

DYNAMICS OF CAUSE ENGAGEMENT

Understanding the impact of the digital
revolution on cause involvement

Exploring the connection between cause
engagement and behavior change

Prepared by:

Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide & The Center for
Social Impact Communication at Georgetown University

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About Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide

Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide (Ogilvy PR) is a global, multidisciplinary communications leader operating in more than 80 markets. For more than two decades, Ogilvy PR has been at the forefront of social marketing—advancing personal and public health and safety and broader socially desirable goals via communications initiatives. We have developed numerous social marketing campaigns to successfully raise awareness, educate and prompt action regarding some of today's largest and most complex issues, ranging from cancer to cardiovascular health, substance abuse to homeland security, youth violence prevention to disaster preparedness, and much more.

Named the 2011 outstanding global digital/social consultancy by The Holmes Report, Ogilvy PR is a unit of Ogilvy & Mather, a WPP company (NASDAQ: WPPGY), one of the world's largest communications service groups. For more information, visit ogilvypr.com and smexchange.ogilvypr.com

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About the Center for Social Impact Communication

Georgetown University's Center for Social Impact Communication (CSIC) is the nation's leading educational resource on social impact communication. Launched in 2008 and housed in the Master of Professional Studies program in Public Relations and Corporate Communications, CSIC aims to elevate the discipline by pioneering industry standards in responsible communication practices and by educating and inspiring the professionals who lead the way in creating positive social impact through their work. For more information, visit csic.georgetown.edu.

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Purpose of the Study

The *Dynamics of Cause Engagement* is the product of a unique partnership and more than a year spent examining trends in the ways in which Americans perceive, learn about and interact with causes and social issues. A small group of graduate students and faculty from Georgetown University's Center for Social Impact Communication worked side-by-side with senior leaders from Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide's Social Marketing practice, identifying gaps in the current cause landscape and devising a survey that would separate fact from fiction when it comes to the changes brought about by the digital revolution.

The partnership was truly collaborative in every sense of the word—not academic vs. practitioner, not student vs. professional. Indeed, the coupling of a unity of purpose and a diversity of perspectives allowed us to develop a study with broad implications, relevant to communicators and organizations in the nonprofit, private and public sectors. The results speak to the profound need for strategy and integration when communicating about causes, two things that are at the very heart of what is taught at Georgetown's Masters of Public Relations and Corporate Communications program and practiced at Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide. And the study results certainly open up new dialogues about what it means to be “involved” in a cause today, both in the more traditional sense as well as in the actions of so-called “slacktivists” and others empowered by the availability of digital tools. What remains to be seen, and studied, is the overall impact of this involvement.

This report summarizes the major findings of our study and provides organizations and practitioners with useful information to help define and tailor a strategic approach to deepen the connection between a cause and its supporters.

Acknowledgements

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About the Survey:

An online survey was conducted among a nationally representative sample of 2,000 Americans ages 18 and over. The data were balanced to reflect the demographic profile of the U.S. adult population based on census criteria to ensure results are projectable to the larger U.S. population.

The survey was fielded by TNS Global from November 30 to December 22, 2010, and has a margin of error of +/-2.2% at the 95% confidence level.

Throughout this report, an asterisk ‘*’ next to a number indicates a significant difference from the corresponding audience at the 95% level of confidence.

Major Themes

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Big Picture: The American Cause Engagement Landscape

Traditional Forms of Engagement Reign Supreme

Despite the growing popularity of social networking sites and the increased efforts of organizations to engage their supporters via social media, survey results show that historically prominent ways of supporting causes (e.g., donating money, volunteering, learning more about the cause, talking to others) are still the first and “most often” ways Americans get involved. Only 18 percent of Americans identified a promotional social media activity (e.g., joining a cause group, posting a cause logo to a social profile, writing about a cause on a blog) as the way they first get involved with causes, and fewer than one in six (15%) say it is the way they “most often” engage. Social media promotional activities also fall lower on the list of activities Americans believe give them a feeling of being cause champions (or being very involved with a cause).

Involvement Activities

	First	Most Often	Cause Champions
Donating money	40%	41%	33%
Talking to others about it	40%	33%	26%
Donating clothing, rewards points, hair or other personal items	30%	24%	19%
Learning more about the issue and its impact	37%	21%	14%
Signing a petition for the cause	27%	19%	14%
Volunteering time (i.e., help-lines, soup kitchens, mentoring, cleaning)	19%	17%	22%
<hr/>			
Social media NET	18%	15%	10%

Social media NET includes social media promotional activities (e.g., joining a cause group, posting a logo to a social profile or contributing to a blog).

(Only top responses shown)

“Americans still prefer historically prominent ways of engaging with causes as well as traditional sources of cause information.”

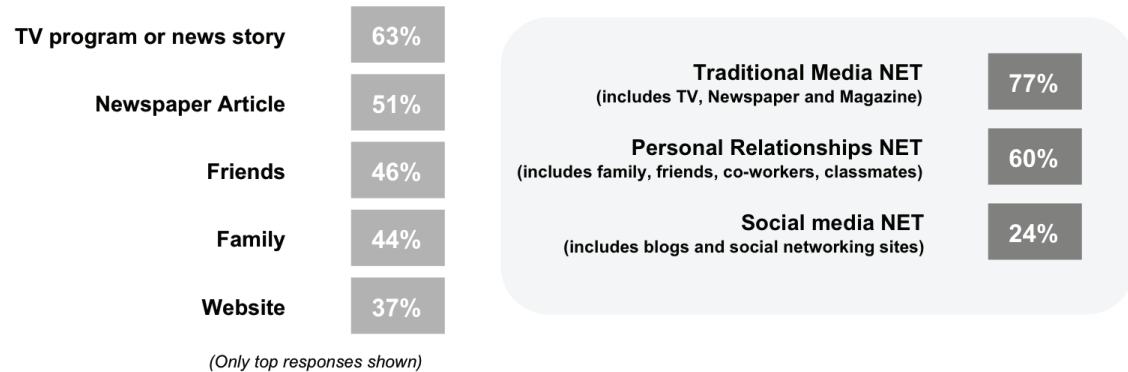
When learning about causes, Americans still rely on traditional communications channels as their primary sources of information. Survey results show that the number of Americans who turn to social media (24%) as a source of information still lags far behind those who utilize television and print media (77%) and personal relationships (60%).

Social Media Holds Promise for Fostering Engagement

While promotional social media activities may fall lower on the list of ways Americans currently learn about and engage with causes, survey data highlight increasing opportunities to *broaden engagement* through the strategic use of social media.

The majority of Americans recognize the value of social media in facilitating visibility and support for causes. Nearly six in ten Americans (57%) agree that online social networking sites allow people to support causes more easily, and 40 percent feel they can help get the word out through social networking sites.

Sources of Information about Causes



Online Support

Strongly/Somewhat Agree

Online social networking sites, like Facebook, increase the visibility of social causes and issues



Online social networking sites, like Facebook, allow people to support causes more easily



I feel like I can help get the word out about a social issue or cause through online social networks, like Facebook, Twitter and blogs



“Six in ten Americans believe that social media is valuable in facilitating visibility and support of causes.”

So-Called Slacktivists: More Active Than We Think

Does the relative ease with which we can now share information and get the word out about causes translate to slacktivist behavior? Contrary to the portrayal of a slacktivist as one who passively “likes” things on Facebook but is not truly engaged, survey results show that Americans who get involved with causes through promotional social media activities (e.g., joining a cause group, posting a cause logo to a social profile, writing about a cause on a blog) also continue to participate in cause-related activities outside of the social media space. In fact, Americans who selected social media activities among the “most often” ways they are involved with causes are:

- Just as likely as non-social media cause promoters to donate money (41% vs. 41%)
- Twice as likely to volunteer as non-social media cause promoters (30% vs. 15%)
- Twice as likely to participate in events and walks (25% vs. 11%)

“Most Often” Ways of Getting Involved

	Social media cause promoters	Non-Social media cause promoters
Donating money	41%	41%
Volunteering time (i.e., help-lines, soup kitchens, mentoring, cleaning)	30%	15%
Taking part in an event or walk	25%	11%
Requesting that others contact their political representatives by email, letter or phone	22%	5%
Recruiting others to sign a petition for the cause	20%	4%
Requesting donations to support your work or involvement in a cause	11%	3%
Mean number of activities	6.7	2.9

Overall, Americans who support causes by participating in promotional social media activities are engaged in a greater number of different kinds of supporting activities than Americans who do not use social media to promote causes (6.7 activities to 2.9, respectively). For these individuals, **social media is simply being added to their range of engagement activities, not replacing the more historically prominent ways of supporting causes like donating or volunteering.** This is good news for causes.

In addition, results show that this group also seems to be more willing to go beyond their individual contributions and influence others in their networks to become supporters as well. They are five times more likely than non-social media cause promoters to recruit others to sign a petition for a cause (20% vs. 4%); four times more likely to ask others to contact their political representatives (22% vs. 5%); and three times more likely to request others to donate (11% vs. 3%).

Caution: Digital Tools Could Drive “Cause Fatigue”

As the use of digital tools in cause engagement continues to increase, they could become potential drivers of “cause fatigue” if not used strategically. Already, three-quarters of Americans (75%) agree that emails about causes can sometimes feel like spam, and about half of Americans believe that they get too many emails and messages about causes and that everybody “likes” causes on Facebook and it does not mean anything.

Online Support Fatigue

Emails about causes sometimes feel like spam



Everybody “likes” causes on Facebook, it doesn’t really mean anything



I get too many emails and messages about causes now



“Almost half of Americans believe they get too many emails about causes.”

