NHSGGC Analysis: Social isolation and loneliness

This summary presents analysis of volunteering data in the 2022/23 NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (NHSGGC) Health and Wellbeing Survey and builds on analysis of the 2017/2018 dataset as well as Volunteer Scotland's cross-sectional analysis of the 2022 Scottish Household Survey. The analysis considers the impact of social isolation and loneliness on formal volunteer participation across the Greater Glasgow and Clyde area.

There are differences in how social isolation is measured in the SHS and the NHSGGC Health and Wellbeing survey. NHSGGC ask a direct question – "Do you ever feel isolated from family and friends?" SHS uses the frequency of social meetings with friends, relative, neighbours or work colleagues as a measure of social isolation. Both surveys include a direct question on the frequency of feeling lonely. SHS measures this over the past week, NHSGGC measures this over a two-week period.

Key Takeaways:

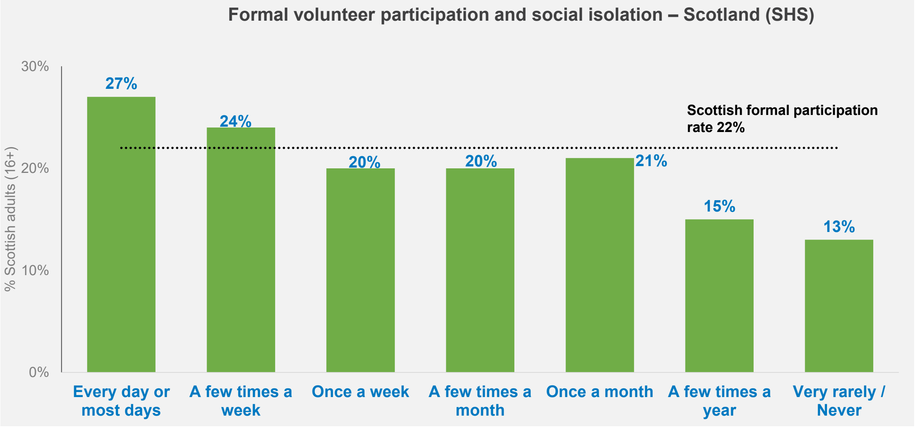
Social Isolation

- In Scotland, where frequency of social contacts is used as a proxy measure for social isolation, formal volunteer participation decreases as the frequency of social interactions decreases from 27% for adults who have almost daily social interactions to 13% for adults who very rarely or never have social interactions.
- In NHSGGC, formal volunteer participation is higher for adults who feel isolated from friends and family.
- Further research would be beneficial to understand why adults in NHSGGC who feel isolated from friends and family have higher volunteering participation rates. The demographic make up of the area may influence the participation rates for those feeling isolated from friends and family. Previous research indicates that volunteering can help reduce or even eliminate social isolation. In areas within NHSGGC where many adults are not originally from the local community and feel disconnected from friends and family, volunteering may serve as a valuable way to foster new social connections and strengthen ties within the community. Further research in deprived communities would also be beneficial to understand why the relationship is not statistically significant in deprived communities in NHSGCC.

