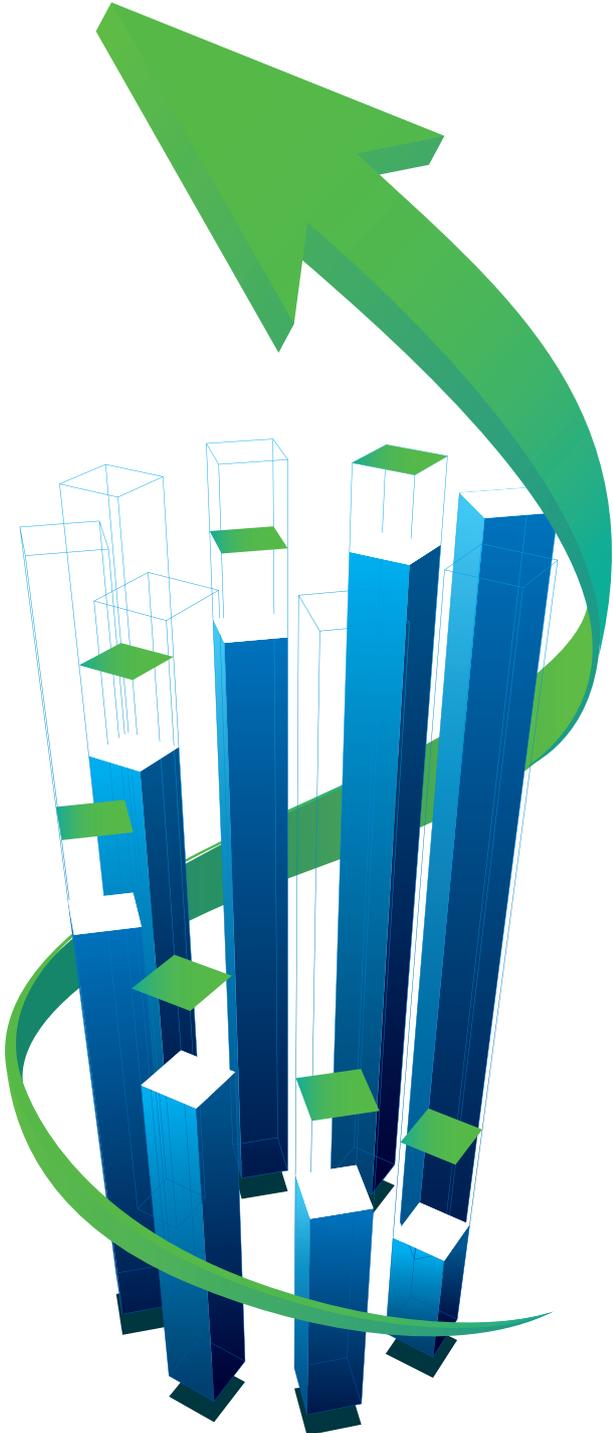


State of the Sector VI

# Volunteers



# 8. Volunteers

**This chapter examines aspects of volunteering in the voluntary and community sector. The data presented in this chapter are derived from a number of sources including the *State of the Sector VI* survey. Additional data are drawn from two reports published by Volunteer Now, 'Mapping volunteer Involving Organisations in Northern Ireland, 2010' and 'Mapping Volunteer Involving Organisations in Northern Ireland: Phase 2', 2011.**

From the *State of the Sector VI* survey 86% of respondents indicated that they currently involve volunteers in the running of their organisation<sup>49</sup> and the total number of volunteers reported was 45,106, with around 19% of volunteers playing a role in the governance of their organisation. Most volunteers are found in the category 'young people', accounting for just over 20% of total volunteers, followed by 'health and wellbeing' and 'sport/recreation', between them accounting for 23%. Over the next 12 months 46% of respondents indicated that they intend to increase the numbers of volunteers in their organisation; a third indicated no change to the current numbers and; only 23 organisations (2%) thought there would be a reduction in volunteer numbers in their organisation.

