

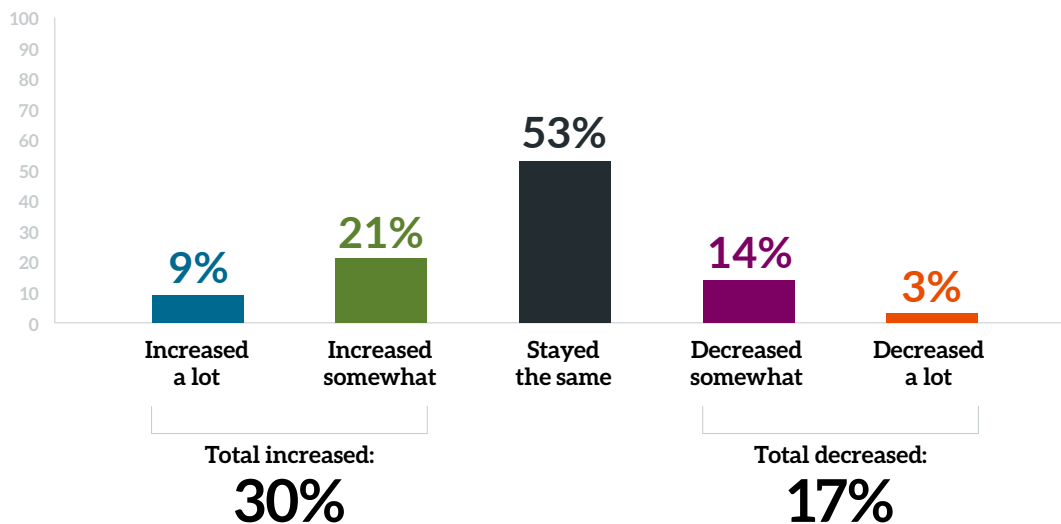
# Volunteering and COVID-19

## Before the pandemic, volunteering was on the rise for 30 percent of donors.

Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, half of volunteers said the amount of time they volunteered had stayed the same in the previous two years, while 30 percent had increased their time. Of those who had spent more time volunteering, nearly three-quarters said it was because they wanted to become more involved in a cause or their community. Gen X and Millennial volunteers were more likely to give this reason; 79 and 78 percent, respectively, said this, compared to 62 percent of Baby Boomers.

A donor’s decrease in volunteer time was most often attributed to having less time available. Younger generations especially felt the time constraints. Eighty percent of Gen X and 79 percent of Millennials said they have less time available or they’re too busy, compared to 45 percent of Baby Boomers.

How volunteer time has changed in the last two years



### Reasons for increased volunteering

I want to become more involved in a cause or community	72%
I have more time available	43%
Someone asked me to get more involved	36%
I wanted to meet other people	19%
I wanted to get my family involved in volunteering	19%

### Reasons for decreased volunteering

I have less time available	49%
The priorities of me or my family have changed	41%
I am too busy	20%
The volunteer work I was doing was temporary	13%
I am less interested/passionate	7%

Base: Respondents who volunteered within the last two years

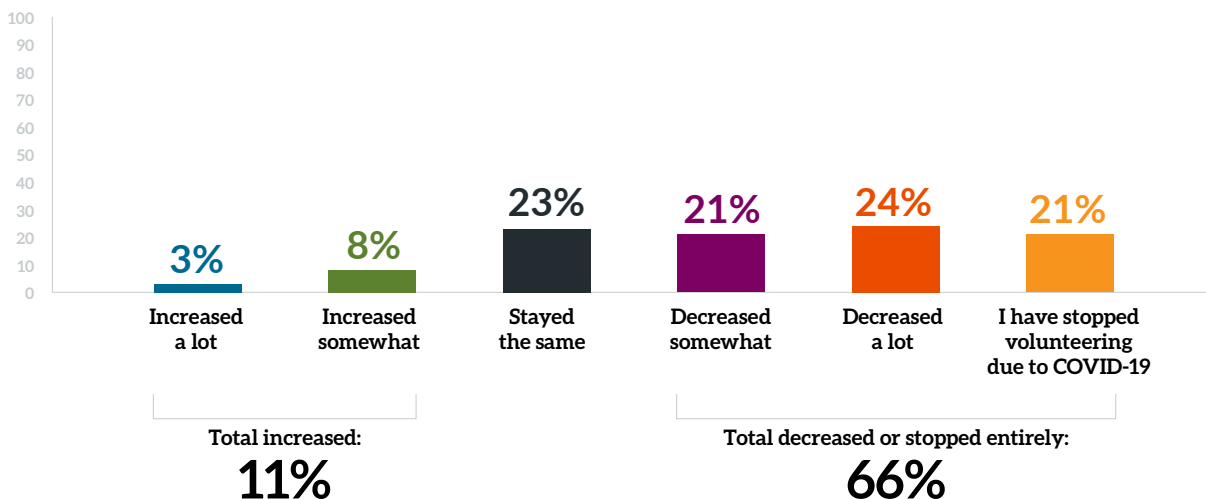


**However, as the COVID-19 crisis intensified, volunteers reconsidered their activities and sharply decreased the amount of time they volunteer.**

