

Why Don't America's Rich Give More to Charity?

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The rising wealth of the top tier of earners seems to be inaugurating a new age of charitable giving. More than 150 billionaires from around the world have now signed Bill and Melinda Gates' Giving Pledge, promising to donate [at least half of their fortunes to charity](#). Others give money to hospitals, parks, or schools, renaming them in the process; in New York City, Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall is now known as David Geffen Hall, while the historic 42nd Street library is called the Steven A. Schwarzman Building.

Such grand philanthropic donations are visible and public-facing, but they distract from a broader pattern in charitable giving: As a group, the wealthy do donate more money overall, but as a proportion of earnings, many of them give less than those with far less wealth.

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In [a study](#) published last year in the journal *Psychological Science*, for instance, Pia Dietze and Eric D. Knowles of New York University gave each of their subjects a pair of Google Glass and asked them to take a walk on a busy street. Using the technology to track people's eye movements, the researchers discovered that their upper-income subjects spent significantly less time looking at other people in their field of vision.