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General Information



KEY INFORMATION ABOUT BELGIUM

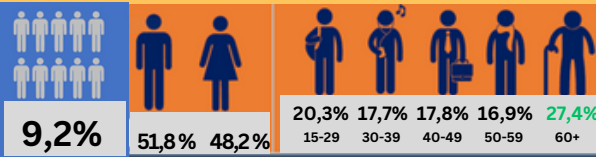
Capital: Brussels
Official Language: Dutch/French/German
Population: 11,715,774
Currency: Euro (EUR)
Calling Code: +32

KEY ECONOMIC INDICATORS*

GDP per capita: 48 224.00\$
Real GDP growth in 2022: 1,7%
Unemployment rate in September 2023: 7,1%

Statistics and Demographics**

Volunteer experience at least once in a lifetime (percentage of the total population) In Belgium



The average volunteer in Belgium, a person who has been involved in volunteering at least once in their life, is equally likely to be male or female, of aged age (+60 years, 27,4%) and with Higher non-university education (bachelor) 29,3%.

The average hours/volunteer 199,9 annually **



According to the level of education, volunteer experience at least once in a lifetime was reported by 0,8% with No diploma, 2,6% with Primary education, 13,9% with Lower secondary education, 29,1% with Upper secondary and with 29,1% post-secondary education, 29,3% with Higher non-university education (bachelor) and 24,3% with University education (master's).

Motivation for Volunteering

Research shows that intrinsic motivators (being able to do volunteering yourself according to one's own abilities and interests, the enjoyment of volunteering, the connection with others, the meaningfulness of the tasks) are much more sustainable and stronger than extrinsic motivators (obligation or financial reward). Intrinsically motivated volunteers stay longer in the organisation.*****

DEFINITION OF VOLUNTEERING***

The Belgian Volunteer Law defines it as follows: volunteers freely and unpaid give a piece of their free time to an non-profit or public organisation.

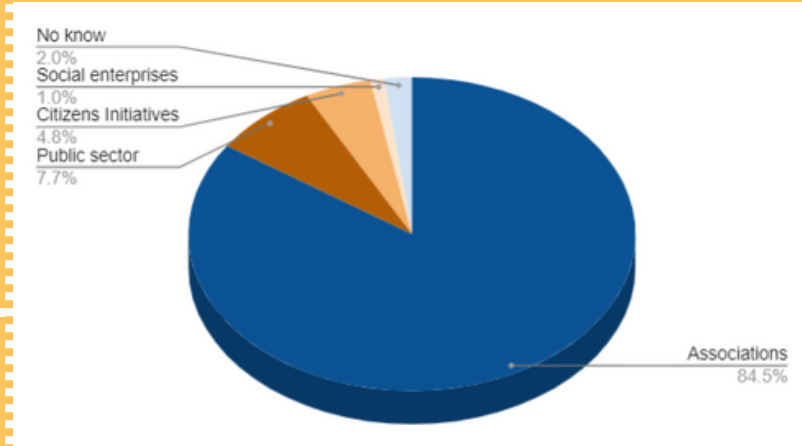
SOCIAL CONTEXT AND SIGNIFICANCE OF VOLUNTEERING

Volunteers identify unmet needs in society and try to do something about them. They are essential cogs in our democracy and need not worry about profitability in the process. Volunteering is not only good for society, it is also good for the volunteers themselves. They feel useful, they share what they know and can do and develop social and other skills.

Types of Volunteer Activities**

A report carried out by the King Baudouin Foundation on volunteering in Belgium shows that 23% of them are culture-related, in socio-cultural or nature-themed associations (Male 24.7%, Female 21.1%), 13.4% youth-related (M7.9% F13.5%), 20.8% sports-related (M26.7% F8.7%), 14.1% education, training institutions and research (M7.2% F17.1%), 5.6% health care (M2.7% F6.4%), 16.0% social services (M11.7% F14.4%), 6.6% religion-related (M5.4% F6.8%), 11.1% rights and interests (M 11.2% F10.3%) and 2.9% other themes (M 2.5% F1.6%).

Types of organisations volunteers are most commonly associated with in Belgium.



* Source: <https://versus.com/nl/belgi%C3%AB>

**Source: <https://media.kbs-frb.be/nl/media/7735/Le%20volontariat%20en%20Belgique.pdf>

*** Source: https://etaamb.openjustice.be/nl/wet-van-03-juli-2005_n2005022674.html

**** Source: <https://kbs-frb.be/nl/zoom-vrijwilligerswerk-belgie>

***** Source: De Clerck, T., Willem, A., Aelterman, N., & Haerens, L. (2019). Volunteers' managing volunteers: The role of volunteer board members' motivating and demotivating style in relation to volunteers' motives to stay volunteer. *Voluntas*. Haivas, S., Hofmans, J., & Pepermans, R. (2013). Volunteer engagement and intention to quit from a self-determination theory perspective. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 43, 1869-1880.

