



The gift of time

The impact of volunteering and the
role it plays in the wider world

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We would also like to thank all the volunteers who gave up their time to fill out our volunteer experience survey. Without your support, we could not have produced this report.

Thanks also to Lorna Cordwell, Head of Counselling at Chrysalis Courses, who gave us a detailed analysis on the benefits of volunteering.

The definition of volunteering

Someone who gives their time for free to support a charity or community project at least two or three times a year.



Foreword

Linda Fenn, Head of Volunteering, BHF



From the heroes who work the shop floor to the cheerleaders who wear our logo with a smile at fundraisers, in my ten years at the BHF I have seen first-hand the extraordinary selflessness of volunteers.

I have met volunteers from all walks of life who together help us raise funds and beat heartbreak every single day. I meet the most incredible people who are making an invaluable difference to our work. People like Dorothy and Alan who have been married for 44 years, whose lives took a drastic turn when their 37-year-old son suffered a cardiac arrest in his sleep and sadly passed away, leaving behind his wife and nine-year-old daughter.

In the midst of unimaginable grief, Dorothy and Alan became BHF volunteers, working within their community to raise funds and ensure our crucial research into heart and circulatory diseases continues. In just three years, Dorothy and Alan have raised tens of thousands of pounds from events they've organised in memory of their son, bringing together their local community and showing solidarity for our cause. But more importantly, volunteering has helped them find inner strength to turn their grief into something positive and give them a new sense of purpose.

The change that Dorothy and Alan experienced as a result of volunteering is something experienced by other BHF volunteers; helping many of them to feel part of a community, make lifelong friends or

meet new people. It can also provide others, like 18-year-old Mohamad, a way out of unemployment by giving them new skills and confidence.

Originally from Syria, Mohamad and his mother made a new start in Scotland after fleeing their war torn country over 18 months ago. Determined to progress in the UK, Mohamad started volunteering for his local BHF home store in the hope that he would learn English so that one day he can pursue his dream of becoming a doctor. Since his arrival, not only has Mohamad been able to improve his language skills, but also secure part time paid work in our store which has helped develop his confidence greatly. Each year we support thousands of teenagers work experience, from college students to those looking for a job who are keen to build up their CVs.

Despite the heart-warming examples above, we know that volunteering has an image problem. There is a common misconception that volunteering is for 'lonely' older people or those with time on their hands. However, our research reveals that volunteering helps many younger people overcome loneliness and isolation, meet new people and develop valuable skills. In fact, our survey suggests

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that younger people are more motivated and committed to volunteer with charities than any other age group.

This report also reveals that people who could benefit most from giving up their time are those least likely to be involved. There are a number of reasons why people choose not to volunteer - from poor health, caring responsibilities and studying, to work and family commitments. However, we hope this report can help make volunteering appeal to the interests of different groups and show that volunteering at the BHF is flexible, with a variety of roles on offer.

The free time that volunteers give is vital, but their impact goes beyond money. This report, with the help of our recent survey findings, also looks at the vast personal benefits of volunteering - from battling loneliness and learning new skills to improving mental and physical health and the psychological impact of making a positive difference.

From funding life-saving research to operating 738 charity shops nationwide, we couldn't achieve the things we do without generous-spirited people kindly donating their time. Whether it's informing people about our work or organising events and raising funds on our behalf, every one of our volunteers bring us a step closer to our goal of beating heartbreak forever.

Without the skills, commitment, passion and energy that our volunteers give, the BHF would not be where it is today. This is why we want to highlight the contribution that volunteers make to our society, the positive impact volunteering has for individuals, and inspire people of all ages to get involved in the future. Everyone has the skills to make a difference and the BHF welcomes people from different backgrounds and experiences to help us make a valuable contribution to those living with heart and circulatory diseases.



Linda Fenn, Head of Volunteering, BHF

Key findings

The public's current experience of volunteering



The scope of volunteering

With the NCVO estimating that 91% of charities are reliant on volunteers, the contribution of volunteers to charitable work across the UK is undeniable. The huge scale of volunteering makes it possible for many charities to operate as they do and offers a vast array of personal benefits to those who donate their time.

- More than half (55%) of respondents have volunteered at some point in their lives and just under one in five (19%) currently do so on a regular basis.
- The 16-24 age group are the most likely to have volunteered, with 46% having done so in the past and 24% currently involved.
- 53% of respondents would be interested in volunteering in the future.