Two reports on volunteering produced by Volunteer Now<sup>50</sup> in 2010 and 2011 in total covered 189,362 volunteers with the

majority of volunteers found in the voluntary and community sector. The distribution of volunteers was dominated in both surveys by organisations with an income of over £1 million, which accounted for around 40% of volunteers, highlighting the greater capacity of larger organisations to accommodate volunteers. The impact of income on volunteering was, however, not uniform. When recruiting new volunteers most organisations have an informal chat with potential recruits and undertake AccessNI checks. Once recruited, over 80% of organisations ensure the new recruit benefits from an induction programme, a named individual to go to for support and a training programme to help them carry out their role.

In the 2011 report it was found that over 70% of respondents had some difficulties in recruiting enough volunteers in the previous 12 months - a trend particularly evident in a number of categories; sports clubs/groups, credit unions and church/faith based organisations. Almost three quarters of organisations reported having some difficulties in recruiting volunteers with the skills or experience required. This was again more evident in sports clubs/groups, credit unions and church/faith based organisations. Just over half of all respondent organisations (53%) reported volunteer retention difficulties with sports clubs/groups (58%). The voluntary and community sector (54%) reported most difficulty.

The six most popular volunteering opportunities reported were governance, fundraising, administration/office work, working with young people, event management and working with children.

49 There were 1,022 volunteering involving organisations in the survey.

50 *Mapping Volunteer Involving Organisations in Northern Ireland*, Volunteer Now, 2010 and *Mapping Volunteer Involving Organisations in Northern Ireland, Phase 2*, Volunteer Now, 2011.

**Table 8.1**     **Volunteers and governance**

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Volunteers: Male	15,575	18
Volunteers: Female	22,510	23
<b>Volunteers: Total</b>	45,106	44
Governance: Male	3,562	4
Governance: Female	4,762	5
<b>Governance: Total</b>	8,424	8

From the *State of the Sector VI* survey, 86% of respondents indicated that they currently involve volunteers in the running of their organisation<sup>51</sup> and the total number of volunteers reported was 45,106. In terms of a gender break down, the number of female volunteers reported<sup>52</sup> was 22,510 (59%) with an average of 23 female volunteers in each volunteer involving organisation. For male volunteering the total was 15,575, with an average per organisation of 18. Almost 19% of volunteers play a role in the governance of their organisation.

51 There were 1,022 volunteering involving organisations in the survey

52 The gender breakdown of volunteers was only available for 38,085 volunteers.

**Table 8.2 Numbers of volunteers by organisational income bands**

Income band	Mean	Number of volunteers	Number of organisations	% volunteers
Over £5 million	90	1,348	15	3
£1,000,001-£5 million	76	3,274	46	7
£500,001-£1 million	87	4,608	55	10
£250,001-£500,000	116	8,356	79	19
£100,001-£250,000	88	11,556	135	26
£50,001-£100,000	38	4,441	120	10
£10,001-£50,000	26	5,000	199	11
£5,001-£10,000	19	1,901	102	4
Up to £5,000	17	3,582	209	8
None	11	701	62	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>44,767</b>	<b>1,022</b>	<b>100</b>

The numbers of volunteers reported in the survey are dominated by the five income bands between £10,000-£50,000 and £500,000-£1 million, which represent over three quarters of all volunteers. Two income bands in particular dominate the distribution of volunteers. Although the £100,001-£250,000 band represents 13% of the total respondents, it accounts for 26% of total volunteers, whilst the £250,000-£500,000 income band represents 8% of organisations and 19% of volunteers.

**Table 8.3 Volunteers by organisation main sub category**

Sub sector	Mean	Total
Young people	141	9,442
Health and wellbeing	69	5,819
Sport/recreation	291	4,372
Education/training	58	3,912
Disability	53	3,695
Community development	19	3,020
Children and families	21	2,879
Arts/voluntary and community sector	24	1,637
Older people	22	1,510
'Other'	33	1,450
Advice services	31	1,337
Volunteer development	115	1,034
Community relations	27	1,012
Remaining sub-categories	-	3,907
<b>Total</b>		<b>45,026</b>

Respondent organisations were asked to identify the sub-categories which best described the work of the organisation and to rank the categories from one to five. By taking the first ranked sub-category for organisations it is possible to identify the breakdown of volunteering by the main sub-categories of organisational work. In terms of the number of volunteers, the category 'young people' is significant, accounting for just over 20% of total volunteers. The second and third ranked categories, 'health and wellbeing' and 'sport/recreation', between them account for 23%.

