The 2015 Survey of Effective Altruists: Results and Analysis

In November 2015, .impact released an Effective Altruism Survey to help the community better understand its actions, values, demographics and ideas. After consultation, the survey was initially released only in the Effective Altruism Facebook group, but was subsequently shared more widely. This is the second year that the survey has been carried out, which means it's possible to see what's changed in the community in the last year.

The results should be useful to anyone involved in movement-building, analysing the impact of the Effective Altruism community as a whole (especially with reference to donations), or anyone who's interested in a snapshot of what Effective Altruism looked like in 2015. If you're confused by any abbreviations used in the report, see the list of abbreviations near the end.

Contents

Key Findings

- 2904 sincere people took the survey, and out of those 2352 people would consider themselves EAs. All the following results look only at the people who'd consider themselves EAs. This is three times as many people as last year!
- The most popular way for people to hear about EA was Less Wrong (20%), followed by 'personal connection' (11%) and 'Book/article/blog post etc.' (11%), but 20% of people didn't answer this question. More people heard about EA for the first time this year than any other year, with the number of people that first heard about EA in a year increasing with time.
- 37% of EAs identified Poverty as the 'Top Priority' cause area. The next-most-popular top priority cause was prioritisation, with 9.4% of EAs identifying this as the Top Priority.
- 885 of the EAs sampled donated money to an EA or EA-recommended organisation. The most popular organisations to donate to were AMF, SCI, and Give Directly.
- Total donations (**in 2014**) from EAs sampled were $6,765,244, with the median being $330; this is very skewed by large donors.
- 56 donated both last year and this year, and the median increase in donation amount was $296
- 436 (37% of those who answered the question) said yes to *'Do insecurities about not being "EA enough" sometimes prevent you from taking action or participating more in the EA community?'*

- 717 (64% of those who answered) said that EA was welcoming, 103 (9%) said that EA was unwelcoming

Background

To help you understand the survey, and its limitations, I'm going to briefly touch on its methodology.

It's easy to survey, say, all Americans in a reliable way, because we know where Americans live and we know how to send surveys to a random sample of them. Sure, there may be difficulties with subpopulations who are too busy or subpopulations who don't have landlines (though surveys now call cell phones), but on the whole it's possible to see how to get a random sample of Americans. Contrast this with trying to survey effective altruists. It's hard to know who is an EA without asking them first, but we can't exactly send surveys to random people all across the world and hope for the best. Instead, we have to do our best to figure out where EAs can be found, and try to get the survey to them.

We did our best, but some groups may have been oversampled (more survey respondents, by percentage, from that group than are actually in the true population of all EAs) or undersampled (not enough people in our sample from that subpopulation to be truly representative). This is a limitation that we really felt last year, with a lot of discussion over whether we had an unrepresentative sample, and so this year, we took the results in two stages. Initially we shared the survey on the EA facebook page, and told people not to share the link more widely. Once the results from that sample stopped coming back in, we started to send the survey off to other areas (such as emailing to local groups, and sharing on Less Wrong and Slate Star Codex). We tracked them through different referral URLs, but unfortunately the tracking URL system failed for slightly less than a half of the EAs.

A breakdown of the properties of the different populations is shown in the [subpopulation analysis](), where we show that although there are some demographic differences in the subpopulations, it's not possible to detect a difference in the main cause area or donation amounts between different subpopulations.

Analysis was done in R. All scripts and associated data can be found in the public [GitHub repository]() for the project. Data was collected by Tom Ash and then handed to the data analysis team in anonymized format, as described in the survey's privacy policy. Currencies were converted into American dollars and standardized using contracted virtual assistants, and then processed and analyzed using the open source [Surveytools2 R package](), created by Peter Hurford.

Results

The survey page was loaded by 2,904 unique, sincere visitors (those who answered "Yes" to the question "Are you giving genuine, sincere answers?"). 2799 (96.4%) of them answered the question on whether they self described as an EA. Of those 2799 people, 2352 (84.0%) of these people considered themselves members of the EA movement and were included for the entire analysis. This is three times the number of EAs we sampled last year.

There are several plausible reasons why the survey reached many more people this year. Firstly, the survey was more widely advertised this year than last. Secondly, we see later in the report (in this section) that the Effective Altruism movement itself has grown a lot in the last year, with around one-quarter of the self-identifying EAs having joined in the last year; both these factors together can explain the increase in number of EAs surveyed this year.

|	Have you heard of the term "Effective Altruism" or "EA" before?		
Could you, however loosely, be described as "an Effective Altruist"?		Heard of EA	Hadn't heard of EA
	Would consider themselves an EA	2239	38
	Wouldn't consider themselves an EA	312	113

This considers all the responses to the survey, excluding 202 sincere entries who didn't answer at least one of the questions

Results for the just the initial Facebook sample

	Heard of EA	Hadn't heard of EA
Would consider themselves an EA	257	0
Wouldn't consider themselves an EA	6	1

The sample from the Effective Altruism Facebook group had a much higher proportion of people who had heard of EA and would consider themselves EAs, which is not very surprising.

To put the 2239 EAs in perspective, last year's EA survey managed to sample 813 EAs, the Effective Altruism facebook group has around 10,000 members, and Giving What We Can has around 2,000 members (as of July 2016). So assuming that the number of EAs is in the region of five to ten thousand, we have managed to sample a sizeable portion of the movement!
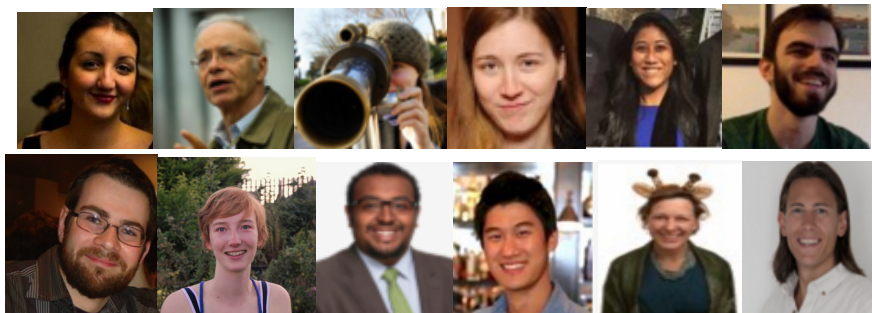
A snapshot of people who identify as EAs

Cause Areas

EAs have different ideas as to which causes will have the most impact. This year we asked which causes people think are important, presenting a series of causes and letting people answer that it was "The top priority", "Near the top priority", through to "I do not think any EA resources should be devoted to this cause".

Poverty was overwhelmingly identified as the "Top priority", as can be seen in the chart below. The causes that were identified as "Near Top" were much more varied. Causes which many EAs thought no resources should go to included politics, animal welfare, and AI. There were very few people who didn't want to put any EA resources into combating poverty.