Cause Involvement Gives Americans a Sense of Purpose and Meaning in Life

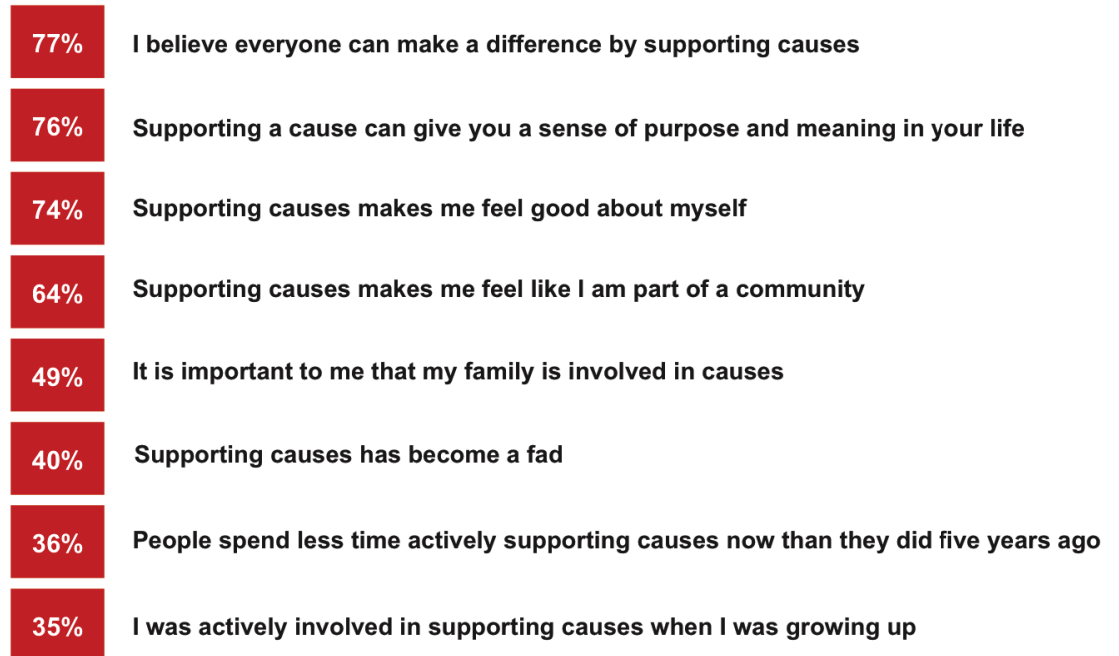
Regardless of social media usage, the large majority of Americans believe in the power of supporting causes. **About three-quarters of Americans** think that everyone can make a difference by supporting causes and that **being involved with a cause gives them a sense of purpose and meaning in life** and makes them feel good about themselves. In addition, nearly two-thirds of Americans (64%) believe that supporting causes enhances the feeling of belonging to a community.

The importance of supporting causes seems to be a family affair for Americans as well. Nearly half (49%) of Americans consider familial involvement with causes important, and more than one-third (35%) were actively involved in causes when growing up.

Current perceptions of cause engagement are not entirely rosy, though. Survey findings show that four in ten Americans believe that supporting causes has become a fad and more than one-third (36%) think that people spend less time actively supporting causes now than they did five years ago.

Cause Beliefs

Strongly/Somewhat Agree

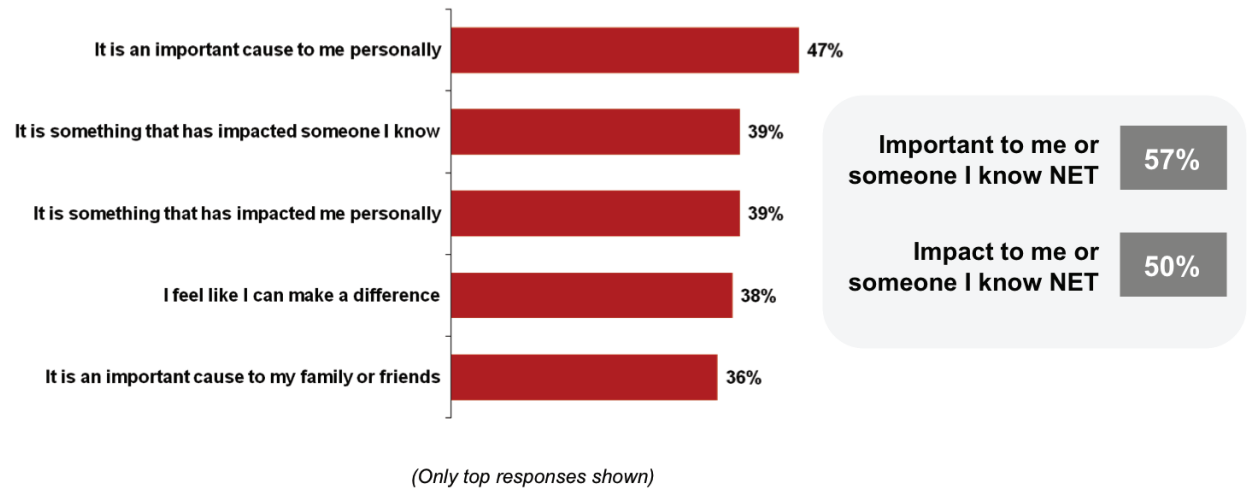


Personal Relevance Drives Engagement

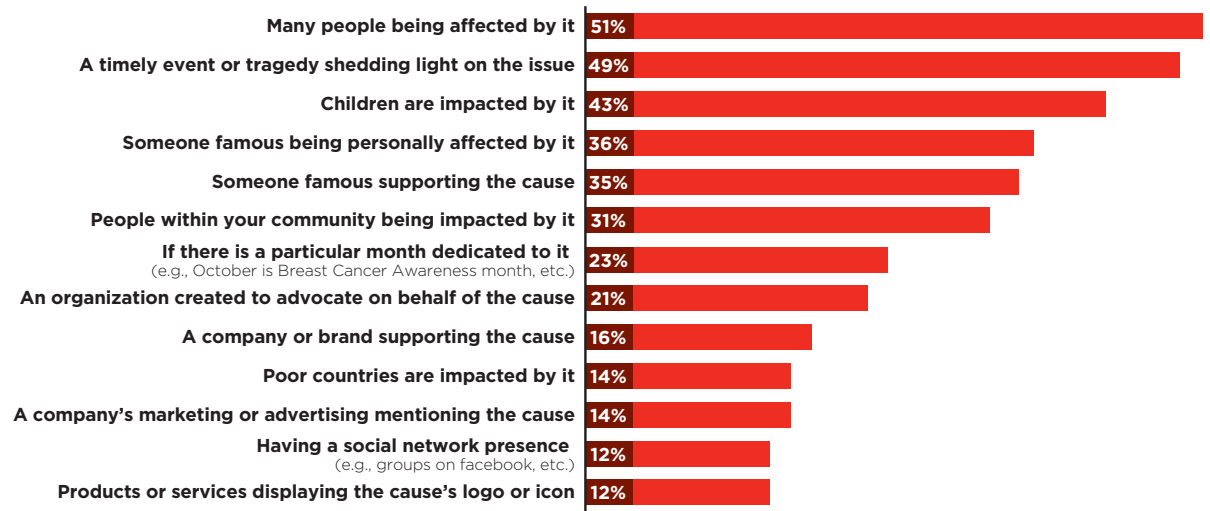
When it comes to causes and social issues, what are the main drivers of engagement among Americans? Personal relevance, according to study findings. Results show that Americans are most motivated to get involved with causes that are important to both themselves or someone they know (57%) or that impact both themselves or someone they know (50%).

And, while celebrity endorsements certainly play a role in garnering attention for causes among Americans, survey respondents identified several factors as being even more important than a famous face. Americans believe that many people being affected (51%), a timely event or tragedy (49%) and children being impacted (43%) generate the greatest attention for a social issue or cause.

