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The Charitable Habits of Blood Donors

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Introduction

There is a need for a constant supply of blood and blood products (e.g. plasma and platelets) in the American health care system. Common recipients of blood include: patients at risk for major hemorrhage, patients with sickle cell anemia, patients undergoing surgery, and thrombocytopenia in neonatal patients¹. This demand is met through nationwide blood banks, such as the American Red Cross, and their blood donation programs. The American Red Cross relies solely on volunteer donors; thus, one of the most pressing issues facing this institution is getting donors in the door.

Through our survey questions we hope to uncover more factors that guide individuals in their philanthropic ways²⁻⁴. The overall goal of this research is focused on unveiling new information that will supply the American Red Cross with valuable insight into their donor population and possible opportunities for joint publicity. We investigated the similarities and difference between how and why individuals undertake certain charitable activities.

Methods

An anonymous 30 question survey was distributed to American Red Cross donation centers throughout Vermont and New Hampshire. The majority of questions provided 4-5 options that existed on a Likert sliding scale, while the remaining questions were mostly demographic in nature consisting of yes/no or numerical responses. The questions were designed to help us investigate the relationship between charity (money), blood donation, and volunteer activity (time) of the blood donor population. Our target population were the potential blood donors at either a Red Cross donation center or persons participating in a Red Cross blood drive. Inclusion criteria were donors of 18 years of age or older. Donors were placed into 3 categories of Rate of Blood Donation (times/year): Low = 0-1, Medium = 2-5 and High = 6+. Comparison of mean responses between groups were analyzed by calculating 95% confidence intervals. If confidence intervals overlapped, significance was assumed to be greater than $p = 0.05$ and therefore not significant.

References

1. Bednall TC, Bove LL. Transfusion Medicine Reviews 2011;25:317-34.
2. Bednall TC, et al. Social Science & Medicine 2013;96:86-94.
3. Masser BM, et al. Transfusion Medicine Reviews 2008;22:215-33.
4. Sharma S, et al. American Family Physician 2011;83:719-24.

Figure A	Rate of Blood Donation		
	Low	Medium	High
Mean Score for Giving Money (1= weekly; 5 = less than yearly)	3.30	3.08	2.73
95% CI	2.89 - 3.70	2.93 - 3.22	2.44 - 3.03

Donating more blood shows a trend with donating more money (not significant, $P > 0.05$)

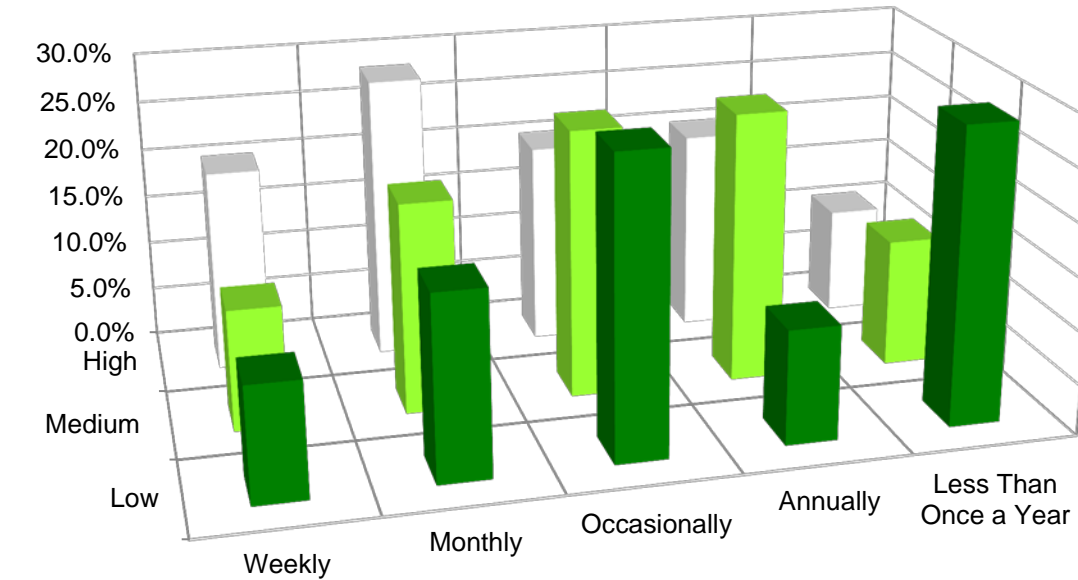


Figure B	Rate of Blood Donation		
	Low	Medium	High
Mean Agreement Score (1= Str Agree; 5 = Str Disagree)	3.77	4.29	4.3
95% CI	3.47 - 4.07	4.19 - 4.39	4.07 - 4.53

Giving more blood is associated with greater disagreement with: "If I had the extra money to donate I would not donate my blood or time as often as I do."

