

General Information



KEY INFORMATION ABOUT THE NETHERLANDS

Capital: Amsterdam
Official Language: Dutch
Population: 18.04 million*
Currency: Euro (EUR)
Calling Code: +31

KEY ECONOMIC INDICATORS

GDP per capita: US\$ 77.880**
Real GDP growth in 2022: 1.2 %**
Unemployment rate in February 2026: 4,1 % ***

DEFINITION OF VOLUNTEERING*****

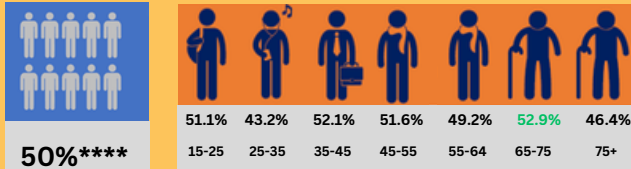
By volunteering, we mean all forms of voluntary effort that someone performs unpaid and without obligation for another person or society. These can be volunteer initiatives, neighbourhood or citizen initiatives etc. Besides, they can be large or small, local to national, formal or informal,

SOCIAL CONTEXT AND SIGNIFICANCE OF VOLUNTEERING*****

Volunteering is also an essential part of social networks in society that share common values, often referred to as “social capital” (Van Beuningen and Schmeets, 2013). This social capital acts like the lubricant that keeps society running smoothly. Social capital not only has a positive effect on the economy but also on well-being (Kroll, 2011; Portela, Neira, Salinas-Jiménez, 2013; Matsushima and Matsunaga, 2015). In the Netherlands, it has been shown that 91 percent of volunteers say they are happy, compared to 85 percent of those who do not volunteer (Schmeets and Arends, 2020). Volunteers are also more satisfied with their own lives, their social contacts, and their mental health, and they score higher on the personal well-being index than those who are not volunteers.

Statistics and Demographics

Volunteer experience at least once in the past 12 month (2024) (percentage of the total population)*****



Total number of volunteers: 7.600.000

Annual economic value of volunteering: € 128 billion*****

In 2024, the share of people volunteering at least once in the past 12 months was 41.8% among those with elementary education, VMBO, lower secondary education, or MBO level 1. This compares to 39.8% in 2023 and 31.2% in 2022.

Among those with vocational education (MBO levels 2, 3, and 4), senior general secondary education (HAVO), or pre-university education (VWO), the share was 49.2% in 2024, 49.1% in 2023, and 40.1% in 2022.

For individuals with higher professional education (HBO), or university-level bachelor’s, master’s, or doctoral degrees, the share was 56.4% in 2024, compared to 56.8% in 2023 and 51.9% in 2022.*****

Volunteering is essential for a healthy, safe, and resilient Netherlands (SCP) (opens in a new window). Together, 7.6 million volunteers (CBS) (opens in a new window) invest over 128 billion euros* annually in time and effort for society. They do this with great pleasure and satisfaction. They help address major social challenges, from healthcare, existential insecurity, and education to sustainability, biodiversity, and the energy transition. They voluntarily contribute to their neighborhood, sports clubs, youth and elderly activities, care, social equality, arts and culture, poverty, nature and landscape, education, safety, and much more.

Types of Volunteer Activities (%)

Activity Type	Percentage (%)
Sports club	16,2
School	9,8
Neighbourhood	10,0
Care or healthcare	9,0
Philosophical organization	8,3
Hobby or social club	10,9
Cultural association	6,5
Youth or community center work	7,0
Social assistance	3,7
Environment, nature or animal protection	5,1
Refugee Aid, human rights	2,4
Labor or political organization	2,2
Other organization	10,3
Living	.
Trade union or business organization	.
Political organization	.

Motivation for Volunteering*****

The most common motivation is **enjoying doing something for others (53.9%)**, closely followed by **enjoying the activity itself (53.2%)**. Around **34.1%** find volunteering a **meaningful way to spend their time**, while **27.5%** are motivated by **social contacts**. Additionally, **24.7%** feel it is a **duty**, and **16.6%** participate in order to **learn new things**. A smaller share (**3.3%**) volunteer **to increase their chances of getting a job**, while **8.3%** report **other reasons**.

* Source: <https://www.cbs.nl/en/nl/visualisaties/dashboard-bevolking-bevolkingsteller/>
 **Source: <https://www.imf.org/external/datamanager/NGDPDEC/RWEO/NLD?zoom=NLD&highlight=NLD>
 ***Source: <https://www.cbs.nl/en/nl/visualisaties/2026/12/overloosheids-in-februari-4-1-procent>
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Impact of Volunteering*

Volunteering creates value on three levels.

1. **Micro:** Volunteers enhance their own well-being and skills; beneficiaries experience, for example, less loneliness and more trust; colleagues face less work pressure.
2. **Meso:** Organisations benefit from cost savings, legitimacy, innovation, higher productivity, and a better reputation.
3. **Macro:** Communities gain cohesion and safety; societies experience greater solidarity.

Annually, this represents billions of euros in social and economic returns. The impact of volunteering is hardly expressible in monetary terms, because without volunteers many things simply would not happen. Where there is a direct economic impact, this can help deepen the understanding of volunteering's impact.