Engagement Drivers



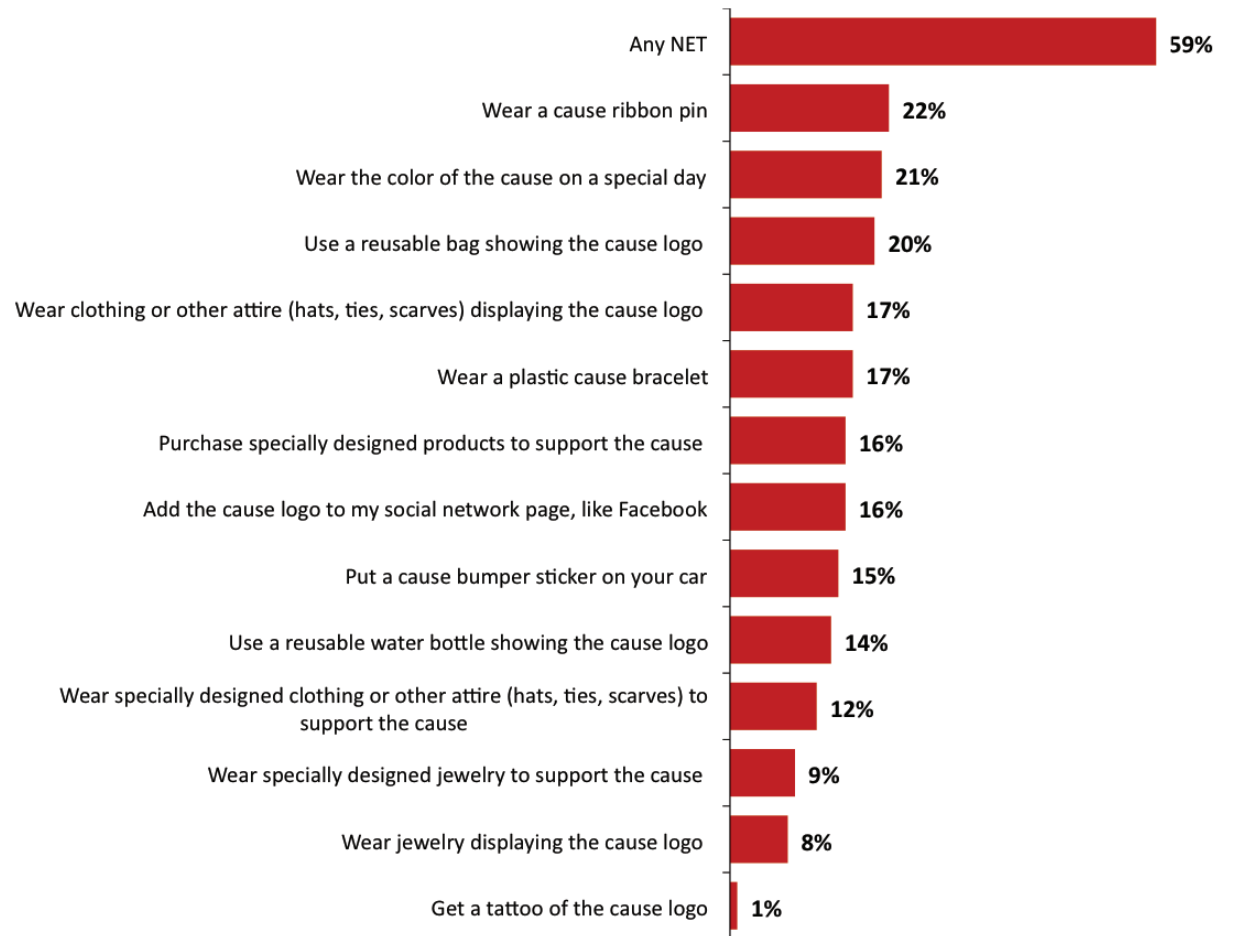
Attention Drivers



You Are What You Wear: Americans Displaying their Support for a Cause

While Americans generally do not feel that products or services featuring a cause's logo or icon generate as much attention for the cause when compared to other factors, nearly six in ten (59%) are willing to display their support for a cause by using cause-branded products. Wearing a cause ribbon or pin (22%), wearing the color of the cause on a special day (21%), or using a reusable bag showing the cause logo (20%) are at the top of the list of ways in which Americans would most likely show their support of a cause.

Willingness to Display Support



Involvement in Causes Can Trigger Behavior Change

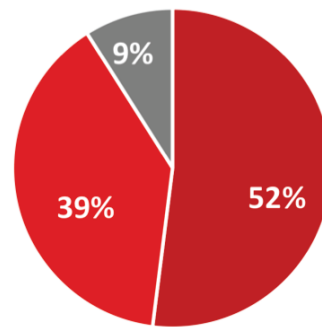
Americans who donate, volunteer or otherwise support a cause may be looking to impact the world around them, but survey results show that they may find that the experience of being involved with a cause can actually impact their own behavior as well.

More than half of Americans (52%) affirmed to have changed their behavior as a result of their involvement with a cause.

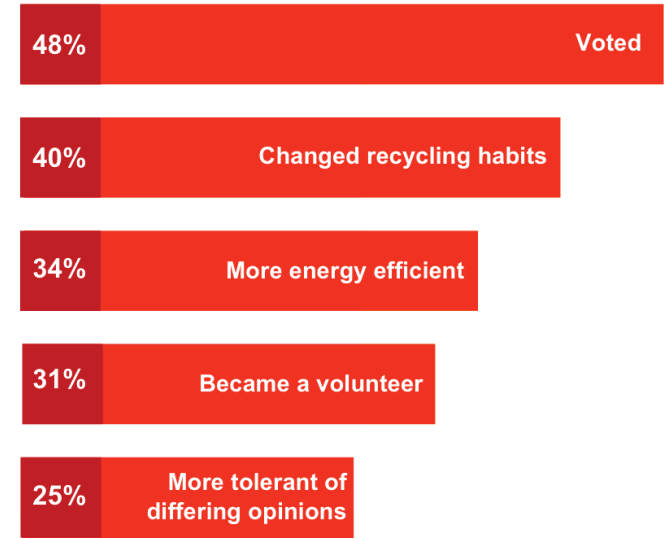
Nearly half of Americans (48%) report changing their voting behavior as a result of being involved with a cause, making it the most common type of behavior change. Changing recycling habits (40%), becoming more energy efficient (34%) and becoming more tolerant of differing opinions (25%) also neared the top of the list. Health-related behaviors, such as changing one's physical activity (12%), visiting a medical professional (9%), or requesting a specific medical test or screening (8%), fall lower on the list.

Behavior Change as Result of Cause Involvement

I have changed my actions or behavior because of my involvement in a cause



- Strongly/Somewhat Agree
- Strongly/Somewhat Disagree
- Don't know



(Only top responses shown)

Pulse Check: Issues that Matter to Americans

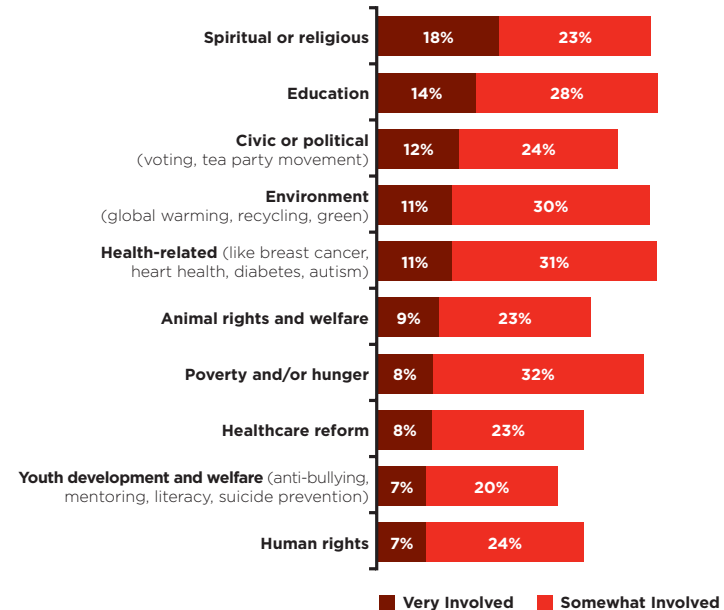
Timely Cause Concerns

Not surprisingly, concerns over the economy, joblessness and poverty abound among Americans. When asked what comes to mind when thinking about important social issues or causes, Americans reported unemployment and low wages, economic concerns, healthcare reform and poverty/hunger tops among a broad range of issues.

More than four in ten Americans (45%) are involved in supporting social issues and causes, with the greatest involvement found in health, education, spiritual and environment-related causes.



Involvement with Causes



(Only top ten causes shown)

Supporting Our Troops and Feeding the Hungry Are the Top Causes for Americans

With which specific causes and issues are Americans most involved? Supporting our troops and feeding the hungry, according to the study results. Health-related issues, such as breast cancer, diabetes and heart disease, are also near the top of the list. Overall, Americans tend to be more personally involved in causes they are knowledgeable about.

Looking ahead, Americans expect supporting our troops and feeding the hungry to continue to be the most prominent causes in 2011. Bullying and childhood obesity—both of which have received increasing media attention in 2010—also are expected to be among the top causes of 2011.

Knowledge and Involvement with Specific Causes

	Knowledge (Very or Somewhat)	Involvement (Very or Somewhat)
Supporting our troops	71%	39%
Feeding the hungry	65%	39%
Breast Cancer	68%	32%
Heart disease and heart health	66%	30%
Diabetes	61%	27%
Global warming	60%	25%
Drunk driving	73%	23%
Domestic violence	61%	20%
Bullying	60%	20%
Pro-life	62%	19%

Overall, Americans tend to be more personally involved in social causes that they feel more knowledgeable about, including supporting our troops, feeding the hungry, breast cancer and heart disease.

(Only top ten causes shown)

“More Americans are involved with supporting our troops and feeding the hungry than any other causes or social issues today.”

Controversy Contributes to Perceived Prominence

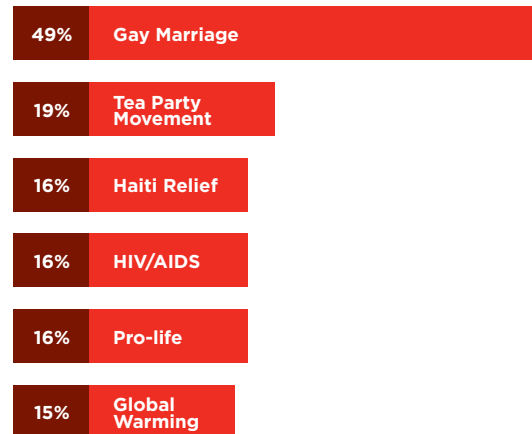
Almost half of Americans (49%) believe that society is less open to supporting gay marriage, putting it at the top of the list of controversial issues. Interestingly, the Tea Party movement and global warming also appeared high on the list of issues that Americans believe society is less open to supporting, and at the same time, ranked them among the causes believed to be the most prominent in 2011. This indicates that “fame” is not always translated into widespread support, and that perhaps the controversial nature of these causes contributes to their perceived prominence.