Number of EAs who identify a cause as the top priority
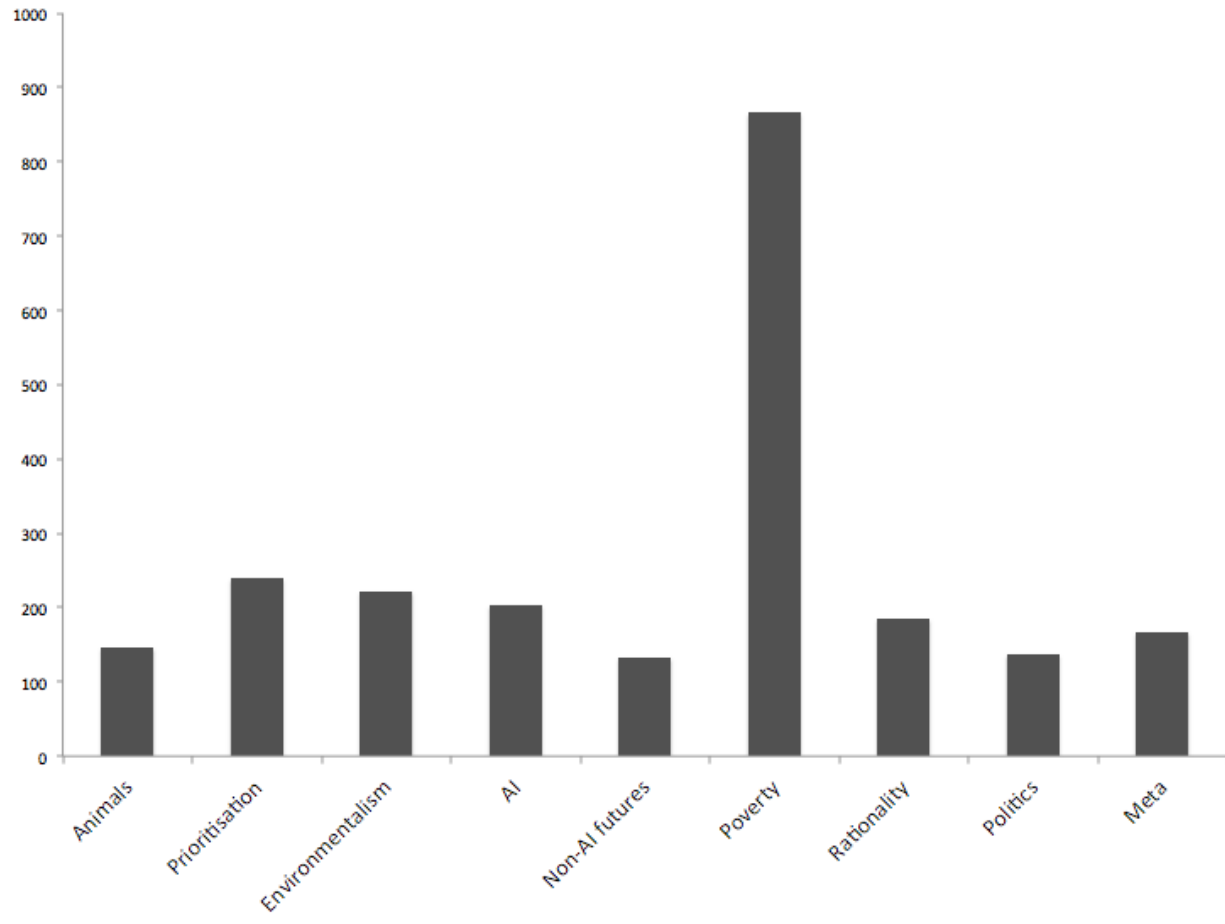
Number of EAs who identify a cause as near the top priority
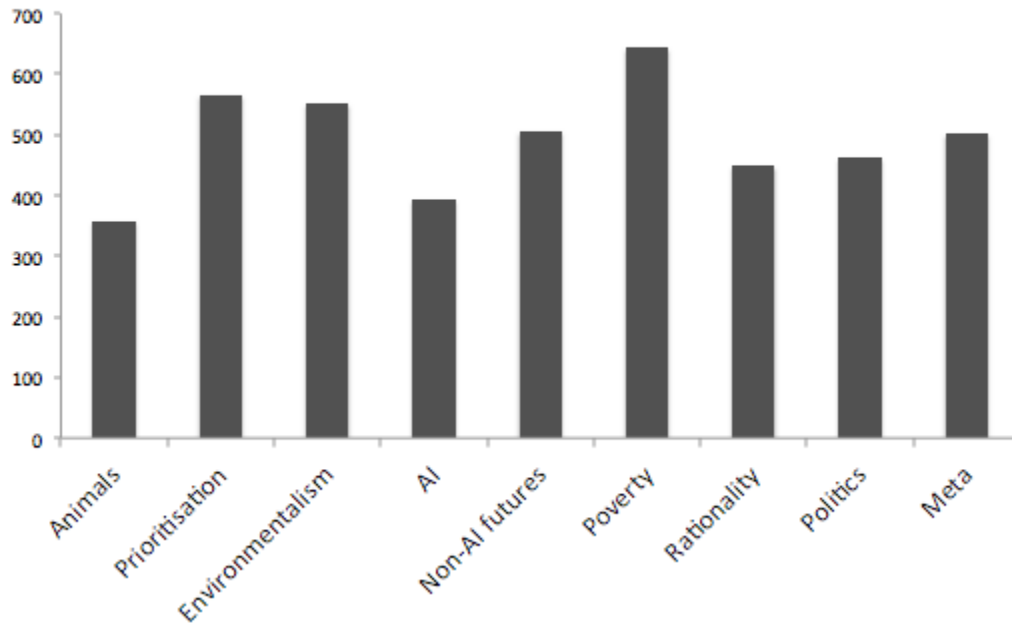
Number of EAs that think no EA resources should go towards:
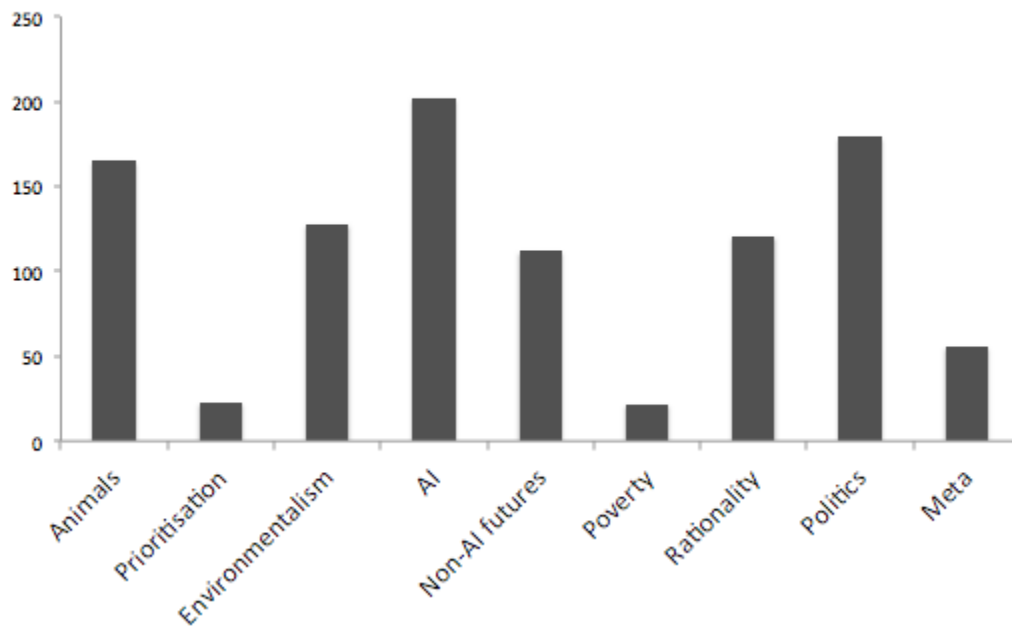
How are Cause Areas correlated with demographics?

As might be expected, the identification of Animal Welfare as the top priority was highly correlated with the amount of meat that EAs were eating. The chart below shows the dietary choices of those who identify animal welfare as the top priority. The second chart shows the proportion of diets in the EA population as a whole. Those who identified animal welfare as the top priority were overwhelmingly vegan, much more than the EA rate of ~20%, which is in turn much higher than the estimated veganism rate in the US of ~0.5%.

Dietary Choices of EAs, comparing those who identified animal welfare as the "Top Priority" and the general EA Population
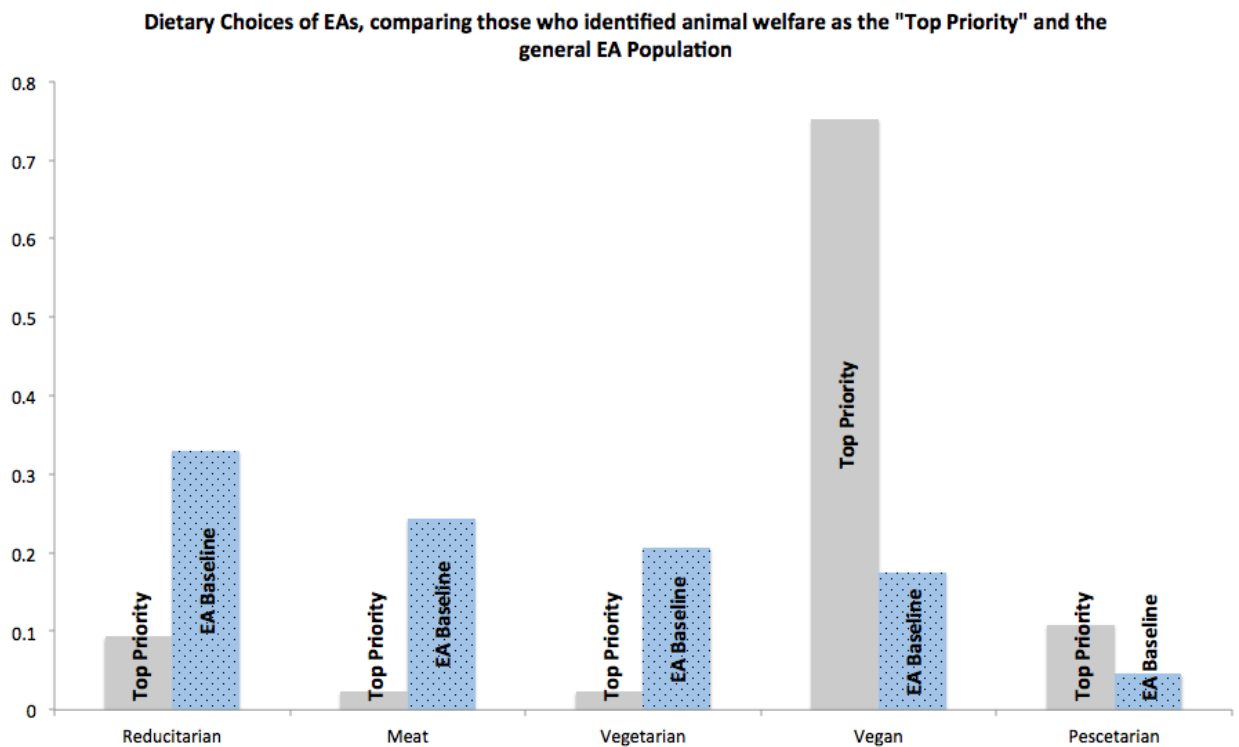
Donations

