Somebody to Lean On: Community Ties and Mutual Aid During COVID-19

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daily behaviour and management of pandemic impacts

Daily behaviour patterns matter:

- **Following public health guidelines** – burgeoning research on this
- **Helping each other** – little to no research on this
- Help from others in the community may be crucial for individuals and households facing impacts of pandemic and related restrictions

Research Questions:

1. In what practical ways have people helped each other during the COVID-19 pandemic (beyond their own household and family), and how widespread are such practices?
2. How do an individual's pre-existing community ties shape their likelihood of giving and/or receiving help?
3. Are people in particular need of help more likely than average to get it?

mutual aid: practical help in crisis conditions

- Disasters and pandemics stretch resources of governments and other formal organizations beyond the limit
- In this context, bottom-up cooperation becomes important – literature on disaster recovery and resilience
- Our focus is on **practical help** among individuals – running errands, lending money, giving supplies, delivering meals …
- We focus on both **giving** and **receiving** help – unpaid, from non-family members and people outside the household
- We assume an association between giving and receiving through reciprocity – so we understand giving/receiving as **mutual aid**

community ties and mutual aid

- **"Community ties" =** embeddedness in local social networks
- Existing research shows that individuals and households access informal help and support through social networks
- Disaster resilience literature demonstrates importance of interpersonal support, but insights come from specific cases
- COVID-19 crisis is exceptionally widespread, so we can look at patterns of helping behaviour across many settings at once

Our measures of community ties:

- Neighbourhood level – knowledge of neighbours
- Community level – active in community associations in last 12 months

