

Experience of volunteering by adults in Northern Ireland

Findings from the Continuous Household Survey 2017/18

Annual publication

Published: 28 March 2019

Coverage: Northern Ireland

Main Stories

- In 2017/18, over a quarter (27%) of adults had volunteered within the past year. While trend data is not available from the Continuous Household Survey, this question was previously included on the Omnibus Survey with the most recent figure from 2016 also being 27%.
- Of those who had volunteered in the previous year, 40% had carried out fundraising, 35% had helped in a church or religious organisation and 32% had organised or helped to run a community event.
- The most common ways of finding out about volunteering roles were from someone already involved in the organisation (47%), by word of mouth (40%), and through a church or religious organisation (33%).

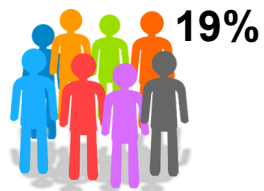
Types of organisation volunteered with



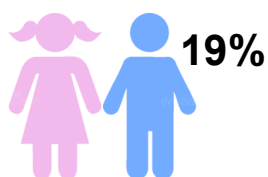
Church/faith based
organisation



Sports organisation

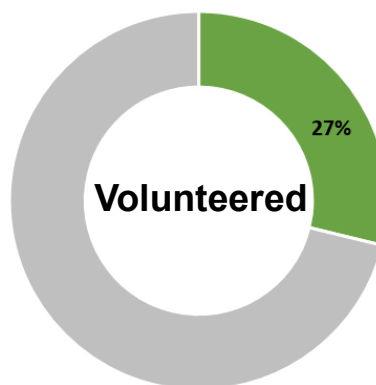


Local community,
neighbourhood or
citizen's groups



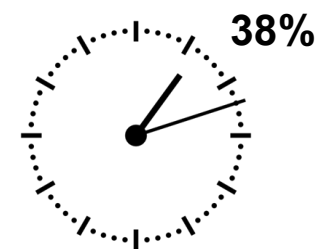
Youth/children's activities
(outside school)

Volunteered



In 2017/18, over a quarter (27%) of adults
had volunteered within the past year.

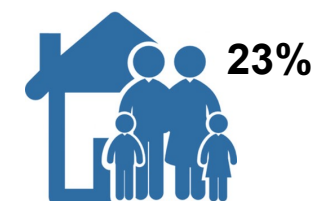
Reasons for not volunteering



'I don't have the time'



'I have work commitments'



'I have to look after children/the home'

Contents

Page

Participation in volunteering	3
Types of voluntary work or activity	4
Types of organisation volunteered with	6
Time spent volunteering	7
Volunteering experience	8
Identifying volunteering roles	11
Reasons for not volunteering	12
Factors that might encourage volunteering	14
Definitions and technical notes	16

Lead Statistician: Clair Stewart
asu@communities-ni.gov.uk

First published 28 March 2019

Introduction

This report presents the findings from the 2017/18 Continuous Household Survey (CHS) in relation to experience of volunteering by adults in Northern Ireland.

The Department for Communities (DfC) is the lead department for volunteering. DfC is responsible for the development of voluntary and community sector strategies and policies and both funds and works in partnership with the sector.

Questions on volunteering were previously included in the Northern Ireland Omnibus survey. However, in 2017/18 they were moved to the CHS to improve the sample size and thus the precision of the estimates. Given this change, figures for 2017-18 are not directly comparable with previous years' figures from the Omnibus survey.

Within this report volunteering is defined as follows:

'the commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society and the community, the environment, or individuals outside (or in addition to) one's immediate family. It is unpaid and undertaken freely and by choice.'

Survey respondents were advised that their replies should only refer to unpaid work or activities.

Continuous Household Survey

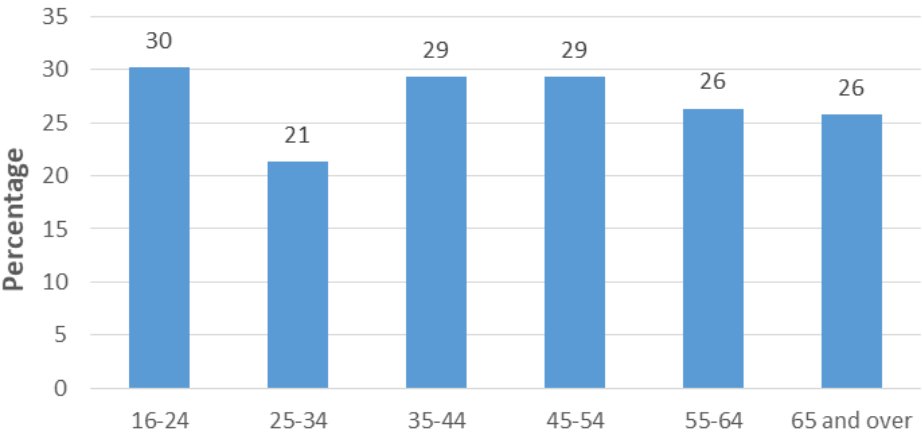
More information relating to the CHS, methodology, definitions and the interpretation of figures can be found in the definitions and technical notes section. The questions that were asked in the CHS 2017/18 relating to culture, arts and sport are available [here](#). Data tables are available in [Excel](#) and [ODS format](#).