**Table 8.4 Numbers of volunteers involved in governance by organisational income bands.**

Income band	Mean	Number of volunteers	Number of organisations	% volunteers in governance
Over £5 million	5	108	12	1
£1,000,001-£5 million	5	349	36	4
£500,001-£1 million	5	496	53	6
£250,001-£500,000	4	632	68	8
£100,001-£250,000	5	1,146	115	14
£50,001-£100,000	5	1,105	117	14
£10,001-£50,000	4	1,562	182	19
£5,001-£10,000	4	782	84	10
Up to £5,000	4	1,558	191	19
None	4	380	46	5
<b>Total</b>		<b>8,118</b>	<b>768</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 8.4 very clearly demonstrates that typically in an organisation of any income band the number of volunteers involved in governance tends to be four or five. Typically the percentage of volunteers involved in governance tends to decrease as organisational income rises. In terms of volunteers involved in governance in the sub-sectors, the community development sub-sector provides 1,587 volunteers, followed by children and families (979), young people (590), health and wellbeing (597), older people (573) and arts (519).

**Table 8.5 Over the next 12 months does your organisation intend to increase/decrease the numbers of volunteers?**

	<b>Number of organisations</b>	<b>%</b>
Increase	534	46
No change	380	33
Decrease	23	2
Don't know	214	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,151</b>	<b>100</b>

The importance of volunteering in the voluntary and community sector is demonstrated by the fact that 46% of respondents reported that they intend to increase the number of volunteers in their organisation over the next 12 months, whilst a third of respondents intend maintaining volunteering at current levels. Just under a fifth of respondents were unsure about levels of volunteering in the next year.

## Mapping Volunteering Involving Organisations in Northern Ireland

Between 2010 and 2011, NICVA undertook two major surveys on volunteering on behalf of Volunteer Now<sup>53</sup>. The surveys built on a number of previous surveys into volunteering in Northern Ireland, the first of which was published in 1995 by the Volunteer Development Agency<sup>54</sup> and provided the first comprehensive picture of volunteering in Northern Ireland. The 2007 report, *It's All About Time*<sup>55</sup>, was also reported on in *State of the Sector V*.<sup>56</sup>

*Mapping Volunteer Involving Organisations in Northern Ireland* (2010) reported on 1,609 survey responses and addressed a number of key questions which included:

- What kinds of organisations involve volunteers?
- How many volunteers are involved?
- What procedures are in place when new volunteers are recruited?
- What policies and practices are in place when volunteers are involved in organisations?

<sup>53</sup> *Mapping Volunteer Involving Organisations in Northern Ireland*, Volunteer Now, 2010 and *Mapping Volunteer Involving Organisations in Northern Ireland*, Phase 2', Volunteer Now, 2011.

<sup>54</sup> The Volunteer Development Agency was replaced by Volunteer Now in April 2010.

<sup>55</sup> *It's All About Time*, Volunteer Now, 2007.

<sup>56</sup> *State of the Sector V*, NICVA, 2009.

- What levels of support are available to volunteers?
- What are the different roles carried out by volunteers?

## Volunteering

The total number of volunteers reported by organisations was 96,464 with the majority (76,424 or 79%) coming from the voluntary and community sector. This represented a slight over-representation of the sector as it accounted for 72% of organisations in the sample. Also over-represented were sports clubs/groups, which totalled 3% of organisations in the sample and accounted for 4,601 volunteers (5%). The church/faith based sector, which represented 12% of organisations, accounted for just over 8,000 volunteers (8%).

The distribution of volunteers was dominated by organisations with an income of over £1million (7%) which accounted for 40% of volunteers, highlighting the greater capacity of larger organisations to accommodate volunteers. However, the impact of income on volunteering was not uniform as the two bands from £250,001-£1million, with 120 organisations (9%), had 11,368 volunteers (12%).

