

# 11 Volunteering

## Main Findings

Levels of volunteering have remained relatively stable over the last 5 years, with around three in ten adults providing unpaid help to organisations or groups. In 2016, 27 per cent of adults provided unpaid help to organisations or groups in the last 12 months.

The profile of volunteers has also remained relatively stable over time. Volunteers are more likely to be:

- women
- from higher socio-economic and income groups
- from rural areas
- from less deprived areas.

Overall, the volunteering results from 2016 by economic situation, household income and area deprivation continue to support existing evidence about the under-representation of disadvantaged groups in volunteering.

The type of organisations most commonly volunteered for were 'health, disability and social welfare' organisations and 'youth or children' organisations (19 per cent).

Younger adults were more likely to work with children and young people and help with sporting activities, whilst older adults were more likely to volunteer for religious organisations, community groups, and groups working with the elderly.

Eighteen per cent of adults that provided unpaid help do so 'several times a week' and a quarter (25 per cent) of volunteers provided unpaid help 'about once a week'. Three in four (75 per cent) of adults that volunteered did so for up to 10 hours a month.

Most people stopped volunteering due to changes in their circumstances such as no longer having time (34 per cent), they have moved house (13 per cent) or due to illness (10 per cent).

## 11.1 Introduction and Context

The Scottish Government recognises that volunteers of all ages form a valuable national resource, vital to the success of Scotland and that volunteering is a key component of strong communities. Volunteering is all about new experiences, feeling good and making a difference and it is important to recognise the benefits of volunteering, in terms of skills development, community empowerment and strengthening public services.

The definition of volunteering currently used by the Scottish Government is: ‘the giving of time and energy through a third party, which can bring measurable benefits to the volunteer, individual beneficiaries, groups and organisations, communities, environment and society at large. It is a choice undertaken of one's own free will, and is not motivated primarily for financial gain or for a wage or salary’<sup>77</sup>. This definition broadly encompasses ‘formal volunteering’ – where unpaid work is undertaken through an organisation, group or club to help other people or to help a cause (such as improving the environment). In contrast, ‘informal volunteering’ refers to unpaid help given as an individual directly to people who are not relatives.

The volunteering questions in the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) ask about providing unpaid help to organisations or groups, therefore the focus of this chapter is on formal volunteering. This chapter presents findings from the 2016 data about the prevalence and frequency of volunteering, the type of organisations for which individuals gave up their time, the activities which individuals undertook, hours they volunteered in the past month, and reasons why people who volunteered in the past had given up<sup>78</sup>. A number of terms are used interchangeably to refer to volunteering throughout the chapter (e.g. unpaid help, unpaid work, unpaid activity and voluntary work).

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<sup>77</sup> Scottish Executive (2004) Volunteering Strategy  
<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2004/05/19348/36990>

<sup>78</sup> Prevalence and frequency of volunteering and the type of organisation for which individuals give up their time are asked annually. Activities which individuals undertake, hours spent volunteering and reasons why people who have volunteered have now given up are asked biennially.

## 11.2 Providing Unpaid Help to Organisations or Groups

### 11.2.1 Prevalence of Providing Unpaid Help

- Just over a quarter of adults provided unpaid help to organisations or groups in the last 12 months.
- The overall rate of volunteering has remained relatively stable between 2009 and 2016 with the proportion of females being consistently higher than males.

Table 11.1 shows that 27 per cent of adults provided unpaid help to organisations or groups in the last 12 months.



### Profile of volunteers

- There is an under-representation of disadvantaged groups who have volunteered.
- Volunteering information has been collected since 1999. Overall, in 2016 as in every other year, more women (29 per cent) than men (26 per cent) volunteered in the last 12 months.
- Levels of volunteering have varied according to economic status - fewer people from lower socio-economic groups have provided unpaid help compared with higher income groups.
- In general the percentage of adults volunteering has increased with income.
- Volunteering has been consistently lower for those in the 20 per cent most deprived areas (18 per cent) than in the rest of Scotland (30 per cent).
- The rate of volunteering has been consistently higher in rural areas than in urban areas, where 41 per cent of adults in remote rural areas and 31 per cent of adults in accessible rural areas provided unpaid help to groups or organisations compared to

around a quarter of adults in large and other urban areas (26 per cent and 24 per cent respectively).

