



**INDIVIDUAL
GIVING STUDY
2021**

nvpc 
Towards a
City of Good

About the Report

Since 2004, NVPC's Individual Giving Study has informed nonprofit organisations (NPOs), funders, policymakers and other individuals interested in giving on the state of volunteerism and donations in Singapore. Over the last two decades, the study has evolved to provide deeper insights into the givers' motivation and define opportunities to drive the giving culture in Singapore. In 2021, the Individual Giving Study was an opportunity to understand structural shifts in the individual giving landscape in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Contents

- | | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|----|-------------------------------|
| 2 | Executive Summary | 15 | Giving Motivations & Barriers |
| 4 | Individual Giving in 2021 | 21 | Conclusion |
| 7 | Individual Giving Preferences | 22 | Glossary |
| 14 | Other ways of Giving | 23 | References |

Research Design

PARTICIPANTS

n = 2004

Singapore Citizens / PRs (15 years or older) & Employment Pass / Dependent Pass / Student Pass / Work Permit / S Pass Permit aged 15 years or older



METHODOLOGY

Face-to-face interviews

Options to respond to the survey over Zoom (n = 87) or via online questionnaire (n = 177) due to COVID-19 fears



INTERVIEW

Average length: 30 minutes

Survey questionnaire offered in 3 languages – English, Chinese and Malay.



FIELDWORK

8 April to 17 September 2021

Temporary halt due to Phase 2 Heightened Alert (P2HA) between 18 May and 16 June 2021



SAMPLING

Department of Statistics Singapore

Stratified random sampling of dwelling in Singapore by geographic region



ASSESSMENT

Valid & Reliable for use in Singapore

Cronbach Alpha > .7

Confirmatory Factor Analyses to prove tools are valid for use in Singapore's context and culture



Executive Summary

Donation and volunteering rates have decreased but the giving landscape remains resilient in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The last few years have been tough for most individuals and charities. Safe distancing measures during the COVID-19 pandemic contributed significantly to difficulties in volunteering and garnering donations. Many nonprofits had to cancel or reduce their volunteering and fundraising events.

However, the news is not entirely bleak. Although individuals generally donated and volunteered less, many who were financially unaffected by the pandemic donated and volunteered more often. The nonprofit sector also remained resilient and adaptable by utilising online platforms to encourage giving and continue to meet the needs of individuals affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Below are 9 key insights from the 2021 Individual Giving Study:

1

Trend of declining donation and volunteering rates continues.

In 2021, 60% of respondents donated while 22% volunteered – a decline of 19% for donating and 7% for volunteering from the previous study in 2018.

The median number of hours volunteered also declined from 24 hours in 2018 to 12 hours in 2021. However, the median amount donated increased from \$100 in 2018 to \$200 in 2021.

3

Individuals still preferred to give occasionally. However, there were more consistent and committed donors in 2021 compared to 2018.

Individuals continue to prefer to occasionally volunteer (73%) and occasionally donate (63%). At the same time, there were more consistent and committed donors, with a 3% increase in respondents who donated weekly and a 20% increase in respondents who donated monthly. The majority of these donors were aged 35 to 44.

2

Individuals whose everyday lives were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic gave more.

70% of respondents who were affected personally or at work by COVID-19 donated, while only 58% of respondents who were not affected negatively did.

26% of respondents who were affected personally or at work by COVID-19 volunteered, while only 15% of respondents who were not affected negatively volunteered.

4

There has been an acceleration of digital giving.

There was a 27% increase in volunteers who signed up exclusively through online channels and a 22% increase in donors who donated solely through online methods. There is an opportunity to boost digital and hybrid giving in the future as we move into an endemic COVID-19 state.

5

Givers were more welfare-focused. Other causes saw a decline in donations and volunteerism.

The social service sector saw an increase in support, with a 2% increase in donations and an 8% increase in volunteerism. It is also essential to aid in the recovery of less-supported sectors such as the arts, culture, heritage, sports, youth and environment sectors.

6

Giving to informal and community-led (ground-up) initiatives saw increased participation.

Both volunteerism and donation to informal initiatives saw an 11% increase. Informal initiatives refer to community-led activities (group-up initiatives); these initiatives are not conducted by registered NPOs, such as social service agencies.

In addition, informal and formal giving were significantly inversely related. Only a tiny proportion of volunteers (11%) and donors (8%) gave through both means. Promoting collaborations between non-profit organisations (NPOs) and informal ground-up initiatives (GUs) is essential to sustain both informal and formal giving.

7

More are giving in ways other than cash donations, signalling an expansion of giving in Singapore.

The definition of giving has gone beyond cash donations, with many respondents engaging in other forms of giving by performing spontaneous acts of giving in everyday life, donations-in-kind and giving while making a purchase.

More than half of the respondents reported that in the future, there were more likely to make donations in kind, buy goods and services from charities and social enterprises, and give while making a purchase. This presents an opportunity to tap into these other ways of giving.

8

Volunteers were most motivated by a desire to express altruistic values and acquire new learning experiences and personal growth. Donors were most driven by altruism, trust, and their social networks.

The top three motivations among volunteers were to express altruistic values (87%), to gain new learning experiences and exercise underused skills (81%), and to enhance personal growth and development (62%).

The top three motivations among donors were the altruistic desire to improve the lives of others (95%), trust that the receiver will appropriately use the funds for the public good (71%), and strengthening one's social relationships (62%).

9

Volunteers were most hindered by a lack of time and the COVID-19 pandemic. Donors were hampered by financial constraints, not being approached and their fear of donation scams.

The top three barriers to volunteering were lack of time due to school or work (41%), family commitments (33%), and having other priorities (22%). COVID-19 was the fourth most-cited barrier to volunteering in the past year (20%).

The top three barriers to donating were financial constraints (39%), not being approached (25%), and being fearful of donation scams (23%).



Trend towards declining donation and volunteering rates continues.

2021 IGS saw a significant reduction in donation rates.

Before the pandemic, there was already a steady decline in the donation rate over the years. 2021 saw the most significant reduction in donation rate of 19% from the 2018 study.

As the pandemic has resulted in Singapore's worst recession since independence (Phua, 2021), financially affected individuals were likely less inclined to donate.