The second largest population of volunteers was found in the £10,001- £100,000 income band, which accounted for 24% of volunteers. In comparison, organisations with an income of less than £1,000 accounted for just over 3% of volunteers. Groups with an income below £10,000 represented 44% of the sample, yet accounted for just fewer than 10% of the total number of volunteers.

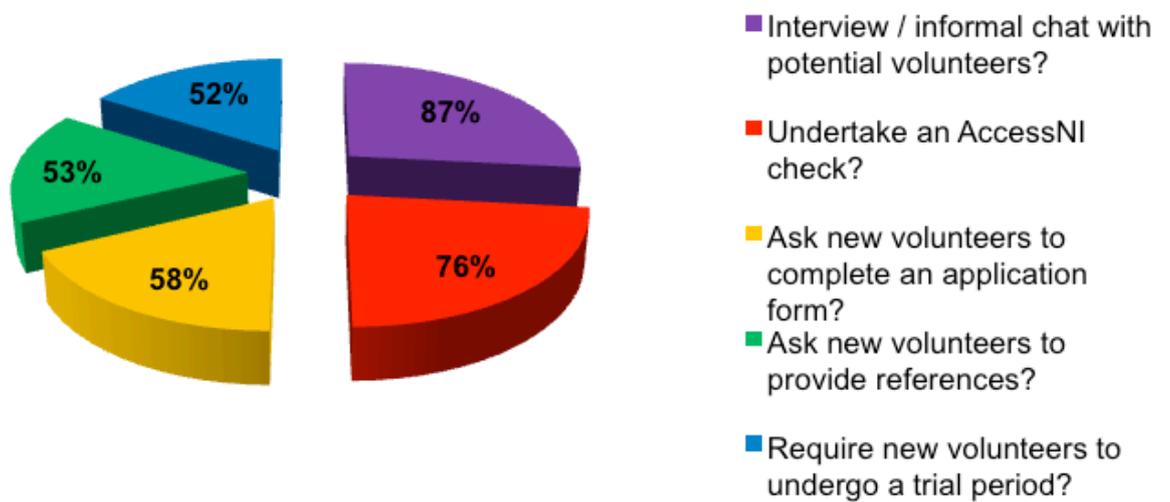
The report highlighted the challenge of enabling smaller income groups to attract greater number of volunteers

The report also highlighted the different types of volunteering opportunities on offer. Using the volunteering opportunities as categorised on the Volunteer Now website<sup>57</sup> respondents were asked to identify the range of volunteering opportunities on offer. The five most popular types of opportunities offered by organisations included administration/office work (55%), committee/trust member (44%), working with children (37%), fundraising/flag days (36%), working with young people (36%) and advice/information (31%).

57 <http://www.volunteernow.co.uk>

## Formal application and monitoring processes

**Figure 8.1** When recruiting new volunteers does your organisation do any of the following?



A comparison with *It's All About Time* on the five main aspects of the formal application and monitoring process indicated that for each of the procedures covered in Table 8.4, there had been an increase in coverage between 2007 and 2010. There was a significant increase in undertaking Police record checks on potential volunteers, up 17% on the 2007 figure to 76%.

**Table 8.4 Volunteer management**

Once recruited, do new volunteers receive any of the following?	2010 (%)	<i>It's All About Time</i> , 2007(%)
An induction with regard to the organisation	87	84
A named person to go to for support	86	81
Training to carry out their role	80	76
Copy of/information about child protection policy	79	72
Support and/or supervision meetings	73	69
Copy of/information about health and safety regulations	72	69
Copy of/information on equal opportunities policy	60	61
Copy of/information about insurance cover	53	57
A written role description	48	53
A written volunteer agreement	35	39

Ten elements of volunteer management were identified in *It's All About Time* and replicated in the survey. The rank order of employing the various elements remained constant over the two periods with an induction remaining the most popular practice in organisations (87%) followed by 'a named person to go to for support' (86%) and training for volunteers to carry out their role (80%). A written volunteer agreement (35%) and a written role description (48%) were the least popular approaches to volunteer management, particularly in the lower income groups, despite being regarded as indicators of good practice in organisations. The research highlighted the need to engage with the range of organisations across the various sectors to ensure that there is sufficient capacity to develop fully the range of volunteer management procedures.