- Those in 'education (including HE/FE)' (39 per cent), followed by those who are 'self-employed' (36 per cent) and those in 'part-time employment' (31 per cent) were most likely to have provided unpaid help. Adults who are 'permanently sick or have short term ill health issues or are disabled' (11 per cent) were least likely to have volunteered.

There is a difference along gender lines with a higher percentage of women (29 per cent) saying that they have provided unpaid help compared with men (26 per cent). Figure 11.1 shows the trend in volunteering over the past eight years. It can be seen that the overall rate of volunteering has remained relatively stable over the time period with the proportion of females being consistently higher than males.

**Table 11.1: Whether provided unpaid help to organisations or groups in the last 12 months by gender**

Column percentages, 2016 data

Adults	Male	Female	All
Yes	26	29	27
No	74	71	73
Total	100	100	100
<i>Base</i>	<i>4,400</i>	<i>5,240</i>	<i>9,640</i>

**Figure 11.1: Percentage providing unpaid help to organisations or groups in the last 12 months by gender**

2009-2016 data, Adults (minimum base: 2,450)

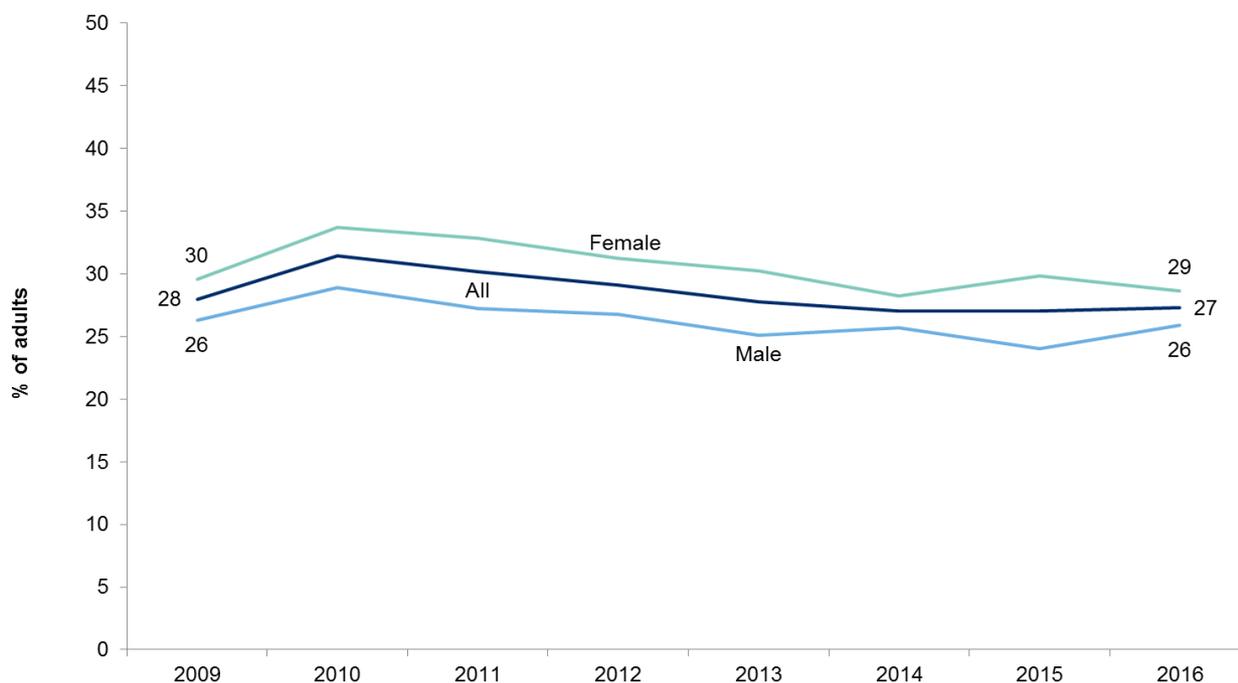
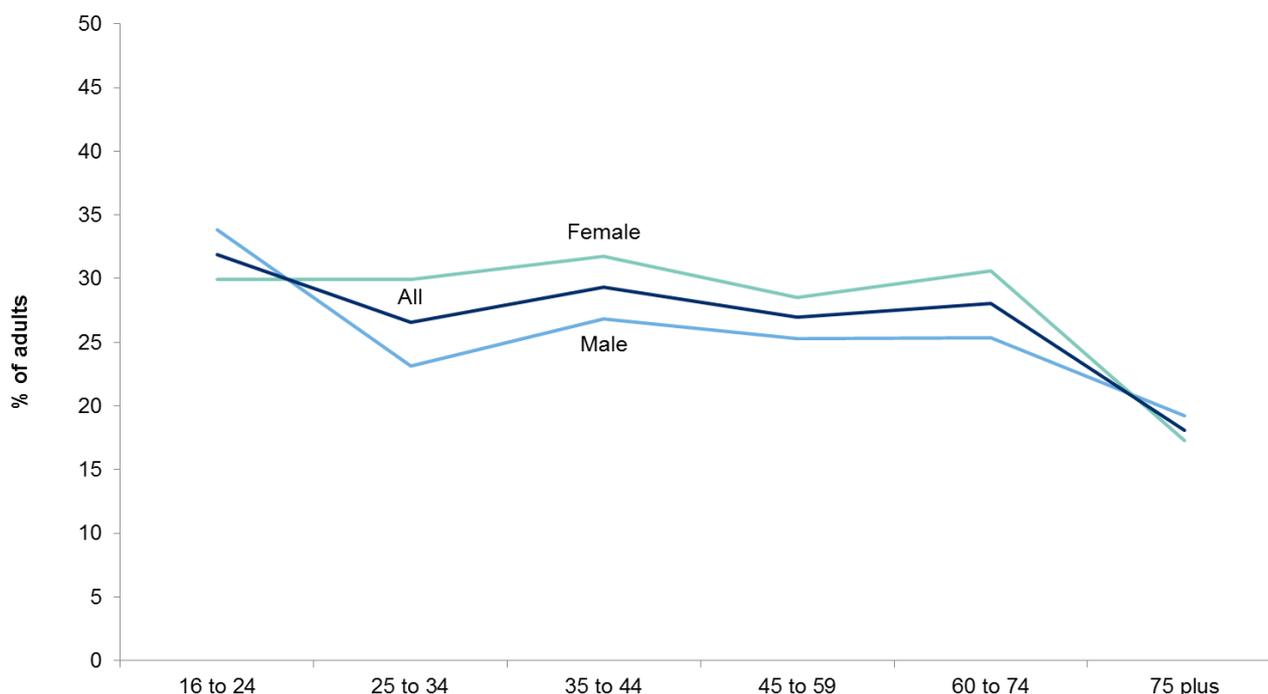


