

Institute for  
Volunteering  
Research

# research bulletin

National survey of volunteering and charitable giving

## Young people help out

Volunteering and giving among young people

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Office of the **Third Sector**

**This research bulletin is one of a series published by the Institute for Volunteering Research to explore and disseminate aspects of *Helping Out: a national survey of volunteering and charitable giving (2007)*.**

The Helping Out study carried out in 2006-07 provides a new evidence-base about people's volunteering and giving in England. This bulletin focuses on findings from young people. It discusses their manner, method, and experiences of engagement in formal volunteering and it looks at why some young people do not volunteer. Young people's levels of and motives for charitable giving are also discussed.

## The context

There are great expectations placed on the volunteering agenda with regard to young people. Issues such as increasing skills and employability, enhancing social cohesion, integrating young people who are on the margins and reducing crime and anti-social behaviour are all seen as possible outcomes when young people are successfully engaged in volunteering.

The Helping Out survey covered people up to and beyond 65-years-old. For the purposes of this bulletin young people are defined as those aged 16- to 24-years-old.

## How young people volunteer

The Helping Out survey found that 57 per cent of all young people surveyed had formally volunteered in some way over the previous year. Forty three per cent of young people were regular volunteers, helping out more than once a month, while 13 per cent were occasional volunteers, helping out less than once a month.

The extent of formal volunteering varies significantly with age and young people are neither the most nor the least likely to volunteer (Table 1).

**Table 1: Extent of formal volunteering, by age**

	16-24 (%)	25-34 (%)	35-44 (%)	45-54 (%)	55-64 (%)	65+ (%)	All (%)
All formal volunteers	57	57	64	58	64	53	59
Regular volunteers	43	34	36	38	42	41	39
Occasional volunteers	13	23	28	20	22	12	20
Non-volunteers	43	43	36	42	36	47	41
Base (unweighted)	123	259	456	406	427	484	2155

Base: All respondents answering volunteering questions. Don't know/refusal responses excluded.

The majority of young volunteers were to be found helping out in the voluntary and community sector (73 per cent), followed by the public sector (20 per cent), and the private sector (7 per cent). Young people were more likely to volunteer in the voluntary and community sector and less likely to volunteer in the public sector than other age groups, apart from volunteers over 65-years-old.

## What young volunteers do

Educational organisations were the most popular destination for young volunteers (43 per cent), followed by sports and exercise organisations (26 per cent) and religious organisations (25 per cent). Least popular destinations included organisations that help the elderly (2 per cent), safety or first aid organisations (2 per cent) and trade unions (0 per cent).

Raising or handling money proved the most popular type of volunteering activity among young volunteers (61 per cent), followed by organising or helping to run an event (54 per cent). The least popular types of volunteering activity included secretarial, administrative and clerical work (14 per cent), and transporting (6 per cent).

## How young people get into volunteering

Word of mouth was the primary route into volunteering for most young volunteers (73 per cent). Just over one-fifth (21 per cent) heard about an opportunity to volunteer through an organisation whose services they had previously used. Local and national organisations were the primary sources of information on volunteering that young people consulted (20 per cent and 18 per cent respectively).

Young people get involved in volunteering for a mix of altruistic and instrumental reasons (Table 2). The majority of young volunteers (56 per cent) said they started volunteering because they wanted to improve things and help people. However, young people were more likely than other age groups to say they got involved in volunteering to enhance their skills and employability. Over one-third of young people (35 per cent) got involved in volunteering because they wanted to meet people or make friends. Young people (along with people aged 65 and over) were more likely than other age groups to mention wanting to meet people as a motive for volunteering.

