

Volunteering in Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 2016

June 2017

Reader Information

Purpose	This publication presents the results of the Volunteering Module in the October – November 2016 Omnibus Survey. The main themes explored in the survey include levels of volunteering, support for volunteers and reasons for not undertaking volunteering roles.
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Introduction

As part of the Volunteering Strategy for Northern Ireland, the Voluntary and Community Division (VCD) of the Department for Communities (DfC) commissioned a project to monitor volunteering levels throughout NI. The primary data used for this purpose was derived from a series of questions that were included within the Northern Ireland Omnibus survey. The questions were included within the Omnibus for the first time in the Autumn of 2012 and repeated annually, including the October - November 2016 Omnibus survey. This report outlines the findings of the latest research, including comparisons with previous years where appropriate.

NI Omnibus Survey

An omnibus survey is a face-to face survey that contains questions about a wide range of issues. The Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey is carried out by the Central Survey Unit (CSU) of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) on a regular basis and is designed to provide a snapshot of the lifestyle and views of the people of Northern Ireland.

Further information on the Omnibus is detailed in Annex A. The response rate for the 2016 survey was 49% which resulted in 946 responses.

Definition of Volunteering

Respondents were asked to consider the following definition of volunteering in their responses:

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.”

Respondents were advised that their replies should only refer to **unpaid** work or activities.

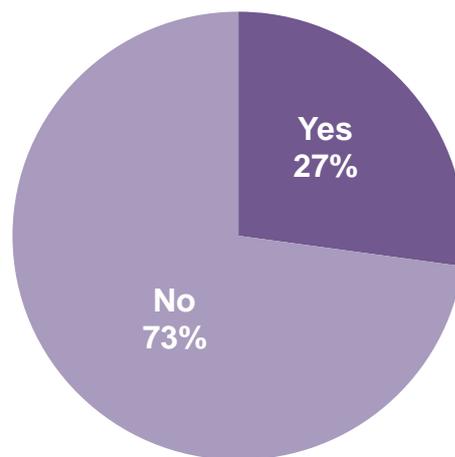
Key findings

- Just over a quarter (27%) of adults in Northern Ireland indicated that they had carried out voluntary work within the past year. This is a decrease on the proportion of those who volunteered in 2015 (32%), however the rate is similar to those reported over the period 2012 to 2014.
- Of those who had volunteered in the previous year, 37% had helped in a church or religious organisation, 36% had carried out a fundraising activity and 26% of respondents indicated that they had worked with young people.
- Nearly half (46%) of those who had volunteered had volunteered with a church or faith based organisation, whereas just over a fifth (21%) had volunteered with a sports organisation.
- More than four fifths of respondents (85%) stated that their efforts are recognised/appreciated by the organisation for which they volunteer.
- Almost one half (47%) of respondents who had volunteered in the previous year indicated that a police or Access NI check was carried out.
- The most common methods of identifying volunteering roles were from someone already involved in the organisation (40%), by word of mouth (38%), and through a church or religious organisation (35%).
- The top three reasons for not volunteering were, 'I don't have the time (36%)', 'I have work commitments' (32%) and 'I have to look after children/the home' (24%).

Levels of participation in volunteering

Respondents were asked whether they had participated in any voluntary work that fell under the definition provided. Over a quarter (27%) of adults in Northern Ireland indicated that they had carried out voluntary work within the past year.

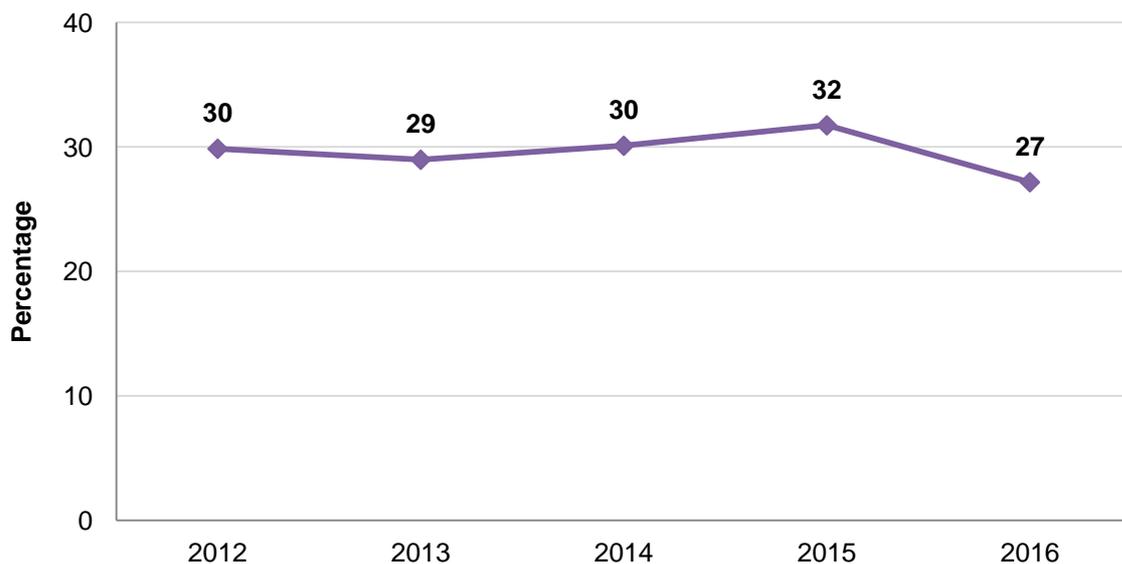
Figure 1: Have you carried out any voluntary work or activity in the past year?



Base: 945

The 2016 proportion of those who have volunteered is a decrease on the comparable 2015 figure (32%). However, the rate is similar to those reported over the period 2012 to 2014.

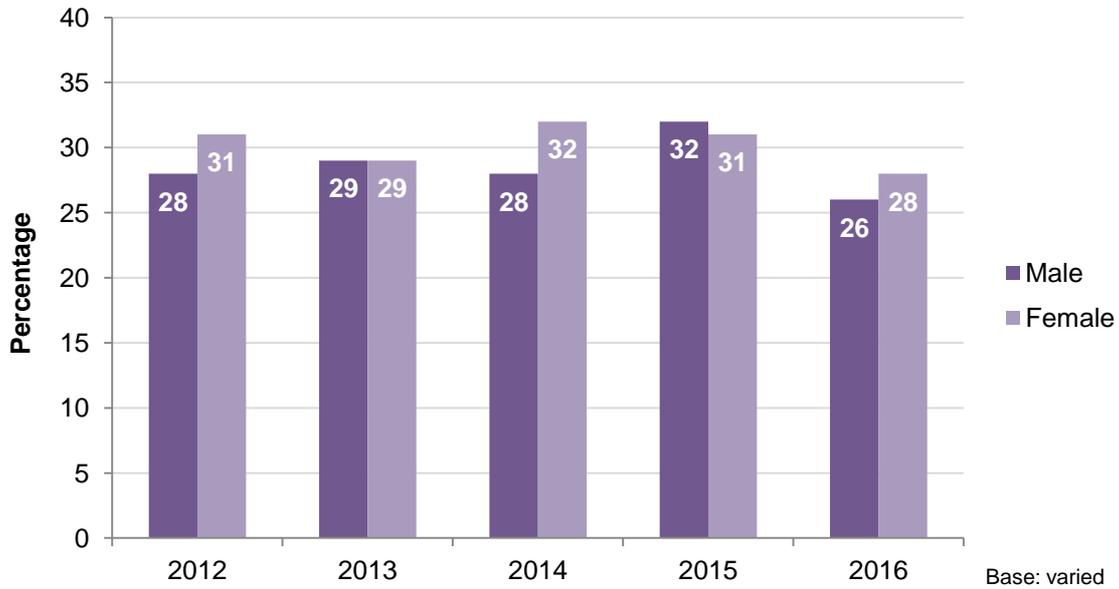
Figure 2: Percentage of respondents who have engaged in volunteering in the last year, 2012 to 2016