Figure 11.2 shows the gender difference in volunteering by age. In 2016, there was a difference between males and females within the 25 to 34 age group, where a higher proportion of females (30 per cent) volunteered than males (23 per cent) and within the 60 to 74 age group, where 31 per cent of females and 25 per cent of males volunteered.

Volunteering was lowest among men aged 25 to 34 compared to all of the other age groups under the age of 75 (23 per cent of men in this age group provided unpaid help). After the age of 75, providing unpaid help declined: 19 per cent of men and 17 per cent of women aged 75 and over provided unpaid help to organisations or groups in the last 12 months.

**Figure 11.2: Percentage providing unpaid help to organisations or groups in the last 12 months by age within gender**

2016 data, Adults (minimum base: 730)



### Variations in volunteering: economic situation

- Those in education, self-employed or working part-time were most likely to have volunteered.

There is also variation in volunteering according to individuals' current economic situation (Table 11.2). Those in 'education (including HE/FE)' (39 per cent), followed by those who are 'self-employed' (36 per cent) and those in 'part-time employment' (31 per cent) were most likely to have provided unpaid help. Adults who are 'permanently sick or have short term ill health issues or are disabled' (11 per cent) were least likely to have volunteered. Just over one-fifth (21 per cent) of those 'unemployed and seeking work' had volunteered in the previous 12 months.

