

General Information



KEY INFORMATION ABOUT IRELAND*

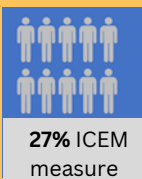
Capital: Dublin
Official Language: Irish, English
Population: 5,149,139 (as of 2022)
Currency: Euro (EUR)
Calling Code: +353

KEY ECONOMIC INDICATORS*

GDP per capita: US\$ 112,895 (as of 2024)
Real GDP growth in 2024: 2.6%
Unemployment rate in 2026: 4.6%

Statistics and Demographics

Volunteering rate of population



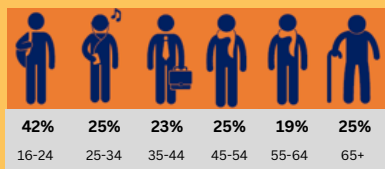
Total number of volunteers:

- 1,116,950 as of 2022**
 - Internal Irish Charities Engagement Monitor Report with 1134 respondents 16+
 - Asked about any volunteering done in the last 12 months
- 711,879 as of 2022 (2022 Census) (13.82 % of the population)**
 - The 2022 Census asked about 'regular' volunteering while providing no definition of 'regular'. It also excludes the large number of people that volunteer in more ad hoc, short term or informal roles.

Annual economic value of volunteering:

No data available for the moment.

Volunteer experience per gender and age group (percentage of the total population)**



23% of the total population (2022)

46% of the total population who volunteered at least once

30% of the total population (2022)

46% of the total population who volunteered at least once

Education Levels and Volunteering

No data available for the moment.

Motivation for Volunteering

No data available for the moment

DEFINITION OF VOLUNTEERING***

Volunteering is any time willingly given, either formally or informally, for the common good and without financial gain.

SOCIAL CONTEXT AND SIGNIFICANCE OF VOLUNTEERING

No data available for the moment

Impact of Volunteering on Volunteers****

First Example: Looking at the report titled The Impact of Volunteering on The Health and Well-Being of The Volunteer, with 1797 responses:

- 65% of respondents reported an increase in their self-esteem
- 55% of respondents reported an increase in their mental health and well-being
- 45% of respondents reported an increase in their physical health and well-being
- 81% of respondents reported an increase in their feeling of making a useful contribution to the community
- 59% of respondents reported an increase in their range of friendships
- 66% of respondents reported an increase in their sense of belonging to their community
- 60% of respondents reported an increase in their feeling of being included and not being alone

Types of Volunteer Activities****

- Sporting Organisation – 40.33% of volunteering population
- In the community – 31.88% of volunteering population
- Social or charity organisation – 27.87% of volunteering population
- Religious group – 18.20% of volunteering population
- Political organisation – 2.43% of volunteering population

*Note that the total percentage exceeds 100%, as volunteers may engage in more than one type of volunteer activity.

Second Example: From the National Volunteer Survey 2024, with 394 responses:

- Do you feel that your volunteering experience was personally meaningful to you? – 95% said yes
- Do you think your volunteering made a meaningful difference to the wider community? – 93% said yes
- Has volunteering helped improve your personal wellbeing? – 85% said yes
- Has volunteering increased your sense of being part of or belonging to the community? – 90% said yes.
- Do you believe that volunteering helps you understand different cultures within the community? – 83% said yes
- "Without volunteers, non profit organisations and community groups would be able to help less people" – 89% agreed with this statement

*Source: Constitution Article 8 <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-the-taoiseach/publications/constitution-of-ireland/>, 2022 Census, Worldbank, CSO

**Source: Internal Irish Charities Engagement Monitor Report 2022

***Source: National Volunteering Strategy section 2.1

****Source: 2022 Census

*****Source: The impact of volunteering on the health and well-being of the volunteer, 2017: Report

Impact of Volunteering on Volunteer's Communities

Example: Impact of COVID-19 on Volunteer Participation in Ireland - According to Ipsos MRBI statistics commissioned by Volunteer Ireland, three-quarters of the population volunteered their time since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic from March to September 2020. Report

Volunteer activities:

- Did someone's grocery shopping – 40%
- Befriended someone who was lonely – 31%
- Collected their prescriptions – 29%
- Did their cleaning or gardening – 24%
- Showed them how to use Zoom, Teams etc. – 23%
- Gave them a lift to a medical appointment – 21%

Measuring the Impact of Volunteering

The Volunteer Impact Assessment Toolkit (VIAT) has been used by Volunteer Ireland and VIOs to assess the impact of their volunteer programmes. This assessment helps create a pathway for volunteer development within the organisation and explores the past, current and future needs of the VIOs volunteer base. A number of organisations including Depaul Ireland and Engineers Ireland have completed VIAs and gone on to achieve the Investing in Volunteering framework.