While it's useful to hear what people think about different causes, it's also interesting to see if they put their money towards a cause. We asked the EAs if they had donated money to a large list of EA-related organisations. The results are shown in the chart below:

Number of EAs who donated to various EA organisations
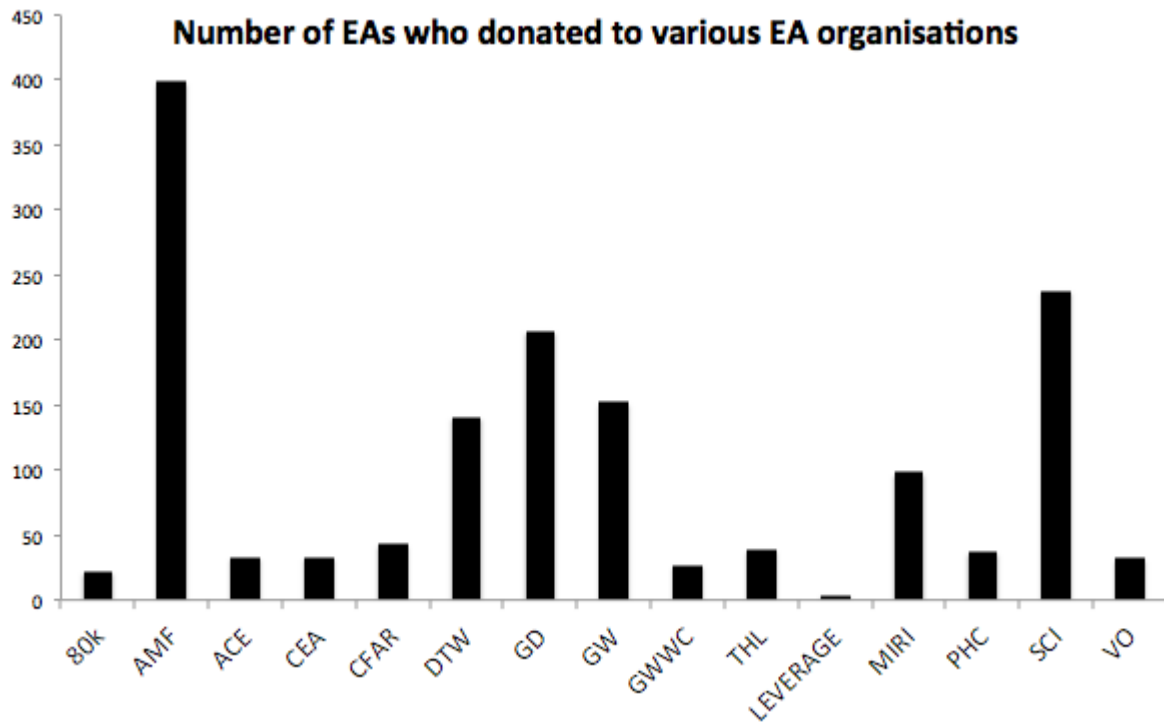
See the index for any unclear abbreviations

As might be expected, the organisations which the most people sent some money to were the charities top-rated by GiveWell, as well as GiveWell itself.

We can break down the donation figures by how they came across the survey, using the referrer URL. More details of these sub-populations can be be found in the subpopulation analysis.

Donations: LessWrong - Referred
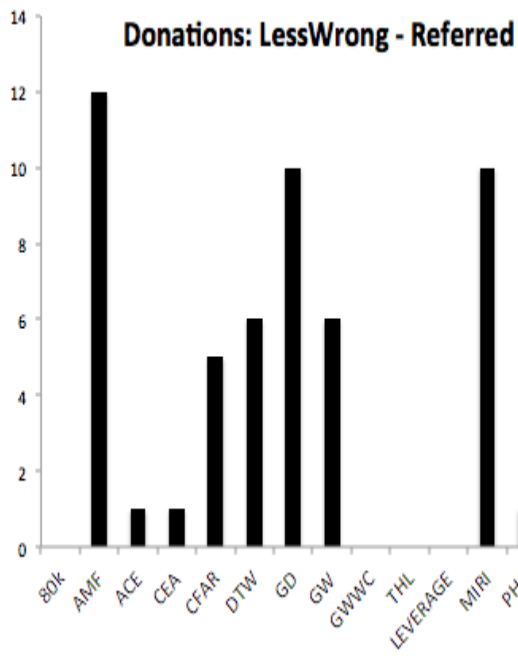
Donations: SlateStarCodex - Referred
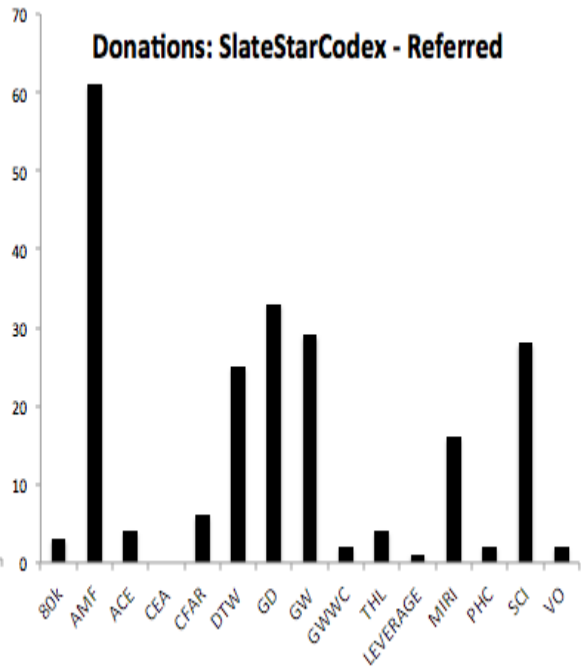
Donations: No Referrer
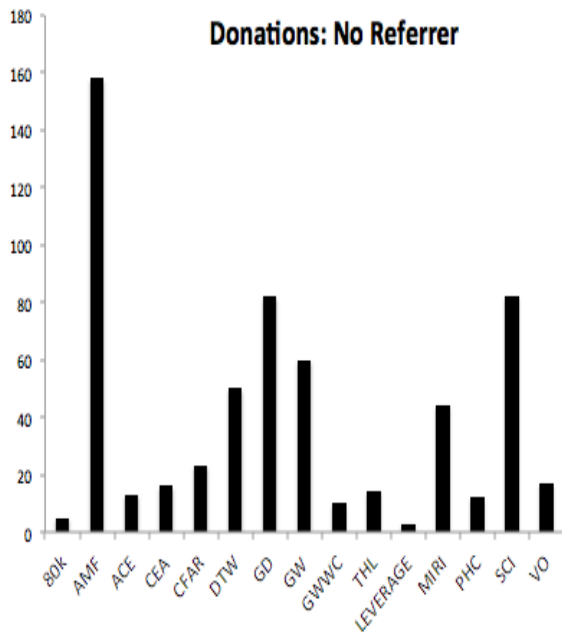
Donations: EA FB Group - Referred
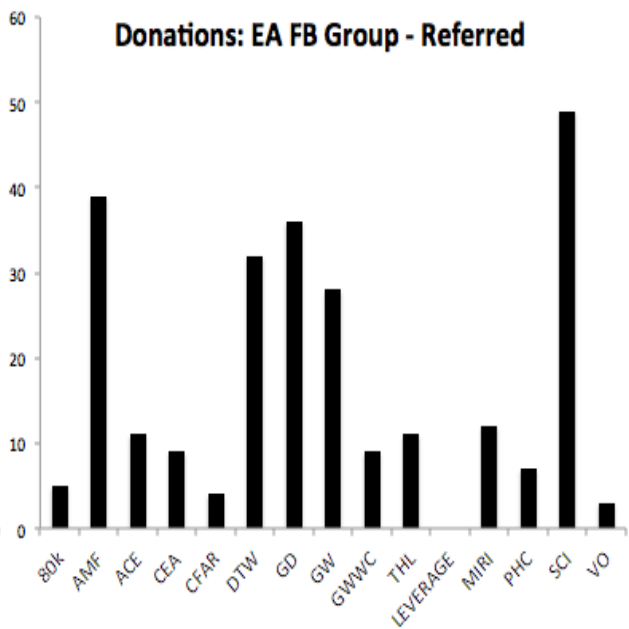
The take-away message is that in terms of number of donation destinations, sub-populations are quite similar. The Less Wrong population prefer MIRI and CFAR compared to the overall population, the EA FB group and the No Referrer group, while the EA FB group prefers SCI compared to the overall population. Note that the Less Wrong population had a small size, so there's a large sampling error.