Participation in volunteering

In 2017/18, over a quarter (27%) of adults had volunteered within the past year.

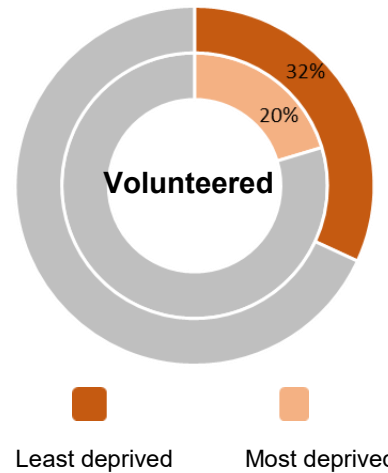
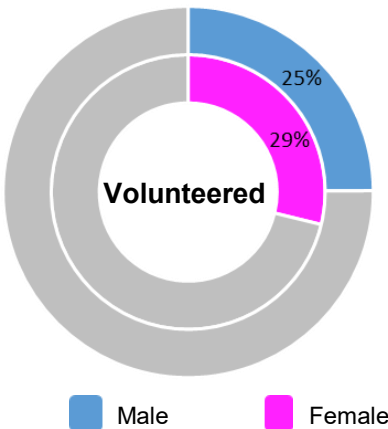
A higher proportion of females (29%) had volunteered in 2017-18 in comparison with males (25%), whilst a lower proportion of those aged 25-34 years (21%) volunteered compared with those aged 16-24 (30%), 35-44 (29%) and 45-54 (29%) years.

Volunteering by age group



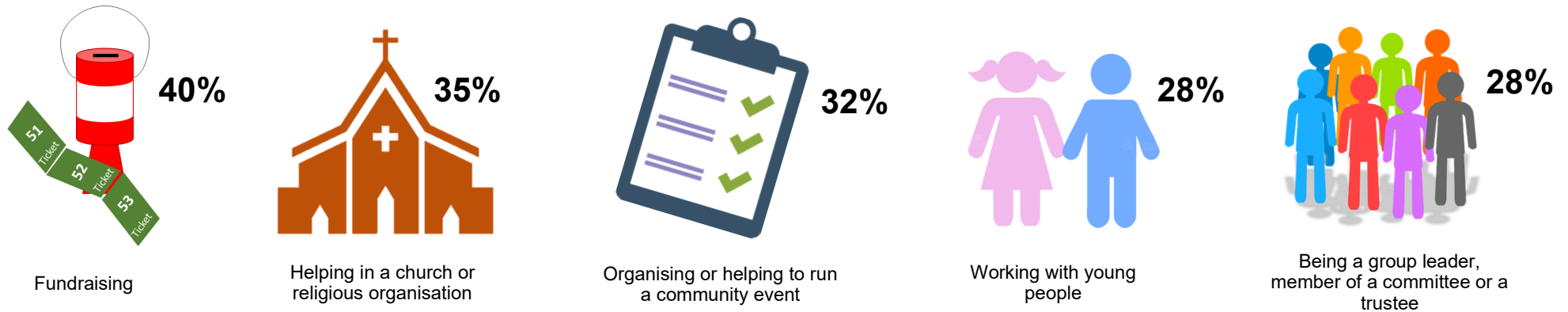
In 2017/18, adults from the Protestant community were more likely to volunteer (32%) than those from the Catholic community (23%). In addition, adults who were married/cohabiting (30%) were more likely to volunteer than those who were single (24%), separated/divorced (21%) or widowed (18%).

Higher proportions of those who lived in the least deprived or rural areas (both 32%) volunteered compared with those who lived in the most deprived or urban areas (20% and 24% respectively). Adults in paid work or who were economically active were more likely to volunteer (both 29%) than those not in paid work or economically inactive (24% and 23% respectively).

