

# FACT SHEET ON VOLUNTEERING IN DENMARK

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## General Information



## KEY INFORMATION ABOUT DENMARK

**Capital:** Copenhagen  
**Official Language:** Danish  
**Population:** 5,982,832 (as of 2024)  
**Currency:** Danish Krone (DKK)  
**Calling Code:** +45

## KEY ECONOMIC INDICATORS

**GDP per capita:** 425.000 DKK (as of 2021)  
**Real GDP growth in 2022:** 3.82% (as of 2023)  
**Unemployment rate:** 2.9 % (as of 2024)

## DEFINITION OF VOLUNTEERING\*\*

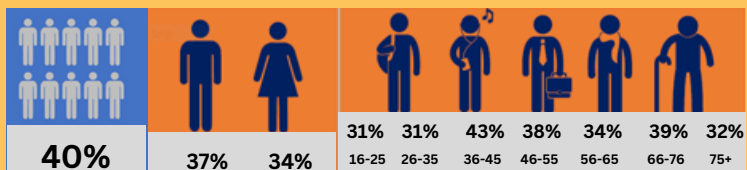
There is no authorised definition of what a volunteer is. However, there is general agreement among researchers that a volunteer is a person who performs voluntary work that fulfils a number of criteria.

Volunteering is the activity, action or effort that a volunteer performs. Volunteering is an endeavour that 1) is voluntary, 2) not paid, 3) is for the benefit of someone other than the volunteer and the volunteer's family, 4) is formally organised and is active (e.g. membership of an association is not volunteering).

## SOCIAL CONTEXT AND SIGNIFICANCE OF VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering is an essential part of the Nordic democratic welfare behaviour model and the Danes' constitutional opportunity to cultivate and safeguard their interests, whether it's sports, culture, social and health care, religion, politics or anything else.

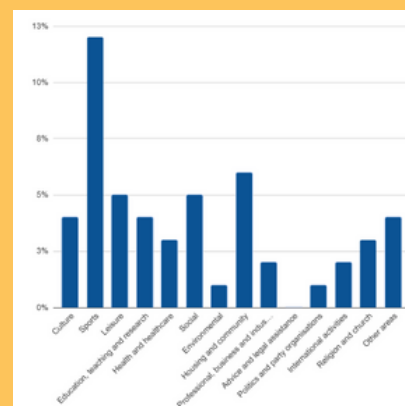
## Statistics and Demographics\*



In Denmark, the average volunteer is a 35-45 year old male while volunteering among women is most common for the ages 16-25. Danish volunteers spend an average of 15.5 hours/month volunteering with volunteers in the non-working population spending more time volunteering compared to the employed population. Only around 22% of the adult population have never volunteered and wouldn't want to do so while 44% of non-volunteers would like to volunteer if asked.

There are still large differences in volunteering according to education level, so the higher the level of education, the higher the proportion of people who volunteer. On the other hand, volunteers with without vocational training spend more hours volunteering than other population groups

## Types of Volunteer Activities\*\*\*



The sports sector is where the vast majority of Danes are involved in volunteering. The proportion of the population who volunteer in sports clubs, sports associations and the like is 12%, and more than twice as high as participation in the other volunteering areas. The housing and community sector is where the second most people are involved (6%), closely followed by the social sector (5%) and the leisure sector (5%).

The area where the fewest Danes volunteer is in organisations that provide advice and legal assistance.

## Motivation for Volunteering\*\*\*\*

Being able to do something concrete in an area that interests the individual and being part of a community are the main reasons for volunteering. The feeling that 'someone has to do it' and the desire to get involved in your children's leisure activities are also among the reasons for volunteering. There is also an increase in informal volunteering outside of organisations and associations, while member volunteering has not decreased. Informal volunteering is particularly prevalent among people on disability pension and cash benefits. 65% of all volunteers volunteered during the corona crisis between 12 March 2020 and November 2020. About one in five of them have done volunteer work triggered by the crisis.

\* Source: VIVE (<https://www.vive.dk/da/udgivelser/frivillighedsundersogelsen-2020-lxmk93vd/>, <https://www.vive.dk/media/pure/lxmk93vd/5662919>)

\*\* Source: DIVE/CSFA (<https://frivillighed.dk/guides/fakta-og-tal-om-danskernes-frivillige-engagement>)

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## Measuring the Impact of Volunteering

There is no commonly applied model for measuring volunteering impact in Denmark. However, most public and private organisations require that volunteering impact is being measured. To do so, they most often utilise Theory of Change and Performance Management systems/logics, but in general there can be great variation.

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

FriSe Denmark is, in collaboration with volunteer centres and the National Board of Social Services, developing and implementing the volunteer centres' quality model that ensures that volunteer centres work in a more goal- and result-oriented way. The quality model for the country's many volunteer centres provides a common standard, but at the same time supports diversity among the volunteer centres, because it is important to take into account differences in the local context.