Loneliness

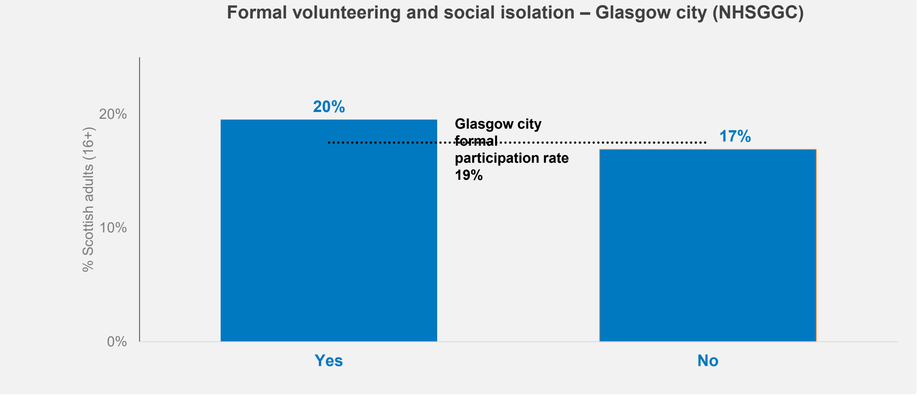
- In Scotland formal volunteer participation is highest for adults who feel lonely none or almost none of the time (23%) and lowest for all adults who feel lonely most of the time (12%).
- In NHSGGC formal volunteer participation rates are highest for adults who are lonely rarely or never and some of the time (19%) and lowest for adults who feel lonely all the time or often (15%).
- The relationship between formal volunteer participation and loneliness differs between local authorities.
  - In East Dunbartonshire formal participation rates are highest for adults who feel lonely all the time or often and lowest for adults who feel lonely some of the time.
  - In Glasgow City formal participation rates are highest for adults who feel lonely some of the time and lowest for adults who feel lonely all the time or often.
  - In Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire formal volunteer participation rates are highest for adults who feel lonely rarely or never.
  - Formal volunteer participation rates are lowest in West Dunbartonshire for adults who feel lonely all the time or often and lowest for adults who feel lonely some of the time in Inverclyde.
- These findings raise questions as to why the trends differ between local authorities, whether there are specific interventions in some local authorities that help people feeling lonely access volunteering opportunities and whether trends are due to demographic differences. This is an area that would benefit from further research.

Formal volunteer participation and social isolation



Formal volunteering participation rates are:
- 5 percentage points (pp.) higher than the average formal volunteer participation rate for adults who have social contact every or most days.
- 2 pp. higher than the average formal volunteer participation rate for adults who have social contact a few times a week.
- Between 1 pp. and 2 pp. lower than the average formal volunteer participation rate for Scottish adults who have social contact weekly, a few times a week or monthly.
- 7 pp. lower than the average formal volunteer participation rate for adults with social contact a few times a year.
- 9 pp. lower than the average formal volunteer participation rate for adults who rarely or never have social contact.

Sample sizes do not allow for an analysis of social isolation and formal volunteer participation by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation Quintiles.



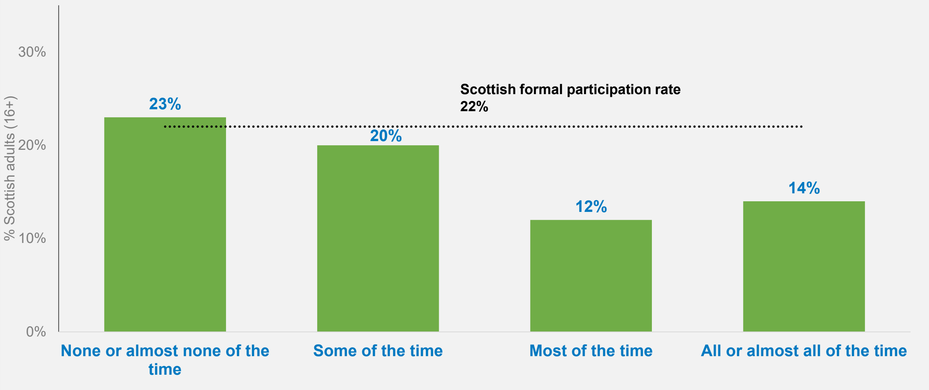
In NHSGGC the relationship between formal volunteer participation and social isolation is not statistically significant for:
- NHSGGC overall
- All Geographical areas, except Glasgow city
- All Thriving Places.

In Glasgow city formal volunteering participation rates are:
- 1 percentage points (pp.) higher than the average formal volunteer participation rate for adults who have experienced feeling isolated from family and friends.
- 2 pp. lower than the average formal volunteer participation rate for adults who have not ever felt isolated from family and friends.