National E-platform for Volunteering

I-VOL – Site for volunteers to find and apply for volunteering opportunities posted by VCs:

<https://www.i-vol.ie/>



Quality Standards in the Field of Volunteering

The Volunteer Charter in Ireland is a framework that outlines the roles and responsibilities of both volunteers and organisations. It acts as a two-way agreement, helping to set clear expectations and promote positive relationships. The Charter emphasises values such as respect, inclusion, communication, and support, ensuring that volunteering is a meaningful and well-managed experience. It is considered a baseline standard and is widely used to guide good practice across the sector.

The Volunteer Friendly Award is a national quality standard that recognises organisations which meet good practice in volunteer management. It focuses on practical areas such as recruitment, training, support, and recognition of volunteers. Organisations work through a structured process to review and improve how they involve volunteers in order to achieve the award. It is generally seen as an entry-level quality mark, demonstrating that an organisation provides a supportive and well-organised environment for volunteers.

A pilot of the Volunteer Friendly Award was completed, however this award is not currently in operation. It is hoped it would be running again.

Investing in Volunteers (IiV) is a more advanced and externally assessed quality standard, used both in Ireland and the United Kingdom. It involves a detailed evaluation of how an organisation values, supports, and integrates volunteers into its overall work. It includes independent assessment and places a strong emphasis on continuous improvement and excellence. Achieving IiV accreditation shows that an organisation meets a high standard of volunteer management and is committed to best practice.

Challenges to the Development of Volunteering

Ireland's volunteering sector faces several challenges at the national infrastructure level, despite having a relatively well-developed system. Key issues include inconsistent recognition of volunteering across government policy, meaning it is often not fully integrated into national planning or public services. Funding remains a major constraint, limiting the capacity of volunteer infrastructure to expand and sustain services.

Volunteer involving organisations report a struggle with recruitment and retention as people increasingly prefer flexible, short-term roles rather than long-term commitments. Many organisations lack the resources needed for effective volunteer management, which can lead to poor volunteer experiences and high turnover.

Challenges also include the cost of compliance and barriers to volunteering such as transport, language, etc. **



Institutional and Legal Framework for Volunteering

- National Volunteering Strategy 2021 – 2025***
 - **Second strategy currently in development.**
- There is no explicit legislation relating to volunteers.



National Award and Recognitions for Volunteering*

- 12 awards overall with different categories for different types of volunteering, groups, and an overall volunteer of the year
- more than 530 nominations
- all nominees get a personalised thank you card in the post
- 50 submissions for Volunteer Ireland Awards photography contest
- 36 volunteers are shortlisted and their stories are shared with the media

In 2025, the combined awards campaign secured print and broadcast media coverage to the value of over €447,000 with 4.9 million people having the opportunity to see or hear about the awards through newspapers, radio shows and online platforms.

Across all social media platforms, our organic content reached 129,000 and an engagement of 4500.



Financial Support for the Development of Volunteering

Based on the latest figures from DRCDG, in 2025 they allocated €7,334,000 to support volunteering. This included funding to the Volunteer Centres, Volunteer Ireland, a few other organisations that promote volunteering such as Young Social Innovators, and specific projects that delivered actions in the National Volunteering Strategy.

