

*This text is a summary in English of the original text available in Spanish: “La acción voluntaria”. The summary has been prepared by Nabilah Binti Muhammad Adib Doyle as part of her course requirements in the School of Politics, Philosophy, Language and Communication Studies at the University of East Anglia (UK) in 2021.*

## ‘Voluntary Action in 2018: Interest in Volunteering’

Plataforma del Voluntariado de España (PVE), 2019. *La Acción Voluntaria en 2018: Interés en el voluntariado*. Madrid: Plataforma del Voluntariado de España (PVE), pp.1-105.

### Overview

Every year, the Platform for Volunteering in Spain (PVE) publishes a report that overlooks voluntary action carried out in the country. This 2018 report studies the data collected from 2 surveys, one in May and one in October, with regards to the social participation of citizens in both formal and informal volunteering activities. Therefore, the points of interest lie in analysing the interests and motivations of current and potential volunteers to extract a deeper understanding of what motivates them to dedicate their time and skills into this social sector. This approach will not only improve citizen collaboration with NGO’s but also adjust the expectations of volunteers towards their work and goals. An overall observation from the results suggest that the Spanish population favour collaboration with NGO’s so far as volunteering within it is maintained with a certain stability. Ultimately, this report discusses the prevalence of citizen collaboration with NGOs, a form of Formal Volunteering.

### Background

This research conducted by PVE seems to have been incentivised by Eurostat’s study on Living conditions in Europe (published in 2018) where they included a chapter on **social participation**. Equal to this report, the focal study groups of Eurostat’s survey were:

**Active Citizenship:** The participation in activities of a political party, local interest group, public consultation, or a protest etc...

**Formal Volunteering:** The participation in voluntary work within an organisation’s framework.

**Informal Volunteering:** The participation in activities that are considered more individualised and punctual (in accordance to volunteering governed by Spanish law).

The results of that chapter in the Eurostat report, however, were based on surveys carried out in 2015 on the European population over the age of 16. Alongside it, they had also recorded data on individual countries, whereby Spain’s revealed a significantly lower level of volunteering compared to the overall average in Europe. They are shown in the table below:



Focal Group	Average in Europe	Spain	Percentage difference
Active Citizenship	11.9%	7.9%	4.0%
Formal Volunteering	18.0%	10.7%	7.3%
Informal Volunteering	20.7%	10.6%	10.1%

Interestingly on top of this, PVE had collected data on Spain's Formal Volunteering levels in 2014, which was higher than the following year, with 9.2% in 2014 and 7.9% in 2015. The numbers do not tally because this data was subjected on less people than in Eurostat's study.

These poor results are the reason PVE continues to conduct periodic surveys on volunteer action, with the intention of monitoring and maintaining a certain stability with an added factor of NGO and volunteer collaboration across the country(Formal Volunteering).

Important notes: Sample sizes and minimum age groups used in this report by PVE are different compared to that of Eurostat. PVE used the data collected in 2014 solely as a point of reference as the data analysed in 2018 considers the relevant changes to the types of collaborations with NGOs. The report addressed Formal Volunteering more than Informal Volunteering – perhaps to keep in line with the main factor of NGO collaboration amongst citizens.

## **Methodology**

Below is a table of details on the method used to collect data of Spain in 2018, adapted from the report.

	May 2018 Survey	October 2018 Survey
Instrument for data collection	Computer-assisted telephone interviewing	Computer-assisted telephone interviewing using the CATI system. 33% of the interviews were conducted with individuals located by cell phone.



Group of Study	Individuals 14 years of age and older	Individuals 14 years of age and older
Geographical Area	Spanish peninsular, Balearic and Canary Islands	Spanish peninsular, Balearic and Canary Islands
Questionnaire	Ad hoc designed by PVE Observer and incorporated into IMOP tracking.	Ad hoc designed by PVE Observer and incorporated into IMOP tracking
Dates	May 28 to June 10 2018	September 24 to October 7 2018
Sample size	1,509 interviews	1,509 interviews
Sample error	Assuming P=Q=50% and a confidence level of 95%, the sampling error is $\pm 2.6$ percentage points.	Assuming P=Q=50% and a confidence level of 95%, the sampling error is $\pm 2.6$ percentage points.
Responsible institute	IMOP Insights, S.A.	IMOP Insights, S.A.

