LIFECYLE OF VOLUNTEERING IN SPORT (2019)

WHO VOLUNTEERS, WHEN AND WHY





BACKGROUND TO LIFECYCLE RESEARCH

Who's who





Sport England

Sport England believes that being physically active enriches lives, builds stronger communities and creates a healthier, happier nation. So we want everyone in England to feel able to take part in sport or activity, regardless of age, background or ability.

Sport and activity would not happen without the millions of people who give their time, skills and passion. We know volunteering in sport and physical activity can be incredibly powerful, benefiting both those who give their time and those they support.

Sport England commissioned Jump to understand more about how people volunteer over the course of their lives, and why they might stop giving their time

Jump Projects

Jump works with national data to measure and understand the social impact of sport and culture.

Over the past seven years, our team has produced groundbreaking research on the value of volunteering to communities and society, and its impact on the wellbeing of individuals.

WHAT LED US HERE

The work that paved the way: 2016-2019.

In 2014, Jump (while working at sport volunteering charity Join In) produced the first economic valuation of sport volunteering in *Hidden Diamonds*. In 2016, with *Making Time - GIVERS*, Jump investigated the motivations and barriers for all volunteers, and how sport might be different.

Since 2016, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) have published *Sporting Future*, a new strategy for sport with a new focus on volunteering. Sport England now have their first volunteering strategy and, in *Active Lives*, a new, comprehensive dataset showing levels of sports participation across the UK.

The <u>first review of Active Lives</u> in 2017/18 showed a 'significant decrease of over 400,000 people' in the rates of sport volunteering on the previous year. To try to understand more about why this might be, Sport England briefed Jump to build on the work in sport volunteering, and to:

- design a survey with a more robust sample size of current and ex-sport volunteers in England
- ensure the survey is consistent and complementary to other national datasets (e.g. Community Life) to enable direct comparison between sport and general volunteering, and provide a clearer view of the similarities and differences between them
- evidence the links in the existing and new data sets between sport participation and volunteering
- explore the 'lifecycle' of sport volunteering and identify key life stages for the recruitment and retention of volunteers in sport
- build on Sport England and Jump's work in 2018 (Cancer Research UK, the National Trust and BT) on diversity in volunteering (ethnicity and socio economic status).

The result was this bespoke report, referred to from here on as the *Lifecycle of Volunteering survey* **2019** (LOVS).

Note: by sport volunteering we mean anyone giving their time to help make sport and physical activity happen.

"The LOVS survey is consistent and complementary to other national datasets (e.g. Community Life) to enable direct comparison between sport and general volunteering."

KEY LIFE STAGES

In this report and analysis we look at volunteers across the main age groups and life stages as they are mapped in UK national data sets.

This enables comparison across age groups between sport and general volunteers to understand where certain barriers, motivations and characteristics (e.g. children under 16) vary between sport and general volunteers outside of sport.

These comparisons across national data sets, between sport and non-sport volunteers, help us to understand where sport is different at key stages in life from other forms of volunteering. The result is a broad, new understanding of the lifecycle of volunteering in sport.

We recognise that there are limitations to this approach. For example, these categories are quite broad and of course there will be many volunteers who feel they don't fit into these groups or that the data here doesn't reflect their experience.

However, we think the principle of taking a life course approach to understanding volunteering is still a useful way of interpreting this data and at a later stage understanding and exploring in more depth the implications/recommendations for practice.









SUMMARY: THE LIFECYCLE OF VOLUNTEERING IN SPORT

Key life stages and opportunities.

Children (0-15)

Trend: the link between playing sport and going on to volunteer is clear (60% of volunteers once played).

Opportunity: growing sport participation and volunteering among groups less likely to be playing is a key focus for Sport England.

Consider: emphasise how team sport, helping out and the social side of sport can be a focus for growth and start to form a lifelong habit of volunteering.





Young people (16-24)

Trend: young people volunteer via education and university (44%) and their friends (over 60%).

Opportunity: to highlight the skills growth and social benefits of volunteering.

