and purpose in their communities.

Nearly 80% of youth philanthropy programs serve 13-18 year olds

Today’s GenZ youth philanthropists, born between 1996 and 2014, report that they want to make decisions about where their donated dollars go and see the impact of that money. GenZers tend to give small and spontaneous donations and are the most likely of any generation to give via social media.

In 2020, 44% of Gen Zers donated to charity – most frequently to children, animals, health, religion, and social services.

26% of Gen Zers volunteered in 2020, the highest percent of any age group.

Participation in youth philanthropy programs is declining

Our research indicates that participation in youth philanthropy programs is declining. In 2018, there were an estimated 513 such programs in the United States. In 2021 there were an estimated 475 programs.

Where and how much do youth philanthropy programs give?

All Grants Made by Youth Philanthropists, through youth philanthropy programs in the US, from 2015-2018

- Human Services: 42.9%
- Education: 19%
- Health: 19%
- Arts & Culture: 6.6%
- Human Rights: 3.7%
- Other: 8.8%

From 2015-2018, youth philanthropists made grants totaling $6.3 million through youth philanthropy programs in the US.
Why Youth Philanthropy Matters — Sources

- The Sillerman Center for the Advancement of Philanthropy, Youth Philanthropy Project.

- Youth ages 14-17 with at least one adult mentor in the community who provides advice or guidance in the United States. Kids Count Data Center, Annie E. Casey Foundation. July 2021.


- Youth ages 14-17 who participated in community service or volunteer work at school, church, or in the community during the past year in the United States. Kids Count Data Center, Annie E. Casey Foundation. July 2021.


As young people face myriad challenges, we explore how youth philanthropy can best engage young people of all socioeconomic backgrounds in grantmaking.

**Youth and Mental Health Challenges**

- 1 in 4 children and teens experience mental illness
- In 2020, 1 in 6 young people ages 12-17 had a major depressive episode
- In 2020, 1 in 5 young people had declining mental health due to COVID-19

**17M Children** Face Mental Health Challenges

- 67% Don't Receive Help

- Children tend to suffer more harm from disruption and family stress than adults
- Children who experience food and financial insecurity, in addition to social isolation, reported the poorest mental health outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the share of students who say there is an adult at school with whom they can discuss anxiety, stress, or depression, dropped from 46% before the pandemic to 39% in 2021

In Spring 2021, **49% of students** reported feeling **depressed, anxious, or stressed**, which made it hard to do their best in school.

**Insufficient Funding**

- In 2020, total US giving **INCREASED** slightly from 2019
- Total Charitable Giving **Increased by 3.8%**
- Charitable Giving to Health **Decreased by 4.2%**
- But giving to healthcare organizations **DECLINED by over 4%.**

- **5%** Only 5% of foundation healthcare grants go to mental health
- **1%** Less than 1% of US government spending goes to mental health

To engage young people in youth philanthropy programs, we must be aware of and ready to assist young people as they face mental health challenges. Robust support systems and mentors are vital to young people’s participation in these programs. Programs should also consider funding youth mental health organizations in order to create a holistic approach to positive youth mental health outcomes.

Please visit [http://sillermancenter.brandeis.edu](http://sillermancenter.brandeis.edu) for more information. See sources on the back.
Youth and Mental Health Challenges — References


- NAMI. (2020). 2020 Mental Health by the Numbers: Youth and Young Adults.


In the second quarter of 2022, rates of unemployment for youth ages 16-19 were nearly 8 percentage points higher for Black youth than for white youth.

Young people, many of whom are struggling to find jobs, should be compensated for their involvement in youth philanthropy programs.

From April 2021 to July 2021, the youth labor force grew by 2.4 million. There was also increased demand for jobs in 2021, with 75% of youth ages 16-24 seeking employment.

Coupled with an increased demand for jobs in 2021, 75% of youth ages 16-24 sought employment, up from 67% in 2020.

A growing share of 18-24 year olds lost income throughout the COVID-19 pandemic

Compensating young people for their involvement in youth philanthropy enables them to build leadership and collaboration skills as they make decisions about how to spend money to support their communities.

Compensation may be an hourly payment rate, transportation subsidies, or a stipend. Provision of on-site child or sibling care also removes another impediment to participation for some young people.

Please visit http://sillermancenter.brandeis.edu for more information. See sources on the back.
Philanthropy Can Counteract the Harms of Youth Unemployment — Sources


The Link Between Technology Access and Engaged Youth Philanthropists

76% of youth philanthropy programs want to continue with hybrid programming.

Yet, in 2021, more than 10 percent of youth philanthropy program organizers reported that access to technology was a barrier for youth participation in programming.

Access Continues to Decrease

Internet Access for Education

Computer/Digital Device Available

April 2021

July 2021

Internet & Computer/Digital Device

Youth without technology access face barriers to education

YouthTruth’s student survey showed that lack of access to technology prevented students from "doing their best in school."

Limited/No Internet Access 23%

Limited/No Computer/Digital Device Access 13%

A household may or may not have broadband or internet due to:

High Cost

Weak or no connectivity

No service available

To ensure equity and access to youth philanthropy, program organizers should provide students access to necessary technology. This might include paying for internet service and video conferencing platforms, grant application software, and file sharing.

Please visit http://sillermancenter.brandeis.edu for more information. See sources on the back.
The Link Between Technology Access and Engaged Youth Philanthropists — Sources


- Households in which internet and a computer or digital device are usually or always available to children for educational purposes in the United States. Kids Count Data Center, Annie E. Casey Foundation. July 2021.

- Households in which internet is usually or always available to children for educational purposes in the United States. Kids Count Data Center, Annie E. Casey Foundation. July 2021.

- Households in which a computer to digital device is usually or always available to children for educational purposes in the United States. Kids Count Data Center, Annie E. Casey Foundation. July 2021.