Base: varied

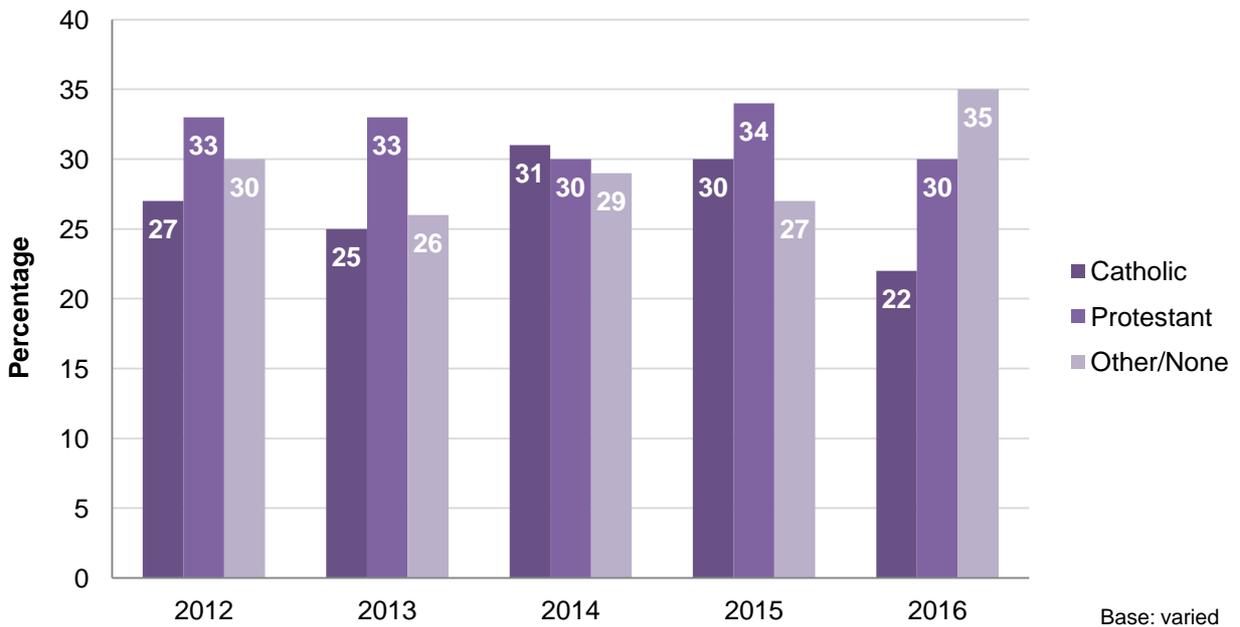
Similar proportions of males (26%) and females (28%) said that they had volunteered in the past year. These are similar to the proportions reported throughout the period 2012 to 2015. In addition, analysis by age shows no difference in the proportions of adults who volunteer by age group (Aged 16-64: 29%; Aged 65 and over: 23%).

Figure 3: Participation in volunteering by gender, 2012 to 2016



The proportion of respondents who had volunteered and gave their religion as Catholic had decreased from 30% in 2015 to 22% in 2016. The proportion of respondents who gave their religion as Protestant and indicated that they had volunteered in the last year was similar over the previous two years (2015: 34%, 2016: 30%).

Figure 4: Participation in volunteering by religion, 2012 to 2016



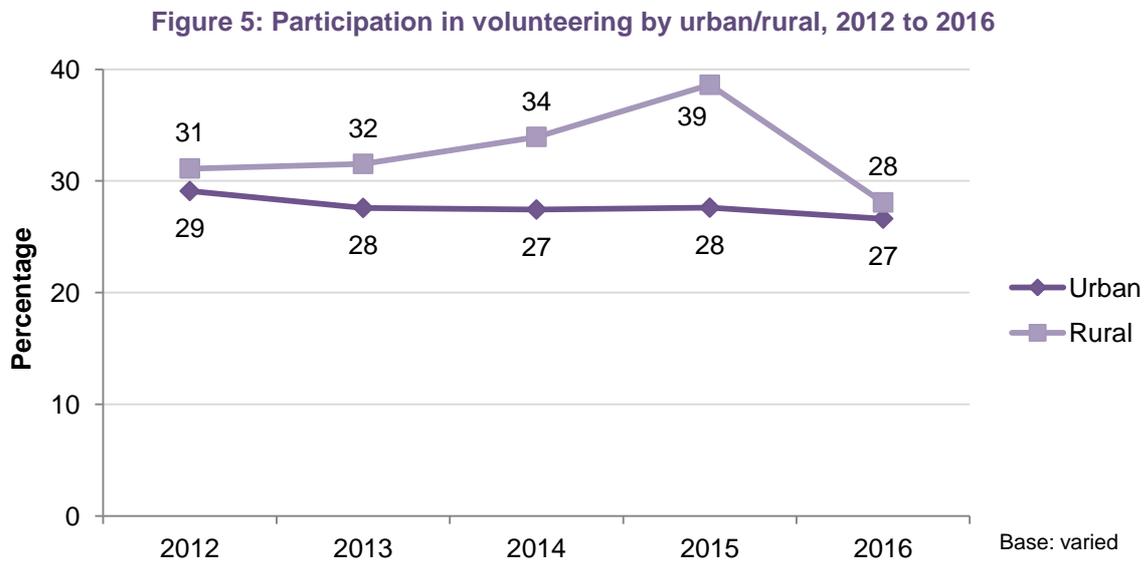
Almost one fifth (18%) of adults who have a disability had volunteered in the last year, a similar proportion to that in 2015 (19%). However, the proportion of adults who do not have a disability who had volunteered in the past year decreased from 35% in 2015 to 30% in 2016.

The proportion of respondents who have dependants and had carried out some voluntary work (28%) was similar to those without dependants (27%). This is in contrast to the previous year's results when the proportion of respondents who have dependants and volunteered was 38% and those without dependants was 29%. However, when the previous years' results (2012-2014) are compared, the higher proportion of respondents with dependants who had volunteered in 2015 appears to be an inconsistency rather than the norm.

Analysis by deprivation quintile revealed that 17% of adults in the quintile identified as 'most deprived' had volunteered in the previous year compared with more than a third (36%) of respondents in the 'least deprived' quintile. These proportions are similar to the previous year's results when one fifth of respondents (21%) who lived in the most deprived quintile had said they had volunteered compared with 35% of those who lived in the least deprived quintile.

Analysis by employment status showed that more adults who were in paid employment (31%) had volunteered than those not in paid employment (22%). However when this is broken down by age, adults aged 65 and over who were not in paid employment were more likely to have volunteered than those in paid employment (24% and 16% respectively).

Analysis of the trend throughout the period 2012 to 2016 shows no change in the proportion of the population living in urban areas who volunteer. In contrast, the population of those living in rural areas who volunteer increased from 31% in 2012 to 39% in 2015 before decreasing to 28% in 2016.