Consider: emphasise the fact that sport volunteering enhances skills that employers look for, and helps to grow social networks and connections.

Middle-aged (25-54)

Trend: this group are more likely to be working full time and more than half of this group volunteer where their children take part.

Opportunity: emphasise constantly that volunteering is the 'social norm' in a club (everyone is involved) and emphasise the benefits.

Consider: this 'squeezed middle' is cash-rich and time-poor, so more proactive and engaged management from sport clubs and groups will help keep them involved.





Older people (55+)

Trend: older people have more spare time, volunteer for longer and are more motivated by a social cause.

Opportunity: there are clear benefits to sport volunteering in building social networks and contributing to the health of their wider community and nation.

Consider: emphasise the wellbeing and social benefits of sport volunteering and develop a clear narrative on the wider social impacts of sport in order to engage older volunteers.

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SHOW?

This survey of 1,565 current sport volunteers and 703 ex sport volunteers backs up some existing views, and challenges others.

Research that tells us what we think we know may not seem as interesting as research that tells us what we don't, but it is just as useful. **LOVS** uses new and large datasets to better understand many of the commonly held observations on volunteering. In this report we are able to **quantify** and see the scale of:

- the positive association between sports participation and volunteering
- the influence of family connections on inclination to volunteer in sport
- the role of social and economic status on likelihood to volunteer.

LOVS also throws up some interesting and unexpected challenges for sport. It poses **new questions** about:

- the experience of sport volunteers
- the links between volunteering to different formats of sport participation (team vs individual)
- the difference in perception between sport volunteering as a personal or family affair, and general volunteering as more of a way to help others.

FOR ALL THE DETAIL

Throughout this summary, we refer to insights from the *LOVS* alongside other sources like *Active Lives*. Technical details about its sample (1,565 current and 703 ex sport volunteers), data tables and analysis can be found HERE.

"Research that tells us what we think we already know can seem less interesting. But it can help to confirm and quantify our assumptions and opinions and develop a clearer understanding of why things happen."

SPORT VS GENERAL (NON-SPORT) VOLUNTEERING

Similarities, differences and benefits

HAPPY DAYS: VOLUNTEERING IS GOOD FOR ALL OF US

There are significant new findings in 2019 on the links between volunteering and physical and mental health.

The 2016 DCMS Sporting Future strategy for sport described how sport policy would be measured against five outcomes:

- 1. Physical health
- 2. Mental health
- 3. Individual development
- 4. Community development
- 5. Economic impact.

In 2019 — alongside the work for **LOVS** — Jump conducted the most advanced analysis yet to establish the association between volunteering and improved mental and physical health. This work — <u>Happy Days</u> — found that:

- both general volunteering and sport volunteering had statistically significant associations with improved wellbeing (measured as life satisfaction)
- the wellbeing uplift from volunteering at least once a week is almost three times higher than for volunteering several times a year. In Community Life, sport and general volunteers volunteer at broadly the same frequency (33-35% at least once a week). However the primary data revealed sport volunteers do so more frequently (see Table 16A)
- Formal volunteering (i.e. volunteering in a group or club) is associated with considerably higher wellbeing than informal volunteering



SPORT VOLUNTEERING OFFERS MULTIPLE BENEFITS

Groups and clubs offer a number of opportunities and activities that impact on our health and wellbeing.

Jump's previous work has shown the significant positive association between sport volunteering and outcomes including mental and physical health, individual development (feeling like you can achieve your own goals) and trust. Appendix 2 of *LOVS* details additional analysis for Sport England, using the *LOVS* data and *Active Lives* dataset, that also supports these findings.

All of this data and analysis supports the conclusion that volunteering in sport benefits people **in three ways**:

- The volunteer experience and the associated personal wellbeing benefits.
- The volunteer can also benefit from the physical activity that they, or their family, get from playing the sport.
- The families, clubs, groups and community in which volunteers invest their time generate social networks, cohesion and trust.

"The families, clubs, groups and community in which volunteers invest their time generate social networks, cohesion and trust."