Prominent Causes in 2011



(Only top six causes shown)

Causes Americans Believe Society is Less Open to Supporting



(Only top six causes shown)

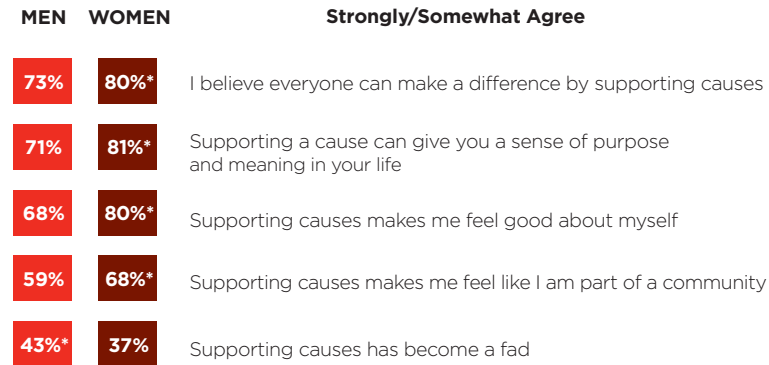
Demographic Trends: Cause Engagement by Gender

Women Are Strongest Believers in the Power of Supporting Causes

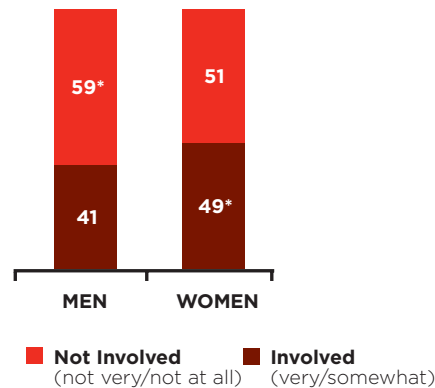
American women are strong believers in the power of individuals to make a difference by supporting causes, while their male counterparts are more likely to view supporting causes as a fad. In addition to believing that everyone can make a difference by supporting causes, American women are more likely than men to believe that supporting causes creates a sense of purpose and meaning in life, makes them feel good about themselves and makes them feel like part of a community.

Not surprisingly, a significantly higher number of women are engaged with causes and are willing to display their support. Almost half of American women (49%) report to be very or somewhat involved in causes, compared to 41 percent of men, and nearly two-thirds (64%) would display their support, versus 54 percent of men.

Cause Beliefs



Level of Involvement



Cause Involvement Triggers Behavior Change More Often Among Women

Findings also highlight gender differences when it comes to cause-driven behavior change. **American women are significantly more likely than men to say they have changed their behavior due to cause involvement (55% vs. 48%),** including environmentally-conscious actions (e.g., changing recycling habits, becoming more energy efficient) and health-related behaviors (e.g., modifying diet or physical activity). Women also are significantly more likely than men to say they have switched to brands that support causes they support.

Types of Behavior Change as Result of Cause Involvement

Changed recycling habits	Became more energy efficient	Became a volunteer	Became an organ donor	Changed my diet	Changed my physical activity	Requested a specific medical test or screen	Switched to brands/designers that supported causes I support
Men 36%	Men 30%	Men 28%	Men 12%	Men 15%	Men 10%	Men 7%	Men 11%
Women 44%*	Women 38%*	Women 34%*	Women 18%*	Women 18%*	Women 14%*	Women 10%*	Women 16%*

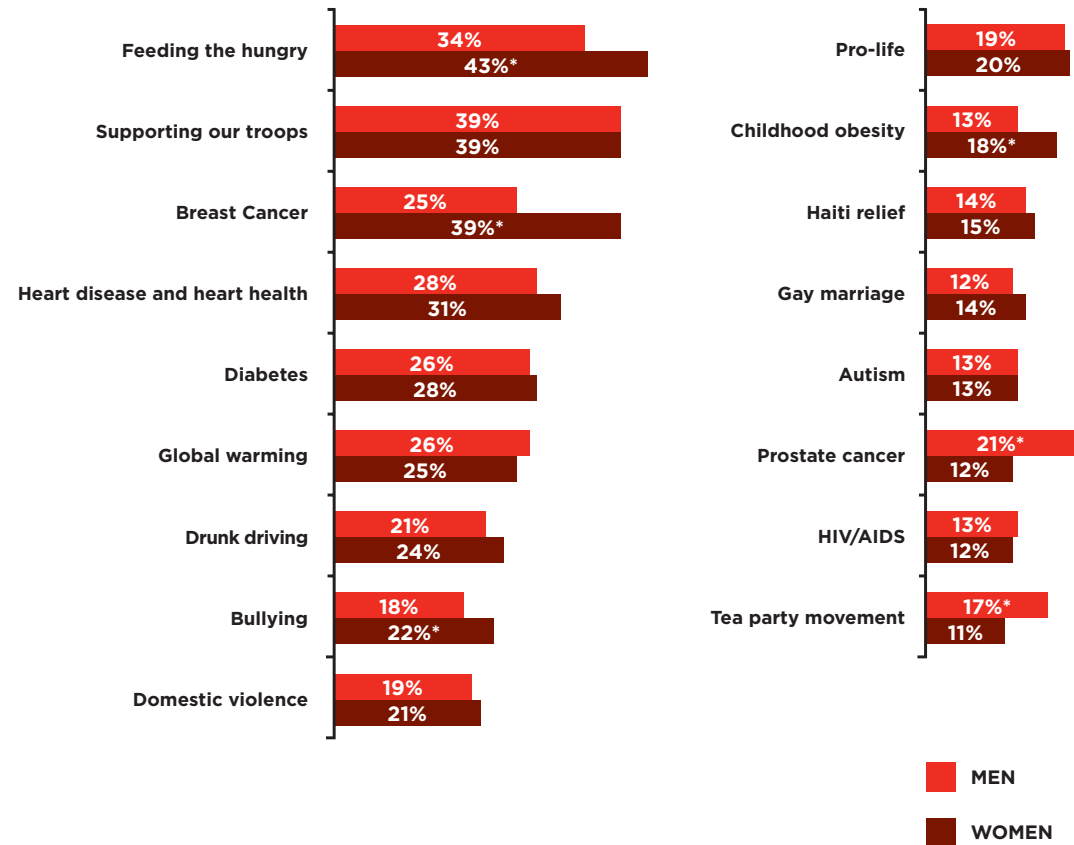
“Women are significantly more likely than men to have changed their behavior due to cause involvement.”

Men and Women Share Support for Feeding the Hungry and Supporting Our Troops

Despite all the differences, men and women are more alike than different when it comes to which particular causes they choose to support. For both, feeding the hungry and supporting our troops are among those that rank the highest and are believed to be the most prominent causes in 2011. As expected, gender-related health issues like breast cancer and prostate cancer are significantly more likely to be supported by women and men, respectively. In addition, survey results indicate that **women are more compelled to support youth-related causes like bullying and childhood obesity, while men are more likely to support the Tea Party movement.**

Involvement with Specific Causes

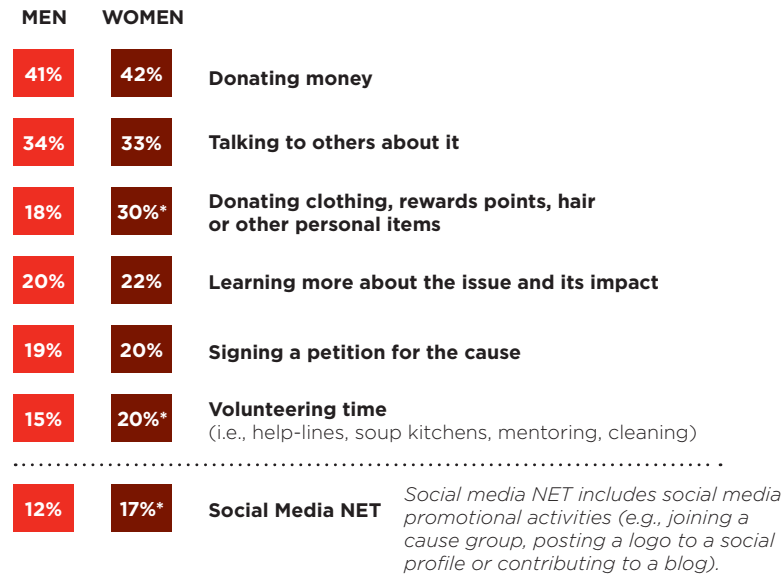
(Very or Somewhat involved)



Women More Likely to Donate Personal Items and Volunteer Their Time in Support of Causes

Women and men also tend to agree on the ways in which they “most often” support their chosen causes. For both, more historically prominent ways of engaging with causes top the list, including donating money, talking to others, and learning more about the issues and impacts. Women, however, are significantly more likely than men to get involved by donating clothing and other personal items, and volunteering their time in support of causes.

“Most Often” Ways of Getting Involved

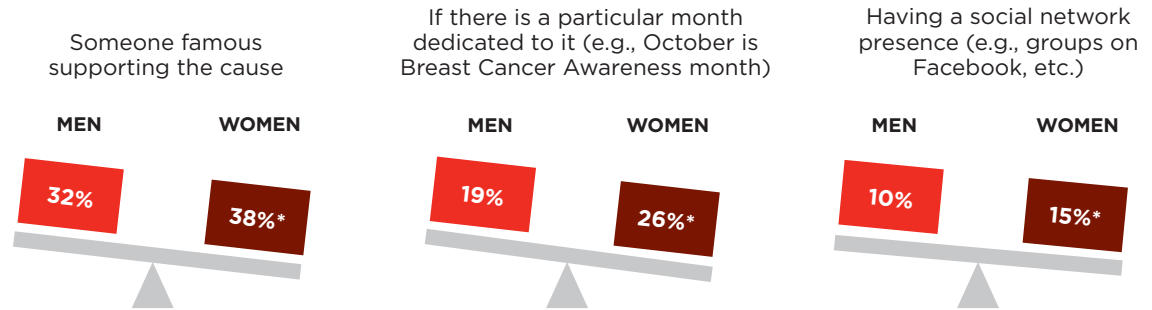


(Only top responses shown)

Size of Population Affected and Timely Events Are Top Attention Drivers for Men and Women

For both men and women, the main drivers of attention for a cause or social issue are having many people affected by it, a timely event or tragedy, and children being impacted. However, women are more likely than men to believe that causes can attract interest by having the support of a celebrity, a particular month dedicated to it and/or a social networking presence.