Nonetheless, individuals who could afford to donate were donating higher amounts.

This led to a \$100 rise in the median sum donated to \$200 for individual donations in 2021. 10% reported an increase in the amount they donated since the start of DORSCON Orange.

Given the physical nature of volunteering activities, the negative impact of the pandemic is more dearly felt in volunteering.

48% of respondents indicated that they had volunteered less since the start of DORSCON Orange¹.

Furthermore, only 22% volunteered in the past 12 months, a 7% decline from the 2018 study. The median number of hours volunteered also declined by half from 24 hours in 2018 to 12 hours in 2021.

Despite the observed declines in donation and volunteering rates in 2021, the future of giving remains hopeful.

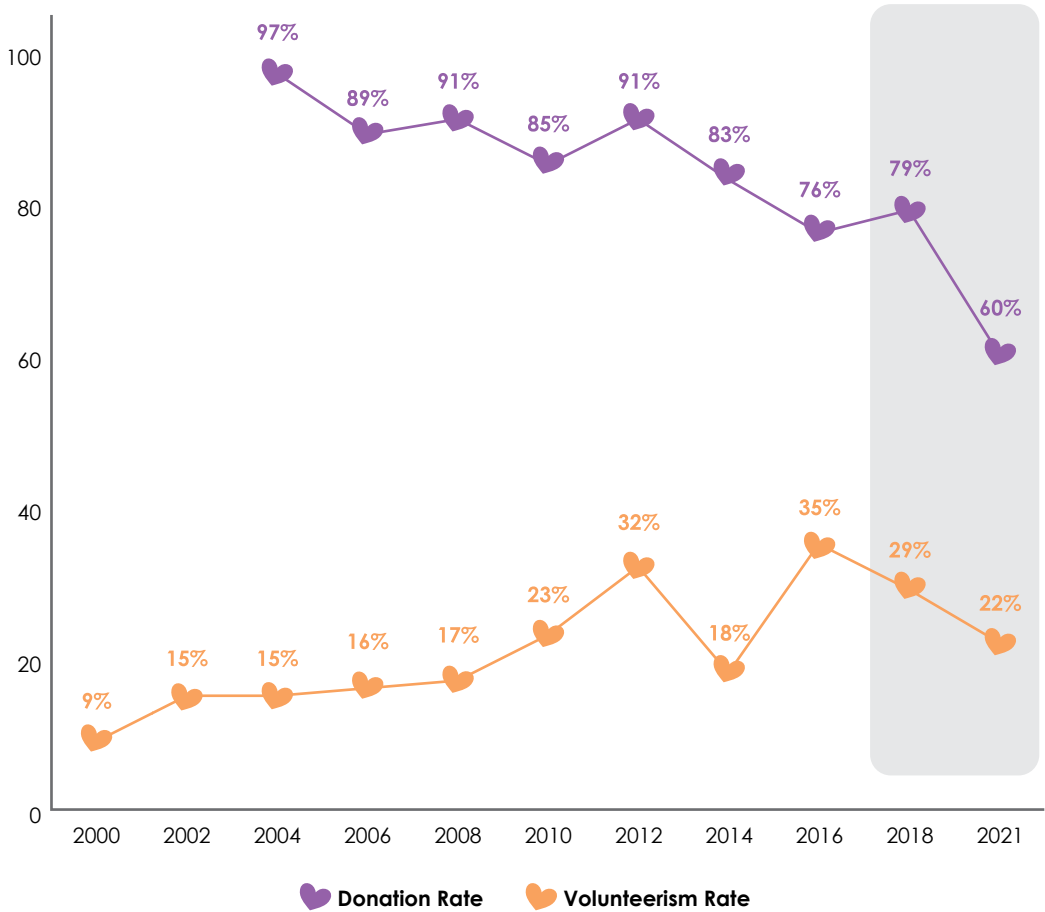
70% of respondents reported being likely to donate, and 56% were likely to volunteer in the future.

Looking forward, it is essential to ensure that giving channels remain accessible to this pool of potential givers.

The pandemic has fundamentally disrupted giving behaviours, partly due to the necessary physical restrictions to curb infections. However, there is room to remain optimistic about the sector's recovery as restrictions are lifted, and income levels recover in a post-COVID world.

¹ The 'Disease Outbreak Response System Condition', or DORSCON, is a colour-coded framework that shows you the current disease situation. It also demonstrates what needs to be done to prevent and reduce the impact of infections. There are 4 levels in order of severity of the disease situation: green, yellow, orange, and red.

Figure 1
Donation & Volunteering Rate Over the Years



\$100
in 2018

\$200
in 2021

Amount Donated (Median)

24 Hours
in 2018

12 Hours
in 2021

Hours Volunteered (Median)



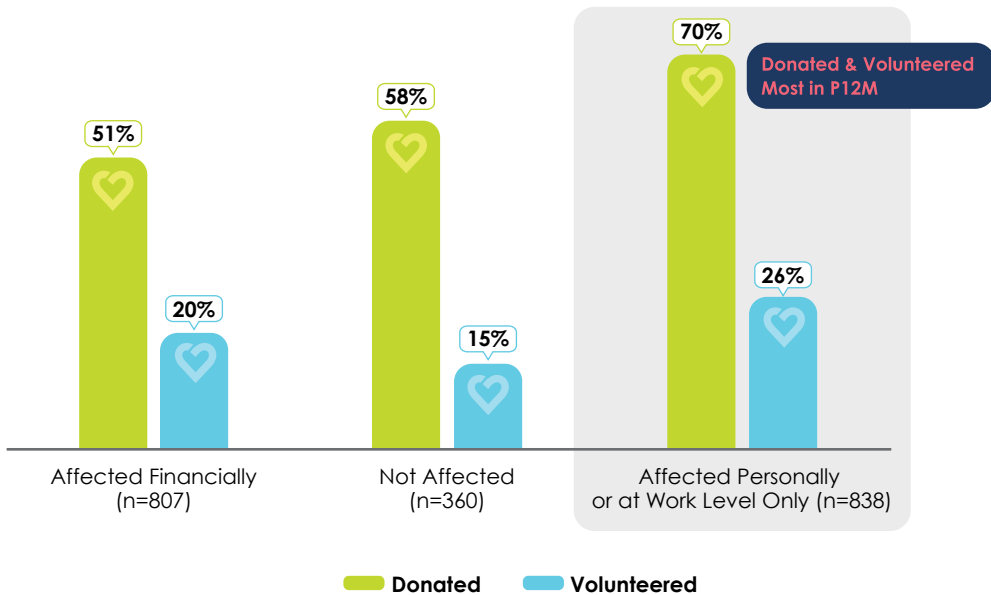
Individuals whose everyday lives were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic gave more.