AT FIRST GLANCE, SPORT IS LIKE ALL VOLUNTEERING

Sport volunteers have similar motivations and barriers across ages and genders as other volunteers.

In 2016, Jump's *GIVERS* research concluded that what makes people volunteer and what stops them are broadly similar in both sport and general volunteering*. *LOVS* backs up the conclusions with the strongest evidence yet.

It shows that some motivations for sport volunteers are broadly similar to those of other volunteers across all generations (age groups 16-24, 25-55 and 55+) (see **Tables 5, 7**). And specifically that:

- 45% are motivated by a desire to help people (43% young, 47% middle, 46% old)
- 22% by a connection to the needs of family or friends (18% young, 26% middle, 17% old)
- 14% volunteered because their **family and friends did** (25% young, 16% mid, 6% old)
- young volunteers are motivated to get involved by the opportunity to learn new skills (43%) and get on in their career (27%), but put off by the 'need to study' (73%)
- a higher proportion of older people are motivated by having more time to volunteer, while a higher proportion of the 25-54 middle aged group cite having to look after the children as a barrier.
- Alongside the GIVERS work from 2016, tables 5 and 16B continue to demonstrate that older volunteers (55+) are more motivated by a social cause and desire to help others.

It also shows that there are **no significant differences** in motivation **between high and low socioeconomic groups** (see **Tables 20** to **23**).

However, though not statistically significant, some illustrative differences in survey responses show a higher proportion of lower socioeconomic groups reporting the desire to learn new skills or volunteering in response to a need in their community. These findings are consistent across all types of volunteering and observed in earlier work from Sport England (with partners National Trust, Cancer Research and BT) on the socioeconomics and diversity of volunteering*.

*source - GIVERS, <u>A Bit Rich, ABC of BAME,</u> <u>Time Well Spent</u>

"Many motivations for sport volunteers are broadly similar to those of other volunteers across all generations"

WHERE SPORT DIFFERS: YOUNGER, RICHER AND LESS ALTRUISTIC

Sport volunteers tend to be younger and better off but also less religious and less motivated to help a cause.

Numerous data sources (Active Lives, Taking Part, Understanding Society, Community Life and the Sported study In Sport, We Trust) show us that sport group members are more likely to be younger, male and from higher socioeconomic groups.

Unsurprisingly, *LOVS* confirms this pattern, showing that sport volunteers (compared to general non sport volunteers) are younger, wealthier, more educated, happier and healthier, more likely to be married men with children, and more likely to be in employment (see **Table 16A** and the *Community Life* data).

LOVS also shows that sport volunteers (Vs non-sport general volunteers) are:

- less likely to say "the cause was really important to me" (25% vs 38%)
- less likely to say "I want to improve things/help people" (45% vs 54%)
- less likely to be motivated by religious belief (3% vs 21%)
- more likely to be motivated by a family link (22% saying "it was connected with the needs of my family/friends" vs 18% of non-sport volunteers) (see **Table 16B** and the **Community Life** data).

*Source: GIVERS, A Bit Rich, ABC of BAME, Time Well Spent

TEAM SPORT

There is a strong connection between participants in team sport and sport volunteers.

LOVS and the **Active Lives** dataset confirm that those who volunteer in team sports are more likely to volunteer more often, and for longer. They show that:

- 20% of those who play a team sport volunteered over twice in the last 4 weeks compared to only 8% of individual sport players more than twice as many (see **Table 32** and the **Active Lives** data).
- ex-volunteers are 33% less likely to have volunteered in a team sport, compared to current volunteers. In other words, team sport participants tend to stay involved longer than those in individual sports (see **Table 15**).
- The latest data from the Active Lives survey is showing a decline in participation in team sports which may (or may not) be associated with the decline over the same period in volunteering in sport.



GENDER BALANCE

Behaviour patterns of participants in different types of sport may explain the gender imbalance in volunteering.

The previous page demonstrated that team sport participants are more likely to volunteer more often and for longer. This may help to **explain the gender imbalance in sport volunteering**, generally around 60% male vs 40% female (*Taking Part, Active Lives* and weighted LOVS data).

