**Now More than Ever – Volunteer!**

The Network for Volunteering in Israel

The “New Volunteers” of the Coronavirus Crisis

A survey-based overview of the situation

April 2020

The Network for Volunteering in Israel

Founded by the State of Israel and the Israel Joint Distribution Committee

**Introduction**

Over the past few weeks, Israel, along with the entire world, has been in a state of crisis as a result of the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). The Coronavirus does not differentiate between populations or sectors, affecting all of Israeli society, but especially impacting its most vulnerable populations. During these difficult times, the resilience of Israel’s residents and communities is being tested.

Indeed, Israeli society is managing to tap into its strength and vitality during this crisis. In recent weeks, many people have volunteered, donated, and responded to the wide range of pre-existing and emerging needs among the various populations in need of assistance. This greatly contributes to social resilience and solidarity. It encourages social organizing and civic participation, and enhances our sense of shared social responsibility.

Volunteerism produces effective action and promotes solutions to the burning social problems that have arisen in the current situation: Volunteers bring food and medication to isolated senior citizens, and help alleviate their loneliness. Volunteers provide daycare for the children of health care professionals and other workers who must work during this emergency. They help families in quarantine, and those who are in economic distress due to the situation. Wherever there is a need, there are volunteers willing to meet it.

The Network for Volunteering in Israel is working in full coordination with its partners and all those involved in the field of volunteering and social engagement, from local and municipal authorities to social organizations and businesses. Together we are working to develop coordinated, synchronized, and effective volunteer efforts to meet the wide range of needs that Israel’s citizens have at this time. As part of this effort, the Network for Volunteering has been conducting an ongoing process of data collection, knowledge development, research, and inquiry. This will help us learn the relevant lessons about how to best respond to the current emergency, as well as those that may arise in the future.

All of the information in this report is based on data collected from a number of surveys conducted during this recent time period. These include a survey of a representative sample of Israeli society, and another of a representative sample of people who recently became unemployed, both conducted on our behalf by the Geocartography Knowledge Group. Additional surveys were conducted among volunteer coordinators in social organizations, managers of volunteer units in the local authorities, and social engagement coordinators in youth centers. The data collected in these surveys and included in this report provide an overview of volunteerism in Israel during this time.

**Data on Volunteerism During the Coronavirus Crisis: April 2020**1

20.3% of the surveyed Israeli adults (18 and older) are volunteering during the Coronavirus crisis.

This rate is nearly identical to the rate of volunteerism during routine times:

20.6%

according to the Social Survey of the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019.

Nevertheless, Coronavirus and the resulting restrictions have created a new reality for volunteerism. Some volunteer roles cannot be carried out as usual. Some volunteers (such as senior citizens or people with preexisting medical conditions) cannot perform their regular roles.

This means:

1. New styles of volunteerism
2. New roles for volunteers
3. New volunteers
4. **New styles of volunteerism**

Via digital/online platforms: 27%

Via telephone: 36%

Personal and face-to-face encounters: 37%

During the Coronavirus crisis there has been a significant increase in “remote” volunteerism, conducted over the phone or online.

According to previous research2, the rate of volunteerism conducted via digital platforms prior to the outbreak of the Coronavirus was only 4%.

1. **New roles for volunteers, alongside routine roles**

Whether volunteerism is conducted through face-to-face meetings, over the phone, or online, dealing with the Coronavirus has led to the development of new roles, alongside those familiar to us from routine times or even previous emergencies.

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| **Primary Roles** | **Percentage of volunteers performing this role** |
| Assistance with shopping, packaging, and delivering food and medicine to vulnerable populations and those in quarantine  | 38.2% |
| Psychological and emotional support and assistance | 26.6% |
| Conducting online lessons and workshops | 14.7% |
| Phone calls to alleviate the loneliness of isolated senior citizens | 14.5% |
| Community-initiated organization for mutual support within the neighborhood | 8.1% |
| Day care services for essential workers | 2.7% |

The most common volunteer role is assistance with shopping, packaging, and delivering food and medicine to vulnerable populations and those in quarantine.

Some roles that were carried out in person during regular times have been shifted to the phone or digital platforms.

44% of the volunteers making phone calls to senior citizens are between the ages of 35-54.

80% of the volunteers giving online workshops and classes are between the ages of 18-34.

1. **New volunteers during the time of the Coronavirus**

It is generally accepted that the majority of those who volunteer during an emergency are the same people who volunteer during routine times. However, the current emergency has brought on unprecedented challenges, unknown during previous emergencies. Due to the restrictions and the high risk of contagion to certain populations, some veteran volunteers cannot perform their roles. At the same time, many people who did not volunteer during routine times have entered the picture. Among these are individuals who are now on unpaid leave or unemployed.

