

Is being generous the next beauty trend?

August 31 2020



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It has long been known that giving can have positive effects on the person who is giving, such as an increase in happiness, confidence, and even physical health. But research from Indiana University has found there may be another potential implication of giving: physical attractiveness.

The IU study, published in *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, found that more [attractive](#) people are more likely to be givers, and givers are rated as more attractive.

"Poets and philosophers have suggested the link between moral and physical beauty for centuries," said study co-author Sara Konrath, who is an associate professor of philanthropic studies at the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy on sabbatical this year at Notre Dame's Institute for Advanced Study. "This study confirms that people who are perceived as more attractive are more likely to give and givers are seen as more attractive."

Konrath and study co-author Femida Handy, of the University of Pennsylvania, used three large studies, one that examined older adults at a single time, and two that started in late adolescence and followed participants for years—one of these studies followed participants as late as older adulthood. Konrath and Handy asked two research questions: Are individuals who undertake more giving behaviors rated as more physically attractive? And the reverse, are more physically attractive people more likely to undertake giving behaviors?

Those rating physical attractiveness had no information on participants' giving behaviors, allowing the researchers to determine if a person's giving behaviors correlated with [physical attractiveness](#), without the halo effect of raters being influenced by knowing participants' giving behaviors.

When it comes to the [older adults](#), volunteering and giving affection were related to higher attractiveness ratings. When it comes to young people, those who volunteered rated higher.

"Although we cannot fully explain why the link between giving behaviors and attractiveness exists, we find remarkable consistency

across the three studies, despite being conducted at different times, using different participants, and using different methods and measures," Handy said.

The paper is important, Konrath said, because it disproves the perception that beautiful people are self-focused and vain. Instead, the studies found that being rated as a little more attractive was associated with a little more generosity. Furthermore, Konrath noted that people spend significant amounts of money on [beauty products](#) and cosmetic surgery to improve their looks, yet it is possible that doing good could help to draw inner beauty to the surface.

"Our findings suggest that beauty products and procedures may not be the only way to enhance an individual's attractiveness," Konrath said. "Perhaps being generous could be the next [beauty](#) trend."

More information: Sara Konrath et al, The Good-looking Giver Effect: The Relationship Between Doing Good and Looking Good, *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* (2020). [DOI: 10.1177/0899764020950835](#)

Provided by Indiana University

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