How Much are EAs Donating?

Donating money seems to be an activity commonly associated with effective altruism, and certainly something we want to emphasize. So how much are these EAs donating? We asked about 2014 donations, as the survey started before the end of 2015. Similarly, last year we asked about 2013 donations. Across our entire survey, 1341 people shared the amounts they'd donated. 1171 of these were self-described EAs.

One might expect that these donation are overreported, as people who would donate less might be less inclined to report it. However, the number of people reporting 0 donations (345 people, 286 of which are self-described EAs) shows that maybe people were more forthcoming than we'd expect. So we painstakingly standardized all the donations into US dollars and found out that the average 2014 donation was $5,777 among all EAs who took the survey.This seems impressive, but it's because the number is highly right-skewed by a few major donors.

The more informative metric, the median donation, was $333. Certainly good, but not as impressive. Donations are clearly affected by student status, as the median donation of non--students was $1000, compared to the median donation of students at $100.00. The 406 students who donated gave $539,760.20, whilst the 697 non-students who donated gave $5,780,380. Maybe mean / median isn't a good way to visualize the donations. Instead, let's look at it in terms of deciles, as in, how much would you have to donate to be in the top X% of donors (based on the reports that we have)?

To be in the top 90%...	$0	Top 9%...	$9,414.02
Top 80%...	$0	Top 8%...	$10,000.00
Top 70%...	$46.05	Top 7%...	$11,007.70
Top 60%...	$150	Top 6%...	$14,382.56
Top 50%...	$332.76	Top 5%...	$15,661.60
Top 40%...	$763.28	Top 4%...	$20,000.00

Top **30%...**	$1,600	Top **3%...**	$25,000.00
Top **20%...**	$3,800	Top **2%...**	$48,000.00
Top **10%...**	$8,000	Top **1%...**	$100,000.00

And to beat the #1 donation in our registry, you'd have to donate more than 1 million dollars!

This shows the true nature of EA donations: highly skewed toward a few, top donors. Arguably, even someone working a minimum wage job could afford to be in the top 50% of EA donors, but it would take quite the earning to give career to be able to make it into the top 1%. In total, the 2014 donations among all self described EAs in our survey was over $6.77M. That's a good haul! If you made donations not reported in the survey, please report them via the EA Donation Registry, which lets you anonymously bump up the public total for 'team EA' and also if you so choose share your own donations to inspire others.

Percentage of Income Donated

The mean EA in our sample donates 7.5%[1], but again this is because of a skew. The median is 3.0%. While this may seem low when benchmarked against the 10% of the Giving What We Can pledge, it is higher than the United States national average of around 2% of GDP[2]. To better visualize, let's look at how many people donate a certain amount of income or higher. Since many did not fill out their income or have income less than $10,000, this is based on a sample of 624 EAs

Donate **1% or more....**	415	**30%...**	28
2%	345	**40%...**	15
3%	281	**50%...**	13
5%	254	**60%...**	9
10%	166	**70%...**	7

1 Percent income percentages were performed only for people with income greater than $10K, as donations as a percentage of income became quite absurd with low incomes, including many people donating without any income at all. This was chosen prior to any analysis.
2 https://www.philanthropy.com/article/The-Stubborn-2-Giving-Rate/154691

15%	74	**80%...**	5
20%	49	**90%...**	3

At least 166 EAs in our survey are on pace with the Giving What We Can pledge, but many are not. This just goes to show that 10% is a big ask, even for EAs earning more than $10K. Though having 13 people committed to the 50% level or higher is pretty impressive! Keep in mind, however, that this is just a snapshot of 2014, and not necessarily an indication of any sort of sustainable long term pledging. Also, keep in mind that this doesn't capture the EAs that are saving now while waiting for better causes to donate to later. If you are interested in some actual donations and donation plans that people have made, check out the EA Donation Registry.

Giving What We Can

Giving What We Can ask their members to sign a pledge to donate 10% of their pre-tax income to effective charities. Students and people who are unemployed are not expected to donate 10%. Filtering out the students, and those with an income of less than $10,000 (as well as those who didn't fill out student or income status) we find that:

	Is GWWC Member	Isn't GWWC Member
Donates 10% or more	75	57
Donates less than 10%	69	274

Excluding those with less than $10,000 yearly income, students, and those who didn't fill out income, donations or student status. Interestingly, there were 25 students with more than $10,000 income who donated more than 10% of it, 18 of them GWWC members.

Donations Among Earning to Give

And, of course, the big question on everyone's mind: how much money are these "earning to give" people making? And how much are they donating? Keep in mind that this question includes people who want to pursue earning to give, but haven't started yet. In 2014, the total donations amongst the 316 people who identify their career plan as "Earning to give" was $2,719,259.

Excluding students, the median donation in 2014 for the 236 non-students on an "earning to give" path is $782.835, which is actually less than the median donation for non-students generally. This suggests that many of the people who are aiming to earn to give are aiming to give later, and perhaps building up career capital in the meantime.

We can break this down further by looking at the answers to the question "Do you believe that - for you at the moment - it is better to act now or invest to act better later?". Of the 112 non-students who answered "Act now" and said their career plan was earning to give, the median donation was $1,933. Of the 59 non-students who answered "Act later", the median donation was $131. This gives a lot of evidence to the theory that the low median donation for earning to give is due to people investing to give later.

Change in donations

Since this is the second year we have collected the EA survey, we're able to identify people who're taking it for the second year in a row. Of those people, 56 supplied donation information both this year and last year.

Although some decreased and some increased their donation amount, the mean person increased their donation amount by $2437. This figure hides a huge variance, with a few people increasing or decreasing their donation amount by over $10,000. Still, encouragingly, the median is positive, with a value of $296. However the small sample size means that this can't be used to make very firm conclusions at all.

EA Demographics

Age

EAs are also said to be pretty young. This year, our mean age is 28 and our median age is 26. To get a better visualization, we can look at a histogram of ages. EA ages spanned a range of 66 years, from the youngest at 14 to the oldest at 80. Comparing to last year's survey, over the past year, the mean EA has aged by 1.3 years.

