

Examining the pandemic's impact on individual generosity

November 29 2022, by Juliana Rosati



GENEROSITY TRENDS AND IMPACTS:

Before and During the COVID-19
Pandemic in the USA

National findings and initial impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on volunteering,
donation, and other prosocial behavior trends from 2020 through 2021

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AUGUST 2022

Credit: University of Pennsylvania

How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect people's volunteering, donating, and helping behaviors? A report by Penn's School of Social Policy and Practice (SP2) faculty and students summarizes a nationally representative study aiming to answer this question.

With [collaboration](#) and funding from the Generosity Commission of Giving U.S., SP2 Professors Ram Cnaan and Femida Handy, along with Ph.D. in Social Welfare [students](#) Tiana Marrese, Daniel Choi, and Anna Ferris conducted a survey asking [respondents](#) to report their behaviors both before and during the COVID-19 [pandemic](#).

The results, released in the report "[Generosity Trends and Impacts: Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic in the U.S.](#)," represent the first large nationally representative data on volunteering, donating, and other prosocial, or generous, behavior before and during the pandemic. Questions asked respondents about volunteering and donating in "formal" contexts (involving established nonprofit organizations) and "informal" contexts (involving friends and neighbors), as well as other positive contributions to one's community. Among a number of findings, the report documents the following trends during the pandemic:

- Virtual volunteering increased and in-person volunteering decreased.
- The total number of donors decreased, while the average donation amount increased significantly, by over 200%.
- Informal volunteering and/or donating remained stable at high levels, engaged in by about two-thirds of respondents.
- While showing gratitude to frontline workers and ethical buying and boycotting intensified, donating blood decreased.

"Understanding the trends in volunteering and donating is vital for understanding the well-being of individuals and society," write the authors. "It is too early to assess the long-term effects of the pandemic

on [generosity](#). However, we can ascertain how the pandemic impacted people's generosity during the height of the outbreak."

Provided by University of Pennsylvania

Citation: Examining the pandemic's impact on individual generosity (2022, November 29)
retrieved 9 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2022-11-pandemic-impact-individual-generosity.html>

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