Interestingly, respondents who were negatively affected¹ by COVID-19 in their personal lives or by workplace adjustments volunteered and donated at significantly higher rates than other respondents.

Understandably, financially affected respondents donated less but still volunteered considerably more than those not negatively affected by the pandemic.

These individuals were likely more empathetic towards the hardships of others or had more time, spurring them to give more than those who reported not being affected negatively.

Figure 2
Impact of COVID-19 on donation and volunteering rates



¹ Singapore's efforts to curb the spread of the pandemic included multiple restrictions and safety measures, which inevitably affected personal life, workplace, and financial status. These restrictions included work-from-home arrangements, disruption of in-person classes, and social distancing measures.



People still preferred to give occasionally. However, there were more consistent and committed donors in 2021 compared to 2018.

Occasional giving¹ has consistently been the preferred frequency of giving since 2008. The trend continues in 2021, with more than 50% of respondents selecting it as the preferred method.

Nonetheless, there was a slight increase in committed and consistent donations in 2021. These regular donors were found to donate higher amounts.

The 2021 IGS found a 3% increase in weekly donations and a 20% increase in monthly donations from 2018, possibly due to the rise in donation appeals during the COVID-19 pandemic and the increased ease and accessibility through digital giving².

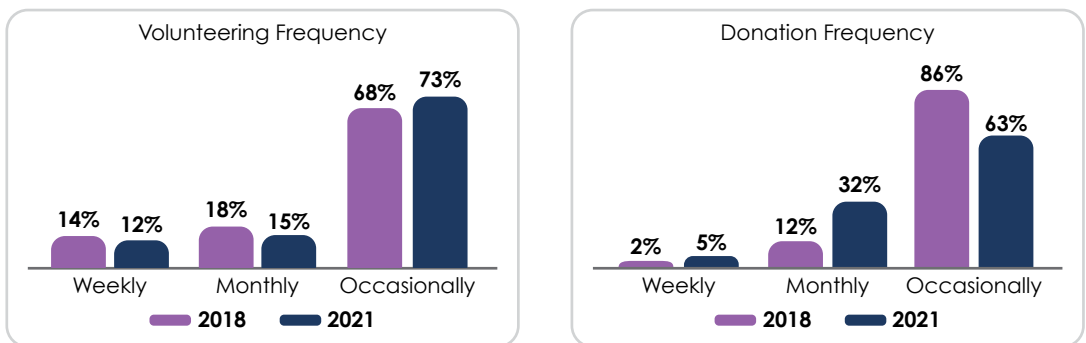
Occasional volunteering was still the most preferred – weekly, and monthly volunteering instances saw a slight dip of 2% and 3%, respectively.

The preference for occasional volunteering can also be explained by pandemic restrictions curtailing available regular volunteering opportunities, thus leading to regular volunteers turning to occasional volunteering.

The trends from the IGS and internationally³ suggest that NPOs would benefit from shifting occasional givers to regular givers.

NPOs and GUs should find ways to make occasional donors and volunteers become regular donors and volunteers through strategies. It can be achieved by providing meaningful experiences, engagements, and impact reporting. More details on giver motivations can be found in insights #8 and #9.

Figure 3
Volunteering and Donation Frequency in 2018 and 2021



¹ Giving either quarterly, biannually, annually or on an ad-hoc basis.

² On Giving. sg—one of the largest giving platforms in Singapore organised by NVPC, there was a 160 per cent increase in total donations in 2020, rising from SGD 35.8 million in 2019 to SGD 93.4 million in 2020 (adjusted for inflation).

³ The Nonprofit Recurring Giving Benchmark Study states that regular donors are likely to give up to four times more than a one-time donor over a lifetime (NextAfter, 2018). Charities can ride on this trend and strategies to get more donors to donate regularly.



There has been an acceleration of digital giving due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

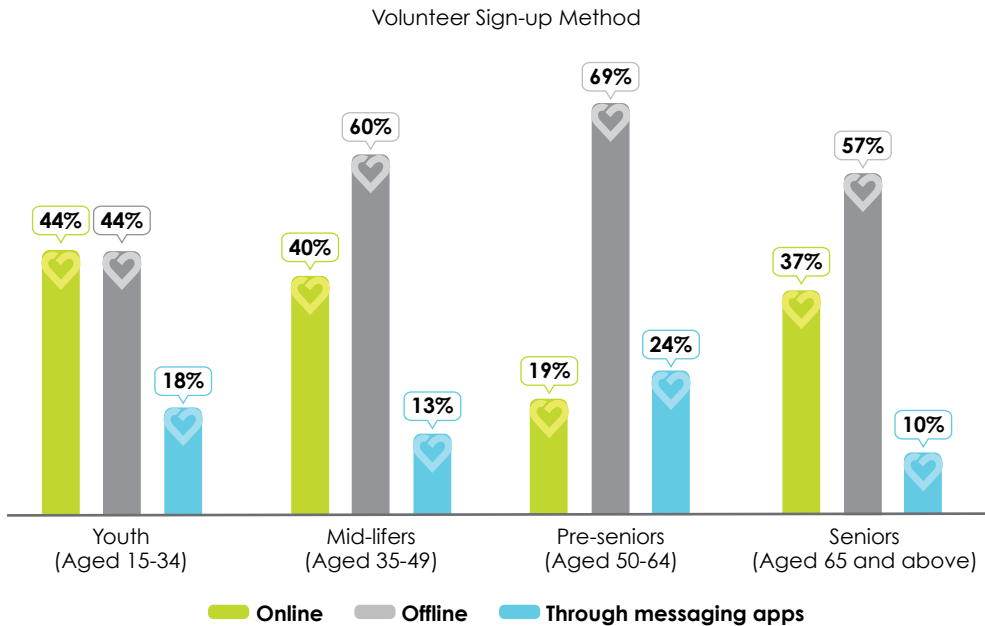
Pandemic restrictions have driven many giving efforts online, with NPOs and GUs pivoting to online fundraisers and developing digital volunteering opportunities.