Histogram of EA Ages
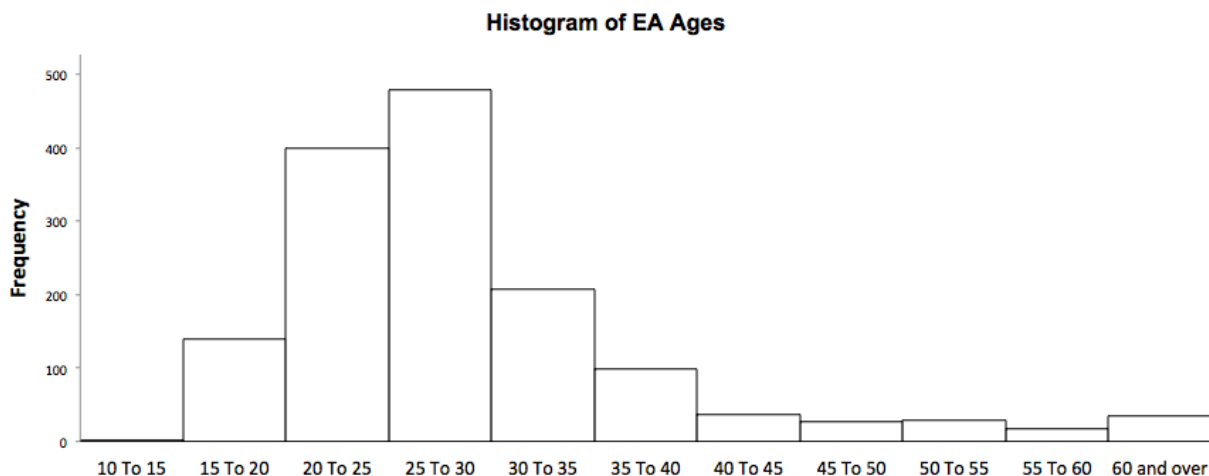
Gender

The sample of EAs we got is also very male-biased. Of the 1626 who answered the question asking how they self-identified regarding gender, 1194 (73%) identified as male, 398 (24%) identified as female, and 34 (2%) respondents identified as "other," that is some identity aside from male and female. This is completely in line with the 2014 survey, which had a 75% male rate. It's clear that EA has a significant problem with gender diversity, which is worse than that of the UK House of Commons (at 71% men), and directly between the percentages of men in Philosophy/Economics (~70%) and Computer Science and Maths (~80%) PhDs[3].

Where do our EAs live?

In which country do you live?			
United States	782	Brazil	14
UK	285	France	14
Australia	100	Poland	14
Germany	81	Sweden	14
Canada	74	Belgium	9
Switzerland	36	Finland	9
Norway	28	Singapore	8
Netherlands	21	Denmark	7
New Zealand	16	Others	115

Excluding the 724 people who didn't answer the question

As you can see, the two hubs of the US and the UK are quite strong, with 65.5% of all surveyed EAs. Australia and Canada don't do too bad either, being another 10.6% of all EAs. Also encouraging is the number of EAs in countries which don't have English as a first language, who make up 22.2%, although there is still some way to go. (Ireland is the only country counted in 'others' with English as a first language). If you're interested in telling people about EA in a non-English language, then check out the EA wiki list of Non-English Language EA Venues, and please add to it if you know any more resources.

3 PHDs gender ratios from Leslie 2015: http://slatestarcodex.com/blog_images/l_gre_math2.png

Also, many people made their locations public information, and you can see them visualized on the Map of EA locations - an image from which is shown below.
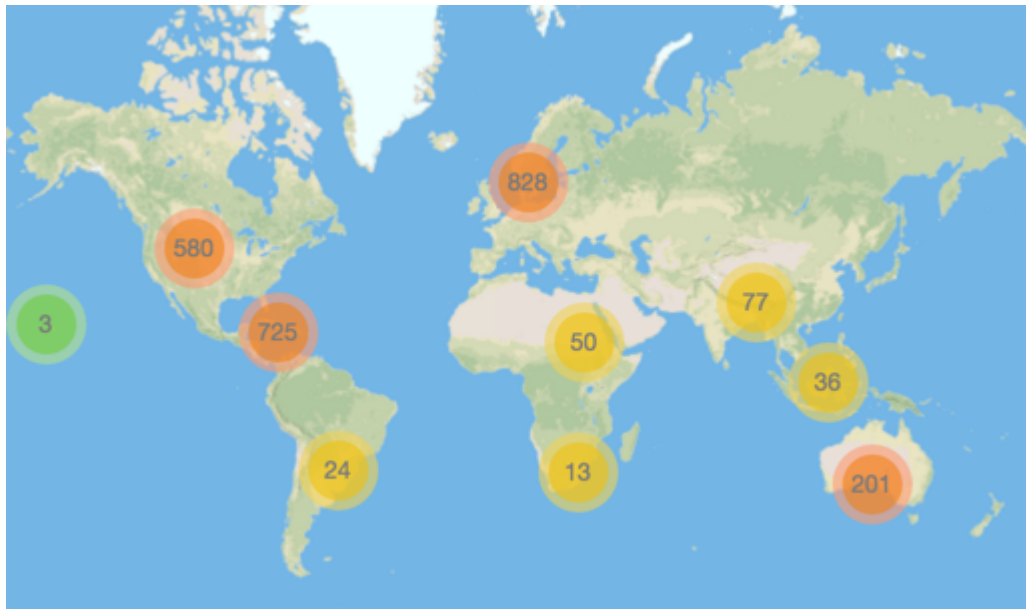
Where do they live?

In which city do you live?			
London (UK)	117	Berkeley (US)	43
San Francisco (US)	107	Oxford (UK)	37
Boston / Cambridge (US)	62	Cambridge (UK)	32
New York (US)	60	Melbourne (AU)	25
Washington DC (US)	49	Chicago (US)	24
Seattle (US)	46	Vancouver (CA)	20
Other		834	

Excluding the 896 people who didn't answer the question

For this question we had a drop-down list of common "EA Hubs" and then allowed free-form response. Some of the cities identified in the free-form response had many more EAs than the preselected hubs - for instance Seattle, which we didn't identify as a hub before, has 46 EAs, more than twice as many as Vancouver (with 20), which was on the drop-down list.

Last year's survey pointed out that there was a lot of potential for EA hubs in New York and Washington DC. Despite the Centre for Effective Altruism itself being in Oxford, it loses out to London in terms of EA numbers, though the San Francisco Bay Area (including Berkeley) seems to have the highest number of EAs overall. However, more EAs live outside of "Hubs" than inside, with a very large number of EAs living in cities with no other EAs. If we grew all of these cities into hubs to rival the size of hubs in the US and UK, we could dramatically expand the number of Eas.

Religion

What are your religious beliefs?	
Atheist, agnostic or non-religious	1325 (87%)
Christian	131 (8.6%)
Jewish	39 (2.6%)
Buddhist	23 (1.5%)
Muslim	4 (0.26%)
Hindu	3 (0.20%)
Sikh	2 (0.13%)

Excluding the 825 people who didn't answer the question on religion

It has been suggested that the EA community should reach out to religious groups more. The proportion of non-religious people is almost exactly the same as that in last year's survey (88% last year compared to 87% this year), so such efforts clearly have a long way to go.

Philosophy

What moral philosophy, if any, do you lean towards?				
Consequentialism (Utilitarian)	No opinion, or not familiar with these terms	Consequentialism (NOT Utilitarian)	Virtue Ethics	Deontology
767 (56%)	305 (22%)	177 (13%)	71 (5%)	44 (3%)

Excluding the 988 people who didn't answer this question

No definition of these terms were given in the survey.

Do they see EA as an opportunity or an obligation?

There has been a lot of discussion over whether to treat Effective Altruism as an obligation, as famously championed by Peter Singer in this classic essay, or a (non-obligatory) opportunity to do a huge amount of good.

Do you think of Effective Altruism more as an "opportunity" or an "obligation"?			
Both	Opportunity	Obligation	Other
622 (42%)	505 (34%)	306 (21%)	51 (3%)

Excluding the 868 people who didn't answer this question

Careers

What Careers are These EAs Planning on Pursuing?

What broad career path are you planning to follow?			
Direct charity / non-profit work	Earning to give	None of these	Research

190	512	375	362

Excluding the 913 people who didn't answer this question

What careers do the EAs have at the moment?

A free-form text box was used for occupation, which made the analysis a bit tricky. Of the 963 people who answered, there were 221 people who were programmers of some sort (found by searching for matches to "engineer" or "software" or "programmer", then checking and removing those who were e.g. mechanical engineers). 78 people used the word "research" in their occupational description, while 48 used "consult" (i.e. consultancy or consultant), 38 used the word "student", while 24 people had a job that involved "data" (including 9 "Data Scientist"). There was a huge range of careers, including nurses, priests, writers and analysts.

What subject did they study at school?