In March 2020, state and local governments began urging residents to stay home to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. At the time, nearly half (47 percent) of recent volunteers believed the amount of time they volunteered would decrease or stop entirely due to pandemic-related social distancing.<sup>3</sup>

But five months into the crisis, those expectations proved to underestimate the true impact of the pandemic on volunteerism. In an August 2020 survey of Fidelity Charitable donors, two-thirds said they have decreased the amount of time they volunteer or stopped entirely due to the pandemic.

**How volunteer time has changed during COVID-19**



Base: Respondents who volunteered within the last two years

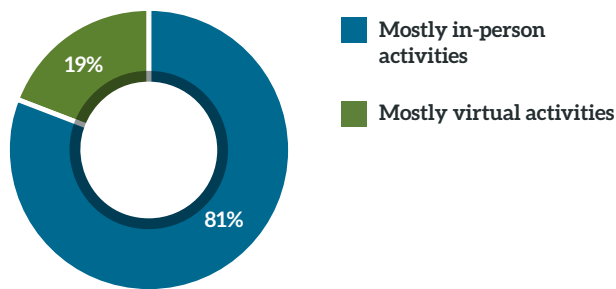
<sup>3</sup> Fidelity Charitable, "How COVID-19 is shifting donor giving," April 2020.



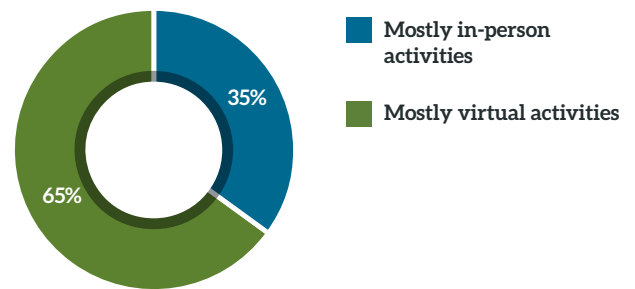
**The COVID-19 crisis has forced many donors to shift away from in-person volunteering. Eight in ten volunteers did in-person activities before—but during the pandemic, 65 percent moved to mostly virtual activities.**

Before the pandemic, the vast majority of donors participated mostly in on-site or in-person volunteer activities. But as COVID-19 made it risky to gather in public, many of the donors who wished to continue supporting their favorite nonprofits shifted to remote or virtual volunteer activities. Donors who have participated in virtual volunteerism during the pandemic are split in their reactions; 38 percent are mostly or very satisfied with their virtual experience, while 27 percent are only a little or not at all satisfied.

**Before COVID-19, I participated in...**



**During COVID-19, I have participated in...**

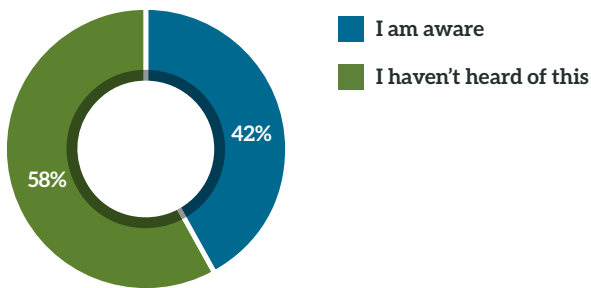


Base: Respondents who continued volunteering during the pandemic

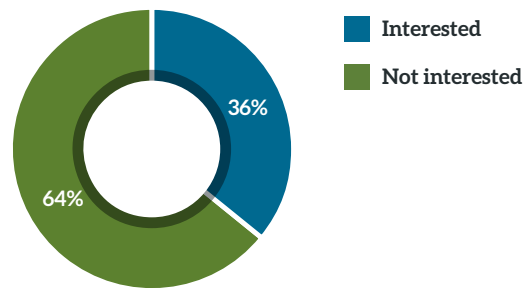
## Most donors are new to the concept of virtual volunteerism and are not sure how to find remote opportunities.

More than half of donors have yet to engage in virtual or remote volunteering. This group says they have never heard of virtual volunteerism and aren't interested, and nearly two-thirds say they don't know how to seek out remote volunteer roles. But as the pandemic wears on and in-person volunteering remains risky, these opportunities may become more prevalent—particularly if nonprofits pivot to provide meaningful virtual opportunities and actively promote them among their regular volunteers who wish to remain engaged.