Despite an overall decrease in volunteering, online channels have seen a rise in popularity, with 35% of volunteers signing up exclusively through online channels, compared to only 8% in 2018.

Youth (aged 15 to 34) and mid-lifers (aged 35 to 49) were significantly more likely to sign up for volunteering opportunities online.

The same shift towards online channels was also observed amongst donors. In 2021, 22% of donors had donated solely through online methods, compared to only 7% in 2018. Youth and mid-lifers were also significantly more likely to donate online.

Figure 4
Comparison of volunteer sign-up methods across age groups



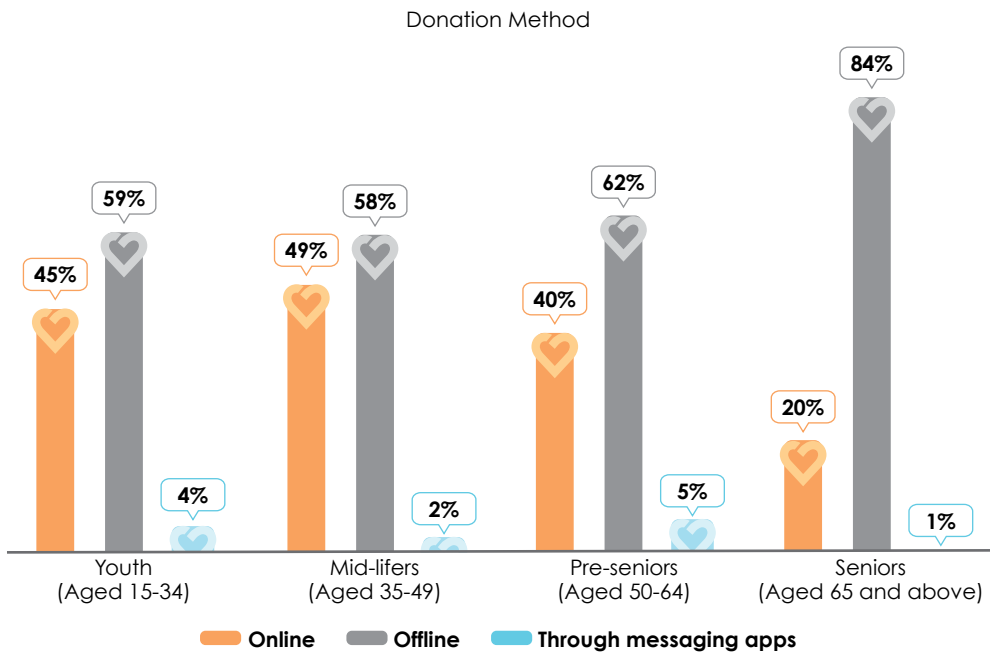
This trend towards embracing digital giving has also been observed abroad.

Offline cash donations have declined whereas there was an increase in web and debit card giving (Charities Aid Foundation, 2020). Digital peer-to-peer fundraising¹ has also seen explosive growth abroad (Peer-to-Peer Professional Forum, 2022).

Integrating offline and online giving initiatives are key to ensuring the ability to capture all age groups as they have different affinities to either online or offline methods of giving.

Despite the increasing trend among youths and mid-lifers to give online, offline channels remain the overall most popular method, particularly for pre-seniors (aged 50 to 64) and seniors (aged 65 and above). Integrating both offline and online giving methods is vital to sustaining the rate of giving beyond the pandemic.

Figure 5
Comparison of donation methods across age groups



¹ Digital peer-to-peer fundraising can be conducted either by setting up a fundraising webpage to be sent out to friends and family members, or by fundraising through live streaming platforms, such as Twitch, YouTube and Tiktok.



Givers were more welfare-focused. Other causes saw a decline in donations and volunteerism.

In 2021, the social service sector saw an 8% increase in volunteerism, and a 2% increase in donations. 3 out of 10 who volunteer, do so with the social service sector. 2 out of every 10 donors make their donations to the social service sector. The pandemic has likely resurfaced the importance of meeting the basic needs of others through the social service sector in givers' minds.

Nevertheless, we should remain mindful that specific communities within the social service sector have received less support despite the overall increase in support the sector received (e.g. women, persons with disabilities, low-income groups etc.).

Further efforts can be made to support less-supported sectors

Comparatively, other sectors saw a further decline in volunteerism and donations in

2021. The youth sector saw a combined drop of 13%, the environment sector 6%, the sports sector 4%, and the arts, culture, and heritage sector 3% compared to 2018.

In particular, the arts, culture, and heritage sector received only 1% support in terms of volunteerism and donations. The lack of support could lead to the closure of NPOs that already struggle to sustain themselves due to pandemic restrictions and difficulty with fundraising in the economic downturn. It is essential to consider giving in these less-supported sectors to ensure they receive sufficient support.

The community can help by encouraging their peers to gain new volunteering and donating experiences by giving to these less-supported sectors. NPOs and GULs can take further steps to re-engage previous donors and volunteers.