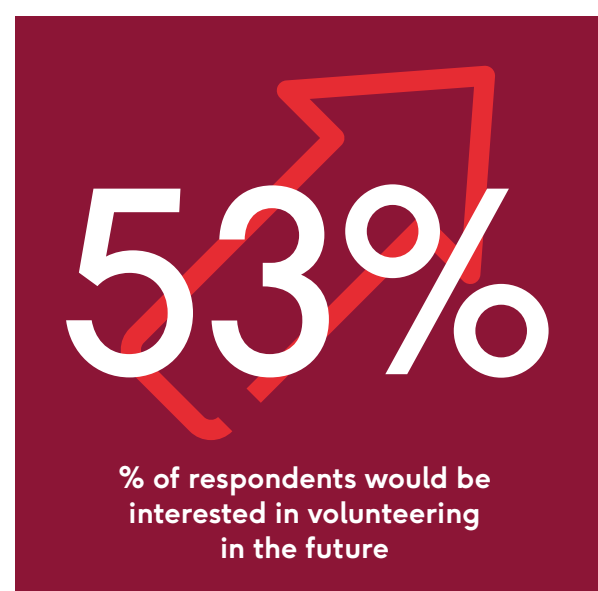
One of the clear messages from our survey was the valuable role volunteering plays in many people's lives. The survey found that over half of UK adults (55%) have volunteered at some point in their lives, yet just under one in five (19%) currently do so on a regular basis.

It was also striking that, contrary to popular belief, the 16-24 age group are the most likely to have volunteered. Nearly half (46%) say they have volunteered in the past and 24% say they're currently volunteering.

On the other hand, those aged over 55 (33%) are more likely to have not volunteered and rule out volunteering in the future. This

is compared to just one in eight respondents aged 25-34 (13%) who say they would never consider volunteering. This challenges the notion that volunteering is for older people.

The survey findings also reveal that 53% of respondents would be interested in volunteering in the future. This indicates that charities and community organisations could tap in to a huge pool of people who are open to helping voluntary organisations, which could have an enormous impact in terms of raising funds for vital work and helping people in need across the country.



Motivations

Giving back and making a difference

- Two in five (42%) volunteers choose to get involved to give something back to the community and 41% volunteer to make a difference.
- Three in five (58%) of those over 55 volunteer to give back to the community, compared to just 31% of 16-24 year olds.
- Half (49%) of over 55s volunteer to make a difference, compared to a third (34%) of 16-24s.
- 49% of women choose giving back to the community as a reason to volunteer, compared to 34% of men.

According to the survey results, the most popular reasons for volunteering among UK adults who volunteer are to give something back to the community (42%) and to make a difference (41%).

However, this differs significantly by age, with 58% of volunteers over 55 wanting to give back to the community, compared to just 31% of 16-24 year olds who volunteer. Half (49%) of volunteers over 55 also chose making a difference as a key reason for getting involved, in stark contrast to 34% of 16-24-year olds who volunteer.

Testimonies from people in this older age group who volunteer at the BHF, say that 30% volunteer because they have a personal link to the cause.

Interestingly, the results also revealed women are much more likely to be motivated by giving something back to the community, with 49% of female volunteers choosing it as a reason compared to 34% of male volunteers. Women were also shown to be 41% more likely to say they volunteer or have chosen to volunteer in the past because they wanted to make a difference (34% of men vs 48% of women). This suggests that women are more likely to get involved due to altruistic motives, whilst 46% more men volunteer to improve their health and wellbeing (13% of women vs 19% of men).

Our survey findings indicate that many younger people view volunteering as a stepping stone for future career prospects as it provide them with the opportunity to gain work experience that can enhance their CV. With the youth unemployment rate having risen to 11.6% in April-June 2019, compared to 10.8% in the previous quarter, it could be that many young people are now using volunteering as a pathway to employment (Youth Unemployment Statistics from the Commons Library, 2019).