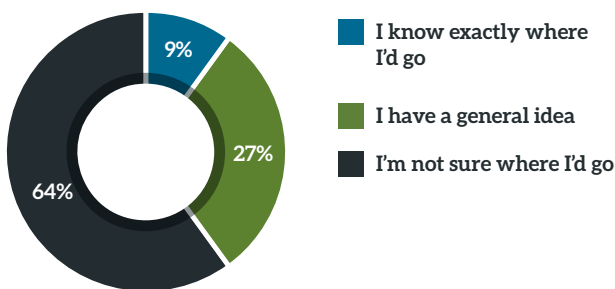
**Awareness of virtual volunteer activities**



**Are you interested in virtual volunteer activities?**



**Do you know where you would find virtual volunteer activities?**



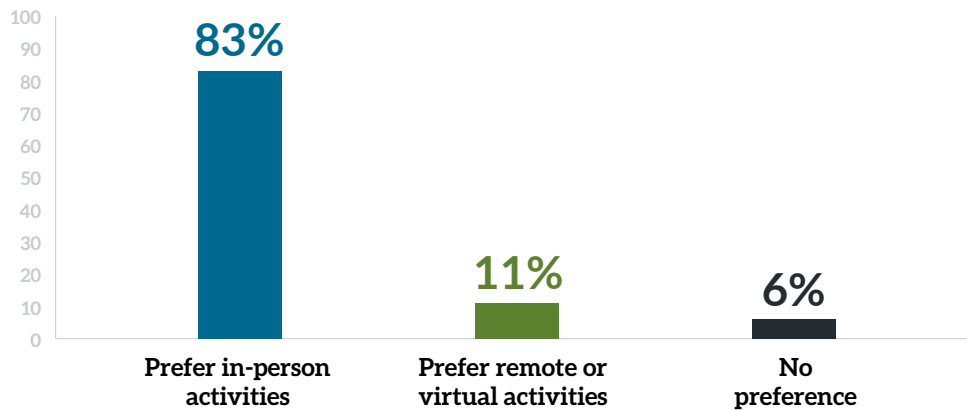
Base: Respondents who stopped volunteering during the pandemic or haven't participated in virtual volunteerism



**Given the choice, more than eight in ten volunteers prefer in-person volunteer activities.**

Volunteers show a strong preference for in-person and on-site activities—with many saying that volunteering in-person helps them feel like more a part of their community. However, as more nonprofits pivot to offering virtual volunteer opportunities and the variety of options broadens, more volunteers may find virtual roles they prefer.

**Donor preference**



**Why do you prefer in-person volunteering?**

It makes me feel like part of my community	75%
I like socializing with others	53%
I can work with my preferred nonprofits	43%
I can use more of my specific skills	40%
I can volunteer with a group	31%

**Why do you prefer virtual volunteering?**

It's flexible/fits into my schedule	54%
It's easier for me	50%
I can use more of my specific skills	29%
I don't have to interact with other people	17%
I can volunteer for a wider variety of organizations	8%

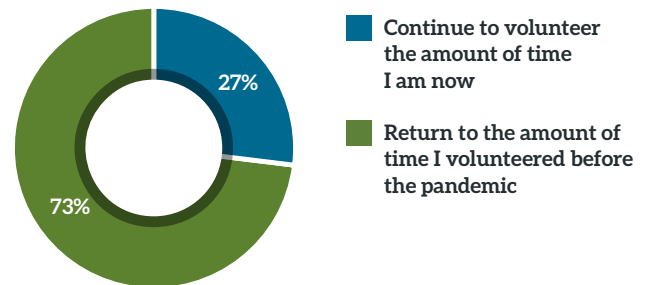
Base: Respondents who have done both in-person and virtual volunteering



**When the pandemic ends, nearly three-quarters of donors expect to return to their pre-pandemic volunteering routines.**

At this stage, volunteers are planning to revert back to their pre-pandemic volunteer engagement once the COVID-19 crisis ends. This is a hopeful indicator for nonprofits concerned that the reduction in volunteer support due to the pandemic may be permanent. At the same time, the longer the crisis continues, the more likely it becomes that the sector will need to find new models to continue to engage volunteers or to deliver services without them.

After COVID-19, I expect I will...



Base: Respondents who either increased or decreased their volunteer time during the pandemic or stopped volunteering entirely

# Methodology

Artemis Strategy Group, an independent research firm, conducted a research study on behalf of Fidelity Charitable about how donors engage in volunteerism. 1,842 adults in the U.S. who donated at least \$1,000 to charity in 2019 were surveyed in March 2020.

In addition, a survey was conducted in August 2020 among 491 Fidelity Charitable donors about how volunteerism was impacted by COVID-19. The data and analysis on pages 13–17 is based on this survey.