**Table 2: Reasons for involvement, by age**

	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	All current volunteers
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Improve things, help people	56	58	57	57	48	45	53
Important to me	39	34	44	42	47	41	41
Time to spare	33	36	38	35	44	56	41
Meet people, make friends	35	27	28	23	27	41	30
Needs, interests of family or friends	16	34	41	38	20	17	29
Need in the community	29	19	26	29	33	35	29
Use existing skills	36	21	25	30	26	29	27
Philosophy of life	10	16	22	26	24	32	23
Friends, family did it	24	27	19	19	16	21	21
Learn new skills	46	21	17	15	10	14	19
Religious belief	21	15	10	13	17	25	17
No-one else to do it	7	9	17	14	16	11	13
Help my career	27	9	8	2	1	1	7
Had received voluntary help	3	5	2	5	3	4	4
Get a recognised qualification	2	2	4	1	2	1	2
Already involved in the organisation	4	1	1	1	2	1	2
Interests, hobbies	4	3	2	2	*	2	2
Give something back	0	1	2	*	1	1	1
Other	5	3	2	6	4	2	3
<i>Base (unweighted)</i>	<i>64</i>	<i>161</i>	<i>316</i>	<i>257</i>	<i>286-287</i>	<i>267</i>	<i>1351-1352</i>

*Base: All current formal volunteers. Percentages sum to more than 100 as respondents could choose more than one reason. Don't know/refusal responses excluded.*

*\* represents percentages of less than 0.5%*

## Young people's volunteering experiences

Volunteers were asked about their experience of helping out in the main organisation they volunteered for to ascertain how they were, and wanted to be, involved and supported by organisations.

Young people gave a positive account of their volunteering experiences. Nearly all current, regular volunteers (98 per cent) said they could cope with the things they were asked to do. In addition, 97 per cent felt their efforts were appreciated by the organisation; 92 per cent said they were given opportunities to do the sorts of activities they enjoyed; 84 per cent felt

the organisation had reasonable expectations in terms of workload; and 73 per cent felt they were given the opportunity to influence the organisation. However, more than one-quarter (28 per cent) said things could be better organised and one-fifth (20 per cent) felt there was too much bureaucracy.

With regard to formal management processes associated with volunteering, young people were the most likely age group to be provided with a role description, asked for details of criminal convictions and undergo a Criminal Records Bureau check (Table 3). One-third of young people (33 per cent) had been given information by an organisation on how to reduce risks but, in contrast to other age groups, were the least likely to receive information on the organisation's insurance cover for these risks (15 per cent).

Turning to the importance of formal recognition for their volunteering, 65 per cent of all young, current volunteers who volunteered regularly with their main organisation felt it was either fairly or very important. Only 11 per cent felt it was not important at all to receive recognition for their volunteering. As with all age groups, the number of young people gaining qualifications through volunteering was low at 6 per cent. Nearly half (46 per cent) did not know that qualifications were available.

**Table 3: Volunteer recruitment practices, by age**

	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	All current volunteers
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Role description provided	33	13	16	23	15	20	19
References taken up	11	13	10	13	13	9	11
Asked for details of criminal convictions	28	18	21	18	14	12	18
Criminal Records Bureau check	25	19	22	22	16	10	18
<i>Base (unweighted)</i>	<i>62-64</i>	<i>160-161</i>	<i>314-316</i>	<i>256-257</i>	<i>284-286</i>	<i>265-267</i>	<i>1342-1350</i>

*Base: All current formal volunteers. Don't know/refusal responses excluded.*

## Getting more young people to volunteer

The main barrier to volunteering among young people who were not currently volunteering but interested in starting, was lack of spare time (93 per cent). Just over half (56 per cent) didn't know how to find out about getting involved, while worry about risk and liability prevented 51 per cent from volunteering.

## How young people give

The Helping Out survey also looked at charitable giving. It found that 74 per cent of young people who answered the charitable giving questions gave to charity. This is similar to other age groups. However, this age group gave the least in terms of the average amount donated - £16.93 in the four weeks prior to completing the survey, compared to an average for all age groups of £30.94.

In terms of causes supported, young people primarily gave to medical research (41 per cent of those who had donated in the previous year), and to overseas aid or disaster relief (35 per cent).