Impact of Volunteering

In Belgium, an article* that examined the relationship between volunteering and self-rated **health** concluded that volunteers generally report significantly better health scores compared to non-volunteers, equivalent to being five years younger. Another study, carried out by the Christian Mutuality, its movements and UCLouvain, shows a clear correlation between volunteering and health and it concluded that well-being is linked to commitment, volunteers go less often at the doctor and they need fewer medications.**

Volunteering also contributes to the integration of **immigrants**, enabling them to actively participate in activities tailored to their needs and resources, while increasing their sense of agency and connection to the community.*** Moreover, it reduces the recruitment discrimination they face and, as a result, promotes their integration into the labour market.****

Measuring the Impact of Volunteering

No data available for the moment

Quality Standards in the Field of Volunteering

In 2024, the Plateforme francophone du Volontariat offers municipalities that wish to do so and meet certain criteria to receive the **Commune Volontaire label**. This label promotes municipalities that facilitate and concretely encourage quality volunteering accessible to all.

PFV also provide a **Charter for Quality Volunteering**, a certification of membership of the Plateforme, to ensure that the volunteer's place is meaningful in the organisation's project and that they are supported during their time as volunteers. It highlights the importance of identifying the specific contribution of volunteering beyond its pro bono nature. It recognises that volunteers bring value not so much for what they do, but for who they are, including their time, humanity, freedom, initiative, creativity and knowledge of the reality on the ground.

Challenges to the Development of Volunteering in Belgium

- Exceptions to cost reimbursements for certain sectors and tasks in the volunteer law make it unnecessarily complicated and unfair for volunteers
- The informal obligation for volunteers receiving benefits is a barrier to volunteer
- Barriers for immigrants to volunteer may be the difficulty to understand what is volunteering, what is social sector in Belgium and finding organisations.*****

National E-platform for Volunteering**



The regional support centres of Flanders and French speaking part of Belgium have an online database for volunteer opportunities to promote and match volunteers with organisations. The e-database in Flanders is www.vrijwilligerswerk.be and for la plateforme it's: <https://www.levolontariat.be/annonces>.



Financial Support for the Development of Volunteering in Belgium

The regional support Centres for volunteering Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk vzw and la Plateforme Francophone du Volontariat receive funds from the regional authorities and every non-profit sector in Belgium has its own funds. On the other hand, a financial support given to the volunteers is that they can get a reimbursement for their cost (fixed or real) without paying taxes.



Institutional and Legal Framework for Volunteering in Belgium

- There is a volunteer law of 2005 for all volunteers and volunteer organisations in Belgium
- There is a Flemish coordinated policy for all volunteer sectors.
- A free insurance for small organisations in Belgium
- Volunteer week and wêldoeners (www.weldoeners.be) in Flanders about promoting and rewarding of volunteers
- IVD

Key Stakeholders in the Development of Volunteering

- Organisation as Vlaams Steunpunt Vrijwilligerswerk, La plateforme francophone du volontariat and Support centre Brussels:
- Regional support centres for volunteers
- High Council of Volunteers in Belgium: advisory instance about volunteering at Belgian level

Current situation of volunteering in Belgium

- **Instrumentalisation of volunteering:** people call on volunteers because it fits in with policy, e.g. with a view to activation, integration, savings
- **Blurring of boundaries between non-profit and profit:** for-profit organisations call on volunteers
- Socialisation of care in which the government partly withdraws from care and gives responsibility to citizens and volunteers to organise care themselves
- Corona made it appear that some volunteering is more important than others, which resulted in adapted, very complicated, poor and unfair regulations
- **Expectations of volunteers have evolved:** they look more at what's in it for me and are looking for flexible engagement, they do not stay with the same organisation their whole life, more volunteer are looking for temporary engagements

Research in the Field of Volunteering

- At the request of the King Baudouin Foundation, researchers from UGent investigated the importance of volunteering in Belgium in 2019. This study is based on the results of the 2019 FPS Economy workforce survey. This is the second study on volunteering in Belgium - the first dates back to 2014. Fundamental changes to the research methodology mean that the 2014 study should be viewed in a different way than the 2019 study.
- Research about voluntourism in Flanders/Belgium: <https://www.vlaanderen.vrijwilligt.be/artikels/volontourism/>

The State Award for Volunteering

No data available for the moment.

* Source: Jens Detollenaere & Sara Willems & Stijn Baert, 2017. "Volunteering, income and health," PLOS ONE, Public Library of Science, vol. 12(3).

** Source: <https://www.enmarche.be/sante/prevention-1/le-volontariat-c-est-bon-pour-la-sante-nbsp.html>

*** <http://www.via.brussels/resultatsrecherche/camim/>

**** Baert, Stijn & Vujic, Suncica, 2016. "Immigrant Volunteering: A Way Out of Labour Market Discrimination?," IZA Discussion Papers 9763, Institute of Labor Economics (IZA).

***** Plateforme francophone du Volontariat, 2018: [La facilitation du volontariat des demandeurs d'asile en Wallonie et à Bruxelles](#)