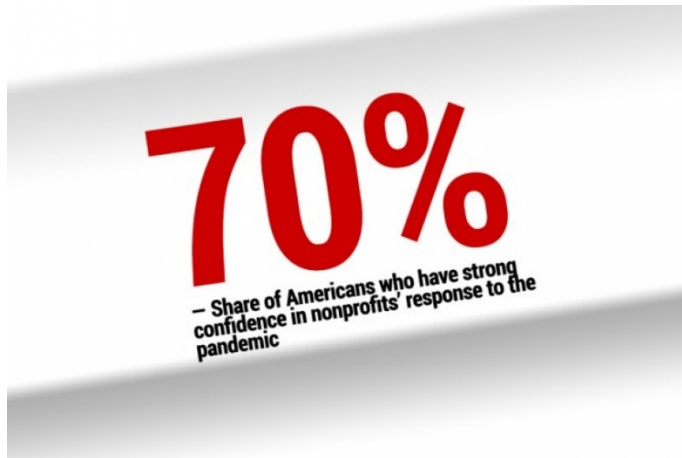


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## **Trust in Nonprofits Rises as Confidence in Government Covid Response Slides**

While donors applaud charity work in the crisis, they show signs of getting worn out by frequent appeals.

By Michael Theis



In the months since the coronavirus first prompted social-distancing rules and other actions, Americans have grown more confident in nonprofits, and they now trust them more than they do state, local, or federal governments, a new poll shows.

Nonprofits are benefiting from a surge in trust, especially by young and middle-age Americans.

What's more, the survey found donors are continuing to change their giving habits, providing less to education and arts groups than they did in the past. Social-service nonprofits remain key for donors.

In addition, the survey found that donors were showing signs of a weariness in getting appeals.

The survey also suggested that as states are easing restrictions on social distancing, some Americans are ready to get back to volunteering in person.

The results are the second in a series of studies by the Chronicle of Philanthropy, Luth Research, and the Nonprofit Institute at the University of San Diego's School of Leadership and Education Sciences. The survey, based on data from 350 Americans who formed a representative sample of the adult population, has a plus-or-minus 5 percent margin of error.

Taken in mid-May, the poll found that 70 percent of Americans said they either had "a fair amount" or "a great deal" of confidence in the nonprofit response to the pandemic. Only 65

percent similarly rated their confidence in either state or local government, and only 44 percent similarly rated their confidence in the federal government.

The rise in trust was most pronounced in people 45 to 54. Seventy-six percent of people in that age group said they had a fair amount or a great deal of confidence in nonprofits responding to the coronavirus, up from 60 percent a month before. Likewise, 74 percent of those 34 or younger had similar levels of confidence in nonprofits, up from 64 percent a month before.

### **Causes Getting Support**

Roughly two-thirds of those polled in both rounds of the survey said they had donated to a nonprofit in the 12 months before the pandemic. During the pandemic, many donors have shifted their giving priorities, the research found. Health and social-service charities continue to do well, but education and arts groups are now a lower priority, donors say. Forty-seven percent of donors said they had been giving to social-service groups since the pandemic began, while 43 percent said they had supported those organizations before the pandemic.

The second round of the survey asked in more detail about giving to human-service nonprofits.

Food banks and pantries continue to be the most frequent recipients of gifts from those who support human-service groups. Housing was the second most important cause for those donors, attracting contributions from 20 percent of those who aid human-service groups.

### **Signs of Information Overload**

Among donors who gave in the past year, 70 percent said the level of communication from nonprofits was "just right," down from 77 percent a month ago.

The poll found a big jump in the proportion of donors who said they were hearing "too much" from nonprofits, rising from 11 percent a month ago to 22 percent in the latest survey round.

Donors said they most like hearing from charities by email , with 75 percent saying that. Interest in getting postal mail is dropping, with 32 percent saying that is how they like to hear from charities, compared with 42 percent in the first survey.

### **Volunteering Patterns**

The poll found that some donors are ready to plunge back into helping charities in person but most aren't eager to do so quite yet.

Thirty percent of those polled said they had volunteered in the previous year, and of those one third weren't sure when they would return. But 20 percent said they expected to do so in one to three months. Only 13 percent expected to do so in a month.

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