Attention Drivers



Women are More Likely to Recognize the Role of Social Media in Facilitating Cause Involvement

When it comes to social media, women are more likely than men to recognize the role that sites like Facebook can play in facilitating cause involvement. Nearly two-thirds of women (65%) believe that social networking sites can increase visibility for causes, and six in ten (60%) believe they allow people to support causes more easily. It comes as no surprise, then, that women are more likely to support causes through promotional social media activities (e.g., joining a cause group on Facebook, posting a cause logo to a social profile, contributing to cause blogs) than men (17% vs. 12%, respectively).

Online Support

Strongly/Somewhat Agree

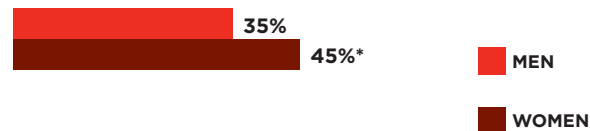
Online social networking sites, like Facebook, increase the visibility of social causes and issues



Online social networking sites, like Facebook, allow people to support causes more easily



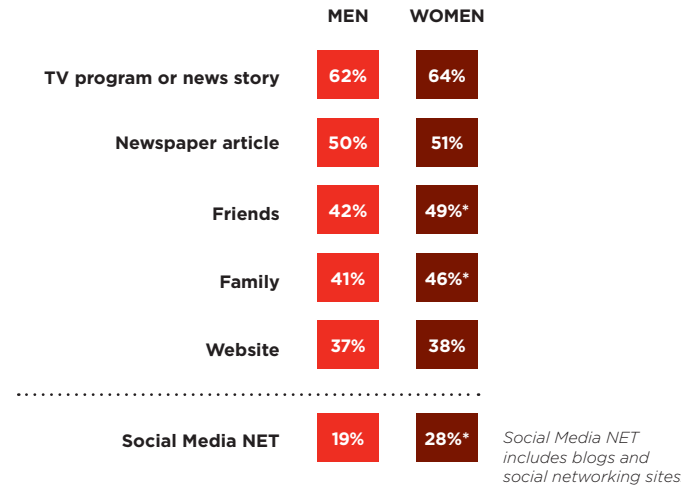
I feel like I can help get the word out about a social issue or cause through online social networks, like Facebook, Twitter and blogs



Women also turn to social media as a source of cause information more often than men—though for both, this lags far behind traditional TV and print media sources and personal relationships.

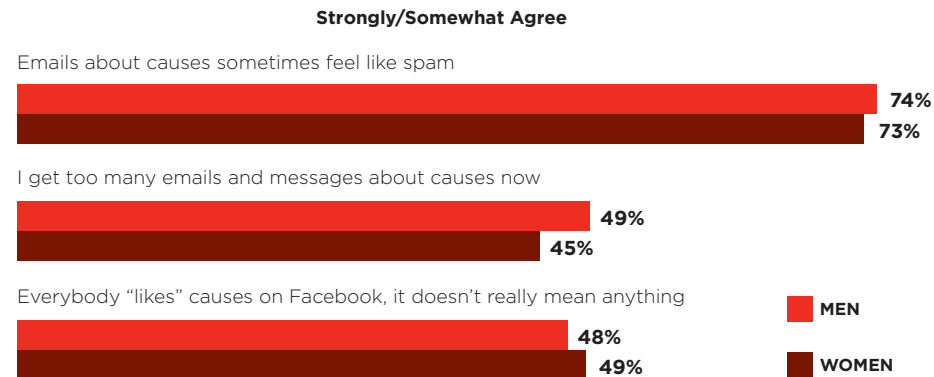
While women are more likely than men to believe in the power of social media to support causes, they are in agreement on the degree to which online cause-related communications can sometimes feel like “too much.” Nearly three-quarters of men and women (74% and 73%, respectively) agree that emails about causes can sometimes feel like spam, **and about half of both populations admit that they get too many cause-related emails now** (49% and 45%, respectively) and that everybody “likes” causes on Facebook and it does not really mean anything (48% and 49%, respectively). Practitioners should be wary of these indicators and ensure strategic uses of these digital tools in order to avoid unintentionally contributing to “cause fatigue.”

Sources of Information about Causes



“Women are more likely than men to turn to social media as a source of cause information.”

Online Support Fatigue



Women Support Companies that Support Causes

Cause marketers often target the female demographic with campaigns, and with good reason—survey results confirm that **American women are significantly more likely than men to show their support of a cause by purchasing products or services from companies who support the cause.** In addition, women are more likely to learn about causes through corporate partner or sponsor promotions, including advertisements, product packaging, and in-store displays.



Demographic Trends: Cause Engagement by Ethnicity

Social Media Plays Greater Role in Cause Engagement For African Americans and Hispanics

Among American adults, there appear to be some significant differences in how various population segments perceive social media and their effectiveness in facilitating cause involvement. **African Americans and Hispanics are significantly more likely to believe that they can help get the word out about a social issue or cause through online social networks** (58% and 51%, respectively, vs. 34% of Caucasians). They also subscribe more readily to the belief that social networking sites like Facebook make it easier to support causes today, and that these sites help increase visibility for causes. **Nearly one in three African American adults (30%) and four in ten Hispanics (39%) say they are more likely to support a cause or social issue online than offline—both significantly higher percentages than among Caucasians (24%).**

Online Support

Strongly/Somewhat Agree

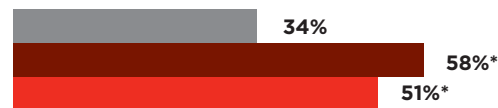
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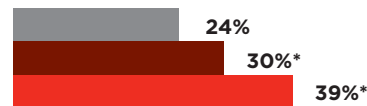
Online social networking sites, like Facebook, allow people to support causes more easily



I feel like I can help get the word out about a social issue or cause through online social networks, like Facebook, Twitter and blogs



I am more likely to support a cause online than offline



■ Caucasians ■ African Americans ■ Hispanics

“African Americans and Hispanics are significantly more likely to believe that they can help get the word out about a social issue or cause through online social networks.”

While traditional media (print and television) and personal relationships remain the primary ways in which Americans learn about causes, **both African Americans and Hispanics are significantly more likely than Caucasians to look to social media as an additional source of information** (31% and 27% vs. 21%, respectively).

Similarly, social media are not among the top ways Americans “most often” support causes—donating money or personal items, talking to others and learning about the issues rank the highest—but again, African Americans and Hispanics are significantly more likely than Caucasians to engage with causes through promotional social media activities (e.g., joining a cause group on Facebook, posting a cause logo to a social profile, contributing to cause blogs).

Sources of Information about Causes

	Caucasians	African Americans	Hispanics
TV program or news story	64%*	66%*	57%
Newspaper article	54%*	42%	43%
Friends	47%*	51%*	38%
Family	45%	47%	39%
Website	36%	41%	41%
<hr/>			
Social Media NET <i>Social Media NET includes blogs and social networking sites.</i>	21%	31%*	27%*

(Only top responses shown)

“Most Often” Ways of Getting Involved

	Caucasians	African Americans	Hispanics
Donating money	42%	38%	39%
Talking to others about it	34%*	39%*	27%
Donating clothing, rewards points, hair or other personal items	25%*	25%	19%
Learning more about the issue and its impact	22%*	22%	16%
Signing a petition for the cause	20%	18%	18%
Volunteering time (i.e., help-lines, soup kitchens, mentoring, cleaning)	18%	18%	16%
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Social Media NET	13%	20%*	18%*

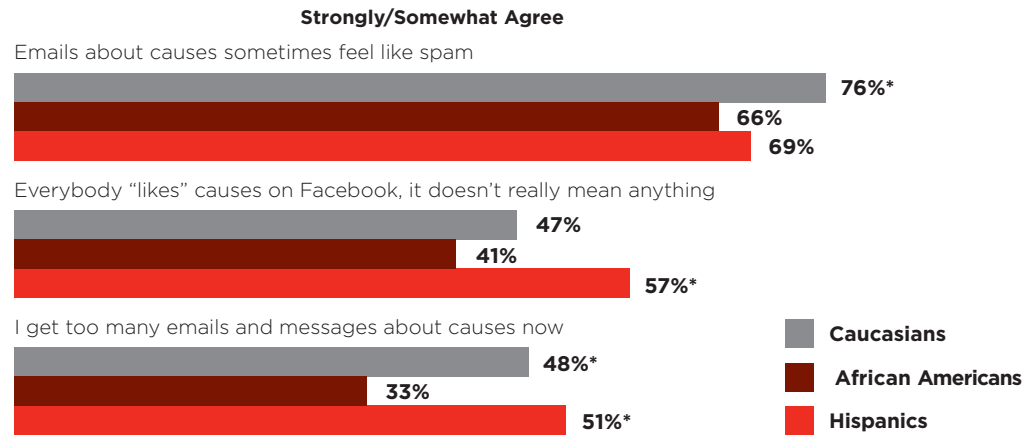
Social media NET includes social media promotional activities (e.g., joining a cause group, posting a logo to a social profile or contributing to a blog).
(Only top responses shown)

“African Americans and Hispanics are significantly more likely to engage with causes through promotional social media activities.”