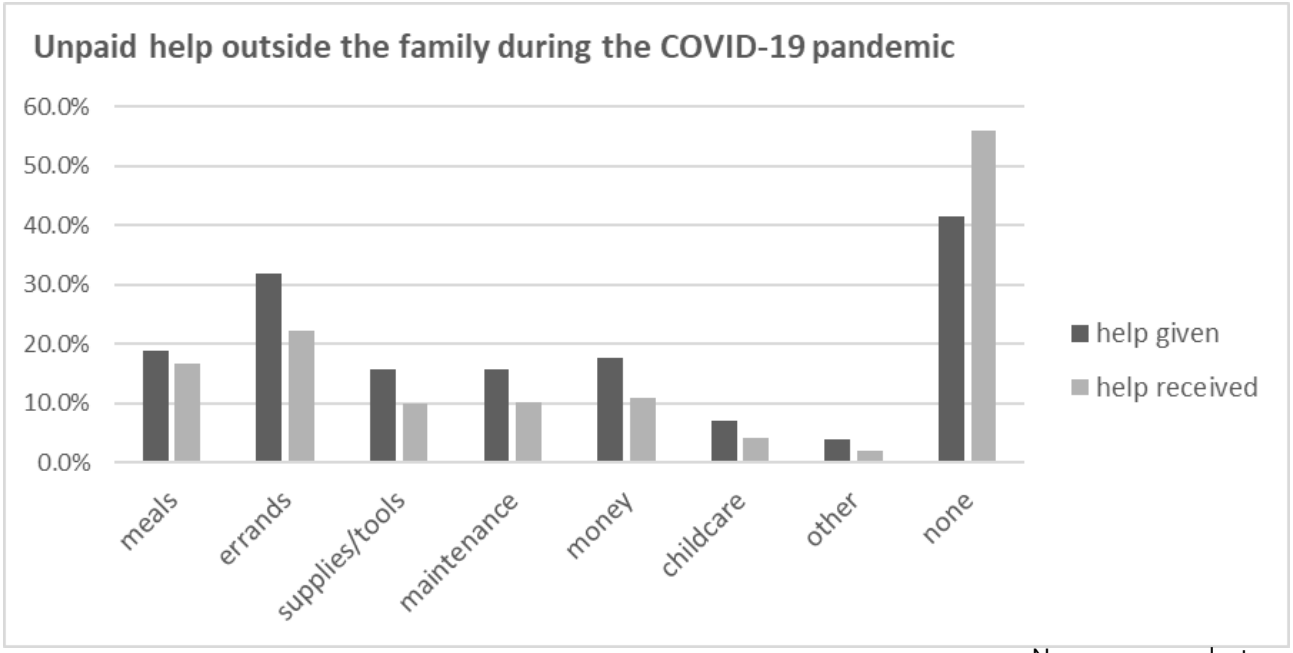
hypotheses

- **Hypothesis 1:** Individuals who know their neighbours are more likely to provide unpaid help to people outside their family during COVID-19.
- **Hypothesis 2:** Individuals who are members of community organizations are more likely to provide unpaid help to people outside their family during COVID-19.
- **Hypothesis 3:** Individuals who know their neighbours are more likely to receive unpaid help from people outside their family during COVID-19.