Motivations

Learning and experience

- A third (31%) of volunteers donate their time to gain new skills and experience and a quarter (25%) do so to learn new things.
- Two in five respondents aged 16-24 (40%) say they volunteer to gain new skills and experience, compared to less than one in five of those aged over 55 (18%).
- A third (32%) of 16-24 year olds volunteer to learn new things, compared to just 15% of those aged over 55
- 23% of those in Greater London say they volunteer to create a pathway to employment, compared to just 5% in the South West

Our national survey also revealed that many UK volunteers donate their time to gain new skills and develop their experience (31%), and to learn new things (25%). However, two in five respondents aged 16-24 (40%) say they volunteer to gain new skills and experience, compared to less than one in five of those aged over 55 (18%). Young volunteers are also more likely to give up their time to learn new things, with 32% of 16-24 year olds selecting it as a motivating factor compared to just 15% of those aged over 55. This perhaps bucks stereotypes of younger generations being less community spirited.

Moreover, 23% of those in Greater London say their motivation comes from wanting to create a pathway to employment, compared to just 5% in the South West. This is potentially due to

a higher proportion of young people living in Greater London who are thinking about career prospects. In an increasingly competitive employment market, volunteering can be a valuable route to acquiring practical skills and experience that prepare young people for the working world.

What does this tell us?

The survey results reveal an interesting split between age groups, demonstrating a greater likelihood for older people to consider volunteering for altruistic motives while younger people are more likely to think about what they can learn from it and how this could help them gain experience. This reinforces the importance of tailoring volunteering opportunities to different age groups and highlighting the broad spectrum of benefits available to those who donate their time.



2 in 5 volunteers aged 16-24 (40%) say they volunteer to gain new skills and experience, compared to less than 1 in 5 of those aged over 55 (15%)

Benefits of volunteering

Regardless of age and gender, the testimonies that came from people's experience and the evidence from research all suggests that volunteering is hugely beneficial for an individual's health and wellbeing.

- Nearly a third (29%) of UK volunteers choose to get involved to meet new people.
- Four in five (80%) BHF volunteers agree that volunteering has helped them meet new people.
- Over half (52%) of respondents say volunteering has helped them overcome loneliness, with 64% of 25-34s agreeing.
- Three in five (60%) volunteers living in Greater London say it has helped them overcome loneliness.
- Two thirds (66%) of volunteers say they regularly socialise with new people, friends and family compared to just 43% of non-volunteers.

Making new friends and meeting new people

One of the key benefits of volunteering that came through in our research is the reward of meeting new people and making lifelong friends. A third of UK volunteers choose to give their time in order to meet new people (29%). This didn't differ greatly between ages or regions, suggesting that our desire to meet new people and make connections is universal.

Interestingly our internal survey of BHF volunteers showed that 56% of BHF volunteers chose it as

a key motivation, significantly higher than the national average. This suggests that the BHF's volunteering opportunities are well suited to those looking to make friends and socialise with others. The BHF survey also found that four in five respondents (80%) agree that volunteering has helped them meet new people, showing that volunteering is a great way to meet people from all walks of life, as well as connecting people with a similar interest in giving something back to their local community.



Interestingly, over half of volunteers (52%) said volunteering has helped them overcome loneliness, with the largest proportion of people agreeing to this in the 25-34 age bracket (64%). Last year, a report by the NCVO also found

Benefits of volunteering

that 18-24 year olds (77%) and 25-34 year olds (76%) are most likely to agree that volunteering has helped them feel less isolated (NCVO report page 10).

Our survey results revealed that Londoners had benefited most from volunteering, with three in five living in Greater London (60%) saying that it had helped them feel less alone. This demonstrates that younger people and those living in London are most likely to take up volunteering in a bid to combat loneliness, going against the perhaps somewhat stereotypical idea that older people living in rural areas would be most in need of meeting new people. In fact, recent research by YouGov shows that young people are most likely to feel lonely, as are people living in urban areas (YouGov 2019 Let's Talk Loneliness Campaign). This could be linked to a lack of community in larger cities with many young people unable to make connections with new groups of people.

Our findings also show that volunteering can have a positive impact on people's social life, with two thirds of volunteers saying they regularly socialise with new people, friends and family (66%), compared to just 43% of non-volunteers. With two in five UK adults wanting to improve their social life, volunteering is a great option for anyone wanting to meet new



people in their area and overcome loneliness. It can also create a supportive network within your neighbourhood, making it a safer and more familiar place to live. For example, there is a clear link between volunteering and forming close ties with the local community, as 81% of people choose to volunteer in their own neighbourhood (NCVO page 27). Moreover, 28% of recent volunteers say they decided to volunteer because of a need in their community (NCVO page 35).