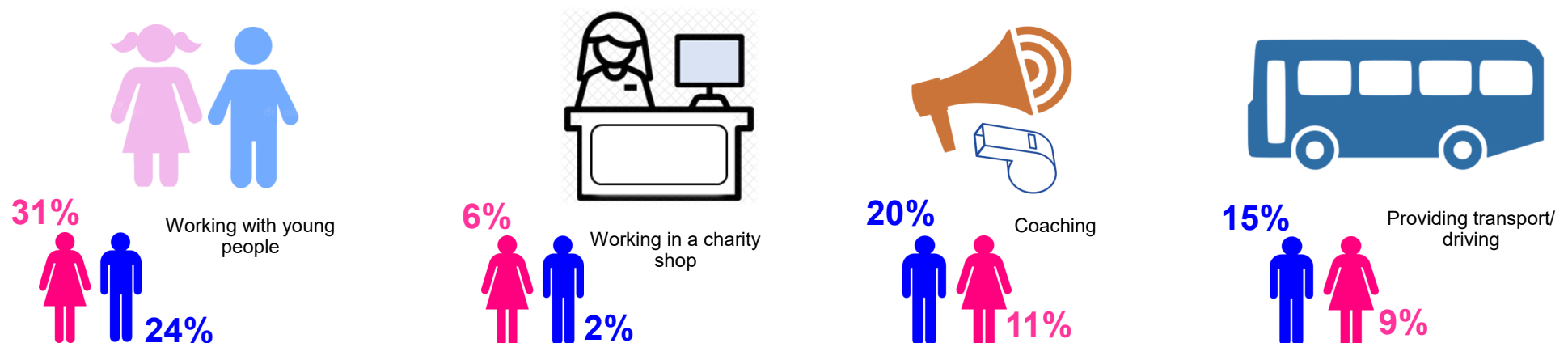


Types of voluntary work or activity

The five most popular types of voluntary work carried out in 2017/18 were: 'fundraising' (40%), 'helping in a church or religious organisation' (35%), 'organising or helping to run a community event' (32%), 'working with young people' (28%) and 'being a group leader, member of a committee or a trustee' (28%).



Analysis by gender indicated that a higher proportion of females had volunteered in the past year by working with young people (31%) or working in a charity shop (6%) compared with males (24% and 2% respectively). In contrast, a higher proportion of males had volunteered by coaching (20%) and 'providing transport/driving' (15%) than females (11% and 9% respectively).



A higher proportion of Protestants (50%) volunteered by 'helping in a church or religious organisation' compared to Catholics (18%). Similarly, a higher proportion of Protestants cited 'being a group leader, member of a committee or a trustee' (32%), and providing 'practical help such as shopping, gardening, building or 'Meals on Wheels' (17%) as volunteering activities compared with Catholics (24% and 11% respectively). In contrast, a higher proportion of Catholics were involved in activities including 'fundraising' (47%), 'organising or helping to run a community event' (37%) and 'coaching' (20%) than Protestants (39%, 29% and 13% respectively).

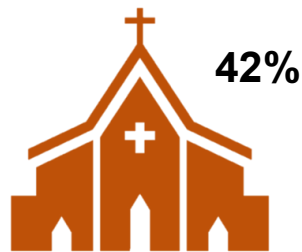
Analysis by paid employment showed that relatively more adults who were in paid work (35%) volunteered by 'organising or helping to run a community event' than those not in paid work (27%). In addition, a higher proportion of those in paid work were involved in activities including 'working with young people' (33%), 'promotion of a particular cause or event' (22%) and 'coaching' (20%) than those not in paid work (21%, 14% and 8% respectively). In contrast, relatively more adults who were not in paid work volunteered by means of providing 'practical help such as shopping, gardening, building or 'Meals on Wheels' (19%) and by 'working in a charity shop' (7%) than those who were in paid work (12% and 3% respectively).

A third (33%) of adults who lived in the most deprived areas were involved in 'organising or helping to run a community event' compared with a fifth (20%) of adults who lived in the least deprived areas. Conversely, a higher proportion of adults who lived in the least deprived areas volunteered in activities including 'helping in a church or religious organisation' (46%), 'visiting people' (18%) and 'befriending or mentoring' (16%) compared with those who lived in the most deprived areas (20%, 9% and 7% respectively).

A higher proportion of adults who lived in rural areas volunteered by 'helping in a church or religious organisation' (40%), 'organising or helping to run a community event' (36%) and 'being a group leader, member of a committee or a trustee' (32%) compared with adults who lived in urban areas (31%, 29% and 25% respectively).

Types of organisations volunteered with

The most common type of organisation that adults identified as volunteering with was a 'church/faith based' organisation (42%). Just over a fifth of respondents (21%) said that they had volunteered with a 'sports' organisation and just under a fifth (19%) had responded that they had volunteered with 'local community, neighbourhood or citizen's groups' or 'youth/children's activities (outside school)'. Three per cent of respondents said 'I volunteer, but not with an organisation'.



42%

Church or faith based
organisation



21%

Sports organisation



19%

Local community, neighbourhood
or citizen's groups



19%

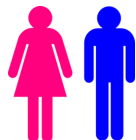
Youth or children's
activities (outside school)

Analysis by gender indicated that a higher proportion of females volunteered with organisations that involved 'youth/children's activities (outside school)' (23%) and 'children's education/schools' (16%) than males (15% and 9% respectively). In contrast, a higher proportion of males (30%) indicated that they had volunteered at 'sports' organisations than females (14%).