**Table 11.2: Whether provided unpaid help to organisations or groups in the last 12 months by current economic situation**

Column percentages, 2016 data

Adults	Self-employed	Full-time employment	Part-time employment	Looking after home / family	Permanently retired from work	Unemployed and seeking work	In Education (including HE/FE)	Permanently sick or short term ill health or disabled	All
Yes	36	27	31	24	25	21	39	11	27
No	64	73	69	76	75	79	61	89	73
All	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Base	630	3,130	960	460	3,180	320	410	530	9,640

- The percentage of adults who volunteered increased with income.

Table 11.3 shows the differences in volunteering by household income band. It can be seen that in general the percentage of adults who volunteered increased with income. Around one-fifth of adults in households in the lowest net income bands, £0-£20,000, volunteered in the last 12 months, compared to almost two-fifths (39 per cent) of those with a net household income of more than £40,000.

**Table 11.3: Whether provided unpaid help to organisations or groups in the last 12 months by net annual household income**

Column percentages, 2016 data

Adults	£0 - £6,000	£6,001 - £10,000	£10,001 - £15,000	£15,001 - £20,000	£20,001 - £25,000	£25,001 - £30,000	£30,001 - £40,000	£40,001+	All
Yes	21	21	20	20	26	26	29	39	28
No	79	79	80	80	74	74	71	61	72
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Base	250	900	1,620	1,420	1,170	900	1,280	1,760	9,300

Household income in the SHS is that of the highest income householder and their partner only. Includes all adults for whom household income is known or has been imputed. Excludes refusals/don't know responses.

### Variations in volunteering: deprivation

- Volunteering was lower for those in the 20 per cent most deprived areas.

Table 11.4 shows the prevalence of volunteering by level of deprivation, as defined using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). It can be seen that volunteering was lower for those in the 20 per cent most deprived areas (18 per cent) than in the rest of Scotland (30 per cent).

**Table 11.4: Whether provided unpaid help to organisations or groups in the last 12 months by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation**

Column percentages, 2016 data

Adults	20% most deprived	Rest of Scotland	Scotland
Yes	18	30	27
No	82	70	73
Total	100	100	100
Base	1,880	7,760	9,640

### Variations in volunteering: urban/rural areas

- Volunteering in rural areas was higher than in urban areas.

Table 11.5 shows differences in volunteering by Urban Rural classification. It can be seen that the rate of volunteering in rural areas was higher than in urban areas, with 41 per cent of adults in remote rural and 31 per cent of adults in accessible rural areas saying they provided unpaid help to groups or organisations compared to around a quarter of adults in large and other urban areas (26 per cent and 24 per cent respectively).

**Table 11.5: Whether provided unpaid help to organisations or groups in the last 12 months by Urban Rural Classification**

Column percentages, 2016 data

Adults	Large urban areas	Other urban areas	Accessible small towns	Remote small towns	Accessible rural	Remote rural	Scotland
Yes	26	24	27	34	31	41	27
No	74	76	73	66	69	59	73
All	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Base	2,880	3,280	930	550	1,050	960	9,640

### 11.2.2 Types of organisations Unpaid Help Provided to

- The most common types of organisations which volunteers helped with were those working with 'health, disability and social welfare' and 'youth / children'.
- There was variations in the types of unpaid activity adults had undertaken in the last 12 months by gender.

Table 11.6 lists the types of organisations that adults who did voluntary work in the last 12 months provided unpaid help to. The most common types of organisations which volunteers helped with were 'health, disability and social welfare' and 'youth / children' (both 19 per cent). This was followed by people who worked with 'local community or neighbourhood groups' and 'children's activities associated with schools' (both 18 per cent). The next most common types of volunteering were, 'sport / exercise (coaching or organised)' (17 per cent), 'religious groups' and 'hobbies / recreation / arts / social clubs' (both 16 per cent).

#### **Variations in the types of organisations unpaid help provided to: Urban Rural Classification**

Table 11.6 also shows the variation in the types of organisations that adults volunteered with by Urban Rural Classification. It can be seen that similar percentages of adults in large and other urban areas and remote and accessible rural areas (around one-fifth) provided unpaid help to 'youth / children' organisations. A higher percentage of adults in large and other urban areas (17 per cent and 22 per cent respectively) provided unpaid help to 'health, disability and social welfare' organisations compared to remote rural and accessible rural areas (15 per cent and 18 per cent respectively).