These results reinforce the fact that volunteering is beneficial for people of all ages, providing opportunities to meet new people and overcome loneliness and social isolation.

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Volunteering might be seen as something you do at the end of your life or when you retire. But for me, volunteering as a community speaker at the BHF has helped start my life. I have had access to training, built my confidence in ways I never imagined and met new, lifelong friends.

Kira Blake, 25, BHF Community Volunteer

Benefits of volunteering

Mental and physical health

- Nearly seven in ten volunteers we surveyed (68%) agreed that it had improved their mental health, with just under a third strongly agreeing (30%).
- Four in five (83%) BHF volunteers agreed that volunteering had contributed to their overall happiness.
- BHF volunteers who gave the most time each month to supporting the charity were the most likely to strongly agree that volunteering had contributed to their overall happiness (49%).
- Two in five (58%) said volunteering has improved their physical health.
- More than half (54%) of UK adults want to improve their health.

One of the most striking elements of our research was the strong link between volunteering and its benefits for health and wellbeing. Nearly seven in ten volunteers we surveyed (68%) agreed that it had improved their mental health, with just under a third strongly agreeing (30%).

According to the BHF's internal survey, a staggering 83% of BHF volunteers agreed that volunteering had contributed to their overall happiness. Interestingly, BHF volunteers who gave the most time each month to supporting the charity were the most likely to strongly agree that volunteering had contributed to their overall happiness (49%), suggesting the more time spent volunteering for the BHF, the happier it made them. Previous research has

also shown that volunteering helps people to counteract the effects of stress, anger and anxiety (Help Guide, 2019). Volunteering not only helps people overcome loneliness, which is recognised as having a serious impact on our health, but also gives people a sense of purpose and can build self-esteem.

This is clearly an important finding, especially with the growing awareness of the importance of good mental health. Research by NHS Digital has shown that the number of cases of severe mental illness has steadily increased since 1993 and the Mental Health Taskforce has said that three-quarters of problems are established by the age of 24 (BBC News 2018). While following medical advice when dealing with mental health is paramount, helping other people is found to have positive effects on mental wellbeing, suggesting volunteering can be a positive factor.

Volunteering can also benefit peoples' physical health, with almost three in five respondents (58%) who have volunteered saying that it has been beneficial. This is also reflected in our internal survey which shows 23% of BHF volunteers found their health had improved to a great extent. This could be a result of people being encouraged to stay active and get out of the house while in their volunteering role. From a BHF perspective volunteers are likely to have learnt about the importance of leading a heart-healthy lifestyle due to the nature of the organisation. Considering that our survey shows half of UK adults (54%) want to improve their health, these findings reveal how helping others can also have huge personal benefits.

“Volunteering helps me manage my depression.”

Brenda, 70, Community Fundraiser

Brenda, 70, has been volunteering for the BHF for over 20 years as a community fundraiser. Her role involves organising events and speaking to the public on behalf of the charity to help raise funds and awareness for life saving research into heart and circulatory diseases.

Brenda has always suffered from mild depression, but her mental health took a turn when her husband, Melvyn died from a cardiac arrest in 2016. Brenda says volunteering helped her combat the depression that overtook her since Melvyn passed away and gave her the motivation and purpose she needed to channel her grief and move forward.

"I was driving my husband to the hospital on the day he died. We were moments away from getting seen by a cardiologist, but he just slumped forward in the car and I knew he was going into a cardiac arrest, so we went straight to A&E. My youngest son started CPR and minutes later, the ambulance arrived but it was just too late. He was gone.

"My depression has worsened since then and it can be a real effort to keep motivated. I sold the house we lived in as it felt very lonely without him there, especially at night. I've

always enjoyed volunteering at the BHF and decided that I was going to channel my energy and grief into doing something positive by continuing to raise awareness of the awful heart and circulatory diseases that are devastating families and lives like mine."

Now, Brenda encourages others to volunteer: "Volunteering has given me a purpose, particularly during a difficult time in my life, after losing my husband who had been in my life for 48 years. It makes things that little bit easier to deal with. It helps me stay connected with my community, I've made new friends and I really do feel a sense of achievement when I raise money that's going towards research to save people's lives. I've been volunteering for 28 years and plan to carry on for many more years supporting the BHF."