23%

Youth or children's
activities (outside school)



15%



16%

Children's education/
schools

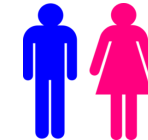


9%



30%

Sports organisation



14%



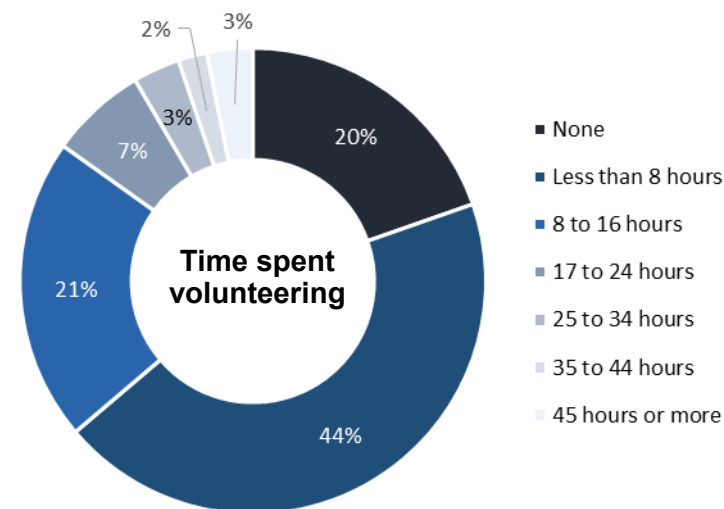
Analysis by religion revealed that almost three fifths (59%) of Protestants had volunteered in the past year at a 'church/faith based' organisation compared with 27% of Catholics. In contrast, a greater proportion of Catholics indicated that they had volunteered with a 'sports' organisation (31%), 'children's education/schools' (17%) and in 'health and social care' (16%) than Protestants (16%, 10% and 9% respectively).

A quarter of adults with a disability (25%) said that they had volunteered with 'local community, neighbourhood or citizen's groups' compared with 18% of adults who do not have a disability. In contrast, a higher proportion (21%) of adults who do not have a disability volunteered with an organisation that provided 'youth/children's activities (outside school)' than those with a disability (13%).

Analysis by paid employment showed that a higher proportion of those in paid work had volunteered with sports organisations (25%) and 'youth/children's activities' (23%) than those not in paid work (16% and 13% respectively). Conversely, a higher proportion of adults not in paid work (13%) volunteered with an organisation for older people compared with those in paid work (7%).

Time spent volunteering

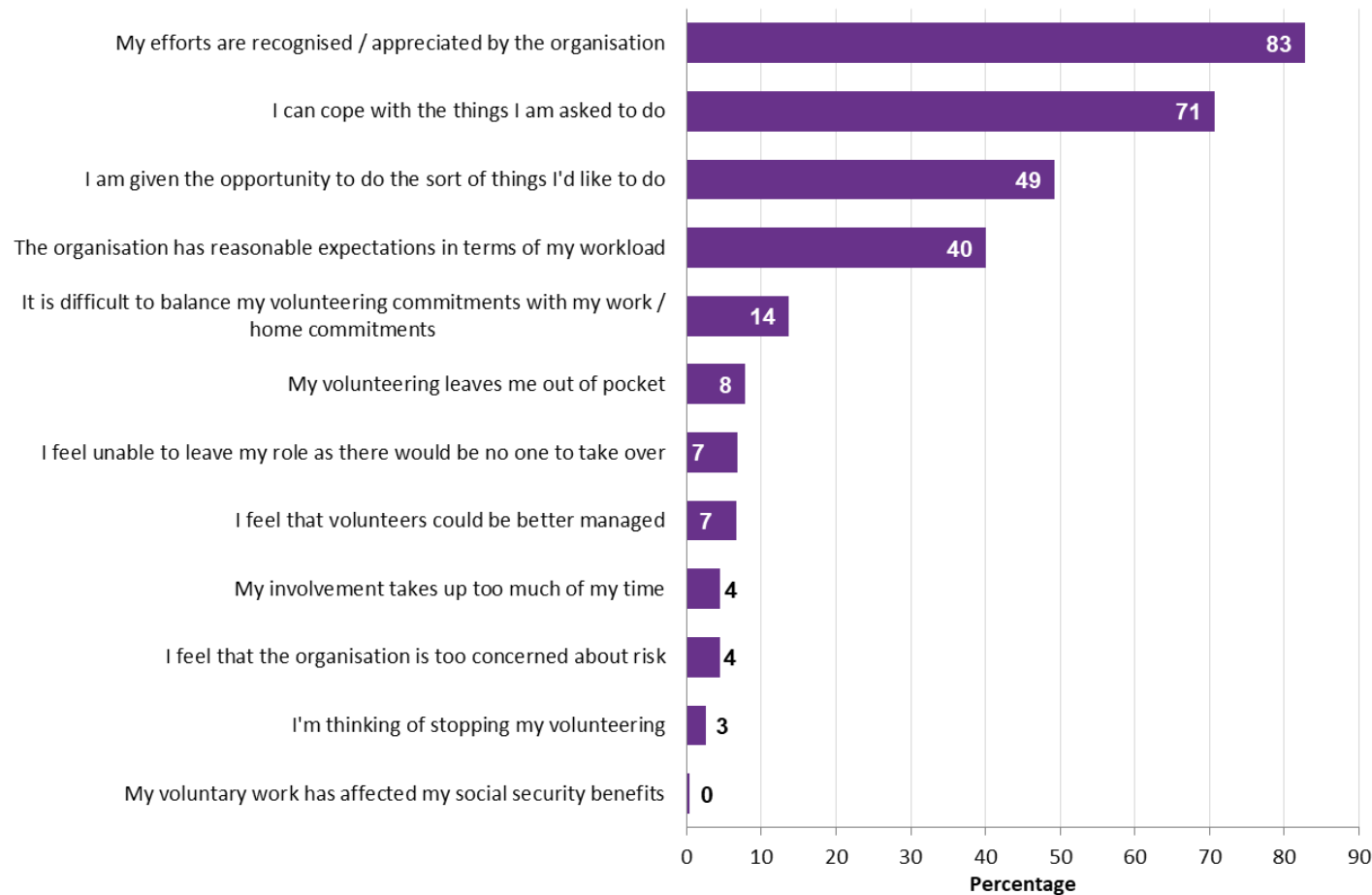
About 15% of those who had volunteered had spent 17 hours or more volunteering in the previous four week period, while a further 21% had volunteered for 8 to 16 hours. The most common length of time spent volunteering in the previous four week period was 'less than 8 hours' (44%). A fifth (20%) of adults who volunteered stated that they had not volunteered at all within the previous 4 weeks.