IMOP stands for the Investigation, Marketing y Opinion company and is responsible for the creation of the surveys. The data collected from the surveys was analysed by Folia Consultants. Questions of both surveys can be found at the end of the published document.

## **Main Findings**

There are 4 main areas of investigation, or chapters, within this report and they each relay bounteous statistics. This summary intends to include those that are most relevant.

1. Overview of the Spanish population's collaboration with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) in 2018 (average of both surveys)



The collaboration with organisations represents a Formal Volunteering according to Eurostat's measures above. Subsequently, from a previous year's report, PVE have identified 4 types of collaboration with NGO's, which are:

- a. Being associates of an organisation
- b. In-kind Donations (such as food, books, clothing, etc.) to organisations
- c. Financial Donations to organisations
- d. Volunteering in organisations

The same criteria was applied upon collecting data for their May and October 2018 surveys. Combining them, results show that an average of 40.6% of their participants over 14 years old collaborate with an NGO; additionally analysing the fact that this percentage increases to 42.1% when counting the data from those above 18 years of age. Generally, PVE statistics and graphs in this report are categorised by Gender and Age, yet the Household size in this chapter presents an interesting outlook as well. While there are more women than men and those over the age of 50 that collaborate with NGOs, people who live alone collaborate less with NGOs, oblivious that they represent more than a quarter of the Spanish population. However, 37.5% of a 2-person household collaborate the most with NGOs, which represents the highest percentage of 30.6% of the population.

Considering similar contributing factors, the leading type of collaboration with NGOs is Financial Donation, representing 20.1%, whereas being an associate contributes to 14.3%, in-kind donation 10.8%, and volunteering at only 6.2%. It is then highlighted here that in-kind donation decreased from 12.3% in May 2018 to 9.2% in October 2018. Interestingly, they also show that 55.9% of the Spanish population collaborate and commit to only one NGO, while the remaining percentage collaborate with various at a time. They analyse that this has to do with sex and age, where men and younger age tend to collaborate with 1 organisation.

Amongst the Spanish population that does participate in either of the 4 types of collaboration between 2017 and 2018, Financial Donation is still the number one route for action. In fact, there is a slight increase from 19.7% in 2017 to 20.1% in 2018. The other types of collaboration with NGOs decreased in percentages, with in-kind donation dropping the most from 19.4% to 10.8% between the years. These decreases add to the population of Spaniards who do not collaborate.

PVE states that the prevalence and rise in only the Economic collaboration with NGOs does not give off a positive participatory culture. In fact, they believe that it represents a type of weak involvement that really only gives full responsibility to the NGOs to carry out the physical activities of aid. However, at the same time, this economic gain in contribution develops a good image for these organisations as it proves their legitimacy and possibly attracts more attention from others in the near future.

The remaining sections of this chapter in the report analyses the profiles of the Associationism and Donation collaborations with NGOs in more depth.

## 2. Volunteering and Volunteers

Evidently from the criteria and data above, volunteering is the fourth and weakest type of collaboration with NGOs in Spain. A Eurostat data collection in 2017 of formal or informal volunteering over the age of 16 across EU countries demonstrates that Spain represents only 10.7% of that, more of them women than men. The

average figure between all 28 countries was 19.3%, already suggesting a very low rate of volunteering in general, but this just highlights the severe lack of it in Spain. Shockingly, from the previously mentioned Eurostat data of Formal Volunteering in 2015, Spain recorded the same figure of 10.7% - which clearly states that there had not been enough volunteer attention then nor has there been 2 years later. Moreover, from PVE's 2014 reading of 9.2% of Formal Volunteering within their sample size (which is unknown) of participants over the age of 14, to their average data between May and October 2018, the situation has plummeted to a volunteering level of 6.2%.

