

# Volunteer recruitment still 'tough': UK survey shows no signs of improvement

May 30 2024

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More than half of voluntary organizations are still finding volunteer recruitment difficult, according to a major sector survey which shows that the situation has not improved over the last 12 months.

The [report](#), "Present Struggles, Past Origins: Current Challenges in Volunteering Amidst Two Decades of Decline," by Nottingham Trent University's VCSE Data and Insights National Observatory and Pro Bono Economics (PBE) is part of a barometer which takes the quarterly temperature of the voluntary sector. More than 560 organizations responded to the latest wave.

When the survey last focused on volunteering in Spring 2023, charities reported concerns over decreasing numbers. While the latest barometer does not show significant decline, 6 in 10 organizations continue to face difficulties in [volunteer](#) recruitment and around half (47%) have not seen an increase in numbers over 12 months.

Lack of time (59%) and lack of interest (50%) were cited as the most significant barriers to recruitment.

There has also been little improvement for organizations that do not have enough volunteers to meet their objectives, with four in 10 still in this position and 82% of those finding recruitment difficult.

Findings also indicate that organizations are less likely to invest in recruitment methods which require time, money and skill, with a decline in in-person recruitment events and social media activity and 84% mainly using word of mouth to recruit volunteers.

Organizations continue to experience challenges in volunteer retention, with little shift in the picture since 2023 and one in three reporting difficulties. Almost 70% said volunteer family and caring responsibilities were a significant barrier to retention, with work responsibilities and a decline in flexible working also having an impact.

Almost double—42%, compared to 23%—said that the commitment is too big for their volunteers and 42% noted the time contributed by their

volunteers has increased over the last year, a slight increase on last Spring (35%).

Some of the charities who responded to the survey reported that they are changing the way they do things to try and improve volunteer [recruitment](#):

"We have a part time volunteer coordinator which has made recruiting and retaining volunteers and filling rotas more straightforward. She has introduced rewards and social activities to maintain morale. She has also worked with the local college to recruit young people on Duke of Edinburgh and this has slightly changed the age profile. Some of these [young people](#) have stayed with us at the end of their placements."

"Our pool of older, more experienced volunteers has declined since COVID-19 meaning we are now in a position where we don't have the capacity to train newcomers. We have trialed some training and workshop days in an attempt to fast-track newcomers so they can come in and use our facilities to practice/undertake some training solo. We have also created a training pack for new volunteers, which contains practical training activities they can undertake at home while they are waiting for a more experienced volunteer to become available to shadow."

Professor Daniel King, Director of the National VCSE Data and Insights Observatory at Nottingham Business School, part of NTU, said, "The results of this wave are very similar to last Spring, which shows that there are some perennial challenges facing voluntary organizations.

"It's hard out there, and while some organizations are adapting and having some success, others are experiencing tensions with balancing the needs of the organization with the needs of volunteers.

"Volunteers' Week shines a spotlight on the fantastic impact volunteering has for people and for organizations, but longstanding challenges highlighted in our report are requiring the sector to think differently about volunteer participation."

**More information:** Present Struggles, Past Origins: Current Challenges in Volunteering Amidst Two Decades of Decline:  
[www.ntu.ac.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf...-report-may-2024.pdf](http://www.ntu.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_data/report-may-2024.pdf)

Provided by Nottingham Trent University

Citation: Volunteer recruitment still 'tough': UK survey shows no signs of improvement (2024, May 30) retrieved 24 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2024-05-volunteer-tough-uk-survey.html>

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