Volunteering experience

Organisation

Those respondents who volunteered with an organisation were asked about their experience of volunteering. The more frequently cited responses were relatively positive with more than four-fifths of those who volunteered with an organisation (83%) stating that their 'efforts are recognised/appreciated by the organisation'. In addition, 71% cited 'I can cope with the things I am asked to do' whilst just under half (49%) cited 'I am given the opportunity to do the sort of things I'd like to do'. Three per cent of those who volunteered with an organisation indicated that they were thinking of stopping their volunteering whilst 4% said that their involvement takes up too much of their time.



Analysis by disability showed that 14% of those with a disability who volunteered with an organisation stated that 'my volunteering leaves me out of pocket', a higher proportion than those who do not have a disability (6%). In addition, a higher proportion of those with a disability (8%) were thinking of stopping volunteering than those who do not have a disability (1%).

A higher proportion of those who were in paid work (19%) or who were economically active (18%) stated that 'it is difficult to balance my volunteering commitments with my work/home commitments' in comparison with those not in paid work (6%) or who were economically inactive (5%).

A higher proportion of those who lived in urban areas and who volunteered with an organisation cited that 'I can cope with the things I am asked to do' (74%) and 'I am given the opportunity to do the sort of things I'd like to do' (53%) compared with those who lived in rural areas (67% and 44% respectively). In contrast, a higher proportion of those who lived in rural areas (9%) cited 'I feel unable to leave my role as there would be no one to take over' compared with those who lived in urban areas (5%).