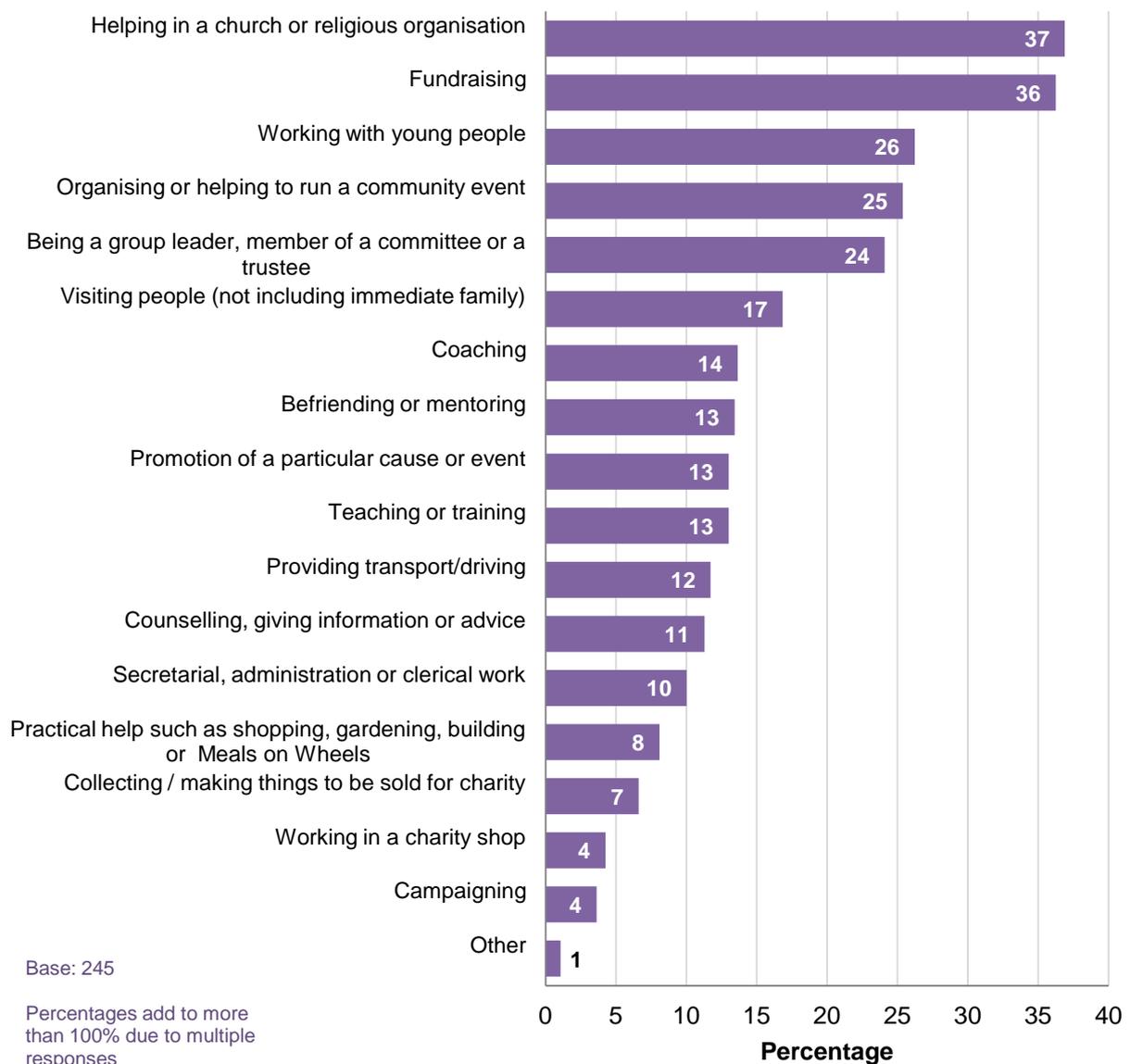


Types of volunteering undertaken

Those surveyed who had volunteered in the previous year (n=245), were asked to indicate all types of volunteering that they had undertaken.

The most frequently cited answers from respondents were that 37% had volunteered by “helping a church or religious organisation”, 36% had carried out a “fundraising” activity, 26% stated that their voluntary work involved “working with young people” and 25% of respondents indicated that they had “organised or helped to run a community event”. This year’s top five activities were similar to those in 2015 although in a different order, with ‘fundraising’ being the most common type of voluntary work followed by helping a church or religious organisation (43% and 33% respectively).

Figure 6: In the last 12 months, what types of voluntary work have you carried out?



Just under one tenth of adults (8%) volunteered by providing practical help such as shopping, gardening, building or meals on wheels. This is a decrease on the proportion of adults who volunteered in this way in 2015 (18%).

Analysis by gender indicated that a higher proportion of females (18%) than males (8%) had volunteered in the past year by “befriending or mentoring”.

A higher proportion of Protestants (56%) performed their volunteering as “helping in a church or religious organisation” compared to Catholics (19%). This mirrored the trend in 2015 (50% of Protestants compared to 17% of Catholics). Similarly, a higher proportion of Protestants cited “working with young people” compared with Catholics (35% and 19% respectively). In contrast, a higher proportion of Catholics (18%) were involved in “coaching” as a volunteering activity than Protestants (8%).

Analysis by employment status showed that more respondents who were in paid employment (46%) undertook “fundraising” than those not in paid employment (28%). In addition, a higher proportion of those in paid employment were involved in “working with young people” (34%), “coaching” (21%) and “promotion of a particular cause or event” (18%), than those not in employment (13%, 6% and 7% respectively).

In comparison, more respondents who were not in paid employment volunteered by means of “befriending or mentoring” (18%) and by “working in a charity shop” (9%) than those who were in paid employment (8% and 1% respectively.)

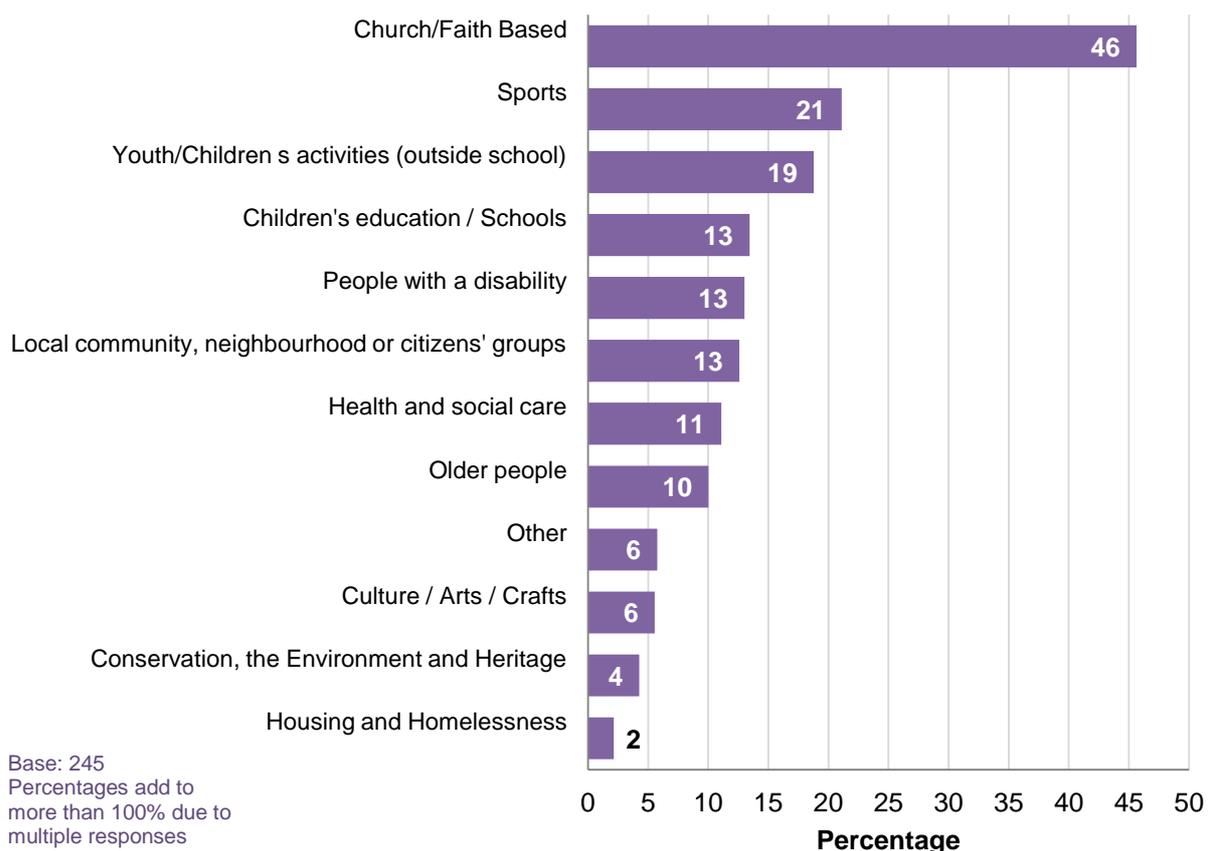
Almost three fifths of adults (59%) who lived in the most deprived areas undertook “fundraising” compared with 35% of respondents who lived in the least deprived areas. However, a higher proportion of respondents who lived in the least deprived areas volunteered by “helping a church or religious organisation” compared with those who lived in the most deprived areas (44% and 8% respectively).