Young people were less aware than other age groups of tax-efficient giving. However, the two methods of tax-efficient giving that a larger proportion of young people did know about were Gift Aid and payroll giving (Table 4).

Young people primarily gave because they regarded the charity's work as important (41 per cent), or because they had been asked to donate by a charity representative (22 per cent). Nearly one in five (19 per cent) donated because it made them feel good.

**Table 4: Awareness of tax efficient methods, by age**

Proportion aware (prompted and unprompted):	16-24 %	25-34 %	35-44 %	45-54 %	55-64 %	65+ %	All %
Gift Aid	43	66	68	68	72	59	64
Payroll giving	25	37	40	53	51	32	40
Legacies	9	14	22	31	36	26	24
Tax relief on gifts of shares	4	8	11	16	20	21	14
Self Assessment Form	8	7	12	17	13	12	12
Tax relief on gifts of land/buildings	4	8	7	11	14	13	10
<i>Base (unweighted)</i>	<i>123</i>	<i>258</i>	<i>457</i>	<i>406</i>	<i>427</i>	<i>484</i>	<i>2155</i>

*Base: all respondents answering charitable giving questions. Don't know/refusal responses excluded.*

## Summing up

The Helping Out data paints a positive picture of young people's engagement in volunteering and giving: over half get involved in volunteering and three-quarters give to charity. A pathway of young people's engagement can be identified which suggests that:

- > Young people want to help out for both outward reasons (a desire to help people and improve things or to contribute to an important cause) and inward reasons (to learn new skills or to feel good).
- > Word of mouth is important. Opportunities for volunteering are found out about informally through word of mouth, while being asked to make a donation by a charity representative stimulates giving.
- > The voluntary and community sector is the primary context for young people's volunteering, which takes place within education, sports/exercise and religious organisations. Young people volunteer to raise/handle money and organise events.
- > Young volunteers appear contented with their volunteering tasks, feel appreciated and feel they have organisational influence. Recognition for their work is important to them.
- > In terms of their experience of formal volunteering, most young people are not given role descriptions for the tasks they do, CRB checked or asked about criminal convictions.

## Implications

A majority of young people engage in charitable giving and in formal volunteering, and many do so on a regular basis.

When thinking about how to sustain and increase volunteering among young people, organisations should consider the prospects for skills development they are offering and the altruistic aspects of the volunteering opportunities they make available. It is also important to recognise the work young people do. Most young people hear about opportunities through word of mouth, implying that if an organisation is managing young volunteers appropriately, they can be effective peer recruiters.

Most young people give to charity but their level of giving is low, as may be expected from this age group. However, their awareness of smart giving is also low. If organisations raised awareness of tax-efficient methods of giving among young people, there could be significant added value to young people's financial contribution.

## The Helping Out study

The Helping Out study was carried out by NatCen and the Institute for Volunteering Research, on behalf of the Office of the Third Sector within the Cabinet Office. It was designed as a follow-up study to the 2005 Citizenship Survey to represent the general (adult) population in England. Face-to-face interviews were carried out in October 2006-February 2007. In total, 2,156 respondents were interviewed for the main sample (a response rate of 62 per cent), and 549 for a separate minority ethnic boost sample (a response rate of 51 per cent).

This research bulletin presents additional findings on formal volunteering. The main findings can be found in Low, N., Butt, S., Ellis Paine, A. and Davis Smith, J. (2007) *Helping Out: a national survey of volunteering and charitable giving* London: The Cabinet Office.

Full copies of the study report are available online (pdf format) at:  
[http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third\\_sector/Research\\_and\\_statistics/third\\_sector\\_research.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/third_sector/Research_and_statistics/third_sector_research.aspx)

This bulletin was written by Mark Hutin, IVR  
May 2008



Regent's Wharf  
8 All Saints Street  
London N1 9RL  
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7520 8900  
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7520 8910  
E-mail: [ivr@volunteeringengland.org](mailto:ivr@volunteeringengland.org)  
[www.ivr.org.uk](http://www.ivr.org.uk)



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