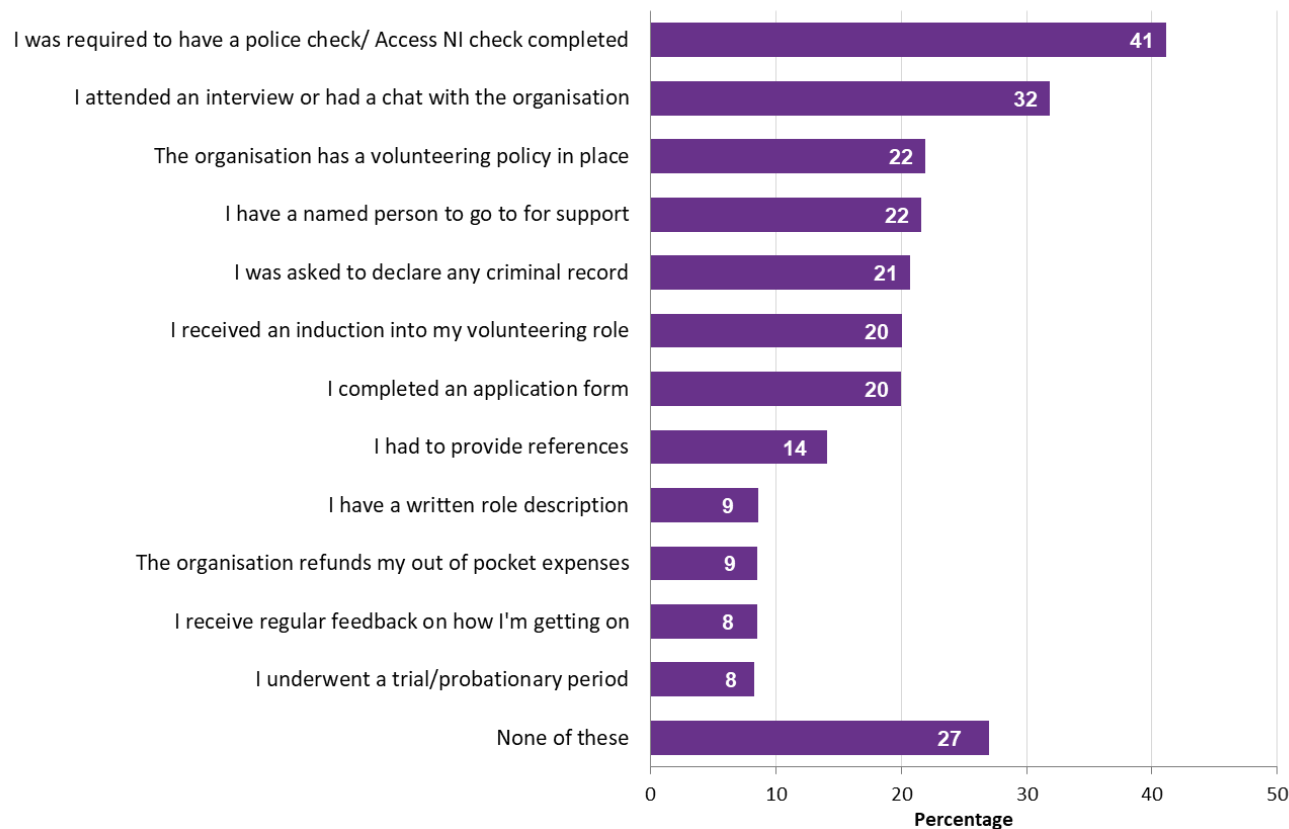
A fifth of those with dependants who volunteered with an organisation (20%) stated that 'it is difficult to balance my volunteering commitments with my work/home commitments', a higher proportion than those without (9%). In addition, a higher proportion of those with dependants cited 'my involvement takes up too much of my time' (6%), 'I feel that the organisation is too concerned about risk' (6%) and 'I'm thinking of stopping my volunteering' (4%) compared with those without dependants (3%, 3% and 1% respectively). In contrast, just under three quarters of those with no dependants who volunteered with an organisation (74%) stated that 'I can cope with the things I am asked to do' compared with 66% of those with dependants.

Volunteering role

Those respondents who indicated that they volunteered with an organisation were asked to read a number of further statements relating to the processes involved in their main volunteering role and main organisation and state whether any of them were applicable.

Around two fifths (41%) of those who volunteered with an organisation indicated that they were required to have a police or Access NI check completed and just under a third (32%) attended an interview or had a chat with the organisation prior to taking up their volunteering role. More than one in four of those who volunteered with an organisation (27%) stated that none of the statements regarding the organisation that they volunteer with apply to them.

Higher proportions of those living in urban areas cited statements relating to the application and induction process compared to those living in rural areas.



Identifying volunteering roles

The most common methods of identifying volunteering opportunities were from someone already involved in the organisation (47%), by word of mouth (40%), and from a church or religious organisation (33%).



Only three in a hundred adults found out about their volunteering role at a local event/volunteer fair whilst only two in a hundred identified their role through their employer's volunteer scheme or a volunteer centre.

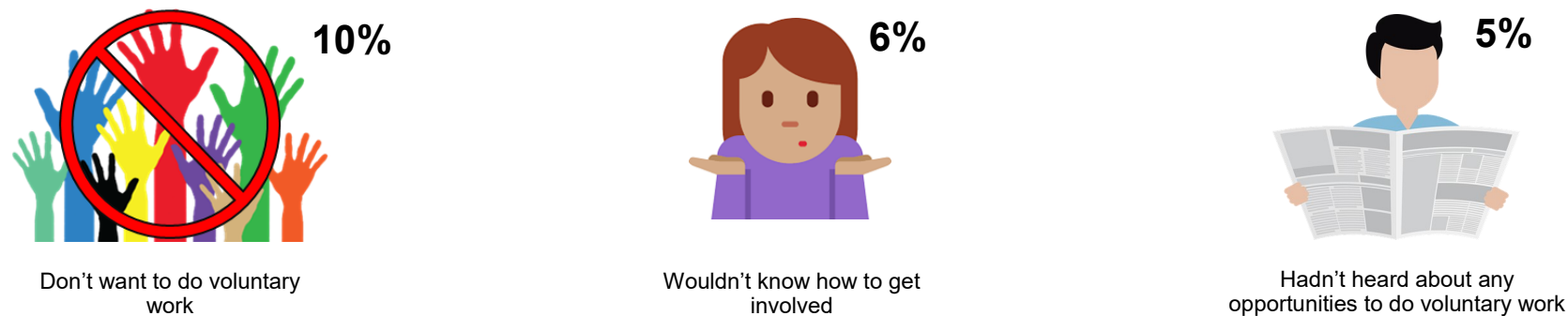
Analysis by religion showed that a greater proportion of adults from the Protestant community (49%) indicated that they found out about volunteering through a church or religious organisation when compared with Catholics (17%). In contrast, a higher proportion of Catholics said that they found out about volunteering through someone already involved in the organisation (52%) and a volunteer centre (4%) than Protestants (44% and 1% respectively).

