



The Market for Charitable Giving

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Abstract

Through good and bad economic times, charitable gifts have continued to roll in largely unabated over the past half century. In a typical year, total charitable gifts of money now exceed 2 percent of gross domestic product. Moreover, charitable giving has nearly doubled in real terms since 1990, and the number of nonprofit organizations registered with the IRS grew by nearly 60 percent from 1995 to 2005. This study provides a perspective on the economic interplay of three types of actors: donors, charitable organizations, and government. How much is given annually? Who gives? Who are the recipients of these gifts? Would changes in the tax treatment of charitable contributions lead to more or less giving? How can charitable institutions design mechanisms to generate the greatest level of gifts? What about the effectiveness of seed money and matching grants?

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