

## New study moves Massachusetts up in charitable-giving ranking

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Bit by bit, Bay Staters are chipping away at their parsimonious image.

A new study ranks Massachusetts the eighth most generous state when it comes to charitable giving, contradicting similar reports that have identified it and other New England states as being among the country's stingiest givers. The same study ranked Massachusetts 11th in 2005.

The Boston Foundation commissioned the study for the first time last year after questioning the conclusions of the widely publicized "Generosity Index," which repeatedly has placed Massachusetts near the very bottom of the philanthropy scale. That annual index, by the Catalogue for Philanthropy, contains what the Boston Foundation calls a built-in bias against high-income states.

To remedy that inequity, the Boston Foundation study takes into account each state's cost of living, tax burden, and other regional factors that affect philanthropy. In Massachusetts, for example, high housing costs are blamed for limiting many people's ability to make charitable gifts. Religious affiliations and ethnic differences are also cited as affecting charitable giving.

The new methodology, based on number-crunching of federal data by researchers at Boston College's Center on Wealth and Philanthropy, is a more accurate measuring stick for comparing state-by-state giving, according to the study's authors.

Paul S. Grogan, president and chief executive of the Boston Foundation, called this year's study a "new, national effort to develop valid metrics to place the whole subject of philanthropy on a more professional and credible foundation."

After taking a similar approach to tracking philanthropy nationwide, a report issued last month by NewTithing Group, a San Francisco nonprofit, ranked Massachusetts the 32nd most charitable state. However, that report emphasized liquid assets such as cash, stocks, and bonds (but not houses or retirement accounts) rather than household income, and included only households with more than \$200,000 in annual income; the Boston Foundation report calculates charitable giving rates for the entire state population.

Sacha Pfeiffer can be reached at [pfeiffer@globe.com](mailto:pfeiffer@globe.com). ■