A higher percentage of adults in remote small towns provided unpaid help to 'sport / exercise (coaching or organising)' groups (34 per cent) than all other areas (between 15 and 18 per cent) and to 'the elderly' (26 per cent) compared to nine per cent in large urban areas and 11 per cent in accessible rural areas. A higher percentage of adults in remote small towns (one quarter) and remote and accessible rural areas (around one-fifth) provided unpaid help to 'hobbies / recreation / arts / social clubs' compared to large and other urban areas (15 and 14 per cent respectively). Conversely, one-third (33 per cent) of volunteers in remote rural areas and just over one-quarter in accessible rural areas provided unpaid help to 'local community or neighbourhood' organisations compared to large urban areas (14 per cent) and other urban areas (15 per cent).

**Table 11.6: Types of organisations or groups for which adults provided help for in the last 12 months by Urban Rural Classification**

Percentages, 2016 data

Adults who did voluntary work in the last 12 months	Large urban areas	Other urban areas	Accessible small towns	Remote small towns	Accessible rural	Remote rural	All
Health, disability and social welfare	17	22	22	16	18	15	19
Youth / children	20	17	24	17	20	20	19
Local community or neighbourhood groups	14	15	16	20	26	33	18
Children's activities associated with schools	19	15	15	16	23	19	18
Sport / exercise (coaching or organising)	15	18	15	34	17	17	17
Religious groups	14	18	15	20	15	13	16
Hobbies / recreation / arts / social clubs	15	14	16	25	19	21	16
The elderly	9	12	14	26	11	17	12
Environmental protection	5	3	4	2	9	9	5
Citizens groups	2	4	6	7	4	9	4
Education for adults	6	3	3	2	5	6	4
Safety, first aid	3	3	3	3	4	8	4
Justice and human rights	6	4	4	1	3	2	4
Wildlife protection	3	2	3	2	5	4	3
Domestic animal welfare	3	3	3	4	5	2	3
Political groups	3	3	4	0	2	4	3
Trade union activities	1	1	-	-	1	0	1
None	5	4	4	4	3	3	4
Don't Know	1	0	0	-	0	0	0
<i>BaseMin</i>	710	750	240	180	320	420	2,620

Columns may add to more than 100 per cent since multiple responses were allowed

### Variations in the types of organisations unpaid help provided to: gender and age

Table 11.7 shows the types of organisations that adults volunteered with in the last 12 months by gender and age. Women were more likely to volunteer with 'children's activities associated with schools' (23 per cent), 'health, disability and social welfare' organisations (22 per cent), 'youth / children' (20 per cent) and 'local community or neighbourhood groups' and 'religious groups' (both 17 per cent). Men were most likely to have volunteered with 'sport / exercise (coaching or organising)' (25 per cent), 'local community or neighbourhood groups' and 'hobbies / recreation / arts / social club' (both 20 per cent) and 'youth / children' organisations (18 per cent).

Providing help with 'children's activities associated with schools' (32 per cent) and 'youth / children' (27 per cent) was most common among adults aged 35 to 44. Adults aged 16 to

24 were most likely to have volunteered with organisations working with 'sport / exercise (coaching or organising)' (31 per cent) followed by 'youth / children' (23 per cent) and 'hobbies / recreation / arts / social clubs' (19 per cent). In contrast, volunteering for 'religious groups' and organisations working with 'the elderly' tended to increase with age, as did volunteering with 'local community or neighbourhood groups' (to age 60-74 on the latter). Of those adults aged 75 and over who had volunteered, 39 per cent did so with 'religious groups', and 23 per cent with organisations working with 'the elderly'.

**Table 11.7: Types of organisations or groups for which adults provided help for in the last 12 months by gender and age**