Benefits of volunteering

Personal growth and development

- Seven in ten (70%) 25-34 year olds agree that volunteering has helped improve their employability and nearly three quarters (72%) of respondents say that it has allowed them to learn new skills.
- Four out of five past or present volunteers (80%) found that they were able to utilise their skills.
- Three in five (60%) volunteers feel confident when applying for a job compared to 43% of non-volunteers.

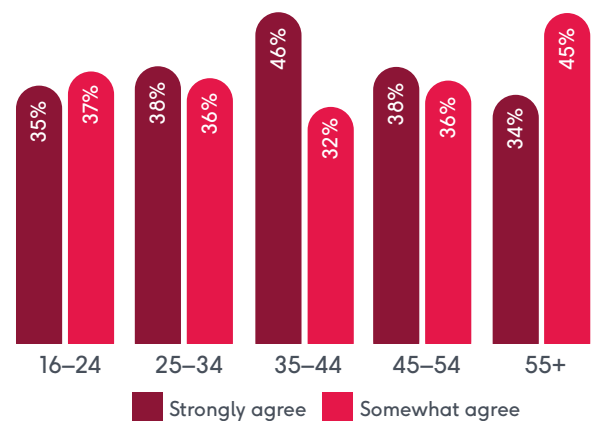
There is a vast range of volunteering tasks across the charity sector that give people the chance to develop transferable skills, such as admin work, IT, marketing and fundraising. This can give valuable experience to people who may be searching for a job. In fact, our research reveals that 70% of 25-34 year old volunteers say volunteering has helped to improve their employability and nearly three quarters (72%) of respondents say that it has allowed them to learn new skills.

The findings also show that four out of five past or present volunteers (80%) found that they were able to utilise their skills. We also found that volunteers are more likely to feel confident when applying for a job, with three in five (60%) agreeing compared to 43% of non-volunteers. With our survey showing that nearly three in ten UK adults would like to improve their career, the findings reveal volunteering can be a great pathway to employment.

Many volunteering opportunities also offer access to training and qualifications, which can bolster your CV. At the BHF, volunteers can apply for training opportunities such as its apprenticeship scheme. Some may also be eligible for a funded National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in retail as a result of a partnership with Derby College, as well as Learning Curve training available in Scotland. Three quarters (78%) of those volunteers who receive training feel they benefit from new knowledge and skills (NCVO, 2019: 49). The BHF has also started to roll out Dementia Friends training across its 738 shops nationwide, so that volunteers are equipped with better understanding when customers with dementia visit its shops.

In some instances, volunteering can also lead to paid work within the organisation people have been volunteering. For example, a third of the BHF's retail staff were originally volunteers who have been able to capitalise on the skills they've developed while volunteering to secure a job.

Volunteering allowed me to learn new skills



Benefits of volunteering

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It helped me get my confidence back after everything I'd been through.

Cathie, 55, BHF Shop Volunteer

Former volunteer Cathie, now 55, undertook her first National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in Retail Skills and Employment when she joined the BHF as a shop volunteer. She has since gone on to complete a myriad of different courses from Customer Service to Team Leadership.

With only one course left to complete, Cathie is an advocate of the NVQs: “It’s straight-forward and easy to do and getting the qualification and certificate when you finish makes you feel so good!”

Whilst Cathie was studying for one of her courses, she devastatingly lost her husband just two days before an exam. Determined to see it through, Cathie refused to give up and insisted on taking the exam as planned.

In her seven years at the BHF, Cathie has progressed from volunteer to Assistant Manager, and is now putting all of the knowledge she has developed into practice.

Cathie had previously battled with alcoholism, but through a local support network, she managed to overcome her addiction and was signposted to the newly opened BHF shop in Exeter in 2012. She hasn’t looked back since, climbing the ladder and turning her life around.

“It helped me get my confidence back after everything I’d been through, which then gave me the courage to go for an NVQ. My courses taught me to look at things differently and gave me the chance to improve my skill set.”



Benefits of volunteering

Feeling good about making a meaningful difference

- Three quarters (74%) of volunteers say they have made a positive difference to society in the past three months, compared to just three in ten non-volunteers (30%).
- Volunteers are 25% more likely to say they feel fulfilled with the activities they do in their life compared to non-volunteers.
- Four in five (82%) BHF volunteers feel like their work has had an impact.

