



VOLUNTEERING TRENDS IN SCOTLAND – A CHANGING LANDSCAPE?

TECHNICAL NOTE

1 PURPOSE

Volunteer Scotland (VS) has recently completed a high level review of some of the research that is currently available on volunteering in Scotland. The purpose of this review was to reflect on the current state of volunteering, particularly around levels of volunteer participation and the current direction of travel for volunteer involvement in Scotland.

VS will use these findings to help focus and guide future analysis and research in this area. These findings, combined with future analysis, will help to assess the feasibility of current policy agendas – the success of which relies on increased participation in voluntary activity – and to help inform the design and improvement of services aimed at extending the depth and breadth of participation in Scotland.

2 DATA SOURCES

The review has focused on findings taken from the following sources:-

- The [Scottish Household Survey \(SHS\)](#), 2007-2013. This is a [National Statistics](#) release which is produced by the Scottish Government on an annual basis. More detailed information about the survey, including the survey methodology, can be found [here](#).
- The [Volunteering in Scottish Charities](#), 2013. A VS survey (the first research of its kind in Scotland) which aimed to better understand volunteering in local charities and the challenges they face in involving and managing volunteers. More detailed information about the survey can be found [here](#).
- The [Volunteering in Scotland Survey](#), 2013. A national omnibus survey carried out by VS which was designed to complement the SHS and to fill in some of the gaps in the national picture for volunteering in Scotland. More detailed information about the survey can be found [here](#).
- [Volunteering Participation in Scotland: An Analysis of Linked Social Survey and Administrative Data](#), 2014. This was a collaborative piece of work between VS and the University of Stirling to explore data on volunteering participation in Scotland to identify

the determinants of volunteering supply. More detailed information about the study can be found within the Methodology section of the paper.

3 SECONDARY ANALYSIS

VS has carried out secondary analysis of the SHS data to further explore the frequency and intensity with which volunteering takes place and to also consider the possibility of whether a 'core' of volunteers is evident within Scotland.

The idea of a 'core' draws upon aspects of a 2001 Canadian study (Reed and Selbee)¹ and work undertaken by the Third Sector Research Centre (TSRC)² to explore whether a small cohort of the population provides a disproportionately high number of volunteer hours.

To examine this, data was taken from the 2012 SHS in response to the question "*thinking about all the unpaid help you provide, how many hours in total would you estimate you spent on these activities in the past month*"³. Responses were ordered from high to low and a respondent was considered to be within the 'core' if they formed part of the smallest grouping to collectively provide two-thirds of the total number of hours volunteered. To be included within the 'core' in 2012, respondents needed to have carried out at least 16 hours of volunteering in the past month.

The cut-off point for inclusion in the core was an arbitrary decision. A different threshold could have been applied, but the cut-off point of two-thirds has become the default position amongst other similar analysis. VS intend to carry out further analysis around the 'core' of volunteers to look at additional years of data and to explore the socio-demographics of those respondents who constitute the 'core'.

4 TABLES AND CHARTS

The tables and charts produced as part of this review are available to download [here](#). Please note that the figures provided in the tables and charts have been independently rounded, so they may not always sum to the relevant sub-totals or totals. Some tables and charts may also include multiple responses or exclude 'don't know' or 'other' categories.

5 DEFINITIONS AND CLASSIFICATIONS

- **Current volunteer:** a person who has volunteered at least once in the past 12 months.

¹ Reed, P. and Selbee, L (2001) The civic core in Canada: disproportionality in charitable giving, volunteering and civic participation, *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 30, 761-780.

² Mohan, J. and Bulloch, S. (2012) The idea of a 'civic core': what are the overlaps between charitable giving, volunteering and civic participation in England and Wales?, *Third Sector Research Centre, Working Paper 73*.

³ VS recognise that the relatively short reference period used in this question (past month) makes the data vulnerable to one-off behaviours that are otherwise uncharacteristic of the individual. The reader is asked to bear this in mind.

- **Past volunteer:** a person who has volunteered at least once in their lifetime, but who has not volunteered in the past 12 months.
- **Non volunteers:** people who have never volunteered.
- **Regular volunteers:** people who have volunteered in the past 12 months and have done so either several times a week; about once a week; or less than once a week but at least once a month.
- **Occasional volunteers:** people who have volunteered in the past 12 months and have done so either less than once a month, but at least five or six times a year; a few times a year; or less often.
- **Weekly:** those people who have volunteered in the past 12 months and have done so either several times a week or about once a week
- **Monthly:** those people who have volunteered in the past 12 months and have done so less than once a week but at least once a month.

6 CONTACT

Our aim is to provide relevant and reliable information, analysis and advice. If you have any questions or comments regarding the content of this review, then please contact Gemma Jackson or Kathleen Doyle on 01786 479593 or email policyandresearch@volunteerscotland.org.uk