Types of organisations you have volunteered with

Respondents who had undertaken volunteering in the last year were asked which types of organisations they had volunteered with.

The most common type of organisation that adults had identified as volunteering with was a “Church/Faith based” organisation (46%). Just over a fifth of respondents (21%) indicated that they had volunteered with a “Sports” organisation and just under a fifth (19%) had responded that they had volunteered with “Youth/Children’s activities (outside school)”.

Figure 7: In the last 12 months, which type of organisation have you volunteered with



Analysis by gender indicated that a greater proportion of females volunteered with organisations that involved “people with a disability” (18%) and “Health and social care” type organisations (16%), as opposed to males (7% and 6% respectively).

In contrast, a greater proportion of males (29%) indicated that they had volunteered at “Sports” organisations compared with females (14%).

Analysis by religion revealed that almost two thirds (63%) of Protestants had volunteered in the past year at a “Church/Faith based” organisation compared with just under a third of Catholics (32%). In contrast, a greater proportion of Catholics (33%) indicated that they had volunteered with a “Sports” organisation than Protestants (14%).

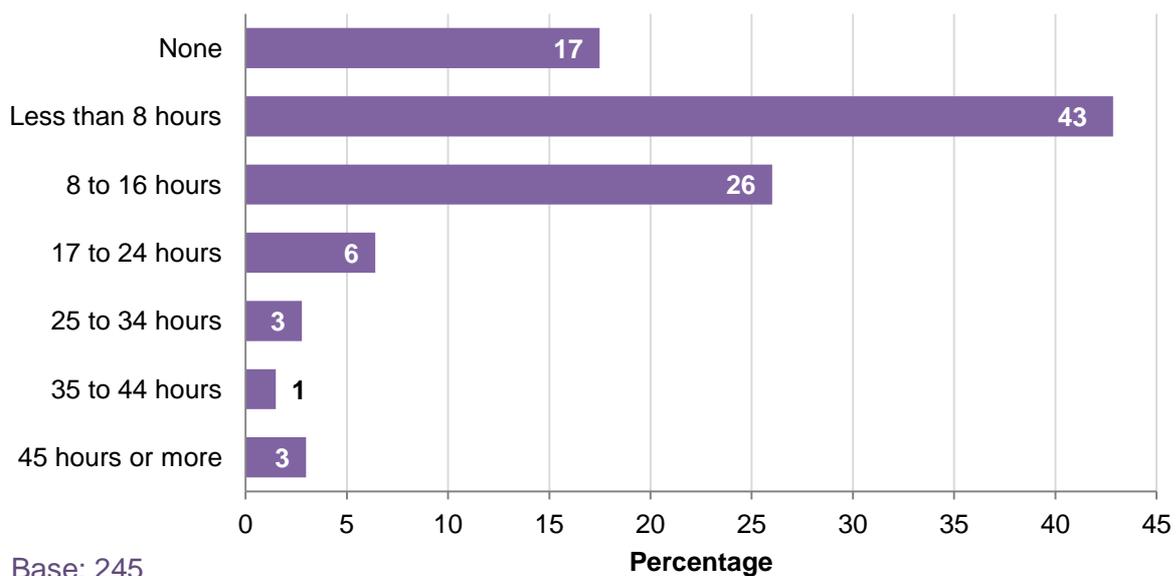
A quarter of adults with dependants (25%) indicated that they had volunteered with an organisation that provided “Youth/Children’s activities (outside school)” compared with 14% of adults without dependants. A similar proportion of adults with dependants (23%) indicated that they had volunteered in “Children’s education/Schools”, this is greater than the proportion of adults without dependants (7%).

Time spent volunteering

Adults who had undertaken volunteering in the last year were asked how much time they had spent volunteering in the last 4 weeks.

The most common length of time spent volunteering in the previous 4 week period was “Less than 8 hours” (43%) which while similar to the 2015 figure (38%), is greater than the proportion who volunteered for the same length of time in 2014 (33%). Just under a fifth (17%) of adults stated that they had not volunteered at all within the previous 4 weeks. This is similar to the proportion in 2015 (24%), however it is less than the comparable in 2014 (26%).

Figure 8: Approximately how many hours have you spent doing these types of voluntary work in the last 4 weeks?