Figure 6
Percentage of volunteers giving to each sector

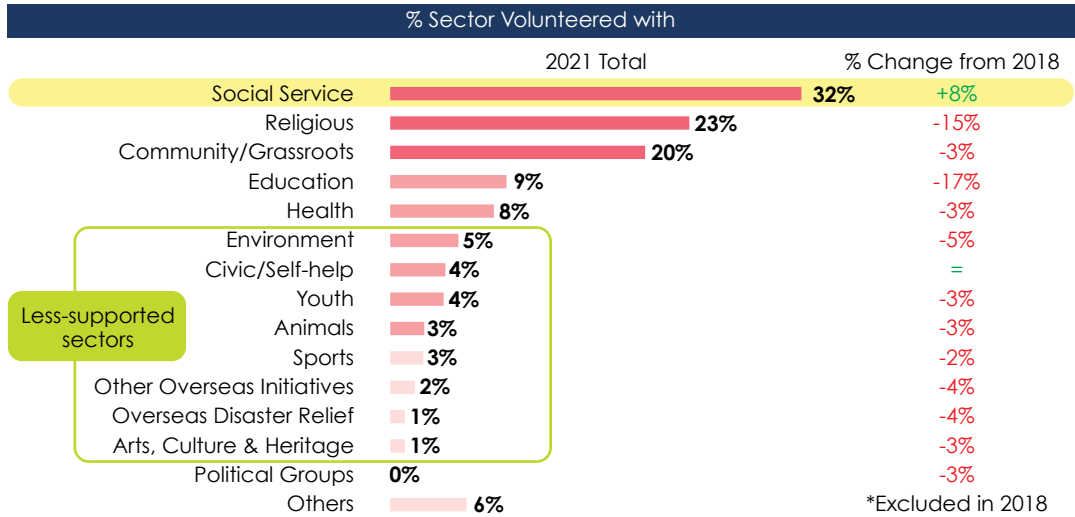
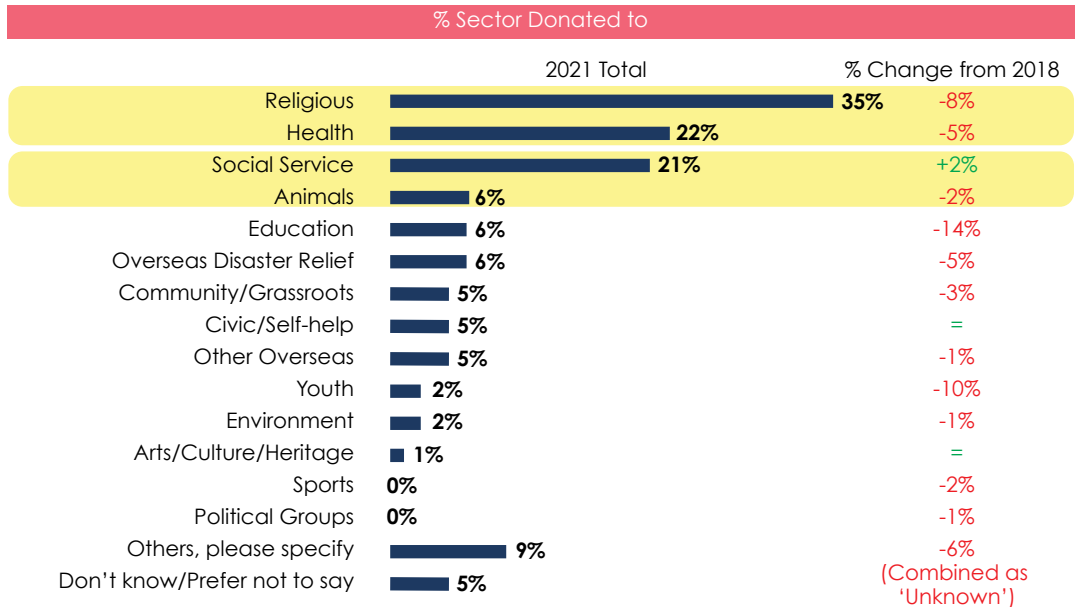


Figure 7
Percentage of donors giving to each sector





Giving to informal and community-led (ground-up) initiatives saw increased participation.

Although formal giving¹ remains the dominant giving channel, the study revealed an 11% increase in informal giving² in 2021.

This is a 1.5 times increase in informal volunteerism and a 2.8 times increase in informal donations from 2018. This may be due to GUI's ability to respond quickly in rapidly changing circumstances, making it well-suited to respond to needs arising out of crises such as the pandemic (Roy et al., 2021; Brugh et al., 2019).

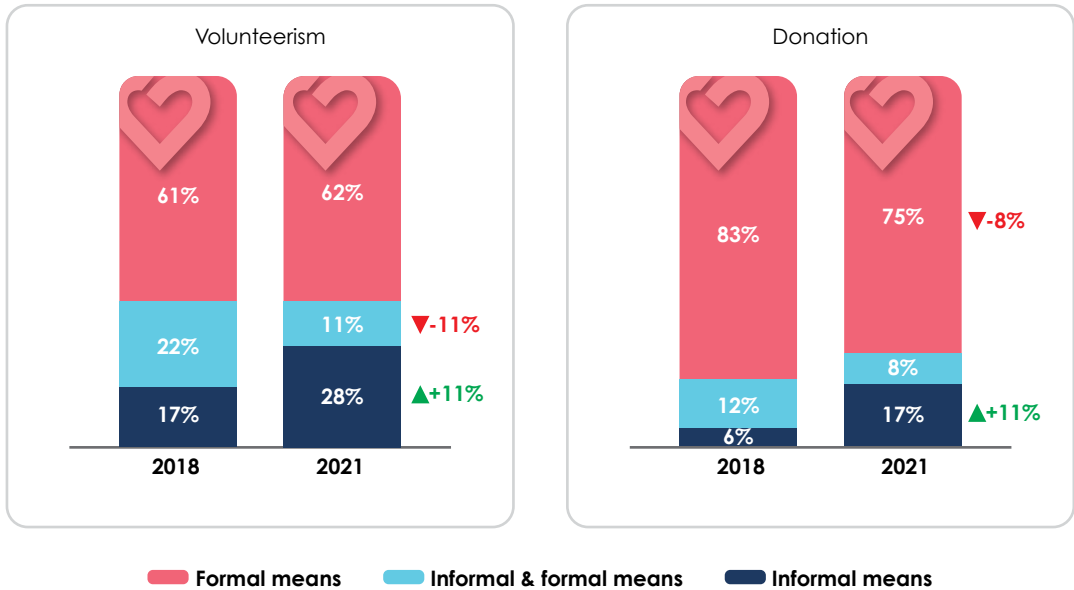
In addition, informal ways of giving often have lower barriers to entry than formal ways. There is little or no formal training or registration required, volunteers can operate on flexible timings, and there is no fixed long-term commitment. Thus, informal giving can be seen as an alternative to formal giving for givers who cannot scale the barriers to entry that exist for the latter.