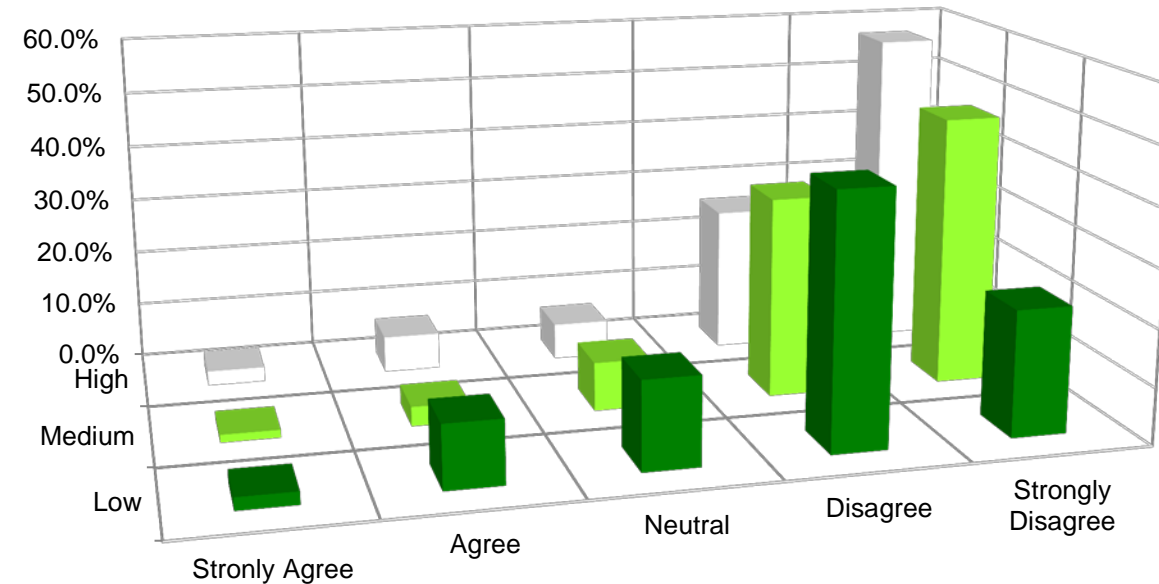


Figure E (Left) and F (Right): Ranking of charitable acts according to those surveyed on the variables of:

Personal Priority

- Blood donation ranked highest for personal priority as a charitable act compared to other charitable options.

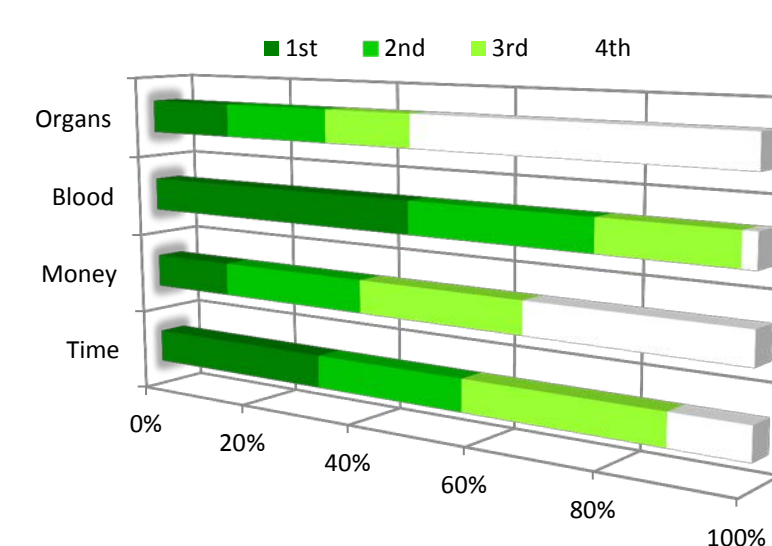


Figure C	Rate of Blood Donation		
	Low	Medium	High
Mean Agreement Score (1 = Str Agree; 5 = Str Disagree)	2.33	1.98	1.67
95% CI	2.07 - 2.58	1.88 - 2.08	1.5 - 1.84

Giving more blood is associated with greater agreement with: "I value giving blood as among my top priorities in my charitable donations."