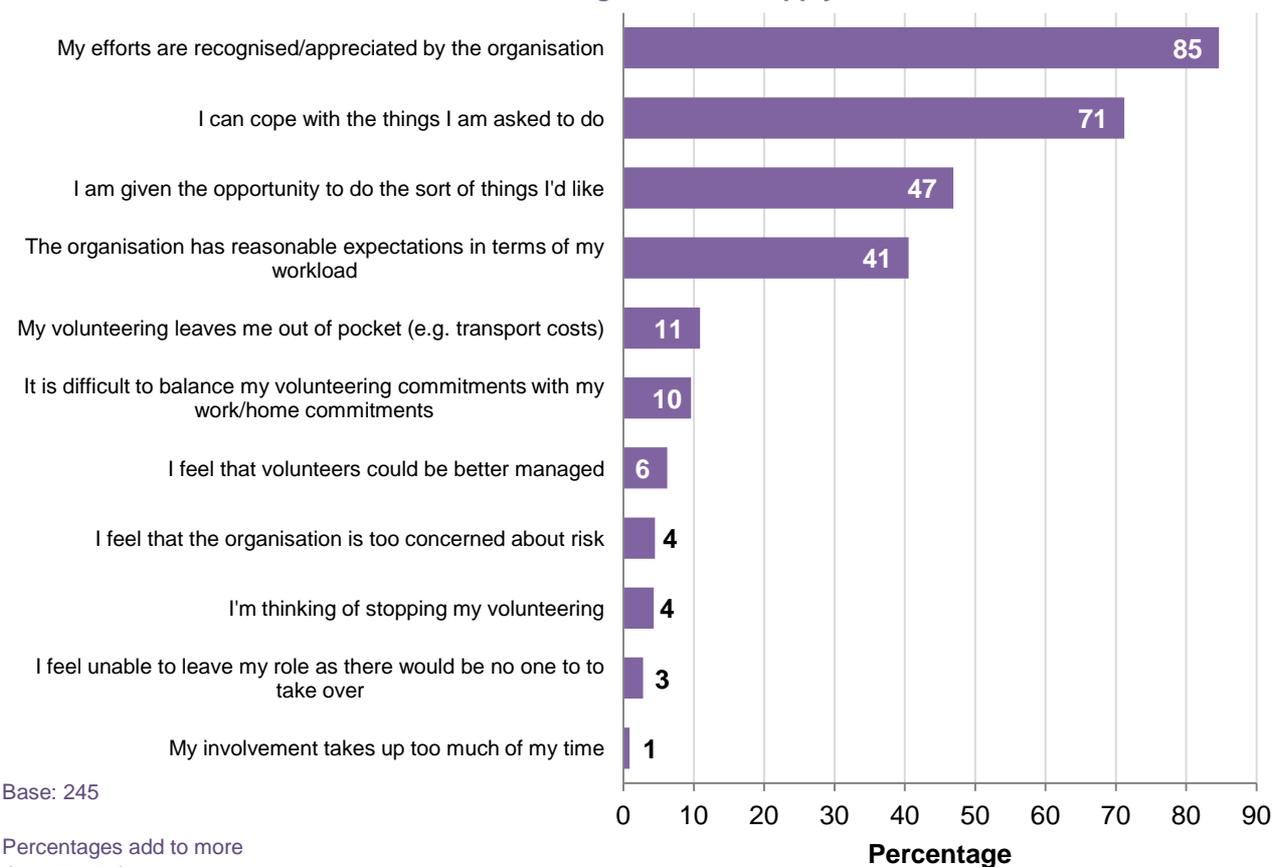


Volunteers' experiences with their organisations

Respondents were asked to comment on a range of statements relating to their experience of volunteering with their main organisation. More than four-fifths of respondents (85%) stated that their “efforts are recognised/appreciated by the organisation” for which they volunteer. This was similar to the 2015 figure (80%) but greater than the proportion in 2014 (76%).

One out of every hundred respondents (1%) indicated that they felt their involvement with the organisation they volunteer with takes up too much of their time. This was less than the proportion of respondents who felt the same about volunteering with their organisation in both 2015 and 2014 (4% and 5% respectively).

Figure 9: Thinking about the MAIN organisation you volunteer with, which of the following statements apply?



More than one in seven (71%) adults indicated that they are able to cope with what they are asked to do. This was a similar proportion to 2015 (66%), but was greater than the proportion in 2014 (59%).

Analysis by disability revealed that just over one tenth of respondents who have a disability (12%) were thinking of stopping volunteering, a higher proportion than those who do not have a disability (3%).

A greater proportion of those who were in paid employment and who had volunteered felt that volunteering left them out of pocket compared with those who were not in paid employment (15% and 6% respectively).

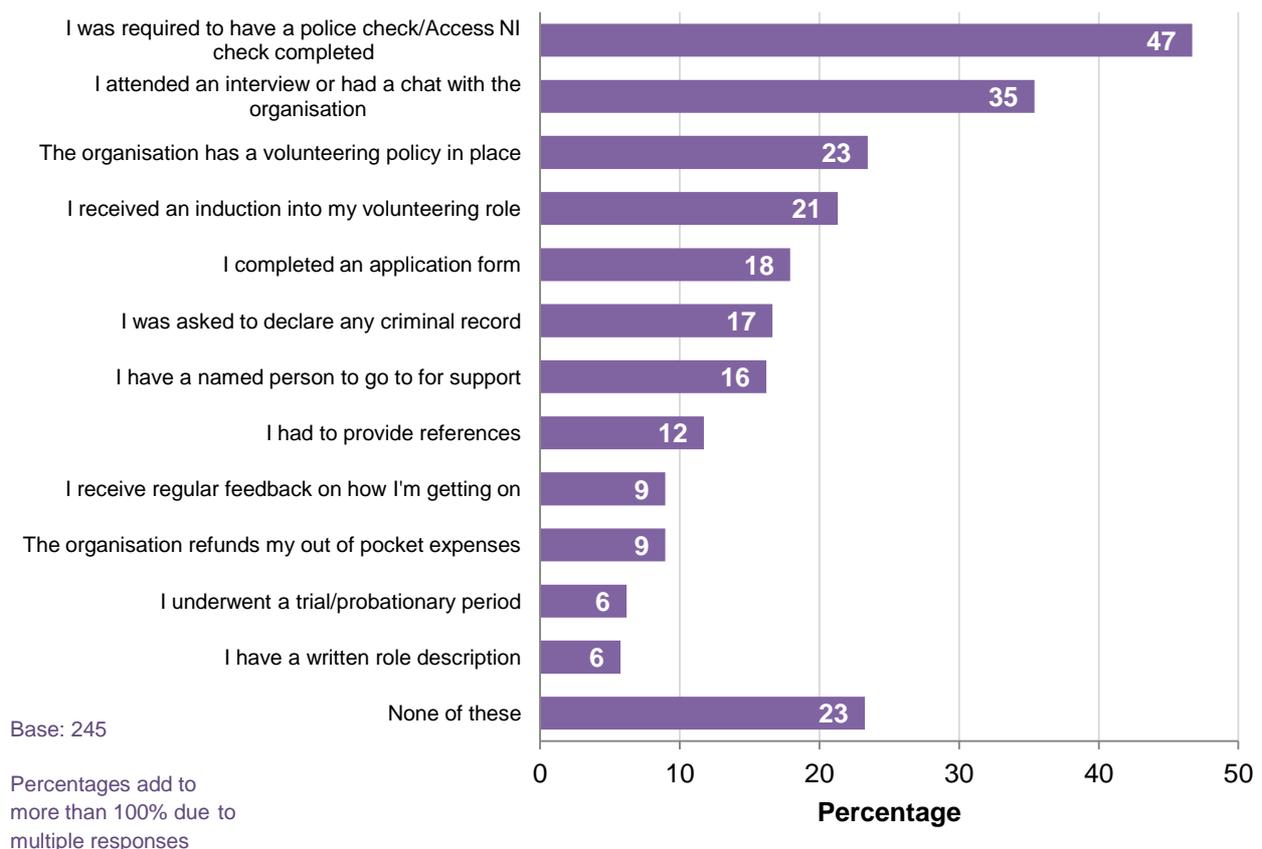
A greater proportion of those who were economically active felt that they could cope with what they were asked to do whilst volunteering compared with respondents who were economically inactive (75% and 62% respectively). In addition, a higher proportion of those who were economically active than those who were economically inactive felt “it is difficult to balance my volunteering commitments with my work/home commitments” (14% and 4% respectively).

The volunteer experience

Respondents were asked to read a number of further statements relating to their main volunteering role and state whether any of them were applicable.

Almost one half (47%) of adults indicated that a police or Access NI check was carried out, similar to the proportion in 2015 and 2014 (both 41%). More than one third of adults (35%) had an interview or chat with the organisation prior to taking up their volunteering role, similar to the proportions in 2015 and 2014 (29% and 32% respectively). Just under a quarter (23%) of respondents had volunteered in an organisation that had a volunteering policy in place similar to 2015 (21%).

Figure 10: Thinking about your volunteering role and the main organisation you volunteer with, which of the following statements apply?