- **Hypothesis 4:** Individuals who are members of community organizations are more likely to receive unpaid help from people outside their family during COVID-19.

Note: we expect our independent variables to have effects independent of each other – analogous but separate mechanisms

descriptive data: patterns of giving and receiving help

Figure 1



N = 4012 respondents

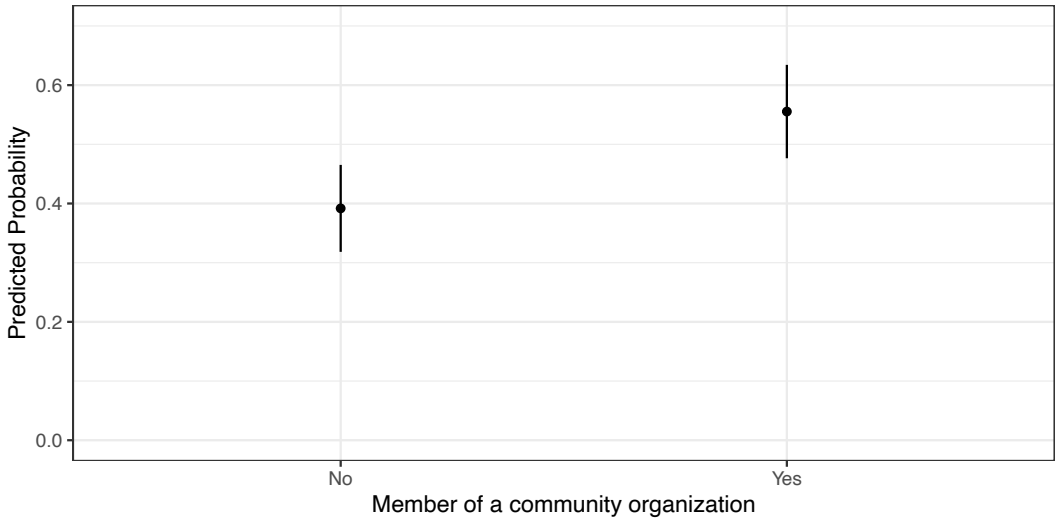
- We also found that giving and receiving help are strongly correlated

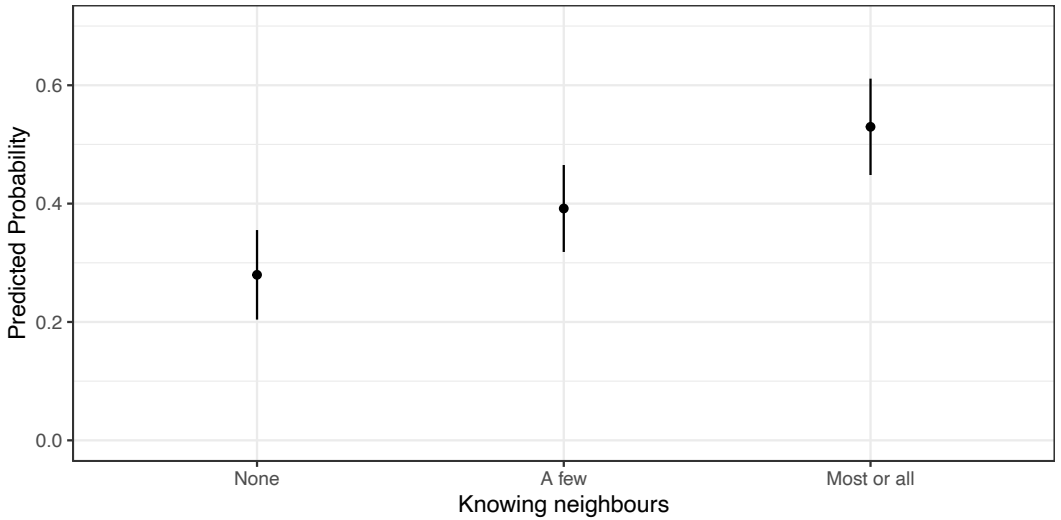
modelling the relationship between help and mutual aid