A rudimentary review of the <u>Active Lives</u> dataset shows that women are more likely to participate in individual sports (running, swimming, yoga, fitness classes). The data also shows that these individual sports have a lower percentage of their participants who volunteer (these sports can be more commercial and by their nature less volunteer intensive e.g. you don't need a volunteer with you to go for a run or a swim). While worthy of further investigation, this seems to be a common sense explanation for the gender gap in sport volunteering.

That said, this is changing. And Sport England's 2017 survey <u>Spotlight</u> <u>on volunteering and gender</u> shows that, with the arrival of children, there's a significant opportunity to engage parents and mums.



WHERE SPORT DIFFERS: CONTINUITY AND FAMILY

If your parents got involved — or your kids do now — you're more likely to volunteer.

For the first time*, **LOVS** provides quantifiable evidence that you're more likely to volunteer in a sport that you play (or played) yourself. And building on Sport England's 2017 survey **Spotlight** on volunteering and gender (and other studies) the data also confirms and quantifies the significant influence of family members playing or volunteering.

LOVS shows that:

- Sport volunteers are more likely than general volunteers to have children under 16 (40% vs 25% Table 16A)
- 60% of sport volunteers volunteer in a sport they play or played
- 53% of sport volunteers say their parents also volunteered (rising to 78% for 16-24 age group)
- **52**% of the 25-54 group are volunteering at a place where their children also take part in sport (see **Table 4**).

A lot of volunteers from the **younger age group** (16-24), received information about volunteering through school, university or college (44%), or through social groups, with over 60% getting starting volunteering either after playing the sport or through friends who play. (see **Table 6**).

*As a result of new analysis on the Sport England Active Lives dataset and bespoke questions in the primary 2019 Lifecycle survey.



STOP AND START

Age is just a number. Understand how volunteering interacts with key life stages.

COMMITTED, LONG-SERVING AND BROADLY HAPPY

LOVS allows us to add sociability, satisfaction and longevity to the list of benefits.

Jump's previous research shows us that sport volunteering is significantly and positively associated with a number of key outcomes. Regardless of socioeconomic circumstances, sports volunteers are happier, less anxious, more trusting, more perseverant, less overweight, and have a stronger sense of a life worth living (see the *Active Lives* dataset analysis in <u>Appendix 2</u>). This work is consistent with international studies demonstrating the wellbeing value of helping others.

LOVS now shows us that we can add building social networks to this list of positive outcomes. **Over half of sport volunteers reporting that they socialise with their fellow volunteers** outside of the group or club (see **Table 4**).

It also suggests that **sport volunteers are committed and satisfied with their volunteer experience**, with 89% reporting that they intend to do the same or more volunteering next year, compared to 80% of general volunteers (**Table 4** vs the NCVO *Time Well Spent* survey, 2018).

Perhaps as a result of these wellbeing and social benefits, *LOVS* also reveals that **sport volunteers are long-serving**, staying involved for an average of 5.9 years* (see **Table 4**).

"Over half of sport volunteers report that they socialise with fellow volunteers."

SATISFIED BUT SQUEEZED

LOVS shows why some sport volunteers may be thinking of quitting – and how to stop them. Make sure the volunteering is sociable, organised and rewarding.

According to *LOVS*, **53**% of sport volunteers would like to give more time, compared to only 41% of general volunteers (see **Table 16A**).

We have already seen that sport volunteers are much more likely to have children (see Table 4). Tables 7 and 8 also show that it is the parental age bracket 24-54 who are most likely to cite work commitments, childcare and not enough time as barriers to volunteering.

When you add in the fact that sport volunteers are more likely to be full-time employed, we're talking about busy families who are financially comfortable but limited for time. They would like to do more, but they're prevented by the competing demands of work, kids and other commitments.



AGE IS JUST A NUMBER, BUT LIFE CHANGES MATTER

Age in itself doesn't stop people volunteering — but changing life circumstances do.