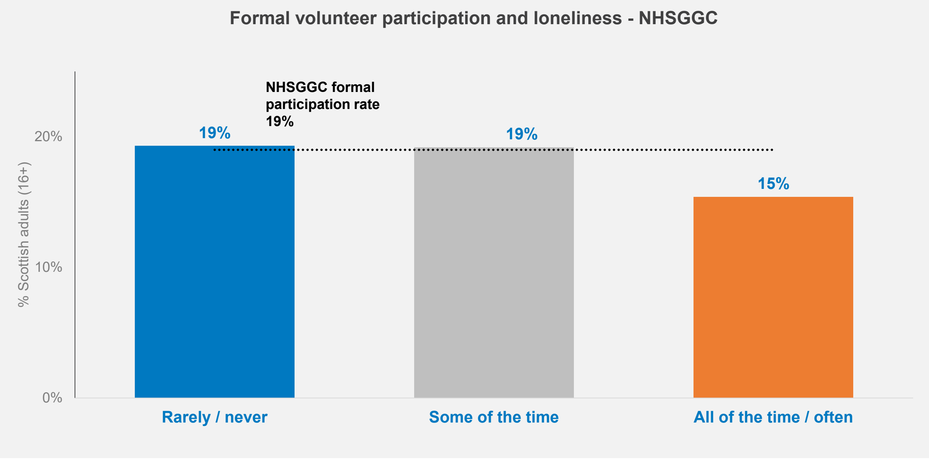
Please see: Volunteer Scotland Cross Sectional Analysis, Volunteer Scotland's NHSGGC 2017/18 analysis and NHSGGC overall 2022/23 Health and Wellbeing survey reports for further details.

NHSGGC Analysis: Social isolation and loneliness

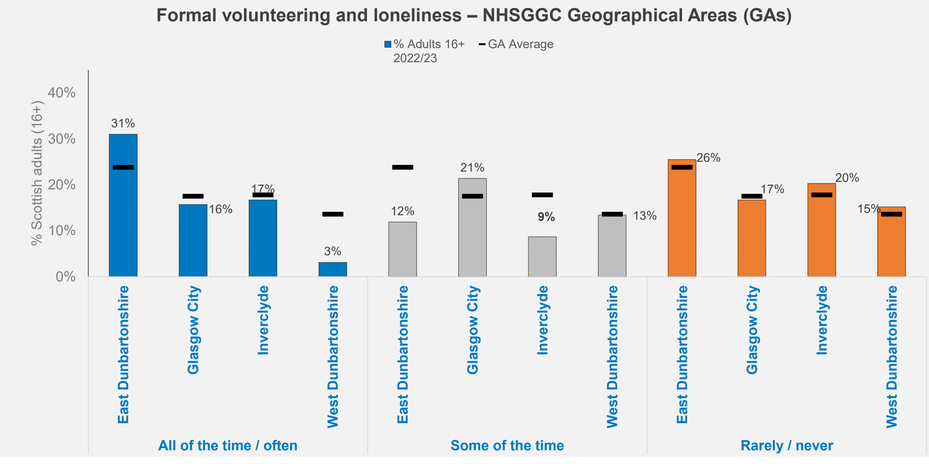
Formal volunteer participation and loneliness



Formal volunteering participation rates are:
- 1 percentage point (pp.) higher than the Scottish average formal volunteer participation rate for adults who are lonely none or almost none of the time.
- 2 pp. lower than the Scottish average formal volunteer participation rate for adults who feel lonely some of the time.
- 10 pp. lower than the Scottish average formal volunteer participation rate for adults who feel lonely most of the time.
- 8 pp. lower than the Scottish average formal volunteer participation rate for adults who are lonely all or almost all the time.
- Sample sizes do not allow for an analysis of social isolation and formal volunteer participation by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation Quintiles.



In NHSGGC formal volunteer participation rates are:
- Equal to the NHSGGC average formal volunteer participation for adults who felt lonely rarely, never or some of the time.
- 4 pp. lower than the NHSGGC average formal volunteer participation rate for adults who have felt lonely all the time or often.



- The relationship between Geographical Areas and loneliness is not statistically significant in East Renfrewshire and Renfrewshire.
- For adults who feel lonely all the time or often formal volunteer participation rates are above the Geographical Areas average in East Dunbartonshire and below average in Glasgow City, Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire.
- For adults who feel lonely some of the time formal volunteer participation rates are below the Geographical Areas average in East Dunbartonshire, Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire and above average in Glasgow City.
- For adults who rarely or never feel lonely formal volunteer participation rates are above the Geographical Areas average in East Dunbartonshire, Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire and below average in Glasgow City.
- The relationship between loneliness is not statistically significant in any of the Thriving Places.

Please see: Volunteer Scotland Cross Sectional Analysis, Volunteer Scotland's NHSGGC 2017/18 analysis and NHSGGC overall 2022/23 Health and Wellbeing survey reports for further details.