¹ Formal giving refers to participating in volunteering activities or donating through registered NPOs, such as registered charities or places of worship.

² Informal giving refers to doing so without going through a registered NPO. For instance, informal GUIs may deliver food or donate directly to vulnerable individuals or families.

Figure 8
Comparison of means of giving between 2018 and 2021



Given the substantial social, community and economic impact of informal giving, efforts should be made to sustain this momentum of informal giving post-pandemic.

This increase in informal giving is promising. Positive social impact is created, and communities are strengthened by it. For instance, mutual aid groups, a method of informal donations, are seen as a response to crises that inadvertently promotes solidarity within communities (Solnit, 2020). Informal volunteering is also a type of social capital that helps establish networks, norms and trust that facilitate community building (Nunn, 2000). In these ways, informal giving helps bind people together and promotes self-generating communities of care.

Beyond generating positive social value, informal giving has proven to have considerable economic value. In the United Kingdom, the monetary value of informal volunteering was estimated to be £18.6 billion in 2012/13 (UK National Office of Statistics, 2016).

Promoting collaborations between NPOs and GUs is essential to sustain informal and formal giving.

The survey found that informal giving and formal giving were significantly inversely related. Only a tiny proportion of volunteers (11%) and donors (8%) gave through both means. An increase in informal giving led to a decrease in formal giving. It is still possible to sustain both forms of giving through integration and collaboration.



More are giving in ways other than cash donations, signalling an expansion of giving in Singapore.

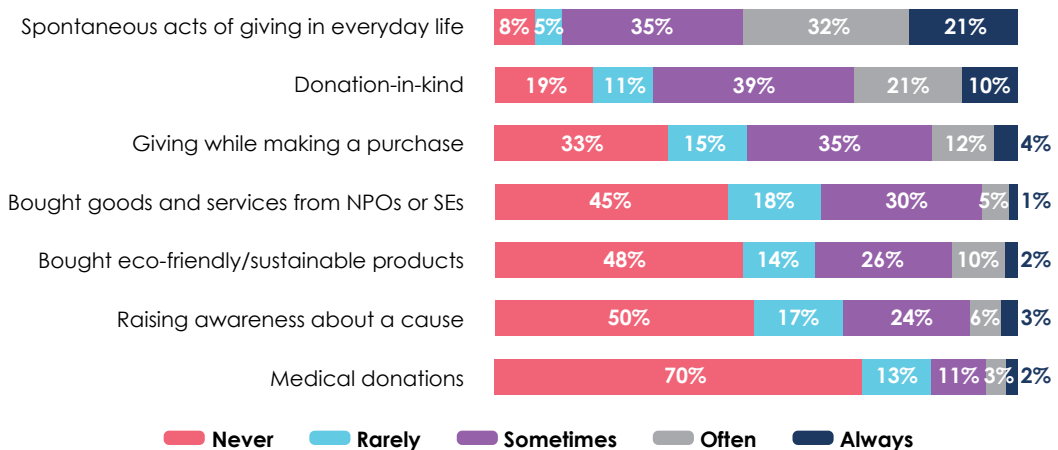
The concept of individual giving has expanded beyond resource transfers. Acts of social good incorporated into the individual's daily routine are a promising step forward in encouraging more to take up acts of giving.

Many givers have explored other ways of giving with 88% of respondents performing spontaneous acts of giving in their everyday lives sometimes. Spontaneous acts of giving include acts such as giving up one's seat on public transport and picking up litter.

The definition of donations has expanded beyond donating in cash among givers. At least 70% of respondents have also donated-in-kind in some capacity in the past 12 months. Other ways of giving, such as buying goods and services from NPOs (36%), or mindful consumerism by purchasing eco-friendly and sustainable products (38%) have seen an increase as well.

Figure 9

Other ways of giving adopted by individuals in Singapore in the past 12 months (2021)



Going forward, untapped opportunities to increase other ways of giving should be explored by charities.

77% of respondents were open to giving through donations-in-kind in the future, 52% were open to purchasing goods and services from NPOs and social enterprises, and 51% were open to giving while making a purchase. For example, with e-commerce forecasted to hit S\$13.4 billion by 2026 (Ang, 2021), online check-outs could be one way to boost giving and raise awareness of non-profit causes.

¹ Spontaneous acts of giving include giving up one's seat on public transport and picking up litter



Volunteers were motivated by altruistic values, acquiring new learning experiences and personal growth. Donors were most driven by altruism, trust, and their social networks.

Motivations to volunteering

In the survey, volunteering was defined as an act to help others out of free will. To determine what drives people to volunteer, the survey used the Volunteer Functions Inventory (Clary et al., 1998), which categorises factors that volunteers are typically driven by into six categories:



Protective

People volunteer to reduce negative feelings they have about themselves. This includes reducing feelings of guilt and loneliness.



Values

Volunteering is seen as a way to express or act on important values like altruism and humanitarianism.



Career

Volunteering as a means to gain career-related skills or advantages.



Social

Participating in volunteering activities as a way to strengthen one's social relationships.



Understanding

People volunteer in order to gain new learning experiences and to exercise skills that are often unused.



Enhancement

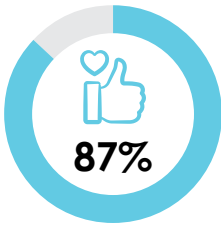
Volunteering to aid in personal growth and development.

'Altruism', 'Understanding' and 'Enhancement' were the top 3 volunteer motivations.

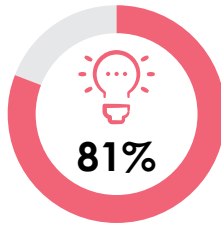
The desire to express or act on values like altruism and humanitarianism was the most-cited driver of volunteerism, with 87% of respondents selecting the option. The second most selected option was 'Understanding', with 81% of respondents being motivated to gain new learning experiences and exercise skills that are often unused. The third-most cited reason for volunteering was 'Enhancement', with 62% motivated to volunteer for personal growth and development.