Our research suggests that volunteers who see the results of their volunteering and tangible signs that they are making a difference have an increased sense of wellbeing. This shows that knowing the impact of charitable actions can build confidence and help volunteers feel valued.

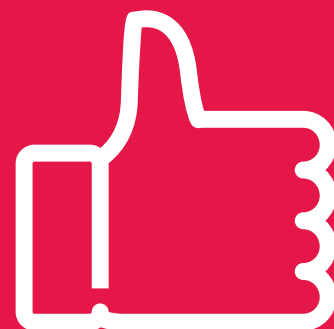
In fact, our survey shows that 74% of volunteers say they have made a positive difference to society in the past three months, compared to just three in ten non-volunteers (30%). We also found that 50% more volunteers say they feel fulfilled with the activities they do in their life compared to people who don't volunteer (50% vs 75%). This is likely to be linked to the 'feel good' factor of making a positive difference and a general awareness of the impact of volunteering.

Our internal survey backs up the national picture, with 82% of volunteers at the BHF agreeing that their volunteering has had an impact, and a similar proportion (83%) agreeing that volunteering has contributed to their overall happiness.

“

What I didn't expect when I signed up as a volunteer is how much it would help with my recovery after suffering from a cardiac arrest. It gave me a purpose and it makes me feel good to know that by sharing my story, I could be helping to save someone's dad, brother, son. I am encouraging people to get CPR trained and have the confidence and skills to take action if they see someone suffering from a cardiac arrest, the same way CPR saved my life.

Neil Caitens, 45, Cheshire Police Detective and BHF Community Volunteer



Volunteers are 50% more likely to say they feel fulfilled with the activities they do in their life compared to people who don't volunteer

Benefits of volunteering

Psychologist Lorna Cordwell, Head of Counselling at Chrysalis Courses, said:

Volunteering brings some very clear ways to help us increase our happiness. As a starting point, volunteering allows us to make new friends, meet people, have a routine, and have more physical exercise.

Volunteering for charities or community organisations can fulfil people's lives in many ways. We know there are links between anxiety, depression and isolation and lack of routine and social contact. The benefits of having regular involvement in projects or charity work will be a reduction in the experience of anxiety and depression. Anxiety for example, feeds on avoidance, and if people are nervous of going out and using public transport, then regular volunteering will motivate them to make those short journeys. Depression feeds on isolation, lack of social contact and support and in particular, losing meaning to our lives. Volunteering can help us to overcome all of this.

“Having meaning and purpose in our lives and being able to live by our values is incredibly important. Being able to be involved in work that benefits the community or benefits a charity important to us can be so much more than having routine. We genuinely feel valued by others, we know we are contributing to society and we value this contribution and our skills.

www.chrysaliscourses.ac.uk

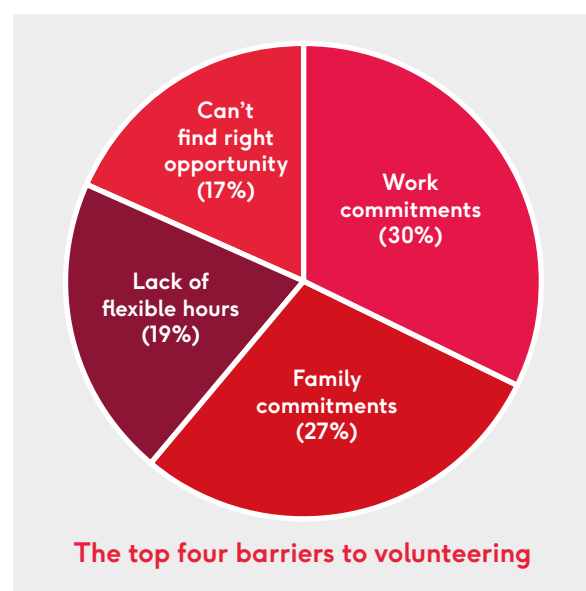
The barriers to volunteering

- The top four barriers to volunteering are: work commitments (30%), family commitments (27%), lack of flexible hours on offer (19%) and not being able to find the right opportunity (17%)
- 9% said they did not know where to find out about volunteering
- Work commitments were cited as the main reason for not volunteering among those aged 35-44 (41%), compared to 22% of those aged over 55

In a busy world, where many of us are juggling work commitments with families and social lives it's no surprise that some of the reasons that people gave for choosing not to volunteer, reflect this. Our nationwide survey found that, for people who do not volunteer, the top four barriers are: work commitments (30%), family commitments (27%), lack of flexible hours on offer (19%) and not being able to find the right opportunity (17%). Interestingly, 9% said they did not know where to find out about volunteering. Work commitments were cited as the main reason for not volunteering among those aged 35-44 (41%), compared to 22% of non-volunteers aged over 55.

