

# 200 days of lockdown: The post-lockdown picture



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**One hundred days ago I wrote about the Post-Covid Consumer with some optimism – restrictions were easing, businesses were re-opening and consumer confidence had risen from its June low of -36 to an encouraging “high” of -27.**

Now, as we reach day 200, we’ve stalled. Consumer confidence has inched up to -25 in September and it feels like we’re holding our collective breath. Six months since lockdown, as the weather cools and the nights draw in, we’re facing an uncertain winter, with further impacts on our social, economic, and psychological lives pretty much inevitable.

**In this ever-changing context, what does it mean for charities? How does the sector energise itself and plan for the future?**

For a start, there are positives – rumours of the world becoming a kinder place are not unfounded. **More than half of the British public donated to charity between April and June 2020.** Over the past 6 months response rates to direct mail have beaten predictions: standard warm cash campaigns have experienced double digit increases year-on-year and emergency appeals have been smashing forecasts, both in terms of response rates and average gifts. While direct debit cancellations grew in March, they had dropped by June and are still well down on last year’s figures.

There’s little sign of donor fatigue either – even when shops and pubs reopened, people continued to give at increased levels. In addition, Donor Pulse’s update on the Impact of Covid-19 on Donor Behaviour reports significantly increased levels of intention to give, both in the short term (next 3 months) and into the future.

But we can't be complacent. We know we're entering recession and that job losses are imminent. Measures of financial resilience stuttered at the end of July and have worsened through August. While the societal mood may be kinder, people's ability to give will inevitably be compromised in the months to come.

Data from past recessions tells us that successful fundraising in a financial downturn is dependent on two critical factors: audience connection and innovation. Identifying and resonating with your loyal supporters is essential; as is finding new ways for people to give in a world where many traditional ones have been curtailed.

### **Making the shift to a truly audience-led approach**

An audience-led approach is nothing new but there is now a genuine commercial urgency to make that shift. It's not easy – understanding the complexity of integrating data, creativity and tech, not to mention overcoming siloes and cultural resistance, are hard – but it's essential if a charity wants to survive, and thrive, post Covid.

There is a high probability that the generation growing up now will be more charitable than its parents. Donor Pulse reports that 84% of 18-24 year olds donated between April and June this year (73% if you exclude NHS donations) – compared with 55% of 40-54 year olds (52% excluding NHS). **In addition, 50% of the younger audience say they are more likely to give in the future than they were three months ago**, whereas only 20% of the older cohort say the same.

But connecting with this younger audience is tough, as many charities know. It requires a whole new approach with very different, largely digital, strategies. Without digital transformation and innovation charities risk failing to create valuable connections with these new audiences and put their future survival in jeopardy.

In another 100 days 2020 will be over. Who knows what 2021 will bring? One thing we do know is that without doubt it will continue to be a time for fundamental change in fundraising. A time for insight to take centre-stage as charities transform and reorganise around supporter motivations and behaviours; for experience mapping that doesn't just go from A to B but truly reflects how the supporter wants to interact; for proposition development shaped and moulded around the donor; for contextual communications that emotionally connect on supporters' terms. And ultimately for better donor experiences that meet supporter needs while, crucially, creating lasting business value.

As we still look hopefully towards a time post-Covid, we need to take our lead from our supporters, understand what inspires them, listen and adapt to their changing needs and offer them certainty and assurance in an unsettled world.

*If you'd like to know more about how Signal is helping charity clients make the shift to audience-led, please get in touch.*

