

Research shows that mormons are generous and active in helping others

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When it comes to being generous with time and money, Americans who are not Mormons can learn from Americans who are.

A new study from researchers at the University of Pennsylvania and Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis explores [Church](#) of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints culture and explains LDS members' volunteering and charitable giving-habits.

It is the first study focusing on giving and volunteering practices of Latter-day Saints that has been carried out within LDS wards by a non-church-affiliated university.

The researchers are Ram Cnaan, a professor in Penn's School of Social Policy & Practice; Daniel W. Curtis, a student earning his Ph.D. in social welfare; and Van Evans from IUPUI.

[“Called to Serve: The Prosocial Behavior of Active Latter-day Saints”](#) is the largest and most detailed study of its kind. Researchers surveyed 2,644 active Mormons in Southeastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Michigan, Utah and California.

Overall, researchers found that members of the LDS Church are the most “prosocial” members of American society.

“Regardless of where they live, they are very generous with their time and money,” Cnaan, an expert in faith-based social services and the lead

researcher, said. “Through a theology of obedience and sacrifice and a strong commitment to tithing and service, Latter-day Saints are model citizens.”

One of the Mormons’ basic beliefs is that they are called by God to serve others. Thus, practicing members of the LDS Church act under the belief that they are called to give time and expertise to church, society and humanity, the study says.

Researchers found that active members of the LDS Church volunteer and donate significantly more than the average American. When it comes to the time they spend volunteering, the average adult American LDS member contributes as much as seven times more than that of the average American.

An average American Latter-day Saint provides almost 430 hours of volunteer labor annually. This equates to approximately 35 hours per month. In comparison, the average American volunteer provides about four hours of volunteering per month.

The researchers divided their volunteering-related findings into four groups: volunteering for religious purposes within the church, church-affiliated volunteering to meet the social needs of members, church-affiliated volunteering to meet the social needs of people in the community regardless of LDS membership, and volunteering outside the church to assist people in the community.

The most common volunteer activity of Latter-day Saints is within the ward, or local territorial division, and for religious purposes, which accounts for 57 percent of their volunteer time. Nearly 95 percent of the respondents report performing 242 hours of religious volunteering annually. This includes performing a “calling” from the church, a set of specific responsibilities or duties a member of the church has been asked

to handle. A “calling” can range from cleaning the church building to leading youth groups to serving as a ward leader.

As a part of a larger “culture of service, which begins as soon as an individual joins the LDS Church,” according to the study, respondents view callings as positive experiences.

The study reports that 86 percent of respondents said that they are currently serving a calling.

LDS members also volunteer to perform social responsibilities within the ward, which amounts to 22 percent of the Latter-day Saints volunteer time. This includes activities such as leading a church-affiliated Boy Scout troop, making meals for another member of the ward or helping a fellow member move into a new home. Nearly 94 percent of the respondents reported volunteering this way.

The least frequent volunteer activity is social volunteering outside of the church, equating to almost 8 percent of the Latter-day Saints’ volunteer time. Nearly 62 percent of the respondents indicated that they volunteer outside of the church. On average, an active Latter-day Saint provides 34 hours of social care outside the ward that is geared toward the community.

Mormons outside of Utah spent more time providing social care within their wards than those living in Utah, the study found. Latter-day Saints in the Pennsylvania and New Jersey areas volunteered more hours than Latter-day Saints in Utah.

While LDS members volunteered fewer hours to causes independent of the church, even if this were the only volunteer activity of Latter-day Saints, it would equal the national average of volunteering of all Americans, according to the study which cites previous research

conducted by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

The researchers determined that, through volunteering, an active Mormon provides a social contribution equivalent to \$9,140 annually. If young, full-time missionaries are excluded, their social contribution still equates to \$7,102 per year.

All the regions studied reported similar levels of overall volunteering. The study notes that this suggests that the expectations for the amount of time spent [volunteering](#) is the same for all LDS members, but the distribution of those hours depends on the needs in the local area.

In terms of the LDS members' financial contribution to not only the church but also to other charitable causes, they outshine non-Mormon Americans yet again.

“There is probably no other religious group in which tithing is taken so seriously as in the LDS Church,” Cnaan said. “In America, it’s rarely practiced.”

Tithing is the practice of donating 10 percent of one’s annual income to the faith community. Also present in the Judeo-Christian religious traditions only 4 percent of the population reported fully tithing their income last year.

The study unveils that 88 percent of LDS respondents reported donating 10 percent of their income to the church. Adding to those who reported fully tithing, another 6 percent said that they partially tithed.

But, the study found, members of the LDS Church also donate to other causes. Through the church, on average, a Latter-day Saint donates \$650 a year to social causes and another \$1,171 a year outside the church.

The researchers divided their findings regarding monetary donations into two categories: secular giving, or donating money other than through the church to support a worthy cause, and welfare giving through the LDS Church.

The study shows 48 percent of the respondents reported donating money through secular giving. On average, a Latter-day Saint donates \$1,171 annually to social causes outside the church.

The study illustrates most common reported activity in welfare giving was through “fast offerings.” On the first Sunday of the month, healthy members of the church are encouraged to fast for two consecutive meals and donate the money they would have spent on food to the church as a “fast offering,” the report says. Local Mormon leaders use the fast offerings to help members and non-members in need.

LDS members can also donate money to the church’s global humanitarian aid efforts or to a no-interest student loan program run by the church, food drives or other ward-initiated fundraising efforts. The study reveals that an average Latter-day Saint donated \$650 annually to social causes through the church.

Taken together, an average Latter-day Saint pays full tithing and donates \$1,821 to social and community causes.

The idea for this research originated with a suggestion from IUPUI’s Evans, who studied under Cnaan in the Non-Profit Leadership program at Penn’s School of Social Policy & Practice. Evans graduated in 2009.

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

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