### National E-platform for Volunteering \*\*\*\*\*



Frivilligjob.dk is Denmark's largest portal for volunteering with more than 9,000 active postings annually from voluntary associations and organisations with volunteer activities and more than 20,000 applications from citizens interested in volunteering. It has existed since 2005, is free to use and is run by Frivilligcentre og Selvhjælp Danmark (FriSe).

## Challenges to the Development of Volunteering in Denmark\*\*\*\*\*

- Demographic Changes: The growing elderly population increases the need for volunteers in elderly care, but with fewer young people available.
- Economic Factors: Voluntary organisations often lack the financial resources to recruit, train and retain volunteers. At the same time, economic crises can cause people to prioritise paid work over volunteering.
- Recognition and Value: Volunteering may not be sufficiently recognised or valued in society, which can reduce motivation.
- Cultural Perceptions: Cultural attitudes towards volunteering can vary, and in some societies there may be a lack of tradition or encouragement to get involved.
- Digital Divide: Not all potential volunteers have access to the digital platforms used for recruitment and coordination.



## Institutional and Legal Framework for Volunteering in Denmark

In Denmark there are two laws which aim at supporting volunteering and voluntary organisations on a local level: Lov om Social Service § 18 (Social Services Act) and Folkeoplysningsloven (Danish Act on Popular Education).

### Key Stakeholders in the Development of Volunteering

In the development of volunteering in Denmark, there are several key players who have played a crucial role including:

- National and local volunteer centres - FriSe is a national organisation for a number of independent volunteer centres and self-help projects in Denmark that support and initiate voluntary social initiatives locally.
- The Danish Institute for Voluntary Effort (DIVE) - a state-owned, self-governing knowledge and development center on voluntary work
- The Danish Volunteer Council, which advises the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing and the Danish Parliament on the role and efforts of the voluntary sector in relation to social challenges.
- Danish Agency for Social Affairs and Housing
- NGOs and civil society organisations



## Financial Support for the Development of Volunteering in Denmark

The Social Services Act imposes an obligation on local authorities to provide financial support for local voluntary work and to cooperate with voluntary organisations. The objectives are to improve interaction between voluntary social work and local authorities, to make voluntary work more visible in local communities and to improve the conditions for voluntary social work. To solve this task, local authorities receive an annual financial compensation from the central government, paid via block grants.

### Tax benefits:

In general, voluntary organisations are exempt from taxation and VAT. If the organisation, however, has commercial activities of more than approximately 6,500 Euros it has to pay VAT; as long as the surplus is used in accordance with the organisations objectives, it will be exempted from tax

## The State Award for Volunteering

There is no national award, but many municipalities have awards for volunteer of the year/voluntary organisation/charity etc. Often they are presented in connection with the annual celebration of volunteering on Volunteer Friday

## Trends in the Development of Volunteering in Denmark\*\*\*\*\*

- Episodic volunteering, where volunteers engage in shorter and more specific projects rather than long-term commitments.
- Involvement of citizens outside the labour market, including young people without jobs and education.
- Many organisations now use digital platforms to recruit volunteers, coordinate efforts and communicate with their members.
- A growing realisation of the need to offer volunteers training and skills development.
- Organisations consciously work to engage diverse populations, including ethnic minorities, older people and people with disabilities, to ensure volunteering is accessible to all.
- A trend towards closer cooperation between voluntary organisations and public institutions to solve complex societal problems and ensure that resources are best utilised.
- Schools and educational institutions are integrating volunteering activities into their programmes and there are special initiatives aimed at engaging young people in volunteering projects, both for their own development and to strengthen society as a whole.

## Research in the Field of Volunteering

In Denmark, there is extensive research and resources available on volunteering that shed light on different aspects of volunteering, civil society and social engagement including from the Danish Institute for Voluntary Effort (DIVE), universities providing studies/evaluations of Danish volunteer centres, VIFO (Videncenter for Folkeoplysning) regularly publishing the 'Volunteer Report' and VIVE (Danish Centre for Social Science Research and Analysis) that conducts research focusing on the role of civil society in Denmark, including volunteering and its impact on society.

\*\*\*\*\* Source: FriSe Denmark (<https://frise.dk/frivilligcentrenes-kvalitetsmodel>)

\*\*\*\*\* <https://frivilligjob.dk/om-frivilligjob.html>

\*\*\*\*\* Source: CFSA/DIVE, Statistics Denmark (<https://www.frivillighed.dk/frivilligraadet>, <https://www.dst.dk/da/Statistik/emner/befolkning-og-valg/befolkning-og-befolkningens-fremskrivning/aldersfordeling>)

\*\*\*\*\* Source: CFSA/DIVE, VIVE, Danish Authority of Social Services and Housing (<https://frivillighed.dk/analyser/frivilligrapporten-analyser-af-frivilligheden-i-danmark> <https://www.vive.dk/da/undersogelser-i-gang/vive-kortlaegger-danskernes-frivillige-arbejde-6068jn8d/>, <https://www.sbst.dk/nyheder/2023/frivillighed-og-velfaerd-2024-brobygning-til-trivsel>)