Each of the top six ranked practices has become more prevalent over time, which suggests a positive response across the various sectors to the need to embrace good practice. The four lowest ranked approaches (covering information of the equal opportunities policy, information about insurance cover, a written role description and a written volunteer agreement) have however decreased in coverage. The decline in providing information on equal opportunities provides a particular challenge vis-à-vis ensuring diversity in volunteering and demonstrating a community relations impact.

A breakdown of the sample by the nature of the organisations indicated that in general the different elements of volunteer management are more in evidence in the voluntary and community sector than in the overall group. In general, the church/faith based sector and the sports clubs/groups sector tended to score lower across a range of best practice indicators. Although this may be a result of the relatively small sample size for some sectors, the report suggested that these sectors merited further study. The statutory sector generally scored above the sample average, suggesting that the sector has well developed procedures and may be well placed to increase the levels of volunteering opportunities it currently offers.

## Mapping Volunteering Involving Organisations in Northern Ireland – Phase 2

In 2011 NICVA produced a second major volunteering report on behalf of Volunteer Now which built on the previous body of work. 1,218 organisations<sup>58</sup> across Northern Ireland responded to the survey, either by post or online, and additional data from 301 church/faith based groups were also added to the research and included in the church/faith groups report. Whilst addressing the key questions identified in the previous mapping report, this research went further with an additional body of questions aimed at addressing recruitment and retention issues relating to volunteers.

<sup>58</sup> The research covered those organisations which did not take part in the first mapping exercise, ensuring that the Phase 2 report did not cover any respondent organisations from Phase 1.

## Volunteering

The total number of volunteers reported by organisations is 92,898 with the majority, 52,925 (59%) coming from the voluntary and community sector. This represents a slight under-representation of the sector as it accounted for 61% of organisations in the sample. Three categories are over-represented in terms of volunteers: the church/faith based sector; the statutory sector, and the catch all 'other' category.

The distribution of volunteers was again dominated by 9% of organisations with an income of over £1million, which accounted for 37% of volunteers, highlighting the greater capacity of larger organisations to accommodate volunteers - a trend reported in the previous report. The two income bands from £250,001 to £1million were also over-represented, with 184 organisations (16%) accounting for 24,972 volunteers, 28% of the total.

The second largest population of volunteers is to be found in the £10,001-£100,000 income band, accounting for over a quarter of organisations but only 17% of volunteers. Groups with an income below £10,000 represent 34% of the sample, yet account for just 8% of the total number of volunteers. This research again highlighted the challenge with regard to enabling smaller income groups to attract greater numbers of volunteers.

The research again highlighted the different types of volunteering opportunities available. Using the same approach as the Phase 1 report, the most popular types of volunteering opportunities reported by

organisations were governance (59%), fundraising (58%), administration/office work (56%), working with young people (41%) and event management (40%).

## Formal application and monitoring processes

**Table 8.5** When recruiting new volunteers does your organisation do any of the following?

	2011 %	2010 %
Ask new volunteers to complete an application form?	55	58
Interview/informal chat with potential volunteers?	87	87
Ask new volunteers to provide references?	48	53
Undertake an AccessNI check?	66	76
Require new volunteers to undergo a trial period?	48	52

A comparison between Phase 1 and Phase 2 on the five main aspects of the formal application and monitoring process indicated that for each of the procedures there has been a decrease in coverage since Phase 1, with a marked decrease by 10%<sup>59</sup> in the use of Police record checks. Two hundred and eighty-four organisations, over three quarters of which are in the voluntary and community sector, employed all five application and monitoring procedures. Generally, as was reported in Phase 1, the evidence suggested that the likelihood of each of the procedures being employed by organisations increased with organisation income levels.

<sup>59</sup> It should be noted, however, that trends and variability in results may well be due to variations in the research approach over the period and to variation in populations of interest for the research.