What subject(s) if any did you specialise in?					
Economics	**Engineering**	**Mathematics**	**Medicine**	**Philosophy**	**Humanities**
196 (10%)	171 (9%)	324 (17%)	77 (4%)	218 (12%)	173 (9%)
Psychology	**Social Sciences**	**Sciences**	**Vocational**	**Physics**	
121 (6%)	218 (11%)	188 (10%)	79 (4%)	143 (8%)	

Excluding the 617 people who didn't answer the question

There's still a large bias towards Philosophy, Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths, which counted together account for 60% of the EAs we sampled (not counting social sciences and economics as sciences). This is against a background of around 40% of students (in the UK) taking science subjects[4]

Has EA changed people's career direction?
We asked "Have you taken (or plan to take) a different career or education path than you would have otherwise taken, for EA reasons?". Out of the 1,481 people who answered, 467 (32%) said "yes", 896 (60%) said "no", and 8% said "other". Many of the "Yes" responses were quite substantial changes, involving switching to completely different degrees or careers. A large

---

4 https://www.hesa.ac.uk/stats

number of the comments described how EA had inspired them to leave academia to work on more applied subjects.

How do EAs interact with the movement?

This year we asked questions about how the EAs heard about the movement, and how they got more involved.

In roughly which year did you first get involved in EA?							
Before 2009	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
60	39 (3.6%)	57 (3.4%)	81 (4.9%)	136 (8.3%)	262 (16%)	396 (24%)	606 (37%)

Excluding 715 people who didn't answer this questions

Number of People who Got Involved with EA by Year (Self-Reported)
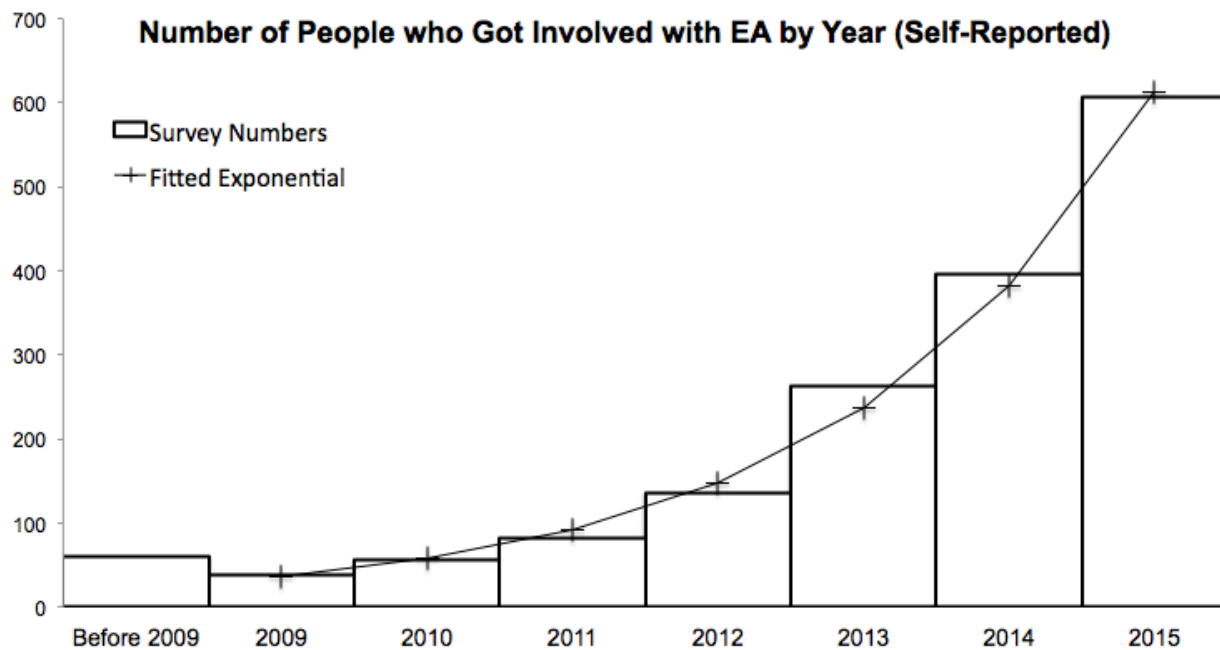
This is encouraging news for outreach: the number of EAs getting involved has been increasing each year. Also shown is an exponential curve which models the survey numbers very well (with

an R^2 > 0.99). If the growth keeps to this rate, then we can expect around 1000 people to get involved in 2016.

Ways of hearing about EA over time

Here we look at the number of responses we got to the question "How did you first hear about EA?", and cross-referenced them with the results of the quest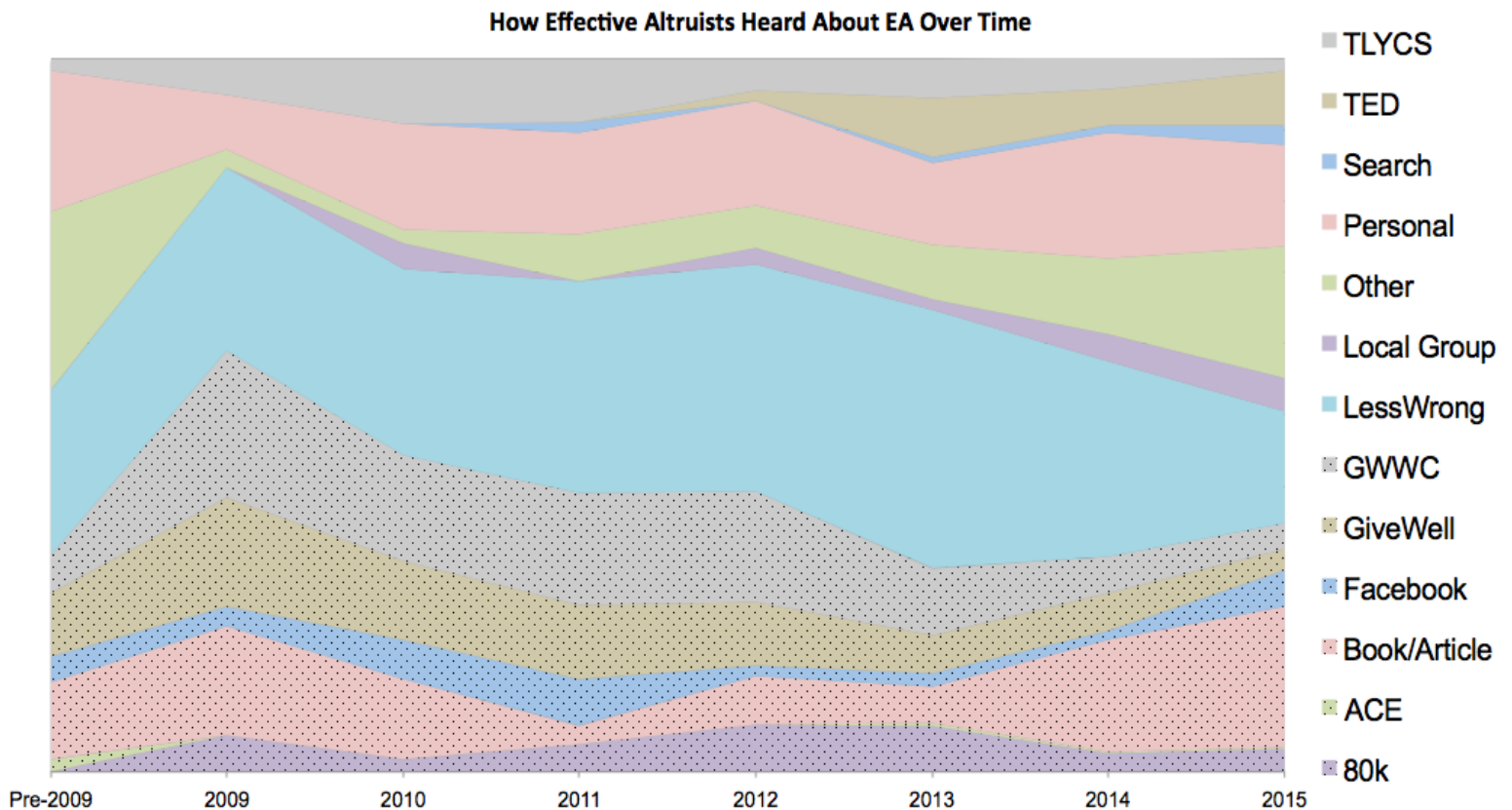ion "In roughly which year did you first get involved in EA?". This gives a rough idea of how the ways of hearing about EA have changed over time. It's important to bear in mind, however, the limitations - both of the questions asked respondents to recall from possibly long periods ago, and also the second question referred to 'getting involved' as opposed to hearing about EA. It's very plausible that a large number of EAs heard about EA and then 'got involved' much later.