Potential for Social Media Overload Across Ethnicities

Americans of all ethnicities are generally in agreement when it comes to potential cause-related social media overload, though they differ in the degree to which certain tools drive their “cause fatigue” the most. For example, Caucasians are significantly more likely to feel that emails about causes sometimes feel like spam (76%, vs. 66% of African Americans and 69% of Hispanics). Hispanics are significantly more likely to believe that everybody “likes” causes on Facebook and it doesn’t really mean anything. And **while half of Caucasians and Hispanics (48% and 51%, respectively) agree that they get too many emails about causes now, a significantly lower number of African Americans (33%) feel this way.**

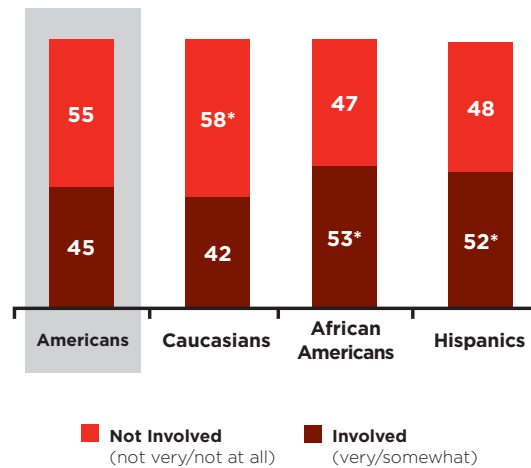
Online Support Fatigue



Supporting Causes is a Family Affair

Americans are in strong agreement that everyone can make a difference by supporting causes. However, **African Americans and Hispanics are significantly more likely than Caucasians to be involved with causes and to believe that supporting causes makes them feel like a part of a community.** They also are significantly more likely to feel that it is important that their family be involved in causes (55% of Hispanics and 54% of African Americans, vs. 46% of Caucasians), and to have been actively involved in supporting causes when growing up (40% of Hispanics and 45% of African Americans, vs. 32% of Caucasians).

Level of Involvement



Cause Beliefs

Caucasians	African Americans	Hispanics	Strongly/Somewhat Agree
76%	79%	78%	I believe everyone can make a difference by supporting causes
76%	78%	78%	Supporting a cause can give you a sense of purpose and meaning in your life
74%	73%	77%	Supporting causes makes me feel good about myself
61%	69%*	70%*	Supporting causes makes me feel like I am part of a community
46%	54%*	55%*	It is important to me that my family is involved in causes
32%	45%*	40%*	I was actively involved in supporting causes when I was growing up

Types of Behavior Changes Vary Across Ethnicities

In addition to making people feel good about themselves and giving them an increased sense of purpose and meaning in life, study results show that cause engagement can actually trigger changes in behavior for those who are engaged. **About half of Caucasians, African Americans and Hispanics** (50%, 54%, and 56% respectively) **agree that they have changed their behavior as a result of cause involvement**, with some differences among ethnicities in the types of behaviors most often changed. African Americans and Hispanics are significantly more likely than Caucasians to agree that they have changed the way they behave toward others (25% and 24%, vs. 18%), while Caucasians are significantly more likely to have made environmental behavior changes (e.g., changing recycling habits, becoming more energy efficient). And African Americans are significantly more likely than either Caucasians or Hispanics to have visited a doctor or medical professional as a result of their involvement in a cause (15%, vs. 9% each).

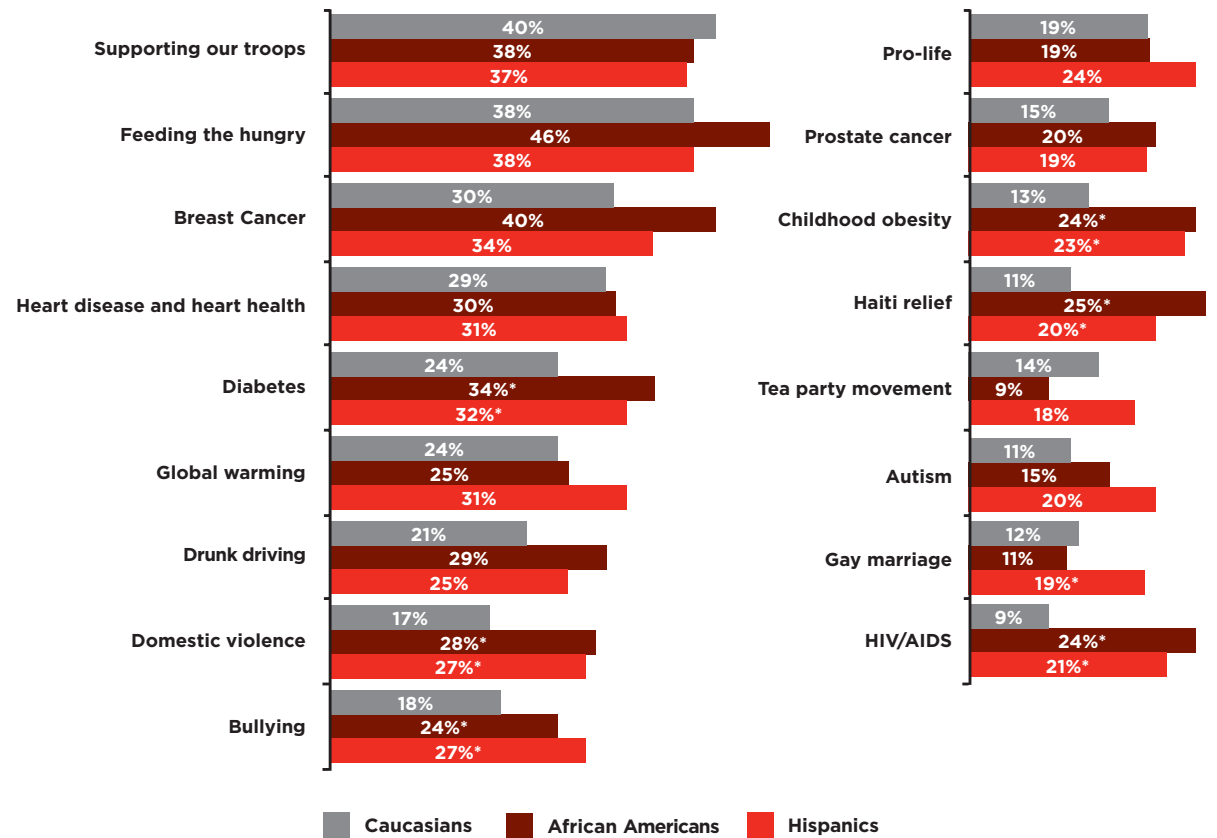
Types of Behavior Change as Result of Cause Involvement

Changed recycling habits	Became more energy efficient	Went to see a doctor or medical professional	Became a mentor	Changed the way I behave towards others
Caucasians 42%*	Caucasians 36%*	Caucasians 9%	Caucasians 8%	Caucasians 18%
African Americans 34%	African Americans 28%	African Americans 15%*	African Americans 16%*	African Americans 25%*
Hispanics 35%	Hispanics 29%	Hispanics 9%	Hispanics 8%	Hispanics 24%*

Supporting Our Troops, Feeding the Hungry and Health-Related Causes Receive Greatest Support Across Ethnicities

Overall, Americans of all ethnicities are in agreement when it comes to the causes in which they are most involved, with supporting our troops, feeding the hungry and health-related causes (e.g., breast cancer, heart disease) topping the list. However, **African Americans and Hispanics are significantly more likely than Caucasians to be involved in several key issues, including diabetes, domestic violence, bullying, childhood obesity, Haiti relief and HIV/AIDS.**

Involvement with Specific Causes (very or somewhat involved)



“African Americans and Hispanics are significantly more likely than Caucasians to be involved in several key issues, including diabetes, domestic violence, bullying, childhood obesity, Haiti relief and HIV/AIDS.”

Which cause is perceived to be the most prominent in 2011? According to Caucasians and Hispanics, supporting our troops will remain the most prominent issue during this year, while for African Americans, childhood obesity ranks higher.

