

Chapter 11

Volunteers and trustees

Highlights

- Formal volunteering is slowly increasing (42% of the population in 2003 compared to 39% in 2001).
- An estimated 1.1 million full-time workers would be needed to replace formal volunteers.
- Over half of formal volunteers have a fundraising activity (53%).
- Registered charities benefit from approximately 890,000 trustees.



11.1 Introduction

Although the size of the voluntary sector's paid workforce is increasing, voluntary organisations still rely on the contribution of volunteers even if for some organisations this may only be in the form of trustees.

Raising the level of volunteering and community participation has been a key target for the government and is central to its civil renewal agenda. A multitude of government initiatives promoting volunteering have been launched as a result, especially in 2005, which was designated as the Year of the Volunteer.

11.2 Sources of data

This chapter briefly explores the size and characteristics of the unpaid workforce. Information on the number of volunteers for general charities is now outdated. The latest edition of *The National Survey of Volunteering* (1998) estimated that general charities had three million unpaid workers.

More recent statistics on volunteering are available in the Home Office Citizenship Survey (HOCS), a biennial survey providing a detailed review of trends and attitudes to citizenship and active citizenship in England and Wales. This includes an assessment of formal volunteering, a summary of which is included in this chapter.

Estimates of the number of trustees have been reproduced from the Charity Commission.

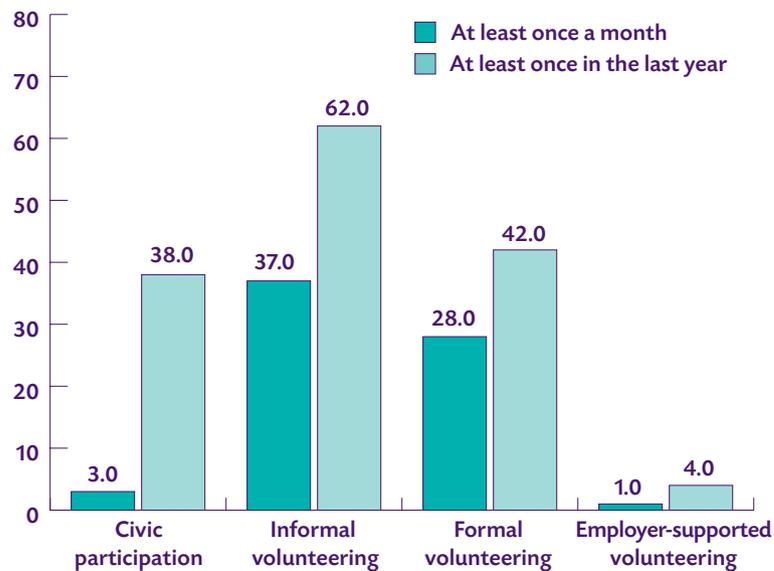
11.3 Active community participation¹³

Rather than focusing purely on volunteering, the 2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey looks more broadly at ‘active community participation’, which is broken down into four categories:

- civic participation: engagement in a range of activities such as contacting a local councillor/Member of Parliament, signing a petition, or attending a public meeting;
- informal volunteering: giving unpaid help as an individual to people who are not relatives;
- formal volunteering: giving unpaid help through groups, clubs and organisations to benefit other people or the environment; and
- employer-supported volunteering: volunteering through schemes set up by employers.

The relative importance of each type of participation is illustrated in Figure 28. This illustrates a significant difference between the number of people who have participated in one way or another at least once in the last 12 months, and those displaying a regular monthly commitment. The most common form of participation was informal volunteering (62% in the last 12 months), followed by formal volunteering (42% in the last 12 months).

Figure 28: Participation in voluntary and community activities by type of activity, 2003 (%)



Source: 2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey (2004)

¹³ ‘Active Participation in Communities’ chapter in 2003 *Home Office Citizenship Survey: people, families and communities*. Home Office Research Study 289 (2004).

11.4 Formal volunteering

The HOCS does not provide any evidence of how many people volunteer for general charities. The category that might most closely approximate to the number of volunteers giving time to voluntary organisations is formal volunteering: giving unpaid help through groups, clubs or organisations.

The 2003 HOCS estimates that 42% of the population volunteered formally at least once in the last 12 months, a slight increase over 2001 (39%). A much smaller proportion (28%) – unchanged since the last survey – has volunteered formally at least once a month in the last 12 months.

The HOCS is based on a survey of England and Wales. If these proportions are applied to the total adult population¹⁴, the number of formal volunteers is estimated to be 17.9 million (once a year) and 11.7 million (once a month). If the survey results were equally valid for the UK adult population as a whole¹⁵, these estimates would increase to 20.2 million (once a year) and 13.2 million (once a month) formal volunteers.

Formal volunteers engage in a wide range of activities. The most popular are raising or handling money (53% of formal volunteers), and organising or helping to run an activity or event (49%).

Table 35: Types of formal volunteering undertaken at least once in the last 12 months (%)

Activity	%
Raising or handling money	53.0
Organising or helping to run an activity or event	49.0
Leading a group/being a member of a committee	29.0
Giving other practical help (direct services)	28.0
Giving advice/information/counselling	23.0
Providing transport/driving	23.0
Visiting people	20.0
Secretarial, administrative or clerical work	18.0
Befriending or mentoring people	14.0
Representing	12.0
Any other help	9.0
Campaigning	8.0

Source: 2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey (2004)

¹⁴ Estimated England and Wales population aged 16 and over: 42.4 million (source: ONS, 2003).