How Effective Altruists Heard About EA Over Time

Legend: TLYCS, TED, Search, Personal, Other, Local Group, LessWrong, GWWC, GiveWell, Facebook, Book/Article, ACE, 80k

X-axis: Pre-2009, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015

Taking the caveats on board, the graph does have some interesting lessons, pointing to a growth in people hearing about EA through books, 'Other', and the decline of Less Wrong as a promoting force for EA. The growth in book referrals makes a lot of sense given the publication of *Doing Good Better* by William MacAskill in mid-2015. Similarly, Less Wrong as a whole has had decreasing numbers of posts since 2011[5], and the decline of its community as a whole helps to explain its decreasing impact on EA outreach.

Ways people got involved compared to ways they heard about EA

We can compare the ways in which people first heard about EA to the ways in which people got involved, as shown in the graph below.
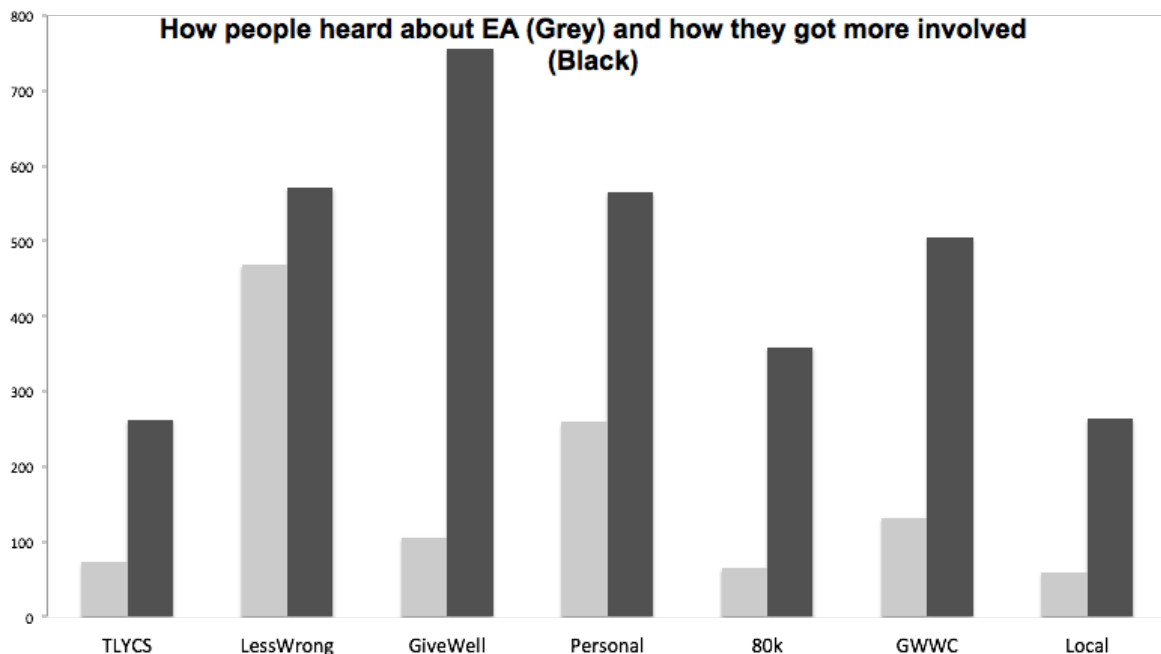
As discovered in last year's survey, a large number of people found out about effective altruism through Less Wrong. However the perhaps surprising finding is that a large number of people 'got into' effective altruism because of the work of GiveWell, despite its relative lack of outreach efforts compared to other EA organisations.

What can we draw from these graphs? Firstly, that many organisations are much better at getting people more involved in EA than they are at getting people to hear about EA. In

5 http://LessWrong.com/lw/kbc/meta_the_decline_of_discussion_now_with_charts/

particular, GiveWell stands out here. We can also see some trends over time, particularly with The Life You Can Save declining and 'Other' and 'Book/Article' increasingly getting people into EA. This also suggests that strongly encouraging people to check out GiveWell may be a strong method to get people into EA.

What do people think about the movement?

What is the state of the EA movement as a whole? We asked some questions addressing specific concerns that people have raised about problems in EA.

Insecurities

Do insecurities about not being "EA enough" sometimes prevent you from taking action or participating more in the EA community?	
No	Yes
742 (63%)	436 (37%)

Excluding the 1,174 people who didn't answer this question

This question had one of the highest rates of leaving blank, which may partially be due to the fact that it was one of the last questions on the survey, but may also be due to people feeling uncomfortable at this question. There was no statistically significant relationship between the earlier question, 'Do you think of Effective Altruism more as an "opportunity" or an "obligation"?', and this question.

Clearly the fact that 37% of self-identifying EAs feel insecure about this is a worrying point. Reading the comments gives some more details, although only 135 people left comments and so they must be taken carefully.

Clear themes in the comments were that people often felt put-off by jargon. This is a clear area where there can be improvement from the community. Another sticking point was that people felt they would be judged for not donating enough money to effective causes or not spending their time 'correctly'. A few responded with saying that they had been judged for this.

Many respondents stressed that they felt that their insecurities were self-imposed by comparing themselves to EAs who were working on EA causes all the time, and that nothing the EA community explicitly said had caused them to feel insecure. However, this doesn't mean the EA

community shouldn't focus on ensuring people feel comfortable, and also celebrate those taking whatever steps they can to help.

The other common reasons people gave for their insecurity could best be described as a fear of fitting into an elitist movement. As a very typical answer went,

"The EA community as a whole is incredibly intelligent and rational, and many seem to come from really good schools. As someone who goes to an unknown school and is unfamiliar with a lot of the typical jargon, it can be a little intimidating. That being said...everyone is very welcoming."

How welcoming is EA?

How welcoming do you find the EA community?				
Very Welcoming	Welcoming	Neither welcoming nor Unwelcoming	Unwelcoming	Very Unwelcoming
216 (19%)	501 (45%)	299 (27%)	59 (5%)	44 (4%)

Excluding the 1233 people who didn't answer the question

This is more encouraging than the previous question, with few of the EAs sampled saying that the movement is actually unwelcoming. Naturally there is a risk of selection bias, where those that feel that EA is unwelcoming don't take the survey. The comments reveal a common trend - that generally EAs are welcoming, but that the lack of diversity in certain areas can be unwelcoming for people who have different views or backgrounds and try to participate.

A clear message from the responses to these two questions is that EA should continue to work hard on increasing diversity. This includes both an effort to reach out to new groups and areas, but also an appreciation that people may have unconscious biases that have the unfortunate effect of preventing diversity. For some actionable points that people can take to make their group as inclusive as possible, see this post on the EA Forum.

What do people have to say about EA?
We also asked several free-form questions:
- "If you are a member of a local EA group could you describe some of the benefits of being a member?"
- "What do you think are the major challenges or threats facing EA?"
- "Can you think of any areas or interventions EA may have neglected?"
- "Do you have any suggestions as to how EA could be improved or developed?"

It's quite hard to classify the results of these questions. However many of the answers fitted into broad classes. To the first question, common benefits identified were providing a general social network, providing a general space to talk about EA ideas, and motivation to work on EA projects.

Common challenges discussed were concerns that the movement could make PR mistakes as it grew, or that the movement would fragment. Another common worry was that EA would not be able to become a mass movement, due to elitism and lack of diversity.

Common neglected areas suggested were mental health, environmentalism, politics and policy, and rationalism.

Common Improvements included reaching out to religious groups, making more of an effort to be welcoming and diverse, and handling PR better.

The future of EA

People were asked "How confident are you that you will be an EA 20 years into the future?" (displayed down the table), and "Do you think there will be an Effective Altruist movement in 50 years time?" (displayed across the table)

	Very likely not	More likely no than yes	More likely yes than no	Very likely yes
Completely or almost completely sure that I won't	4	1	0	0
Probably not	4	12	18	4
Don't know	9	24	79	28
Probably yes	13	109	449	193
Completely or almost completely sure that I will	7	22	154	227

Excluding the 996 people who didn't answer one or more of the questions

Conclusion

It is hard, if not impossible, to know if our sample was representative of the general EA population, and so all conclusions must be taken with numerous caveats. However, the sub-population analysis suggests that we have fairly accurately captured the various sub-groups in the sample, and that there is not a huge amount of variance between sub-groups. Again, it's important to note that it is inappropriate to make claims about the EA movement as a whole without acknowledging that one might be generalizing from an insufficient or biased sample.