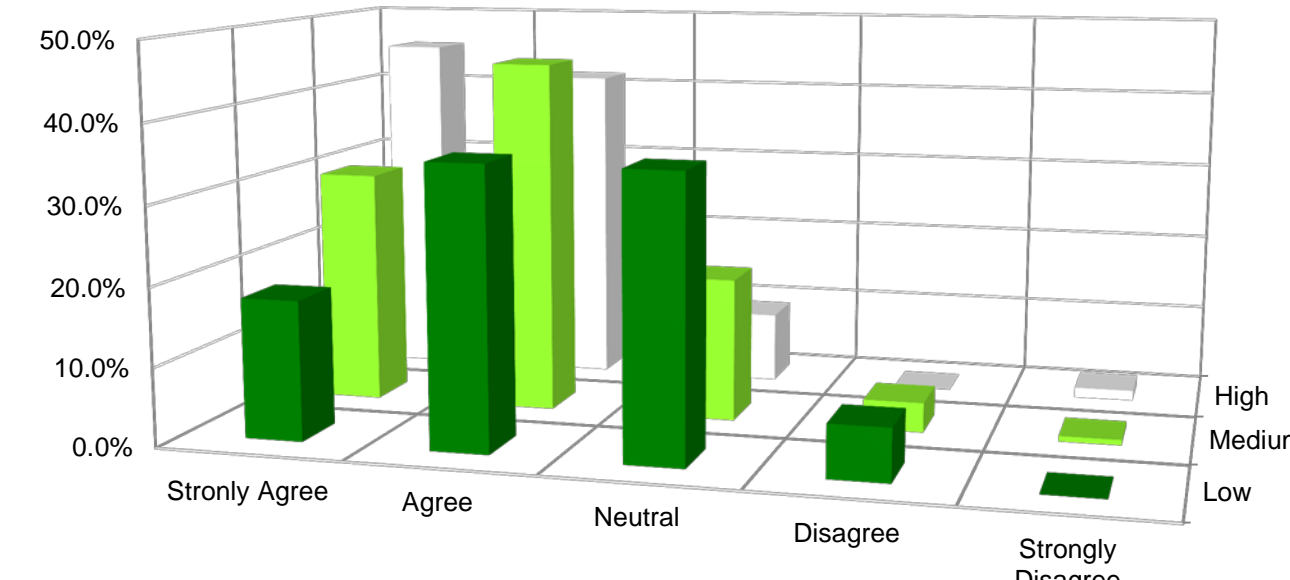
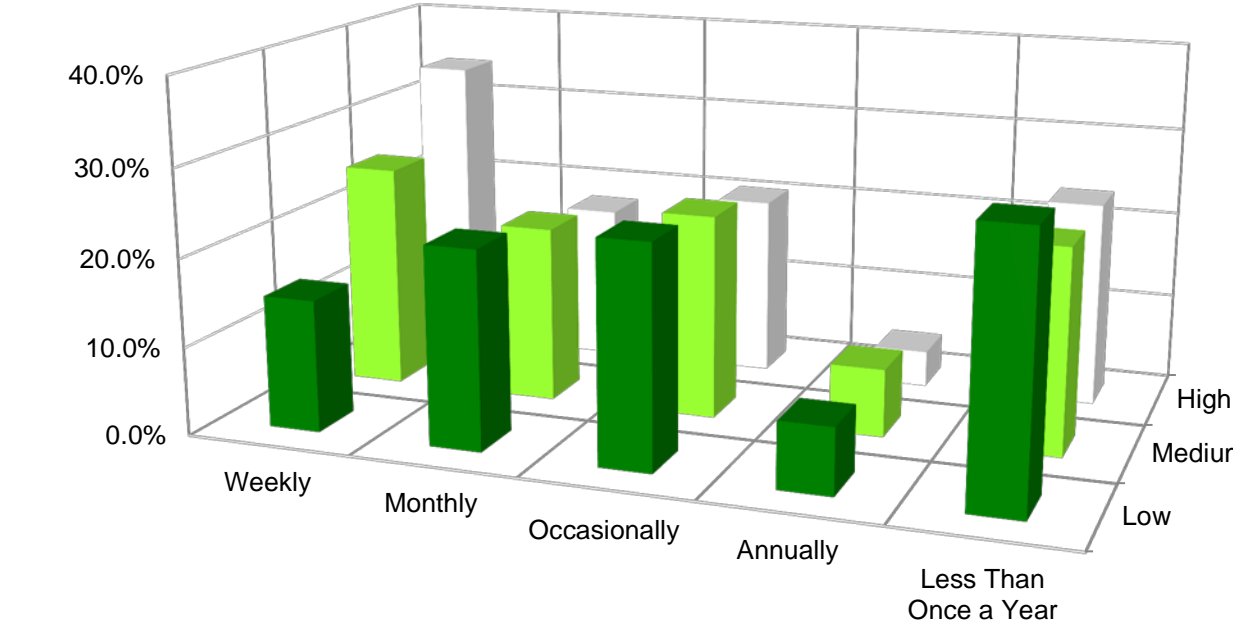