A higher proportion of adults with dependants cited that they 'set up the group with like-minded people' (6%) and identified volunteering roles from a volunteer centre (4%) compared with adults without dependants (3% and 1% respectively).

Reasons for not volunteering

Respondents who reported that they had not undertaken any volunteering in the last year were asked if there were any reasons for this. The top three reasons for not volunteering were 'I don't have the time' (38%) 'I have work commitments' (36%), and 'I have to look after children/ the home' (23%).

Of those who responded to the question, 10% stated that they 'don't want to do voluntary work', whilst 6% said that they wouldn't know how to get involved and 5% hadn't heard about any opportunities to do voluntary work.



Analysis by gender indicated that 33% of females said 'I have to look after children/the home' compared with 14% of males. A higher proportion of males (13%) stated that they didn't want to do voluntary work compared to 8% of females.



Just over a fifth (21%) of adults aged 65 and over said that they didn't want to do voluntary work, a higher proportion than all other age group.

A higher proportion of adults with dependents stated that they didn't have the time to volunteer (52%), had to 'look after children/the home' (51%) and had work commitments (47%) in comparison to those with no dependants (29%, 4% and 29% respectively). In contrast, a higher proportion of adults with no dependants cited reasons including 'I have an illness or disability that prevents me from volunteering' (16%), 'I don't want to do voluntary work' (14%) and 'I feel I'm too old to get involved' (12%) compared to those with dependants (7%, 5% and 3% respectively).

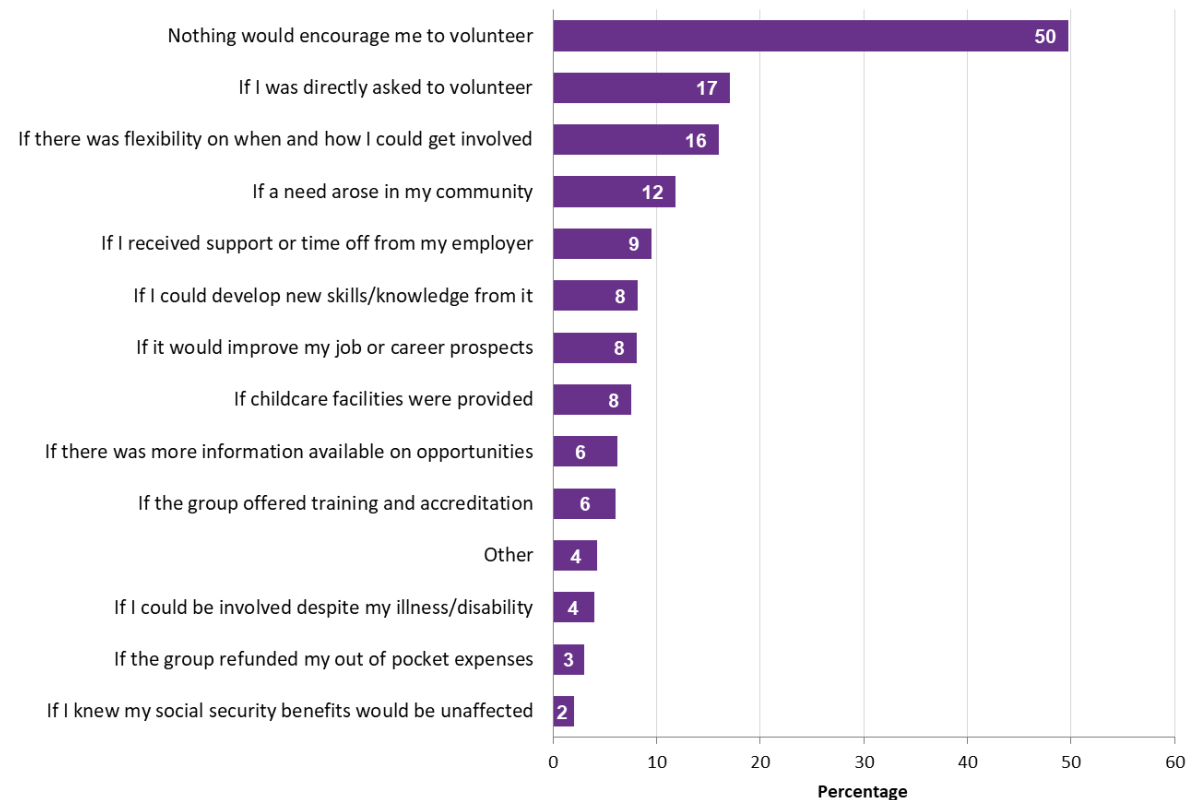
Analysis by paid employment showed that higher proportions of adults in paid work referenced caring duties and other commitments as reasons for not volunteering in comparison to those not in paid work. Higher proportions of adults not in paid work cited reasons including 'I have an illness or disability that prevents me from volunteering' (23%), 'I feel I'm too old to get involved' (15%) and 'I don't want to do voluntary work' (13%) in comparison to those in paid work (2%, 2% and 7% respectively).