Prominent Causes in 2011

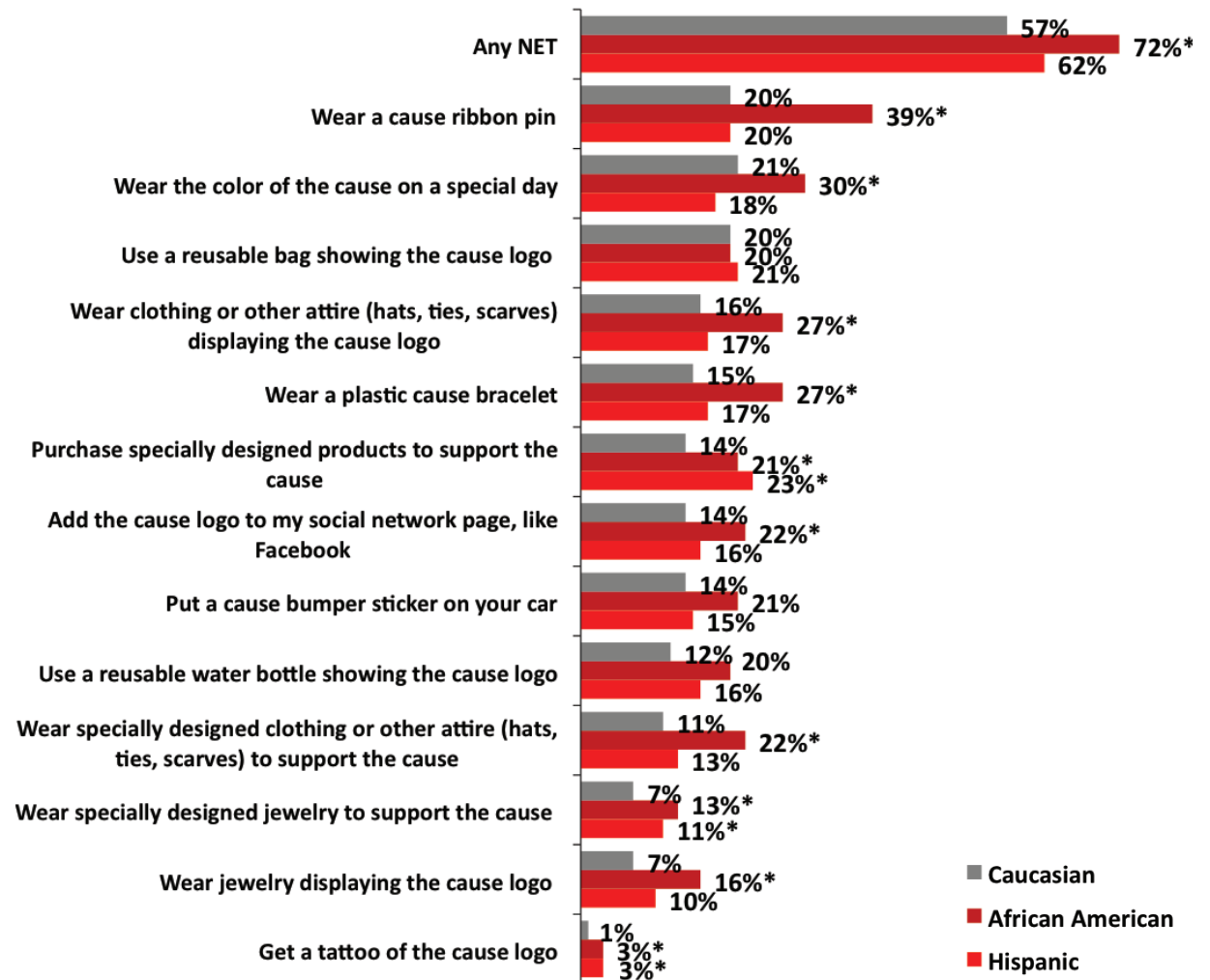
Caucasians	African Americans	Hispanics
Supporting our troops (41%*)	Childhood obesity (37%*)	Supporting our troops (30%)
Feeding the hungry (31%*)	Supporting our troops (33%)	Global Warming (28%)
Bullying (29%)	Breast cancer (32%*)	Bullying (26%)
Tea party movement (29%*)	Feeding the hungry (32%*)	Gay Marriage (25%)
Global Warming (25%)	Bullying (31%)	Breast cancer (24%)
Childhood obesity (25%)	Global Warming (25%)	Feeding the hungry (24%)

(Only top six causes shown)

African Americans More Willing to Display Support of Causes

When it comes to displaying their support for a cause, **African Americans are significantly more willing to show their support than Caucasians and Hispanics** (72%, vs. 57% and 62% respectively). Wearing a cause ribbon or pin and wearing the color of the cause on a special day are on top the list of ways African Americans say they would show their support.

Willingness to Display Support



Demographic Trends: Cause Engagement by Generation

Personal Word-of-Mouth, TV Still Inform Cause Engagement Most Across Generations

Despite the growing popularity of social media as means of engaging with causes today, Americans still look to personal communication with friends and family as well as traditional media when learning about and telling others about causes. While Generation Y is significantly more likely than its older counterparts to utilize social media to learn about causes, more than 4 in 10 Americans age 18-29 still get their information from family (48%), friends (46%) and TV (45%).

Generation Definitions:

- Gen Y: Ages 18 to 29
- Gen X: Ages 30 to 45
- Baby Boomers: Ages 46 to 60
- Silent Gen: Age over 60

Sources of Information about Causes

Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers	Silent Gen
Family (48%)	TV program or news story (56%)	TV program or news story (70%*)	TV program or news story (70%*)
Friends (46%)	Friends (47%)	Newspaper articles (56%)	Newspaper articles (65%*)
TV program or news story (45%)	Family (45%)	Friends (45%)	Friends (45%)
Website (38%)	Website (43%)	Family (45%)	Family (38%)
Social networks (32%*)/ Newspaper articles (32%)	Newspaper articles (41%)	Website (36%)	Magazine Article (37%*)
Social Media NET (35%*)	Social Media NET (30%*)	Social Media NET (21%)	Social Media NET (13%)

Social Media NET includes blogs and social networking sites

Offline Exchange of Cause Information Still Vital

Face-to-face, offline conversations appear to still be the way information about causes is most often relayed among Americans of all generations, according to survey data.

Nearly two-thirds of Americans (62%) report that being told in person is the way they are typically informed of causes and social issues in which others want them to be involved. Even among Generations Y (ages 18 to 29) and X (ages 30 to 45), who are significantly more likely than older generations to report being sent messages or invitations via social media or text messaging, more than half (56% and 59%, respectively) report this face-to-face engagement as the primary way they learn about causes.

Ways People Tell Others about Causes

	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers	Silent Gen
Tell me in person	56%	59%	65%	63%
Forward me an email about a cause	29%	41%	41%	49%*
Tell me over the phone	24%	29%	35%*	38%*
Write me a personal email	19%	33%	28%	33%
Send me information about a website to visit	24%	29%	27%	30%
Invite me to join a cause on Facebook or another online social networking site	26%	26%	19%	14%
Send me a message on Facebook or other online social networking site to add the cause logo or icon (like a ribbon) to my Facebook page or blog	23%*	23%*	14%	12%
Tell me via text message	14%*	11%*	7%	3%
Tell me via instant message (e.g., AIM, Google Chat)	7%	8%	4%	3%

“Nearly two-thirds of Americans report that being told in person is the way they are typically informed of causes and social issues in which others want them to be involved.”

Social Media: Beliefs vs. Actions

Americans of all ages are in agreement that they can make a difference by supporting causes; however, they disagree in their perception of the extent to which social media can help accomplish this. When it comes to showing support for causes, **Generations X and Y subscribe more readily than Baby Boomers (ages 46 to 60) and the Silent Generation (age 61 and over) to the beliefs that social networking sites like Facebook help increase visibility for causes and help them get the word out about causes more easily.** Generations X and Y also are significantly more likely to report that they would support a cause online rather than offline (36% and 37%, respectively).

Online Support

Strongly/Somewhat Agree

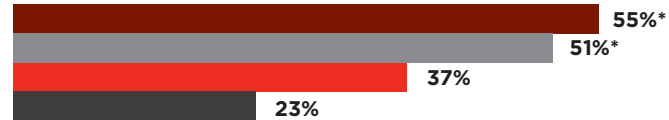
Online social networking sites, like Facebook, increase the visibility of social causes and issues



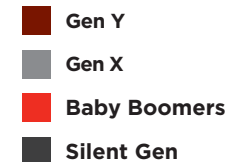
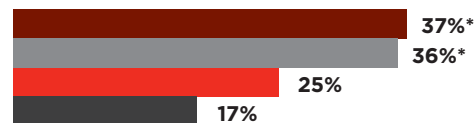
Online social networking sites, like Facebook, allow people to support causes more easily



I feel like I can help get the word out about a social issue or cause through online social networks, like Facebook, Twitter and blogs



I am more likely to support a cause online than offline



However, **even for younger generations, social media continues to remain relatively low on the list of ways Americans typically support causes.** While Generation Y is more likely than older generations to make use of promotional social media tools (e.g., blogs, cause icons on social profiles, cause groups) these still rank below more historically prominent types of engagement (e.g., donating, talking to others about social issues, volunteering, signing a petition).

“Most Often” Ways of Getting Involved

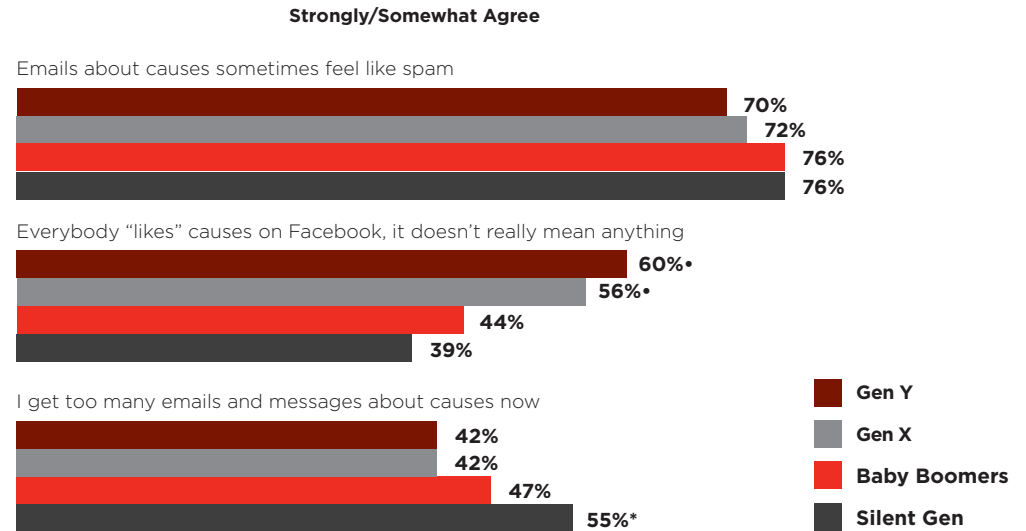
	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers	Silent Gen
Donating money	27%	39%	44%	50%*
Talking to others about it	31%	31%	33%	37%
Donating clothing, rewards points, hair or other personal items	14%	22%	25%	31%
Learning more about the issue and its impact	15%	19%	21%	26%*
Signing a petition for the cause	15%	17%	19%	24%*
Volunteering time (i.e., help-lines, soup kitchens, mentoring, cleaning)	15%	17%	19%	16%
.....				
Social Media NET	21%	18%	14%	8%

Social media NET includes social media promotional activities (e.g., joining a cause group, posting a logo to a social profile or contributing to a blog).