Key Stakeholders in the Development of Volunteering

- Volunteer Ireland
- Volunteer Centres
- National government, particularly the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht that has overall responsibility for volunteering
- Organisations that involve volunteers
- Volunteers
- Other national agencies and umbrella bodies

Trends in the Development of Volunteering

1. **Volunteer Numbers Are Falling:** Each dataset has its own issues, but in short we can not definitively say that Volunteer numbers are falling. In order to provide better data, Volunteer Ireland is looking at conducting another survey with NFP Research on their Irish Charities Engagement Monitor, November 2026. Other avenues are also being explored with the CSO.
2. **Evidence that “Informal Volunteering is Rising”:** In short we can not definitively claim that “informal volunteering is rising”, however there is a lot of anecdotal evidence of it existing, which can help with popularising it as it is difficult to gather data on.
3. **Evidence that “organisations are struggling to recruit and retain volunteers”:** We have enough evidence to say that “organisations are struggling to recruit and retain volunteers”. Because this does not apply to every organisation, it may be better to say that “many organisations are struggling to recruit and retain volunteers”.
4. **Evidence that “volunteers want more flexible roles”:** Alongside the three sources that suggest that volunteers want more flexible roles, there is 3 case studies and a
5. variety of anecdotal evidence supporting this claim. Also considering that the VI national survey only contained active volunteers, it may introduce selection bias and thus it is acceptable to claim that volunteers want more flexible roles.
6. **Evidence that “Organisations that embrace flexibility and inclusion have a better chance of recruiting and retaining volunteers”:** Evidence supporting this consists of the 3 case studies mentioned above, the report “Inclusion in Volunteer Programmes” found below and various anecdotal evidence. With no evidence supporting the contrary, it is acceptable to say that organisations that embrace flexibility and inclusion have a better chance of recruiting and retaining volunteers.

Research in the Field of Volunteering****

Research by Volunteer Ireland:

- Report on the Volunteering Question in Ireland's 2022 Census - The 2022 Census in Ireland sought to understand the prevalence and patterns of voluntary activity across the 26 counties of Ireland. This report aims to shed light on the rich tapestry of volunteering across the country by examining data collected in the census.
- Inclusion in Volunteer Programmes - Developed with a research team from Dublin City University and Queen's University Belfast, this report provides insight into the experiences of organisations' inclusivity in their volunteer programmes. It includes interviews with VIOs on how best practice can be implemented.
- Rural Volunteerism: Impacting Development and Sustainability - This report documents the extent and impact of volunteerism in rural communities throughout Ireland by drawing on research carried out in NUI Galway and by Volunteer Ireland. The report highlights the essential role rural volunteers' play in the sustainability and development of many rural regions.
- Migrant Participation in Sport Volunteering in Ireland - This report, developed in partnership with Sport Ireland, explores migrant participation in sport volunteering in Ireland. The report looks at the numbers, interests and demographics of migrants that volunteer in sport while exploring the barriers for those that don't.
- The Impact of Volunteering on the Health and Wellbeing of the Volunteer - In 2017, Volunteer Ireland conducted research into the impact volunteering has on the health and well-being of volunteers. Combining focus groups with the results of a national survey of volunteers, the report concluded that volunteering has a positive impact on volunteers in a multitude of ways.

Research by Volunteer Centres:

- Promoting Youth Volunteering in Ireland: Current Practice and Ways Forward - In 2023 the Department of Rural and Community Development, through the Irish Research Council, commissioned a research team at University College Cork to undertake a study on how to promote youth volunteering. The study was carried out in partnership with Cork Volunteer Centre.
- Building Resilience: Capturing a Community Response - A report to capture the learnings from communities where large numbers of people from Ukraine had been re-settled. Clare VC Board member Dr Helen McQuillan initiated the lead on the project to document and evaluate the impact and outcomes of structured volunteer management and community engagement.
- A Comparative study on the needs and challenges of volunteering in urban and rural communities - The research set out to explore further the findings of 31 focus groups conducted in January and February 2019 to inform their input into the National Volunteering Strategy's Call for Input process. The research specifically set out to explore volunteer recruitment and retention and the role of Volunteer Centres in supporting volunteering and volunteer involving organisations (VIOs).

Research by Other Organisations:

- Inclusive Volunteering: Exploring Migrant Participation in Volunteerism - This small-scale study explored migrants' experiences of volunteering in Cork city and county, including their motivations and pathways into volunteering, the benefits and challenges of volunteering, and the factors which facilitate or inhibit volunteering.

*Source: Internal review, general volunteer award information can be found here: <https://www.volunteer.ie/about-the-awards/>

**Source: VI analysis

***Source: <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/national-volunteering-strategy-2021-2025.pdf>

****Source: <https://www.volunteer.ie/research/>