Percentages, 2016 data

Adults who did voluntary work in the last 12 months	Male	Female	16 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 59	60 to 74	75 plus	All
Health, disability and social welfare	15	22	16	22	14	20	21	18	19
Youth / children	18	20	23	21	27	22	10	6	19
Local community or neighbourhood groups	20	17	10	12	15	23	24	20	18
Children's activities associated with schools	12	23	18	22	32	18	7	2	18
Sport / exercise (coaching or organising)	25	10	31	17	18	17	11	3	17
Religious groups	14	17	9	8	8	13	29	39	16
Hobbies / recreation / arts / social clubs	20	13	19	15	17	15	16	13	16
The elderly	9	14	7	7	11	13	17	23	12
Environmental protection	6	5	3	4	6	8	6	3	5
Citizens groups	5	4	3	3	3	3	7	7	4
Education for adults	4	4	4	7	4	4	4	2	4
Safety, first aid	3	4	4	6	3	4	2	1	4
Justice and human rights	3	5	6	6	3	4	3	4	4
Wildlife protection	2	4	3	4	3	4	2	3	3
Domestic animal welfare	2	5	1	7	4	4	2	2	3
Political groups	5	1	2	2	3	3	3	5	3
Trade union activities	1	1	.	1	1	2	1	0	1
None	4	4	1	5	4	4	4	7	4
Dont Know	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
<i>Base/Min</i>	<i>1,090</i>	<i>1,520</i>	<i>220</i>	<i>340</i>	<i>450</i>	<i>660</i>	<i>700</i>	<i>240</i>	<i>2,620</i>

Columns may add to more than 100 per cent since multiple responses were allowed.

## Type of unpaid work or activities

- The most common types of unpaid work or activities undertaken were:
  - generally helping out
  - raising money
  - whatever is required.

Table 11.8 shows the type of unpaid work or activities that adults undertook on behalf of the group or organisation they gave most help to in the last 12 months. The most common unpaid activity undertaken was 'generally helping out', with 43 per cent of adults who volunteered doing this type of activity. In terms of more specific roles, 30 per cent of adults helped by 'raising money', whilst 29 per cent said they did 'whatever is required'. Twenty-eight per cent helped to 'organise or run events or activities'.

The proportion of females 'raising money' was 35 per cent compared to 23 per cent of males. Conversely, a higher proportion of males were involved in 'education or training or coaching' (21 per cent) compared to females (15 per cent).

**Table 11.8: Types of unpaid activity adults have undertaken in the last 12 months by gender**  
Percentages, 2016 data

	Male	Female	All
Generally helping out	41	45	43
Raising money	23	35	30
Doing whatever is required	28	30	29
Helping to organise or run events or activities	26	30	28
Committee work	20	17	18
Education or training or coaching	21	15	18
Providing advice or assistance to others	14	13	14
Office work or administration	10	11	11
Managing, organising or co-ordinating other	7	9	8
Visiting, buddying or befriending people	5	9	7
Providing transport or driving	8	4	6
Providing direct services (e.g. meals on	5	6	6
Campaigning	5	6	6
Counselling	4	4	4
Representing others	4	4	4
IT Support	4	3	3
Advocacy	3	3	3
No answer	3	1	2
<i>Base</i>	<i>1,080</i>	<i>1,510</i>	<i>2,590</i>

### 11.2.3 Time Spent Volunteering

- Nearly one in five adults that provided unpaid help did so fairly frequently.

Table 11.9 shows that 18 per cent of adults provided unpaid help ‘several times a week’ and a quarter (25 per cent) of volunteers provided unpaid help ‘about once a week’.

#### Variation in the time spent volunteering: gender

- More men than women provided unpaid help ‘several times a week’.

There are gender differences with more men (21 per cent) than women (15 per cent) who provided unpaid help ‘several times a week’.

**Table 11.9: Frequency of unpaid help to organisations or groups in the last 12 months by gender**

Percentages, 2016 data

Adults who did voluntary work in the last 12 months	Male	Female	All
Several times a week	21	15	18
About once a week	24	27	25
Less than once a week but at least once a month	17	22	20
Less than once a month but at least five or six times a year	10	13	12
A few times a year	18	15	16
Less often	7	6	7
No answer	3	2	3
All	100	100	100
Base	1,090	1,520	2,620