That said, this year's survey sampled **2352 self-identifying EAs**, more than three times as many as last year.This is partially because the survey was publicised more widely this year, but it is clear that the movement is growing rapidly: the number of people we sampled who had got involved in a particular year **had grown each year since 2009**. Poverty was by far the cause area which most of the EAs we sampled identified as the **top priority**.

The sampled EAs donated **over $6,750,000** to EA charities or organisations. Around **one third** of sampled EAs donate to EA causes, of which the median yearly donation was **$330**. However 436 said that *'insecurities about not being "EA enough" sometimes prevent [them] from taking action or participating more in the EA community',* although only 103 people said that Effective Altruism was unwelcoming, compared to 800 who said it was welcoming.

If you'd like to give feedback on how the survey could be improved next year, or want to have a look at the anonymised data, send an email to dotimpactemail@gmail.com. If you'd like help with a local group, email lean@effectivealtruismhub.com. To hear more about what's going on in the EA community, sign up to the EA Newsletter. Thank you for reading!

Subpopulation Analysis

We didn't have a huge amount of time to complete a methodological appendix of the same scale as last year's. However below we compare the different sub-populations in the survey, and ultimately conclude that there seem to be no statistically significant crucial differences between them.

Imagine for a moment that we managed to survey every single person in the world who self-identifies as an EA fully and accurately and collected their results. This "truly unbiased census" would give us an accurate view of EAs. No matter how we may caution against it, any claims of "EA Survey Results" may be taken by some casual readers to have the same weight as if we completed such a "truly unbiased census". Saying around 20% of our survey respondents are vegan would be taken by these readers to mean that around 20% of EAs truly are vegan. Given that this isn't the "truly unbiased census", such a jump is invalid as a logical deduction. But how good is it as an inference? That is, how similar to the "truly unbiased

census" is our EA Survey? How can we even know?

This year we initially launched the survey on the EA Facebook page under strict instructions not to share it further, and so we can be fairly sure that the group of people who used that URL are all members of the EA Facebook Group, although not necessarily representative ones. This gives us a benchmark to compare the other subpopulations against.

Attaining a representative sample is a significant challenge in any survey of this nature because (i) we do not have a basis for the actual distribution of EAs across various subpopulations and were not able to share the survey with every group equally, (ii) the responses were collected voluntarily on an online form. These challenges are inherent to many public surveys, especially those studying amorphous populations like members of a specific ideology or social movement (e.g. vegetarians, feminists, various EA subpopulations). Many published studies do make use of convenience sampling when studying groups that are impossible to reach via more normal methods, such as the 2013 Running USA Survey and the Diverse Green Survey. It's also common with our friends at Less Wrong with the Less Wrong Survey, and other attempts at surveying the EA movement by 80,000 Hours.

Referrer URL		Referrer (Self-Reported)	
No Referrer	964	EA Facebook Group	323
Slate Star Codex	472	Slate Star Codex	317
Initial EA Facebook Group Release	258	EA Newsletter	259
GWWC FB Group Message	130	Less Wrong	259
LW	121	Other	159
Local Group	111	Any other FB Group / Page	106
SHARE	50	Friend	84
EA Forum	41	Local Group or Chapter	69

EA Newsletter	27	Elsewhere on Facebook or Social Media	57
Assorted Others	178	Giving What We Can	40
		Other EA Organisation	35

Excluding the people who didn't answer these questions

We can see quite a large discrepancy between these figures, with twice as many people claiming they arrived from Less Wrong than actually used the Less Wrong link. More people used the SSC URL than said they came from SSC, and many more claimed they came from the EA Newsletter than used the link provided there.

Given that I don't expect many people would lie about this sort of thing, this suggests that many people may have been referred to the EA Facebook link or the SSC link from another source (e.g., a comment on Less Wrong pointed them towards the SSC link, and they put the referrer as "Less Wrong") and there was probably a large population who frequent both the EA Facebook group, SSC, the EA Newsletter and Less Wrong, and saw the link in all the places. This might mean that the groups are less "stratified" than we might be inclined to think. It's also quite possible people have unreliable memories about these matters.

Differences in our Subpopulations

The first place to look was how much differences in sampling matter. Do EAs that come from Other places act significantly differently than EAs who are recruited from the Facebook group? If all the groups are essentially similar, then it might not matter that much that we oversampled or undersampled any one particular group. To look into this, we checked to see where people were taking the survey from. We used the URL information because it contained three fairly large sized groups: those who were recruited through Facebook, Slate Star Codex, and a GWWC group message. We compare these three groups and the group consisting of the remaining people:

	Other (1492 people)	Initial EA FB Group Sample (258 people)	Slate Star Codex (472 people)	GWWC Group Message (130 people)	Statistically Significant?[6]
Mean Age (SD)	30.0 (11)	25.7 (7.1)	26.7 (7.5)	27.4 (8.0)	NS (p: 0.7724)
Median Donation, USD[7]	1000	1000	200	776.5	NS (p: 0.3994)
Median Income, USD[7]	45,398	39,709	52,648	30,000	NS (p: 0.6812)
Median % Income Donated[7,8]	3.6	5.3	1.0	4.1	NS (p: 0.06383)
% Male	71.4	72.6	83.2	62.9	*** (p: 4.383e-05)
% Poverty Top Priority	340 (46%)	102 (45%)	185 (46%)	59 (58%)	NS (p: 0.1051)
% Student	228 (36%)	99 (47%)	137 (42%)	36 (41%)	NS (p: 0.07764)
% Veg*n	39%	51%	18%	48%	*** (p < 2.2e-16)
Median Year Got Involved	2014	2014	2014	2014	*** (p: 0.000876)

We found statistically significant differences in % male (Slate Star Codex is more male - dominated than EA as a whole, and GWWC's sample less so), and vegetarianism (Slate Star Codex is much less likely to be vegetarian), and the year in which people got involved (people

6 ***: p< 0.001; **: p< 0.01; *:p<0.05; NS: p>0.05. Significance testing was with Chi-square for everything except income, donation, and % inc. donated, which were compared with a one-way ANOVA test. Note that it might be appropriate in future to apply a correction to the significant p-value because of the many significance tests carried out - e.g. a Bonferroni correction.

7 Excluding students. For all categories tested with an ANOVA, medians are shown for consistency with earlier descriptions of these statistics. It must be kept in mind that the ANOVA detects statistically significant differences in the **mean**.

8 Also excluding those who earn less than $10,000

on the EA Facebook page got involved earlier, to a statistically significant level, even when the median year, 2014, is the same for all groups).

We found marginally significant differences in % student (EAs on the FB page are more likely to be students, while those who didn't have a referrer URL are more likely to not be students), and % income donated (those referred from Slate Star Codex are more likely to donate less as a proportion of their income). Note that both these effects are above the traditional $p = 0.05$ significance cut-off, however, and would be less significant if we applied a correction such as the Bonferroni correction to our $p = 0.05$ level, to account for the multiple tests performed above.

On the other hand, the main lesson from the cause choice question - that poverty was overwhelmingly people's top priority - didn't change across groups. Informal analyses did show a significant difference in other cause choices across the groups, and this is something that can be followed-up on. There were no significant differences in donation amount. The lack of significant difference in donation amount or prime cause choice makes the concern of undersampling and oversampling less than originally anticipated, as it seems that there is so much variation inside every group that it's not possible to tell if the referral groups actually differ. Perhaps if we were able to sample every member of the EA community we would be able to tell if there was a difference in e.g. income between the different subpopulations, but with the extremely noisy data at hand we are not able to detect any difference to a $p=0.05$ significance level.

However, this still does not address any concern that we missed an important recruitment channel (for example, getting less engaged EAs from student groups) that would produce different results. Also, the undersampling / oversampling appears to affect our views of diet, as well as some basic demographic information, which might make for challenges to these findings.

List of Abbreviations

80k - 80,000 Hours
AMF - Against Malaria Foundation
ACE - Animal Charity Evaluators
CEA - Centre for Effective Altruism
CFAR - Centre for Applied Rationality
DTW - Deworm the World
GD - GiveDirectly
GW - GiveWell
GWWC - Giving What We Can
LEVERAGE - Leverage Research
MIRI - Machine Intelligence Research Institute

PHC - Project Healthy Children
SCI - Schistosomiasis Control Initiative
SSC - Slate Star Codex
THL - The Human League
TLYCS - The Life You Can Save
THL - The Human League
VO - Vegan Outreach