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## Personality Traits Shape Our Prosocial Behavior

**Why do some people do more for the community than others? A new study from the University of Zurich now shows that personality traits such as extraversion and agreeableness correlate with volunteering and charitable giving.**

People's willingness to do volunteer work or give to charity differs greatly. Besides financial and social incentives, individual differences in people's personality can explain why some of us are more likely to contribute to community welfare than others.

Researchers at the Department of Psychology of the University of Zurich have examined the links between the so-called Big Five personality traits (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism) and people's willingness to engage in prosocial behavior. Their analysis was based on 29 international studies comprising more than 90,000 participants. It included different methods to describe people's personality and covered various forms of philanthropic engagement.

### Personality traits matter

The study findings show that two personality traits in particular are linked to philanthropic engagement. Sociability and assertiveness (extraversion) positively correlate with volunteering. In other words, extraverts are more likely to do volunteer work. Meanwhile, agreeableness correlates more closely with a willingness to give money to charity. This behavior may be explained by the fact that agreeable people tend to be more compassionate and considerate of other people's feelings.

Research on the other personality traits, however, yielded mixed results. For example, there was no clear link between conscientiousness and philanthropic engagement. Openness and neuroticism also appeared to have little effect on people's prosocial behavior.

### New strategies to promote volunteering and donating

"Our findings confirm that individual differences in personality play a role in whether and how much people engage in prosocial behavior," says Wiebke Bleidorn, first author and professor of psychology at the University of Zurich. She believes that a better understanding of these links can help to encourage people to contribute to the common welfare based on their individual strengths and motivations.

The study thus not only provides valuable scientific insights but also practical guidance for organizations and policymakers wishing to promote volunteering and charitable giving. "This knowledge can be used to develop more targeted strategies aimed at promoting volunteering and charitable giving," says Christopher J. Hopwood, last author and professor of psychology.

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