The report states that this information alarmed various Corporations and Organisations in 2018 into contributing immediate support and promotion towards the higher knowledge of volunteering in Spain. Intended foundations where volunteering could flourish are: Educational Institutes, Corporate Sectors, Public Sectors, Banks, Government Organisations, and PVEEx (PVE in Extremadura).

So far, PVE have made a conclusion that the higher percentage of volunteering is represented by those who are women, employed, have a medium and high level of education, are of upper-middle-high status, and are living in a two-person household. Furthermore, as the survey is aimed at the general population over the age of 14, PVE has been able to identify that the most active volunteers are between the ages of 25 and 54. Amongst the different areas of development within volunteering, such as cultural, educational, or environmental, the social factor is still the most significant with more than half of the volunteers accounting for it.

Another significant factor of volunteering in Spain is the permanence of volunteers in the organisations they collaborate with. Data from the two surveys combined in 2018 show that more than half (52.8%) of volunteers have been committed to one organisation for more than 5 years, and 34% have done so for more than 10 years. To further understand why this is the case, PVE included a level of satisfaction question within the May 2018 survey to which less than 1% of participants are dissatisfied.

This provoked them to find out the reasons for such a commitment. The 4 highest scoring reasons are: the possibility of helping, the relationships with who they work with, the feeling of doing something positive for society, and the possibility of generating a social change. Overall, while there is a positive outlook on volunteering, PVE cannot confirm if it is linked to religious beliefs or political ideas. Yet what they have been able to say is that the image of volunteering is kept well amongst those who do participate with organisations than those who don't.

### 3. Interest in Volunteering

*Trust:* The following chapter starts off by addressing that volunteering is guided by the level of trust it embeds in society. Data from the two surveys of 2018 have shown that the majority of participants have a great deal of trust in the system of volunteering. Unlike the general feminisation of volunteering, the perception of trust or confidence towards this social act differs within the age-groups of the participants, not gender. Results show that, there is the highest trust amongst those aged 14-24, while it is lower among those over the age of 65. Moreover, in terms of Formal Volunteering, data from the October 2018 survey shows that trust and confidence improves when collaborated with NGOs – especially among associate members, those who make financial donations, and volunteers.

*Interest:* In the event of the interest towards volunteering from trust, the October 2018 survey reveals that the general interest in volunteering is high, with women expressing more of an interest in the field than men, albeit slightly. Specifically, interest has more to do with age groups, yet again, where the most interested people are those between the age of 14 and 34 years old. Those on either side of this group find volunteering unattractive – especially over the age of 65. PVE believes that this fact can be of very good use for recruitment campaigns.

*Motivating reasons for non-volunteers:* The May 2018 survey provides information on what motivations might encourage new volunteers to do so. Among the reasons for motivation, the non-volunteers would mostly consider volunteering if they believe that the NGOs cause is attractive to them, if the NGO provides a training course on the tasks beforehand, and also if they are able to do volunteer work only occasionally. These reasons have been voted equally between men and women, more so between the ages of 24 and 34 of the sample. Again, organisations can use this data for improvement in recruiting.

*Motivating reasons for current volunteers:* Meanwhile, the motivations of current volunteers were brought to light within the October 2018 survey, where the top 3 reasons are solidarity, personal satisfaction and permitting life conditions; the first being the highest chosen reason followed by the rest. However, like the other areas of observation previously, age is a huge factor in this set of results as well. PVE record that those who value solidarity most are participants between the ages of 14 and 24, while personal satisfaction is relevant to those between 25 and 34 years of age. Lastly, participants who are older than this participate in volunteering because of social commitment or free time – barring those who did not answer this question of course.

