

Foundation Giving Trends

Key facts and figures on giving, income and assets in the top 300 UK Independent Charitable Foundations

The Association of Charitable Foundations' report, Giving Trends, shows that grant spending by the top 300 foundations in 2014/15 reached a record £2.7 billion, finally overtaking the £2.5 billion spent in 2008 before the credit crisis, although the level hasn't yet recovered in real terms. Nonetheless, the overall trend over recent years is for foundation spending to grow, despite an underlying 'bumpiness' in their finances over the same period, with dramatic swings in the annual growth of voluntary income, and asset growth slowing with the economy, following two years of rising values. In sum, with grant spending growing more steadily than income, the results suggest the helpfulness of the 'total return' approach taken by some foundations, taking advantage of capital growth as well as investment income to support grants.

The value of the combined net assets of the Top 300, largely comprised of investments, reached a new high of £54 billion in 2014/15. Assets are concentrated, with a few large foundations controlling a large proportion of the sector 'wealth' (see diagram). Asset values have steadily grown over the last 5 years from £42 billion in 2010/2011. The report also provides analysis of 16,500 grants, to show where the money goes, and presents evidence that education and training receives the lion's share of all grant-making, followed by health and arts and culture.

The role of family and corporate foundations are also highlighted as growing sources of income for the sector.

Top 10 foundations by net assets

	£million
Wellcome Trust (Sept-15)	17,125.30
Garfield Weston Foundation (Apr-15)	10,852.58
Children's Investment Fund Foundation (Aug-14)	2,622.43
Leverhulme Trust (Dec-14)	2,143.76
City Bridge Trust (Mar-15)	1,151.60
Henry Smith Charity (Dec-14)	838.80
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation (Dec-14)	836.68
Health Foundaton (Dec-14)	831.55
Wolfson Foundation (Apr-15)	728.64
Paul Hamlyn Foundation (Mar-15)	659.87

Source ACF, 2016