Motivations to volunteer

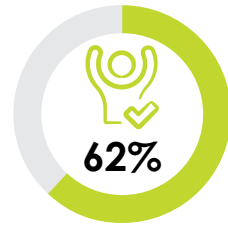
% = Percentage of respondents who selected



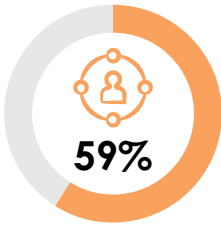
Values*



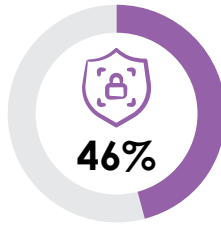
Understanding



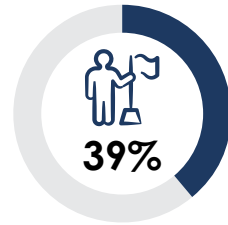
Enhancement



Social



Protective*



Career*

* Factors that significantly influenced volunteering, significant at the .05 level

Motivations to donating

To understand donor motivations, the survey utilised the Motives to Donate Scale to understand Singapore's 'TASTE' for charitable giving (Konrath, 2017).



Trust

People are more likely to give to nonprofits that they trust will use their donated money to make a difference.



Altruism

Donors tell us again and again that they find it important to help others in need.



Social

Many donors say that they give because their donations matter to someone they know and care about.



Taxes

The tax breaks many people get in exchange for their gifts to charity are another motivating factor for giving.



Egoism

Egoism is when people give in order to receive some personal benefit, such as feeling good or looking good to others.

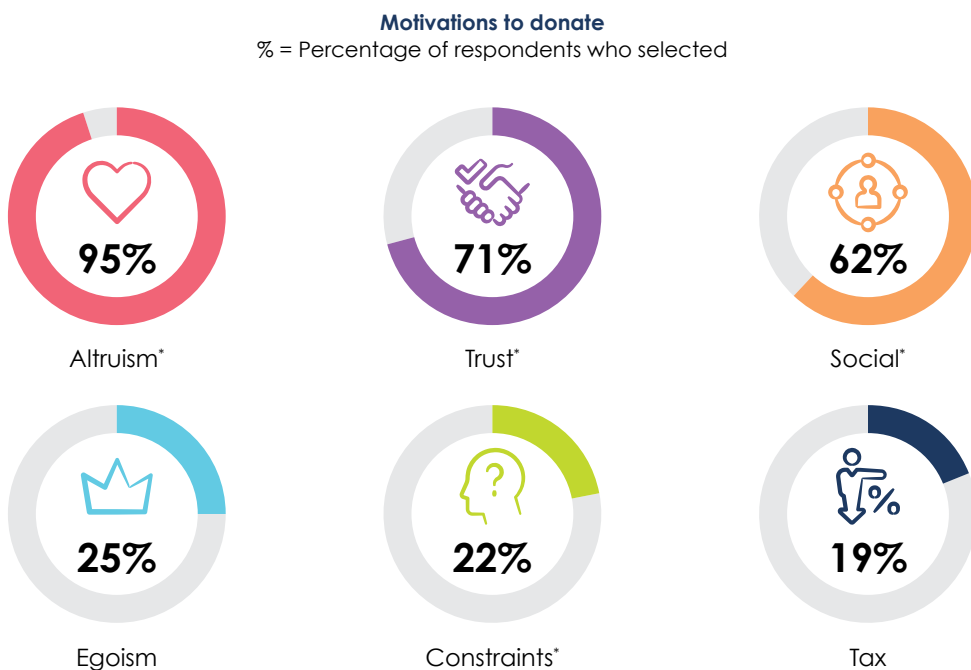


Constraints

Constraints due to financial abilities affect motivations.

'Altruism', 'Trust' and 'Social' were the top 3 donor motivations.

95% of respondents were motivated by the desire to improve the well-being of others. 71% were motivated by their trust in the NPOs to use the funds appropriately for the public good. 62% were influenced by their social networks, who placed importance on donating. Overall, we understand that Singaporeans are more motivated by how they can help others when they give rather than what they can get back.



* Factors that significantly influenced donating, significant at the .05 level

By understanding donors' and volunteers' motivations, NPOs and GUs can tailor outreach and align initiatives with their givers' motivations to ensure recruitment and retention. Programmes designed can also coincide with volunteer motivations to provide higher levels of volunteer satisfaction and sustained long-term volunteerism (Ferreira et al., 2012).



Volunteers were most hindered by a lack of time and the COVID-19 pandemic. Donors were hindered by financial constraints, not being approached and a fear of donation scams.

Beyond determining what drives people to volunteer or donate, understanding the barriers in place that hinder plans for volunteering or donations contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the giving landscape. More importantly, it illuminates the areas where improvement is needed.

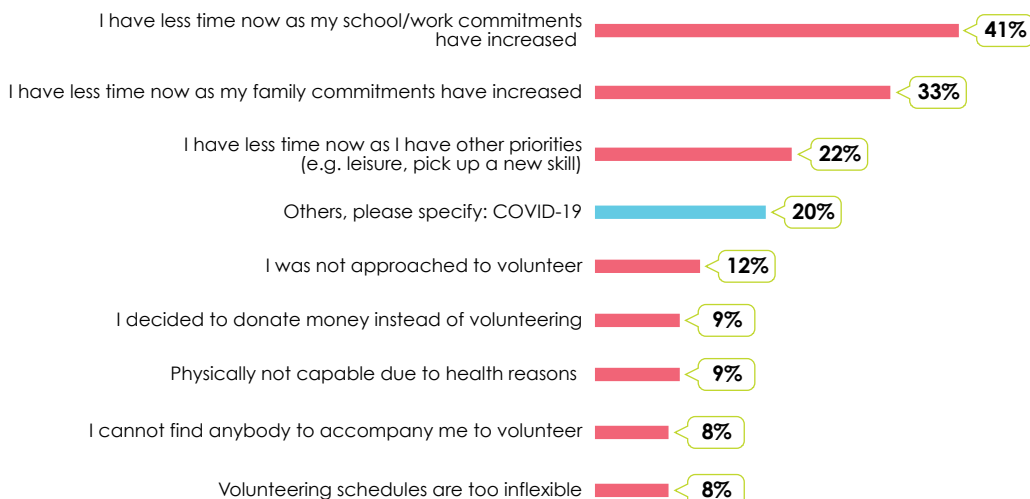
Barriers to volunteering

The top-cited barrier against volunteering was the lack of time. 41% of respondents reported having less time to volunteer due to school or work, 33% due to family commitments and 22% due to having other priorities. 20% of respondents also cited the COVID-19 pandemic as a barrier to volunteering, making it the fourth most-cited barrier against volunteering. With the easing of pandemic restrictions, efforts to encourage volunteering should focus on removing the other top barriers. Promoting volunteering activities that require less time commitment or integrating volunteering with school, work, and family commitments to reduce conflicting priorities may be a strategy that charities can utilise.