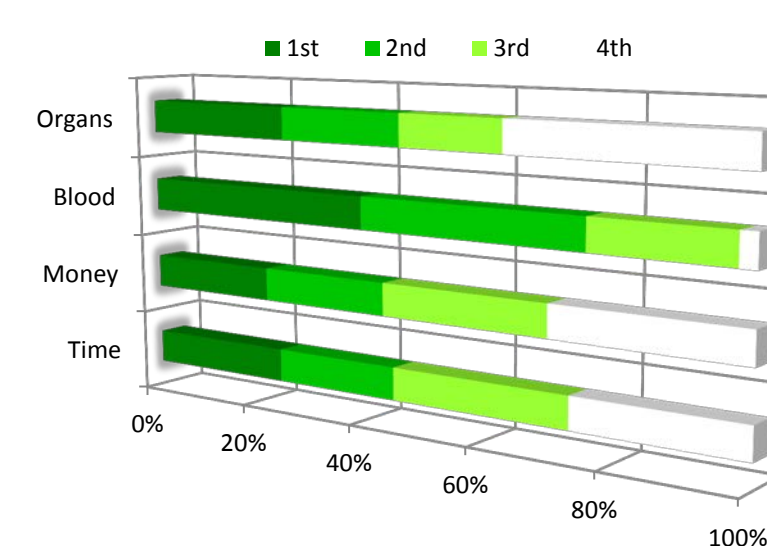
Figure D	Rate of Blood Donation		
	Low	Medium	High
Mean Score for Giving Time (1= weekly; 5 = less than yearly)	3.15	2.829	2.644
95% CI	2.70 - 3.60	2.65 - 3.01	2.29 - 3.0

Donating more blood shows a trend with donating more time (not significant, $P > 0.05$)



Positive Impact on Recipient

- Blood donation was viewed as having the most positive impact compared to other .



Demographic Data (\pm 95%CI)	Rate of Blood Donation		
	Low (n= 45)	Medium (n= 289)	High (n= 77)
Average Age (yr)	39.5 (\pm 5.3)	50.2 (\pm 1.9)	53 (\pm 3.6)
Percent Female (\pm 15.2)	67.5% (\pm 15.2)	53.8% (\pm 6.1)	47.1% (\pm 12.2)
Most Common Generation	No preference	Baby Boomers	Baby Boomers
Percent Caucasian	95% (\pm 9)	98% (\pm 3)	99% (\pm 3)
Percent with Bachelor's Degree or Above	45.5% (\pm 15.3)	54.4% (\pm 5.86)	51.4% (\pm 11.7)
Average Age at First Blood Donation	23.8 (\pm 2.9)	27.4 (\pm 1.5)	28.1 (\pm 3.3)
Amount of Money Donated Annually*	1.6 (\pm 0.3)	2.4 (\pm 0.1)	2.6 (\pm 0.3)

Donation amount categories: 1 = 0-\$100; 2 = \$101-500; 3 = \$501-\$1000; 4 = \$1,001-\$5,000; 5 = more than \$5,000

Discussion

What is the charitable nature of blood donors?

- Those that donated blood more frequently (in the medium and high donation groups) valued giving blood "among top priorities in charitable donations."
- Low-frequency donors indicated that they would donate blood less frequently if they had the option to donate money to charity instead, but donate significantly less money than do medium and high-frequency donors. Low frequency donors were also significantly younger than high-frequency donors, although this may be an artifact of sampling.
- No significant difference between low, medium and high-frequency blood donation groups was found between volunteering time, or level of satisfaction with giving blood.

Study Limitations

- We did not survey "zero blood donors," and thus our data did not include those who have not yet made the decision to donate blood.

Conclusions

As a group, blood donors are generally charitable with no significant differences in charitable activity noted between low, medium and high frequency blood donors. We do not recommend a change in Red Cross recruitment strategies for existing donors at this point in time.