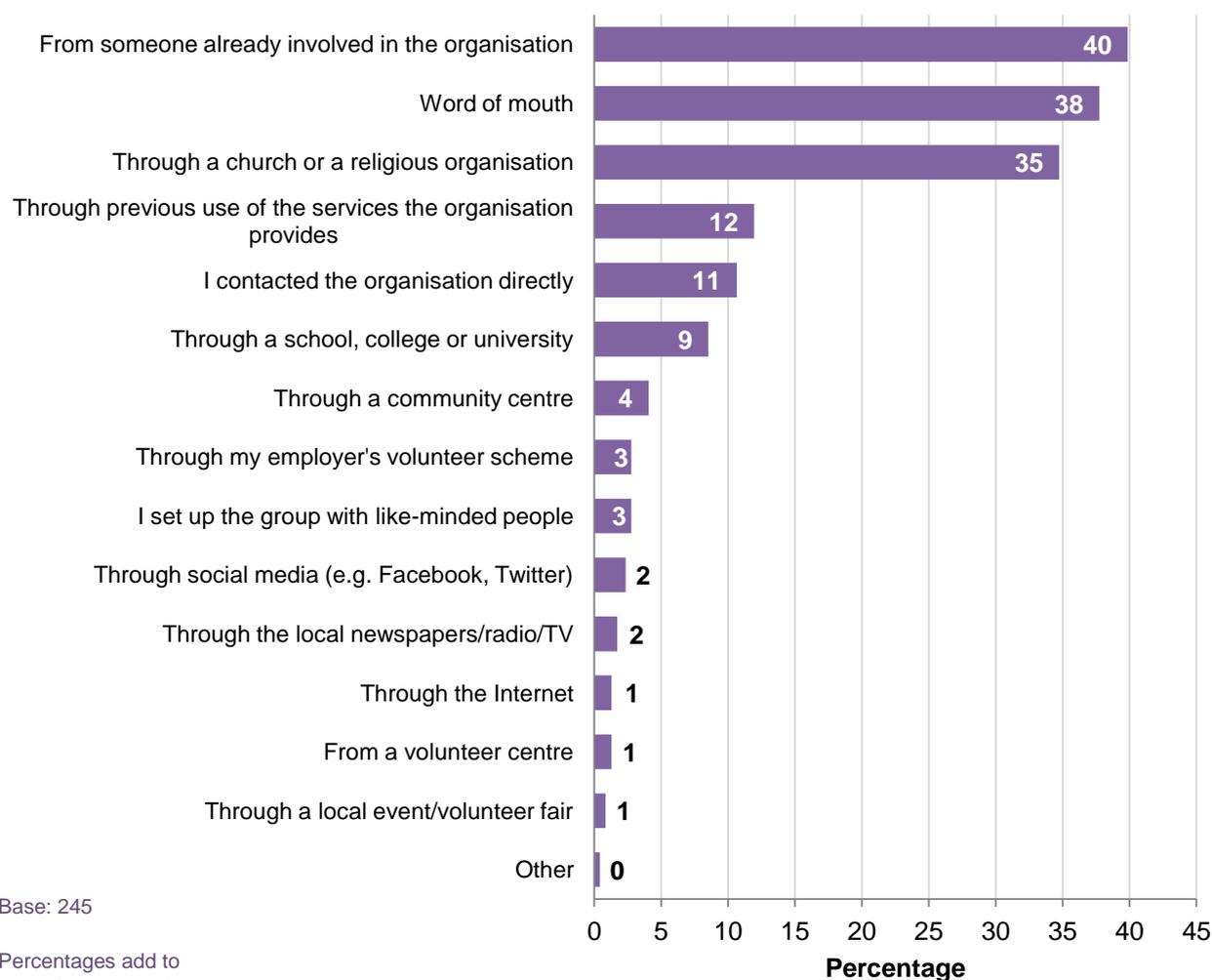


In total 23% of respondents stated that none of the statements regarding the organisation that they volunteer in apply to them. This is similar to the proportion of respondents in 2015, but is less than the proportion who stated this in 2014 (29% and 33% respectively).

How did you find out about volunteering role?

Adults in Northern Ireland were asked how they found out about their current volunteering role(s). The most common methods of identifying volunteering roles were from someone already involved in the organisation (40%), by word of mouth (38%), and through a church or religious organisation (35%).

Figure 11: How did you find out about your present volunteering role/roles?



Just over one tenth of respondents (11%) stated that they had contacted the organisation directly which is a greater proportion than in 2015 (5%).

Analysis by religion showed that a greater proportion of respondents who are Protestant indicated that they found out about volunteering through a church or religious organisation when compared with Catholics (49% and 23% respectively). In comparison a greater proportion of Catholics (7%) said that they found out about volunteering through their employers volunteer scheme than Protestants (0%).

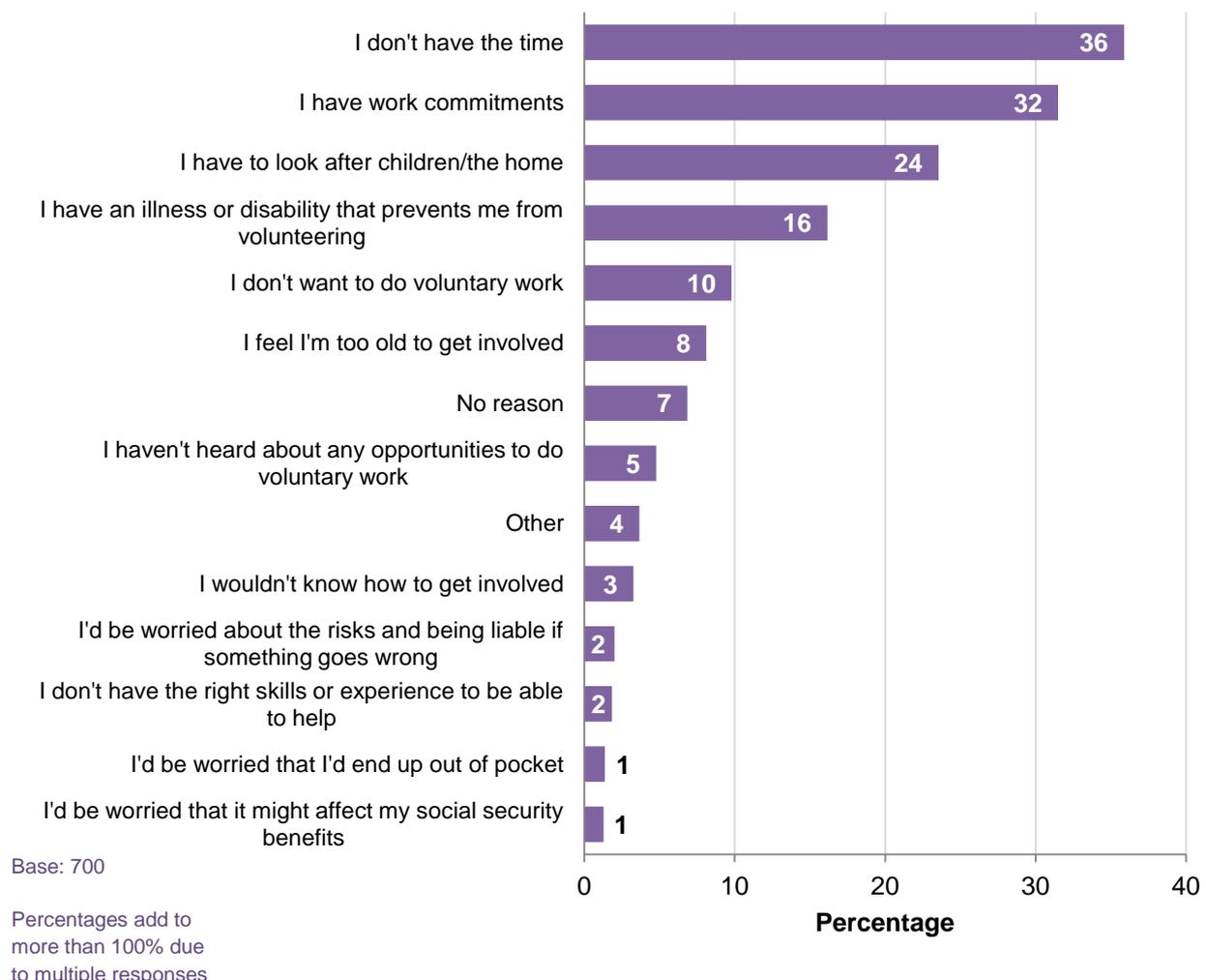
A greater proportion of adults with dependants stated that they found out about their volunteering role through a community centre (9%) and through social media (5%) compared with adults without dependants (1% and 0% respectively).