The rate of volunteerism among those on unpaid leave or unemployed is 25%.3 This is higher than the rate in the general population (20%).

65% of the those who are on unpaid leave or unemployed are interested in volunteering during this time, if they are offered a role that interests them and complies with the current health guidelines and restrictions.3

60% of those applying as volunteers through the website of the Network for Volunteering in Israel are new to volunteerism.4

As in routine times in Israel, more males than females are volunteering. Female volunteers are mainly active in providing emotional support and caring for children. Male volunteers are mainly active in the areas of food production and distribution, transportation of goods, and security. 1  Males: 23.4% Females: 17.5%

There are several possible explanations for the (relatively) high rate of volunteerism among those on unpaid leave or unemployed. In addition to altruistic and value-related motivations, we also see, for example, the desire to continue to have a sense of meaning and purpose, to fill the new-found free time due to loss of employment with meaningful activity, and the hope that volunteering will help them reintegrate into the employment cycle by making connections and gaining new experience.

**Volunteerism through the Local Authorities**

In times of emergency, local authorities provide the most effective organizational frameworks, identifying residents’ needs and the response that the situation demands. Volunteers can work through the local authorities, in collaboration with civic organizations and businesses. Many opportunities for volunteering can be found through the local authorities’ volunteer units, youth centers, and through the volunteer coordinators in the education system.

Volunteer units in the local authorities5

51,446 volunteers

89% of the volunteer units were engaged in the acquisition, packaging, and delivery of food and medicine

86% were involved in making phone calls to isolated senior citizens

27% were involved in operating the public service telephone line (106)

**Social involvement of young people in youth centers**6

20,734 youth are involved in volunteer social activities

67% of the youth centers were engaged in the acquisition, packaging, and delivery of food and medicine

61% were involved in making phone calls to isolated senior citizens

47% were involved in offering online workshops and classes

**Volunteerism in Education7**

Given the closure of the education system during this time, many volunteers working in education have transferred their activities to digital platforms. They continue to offer support to help students learn and succeed in their studies. Additionally, they are integrating new responses to a variety of needs that have arisen as a result of the current situation. Youth who had previously volunteered are continuing their activities to address crucial social needs, whether online or in person.

There are 16,500 youth volunteers, including:

* Teenagers
* Volunteers in their year of national service
* Volunteers with mission-driven organizations and communities
* Volunteers with religious organizations and groups
* Participants in pre-military preparation courses
* Youth village residents
* Volunteers with educational organizations and communities
* Alumni of youth movements and organizations

These volunteers are involved in providing educational activities, helping at youth centers, engaging in online volunteerism, doing agricultural work, and providing child care.

50% of those who were previously volunteering in educational support roles are continuing to do so during this time. Youth are volunteering in day camps for children of medical professionals, offering online or telephone tutoring services for special needs students, providing assistance to the local authorities, and providing online learning and support using digital tools.

80 educational assistants offer online support through the Ministry of Education’s Division for Welfare Services – for a total of 4000 hours of volunteer activity.

150 educational assistants help students at youth villages for at-risk children, who lack family support.

150 participants in the Masa Program are continuing to teach or offer educational support online.

**Volunteers with social organizations8**

Many civil society and public organizations that have volunteer activities during routine times, have transformed their activities and the roles of volunteers to meet the current needs of the people who receive their services.

Organizations have adjusted the roles of their volunteers to the situation or created new roles, as needed. New organizations have been set up specifically to meet the needs of this time. Other organizations had to halt their activities, in order to protect their volunteers’ health.

44% of the organizations are involved in telephone calls to senior citizens

43% are involved with packaging and delivery of food

41% are offering online classes and workshops

9% of the organizations had to completely cease volunteer activities during this period

The populations aided by these organizations include:

* Families of children with special needs
* Adults with special needs
* Agricultural workers
* People in quarantine
* Animals
* Families assisted by the Welfare Department
* Families not assisted by the Welfare Department
* Senior citizens
* Children and youth
* New immigrants
* Single-parent families
* Families of the sick
* Other

**Needs of Volunteer Coordinators: Knowledge and Tools**

Volunteer Coordinators said they require additional knowledge and tools on the following topics:

Maintaining and motivating volunteer activity 50%

Management in uncertain times 47%

Cooperative management among various sectors during the emergency 41%

Coordinating online volunteer activity 41%

Recognition and appreciation of volunteers during the emergency period 40%

Platforms for learning among colleagues 35%

Emotional support for volunteers 31%

70% of the organizations said that during this time, they have established collaborations with local authorities, government ministries, local and national businesses, and other organizations similar to their own.