*Is it easy or hard to join volunteering?* Seeing as there is quite an amount of interest in volunteering among the general sample of participants, the October 2018 survey highlights that less than half of them think it is easy to join volunteering. The remaining percentage is made of those who don't think it is easy or do not know what to say (or do not answer). It is analysed that the participants who perceive it is easy belong to a high level of education and high/medium-high socio-economic status, while unemployed participants and students perceive it to be difficult. However, they also note that experience, people who already collaborate with NGOs in any way, as well as active volunteers, find it easier to join volunteering.

*Reasons for disinterest:* Apparently, the main focus of the surveys in 2018 was to find out what made people disinterested in volunteering (including the ease and difficulty factor discussed above). May 2018 results show that the most significant reason for not participating in volunteering is because they believe that there are other useful ways to get involved. Second to that is because they believe it is difficult to commit to one action constantly (due to other personal prior commitments perhaps) and third because they are not sure what volunteering really is. The final reason and least chosen reason is due to thinking that volunteering is difficult or complicated to get involved with. Students actually have the highest perception of this reason when trying to collaborate with NGOs. Along with the difficulty in finding an attractive cause to volunteer in, people have said that they find it hard to get involved because of reasons such as work, caring for others, family time, volunteer work does not interest them, no access to any volunteer locations, health problems etc...

*Areas for improvement:* After this issue of motivating reasons, PVE sought out to investigate from the participants what they would like to see NGOs do to improve the recruitment of volunteers. Of highest scored, organisations need to be more transparent, improve their publicity and campaigns, change the image of the

organisation (to reduce scandals and increase trust), and introduce more recruitment campaigns on radio and TV.

This chapter has proved to be very heavy on obtaining information about how much interest there is in the volunteering sector in general and also the within NGOs among those who are or are not already involved in this social sector. It included finding out reasons for motivation towards participating in voluntary action for all people as well as their perception on what could be done better by the NGOs themselves to recruit more volunteers.

#### 4. Evolution of Data on Volunteering (from November 2014 to October 2018)

The final chapter of this report looks at the change in volunteering levels from November 2014 to October 2018. A general view of all data collected over the years have presented a decrease in volunteers over the age of 14 from 9.2% in 2014 to 5.6% in October 2018, with some highs and lows in-between. Within these results, there was always a slightly higher population of women volunteers than men, where a feminisation index of 1.4 in October 2018 suggested an over representation of women. Volunteers in the age group of 25 to 54 years old are most active compared to the others, although the drop in the number of volunteers within a younger age group from 14 from 2014 to 2018 is due to their busy lifestyle and the lifelong need for commitment quality of volunteering – which is unattractive to them. Moreover, the interest of non-volunteers towards volunteering within an NGO has gradually decreased as well from 2014 to 2018. Therefore, PVE has deemed it necessary to further monitor volunteering among age groups and encourage NGOs to improve their ways of recruiting them based off these factors in order to maximise volunteer interests and participation.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, it is evident that this report on Voluntary Action in 2018 in Spain thoroughly investigated the interest in volunteering among volunteers and non-volunteers of the general population of the sample over the age of 14 by distributing 2 surveys within the year, in May and October. Both surveys included different questions to serve different yet similar interests to come to an informed conclusion about the state of volunteering in Spain. Data from the 4 areas of investigation of, the Spanish population's collaboration with NGOs, volunteering and volunteers, interest in volunteering, as well as the evolution of data, has undoubtedly given light to the interests and motivations of the people in relation to volunteer work, within organisations especially. It was compelling to find out that although there were high levels of trust and interest to volunteer, there were many personal and non-personal obstacles that the participants faced which discouraged them to join. Not only that but, the rise in interest in 2018 is still the lowest it has been since 2014, leading PVE to utilize the results of this report to influence stronger recruitment efforts from the organisations. The decrease in volunteering as the years go by make it imperative that organisations step up and do something to increase it. Suggestions of improvement are surveyed in the questionnaire by PVE which would hopefully result in some action by the NGOs. There is no cause too small to ignore in this day and age, and the more people there are who stand in solidarity, the better the world is in diminishing the root of these causes – which should be a cause for volunteering in itself!