Just under a half of respondents (46%) who lived in rural areas stated that they found out about their volunteering role through word of mouth compared to just under a third of those who lived in urban areas (32%).

Reasons for not undertaking volunteering

Adults in Northern Ireland who reported that they had not undertaken any volunteering in the last year (n=700) were asked if there were any reasons for this. The top three reasons for not volunteering were “I don’t have the time” (36%) “I have work commitments” (32%), and “I have to look after children/the home” (24%) and these matched the top three reasons from 2015 and 2014.

Figure 12: Are there any reasons why you have not carried out any voluntary work or activity?



Of those who responded to the question, 10% stated that they “don’t want to do voluntary work” and 8% said that they felt “too old to get involved” as their reason for not volunteering. These results are similar to the 2015 survey (both 10%).

Analysis by gender indicated that 32% of females said “I have to look after children/the home” compared with 15% of males.

Nearly a third (30%) of those aged 65 and over said they felt too old to get involved, a greater proportion all other age groups.

Analysis by employment status showed that just under half (47%) of adults in paid employment stated “I don’t have the time (to undertake volunteering)”, compared with 23% of those not in paid employment.

Almost a third (29%) of those not in paid employment said that having an illness or disability prevented them from volunteering, compared with 3% of those in paid employment.

Other responses received mainly referenced caring duties and other commitments as a reason for not volunteering.

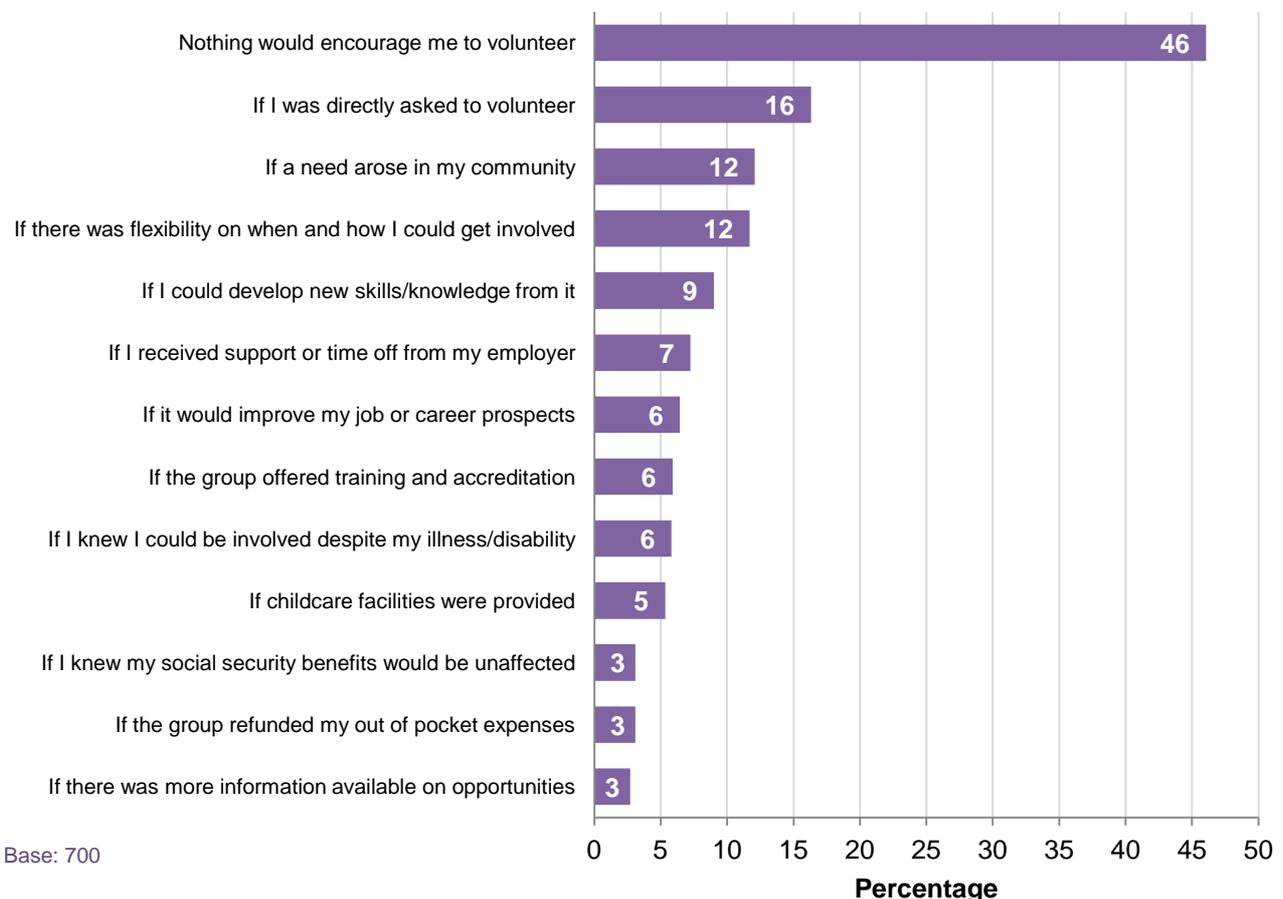
Factors that might encourage volunteering

Adults in Northern Ireland 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.

Almost half (46%) of respondents stated that “nothing would encourage them to volunteer”, similar to 2015 (44%). This became more pronounced as age increased, with 77% of the ‘65 and over’ age group stating that “nothing would encourage them to volunteer”, compared to 31% of the ‘25-34’ group.

Just over one tenth of respondents (12%) stated that if there was flexibility on when and how they could get involved it would encourage them to volunteer, this is lower than the proportion in 2015 (18%). Similarly, 3% of adults stated that if there was more information available on opportunities it would encourage them to volunteer which is also lower than the proportion in 2015 (7%).

Figure 13: What would encourage you or make it easier for you to become a volunteer?



Percentages add to more than 100% due to multiple responses

Analysis by marital status showed that 12% of single respondents stated that “improving job/career prospects” would encourage them to volunteer, compared with 4% of married¹ respondents.

A greater proportion of those without dependants (52%) than those with dependants (37%) said that “nothing would encourage them to volunteer”. Conversely, a greater proportion of adults with dependants indicated that they would be encouraged to volunteer if childcare facilities were provided (13%) or if they received support or time off from their employer (10%) when compared to adults without dependants (1% and 5% respectively).

Analysis by disability status showed that over half (54%) of respondents with a disability stated “nothing would encourage me to volunteer”, compared to 43% of those without a disability. This is a similar outcome to the 2015 results where the figures were 61% for those with a disability and 38% of those without a disability. However, 20% of those respondents with a disability said they would be encouraged to volunteer “if they knew I could be involved despite my illness/disability”.

¹ Married and living with husband/wife, or in a civil partnership

Appendix 1 Technical notes

Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey

The questions included in the October - November 2016 volunteering module of the Northern Ireland Omnibus survey are included in [Appendix 2](#). The sample for the October - November 2016 survey consisted of a systematic random sample of 2,200 addresses selected from the Pointer address database. The Pointer address database provides a good sampling frame of addresses, but contains no information about the number of people living at an address. Further selection stages were therefore required to convert the listing of addresses to a listing of individuals, aged 16 or over, from which one person in each household (the 'selected respondent') was randomly chosen by computer to complete the questionnaire. Of the 1,920 people eligible to take part, 946 participated, giving a response rate of 49%.

Weighting

Selecting only one individual for interview at each sampled address means that the probability of selection for the survey is inversely related to the size of the household. Therefore, the data are weighted in relation to the number of eligible adults at each address. This weighting process adjusts the results to those that would have been achieved if the sample had been drawn as a random sample of adults rather than of addresses, thus allowing inferences to be made about the population.