Quality Standards in the Field of Volunteering*****

Many standards developed by volunteer organisations.
One quality mark concerns how volunteer organisations manage their volunteer policies.

National E-platform for Volunteering

NOV does provide a national volunteer database called "VrijwilligersVacatureBank" (Volunteer Vacancy Bank). This database serves as a platform for connecting volunteers with organizations looking for volunteers.



Challenges to the Development of Volunteering in the Netherlands***

1. **Aging population and demographic changes:** fewer young people available as new volunteers, while demand for care volunteers is rising.
2. **Changing motivations and expectations:** volunteers increasingly seek flexibility and meaningful engagement.
3. **Volunteer recruitment and retention:** difficulties due to busy lives, work, and other commitments.
4. **Professionalisation and support:** limited resources for guidance and appreciation.
5. **Digitalisation and accessibility:** varying digital skills create participation barriers.
6. **Diversity and inclusion:** lower participation among migrants, people with disabilities, and minority groups.
7. **Funding and policy frameworks:** budget cuts and changing subsidies threaten continuity.

Measuring the Impact of Volunteering

- We use the method mentioned here: <https://www.vrijwilligerswerk.nl/vrijwilligeomzet/default.aspx>
- There are more methods: <https://www.movisie.nl/artikel/waarde-vrijwillige-inzet>
- Many organisations use the method of storytelling.
- One other, quite complex method, is the social handprint: <https://socialhandprint.com/>



Institutional and Legal Framework for Volunteering in the Netherlands

There is no specific legal framework for volunteering.

There are however many laws that impact volunteering, many of which are listed here: <https://www.vrijwilligerswerk.nl/kennis/wetten-en-regels/default.aspx>



Financial Support for the Development of Volunteering in the Netherlands

Some large organisations get, amongst which Vereniging VrijwilligerswerkNL. Furthermore there are some temporary national programs.

Many organisations get local funding and some provincial. The list of sources is quite big.

NOV organizes the **annual National Volunteer** Awards event**. With contributions from the Ministry of Public Health Welfare and Sport and the Postcode Lottery. Several municipalities have their local awards and ratings for volunteer work.



Trends in the Development of Volunteering in the Netherlands****

When asked whether they volunteer, 30 percent of Dutch people answered yes in 2023, compared to 37 percent in 2016. The Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) estimates volunteer participation in 2022 at 41 percent of the population aged 15 and over. A second study by Motivaction, which asked for whom people have volunteered, shows that 50 percent have done so, mainly for sports clubs, their own neighbourhood, schools, or care institutions. What is particularly interesting is that nearly six out of ten Dutch people indicate they want to volunteer in the future.

1. **From 'old' values:** The difference in percentages suggests that fewer people identify with the heavier, more binding term 'volunteering,' but rather see their activities as a freer and more informal way of voluntary engagement. Motivaction's research shows that values such as solidarity, helping others, and contributing to society are important drivers for volunteering. These dutiful values are typical of older generations in the Netherlands. The aging population therefore results in a decline of a large and important group of volunteers.
2. **Towards new values:** To ensure that enough volunteers remain available in the future, volunteering must be organized in a way that appeals to the more individualistic values of younger generations. Individualism does not mean a lack of willingness to help others. However, volunteering will be less driven by duty or community spirit and more by values such as idealism, self-development, exploration, and experience.

Motivaction also sees the growing importance of these individualistic values reflected in the wishes volunteers themselves have regarding their work and the organisation. Volunteers would like to see more recognition and appreciation within volunteer organisations. In addition, they want more attention to (personal) guidance, feedback on performance, personal development, and learning new skills.

Key Stakeholders in the Development of Volunteering****

Volunteer organisations, volunteer support, government and municipalities, business community, educational institutes, volunteers and non-volunteers.

Research in the Field of Volunteering

There is lot's of research though not enough:

<https://www.vrijwilligerswerk.nl/kennis/wetenschap/publicaties-wetenschap/default.aspx>

* Source: <https://www.vrijwilligerswerk.nl/vrijwilligeomzet/omzet-publicatiesonderzoek/default.aspx>

**Source: www.vrijwilligerswerk.nl

***Source: <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2023/14/taartal-vrijwilligers-tijgt-langszaam> / <https://www.movisie.nl/artikel/veranderende-motivatie-vrijwilligers> / <https://www.vrijwilligerswerk.nl/nieuw/vrijwilligers-werven-en-behouden/> / <https://www.movisie.nl/artikel/organisatie-voor-vrijwilligers-ondersteunen> / <https://www.scp.nl/publicaties/publicaties/2022/06/rapport-digitalisering-en-sociale-participatie> / <https://www.movisie.nl/artikel/diversiteit-vrijwilligerswerk/>

****Source: <https://www.binnenlandsbestuur.nl/financien/gemeente-en-provincie/onds/navrijjaar-niet-gedempt-maar-opgeschoven>

*****Source: <https://www.vrijwilligerswerk.nl/PageByID.aspx?sectionID=172153&contentID=3161612&forcedownload=true>

****Source: https://www.vrijwilligerswerk.nl/nieuws-home/2498046.aspx?*=Vrijwilligerswerk-is-uit-Je-wel-eens-vrijwillig-inzetten-is-in

*****Source: <https://vrijwilligeomzetgoedgered.nl/>