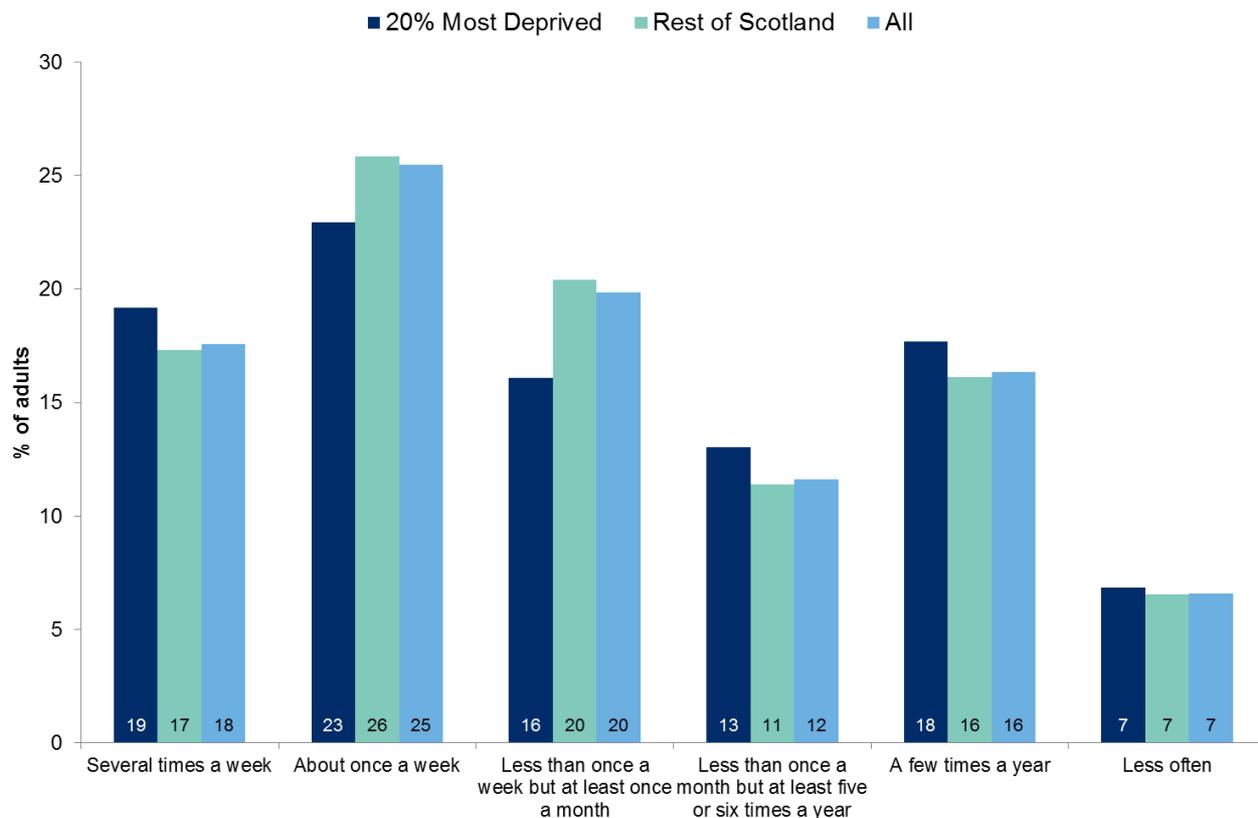
### Variation in the time spent volunteering: area deprivation

- There is little variation in time spent volunteering by area deprivation.

Figure 11.3 shows that the frequency of volunteering does not vary by area deprivation.

**Figure 11.3: Frequency of unpaid help to organisations or groups in the last 12 months by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation**

2016 data, Adults (minimum base: 320)



## Number of unpaid help hours provided

- Three quarters of volunteers in Scotland provided unpaid help for 10 hours or less in the last four weeks.

Adults who had undertaken voluntary work in the last 12 months were asked the specific number of hours that they provided unpaid help in the last four weeks. Table 11.10 shows that three quarters (75 per cent) of volunteers in Scotland provided unpaid help for 10 hours or less, and that around half (51 per cent) provided help for between one and 5 hours. There was no variation between the 20 per cent most deprived areas and the rest of Scotland in the number of unpaid help hours provided.

**Table 11.10: Total number of hours of unpaid work provided in the last four weeks by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation**

Column percentages, 2016 data

Adults who did voluntary work in the last 12 months	20% most deprived	Rest of Scotland	Scotland
Less than an hour	8	5	6
Between 1 and 5 hours	50	52	51
6 to 10 hours	19	18	18
11 to 15 hours	7	7	7
16 to 20 hours	6	6	6
21 to 35 hours	5	6	6
36 hours or more	7	5	5
All	100	100	100
<i>Base</i>	<i>310</i>	<i>2,270</i>	<i>2,580</i>

### 11.2.4 Reasons for Stopping Volunteering

- Around a quarter of non-volunteers said they had previously given unpaid help.
- The majority of respondents stopped being involved in voluntary work or activities because of changes to their life circumstances.
- People are most likely to opt in or out of volunteering according to how much time they have to give to it.