Design effect

Survey weighting tends to increase the standard errors of survey estimates and therefore reduces the precision. The effect of the weighting was measured using the Design Factor (DEFT). The standard errors were then multiplied by the Design Factor to ensure that the estimates were precise enough to be used for significance testing between different proportions.

Significance testing

Any statements in this report regarding differences between groups such as different age groups, religions etc. are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. When the proportions who chose two different response categories to a question e.g. agree or disagree are quoted as significantly different this is also at the 95% confidence level.

This means that we can be 95% confident that there is an actual difference between the groups or responses because there is a 5% probability (one in twenty) that the difference may only have arisen by chance.

Marital Status

All marital status groups include the corresponding civil partnership group e.g. married includes married or in a registered same-sex civil partnership; widowed includes widowed or surviving partner from a same-sex civil partnership etc.

Disability

A person with a disability in this report has been determined as those answering yes to both of the questions below:

- Do you have a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity? By long-standing illness I mean anything that has troubled you over a period of time or that is likely to affect you over a period of time.
- Does this illness or disability limit your activities in any way?

Dependants

A person is defined as having dependants if they have responsibility for either the care of a child(ren), a person(s) with a disability or an elderly person(s).

Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure, 2010

The data have been analysed by the multiple deprivation rank of the Super Output Area (SOA) in which the respondents were living. This is estimated using the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2012 which is a weighted combination of seven domains of deprivation. Rank 1 indicates the most deprived SOA, while rank 890 denotes the least deprived SOA. A quintile is the portion of a frequency distribution containing one fifth of the total sample. As the 890 SOAs are ranked from 1 to 890 in terms of Multiple Deprivation, the first quintile (the most deprived 20%) encompasses those living in the SOAs ranked 1 – 178 with the second most deprived quintile ranked 179 - 356 and so forth.

² [Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Report 2010](#)

Urban/ rural classification of Super Output Areas

The data have also been analysed by whether respondents are living in SOAs that have been categorised as either urban or rural as set out in the Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements report (2005)³ for the 2012-2014 survey results or the Review of Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements report (2015-2016)⁴ for the 2015 survey results. These reports classified each settlement in Northern Ireland into one of eight bands (A-H) and recommended that Government and other users should consider defining "urban" and "rural" areas in ways which are appropriate for different programmes and projects. In the absence of a programme-specific definition, Bands A-E can be defined as urban and Bands F-H as rural. This definition was applied in the analysis in this bulletin.

Interpretation of figures and tables

The following should be noted when interpreting figures and tables:

- Figure less than 0.5% are denoted by '0' and no responses by '-'.
- Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding or where multiple responses are allowed.
- The base number of responses to each question is shown in each table as the number of respondents may vary.

³ [Statistical classification and delineation of settlements 2005](#)

⁴ [Review of the statistical classification and delineation of settlements 2015](#)

Appendix 2 Questionnaire

Northern Ireland Omnibus Survey – Volunteering module October - November 2016

The following questions are about 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.’

[DFCQ1] Thinking about the definition just given, in the past year, have you carried out any voluntary work or activity.

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

[DFCQ2] Are there any reasons why?

- 1 I have work commitments,
- 2 I have to look after children/the home,
- 3 I don't have the time,
- 4 I haven't heard about any opportunities to do voluntary work,
- 5 I wouldn't know how to get involved,
- 6 I'd be worried that it might affect my social security benefits,
- 7 I'd be worried that I'd end up out of pocket,
- 8 I'd be worried about the risks and being liable if something goes wrong,
- 9 I don't have the right skills or experience to be able to help,
- 10 I feel I'm too old to get involved,
- 11 I have an illness or disability that prevents me from volunteering,
- 12 I don't want to do voluntary work,
- 13 Other - please specify,
- 14 No reason

Please specify other

[DFCQ3] What would encourage you or make it easier for you to become a volunteer?

- 1 If I was directly asked to volunteer,
- 2 If a need arose in my community,
- 3 If I could develop new skills/knowledge from it,
- 4 If there was flexibility on when and how I could get involved,
- 5 If the group offered training and accreditation,
- 6 If it would improve my job or career prospects,
- 7 If there was more information available on opportunities,
- 8 If I received support or time off from my employer,
- 9 If the group refunded my out of pocket expenses,
- 10 If childcare facilities were provided,

- 11 If I knew my social security benefits would be unaffected,
- 12 If I knew I could be involved despite my illness/disability,
- 13 Other - please specify,
- 14 Nothing would encourage me to volunteer

Please specify other

[DFCQ4] In the last 12 months, which types of voluntary work have you carried out?

- 1 Fundraising
- 2 Organising or helping to run a community event
- 3 Being a group leader, member of a committee or a trustee
- 4 Befriending or mentoring
- 5 Visiting people (not including immediate family)
- 6 Coaching
- 7 Counselling giving information or advice
- 8 Secretarial administration or clerical work
- 9 Providing transport/driving
- 10 Promotion of a particular cause or event
- 11 Campaigning
- 12 Practical help such as shopping gardening building or 'Meals on Wheels'
- 13 Collecting / making things to be sold for charity
- 14 Teaching or training
- 15 Helping in a church or religious organisation
- 16 Working with young people
- 17 Working in a charity shop
- 18 Other - please specify

Please specify other

[DFCQ5] Approximately how many hours have you spent doing these types of voluntary work in the last 4 weeks?

- 1 None,
- 2 Less than 8 hours,
- 3 8 to 16 hours,
- 4 17 to 24 hours,
- 5 25 to 34 hours,
- 6 35 to 44 hours,
- 7 45 hours or more

[DFCQ6] Thinking about the MAIN organisation you volunteer with, which of the statements on the showcard apply?

- 1 My efforts are recognised/appreciated by the organisation
- 2 I can cope with the things I am asked to do,
- 3 I am given the opportunity to do the sort of things I'd like to do,

- 4 The organisation has reasonable expectations in terms of my workload,
- 5 I feel that volunteers could be better managed,
- 6 I feel that the organisation is too concerned about risk,
- 7 My involvement takes up too much of my time,
- 8 It is difficult to balance my volunteering commitments with my work/home commitments,
- 9 My volunteering leaves me out of pocket (e.g. transport costs),
- 10 My voluntary work has affected my social security benefits,
- 11 I feel unable to leave my role as there would be no one to take over,
- 12 I'm thinking of stopping my volunteering

[DFCQ7] How did you find out about your present volunteering role/roles?

- 1 Word of mouth,
- 2 From someone already involved in the organisation,
- 3 From a church or a religious organisation,
- 4 From previous use of the services the organisation provides,
- 5 From a volunteer centre,
- 6 I contacted the organisation directly,
- 7 Through a school, college or university,
- 8 Through a community centre,
- 9 Through the local newspapers/radio/TV,
- 10 Through social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter),
- 11 Through the Internet,
- 12 Through a local event/volunteer fair,
- 13 I set up the group with like-minded people,
- 14 Through my employer's volunteer scheme,
- 15 Other - please specify

Please specify other

[DFCQ8] Thinking about your volunteering role and the main organisation you volunteer with, which of the following statements apply?

- 1 I attended an interview or had a chat with the organisation,
- 2 I completed an application form,
- 3 I had a police check/Access NI check completed,
- 4 I was asked to declare any criminal record,
- 5 I had to provide references,
- 6 I underwent a trial/probationary period,
- 7 I received an induction into my volunteering role,
- 8 I have a written role description,
- 9 I have a named person to go to for support,
- 10 I receive regular feedback on how I'm getting on,
- 11 The organisation refunds my out of pocket expenses,
- 12 The organisation has a volunteering policy in place,
- 13 None of these