Factors that might encourage volunteering

Respondents who said they had not volunteered in the last 12 months were asked what would encourage them or make it easier for them to become a volunteer.

Half (50%) of adults stated that nothing would encourage them to volunteer. Over three quarters (76%) of adults aged 65 and over and nearly four fifths (79%) of widowed adults said that nothing would encourage them to volunteer, both higher proportions than other corresponding demographic groups.

The two most frequently cited factors that would encourage volunteering were 'if I was directly asked to volunteer' (17%) and 'if there was flexibility on when and how I could get involved' (16%). Eight per cent of adults stated that if they could develop new skills/knowledge from it or if it would improve their job or career prospects it would encourage them to volunteer.



Analysis by gender showed that a higher proportion of males (52%) stated that nothing would encourage them to volunteer than females (47%). A higher proportion of females stated that they would be encouraged to volunteer if there was flexibility on when and how to get involved (18%) than males (13%). In addition, higher proportions of females said they would be encouraged by factors including 'if childcare facilities were provided' (12%) and 'if there was more information available on opportunities' (8%) in comparison with males (4% and 5% respectively).

Analysis by paid employment showed that a higher proportion of adults not in paid work (60%) stated that nothing would encourage them to volunteer compared with those in paid work (41%). Higher proportions of those in paid work referenced flexibility/support and gaining new skills as factors that might encourage volunteering. In contrast, higher proportions of adults not in paid work cited 'if I could be involved despite my illness/disability' (6%) and 'if I knew my social security benefits would be unaffected' (3%) as factors that would encourage them to volunteer compared to those in paid work (2% and 1% respectively).

A higher proportion of those without dependants (54%) than those with dependants (43%) said that nothing would encourage them to volunteer. In addition, a higher proportion of those without dependants (5%) said they would be encouraged to volunteer if they 'could be involved despite my illness/disability' compared to those with dependants (2%). However, higher proportions of adults with dependants indicated that they would be encouraged to volunteer by factors including 'if childcare facilities were provided' (18%), 'if the need arose in my community' (14%) and 'if I received support or time off from my employer' (12%) compared with those without dependants (0%, 11% and 8% respectively).

Definitions and technical notes

Continuous Household Survey

The Continuous Household Survey is a Northern Ireland wide household survey administered by Central Survey Unit, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. The sample for this survey in 2017/18 consisted of a systematic random sample of 9,000 addresses selected from the Land and Property Service's list of private addresses. The findings reported for 2017/18 in these tables are based on 2,824 respondents, aged 16 and over, who answered the questions relating to volunteering that were first included as part of the culture, arts and sport module of the survey in 2017/18.

Weighting the Continuous Household Survey

Analysis of the culture, arts and sport modules of the CHS have been weighted for non-response. A chi square goodness-of-fit test showed that the CHS sample was not representative of the population by age and sex when compared with the Population and Migration Estimates Northern Ireland 2016 (NISRA). As a result, three separate weights were produced for age, sex and age and sex combined.

Non-response weighting sometimes increases standard errors, although the impact tends to be fairly small, i.e. the adjustment may be less or greater than 1, but will generally be reasonably close to 1. In the case of the culture, arts and sport modules of CHS, the values of the adjustment for all three weighting systems are so close to one, it is not necessary to take account of this in the calculation of standard error and confidence intervals.

While weighting for non-response (also called post-stratification) should reduce bias, it must be acknowledged that it will not eliminate bias. The reasons individuals choose to take part in surveys are complex and depend on lots of factors specific to the individual. As a result, the non-response biases in surveys are likely to be complex. Post-stratification works on the assumption that, by aligning the survey to the population along a small number of dimensions such as age and gender, many of these complex biases will reduce. However, it would be misleading to suggest that they will be eliminated.

Volunteering

Volunteering is defined as *'the commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society and the community, the environment, or individuals outside (or in addition to) one's immediate family. It is unpaid and undertaken freely and by choice.'*

Have you carried out any voluntary work or activity in the 12 months prior to the CHS? Replies should only refer to unpaid work or activities.

Statistical significance in this report

Any statements in this report regarding differences between groups are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. This means that we can be 95% confident that the differences between groups are actual differences and have not just arisen by chance. The base numbers and sizes of percentages have an effect on statistical significance. Therefore on occasion, a difference between two groups may be statistically significant while the same difference in percentage points between two other groups may not be statistically significant. The reason for this is because the larger the base numbers or the closer the percentages are to 0 or 100, the smaller the standard errors. This leads to increased precision of the estimates which increases the likelihood that the difference between the proportions is actually significant and has not just arisen by chance.

Other notes

The following should be noted when interpreting figures and tables:

- Detailed tabulations are not provided where the number of respondents is too small to allow meaningful analysis.
- The base number of responses to each question, which is shown in each table, is the unweighted count. The base may vary due to some respondents not answering certain questions.