Table 11.11 shows that of those adults who said they had not given unpaid help to clubs or organisations in the last 12 months, 24 per cent said they had nonetheless given unpaid help to an organisation or group previously. This figure has remained fairly constant in recent years, ranging between 23 per cent and 25 per cent of respondents since 2009.

**Table 11.11: Giving unpaid help previously**

Column percentages, 2009 - 2016 data

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2014	2016
Yes	23	25	24	23	24	24
No	75	74	75	76	75	75
Don't know	1	1	1	1	1	1
All	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Base</i>	3,430	2,650	3,390	6,960	7,130	7,020

Table 11.12 shows that the majority of respondents stopped being involved in voluntary work or activities because of changes to their life circumstances, for example because they no longer had the time (34 per cent), they moved house (13 per cent), through illness (10 per cent), or had started paid employment (8 per cent). There was little indication that people stopped volunteering due to anything the organisation they had volunteered for had done, or had failed to do: for example, only one per cent said they had felt unappreciated and only one per cent felt things could have been better organised.

**Table 11.12: Reasons why adults stopped providing unpaid help**

Column percentages, 2016 data

Reasons for stopping unpaid help	Male	Female	All
I didn't have the time any longer	33	34	34
I moved house	14	12	13
Through illness	9	11	10
I started paid employment	9	8	8
My circumstances changed	7	8	8
I had children	5	9	7
I had achieved what I wanted to achieve	8	5	6
I had new caring responsibilities	2	5	4
I got bored or lost interest	3	2	3
I wanted a change	3	2	3
Things could have been better organised	1	2	1
I didn't feel appreciated	1	1	1
It was costing me money	1	0	1
Other reasons	5	3	4
<i>Base</i>	730	930	1,660

Correspondingly, when asked what might encourage them to undertake work or activities on a voluntary basis again in the future, the most common response (Table 11.13) was 'if it fitted in with my other commitments' (14 per cent). This suggests that people are most likely to opt in or out of volunteering according to how much time they have to give to it, and the fit with other commitments in their life at the time. However, six per cent of respondents said they might be encouraged to undertake unpaid work or activities again in the future 'if it fitted in with my interests and skills' or 'if someone asked me to do something' (four per cent), suggesting there may be potential to tailor more volunteering opportunities to the interests and skills individuals feel they have to offer or improve communication about the opportunities on offer.

**Table 11.13: Reasons why adults may undertake unpaid help in the future**

Column percentages, 2016 data

Reasons for undertaking unpaid work in future	Male	Female	All
If it fitted in with my other commitments	14	14	14
If it fitted in with my interests and skills	7	6	6
If someone asked me to do something	5	4	4
If I thought I could help others	3	3	3
If I could volunteer when I felt like it	2	2	2
If I knew more about the opportunities available	2	2	2
If it was good fun	3	1	2
If it would improve my career/job prospects	1	1	1
If it helped me gain qualifications	1	1	1
If it would improve my skills	1	1	1
If someone I knew volunteered with me	1	1	1
If I had more confidence	0	1	1
If I was sure I wouldn't be out of pocket	1	0	0
If I was certain that it wouldn't effect my benefits	1	0	0
If there were more people like me volunteering	0	1	0
No answer	56	56	56
Other	1	1	1
Don't know	10	11	10
<i>Base</i>	<i>3,310</i>	<i>3,720</i>	<i>7,020</i>

## Conclusion

This chapter has summarised Scottish Household Survey findings on volunteering. Both the levels of volunteering and the profile of volunteers have remained relatively stable over the last 5 years. Overall, the volunteering results from 2016 by economic situation, household income and area deprivation continue to support existing evidence about the under-representation of disadvantaged groups in volunteering. People are most likely to opt in or out of volunteering according to how much time they have to give to it. One suggestion is that the potential to increase volunteering is to make opportunities flexible and to fit skills.