Figure 10
Barriers to volunteering

Q. Why have you not volunteered in the past 12 months?

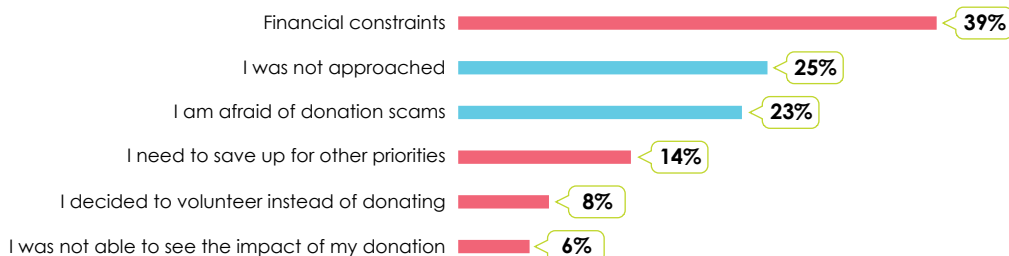


Barriers to donating

Similar to volunteering, identifying barriers to donating will help charities to strategise. The most significant barrier against donating was financial constraints (39%). The following two most commonly cited barriers were not being approached (25%) and being fearful of donation scams (23%). Efforts to encourage donations should focus on improving the reach of donation appeals and tackling fears of being scammed. As for those who cited financial constraints, it may be helpful to inform these people that there are other forms of giving.

Figure 11
Barriers to donating

Q. Why have you not donated in the past 12 months?



Actionable steps

Alleviate barriers to volunteering

- Encourage micro-volunteering which has lower barriers to entry with less need for formal training and no requirement for long-term commitment. Micro-volunteering can be completed in short and discrete periods (Jochum & Paylor, 2013).
- Integrate spending time with loved ones and volunteerism by promoting group-based volunteering activities that involve communities, families, and couples.

Alleviate barriers to donating

- Improve the reach of donation appeals by diversifying engagement streams.
- Boost educational campaigns to increase trust in charities. The Charities Unit's Safer Giving campaign is an example of educational campaigns to guide donors on giving safely and avoiding falling victims to scams (Charities Unit, 2021).
- Build secure digital infrastructure to support online donation drives to allay people's fears of misuse of personal data and being scammed.

Conclusion

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the giving landscape has seen significant changes. There is a shift in giving preferences towards the social service sector, a rise in informal and digital giving, and an expanded definition of giving beyond cash donations to include other ways of giving.

Embracing and responding to these changes is essential to ensure that giving is sustained in the post-COVID future. The shift towards online giving emphasises more than ever the need to build relevant digital infrastructure to ensure a seamless digital giving experience. Online and offline channels of giving must work in tandem to encourage a culture of giving in Singapore. Collaborations between NPOs and GUs should also be promoted to ensure the sustainability of both formal and informal means of giving.



Glossary

Methodology

The final sample comprised of **2,004 responses** and included Singapore Citizens/Permanent Residents and individuals on Employment Pass/Dependent Pass/Student Pass/Work Permit/S Pass Permit. All respondents were aged **15 years or older**. Participants were obtained through a **stratified random sampling by geographic region from the Department of Statistics' National Database on Dwellings in Singapore**. Fieldwork was conducted from 8 April to 17 September 2021, with a temporary halt from 18 May to 16 June 2021 due to Phase 2 Heightened Alert (P2HA) restrictions.

The survey was mainly administered face-to-face, using Computer Aided Personal Interviewing (CAPI) by trained fieldwork personnel. The interviewer read the survey questions to the respondent whilst filling up their responses on the tablet. Showcards were used when required, for example, when there was a long list of options for certain questions. Due to fears stemming from the COVID-19 situation, options to respond to the survey over Zoom (n=87) or through an online questionnaire (n=177) was also provided. No significant difference between the different mediums of responding were found.

Definitions used

Volunteering is defined as activities one does out of their own free will, without expecting financial payment, to help others outside of their household, family, relative or friends.

Volunteering acts exclude compulsory community work such as Values-In-Action (VIA), Community Involvement Program (CIP) in schools and Correct Work Order (CWO), unless compulsory volunteer hours were exceeded. Formal volunteering refers to volunteering with registered organisations while informal volunteering refers to helping communities directly, without going through any registered organisations.

Donating is defined as giving money out of one's own free will, without expecting financial payment, to help others outside of their household, family, relatives or friends.

Donating excludes compulsory payments of money such as paying fines or taxes. Formal donating refers to donations made through registered organisations while informal donating refers to donating directly to communities, without going through any registered organisations.

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Individual Giving Study 2021

The study is based on quantitative data collected from 2,004 respondents across Singapore between 8 April and 17 September 2021. The purpose of the study is to determine giving behaviours and the drivers of giving, and understand how to cultivate a culture of giving in Singapore. The study measured volunteering and donation rates, identified the motivations givers have, and thus defined opportunities to promote giving in Singapore.

About NVPC

The National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre (NVPC) is the steward of the City of Good vision for Singapore, where individuals, organisations, and leaders come together to give their best for others. Through our brands, programmes, and initiatives, we facilitate partnerships with charities, organisations, public sector bodies, and individuals to enliven the giving ecosystem within Singapore.

We invite you to join us in building a #CityofGood together. Visit us at www.cityofgood.sg.

Towards a



Together, Because