LOVS shows us that ex sport volunteers:

- are actually younger than current volunteers (see Tables 9, 2A, and 10A).
- have served less time than current volunteers (4.15 years vs 5.85)(see Table 15)
- gave time less frequently than current volunteers

So, perhaps surprisingly, it doesn't seem to be age, length of service or natural attrition that leads sports volunteers to stop.

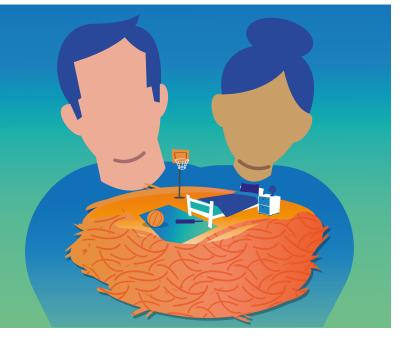
So what does? According to LOVS:

- a higher proportion of current sport volunteers have children currently taking part in sport than ex-volunteers (40% vs 24%)
- a further 21% of ex-volunteers say that their children used to play but no longer do (see Table 15).
- · Given what we already know about the

comparative wealth and education of sport volunteers, what motivates them to volunteer (friends, family, helping others) and what stops them (a busy lifestyle), we can reasonably conclude that it's not so much a volunteer's age that stops them volunteering as what they've got going on at the different stages of their lives, particularly with kids and work.

The sport volunteer demographic have more pressures on their time and may be more sensitive to how that time is organised and managed. Clubs and groups need to explore ways to keep people engaged through the times when their status as a volunteer may be vulnerable.

The 'empty nest' phenomenon? Data suggests that parents give up volunteering in sport when their kids stop playing or perhaps move out of home.



WE NEED MORE PROACTIVE MANAGEMENT

The data suggests that sport volunteers are not managed as proactively and effectively as other sectors (although samples sizes are small).

LOVS shows us that 11% of sport volunteers are considering stopping or reducing their volunteering next year (see Table 4). And it's worth remembering that Active Lives in 2017/18 showed a "significant decrease" in the rates of sport volunteering on the previous year. That said, the 11% considering reducing compares (if not directly) to the 15% of general volunteers who say they're fairly or very unlikely to continue volunteering next year (NCVO Time Well Spent survey, 2018).

However, of the 11% thinking about stopping or cutting back, 13% say their group is badly organised and 17% that their efforts are not appreciated (see Table 16D). These numbers are higher than among general volunteers (2% and 4%) in the Community Life data.

LOVS (see **Table 4**) also shows us that those sport volunteers thinking about cutting down or stopping are **less likely:**

- to be socialising with fellow volunteers outside the club or group (40% vs 53%)
- to agree that they've made new friends volunteering (69% vs 83%)
- to agree that they have someone to support them (78% vs 88%), or that they'd received training or an induction (39% to 49%).

Table 15 also shows that ex sport volunteers are several times more likely to have never been a member of the organisation where they helped.

These findings may not come as much of a shock. But, for the first time, they send a clear, evidence-based message to clubs and groups in the sports sector about how best to keep their volunteers happy. Namely: to provide more training and support, and look to create a more rewarding and sociable experience for their volunteers.

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OUR THOUGHTS AS SPORT VOLUNTEERS AND RESEARCHERS

What would we do with this information? Hypotheses and suggestions.



THE UNCOMFORTABLE TRUTH: SPORT LACKS DIVERSITY

Strategic intervention should aim to reduce the social divide in sport participation and volunteering.

If the motivations and barriers are broadly the same for almost all demographics, the question remains: why are there more sport volunteers from higher socioeconomic backgrounds?

The answer perhaps lies in the findings that the majority of participants volunteer in a sport they played (60%) and that their parents also volunteered (53%). In other words, it seems that sport **participation** (both playing and volunteering) is a generational habit passed down through families from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. On the flip side, those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are passing a lower likelihood of playing or volunteering down through the generations.

Without strategic intervention, these socioeconomic divides will only become wider, withholding the health and wellbeing benefits of sport and volunteering from the communities that arguably could benefit the most.