## Volunteer management

**Table 8.6 Volunteer management**

Once recruited, do new volunteers receive any of the following?	Yes (%)	Yes Phase 1 (%)
An induction with regard to the organisation	82	87
A named person to go to for support	85	86
Training to carry out their role	76	80
Copy of/information about child protection policy	71	79
Support and/or supervision meetings	70	73
Copy of/information about health and safety regulations	67	72
Copy of/information on equal opportunities policy	56	60
Copy of/information about insurance cover	50	53
A written role description	47	48
A written volunteer agreement	37	35

Ten elements of volunteer management were again addressed in Phase 2. The rank order of employing the various elements remained relatively constant over the two periods, however, 'a named person to go to for support' (85%) moved from second to first in the ranking, followed by 'an induction with regard to the organisation' (82%). Ranked third again was 'training for volunteers to carry out their role' (76%). A written volunteer agreement (37%) and a written role description (47%) were again the least popular approaches to volunteer management, particularly in the lowest income groups. All the listed practices were less evident over time with the exception of a written volunteer agreement.

## Recruitment and retention of volunteers

A key theme developed in the Phase 2 report was the difficulty organisations faced in both the recruitment of volunteers generally and in the recruitment of volunteers specifically with the required skills and experience. Additionally, organisations reported difficulties in the retention of volunteers. Over 70% of respondent organisations had some difficulties in recruiting enough volunteers in the previous 12 months - a trend particularly evident in a number of categories; sports clubs/groups (81%), credit unions (79%) and church/faith based organisations (75%).

---

Almost three quarters of organisations (75%) reported having some difficulties in recruiting volunteers with the skills/experience required. This was again more evident in sports clubs/groups (83%), credit unions (79%) and church/faith based organisations (75%).

Just under half of all respondent organisations (49%) reported some difficulties in providing sufficient induction and/or training to volunteers. This issue was most evident in sports clubs/groups (56%) and in social enterprises (53%).

Just over half of all respondent organisations (53%) reported volunteer retention difficulties with sports clubs/groups (58%) and the voluntary and community sector (54%) reporting most difficulty. Overall, sports clubs/groups appeared to be facing the most challenges in terms of recruiting volunteers, recruiting volunteers with the skills and experience required, providing induction and training for volunteers and in the retention of volunteers.

The research also set out to review the different types of volunteering opportunities available in organisations. Five of the six most popular volunteering opportunities reported in Phase 1 are again in the top six. The six most popular types of volunteering opportunities were governance (59%), fundraising (58%), administration/office work (56%), working with young people (41%), event management (40%) and working with children (37%). The Phase 2 report again identified the greater capacity of some larger organisations to involve volunteers although the impact of income on volunteering remains inconsistent with what one might

expect.<sup>60</sup> The clear challenge, the report suggested, was to focus efforts on building capacity in the smaller income groups to enable them to both attract and support, greater numbers of volunteers.

---

<sup>60</sup> It might be expected that with increasing organisational income there would be an increase in the capacity of organisations to involve volunteers, however, this does not hold across all the income bands.

*State of the Sector VI* is the latest edition in the *State of the Sector* research programme. The previous *State of the Sector* reports have developed the only comprehensive picture of the scale and scope of the economic activities of the Northern Ireland voluntary and community sector. The publication of each *State of the Sector* report represents another step in the evolution of this type of statistical analysis and as such adds to the already broad and in depth knowledge of the sector, by examining many of the key issues currently affecting and shaping it.

*State of the Sector VI* provides high level statistics on the various types of resources available to the sector and the relationship between voluntary and community organisations, government, funders and the general public. *State of the Sector VI* is invaluable to all those who need an up-to-date and reliable source of statistics and commentary on the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland. People working in the sector – academics, decision-makers, social science students and journalists – will all find this publication useful.

Published April 2012 by:  
Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action

Tel: (028) 9087 7777

Fax: (028) 9087 7799

Minicom: (028) 9087 7776

International code: +44

[info@nicva.org](mailto:info@nicva.org)

[www.nicva.org](http://www.nicva.org)

[www.communityni.org](http://www.communityni.org)

ISBN 978-0-903087-57-5

Charity registered with Inland Revenue No XN 47024

Company limited by guarantee (No1792)