Only 18% of recent volunteers say they volunteer within working hours and are supported by employers to do so (NCVO Report 28-29). This could be a missed opportunity for employers who could boost their reputation for corporate social responsibility and also give their employees the chance to gain varied work experience and improve their wellbeing. Half (51%) of those surveyed said their employers did not actively encourage volunteering or have a volunteering scheme, with a further 25% saying they didn't know (NCVO Report).

Further research indicates that stigma and perceptions act as a barrier to volunteering. A report by Volunteering Matters (2019) states that many men and younger people in particular hold negative views on volunteering. It also suggests that younger people can be deterred by feeling that they don't have time, not knowing anyone else who volunteers, and thinking that it is an activity for older people with time on their hands.



How do we attract more volunteers?

- The top five things that would encourage people who don't currently volunteer to give up their time are: flexible hours (36%), an interesting role (35%), the opportunity to learn new skills (31%), the opportunity to meet new people (27%) and access to training (23%).
- Nearly a third of 16-24 year olds (32%) said the chance to improve their CV would encourage them to volunteer and 40% said an interesting role would be a motivating factor.
- Only one in ten 16-24 year olds say nothing would encourage them to get involved (X%), compared to 35% of over 55s.
- 88% of BHF volunteers would recommend volunteering to friends or family.

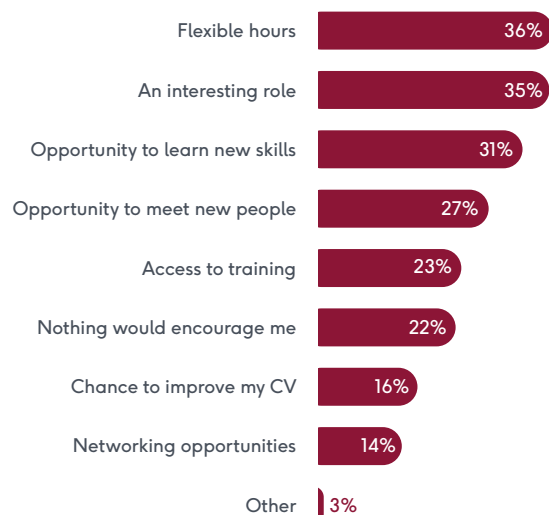
Our latest findings show that the top five things that would encourage people who don't currently volunteer to give up their time are: flexible hours (36%), an interesting role (35%), the opportunity to learn new skills (31%), the opportunity to meet new people (27%) and access to training (23%).

Nearly a third of 16-24 year old non-volunteers (32%) said the chance to improve their CV would encourage them to volunteer and 40% said an interesting role would be a motivating factor. With only one in ten 16-24 year olds saying nothing would encourage them to get involved in volunteering, these findings suggest young people are open to volunteering opportunities depending on what the role could offer them.

With 35% of non-volunteers aged over 55 saying nothing would encourage them to volunteer according to our national survey, more needs to be done to market volunteering to this age group in a way that meets their interests and highlights benefits that may have been overlooked.

For example, the BHF prides itself on the support it offers to volunteers. Our internal survey revealed that 88% of our volunteers would recommend volunteering to friends or family compared to the national average of just 70% (NCVO report page 9). This is in part due to the flexible hours on offer, with the majority of respondents (29%) saying that in the past month, they only volunteered for 2.5 hours and still find it rewarding and impactful. Our community fundraising roles for instance, give individuals the flexibility to organise events in their own time, fitting it around their work and family commitments.

Factors that would encourage me to volunteer



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What I love about volunteering at the BHF is that there is no contract that you need to commit to. The hours are varied and you can dip in and dip out as you please. I always feel supported which makes it easier to volunteer and I just feel proud that I can give something back to the BHF when I can. BHF research saved my life.

Nicola Kenton, 24, Sports Journalist



How do we attract more volunteers?

“

After my life saving heart transplant I wanted to give something back.