Finally, in 2019 Sport England joined with the National Trust, Cancer Research and BT to look at diversity in volunteering as it pertains to diversity of income and ethnicity. The work, 'ABC of BAME' and 'A Bit Rich', found that ethnic and income diversity is an issue in all forms of volunteering and that, if anything, sport seemed to have more positive ethnic diversity. But two issues do stand out as relevant to sport — that the wellbeing benefits of volunteering are not as positive for ethnically diverse groups (an issue worthy of further exploration and explanation). The research also found that volunteering does seem to foster greater social mixing (mixing with people of different backgrounds and ethnicity) and trust for those who take part.

"Without strategic intervention, socioeconomic divides will only become wider."

DOES SPORT NEED TO ESTABLISH A SOCIAL 'CAUSE'?

Volunteers outside sport appear more motivated by making an impact on a social cause and helping others.

Compared to sport volunteers, general volunteers tend to be older and less likely to have children under 16 in the family (75% vs 59%, **Table 16**). Significantly, they're also more motivated to volunteer by religion or the desire to help people (see **Table 16B**).

These findings echo Jump's previous volunteering research (including *GIVERS* in 2016 and *Happy Days* in 2019) which shows that older people in the 55+ age group are more motivated by making a difference and the impact of their volunteering. In other words, by a social 'cause'.

The data seems to show that the motivation of some sport volunteers evolves to meeting the 'outer' needs of the community once the 'inner' needs of their family have been met, but further research is needed to quantify this.

In the meantime the question remains: could sport volunteering do with more of a social 'cause'? What could this cause be and how can it be communicated to motivate people of all generations to get or stay involved in sport volunteering?

"General volunteers are more motivated by a cause that is important to them and the desire to help others."

SPORT: THE PREVENTATIVE NHS?

The health and wellbeing benefits of sport volunteering seem pretty persuasive — let's explore them further.

Motivation and socioeconomic background aside, there are two things we shouldn't forget:

- Millions of kids and adults from all socioeconomic backgrounds across the UK enjoy significant health and wellbeing benefits as a result of playing sport.
- Without an army of hardworking, long-serving volunteers, they wouldn't. Simple.

What does this mean to society? It's no exaggeration to say that sport volunteers are **safeguarding** millions of people's physical and mental health. Together, they are generating enormous health and wellbeing value to the UK*.

We know that volunteers themselves feel greater purpose and happiness. But on a wider scale, we should celebrate what their volunteering contributes to the nation's health and economy. Players and volunteers of all ages should understand why sport volunteering is so important, why more people should get involved, and why they should keep going.

This data sits alongside growing evidence of the importance of shared experiences and collective endeavours as key to all of our wellbeing.

Collective purposeful endeavour — doing something, with purpose, with others — is good for us. Sport and physical activity, and the groups and clubs they generate, are of enormous value to our society. And volunteers make it all possible.

*In 2014, the volunteering sector as a whole was estimated by Chief Economist of the Bank of England Andrew Haldane to be worth £50-200bn per year in the UK.



AREAS TO EXPLORE FURTHER

LOVS raised further questions about women in volunteering and what happens after university.

While 37% of current sport volunteers are women, that number rises to 60% of ex-volunteers (see **Tables 2B and 10A**).

In other words, more women are leaving sport volunteering than men, possibly when their children stop playing the sport. And we have already seen that team sports are more volunteer intensive and more male in terms of participation levels.

Given how important we now know the social side of volunteering is in retaining volunteers, does this point to a slightly male-dominated social culture among sports clubs and groups? And does this discourage women from staying involved once their children move on?

Or is it simply that key life stages (education, work, having children) have more impact on women's volunteering habits than men?

This new LOVS data, combined with Sport England's 2017 survey Spotlight on volunteering suggest gender is worth investigating through more qualitative research methods.

There also remains the role of education, at all ages and levels to promote volunteering as a way to build networks and grow skills for young people of all socio-demographics (not just higher education graduates).



Technical details about sample, data tables and analysis can be found <u>HERE</u>.

If you have any thoughts, queries or questions on this report please feel free to contact:

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THANK YOU