¹⁵ Estimated UK population aged 16 and over: 47.8 million (source: ONS, 2003).

The survey found that:

- there were no significant statistical differences between the numbers of men (41%) and women (43%) formally volunteering.
- people aged 25 to 34 were those most likely to formally volunteer (49%).
- White and Black African people were also most likely to formally volunteer (both 43%).
- there was a close relationship between formally volunteering and religious practice (57% of those who actively practised a religion formally volunteered compared to 38% of those who did not).
- the proportion of those volunteering formally was equally higher amongst those in higher managerial or professional occupations (58%), and amongst those with a qualification at degree level (60%).

The 17.9 million people who volunteered formally in the last twelve months gave, on average, the equivalent of 104 hours each. This represents approximately three working weeks each. It is estimated that around 1 million full-time workers would be needed to replace them at a cost of £22.5 billion (based on the national average wage).

These figures apply only to England and Wales. If the same method is applied to the whole of the UK adult population, an estimated 1.1 million full-time workers would be needed, over twice the number of full-time equivalent paid employees in the voluntary sector. This would be at a cost of £25.4 billion (based on the national average wage). However, it should be noted that these estimates take no account of the costs of volunteer development or management.

Developments in volunteering

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It could be argued that volunteering is currently experiencing a bit of a high. Never before has volunteering received such direct attention or support from government. 2005 was the UK Year of the Volunteer, during which the public pledged over one billion minutes of volunteering time. 2005 also saw the launch of the Russell Commission's framework for youth engagement, a well-received proposal for which the government has promised significant levels of funding.

All that said, however, there are a number of significant challenges facing the sector. Despite a recent peak in numbers, volunteering levels may still be lower than in previous years. Our changing demographic profile also creates challenging issues of involvement for the sector. It would appear too that volunteers are getting more demanding, and organisations may need to change if they are to continue to attract the new generation of active citizens. Anecdotal evidence indicates a move towards 'episodic' volunteering, for example, in which people volunteer for shorter and more self-contained periods of time. The government's service delivery agenda also creates challenges in terms of the related move within the sector towards professionalisation, and with that the potential to marginalise volunteers. Similarly, as we become an increasingly risk-averse society, organisations may struggle to balance the demands to implement numerous bureaucratic procedures with the demands of volunteers to maintain a flexible and informal approach.

The trick for the sector, therefore, is to build on the current enthusiasm for voluntary action; and to do this in a way that balances the provision of professional volunteer management support, with the spirit of free will and choice which is at the heart of volunteering.

11.5 Trustees

A special category of unpaid worker is the organisation trustee or management committee member. The HOCS estimates that 29% of formal volunteers lead a group or are a member of a committee. At the end of March 2005, the Charity Commission held details of over 890,000 individuals acting as trustees of registered charities. However, because some of these fulfil that role for more than one charity, the Commission estimates that there are more than a million trustee positions in England and Wales. Trustees are inevitably concentrated in smaller general charities, as all organisations require a number of trustees in order to function. Although board size increases with size of organisation, 85% of trustees are connected with organisations whose annual income is £100,000 or less.

A recent report by the Charity Commission on the recruitment of trustees showed that 76% of trustees are aged 45 and over, and only 0.5% are under the age of 24. Research for NCVO (Cornforth, 2001) indicates that 55% of trustees are men and only 4.8% are from a black or minority ethnic community.

11.6 Conclusion

Volunteers and trustees are an important resource for many organisations, whether as direct deliverers of services, fundraisers or trustees. Voluntary organisations of course benefit from the unpaid time given to them, but at the same time they are a catalyst for voluntary action and active citizenship. Any discussion of volunteer value cannot be limited to financial considerations but needs to encompass the increasingly used concept of social capital.

Whilst new volunteering schemes are undoubtedly providing new opportunities for voluntary and community organisations, competition for volunteers is nevertheless growing and both public service delivery and community governance are increasingly drawing on the pool of active citizens.

11.7 Resources and further reading

Charity Commission (2005) *Start as you mean to go on: trustee recruitment and induction*. London

www.charity-commission.gov.uk/Library/publications/pdfs/rs10text.pdf

Cornforth, C. (2001) *Recent trends in charity governance and trusteeship*. London: NCVO: www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/?id=1446

Davis Smith, J. (1998) *The 1997 National Survey of Volunteering*. London: Institute for Volunteering Research: www.ivr.org.uk/

Gaskin, K. (1997) *VIVA – The volunteer investment and value audit*. Briefing paper prepared by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York

Gaskin, K. (1999) *Valuing volunteers in Europe: a comparative study of the volunteer investment and value audit*. *Voluntary Action*, 2 (1)

The Governance Hub: www.governancehub.org.uk/

Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate
www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/voluntary1.html

The Institute for Volunteering Research: www.ivr.org.uk/

Jochum, V., Pratten, B. and Wilding, K. (2005) *Civil renewal and active citizenship: a guide to the debate*. London: NCVO: www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/?id=1512

Office for National Statistics – the Household Satellite Account site includes values of formal voluntary activity for 2000: www.statistics.gov.uk/hhsa/hhsa/section237.html

The Volunteering Hub: www.volunteering.org.uk/aboutus/volunteeringhub/index.htm