Eliza, 21, Volunteer from Penzance

Eliza knows only too well the impact volunteering work has on the lives of people living with heart and circulatory diseases. Having undergone a life saving heart transplant earlier this year after going into heart failure at just 20-years-old, she understands the importance of the BHF's research.

Eliza was born with a rare genetic heart condition called Danon's disease, however it wasn't diagnosed until she was 12-years-old. For many years she had to travel up from her home in Penzance to Bristol for regular check-ups and tests and take various pills to keep the heart failure at bay. Up until the age of 18, Eliza was able to live a relatively normal life, completing her A Levels and embarking on a degree at University.

However, throughout her first term at university, Eliza's health deteriorated considerably, forcing her to put her education on hold. Her condition then progressed, causing her to go in to heart failure. Back in October last year, cardiologists at the Royal Papworth Hospital in Cambridgeshire decided

that Eliza's best chance of survival was to have a heart transplant and so she was placed on the waiting list. In January, Eliza was told to travel up to the specialist hospital and was put on the urgent list meaning she had to wait in hospital on a dopamine drip. A month later she received her life saving transplant.

Only a few months later and Eliza is already volunteering at her local BHF shop in Penzance, helping out when and where she can to 'give something back'. With a new lease of life, she loves to style and model donated clothing, displaying her scar with pride. She hopes more people will join her in supporting the charity so that people like her can benefit from future advances in research.



How do we attract more volunteers?

Simon Gillespie OBE, Chief Executive of the British Heart Foundation, said:



We are so lucky to have an army of hard-working, passionate volunteers at the British Heart Foundation. We wouldn't be able to achieve what we do without them in our mission to beat the heartbreak caused by heart and circulatory diseases. It has been my pleasure and privilege to be a part of that amazing team.

But there is so much more that needs to be done, which is why we urgently need more volunteers from all parts of the UK to come forward and do what they can. If you would like to be part of our next breakthrough and make a positive difference, please give volunteering a chance. I know from my own experience the difference it can make.



Conclusion

The survey findings explored in this report reiterate the widely recognised benefits that volunteering offers to an individual's health and wellbeing. It also demonstrates the important role volunteering can play in tackling loneliness and social exclusion as well as giving people new skills and confidence.

Despite what many might think, this report has shown that young people are just as interested in volunteering as older generations. However, the motivations of these age groups often differ. Generation Z (16-24) are most likely to get involved in order to learn new skills and gain valuable work experience, whilst millennials (25-34) are the age group most likely to overcome loneliness from volunteering. Older generations on the other hand are most often motivated by the opportunity to meet new people or make a difference to a cause they feel passionately about. It's important that organisations think about this array of motivations when marketing their volunteering opportunities to make them appealing to a wide range of people.

Another theme of the report has been the barriers that stop people volunteering. Although younger people are more interested in volunteering than any other age group, less than a quarter currently do so. A number of barriers play a part in this such as work and family commitments or studying. This shows that we need to make opportunities as flexible as possible so that people can fit volunteering around work and family commitments.

Finally there is huge potential to increase the number of people who regularly volunteer. With regular volunteering (at least once a month) down by 6% since 2013, these findings reveal that it is more important than ever to raise awareness of the myriad reasons to volunteer (Community Life Survey, p 22). At the BHF, there are a variety of roles on offer that are not just limited to our retail stores. From events to community activities, volunteers help us play an active role in local neighbourhoods to ensure that the people affected by heart and circulatory disease are getting the support they need as well as raising money for life saving research. We found that the majority of our volunteers enjoy the time they spend volunteering for us because of the flexibility of the roles and the opportunity to meet new people and make lifelong friends.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of the BHF. Whether they're joining a fundraising group, helping out on the shop floor or giving out medals at a fundraising event, each and every volunteer is helping us make a positive difference to the 7.4 million people living with heart and circulatory disease across the UK. We want to encourage more people, whatever their skills or background, to consider volunteering to help us continue to make a significant and a valuable difference to people's lives.

To find out about volunteering opportunities at the BHF, visit bhf.org.uk/volunteer

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The survey of 2,001 UK adults was conducted by Censuswide between 2nd and 6th August 2019.

We also ran an internal survey amongst active volunteers at the BHF, with 770 respondents throughout August 2019.

bhf.org.uk

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Beat Heartbreak Forever

Beat heartbreak from  heart diseases  stroke  vascular dementia  diabetes

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