**Four Major Barriers to Volunteerism During the Coronavirus Crisis**

In the survey among people who are on unpaid leave or are unemployed, those who are not volunteering noted the following reasons:3

1. **Fear of being infected with Coronavirus in the course of volunteering** 35%

We recommend publicizing opportunities for distance volunteering (from home), conducted online or via telephone. This barrier is mainly noted by people 55 years or older. 66.8% of this age group cited this reason for not volunteering, as compared with 30% of younger people.

1. **Inability to volunteer because of young children at home** 25%

We recommended making parents aware of volunteer activities that can be done in the evening or at night. This reason was given by more females (30%) than males (20%) in the relevant age population.

1. **Economic stress preventing volunteerism** 14%

It is important to publicize and discuss the positive correlation between volunteering and employment.

More males (17%) more than females (10%) cite this reason. It is noted as a barrier by roughly the same percentage among the various age groups.

1. **Unaware of volunteer opportunities** 11%

It is essential to publicize volunteering opportunities and the various platforms where volunteer opportunities can be found.

**Primary Needs** 5, 6, 8

Several major needs have arisen during this time, according to the surveys conducted among organizations’ volunteer coordinators, managers of volunteer units in the local authorities, and social engagement coordinators in youth centers.

**Personal protective equipment for volunteers**

There is a need for masks, gloves, and hand sanitizer to ensure volunteers’ safety and health.

**Budgets for gestures of appreciation**

Organizations need budgets to give gifts or certificates of appreciation to volunteers and to organize nation-wide events recognizing their contribution.

**Compensation for travel expenses**

Budgets are required to reimburse volunteers’ expenses for travel within and between cities.

**Professional enrichment**

There is a need for additional knowledge about organizing and managing volunteer efforts during emergencies, shifting to “remote” volunteering, and tools and ideas for maintaining and motivating volunteerism in the long-term.

**Personal resilience of managers and volunteers**

There is a need for additional knowledge about methods for coping with the ongoing emergency and the difficulties associated with it.

**Retaining volunteers who cannot currently volunteer due to their age**

There is a need for knowledge about maintaining the relationship with volunteers who are currently unable to perform their roles, and preserving their sense of belonging to the organization.

**Sources**

The data presented in this report are based on the following studies and surveys

1 Targeted internet survey, conducted by the Geocartography Knowledge Group on behalf of the Network for Volunteering in Israel. The survey population consisted of 534 male and female internet-users from the Jewish and Arab sectors, ages 18 and over. They constitute a representative national sample of this population in the State of Israel. This survey was conducted during the last week of March 2020.

2 Targeted survey conducted by CI Marketing Research on behalf of the Network for Volunteering in Israel. The survey population consisted of 2500 males and females from the Jewish and Arab sectors, ages 15 and over. They constitute a representative national sample of this population within the State of Israel. This survey was conducted throughout 2019.

3 Targeted internet survey, conducted by the Geocartography Knowledge Group on behalf of the Network for Volunteering in Israel among 304 male and female internet-users from the Jewish and Arab sectors, ages 18 and over, who became unemployed as a result of the Coronavirus crisis. This survey was conducted during the last week of March 2020.

4 Questionnaire on Volunteerism in the Coronavirus Period. Responses to this questionnaire were collected through the website of the Network for Volunteering in Israel in April 2020.

5 Targeted internet survey conducted by the Network for Volunteering in Israel and the volunteer department of the Israel Ministry of Labor, Welfare, and Social Services. The survey population consisted of 142 male and female managers of volunteer units in the local authorities. This survey was conducted during the first week of April 2020.

6 Targeted internet survey, conducted by the Network for Volunteering in Israel. The survey population consisted of 95 male and female social engagement coordinators in youth centers. This survey was conducted during the first week of April 2020.

7 This data is based on a report from the Israel Ministry of Education, which was distributed to the member-groups of the Network for Volunteering in Israel on April 12, 2020, and an informational booklet distributed to educational support volunteers and staff in April 2020.

8 Targeted internet survey, conducted by the Network for Volunteering in Israel. The survey population consisted of 142 male and female volunteer coordinators and project managers in social organizations. The survey was conducted during the second week of April 2020.

The images and photographs used in this report were obtained from a variety of organizations, local authorities, and youth centers.

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For more information contact:

Network for Volunteering in Israel

The Israel Volunteer Council