- August 2020 survey of 4,000 Canadian and Americans
- Survey-weighted glm with country fixed effects
- Dependent variables: giving help (binary), receiving help (binary)
- Independent variables: community organization membership (binary), how many neighbours do you know? (none, a few, most or all)
- Control variables:
  - Standard demographic variables: age, gender, household income, education
  - "Need-based" variables: COVID-19 case in the household, financial hardship resulting from pandemic, self-rated health status, close friends in the community
- Proceed stepwise – 6 models in total

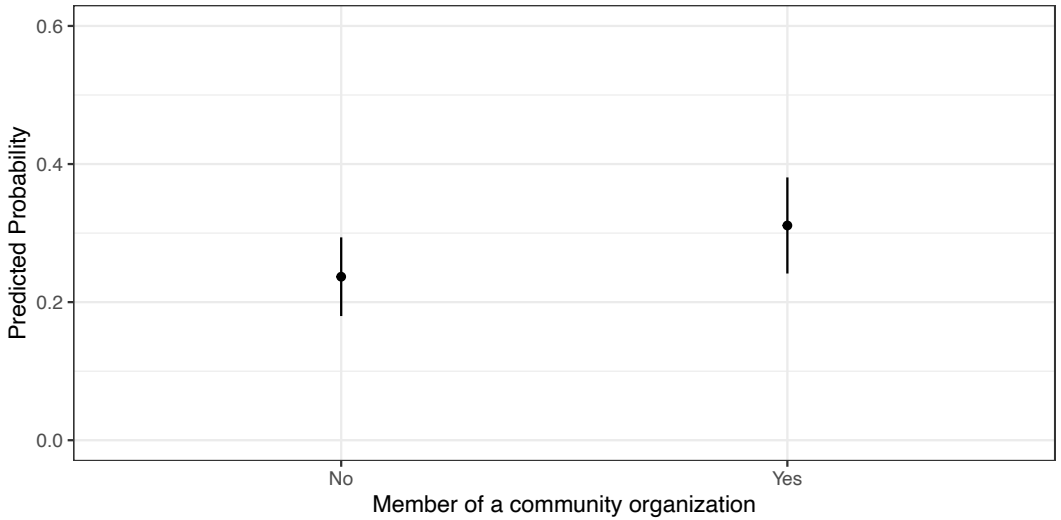
Results

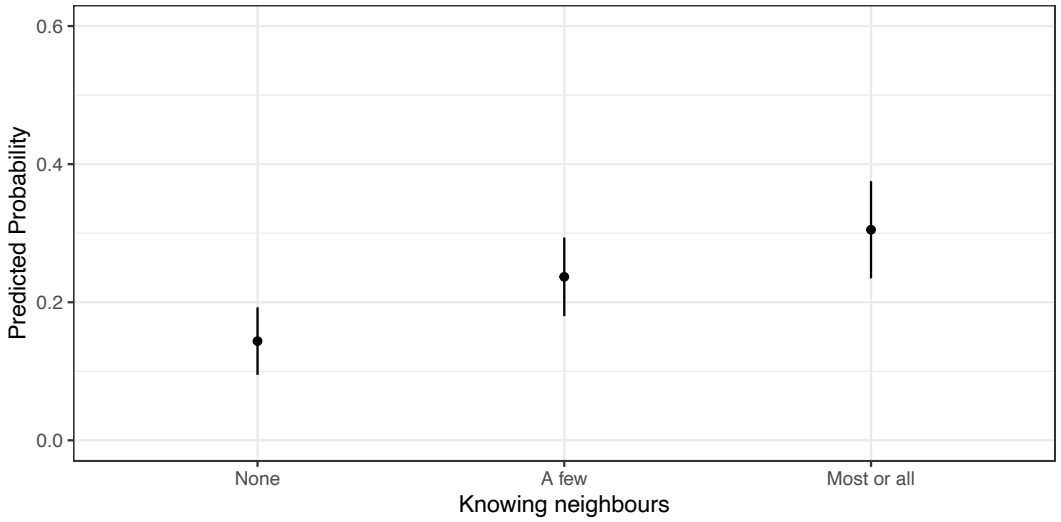
helping others during the COVID-19 pandemic (full model)





receiving help during the COVID-19 pandemic (full model)





summarizing the results

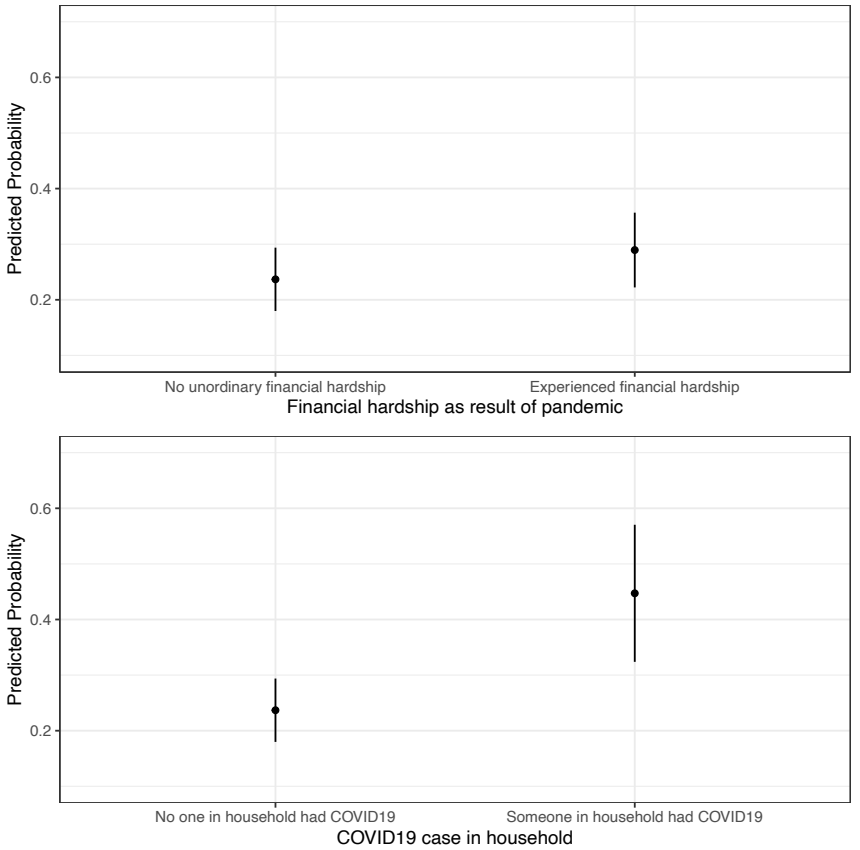
- For both Canadian and American residents, **an individual's pre-existing community ties affects their likelihood of giving and receiving practical, unpaid help** during the COVID-19 pandemic
  - Discrete change across the full range of each variable is between 15-25% when controlling for the other measure of community ties
  - The exception is the effect of the community organization variable on receiving help (8%)

next steps:

Are individuals who are in the most need of help the ones receiving help?