Different Generations, Different Drivers of Online “Cause Fatigue”

Social media users or not, study findings across all generations point to the potential for online cause overload. More than 7 in 10 report that emails about causes sometimes feel like spam. The Silent Generation—which is significantly more likely than younger generations to be told about causes by email—also is significantly more likely to say they receive too many emails about causes (55%). Generations X and Y are significantly more likely to believe that everybody “likes” causes on Facebook and that it doesn’t really mean anything.

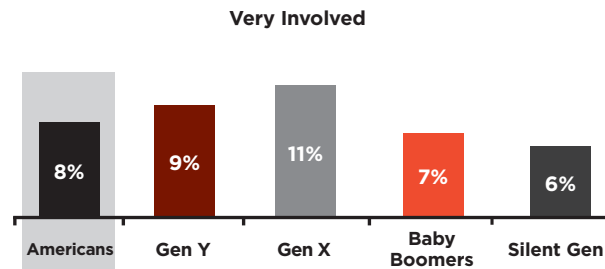
Online Support Fatigue



Gen X Strongest Believers in the Power of Supporting Causes

More than younger and older generations, Generation X has the highest number of people who report being very involved with causes. Generation X is also more likely to believe that supporting causes provides a sense of purpose and meaning in life and enhances the feeling of belonging to a community. In addition, **Generation X is the most concerned about family involvement in causes.** Generation Y, on the other hand, reports having the greatest involvement growing up.

Levels of Involvement



“Generation X is the most concerned about family involvement in causes; Generation Y reports having the greatest involvement growing up.”

Cause Beliefs

Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers	Silent Gen	Strongly/Somewhat Agree
69%	79%	77%	78%	I believe everyone can make a difference by supporting causes
69%	80%	77%	76%	Supporting a cause can give you a sense of purpose and meaning in your life
69%	78%	73%	73%	Supporting causes makes me feel good about myself
58%	68%	64%	62%	Supporting causes makes me feel like I am part of a community
48%	55%	48%	43%	It is important to me that my family is involved in causes
41%	36%	36%	31%	I was actively involved in supporting causes when I was growing up

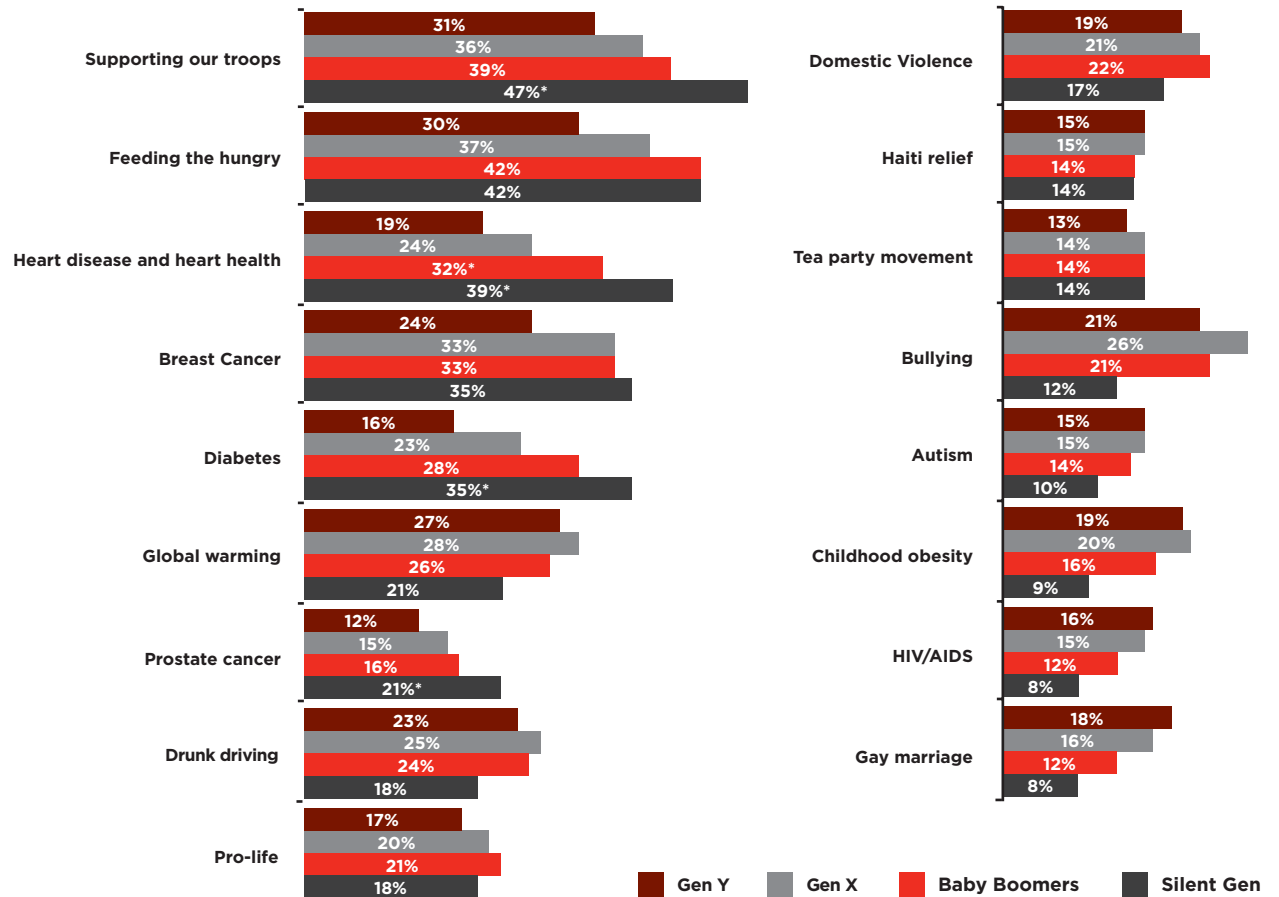
All Generations Share Support for Feeding the Hungry and Supporting Our Troops

Americans of all ages are generally in agreement about the causes in which they are most involved, with supporting our troops and feeding the hungry at the top of the list. **Health-related issues, such as heart disease and diabetes, garner stronger involvement from Baby Boomers and the Silent Generation, while global warming ranks slightly higher among Generations X and Y.**

Looking ahead to the remainder of 2011, **Generation Y believes that gay marriage will be the most prominent cause (28%),** followed closely by supporting our troops, bullying and global warming (26% each). Older Americans (Generation X, Baby Boomers and the Silent Generation) are in agreement that supporting our troops will remain most prominent (31%, 39%, and 50%, respectively).

Involvement with Specific Causes

(very or somewhat involved)



Top 5 Most Prominent Causes in 2011

Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers	Silent Gen
Gay marriage (28%)	Supporting our troops (31%)	Supporting our troops (39%)	Supporting our troops (50%*)
Supporting our troops (26%)	Bullying (28%)	Feeding the hungry (33%)	Feeding the hungry (38%*)
Bullying (26%)	Breast cancer (25%)	Bullying (30%)	Tea party movement (33%*)
Global warming (26%)	Global warming (24%)	Global warming (27%)	Childhood obesity (33%*)
Feeding the hungry (22%)	Childhood obesity (24%)	Tea party movement (25%)	Bullying (30%)

Key Lessons

The results of this study suggest opportunities for organizations and practitioners to deepen the connection between a cause and its supporters. The following are key findings that should be considered when designing strategies and tactics to foster cause engagement:

- **Don't Lose Sight of Traditional Forms of Engagement.** Results highlight the continued importance of historically prominent types of supporting activities (e.g., donating money, volunteering) and of traditional channels of communication (e.g., television and print media, personal relationships) in cause engagement.
- **Make Strategic Use of Social Media to Broaden Engagement.** Although promotional social media activities may not be at the top of the list of ways in which Americans currently engage with causes, Americans do recognize the importance of social media in facilitating the support of causes. This is particularly true among women, younger generations, African Americans and Hispanics. These groups also are more likely than their counterparts to learn about and engage with causes through social media. However, as the use of digital tools in cause engagement increases, the tools

could become drivers of “cause fatigue” if not used strategically. Strategic use of digital media means thinking beyond the “hot tool” of the moment and carefully integrating digital initiatives into a broader strategy to help achieve the defined goals and objectives.

- **Think Beyond Stereotypes: So-Called Slacktivists are More Active Than You May Think.** Americans who support causes by participating in promotional social media activities are engaged in a greater number of different kinds of supporting activities than Americans who do not use social media to engage with causes. This indicates that social media activities actually supplement—rather than replace—the range of historically prominent types of cause engagement activities. Engaging supporters through social media, therefore, holds potential to deepen their overall involvement with a cause.
- **Design strategies and tactics based on audience-specific drivers of engagement: There is no “one size fits all” formula for cause engagement.** Findings highlight significant demographic differences in the types of causes Americans support, how they learn about and engage with causes and how important cause involvement is for them personally and for their families. Therefore, a deep understanding of the

engagement drivers for your specific target audience is fundamental in order to tailor strategies and tactics that will resonate with and move them to the next level of involvement.

- **Consider cause involvement as a strategy to foster behavior change.** Results highlight a potential connection between cause involvement and behavior change. More than half of Americans (52%) affirmed to have changed their behavior as a result of their involvement with a cause. This figure is even higher among women (55%) and Generation X (58%). Therefore, social marketers should consider adding cause engagement to their tool box of strategies to motivate behavior change.

In conclusion, the study results reinforce the importance of combining multiple strategies to offer supporters a wide variety of opportunities to engage. **Integration is the key** in a world where social media is expanding and opening new venues for involvement, but, at the same time, the traditional forms of cause engagement remain critical. **The bottom line: the most appropriate channel depends on your audience and objective.** If you can banish thinking about “online” versus “offline” engagement, and integrate a variety of approaches based on audience research, you will have more success in engaging supporters.