- Who needs help?
- Individuals experiencing pandemic "crisis":
  - COVID19 case in their household
  - financial hardship as a result of the pandemic
- Does experiencing a crisis make individuals more likely to receive help?

The effect of experiencing a crisis as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic on receiving help



next steps

- Examine further the relationship between vulnerable populations and the provision of help
  - Age, individuals working in jobs with a greater risk of contact with COVID19, poor and marginalized people
  - But there is no reason to expect that these people have higher than average community ties

Thank you!

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Results: Helping others during the COVID-19 pandemic, full model

	Dependent variable:
	Helped others during pandemic
Member of community organization	0.668***
	(0.089)
Knows a few neighbours	0.517***
	(0.118)
Knows most or all neighbours	1.070***
	(0.136)
Has a friend in community	-0.577***
	(0.097)
Household income	0.026
	(0.027)
Age 25-34	-0.284*
	(0.168)
Age 35-44	-0.385**
	(0.167)
Age 45-54	-0.435***
	(0.167)
Age 55-64	-0.525***
	(0.167)
Age 65 and older	-0.777***
	(0.164)
Male	0.014
	(0.078)
Gender other (eg. non-binary, two-spirit, gender-queer)	-0.080
	(0.508)
Some technical, college, CEGEP or university education	-0.030
	(0.123)
Completed technical, college, CEGEP, or associative degree	0.097
	(0.132)
Bachelors degree	0.160
	(0.124)
Masters, Professional degree or Doctorate	0.289**
	(0.142)
Someone in household had COVID19	0.757***
	(0.197)
Experienced financial hardship as result of pandemic	0.371***
	(0.085)
Self-rated health as fair	-0.420*
	(0.237)
Self-rated health as good	-0.361
	(0.228)
Self-rated health very good	-0.256
	(0.231)
Self-rated health as excellent	-0.137
	(0.252)
resident USA	0.055
	(0.080)
Constant	-0.047
	(0.293)
Observations	3,641
Log Likelihood	-2,260.361
Akaike Inf. Crit.	4,568.722
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Results: Receiving help from others during the COVID-19 pandemic, full model

	Dependent variable:
	Received help during pandemic
Member of a community organization	0.375***
	(0.086)
Knows a few neighbours	0.615***
	(0.130)
Knows most or all neighbours	0.961***
	(0.146)
Has a friend in community	-0.690***
	(0.105)
Household income 1-30,000	-0.147
	(0.296)
Household income 30,001-60,000	-0.687**
	(0.297)
Household income 60,001-90,000	-0.668**
	(0.304)
Household income 90,001-110,000	-0.750**
	(0.319)
Household income 110,001-150,000	-0.794**
	(0.311)
Household income >150,001	-0.908***
	(0.322)
Age 25-34	-0.187
	(0.164)
Age 35-44	-0.334**
	(0.163)
Age 45-54	-0.903***
	(0.164)
Age 55-64	-1.167***
	(0.169)
Age 65 and older	-1.033***
	(0.163)
Some technical, college, CEGEP or university education	0.024
	(0.129)
Completed technical, college, CEGEP, or associative degree	0.152
	(0.137)
Bachelors degree	0.014
	(0.126)
Masters, Professional degree or Doctorate	0.336**
	(0.142)
Male	0.137*
	(0.079)
Gender other (eg. non-binary, two-spirit, gender-queer)	-0.060
	(0.545)
Someone in household had covid	0.958***
	(0.197)
Experienced financial hardship as result of pandemic	0.272***
	(0.084)
Self-rated health as fair	-0.461*
	(0.247)
Self-rated health as good	-0.684***
	(0.237)
Self-rated health very good	-0.661***
	(0.239)
Self-rated health as excellent	-0.577**
	(0.256)
USA resident	0.089
	(0.081)
Constant	0.515
	(0.389)
Observations	3,643
Log Likelihood	-2,197.321
Akaike Inf. Crit.	4,452.642
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01